

Abraham Goldsmid; no one, indeed, of any class or description, ever became tolerably well known to him, without improving their fortunes in some degree by the connection; so that the list of those whom gratitude or the sense of kindness received in one way or other had bound, or ought to have bound, to him, was almost endless.

The City of London was thrown into the greatest agitation yesterday morning by the news received of the melancholy event. He had, it appears, shot himself with a pistol through the head, in the Wilderness, at the back of his own house, at Morden in Surrey, about 8 o'clock in the morning. The medical gentlemen from the neighbouring villages were summoned as soon as the fact was ascertained, but their skill was unavailing; he executed his design too effectually for human aid to be of any use to him.

The reports went on to conclude that 'the cause of this rash act is not difficult to assign' – Goldsmid had suffered sudden and extensive financial losses and he was 'unable to bear up against the pressure of his misfortunes; and hence was driven to terminate a life which till then had never been chequered by misfortune'.

On 29th September 1810 a further report appeared in *The Times*:

An inquest was assembled at Merton, on the body of Mr Abraham Goldsmid, who had shot himself. The coachman of the deceased was the first witness.... Several witnesses deposed, that since the unfortunate death of his brother, Mr A Goldsmid had been subject to an occasional depression of spirits.... The evidence was conclusive; and the jury immediately found a verdict of insanity. Mr Goldsmid's losses by the late loan are stated to have amounted to nearly 200,000*£*.

On 15th October 1810 Goldsmid's body was buried at the Jews' Burial Ground at Mile End at 5.30pm. The hearse was followed by his own carriage and thirteen mourning coaches. The high priest and elders from his synagogue were present, but not his brothers, who were too distressed. Though every respect was shown there were no funeral rites.

There was not a person present whose unfeigned regret did not bear testimony to the many virtues and uncommon philanthropy of the deceased.

Goldsmid's unhappy villa (figs. 41, 42) passed to his son Aaron and appears to have remained empty until it was demolished in 1826 when it was replaced with the present restrained two-storey stuccoed house, 'a good example of a typical Regency Villa' with sash windows and Greek Doric columned porch.

Gilliat Hatfield of Morden Hall purchased the property in 1929 in order to shield his estate from encroaching developments; upon his death in 1941 it formed part of his generous bequest to the National Trust and is currently let as a private house. Only some small traces of Goldsmid's garden and Grecian lodge remain.⁵ Perhaps appropriately, today the *Wilderness* – the melancholy spot where Mr Goldsmid took his own life – is an inaccessible, overgrown wildlife reserve, haunted only by the black shadows of the rooks which roost overhead.

