

# **Pages from an architect's notebook**

## **George Repton: his drawings for a model farm at Long Ditton and for a greenhouse and bridge at Albury Park**

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*These two reports concern mainly the designs for three buildings intended for Surrey estates. Two of them – a bridge-like structure and a greenhouse – were named as for Albury Park, and the third – a model farm – for the owner of Southborough House. Although it is possible that none of the designs was realised on these sites, the drawings for them made by George Repton between c1800 and c1818 are not without interest. In pursuing their possible origins and destinations we are taken also to a forgotten garden (possibly by Humphry Repton) in Bedfordshire, and to two little-known houses in the New Forest, by John Nash.*

### **Introduction**

The architect John Nash (1752–1835) entered into partnership with the landscape gardener Humphry Repton (1752–1818) in about 1796. Repton's two architect sons – John Adey Repton (1775–1860) and George Stanley Repton (1786–1858) – were assistants in the practice which ended acrimoniously in about 1802. As a result, John, who was deaf, joined his father, who had no formal architectural training, and George remained with Nash, to become his chief assistant. George left Nash's office, not long after marriage in 1817, for independent practice.

During his years with Nash, George Repton kept several notebooks. We are concerned here principally with only two of them. One is at the British Architectural Library Drawings Collection at the RIBA, London. It is undated, but the contents suggest that it was used from about 1800 to 1805. Its pages are watermarked 1798. The second notebook, at the Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton, is a companion volume the inside top board of which is inscribed with George Repton's name and the date January 1805. There is no complete watermark, but fragments make up 1799. This notebook contains drawings of, or for, 50 subjects. One of these is a model farm inscribed 'Thos. Langley Esqre / Long Ditton'. Another is a substantial greenhouse for 'Samuel Thornton Esq. / Albury Park Surrey'. All eight pages of drawings are reproduced with this article, together with comments drawn from a catalogue raisonné of the Brighton notebook, made by the present writer.

For differentiation and convenience, the notebook at the RIBA is referred to here as the RIBA Notebook and the one at Brighton as the Pavilion Notebook. The former has been foliated, the latter paginated. Hence (eg), RIBA Notebook f 90v, and Pavilion Notebook 19. Other items at the RIBA are referred to by their printed catalogue number.

### **Southborough House (Pavilion Notebook 16–19)**

Had the Reverend Thomas Streatfield not written from Westerham to Thomas Langley's wife Sarah for advice about a neighbour's kinsmen, it is unlikely that we would know much more about this client of Nash's than the few fragments that can be found in the official local records of his day. He has been particularly elusive.

On 3 November 1822<sup>1</sup> Langley replied to Streatfield's letter, relating that Patientius Warde of

Hooton Pagnell, near Doncaster, was first cousin to his mother, his maternal grandmother having also been named Warde. She had married Edmund Winn, a brother of Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory, near Wakefield. They had several children – among them Langley's mother and Thomas Winn of Akton, near Pontefract, who had care of Thomas Langley until he was about 14. Both his parents had died when he was 'quite a child'. That would have been in about 1760. This is all we know of the man until his appearance at Long Ditton, near Surbiton, over 40 years later, except that it could well be that the Thomas Langley named among directors of the Bank of England in *Peacock's polite repository* for 1802 (illustrated by Humphry Repton) is the same person. If so, perhaps it is significant that in that year the names of Edward Simeon and Samuel Thornton, both clients of Repton or Nash, appear alongside Langley's in that same list. His was still there in 1822, but not in the year following, which suggests that if this Thomas Langley was from Southborough Park, he retired from his directorship when 70 years old. He died in 1829, aged 77, and was buried at Kingston, Surrey.

As a leading landowner who was active in local affairs, Thomas Langley has left remarkably little evidence of his 25 years at Long Ditton, although he, like Charles Corkran, who was to occupy Southborough Park on the death of Sarah Langley in 1852, is remembered in name. The Ordnance Survey map of 1896 marks Langley Avenue and Corkran Road in the immediate neighbourhood, at which time Southborough Park itself was largely intact, though its environs had been infiltrated by such as 'The Brambles', 'Draconia', 'Chiswick House' and 'Monaro' – substantial suburban villas of various styles. Yet, as late as 1880, the area was virtually untouched.

The Land Tax records give Langley's name as occupier of property at Long Ditton valued at £34, in 1804. He was owner of that land from 1805 until at least 1812, as he was of another parcel previously 'of Clutton', valued at £2. Langley first appears in Kingston Land Tax records in 1806 as owner and occupier of 'Borough Farm' (£68), where Owen Clutton had been in previous years.<sup>2</sup> Kingston Poor Rates list James Stokes for 'Borough Farm' in 1804, and Thomas Langley in 1805.<sup>3</sup> No deeds have come to light, but Richardson's *Surbiton* (1888) refers to '... Southborough Farm, which belonged to Mr. Thomas Langley; as well as Southborough Lodge as the House was once known, which was erected in 1808 for Mr. Langley by John Nash'.<sup>4</sup>

This information tallies with the Tithe Map – which marks, but does not name, the farmstead standing a little to the east of the house. Later OS maps do name that site 'Southborough Farm' (fig 1).

We may now turn briefly to Southborough House (fig 2). Colvin, Davis, Pevsner and Summerson all confirm Richardson's date of building. The house, in good hands, is already well recorded,<sup>5</sup> and is not in any case the subject of these Pavilion Notebook drawings, though the attribution to Nash is secured by other drawings made by George Repton. They are entered in the RIBA *Catalogue* under Nash's name.<sup>6</sup> The working drawings referred to there as being in the house disappeared some years ago. The present owner has not seen them.

John Hassell made a drawing of the symmetrical garden front of this asymmetrically planned classical house in 1823.<sup>7</sup> As one of a series of houses, the design is placed by Summerson in his *Life and work of John Nash* (1980) after Cronkill (1802), Sandridge (1805), and Lissan Rectory (1807) – all distinguished by incorporating a round Italianate tower in their composition. Yet Southborough does not, its prettiest point being a copper-domed octagonal porch contained cosily in the angle of two walls. Bank Farm, otherwise known as Point Pleasant (c1797),<sup>8</sup> at Kingston, must have been known to Langley. Unlike the St Johns, lords of the manor of Battersea, who lived at Bank Farm, Langley did not, so far as can be shown, engage Humphry Repton to lay out his grounds. There is an ice house at Southborough that is now in a separate garden, but this is a disappointingly humble affair compared with those that George Repton drew up for some other clients.

Repton's farmstead drawings (figs 3–6) detail a model complex which, though of great interest in itself, is not of outstanding originality in the overall form that it takes. Efficient, economic farming was the rage of the day, landowners being as proud of their new establishments as they were of the stock that they bred.



