

THE NORWICH PLEASURE GARDENS

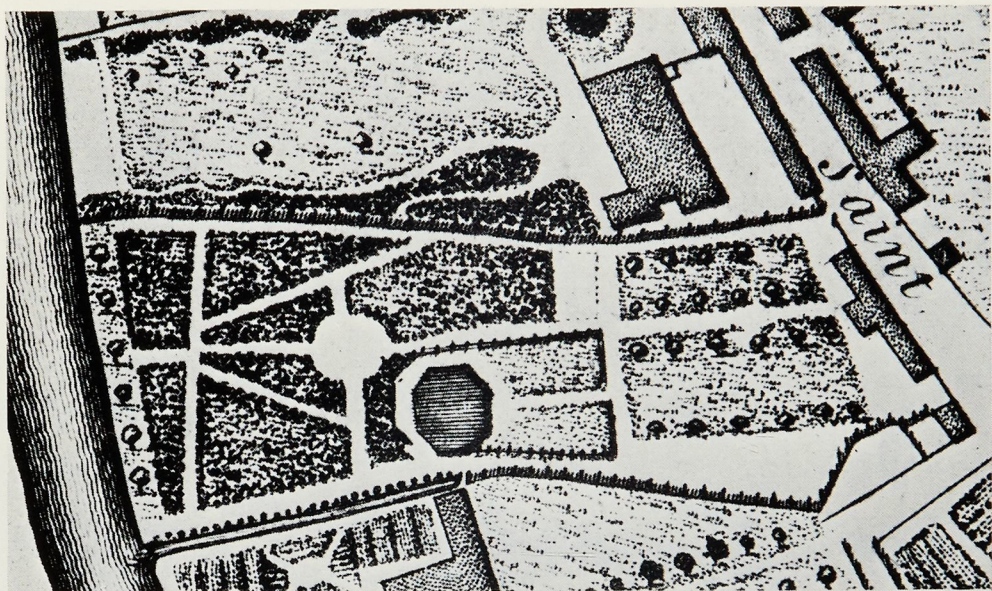
By TREVOR FAWCETT, B.A., M.Phil., F.L.A.

NO-ONE investigating the social life of London in the eighteenth century can fail to be impressed by the paramount rôle of its many pleasure gardens. Vauxhall and Ranelagh had indeed an international reputation, but they were only the most fashionable of a host of gardens serving all classes of society. More than sixty pleasure gardens are described in the standard work on the subject,¹ and there were almost certainly others more obscure and unrecorded. Some of them, it is true, were no more than simple tea-gardens, prettily situated and laid out with arbours and refreshment boxes, and perhaps also with a bowling-green and skittle alley. Several grew up around mineral springs, like Islington Spa and Pancras Wells. Most gardens provided occasional entertainments: concerts, dancing, acrobats, sporting contests, balloon ascents, fireworks. The bigger places like Vauxhall, Marylebone, Cuper's and Ranelagh were variously notable for their illuminations and promenades, their evening concerts and masquerades, their splendid fireworks, and their elegant garden architecture and furnishings. Vauxhall was specially renowned for its dazzling displays of lights and its tree-lined walks enlivened with triumphal arches, statuary, pavilions and colonnades. At Ranelagh the great attraction was the Rotunda, within which the fashionable world processed endlessly.

It would be natural to suppose that these London pleasure gardens were imitated in other parts of the country, yet with rather few exceptions this was not so. Small tea-gardens attached to inns and bowling-greens could certainly be found in many provincial centres, but places of sufficient pretension to be called pleasure gardens were distinctly rare. Outside the metropolis the principal eighteenth-century gardens were probably those at Bath, Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Birmingham and Norwich; only well after 1800 do we discover them established in other towns. Bath had its Spring Gardens, superseded in 1795 by Sydney Gardens; Liverpool its Ranelagh and Folly Gardens, both of which ceased before 1800; Newcastle its Spring Gardens and New Ranelagh; Birmingham its long-lived Vauxhall.² At none of these was the overall activity to be compared with that at Norwich, where as many as four gardens were at times in furious competition. Not only that, the first public garden in Norwich was laid out remarkably early.

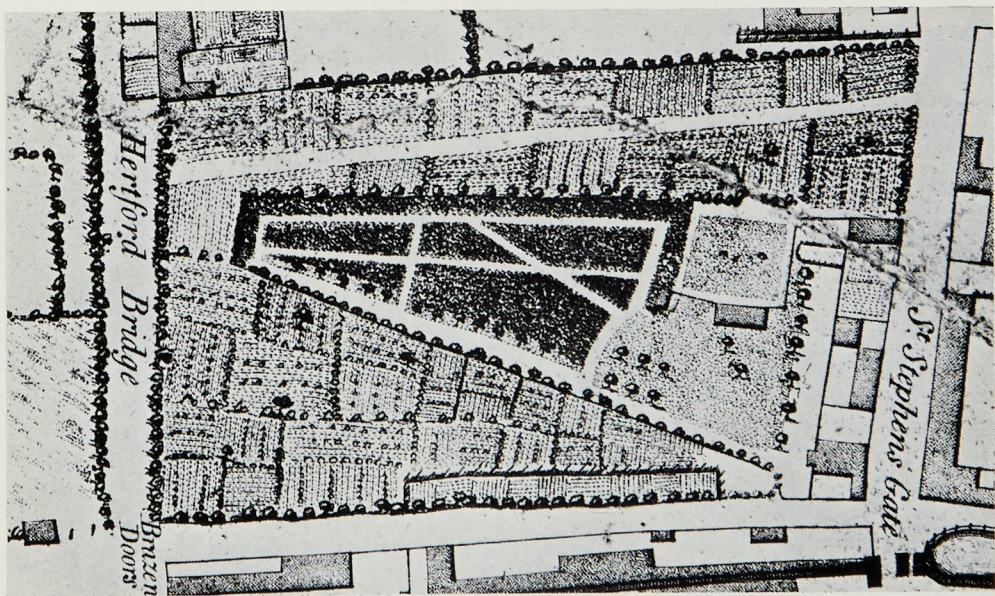
c. 1663-1770

In his *Worthies of England*, printed in 1662, Thomas Fuller remarked that "Norwich is (as you please) either a *City* in an *Orchard*, or an *Orchard* in a *City*, so equally are *Houses* and *Trees* blended in it; so that the *pleasure* of the *Country* and *populousness* of the *City* meet here together".³ Fuller attributed

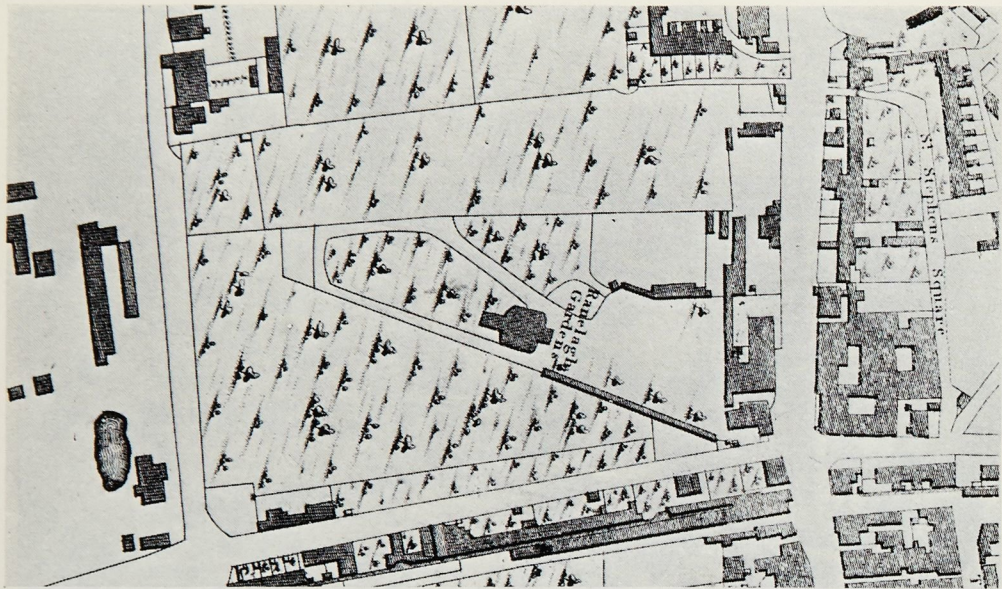


Details from A. Hochstetter's plan of Norwich (1789).

