

father, who delighted in the garden, complained that it was a mere osier-bed'.¹¹ These willows would have been planted with great significance, since they were associated with the destruction of Pope's villa, further upriver at Cross Deep, Twickenham,¹² at the hands of Baroness Howe, which prompted Turner's elegiac painting *The Dilapidation of Pope's Villa at Twickenham* in 1808, and the verses which he wrote to accompany its exhibition at the Royal Academy. Through the sister arts of poetry and painting, Turner lamented the loss of the building and all it represented, including 'Pope's willow bending to the earth forgot/Save one weak scion by my fostering care/Nursed into life...'¹³ So the 'mere osier-bed' may have had a poetic lineage, traceable to Alexander Pope's famous garden. In Havell's drawing, the pond may be indicated just to the left of the standing figure: some later colourists of Cooke's engravings added a touch of blue at that point.

In spite of Old William's fondness for Sandycombe, his failing health, 'always working in the garden and catching cold, and required looking after',¹⁴ among other reasons, prompted Turner to sell the house in 1826, taking his father back to London – 'Daddy being now released from farming thinks of feeding', he wrote to James Holworthy in January 1826.¹⁵ The house changed hands many times, and it and the grounds changed with the owners; the 1863 Ordnance Survey (*fig. 4*) shows the rectangular ponds replaced by a large circular water feature, possibly with a little bridge and an island in the centre, boundary and curving paths still appear, and a number of large trees are shown, including conifers formally spaced, quite close to the house. This map shows a large conservatory, perhaps also with a greenhouse, abutting the garden facade. In the surrounding area the earlier informal pattern of fields has given way to the planting of commercial orchards. By the OS survey of 1897, the Sandycombe plot had been considerably diminished as the area became increasingly urbanised with the coming of the railway. This continued the

gradual process of breaking up the large estates nearby, as well as the division of more modest plots, that had begun early in the nineteenth century. The gardens of the surrounding houses are, however, richly endowed with mature trees, so that in summer it is still possible to stand, as Turner did, 'to refresh his eye with the run of the boughs from his sitting-room window'.¹⁶ In 1947 Professor and Mrs Livermore bought Sandycombe Lodge. Professor Livermore died in 2010, bequeathing the house to the Sandycombe Lodge Trust, which is now undertaking conservation studies in which the history of the grounds will play a part. To have the opportunity to bring back a work by Turner, unique in being a work of architecture by a major painter for his own use, brings us to an exciting point in its history.

Catherine Parry-Wingfield is trustee of the Sandycombe Lodge Trust.

The Trust's website:

www.turnerintwickenham.org.uk

"PLEASURABLE MEMENTOES": SUTTON NICHOLLS'S VIEWS OF THE LONDON SQUARE IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By Anna Maude

Topographical prints as a genre have so far failed to ignite the curiosity of art historians, who seem infuriatingly comfortable nodding along to the accepted doctrine that the value of the topographical plate lies in the accuracy of its delineation. Those images that can claim notable aesthetic qualities are no longer trusted as 'topographical', and so are elevated to the position of 'art object', to be judged on attribution, style and technique.¹ This has left many fascinating images woefully understudied, particularly those produced in the eighteenth century, when the topographical plate made up a significant portion of the entire print trade in London. In the course of compiling the online

11. Thornbury, *op.cit.*

12. Alexander Pope lived at Cross Deep from 1727 to 1744.

13. Several of Turner's sketchbooks and his Verse Book of 1808 contain drafts for this poem (Turner Bequest, Tate Britain).

