

## **An archaeological survey of garden earthworks in Grotto Wood, Roxford, Hertingfordbury, Hertfordshire**

### **Abstract**

*A survey of earthworks in Grotto Wood, Hertingfordbury suggest these represent the rare survival of an unusual post-medieval formal garden. They included a mount, three ponds, the site of a reputed grotto, and a raised gravel perimeter walk. The gardens were first recorded on Drury and Andrews' 1766 map of the county of Hertfordshire. Two 18th-century descriptions seem to suggest that they were highly regarded. They seem to have been deliberately destroyed between 1775 and 1789. Thereafter the site reverted to coppiced woodland, and seems to have been forgotten until recently rediscovered.*

*Although associated with Roxford manor house, a minor country residence, the gardens could not be seen from the house. Furthermore, they do not appear to have provided significant views or vistas back to the house. The principal feature of this garden seems to have been a grotto at its southern end. This is now marked by a large crescent-shaped mound just beyond the lowest of the three ponds. At the other extreme (north) of the garden is a large formal spiral mount. Fine views of the garden and the valley of the River Lea would have once been possible from this position.*

### **Introduction**

An archaeological survey of garden earthworks in Grotto Wood, Roxford, Hertingfordbury, Hertfordshire (NGR: TL 301105) was undertaken in March 1995 by C K Currie of CKC Archaeology (Gardens Archaeology Project). The commissioning body was the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust. The site is almost surrounded by a large waste-disposal tip, and it was considered appropriate to record the garden remains in case they, or their surroundings, should be affected by the extension of the tip in the future.

The survey made a scale plan of garden earthworks that included a mount, three ponds, the site of a reputed grotto, and a raised gravel perimeter walk. These were first recorded on Drury and Andrews' 1766 map of the county of Hertfordshire. They were subsequently described by two 18th-century visitors, and appear to have been highly regarded. They seem to have been destroyed in the later 18th century. Thereafter the site reverted to coppiced woodland, and seem to have been largely forgotten until recently rediscovered by Patience Bagenal, a local member of the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust.

### **Historical background**

Grotto Wood is an irregular shaped wood of roughly square dimensions, about 150m by 150m at its widest points, with a semi-circular projection at its southern end with a radius of about 45m. It stands approximately 1.5km. SSE of the village of Hertingfordbury, and 150m NW of Roxford Farm, centred on NGR TL 301105. The latter is probably on the site of a sub-manor of Hertingfordbury mentioned in Domesday Book. There are traces of a homestead moat here alongside the River Lea. A study of the surrounding landscape suggests that Hertingfordbury has a history of dispersed settlement (Munby 1977, 109), of which Roxford Farm is the successor of a sub-manor dating back at least to Late Saxon times (Hoskins 1955, 55). This dispersed settlement is characterised by the abundance of place-names nearby ending in 'End' or 'Green'. Grotto Wood stands on the edge of a gravel plateau some 20m above the Lea valley bottom at a height of about 61m AOD at the southern end of the wood, rising to 69.5m in the north-west corner.

The Victoria County History has traced the descent of the manor of Roxford (Christie 1912, 465-6). It appears that this small manor had been divided amongst the three sisters of Robert de Louth in 1484, and was not reunited as a single land unit until it came into the hands of Thomas Fanshawe around 1651. By about 1660 the manor had passed to George Chalncombe. His widow conveyed the property to John Brassey in 1700. The Brassey family continued to hold the manor until 1801, when they sold it to William Baker of Bayfordbury.

Recent research by Mrs Patience Bagenal, who lives nearby, has uncovered previously unknown material about the earthworks in Grotto Wood. Cartographic information suggests that the garden must have been created between 1605 and 1766. In 1605 a map survives which shows the site of Grotto Wood being occupied by a field known as the Moore Meade (Andrews 1916-8, 188). However, by the

time of Drury and Andrews' Topographical Map of Hertfordshire of 1766, an elaborate garden in the formal style is shown that corresponds roughly with the shape of the present garden remains (Hertfordshire Publications 1980 reprint, folio 5). Furthermore, Mrs Bagenal has discovered two overlooked contemporary descriptions of the site.