1. Vauxhall Gardens (previously known as Moore's Spring Gardens; Bunn's; Keymer's) showing the octagonal Pantheon and a stretch of the River Wensum.



2. Ranelagh Gardens (previously known as Smith's Rural Gardens, then Quantrell's; also as Neech's; Harper's; Finch's; and finally Royal Victoria Gardens).



Details from J. Dallinger's plan of Norwich (1830).
3. Ranelagh Gardens.



4. Richmond Hill Gardens; showing also Butter Hills, the site of the former Wilderness garden.

the local predilection for horticulture to the influence of Dutch immigrants settling in the city. A few years later the diarist John Evelyn particularly noticed the flower gardens "which all the Inhabitans excell in".⁴ Whether it was the example of the many small gardens and orchards already abounding in Norwich, or whether the stimulus came from the rising London pleasure gardens (like New Spring Gardens—Pepys's Fox-hall), a garden was laid out in the city in 1663–4 by Henry Howard, brother to Thomas, Duke of Norfolk. The first hint of its existence occurs in Edward Browne's journal entry for 1 January 1664 where it is described as "by the water side in Cunsford, which hee [Howard] intends for a place of recreation, having made already walkes round and crosse it, forty foot in bredth; if the quadrangle left be spatious enough hee intends the first of them for a bowling green, the third for a wilderness, and the forth for a garden [i.e. a flower garden]".⁵ The site did in fact extend from Conisford Street (later King Street) down to the Wensum, near a bend in the river. Normally it was reached by boat and that is how Thomas Baskerville was conveyed there some fifteen years later, when the garden was well established:

Taking a boat for pleasure to view this city by water the boatman brought us to a fair garden belonging to the Duke of Norfolk, having handsome stairs leading to the water by which we ascended into the garden and saw a good bowling-green, and many fine walks; the gardener now keeping good liquors and fruits to entertain such as came there to see it.⁶

My Lord's Garden, as it was still being called late into the eighteenth century seems to have remained a place of quiet public resort for many years. Its bowling-green was maintained and especially during the holiday week of the Norwich Assizes genteel company continued to frequent it.

But only two hundred yards upstream was another pleasant site, bounded by the river and St. Faith's Lane. John Moore, a gardener, seizing his opportunity, in 1739 designed a garden there with walks and bowers, where gentlemen and ladies "may regale themselves with excellent Made Wines, choice Sider, fine Home-brewed Ale, and Cakes; and where they may have also a very good Pleasure-Boat, if they chuse to go on to the Water".⁷ Initially Moore called his plot New Spring Garden, after the already celebrated resort by the Thames later re-named Vauxhall. And in its early years the character of Moore's garden was not unlike that of its London precursor as Pepys and Evelyn knew it. Its charms were essentially rural. From May to September visitors came here not for sophisticated entertainment, but simply to stroll about enjoying the riverside prospects and the birdsong, and to sit drinking and eating in the shady bowers. Except in scale these were little different from the pleasures provided by some of the local inn and nursery gardens, such as the Gibraltar at Heigham or the Flower in Hand, St. Mary's, both well known for their annual shows of carnations.⁸

After some years Moore began to multiply the attractions of his garden. Probably he already scented competition. In 1748 one Samuel Bruister had acquired on a hundred-year lease a tract of sloping ground near Ber Street Gates, part of Butter Hills. Soon it was being planted with the young trees

that would grow by and by into an attractive wilderness. In July of that year Bruister publicized his new venture by holding a grand wrestling match in the garden: twelve men in pumps and white stockings would wrestle for three hats and nine pairs of gloves, while neat wine, homebrewed ale and other liquor would be to hand.⁹ To Moore, even if the appeal of wrestling was directed at a less genteel clientèle than frequented his own garden, this must have sounded ominous. He quickly countered with concerts, illuminations and fireworks. When Spring Gardens re-opened in May 1749, it was found to be decorated with globular oil-lamps and furnished with an orchestra for the Tuesday evening concerts that were promised for the season. Admission tickets now cost 1/- of which 6d. was returnable in refreshments; season tickets cost 5/-. During Assize Week four public breakfasts were held, on which occasions the assembled company was served with tea, coffee, chocolate and French rolls, and entertained by a band of musicians.¹⁰ Yet the rustic charm of the place hardly seemed to suffer—it was even enhanced. Certain lines on the transcience of earthly pleasures which appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* of 26 May 1750 paint a pretty enough picture of Spring Gardens at this time:

. . . The lucid Lamps that shine between
 The bending Boughs, all fresh and green;
 The sweetness of the vernal Showers;
 The vivid Dyes that paint the Flowers.
 Their fragrance floating on the Breeze;
 The Songsters warbling midst the Trees;
 Describe the soft expiring Notes,
 As o'er the Stream the Musick floats. . . .

The pattern of amusements established in 1749 was to remain fairly constant at Spring Gardens for many years, though from time to time with innovations. In 1753 "a very curious Transparent Arch built in the Gothick Taste" was erected and ornamented with lamps. Firework displays became rather more effective. For Assize Week 1763, John Moore's widow—who was now running the garden—advertised a show of ten firework display pieces: yew tree, brilliant fountains, passion flowers, diamond with stars, vertical wheels, Chinese fruit tree, rainbow, large sun, fixed stars, and a set piece on the old Gothick arch.¹¹ But pyrotechnic resources, here mainly limited to fiery fountains and fixed designs, were to become much greater in future years.

The appetite for public gardens seemed to be growing. Samuel Stebbing felt sufficient confidence by 1768 to experiment with public breakfasting at the Wilderness, just within the southern city wall, where the trees once planted by Bruister would now be forming pleasant groves. Music was engaged to play not only at the breakfasts but also in the evening when the garden was illuminated.¹²

On land just outside St. Stephen's Gates a still more important garden was emerging. We hear of it first about 1763 as a nursery garden, where Widow Smith sold fruit trees, flowering shrubs, evergreens, roots, bulbs, seed, and similar produce.¹³ But by 1766, if not earlier, Smith's Rural Gardens aspired to something better. It was announced that on Guild Day the grounds

would be illuminated, old Herefordshire cider and Westall's fine nog would be available, "and two men will be set at the Gate to keep out such Persons as may be thought disagreeable".¹⁴ The following year fireworks were introduced and the entrance charge in Assize Week was 1/-, of which 8d. was allowable in drinks and fruit. Another year and there was an illuminated grand walk, with lights fixed to the tables in a new taste. And still, in the season, faithful to its origins, the garden was glorious with flowers.

