



Historic England

# THE BATH HOUSE, WREST PARK, BEDFORDSHIRE

## HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Jonathan Kewley

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



Research Report Series 074-2018

**THE BATH HOUSE,  
WREST PARK,  
BEDFORDSHIRE**

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Jonathan Kewley

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND CODES USED IN THE REPORT

BA	Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service
BL	British Library
GEC	G. E. C., 1910-59 <i>The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland....</i> (new edition, ed. Hon. Vicary Gibbs; London: St Catherine Press)
HEA	Historic England Archive
NIAE	National Institute of Agricultural Engineering
TNA	The National Archives
VCH	H. Arthur Doubleday (ed.) 1904-14 <i>The Victoria County History of Bedfordshire</i> (Westminster: Archibald Constable)

Cover illustration: The exterior of the Bath House, from the north-east (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232097)

## **SUMMARY**

Wrest Park sits in one of the great gardens of England – not the creation of one person or one era, but a garden which has developed incrementally since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, retaining important features from a number of eras. It contains a number of significant garden buildings, including one from the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the subject of this report, which has been variously described as a bath house, a Roman bath, a hermitage and a grotto. It is a good survival of a building type once not uncommon: a place to take a bath within reach of, but not attached to, a country house. It has many features in common with others of its type, notably aspects of a grotto.

This report is based on a site visit and archival and printed sources, together with secondary background reading on 18<sup>th</sup>-century baths and landscapes.

## **BACKGROUND**

This report is the result of a request to Historic England by the owners of the Bath House, the English Heritage Trust (EHT), to undertake research which could support the conservation of the building and contribute to its future presentation following restoration. EHT sought clarification on a number of points, notably (i) whether the building was constructed in a single phase or multiple phases, (ii) what its historical appearance and layout were, (iii) the nature and level of the repair programme undertaken at the Bath House during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and (iv) any alterations or repairs undertaken at the nearby Cascade and stone bridge, contemporary mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century structures. Various detailed questions on the pebble and animal bone floor of one room of the Bath House will be answered in a separate Historic England Research Report by Polydora Baker.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

Jonathan Kewley researched and wrote the text. Patricia Payne took photographs. A laser scan was undertaken by David Andrews. Rachel Forbes desktop-published the report, with assistance kindly provided by Katie Carmichael.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Elizabeth Graham generously shared her PhD thesis and her knowledge of 18<sup>th</sup>-century baths and bath-houses. Polydora Baker shared the preliminary conclusions of her own Research Report on the bone floor at Wrest Bath House. Emily Cole read and edited the report in draft and in final stages. Wayne Cocroft also read a draft, and Magnus Alexander provided data and images from his previous survey work. I am indebted for their assistance to the staff at Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service, and to Andrew Hann and his colleagues at English Heritage.

## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

Historic England Archive, The Engine House, Firefly Avenue, Swindon, Wilts. SN2 2EH

## **DATE OF RESEARCH**

December 2017 to May 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

Like many other gardens of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Wrest is as much a garden of buildings as of plants. One of these buildings — known variously as the Bath House, the Bath, the Roman Bath, the Cold Bath, the Hermitage and the Grotto — is the subject of this Research Report. It should not be confused with what are described on the National Heritage List for England as ‘2 Roman Baths’, which are stone bath-tubs placed in the South Parterre probably in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

The Bath House needs first to be put into context, both geographically and historically. Wrest Park is in southern Bedfordshire, in the Hundred of Flitt and Manor of Wrest.<sup>2</sup> Historically most of it (including the Bath House) was within the parish of Flitton-cum-Silsoe, but since 1831 it has been in the new parish of Silsoe. It is in the current administrative unitary authority of Central Bedfordshire.

The ownership of Wrest appears more complicated than it actually is.<sup>3</sup> It was in the possession of one family from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to 1917, but it passed many times down the female line and so the continuous descent is less obvious. The family were the de Greys, originally from Normandy, then Essex. John de Grey acquired the manor of Wrest following his marriage to Emma de Cauz in 1230-32. John’s son Reynold was created 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Grey of Wilton and summoned to Parliament in 1295. His grandson became Lord Grey of Ruthin in 1325, and his great-great-grandson Edmund was created Earl of Kent in 1465, having served as Edward IV’s Lord Treasurer. The 11<sup>th</sup> Earl married the only daughter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Lucas of Shenfield, who was created Baroness Lucas of Crudwell in 1663. Their son, the 12<sup>th</sup> Earl, was appointed Lord Chamberlain in 1704 and created Duke of Kent in 1710, but had no surviving male heirs to inherit the title. To retain a peerage in the family higher than the barony of Lucas, he succeeded in having himself created, three weeks before his death in 1740, Marquess Grey, with special remainder to his granddaughter and her male heirs.

This granddaughter was Jemima Campbell, whose mother Amabel (the Duke’s daughter) had married a Scottish nobleman, the future 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Breadalbane. Just before his death the Duke of Kent married her off to the Hon. Philip Yorke, eldest son of the then Lord Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke, whose seat was at Wimpole in Cambridgeshire, not that far from Wrest. Yorke was styled Viscount Royston from 1754, when his father was created Earl of Hardwicke, to which title he succeeded in 1764; he died in 1790. The Marchioness died in 1797, leaving two daughters but no sons. The elder daughter, Lady Amabel Yorke, succeeded as Lady Lucas of Crudwell under the unusual remainder with which that title had been granted. She had married Alexander Hume-Campbell, Lord Polwarth, son of the Scottish 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Marchmont. There were no children of the marriage, and he died in 1781, aged 30.

In 1816 Lady Lucas was created Countess de Grey, with yet another special remainder, to her younger sister and the latter’s male heirs. This meant that on her death in 1833, Wrest, the earldom and the Lucas barony passed to her nephew the 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Grantham. He, as Earl de Grey, must not be confused with the Prime Minister at the time of the Reform Act, who was Earl Grey. He again had two



daughters but no sons. On his death, the earldom passed to his nephew the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Ripon, but Wrest (and the Lucas barony) went to his elder daughter Anne Florence, who had married the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl Cowper of Panshanger, Hertfordshire. On her death in 1880, Wrest and the barony passed to her son Francis, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl. He in turn died without issue in 1905. Panshanger passed to relatives on his father's side, while Wrest went to his nephew (his sister's son), Auberon Herbert, who succeeded as the 8<sup>th</sup> Baron Lucas of Crudwell. He let the house to the American ambassador Whitelaw Reid from 1905 to 1912. The 8<sup>th</sup> Baron was killed in action in 1916, when the title and Wrest passed to his sister Nan, who put the estate up for auction in around May 1917 – the first time it had passed other than by descent for 600 years. The purchaser was a businessman from County Durham, John G. Murray, who initially lived there but then began asset-stripping, especially the timber in what was then a well-wooded park. He tried to sell the estate by auction in 1934, but did not find a buyer until 1939, when Wrest and its gardens were bought by the Sun Insurance Company as its wartime headquarters. In 1946 the estate was sold to the government's Ministry of Public Building and Works. This body passed it onto the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering, which was made responsible for maintaining the gardens with advice from the Ministry; meanwhile, the garden buildings remained the responsibility of the Ministry itself. In 2006, on the closure of the NIAE, the site came into the hands of English Heritage, which embarked on a process of repair and restoration.

The ownership of Wrest during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the period relevant for this report, can be summarised as follows; individuals are given the names or titles by which they will be referred to in the Report (actual titles are given in the endnotes):

Duke of Kent <sup>4</sup>	1702-1740
Marchioness Grey and her husband Lord Hardwicke (d. 1790) <sup>5</sup>	1740-1797
Countess de Grey <sup>6</sup>	1797- 1833
Earl de Grey <sup>7</sup>	1833-1859
Countess Cowper <sup>8</sup>	1859-1880
Earl Cowper <sup>9</sup>	1880-1905
Lord Lucas <sup>10</sup>	1905-1916
Whitelaw Reid, <i>tenant</i> , 1905–1912 <sup>11</sup>	
Lady Lucas <sup>12</sup>	1916-1917
J. G. Murray	1917-1939
Sun Insurance Company	1939-1946
Ministry of Works/English Heritage	1946 to date
National Institute of Agricultural Engineering (now the Silsoe Research Institute), <i>tenants</i> , since 1947	

Two points become apparent. One is the decline in the de Grey family from their peak, with a dukedom, under Queen Anne, down to a marquessate from 1740, an earldom from 1816 and only a barony after 1905. The other is that while Wrest was the family's principal seat up until the death of Earl de Grey in 1859, it was only a secondary residence for the Cowpers up until 1905, and was then let.

The gardens at Wrest are a melange of different styles of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and are registered Grade I (the site is also a scheduled ancient monument, and numerous structures within it are individually listed, including the Bath House [Grade II\*]).<sup>13</sup> The formal garden of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, believed by Earl de Grey to be French-inspired, is now considered to show more Dutch influence.<sup>14</sup> Its focus was Thomas Archer's pavilion at the foot of the main canal, the Long Water. The Duke of Kent kept up to date with emerging English fashions and employed Batty Langley in the 1730s.<sup>15</sup> Further alterations, principally to the outer parts of the gardens, were made with the advice of 'Capability' Brown in the late 1750s, with a further programme of work in the 1760s and '70s. In the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Earl de Grey carried out more changes, inspired by his vision of Versailles.

A word is also in order about the house, or rather houses. The medieval house was just south of the present fountain. It was much rebuilt over the centuries, and by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was long, low and rambling, but externally Georgianised. It was pulled down by Earl de Grey in the late 1830s after he had built a new house to his own designs to the north, which is the house there today.

## LOCATION

The gardens at Wrest are roughly rectangular, the longer sides running north-south (Fig. 1). The present house is at the northern end, with the site of the old house about a quarter of the way down from it. Immediately south the Broad Walk (or Broadwalk) runs west-east with the Great Yew Hedge on its northern side. When the old house was still standing this meant that there were discrete areas west and east of it. That to the west is where the Bath House is found (Fig. 2).<sup>16</sup>

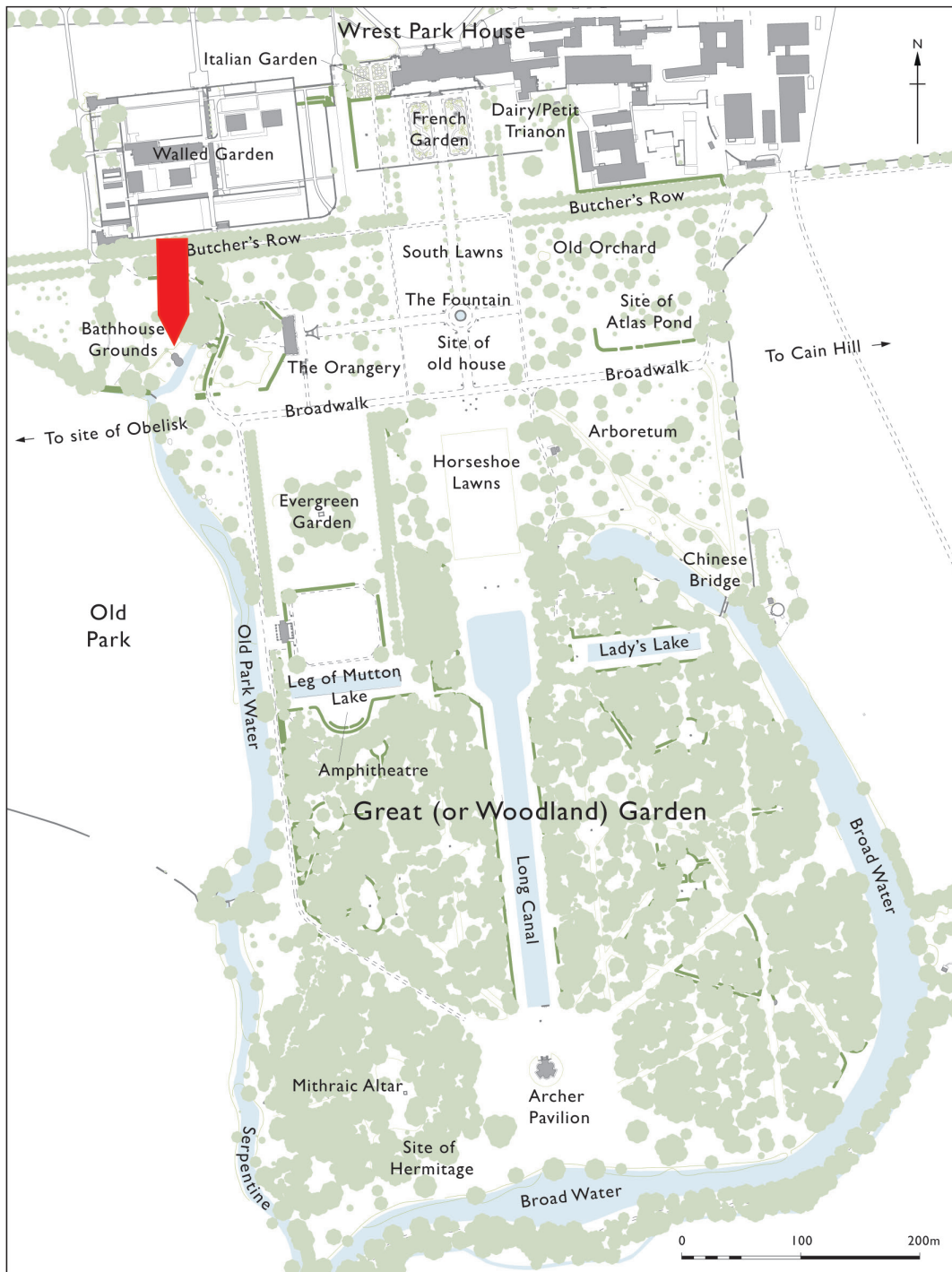


Fig. 1 The gardens at Wrest in 2009, with the Bath House Grounds marked by the red arrow (from a survey by Atkins for English Heritage, 2009)

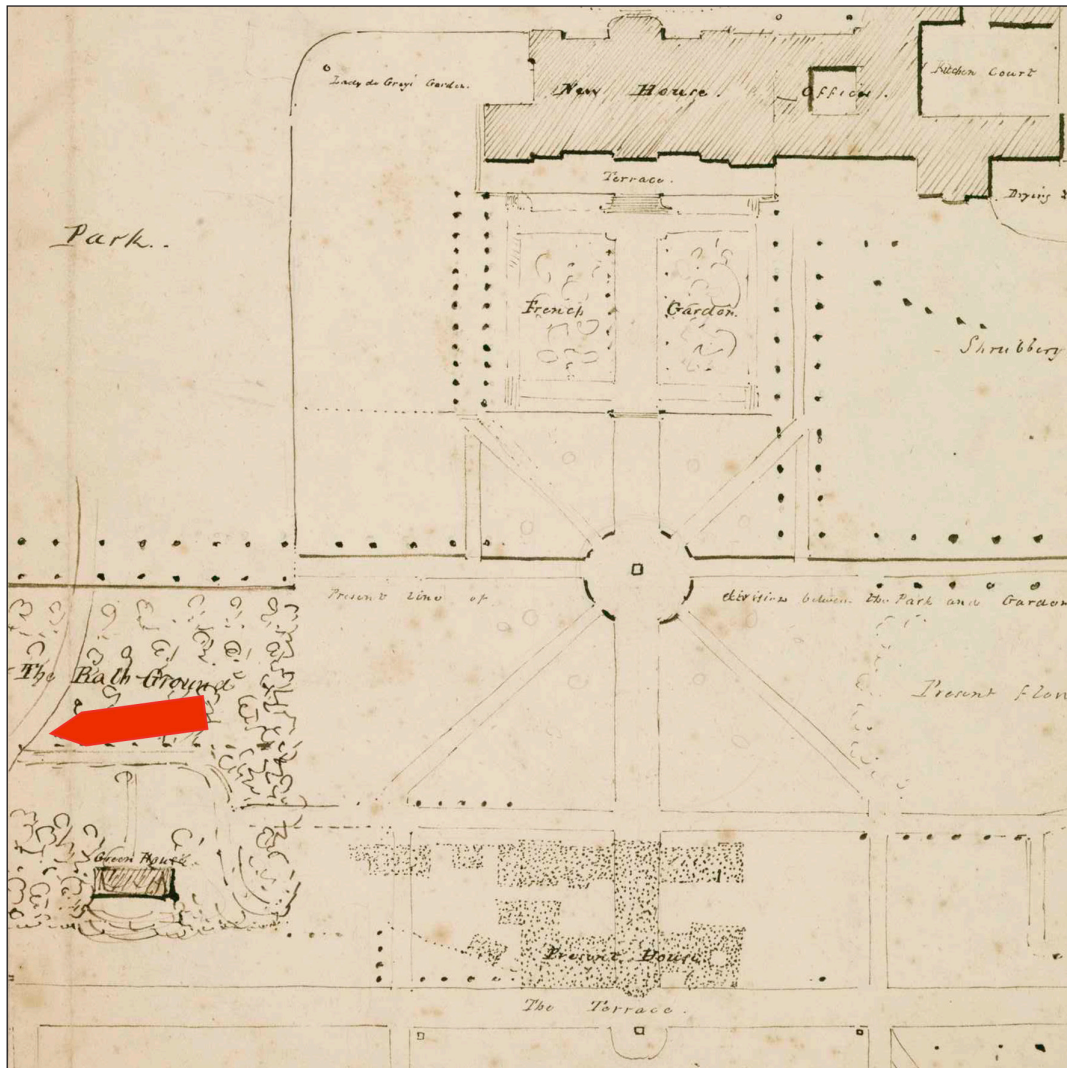


Fig. 2 The relationship between the old house (at bottom centre) and the Bath House (just off the plan on the left, where the red arrow is pointing). The present house is at the top of the plan. (Detail of Earl de Grey, 'Plan showing the relative positions of the old and new houses at Wrest', 1834. BA L33/150, photograph © Historic England DP110942)

