32. (a) The causeway by the lake at the Boathouse-Grotto in 1998.
    (b) The boat dock at the grotto, as revealed and consolidated in 1998.
33. A photograph of the grotto chamber before the fire of 1884 by G.W. Dunn of Woodford. From Oliver Dawson, The Story of Wanstead Park, 1894.
Sculpture at the Grotto

During work on the grotto in the winter of 1998, while the level of water in the lake was lowered, fragments of stone were visible in the water. These were removed to the bank and a number of sculptures were revealed. Many of the smaller pieces of moulded and carved stone and terracotta came from the façade of the grotto, which was decorated with a variety of rocks, minerals and Large fragments of carved stone figures probably came from the formal garden, although it is difficult to relate them to anything shown in the engravings or items in the sale catalogue. All were badly damaged and difficult to identify but appear to be parts of massive over-life-size figures. They are of Portland stone, and show high quality carving detail. One seems to be part of a crouching figure with head turned back and is possibly a slave or captive figure, or part of a group of wrestlers. The very active and contorted pose is reminiscent of Claude David’s ‘Prometheus’ or ‘Vulcan’, although the scale is very much larger. Another is clearly the torso of a figure of Andromeda, with chain and padlock visible.

There is no record that they were ever displayed at the grotto, although they may have been shown like fragments of antique statues. One possible explanation for their presence near the grotto might be that they were removed from the great canal garden when it was obliterated from the landscape and were in too damaged a state to be placed elsewhere or sold, and so were thrown into the lake. There are, of course, many other possible scenarios. I hope that further information will come to light.

There is a further twist to the story of statues at the Grotto. Early photographs from around the turn of the nineteenth century show that there were two figures on the façade. These are identifiable as Andromeda and an Allegory of Winter. This Andromeda, however, is not the stone figure recovered from the lake. She is smaller, and the photograph shows that she has a hollow right arm suggesting that she was made of lead. This has recently been confirmed by the discovery of the statue in a private collection. It is similar in pose to the lead Andromeda by John Van Nost the Elder made for the garden at Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire, where she was complemented by Perseus on the other side of the main axis. Both of these subjects were popular in the eighteenth century and both probably derived ultimately from statues at Versailles. A large Perseus and Andromeda group was made for the gardens to the designs of Pierre Puget in 1684. An Allegory of Winter by François Girardon was executed in 1675-86. Was there originally a Perseus to rescue the Andromeda? Were the Wanstead figures purchased originally for the formal gardens, or acquired for the grotto in the 1760s, or added later?

Entertainments on the Water

The grotto was just one part of the elaborate permanent scenery at Wanstead against which entertainments were presented. There are very few direct references, but the following description is so exciting that it almost compensates for the lack of others.

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128 From Narford Hall, Norfolk, now at the V & A.
129 If it is similar in pose to the stone statue in the garden at Saumarez Manor, Guernsey.
130 John Nost charged £45 for the pair on 16 November 1705. Documents at Melbourne Hall.
131 Now in the Louvre.
132 John Van Nost the Elder, or his shop, could have supplied the figure at that time. See Sheila O’Connell, ‘The Nosts: a revision of the family history’, Burlington Magazine, volume 129, December 1987, pp. 802-6.
133 I am grateful to Malcolm Baker for discussing the sculpture with me.
Many lights appear in the trees and on the water. We are off and have great excitement fishing up treasure (fake) tied to bladders. His Lordship is hailed from the shore by a knight, who we are told is King Arthur, have you the sacrifice my Lord, who answers no, then take my sword and smite the water in front of the grotto and see what my wizard has done, take also this dove and when asked, give it to the keeper. Off again to some distance from the grotto, the lights are small and water still, the giant eagle appears and asks, have you the sacrifice, no my Lord answers, so be it and disappears in steam. His Lordship smites the water with King Arthur's sword, all the company are still, a rumble sucking noise comes in front of the opening of the grotto the water as if boiling and to the horror of all the company both on the water and on the shore scream with fright, appearing as though from the depth of hell arose a ghastly coffin covered with slime and other things. Silence as though relief, when suddenly with a creaking and ghostly groaning the lid slid as if off and up sat a terrible apparition with outstretched hand screeching in a hollow voice, give me my gift with such violence, that some of the company fell into the water and had to be saved, and those on the shore scrambled in allways confusion was everywhere. We allmost fainted with fright and was only stayed from the same fate by the hand of his Lordship, who handed the keeper the dove (fake) the keeper shut its hand and with a gurgling noise vanished with a clang of its lid, and all went pitch. Then the roof of the grotto glowed two times lighting the water and the company a little, nothing was to be seen of the keeper or his coffin, as though it did not happen.

This extraordinary entertainment reputedly took place in 1768 and was witnessed by an Italian noblewoman staying at Wanstead House at the time, who is said to have recorded it in her journals.\textsuperscript{134}

After the building of the Temple and the boathouse-grotto in the 1760s, Earl Tylney was not much at Wanstead. On his death unmarried in 1784, his fortune and estate, including Wanstead, passed to his sister's son, Sir James Long of Draycot, Wiltshire, who died ten years later. Wanstead then passed to Sir James Long's young son, and on his death in 1805, to his daughter, Catherine Tylney Long, then a minor. Wanstead was meanwhile let to the Prince of Condé, in exile from France.

