

Where Kensington high o'er the neighbr'ing lands
'Midst greens and sweets, a regal fabric stands,
And sees each spring, luxuriant in her bowers,
a snow of blossoms, and a wilde of flowers,
The Dames of Britain oft in crowds repair
To gravel walks, and unpolluted air.
Here, while the town in damps and darkness lies,
They breathe in sun-shine, and see azure skies;
Each walk, with robes of various dyes bespread,
Seems from afar a moving tulip-bed,
Where rich brocades and glossy damasks glow,
And chints, the rival of the show'ry bow.

‘THE INGENIOUS MR. CHARLES BRIDGEMAN’
AND HIS WORK AT KENSINGTON PALACE

By Sally Williams

In spring 2006 Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) commissioned an historical survey of the gardens at Kensington Palace with a view to informing the re-presentation of the royal landscape.¹ This research has brought to light fascinating information, and gives us a greater understanding of the development of the gardens from the late seventeenth century to the present.

This article looks at information drawn from documents and illustrative material relating to the work of landscape gardener Charles Bridgeman at Kensington during his time in royal employ, first as Henry Wise's partner from 1726, and subsequently as sole Royal Gardener from 1728 until his death in 1738. This period was one of strenuous activity in the gardens, largely under the zealous eye of Queen Caroline, when they could be said to be at their most extensive and also their most admired, a time when Kensington Palace was the principal ornament in a substantial landscape. Although designs to transform the predominantly formal layout of the royal gardens were already underway prior to his tenure, Bridgeman's achievement lay in his ambitious development of these works and his reconfiguration of the land to create terraces, undulat-

ing lawns, serpentine path systems, mounts and vistas, some of which remains in place today.

Kensington Palace became a royal residence soon after the accession of William III and Mary II, when the new king sought a house sufficiently near Parliament while having a rural aspect for the sake of his health. Nottingham House, near the royal hunting ground of Hyde Park, was purchased in 1689 from Daniel Finch, 2nd Earl of Nottingham. The Jacobean house was much enlarged and remodelled for royal use, its 26 acres of gardens re-landscaped in the Dutch style at the instigation of the royal couple, particularly Queen Mary. From 1677 William Bentinck, 1st Earl of Portland, had been responsible for care of royal grounds and in 1689 he was appointed Superintendent of the Royal Gardens, with George London as deputy, who with his partner Henry Wise was already among England's most influential garden designers. When Queen Anne succeeded William III in 1702 she engaged Wise as royal gardener; he was subsequently retained as Master Gardener by George I in 1714 and then by George II in 1727. However, it was Caroline, the latter's queen, who delighted in gardens, her interest nurtured in Germany particularly through the celebrated garden of her former home at Herrenhausen, created by Sophia Electress of Hanover.

Under Queen Anne, the palace gardens were extended eastwards into Hyde Park, with further acres added towards what is now Bayswater Road,² a process of expansion that continued under George I who appropriated further acreage of Hyde Park in 1726, and culminated in the reign of George II when Kensington Palace Gardens reached their greatest extent. George II was the last reigning monarch to use Kensington Palace as a residence, and in the years following his death in 1760 the royal pleasure grounds shrank to their pre-1727 extent – west of the Broad Walk and north of Dial Walk.

1. This work was commissioned from Todd Longstaffe-Gowan Ltd., and was carried out by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, Sally Williams, Jennifer Ledfors and David Lambert. The resultant documents include a chronological survey of the development of the gardens and a report entitled *Kensington Palace Gardens: Landscape Conservation Statements* (August 2006). The research focused on the palace and the surrounding gardens that come under the aegis of HRP, as distinct from Kensington Gardens, the public park that is the responsibility of Royal Parks Agency.

2. According to William Loftie, *Kensington Palace* (1898), p. 46: 'the paddock for deer was said to have been taken from Hyde Park in 1705'. It had, however, belonged to Kensington Gardens after 1663, and, as we learn from a subsequent document, had been rented by the Ranger of Hyde Park. In 1729 a sum of money was paid to the Ranger as compensation for the loss of this holding, which would seem to have extended as far west as 'Horse Quarter' and 'Colt Quarter', but of course, never formed any part of the adjoining Hyde Park.



6. William Hogarth *The Rake's Progress: The Levee*, 1734/35 (detail)
Bridgeman is shown proffering a plan of a garden to the Rake
(COURTESY SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM)

Queen Anne’s gardens at Kensington were laid out in the extravagant French style of the day epitomised by Le Nôtre’s Versailles. Henry Wise’s scheme included the series of garden sections comprising the Wilderness in the north with a ‘Mount’ (actually an optical illusion created by trees of different heights) and sunken garden; new layout of the formal south gardens; and within the land taken to the east, a rectangular pond (now the site of the Round Pond), which was later enlarged under George I and then reconfigured by Bridgeman for Queen Caroline.

Upon his accession to the throne in 1714, George I embarked upon a series of improvements in the gardens, largely focusing on the Paddock area between Kensington Palace and Hyde Park, and developing a growing menagerie that eventually included tigers, civet cats, exotic species of beast and bird, a snailery and tortoises; his ‘first Intention ... was that of having Animals of different kinds, kept to run & feed at Liberty all over the whole, in the several Lawns, Quarters & Walks, the Wooded Quarters excepted’.³ The new paddocks were enclosed by a long brick wall in 1726 and, having encroached further into Hyde Park, the king began works to impose a formal plan on the grazing areas and copses. The preceding article in this journal by Jennifer Ledfors provides a lively record of some of the works carried out in the royal gardens up to this period, derived from contemporary sources.

It is at this point that Charles Bridgeman enters the frame. (*fig.6*) Bridgeman has been described as ‘a key figure in the transition from the formal to the natural or landscape style of gardening... a brilliant surveyor and draughtsman... and a highly skilled practical gardener’.⁴ He was much praised in his day by influential contemporaries such as Horace Walpole, who described him as ‘the next fashionable designer of gardens’ after London and Wise,⁵

Stephen Switzer – for whom Bridgeman’s designs attempted an ‘incomprehensible vastness’ with a ‘fancy that could not be bounded’ – and Colin Campbell and Christian Cole both referred to his *ingenuity*. In later years, eclipsed by those that followed, particularly Lancelot Brown and Humphry Repton, Bridgeman has often not been accorded the importance he deserves, although this was redressed in Peter Willis’s important monograph, first published in 1977 and reprinted in 2002.⁶ Standing at the brink of the sweeping trend for the naturalistic landscape garden, his origins were rooted in the formality of London and Wise, and while his later work heralded the advent of the new style, he did not quite shake off the trammels of the earlier traditions.

Bridgeman’s early life is poorly documented. Born around 1690, his origins were relatively humble, and his father was probably a gardener for the Earl of Oxford at Wimpole in Cambridgeshire. His association with London and Wise may have begun in the early 1700s as a young apprentice in their hugely influential Brompton Park Nurseries (founded in 1681).

Bridgeman has been credited by some (including Horace Walpole) as the inventor of the *Ha-ha*, and although this is patently not the case,⁷ he certainly appears to have been responsible for popularising this ingenious device in England, which removed the need for obvious boundary walls and, in the words of Walpole, was:

the leading step to all that has followed...No sooner was this simple enchantment made, than leveling, mowing and rolling followed. The contiguous ground of the park outside the sunk fence was to be harmonised with the lawn within; and the garden in its turn was to be set free from its prim regularity, that it might assort with the wilder country outside. The sunk fence ascertained the specific garden (i.e. immediately around the house), but that it might not draw too obvious a line of distinction between the neat and the rude, the contiguous outlying parts came to be included in a kind of general design: and when nature was

3. A note by Henry Joy nes of 1731, Clerk of Works at Kensington from 1715, PRO 6/114 fo.30.

4. Miles Hadfield, *The English Landscape Garden* (Shire Garden History, 1997 edition).

5. Walpole went on to say that Bridgeman ‘banished verdant sculpture, and did not even revert to the square precision of the foregoing age. He enlarged his plans, disdained to make every division tally to its opposite, and though he still adhered much to strait walks with high clipped hedges, they were only his great lines; the rest he diversified by wilderness, and with loose groves of oak, though still within surrounding hedges’. Quoted in Isabel Chase, *Horace Walpole: Gardenist. An Edition of Walpole’s ‘The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening’, With an Estimate of Walpole’s Contribution to Landscape Architecture* (Princeton, 1943), pp. 24–25.

6. Peter Willis *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden* (London: A Zwemmer Ltd, 1977, reprinted by Elysium Press, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2002). Much of the material in this article on Bridgeman’s career is based on information in Willis.