Meanwhile, down by the river, an old garden was showing renewed life. Under constant threat of degenerating into a mere kitchen garden, My Lord's Garden had persisted. Its bowling-green was still intact. When in 1770 the land was put up to let, its advantages as a small public garden were stressed, notably the good cellar and the accommodation for entertaining. The new tenant was William Curtis. In Assize Week 1770, while Moore's Spring Gardens was rejoicing in fireworks made by the engineer of metropolitan Ranelagh, and Smith's Rural Gardens in a newly invented piece from France that flung its fire twenty feet, Curtis was retaliating with line rockets running "from the Top of the Summer-House to the Top of the Booth". He had initiated public breakfasting as well.¹⁵

1771—c. 1780

There was no announcement in 1770 of festivities at Norwich's fourth public garden, the Wilderness. It stood a little remote, at the southern boundary of the city, and in the face of mounting competition from more accessible gardens would have required unusual attractions to pull in a large crowd. Otherwise it had the asset of a very favourable site. One visitor, calling during the years 1771-3 when it was untenanted, recorded his impressions:

. . . we went to the Wilderness of which Mr. Halstead had procured the key. It is on the declivity of a hill near Bere-street gates, was formerly a public garden, but now private property. At the upper-end of it is Mackarel's Tower . . . which commands an extensive and delightful prospect of the river and country.¹⁶

In the spring of 1773 Joseph Hammond became the new tenant or owner and set out at once to make the Wilderness a viable concern. The Long Walk under the wall was newly gravelled, the garden decorated with lamps, fireworks prepared, a band of musicians engaged. At the Assize Week breakfasts that year the assembly was encouraged to dance cotillions and country dances.¹⁷

Nor were the other gardens idle. William Curtis in particular was spurred to great efforts. His garden was after all within constant view and earshot of Moore's, barely a furlong off. As a first novelty he began to display topographic views and curios of various kinds: St. James's Park, the cathedral at Florence, Ranelagh Gardens, the Quirinal at Rome, ingenious grotto- and shell-work.¹⁸ In 1772 he brought in workmen from London to construct an artificial cascade on the model of that at Vauxhall, watermill and all. He claimed his own to surpass the original in fact, "as Swans will appear on the Water, and the Sun and Moon appear to move in the Element; which is not in the Cascade at Vauxhall".¹⁹ Visitors might view the cascade privately for half a guinea.

Curtis experimented with novel fireworks too—in 1771 a new fire with no powder in its composition, in 1773 “a new-invented Piece called the Maccaroni Head”—but in pyrotechnics he was pitting himself against William Quantrell.

About 1768, as Widow Smith increased the scope of her nursery garden and came to realise the drawing power of a dazzling show of fireworks, she took on Quantrell as her engineer. He it was who created for her the splendid “six Vertical Wheels moving all at once—It being the largest Piece of Firework that ever was seen in Norwich”. That was in 1771.²⁰ A year later Quantrell took over the whole garden on his own account. We discover the reason for Widow Smith’s retirement through a statement by her gardener, Edward Flegg, who had himself largely been responsible for the arrangements over the past few years. Flegg announced that for once he intended to open his own nearby nursery garden to the public in Assize Week—“And as there will be a Provision made of Fruit, Cakes and Cyder only, it is expected there will be a great Number of Gentlemen and Ladies, as many have promised to come”. He was doing this for the benefit of Widow Smith who lately kept the Rural Gardens; “she being cruelly stripped of every Thing she had in the World, is not capable to stir from her Chair, and now supported by me without the least Assistance”.²¹ One hopes that Flegg’s active sympathy was rewarded in spite of the magnetism of the gardens across the way, where Quantrell (like Curtis that year) was treating his clients to fireworks in the modish style of Torrè’s displays at Marylebone Gardens, London.

All the Norwich pleasure gardens were now relying more heavily on fireworks. Pyrotechnics was a rapidly advancing art. The old-fashioned displays had been mainly confined to simple fixed devices like suns and diamonds (made up of clusters of small “gerbes” and “saxons”), varied by fountains and cascades of sparks and fire, or by flights of rockets, shells and tourbillons. Now, although the basic gunpowder mixtures remained the same, they began to be used with greater subtlety. Adding further chemicals increased the available range of coloured and sparkling fires (even if both their real variety and intensity continued modest until the eventual introduction of potassium chlorate into firework manufacture half a century later). If we remember also the improvements in theatrical machinery and scenic devices achieved about the same period, it is clear that fresh possibilities for spectacular effects were opening to the keepers of pleasure gardens. We find evidence of this in 1774.

Curtis had retired from his garden in order to concentrate on the museum of curiosities he was to establish in Norwich. His successor, Graves, now gave notice of an elaborate piece of machinery which he had lately installed “representing a Sea-Fight, with Five Ships, &c. also the Method of storming a Castle, with the addition of Martial Music, to conclude with a beautiful Transparent Painting, representing a Sea God, drawn in a Triumphal Carr. . . .”²² A few weeks later Graves adds the information that his sea fight has been embellished with mermaids and dolphins. Besides all this he is showing a view of Vesuvius and a new machine called the Man of the Mill. At the Wilderness, too, had been contrived a “grand Piece of Machinery . . . to run 680 Yards

upon a Line". Quantrell announced a firework display arranged by Italian artists—"in particular, the large Palm Trees, 36 feet high, likewise Dragons to go to different Parts of the Garden".²³

The following year, 1775, the four principal Norwich gardens were in intense competition. The advertisements of their Assize Week programmes occupy almost an entire close-printed column in the *Norwich Mercury* of 12 August, and it is again the detail of mechanical devices and fireworks that catches the eye above all other amusements. Hammond lists the pyrotechnic delights forthcoming at the Wilderness; his machine has been improved since last season and includes a distant waterfall, a working water mill, sheep, swans and a heron. Graves whets the public appetite for the intriguing fireworks prepared for him by an Italian, Giuseppe Gatti. Intriguing by their names alone, as witness "Gobo la Luna" or "Peca Curiosa Che va Arestel, to finish with Roman candles" [*sic*]. At Quantrell's the aid of Baptista Pedralio (sometimes spelt Patroliia) had been enlisted. Formerly one of Torrè's chief assistants at Marylebone, Pedralio was well equipped to reproduce his master's most celebrated effects in Norwich. Perhaps chief amongst these was his "large Globe 21 Feet in Circumference which will turn round its Axis, and fall into four Parts, and will discover Vulcan in the inside, who will be attended by his Cyclops to the Mount made by Signior Baptista Patroliia . . . with Vulcan's Cave and Forge and the Eruption of Mount Aetna". A theatrical experience of no mean order!

Spring Gardens in the later 1770's underwent substantial changes. Early in 1775 James Moore (no doubt the son of Widow Moore) auctioned the garden after some years in sole charge himself. According to the advertisement: "The great resort of Company to this Garden bespeaks at once it's preferable Situation to all others; the Proprietor having for several Seasons in the Assize Week disposed of upwards of 2,500 Tickets at 1s. each, in a single Night".²⁴ For little more than a year the garden became Hudson's and then in summer 1776 the property passed to James Bunn.

Bunn was interestingly qualified for his new task. He had first come to notice as a minor performer at the Norwich Theatre, where also he helped out with the scene painting. But around 1773, dissatisfied with his salary and perhaps feeling that his artistic talents deserved a better outlet, he set up as an engraver—without however severing his connections with the Theatre for which he long continued to paint scenery of merit. Within a year or so he had extended his range to the teaching of architecture and drawing, and could claim in addition to be competent as a coach- and sign-painter, an engraver and an interior decorator. That he could so advertise himself as late as 8 June 1776 demonstrates the suddenness of his conversion to Spring Gardens. For on 27 July, when his next announcement appears, he is already preoccupied about public breakfasting, concerts and fireworks. His only regret, he says, is that he has not been spared time to re-decorate the garden.

His really serious rival was Quantrell. The other gardens, it seemed, had shot their bolt. Graves had given up the game already. Hammond lasted at the Wilderness only until 1778 and then he also retired (probably to the Black

Prince Inn, in Norwich Marketplace, which he had opened as a standby some years before).²⁵ In fireworks Bunn could possibly rival but hardly surpass Quantrell's, where every year Pedralio's set pieces sounded yet more beguiling: "the taking of Bunker's-Hill, with Fire ships, and a great Confusion of Bumba and Muscata" (1776); "Herculus's delivering Thetis from out the Infernal Regions, which will be attended with the greatest Explosion that ever was exhibited" (1777).