A path now runs west from the fountain just north of the old house site. It leads to the east-facing Orangery built by Earl de Grey in 1839, behind which is a works yard. West of this (Fig. 3) are the Bath House Grounds or Bath House Garden, bisected by the Bath House Water running north-east to south-west. On its west bank stands the Bath House. The Water connects to the south with the Old Park Water, part of the informal moat which almost encircles the gardens. The original approach was rather more direct. A plan, probably dating from the 1830s but before the Orangery was built in 1838 (Fig. 4), shows a very roughly semi-circular path leading from just west of the old house through the Bath House Grounds. About two-thirds of the way round, a path is shown branching off to the right and leading west across the Cascade and past the door of the Bath House and on into the park. The main path continued on to what in 1776 was called a 'little Gate towards the Bath' in 'the Yew hedge'<sup>17</sup> – that is, the so-called Great Yew Hedge (running west-east). Planting was no doubt dense, to screen the bath from view; in 1779 the Marchioness deprecated 'any thinning about the bath'.<sup>18</sup>

A landscape analysis project of the entirety of the gardens at Wrest was undertaken by what is now Historic England over a five-year period ending in 2013.<sup>19</sup> It was followed in 2015 by an analytical earthwork survey purely of the Bath House Grounds by Magnus Alexander and others.<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 3 The layout of the Bath House Grounds in 1972 (more or less as today); the Bath House is shown in red (25" to 1 mile OS map, surveyed 1972, published 1975). (Historic Ordnance Survey mapping © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd. All rights reserved 2018. Licence number 000394 and TP 0024)

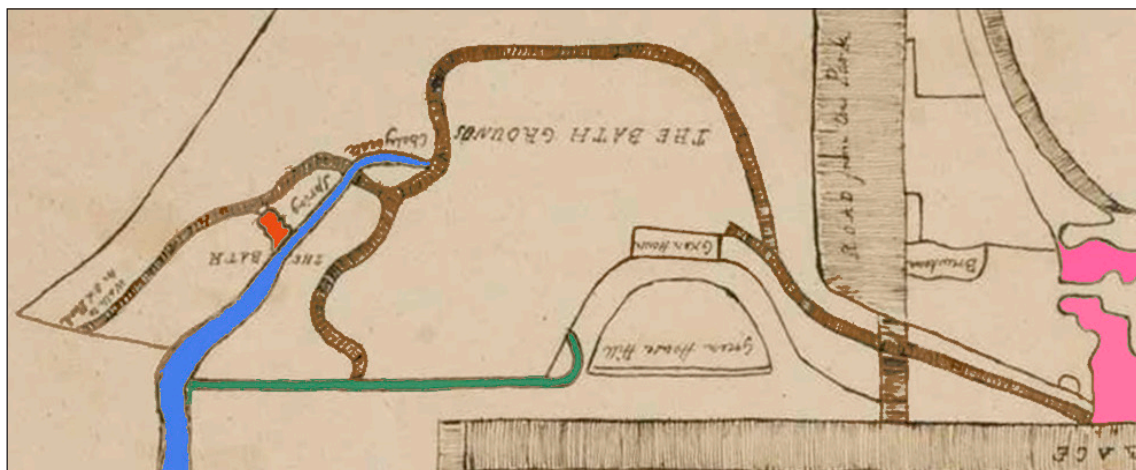


Fig. 4 The Bath House Grounds c. 1830, showing (by added colour) the Bath House in red, the Bath House Water and spring in blue, the Great Yew Hedge in green, and the old house in pink. (Detail from an undated and anonymous map. BA L33/208 Photograph © Historic England DP110948)

## DESCRIPTION

The Bath House is a single-storey structure built on a figure-of-eight plan and consisting of two rooms (Fig. 5). The long axis runs approximately north-west to south-east, but for the purposes of this report it will be assumed to run north-south. It will be described as it is today, with the caveat that extensive works were carried out in the 1960s, and some features may date from that time (Figs 6 and 7).



Fig. 5 (above left) Plan of the Bath House, 1966, drawn by T. J. Bailey of the Ministry of Works (detail of MP\_WRE0082 Historic England Archive)

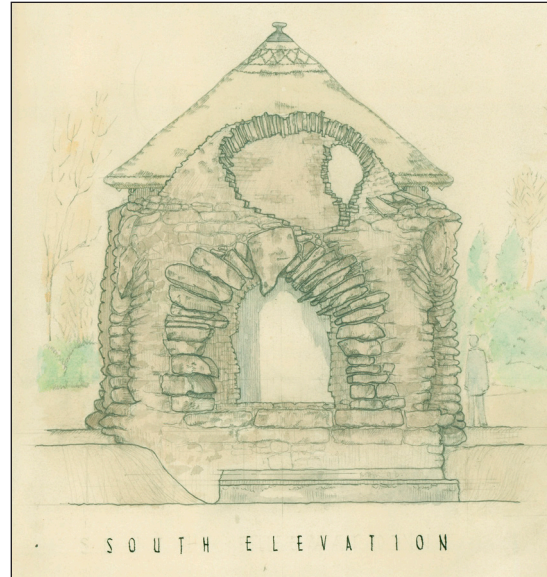


Fig. 6 (above right) The south elevation of the Bath House, drawn by T. J. Bailey of the Ministry of Works, 1966 (detail of MP\_WRE0082 Historic England Archive)



Fig. 7 The Bath House from the north-east in 2018 (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232097)

The northern room of the Bath House is octagonal in internal plan, with doorway-height clear openings in the north and south walls, and window-size openings in the west and east walls. In each of the other four walls there is a tall niche with a semi-spherical top (Fig. 8).

The southern room is circular in internal plan, with a round-headed doorway-height opening in the north wall and round-arched, window-size openings in the west, south and east walls (Figs 9 and 10).

The Bath House is built of stone, which seems to be the local ironstone seen in cottages in Silsoe village and Silsoe Church of 1829-31 (unlike the present Wrest Park house, which is of Bath stone, or its predecessor which was of brick and perhaps timber). On the inside the stone is dressed but the blocks are of varying sizes. Those at the backs of the niches are curved; from a distance it could almost pass as brickwork. The windowsills are of broken stones.



Fig. 8 The interior of the northern room of the Bath House, looking north-east at one of the four niches (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232134)

On the outside of the Bath House the stone is much more rustic, with a distinctive method of treating the tops of the openings by using a large, roughly-circular stone as a sort of lintel (see Fig. 7). It looks as though this 'rustickwork' may have been applied after the shell of the Bath House had been built. It bulges in places, presumably deliberately. The lower courses are of rough, narrow stones (looking like slate) but most of the upper courses of stonework are much rougher and less regular – the exceptions are the very top courses which have more regular, brick-like stone. At the north-east and north-west corners are vertical recesses in the wall which may relate to removed buttresses (see p. 29). The internal stonework is pointed with a creamy-white mortar which is presumably cementaceous as in a number of places its hardness has caused the stone to erode away sacrificially. The roof of the northern room is conical and thatched; there is no ceiling, and the roof's timber structure is visible from below (Fig. 11). The roof of the southern room is a stone dome, with several holes, presumably built to resemble a ruin (Fig. 12).



Fig. 9 (above left) The interior of the southern room of the Bath House, looking south-east towards the Cascade (© Historic England, Jonathan Kewley)



Fig. 10 (above right) The southern room of the Bath House viewed from the west (© Historic England, Jonathan Kewley)



Fig. 11 The roof structure of the northern room of the Bath House, seen from below (© Historic England, Jonathan Kewley)





Fig. 12 The stone roof of the bath room on the south, built to resemble a ruin (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232121)

The floor of the northern room consists of pebbles laid in some sort of mortar or cement, with other features which have been identified by Polydora Baker of Historic England as deer bones, and which divide the floor into a central circle and eight radiating compartments (Fig. 13).<sup>21</sup> There are three cement steps up to it from outside. It is unclear how much of this work is original and how much dates to 19<sup>th</sup>-century modifications or the ‘restoration’ of the 1960s (see p. 39; certainly two photographs of 1963 show the floor looking somewhat different from its appearance today (Fig. 14).<sup>22</sup>

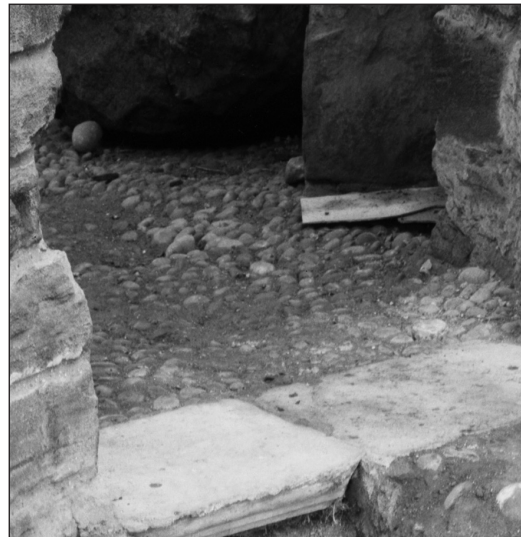


Fig. 13 (left) The floor of the north room of the Bath House (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232144)

Fig. 14 (right) The floor of the northern room of the Bath House in 1963, looking north-east from the bath room (detail of p\_ao6331\_003 Historic England Archive)

All the floor area of the southern room, except a narrow stone rim, is taken up by a circular tank — the bath itself (Figs 15 and 16). It is in two sections, one above the other. The lower is of a lesser diameter than the higher, creating a stone path around the edge of the lower. An architect's drawing from the restoration of 1968 specified that the walls of the lower section were to be rendered over a coat of Synthaprufe, a proprietary damp-proofing compound (Fig. 17).<sup>23</sup> At the time of inspection in 2018, the lower part was filled to the brim but above that it was empty. The 1967 excavations found the floor of the tank to be paved with 7-inch-square limestone slabs (Fig. 18 and see Fig. 57). These were presumably then restored and/or replaced, but this could not be confirmed as the bath was full of murky water when visited for the present report. There is a split flight of very narrow stone steps leading down on either side of the northern opening (Fig. 19). When excavated in the 1960s, only residual remains were found of steps (Fig. 20), and the present ones are a reconstruction of that time. The drop from the top of the steps into the pool is currently unprotected, but the excavations found 'slots and fixing for former balusters'.<sup>24</sup>



Fig. 15 The bath in the Bath House, looking down from the entrance to the bath room (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232125)



Fig. 16 The bath in the south room of the Bath House looking south-west, and showing the two stages of the tank (© Historic England, Jonathan Kewley)

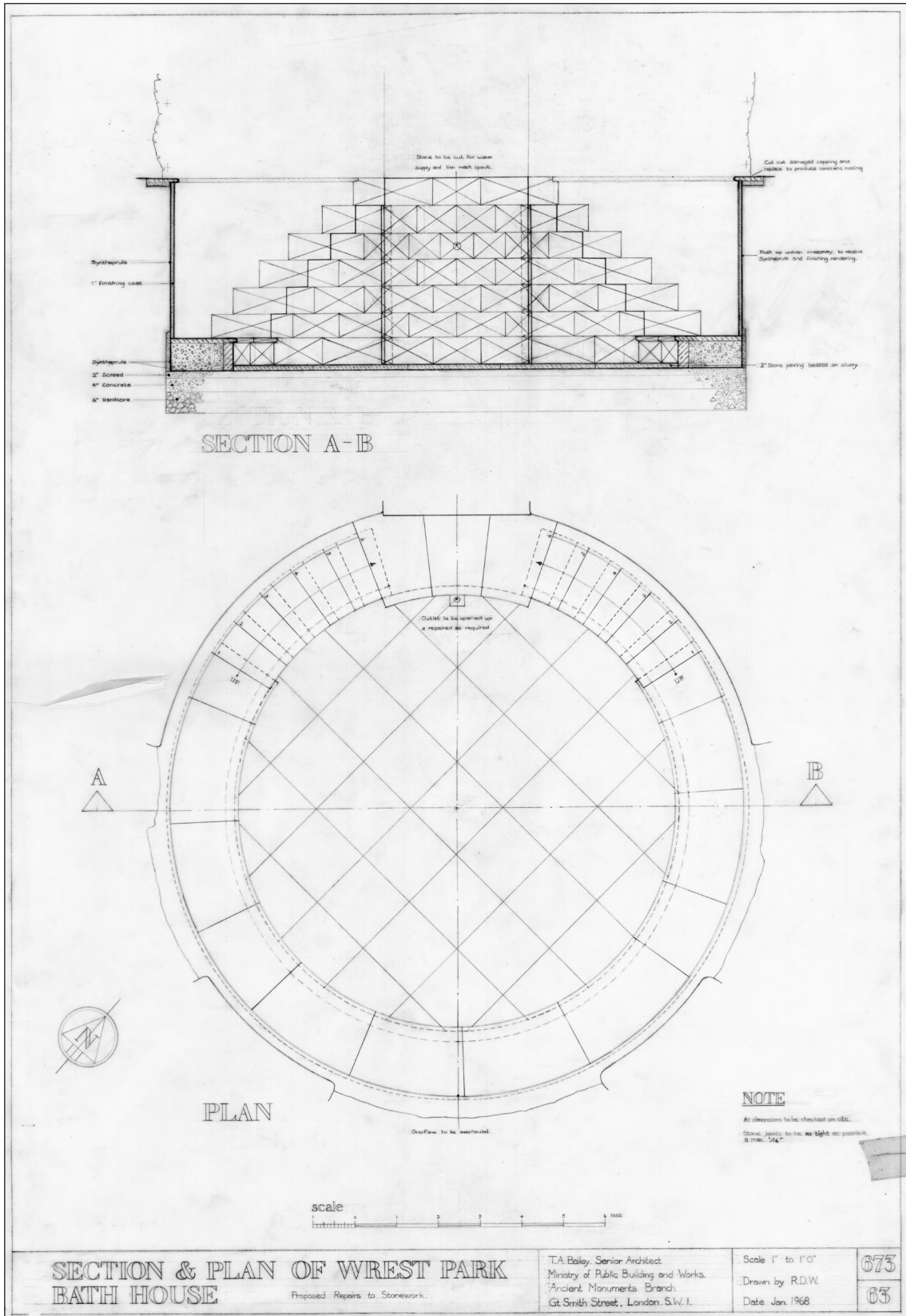


Fig. 17 A drawing by the Ministry of Works architect specifying work to be undertaken on the bath in 1968 (MP\_WRE0098 Historic England Archive)

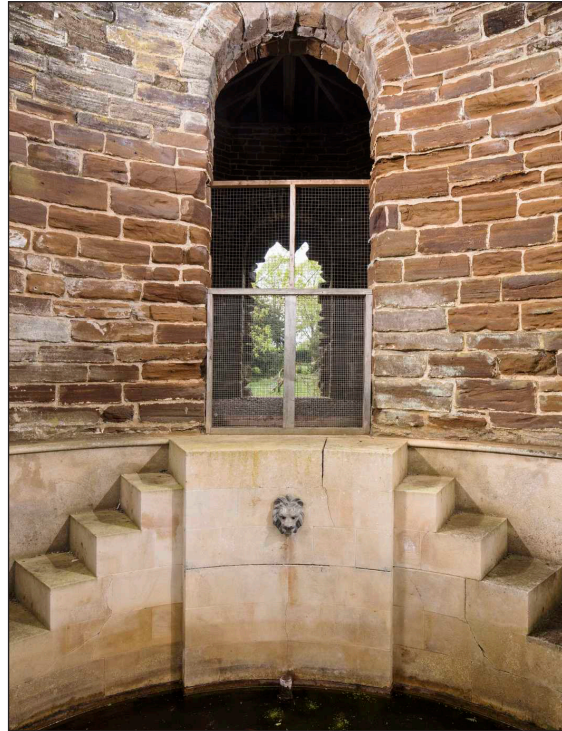


Fig. 18 (top left) The bath in 1963, showing the 1830s infill partly removed to reveal tiles at the bottom (p\_ao6331\_004 Historic England Archive)

Fig. 19 (right) Looking north at the steps into the bath today, the result of the 1960s ‘restoration’ (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232126)

Fig. 20 (bottom left) The bath fully excavated in 1968, showing the remains of the original steps (p\_ao7506\_003 Historic England Archive)

There are a number of loose stones lying around the Bath House (Fig. 21), matching those on the exterior. To the south the building abuts the Bath House Water (see Fig. 7), but there is no way of getting from one to the other (or indeed from the southern room directly to the outside). The south wall continues down into the water as a revetment.



