

EVIDENCE FOR A SURVIVING HUMPHRY REPTON LANDSCAPE: BARNHILLS PARK, WEMBLEY

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SUMMARY

Humphry Repton, the landscape architect, prepared one of his Red Books for Richard Page of Wembley Park in about 1791–2. The present location of the book is unknown, but extracts and plates reproduced in some of Repton's other literature, have enabled a reconstruction of his Wembley Park proposals to be made. Much of Repton's Wembley Park landscape was removed in 1922–3 during construction of the British Empire Exhibition which was held there in 1924–5. Page also owned the adjacent Barn Hill to the north of Wembley Park, then known as Barnhills Park, although there is no direct reference to it in Repton's surviving literature. This paper presents evidence that the Barnhills Park landscaping, much of which still survives, was also landscaped by Repton.

INTRODUCTION

Although the Red Book prepared by Humphry Repton (1752–1818) for Richard Page of Wembley Park has been lost, attempts have been made (Stroud 1974, 72–5 and Hewlett 1980, 16–21) to reconstruct his proposals based on extracts and plates from the Red Book that were reproduced in Repton (1795).

Adjacent to Wembley Park, immediately north of Forty Lane (the A4088) is Barn Hill, on which there is a considerable area of existing landscaped woodland. This is largely in woodland belts surviving around the edges of the Hill and on its crown where they have been retained within Fryent Country Park, an area managed for nature conservation and public recreation by the London Borough of Brent. Some of the belts are found amongst the suburban housing that largely covers the southern slopes of Barn Hill. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Hill was also owned by Page and known as Barnhills Park¹, with an area now estimated to be about 76 hectares.

Barnhills Park is not mentioned by name in Repton's surviving literature

and it is only recently that other evidence has suggested (Cunnington 1975, 28–35) that these woodland belts may be a Repton landscape. Recent hedgerow and woodland surveys have shown that the landscaping has many characteristics associated with Repton. Combined with an examination of documentary sources, convincing evidence can be put forward to show that this is a surviving Humphry Repton landscape.

Geologically, Barn Hill (86m Ordnance Datum) is of London Clay with a summit capping of Pebble Gravel of maximum depth of about 2m, although there is much gravel downwash on the northern slopes. The areas of the two Page owned parks are within tetrads 18TQ84 and 18TQ86.

BRIEF HISTORY

A background history of the Wembley Park and Barn Hill areas is given in Hewlett (1979, 141–90). Further information on the Barn Hill area is given in Cunnington (1975, 25–38 and 1983, 103–10). Stroud (1974, 72–5); and Knight and Savey (1984)

mention the later history of Wembley Park. For information on the Parish of Harrow Inclosure Act of 1803 refer to Dark (undated).

Wembley Park was granted to the Page family in 1542–3 having previously been in the hands of Kilburn Priory and remained vested in the family for 260 years. The Pages became one of the most wealthy families in Middlesex. Between 1603–8 the Uxendon estates at Preston to the west of, and including, Barn Hill had been acquired by Richard Page (died 1642) from Richard Bellamy or his widow, whose family had suffered considerable religious persecution and had been connected with the Babington plot (Bushell, 1914, 71–104).

During the first half of the 18th century, Wembley Park consisted of agricultural land associated with a series of farm buildings along, or near to, Wembley Hill Road. On the death of Richard Page of Harrow (1702–71) Wembley Park passed to his eldest son, another Richard Page (1748–1803). Page's Uxendon estates including Barn Hill were adjacent to the northern edge of Wembley Park, the other side of Forty Lane. Page chose one of the existing farm houses on the Wembley Park estate to be his new manor house.

Between about 1791–2 Page engaged Repton to prepare plans for the conversion of the agricultural estate into a landscaped park and for improvements to the manor house. Stroud (1974, 72) states that there is no evidence of any attempts at landscape improvements before Repton was commissioned. Repton may have been recommended to Page, as he had just landscaped the local Brandsbury Park (now Brondesbury), Willesden, then still rural, for Lady Salusbury. The Red Book for Brandsbury was probably the first to be used in practise (Hyams 1971, 137)². Repton (1795, 9–10) described Wembley Park thus:

In the vicinity of the metropolis there are few places so free from interruption as the grounds at Wembly; and, indeed, in the course of my experience, I have seen no spot within so short a distance of London, more perfectly secluded from those interferences which are the common effects of divided property, and a populous neighbourhood. Wembly is as quiet and retired at seven miles distance, as it could have been at seventy.

Repton's Red Book proposals included gothicising the house, Wembley Park Mansion, (the site of which is near the present intersection of Manor Drive and Park Chase), by changing its colour from brick red to cream and by adding battlements, bringing the offices nearer to join the house and so add to its effect; and by removing the shrubbery that was choking the house so as to show more extent of the park and prospect. Stroud (1974, 73) states that the plans to gothicise the house were not implemented. However, the plans for landscaping the grounds were largely adopted, as considered below with the evidence for Barnhills Park. A map of the Wembley Park landscaping based on the 1864 Ordnance Survey map is given in Fig. 1 and this is very similar to the 1834 plan of Wembley Park³.