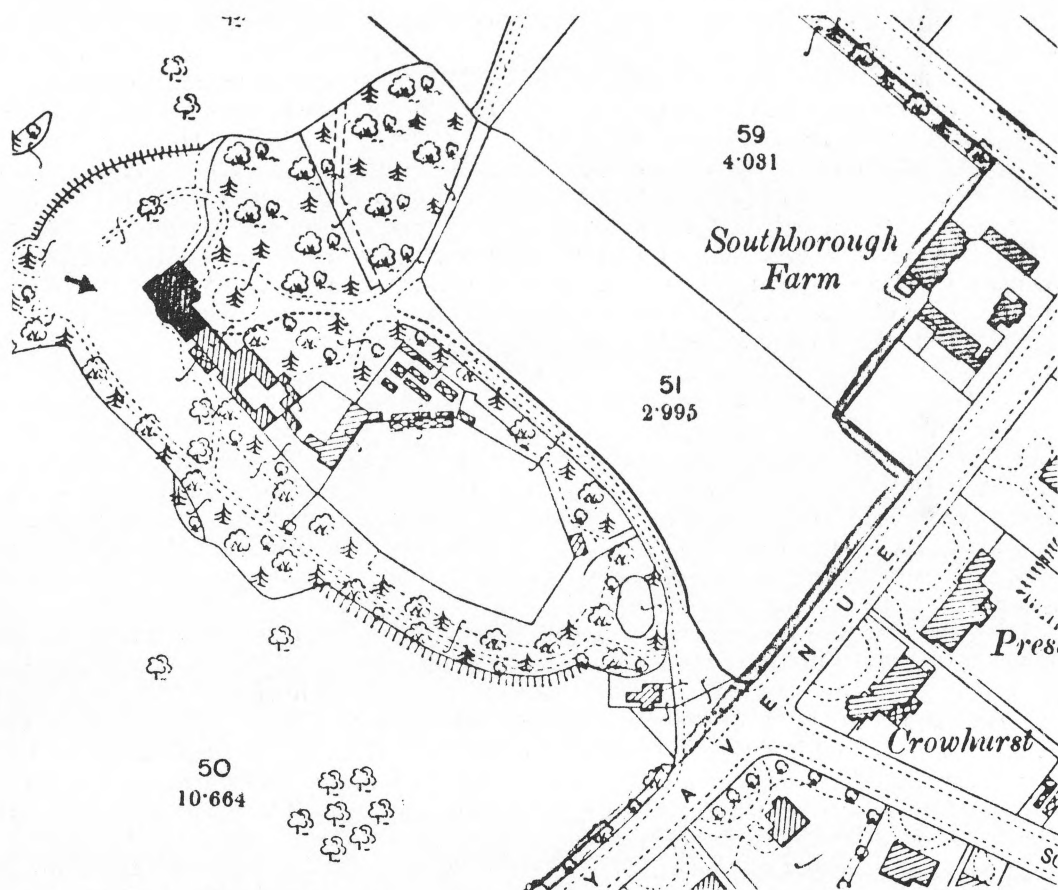


Fig 1. Ordnance Survey map of Southborough House and Farm, 1/2500



Fig 2. Southborough House, Ashcombe Avenue, Surbiton: the garden front. (Photograph: author)

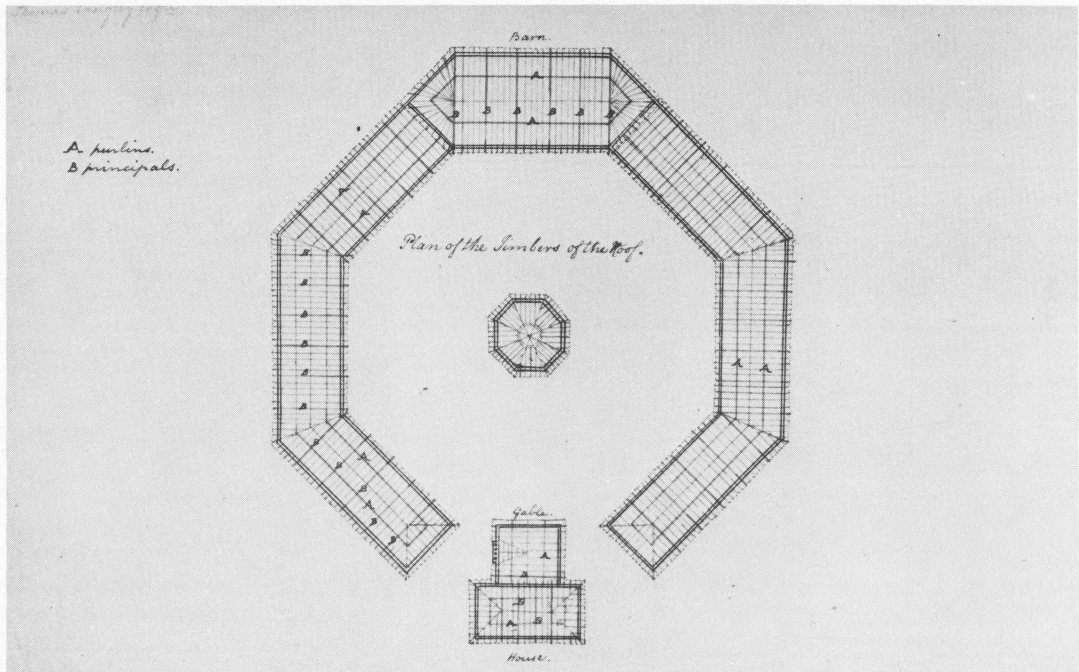


Fig 3. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 16: model farm – plan of the roof timbers, inscribed 'Thomas Langley Esqre'. (Author's photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)

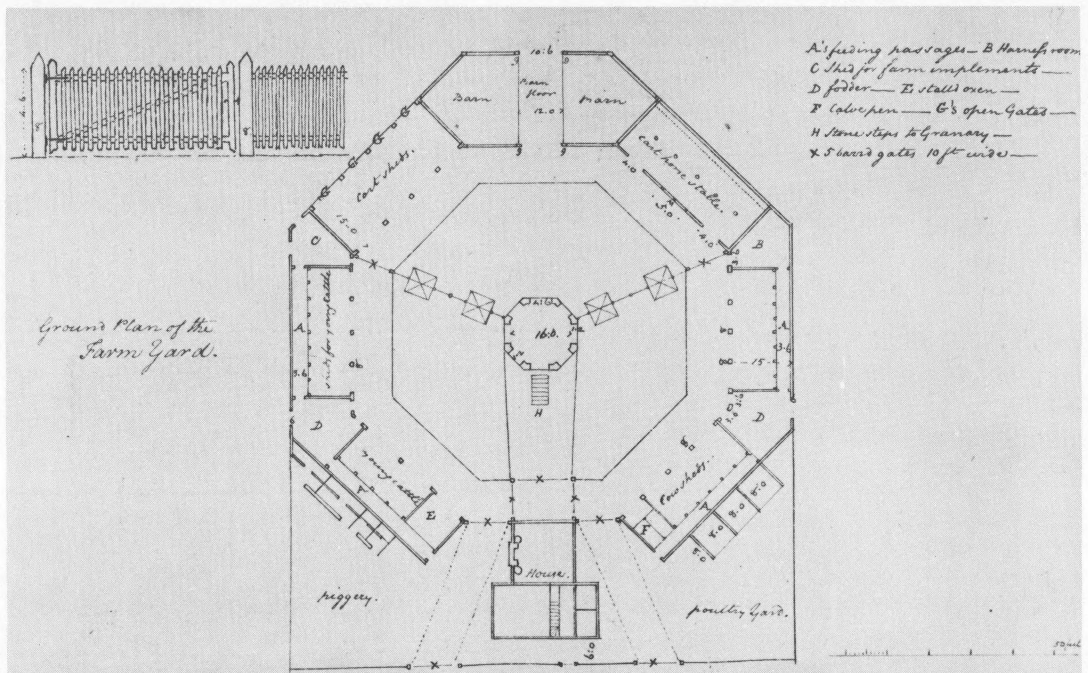


Fig 4. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 17: 'Ground Plan of the Farm Yard'. (Author's photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)

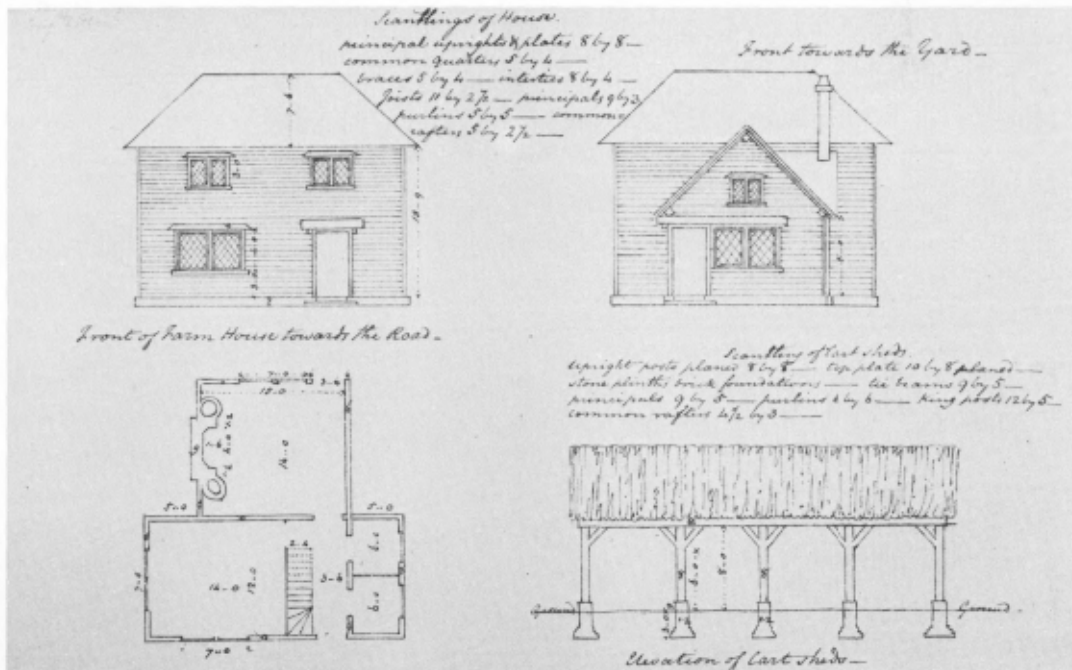


Fig 5. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 18: drawings for a farm house and cart sheds, inscribed 'Thos. Langley Esqre/Long Ditton'. (Author's photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)