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

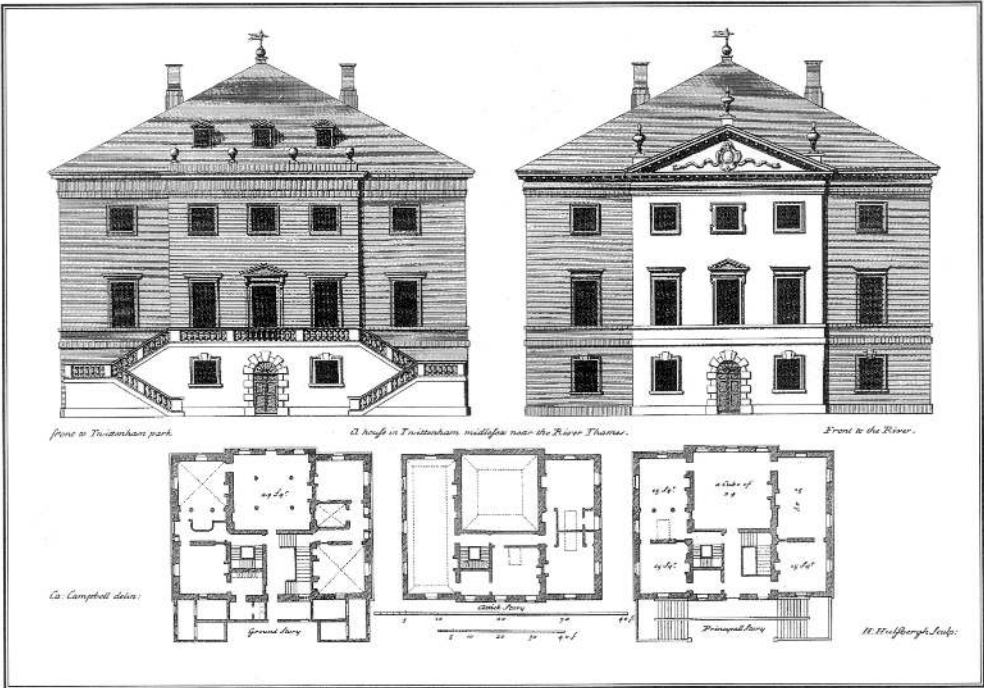
By Chris Sumner

In London there are ten Strategic Views protected by Central Government planning policy, together with a greater number of local views defined in borough Unitary Development Plans, but the Strategic Views are narrow viewing cones giving correspondingly narrow protection to views of St Paul's Cathedral or the Houses of Parliament, mainly from relatively high land around the inner periphery of the capital. The concept, so simple and so elegantly expounded by Hal Moggeridge at the *London Views* Conference and written up in the most recent London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust *Newsletter*, of protecting the open space of the sky and of safeguarding the silhouettes of important monuments, seems hardly to have entered into official thinking, but it is the sky and the silhouettes that are under continuing and increasing threat. One need only compare photographs taken in the 1950s of the City of London from *Greenwich Park* with modern

5. The present kitchen garden at Morden, with fine iron *claire voyée* to the south towards Morden Lodge and with the unusual feature of the River Tandle flowing through it, was probably part of Goldsmid's estate, but later came to be attached to Morden Hall on its north side. A lease of 1812 (Surrey County Records Office 85/2/131) listed the fruit (52 vines, 62 peaches, etc) and buildings, including five hothouses, large conservatory, gardener's house and two small bridges. An accompanying map shows the kitchen garden giving onto a small parkland beyond. Today the kitchen garden wall is Grade II listed and Morden Hall is included in the English Heritage *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England and Wales*. It now encloses a garden centre, with the service buildings let as craft workshops. Ivy Lodge, an eighteenth-century classically-inspired building north-west of Morden Lodge, was probably built as a combined carriage shed, stable and cottage for Morden Lodge – its low arched windows are similar in style to Goldsmid's house. By 1812 it was let with the kitchen garden as a stable and coachhouse. The building suffered extensive bomb damage in World War II, and is currently let as a private house.



43. Princess Amelia's Bath House, Gunnersbury Park (1966)
(ENGLISH HERITAGE)



44. Marble Hill House as published in *Vitruvius Britannicus* (vol. 3; 1725)
(ENGLISH HERITAGE)

45. Marble Hill House, Richmond (1966)
(ENGLISH HERITAGE)

views to see how much damage a relatively small number of insensitively located and generally badly designed high buildings have done to central London. London is a northern city, although the Gulf Stream may give us a mild climate, and for much of the year the sun is low in the sky, and tall buildings spell not grateful shade but unwelcome overshadowing. It is part of London's special character that our streets are narrow and our buildings low compared with those of most other major cities, and the happy consequence of having a stock of buildings that do not generally rise above the tree-line is that in our parks the trees are seen against the sky. The illusion of *Hyde Park* as a piece of real countryside is wholly convincing for at least some of the time, and its rural character must contribute enormously to the pleasure and sanity of Londoners and visitors alike.

The matter of high buildings leads on to the subject of the *London Eye*, where delegates of the London Views Conference spent an exhilarating half hour at dusk. David Welch, who recently retired as Chief Executive of the Royal Parks Agency, hates the Eye for its impact on *St James's Park*. Certainly, you can't miss it – indeed, it is visible from *Kensington Gardens* and from *Richmond Park* to mention only two locations – but it is fun to travel on and wonderful, if not a little surreal, to look upon. A trip on the big wheel also brings home that London is a low-rise green city, surrounded by green hills. I have a mental *hit list* of high buildings that London would be better without, but, for the time being at least, the London Eye is not on it.