Fig. 21 (above) Loose stones outside the Bath House (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232119)

At the northern end of the Bath House Water is what is called the Cascade. This consists of a grassy mound with a tree on top, with to the south of it a rough path, shielded from the Bath House Water by boulders. From the south it reads as a jumble of boulders with a void or arched opening beneath (Fig. 22 and see Fig. 50). Between this path and the tree is a miniature curving gorge – now dry-lined with roughly-shaped, brick-size stones, matching those of the Bath House; the back consists of a semi-circular, niche-like

recess. On top of the sides are large coping stones. This gorge runs under the path, thus making the latter a very rustic bridge, although it reads as a bridge only from certain angles (Fig. 23). The National Heritage List for England describes what it calls the interior of the Cascade as follows: ‘the stone lined channel leads under a low pointed arch into a chamber which holds a lead lined tank, from where stored water presumably cascaded out under the rough stone arch.’<sup>25</sup> The spring must have been quite powerful to have forced the water over the ledge between the void and the Bath House Water. Photographs from the 1970s, when it still had water in it, show that the amount actually cascading into the Bath House Water was quite modest (Fig. 33). The relationship between the Bath House, the Bath House Water and the Cascade is shown in a recent geospatial image (Fig. 25). The Cascade should not be confused with a previous cascade at Wrest belonging to an earlier, more formal time.<sup>26</sup>



Fig. 22 (top right) The Cascade from the south (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232118)

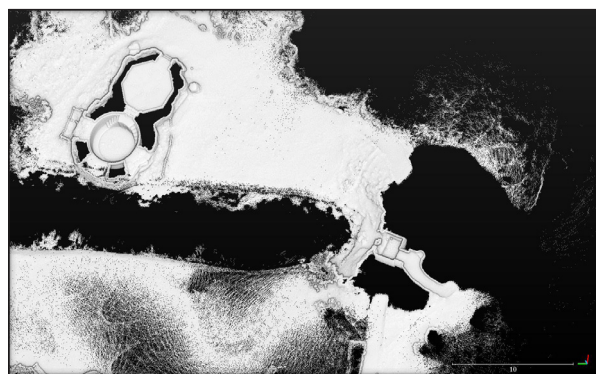


Fig. 23 (middle right) The ‘bridge’ over the Cascade, from the north-east (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232116)



Fig. 24 (above) The Cascade from the south-west in the 1970s (AL1907 011 01 ©Crown copyright.Historic England Archive)

Fig. 25 (bottom right) The Bath House (left) and the bridge and Cascade (right), joined by the Bath House Water (a horizontal section from a geospatial image taken by David Andrews © Historic England)



The path over the top of the Cascade offers a fine view of the Bath House, possibly intended to be the main prospect for visitors (Fig. 26). This has sometimes been termed a bridge (see p. 36), although it has no balustrade or wall. Certainly the listing description does not recognise it as a bridge and describes it as ‘a mound crossed by stone-lined paths’.<sup>27</sup> It has been confused with other bridges on the estate, in part because Edward Stevens’ bill of 1770 for work on the Bath House (Appendix B), referred to below, also covers work on a ‘new Bridge in His Lordship’s Gardens’, and it has been incorrectly assumed that the fact both are on the same bill means they were near each other.<sup>28</sup>



Fig. 26 The Bath House from the top of the Cascade (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232104)

The bridge on the Stevens bill surely cannot be the Cascade as the bill is for work on a bridge by a bricklayer, a carpenter, a joiner, two smiths, a painter, stone quarriers and two lime merchants; the Cascade does not now contain any wood or metal except lead,<sup>29</sup> or (seemingly) anything painted. Stevens’ bill must therefore be for one of the two other bridges at Wrest called respectively the Old Bridge and the Chinese Bridge, neither anywhere near the Bath House. It was almost certainly the Chinese Bridge, which is known to have collapsed in 1769, not long after Stevens had overseen repairs at the nearby Chinese Temple. Earl de Grey recorded that what he called the New Bridge of 1770 was on the site of the ‘present Bridge 1834’;<sup>30</sup> this ties in with other accounts of the rebuilding of the Chinese Bridge at that time (Fig. 27).



Fig. 27 The Chinese Bridge c. 1831 (from an album of watercolours; photograph DP110078 ©Historic England Archive)

## HISTORY AND FUNCTION

### Baths and bathing culture

Baths were relatively common in connection with larger houses in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> They might be inside, or in the garden but within a reasonable distance from the house.<sup>32</sup> Susan Kellerman has defined bath houses (as opposed to bathrooms) as:

... free-standing structures within a designed landscape on a private country estate ... [which] originally had not only a practical bathing (and social) function, but were also intended as architectural ornaments, as were other garden buildings such as temples, arbours, or grottoes. [They were] ... close to a water supply such as a spring ... [They] might contain the plunge pool itself, or serve only as a changing room, with the bath in the open air.<sup>33</sup>

They were for taking a bath in, not swimming – they were small in diameter, and an average of 4 ft 5 ins deep,<sup>34</sup> allowing the bather to stand and be largely immersed.<sup>35</sup> Vivien Rolf has described bath houses as halfway between decorative and functional buildings, the functional side being taking the waters, and the decorative as a venue for small-scale gatherings. In many cases, of course, they were also features in a designed landscape.

The contemporary author J.-F. Blondel, talking about large houses (in France), felt that bathing demanded solitude and that a bath should be detached from the body of the house.<sup>36</sup> This could be sociable solitude, however, and he recommended two individual baths.<sup>37</sup> Equally, though, there needed to be privacy from servants, certainly for female bathers; at Powis Castle, Montgomeryshire, gardeners were not allowed to enter the area around the bath house after 11 a.m.<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Graham has suggested that this privacy could often be better obtained in the garden than in the house, where bathrooms tended to be behind the green baize door and therefore within the realm of the servants.<sup>39</sup>

The simplest arrangement was a small open-air bath fed from a spring with a grotto or small rustic building as a dressing room; one stage up would be to put the pool within an often-picturesque bath-house building.<sup>40</sup> An example of the first sort can be found at Rousham, Oxfordshire, where an open-air pool in a wooded glade has a small Gothic grotto as a dressing room (1730s).<sup>41</sup> John Evelyn paired a grotto with a bath at Albury, Surrey, in the 1660s,<sup>42</sup> and this became a common association until at least the 1790s.<sup>43</sup> Cool and shade were also seen as important, so that on leaving after a bath, the bather could breathe fresh air in the shade of greenery (see p. 36).<sup>44</sup> In addition to their use as places to have a bath (in the modern sense), baths were sometimes, as at Wrest, fed by mineral waters which were seen as having health-giving properties through either drinking or immersion, or both (see pp. 32-33).

Bath houses were, of course, also garden buildings, and as such part of the general culture of 18<sup>th</sup>-century gardens. John Dixon Hunt has described this culture as the move from the emblematic (which required learning to understand – an inscription or a classical allusion, say) to the expressive (where the primary response is emotional, requiring no more than a visitor's presence in the garden).<sup>45</sup> Wrest straddles this change.

## Early bathing at Wrest

Edward Lawrence's plan of the Wrest estate in 1719 (Fig. 28) shows a rectangular spring-fed pond probably to the north of the site of the present Bath House.<sup>46</sup> John Rocque's plan of 1737 (Fig. 29) shows a rectangular pond in around the same position as found on Lawrence's plan, with a serpentine watercourse running south-west. It has been plausibly suggested that the latter represents an informalising of the earlier watercourse.<sup>47</sup> This raises the possibility that the pond might have been a simple outdoor bathing pool.<sup>48</sup> If so, the water might have been running north-east towards it rather than south-west from it, although in 1760 the Marchioness referred to 'the ditch that came *from* [my italics] the mineral spring' – which in that year was joined to the serpentine lake – suggesting running south-west.<sup>49</sup> This would mean that the pond shown by Lawrence and Rocque would have been immediately above the spring. Lysons and Lysons in 1813 described the Wrest Bath House as being 'at the spring-head'.<sup>50</sup>

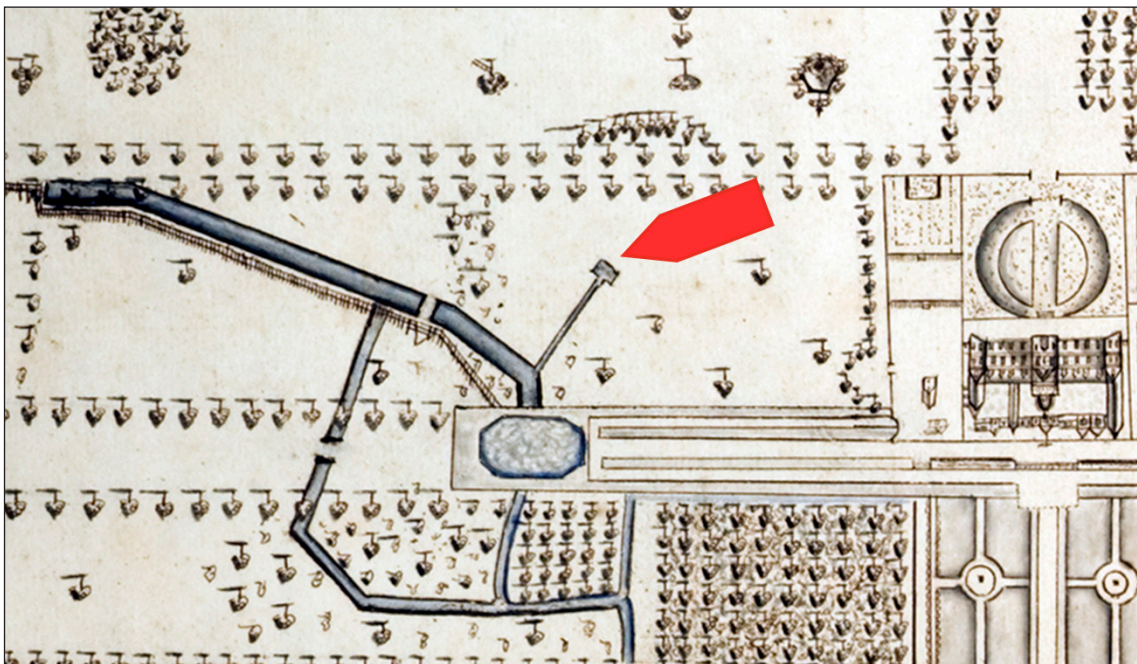


Fig. 28 (above) The area west of the old house in 1719, showing a small rectangular pond (marked with a red arrow) with a rill running south-west from it to a much larger octagonal pond (detail of plan by Edward Lawrence, BA L33/286 f3; photograph © Historic England DP110990)

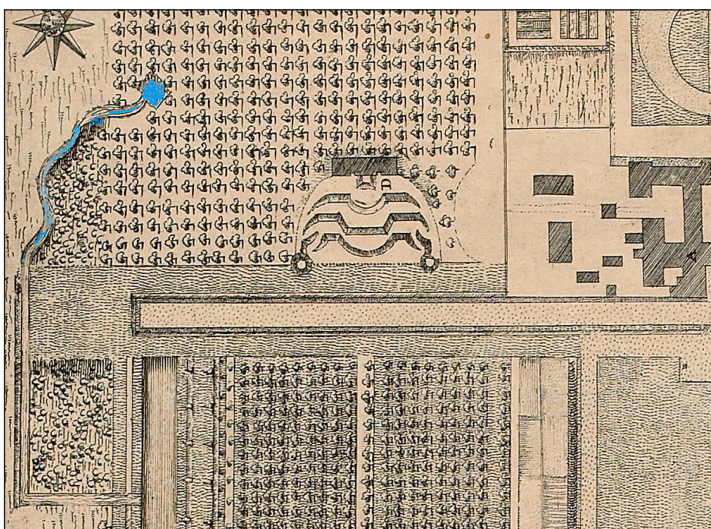


Fig. 29 (left) The same area in 1737, showing in added blue colour a similar pond but now with a serpentine watercourse running south-west from it (detail of plan by John Rocque, Map Room 99/7 Historic England Archive)



## The works of the 1750s and 1760s

The de Grey family were believers in keeping their gardens up-to-date, and they were altered frequently. So far as the Bath House is concerned, the story seems to begin with Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, who worked at Wrest in 1758-60 and visited briefly again in 1778 and 1779; he worked at Lord Hardwicke’s family seat, Wimpole, not that far away, in 1769, so could conceivably have been consulted about Wrest then, too.<sup>51</sup> Brown’s usual approach was to have an accurate survey of an estate made by an assistant, on the basis of which he would make a plan of suggested ‘alterations’,<sup>52</sup> but frustratingly no drawings for Wrest survive to show exactly what is due to him.

The Bath House seems to have been part of a collection of three structures built in the same area, the others being the Cascade (incorporating the stone bridge over it; see pp. 13-15) and the Rustic Column. The last (Fig. 30) was so named by Earl de Grey in the 1830s but is now sometimes (less accurately) called ‘Brown’s Column’. It is a simple Tuscan, urn-topped column on a pedestal, with two rusticated blocks protruding at intervals up the shaft. It bears the following inscription:

These Gardens originally laid out by Henry Duke of Kent were altered and improved by Philip Earl of Hardwicke and Jemima Marchioness Grey, with the professional assistance of Lancelot Brown Esq. 1758, 1759 and 1760

Earl de Grey stated that the column ‘was originally erected in the time of Lord Hardwick by the Architect who built the Bath House as an object to look at from thence. It was removed by Countess de Grey in 1828 to its present situation’ on the east side of the garden.<sup>53</sup> Excavations of 2015 revealed the original location of this column, which is now marked by a plaque. It was close to the Great Yew Hedge, so could be viewed from the top of the Cascade bridge, though seemingly less easily from the Bath House itself. Thomas Wright, the writer discussed in more detail below, preferred his rustic confections to be placed so ‘that no one of them appear



Fig. 30 The Rustic Column in its present position at Wrest Park in 2011 (© Historic England DP141093)

in Sight of another or of any regular Piece of Architecture, being imagined to please most, where they may be naturally supposed the only Productions of the age, before Building became a Science.<sup>54</sup> This may have implications for whether or not Wright was involved in the erection of the Bath House (as discussed below).