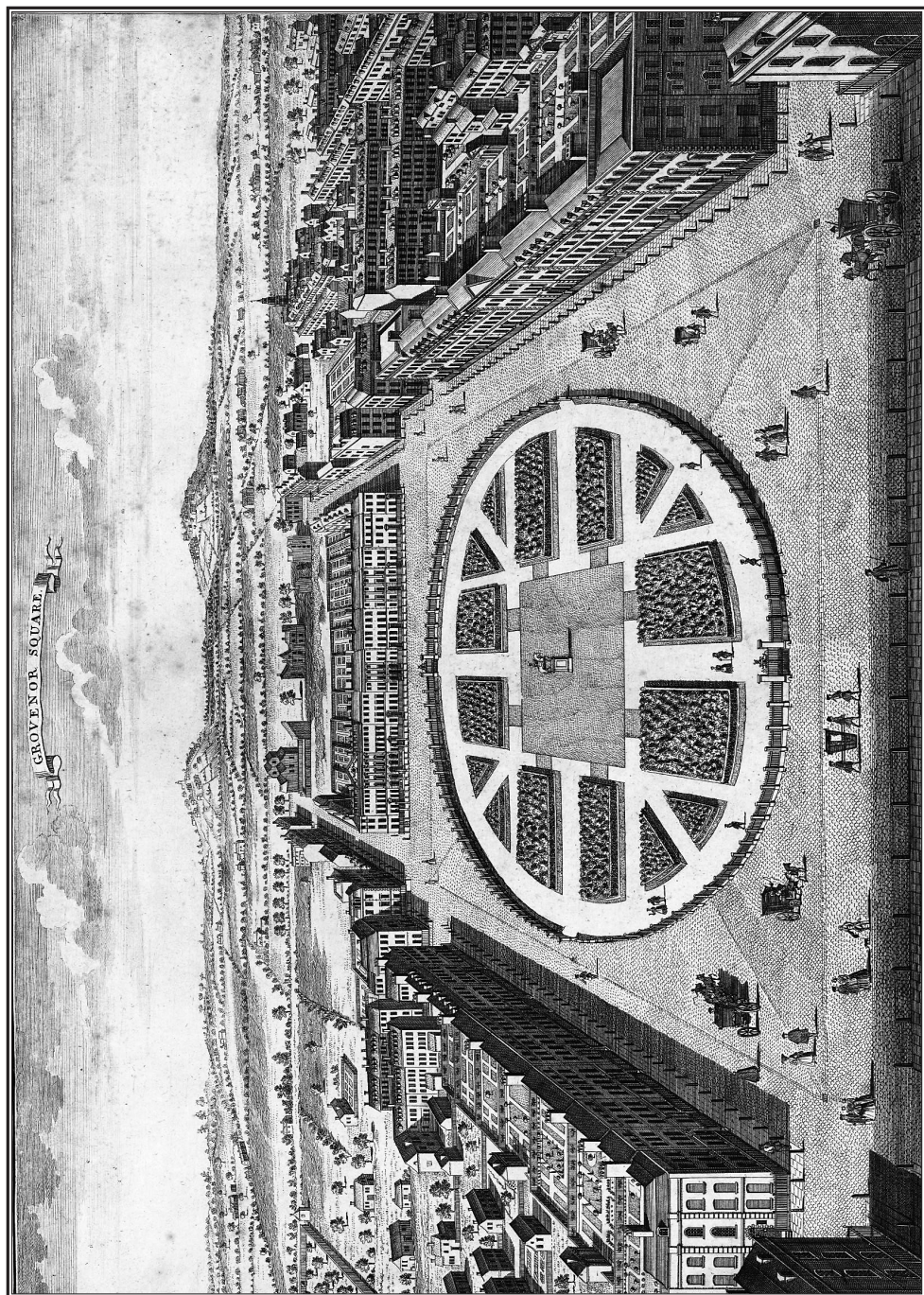
14. Thornbury, *op.cit.*

15. Gage, *op.cit.*

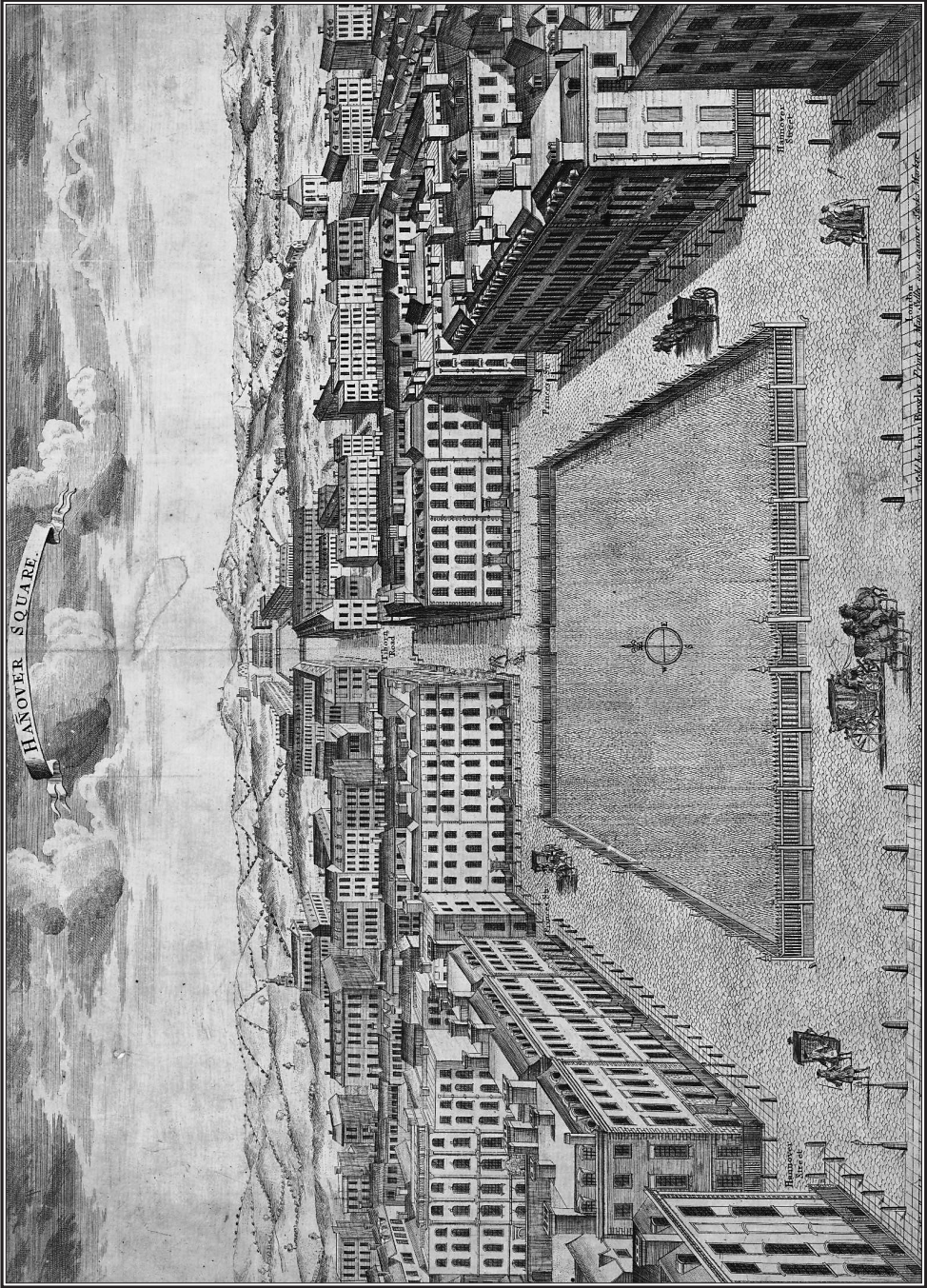
16. Thornbury, *op.cit.*

1. For an example of this view see Martin Hardie, discussed in M.W. Barley's *A Guide to British Topographical Collections* (London, 1974), p.5.

For a coherent discussion of the problem see Felicity Myrone, 'The Monarch of the Plain: Paul Sandby and Topography', in Bonehill and Daniels ed. *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain* (London, 2009) pp.57-63.