7. Although the ha-ha’s first description in print may be the 1709 publication of *La Théorie et la Pratique du Jardinage* by Antoine Joseph Dézallier d’Argenville (translated by John James and published in London in 1712), it is likely to have evolved from fortifications, moats and similar structures in medieval times, probably in France.

taken into the plan, under improvements, every step that was made, pointed out new beauties and inspired new ideas.⁸

Bridgeman soon became known for his design of numerous gardens and estate landscapes for the wealthy, often working alongside famous contemporaries such as Sir John Vanbrugh, Colin Campbell, Henry Flitcroft, Stephen Switzer, William Kent and James Gibbs. Undertaking projects for a great variety of clients, he was 'always exhibiting a responsible pragmatism towards the limitations and opportunities of each estate. No problem and no solution were the same... [he] moved easily from the formality of Boughton to the wildness of Chatelherault, or from the vastness of Blenheim to the intimacy of the Pheasant Garden at Woburn'.⁹ As Willis also remarks, 'satisfying demands of the new style was by no means easy: landscape gardening had its own discipline, and its earliest manifestations were as artificial in their irregularity as the formal layouts had been in their regularity'.¹⁰

His work at Blenheim Palace for the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough began early in his career as one of Henry Wise's team from 1709-16 alongside Vanbrugh. Bridgeman also worked with Vanbrugh at Eastbury and Claremont in the 1720s, where his contributions included great avenues, straight and winding walks, ha-has, kitchen gardens, lakes and earthworks. By the early 1720s he was also closely connected with Edward Harley, 2ND Earl of Oxford, whom he assisted with the layout of his Marylebone Estate, in particular the development of Cavendish Square and its environs. Other work in London included St James's Square, laid out by 1728 and much admired at the time, with a large lake and central fountain. His work at Rousham in Oxfordshire came towards the end of his career, but Bridgeman is probably best known today for the landscape he undertook at Stowe for Lord Cobham,¹¹ where he worked from 1716 until the mid-1730s, initially in conjunction with Vanbrugh, and later with Gibbs and then Kent. By 1719 Lord Cobham's landscape was in the grip of Bridgeman's 'design and control', with large numbers of trees planted, walks laid out, a 'ditch bank' dug and the excavated earth formed into two mounds, garden

statuary and Vanbrugh's classical features in place or underway. By 1720 Cobham's public status had risen by increased wealth and his appointment as Privy Councillor, and his plans for Stowe were similarly aggrandised. Bridgeman was commissioned to prepare a suitable landscape scheme and his bird's-eye plan of c.1720 shows some 28 acres of the garden bounded by a ha-ha, with avenues linked by *rond-points*, majestic walks cutting across the landscape, and Vanbrugh's Rotunda on a prominent vantage point as one of seven garden features. In 1726 James Gibbs took over from Vanbrugh after the latter's death and worked with Bridgeman as Cobham's ambitious plans developed further. Bridgeman's immense legacy at Stowe was, however, largely swept away by the mid-1730s through the robust efforts of his successor, William Kent, and latterly Lancelot Brown, who worked at Stowe from 1741.

In his plans for Stowe and elsewhere, including Kensington Palace, Bridgeman's particular landscape predilections are evident: his exploitation of the existing lie of the land, the *genius loci*, and his liking for vastness of scale, his 'extravagant way of thinking'. Willis summarises his design vision as encompassing the *formal* (parterres and kitchen gardens, lakes and avenues), the *transitional* (using established motifs in a new way - softly moulded lawns with grass banking, mounts topped with temples, amphitheatres, many-faceted cabinets set in woodland) and the *progressive* (his use of statues and garden buildings often juxtaposed with a rural landscape or set within it, sometimes with the aid of a ha-ha). These trademark features of ha-has; lakes, canals and water; turfed ramps and terraces; straight and winding walks; dense woodland; garden buildings, temples and statuary all appear in the work he accomplished at Kensington.

By the time of his involvement in the royal gardens Bridgeman's reputation was such that the Board of Works was quite confident of his 'Experience, skill & Ability';¹² he was known for doing a job speedily and well, and furthermore he had already worked for the

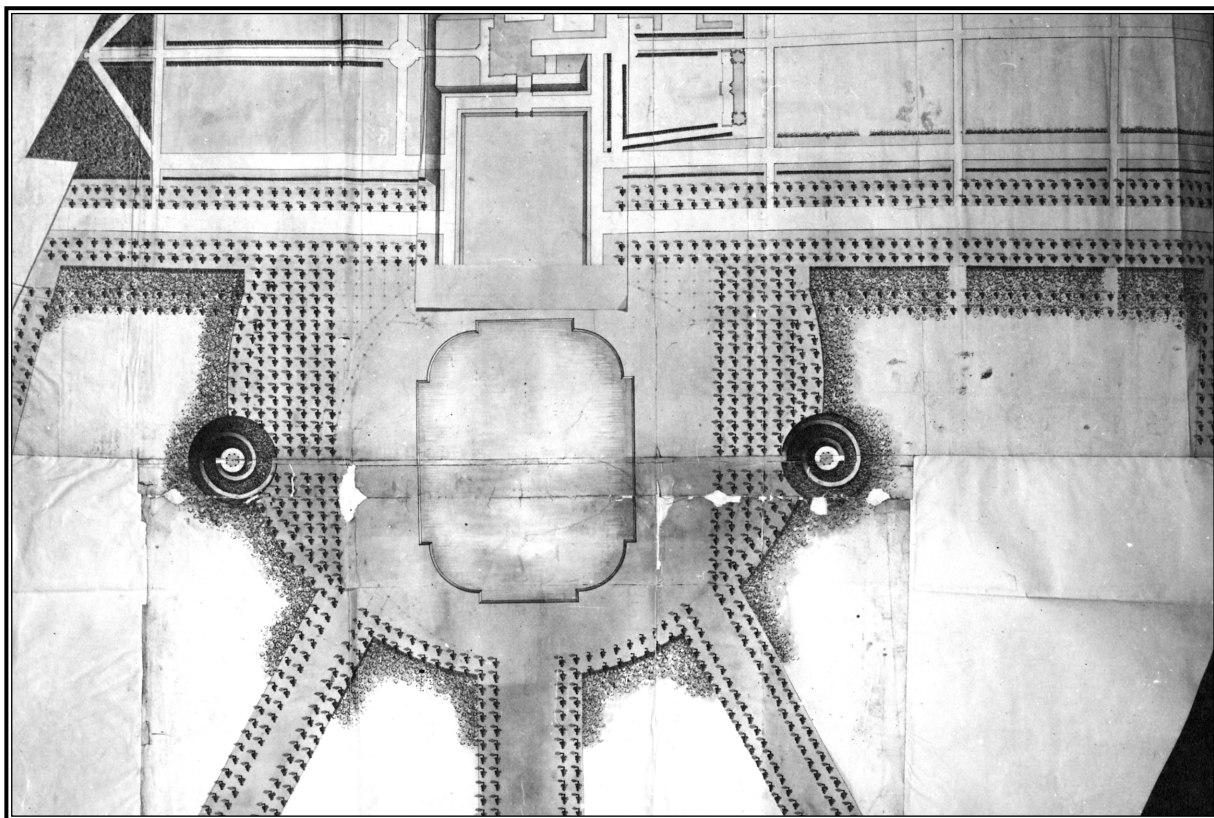
8. Chase, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

9. Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

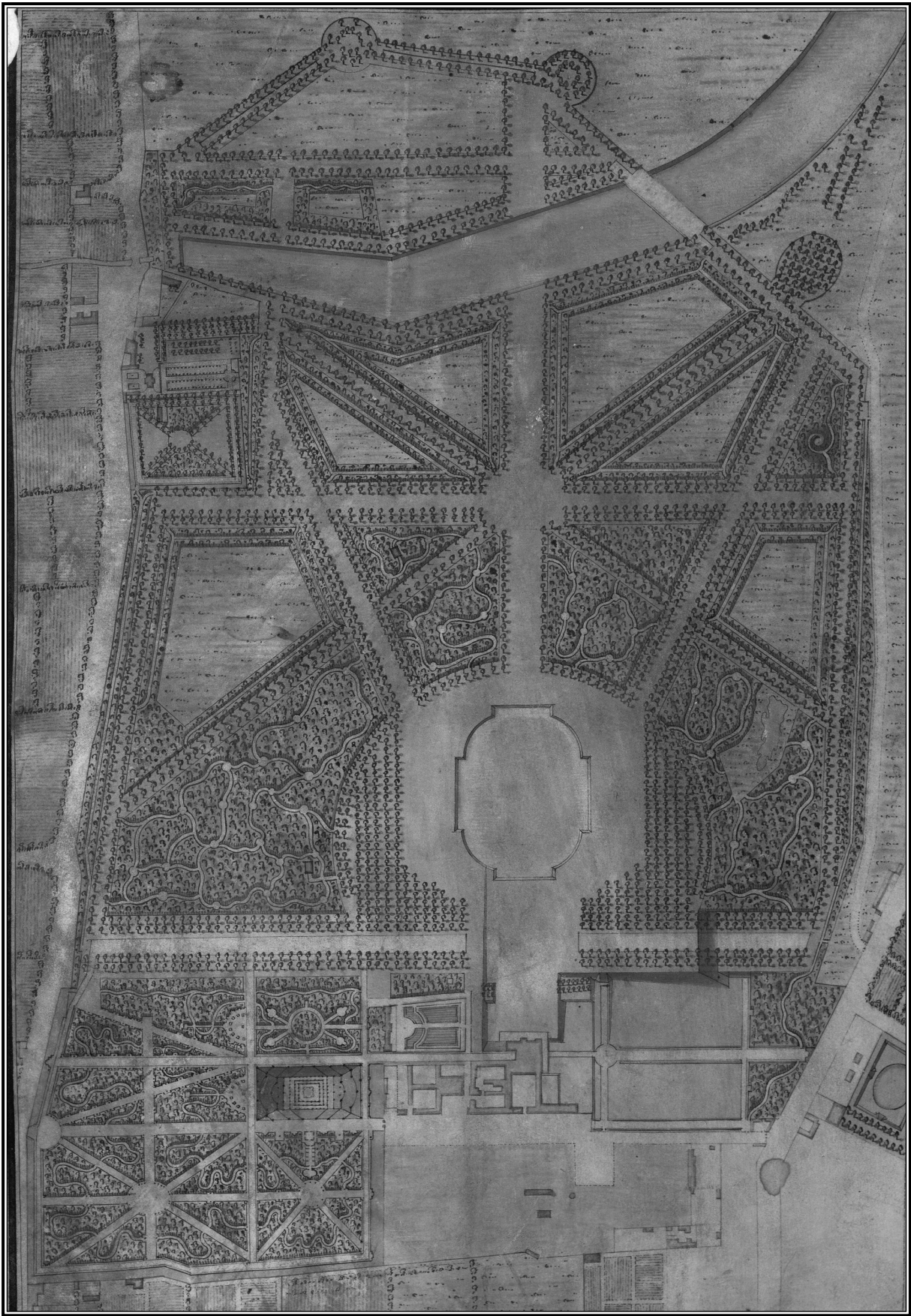
11. Willis describes Stowe as Bridgeman's 'dream-landscape'.

12. See the terms of the Royal Appointment in 1726, National Archives (NA), Works 6/114, fos. 7R-10R.

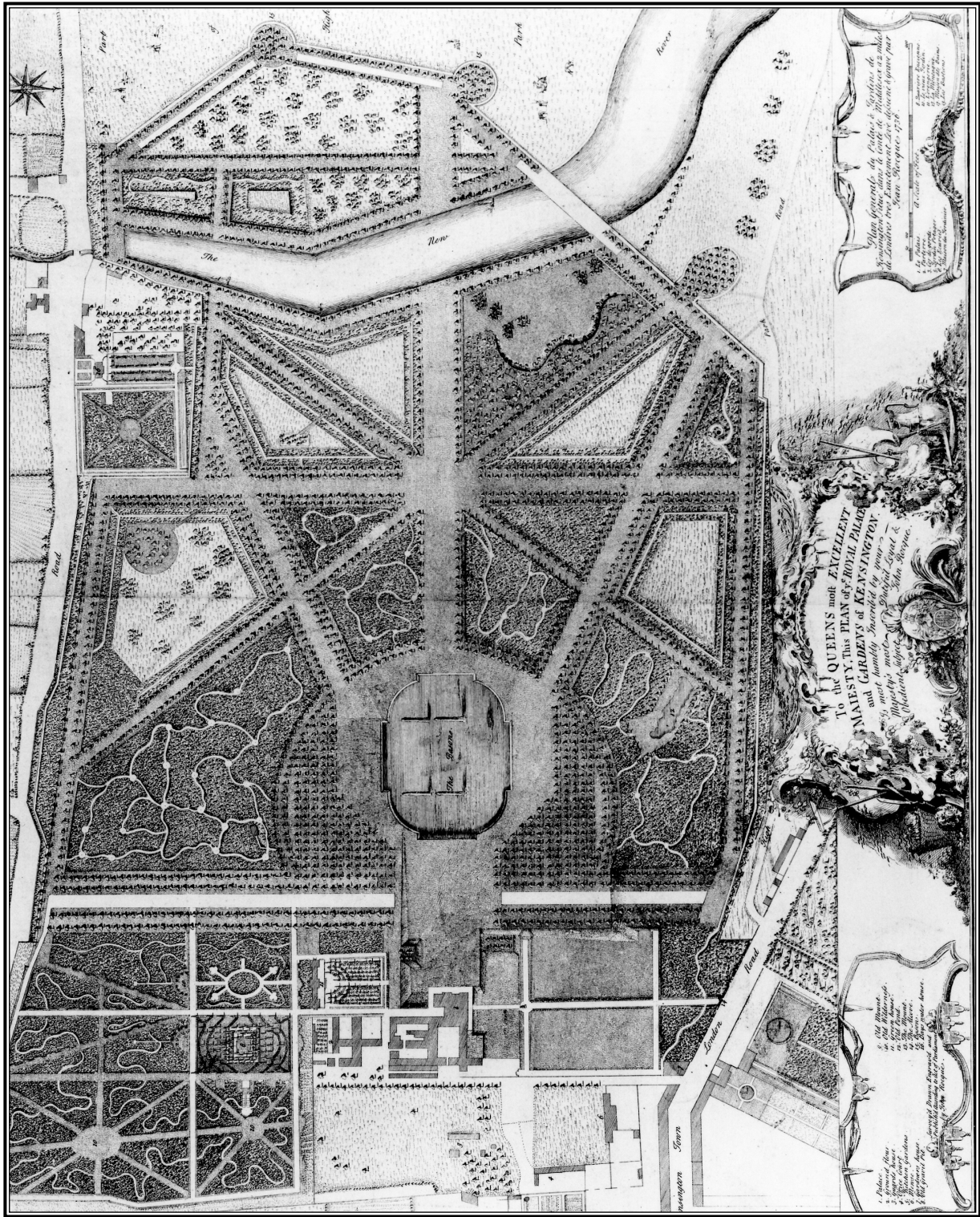


7. Drawing of Kensington Palace, Broad Walk, Round Pond and Great Bow attributed to Bridgeman
(BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD, MS GOUGH DRAWINGS A3* FO.15)