## The building of the Bath House

The location of the Bath House must have been determined largely by the location of the essential water supply (see below and p. 17); this was the general position elsewhere, and bath houses were perhaps the one garden structure where aesthetics had to take second place to practicalities.<sup>55</sup> However, given that Brown was working at Wrest in 1758-60 and the Bath House appears to date from 1770, it must presumably have been inserted into an existing setting. The stone, local as already noted, may have come from the quarries which were being worked on the estate.<sup>56</sup>

A paper survives headed 'A General Abstract of the Bills delivered this 31<sup>st</sup> August [1770] for Work done for The Rt Honble The Earl of Hardwicke at the cold Bath and new Bridge in His Lordship's Gardens at Wrest' (see Appendix B).<sup>57</sup> It is interesting to see which trades were involved. There was a bricklayer, despite there being no bricks in the Bath House structure; there was no mason, so presumably the bricklayer did the mason's work. There was a stone quarrier, who presumably raised the stone from the estate. There was a carpenter, who presumably made the roof structure (see Fig. 11). Nothing was paid to the joiner, who worked only on the bridge. It may be worth recalling the difference between the two trades:

The joiner's usual responsibilities were the production of components in a workshop, which were fitted by carpenters into structural masonry on the building site. This included – but was not limited to – the making of doors, windows, staircases and other components (produced by the joiner) into the building structure. In practice, however, the work of these two artisans had a considerable overlap.<sup>58</sup>

This could suggest that there were no windows at the Bath House, only window openings. There was a small payment to a smith, possibly for a latch, lock and hinges. Nothing was paid to the painter, the implications of which will be discussed below. There was a substantial payment to a lime merchant; lime would have been used for mortar and conceivably for whitewashing the interior, but as no plasterer is mentioned, presumably not for plaster. Finally there was a payment to a thatcher.

Work had begun at the Bath House by September 1769 (see p. 23) but it is unclear when it was finished.<sup>59</sup> A letter of May 1771 implies it was not quite completed by then, although the bath had already been 'neatly paved' and filled with 'limpid water'; a writer felt sure that when completed, the building 'will exceed rather than fall short of our expectation'.<sup>60</sup> The letter also refers to the Bath House being 'embosomed with a greenwood shade and decorated with a murmuring waterfall' (the Cascade), though the surrounding grounds were still being weeded, cleaned and planted in June 1772.<sup>61</sup> They clearly included trees (such as elm, poplar and willow), many of which were blown down in a storm of 1779 and subsequently replaced.<sup>62</sup>

## Influences and architects

The Duke of Kent, who died in 1740, had obtained designs for houses and garden structures from a great variety of architects, including Thomas Archer, Giacomo Leoni, Filippo Juvarra, Nicholas Hawksmoor, James Gibbs, William Kent and Batty Langley;<sup>63</sup> fidelity to an architect does not seem to have been a Wrest tradition.

The Bath House at Wrest was described by Lysons and Lysons as ‘a building in imitation of a Roman temple’.<sup>64</sup> This is a misunderstanding: it was in fact an imitation of a Roman bath. It is important to understand what this meant to contemporaries. No fully-intact Roman baths seem to have survived, or at least to have been noticed in the period. What were becoming known were the ruins of Roman bath complexes. There are good examples in Charles Cameron’s *The Baths of the Romans*, admittedly published (in 1772) just after the Wrest Bath House was built, but indicative of the climate. Illustrations of Antonine’s Baths (Fig. 31),<sup>65</sup> for instance, show ruinous, shallow-domed circular bathrooms – good precedents for those at Wrest (interestingly, round baths were not, it seems, common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>66</sup> Cameron also illustrates a *caldarium* at Pisa (Fig. 32), which appears to be octagonal, with segmental-topped niches and holes in the roof (although deliberate ones, rather than the results of ruination).<sup>67</sup> Contemporaries were ever ready to suspend disbelief and did not seem to worry whether ruins were actually old or newly put up.<sup>68</sup>



Fig. 31 (top right) Antonine’s Bath, Rome (detail), from Cameron’s *The Baths of the Romans*, 1772 (© The British Library Board 136.gg.11)

Fig. 32 (bottom right) A *caldarium* at Pisa, from Cameron’s *The Baths of the Romans* (© The British Library Board BL 136.g.11)

Some accounts of Wrest refer to a hermitage. The Root House of 1749 (no longer surviving), designed by Thomas Edwards and Daniel Wray and located in the southern part of the gardens, was ostensibly the dwelling of the priest officiating at the Mithraic altar, but was also described as a hermitage (for instance, in 1750).<sup>69</sup> It appears, however, that this term was likewise used to refer to the northern room of the Bath House: Horace Walpole, visiting Wrest in June 1771, refers to ‘a hermitage and cold bath’.<sup>70</sup> Andrew Plumridge appears confused when, in an article in 1997, he says that the Root House was ‘round with a thatched roof and gothic door between two windows’;<sup>71</sup> there is a watercolour of the building by George ‘Sidney’ Shepherd dated 1813 (Fig. 33), from which it can be seen that it was square or rectangular with a primitive pediment to the front.<sup>72</sup> A hermitage did not presuppose a hermit: William Wrighte describes a winter hermitage as ‘a Retirement from Hunting, Fowling, or any other Winter Amusement’.<sup>73</sup>

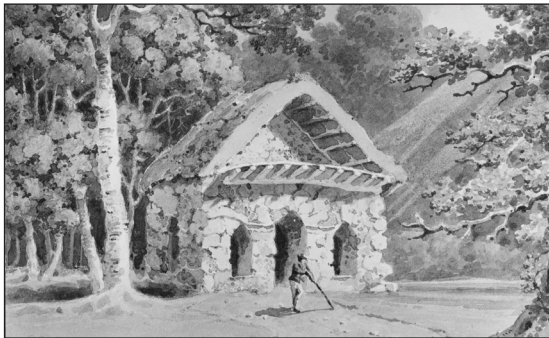


Fig. 33 (left) The Root House at Wrest in 1813, by G. Shepherd (p\_a05194\_007 Historic England Archive)

Fig. 34 (right) The Bath House in 1813, by G. Shepherd (p\_a05194\_003 Historic England Archive)

It is noteworthy that the earliest view of the Wrest Bath House, dated 1813 (Fig. 34), shows the thatched roof of the northern part topped by what appears to be a cross, which would equate with the idea of a Christian hermit rather more than any bath-related function — although at Stourhead (Fig. 35) the view for contemplation from the bath was of two edifices of Christian form, Stourton Church and Bristol High Cross.<sup>74</sup> William Wrighte illustrates a hermitage with a cross atop a thatched roof (Fig. 36).<sup>75</sup> The alternative name ‘Hermitage’ at Wrest, perhaps just for the northern room, may therefore be a valid and comprehensible one.



Fig. 35 (left) The view from the bath house at Stourhead towards Stourton Church (BB66\_02140 ©Crown copyright.Historic England Archive)

Fig. 36 (right) A design for a cross-topped, thatched-roofed hermitage in William Wrighte’s *Grottesque Architecture, or Rural Amusements*, 1767 (© The British Library Board L 61.b.13)

As well as the idea of a Roman bath, the Wrest Bath House reflects contemporary fondness for stonework which was not what polite architecture calls rusticated but genuinely rough, irregular and massive. Unlike the massiveness of work by, say, Sir John Vanbrugh earlier on in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by the 1750s irregularity was important; it should not be forgotten that the word rococo comes from *rocaille* (rockwork or pebblework).<sup>76</sup> A comparison can be made with Stourhead, Wiltshire, where the grotto-*cum*-bath house of the late 1740s has a tunnel leading to a first, circular chamber, lined with tufa and floored with pebbles under a vaulted dome; there are four arched openings alternating with four niches containing stone seats. Off it was a top-lit chamber containing the bath.<sup>77</sup>

There has been confusion over who actually designed the Wrest Bath House. Names suggested are (in alphabetical order) Lancelot Brown, Sir William Chambers, Edward Stevens and Thomas Wright. In addition, there is likely to have been substantial involvement by Lord Hardwicke and the Marchioness, given how keen an interest their letters and travel journals show them to have had in garden buildings elsewhere.<sup>78</sup> Earl de Grey stated in the 1830s that ‘The Bath-House was built by the Earl of Hardwicke’.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the evidence of family letters and journals suggests that the Marchioness was as involved in building and garden-making as her husband.

‘Capability’ Brown and William Chambers need little introduction – the former was the designer of so many naturalistic landscapes in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the latter was the Court architect of the first half of George III’s reign. Edward Stevens (c. 1744-1775) was Chambers’ pupil from 1760 to 1766, when he set up by himself. His principal work seems to have been Doveridge Hall, Derbyshire, designed in 1769, built in 1770-77 and demolished in 1938 (Fig. 37). He went to study in Italy in 1774 but died there soon afterwards.<sup>80</sup> In 1769 Stevens produced drawings for a ‘Theatre or Colonnade’ at Wrest, which seems not to have been built.<sup>81</sup> The next year he carried out alterations to the house at Wrest,<sup>82</sup> and also, as mentioned on p. 15, designed the Chinese Bridge in the eastern part of the garden (see Fig. 27). The Rustic Column has been attributed to Stevens (see p. 18).<sup>83</sup> Its inscription records the completion of Brown’s garden works in 1760, so it was probably erected in the later part of that decade – perhaps in 1769-71, when Stevens was active at Wrest. This certainly makes him the most likely designer, as stated by Earl de Grey (see p. 18).<sup>84</sup>

Thomas Wright (1711-86) should not to be confused with William Wright, author of *Grotesque Architecture* (1767). Thomas was originally a scientist (an astronomer and designer of marine instruments) but in the 1730s he became the protégé of the



Fig. 37 Doveridge Hall, Derbyshire, designed by Edward Stevens and built in 1770-77 (photographed in 1890; sc00195\_03 Historic England Archive)

architect Earl of Pembroke, and after 1750 moved on to work principally as a designer of gardens and buildings. However, neither science nor design was his main source of income: from the 1730s, he was tutor to various young women (including Catherine Talbot) and also to the children in the Duke of Kent's family.<sup>85</sup> His main interest (or at least success) was in the design of rustic garden buildings, where Eileen Harris declares him to have been in the forefront of fashion.<sup>86</sup> George Mason, who wrote an *Essay on Design in Gardening* in 1768, saw Wright as the link between William Kent (who died in 1748) and 'Capability' Brown (working from the 1750s).<sup>87</sup> Possibly because he was employed as a tutor, he only drew designs (mainly for friends or kinsmen of the de Greys) and did not contract for the work, as many designers did.<sup>88</sup> He did not necessarily supervise the works he had recommended on a landscape design.<sup>89</sup> There is known to have been a copy of his 1750s work *Arbours and Grottos* at Wrest, which could have perpetuated his influence even after he retired to County Durham in 1762.<sup>90</sup>

Horace Walpole attributes the 'Hermitage and Cold Bath' at Wrest to 'Capability' Brown.<sup>91</sup> Certainly, Brown sometimes designed buildings, notably a Palladian bridge at Scampston in Yorkshire of 1773 and Gothick domestic offices and a bridge at Burton Constable in the same county in c. 1772.<sup>92</sup> Indeed he also built a bath house at Burghley, in the Soke of Peterborough (matching the style of the house).<sup>93</sup> However, Brown seems unlikely to have been the architect of the Wrest Bath House, not only because of the documentary evidence pointing so clearly to Stevens, but also because it was built at a time when there is no evidence that he was working at Wrest.

One could postulate that Chambers was engaged to design various structures at Wrest but that most of the work was undertaken by his assistant, Stevens, who took over the job when he set up on his own. Seemingly in support of this, Lysons and Lysons, writing 40 years after Stevens' death, when he would have been thoroughly forgotten, ascribe the Bath House to Chambers,<sup>94</sup> and Earl de Grey, six decades later, ascribes the Chinese Temple to him, also saying it was built after Brown's alterations in the gardens in 1760; a payment of £100 to Mr Chambers was made in July 1761, probably for this Temple, built around that time.<sup>95</sup> Plumridge raises the possibility that what Stevens was doing was actually fitting out the interior of the Bath House, but this seems unlikely.<sup>96</sup> Evidence against Chambers' involvement includes the fact that, among the letters Chambers sent in 1770-72 regarding work at Woburn Abbey and Ampthill Park, there is no reference to Wrest.<sup>97</sup>

Stevens was already describing himself as an architect in 1763.<sup>98</sup> He would have been familiar with mock-Roman ruins; the year before he was taken on by Chambers, in 1759, the latter designed the Ruin at Kew which was 'built of brick with an incrustation of stone' (see Fig. 47).<sup>99</sup> Stevens clearly contracted for the building of Wrest Bath House and other structures; Lord Hardwicke paid him a total of £1,898.13.0 between August 1770 and July 1773.<sup>100</sup> In September 1769 Stevens stated, 'I have nearly completed the front of the Arch, over the Spring Head; the Cascade part excepted; and [am] particularly happy with the disposition of the several stones ... If the weather continues favourable I make no doubt of being very forward with the Bath in about a fortnight, but I cannot say with certainty when it will be covered in'.<sup>101</sup>



Fig. 38 (left) The Ragged Castle, Badminton, Gloucestershire, designed by Thomas Wright and built c. 1750 (© Throwawayhack/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

Fig. 39 (right) The Hermit's Cell, Badminton, designed by Thomas Wright and built in 1747 (© Ray Bird ActonT/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-SA-3.0)

Thomas Wright designed two structures at Badminton, Gloucestershire, which, combined, create something of a sense of Wrest Bath House – the Ragged Castle (c. 1750) (Fig. 38), with stone of uneven size, and the Hermit's Cell (1747) (Fig. 39), of rough timber with a thatched roof.<sup>102</sup> At Rushbrooke, Suffolk, a Gothick folly and ice-house is attributed to Wright; it is buttressed, as the Wrest Bath House appears to have been, and has a conical roof topped by a cross (Fig. 40).<sup>103</sup> Design I in Wright's *Arbours and Grottos* (1755-58) is of a rock-work bath house and hermitage, but more elaborate than that at Wrest, although there is a certain resemblance in the semi-spherical domed projections.<sup>104</sup>

Eileen Harris attributes the Wrest Bath House to Thomas Wright on stylistic grounds, and because of his association with the family.<sup>105</sup> However, she seems not to have known of the clear documentary evidence which must confirm Stevens as at least the executing architect, possibly originally brought to Wrest by Chambers. Beyond that, we have no proof of Wright's involvement in the design of Wrest's Bath House, but he may well have discussed ideas for a bath house with Hardwicke and the Marchioness, who themselves would have been knowledgeable and assertive clients (see Appendix B).



