THE PORTLAND FAMILY AND BULSTRODE PARK

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The history of Bulstrode House and its inhabitants from the late eleventh-century until the early nineteenth is described. During this time it became a great centre of cultural and intellectual life.

The Bulstrode estate lies on the southern boundary of Gerrards Cross and is now part of the parish. Previously it was divided between the parishes of Hedgerley and Upton, the boundary ran through the house and its grounds. The inhabitants regarded the ancient church at Upton as their parish church.

Bulstrode Park belonged to the Bulstrode family throughout the Middle Ages, but Sir Henry, who owned the estate during the first half of the seventeenth century, overspent his income, partly through mustering troops for Cromwell but probably also in rebuilding Bulstrode House. Henry died in 1643.[1] His heir and successor, who was known as Captain Thomas Bulstrode, had to sell the estate, saying sadly that it was 'the inheritance of his ancestors'. The purchaser was a member of the Drury family who had taken over the estate of the Abbey of Missenden in Chalfont St Peter, and also the lordship of the manor. He in turn was ruined and the house known as Hedgerley Bulstrode and the lordship were bought by Judge Jeffreys, a jovial Welshman but hated for his harshness to the West Country peasants who had taken Monmouth's part in the rebellion against the succession to the English throne of James, Duke of York, the Catholic brother of Charles II. While at Bulstrode he carried out very extensive alterations to the house and encased Henry Bulstrode's house in classical façades.

When James was ultimately deposed by the Protestant William of Orange, Jeffreys also fled and hoped to reach France. Unfortunately he went ashore to have one last drink at the Red Cow tavern in Wapping and here he was apprehended and later confined in the Tower of London for the rest of his life.

After the disgrace of Jeffreys, his son and daughter remained in possession of the park and estate of Hedgerley Bulstrode for four years and then sold it to Hans William Bentinck, one of the closest friends of the new King William III (Fig. 1). Bentinck had nursed William through smallpox and had probably saved his life at the Battle of the Boyne. Bentinck was a very cultured man and had been the Dutch ambassador to Paris where he had mixed in high society. Like all his family he was passionately interested in gardening.[2] English politicians who had brought King William to England were jealous of his Dutch advisors, so Bentinck began to play a less important part in government and he devoted himself to Bulstrode. He employed Talman as his architect and George London as his chief garden designer, but he also brought Dutchmen over to help.[3]

Bentinck did not alter the Jeffreys' house very much; with Talman's help he added pavilions and long raised terraces to each end of the south front and built an orangery at the back. The garden was laid out most elaborately, as can be seen in the second of the engravings by Bowles, a copy of which now hangs in the entrance of the house (Fig. 2). Henry Wise who was in charge of the royal gardens may have helped also.

There was an enclosed garden at the east, apparently with a pavilion in the middle, and four rectangular beds laid out symmetrically round it. These were probably outlined and divided by low box hedges in the Dutch style. Behind this enclosed garden there is a large area with a pond in the middle and apparently tree-lined paths leading from it like spikes from a wheel; remains of this can still be traced.

To the north of this there is a straight canal of considerable length, a very Dutch feature. This is known as the Long Water and still exists, but is no longer accessible to the public. Although it is at the top of the hill, it never runs dry so the water-table must be high in this area. The engraving shows other extensive formal gardens, each enclosed in a rectangle of hedges. The largest of these enclosures

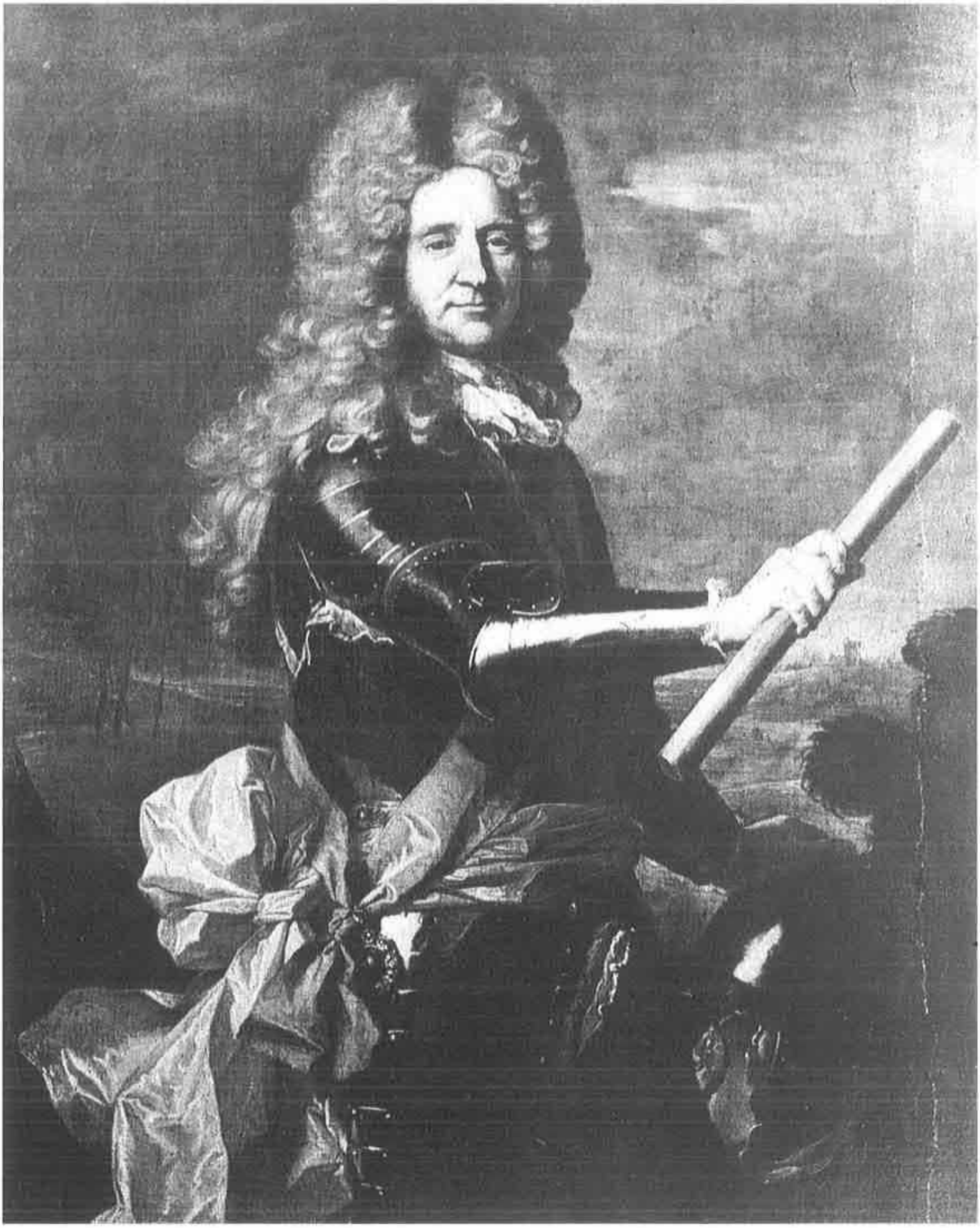

FIGURE 1 Portrait of Hans William Bentinck, 1st Earl of Portland, K.G., 1649–1709, from a painting by H. Rigaud, 1699. Reproduced from Turberville 1939 with kind acknowledgement.

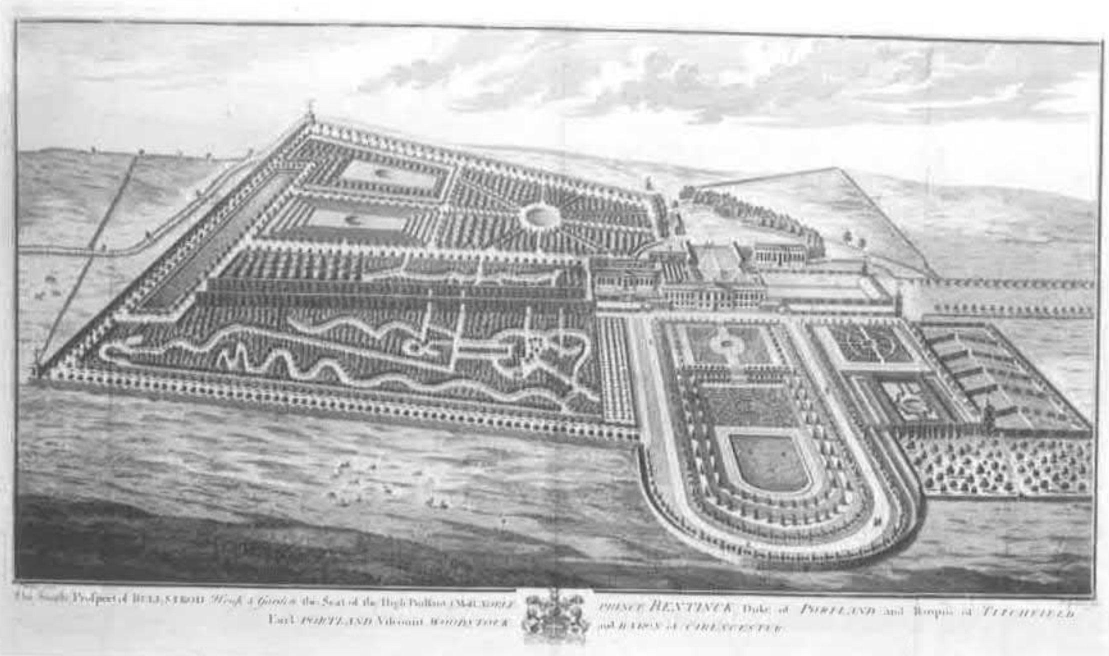

FIGURE 2 Bulstrode engraving of house and garden by Bowles circa 1716. Reproduced courtesy of The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.