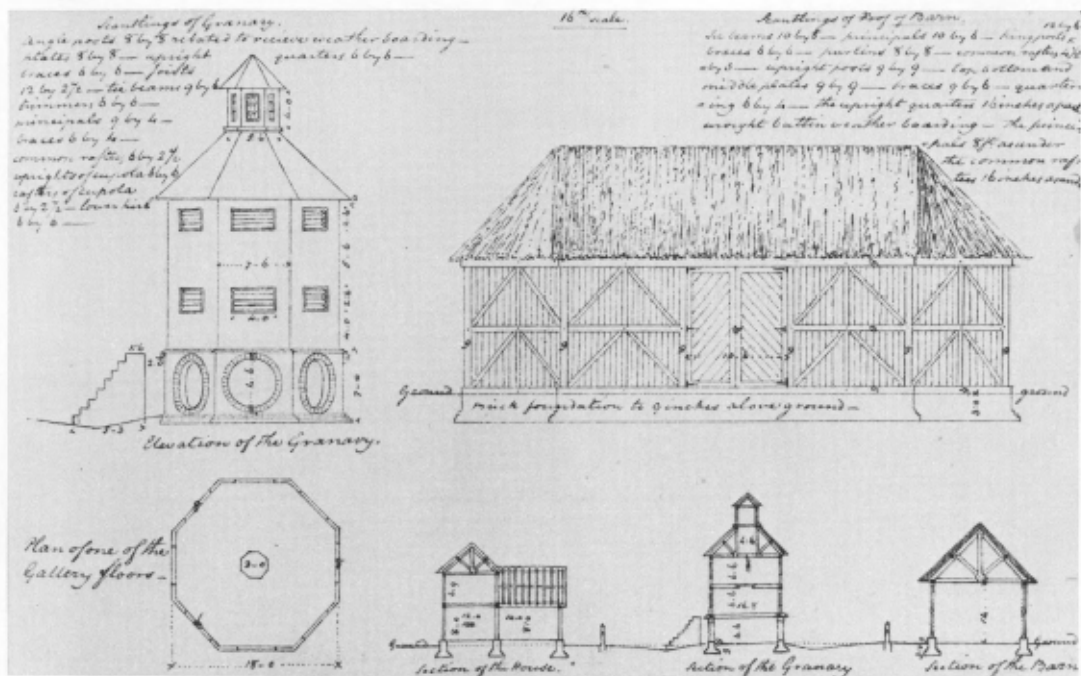


Fig 6. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 19: model farm — elevations, plan and cross-sections. (Author's photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)



While there were precedents for farm buildings being designed by architects, many leading ones were now being engaged to produce what might in the past have usually been mere hovels and sheds. Carr, Paine, Brown, Holland, the Wyatts, Soane and Cockerell are among those who were employed by enterprising clients.

Robert Lugar (c1773–1855) claimed to be the first regular architect to publish a book of designs for farm buildings, his *Country gentleman's architect* (1807) appearing the year before Southborough was built. His opening remarks sum up the scene. Having mentioned the needs of philanthropic gentlemen wishing to erect cottages for their labourers or farms for their tenants, Lugar continues that he has also 'added a selection of houses possessing superior internal accommodations, and suited in their external appearance to the rank and style of a Gentleman farmer'. Obviously hoping to spark off enthusiasm and commissions, he adds that the houses should be 'accompanied by such out-buildings as distinguish the residence of a principal landholder, living in a way suitable to an extensive domain'.<sup>9</sup> Lugar's pl 10 shows the plan of a farmstead of octagonal shape, the dwelling house occupying one side. With a generous 'Best parlour' at the front, the whole yard and its offices could be under continual surveillance from the 'Sitting room' at the rear. Though Lugar's ideal plan is of different proportions and varying in detail from that drawn by Repton and inscribed with Langley's name, it is essentially the same in concept, including even an octagonal granary in the centre of the yard.<sup>10</sup>

Octagonal layouts were not favoured by John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843) when compiling his *Encyclopaedia* of 1833.<sup>11</sup> In 200 pages that deal with the subject, concluding with how to convert a mansion to serve as a farmery, not one of his designs departs from a quadrangular plan. Lugar was in fact not the first to publish designs for farm buildings, a notable precursor being William Barber in *Farm buildings; or rural economy*, of 1802. Moreover, Barber included among his six aquatint plates an octagonal farmyard designed for Sir Francis Hopkins<sup>12</sup> on the same lines as Lugar's. At Kenwood, George Saunders built another such example in neo-classical style. Although incomplete and since converted, it dates from 1793–4. Then there is a small octagonal granary at Grovelands,<sup>13</sup> Southgate, a house designed by Nash, and landscaped by Repton, in 1797.

To conclude: after an exhaustive search conducted personally through archives and field-work, as well as by correspondence with local societies, and with historians familiar with Long Ditton, not one shred of evidence that the octagonal farmstead was ever built at Southborough can be produced. On the contrary, while reliable evidence does not appear until production of the Tithe Map in 1840,<sup>14</sup> this does show very clearly that the buildings then existing were of symmetrical arrangement and formal in planning, but contained within a square. There remain three possibilities: either a farm was constructed on the octagonal principle, but for reasons unknown to us it had been replaced within 30 years by one of rectangular plan; or the octagonal arrangement was proposed and rejected, and Langley built a new range to another design; or Langley held property elsewhere at present not identified, and Repton's design was intended for that site. If earlier buildings existed, it is unlikely that they were retained.

The Tithe Map layout had changed very little even in 1896, though by the early 1930s a new generation of 'Glendowers', 'Wentworths', 'Ravenscrofts' and 'Ridgeways' were invading the area once used as a farm, which appears to have been demolished after 1913.

Before leaving the subject of agricultural building complexes of rational design, note should be taken of a set of three Repton drawings for a farmhouse, cow byres and dairy-farm buildings in the RIBA Notebook.<sup>15</sup> Inscribed 'Lord Thanet' (they were probably for Hothfield, Kent), the plan – rectilinear overall – includes many stalls and three yards. A bailiff's house is placed axially and detailed by two plans, two elevations and a perspective view.

Finally, in mid-1986, Sir John Summerson presented the Lee–Duesbury album of architectural drawings to the Pevsner Memorial Library at the RIBA. Charles Lee had been articled to Nash and became Henry Duesbury's partner. Included in the collection is the plan of an octagonal cattle market (possibly at Abergavenny), or perhaps of a model farm. Though lacking a dwelling, it relates closely to George Repton's drawings for Langley. This detailed and annotated sketch plan is inscribed 'J Nash'.

### Albury Park (Pavilion Notebook 26-9)

Samuel Thornton (1755–1838), of Clapham, was from a banking family. In common with several kinsmen he became a director of the Bank of England. He was to hold this appointment for 53 years, from 1780. As an MP returned first as the Member for Kingston-upon-Hull in 1784, he supported the Tory cause, was 'a frequent speaker on commercial questions, and especially championed the interests of the Bank of England'.<sup>16</sup> Robert and Henry Thornton, his brothers, were also MPs.

Such office in the Bank would have ensured that Samuel Thornton knew Sir John Soane at least professionally, for Soane became architect to the Bank of England in 1788 on the death of Sir Robert Taylor (Nash's master). He worked at several houses owned by the Thornton family at large, and altered 22 St James' Square, London, for Samuel, who occupied it from 1797 until 1817.<sup>17</sup> Soane not only did some repair work for him there in 1805 and 1811,<sup>18</sup> but was engaged by Thornton at Albury Park immediately after his purchase of the estate from the trustees of Admiral William Finch, in 1800.<sup>19</sup> Thornton sold to Charles Wall in 1810/11.<sup>20</sup> Soane's staircase has survived two waves of change – the first made by Wall, when he employed Henry Hakewill in 1815 to add a Gothic wing. Then Henry Drummond (another director of the Bank of England) commissioned A W N and E W Pugin to complete the transformation. Pevsner virtually dismisses the latter's work.

The architectural history of Albury, the demise of its village, and the evolution of its grounds that were laid out by John Evelyn (1620–1706) are all subjects of considerable interest in their own right. We cannot deal here with either the house or the village, and even with the grounds we must reduce our focus to a rectilinear plot of about 1300ft by 500ft lying about 300ft north of, and parallel to, the long, roughly east–west, axis of the house. Both, in turn, follow the direction in which the Tillingbourne flows.