Fig. 40 (right) The Pump House, Rushbrooke, Suffolk, attributed to Thomas Wright (photographed between 1880 and 1917; OP27927 Historic England Archive)

As well as architects and their buildings, the influence on Wrest Bath House of illustrations in pattern books must not be discounted, perhaps especially where the owners played such an involved role. William Wright's *Grotesque Architecture* of 1767 includes a Hermit's Cell which has many similarities with the northern room at Wrest Bath House (see Fig. 36).<sup>106</sup> It is hexagonal or octagonal with a thatched conical roof topped with a cross. One face has a round-headed doorway, the other two visible ones have small round-headed window openings. Also potentially influential on Wrest are Wright's designs in *Grotesque Architecture* for a bath forming part of a larger hermitage complex with circular walls of dressed but perhaps hammered stone and a conical thatched roof,<sup>107</sup> and for a Summer Hermitage with a thatched roof, and walls of massive, rudely-cut stone (Fig. 41).<sup>108</sup>

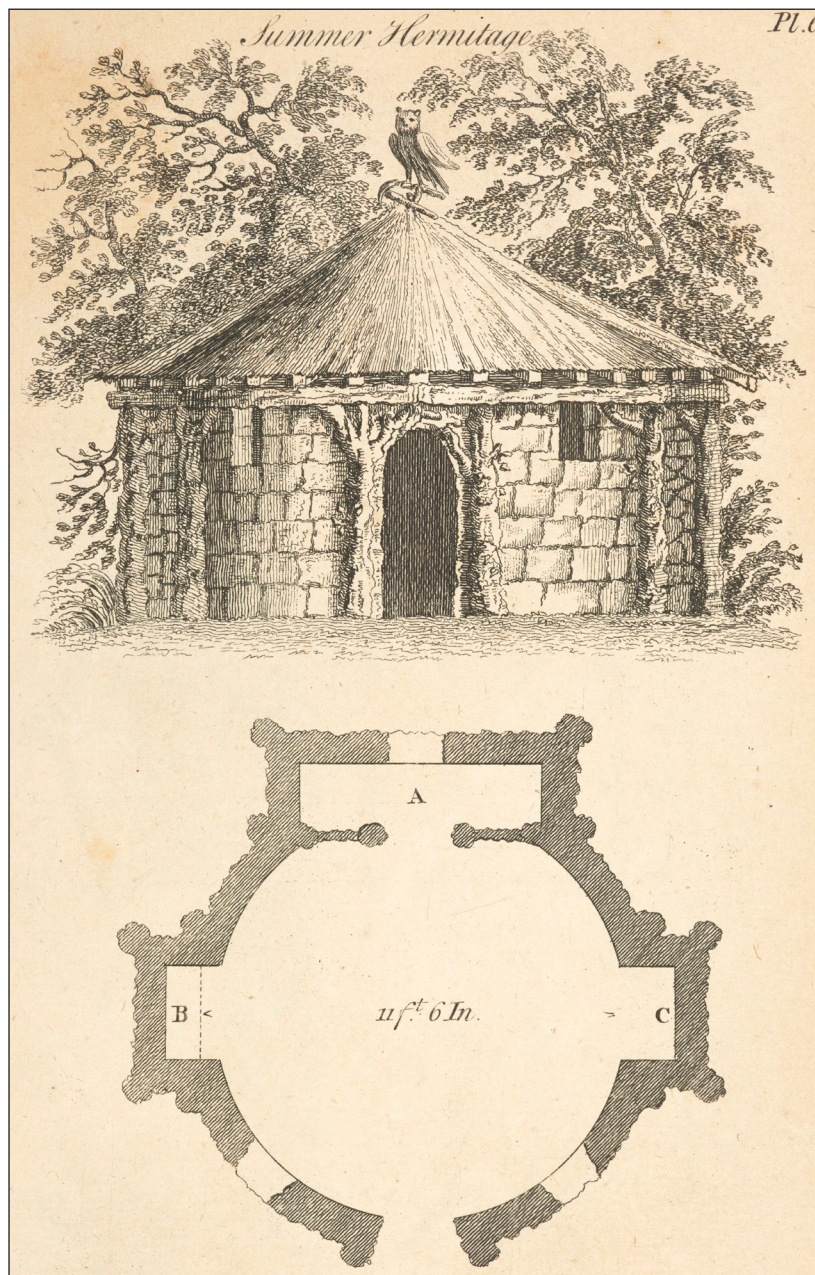


Fig. 41 A Summer Hermitage from William Wright's *Grotesque Architecture*, 1767 (© The British Library Board 61.b.13)



Walpole judged the Bath House at Wrest to be ‘in a bold good taste.’<sup>109</sup> Contemporary examples can be found for the various features of the building. For the facing of rough rockwork, and the circular bath room, there is the mid- to late 18<sup>th</sup>-century bath house at Arbury Hall, Warwickshire, built of rough-hewn rock (Fig. 42).<sup>110</sup> For the conical thatched roof there is Painshill, Surrey, where a circular ‘Roman-style’ thatched building of c. 1790 stood over the plunge pool.<sup>111</sup> Thatch, incidentally, is not necessarily a reference to primitive English or Roman buildings; it could also be seen as Chinese.<sup>112</sup> If the bones laid into the floor of the northern room at Wrest’s Bath House are original,<sup>113</sup> they have a precedent in the Hermitage at Hagley, Worcestershire, of 1751, where the seat is adorned with bones.<sup>114</sup> This may have been to produce an aura of pagan Roman animal sacrifice or, more likely, it may have been purely decorative, as shells were. Lord Hardwicke and Marchioness Grey knew George Lyttleton of Hagley well, and visited the house in 1763, so may have had personal experience of this building.<sup>115</sup> Also, the Root House at Wrest, built in 1749 (see p. 21), provided a precedent: it had a mosaic pavement of pebbles, set with a pattern of horses’ teeth and sheep’s trotters, added in 1750. Notably, in 1767 William Wrighte recommended flooring a summer hermitage with ‘Sheeps Marrow-bones placed upright, or any other pretty Device intermixed with them,’<sup>116</sup> and the floor of a Hermit’s Cell with ‘small Pebble Stones or Cockle Shells.’<sup>117</sup> Thomas Wright suggested paving an ornamental aviary with ‘some Mosaic Figure, in Horse’s Teeth or Pebbles’.<sup>118</sup> The grotto at Stourhead of 1748, with alterations in 1751 and 1776, has a pebble floor.<sup>119</sup>



Fig. 42 The bath house at Arbury Hall, Warwickshire, mid- to late 18<sup>th</sup>-century in date (Warwickshire County Record Office PH 352/63/41)

## Original form

The Bath House at Wrest was proposed as a subject for Wedgwood’s ‘frog’ service for Catherine the Great in 1773, but it was not in the end included, and the drawing made of ‘the Bath & Room’ seems to have been lost.<sup>120</sup> No surviving illustration of the Bath House has been traced dating from any earlier than 1813 (Fig. 43), over 40 years after it was built. There is, however, nothing in the written evidence to suggest that its form altered in this period, other than the references (detailed below) to unsuccessful applications of paint. The form in 1813 equates to that today (Fig. 44), although the angle of the painting means that the southern room is not really visible, and the artist seems to have struggled with the correct proportions of the structure. The only other early image of the building is a watercolour which has been dated 1831 and attributed to Earl de Grey (Fig. 45 and Fig. 46).

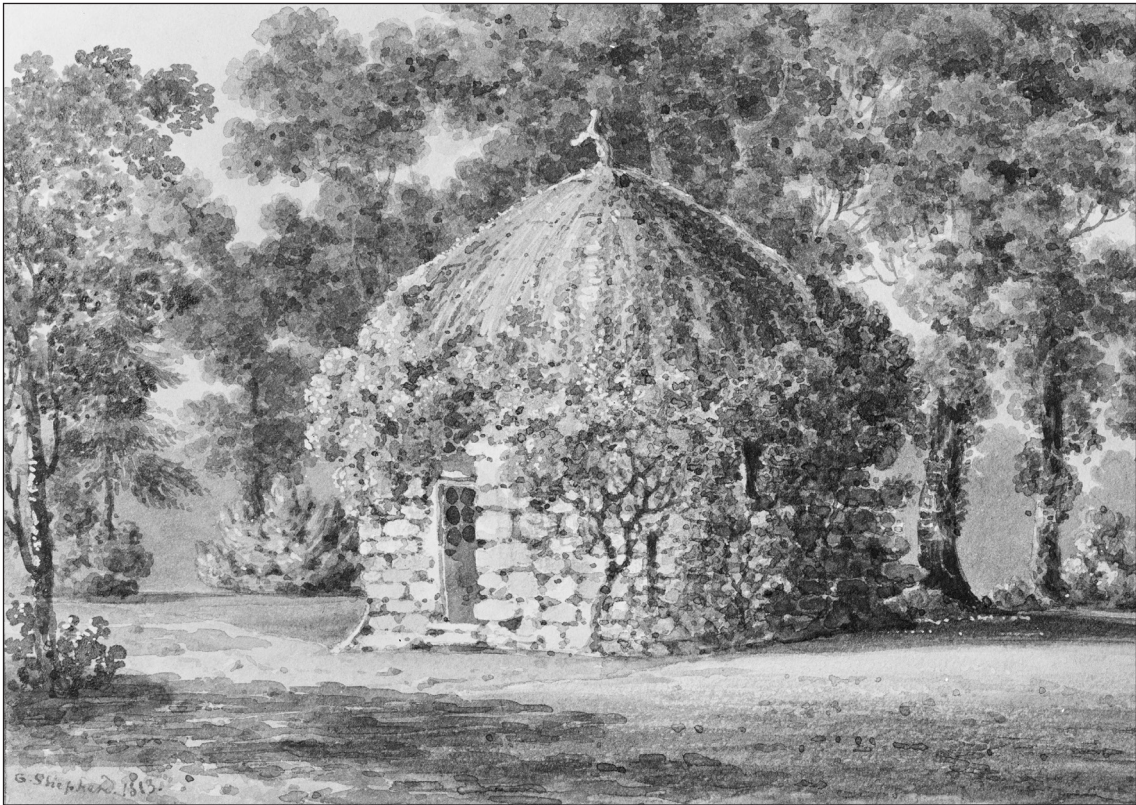


Fig. 43 The Bath House at Wrest by G. Shepherd, 1813 (p\_a05194\_003 Historic England Archive)



Fig. 44 The same view as Fig. 43 today (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232098)



Fig. 45 The Bath House at Wrest, c. 1831 (detail from a watercolour attributed to Earl de Grey; DP110042 ©Historic England Archive)



Fig. 46 Approximately the same view as Fig. 45 today (© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232106)

The southern room was the bath, and it had no space for anything else (see Figs 15 and 16). In 1771 it was described as being ‘neatly paved and filled with limpid water.’<sup>121</sup> The northern room must logically have been the dressing room, in which the user or users would disrobe for their bath and dress again afterwards.<sup>122</sup> That there is only one at Wrest suggests that men and women bathed separately.<sup>123</sup> The main aim of the bath seems to have been the health-giving properties of its waters: in 1784, the local vicar, who was in poor health, asked to borrow a key to Wrest’s gardens, ‘that he may be allow’d to use the Bath; as Batheing is Recommended to him.’<sup>124</sup> However, it is probable that this room had other functions, as many garden structures did – as a place of shelter if rain came on during a walk, for instance, or a venue for tea: Countess de Grey recorded that ‘We breakfasted at the Bath-House’ in August 1787.<sup>125</sup> The niches in the walls (see Fig. 8) seem intended to put clothes or other belongings on; Wrighte refers to something similar in his design for a rural bath as ‘Three Seats within by way of Closets, for the Conveniency of dressing and undressing’.<sup>126</sup> They could possibly also have served as rather low seats.

Some stones might have been left lying around the exterior of the Bath House to suggest they had fallen off the ruin; Chambers did this at Kew (Fig. 47).<sup>127</sup> However, de Grey’s watercolour of around the 1830s shows the building as having buttresses, on either side of the west window, which are no longer there. Slots can today be seen in the stonework where these buttresses must have fitted in, which suggests they were original features (see Figs 7 and 46), although they are not obvious in the 1813 view (see Fig. 43). Some of the stones currently lying around may be from them (see Fig. 21). The buttresses may have been to suggest antiquity and a pretended need to prop up what was being presented as a ruin; the slots suggest they were not added later for functional reasons.



Fig. 47 The Ruin in the grounds of Kew Palace, by William Chambers, 1759, showing stones arranged as if fallen from the ruin (Plate 42 of Chambers’ *View of Kew*, Historic England Archive)

There was at one time an inscription over the door of the Bath House (as there was at Stourhead Bath House):<sup>128</sup> a letter to the Marchioness in 1793 records that painters were to ‘paint the Bathhouse & the inscription over its Door. According to your Ladyship’s directions’.<sup>129</sup> Unfortunately the inscription itself is not recorded; an account published in 1779 gives the inscription over the door of the ‘Hermitage’,<sup>130</sup> but it seems from other references that this means the Root House, not the Bath House.<sup>131</sup>

No illustration or description survives of the original internal treatment of the Wrest Bath House. The bathroom of c. 1750 at Crew’s Hole near Bristol (octagonal with niches in the walls) was rendered up to cornice level.<sup>132</sup> Bath houses with polite classical elements, like that at Walton in Warwickshire (rustic only at basement level), tended to be plastered or panelled inside.<sup>133</sup> In contrast, at Stourhead the bath was in an undecorated grotto made of the local stone.<sup>134</sup> Interiors were not necessarily in the same style as exteriors — at Lucan, Co. Dublin, for instance, the bath house was classical outside and Gothic inside.<sup>135</sup> There could be alternative uses for any rooms in a bath house which did not contain a bath, for example dining or playing cards, although this was perhaps more a feature of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century than earlier.<sup>136</sup>

No reference is known to survive to either plastering or panelling within the Bath House at Wrest. Stevens’ abstract of 1770 (Appendix B) does not include any payments to the painter in relation to the Bath House (he was paid only for work on the bridge).<sup>137</sup> There are, however, other tantalising but unclear references to painting the Bath House — and to problems with paint. In 1775 ‘The Bath Room is painted & looks neat again ... tis a great Pity that the Painting will not stand for it is a pretty little Room’;<sup>138</sup> the last phrase must surely refer to the northern room, as the southern is not really a room at all. There were certainly problems with damp: in 1774 the Marchioness enquired how ‘the Room looks at the Bath ... especially after Rain’.<sup>139</sup> The reply was that it did not look any worse after rain: ‘It is a bit indifferent, especially the Niches near the Bath, but the Damp does not seem to make any Progress’.<sup>140</sup> In 1802 exterior painting was being undertaken as part of repairs to garden buildings, including the Bath House, but it is not clear if the latter was included in the painting work.<sup>141</sup>

Taken together, these references suggest that some part of the Bath House was painted in the 1770s, but that the finish was not lasting because parts of the building were damp. These parts must have been either plaster or bare stonework, both surfaces liable to damp; wooden or metal windows and doors were presumably painted as well. Little guidance can be gained from other contemporary bath houses; that at Roxford, Hertfordshire, built around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was ‘richly Ornamented with Painting’, according to a contemporary account, but this seems the exception rather than the rule.<sup>142</sup> Certainly there is no trace of paint in Wrest Bath House today, although the building has of course been thoroughly ‘restored’.

There is no evidence, written or physical, for panelling within the building. The quality of the dressed stonework, and the idea of a bath as a grotto, both argue against panelling (and indeed against plaster on the walls). Panelling was in any event becoming less fashionable by 1770.

A bath house consisting of two rooms was quite common, and often (for obvious reasons of gravity) the actual bath was lower. Examples are the Bath House at Walton Hall, Warwickshire, of 1749, attributed to Sanderson Miller,<sup>143</sup> and the Fishing Pavilion at Kedleston, Derbyshire, of 1770-72 by Robert Adam.<sup>144</sup> Some dressing rooms had fireplaces but there is no evidence for one at Wrest.<sup>145</sup>

At present the Wrest Bath House has neither doors nor windows in the various openings. In 1779 there were definitely doors as they were to be 'cover'd with Lead',<sup>146</sup> possibly suggesting that they needed protection from damp, although it could have been for aesthetic reasons. There is unfortunately a stain on the document at the end of the word but it looks like doors in the plural – presumably the entrance door to the north, and an internal door between the two rooms. An external door is also shown on both the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century watercolours.

The watercolour by Earl de Grey in the early 1830s (see Fig. 45) shows the sill of the south-west opening in the southern room almost at ground level, the ground being quite a bit higher than today. This suggests the (perhaps unlikely) possibility of a bather's being able to enter directly from outside if the water was up to the top of the steps. The same watercolour clearly shows one window in the northern room – that to the west (the only one in the northern room visible from the angle the painter was at). It has a mullion and transom, and each quarter is broken up by astragals which could be cast iron, lead or conceivably wood; there were lead windows in less visible parts of the old house at Wrest.<sup>147</sup> However, this must be treated with some caution, as the watercolour of the Root House in the same sketchbook (Fig. 48) is clearly a copy (with the figure moved) of the one signed by G. Shepherd and dated 1813 (see Fig. 33). The Earl's study of the Bath House is quite different from Shepherd's, but given that the Root House painting was a copy, the possibility must not be discounted that the Bath House image was a copy of another lost image of earlier date. Whatever it is, it largely conforms with the Bath House today, save that all trace of a window in the window opening has gone.

If the watercolour by the Earl is an original work of c. 1831, it shows there were windows (and a door) in the Bath House before he filled in the bath itself in 1834 (see p. 35), and so it would not be possible to argue that they were added to mark a change of function at that stage. So far as privacy was concerned, an alternative or addition to windows would be planting. Both early 19<sup>th</sup>-century watercolours show climbers or wall-shrubs embracing the building, and trees close by.



Fig. 48 Watercolour, attributed to Earl de Grey, of the Root House at Wrest (demolished) (DP110048 ©Historic England Archive)

The exterior rustic stonework projects into the ‘window’ openings of the northern room (Fig. 49), and so any windows would have had either not to open or to open inwards (or perhaps have only a central panel opening). At Walton, Warwickshire, the bathing pool – underneath an elegant upstairs room – is open to the elements at the sides, as is that in the grotto at Painshill.<sup>148</sup>

Wright seems to have seen windows and doors as optional in garden buildings; one of his arbour designs may ‘if meant as the Abode of an antient Philosophical Druid, or otherwise that of a more modern Ancorite, ... be glaz’d and secured with a Door’.<sup>149</sup> Any original windows in the southern room at least are likely to have been clear so as to preserve the view; the Rustic Column was said to have been erected so as to be seen from the Bath House. Some Roman private baths had views – for example those of Pliny the Younger at Laurentinum in Latium<sup>150</sup> – as did the plunge-pool at Stourhead (towards Stourton Church and the re-erected Bristol High Cross) (see Fig. 35).<sup>151</sup> Works on the southern (bath) room in the 1960s found what were recorded as ‘2no holes for former (probable) iron rails across windows’.<sup>152</sup> It is unclear whether these would have been bars across open window openings, or transoms for metal windows – presumably the former.