is intersected by strange serpentine paths.[4]

Bentinck loved straight lines; he came to an agreement with other local residents to straighten the narrow twisty lane which led to Windsor. He was interested in education and founded a school for both boys and girls in Bull Lane. There were to be twenty boys and fifteen girls, all of whom were to be 'cloathed' and, after their time at school had ended, were to be apprenticed. He endowed the school and provided a salary of £20 each for the school master and school mistress. His care for the education of girls is remarkable at this time. Queen Anne admired Bentinck and came to visit him at Bulstrode. She created him Earl of Portland, and his son Henry, who succeeded him, became Duke.[5]

Henry was very different from his father; he was renowned for the magnificence of his entertainments and his conviviality. He was deeply interested in painting. At this time it was fashionable for young men who went on the 'Grand Tour' to go to Venice and buy topographical pictures. Henry, however, went further and persuaded Venetian artists to come to England. At the time a competition was arranged among artists from every country for plans for the decoration of St Paul's cathedral. This was a great incentive for them to come to England. While here, they found plenty of work in decorating or redecorating the many great houses built during this period.[6]

The Duke of Portland admired the work of Sebastiano Ricci and commissioned him to decorate the chapel at Bulstrode and also his town house. Sebastiano devised a unified plan for the decoration of the old chapel at Bulstrode. The walls were panelled with cedar elaborated with *trompe-l'œil* pilasters with allegorical figures supported on scrolled brackets. The scheme included two large paintings which represented the Baptism of Christ and the Last Supper. These were still in existence in 1847. A preliminary sketch for the Baptism was sold at Sotheby's in 1968 and is now in the possession of Mr John Harris, and that for the Last Supper is in the National Gallery of Art in Washington.[7]

Sebastiano also designed the stained glass windows in the chapel. When it was demolished, the Duke of Somerset had the windows taken to his West Country property of Maiden Bradley to be erected in the parish church. This building became unsafe, and one of the windows was taken to the church of St Andrew in the Wardrobe in the City.[8] Vertue, the eighteenth connoisseur who travelled throughout England and described works of art, says of the chapel, 'The whole is a noble free invention with a variety and freedom in the composition of the parts', while Horace Walpole reported in 1705 that there were two fine windows of modern glass in the chapel at Bulstrode.[9]

Duke Henry had a son called William who was a quiet pleasant young man. Dean Swift writes of him, 'he is free of the prevailing qualifications of the present young people of quality such as gaming, sharping [i.e. card sharping] and pilfering.' In the 1730s his family looked round for a suitable wife for him. At this time, marriages between the children of noble families required almost as much negotiation as those of ruling monarchs. It is not known how the Portlands came to choose Margaret, the only daughter of Edward Harley, as a suitable bride. She came of a distinguished family and was an heiress. The grandfather on her father's side was Robert Harley, Lord Treasurer and faithful supporter of Queen Anne who had been created Earl of Oxford. He possessed valuable property in London. His son Edward, Margaret's father, was less occupied in politics. He lived at Wimpole in Cambridgeshire and was in the process of rebuilding the house and remodelling the garden. He was a scholar and was considered rather pedantic as he was 'always talking of the Greeks and Romans out of season'. He had built up a magnificent library and was generous in allowing scholars and poets free access to it. These distinguished people usually stayed in the house. Among them were Pope, Prior, Richardson, Dr Middleton, a celebrated theologian, and Thomas Tredway, professor of music.[10]

Margaret's mother, Henrietta, was less remarkable than her father. Not very much is known about her except that she had red hair and that she and Edward Harley had been married quietly in the drawing room at Wimpole. She was very hospitable in entertaining all Edward's scholarly friends; she may have been rather prim as she disapproved of Pope who was 'too fond of philandering'.[11]

Margaret was the only child of Edward and Henrietta. She was much loved in the great Cambridgeshire house and no doubt sometimes entered the library where scholars and poets would be at work. Swift might have formed one of the group, but Matthew Prior, a rather pedestrian poet, seems to have been her favourite. He addressed a poem to her:

> To lift your heart and hands to Heaven
> and, dearest child, along the way
> in everything you do or say
> obey and please my lord and lady
> so God shall love and angels aid thee.

Peggy's grandfather, Robert Harley the distinguished statesman, used to write to Peggy's mother to enquire about her health. On one occasion the reply came, 'she has cut two teeth as easy as can be', and on another her mother reported, 'she is backward of her feet and also her tongue but, at three, Miss Peggy is of perfect health and wantonness and promises, as far as any lady of her years, to be an admirable coquette.'[12]

There is a delightful portrait of her as a toddler and another,[13] when she was older, in which she is dressed as a shepherdess. The outstanding work of art which she inspired was a bust carved by Rysbrack when she was twelve years old (Fig. 3). (The late Duke of Portland, a distinguished soldier and administrator, told me that, on his way to breakfast, he always kissed her.) Rysbrack was a Dutch sculptor who came to England and was responsible for some of the best large-scale monuments in English churches.[14]

Not much is known about Peggy's formal education; she probably had a governess and visiting masters to teach her dancing, French and Italian. She joined in the social life of Cambridgeshire. Her special friend was Elizabeth Collingwood who also lived in Cambridgeshire. She was four years younger than Margaret. Elizabeth was an excellent and witty letter-writer. Margaret used to lament that her talents did not lie in this direction and that her letters were 'hum-drum'. She was more interested in the natural world than in literature. However, she had a great sense of humour; in the letters she exchanged with Miss Collingwood 'Colly' or 'Cauliflower', (they always disguised the names of their families and acquaintances with nicknames).[15] Her friends referred to her as the Merry Duchess or the Sprightly Duchess. Mrs Delany recounts how, when the two of them were making nets for the cherry trees, 'a laugh would be hatched' and the work laid aside.[16]

Margaret was twenty years old when the negotiations for her marriage took place; she seems to

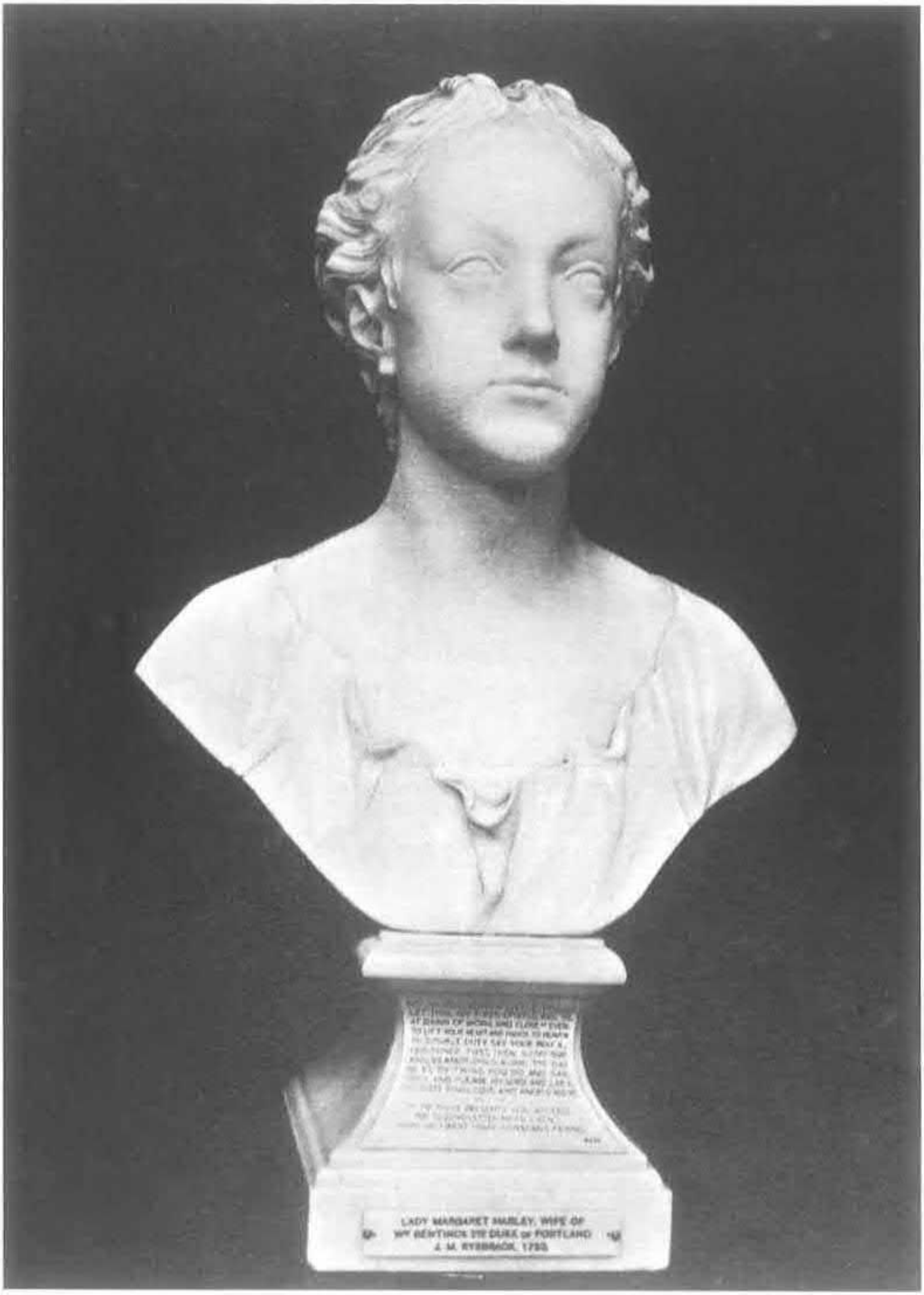
LADY MARGARET HARLEY, WIFE OF
WM BENTINCK 2ND DUKE OF PORTLAND
J. M. RYSBRACK, 1723

