

buildings. In 1926 the Trustees asked - in vain - to be relieved of responsibility for the Park.

Things are not and are never likely to be what they were before the War. The maintenance of that great park will always cost, or should cost, far more than we can possibly make by our various activities.⁷³

They might have added that no other park in London was expected to operate on these terms, but it would be many years before Alexandra Park was put on a conventional footing.⁷⁴

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the First World War

THE MANDARIN OF THE NINE WHISKERS: CHAMBERS, CHINA AND KEW By Hazel Conway

William Chambers was born in Gothenburg, Sweden in c.1723,¹ educated in England, and served with the Swedish East India Company from 1740-49. He became architect to the King, Comptroller and Surveyor General, and the most important official architect in England.² (fig. 18) In 1744 he had visited Canton in China and after his second tour in 1748 he began studying Chinese architecture and gardens seriously, and his reputation as a sinologist grew. Following the publication of his *Designs of Chinese Buildings* in 1757,³ he thereafter became known as the 'Mandarin of the Nine

Whiskers'. He was appointed architect to Princess Augusta, becoming tutor to her son George, Prince of Wales (later George III) and in 1757 he started to lay out the Botanic Gardens at Kew for the Princess, with a perimeter walk featuring a variety of buildings. Today, with the exception of the Pagoda and the Orangery, all the other Chambers' buildings have either been moved or destroyed. The buildings were intended to stimulate the imagination of visitors who, from their Grand Tour of Europe, would have understood that the Temple of Bellona, for example, was based on the Pantheon of ancient Rome. Few, if any of them, would have been to the Far East. In his later *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, 1772, Chambers argued for variety in gardens and for them to evoke changing feelings and sensations.

When Chambers started working at Kew there were already two buildings in the Chinese taste: a bridge and the House of Confucius. Chinese buildings had become very popular in England in the mid-1740s and early 1750s although they were never as fashionable as *Chinoiserie* furniture and decoration. In 1746 a Chinese hut was built at Stowe and a year later a Chinese house modelled on one in Canton was built by Thomas Anson at Shugborough next to a Chinese bridge, and there was also a pagoda. By 1750 there were Chinese pavilions in the pleasure gardens of Ranelagh and Vauxhall. Pattern books on the subject were published in the 1750s (such as those of William and John Halfpenny: *New Designs for Chinese Temples*, in four parts, 1750-52; *Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste*, 1750-1752; *Rural Architecture in the Gothic Taste*, 1752; *Chinese and Gothic Architecture Properly Ornamented*, 1752) but these gave decorative rather than constructional details.

During the first half of the eighteenth century there were a number of reports of China from the Jesuit missions. Among them was Matteo Ripa's description and engravings of the Imperial Summer Mountain Retreat at Jehol, now Chengde, made in 1713 (fig. 19). Generally it was agreed that Chinese gardens were informal in character. Sir William Temple's essay *On the Gardens of Epicurus*, published 1692, reported that Chinese gardens were 'without any Orders or Disposition of

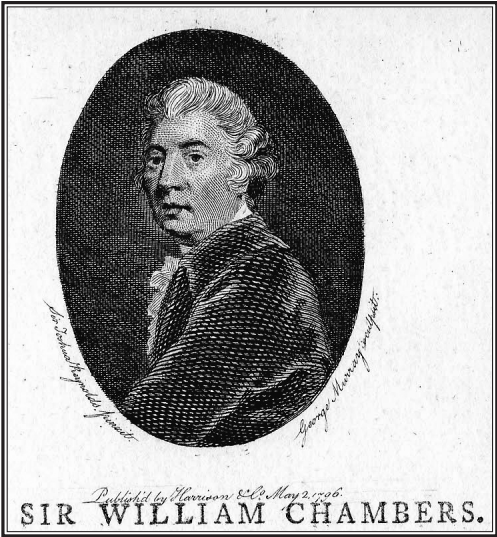
73. Minutes of AGM, 28 May 1926, HA.

74. From 1924 the Contributory Authorities made grants towards the upkeep of the grounds until 1966 when Alexandra Park and Palace was taken over by the newly formed Greater London Council.

1. Sir William Chambers' date of birth has been given variously as 1722, 1723 and 1726.

2. In 1761 Chambers was appointed, along with Robert Adam, as one of the Joint Architects of the King's Works, and by 1769 he was Comptroller of the King's Works. When the office was re-organised in 1782 Chambers became Surveyor General and Comptroller.

3. The full title is *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines and Utensils. Engraved by the best hands, from the originals drawn in China ... to which is annexed, a Description of their temples, houses, gardens, &c.* (London, 1757).



18. Sir William Chambers, etching and engraving after Reynolds, 1796. Illustration in *Biographical Magazine*, broadside on the life of William Chambers
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)
19. Matteo Ripa (after Shen Ya), *View of the Imperial Summer Palace at Jehol*, engraving on Chinese paper, c.1711-13. Plate from a set of 34 mounted in an album
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parts'. This point was taken up by Robert Castel in *Villas of the Ancients*, 1728, where he claimed that the informal gardens surrounding the formal core 'are the present Manner of Designing in China'. This was the period in the early eighteenth century when the formal gardens of Tudor and Stuart England were being criticised, and so-called 'natural' landscape gardens were being promoted. Chinese gardens could, it seemed, play a part in this debate. It was not until 1752 that a first-hand description of the pleasure gardens of the Imperial Summer Palace, Beijing was translated into English and the first person to make use of this information was William Chambers.

The Chinese used a limited selection of plants in their gardens, their choice dictated by symbolism. *Bamboo* symbolised lasting friendship and hardy age, the ability to bend with the storm and rise after it, according to Daoism. It was planted alongside stone bamboo shoots, to emphasise their pointed qualities. *Lotus* symbolised the aspiration to purity. *Peony*, the king of flowers, symbolised wealth and prosperity. When the Chinese garden was completed it was adorned with inscriptions - literary and poetic allusions - which added meaning for the visitors. The gardens were intended for all members of the family and for use in all the seasons. The seasonal delights of plum blossom, lotus flowers and autumnal colours provided occasions to invite friends. The garden could be enjoyed in all weathers: listening to the sound of raindrops on banana leaves, or feeding the goldfish in the water. In English gardens, plants and grass predominated, but to the Chinese grass was for cows, since it provided no mental stimulation or allusions.

William Chambers' visits had been restricted to Canton; however, he thought that what he had seen there represented the gardens of the whole country. While he was in Canton in 1744 and 1748 he had made sketches for his own purposes, which he was persuaded to publish by 'several lovers of chinoiserie', among who, very probably, was the Dowager Princess of Wales, Augusta. To some critics, publishing a book on Chinese architecture was unlikely to raise Chambers' reputation among those 'truly learned in architecture'. But as Chambers wrote in *Designs of Chinese*

Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines and Utensils, he could not understand why it was 'criminal ... to give an account of what he had seen in China, any more than in Italy or France or any other country'. While *Designs of Chinese Buildings* contained 21 plates (fig. 20) and presented Chinese architecture as a subject worthy of serious study for the first time, it was written in very general terms. Chambers described the great pagoda of Ho-nang in the Suburbs of Canton but gave no elevations, only a not very accurate plan. His excuse was that such details would be irrelevant to European artists and it was difficult to do accurate measured drawings because there were too many curious Chinese around! The only pagoda he illustrated was one to the south of Canton, seven storeys high, on a hexagonal base. Chinese architecture was, he thought, 'inferior to the antique' (Greek and Roman) and generally unfit for European purposes, though it might be introduced to 'extensive parks and gardens, where great variety of scenes are required'. Published in 1757 the book was too late to be of any real influence on Chinoiserie in England, but it and his later book, *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, 1772, became most influential in France and Germany, where the Chinese fashion flourished in the 1770s and 1780s.

The most influential part of *Designs of Chinese Buildings* was Chambers' essay 'On the Art of Laying out Gardens among the Chinese', although he did not include any plans or drawings, nor did he mention any specific Chinese examples. He drew heavily on Father Attiret's description,⁴ but also added his own observations, noting that as the climate was hot, Chinese gardens featured lots of water and in small gardens almost all the ground was water. He commented that the Chinese did not like to walk, so there were no spacious allées; rivers and walks might wind, but avoided the serpentine curves that the English were so fond of. He noted that the Chinese were fond of large artificial rocks and that the making of these was a 'distinct profession [...] in Canton and probably

4. Jean Denis Attiret, *A Particular Account of the Emperor of China's Gardens Near Pekin: in a Letter from F. Attiret, a French Missionary, Now Employ'd by that Emperor to Paint the Apartments in Those Gardens, to His Friend at Paris*. Translated from the French by Sir Harry Beaumont (London, printed for R. Dodsley, sold by M. Cooper, 1752)

elsewhere'. He reported that the stones came from the southern coasts of China and had been eroded by waves, and were used to make caverns and grottoes. To enhance the effect of the wind making strange noises as it passed through and around the rocks, the Chinese 'let loose different sorts of monstrous birds and animals'. Small pieces were used for miniature landscapes: a piece no larger than a man's fist '... of beautiful form and lively colour [...] they use in landscapes for their own apartments'. In Chambers' illustrations there is one hint of the use of rocks in an illustration of a house. This has a pool in front of it with a few pieces of bamboo with vertical rocks beside them.

In both *Designs of Chinese Buildings* and the *Dissertation* Chambers was concerned with the way the imagination was affected by what it saw and the associations evoked. He aimed to apply Edmund Burke's principles of the Sublime and the Beautiful to Chinese examples.⁵ Burke had identified two categories of feeling associated with two very different types of landscape: tranquil scenes, such as Poussin's classical landscapes he called *Beautiful*; those that induced feelings of terror, difficulty and pain, such as depicted by Salvator Rosa, he called *Sublime*. Gardens affect the imagination by variety, contrast and diversity and in Chambers' view Chinese gardens illustrated this perfectly. The varied scenes of Chinese gardens were linked by winding passages and marked by serpentine bridges, a seat or some other special object. Surprise and terror came from artfully disposed buildings, rocks, dark caverns and other objects. Contrasts came from dark caves opening to the extensive views, bright areas contrasting with shadowy ones. In other words, Chambers argued, the Chinese modelled their gardens on nature in all her irregularity, heightening and embellishing it in the most striking manner possible. So his essay promoted contemporary ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime to Chinese examples. Chinese gardens do indeed achieve the qualities Chambers ascribes to them, but the theories behind them owe nothing to Burke and everything to Chinese philosophy.

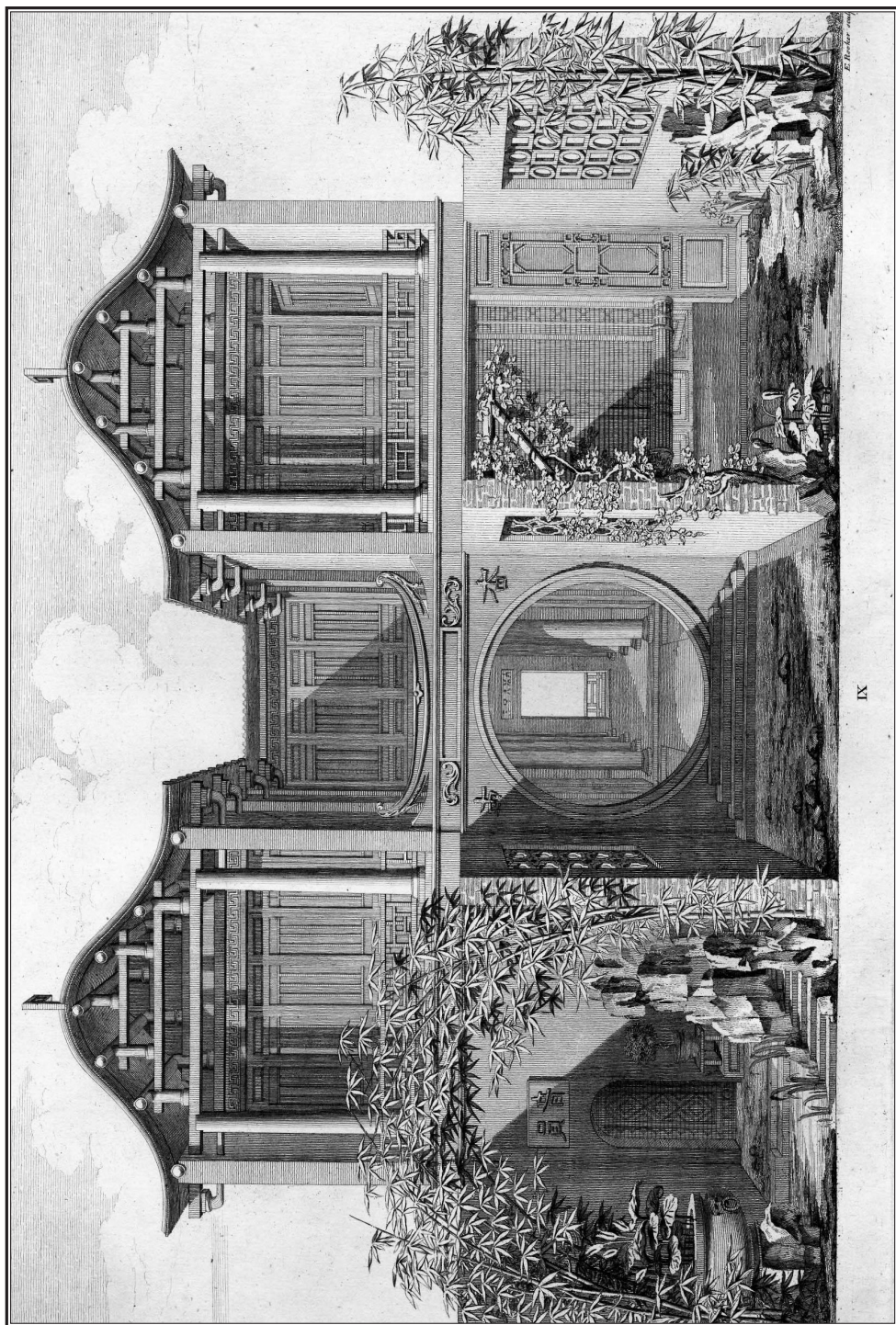
As has been stated above, there were

already two buildings in the Chinese taste that had been erected at Kew when Chambers started working there in 1757: a Chinese bridge and the House of Confucius, c.1749. There is some debate as to whether the designer of the House of Confucius was Chambers or Joseph Goupy and on balance it seems to have been the latter who first introduced Chinese buildings at Kew (*fig. 21*). At the north end of the site there was an uninterrupted view of the lake from the White House and at the south two grazing areas. Around the perimeter walk were buildings intended to stimulate the imagination of visitors. At the south end the Pagoda of 1760, set in a glade with the Alhambra on one side and the Mosque on the other (both demolished pre-1820), provided the focal point (*fig. 22*). The Pagoda was ten storeys high (not an uneven number as most far eastern pagodas are) and featured gilded dragons at each corner, which were according to Chambers 'covered with a kind of thin glass of various colours'. The railings around each balcony were painted blue and red and the underside of the roofs were red, while the roofs themselves were 'covered with plates of varnished iron of different colours' (*fig. 23*). The Pagoda was never meant to be architecturally correct, but it was and remains the most ambitious Chinese garden structure in Europe. Visitors gasped at the glitter of the golden dragons and the glazed tiles, which were laid in alternating rows of green and white. It was according to John Harris 'a concoction of the Cathay of Tan Chet Qua and the Mandarin of the Nine Whiskers' (characters in Chambers' *Dissertation*).⁶

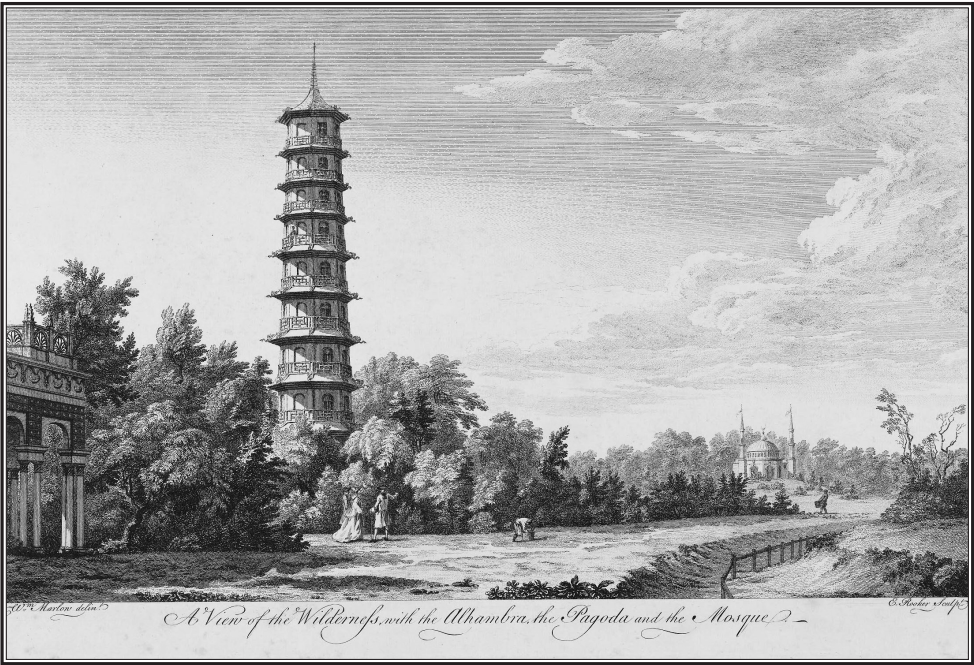
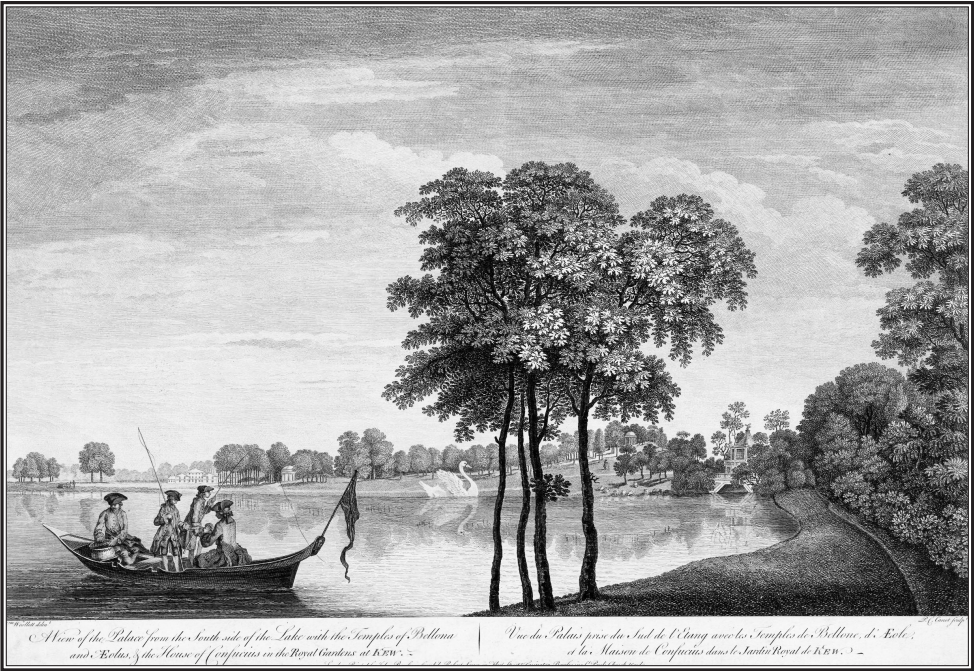
The ruined arch was based on Roman triumphal arches such as the Arch of Constantine in Rome, or the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Triumphal arches evoked the grandeur that was Rome and as this was built as a ruin, it reminded visitors of the transience of empires and their own mortality and thus inspired melancholy, a function of buildings that has completely disappeared today. The ruined arch also had a practical function for it was set in an embankment and carried a track to bring cattle and sheep from a farm on the other side of the Kew Road to the gardens.

5. Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (London, 1756).

6. John Harris, *William Chambers*, (Zwemmer, 1970).



20. Etching of a Chinese building from William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* (1757).
Number 9 in a volume of 21 plates
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21. *A View of the Palace from the South side of the Lake with the Temples of Bellona and Aelus, and House of Confucius in the Royal Gardens,* etching after William Woollett, c.1760.
Printed for John Bowles in Cornhill, Robert Sayer in Fleet Street, and Carrington Bowles in St Paul's Churchyard
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22. *A View of the Wilderness with the Alhambra, the Pagoda and the Mosque,* etching.
Plate from William Chambers, *Plans, elevations, sections and perspective views of the gardens and buildings at Kew*, 1763
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In the menagerie Chambers designed an octagonal open pavilion or 'ting' to stand in the centre of the pool (fig. 24). By 1785 both the pavilion and the menagerie had gone, but a replica 'ting' now stands in the lake near Osterley House.

These buildings were set in a composition of cross viſtas and axes, one building answering another in a range of styles, which evoked different moods as the visitor was led on a tour of world architecture. The Pagoda provided the focal point and the peripheral walks and exedras disguised the constrained space. In all this Chambers was in tune with what was happening elsewhere in landscape gardening. Yet in Europe his name is associated predominantly with the development of the Chinese garden, so let us examine this aspect of his work and its influence in more detail.

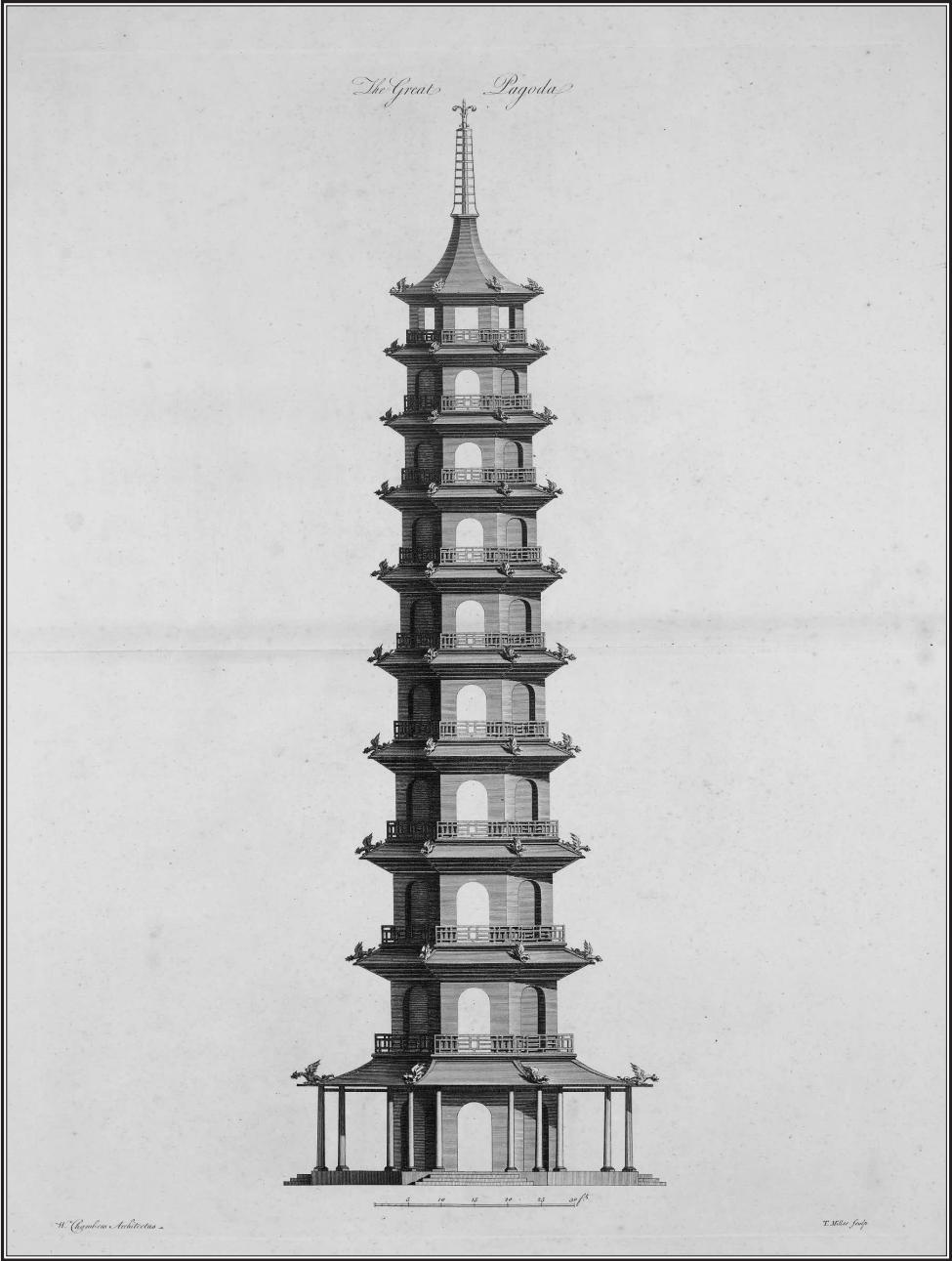
Unfortunately for Chambers, he was promoting his views and putting his ideas on Chinese gardens into effect at Kew at just that time when taste in gardening in this country was undergoing a radical change under the influence of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. In 1764 Brown was appointed Master Gardener by George III at Hampton Court and commissioned to re-landscape Richmond Gardens. Among the characteristics of Brown's landscapes were his use of natural materials: contouring the land, improving the courses of rivers and the boundaries of lakes. Buildings, statues and objects that stimulated the imagination had little place in his designs. This was when Merlin's Cave and William Kent's other buildings and the formal planting on the Richmond estate were swept away. In 1773 Brown created the Hollow Walk and planted it with laurels, and this now forms the Rhododendron Dell. Brown concentrated on landscape forms, trees and water and banished from the landscape those objects that stimulated the imagination. As a result many of his contemporaries found his designs dull. The most vociferous of Brown's critics were Sir William Chambers and later Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price. In 1772 Chambers published the *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, a polemic in which he attacked English gardening in general and Brown in particular. Chambers condemned excessively 'natural' gardens. Variety, novelty and contrast

could be produced by organising nature, but, he argued, it was easier and more effective to use buildings, statues and bridges as the Chinese had done so effectively. The *Dissertation* was greeted with criticism and ridicule: for promoting Chinese taste, for its emphasis on the sublime and the 'horrid', and for being 'unnatural'. Because of the *Dissertation* Chambers gained a reputation for being strongly in favour of Chinese gardens and extremely anti Brown's landscapes. It would perhaps be fairer to say that he was against the extremes that Brown's landscapes represented.

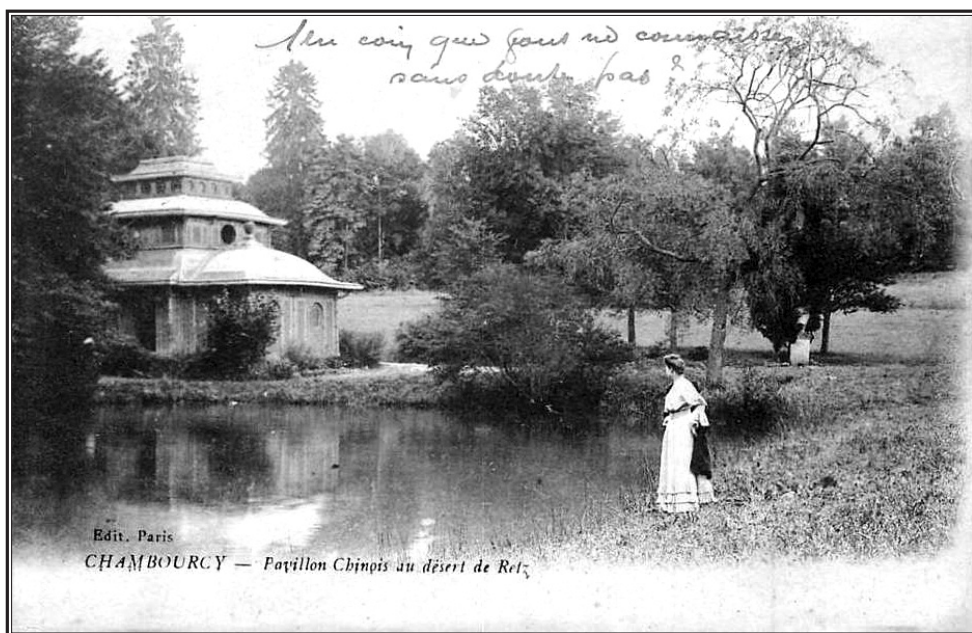
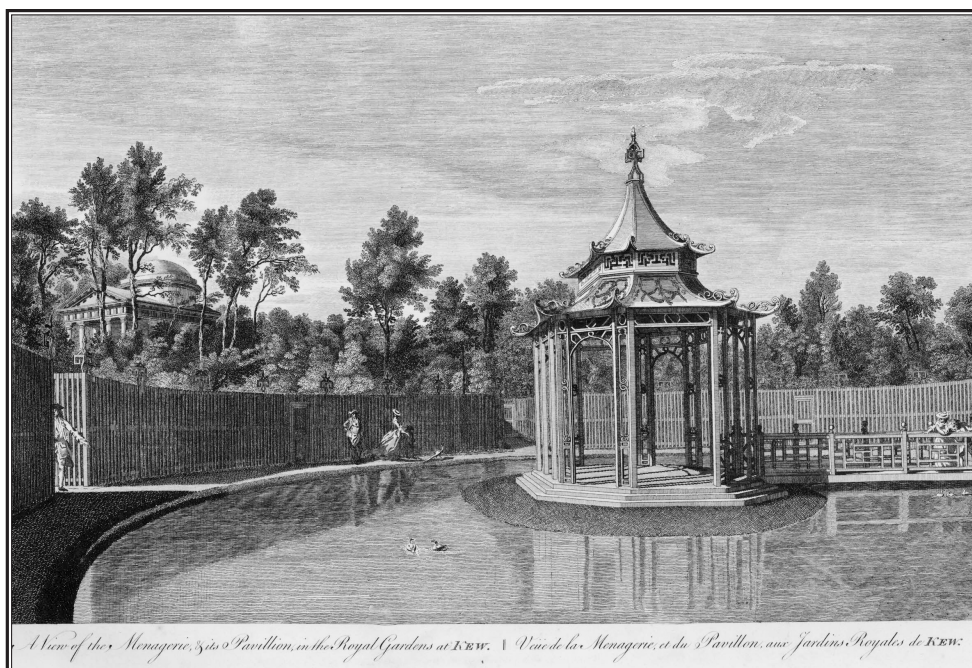
In Europe Chambers influenced the fashion for the *Jardin Anglo-Chinois*. In 1763 Count Francesco Algarotti made a précis of Chambers' essay 'On the art of laying out gardens', adding that:

