



FROM FIELDS to GARDENS:

THE MANAGEMENT of LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS in THE EIGHTEENTH & NINETEENTH CENTURIES

By Susan Palmer

Lincoln's Inn Fields is the largest garden square in London, covering some $7\frac{1}{4}$ acres. Where the square is now was originally, as its name suggests, open fields: Cup Field, plus part of Fickett's Field to the south and Purse Field to the west. *Fig. 1* shows the rural nature of their location in the mid-sixteenth century and *fig. 2* shows their exact location in relation to the garden enclosure. As early as 1376 these fields were a common walking and sporting place for the citizens of London, and there is also some tradition of jousting. By the reign of Elizabeth I, Cup Field and Purse Field were pasture grounds in the hands of the Crown. One of the first historical events which can definitely be located in the Fields is the execution on 20th and 21st September 1586 of Anthony Babington and his fellow conspirators, although the exact spot is not known. One contemporary account tells of Babington being drawn 'from Tower Hill, through the citie of London, unto a fields at the upper end of Holbourne, hard by the high way side to St Giles: where was erected a scaffold

convenient for the execution'.¹

By the beginning of the seventeenth century the fields were obviously ripe for building development. The first attempts to get permission to build were made in 1613, to vociferous protests from Lincoln's Inn. Nothing came of it, but proposals were put forward to prevent anything of the kind happening in the future, and in 1617 a petition was put to the King that the fields commonly called Lincoln's Inn Fields might be converted into walks in the same manner as Moorfields ten years earlier, to the great pleasure and benefit of the City. As a result, a Commission was appointed in 1618 to survey the fields, raise contributions and lay out the walks. One of the Commissioners was Inigo Jones, and it is often erroneously stated that he was responsible for laying out the Fields. In fact the Commission came to naught.

In 1638 William Newton acquired the leases of Cup Field and Parse Field. A licence was soon granted for him to build 32 houses, despite protests from Lincoln's Inn, and between then and 1657 a number of handsome houses were built. In 1657 Cup Field came into the joint possession of Sir William Cowper, Robert Henley and James Cowper. They

1. For a detailed description of the early history of the fields see *Survey of London Vol. III: The Parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields* (Part 1): Lincoln's Inn Fields, LCC, 1912.

wanted to complete the three sides of Cup Field by building on its north and south sides. Anticipating protests from Lincoln's Inn they reached an agreement whereby the Inn controlled the manner in which the building was done. They also agreed to have Cup Field 'levelled, plained and cast into grass plotts and gravel walks of convenient breadth, railed along on each side, and set with rows of trees', within two years.² The three men sold the remainder of Cup Field to Lincoln's Inn, and Lincoln's Inn leased it back to them for 900 years. Building in the Fields was complete by 1659. The north side was known first as Newman's Row, the west terrace being Arch Row because of the archway then existing between numbers 54 and 55 Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the south as Portugal Row. (figs. 3 & 4)

However, despite the building of the houses and the rudimentary laying out of the Fields, Lincoln's Inn Fields was notorious at the end of the seventeenth century as an ill-kept and unsafe place. Apart from the fact that it was still a place of execution,³ rubbish was frequently dumped there, many people were hurt by horses being exercised in the fields, various unlawful sports and games were indulged in, and it was a well-known haunt of robbers and vagabonds. The most famous description of all is probably that in Gay's *Trivia* of 1716:

Where Lincoln's Inn, wide space is railed around, cross not with venturous step; there oft is found the lurking thief, who, while the daylight shone, made the walls echo with his begging tone: that crutch, which late compassion moved, shall wound thy bleeding head, and fell thee to the ground...

Cripples apparently congregated here, extorting money and threatening people with their crutches. They were known as 'mumpers'; 'rufflers' were beggars who assumed the character of maimed soldiers and imposed on the sympathy of passers-by.

Clearly, something had to be done, and in 1734 the inhabitants got together and, in a

pattern which became familiar in other London squares from the mid-eighteenth century, applied for an Act of Parliament 'to enable the present and future proprietors and inhabitants of the houses in Lincoln's Inn Fields to make a rate on themselves for raising money sufficient to enclose, clean and adorn the said fields'.⁴ This Act provided for the election of Trustees, described their powers, and prescribed penalties for encroaching and committing nuisances etc. The 21 trustees, who were all inhabitants of the houses around the square, were elected on 2nd June 1735, and they paid compensation of £250 to Anthony Henley and William Cowper, the holders of the 900-year lease of Cup Field from Lincoln's Inn.⁵

The Trustees' first acts were to invite tenders for enclosing the centre part of the square with iron railings on a stone plinth; to appoint a Scavenger to keep the fields and streets clean and take away household rubbish; to arrange for the laying out of the central garden; to appoint a Beadle and Watchmen to keep the peace and enforce the Act; and to arrange for lighting. To get the necessary capital to begin they raised a mortgage on the rates, which was increased at least once in later years, the first year's rate being set at 2/6 in the £, based on the land tax assessment of each house.⁶

Fig. 11, though dating from nearly a hundred years later, shows clearly the central railed garden enclosure; the footway separated from the carriageway by stone posts at

4. Geo.II cap.XXVI *An Act to enable the present and future Proprietors and Inhabitants of the Houses in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in the County of Middlesex, to make a Rate on themselves, for raising Money sufficient to inclose, clean, and adorn the said Fields.* For a detailed discussion of the development and management of garden squares in London see Todd Longstaffe-Gowan *The London Town Garden* (Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 182-233.

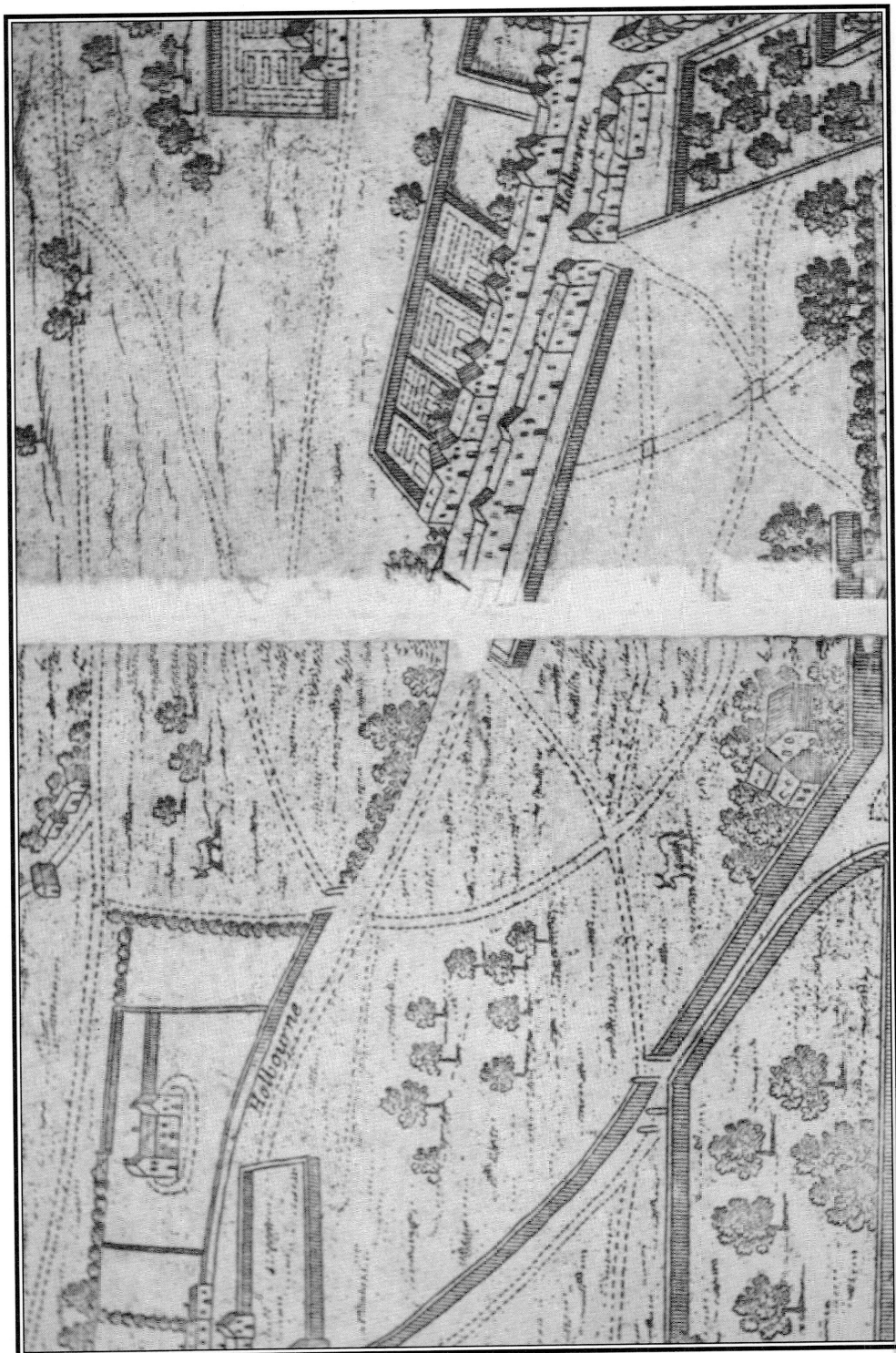
5. They paid Lincoln's Inn one shilling a year rent for the fields, the 900 year lease of which will revert to Lincoln's Inn in 2557.