FIGURE 3 Bust of Lady Margaret Cavendish Holles Harvey, later Duchess of Portland, 1715–85 by J.M.Rysbrack, 1723. Reproduced from Turberville 1938 with kind acknowledgement.

have accepted the arrangement without protest (Fig. 4). The young couple were married in Marylebone chapel in Vere Street, a simple building with a classical façade. The church had recently been built to serve the great estate between Marylebone Road and Oxford Street; this area was owned by the Portlands and was just being developed (the street names bear testimony to the connection of the family with this area: e.g. Harley Street, Henrietta Street, Welbeck Street, Portland Square, and also Bulstrode Court.) On the occasion of the marriage, Margaret had an elaborate trousseau[17] which included –

> one gown and petticoat of white Paduasoy [a smooth silk originally made in Padua] embroidered with gold and all colours
> one gown and petticoat of pink armeseen both gown and petticoat covered all over with rich silver trimming mixed with coloured flowers
> gown and petticoat of white lutestring [a glossy silk cloth] clouded with pink and brown
> night gown of yellow lutestring ruches
> fine calico quilted bed gown
> double mob [cap?] and double ruffling and ruche laced all round with 'maclean' lace, the pattern being of oak leaves
> 14 tuckers of plain cambric
> 30 pocket handkerchiefs
> 2 laced riding skirts
> 2 pair of scarlet stockings
> 28 day shifts
> 3 white calico quilted petticoats to wear over hoops
> 1 hoop of white lutestring
> silver tissue shoes
> blue velvet clogs
> 2 pair of stays
> 6 fine holland aprons.

The occurrence of the holland aprons among the finery shows that she intended following active

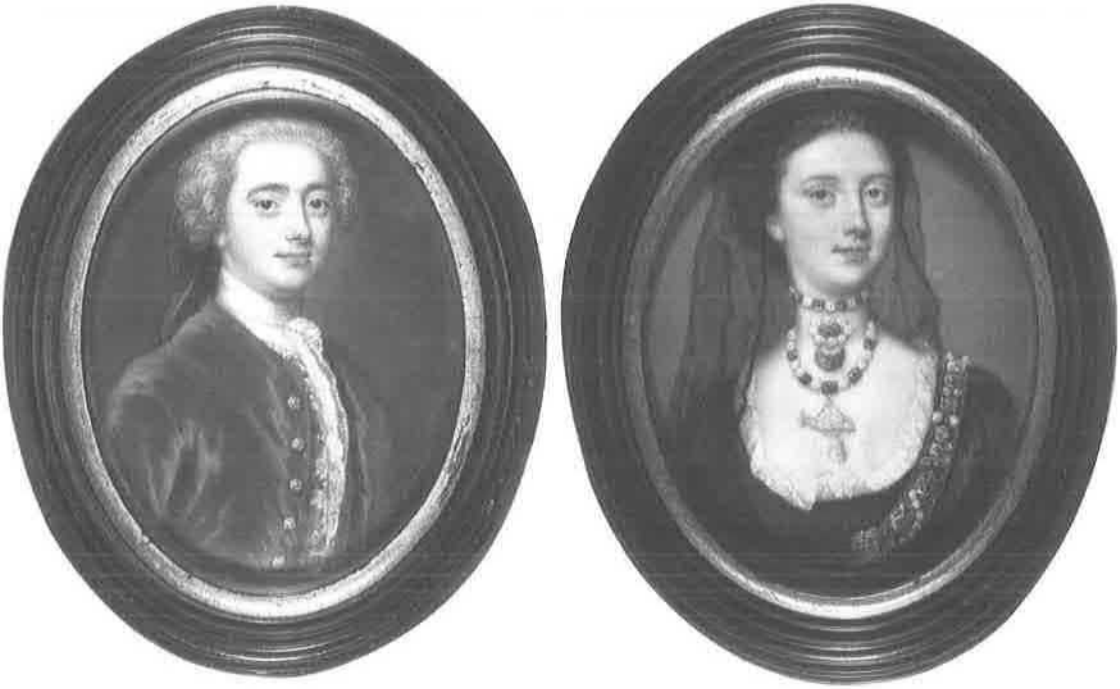

FIGURE 4 Miniatures of William, 2nd Duke of Portland, K.G., 1709–62 and Lady Margaret Cavendish-Holles-Harley, Duchess of Portland 1715–85. From enamels by C.F. Zincke. Photographs copyright Mark Fiennes.

pursuits. Her trousseau is moderate in comparison with that of the Duchess of Devonshire: besides all kinds of gowns, cloaks, etc., she had 65 pairs of shoes and 45 pairs of stockings.[18]

William and Margaret set up house in Bulstrode in 1732 and seemed very happy. Writing to one of her friends, Margaret called her husband 'sweet William' and said 'this is a flower with which I wish you were better acquainted'. William did his best to entertain the ladies; one day he took them round London to show them the sights.

William's father died shortly after William and Margaret came to Bulstrode, so they inherited the title and became Duke and Duchess of Portland. They also inherited a large house within the precincts of Whitehall. Margaret's friend Elizabeth Robinson (later Mrs Montague) came to stay at Bulstrode and wrote to another friend, exclaiming in ecstasy, 'The rural beauties of this place would pursuade [*sic*] me that I was in the plains of Arcadia but the magnificence of the building under whose gilded roof I dwell has a pomp far from pastoral. We go to chapel twice a week and have sermons on Sundays for His Grace values the title of Christian above that of Duke. We breakfast at 9, dine at 2, drink tea at 8 and sup at 10. We work or read in the morning, the same in the afternoon, walk from 6 until supper and then write letters which the Duke comes in to frank.'[19] [Members of both houses of Parliament were able to stamp letters which then went free.]

The Duke and Duchess took religion very seriously. They went to church regularly, and there were frequent services in the Bulstrode chapel when the whole party assembled in the gallery and went down into the body of the chapel to receive communion. Their tastes in literature and music were strict and conservative. They liked *Clarissa* by Richardson but deplored Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. They attended oratorios when they were in London and especially admired Handel's *Messiah*. The Duchess was upset because the populace preferred *The Beggar's Opera*.

Soon after William and Margaret came to Bulstrode, Margaret contracted a close friendship with a lady called Mrs Pendarves who, on her second marriage, became Mrs Delany (Fig. 5).[20] She was older than Margaret and had been a friend of her mother. She was a lady of wit and learning and was held in high regard by society. It is through her eyes that Bulstrode can be seen, for the friendship between the Duchess and Mrs Delany is celebrated in verse.

> The same desire, the same ingenious arts
> Delighted both, we owned and blessed the power
> That joined at once our studies and our hearts.[21]

As will be seen below, botany was the favourite pursuit, but they were skilful in all arts and hobbies. They both spoke French and Italian fluently and they were adept at spinning, embroidery and drawing; they produced very fine shellwork and wood-turning and they also tried to learn mathematics and astronomy.

In 1737 the Duke and Duchess began a family. The first child was called Elizabeth. Presumably like the Duchess's other children, she was fed by a wet nurse but when she was a toddler she played in the great house and helped to amuse the guests. Mrs Delany, who was staying at Bulstrode, wrote enthusiastically, 'We have a variety of amusements as reading, working and drawing in the morning; in the afternoon the scene changes, there are billiards, looking over prints, coffee, tea and, by way of interlude, pretty Lady Betty comes on the stage and I can play as well at Bo Peep as if I had a nursery of my own. She is the best humoured little thing I ever knew.' (Later, Elizabeth married Lord Weymouth who became Marquis of Bath.[22])

There were four other children: Harriet who became Countess of Stamford, William Henry, the future third Duke who was called Lord Titchfield during his minority, Margaret who died young, and Edward. When the Duchess was pregnant she sent for Elizabeth Collingwood to attend her, for it was customary when a lady of quality was pregnant for her to have a younger lady with her who accompanied her everywhere and had to be suitably dressed. Elizabeth wrote to her father saying that never again would she so need a handsome suit as on this occasion when appearing with the Duchess; her father sent £20 and the Duchess helped her to lay out the money to the best advantage. They chose a silk, a 'little imperfect in the weaving' and also a 'hoop of the greatest magnitude'.[23]

Most of the Duchess's children were born without difficulty, but when she was pregnant with Margaret she decided to go to London, probably to be treated by Dr Mead, the most famous women's doctor of the time. He followed the barbarous