The first of these, by Richard Dick, has been dated by internal references to between 1739 and 1765. He describes the garden at some length, referring to a 'long Gravel Walk', a spiral mount, a series of fishponds, including an Octagon Basin, a cold bath and a grotto, from which the wood took its name. Most of the features that Dick describes are traceable on the ground today, although they are heavily overgrown.

The gardens described by Richard Dick in the 18th century bear a close resemblance to the present earthwork remains. Therefore, it is considered worth quoting this source in full, as it helps to put some substance on the bare outline presently surviving. The spellings and grammar are as in the original document.

Dick states that, 'Third day the 18th. went to Mr Brassees at Rockford to see the Grotto etc. 1st you go in at the gates. you go up a long Gravel Walk at the end whereof is a leaden statue on a pedestal representing Fame. then you turn of your left and then go up a hill round and round till you come to the top. On each side as you go up their is yew hedges. here and there is seats cut in them. at the Top of the Hill is a fine octagon Summer House, which commands a prospect of the Whole Garden and is richly ornamented with fine Paintings. then you came down the same way you went up. and then you turn of your right and go into a cave made of Flint which is under the Summer House, where is a Table upon which two images stand one representing Death and the other Time. their is two Windows shine into or else it would be totally Dark. then you come out. On your Right hand is an Aviary or place for Doves and on the left an Aviary for small singing and canary birds. then before the cave is a Large oblong Fishpond where you see quantities of Fresh Water Fish. and round the end of the pond is Large pieces of flint to represent small rocks. and 1 piece is very much like a Busto, then beyond this is an Octagon Bason.

on one side is a piece of shell Work, where by Turning a cock a hundred Fountains and more play into the water. in the middle of this Bason is Neptune standing with is feet on the Head of a Dolphin surrounded with large pieces of Flint to represent rocks. Then you go to the Grotto where you go down a few steps. on each side of you is Walls of Flint. then he unlock an Iron Door where you go ino he grotto. the bottom is paved with curious small pebbles from Black Heath in a curious manner and on the great Wall afront the grooto is fine Shells. Two small marble Basons of each side of the Door way and 1 opposite. then you go into the Grotto which is richly ornamented with Shells and coloured Flints, a large Bason in the middle of it and fine marble Seats where you set, then the Gardiner turns a cock and fountains all round from the outside into the inside and 1 over your head into the Bason. then you go down a Few Steps into the Cold Bath paved with Marble and fine Stone and richly Ornamented with Painting. then we came out and went [up] a little hill over the Cold Bath where is a fine bilt Chimney round and like the fire of a Bomb bursting out. the which chimney is for a fire in the Dressing Room. then we came down and went by the side of the Cold Bath, the wall of which is painted to represent a Door and two Windows then we came out, but besides their is Statues, Fountains etc.' (quoted in Bagenal 1994, 16-17).

Another source, is a poem, 'Hertford and its environs', in which the garden is described by Thomas Green. This was written about 1775.

'See Roxford next a place retired  
but for its garden much admired  
These works of nature and of art  
their various beauties do impart.  
A moat, a summer house, a cave  
An aviary too you have:  
Whose various birds you see and hear  
Whose melody delights the ear  
A bath thats elegant and neat  
And for the purpose quite compleat  
Adorn'd with paintings well designed

By chosen artists of the kind  
But this the grotto far excels  
Which is enriched with choicest shells  
and ornaments of different kind  
To charm the eye and please the mind  
And here a curious fountain plays  
Which throws the water different ways  
Above, below, on every side  
In plentiful streams both far and wide  
Where they disposed to lock you in  
they soon could wet you to the skin  
By curious art and man's device  
They'd do it for you in a trice;  
Indeed they never are so rude  
Unless a blockhead should intrude. (quoted in Bagenal 1994, 17)