6. The records of the Trustees are in the British Library: BL Add MSS 35,074-35,083. These include five minutes books covering the lifetime of the Trust (1735-1894) with gaps between June 1777 and December 1792 and between April 1879 and the winding up of the Trust in 1894. All quotations in this paper are from these minute books unless otherwise stated. There is also an incomplete set of Letter Books and Accounts in the Holborn Local Studies Library: B/34 A7-11. Finally there are some letters and printed circulars in the archive of Sir John Soane's Museum: SM Archives Private Correspondence XVI.A.2.1-13. The Trustees met in the Council Chamber of Lincoln's Inn, paying the Butler an annual sum for providing coals and candles.

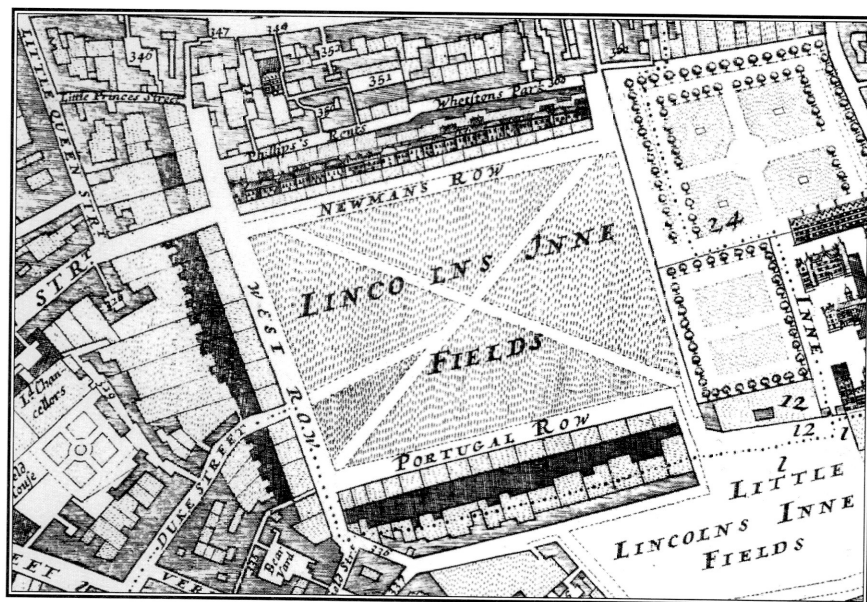
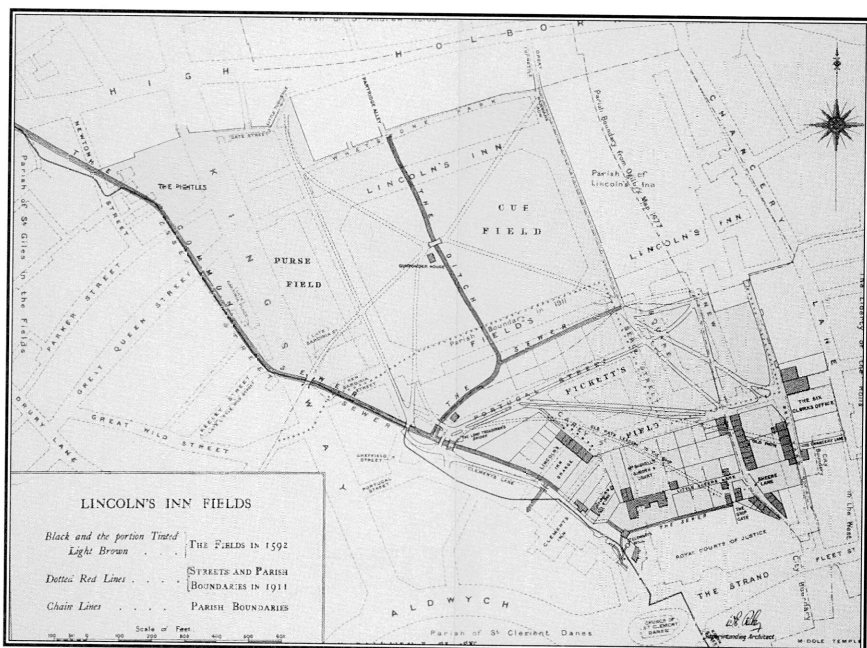
A comparable series of records exists for the Trustees of St James's Square, the first London Square to be enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1726. They are quoted extensively in the account of St James's Square in *Survey of London Vol XXIX: The Parish of St James Westminster* (Pt 1: South of Piccadilly LCC, 1960), and there are many parallels that can be drawn between the development and management of the two squares.

2. In September 1663, Samuel Pepys, who often walked in the fields for recreation, remarks in his diary that he 'took a walk to Lincoln's Inn walks, which they are making very fine'.

3. William, Lord Russell was beheaded here in 1683 having been found guilty of complicity in the Rye House plot, an event marked by the LCC in 1897 by a brass plaque in the floor of the rain shelter in the garden purporting (erroneously) to mark the exact spot. The plaque (which has recently been removed, presumably for safe-keeping) reads 'On the spot was beheaded Ld Wm Russell, a lover of constitutional liberty, 21 July AD 1683'.

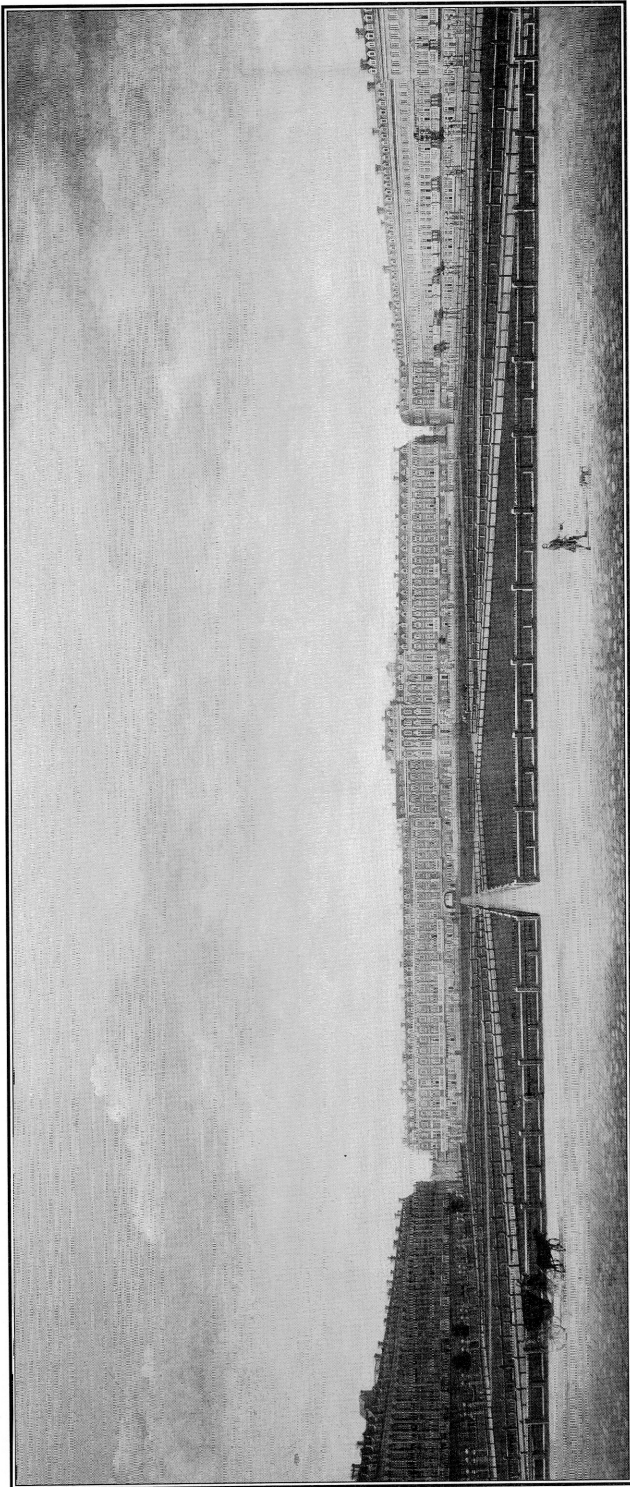


1. Detail of a map of London attributed to Ralph Agas, n.d. [c.1560]
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)



