

**Designed Landscapes of the Central Northamptonshire Gentry
c. 1770 - c. 1840**

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Abstract:

The designed landscapes of the gentry have frequently been studied as examples of the landscapes of a county, designer or period and have rarely been treated as distinctively gentry landscapes. The wealth, size of landholding and role the gentry played in local governance often resulted in an intimate relationship expressed socially and spatially in the village and parish in which the Hall and designed landscape were located which has also been generally ignored. This thesis is a close study of four designed landscapes which aims to understand the form and function of improvements considered or made and the relationship between the designed landscapes and the village and parish of which they were a part.

The first part of the thesis establishes the key concepts, methodology of the thesis and the historical geography of central Northamptonshire in the mid-late eighteenth century, a period of rapid political, social and economic change locally and nationally. The second part of the thesis describes and analyses the improvements to each landscape establishing a chronology of change in the context of the interests and personality of the landowner and the neighbouring village.

I argue that these four landscapes show an evolution in the design pleasure grounds belonging to the landed gentry. The evolution can be understood, in part, as a response to the growth of extra-urban villa landscapes. The close study of these landscapes also reveals the importance of landowner personalities and the hidden participation of women in horticulture and decision making.

I suggest that a close study of designed landscapes within a narrow and spatial and temporal framework demonstrates more complexity than is sometimes acknowledged and can add nuance and detail to our understanding of historical designed landscapes.

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Preface

It should be noted that shortly after beginning my research, financial difficulties experienced by local government in Northamptonshire led to proposals to limit access to Northamptonshire Record Office to paying customers, a proposal that would have rendered my research impossible. Consequently, I spent more time on archival research in the early years of study than I might otherwise have done. While not ideal in principle, in the context of Covid-19, this has proved to be immensely beneficial as the substantial majority of archival research had been completed before access to libraries, Record Offices and other repositories became limited or impossible.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
BM	British Museum
CLO	City of London Archives
JP	Justice of the Peace or Magistrate
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office
RCHME	Royal Commission of the Historic Monuments of England
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office

Chapter 1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to understand the improvement of four designed landscapes of the gentry in Central Northamptonshire and the relationship between these improvements and the associated villages and parishes. Like all landed elite, the landed gentry were subtly encouraged to improve their estates, designed landscapes and themselves.¹ The landed elite believed they ruled by right, justified their power, in part with a unilaterally imposed contract in which they provided for the nation by maximising the productivity of their estates while treating their tenants responsibly.² They demonstrated their class belonging through tasteful demonstrations of their wealth and manners. Designed landscapes were the locus of displays of wealth and taste as well as providing spaces for familial pleasure.³ Every landed elite household had to decide whether their designed landscape provided the pleasure they wished to enjoy and/or represented the family to visitors and travellers in a manner that was adequate for their perception of their social status. Each landowner then had to make choices about how to improve their designed landscape to meet either or both desires. The landowner had to consider whether to employ a specialist designer, what forms and function(s) the landscape should contain and meet and how it should relate to the Hall, estate and the

¹ See contemporary reports such as: Marshall, W., *The rural economy of the Midland counties; including the management of livestock in Leicestershire and its environs: together with minutes on agriculture and planting in the district of the Midland station*, (London, 1790); Donaldson, J., *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton*, (Board of Agriculture, Edinburgh, 1794); Young, A., *General Report on Enclosures Drawn Up by Order of the Board of Agriculture*, (London, Board of Agriculture, 1808); Pitt, W., *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton, drawn up for the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement*, (London, Board of Agriculture, 1811).

² Duckworth, A. M., *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*, (Baltimore & London, John Hopkins University Press, 1994 [1971]; Williams, R., *The Country and the City*, (London, Vintage, 2016 (1973)), pp. 85-95; Barrell, J., *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The rural poor in English painting 1730-1840*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980); Williams, R., *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, (London, Fontana, 1983), p. 160-1; Seymour, S., *Eighteenth-Century Parkland 'Improvement' on the Dukeries' Estates of North Nottinghamshire*, unpub. PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham, (1988), pp. 10-33.

³ Feluś, K., *The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden: Beautiful Objects and Agreeable Retreats*, (London, I.B. Taurus, 2016).

village and roads beyond the boundary. It is the response to these questions and the motivations for them, that this thesis seeks to understand.

Landed elite designed landscapes research has primarily fallen into one of four categories. It has been site specific; a history of designed landscape change across time at a particular site.⁴ It has been designer specific.⁵ There have been studies on particular topics either at specific locations or on specific themes.⁶ There have also been several general surveys of geographically defined areas, most frequently counties, such as Mowl's co-authored series of County Garden History studies.⁷ During the lifetime of this thesis the bicentenary of Repton's death led to several publications presenting his work at a range of sites by County Gardens Trusts that combined research at specific sites within a county.⁸ Several papers highlighted themes in Repton's work and Williamson's recent book on Humphry Repton sought to summarise his work and legacy.⁹ Gentry landscapes have attracted limited attention

⁴ Goodway, K., William Emes and the Flower Garden at Sandon, Staffordshire, *Garden History*, Vol. 24:1, (1996), pp. 24-29; Davison, K., *Woburn Abbey: The Park and Gardens*, (London, Pimpernel Press, 2016).

⁵ Stroud, D., *Capability Brown*, (London, Country Life, 1950); Simo, M. L., *Loudon and the Landscape: From Country Seat to Metropolis*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1988); Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England*, (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1999); Cowell, F., *Richard Woods (1715-1793): Master of the Pleasure Garden*, (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2010).

⁶ Law, S., Early Eighteenth-Century Rides in Estate Context: Practice at Rufford Abbey, Nottinghamshire, 1700-1743, *Garden History*, Vol. 45:1, (2017), pp. 45-65; Seymour, S., Daniels, S. & Watkins, C., Estate and Empire: Sir George Cornwall's management of Moccas, Herefordshire and La Taste, Grenada, 1771-1819, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 24:3, (1998), pp. 313-351; Seymour, S. & Calvocoressi, R., Landscape Parks and the Memorialisation of Empire: 'The Pierrepoints' 'Naval Seascape' in Thoresby Park, Nottinghamshire during the French wars, 1793-1815, Vol. 18:1, pp. 95-118, *Rural History*, (2007); Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste: The Art of Humphry Repton's Red Books*, (London & New York, Routledge, 2007).

⁷ Mowl, T. & Hickman, C., *The Historic Gardens of England: Northamptonshire*, (2008).

⁸ Batty, S. ed., *Humphry Repton in Sussex*, (Sussex Gardens Trust, 2018); Eyres, P. & Lynch, K., *On the Spot: The Yorkshire Red Books of Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardener*, (Huddersfield, New Arcadian Press 2018); Rutherford, S. ed., *Humphry Repton in Buckinghamshire and Beyond*, (Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust, 2018).

⁹ Tarling, J., Music at Heathfield: Repton as musician and writer, pp. 29-35 in Batty, S. ed., *Humphry Repton in Sussex*, (Sussex Gardens Trust, 2018); Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton: Landscape Design in an Age of Revolution*, (London, Reaktion Books, 2020).

and interest has usually arisen for reasons that go beyond the social status of the landowner.¹⁰ There is a growing recognition that designed gentry landscapes are an important area of study as *gentry* landscapes.¹¹ This thesis is a response to the suggestions that this aspect of the gentry and their designed landscapes has been relatively understudied.

Designed landscape research has been primarily interested in the designed landscape and has paid less attention to the relationship between the designed landscape and the estate landscape and less still to the relationship between the designed landscape and the village or parish within which it was located.¹² However, the landed gentry frequently lived physically close to the local community and provided many of the men who governed it, particularly the clergy and magistracy. They could have a close physical relationship with ‘their’ village, living within or very close to the settlement. This thesis is concerned with the ‘external’ relationship, the relationship between the designed landscape of the gentry landowner and the morphology of the settlement adjacent to it.

This thesis investigates the proposals for designed landscape improvement at four gentry landscapes in central Northamptonshire between c. 1770 and c. 1840 and the extent to which the proposals were implemented. The thesis uses the surviving archival and documentary evidence and, where possible, material evidence in the landscape, to undertake a close study of each site. It establishes a chronological account of designed landscape improvement, a description of gentry decision making, lifestyles and social networks and assesses the relationship between the Hall and designed landscape

¹⁰ McDonagh, B., Women, enclosure and estate improvement in eighteenth-century Northamptonshire, *Rural History*, Vol 20:2, (2009), pp. 143-162; Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes in Georgian England*, (London, Routledge, 2015).

¹¹ Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes*, (2015), p. 16.

¹² See Spooner, S., & Williamson, T., Gardens and the Larger Landscape, pp. 193-215 in Bending, S., ed., *A Cultural History of Gardens in the Age of Enlightenment*, (London, Bloomsbury, 2016 [2013]).

and the nearby village. It places the landscapes in the social and spatial setting of the villages of which they were a part, analysing the designed landscapes as material representations of the ideology of the gentry and declarations of the way in which they wished to see and be seen by their social class, visitors, travellers and the local community.

Designed landscapes are also part of larger geographies as they are located within counties and regions. Central Northamptonshire is part of the 'Champion' landscape of the English Midlands which, having a distinctive geological and topographical profile and village and land use patterns, transcends county boundaries.¹³ Furthermore, the Midlands region had a particular profile of elite. The distance from London and other major cities limited the attractiveness of the region to an urban elite who wished to buy or build an extra-urban villa with a modest landholding. Consequently, the Midlands region consisted almost entirely of estates belonging to the landed elite, the majority being landed gentry estates which, while individually smaller than aristocratic lands, were the estates on which most of the rural population lived.

The location of central Northamptonshire, near the southern extremity of the Midlands region and relatively close to London, and the geology and topography of the area, which lacked fast flowing rivers and coal, created an opportunity for entrepreneurs to use cheap labour in piecework boot and shoe production.¹⁴ Employment in traditional lace and weaving industries was lost to factory production in other parts of Britain but boot and shoe production was not yet mechanised. Towns and some villages in central Northamptonshire grew rapidly while acquiring new sources of employment and, critically, new sources of employer. Combined with the growth of dissenting religion, the distance between the landed gentry, who continued to see themselves as the

¹³ Williamson, T., Liddiard, R. & Partida, T., *Champion: The Making and Unmaking of the English Midland Landscape*, (Liverpool, University of Liverpool Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Mounfield, P. R., The Footwear Industry of the East Midlands: Northamptonshire, 1700-1911, *East Midland Geographer*, Vol 3:8, No. 24, (Dec 1965), pp. 434-453;

ruling elite, and the manufacturing labourer grew both socially and spatially. This thesis explores the spatial relationship between the designed landscape and 'polite quarter' and the rest of the village.

The thesis will suggest that between 1770 and the early 1800s, parkland design remained consistent, but pleasure ground design slowly evolved. It suggests that pleasure ground design responded to the demand for extra-urban villas elsewhere, even though the principal designer of the period, Humphry Repton was ambivalent to the new market for his business, and some landed gentry were isolating themselves from the change taking place beyond their sphere of influence. The decisions taken by an individual landowner were made within the wider framework of the landed elite's way of seeing landscape, and the fashion of the moment. However, understanding particular landscapes through a close study of the archival record and, where possible, evidence from the field, reveals a complexity in form and motivation. It is this complexity, derived from the particular circumstances, decisions and personality of the landowner and their household that also provides evidence for speculations about the motivation of the landowner and the timing of improvements, the response of the landowner to improvement proposals, the participation of women in decision making and horticulture, and the relationship between the Hall, polite quarter and village. It is this detailed evidence and the complexity that lies beneath the shared world view and common forms of improvement that allows the thesis to understand the designed landscapes of the landed gentry in central Northamptonshire at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

Chapters Two and Three are an introduction to two key concepts, the methodology of the thesis, Northamptonshire of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the four parishes within which the designed landscapes studied are located. These chapters describe the concepts and historical geography underlying the detail study of four designed landscape of the landed gentry in central Northamptonshire. I

introduce two key concepts – the gentry and landscape. The landed gentry, their place in society and their social cohesion are described enabling the social standing of the landowners studied in Chapters Four to Seven to be understood. Landscape is subdivided into three sections. Two complementary traditions of understanding the historical geographies of landscapes and these, the study of material landscape history and landscape as a cultural phenomenon, as way of seeing, are discussed at the beginning of the section.

The middle part of this section traces the development of the dominant forms of designed landscapes through the seventy-year period of the thesis. Designed landscapes saw a gradual reduction in the influence of Brownian landscapes amid a debate about the form that the picturesque, designed landscape should take, a growth in the popularity of tours to picturesque and sublime landscapes, and the growth of hybrid gardens influenced by the emergence of what was later termed the 'Gardenesque'. The forms and functions of the designed landscapes of the case studies can then be located in the wider context of designed landscape historical geography. The section ends with a consideration of the culture of and imperative to improve. Improvement was an expression of a gentry way of seeing landscape which maximised profit, pleasure and status and which had the potential to alter the lives of villagers. The common 'gentlemanly hobby' of antiquarianism and its relationship with religion as a driver for personal and moral improvement completes this section.

Chapter Two continues with a description of the methodology adopted and describes the process of decision making and research. There is an assessment of the sources of evidence used. Humphry Repton dominates this period of landscape design not only because of the quality of his designs and the breadth, socially and geographically of his clientele, but also because he left a substantial body of written work. His written work is treated as source material and Chapter Two ends with a discussion of his work. Chapter Three is an introduction to

Northamptonshire in general, central Northamptonshire in particular, and the four parishes within which the improved landscapes were located. Here, Northamptonshire's location within England, its transport links and emerging boot and shoe manufacturing industry are described as these features of Northamptonshire's historical geography are critical to understanding the social and spatial forces influencing village dynamics at this period.

Chapters Four to Seven present the results of archival and field research at each location. Each chapter follows a particular designed landscape, its owners, village and parish through time. I take a chronological approach to the life and lifestyle of each gentry family and the ways in which they behaved with respect to their land, other county gentry and the people in the locality. I describe their designed landscapes, the changes proposed and sometimes implemented. I analyse the proposals for improvement by professional designers and place the design in the context of the designer's work and contemporary landscape design fashion. Where possible, I make speculations about the motivations for improvement and the participation of members of the household in decision making and horticulture and about the relationship between the landowner and the designer and between the landowner and village. Chapter Eight draws conclusions from the findings of Chapters Four to Seven and the thesis ends with some questions which would benefit from further research.

Chapter 2 Concepts, Methods and Sources

2.1 Introduction

This chapter has two distinct sections. The opening section considers two key concepts: 'gentry' and 'landscape'. The first of these distinguishes the gentry from both the titled landed elite and the urban elite. The rural gentry, usually owners of smaller landholdings than ennobled landowners, were enculturated from birth through experience and education, into an ideology of local power expressed through political, moral and spiritual leadership, social networks and material forms in art, music, architecture and landscape design. The second brings together two traditions of landscape history and cultural historical geography interpreting field and detailed archival research through the lens of the idea of landscape and understands designed landscapes as a material expression of the ideology of the landed elite. It is argued that the close spatial connection between many gentry landscapes and the village to which they were local requires a consideration of settlement morphology in garden and pleasure ground design.

Second, the chapter addresses the reasons for choosing the case study sites, the research methodology and the sources used while researching this thesis. I used a variety of source materials – survey, commercial, valuation, tithe and Ordnance Survey maps, estate and account books, letters, diaries and sketches, newspapers, commercial drawings and watercolours – to obtain evidence from the archives and in the field. Humphry Repton, who was the major landscape gardener of the period and, uniquely amongst landscape gardeners of the late eighteenth-century left a large body of written material is treated as a distinct source and discussed at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Key Concepts

2.2.1 The Landed Gentry

In the late eighteenth century the landed elite owned the majority of land in England: Mingay estimates between 70-85% in 1790 of which the landed gentry owned 50-60%.¹⁵ The landed gentry were socially inferior to the aristocracy.¹⁶ However, while a few landed gentry owned more land than a few aristocrats in general '... between the main body of the peerage and the great majority of the gentry there yawned always a measurable social gulf.'¹⁷ Thompson recognised that 'country gentleman' though 'in many respects their [aristocrats] equals in status though not in possessions' can be treated as a separate, though sometimes overlapping sub-class.¹⁸ The landed elite controlled the political and social life of England, with some competition from an urban, merchant and entrepreneurial non-landed interest. It consisted of these two largely distinct groups; an ennobled and landowning sub-class – aristocrats - who, generally, owned very large estates and dominated national politics and a group below them in status, usually owning less land and often with a more local focus – the gentry.¹⁹ Below this landed elite the yeomanry, owning between 15-20% of the land and backed by less capital, were much more at risk from low agricultural prices, poor harvests and the costs of agricultural improvements.

Gentry status was given by 'peer-group acceptance' so the amount of land, the value of the land and the income required to maintain the lifestyle of a gentleman, framed as a life of leisure, varied throughout England and Wales, but in general terms, the acreage likely to be

¹⁵ Mingay, G. E., *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 26.

¹⁶ Beckett, J. V., *The Aristocracy in England: 1660-1914*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986), p. 24-26.

¹⁷ Mingay, G. E., *The Gentry: The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class*, (London, Longman, 1976), p. 4.

¹⁸ Thompson, F. M. L., *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 7.

¹⁹ Chambers, J. D., & Mingay, G. E., *The Agricultural Revolution*, (London, Batsford, 1966), p. 17.

owned by a county gentleman has long been accepted.²⁰ Mingay summarised three categories of gentry wealth for 1790.²¹ He later amended these figures suggesting that, in 1790, the income of English and Welsh baronets was on average £2,000 *p.a.* and knights £1,000 *p.a.*. Esquires and Gentlemen had lesser incomes of, on average £400 *p.a.*. The war years increased the incomes of the gentry dramatically so that by 1815 baronets and knights had seen their incomes double while the incomes of esquires and gentlemen increased by 50%.²²

Translating acreage into figures for income is not straightforward. Mingay was unwilling to extrapolate in any detail the income required to maintain the life of a country gentleman to the size of landholding he would need. The yield in rental value would depend on a variety of factors including soil type, the type of crop or livestock production, proximity to markets, whether the land was open or enclosed and whether roads had been turnpiked. Others, while largely accepting his analysis, have been less circumspect. Thompson accepted that 'Before 1800 rather less than £1,000 a year should have sufficed'.²³ He suggested that for the majority of the nineteenth century, as a very broad average, £1 of income per year was equivalent to owning 1 acre of land. In 1800 rental incomes were, on average less than 20s/acre but, before the decline in agriculture from the end of the wars with France, were rising.²⁴ Armstrong repeats Mingay's findings and McDonagh follows Thompson, Stone & Stone and Beckett in suggesting that the better off gentry landholdings were generally between 1,000 and 3,000 acres.²⁵

²⁰ Stone, L., & Stone, J. C. F., *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 306.

Beckett, J. V., *The Aristocracy in England*, (1986), p. 40-1.

²¹ Mingay, G. E., *English Landed Society*, (1963), p. 23 & 26.

²² Mingay, G. E., *The Gentry*, (1976), p. 11.

²³ Thompson, F. M. L., *English Landed Society*, (1963), p. 111.

²⁴ Young, A., *General Report on Enclosures*, (London, Board of Agriculture, 1808), p. 211-221. Young reports that arable land rents in Northamptonshire increased from 11s. 6d. to 20s. Pastoral land would not have yielded quite as much.

²⁵ Armstrong, W. A., *The Countryside*, pp. 87-153 in Thompson, F. M. L., ed., *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950, Vol. 1: Regions and Communities*,

The highest priority of any member of the landed elite was the preservation of the family. Land was the greatest actual and symbolic guarantor of a family's status and durability.²⁶ Landed gentry families were vulnerable to a variety of direct risks. Unwise behaviour, incompetent estate management, poor harvests and unfavourable market conditions could all conspire to render any gentry family at risk of losing some or all its land. Succession laws evolved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries enabling families to limit, as far as possible, the damage done by a profligate or foolish inheritor. However, at the same time the changes in capital markets mortgage legislation made mortgaging safer for the mortgagee.²⁷ Consequently, there was a rise in the use of mortgages to finance improvements, purchases of land and, in some cases, expenditure on luxury goods. While these developments helped protect families against some threats to their survival, they remained at risk of long-term market changes which compromised their ability to meet debt payments.

Thompson identified three broad categories of the landed elite from the 'solid central core', who were neither industrial entrepreneurs nor active in London society, to 'business-like and entrepreneurial' at one end of the spectrum and the 'frivolous, extravagant, improvident, self-indulgent and, immoral' at the other.²⁸ Rental income was unpredictable and landed families sought additional revenue. Several alternative sources of income were available. Landowners could improve their land so that agricultural yields would increase and higher rents could be charged. They could exploit mineral reserves on their land and, perhaps, use the minerals in small scale industrial processes. They could invest money in government bonds, stock funds or directly in speculative ventures.

(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 90; McDonagh, B., *Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape: 1700-1830*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2018), p. 6.

²⁶ Beckett, J. V., The Decline of the Small Landowner in England and Wales 1660-1900, pp. 89-112, in Thompson, F. M. L., ed., *Landowners, Capitalists, and Entrepreneurs: Essays for Sir John Habakkuk*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994), p. 95.

²⁷ Mingay, G. E., *The Gentry*, (1976), pp. 108-117.

²⁸ Thompson, F. M. L., *Gentrification and the Enterprise Culture: Britain 1780-1980*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994). p. 43-4.

The landed elite could also attract income by marrying a son to a daughter of a wealthy man who would bring a substantial dowry with her. In some cases, prospective daughters-in-law could be found within the existing landed gentry group. There was also a growing pool of eligible young women whose families sought the status of ties to established gentry but who had acquired their wealth through trade, the professions or industry. These families gave the landed gentry the ability to attract a significant dowry while inadvertently blurring the boundary between the gentry and the monied but unlanded. Advantageous marriages that linked families or brought significant dowries were an ancient and reliable way of gaining or securing status or funding debt payment, land acquisitions and consolidation or improvements to estates, mansions, parklands and pleasure grounds.²⁹

It was possible, with sufficient wealth and assuming the availability of property on the market, to acquire an estate and this appeared to offer a route to social acceptance as a member of the landed gentry. Stone and Stone argue that estates rarely came to the market as 'younger sons or more distant relatives' inherited estates unexpectedly.³⁰ Their study of Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Northumberland showed that between 1540 and 1880, 8% of the inheritor owners who sold their estates were forced to do so because of their financial ruin. They conclude that, while this number is not negligible, it was insufficient to change the landed gentry in any way except over the longest time period.³¹

Socially ambitious people were able to acquire the accoutrements of gentry status by acquiring the appropriate food, furniture, address, and critically for this thesis, a fashionable garden, that is, by displaying their

²⁹ Thompson, F. M. L., *English Landed Society*, (1963), p. 19.

³⁰ Stone, L., & Stone, J. C. F., *An Open Elite?*, (1984), p. 90.

³¹ Stone, L., & Stone, J. C. F., *An Open Elite?*, (1984), p.89-91, 108-110; Beckett, J. V., *The Aristocracy in England*, (1986), p. 17-18.

good taste. In practice however, full acceptance probably took more than one generation as the education and sub-conscious awareness of the subtle codes of behaviour required for belonging had to be learnt. In *Mansfield Park* Mrs Bertram's enthusiasm for moving Fanny Price out of the Hall and into Mrs Norris' White House was because, as the daughter of a younger sister, Fanny did not belong in the main family residence.³² Stone and Stone argue there were no legal barriers to joining the landed gentry but 'The glue which held the upper and middle levels of English society together was a common bond of gentility, but the barriers which broke it down into infinite gradations of honour and respect were those of snobbery.'³³

The medieval historian Peter Coss argues that the gentry are best understood as a social formation which existed to deliver monarchical and later parliamentary power into a local level.

... territoriality is crucial to the understanding of the gentry as a social formation. All landownership is, in the most basic sense, territorial; but what distinguishes the territoriality of the gentry is its collective nature. This territoriality has four essential components: collective identity, status graduation, local public office and authority over the populace.³⁴

The county gentry secured their personal dynastic legacy and policed the boundary of their class through control of and access to the land, social events and invitations to their houses, balls and sporting activities. Senior families provided the sheriff, a wider group formed the magistrature, assizes and local militia officer corps. The landed gentry provided the economic, legal and political framework within which a county functioned.

³² Austen, J., *Mansfield Park*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 19-20.

³³ Stone, L., & Stone, J. C. F., *An Open Elite?*, (1984), p. 306.

³⁴ Coss, P., *The Origins of the English Gentry*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 9.

2.2.2 Landscape

2.2.2.1 Approaches

In the introduction to his *The Making of the English Landscape* W. G. Hoskins wrote 'To write its [a landscape's] history requires a combination of documentary research and of fieldwork, of laborious scrambling on foot wherever the trail may lead.'³⁵ Beresford described himself dealing with 'Time and Place', the 'visible remains in the real world'.³⁶ A wide range of documentary evidence, including personal texts such as letters and diaries, and detailed field work have been essential to landscape history research for more than half a century.³⁷ Hoskins wanted to give a coherent account of the landscape as we see it today. *The Making of the English Landscape* is a summary of multiple detailed studies to build a single narrative of a landscape through time as one layer of human activity is built over previous layers. He understood that his aim was distinctive and his perspective, which Matless describes as 'composing his history in relation to the present' framed past landscapes not so much as expressions of the past as something that is being lost in the present.³⁸ Hoskins narrative is contested as it has become clear that there is no single narrative of landscape history, that research objectivity is elusive and that understanding a past landscape can inform our understanding of the culture that created it and the meanings given to it.³⁹

Other less linear methodologies have investigated the patterns of landscapes through thematic understandings of the histories of field

³⁵ Hoskins, W. G., *The Making of the English Landscape*, (London, Penguin, 1955), p. 14.

³⁶ Beresford, M.W., *Time and Place: Collected Essays*, (London, Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 3.

³⁷ Williamson, T., *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 5.

³⁸ Matless, D., *One Man's England: W. G. Hoskins and the English culture of landscape*, *Rural History*, Vol. 4:2, (1993), p. 189.

³⁹ That Hoskins wrote a subjective history that reflected his own pessimism arising from his dissatisfaction with modernity and planning does not detract from Hoskins intention or his influence, but it does confirm the problematic nature of the attempt to achieve objectivity. See Matless, D., *One Man's England*, (1993), pp. 187-207; Matless, D., *Landscape and Englishness: Second Expanded Edition*, (London, Reaktion Books, 2016), pp. 369-377.

patterns, settlement morphology and the paths, roads, navigable waterways and other transport arteries that connect them.⁴⁰ In so doing these studies can be both time and place specific and are frequently used to inform regional analyses of historical landscapes.⁴¹ Williamson argues that landscape history is more concerned with the physical environment, physical patterns that persist through the generations, what he calls 'antecedent structures', and 'variations in soils, climate and topography' than other histories. This leads to a focus on regions; areas defined not by administration or politics but by the physical environment - topography and surface geomorphology and climatic factors such as rainfall and temperature - and the 'human landscape' - settlement patterns, the nature of field systems and the extent of wastes and enclosed fields.⁴²

The detailed archival, map and field research approach of earlier historical geography and landscape history is fundamental to this thesis. The 'antecedent structures' are the parents of improved designed landscapes as each landscape is constructed, sometimes literally, on or out of the previous. Gentry Halls and designed landscapes were located in parishes, often but not always, on the edge of villages. These pre-existing human environments provide an immediate material, social and political context but also relate to one another in a spatial hierarchy of settlements. In the eighteenth-century villas were built near larger cities, and especially London, by the elite, including a growing urban elite who

⁴⁰ Roberts, B. K., *Rural Settlement in Britain*, (Folkestone, Dawson & Sons, 1977); Roberts, B. K., *The Making of the English Village*, (Harlow, Longman, 1987); Williamson, T., Liddiard, R. & Partida, T., *Champion*, (2013); Williamson, T., Open Fields in England: an Overview, pp. 5-28, in Dyer, C., Theon, E. & Williamson, T. eds., *Peasants and their Fields: The Rationale of Open-field Agriculture, c.700-1800*, (Turnhout, Brepols, 2018).

⁴¹ Foard, G., Hill, D. & Partida, T., Rockingham Forest, Northamptonshire: The Evolution of a Landscape, *Landscapes*, Vol. 6:2, pp. 1-29, (2005); Hawkins, M., The Impact of the Grand Junction Canal on Four Northamptonshire Villages: 1793-1850, *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Vol. 64, (2011), pp. 53-67; Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes*, (2015).

⁴² Williamson, T., *The Transformation of Rural England, Farming and the Landscape 1700-1870*, (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2002), p. 21-27.

did not belong to the historic gentry.⁴³ This study however, has been limited, deliberately, to designed landscapes of similar local topography and geomorphology and representative of a distinct region – the champion landscape of the south Midlands. This region was relatively close to London but did not have a town or city at the top of the settlement hierarchy large enough or dominant enough to generate extra-urban villas. They are, in this part of central Northamptonshire, controlled by the gentry, who had a distinct role in county life and a particular perception of their place in the social hierarchy.

Hoskins' attempt to understand past landscapes from the perspective of modern landscapes is to miss, or perhaps reject, historic landscapes as expressions of the contemporary society, its hierarchies, social relations and exclusivities. 'Landscape' is more than the physical material we see and which can be studied to reveal a series of human interventions in space and through time. It is also the subjective depiction of a scene in visual and written art and the embodiment of the self-identity and ideology of the elite. Artistic depictions alter the landscape way in which the physical material of scenery or an archaeological or historical site is perceived and understood. The content of what is seen is material but the way in which it is seen is cultural. 'Landscape' has become a 'way of seeing the world'.⁴⁴ Altering the landscape by say, enclosing open fields, is to build hedges and fences, plough or graze over historic field strips, to alter the material of the landscape but it is also to express 'ownership' of land, to create in physical form an idea of what the landscape 'ought' to be and, thereby, alter the experience of the landscape by changing views, working patterns, and routes. It occurs within a cultural context of landownership, the consciousness, pressures and imperatives of and on the landed elite, their self-identity and power relations. Therefore, to study the history of the landscape is

⁴³ Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes*, (2015); Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 207-254.

⁴⁴ Cosgrove, D., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscapes*, (London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998 [1984]), p. 13.

to study the culture and self-identity of those who had the power to alter it and who revealed their values in it and through it. 'A landscape is', Cosgrove and Daniels wrote in the opening sentence of *The Iconography of Landscape*, 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring and symbolising surroundings.'⁴⁵ Landscape is only altered by those with the financial, political and social power to 'improve' it. The elite control the way it looks, the way it is seen and therefore the way it is experienced and the responses to that experience. This expansion of the historical geographer's subject matter is consistent with an historical geography that as Harris argues 'is ... built around the relationship between culture and environment' and which, 'as there is no body of law or general theory' requires 'the synoptic judgement of the historian', and as he went on to suggest, the geographer.⁴⁶

The dual meanings of 'landscape' as material to be explored or exploited, and as a cultural image leads to the existence of multiple ways of understanding the material landscapes of the past. The landed elite created landscapes, for pleasure and profit and to impress their neighbours. However, the forms that landscapes took when they were improved through enclosure or picturesque vistas were an expression of values expressed in the art and poetry that was sold to the landed elite. The landed elite were enculturated into attitudes about the way in which society should be organised and the way in which the landed elite and the remainder of society should behave through images of the landscape that they chose to consume. It is not surprising that the most popular visual and poetic representations of landscape were those that reinforced the self-identity and security of the landed elite, or those who aspired to their status.

⁴⁵ Cosgrove, D. & Daniels, S., eds., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 1.

⁴⁶ Harris, R. C., Theory and Synthesis in Historical Geography, *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 15:3, (1971), p. 169, p. 168, p. 167.

The approaches to landscape of landscape historians and cultural historical geographers begin from different starting points and are best understood as overlapping methodologies. The former are interested in the human activity which created the landscape while the cultural historical geographer is focussed on meanings of the material landscape which are symbolic in the sense that they are windows allowing views of the ideology of the landowning class. However, while the two approaches may begin from different points, they move towards each other as they share the same space, working with the same material - the physical landscape and the archival record – to understand the material landscape and the way in which it expressed its present and shaped its the future. The differences are of emphasis and nuance: they function alongside each other to bring insight into the history and geography of a particular landscape or types of landscape.⁴⁷ This thesis employs the methodologies of landscape history but interprets the evidence revealed by detailed archival and field research in the light of a landed elite whose ideology was rooted in the way they saw landscape and was expressed in the landscapes they purchased, improved and sold.

This thesis is however, only concerned with the design, use and meaning of the designed landscape associated with the Hall, including topography, water, planting and built structures. It is not concerned with the farmed landscape beyond the designed landscape except in so far as it features within a designed or appropriated view or was traversed by the approach, other route or localised feature such as a copse for shooting or a statue placed in a prominent position or influenced the form or timing of the designed landscape improvement.

2.2.2.2 Improvement

Designed landscapes were modernised in the context of a wider imperative of improvement. Eighteenth century 'improvement' was

⁴⁷ Harris, R. C., Theory and Synthesis, *Canadian Geographer*, pp. 157-172.

underpinned by nationalism, production, profit and responsibility. It was expressed in public, economically driven attempts to bring greater yields from the land, in private, domestic quests for landscapes that could be enjoyed, and in a personal quest for betterment through learning, financial security and appropriate behaviours.⁴⁸ These four underpinnings and their three expressions were intimately connected in a response to the growth of a market economy and proto-industrialisation, a fear of unrest and a reframed understanding of nature and artistic representations of it. This centuries-long response took different material forms in the centuries following the emergence of capitalism in the northern Italian city states during the renaissance, but the underlying cultural imperative remains similar. In the mid and late eighteenth-century it had its own particular material forms, expressed in changes in the landscape and in designed landscapes but representative of elite ideology.⁴⁹ In this section the four underpinnings of improvement are illustrated with reference to contemporary agricultural reports while contemporary anxieties about improvement are revealed in Jane Austen's fictional estate construct *Mansfield Park* and John Clare's personal poetry.

In his 'Introductory Observations' to Young's *General Report on Enclosures* of 1808 Sir John Sinclair commented that 'The foundation of national prosperity must rest, *on the knowledge possessed by individuals, of Agriculture, and all the other useful arts*'. [His italics].⁵⁰ James Donaldson's 1794 survey of agriculture in Northamptonshire, part of the background to Young's *General Report*, used the term twice in its typically lengthy title *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton, with Observations on the Means of its Improvement. Drawn up for the Consideration of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement*. The Board would Donaldson wrote, 'be happy to give every assistance in its power, to any person who may be desirous of

⁴⁸ Seymour, S., *Eighteenth-Century Parkland*, (1988), p. 10.

⁴⁹ Cosgrove, D., *Social Formation*, (1998 [1984]), esp. pp. 189-239.

⁵⁰ Young, A., *General Report on Enclosures*, (1808), p. vi.

improving his breed of cattle, sheep, etc. or trying any useful experiment in husbandry.⁵¹ National prosperity, especially in a period of war and uncertainty, lay in the land and its productivity. To maximise productivity was to support the nation. In his ninth appendix 'Advantage to Landlords by Enclosing' Young concluded that 'What a spectacle, viewing it politically, to see the produce of such immense tracts [open fields] amounting to millions of acres, minus in the national account!⁵² Enclosing open fields, he argues produces more food of a higher quality which, in turn allows much higher rents to be charged. It was therefore in the individual interests of landowners to do their national duty and to 'improve', that is, enclose, land.

Other improvements also increased productivity. Turnpiking roads increased the volume of goods that could be transported and, particularly in the wetter seasons of the year, the average speed of a cart or coach. Improved roads increased the demand for travel for pleasure but also allowed landowners to increase rents close to turnpike roads.⁵³ Hawkins has shown that, in Northamptonshire, the arrival of the Grand Junction Canal had a significant impact on the trade of a village within about 7 kms of the canal.⁵⁴ Societies such as the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, founded in 1754, were formed to promote and support projects that might have yielded advancements that would benefit the nation through increasing food production and the landowner by allowing rent increases. In 1788 the Society's *Transactions* published the results of experiments by John Boote of Atherstone showing that 4 acres of drill sown seeds yielded far more weight of crops than an equivalent area in which the seeds were broadcast by hand.⁵⁵ New crop strains, livestock

⁵¹ Donaldson, J., *General View of the Agriculture of Northampton*, (1794), p. 3.

⁵² Young, A., *General Report on Enclosures*, (1808), p. 220.

⁵³ Bogart, D., Turnpike Trusts and Property income: New Evidence on the Effects of Transport Improvements and Legislation in Eighteenth-Century England, *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 62:1, (2009), pp. 129.

⁵⁴ Hawkins, M., *The Impact of the Grand Junction Canal*, (2011), pp. 53-67.

⁵⁵ Boote, J., *Transactions of the Society instituted at London for the Encouragement of the arts, manufactures and Commerce*, Vol., 7, (1789), pp. 15-27.

breeds, husbandry practices and machines all increased productivity and therefore simultaneously increased the wealth of the nation and allowed landowners to increase rents. Donaldson believed that 'If neat light ploughs, with cast-iron mould-boards, were introduced, there is no doubt but a man with two horses, would do the same work which they now perform with double the number, and to as good purpose'.⁵⁶ New machinery increased production but it was also liable to reduce the demand for agricultural labourers and, just as enclosure had led to protests, so the introduction of machinery prompted disturbances and even riots.⁵⁷

Vesting the prosperity of the nation in land gave the landed elite the responsibility for ensuring the prosperity of the nation and therefore managing the land effectively.⁵⁸ This reinforced the right of the landed elite to govern but also bestowed an expectation that they should govern well. There is therefore a short distance between improving the land to improving oneself so that the landowner was able to govern virtuously. Governing virtuously extended beyond maximising production and profit to governing benignly so that those who worked the land did so, while being properly looked after.

Virtuous, paternalist management of tenants required enabling them to plan, invest in equipment, new breeds and crops or crop strains, building and hedgerow repairs or, at the very least, rent enough land to survive without being forced to leave the land and becoming a burden on the parish. Pitt encouraged the use of lengthy, preferably 21-year leases, quoting 'respectable farmers' who believed that 'the want of leases is a great check to improvements'.⁵⁹ Pitt was also supportive of local friendly societies which, if the Lamport Society was typical, and he

⁵⁶ Donaldson, J., *General View of the Agriculture of Northampton*, (1794), p. 67

⁵⁷ McDonagh, B., & Griffin, C. J., *Occupy! Historical geographies of property, protest and the commons: 1500-1850*, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol 53, (2016), pp. 1-10.

⁵⁸ Young, A., *General Report on Enclosures*, (1808), p. vi.

⁵⁹ Pitt, W., *General View of the Agriculture of Northampton*, (1811), p. 45.

believed it was, were gatherings of 'respectable neighbouring farmers' who discussed farming practice, bought books on agriculture and considered 'the merits of new discoveries or projected improvements ...'.⁶⁰ Pitt also reported that the Lamport Society encouraged their members 'that, where circumstances will admit, the honest and industrious labourer should be accommodated with land, at a fair rent, sufficient to keep a cow; but, where that is not practicable, with sufficient to grow potatoes for their family, and to enable them to feed a pig.'⁶¹

Young published evidence on the impact of enclosure on the poor. In the parish of Passenham in Northamptonshire he recorded 'Deprived of the cows, and great sufferers by loss of their hogs' and Mr. Forster of Norwich who 'lamented that he had been accessory to injuring 2000 poor people, at the rate of twenty families per parish', although at the time, he was reluctant to see the link between enclosure and rises in poor-rates.⁶² Nevertheless, he quoted Mr. Burton of Langley, a 'very able Commissioner', approvingly. Burton 'wished for a clause in all acts ... which makes the allotment inalienable from the cottage, as he admits there is considerable benefit in the poor people having enough land for a cow, from two to four acres, according to the soil'.⁶³ Such allotments were rare and while in Crick, Northamptonshire, enclosed in 1777, there were more than 85 allotments, Harlestone, enclosed in 1767, was more typical. There were fifteen allotments in a parish of about 80 households. The 'Trustees for the poor' were allotted 6-3-0 acres.⁶⁴

Contemporary reports expressed the culture of improvement in a written material form while calling for improvement to be expressed in the material of landscape by encouraging to landowners to enclose, grow

⁶⁰ Pitt, W., *General View of the Agriculture of Northampton*, (1811), p. 266.

⁶¹ Pitt, W., *General View of the Agriculture of Northampton*, (1811), p. 245.

⁶² Young, A., *General Report on Enclosures*, (1808), Appendix IV, pp. 151, 158.

⁶³ Young, A., *General Report on Enclosures*, (1808), Appendix IV, p. 158.

⁶⁴ Anscumb, J. W., *Enclosures in Northants, Vol. I, 1727-1778*, (Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton, n.d.), p. 85, p. 45. Both parishes were controlled by Robert Andrew of Harlestone Park.

new varieties of crops, rear new breeds of livestock, adopt new husbandry techniques and make use of new types of machinery. This was of benefit to the nation as more food was produced and, in wartime reduced the dependency of Britain on food and timber imports while, at the same time, benefitting landowners who could achieve greater rental yields; something they were generally content to do. Alongside the grounding of agricultural improvement in nationalism, productivity and increased profit there were more muted calls for the elite to behave responsibly on behalf of the poor. The elite were enculturated into the notion of improvement and it was through the notion of improvement that the right to govern was expressed. Improvement showed the elite how responsibility for land, people and nation should be exercised and what forms it should take.

The Church was a materially substantial symbol of a spiritual and moral order. The building, usually smaller but almost always taller than the Hall, was a constant reminder of a social hierarchy and a behavioural code in which each person had a place and a class-based set of rules to which they were expected to conform. The church - building, clergy and institution - reminded each person of the responsibility they had to exhibit 'godly living'. The spatial dynamics of many villages reinforced the close links between the Hall, the landed elite and the clergy. Church buildings also represented the peculiarity of established religion in England as the building was usually ancient but the denomination was relatively young. Its origins in the affairs of state rather than theological and political reformation and the compromise of the Elizabethan settlement, neither Catholic nor Reformed, allowed some of the Tory inclined High Church party to find common cause with social causes, especially the abolitionism of the Clapham Sect evangelicals of the last decade of the century.⁶⁵ Many evangelicals were unwilling to use

⁶⁵ See Aston, N., Thomas Townson and High Church Continuities and connections in Eighteenth-Century England, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 97:1, (2021), pp. 53-69, in which Aston traces the career of the High Churchman, scholar and Tory Archdeacon of Richmond & Rector of Malpas, Cheshire, Thomas Townson. He 'sought to be pastorally accessible to his parishioners by visiting regularly, distributing

politics to achieve their goals but Bebbington argues that 'Alongside his [Wilberforce's] friends with reforming objectives in the Clapham Sect, there was a much larger bloc of Evangelical MPs from 1784 onwards with unqualified Tory views. Likewise, after the French Revolution the Evangelical clergy were overwhelmingly Tory.'⁶⁶

Any improvement which included enclosure, however benign, altered the landscape dramatically. In some extreme situations, such as Lilford in Northamptonshire, the village was demolished but it was more likely that footpaths and roads from the village that were used to the fields and other villages were moved or closed.⁶⁷ Some trees may have been cut down and views altered dramatically as previously open fields were divided by hedgerows and fences. A sketch of Lilford by Peter Tillemans (1721) and a painting attributed to Anthony Devis (c.1760) show the impact of enclosure on ancient paths.⁶⁸

Improvement could alter the experience of being in the village as traditional landmarks, views and routes were removed or hidden by the impact of enclosure an experience which troubled John Clare. John Clare wrote of his experience of enclosure in a fenland Northamptonshire that was quite different to Central Northamptonshire then and now; indeed, it is not part of the modern county. Clare had a distinctive character and a particular voice that was intimately connected to a particular landscape and it is not clear how far he gives a voice to the lived experience of many poorer villagers who watched their landscape change as improvement was done around them, and

Bibles and pious tracts, establishing people's material needs and trying to guide and relieve them and, through the avoidance of any sort of ostentation or preening, encouraging parishioners to feel that in him they had an ally in both their temporal and spiritual lives' [p. 61]. He wasn't hostile to the Catholic church directly but was fiercely anti-Papal, a common position amongst High Churchman of the period.

⁶⁶ Bebbington, D. W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, (London, Routledge, 1989), p. 139-140.

⁶⁷ Gregory, J., & Spooner, S., Public Rights of Way and Countryside Access in Norfolk: 1880-1960, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 74, (2021), pp. 10-11.

⁶⁸ Waites, I., 'Extensive fields of our forefathers': Some Prospect Drawings of Common Fields in Northamptonshire by Peter Tillemans, c. 1719-21, *Midland History*, Vol. 36:1, (2011), p. 59.

therefore to them. Nevertheless, in *The Fallen Elm*, a tree symbolic of the land, John Clare wrote of a particular tree in Helpstone, 'Thou change 'til now did never injure thee'. He recognises that organic, natural change from within is part of the natural order but goes on to describe the sudden, destructive 'innovative' change from outside.

Self-interest saw thee stand in freedom's ways,
So thy old shadow must a tyrant be;

With axe at root he felled thee to the ground
And barked of freedom. O I hate the sound!

Thus came enclosure – ruin was its guide
But freedom's clapping hand enjoyed the sight
Though comfort's cottage soon was thrust aside
And workhouse prisons raised upon the site.⁶⁹

The tree is a literal victim of the improver's will and a material [dis?]embodiment of an enclosure which dispossessed the rural poor of their accommodation and their livelihood and created a problem to which the workhouse was a solution.

Clare's dual dislocation, from spatial and social place, fuelled his view that he was witnessing the emergence of a new qualitative divide between agricultural labourers and yeoman. Barrell argues that,

'The real subject of *The Parish* is the increasing gap between the large farmers – converting themselves into a middle class, into professional men, literate, preferring plate to pewter – and the agricultural labourers.⁷⁰

His perception was that class boundaries were solidifying and the gaps between them were growing. This perception of improvement from

⁶⁹ Clare, J. *The Fallen Elm*, in Bate, J. (ed.), *John Clare Selected Poems*, (London, Faber & Faber, 2003), 1 39-40, 49-50, 57-60, pp 141-143.

⁷⁰ Barrell, J., *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 197.

below, from the perspective of someone to whom improvement was done, who found villages and their fields altered, illustrates the powerlessness of the poorest who became the victims of the national drive for productivity and the landowners' quest for patriotism and profit.

It was the careless lack of responsibility towards the parish, and especially the powerless poor, that Mr Rushworth and Maria represent in Austen's novel *Mansfield Park*. Rushworth had allowed cottages outside Sotherton to fall into disrepair implying that either the village population was declining or that the accommodation of the poorest was not as good as Donaldson, Pitt or Young would have liked. Maria considered that the length of the drive between the 'disgraceful' cottages and the Hall was, or would become under Rushworth management, 'as it should be'. Rushworth was considering 'improving' his landscape, a project which would have removed avenues of ancient oak trees, symbolically as destructive and innovative act as the removal of Clare's elm tree.⁷¹ The designed landscape, and particularly the removal of trees, and the distancing of the Church, as represented at Sotherton by the unused chapel and Maria's enthusiasm for the literal distance between the Hall and the parish church, are signifiers of the moral role of the gentry being quietly and carelessly abandoned.

The landed elite were expected to promote estate landscapes, that were profitable (*utile*) and pleasurable (*dulce*). This delicate balance between beauty and use, public benefit and private gain, created an agricultural improvement culture that was increasingly capitalist and perceived by the landed elite as patriotic and virtuous.⁷² The designed landscape was a material representation of improvement with a similar balance to be struck. It was a short step from seeing that agricultural

⁷¹ See Austen, J., *Mansfield Park*, (1994), p. 66, 399 fn. 44b; and Daniels, S., 'The Political Iconography of Woodland in later Georgian England', pp. 48-52 in Cosgrove, D. & Daniels, S. eds., *The Iconography of Landscape*, (1988), pp. 43-82.

⁷² See Williams, R., *Keywords*, (1983), p. 160-161; Seymour, S., Historical Geographies of Landscape, in Graham, B. & Nash, C. eds., *Modern Historical Geographies*, (Harlow, London, 1999), pp. 193-217; Seymour, S., *Eighteenth-Century Parkland Improvement*, (1988), p. 11.

improvement was both patriotic and profitable via 'a Shaftesburian recognition that excellent aesthetic taste denotes an excellence of moral character' to understanding that improving a parkland and pleasure ground helped to cement a sense of belonging and acceptance in local landed society.⁷³ There was no cultural disconnect between these two loci of improvement as they were both expressions of the same imperative to improve, that is, to enable nature to be as productive and pleasure-giving as possible.

Tension arose between the tasteful estate that maintained an appropriate balance between *dulce* and *utile* and those who were perceived to exploit nature for maximum profit without any regard either for the future of the land or the well-being of the labour-force. The more traditional saw newcomers to land ownership as under-schooled in virtue and over-schooled in commerce.⁷⁴ The social, economic and patriotic imperative for improvement carried responsibilities expressed through paternalist care for tenants, attention to the moral well-being of the parish and management of charities, the legal system and civil defence and a socially policed exercise of good taste in displays of wealth and manners. Very gradually in the early nineteenth century some entrepreneurs and professions began to question the benefit of using their monetary wealth to acquire landed estates and settled instead for buying or building conveniently located villas with a few acres. These villas and their gardens started to break the link between pleasure and profit as the buildings and the landscapes were designed primarily for pleasure and occasionally as a 'substantial capital gain and secure asset'.⁷⁵ There was a diminishing interest in establishing the country house as the locus of a dynasty; the dynastic fortunes of the family were in business not in land. The complex market for designed landscape improvement inevitably led to some cross-fertilisation in the image of what constituted good taste. However, while 'the idea of

⁷³ Duckworth, A. M., *The Improvement of the Estate*, (1994), p. 124.

⁷⁴ Cosgrove, D., *Social Formation*, (1998 [1984]), p. 211.

⁷⁵ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 207.

improvement implied a progressive, stable polity' its wide range of applications was vulnerable to 'an increasingly complicated society'. Consequently, by the early nineteenth century its meaning fractured and, at least when applied to designed landscapes, took on a more pejorative meaning as it 'was used to signify the corruption of landed society and in the domain of middle-class reform it was deployed against landed power and privilege'.⁷⁶ It is no coincidence that this negative usage was growing in popularity as Humphry Repton found his career increasingly dependent on 'the same [newly wealthy] person who lived in a hired workshop must [now] inhabit a house of his own in the country, so a field is bought – and the villa is to be built and Mr Repton must come to fix the spot'.⁷⁷

Improvement looks forward to what the nation, land or individual could become and does not appear to have much in common with antiquarianism. However, antiquarianism sought to justify the elite's place in society, the English (British) place in the world and, in the early nineteenth century in an unspoken collaboration with the evangelical revival, self-improvement.⁷⁸ It was part of the intellectual background that drove improvement. This section concludes with a discussion of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century antiquarianism and its place in the self-understanding of the elite and the improvement imperative.

In late eighteenth century elite society Antiquarianism was a polite hobby for gentleman.⁷⁹ It gave educated gentlemen an outlet for their curiosity and interest.⁸⁰ At least one landowner in this thesis was an

⁷⁶ Daniels, S., *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992), p. 82.

⁷⁷ Repton, *Memoir*, quoted in Daniels, S., *Fields of Vision*, (1992), p. 84.

⁷⁸ See Speight, S. J., A gentlemanly pastime: antiquarianism, adult education and the clergy in England, c. 1750-1960, *History of Education*, Vol. 40:2, (2011), pp. 143-155; Spillane, H., "A Matter Newly Seene": The Bishop's Bible, Matthew Parker, and Elizabethan Antiquarianism, *Reformation*, Vol. 27:2, (2022), pp. 107-124.

⁷⁹ Speight, S. J., A gentlemanly pastime, (2011), p. 145.

⁸⁰ Williams, K., J., Antiquarianism: A Reinterpretation, *Erudition and the Republic of Letters*, Vol 2, (2017), p. 65.

active antiquarian, and professional men like John Adey Repton pursued antiquarian interests. It was also commonplace for clergy to devote themselves to coin collecting, natural history, architectural history or other studies.⁸¹ For the clergy 'antiquarianism was a recognisably gentlemanly pursuit, staving off intellectual boredom and providing an additional rationale for the clergyman's membership of local elite circles'.⁸² In 1844, 77% of the members of the Northamptonshire County Antiquarian Society were clergy.⁸³ Senior clergy had been active in the sixteenth century using an antiquarian methodology.⁸⁴ Archbishop Matthew Parker (1504-75) had an interest in medieval manuscripts and was, in part motivated by the desire to present the English Bible, first published in 1568 as not 'an innovation of the Henrician Reformation but an historic fact of English religion which could be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon Church'.⁸⁵ The preface to the 'Bishop's Bible' was a subtle attempt to claim the Church of England as the natural heirs of the English church and to distance its Catholic opponents while quietly appropriating Anglo Saxons like Bede and King Alfred as idealised models of the practice and order.⁸⁶

As interest in material artefacts, archives and texts enabled senior churchmen to draw links between the English church in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and the Anglo-Saxon church, so secular antiquarians' interests in gothic architecture and artefacts supported the claim that English society was uniquely free and properly ordered. Antiquarianism was part of the improvement project, promoting the

⁸¹ Lake, C., B., *Antiquarianism as a Vital Historiography for the Twenty-First Century*, *The Wandsworth Circle*, Vol 50:1, (2019), pp. 74-89; Sheehan, J., *Sacred and Profane: Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century*, *Past & Present*, Vol 192, (2006), pp. 35-66; Speight, S. J., *A gentlemanly pastime*, (2011), p. 143-155; Sweet, R., *Antiquaries: the discovery of the past in eighteenth-century England*, (London, Hambledon & London, 2004); Williams, K. J., *Antiquarianism: A Reinterpretation*, (2017), pp. 56-96.

⁸² Speight, S. J., *A gentlemanly pastime*, (2011), p. 145; Sweet, R., *Antiquaries*, (2004), p. 53-4.

⁸³ Speight, S. J., *A gentlemanly pastime*, (2011), p. 148.

⁸⁴ Spillane, H., "A Matter Newly Seene", (2022), pp. 107-124.

⁸⁵ Spillane, H., "A Matter Newly Seene", (2022), p. 124.

⁸⁶ Spillane, H., "A Matter Newly Seene", (2022), p. 119, 124.

nation and English exceptionalism, establishing the place of elite in a well-ordered society and securing for the individuals who were its practitioners and/or beneficiaries a more secure place at the elite table.

The pool of antiquarian knowledge could be disparate, like a curiosity cabinet, or organised into studies of particular phenomenon, archives or artefacts such as gothic architecture. Some antiquarians, most notably in Northamptonshire, John Moreton (1672-1726) and John Bridges (1666-1724) collected information on Northamptonshire's parishes, churches, elite families and major monuments and buildings.

Some antiquarians were also part of the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries. Their evangelism was not a prerequisite for their antiquarianism but was fully integrated into the imperative for self and social improvement. Evangelicals were at the heart of the drive to improve outward behaviour as a sign of inward faith in a way that mirrored seventeenth century antiquarians' endeavour to establish the correct way to worship. Abbot Upcher and his wife Charlotte employed Repton at Sheringham in 1814. They were a young evangelical couple who placed a high value on their charitable responsibilities and received Repton's encouragement in the red book for Sheringham. Repton emphasised the important of a 'paternalistic estate with a resident gentleman'.⁸⁷ Repton was motivated by his conservatism and fear of social unrest but their paternalism was rooted in their evangelicalism as well as their class. The appointment of evangelical clergy could accompany the material expression of an evangelical moral imperative as village buildings were improved or replaced. In Laxton, Northamptonshire Lady Carberry employed the Reptons to design and build new cottages and a parsonage at the same

⁸⁷ Finch, J., Entangled Landscapes and the 'Dead Silence'? Humphry Repton, Jane Austen and the Upchers of Sheringham Park, Norfolk, *Landscape Research*, Vol. 39:1, pp. 82-99, (2014), p. 7.

time as her husband was employing them to improve the Hall and designed landscape. (See Figure 7.25).⁸⁸

A series of antiquarian books published by Alexander Hogg in the second half of the eighteenth-century, that were 'wholly derivative of more expensive volumes', nevertheless expanded the readership of antiquities by promising 'self-improvement and edification'.⁸⁹ The much more carefully researched and original *The Beauties of England and Wales* series (1798ff) by John Britton and Edward Brayley was also aimed at broader market than most antiquarian publications before it. Retailing at only 2/6d it sold many more copies. The readership of the series was still dominated by 'the gentry and the prosperous middling sort', but Sweet argues that, by the end of the eighteenth-century antiquarianism was placed 'within that booming genre of 'self-help' literature for the middling sort with aspirations to gentility'.⁹⁰ Antiquarianism which had roots in and continued to support, nationalism, the English church and the power of the ruling elite, also had a partial alliance with the evangelical revival and became a vehicle for self-improvement of an expanding and changing elite.

2.2.2.3 Designed Landscapes

A designed landscape is located within the more extensive landholding of farmed and sometimes mined or quarried land that provided the landowner with much of their income and status. The mid-late eighteenth-century designed landscape frequently merged into the farmed landscape, some of it may have been used for rearing stock and might also contain a distinct area separate from farmed land or grazed parkland. A ha-ha retaining wall allowed stock to graze while protecting the more intensely designed garden, shrubbery or carefully manicured

⁸⁸ McDonagh, B., *Elite Women*, (2018), p. 115. For a detailed account of the working relationship between Humphry Repton and Lady Carberry's husband, George Freke Evans, see Leyland M., *Patronage and the Architectural Profession: The Country House in Nineteenth-Century Northamptonshire*, unpublished PhD thesis, Leicester University, (2016), pp. 121-137

⁸⁹ Sweet, R., *Antiquaries*, (2004), p. 323.

⁹⁰ Sweet, R., *Antiquaries*, (2004), p. 324, 266.

lawn it contained, although occasionally even this area was grazed.⁹¹ This 'polite landscape' was the location of displays of taste and wealth, designed for the enjoyment of the family and status affirming visits by other gentry and was specifically designed for this purpose.

From the mid-eighteenth century the most fashionable designed landscapes created the illusion of a natural landscape, perhaps punctuated by a series of scenes, viewpoints or resting places. In the second half of the eighteenth-century aspiring landscape gardeners were often also architects and, along-side 'natural' landscape forms such as ponds, islands, slopes and plantations, shrubberies and flower beds and routes such as walks and approaches, dams, lodges, bridges, boathouses, and greenhouses were designed.⁹² In the Introduction to his *Observations on Modern Gardening*, published in 1770, Whatley wrote that 'Nature, always simple, employs but four materials in the composition of her scenes, *ground, wood, water, and rocks*. The cultivation of nature has introduced a fifth species, the *buildings* required for the accommodation of men [*sic*].'⁹³

The designed landscapes of this thesis are moderate in size. The great parklands of Brownian landscapes criticised by Humphry Repton in 1806 as 'enlarged beyond all reasonable bounds of prudence or economy' were beyond the means of most gentry who benefitted from Repton's dislike of the *ferme ornée* and his, perhaps retrospective, justification of taste in which 'the necessity of contracting that portion of an estate in which beauty, rather than profit, is to be considered'.⁹⁴ The emergence of picturesque landscapes, a material expression of

⁹¹ Brown, D., & Williamson, T., *Lancelot Brown*, (2016), p. 73; 103 Williamson, T., *Polite Landscapes*, (1995), pp. 107; 121-123.

⁹² See Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2010), pp. 72-105 on Woods' structures.

⁹³ Symes, M., *Observations on Modern Gardening by Thomas Whatley: An Eighteenth-Century Study of the English Landscape Garden*, (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2016), p. 31.

⁹⁴ Repton, H., *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening*, (London 1806), p. 9. Jacques observes that Repton had relatively few large commissions after 1804, a situation that Repton attributed to war with France. Jacques, D., *Georgian Gardens: The Reign on Nature*, (London, Batsford, 1983), p. 170.

changing taste in poetry, literature and art, was of benefit to, and may have been partly encouraged by, the smaller budgets and landholdings of the gentry. These smaller landscapes represent a changing market for landscape designers which Repton, the leading landscape gardener of his time, exploited.⁹⁵ His reputation has been restored in the twentieth century from a period of almost total neglect by Hussey, Stroud, and the first exhibition of his life and work at the University of East Anglia in 1982.⁹⁶ A trio of books written over the last twenty or so years inform discussion on Repton from the distinctive perspectives of cultural geography, art history and landscape history.⁹⁷

However, not all designed landscapes improved before 1790 were on the scale of aristocratic estates. Some of Brown's landscape designs were, or at least included, smaller acreages of shrubbery walks that were similar in form, if not in concept, to circuit walk landscapes such as William Shenstone's landscape at The Leasowes.⁹⁸ Evidence is growing of landscapes designed by 'the capability men', that is designers trained by, or designing in the style of Brown.⁹⁹ This thesis will discuss one site in Staffordshire with two surviving designs a generation apart; one by William Emes, one of Brown's foremen, and John Webb, one of Emes' foremen. Between these two designs Webb designed a landscape for Thomas Thornton at Brockhall in

⁹⁵ This market had been exploited before Repton's decision to become a landscape gardener. Designers such as William Emes, Thomas Wright, Richard Woods were providing designs for smaller, gentry landscapes in the decades prior to 1790.

⁹⁶ Hussey, C., *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, (London, G. F. Puttnam's Sons, 1927); Stroud, D., *Humphry Repton*, (London, Country Life, 1962); Carter, G., Goode, P. & Laurie, K., *Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardener: 1752-1818*, (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, 1983).

⁹⁷ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999); Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste*, (2007); Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton*, (2020).

⁹⁸ On The Leasowes see Gallagher, C., *The Leasowes: A History of the Landscape, Garden History*, Vol 24:2, (1996), pp. 201-220 and Symes, M., & Haynes, S., *Enville, Hagley, The Leasowes: Three Great Eighteenth Century Gardens*, (Bristol, Redcliffe, 2010), pp. 137-189. For Brown's smaller scale shrubbery walks see for example, the plan of the pre-1788 circuit shrubbery at Sion Hill, Middlesex in M. Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden: English Pleasure Grounds 1720-1800*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 148 and Harris, J., Le Rouge's Sion Hill: A garden by Brown, *The London Gardener*, Vol. 5, (1990-2000), pp. 24-27.

⁹⁹ See Brown, D & Williamson, T., *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men*, (2016).

Northamptonshire. There were landscapes being designed for the gentry through the mid- to late- eighteenth century. It should be noted that not all designers of this period were 'capability men' as Cowell has demonstrated.¹⁰⁰

Designed landscapes were not however, exclusively for the rural elite. A growing number of the elite who desired fashionable designed landscapes were 'those whose wealth stemmed at least as much from active investment in colonial enterprises, industry and commerce. Moreover, many of those who acquired rural estates in this period were upwardly mobile individuals who had made their money entirely in such activities.'¹⁰¹ While the rural elite had been active in exploiting 'colonial enterprises, industry and commerce' for some time, the interest of the urban elite in rural estates skewed the market towards smaller structures and designed landscapes and towards an uneven spatial distribution of property and land.

The uneven spatial distribution of designed landscapes for the gardens of the urban elite has been recognised for some time and is key to a regional approach to the historical geography of designed landscapes.¹⁰² However, even though the number of smaller designed landscapes grew in the last decades of the eighteenth-century, and even though this is likely to have influenced the forms that improved designed landscapes took, the constituent elements were not unknown in the mid-late eighteenth-century. Flower gardens may have been out of fashion but were still designed and provided inspiration for later designers. Mason's garden at Nuneham Courtenay (1771), was an inspiration for Loudon's 1803 flower garden design at Scone. Loudon, who, having accepted the critique of Repton by Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight who took Gilpin's view of what constituted the

¹⁰⁰ Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2010).

¹⁰¹ Brown, D & Williamson, T., *Brown and the Capability Men*, (2016), p. 164-5.

¹⁰² Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), esp. pp. 207-254; Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes*, (2015) esp. pp. 46-99.

appropriate composition of a picturesque prospect just as Repton's first book *Sketches and Hints*, was being published, planned a flower garden which blended 'scientific order and picturesque composition'.¹⁰³ Repton's design for Courteenhall, Northamptonshire (1791-3) included 'Lady Wake's flower garden'; a 'parterre for flowers in small beds etc.' overlooked by a statue of Flora and a Greenhouse attached to the offices.¹⁰⁴

Repton's commission at Courteenhall was very early in his career; he first visited the estate, which is close to the turnpike road from London to Holyhead, in 1791. This thesis will add to the evidence showing his parkland designs to be rooted in the eighteenth-century.¹⁰⁵ That does not mean that all his parkland designs were derivative or lacking in innovation.¹⁰⁶ However, while Repton, Webb and others (re-)introduced flower gardens very close or adjacent to the Hall Repton went further, placing flower gardens behind screens, using trellis to hide unsightly vistas and creating elaborate complexes of 'garden rooms'.¹⁰⁷ He retained the open picturesque vista from behind the frames of the Hall windows or on the open terrace but gave more attention to the pleasure ground and flower garden with time. Repton's innovative pleasure ground designs 'initiated the nineteenth-century shift towards more complex, formal and geometric gardens'.¹⁰⁸ Repton also benefited from technological improvements which allowed affordable glasshouses to become increasingly commonplace. These structures allowed the gentry to construct an 'inside/outside' room in which, as Tropp points

¹⁰³ Simo, M. L., *Loudon and the Landscape*, (1988), p. 4; p. 56. By 1811 Loudon's plan for Scone including formal avenues as well as picturesque landscape.

¹⁰⁴ Repton, H., *Courtenhall Red Book*, (1793). Phibbs believes this a later design inserted into the red book at a later date; from a comment during a lecture at Ashridge, 2018. However, while the book may well have been rebound, there is no evidence to suggest that Repton revisited Courteenhall or redesigned the 'pleasure ground'.

¹⁰⁵ Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton*, (2020), p. 264.