This poem contains a later pencilled note that suggests that the garden was shortly afterwards destroyed. This note states that the garden '... is now a mere wilderness. The moat, summer house and aviary, grotto, fountain and bath destroyed and the material sold to Mr Alderman Kirby'. As Kirby died in 1789, it must be assumed that the garden was destroyed between 1775 and 1789 (Bagenal 1994, 17). Subsequently, the very existence of a garden here seems to have been forgotten. In 1807 a detailed map of William Baker's estate was made (HRO D/EX 629 P1). This shows Grotto Wood as woodland, and fails to record any of the internal features that made up the garden, even the ponds. The only features noted are the gate in the south-east corner and the deep ditch around the southern end of the wood. For some reason, a special effort seems to have been made to show this latter feature. By 1834 the area is referred to as a coppiced wood. Once, there may have been many yews surviving from the earlier garden. In 1859 it is recorded in the Bayfordbury estate records that 'Grotto underwood cut and the principal part of the Yews taken down with other Trees' (Bagenal 1994, 16-17).

No subsequent map shows any sign of the garden, although the Ordnance Survey show the three ponds from the late 19th century (OS maps 25" sheet XXXVI.2; 1880, 1898, and 1923 eds.).

### **Strategy**

A full measured survey of the site was undertaken, at an appropriate scale, showing all the earthwork features contained within the wood. This was made by taking measured offsets from a fixed baseline, using standards of accuracy acceptable to professional archaeologists. This baseline was surveyed with a theodolite to known fixed points on the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps of the area. Following the main survey, appropriate points on the site were levelled to tie heights into the Ordnance Survey datum.

The survey was carried out over four Saturdays during the month of March 1995. A preliminary exploration of the site to determine the best method of survey was made in June 1994. The survey was delayed until the dense undergrowth present from the previous summer had died back.

### **Survey Results**

The survey demonstrates that a small-scale ornamental landscape once existed within the confines of what is now Grotto Wood. Although such features are frequently referred to as gardens, this definition is not entirely satisfactory, and the term 'ornamental landscape' is possibly more accurate. However, for convenience the site will hereafter be referred to as a garden. The earthworks here were surrounded by a ditch to form a rhomboidal shape with apsidal ends at the north and south. This enclosure grew progressively wider as it extended southwards.

At the north end of the site, in an approximately central position, is a large mound. This has a regular cyclic shape, with traces of what may have been a ridge or pathway about half way up on the north and west sides. On the south side is the remains of a trench, about 12m long and 2m wide, cut into the mound as part of amateur archaeological excavations earlier this century. The mound is between 28-30m in diameter, and a maximum of 3.7m high. Extending from its east and west sides is a bank that seems to form the northern boundary of the old garden. However, the wood has extended up to 15m to the north of this bank in places, and another ditch has been dug around this extension. This latter

boundary seems to have been in existence at the time of the 1807 map of William Baker's estate, and so it may be an original feature.

Around the edges of the wood, except part of the south side, there is a broad bank inside the outer ditch. This bank is up to 10m across its base in places, and seems to be surmounted by a gravel path, up to 5m wide. In a few places, yew trees can be found on the inner edge of this path, suggesting that a yew hedge may have divided the path from the inner garden. On the south-west side of the site, this raised walk changes and appears to drop below a slightly raised terrace. On the south-east edge, the path seems to continue as a raised bank, but later disturbance in this area has partly obscured the evidence.

To the south of the mound at the north end of the site is a series of three ponds running roughly centrally down the centre of the enclosed area. There is a steep drop of about 2.5m from the bottom of the mound to the bottom of the first pond. This pond is supplied by a spring in its north-east corner. The entry of this spring is surrounded by a small brick tank; the water currently fills the tank and flows over the top. However, this feature contains much silt and detritus from years of neglect, and it is not certain if this arrangement was intended.