John Evelyn inherited neighbouring Wotton House in 1699. He was a friend of the Howards, who at that time owned Albury Manor. John and his architect brother, George Evelyn (1617–99), were engaged by the young Henry Howard (later 6th Duke of Norfolk) to complete the rebuilding of the house put in hand by the 5th Duke, Thomas,<sup>21</sup> and to lay out the grounds. John

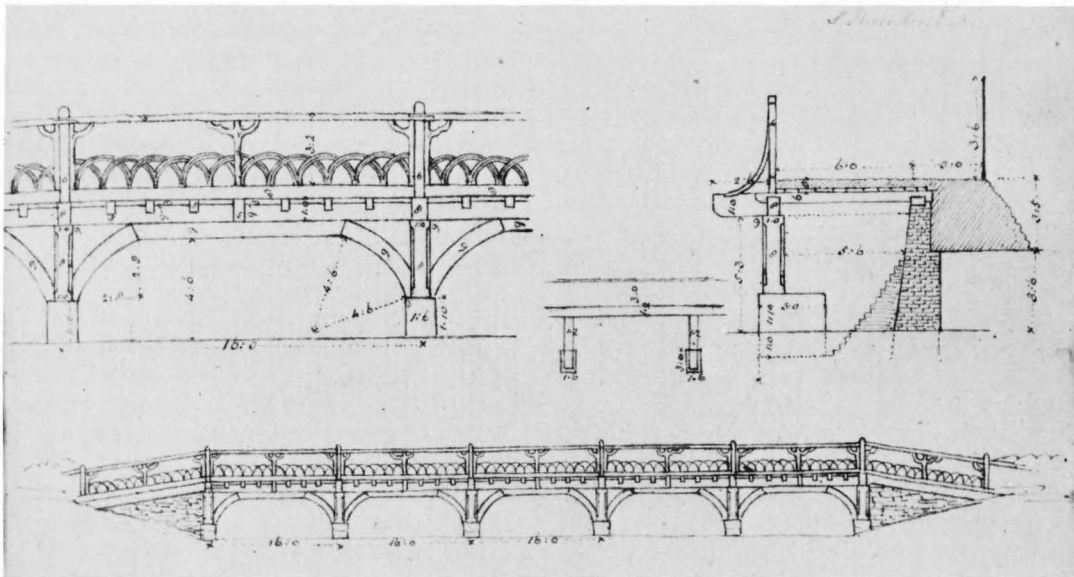


Fig 7. George Repton, RIBA Notebook, f90v: design for a bridge, inscribed 'S. Thornton Esqr'. (Photograph: British Architectural Library, RIBA, London) (© RIBA Collections)

Evelyn's diary records: '19 September 1667, . . . I accompanied Mr Howard to his villa at Albury, where I design'd for him the plot of his canall and garden, with a crypt thro' the hill.'<sup>22</sup> Three years later that tunnel had been made, and 'the canall was now digging . . .'.<sup>23</sup>

It was towards the south side of his rectilinear plot that Evelyn canalised the Tillingbourne. Its length was divided symmetrically by a path, dam, or causeway 80ft long.<sup>24</sup> This aligned with the centre of the house to its south and with a semi-circular pool and fountain on a hillside terrace to its north. The pool, in turn, was backed by an exedra – the entrance to Evelyn's 'Crypt', 'Crypta', 'Pausilippe' or, simply, tunnel, cut 500ft through the sandstone hill.

Engaging though Evelyn's work is, we can consider here only that 80-foot causeway, or dam. George Repton's drawing inscribed 'S. Thornton Esqr' (RIBA Notebook f 90v) shows a rustic timber construction (fig 7), the cross section of which reveals that it was no normal footbridge, for the water level to the right appears to have been some feet higher than that to the left. Additionally, its wide deck spans the dam apparently separating these water levels. Although only one elevation is shown, the section also suggests that this was the principal 'front', so it might have been designed to stand towards the eastern extremity of the canal, or to span the length of the dam and simultaneously screen it from view. However, ambiguities in the drawings demand reserve in stating the exact site and purpose of this bridge. While it could be argued that such a structure could have been built almost anywhere across the water meadows for the passage of heavier traffic over marshy ground or occasional floods, it will be noted that the bridge is of five spans. Each, from post centre to post centre, measures 16ft. That gives us a total water span of precisely 80ft.

Documentary search has failed to prove that such a bridge was built. By 1839 the Tithe Map tells us that neither it nor, indeed, the canal proper, existed. Virtually the whole feature had been filled to become a 'wild garden', and the Tillingbourne had resumed its modest course. By the 1870s (OS) the entire lower garden levels had been formally planted, though the upper terrace, pool, exedra and tunnel survive much as before.

In view of these findings it is of interest to learn that Samuel Thornton kept a notebook. Elusive and incomplete as it proved to be, this potentially revealing document includes a few words in support of our hypothesis that he might have commissioned Nash to design a bridge for Evelyn's canal, for it records that after William Clement Finch purchased Albury in 1782, he 'modernised the House . . . and removed the Bridge over the Canal which led to the Center of the Gardens'.<sup>25</sup> There is also a draft, presumably by Thornton, for his notebook. It reads: 'When Mr Finch purchased the Estate in 1782 he modernized the House by putting in new Windows & stuccoing it afresh – He also pulled down the offices which extended towards the church & removed the Bridge over the canal which led to the Center of the Gardens'.<sup>26</sup> So Thornton knew that a bridge had been there. While further evidence in the possession of the Albury History Society has not been examined by the present writer, he has been advised that ground plans are known to one member 'indicating that a bridge was either constructed or intended at about the end of the 18th Century'. Davis, in *John Nash* (1973), notes (presumably on the strength of RIBA Notebook f 90v alone, for no evidence is offered) that Nash actually built a bridge for Thornton at Albury, at a date unknown.

Samuel Thornton's presumed draft does not help with the greenhouse (Pavilion Notebook 26–9: figs 8–11), and the search for it at Albury has been unrewarding. Despite this, it is still a matter to be pursued in the wider Nash–Reptons context, and Thornton's draft is worth a further glance as it tells us also more of his alterations to the house: 'Upon Mr Thorntons obtaining possession of the Estate he built the present commodious offices adjoining to the West Front – He also removed the stone stair-Case which had been placed in the Vestibule at the Entrance to their present Position, & there being no Drawing room adequate to the size of the Dining Room, made the present Drawing room of 36 feet by 24 by throwing into one, 2 Rooms on the Eastern side, & putting in windows & erecting a Colonnade towards the East front. He new floored the Upper Part of the House new modelled and changed the Fireplaces in the different Bed Rooms to the North Front He thereby gained two more Rooms over the Vestibule & other Conveniences – He afterwards erected a warm & cold Bath introduced Soft as well as Hard Water to every part of the House by the



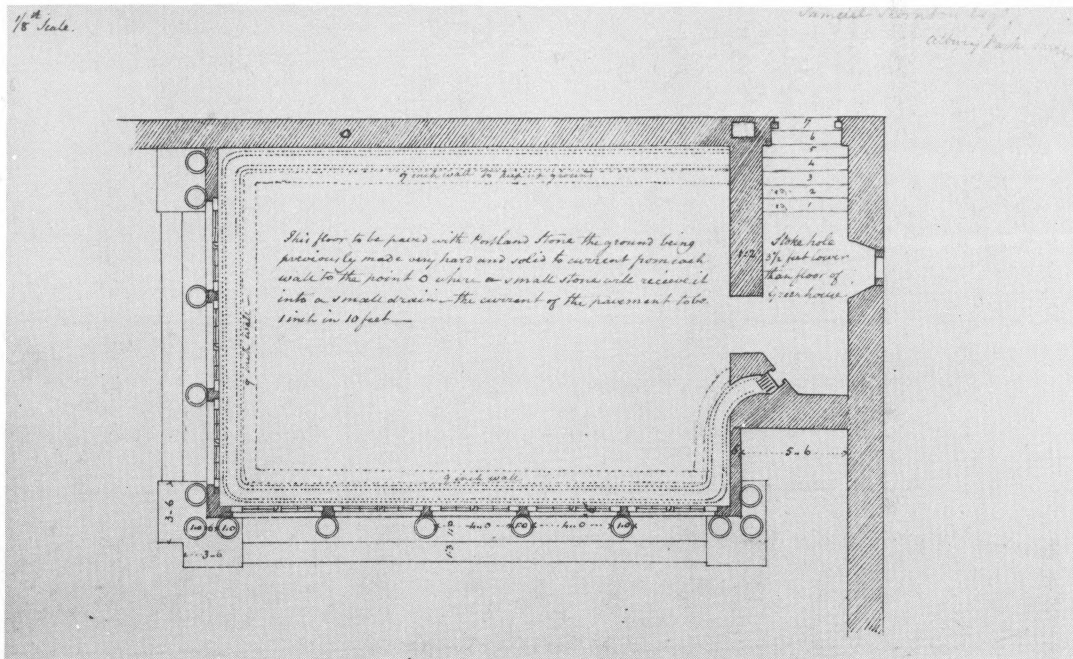


Fig 8. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 26: greenhouse – plan, inscribed ‘Samuel Thornton Esq./Albury Park Surrey’. (Author’s photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)

means of a curiously constructed Wheel adjoining the River. Mr T. built a brewhouse, laundry, Slaughter House, Schoolroom & other offices Also a large Sheep pen in the park besides a variety of other Outbuildings’.<sup>27</sup>

Some, if not all, of these alterations, would have been directed by Soane. Of his total contribution to Albury we have scant knowledge. It is tempting to suppose that some of the secondary buildings might have been by Nash, but apart from the bridge and greenhouse designs we have found no reason for connecting either him or the Reptons with Albury Park. Thornton’s accounts at the Bank of England record no payments by him to any of our trio.