¹⁰⁶ See for example: Daniels, S., *Landscaping for a Manufacturer: Humphry Repton's commission for Benjamin Gott at Armley in 1809-10*, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 7:4, (1981), pp. 379-396.

¹⁰⁷ See Repton, H., *An Enquiry*, (1806), p. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton*, (2020), p. 264. Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 181-183.

out, tender or overwintering flowering plants could be grown but the 'display [of plants] and social enjoyment were paramount.'¹⁰⁹

Repton's use of roses in small spaces serves as an illustration of the role he had in enabling designs to be adapted to the smaller landscapes not only of the landed gentry, but also the urban elite as they moved to extra-urban villas with modest acreages. In *Observations* Repton wrote,

'But at VALLEY FIELD, where the flower garden is in front of a long wall, the attempt to make the scene natural would be affected; and therefore as two great sources of interest in a place are *variety* and *contrast*, the only means by which these can be introduced, are in this flower garden, which, as a separate object, becomes a sort of episode to the general magnificent scenery.' [his capitalisation and italics].¹¹⁰

The flower garden at Valleyfield was a distinct and separate part of a larger design and Repton thought all flower gardens, except those 'annexed to the house', should be hidden from view.¹¹¹

Repton's own garden at Hare House was not only 'annexed to the house', there being no other land, but also open to view from the High Street in Romford. In the final chapter of *Fragments* Repton explains the appropriation of additional land and the view he created from his cottage. He appropriated, by agreement, twenty-five yards of the village green and by placing 'a basket of roses' to hide the butcher's shop 'whilst a hedge of roses and sweet may hide the dirt of the road, without concealing the moving objects which animate the Landscape'.¹¹² He

¹⁰⁹ Tropp, R., 'The most original and interesting part of the design': The attached quadrant conservatory at the dawn of the nineteenth century, *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, Vol 41:3 (2021), p. 237. See Chapter 7.

¹¹⁰ Repton, H., *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening: including some remarks on Grecian and Gothic Architecture*, (London, 1803), p. 102.

¹¹¹ Repton, H., *Observations*, (1803), p. 101.

¹¹² Repton, H., *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, (London, 1816), p. 235-6.

added a rose garden to his own memorial garden in Aylsham churchyard.¹¹³

Loudon later revised his criticism of Repton acknowledging that he was 'one whose genius and varied accomplishments eventually enabled him to rise to the highest eminence in his profession; or, perhaps, it would be speaking more correctly to say, that his talents enabled him to exalt into an honourable profession, that pursuit which, before his time, had been looked upon but as an occupation for the gardener or nurseryman'.¹¹⁴

His publication of Repton's work in 1840 was a public acknowledgement of his debt. The aim of the style he termed 'Gardenesque' was, like Repton's innovative pleasure ground designs, flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of landscape sizes. Loudon's introduction to his collected works of Repton was an early attempt to provide a biography of his life, revealing in the process, that Repton's background was unusual. Unlike Brown, Woods, Webb, *et al.* or Loudon himself, he did not come from a farming background or serve as an apprentice or foreman to a landscaper. Repton believed himself equipped to advise on 'true taste in *Landscape Gardening*' because Landscape Gardening was a 'Polite Art' and therefore 'is not an accidental effect, operating on the outward senses, but an appeal to the understanding'.¹¹⁵ This suggestion, that his status gave him an expertise that did not need to be earned through experience was not shared by Price or Knight, who disliked the emergence of professional landscapers who had, they felt, neither the learning nor the understanding of a place to recognise the picturesque potential of a site.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Daniels, S., Voices from the Grave, *Garden Museum Journal*, Vol. 36, (Winter 2018-19), pp. 14-16.

¹¹⁴ Loudon, J. C., *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the Late Humphry Repton, Esq.: Being his entire works of these subjects*, (London, 1840), p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Repton, H., *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*, (London, 1796), pp. xv, xvi.

¹¹⁶ This view did not prevent Uvedale Price from advising on landscape design far from his Herefordshire estates. See Watkins, C. & Cowell, B., *Uvedale Price (1747-1829): Decoding the Picturesque*, (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2012), pp 158-162,

It is apparent from Repton's writing and designs that his ideas, particularly in the pleasure ground, evolved through his career. Loudon's *volte face* on Repton's value partly reflects the maturing of a writer but is also an acknowledgement of Repton's innovative pleasure ground thinking. Repton was designing, innovating and, as will be shown, writing at a turning point in landscape design during a period of considerable change in English social, political and economic history.¹¹⁷

The garden of Repton's modest house in Hare Street hid the unsightly and revealed the interesting and raises the question of the relationship between the designed landscape and the village. It is possible that the village might be visible from the Hall or, as is the case in three of the four case studies in this thesis, so close to the Hall that it might be said that the Hall is part of the village. Where the Hall is located close to the village it is also likely to be close to the church and rectory. This established a 'polite quarter' of gentry life and not only made the gentry relatively self-sufficient, particularly where an approach by-passed the village, but also reinforced the dominance of the gentry as any church-going villager had to visit the quarter and be reminded of their status. Even if they were not church goers, the church and Hall were the tallest and largest buildings and were a constant reminder of the social hierarchy. This thesis argues that the proximity of the village required the designer, professional or amateur, to resolve design questions about the relationship between the Hall and village. The owner must know what sort of relationship the household wished to have with the village to know how much of the village is to be hidden from view and, therefore, the extent to which the Hall and the designed landscape is to be revealed to the village. The Hall, church and Rectory, even if recently remodelled or rebuilt, were likely to have been part of the village for many centuries. Improvement, whether in the designed

199. For discussions of the Picturesque Controversy see Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 110-114; Carter, G., Goode, P. & Laurie, K., *Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardener 1752-1818*, (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, 1983), pp. 34-41; Watkins, C. & Cowell, B., *Uvedale Price*, (2012), pp 61-86.
¹¹⁷ Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton*, (2020), p. 264.

landscape or beyond could alter the experience of the village and parish significantly.

The designed landscapes of the gentry were an area of the estate set aside primarily, though not exclusively, for the pleasure of the household and for displaying taste and virtue.¹¹⁸ They were expected to be fashionable but not extravagant, they should provide pleasure but also demonstrate a fitting relationship with the village, parish and travellers.¹¹⁹ In this respect, and in keeping with the way in which all land was to be managed, the designed landscape was a distinctive type of landscape subject to the same expectations and pressures as all estate land.

This thesis concerns four county gentry families improving their landscape in a period of social change. It investigates the forms that designed landscape improvement took at each location, the relationship between the designed landscape improvement, the estate within which it lay and the village community of which it was a part. However, the language employed to describe a designed landscape is complex. A designed landscape can include a 'parkland'. Parklands were originally hunting grounds but had become large expanses of grassland, punctuated by clumps of trees and surrounded by shelter belts that could be perforated to allow for particular views.¹²⁰ The grassland was also grazing land. Repton recognised early in his career, and was content to republish his opinion in 1806, that the scale of a view should be in proportion to the scale of the Hall and that 'the whole should be, or at least *appear to be*, a park'; that is, distinguishable from a farm [his italics].¹²¹

¹¹⁸ The home farm might also be seen as a legitimate part of the display of improvement, patriotism and virtue. See Partida, T., The Early Hunting Landscapes of Northamptonshire, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. 60, (2007), p. 59; Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, (1995), pp. 121-123.

¹¹⁹ This was central to Repton's understanding of 'character'. See Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton*, (2022), pp. 150-162.

¹²⁰ Williamson, *Polite Landscapes*, (1995), pp. 22; 94-99.

¹²¹ Repton, H., *An Enquiry*, (1806), p. 97.

Parklands could be extremely large or very small and there is the possibility of confusion between 'parkland' and 'garden'. The 'parkland' at Barton Hall consisted of a single field of only nineteen acres and is much closer to Whately's 'a field surrounded by a gravel walk is to a degree surrounded by a garden' than the image of an expansive space where a horse or carriage would have been the most appropriate way of experiencing the landscape.¹²² However, while 'garden' might have been appropriate for Barton Hall, had Repton submitted his design in 1770, the clear distinction in landscape design as the century came to an end between the area adjacent to the Hall, and the open grazed landscape beyond would require at least two terms to describe it. 'Pleasure ground' is adequate for this area but there is no suitable term for a modestly sized gentry landscape which included a picturesque view consisting of an open, grazed lawn, a middle ground of interest such as a pond, and a wooded background. For convenience, but aware of the problematic terminology, this thesis will continue to use 'parkland' to describe the designed landscape beyond the pleasure ground. The term 'designed landscape' is used to refer to that area which a landscaper gardener and/or landowner has specifically designed and which is distinct from the farmed, mined or quarried landscape, even if there is some overlap between the primarily profitable and the primarily pleasurable landscapes.

2.3 Methods and Sources

This thesis suggests that understanding an historic designed landscape requires answers to five questions: What form did the landscape take, how does this landscape relate to other neighbouring landscapes, what did it mean to its society, its creators and the people who lived and worked in it, how do our preconceptions affect what we see in this landscape and how should we manage it in the future? The thesis is concerned with the first four and relies on obtaining sufficient archival

¹²² Symes, M., *Observations*, (2016), p. 165.

and other material to be able to reconstruct the improvement of designed landscapes at four gentry owned estates in Central Northamptonshire. First, I selected four case study sites from a range of possible candidates. This required a judgement based on a broad search of material and an estimation of the potential of each site and how each site would fit in the study alongside other sites. The first sub-section describes this process. Then I undertook a focussed search of all the available material and site visits to enable conclusions to be drawn about the proposals for the designed landscape improvement, the extent to which they were implemented, the nature of the household and their possible reasons for and participation in improvement, and the relationship between the designed landscape settlement of which it is a part. The second section describes this process. It is inevitable that historic records are partial and not necessarily aligned with the researcher's questions. The third sub-section assesses the sources used and considers some mitigations for their weaknesses. In the final section, Humphry Repton's written work is treated as a source.

2.3.1 Case Study Selection

There are three criteria for selecting designed landscapes to study. First, a candidate landscape must have a landscape design proposed or built during the period of study. Contemporary maps, such as Eyre & Jefferys' 1791 map and Bryant's 1827 survey, and modern surveys of historic sites provided a starting point for considering which sites had potential for this study.¹²³ They included parkland and Eyre & Jefferys identified some estates and their landowners by name. Digital, card and collection indexes for families, places and other search categories were used to compile a list of maps and documents. These sources were used to establish the status of the landowner, the nature of the designed landscape and the timing and extent of any proposals of any improvement during the time period of the study. Modern resources

¹²³ Eyre & Jefferys' map was published by in a revised version by William Faden in 1791. Andrew Bryant's map of Northamptonshire was based on a new survey completed in 1826.

such as a list of Humphry Repton's commissions or Richard Wright's work were consulted to assess the likelihood of material beyond the county.¹²⁴ Several estates, such as Aynho in the far south-west of the county and then owned by the Cartwright family, were rejected on the basis that, while an extensive family archive exists, there is little or no evidence of any significant work having been carried out between 1770 and 1840.¹²⁵

Second, an archive of sufficient size must have survived if events of the improvement are to be understood. Inevitably, this requirement limited the selection of gentry estates to a combination of family longevity, links to Sir Giles Isham of Lamport Hall (1903-1976) and especially Miss Joan Wake of Courteenhall (1884-1974), both of whom were founding members of the Northamptonshire Record Society and chance.¹²⁶ The suspected involvement of Humphry Repton at Norton Hall and the role that John Webb may have played at Overstone Hall are both largely unknowable as the archives have almost certainly not survived.

Third, some variety between the locations chosen is preferred to avoid an overdependence on one designer, a short time period or families with similar histories or social standing. Courteenhall, where a Repton Red Book (1793) survives, was rejected in favour of Repton sites at Barton Hall (1794), Finedon (1793), and Harlestone Park (1808-11) because the three sites, while relatively close geographically and topographically had different family histories, were in different types of parish, had different pre-existing landscapes, were designed over a longer period of time and experienced different responses from the landowners. The landscape at Boughton Park was rejected because it was built by William Wentworth, 2nd Earl Strafford, who was of higher

¹²⁴ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 255-270; Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2010).

¹²⁵ Humphry Repton spent ten days at Aynho, in 1796/7 but plans that he drew have not survived and the extent of any work proposed and/or carried out is not clear.

¹²⁶ Miss Joan Wake and Sir Giles Isham persuaded many of the landed elite to donate their archives to the Northamptonshire Record Office. Many documents were preserved because of Miss Wakes' energy and foresight.

social status and absent using the site as a break in the journey to and from his main estates at Wentworth Woodhouse, Yorkshire.¹²⁷

The four landscapes chosen form two pairs (Figure 2.1). Barton Hall and Finedon are within nine kms of each other and lie between Wellingborough and Kettering. Both have similar topographies but while Barton Seagrave is a small village where the dominant landowner is not the Lord of the Manor, Finedon is a large village which developed a significant shoe and boot-making industry in the late eighteenth century and, while the Dolben family were Lords of the Manor, they were minority landowners.¹²⁸ Barton Seagrave was enclosed in the seventeenth-century but Finedon was not enclosed until 1805-8.¹²⁹ Barton Seagrave was bought by the Tibbits family in 1791/2 but Finedon Hall had belonged to the Dolben family since the seventeenth century.

Both landscapes were on important turnpike roads and close to notable towns. Barton Seagrave, less than 2kms from Kettering was on the coaching route from Bedford to London and an east-west turnpike from Peterborough to Kettering and Market Harborough. Finedon, only 7 kms from Wellingborough, was also on the north-south turnpike from Bedford to Leicester as well as an east-west turnpike that linked Wellingborough, and therefore Northampton with Peterborough. The location was exploited when it gained importance as a shoe and boot producing village, part of a chain of villages extending eastwards from

¹²⁷ The site has also been researched by a local historian. See Scott, S., *The Follies of Boughton Park Revisited*, (Scott Publications, 2011).

¹²⁸ See Sections 3.3.2 & 4.5.

¹²⁹ Sir William Dolben Bart., MP was asked to support a petition against the enclosure bill for Burton Latimer between Finedon and Kettering. He owned no land there but did own the advowson and was a trustee of a charity in the village. Neeson, J. M., *Commoners: common right, enclosure and social change in common-field England: 1700-1820*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 207-220, Neeson has analysed the enclosure of Burton Latimer and Dolben's objections to it. This informs his involvement in the enclosure of Finedon two years later and also contributes to the picture gained of the Dolben family self-perception as landowners in central Northamptonshire with a responsibility to ensure that there was held land in trust for the poor and a long-term investment made in timber for the future.

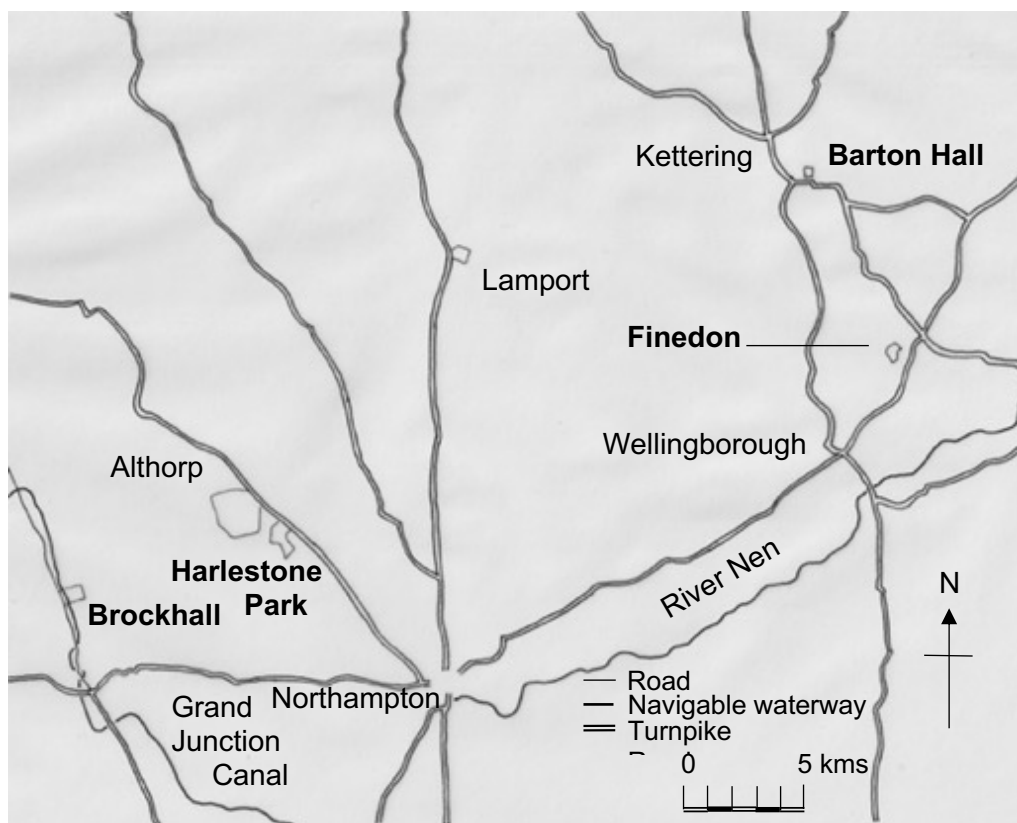


Figure 2.1: Detail: Central Northamptonshire from Cary, J., *A New Map of Northamptonshire, Divided into Hundreds, exhibiting Roads, Rivers, Parks etc.* (1820)

Northampton. The site of the two villages was prominent and regular travellers through central Northamptonshire would have been aware of both villages. They will also have been noticed by long-distance travellers as both were mentioned in Paterson's Road Books.¹³⁰

The archive for the Tibbits family in Barton Seagrave is noticeably less complete than the other three families but the existence of a Repton Red Book and the value of a site close to Finedon outweighed the relatively limited research potential of the site. The parkland at Barton Hall has not been built on and it is possible to identify features on the ground that appear on maps and in the Red Book. It is therefore possible, with permission, to walk the pleasure ground and woodland,

¹³⁰ Paterson, D., *A New and Accurate Description of all the Direct and Principal Cross Roads in England and Wales and Part of the Roads of Scotland*, (London 1811), p. 196.

and to walk the parkland which is crossed by a public footpath. Finedon Hall is private property, access to its grounds is not permitted and part of the designed landscape has been built on. However, some of the landscape is accessible and while few features of the late eighteenth-century landscape remain, the pond bed and dam can still be identified. The parish Church and churchyard give a good view of the eastern part of the designed landscape and a householder who now owns this lawn granted access to it so that a close inspection could be made.

Further west and to the north-west of Northampton, Harlestone and Brockhall are also within a few kilometres of each other. Brockhall was a very small and almost entirely closed village which had been in the Thornton family's possession since 1625, but Harlestone was a larger, much less isolated village and only fully in the ownership of the Andrew family from 1750.¹³¹ Harlestone Park is now leased by Northampton Golf Club but permission was granted to walk over part of what remains of the landscape and to view the pond and dam/bridge. There is no evidence of the Hall, pleasure ground or kitchen garden. The Hall was demolished in 1940. Access to Brockhall, which is in private hands, is not permitted. There have been no public footpaths across the land since Thomas Reeve Thornton redirected them in 1804. Fortunately, the Brockhall archive is the richest and the lack of physical access to the site is the least problematic. Google Earth allows some insight to the modern remnants of the landscape although the parkland west of the Grand Union Canal has been largely destroyed by the M1 and modern farming practices.

In contrast to Barton Seagrave and Finedon, Harlestone was on a turnpike road from Northampton to Dunchurch but this was primarily of local importance. Brockhall was not on a turnpike road and the quality of Watling Street, which was also a drove road, was very poor. The Grand Junction Canal (1805) passed through the designed landscape

¹³¹ See Section 3.4.

at Brockhall but had little impact on the village. In contrast to the eastern pair of sites, Brockhall and Harlestone villages were, with the exception of the driving of livestock to Smithfield market in London, more local settlements. The passers-by, and the inhabitants who travelled were moving primarily to markets or between Northampton and local villages. It will be shown that Barton Seagrave was a village that people passed through, Finedon became a centre for finishing boots and shoes that were sent to London, Harlestone saw local traffic in the newer part of the village to the east but was an agricultural village to the west. Brockhall was a small, isolated, pastoral village.

The four landowners occupied subtly different positions within Northamptonshire gentry society. Sir William Dolben MP (Finedon) had a national profile. Robert Andrew (Harlestone Park) was a leading figure in his hundred and in the local civil society and was likely to have been a familiar figure across much of the county. Thomas Reeve Thornton (Brockhall) participated in gentry social life but was not a major part of social life and did not often appear in reports of local charities or other activities in the *Northampton Mercury*. When Charles Tibbits acquired Barton Seagrave he was an aspiring county gentleman with a minor landholding on the western county boundary and a family background in banking.¹³²

Inevitably, the detail of the description varies at each location as the archive is silent on some aspects of residents' lives, most notably the role that women played in decision making, those employed to carry out work and the reasons for many of the decisions made. Such gaps are common-place and conclusions may be dependent on the assumptions that the situation in central Northamptonshire is analogous to other locations where the archive is richer.

¹³² Peacock's *Polite Repository*, (London, 1796), BM, CIB 54436; Salzman, L. F. ed., *The Victoria County History of the Counties of England: Warwick*, Vol XI, (London, Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 270-271.

The selection of sites with similar topographies was deliberate. The lack of variation between the four sites means that any variation in the designed landscape is likely primarily to be a result of human factors. The constraints imposed by soil type, and to a lesser extent the shape of the land, are removed but constraints imposed by land ownership, wealth, individual preference, the willingness to take risks, the desires of the household, the imagination of the designer and the spatial and economic relationship with the settlement are given greater prominence. This thesis, which has a very focused study area accepts the insights of the regional approach but asks questions at a more detailed level.

2.3.2 Methodology

This thesis is concerned with the elite, with particular designed landscapes and their forms, the households that commissioned them, and the designers that designed them, the parishes of which they were a part and with other designed landscapes that were proposed at a same time. The archival record, partial and skewed as it is towards the powerful, is well suited to establishing an understanding of designed landscapes. Using archival records and observations in the field, I have established a timeline of events, decisions, engagements with designers and family interactions that informs the creation of the designed landscape at each of the four sites chosen for study. I have used the same evidence to speculate about attitudes and opinions held by the elite on designed landscapes and their interactions with their parishes.

Record Offices contain large numbers of material records that are listed digitally and on paper or card indexes. Digital records are not yet sufficient for research as they cannot be relied upon to be a complete record of the archive of a place, person or event. Record Offices also contain knowledge professionals, volunteers and researchers. At Staffordshire Record Office the archivist put me in touch with a volunteer recording some letters by John Webb. At Northamptonshire

Record Office, a chance conversation over coffee led to contact with Finedon Historical Society with whom I walked the site, discussed Sir William and John English Dolben and the 'swing' riot of 1830. Close reading of a document is essential as a short passage in a much longer text may reveal a key find. A long letter from Sir William Dolben MP to his son John English largely concerning prospects for an abolitionist Act of Parliament in the mid 1780s, includes a paragraph showing Sir William's interest in the new pond at Finedon Hall.¹³³

Digitalization has revolutionised some archival research. Digital newspaper archives enable large numbers of titles to be searched simultaneously for particular names, places and key words.¹³⁴ This was simply impossible before the digitisation of newspapers and is a significant development in the ability to access information about the interaction of people (primarily men of status or rank), places, societies, charities, property and the law. It has brought a much clearer picture of the participation of some gentry in civil society. However, any newspaper is likely to choose to print material within the cultural standards of its time and consequently, almost all women, people of colour and people of low net status or worth unless selling property, bankrupt or the victims or perpetrators of crime, are, at best, under-represented.¹³⁵

Revealing the place of people largely excluded from the written histories requires different methodologies. While reconstructing the likely improvement at a site I have also inferred or speculated on the participation in improvement of other members of the household. The women of a household, perhaps the drivers of designed landscaped improvement, may only occasionally feature in a written archive or they may have been excluded completely. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to

¹³³ Sir William Dolben to John English Dolben, 3 July 1789; NRO D(F) 44.

¹³⁴ The British Library Resource www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk was used.

¹³⁵ Mussell, J., *Doing and Making: history as digital practice*, pp. 79-94, in Weller, T., *History in the Digital Age*, (Abington, Routledge, 2013), pp. 82-85.

infer from an understanding of the individuals concerned that women are very likely to have played a major role in the design, management and use of an improved landscape.¹³⁶

In this thesis I have sought to substantiate conclusions that I have drawn from the archival material, from field research and from inferences, speculations and imaginary perceptions and geography. The timeline of improvement, the personalities involved, the decisions made and the actions taken have been combined to reveal a more or less improved landscape from which conclusions can be made that are internal to the designed landscape, combine the landscape with social and spatial impacts beyond its boundary or are primarily external to the landscape. I have also researched the village and parish within which each designed landscape was located. The research reveals the nature of the village, its morphology, employment structure and the relationship between individuals in the parish and the landowner who may also be the Lord of the Manor.

2.3.3 Sources

2.3.3.1 In the Field

Visiting the locations in this study was a key part of this research although three difficulties were encountered. First, access has not been permitted to part or all of three sites. Second, parts of two sites have been built on and any physical record has been lost. Third, the views of or from the designed landscape have altered. Even where the viewpoint is identical, trees have grown, livestock are no longer present, approach routes are absent or altered.

This study has not undertaken archaeological surveys and, while LIDAR revealed some hidden features, the surface features can be misleading.

¹³⁶ See the discussion in McDonagh, B., Women, enclosure and estate improvement, *Rural History*, (2009), pp. 143-162 and Hunt, A., & Everson, P., Sublime Horror: Industry and Designed Landscape in Miss Wakefield's Garden at Basingill, Cumbria, *Garden History*, Vol. 32:1 (2004), pp. 68-86.

In every case the functions of most of the features in the designed landscape have changed. Footpaths and approaches may not have been maintained, planting, especially flowering plant and some shrubs, have disappeared, some structures have fallen into disrepair or been used for 'spare parts' and water courses may have been redirected or altered. It is possible, in some circumstances, particularly at Brockhall, to mitigate against the lack of access. Using digital resources such as Google Earth that give a modern view of the landscape, it is possible to 'see' the landscape. The aerial view provided by Google Earth can reveal evidence that might be hidden or difficult to identify on the ground. Modern digital tools such as Google Earth or LIDAR are compensations for the inaccessibility of historic sites but the ability to see the topography, the structures of the designed landscape and to walk in the 'polite quarter' and the rest of the village has been an essential part of creating an imaginary mental image of the landscape in this thesis.¹³⁷

Seeing a view 'on the ground' can alter a perception of a landscape only previously read from a map drawn by a surveyor or landscaper. The altered perception may then reshape an understanding of a designed landscape by offering new answers to questions seeking an explanation for decisions of actions made more than two centuries ago. Lorimer writes that, in the process of researching historical geographies 'Activities take shape on the hoof, are improvised according to circumstance, conditions underfoot and things to hand.'¹³⁸ Being confronted by a 12' stone wall in Brockhall was a stark reminder of the reality of exclusion in the designed landscape. These unexpected discoveries can alter the perception of events, push research in a new

¹³⁷ Williamson, T., Landscape: the Configured Space, pp. 136-154, in Barber, S., & Peniston-Bird, C., *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, (New York, Routledge, 2009), p. 137-8.

¹³⁸ Lorimer, H., Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork, pp. 248-273 in Delyser, D., Herbert, S., Aitken, S., Crang, M., & McDowell, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, (London, Sage, 2010), p. 256.

direction, offer revised explanations for decisions or a clearer understanding of the self-perception of individuals.

2.3.3.2 Documents

This thesis relies on obtaining a significant amount of archival detail to make a reconstruction of events possible. Using these resources raises questions about their reliability, the extent to which it is possible to reconstruct the historical geography of a landscape and how far it is possible to access the detail of what occurred at a particular site accurately.¹³⁹ In this section the sources used to reconstruct the designed landscape history at the four sites are described.

In the eighteenth-century maps were produced for sale by entrepreneurial surveyors, publishers or retailers.¹⁴⁰ Three county maps of Northamptonshire are of particular use for this thesis: Thomas Eyre and Thomas Jefferys (1791), John Cary (1809-11) and Andrew Bryant (1827).¹⁴¹ These maps also reflect a growing utilitarianism through time and a widening of the market for which they were produced. Eyre and Jefferys map was reviewed by the senior gentleman in each hundred in the county and selected estate owners are named.¹⁴² This map, like its Cary and Bryant successors can be used by travellers within and through the county as roads are depicted with care and, in Cary and Bryant, colour.¹⁴³ Prominence is also given to parklands revealing the location and scale of designed landscapes for owners, visitors and travellers alike. It is clear that county society has a hierarchical social structure which is represented on paper or cloth. The maps are

¹³⁹ Wishart, D., The Selectivity of Historical Representation, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 23:2, (1997), p. 114.

¹⁴⁰ Pedley, M., *The Map Trade in the Late Eighteenth Century: Letters to the London map sellers Jefferys & Faden*, (Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2000).

¹⁴¹ See Whitaker, H., *A Descriptive List of the Printed Maps of Northamptonshire: 1576-1900*, (Northampton, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1948).

¹⁴² Pedley, M., *The Map Trade*, (2000), pp. 3, 9.

¹⁴³ Delano-Smith, C. & Kain, R. J. P., *English Maps: a history*, (London, British Library, (1999), p. 175.

examples of a hybrid, interim style of cartography which reflects the gradual move to a more ordered, systematic culture.¹⁴⁴

The first Ordnance Surveyor's drawings for Northamptonshire were produced in 1817.¹⁴⁵ For the first time there was a centrally controlled attempt to produce maps with standardised information, both in terms of the landscape features that were to be recorded and emphasised and symbols that were to be used to represent them. The triangulation methodology adopted to measure distance and area also gave, for the first time, an accurate and universal system for establishing the topographical basis on which landscape features could be represented. The Ordnance Surveyor's Drawings for Northamptonshire were selective in their choice of which estate and parkland features to depict and the detail with which they are depicted.¹⁴⁶ When the Ordnance Survey maps for Northamptonshire were published in London in 1835, the control the elite could exert through their patronage of map-making, had been dramatically reduced.¹⁴⁷

Estate maps were produced by a surveyor for a landowner to serve the interests of a landowner. They were early attempts to measure land owned accurately enabling a better estimate of the rental potential of land. They often included coats of arms and were symbolic statements of the right to belong to the landed elite.¹⁴⁸ An estate book offers a more utilitarian presentation of land belonging to the estate. The maps in an 1842 Barton Seagrave estate book give clear information about rivers, streams and woodland but there is no information that was deemed extraneous to the efficient running of the estate (Figure 5.18). There is

¹⁴⁴ See Edney, M. H., 'Reconsidering Enlightenment Geography and Map Making: Reconnaissance, Mapping, Archive', pp. 165-198 in Livingstone, D. N., & Withers, C. W. J., eds., *Geography and Enlightenment*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1999).

¹⁴⁵ For a summary of the Ordnance Survey's nineteenth-century project to map Britain see Delano-Smith, C. & Kain, R. J. P., *English Maps*, (1999), pp. 216-224.

¹⁴⁶ Bishop, W., *Ornamental Lakes: Their Origins and Evolution in English Landscapes*, (London, Routledge, 2021), p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ Johnson, M., *Ideas of Landscape*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 2007), p. 85.

¹⁴⁸ Delano-Smith, C. & Kain, R. J. P., *English Maps*, (1999), p. 122.

therefore no detail about planting in the parkland and this illustrates the potential disconnect between the intentionality of the map maker and the questions that interest the researcher.

Tithe maps, produced after the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 and its 1837 amendment, usually depict field boundaries, water courses, roads and paths, some buildings and woodland although the level of detail varies between maps. Representations of hedges and fences and types of land use are less common.¹⁴⁹ The accompanying book details who owned and rented individual fields with the field names and the use to which each field was put. The standard of tithe maps varied; some were based on a pre-existing parish or estate map.¹⁵⁰ However, Kain and Prince argue that, despite the potential for inaccuracies in a tithe map and provided the researcher is aware of their limitations then 'As sources for reconstructing the salient feature of mid-nineteenth century landscapes they pass all but the most stringent tests with considerable credit, if not flying colours'.¹⁵¹

The information contained in enclosure maps varies significantly. Delano-Smith and Kain argue that

'... enclosure maps parallel the broader cartographical trend in England for cadastral maps to become increasingly utilitarian in appearance as the large-scale map became accepted as an axiomatic adjunct to enlightened land management'.¹⁵²

However, even the versions that include information about the field system being replaced, are designed to show who will own what land and where the field boundaries are to be constructed. It was in the interests of the Commissioners and landowners to employ surveyors who would produce accurate maps. Consequently, while the information presented served a purpose that may not be the same as the

¹⁴⁹ Kain, R. J. P., & Prince, H. C., *The Tithe Surveys of England and Wales*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 88.

¹⁵⁰ Kain, R. J. P., & Prince, H. C., *Tithe Surveys*, (1985), pp. 81-86.

¹⁵¹ Kain, R. J. P., & Prince, H. C., *Tithe Surveys*, (1985), pp. 120-1.

¹⁵² Delano-Smith, C. & Kain, R. J. P., *English Maps*, (1999), p. 132.

researcher's, the features that the maps show can be deemed to be reliable. These maps are an invaluable part of the researcher's evidence for change in the (designed) landscape and/or the relationship between the designed landscape and the parish and wider area. Maps provide very little information about the people who lived in the parish.¹⁵³ Buildings, fence lines, roads, footpaths and watercourses are usually shown but there is no information that helps us to understand who lived where or what they did. For this, the census returns from 1801 provide information about population and employment that, if required, can be used in conjunction with map data to estimate land use and the spatial and social structure of a parish and a settlement. Earlier records are available. Parish registers are a valuable source of information about baptisms, marriages and burials but the details of a household were not recorded consistently. As a result, some records do not record an address or occupation of the people concerned rendering the information less useful.¹⁵⁴ Militia lists offer an inconsistent and partial record of populations which I have used to provide an impression of population and occupation in each of the four parishes in the late 1770s.¹⁵⁵ I have also relied on census data from the 1801, 1831 and 1841 censuses to indicate the population and, in 1831 and 1841, an estimate of employment of each parish. Early census data is also problematic. The three censuses used did not record the same information nor was the information recorded using the same methodology.¹⁵⁶ The first 1801 and 1831 censuses relied on the clergy and overseers of the poor for their administration and produced data that was neither individual nor household specific. The 1831 census broadened the range of employment categories used to describe the

¹⁵³ Kain, R. J. P., & Prince, H. C., *Tithe Surveys*, (1985), p. 256.

¹⁵⁴ Edwards, P., *Rural Life: A Guide to Local Records*, (London, Batsford, 1993), pp. 115-122.

¹⁵⁵ For an introduction to the Northamptonshire Militia lists see Hartley, V. A., ed., *Northamptonshire Militia Lists, 1777*, (Northampton, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1973), pp. ix-xxiv.

¹⁵⁶ For a discussion of the methodologies of the first four census see Higgs, E., *Making Sense of the Census Revisited: Census Records for England and Wales 1801-1901, A Handbook for Historical Researchers*, (London, IHR, 2005), pp. 8-14.

employment of men and some women and children but, like the 1841 census, the recording of employment categories was not consistent.¹⁵⁷

These structural problems make precise descriptions of the age, sex, population and employment of the four parishes impossible. However, this thesis does not require absolute precision to gain an understanding of the social dynamics in each of the villages and parishes where the designed landscapes studied were located. It is not necessary to know, for example, exactly how many artisan shoe-makers and how many boot and shoe makers were employed in the manufacturing process in Finedon, for example, to know that the latter group were a significant category of employees in the village.

Account books can be a rich source of information about what was bought, sold, paid, constructed or demolished, as the account books of James Payne, Thomas Reeve Thornton's steward at Brockhall, will show. Inevitably, there are gaps in the record either because books have not survived or because they record only what was of interest to the estate at the time.¹⁵⁸ Contemporary letters, journals and diaries offer partial glimpses into the lives of the correspondents and writers as they recorded their priorities, preoccupations and perceptions.¹⁵⁹ Eliza Packe's diary, written while resident at Harlestone Park, records who visited and when but not what they did.¹⁶⁰ Viscount Torrington's dismissal of Northamptonshire's scenery in his diary was more to do with the limits that enclosure placed on his riding than his appreciation

¹⁵⁷ Lawton, R., *The Census and Social Structure: An Interpretative Guide to Nineteenth Century Censuses for England and Wales*, (London, Cass, 1978), p. 3. For a summary of the administration of and weaknesses in the censuses of 1841 & 51 see Armstrong, W., A. *The Census Enumerator's Books: A Commentary*, pp. 28-81, in Lawton, R., *The Census and Social Structure*, (1978), pp. 30-39.

¹⁵⁸ Edwards, P., *Farming: Sources for Local Historians*, (London, Batsford, 1991), pp. 33-36.

¹⁵⁹ Donnelly, M., & Norton, C., *Doing History*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2011), pp. 72-74; for a discussion of private letter writing see Dobson, M., Letters, pp. 60-64, in Dobson, M., & Ziemann, Benjamin., Eds., *Reading Primary sources: The Interpretations of texts from the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History*, (Abingdon, Routledge, 2009).

¹⁶⁰ NRO A363

of south Midland topography.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, insights from diaries help to build a picture of who the authors were and what gentry lives were like.¹⁶²

Occasionally correspondence has survived which reveals important issues. An increasingly ill-tempered exchange between Humphry Repton and Lord Carberry at Laxton Hall, Northamptonshire is instructive in the way Repton worked in the years following 1808.¹⁶³ The tone of the letters from Lord Carberry is indicative of the sense of superiority the landed elite felt towards the professionals they engaged. Only two letters have survived from Repton's correspondence with Robert Andrew at Harlestone Park. They reveal a detailed interest in project management and a harmonious working relationship.¹⁶⁴ A variety of images of the landscape have survived ranging from the utilitarian to the sketches and engravings produced by amateurs, and also those by professionals following a commission or used as a marketing device.¹⁶⁵ These images are selective. The professional needed to flatter his employer, to ensure that he and his estate, Hall or parkland was seen in the best light. An amateur might lack the skills to draw as well as the professional but they will focus on details that matter to them.¹⁶⁶ John English's eldest surviving daughter, Juliana (Julia), was a capable amateur sketcher as indicated by a notebook of her sketches of the landscape of Finedon Hall (See Figure 4.8). Her sketchbook is consistent with a newer style of drawing manual that followed new pedagogical methods introduced in the eighteenth

¹⁶¹ McDonagh, B. & Daniels, S., Enclosure stories, *cultural geographies*, Vol. 19:1 (2012), p. 111.

¹⁶² McDonagh, B. & Daniels, S., Enclosure stories, (2012), p. 111.

¹⁶³ NRO Freke, Bundle 1-11. See also Leyland, M., *Patronage and the Architectural Profession*, (2016), p. 121-129.

¹⁶⁴ NRO HIL 2098/1 & NRO HIL 2100/7. I am grateful to Jenny Burt of Northamptonshire Gardens Trust who alerted me to the existence of these two letters.

¹⁶⁵ Three Repton watercolours (NRO P/1280, P/1281 & P/1282) which are substitutes for Red Book drawings for Harlestone Park were produced to encourage Robert Andrew to commission more work from Repton.

¹⁶⁶ See Piana, P., Balzaretto, Moreno, D & Watkins, C., 'Topographical art and landscape history: Elizabeth Fanshawe (1779-1856) in early nineteenth-century Liguria', *Landscape History*, Vol. 33:2 (2012), p. 79.

century. Popular drawing manuals emerged from about 1800 and were widely used to teach drawing to amateurs. Amateurs were taught to draw simple landscape subjects in straightforward compositions in pencil before progressing to more complex landscapes with light and shade and then to add tints and watercolours.¹⁶⁷ Julia Dolben's sketches, produced in 1815, are in a style Bermingham describes as the 'by-now-outmoded aesthetic of the picturesque', although this may have more to do with the landscape at Finedon than her style.¹⁶⁸ Bermingham argues that '... in its infantilization of the amateur, as a beginner or young person, the progressive method worked to keep the amateur in his [sic] place'.¹⁶⁹ This impact was all the greater on amateur women artists as their drawing and painting was seen as a non-commercial leisure and therefore domestic, activity. Being neither a commodity, except in so far as it mediated a young woman's refinement and therefore suitability as a wife, nor the work of a professional, amateur drawing and painting was an ideal, and safe, pastime for an elite woman.¹⁷⁰

I have been able to draw on a wide variety of sources which include map and plan evidence from county maps, estate surveys, estate and tithe maps, John Webb's plan for 'some alterations' at Brockhall and written material in correspondence, diaries, account books, estate and tithe books, sales particulars, wills, newspapers and Humphry Repton's publications and red books, and images from his red books and publications, Peacock's *Polite Repository*, published collections of engravings, professional and amateur drawings and sketches, photographs and nineteenth-century postcards. While each source needs to be treated with care when considered in isolation, together they have enabled me to corroborate, or contradict, evidence and construct a reliable account of improvement at each location.

¹⁶⁷ Bermingham, A., *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art*, (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 165-181.

¹⁶⁸ Bermingham, A., *Learning to Draw*, (2000), p. 173.

¹⁶⁹ Bermingham, A., *Learning to Draw*, (2000), p. 174.

¹⁷⁰ Bermingham, A., *Learning to Draw*, (2000), p. 180.

2.3.3.3 Humphry Repton

Three of the four landscapes studies in this thesis were the subject of design proposals submitted by Humphry Repton. He was a prolific writer and capable artist and his multiple red books, published works and surviving correspondence are the greatest single body of work by a landscape designer of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁷¹ Repton codified landscape gardening/design and, in the process, provided a commentary on the evolution of the form of designed landscapes and the society that commissioned them. In this section the structure and purpose of his red books is described and his four books on landscape gardening written between 1796 and 1816 are used to illustrate his perception of the changing social structure of the elite who commissioned his designs.

Repton reported his opinion of a landowner's landscape's potential using red books. Usually bound in red leather, the books generally contained text illustrating the alterations he proposed, some reasoning for them, a plan of them, and one or more illustrations which usually included a 'before' and 'after' image utilising his 'slide' innovation.¹⁷² The 'slide' technique allowed landowners to see the transformation Repton proposed revealed instantly on the page in front of them. The red books functioned in several ways as a sales tool, a record of discussions with the landowner, a starting point for working drawings or a status symbol for owners who did not intend to improve.¹⁷³ They were not intended to be detailed working plans for outdoor use implementation of a design.¹⁷⁴ Inevitably, the red books, despite their standardised structure, varied considerably in length and complexity between locations. In general, longer and more generously illustrated

¹⁷¹ Loudon, J. C., *Landscape Gardening*, (1840), p. 6; Stroud, D., *Humphry Repton*, (1962), pp. 11-26; Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton*, (2020), pp. 59-63. This was not the limit of Repton's published work.

¹⁷² See Repton's description of this device in Repton, H., *Sketches and Hints*, (1796), p. xv.

¹⁷³ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 10-11.

¹⁷⁴ Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste*, (2007), p. 79; Williamson, T., *Humphry Repton*, (2022), pp. 126-129.

documents were reserved for larger estates with therefore, wealthier and higher status owners. There was a general trend through his career towards producing fewer red books, as the format was restricted to the larger projects with landowners whose status was high, such as the Duke of Bedford at Woburn (1805) or were of particular interest to him such as the Upchers at Sheringham Hall.¹⁷⁵ Smaller projects, and landowners of lower status were given a report.¹⁷⁶ In the twentieth century red books have become family heirlooms or arts of work even when separated from the landscapes for which they were prepared.¹⁷⁷

The red books were a summary of and justification for Repton's plan for the site. In the introduction to the red book for Courteenhall (March 1793) he wrote,

It may be observed, that a considerable time has elapsed between the date of my first visit at Courteen hall, and the completion of this small volume; but having from time to time had the opportunity of marking out much of the detail on the spot, the apparent delay has I trust been of no consequence; particularly as these kind of books serve less as a guide for the execution; than as a record of improvement, and a justification of the principles on which they are conducted.¹⁷⁸

These opening comments raise the possibility that Repton visited sites where he was consulted on more than one occasion and that the date in the red book indicates the first or primary visit. It is also possible that, in the hectic days of 1792-4 when his business was thriving, he produced red books for the smaller estates of less affluent gentry after a single visit where he did not anticipate returning to supervise the implementation of his plan. It is likely that he hoped his time would be

¹⁷⁵ Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste*, (2007), p. 65; See Davison, K., *Woburn Abbey*, (2016), pp. 134-145; Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 170-180 on Woburn Abbey; *The Gardens of Ashridge by Humphry Repton*, (Ashridge, Berkhamstead, Ashridge Executive Education, HULT, 2018); Daniels, S. & Veale, L., 'Revealing Repton: Bringing Landscape to Life at Sheringham Park', *Landscape Research*, Vol. 40:1, (2015), pp. 5-22.

¹⁷⁶ As at Harlestone Park (1808).

¹⁷⁷ Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste*, (2007), pp. 65-66.

¹⁷⁸ Repton, H., *Courteenhall Red Book*, p. 1.

spent with the aristocracy on large projects such as Welbeck Abbey and may not have been disappointed when, for example, Charles Tibbits at Barton Hall, did not ask him to return.¹⁷⁹ If he was complacent at this stage in his career he was later 'dismayed by the way so many circumstances had conspired to compromise his designs on the ground'.¹⁸⁰ One of those circumstances was his own method of working.

The function of the red books, and in Harlestone Park's case, several watercolours, has an impact on the way they should be seen and used. It was in Repton's interests to maximise the difference between the 'before' and 'after' images of the landowner's hall and designed landscape. He could not afford to deride the existing view(s) too much as this would imply too great a criticism of either the landowner or their predecessor. However, by manipulating views and by introducing the symbols of, in the case of the gentry landowners of this thesis, gentry ideology and self-identity, such as the church, oak trees or deer, Repton was able to flatter the landowner who could imagine himself or herself a modern, tasteful gentleman taking his rightful place, owning and managing the land and responsible for the material and moral virtue of the community.

The codification of late eighteenth-century landscape gardening was partly a result of Repton's desire to ensure a design was consistent with the status of his client. Red books can be seen as the way in which his plans demonstrated taste and scale fitting for the status of the landowner while maintaining a balance between beauty and productivity. Rogger notes that Repton was familiar with Whately's visual language in his *Observations*, the sixth edition of which was printed in 1801, two years before Repton explained his understanding of 'character' by using portraiture as an analogy for the role of the landscape gardener in his own *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening: including some remarks on Grecian*

¹⁷⁹ See Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 154-166.

¹⁸⁰ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 14.

and Gothic Architecture. In the process, Rogger argues, Repton distinguished himself from Brown and went further than Whately by placing 'character' not in the given of the elements of nature but 'also through the landscape gardener's control of the viewer's gaze.'¹⁸¹ The 'character' of a designed landscape was a design principle and a vocabulary of flattery but it was also a process through which the idea of landscape moved from the imagination to a particular material form, first on paper and then in the landscape of a gentry garden.

Repton's four landscape gardening books organised his approach to landscape gardening, primarily by combining extracts from his red books into a coherent whole.¹⁸² The publication of *Sketches and Hints* brought together extracts from fifty-seven red books, three of which were in Northamptonshire: Courteenhall, Finedon and Milton Park, the home of Earl Fitzwilliam near Peterborough. Repton's intention is included in the subtitle to the book: ... *The whole tending to establish fixed principles in the art of laying out ground*. The preamble makes clear the tension that Repton experienced between his belief that he had 'once thought it would be possible to form a complete system of *Landscape Gardening*, classed under certain *general rules*, to which this art is as much subject as *Architecture*, *Music*, or any other of the *polite arts*' [his italics] and his experience which taught him that 'such *rules* do actually exist, yet I have found so much variety in their application' led to his decision to illustrate the rules using worked examples.¹⁸³ The title of the book suggests that, while rules may exist, they cannot be rigidly applied without any regard to the circumstances of the particularities of the site. Consequently, hints, illustrated by sketches, are the most that a landscape gardener should offer.

¹⁸¹ Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste*, (2007), p. 88.

¹⁸² The last book *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816) is the least dependent on red books but still draws heavily on designs from real commissions.

¹⁸³ Repton, H., *Sketches and Hints*, (1796), p. ix.

The first chapter clarifies the circumstances of a site which require the careful application of rules to fit the 'character' of the site and its 'situation'. Here character of a place is the combination of its situations, that is, the characteristics of the physical place and the house, the rank of the owner and the way the property was to be used. The centrality of character and situation, and therefore of the importance of pragmatism in landscape gardening, did not diminish through Repton's career. Far from being a rigid designer who imposed a fixed formula on each landscape, Repton usually applied general principles with imagination. Nevertheless, the focus on the character of the landowner reinforced Repton's perception of the status of the landowner as the foundation of each scheme, reinforcing the improvement as a material statement of the landowner's ideology.

The second book, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* was published in 1803. Again, the sub-title is informative as Repton added 'some remarks on Grecian and Gothic Architecture' and with the intention that 'the whole' would be 'tending to establish fixed principles in the respective arts'. Much of this book echoes *Sketches and Hints*, with some additional scientific observations, most notably on optics. Repton felt the need to defend his profession against the amateur as 'Both taste and understanding require cultivation and improvement'.¹⁸⁴ This was a conservative defence of the hierarchical society which he was beginning to sense was under pressure. He wrote that

In short, that a knowledge of what is good, what is bad, and what is indifferent, whether in actions, in manners, in language, in arts, or science, constitutes the basis of good taste, and marks the distinction between the higher ranks of polished society, and the inferior orders of mankind, whose daily labours allow no leisure for other enjoyments than those of mere sensual, individual, and personal gratification.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Repton, H., *Observations*, (1806), p. 10, (preface).

¹⁸⁵ Repton, H., *Observations*, (1806), p. 11, (preface).

The preface also introduces his son John Adey, an architect and antiquarian, and in affirming the value of Gothic architecture, Repton was indicating the family's growing interest in history, fuelled in part by his 'sense that the nineteenth century inaugurated a new, less venerable, social and scenic order'.¹⁸⁶

Repton had lost money on the publication of *Sketches and Hints* and his income was under increased pressure as the war with France continued so, when in 1805/6 he was asked for a new edition of the book, he produced *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening*. It was a much cheaper production with no illustrations and, selling for 5s, was aimed at a less affluent audience; evidence that his clientele was changing.¹⁸⁷ The sub-title '*to which are added, some Observations on its Theory and Practice, including a Defence of the Art*', indicates not only greater confidence in his ideas but also some evolution in his thinking. Using his recent experience of his grand, multi-outdoor-roomed scheme at Woburn, Repton argues that proximity of the lawn to the Hall obscures the uniqueness of the pleasure ground. He believed it to be 'absurd' to plant flowers and shrubs in a cattle pasture' and that they should be separated in a visible manner by a tasteful fence rather than the hidden fence of the ha-ha. These 'gardens or pleasure grounds near a house may be considered as so many different apartments belonging to its state, its comfort, its pleasure'.¹⁸⁸ This rejection of the 'baldness and nakedness round a house', which had been part of Price and Knight's criticism during the picturesque controversy before the publication of *Sketches and Hints* was part of Repton's recognition of how little separated him and Uvedale Price.¹⁸⁹ The two books contain a regret that elite society is changing and that designed landscapes, at least in the pleasure ground or garden are evolving.

¹⁸⁶ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 135.

¹⁸⁷ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 16.

¹⁸⁸ Repton, H., *An Enquiry*, (1806), pp. 10, 13.

¹⁸⁹ Repton, H., *An Enquiry*, (1806), pp. 157, 171.

An Enquiry was written in 1805 the year in which Knight published *An Analytical Enquiry into Principles of Taste*, when Knight broke with Uvedale Price and the year following the young Loudon's publication of his own *Observations*. Loudon defended Price and Knight and included a polemic against Repton's improvement of Valleyfield in Scotland. Loudon was seeking to establish himself and become known but his books, including a 'pattern-book' *Hints on the Formation of Gardens and Pleasure Grounds* and his own consultancy practice may have damaged Repton's career.¹⁹⁰

Repton's last landscape gardening book *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816) is also drawn from red books and subtitled '*The whole tending to establish fixed principles in the respective arts*' although there are now '*some remarks on Grecian and Gothic Architecture*'. The thirty-six fragments have no particular structure or order to them, echoing Repton's view that the French wars and taxes have undermined traditional attitudes to land and wealth allowing value to eclipse beauty with the consequence that, just as his life is coming to end, so is his profession.

Despite Repton's disappointment and pessimism, he was a pivotal figure in the evolution of mid-nineteenth century landscape design.¹⁹¹ Fragment 4, 'Concerning Cobham', describes his removal of the pasture which had extended to the house and his 1790 plan which had enveloped 'the whole of the premises in plantations, shrubberies, or gardens' and, 25 years later 'have totally changed the character of the place. The house is no longer a huge pile, standing naked on a vast grazing ground: its walls are enriched with roses and jasmines; its apartments are perfumed with odours from flowers surrounding it on every side.'¹⁹² Fragment 5 'on Dates of Buildings' describes a 'Keeper's

¹⁹⁰ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 144.

¹⁹¹ Loudon, J. C., *The Landscape Gardening*, (1840), p. ix, 2,

¹⁹² Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 11-12.

House at Woburn Abbey. It had been the subject of an article in *Archaeologia*, the journal of the Society of Antiquaries in 1810. Repton wrote that he designed a small flower garden for the cottage on the basis of research using antiquarian drawing and paintings, including those in Woburn Abbey, enabling him to use authentic plants.¹⁹³

Humphry Repton was the pre-eminent landscape gardener of the twenty-five years from about 1790. His written work provides evidence of his ideas and practice, an explicit explanation of his plans at particular sites and an insight into his family life. It provides a codification of the principles of landscape design that were common when he was working; principles that, in the process of designing and codifying, he developed and publicised. He was responsive to the particularities of a site and the character of the place and owner but also to new ideas and antiquarian research. He was pessimistic about his profession and the changing state of elite society but provided the next generation with the conceptual tools to accommodate the growing number of smaller designed landscapes in a form that was consistent with the largest landscapes. His conservative social attitudes, revealed in his writing, confirm that however innovatory the pleasure ground designs he produced as his career progressed might have been, he was not in any way seeking to undermine an idea of landscape that connected gentry ideology and the materiality of designed landscapes.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has described the landed gentry, the idea of landscape which they absorbed, its expression in material form and the intersection of the imperative of landscape improvement as expressed in enclosure and designed landscapes. The way the landed gentry saw the landscape was a part of, and a partial justification for, their self-understanding of their place, and the place of everyone else in an

¹⁹³ Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 15.

ordered and virtuous English society. It was their belief that, uniquely, they had the right, and a responsibility, to maintain the conditions for a hierarchically ordered English society so that it would prosper. By displaying manners, good taste and managing a productive and profitable land they sought to provide not only a secure and moral country but also the framework within which the 'lower orders' could themselves prosper through work and virtuous living. Improving land was regarded as a virtuous act that benefitted the nation and enabled 'nature' to be more productive. Creating a designed landscape required, for some, a gentleman's and in some cases a gentlewoman's, eye to see the potential of the land for revealing an appropriate picturesque prospect. More commonly though, landowners either managed the improvement of their parklands and pleasure grounds with the advice of a professional designer or did what they wanted.¹⁹⁴ This gentlemanly culture was under threat from the rise of cash rich but land-poor merchants, businessmen, bankers and lawyers. Although this was not a new phenomenon, as the seventeenth century rise of Robert Cecil shows, the growth in the number of such people was increasing as England's industrial and mercantile economy grew. This placed a new demand for art, including designed landscapes, that questioned assumptions about what was tasteful while gradually becoming accepted by the landed elite.

In the following five chapters the four tasks of understanding the culture of an historic designed landscape are pursued in detail.¹⁹⁵ The four landscapes, the wider geographies of which are described in Chapter Three, are reconstructed in Chapters Four to Seven. Detailed field and archival research reveal, as far as it is possible, the events that affected the landscape within the boundary of the property. Each estate is

¹⁹⁴ See Watkins, C., & Cowell, B., *Uvedale Price*, (2012), p.156-160. Price, who was a respected art connoisseur managed his own landscape improvements and advised some of his friends but also encouraged Lady Beaumont to employ his foreman James Cranston to advise her on landscape improvement. Book such as *Whately's Observations on Modern Gardening* or Repton's four landscape gardening books are, in part, advice to the landed elite who did not wish to employ a professional designer.

¹⁹⁵ See p. 54.

placed in the wider context of the village of which it was a part and the gentry network within which the owner moved. On the foundation of this core physical material, visual and written artistic material the attitudes and motivations of the owners as they managed their social position, estates, designed landscapes and communities are imagined and the relationship between the landowners, their designed landscape improvement, the village community, and wider social and economic changes established.

Chapter 3 Northamptonshire

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a short historical geography of Northamptonshire with particular attention given to the central area on which this thesis focuses. The chapter is in three sections. The first describes Northamptonshire's geology and topography, land use and enclosure history and its location within England. The decline of local piece work in traditional industries is also described. The second section narrows the focus of the chapter and concentrates on central Northamptonshire. This section describes the competitive disadvantage in the production of cloth and lace but a competitive advantage in the production of boot and shoes. In the final section detailed attention is given to the four villages in which the designed gentry landscapes studies are located: Barton Seagrave and Finedon, Brockhall, and Upper and Lower Harlestone.

3.2 Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire is oriented along a south-west – north-east axis and follows the geology that underlies the topography of almost the entire county (Figure 3.1). The county is approximately 110 kilometres long and 40 kilometres wide. The landscape is gentle and the hills to the north-west of the county are rarely above 150-200m. An escarpment in central Northamptonshire of Lias clays over Oolitic limestone and sandstone with outcrops of ironstone or limestone has steep slopes to the north and north-west and a gentle, undulating surface to the south-east. In the north-east the scarps and backslopes are replaced by the flat fenland of the Soke of Peterborough.¹⁹⁶ Britton opens the Northamptonshire volume of his topographical series *The Beauties of*

¹⁹⁶ Steane, J. *The Making of the English Landscape: The Northamptonshire Landscape: Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough*, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), p. 25-30.

Figure 3.1: Northamptonshire's topographical areas and major towns
[from Steane, J., *The Northamptonshire Landscape*, p. 27.]

England and Wales describing the county as 'situated nearly in the centre of England and, from its extended and irregular figure, borders on more than any other shire in the kingdom'.¹⁹⁷ Northamptonshire lies across the English watershed in the South Midlands.¹⁹⁸ No rivers flow into the county but several rise in the county or form county boundaries and reach the sea via the Wash, the Thames and the Severn.¹⁹⁹ The major river, the Nene, flows north-east from its source in the north-west through Northampton to Peterborough and the Wash.²⁰⁰ This hydrological quirk meant that until canals were built in the late eighteenth century all water-based trade in Northamptonshire was from or to the county. None of it was through the county.

Ironstone has been mined since the bronze age and provided employment, the market being primarily local. Further east, limestone was quarried primarily for local building. The soil, though fertile, is clayey and becomes heavier as the land rises to the north. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw up to 50% of the county subject to enclosure by agreement.²⁰¹ Enclosure occurred primarily, but not exclusively, in the parts of the county with the heaviest clay soils that were hard to work and the slowest to warm up in the spring. The land was ideal for pasture and encouraged sheep and cattle farming, primarily for the London market. Several landowning families including the Spencers (Althorp), Ishams (Lamport) and Knightleys (Fawsley), were able to build their wealth and social status through sheep

¹⁹⁷ Britton, J. & Brayley, E. W., *A Topographical and Historical Description of the Country of Northamptonshire*, (London, Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1809), p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Since the medieval period the county has been split. The Soke of Peterborough containing the Cathedral and the ecclesiastical power of the county, has had the right of self-administration and the power to hold its own assizes. It remained technically part of Northamptonshire until 1965.

¹⁹⁹ The historic boundaries of Northamptonshire are used throughout this thesis but the extremities of the county, Peterborough and southwest of Towcester, are largely beyond the area of interest and receive relatively little attention.

²⁰⁰ Locally the River Nene has two variants of its name. Nearer the sea it has been known as the Nene, further inland as the Nen. The boundary between the two variants has been moving inland. This thesis uses the local version for the relevant stretch of water.

²⁰¹ Hoskins, W. G., *The Making of the English Landscape*, (1970), pp. 153-154, 180. This is a broad-brush figure but shows that even Northamptonshire was already heavily enclosed before 1730.

farming.²⁰² Williamson has shown there was a general pattern of increased pasture-land and early modern enclosure from north east to south west in the county.²⁰³ It is now being recognised that the pre-enclosure pattern of settlements in Northamptonshire is complex, affected by the water supply, soil conditions, and the impact of planned or re-planned villages.²⁰⁴

The extent to which the location of settlements, field types and the agricultural products produced was determined by geology and soils is open to question. Foard, Hill and Partida argue that, while the 'physical geography was, until recently, the primary determinant of land use, the administrative and tenurial framework was also critical'. A pattern of settlements established in the late Anglo-Saxon period has remained largely unvaried and patterns of land use evolved within the boundaries of the settlements and landlord land holdings.²⁰⁵ This reveals a complex, dynamic process subject to a variety of factors from the nature of the soil, the decisions of the landowner and social, cultural and economic forces well beyond the boundaries of the parish.²⁰⁶ Sixteenth and seventeenth century enclosure led to the depopulation of some villages and new laws to limit enclosure. By the early eighteenth century about half of Northamptonshire was still unenclosed.²⁰⁷ From the early

²⁰² Finch, M. E., *The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families 1540-1640*, (Northampton, Northampton Record Society, 1956). See also Hoskins, W. G., *The Making of the English Countryside*, (1955), pp. 148-152 and Steane, J. *Northamptonshire*, (1974), pp. 184-190.

²⁰³ See Williamson, T., Open Fields, 'Planning' and the Environment, Rural History 2013, Bern. http://www.ruralhistory2013.org/papers/3.5.2._Williamson.pdf

²⁰⁴ Williamson, T., Open Fields in England, (2018); see also Foard, G., Hill, D. & Partida, T., *Rockingham Forest*, (2005), for an earlier view. See also Hall, D., *The Open Fields of Northamptonshire*, (Northampton, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1995), for a comprehensive summary of enclosure in Northamptonshire parishes.

²⁰⁵ Foard, G., Hill, D. & Partida, T., *Rockingham Forest*, (2005), p. 4.

²⁰⁶ This is a complex and disputed subject which is beyond the scope of this thesis. The picture of local complexity is reinforced in Williamson, T., Liddiard, R. & Partida, T., *Champion*, (2013).

²⁰⁷ Turner suggests 53% of Northamptonshire and almost 21% of the English countryside was enclosed by Parliamentary Act: Turner, M., *English Parliamentary Enclosure: Its Historical Geography and Economic History*, (Folkestone, Dawson, 1980), p. 34, while Tate argues that at 54% Northamptonshire was, by 7.5%, the county most subject to Parliamentary enclosure. Tate, W. E., *Inclosure Movements in Northamptonshire [sic]*, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. 1:2, (1949), pp. 19-33. p. 30.

modern period until the mid-eighteenth century the Northamptonshire countryside was a varied patchwork of enclosed and open fields.

Northamptonshire is familiar as a quintessential 'Champion' county. Spooner argues that Parliamentary enclosure and designed landscapes have a complex relationship but, she writes,

'It is clear, however, that there was a strong relationship between the development of parks and gardens and the enclosure of open fields, as well as a strong visual relationship between the designed 'core' immediately around the house and the wider agricultural landscape'.²⁰⁸

Enclosure presented an opportunity to expand or redevelop parkland. If the relationship between enclosure and the designed landscape is not causal, she argues, then it was at the very least, closely related.²⁰⁹ However, as Spooner and Williamson had previously acknowledged, 'we should not exaggerate its [enclosure's] importance'.²¹⁰ In Northamptonshire, parliamentary enclosure was continuing while landscape parks and gardens were being created but enclosure and the introduction or improvement of a designed landscape were not necessarily contemporaneous.²¹¹ The relocation of Lilford village when the parish was enclosed and the parkland improved is a rare example.²¹²

McDonagh and Daniels show that, in an example of a female landowner, Elizabeth Prowse 'spent 40 years improving the newly-enclosed estate'.²¹³ This implies that the relationship between enclosure and designed landscapes was not one of causality but of convenience. Enclosed landscapes, like open fields, could form the backdrop of 'appropriated' views, provided they met the rules of tasteful, picturesque

²⁰⁸ Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes*, (2015), p. 129-30.

²⁰⁹ Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes*, (2015), p. 113-129.

²¹⁰ Spooner, S. & Williamson, T., *Gardens and the Larger Landscape*, (2013), p. 204.

²¹¹ Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscapes*, p. 131.

²¹² McDonagh, B. & Daniels, S., *Enclosure stories*, (2014), pp. 110.

²¹³ McDonagh, B. & Daniels, S., *Enclosure stories*, (2014), pp. 112.