\textbf{Catherine Long and William Wellesley Pole}

Catherine Long was destined to be one of the wealthiest women in the kingdom on reaching her majority, and had numerous suitors, including, it was rumoured, the Duke of Clarence, who was turned down. Amid great festivities she came of age in 1808, and Wanstead was prepared to receive her. In 1812, she married William Wellesley Pole, nephew of Sir Arthur Wellesley (who later became the Duke of Wellington). William took the name of Pole Tylney Long Wellesley, and Catherine became Catherine Tylney Long Wellesley.

The house was extravagantly redecorated for festivities on the birth of their son and for a fête to welcome the Duke of Wellington in 1814, and it may well have been prior to this occasion that they began to consider changes to the grounds. They consulted both Humphry Repton and Lewis Kennedy in the period 1813-1818, which resulted in large plantations of trees, the draining of the Reservoir, and the formation of an American Garden.

\textsuperscript{134} See Julian Litten, \textit{The English Way of Death, The Common Funeral Since 1450}, Robert Hale, 1991, pp. 104-105. The description has not been checked, since I have so far failed to locate Stuart Campbell-Adams, who provided the information to Julian Litten. Any information on this source would be gratefully received.
Repton at Wanstead

Wanstead is not mentioned by name, but in his *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* Repton refers to ‘a place near the capital’, and provides an illustration with a flap from which Wanstead may be identified (figs 34, 33). Confirmation is provided by Robert Havell, writing in 1823, who reported that the area near the house had been ‘lately laid out and adorned as a rich parterre, or flower garden; and as it has been executed to the designs of Mr. Repton, we have every reason to anticipate a tasteful and beautiful result . . .’ Repton refers to having been recently consulted, and there is evidence that his association began about three years earlier, in 1813. His first visit was made in April 1813, followed by his report in September of that year. To his chagrin, this remained unbound, although he had hoped that it would have been shown off to influential members of the Wellesley family, and was included in the 1822 sale catalogue as a portfolio of ‘Repton’s Drawings of Plans for Improving the Grounds at Wanstead House, (15)’. A copy of Repton’s *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* of 1803 was also in the library at Wanstead.

His report is carefully worded. It represents a statement of views which he knew might not be particularly welcome and it is interesting because it is a mirror of the admiration with which the grand layout of Wanstead, although considered old-fashioned, was still regarded. Because the original layout was etched so strongly on the landscape, he had to consider how, if at all, to accommodate any modernisation, and how to blend the old and the new - a problem no less difficult in considering present-day conservation of the garden at Wanstead:

the original plan of this Place must ever (be) strongly traced in many parts . . . and it is impossible to be quite obliterated in conformity with modern styles. It is therefore an object worthy of consideration, whether the original, or a more recent style, be advisable; and how far both may be admitted, without the incongruous mixture of two things so opposite, that they cannot be blended in one rational plan.

He did not recommend sweeping changes. He said: ‘It would be absurd in this place to conform to the modern style, of placing the house in the centre of its domain, from which every thing is banished, but the beasts of the forest.’ Instead, he suggested that it should be treated according to its character of a ‘splendid Palace’ in the vicinity of the metropolis, like Versailles, Potsdam or Kensington. He considered the gate opening directly into the forecourt as the ‘dressed limit’ of such palaces, and he proposed for this area at Wanstead ‘the richness of a symmetrical parterre’, which would be ‘more consonant than a square area of lawn, too small to be fed by flocks and herds, and too large to be considered a bowling-green’. This would be visible from the main first-floor rooms like a ‘rich carpet spread under the eye in perfect harmony with the vases and obelisks’. He also suggested a ‘clipped fence’ to retain privacy. Buckler’s view of the house taken

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135 Published in 1816, Fragment XXVI, pp. 129-36.
136 Robert Havell, *A Series of Picturesque Views of Noblemen’s and Gentlemen’s Seats with Historical and Descriptive Accounts of Each Subject*, 1823.
138 Letter from Humphry Repton to William Tylney Long Pole Wellesley of 22 September 1813, Beinecke Library, Yale University.
139 Under Books, lot 447, p. 298.
in 1823\textsuperscript{141} only suggests this feature, but it was executed and the main lines of the parterre are still visible as ridges on the ground (fig. 36).

Repton then turned his attention to the wider landscape, including the distant views of London and the dome of St Paul’s. These had been visible when the gardens were first planted, but had become obscured by the growth of the trees which he proposed to cut down in order to reveal the lakes and the longer view.

He commented that because the surroundings were relatively flat, the area depended on ‘the wood and the water’ for its effect, but there was little except formal regularly-spaced woodland in the park and the pieces of water were exposed and looked unnatural, with naked banks. This could be improved by clothing them ‘very amply’. The survey of 1990\textsuperscript{142} revealed that a great deal of planting was done at this time around the lakes, which made for a more private landscape and increasingly ‘furnished’ views from the house as the trees grew.

Repton’s method for furnishing pleasing clumps of trees and improving views incorporating woodland was shown in two sketches by him\textsuperscript{143} and can be very well illustrated in practice at Wanstead. He maintained that the beauty of groups of trees depended on their being planted two or three close together so that their trunks would lean outwards and their branches intermingled. This could be achieved by two or more being planted in the same hole, after having their roots cut to enable them to be brought nearer together. In addition, he often employed lower bushes to give a more furnished appearance, and if these were thorns, as they often were, they would serve as ‘nurses’ in protecting young trees from animals. Beeches planted in this way survive at Wanstead in areas close to the lakes as Repton recommended. There are also similar plantings of oaks, one of which has a girth of 406 centimetres (about thirteen feet four inches), with about ten trees in the hole.