2 Plan of Lincoln's Inn and the surrounding area in 1912, with an overlay to show the exact position of the three original fields.
(FROM SURVEY OF LONDON VOL III: THE PARISH OF ST GILES-IN-THE-FIELDS (Pt 1) LCC, 1912)

3. Detail of Morgan's map of London, 1682
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)



4. *View of Lincoln's Inn Fields* by Samuel Scott, c.1683
(COLLECTION EARL OF PEMBROKE, WILTON HOUSE, WILTSHIRE,
BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY)

intervals; and the oil lamps set on stone obelisks,⁷ with further lamps on the central railing. The central enclosure was kept locked and numbered keys were supplied to each household in the square and to such Benchers of Lincoln's Inn who requested them. (fig. 5)

The layout of the central garden was initially very simple, consisting of grass, with a 25 ft wide gravel walk within the garden rails, and four gravel walks leading to a central reservoir or basin. (fig. 6) The Trustees' minutes of 19th May 1736 record a proposal to place a statue of King William in the middle of the reservoir, but the proposal was deferred for further consideration and is not referred to again.⁸ Initially one individual contracted for a number of the jobs advertised by the Trustees, including looking after the garden, but in 1750 Thomas Florence was appointed gardener at a salary of £25 per annum with an extra £5 for turning the gravel in the walks, to be repeated every 5 years. In 1736 an iron roller and a wooden roller were purchased, and in 1760 four leather boots ordered for the horse who rolled the gravel walks. From time to time sheep were introduced to 'mend the verdure', though in 1752 the gardener was asked to 'wait on such of the gentlemen who have goates in the garden and ask them to remove them, as they do great damage, particularly to the gravel walks'. The following year the gardener himself was asked to remove his horse and not to allow it to graze in the garden.

From the beginning, the Trustees faced the problem of unauthorised persons getting over the railings, particularly at night. The central reservoir presented an irresistible attraction in cold weather and the gardener was instructed 'to take care that the ice should be broken every morning to prevent anyone from skeeting or sliding on the reservoir', indeed in particularly frosty weather the watchmen had to be drafted in to help him.

The 'great disorder and indecency' occasioned by this activity was not the only problem posed by the reservoir; on 26th February 1752, for instance, it was reported to the Trustees that the body of a dead poor person had been found in the reservoir, and both the gardener and watchmen were reprov'd 'for letting [it] lie there so long'. The most serious problem, however, almost from the very beginning, was that it leaked. The problem seems to have begun with damage to the clay and brickwork in the *Great Frost* of 1739. A survey in 1763 led to £200 worth of repairs and to two wells being sunk in the north-east and north-west corners of the fields⁹ and pumps put down to boost the water supplied by the New River Water Company to try and improve the water level in the basin, but by 1774 an engineer was again engaged 'to make a survey and sketch of the basin and report on alterations which could be made to make it a greater beauty to the fields'. From his survey of the ground levels he concluded that 'when the Basin is kept full or nearly so, the inhabitants on the South side will enjoy the sight of water from their ground floors and from the pavement in the front of the houses'. More powerful pumps were installed and pumping water became one of the duties of the gardener, but the problems continued. Finally, in the summer of 1790 after much debate and opposition, the basin was filled in.¹⁰

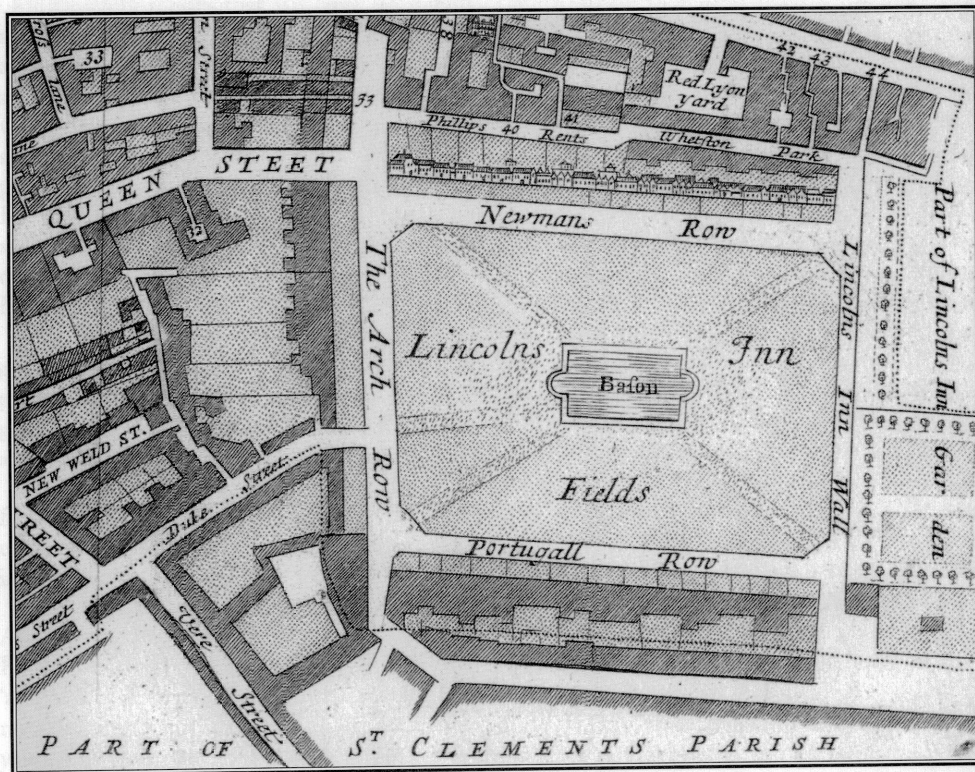
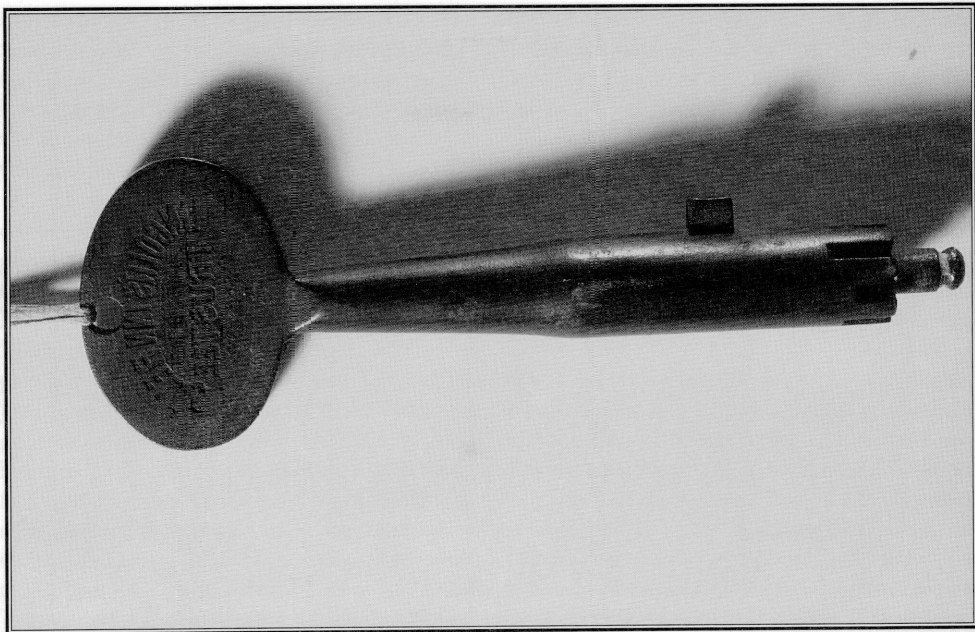
Despite the presence of the watchmen, beggars and vagrants continued to be a problem, as did the unauthorised dumping of rubbish over the railings. The exercising of horses in the gardens was also strictly forbidden, and in April 1760 a servant of Mr Garrick's was convicted before Justice Fielding for riding horses airing in the fields and fined 40 shillings. This harsh penalty was, however, mitigated to seven shillings and sixpence when it was discovered that he was only 14 years old and not acquainted with the rules. The lists of acts regarded as nuisances were advertised on boards erected at intervals around the fields, and these were added to as occasion demanded; in 1774, for instance, an edict was issued

7. The use of obelisks for decoration, for posts and for the support of pumps and lamps was widespread in London. Sutton Nicholl's view of St James's Square of c.1728 (Plate 129 *Survey of London* Vol xxix) shows similar obelisks supporting oil lamps.