In 1792 just before the actual landscaping work commenced, Page inherited Flambards, a maturing Capability Brown landscape on Harrow Hill and his enthusiasm for Wembley Park declined. Richard Page died in 1803. The Land Tax returns of 1804 show that a John Gray (1747–1828) was the new owner of Wembley Park, although the Pages still held Uxendon and Barn Hill. Between 1811–14 Gray spent considerable sums (£14,000) extending and renovating Wembley Park Mansion and associated features, although not always as Repton had originally proposed. Entrance to the estate was by a drive from the thatched Wembley Park Lodge which still survives

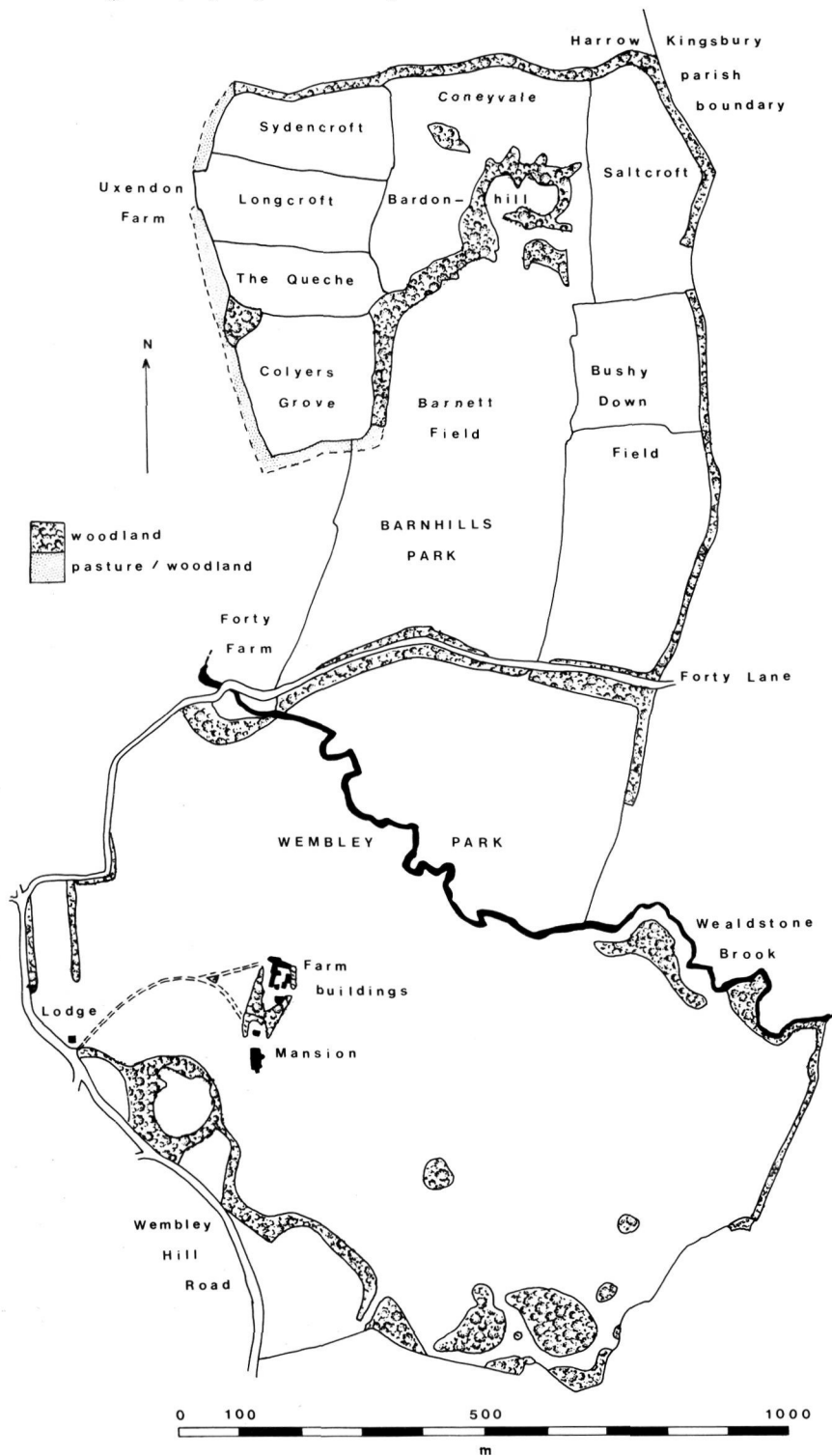


Fig. 1 Barnhills Park and Wembley Park to show probable extent of Repton landscaping. Based on the 1864 Ordnance Survey maps with reference to the 1817 Harrow Enclosure Award maps and the 1834 Shuttleworth map⁴.

as 114 Wembley Park Road. Repton may have been the original architect of this cottage as the cottage orné style was typical of the work of Repton and his eldest son, John Adey Repton, in the first decade of the 19th century (London Borough of Brent 1984, 30).

In 1880 John Gray's son, the Revd. John Edward Gray, sold some of the Wembley Park estate to the Metropolitan Railway Company. In 1889 the remainder of the estate was sold to Sir Edward Watkin, chairman of the Metropolitan Railway. Wembley Park was opened as a public pleasure ground containing the ill-fated Watkin's Folly, an Eiffel Tower imitation that met both financial and geological problems in the London Clay. Wembley Park Mansion was demolished in 1908. In 1912 an eighteen-hole golf course was opened at Wembley Park and later it became the site of the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–5. The Exhibition, Wembley Stadium and the present leisure and commercial nature of Wembley Park have been described in the references given above.

Much less is known about Barnhills Park. Page's Folly (the prospect house proposed by Repton and discussed later in this paper) which was built on the top of Barn Hill and the Barn Hill farmhouse were demolished in the first half of the 19th century, the Folly certainly after 1820. The Barn Hill fields were then probably farmed as part of the neighbouring Uxendon farm. In 1817 Barn Hills (the eastern half of Bardonhill) and Coneyvale fields were classified as pasture and in 1852 they were meadowland, as was Saltcroft (Cunnington 1975, 29).

Between about 1895 and the early 1920s the Barnhills Park area was a golf course and many of the greens and bunkers are still visible. The course fell into dis-use after the First World War and in June 1927 Wembley Urban District

Council purchased 20.2 hectares of the hill top for public Open Space. By this time suburban development had commenced on the lower southern slopes of Barn Hill by Haymills, followed by Wimpey; and by the late 1930s most of the southern slopes and the Uxendon farm area were covered by housing. In the mid-1930s Middlesex County Council purchased the land east and north of Barn Hill Open Space, thus preventing further suburban expansion. In 1984 Barn Hill/Fryent Way Open Space was renamed Fryent Country Park.