So what are the present planning issues that could affect our parks and gardens? The tallest and most controversial building proposed is the office tower designed by Foster Associates to replace the bomb-damaged and dismantled Baltic Exchange in the City, which would be visible over a wide area. Less high, and less high-profile, is the proposed Pinnacle building at the junction of the Great West Road and the North Circular at Chiswick, which would if built be visible from *Gunnersbury Park* and *Kew Gardens*, as well as from *Kew Green* and the River Thames. Gunnersbury Park itself looks better all the time – trees are being planted along the southern and western boundaries using money for environmental

improvements to the M4/Great West Road Corridor. Work is advancing on re-roofing and restoring Princess Amelia's Bath House. (fig. 43) The restoration of the formal garden to the north of the Temple should start shortly. Archaeological reports on both the Bath House and the Japanese Garden have recently been completed and have added enormously to our knowledge of those two exotic elements of the Park. Gunnersbury has received Heritage Lottery Fund grants, other beneficiaries of which include *Garrick's Temple and Lawn* at Hampton, where the Temple houses an exhibition dedicated to the actor-manager David Garrick. The riverside garden again resembles its mid-eighteenth century state and includes three groups of cypresses donated by the LHPGT. The restored Temple and Lawn were reviewed in *Country Life* on 10th February 2000. The garden is open daily, the Temple on Sunday afternoons from 7th May to 24th September.¹

A lottery bid has recently shed light on a previously overlooked garden at Southall, in the London Borough of Ealing. *Manor House Grounds* is a small public park, formerly part of the gardens and grounds of the Manor House, The Green. The Manor House itself is a rare and surprising survival of old rural Middlesex – a rambling half-timbered building dating from 1587 in a suburban area now with a population of predominantly Indian ethnic origin. Research by consultants suggests that the present layout of the park, while superficially largely of the 1920s, is essentially of a much earlier period, perhaps Jacobean or even Elizabethan, origin, with a small rectangular pond surrounded by formal paths and the remains of very old clipped yew trees and hedges.

On 30th June this year the *Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Walk and Playground* was inaugurated. The Memorial Walk takes the form of a figure of eight route linking Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, Green Park, and St James's Park, and the recently installed crossings at Hyde Park Corner allow pedestrians to cross at road level rather than requiring them to dive into a maze of subways. The main feature of the new playground, with the theme of Peter Pan, is a wooden galleon

1. Further details from the Temple Trust on telephone no. 020 8992 2248

stranded on a sandy beach. Sadly, political correctness reigns, and all belligerent references to piracy have been omitted. Let us hope that spirited successors to the *Lost Boys* will run up the *Jolly Roger* on the thirty-foot mast.

The *River Thames* continues to attract attention from developers, with proposals for residential and commercial schemes on the riverside at Hammersmith and Wandsworth especially, including new proposals for Battersea Power Station. Largely in response to an initiative by the West London River Group, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, Government Office for London, and the Port of London Authority have, together, with the London Boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Richmond upon Thames, and Hounslow, commissioned from W. S. Atkins Planning Consultants a planning study, the *Thames Strategy – Kew to Chelsea*. This is intended to provide supplementary planning guidance and define policies and projects for riparian sites along the stretch of the river immediately downstream of the reaches covered by the *Thames Landscape Strategy – Hampton to Kew* (TLS). The TLS has clocked up a number of successful schemes in its six years' existence, ranging from riverbank enhancements to publications and guides to building restoration, and has been quoted to help fend off unsuitable development proposals. At the time of writing, the re-opened Public Enquiry into a scheme for tall blocks of flats for *Seething Wells* waterworks site at Surbiton, on the river opposite Hampton Court Home Park, has just finished and the result is expected within a couple of months.

Donna Clack, the first Co-ordinator of the TLS and a good friend to the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, is leaving the job at the end of June to take up a post as fundraiser for a nursing charity. Donna has been a most committed supporter of and advocate for the Strategy over the last five years, and as a member of the TLS Officers' Steering Group I take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work and wish her well.

In 2002 the country will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. The residents of Richmond and Twickenham will in addition be celebrating the centenary of the passing of the *Richmond, Petersham and Ham Open Space Act*, a conse-

quence of the 'indignation meetings' that also led to the purchase in 1901 by the LCC of Marble Hill in order to preserve the view from Richmond Hill. (fig. 44) It seems to me appropriate that the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust should mark the event in some way – and, indeed, plans are afoot.

F I N I S