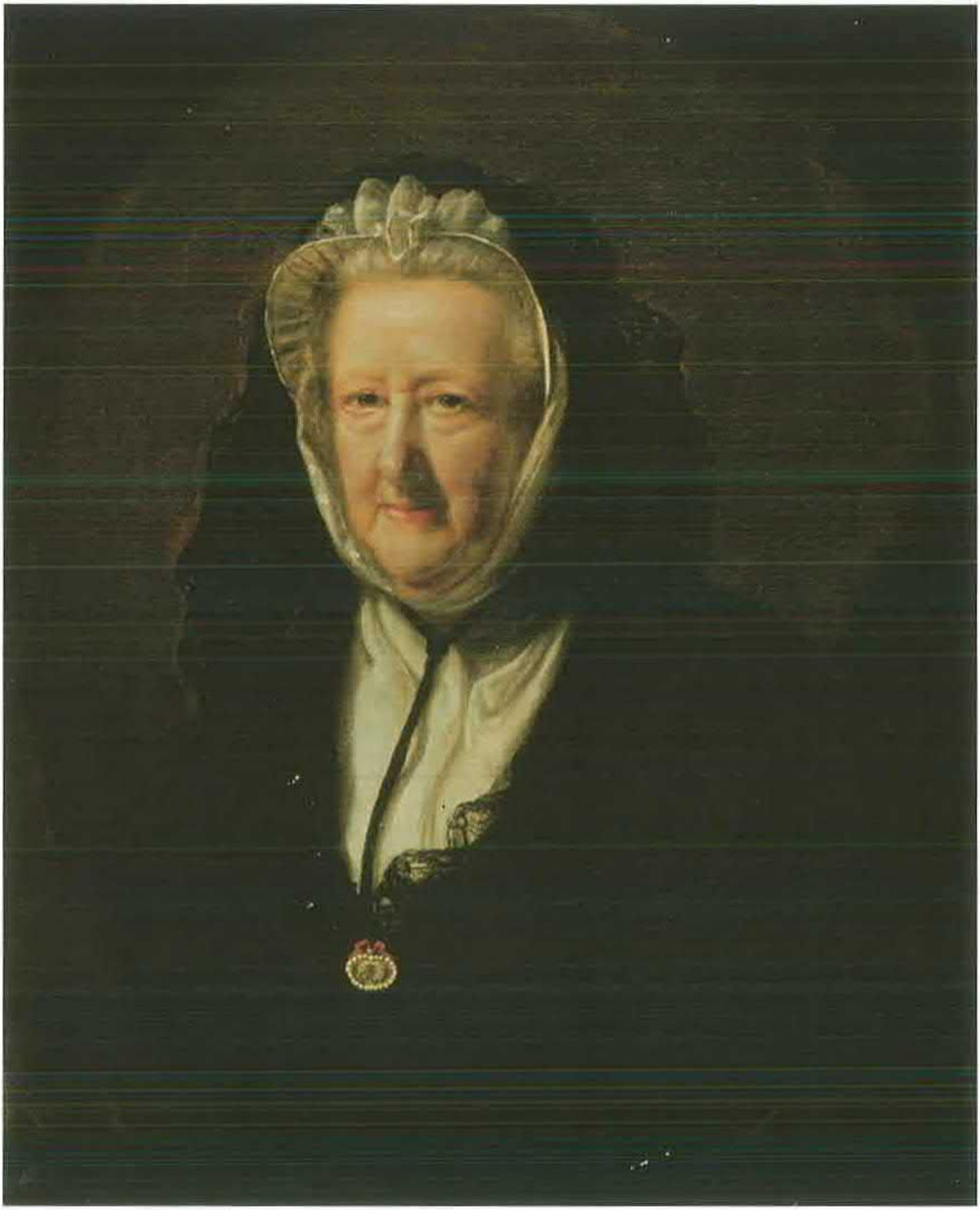

FIGURE 5 Portrait commissioned by King George III from J.Opie of 'dearest Mrs Delaney'. Reproduced courtesy the National Portrait Gallery.

practice of bleeding; Margaret's friends almost despaired of her recovery, and the Duke sent a pathetic ill-spelt letter to Mrs Delany to prepare her for the worst. Eventually Margaret and the new baby recovered.[24]

Meanwhile, with this increasing family William and Margaret decided to look for a governess and chose a lady called Mrs Elstob who, with her brother, had published the first Anglo-Saxon dictionary and various important Anglo-Saxon texts. After her brother died, poor Mrs Elstob tried to keep a school for tradesmen's daughters. She found the work so hard that she had no time to 'eat or drink, much less to study'. Friends tried to obtain a post for her in a noble family; she wrote deprecatingly that she could not do any work proper to her sex, although she added that her dress was of her own weaving and that she wore no stockings but what she had knitted herself. Although she must have been rather depressing to look at, the Duchess, who appreciated her genuine scholarship, was glad to employ her. She was a great success; she loved the Duchess and says, 'The children by their sweet endearing temper clearly discover whose children they are.' The children loved her and called her 'Tob'. She lived happily in the great house, although becoming increasingly crippled by arthritis. She was able to continue her Anglo-Saxon studies. A scholar called Rowe More reported that he visited her 'sleeping room and found her surrounded by books and dirtiness, the usual appendages of people of learning'. In her later years either Elizabeth or Harriet penned letters at her dictation because of her arthritis.[25]

Things went on quietly until one terrible Christmas when, as Mrs Delany says, 'The young people full of joy and spirits had a little dancing', Lord Edward being 'very brisk'. Next day he had a headache and felt tired. A doctor was sent for from Windsor, who diagnosed smallpox. The Duchess tried to keep up her spirits. Lord Edward recovered but the girls caught it, and Mrs Delany had her harpsichord moved into the sick room to try to soothe Harriet whose illness was the most serious.[26] It is surprising that the Duchess and her children were not vaccinated. Vaccination was known at the time and many people underwent it, but the Duchess was conservative. She recommended all kinds of herbal cures and believed in old wives' tales. For instance, a prescription for a cough was two or three snails boiled in water, and for croup a spider sealed in a goose quill hung round the neck.[27]

In spite of her fondness for Bulstrode and her preoccupation with her family, Margaret played a very important part in the social life of London and of the Court. She was friendly with George III and Queen Charlotte.

Women's costume at this time was elaborate. The hair was dressed high (cartoons show men on ladders powdering the top) and was filled with ornaments such as ships or birds. Ladies wore gowns which were draped over hoops at the back and open down the front to show embroidered petticoats. The gowns were also open above the waist and very often a richly decorated 'stomacher' was worn (Fig. 6).[28]

Mrs Delany said that the Duchess had twelve 'toilettes'. When she went to the Queen's birthday and took her daughter Elizabeth to court for the first time, she wore a dress of white and silver flowered with gold and silver and a white satin stomacher covered with jewels of all colours, and all her diamonds. Lady Betty wore a stomacher of blue satin with loops and stars of diamonds and a dress of white and silver flowered with silver and blue. Before being presented she practised dancing with a train. 'She was an engaging figure', wrote Mrs Delany, 'she looked so modest and composed although glittering with diamonds.'

No doubt the Duchess and Lady Betty looked charming, but some of the clothes must have been very ugly, such as the gown worn by Lady Huntingdon at the Prince of Wales's birthday. This had a black velvet petticoat which was decorated with a large stone vase filled with ramping flowers.[29]

The family travelled between the London house at Whitehall and Bulstrode very frequently. The roads were bad and there were many accidents. The bridge over the river Colne at Uxbridge was under construction in the 1760s and the water often overflowed. Anne Granville, Mrs Delany's niece, described a journey to Bulstrode when 'we flounced into great holes of ice and snow – enough to swallow up coach and horses'.[30] The coaches often overturned. The family used to set out from London about 10 o'clock and arrive at Bulstrode for the very substantial meal at about three o'clock.

Formal meals consisted of numerous courses. Each course was virtually a complete meal: meat, poultry and sweets. Thus, a meal whose menu has been preserved had 'in the first course Fish, Beef-