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Although there was no direct reference to Barnhills Park in Repton's surviving literature on Wembley Park (Repton, 1795), the evidence below suggests that in his proposals for Wembley Park he was also referring to Barnhills Park. The Wembley Park landscaping is also mentioned in Loudon (1840, 48–50, 56–60, 79–80, 82–3), Nolen (1907, 19, 40, 42), Stroud (1962, 46, 68–9, 174 and 1974, 72–5) and Hewlett (1980, 16–21) although these largely quote from Repton (1795).

Even if no other evidence were available, it would have been logical for Page to have had both estates landscaped, given the commanding position of Barn Hill in overlooking Wembley Park. From the summit of Barn Hill clear views of Wembley Park would have been obtained, including the Mansion less than 1.5km away. (Today the view is of suburbia, offices and Wembley Stadium). Barn Hill would have been prominent as viewed from Wembley Park.

Repton (1795, 38–41) wrote:

The Park at Wembly is only defective in two circumstances; the first is the common defect of all places where the hedges have

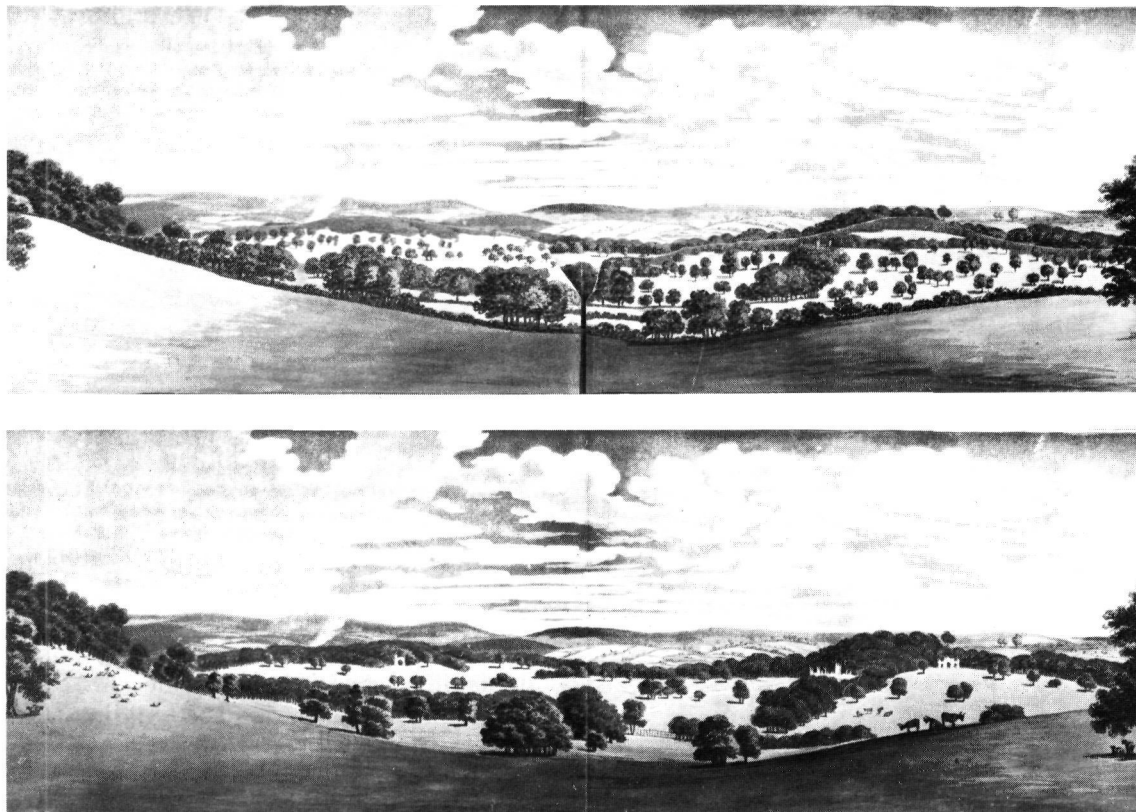


Plate 1 Repton's before, and after proposed landscaping plates of Wembley Park reproduced in Repton (1795)¹³. The views are now considered to be from the site of the proposed prospect house on Barn Hill. (reproduced by kind permission of the Librarian B.A.L./R.I.B.A.).

been recently removed, and too many single trees are left; the natural reluctance felt by every man of taste and experience to cut down large trees, at the same time that he sees the unpleasant effect of artificial rows, is very apt to suggest the idea of breaking those rows by planting many young trees; and thus the whole composition becomes frittered into small parts, which are neither compatible with the ideas of the sublime nor beautiful. The masses of light and shade, whether in a natural landscape or a picture, must be broad and unbroken, or the eye will be distracted by the flutter of the scene; and the mind will be rather employed in retracing the former lines of hedge-rows, than in admiring the ample extent of lawn, and continuity of wood, which alone distinguishes the park from the grass or dairy farm. This defect will of course easily be remedied when the new plantations shall have acquired a few years growth, and many of the

old trees shall be either taken down or blended into closer groups by young ones planted very near them: but there can be little occasion for dotting young trees with such profusion; and I do not hesitate to affirm, that of several hundred such trees now scattered upon the lawn, not more than twenty can be absolutely necessary⁴.

The other defect of Wembly arises from a sameness of objects; . . . The approach-road to the house will be a feature of the lawn, both as seen from thence, and also from the high ground about the park.

The expedient of producing variety at Wembly by buildings, is perhaps the most difficult, and requires the greatest attention; because one source of our admiration is, that in the neighbourhood of the metropolis a place should exist so perfectly secluded and detached from the "busy haunts of men:" we must therefore be particularly cautious that

every building should appear to be an appendage or inmate of the place, and not a neighbour intruding on its privacy. From hence arose some difficulty in the style of building proper for the prospect on the hill: a very small one would have been inadequate to the purpose of containing such companies as may resort thither; as well as forming a dwelling house for those who should have the care of the prospect rooms, and the dairy; yet in building a large house, there was a danger of making it appear to belong to some other person. A design has at length been made for such a building as is worthy of the situation, from whence a view is presented, of which it is very difficult for the pencil to give any just idea; yet it is here inserted, No. XIV. for the sake of shewing the improvement of which it is capable on the principles already enumerated, viz.