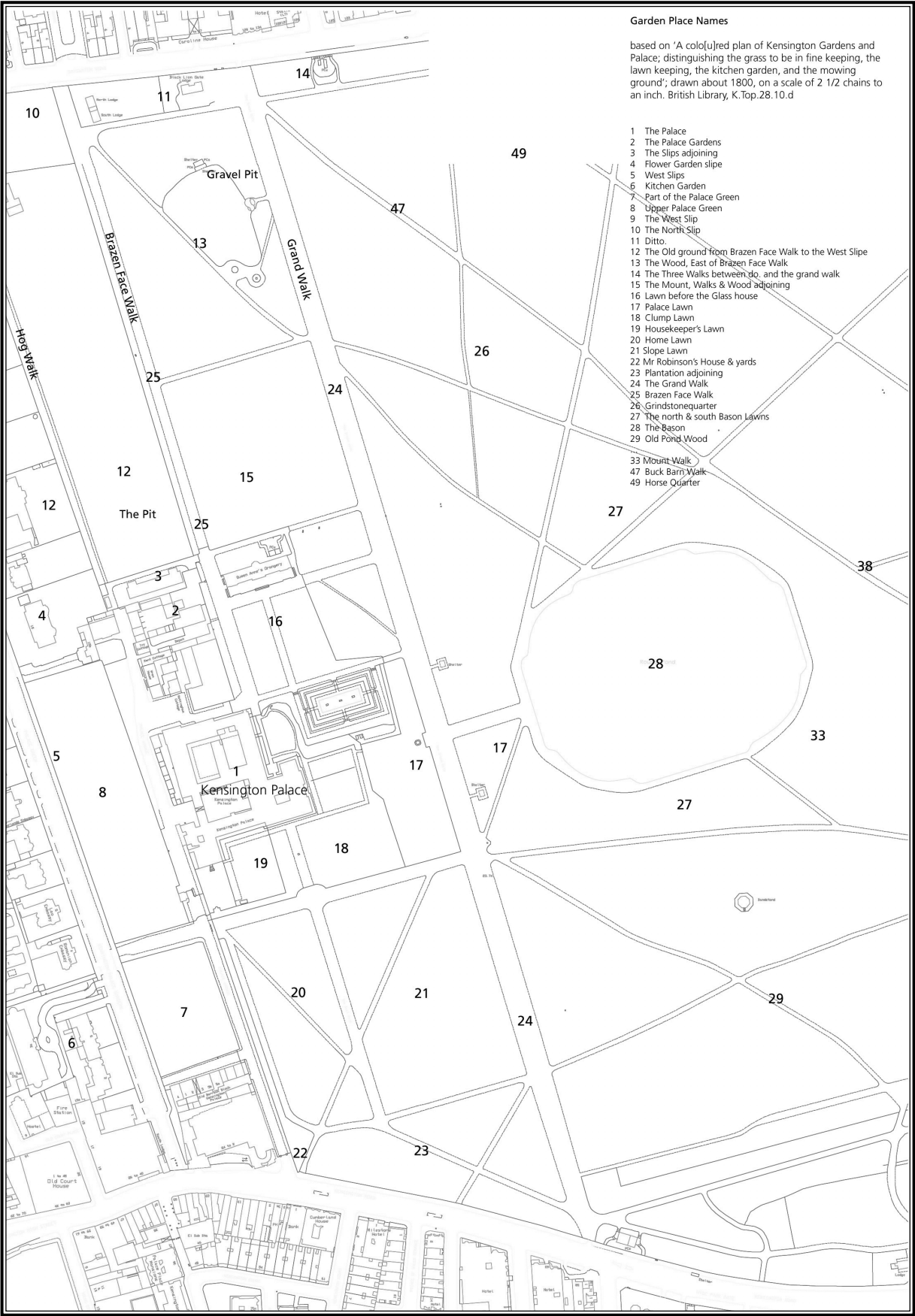
8. Aerial photograph of 4 April 1946 showing the Round Pond much as in Bridgeman's day
(COURTESY HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES)



9. Charles Bridgeman Plan of Kensington Palace, c.1733
(REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE HUNTINGDON LIBRARY, SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA; REF. ST MAP 147)



10. John Rocque *Plan Generale du Palais & Jardins de Kensington Situe dans la Conte de Middlesex a 2 milles de Londres tres Exactement Leve dessiene & Grave par Jean Rocque 1736*
(COURTESY HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES)



11. Map showing garden areas, based on a plan of the gardens of 1800. (See fig. 13)
(COURTESY TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN)

future king George II (then the Prince of Wales) at Marble Hill in c.1724.

After George London’s death in 1714, Wise had brought in William Smith and Joseph Carpenter as his partners in both the Nurseries and his work on the royal gardens. It was on Carpenter’s death in 1726 that Bridgeman became Wise’s partner in the royal gardens and their appointment as George I’s ‘Cheif [sic] Gardiners’ was to ‘order keep and maintain’ the gardens at Hampton Court, Kensington, Newmarket, Windsor and St James’s, under the ‘Cognizance’ of the Surveyor of Gardens and Waters, Charles Dartiquenave, who had replaced Vanbrugh in this role upon the latter’s death in 1726. They were paid £20 per acre a year for their ‘Service, care, & Expences’, which amounted to a total of £2,960 a year.¹³ Wise and Bridgeman soon submitted an estimate for planting and developing the area of Hyde Park that George I wished to appropriate for his Kensington garden. This document goes into fascinating detail of the costs required for ‘the new works to be performed in the gardens & in the new ground to be taken into them at the Royal Palace at Kensington by His Majesty’s own direction & adjustments viz: in new making & laying with fine gravell the walks that encompass the great upper wilderness there. And also the Laying & finishing the severall large walks and the great parade of the new ground so taken in in the same manner with the finest gravell & grass. The whole surface of these works together amounting to upwards of 23 acres.’¹⁴ The work specifically in ‘the ‘new ground’ was costed as follows:

For Earth to be dug & taken of the ground between the severall walks of trees there which earth is to be removed to make room for the gravell to be laid in the place thereof the expenses of digging filling into carts carting away disposing & laying the same in proper places in the old & new Plantations all charges included £246 3s; For turf to be used in laying the severall walks verges divisions of grass intended within this new ground the turf so used to be taken of the walks in the new paddock where gravell is to be laid & also of such places in Hyde Park as lye out of sight. The expences of cutting the turf loading & carting the same Leveling & preparing the said several verges & divisions

to receive it laying beating rolling & finishing the same all charges included £318 8s; For gravell to be used in laying the several walks & great parade of this new ground the principal walk of which is 80 feet wide and 2800 feet long [the Broad Walk] & all the several other walks of the same Length the gravell to be used for the purpose is proposed to be taken out of severall pitts to be sunk in proper places in the said great upper Wilderness & in Hyde Park. The expences of opening the severall pitts digging the gravel casting or screening the same loading carting laying spreading making ramming rolling & finishing all charges included £2273 5s; For digging open the ground for dreins preparing & planting in borders Lyme Espalers £120; sum total £3800 15s 10d; H. Wise, Charles Bridgeman.

These works were carried out at least in part by the time of the king’s death in June 1727: Wise and Bridgeman had spent £1668 4s 2d of the £3800 15s 10d allocated to them under their estimate; they had made avenues and planted trees, had commenced the Great Bow, a semi-circular opening in woodland from which the Front Walk and two other rides eventually extended towards Hyde Park, and the Broad Walk was nearly completed. A plan attributed to Bridgeman shows this design with two symmetrically placed mounts topped by circular temples. (*fig. 7*)¹⁵ Treasury documents of 23 May 1729 refer to agreements to pay Wise and Bridgeman £100 6s 3d ‘for keeping such part of the new additional gardens at Kensington as was finished at the time of His Majesty’s accession’, and also £58 19s for attending to the trees in ‘the great new Plantation’.

The post of Royal Gardener brought with it numerous practical responsibilities: kitchen gardens to be dug and cropped, trees tied up, hedges and evergreens pruned and clipped, gravel rolled and weeded, lawns mown and swept, dung to be applied, and produce to be transported to court on a daily basis. The Royal Gardeners had to provide their own horses, labour force and tools, which at Kensington included ‘bundles of brooms’ to sweep the lawns. Documents in the Office of

13. Warrant by the Board of Works signed 18 October 1726, NA, Works 6/114 fos 7R–10R.

14. NA, Works 6/114 F.10V.

15. It should be noted that the early design for the circular lawn, radiating avenues and focal Round Pond was already underway by the time Wise and Bridgeman submitted their estimate and Charles Withers, Surveyor General of His Majesty’s Woods, had received a first payment in September 1726 for works undertaken; see Pete Wilson *Kensington Palace Gardens, A Desk Top Assessment of the Proposed Garden of Remembrance in Memory of Diana, Princess of Wales*, EH Archaeology Division CAS Project 576, 31 March 1998, p. 14.

Works regularly record repairs to various pieces of garden equipment, which in 1726 and 1727 included 'the moving scaffold for cutting trees' that 'was very much decayed';¹⁶ '2 new frames for the horse rowles; 3 frames for the horse rowls wants mending; 5 stone rowlers wanted mending'¹⁷ and glazing works in the gardens at Kensington, 'Mr Bridgeman having represented to the board that His Majesty's mellons, cucumbers, etc are likely to suffer great damage from the frosts for want of such repair'.¹⁸ The Gardeners' tasks also encompassed feeding the tigers, civet cats and other 'Foreign Beasts and birds kept in His Majesty's gardens & paddock at Kensington',¹⁹ and even keeping the 'foreign Hogs' at Bayswater supplied with corn.