6. Sutton Nicholls, *Grovenor Square* c.1730, etching and engraving
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)



7. Sutton Nicholls, *Hanover Square* c.1725, etching and engraving,
published by John Bowles in *London Described* (1731)
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

catalogue for the British Museum's substantial topographical collection, it became clear to me that many of these prints deserved far more attention than they had previously received.² Some of the most striking are the early eighteenth century views of London squares by the engraver Sutton Nicholls, described by Bernard Adams in his seminal work on the London illustrated book as "pleasurable mementoes of early eighteenth century urbanity".³

Nicholls began his series of bird's eye views of London's squares in the 1720s, and these plates were brought together, along with other views of London buildings by Nicholls and others, and collectively published by John Bowles under the title *London Described* in 1731. While Nicholls had worked on other topographical plates, it is for these views of the squares that he is best known, due to their popularity with both contemporary audiences and later collectors.⁴ Indeed, the plates were still considered relevant 25 years after their first publication, as they were reissued in 1754 in the sixth edition of Stow's *Survey of London*. By mid-century prints were often advertised by print-sellers as 'amusing' or 'curious', but Nicholls's plates were not re-published as an amusing aside, but in a contemporary architectural publication. The plates today are admittedly charming, with an undeniable old world appeal, but the pleasant nature of the views does not explain their lasting appeal and success, nor why they were chosen in 1754 over other, more modern views. In order to get a better understanding of these plates it is necessary to look beyond their aesthetic qualities and documentary value, and place them in the wider context in which the images were created. In the case of Nicholls's squares this context was a crucial period in the history of garden square design, as well as one that saw rapid expansion in the evolving field of topographical print-making in the capital.

The residential square in London's West End in the early eighteenth century is most commonly perceived as the domain of the elegant, privileged elite living in a great, global

metropolis. The squares attracted the best residents, as they offered space, convenience, prestige and a solution to the country gentleman who wished to keep in contact with the society of London, but balked at spending significant time in the choked, crowded, crime-ridden streets of the city. Following the Plague and Great Fire of the 1660s, this dilemma became all the more acute. The West End developments were largely designed in the aftermath of these disasters, aimed at the upper classes.⁵ It was certainly the hope of the planners that the squares would attract the best sort of tenants, and given the level of citizen residing in the new squares, as documented by Wheatley & Cunningham,⁶ and the many accounts of the West End as the domain of the elite,⁷ there is no reason to suggest that they failed. Admittedly by 1731, Covent Garden, the city's first square⁸ (planned in 1631) had evolved into a bohemian neighbourhood largely abandoned by the aristocracy, but the reputation of the other West End squares as the place to be was untarnished, especially the new developments of Hanover square (1713) and Grosvenor square (1725).⁹ Contemporary prints support the notion that the West End, and particularly the squares, was the realm of the elite. Nicholls's plates ignore any traces of smoke, fog, soot, dirt, or the darker side of society, and the buildings are somewhat homogenized, probably due in part to the effects of the bird's eye perspective (see figs. 6-9).¹⁰ The occasional street trader is included, but they are not marked out as threatening or degrading characters, and the prints don't hint at the annoyance their presence must have caused to

5. See Donald J. Olsen, *Town Planning in London: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (New Haven and London, 1982), p.20.

6. Wheatley & Cunningham, *London Past and Present*, 3 vols (London, 1891), p.187 for Hanover Square.

7. See, for example, Roy Porter, 'The Wonderful Extent and Variety of London', in O'Connell ed. *London 1753* (London, 2003) pp.9-11; and Peter Thorold, *The London Rich: the creation of a great city from 1666 to the present* (London, 2001). Thorold discusses the attempts to keep the poor out of the new West End developments, showing that it was the desire of the planners and the residents to restrict the occupants of the new buildings to the better sort. See p.43.

8. It has been argued that Lincoln's Inn Fields and even Moorfields were the first city squares, but Covent Garden piazza was the first planned space designed as a square as we now know it.

9. For a detailed discussion of the development of the London Square, see Elizabeth McKellar, 'Open Spaces in the City: from Field to Squares and Gardens', in *The Birth of Modern London: the development and design of the city 1660-1720* (Manchester, 1999); Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Square: Gardens in the Midst of Town* (New Haven and London, 2012).

10. Homogeneity was the ideal, but in practice, very few London squares achieved it.

2. The online catalogue can be found at www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.

3. Bernard Adams, *London Illustrated 1604-1851* (London, 1983) p.69.

4. Today, the collection is rarely found intact, due to the popularity of the individual prints as decoration. See Adams, *London Illustrated op. cit.*, p.69.

residents. Their inclusion in the plates points to their ubiquity, and the general disregard paid to staffage at this time suggests that Nicholls was simply filling in space. However, one must be careful in placing too much emphasis on the elite nature of the squares, and in trusting in the views as reliable documents of the past. The presence of thieves, beggars, and the problems of licentious behaviour were everyday realities inflicted on the residents of the elite squares, as well as the slums.¹¹ Indeed, Jeremy Boulton's study of the poor in the West End from 1600-1724 provides a convincing argument that the social exclusivity of the district has been over-emphasized, and reminds us that the poor were always closer by and most importantly more visible, than contemporary city views suggest.¹² It is important here to take a closer look at the issues surrounding the topographical print in the early eighteenth century, in order to understand these images more fully.

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, topography was one of the primary markets for London's print-sellers, owing to the exciting new development and expansion of the city following the Great Fire of 1666.¹³ Views of new buildings drew an audience, as these were the aspects of the city that people wanted to see in print. This was essential. No views were made unless an audience for them existed, and the tastes of this audience in turn determined the style of print produced. Over the course of the first half of the eighteenth century the style and form of topographical plates produced in London evolved, as they adapted to changing tastes and a growing market, as shall be discussed in more detail further on.¹⁴ What is important to recognize is that the London seen in contemporary prints is the London people wanted to see. It was the market, rather than a concern for accurate delineation that motivated the print-sellers.