The upper pond is approximately rectangular, being 35m by 10m, narrowing slightly to about 8m at its southern end. On its west bank, near the north end of the pond, is an irregularly excavated hollow, about 10m long and up to 5m wide. This has the appearance of a small quarry, with the waste spoil thrown up around its banks. It may, however, be all that remains of further garden features. Richard Dick's description given above records two bird aviaries near the mound and the upper pond, and this hollow may represent their site.

Below this pond is a roughly circular pond, about 18-19m in diameter, with a small island in the middle. According to contemporary descriptions this pond was once octagonal, with statues on the island. The feature is so silted and overgrown today that any sign of an octagonal shape has been eroded away. Between the first and second ponds a few bricks and a large flint block remains at the place where the water flowed from one to the other. These might be taken to be the remains of a sluice; flints are described by Dick as being placed here to imitate rockwork, possibly for a small cascade.

Below the circular pond is a further rectangular pond similar to the northern pond. This is about 32m long and 8m wide, tapering slightly towards its southern end. The banks around this pond are up to 1.5m higher than its bottom.

At the south end of the wood is a large apse-shaped projection of about 45-50m in length, with a maximum of about 40m wide at its northern end where it joins the main body of the wood. Within this area is a roughly crescent-shaped mound. The mound curves slightly around the bottom of the lower pond. Between the pond and the mound is a curving depression, which has the appearance of a sunken walk leading to the inner hollow of the crescent. The crescent is about 30m across its long axis, and about 16m wide across its centre. The long axis is aligned roughly east-west. At its highest point on its eastern side, the mound is about 2.65m above the sunken 'path' on its north side, and almost 3m higher than the outside of the wood.

In its centre, the mound has sunk, making the two outer 'horns' of the crescent up to a metre higher than the centre. It is on the north of this hollow that it is believed that the entrance to the grotto was situated. According to Richard Dick's description, this was made of rockwork and shells, but a later source claims the materials were removed and sold to a Mr Kirby. It is possible that the hollow in the top of the crescent mound is where the structure within has been dug out and removed.

All around the perimeter of the apsidal projection, and along the two southern edges of the wood adjoining, is a deep ditch. This is over 5m wide and up to 2m deep in places, and is far more substantial than the boundary ditches around the main body of the wood. At its far eastern end this ditch shows signs of having been back-filled. A further point of note is what appears to be an excavated disturbance in the far southern end of the ditch. Although it is possible this may have been caused by animals, it has the appearance of being originally man-made. At the time of the survey, there was water seeping into this hole, seemingly from the north. It is possible that this was the original exit of the water that once flowed through the grotto from the ponds.

The original entrance to the garden was in the south-east corner of the main body of the wood. The raised bank that surrounds most of the site seems to begin here. During a visit in June 1994 an old iron gate post was observed on the east side of this bank, a few metres inside the wood. When the present survey was made, this post was no longer visible. It seems, therefore, that it may have been removed between June 1994 and the date of the survey in March 1995.

## Discussion

The earthworks contained within the wood are characteristic of a formal garden, which seems to have contained a spiral mound, three formal ponds, a raised gravel walk and another mound on the presumed site of the grotto and cold bath. Other lesser features of unknown origin can be discerned, but the whole area is extremely heavily overgrown, and some very minor features may still remain hidden. This problem made it difficult to assess the site as fully as one would have liked, although it is considered that no major components of the conjectured garden have been missed. Stinging nettles exist in places up to 2m in height, and this suggests the soil has a high phosphate content, thereby supporting the idea that it was once an elaborate garden.

Besides brambles, thistles and nettles, the site has been damaged by root penetration from large trees, some of them subsequently having fallen, damaging the earthworks in consequence. However, despite this general dereliction, the site is otherwise well-preserved, and many features such as gravel paths, and even the supporting post of an iron gate recorded by Dick in the 18th century, could still be traced in the undergrowth at the time of the first visit in June 1994 (this post can no longer be found).