So Bunn set out to provide a novelty. In the winter of 1776-7 he built a rotunda in the middle of the garden and named it the Pantheon, after the fashionable resort in Oxford Street. No doubt he foresaw several advantages, and one of them he stated—the garden would be less at the mercy of the weather. Further than that arose the opportunity of extending activities into the autumn and winter months. Even more important, Bunn had at his disposal an auditorium capable of seating 1,000 persons.²⁶ Now that he had some covered accommodation for his guests, it was ironic that Bunn's first attempt to provide a grand musical evening on the plan of the galas at Ranelagh should be half thwarted by the weather. The intended programme had promise:

While the Company are assembling in the Gardens, they will be entertain'd by a Band of Wind Instruments, consisting of Clarinets, Bassoons, and French Horns; and a Military Band of Drums and Fifes will be stationed on the Top of the Triumphal Arch; and two Bands are to answer each other alternately from Six o'clock 'till half past Seven: The Concert in the Pantheon will then commence, with the Overture and Chorus in *Acis and Galatea*, "Oh the Pleasures of the Plains". Duetto, "How sweet in the Wood Lands". A Glee, for five Voices, "How happy how joyous are we". A Hunting Song, composed by Mr. Hook. Chorus in *Acis and Galatea*, "Galatea dry thy Tears". This Performance will receive the Addition of an excellent organ. . . .²⁷

The day of the intended concert dawned stormy and cold. Fearing a poor attendance, Bunn rashly decided to postpone it. But as the day wore on the weather cleared. Visitors began to arrive from the city and the surrounding countryside. Hurriedly the concert was reinstated, but by this time the earlier word of a postponement was getting round. In the end the concert was performed to a depleted audience and had to be repeated a week later. Bunn vowed not to meddle with his stated programme again.²⁸

Concerts of vocal and instrumental music were undoubtedly a leading feature at the pleasure gardens, but to gauge the quality of the music performed is no easy matter. James Woodforde, rector of Weston, who quite frequently visited the gardens in Norwich, was little impressed by what he heard: at Quantrell's on 20 June 1780 "heard a sad Concert"; at Quantrell's on 21 June 1785 "tolerable good Music, indifferent singing"; at Bunn's on 4 June 1790 "the Concert was midling"; at Keymer's (which succeeded Bunn's) on 15 August 1794 "a poor Concert and worse singing". (In contrast, the fireworks often delighted him.) Woodforde's poor impression of the music is reinforced by a comment in a letter of 1803 by a farmer's daughter, Elizabeth Girling, who speaks of "very moderate" singing at the gardens (though she too enjoyed the fireworks).³⁰

Certainly the musical fare was very mixed: at one extreme, variety turns like Rossignol the whistler or Romain the comic violinist; at the other, quite enterprising concerts by serious musicians. Talented local professionals and amateurs, both instrumentalists and singers, took an important part in the concerts. And local militia bands as well. Star performers from the London theatres and gardens were frequently engaged: the violinist Gehot, the wind player Frichot, the harpist Williams, singers like Miss Morris of Ranelagh (whom Quantrell later married) or Johnstone and the celebrated Incedon, both of Covent Garden.³¹ So musical standards were not invariably low, nor was the choice of compositions always negligible. If some concerts were little more than a potpourri of sentimental ballads and comic ditties, others offered programmes that included works by Handel, Corelli, Boyce, Arne, J. C. Bach, Pleyel, Stamitz and Haydn. In familiarizing their audiences with modern compositions, the pleasure gardens fulfilled an important function. By their agency the new musical idiom of the later eighteenth century became diffused among the general public to an extent not possible through the more exclusive means of the subscription concert.

c. 1780-1799

Bunn's and Quantrell's had now emerged as clear rivals. There could be no respite in the quest for novelty. Bunn began to exhibit paintings and transparencies, some his own work, others by John Sanders, an artist resident in Norwich. These were on show in December 1778 in a second building recently erected, while fires were lit to warm the Pantheon and a winter concert attempted.³² Quantrell continued to hold flower shows, sometimes winning first prize himself. In 1780 he opened a bowling green. Bunn acquired the old artificial waterfall and landscape from the Wilderness.³³ Quantrell had an artificial cascade of his own, complete with subterranean cavern.³⁴ Bunn painted some local views and displayed them. One depicted members of the Neptune Society returning from their annual water frolic and "passing the Garden in their different Boats, accompanied with Violins, French Horns, Drums and Fifes, Guns firing, &c."³⁵ More pointedly, in 1780 he invited the previous firework engineer at Quantrell's to prepare some sensational displays in which for once he might eclipse his rival. At one of these Pedralio transformed himself into "a cascade of Chinese Fire from all Parts of his Body", the sparks shooting out sixty feet across.³⁶ Quantrell, on his mettle, responded immediately. A new Italian engineer was summoned to Norwich to create "a capital Firework, call'd Harlequin from the Globe, With a Dance of Furies; and Sig. Antonio Batalus will Fly across the Garden with Fire from different Parts of his Body".³⁷

The competition was still severe. Fireworks might be expensive, but they were a sure draw for crowds. Unfortunately they were also dangerous. While Bunn's engineer was preparing a display in 1782, the chemicals took fire and exploded. One man was killed outright, and instead of fireworks a memorial concert had to be arranged for the benefit of the widow. Bunn's future interest in fireworks was understandably restrained.

But a new diversion was in the offing. On 1 December 1783, only months after the first experimental unmanned balloon ascents, Charles and Robert accomplished their famous two-hour flight from Paris in a hydrogen balloon. Tardily but inevitably the excitement spread to England. Lunardi ascended from London in September 1784. A few months later Blanchard and Jeffries floated over the Channel. Society succumbed to balloon mania. Dr. Burney may be taken to reflect the general enthusiasm when he writes: "if I had wit enough, or energy of mind sufficient to be *mad* abt anything now, it wd be abt *Balons*—I think them the most wild, Romantic, pretty playthings for grown Gentlemen that have ever been invented & that the subject, as well as the thing, lifts one to the Clouds, whenever one talks of it".³⁸ One of the few to express his disgust with the whole business was Horace Walpole and he had special reason; for his uncle the third Earl of Orford, who had caused him trouble enough already, was displaying an inauspicious interest in ballooning and Walpole no doubt feared the worst. Lord Orford's enthusiasm quickly blossomed into patronage; and the centre of his activities was East Anglia.

In November 1783 the Norwich public was hoaxed into assembling on Mousehold Heath to see a balloon that never was.³⁹ Real balloons were imminent however. James Bunn constructed the first and had it floating in the Pantheon by mid-January 1784.⁴⁰ This balloon, ten feet in diameter, was launched on 1 March from a temporary scaffold and "was lost in the clouds in a shower of hail in two minutes 30 seconds" according to Syllas Neville, a Norwich doctor, who noted the fact in his diary.⁴¹ Already a small balloon had ascended from Quantrell's,⁴² and another soon followed, raising doubts in Neville's mind: "The mania for these things is very general at present, but *cui bono?* To what use can they be applied"?⁴³

The mania *was* very general. Balloons rose from all quarters into the East Anglian sky. None of them manned as yet, though Bunn was trying to gather subscribers enough to defray the cost of a really large balloon, 25 feet in diameter, to carry him and a companion on the first manned flight from Norwich.⁴⁴ Small hot-air balloons were so simple to construct, and such potential hazards, they were banned from the city.⁴⁵ At Eriswell in Suffolk, Lord Orford was conducting a whole series of hydrogen balloon flights. A balloon launched from Bungay Common travelled all the way to Kent.