This is interesting, as it can help to shed light on what it was that people valued about the square, and wanted recorded for posterity. This was certainly not the beggars and thieves who must have resided in the open space, and accordingly, their presence is eradicated from the views. Neither was it an ostentatious display of wealth and status; residents reserved flamboyant statements for the country house. Instead, the views are most successful at displaying a rather more subtle attribute of the new squares. The London square has an undeniably understated elegance. It did not shout magnificence and grandeur, as did the grand buildings of Rome and Paris. Evidently, for those living in and experiencing London, other factors were more important.¹⁵ Most notably, the early eighteenth-century squares provided a sense of air, space, openness, and views, qualities distinctly lacking from the crowded, clogged city. Many contemporary accounts remark on the sense of space, and with that, the circulation of fresh air, that the squares provided.¹⁶ As early as 1665 it was noted of Bloomsbury,

It is the best air and finest prospect, being the highest ground, and overlooking other parts of the city. The fields bordering upon this place are very pleasant and dry grounds for walking and improving of health.¹⁷

Space, air and views were the most valued attributes of urban residential living, and they became closely associated with the square. Many of the new West End squares benefited from proximity to the countryside, which remained a vital component in the contentment of the English elite.¹⁸ At this early stage, the appeal of the square did not lie in its potential for creating a mini-countryside in the open space. Rather, the value of the square lay in fresh air, and a sense of openness: views across the space set them apart from other residential developments. The many new

11. The problems were particularly notable in Lincoln's Inn Fields. See Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Garden* (London, 2001) p.200.

12. Jeremy Boulton 'The poor amongst the rich: paupers and the parish' in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2000) especially p.216 and p.198.

13. See Timothy Clayton, *The English Print 1688-1802* (Yale, 1997), p.74 and Sheila O'Connell 'Curious and Entertaining: Prints of London and Londoners' in *London 1753*, *op. cit.*

14. Clayton has described the massive growth of the London print market, as more and more people desired knowledge and amusement, with money to pay.

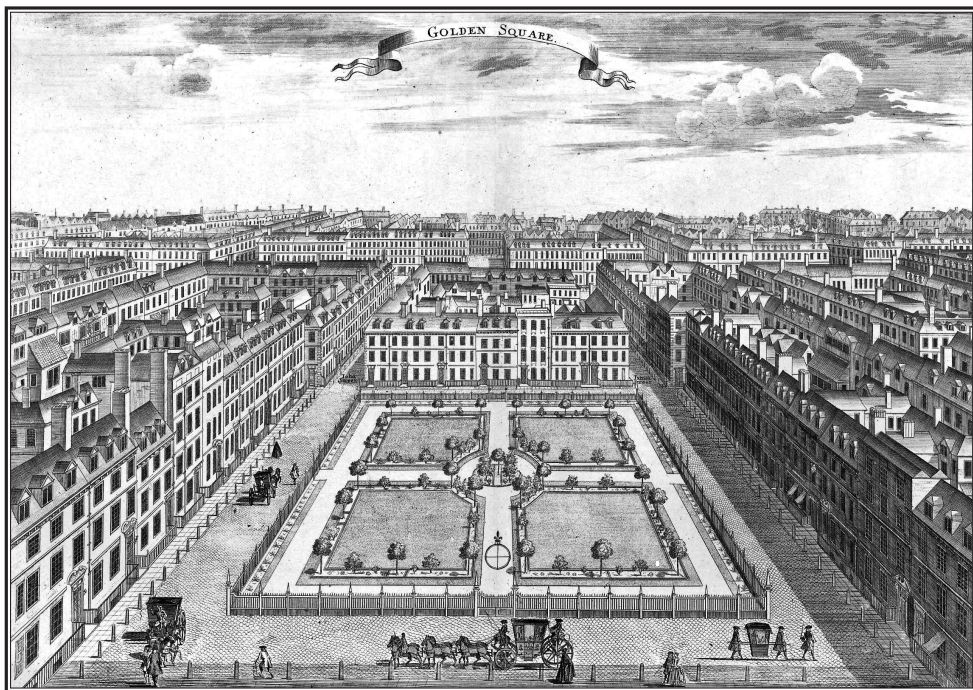
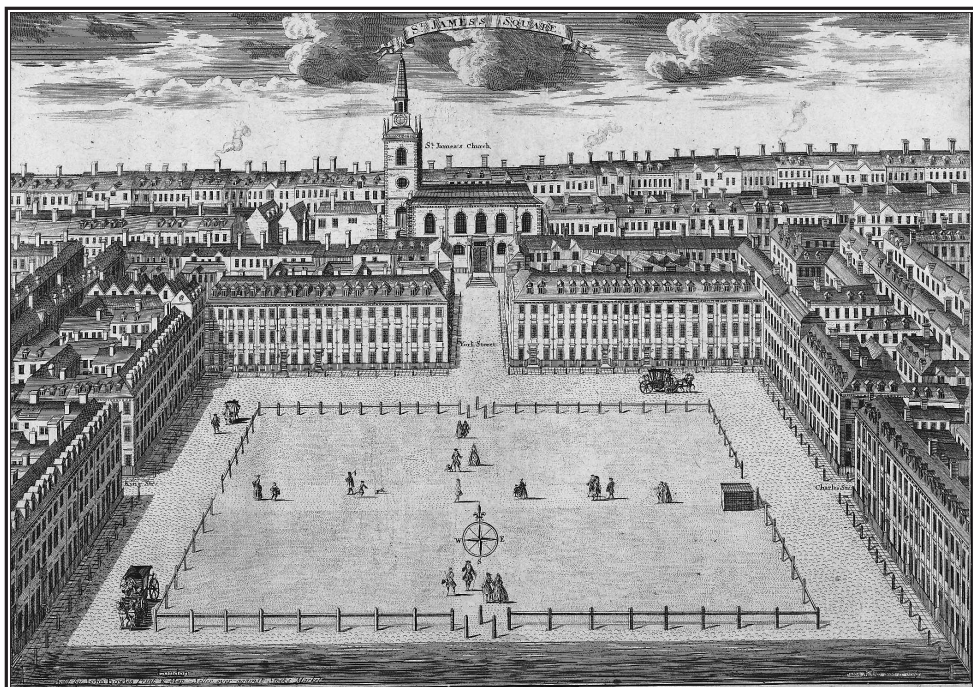
15. See Olsen, 'Introduction' in *Town Planning*, *op. cit.*