The earthworks seem to be a remarkable survival of a formal garden that, apart from the deliberate removal of all the architectural structures between 1775 and 1789, has been little disturbed since. Such gardens are rare in England, many commentators (wrongly) arguing that they were all destroyed by the work of Capability Brown and his contemporaries. Although abandoned formal garden sites are now being discovered by archaeological fieldwork and aerial photography, they are still unusual enough to be worthy of special preservation. The garden at Grotto Wood is important because of its curious design. The type of features it contained is also unusual for a garden still being admired in the later 18th century. It is also noteworthy in that it was a relatively small compact garden belonging to a smaller manor house. The complexity of the garden and its contents is particularly unusual for such a modest status site, and its study is considered to be worthy of at least regional, if not national, importance. Turner (1992, 169) has urged the need to study more of these lesser sites. This is needed to counter the imbalance in our perception of historic gardens that derives from an over-emphasis for studying sites of the highest status.

Research by Patience Bagenal has revealed that a similar grotto to the one described by Richard Dick existed at nearby Ware. The garden here also had a shell encrusted entrance, an octagonal summer house and a room paved with small round stones. This grotto was built by a Quaker named John Scott, and was partly finished in 1764. The Brassey family who owned Roxford in the 18th century were Quakers and London Bankers. It is possible that Scott and the Brasseys attended the same local Quaker meetings, and knew each other. One of these sites may have been the influence for the other.

Grottoes and caves were quite common features in gardens in the 18th century. The poet, Alexander Pope, had a similar feature below his house at Twickenham in the early 18th century that was much admired, and written about. This feature was probably the influence for the many grottoes constructed in 18th century informal landscapes. Two of the most notable were at Claremont and Oatlands in Surrey, the designs of Stephen Wright in the 1750s and 1760s (Symes 1992). However, grottoes were known in formal gardens before this. Many consider that they were influenced by Italian examples, dating back to the Roman and early Renaissance periods (Anthony 1991). One of the most famous garden descriptions of the later 17th century, Sir William Temple's Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, written in 1685, describes a grotto as part of a formal garden layout.

'From the middle of this parterre is a descent of many steps flying on each side of a grotto that lies between them (covered with lead and flat) into the lower garden..... the grotto embellished with figures of shell rock-work, fountains and water-works.' (quoted in Anthony 1991, 56)

Leaving aside the location in the garden, this description is very similar to that at Roxford. It is also comparable to many other contemporary grotto descriptions, seeming to suggest that there were many

affinities in the design of such features throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, both in formal and informal gardens.

Of the other main features with the Roxford garden, the mounts fountains and ponds are common features of early formal gardens. Mounts are known from at least the 16th century. A well-known example of mounts overlooking a moated garden can be seen today at Lyveden New Bield, Northamptonshire, began around 1597 (Taylor 1983, 21). By the early 18th century, these features were beginning to go out of fashion, as were fountains. Both types of features were lampooned by writers such as Joseph Addison and Alexander Pope (Currie 1990, 29). In the oft-quoted Epistle to Burlington of 1731-32, Pope advises garden designers,

'Consult the Genius of the Place in all  
That tells the Waters to rise, or fall.....

With silver-quiv'ring rills maeander'd o'er -  
- Enjoy them, you! Villario can no more;  
Tir'd of the scene Parterres and Fountains yield,  
He finds at last he better likes a Field.....

The suff'ring eye inverted Nature sees,  
Trees cut to Statues, Statues thick as trees,  
With here a Fountain, never to be played,  
And there a Summer-house, that knows no shade.

(Bateson 1951, 138, 141, 144)

Horace Walpole also criticised formal gardens as being in bad taste in the 18th century. His quote on elaborate gardens using extensive water-based features, like those at Roxford, may suggest one of the reasons why it fell out of use,

'But for magnitude and enormous cost, the hydraulic works, fountains and waterfalls, were the most extraordinary; indeed, their extreme first expense, and the constant demand for supporting them in perfection, led in a few years to their total disuse. Neglect soon occasioned decay, and decay caused their entire removal' (Wornum 1876, 97).