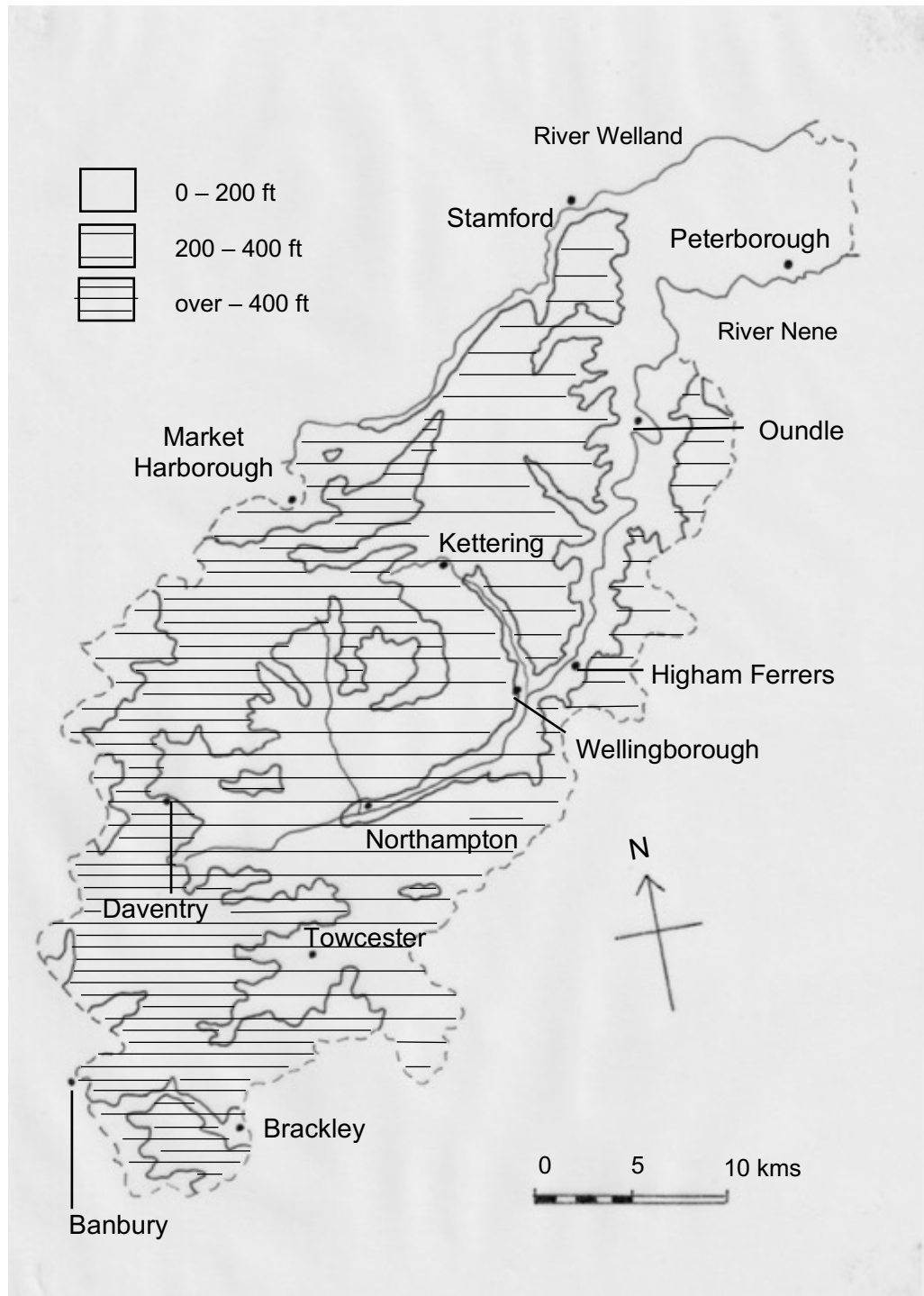


Figure 3.2: Northamptonshire topography and major settlements in 1779

scenery. Humphry Repton opposed including evidence of arable agriculture in views from Halls or designed landscapes attributing Northamptonshire's lack of picturesque scenery to particular agricultural

and silvicultural practices and the lack of improvement rather than the absence of an attractive topography.²¹⁴

The general face of the County of Northampton is certainly not picturesque, few hunting counties indeed are so, but I am convinced that this County owes its want of beauty to the bad habits of lopping trees, and ridging up the ground, more than to the shallow soil or natural shapes of the surface:²¹⁵

With few exceptions, anyone travelling north or south between Banbury in the west and the Wash in the east had to travel through Northamptonshire (Figure 3.2). As Hindle's survey of the medieval road network in England and Wales has shown, Northampton was a key node in the English road system and a meeting point for travellers heading north or south.²¹⁶ Mathew Paris' 1250 map of England placed Northampton on the primary north-south route between St. Albans and Leicester, a mark of Northampton's importance in the medieval era.²¹⁷ The large chases, Salcey and Whittlewood forests in the south and Rockingham forest in the north provided sport; King John had a hunting lodge at Geddington near Kettering.²¹⁸ At about 105 kms from London, Northampton was, by medieval standards, relatively accessible.

The frequent visits by the monarch and his court in the medieval period stimulated trade. Local resources including sheep for wool, cattle for hides and oak trees for timber and fuel led to the growth of tanning, dyeing and weaving for an emerging boot and shoe making industry for the London market and for the military.²¹⁹ Northampton remained an

²¹⁴ Sheringham is an exception to this general rule; see Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pl. 100, p. 95.

²¹⁵ Repton, H., *Courteenhall Red Book*, (1793).

²¹⁶ Hindle, B. P. The Road Network of Medieval England and Wales, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol 2:3, (1976), pp. 209, 213, 219..

²¹⁷ Cockburn, C., The maps of Matthew Paris, 2020, <https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2020/07/the-maps-of-matthew-paris.html>

²¹⁸ Hindle, B. P., The Road Network of Medieval England and Wales, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol 2:3, (1976), p. 209, 213-4.

²¹⁹ Mounfield, P. R., The Footwear Industry of the Midlands: Northamptonshire from Medieval times to 1700, *East Midland Geographer*, Vol. 3:7, No. 23, (1965), pp. 397-407.

important cloth and clothing producer into the eighteenth-century.²²⁰ A devastating fire in 1675 led to the rebuilding of the town which Daniel Defoe described as 'the handsomest and best built town in all this part of England'.²²¹

The county had more than average the number of large aristocratic estates although, in the late eighteenth century, several of these were secondary estates such as Boughton House and Wakefield Lodge, owned by families with primary estates elsewhere.²²² The introduction to the most recent edition of Pevsner's *Northamptonshire* ascribes the survival of the many 'gentleman's houses' in the county to its location. 'The county is far enough from London to avoid developments which would make it less attractive to continue residence and near enough to London to make continued residence possible even in the C21'.²²³ Earlier in the century, Daniel Defoe had ascribed Ipswich's lack of prosperity to 'the neighbourhood of London, which sucks the vitals of trade in this island to itself, is the chief reason of any decay of business in this place'.²²⁴

Road transport had improved considerably by 1770 but travelling to Northamptonshire from London still required at least one night 'on the road'.²²⁵ Counties like Hertfordshire experienced more rapid turnover of property ownership and a growth in demand for villas with only modest amounts of land while further north and west larger provincial towns and emerging industrial centres were able to compete more effectively with London's influence.²²⁶ The consequence of this spatial reality was a relatively stable landed elite population in Northamptonshire through time.

²²⁰ Mounfield, P. R., *The Footwear Industry*, (1965), pp. 438-440.

²²¹ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire*, (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2nd Edn.), p. 430.

²²² Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 120, 532.

²²³ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 1

²²⁴ Defoe, D., *Tour through the Eastern Counties of England, 1722*, (London, Cassell, 1891), no page. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/983/983-h/983-h.htm>

²²⁵ *Passim*, Cole, E., 'A House fit for a Queen: The Plan and Interiors of Theobalds, Hertfordshire', Burghley 500 Symposium (Garden Museum, 19 April 2021).

²²⁶ Stone, L., & Stone, J. C. F., *An Open Elite?*, p. 33-39.

3.3 Central Northamptonshire c. 1770 - c.1840

3.3.1 Transport

Roads in Northamptonshire were notoriously poor. On July 1st 1789 John Byng recorded in his diary that 'All the latter part of June has been November weather; and the roads are as bad as in midwinter:- this has made us inactive, and prevented our venturing into the cross roads of Northamptonshire'.²²⁷ Donaldson approved of the 'good stone bridges' over the vast majority of the rivers and streams and recognised that the big, cross country routes were now turnpike roads.²²⁸ But he also believed that the county's roads were poorly planned describing parish roads as little more than tracks. William Pitt agreed with Donaldson although he suggested that some of the bridges were in a poor condition and several were no more than 'unpleasant, if not dangerous, fords'.²²⁹ He was sympathetic to Northamptonshire's transport plight as he recognised that the county had limited local materials for good road making and repairing. However, quoting a Mr. Knight he reported that grazing parishes do not bother to repair roads, despite the statutory requirement, as long as 'a horse or an ox can get along'.²³⁰

Pitt was writing twenty years after Marshall noted that Northamptonshire roads were often impassable in winter and wagons and coaches were frequently stuck in the mud.²³¹ He acknowledged, like Pitt after him, that the region had deep soils and limited 'hard materials' but believed that there was no excuse for 'The roads of this district [which] had probably remained in a state of almost total neglect, from the days of the Mercians, until some twenty years back; when a spirit of improvement went forth.'²³² Defoe had described the roads from Northampton to

²²⁷ Bruyn Andrews, C., ed., *The Torrington Diaries: Containing the Tours Through England and Wales of the Hon. John Byng (later Fifth Viscount Torrington) between the years 1781 and 1794*, Vol. 2, (London, Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd., 1935), p. 116.

²²⁸ Donaldson, J., *General View*, (1794), p. 48-49.

²²⁹ Pitt, W., *General View*, (1809), p. 231.

²³⁰ Pitt, W., *General View*, (1809), p. 232.

²³¹ Marshall, W., *The Rural Economy*, (1790), p. 40.

²³² Marshall, *Rural Economy*, (1790), pp. 37-41.

[Market] Harborough as 'deep dismal roads, the dirtiest and worst in all that part of the country'.²³³ Seventy-five years later, In *Observations on a Tour in England* (1801), Charles Dibdin noted that

The danger from this abominable road is the prodigious depths of some of its ruts, which might be remedied with very little labour, for the bottom is perfectly sound; ... In the space of eleven miles between Kettering and [Market] Harborough [I] was obliged as were my family and servants to walk five; and lest the carriages should overset, every individual of us were occasionally under the necessity of giving them assistance to keep them upon their wheels; and all this on a turnpike road.²³⁴

As late as 1817, Thomas Reeve Thornton [Thomas Reeve] of Brockhall admitted that the road beyond Banbury was better than the road from Daventry to the Oxfordshire border.²³⁵ The landed elite were sometimes willing to organise and pay for improvements to local roads, turnpiking or repairing them.²³⁶ The elite expected a return on their investment. Improved transport links improved access to markets allowing goods to travel further in the same amount of time and more goods to be transported over the same distance. This brought greater returns to the trader allowing, if they rented property or land from the landed elite as Marshall predicted, the landowner to increase their rent as a result.²³⁷

²³³ Defoe, D., *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, (London, 1724-1727, [2018]), p. 497. <https://www.globalgreybooks.com/tour-through-the-whole-island-of-great-britain-ebook.html>

²³⁴ Ireson, T., *Northamptonshire*, (London, Robert Hale, 1954), p. 204.

²³⁵ T. R. Thornton's personal journal recording his 'Tour to the Isle of Wight Aug 11 A. D. 1817'. NRO Th 3181, p. 1.

²³⁶ Robert Andrew chaired the Trustees' committee at the Fox and Hounds in Harlestone to maintain the turnpike road, *Northampton Mercury*, 13th July 1781. See Cossins, A., *The Turnpike Roads of Northamptonshire with the Soke of Peterborough, Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Vol. 1:3, (1950), p. 39, in which Cossins shows that Acts were passed in 1759-6, 1780-2 and 1806 during Robert Snr's seniority.

²³⁷ Bogart suggests that a landowner could expect property revenue increases of up to 20% for land within a parish with a new turnpike road. Bogart, D., 'Turnpike Trusts and Property income, (2009), p. 129.

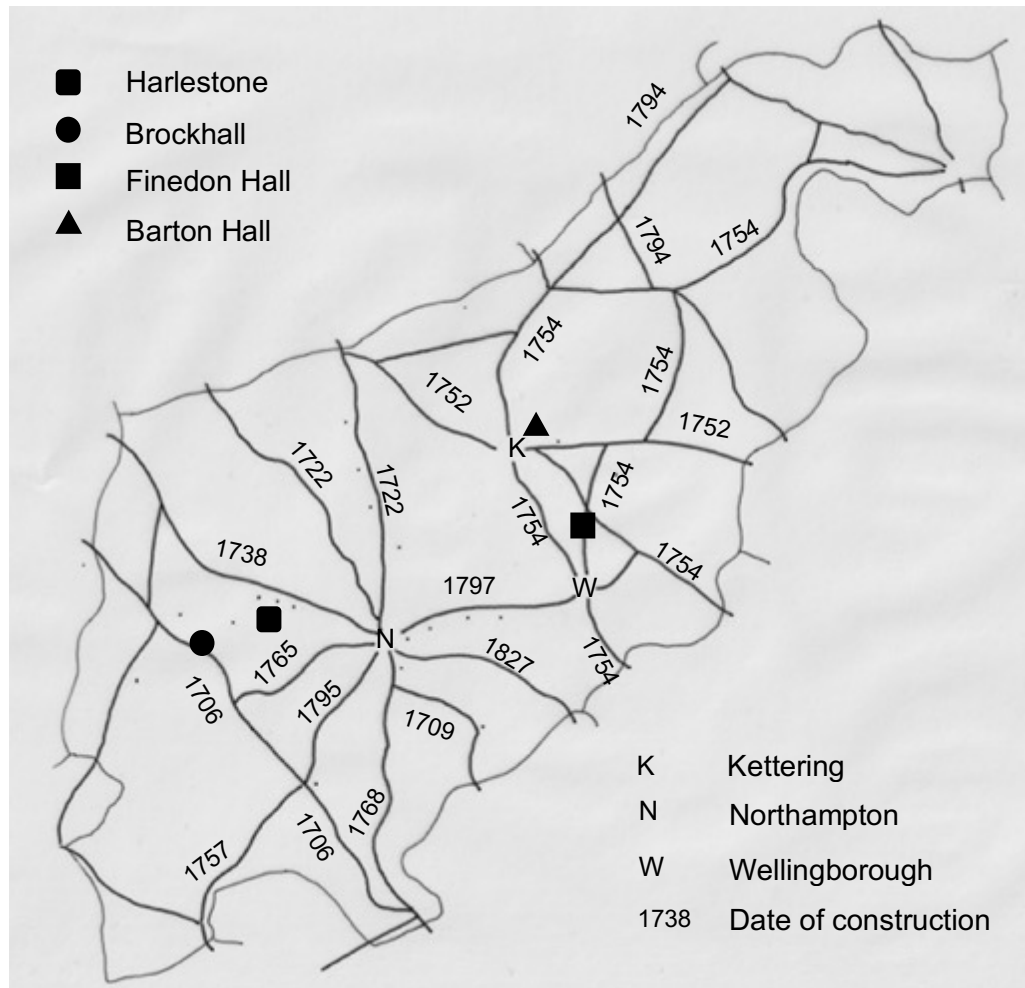


Figure 3.3: Turnpike roads in Northamptonshire c. 1800

The river Nene was navigable below Northampton but the river was notoriously difficult to navigate. The Nene Navigation was officially opened in 1761, Pitt regarded it as little more than useless as an artery for transporting heavy goods.²³⁸ North-south transport improved dramatically in 1800 when the Grand Junction Canal opened between Brentford, where it met the Thames, and Braunston on the Northamptonshire-Warwickshire border, where it met the Oxford Canal. A tunnel at Blisworth, Northants opened in 1805 and the Northampton Arm of the canal was completed in 1815. Hawkins has shown that the canal had a significant impact on the villages within about five miles of wharves in Northamptonshire as it simulated trade, bringing goods and raw materials in volumes

²³⁸ Steane, J., *Northamptonshire*, (1974), p. 257-258.

previously impossible and allowing the distribution of much larger quantities of product to existing and new markets.²³⁹ At Weedon, a barracks and military supply depot, and substantial market for boots was established in 1804 because the canal permitted the relatively rapid transport of supplies to the Midlands and south to London.²⁴⁰ Coal and the raw materials for bricks led to the establishment of kilns and brick built houses became common in this 10-15 mile wide strip of land across the county. The introduction of cheap bricks also enabled small factories to be built cheaply. Elsewhere however, traditional local industries became uncompetitive as steam power reduced costs elsewhere in England but entrepreneurs were able to exploit the lack of mechanisation in boot and shoe manufacturing and build a new industry on Northamptonshire's pre-existing expertise.²⁴¹

3.3.2 Boot and Shoe Manufacturing

The Calico Acts of 1720 banned the importation of most Indian cotton fabrics, and stimulated the growth of the English worsted trade. Small producers emerged in Long Buckley, West Haddon, Wilbarston, Brauston, Harringworth, and Desborough. By the middle of the eighteenth-century Kettering was exporting about 1000 units of worsted cloth to London per week. The trade was seen as an ideal source of work for the poor some of whom had been displaced by the growing number of Parliamentary enclosures. Raybould records that a John Fletcher left his agricultural labouring job in Warwickshire in 1760 to learn weaving from his brother-in-law Facer Garrett in Yelvertoft, a village in north central Northamptonshire.²⁴²

Water-power was used in numerous mills in central Northamptonshire but the rivers are small, their gradient low and the power that could be

²³⁹ Hawkins, M., *Grand Junction Canal*, (2011), pp. 53-67.

²⁴⁰ Steane, J. M., *Northamptonshire*, (1974), p. 259-264.

²⁴¹ Mounfield, P. R., *The Footwear Industry of the East Midlands: Northamptonshire*, (1965), p. 450.

²⁴² Raybould, W., *Textile manufacturing in Eighteenth-Century Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Vol. 68, (2015), p. 33, 40.

generated was limited. The central area of the county was too distant from sources of coal to benefit from steam power. Consequently, industries that could be mechanised in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century migrated out of the county to locations with better access to water and steam power. Competition from Yorkshire and the importation of raw materials like cotton from British and other European colonies led to a decline in the worsted industry in the late eighteenth century.²⁴³ Unemployment grew and so did the cost of poor relief. Donaldson noted that, at the time of writing, the poor rate in Kettering was 12s in the £ when 2-5s was typical in village parishes.²⁴⁴ Although Thomas Gotch opened his first boot and shoemaking manufactory in Kettering in 1778, the new source of employment did not offset job losses in worsted production until about 1820.²⁴⁵

The decline of the worsted and lace-making industries provided a workforce for the growth of the boot and shoe-making industry in several towns and villages particularly, though not exclusively, along the river Nen.²⁴⁶ The competitive advantage Northamptonshire shoemaking gained changed some villages irrevocably. This altered the balance of influence and importance between settlements and added to the subtle and very long-term changes in the balance of power between land and wealth, town and country.

Most villages across England had shoemakers producing shoes for local consumption. By the time of the English Civil War, Northampton was known for boot and shoe making and the town was exporting boots

²⁴³ Randall, A., The Kettering Worsted Industry of the Eighteenth Century Part I, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. 4:5, (1971), pp. 313-320; Randall, A., The Kettering Worsted Industry of the Eighteenth Century Part II, *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, Vol. 4:6, (1972), pp. 349-357; Raybould, W., *Textile manufacturing*, (2015), pp. 31-46; Vialis, C. & Collins, K., *A Georgian Country Parson: The Rev. John Mastin of Naseby*, (Northampton, Northampton Record Society, (2004), p. 109.

²⁴⁴ Donaldson, J., *General View*, (1794), p. 46.

²⁴⁵ See Randall, A., The Kettering Worsted Industry, Parts I & II, (1971, 72).

²⁴⁶ Eason, A. V., *Saint Crispin's Men' a history of Northamptonshire's shoemakers*, (Duston, Park Lane Publishers, 1994); Mounfield, P. R., *The Footwear Industry*, (Dec 1965), pp. 434-453; Swann, J., *Shoemaking*, (Aylesbury, Shire Publications, 1986).

and shoes to the West Indies in the early eighteenth-century.²⁴⁷ In the last third of the eighteenth-century the county became the dominant shoemaking centre in England eclipsing other centres including Sheffield and Norwich. Its proximity to London, relatively low wages due to the lack of competition from emerging factory-based, machinery-using industries and the decline of other local manufacturing industries led to the growth of piecework, non-factory-based shoe manufacturing.²⁴⁸ The demand for boots and shoes for the military grew as the war with France continued and the need to meet large orders for boots and shoes stimulated the new manufacturing process. While local leather continued to be produced, tanned hides were increasingly sourced from London. In 1767 Sharman and Ekins founded the first shoemaking warehouse. They brought cut leather 'uppers' and soles from London, stored components at their warehouse before sending them to pieceworkers in the 'basket' trade.²⁴⁹ The 'closers', who stitched the uppers together, and were often women, and the 'makers', who attached the finished uppers to the soles, worked from their homes or in lofts and sheds above or behind cottages in the villages surrounding a local manufacturing centre. This method of operation followed a pattern first established in Northampton and spread to Kettering, Daventry and Wellingborough, a locally important market town and bridging point over the River Nene less than 5kms from Finedon. Wellingborough's population grew from 3325 in 1801 to 5061 in 1841, an increase of 52%. In 1831, 64.61% of the population worked in 'Retail and handicrafts', a category that included boot and shoe making.²⁵⁰ Part of the rapid increase in population can be attributed to 'the numerous families of journeyman shoemakers who went to reside there [Wellingborough] during the war [with France]'.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Morrison, K. A. & Bond, A., *Built to Last?: The Buildings of the Northamptonshire Boot and Shoe Industry*, (London, English Heritage, 2004), p. 15-16.

²⁴⁸ Mounfield, P. R., *The Footwear Industry*, (1965), p. 442.

²⁴⁹ This form of manufacturing was known as the 'basket trade' because the components and finished products were delivered and collected from the pieceworkers in baskets which were then transported together in carts.

²⁵⁰ https://visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10284120/cube/TOT_POP

²⁵¹ Steane, J., *Northamptonshire*, (1974), p. 276-277.

In the competitive social hierarchy of village life artisan shoemakers and basket trade shoe and bootmakers did not see each other as equals. Whether in the towns like Northampton and Wellingborough or boot and shoe making villages like Long Buckby, Earls Barton or Finedon the pieceworkers were low in the social pecking order, the skilled 'polite' artisan shoemakers forming a distinct group from the 'rough trade' bootmakers.²⁵² From the early 1820s boot and shoe manufacturing entrepreneurs gathered the workers into manufactories where the components were assembled by hand. The piecework basket trade was not undercut by more organised production until the emergence of factories during the 1830s. A mechanised boot and shoe manufacturing process did not emerge until the invention of a shoe stitching machine in the late 1850s. This change in the process of manufacturing boots and shoes created a group of people in some villages that were no longer dependent on landowners for their livelihood. They now relied on the entrepreneur for their income and could live independently of the gentry unless they continued to attend the parish church or were required to appear before the magistrate. Central Northamptonshire villages like Finedon became a microcosm of the subtle, and during this period, marginal, change in power relations between the landowning class and entrepreneurs and industrialists that emerged in the late eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth century.

3.4 Case Studies

3.4.1 Finedon

Finedon is about 4 kms east of Wellingborough. It is one of only four settlements in Northamptonshire listed in the Domesday Book with a population greater than 50.²⁵³ Archaeological remains have been found

²⁵² Morrison, K. A., with Bond, A., *Built to Last*, (2004) p. 15;

<https://historicensland.org.uk/images-books/publications/built-to-last/built-to-last/>

²⁵³ Moore, S. A., *Domesday Book: The Portion Relating to Northamptonshire: Translated and Extended*, (Northampton 1863). Reaney, P. H., *The Origin of English Place-Names*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1960), p. 18, shows that Finedon

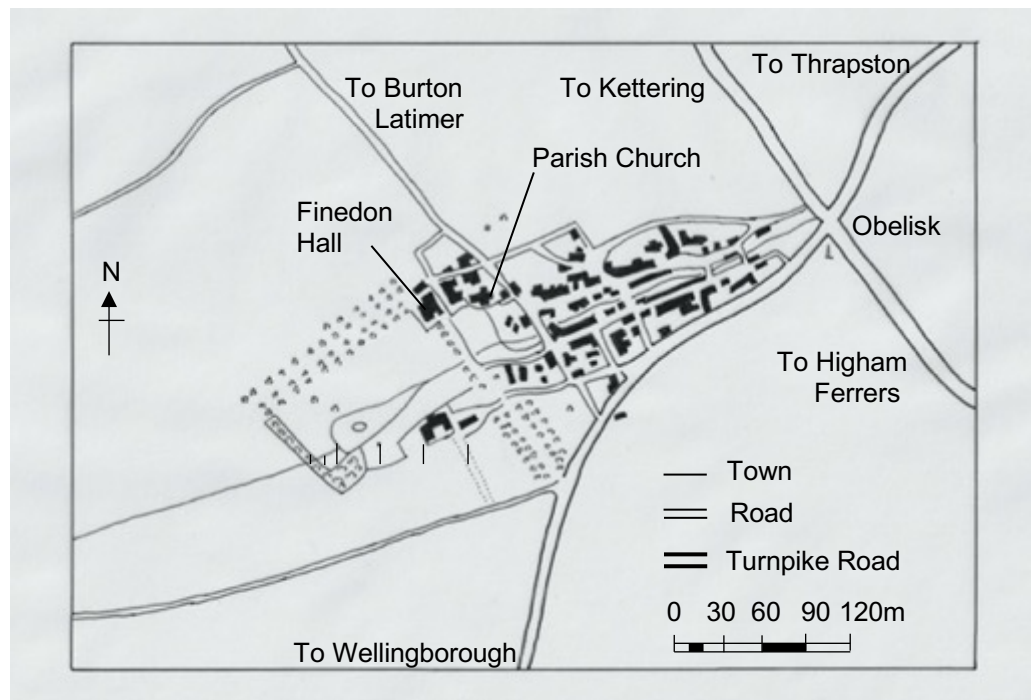


Figure 3.4: Finedon c. 1835. Map based on 1":1mile OS 1st Series SE Northamptonshire LII (1835)

indicating that the area was settled in the Iron Age and Roman periods.²⁵⁴ The village was granted the right to hold a market in the thirteenth century.²⁵⁵ It lies at about 90m above mean sea level. Agriculture was mixed arable and pasture. Finedon's location on good agricultural land at the meeting point of two important roads, both turnpiked in 1754, ensured its continuing survival as an important local village. The north-south road connected, at a national scale, London and the north-west, at a regional scale, Bedford and Leicester and more locally, Higham Ferrers and Kettering. The east-west turnpike was of

has changed its name, or used a modified spelling, several times: Tingdene (1086), Tindena (1167), Thingdene (1200), Thingdon alias Fyndon (1606) and means valley where the 'thing' that is assembly or council, met. Gelling M. & Cole, A., *The Landscape of Place-Names*, (Shaun Tyas, Donington, 2014 Edn.), p. 118; 'Wellingborough', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Volume 2, Archaeological Sites in Central Northamptonshire*, (London, 1979), pp. 166-170. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/northants/vol2/pp166-170>

²⁵⁴ 'Wellingborough', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Vol. 2*, (1979), pp. 166-170. *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/northants/vol2/pp166-170>

²⁵⁵ 'Parishes: Finedon', in *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp196-203>

regional and local importance linking Wellingborough with Stamford and Peterborough.

The Dolben family acquired Finedon Hall by marriage in 1683. By 1777 Militia lists suggest that there were 90 men eligible for service of whom 57.5% were farmers, agricultural labourers or servants (Table 4.1). The employment profile began to change, and the village population grew, in the following decades and by 1801, 886 people lived in Finedon. By then, an increasing minority of the population were not dependent on the Lord of the Manor for their livelihood or accommodation. The growing independence of the village was exacerbated by a division between a 'polite quarter' north of the Town Brook and west of the Burton Latimer Road (Figure 3.4) and the rest of the village.²⁵⁶ The Dolben family began the improvement of the Hall in about 1780 and the designed landscape in about 1785. In the decades following the improvement the employment structure of the village changed as boot and shoe manufacturing became an important industry in the village and the social and spatial distance between the gentry and a significant minority of the parish grew.

3.4.2 Barton Seagrave

Barton Seagrave lies close to the south and east banks of the River Ise at between about 60 and 90 metres above mean sea level and 2 kms south-east of Kettering and about 7.5 kms north of Finedon on the turnpike road (Figure 3.5). Apart from the alluvial soils close to the river the parish is predominantly a moderately heavy clay overlying Oolitic Lias with silty clays at lower levels and a greater proportion of sand at higher levels.²⁵⁷ The parish has supported arable and pasture farming; in the mid-nineteenth century the parish was about 50% arable and 30% pasture and meadow and land was also set aside for timber.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ For greater analysis of the spatial segregation of Finedon see section 4.5.2: Village Dynamics.

²⁵⁷ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp176-180>

²⁵⁸ NRO Map T185: Barton Seagrave Land Use, Rents and Tithe Apportionment Map

The parish was more fertile and easier to work than other nearby and more elevated areas of Northamptonshire.

There have been settlements close to Barton Seagrave since the Iron Age. The village appears in the Domesday Book and, after the Manor was reunited in the early fifteenth century, local families including the Brudenells of Deene Park (Earls of Cardigan from 1661), the Robinsons of nearby Cransley and Cranford Halls and John Bridges, antiquarian and posthumous author of *The History of Northampton* (1791), were all Lords of the Manor.²⁵⁹

The village grew at a significant bridging or fording point on the river. The bridging point was sufficiently important to warrant a defensive presence and a Manor House was constructed in the early fourteenth century in an area long known as 'Castle Field'.²⁶⁰ It was probably ruined by the mid fifteenth century.²⁶¹ In about 1600 a small manor house was built next to the church on a bend in the road.²⁶² Open land

Figure 3.5: Detail: The County of Northampton, Eyre and Jefferys (1791)

²⁵⁹ *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp176-180>

²⁶⁰ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp176-180>. It should be noted that the VCH entry for Barton Seagrave is confused about the ownership of Barton Hall when Charles Tibbits bought the estate in 1792.

²⁶¹ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp176-180>

²⁶² Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 111.

in front of the Manor House functioned as a village green. Other buildings by the bend in the road are no younger than this period although the Rectory was rebuilt in the late seventeenth century.²⁶³ By the end of the seventeenth century the village had established its present shape. Gathering by the village green, the bend in the road is dominated by the Church, Rectory and Manor House.

The modern Barton Hall was built in the early seventeenth century to the north of and a little further away from the village. While the main entrance to the Hall faces the village, it also faces the road that became the turnpike road. This Hall also has a private space that faces west towards the river and Kettering. The date of the enclosure of Barton Seagrave is unknown but Bridges believed it to have been 'about one hundred years ago' which would place the enclosure in the first half of the seventeenth century.²⁶⁴ This means that at about the time the new Hall was being built the land was being enclosed and the relationship between the Lord and the village altered. The construction of the new Hall, the replacement of the open fields and the introduction of a more capitalist economic structure occurred roughly simultaneously, dramatically altering the social and spatial relationships of the village and parish.

Barton Seagrave was a small agricultural village about 3 kms from Kettering, one of the largest market towns in Northamptonshire, but, despite its proximity, the village was largely agricultural. The 1777 Militia Lists reveal that the population and the variety of employment categories were much lower than in Finedon. All the fit, able men who were eligible to serve in the militia were either farmers, agricultural labourers or servants (Table 3.1). The village may have been too small to support a forge, a carpenter, a baker, publican or cordwainer or the people occupying those roles might have been exempt from service and

²⁶³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1372630>

²⁶⁴ Bridges, J., *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, Vol II, (Oxford, 1791), p. 217.

OCCUPATION	1777	%
Farmer	4	18.2%
Labourer	5	22.7%
Servant	13	59.1%
	22	100.1

Table 3.1: Barton Seagrave Residents by Employment: 1777
Northamptonshire Militia Lists

consequently, were not recorded in the list. In 1801 the population of the village was 159.

When Charles Tibbits bought Barton Hall in 1792, Barton Seagrave was at the crossing point of two important turnpike roads which carried traffic from London and Bedford north towards Leicester and beyond and between Peterborough in the east towards Market Harborough in the west. The Hall was on the turnpike road several hundred metres east of the village and therefore detached from it. Separated from the village by the road and a field it was outward looking; Charles Tibbits did not have to visit the village except to attend the church and the villagers who did not work in the Hall or its associated buildings did not have pay much attention to the Hall; they could use local paths to walk to Kettering. However, although the Hall may not have featured much in their everyday lives it could be seen from both the village and the road up the hill on the north side of the River Ise. This detached visibility will be significant when the motivations for the purchase of the Hall by the Tibbits family and the reasons for Charles' response to Humphry Repton's Barton Hall red book for the landscape are considered in Chapter Five.

3.4.3 Brockhall

Brockhall is about 10kms north-west of Northampton and about 6kms east of Daventry (Figure 3.6). The parish lies between about 80m and

125m above mean sea level and is primarily on the eastern side of the valley of an upper tributary of the Nen. The Hall and village are on a gentle west facing slope of clays which are fertile but heavy to work. The Hall overlooks a flat valley bottom of alluvial deposits which is naturally wet, seasonally waterlogged and less fertile than the slightly acidic clays of the eastern valley side. On the western side of the river, the land rises gently. Sands and gravels drain more freely but are subject to a seasonally high-water table. Unimproved, they are of average fertility.

The village has a long history. Recorded in the Domesday Book, it was closely linked to Muscott, a deserted medieval village a kilometre to the north and Norton, a close neighbour across the valley. It is also small. It is only 861 acres and in 1800 had a population of 70.²⁶⁵ By 1831 this had declined to 58. Owned by the local sheep and cattle farming Thornton family since 1625, the parish was enclosed by common



Key: = Turnpike Road — Minor Road — River Nen
••• Gentry or Aristocratic parkland

Figure 3.6: Brockhall and Harlestone c. 1817; Map based on OS drawings: Northampton (1817)

²⁶⁵ https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10266956/cube/TOT_POP

agreement between 1611 and 1619-20.²⁶⁶ Brockhall was integrated into the south Midland livestock droving economy including trading cattle in London. In 1839 only three fields, Dryland Hill, North Dryland, which had both been recently converted from pasture to arable land and West Dryland were being farmed as arable land. Approximately 93% was of the parish was pasture, meadow or woodland. Brockhall was a closed village; the only people not working directly for the Thornton family were either farmers renting land from them or a carpenter, his apprentice and a draper. Two of the four farmers are described as graziers in 1841 indicating the long-standing tradition in Brockhall for livestock farming.

In 1800, very few people would have passed through village on their way to somewhere else. Despite its proximity to the Grand Junction Canal which passed through the parish, there is no evidence that the canal brought any economic benefit to Brockhall; the village was either too poorly placed, or prevented by its owner, from diversifying. There were no deposits of stone to provide a source of quarrying work. Watling Street was in so poor a condition that it was little more than a local road. Unlike villages a few kilometres from Brockhall, such as Weedon, which also benefited from better roads and a larger population, Brockhall remained a relatively isolated, closed village. However, it was an easy walk, by contemporary standards, to neighbouring villages; the market at Daventry was less than two hours on foot and Northampton's markets were close enough for a day trip.

3.4.4 Harlestone

An old road that ran north-east out of Northampton towards Dunchurch and Coventry reached Althorp House, the seat of Earl Spencer, shortly after passing through the older part of Harlestone village, now known as Upper Harlestone (Figure 3.6). 'Upper' Harlestone is characterised by thatched cottages along the old road. A few hundred metres to the east the 'new' turnpike road, constructed in 1739 passed through 'Lower

²⁶⁶ Hall, D., *Open Fields*, p. 218; <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/northants/vol3/pp31-33>.

Harlestone'. Lower Harlestone is dominated by eighteenth century buildings constructed of local ironstone including the smithy and the Fox and Hounds public house.²⁶⁷

Most of the parish lies at about 90-110m. To the south there are light, acidic, sandy soils of the Harlestone heathlands; although rare in Northamptonshire they are part of a ring of heathlands about 4-5 kms north of Northampton. Steane quotes Morton who was writing in 1712, describing the heathlands from Harlestone to Church Brampton and Kingsthorpe to Overstone as 'hollow, springy or rippling Ground, that resounds to the Strokes of the Horses Feet when they are ridden upon it, ... having never been open'd and disturbed by Plowing'.²⁶⁸ Easter horse races were held on Harlestone Heath from the early seventeenth-century.²⁶⁹ To the north, most of the parish has a clayey topsoil. A tributary of the Nen upstream of Northampton runs south-west to north-east through the village and cuts through layers of clay and ironstone. The geology, giving farmable soil and good stone, provided Harlestone village with its primary sources of employment for centuries and supported a Bronze Age settlement on Harlestone and Dallington Heaths.²⁷⁰ The parish was primarily pasture with only about 12 acres of the North and South Ryefields and Wheatfield growing arable crops in the 150 years before the 1766 enclosure.²⁷¹

Two small quarries had given employment to about 46 men between 1719 and 1760 between 'Upper and 'Lower' Harlestone. At the same time only 3 men, a butcher, a beer seller and a shopkeeper, worked in

²⁶⁷ Harlestone Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan, (Daventry District Council, 2017), p. 16.

²⁶⁸ Steane, J., *Northamptonshire*, (1974), p. 224.

²⁶⁹ Strutt, J., *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England: From the Earliest Period, Including the Rural and Domestic Recreations, May Games, Mummers, Pageants, Processions and Pompous Spectacles*, (London, Methuen & Co. 1801), p. 38.

²⁷⁰ Field, L. & Chapman, A., *Archaeological excavation at Harlestone Quarry near Northampton*, (Northampton Archaeology Report 06/173, Dec 2006, revised April 2007).

²⁷¹ Hall, D., *Open Fields*, p. 289.

retail trades.²⁷² It is likely that the proportion of tradesmen grew as the century progressed, the settlement grew slowly and the turnpike road became busier. In 1793 the *Northampton Mercury* carried an advertisement for a tenant for a house and two acres that was 'well situated for a Baker, or any Tradesman'.²⁷³ In 1801 the population was 437.

The two parts of the village were not contiguous but were separated by Harlestone Park, the Hall which belonged to the Andrew family. There were footpaths and a road linking the two parts of the village some of which crossed the designed landscape of the Hall. The village was a half-day walk to the county town, giving access to Northampton's markets although it was probably too far from the Northampton arm of the Grand Junction Canal to benefit from the trade the canal stimulated. In 1800 enclosure was still a memory but the new turnpike road in 'Lower' Harlestone and the benefit it brought to trade were an established part of village life. When Robert Andrew Jnr. chose to improve his Hall and landscape they were an integral part of the village, physically at the heart of the village and directly supporting about 40-45% of the population.

3.5 Conclusion

In Northamptonshire the last decades of the eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth centuries were marked by three conditions. The period was one of rapid change in the countryside and in manufacturing. Second, improving transport made the movement of people and goods quicker and, in some cases, possible. Third, Northamptonshire is little more than 100 kms from London and this geography gave it an advantage enabling it to exploit improving transport and changes in manufacturing processes.

²⁷² Forrest, M., *Village Roots: A History of Harlestone up to the Twentieth Century*, (Harlestone, Margaret Forrest, 2006), p. 49.

²⁷³ *Northampton Mercury*, Saturday 25 Mar 1793.

Parliamentary enclosure was changing the visual appearance of Northamptonshire's countryside, the range of crops grown and animals reared, the level of agricultural production, and the employment structure of the countryside. As England began to experience regional specialisation in industrial production, local production of lace and worsted declined. It was replaced by Northamptonshire's specialism – boot and shoe production. This was centred on particular towns and villages, including Finedon, and was partly responsible for rapid population growth in these places. The landed gentry had a direct and controlling role in the changes in the countryside as they owned the majority of land that was enclosed. They were the people who benefitted the most from enclosure, partly by expressing their patriotic duty in maximising production of food and timber but primarily through higher rents for land and the increased value of their land. However, they had, at most, a minor role in industrial changes, benefitting only where population growth increased rents for buildings they owned in those villages and towns that grew. Some will have lost income where local industries were in decline and were not replaced by boot and shoe manufacturing. The growth of industry distanced the landed gentry from some of the people living near their land and reduced their ability to control the population. Agricultural changes from enclosure or new machinery led to a fear of unemployment, displacement and destitution.²⁷⁴

The transport infrastructure of the county improved significantly. Roads were turnpiked and despite their generally poor condition, they still increased the rental value of land close to the road. Roads were improved on an *ad hoc* basis leaving routes such as Northampton to Kettering or Wellingborough poorly served. There were also improvements to the Nen which were limited in their success and did not encourage the passage of goods through the county but the construction of the Grand Junction Canal had a major impact on central

²⁷⁴ See McDonagh, B., & Griffin, C. J., *Occupy!* (2016), pp. 1-10.

Northamptonshire, particularly in the west. The canal enabled low value, high weight goods to be brought to parts of the county and provided a route for delivering very large numbers of shoes and boots for the military and to London.

The landscapes of central Northamptonshire did not vary greatly. The soils are largely consistent and most people outside the towns were employed in agriculture. However, more detailed investigation of particular places reveals a greater variation in the type of farming being undertaken, the range of employment in a village, the number of landowners in a parish, the availability of good transport links and the proximity of the village to markets and towns. This local variety is the result of many decisions taken by people, particularly the landed gentry, over a long period of time about when to enclose, whether to turnpike a road, what rents to charge and with what lease arrangements. Northamptonshire in general can be seen as an archetypal 'Champion' landscape but, inevitably, the generality obscures marked local variations which shaped the appearance and productivity of the land, the profitability of the land for the tenant and the landlord, the security of employment and dwelling for the labourer and the perceived stability of local life.

Northamptonshire could not compete with the higher income industrial jobs that were created where the availability of water or steam power allowed factories to mechanise production. It was however, no more than two or three days journey by coach from London. Spooner has argued that villas were built for industrialists, professionals, bankers on London's urban fringe.²⁷⁵ Northamptonshire was far enough north to keep its local identity and be unaffected by easy access to London by the wealthy middle class who aspired to own a country villa with a modest plot of land. It was, however, close enough to London to be able to transport goods there for sale, a competitive advantage it had over

²⁷⁵ Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscape*, pp. 52-82.

parts of the country further north which, until rail transport, had to rely on water for the transportation of bulk goods. Industrialists in London were able to influence manufacturing in Northamptonshire but the county was too far from London to be a desirable location for them to build villas with modest amounts of land.

This brief review of Northamptonshire's historical geography, which has concentrated on the central area of the county, has shown that regional, county or part county generalisations reveal patterns that are useful for understanding processes at a macro level. However, it has also shown that the generalisations conceal local variations in the patterns that indicate that processes are more complex than might at first be thought. Each parish and landscape studied in this thesis is part of a region that is between the hinterland of London and more distant counties. They are also part of a county in which a general pattern of geology and soil type, farming and enclosure, industry and transport influenced social, political and cultural life. This was the physical and social context within which individual members of Northamptonshire's gentry chose to improve their designed landscapes. These improvements are described and analysed in detail in the next four chapters.

Chapter 4 Finedon Hall

4.1 Introduction

Finedon Hall was the home of the Dolben family, an established Northamptonshire family with a national profile. This chapter describes and analyses improvements at Finedon Hall during the seniority of Sir William Dolben Bart. MP [Sir William] and his only son John English Dolben [John English]. A chronological approach is adopted that describes change, or proposals for change, in the designed landscape and the village and offers an understanding of change in the designed landscape and the relationship between the designed landscape and the village. The second section of the chapter traces the origins of the Dolben family in Finedon and introduces Sir William and Finedon village. This section also charts the alterations that were made to the landscape under Sir William's baronetcy before John English invited Humphry Repton to prepare a red book in 1793.²⁷⁶

Repton's visit, the proposals he made and the response of Sir William and John English, are considered in the third section. This allows for some speculation about the reasons for the decisions that were taken in the years following 1793. The fourth section covers John English's management of the estate from enclosure in 1805-8, the death of Hannah Dolben née Hallett, John English's wife in 1807 and the appointment of Revd. Samuel Woodward Paul as curate in 1806 and his self-appointment as vicar in 1810. These contemporaneous events shaped the immediate future of the Hall as Sir William and John English were not resident in Finedon between about 1808 and 1812. The parish was also evolving as Finedon was becoming established as a centre of shoe- and boot-making in Northamptonshire and by the time of John

²⁷⁶ Strictly speaking the Repton's Finedon book was not a 'Red' Book as it was not bound in the trademark red Moroccan leather but in brown leather. It was not the only 'brown book' but because 'red book' is generally used even when a book was not bound in red leather, it will be referred to throughout this thesis as a 'red book'.

English's death in 1837, a death which marked the end of the male Dolben line at Finedon, the village had grown and changed significantly. It was very different to the other villages under consideration in this thesis and this section provides the background for the complex relationship between the Hall and the village and the way in which they viewed each other. The chapter ends with concluding comments which account for the landscape changes made and places change in Finedon Hall and garden in the context of the village beyond the parkland boundary.

4.2 Sir William Dolben Bt. MP: From inheritance to commissioning Humphry Repton (1756-c.1792)

4.2.1 Background

From the mid-fifteenth century until 1682 the manor of Finedon was owned by the Mulso family. Tanfield Mulso's co-heirs, Anne and Elizabeth married Gilbert Dolben (1658-1722) and his brother John (1662-1710). Gilbert and John were sons of John Dolben (1625-1686) who was born in Stanwick, Northamptonshire and became Archbishop of York in 1683. Archbishop John's father had been Bishop-designate of Gloucester but died before his consecration, his brother William was a leading judge and his uncle-in-law was Gilbert Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury. Gilbert Dolben was a Judge at the Court of Common Pleas for Ireland surviving the removal of judges in Ireland in 1714. John, also a lawyer, was MP for Liskeard, Cornwall but spent heavily and sold his part of Finedon manor to Gilbert. Gilbert and Anne's only son, John, was Vicar of Finedon, Rector of Burton Latimer and a Canon of Durham Cathedral. John Dolben was friends with Nathaniel Crewe, Bishop of Durham, who lived at Steane near Brackley about 40 miles WSW of Finedon.²⁷⁷ He had previously been Dean of Chichester Cathedral and Bishop of Oxford and the beneficiary of James II's patronage following his explicit support for the King's Catholicism. He showed political skill

²⁷⁷ Aston, N., 'Dolben, Sir John, second baronet (1684–1756)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004).
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7777>]

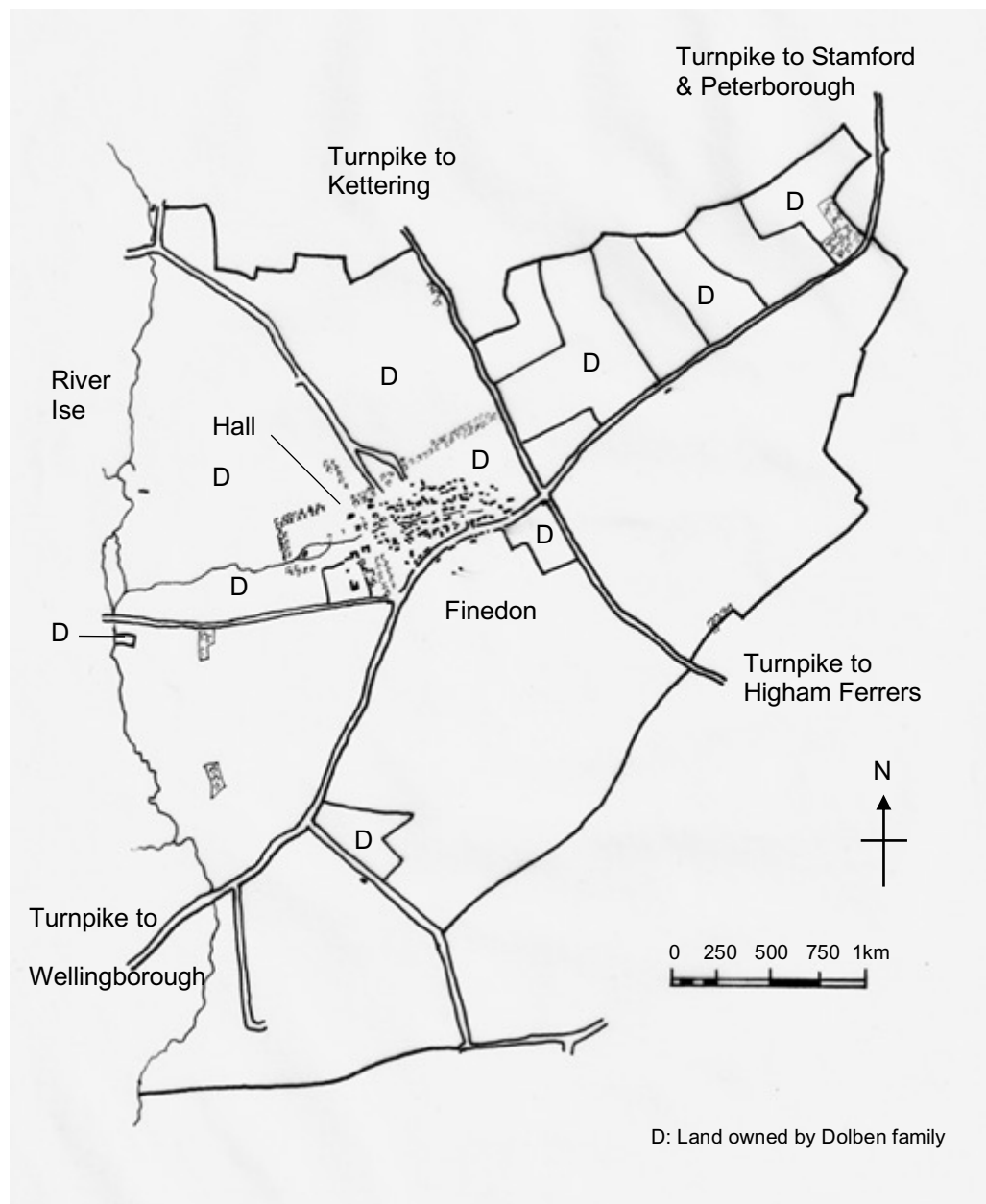


Figure 4.1: Finedon parish and Dolben landholding 1817; Map based on OS Drawing: Wellingborough (1817)

as the King's authority waned and he survived the transfer of power relatively unscathed.²⁷⁸ The high profile of the seventeenth and

²⁷⁸ Price, P., *An Incomparable Lady: Queen Mary II's Share in the government of England: 1689-94*, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol.75:3, (2012), p. 312. Bishop Crewe sought the suspension of Henry Compton Bishop of London, an enthusiastic collector of new tree species, because of his support of John Sharp, an anti-papal clergyman. He became Archbishop of York in 1691 and was a leading advisor to Queen Anne. One of his children, John, married Anna Maria Hosier of Wicken Park,

eighteenth century Dolben family and their friends is indicative of their status, national profile and high church Anglicanism. Sir William maintained the Dolben tradition.

Canon John Dolben married Elizabeth Digby and they had one surviving son, William, born in January 1727 (Figure 4.2).²⁷⁹ Educated in the family tradition at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, he inherited Finedon manor when his father died in 1756. By then he had married Judith English in Westminster Abbey. She was the daughter of Somerset English of Hamptonet and Eastergate near Chichester in Sussex and the great-granddaughter of Sir Joseph Sheldon, Lord Mayor of London in 1675-6 and nephew of Archbishop Sheldon.²⁸⁰ She was Somerset English's heir and brought with her £30,000 (c. £60-71M).²⁸¹ She died in 1771 and Sir William married Charlotte Scotchmer née Affleck in 1789. Charlotte was Sir William's second cousin and one of seventeen children including two admirals and three clergy. James Affleck was Vicar of Finedon from 1757-1785.

Sir William was MP for Oxford University (Feb-Mar 1768 and 1780-1800) and Northamptonshire (Mar 1768-1774) (Figure 4.3). He was an active player in national politics, particularly in abolitionism. Wilberforce later 'described "the venerable Sir W. Dolben" as one of his principal supporters'.²⁸² With the approval of Pitt and the King, and with the expectation that it would be impossible to pass a bill to abolish slavery he introduced the Slave Trade Act, known as the 'Dolben Act', to Parliament during 1788.²⁸³ He received some criticism among

Northamptonshire. One of John Sharp's sons, Granville was an early abolitionist and member of the Clapham Sect.

²⁷⁹ Elizabeth Digby was a daughter of Sir William Digby, 5th Baron Digby and MP for Warwick.

²⁸⁰ Dallaway, J., *A History of the Western Division of the County of Sussex*, Vol. 1, (London, 1815), p. 120.

²⁸¹ measuringworth.com.

²⁸² LoGerfo, J. W., 'Sir William Dolben and "The cause of Humanity": The Passage of the Slave Trade Regulation Act of 1788', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol 6:4 (1973), pp. 437.

²⁸³ <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/dolben-sir-william-1727-1814>

supporters of slavery. Simon Taylor wrote to Chaloner Arcedeckne in September 1789 about tactics for the abolition debate.

I am very glad to find that we have so many friends in the House, and that he [Pitt] could not carry his friend Wilberforce's schemes into execution, for Sir William Dolben's insidious [sic] regulations I wish both these gentleman would take a passage to the West

Figure 4.2: unknown after John Opie: Sir William Dolben, Bt.
(c. 1800-1814) [University of Oxford,
<https://www.vads.ac.uk/digital/collection/OP/id/72/rec/46>]

The bill improved the conditions of slaves in British slave ships.

Figure 4.3: Hickel, K. A., The House of Commons 1793-94 (1793-95) [NPG 745, © National Portrait Gallery, London]

indies themselves, and see how negroes are treated, and then go to the coast of Guinea and see how happy they live there.²⁸⁴

Olaudah Equiano wrote to Dolben thanking him for his work.²⁸⁵ He took an independent Tory approach, frequently supporting the government but, as a result of his strong support for the Church, opposed Catholic emancipation. Before he rose to prominence on the national stage he had served as High Sheriff of Northamptonshire in 1760-1.

In 1785 he appointed Revd. Charles Cave to the living at Finedon. Charles Cave (1747-1810), a near contemporary of John English and a fellow antiquarian, appointed a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1781, was the younger son of Sir Thomas Cave 6th Baronet of Stanford Hall in Stanford on Avon in the far north-west of Northamptonshire. He inherited the baronetcy when his elder brother, also Thomas, died in

²⁸⁴ <https://blog.soton.ac.uk/slaveryandrevolution/tag/william-dolben/> The offensive language is repeated here as it is contained in the original letter and is quoted in the blog.

²⁸⁵ Olaudah Equiano to Sir William Dolben, n.d.; NRO D(F) 39

1792 aged 25. Part of the Stanford estate was on the Leicestershire side of the county boundary and both the 6th and 7th Baronets had also been MPs for Leicestershire. When he was appointed Vicar of Finedon, Revd. Charles Cave was already the Rector of South Kilworth in Leicestershire.²⁸⁶ In 1790 he was appointed Vicar of Theddingworth, also in Leicestershire. John Bailey, the Finedon-based local historian, said of Cave that 'He probably lived at Stanford on Avon after succeeding to the baronetcy and seems to have been more attached to Theddingworth than Finedon. Revd. Cave was an absentee clergyman but he appointed John Maddocks his curate in 1792 and Samuel Woodford Paul in 1806. Three months later Revd. Paul married John English's daughter, Charlotte. They lived in the Vicarage. Revd. Sir Charles Cave died unmarried on 21 March 1810 and was buried at Theddingworth.'²⁸⁷

He may have been a largely absentee vicar but Cave shared Sir William's moral High Church views. In 1773 one of two Amicable Societies in Finedon was formed; Sir William was its President, Revd. Charles Cave its Vice-President and John English its secretary. The Society, which met once a month was designed to provide relief for its members when they were ill and provide funeral benefits on their death. Each member, who had made the necessary contributions, received 7s/week sick pay for the first six months, 4s/week for the remainder of the year and 2s/week until they returned to work. However, there were strict rules designed to maintain good moral and spiritual health as well as provide for the physical needs of villagers. Society members were required to be Protestants and in good health. Bailiffs, soldiers and sailors could not join and members had also to be under 35 years of age, known to at least one other member and live within 5 miles of Finedon. Burial benefits were paid but not for people who killed

²⁸⁶ He ceased being Rector in South Kilworth in 1786.

²⁸⁷ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (Finedon, 1975), p. 74. Bailey's book is detailed and a useful history of Finedon. However, it is not referenced and some claims are hard to substantiate.

themselves or if death had resulted from alcohol, gambling or fighting, or if the individual had a venereal disease.²⁸⁸ In 1809 the principal subscribers to the Society was a list of the polite society in the village Sir William, William Somerset, Revd. Sir Charles Cave, Mrs Elizabeth Raynsford née Dolben, Miss Anne Dolben, John Gray, John Gray Jnr., Mrs Holmes, widow of the late Dean of Winchester and Miss Gray.²⁸⁹

For more than a decade before his appointment to the Finedon living and until his death, Revd. Charles Cave was a family friend, a member of the Northamptonshire gentry and shared the Dolbens' benign paternalism, recognising that the Lord of the Manor was expected to provide for his parish and that the Church was expected to maintain the moral and spiritual health of the parish. Parishioners, while able to receive the largesse of the landowner, were expected to conform to a prescribed set of behaviours. The Dolben-Cave alliance reflects a high church benevolent paternalism that demanded self-improvement and good manners from anyone who benefitted from their largesse. This was a similar attitude to the morality of the evangelical 'Clapham Sect' to which the Dolbens' were connected by friendship and some common political goals.²⁹⁰ John English was not oblivious to the double standards that the demand for the right behaviour could generate. In a 1794 diary note he questioned the partial way in which demands for public morality were enforced when he wrote 'Susanna Clifton did Penance [sic] in a white sheet before Mr Maddocks by the procurement of Sir Charles Cave [she had given birth to an illegitimate child earlier in the year]. Churchwardens led her up the Aisle. Why do not also the rich do penance?'.²⁹¹

The Northamptonshire Militia Lists compiled in 1777 give the best account of the nature of Finedon village prior to the national censuses

²⁸⁸ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 34-5.

²⁸⁹ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 35-6.

²⁹⁰ The term 'Clapham Sect' was first used by James Stephens in 1844.

²⁹¹ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 74.

of the nineteenth century.²⁹² The lists cannot be treated as definitive because several categories of people, most notably all women, but also children who worked but were too young to join the militia, and men who were excused by law from serving, were too infirm or who were deemed too poor and had three or more children were excluded.

OCCUPATION	1777	%
Esq.	1	1%
Alehouse keeper	1	1%
Baker	1	1.1%
Blacksmith	3	3.3%
Breeches-maker	1	1.1%
Butcher	1	3.3%
Carpenter	4	4.4%
Cordwainer	5	5.5%
Draper	1	1.1%
Excise officer	1	1.1%
Farmer	13	14.3%
Labourer	21	23.1%
Lace Dealer	1	1.1%
Mason	2	2.2%
Matmaker	3	3.3%
Miller	1	1.1%
Servant	21	23.1%
Shepherd	2	2.2%
Taylor [sic]	2	2.2%
Weaver	5	5.5%
unascribed	1	1.1%
	91	100.1

Table 4.1: Finedon Residents by Employment: 1777 Northamptonshire Militia Lists

²⁹² Hartley, V., ed., *Northamptonshire Militia Lists*, (1973).

The militia list for Finedon reveals a range of occupations that would be expected from a large village in the middle of the second half of the eighteenth century (Table 4.1). The village was dominated by agriculture, 1 in 3 men on the militia list were farmers or labourers, and service, a further 1 in 4 were servants.²⁹³ Weaving and lace-making have yet to suffer the decline that the local industries would experience in the decades following 1777 and other trades, including shoe making, are serving local needs. At the beginning of the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century, as Sir William was on the verge of appointing Revd. Charles Cave to the benefice and improving his Hall and designed landscape, Finedon was a large village with a population primarily employed in agriculture, service or providing for the needs of the village.

4.2.2 Pre-Repton Improvements

The archive is relatively silent on the improvements that Sir William made to the Hall, garden and estate in the first twenty years of his baronetcy. The Hall he inherited had been rebuilt and enlarged by Sir Gilbert Dolben in the early eighteenth-century; a modest Elizabethan house became a Hall with a five-bay front with two matching bay wings.²⁹⁴ In 1765 Sir William introduced a private enclosure that had the impact of distancing the village from the Hall and uniting the Church, Vicarage and Hall behind a boundary (Figure 4.4).²⁹⁵ He enclosed a small acreage near the Church, Rectory, and Boy's School but more significantly, closed several roads that ran between the Rectory and the Church and crossed the Town Brook to the east of the approach to the Hall but to the west of Church Hill.²⁹⁶ This created a discrete area of land inaccessible to the village unless there was a specific reason to gain access to the 'polite' area. The road closures altered the routes that all people took when travelling through Finedon and from Finedon

²⁹³ This assumes that the term 'labourer' refers to agricultural labourer and does not include, for example, quarryman. This is likely as there were two quarrymen listed in 1777 Harlestone militia list.

²⁹⁴ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 275.

²⁹⁵ NRO D(F) 177.

²⁹⁶ NRO D(F) 177. See Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 127.



Figure 4.4: Road closure following private enclosure in 1765

to Burton Latimer and Kettering in the north and Wellingborough to the south-west.

The acreage of the enclosure may have been limited but the choice to alter movement within and through the village and to distance the village from the 'polite' quarter reflected the status of the Dolben family within the village. Sir William did not create an additional physical boundary that separated the rest of Finedon from gentry 'territory' but established a metaphorical boundary that informed villagers where they belonged. Physical views were scarcely altered but Sir William was reinforcing three views: the gentry remained masters of all they surveyed, travellers were able to see into the gentry quarter but were distanced from it and the villagers were told, politely, what and where their place was, socially and spatially. In this sense the modest enclosure that predated any landscape alteration was the most significant action that Sir William took in his 59 years as Lord of Finedon Manor.

Sir William may have been Lord of the Manor and the largest landowner in the parish but in a parish of approximately 3300 acres, his landholding was, at approximately 1250 acres, a minority share (Figure 4.1). The income from his land was sufficient for a country gentleman but Sir William also maintained property in London and finance may have been a concern. In 1779, aged 29 John English married Hannah Hallett, the daughter of William Hallett the cabinet maker and granddaughter of William Hallett's father, also William, of Canons near Stanmore in Middlesex. Her step-brother, William Hallett III, was the subject of Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs William Hallett, or The Morning Walk* of 1785. She had 'a fortune of 70,000l'.²⁹⁷ It coincided with Sir William's return to Parliament in 1780 and it may be that the marriage and the income from Hannah's fortune encouraged Sir William, John English, Charlotte and Hannah to begin improvements to the Hall.

John Johnson, a Leicester born but Berners Street, London based architect was working at the Hall in 1780. A letter from John English to Sir William shows that variously, 'J' or 'Johnson' was altering and decorating the Hall following instructions from the Dolbens. It is clear from this letter of 8th April 1780 that if Sir William was not the primary decision maker, his approval was sought.

The Paper in the Velvet-room to be pasted, if you please, on the wall. Johnson says he means also the drawing room to be done without canvas.

Johnson advises a certain place to be made under the brown stairs, with 2 doors one into the Greenhouse and one to the staircase. By this will be made my *gardening closet* (O! I but miss it. We're within reach!) will be made as you mentioned a new plan

²⁹⁷ The Gentleman's Magazine, v. 49, (1779), p. 566.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011429365&view=1up&seq=598&q1=Dolben>; See also Beard, G., The Quest for William Hallett, *Furniture History: Studies in the History of Furniture and Design*, Vol. 21, (1985), pp. 220-226.

for the 1st article viz: to link some steps for the first landing place of the common stairs onto the *new* Butler's pantry and wall up the present door, which w. give space light air and water in plenty. He thinks this very feasible, but the throwing either Housekeepers room or Butler's pantry beyond the Kitchen he seems to think wrong in principle. You will I hope come soon, and having examin'd, give your opinion on these mighty affairs, which shall no longer trespass on my time and paper.²⁹⁸

In a letter to Sir John Palmer at East Carlton Hall on the Northamptonshire-Leicestershire border near modern Corby, John Johnson's clerk mentions that Johnson will be at Finedon 'in the next week or two'.²⁹⁹

John English's letter shows that he was looking forward to the access that the new doors would give to the greenhouse. Unfortunately, there is no further reference to the greenhouse or 'gardening closet'. It suggests an interest in horticulture but there is no evidence to tell us who was interested, what form the interest took or how it was expressed on the ground. In a note at the end of a later letter to John English, Sir William wrote 'Give my love to Mrs D and tell her that I shop to bring her some African seeds from Mr. Clarkson's Collection'.³⁰⁰ This is the only reference to Hannah Dolben in the Dolben archive and, while she appears to have been an enthusiast for exotic plants, we cannot know which plants she grew or where in the pleasure ground, greenhouse or kitchen garden she grew them.

'Mr Clarkson's Collection' almost certainly refers to John Clarkson's collections of plants and seeds brought to England during his service in the Royal Navy. He was an active abolitionist who, in the 1790s helped to found Freetown with his elder brother Rev. Thomas, Henry Thornton

²⁹⁸ Letter from John English Dolben to Sir William Dolben: 8th April 1780. My italics. NRO D(F) 51.

²⁹⁹ Letter from J. Andrews for John Johnson to Sir John Palmer: 29th Aug 1781. LRO DG4 601

³⁰⁰ Letter from Sir William to John English: 3rd July 1789, NRO D(F) 44

and Granville Sharp, and became the first Governor of Sierra Leone. During this period he also collected plants and seeds for Joseph Banks.³⁰¹ Thomas Clarkson collected curiosities, items that ships involved in the slave trade imported to England, including seeds. The chest in which he stored, and displayed them, was made of mahogany and therefore a material expression of the trade that its contents represented. He used the chest to raise awareness of the triangular slave trade and he believed that the box had helped persuade Pitt to join the abolitionists.³⁰² Like Henry Thornton and Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson was a member of the influential, evangelical, abolitionist group the Clapham Sect. Clarkson also created a list of leading abolitionists which included Herbert Mackworth MP whose family later inherited Finedon through marriage and Thomas Powys, 1st Baron Lilford who succeeded Sir William as MP for Northamptonshire. The flowers at Finedon Hall were a living statement of the Dolben's anti-slavery position and evidence of an intersection between the participation of women in horticulture and the importation of exotic seeds and plants from an Empire still supporting the enslavement of people.