16. See the discussion of the squares and quotes in McKellar, 'Open Spaces' *op. cit.*, for example pp.195-7.

17. An eminent doctor, quoted in Thorold, *London Rich*, *op. cit.*, p.48.

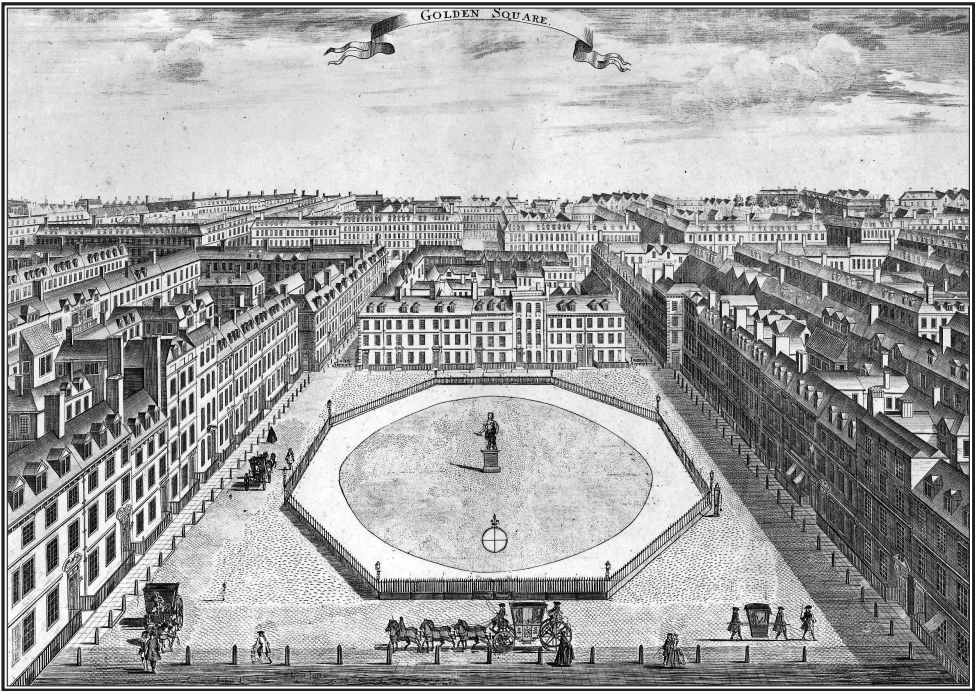
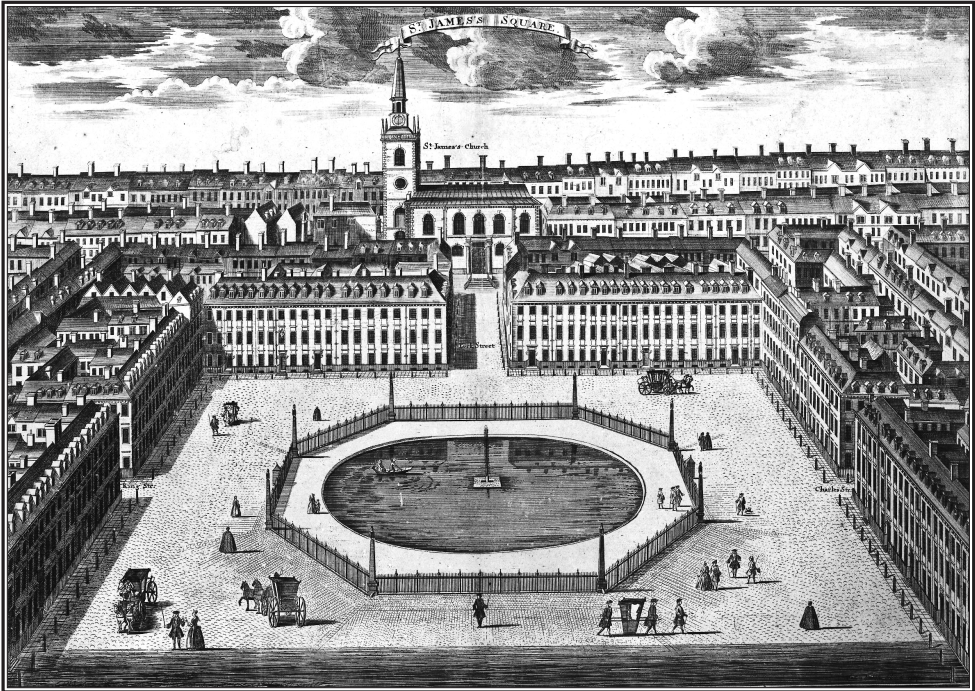
18. The country house was still the primary residence of many of London's elite. Thorold discusses the close links between the town house and the country residence that were maintained in the eighteenth century, in terms of practical considerations such as the transfer of goods, laundry, and mail. These links highlight the strong association the English felt to the countryside. See Thorold, *London Rich*, *op. cit.*, p.63.

“PLEASURABLE MEMENTOES”: SUTTON NICHOLLS’S VIEWS OF THE LONDON SQUARE



8. Sutton Nicholls, *St James's Square* c.1720, etching and engraving
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

9. Sutton Nicholls, *Golden Square* c.1725, etching and engraving,
published by John Bowles in *London Described* (1731)
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)



10. Sutton Nicholls, *St James's Square* c.1720, this state 1754, etching and engraving,
published in the sixth edition of Stow's *Survey of London*
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

11. Sutton Nicholls, *Golden Square* c.1725, this state 1754, etching and engraving,
published in the sixth edition of Stow's *Survey of London*
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

squares built on the edge of town, such as Soho, Queen, Hanover, Grosvenor and Bloomsbury squares, would have also commanded views out onto the fields to the north. It was these aspects of the square that Nicholls's views capture so brilliantly, and what sets them apart from later topographical views of London squares.