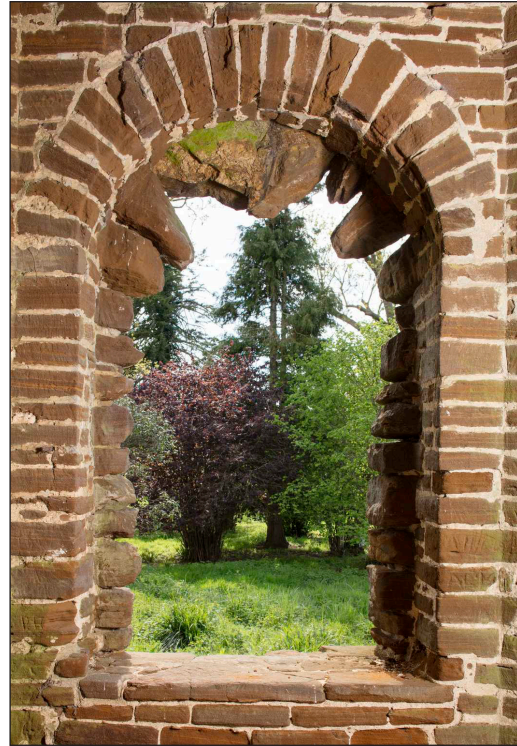


Fig. 49 The north-west window opening of the Bath House, showing stones from the exterior stonework projecting into the window space  
(© Historic England, Patricia Payne DP232120)

## Water supply

Very little has been written about the water supply to detached bath houses. At Crew’s Hole near Bristol, the steeply-sloping terrain allowed the bath to be filled by gravity via a cascade from a reservoir above it.<sup>153</sup> Lysons and Lysons stated in 1813 that the serpentine river at Wrest was ‘supplied by a spring which rises not far from the [old] house’.<sup>154</sup> At Packwood, Warwickshire, in the 1680s, the bath was fed by a sluice gate on the lake.<sup>155</sup> At Kedleston, Derbyshire (1759-61), a stream actually flows through the bath.<sup>156</sup> One 18<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish bath house was sufficiently technologically advanced to allow the water level to be raised or lowered by the turning of a tap.<sup>157</sup>

Earl de Grey, writing in the early 1830s, recorded that the Wrest Bath House ‘was supplied by pipes from a spring in the neighbourhood which was supposed (now believed erroneously) to have some Chalybeate quality’.<sup>158</sup> Later, a local physician apparently analysed the water from the spring near the Bath House and found it contained iron held in solution by carbonic acid, and also sulphate and muriate of lime, with sulphate of magnesium or Epsom Salts.<sup>159</sup> Logically the water must have

arrived either by gravity or as a result of pumping. There appears to be no mention anywhere of a pump at Wrest, however, so if the water supply was fed by gravity, the source must have been uphill from the bath inlet. The obvious source would be the Chalybeate spring which fed the Cascade (marked as such on an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century plan; see Fig. 4). No data is available as to the fall (if any) in levels between this spring and the water level in the pool in the Bath House. The possibility has been raised of the existence of a further spring west of the Bath House, but again data on levels is not available.<sup>160</sup> In 1900 a spring in the vicinity of the Bath House was seen by the author of an article in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* as the source of the water for the whole serpentine river.<sup>161</sup>



Fig. 50 The Cascade in the 1970s (AL1907 010 01 ©Crown copyright.Historic England Archive)

There were clearly issues with the supply of water to the Cascade, however. In 1919-20, Wrest's new owner, John Murray, improved the flow of water to the feature. A newspaper commented that 'the spring, which for nearly a century did not deserve its name, now sends forth a copious supply of water so that the lake is no longer stagnant'.<sup>162</sup> Murray also introduced alpine plants 'in abundance' to the 'rustic bridge' over the Cascade, and removed much of the ivy from the Bath House. A note in a report of 1991 records that the spring supplying certainly the Cascade was still in existence in 1952 but later ran dry because of borehole extraction.<sup>163</sup> In 1960, there is a reference in Ministry files to the 'Cascade being made workable', and there were further changes to this area in 1961.<sup>164</sup> Photographs of the 1970s illustrate the successful results, with running water restored (Fig. 50, and see Fig. 24).<sup>165</sup>

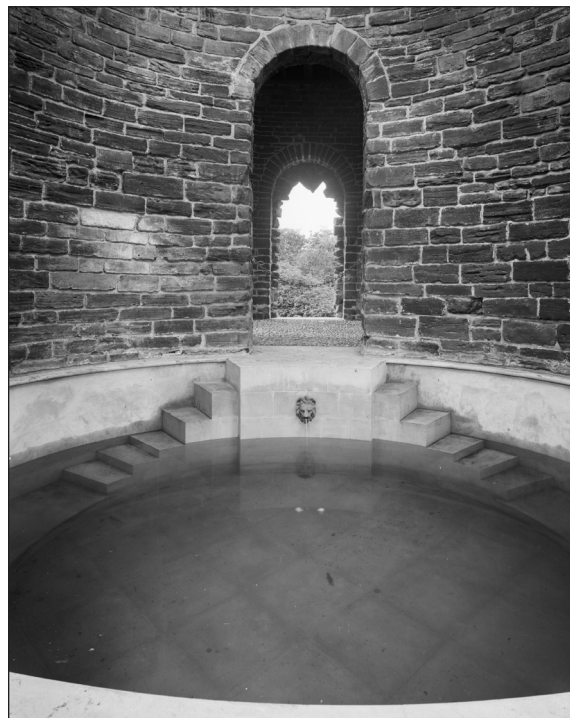


Fig. 51 The bath room at Wrest in 1969, shortly after 'restoration', showing the lion's mask inlet (p\_ao7888\_001 ©Crown copyright.Historic England Archive)



The Georgians thought it desirable for bath water to be clear (and thus clean); the diarist Charles Greville recorded that at Painshill he ‘bathed in the cold bath in the grotto, which is as clear as crystal and as cold as ice.’<sup>166</sup> The water at Wrest, today and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was impregnated with iron and thus a rusty colour,<sup>167</sup> but perhaps it was different in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Elizabeth Graham states that generally water entered a bath through a spout, and left it through a plughole or was pumped out, with water flow controlled by a brass tap or cock.<sup>168</sup> There is now a lion’s mask above the bath at Wrest, in the position of an inlet (Fig. 51). However, this seems to date from the 1960s restoration and it is unclear what (if anything) it was intended to replace and whether any evidence was discovered as to the original inlet; certainly a photograph taken at the time of the restoration does not appear to show one.<sup>169</sup>

The supply pipes to the Bath House were originally of wood; the house carpenter mended them in 1783.<sup>170</sup> Two years later ‘Six men were employed ... in digging out a trench to lay the New Pipes to convey the water to the Bath, digging gravel, ... drawing the pipes together and assisting to lay the same down ... House carpenter employed in laying the Bath Pipes down and sundry jobs’;<sup>171</sup> five men were then needed to cover the pipes up.<sup>172</sup> The efficacy of pipework at Wrest may have been hampered by a lack of plumbers locally; it seems that London men had to be used.

There is further mention of pipes supplying the Bath House in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1801 the land agent informed Countess de Grey that a particular lot of timber was:

totally unfit to make pipes to carry water to the Bath [,] and to make pipes of Lead will cost upwards of £50 would your Ladyship please to have it done this year, or delayed until another, the Ground is so boggy and wet that Wood Pipes will continually want repairing and will upon the whole be as Dear as Lead in the end.<sup>173</sup>

Lead seems to have been decided upon, as the next year the agent was writing to a London plumber about ‘Pipes for the Bath water’, and in May 1802 pipes were being laid.<sup>174</sup> As just mentioned, there were continuing problems with poor drainage in the Bath House Grounds (perhaps not surprising as Wrest is the lowest part of the parish).<sup>175</sup> In 1804 – the area being ‘so very wett the men can hardly stand on it’ – the agent was ‘draining the Bath Ground’, cutting down some of the taller trees and planting some ‘Aquatic shrubs & plants’ (possibly not entirely trusting the efficacy of his drains), work which continued into 1805.<sup>176</sup> The agent’s hope was that ‘the wood will grow better than it used to do’, though the trees were thinned at various points thereafter, including in 1822.<sup>177</sup> Iron pipes were bought for draining an unspecified part of the gardens in 1823-24.<sup>178</sup>

This contradicts what a member of the family had said in 1778 – ‘I never thought Wrest damp, the water about it runs, & the House I think is upon gravel and sand. I am sure there are many thousand Bricks laid in Drains under ground’.<sup>179</sup> However, by 1792 it was reported that ‘The whole of the Drains in Wrest Gardens are in very bad order, Mr Pawsey to put them in good Repair.’<sup>180</sup> A number of Capability Brown’s drainage schemes did not work properly, notably those at Hewell, Worcestershire, Croome in the same county, and Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire;<sup>181</sup> possibly Brown’s drains at Wrest proved equally ineffective.

The bath of course needed to be emptied as well as filled; excavation in the 1960s revealed a plug at the bottom through which the bath could be emptied, presumably to the Bath House Water. An architect's drawing for the restoration (see Fig. 17) says 'Outlet to be opened up and repaired as required' but it is not known exactly what was done.

The water supply to the Bath House would no longer have been needed after the filling-in of the bath in 1834 (see below) and would therefore have fallen into disuse or indeed been dismantled. The wider water system (of relevance to the Cascade) was described in 1963 as 'a decayed underground water system of unknown plan which failed to deliver water where it was wanted but produced floods where they were not'.<sup>182</sup>

Archaeological investigations by Albion Archaeology in 2015-16 into (among other things) drainage and supply pipes around the Bath House and Cascade were generally inconclusive. They did show that there was a concrete pipe to the Cascade, suggesting that in the later years of its operation there was no spring on the site, and the water was brought in from elsewhere.<sup>183</sup> This change may have formed part of the works undertaken by John Murray in 1919-20 (see p. 33).

## Subsequent history

Repairs were carried out to the Bath House in 1802 – unspecified except that they included 'laying down the Pipes'.<sup>184</sup> It was re-thatched in 1821.<sup>185</sup> It is probable that the bath remained in use until in 1827-28 'complete Cold and Hot Baths' were installed in the (old) main house.<sup>186</sup> In 1834, presumably because it was by then disused, Earl de Grey 'filled up' the bath in the Bath House.<sup>187</sup> The fill and the pebbled floor then created can be seen in photographs taken during the 1960s works (Fig. 52 and see Fig. 18).



Fig. 52 The southern room of the Bath House in 1963, showing the pebble-topped earth filling (presumably dating from 1834) partly dug out to reveal the bath (p\_a06331\_003 Historic England Archive)

A number of accounts published either side of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century give an idea of how the Bath House was seen (both visually and figuratively) and what its surroundings were like. In 1885 the *Gardeners' Chronicle* admired the fernery, which seems to have occupied part of the Bath Grounds, but did not mention the Bath House itself.<sup>188</sup> In 1899, a fairly detailed account of the area was given by William Treacher, who described his visit to 'the old Roman bath-house':

we crossed a rustic bridge, where we felt compelled to rest a while and drink in the magnificent scenery. There seemed an air of classic sanctity about the secluded spot. Above, below, around was like a sheet of vivid green: the branches of the trees almost touched the water's edge, all kinds of ferns seemed to enjoy a healthy existence among the rocks, and the water itself with its greenish surface gave a touch of loneliness to the scene. Before us we saw an ancient Roman temple, ... part of which was originally the bath-house; but the basin has for many years been filled up. The floor is a very curious one, as it is formed of knuckle bones, teeth, and pebbles radiating from the centre. The roof, and indeed most of the exterior, is covered with ivy ...<sup>189</sup>

In 1908 (in Whitelaw Reid's time) the *Gardeners' Magazine* said that laurel hedges were 'very numerous and thick in what are known as the Bath Grounds. Here is the remains of an old Roman bath house, close to the rock fernery, and to the place where the water that supplies the streams and ponds rises.'<sup>190</sup> The same year the *Gardeners' Chronicle* gave the following description:

Close to [the Great Yew Hedge] are the baths, which formed at one time the bathing place at Wrest. A ruined structure, mantled with Ivy, covers the actual pool, the water issuing from a chalybeate well and flowing under the rockery ... which in summer ... is decked with flowers. Ferns grow in luxuriance. The spring provides water for the lake, which "Capability" Brown ... altered and ornamented ... This in early summer is a beautiful spot, especially when the Rhododendrons are in full bloom.<sup>191</sup>

Edward Stevens would no doubt have been delighted that the writer seems to have thought it was a real ruin.

As part of his quite extensive works around the Bath House in 1919-20, Wrest's new owner, J. G. Murray, felled trees in the area surrounding the building to open up the view. In 1920, the local newspaper wrote that Murray had 'carried out great improvements' in the Bath House Grounds, 'letting in sun and air by removal of elms and yew, and replanting the extensive rockeries with alpine plants'.<sup>192</sup>

The sale catalogue of 1917 does not mention the Bath House,<sup>193</sup> but that of 1934 includes:

THE OLD BATH HOUSE, a picturesque old stone building, surrounded by a Rock garden with stone bridge over Stream. In the Grounds is a copious Chalybeate Spring.<sup>194</sup>

Clearly, as Murray had intended, the Bath House was becoming more noticeable. Some photographs dated to c. 1939 show the northern room not thatched but tiled.<sup>195</sup> When this change was made is not clear, but it was post-1831 (see above and Fig. 45) and does not look newly-done in the photograph.

Wrest was bought by the Ministry of Public Building and Works in 1946 to house the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering. At first the legalities were confused, but in 1955 a lease of the house and most of the grounds to the NIAE was finally granted, with the garden buildings, including the Bath House (described as the ‘Grotto’), excluded. A description of the estate in the late 1940s, written a decade and a half later, paints a depressing picture:

When we bought the estate [it] was in a frightful mess. The gardens had been neglected for several decades and were hopelessly overgrown; the waterworks were in chaos; and the buildings had lapsed into serious dilapidation.<sup>196</sup>

At first the Ministry concentrated on the more obvious (and presumably higher priority) buildings, the Pavilion, the Banqueting House and the Orangery; a list of the six principal buildings in the gardens, accompanying a plea by an inspector of ancient monuments to preserve and maintain them, does not include the Bath House.<sup>197</sup> There were problems with the NIAE misusing some of the garden buildings.<sup>198</sup> One incensed inspector wrote, ‘the [Ministry of Agriculture] Officer in Charge at Wrest Park [is] either a barbarian or had no control over his people, though I am told that the latter is improbable’.<sup>199</sup> There is no mention in these papers of the Bath House, which may have been saved by its inconspicuousness and perhaps its more vernacular appearance, too.

The first proper account in Ministry of Works records seems to be in March 1949 when an inspector reported, under the heading ‘Grotto or Hermitage’:

The mud and peat banking was sliding away from the foundations. Mr Bailey requested that steps be taken to prevent further “landslides” and the D[istrict] S[urveyor] should go ahead. As this was a very difficult proposition it was agreed that the matter should be investigated and a separate report prepared as to means of carrying out the work.<sup>200</sup>

Steps were not in fact taken until 1954, when the waterside section of the Bath House was underpinned (Figs 53 and 54). The Ministry struggled to get the public admitted to the gardens at all, and in 1951 they were not allowed near the Bath House; the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, B. H. St John O’Neill, had to point out that ‘the grotto or Hermitage, due west of the Orangery, is an integral part of the garden & should be shown to the public.’<sup>201</sup> In 1956 it was reported that

the roofed section of the building is now badly holed and clearly dangerous but could, no doubt, be protected for the present. But the ruined vault over the other section of the building must be repaired now. It is quite clear that recently it has become more ruinous than it ought to be and if it is not attended to very soon (before the winter) it will fall.<sup>202</sup>



Fig. 53 The Bath House from the south-west in April 1954, showing how it had been undermined by the Bath House Water (p\_a03147\_001 Historic England Archive)



Fig. 54 The same view a month later, after underpinning (p\_a03177\_003 Historic England Archive)

It was propped up at least twice in in 1956 and 1957 as an interim measure (Fig. 55).<sup>203</sup>

A draft schedule of works of 1960 has under the heading 'Hermitage':

Replace the existing pyramidal tile roof.