In October 1785 Sir William visited the Bishop of Salisbury, Shute Barrington. Barrington's Chaplain was Thomas Burgess who was also part of the abolitionist movement, publishing *Considerations on the Abolition of Slavery* (1789). Burgess was a prebendary in the Diocese at the same time as Robert, the brother of Uvedale Price. In 1791 Shute Barrington was translated to Durham where Thomas Burgess was later made a prebendary. He may have known Joseph Stephenson, Vicar of Barton Seagrave until 1798 and also a prebendary in Durham. Like Sir William, Thomas Burgess was opposed to Catholic emancipation.

³⁰¹ Goodman, J., *Planting the World Joseph Banks and his Collectors: An Adventurous History of Botany*, (London, William Collins, 2020), pp 195-6.

³⁰² Webster, J., Collecting for the cabinet of freedom: the parliamentary history of Thomas Clarkson's chest, *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol.38:1, (2017), pp. 135-154.

Bishop Barrington employed James Wyatt to alter Salisbury Cathedral. While staying there Sir William admired the Bishop's garden noting in his letter that the Dean had spent £7-8,000 on improving the Palace and, recounting a two day riding trip, described the ruins of Nettley Abbey in fashionable terms as 'very large and strikingly awfull [sic]'.³⁰³ This network of relationships not only reveals Sir William's politics, religious views, his attitude towards slavery and his national profile, but also his awareness of good taste in architecture and landscape design and Mrs Dolben's interest in exotic plants. It is not a surprise that, with the income acquired through John English's marriage to Hannah Hallett, they chose to improve their Hall and garden landscape.

Sir William and John English began the improvement of their garden the following year and concentrated on alterations in Priors Close (Figure 4.5). Over the next four years they supervised the construction of a pond, the water retained by a new dam, a shrubbery walk and a monument to Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor, who had owned the Manor of Finedon.³⁰⁴ The Holly Walk and other avenues were older features of the designed landscape. During 1789 or 1790 Jacob Schnebbelie (1760-1792) drew the view from the dam towards the Hall (Figure 5.5). Schnebbelie was born in London and, having worked in his father's confectioner's shop, taught himself to draw. He then had a portfolio career teaching at several schools including Westminster School where Sir William and John English were educated and running a book and print shop at 7 Poland Street where he also lived.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ NRO D(F) 46.

³⁰⁴ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp196-203>. Bailey wrote that the Cross was 'demolished by hooligans' in about 1930. Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon Revealed*, (Finedon, 1986), Plate 35.

³⁰⁵ O'Donoghue, F. M., & Dias, R., *Schnebbelie, J., (1760-1792)*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24811>

Figure 4.5: Detail: Finedon Enclosure Apportionment Map with annotations (n.d.) [NRO Map 625]

Richard Gough suggested that the Society of Antiquaries should employ Schnebbelie as one of its draughtsmen and he contributed to *Monastic Remains and Ancient Castle in England & Wales*.³⁰⁶ John English was an early member of the Society and would have known Schnebbelie from there as well, perhaps, from Westminster School. He published the first three of a series of quarterly publications *The Antiquaries Museum* containing 4 prints each in 1791 before he fell ill and died in early 1792. Six of the drawings in the three volumes he published were of churches, monuments and sculptures in Northamptonshire including four from Higham Ferrers and

³⁰⁶ Sweet, R., Antiquaries and Antiquities in Eighteenth-Century England, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 34:2, (2001), p. 194.

Irthlingborough, both of which are within 5 kms of Finedon Hall. It is likely that these were drawn at the same time as he was visiting John English at Finedon Hall. He also drew many of the drawings for Volumes II and III of the Society's *Vetusta Monumenta* (1789, 1796). These drawings were engraved by James Basire Snr (1732-1802) who was also partially dependent on the Society for his living. He engraved the drawing of the new landscape at Finedon Hall.

Schnebbelie's drawing shows a cascade at the outflow of the pond. The cascade was destroyed in 1880 when the dam was partly demolished to drain the pond following an outbreak of typhoid.³⁰⁷ He has, however, exaggerated elements of the scene to strengthen the credentials of the landscape as an expression of tasteful, historic, landed Englishness. The sketch of the shape of the pond does not correspond to Repton's 1793 plan, the enclosure map of 1805 or the pond bed today (Figure 4.9). Schnebbelie exaggerated the curve of the pond, giving it the appearance of a river, making the island look much larger than it was and giving Queen Edith's cross greater prominence than it warranted.

Figure 4.6: Jacob Schnebbelie: Engraving of Finedon Hall, Finedon (c. 1790) [NRO Misc Print 776]

³⁰⁷ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon Revealed*, (1986), Pl. 34.

He knew that the pond would appear more fashionable and that the island, necessarily larger and adorned with a mature clump of trees, would also be seen as a fitting destination.

Queen Edith's cross, installed as recently as 1786, has been moved closer to the parkland so that Dolben antiquarianism and their longevity in British society was clearly visible. Queen Edith's Cross was located close to a road between Finedon and Wellingborough. Anyone travelling into the village will have seen the cross as they climbed the bank up from the river and at about the same time as the pond was revealed. The choice of Queen Edith (1025-1075) was almost inevitable for the future Lord of Finedon Manor who had antiquarian interests. She was the wife of Edward the Confessor and held the Manor of Finedon until the Norman Conquest. She represented a direct link between the Dolben family and pre-Norman, Anglo-Saxon England and, vicariously through her husband perhaps, virtuous, holy living. This message – the anchoring of the Dolben family in English history in their place in Finedon and a model of virtuous, benign rule – was given by John English in the view presented to visitors travelling north-west into the village and was the memory left to them as they moved towards Wellingborough on the old road and by Jacob Schnebbelie to anyone who saw the print.

Combined with other tropes of gentry ideology, Schnebbelie's print presented a gentleman's improved Hall and garden. The plantation 'behind' the dam is recently planted and a well-dressed gardener is reclining against a tree with his dog and his tools. The gardener surveys the young scene taking a well-earned rest. He has perhaps, been preparing the landscape for his employers as a small boat with three passengers is making its way across the pond towards the island. This scene is reminiscent of a tea party that Sir John English enjoyed with visitors from Thrapston in 1803.³⁰⁸ The print includes some cows and at

³⁰⁸ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 36.

Figure 4.7: Dolben, J.: Temple in the Shrubbery and in the Bowling Green at Finedon, 1815 [NRO D(F) 8]

least one deer, a symbol of high social status. The trees on the island are depicted with their trunks shorn of branches allowing Schnebbelie to depict a shrubbery growing on the north-east side of the lake. The kitchen garden wall and buildings, partly obscuring the Hall, features later criticised by Repton, are also shown.

John English's daughter Juliana (Julia) was a capable amateur artist and a sketchbook from 1815 survives. She drew several sketches of the designed landscape at Finedon Hall including two memorials placed in the garden by her father (Figure 4.7). In 1787 he erected a memorial dedicated to his school friend Edward Wortley Montagu in Westminster Abbey, later placing a memorial urn to his friend in the garden at dedicated Finedon Hall.³⁰⁹ In 1792 he built a gothic temple, large

³⁰⁹ Edward Wortley Montagu was the illegitimate son of Edward Montagu, and grandson of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Part of the inscription reads (in Latin) 'in

enough to seat several people under a canopy, in the shrubbery, dedicated to the memory of Joseph Willcocks of Barton Hall.

In a letter lamenting the likely failure of attempts to abolish slavery three years after work digging the pond began, Sir William asked John English

Pray has J. Warner finished the Dam, and will the water be pent up high enough to make a perfect fence: How does it look to the Eye, and what effect has it on the Shrubbery walk: it must, I shd think, very much improve and ease the rise of the hill up to the Root House; I shd like to know whether the Holly hedge makes a good shoot this year: Give my love to Mrs D and tell her that I shop to bring her some African seeds from Mr. Clarkson's Collection.³¹⁰

This extract suggests two observations. First, the pond is to be used as a *de facto* fence to the south of the parkland. Figure 4.8, another of Julia's sketches, looks south-east from Prior's Close, the parkland visible from the Hall, across the lake towards open ground, Grove House and 'the gardener's house'.³¹¹ Grove House was owned by Lady Raynsford, Sir William's sister and widow of Sir Nicholas Raynsford of Brixworth Hall. The sketch is post-enclosure and the land south of the pond was owned by several different people but prior to 1808 it was 'open' to the public in the sense that any passer-by was able to see across the lake and into Prior's Close from a lane close to Queen Edith Cross. By 1815 the lane had been closed and a fence between Grove House and the cottage prevented anyone walking along the south bank of the pond. This is an echo of the closure of footpaths in Lilford

memory of a friendship which began at the neighbouring royal school, continued without interruption at Oxford, was not diminished though half the world lay between, was hardly broken by death, and which, if it pleases God, shall be renewed in Heaven'. Montagu died aged 26 in a shipwreck in the East Indies.

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/edward-wortley-montagu>

³¹⁰ NRO D(F) 44.

³¹¹ NRO D(F) 8 Julia Dolben describes these properties as above but in 1808 the 'gardener's house' was the property of William Wallis, a yeoman farmer (NRO D(F) Map 625). By 1815 Grove House belonged to Lady Raynesford, widow of Nicholas Raynesford of Brixworth Hall and Sir William's sister but it was let to tenants.

Figure 4.8: Dolben, J., Pencil Sketch of Grove House, Finedon (1815)
[NRO D(F) 8]

depicted by Anthony Devis and pushed the prying eyes of the public further away from the pond and the garden.³¹² The 'old' road to Wellingborough, now Harrowden Lane, is too far back from the brow of the hill to have a sightline into the parkland.

Second, the parkland had been developed in a standard but nonetheless 'modern' way by Sir William and John English by 1789. Sir William asked how the appearance of the shrubbery has changed and if the slope to the root house looks less steep with water at the bottom. Shrubberies and root houses were not new and John English had not supervised the construction of an innovative improvement. By the 1780s both had been a common feature of parklands for more than a generation and had for example, in R. Dodsley's description of The Leasowes in his 1765 book '*The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.*', been given a wide audience. This letter is the only evidence of the root house at Finedon. Inevitably such deliberately

³¹² See Waites, I., *Extensive fields*, (2011), pp. 42-68.

fragile and rustic structures leave no trace in the landscape and we are reliant on map or documentary evidence of their existence. This means that they were probably much more widespread than the evidence suggests. Unfortunately, the 1790 Schnebbelie print does not show the root house. It was probably in the Holly Walk or the upper parts of the shrubbery near the kitchen garden.

4.3 Sir William and John English (1793-c.1814)

4.3.1 A Red Book for Finedon

Repton arrived at Finedon Hall on 23rd March 1793. At that time his business was thriving. Between 1792 and 1794 he began or completed at least 34 projects and maybe as many as 54, preparing between 27 and 30 red books.³¹³ He delivered the red book within six weeks and was clearly presented with several challenges to his views on the appropriate style for a gentleman's landscape. The opening comments in the red book appeared in Repton's *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* the following year. He recognised that at Finedon 'these avenues when collected into a large mass as they appear at a distance from the road near Wellingborough confer a considerable [] importance on the place' (Figure 4.9). In his opinion, 'unless the whole could have been modernised' the avenues should be retained in the scheme. Perhaps with a view to the budget that John English had in mind, or that Repton envisaged, the 'scale and at an expense' were such that 'the Situation would hardly justify'.³¹⁴ It is possible that the Finedon experience led him to reconsider, or clarify, his views on the improvement of some landscapes which had a strong pre-existing formal landscape.

At this early stage in his career, Repton was using his red books to work out the principles of landscape gardening that would be published in *Sketches and Hints* in 1796. Repton visited Courteenhall, about 9

³¹³ Gazetteer in Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 255-270.

³¹⁴ Repton, H., *Finedon Hall Red Book*, (1793). Access to the Finedon red book has not been granted. I have had access to an incomplete and unpaginated copy.

kms south of Northampton in March 1791, although he did not produce a red book until 2 years later.³¹⁵ He lamented the grandeur of the Courteenhall stable block which, he believed, threatened the character of the Hall.³¹⁶ The c.1780 stable block preceded Repton's visit by a year and he is partly expressing his disappointment that the landscape was not designed as a whole; the same problem he later encountered at Finedon Hall.³¹⁷

After presenting the contrast between 'the perfection of Landscape Gardening' and 'Ancient Gardening' Repton described three 'difficulties' with the Finedon landscape. The difficulties were as much social as artistic. The proximity of the vicarage, school and church, beautiful buildings in their own right, to the east, the visibility of the village and the scale of Grove House to the south and the obstruction of the view south-west by the kitchen garden, stables and offices all combined to threaten the character of the property. That is, they limited the ability of the property and its landscape to reflect the appropriate character of a gentleman's residence.

Repton wrote 'To the south the large [mansions] of Lady Rainsford even more than the village itself are incompatible with modern ideas of Unity which suppose the house unincumbered by alien property.'
[sic].³¹⁸ Elizabeth Raynesford may once have been a Dolben but she was now a Raynesford and the property was no longer under the control of the Dolben line. Furthermore, it distracted attention from the Hall which should be the sole object of attention for the visitor and traveller. His solution was as dramatic as his text was understated. He proposed that 'Mrs Raynesford's [sic] house with the adjoining lanes must be converted into lawn and wood'.³¹⁹ The buildings diminished the status of the owner rather than enhancing it. Repton wanted to establish

³¹⁵ I am grateful to the owners of the Courteenhall red book for giving me access to it.

³¹⁶ Repton, H., *Courteenhall Red Book*, (1793).

³¹⁷ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 202-3.

³¹⁸ Repton, H., *Finedon Hall Red Book*, (1793).

³¹⁹ Repton, H., *Finedon Hall Red Book*, (1793).

an appropriate distance between the Hall and other buildings and create views worthy of a gentleman of taste.

Repton included an ambitious new approach to the Hall from the south that ignored the South Avenue, went past the demolished Grove House to the west, crossing the Town Brook where the existing pond begins and approaching the Hall from the west (Figure 4.9). He represented the new approach with a dotted orange line (1), but recognised that, despite its incompatibility with ‘all modern notions [of landscape gardening]’ John English would not abandon the South Avenue. Repton was resigned to ‘be content to approach the house along the avenue’.³²⁰ The South Avenue remained in existence throughout the nineteenth century (Figures 4.9 & 10).³²¹ The avenues at Finedon are a

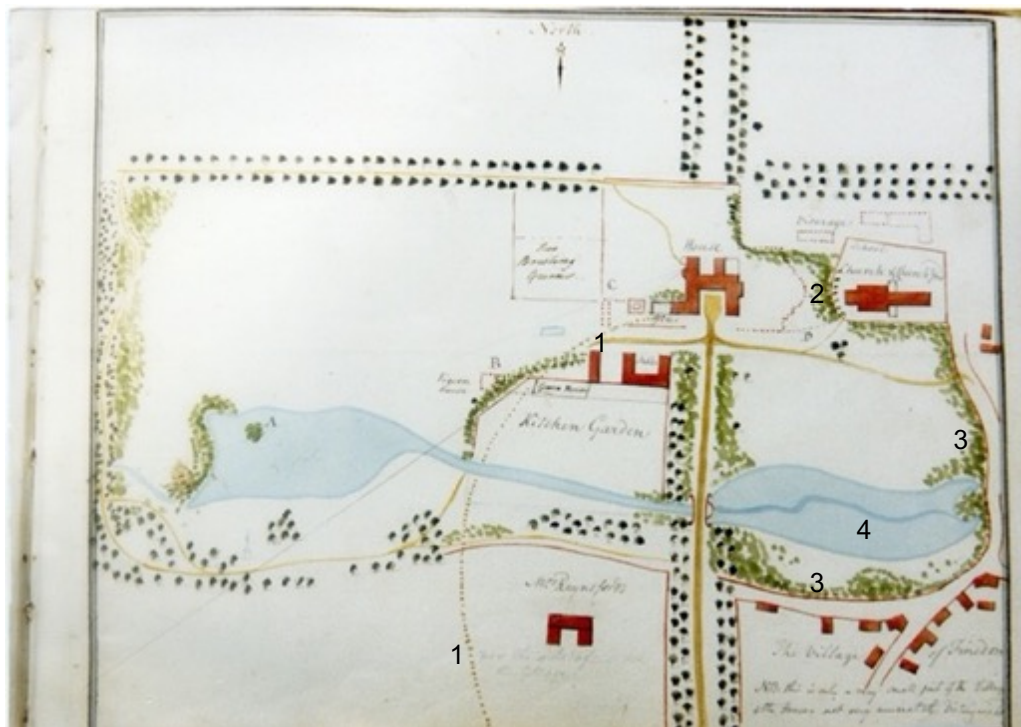


Figure 4.9: Repton, H., Plan, Finedon Red Book (1793)

³²⁰ Repton, H., *Finedon Hall Red Book*, (1793). I am grateful to Carol Fitzgerald of the Northamptonshire Gardens Trust for giving me a transcript of the text and a copy of the sketches from the Red Book. Unfortunately, the transcript is incomplete and the sketches of poor quality, but it is unlikely that the omissions materially alter the understanding of Repton's views or intentions.

³²¹ I am grateful to Finedon Historical Society for giving me digital copies of these images.



Figure 4.10: 'The Hall from the Grove, Finedon'
[Postcard courtesy of Finedon Historical Society]



Figure 4.11: South Avenue looking towards at Finedon Hall
[Photograph courtesy of Finedon Historical Society]

Figure 4.12: Julia Dolben: Pencil Sketch of Finedon Vicarage (1815)
[NRO D(F) 8]

prime example of Repton's pragmatism and sensitivity to his client's circumstances.

He was also aware of the limitations of his influence in the view to the east where 'This view, as I have already observed, is incumbered by the vicarage and even by the church [notwithstanding] its beauty. If the vicarage and the school are removed, the church might be [insulated], but I do not consider this as absolutely necessary;'. The solution was to improve the view in three ways. First, by planting trees between the Hall and the buildings (Figure 4.9) (2). Second, a boundary belt of shrubs and trees that would indicate the boundary of the Dolben parkland very clearly (3). Third, by an extensive alteration to the Town Brook east of the south avenue to create a second pond and by planting on the south bank of the pond (4). Repton described this view as 'a circumstance [which could become] an object of beauty rather than of regret'.³²² The view of the village on the south side of the Town Brook would become

³²² Repton, H., *Finedon Hall Red Book*, (1793).

'perfect in itself when seen from the library' when the brook had been widened to give the appearance of a natural river; the Town Brook could not be seen from the Hall because of the steep slope.

Repton wanted to remove the Vicarage and School, Grove House and its neighbouring cottages, but he was relaxed about the proximity of the village. Indeed, he wrote that 'From the opposite shore near the public house, the view will be very striking'. The design is as much about the views of the Hall and landscape of the gentleman presented to travellers as it is about views from the Hall. Figure 4.13 is a reproduction of Repton's sketch, in very poor condition, which showed the view and assumed the malting house and pigeon house had been removed and the additional pond dug. The bridge, probably a recent rebuild, would have disguised the dam in Repton's project.³²³ This view, read in conjunction with Repton's plan, reveals a familiar Repton device. A new sunken fence (shown at 'D' in Figure 4.9) created a viewing area raised above an open, lawned foreground which a slope

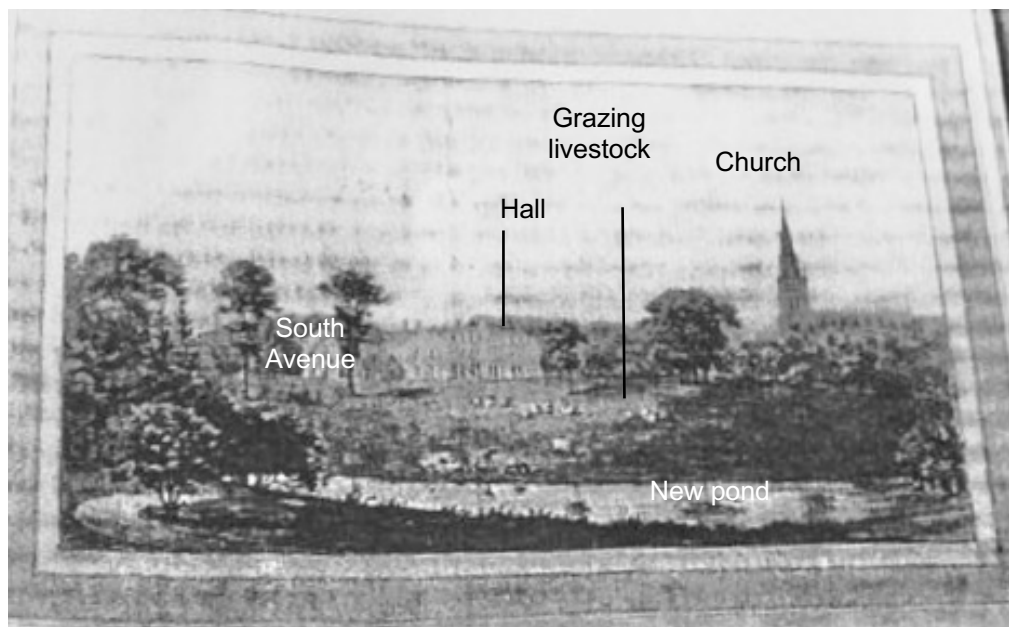


Figure 4.13: Repton, H., Sketch of the view from the south of the river to the Hall and Church, Finedon Red Book (1793)

³²³ Bowsher, J., *Spanning the Centuries: The Historic Bridges of Northamptonshire*, (Northampton, Northamptonshire County Council, 2017), p. 123.

led down to an attention holding 'natural' looking middle ground; a river. This was typical of the period. Repton proposed a similar arrangement at Barton Hall, also in 1793, and at Harlestone Park in 1808. John Webb, following William Emes, proposed similar alterations at Brockhall in 1799. Beyond the water there was planting which formed part of the background, although at Finedon Hall the proximity of the Hall to the village meant that the village was included in background to the view.

Repton's decision to include the village in the view from the Hall and garden, and his decision to depict this view in reverse, that is from the village south of the brook, is informative. The inclusion of the village in the view affirmed the paternalist relationship between the 'polite' area of the village, the Hall and the Church. Repton's sketch suggests that the pleasure ground and the lawn were partially open to the village. Repton was reinforcing the links between the gentry and the villagers for whose well-being they saw themselves as responsible. The reality, as the early nineteenth century progressed, may have been rather different, but the belief in the role of the gentry for 'their' people is expressed in material form in the diminutive size and perforated nature of the planted boundary. Indeed, the gradual reduction of power the Dolbens had over the village may have encouraged them not to hide behind walls and planting but to be seen to be part of it.

Repton was creating a view from the Hall to the south and east but did not want to hide the parkland or Hall from the village or from travellers at the Bell Inn. The present Bell Inn occupied sixteenth century farm buildings that, by 1806, belonged to Sir William. Following enclosure, the street 'Bell Hill', was constructed and the Bell Inn moved from its original location on the old road to the west.³²⁴ It was therefore the old position that Repton was referring to and which he describes on the plan as 'The Village of Finedon', although he makes clear that it is only

³²⁴ Historic England List Entry Number 1040659 & 1040660; <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1040659> & <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1040660>.

a fraction of the village. It was this view that Repton chose to include in the red book. This may have been partly to hide the fact that the village would be visible but it also showed John English how he and his status would be seen by visitors to the village. The antiquarian John English was being sold an image of his position in society in a view from the public house, which today claims to have been granted a licence by Queen Edith in 1042; a view which included his Hall, and the parish church. Here, Repton was suggesting, is a landscape which embodies the role of the gentry in their community. The gentry providing the conditions in which community prospers materially, and the church providing the moral guidance for their behaviour and spiritual existence. By choosing not to obscure the Hall and parish Church, Repton, and by implication John English, were making a strong statement about the rightful place of the Hall in the social order of the village and the Church in the moral and religious economy of village life in particular, and society in general. The proposed landscape was a declaration to travellers that here was a stable community in which the gentry, in their 'polite quarter' cared for their tenants while they in return were expected to work hard and behave appropriately. In this sense, this sketch can be seen as intensely ideological.

Further west Repton was concerned with the kitchen garden and the two houses south of the pond. He appears to have approved of the pond and shrubbery but was scathing about the view from the house writing in the red book that 'The most beautiful shape of ground is that which falls to the south [west], and this is entirely hidden by the stables kitchen garden and offices, all which ought [] to have [been] to the east of the house'.³²⁵ He went further saying that 'the most injurious part of this landscape [are the] unsightly buildings at B and C ... such a foreground is a disgrace to the Landscape, and degrades the lake to a mere pool or fish-pond adjoining to the farm-yard.'. Remedies for the 'disgrace' were offered. The kitchen garden was to be moved to the

³²⁵ Repton, H., *Finedon Hall Red Book*, (1793).

north-east of the Hall, and the lake was to be given an island planted with alder trees to divert the eye and break a straight line of sight. In an indication of Repton's pragmatism, he recognised that the kitchen garden was unlikely to be relocated and he suggested it could be disguised by a low shrubbery over which the otherwise attractive lake would be seen. This would have rendered the view from the Hall acceptable.

4.3.2 A Dolben response

Sir William and John English's response to the proposals in the red book was limited. The best evidence for any actions taken by John English is the 1808 Enclosure Allotment Map (Figure 4.14). This map was not intended to portray anything other than the ownership of land in the clearest manner possible. Consequently, while field boundaries and property locations can be assumed to be sufficiently accurate for conclusions to be drawn, topographical features such as the location of open woodland, and especially individual trees cannot. This is particularly the case if a plantation was young; the map was drawn less than fifteen years after Repton's visit. Nevertheless, there is sufficient detail in this map to draw reasonable conclusions about the response to most of Repton's suggestions.

Figure 4.14, the 1808 enclosure map and Figure 4.15, Repton's red book plan, are annotated to highlight Repton's key proposals and the Dolben's responses. Repton suggested an island in the pond (1) that would distract the eye from the kitchen garden and pigeon house. He also proposed a more complex south shoreline than the 1805 map suggests and in a different place to the shore in Schnebbelie's drawing, where the pond looks more like an expanded river. There is evidence in the current pond bed that the larger island, which corresponds to the island in the Schnebbelie drawing and Julia Dolben sketches, was present but it is unlikely that the other island was ever constructed.

The south shoreline of the pond bed today suggests that the 1805 map is accurate. This view is also supported by the 1st edition 25" OS map of 1884. Repton proposed tree and shrubbery planting around part of the lake, near the kitchen garden, to hide the wall and to provide a shady walk and on the south bank near Grove House (2). Here, the evidence is inconclusive. It is not possible to be certain about the extent of the planting that was present before Repton visited in 1793, nor can the 1805 map be relied on as evidence of the absence of planting. It is likely that there was a plantation near the dam, and sporadic or clump planting between Grove House and the Kitchen Garden but it cannot be said with any certainty that they were the result of Repton's visit.

Figure 4.14: Detail: Finedon Enclosure Apportionment Map (1805) with annotations showing the Dolben response [NRO Map 1080]

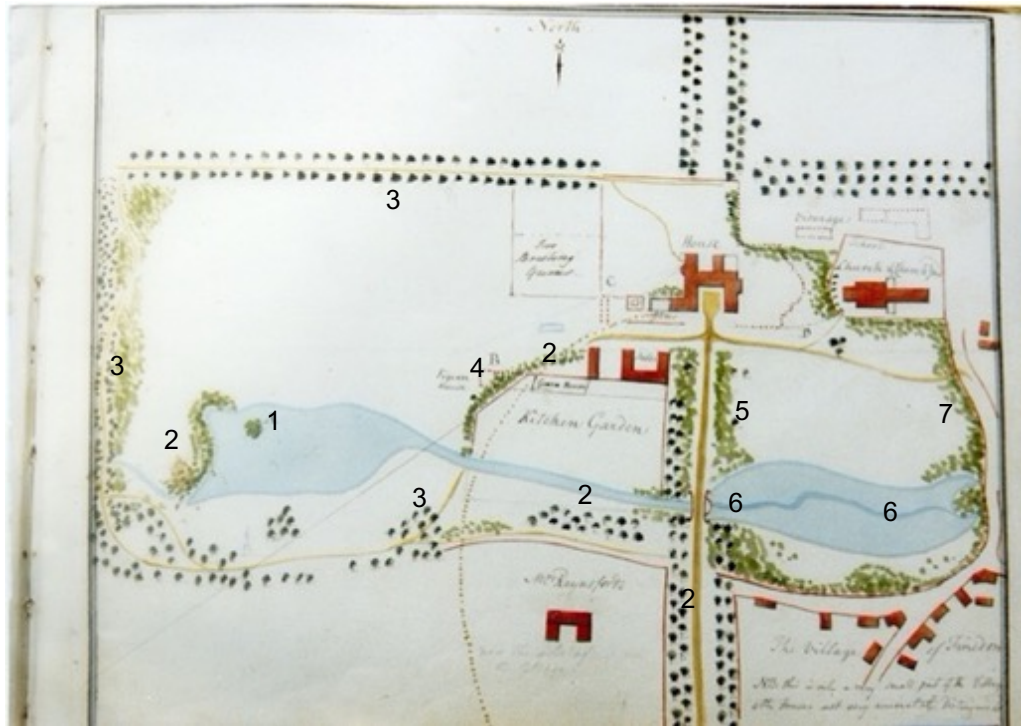


Figure 4.15: Repton, H., Plan, Finedon Red Book (1793)
with annotations showing the Dolben response

Repton's planting here was, in part, to provide interest for a circuit walk (3), that followed the Holly Walk, the hillside to the dam, the south bank of the pond and crossed the Town Brook over a bridge and returned to the house in a shrubbery alongside the Kitchen Garden. Repton would have preferred to see the kitchen garden relocated but recognised that a compromise plan was more likely to be executed. He wanted the pigeon house (4) to be demolished to create a site line to the pond. However, there was no attempt to create the site line that Repton proposed or to improve the view of the pond from the Hall.

To the east and south-east of the Hall, John English made very few alterations. It is not known if the South Avenue was thickened with additional planting (5) but, as far as it can be trusted, the 1805 map would suggest that it was not. Similarly, the south bank of the Town Brook was not cleared, it is unlikely that many if any trees were planted and there is no doubt that the new pond was not dug (6). If it had been,

the late eighteenth century bridge carrying the South Avenue would also have functioned as a dam and there is no evidence under the bridge to suggest that there was ever a dam. Further, the new pond would also have been destroyed in 1880 during the typhoid outbreak in the village and, while the destruction of the 1786 dam and pond is noted, there is no record of an upper lake being drained.

The small enclosure of 1765-70 closed Church Lane, an extension of Church Street. It ran east-west to the south of the churchyard and joined the South Avenue south of the Hall. The churchyard was smaller in 1790. Repton saw this as an ugly intrusion into the view east from the Hall and the 1805 map suggests that the lane was removed. However, the OS map is more ambiguous and Julia Dolben's sketches also suggest that a lane remained. The evidence is not clear but it is more likely that the 1805 map was not interested in the detail of lanes within Sir William's Hall and parkland and consequently did not include a rough lane that survived into the twentieth century. As Repton anticipated, his radical suggestion that the vicarage and schoolhouse

Figure 4.16: Dolben, J., Pencil Sketch of Finedon Hall, Finedon (1815)

[NRO D(F) 8]

should be demolished was not followed. Few of Repton's proposals, beyond some planting, found expression in the landscape; a common enough fate for his designs. In 1793 he was engaged in a large number of projects in at least a dozen counties from Kent to Cheshire and Suffolk to Herefordshire. The apparent lack of activity at Finedon Hall raises questions about the Dolben's decision to commission Repton to produce a red book and to do very little, apart, presumably, from displaying it.

4.3.3 Dolben motivations

In 1793 Sir William was Member of Parliament for Oxford University and spent much of this time in London; John English managed the estate. There is no surviving evidence of the role that Charlotte or Hannah Dolben played in managing the household; all the surviving letters concerning the improvement of the Hall and parkland are between father and son. The red book was addressed to John English. However, while it is impossible to be sure who the main player was in decisions made about improvements, there is no reason to doubt that Sir William and Charlotte Dolben, John English and Hannah Dolben all participated in decision making. There might be three reasons why the household and the family took a minimal approach to Repton's ideas.

First, they may have been content with the landscape that they had created. They may have recognised that the views in all directions were not as good as they could have been but were nevertheless, enviable. Sir William was noted for his 'mildest manners a cultivated mind and a most benevolent nature'.³²⁶ Second, it is possible that, after more than ten years of improvements to the Hall and parkland the family had decided that their energy could be better spent elsewhere. John English had an interest in book collecting and antiquarianism. The combined impact of Sir William's work against slavery and John English's

³²⁶ LoGerfo, J. W., 'Sir William Dolben' (1973), p. 438.

historical pro-occupations may have depleted their enthusiasm for further disruption and expense in their landscape.

Third, a financial crisis, with roots in rapid growth from 1788 leading to a greater reliance on paper based financial instruments and the declaration of war with France on 1 Feb 1793, was among the worst of the eighteenth century.³²⁷ The atmosphere of uncertainty that peaked during the late spring and summer of 1793 coincided with the period following John English's receipt of the red book when the family would have been making decisions about how to proceed on the recommendations that Repton had made. They may have been reluctant to take on too much risk in such uncertain times. There is however, little reason to believe that John English was particularly cautious in his spending and it is most likely that 'improvement fatigue' limited the Dolben's enthusiasm for more disruption. In the next section the period of John English's Lordship is described and as an impression of 'John English the man' emerges, further consideration is given to his motivations.

4.4 Sir John English Dolben Bt. (1814-1837)

4.4.1 Background

John English was 64 when he became the 4th Baronet and Lord of Finedon Manor. He had been, for all practical purposes, running the estate for several decades before he inherited it. He had married Hannah Hallett of the Hallett cabinet making family in 1760. Hannah and her son William Somerset Dolben were secondary heirs of the Hallett estate should the primary heirs have failed to produce children.³²⁸ John English married into a very successful artisan family who, by Hannah's generation had made the transition to gentry status. In return he received a substantial income from investments which

³²⁷ Hoppit, J., Financial Crises in Eighteenth-Century England, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 39.1, (1986), pp. 54-56.

³²⁸ William Hallett's will (2 Jan 1783), PROB 11/1086/105. Hannah Dolben's father died before her grandfather.

enabled the family to secure their continuing status as leading gentry in Northamptonshire and on the national stage. This section shows that the funding may have enabled an improvement to the Hall and landscape, a collection of books and medallions that was well known and supported a high profile as a philanthropist and antiquarian.

4.4.2 John English 1779-1817

In 1780 William Somerset Dolben was born; the first of Hannah and John English's four children and the only male heir. As John Johnson was working on improvements to the Hall and Sir William was returned to parliament as the MP for Oxford University, the future of the family would have seemed reasonably secure. John English was active through the 1780s and 90s in Northamptonshire life. He participated in the philanthropic life of the county chairing the committee reviewing the plans and budget for a new County Hospital in Northampton in 1790.³²⁹ He was active in the social life of the county acting as co-steward with the Rt. Hon. Lord Compton and Fiennes Trotman Esq. and organising the 1788 Northampton race and ball season.³³⁰ He continued to build his book collection subscribing, for example to *The works of the Rt. Rev. Thomas Wilson, Bp. of Sodor and Man*, in 1780 at a cost of 2 Guineas and, with his father and daughters, to the Rev. J. Mastin's 1792 book *The History and Antiquities of Naseby*.³³¹ His book collection remained well known and was described in 1895 as a 'valuable library' of 'about 1,000 volumes amongst which are several editions of the Fathers ... a copy of Cranmer's Bible, 1541; a first Prayer Book of Edward VI, 1549' (Figure 4.17).³³²

Membership of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce brought John English into contact with a variety of men and women. Early members included The Duchess of

³²⁹ *Northampton Mercury*, 8 May 1790

³³⁰ *Northampton Mercury*, 6 Sept 1788

³³¹ *Bath Chronical and Weekly Gazette*, 16 Nov 1780

³³² *Northampton Mercury*, 21 June 1895



Figure 4.17: John English Dolben's 'Monk's Cell' Book Collection
(photograph by the author)

Northumberland, the composer Thomas Arne, the architect James Adam, the furniture maker Thomas Chippendale and the landscaper Lancelot Brown. By the 1770s the Society had a membership of more than 2,500 and continued to promote improvements in agriculture and mechanised production as well as the arts.³³³ Between 1755 and 1783 the Society gave a reward for example, of £1665-18-2 and 3 honorary gold medals for 'planting Vines and Mulberry Trees, and producing Silk and Cotton'.³³⁴ For a family concerned to improve the productivity of the land and the beauty of the landscape membership of this Society was an entirely natural way of embracing the late eighteenth-century improvement culture to which they were committed. The Society was an expression of the indivisibility of the drive to enclose and create picturesque landscapes. They were expressions of the same

³³³ Bennett, S., 'Little more ... than of a Society in the moon': Publicising the work of the Society for the encouragement of the arts, Manufactures and Commerce (1754-1900) first given as an address to the RSA and published on *Institutions of Literature: 1700-1900*: <http://institutionsofliterature.net/2017/08/16/susan-bennett-on-the-society-of-arts/>

³³⁴ *Transactions of the Society, Instituted at London, for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, Vol. 1, (1783), p. 22.

'disinterested principles and actuated by the most liberal motives (the benefit of mankind in general and of their country in particular)'.³³⁵

Sir William and John English would have been aware that the Society rewarded Elizabeth Fanshawe, a young woman and accomplished artist, and it is likely that Hannah and John English encouraged their daughter's sketching.³³⁶ Julia English's 1815 sketches are images of a mature gentry family landscape used for pleasure and containing memorials to family friends, the scene embraced by the typical symbols of late eighteenth century gentry ideology. Like Schnebbelie, she sketched the pond from the dam but she placed the Hall and the church centre stage (Figure 4.16). Representing the social order as it should be, the squire and vicar are master of all they survey and the guarantors of stability, morality and well-being. The scene is embraced by trees. The Holly Walk is clear to the left, planting on the banks of the pond frames the Hall and echoes the vertical lines of the church. In the centre of the sketch, smaller planting, the shrubbery walk, does not successfully hide the kitchen garden but reveals a boat house and gothic structure. The boat house is clearly used as an occupied rowing boat rests on the right-hand side of the pond. These sketches express the ideology into which Julia Dolben had been enculturated and which the Dolben landscape expressed.

The Society's enthusiasm for encouraging the arts may also have led John English to sit for the young Scottish sculptor and artist James Tassie. He was pioneering a new technique for making glass paste medallions. The Society gave £1547-3s 'For Basso Relievos, Casting in bronze, Carvings in Wood, Statues in Marble, Cameos, Pastes, and Profile of his Majesty' between 1755 and 1783. The Society stated that it aimed 'to diffuse an elegant taste among those in a higher sphere of

³³⁵ *Transactions of the Society*, Vol. 1, (1783), p. v.

³³⁶ Piana, P., Watkins, C., & Balzaretto, R., Art and Landscape History: British artists in nineteenth-century Val d'Aosta (north-west Italy), *Landscape History*, Vol. 39:2 (2018), p. 6.



Figure 4.18: Tassie, J., Sir John English Dolben, C. 1750-1837. 4th Baronet of Finedon [National Galleries of Scotland]

life, honorary premiums are annually bestowed on young persons of reason and eminence, who may probably become, hereafter, the patrons or patronesses of the fine arts'.³³⁷ It is reasonable to suppose that the Society supported James Tassie, who had moved to London in 1766, in his early attempts to develop his glass paste process.³³⁸ In

³³⁷ *Transactions of the Society*, Vol. 1, (1783), p. 48.

³³⁸ *Transactions of the Society*, Vol. 1, (1783), p. 44.

1929 *The Scotsman* reported that his first known medallion, produced in 1773/4 was of John English Esq. but the medallion, which is about 8cm high, cracked as the technique had not yet been perfected (Figure 4.18).³³⁹ Tassie went on to have a successful career making medallions of leading figures including Catherine the Great, Prince Charles Edward Stuart, George III, William Pitt and Adam Smith.³⁴⁰

This was not the only image of John English that was made in his lifetime. An unknown artist painted, in oil a small portrait (75cmx63cm) of him in 1802 when he was Vice-President of the Northamptonshire Preservative Society of which he was the founder. The Society met for the first time in October 1789 partly with the aim of improving resuscitation techniques; there was concern about the number of people drowning in the Nen at Northampton at the time. It is thought that he encouraged a Doctor Curry to write a book on resuscitation in 1792. Although most of the 500 books printed were sold in Northamptonshire, some were sold in London and a French translation was made. An updated second edition in 1815 was dedicated to the Duke of Gloucester who was the patron of the Royal Humane Society after which the Northamptonshire Preservative Society had been modelled.³⁴¹

In 1806, Charlotte Dolben, the fourth and youngest child of John English and Hannah, married Rev. Samuel Paul.³⁴² He had recently been appointed curate and had bought the advowson from Sir William by the time that the absentee Vicar, Rev. Sir Charles Cave died in 1810. He then appointed himself Vicar, remaining in post until his death in 1847. He took his responsibilities seriously having been appalled at the lack of attention paid to the parish by his predecessor taking an

³³⁹ *The Scotsman*, 6 April 1929.

³⁴⁰ <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/search?artists%5B5448%5D=5448>

³⁴¹ See Marsh, R., Dr. James Currie and the Northamptonshire Preservative Society, pp. 23-29, in Bennetts, F. E. (ed.), *Proceedings of the History of Anaesthesia Society*, Vol. 18, (1995).

³⁴² *Gentlemen's Magazine*, Vol. 77, (1806), p. 874.

active role in the life of the village, including serving as magistrate. It is unknown whether he shared John English's (and Rev. Sir Charles Cave's) antiquarian interests but, by the time of his death, he had been influenced by Tractarianism. After the opening formula, his will begins 'I commit my body to the earth and to be buried according to the correct rites of our true Catholic Mother the Church of Christ in this Kingdom in the assured hope of blessed resurrection through my Saviour Jesus Christ'.³⁴³ The Dolben family shared many priorities with members of the Clapham Sect but their ecclesiology was quite different.

The following year (1807) Hannah Dolben died. Rev. John Mastin of Naseby, recorded in his memoirs that John Nethercoat Esq. of Heslebeeche Hall believed that he had bought the Finedon estate.

'He [Nethercoat] purchased of William Somerset Dolben Esq' the whole of the Dolben Property [sic] at Finedon. The Mansion House and about eleven hundred acres of land in that Lordship. But Mr Dolben dying before the business was finally settled, Mr Nethercoat was disappointed, and remained at Heslebeeche,'³⁴⁴

It is not known whether Sir William and/or John English wished to sell, or if they did, why. Neither is it known why William Somerset would be managing the sale; although Sir William was eighty years old. It is likely, however, that in 1811 Finedon Hall was being let to the Earl of Egmont. Paterson's Road Book (1811) featured Finedon on two routes.³⁴⁵ Finedon is mentioned four times. The first shows that the Earl of Egmont was resident at Finedon: 'Great Harrowden, Earl Fitzwilliam. About two miles to the r. of Great Harrowden, at Finedon, Earl of Egmont'.³⁴⁶ The second is more ambiguous referring to the Earl of Egmont 'two miles beyond Irthlingborough and 'John Gray Esq.' at

³⁴³ TNA PROB-11-2062-181.

³⁴⁴ Vials, C., & Collins, K., eds., *A Georgian Country Parson: The Revd. John Mastin of Naseby*, (Northampton, Northampton Record Society, 2004), p. 59.

³⁴⁵ Paterson, D., *A New and Accurate Description of all the Direct and Principal Cross Roads in England and Wales and part of the Roads of Scotland*, (London, 1811), p. 155, 196, 318, 431.

³⁴⁶ Paterson, D., *Roads in England and Wales*, (1811), p. 155.

Finedon.³⁴⁷ John Gray was a local gentleman farmer who was renting Grove House, Elizabeth Rainsford having died in 1810. However, two entries describe the senior gentleman and resident of the Hall in Finedon as ‘Sir William [or Wm.] Dolben, Bart., while the Index describes Sir William, rather prematurely as ‘Dolben, late Sir W.’ and the Earl of Egmont is also said to be living at Sundon House in Bedfordshire.³⁴⁸ The evidence is further complicated by entries in the 1807 version of Paterson’s Road Book, described on the title page as an improved second edition. While Sir William is listed as the owner of Finedon Hall, Barton Seagrave is shown as still belonging to ‘Wilcocks Esq^r.’³⁴⁹ This edition draws heavily on Eyre and Jefferys 1791 map and, despite its claims to be accurate, Paterson’s Road Book was unreliable when it was published. However, even if fact checking was inconsistent, the listing of the Earl of Egmont at Finedon at all suggests that he must have been living there for at least some period of time before 1811. Despite the lack of corroborating evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that John English left Finedon following the death of his wife and resolved to sell the estate. At some point he changed his mind and chose to let it before returning during the 1810s.

4.4.3 John English 1817-1837

John English was mentioned in regional newspapers in the early years of the 1800s. In 1802 he gave one Guinea towards a statue in honour of the deceased Duke of Bedford and in 1805 he was listed as a one Guinea *per annum* subscriber to the Society for the Discharge and Relief of Persons Imprisoned for Small Debts and attended the annual meeting at Craven Street, Strand, London.³⁵⁰ However, following the death of his wife there are very few mentions of him in newspapers or the archives until 1819. During that period his father died (1814) and

³⁴⁷ Paterson, D., *Roads in England and Wales*, (1811), p. 196.

³⁴⁸ Paterson, D., *Roads in England and Wales*, (1811), p. 318, 431, 339.

³⁴⁹ Paterson, D., *Paterson’s British Itinerary Being A New and Accurate Delineation and Description of all the Direct and Principal Cross Roads of Great Britain in Two Volumes, The 2nd Edition Improved*, Vol. 1, (London, 1807), p. 255.

³⁵⁰ *Sun (London)*, 12 June 1802, *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 20 May 1805

less than three years later his only son, Lt. Col. William Somerset Dolben also died. An obituary for William Somerset in the Stamford Mercury read

On the 1st inst. at Finedon, Northamptonshire, of a typhus fever, aged 36, most deeply lamented, William Somerset Dolben, Esq. only son of Sir English, and grandson of the later venerable Sir William Dolben – By his death the name of the branch of the family, traced through many honored characters to the time of Edward 4th, will, in all likelihood, be extinct. – He was sound in his religion, correct in his practice and amiable in his manners. The reader can therefore form a true judgement in what degree the early and sudden loss of him must be deplored.³⁵¹ [sic]

John English was 67.

He re-emerged onto the social scene in 1819 when he attended the Northampton Grand Music Festival where he will have met most of the local nobility, baronets and gentleman including Charles Tibbits, Thomas Reeve Thornton and Robert Andrew.³⁵² The following year he set off on a tour of Italy. There is little contemporary evidence of the trip but his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* recorded that 'about 1820 he visited Italy, taking with him Mr. G. Tytler, a Scotch [sic] artist, who afterwards published a large panoramic view of Edinburgh and also several lithographic views in Italy, in which the figure of Sir English frequently occurs.'³⁵³ George Tytler (1787-1849) was an engraver and artist who exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition from 1823-1825. He produced three landscapes of Godmanchester and Huntingdon in modern Cambridgeshire between 1817 and 1822 and a watercolour of the 'Skeleton of the Missouri Leviathan' (1842) is attributed to him. He was sufficiently well known and respected for Frederick Christian Lewis (1779-1856) to make a coloured engraving of a 'British view of

³⁵¹ *Stamford Mercury*, 14 Feb 1817

³⁵² *Northampton Mercury*, 25 Sept 1819.

³⁵³ Quoted in Isham, G., *A Northamptonshire Worthy: Sir John English Dolben, 4th Bart. Of Finedon (1750-1837)*, *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Vol. 4:5, (1971), p. 278.

Huntingdon' in 1817 'after George Tytler'. He was probably most well-known for a pictorial alphabet in which each letter was formed out of a Roman ruin. He is likely to have made the sketches on which the alphabet was based while in Italy with John English. These sketches suggest that the pair spent some time in Rome, Ravenna, Rimini, Florence and Spoleto in Umbria. Other letters are based on Tytler's drawings in Britain including St. Ives in Huntingdonshire.³⁵⁴



Figure 4.19: Tytler, G. *Sir John English Dolben, Bart.* (1819)
[British Museum (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)]

³⁵⁴ See Brown, I. G., The illustrated 'Grand Tour; alphabets of George Tytler, 1820-1825, *The British Art Journal*, Vol 19:3, (2018), pp. 56-63; <https://www.norrismuseum.org.uk/discover/library-collection/library-pwd/>

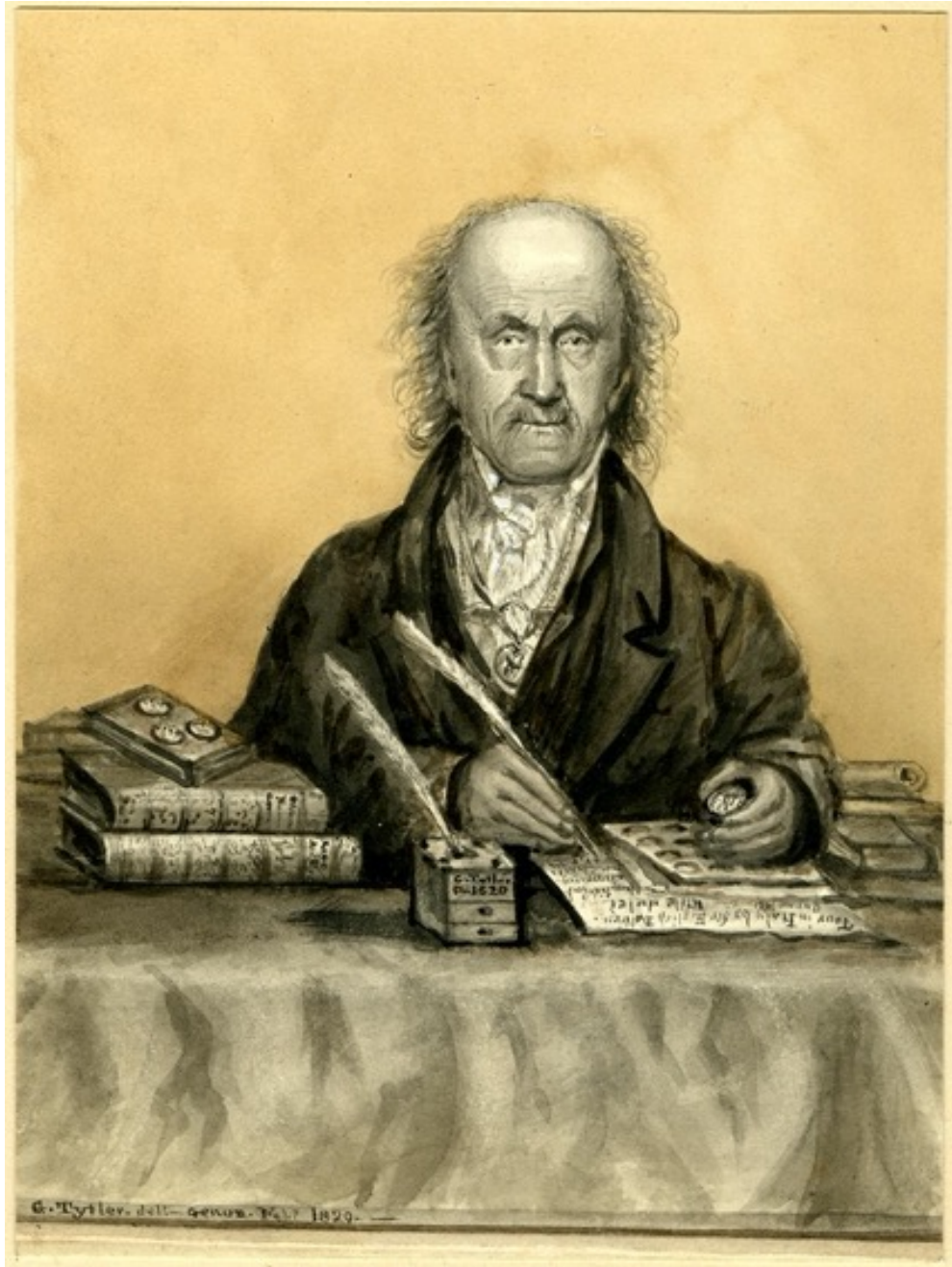


Figure 4.20: Tytler, G. *Sir John English Dolben, Bart.* (1820)
[British Museum (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)]

Two conclusions can be drawn from John English's trip to Italy with George Tytler. There is no evidence that John English travelled when he was a young man. That does not mean that he didn't, but it is likely that he, an antiquarian, had long wanted to visit the European mainland. From his late twenties his responsibilities at Finedon and then war with France would have prevented his travelling. By 1820, when he was 70,

he may have thought that if he was going to go to Italy, he would have to go soon. He may also have thought that the trip might be a helpful distraction from the bereavements of the previous decades. Tytler made an engraving of John English sitting at a desk in 1819 prior to their trip and a black ink and watercolour of the same scene in February 1820, probably while they were in Genoa, Italy (Figures 4.19 & 20). The details of these drawings are subtly different and reveal John English's cultural hinterland, a hinterland which helps to explain his decision not to make extensive alterations to the Finedon Hall landscape after Repton's visit in 1793 and his unchanging attitude to his relationship with Finedon village. Both drawings show John English as an old, balding man with several books and coin collections. He is inspecting a coin and, rather improbably, writing on a sheet which is partly covered by a coin holder. The earlier engraving has two sheets, one headed 'Moderate Politicians in Church and State', the other 'Humane Society Northampton'. One of the books to John English's right is 'County History Vol. 1'. Here are John English's life-long interests.

In 1826 he chaired a Wellingborough-based campaign to petition the government to free slaves in British colonies. Describing slaves as those '(who, although with the same rational Intelligence, and possessed of immortal Souls equally Valuable as the most of our Race) are permitted to remain Year after Year in a State of the greatest Suffering and moral Degradation'.³⁵⁵ The language of this petition shows that John English understood the classical arguments that were used to support slavery.³⁵⁶ The Humane or 'Preservative' Society in

³⁵⁵ *Northampton Mercury*, 4 Feb 1826

³⁵⁶ John English's language shows that he was aware of the Aristotelean concept of 'natural slavery' that was used as a basis for the Council of Valladolid (a Catholic conference called by King Charles I of Spain, which deliberated in 1550/51, to decide whether methods adopted to conquer, convert and enslave indigenous peoples were just. He explicitly denies that indigenous peoples were 'barbarians' as they were rational and had souls, like anyone from western civilisation and regardless, he implies, whether they had a Christian faith. See Pharo, L. K., *The Council of Valladolid (1550-1551): a European disputation about the human dignity of indigenous peoples of the Americas*, pp. 95-100, in Düwell, M., Braavig, J., Brownsword, R., & Mieth, D., Eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Northampton reflected his continuing interest in improving culture, productivity and trade that has already been in his membership of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Art, Manufacture and Commerce. It is possible that his choice of George Tytler, who was a 'journeyman' engraver and artist, was an expression of his desire to support (relatively) young artists just as James Tassie had been supported. The volume, an unnamed County History, reflects John English's antiquarianism; by his death he was one of the longest serving fellows of the Antiquarian Society.

The watercolour replaces several opened envelopes on John English's left; he is depicted in 1819 as an active correspondent, with a scroll and books. This indicates a man who is travelling and therefore receiving less correspondence. In this drawing John English is writing an account of his tour; the sheet reads 'Tour in Italy by Sir English Dolben *Utile dulci*'. *Utile dulci*, is drawn from a longer quote from Horace's *Ars Poetica* – *Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci* – He who mixes pleasure and profit gains everyone's approval. This could be seen as a summary of John English's view of himself, of the ideal eighteenth century gentleman and his experience of the Italian landscapes that were the origin of the idea. John English frequently subscribed to, and attended annual dinners for, charities such as the relief of Destitution in the Highlands of Scotland, the Irish Clergy, or the Marine Society, but there is no evidence to suggest that he was anything other than a paternalist who held traditional views about the responsibilities of his class to govern in a virtuous and beneficent manner. He saw himself as neither a radical nor an arch-conservative. His benign, paternalist self-perception continued through his life even as, as will be shown in the next section, the size, social profile and power dynamics of Finedon changed in the second half of his life.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-handbook-of-human-dignity/council-of-valladolid-15501551-a-european-disputation-about-the-human-dignity-of-indigenous-peoples-of-the-americas/9F33A874C0096A66060A73E911C47B7D> for a summary of the Council of Valladolid.

The principle of *utile et dulci* also had implications for the management and improvement of the landscape. The Dolben family chose not to pursue most of the suggestions offered to them by Humphry Repton and three suggestions for their decision have been made. It is most likely that they had become 'improvement weary' having endured at least ten years of disruption as the Hall and landscape were altered. John English judged that he had better things to do. He had considerable interests beyond his home and land. He was certainly active in local politics, in developing property for rent, in local and national philanthropic and social life. He was also an active and enthusiastic antiquarian at a national level, a book and coin collector and encouraged developments in scientific techniques and machinery. The Dolben family had created a fashionable picturesque landscape on the edge of 'their' village. It was not as good as it could have been but, with active lives and numerous interests, they chose not to endure several years more domestic upheaval and considerable expense for, in their view, relatively little gain.

4.5 Locating Finedon and Finedon Hall

4.5.1 Finedon Village

Finedon was at the cross-roads of two important local and regional turnpike roads. Traffic passed through the village on an east - west road and adjacent to the village on a north-south road. It was also less than two hours from Wellingborough on foot. Finedon had a long history, passing trade and a large local market attracting other traders who came to the village each week. This drew people to settle in the village and, although it lost its place amongst the largest settlements in Northamptonshire - it was too close to Wellingborough an important bridging point - it continued to grow. The consistency and extent of its growth is hard to establish before the first census but by 1801 it had a population of nearly 900 (Table 4.2).³⁵⁷

³⁵⁷ http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10274473/cube/TOT_POP

Finedon grew rapidly in the decades following 1801, particularly in the 1810s and 1840s. The Northamptonshire boot and shoe manufacturing trade contributed to much of this growth. In Finedon in 1831, a small majority (55%) of the male population were either farmers or agricultural labourers (Table 4.3).³⁵⁸ A significant minority (27%) were engaged in retail or 'handicrafts' industries. The high number of people in retail is not surprising given the size of the village and it is likely that many people in this category produced goods for sale in their own homes.

The 1831 census does not identify what these 27% of people are doing, nor what the non-agricultural labourers (3%) were labouring on. It is likely that many of these people were working in boot and shoe manufacturing. The most surprising census return is the lack of people employed as servants. It is not known who was in residence when the census was taken but is very likely that John English and his household were not in Finedon at the time. By 1841, servants excepted, the broad pattern remains. Farmers and agricultural works are a smaller proportion of the working population but, at 47%, still outnumber any other category by almost 3:1. Servants make up the next largest category (17.5%) confirming that the 1831 data was an anomaly explained by Sir John English's absence. 'Shoe-makers' (11.3%) and 'stone masons' (7%) are by some distance the next largest categories of employment. Women's occupations were not necessarily recorded but women were part of the 'basket' shoe manufacturing industry in Northamptonshire in the early part of the nineteenth century so the number of 'shoe-makers' is likely to be an underestimate. Both categories conceal significant differences in occupation and status. 'Shoe-makers' includes master craftsmen, the artisans who were present in many villages and had passed an apprenticeship, and the pieceworkers of the newer boot and shoe manufacturing industry. Similarly, 'stone mason', which was used in Northamptonshire but was not on the list of occupations to be used by the census recorders, is

³⁵⁸ http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10274473/cube/OCC_PAR1831

likely to have included skilled stone masons who worked stone to order for building or decoration and quarrymen who dug ironstone from small quarries on the edge of the village.³⁵⁹ The village was able to support a

YEAR	POPULATION	POPULATION CHANGE	POPULATION CHANGE %
1801	886	-	
1811	967	+ 81	+ 9%
1821	1159	+192	+20%
1831	1292	+133	+11%
1841	1278	- 14	- 1%
1851	1588	+310	+24%

Table 4.2: Population of Finedon: 1801-1851

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	1831	%
Farmers employing labourers	20	6%
Farmers not employing Labourers	4	1%
Agricultural Labourers	148	48%
Manufacturing	6	2%
Retail and handicrafts	85	27%
Capitalists, Professionals	8	3%
Labourers (non-agricultural)	10	3%
Servants	5	2%
Other	24	8%
	310	100

Table 4.3: Adult Male Residents of Finedon by Occupation:
1831 Census

³⁵⁹ See [https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table/GB1841OCC_M\[1\]](https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table/GB1841OCC_M[1]) for a list of occupations for the 1841 census.

District	Area	%	Area	%	Area	%	total	% of
Occupation	17	Occup--	18	Occup-	19	Occup-		total
		ation in		ation in		ation in		
		area 17		area 18		area 19		
Households	100		123		27		250	
Agric Labourer	59	54.6%	68	47.8%	19	18.1%	146	41.1%
Baker	1	0.9%	5	3.5%	1 + 1	1.9%	7 + 1	2.3%
Blacksmith	0	-	2	1.4%	2	1.9%	4	1.1%
Builder	1	0.9%	0	-	2	1.9%	3	0.8%
Butcher	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
Carpenter	1	0.9%	4	2.8%	3	2.9%	8	2.3%
Carrier	1	0.9%	1	0.6%	1	1.0%	3	0.8%
Clergyman	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
Cooper	0	-	1	0.6%	0	-	1	0.3%
Draper	1	0.9%	0	-	0	-	1	0.3%
Farmer	10	9.2%	2	1.4%	9	8.6%	21	5.9%
Female Servant	4	3.7%	4	1.4%	19	18.1%	27	7.6%
Gardener	0	-	1	0.6%	2	1.9%	3	0.8%
Governess	1	0.9%	0	-	0	-	1	0.3%
Grocer	1	0.9%	0	-	0	-	1	0.3%
Inn Keeper	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
'Jaler'	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
Lawyer	0	-	2	1.4%	0	-	2	0.6%
Male Servant	1	0.9%	3	2.1%	19	18.1%	23	9.9%
Malster	1	0.9%	0	-	0	-	1	0.3%
Master Mason	1	0.9%	5	3.5%	1	1.0%	7	2.0%
Matmaker	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
Merchant	0	-	1	0.6%	0	-	1	0.3%
Midwife	0	-	1	0.6%	0	-	1	0.3%
Miller	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
Milliner	0	-	0	-	2	1.9%	2	0.6%
Musician	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
Nurse	0	-	1	0.6%	0	-	1	0.3%
Painter	0	-	0	-	3	3.9%	3	0.8%
Plumber	0	-	1	0.6%	0	-	1	0.3%
Saddler	0	-	1	0.6%	0	-	1	0.3%
Salesman	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
School Master	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
School Mistress	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
Shepherd	1	0.9%	0	-	0	-	1	0.3%

Shoe Maker	0	-	30	21.1%	11	10.4%	41	11.3%
Stone Mason	23	21.3%	2	1.4%	0	-	25	7.0%
Tailor	1	0.9%	6	4.2%	0	-	7	2.0%
Victualler	0	-	1	0.6%	0	-	1	0.3%
Woolstapler	0	-	0	-	1	1.0%	1	0.3%
TOTAL	108		142		106		356	

Table 4.4: Finedon Residents by Employment: 1841 Census



Figure 4.21: Map of Finedon showing 1841 census enumeration districts

considerable range of handicraft, retail and service providers including a cooper, two lawyers, two school teachers, two milliners, a matmaker, and a saddler.

In the 1841 census Finedon was divided into three enumeration districts (Figure 4.21). The village was split into a western district (19), and two eastern districts, one to the south and one to the north of the Town Brook (17 & 18). Agricultural labourers were mostly resident in the eastern half of the village being roughly equally divided between district 18 in the north and 17 in the south. Nearly 20% of the agricultural

labourers lived in the western portion of the village where they were as numerous as male and female servants. Male and female servants combined were more than a third (36%) of the population of district 19 and only 25% lived in districts 17 and 18. Farmers were almost entirely in the south of the village in districts 17 and 19.

Most people who made products to sell, like the tailor or baker, or who provided services, like the plumber or nurse, lived in districts 17 and 18, but there were notable exceptions. Both milliners, half the blacksmiths and all three painters lived in the western part of the village. There were two other significant sources of employment in 1841. Stone masons, which included master masons and quarrymen, 9% of the total working population. Most quarrymen lived in district 17.³⁶⁰ There were 41 shoemakers. This was almost certainly an underestimate of the number of men, women and children involved in making shoes and boots but still represented more than 1 in 9 of every occupation recorded. Approximately 75% of these people lived in district 18 but the remaining 25% lived in district 19.

North of the Town Brook, home to the Hall and Rectory, was a largely gentry dominated area, the 'polite' district, that, as early as 1765 need not have been visited by anyone who did not have business there. South of the Town Brook was a much more mixed area that saw rapid growth and, from 1822, the first Methodist chapel. There had been a Quaker meeting house in the north-eastern part of the village from 1690 but attendances had fallen during the second half of the eighteenth century leaving the Methodist chapel as the only religious structure competing with St Mary's, the parish church.³⁶¹ This south-western part

³⁶⁰ There is little or no evidence of organised quarrying in Finedon in the early part of the nineteenth-century so it is likely that these men were employed in small scale operations run by a landowner's agents in a manner similar to bell pits or adit mines in early coalfields.

³⁶¹ Despite Revd. Paul's attempts to provide a resident clerical presence, he failed to prevent the emergence of a non-conformist church in the parish. The Church of England remained identified with the gentry, a social positioning reinforced during the 1830 'swing riot'.

of Finedon included 20% of the agricultural labourers, nearly 50% of the farmers as well as both schoolteachers, the inn keeper, both milliners and 25% of the shoemakers. West of the 'old road' from Finedon to Burton Latimer and Kettering was a more affluent part of the village in which most of the residents were gentry or yeoman farmers, worked directly for the gentry or farmers or produced goods or provided services that were aimed at the gentry and farmers.