One of the most interesting aspects of Nicholls's plates is their focus on the space of the square itself, and the views beyond, rather than the architecture. This was a phenomenon peculiar to this series of plates, and does not appear in topographical views of squares in the same way again. By adopting a bird's eye view, Nicholls was able to represent the entire square, which engulfs the whole central section of the plate. Unusually for topographical plates of this time, the surrounding buildings are not the main focus of the view. They seem to act more as a border for the square, further emphasizing the proximity to the countryside beyond, when relevant. The bird's eye perspective also offers a view of the layout of the square gardens. When the squares were first built, little attention was paid to the design of the space: the primary function of the square was to provide fresh air and views. What did exist in the 1720s was carefully recorded by Nicholls, and one can safely assume that his depictions of the squares were largely accurate, due to the central role of the space in the print and given the attention to detail in altering the plates in later states, as we shall see further on. It is important to remember that at the time Nicholls was working not all the squares were enjoying the same fortunes. Some were relatively new, such as Hanover Square, Cavendish Square (begun in 1717), and Grosvenor Square, while others had been around for some time, such as St James's Square, planned in 1665, and Golden Square, built between 1670 and 1700. A comparison of the views of St James's Square, Hanover Square and Grosvenor Square is revealing.

On the one hand, with its plain large central space surrounded by a simple low wooden rail, St James's is a good example of early square planning, with its focus on space and views (see fig. 8). Little attempt at decoration has been made, and people stroll freely in the square. The open space of

Hanover square was similarly undeveloped, although the initial fence was higher with gates on each side, and the views out to the surrounding countryside is a prominent feature of the plate (fig. 7). Much of Hanover square's initial popularity lay in its 'vistas',¹⁹ and to use the term 'garden' to describe the square would be stretching the notion somewhat. Other squares tended to include sections of grass interspersed by gravel paths in a rectangular space, as seen in Bloomsbury, Soho and Golden squares (fig. 9). This style of garden square was criticized by Thomas Fairchild, who, in *The City Gardener* of 1722, wrote strongly of the need for a more 'rural' style of planting in London's squares.²⁰ His ideas appealed to Sir Richard Grosvenor, who ensured the formal planting of the large space in Grosvenor Square was more elaborate than any square in London. Grosvenor Square was the newest, and most fashionable of the squares pictured by Nicholls, and the garden stands out amongst his plates (fig. 6). The view shows the layout and planting of the square, with sections of shrubs, plants, and small trees, enclosed by circular railings, and, in the centre, an equestrian statue. Private gardens lie behind the houses, which had not been seen before, and the countryside seems within touching distance beyond. These differences were more significant than a simple preference for shrubs in Grosvenor square: the layout of the internal space impacted on the public nature of the square, and its function in the city, which was greatly to influence the design and improvement of London's squares. Nicholls's careful recordings of details in the first state of the plates demanded that alterations be made when the plates were reissued some 25 years later in the sixth edition of Stow's *Survey of London*, in which they played a starring role.²¹ This is remarkable for plates that were clearly outmoded by mid-century, especially given the strong interest in the new architecture of the

19. See Henry H. Lawrence, 'The Greening of the Squares of London: Transformation of Urban Landscapes & Ideals' in *The Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 83, March 1993.

20. For the history of the development of the London square garden see Longstaffe-Gowan, 'Garden Squares' in *London Town Garden*, *op. cit.*, pp.183-233.

21. The publishers' strategy to attract and hold subscribers involved issuing the best, most attractive plates in the first numbers, which included many of Nicholls's square views, and then holding others back until much later in the series, in parts 100-2. See Adams, *London Illustrated*, *op. cit.*, p.90.

city. Their enduring popularity is even more interesting when one considers developments to the topographical view in this time, as well as the fluctuating fortunes of the squares themselves.

The success of the Grosvenor Square garden elicited a new era in the history of the London square. In 1725, the residents of St James's Square, frustrated with the current lack of maintenance, petitioned for a private Act of Parliament transferring control of the upkeep of the square to the residents, which was granted in 1726. This was a significant moment in the history of London's squares, empowering residents to beautify and effectively enclose the previously public open space. The ensuing improvements to St James's square included paving, and a central basin surrounded by octagonal railings with lamp posts at the corners (*see fig. 10*). The introduction of heavy, high railings in place of the wooden fence that existed before is a sign of the developing movement towards increased exclusivity, which became a prominent theme in garden squares as the century progressed.²² The changes were made after Nicholls had engraved the square, but he promptly updated his plate in time for the 1731 publication. This was the only square to have already gone through the process of improvements before *London Described* came out, but the example of St James's Square was duly followed by residents of many of the other London squares, who recognized the potential of the private Act of Parliament for preserving both the upkeep of the square garden, and the social prestige of the square - vital for attracting the best residents.²³ By the time the plates were reissued in 1754, many of the squares had undergone some form of transformation. Often this was one of improvement, or at least, so it would appear to contemporaries. The octagonal railings used in St James's Square became a popular addition, used in Soho, Leicester, and Golden squares (*see fig. 11*),²⁴ reflecting, presumably, changing

gardening fashions, as well as the social prestige of the neighbourhood. However, by 1754, this was not necessarily a positive change. Some of the squares were in decline, and had not yet undergone improvements. Hanover Square is a good example, as the previous fence with gates has been replaced by a much simpler wooden railing, forming hurdles around the square, that were not replaced until much later in the century (*fig. 12*). Clearly, the alterations made to the plates for the Stow reissue are incredibly useful for marking changes to square gardens, and for highlighting a state of flux and transition in the state of London's squares. However, this is not the only point of note. The reissued plates were not simply interesting for documenting changes to the gardens. Indeed, when one considers the style and tone of other topographical plates issued around 1754, it becomes intriguing that the publishers felt the plates were worth re-engraving, and marketing at all, especially in a collection essentially celebrating new developments in London's architecture.