Consolidate the "ruined" dome

Restore the floor in cobbles with vertebrae bone design<sup>204</sup>

Another schedule states:

Existing planting to be adjusted to recreate 18<sup>th</sup> century setting of buildings

Cascade to be made workable<sup>205</sup>

In fact, the tiles had been stripped off in 1958 and the roof covered with tarpaulin.<sup>206</sup> The Ministry of Works admitted to itself, although not publicly, that ‘we have made a mess of [the work at Wrest] administratively over the last 14 years.’<sup>207</sup> In 1963 the Treasury approved the expenditure of £39,400 on a programme of work, including on the Bath House.<sup>208</sup> A photograph in November 1963 shows the roof timbers exposed (Fig. 56), while staff began to think of the restoration of the bath itself (Fig. 57).<sup>209</sup> Drawings which appear to be for the re-roofing and re-thatching of the northern room are dated January 1966 (Fig. 58), although it is not entirely clear whether timbers were to be entirely new or incorporated surviving work.<sup>210</sup> By February 1967 work on the Bath House was nearly complete,<sup>211</sup> and it was entirely so by 1969,<sup>212</sup> although in 1980 it was recorded that the adjustment of the planting had still not happened.<sup>213</sup>



Fig. 55 The roof of the bath room, shored up in November 1956 after partial collapse (p\_a04542\_006 Historic England Archive)



Fig. 56 The Bath House from the south-east in November 1963 with the roof timbers of the north room exposed (fl01183\_01\_002 Historic England Archive)

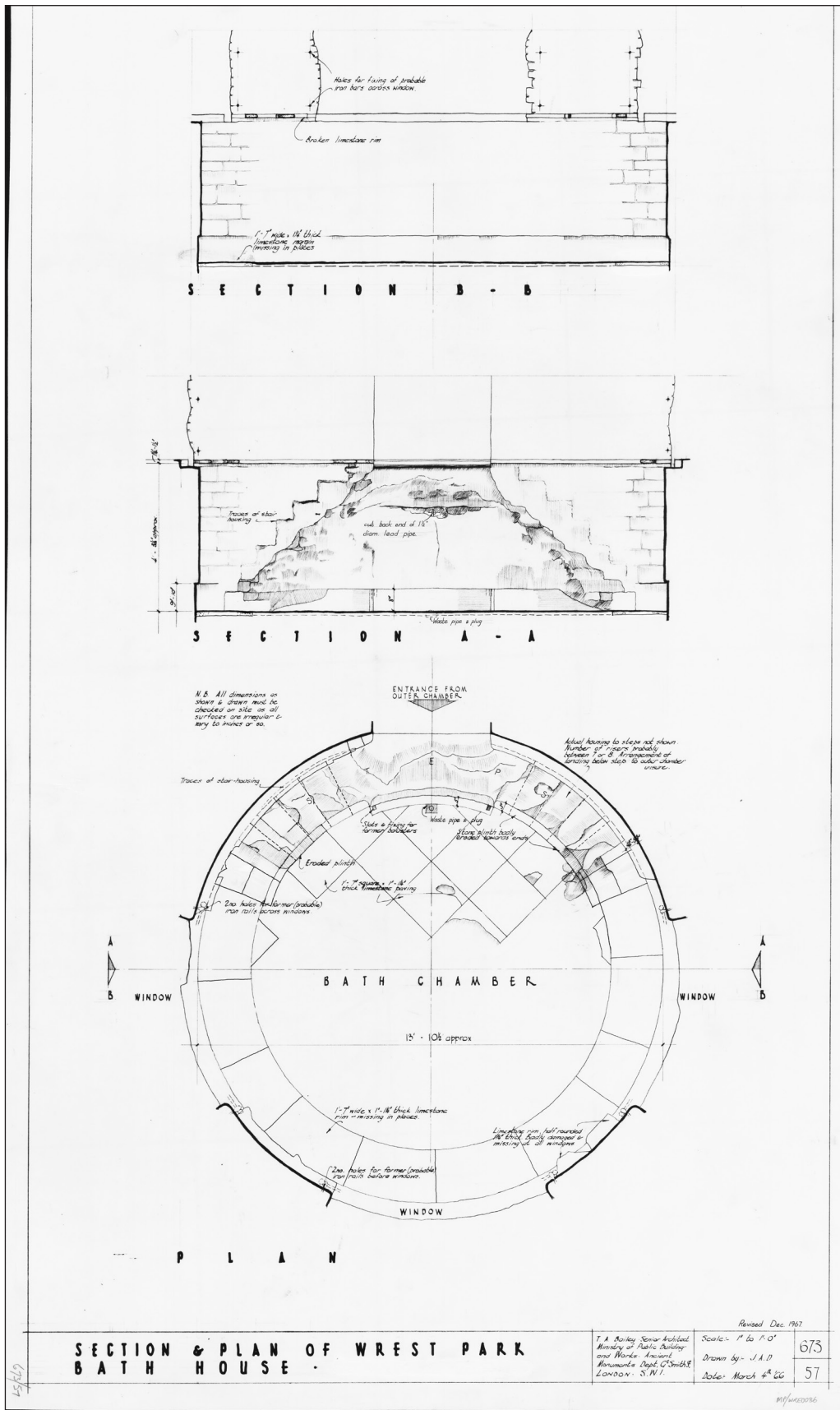


Fig. 57 Plan and section of the bath as existing in 1967, with tiles shown on the bottom of the bath (MP\_WRE0086 Historic England Archive)

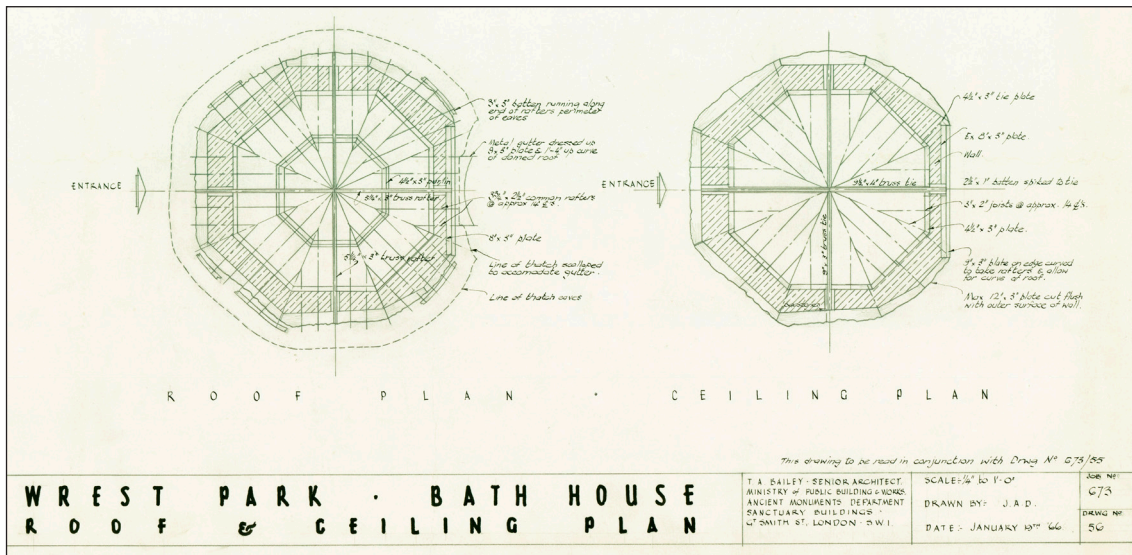


Fig. 58 Plans of the roof and ceiling of the north room, 1966, by T. A. Bailey of the Ministry of Works (MP\_WRE0084 Historic England Archive)

The 1960s works to the Bath House were extensive, although unfortunately detailed records do not survive. The most obvious changes, as recorded by photographs now in the Historic England Archive, were the replacement of the tiled roof of the northern room with thatch, and the digging-out of the bath and recreating it with cement or concrete (Fig. 59) and the likely re-laying of the pebble floor (see Figs. 13-14). In a number of places the ironstone can today be seen to have been behaving sacrificially, suggesting that cement mortar was used for pointing in the 1960s.

The Bath House is today part of English Heritage’s visitor route around Wrest. It stands largely isolated in open ground on the bank of the Bath House Water (see Fig. 7), in contrast to its historic setting, hidden in the woods and undergrowth.



Fig. 59 The bath at Wrest in January 1968 after excavation but before ‘restoration’ (p\_ao7506\_001 Historic England Archive)



## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Bath House at Wrest is a good example of what was once a relatively common feature of English country houses and their grounds. Like many others, it has an element of the grotto to it, overlooks water, and was originally accessible from the house but embowered in the privacy of dense plantings. Like other bath houses, it seems to have been seen in a number of simultaneous guises – primarily as a place to have a bath and get dressed afterwards, but also as a grotto, as a ruined Roman bath, as a cross-topped Christian hermitage, as a pleasant room for tea or a picnic, and as a picturesque component of the gardens and landscape.

It is frustrating that no early images or detailed descriptions of the Bath House survive (the first is over 40 years after it was built), and also that it was so heavily ‘restored’ in the 1960s that physical clues are lacking, too. It seems that it did originally have doors and, in the northern half but not the southern, windows. Part of it was painted in its early life but quite what is uncertain, other than that it seems to have been unsuccessful. The possibilities are the bath itself (failing because it was mainly underwater) or the inside of the northern room, failing because paint was applied onto either bare stone or (damp) plaster. There is no evidence within the fabric or in historical documents for the existence of panelling. Any ‘polite’ interior scheme would surely have required a ceiling rather than the open roof timbers now present, but there is no evidence of one.

The exterior of the building looks much as it did when first completed, except for the loss of the door, of the cross on top, of the inscription over the door, and – if they were ever there – of windows in the northern room. The setting, though, is sadly reduced from the dense planting of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Inside, the bath itself shows the effects of the 1960s works. The northern room, subject to queries about original decoration, seems unaltered except for what appears to be hard pointing and a possibly heavy ‘restoration’ of the decorative floor.

Archival evidence makes it clear that the Bath House was built by Edward Stevens, an architect little-known because he died young, but was undoubtedly influenced in the design both by Wrest’s owners and by their tutor and familiar Thomas Wright. The involvement of William Chambers in some capacity cannot be ruled out. Less certain is any input from ‘Capability’ Brown; he is not known to have been at Wrest during the decade before the construction of the Bath House, although he may conceivably have earmarked the site as one for a building of some sort when informalising the gardens in the late 1750s – especially as there was an open bath on the site.

There seems little scope for further archival research on the Bath House, and the most fruitful approach henceforth would seem to be archaeological. Certainly excavation might unearth evidence of the original water supply, and the ground is damp enough for it to be possible that some remnants of wooden pipes might have survived.

This Report has not looked at any structure other than the Bath House itself and the Cascade and rockwork bridge. Further work on the Rustic Column might illuminate the history of these three features which for a time together formed a discrete section of the Wrest gardens, and especially illuminate their comparative dates. The research for this Report has noted in passing the extent of the involvement of Edward Stevens at Wrest; a fuller study of him is overdue.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A 9<sup>th</sup> August 1770 BRO L31/342/1

Dr. to Edw:<sup>d</sup> Stevens Architect

1770		£ s d
Aug:t	To a plan and Elevation for a Bridge and For Surveying the Erecting of it; measuring the works, settling the Bills, & making the necessary drawings for the workmen at 5 per cent on the sum of £169 17s 9 ¼ d	8.10.0
Aug:t 9	To travelling Expences etc in my last Journey to Wrest & back again	2.6.9
		10.16.9

### Appendix B 31<sup>st</sup> August 1770 BRO L31/318

A General Abstract of the Bills delivered this 31<sup>st</sup> Aug:t for Work done for The Rt Hon:<sup>ble</sup> The Earl of Hardwicke at the cold Bath and new Bridge in His Lordship's Gardens at Wrest

		Total amount of their Bills £ s d	At the Bridge £ s d	At the cold bath £ s d	
London workmen	Bricklayer	John Rentham	69.9.0 ¼	11.7.10 ½	58.1.1 ¾
	Carpenter	John Cook	98.17.3 1/2	71.16.7	27.0.8 ½
	Joiner	Will <sup>m</sup> Greenell	62.7.0	62.7.0	
	Smith	Jam: <sup>s</sup> Palmer	0.9.2 ½	0.9.2 ½	
	Smith	Fra: <sup>s</sup> Lowings	8.0.4 ¼	6.1.11 ¼	1.18.5
	Painter	Jam: <sup>s</sup> Clearson	7.17.6	7.17.6	
	Stone Quarriers	Homes, Homan & Co	9.10.0	2.16.0	6.14.0
	Lime Merch: <sup>t</sup>	Page & Bradley	15.6.3	4.1.8	11.4.7
	Lime Merch: <sup>t</sup>	S. Humberstone	4.14.0	3.0.0	1.14.0
	Thatcher	J. Rainbow	0.19.0		0.19.0
			277.9.7 ½	169.17.9 ¼	107.11.10 ¼
	Architect	E. Stevens	10.16.9		
			288.6.4 ½		

## ENDNOTES

- 1 NHLE 1402825
- 2 *Victoria County History of Bedfordshire* Vol. II 1908 (ed. W Page) (London: Archibald Constable & Co) 305-06
- 3 This account is based on VCH 326-28 and on GEC
- 4 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Kent 1702-06; Marquess of Kent 1706-10; Duke of Kent 1710-40
- 5 Hon. Philip Yorke 1740-54; Viscount Royston 1754-64; 2nd Earl of Hardwicke 1764-90
- 6 (5<sup>th</sup>) Lady Lucas of Crudwell 1797-1816; (1st) Countess de Grey 1816-33
- 7 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Grantham 1786-1833; 2nd Earl de Grey 1833-59
- 8 Dowager Countess Cowper 1856-80 was also (7<sup>th</sup>) Lady Lucas of Crudwell 1859-80
- 9 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Cowper 1856-1905 was also 8<sup>th</sup> Lord Lucas of Crudwell 1880-1905
- 10 9<sup>th</sup> Lord Lucas of Crudwell 1905-16
- 11 Land Use Consultants 1983 *Historical Survey of Wrest Park: Summary Report* (prepared for Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings) 19
- 12 (10<sup>th</sup>) Lady Lucas of Crudwell 1916-58
- 13 Whole site listed NHLE 1000113 and scheduled 1005407. Bath House and Cascade listed NHLE 1113790.
- 14 L. C. Halpern 1995, 'The Duke of Kent's garden at Wrest Park', *Journal of Garden History* 15:3, 149-78 at 149
- 15 Halpern 169, arguing that Eileen Harris' attribution of much of this work to Thomas Wright cannot stand in the face of documentary evidence in favour of Langley
- 16 See *Plan Shewing the relative Positions of the Old and New Houses at Wrest* by Earl de Grey 1836 (BRO L33/150)
- 17 Marchioness to Countess de Grey 20<sup>th</sup> November 1776 (BA L30/11/122/112; L30/9/60/89)
- 18 BA L30/11/122/189
- 19 M. Alexander 2013 *Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire: Landscape Investigations* (English Heritage Research Report Series no. 6-2013)
- 20 M. Alexander, S Newsome and E. Chamberlin 2015 *Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire: Bathhouse Grounds Analytical Earthwork Survey* (Historic England Research Report Series no. 84-2015)
- 21 Polydora Baker, *Zooarchaeological analysis of the bathhouse bone floor, Wrest Park* (Historic England Report Series no. 63/2019)
- 22 HEA p\_a06331\_003
- 23 HEA MP\_WRE0098
- 24 Plan, HEA MP\_WRE0086

- 25 NHLE 1113790
- 26 Mentioned in some undated but probably early 18<sup>th</sup>-century measurements by one William Farrer (BRO L28/21)
- 27 NHLE 1113790
- 28 This bridge is also referred to in a bill from Stevens to Lord Hardwicke dated 9<sup>th</sup> August 1770 (BRO L31/342/1) (see Appendix A)
- 29 Which would have been installed by a plumber not a smith
- 30 See a sheet (not foliated but headed 'Wrest House and Garden'), in what was catalogued as 'Rough Notes on the family and on Wrest, probably by Earl de Grey' (BA L31/105). See also: BL Add. MSS 35693
- 31 Graham, E. 2013 *Pleasure and Utility: Domestic Bathrooms in Britain, 1660 - 1815* (Edinburgh University PhD thesis, 2013) 65
- 32 S. Kellerman 2001 'Bath Houses: An Introduction' *The Follies Journal* 1 21-27 22
- 33 S. Kellerman 2001 'Bath Houses: Gazetteer' *The Follies Journal* 1 45-57, 45
- 34 1.35 metres
- 35 Graham 30
- 36 J.-F. Blondel 1737 *De la Distribution des Maisons de Plaisance et de la Decoration des Edifices en General* Vol. I (Paris: Jombert) 72
- 37 Blondel 73
- 38 Deitz, P. 2011 *Of Gardens: Selected Essays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press) 246, cited by Graham 213
- 39 Graham 60
- 40 V. Rolf 2011 *Bathing Houses and Plunge Pools* (Oxford: Shire Publications) 9
- 41 Rolf 20
- 42 Graham 217
- 43 Graham 226
- 44 Blondel 72
- 45 Hunt, J. D. 1992 *Gardens and the Picturesque*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 3, 42, 75-77 (cited by Graham 214)
- 46 Alexander 2015
- 47 Alexander 2015 39
- 48 As Alexander suggests (Alexander 2015 39)
- 49 Godber, J. 1968 *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park* (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society 57), 62.