First. By collecting the wood into larger masses, and distinguishing the lawns in a broad masterly manner, without the confused frittering of too many single trees.

Secondly. By the interesting line of road winding through the lawn.

Thirdly. By the introduction of cattle, to enliven the scene; and, Lastly, By the appearance of a seat on the knoll; and a part of the house, with its proposed alterations, displaying its turrets and pinnacles amongst the trees.

To the common observer, the beauties of Wembley may appear to need no improvement; but it is the duty of my profession to discover how native charms may be heightened by the assistance of taste: and that even beauty itself may be rendered more beautiful, this place will furnish a striking example.

In these extracts Repton mentioned a number of features which the evidence suggests, were associated with the Barnhills Park landscaping. These include the tree belt and hedgerow landscaping, which probably referred to both parks (Fig. 1) and are considered later. The other main evidence concerns the prospect house and the two plates (Repton's plate XIV) of the Wembley Park landscape, here reproduced as Plate 1.

Repton mentioned the choice of building for the prospect on the hill and described the view that would be

obtained from it. These before and after views show that Repton intended to landscape the hill slopes, in addition to Wembley Park, as there are some changes in the foreground to the originally existing hedges. This would suggest that the views were taken from Barn Hill, as Wembley Hill, the nearest hill to the Mansion House, was not part of the Page estate. Barn Hill is both higher and much larger than Wembley Hill. Although it is now difficult to compare the view from Barn Hill with that in these plates, they do appear to agree well. Complete correlation would be unexpected, as Hyams (1971, 127–8) suggests that Repton drew the final artwork for his Red Books, away from the site using field notes and sketches. The final work plans frequently varied from those in the Red Books, depending on his clients wishes.

Further evidence that the building was to be on Barn Hill, is given in the Statement of Claims connected with the Inclosure Award AD 1805⁵ in which a prospect is recorded at Barnhills Farm in addition to the farmhouse, under the heading of Devises of Richard Page. The area of the farm was given as 77.3 hectares, which may approximate to the estimated 76 hectare area of the Barnhills Park area under consideration in this paper. The farmhouse was on the north-west side of the summit and was first mentioned in 1732⁶. Only the farmhouse was shown on the Enclosure Book copy of the Enclosure Map, but a copy of the map in the Public Record Office, possibly of earlier date (the Award was made in 1817, the Act having been passed in 1803), shows two buildings on Barn Hill, the second being much larger than the farmhouse (Cunnington 1975, 33) and sited at a position in the landscaping where views would have been obtained of both Wembley Park and of London.



Plate 2 Part of the summit landscaping in winter, looking north-west towards the prospect house site.

Cunnington (1975, 32) also quoted from *London and its Environs, or the General Ambulator*, twelfth edition, London 1820 which in considering Wembley Park mentioned that 'On an eminence opposite called Barn Hill, is an unfinished building, commanding a fine view, erected by the late Mr. Page, and called his Folly.'

Further evidence that Barn Hill was a park at this time is given in a reference⁷ of c. 1800: 'Barnetts Field, Uxendon, part of No. 999 now Barn Hill Park'; and in the Enclosure Award Book: 'Public road XIV between the parks of Wembley and Barnhills.'

Work at Wembley Park probably commenced in the spring of 1793 (Stroud 1974, 73), for on 6 May 1793 Repton wrote to another of his clients and mentioned that he had started the actual landscaping for Mr Page⁸.

LANDSCAPE EVIDENCE

The original woodland of Barn Hill was largely cleared, probably during medieval times to leave a hedgerow landscape (Williams and Cunnington 1985, 7-22). Repton incorporated these hedges to a large extent into his landscaping and therefore some caution is required in interpreting the evidence as to the extent of the park and its landscaping (Figs 1 and 2, plates 2 and 3). Much of Repton's scheme can be retraced by following the existing woodland belts and comparing them with the map evidence. The maps used were the Enclosure Book copy of the Enclosure Map and a different version of the map in the Public Record Office, Pringle and Greenwoods 1819 Map of Middlesex; and the 1864 and 1897 Ordnance Survey maps. There is no evidence of landscaped woodland on