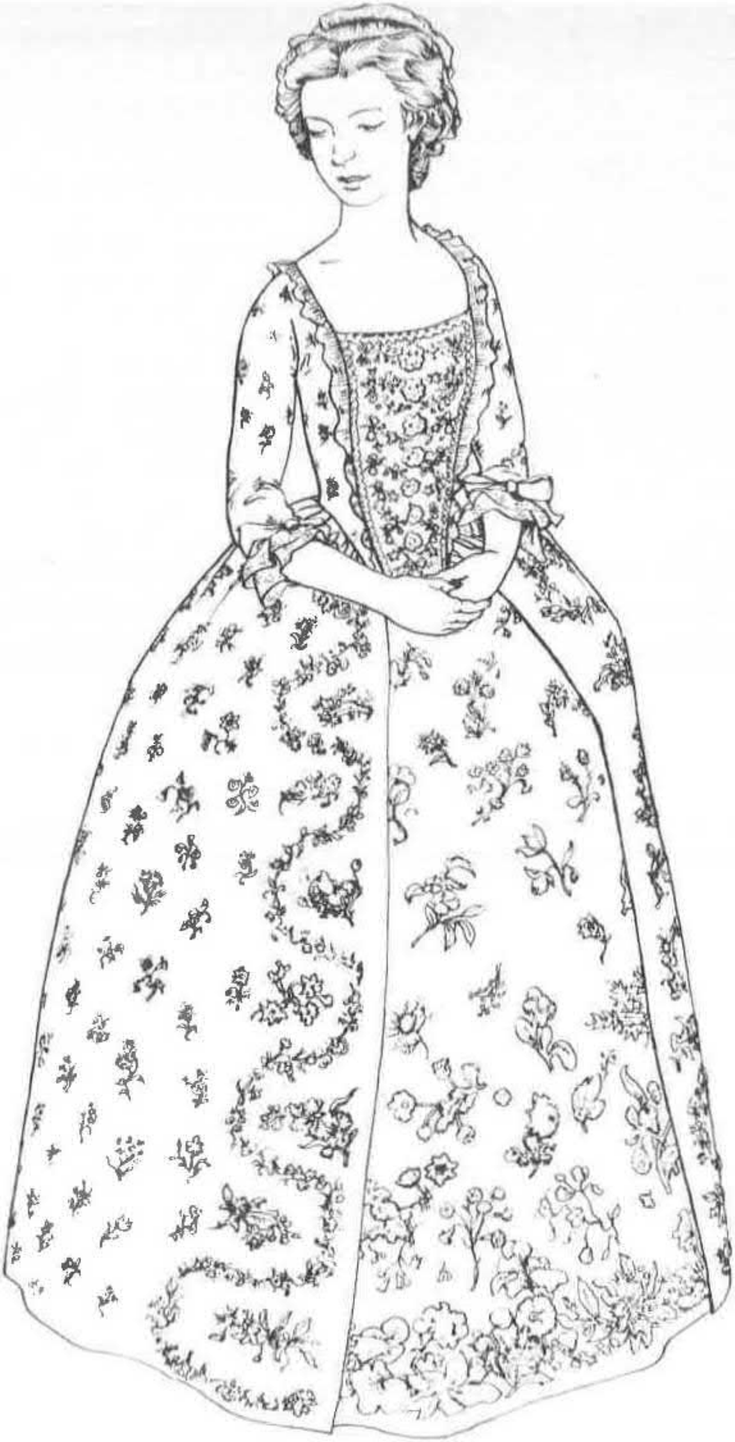

FIGURE 6 A reconstruction of Mrs Delany's court dress. Reproduced courtesy Ruth Hayden.

steaks, soup, rabbits and onions, fillet of veal, Blancmange, cherries, Dutch cheeses and the second course Turkey pout, salmon, quailles, little terrenes, peas, mushrooms, apple pye; then there was desserts Raspberries and cream, sweetmeats and jelly, strawberries and cream, almond cream, currants and gooseberries, orange butter.'[31] Generally, however, the meals were simpler. Mrs Delany was fond of oysters and she and the Duchess often dined off sprats.

The Duchess's chief helper was John Lightfoot, curate at Uxbridge and a distinguished botanist. The Duke had appointed him chaplain at Bulstrode where he took services twice a week in the chapel. Any time which he could spare from his duties in Uxbridge were spent at Bulstrode where he instructed the Duchess in botany and helped her to collect plants. He was elected a member of the Royal Society and he corresponded with Linnaeus, the outstanding botanist of the time who introduced the first systematic classification of plants. Another helper was Dr Solander who had studied with Linnaeus. When he came to England, the Duchess brought him to Bulstrode and taught him English. He became assistant librarian at the British Museum which at this time was devoted only to natural history. A more practical helper was George Dionysius Ehret who had been a nurseryman at Heidelberg. He had a wonderful talent for representing plants and painted for her some 300 exotic and 500 English plants, done on vellum and highly finished. He also taught her daughters.[32]

Mrs Delany was also very interested in botany, but perhaps from an aesthetic rather than a scientific angle. She used to attend the discussions and gently mocked the serious scholars, both for their extraordinary names and their scientific vocabulary. As she says, 'an ignorant person sitting by might expect to see their candles to turn blue and that they were at their incantations.' On another occasion she simply says, 'Mr Lightfoot and Botany go on as usual.'

The Duchess often used to visit Weymouth, the seat of her son-in-law. We hear of her scrambling among the rocks to collect shells, seaweed, fossils. She brought back sea creatures of the 'polibus kind' and a green worm larger than a centipede. The creatures were kept alive in sea water brought to Bulstrode.[33]

There was by now a very large collection of botanical and geological specimens – especially shells – at Bulstrode, for friends sent her interesting objects, both from this country and overseas. She also bought specimens from dealers who flourished at this time; she loved objects from exotic countries. She was acknowledged as an authority on shells, and the University of Oxford dedicated a comprehensive book on conchology to her.[34]

Another place she loved to visit was Calwich in Shropshire where Mrs Delany's brother, also a botanist, had an estate. Here she met the French philosopher Rousseau and they used to study plants together. He used to send specimens back to Bulstrode and they carried on a friendly correspondence.[35]

Even Bulstrode was not large enough to house the collection. In 1769 they were gathering mushrooms and fungi which grew prolifically in Bulstrode and the commons round about. Mrs Delany describes the breakfast room which is now 'turned into a depository of sieves, pans, platters and productions of that nature spread on tables, windows, chairs with books opened at their usual places [which] make an agreeable confusion and sometimes, not withstanding twelve chairs and a couch, it is a little difficult to find a seat.'[36]

The Duke died in 1761 and Dr Delany in 1768 so both ladies were now widows. Their friendship grew even stronger, and Mrs Delany usually spent the six summer months of the year at Bulstrode. They used to walk about the park or drive in a chaise. Mrs Delany wrote descriptions to her friends thus in 1779:

> such woods and groves and lawns and terraces not to be described and all enlivened with such a variety of animals hardly to be enumerated – beautiful deer, oxen, cows sheep of all countries, bufaloes, mouflons, horses, asses; all in their proper places. Then hares and squirrels at every step you take so confident of their security that they hardly run away. The great lawn before the house is the nursery of all sorts of pheasants and pea fowl and guinea fowl besides interlopers of bantam pidgeons; and not withstanding these numerous families the lawn is kept with as much neatness as the drawing room.

Or again:

> The D. and I took a short walk and a pretty uncommon scene is before me: on the lawn of a

> flock of sheep, a shepherd and a dog; at a little distance and in the foreground fifteen or sixteen hares feeding with peacocks and guinea fowl that makes a beautiful mixture of pretty objects . . .

Recording another walk round the grounds she says, 'nothing pleased me more than the gold and silver fish I have seen in shoals, thousands I am sure, all swimming up to the D. who fed them with bread.'

Most of the animals were in cages, including a porcupine and a Java hare, but others ranged freely. The menagerie was a notable feature of Bulstrode. It had been begun by the first Duke who had macaws, parrots and all sorts of foreign birds flying in one of the woods. He built a house and kept people to wait on them. Many of the exhibits had died, but the Duchess restocked the wood and park, as Mrs Montagne said, 'The Dss is as eager on collecting animals as if she foresaw another deluge and was assembling every creature after its kind to preserve the species.[37]

The high point in their study of natural history was reached when Captain Cook, Joseph Banks and Dr Solander returned from the first of their sensational voyages round the world, bringing many interesting and exotic plants with them, especially from the South Seas.[38] They came to Bulstrode in November 1771, and Mrs Delany reports that there were many learned discussions in which Mr Lightfoot joined. They talked of how the account of the voyage should be published. The Duchess was given seeds from some of the plants, and it is possible that some of these were grown at Bulstrode, for an old map marks a field called 'Botany Bay field'.

Soon after this party at Bulstrode, the Duchess and Mrs Delany went to the British Museum where Dr Solander took them round and showed them interesting specimens. They also went to Mr Banks's house in New Burlington Street where many other specimens were preserved. Mrs Delany describes their visit a 'a charming entertainment of activities'.[39]

The Duchess was an active gardener, and during the cold weather she 'heaped cloaks on cloaks'. She was expert in propagating especially by layering. She had a flourishing vegetable garden, but her chief interest was a scientifically designed garden, probably inspired by Miller, the head of the Chelsea Physic Garden 'where every species of plant was planted separately according to its species'.[40]

Her favourite gardener was called Mr Agnew. He helped her with the work and also found specimens for her. Local people also brought her plants and birds, birds' eggs and nests, including eggs of the crown bird and a reed warbler's nest, but when someone brought her young nightingales, she let them go.

Mrs Delany meanwhile began a new project, although she was now seventy-two years of age. As already shown, the Duchess had built up a comprehensive herbarium with the aid of Ehret. Now Mrs Delany did the same thing but used her new technique of cutting out paper flowers and mounting them on black backgrounds. In order to do this she studied the flowers most minutely, not only their petals but also their stamens, calyxes, leaves, veins and prickles on their stalks. She used to go to the ports and buy thin tissue paper from the sailors who brought it from China. Sometimes, however, she dyed the paper herself. The background was usually coloured with Indian ink. She used to cut out the tiny fragments of coloured paper very precisely without drawing them first. In her picture of the 'melon thistle' (Fig. 7) the flower is made up of 190 parts and there are 399 spines on the stem. Often, as in the feathered pink, the petals are almost thread-like and swirl about. One cannot help admiring the exquisite fineness and sharpness of the scissors which she used. The paper mosaics, as Mrs Delany called them, were also much admired by the experts, especially the great painter Reynolds and Sir Joseph Banks, who said 'that they were the only representations from Nature which he had ever seen from which he could venture to describe botanically without the least fear of committing an error.'[41]

Although the Duchess's main interest was in the natural world, she also collected pictures, enamels and china. She had inherited a fine collection of works of art and pictures from her father, Edward Harley. Her collection included a Holy Family by Raphael, a sleeping boy by Van Dyck, paintings by Claude Loraine and Elscheimer, and also Rembrandt engravings. One of the chief treasures was the *Bedford Book of Hours* illuminated in the fifteenth century. The chief addition made by the Duchess was the blue intaglio Roman vase which had been acquired by the Duke of Hamilton. The arrangements for the sale were very intricate and