- 50 D. Lysons and S. Lysons 1813 *Magna Britannia: being a concise topographical account of the several counties of Great Britain* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies) Vol. I Part I 85
- 51 BA L30/11/122/181; Lady Polwarth to her sister, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1779 (BA L30/13/12/56); Godber 86
- 52 K. Lynch 2016 *Noble Prospects: Capability Brown and the Yorkshire Landscape* (Harrogate: Yorkshire Gardens Trust)
- 53 BA CRT 130 Silsoe 4 Slide 1676. It is now believed that this reference was made out of politeness to the Countess de Grey, who was blind by this time. The estate was being managed by Lord Grantham, soon to become Earl de Grey: pers. comm., Andrew Hann
- 54 Eileen Harris 1967 *Thomas Wright 1755/1758 Arbours and Grottos* (a facsimile of the two parts of *Universal Architecture* 1755 and 1758 with a catalogue of Wright's work in architecture and garden design by Eileen Harris) (London: Scolar Press)
- 55 Kellerman 23
- 56 There are references to 'raising stones' and selling them in the 1820s (Duplicates of the late Mr Thomas Brown's Wrest estate account Lady Day 1827 to Lady Day 1837 [BA L26/1454])
- 57 BA L31/318
- 58 Arthur Gidney 2017 *The Building Site in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press) 28-29
- 59 BL Add. MSS 35693-35694, per Andrew Hann
- 60 Hadley Cox to Lord Hardwicke, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1771 (BL Hardwick Papers Add. MSS 35693-4)
- 61 R. Finney to Lord Hardwicke, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1772 (BL Add. MSS 35693-4)
- 62 Countess de Grey to Marchioness, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1779 (BA L30/9/60/178)
- 63 T. Hudson 1974 'A Ducal Patron of Architects' *Country Life*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 78-81
- 64 Lysons 85
- 65 C. Cameron 1772 *The Baths of the Romans explained and illustrated* (London: George Scott) Plate XIV
- 66 See shapes given in Graham 78
- 67 Cameron 48
- 68 Andrews, M. 1989 *The Search for the Picturesque* (Aldershot: Scolar Press) 49
- 69 Marchioness Grey to Catherine Talbot, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1750 (BA L30/9a/6). See: Andrew Hann n.d. *The Mithraic Glade: A Summary History* (unpublished draft Research Notes)
- 70 P. Toynbee (ed.) 1928 *Horace Walpole's Journals of Visits to Country Seats, etc*, Walpole Society 16, 71
- 71 A. Plumridge 1997 'The Duke's Garden at Wrest' *Follies* 9:2 (OS no. 34) 14-18, 17
- 72 HEA pa 054194/007. A watercolour in Earl de Grey's sketchbook (BA CRT 130 Silsoe 4 Slide 1669) is clearly a copy

- 73 W. Wrighte 1767 *Grotesque Architecture, or Rural Amusements; consisting of Plans, Elevations, and Sections, for Hutts, Retreats, Summer and Winter Hermitages, Terminaries, Chinese, Gothick and Natural Grottos, Cascades, Baths, Mosques, Moresque Pavilions, Grotesque and Rustic Seats, Green Houses, etc* (London: Henry Webley) Text to Plate V
- 74 Rolf 31
- 75 Wrighte Plate 3
- 76 Symes 9
- 77 Graham 214
- 78 Godber 135-40; T. Richardson 1997 'Wrest Park, Bedfordshire' *Country Life*, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1997 38-43, 42
- 79 BA CRT 130 Silsoe 4 Slide 1666
- 80 Colvin, H. M. 1995 *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (New Haven and London 1995); Saunders, E. 1972 'Doveridge Hall' *Derbyshire Life and Countryside*, August 1972 (37:8) 40-41
- 81 BA L33/106
- 82 See a sheet (not foliated but headed 'Wrest House and Garden'), in what has been catalogued as 'Rough Notes on the family and on Wrest, probably by Earl de Grey' (BA L31/105)
- 83 Land Use Consultants (1983) 17
- 84 Alexander (2013) dates the Column to 1770-72, but does not mention a source
- 85 Harris 11-14
- 86 Harris 15
- 87 Harris 15
- 88 Harris 15
- 89 Lynch 35
- 90 Harris 19
- 91 Toynbee 71
- 92 Lynch 36, 40; Nikolaus Pevsner and David Neave 1995 *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire: York and the East Riding* (London: Penguin Books), 377 and 671
- 93 Rolf 23-24; the works on the gardens went on from 1756 to 1778 (Colvin)
- 94 Lysons 85
- 95 Earl de Grey's Sketchbook (copy in BA CRT 130 Silsoe 4)
- 96 Plumridge 17
- 97 BL Add. MSS 41133

- 98 RIBA Drawings Collection SC72/1
- 99 W. Chambers 1763 *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Perspective Views of the gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surrey* (London: for the author) p. 7 and plates 41 and 42
- 100 Hoare's bank ledgers, per Andrew Hann
- 101 BL Add. MSS 35693-35694, per Andrew Hann
- 102 Symes, M. 1991 *The English Rococo Garden* (Prince's Risborough: Shire Publications) 33; Harris 19; Verey and Brooks
- 103 Harris 19
- 104 Harris, Design I
- 105 Harris 19
- 106 Wrighte Plate 3
- 107 Wrighte Plate VII
- 108 Wrighte Plate VI
- 109 Toynbee 71
- 110 Kellerman Gazetter 50, 51. NHLE 1001185 'Of rubble sandstone construction, the bath house comprises a square dressing room with an arched projection containing a bench seat facing the drive, and an adjoining circular bath chamber, the vaulted roof of which is partly collapsed'.
- 111 Rolf 60; date from Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner 1971 *The Buildings of England: Surrey* (second edition revised by Bridget Cherry) (Harmonsworth: Penguin Books) 404
- 112 Wrighte Text to Plate IV
- 113 There was restoration in the 1960s (TNA AM046293-001 'Wrest works 1946-64 – ref to statues and planting')
- 114 Symes 36
- 115 BRO L30/11/122/13 and L30/9a, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1763
- 116 Wrighte Text to Plate VI
- 117 W. Wrighte 1767 *Grotesque Architecture* text to Plate III
- 118 Harris 'The Method of Executing the Design C'
- 119 Symes 10; Nikolaus Pevsner 1975 *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (second edition revised by Bridget Cherry) (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 498
- 120 G. C. Williamson 1909 *The Imperial Russian Dinner Service: A Story of a Famous Work by Josiah Wedgwood* (London: Geo. Bell & Sons); Marchioness to Countess de Grey, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1774 (BA L30/11/122/60)
- 121 Hadley Cox to Lord Hardwicke, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1771 (BL Add. MSS 35690-35654)
- 122 Symes supports this interpretation (Symes 36)

- 123 For examples of two dressing rooms, see Graham 256 n. 130
- 124 Joseph Pawsey to Philip Yorke, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1784 (BL Add. MS 35694)
- 125 20<sup>th</sup> August 1787 (cited in Way 172)
- 126 Wrighte Text to Plate XX
- 127 Chambers 7
- 128 Graham 214
- 129 Joseph Pawsey to Marchioness Grey (cited in Way 189 and Alexander 2015 15)
- 130 Anon 1779 *A Tour through the island of Great Britain divided into circuits or journies...* (9<sup>th</sup> edn, Dublin: James Williams), Vol. III, 47-48. The original edition was by Daniel Defoe but the revisions of the 9<sup>th</sup> edition were by 'Gentlemen of Eminence in the Literary World'. The inscription read: 'Stranger, or guest, whom e'er this hallow'd grove / Shall chance receive, where sweet contentment dwells,/ Bring here no heart that with ambition swells, /With av'rice pines, or burns with lawless love./Vice-tainted souls will all in vain remove/ To sylvan shades, and hermits peaceful cells;/ In vain will seek retirement's lenient spells,/Or hope that bliss which only good men prove./If heav'n born truth, and sacred virtue's love, / Which cheer, adorn, and dignify the mind,/ Are constant inmates of thy honest breast;/If, unrepining at thy neighbour's store,/ Thou count'st, as thine, the good of all mankind,/Then welcome, share the friendly groves of Wrest'.
- 131 Andrew Hann (English Heritage), pers. comm.
- 132 J. Russell 1990-91 'An 18<sup>th</sup> Century Bath House and Garden Layout at Crews Hole, Bristol' *Bristol & Avon Archaeology* 9 51-53
- 133 Hawkes, W. 2001 'The Walton Bath House, Warwickshire' *The Follies Journal* 1 29-34, 29, 31
- 134 Rolf 30
- 135 Graham 237
- 136 Graham 240, 256
- 137 BA L31/318
- 138 Countess de Grey to Marchioness (BA L30/9/60/56)
- 139 Marchioness to Countess de Grey 20<sup>th</sup> June 1774 (BA L30/11/122/61)
- 140 Countess de Grey to Marchioness, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1774 (BA L30/9/60/36)
- 141 Joseph Pawsey to Lady Lucas, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1802 (BA L30/11/215/125)
- 142 Graham 218
- 143 Hawkes 29
- 144 Kellerman 24; Rolf 8
- 145 Kellerman 23
- 146 BA L31/343

- 147 See the collection of estimates for works in 1779 (BA L28/23)
- 148 Rolf 33, 56-57
- 149 Harris 'The Method of Executing the Design B'
- 150 Cameron 31
- 151 Rolf 31
- 152 HEA MP\_WRE0086
- 153 Russell 52
- 154 Lysons 85
- 155 Rolf 14-15
- 156 Graham 201
- 157 Graham 232
- 158 Earl de Grey's Sketchbook (copy in BA CRT 130 Silsoe 4)
- 159 William Treacher 1899, *Wrest and its Surroundings, a history of the de Greys of Wrest, with a guide to Wrest gardens and the Kent mausoleum at Flitton* (privately printed) 21
- 160 Magnus Alexander, pers. comm.
- 161 R. H. P. 1900 'Wrest Park' *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 16<sup>th</sup> June 373-77, 375
- 162 *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1920
- 163 TNA AA46293-2G Pt 2
- 164 TNA AM046293-001
- 165 HEA p\_a00419\_072 (1949), HEA AL1907 010 01 (1970s)
- 166 Rolf 56-57
- 167 Curtis 833
- 168 Graham 79
- 169 HEA MP\_WRE0098
- 170 Letter from Thomas Gostelow, 25<sup>th</sup> August 1783 (BL Add. MSS 35693-35694, per Andrew Hann)
- 171 Gostelow, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1785 (BL Add. MSS 35693-35694, per Andrew Hann)
- 172 Gostelow 30<sup>th</sup> May 1785 (BL Add. MSS 35693-35694, per Andrew Hann)
- 173 Joseph Pawsey to Countess de Grey, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1831 (BA L30/11/215/113)
- 174 Joseph Pawsey to Countess de Grey, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1802 (Way 219); Pawsey to Countess de Grey, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1802 (BA L30/11/215/125)
- 175 VCH 325

- 176 Joseph Pawsey to Countess de Grey, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1804 (BA L30/11/215/143) and 25<sup>th</sup> March 1804 (L30/11/215/144)
- 177 West Yorkshire Archive Services, WYL150/7/6/vol. 35, p. 19 (7<sup>th</sup> August 1822)
- 178 Duplicates of the late Mr Thomas Brown's Wrest estate account Lady Day 1827 to Lady Day 1837 (BA L26/1454)
- 179 BA L30/9/17/249
- 180 Paper signed William Malcolm and dated April 26<sup>th</sup> 1792 (BRO L/9/68)
- 181 M. Cousins 2016 'The Not-so-capable Mr Brown? Hewell Grange, Worcestershire', *Garden History* 44:1 51-73 at 60
- 182 Draft letter to HM Treasury, signed J. R. Gilbin, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1963: TNA AM046293-001
- 183 Albion Archaeology 2016, *passim*
- 184 Joseph Pawsey to Lady Lucas, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1802 (BRO L30/11/215/125)
- 185 Duplicates of the late Mr Thomas Brown's Wrest estate account Lady Day 1827 to Lady Day 1837 (BRO L26/1454)
- 186 Duplicates of the late Mr Thomas Brown's Wrest estate account Lady Day 1827 to Lady Day 1837 (BRO L26/1454)
- 187 See 'Rough Notes on the family and on Wrest, probably by Earl de Grey' (BA L31/105)
- 188 Anon. 1885 'Wrest Park, Bedfordshire' *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 244
- 189 Treacher 1899 20-21
- 190 C. H. Curtis 1908 'Wrest Park' *Gardener's Magazine*, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1908 (Vol. 51 no. 2,871) 833-36 at 834
- 191 W. T. 1908 'Wrest Park, Bedfordshire' *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 29<sup>th</sup> August 157-59 159
- 192 *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1920
- 193 Sale catalogue of Wrest Park Estate 1917 (BA AD 3237)
- 194 BA L23/1001/1
- 195 BA Z50/104/30
- 196 Draft letter to HM Treasury, signed J. R. Gilbin, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1963: TNA AM046293-001
- 197 Memo. 5 November 1949 by A. H. Brookholding-Jones: TNA AA46293-2-Pt1 (1946-51); memo. G. H. Chettle, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1947: TNA AA46293-2-pt1 (1946-51) Garden buildings & statues files.
- 198 N. Digney to H. Garside (Ministry of Agriculture) 29<sup>th</sup> December 1949: TNA AA46293-2-Pt 1 (1946-51)
- 199 202799, signed R. A. Barker, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1949: TNA AA46293-2-pt1 (1946-51) Garden buildings & statues files
- 200 Memo. signed R. C. Banton, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1949 TNA AA46293-2-pt1 (1946-51) Garden buildings & statues files

- 201 Memo. 15<sup>th</sup> April 1951: TNA AA46293-2-pt1 (1946-51) Garden buildings & statues files
- 202 Memo., 25<sup>th</sup> September 1956; signature possibly D. E. King: TNA AM046293-001 'Wrest works 1946-64 - ref to statues and planting'
- 203 HEA p\_a04542\_006; HEA p\_a04542\_006; HE Registry AM046293/01A Work Progress Report week ending 12<sup>th</sup> August 1957; this said it was to be 'pointed and grouted up in the near future', but it is not known if this was actually done.
- 204 TNA AM046293-001 'Wrest works 1946-64 - ref to statues and planting'
- 205 TNA AM046293-001 'Wrest works 1946-64 - ref to statues and planting'
- 206 HE Registry AM046293/1A, Work Progress Report 28<sup>th</sup> October 1958
- 207 HE Registry AM046293/2(III) 6<sup>th</sup> March 1963 J. R. Gilbin to 'Mr Cunliffe'
- 208 TNA AA 046293-2-PT6 f119/2 Pt 3
- 209 HEA f101183\_01\_002
- 210 HEA MP\_WRE0084
- 211 F205/2 Pt3
- 212 TNA AA046293-2-PT6
- 213 Manuscript notes on 1961 'Overall plan': TNA AA046293-2-PT6



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