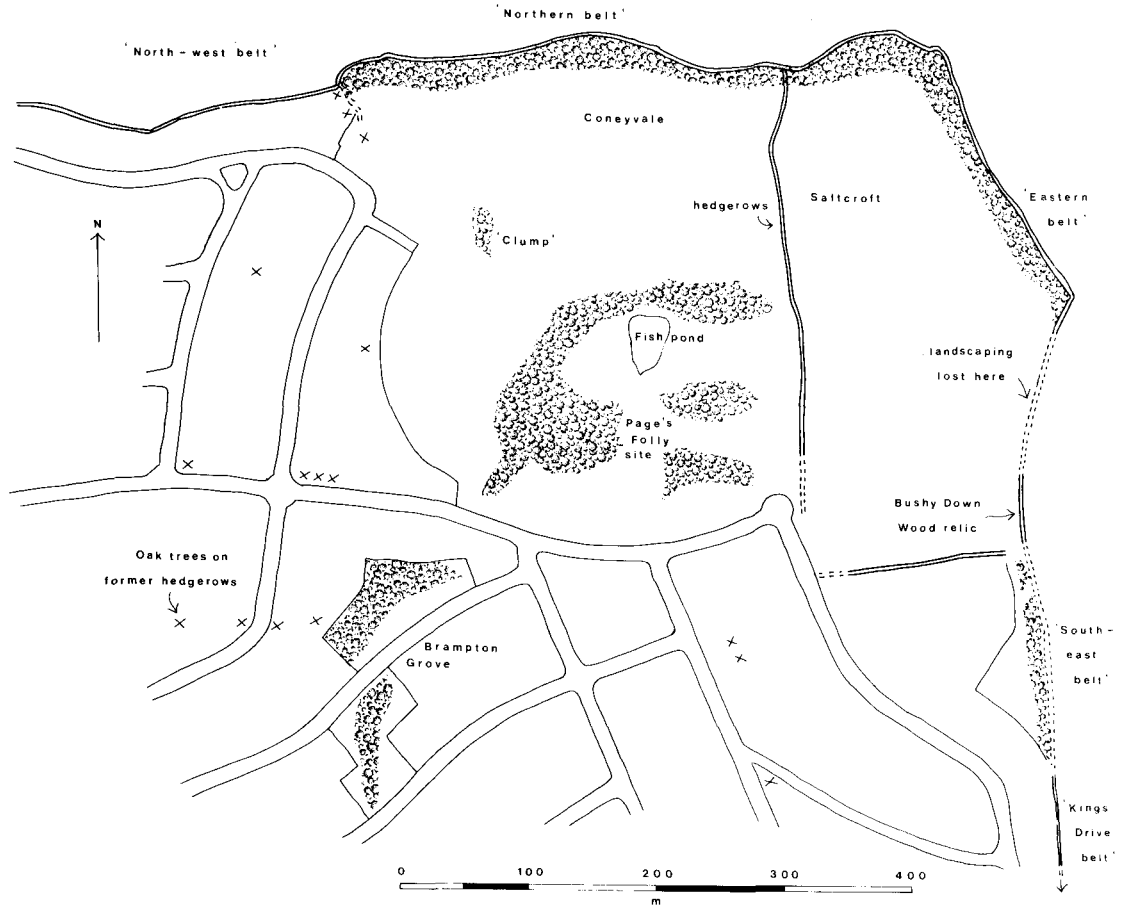


Fig. 2 Repton's surviving woodland landscaping on Barn Hill.

maps prior to 1793, while all of the above listed maps show the woodland belts. The Messeder Map of Harrow 1759⁹, although not of great detail, does show the Barn Hill Farm (house), the parish boundary hedge and woodland corresponding to Bushy Down Wood, but as expected, none of the woodland considered to be Repton's.

Another problem was the belt to the west of Sydencroft, Longcroft, The Queche and around Colyers Grove. This was also adjacent to the field boundary hedgerows, but the maps show varying portions of the belt

marked as hedge, woodland and pasture; though grazing may well have been permitted once the landscape trees were established.

The east side of Barnhills Park was marked by the Harrow/Kingsbury parish boundary. Running north from Forty Lane this can still be traced as mature trees to the rear of properties in Barn Hill (road) and Kings Drive. Repton's landscaped belt followed this hedge on its uphill (Harrow) side. Shortly after entering Fryent Country Park, there is a missing section of the parish boundary hedge which is then joined by the route of Hell Lane, an ancient trackway that then followed the parish boundary northwards (Braun 1937a, 218–28 and 1937b, 365–92). At the north-eastern corner of Barn Hill, the land-

scaped belt diverges west from the parish boundary, to follow the northern edge of Barnhills Park. This was also bounded by an ancient hedge with associated woodland boundary earthworks. North of the former Sydencroft field, only the hedge remains, although originally the landscaping followed the northern side of this field and then curved around its western edge. The Uxendon farm buildings were just west of Longcroft field. The landscaping then swept along the western edge of Longcroft, The Queche and Colyers Grove, before curving east around Colyers Grove and uphill towards the summit woodland. Some of the landscaping on the eastern boundary of Colyers Grove still survives on greens to the east and west of Brampton Grove road.

South of Colyers Grove the western boundary of Barnhills Park appears to have been the hedge with Pargraves, the boundary with Forty Farm (another of Page's properties, leased to a tenant farmer). This hedge went south to Forty Lane. The surviving trees along the southern (Wembley Park) side of Forty Lane were also probably planted by Repton and the maps show that there was once a similar belt on the northern (Barnhills) side of the road.

The perimeter of the Barn Hill summit landscaping approximates to the higher (eastern) half of Bardonhill field and again probably incorporated the original hedges. To the west of the summit, the woodland was planted across the centre of Bardonhill field, to join a tree belt continuous with the surviving Brampton Grove belt. There is also a clump of trees between the north-western tip of the summit landscaping and the northern belt of the park. Although not marked on the Harrow Enclosure maps, the age and species of these trees is similar to that on the summit.

Thus Barnhills Park appears to have consisted of the fields of Barnetts, Colyers Grove, The Queche, Longcroft, Sydencroft, Coneyvale, Saltcroft, Bushy Down Wood, Bushy Down Field and Bardonhill; names based on the Harrow Manorial Survey of 1547 (Cunnington 1975, 25–38)¹². During the early 19th century the remaining Bushy Down Wood remnant was reduced to hedges. Suburban housing now covers all of these fields except Coneyvale, Saltcroft, the landscaped part of Bardonhill, the northern tip of Barnetts and part of the former Bushy Down Wood, though the landscaped field boundaries have often survived. It was also possible (Williams 1985, 165–71) to follow some of the former hedge lines through suburban Barn Hill by using the surviving landscape trees and

mature hedgerow Oaks that were left standing when the estate was built. Boundary sections of Sydencroft, Coneyvale, Longcroft, The Queche, Colyers Grove, Barnetts, Bardonhill and Bushy Down Wood were found in this way. On Fryent Country Park itself, the hedgerow and landscape trees were easy to trace, although frequently obscured by developing Oak and other scrub.