8. Daniel Abramson in *Money's Architecture: the Building of the Bank of England 1731-1833* (Harvard PhD thesis, 1993), p. 205 fn 66 refers to the wave of statues of William III erected in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While the Bank of England was making plans to erect one in 1731-2, others were (according to an account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 1/12 [December 1731] p. 539) being planned for Bristol, Hull, Southwark and, interestingly, Lincoln's Inn Fields. A bequest of 1724 for the erection of one in St James's Square was not carried out until 1808 (*Survey of London* XXIX p. 67).

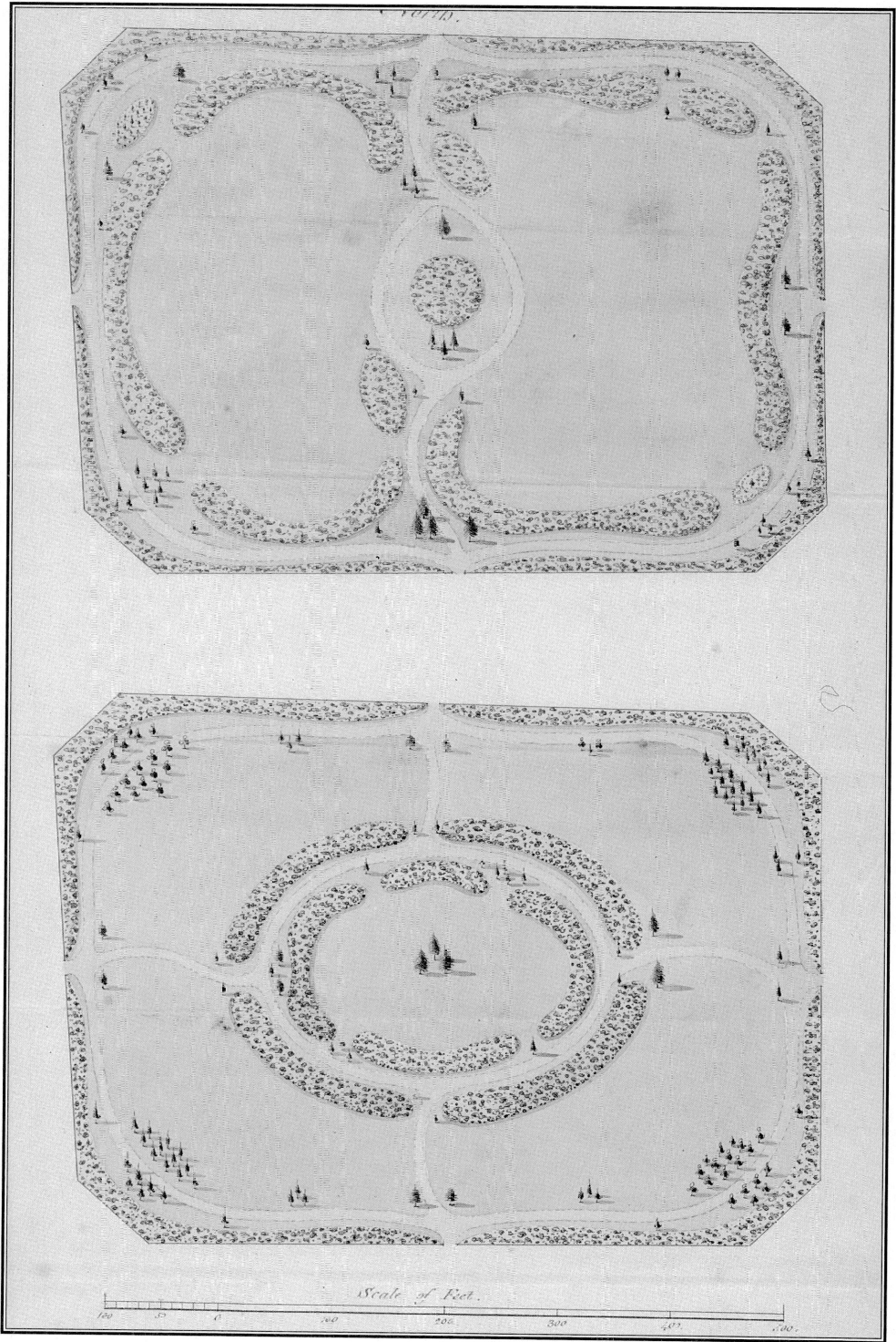
9. The first of a number of subsequent wells had been sunk in May 1737 for the purpose of raising water by means of an engine for the purpose of watering the square to lay the dust - a big problem, particularly in the summer months.

10. The gap in the surviving Trustees' minutes from June 1777 to December 1792 means that we are reliant for our knowledge of this on a mention in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 1790 Part II p. 702.



5. Sir John Soane's key to the garden of Lincoln's Inn Fields
(COURTESY TRUSTEES OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM)

6. Detail of a map of the Parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields from the 1755 edition of Stow's Survey.
Note the basin in the centre of Lincoln's Inn Fields
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)



7. Two of four alternative schemes for the layout and planting of the garden by Thomas Richardson, March 1790
(COURTESY TRUSTEES OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM)

that carpets were no longer to be beaten in the fields, except by the servants of the inhabitants, who were no longer to use the iron rails, but a horse to be provided for the purpose. In the same year it was forbidden to walk within the rails in pattens.

The appearance of the garden began to change from the simple pattern of grass with gravel walks at the end of the eighteenth century. A hitherto unpublished plan dated March 1790 by the surveyor Thomas Richardson of Chelsea with four alternative planting schemes survives in the archives of Sir John Soane's Museum. (figs. 7 & 8)¹¹ They all propose a variation on a theme of grass bisected by a more picturesque arrangement of four gravel paths, with shrubs between the railings and the outer path and clumps of shrubs in various patterns, intersected with trees. The gap in the surviving minutes of the Trustees of Lincoln's Inn Fields at this date unfortunately means that we have no details regarding the commissioning of this survey, and why nothing resulted from it. It would seem likely, however, that it was connected with the removal of the central basin in the same year. Certainly there were repeated complaints in the autumn of 1790 to Matthew Burchell, nurseryman, of Fulham,¹² that grass seed had not been properly sown over the site of the late basin: in a letter of 23rd September from the Trustees, he was adjured:

[to] give [himself] the trouble of looking at the grass plott...The effect is very disagreeable. In many parts of it there is not a blade of verdure to be seen. The grass seems to be intirely dead at the root and it is to all appearance quite barren.

A further letter of 18th November goes so far as to say that '...The spot has the most uncouth and dismal appearance of any square in or about the metropolis...'

The first mention of planting comes in April 1795 when Thomas Watkin, 'Gardener at Highagate', supplied an estimate for planting 'a double row of Quick set swarthe inside the railings', a proposal carried out the following year using three-year-old plants.