In April of the following year the focus of interest shifted rapidly to Quantrell's. It was learned that a Norfolk man, James Decker, had conveyed a large balloon there, that he intended soon to attempt a flight, that he would take up as his companion a 13-year-old London girl, and that the whole enterprise was under Lord Orford's patronage. The balloon, with its elegant car, could be viewed daily on payment of 1/- (gentry) or 6d. (working people, children and servants).⁴⁶ By Wednesday 1 June, the day appointed for the ascent, Norwich was keyed up with excitement. Crowds were early assembling in and around the garden. The gentry started to occupy their expensive seats. The slow process of filling the balloon began. The sky threatened. Not long after 2.30, when Decker and his companion Miss Weller had entered the car,

a sudden squall of wind blew up and began to buffet the balloon. Twice the silk was torn and twice hastily mended by tying up the rents. A considerable volume of hydrogen had escaped, reducing the balloon's lifting power. It was raining and hailing, the wind was blowing out to sea, but Decker would not be dissuaded. Miss Weller had reluctantly to be left behind, then the ropes were cast off and immediately the balloon began to rise "in the most beautiful manner, with considerable rapidity" until after eight minutes it was lost to sight in cloud. The storm notwithstanding, it proved an uneventful flight and Decker landed safely in a meadow near Loddon. His show of courage had delighted everyone; when he returned that evening to Norwich "the populace took the horses from the carriage, and dragged him in great pomp to the theatre, where he was received with unbounded marks of applause".⁴⁷

Three weeks later Decker ventured a second flight from Quantrell's. Again occurred a serious leakage of hydrogen during the filling process, this time when the valve was accidentally opened. Again Miss Weller had to be disappointed. Even with Decker alone, lift was so much reduced that as the ascent began the balloon could scarcely clear the trees around the garden. Decker threw out ballast frantically and at last the labouring vehicle rose. On this occasion most of the ascent was hidden to spectators in the garden, amongst whom was of course Lord Orford ("in the most shabby Dress" noted Woodforde, who was also present).

The third and last flight from Quantrell's that year was altogether more dramatic however; Major Money's flight in the British Balloon. Nothing untoward at first; a smooth launching; a gentle ascent; a steady drift to the east. But when the Major came to open the gas release valve, he discovered the aperture to be ridiculously small. Unable to descend quickly, he floated out across the Suffolk coast and came down in the sea. It was five hours later, long after nightfall, that he was eventually found by a cutter and rescued, still tenuously supported by his great pink and green balloon.⁴⁸

With this the craze diminished somewhat. Quantrell felt himself sufficiently an authority on balloons to proceed to Bury St. Edmunds later that year in order to assist at the launching of one with special inclined planes, but there was no more spectacular ballooning from his own garden. He, like Bunn, resumed the staple fare. Perhaps one could detect more emphasis now on variety turns in their programmes. Both gardens engaged slack wire performers in 1786. In the winter season Bunn let his Pavilion to equestrian circus companies. Then unexpectedly in 1789 Bunn's was sold. John Keymer, proprietor of the Dove Tavern, Norwich, had taken it on.⁴⁹

Fresh to the job, Keymer was prepared to innovate. He called in Matthew Keymer (his son?) a Yarmouth drawing master, to re-arrange the hundreds of lamps in the garden and to paint transparencies. He cambered the walks to stop puddles forming when it rained. He had the Pavilion painted. He also wrote to the *Bury Post* complaining of what he imagined to be Quantrell's hostility and poaching of staff. Quantrell rallied to his own defence. After 17 years' tenure of a Norwich garden he, Quantrell, had a reputation to think

of. As a firework artist he was certain he had no superior. Never had he made approaches to Keymer's staff. Indeed he had given Keymer positive assurances that he would not attempt to engage musicians, waiters and other garden staff that Keymer intended to employ. This he would hold to. And he could promise he bore his rival no ill will.⁵⁰

Keymer went on his way energetically. His first Assize Week programme, which included an enactment of a royal progress to St. Paul's, attracted so many spectators that it had to be repeated. Such an immediate success may well have alarmed Quantrell, for he too attempted something new. He commissioned John Ninham, the Norwich coach-painter, to design him a pasteboard replica of the Bastille. And on Guild Day 1790, following the concert and fireworks, Ninham's Bastille was successfully stormed by real live citizens, laying bare the prison cells, the torture chamber, the skeletons, and proceeding to the beheading of the governor and the release of prisoners.⁵¹ That was more exciting by far than the ingenious procession of model figures on show at Keymer's, and Keymer knew it. With his assistants Matthew Keymer and Pietro Martinelli he worked fast. When Keymer's programme for Assize Week was announced, it included a pantomime, *The necromancer*, in which would appear exterior and interior views of the Bastille, with torture instruments, cells, skeletons and chained victims.⁵²

Who was the better showman? That Assize Week both gardens were well patronized, but at the end of it Quantrell had to call his creditors together and beg for time to settle with them.⁵³ Was it then that he came to some sort of accord with Keymer? Their competitiveness must have been running both into needless expense. Whatever it was that passed between them, from then on the new firework specialist and pantomime Harlequin at Keymer's Gardens is Quantrell's son. Quantrell senior held out for a few more years, raising sufficient capital in 1792 to erect an amphitheatre which the garden had long been in need of. Then in 1794 he followed his son, humiliatingly, to Keymer's (now grandly re-named Vauxhall) and became chief engineer there. His old garden passed to a man called Coe.⁵⁴

It seemed that the future, if anywhere, lay with Keymer's Vauxhall. Pantomimes were a brilliant feature here now, and even James Bunn had joined the team to supply clever scenery. Fireworks and circuses were equally popular. People flocked to the public breakfastings. At the other garden, by contrast, Coe was showing little enterprise and after two indifferent seasons he handed over to Samuel Neech. Neech re-christened the place Ranelagh and gradually undertook necessary improvements. But he can hardly have believed his good fortune when in 1799 Keymer unexpectedly left Vauxhall to retire to a Norwich inn, and the garden found no immediate successor.⁵⁵

1800-1850

So in 1800 Neech's Ranelagh was in a commanding position now that competition from Vauxhall had suddenly evaporated. There was no threat from the Wilderness either, for this had become a boys' school. Only one other garden presented any hint of opposition: a few hundred yards along the

Ipswich Road lay the King of Prussia Inn, and it was here that one Cullington had begun to develop his Prussia Gardens. In August 1799 he provided illuminations and a military band. A year later the garden had been "greatly improved, and a number of new Alcoves erected". In 1802, always a sign of ambition, public breakfasting was introduced.⁵⁶

Meanwhile Neech was busy with his own improvements. Making use, it seems, of building materials from the defunct Vauxhall, he erected a sturdy rotunda "large enough to hold two thousand persons", retaining for it the old name of The Pantheon.⁵⁷ This was presumably additional to, not a replacement of, the amphitheatre put up by Quantrell eight years earlier. Even with the increase of buildings on the site, and in spite of the essentially "urban" nature of many of the entertainments (concerts by metropolitan singers; sophisticated firework displays arranged by Clitherow—"real Fire-Work-Maker to his Majesty"), Neech was still at pains to stress the "rural simplicity" of the gardens. Provided the weather was kind, he could expect fashionable company and high attendances. It was reported in Assize Week 1801, for example, that more than 3,300 were present on one occasion. The *Norwich Mercury* commented in 1803:

The audiences at our public amusements this week have been uncommonly numerous. The serenity of the weather has given a peculiar beauty and attraction to Neech's Gardens, which have indeed been the resort of almost all the influx of company. Exclusive of the vast concourse at breakfast, upwards of 2,600 persons were at Ranelagh on Wednesday evening.

On the similar Wednesday next year, about 1,200 attended the breakfasting and in the evening "not fewer than 3,000".⁵⁸ To a writer in 1827, reminiscing about Ranelagh in Neech's time, these were the golden years. How splendid, for instance, the concerts were. "We remember the days of the facetious Townshend, Incledon, and the admirable Mrs. Bland. The orchestra in the Gardens, composed of a Military Band of more than thirty performers, and in the Pantheon with wind and stringed instruments of not less than fifty, led by some of the first masters of the time". . . .⁵⁹

It was during the long reign of R. M. Harper, who succeeded Neech as lessee of the gardens in 1805, that there appeared the first signs of a decline in Ranelagh's fashionable prestige. But at first this was hardly perceptible. The programmes of events advertised in the newspapers seemed to continue much as before.