As the documented Repton landscape at Wembley Park has been largely removed through a multitude of land uses during the past century, little survives to act as a comparison for the Barnhills Park landscaping. Surveys of the remaining Wembley Park trees were hindered by the difficulty of gaining adequate access to the many land units involved, the large number of second generation trees including suckers; and subsequent plantings. Where extant landscaped belts have been found to coincide with the landscaping shown on 19th century maps, species lists have been made. Such belts exist along much of the southern side of Forty Lane and behind Forty Close. These belts typically contained Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Common Lime (*Tilia x vulgaris*), Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), Common Oak (*Quercus robur*), Turkey Oak (*Q. cerris*) and Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) in various proportions, plus other less frequent species such as Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Sycamore (*A. pseudoplatanus*), Cherry species (*Prunus* sp.) and English Elm (*Ulmus procera*) suckers. These belts were thus similar to those of Barnhills Park, providing strong evidence for a common design.

In discussing the Barnhills Park landscaping, it would be useful to know if the landscape trees could be differentiated from those of the hedges that Repton planted his belts along. Williams and Cunnington (1985, 7–22) surveyed both the Barn Hill and the other hedges of Fryent Country Park and it was obvious that the hedgerows had a different tree composition from the pure landscape belts. A census of the mature Barn Hill trees was undertaken in 1984 (Fig. 3). All standard (timber sized) trees were counted, but not shrub species such as Hawthorn. From the Fryent Country Park hedgerow survey it would be expected that most or all of the Field Maple on Barn Hill was of hedgerow origin. The Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) could have been planted by Repton or be of hedgerow origin. It would also be expected that some of the Common Oak and a few Ash were part of the hedgerows, but the majority of these two species and all the other species of standard trees can be considered to be part of the planted landscaping;

	'Kings Drive belt'	'South-east belt'	Bushy Down Wood relic	'Eastern belt'	'Northern belt'	'North-west belt'	Summit landscaping	'Brampton Grove belt'	'Clump'	Totals
Common Oak	10	15	3	36	67	—	9	3	4	147
Hornbeam	—	4	—	30	15	—	11	6	—	66
Horse Chestnut	2	2	—	—	—	—	35	3	—	42
Common Lime	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	15	2	37
Beech	1	—	—	4	7	—	21	3	—	36
Ash	2	3	2	2	15	5	—	3	—	32
Field Maple	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	4
Sweet Chestnut	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	3
Sycamore	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Turkey Oak	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Wild Cherry	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
English Elm (suckers)	?	present	present	present	—	present	present	present	—	—
Totals	15	24	5	72	112	5	98	33	6	370

Fig. 3 Census of standard landscape and hedgerow trees, Barnhills Park area, 1984¹⁴.

ie. Hornbeam, Horse Chestnut, Common Lime, Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Sycamore, Turkey Oak and English Elm.

In interpreting Fig. 3 it should be noted that the sections are of arbitrary designation, (Fig. 2). The Kings Drive section results were estimated as survey access was limited. In addition parts of the landscaping have been subjected to differential removal of trees, eg. by suburban housing development or Dutch Elm Disease (*Ceratocystis ulmi*). Dead or fallen trees were not counted.

Common Oak was usually the most frequent tree in all of the landscape sections and had a high density in the eastern and northern belts. It was relatively uncommon on the summit, where some of the Oaks may represent the original Bardonhill hedge boundary. A few of the 147 Oaks may not have been pure Common Oak. The one definite Turkey Oak was on the summit.

Ash was frequent on the hedge-banks of the northern and eastern belts, but this consistency in their location and the low density of Ash elsewhere in Fryent Country Park hedges, suggested that these trees were part of the landscaping rather than the hedges. Ash was absent from the summit, but present in the Brampton Grove Belt. Hornbeam and Beech were present in most parts of the landscaping, although at varying densities with Hornbeam concentrated in the

eastern belt and Beech on the summit. Horse Chestnut was absent from the eastern and northern belts, but largely concentrated on the summit. Sweet Chestnut was only present in the northern belt.

Common Lime was frequent on the summit and the Brampton Grove Belt. It was also present in 'the clump', but absent from the northern and eastern belts. As the tallest broad-leaved tree in Britain as a whole (Mitchell, 1978, 359), Common Lime would have been a good choice for inclusion in these elevated sections. Sycamore was confined to the summit.

The former distribution of the mature English Elms which were all killed through Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s can be deduced from the distribution of their suckering clones (Rackham 1976, 129). Elm was present throughout much of the landscaping, but not in the northern belt, but was present at the north-west corner of Sydencroft. The Elm suckers in the eastern belt have been considered by Williams and Cunnington (1985, 7-22) and although there may have been some landscape Elms in the north-east corner of Saltcroft, it was suggested that the eastern belt suckers represent boundary planting by the adjacent former Hill Farm on the Kingsbury side of the parish boundary.

Dating the trees was also a problem and as they were densely spaced their ages could not be