It is ironic that Roxford may have still been extant when Walpole was writing this text. It is the late survival of what appears to an entirely anachronistic form of garden that makes Roxford so unusual. Against all the dictates of taste of the later 18th century, it still seems to have been admired as late as 1775.

The date of the creation of the garden is a matter of considerable conjecture. As the manor was not a single land unit before about 1651, it is unlikely that the garden was created before that date. It can be shown to be in existence by 1766. Although this suggests that the Brasseys were probably responsible, the relatively long ownership of the Chalncobes, c. 1660-1700, must also be considered.

The stylistic evidence seems to suggest that the garden was created at some between 1651 and c. 1730. However, the opinion that formal gardens were not created after c. 1730 because of the changing fashion has been questioned recently. At Castle Bromwich Hall in the West Midlands, where the gardens were once claimed to be 'at the height of their sophistication in 1730', it has now been conclusively shown that the work on the greater walled formal garden did not begin until after 1730, and was still continuing in 1747 (Currie and Locock 1993). Elsewhere, at places like Thenford House, Northamptonshire (now post-coded as Oxfordshire) anachronistically formal features seem to have been created throughout the 18th century within an overall framework that was less formal (Currie 1992).

Such examples warn researchers not to be too dogmatic about dating gardens. Bagenal (op. cit.) hints that there is a possible connection between the grottoes of Roxford and Ware that may date the gardens at Grotto Wood nearer to the middle of the 18th century. Such evidence is tenuous, and any influence Roxford may have had at Ware may be the result of the former being an old-established local garden of repute. Nevertheless, it is something we can not state for certain. The late admiration of Roxford may

indicate that formal gardens were only despised in courtly circles. In more out of the way places, they may have been admired well into the later 18th century. All that can be said with any form of certainty is that Roxford appeared to exist in its final form in 1766. Whether all the garden was created together, or whether it evolved over a number of years, with features like the grotto being added to an earlier garden, is a question that can not be answered on the present evidence.

## **Conclusions**

The remains appear to be a fine example of an unusual formal garden. Although associated with Roxford manor house, a minor country residence, they could not be seen from the house. They do not appear to have provided significant views or vistas back to the house, either. The principal feature of the gardens seems to have been a grotto at its southern end. This is now marked by a large, but irregular, crescent-shaped mound just beyond the lowest of the three ponds. At the other extreme (north) of the garden is a large formal mound from which excellent views of the garden and the valley of the River Lea could once be obtained.

Two points seem to make this garden unusual, besides the fine state of preservation of the earthworks. These are the distance that it was located from the house, and its possible late date for a formal garden. Although it is possible the garden was begun in the later 17th century, it does not receive any salutary notices until the second half of the 18th century, when formal gardens were supposedly out of fashion. The site is therefore one of a growing body of formal gardens that may have still been developed and admired at a time when garden historians once considered they would have been despised.

## **Archive**

Copies of this report have been placed in the care of the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR).

## **Acknowledgements**

Sincere thanks are given to all those involved with this project. In particular to Ann Bessant and Patience Bagenal, whose hard work enabled the site to be recognised, and to the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust for the funds allocated for its survey.

The author is grateful to those who helped with the survey, either in clearing undergrowth, or with the measuring of the earthworks. He is also grateful to the inhabitants of Roxford, who allowed him to park his car within easy reach of the site. Finally Starmin, the site owner, must be thanked for allowing the survey to be undertaken.

## **References**

### **Original sources in the Hertfordshire Record Office (HRO)**

HRO D/EX 620 P1: Map of the estates of William Baker, 1807, by H Dixon.

Ordnance Survey 25" maps, Sheet XXXVI.2, 1880, 1898 and 1923 editions.