By mid-century, the topographical view in London had developed past Nicholls's very pleasant but somewhat crude and simplistic formula. There were two main factors influencing the shift in style and viewpoint that occurred. First was the influence of Canaletto, who arrived in London in 1746. Previously, the topographical view had been closely connected with map-making, so it was the subject itself, rather than the quality of the engraving, that was primary.²⁵ Canaletto introduced a new approach, shifting viewpoints down from the previous bird's eye to pedestrian levels, thus introducing the sky as a fundamental element in the view. Staffage provided scale and related directly to the surroundings, rather than being merely the fanciful additions seen on Nicholls's plates, and attention was paid to the fall of light and the view beyond the building (*see for example fig. 13*).²⁶ Essentially, Canaletto freed the view from the confines of map-making, and made it an art form. This fitted nicely with the general expansion of the London print market,

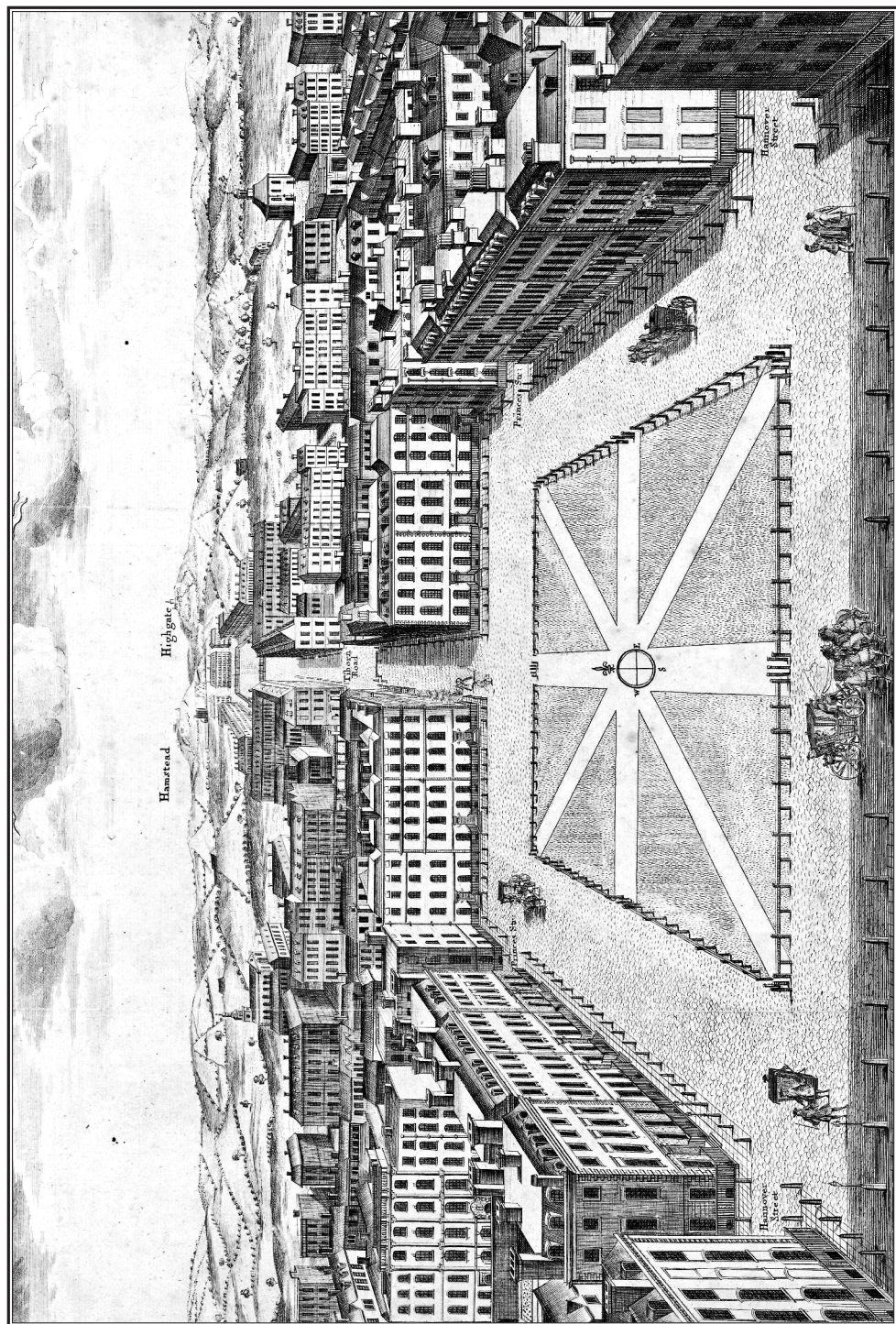
22. See Lawrence, 'The Greening of the Squares of London', *op. cit.*. Also McKellar, 'Open Spaces', *op. cit.* and Longstaffe-Gowan, 'Garden Squares', *op. cit.*

23. As it turned out, the Grosvenor Square garden was not repeated in other London squares, whose residents preferred a more simplified style that often involved a greater discrepancy between the enclosed central garden and the surrounding paths. Highly planted areas provided hideaways for thieves and licentious behaviour, which undoubtedly deterred residents from the Grosvenor garden style.

24. Golden Square was granted its own Act for improvement in 1750.

25. See Clayton, *English Print*, *op. cit.*, p.75.

26. For a good discussion of the influence of Canaletto see O'Connell, *op. cit.*, p.41.



12. Sutton Nicholls, *Hanover Square*, c.1725, this state 1754, etching and engraving, published in the sixth edition of Stow's *Survey of London*
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)



13. Thomas Bowles, after Canaletto, *A View of Northumberland House, Charing Cross*, 1753, etching
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

14. J. Maurer, *A Perspective View of Grosvenor Square*, 1746, etching and engraving
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

encouraged by an increasingly affluent and interested public, desirous of using new media for knowledge and entertainment. Topographical prints became a luxury commodity that more and more people were prepared to pay for.²⁷ The popularity of topographical prints was further enhanced by the second major trend that influenced the style of views at this time, namely the invention in the 1740s of the optical glass, or zograscope that created an illusion of three-dimensionality when looking at perspective views through a concave glass. The effect could only be gained through correct linear perspective, and printmakers, following the demands of their market, obliged (*see for example fig. 14*). This meant that the slightly strange perspectives of Nicholls's bird's eye views fell out of favour with printmakers. So, by 1754, Nicholls's plates, with their peculiar perspectives and outdated staffage, would have seemed old-fashioned to a market acquainted with the new style of topographical view. This raises interesting questions about why Nicholls's plates remained popular, and whether there was a significant change in their appeal.