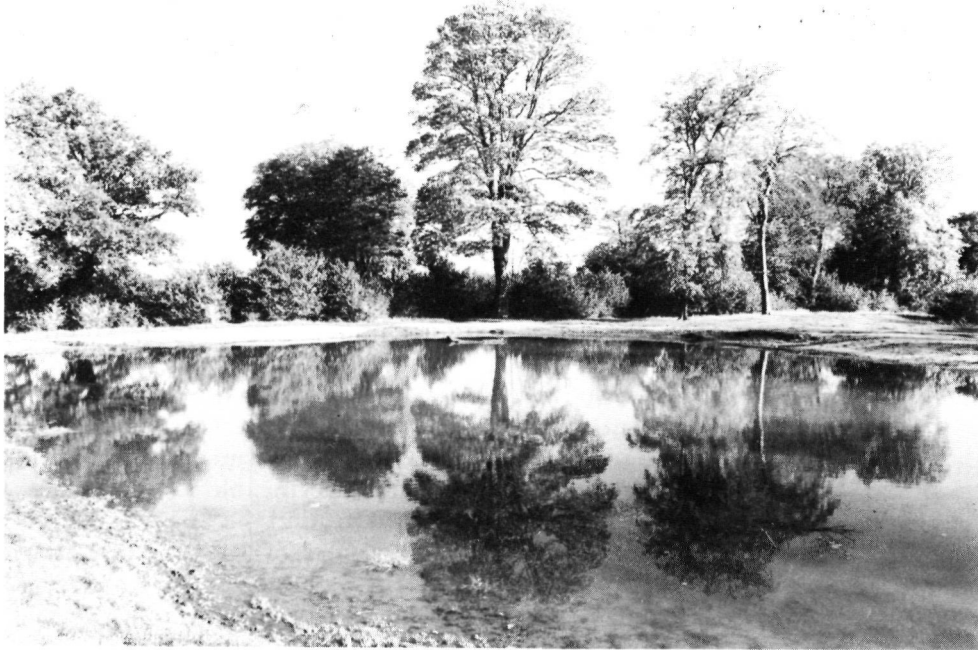


Plate 3 View looking north-east across the Fishpond to part of the summit landscaping.

readily estimated on the basis of their girths, as suggested by Mitchell (1978, 25). Tree ring counting was difficult, as trees that had fallen were decomposed internally. Ian Barrow (pers. comm., Arboricultural Officer, London Borough of Brent) estimated that some of the trees were about 150–200 years old, which could include a planting date of 1793. Although some of the trees were certainly of a later generation than the originals, the fact that the outline of the landscaping had changed little since the 1817 Enclosure Award maps and the 1864 Ordnance Survey map, does suggest that many of the trees are the originals. Certainly, the landscape shape, is virtually identical to the one that was planted.

DISCUSSION

The landscape features of Barnhills Park as described above are characteristic of Repton's work.

The practise of planting a belt of trees around much of the park perimeter was like some of his other earlier works, although he later abandoned it in favour of breaking up

the belts into groups of uneven extent (Hyams 1971, 138).

The Brampton Grove belt is of interest as it was once part of a belt sweeping down from the summit, another Repton characteristic. In this way he differed from Capability Brown (1716–83) who would plant isolated clumps of trees on hill tops. Repton (1803) quoted in Hyams (1971, 132–3) wrote:

In recommending that the hills should be planted, I do not mean that the summits only should be planted by a patch or clump; the woods of the valley should on the contrary seem to climb the hills by such connecting lines as may neither appear meagre nor artificial, but following the natural shapes of the ground, produce an apparent continuity of wood falling down the hills in various directions.

Although the effect is now somewhat obscured by suburban housing, map contours show that the Brampton

Grove belt is on a prominent convex brow of the Hill. This is now best seen during the journey between Northwick Park and Wembley Park stations on the Metropolitan Line. Repton appears to have carefully selected which of the original hedges would have best produced the desired effect, after being landscaped as tree belts. Assuming that he did intentionally use this brow to emphasise his belt, it is then clear why he had to plant trees across Bardonhill field in order to meet the belt on the brow and thus produce the effect of woodland continuity.

During the 1930s when the housing was under construction on the southern slopes, this Brampton Grove belt formed such a remarkably fine piece of woodland, that the estate developers approached Wembley Urban District Council to amend the originally agreed housing estate plans, so that the trees could be retained, even though it was not then realised that these trees were Repton's work (Williams 1985, 165–71). After over two years of bureaucratic involvement including that of the Minister of Health, the two greens composing this part of the belt were eventually purchased on 25 February 1938, for the '... purpose of preserving the trees growing thereon.'¹⁰

The tree species used at Barnhills Park were very similar to those used by Repton elsewhere. For example, at Corsham in 1796 Repton used Common Oak, English Elm, Beech, Sweet Chestnut, Sycamore and various exotic Oaks (Green 1981, 31). Another Repton feature is the clumping of species within the landscaping, as apparent at Barnhills Park. Repton believed that different species should predominate at various places within a landscape, rather than being an indeterminate mixture (Carter, Goode and Laurie 1982, 48).

The Fishpond (a recent name of convenience) at the top of Barn Hill measures about 45m × 35m with a maximum depth of about 1m and is much larger than any of the farm ponds that were once present in almost every field. There is little doubt that this was intended to be part of the landscaping and is surrounded by the summit woodland at varying distances from the pond. The Fishpond is also unusual in that it is surrounded by permeable Pebble Gravel that caps the summit of Barn Hill, whereas all the farm ponds (including one that was just to the south of the Fishpond) are in impermeable London Clay. Excavations around the Fishpond perimeter in the summer of 1984 showed that it too was in a London Clay basin that had been excavated after removal of the over-lying Pebble Gravel. It is therefore not a dew pond (which are fed by water running into a clay-lined depression in permeable strata), but is fed by water percolating through the Pebble Gravel and held by the underlying clay of the pond basin.

It is not known when the Fishpond was constructed, especially as ponds were not always marked on maps, possibly because, unlike hedges, they did not mark field and ownership boundaries. A pond, probably the Fishpond, was marked on Pringle and Greenwoods 1819 Map of Middlesex, amongst some woodland belts. Both the Fishpond and smaller pond to the south were shown on the Rating Valuation Map of the Parish of Harrow (1852)¹¹ but only the smaller pond was marked on the first Ordnance Survey maps in 1864.

From the proposed prospect house, the pond and surrounding trees would have formed the northern view. Repton did appear to be inconsistent in the use of water in such situations. Repton (1803) quoted in Hyams (1971, 133) wrote, 'Water on an eminence or on the side of

a hill is among the most common errors of Mr Brown's followers; in numerous instances I have been allowed to remove such pieces of water from the hills to the valleys, but in many my advice has not prevailed.' Yet Repton went on to state that although of unnatural situation, pools should be retained for the satisfaction they give to the viewer. Certainly Repton had a good knowledge of hydraulics (Carter, Goode and Laurie 1982, 52) and did make use of water in some of his other landscapes including Wembley Park where he used the Wealdstone Brook, a tributary of the River Brent.