### **Original sources in print**

A Drury & J Andrews, A topographical map of Hertfordshire, first published 1766, reprinted in facsimile by Hertfordshire Publications, 1980

J James, The theory and practice of gardening, London 1712

A Pope, 'Epistle to Burlington', pp. 130-51, in F W Bateson (ed.), Epistles to Several Persons, London, 1951, (Poems by Alexander Pope, first published in 1731)

H Walpole, 'A history of modern taste in gardening', in R N Wornum (ed.), Anecdotes of painting in England, London, 1876, (Essays by Horace Walpole, first published in the 18th century)

## Secondary sources

- W F Andrews, 'The manor of Roxford', Transactions of the East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society, 6.2 (1916-8), 180-9
- J Anthony, The Renaissance Garden in Britain, Princes Risborough, 1991
- P Bagenal, 'Roxford's forgotten grotto', Hertfordshire Countryside, July 1994, 16-7
- M E Christie, 'Hertingfordbury' in W Page (ed.), The Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire, vol. 3, London, 1912, 462-8.
- C K Currie, 'Fishponds as garden features, c. 1550-1750', Garden History, 18.1 (1990), 22-46
- C K Currie, Excavations and surveys at Thenford House, Oxfordshire, Private report to Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine MP, confidential copy deposited with the Royal Commission of Ancient Monuments (England), Swindon, 1992
- C K Currie, Knowle Hill, Ticknall, Derbyshire: an appraisal of the landscape, Private report to the Landmark Trust, 1993
- C K Currie & M Locock, 'Research excavations at Castle Bromwich Hall gardens, 1989-91', Post-medieval archaeology, 27 (1993), 111-99
- C K Currie & M Locock, 'The formal cascade at The Gnoll, Neath, West Glamorgan', Archaeologia Cambrensis, forthcoming
- English Heritage, The management of archaeological projects, London, revised edition 1992
- H Godwin Arnold, 'Shaw House, Newbury', Garden History, 5.3 (1977)
- W G Hoskins, The making of the English Landscape, London, 1955
- L M Munby, The Hertfordshire Landscape, London, 1977
- G Soffe, 'Southwick Priory and its late Romanesque sculptured lavabo', Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society newsletter, new series no. 3 (1985), 27-9
- M Symes, 'The garden designs of Stephen Wright', Garden History, 20.1 (1992), 11-27
- M Symes, A glossary of garden history, Princes Risborough, 1993
- C Taylor, The archaeology of gardens, Princes Risborough, 1983
- R C Turner, book review of A E Brown (ed.), Garden archaeology, London, 1991, in Post-medieval archaeology, 26 (1992), 168-9

## Appendix 1: notes on possible parallels for features in the garden at Grotto Wood, Roxford

1. Apsidal shape. The apsidal-ended shape of the garden can be seen in the shape of contemporary ponds illustrated in garden designs in John James' work The theory and practice of gardening (London, 1712). This work is almost a direct copy of a work on French gardening published in Paris in 1709. Although the shape in James' designs is applied to ponds, its popularity is demonstrated, particularly in gardens of the French type. A fine use of the shape can be found in the formal mirror pond at Castle Bromwich, West Midlands, recently discovered by archaeology (Currie 1990, 40, figure 7).



2. The spiral mount. Ordinary mounts are common features in many formal gardens. They are possibly more common in the 16th and 17th centuries than in later formal gardens of the early 18th century. Spiral mounts could be found at three well-known sites, of widely differing dates. One, now vanished, existed at Hampton Court, Greater London, a creation of the 1530s (Symes 1993, 79). Some of the best surviving spiral mounts exist at Lyveden New Bield, Northamptonshire. Here are two large and two smaller mounts at the corners of a moated garden created at the very end of the 16th century (Taylor 1983, 46-7).

Another well-known example exists at Packwood House, Warwickshire. Although the spiral mount itself may be an original feature, the elaborate yew topiary surrounding it is now thought to be largely the work of 19th-century antiquarianism.

3. The ponds. Ponds in rectangular and octagonal shape are extremely common in formal gardens, and can be found everywhere. Both forms existed in the now largely vanished formal gardens at such famous sites as Stowe, Buckinghamshire and Boughton House, Northamptonshire. At both sites the octagonal ponds were altered to create less formal lakes in the later 18th century.