The RIBA *Catalogue* describes, under John Repton’s name, a wash drawing dated 1810 in the watermark, as a ‘Design for a conservatory of rectangular shape with a low pitched glass roof; the double glass doors divided from each other by wreathed columns supporting a frieze with acroteria cresting’ (fig 12). Tonally rendered, in a garden setting, the greenhouse appears just as that drawn in Pavilion Notebook 26–9. Only in details of glazing bars are there differences: even the number of acroteria is the same.

The Pavilion Notebook design, inscribed ‘Samuel Thornton Esq./Albury Park Surrey’, shows that the greenhouse fitted into the angle of a wall, conceivably as did another designed by Nash, for Sandridge Park, Devon. Egyptian in flavour, that construction of c1805 contributed a major element to the composition of the house itself: it was an integral part of the design. There is no hint that this was the intention at Albury. The greenhouse could have stood physically quite apart from the house.

Until some time after Henry Drummond (1786–1860) had retired from the family banking business in 1844, the north-east part of his mansion appeared like a modest self-contained classical house.<sup>28</sup> The Tithe Map and some prints show glass constructions (a covered way and perhaps a lean-to) on two faces of the building. These would have been swept away by the time the Pugins had completed their transformation. Such buildings apart, it was also proposed to

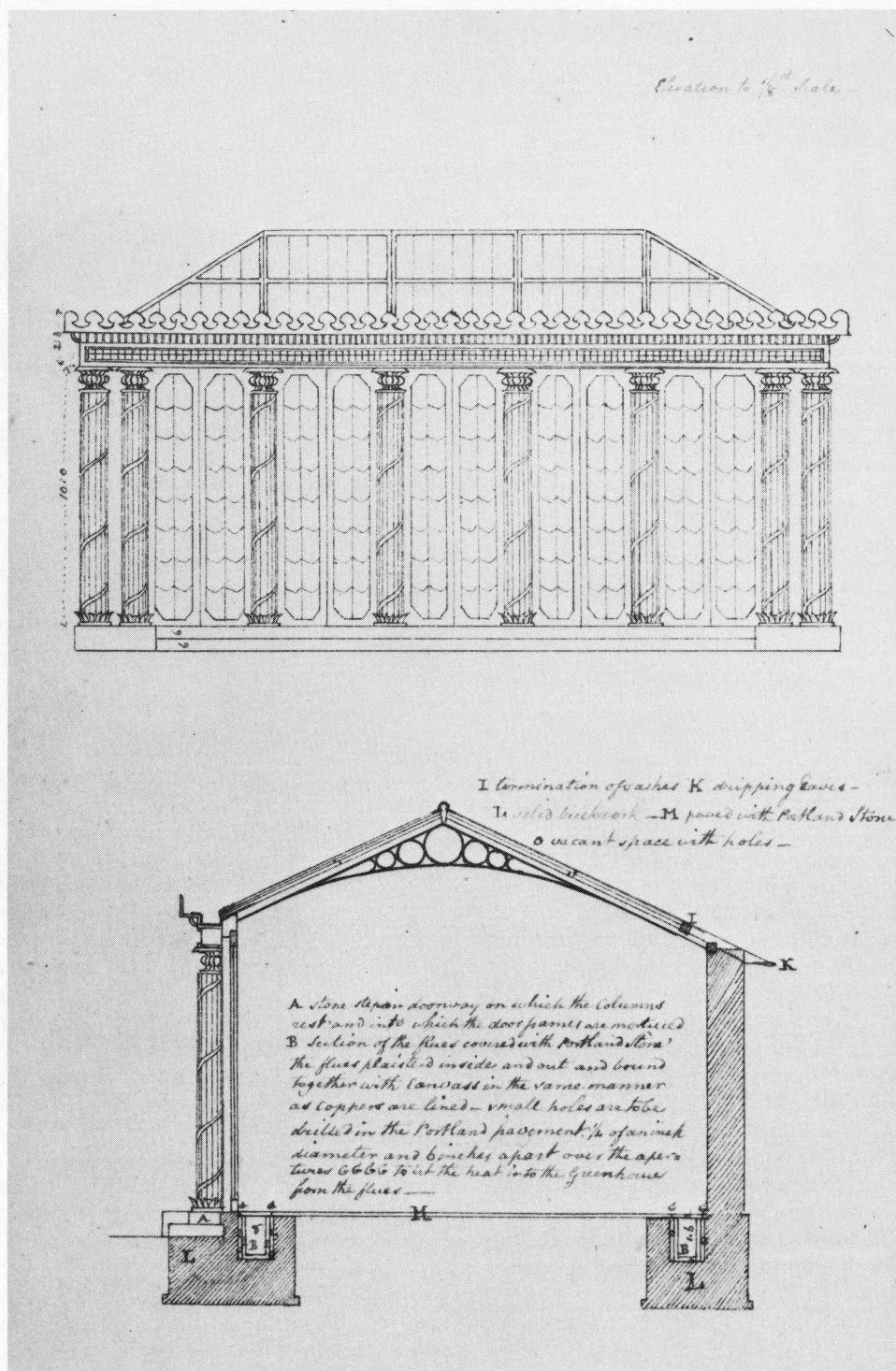


Fig 9. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 27: greenhouse – elevation and section. (Author's photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)



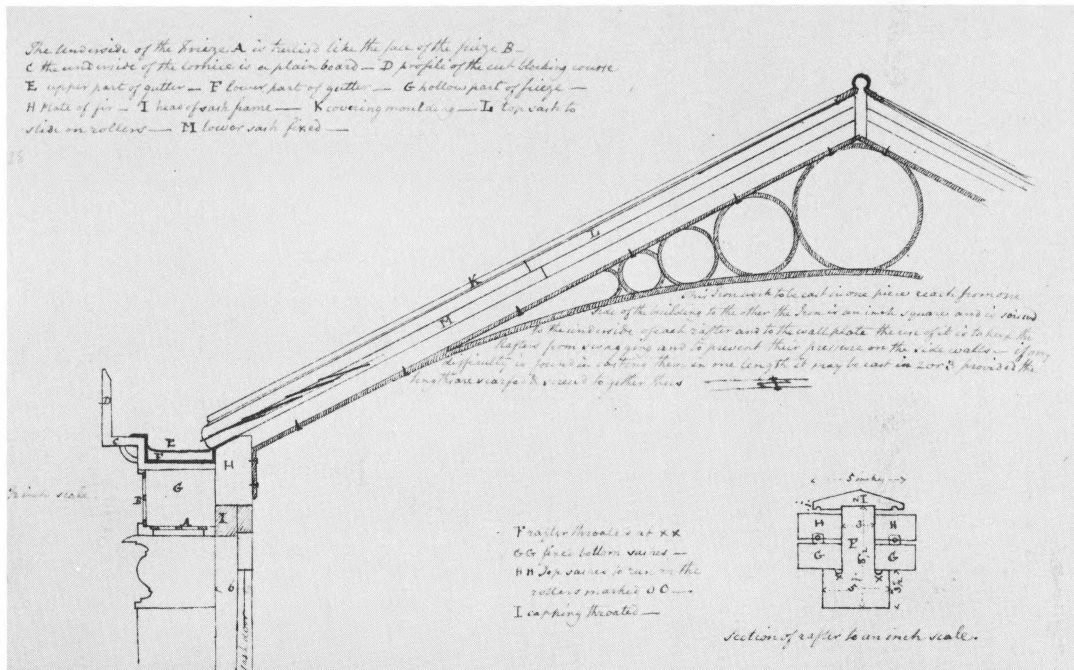


Fig 10. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 28: greenhouse – details of roof and roof sashes. (Author's photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)

construct a conservatory out from the drawing room. As it was to be little bigger than Thornton's greenhouse mention should be made of it here to avoid future confusion, for neither cast iron construction nor a Gothic frieze would be apparent in a plan. On 23 March 1847 John Jones of Birmingham submitted estimates and drawings for a neat seven-by-three-bay design, but as Pugin implored Drummond not to put up an abomination such as a greenhouse in front of his building, it might not have been built in that position, if at all.<sup>29</sup>