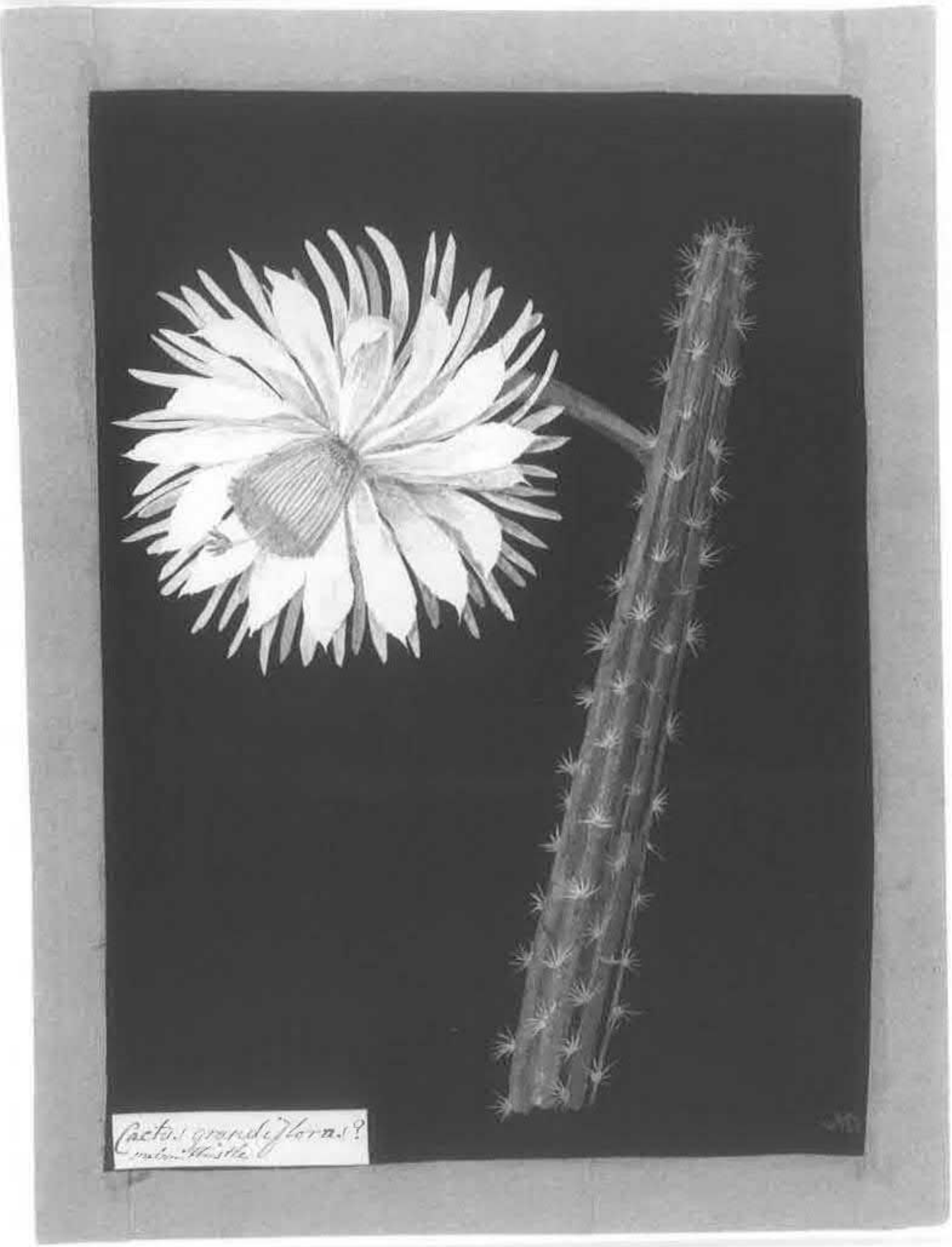
Cactus grandiflorus?
melon thistle

FIGURE 7 An example of one of Mrs Delany's 'flower-mosaics', a 'melon thistle'. © Copyright The British Museum (reference 1891-5-5-133, vol 2, 32).

were helped by the Duke's famous wife, Emma,[42] and also by Mary Hamilton, the Duke's niece who stayed at Bulstrode and was a great favourite with both the Duchess and Mrs Delany.

A good deal of information about the collection can be gleaned from the letters of Horace Walpole and the journals of Vertue.[43] When the Duke and Duchess first went to Bulstrode Walpole described the 'brave gallery of old pictures'. This gallery probably ran behind the main gallery and its auxiliary rooms which faced south across the park. In 1762 he reported that the Duchess had 'lately enriched him exceedingly' by the gift of nine portraits of the court of Louis Quatorze which Lord Portland had brought over from France and which hung in the nursery where 'the children amused themselves with shooting at them'. Walpole had a rather ambiguous relationship with the Duchess, not unmixed with envy. He said of her, 'she is perfectly sober and only loves empty vases'. When a copy of the King of France's Raphael came up for sale at Christie's and was bought by the Duchess for the phenomenal sum of £7,000, Walpole said that the bidding was carried on by the Duchess and other members of the nobility who 'care not what they pay'.[44] Although he was often sarcastic and rather disagreeable, he was regarded with great respect during his lifetime. He disliked the classical architecture so characteristic of the eighteenth century and advocated a return to Gothic as more romantic.

The great example for this transformation was set by his own house at Strawberry Hill, where he himself often posed as a monk in his little Gothic chapel. We hear how in June 1770 the Duchess and Mrs Delany went to Strawberry Hill and how, a few days later, he came to Bulstrode 'where all was hurry and excitement', and plans were set afoot for transforming the house into a Gothic mansion. The Duchess began in a small way by having a grotto built at the head of the Long Water. Mrs Delany supervised the work; she says that 'the stones were ruder than Gothic and the stone-mason's head harder than the stones he hammers'. When finished it was a remarkable structure; its rough stones were overlaid by delicate shell-work in which Mrs Delany excelled.[45] The Duchess used to love sitting at the entrance, spinning at her wheel or practising her skills in wood-turning.

There was a growing intimacy between the ladies at Bulstrode and George III and Queen Charlotte at Windsor. This was made easy because the Duchess's daughter, Lady Weymouth, was a lady-in-waiting. Visits were often exchanged. One of the most notable was on the birthday of the Prince of Wales in August 1778. The celebrations began early when a cavalcade of fifty persons drove through the park and round the courtyard up to the house. The Duchess waited on the hall steps at the main entrance. The Royals 'walked through the great apartments and admired everything they saw, the young ones full of observation and proper questions, some whistling, some skipping ... charmed with the excellent breakfast and eat abundantly'. This breakfast was spread in the gallery which ran the length of the south façade and out of which opened a suite of 8 rooms and three closets. 'The tables were spread with tea, coffee, chocolate and cakes fruit and ices to which succeeded, as if by magic a cold repast. The Queen sat meanwhile in the drawing room at the end of the great gallery. She was dressed in an Italian nightgown of purple lute-string trimmed with silver gauze and a hat. The Duchess brought her tea and biscuits. The Queen insisted on taking back the cup to the gallery herself.' She especially admired the chairs worked from nature in chenille by Mrs Delany.[46]

The return visit was equally successful; there was music and also dancing for the younger people and much conversation. George III loved music and had a special interest in that of Handel. There was dancing for the young, but after a time the King stopped it because he thought that the musicians would be getting tired. The whole party then walked outside on the south terrace because the King said that the people of Windsor liked to see them. The Duchess's party returned to Bulstrode by torchlight.[47]

Somewhat later, when the Duchess was an old lady of sixty-eight and Mrs Delany eighty-two, a stag hunt was organized on the common. The Duchess was no early riser but she got into her chaise at quarter to ten and went to Gerrards Cross 'about the middle of the common'. The King came a quarter of an hour later with the Prince of Wales and a large retinue. They saw the stag turned out of a cart and the 'poor trembling creature bounding over the plain in the hope of escaping his pursuers'. The Duchess hurried back to Bulstrode to receive the Queen, who stayed until two o'clock. The Lady Mary Forbes entertained a large party at the Bull.[48]

Life went on happily. We will leave the old ladies sitting at small tables with their work and separate candles. There was much conversation from grave to gay. One of the subjects which interested them was the invention of air balloons. Mrs Delany was older than the Duchess but in better health.[49] The Duchess died in 1785 and, in spite of the great wealth which she inherited, she was bankrupt and her whole collection had to be sold.

The sale, which was conducted by Skinner & Co., contained over 4,000 items and lasted for thirty-eight days. Mr Lightfoot drew up the catalogue which is, in itself, a landmark in the history of botany, as many plants received their names and classification for the first time. He says, 'It was the intention of the enlightened possessor to have had unknowen [*sic*] species described and published . . . but it pleased God to shorten her design.' There is a copy of the catalogue in the British Museum (Fig. 8). The frontispiece shows a most extraordinary jumble of objects; the centrepiece is the Portland vase with a branch of coral projecting from its mouth. The vase fetched £1,029.[50]

After the death of the Duchess in 1785 and the sale of her great collection, William Henry Bentinck, Marquess of Tichborne, her eldest son, inherited Bulstrode. He and the Duchess had never been on good terms, partly through political differences. She was a 'dyed in the wool' Tory and a great friend of Lady Bute whose husband, Lord Bute, had been George III's tutor and whom he personally appointed as prime minister in 1762. Bute was a leading Tory and an upholder of royal power but William, now Duke of Portland (Fig. 9), was an important member of the Whig party and closely connected with the Cavendish family who wielded enormous power at this time.[51] He had never liked Bulstrode and had exchanged the estate for that of Welbeck in Nottinghamshire which the Duchess had inherited from her mother, Henrietta, who was herself a Cavendish.[52] William lived with Henrietta, his grandmother, and married Lady Dorothy Cavendish, the fourth daughter of the Duke of Devonshire; he was thus absorbed into the more liberal faction of the Whig party headed by the Marquess of Rockingham.