What changes the newspapers do depict over the next decade or so relate to the rise of other gardens. Sometimes it is a mere fleeting glimpse. In 1807 we hear of Stewardson's Vauxhall Garden, York Garden House and Bowling Green.⁶⁰ Was this a short-lived endeavour to revive an earlier garden? In 1813 M. Sparkell informs the public that her Vauxhall Gardens in Barrack Street will be illuminated for Assize Week: she has arranged a concert, with a military band to play in the interval; a large room is to be reserved for dancing; and each evening a small balloon will be sent up.⁶¹

Coming into prominence about this time was a rather more significant resort, Richmond Hill Gardens, flanking Bracondale Road at the western end of the Wilderness. "This delightful spot comprehends the most beautiful and romantic views in the neighbourhood, stands on a most elevated situation, [and] is fitted up at a very considerable expence". . . .⁶² Its programme was ambitious from the start: breakfasts, concerts, illuminations, and fireworks (like Ranelagh's) devised by the celebrated Clitherow.

Prussia Gardens also enjoyed good patronage. In February 1815 it was the venue for the first manned balloon flight from Norwich for thirty years. "Flight" is perhaps a misnomer. The balloonist, a man named Steward, watched by a vast concourse of spectators, rose from the ground with the utmost difficulty. He "skimmed and skimmed and skimmed and skimmed" and came to earth no more than 500 yards from his starting point. The mob who had pursued him tried to push him off again, and when that failed, tore the red and white silk balloon to pieces.⁶³ Taking quick advantage of the fiasco, Harper invited the eminent balloonist Windham Sadler to demonstrate how the thing should be done. One beautiful day that summer, Sadler ascended gracefully from the grounds of Ranelagh (where 4,000 witnesses had gathered) and spent almost an hour drifting to and fro across Norwich, affording perfect views to all.⁶⁴

This was one of Harper's last important acts at Ranelagh, for in 1817 he removed to the Falcon Inn, Ditchingham, true to the tradition by which innkeepers could turn into keepers of pleasure gardens, and keepers of pleasure gardens retire to inns. It is a reminder that the most basic function of a pleasure garden was to supply dainty food and a variety of drink in agreeable surroundings. The profits of a garden came from what was consumed there.⁶⁵

W. Finch, a man "of very creative imagination",⁶⁶ succeeded Harper. He set to work with enthusiasm and promulgated his achievements with a certain verve. In 1819 for example:

. . . the principal broad walk of the front orchestra will be lighted *à la Chinese*, with many hundred lamps, and the visto of the long walk will terminate with a Chinese Pagoda, in transparency! attached to which, an Hermitage will be discovered (also lighted up) with its ascetic inhabitant, surrounded by the *tout ensemble* of such retirement.⁶⁷

The Saloon could furnish "an extensive assortment of confectionery, ices, jellies, &c. together with a cold collation appropriate to the season". Fireworks would be presented by Mrs. Jones, daughter of Mme Hengler of Vauxhall, London. (And Mrs. Jones was to remain the author of Ranelagh firework displays for many years.)

It is plain that Finch was hoping to win back to Ranelagh its former clientèle: hoping and apparently succeeding. Crowds waiting for admittance in 1819 obstructed the entrance, and in the course of Assize Week 9,000 persons were admitted. Finch was ecstatic with thanks to a generous public.⁶⁸ His efforts were redoubled. He commissioned Francis Thorne, scene painter at the Norwich Theatre, to adorn his Saloon with twenty picturesque and romantic views.⁶⁹

He engaged one of the Pandean bands then in vogue to provide music for dancing.⁷⁰ A special attraction in 1822 were the popular *fantoccini*, little mechanical figures employed in a kind of puppet show. Ranelagh now boasted two Chinese walks festooned with lanterns; an arch had been erected in the Long Walk; the interior of the Pantheon was newly decorated; three bars served refreshments.⁷¹ Although an attempted masquerade ball in 1823 had to be cancelled for lack of subscribers, the 50-year-old Finch seemed not at all discouraged. An octagonal military bandstand went up. The refreshment boxes were rebuilt to hold 600.⁷² An amphitheatre was built for the circus performers.⁷³ No wonder that Ranelagh was apostrophized in contemporary verse:

The walks, the bowling-green, alike can charm,
 The placid bosom, free from guilt's alarm,
 Or if to pipe and glass you more incline,
 What friends like Norwich friends so sweet combine?
 Here various pleasures the free mind engage,
 Yon gay Rotundo furnishes a stage,
 The sister arts, music and painting meet,
 To make the lively Pantomime complete,
 Equestrian feats beholding, we admire,
 With dancers light, upon the rope, and wire:
 A Concert now, th'enchancing glee and song,
 With instruments, the mirthful hours prolong,
 In ev'ry face approving smiles appear,
 Hail, Ranelagh! thy scenes my heart can cheer.⁷⁴

In view of such affectionate testimony, and remembering Finch's apparently unbounded zeal for improvements, it is salutary to read the withering comments in the *Norwich Theatrical Observer and Ranelagh Spectator* in 1827, after Finch's departure. Perhaps the writer was hopelessly biassed. He can admit that the Pantheon (not put up by Finch) is a handsome structure, that the concerts deserve praise, and that the illuminations may be granted in good taste. That is on the credit side. The debit is more far-reaching. The walks are ill-lit and "the large space of ground at the back of the Pantheon, is uselessly taken up by the rubbish of a Kitchen Garden". The fireworks area is "extremely contracted, and trumpery in the extreme". When fireworks are displayed "we are smothered with smoke, and the machinery is badly managed". Finch was accustomed to assert he had beautified the place at great expense, "but with the exception of a gilded Lion rampant stuck up to the right of the Pigeon Locker, gravelling the walks, and erecting a parcel of barber's poles, crossed on the top for the purpose of suspending variegated lamps, we know of nothing else he did worth speaking of". (What of the decorations then? the new refreshment boxes? the bandstand? the amphitheatre? was it all a sham and a façade?) Of course, goes on the critic, Finch had been no more than a tenant; and the proprietor, a brewer, would never so much as raise a finger to help. In 1824 Finch had lost several hundred pounds during Music Festival Week, while the poor weather in Assize Week that year had only aggravated his losses. Why should a tenant be so utterly dependent on the fineness of the weather during a single week out of the fifty-two?⁷⁵

The same writer had observations to make on certain other gardens. Take Richmond Hill. Here it seemed to him regrettable, considering the picturesque nature of the site, that the city wall, which had recently collapsed there, should have been replaced by a screen that so detracted from "the romantic beauty attached to these grounds". The garden could in fact be in better hands. Nevertheless, "in diversity, brilliancy, and in beauty of colour" the fireworks here were wholly admirable. Prussia Gardens, once so popular, had lost much of its custom (our critic continues); and that was a pity, since its present proprietor seemed a very respectable man. Mr. Page's garden, near St. Michael-at-Thorn in Ber Street, afforded a superb prospect and well repaid a morning visit.⁷⁶

This is the first mention of Page's Greyhound Gardens, which soon became a favourite with the Norwich working class. (Not that any Norwich garden had ever pretended to be exclusive—no more than, say, Vauxhall in London, where the mingling of the classes was often remarked on.⁷⁷) Page took to advertising in rhyme. A bill for Assize Week 1836 mentions the re-modelled garden, the bowling green, the singers, the spectacular but harmless fireworks, the montgolfier that would be launched. . . . On the Monday beforehand, the music would have to be rehearsed:

As perfection in science to practice belongs
 'Twill be needful to go through our Music and Songs,
 And therefore On Monday, with all due submission,
 We invite all our Friends to a Gratis Admission! ! !⁷⁸

In 1841 there were three bands (one a Pandean) at Greyhound Gardens, together with excellent rope-dancing and fireworks. "The disposition of the comparatively small plot of ground is really creditable to the ingenuity and taste of the proprietors, for it is laid out in terrace walks, arcades, and grottoes, while the centre affords excellent scope for the entertainments and promenade of the company".⁷⁹ Alfred Page now determined to exercise his ingenuity and taste on a more formidable scale. In 1842 he became proprietor of the Royal Victoria Gardens, none other than the former Ranelagh.⁸⁰