John Doyley’s plan of Wanstead of 1815-16\textsuperscript{144} shows the Repton parterre clearly, as well as the lake, the grotto island and the other large island on the south-west of the lake, together with new plantings near the water (fig. 37). The Reservoir was filled in, probably on his advice, since it is here shown as a field.

**Lewis Kennedy**

The final episode in the story of the changes to the gardens by the descendants of Josiah Child came in 1818. John Claudius Loudon in his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* of 1822 noted that the then owner of Wanstead had ‘made great improvements; erected extensive hot-houses in the kitchen-garden, and formed one of the largest American gardens in the kingdom, from designs by Lewis Kennedy, Esq.’. It is not quite clear whether all these improvements are attributable to Kennedy, nor exactly where they were. However, it is clear that Kennedy was responsible for the design of the American Gardens, and his *Notitiae*\textsuperscript{145} give the date of 1818 for this.

\textsuperscript{141} British Library, Add MS 36362, ff.114-118.
\textsuperscript{144} ERO D/Dcy P2A.
\textsuperscript{145} Private collection.
34. Humphry Repton: View from the south-west corner of Wanstead House, as published in *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1816.
37. John Doyle: Plan of Wanstead, c.1815-16. Essex Record Office D/Dcy P2A. This shows the Repton parterre in front of the house and the roughly oval American garden slightly to the north-east.
Lewis Kennedy developed a flourishing career as a landscape gardener in the early nineteenth century, submitting his proposals to his clients in the form of green morocco-bound volumes containing a descriptive hand-written text, a few monochrome sketches and larger watercolours illustrating his ideas. He generally suggested a wide variety of effects and came to specialise in flower gardens. His ‘green book’ for Wanstead was in the 1822 sale catalogue as lot 407 on page 295, under the title Notitiae, with illustrative Sketches for American Garden at Wanstead, by Kennedy, original Drawings, &c. most sumptuously bound in green morocco.

The Notitiae introduce Kennedy’s ideas very circumspectly. He clearly feels that Wanstead is old-fashioned, but he praises the ‘abilities of some of our first masters for Gardening and Architecture’ who helped to form the landscape and comments that the ‘original style’ of the gardens has been preserved. He finds this to be in the ‘regular and symmetrical fashion’, and proposes something more related to ‘nature’s free growths’.

He reported that the trees and shrubs in the existing American garden were flourishing, which indicated that the ground was not ‘improper’. American gardens required acid soil to accommodate the specimen trees and shrubs from the American continent. Kennedy’s plan indicates his ideas for the new area, which would provide a long arbour walk, winding paths, alcoves and seats, a covered walk and a semicircular Italian Garden bordered by a trellised seat and a rock garden.

This principal feature, which he calls, on his watercolour sketch, the ‘Rock Italian Garden’, would be semicircular in shape, bordered by rockwork and with flower beds in the centre. He had designed something similar for the garden at Chiswick Villa in 1814. The flower beds would be planted with a succession of hardy flowers of low growth, such as pinks, stocks, lilies, iris, and so on, with some small shrubs like daphnes and ericas. The crevices between the rocks were to be filled with plants, such as sedums, wallflowers and plants that grow in rocky situations. Kennedy says that it would be more appropriate to have streamlets of water flowing from vases on the rocks, but concludes that ‘in our frozen regions’ this would not be practical. He recommends a rustic alcove for the Rock Garden, which would be covered with climbing plants to hang in festoons.

One of the other main features was to be the ‘Sinarium’ and pheasantries. The Sinarium was for plants requiring heat in winter, which was believed to be the case with camellias, tree peonies, magnolias, nandina and China roses. This would have a pheasantry at each end. The building could be totally removed in summer, leaving the plants in the ground.

John Doyley’s plan of 1815-16, already referred to, clearly shows where this American Garden was situated (fig. 37). It appears as an island of more intense cultivation to the north of the grassed walk behind the house, circled and crossed by paths. At the time of the sale in 1822, it contained a pair of lead vases with eagle ornaments and a pair of stone pedestals with sculptured tablets. There was also a stone pedestal with a ‘curious antique Egyptian stone ornament on the top, sculptured in hieroglyphics’. This was apparently a pyramidion from the tomb of Princess Tia, one of the sisters of Ramesses II. It had been in the collection of Smart Lethieullier, who had bequeathed it to the British Museum, but it did not arrive there and was reported to be in the garden of Sir James

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146 Jan Woudstra, 'Lewis Kennedy, landscape gardener, and his work at Buckhurst Park', Apollo, 1992, pp. 215-221.
147 Sale catalogue, page 118, lot 279, which was not sold.
148 Pyramidal portion forming the apex of an obelisk.
THE GARDENS OF WANSTEAD

Tynney Long where it was seen by the Danish scholar, Georg Zoega. Smart Lethieullier may have given the pyramidalion to Earl Tynney, who shared his interest in collecting.  

The Sale and Demolition of Wanstead House

Catherine and William did not enjoy Wanstead for long, for their financial situation quickly deteriorated until it was out of control. Amid allegations of unbridled extravagance and scandal, the contents of the house were put up for auction in 1822 to satisfy Wellesley’s creditors. The sale attracted great crowds and was like a fair, with entry by catalogue, which gave free access to every part of the house. ‘Every description of vehicle has been put in requisition, and immense crowds of elegantly dressed females have daily visited the house and grounds’, read a newspaper report.  