In short, no documentary, graphic, or physical evidence has yet been found suggesting that the Nash/Repton greenhouse design of Pavilion Notebook 26–9 was built at Albury. But as Thornton is believed to have sold up in 1810 only because of financial difficulties, he might well have been obliged to forgo this little self-indulgence. It will be shown, however, that our quest does not end here. We must turn to Humphry Repton's manuscript *Memoir* for our next clue, and this will eventually lead to a connection between the Pavilion Notebook design and a nameable client and location, though Humphry's ambiguous 'Sir xxx' has been supplemented by a later hand to read 'G.P.T-R'.<sup>30</sup> This must have been Sir Gregory Osborne Page-Turner (1785–1843), 4th baronet, DCL, of Battlesden Park, Bedfordshire. Despite immense wealth, Sir Gregory had a miserable life. He was fortunate enough to succeed to his father's title and estate in 1805 and to have been blessed with an inherited income of £17,000 a year. Unhappily his excessive eccentricity trespassed beyond the bounds of conventional sound-mindedness and he was officially declared insane in 1823. As a consequence of gross extravagance his income had diminished to a mere £1000 per annum. He was deeply in debt. The contents of Battlesden were put up to auction: the books alone took 14 days to sell.<sup>31</sup> Then there were the furniture, pictures and prints, and rooms stacked with other acquisitions, many never unpacked. Even boxes of stones had been bought for large sums.

We can deduce that this improvident young baronet's occupation of Battlesden was from 1805 until 1823, after which date he was obliged to reside elsewhere. As Humphry Repton tells us in

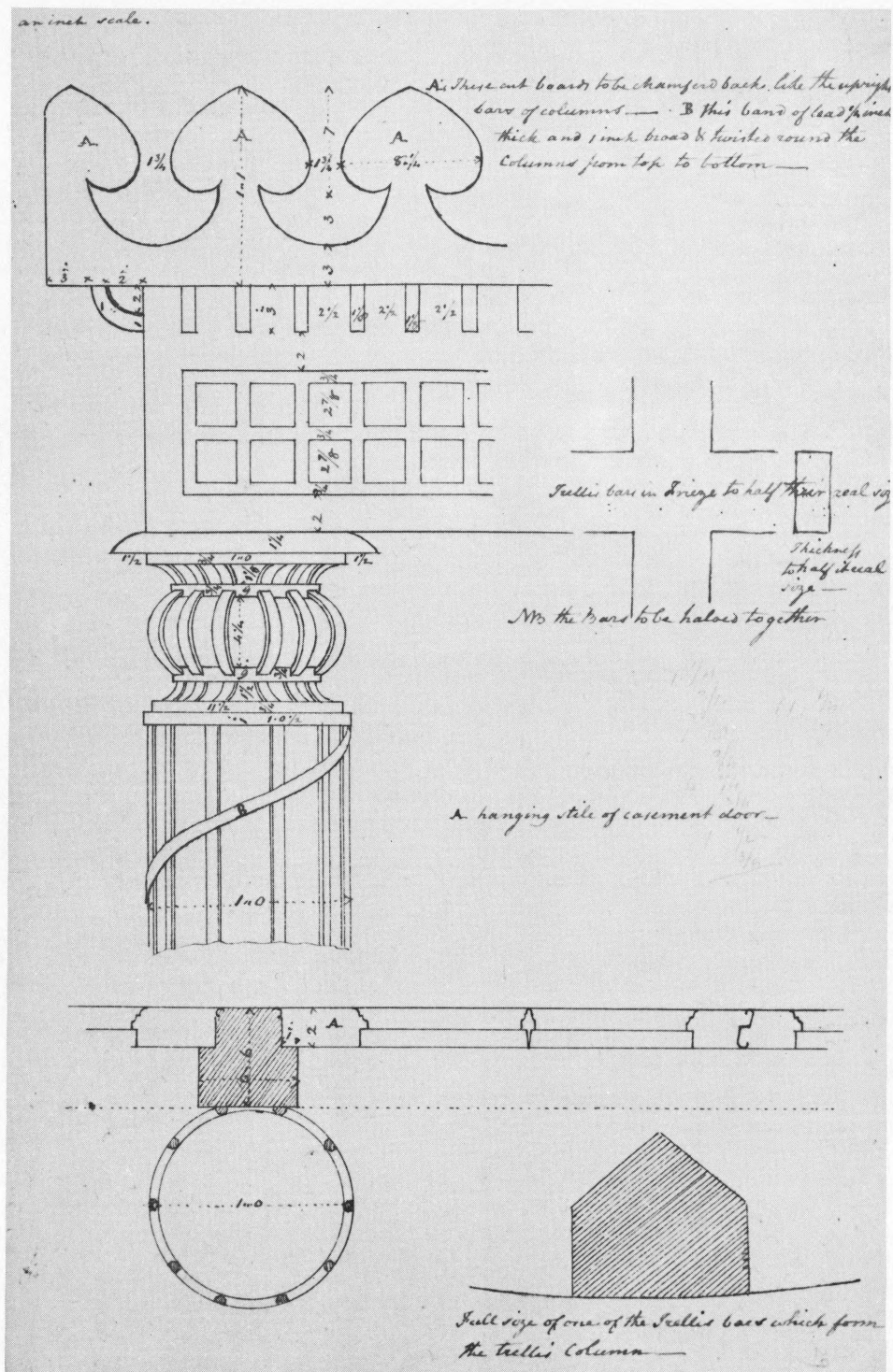


Fig 11. George Repton, Pavilion Notebook 29: greenhouse — details of entablature and column. (Author's photograph by courtesy of Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery and Museums, Brighton)

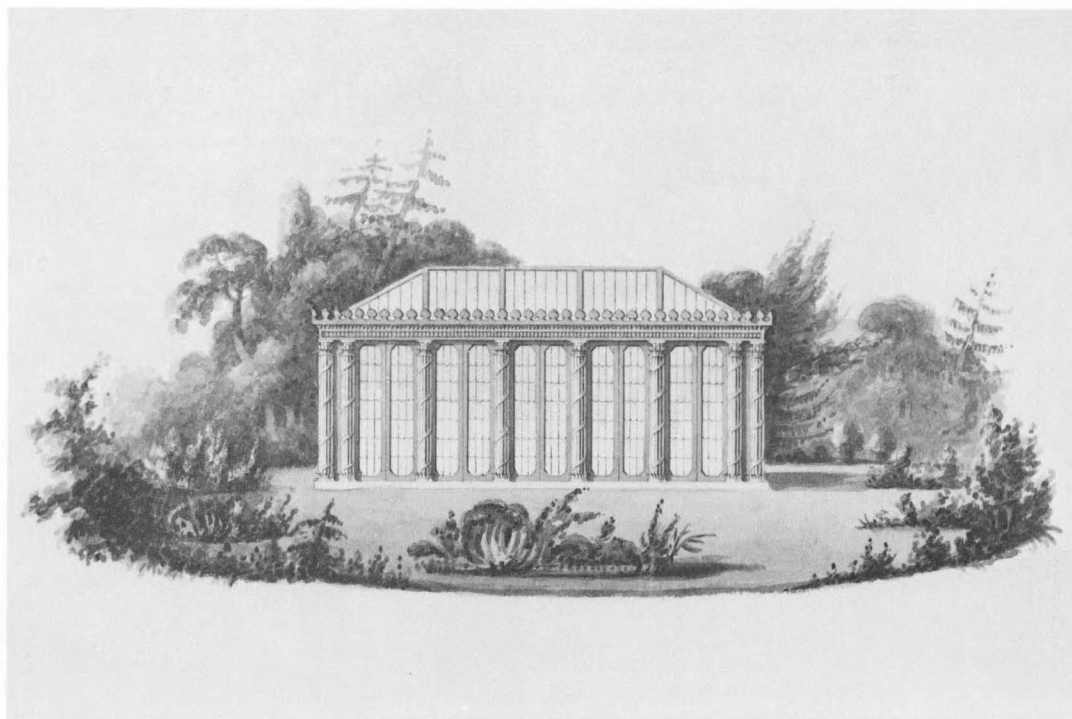


Fig 12. John Repton: design for a conservatory, watermarked 1810. (Photograph: British Architectural Library, RIBA, London) (© RIBA Collections)

his *Memoir* that when he visited Page-Turner with Edward Repton (another son, at that time intended to join his father's practice) the client had not yet quite achieved his majority, we can place their extraordinary excursion to have been made in either 1805 or by mid-1806.