William was a quiet man who lacked energy, but was welcomed enthusiastically as one of the most important members of the party, partly because of his connection with the Cavendishes. He was known as a 'convenient cipher'. He took office under Rockingham in 1765 and again in 1782. His liberal views are illustrated by his support of Wilkes who had attacked the king in an article in his newspaper called *The North Britain*. Wilkes and many of his supporters were imprisoned but Wilkes claimed immunity because he was an M.P. This case was of great significance to the Whigs, and William illuminated his London house in celebration of Wilkes's discharge.

After the death of Rockingham, William became Prime Minister, presiding over an uncomfortable coalition of Fox and North. After a few months he honourably resigned because the King and the Lords refused to accept a bill regulating the government of India which had been passed by the Commons.[53]

Although politics was probably his prime interest, he also spent time and energy in the rebuilding of the Jeffreys' house at Bulstrode and 'improving' the park. The first architect whom he consulted was John Nash, who designed the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park. Three plans were exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1802. They show the Jeffreys' house deprived of its pediment and fronted by an unbroken colonnade. It was roofed by a dome and had orangeries on each end. This Nash plan was not carried out, but there is an imaginary painting of it at Welbeck Abbey. The Duke preferred a rival scheme by James Wyatt which was more romantic. The great gallery was divided up and the pediment demolished. The central part of the gallery was converted into a large library, and a state dining room was constructed at the east end and a smaller room to the west. A large square tower occupied the south-west corner in front of the chapel and two smaller rectangular towers flanked a new entrance on the south front. These towers formed hexagonal bay windows to the library on the first floor. In the engraving the east end of the south front seems to survive from the older building as the windows are similar and it consisted of only two storeys whereas the rest of this wing has had another storey added to it which, like the towers, was topped by battlements. The greatest modification, however, was on the south front where a large new wing with towers was built in front of the Jeffreys' building. The centre part of the first floor was occupied by a sitting room which had bedrooms and dressing rooms on either side. The ground floor was used as cellars and storerooms. The size of this new wing can be appreciated, for the entrance is clearly the now detached

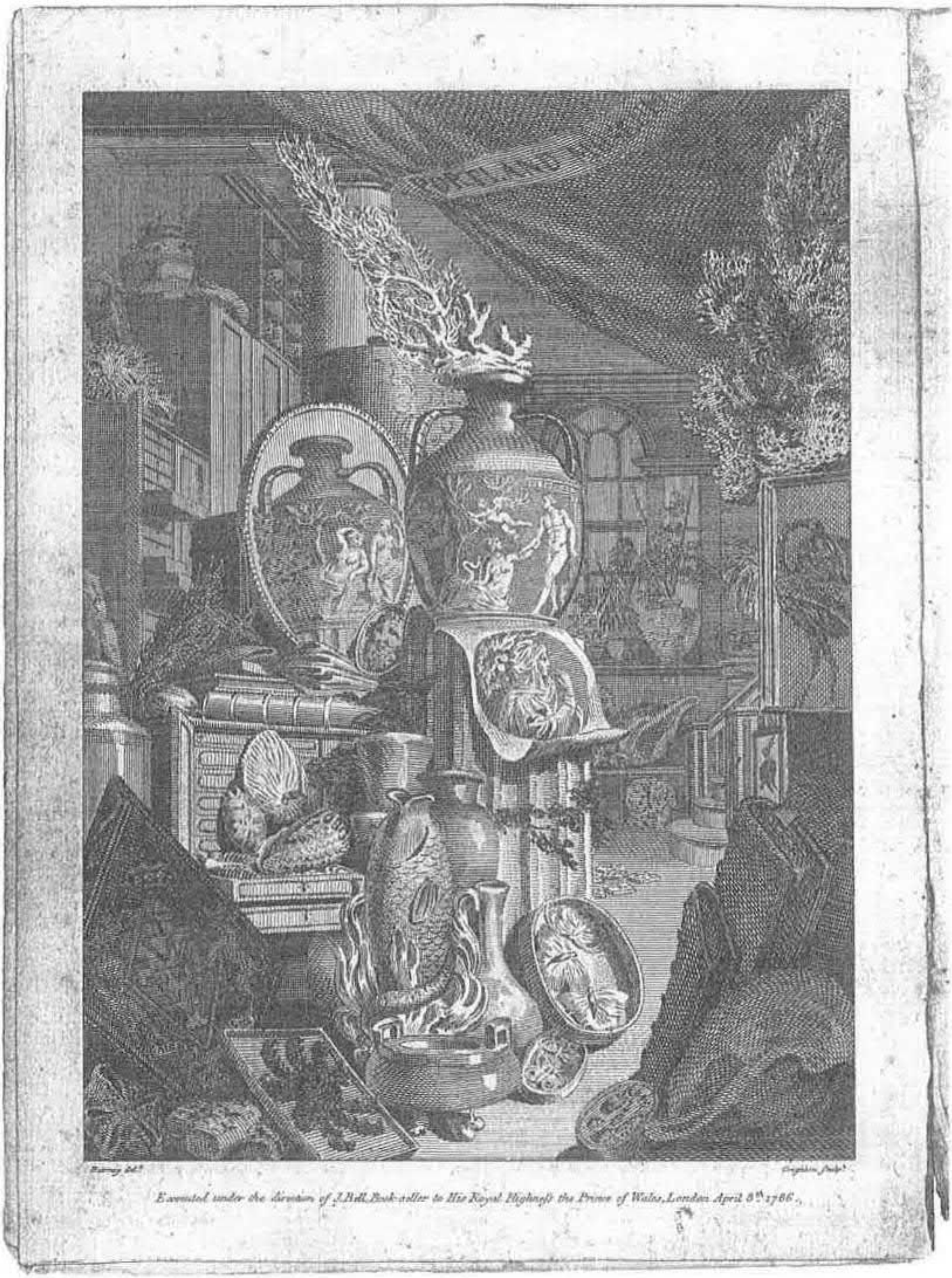
PORTLAND
Burney del.
Grignion sculp.
Executed under the direction of J. Bell, Book-seller to His Royal Highneſs the Prince of Wales, London April 8th 1786.

FIGURE 8 Frontispiece from the sale catalogue of the Duchess of Portland's collection 1786. Reproduced courtesy The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.

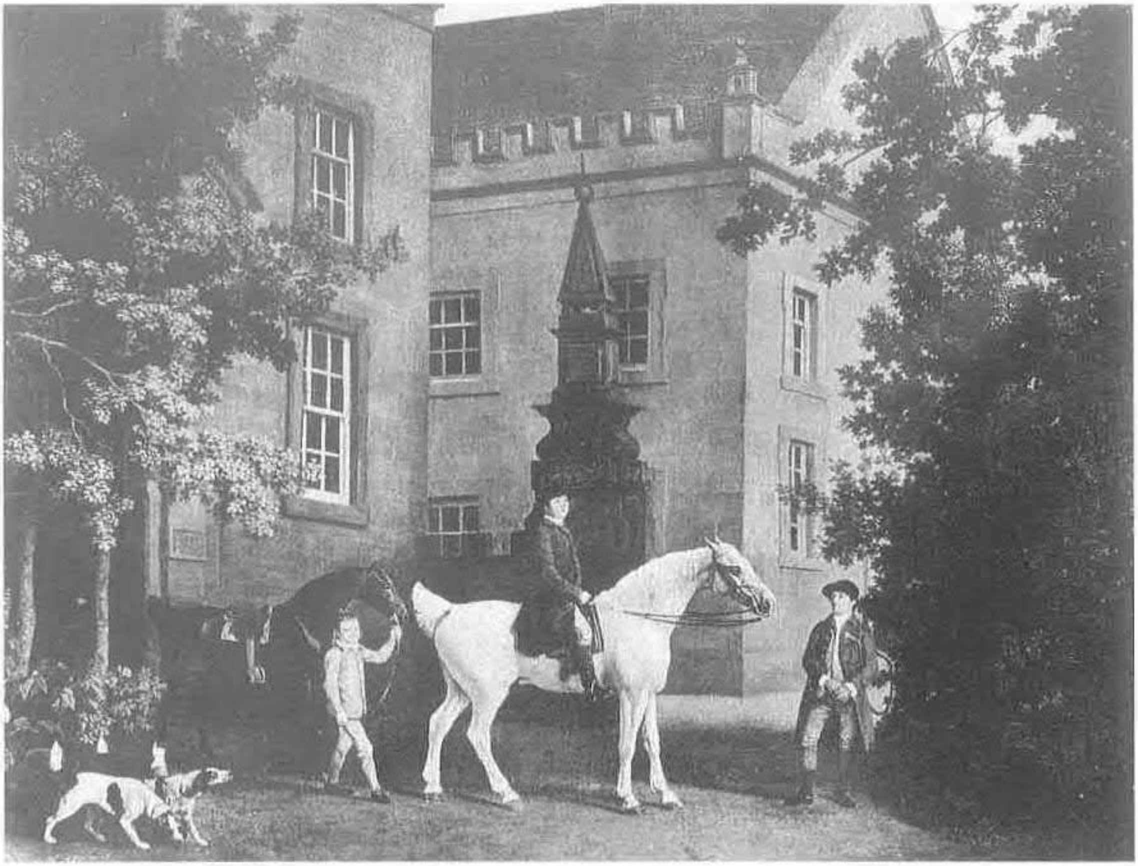

FIGURE 9 Portrait of the 3rd Duke of Portland at Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire from a painting by G Stubbs 1767. Reproduced from Turberville 1939 with kind acknowledgement.

building known as the 'Pigeon Tower' which became isolated in 1860 (Fig. 10). Legend has grown up round the building, and it is sometimes called the Norman Tower, connecting it with the ancient legend. It is built of pleasant softly coloured red brick and clearly dates from about 1800 – presumably this material was also used for the rest of the house.[54]

Before the building work was begun, the Duke began to remodel the park. He called in Humphry Repton, one of the most prominent landscape designers of the period. Writing in 1802, Repton describes this work as 'opening up the valleys and taking away a great depth of earth from the stems of the largest trees, which had been formerly buried', and thus 'by degrees restoring the surface of the ground to its original and natural shape'. In a note, Repton adds, 'in this great work are occasionally employed among the more efficient labourers, an hundred children from 10 to 15 years old, who are thus early trained in habits of wholesome industry far different from the foul air and confinement of spinning in a cotton mill; to the benevolent observer no object can be more delightful than park scenery thus animated'. (These were perhaps pauper children.) Repton also designed a great drive, going round the park and running along the top of the ramparts of the camp which he called 'a circumstance of antiquity worthy to be drawn into note.'[55]

The rebuilding and remodelling of the house and park were only partially carried out because the Duke became bankrupt and died in 1809 owing Wyatt large sums. The fourth duke was not interested in the estate so he sold it with its unfinished buildings to the eleventh Duke of Somerset.