4.5.2 Village Dynamics

The 1841 census does not distinguish between types of shoemakers. Shoemaking became the dominant industry in central Northamptonshire. Artisan shoemakers and basket trade boot and shoemakers were both, by local standards, relatively well paid jobs.³⁶² It is likely that only a few of the shoemakers were artisans following the whole process of shoemaking. A village would not have required many producers to meet local demand but Finedon was ideally placed to take advantage of the growth of the 'rough trade' of boot and shoemaking.

Boot and shoemaking in Finedon was completely independent of the historic centres of power and control in the village. It was controlled by the relationship between entrepreneurs in Northamptonshire and London and markets in the military, London, north-west England and overseas and between the local entrepreneur and the workers. The gentry and yeomanry were by-passed, literally, in the movement of materials and goods and metaphorically in financial transactions and decision-making.³⁶³ The only exceptions to this relocation of relations in the village were rents paid to landowners for accommodation, the role of the gentry in administering the law, and where the workers went to the parish church, the clergy. Finedon therefore had a significant minority of its population who did not see their lives as dependent on, or

³⁶² This is not to suggest that either groups of workers enjoyed a comfortable living, but the work was less subject to seasonal variation than labouring or natural limitations such as the supply of stone in a quarry.

³⁶³ Mounfield, P. R., *The Footwear Industry*, (1965), pp. 442-443.

related to, the family in the Hall or the gentry, in any meaningful way. It will be shown that this was very different to Barton Seagrave, Brockhall and Harlestone Park, and created an environment in which it was possible to dissent, or hold radical ideas, in a group of some size. The scale of religious or political opposition to the *status quo* could number dozens of people creating 'security in numbers' and allowing a challenge to the gentry to emerge. It also represents the gradual emergence of a new elite.

Challenges to the established order had a long history in Finedon. The year after the Toleration Act (1689) a Friends Meeting House was built on High Street (formerly North East Street) in Finedon. Although the building, which was rebuilt, remained in use until the twentieth century, attendances declined in the second half of the eighteenth century when many Quakers chose to be baptised into the Church of England.³⁶⁴ From about 1739 a group of Congregationalists who were affiliated to a larger group of Independents in Wellingborough met in a barn owned by Thomas Annis. His wife Susannah granted the building to the group after his death in 1752.³⁶⁵ Both these worshipping communities met in what would become enumeration District 18 to the north-east of the village. John Miller, a native of Finedon returned to the village from Kettering where he had been a Methodist, with his wife Patty Tompkins. He bought a bakehouse cottage and garden on Regent Street and founded a Methodist Chapel in 1814. The first Chapel was built in the garden of another nearby cottage owned by James Cole, also of Kettering.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, Rev. Sir Charles Cave Bt. was part of the Dolben's social network and an antiquarian but he employed a curate to minister to the parish in his place. Rev. Samuel Paul replaced Rev. Cave and was resident in the parish but, as John English's son-in-law, Vicar and Magistrate, he was thoroughly identified

³⁶⁴ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 146-148.

³⁶⁵ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 154.

with the elite. Dissenting religion in Finedon flourished and the spatial and social gap between the Hall and polite quarter and the village continued. John English used his financial power to take advantage of the rising population and develop property he owned in the village. He converted barns and houses into cottages which he let to tenants.³⁶⁶ His social network, and that of the Vicar, Mrs Raynsford and the other gentry was beyond the village as they met friends on other estates or at social events in Northampton.

The insecurity of the gentry position in the village became clear on 1st December 1830. William Page, a tenant farmer, had bought the first threshing machine to be introduced to the village. The machine was destroyed by a group of unemployed agricultural labourers who were then arrested by a detachment of soldiers. The incident occurred in Mulso Square which, with Dolben Square, was considered the heart of the village.³⁶⁷ The magistrate, Rev. Samuel Paul, committed them to trial at the next assizes in Northampton. A letter from Charlotte Young of Orlingbury Hall to her aunt, Mrs Barton at Maidwell Rectory recorded that further trouble began when the arrested men were being taken through Wellingborough to Northampton later that same evening.³⁶⁸ She described up to 1000 men gathering in Wellingborough before '2-300' went to Finedon to speak to the magistrate. This illustrates the closeness of Wellingborough and Finedon. Although Revd. Paul was able to calm the situation with amongst other things, beer, word was sent to his coachman to take his coach to Orlingbury Hall to prevent it being attacked. According to Charlotte Young, 27 farmers and family men rode to Finedon and 'Vast numbers of people of the better sort flocked into Finedon from the neighbouring villages armed with swords and guns to defend Mr. Paul'.³⁶⁹ The tension gradually eased and

³⁶⁶ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 159.

³⁶⁷ Bailey, J. L. H., *Finedon otherwise Thingdon*, (1975), p. 157. The naming of these squares, the 'heart' of the village, after the two landowning families, was a constant reminder of the historic power of the elite.

³⁶⁸ NRO Y(O) 814.

³⁶⁹ Smith, C., 'Researching the Finedon Swing Riots of 1830', *Finedon Historical Society Newsletter*, May 2018, pp. 10-12.

further violence and damage were averted. It is possible that the relatively light sentences passed on the machine breakers in March 1831 contributed to defusing the crisis.³⁷⁰

Finedon was a village segregated by class, choice and unwritten rules. The gentry lived in the north-west of the village. The re-routing of roads and a modest enclosure by Sir William in 1765 kept villagers out of the 'polite zone' of the village. Sir William's actions moved the main road a few hundred metres east and subtly, but very powerfully, told villagers that they were not welcome beyond the parish church. In a village the size of Finedon employment was not dependent on the primary landowner. The village was large enough to maintain an economy that was not solely reliant on landowners. There were also other industries, particularly quarrying and shoemaking that provided income for villagers independently of the Hall. This independence created a situation in which dissenting religion could exist without notable penalty and radical action could take place, though not without the law being applied. Many people in Finedon were able to live their lives without encountering the Dolben or Dolben-Mackworth families unless they attended the parish church. Many villagers chose not to. Finedon was a complex village in which the dominant family were much less powerful than in the other villages that this thesis studies. The power of the Dolben family was further reduced by the modest size of their landholding.

4.6 Concluding Comments

Over two generations from about 1780 to the 1830s Sir William and John English Dolben maintained a national profile. Sir William was a high profile abolitionist in Parliament and is credited with hastening the end of legal slavery in Britain. John English did not follow his father into representative politics but was active locally in the social life of

³⁷⁰ *Passim* Mr. M. Burton, Finedon Historical Society. Kain & Prince described the execution of six males and the transportation of 457 males in the Weald after riots in 1830-2 were quashed: Kain & Prince, *Tithe Surveys*, (1985), p. 29.

Northamptonshire, he led or supported local causes in Wellingborough and maintained a presence in London at social events, supporting philanthropical causes, and was a member of the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce. Father and son saw themselves as significant county gentleman with a presence in national life and they embraced improvement. With Sir William's enthusiastic support, John English created a landscape which embodied their self-identity and which was a material statement of their political and social ideology.

The improvements made to the designed landscape at Finedon Hall, a small enclosure in 1765, the modifications to the Hall and Prior's Close in the 1780s and the commissioning of, and responses to, Humphry Repton were part of an expression of the improvement imperative also seen in the enclosure of Finedon parish. They were inseparable from Sir William and John English's political and social philosophy and the way they enjoyed themselves. Philanthropic activities, active participation and leadership of peer group social events, anti-slavery, antiquarianism expressed in book and coin collecting, membership of improvement and self-improvement societies were consistent with a benign paternalism which promoted the well-being of the parish while demanding a standard of behaviour that excluded those unable or unwilling to achieve it. Their improved designed landscape, fashionable yet lacking in any innovation, mirrored their wider attitudes which, apart from their opposition to slavery in Britain and the colonies, saw a virtue in not challenging the status quo.

Understanding the designed landscape at Finedon Hall has revealed four elements of the relationship between the Dolbens and Finedon that reflect the complexity of the relationship between the Lord of the Manor and village and external forces that were altering the household at the Hall or the interface between the polite quarter and the rest of the village which the Dolbens were either unaware of, indifferent to or simply ignored. Nevertheless, as will be seen, even though this

designed landscape bears little evidence of innovation, these external forces were gradually altering the forms that designed landscapes would take.

First, roads played an important role in framing the relationship between the Dolbens, their designed landscape and the village. In 1765 Sir William reinforced the existence of the polite quarter by enclosing land and closing public roads and lanes that crossed it. He created a corner of the village from which a growing number of residents were excluded. This is a material expression of the lack of power they had in decision making in the village. Ironically, within a generation or two the memory of the closed routes may have faded as the village grew to the east, away from the polite quarter. The growth of the village away from the polite quarter is itself an expression of the increasingly complex power structures of the village. Finedon's two turnpike roads and its proximity to Wellingborough made the village an ideal location for the development of boot and shoe manufacturing and this made a significant contribution to the early nineteenth century power structure complexity.

Second, the growth of the village was not the only factor that complicated village dynamics. Sir William and then Sir John English were Lords of the Manor but they were minority landowners, owning about 1250 acres. This meant that the parish had to be administered by consent and maybe one reason why enclosure did not occur until 1805-8. The income from their lands was sufficient to maintain the lifestyle of the landed gentry, but the Dolbens were senior gentry, which placed a greater expectation on their financial commitment to charitable giving, and Sir William maintained a presence in London while he served as an MP. This stretched their finances, increased their reliance on good marriages and may have compromised their ability to dominate the village.

When the population of the village grew in the early nineteenth century the new residents, primarily working in the boot and shoe industry were not dependent on the landed gentry. Unless they rented their house and workshop from the gentry, they were wholly dependent on boot and shoe manufacturing entrepreneurs for their livelihood. The Dolbens minority landowning position, the size of, growth in and nature of the village population, and the emergence of dissenting religion led to a greater distance, sometimes spatially expressed, between the landed elite, who continued to see themselves as the rightful leaders of the community, and a growing proportion of the population of the village. For some of these people land was no longer the basis of their livelihood and this change in the village mirrored wider changes in English society. For the time being power, particularly in the maintenance of law and order, and political representation, remained with the landed elite and, in Finedon's case, the designed landscape remained as attached to the forms of the late eighteenth century as the landed elite remained attached to their ideology. However, the seeds of slow change that took place through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century can be seen in these village dynamics.

Third, uniquely in this thesis, there are two landscapes in the designed landscape at Finedon. The first, designed, as far as we know, by an amateur gentleman (or gentlewoman), the second proposed by the professional landscape gardener Humphry Repton. Both followed, in broad terms, the same basic structure. Open lawn, water and planting creating a familiar picturesque prospect from the Hall, or near it in the case of the western, amateur, landscape. Neither the Dolbens nor Repton's landscape designs are anything other than typical for the late eighteenth century. However, Repton's superior skills are evident in his eastern garden design. In particular, he created a deliberate viewpoint from the Bell Inn that was designed to reveal the landscape of the gentry to the traveller. Repton knew the potential of the 'reveal' to passers-by and travellers. This scene was also, because the view was visible across the boundary, unifying. The traveller, the outsider, is

invited to stop, to dwell and admire and in so doing is welcomed into the well managed estate. There is not quite the welcome to enter the garden physically symbolised by the wooden stile in Repton's 'good' unimproved scene, but the Bell Inn functioned as the bench for the traveller to rest upon.³⁷¹ Although, ironically, by choosing not to improve the scene as much as Repton suggested it was not as good a prospect as it would have been. Even so, the traveller saw not only their own lack of belonging and the contract between landowner and labourer but also the welcome given by the 'soft visibility' of the benignly managed estate and by implication, community.³⁷²

The Dolben designed landscape was primarily for household consumption and enjoyment. Sir William had asked John English whether the pond and shrubbery 'looked good to the Eye', that is, was it picturesque. Schnebelie's engraving depicts an island toward which a small group is rowing and where John English's diary recorded tea being taken by family and friends. The same engraving shows cows and a deer grazing; it had some utility. It was also the locus of intensely personal memorials; spaces where John English and others could express and experience their loss of close friends. The one exception to the internal focus of the garden was Queen Edith's Cross. The Cross, which marked the existence of a pre-Norman England, part of the self-identity of Finedon and the Dolben family, was visible from the road, although not from the turnpike. It balanced the obelisk at the junction of the two turnpike roads to the east of the village. The two structures were indications that this was the territory of a family with deep roots in Britain and patriotic duties central to its *raison d'être*.

Repton's eastern design is primarily concerned with the appropriate character of the owners and its expression in the landscape. Other buildings crowd the Hall and diminish its stature, unsightly village houses are too prominent without the eye being diverted by a new pond

³⁷¹ Repton, H: *Fragments*, (1816), p. 194.

³⁷² See Daniels, *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 52-54.

and planting, and, in a perfect world, the south avenue is too straight. Repton shows his flexibility in his willingness to recognise that the straight avenues emanating from the Hall enhance its character. He places character above the form of the design. The after-life of Grove House, let to John Gray from 1810, shows that Repton was right to see the building compromising views from the Hall and lawns. Grove House echoes the loss of control that the Lord of Manor was experiencing as the shoe and boot manufacturing spread to Finedon.

Fourth, the voice of two women is heard at Finedon Hall. Hannah Dolben is heard through the exchange of a letter between father and her husband as she received 'African Seeds for Mrs D'. By contrast, the sketchbook of Hannah's daughter Julia has survived and this reveals images of the designed landscape in the mid 1810s. Her sketches aid an understanding the chronology of designed landscape improvements. Her choice of views aid an understanding of the Dolben use and perception of their landscape.

At about the same time that Julia was sketching Finedon Hall and scenes on the English south coast, Henrietta Fortescue was drawing 'sublime subjects such as steep and rocky cliffs, narrow gorges and impetuous torrents and picturesque castle and ruins that are characteristic feature of the Val d'Aosta'.³⁷³ Julia's sketches, display a similar interest in the sublime and picturesque but are also similarly 'careful in representing trees'. Julia's sketches are the only evidence of the mature designed landscape and, with two exceptions, the only voice recording the personality of the landscape. The space she reveals is familial and pleasurable as the rowing boat is used to take tea on the island, but it is also deeply personal as it contains two memorials to close friends hidden in the shrubbery at the eastern end of the pond.

³⁷³ Piana, P., Watkins, C., & Balzaretto, R., *Art and Landscape History*, (2018), p. 93-4.

In Finedon the archive has revealed a landed gentry family who improved their designed landscape according to principals that were the norm in late eighteenth century England. The landscape expressing their ideology was located within, but largely unaltered by, a large village which was beginning to experience rapid change caused by piecework-based manufacturing which, like many of the villagers, bypassed the landed interest in every-day life. The designed landscape at Finedon can be understood as an expression of elite ideology, an improvement bringing pleasure and affirming status. Improvement took place without attention to the impact of the improvement on the rest of the village while apparently unaware of changes occurring beyond the boundary of the designed landscape. Despite this, polite social change, most notably in female pastimes, were embraced in horticulture and sketching.

Chapter 5 Barton Hall

5.1 Introduction

Charles Tibbits, the young and recently married son of a banking family who also owned a modest landholding on the Warwickshire-Northamptonshire border, bought the estate in 1792. One year later he invited Humphry Repton to improve the landscape. This chapter begins by tracing the origins of the landscape as Charles Tibbits found it and describes Barton Seagrave village and its spatial relationship with the Hall. It then gives an account of Repton's proposals for improvement and Charles Tibbits' response to them. The relationship that Charles Tibbits acquired when he bought the estate and the impact of Repton's proposals on the relationship are investigated to understand the social dynamic between the landowner and the other residents of Barton Seagrave. The chapter ends with a discussion of the village in the early decades of the nineteenth century and the continuing relationship between Hall and village. It is suggested that the ownership of Barton Hall and the possible material improvement of the landscape not only had an impact on 'vertical' social relations within the parish but also 'horizontal' relations with other landed gentry in the county. In this sense the purchase of Barton Hall can be seen as central in the Tibbits' family quest for landed gentry status.

5.2 Barton Seagrave pre-1791

Barton Hall has as notable a place in the antiquarian history of Northamptonshire as it had in the geography of central Northamptonshire in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the first quarter of the century, it was the home of John Bridges (1666-1724), the antiquarian who compiled the notes from which his *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* was edited and

Figure 5.1: Tillemans, P., Barton Hall (south front), c. 1719

Figure 5.2: Tillemans, P., Barton Hall (from south-west), c. 1719

Figure 5.3: Tillemans, P., Barton Hall (along west avenue), c. 1719

published.³⁷⁴ Bridges commissioned Peter Tillemans to produce drawings of buildings, monuments and sculptures across the county. Tillemans made three drawings of Barton Hall which Bailey describes as ‘some of the most delightful and highly finished in the series’ (Figures 5.1, 2 & 3).³⁷⁵ The size of the trees in the avenue depicted in Tillemans’ third drawing suggests that it was planted by Bridges. Bailey quotes Morton who wrote in his 1712 *The Natural History of Northampton-shire With Some Account of the Antiquities* that ‘The Worshipful J. Bridges, Esq; has in his own Grounds in and about Barton Seagrave, planted at least 40000 Trees of several Kinds: The advantage whereof in part he himself has lived to enjoy, and his Posterity will enjoy it, in still greater Measure’.³⁷⁶ When Humphry Repton came to see the landscape in the autumn of 1793 he was not so approving.

Bridges died in 1724 and the estate was bought by the 2nd Duke of Montagu of the neighbouring Boughton House, an estate where he oversaw extensive landscape improvements in a conscious attempt to imitate Versailles, albeit on a modest scale. Following the purchase of Barton Hall some improvements were made to the Hall as the porch received a pediment and rainwater heads are embossed with the date ‘1725’.³⁷⁷ The Duke also commissioned a survey of the parish from W. Brasire, a surveyor and engraver (Figure 5.4).³⁷⁸ Brasire’s map shows the parish boundary, the established post-enclosure field layout and confirms the identity of the new owner. If Morton was correct then there is no reason to doubt that Bridges planted the avenue, and the trees along the pleasure ground and road boundary of ‘Home Close 32’

³⁷⁴ It was edited by Rev. P. Whalley in 1791 with the financial support of Sir William Dolben.

³⁷⁵ Bailey, B. A. ed., *Northamptonshire in the Early Eighteenth Century: The drawings of Peter Tillemans and others*, (Northampton, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1996), p 17.

³⁷⁶ Bailey, B. A. ed., *Northamptonshire in the Early Eighteenth Century*, (1996), p 17.

³⁷⁷ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 111.

³⁷⁸ I am grateful to Dr. Paul Stamper and Mr. John Pegg, trustees for Wicksteed Park, Northamptonshire for alerting me to the existence of this map the original of which has been lost, and to John Pegg for giving me a digital copy.



Figure 5.4: Brasier, W., Manor of Barton Seagrave, 1727 [J. Pegg]

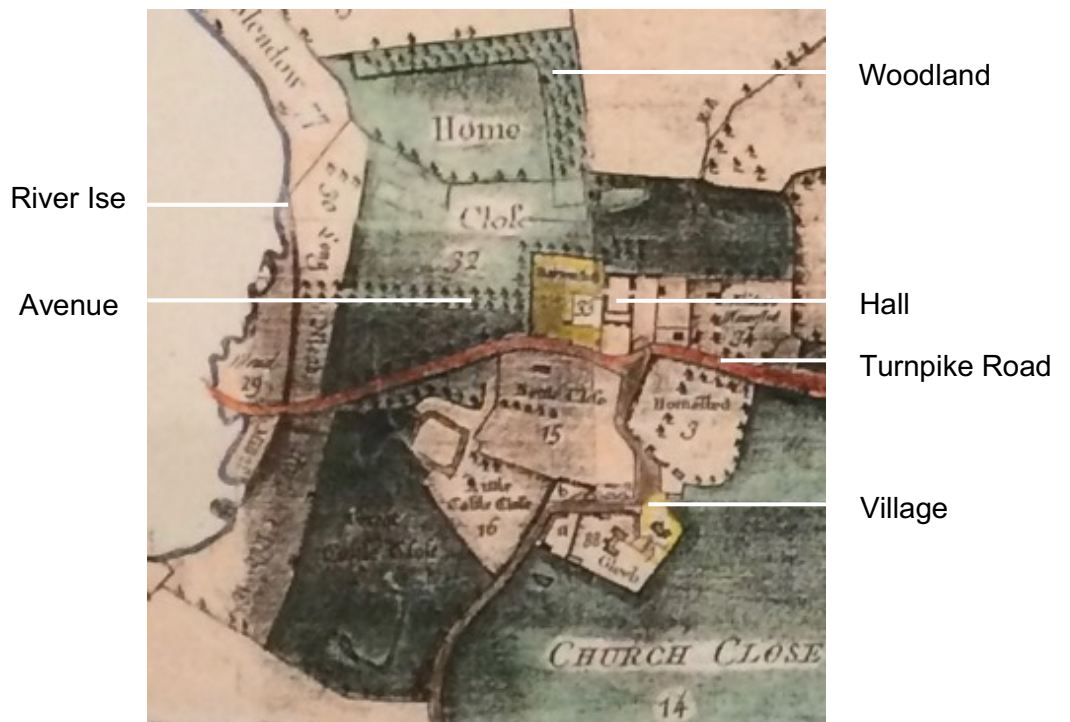


Figure 5.5: Detail: Brasier, W., Manor of Barton Seagrave 1727 [J. Pegg]

Figure 5.6: Detail: The County of Northamptonshire, Eyre & Jefferys (1791)



Figure 5.7: Detail: Bryant, A., Map of Northamptonshire 1827
[BL Maps 23.a.9.; CC BY-NC-SA 4.0]

shown in Figure 5.5. This detail also reveals an 'L' shaped woodland to the north and east of the Home Close which can also be attributed to Bridges. The *patte d'oie* avenues of trees centred on the Rectory do not appear on this map suggesting that they were either juvenile or had yet to be planted. Eyre and Jefferys map shows none of this woodland but its level of detail is very low (Figure 5.6). The more detailed Bryant map of 1827 includes the village avenues but includes no woodland in the Hall parkland (Figure 5.7). There is no doubt that these omissions are the result of decisions taken by map makers and do not reflect the situation 'on the ground'.

The 2nd Duke of Montagu died in 1749 and Boughton House was largely ignored by the 3rd Duke. He sold the Barton Hall estate to Rt. Revd. Joseph Wilcocks (1673-1756). Bishop Wilcocks held the See of Gloucester from 1721-31, and then became the Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster (1731-56) a post also held by John Dolben (from 1666-1683) until his translation to York.³⁷⁹ Joseph Wilcocks declined preferment to the Archbishopric of York to spend time on improvements to the west façade of Westminster Abbey. He used Barton Hall as a summer residence. There is no evidence that he made any improvements to the Hall or designed landscape before the estate was inherited by his son, also Joseph in 1756.

Joseph Wilcocks (1724-1791) was sent to Westminster School when it was founded in 1736 before studying at Christ Church Oxford from 1740-1744. Three years older than Sir William Dolben, who also attended Westminster School, he was awarded his BA from Christ Church as Sir William matriculated. Wilcocks was independently wealthy and a life-long antiquarian; like his father he was elected to the Society of Antiquaries of London. He travelled widely in Britain and in Europe, particularly in Italy and from 1757 began collecting information for a book which was, like John Bridges' *History of Northamptonshire*,

³⁷⁹ The Bishop of Rochester was also Dean of Westminster from 1666-1802.

eventually published posthumously. *Roman Conversations; or a Short Description of the Antiquities of Rome: Interspersed with Characters of Eminent Romans; and Reflections, Religious and Moral on Roman History*, was published in two volumes in 1797. Volume One opens with a lengthy eulogy to Wilcocks and includes some letters sent to the publisher, one of which was from John English Dolben.

Wilcocks inherited Ladye Place, Hurley in Berkshire in 1763 and spent much of his time there but continued to visit Barton Seagrave and corresponded with his friends and acquaintances including the Dolben family.³⁸⁰ In 1759 Wilcocks wrote to Sir William Dolben from Leghorn (Livorno) on his way to Rome asking after the health of Lady Dolben, Master Dolben, Mrs Rainsford and Miss Dolben before describing the 'grand theatre of the magnificence both of nature & art, ... the long mountainous shore of the Genoese dominions'. The letter continues with a description of building to the west of Pisa Cathedral 'which will be still more pleasing to Sir William Dolben, as they are memorials, not of the ancient power & riches, but of the ancient love & concord of the members of this Republick'[sic].³⁸¹

The 3rd Duke of Montagu had kept the advowson of Barton Seagrave Church and Revd. Joshua Stephenson, his appointee, and his son, also Joshua, both kept diaries. The diaries, which cover the period 1774-6 and 1785-7 respectively, reveal a network of gentry socialising based partly on familial links, Revd. Stephenson was the brother-in-law of William Robinson, a younger brother of Sir George Robinson of Cransley Hall. The social network was primarily local, they visited the Youngs of Orlingbury, the Palmers at Carlton, and the Dolbens at Finedon but they ventured, or met with families from further afield including Lilford Hall, where he attended a ball and Harlestone Park, where Joshua Jnr enjoyed 'a pretty place – there is a little park there with deer - & a pretty piece of water' and met Robert Andrew Jnr.

³⁸⁰ https://www.berkshirehistory.com/castles/ladye_place.html

³⁸¹ NRO D(F) 26

Joseph Wilcocks was part of a network of gentry social life in central Northamptonshire. His antiquarianism, shared with his near neighbours at Finedon was an expression of late eighteenth century curiosity, a culture of improvement that went beyond maximising profit to serve self-improvement and, seamlessly, to promoting moral and spiritual behaviour and a self-confident English and British history. In this sense, an interest in antiquarianism could exist comfortably within a cultural identity that embraced the established social order, the established church, agricultural and technology advancement, designed landscape improvement, self-improvement and paternalism.

When Charles Tibbits bought Barton Hall from the estate of Joseph Wilcocks in 1792 the Lord of the Manor was the Duke of Buccleugh. The Duke owned, but was an absentee from, Boughton House about 5 miles to the north and he owned the land on the north side of the River Ise. He had installed the Hon. Rev. R. B. Stopford, a younger brother of James Stopford, 3rd Earl Courtown, the Duke's brother-in-law, to the living. Figure 5.9 shows the land ownership in 1842, the only moment for which there is reliable evidence, but uses the same 1817 map as a base (Figure 5.8). There is no evidence to suggest that significant amounts of land changed hands between the eighteenth-century Barton Hall estate and the mid-nineteenth-century estate belonging to John Borlase Tibbits, the third husband of Isabella Tibbits, Charles Tibbits' grand-daughter. Barton Seagrave village was, with the exception of a handful of scattered farms, gathered around the village green, rectory and church (Figure 5.8). The estate that Charles Tibbits bought consisted of about 85% of the parish, and some land in Kettering parish. There was sufficient acreage to support a county gentleman's lifestyle, and a designed landscape and Hall that had been improved at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

The Tibbits family had roots along the Northamptonshire-Warwickshire-Oxfordshire border and holding or renting land between Daventry and Banbury. In 1784 Charles Tibbits' father, Richard (1733-1808), bought

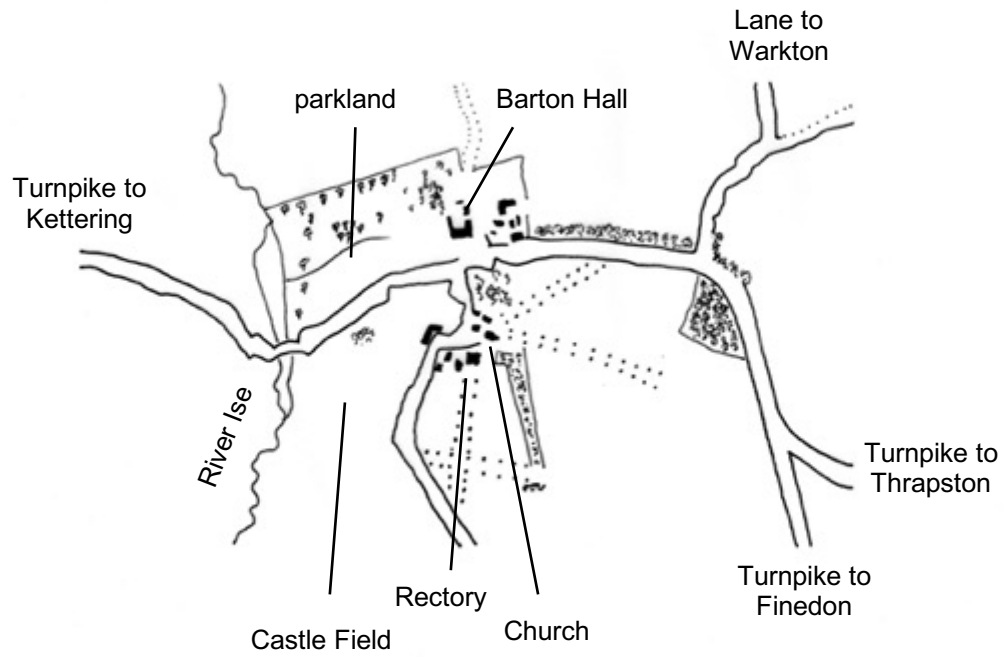


Figure 5.8 Barton Seagrave village c. 1817

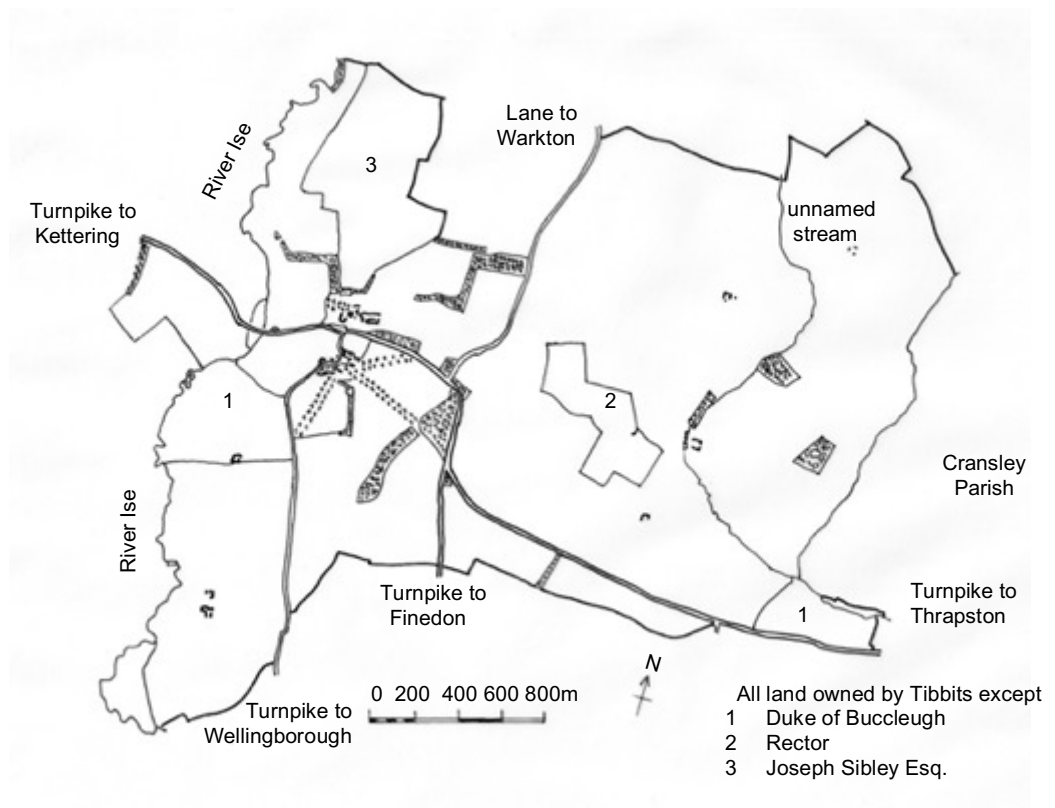


Figure 5.9 Land ownership in Barton Seagrave parish 1842

5.3 Charles Tibbits (1764-1830)

the Manor of Flecknoe, Warwickshire near Daventry.³⁸² He bought the land from Nicholls Rainsford a descendent of the Dallington family into which Elizabeth Raynsford née Dolben had married. Richard Tibbits was a banker registering his address as 'Hornsey Lane, parish of Islington, County of Middlesex' where he was a partner in the bank of Newnham, Everett, Drummond, Tibbits & Tanner. In 1786 the bank was trading out of 65 Lombard Street in the City of London.³⁸³ Richard and Charles Tibbits illustrate the commonplace blurring of the boundaries between the professional and mercantile classes and the gentry. The family do not have their own entry in Burke's Landed Gentry. The name only appears because of Charles' marriage to Mary Woodyeare (1764-1840) of Crookhill Hall, near Conisburgh in the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1791. She was the daughter of the John Woodyeare (1727-1812) who had his portrait painted by Pompeo Girolamo Batoni in Rome in 1750 on his grand tour. He later become a deputy lieutenant of Yorkshire.³⁸⁴ This marriage brought together a banking family that aspired to greater landed gentry status and a long-established gentry family. This social movement was not unusual and had a long history as for example, the Cecil family at Theobalds and Burghley in the sixteenth or the Hoare family at Stourhead in the eighteenth century demonstrate.³⁸⁵

³⁸² 'Parishes: Wolfhamcote', in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 6, Knightlow Hundred*, ed., Salzman, L. F., (London, 1951), pp. 269-273.

³⁸³ Peacock, W., *The Polite Repository, Or Pocket Companion*, (London, Peacock, 1786). Few records of the bank survive. A note added to a pass-book of 1785-1790 suggests that Charles did not maintain an interest in the bank after his father's death and that it failed on 11 December 1825, a victim of the 1825 financial crisis. (BM CIB 54436)

³⁸⁴ <https://new.artsmia.org/stories/as-northern-grade-arrives-at-the-museum-a-homage-to-dandies-dudes-and-sharp-dressed-men/>
Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry, Volume 2, p. 1633:
<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ONEKAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA1633&lpg=PA1633&dq=John+Woodyeare&source=bl&ots=a8QXjQfvoj&sig=ACfU3U0z4DFKtJe0faKNWKPUdyaLyWk9Mw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjxwuGEnP7IAhWsQRUIHSoUDfs4ChDoATAAegQIBxAB#v=onepage&q=John%20Woodyeare&f=false>

³⁸⁵ Moll, R. J., Parchment, Print and Paint: The Dissemination of the Cecil Genealogy, *The Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. 102, (2022), p. 293; Hutchings, V., Hoare, Sir Richard (1648-1719), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13385>, (2004).

There is no evidence to indicate what sort of family Charles and Mary Tibbits were. There are no surviving portraits and no letters or diaries which reveal their pastimes or what they enjoyed. It is not known who Mary welcomed to the Hall or whether Charles collected books or was a frequent member of shooting parties. They had one son, Richard, who predeceased them.

It is not a coincidence that Charles was married in the year before he bought Barton Hall. His father returned to London to concentrate on the bank leaving Charles to manage the family lands and, with a good marriage achieved, establish himself as a county gentleman in Northamptonshire. Within about eighteen months of acquiring Barton Hall, Charles Tibbits had asked the landscape gardener of the moment, Humphry Repton, to devise a scheme to improve his pleasure ground and parkland. He shared a desire to improve with Thomas Reeve Thornton at Brockhall, who began updating his Hall and landscape within months of inheriting (Chapter 6) and Robert Andrew at Harlestone Park, who also invited Humphry and John Adey Repton to his estate soon after his father's death (Chapter 7). While Charles Tibbits may have been establishing a seat fitting for the status he wished to acquire, he was also a young man with his hands on the reins of an estate. His contemporaries at Brockhall and Harlestone Park who, unlike him had grown up on the estate they inherited, were just as eager to make their mark on the landscape.

5.4 Humphry Repton at Barton Hall

Humphry Repton visited Barton Hall in 1793 when he was in great demand in much of England.³⁸⁶ There is no evidence that he visited Finedon Hall on his trip to Barton Hall even though he had sent a red book there only six months earlier. The turnpike roads that passed Barton Seagrave would have enabled him to call at the Hall on the way

³⁸⁶ Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book*, (1794), p. 1.



Figure 5.10: Detail: Brasier, W., *Manor of Barton Seagrave* 1727
[J. Pegg]

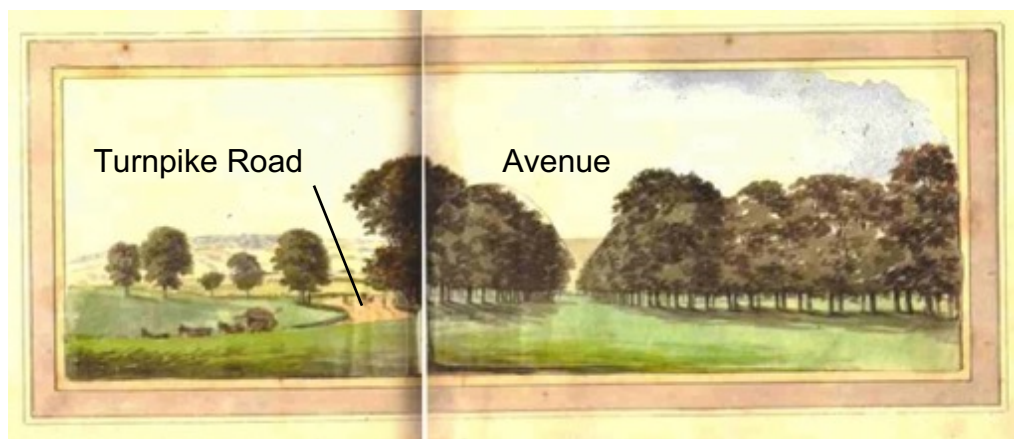


Figure 5.11: Detail: Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book* (1794)
[Reproduced by kind permission: Holden Forests and Gardens, Warren
H. Corning Library, Special Collections, Kirtland, Ohio, USA]

to or from other commissions. Brasier's map of 1727 is the most accurate representation of the landscape indicating the designed landscape that Repton encountered when he visited (Figure 5.5). Annotations to Brasier's map show those parts of the designed landscape which he thought most in need of improvement to display the right character for a gentleman (Figure 5.10).

The map shows four features. First, to the north of the Home Close there is the 'L' shaped area of woodland planted by Bridges. This was used by Repton as the beginning of a circuit path around the parkland. Second, there were several ponds which Repton considered were 'made in improper situations'. He was of the opinion that 'fish will thrive better in large quantity than in a small pool', the number of fishponds should be rationalised and only the 'lower' pond to the west should be retained.³⁸⁷ This pond was fed by one of a series of natural springs that emerge from the slope between the Hall and river. Third, the avenue which ran west from the Hall towards Kettering that Tillemans drew for Bridges is very clear on Brasier's map. Repton believed that this created a 'character of gloom and confinement' at Barton Hall and recommended its removal. His, perhaps exaggerated sketch of the view from the Hall along the avenue towards Kettering is the 'before' image of the only slide in the Barton Seagrave Red Book (Figure 5.11). Fourth, the main road towards Kettering and the road into the village. Repton wanted to move the turnpike road closer to the village to allow for a longer approach and a larger pleasure ground.

Repton laid out his plan for the landscape in the red book he sent to Charles Tibbits on 8th April 1794. In the opening sentence of the red book, Repton reveals that he had discussed his views of the Barton Hall landscape with Charles Tibbits and his intention was to create a parkland for gentle enjoyment.

The substance of the following remarks has already been hinted in conversation, yet to render the improvement of Barton Seagrave an object of leisure amusement, it is necessary to have in writing such general outlines of a plan, as may facilitate the gradual progress of the execution; althou^{gh} no plan can be expected to describe in detail those circumstances which can only be marked with precision on the spot.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book*, (1794).

³⁸⁸ Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book*, p. 2.

There is here an indication of the lack of precision in the proposals contained in Repton's red books illustrating the provisional nature of red books in general and perhaps, occasions when he was not anticipating, or even striving for, a substantial contract for implementing the plan. This red book is one of a large number that Repton was producing in the early years of his career when his success was at its peak and the number of consultations he gave, the red books he sold and the limited construction supervisions he undertook resulted in a comfortable living.³⁸⁹

A comparison between Brazier's 1727 map and Repton's plan from the Barton Seagrave Red Book reveals that he wanted to make five key changes to the landscape (Figures 5.12 & 13). First, he suggests a circuit walk from the Hall to the kitchen garden, passing the 'greenhouse' and through the woodland to the north and north-west. The woodland is extended to the river and the circuit crosses the river to a shrubbery walk along a newly constructed island before reaching the turnpike road. The 'principal gravel walk round the premises' returns up the hill towards the Hall. Repton was vague about the precise location of the path from the turnpike to the Hall because the 'site of the old mansion in the Castlefield was not accurately defined in the map from whence the outline of mine was taken'.³⁹⁰

The description of this walk as a 'gravel path' is self-conscious. Repton's language echoes Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), a book Charles Tibbits may have known. Whately observed that

Many gardens are nothing more than such a *walk round a field*; that a field is often raised to the character of a lawn; and sometimes the enclosure is, in fact, a paddock; whatever it may

³⁸⁹ Daniels, *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 1; Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste*, (2007), p. 65

³⁹⁰ Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book*, p. 6.

be, the walk is certainly a garden; it is a spot set apart for pleasure;³⁹¹

The preceding paragraph and the rest of the sentence describe a scene in which ‘many ornaments may be introduced as appendages to the latter’. Whatley is describing a *ferme ornée* but these ornamentations would have been anathema to Repton.³⁹² The design was, however, commonplace in the 1780s and 90s, and was a re-working of designs rooted in circuit shrubbery walks from the 1760s onwards.³⁹³

The circuit visited the kitchen garden, where Tibbits would have been able to show off his taste and wealth in displays of fruit, and, having reached the river, passed in front of the Hall. The path was at the bottom of the slope meaning that the Hall was displayed raised above



Figure 5.12: Repton, H., Plan for Barton Hall Designed Landscape, *Barton Seagrave Red Book* (1794) [Reproduced by kind permission: Holden Forests and Gardens, Warren H. Corning Library, Special Collections, Kirtland, Ohio, USA]

³⁹¹ Symes, M., *Whatley's Observations*, (2016), p. 165.

³⁹² Repton, H., *Sketches and Hints*, (1796), p. 43.

³⁹³ See for example, Cowell's summary of Richard Woods' designs which lacked innovation but were admired by Repton in Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2010), pp. 163-171.



Figure 5.13: Brazier, W., 1727 map and Repton, H., 1794 plan compared

the viewer, making it appear larger than it really was. This was a device used in the approach drive and circuit walk by the landscaper John Webb at Brockhall in 1799 and also on the approach drive to Harlestone Park by Humphry and John Adey Repton in 1808-11. At Barton Seagrave the approach drive could not be used to display the Hall in this way. The only mechanism for presenting the Hall from below was by developing a walk that took the viewer past the house by the river. William Emes (1778) and John Webb (1810) used this technique to display the Hall at Bromley Hall, Staffordshire, for the same reason.³⁹⁴

Second, Repton wanted to rationalise the number of small fishponds. He recognised the value of growing fish for the table but wanted to remove the fishponds at the top of the hill that would have been seen from the new gravel walk and to soften the geometric shape of the lower fishpond. This, the only remaining pond, would be hidden behind a clump of trees. The rationalisation of ponds was a theme of landscape gardening in the second half of the eighteenth century and beyond. Constable's 1816 painting *Wivenhoe Park* shows a single large pond that had been created from two smaller ponds. The design, which included a dam hidden beneath a bridge, was by Richard Woods and is very similar to the Repton's design at Harlestone Park.³⁹⁵ Webb's sinuous 'river' at Brockhall also unified three separate fishponds.³⁹⁶

Thirdly, Repton wanted to create a new arm of the river and use the spoil to create an island on which a shrubbery would be planted and along which the circuit walk would run. The new channel of the river is a critical part of Repton's scheme for Barton Hall. He suggests that the current water course cannot be seen from the house because it is too narrow and is, he implies, a wasted opportunity to create a picturesque scene. '... if it is', he wrote, 'brought in the line described on the map it

³⁹⁴ See Section 6.4.

³⁹⁵ Tarling, J., *Music at Heathfield*, (2018), p. 27.

³⁹⁶ See Section 6.3.2

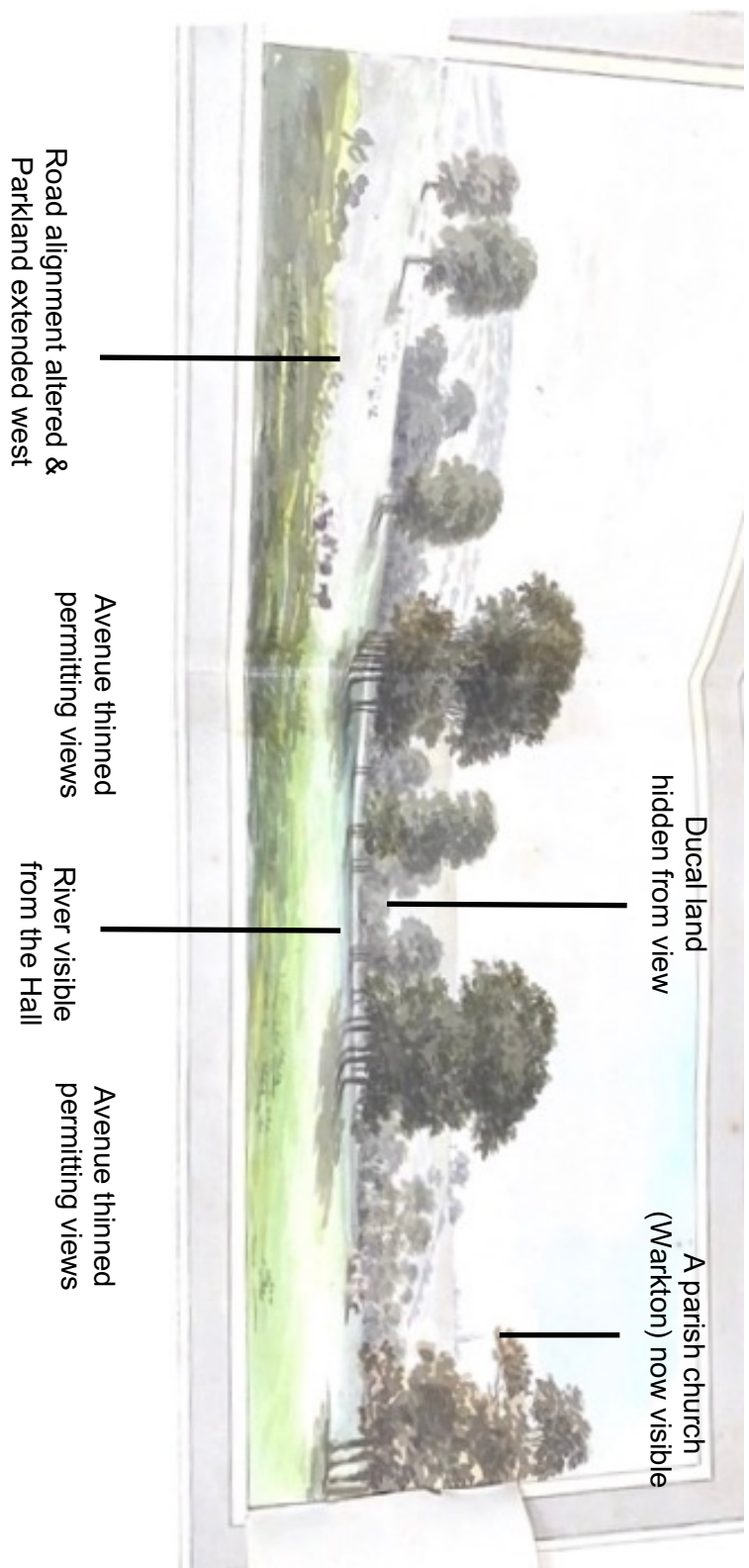


Figure 5.14: Detail: Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book* slides lifted (1794) [Reproduced by kind permission: Holden Forests and Gardens, Warren H. Corning Library, Special Collections, Kirtland, Ohio, USA]

will present two long reaches of its course, and a much narrower channel will become visible, because the eye looks diagonally along, not directly across it'.³⁹⁷ Repton wanted to create an interesting middle ground in the view from the house and pleasure ground. Looking down the slope, adorned with a few clumps of trees the viewer would see the river and the shrubbery between its two diagonally viewed arms (Figure 5:14). With the river and shrubbery as the primary focus, the slope up the hill towards Kettering which Tibbits did not own, would become less visible. This satisfies the imperative to create a picturesque view and to create the impression that Tibbits was master of all the land that could be seen. A Basire engraving of 1782 shows that Cranford Hall, the seat of Sir George Robinson and only a few miles from Barton Seagrave had a small river in the view from the Hall (Figure 5.15).³⁹⁸ Richard Woods used similar designs.³⁹⁹ Repton is also fulfilling his claim in the introduction to the Courteenhall red book that only a skilled professional can create the picturesque in Northamptonshire.⁴⁰⁰

There is also the implication in Repton's writing that he recognised that Charles Tibbits was working to a budget, a common feature of the red books regardless of the apparent wealth or status of his clients. The introduction foresaw a 'gradual process of execution' and a footnote to the text in the explanation for the plan for the river, explains that the cost of digging a new channel for the river is relatively modest. Repton calculated the cost for a channel at about £120 (approximately £170,000 today).⁴⁰¹ This was despite a recent experience at Welbeck where Repton has been criticised by the Duke of Portland for proposing a 'second best expedient' to reduce costs.⁴⁰² The experience would

³⁹⁷ Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book*, p. 6.

³⁹⁸ Upcott, W., *A Bibliographical Account of the Principal Works Relating to English Topography: v. 3. Oxfordshire - Yorkshire. Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica. Suppl. to second part. Index of places. Index of names*, (1818).

³⁹⁹ See for example, Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2009), p. 122.

⁴⁰⁰ Repton, H., *Courteenhall Red Book*, (1793), p. 3.

⁴⁰¹ measuringworth.com using the 'labour cost' for a project to compare costs. See Floud, R., *An Economic History of the English Garden*, (London, Allen Lane, 2019), pp. 9-14.

⁴⁰² Gore, A, & Carter, G., eds., *Humphry Repton's Memoirs*, (Norwich, Michael Russell, 2005), p. 33.

Figure 5.15: Basire, W., Cranford, the Seat of Sir George Robinson, Bart. (1782)

have been fresh in Repton's memory but, attuned to the need for an appropriate 'character' in each landscape, he would also have been acutely aware of the difference, and lesser, status of Charles Tibbits. The proposed island shrubbery is also important for the integrity of the design. The plan, which is in no sense a planting plan, proposes that the person walking along the gravel path should turn their back to the land of the Duke on the other side of the river. There is no view here out of the parkland. Following a winding path between shrubs and trees there are occasional gaps which are lighter in atmosphere, provide somewhere to sit and, in some cases give a view along and over the river and up the hill towards the Hall. The impact of this device is to focus attention away from land belonging to another, and in this case much more important and powerful, landowner, and onto land belonging to Charles Tibbits. The material forms of the landscape reinforce the status of the landowner by directing the eye towards the tasteful shrubbery, 'natural scene' and imposing Hall.

Fourth, Repton advocated the removal of the formal avenue that descended the hill from the Hall. The avenue was aligned on the Hall and focused the view from the road leaving Kettering on the Hall. It would have been impossible to leave Kettering heading south and east and not see the avenue and the Hall to which it led. At Finedon Hall Repton encountered formal avenues which he judged should not be removed. As a result of this decision, Finedon Hall became the illustration of his views on the defects 'of the ancient style of gardening' in *Sketches and Hints*, published in 1794.⁴⁰³ At Barton Seagrave, Repton's justification for thinning the avenue (he did not advocate its complete removal and did not approve of the wanton destruction of trees simply on the basis of taste) was the gloomy feeling it gave to the Hall and parkland. Here, he argued, the avenue threatened the character of the environment and was not fitting for a young, aspiring gentleman like Charles Tibbits. If he wanted to project himself as a member of Northamptonshire's gentry, the young man would need to distance himself from yesterday's gardening style and open up his landscape. The limits to the extent to which he should do that have already been seen by the river where views to the west were limited by trees and shrubbery. Indeed, the development of the river as a middle ground in a picturesque prospect from the Hall was dependent on the removal of many of the trees that formed the avenue so that the avenue, as an avenue, no longer existed. The view from and towards the Hall was to be framed by trees not constrained by an avenue (Figure 5.16).

Fifth, Repton wanted to move the turnpike road that was inappropriately close to Barton Hall. Repton wrote that his detachment from the locality and its traditions meant that he could approach some subjects independently. 'Therefore', he wrote, 'I do not hesitate to affirm that the public road ought to be moved to a greater distance from the house, to give that degree of freedom and extent of lawn which is expected to

⁴⁰³ Repton, H., *Sketches and Hints*, pp. 42-43.

surround a Gentleman's residence'.⁴⁰⁴ Here, the owner, a gentleman, must have a property whose character reflects his status. Consequently, there must be some distance between the public road and the front door of the Hall. In the case of Barton Seagrave, this also gave room for an expanded lawned terrace above the slope down to the river. He left the detail of the precise route of the realigned road to be decided by Tibbits and others locally. It was not the route that mattered *per se*, it was that the public should be at arms-length and that there should be an approach to the Hall worthy of the character of the estate and the owner. The combination of framed views in (and out) and an expanded pleasure ground are reminiscent of the expansion of his own garden at Hare Street, near Romford.⁴⁰⁵

Repton devised eight 'requisites' that characterised a good approach which he summarised in *An Enquiry*.⁴⁰⁶ Barton Hall had a necessarily short approach but despite this, Repton was able to satisfy most of his approach principles. The approach was direct and natural and, while it did leave the main road at right angles (when approaching from the north-west) it did so at a point where the main road turned a right angle. The approach from the south would, desirably, have appeared to be the main road. The approach did not follow the boundary of the parkland and the house was deliberately hidden by planting until the approach reached the entrance. These 'requisites' are an example of Repton's ability to codify landscape gardening into a set of principles.

Sixth, Repton wanted to control the way in which the Hall was revealed to the public and to visitors. The desire to control emotion and perception is part of the landscape designer's work. Repton began his pitch to clients in his red books with the 'slide' device which revealed the 'capabilities' of the landscape in a clear, dramatic and artistic form that relied on the visual. Repton's plan controlled views into and out of

⁴⁰⁴ Repton, H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book*, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁵ See Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 60-61.

⁴⁰⁶ Repton, H., *An Enquiry*, (1806), pp. 108-109.

the garden. The village was hidden from the Hall. The view from the entrance to the Hall looked down an approach through framing trees to the church. This had the effect of linking the spatially separate 'polite' part of the village creating the impression that the heart of the village is on an axis from the Hall to the church, Rectory and manor house by the village green. This is a visual conceit as the Manor House obstructs the church at ground level in the view from the Hall but Repton is here presenting an image of social hierarchy and power in the parish rather than an accurate representation of the material form of the landscape. The residents of these three buildings owned almost all the parish. It also linked Charles Tibbits with Church, which he did not control and the Manor House, which he did not own, integrating the owners of Barton Hall with the polite quarter of the village where their power was limited.

If the village is hidden from the Hall then the reverse is also true. Repton did not suggest that a thick boundary belt enclose the garden. The belt at Barton Hall is perforated, as it was at Finedon. The perforations are designed to allow passers-by to see the Hall from the best angle. The gaps in the planting allowed Charles Tibbits to look out to his land to the west, but also prevented anyone in the village looking into the parkland when they were in the village. The only other sketch in the red book contains the view that Repton proposed from the turnpike road to the Hall (Figure 5.16). It is this view that presents Charles Tibbits, Gent., to the traveller, as described in, for example, Patterson's Road Books.⁴⁰⁷

Finally, Repton proposed a 'green house' on the terrace to 'balance the Hall'. The present 'Orangery' was probably built in about 1820 which would date the structure at about the time of the marriage of Charles' son Richard, to Horatia Charlotte Lockwood. The match brought £10,000 (£11m today) (Figure 5.17).⁴⁰⁸ However, the structure is on the

⁴⁰⁷ Patterson, *Direct and Principal Cross Roads*, (London, 1811), p. 196.

⁴⁰⁸ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 112.



Figure 5.16: Detail: Repton H., *Barton Seagrave Red Book* (1794)
[Reproduced by kind permission: Holden Forests and Gardens, Warren
H. Corning Library, Special Collections, Kirtland, Ohio, USA]



Figure 5.17: Barton Hall Orangery (photograph by the author)

same scale as Repton's sketch and while it is unlikely that Repton was offering a design for the green house (he chose not to add any detail to his plan or text for the pleasure garden above the pre-existing ha-ha) it is possible that the Orangery was either built following Repton's visit or in accordance with his suggestion. It is possible to trace a formal garden on the terrace above the slope that is based on the main doorway of the west elevation of the house and the Orangery but there is no independent evidence to suggest that the garden dates from the construction of the Orangery.

5.5 Charles Tibbits' Response

Repton sent the red book on 8th April 1794. There is no direct evidence to help understand why Charles Tibbits chose to commission Repton, but he was at the peak of his popularity, and he had become the most fashionable and accomplished designer of the period. There is also no direct evidence to explain why he chose to respond to the ideas Repton presented to him in the way that he did. There are three maps that indicate Charles Tibbits' response to some of Repton's proposals but while none show any useful detail of the pleasure ground or 'parkland', it is clear from the Ordnance Survey Working Drawing of 1817, Andrew Bryants' 1827 map of Northamptonshire and an estate plan from 1842, that Repton's major changes were not implemented (Figures 5.8 & 9, 5.7 & 5.18). The OS map of 1817 and Bryants' map ten years later both demonstrate that the river was not altered and the turnpike road was not re-routed. These two realignments were the key to Repton's attempts to establish the right character for Barton Hall as, in his opinion without these two features the Hall lacked an appropriate approach and an appropriate view. They will also have only had a limited capacity for a circuit walk that was a good fit for the status of the Tibbits' household as much of the circuit would have been along public paths and roads. Furthermore, the lack of woodland on the island on the river not only failed to conceal the land beyond the river that did not belong to Tibbits but also meant that the only opportunity to create a

Figure 5.18: Detail: Estate Book, Barton Seagrave and Kettering
Northamptonshire (1842) [NRO FS 16/25]

picturesque scene in the unprepossessing landscape of central Northamptonshire was lost. It should be noted that although Repton's advice on improvements for Barton Hall to display the appropriate character as a gentleman's residence, was not followed, the Tibbits family were readily accepted in county gentry life.

An estate book from 1842 shows the size of each field owned at Barton Hall.⁴⁰⁹ Figure 5.18 shows a page from the notebook which records the approximate shape of the fields around the Hall and includes areas 17

⁴⁰⁹ NRO FS 16/25

(Plantation ponds etc. 5a 1r 0p), 19 (Red Hill Lawn and Meadow 24a 3r 26p) and 20 (Mansion House, Out^{bs}, Lawn, Pleasure Gn^d, etc. 5a 1r 32p). This plan is a functional drawing designed to be used for the management of the estate and is not a detailed representation of what was present on the ground. However, several conclusions can be drawn. The single channel of the river confirms the earlier map's evidence that Repton's island shrubbery was not constructed and, consequently the river would not have been visible from the pleasure ground of Hall. It also confirms that the turnpike road was not realigned.

The woodland shown on Brasier's 1727 estate map remains. There is no path marked through the woodland, but that wouldn't be expected from a plan prepared for the management of the estate. There is evidence on the ground today that a path was constructed through the woodland but it is not clear when the path was made. However, Joshua Stephenson records in his diary that

'G. Isham walked over to Warkton James came & he and I walked over to Mr. Wilcock's wood, we all went over and dined at Cranford where we met Mr. * Mrs Langham Rokeby & a Mr. Davis, & Mr. North, who gave us some musick at night, & my Uncle gave us each half a guinea and we went to Barton in the coach.'^[sic]⁴¹⁰

The woodland planted by Bridges was a feature in the mental maps of some local gentry and the beginning of the circuit Repton proposed may have pre-dated Joseph Wilcocks as well as Repton and Charles Tibbits.

The lower fishpond is not represented on the estate plan but two fishponds near the Hall in the plantation have been retained. Today these fishponds are damp, boggy depressions that contain seasonal surface water. If the lower fishpond had been retained it is likely that it would have been included on this plan because, like the two fishponds near the Hall, it would have contributed to the production and drainage of the estate. There is no evidence from this plan that helps determine

⁴¹⁰ Diary of Joshua Stephenson, 29th Mar 1785. NRO Photostat 1772

the fate of the avenue. No woodland is shown in the garden but none would be expected and this is not determinative. A LIDAR image shows pits where the avenue was. It does not indicate when the avenue was thinned but it is likely that Charles Tibbits followed Repton's suggestion here.

Finally, this plan, as well as Brasier's map, and Repton's plan show the public footpath which runs along the bottom of the slope through field 19, the 'garden'. Repton does not mention this public footpath, which is still in place today and it is not clear how he proposed the footpath should cross the plantation by the river bridge. Even if Charles Tibbits planted the plantation in area 53 and thereby created a physical barrier between the Hall and the less genteel part of the village, he did not attempt, or succeed, in closing the footpath across his parkland. If he lacked the influence to do this at the beginning of his tenure it is unlikely that he would have had much difficulty by the 1820s. The existence of the footpath meant that any passer-by could cross the parkland of Barton Hall at will, see the Hall and the Tibbits family and, just as importantly, be seen by them.⁴¹¹

In his discussion of the differences between a Tillemans prepared sketch of Lilford for John Bridges in 1721 and a painting usually attributed to Anthony Devis from c. 1760, Waites observes that the earlier sketch shows 'the various furlongs and strips that are organised in relation to the lie of the land, and in order to achieve the best conditions for the drainage of the soil'.⁴¹² By contrast, the Devis painting depicts 'an *ad hoc*, wavering path cutting across it [a field] ... but the path in the Lilford House painting meanders blindly towards a clearly enclosed field where it then comes to an abrupt end'.⁴¹³ When Devis

⁴¹¹ There is a contrast with Brockhall where Thomas Reeve Thornton moved footpaths and roads in 1804 (Chapter 6) and a similarity with Harlestone Park where Robert Andrew did not move a footpath that was, adjacent to the pleasure ground (Chapter 7).

⁴¹² Waites, I., 'Extensive fields of our forefathers', (2011), p. 59.

⁴¹³ Waites, I., 'Extensive fields of our forefathers', (2011), p. 62.

was painting the Powys family were enclosing Lilford parish. The village was removed in 1755 and the Church, the ultimate symbol of social stability and Englishness, was pulled down in 1788.⁴¹⁴ He points out that the draconian experience of enclosure, embodied in Clare's poetry, was not inevitable.⁴¹⁵

At Barton Hall the garden improvement occurred more than a century after enclosure, but neither enclosure nor garden improvement, however much they may have limited other freedoms, limited the freedom of ordinary people to use footpaths in the parish. Lilford Hall, and to a lesser extent Brockhall, embody the power of the gentry to reshape the landscape in the way they saw fit, so that it appeared as they thought it should. The act of improvement which created a material expression of an idea of the ideal social order was, in its very implementation, a demonstration of the ability of landowners to control the way other people used the landscape, and therefore of the ideal social order it expressed. In the process the experience of the landscape became one in which ordinary people lacked the power to follow well-trodden paths as their predecessors had and therefore their social place in their material place was reinforced. However, this did not have to be, and nor was it, a universal experience. Even if gentry had the power to control the way the landscape was used and experienced by closing or relocating footpaths, they did not always exercise that power.

Charles Tibbits was reluctant to devote a significant sum of money to the improvement of his parkland as suggested by Repton. He may have considered himself too new in the social landscape to seek to move the turnpike road. Once that decision was made it is likely that Charles Tibbits thought that the constraints placed on the rest of the garden by the un-realigned road compromised the circuit walk making the expense of the alterations to the river disproportionate to the benefit. 1794 was a

⁴¹⁴ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol3/pp227-231>

⁴¹⁵ Waites, I., 'Extensive fields of our forefathers', (2011), p. 63-66.

year of instability, to be followed by a decade of uncertainty, as the war with France escalated. This may have persuaded Charles Tibbits that unnecessary expense was best avoided. He may also have discovered that the estate needed more expenditure than he had realised. There is no documentary evidence to account for financial decision making, but Charles Tibbits chose to spend no more than the minimum on his new designed landscape.

The choice of Barton Seagrave, as opposed to another estate for the Tibbits family may have been driven by its very public location. Of course, it is possible that it was one of very few estates available in the early 1790s and Charles Tibbits had little choice. Nevertheless, he chose to buy it and move the family to the centre of the county. The Hall is alongside an important turnpike road where travellers moving east-west or north-south through Northamptonshire travelling between Cambridge and Birmingham would have passed his front door. It was an ideal place to be seen.

If Richard and Charles Tibbits were aiming to establish the family as acceptable to, and accepted by, members of the county gentry, Barton Hall, at a crossroads in the county and the South Midlands, was a means by which the family's status might be raised. The improvements that Repton suggested would have enhanced their status as the property took on the character befitting the status that Charles Tibbits wished to acquire, but it is likely that he was content to take a cautious approach to his family's wealth and allow the property as it already existed to speak for itself. The success of his gamble can be seen in the marriage he was able to secure for his eldest son. Richard the younger (1794-1821) who was educated at Christ Church, Oxford like many of the Northamptonshire gentry, married Horatia Charlotte Lockwood (1796-1838), the daughter of Thomas Lockwood and Charlotte Manners-Sutton. Her uncle was Charles Manners-Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the marriage took place in his private

chapel at Lambeth Palace. The Tibbits family were established county gentry.