In February 1798 the Trustees decided to

appoint a sub-committee of five to regulate various aspects of the management of the Fields, and John Soane, who had moved into the newly-rebuilt number 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields four years earlier and had been elected a Trustee almost immediately, was allocated responsibility for the Pavement and the Inclosure. It is perhaps in connection with this that in May 1800 Soane drew a 'Design for the improvement of the East side of Lincoln's Inn Fields and for planting the area within the Iron Railing'.¹³

Still, however, there were complaints about the appearance of the gardens, and in June 1802 the Trustees received a petition from 27 of the inhabitants 'to take into consideration the propriety of planting the square and new gravelling the walks and agreeing each to subscribe a certain sum towards this'. A '*Committee for the Improvement of the Garden*' was formed, Soane being one of 11 members. One of their first acts was to highlight the need for new locks and keys to the garden gates, a number of forged keys being in use. Inhabitants were to be requested to hand in their keys on quitting the fields, and were also adjured to 'admonish their servants to lock the gates on entering as well as leaving to prevent improper persons from getting in'. The minutes refer to improvements being carried out in the garden the following year by John Collins,¹⁴ but frustratingly these are not detailed. Clues are afforded, however, by the action of the Trustees at their meeting of 18th February 1805 when they ordered printed letters to be sent to all the houses in the square, to include the stricture that 'Particular care is to be taken to prevent children from running over the beds or destroying the shrubs and flowers - positive orders should be given to Nursery Maids to this effect...'. Later in the year the gardener's contract was terminated as he did not mow enough or hoe and rake the beds as often as agreed. The new gardener was to have an occasional assistant, a post which quite quickly developed into that of assistant gardener during the busiest parts of the year, often doubling up with another post during the winter.

The appearance of the garden can be

11. SM Archives Private Correspondence XVI.A.2.1. For Thomas Richardson see *A Dictionary of Land Surveyors and Local Mapmakers of Great Britain and Ireland 1530-1850*, 2nd edition by Sarah Bendall, British Library, 1997, entry R148.

12. Ray Desmond *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturalists*, 1994, p. 118.

13. Soane Museum drawings 14/5/2-5. No charge was ever made for this work.

14. Desmond *op.cit.* p. 161.

seen in the 1813 edition of Horwood's map of London (fig. 9) and from the same year dates a view by one of John Soane's architectural pupils, Robert Chantrell, who had climbed up to the top of Soane's new house at number 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields for a good vantage point. (fig. 10) Fig. 11 shows the appearance of the square and part of the gardens in 1810. No seats can be made out in these views, but the report in May 1821 of the decayed state of the garden seats suggests that they had been there for some time.

The square was still lit by oil lamps, as it had been since the Trustees had first contracted in 1736 for 20 stone obelisks for 20 globular lamps next to the footway, together with lamps on irons by the railings, though the number of lamps had gradually been increased over the ensuing century. In 1814 the Trust approached the Gas Light and Coke Company to find out their terms for lighting the square by gas. Nothing came of the initial proposal as the very long lengths of pipe needed proved too expensive. Negotiations continued, however, and in 1819 four large gas lamps were erected on columns on the north side and two on the south side, and 20 of the existing oil lamps were discontinued. Repaving in 1824 (see below) gave the opportunity to lay gas mains on the east and west sides of the square and 20 more gas lamps were erected around the square, together with one over each gate on the north and south sides of the garden, Mr Edge of Great Peter Street supplying lanterns, pillars and fittings 'of a pattern similar to those erected by the Board of Works opposite Somerset House'.¹⁵ The old stone obelisks to which the oil lamps had been fixed were removed.¹⁶

The garden and the lighting were not the only areas in need of improvement ninety years after the passing of the original Lincoln's Inn Fields Act. In March 1824 the Garden Committee recommended that the Trustees appoint a *Surveyor of Pavements*. His detailed report revealed that these were in a very bad way, the carriageway being paved with a mixture of pebbles, old squares and Kentish rag

which was inadequate to bear the necessary weight. He put forward detailed proposals for repaving. However, there was a faction among the Trustees who favoured the process of 'McAdamizing' and one of them was deputed to interview James McAdam. In the event, however, they decided to follow the traditional route, using their powers under an Act of 1816/17 to increase their rates and levy a separate paving rate to pay for the more expensive stone paving.¹⁷ The expediency of having a footway of Yorkshire paving three feet wide with a granite kerb around the garden part of the square was rejected after discussion.

Improvement continued in the garden and in February 1825 Mr Barrett, nurseryman¹⁸ was paid £21 3s 4d for 'shrubs etc.'. The following month, however, the Garden Committee reported great devastation to the garden by 'the young gentlemen playing various games there and otherwise misbehaving themselves'. The Trustees had already issued an edict the previous year that no cricket or trap ball be played in the garden, and now they resolved that 'no play of any description be allowed'. This seems to be part of an ongoing battle with the boys who attended a school kept by a Mr Robinson in the square. The Trustees had a few years before decided that his boarders should be allowed to take exercise in the garden if they kept together in an orderly manner with a responsible person in charge, but they were soon excluded for violations of the rules.

At the end of 1826 the Garden Committee conducted a survey of the garden 'to determine the propriety of removing a certain number of trees...to improve the growth of the other trees and shrubs...' and commissioned Thomas Brown of the Bedford Nursery, Hampstead Road¹⁹ to prepare a report. This report recommended the felling or trimming of 25 trees in the north-west quarter, 23 in the south-west, 20 in the south-east, 15 in the north-east and two in the centre clump. A surprising variety of trees are mentioned: elm, almond, laburnum, balsam, poplar, Siberian crab, double-blossomed

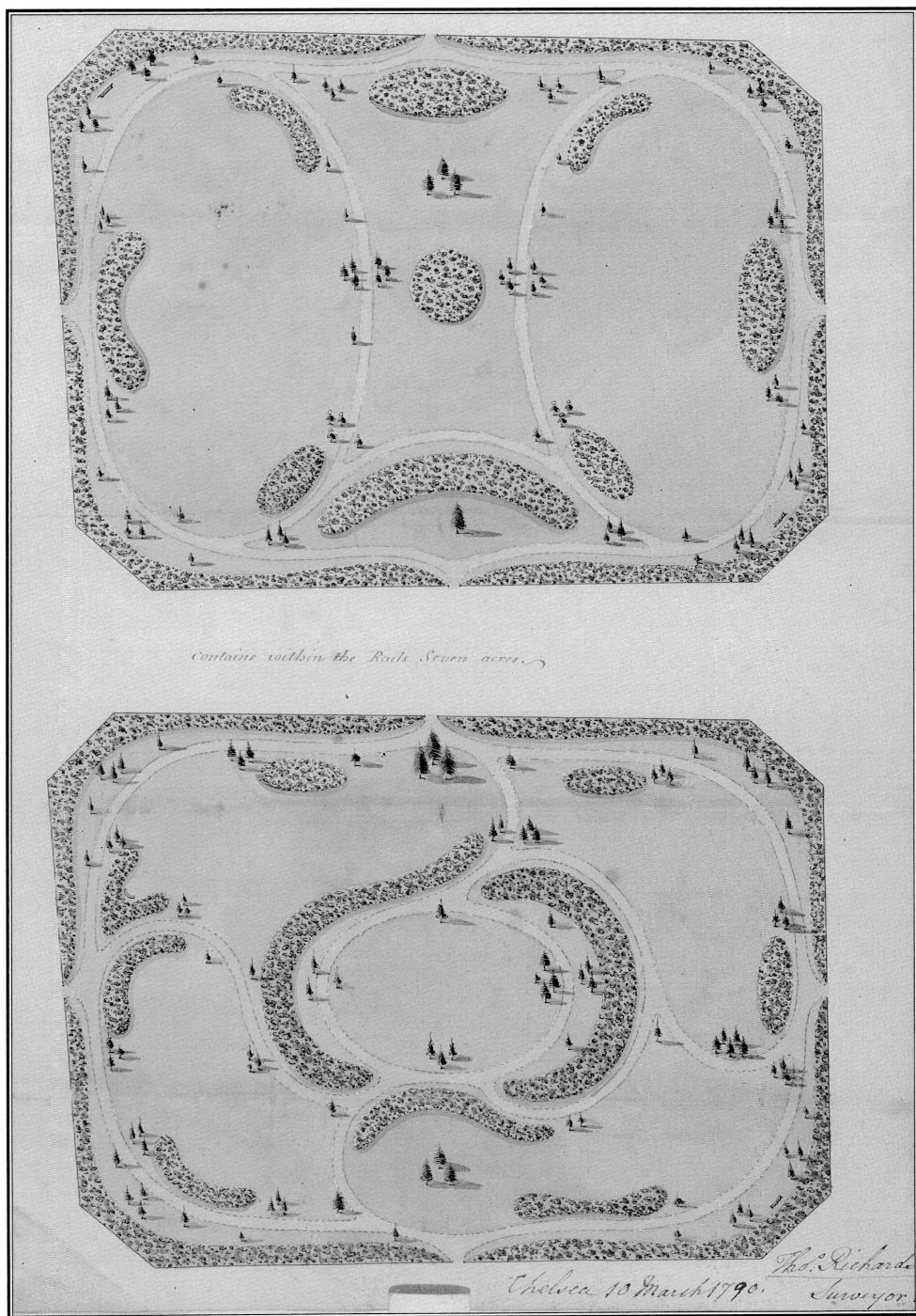
15. The oil lamps in St James's Square had been replaced by gas in 1817.