The house itself was sold in 1823, again at auction, for £10,000, the purchaser being bound to clear everything away down to the foundations by Lady Day 1825. The purchasers were Messrs Stannard and Athrow of Norwich, with de Carle, Wright and Coleman, also of Norwich. It was announced that they intended to sell everything by lots, and they were reported to have sold a pair of marble chimneypieces for 300 guineas before they left the saleroom.

When the demolition of the house was in progress and later ‘a good many memorials came into the possession of residents in the villas of the neighbourhood’, as one report puts it. A number of items went to Wanstead House, Cambridge, including a handsome doorcase, a white marble chimneypiece, a wrought-iron stair balustrade, and items of panelling. The rooms from which they came have not yet been identified. The following have been identified as originating or possibly originating in Wanstead House and gardens: a library table in the manner of Kent, now at Chatsworth (lot 26 in the sale catalogue); a giltwood and gesso suite of furniture attributed to James Moore, known as the Wanstead Suite, c.1720; two chimneypieces in the great hall at Chillingham Castle, Northumberland, which were brought in by Sir Jeffrey Wyatville in 1828; four Corinthian capitals and entablature of the portico at Hendon Hall, Hendon, which was described in Keane’s Beauties of Middlesex, 1850, as having a carriage front ‘adorned with pillars and enriched capitals, brought from Wanstead House’ (possibly bought by Samuel Ware, an architect, who owned the Hall by 1828, and may have acquired other artefacts from Wanstead such as balustrading, urns and obelisks); ebony chairs said to have gone to Lord Macdonald of the Isles, according to Hiram Stead; an obelisk at The Warren, Loughton, which may have come from the forecourt; two very large stone capitals and two ball finials, as well as some other stone fragments, at Snaresbrook House, Woodford Road, Snaresbrook (which may or may not have some connection with Wanstead House itself, or the Green House, which was in fact taken down in 1799); and a large ball finial at The Temple.

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149 Information received from Julian Litten and Professor Geoffrey Martin, quoting Zoega, De origine et usu obeliscorum, Rome 1797.
150 Stead, op. cit.
152 Stead, op. cit.
153 An armchair was shown at In the Public Eye, an exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1999, item 50. The location of the suite is unknown.
Wanstead Park. Fragments of carved stone were reported in the neighbourhood early this century, and some relics in the park itself, used as stepping-stones across the stream connecting the lakes. It remains to be seen what these clues will reveal.\textsuperscript{157}

After the demolition of the house, the grounds entered a period of neglect. Some of the timber was felled and sold and the land was used for grazing. Wanstead Park remained in the ownership of the Wellesley family. The acquisition of part of it in 1882 by the Corporation of London as the Conservators of Epping Forest both protected it as an open space and inaugurated a new era for it as a public park. Part was retained by Earl Cowley and then after consideration for speculative housing was sold in 1920 for a golf course.

**Conservation at Wanstead Park**

Although the features of the historic landscape are not far to seek (they are well preserved as earthworks, with the remnants of old plantings), Wanstead Park has now acquired a particular character of its own, which is very different from even its early nineteenth century form. It is much appreciated as a nature reserve, and the woods and lakes have a wildness which has encroached on the landscape of the past. Dutch Elm Disease and old age have destroyed many trees, as have severe storms.

The Corporation of London commissioned an extensive survey of the park in 1990 from Debois Landscape Survey (fig. 38).\textsuperscript{158} A phased Management Plan of conservation and improvement has now been commenced. It is not intended to change the present character of the area, but to conserve and enhance those features of the historic landscape which survive and restore others, and to safeguard and extend the ecological richness of the park, with the aim of increasing the public’s enjoyment. For example, the mounts and amphitheatre are being cleared of scrub and invasive roots and their yew hedges replanted, overgrown paths and vistas are being cleared and re-cut, a partly-surviving avenue of lime trees in the outpark and other remnants of avenues are being repaired, and the double avenue of sweet chestnuts leading from the Temple to the Heronry Pond (the present name for the westernmost of Rocque’s Serpentine Lakes) has been replanted. The second stage of repair and refurbishment of the Temple was completed early in 1997, and the boathouse-grotto is being maintained as a ruin by regular consolidation.

The deterioration of the Heronry Pond has long been a matter of concern to local residents and the Corporation. It is hoped to overcome the problem of severe leaking by installing a water pumping system, which will replenish the Heronry Pond and benefit the other lakes as well. Repair work there is envisaged in the future, to restore the water and the islands. Perhaps the island-grotto there will one day give up its mystery.

This publication is presented as research in progress, and concentrates on the eighteenth century history of the estate. The material on the demise of Wanstead is quite extensive, and I have not yet

\textsuperscript{157} Baggs, ‘The After-Life of Wanstead’, *Georgian Group Journal*, volume VI, 1996, pp. 131-133. Hiram Stead includes an unattributed clipping with the comment: ‘It is evident, too, that when the demolition of the Great House was in process, or in the period of subsequent neglect and decay, a good many memorials came into the possession of the residents in the villas of the neighbourhood . . .’