5.6 Barton Seagrave 1795-1845

The discussion on Charles Tibbits' improvements at Barton Hall have suggested that the land beyond the boundary of the garden was as important as the woodland, pleasure garden and walks within it. The Hall and landscape were to be seen in a good light from the turnpike roads, and they were to be concealed from the village by trees but reveal the parish church through gaps in the planting. The decisions that Repton made when he designed an improved landscape and that Charles Tibbits made when he chose to improve the landscape in the way that he did were influenced by the nature of the village beyond the turnpike road and field. The parish had not remained static in the years following 1777 when the Militia Lists suggest that the parish was overwhelmingly dependant on the Hall, gentry and land for employment and the Revd. Stephenson was Rector.

Henry Scott, the 3rd Duke of Buccleugh, inherited the Boughton House estate through his wife Lady Elizabeth Montagu in 1790. The Dukes of Montagu had retained the Barton Seagrave advowson and on the death of Revd. Stephenson in 1798, he appointed his son-in-law's younger brother, Hon. Rev. R. B. Stopford (1774-1844), rector of the parish. He was thoroughly integrated into the local gentry and aristocracy and was also Canon of Windsor and a chaplain to the Queen. He was fourth son of James Stopford, 2nd Earl of Courtown in County Wexford who married Mary Powys of Suffolk, a daughter of Lady Mary Brudenell of Deene, the neighbouring estate to Boughton house. Rev Stopford was married to Eleanor Powys a daughter of Thomas Powys 1st Baron Lilford of Lilford, Northamptonshire. His nephew, Lt-Col. Hon. Edward Stopford (1795-1840) later married Horatia Charlotte Lockwood, the widow of Charles Tibbits' son Richard. The Rector was considerably better connected than Charles Tibbits and, while Charles had the

greater status in the parish, this was a relationship that he would have wanted to cultivate.

There is no evidence that Charles Tibbits, or his heir, his granddaughter Isabella, acquired more land in Barton Seagrave parish after the estate was bought, although he did buy the Manor of Wofhamcote, the parish next to Flecknoe, in 1826.⁴¹⁶ Consequently, the 1842 Barton Seagrave Tithe Book can be used as a sufficiently accurate estimate of the ownership of land in the parish. Charles Tibbits owned about 85% of the land in the parish (Table 5.1). This gave him a comfortable income and considerable power to manage his estate and the affairs of the village as he wished. He was constrained by the desire to gain the approval of the landed elite and the separation of the Hall from the village green, but beyond the need to be seen to behave appropriately, Charles Tibbits was *de facto* the owner of the parish. If power was shared it was with Rector and yeomanry who would usually have formed a united front in response to any external pressure. Charles Tibbits was also the dominant employer in the parish. Early census data show that Barton Seagrave grew rapidly in the first two decades of the century but experienced some volatility in its population thereafter (Table 5.2). This volatility may partly be explained by coincidences on the day of the census.

The 1831 census shows a parish dominated by agriculture (Table 5.3). Of 36 people recorded as employed only 4 (11%) were not working on the land, although no servants were recorded. The 1841 census which was much more detailed, recording the individual names of men and women of all ages, and the occupations of most men and some women confirms this pattern of occupation (Table 5.4). Almost 50% of the workforce were either farmers or agricultural labourers employed

⁴¹⁶ 'Parishes: Wofhamcote', in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 6, Knightlow Hundred*, ed. L F Salzman (London, 1951), pp. 269-273. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol6/pp269-273> [accessed 19 August 2022].

Landowner		Acreage
The Duke (as Lord of the Manor)	1-1-03	
The Duke	84-1-03	85-2-06
Lord Viscount Hood		1525-2-14
Parish		0-0-04
Sir George Robertson Bart.		1-3-10
Joseph Sibley Esq.		105-1-38
Trustees of the Turnpike Road		0-0-16
The Hon. Revd. R. B. Stopford (Glebe)		64-3-01
		1782-1-09

Table 5.1: Land Ownership in Barton Seagrave Parish,
Barton Seagrave Tithe Book 1842 (NRO Map T.185)

YEAR	POPULATION	POPULATION CHANGE	POPULATION CHANGE %
1801	159	-	
1811	201	+42	+31%
1821	223	+22	+11%
1831	203	- 20	- 9%
1841	219	+16	+ 8%
1851	207	-12	- 5 %

Table 5.2: Population of Barton Seagrave: 1801-1851

directly on the land. A further 36% are servants working in the Hall, the Rectory or for local farmers. Barton Seagrave was dominated by the land and by service. The remaining categories are varied, but all serve the village or the Lord of the Manor, and none are a surprise. Few villages did not have a clergyman, carpenter or blacksmith. The two gardeners worked for the Rector. Consequently, in 1841 about 60% of the village population rented land from the Tibbits family, worked on

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY 1831

Farmers employing labourers	5
Farmers not employing labourers	0
Agricultural Labourers	13
Manufacturing	0
Retail and handicrafts	4
Capitalists, Professionals	0
Labourers (non-agricultural)	8
Servants	0
Other	6
TOTAL	36

Table 5.3: Adult Male Residents of Barton Seagrave by Occupation:
1831 Census

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	ADJUSTED
		INDIVIDUALS	PERCENTAGES
		EMPLOYED	
Agricultural labourer	38	40%	42.7%
Bailiff	1	1%	1.1%
Blacksmith	1	1%	1.1%
Carpenter	1	1%	1.1%
Clerk	1	1%	1.1%
Farmer	6	6%	6.7%
Female servant	20	21%	22.4%
Gardener	2	2%	2.2%
Independent	6	12%	6.7%
Male servant	12	13%	13.4%
Publican	1	1%	1.1%
	89	99%	99.6%

Table 5.4: Barton Seagrave Residents by Employment: 1841 Census

their land or were servants in the Hall. Even if there were more people working in lace- making, worsted or boot and shoe manufacturing in the first two decades of the century before their work disappeared or moved to Kettering, the level of dependency on the owner of Barton Hall was high. He employed most of the villagers, they lived on his land or in his property and they were dependent upon him for their work. Much of the rest of the village were dependent on the Rector or yeoman farmers who formed the upper levels of the social pyramid in the village.

Over the course of seventy years the employment structure of the village became more complex but it remained dominated by the land and by service. The social structure of the village remained unaltered and the owner of the Hall was the senior figure in the parish. Charles Tibbits, who was resident at Barton Seagrave, may have played a greater role in parish affairs than Joseph Wilcocks who had spent much of his time in Berkshire, and was certainly more active in the gentry social scene but the social dynamic was essentially unchanged.

The construction of Barton Hall on the edge of the village suggests that physical barriers both horizontal and vertical between gentry and aristocracy and the rest of society were a common part of the built environment, designed landscape and social relations. Barton Seagrave had been a stable farming community for more than a century and did not experience the rapid change in agricultural rental values that other villages in Northamptonshire which experienced Parliamentary enclosure in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries suffered. Young reported that rents for Northamptonshire arable land increased from 11s 6d to 20s per acre when the land was enclosed but this would not have happened in Barton Seagrave parish.⁴¹⁷ The largest impact on rents in the eighteenth century caused by activity within the parish would have been the impact of road being turnpiked in 1754. When Charles Tibbits

⁴¹⁷ Young, A., *General Report*, (1808), p. 218.

improved the garden landscape at Barton Hall, he was not making a radical change in the dynamics of the village

5.7 Concluding comments

This chapter has investigated and analysed the archival and field evidence of the improvement of the designed landscape of an estate recently purchased by a gentry family with a banking background. Some speculative explanations have been offered for the choice of Barton Seagrave, the decision to consider improvement, to commission a red book and to react in a largely passive manner. Charles Tibbits' desire to improve the designed landscape at Barton Hall can be understood as an attempt by father and recently married son to acquire full acceptance as members of the Northamptonshire county gentry.

Barton Hall was the embodiment of several facets of landed gentry status that would have attracted the Tibbits family as they sought to raise their status. The Hall came with land. Charles Tibbits owned more than 1500 acres which gave him a comfortable income well in excess of the £1000 p.a. that is considered necessary for a country gentlemen's lifestyle. The Hall was an impressive property which he displayed to any traveller along the turnpike road. The Repton commission displayed his good taste but the decisions he made about which parts of the plan to implement also displayed wise management of his estate. His lack of extravagance may have been seen with approval by some of those gentry he sought to impress. Charles Tibbits carefully revealed his Hall and garden to those he wished to be seen by. He also chose to establish a small plantation behind the cottages in the village, screening them from the Hall and vice versa. In so doing he added an extra physical barrier between the village, especially the poorer part of it.

There are three detailed facets of the improvement of Barton Hall's designed landscape that are of interest. First, improved transport was a likely pre-requisite for the changes at Barton Hall in the 1790s. While it

is possible that Charles Tibbits would have bought Barton Hall if the road network had not been turnpiked, the relative quality of the roads and the visibility that the importance of the roads gave the Hall was a desirable feature of Barton Hall if it was to support the rise of the Tibbits family into the landed gentry of the county. The relative quality and importance of the roads to Barton Seagrave also facilitated Humphry Repton's visit. He was able to visit Barton Hall without making a major detour and, within the restrictions of the day, in relative comfort. We cannot be sure that the location of such a modest commission was critical in Repton's acceptance of the offer of a commission but there is little doubt that it helped.

Second, the Hall was the dominant but not sole location of power in the village. The earlier relocation of the Hall distanced it from the heart of the village, trees were planted that hid the Hall from the village. These two actions emphasised the social distance between the gentry (in the Hall) and the ordinary villagers. The villagers were largely dependent on the Tibbits family for their homes, their employment, and therefore their survival. However, not all the gentry lived in the Hall. One farmer and the Rector lived on the 'village green' and, from 1798, the Rector was from a senior family in the local elite. Those villagers not employed by the Hall were either employed by the Rector and farmer, the tenant farmers in the village or they provided carpentry and blacksmith services to the village reinforcing their dependence on the gentry. The view of the church and Manor House from the Hall in an implied polite axis along the approach road to the village green strengthened the hierarchy as perceived by the landed gentry.

The relationship with the village and travellers was complex as Charles Tibbits carefully revealed his Hall and garden to those he wished to be seen by but chose to establish a small plantation behind the cottages in the village, screening them from the Hall and vice versa. In so doing he added an extra physical barrier between the village, especially the poorer part of it. However, he did not re-route the footpath that ran

through the parkland and did not therefore, create an impenetrable barrier between himself and the village.

Third, Repton's plan for improvement at Barton Seagrave is a good example of a modest estate designed for a gentleman of relatively modest means. The plan reveals Repton's principles at work, his attempts to create a picturesque vista in a county with limited picturesque potential and which, when compared with Brockhall and Harlestone Park, demonstrates the evolution of circuit walks and pleasure ground design at the end of the eighteenth century. He suggested a line of sight along the drive that connected the polite quarter of the village green, and in particular the church, with the Hall. The red book reveals the importance of 'character' in Repton's designs; the design, and particularly the proposed re-routing of the turnpike road could be subtitled 'fit for a gentleman'. Furthermore, the red book reveals a sensitivity to his perception of the needs of his client. While his suggestion of cost cutting measures was received poorly by the Duke of Portland, it is very likely that Charles Tibbits was cost conscious and Repton's costing of the work to widen the river shows that he was able to listen to or 'read' his clients. Repton's ability to codify design principles gives the impression of his dominance in the landscape gardening market, but this design applies a familiar formula in a creative, cost-conscious and site-specific manner.

Charles Tibbits saw his designed landscape as a means to an end - social advancement and the consolidation of his status. However, he had no wish to separate himself completely from the parish, thereby revealing a degree of paternalistic responsibility for his tenants and employees, nor did he want to risk the future financial stability of the family by constructing a landscape that was too expensive. The social status of the Tibbits family was transformed over the course of thirty years. In 1804 Charles Tibbits served as High Sheriff of Northamptonshire and in 1820 his son Richard married into the Sutton-Manners family.

Chapter 6 Brockhall

6.1 Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 paired two landscapes in which similar responses to the same professional designer occurred in gentry estates notable for the dissimilarity in the trajectory of the status of the gentry families and social environment of their settlements. This chapter is the first of a pair in which two gentry families with long histories in the county made significant alterations to their landscapes following advice from professional designers but the working relationship with their designer, the nature of their settlements and the way they related to the settlements were all different.

The chronology and personalities at Brockhall are straightforward. Thomas Reeve Thornton [Thomas Reeve] inherited Brockhall aged 15 and following his coming of age and marriage, made substantial alterations to his Hall and landscape. The chapter begins with a summary of the background to the Thornton occupancy of the Brockhall estate from 1625 until improvements began in 1799. The second section introduces John Webb (1754-1828) who was invited to design alterations to the landscape in 1799 and Thomas Reeve's management of his improvement scheme. The landscape design proposed by Webb at Brockhall and Thomas Reeve's adaptation of it are described. The third section focusses on the evolution of parkland and pleasure ground design at the beginning of the nineteenth century evident in Webb's work at Brockhall and at King's Bromley in Staffordshire where his mentor William Emes also produced a plan. In the fourth section, the relationship between Hall and village is analysed through the employment structure of the village and Thomas Reeve's improvement decisions. The nature of the village, the relocation of footpaths and views of Brockhall, both into and from the Hall and the estate that the landscape design promoted are indicative of a long-standing gentry family imposing their way of seeing the landscape on their community

perhaps modified by personal preferences and a response to changes in the society around them.

6.2 The Thornton family and Brockhall: 1625-1799

Thomas Reeve Thornton (1775-1862) was at Rugby School when his father Thomas Lee Thornton (1726-1790) died.⁴¹⁸ Three years later he entered St. John's College, Cambridge and in January 1799 married Susannah Fremeaux (1776-1846). Her family was of Huguenot descent and lived in Kingsthorpe Hall two miles north of Northampton.⁴¹⁹ There is no evidence to indicate how the estate was managed between 1790 and 1799 but it is likely that Thomas Lee's widow, Mary née Reeve (1740-1811) ran the estate until her son's majority.

There is little evidence to show what sort of people Thomas Reeve and Susannah were. There are no images of them and, apart from brief references to the family using the garden for pleasure, there are few indications to show what interested them. Thomas Reeve was a member of the Pytchley Hunt, the landscape was designed with shooting in mind and he hosted at least one shoot at which his near neighbour and relative by marriage, Robert Andrew Jnr of Harlestone Park, was present. He supervised a successful landed gentry business, farming and letting land as his family had done for several centuries.

The Hall which Thomas Reeve inherited and where he had grown up was probably built by the Eyton family in the 1610s-20s during their short tenure at Brockhall (Figure 6.1). This is disputed by the RCHM entry for Brockhall which suggests that the Hall was built by the

⁴¹⁸

<https://ia800207.us.archive.org/12/items/rugbyschoolregis01rugbuoft/rugbyschoolregis01rugbuoft.pdf>. Thomas Reeve and his younger brother John both entered Rugby School in 1786.

⁴¹⁹ Spooner suggests that Kingsthorpe Hall is the only villa close to Northampton that corresponds to the growth of villas close to major towns and cities during this period: Spooner, S., *Regions and Designed Landscape*, (2016), p. 86.

Thorntons shortly after buying the estate.⁴²⁰ The sale on 2nd May 1625 included a Manor House and 'The White House at Brockhall' as well as 10 gardens, 100 acres of arable, 60 acres of meadow, 240 acres of pasture, 1 acre of wood and 20 acres of furze.⁴²¹ Identifying these buildings is problematic as a map of 1614 does not extend far enough east to show the buildings and the sketch and a map of 1672 is too late to be evidence for the date of the construction of the Hall.⁴²² Pevsner describes the building as having an 'impressive if somewhat forbidding Elizabethan S front' but does not ascribe a date.⁴²³ Bridges however, added the note 'Here is one neat seat, the residence of Mr. Thornton Lord of the Manor, supposed to be built by the family of *Eyton*' to Tillemans unsigned drawing '*Front of Mr Thorntons House at Brockhole 21 July 1721*' (Figure 6.1).⁴²⁴ While no definitive proof exists it is likely that the house was in place in 1625 when the Thomas Thornton bought the estate.

Figure 6.1: Tillemans, P., Front of Mr. Thorntons house at Brockhole 21 July 1721

⁴²⁰ 'Brockhall', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Volume 3, Archaeological Sites in North-West Northamptonshire* (London, 1981), pp. 31-33. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/northants/vol3/pp31-33>

⁴²¹ NRO Th 190.

⁴²² NRO Th 199 & Th 3659.

⁴²³ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N., & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 143.

⁴²⁴ Bailey, B. A. ed., *The Drawings of Peter Tillemans*, (1996), Pl. 36, p. 35. Bridges, J., *Northamptonshire*, p. 482. Bailey does not quote from Bridges verbatim but the meaning is not lost.

The Thornton family embodied the late medieval and early modern emergence of the Northamptonshire gentry. In the 'Newnham of Newnham and Thornton of Brockhole or Brockhall' pedigree, Baker wrote of Thomas Thornton 'THOMAS THORNTON of Newnham, esq. a barrister-at-law, *purchased Brockhole 1625*'.⁴²⁵ This entry establishes the social credentials of the Thornton family now residing at Brockhall. Thomas the elder had married Elizabeth Ward of Brayfield in 1692. Successive generations were able to attract good marriages for their children; a mark of the Thornton family's growing stability and security. When Elizabeth was widowed she married Rev William Trimnell, Dean of Winchester and Rector of Brington, a village near Brockhall. Two generations later, William Thornton, rose to become a Major-General and married Mary, the daughter of David Trimnell, precentor of Lincoln Cathedral and Archdeacon of Leicester. Her brother, Charles, was Bishop of Winchester. Their elder son, William, also joined the army and rose to the rank of Lieut. General. His younger brother, Robert, became Vicar of Cold Ashby and Weedon Bec.

The Hall lies to one side of its parkland but is at the heart of the village and near the centre of the long, narrow parish.⁴²⁶ It is, and was, separated from the church by a few tens of metres. The Rectory was also at the heart of the village, across the road from church (Figure 6.2 & 6.5). When Thomas Reeve inherited the estate, the Rector was Revd. Matthew Panting who had been appointed by Thomas Reeve's grandfather, and Matthew Panting's uncle, Thomas Thornton, in 1753. Thomas Thornton had married Frances, the daughter and heir of William Lee of Cold Ashby. Matthew Panting was also Vicar of Cold Ashby from 1753 until his appointment to the parish of Weston Turville in Buckinghamshire.⁴²⁷ He continued to serve in Brockhall until his

⁴²⁵ Baker, G., *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton*, Vol. 1, (London, Nichols, 1822), p. 115.

⁴²⁶ See Figure 6.3.

⁴²⁷ Thomas Thornton's wife Frances was the daughter and heiress of William Lee of Cold Ashby.

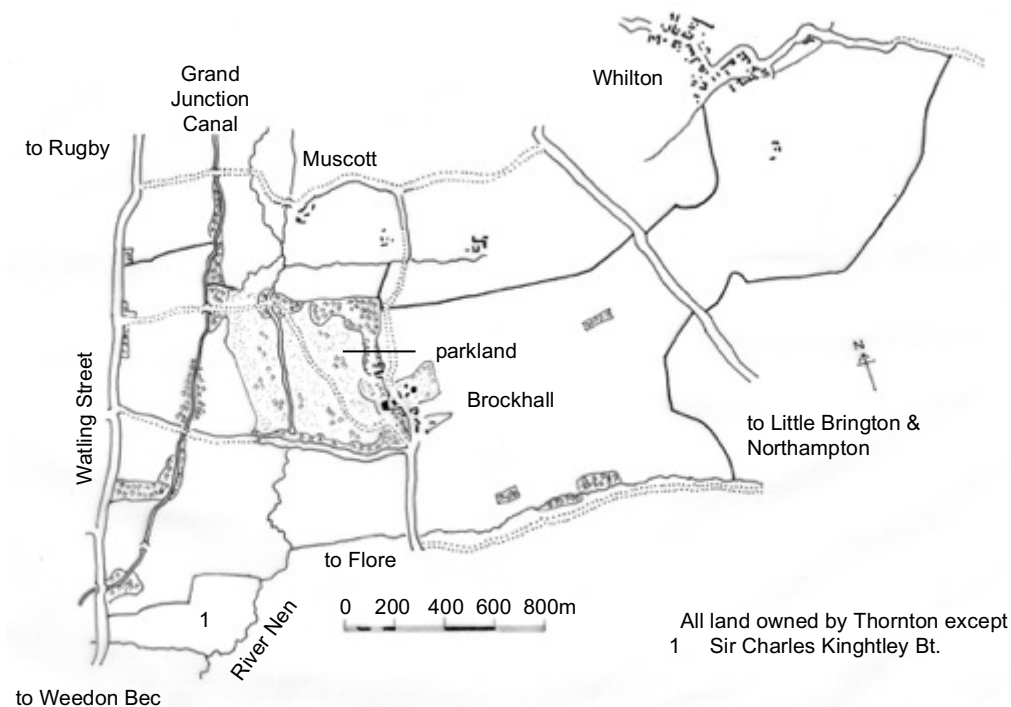


Figure 6.2: Brockhall parish in c. 1817

death in 1794.⁴²⁸ His sister, Elizabeth married Revd. Euseby Isham, the uncle of Eliza Packe, née Isham who lived at Harlestone Park in the mid-1820s. Thomas Reeve appointed Revd. John Fisher to the living at Brockhall in 1794. He was already the Rector of Cossington in Leicestershire and married to Charlotte Andrew of Harlestone Park the daughter of Robert Andrew Snr and Frances née Thornton, Thomas Reeve's aunt. Thomas Reeve appointed his younger brother Philip Rector of Brockhall parish church in 1806.⁴²⁹ The Church Warden, James Payne, was also Thomas Reeve's bailiff.⁴³⁰

Revd. Philip Thornton was also the domestic chaplain to Henry Ryder, on his appointment as the Bishop of Gloucester until Ryder's death in

⁴²⁸ Lipscomb, G., *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham Vol. II*, (London, J. & W. Robins, 1847), p. 498, 500.

⁴²⁹ Philip (1782-1869) served as Rector of Brockhall from 1806-1869. The Rectory was rebuilt between 1808 and 1821.

⁴³⁰ Smith, J. S., *The Story of Brockhall, Northamptonshire*, (Flore, Flore Heritage Society, 2003), p. 23.

1836. Ryder was the first evangelical to be elevated to the episcopate and, although he appointed 5 domestic chaplains, it is possible that some or all the chaplains were also evangelicals. There is no evidence to indicate Philip Thornton's theology or what impact his theology had on his ministry in Brockhall parish or the behaviour and decisions of the Brockhall household. There is some evidence that Thomas Lee and Thomas Reeve were concerned for the well-being of their family and Thomas was an occasional participant in local societies but neither of these are uniquely indicative of an evangelical spirituality, or indeed any self-conscious spirituality.⁴³¹

The landscape that Thomas Lee and Thomas Reeve inherited had been laid out in the 1720s by Thomas Thornton Esq. (1698-1783). He had inherited the estate when he was only 21 and was squire for 64 years. He laid out a formal landscape of elm tree avenues, fishponds, geometric plantations and canals, at least one of which included an island, filling a substantial area between the Hall, the road to Dodford and the bottom of the valley where the River Nen had two courses (Figure 6.3). The canals were fed by the smaller course. A detailed record of the building of this landscape survives and Rod Conlon, a local garden historian, has reconstructed the progress of work carried out from payments made to craftsmen and labourers between October 1725 and January 1731.⁴³² There is no record that Thomas Lee, who was an elderly man when he inherited Brockhall, sought to improve the estate. He may have been aware that he was likely to have a relatively short period as Lord of the Manor before Thomas Reeve inherited the estate in his own right.

⁴³¹ There is a lengthy correspondence between Thomas Lee, his co-Trustee Lord Harborough and his elder nephew William about the younger nephew's (Robert) education at Cambridge. Thomas Lee shows himself to be sympathetic to the modest debts Robert has acquired as the younger man sought to avoid losing face with his relatively richer peers. NRO Th 1-44.

⁴³² NRO Th 2034a. A short unpublished paper Conlon, R., '*Brockhall: The Thorntons and Their Gardens*', Northamptonshire Gardens Trust and other notes trace a detailed month by month timeline for the work undertaken. I am grateful to Rod Conlon for giving me access to his work and for several discussions about the landscape at Brockhall prior to John Webb's involvement.

Figure 6.3: Detail: Plan of Thomas Lee Thornton's estate, 1787 [NRO Map 3683]

At only 861 acres the parish was always very small.⁴³³ Over 200 years the Thornton family increased their holding in the parish from approximately 353 acres in 1672, when the Andrew family were larger landholders to 1806 when Thomas Reeve bought nearly 264 acres from Robert Andrew (Snr).⁴³⁴ Hill notes that in Northamptonshire demesnes were either compact, field strips were adjacent and close to the manor house, or dispersed, field strips were spread throughout the township. Brockhall demesne was dispersed.⁴³⁵ By 1806 the parish was almost completely closed; only 3 fields did not belong to the Thornton family (see Figure 6.2).

⁴³³ The parish was 861-2-32 acres. In 1839 two fields, Upper and Lower Meadow (33-3-11 acres), were owned by Sir Charles Knightley of Fawsley. The church living controlled 5-0-21 acres and a further 19-2-14 acres were transport links, road rail and canal in 1839. Before the railway was built transport accounted for 11-2-38 acres. Approximately 94% of the parish was owned by Thomas Reeve Thornton before the railway was built.

⁴³⁴ NRO V910-1.

⁴³⁵ Hall, D., *Open Fields*, (1995), p. 66.

YEAR	POPULATION	POPULATION CHANGE	POPULATION CHANGE %
1801	70	-	
1811	78	+8	+11%
1821	69	- 9	-12%
1831	58	- 9	-13%
1841	59	+1	+ 2%
1851	57	- 2	- 3%

Table 6.1: Population of Brockhall: 1801-1851

The 1777 Militia List records 2 farmers, 6 servants and 5 ‘unascribed’ men capable of joining the militia. It is clear that the population was very low and that almost half the men recorded were working in service but the level of ‘unascribed’ men makes any further analysis impossible. By 1801 the population was 70 (Table 6.1). Baker records that these 70 inhabitants lived in eleven houses.⁴³⁶

The road through Brockhall continues north to the deserted medieval village of Muscott and then to Whilton or Norton. To the south roads lead to Flore or Weedon Bec and Dodford. These three villages were on turnpike roads that linked Northampton, Dunchurch/Rugby and the south (Figure 6.4).⁴³⁷ However, Brockhall was not a village that anyone would pass through on the way to anywhere else. Uniquely in the four landscapes studied in this thesis, Patterson’s Roads books do not mention either the Thorntons or Brockhall, and in comparison to the other three landscapes, Brockhall was small and relatively isolated.

When Thomas Reeve took over the running of the Thornton estate he led a successful family who had increased their landholdings,

⁴³⁶ Baker, G., *Northampton*, Vol. II, (1822), p. 116.

⁴³⁷ Cossons, A., *The Turnpike Roads of Northamptonshire*, (1950), pp. 33-34.

established themselves among the county gentry, controlled their parish but owned a Hall and designed landscape that were out of fashion. In the next two sections his attempts to improve both are described.

6.3 Thomas Reeve Thornton and Brockhall (1799-1810s)

6.3.1 The Hall

Thomas Reeve began improving the estate almost immediately. The Hall was the focal point of the improvements to the Brockhall landscape, it received the bulk of Thomas Reeve's early attention, and he acted as his own architect, but the improvements to the Hall and its ancillary buildings were not conducted in isolation. Thomas Reeve approached John Webb in 1799 and the commission gave him a unified design that integrated the Hall and the ancillary buildings into a plan for the landscape (Figure 6.6). The placing of buildings, roads, drives and paths, woodland and shrubbery planting were all related to each other and to the Hall. Improvements to the landscape were conceived together and were started at the same time. This was not always the case as Repton's critique of the landscape at Finedon shows.

The scale of Thomas Reeve's alterations to the Hall is clear from a comparison of Tilleman's early eighteenth-century sketch with a modern photograph (Figures 6.1 & 6.4). He created a three-storey symmetrical



Figure 6.4: Brockhall today (photograph by the author)

building, reducing the height of the gables, building four corner turrets and a flat parapet between them. The entrance was re-located to the centre of the elevation. Some of the account books kept by James Payne have survived. The book for the period April 1799 – Nov 1802 is primarily a list of who was paid for what work each week for nearly three years.⁴³⁸ It is rare that the reason for the work being undertaken is stated and consequently it is not always possible to be sure why the work was being carried out. Nevertheless, work started with the removal of buildings on April 6th 1799, less than three months after his marriage. A brickyard was built in January 1800.⁴³⁹ In late March James Payne paid a beer bill of 2s in exchange for use of Mr. Lovel’s boat to carry bricks to the brick-yard, presumably for the construction of a kiln that then produced the bricks Thomas Reeve used for building.⁴⁴⁰

The account book section covering ‘Work Done at the Hall’ begins on 17th August 1799 and ends on 27th August 1803 but this section is vague about what was done; much of what is described is the work of masons and carpenters on the interior of the house. Thomas Hanson

Category	Total
Work done at different places	£95/10/5½
Paid Sundries	£735/13/7½
Work done at the Hall	£218/13/0½
Work done about the New Stables	£452/19/5
Expence [sic] laid out at Brick-yard	£222/3/10½
Building new brew-house and laundry	£212/- /-
Total	£1937/- /4½

Table 6.2: Thomas Reeve’s Improvement Expenditure 1799-1802⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Account Book 1799-1803 NRO Th 2253.

⁴³⁹ The brick yard produced hundreds of thousands of bricks, 146,185 in the 1800 season alone, and may have supplemented the income of the estate for several years. NRO Th 2253.

⁴⁴⁰ Account Book 1799-1803 NRO Th 2253.

⁴⁴¹ NRO Th 2253.

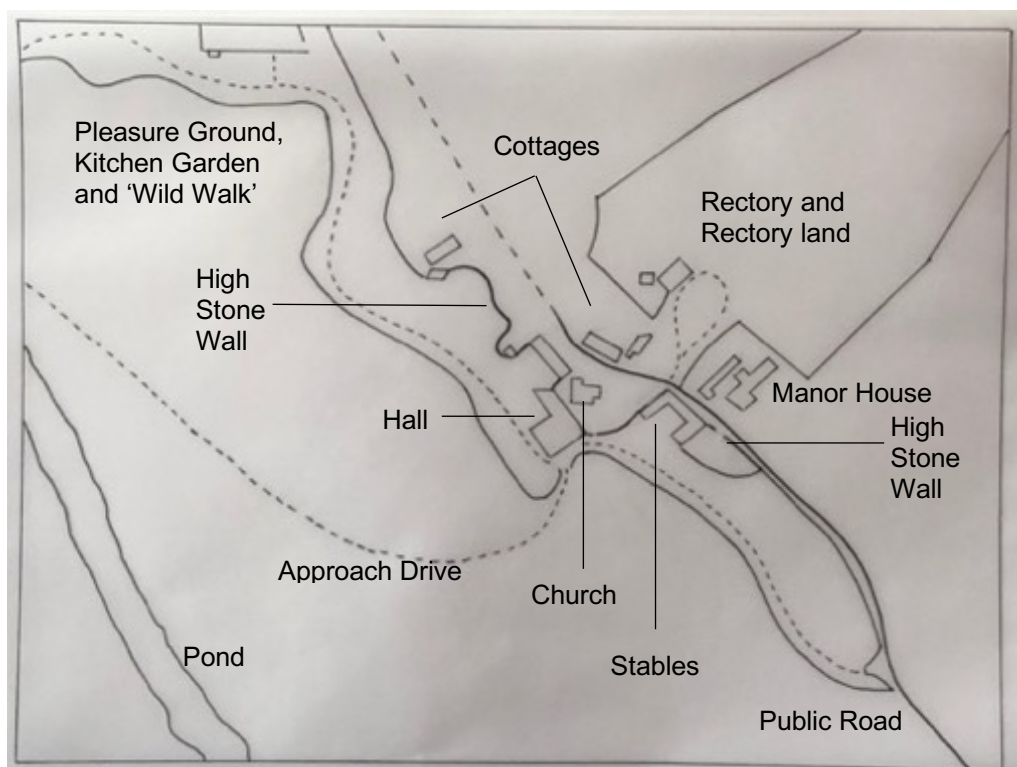


Figure 6.5: Brockhall in c. 1817

worked on the turrets for seven days in the week beginning 15th September 1800 for which he was paid 18s 8d but this is a rare example of exterior work.⁴⁴² Unless the weather was too poor to work on the turrets in the winter they may have been complete as he was paid £3/15/6 on 29th November 1800 'on account Building Wall against Churchyard', work that was already underway in August that year.⁴⁴³ In the absence of any other evidence it is likely that the Hall improvement took four years from August 1799 to 1804. The Hall was not the only building improved or replaced. Table 6.2 shows that there were several projects for work replacing the stables and building a brew-house and a laundry. The detail of the entries also shows that many metres of wall were repaired, rebuilt or added.

The impact of these improvements was to remove the Elizabethan façade of the Hall, only the windows and chimneys remain. It also

⁴⁴² Account Book 1799-1803 NRO Th 2253.

⁴⁴³ NRO Th 2253.

removed the offices and stables from the courtyard in front of the Hall, and consequently, the front elevation of the Hall became open to the landscape but the day-to-day activities of the functioning of the Hall became obscured. The 'hiding' of the offices was commonplace in the improvement of Hall and landscape and is indicative of a physical separation between the gentry and their staff represented in the material of their built landscape. At Brockhall it also gave Thomas Reeve the opportunity to create a physical barrier between the Hall and the village: the 12' stone wall being 'built against the churchyard' by Thomas Hanson.⁴⁴⁴

6.3.2 John Webb's Plan for Alterations

John Webb was a Staffordshire based landscape gardener, described by Mowl and Barrie as the 'protégé and successor of Emes'.⁴⁴⁵ He was not the first foreman to succeed his master. Foremen were the eyes and ears of designers, responsible for managing the laying out of the landscape that designer and owner had agreed.⁴⁴⁶ Relatively little is known about him. He began to gain commissions in his own right from about 1792, working for Sir Richard Arkwright at Willersley Castle, Matlock, Derbyshire in that year.⁴⁴⁷ Colvin reports an unattributed comment that in 1805 Webb was said to be 'all over England'.⁴⁴⁸ By 1799 he had an established reputation in the west midlands, north-west England and elsewhere and was sometimes employed to complete Repton schemes. At Rode Hall, for example he modified Repton's scheme between 1802 and 1812, the original having been laid out in a short red book in 1790.⁴⁴⁹ He came from a humbler background than Repton and, having served his apprenticeship supervising the laying out

⁴⁴⁴ NRO Th 2253.

⁴⁴⁵ Mowl, T. & Mako, M., *The Historic Gardens of England: Cheshire*, (2008), pp. 11, 89; Mowl, T. & Barrie, D., *The Historic Gardens of England: Staffordshire*, (Bristol, Redcliffe, 2009), p 191; Brookman, A., 'John Webb, who's he? Part 1: Travels of a Georgian Landscape Gardener', *Newsletter of the Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust*, No. 39, (2008), p. 6-7.

⁴⁴⁶ Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, p. 155-158.

⁴⁴⁷ Brookman, A., 'John Webb, who's he? Part 1: (2008), p. 6.

⁴⁴⁸ Colvin, H., *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects: 1600-1840*, (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2nd ed. 1995), p. 1031.

⁴⁴⁹ Mowl, T. & Mako, M., *Cheshire*, (2008), pp. 87-90.

of landscapes, was more experienced and probably more suited socially and temperamentally than Repton, to the 'build' stage of a scheme.

The elements to Webb's Brockhall design generally correspond with the principles of good 'modern' design that Repton expressed in *Sketches and Hints* and repeated in *An Inquiry*. The Hall, on slightly raised ground and commanding a view over the valley, is the focal point of the parkland landscape.⁴⁵⁰ This principle controls the design. A sinuous but narrow pond crosses the parkland and appears to be a river. Its shape and dimensions echo the Grand Junction Canal which, at the time of

Figure 6.6: Webb, J., A Plan of the Demesne Lands at Brockhall the Seat of Tho^s Reeve Thornton Esq^r with some alterations (1799)

[NRO Map 6427]

⁴⁵⁰ Brown and Williamson argue that the priority of the parkland over the pleasure ground is a 'key feature of Brown's style'. At the beginning of his career Webb continued this Brownian legacy. See Brown, D. & Williamson, T., *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men*, (2016), p. 155ff.

Webb's visit, was only two years old.⁴⁵¹ The pond which was probably constructed between 1811 and 1814 was of sufficient width for 'sailing'. It is not clear from diary entries whether the Thorntons kept a rowing boat or had a boat that could be manoeuvred under sail in the narrow pond.⁴⁵² By the time the 1839 Tithe Map was drawn they had constructed a boat house.

A sinuous canal-like pond was not a new idea. Webb would have already encountered similar structures, usually known as 'rivers' or 'ponds' from the previous generation.⁴⁵³ Cowell shows that Woods frequently naturalised pond edges and designed canal-like structures that could be gently curved or even straight.⁴⁵⁴ Distant examples at Wivenhoe, Hare Hall or Hatfield Peverel may not have been known first hand by Webb, though they may have been to Emes, but while neither Emes nor Webb carried out much work in Buckinghamshire, the landscape at Little Linford in Buckinghamshire was much closer to his 'home territory' and may have been familiar. It certainly bears a strong resemblance to the larger scale Hall, landscape and water at Brocket Hall, Welwyn in Hertfordshire, shown in William Angus' 1787 engraving following Sandby.⁴⁵⁵ At Brockhall, Webb's solution to providing water across a well-supplied but wide flat landscape made use of some existing pools and did not require a large amount of earth moving or a visually intrusive dam.⁴⁵⁶ The pond was a key feature on the approach drive and a focus of views from the shrubbery walk, terrace and Hall.

Webb's design for the approach to the Hall follows graceful curves which, with carefully placed planting, provide only brief, tantalising glimpses of the Hall but, once the Hall is seen in full, the approach

⁴⁵¹ The canal between Braunston and Blisworth, which opened in 1797, was the first section of the Grand Junction canal to do so. The remainder of the canal, between the Thames and Blisworth opened in 1800. The Blisworth tunnel completed the now reliable route to London in 1805.

⁴⁵² NRO Th 3184.

⁴⁵³ Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2009), p. 115.

⁴⁵⁴ Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2009), p. 121.

⁴⁵⁵ Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2009), p. 122.

⁴⁵⁶ See also NRO Map 3683.

takes a practical direct route. The approach drive would have begun with a new lodge but there are similarities to the Repton's approach drive at Harlestone Park designed between 1808 and 1811 (See Figure 7.11). Both approaches cross water and pass in front of the building below the level of the Hall allowing a view from the side windows of the approaching carriage of a Hall made more imposing by the angle at which the Hall is viewed. This device also permits a view of the approaching carriage from the Hall enabling servants to be prepared for the arrival of guests. At Brockhall, relatively little use is made of tree clumps to hide the house; planting belts largely fulfil this role. Most of the boundary of the parkland is wooded and the canal and woodland are used to create an inner and outer 'parkland'. This meant that there was no 'passing' view of the Hall from 'The Street Road' (Watling Street); the only close-up view was from the approach as it crossed the canal, within the bounds of the parkland.

The woodland also controls the view from the Hall into and beyond the park. From the Hall and its terrace above an iron and wooden fence the pond was in view as far as the bridge and the canal could be seen as it entered the parkland from the approach bridge. Woodland planting and narrow belt planting constrained most external views. The ridge above the turnpike road was also visible above the trees. To the north-west it was possible to see the woodland of the parkland at Norton Hall and Norton church a few miles away. To the south-west Dodford church was visible. The natural topography hid churches at Flore and Weedon from view.

Extensive use of 'sunk fences', particularly in the 'outer parkland' on the western side of the Grand Junction Canal, created several distinct areas that could be used for stock control, displaying prize stock, keeping a small herd of deer or as distinct hunting areas. Repton saw game as an ornamental feature of a parkland. He believed that

hedgerows outside the park were ideal cover for birds.⁴⁵⁷ Phibbs believes that field sports in Brownian landscapes were primarily concerned with game hunting which, he believes had little or no impact on the design of landscapes, but he admits that there was a '... general trend for shooting to move into the parkland after about 1790.'⁴⁵⁸ This view is partly expressed *contra* Brown and Williamson who conclude their discussion of hunting in Brownian landscapes arguing that 'It is perhaps doubtful whether the form of the landscape park was critically shaped by such considerations. ... it is equally hard to believe that this important activity played no part in the emergence of the landscape style'.⁴⁵⁹ In 1792 at Moggerhanger Park in Bedfordshire, a hunting lodge belonging to the banker Godfrey Thornton (no relation), Repton created a landscape suitable both for walking in a garden between viewpoints and for hunting.⁴⁶⁰ Bebin suggests that Brockhall was a landscape that provided substantial areas of fox covert maintained for the emerging fox hunting sport.⁴⁶¹ The Grafton Hunt to the south-west and the Pytchley Hunt, which included Brockhall in its territory, were very fashionable, and therefore desirable, hunts which could boast royalty and senior aristocracy among their members. Thomas Reeve, like his friend and near neighbour Robert Andrew at Harlestone Park, was a member of the Pytchley Hunt.⁴⁶² However, the landscape presented by Webb's plan and by later plans suggests that the Brockhall landscape was more concerned with providing cover for game birds. Robert Andrew reared pheasants at Harlestone Park. There is little doubt that the design of the outer parkland at Brockhall was, at least partly, a response to the needs of game bird shooting.

⁴⁵⁷ Phibbs, J., 'Field Sports and Brownian Design', *Garden History*, Vol. 40:1, (2012), p. 66.

⁴⁵⁸ Phibbs, J., 'Field Sports', (2012), p. 66.

⁴⁵⁹ Brown, D. & Williamson, T., *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men*, (2016), p. 123-4.

⁴⁶⁰ From a conversation with the Head Gardener at Moggerhanger Park.

⁴⁶¹ Belin, M. de, *From the Deer to the Fox: the hunting transition and the landscape, 1600-1850*, (Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2013), p. 90-91.

⁴⁶² In common with many Northamptonshire gentry, Thomas Reeve was a member of the Pytchley Hunt.

6.7: Detail: Webb. J., Plan for Alterations at Brockhall, the circuit walk
(1799) [NRO Map 6427]

Webb's design at Brockhall was not just about approaching the Hall, looking out from the Hall or shooting birds. A circuit path was integral to the design providing entertainment, views and the opportunity for Thomas Reeve and Susannah Thornton to display their wealth and good taste. The route included a shrubbery walk with viewpoints, a kitchen garden and it followed a 'wild walk through the plantation' before returning along the drive across open pasture, giving the walkers the same view of the Hall that visitors saw on their arrival (Figure 6.7).⁴⁶³ This is a design that Webb learnt while working for Emes and had precedents in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶⁴ There are no additional buildings, although Thomas Reeve added a number of brick-

⁴⁶³ There is a detailed discussion of the circuit walk in Section 6.5 below.

⁴⁶⁴ See for example Brown at Ingestre, Staffordshire, which also mixes avenues, and landscape forms, Mowl, T. & Barrie, D., *Staffordshire*, (2009), p 98; Lowther Hall, Westmoreland where Webb also worked, Laird, M., *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden*, (1999), p. 122; or Kedleston Hall where Emes was Head Gardener, Goodway, K. M., Not just a pupil of Brown's, *Country Life*, Vol. 182:4, (1988) p. 84-85.

built buildings to his land in the 1800s and 1810s.⁴⁶⁵ Webb placed a few clumps of trees south-west of the Hall to enhance the view. The stable block is hidden by planting but may have been apparent at the final moment on the approach to the Hall. The stable block, which had been passed on the approach drive from Brockhall village was also bypassed by a new approach at a corner in the road junction between Brockhall, Dodford, and the road to Northampton. Webb created, inadvertently or not, a junction with the public road that followed Repton's suggestion that 'Where an approach quits the high road, it ought not to break from it at right angles'.⁴⁶⁶ Thomas Reeve did not follow Repton's advice at the junction of the approach with The Street.

John Webb proposed a scheme that was a creative fit for the landscape and the owner. A new approach from Watling Street passed a new lodge and curved towards the Hall through pasture and plantations. The Hall, raised above the valley floor was not seen until the sinuous pond, a feature of the circuit shrubbery walk and views from the Hall, was crossed. This approach, lodge, pond and the way the Hall was revealed gave the landscape and therefore its owner a gravitas that was consistent with his place in the social order. The landscape was self-contained and hidden behind plantations. From the Hall and shrubbery walk there were only limited views through gaps in the planting to the other side of the valley and particular landmarks. The shrubbery walk provided a location for polite conversation, the appreciation of and maybe participation in horticulture, and a kitchen garden, part of the walk but hidden from the Hall, which may have been admired by visitors.

6.3.3 Thomas Reeve's Response

James Payne's account book for the years 1799-1802 suggests that, with work on the Hall and ancillary buildings well underway, Thomas

⁴⁶⁵ Smith, J. M., Estate Brickmaking at Brockhall, Northamptonshire, *British Brick Society: Information*, Vol. 93, (2004), p. 17.

⁴⁶⁶ Repton, H., *An Inquiry*, (1805), p. 108.

Reeve turned his attention towards the landscape. There is no evidence that John Webb was involved at Brockhall after his plan of 1799 was delivered. It is very likely that, just as Thomas Reeve appears to have been his own architect for the Hall so, with Webb's plan under his arm, he was his own landscape designer for his parkland and pleasure ground. Two years after his marriage and taking possession of the estate, Thomas Reeve put his men to work. In the week beginning 21st February 1801, five men spent the equivalent of 10 days 'at the bridge going into the garden'.⁴⁶⁷ It is not clear whether bridge crossed the Grand Junction Canal or the existing 'canal' pond where the serpentine pond was going to be dug. Wherever it was, it was a significant construction taking more than 2000 bricks and a further 18½ 'labourer-days' work at a cost of £1/12/2.

In the early summer of the previous year, on 14th June 1800, James Middleton was paid 9s for six days work 'wheeling stone for roads' while James Osborn and John Burt were paid 10s each for the same work. Material from the demolition of old buildings and levelling the Stables and stable-yard was recycled onto roads. Robert Penny and James Adams spent 5 days of the same week on the 'foot road on the green', for which they received 8/4d. The latter pair were working on public roads, which is why their location was specified, but the absence of a location for James Middleton's, James Osborn's and John Burt's work cannot be said to demonstrate that that they were engaged in preliminary work on garden roads. In February and March 1801 two men spent 12 days between them on the 'New Road' while another man spent 4½ days 'wheeling stone into the Coach road'. At the end of the year, in December, Thomas Jeffries was paid 9s for six days work 'pitching roads'. Again, it is not possible to be certain which roads these works refer to. On 23rd March 1801 a page of detailed measurements of the distances between stiles, canal bridge, Watling Street, and the road to Wilton and Muscott was made. The notes include mention of the

⁴⁶⁷ All references to time, cost and location here, unless otherwise specified, are from NRO Th 2253.

Figure 6.8: Plan showing route alterations, (1803) [NRO V 908]

shrubbery walk and an estimate of the road sand needed for the road from Brockhall to Muscott.⁴⁶⁸ This road could be the road shown on an 1803 plan which is marked 'footway from Whilton to Brockhall' but it is not a direct route and it seems more likely that this is a reference to footway 'd' which will replace footway 'c' as the 'new road' towards Muscott via Denny's Backyard Close (Figure 6.8).⁴⁶⁹ It is reasonable to think that work on the 'new road' ('d') was underway in 1801 and that, at the very least, the location of the shrubbery-walk was established.

At the same time as these men were working on building a bridge and building, maintaining or repairing roads, others were working on ponds. In the week beginning 14th March Thomas Humphrey and Daniel Meacock both spent 4 days 'digging out ponds' while John Otish spent the same time 'wheeling earth out of the pond'. All three men were paid 8/6d for their efforts. Another four men spent 19½ days between them

⁴⁶⁸ NRO Th 2257.

⁴⁶⁹ The road closures and rerouting were subject to a JP's hearing in August 1803: NRO V908.

working 'on the garden & plantation walls'. Two weeks later three men spent an aggregate 18½ days digging out ponds. In the autumn of 1801

'the horse pond was drawn and the Carp disposed of thus

Put into the Great Pond	60 brace stores
Mill Pond	40
Pond next	12 larger
Stew pond	8 table carp and 1 tench

Sir W Wake and Mr R Andrews had 70 brace of Stores between them⁴⁷⁰

The horse pond lies across an elm avenue south-west of the Hall (see Figure 6.3). The stew pond is next to it. The other three ponds are the formal canals lower down the landscape near the river. These notes suggest that the men who worked on the ponds in the spring were cleaning them and not removing them. The upper ponds are omitted from the 1803 plan and may have been filled in by the time the plan supporting the decision to permit footways to be diverted was drawn but it is just as likely that their inclusion would have been an unnecessary detail. This map does, however, reflect some changes in the landscape between 1799 and 1803. The plantations, shrubbery walk and kitchen garden are shown to be a variation of Webb's advice, not a replication of it.

Work on this landscape continued through the first decade of the nineteenth century. James Payne's account book for 1803-10 is not organised in the same way as his earlier account book.⁴⁷¹ Entries show income and expenditure for a wider variety of categories but expenditure on labour is even less specified than in the 1799-1802 accounts. From April 1803 labour is itemised as a variable weekly expenditure described as 'Pd Labourers as per book'. It is not clear how many labourers were paid, how long they worked, what their rate of pay was or what they worked on. An obvious inconsistency in spending in

⁴⁷⁰ NRO Th 2257

⁴⁷¹ All items of income or expenditure are taken from Account Book 1803-1810 NRO Th 2490 unless otherwise specified.

one year might have indicated that more labourers were being employed for several weeks, perhaps on a particularly large project but no inconsistency exists. However, the Account Book for 1811-1820 shows that for five weeks in April and May 1811 176 labourer-days were spent 'at the pond' and during the following three weeks 165 labourer-days were spent 'at the Stue'.⁴⁷² The substantial investment in time and money, a total of 341 days and £64/5/3, is not repeated in subsequent years and it is reasonable to conclude that the lower fishponds were being altered as the new pond was dug.

The account book for 1803-1810 also reveals a number of significant purchases that suggests when work in the garden and wider parkland landscape was taking place.⁴⁷³ Thomas Reeve had a gardener, John Nunn, who was paid regularly for particular expenditure. In February 1807 James Payne paid his bill of £1/11/4 for 'Trees etc. for the Garden' and on May 21 his bill of £1/14/- for 'Seeds for the Garden' was paid. In 1803 John Nunn was paid 10s a week for his labour. A 1s bill for 'Threds for the fruit trees' was settled on the same day in July 1803 that 2s was paid for 'Gun powder for the garden'. The 2s payment for gunpowder appears several times in the account book. From 1807 onwards James Payne was paying local suppliers for a large number of trees and Quik [sic] plants for hedges. Abram Parker was paid for 15000 Quik at 6/9d per thousand in April 1807 and a further 17700 of Quik and '500 Crab and thorn Quik' were bought the following spring. Another 8000 Quik were bought in April 1809. In February and March 1808 50 elm trees and 1000 ash trees were purchased at a total cost of £1/16/-. These trees were in addition to the 120 beech, 260 hornbeam, 200 sycamore and 90 lime trees that were bought from 'Mr Robert Andrew's nursery' in 1801.⁴⁷⁴ There is no other archival reference to this nursery and nothing more is known about it. Robert Turnbull paid

⁴⁷² NRO V893.

⁴⁷³ NRO Th 2490.

⁴⁷⁴ NRO Th 2257.

Figure 6.9: Map of the Parish of Brockhall and description of the Property of Thomas Reeve Thornton Esq^r in that, and the adjacent Parishes, in the County of Northampton, (1821) [NRO 3684]

£2/15/6 in the spring of 1809 for an unspecified number of nursery plants. Unfortunately, the plant species aren't listed.

Later maps show the landscape as it was probably laid out in the period following 1799. Figure 6.9 is an extract from an 1821 survey of Thomas Reeve's lands in Brockhall and neighbouring parishes. In this map,

oriented so that south-west is to the top, the landscape of the new parkland is shown although some details have been omitted for clarity. This map follows quite closely the plan of 1803 that accompanied the Justices judgement on re-routing footways. The new footway to Muscott, shown in a dotted line heading west, leaves the Brockhall to Whilton road, shown in yellow, where that road bends to the north by the kitchen garden. The other 'new road' follows the route proposed by Webb in 1799 from the Hall to the canal but is more direct in its approach to Watling Street.

There is the only one significant area of woodland shown on the map - where the drive crosses the lake and before it divides between the drive and the kitchen garden. It is not clear whether this is because other woodland is still immature, has not been planted or would have made

Figure 6.10: Detail: Brockhall Tithe Map, (1839) [NRO T31]

the map less useful for its purpose. The Tithe Map from 1839 (Figure 6.10) shows little difference in the main features of the parkland between the 1799 plan, 1803 plan, the 1821 survey and the landscape in 1839 except where already noted. The new approach from Watling Street followed the route shown in 1821 and 1839 to the lake and then, as Webb proposed, across the south-west façade of the Hall before looping through the ha-ha to the south-east entrance courtyard. The 1803, 1821 and 1839 maps all show the shrubbery walk, kitchen garden and woodland planting in the same location and there is no reason to doubt that this is the form they took. The individual location of trees cannot be inferred from these maps but the density of trees in an area on the 1839 tithe map is likely to imply a greater density of planting in that area on the ground. Therefore, the 1839 tithe map confirms woodland where the drive crosses the lake, although the split in the road occurs in the woodland and not beyond it. Woodland also occurs at the edges of the parkland, along the river, partly obscures the canal and hides the end of the lake. Woodland is also used to create a perimeter to most of the Rector's parkland. The pond is a gentle, flattened reverse 'S' shape and crosses the parkland before ending in an island and an outflow to the river. By 1839 there is a structure on the eastern side bank of the pond, a boathouse, that had not featured on any previous map.

There is a high level of certainty about the improvements made to the parkland landscape in the period after 1799. It is harder to be sure about when the improvements were implemented. Nevertheless, it is likely that work had begun on a new bridge in the late winter of 1801 and that the kitchen garden and perhaps some other walls were built in the following two years. A significant number of specimen trees were bought from a Robert Andrews in 1801 and these were probably planted in either the shrubbery walk or the parkland. Measurements from a note in 1801 for the shrubbery walk suggest that detailed planning prior to construction had been undertaken and that the shrubbery walk can probably be dated from 1801/2. It is likely that the

approach was also a priority as this became the public entrance for visitors. Evidence from the 1803-1810 account book suggests that planting in the shrubbery walk, the parkland and elsewhere continued to at least 1810. It is not possible to be certain about the date of the infilling of the upper ponds and the conversion of the lower canals to a serpentine lake. The activities are not mentioned specifically, but the period of unusual labour activity in the spring of 1811 suggests that the water elements of the old landscape were removed and the new landscape laid out then. In the early spring of 1814 as the end of the Napoleonic Wars appeared inevitable, Thomas Reeve bought bunting from Thomas Ven on 26th March and 7th May; he and the family were able to celebrate what they thought was a lasting peace in their new landscape.⁴⁷⁵ It is certain that the transformation of the parkland from a fashionable formal landscape of the 1720s to an improved landscape garden was nearing completion.

The landscape was used and enjoyed. In the summer of 1821 John Thornton, Thomas Reeve's eldest child kept a diary. On 3rd July he recorded that 'Mr. Perigal came for the first time. I rode with Aunt Mary to Daventry, & called on Mr Dobney's, & Mr Clarke. I sailed in the new boat, which arrived on Monday Evening. Maria and Eleanor drank tea at Whilton.'⁴⁷⁶ The following day having ridden to Harleston [sic] to see Mrs Rose, he sailed in the new boat again. In fact, he 'went in the new boat' every day until 16th July except on the two intervening Sundays, Friday 6th when it was too wet and Tuesday 10th when the visits of Perigal, Dobney and the Crawleys prevented him. The boat was not small. On 18th John sailed with his uncle Lee in the morning and a party of 10 went in the boat in the evening. On the 20th and 21st there was sailing after Dinner and then a walk, presumably from the boat house around the circuit through the shrubbery back to the Hall. A mixture of frequent sailing and occasional cricket entertained John and his brother William, who had returned from Harrow, until John left for Cromer on

⁴⁷⁵ NRO Th 2490.

⁴⁷⁶ Diary of John Thornton, NRO Th 3184.

20th August. This glimpse of the gentry at play illustrates that the landscape was not just for displays of wealth, taste and gentility. On Tuesday 24th the family are simply enjoying themselves in each other's company and in their relatively recently improved landscape.

Tuesday.24 Uncle Philip went to Northampton. My Room was papered. They began to scrape the Bookroom. I walked with Aunt Lucy & then sailed with both Boats, till 5 O'Clock, when there came on a heavy Shower; we remained some time under the bridge, but were obliged to come home before the Shower was over. The party dined at the parsonage. I dined at home, & we had a little dance between dinner & tea.

The only record of John Webb's involvement with the improvements at Brockhall is the plan shown in Figure 6.6. This is the only evidence that he ever visited Brockhall. A letter to Lord Bradford survives suggesting that he planned to visit Sir James Langham at Cottesbrooke Hall in 1807 and he may have visited Lamport Hall in 1823.⁴⁷⁷ It is clear, however, that Thomas Reeve improved his landscape using a modified version of Webb's plan. The plan showing proposed path and road alterations in 1803/4 and the 1839 Tithe Map show how Thomas Reeve altered Webb's proposals (Figure 6.8 and 6.10) and Figure 6.11 shows details from John Webb's plan and an 1821 plan at approximately the same orientation and scale.

The impact of Thomas Reeve's modifications was to reduce the scale of parkland and the length of the circuit walk and to limit the approach drive to a single entrance from 'The Street'. The approach was also made shorter. The Tithe Map also shows that the pond had been given a boat house and a more complex southern terminus by 1839. The Dodford road has also been moved to the south but this was not moved until 1836.⁴⁷⁸ There is no evidence that helps explain Thomas Reeve's modifications to John Webb's plan. The modifications reduced the

⁴⁷⁷ SRO D1287/18/25(Q/45). Access to the Langham Archive is no longer permitted.

⁴⁷⁸ NRO Th 3340

Figure 6.11: Details from John Webb's plan and an 1821 plan showing Thomas Reeve's modifications in the pleasure garden

scope of the improvements and, given the family's longevity at Brockhall, the family owned the estate from 1625-1969, it can be supposed that Thomas Reeve was as keen to ensure that the family did not overspend as he was to improve his Hall and parkland. His good business sense can be seen in the construction of a brick yard in 1799

which meant that bricks probably earned an income for the estate and were not a cost.

John Webb was silent on the future of the two paths that were moved following the Justices of the Peace decision in August 1803. They appear on his plan so Thomas Reeve must have decided to move the paths after they met. The paths were moved 'so as to make the same nearer & more commodious to the public'.⁴⁷⁹ Although there is no doubt that the new paths were longer they may, at a minimum of 3 feet wide, have been an improvement on the tracks that they replaced. The impact of the relocation of the paths was to place anyone who was not a Thornton family member, employed by them or invited onto their property beyond the boundary of the parkland. They would have been almost invisible in views at ground level.

Here is a landowner altering the routes that people took from one place to another from the path that had been followed for a very long time to a new route which met the needs of the landowner. This is a material embodiment of the control that landowners had over the lives and bodies of other people. The communal experience in Brockhall of shared footways was altered by the will of one man. Thomas Reeve was able to express his idea of how his landscape should appear by altering the physical location of some of the routes within the village and between villages. In the process he altered the shared experience of the villagers. His ability to give physical expression to his cultural notion of the landscape changed the experience of the landscape for people within it. While creating a circuit, to his design, in his own garden, he altered the way in which people circulated in the village.⁴⁸⁰ In this way Thomas Reeve's ideology was expressed in material form in his landscape. The legal judgement in Thomas Reeve's favour is also evidence of the shift in the understanding of the ownership of land from

⁴⁷⁹ 'Order of Justices for diverting certain Roads in the Parish of Brockhall with Plan etc. 24th August 1803'. NRO V908.

⁴⁸⁰ See, Barrell, J., *The Idea of Landscape*, (1972), p. 109.

being in possession of the rights to the use of products from an area of land to the ownership of the land itself.⁴⁸¹ In Brockhall, where almost everybody owed their living, and therefore their survival, to the Lord of the Manor, Thomas Reeve's control over the material and cultural life of the village, the land and the people was almost absolute.

6.4 John Webb and parkland/pleasure ground design

John Webb's design at Brockhall was not an innovation and, like all designs, it was not produced in isolation. It can be compared to an Emes plan for John Newton at Bromley Hall, King's Bromley, near Lichfield in Staffordshire, in 1778, which shows the roots of the Brockhall design, and his own scheme for John Lane at the same location in 1810, which shows the direction of travel of Webb's pleasure

Figure 6.12: A Plan of the Lands around Bromley Hall the Seat of John Newton Esq. & some Alterations by W^m. Emes 1778 [SRO D6179/1/3]

⁴⁸¹ McDonagh, B & Griffin, C. J., Occupy! Historical geographies of property, protest and the commons: 1500-1850, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol 53, (2016), pp. 2.

ground designs (Figures 6.12 & 6.13).⁴⁸² Bromley Hall lies at the boundary of the flood plain of the River Trent, where the loam-clay soil is prone to waterlogging or occasional flooding and a freely draining, slightly acidic sandy soil which, because of its proximity to the river can have a high water table. The flood plain begins approximately where the edge of the pleasure ground was placed on the northern side of the house. Below the pleasure ground to the north of the Hall was, like the remainder of the parkland and the estate to the south-west of the Hall, poorly suited to arable farming. This is very flat land. The hills of Cannock Chase are visible to the south-west but they barely break the low horizon. Any interest must be found in the river or created by the designer and 'picturesque' scenery, especially in the sense implied by guidebooks to the Lake district or the River Wye, is distinctly lacking. Consequently, the Hall become the focal point of the landscape design both literally and metaphorically.

Emes favoured two approach drives. One, from the existing village street, followed a short curving, wooded route before the vista opened to a landscaped pasture about 300 metres wide and 500 metres long. The pasture contained clumps of trees and a perforated belt of trees which, divided into several small plantations, served to hide the Hall from the public and vice versa. The Hall was revealed when only 50 metres away. The second approach, from the Lichfield road, entered the estate through this pasture but, while the field was visible from the road, visitors would only have glimpsed the Hall briefly through clumps of trees when they were about 200 metres from it. Webb had more land to work with and his solution to the approaches to the Hall was more expansive. Both approach drives were given a new lodge and crossed pasture land bought since Emes had been consulted. The southern approach was, at about 500 metres, the longer. It crossed open pasture but clumps and larger patches of woodland obscured the Hall for the first 150 metres and gave only a glimpse of the River Trent. The

⁴⁸² John Lane inherited Bromley Hall from his aunt Mrs. Elizabeth Newton. See Mowl, T. & Barre, D., *Staffordshire*, (2009), p. 191.

6.13: A Plan of the demesne Lands at Kings Bromley the seat of John Lane Esq. With some Alterations by John Webb 1810 [SRO D6179/1/11]

glimpse of the river was not across its width but along the length of an arm of the river. This gave the appearance of a long, narrow body of water which disappeared behind woodland and raised anticipation for seeing it later. It is reminiscent of Repton's advice at Barton Hall.

The eastern approach was a more dramatic route. Having crossed an open pasture the approach followed a cut through woodland little wider than the drive, crossed a bridge over a lane which gave access to the shrubbery from the village (and may have been an access route for

servants who did not live in the Hall), before rounding a bend and arriving at the Hall quite suddenly. This narrow approach through the trees is similar in form to the approach over the canal bridge at Brockhall as the visitor travel from the outer parkland to the inner. Webb's approaches at Bromley Hall are consistent with the principles followed at Brockhall. The approaches were curved, they required new routes and new lodges and gave only intermittent glimpses of the Hall until it was fully revealed at the last moment. These three elements are also present in Emes' drives as the detail in Figure 6.14, a close up of both plans, shows.

Both landscapers kept the people of the village out of sight. Only a brief view down the length of the southern parkland from the road from Lichfield to King's Bromley in Emes' plan gave a passer-by a clear view of the Hall. Planting to the south and east kept the Hall and parkland physically isolated from the village and to the west the parkland had only intermittent views of pasture and more woodland.

Emes and Webb proposed a terrace above a ha-ha ('sunk fence') to the north of the Hall with good views across a pasture field and the river Trent. To the east and west they planned a 'shrubbery walk' but Emes proposed a 'Wild Walk thru' the sheep pasture continu'd along the South Bank of the River'. Webb did not include a 'wild walk'. The difference in terminology is significant and is indicative of the slow evolution of pleasure ground design. Emes' shrubbery walk and the 'wild walk' were west of the house by or near the kitchen garden; the 'wild 'walk' continuing across pasture and between clumps of trees. The dominant view is of the Hall which continues to be the centre of the design. Following Emes, Webb continued his shrubbery walk around the kitchen garden which was shielded from polite view by shrubbery planting. Webb's planting appears to be more densely conceived and, unlike Emes, he allows an entrance to the kitchen garden. The kitchen garden, which has a substantial building, is laid out as four symmetrical beds centred on a pool. No doubt the pool will have had a practical

Figure 6.14: Detail of the approach drives, kitchen garden and pleasure grounds at Bromley Hall, Staffordshire in Plans by Emes (1778, above), and Webb (1810, below)

function as a water supply, but it may also have been an ornamental feature which enabled John Lane to display his kitchen garden as part of the 'bone' shaped shrubbery circuit. East of the Hall and designed to be seen from the rooms in the east elevation of the Hall, Webb designed a shrubbery with island beds. Island beds have a long history but the location and scale of the beds beneath a window and therefore designed to be viewed from inside the Hall as well as outside was of growing popularity and reminiscent, albeit with different forms, of the parterres of earlier formal gardens. The shrubbery walk terminated in the east with a loop in woodland and two unidentified buildings, one lies on the Trent and could have been a boathouse. The other could have been a small temple-like structure. The ha-ha that separated the Hall terrace from the sheep pasture ended a little east of the Hall in Emes' plan. Webb, however, continued the ha-ha so that it completely separated his shrubbery walk from the pasture. This feature shows that, while Webb's proposals had their roots in an Emes-like scheme, they were subtly but significantly different.