Humphry had an experience not to be forgotten; but despite this, and the fact that landscaping events at Battlesden between c1800 and 1860 have passed without known written record, we must set aside the temptation to relate them here and consider only two of numerous paintings made before 1823.

A pair of water colours by George Shepherd (c1782–1830) show the large mansion, church and cottage alongside, and the slope below them, as seen from the south. The earlier painting (fig 13) is signed, and dated 1816. Parkland between the distant buildings and the foreground is virtually all grazing or lawns. The other landscape is signed, and dated 1818 (fig 14). It depicts the same hillside transformed. Within a splendid Reptonian garden are a Gothick ruin, a capital trellised aviary and a greenhouse. Even to the opening roof sashes this is just like the Albury Park design shown in *Pavilion Notebook* 26–9.<sup>32</sup>

The general accuracy of Shepherd's earlier view is not challenged by the surveyor's (two-inch) manuscript drawing of 1815 prepared for the one-inch OS map.<sup>33</sup> No new buildings are marked. So we are left doubly confused, for heading July in *Peacock's polite repository* for 1808 is H Repton's depiction of Battlesden made from about the same viewing point, showing, incredibly, a five-bay greenhouse.<sup>34</sup> This is set, not in a decorative garden, but on the hillside, adjacent to three terraces – all below house and church.

Presuming that Shepherd's paintings were not, respectively, a record of the scene as it was prior to 1808 (therefore retrospective) and a later visualisation of what by 1818 had been planned but not created and that they actually depict what evolved between 1816 and 1818,





Fig 13. George Shepherd, watercolour dated 1816: Battlesden Park, Bedfordshire. (*Private collection*)



Fig 14. George Shepherd, watercolour dated 1818: Battlesden Park, Bedfordshire. (*Private collection*)

there appears to be only one reasonable explanation – that the *Repository* view was, despite its siting and general similarity, of a different greenhouse which had been removed by 1816; that the new garden had been formed two years later; and that during the many years ensuing when the owner was absent the whole place went to rack and ruin. Subsequently, on Sir Gregory's death, Paxton was engaged to demolish the great house, clear the grounds, and start afresh – which he did in the 1860s. Since then, his château-style house has also disappeared at the behest of the Duke of Bedford, in 1886. But there remain ambiguities about Shepherd's paintings.

While evidence yet to be found might prove events to have been different, this tentative explanation must suffice: the apparent creation and demise of a Repton garden, and much more besides, has passed virtually without trace. A piquant sequel is added by the knowledge that the Paxtons lived on the Battlesden estate, where they were gardeners. This is where Sir Joseph was reared, and the place to which he returned to rebuild in his maturity.

Our final sortie begins at Warrens, Bramshaw, Hampshire, and ends at Northerwood House, some miles distant. Once again, we shall be disappointed in not finding evidence of a greenhouse like the one for Albury having been built, but the modest revelations do not entirely lack interest in that context.

Not long after George Eyre had resumed residence at Warrens which Nash had recently built for him, the architect wrote to his client about sheep sent from the Isle of Wight (Nash's country seat was East Cowes Castle). This undated letter, probably of 1804,<sup>35</sup> enclosed another. It was from 'Mr. Thornton': but as that letter has not been found, we do not know what Thornton communicated to Nash. We do know, however, that the architect had rendered him some professional service for which, apart from considerable travelling expenses, Nash was reluctant to charge because of his amicable connection with Eyre. Reading between the very few lines, one could presume that 'Mr. Thornton' was a friend of Eyre's, and that a fruitful introduction had been made. But we can go no further. While it is likely that 'Mr. Thornton' was, indeed, Samuel (name and date are right for at least the bridge), there could have been others of that name within the circle. However, Nash added a postscript. It reads: 'I thank you for my Introduction to Mr. Michele'. That is of significance, for Captain Charles William Michel was a neighbour of Eyre's. He lived at Northerwood, Emery Down, Lyndhurst, and Nash made alterations to that house, believed to have been built c1760–70.<sup>36</sup>

Northerwood – William Gilpin wrote that it was dubbed 'Mount-royal' by George III, and that the house was known by that name from the time of the King's visit until his death<sup>37</sup> – is the subject of an elevational drawing in the RIBA Notebook; f 75r, inscribed 'Mr Mitchel in New Forest', shows a modest-sized symmetrical house of seven bays on the ground floor and *piano nobile* (fig 15). That floor is fronted by an arcaded verandah with much trelliswork contained by pavilions with large Venetian windows and more trellis. The top floor, however, is of narrower span. It is only five bays wide. Nash is believed to have added the pavilions and verandah with its eight shafts supporting semicircular arches. If his alterations were, indeed, just as shown in this drawing, the verandah with its stocky square columns was not to last long, for G F Prosser in *Select illustrations of Hampshire* (1833) shows the house greatly altered. The residence of John Pulteney '... was first improved some years ago, at the suggestion of the then celebrated architect Mr. Nash, and further added to and embellished under the superintendence of Mr. William Cubitt, in the years 1830 and 1831, and a handsome conservatory built, which is connected with the mansion by a covered passage.' Small as the illustration is, we can see that what was by this time a loggia was now of only five arcaded bays, the first and seventh having been walled in and a sash window inserted in each. Tall shafts or pilasters appear to rise between every opening, to the cornice. The pavilions (by now devoid of Venetian windows) rise a full storey higher and are linked by a top floor now of full seven bays width. The conservatory stands, apparently in detachment, some yards to the west. It has a shallow, sloping roof.

About 60 years passed before publication of our next graphic reference, when Northerwood House was offered for sale.<sup>38</sup> The agent's brochure contains a ground floor plan and lithographic view from the south which shows the addition of a ballroom to the west. Against this a large conservatory is contained within the fabric of the house. This might not be the building that

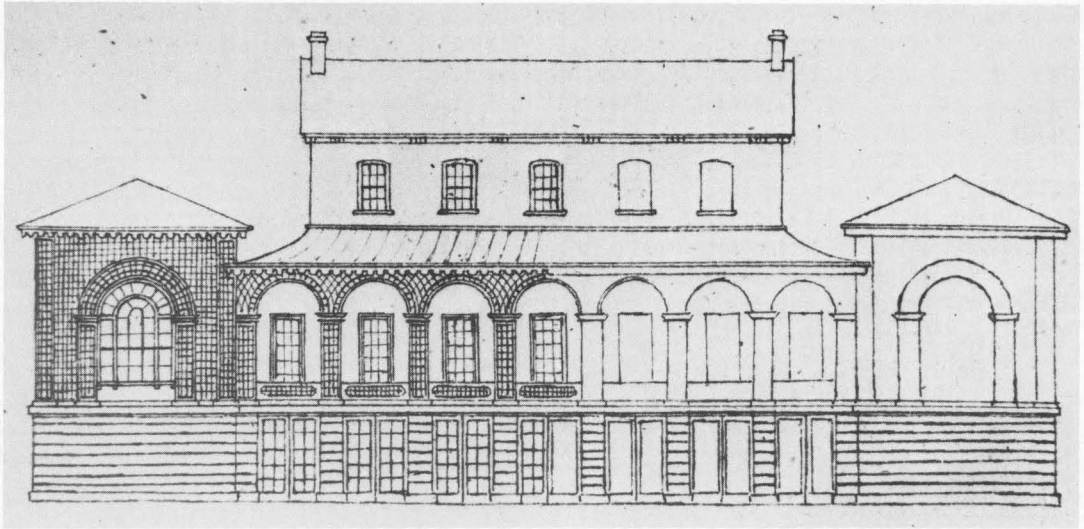


Fig 15. George Repton, RIBA Notebook, f 75r: elevation of a house, inscribed 'Mr Mitchel in New Forest/Lyndhurst'. (Photograph: British Architectural Library, RIBA, London) (© RIBA Collections)



Fig 16. Northerwood House, Lyndhurst, Hampshire: garden front, showing half columns containing four shafts, the left-hand of which is slimmer than its companions. (Photograph: author)

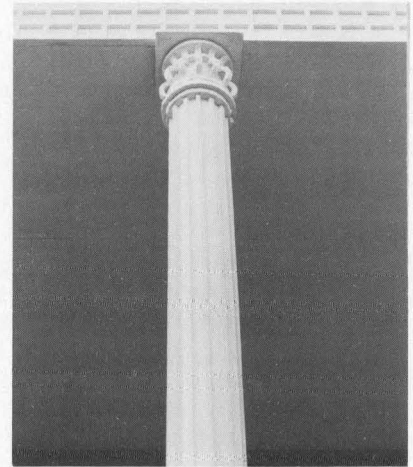


Fig 17. Northerwood House, Lyndhurst, Hampshire: detail of a column. (Photograph: author)

Cubitt added. But it is quite clear that the loggia has supports of rectilinear cross-section with flat pilasters on their surface. These are shown on the large-scale plan.