\textsuperscript{158} See above, note 1.
had an opportunity to examine all the documents relating to it. There remain numerous questions, particularly about the authorship of the garden designs in the era of the first and second Earls Tylney. I should welcome any further information on all aspects of the history of Wanstead House and gardens.

Finally, I should like to acknowledge with thanks the work of previous scholars, and two in particular who have made considerable contributions to the Wanstead story: John Harris, who has written several times about both house and garden and has been generous in sharing information, and John Phibbs, whose report to the Corporation of London provided the basis for my own research. My thanks also go to colleagues at the Corporation of London, who have encouraged this work and shared information with me, especially Bill Row, James Clare, Julian Kverndal and Tricia Moxey.
Wanstead in Context

Michael Symes

No garden can be created in a vacuum, and Wanstead, however magnificent and lavish it may have been, was of its time and therefore reflected the fashions and impulses of the day. Some comparisons may be suggested, though whether these amount to definite influences in either direction has to be speculation. Certainly there are parallels to many of the features in the gardens, and these will be considered below. A few examples only are given: this overview is not meant to be comprehensive.

One general comparison in terms of its extravagance, fate and proximity to London is with Canons, the subject of an earlier Study Day organised by the London Parks and Gardens Trust. There too an enormous house has disappeared and the estate as created in the eighteenth century is not much more than a site with a few relics. In each case, however, it is possible to achieve a good deal of mental reconstruction of the original layout using the site as it exists today.

The development of the site may be divided into four stages:

1. The Baroque

George London was responsible for the layout of the grand formal garden from 1706, though developments continued for several years. The architect of the greenhouse and some other buildings was William Talman, and the team of London and Talman worked at many estates – Chatsworth, Burghley, Castle Ashby, Dyrham Park, Castle Howard and the two Hampton Courts (Hereford and Middlesex). It was therefore a well-established partnership, with designer and architect familiar with the means to complement each other’s work.

The gardens they created at Wanstead contained several elements with parallels elsewhere:

(i) *Mounts.* The idea of a mount in a garden is an old one, stretching back to Tudor times or earlier. The best example of an early mount is at New College, Oxford. Although it might have been expected that they would be out of fashion by the early eighteenth century, a mount was created in Kensington Gardens, where London worked prior to Bridgeman and Kent (*fig. 39*).

(ii) *Ironwork.* The ironwork screen round the bowling green is attributed to Tijou. The screen for which he is famous is still to be seen at Hampton Court (*fig. 40*).

(iii) *Avenues.* The system of great avenues or allées lined with trees was to be found in many estates, one of which was Canons (*fig. 41*).

(iv) *Topiary.* The globes and obelisks cut in the hedges are also to be found in the Dutch-
style garden of Westbury-on-Severn (1690s), which further shares a Banqueting House with Wanstead.

(v) Canal. There were many canals in gardens of the time, for example at Wrest Park, Hall Barn, Chatsworth, Hampton Court (figs 42, 43, 44). The inspiration probably came from Versailles.

(vi) Basin. (This may be post-London). The octagonal shape of the basin to the west of the house is strikingly similar to that of the one in Kensington Gardens (the Round Pond) (fig. 45).

2. The Artinatural

In the 1730s the layout was rococo-ised or made artificial with some natural elements. The designer is not known (John Harris postulates Kent). Again there are some striking similarities to what was happening elsewhere:

(i) The Serpentine. The lakes to the south were linked and made more natural, and called ‘The Serpentine’ on Rocque’s plan of 1741. The same name is given, of course, to the lake in Kensington Gardens (1731). The linking of a series of ponds is also to be found at Londesborough, East Yorkshire (Lord Burlington’s summer residence), where the gardener was Thomas Knowlton, formerly of Canons (fig. 46).

(ii) The Artinatural Layout. The idea of having a straight axis with winding, wriggling paths to each side was common to many gardens at the time. South Dalton and Londesborough were of this kind (fig. 47).

(iii) Fortifications. The theatrical or playful fortification probably stems from Vanbrugh’s work at Castle Howard or the Military Garden at Blenheim, but there was a complete bailey at Stainborough Castle, South Yorkshire, and arrow-headed bastions could be found at Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire (figs 48, 49, 50).

(iv) The Amphitheatre. An amphitheatre in the sense of shaped or ramped embankments could be encountered at Claremont, Stowe, Wrest Park and Studley Royal (fig. 51).

(v) Ruins. The ruins on the island as depicted by Rocque have some similarity to the ruined Hermitages at Richmond Gardens and Stowe (both by Kent) (figs 52, 53). The taste for ruins in general gathered momentum later in the century (see, for example, the Ruined Arch at Kew).

3. Towards the Picturesque

The gardens became more natural in appearance from the 1750s and 1760s. From this period is the Grotto Boathouse. There is an intriguing parallel with the grotto boathouse at Fonthill, Wiltshire, the seat of Alderman Beckford, sometime Lord Mayor of London, which is likely to date from the mid-1750s (fig. 54).
Canal, Wrest Park. Photo, Michael Symes.
LONDESBOROUGH PARK 1739 from an estate plan by Thomas Pattison

x = the Hall

For avenues marked A-F see text.

47. John Rocque: Plan of South Dalton, Yorkshire, *Vitravius Britannicus*, volume IV.
49. Bailey, Stainborough Castle, Yorkshire. Photo, Michael Symes.
The Duchesses' Bastion in Grimsthorpe Gardens, Aug. 10, 1796.

52. John Rocque: The Hermitage, detail from A New Plan of Richmond Garden, 1748.
53. Hermitage, Stowe, Buckinghamshire. Photo, Michael Symes.
4. Humphry Repton

In 1813 Repton produced a Red Book for what he hoped would be a commission to restore his fortunes. Unfortunately, although implemented, the project left him without payment as the owner tumbled spectacularly into bankruptcy. Repton’s design, for a flower-parterre bounded by a trellis-hedge, is typical of his late work – the flower gardens at Endsleigh and Ashridge may be mentioned.

Although the purpose of these notes is to set Wanstead in the general context of garden development, it should not be seen as ‘just another eighteenth-century garden’. It had its own character, through its size, scale and scope, and, taken with the huge house, fully justified the epithet ‘the English Versailles’.
Appendix

*Sally Jeffery*

Since the above text was written, an exciting development has occurred in the later history of Wanstead Park – the missing Red Book by Humphry Repton was offered for sale from a private collection and has been purchased for the library of Sir Paul Getty. He has been kind enough to make it available for study through his librarian, Bryan Maggs, and the following account can therefore add further to the story of Repton at Wanstead and enables a comparison to be made between the recommendations of Repton and Kennedy. I should like to record here my warmest thanks not only to the owner and his librarian, but also to Fiona Cowell and Georgina Green, who shared the task of transcribing the text and contributed to these conclusions.

**Repton at Wanstead: A Continuation**

In fact, there is no ‘Red’ book by Humphry Repton for Wanstead Park. His report was apparently not bound for the Wellesleys, and was included in the Wanstead sale as fifteen drawings, with no mention of text. The text and drawings are now in a brown leather binding which could well date from the time they were purchased at the Wanstead sale in 1822. There are four grey wash sketches incorporated into the text, numbered 1 to 4, and nine watercolours, numbered V to XIII, seven with flaps or overlays, illustrating Repton’s proposals. An annotated plan to which he refers is missing, as presumably is one other item to make up the fifteen mentioned in the sale catalogue. In all, both the text and the illustrations with their captions provide invaluable information on the elaborate proposals made, and on how Repton set out the arguments to persuade his client to adopt them. At least three subsequent plans of Wanstead made by the surveyor John Doyley in 1815, 1824 (figs 37 and 58), and c.1822 permit us to form a picture of what was accepted and what was not and to make comparisons with earlier plans and views.

First, we should note that the information about Wanstead available from *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* of 1816 was only a small (though important) part of the report. Repton’s letter to William Long Wellesley, which is bound into the front of the report, tells us that he first visited Wanstead House on 8 March 1813, that he worked on his report at Harestreet on 19 April 1813 and that it was ‘finally arranged in Sepr 1813’. It was apparently Wellesley himself who instructed Repton that he did not wish to destroy, but rather to preserve, ‘the original Style of the Place’. The extracts published in *Fragments* are taken from the report almost word for word, and represent the introductory remarks on the ancient and modern styles in gardening, his discussion of the parterre on the west, and of the water seen from the house towards London, where he suggests thinning overgrown trees and

159 Sir Paul Getty K.B.E. – Wormsley Library.
160 ERO D/Dcy P2A.
161 London Borough of Redbridge, Local Studies and Archives. *A Plan of the Parish of Wanstead in the County of Essex*, 1824, John Doyley. I am very grateful to Georgina Green who drew my attention to this plan.
162 ERO D/Dcw, P61.

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55. Humphry Repton: View of the East Terrace, supposed to be taken at the time of some Fête or Publick Day at Wanstead House. Watercolour sketch number VI from the Wanstead report. Sir Paul Getty K.B.E. – Wormsley Library.
clothing the banks of the lakes. A single illustration with an overlay (fig. 35) was made especially for *Fragments*, probably a year or so after the report was written, and represents a modification of sketch number XII in the report. The distant landscape is exactly replicated, but a corner of the proposed parterre has been added, in a different form, simpler than those proposed in the report.

A pair of grey wash sketches illustrating good and bad fencing were included in *Fragments* without any indication that they had come from the Wanstead report. They show the advantages of a half sunk fence consisting of a wall three feet below the surface with a fence of iron or wood on it extending three feet above ground level, which does not interfere with the view but provides good protection. Repton further discusses six different kinds of fence to protect against various kinds of animals.

What do these proposals reveal that is new, and how much of the work was carried out? What can be established in answer to these questions and what remains unresolved?

Repton is particularly concerned with exploiting the prospects from the house, and he discusses these one by one in relation to his watercolour views to the east, the south, the west and to the water. To the east, he wishes to soften the distant view by allowing the deer to graze on the grass, adjusting the planting of trees and introducing a bridge over the far canal. For the nearer view, he suggests a terrace enriched with a balustrade and flowers, and a supplementary sketch of the east terrace ‘supposed to be taken at the time of some Fete or Publick Day at Wanstead House’ (fig. 55), shows how it would be.

The landscape to the south was visible from the principal room of the house but was not displayed to advantage. The water appeared unfinished and a ploughed field and row of trees hid what Repton called the ‘offskip’. To improve this, he suggested enlarging the piece of water at the centre of the view and planting trees to lead the eye to the distance. The flap shows ‘the manner in which the Water may be finished, & also how the Park may be blended in appearance with the forest &c.’.

The views to the west include an important watercolour showing the whole of the parterre (fig. 56), which is not included in *Fragments*. It offers two alternative treatments, the left-hand one with ‘Corbeilles of Roses and flowers mixed’ and the one to the right with ‘more formal Embroidery Work with box &c.’, plus a central pool and fountain, statues in the four quarters, arbours at the corners, and arches of greenery in the centre of each side. Behind, to the north, was planned what appears to be a tiered amphitheatre, possibly for the display of exotics, but Repton does not comment on this in the text. The parterre occupies the area between the rows of obelisks and urns of what was the forecourt and was designed to be seen from the first floor of the house. Beyond the octagonal basin is a balustrade or low wall with a pedimented feature to mark the centre, possible containing a grotto, backed by a loosely planted shrubbery ‘to prevent the Road’s going into the Bason Pool’. This view is supplemented by two further sketches. The first, from the west, shows the basin and entrance front of the house. The second shows the curving road circling the basin to the south. The caption reads: ‘In approaching the House, this road is far preferable to that on the North side of the Bason, because it shews the House & the Park to greater advantage’. All of this would have given the approach to the house a greatly enriched and furnished appearance.
THE GARDENS OF WANSTEAD

Some of Repton’s text on the water at Wanstead, together with one view, are included in *Fragments*, but another of his watercolours illustrates his extended comments on this subject, and specifically on the Reservoir Pool and the Lake beyond it. The old quincunx hid almost the whole of the house from view when approached from the public road between the Reservoir Pool and the Lake. The magnificent portico and pediment of the house would be visible once lower planting had replaced the overgrown trees. A pretty iron fence would replace the ordinary paling along the road. The sketch which was reproduced in *Fragments* in slightly modified form (fig. 35) is in many ways the most intriguing of all. This shows Reservoir Pool and the Lake opened up into one huge stretch of water, crossed apparently by two bridges. The caption, which was not included in *Fragments*, tells us that the improved view showed ‘the Effect of removing the trees which now hide the Lake & also the manner of uniting the two waters’. If the Reservoir Pool and the Lake had been united as in this view, the public road (the present Blake Hall Road) would have run across a bridge, and this would have implied greater changes than the text indicates.

Having dealt with the major viewpoints, Repton’s next section examines the ‘Gardens & Pleasure ground’. He lists twelve different features with ‘distinct Characters’, which could be connected to make up a pleasure ground. They could be formed ‘partly by restoring the original Style of Gardens and partly by grafting on them New Scenes of variety & contrast where the trees have now outgrown their original intentions’. Probably a plan was included to locate these scenes, which are numbered in the text. Some of these, like the parterre, and the east terrace, had already been discussed and illustrated. Others, like the maze and a ‘quincunx cabinet de verdure’, remain unknown quantities, although Doyley’s plan of 1815 includes a maze plantation to the north of the house.

However, features such as the Berceau Walk, Fruit Wall and Winter Garden can be identified and discussed. The Berceau Walk and a wall parallel to it ‘of 750 feet in length which faces the South’ are referred to as already existing features. Part of a trellised wall can be seen in Rocque’s view of the Water House, and his plan shows it as a straight line measuring some 600 feet, as part of a series of geometric walks around an amphitheatre behind the green house (fig. 22). This was no doubt developed as a ‘berceau walk’ with trees or shrubs trained over it in an upended cradle shape, as the French term implies, and was retained during subsequent changes to that area of the gardens. It can also be seen on John Doyley’s later plans (*figs* 37 and 58a) as a double row of trees.

Parallel to this, slightly to the north, ran the old boundary of the gardens. Repton refers to this as a wall; it is shown as a continuous line both in the Kip & Knyff engravings (fig. 3) and by Rocque, who also marks a gate across it (fig. 22). This old wall can probably be identified today as the one lying behind the gardens of the houses on the north side of Warren Drive, Wanstead. Repton suggests pruning or ‘heading’ the overgrown trees of the Berceau Walk so that the south face of the wall could receive the sun and be used to grow fruit. This Fruit Wall would also act as a Winter Garden, and the area would be kept locked for safety and privacy. (It can be seen just above the double line of the berceau walk in figure 58a, marked as ‘212’.) Such places at Wanstead would be ‘like treasures in rich Caskets’, says Repton, reserved only for those with keys.

Another such place was the American Garden, which, he says, could be ‘increased in apparent size without actually enlarging it’. We now have additional proof from Repton that this

*Above:* Detail showing the probable location of the Berceau Walk (210), the area occupied by the American Garden (211), and the wall proposed as a Fruit Wall (212).

*Below:* Detail showing the area formerly occupied by the Reservoir Pool (221), now planted with trees.
feature already existed, both from the foregoing comment and from another anecdote which he recounts in his text. This is about the Duke of Portland, evidently a previous tenant of Wanstead, who ‘when an improvident or too provident Steward would have sold the plants growing in the American Garden at Wanstead ... ordered them to be purchased and not removed’. We know, from Kennedy’s Notitiae of 1818, that he himself was responsible for advising on the enlargement of the American Garden. We now know that it was already present when Repton came on the scene and had been there for a number of years, and that he had plans for it, which Kennedy perhaps adopted. In fact, a number of Kennedy’s proposals seem to show a knowledge of Repton’s report, which he may have seen in the library at Wanstead.