The characteristics of Webb's design at Brockhall are also found at Bromley Hall but with two omissions. At Bromley Hall there is no shrubbery/parkland circuit and neither is there a belt of woodland planting that isolates the estate from the countryside. Planting does screen the village from the Hall and the Lichfield Road to the east and south. To the west clumps of trees frame views across open fields. To the north a belt of trees is not primarily screening but a background to a view that contains the River Trent in the middle ground and the terrace and pasture in the foreground. This is a familiar Repton-esque landscape.

The significance of these two plans for Bromley Hall is primarily in the increasing importance attached to the pleasure garden. In 1786 at Bromley Hall (Emes) and in 1799 at Brockhall (Webb) there is a full circuit walk which begins in the pleasure garden but ends crossing pasture between water and the Hall. Repton's plan for Barton Hall in

1793/4 proposed something similar. By 1810, Webb chose to design a walk which did not cross open pasture but was restricted to the pleasure ground. At the same time, Humphry and John Aday were designing and laying out walks in two pleasure grounds either side of a redesigned Hall at Harlestone Park. The significance of the rise in status of the pleasure ground is discussed more fully in Chapter 7. Here, it is sufficient to note that the growth in the market for improvements to estates owned by the gentry and to estates and villas bought and/or built by wealthy families from banking, merchant and industrial backgrounds and a change in the leisure habits of men and women from both backgrounds was leading to a change in the emphasis given to the design of the land immediately surrounding the Hall or villa. This is indicated in Webb's language to describe the route in his landscape. Following Emes, Brockhall was given a 'wild walk through the plantation etc.'. At King's Bromley the 'walk' is simply a 'Shrubbery'. The growth in tourism and the increasing availability of guide books and prints of 'sublime' landscapes also meant that describing a walk through a shrubbery along the banks of the river Trent in Staffordshire as 'wild' would have been a little ridiculous.

This chapter has considered in detail John Webb's plan commissioned by Thomas Reeve in 1799. The plan has been considered in the context of the Brockhall site and the changing fashion in parkland and pleasure ground landscape design. Reference has been made to the local geography of Brockhall and its neighbouring villages when Thomas Reeve took over the management of the estate and to the impact of boundary planting on views into and out of the parkland and pleasure ground. In the next section Thomas Reeve's farming activities, attitude to agricultural improvement and the relationship between the Lord of the manor and the villagers is discussed further.

6.5 Thomas Reeve and Brockhall village c 1810s-1840s

Thomas Reeve was able to live the life of a county gentleman, but he inherited an extensive 'family business'. From the fifteenth century his ancestors had been farming on the lower slopes of the high ground in the north-west of Northamptonshire. The land here is heavy clay, well suited to pasture and poorly suited to arable crops. In 1839 only 5% of the 827 acres of the parish was under arable crops, and these were in fields known as North and West Dryland and Dryland Hill.⁴⁸³ In common with several families in this part of Northamptonshire, including one branch of the Andrew family in Charwelton and the Spencer family at Althorp, the Thornton family concentrated on raising and fattening sheep, cattle and oxen for markets, including driving them to Smithfield in London. Martin notes that on many estates of Northamptonshire in 1564, particularly on the colder clays of higher ground, sheep flocks were sizable and, families such as the Knightleys kept 2,500 sheep at Fawsley, Richard Humphry 800 sheep at Barton Seagrave, a branch of the Andrew family kept 1200 sheep at the deserted village of Charwelton while 300 sheep were kept at Muscott.⁴⁸⁴

Account book entries show that Thomas Lee and Thomas Reeve bought livestock at local markets and then drove them to Smithfield market in London where they were sold. For example, on 16th April 1803, 30 tegs were bought at Northampton Fair for £51/15/- (34/6d each), 35 tegs were bought at Kettering Fair for £51/- (34s each) and Mr Topenal of Moulton was paid 32s each for 14 tegs.⁴⁸⁵ Later that year, on 15th and 23rd July Mr Buswell paid £14/- for 6 sheep, £30/- for 10 lambs and £84/- for 4 oxen sold at Smithfield. These animals would have been driven down Watling Street, on the western boundary of the Brockhall estate to London.

⁴⁸³ NRO T31

⁴⁸⁴ Martin, J., *Sheep and Enclosure in Sixteenth-Century Northamptonshire*, *Agricultural History Review*, Vol 36:1, (1988), p. 50, f. 24, p. 52, f. 26.

⁴⁸⁵ 'teg' is an old English dialect term for a 1-2 year old sheep, usually a ewe.

Thomas Reeve embraced agricultural improvement. On 6th April 1808 Mary and Anne Dicks and Mary Bull were each paid £18/8/- for 28 days work 'pecking turneps' [sic].⁴⁸⁶ on 6th October 1810 Mrs Judkins was paid £2/8/- for turnip seed. It is not known how much land was devoted to growing turnips but the quantity of seed and the time required to pack the turnips is substantial and on 28th September William Cory was paid £4/4/- for 'howing 12 Acors of Turnep's at 7/1 per Acor.⁴⁸⁷ He kept his farming equipment up to date. William Phillips of 'floor' was paid £2/10/- 'for the woodwork of a New Duple Plow' in August 1810, while a substantial investment of £16/5/6 was paid to 'John Cooch of Harleston for a Wincrowing masheen'.⁴⁸⁸ There was a modest but frequent attempt to keep the buildings of the tenants and labourers in good repair, £42/3/- was paid for a new town hedge and £6/6/- for new barns to be built in Newnham in 1765⁴⁸⁹, in 1808 Thomas Griffin was paid £3/15/- for 'Six New Wheelbarrows for the Poor, in February of the same year Thomas Fitzhugh was paid £9/6/9 for stone 'for the New farm houses etc.' and on at least one occasion Mrs Thornton gave a gift of £2/2/- to the poor of Norton.⁴⁹⁰ There is no evidence that Thomas Reeve struggled in the years that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars. He embraced the imperative of improvement in his business life, adopting new farming practices, and in his private life, modifying his Hall and designed landscape to achieve a fashionable, pleasurable and, in an exhibition of self-restraint, affordable landscape.

Brockhall village shrank in the two decades following 1811.⁴⁹¹ Table 6.3 shows population change in Brockhall from 1801 to 1851. However, the numbers involved are so small that the decline to 58 in 1831, only 11 people fewer than in 1801 may represent only two or three families moving to find work in Daventry, Northampton or one of the nearby

⁴⁸⁶ NRO V 893.

⁴⁸⁷ NRO V 893.

⁴⁸⁸ NRO Th 2490.

⁴⁸⁹ NRO Th 2487.

⁴⁹⁰ NRO Th 2490.

⁴⁹¹ See Section 3.4.3

OCCUPATION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE INDIVIDUALS EMPLOYED
Agricultural labourer	0	0%
Apprentice carpenter	1	3%
Carpenter	1	3%
Clerk	1	3%
Coachman	1	3%
Draper	1	3%
Farmer/Grazier	4	11%
Female servant	13	36%
Gardener	3	8%
Groom	1	3%
Male servant	10	28%
	36	100%

Table 6.3: Adult Male Residents of Brockhall by Occupation: 1841
Census

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	1831
Farmers employing labourers	4
Farmers not employing Labourers	1
Agricultural Labourers	4
Manufacturing	0
Retail and handicrafts	0
Capitalists, Professionals	2
Labourers (non-agricultural)	3
Servants	3
Other	0

Table 6.4: Brockhall Residents by Employment: 1831 Census

villages on the canal. The 1841 census recorded 59 people staying in 10 properties on the night of June 6th (Table 6.4).

There are two striking differences to the populations in the other three villages studies. First, there were no agricultural labourers living in the village on the night of 6th January 1841. The demand for labour would be low in a parish dominated by pasture and building work at the Hall was complete. Any labourers living in the village may have been driving stock to market or living in the neighbouring parishes at Whilton, Norton, Muscott, Flore, Dodford or Great Brington. Movement between Brockhall, Muscott and Norton may have been commonplace. In neighbouring Norton of 96 households, 68 contained at least one agricultural labourer. The 1841 Norton census returns list twenty-one occupations for 149 people. Of these 78 (52%) were agricultural labourers. The majority of the other individuals employed were male and female servants (30) and farmers (10).

Second, 64% of the employed individuals in the parish are described as servants. Most work for Thomas Reeve and lived in the Hall (10, 28%), the Rectory (3, 8%) or the three farmers/graziers. Another five people live in their own households but work for the Thornton family either at the Hall or Rectory. Three are gardeners, one a groom and one the coachman. The 1841 occupation returns are not, at first reading, consistent with the 1831 census returns (Table 6.4). Only sixteen people were listed under nine occupational categories in 1831 whereas there were thirty-six people working at more flexibly defined jobs ten years later. However, the occupation of women of any age and men under the age of twenty were not recorded in the 1831 census and this explains the apparent lack of working people in Brockhall in 1831. There is, nevertheless, a surprising shortage of servants in 1831. There were ten male servants in 1841 but only three a decade earlier. It is not obvious why the number of servants should be so few in 1831 unless the Thornton family and their household were absent on the night of the census. If they were this would also account for some or all the decline

in population between 1821 and 1841 but would raise a further question about the decline between 1821 and 1831 and a hidden growth between 1831 and 1841.

Brockhall was a small estate village dependent upon the Lord of the Manor for shelter and employment. Over the period of this study Brockhall changed little despite the growing pace of change elsewhere, and the evidence of that change in the physical structure of the Grand Junction canal. The only natural resource was the soil which provided wealth for the landowner and, through him, employment for the villagers. For a few years after 1800 the soil also produced a supply of bricks that may have artificially increased the village population but certainly generated an income for the estate. The dependence of the village on the landowner and his family was reflected in the morphology of the village which is dominated by the Hall, the church and the Rectory. The only road through the village passes between them and they form a barrier through which villagers had to pass. This barrier is reinforced by the high stone wall that runs between the Hall and stables to the west and the church and some cottages to the east. This physical barrier is an expression of the social divide and the imbalance of power that went with it within the settlement. The combination of dependence on the landowner for employment, exposure to the power of the landowner to shed labour or move roads and the physical barriers constructed in the village created a material environment that mirrored social relations. It also created, as the next section discusses, limits to the visibility of the parkland and pleasure ground and therefore demonstrated that the designed landscape and the relationship between the Lord of the Manor and the villagers and between the Hall/Rectory and the village were to be seen in a particular manner.

6.7 Viewing Brockhall

Today Brockhall is private land and access is not permitted. Access is only granted to those who own or rent the land or own apartments in the

Hall. Planting, a high stone wall and the relocation of Dodford Road prevent good views to the Hall even in the winter when many trees are bare. The clearest view of the Hall is from a new road which bypasses Flore and Weedon to the south-west of Brockhall. Brewer traces the interest in sight lines to 'The eighteenth century [when the] country house also became a visual focal point: a place from which to look as well as to be seen'.⁴⁹² In Thomas Reeve's time views towards the Hall were also restricted. The topography prevented any view of the Hall from north-east to south-east from more than a few hundred metres while Thomas Reeve's planting not only controlled views from the Hall but also views of the Hall and the parkland. His improved Hall was a more solid, cuboid structure and it is possible that it made a greater impression in sight lines from Dodford and Norton churches and, most notably, Norton Hall (Figure 6.14).⁴⁹³ There was no view into the parkland for passers-by on Watling Street. This is in contrast with all the other sites analysed in this thesis.

Brockhall was small in the early nineteenth century but Thomas Reeve ensured that it, and its owner, could still be seen in the locality, deliberately retaining and enhancing views of Brockhall from churches and Norton Hall, symbols of gentry power, temporal and spiritual. The Thornton family were a longstanding and successful gentry family with roots in Northamptonshire from the fourteenth century. They had served several times as High Sheriffs of the County and were part of the social network of County society. The Hall at Brockhall was not relocated; it was cheaper to modify the Hall than relocate and the original site was sufficiently above the bottom of the valley to remain in good taste.⁴⁹⁴ Thomas Reeve brought his home and 'entertainment space' up to date

⁴⁹² Brewer, J, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, Harper Collins, 1997), p. 628.

⁴⁹³ 'Norton', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northamptonshire, Volume 3, Archaeological Sites in North-West Northamptonshire* (London, 1981), pp. 149-158; Bailey, B., Pevnsner, N, & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 502. Norton Hall was bought by Thomas Botfield in 1800.

⁴⁹⁴ Repton, H., *Sketches and Hints*, p. 3.

providing a destination that would have impressed his friends and acquaintances and which his family enjoyed. His improvements were part of making a personal impact on the landscape that ensured his status in his social world.

It was also a statement of his status at the top of the hierarchy in Brockhall parish. Just as Thomas Reeve limited sight lines to his Hall from neighbouring parishes, so he also ensured that, apart from invited guests, only people from Brockhall and neighbouring villages that he employed were able to see his parkland and pleasure ground landscape. There is an inevitable nuance here. If someone crossed the valley from west to east on a new path, they would have seen the Hall and some of the parkland. This was because the boundary planting of

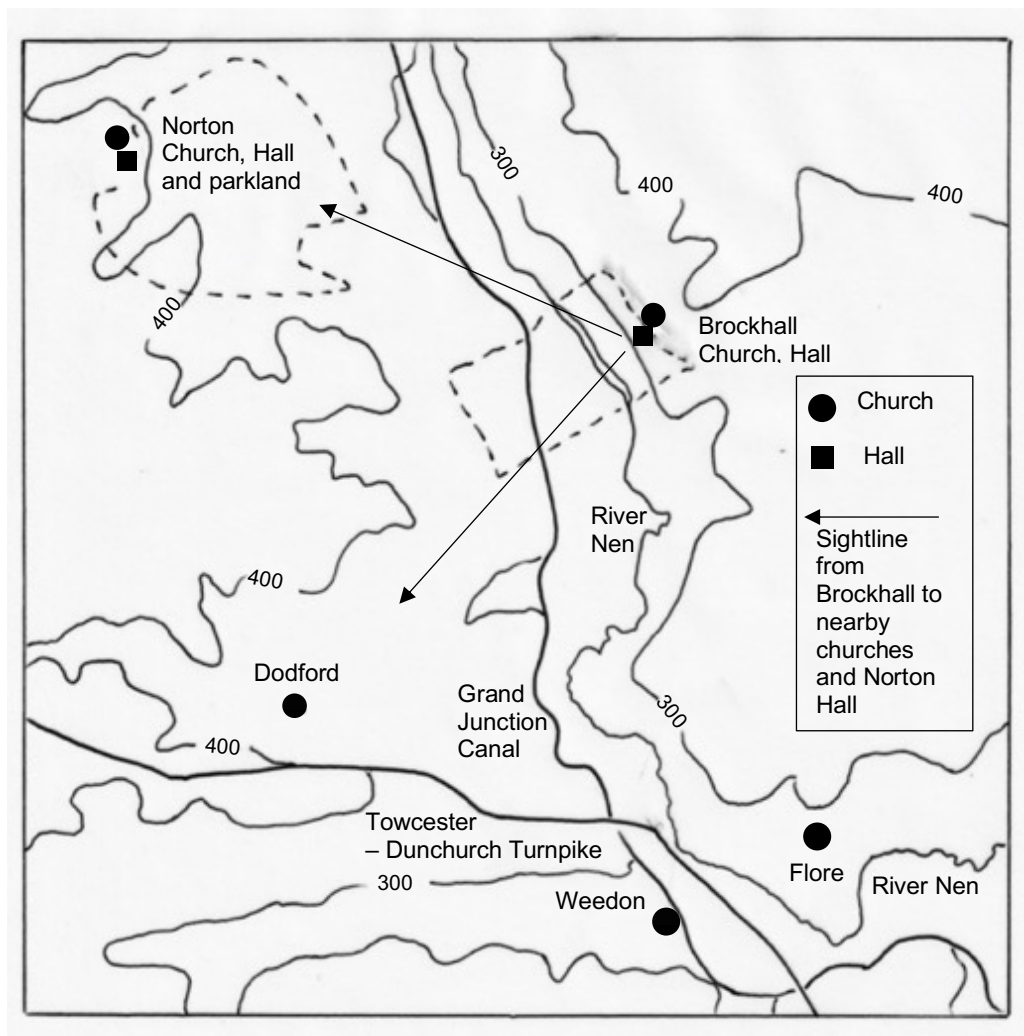


Figure 6:15: Sightlines from Brockhall

the parkland was perforated to allow the sightline to/from Dodford. The pleasure ground however, following the fashion that Repton describes as his own in the early pages of *Hints and Sketches*, was largely hidden behind a wall, shrubberies and trees.⁴⁹⁵ For most people the designed landscape was hidden most of the time. The unwanted prying eyes of those he did not control were excluded while those whose livelihoods were dependent on him were permitted access. In gaining access they saw Thomas Reeve's vision for the landscape, his power over the material of the land, and his ability to express his vision through the materiality of the land. They also experienced his power over their lives as they were now only permitted access to a landscape they had previously had the freedom to walk through on footpaths if they were in service, or provided their labour or a skilled function like carpentry to the Hall.

6.7 Concluding Comments

In the century from about 1726 Thomas Thornton, Thomas Lee and Thomas Reeve continued the tradition of the Thornton family at Brockhall as they expanded their landholdings, managed the family business wisely, married profitably and improved their designed landscape. The designed landscape at Brockhall can be understood as elite ideology expressed through power over other people.

At Brockhall, roads and paths were relocated with the assistance of other gentry with little regard for the impact their alteration had on those who had habitually used; though their quality was improved. Thomas Reeve moved footpaths and roads that crossed his parkland not just to keep people off his parkland but to hide them from it. After the paths and roads were moved and the planting and wall construction was complete it was no longer possible to see people moving within the village or between villages from within the parkland. This created as

⁴⁹⁵ Repton, H., *Sketches and Hints*, (1796), p. 3-4.

exclusive space for visitors and residents of the Hall. The canal, which passed through the parish and the parkland had little or no impact on the village, unlike its impact on nearby villages, particularly Weedon, Flore and Dodford. The canal was also hidden from the Hall by planting. The Thorntons were anxious to establish control over the parish, expressed in their continuing purchases of land and Thomas Reeve also wanted to exclude the village and such passers-by as there were, not only from his land but also from being seen from his land. In a time of social change, exemplified by the arrival of the canal, these actions are a material metaphor for his desire to maintain the social position of the landed gentry.

The exclusion of villagers was integral to the design of the landscape that Webb proposed and Thomas Reeve amended and implemented. He chose to separate the Hall from the village, and the church, in the most dramatic way possible with a 12' high stone wall. The 'polite quarter' in the village was more implied than real but the wall had the effect of separating the Hall from Church and Rectory as well as the rest of the village. There was no doubt that villagers were aware of the divide imposed by Thomas Reeve but, welcome though Philip Thornton will have been, it cannot have escaped his attention that the wall was a statement that it was the Lord of the Manor, the gentleman who owned land, who represented power in the village, not his extended family.

Thomas Reeve maintained a balance between a pleasurable lifestyle and ensuring that the family business was run wisely. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Thomas Reeve was able to create a landscape that grew timber and supported livestock but also provided pleasure to the family and their guests. However, as his control of the parish became almost absolute, he removed from sight any evidence of villagers and travellers that he had not invited into his parkland and garden. Even the distant vistas across the valley were of symbols of the role of the landed gentry in society: the church and other landed gentry. He made his statement as boldly as possible with thick planting and a

stone wall twice the height of taller people. His motivation for creating such a private space may have been temperamental or it may have been a conscious or subconscious resistance to a changing society expressed in the canal and then the railway in 1838. The analysis of the designed landscape at Brockhall has also identified an evolution in the design of landed gentry landscapes from Emes at Bromley Hall through Webb at Brockhall to Webb at Bromley Hall and, the next chapter will show, Repton at Harlestone Park. There was a gradual move away from circuit shrubberies and views of the Hall from the walk towards a pleasure ground that could be viewed from within the Hall. Walks might remain but they were less likely to be circular in nature and more likely to have an end point. The effect of this change was not only to increase the value of plants and flowers as points of interest in themselves but also to reduce the long vista of the Hall seen on foot. The view of the Hall from approach and the long view of the picturesque scene from within the framing effect of the windows of the Hall were not altered. However, the impact of relocating flower gardens to a site adjacent to the Hall was to create an additional short vista of the pleasure ground from within the Hall. The view is a garden landscape within a landscape of more extensive views but it is acquiring similarities with smaller landscapes such as those of the urban elite in 'out of town' villas.

Chapter 7 Harlestone Park

7.1 Introduction

Harlestone village is about 7 kms north-west of Northampton on the 1738 turnpike road to Rugby. The village has two distinct areas separated by Harlestone Park, the Hall and designed landscape of the Andrew family. The parish is primarily pastureland and has outcrops of quarriable ironstone. The Northamptonshire Andrew(e)(es) family can be traced back into the fifteenth century. The genealogy is complex but in the 1730s John Andrew (1698-1756) lived at Creaton about 9 kms north of Harlestone (Figure 7.1). His relative Robert Andrew lived at Harlestone Hall and owned one of two Harlestone manors. Having no heir, he bequeathed his estate to John Andrew's son, Robert Snr (c. 1735-1807) in 1739. The family moved to the more important estate in Harlestone and John unified the two manors of Harlestone in 1750. In 1770 Robert Andrew Snr became Lord of the Manor.

This chapter has five sections. The first considers the period after the unification of the two manors in Harlestone when John Andrew and his son Robert Snr consolidated their position in the village and their hundred. It describes Harlestone village and places the estate in its wider physical and social environment during the last quarter of the eighteenth century shortly after enclosure. The second section describes and analyses the improvements carried out by Robert Jnr when he commissioned Humphry and John Adey Repton to alter his Hall and parkland between 1808 and 1811. There is no red book for this project but not only is the reconstruction of the site a rare example of the Repton's project management from initial consultation to completion but there is also a sketch of the Hall and plans of the Hall and pleasure ground made after the project was finished. This may be unique in Repton's work and it informs our understanding of the gradual evolution of pleasure ground and parkland design. The third section covers the period in which Colonel Packe, Robert Jnr's nephew, managed the

estate as Trustee following Robert Jnr's financial collapse. His young wife, Eliza, kept a diary of visitors to Harlestone Park and the visits she and others made from Harlestone Park between 1825-7. This diary reveals a gentry social network in central Northamptonshire and gives some insight into the way they sought relaxation, entertainment and maintained their social position. The Hall was sold to a neighbour, Earl Spencer in 1831 shortly before Robert Jnr's death.

The fourth section describes the after-life of the landscape as it became a junior site in a much larger estate. The 1829 sales particulars depict the estate as when it was sold. Over the next 20 years it was seen by its owners in a very different way because the owners and the landscape became distanced from one another spatially and psychologically. The section also revisits the village and considers the changes in the village, placing the Hall, its improvements and change in ownership in the context of the changes Harlestone experienced during the first forty years of the nineteenth century.

7.2 Robert Andrew Snr (1756-1807)

Robert Snr was the first Andrew to inherit the unified manor of Harlestone and with it he also inherited three other significant estates (Figure 7.1). Few records survive from this period but there is no doubt that Robert Snr was committed to improving the productivity, and therefore profitability, of his land. He oversaw the enclosure of the parishes in which all his estates were situated: Harlestone was enclosed in 1766, Crick in 1776, Great & Little Creaton in 1782 and Great Addington in 1803. Each enclosure was costly in the short term, the enclosure of Great and Little Creaton cost Robert Snr £862.16.10.⁴⁹⁶ Arthur Young believed that rents from enclosing open arable land could double while common pasture could reasonably be

⁴⁹⁶ NRO A 139.

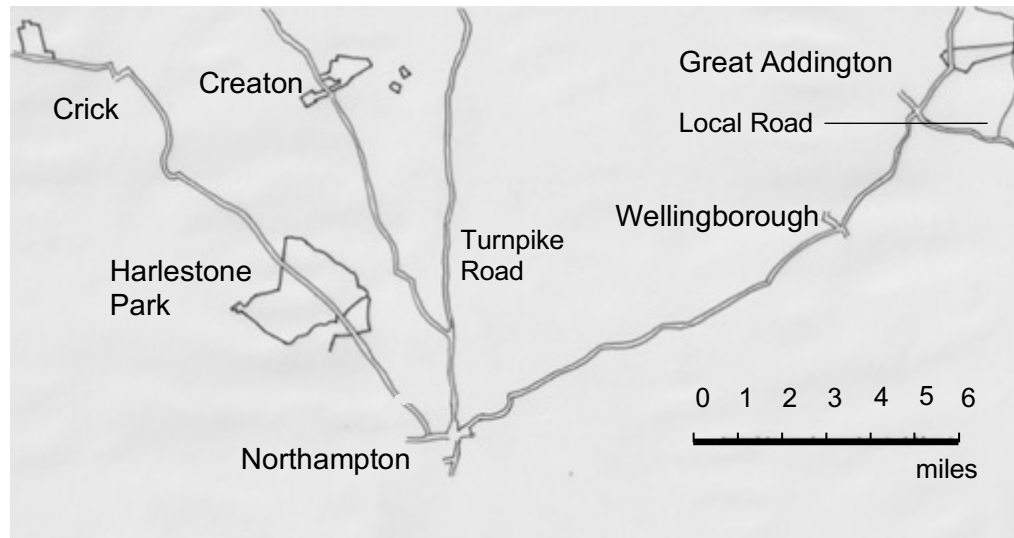


Figure 7.1: Andrew landholdings in 1807

expected to treble in value.⁴⁹⁷ Clearly it would take time to achieve a return on the investment in enclosure and Robert Snr may have been wise to undertake enclosures slowly.

Robert Snr was active in ensuring that the Northampton to Rugby turnpike remained in good condition. In 1781, one of three occasions on which Acts for improving the Turnpike Road were passed during the 51 years that Robert Snr was in control of Harlestone Park, the Trustees met 'at the sign of the Fox-and-Hounds on Tuesday 24th'.⁴⁹⁸ A parish through which a turnpike was introduced could expect to see a rise in rents of at least 20% and this figure would rise if there were other Turnpike Trusts in neighbouring parish. Robert Snr was also active in the Harborough and Welford Turnpike Trust.⁴⁹⁹ He chose to improve the financial return of his land and invested repeatedly, but not foolishly, in enclosure and the road network. By the time he passed his estates to his son he owned about 3500 acres which would have yielded at least £2500 per annum.

⁴⁹⁷ Young, A., *General Report*, (1971, [1808]), p. 220-221.

⁴⁹⁸ *Northampton Mercury*, 13th July 1781. See also Cossons, A., *The Turnpike Roads of Northamptonshire*, (1950), p. 39, in which Cossons shows that Acts were passed in 1759-6, 1780-2 and 1806 during Robert Snr's seniority.

⁴⁹⁹ *Northampton Mercury*, 9th April 1791. The trustees met at the George Inn at Brixworth on 14th April 1791.

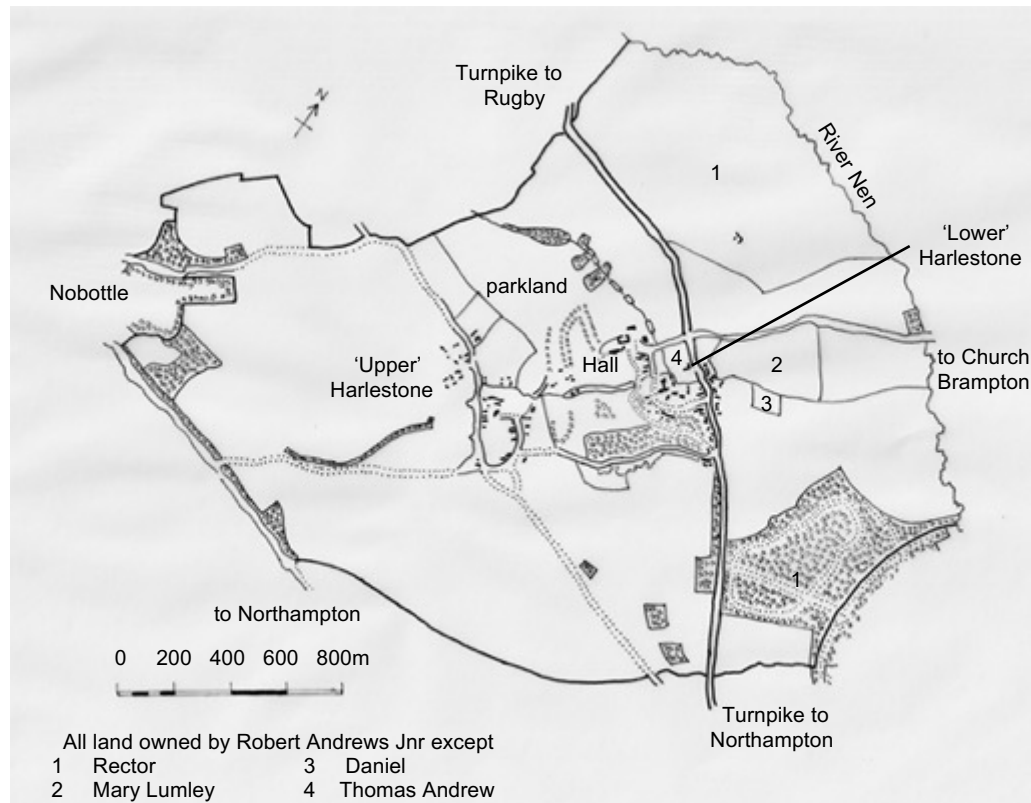


Figure 7.2: Harlestone parish c. 1817

In the introduction to the four case studies in Chapter Three it was shown that Harlestone village consisted of two distinct areas known today as 'Upper' and 'Lower' Harlestone.⁵⁰⁰ Figure 7.2, based on the Ordnance Survey Working Drawings of 1817, shows the older "Upper' Harlestone to the west on the 'old road' and the later 'Lower' Harlestone lying along the 'new' turnpike road of 1739 are evident. The 1777 Northamptonshire Militia Lists are a good indication of employment in the village, though they tell us nothing about its spatial distribution (Table 7.1). In addition to the limited number of people listed on a militia lists, 22 men (27.5%) who arranged for a substitute to serve, were too poor or infirm to serve are not given an employment category. This makes detailed analysis of the employment and functions of Harlestone in the late 1770s of limited value but two conclusions can be drawn. The village is predominantly employed in agriculture or service. There are 11 farmers and 6 labourers and it is likely that several of the 'poor with

⁵⁰⁰ See Section 3.4.4.

OCCUPATION	1777	%
Esq.	1	1.25%
Baker	2	2.50%
Blacksmith	1	1.25%
Butcher	1	1.25%
Carpenter	1	1.25%
Cordwainer	3	3.75%
Farmer	11	13.75%
Joiner	2	2.50%
Labourer	6	7.50%
Mason	3	2.75%
Quarryman	2	2.50%
Schoolmaster	1	1.75%
Servant	13	16.25%
Stonecutter	4	5.00%
Taylor [sic]	2	2.50%
Weaver	3	3.75%
Woolcomber	2	2.50%
Persons excused by law and served by a substitute	10	12.50%
Poorman with 3 children	10	12.50%
Too infirm	2	2.50%
	80	96.5%

Table 7.1: Harlestone Residents by Employment: 1777
Northamptonshire Militia Lists

three children' are also agricultural labourers. The biggest single category of employment is service; the 13 men listed will have been joined by a number of women who were also employed as servants, primarily in the Hall but also in the Rectory, by some farmers and perhaps, the schoolmaster. Second, there is a wider variety of retail and craft trades that were probably working to serve the villagers and

gentry. Some, like the cordwainers, may have also sold their product at the market in Northampton. Therefore, apart from agricultural products, the village was not primarily concerned with external markets and contained no specialists who looked beyond the parish for the bulk of their income.

When Robert Snr inherited Harlestone Manor in February 1756 the Rector was John Clendon who had been in post since 1710.⁵⁰¹ They had a difficult relationship. Rev Clendon was a subscriber to an edition of *Etymologicum Angelicum* by Franciscus Junius edited by Edward Lye, Rector of Yardley Hastings, a village south-east of Northampton.⁵⁰² There is no evidence that Robert Snr shared Clendon's interest in Anglo-Saxon grammar. Robert Snr appointed several Rectors in a relatively short period of time including his uncle Thomas in 1762 and his brother Gilbert (Table 7.2). On Gilbert's death in 1809, Robert Jnr, who had only recently inherited the estate presented his brother-in-law

NAME	FROM	TO	COMMENT
John Clendon	1710	1756	
Richard Blackett Jeykll	1756	1759	
Thomas Andrew	1762	1769	Uncle
George Tymms	1769	1771	
Gilbert Andrew	1771	1809	Brother
Francis Montgomery	1809	1831	Brother-in-law
David Morton	1831	1881	Spencer appointment

Table 7.2: Harlestone Clergy 1710-1831

⁵⁰¹ The Andrew family had acquired the advowson by the end of the seventeenth century. Baker, p. 171.

⁵⁰² Lye, E., ed., *Francisci Junii, Francisci Filii, Etymologicum Angelicum, ex Autographo descriptis e accessionibus permultis auctum edidit*, (Oxford, 1743). Rev. Sir John Dolben Bt. Prebend of Durham, Lady Dolben, Elizabeth Dolben (later Elizabeth Rainsford), William Hanbury of Kelmars, Sir Edmund Isham Bt, Sir Thomas Palmer, Rev Sharp Archdeacon of Northumberland, Sir Hans Sloane, Thomas Thornton of Brockhole [sic], were among a large number of subscribers.

Francis Montgomery. He remained Rector until the estate was bought by Earl Spencer. Mary née Andrew and the Revd. Montgomery benefitted from an extensive remodelling of the Rectory in 1812, shortly after the improvement of the Hall and designed landscape were complete.⁵⁰³ There were only three years between 1762 and 1831 when the Rector was not a close relative of the Lord of the Manor, a relationship common to all four of the estates studied in this thesis. There is very little evidence to indicate the way in which the Rectors served their parish. Thomas and Gilbert Andrew did not hold additional benefices while Francis Montgomery resigned his post at Holcot when he was appointed to Harlestone parish but was also Curate at Milton Malsor, a few kms west of Northampton from 1814, while employing curates at Harlestone.

Robert Snr enclosed Harlestone parish in 1766. The Enclosure Act allotted 1599-3-24 acres to Robert Snr, 309-0-5 acres to the Rector, and the remainder to 12 people and the Trustees for the Poor (6-3-0). By the time of his death he had acquired almost the whole parish. In 1829 Mary Lumley was the largest landowner in the parish after the Andrew family (see Figure 7.2). Even in 1767-8, as the enclosure was being completed, the Andrew family controlled the substantial majority of the parish (about 84%) and their grip on their largely agricultural and service-based parish did not weaken into the nineteenth century.

Robert Snr acquired an understanding of good, landed gentry taste. In 1752, when he was in his mid-late teens he undertook a tour of South Wales and south-west England with three companions and two servants. A journal of the tour survives. Robert Snr described architecture at George Doddington's house near Blandford Forum as

‘a magnificent Stone Building with two wings adjoining each of which contains a court. The sides of these courts, have Lodging apartments for Gent. The others offices, servants Rooms 7c. The

⁵⁰³ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p., 316-7. No evidence concerning this rebuilding has survived.

whole abounded with those irregularities wch distinguish the designs of Sir John Vanburgh Being Blenheim in Miniature.⁵⁰⁴

At Foxly, he admired the artwork and internal decoration

‘the Hall was adorn’d with Paintings by the best Masters collected by the present Proprietor’s Father [Uvedale Tomkyns Price], who seems not only to have been a good judge of other’s performances, but also to have had a pretty Genius in the practical Part of the Art, having himself painted his Grand Staircase in a Masterly Manner.’⁵⁰⁵

He noted Lady Catherine Parker’s formal landscape near Plymouth where ‘a long Terras on high Ground wch commands a full view of the Water, Mount Edgecomb’ and later saw a ‘curious Grotto of shell work not quite finished’.⁵⁰⁶

Later, he described George Doddington’s gardens which ‘contain[ed] about 46 Acres & are prettily disposed in walks with Clumps of Trees, & some water raised with the utmost difficulty. They open by Aha’s very familiarly into the Country, wch is all plain or easy swellings Downs.’⁵⁰⁷

He also described natural and agricultural scenery admiring the ‘most fruitful and beautiful Country grand Prospects, particularly the mountains on the Left, & the Wye on the Right, to Haya.’ and the romantic entrance to Brecknock.⁵⁰⁸ Near Bridport he noted that ‘it is very agreeable to observe, how the Face of the Country changes by gentle Degrees, 1st from inclosures in grazing & Tillage to open Fields of the same; & then to Smooth Downs entirely in sheep Pastures, wch continue to Dorchester.’⁵⁰⁹ He grew into adulthood aware of the fashions and good taste in architecture and landscape design. The Hall that Robert Snr inherited had been rebuilt by his uncle Robert, probably to a design by Francis Smith, a Warwickshire based architect, in 1728

⁵⁰⁴ NRO A 280, p. 50.

⁵⁰⁵ NRO A 280, p. 12-13.

⁵⁰⁶ NRO A 280, p. 38-39.

⁵⁰⁷ NRO A 280, p. 52.

⁵⁰⁸ NRO A 280, p. 13, 14.

⁵⁰⁹ NRO A 280, p. 44.

Figure 7.3: H. Repton, *Harlestone Park*, slide in place (1808)
[NRO P1280]

(Figure 7.3).⁵¹⁰ The origin of the landscape is unknown. Eyre and Jefferys' map shows a small formal plantation to the north of the Hall. There is no evidence to suggest that he made any attempt to improve the Hall or the designed landscape.

Robert Snr ensured the wise financial management of his land and learnt to display good taste but he was equally keen to enjoy the life of a country gentleman to which he had been born. He was probably an early member of the Pytchley Hunt; most other local gentry are not on the earliest list of subscribers but did hunt with the Pytchley. Revd. John Clendon accused Robert Snr of hunting across the 'inclosures of his tenants' without offering them any compensation for the damage done.⁵¹¹ On Monday 18 November 1766 the Hunt's quarry 'turned right by the [Althorp] Park Wall and to Harlestone town. There he was seen to

⁵¹⁰ Bailey, B., Pevsner, N. & Cherry, B., *Northamptonshire*, (2013), p. 317.

⁵¹¹ The majority of Harlestone was not enclosed until 1766 when Robert Snr's brother Gilbert was Rector. There was clearly tension between Rector and Squire. The complaint also suggests that Robert Snr was hunting on horseback in the 1750s. The date of the complaint suggests that Rev. Clendon did not leave the area after he left his post.

come over Mr. Andrew's Park Wall'.⁵¹² By 1796 a Robert Andrew featured in a verse of an anonymous contemporary poem.

I believe I have gone through the whole of the list,
Oh no! I beg pardon, Bob Andrew I've missed,
To pass such a hero the man would be slack,
So in the next verse he shall join the gay pack.⁵¹³

In 1806 Robert Jnr was a subscriber to the Hunt and had paid his subscription of £10-10s, plus a forfeit of £2-2s for not attending the 'Anniversary' in London.

Robert Snr kept deer. By the late eighteenth-century deer were of less value for the plate and more a statement of social status and keeping deer was an expression of his self-perception. In 1800 Robert Snr

Figure 7.4: Millar, J., *Robert Andrew, Earl of Harlestone, Wrestling with a Stag whilst Two Gentleman Watch from the Sidelines (1799)*,
[West Northamptonshire Council]

⁵¹² Paget, T. G. F., *The History of the Althorp and Pytchley Hunt: 1634-1920*, (London, 1937), p. 52

⁵¹³ Paget, T. G. F., *Pytchley Hunt*, (1937), p. 88

commissioned a conversation piece from the Birmingham artist James Millar (1735-1805), an almost exact contemporary of Robert Snr, that projected his self-image (Figure 7.4).⁵¹⁴ James Millar, who exhibited at the Royal Academy and Society of Artists in 1771, was considered the leading portrait artist in Birmingham in the last quarter of the eighteenth century although he also painted landscapes, animals and historical scenes. He painted portraits of John Freeth who owned Freeth's Coffee House, a significant meeting place in Birmingham's cultural life, Joseph and Mary Priestley and the wife of Lunar Society member Thomas Day. These connections, his strong Midlands reputation and his profile in London, explain Robert Snr's choice of Miller.

There is considerable artistic licence in the landscape depicted but it is recognisably related to a view looking north-east over the one of the ponds towards the Hall at Harlestone Park. Robert Snr and the three friends were unlikely to have hunted deer in his modest park, but a flock of bird above the trees, an area known later as 'The Pheasantry', indicates the real activity of the men. Robert Snr is depicted 'wrestling', or more accurately being head butted by, a young deer revealing a man confident in his status and place in society and willing to be seen depicted in a comic situation. He may have been a man of good humour and some self-deprecation, at least when among friends and those he considered social equals.

Robert Snr was a country gentleman determined to play his part in the local and county community. He served as High Sheriff in 1777. He sought to maintain and improve the productivity of, and his wealth from, the parishes where he was a major landowner. In so doing, he not only did his patriotic duty in improving the countryside but also built a stronger legacy for his family. He chose not to improve too rapidly, thus

⁵¹⁴ This painting and a portrait mistakenly entitled Robert Andrew the Younger, are held by Northamptonshire County Council. In both paintings the status of Robert Andrew is raised from gentleman to Earl. This could have been flattery by the artist or hubris by the subject but it is more likely to be part of the comedy of the work.

protecting his land from too much borrowing or the unknowns of relying on the land and markets for his income. He also chose not to improve his Hall or landscape. He did, however, enjoy himself. He was active member of the Pytchley Hunt, which frequently crossed his land, and a hunter of game birds. The deer he kept reveal the status he believed he held. The painting of him 'wrestling' a deer suggests he was a man with some self-awareness and humour. There is no evidence that Robert Snr was a man of books or learning or that he maintained an interest in antiquities, curiosities or science but, as a young man, he had been enculturated into a knowledge of good taste in architecture and landscape design, and wise management of land. Robert Jnr was born into the world that Robert Snr nurtured and will have acquired a self-perception and values from his environment. The values included believing himself to be born to govern the estates for his family and his tenants. He will have expected, or at least believed, that the political and financial status quo should and would be maintained. He also learnt how to enjoy himself having spent time hunting and shooting with his father and their aristocratic and gentry friends. In the next section an account is given of Robert Jnr's impact on the Harlestone landscape as, having learnt from his father, he then succeeded him in 1807 and made significant alterations to the Hall and parkland.

7.3 Robert Andrew Jnr (1807-1825)

7.3.1 Introduction

Robert Andrew was born in 1770. He married Frances Packe (1775-1800), the seventh child of Charles Packe of Prestwold Hall in Leicestershire in 1799. As he moved through his 20s and 30s Robert Jnr was learning his future role as country squire. He had attended his first meeting of the Harlestone Association, a group 'for apprehending and prosecuting robbers and thieves', which offered a reward to 'any Person or Persons who shall apprehend or cause to be convicted any one guilty of [various] Offences', on 8th Feb 1798.⁵¹⁵ He was appointed

⁵¹⁵ *Northampton Mercury*, 10th February 1798.

Cornet of Northamptonshire Gentleman and Yeomanry Cavalry on 10th September 1803 and would have reported to Capt. Sir William Wake of Courteenhall and Lt. Edward Bouverie Esq. of Delapré.⁵¹⁶ The three families knew each other well. The following year Joseph Clark was listed as Robert Jnr's gamekeeper 'for the manor of Crick' suggesting that he was taking responsibility for the management of the family estate at Crick.⁵¹⁷ By the time Robert Jnr inherited Harlestone Park he was not only an active member of the local community and an enthusiastic huntsman, he was also well versed in his responsibilities as the owner of a number of estates and the leading gentleman (Earl Spencer apart) in the hundred of Nobottle. He was also single and perhaps still recovering from the quadruple loss of Frances, who died eight months after giving birth to Robert their only child in 1800; the baby also died shortly after he was born. His mother Frances née Thornton of Brockhall, who was killed when her dress caught fire in 1799 and his brother, John, the Rector of Dodford, who died in the same year.⁵¹⁸

After his father's death he quickly took his place as a leading member of the gentry, seconding Sir William Dolben's nomination of William Cartwright as a candidate for MP for Northampton within three weeks of the announcement of his father's death.⁵¹⁹ He continued the Andrew role in maintaining local turnpike roads and in preserving law and order through the Harlestone Association. He attended balls in Northampton, supported the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and was a subscriber to the campaign to build an assembly room in the George Hotel in Northampton.⁵²⁰

In the second year of his ownership Robert Jnr commissioned Humphry and John Adey Repton to improve his Hall and garden. In the next

⁵¹⁶ *Northampton Mercury*, 10th September 1803.

⁵¹⁷ *Northampton Mercury*, 1st September 1804.

⁵¹⁸ *Northampton Mercury*, 13th April 1799.

⁵¹⁹ *Northampton Mercury*, 25th April and 9th May 1807.

⁵²⁰ *Northampton Mercury*, 1st October 1800.

section the result of their work is described using two unusual sets of documents and analysed through four features: the approach, pleasure garden design evolution, conservatories and the views created. The section ends with a brief discussion of Humphry Repton's working methods and an overview of the estate after the improvement works were complete.

7.3.2 The Reptons at Harlestone Park

7.3.2.1 Three Watercolours and a Plan

There is no record of Repton's plan for Harlestone Park and it is not thought that he produced a red book. Rogger notes that at Harlestone Park there is 'a loose sequence of watercolours, but these show no trace of a previous binding or the numbering typical for Red Book sketches' (Figures 7.5, 7.6 & 7.7).⁵²¹ No letters from Robert Jnr to Repton and only two from Repton to Robert Jnr have survived. Nevertheless, the three watercolours which Repton painted in 1808 and a plan of the Hall and pleasure ground produced by Humphry and John Adey Repton after the completion of the project in 1812, give a good indication of what was constructed at Harlestone Park (Figure 7.9). Two of the watercolours are undated and function in the same way as Red Book illustrations; the first has a slide (Figures 7.5 & 7.6), the second is a side view (Figure 7.7). The status of these two paintings is unknown but, if the analogy with the Red Book is accurate, they were an attempt by Repton, presumably with some explanatory text in a letter or 'report', to gain the commission to complete the improvement.⁵²² Just as a Red Book was a chargeable commission, there is no reason to doubt that Robert Jnr will have paid for the watercolours. The third watercolour has a slightly different composition and illustrates several alterations made to the original plan during the construction phase of the project (Figure 7.8).

⁵²¹ Rogger, A., *Landscapes of Taste*, (2007), p. 66.

⁵²² It is believed that a report was sent by Repton to Mr Botfield, the new owner of Norton Hall, near Daventry although it has not survived.

Figure 7.5 shows Humphrey Repton's representation of the Hall and parkland. He had a vested interest in depicting this scene as both flattering, it was Robert Jnr's inheritance and the result of his family's longstanding and significant presence in Northamptonshire, and in need of improvement, he wanted to gain a commission for the redesign, architectural and project management work for the 'family firm' of H. Repton & Son(s). The painting, and the project, is about the Andrew family and their newest squire Robert Jnr. The Hall is placed at the centre reinforcing his client's status. The tree to the left foreground, probably an oak, signalled not only the Andrew family's patriotism but, just as the oak embraces and protects the Hall, so Robert Andrew takes his place as the responsible squire looking after his people in the village. The village is invisible, although implied, just off-stage, through the gate and behind the trees to the right. Robert Jnr's status is affirmed by the cattle on the north side of the pond – his land is productive and not wasted – and by the implied deer park to the south of the pond.⁵²³

Figure 7.5: H. Repton, *Harlestone Park*, slide in place (1808)
[NRO P1280]

⁵²³ Repton considered the original pool to be 'changed to an apparent river'. Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 21.

Figure 7.6: H. Repton, *Harlestone Park*, slide lifted (1808) [NRO P1280]

Figure 7.7: H. Repton, *Harlestone Park*, (1808) [NRO P1281]

Figure 7.8: H. & J. A. Repton: *To Robert Andrew This Sketch of Harlestone Park is Inscribed by H. & J.A. Repton (1812), [NRO P1282]*

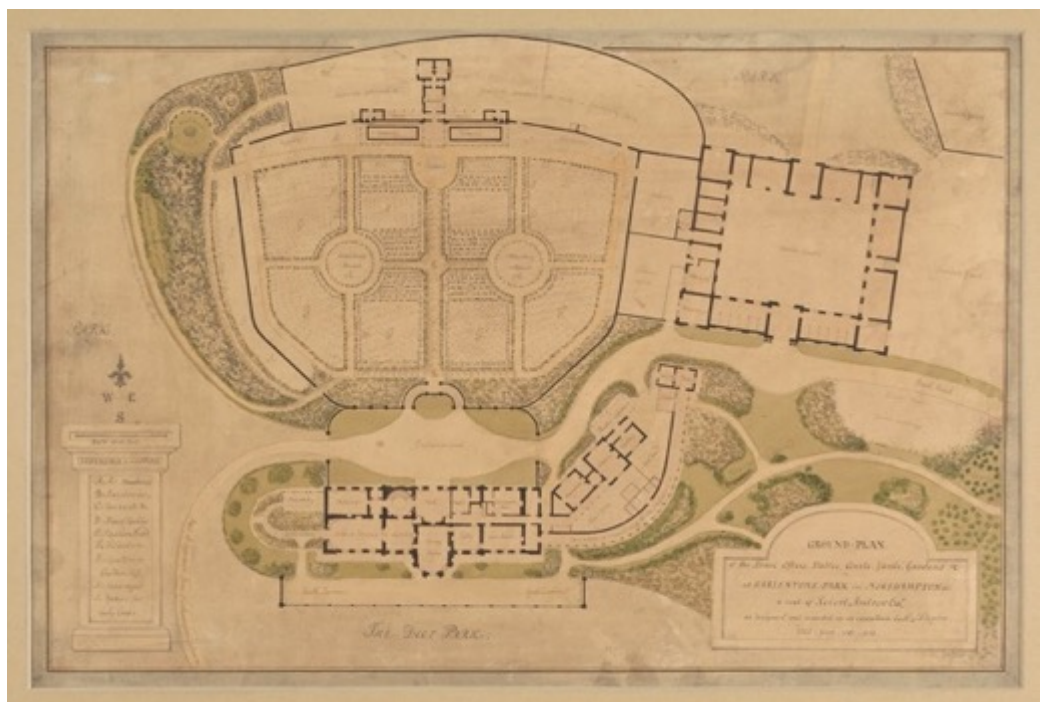


Figure 7.9: H. & J. A. Repton, *Ground Plan at Harlestone Park, (1812)* [Getty Research Institute]

The artistic license of the designer is apparent in Repton's last book, *Fragments* (1816), in which Harlestone Park is used to illustrate 'Unity of Character'.⁵²⁴ Before and after drawings clarify the point Repton makes. A footnote confirms his reluctance to remove trees even when good design may have demanded their destruction. In a passage reminiscent of the suggestion made at Barton Hall, he admits that he wanted to remove tall elm trees which were casting a shadow.

'I could not help observing, that the greatest improvement of which the place seemed capable might be deemed too bold for me to advise, as it was no less than the removal of almost all the Elms to shew the Oaks, and diffuse sunshine over the lawn.'⁵²⁵ This would also have brought the aristocratic oaks to the fore and removed the yeoman elms.⁵²⁶ The great storm of 1810 solved his problem as 'a furious storm of wind tore up by the roots eighty-seven of the



Figure 7.10: H. Repton, *South Front of Harlestone Park, Northamptonshire, R. Andrews Esq^r*, *Fragments*, (1816), p. 22-23

⁵²⁴ Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 21-22.

⁵²⁵ Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 22.

⁵²⁶ Daniels, S., *The political iconography of woodland*, (1984), p. 49-50.



Figure 7.11: H. Repton, *South Front of Harlestone Park, Northamptonshire, R. Andrews Esq^r*, slide lifted, *Fragments*, (1816), p. 22-23

largest Elms, and only one Oak; producing exactly the effect of improvement which I had anticipated, but had not dared to recommend'.⁵²⁷

Fragments includes two plates showing Harlestone before and after improvement (Figures 7.10 & 7.11). These differ in minor details from both the before and after paintings of 1808 and the painting of 1812. Crucially, the woodland to the west (left) of the Hall is depicted as closely planted and overshadowing the offices and parkland while the woodland behind the Hall is now a single row of trees that is redolent of an 'ancient' style of gardening. The improved landscape is open and airy as a new clump of trees replaces a small pond and the elms give way to parkland, a conservatory and shrub planting. The tablet

⁵²⁷ Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 22.

inscribed 'Genio Loci' that commemorated the fortuitous storm has been lost.

7.3.2.2 Reorientation and a reframed approach

The original approach to the Hall was from the east, along two routes through the lower village. Repton reversed the orientation of the Hall and redirected the approach through a new entrance to the parkland at a bend in the turnpike (Figure 7.12).⁵²⁸ There were benefits from this reorientation, but they were consequences of Repton's determination to ensure that the principal rooms of a Hall did not have their 'uniformity of temperament' interrupted by an entrance hall.⁵²⁹ In words that were general but could have applied specifically to Harlestone Park, he wrote that

'therefore, in at least one half of the houses submitted to my opinion, I have found it necessary to change the hall into a saloon, or the vestibule into an anti-room; making the entrance either in the side, or at the back of the house, and converting the lawn to the south into pleasure ground or flower garden, or making a broad terrace dressed with flowers.'⁵³⁰

The reorientation of the Hall allowed a significant change to the ancillary buildings, stables and offices, which, with the exception of the stables were relocated, and hidden, behind a wall and covered walkway. The stables became a dominant structure designed to enhance the approach road, as at Tewin Water, Hertfordshire (1799) or Laxton Hall, Northamptonshire (1806-8) and to display the importance of horses in Robert Jnr's life.⁵³¹ As the entrance was now 'behind' the Hall, to the north, the south façade could be recast as a viewpoint and entertainment space. A terrace extending the width of the house and a

⁵²⁸ This route of this new approach was later altered.

⁵²⁹ Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 5.

⁵³⁰ Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816), p. 5-6.

⁵³¹ See Repton's Tewin Water Red Book comments quoted in Flood, S. & Williamson, T, eds., *Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire*, (Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2018), pp. 179-183.

new curved bay to the central section of the house, had the effect of focusing the attention on the south façade of the Hall where it now stands in relative isolation. The isolation is illusory but the impact is to create a view of a gentleman's mansion embraced by woodland and watched over by the parish church. The second watercolour, from the west, utilises similar techniques to emphasise the same social and moral message (Figure 7.7).

The new approach and Hall reorientation also created views of the pond(s), deer park in the woodland and of a new pleasure ground from the approach. The route of the approach crossed a raised dam disguised as a bridge at the eastern end of a new pond formed from two pre-existing ponds (Figure 7.12). Repton originally proposed a classical structure similar to a design he had used at Heathfield Park in Sussex (1794), Sarsden in Oxfordshire (1796) and Oulton Park, Yorkshire where he was working at the same time as Harlestone (1809-10) but

Figure 7.12: Detail: From Harlestone Park Sales Particulars – the approach (1829) [NRO A95]

the detail of the bridge/dam was altered during the construction.⁵³² A detail in Constable's painting *Wivenhow Park* (1816) depicts Richard Woods' 1765 design and 1778 construction of a length of water on two levels separated by a bridge/dam.⁵³³ Woods' design is more reminiscent of earlier bridges at, for example, Kedleston Hall, but performs precisely the same function. Robert Jnr was not convinced that Repton's proposal was sound. A letter of 3rd March 1811, which also outlined the plans for a conservatory, addressed Robert Jnr's concerns. He thought that the bridge was too short and had too few arches but Repton but was in no doubt, writing that 'I thought my eye was satisfied with the stakes I placed for that purpose'.⁵³⁴

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 the designer used water at the heart of a picturesque formula to create a tasteful balanced scene. In the Repton designs at Barton Hall and Finedon Hall and Webb's design at Brockhall an open lawn, or grazed field, led the eye to water, either an enlarged river or dammed pond. The background was, primarily, woodland. The new Harlestone Park view is essentially the same. Repton, while sensitive to the local conditions, had a 'style' that was frequently, though certainly not universally, followed and the formula remained fashionable across designers and owners.

The view created from the approach, first over water and then up the slope to the south elevation of the Hall is also a familiar device. John Webb used the same technique to create an impression at Brockhall.. It is not known why this route was abandoned but by 1829 the approach had joined the 'back road' to the east of the Hall. A comparison of the route, shown in Figure 7.12 with the 1812 watercolour (Figure 7.6) shows how Repton controlled the view of the Hall from the approach.

⁵³² Tarling, J., 'Connecting the 'scattered beauties' at Heathfield Park', pp. 20-28, in Batty, S. ed., *Humphry Repton in Sussex*, p. 27; <http://www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/2910?preview=1>; Eyres, P. & Lynch, K., *On the Spot*, (2018), p. 95-114, esp. Figures. 8 e, f, & h.

⁵³³ Cowell, F., *Richard Woods*, (2009), Pl 9 & p. 237.

⁵³⁴ The purpose here being the length of the bridge/dam. NRO HIL 2098/1.

He also created a view along the length of the pond as the carriage crossed the bridge/dam.

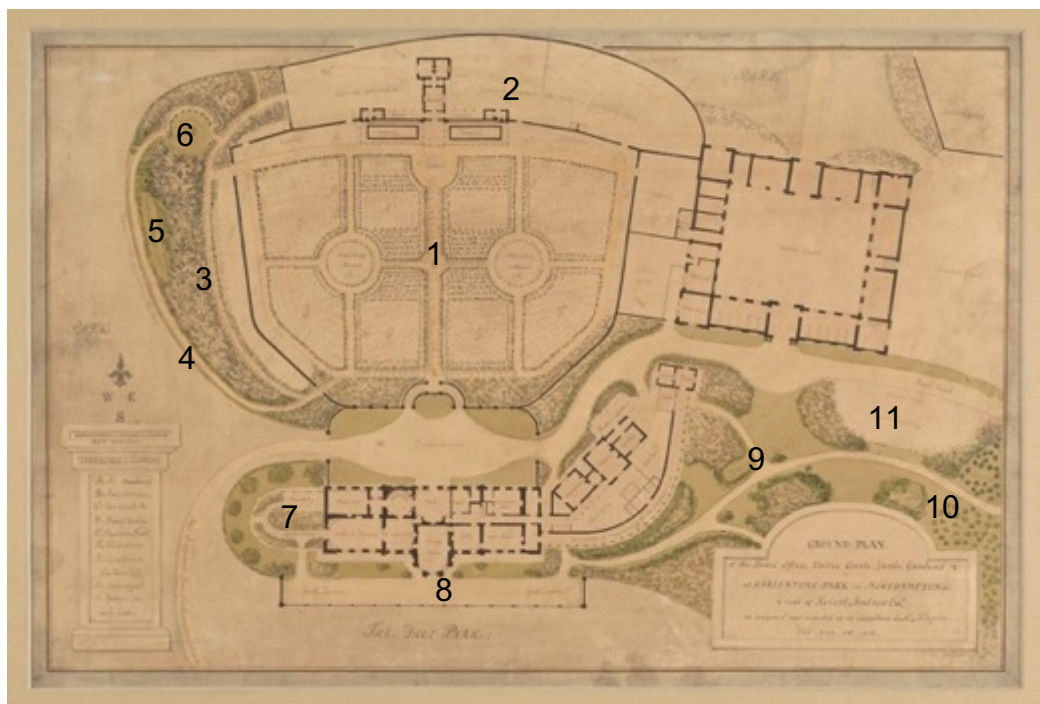
The new approach to Harlestone Hall and the picturesque views created from it were not innovative. The views followed a familiar pattern and the approach kept to the principles that Repton outlined in *An Enquiry*.⁵³⁵ The route to, and the view from, Harlestone Park were representations of a county gentleman's place in the landscape and society; a place which was established and secure. Not everything, however, was predictable. On arrival at the northern side of the Hall the visitor would have noticed two features. A conservatory attached to the western side of the Hall and a new pleasure grounds and kitchen garden. Both are expressions of evolving taste in garden design which is, in turn, a response to the changing social, economic and political forces in English society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The next two sections describe these two features and place them in the context of the evolution of garden design and social change. It will be seen that the designed landscape, presented by Repton as a stable, tasteful form embodying a social order under threat from forces beyond its boundary, contained contradictions which expressed both the stability of the social order and the threats it faced.

7.3.2.3 The Pleasure Garden and Kitchen Garden

Repton placed a kitchen garden to the north of the Hall and two pleasure gardens to the north-west and east, linked by a conservatory and terrace (Figure 7.13). In 1778 at Bromley Hall (William Emes) and 1799 at Brockhall (John Webb) the kitchen garden was an optional stop on a circuit walk (Figures 7.14 & 15). Repton's kitchen garden at Harlestone Park was, like those at Bromley Hall and Brockhall, a place to grow food for the Hall and its guests and to display fruit and vegetables that would impress visitors. When Webb produced his plan for Bromley Hall (1810) he abandoned the idea of a circuit walk

⁵³⁵ Humphry Repton, *An Enquiry*, (1806), pp. 107-112.

favouring instead an out-and-back route which did not go past the kitchen garden (Figure 7.16). Repton's Harlestone Park design was more unusual. Access to the 'north-west' pleasure ground was through the kitchen garden. This blurring of the boundaries raised the place of the kitchen garden and integrated it into the lives of the Andrew family and their visitors. There was no set walk in the pleasure ground at Harlestone Park. The 'kitchen garden' pleasure ground had a route from the kitchen garden along a filbert bush shaded path to a terrace walk, past an evergreen winter garden to a circular clearing containing a root house. This walk was not connected to the conservatory, terrace or eastern pleasure ground but was an independent and modestly scaled shrubbery walk that overlooked the parkland towards the pond.



Key:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Kitchen Garden | 7 Conservatory |
| 2 'Rubbish Ground etc.' | 8 Hall Terrace |
| 3 'Kitchen Garden' Pleasure Ground | 9 'East' Pleasure ground
- shrubberies |
| 4 Terrace walk overlooking park | 10 Grove |
| 5 Evergreen Winter Garden | 11 'Flower nursery and
Flower Stoves' |
| 6 Root House | |

Figure 7.13: H. & J. A. Repton, *Ground Plan at Harlestone Park*, (1812)

[Getty Research Institute]

The eastern pleasure ground was a series of interconnected paths in a shrubbery to a grove in woodland. The shrubbery was alongside open flower nurseries and stoves suggesting that the cultivation of plants was a deliberate part of the design. Between 1788 and 1812 the circuit shrubbery walk was falling out of fashion, as horticulture was becoming fashionable and visible.⁵³⁶ Formal gardens survived the landscape garden fashion of the mid and late eighteenth century and flower gardens often remained distant from the house, sometimes being associated with isolated structures. An unknown artist depicted a circular flower bed in a clearing in front of a temple seat in *Temple and flowerbed in the garden of the Hon. Richard Bateman at Grove House, Old Windsor, Berkshire* sometime before 1740.⁵³⁷ One of Thomas Robins' series of paintings *Woodside. The orangery* (c. 1750s) is



Figure 7.14: A Plan of the Lands around Bromley Hall the Seat of John

Key:	
1	Kitchen Garden
2	Stables
3	Menagerie or Bowling Green
4	Shrubbery Walk
5	'Wild Walk thro' the sheep pasture, continued along the South Bank of the River'
6	Root House

⁵³⁶ Laird, M., *The Flowering of the English Garden*, (1999), pp. 382-385.

⁵³⁷ Strong, R., *The Artist and the Garden*, (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2000), Pl. 212, p. 168.

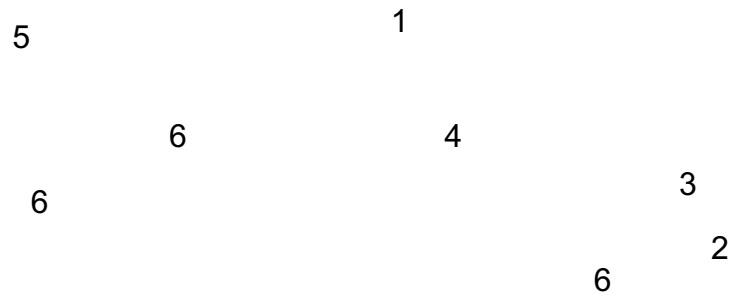


Figure 7.15: A Plan of the demesne Lands at Brockhall the seat of Tho^s.
 Reeve Thornton Esq. with some Alterations by John Webb 1799
 [NRO Map 6427]

painstakingly interested in the detail of flowers in the borders and beds around a detached orangery. More than a century later *Golding Constable's Flower Garden* (John Constable 1815) retained the basic format of lawn, border and flower bed, although here it is possible that the flower bed is a relatively recent 'improvement'.⁵³⁸ These are similar, through on a smaller scale to, Hamilton's flowering shrubbery at Painshill, the flower garden at Nuneham Courteney and Repton's 1793 flower garden at Courteenhall in Northamptonshire (Figure 7.17 & 18).

⁵³⁸ Daniels, S., 'Love and Death across an English Garden: Constable's Paintings of His Family's Flower and Kitchen Gardens', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol 55:3, (1992), pp. 437.

At Bromley Hall, Emes retained a geometric space for a bowling green or menagerie while Webb included a small flower garden in his shrubbery space. Webb's shrubbery space was next to the Hall and could be seen through windows at the eastern end of the building, an arrangement which, as Goodway notes had been Emes' solution at Sanday for Lord Harrowby.