4. Cascades between the ponds. The descriptions of the Roxford gardens suggest small rockwork cascades between the ponds. Occasional pieces of flint can be found where the water leaves the ponds to support this.

Although the opinion of garden historians is that cascades were rare in English formal gardens (Symes 1993, 28), this is not proving to be borne out by recent fieldwork. A number of examples have recently been recorded by this author, including the magnificent example at The Gnoll, near Neath, South Wales (Currie and Locock forthcoming), recently restored to working order. Other smaller-scale examples of probable early 18th century date have been identified at Knowle Hill, Derbyshire, a property owned by the Landmark Trust (Currie 1993), and Forde Abbey, Devon. The latter are shown on a print dated 1727 recently discovered by the owners (Alice Roper pers. comm.). A small unobtrusive example was also excavated recently at Thenford House (Currie 1992). Grotto Wood is one of many sites where small cascades in formal gardens have been overlooked because garden historians tend to notice only the grand and obvious examples like Chatsworth, Derbyshire.

5. Raised walks. Raised walks were common features in formal gardens. A fine high terraced walk survives around the former formal gardens of Shaw House, Berkshire, one of the homes of the Dukes of Chandos (Godwin Arnold 1977). This example is much higher than that at Roxford. Their purpose was to give views over the garden from many different angles.

6. The Grotto. This has been much discussed in the main text as a feature of both formal and informal gardens. Perhaps the best known that is similar to the description of the Roxford Grotto is the world-famous grotto at Stourhead, Wiltshire. This grotto, like Roxford, looks out on to a pond, and has fountains and other water-orientated ornaments within it. It is probably more grand than the Roxford example, but is almost certainly later, and is unlikely to have been an influence.

7. Cold bath. Cold baths were very popular in gardens in the early 18th century. An example was created at Castle Bromwich, West Midlands, in the 1730s. One of the best-known examples is at Packwood House, Warwickshire. Many, like Packwood, were deeply sunken features.

8. The aviaries. Bird aviaries were increasingly popular in 19th century gardens (Symes 1993, 14), but known earlier examples are very rare. They are referred to in Roman and medieval Italian gardens, and so it is probable that they are found in gardens of all periods, but have not been well-recorded during the formal garden period in post-medieval England.

9. Internal arrangements at Grotto Wood. Dury and Andrews' map of 1766 shows some geometric designs within the garden at Roxford. It is difficult to say how accurate these are, but as they are probably the only indications of the internal gardens beyond the ponds and the mounds, one may assume there is an element of truth in them. What they represent must remain purely conjectural, but some suggestions are given.

The more elaborate design in the NW corner may have been created from low yew hedges. Such designs were common. They appear to be shown on early 18th-century prints of the North Garden at

Castle Bromwich, and on the east side of the main garden at Southwick Park, near Portsmouth, Hampshire (reproduced in Soffe 1985, 28, fig. 1).

The latter shows an adjacent design on the west side of the main vista created from grass plats bordered by gravel paths. This may be the form of the quartered design in the SW corner at Roxford. Such Spartan designs, often ornamented only by topiaried yew and statuary, were very popular in late formal gardens of the first half of the 18th century. The two sets of quartered designs on the east of the ponds at Roxford may have been similar plats, orchards or even more functional vegetable plots. Although the latter might be considered unlikely in a garden of seeming ornamental orientation, they are not impossible.

10. Yews. Many of the yews left in Grotto Wood seem to be remnants of the yew hedges and topiary that seems to have formed a major element in the planted design. It is recorded in 1859 that many of the yews in the wood were removed. This suggests that there were once many more than currently survive. The position of nearly all the surviving yews appears to be strategically placed to have once been part of hedges or topiary aligned along the main features of the gardens. Yew hedging and topiary were extremely popular in formal gardens, particularly in the later types.