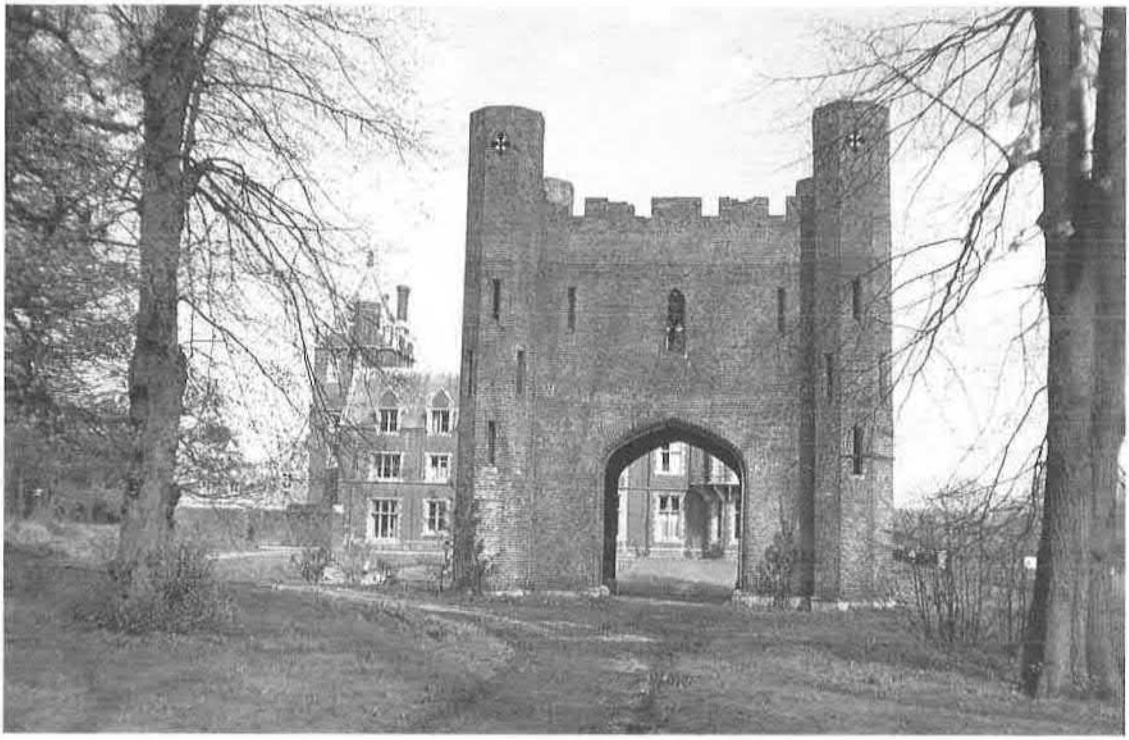

FIGURE 10 The so-called Pigeon Tower, former entrance to the garden wing of Wyatt's House built by the third Duke in 1805–9.

END NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Schazmann (translated by Cox), *The History of a European Family*.
3. M.S. Grew, *William Bentinck and William III*; G. Edmonds, *The History of Chalfont St Peter and Gerrards Cross* (1968), p. 48; J. Harris, 'Bulstrode', *Architectural Review*, 124 (No. 742), (1958). I am indebted to Mr John Harris for much information.
4. This is the second engraving by Bowles. There is a large framed engraving hanging in the entrance to Bulstrode House; it is reproduced by S. Festing, 'Pt. I. Rare flowers and fantastic breeds', *Country Life*, 12 June 1986, 1684 *et seq.*, (p. 1655).
5. Edmonds, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
6. Edmonds, *op. cit.*, p. 49, note 57.
7. Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 319.
8. *Guide to the Church of St Andrew in the Wardrobe* (undated).
9. The Vertue MS., *Walpole Society Annual*, Vol. II, p. 30, and Vol. IV, pp. 47–89, 139.
10. A.S. Turberville, *Welbeck Abbey and its Owners*, 2 vols (1938/1939), Vol. I, pp. 334 *et seq.*; Works of Dean Swift, Vol. XVIII, pp. 199–200.
11. Turberville, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 340 *et seq.*; facing p. 320 there is a portrait of Henrietta by Kneller.
12. *ibid.*, p. 332.
13. G. Paston, *Mrs Delany, a Memoir* (Grant Richards, London, 1900), pp. 123, 192.
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15. Turberville, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 20 and note.
16. Paston, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
17. Communicated to me by J. Bennell, Esq. (probably from the archives of the Royal Commission on Historical MS; it cannot now be traced either there or at Nottingham University where the Portland papers are deposited).

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19. E.J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montague, Queen of the Blue Stockings. Correspondence*, Vol. I (1906), p. 49.
20. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, 6 vols, ed. Lady Llandover (R. Bentley, London, 1861–2), Series, Vol. III, p. 175. This book is the most important source of information about life at Bulstrode; further details can be gleaned from other books about Mrs Delany: Paston, *op. cit.*; C. E. Vulliamy, *Aspasia: A Contemporary Eulogy* (London, Geoffrey Bles, 1925); R. Hayden, *Mrs Delany, her Life and her Flowers* (London, Colonnade (British Library), 1980). There are two interesting and well illustrated articles by S. Festing: Pt. I, *op. cit.*, and 'Pt II. Grace without triviality', *Country Life*, 19 June 1986, p. 1772 *et seq*.; unfortunately the author does not give references or a bibliography.
21. Paston, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
22. *ibid.*, p. 106.
23. Climenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 23.
24. Paston, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
25. Turberville, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 351–2; J. Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. IV, pp. 112–46; Ballard, *Learned Ladies: A Galaxy of Governesses*.
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27. Turberville, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 22.
28. Hayden, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
29. Paston, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
30. *ibid.*, p. 193.
31. *ibid.*, p. 137.
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33. Delany, *Autobiography, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 445, and Vol. II, p. 253.
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40. *Diary* (Llybe Powys), quoted by Edmonds, *op. cit.*, p. 54, note 68; A. P. Paterson, *The Chelsea Physic Garden* (London Parochial Charities).
41. Paston, *op. cit.*, pp. 218, 230; the subject is discussed in the book by Hayden, *op. cit.*, with beautiful illustrations.
42. Delany, *Autobiography, op. cit.*, Vol. 3, pp. 460, 477, etc.; Turberville, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Hayden, *op. cit.*, p. 128; E. F. Anson, *Mary Hamilton aft. Mrs J. D. Dickenson at Court and at Home from Letters and Diaries 1756–1816*, Vol. 2, pp. 175, 177.
43. Collected Walpole correspondence, Vol. IV, p. 139; Vertue, *Walpole Society Annual*, Vol. IV, pp. 68–70, 147, Vol. V, pp. 28, 68, 140 (Vertue used to travel round England to record works of art, taking a retinue of ten servants and six coach horses).
44. Walpole, Diary, Dec. 27, 1775.
45. Edmonds, *op. cit.*, illustration opposite p. 48; also Festing, *op. cit.*, Pt I, p. 1686.
46. Paston, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
47. *ibid.*, p. 226.
48. *ibid.*, p. 236; Edmonds, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
49. Dickenson, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 257; for a charming silhouette of the old ladies at their work, see Hayden, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
50. Festing, *op. cit.*, Pt I, p. 1685, includes a reproduction of the engraving on the cover of the catalogue, of which there is a copy in the British Library.
51. For the tremendous power wielded by the Cavendish family in the eighteenth century, see Foreman, *op. cit.*; this book gives a very detailed account of the politics of this period.
52. Turberville, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 60.
53. *ibid.*, pp. 82, 136.
54. Harris, *op. cit.*; this article includes pictures of all three plans. I am deeply indebted to Mr Harris for information and for sending me the plans. The easiest way to study them is to imagine oneself standing in the chapel which occupied the south-west corner of the building and was entered from the end of the Jeffery's

long gallery. It seems to have remained unaltered until the final rebuilding of the house in the mid-nineteenth century.

55. H. Repton, *Landscape Gardening* (1840), p. 141. Repton compiled 'Red Books' for each estate on which he worked; there is a copy of the Bulstrode Red Book in the Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum.