

The River Thames lies at the geographical, historical and emotional heart of London. (fig. 19) The city has gradually evolved along the banks of a river which flows from Bushy, Hampton Court and Richmond Parks, past Wandsworth, Battersea, Chelsea and St James's Parks to Greenwich and Erith. The river links communities, wildlife and the accumulated memories which give the city its identity. In the Department of the Environment's 1994 survey of priorities for the capital, *Ten thousand views of London*, the Thames emerged as one of the areas of greatest concern for Londoners.

In the scramble to reshuffle the systems of administration and find a new Dick Whittington, some important elements seem to be falling out of the pack. The government's Green Paper setting out proposals for a Greater London Authority does not make a single mention of the Thames. Even sections on environmental quality, transport and the city's identity do not refer to the river once.

Whatever charges may be levelled at the previous government, their policies on the Thames were exemplary. The *Strategic Planning Guidance for the River Thames* (RPG3B/9B) really began to take the river environment seriously. Proposals for a new Thames Policy Area and recommendations to respond to local character and community were being admired by the rest of Europe.

In the rush to remarket London, it would be as well to remember some of the enduring features which make the city a wonderful place to live in. Any new mayor needs to put on his boots and go down to the foreshore - not just send his cat.

CONSERVATION NOTES: A TOUR of LONDON'S HISTORIC LANDSCAPE INITIATIVES

By Chris Sumner

As with the national tabloids and broadsheets, the year's main news stories are the National Lottery and the death of the Princess of Wales.

The third round of grants under the Heritage Lottery Fund *Urban Parks Programme* was announced at the beginning of December 1997; £11.5m was awarded to forty-five parks and gardens across the country.

Grants announced between 16 May and 1 October 1997 have been offered to the following sites in London: Clapton Square (Hackney), Cleaver Square (Lambeth), Gunnersbury Park (Hounslow), John Innes Park (Merton), St Dunstan's Churchyard (Tower Hamlets), Wimbledon Park (Merton), Bushy Park (Richmond), Garrick's Temple (Richmond), and the New River Loop (Enfield), in addition to various Conservation Area Partnership schemes.

The London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust's third, and again very successful, Annual Conference on 24 October 1997 on the subject of *Funding London's Heritage Landscapes* was a useful reminder that, whilst the HLF can be a major source of finance, matching funds still have to be found from other sources, several of which were identified. We were also reminded that the HLF is keen to fund *Restoration Plans* for historic parks and gardens even when there is no immediate prospect of repair and restoration being undertaken.

At *Upper Lodge, Bushy Park*, for example, the HLF is part-funding an archaeological investigation of the gardens preparatory to the production of detailed proposals for their restoration. With the imminent restoration and conversion of Upper Lodge to a single-family house, for many years used as a scientific establishment by the Admiralty, and the return of parts of the grounds to the park, the repair and restoration of the ambitious sequence of canals, pools, cascade, grotto and fountain created around 1710 for Lord Halifax, become a realistic possibility. A series of trenches cut in the autumn by the garden archaeologist Chris Currie uncovered evidence not only of the early eighteenth-century gardens but of the underlying seventeenth-century and possibly sixteenth-century brick walls and water conduits. Ted Fawcett is bringing his dowsing skills to bear on this fascinating site.

There is encouraging news too at *Garrick's Temple, Hampton* (fig. 20) where the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, the Temple Trust, the Thames Landscape Strategy, and the Hampton Riverside Trust are about to start work on the restoration of the temple erected by David Garrick to the genius of William Shakespeare, and of the riverside garden originally laid out under the guidance of Lancelot Brown.

At *Gunnersbury Park* (Hounslow) the HLF has agreed to the funding of part of the first phase of the repair and consolidation scheme, with money awarded for the formal Italian Garden to the north of the Doric Temple and for Princess Amelia's Bath House - a puzzling little building of apparently mid-eighteenth century date, gothicised around 1820.

A rare *Arts-and-Crafts* garden which is now being repaired following years of decline is the *Emslie Horniman Pleasance* in North Kensington. The garden, opened as a public garden in 1914 and donated to the London County Council, was designed by C.A. Voysey, and comprises a small, highly formal, enclosed flower garden, walled on the west and with roofed shelters to the north and south, encompassed by a rectangular moat which was originally planted with water lilies and straddled by an oak pergola planted with climbers. The rectangular *island* was spanned by a *Japanese* bridge made by J.P. White and Sons, and was planted with a riotous and colourful mixture of flowering plants and shrubs to a scheme designed by Madeline Agar. The restoration proposals include the recreation of the long-demolished pergola and bridge and of the original planting scheme.

In Camden, grants have been offered for *Russell Square*, *St George's Gardens*, *St Pancras Gardens*, *Waterlow Park*, and *Hampstead Cemetery*; proposals for *Brunswick Square* and *Bloomsbury Square* are under discussion.

Crystal Palace Park at Sydenham (Bromley) was Sir Joseph Paxton's masterpiece, but the destruction by fire of the Palace, the construction of the National Sports Centre, and the removal or destruction of the fountains, urns and statuary (do they really survive, walled up in a railway arch?) have left the site looking pretty sad. Whether the modern scheme devised by Kathryn Gustafson will succeed in pulling the disparate parts of the park back together into an integrated whole remains to be seen.

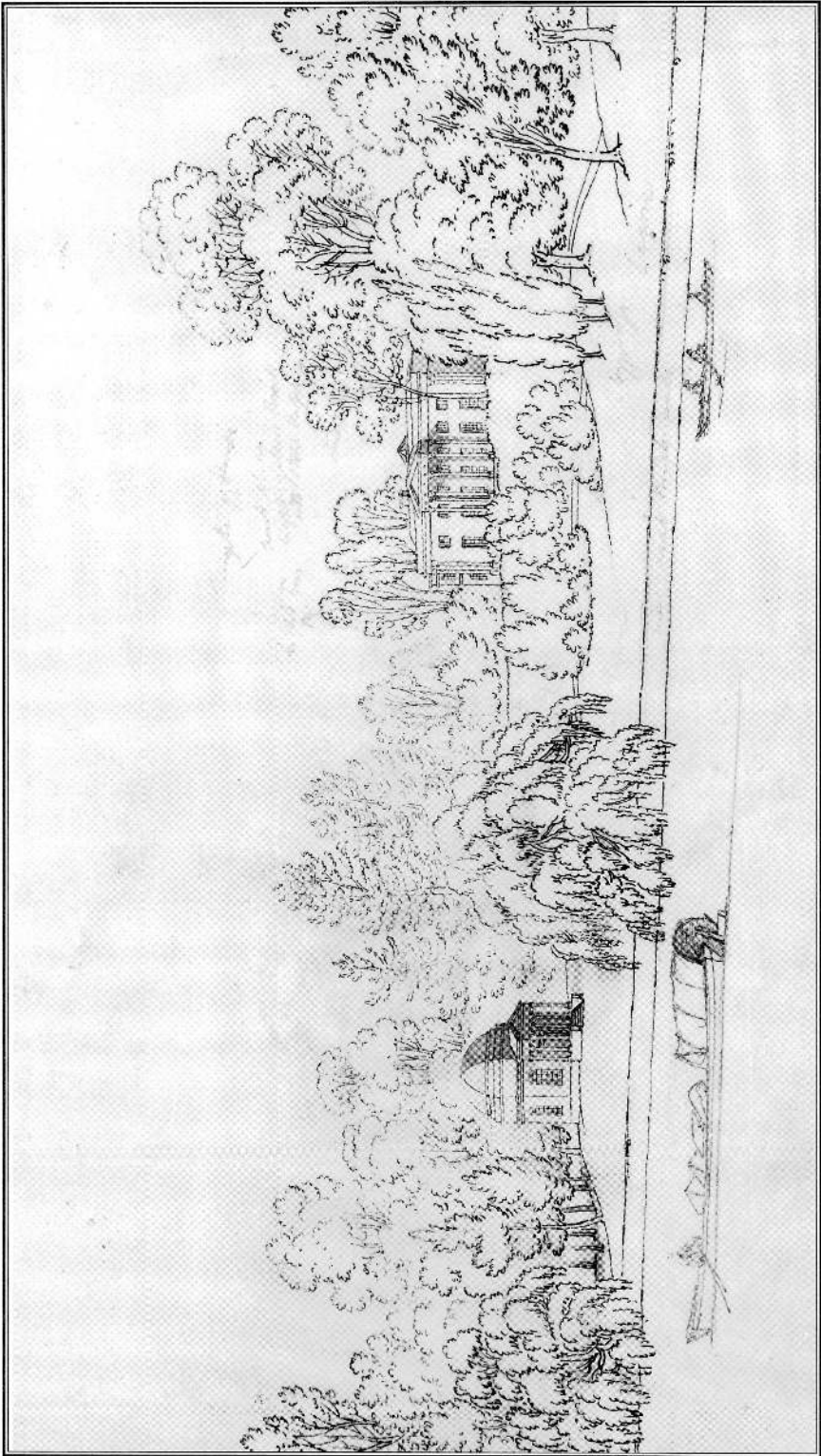
At *Chiswick House Grounds* (Hounslow), by contrast, the emphasis has been on consolidation and scholarly restoration, though even there the apparent need to discourage drowning (though not, it would seem, to discourage more disruptive activities such as football, mountain-biking, and the *exercising* of dogs) means that the newly-restored Cascade, origi-

nally built by William Kent - and thanks to modern technology no longer to be dismissed as *Lord Burlington's Piddle* - is bollarded, chained, and fenced. The little Deer House is to be repaired to house the display of the history and development of the gardens. There are longer-term proposals for making use of the derelict walled garden and tree nursery, which may eventually divert some of the less sympathetic *recreational* activities away from the sensitive areas around the villa and the lake.

In the light of the success of the restoration of the Privy Garden at Hampton Court, suggestions have been made over the last two or three years that the formal gardens that once attended *Kensington Palace* should be restored. The sudden death of the Princess of Wales in August 1997 and the public's extraordinary response to the tragedy focused not just the nation's, but the entire world's attention on Kensington Palace. Any proposals, therefore, for Kensington Gardens now have a resonance that could not have been anticipated a year ago. Whatever one's reaction to the hundreds of thousands of *floral tributes* mouldering beneath their cellophane wrappings, it has to be acknowledged that in the world's mind, if not in the garden historian's, the *reclaim* of Kensington Gardens is no longer Peter Pan or the young Queen Victoria, let alone William and Mary, London and Wise, or Charles Bridgeman, but Diana. The most worthwhile memorial to her in the writer's view, and the one of most lasting benefit to visitors to the Gardens, would be the demolition of the obtrusive hotel that overshadows Dial Walk and its replacement by a building of a civilised scale.

The hotel is a planning mistake of the past. Is the creation of a car park beneath the gardens of *Earl's Terrace*, Kensington High Street, allowed on appeal, a planning mistake of the present that bodes ill for other garden squares included in the *London Squares Preservation Act* of 1931? The *Act* does not preclude the construction of underground car parks, but does it make sense in 1998 to encourage car use and ownership in the inner city, irrespective of any ramps, portals, vent shafts, and loss of trees associated with underground car parks?

One over-scaled development has, for the time being at least, been averted. Kingston



20. Garrick's Villa and the Shakespeare Temple from the River Thames by Joseph Farington, c.1790.
(VICTORIA ART GALLERY, BATH)

Council, which seems increasingly to regard the *Thames Landscape Strategy* much as a forty-fags-a-day man regards his New Year's resolution, has nevertheless resolved to refuse planning permission for the construction of six-storey blocks of flats on the disused filter beds at *Seething Wells, Surbiton*. Since the site is prominently located on a bend in the River Thames, is just opposite Hampton Court Home Park, and is identified in the *Thames Landscape Strategy* as a site that should be kept free of all built development, one wonders why the proposals were not discouraged from the start.

Similarly, one wonders why the prospective developers of an underground (well, actually, m'Lud, only eight metres above ground, but you won't see it, honest guv, we're going to plant grass on the roof...) supermarket and car park in the *Old Deer Park, Richmond* (Grade I registered historic landscape, Metropolitan Open Land, Conservation Area, &c.) were not sent off with a flea in their ear instead of being asked for details of traffic generation. Traffic! Well, really!

THE 'PERT SQUIRT': A HISTORY of the FOUNTAIN COURT at the MIDDLE TEMPLE

By Todd Longstaffe-Gowan

It being understood that Her Majesty Queen Adelaide was desirous of visiting the Temple, every preparation was made for the reception of royalty.' On Saturday the 13th May 1843 the Queen Dowager and her 'royal cortège' were conducted 'over the beautiful church', and through Pump and Fig-Tree Courts:

'to inspect the famous fountain, modelled - not after - but considerably before those of Versailles, and which has been faithfully imitated in the modern garden-engines. By an arrangement with the West Middlesex water-works, it was to have been in full play, but there was some mistake as to the attendance of the turncock, and Her Majesty therefore contented herself with looking at the iron tube and asking a few questions about the depth of the round reservoirs. One of the benchers immediately satisfied the royal curiosity by plunging a cane belonging to one of the porters into the bosom of the liquid, and ascertained the depth to be about eighteen inches.'

In 1843 the Middle Temple's humble geyser, nestling in what Dickens described as the 'slow vegetation of the Fountain Court', was a shadow of its former self. It was pushing 161 years of active service, and its surroundings had undergone five substantial refurbishments since the puny jet squirted its virgin gallon of New River water in the spring of 1682.

The fountain was less a sparkling diminutive of the *Fontaine de l'Encelade*² than a starved spring amidst the 'dry and dusty channels of the Law'.³ Unlike the extravagant fountain displays at Versailles, the Society of the Middle Temple's 'excellent Fountain of Water' was a modest installation: it had neither been devised by an *Intendant de la Conduite et Mouvements des Eaux et Fontaines*, nor was it kept playing by a Chief Fountainer and his retinue of assistant plumbers. Notwithstanding, the Middle Temple fountain was, and remains to this day, a source of considerable pride to the Society's Benchers.

The Fountain Court was formed in 1681-82 in what was then known as the Benchers' Garden - a narrow rectangular garden at the western edge of the Hall Court which possessed a few lofty trees.⁴ Its creation was precipitated by a devastating fire of January 1678 which left much of the Middle Temple in ashes.⁵

The rebuilding of the Middle Temple had begun in May 1678 when Dr Nicholas Barbon, a building speculator who had purchased the neighbouring Essex property, concluded an agreement with the Society of the Middle Temple, by which Barbon conveyed to the Society two parcels of land, formerly part of Essex House Garden upon which he built chambers for the use of lawyers.⁶ 'The first parcel comprised ground north of the Benchers' Garden and west of Essex Court, with a one staircase building on the west side thereof, subsequently known as New Court

2. The *Fontaine de l'Encelade* was among the largest 17th fountains at Versailles, with a very thick central jet rising to 80 feet. Enceladus was the son of Titan and Terra, and the most powerful of all the giants who opposed Jupiter. He was struck with Jupiter's thunders, and overwhelmed under Mount Aetna.

3. Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (first published 1843-4; 1986 ed.), p.763.

4. Hall Court was so named after Middle Temple Hall built in 1562-73.

5. Middle Temple suffered comparatively little in the Great Fire of 1666. The fire of 1678 destroyed five Courts and most of their chambers.

6. The conveyance was printed in *Master Worsley's Book on the History and Constitution of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple*, ed. A.R. Ingpen (London 1910), pp.244-46.

1. *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 27 May 1843, pp.221-22. The principal fountains at Versailles were laid out between c.1661-78.