16. Sir John Soane took the opportunity to acquire four for his Museum, where they can still be seen in the Basement West corridor (M441 and M445) and in the Monk's Yard (MY30 and MY31).

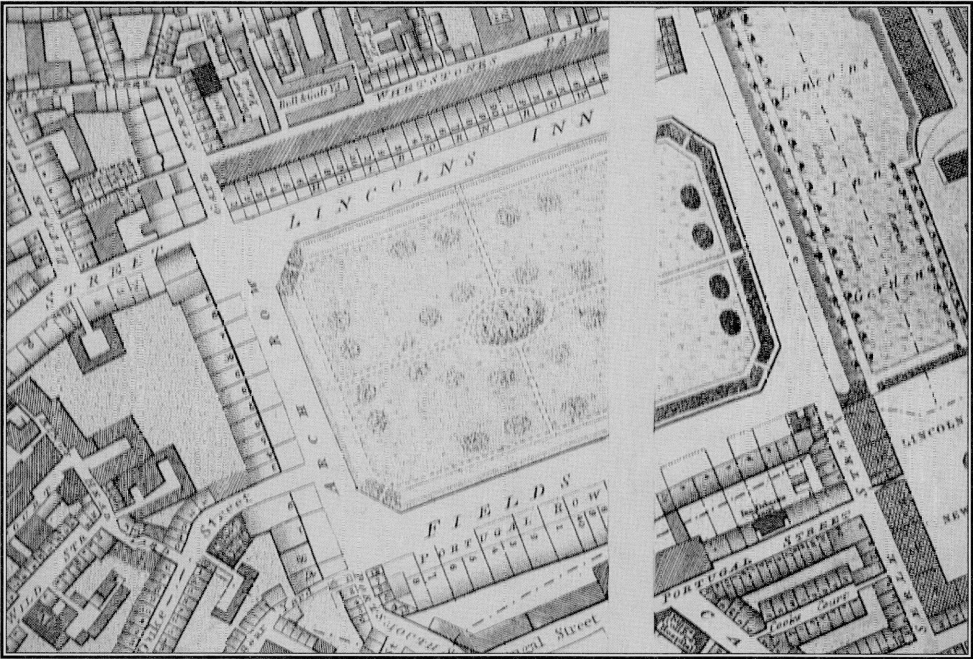
17. The Trustees of St James's Square had opted for macadamising in 1823.

18. Desmond *op.cit.* p. 48.

19. Desmond *op.cit.* p. 109.



8. Two of four alternative schemes for the layout and planting of the garden by Thomas Richardson, March 1790
(COURTESY TRUSTEES OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM)



9. Part of the 1813 edition of Horwood's map of London showing the layout of the garden at that date
(PRIVATE COLLECTION)

10. View of London from the top of No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, drawn by Robert Chantrell, one of Soane's pupils, 1815
(COURTESY TRUSTEES OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM)

cherry, birch, service, acacia and lime. There is no mention of any plane trees, and yet J.J. Sexby writing in 1898²⁰ states that 'The glory of Lincoln's Inn Fields is the number and size of its fine plane-trees, which seem to thrive on the smoke and fog of London life'. Thomas Brown further recommended that some of the surplus trees could be moved to other places in the square where there was a deficiency of large trees, particularly on the south and west sides near the railing. He went on to report that the clumps consisted mainly of lilacs, many of which had become very unsightly and decayed because they were too crowded. He proposed that about a third be cut up, choosing the worst and those near the edges as they had destroyed nearly the whole of the small flowering shrubs and plants that should ornament the outside of the clumps. In the event the Committee ordered half the trees listed to be removed, leaving the others in place till the following year to judge the effect.

The activities of prostitutes feature from time to time in the minutes of the Trustees but the problem became more prominent at this date. In May 1827 a letter was received from the Secretary of the Verulam Club at 35 Lincoln's Inn Fields, complaining of the extreme nuisance from 'Girls on the Town being suffered to parade on the pavement and around the railings of the fields at all hours of the night, to the great annoyance of many gentlemen composing the club'. The following year in July 1828 a complaint was received about Henry Wadilove, the proprietor of chambers in 10 Lincoln's Inn Fields on the north side of the square, that he had 'conducted the house in a very disorderly manner, publicly inviting the Common Prostitutes from the Highway, keeping up Disturbances and dancing the greater part of the Night, and some of the persons so assembled in the House calling out to persons in the Highway in language of Indecency'. This was reported to have happened three times in the past week.

Following frequent complaints about the neglect of duty and drunken habits of the gardener and his assistant, a new gardener was appointed in June 1837 at £1 5s 0d per week, and the opportunity taken to restate his duties. He was to have the entire management of the

garden under the directions of the Garden Committee. It was to be 'kept in order and well stocked with such shrubs and flowers as will flourish and prove ornamental'. The grass was to be properly mowed and the walks kept clean and well rolled. In the winter he was to clear the garden paths of snow and the footways of the square when called upon to do so. Extra assistance, and also tools and seeds, would be provided on application to the Garden Committee. He was to be a Beadle on every alternate Sunday and when required, and for this he was to have a livery coat and hat every second year. Finally, he was 'to demean himself orderly, civilly and faithfully at all times'.

In the autumn of 1837 it again proved necessary to carry out a survey of the trees. The gardener was ordered to cut some down to improve the growth of others and replace dead ones. Sadly it was decided to cut down the service trees because boys were in the habit of throwing stones at them and climbing over the rails for the sake of the fruit. As the trees were of trifling value, the gardener was to be allowed to keep the wood, after selecting useful props and stakes. There was also to be a foot notice inside each gate requesting visitors not to tread on the borders or pluck flowers.

On 23rd May 1845, at a special meeting, the Garden Committee heard about 'a most daring outrage committed the previous night in the garden by a person or persons unknown who had pulled up and destroyed various trees, shrubs and garden seats' and had set fire to the gardeners' tool house, which had burnt to the ground. Handbills were distributed offering a reward of 20 guineas for information leading to the conviction of the offenders. The police concluded that 'the depredations were committed by parties above the lower class of persons through wanton mischievousness' but that there was no possibility of detecting them, further revealing that 'persons with keys have been in the habit of entering the enclosure at all hours of the night, frequently accompanied by females'. The upshot was that a decision was taken that no-one should be allowed into the garden after ten o'clock in the evening, and that a policeman be stationed in the garden at night, a key being supplied for the purpose.²¹

20. J.J. Sexby *The Municipal Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces of London: Their History and Associations* (Elliot Stock, 1898).

21. This was changed to 1/2 an hour after sunset in November 1869, and since the 1990s the gates are again locked at dusk.

The poor gardeners were to be remunerated for their loss of clothes, books etc. burnt in the tool house and a replacement was ordered to be constructed of slate.

In June 1855, the Garden Committee accepted the tender of Richard Wood of Bedford Nursery, Hampstead Road²² to new gravel the walks in the garden and make good the verges with new turf for £105. New regulations were also printed and circulated. These included:

'That no dogs be admitted within the Inclosure';
'That the Gardener and Beadle be directed to enquire of all persons entering... and who are not known to them as Proprietors and Inhabitants by what right they enter';
'That the Flowers and Shrubs... be on no account gathered or destroyed';
'That persons having charge of children, do prevent them going on the Flower Beds and Borders'; and
'That Nurses and Servants of families having the privilege of the Garden Inclosure are strictly forbidden to admit strangers, or to part with the key, and that no Men Servants or Porters, nor their families having the care of Chambers, be admitted into the Garden Inclosure on any pretence'.²³

The character of the square had been changing since the early 1820s when many of the houses became Chambers. By 1859 only a few of the 67 houses were lived in by families. The duties of the Trustees were also undergoing gradual erosion. In 1829, under an *Act of 10 Geo IV*, the Nightly Watch of the Metropolitan Police took over and the Night Beadle and Watchmen were discharged, the Police Rate being assessed on the inhabitants and the Field Rate reduced accordingly. In 1856 the Board of Works for the St Giles District took on the lighting, cleansing, paving and watering of Lincoln's Inn Fields under an *Act of 18 & 19 Victoria*.