'Perhaps the most significant feature of the Sandon flower garden is that (unlike Nuneham Courtney) it was laid out directly under the windows of the drawing room. In this it also anticipates the practice and writings of Repton and Loudon of some 20 or more years later'.⁵³⁹

The 1812 plan suggests that the pleasure ground was not visible from Harlestone Hall, although the location and function of the conservatory,



Key:	
1	Kitchen Garden
2	Stables
3	Shrubbery
4	Flower Garden
5	Root House

Figure 7.16: A Plan of the demesne Lands at Kings Bromley the seat of John Lane Esq. With some Alterations by John Webb 1810 [SRO D6179/1/11]

⁵³⁹ Goodway, K., William Emes and the Flower Garden at Sandon, (1996), p. 28-9.

described in the next section, partly explains this arrangement. It is likely that Robert Jnr, preferring riding and hunting to walking and planting, wanted views across his parkland to the pond and the deer park rather than beds of flowering plants. These views were provided from the terrace and the terrace walk to the north-west.

By the second decade of the nineteenth-century Repton believed that a garden should be 'cultivated and enriched by art with such products as are not natural in this country, and consequently it must be artificial in its treatment, and may, without impropriety, be so in its appearance' but as 'Art' and 'Nature ... cannot well be blended ... the exterior of a garden should be made to assimilate with Park Scenery, or the Landscape of Nature'.⁵⁴⁰ This attitude led to two different solutions to linking pleasure gardens with parklands. The first, as at Harlestone

Figure 7.17: Repton, H., *Courteenhall Red Book*,
Lady Wake's Flower Garden, detail, (1793)

⁵⁴⁰ Repton, H., *Fragments*, p. 142.

Figure 7.18: Repton, H., *Courteenhall Red Book*,
Lady Wake's Flower Garden, detail, (1793)



Figure 7.19: Repton, H., View as Proposed to be Altered from the
Portico of a Villa near London, *Fragments*, (1816), p. 136-7

Park, contains a softened edge to the pleasure ground as flower beds contain only plants and a hard edge between the terrace, which is an artificial viewpoint, and the view. The second, found at larger landscapes such as Woburn or Ashridge, where artificial 'rooms' are separated from the parkland landscape by shrub and woodland planting.⁵⁴¹ This model could also be applied to much smaller landscapes, such as 'a villa near London', or Repton's Hare Street garden where views beyond the boundary are important but the internal landscape is contrived (Figure 7.19). These detailed, unnatural designed landscapes were applied by Repton to enclosed areas of larger landscapes and to smaller villa gardens; in time they influenced the design of emerging suburban gardens.

7.3.2.4 The Conservatory

An untitled and undated sketch of Harlestone Park from the west, by George Clarke, probably from the 1830s, shows a conservatory attached to the western elevation (Figure 7:20).⁵⁴² This is consistent with Repton's 1812 watercolour (Figure 7.8). It was, unusually, connected directly to the drawing room of the Hall (Figure 7.21). Humphry Repton, replying to Robert Jnr on 3rd March 1811, described the conservatory (Repton's term) in some detail.⁵⁴³ Its connectivity is not the only unusual feature; it also contained a 'walk' to a specific destination modelled on a mid-eighteenth century walk. The conservatory is described using three themes: theatrical displays of plants, the relocation of a walk and the extension of the domestic sphere into a glass roofed and walled room implying changing attitudes to gardening and horticulture. It should be noted that 'conservatory' is a complex term and was sometimes used interchangeably with 'orangery', 'greenhouse' and 'glasshouse'.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴¹ See Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 170-180; Davidson, K., *Woburn Abbey*, (2016), pp. 134-146; *The Gardens of Ashridge*, (2018).

⁵⁴² George Clark was a local artist.

⁵⁴³ NRO HIL 2098/1.

⁵⁴⁴ For an introduction to the evolution of structures for growing, storing and/or displaying plants see Grant, F., *Glasshouses*, (Oxford, Shire Library, 2013).

Repton included a rough sketch in his March letter to Robert Jnr (Figure 7.22). The conservatory was intended to have two functions. Its primary purpose was display. Repton's U-shaped plan shows a route between 'stands of plants' to the pheasantry.⁵⁴⁵ This conservatory was not primarily a place for overwintering, growing or tending plants but for displaying them.⁵⁴⁶ It owes its concept to theatrical displays of plants like auriculas and hyacinths and displays of plants in pots beside paths.⁵⁴⁷

The conservatory's second purpose was pleasure derived from a walk in 'nature', albeit modified artistically, with a specific destination. Repton's March letter included the sentence which holds the key to this

Figure 7.20: Detail: G. Clark, untitled pencil sketch of Harlestone Hall from the north-west (n.d.) [NRO A274]

⁵⁴⁵ NRO HIL 2089/1, p.1.

⁵⁴⁶ Climbing plants were grown against the trellis which divided the conservatory, but it is not known if these were grown in pots or soil.

⁵⁴⁷ Richard Weston's *Universal Botanist and Nurseryman* (1777) listed 575 cultivars of hyacinth and 1000 of ranunculus, see Lynch, D. S., "Young Ladies are Delicate Plants": Jane Austen and Greenhouse Romanticism, *ELH*, Vol. 77:3, (2010), p. 697. For the way plants were displayed see for example Laird, M., 'James Maddock's 'Blooming Stage' as a Microcosm of Eighteenth-Century Planting', *Garden History*, Vol. 24:1, (1996), p. 70-81; See Laird, M. & Harvey, J., 'Our Equally Favorite Hobby Horse': The Flower Gardens of Lady Elizabeth Lee at Hartwell and the 2nd Earl Harcourt at Nuneham Courtenay', *Garden History*, Vol. 18:2, (1990), pp. 103-154 esp. pp. 110, 112.

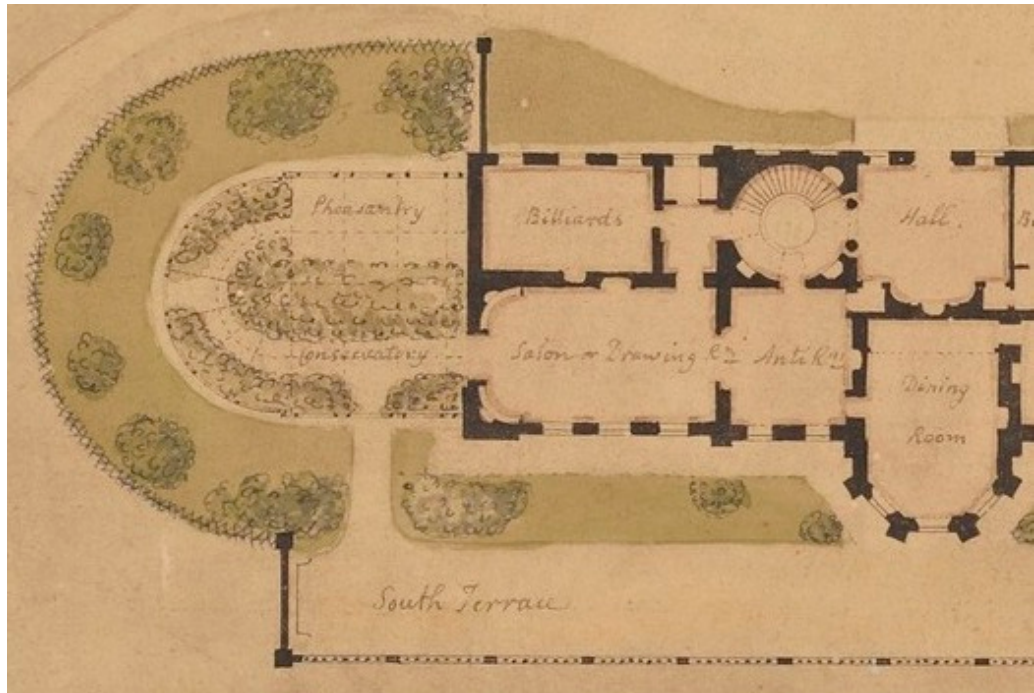


Figure 7.21: Detail: H. & J. A. Repton: Ground Plan of Harlestone Hall (1812) [Getty Research Institute]

Figure 7.22: Detail: Letter from H. Repton to R. Andrew, 3rd March 1811 [NRO HIL 2098/1]

purpose of the conservatory. Repton self-consciously followed circuit walk principles espoused by, for example, Shenstone and Whateley, which urged a walk to, in Shenstone's words, 'Lose the object, and draw nigh, obliquely'.⁵⁴⁸ That is, to avoid a direct approach towards an

⁵⁴⁸ Shenstone, W., *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening*, (1764), pp. 289-297, in Hunt, J. D., & Willis, P., *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1988), p. 291.

object with the object in full view but rather, to maintain tension and excitement by refusing to reveal the next stopping point or destination of a walk until the last moment. Repton's walk in the conservatory concealed the sight of the birds, though not presumably the noise or smell, until the corner was turned. The pairing of birds and plants was not unusual as commodities of good taste.⁵⁴⁹ If the primary purpose of the conservatory was to display birds and plants, it had a secondary function of providing a walk, in the spirit of an outdoor walk, through the display area.

The conservatory was attached to the drawing room. It was, therefore, an integral part of the Hall, particularly for pleasure and entertaining. This arrangement had been unusual but was increasingly fashionable (Figure 7.23). In 1793/4 at Barton Hall, Repton suggested an orangery separated from the Hall by a short distance. When Charles Tibbits built the Orangery at Barton Hall in the early 1820s, he followed the more usual pattern, and Repton's suggestion, in siting it about 50 metres from the Hall. However, by the time he published *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Gardening* in 1803 Repton had elevated the attached Conservatory to the status of one of 'those additions which modern life requires'.⁵⁵⁰ Nearly ten years before he visited Harlestone Park, Repton had concluded that a 'conservatory attached to the house' was highly desirable and had communicated his thinking to potential clients.⁵⁵¹ The phrase 'attached to the house' is ambiguous and didn't necessarily mean having a doorway into a drawing room. In his preface to the published version of his plans for his unsuccessful bid to improve Brighton Pavilion, Repton wrote that the dressed garden should be '... near the house, and if possible, connected with it by a sheltered, if not

⁵⁴⁹ Lynch, D. S., *Jane Austen and Greenhouse Romanticism*, (2010), p. 712.

⁵⁵⁰ Repton, H., *Observations*, (1805), pp. 178-9. George Stanley Repton, working at Sarsden House, near Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire added a conservatory with a glass roof in c. 1825 when he altered his earlier design for the Hall.

⁵⁵¹ Ingram, S., 'Michelgrove 'my most favourite plan'', pp. 53-57, in Batty, S. ed., *Humphry Repton in Sussex*, (Sussex Gardens Trust, 2018), p. 55.



Figure 7.23: Repton, H., *Interiors, Fragments*, (1816), p. 58-59

covered way'.⁵⁵² He was concerned that because the English winter lasts from 'November to May, [and] the English garden is dreary for much of the year'. The principle of attaching a conservatory directly to

⁵⁵² H. Repton, *The Designs for Brighton Pavilion*, (London 1808), p. iv. (courtesy of Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove).
https://archive.org/details/gri_33125008641231/page/n15/mode/2up

the house was clearly already established to provide both a display and a destination during the winter months; auriculas and hyacinths are mid-winter and early spring flowering plants. Repton recognised that a tasteful design could not always accommodate a conservatory writing that,

The luxury of a Winter Garden has of late been in some degree supplied by adding large conservatories to the apartments of a house; but this is not in all cases practicable, nor in some advisable; yet in most situations it is possible to obtain a covered line of connexion with the Green-house, and other appendages of a Winter garden, at a little distance from the house.⁵⁵³

In a footnote on the same page, Repton refers the reader to his own work at Woburn, Bedfordshire, Mr Manning's villa at Totteridge, Middlesex and Stoke Farm in Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire. At each of these sites Repton proposed the same device, a covered walkway and conservatory, for the same purpose, a winter walk to a structure for display at the seat of the Duke of Bedford, a palace for the Prince Regent, a second estate for Lord Sefton and a modest suburban villa for a gentleman a few kilometres north of London.⁵⁵⁴ This device was considered suitable regardless of the status of the client.

At Panshanger, Hertford St Andrew in Hertfordshire (1799-1800) the 'Green House' or 'Conservatory' is part of the main house (Figure 7.24). There is an access to the Conservatory through the Billiard Room and a Picture gallery. The conservatory here is a building closer to the modern understanding of an orangery. It has solid walls and a roof which would result in relatively low light levels. It can be seen in the context of an earlier use of an orangery where 'greens' were stored during the winter, but it could also be seen as a destination for a walk in the winter to

⁵⁵³ H. Repton, *The Designs for Brighton Pavilion*, p. v. (courtesy of Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove).

https://archive.org/details/gri_33125008641231/page/n15/mode/2up

⁵⁵⁴ A sketch which includes the covered walkway is reproduced from Repton's book in Remington, V., *Painting Paradise: The Art of the Garden*, (London, Royal Collection Trust, 2015), p. 196.

Figure 7.24: H. Repton: Red Book: illustration VIII, ground plan for the proposed house, Panshanger Red Book (1800)

staged displays of plants. The Harlestone Park conservatory however, is attached directly to the Drawing Room and is therefore much closer to the daily life of the household. It has a route concealing what is to come. It was designed as a transitional space between inside and outside, domesticating nature.

Who loves a garden, loves a greenhouse too.
Unconscious of a less propitious clime
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,
While the winds whistle and the snows descend.⁵⁵⁵

Landscaping is concerned with expressing a social and political ideology by creating an environment of good taste. Improvements forms varied through time and space as the content of the perception of good taste changed. Moving part of the flower garden, as represented by staged displays of plants, indoors into a room attached to the main

⁵⁵⁵ Cowper, W., *The Task*, 3: 566-9, ed. Morley, H., (The Project Gutenberg eBook, 2015). <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3698/3698-h/3698-h.htm>

house part was the ultimate expression of the trend towards relocating the flower garden beneath Hall windows. It was possible to walk from the Drawing Room through a single doorway into the 'inside-outside', between space of flowering plants in the conservatory. This introduced a stylised flower garden in the conservatory where the light of outdoors but the weather protection of indoors allowed a display of plants in flower-pots that could be experienced as a pseudo garden walk. Here, flowering plants could not just be seen through a window, they could be seen, touched and smelled directly.

The glass conservatory attached to the main Hall symbolised the domestication of horticulture and the taming of nature implicit in gardening. When the room in which the displays were staged lost its solid walls and roof to transparent glass, the boundary between outdoors and indoors, between the improved landscape where walks, informal meals and hunting occurred and the house where formal meals were taken, pictures were hung and women played a greater role in managing household affairs, became even more blurred. The garden became part of the domestic sphere. Lynch argues that 'There Nature, miniaturized, was shoehorned into the enclosed, feminine sphere of the house'.⁵⁵⁶ The glass conservatory, as constructed at Harlestone Park, was a transitional space between the inside and the outside, between the controlled environment of the house and the natural, albeit designed, environment of pleasure ground and parkland; between the domestic, private sphere of the household and the more external, public sphere of the estate.

Women are relatively absent from the historical record but had long been active participants in horticulture.⁵⁵⁷ The domestication of

⁵⁵⁶ Lynch, D. S., "Young Ladies are delicate Plants", (2010), p. 692.

⁵⁵⁷ See Laird, M. & Harvey, J., 'Our Equally Favorite Hobby Horse' [sic], (1990), p. 103-154; Mrs Delaney exchanged correspondence on horticulture with numerous women; McDonagh, B., Women, enclosure and estate improvement, (2009), pp. 143-162 shows that women played a wider role in managing estates and were active lower down the social scale. Jackson, M. E., *The Florist's Manual*, (London, 1822) is an early example of a book written by a woman primarily for a female readership.

gardening as the eighteenth century progressed helped to create the conditions in which the active participation of women in horticulture became increasingly acceptable. The 'flower stoves' and 'flower nursery' in Repton's scheme, are backed by a wall between the pleasure ground and the back road. They were intended to be in full view of the users of the pleasure ground. This suggests that residents at Harlestone Park had an interest in gardening and that the growing acceptability of women in horticulture was being designed into the landscape. When Robert Snr died, he stipulated in his will that Robert Jnr's two unmarried sisters were to be given rooms in the Hall.⁵⁵⁸ He had seven sisters, one of whom, Anne, died in infancy and four were married including Charlotte, to Rev. John Fisher, who replaced Robert's brother John as Rector of Dodford near Brockhall in 1799 and Mary, to Rev. Francis Montgomery, Rector of Harlestone from 1806-1831. Catherine and Harriot remained unmarried. Very little information has survived about Catherine and Harriot but they were almost certainly living at Harlestone Park in 1808/1812. It is possible that Robert Jnr appreciated plants and took an active role in horticulture but it is more likely that he was creating a garden for his unmarried sisters.

Harlestone Hall was subject to a major improvement by the Reptons. The modifications to the parkland were not innovative. The kitchen garden and pleasure ground, however, are indicative of a slow evolution of landscape design close to the Hall. The conservatory is an early example of a glass structure attached to a house. Combined, the effect is to embody significant changes in the form of pleasure grounds and the domestication of horticulture.

7.3.3 Working Methods

The construction of Harlestone Park gives a glimpse of Humphry and John Adey's working methods. The successful relationship between the Reptons and Robert Jnr contrasts with the very poor working

⁵⁵⁸ TNA PROB 11/1468/58

relationship that Humphry Repton had with George Freke Evens at Laxton Hall in north-east Northamptonshire. Evans commissioned Repton in 1806.⁵⁵⁹ At Laxton, the combination of a client who wished to be actively involved in the project and saw the Reptons as skilled professionals providing a service for which he was paying and Humphry Repton's self-perception as a gentleman working alongside gentry and aristocracy, his dislike of detail and his frequent travel led to the Reptons' dismissal and a completed project that satisfied neither Freke Evans nor Humphry Repton. Indeed, when Repton depicted Laxton in a Peacock's Polite Repository vignette he pointedly chose to draw the parsonage that John Adey had designed for Lady Carberry in Laxton Village (Figure 7.25). Leyland has observed that it was during this period that the new rules of engagement of professionals, including architects and landscape designers, were evolving and the relationship between Freke Evans and Repton at Laxton was a model of the lack of clarity of roles and working practices to be avoided.⁵⁶⁰

Figure 7.25: H. Repton, The parsonage at Laxton in Northamptonshire: Lately built by G. F. E. Evans Esq., Peacock's Pictorial Pocket Book

⁵⁵⁹ Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), p. 264.

⁵⁶⁰ Leyland, M., *Patronage*, (2016), p. 121.

At Harlestone Robert Jnr wrote to Repton anxious about the structure of the conservatory and the length of the bridge/dam. There are hints that Repton had not changed his working practices since his poor experience at Laxton. In his reply he wrote,

With respect to the bridge – you will see that the arches are as wide & as flat as they can well be & therefore they cannot be fewer – especially as you seem to think the bridge too short by 30 feet – but I think it will be quite sufficient & before it is built I should advise a skeleton of the whole to be set up to try the effect more fully tho I thought my eye was satisfied with the stakes I placed for that purpose –

We are preparing plans for the Garden Walls & which shall be all ready before we meet in Town.⁵⁶¹

There is evidence here of three of the practices that infuriated Freke Evans. Repton relied on his eye in the landscape to stake out the bridge, he will not be present to supervise the Clerk of Works marking out the bridge, and the plans for garden walls are not ready yet.⁵⁶² In fact they will be ready for Robert Jnr's visit to London rather than being available for the Clerk of Works to use in Northamptonshire. Robert Jnr appears to have been more tolerant than Freke Evans and the build was completed, presumably to their mutual satisfaction as Repton's elevations and plan of 1812 suggest that he was delighted with the outcome.

The outcomes of these two commissions in Northamptonshire were different but Repton was not paid in full for either, although for very different reasons. The Reptons were replaced at Laxton and a dispute about the remaining fee that was due continued into 1811 when Repton gave up trying to obtain payment. His successor, William Carter also had difficulty with Freke Evans over payments, including whether to employ cheaper local tradesmen, as Freke Evans wished, or more

⁵⁶¹ NRO HIL 2098/1 Humphry Repton to Robert Andrew, 3rd March 2011.

⁵⁶² NRO Freke, Bundle 1/45-46, Humphry Repton to George Freke Evans, 19 May 1806.

expensive town craftsmen. Carter went bankrupt in 1814. As Leyland notes, Repton had had similar difficulties with payment at Panshanger in 1803.⁵⁶³ Despite an apparently reasonable working relationship with Robert Jnr and a successfully completed build, they still had not agreed Repton's fee in 1815 and he wrote to his son William that 'we come to no settlement & I expect there is still 2-300 due on PerCentage' [sic].⁵⁶⁴ The letter also makes clear that Repton was short of money and was 'sadly harrass'd by the claims on me & those I have on others'. Although several aspects of professional employment were solved over the nineteenth century the cash flow problems caused by late or no payment remain.

These letters have two other implications for Repton's method of working both of which have been alluded to above. First, Repton wished to employ the best manufacturers to achieve the best results for his clients. Repton sought a design for the gates for the approach to Harlestone Park from Mr. Robert Salmon.⁵⁶⁵ Salmon was an inventor, horticultural researcher and the clerk of works at Woburn, where Repton worked from 1804-1810. In early March 1811 he was still unaware of the costs of the gates which were to be made in Birmingham where Salmon had connections.⁵⁶⁶ It was in the interests of any designer or architect to spend their client's money as luxuriously as possible. The best products would enhance their reputation, as well as that of their client, while sub-standard materials could easily be blamed on the professional by the owner.⁵⁶⁷ Second, later in 1811 Repton told Robert Jnr that John Adey would be inspecting Harlestone Park while he was working for Lord Dounley in Kent and Lord Plymouth at Hewell

⁵⁶³ Leyland, *Patronage*, (2016), p. 131, quoting Stroud, *Humphry Repton*, (1962), p. 109.

⁵⁶⁴ Huntington Library Letters 202 HM 40877, Humphry Repton to William Repton 3rd Oct 1815.

⁵⁶⁵ NRO HIL 2098/1.

⁵⁶⁶ I am grateful to Prof. Daniels for alerting me to Mr. Salmon's role at Woburn.

⁵⁶⁷ This wasn't always the case. In one of his earlier exchanges with the Duke of Portland, Repton found that the Duke wanted only the best. Daniels, S., *Humphry Repton*, (1999), pp. 159-160.

Grange, 50 kilometres from Harlestone in Warwickshire.⁵⁶⁸ This was nothing unusual. However, where a client wants to take close control over the project and to minimise costs and the professional was either slow or reluctant to produce the drawings that the clerk of works needed, it is not surprising that relations could be strained. Nevertheless, if there were any difficulties at Harlestone Park they did not prevent a successful, and ultimately rare, example of a Repton design and build coming to completion.

7.3.4 After the Build

With the exception of the re-routing of the approach to the east of the Hall there is no evidence that Robert Jnr chose to devote more time and money to the design of the Hall and parkland. He continued the lifestyle he had before inheriting his land. He was an enthusiastic horse breeder constructing six paddocks to the north-west of the Hall. He remained an active participant in the Pytchley Hunt and was known as 'a good man on a horse'.⁵⁶⁹ He was a regular participant in local shooting parties frequently joining Sir George Cavendish Spencer, Frederick Spencer and other local gentry including Edward Bouverie, Colonel Ponsonby and occasionally Earl Spencer.⁵⁷⁰ By the mid-1820s Robert Jnr was in desperate financial difficulties. This section traces the journey from the success of the improvement of Harlestone Park to the appointment of Robert Jnr's brother-in-law, Col. Henry Packe, as a Trustee of the estate in 1824.

With a minimum income of at least £2,500 and no aspiration to run a London household there is no reason to suppose that Robert Jnr would have encountered any difficulties financing his improvements,

⁵⁶⁸ NRO HIL 2100/7, Humphry Repton to Robert Andrew Jnr. 11th November 1811.

⁵⁶⁹ Nethercote, H. O., *The Pytchley Hunt; Past and Present*: (London, Samson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 2nd Ed. 1888), p. 28

⁵⁷⁰ Sir Robert Cavendish Spencer Game Book July 1816-1822 & 1826-1830 [BL MS 78052].

household or lifestyle.⁵⁷¹ He would not have expected to have difficulties either. There were several events that were beyond Robert Jnr's control that created difficulties for his financial position. When Robert Snr died he left one son, four married and two unmarried daughters. Within twelve months of the reading of his father's will Robert Jnr had to pay £13,725 to various family members. It is not clear how Robert Jnr responded to the requirements of the will, but he certainly began his tenure of the Andrew estates needing to find a substantial amount of money.

The end of the Napoleonic Wars created hardship for many people and difficulties for some landowners. Large numbers of men were returning from war and agricultural prices in London were volatile.⁵⁷² The eruption of Mount Tamboro, Sumbawa, Indonesia in April 1815 led to the 'year without a summer' in England in 1816.⁵⁷³ Other climate events also caused hardship for the rural poor and tenant farmers during the 1810s. Veale and Endfield's analysis of archival records across England from 1809 – 1818, from the Upcher family in Sheringham, Norfolk to damage to Hereford Cathedral from gales, reveals a decade long period of climatic stress on agricultural yields and incomes that had been subject to rising rents and, from the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1814/15, were also under economic pressure. Rent arrears were rare between 1815 and 1822 on the Northamptonshire Montagu estates, usually running between 0% and 7% each year.⁵⁷⁴ However, 1817-8 was an exception. There was an extraordinary rent arrears rate of 95% in March 1817 and in the following year 33% of tenants received rent abatements. Even in the following decade between 1822 and 1830, the

⁵⁷¹ NRO A95; the sales particulars for the auction of the Harlestone Park estate in 1829 estimated its income at £4,000 *pa*. Even if this was exaggerated Robert Jnr's financial position in 1807 will have appeared secure.

⁵⁷² Solar, P. M., & Klovland, J. T., 'New Series for Agricultural Prices in London: 1770-1914', *The Economic Review*, Vol. 64:1, (Feb 2011), pp. 77-81. It should be noted that these were prices as advertised in trade newspapers in London and will have been affected by factors peculiar to a large urban capital.

⁵⁷³ Veale, L., & Endfield, G., 'Situating 1816, the 'year without summer', in the UK', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 182:4, (Dec 2016), pp. 318-330.

⁵⁷⁴ Dockray, G., *Landed Estates in Northamptonshire: the rural rental economy 1800-1881*, (unpublished MPhil Thesis, Univ. of Hertfordshire, 2013), pp. 178-180.

Montagu estates saw up to 45% of tenants' arrears receiving rent abatements of between 10% and 23%. In the years following his considerable commitment to his house and parkland Robert Jnr's income and assets are likely to have suffered significant falls. The fifteen years following the improvement to Harlestone Park brought economic hardship for most people from a poor climate, market turbulence and pressure on the rural population. If Robert Jnr had allowed himself to become vulnerable to financial instability, he too would have had difficulties.

There was one cause of financial hardship that resulted from Robert Jnr's behaviour, perhaps a response to the death of his mother, his younger brother, wife and son in a short period at the turn of the century. In George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, written in 1871-2 but set in the early 1830s, a bad marriage, or by implication the lack of a good wife, can lead to over-ambition and gambling.⁵⁷⁵ Local historian Forrest could not explain why Robert Jnr chose to improve his Hall and parkland. She wrote that 'To add to the mystery, he was in financial straits. Robert was a heavy gambler, and addicted to horseracing.'⁵⁷⁶ Repton's 1815 letter warning William that he was unlikely be paid the balance of the Harlestone Park Commission money began with the rumour that 'Mr Andrews [sic] has quite done himself up at Newmarket & wants to sell or let Harlestone'.⁵⁷⁷ Robert Jnr borrowed from his family: his unmarried sisters Harriot and Catherine were paid interest on bonds in 1825, he had a £3,000 bond with his brother-in-law Rev. Francis Montgomery and a £14,800 mortgage with Rev. Vere Isham, Eliza Packe's uncle.⁵⁷⁸ An exchange of letters between the Leicester based solicitor Samuel Miles and Col. Packe in 1822 show that Robert Jnr. had also borrowed, informally, from Col. Packe.⁵⁷⁹ By 1825 it was

⁵⁷⁵ Franklin, J. J., *The Victorian Discourse of Gambling: Speculations on Middlemarch and The Duke's Children*, *ELH*, Vol. 61:4 (1994), p. 907.

⁵⁷⁶ Forrest, M., *Village Roots*, (2009), p. 63.

⁵⁷⁷ Huntington Library Letters 202 HM 40877, Humphry Repton to William Repton 3rd Oct 1815.

⁵⁷⁸ NRO, A324 & A271

⁵⁷⁹ NRO A250 & A251, Letters from S. Miles to Col. H. Packe.

estimated that he owed £85,400 and he was unable to service his debts. The next period of Harlestone Park's life began as Colonel Packe, Robert Jnr's brother-in-law, was appointed Trustee of the estates to manage their sale and to satisfy creditors.⁵⁸⁰

7.4 Col. Henry Packe: Trustee (1825-1831)

7.4.1 Managing the Sale

Lt. Colonel Henry Packe (1786-1859) was the youngest son of Sir Charles James Packe Bart. MP of Prestwold Hall in Leicestershire. He had served in the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards from 1800-1816. His elder sister, Frances (1775-1800) had married Robert Jnr in 1799. In 1821 Henry Packe married Eliza née Isham of Lamport Hall in central Northamptonshire, another longstanding senior Northamptonshire gentry family with roots in sheep farming. The trigger for Robert Jnr's action was the threat of receivership initiated by Sir Robert Peel with whom he had bond for £40,000.⁵⁸¹ It was only the intervention of Col. Packe in April 1825 that brought Sir Robert Peel's agreement to suspend receivership while assets were realised.⁵⁸² Sales of land were quickly organised. Crick was sold in April 1825 for £15,176-6-9 of which £6022-13-6 paid a mortgage from the Smyth family.⁵⁸³ The sales of Crick, Creaton and Great Addington yielded £59,516, but the outstanding balance of debt, £25,884, required the sale of Harlestone Park and its estate.⁵⁸⁴

Harlestone Park was to be sold by auction in London by John Robins of Warwick House, Regent Street at Garraway's Coffee House in Chance Alley, Cornhill on 12th November 1829.⁵⁸⁵ This document was accompanied by an estate plan (Figures 7.26 & 27). Without his

⁵⁸⁰ NRO A272 Accounts

⁵⁸¹ NRO A118, Memo c. 1825. This was also a period of considerable financial turmoil as more than 60 county banks failed.

⁵⁸² NRO A227b, Letter Sir Robert Peel to Col. H. Packe.

⁵⁸³ NRO A119. The Smyth family is probably the family of lawyers and accountants in Northampton who were one of a small number of professionals used by the gentry at this period.

⁵⁸⁴ NRO A107

⁵⁸⁵ NRO A95.

Figure 7.26: Harlestone Park Sales Particulars Estate Plan (1829)
[NRO A95]

misfortune, or poor judgement, it is unlikely that such a detailed plan would have been produced. The plan had to be sufficiently detailed and accurate to show the estate at its best without exposing the auctioneer to litigation. Using it, it has been possible to show that parts of the old formal landscape survived improvement, paths from Upper to Lower Harlestone were not moved, a new road was built to the south, a boat house was constructed and the route of the approach and the location

Figure 7.27: Detail: Harlestone Park Sales Particulars Estate Plan
(1829) [NRO A95]

of the Pheasantry can be identified. These details also confirm elements on Bryants' 1827 map suggesting that it too is an accurate portrayal.

The sale of Harlestone Park did not occur by auction. On 3rd July 1829 Earl Spencer wrote to Henry Packe to express his disappointment that the sale would not be by private agreement as he had hoped.⁵⁸⁶ This suggests that Earl Spencer wanted to buy Harlestone Park but feared that the auction would inflate the cost. A letter from Robert Jnr to Samuel Miles, a Leicester-based solicitor, in late 1829 suggests that a Mr. Langton was considering giving up his planned purchase and he feared that Sir Robert Peel was not likely to be flexible.⁵⁸⁷ After a series of discussions about the advowson to the Harlestone living, and the

⁵⁸⁶ NRO A224.

⁵⁸⁷ NRO A241 Letter Robert Andrew to Sam. Miles. Paterson, D., *Principal Cross Roads*, (London, 1811) p. 149, suggests that Mr. Langton lived between Chapel Brampton and Creaton. Although there is no additional supporting evidence this is likely to be the Langton family of Teeton Hall.

terms under which Robert Andrew would continue living at Harlestone Park until his death, Earl Spencer bought Harlestone Park in 1831 for £130,000.⁵⁸⁸

7.4.2 Social Networks

During 1825 and while living at Harlestone Park, Eliza Packe kept a diary (Figures 7.28 & 7.29). She recorded who visited the Hall, where she, Henry and sometimes Robert Jnr went and occasionally, what they did. While the diary lacks detail, it is a record of the social network of a young gentry woman in central Northamptonshire during George IV's reign (Figure 7.30). The diary reveals four things about Eliza Packe's social network. First, there is a spatial element to the network of friends and family. It is not surprising that social networks in the early nineteenth were related to physical distance and the ease of travelling, social distance and the extent to which individuals were from, or were treated as though they were from, the same social class or more closely related through family ties, and the extent to which individuals clustered around events or activities which they held in common, such as hunting, charity trusteeships or communal improvements like the construction of Assembly Rooms in the George Hotel in Northampton.

There are few visits to or from the extremes of the county. The Cartwright family from Aynhoe near Brackley were active in Northampton society but it appears that the journey to the Oxfordshire border was too great for frequent socialising. Similarly, there are few, if any, contacts with families in north-east Northamptonshire. A separate set of networks centred on life in Peterborough would have existed to the north-east of Thrapston and Oundle. There are some families with which Eliza Packe had a great deal of contact. She met the Palmers from East Carlton Park on the northern border of the county at her ancestral home at Lamport Hall where they were family friends. She also met Mr and Mrs Hanbury from the relatively distant Kelmars Hall

⁵⁸⁸ NRO A 124, 128, 302-3, 306, 309.

Figure 7.28: The Diary of Eliza Packe (1825-26) [NRO A363]

Figure 7.29: Extract: Eliza Packe's Diary (13-23 April 1826)
[NRO A 363]

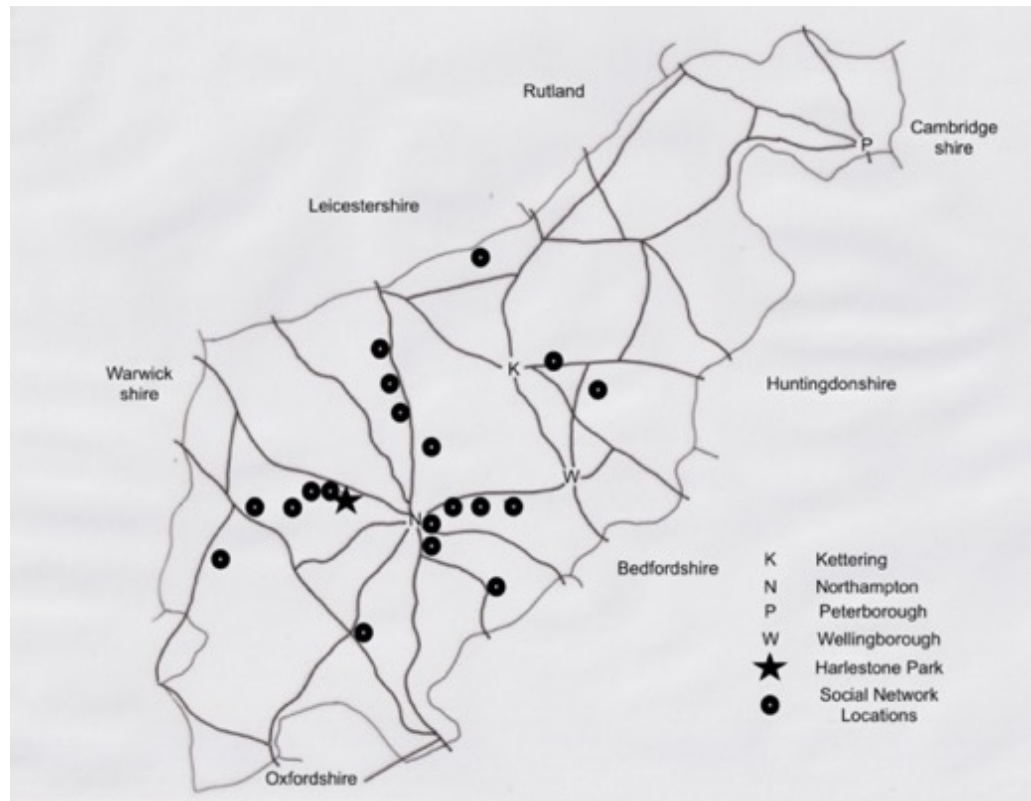


Figure 7.30: Eliza Packe's Social Network

but, like her, the family had married into the Packe family.

The Bouverie family lived at Delapré Abbey, about 1km south-west of Northampton. Edward Bouverie Esq. joined Robert Jnr in shooting trips with George Cavendish Spencer in 1816 and it seems likely that his wife Kathleen and Eliza Packe became friends as they visited each other frequently. Henry Packe joined Robert Jnr shooting on Harlestone and Dallington Heaths.

These social ties were important because they were the way that the gentry regulated access to their ranks. To be invited to tea at Harlestone Park, or to accompany Lord Spencer on a shoot was to be of sufficient social standing to be treated as an equal or at least to be acceptable and welcome company. People considered undesirable, whether through personal failings or lacking the appropriate social background, could be excluded from the gentry simply by being overlooked on the social circuit. Equally, however, the social network could admit new people rising through the ranks if they wanted or

needed to. Northampton's gentry were a relatively stable group but access to the wealth of professionals or emerging industrialists through marriage had been a useful source of income for gentry and aristocratic families for generations, a resource that was exploited by the Tibbits, Dolben and Thornton families.

7.5 Earl Spencer and Viscount Althorp (1831-c.1850)

In 1831 Harlestone Park became subsumed within the landholdings of the 2nd Earl Spencer and being contiguous with Althorp Park, an extension of it. It is likely that Earl Spencer bought Harlestone Park in order to consolidate his estate, perhaps mindful of the Great Reform Bill that was being debated. Viscount Althorp was an enthusiastic promoter of the Bill. His increased landholding gave him greater control over potential voters. He bought it with the aid of a £50,000 mortgage from S. Loyd at 4% arranged on 6th and 7th October 1831.⁵⁸⁹ Extensive account books do not show any action taken by the Earls Spencer at Harlestone Park beyond normal maintenance. The earliest OS maps and later drawings and photographs show that Repton's 1812 plan remained essentially in place.

Izzard suggests that William Rose rented Harlestone Park from 1832-38.⁵⁹⁰ He was living in Chapel Brampton in 1830 but had moved to Harlestone by February 1833 when he was appointed High Sheriff of Northamptonshire.⁵⁹¹ The 1841 census records the 60 year-old William Rose still living at Harlestone Park.⁵⁹² In 1812 William Rose married Maria Isabella Strahan, daughter of George Strahan, the Methodist sympathising Rector of St. Mary's, Islington. On his death in 1824 she inherited stock worth more than £25,000, the dividends of which were

⁵⁸⁹ Althorp Papers BL MS 76533. Accounts show that at the end of 1838 Earl Spencer owed £373,500 and needed £16,134 that year to service his debts.

⁵⁹⁰ Izzard, M. J., *Harlestone Park Good Air and Good Golf: A History*, (Northampton, 2016), p. 43.

⁵⁹¹ <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/19019/page/246/data.pdf>

⁵⁹² <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/7969>

assigned to Rose in the summer of 1835.⁵⁹³ William Rose was descended from a long line of Staffordshire and Warwickshire gentry most of whom had, from the late eighteenth century, been clergy. His father, who changed his name from Holden to Rose, was Rector of Whilton and Vicar of East Haddon. There was no depth to the Rose family's roots in Northamptonshire and no significant landholding but, using the income from his wife's inheritance he was able to rent Harlestone Park, a significant statement of his place in Northamptonshire society. The Rose family appears in Eliza Packe's diary. However, the short-term nature of his residency meant that he did not have the incentive nor the income to improve the Hall or parkland further. Viscount Althorp spent much of his time during the 1840s at Harlestone Park, treating it as his Northamptonshire residence. Frederick Spencer became the 4th Earl Spencer in 1845 but he continued to use Harlestone Park occasionally, writing to Lord John Russell from there in February 1847.

It is not surprising that George Clarke's post-1831 print of the Hall and parkland from this period reveals no significant improvements to either (Figure 7.31). A comparison with a sketch from 1816 reveals an apparently minor but significant change in livestock in the parkland (Figure 7.32). The deer of Repton's watercolours and the earlier drawing have been replaced by sheep. Deer need no longer be seen at Harlestone Park because the residence is no longer occupied by the owner. The disconnect between the owner and residence introduces a reduction in the status of the tenant, rendered visible by the absence of the deer, and a distancing of both the owner and the tenant from the property. Earl Spencer, the owner, has chosen to place sheep, the original source of his family's wealth in the parkland he has recently

⁵⁹³ NRO R(D) 393 & 394. See also NRO R(D) 395-6 and C(H) 85 which show that he was living in Harlestone in the mid 1830s. For a local history of St. Mary's Islington see <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5669abd069a91ad6eca13648/t/599b2e1d1e5b6c1cfaaa2323/1503342154358/2004+History+of+St+Mary+Islington+-+S+Allen+Chambers.pdf>



Figure 7.31: George Clarke, Harlestone Park, Northamptonshire: The Property of Earl Spencer (after 1831) [The Getty Research Institute]

Figure 7.32: South Front of Harlestone Park, Northamptonshire R. Andrew Esq^r (From Repton, H., *Fragments*, (1816) p. 22), [reproduced from Gotch, J. A., *Squires Homes*, 1939]

bought and let. The landscape may be let but it belongs to him. The tenant acquired a cultural landscape that was created by the previous owner and modified by the present owner. It expresses his own status and ideology sufficiently for him to want to rent it and, through time, it may begin to take on his values. The landscape then becomes less an expression of the ideology of the owner of the Hall and more an expression of the ideology with which the owner wished the tenant to be identified. The subtle change in iconography reflects the landowner's perception of the status, and 'character' of the occupier. It is no longer a family landscape with a past, present and future. It does not represent a family earthed in its historic home and preserved for the next generation. It belongs to the Rose family only in the moment and this impermanence echoes the landless status of the occupier.

7.6 Locating Harlestone and Harlestone Park

Harlestone Park did not exist in isolation. It was very much at the centre of two parts of Harlestone village and villagers, though rarely travellers, would have passed the building and through the landscape frequently. The village had combined agriculture with periodic ironstone quarrying for centuries. In 1801 the population of the village was 437 but this grew very rapidly in the first and third decades of the nineteenth century (Table 7.3). About half the population were involved in agriculture in 1831 following the second decade of rapid growth (Table 7.4). Rickman's contemporary analysis of the 1831 census made a distinction between 'manufacturers' who were producing goods for distribution to large, distant markets and 'retail and handicraft' producers who were making goods for a local market. The most numerous of this group were shoemakers.⁵⁹⁵ In 1841 two-thirds of the

Table 7.5 Harlestone Residents by Employment: 1841 Census⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹⁴ '3' and '4' refer to census enumeration districts and correspond to 'Upper' and 'Lower' Harlestone. Harlestone Park was in 'Lower' Harlestone.

⁵⁹⁵ Wrigley, E. A., British population during the 'long' eighteenth century: 1680-1840, pp. 57-95 in Floud, R. & Johnson, P., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern*

YEAR	POPULATION	POPULATION CHANGE	POPULATION CHANGE %
1801	437	-	
1811	563	+126	+29%
1821	564	+ 1	+ 0%
1831	645	+ 81	+14%
1841	639	- 6	- 1%
1851	610	- 29	- 5%

Table 7.3: Population of Harlestone: 1801-1851

Occupational Category	1831	Total (%)
Farmers employing labourers	8	5%
Farmers not employing Labourers	2	1%
Agricultural Labourers	73	45%
Manufacturing	4	2%
Retail and handicrafts	38	24%
Capitalists, Professionals	5	3%
Labourers (non-agricultural)	26	16%
Servants	4	2%
Other	1	1%
	161	99%

Table 7.4 Adult Male Residents of Harlestone by Occupation:
1831 Census

Britain, Vol 1: Industrialisation 1700-1860, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 91-92.

Occupational Category	3	3 (%)	4	4 (%)	Total	Total (%)
Agricultural labourer	45	50%	17	17%	62	32.5%
Baptist Minister			1	1%	1	0.5%
Baker			1	1%	1	0.5%
Barber			1	1%	1	0.5%
Blacksmith	1	1%	3	3%	4	2.1%
Butcher	1	1%			1	0.5%
Carpenter	7	8%	4	4%	11	5.8%
Clerk (in Holy Orders)			1	1%	1	0.5%
Clerk (Parish)			1	1%	1	0.5%
Dairy Man			1	1%	1	0.5%
Earthenware Dealer			1	1%	1	0.5%
Farmer	7	8%	3	3%	10	5.2%
Female Servant	8	9%	19	19%	27	14.1%
Gardener			3	3%	3	1.6%
Grocer			2	2%	2	1.0%
Groom			1	1%	1	0.5%
Lath Render			1	1%	1	0.5%
Male Servant	4	4%	20	20%	24	12.6%
Malster	1	1%	1	1%	2	1.0%
Miller			1	1%	1	0.5%
Publican	1	1%	1	1%	2	1.0%
Schoolmaster			1	1%	1	0.5%
Shoe Maker	5	6%	10	10%	15	7.9%
Stone Mason	8	9%	5	5%	13	6.9%
Tailor	2	2%	2	2%	4	2.1%
Turner			1	1%	1	0.5%

Table 7.5 Harlestone Residents by Employment: 1841 Census

'shoemakers' were in 'lower' Harlestone near the turnpike road (Table 7.3). It is possible that part of the new work and the population growth in Harlestone in the years after the building work at Harlestone Park was complete, can be attributed to the growth of manufacturing, retail and trade employment in the first half of the nineteenth century. The population of Northampton grew rapidly after the construction of the Grand Junction canal (1799-1805) and the Northampton Arm of the same canal in 1815.⁵⁹⁶ This enabled Northampton and its hinterland to benefit from cheaper imports, especially coal to replace the dwindling supplies of wood, and new markets for goods. The same phenomenon also explains the decline in the number of shoemakers in Harlestone from 1831 as employment became concentrated in Northampton or towns and villages better placed to exploit the growth of manufacturing. Northampton continued to grow but Harlestone, not on the railway line and a little too far from the canal, stagnated.⁵⁹⁷

Crompton's 1995 study of two villages in Hertfordshire showed that, as agricultural productivity per person increased in the nineteenth century, so the numbers and breadth of craftsmen and tradesmen grew.⁵⁹⁸ While Crompton found the general conclusions of his study hard to apply at smaller scale parish level, it is no surprise that a settlement like 'Lower' Harlestone, which experienced significant through traffic on a major regional turnpike road, would have seen an increase in people offering goods and services to the passing trade. 'Upper' Harlestone was quieter, on the 'old road' and dominated by agriculture.

The two parts of Harlestone village were linked by roads and footpaths. Two foot paths, described as a 'Foot Way' and a 'Foot Road' on the plan accompanying the 1829 sales particulars, linked the two villages

⁵⁹⁶ Hawkins estimates the growth of Northampton to be 62% between 1801 and 1851. Hawkins, M., *The Grand Junction Canal*, (2011), pp. 56;

⁵⁹⁷ Hawkins, M., *Grand Junction Canal*, (2011), pp. 58.

⁵⁹⁸ Crompton, C. A., *Changes in Rural Service Occupations during the Nineteenth Century: An Evaluation of Two Sources for Hertfordshire, England*, *Rural History*, Vol 6:2, (1995), pp. 193-203.

Figure 7.33: Detail: Harlestone Park Sales Particulars (1829)
[NRO A95]

Figure 7.34: Detail: Eyre and Jefferys' Survey of the County of
Northampton (1791)

following routes to the north and south of the valley (Figure 7.33). A new road was constructed that linked Upper Harlestone with quarries and the turnpike road and it is likely that Robert Snr closed an 'old' road clearly shown on Eyre and Jefferys' 1791 (Figures 7.34).⁵⁹⁹ However, while the estate split the two parts of the village contact between them was not significantly impaired. The Andrew family did not attempt to prevent, or did not succeed in preventing, villagers using paths that were visible from the Hall. Paths passed just beyond the fence of the Repton pleasure ground, across the parkland and through the pheasantry. Harlestone Park was highly visible and unlike Brockhall, it was not a landscape hidden away from the village or the changing social and political landscape.

Robert Snr grew up and lived in the mid-eighteenth century; subject to rapid changes in farming practices and technology but essentially agricultural. Harlestone was a farming and quarrying village close to the county town and good transport. By the time Harlestone Park was sold in 1831, Harlestone had reached the peak of its population and was on the verge of stagnation in a county of rapid industrialisation and growth. The sale of Harlestone Park took the Hall out of ownership of the family who had owned it for more than 300 years and passed it to the neighbouring family. They were less interested in Harlestone Park and Harlestone village and the estate too stagnated.

7.7 Concluding Comments

The improvement of Harlestone Park was a remarkable achievement. A successful gentry family built a Repton landscape of picturesque taste. Repton and John Adey were able to supervise a project from commission to completion. Robert Jnr was, however, unable to ensure that the landscape stayed in the Andrew family and it was bought by Earl Spencer who consolidated the estate into his existing Althorp

⁵⁹⁹ Forrest, *Village Roots*, (2009), p. 53.

estate. The designed landscape at Harlestone Park can be understood as an expression of an elite desire to improve and enjoy, 'landscape as a cultural image'. This landscape, more than the others studied in this thesis, is the locus of contradictions, an image of very gradual societal change. A modernised house and designed landscape was a fitting place for a new, and locally important, landowner to make his mark amongst the elite of central Northamptonshire. It was a location for Robert Jnr and his sisters to run a gentry household at the heart of an extensive social network of polite conversation, shared meals and hunting and shooting. However, it was also an innovatory landscape in which the influence of extra-urban villa landscape design, the importance of women in decision-making, horticulture and displaying of plants indoors in a conservatory can all be seen.

Harlestone Park was the most innovative and contemporary of the landscape designs researched and analysed in this thesis and it reflects gradual changes in garden design which were an expression of wider social change. Roads and footpaths were critical in shaping the relationships between the landowners, their visitors and villagers and between the Hall, the village and other settlements. Decisions about routes had an impact on views of and from the Hall and pleasure grounds. The landscape, and the way it was managed before and after Robert Jnr's improvements, is an expression of the self-identity of the owner or tenant of Harlestone Park and their relationship to their family, the future and most critically, the land.

The pleasure ground and conservatory at Harlestone Park are innovative. They reflect an emerging way of combining parkland and smaller flower and shrub-based spaces in the pleasure ground which reflect the growing popularity, and domestication, of horticulture. The smaller gardens of villas, large-scale compartmentalised pleasure grounds and the pleasure ground at Harlestone Park are connected through the diminishing social distance between the landed elite and the professional and industrial elite who employed the same

professional designers to improve their designed landscapes. The landscape design at Harlestone Park combines a conservative 'parkland' and an innovative pleasure ground design more obviously than any of the other designed landscapes considered in this thesis. The juxtaposition of an increasingly formal terrace overlooking an open parkland can be seen in Repton designs that are on a large scale, such as Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire, and on a more modest scale, such as Oulton Hall, Yorkshire.⁶⁰⁰

Repton's new approach by-passed the village and created new views of the parkland and reoriented Hall. Visitors were not to be confronted with the concerns of the villagers but with the reassuring classical Hall façade and the conservative, picturesque prospect. His depiction of the completed work, containing oak trees, woodland, a calming middle ground and sloping pastureland on which cattle and aristocratic deer can be seen, is framed by trees which entice the viewer into the scene and shows an approach enhancing the Hall and merging, almost to the point of invisibility, with the pasture. The Hall dominates the scene but is nurtured by woodland, balanced by the stables of a hunting and horse-racing man and overseen by the morality and order of the Church of England. Both north and south prospects are Reptonian picturesque views which, while sensitive to the locality, are commonplace across England, but particularly in the south and east. This is Reptonian picturesque which bears a close relation to the depiction (by Pouncey after Thomas Hearne) of a park 'dressed in the modern style' rejected by Payne Knight in *The Landscape* (1794). Similar Repton schemes were seen at Barton Hall and Finedon Hall and the Webb proposal at Brockhall is also from the same imaginary 'pattern book'. Visitors were to be impressed and reassured.

It is likely that Robert Snr closed the road that ran between 'Upper' and 'Lower Harlestone in front of the then entrance to Harlestone Park Hall.

⁶⁰⁰ Davison, K., *Woburn Abbey*, (2016), p. 136; Eyres, P. & Lynch, K., *On the Spot*, (2018), p. 111.

However, neither he nor Robert Jnr closed the footpath that ran within a few tens of metres on the kitchen garden pleasure ground. That Robert Snr did not do so is less surprising as the footpath was to the rear of the Hall. Robert Jnr's decision to leave this view open to passers-by had consequences for the openness of the landscape to anyone in the village. Servants, tradesmen and visitors were able to view the elite landscape but so was everyone who walked the path from Upper Harlestone via the parish church to Lower Harlestone. There is no reason to doubt that Robert Jnr allowed his tenants to collect underwood from his woodland but as they gathered underwood and passed through the parkland, they were reminded of their place in the social hierarchy and the generosity of their benevolent Manorial Lord.

The turnpike road through 'Lower' Harlestone led to the growth of that part of the village and the parish became less dependent on agriculture and quarrying for employment. It also led the village to be more dependent on market and employment influences from beyond the parish boundary. Consequently, while changes in the demand for stone had always left some of the village population vulnerable, there was an increase in the exposure of some trades, particularly boot and shoe-making, to changes in markets, industrial practices and processes over which they had no control. Despite these changes, which will have influenced the revenue of landlords in the village, the Lord of the Manor in this period remained mostly dependent upon income from the land.

In the period of this study, Harlestone Park had three owners and four residents. All the households shared the same elite identity, a belief in an ordered, hierarchical society and its manifestation in the landscape. The detail of how they managed the landscape in which they lived varied depending upon, amongst other things, the way they related to their landscape. For Robert Snr the designed landscape was part of an inheritance that he needed to secure in order to pass on to Robert Jnr. He chose to enclose farmland rather than improve parkland, he chose to improve roads increasing the rental values of his estates and he

chose to commission paintings rather than rebuild his Hall. Robert Snr was primarily interested in creating a collection of estates that were financially stable.

Robert Jnr was enculturated into the lifestyle of a country gentleman with little need to worry about income. He suffered several bereavements in quick succession the impact of which cannot be known but it is likely that they influenced his decision-making following his father's death in 1807. With a secure income from fully enclosed estates, he chose to improve his Hall and designed landscape to make a statement as the new Lord of Harlestone Manor and senior gentleman in the Hundred. He did not have to choose Repton to design his landscape. However, the decision to employ Repton led to a successful relationship and the production of a landscape which achieved national recognition through Repton's use of the project in *Fragments* (1816). This new landscape broadcast the owner's status in the heart of Harlestone village but was also one of pleasure as gardening, the appreciation of plants and winter walks were all catered for.

After the sale of the property and the death of Robert Jnr the relationship between the new owner, Earl Spencer and the Hall and landscape was very different. The owner was absent and he did not express his idea of landscape at Harlestone Park but at Althorp Hall. There was therefore no need to anything with the Hall and landscape at Harlestone Park except protect his investment through maintaining them. The landscape was also relatively young even in the 1840s and may not have 'needed' updating. When the Viscount was resident deer were kept in the park but these were withdrawn when the Hall was let to William Rose Rose. Rose was securing his status through his possession of the landscape, albeit by renting, and he neither needed to update the landscape nor, perhaps, could he afford to.

The close study of the archival record of Harlestone Park has

shown that the way Robert Jnr improved the Hall and designed landscape created a familiar Repton 'parkland', but an innovative pleasure ground landscape which included a 'liminal' conservatory. The pleasure ground provided Robert Jnr's sisters the space to garden. Indeed, despite almost complete archival silence on the relationship between the Reptons, Robert Jnr and his sisters, it is likely that they participated in discussions about the forms that their elite, designed landscape should take. The way in which they maintained, closed or opened footpaths and roads was an indicator of their relationship with the village, impacted their income through the rental value of land and shaped the future of the village by facilitating access to markets, passing trade and the growth or decline of manufacturing. However, following the absorption of Harlestone Park into the Althorp estate, the village no longer had the same importance to the owner's prosperity. The estate also acquired a different relationship with the residents of the Hall as neither a tenant nor Viscount Althorp had a vested interest in the long-term condition of the Hall or designed landscape.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis seeks to understand the improvement of four designed landscapes of the gentry in Central Northamptonshire and the relationship between the improvements and the villages and parishes of which each designed landscape was a part. Each landowner had to consider the form that improvement should take and the way it should relate to the village and parish. Using archival evidence and field observations, this thesis has taken account of the social and spatial geographies of each case study, and offers speculation about the motivation of each landowner, their families and the designer to build an account of the form of designed landscape improvement in central Northamptonshire between c. 1770 and c. 1840. The thesis has also broadened the subject matter beyond the boundary of the designed landscape and included attempts to understand the spatial relationship between the Hall and the village and the social dynamics of the village. This broader, more holistic approach which utilises an awareness of the particular circumstances of the landowning family - their place in landed society over several generations, their social networks, religious practice and, if applicable, appointments and their pastimes - and an awareness of the village - its population and employment patterns, history of religious observance and pattern of dependence upon or resistance to the power of the landed elite – adds a deeper understanding to the forms and place of the designed landscape in the wider farmed, designed and built landscape. The attempt to deepen the understanding of designed landscape in this way has no precedent in the landscape history/historical geography or garden history literature.

The four case studies were chosen because of the rich archive that exists enabling a reconstruction of the designed landscape improvement during the period studied. At Barton Seagrave, where the archive is less extensive, the circumstances of the family, who undertook a transition from modest landholders with extensive business interests to the landed elite, balanced the portfolio of case studies as

the other three landowners were longstanding Northamptonshire squires. The silence of the archive on the personality, interests and intentions of Charles Tibbits illustrates the tensions present in all archival records. The records which have survived are those which were deemed worthy of retaining. The decision to retain was made several times from shortly after the completion, or receipt, of the document to the modern period. In Northamptonshire in the twentieth century, Wake and Isham, both members of the landed elite, sought to preserve archival material from other landed elite in the county. For many villagers writing was either impossible because they did not know how, or impractical because writing materials were expensive. Even those villagers who chose to write are unlikely to have found their writings retained through many generations as their material may have not been considered important or it was not robust enough to survive the conditions in which many people lived.⁶⁰¹

It is an inevitable consequence of contemporary social and environmental conditions and archival collection policy, whether at the time of creation or in the modern era, that all archives have gaps. The historical geographer must acknowledge the limits of the evidence available and resist the temptation to treat absence of evidence as evidence of absence. Silence is not, of itself, evidence. That is not to say that the researcher must, like the archive, remain silent.

Reasonable judgements may be made on the balance of probabilities; a balance which requires caveat. Speculation on Harlestone Park flower gardens is a judgement in silence on who was interested in horticulture. Catherine and Harriot Andrew may have been instrumental in ensuring that areas for flower cultivation were part of the Harlestone Park scheme. However, we do not, and may never, know for certain.

⁶⁰¹ Thomas, D., Fowler, S., & Johnson, V., *The Silence of the Archive*, (London, Facet Publishing, 2017), pp. 17-18.

The approach adopted in this thesis seeks to allow some archives to speak which might otherwise have been silenced. Eliza Packe chose to restrict the content of her diary to the factual recording of social events in which she participated or which involved her husband or Robert Andrew Jnr.. Her decision excludes both her emotional responses to the social events and any visitors to Harlestone Park who did not fall within her narrow, self-imposed remit. The reasons for her decision to record only these events is not known. Nevertheless, the diary reveals the social network of a young woman in central Northamptonshire thus exposing one way in which ideas, fashion and information travelled through the landed elite.

Following Cosgrove and Daniels, landscape is seen as 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring and symbolising surroundings' enabling these landscapes to be understood as expressions of elite values both internally and in wider spatial and social contexts during a period in which social, economic and political change was considerable.⁶⁰²

This thesis has shown that the general imperative to improve received distinct and particular nudges at each location. Designed landscape improvement was considered at all four locations shortly after the landowner inherited or bought the estate and/or acquired an additional source of income through marriage. This study suggests that new sources of income and/or the recent acquisition of an estate through purchase or inheritance by a relatively young man are commonly occurring moments of improvement in the history of a designed landscape. All four landowners chose to employ a professional designer, although Sir William and John English Dolben managed their own design in the late 1780s before approaching Repton in 1793. However, beyond this headline generalisation lies a more complex reality as each landowner related to the designer in a different way. The

⁶⁰²Cosgrove, D. & Daniels, S. eds., *The Iconography of Landscape*, (1988), p. 1; Cosgrove, D., *Social Formation*, (1998 [1984]).

acquisition of a red book and Finedon and Barton Seagrave was not the precursor to extensive landscape improvement. At Harlestone Park, Humphry and John Adey Repton appear, as far as we can tell, to have worked well with Robert Andrew Jnr. and created an improved and transformed landscape. A third route was taken at Brockhall as Thomas Reeve amended the design he had been given by John Webb. Even where the gentry were persuaded to commission a professional designer, the response could vary greatly.

If the funding and timing of landscape improvement was similar, so was the general pattern of design at each *parkland* landscape. All four landscapes adopted a picturesque model of open space, lateral water and woodland presenting a view from the Hall, although the view following the early improvement at Finedon was poorly conceived. This view was very common but not universal as Repton's red book for Courteenhall shows. The landscape at each Hall would have been instantly recognisable and well received by any Northamptonshire gentry schooled in an elite way of seeing.

The parkland landscapes followed an eighteenth-century formula but this thesis has shown that there is an evolution of pleasure ground design from William Emes at Bromley Hall (1778) to Humphry and John Adey Repton at Harlestone Park in 1808-11 via John Webb at Brockhall (1799) and Bromley Hall (1810). In 1778 a circuit shrubbery walk, with limited space for flowering plants was blended seamlessly into the wider designed parkland. The demise of the circuit walk, the introduction of space for the enjoyment of flowering plants, the movement of that space closer to the Hall and finally the discontinuity between pleasure ground and parkland seen at Harlestone Park, and at much larger Repton commissions at Woburn Abbey and Ashridge, were likely to be the result of wider changes in society. The number of plant varieties and exotic plants increased and were more easily obtainable, horticulture became a more fashionable pastime and the growing demand for designs for smaller spaces subtly influenced the design and use of

pleasure grounds over several decades.⁶⁰³ By the time Repton and John Adey were working at Harlestone Park a designed landscape of the Northamptonshire gentry could include elements of designs from extra-urban villas. The irony here is that while Repton disliked working for villa clients, he subtly including elements in his designs for the landed elite inspired by designs for an emerging urban, professional and industrial elite. The landed elite acquired landscapes which were, in part, inspired by landscapes designed for an increasingly affluent social class that the elite considered their social inferiors, feared or ignored. That is not to suggest that central Northamptonshire saw the emergence of extra-urban villas. It did not. It is to suggest however, that the evolution of pleasure garden design in these designed landscapes can, in part, be understood as resulting from the subtle influence of extra-urban garden design elsewhere, and that was, in turn, a consequence of social and economic change. This is an area in which further detailed research could be undertaken to substantiate this hypothesis.

This thesis has focussed on four landed gentry estates in a limited geographical area which share a rich archive. It has enabled a close study of the gentry landscapes as *gentry* landscapes. It has focussed on a period of social and industrial change and considered the response of the landed gentry to the changes beyond the boundary of their estate. In so doing, this study has gone beyond the boundary of the designed landscape into the social networks of the gentry families and the spatial and power dynamics of their parishes. The close study of four designed gentry landscapes near each other but representing gentry families in a variety of circumstances has identified commonalities between the designed landscapes - the parklands are picturesque and the improvement occurred after the landowner came into possession of the estate – and dissimilarities as landowners chose to respond to the advice of professional designers in different ways,

⁶⁰³ Laird, M., *The Flowering of the English Landscape*, (1999), p. 384.

made different decisions about designed landscape boundaries and integrated Hall and designed landscape improvement to varying degrees. This thesis has also shown trends in landscapes design. Technological improvement facilitated the development of conservatories and the importance of small(er) outdoor spaces grew allowing new forms of display and contributing to the active participation of the gentry in horticulture.

The thesis has also gone beyond the boundary of the elite estate and social class into the village and parish. The designed landscape has been treated as part of the wider landscape and social and built environment of the parish as it would have been experienced. The approach reveals greater complexity at a local level but, in so doing, adds new layers of understanding to designed landscapes and their place, and that of their owners in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century society and culture. All landowners and designers responded to the existence of the village. Repton made explicit reference to the village on his plan in the Finedon red book, but often the response was unspoken as cottages were hidden by planting or, at Brockhall by a 12' stone wall. In Finedon the response to the village was passive but the village was changing in response to new forms of production, ownership and control. The designed landscape at Finedon was a typical late C18 designed landscape of the gentry sitting in, or perhaps alongside, a village that by the 1840s was a mixture of agricultural labourers and 'rough trade' shoe and boot-makers who owed their livelihood not to the land but to the entrepreneur. The landscape remained unaltered until the mid-late C19 but elsewhere, the landed elite were absorbing the evolving landscape designs of professionals and industrialists and making them their own in the pleasure grounds of their estates. Finedon was a complex juxtaposition of establishment landed gentry and a growing, changing village creating complexity that is very specific to this place but speaks to wider processes at work. It has only been by extending the area of research into the spatial and social dynamics of

the village that this relationship, a microcosm of the tensions and changes of the nineteenth century, has been revealed.

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