Following their accession in 1727, the new monarchs split their time between their various residences, generally staying at Kensington in the spring, where George II enjoyed stag hunting in the Upper Paddock, while Caroline concentrated on improving her new gardens. Wise and Bridgeman's initial work at Kensington was the completion of the projects begun by the late king, which in addition to the Great Bow and Broad Walk included the enlargement of the Great Bason (originally the basin created by Queen Anne) into a rectangular lake with chamfered corners set into lawn next to the Great Bow, a shape which it retains today despite its appellation as the Round Pond. (*fig. 8*) Charles Withers, Surveyor General of His Majesty's Woods, had chief responsibility for the work on the pond, which commenced in 1726, and by 1728 it was filled with water. For Queen Caroline more ambitious plans followed; the end results are best illustrated in Bridgeman's plan of 1733 and John Rocque's plan of 1736. (*figs. 9 & 10*)

On Lady Day (25 March) 1728, Henry Wise retired and Bridgeman was appointed later that year as sole Royal Gardener to George II, under the same terms as hitherto albeit at a reduced annual payment of £15 per acre. Signatories to his appointment included the then prime minister Sir Robert Walpole, Sir Charles Turner and George Bubb Dodington (both Lords of the Treasury), all of whom had employed Bridgeman on their gar-

dens at Houghton, Warham and Eastbury respectively. As before, he was to work under Dartiquenave as Surveyor of Gardens; his duties were set out in a 'Scheme of His Majesty's Several Gardens and Plantations' which included at Kensington 'The old Gardens from the Green House down to the Road; The New Plantation that which was the Coach Court & Peice before the Stoves; The several Green Houses & Greens and The Kitchen Garden'.²⁰ Separate contracts delineated new works such as landscaping of the enlarged parks at Kensington and Richmond.²¹

Charles Bridgeman himself later described the new approach that George II and Caroline took: 'Their present Majestys altering that first design, having made the whole into a Garden by increasing the Walking parts thereof by planting Espaliers, & sowing Wood to enclose the several Paddock Quarters, which by the first design was to have laid Wild & Open.'²² His agreement of 1728 included completion of the Round Pond and the Royal Paddock by Lady Day 1730, 'Raising & finishing the head of the Lake & the Walks round the Same', 'Replanting about 1195 Standard Elms', making 'Serpentine Walks' in the woods and opening 'the upper Wilderness ... as her Majesty shall direct'. The following extract from this lengthy document – which is now known in the trade as a 'specification' – indicates the detail with which Bridgeman needed to delineate his tasks, and also provides a fascinating account of what was involved to achieve his transformation of the landscape. See the plan at *fig. 11* which provides a key to the garden areas Bridgeman refers to.

... For forming & finishing the severall great walks of 180 feet wide viz the great middle walk that passes at right angles thro' the center beyond the semi-circular lawn & the two diagonals from the said semi-circle in the manner described in the margent & which together contain about 2551 square rods at 5s per rod £637 15s 0d; for finishing the great bason in the said semicircular Lawn before mentioned by taking out the earth there remaining amounting to about 2000 cubical yards. The several charges of digging filling & carting

20. NA, Works 6/114, fos. 12v-15v.

21. Horace Walpole praised Bridgeman's work for the Queen at Richmond: 'as [his] reformation gained footing, he ventured farther, and in the royal garden at Richmond dared to introduce cultivated fields, and even morsels of a forest appearance, by the sides of those endless and tiresome walks, that stretched out of one into another without intermission.' Quoted in Chase, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

22. NA, Works 6/114 fo. 30, 1731.

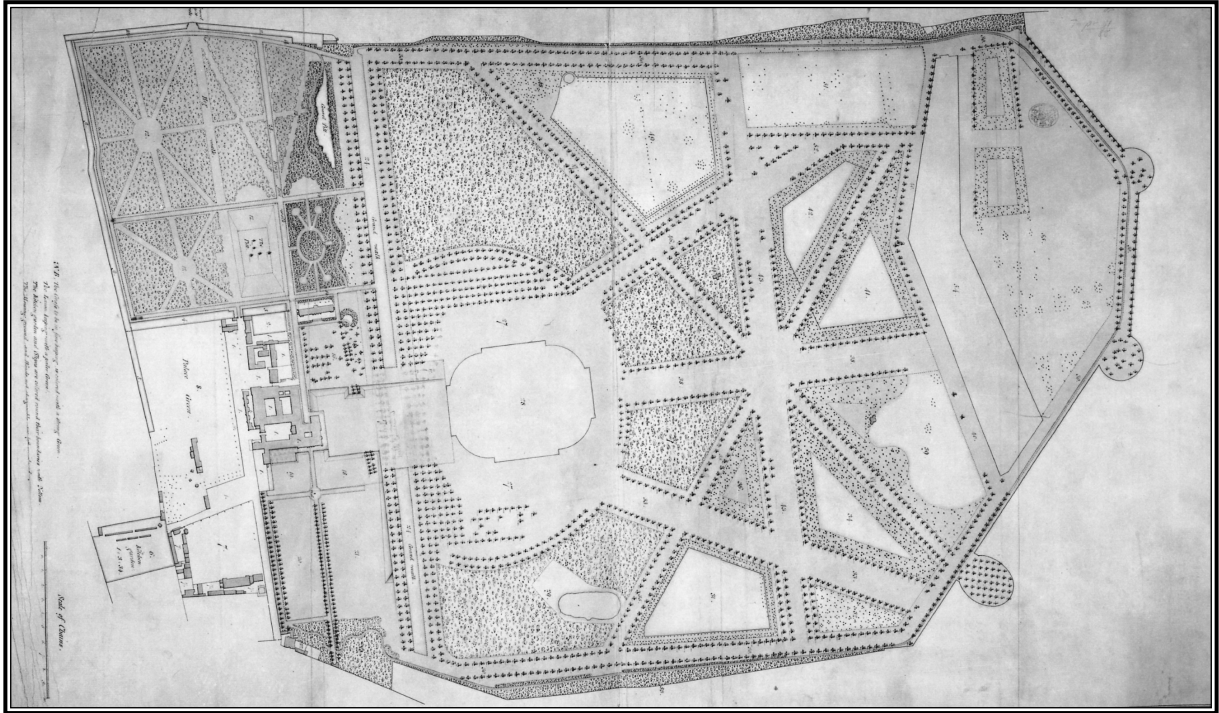
16. NA, Works 4/3 5 August 1726.

17. NA, Works 4/3 22 September 1726.

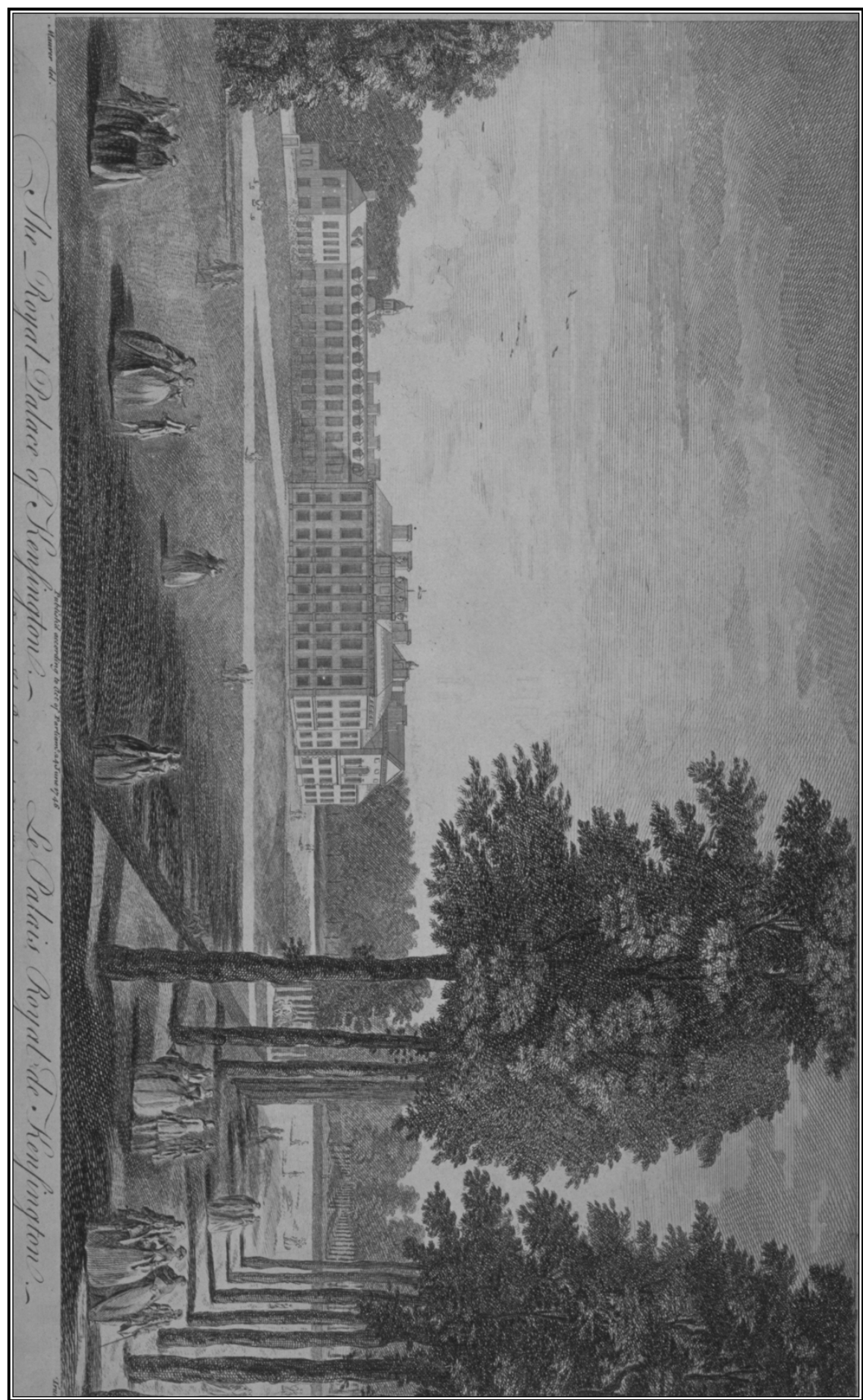
18. NA, Works 4/3 25 January 1727.