Other features suggested by Repton but about which he gives few details are the enlargement of the Grotto Garden, and two walks, each ‘perfectly distinct in character’. The Grotto, says Repton, ‘is a sumptuous specimen of its kind, and at such a distance as makes it an object to which the Walks may lead’. The Wood Walk would be from the east terrace of the house ‘forming the shortest line to the Grotto’ with the water in the distance, while the Sheep Walk would go from the Grotto garden along the banks of the water with a view of the ‘riverlike channels and islands judiciously interposed’ to the end of the Berceau Walk or the American Garden.

The Island Gardens are also one of the features on Repton’s list. These are discussed in a separate section at the end of the report. He evidently disapproved of the ‘fanciful islands’ which were drawn on Rocque’s plan, commenting that ‘from the old map it appears that there formerly existed regular models of fortifications, with many puerile Conceiveit not worth restoring or preserving’. However, having dismissed these and recommending that some of the lesser islands be removed, he accepts that others were beautifully wooded and could be exploited for the views they afforded. He proposes a ferry to cross to the largest island, with two rustic bridges to cross over onto others, and rustic or covered seats set in the most interesting places – especially one to command a view of the Grotto. Two pretty grey wash sketches (one of which is reproduced here as figure 57), show his ideas for these bridges, which were to link Grove Island to the north bank, and to the Great Island. Repton’s names for the islands seem not to be recorded elsewhere, though no doubt they were included on his missing plan, so we have to guess which were the ‘largest island’ or the ‘Great Island’, ‘Grove Island’ (from which the Grotto could be seen), ‘the Cherry Island’ and ‘the Strawberry Island’.

The last watercolour bound in with the text is not captioned, but the final feature on Repton’s list was ‘the Gardens at Highlands’. The separate estate of Highlands was beyond the River Roding to the east, but was included in the Wanstead estate at the time, and the pool shown with a proposed aviary or pheasantry beside it probably portrays one at Highlands. It does not concord with any of the features in Wanstead Park itself.

Repton’s proposals were therefore very extensive, and would have been costly to implement in full. It is clear from the two Doyley plans of 1815 and 1824, which follow Repton’s report by two years and eleven years respectively, that the proposals were acted upon very selectively. The Berceau Walk and the Grotto and its garden were already there, and remained, but it is unclear whether the Fruit Wall was established. Judging by Kennedy’s plan of the existing American Garden, it ran beside the Berceau Walk, and he proposed to enlarge it. However, it is also unclear how many of his suggestions were acted upon, and his proposals for garden
buildings do not seem to have been taken up. None of Repton’s proposed improvements to the approach road round the basin appear on the later plans, nor does the bridge over the canal, nor the enhanced view to the south. The Reservoir Pool and the Lake beyond it were never united. The two walks from the Grotto are not shown, although they may have been made. Perhaps rustic seats were built on the islands, but the bridges recommended by Repton are not shown. It is interesting to note that Kennedy, whose ideas are generally closely related to those in Repton’s report, also proposed a number of rustic seats and a ‘Rustic or Swiss bridge’, which he intended to build to the right of the Grotto. In spite of the absence of any bridges on later plans, footings can be seen near the Grotto, so perhaps this suggestion was acted upon. Very little appears to have been done to enhance the far canal, which is shown on both Doyley’s plans with the triple rows of trees along its length very fragmented, as they had been before Repton’s time. Extensive new planting does seem to have taken place to clothe the banks of the pieces of water, however, especially near the Grotto and on the edges of the Reservoir Pool, and the banks of the water generally may have been improved. A comparison with earlier pre-Repton plans indicates that the so-called Square Pond (now called the Dell) was drained and planted with trees.

The two dated Doyley plans make clear that the Reservoir Pool was not drained and filled in until some time after Repton’s 1813 report, and he does not mention draining it. On the 1815 plan it is described as ‘The Great Pond, now drained’, and it is shown as a new plantation on the later Doyley plans (figure 58b shows the area of the Reservoir Pool, marked ‘221’, planted with trees). One problem arises here. Until Repton’s report came to light this year, it was thought that he might have recommended draining the Reservoir Pool to make a wood. The famous clump of trees forming the ‘Repton Oak’ in Reservoir Wood is located almost in the middle of the area once filled by the pool, which was not drained until later. It is therefore unlikely that those trees were planted on Repton’s direct advice. Was the practice of planting several trees in a single hole discussed with the Wanstead gardeners when he visited and carried on as estate practice later?

The main innovation was the parterre, but there too questions remain because we have no detailed record of exactly what was done. Neither of Repton’s alternative proposals seems to have been followed exactly, but we have incomplete evidence. A faint pencil sketch by Buckler appears to indicate that the trellis and arbours were not planted, and Doyley’s plan of 1815 shows little detail except the general outline and the central fountain pool. We do know, however, from both Doyley and the evidence still visible on the ground, that the four quarters were made, with their crossed diagonal paths. It is interesting that when Repton prepared his watercolour of Wanstead for Fragments some two years after his report, he drew yet another variation on the planting, perhaps in the knowledge that the scheme had been modified in execution.

The greatest interest of this newly revealed report by Repton is in the descriptions of what might have been. Had its recommendations been followed, the potentially magnificent views to the east, south and west would have been developed, the private areas of the Pleasure Garden would have been linked by walks, and the Island Gardens made easier to visit and more pleasant. As it was, events overtook the Wellesleys, and the gardens at Wanstead, instead of being improved as Repton recommended, fell into decline.

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