The same year brought the first of many requests to open up the garden, in the form of a memorial from Richard Twining and others on behalf of the sick poor of the immediate locality, for permission for poor people to walk in the gardens on summer evenings, a request which the Trustees declined as being outside their powers.

A gesture was made two years later when at the beginning of November 1858 it was reported that the show of chrysanthemums in

the fields being unusually fine that year, instructions had been given to the gardener and the beadle to admit all respectable people to view them in the following fortnight between 1 and 4 in the afternoon, advertisements being placed in *The Times* and other daily newspapers.

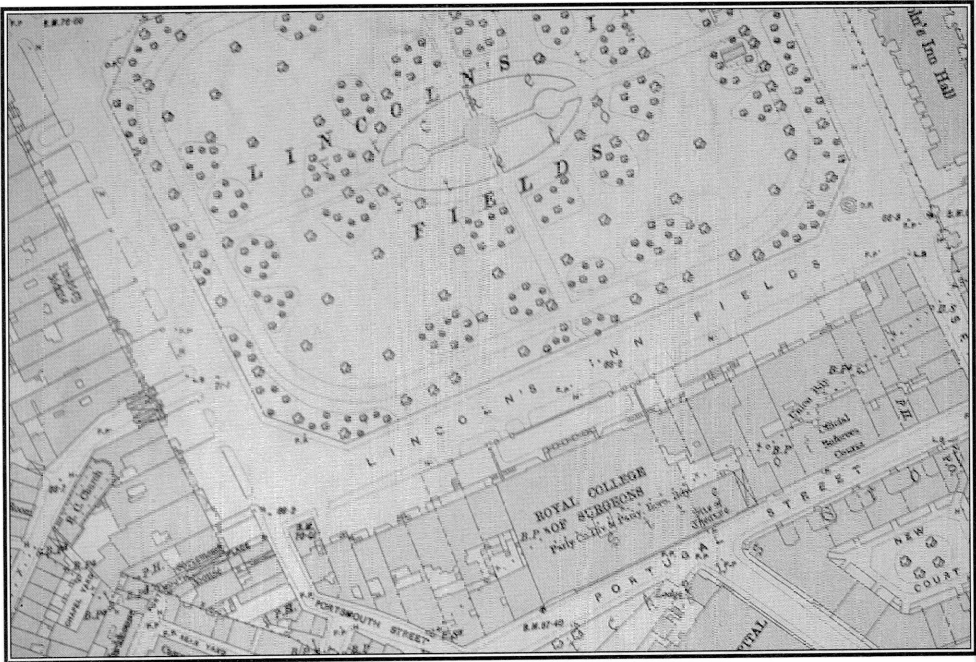
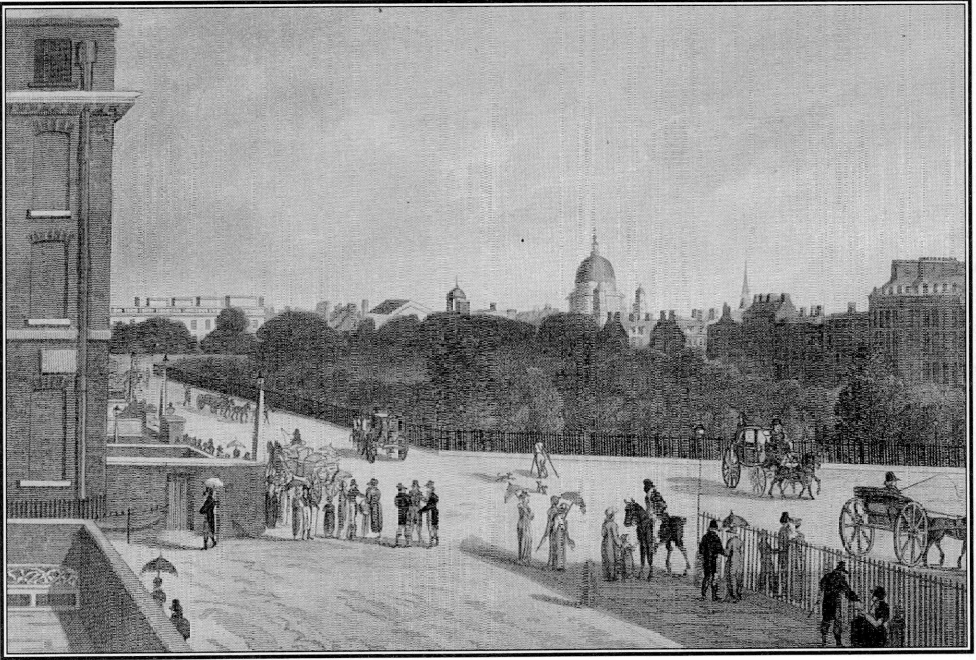
The following year, in August 1859, a letter was received from the Board of Works for the St Giles District asking for the gardens to be thrown open to the public like those at the Temple and Gray's Inn. The letter further reveals that they had already put down a footway of York paving around the north and east sides for the benefit of 'numerous infirm aged and sickly people of the parish of St Clement Danes who resort to that open space for the sunshine and comparatively pure air'. The letter goes on to cite the great change in the occupancy of the square since the Act of 1735 and stresses the large and dense masses of people in the surrounding area. They ask the Trustees to 'move with the Spirit of the Age - to mitigate the evils of the overgrown metropolis and ameliorate the conditions of the poor'.

The request was again refused, but memorials from the inhabitants of the surrounding area in 1860 and 1861 led to a decision to grant keys as a one year experiment to residents in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn Fields at a rent of 1 guinea, each application to be recommended by a Trustee and discussed at a Trustees' meeting. The experiment was renewed the following year and by 1868 the number of non-residents' keys issued had grown to 175. The minutes, however, record a complaint from number 65 Lincoln's Inn Fields about the 'very low class of person now using the Garden. The children are very little better than the rabble outside the railings, whose language is very offensive and whose behaviour is of the roughest and rudest kind'.

Meanwhile the Garden Committee continued to oversee the management of the garden. In 1869 a broad walk was made at the west end of the centre of the garden to correspond with that at the east end, and a path 8 to 10 feet wide constructed across the turf of the centre bed. Despite such improvement, however, a report to their meeting of 3rd May 1869 of the comparative expenditure on the garden in Russell Square led to the conclusion that they did not have enough money to do what they

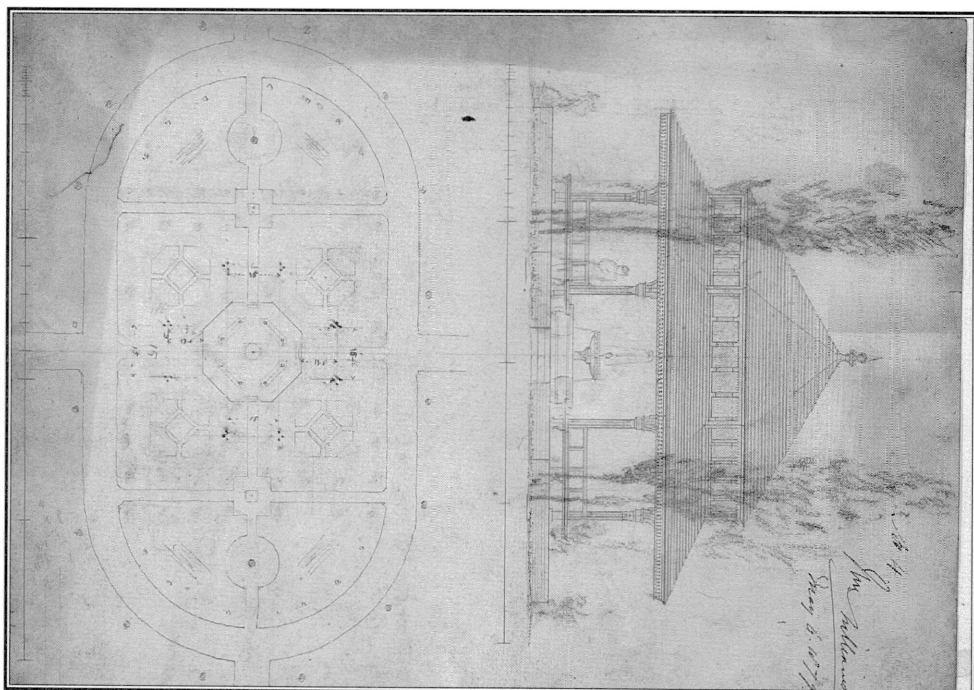
22. Desmond, *op.cit.* p. 109.