19. Treasury Papers, 17 May 1727, T 54/30.

‘THE INGENIOUS MR. CHARLES BRIDGEMAN’ AND HIS WORK AT KENSINGTON PALACE



12. *A Front View of the Royal Palace of Kensington, c.1751 showing Dial Walk, paths and terraces*
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)
13. *A colo[u]red plan of Kensington Gardens and Palace; distinguishing the grass to be in fine keeping, the lawn keeping, the kitchen garden, and the mowing ground, 1800*
(COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD)



14. L. Truchy after John Maurer, *The Royal Palace of Kensington* (1746); a view from the south-east
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)



15. View of the South Lawn, including Home Lawn (right) and Slope Lawn (left), c.1960
(COURTESY RICHARD MOLE)

16. Photograph showing undulating lawn to the south of the Palace, 5 September 1998
(COURTESY HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES)

away being included at 1s per cubic yard £100; Opening a trench round the bason about 2216 feet in Length that being the whole circumference thereof & to a great depth to the bed of clay which in some part lyes 15 feet below the surface out of which trench will be taken about 14777 cubic yards of sand. This trench is to be thus opened to receive a wall of clay raised from that bottom to the surface of the Lawn to confine the water in the said bason which other wise would waste thro the veins of sand in which the said bason is dug to the great injury of the beauty of that water & the health of the palace. For raising & finishing the head of the lake & the walks round the same to levell some parts thereof is already raised by ramming them light with clay & proper earth will take up about 3506 cube yards also finishing the brickwork belonging to the same the several expences of digging & ramming being included at 1s per cube yard, £200 6s; Good earth wanting to be done to the great circular Lawn amounting to about 2400 cube yards the charge of digging loading & carting of which being included at 1s per Cube yard £120; levelling the great circular Lawn containing upwards of 21 acres & covering the same with the earth brought for that purpose the several charges of levelling spreading the earth to proper levels & sowing the same being about 3282 square rods with grass seeds all those charges being included at 2s 6d per rod £422 15s 0d; Trenching & preparing for planting the large piece of ground that lies between the east side of the lake & the boundary wall contain about 1110 square rods at 1s 6d per rod, £3 5s; planting the said piece of ground which will take up about 12,103 plants the trees to be drawn out of quarters already planted the several charges of taking up pruning carriage & planting at 1s per plant £50 8s 7d; Replanting about 1195 standard elms already dead the charge of the trees taking up & water carriage planting & insuring them at 10s per tree, £597 10s; Brick arches where necessary to convey the water cross the walks & for making a proper conveyance for carrying the winter waters from the lake in a workman-like sufficient & warrantable manner & for finishing the mouth of the conveyance of water out of the great bason the materials in the brick wall to be pulled down betwixt the old garden & the paddock together with the moving & herbage of the ground till the same is finished being hereby granted to the undertaker £86 16s 9d;²³

The bills he later submitted to the Office of Works substantiate the works he completed over the next few years, as well as enumerating such things as the quantity and variety of trees

planted. For example, a bill of 11 July 1729 lists:

...151 large dutch elms at 40s each; 13 dutch plantans at 15s each; 1140 English elms at 12s each; 156 oaks, 18 chestnuts and 798 English elms at 10s each; 554 English elms at 8s each; one standard elm at 3s 6d; 266 striped Holleys and 15 pollards at 3s each; 53 elms; 15 chesnuts, and 2 crabs at 30d each; 259 almonds; 437 Hollys, 119 oaks and 3 ash's at 2d each; 127 dwarf almonds, woo horse chesnuts; 400 Spanish chesnuts, and 95 evergreen oaks at 18d each; 36 evergreen oaks at 16d each; 6448 standard elms, 2925 limes, 508 horse chesnuts, 217 spruce firs, and 120 scotch firs at 15d each, and for 250 oaks, 1134 standard elms, 5589 limes, 100 beaches, 214 walnuts, 940 chesnuts and 266 firs at 12d each; and for sweet briars, filberts, shrubs, thorns under 12d ea;²⁴

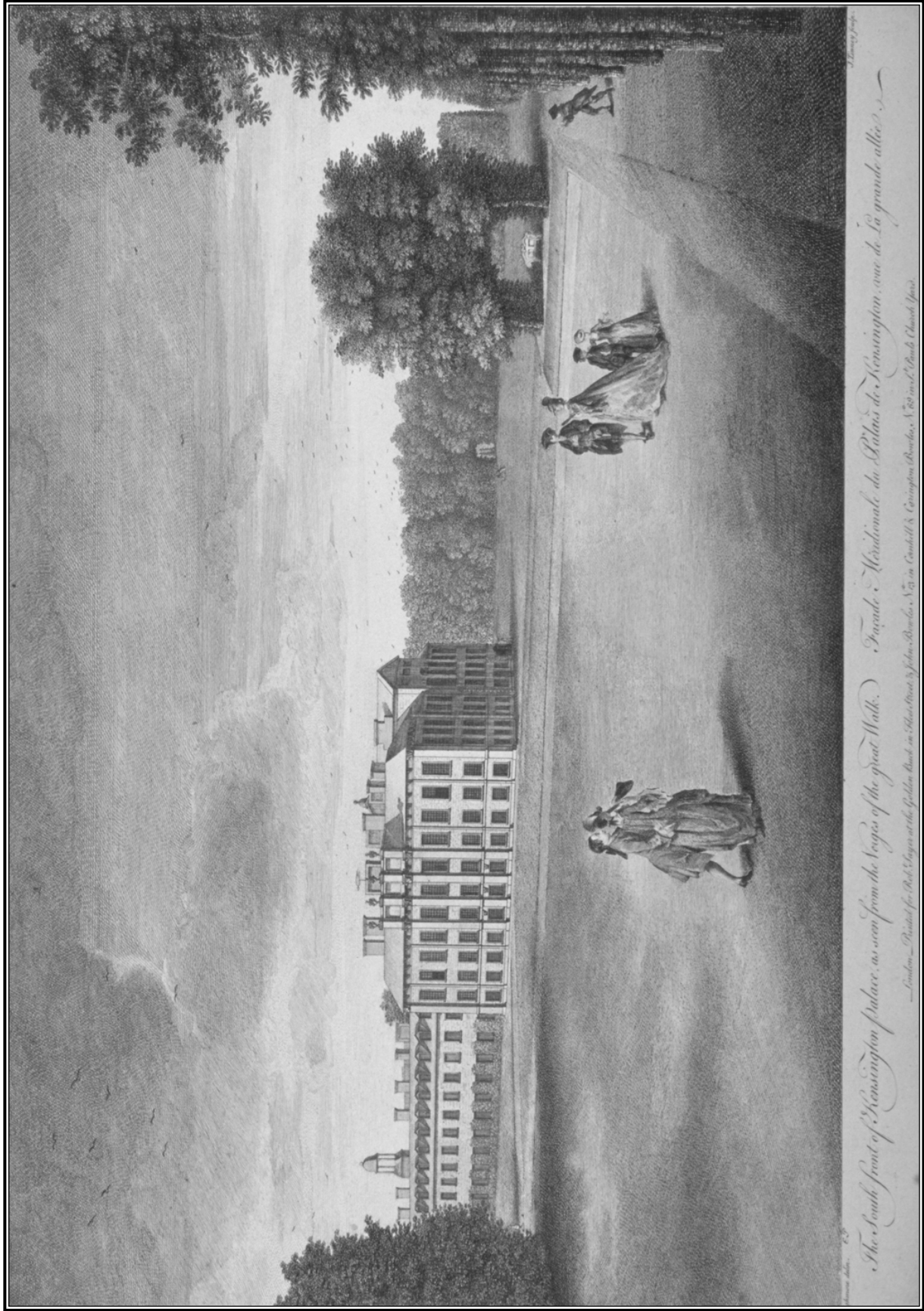
Bridgeman was instructed to make drastic changes to the old formal gardens dating from William and Mary's time and later recast by Queen Anne, 'according to a plan thereof as directed by Her Majesty from the Orangery down to the southern extent next the town [Kensington High Street] ... to be laid with turf and for replanting the evergreens taken out of the quarter to be layed into Lawn as specified in the said plan..²⁵ The ensuing works to replace the earlier formality with open lawns and terraces show how radical the new approach by Bridgeman under Queen Caroline's direction was to prove. (*fig. 12*) The gardens to the south that were swept away and replaced by lawn under Bridgeman included the area now referred to as Apartment 1A Garden abutting the south front of the palace – most recently Princess Margaret's private garden and walled off for that purpose by the late 1950s;²⁶ Clump Lawn, running from the present wall of Apartment 1A Garden to the Broad Walk in the east and from the palace to the edge of Southern Gardens and Dial Walk in the south, which were themselves also part of the former gardens laid to lawn. The broad central path that constitutes Dial Walk is a vestige of George London's flower garden for William and Mary, and Wise's later layout for Queen Anne. By c.1800 the two large expanses either side of Dial Walk were known as Home Lawn to the west and Slope Lawn to the east, the latter so-called on account of the large slope raised on the eastern edge of the