The prospect house was also carefully sited in relation to the summit woodland belts, so as to allow a clear view of Wembley Park to the south and of London to the south-east between another set of belts (Figs 1 and 2).

The evidence therefore, strongly suggests that the Barnhills Park landscaping was Repton's work. The woodland belts date from the late 18th or early 19th century when this Park was in the same ownership of Richard Page, as the adjacent Wembley Park to the south which was landscaped by Repton in about 1793. Extracts and plates from the now lost Red Book for Wembley Park, reproduced in Repton (1795) show that he proposed to construct a prospect house, almost certainly on Barn Hill, from which views of Wembley Park could be obtained. Repton's plate of this view shows that he intended to undertake some tree landscaping on this hill. Further evidence that it was Barn Hill to which Repton was referring comes from various 19th century maps and from an extract in a guide book of 1820 that referred to the unfinished Page's Folly on Barn Hill.

The woodland belts occupy the same shapes as they did on early 19th century maps. The pattern of the belts around

the park perimeter was characteristic of Repton's earlier work. The imaginative use of the hill contours to increase the effectiveness of the landscaping, also suggests Repton's work, as does the continuity of woodland belts between low and high ground. Further evidence is provided by the tree species used and the pattern in which different species predominate in different sections of the landscape scheme.

CONSERVATION

The landscaping is now suffering from the effects of Dutch Elm Disease, adjacent land use changes and the general age of the trees. Their conservation during the last sixty years has not been without effort. In order to continue as a prominent landscape feature in Brent; and as a surviving example of Repton's earlier work, this landscape needs to be conserved, not just on Fryent Country Park where an underplanting programme has been in progress since the early 1980s, but also in the woodland belts of suburban Barn Hill and along the parish boundary section. Inevitably, some changes are likely, but it would be of value to replant trees of composition as near as possible to that of the original scheme using native, if not the same species; and in the same sectional pattern as the original.

NOTES

1. References vary as to the exact form of the Park's name: Barn Hill Park, Barn Hills Park or Barnhills Park. The form Barnhills Park has been used in this paper, to allow the use of Barn Hill in referring to the Hill itself.
2. The Red Book for Brandsbury is currently held by the Dumbarton Oaks Garden Library, Washington D.C., but was on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum in Dec. 1982–Feb. 1983. A closer examination of the book which this afforded revealed Repton's own notes:
March 1st–14th 1789.
Brandsbury at Wilsden in Middx.
Her Ladyship's Villa lately purchased.
The First place of any consequence in which I have been consulted so near London.
The landscaping had been completed by Dec. 1790 when the plants were described as large and numerous.
3. Plan of Wembley Park and Estates, Middlesex for sale by Mr Shuttleworth, 1834. Copy in The Grange Museum, Neasden Lane, NW10. The reserve price was not reached at the auction and the Gray's continued to live at Wembley until 1887.

4. Many individual trees were shown throughout Wembley Park on both the 1834 Shuttleworth and the 1864 Ordnance Survey maps. These were not part of Repton's landscaping and were absent in fields external to Wembley Park and also from Barnhills Park (which did not become a 'park' until landscaped by Repton). While some of these single trees may have been remnants of former hedges, their number and pattern suggest that most of them were not of hedgerow origin. These are probably the several hundred trees to which Repton referred. Indeed, their existence there when Repton arrived provides evidence that Wembley Park was some form of parkland for some time before Repton's landscaping and suggests that it may have been wood pasture in which the original woodland would have been subjected over a number of centuries to severe grazing pressure (Rackham 1976, 142-51 and 1980, 188-202). The evidence suggests that Repton's plans for removing these trees scattered upon the lawn were not implemented. Repton's plate of Wembley Park (Plate 1 in this paper) shows what Wembley Park would have looked like in the late 18th century. Note that there were no individual trees in the foreground, thus providing further evidence that Repton drew his sketches from a hill beyond Wembley Park.
5. GLRO Acc. 76/1400.
6. GLRO LA/HW/Harrow Poor Rate Book.
7. GLRO Acc. 76/909.
8. Letter to Reginald Pole Carew of Antony House, Torpoint, Cornwall dated May 6th 1793 and now in the Cornwall County Record Office at Antony House. The footnote reads, 'On Wednesday I go to Lord Wansfield at Kenwood & on Thursday—to a most beautiful spot near Harrow. I wish I could shew it you—it belongs to Mr Page. I have just opened the trenches & am attacking it in full force.'
9. GLRO Acc. 643, 2nd deposit.
10. Borough of Wembley Minute Book No. 1937-Oct. 1938.
11. In Harrow Reference Library.
12. GLRO Acc. 1052.
13. Repton (1795) captioned his Plate XIV:

View from the tower at Wembley: this is rather a prospect than a landscape; and therefore the pencil gives an inadequate idea of its real beauty. But this scene is attempted, to show how breadth of light and shade is produced, and that flutter corrected which had been the consequence of too many trees dotted on the lawn. In the unimproved state of view, there is an evident confusion; and the chief circumstance attracting notice, is the smoke of a distant lime-kiln.—But, by introducing objects within the park, the view becomes more appropriate and concentrated; and the distance is rendered more subordinate in the general composition.

The location of the lime-kiln to which Repton referred is not known.
14. Fig. 3 excludes those surviving standard hedgerow trees that did not appear to have been incorporated into a landscaped belt. These account for about another 16 Oak trees within the Barnhills Park area (Fig. 2). Standard trees of known recent planting have also been excluded eg. Lombardy Poplar (*Populus nigra* 'Italica'). The approximate extents of the belt sections used in Table 1 are shown in Fig. 3.

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interest. We would also like to thank Tony Leach, Ian Barrow, Peter Creasey, Brita Von Schoenaich, Wembley History Society and Barn Hill Conservation Group for their help. Plate 1 was reproduced by kind permission of the British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects, London.

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