23. SM Archives, Private Correspondence, XV.1.A.2.12



11. *View of Lincoln's Inn Fields coming in from Great Queen Street*. Aquatint published by Ackermann, November 1810.
Note that at this date Great Queen Street came right up from Covent Garden into Lincoln's Inn Fields, along the line of the current Rembrandt Street, Kingsway not being built until 1905
(COURTESY TRUSTEES OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM)

12. Detail of first edition Ordnance Survey of London showing the layout of the garden in 1794
(COURTESY BRITISH LIBRARY)



13. Design by James William Wild for a rain shelter in the garden, 1879. The structure still stands (albeit in a much altered form) but his planting plan and the fountain were never carried out (COURTESY TRUSTEES OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM)

14. Photograph taken in the garden in 1895, with Wild's rain shelter in the background (COURTESY CORPORATION OF LONDON, LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)

wanted and what was needed to the garden. (fig. 12)

In May 1874 a request was received for some Drury Lane children under a scheme of Octavia Hill's to be given a treat in the garden on a Saturday afternoon. The event took place on 18th July and was reported to have been well-supervised by a lady or gentleman to each party of ten children, though it was ruled that next time cricket, football, rounders, trap-bat and ball and kite-flying were to be forbidden.

One or two other similar events followed, and from its foundation in 1882 the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (MPGA) began a sustained and public campaign for more public access to the gardens,²⁴ pointing out to the Trustees that they had failed to take advantage of the provisions of the *Open Spaces Act* of 1881 which would allow them to transfer the care of Lincoln's Inn Fields to the local vestry or to the Metropolitan Board of Works. Defeat was temporarily admitted in 1887, when the MPGA decided to take no further action for the present, but the turning point came in 1890 when the newly-formed London County Council (LCC) became involved. Persuasion was at first tried, a letter of 25th May 1891 referring to children 'who may constantly be seen looking through the railings and casting longing glances at the shady trees and green grass within'. A detailed letter of refusal from the Lincoln's Inn Fields Trustees ended with the observation that the character of the Temple Gardens (which had been cited as being open in a limited way) was entirely different to that of Lincoln's Inn Fields. If the Lincoln's Inn Fields garden were to be open to the public, the whole of its character would have to be changed, and it would be necessary to do away with the thickets and shrubberies to aid the surveillance of the numerous caretakers which would be necessary. There would be a great increase in expense and it would be very difficult to prevent injury to the trees and flowers. Furthermore the noise from the assemblage of a large number of young persons and children on what would soon become a mere playground would be a serious nuisance to the inhabitants.

An initial request by the LCC to Parliament for permissive powers to acquire Lincoln's Inn Fields for the public was thrown out by the House of Commons in June 1892, and clauses relating to Lincoln's Inn Fields in the London Open Spaces Bill of 1893 were rejected by the House of Lords, but on 4th May 1894 a Bill empowering the LCC to take over Lincoln's Inn Fields was passed unopposed in the House of Commons.²⁵

Lincoln's Inn Fields were finally opened to the public on 23rd February 1895 by the Chairman of the LCC, Sir John Hutton. He included in his speech the observation that he thought that they had almost realised the dream of John Ruskin 'when children should no longer play in the gutter'. A newspaper article on the event²⁶ concluded by reporting that:

Since the ground has been under the charge of the Parks Committee, general improvements have been commenced, and various planting works will be undertaken in order to embellish and decorate the garden as the season advances. A detachment of the Parks' Band performed a selection of music for an hour after the ceremony on Saturday, and large crowds of children flocked to the grounds. The actual opening of the gates to admit the public was performed by the Misses Hutton.

Fig. 14²⁷ shows the gardens in 1895. The structure in the distance is a rain shelter in the form of a Moorish kiosk, designed for the Trustees by the then Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum, James William Wild, in 1879. (fig. 13)²⁸ The structure, often erroneously referred to as a bandstand, still survives, though in a skeletal form only, and with a roof which was completely altered by the LCC in 1934. Writing in 1898, J.J. Sexby comments that Lincoln's Inn Fields is:

...often described as one of the largest and finest squares in the world, a character well deserved in the past, and which it may attain to in the future. At present it may be considered in a transitional state, for many of the fine houses on the western side, having become too decayed and unsuitable for modern purposes, are being replaced by huge sets of chambers. The contrast between the sombre gravity of these dingy mansions

24. This campaign is detailed in the minutes of the MPGA, deposited in the Guildhall Library; MS 11,097. I am grateful to Joyce Bellamy for drawing these records to my attention.

25. Compensation of £12,000 was paid to the Trustees of Lincoln's Inn Fields. The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum used their share to install electric light in the Museum.

26. London Metropolitan Archive, Print Collection Holborn H 28899, untitled.

27. London Metropolitan Archive, Photo Library, negative number 70/10424.

28. SM Drawings 87/2/7.

and the bright and staring newness of their successors is painfully apparent; but perhaps it is not too late to hope that this side of the square will at some future date be restored to its earlier dignity...²⁹

He goes on to say:

It must be a matter of congratulation to London generally that this fine garden has been added to the number of its recreation-grounds, where it is possible to step out of the whirl of life and dream for a few moments of the charm and repose of the country.

The management of the gardens by the LCC (and by its successors the GLC and, since 1970, the London Borough of Camden) would form the subject of another article. Suffice it to say that the gardens gradually assumed a more municipal air in the twentieth century with the introduction of a putting green and netball and tennis courts and the erection of a bandstand. The biggest change came in 1941 with the removal of the iron boundary fencing and gates for scrap. This was presented as part of the war effort, but there are indications in the LCC minutes that it was part of a wider agenda. The present railings around the square date only from the 1990s. The decision to erect them and once again to lock the gates at night was taken in an attempt to curb the use of the gardens as a place for homeless people to camp, a situation which reached crisis point in the early 1990s. An exact replica of the original eighteenth-century railings proved to be too expensive, and they are an approximation only, lacking the stone plinth into which the original railings were set (remains of which can still be seen at intervals).³⁰ The railings were paid for by the Lincoln's Inn Fields Association, a body formed from the businesses around the square which existed from 1988 to 2004 to concern itself with the appearance and conduct of the square and to press for improvements in its management, echoing in a small way the management by the Trustees of Lincoln's Inn Fields from 1735 to 1894.

'PARKITECHTURE?'

By The Perambulator

It is a sign of how far parks have come since the first issue of *The London Gardener* ten years ago that they are now attracting serious interest from architects. Funded largely, but not solely, by the Heritage Lottery Fund, a number of innovative new buildings are being showcased by CABE Space in its annual calendar under the awful title of *Parkitecture*. In February, *Green Places*, the journal of the Landscape Institute, ran a five-page spread on new park buildings, and in May the HLF and CABE Space sponsored a seminar held in the new Hub building in Regent's Park, designed by David Morley.

The HLF has always recognised that regeneration of parks needs more than just repair and restoration, and has always offered funding towards good new buildings that can provide public benefit. It takes pains to establish that a new building is really what is needed, and that it will be properly maintained, as well as being of high quality in terms of design.

The premise that just repairing what survives will not deliver regeneration is a good one, and the HLF is to be congratulated on freeing itself from conservation dictums and being ready to fund new build. Parks can often not only physically accommodate such new buildings but greatly benefit from the life they bring into the park. It may be a restaurant or a café, a sports pavilion, a rangers' office, a community room or a toilet block; more often the new buildings are asked to combine several functions under one roof.

The problem is the financial climate in which they are being constructed. For all the political support achieved for public parks in those miraculous ten years, the problems of revenue-funding for parks and public gardens remain acute. The increased availability of capital funds to undertake major projects in parks has certainly made a difference, but annual uncertainties over revenue funds continue to frustrate long-term planning for the good maintenance of parks. While a million pounds or more may be available for a new building, underwriting its long, or even medium-term maintenance, remains highly problematic.

29. Sexby *op.cit.*

30. For instance in the south-east corner opposite the gate to Lincoln's Inn, just past the octagonal drinking fountain.