23. NA, Works 6/114, fos. 19-21.

24. NA, AO 1/2480/282.

25. NA, Works 6/114, fo. 21v.

26. See 1958 aerial photo at *fig. 22*.



17. John Tinney after Joseph Highmore
*View of the South Front of Kensington Palace
with figures in the foreground, c.1751
showing the sloping escarpments*
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)

garden where it joined the Broad Walk. (figs. 13 & 14) Although this large earth embankment is an important relic feature that pre-dates Bridgeman,²⁷ terraces and earthworks nearer to the palace's south front, and which survive in part, were his work. These are clearly indicated on the Ordnance Survey 1ST and 2ND Edition maps (1860s and 1894-96) but are now partially obscured by modern planting. (figs. 15 & 16) An Archaeological Survey by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) in 1994 made a detailed analysis of the earthwork remains,²⁸ which in this area revealed a terraced garden compartment, shown on the right of an engraving by John Tinney of c.1750 with a seat sheltered by two trees, (fig. 17) and another terrace along the south front, also visible in the Tinney engraving. (fig. 18)

Central to Queen Caroline's new scheme was the further extension of the gardens to the east. Adjacent to the palace's east front, the formal beds, gravel paths and low palisade fencing that allowed open views to the east and Hyde Park beyond were removed when it was laid to grass and this area became known as Palace Lawn, which in turn gave onto the semi-circular lawn around the Round Pond. The RCHME Survey of 1994 again delineates Bridgemanic earthworks, including a 'prominent south-facing scarp' from the eastern side of the palace to the north-west side of the Round Pond that defines the northern edge of the view eastwards from the palace; a further 'broad, gentle south-facing scarp' that defines part of the northern edge of the semi-circular terrace around the Round Pond; a 'gently curving, west-facing scarp' that defines part of the eastern edge of the terrace around the Pond; and finally a 'massive scarp . . . curving slightly northward along its general west to east course' that defines the southern edge of

the semi-circular lawn.²⁹ Topographical views from c.1737 to the early nineteenth century show these crisp earthworks, which were referred to in the 1870s as 'the green hills with which the gardens abound'.³⁰ By the late 1860s Palace Lawn was once more enclosed and laid out as a garden by the Duke of Teck. Another area near the palace that appears to have been landscaped by Bridgeman is the small area now called Alice's Tree Garden after Princess Alice who planted a tree here in c.1957, overlooked by the Queen's Gallery and at the southern end of Brazen Face Walk – now called Jubilee Walk.³¹ John Rocque's plan of 1736 and engravings by Tinney and others of the east front of the period show this as a terrace and shallow slope overlooking the east gardens to Hyde Park beyond. (fig. 19) Terraces had been a common feature since at least the early seventeenth century. According to Stephen Switzer, writing in 1718: 'rais'd Walks' were 'necessary for the proper elevation of any Person that walks around his Garden, to view all that lyes round him'. They were also 'absolutely necessary, both as to Use and Beauty' as they were often built of 'Earth, Clay, Rubbish, &c. that necessarily comes out of the Cellars and Foundations'.³²

What is today the Sunken Garden, laid out in 1908/09, had probably been another formal garden that was laid to open lawn by Bridgeman; here the ground was re-levelled to form a steep bank with a small projecting bastion on its north side, the bastion preserving the tail-end of an earlier alley of trees that marked the former boundary of the royal garden. Nearby, the geometric garden to the south of the Orangery laid out in 1704/5 and enclosed by hedges to the south and east, remains on John Rocque and Bridgemanic plans as a formal layout. In the large area that was formerly Queen Anne's Wilderness Garden to the north of the palace and west of

27. The line of this escarpment is shown on plans by Wise c.1706 and Paul Sandby pre-1726; it may have originally been cut to provide a terrace for the early eighteenth-century formal gardens, but later heightened by deposited material when the landscaping around the Round Pond was created from 1726. See *Kensington Gardens, London Borough of the City of Westminster, An Archaeological Survey by The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, Part 2: Report for the National Monuments Record*, Royal Parks Project, March 1994, p. 9; this report built on an earlier earthworks study in 1989 by Travers Morgan, of which only one plan appears to have survived.

28. RCHME Report, 1994 *op. cit.*, p. 9.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

30. Edward Walford *Old and New London* (1877), vol 5, pp. 159-160. Walford provides a lively description of Princess Victoria in Kensington Gardens in the 1820s with her mother and sister, Princess Feodore, with her little cart running 'with astonishing rapidity the whole length of the broad gravel walk, or up and down the green hills with which the gardens abound'.

31. According to William Loftie, *op. cit.*, p. 54: 'The path by the side of what is now an open field was known in old times as Brazen Face Walk, called, no doubt, from a bronze statue or bust which stood on it.' It was probably formed in the early eighteenth century as an access route to the north front of the Palace and was only later lined with trees, well after Bridgeman's time.

32. Stephen Switzer *Ichnographia Rustica* (1718), vol. 1, pp. 150-51.

Broad Walk, Bridgeman’s intervention lay in the insertion of serpentine paths, although by the mid-1780s much of the layout was lost. As to the gardens west of the palace, including Palace Gardens and Kensington Palace Green, no references to Bridgeman’s activities have yet surfaced.

The sweeping away of the formal gardens was followed in 1728 by the completion of the *Grand Walk* (now the Broad Walk), according to William Loftie ‘the noblest feature of the Gardens’, and who described it in 1898 as follows:

The Broad Walk is edged by four rows of elms, which border a gravelled roadway, sixty feet wide. It descends the hill for more than half a mile from Black Lion Gate on the Bayswater Road, to near the site of the old Cavalry Barracks, now Palace Gate, on the Kensington Road. Many of the trees are of considerable antiquity, and it is possible that some of them are of Queen Caroline’s planting. [...] The ground to the westward of the Broad Walk appears to have been scarped, so that between the Palace and the Walk there is a bank. This used to be Slope Lawn. It was edged by a second avenue which led direct from the south front of the main building of the Palace. This walk terminated at the Alcove ... At that time the Gardens were bounded on the south by a brick wall, and the Alcove was arranged, with a clump of old trees, to hide the wall and to end a charming vista from the windows.³³

1729 saw the erection of north and south boundary walls, and the great circular lawn round the *Great Bason* (the North and South Bason Lawns), the Great Bow and giant *pate-d’oie* of great walks, the spokes of which radiated across the gardens. The central spoke, known as the Front Walk, centred on the Great Bason and was thrust over the New River (as designated on John Rocque’s plan of 1736, now the Serpentine) to terminate in a bastion on the boundary with Hyde Park. The Serpentine, or the Canal, was another of Queen Caroline’s ambitious improvements in which Bridgeman was centrally involved. It was formed from a line of six marshy ponds connected by the Westbourne, a small river rising in Hampstead which entered Hyde Park near what was once a small hamlet called Bayswatering. As with the Great Bason, Charles Withers had day-to-day responsibility

for the Serpentine and work here began in late September 1730 and was completed by May the following year.