One possible reason why Nicholls's plates continued to attract an audience at mid-century was their promotion of what was an essentially very British form of architecture. Clayton has shown that one factor fuelling the growth of the London print market was the sense of celebration of England's growing wealth and power in the prints produced.²⁸ *London Described* was an early example of a rising trend amongst print-sellers focusing on the beauties of English architecture, rather than depicting French or Italian views. These prints enabled Londoners to see the architecture of their own city, standing up to similar continental views displayed alongside them in print shops. The garden squares would have stood out as something peculiar to London, and so very British. The fortunes and demands of the London print trade would have also brought a new audience to the prints. *London Described* was aimed primarily at the market for gentleman's libraries, with the

prints designed to be collected as a series, and placed in portfolios. By 1754, this type of print had a much broader appeal, as suggested by John Bowles's sales catalogues, and the many small, cheap versions of views produced for those who could not afford the originals. The need for a print-seller to produce two versions of most London views, a sizeable, ornate version, and a small cheap copy, points to a strong demand for topographical views amongst a wide range of people. In addition, London views were attracting a more diverse audience. It had become popular to buy prints for framing or as wall paper in homes that could not afford expensive oil paintings. By 1749 the Bowles Sale Catalogues were suggesting possible uses for the prints sold. For example, maps and prints were advertised as 'being proper Ornaments for Chimney-pieces'.²⁹ This compares to the 1728 catalogue, which is much more sparse in its wording, presumably because the print-seller felt that the target audience for topographical and architectural plates at that time did not require commentary or suggestions. By mid-century it is highly likely Nicholls's re-issued plates were still desired by collectors, and bought for libraries as before, but they were also especially suitable for decoration as single pieces, and so attracted a wider audience.

Fundamentally, the popularity of Nicholls's views was intrinsically linked to the popularity and fortunes of the squares themselves. The continued presence of the elite in London's most prestigious squares kept them fashionable, and improvements made enhanced their attraction to the elite. Without doubt, the private Acts of Parliament were influential in maintaining the interest and popularity of the squares. Not only did they elicit curiosity in the gardens of the squares amongst London's public, they also played a part in preserving the desirability of Nicholls's plates as the best medium for representing the changing squares. It is worth noting that unlike other subjects of London topography, the squares were constantly changing, not just as a result of controlled improvements made by the residents, but also in the natural growth

27. Clayton, 'A Useful Branch of Luxury: Prints to instruct and entertain', in *The English Print*, *op. cit.*

28. Clayton, *English Print*, *op. cit.*, p.75.

29. Bowles Sale Catalogue for 1749, p.27. There are a number of other examples of this sort of advertisement.



15. Thomas Malton, *Cavendish Square*, 1800, etching and aquatint, published in *Malton's Picturesque Tour*
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

and evolution of the planted areas and space. The squares with gardens would have looked different depending on the time of year they were viewed, and this ever changing urban landscape must have significantly altered the overall impression of London's residential architecture. The function of the space was also evolving at this time, as the shift to greater enclosure and increasing emphasis on the central garden directly challenged the open and public use of the space.³⁰ This helps explain why the later states of the plates were so popular, as they acknowledged the significant changes that were occurring in London's squares. The reissue of the plates is not in itself interesting, as plates were commonly reused by publishers throughout the eighteenth century, and into the nineteenth. It is the fact that such effort was made to update the plates, and the focus of these alterations on the square itself, rather than the surrounding buildings, that is vital. The close attention to detail paid to the smallest changes in what were essentially large open spaces or gardens was something that would not occur again in topographical prints of London. Later eighteenth-century views continued to represent the squares, but the focus had shifted away from the central space, onto the surrounding buildings, with the gardens (as they were increasingly becoming) forming either a diversion in the foreground, or helping to set the scene (*see fig. 15*). The new lower viewpoints did not allow for careful delineation of the central space, and perhaps as the squares became increasingly exclusive, private, and planted in the latter half of the century, their interest to the public as open spaces diminished. Nicholls's plates first appeared at a fortunate moment in the history of the London square, when they were still new, exciting, fashionable and open, where people could go to see and be seen. The bird's eye view provided the perfect perspective for showing the space, and clearly this was what people wanted to see. By 1754, the identity of the squares was evolving, with the desire for a private central garden beginning to compete with the need for open space. This interesting period in the history of the London square has

been uniquely captured in the different states of Nicholls's plates, which provide both a glimpse into the development of London's open spaces, and a valuable guide into how they were perceived and valued by those living in and experiencing them, at a time of great development and change.

'HALF IN LOVE WITH EASEFUL DEATH'

By The Perambulator

There is no denying the mournful pleasure of a Victorian cemetery. But the charm of ivy-bedecked angels and leaning headstones is a treacherous one, which all too easily obscures the relentless power of the processes of decay. Instead of timeless melancholy, imagine the cemetery in a time-lapse film. The ivy is prising stones apart with Herculean force, sucking the moisture out of mortar and turning it to dust, while below the ground, roots are shouldering headstones aside and heaving their backs under paths and kerbs. Every picturesque tilt is nothing but a slow fall, as gravity hauls monuments groundward, while sycamore and ash seedlings writhe upwards towards the light to create a canopy above all but the tallest in less than ten years, casting them into permanent shadow. Rain and frost split the inscriptions from all but the hardest stone, and words of everlasting memory are lost in a small pile of fragments among the leaf mould and brambles.

The forces of nature are so strong and destructive that picturesque decay is impossibly expensive to manage sustainably. But in any case, picturesque decay could only be a management objective in a cemetery where interments were no longer taking place; where no one expected a decent burial. The fact is that most Victorian cemeteries are still open, and their principal function is still to serve the bereaved.

In 2001, a House of Commons Select Committee inquiry was held on the subject of cemeteries. Its report spoke of underfunding, confused legislative responsibility and neglect by both central and local Government.

30. McKellar, 'Open Spaces', *op. cit.*, pp.204-207.

1. From John Keats 'Ode to a Nightingale', 1819.