The history of Ranelagh/Victoria Gardens in the interim is briefly told. It was tolerably well frequented still, and the *Norwich Mercury* in 1836 continued to find "an exhilaration attending a promenade in decorated walks, in the balmy air of a summer evening, amidst numbers assembled for the same enjoyment, enlivened by music". . . . In November that year a partially finished building was blown down in a gale, but re-erected just in time for the visit of Ryan's Royal Circus. Some years later this was replaced by a far more solid building: the Amphitheatre and Royal Albert Saloon. The former contained an arena lit by a central gas chandelier and surrounded by two tiers of boxes; the Saloon had a pleasant interior measuring about 70 ft. by 30 ft.⁸¹ This emphasis on buildings is an indication of the importance attached to circuses, comic pantomimes, romantic dramas, ballets, musical soirées and the like. The trend became even more apparent when the New Adelphi Theatre opened on the site in 1847.⁸²

Perhaps no other source of novelty remained. The springs of invention were running dry. Though the music and the illuminated walks, the fireworks and the bars, still attracted company, the place was perceptibly in decline. Page, finding he could do nothing with it, soon moved away to develop a garden at Heigham, the West End Retreat.⁸³

Partly in response to the city's physical growth, the pattern of Norwich public gardens was once more being transformed. New resorts were becoming popular: Green Hill Gardens, near St. Augustine Gate; Angel Gardens at Catton; Hop Pole Gardens, St. Faith's Lane, on the old site by the Wensum. Tea gardens were in existence on Bracondale Hill (Anchor of Hope), at Trowse (White Horse), at Pockthorpe (Cellar House, centre of the annual Pockthorpe Guild festivities), at Thorpe (Hinsby's; Three Tuns; King's Head), and in Julian Place off Chapelfield Road (Vauxhall Gardens).⁸⁴ The new resorts were more countrified, intimate, informal—oddly reminiscent of Moore's Spring Gardens and Widow Smith's Rural Gardens a century before. Escapism, retreat into rural simplicity, *rus in urbe*, these were linked factors in the success of pleasure gardens.⁸⁵

When Victoria Gardens closed in 1849 it had almost outlived its usefulness. The land was acquired by the Eastern Union Railway Company for a purpose in tune with the times. On 2 October the fittings were auctioned: the drinking boxes, the stage scenery, the firework apparatus, and all the rest.⁸⁶ Station platforms were laid on either side of the Pantheon. The Saloon was turned into waiting rooms. The Amphitheatre became a ticket office and luggage room. The old skittle alley and bowling green were commandeered for goods. In a matter of weeks the line to London had been completed and the first train pulled out of Victoria Station on a triumphal progress south. The *Norfolk Chronicle*,⁸⁷ describing the occasion, felt its poignancy and began to recall what Ranelagh and Victoria Gardens had been:

Two sides of the spacious area which presented itself on passing the entrance, the west and the north, were occupied with "boxes", or "arbours", where parties could sit, and enjoy their refreshments, or sip their wines, while they listened to the instrumental or vocal music provided for their entertainment.

On the south, was a large room, which of late years was used as a "Nine-pin-room". It opened into a spacious and excellent bowling-green. To the eastward, and nearly in the centre, of the grounds, stood a building, called "The Pantheon". Over the entrance was an orchestra; and on each side of the entrance-passage were rooms, from the windows of which refreshments were supplied. This passage led to a spacious and lofty saloon, often converted into a ball room; beyond which was an arena, which was, in the Assize-weeks, used as a Concert-room; at other times, it was occasionally used as a Circus . . . and anon a theatre. . . . Beyond the Pantheon, the grounds were tastefully laid out, and several walks for promenading were constructed.

When evening entertainments were given . . . the Norwich Ranelagh did not fall far short of its metropolitan prototype. The palmy days of these gardens is now fast fading from the recollections. . . . But there *was* a time, when they were the resort of our fashionable aristocracy; and the

public breakfasts . . . were amongst the most gay and pleasant assemblages, that it was ever our good fortune to encounter. They were attended by the first families of the county and city; and used to present an array of beauty, of grace, and of elegance, that few provincial towns could equal, and none could excel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the staff of the Colman and Rye Libraries, Norwich Public Library, for their help in finding the evidence on which this article is based.

¹W. Wroth *The London pleasure gardens of the eighteenth century* (London, 1896).

²For the public gardens at Bath see for example: *The strangers' assistant and guide to Bath* (Bath, R. Cruttwell, 1773) pp. 36-7, and *The historical and local new Bath guide* (Bath, J. Barratt, 1823) pp. 161-2. At Liverpool, Folly Gardens (Islington) closed in 1785 and Ranelagh (which had a Chinese temple for a concert room) some time in the 1790s; Mount Zion was a garden with a terrace for walking in, and Spring Garden a tea garden (information from the Liverpool Record Office and Local History Dept.). At Newcastle Spring Gardens was noted for its concerts, established in 1763; New Ranelagh Gardens opened there in 1760 (S. Middlebrook *Newcastle-upon-tyne*, 1950, p.153). For Vauxhall at Birmingham see for example: *A concise history of Birmingham* 4th ed. (Birmingham, R. Jabet, 1808) p. 37, which also mentions a garden in Deritend. An instance of an early nineteenth-century garden in a small town is Vauxhall Gardens at Boston, Lincs., designed on 2 acres by Charles Cave in 1813 and opened in 1815. In 1825 a maze, marine grotto and cosmorama were added. Descriptions of the varied attractions can be found in *Boston Gazette* 28 April and 11 Aug. 1829, 24 Aug. and 31 Aug. 1830.

³Quoted from J. Nichols' edition of 1811, vol. 2, p. 153.

⁴*Evelyn Diary*, entry for 17 Oct. 1671. Evelyn was of course something of a connoisseur of gardens.

⁵Edward Browne's *Journal* is printed in: Sir Thomas Browne *Works*, ed. S. Wilkin (London, 1835-6) Vol. 1, pp. 44-5. If the garden had been planned as a quincunx, we might have assumed the influence of Sir Thomas Browne, who knew Howard and whose *Garden of Cyrus* was published in 1658.

⁶Hist. MSS. Commission. *Portland MSS.* Vol. 2, pp. 268-70.

⁷*Norwich Gazette* 9 June 1739.

⁸Chapelfield, which Thomas Churchman had planted with elms in 1746, was another favourite public resort in Norwich. See the poem in *Norwich Mercury* 24 June 1749, and the comments in *Ibid.* 22 March 1777 and W. Chase *The Norwich directory* (Norwich, 1783) p.v.

⁹*Norwich Mercury* 9 July 1748. For the period of lease see *Ibid.* 16 May 1778.

¹⁰*Ibid.* 6 May, 5 Aug. and 2 Sept. 1749.

¹¹*Ibid.* 30 July 1763.

¹²*Ibid.* 16 July 1768.

¹³*Ibid.* 15 Oct. 1763.

¹⁴*Ibid.* 14 June 1766.

¹⁵Samuel Coleby was the lessee from 1756 or earlier until 1760 and William Trett up to 1770; the rental in 1772 seems to have been £57 10s per annum. *Norwich Mercury* 17 March and 11 Aug. 1770, 13 June 1772.

¹⁶S. Neville *The diary of Syllas Neville*, 1767-88, ed. B. Cozens-Hardy (London, 1950). Entry for 24 Aug. 1772.

¹⁷*Norwich Mercury* 19 June and 31 July 1773.

¹⁸*Ibid.* 20 April and 18 May 1771.

¹⁹*Ibid.* 15 Aug. 1772.

²⁰*Ibid.* 15 June 1771.

²¹*Ibid.* 15 Aug. 1772.

²²*Ibid.* 18 June 1774.

²³*Ibid.* 30 July 1774.

²⁴*Ibid.* 18 Feb. 1775.