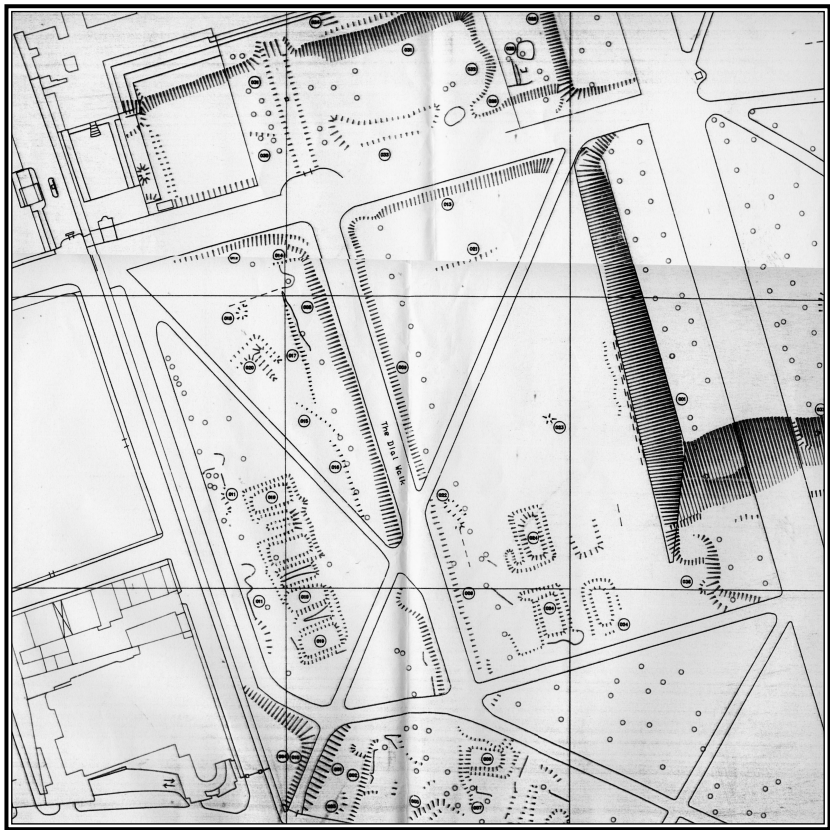
Diagonal and serpentine walks were created in the Paddocks by 1731 and by 1732 a conical mount was raised in the south-east corner of the gardens at the western end of Rotten Row (corrupted from *La Route du Roi*, the road created by William III soon after he purchased Nottingham House), the adjacent gate formerly known as Mount Gate. (*fig. 20*) This mount was created using excavated earth, possibly from the creation of the Serpentine or from Bridgeman’s ha-ha built between Hyde Park and the royal gardens, a dry trench with a slope on the outer side and a vertical stone wall built up to ground level on the inner side. At the top of the mount and approached via a spiral path was William Kent’s ‘little but very picturesque temple, known as The Tower of the Winds’,³⁴ a structure that could be revolved to avoid the wind, said to be Queen Elizabeth I’s invention and first seen at Windsor. According to Daniel Defoe, the seat on Bridgeman’s Mount at Kensington was ‘more ambitious [than the one at Windsor], having a pediment at its centre, supported by caryatids’.³⁵ Another of the garden buildings built at Kensington by 1734/5 and almost certainly designed by Kent was the Queen’s Temple, like the Temple of the Winds constructed of Bath stone, visible in a view by Tinney looking across the Serpentine towards Kensington Palace; (*fig. 21*) it was later incorporated into a park-keeper’s lodge.

The area beyond the Royal Paddock merged into Hyde Park, where Bridgeman also had some responsibilities during Caroline’s reign since they were treated as interdependent. He also undertook work on a number of the roads in the royal parks under Richard Arundell, Surveyor of the King’s Private Roads, including the King’s New Road, which ran from Kensington to Hyde Park Corner. This was south of Rotten Row, which was also known as the King’s Old Road or Lamp Road due to the lamps put up as a safety measure against robbers. In 1735 a road inside the boundary wall of Kensington Gardens was made to provide the Queen with

33. Loftie, *op. cit.*, p. 47. The Alcove was designed by Wren and placed at the end of Dial Walk; in 1860 it was moved to the northern end of the Serpentine where it remains.

34. Loftie, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

35. Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London, 1724–27).



18. Plan of TQ2579 NE & NW showing earthworks,
prepared for Kensington Palace Gardens Survey, March 1989; drawing no 3L/12919
(COURTESY ENGLISH HERITAGE)

19. John Tinney after Joseph Highmore *East Front of Kensington Palace with figures*, c.1751
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)



20. Bernard Lens the Younger, drawing of ‘The Mount’, 1736
(COURTESY KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA BOROUGH LIBRARY)

21. John Tinney after Joseph Highmore *A perspective View of Part of the Serpentine River
with the Queen’s Temple & a distant View of the Palace of Kensington*, c.1736
(COURTESY GUILDHALL LIBRARY, CORPORATION OF LONDON)



22. Aerial photo of 19 September 1958 showing the development of the whole landscape around the royal park at Kensington
(COURTESY HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES)

some privacy from the bustle beyond the walls.

However, by 1733 Bridgeman's dramatic transformation of the royal gardens at Kensington was largely implemented and his royal duties there presumably focused on their maintenance. Queen Caroline died in 1737 and although some of her garden ideas and rejection of formal style had some deriders, the gardens at Kensington were widely praised and became immensely popular with the public. From the 1730s onwards they had had a limited opening to the 'respectable public' but by 1820 Thomas Faulkner was writing that the gardens were 'now open every day, winter and summer ... the great south walk leading to the palace, is crowded on Sunday mornings in the spring and summer, with a display of all the beauty and fashion of the great metropolis'.³⁶

Charles Bridgeman died of dropsy on 19 July 1738 and was buried at St James's Church, Piccadilly. After his death, responsibility for the royal gardens was divided between a number of people – Samuel Milward at St James's and Kensington, George Lowe at Hampton Court, John Kent at Windsor and Newmarket, and the Greenings at Richmond.

What is quite extraordinary is that, of the great number of prestigious garden commissions undertaken by Bridgeman, the bones of one his most important royal landscapes should have survived so remarkably intact in central London, given the pressures of development and the changes that have taken place. Equally extraordinary, perhaps, is the fact that people are not generally aware of Bridgeman's powerful legacy in one of London's great royal parks. It is hoped that the planned re-presentation of the gardens, which should include the erection of interpretative panels, will enable the wider public to appreciate the extent and importance of these curious earthworks that the ingenious Mr Bridgeman created in order to provide Kensington Palace with its uninterrupted views over the developing landscape. (fig. 22)

36. Thomas Faulkner, *History and Antiquities of Kensington* (London, 1820).

DON'T EAT THE DUCKS – TRANSGRESSION IN PUBLIC PARKS By The Perambulator

Don't Eat the Ducks' signs have recently gone up in an HLF-funded public park, in response to a wave of duck-losses caused apparently by East European workers in search of a cheap meal. The message is reproduced in several different languages, all on boards fixed to the railings by the park lodge. Bizarre though this might seem, it is a message that often had to be conveyed to the users of public parks on their opening – for example, signs saying 'Please Protect the Wildfowl' and 'No Guns or Sporting Dogs' were erected around the public walks at Durlston on the edge of Swanage when it was opened in the late nineteenth century.

The nineteenth-century drive to create public parks as lungs for a metropolis is well documented. But when the first public parks opened they were an entirely new kind of landscape. A public park was not a private garden in which the rights of an owner might be respected: they were purchased by the people and dedicated to the people. And it was not countryside of the kind workers had generally used for recreation where it was accessible. When the public first entered public parks, no one knew how to behave in them.

When Phillips Park in Manchester was opened in 1846, the first funded by public subscription, it opened without keepers or any signs. Within a week the Corporation hastened to address both, realising, for example, that the natural reaction of city-dwellers to the sight of flowers, which was to pick a posy to take home, had to be firmly discouraged. Rural Americans arriving for the first time in New York and making their way to Central Park had to be discouraged from a wide range of 'inappropriate' recreational pursuits, such as horseshoe-hurling, tomahawk-twirling and bullet-throwing.

Notoriously, the history of public parks is filled with *Do Not* signs, and correspondingly filled with transgression. In 1849, it was estimated that in three hours on one summer day, three thousand people bathed in the eastern lake of Victoria Park, Bow, a use condemned by the park's designer, James Pennethorne,