The last major reconstruction of Northerwood took place during 1976. The house was greatly added to both vertically and horizontally and converted into numerous flats. And now we arrive at the critical point, for at some time between 1890 and recent years, the arcading was removed, and in its place four free-standing round Graeco-Hindu columns, with half columns framing the containing blind bays have been inserted (figs 16, 17). They support a deep Chinoiserie trellised frieze. The only notable differences between these columns and those in the Albury greenhouse design are that they have no bases – possibly removed – and the shafts are of solid wood with



'flutings' battened on. A remarkable inconsistency between the existing Northerwood columns is that one of these shafts is quite noticeably slimmer than its companions. Why should this be so?<sup>39</sup> How then do we account for such a reappearance so long after Nash had left the scene? Did the columns come from the approach front that escaped published depiction? There are no columns anywhere on the 1890 plan. Did they come from a conservatory that Cubitt replaced? If so, why are the shafts solid and not mere hollow trellis shams as in the Albury Park designs? Perhaps, if free standing, like the Battlesden version, and not a building supported by two solid walls, load bearers would have been called for at Northerwood. Or did the columns come belatedly from another house at which Nash had been employed – perhaps one nearby, as yet unidentified?

George Repton's Notebook designs for Thornton have led us far – north and south – from their intended Albury site. Yet these diversions have borne some fruit, even if raising more new problems than those few we have solved. Inconclusive as this account is, it is of interest to note that the *Gentleman's Magazine* notice of Nash's death<sup>40</sup> states that among the drawings he left were some (unspecified) for Albury Park.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### NOTES

#### *Notes to Pavilion Notebook 16–19*

- 1 British Library Add MS 33929 f 55. Sarah Langley died aged 86. She was buried at Kingston on 18 May 1852
- 2 SyRO: a total of four Land Tax entries to 1820, the last year checked
- 3 Also SyRO KB9/2: grant to Langley of ground (66 roods) being part of the waste ground of the Manor of Kingston at Borough Farm, 1805. I am particularly grateful to Dr D Robinson and Mrs M Vaughan-Lewis for their help
- 4 Richardson, R, 1888 *Surbiton: thirty-two years of local self-government, 1855–1887*, 5
- 5 Davis, T, 1960 *The architecture of John Nash*
- 6 RIBA *Catalogue*, 110–11: [10], Sketchbook II, f 11r, sections, details, elevations, etc. Also, f 10v, details of chimney openings, one reproduced by Davis, *op cit* in note 5, pl 7
- 7 Minet Library, SP88/188/SOU 1: inscribed 'Long Ditton Cockcrow Hill. Thos. Langley Borough Farm'. Bryant's map of 1823 names Cockcrow Hill and marks it a little to the SW of Southborough House. Batley, J C & Moss, G P, 1984. *Catalogue of pictures by J and E Hassell, SyAC*, 75, 33, M 1039
- 8 Demolished, though part of Repton's work survives. Red Book 1796. Illustration in *Peacock's polite repository*, April 1797
- 9 Lugar, R, 1807 *The country gentleman's architect*, p iv
- 10 The several other farm yards illustrated are all essentially rectilinear in plan
- 11 Loudon, J C, 1833 *Encyclopaedia of cottage, farm and villa architecture*
- 12 Briggs, M, 1953 *The English farmhouse*, pl 121, reproduces the original plate
- 13 Information from Mr John Martin Robinson. See his article Model farm buildings of the Age of Improvement, *Architect Hist*, 1976, 17–31, which includes a gazetteer
- 14 SyRO: map 1840, Apportionment 1842
- 15 RIBA *Catalogue*, 118, f 46r, 46v, 47r

*Notes to Pavilion Notebook 26–9*

- 16 DNB
- 17 Chancellor, E Beresford, 1907 *The history of the squares of London*, 103
- 18 Colvin, H, 1978 *Dictionary of British architects*
- 19 Walmsley, R, 1974 *A description of the mansion and grounds at Albury Park, Alfold, Surrey, and of the old parish church of Albury*, 7
- 20 Sion House archives D xxii 1b(i), conveyance
- 21 Walmsley, *op cit* in note 19, 6–7
- 22 Bray, W, 1879 *Diary of John Evelyn, Esq*, ii, 225
- 23 *idem*, 253
- 24 Walmsley, *op cit* in note 19, 10. This booklet also contains a small scale professionally drawn plan. See also Chambers, D, 1981 The tomb in the landscape: John Evelyn's Garden at Albury, *J Garden Hist*, 1, i, 37–54, which discusses the 'Crypta', and Jacques, D, 1978, John Evelyn and the idea of Paradise, *Landscape Design*, 124, 36–8
- 25 Alnwick Castle muniments, Misc MSS A/6/24
- 26 Alnwick Castle muniments. Drummond Papers, C/16/1 a–c, f 11 (wmk 1810). See also C/16/2c (wmk 1810) in the same hand. See also C/17/1–149 for architectural work at Albury 1843–51. Conveyance to Drummond, see Sion House archives D xxi 1a(i)
- 27 Alnwick Castle muniments, Drummond papers, C/16/1 a–c, f 11 (wmk 1810)
- 28 Walmsley, *op cit* in note 19, includes a reproduction (anonymous and undated) of a print showing the classical wing. Another plate shows Albury in its half-timbered state, west front, 1645. Neale's plate of 1826 shows another view of the classical wing. At Weald Manor, Bampton, Oxfordshire, is a framed and mounted untitled water colour depicting a country house from a high viewing point. There is a stretch of water between the painter and the house, of which only the right hand two-thirds is visible. In May 1984 this was identified as Albury Park as it would have appeared before Hakewill added his gothick wing to the west of the Georgian house – which is shown in the water-colour to have had a low screen of four bays connecting the main building to a domed pavilion. As the house appears to be symmetrical, it is reasonable to suppose that there were balancing features on the east flank. Presumably the partitions were demolished when Hakewill's wing was added in 1815 to retain that (limited) symmetry. There is no sign of a bridge or greenhouse, though much is obscured by foreground foliage. I am grateful to Maj and Mrs Robert Colville for their co-operation
- 29 Alnwick Castle muniments, Drummond Papers, C/17/142
- 30 BL Add MS, 62112, *Memoir*, 67
- 31 Bedfordshire R O: Sale catalogue, 20 November 1823. Contents and effects for sale by direction of the Sheriff, on premises. Catalogue, 1824, valuable books
- 32 Private collections. If then existing, the Gothick structure, at least, should appear in fig 13.
- 33 BM Map Room
- 34 The engraving is a miniature. The greenhouse is similar in appearance to the Pavilion Notebook design generally and is shown in a position relating to the greenhouse in Shepherd's painting, but close comparison is impossible for want of detail. I am grateful to members of the Page-Turner family for their co-operation. Battlesden was rebuilt by Paxton with G H Stokes. A brief account of the new house, with illustrations, will be found in Bassett, D, 1983 G H Stokes at Battlesden and Belle Vue, *Architect Hist*, 92–5
- 35 Private collection
- 36 Statutory List
- 37 Gilpin, W, 1791 *Remarks on forest scenery*, ii, 220. Mr Ballard's house near Lyndhurst. The house was renamed by the king, at Mr Ballard's request, when George III was passing through the Forest on the road to Weymouth, in 1789
- 38 Drivers & Co Whitehall, London, 1890. The 6" OS map surveyed in 1869 shows an ice house about 50 yards north-west of the house
- 39 I am grateful to a resident, Mrs T Triggs, for showing me photographs of the columns, complete with the entwining helical metal strip wreaths, taken during the summer of 1976. Two years later the strips had gone
- 40 *Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1835, 438, obituary of J Nash