²⁵*Ibid.* 1 Oct. 1774 and 16 May 1778.

²⁶*Ibid.* 24 May 1777. The position of the Pantheon is shown on the frontispiece map in W. Chase *The Norwich directory*, *op cit.*

²⁷*Norwich Mercury* 30 Aug. 1777. The organ may have come from Graves's garden: see *Ibid.* 27 May 1775.

²⁸*Ibid.* 6 Sept. 1777.

²⁹See J. Woodforde *The diary of a country parson*, ed. J. Beresford. 5 vols. (Oxford, 1924-31).

³⁰G. Paston *Side-lights on the Georgian period* (London, 1902) p. 245. Elizabeth Girling, oddly enough, was one of Woodforde's parishioners.

³¹Johnstone's engagement in 1791 was condemned by John Waddy of the Norwich Theatre who feared it would affect the actors' benefits: see *Norwich Mercury* 30 April and 7 May 1791.

³²*Ibid.* 5 Dec. 1778.

³³*Ibid.* 10 July 1779.

³⁴*Ibid.* 24 July 1779.

³⁵*Ibid.* 30 June 1781.

³⁶*Ibid.* 9 Sept. 1780.

³⁷*Ibid.* 4 Aug. 1781.

³⁸Quoted in R. Lonsdale *Dr. Charles Burney* (Oxford, 1965) p. 385.

³⁹*Norfolk Chronicle* 29 Nov. 1783.

⁴⁰*Norwich Mercury* 17 Jan. 1784.

- ⁴¹Neville *Diary, op. cit.* Entry for 1 March 1784.
- ⁴²*Norfolk Chronicle* 21 Feb. 1784. This balloon measured 5 ft. across and reached Mundford, 28 miles away.
- ⁴³Neville *Diary, op. cit.* Entry for 15 March 1784.
- ⁴⁴*Norwich Mercury* 27 March 1784. Not enough subscribers came forward.
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.* 16 Oct. 1784.
- ⁴⁶*Norfolk Chronicle* 7 May 1785.
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.* 4 June 1785. The main source for Decker's flights is: [E. Rigby] *An account of Mr. James Decker's [sic] two aerial expeditions* (Norwich, 1785). This appeared in the Norwich newspapers before being printed as a separate pamphlet.
- ⁴⁸*Norfolk Chronicle* 30 July 1785.
- ⁴⁹*Norwich Mercury* 28 March 1789.
- ⁵⁰*Norfolk Chronicle* 13 June 1789.
- ⁵¹*Norwich Mercury* 19 June and 24 July 1790.
- ⁵²*Ibid.* 24 July 1790.
- ⁵³*Ibid.* 14 Aug. 1790. Quantrell must have been helped by his successful firework shows that year at Bury and Ipswich; he also staged a show at New Buckenham (*Norfolk Chronicle* 11 Sept. 1790).
- ⁵⁴*Norwich Mercury* 31 May 1794.
- ⁵⁵Keymer had fitted up a brewery the year before: see *Ibid.* 24 Feb. 1798.
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.* 17 Aug. 1799, 2 Aug. 1800, 7 Aug. 1802.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.* 26 July 1800. *Norwich Theatrical Observer and Ranelagh Spectator* No. 38, 7 Aug. 1827, says that the Pantheon came from Vauxhall.
- ⁵⁸*Norwich Mercury* 4 Aug. 1804.
- ⁵⁹*Norwich Theatrical Observer and Ranelagh Spectator* No. 38, 7 Aug. 1827.
- ⁶⁰*Norwich Mercury* 25 July 1807.
- ⁶¹*Ibid.* 14 Aug. 1813.
- ⁶²*Ibid.* 25 July 1812.
- ⁶³*Ibid.* 11 Feb. 1815.
- ⁶⁴He landed in a field near Sprowston Hall: *Norfolk Chronicle* 5 Aug. 1815.
- ⁶⁵Hence for example Quantrell's reminder to players at his bowling green that they must spend 6d. on drinks of some kind (*Norwich Mercury* 23 April 1791). Harper's was not a complete break from pleasure gardens. He soon took over the Apollo Gardens at Yarmouth, formerly Snow's (*Ibid.* 29 April 1820). J. H. Drury's *Historical notices of Great Yarmouth* (1826) p. 101 remarks that during the Yarmouth race week "the Vauxhall and Apollo Gardens are brilliantly illuminated, and singers of great respectability are generally engaged for the orchestras; excellent bands are in attendance. . . ."
- ⁶⁶*Norwich Mercury* 1 Aug. 1818.
- ⁶⁷*Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn Courier* 7 Aug. 1819.
- ⁶⁸*Ibid.* 21 Aug. 1819.
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.* 3 June 1820.
- ⁷⁰*Ibid.* 15 July 1820 and 4 Aug. 1821. These bands played graded panpipes with a range of some four octaves.
- ⁷¹*Ibid.* 13 July 1822.
- ⁷²*Norwich Mercury* 7 June 1823.
- ⁷³*Ibid.* 1 Nov. 1823.
- ⁷⁴J. Lamb *A visit to Norwich: a poem in two cantos* (Norwich, 1820).
- ⁷⁵*Norwich Theatrical Observer and Ranelagh Spectator* No. 38, 7 Aug. 1827. In the 1820s Ranelagh was sometimes hired out for special purposes. Around 1826 one of the buildings temporarily housed the Norwich corn exchange. In 1827 and 1829 weavers' meetings were held in the grounds.
- ⁷⁶*Ibid.* Nos. 38-40, 7-13 Aug. 1827. In 1825 Richmond Hill Gardens was the scene of various balloon ascents (and one failure) by Mr. and Mrs. Graham and Colonel Harvey. About the same period, Prussia Gardens and Ranelagh were used from time to time by long-distance walkers trying to accomplish feats of pedestrianism for a wager. In Thorpe Road stood another garden—Surrey Gardens—which advertised itself as a resort for respectable families and invalids; it had a band on Sunday evenings.
- ⁷⁷For example, Woodforde noted at Quantrell's on 20 June 1780: "A prodigious number of common girls there and dressed". Efforts were made nonetheless to keep out undesirables by posting constables at the entrances, and entertainments like breakfasting were essentially genteel.
- ⁷⁸Bill in Norwich Public Library, Colman Collection, in volume with spine title *Balloon ascents, Public gardens [etc.]*.
- ⁷⁹*Norwich Mercury* 31 July 1841.
- ⁸⁰*Ibid.* 30 July 1842. According to Blyth's *Norwich guide* (1842) the proprietors of the other gardens then were: William Bales (Greyhound), James Pigg (Prussia), and William Richard Youngs (Richmond Hill).
- ⁸¹C. Mackie *Norfolk Annals* Vol. 1, p. 401.
- ⁸²The first play was *As you like it* (*Norwich Mercury* 28 Aug. 1847).
- ⁸³*Norfolk Chronicle* 29 July 1848. In 1849 the West End Retreat (in St. Benedict's Road) was illuminated and had fireworks, pantomime, and a sax-horn band to play polkas and quadrilles (*Ibid.* 21 July 1849).
- ⁸⁴G. K. Blyth *The Norwich guide* (Norwich, 1842). J. Stark *Scenery of the rivers of Norfolk* contains a view of Hinsby's Gardens at Thorpe. In the letterpress J. W. Robberds mentions that this riverside garden was familiar to Norwich people from their earliest childhood and was a popular venue for sailing and rowing matches.
- ⁸⁵The gardens on higher ground in Norwich liked to emphasize also their healthy situation. Quantrell, for example, in 1772 suggested that his garden stood in the most salubrious spot in the district: "noxious marshy Vapours" were quite absent from his place, whatever might be the case at other gardens down by the river (*Norwich Mercury* 18 Jan. 1772).
- ⁸⁶*Norwich Mercury* 29 Sept. 1849.
- ⁸⁷*Norfolk Chronicle* 10 Nov. 1849.