The English have derived their present taste in gardening from the Chinese...

He was corrected and offered to change the text, but died before he could do so. As a result his unaltered text was disseminated throughout Europe (translated into English in 1767, into German in 1769, into French in 1773). No English author thought that the English landscape garden had originated by copying Chinese models and Horace Walpole in his essay 'On Modern Gardening', 1770 set out to correct this misapprehension and defend English originality, but with only partial success. The features of the Anglo-Chinese garden were perceived as an informal network of paths forming circuits within the landscape, a great variety of buildings, and varied landscaping and planting. In France one example is the Desert de Retz at Chambourcy near Poissy, created by the Duc de Monville who worked on it from 1774 until the Revolution (fig. 25). His house was in an immense broken column, but his first house was the Maison Chinoise directly inspired by Chambers. In Germany the taste for Chinoiserie was evident from the early 1750s when the Chinese Tea-house was built at Sans Souci, Berlin, 1754-7; on top is a gilded mandarin carrying a parasol. But the most direct influence can be seen at Oranienbaum in Halle, Germany where from 1775 onwards Prince Franz, Duke Leopold III of Anhalt-Dessau redesigned an island garden as a Chinese garden modelled on Kew. In it were a



23. *The Great Pagoda*, etching, Plate from William Chambers, *Plans, elevations, sections and perspective views of the gardens and buildings at Kew*, 1763
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24. *A View of the Menagerie and the Pavillion at Kew*, etching.
Plate from William Chambers, *Plans, elevations, sections and perspective views of the gardens and buildings at Kew*, 1763
(© TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

25. *CHAMBOURCY - Pavillon Chinois au désert de Retz*, postcard, no date



26. Chevalier de l'Etoile Polaire, etching, 1773.
Satirical print from Volume VI of Matthew Darly's *Characters, Macaronies & Caricatures*, published by M Darly, November 1773
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Chinese tea house, a five storey pagoda (1785–87) and several Chinese bridges spanning canals on which gondolas sailed. Prince Franz also worked on Wörlitz Park, Halle, one of the earliest landscaped parks in Germany, from 1765. The White Bridge, 1773 was based on the Chinese bridge at Kew, but the main influence came from gardens such as Claremont, Stowe and Stourhead, rather than Anglo-Chinese interpretations. The principle behind the design of the garden was to display a wonderful variety of buildings on a circuit and to provide vistas from one to the other, just as Chambers had done so successfully at Kew.

Chambers lived long enough to see many changes to his work at Kew. In 1784 the Pagoda roof was covered in slates and the following year the menagerie was made into a lawn. However, his architectural reputation is undoubted. Indeed the Casino at Marino, 1759–1775, small, perfect in detail and set on a knoll outside Dublin, has been compared in architectural significance to Palladio's Villa Rotunda at Capra. Chambers made a major contribution to the debate on landscape gardening, but he had no wish to be seen as the champion of the Chinese style. Had he not been to China, or had Attiret's descriptions of Yuan Ming Yuan not been published when they were,⁷ he could equally have used English examples. It was a mistake that he recognized. If you ask any visitor to Kew which building they associate with it, most will name the Pagoda, but very few will know that it was designed by the Knight of the Polar Star and Mandarin of the Nine Whiskers, Sir William Chambers.⁸ (fig. 26) And now, through a two-year restoration project due for completion by 2017, eighty wooden dragons will be restored to his Pagoda.

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Sections and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surrey, 1763;

7. Yuan Ming Yuan, the Emperor of China's garden in Pekin, was begun in 1709, and made famous in Europe through the letters of Father Jean Denis Attiret (1702–1768), a Jesuit missionary, who referred to it as the 'Garden of Perfect Brightness' in a letter published in Paris in 1749 – see footnote 4.

8. William Chambers was created a Knight of the Polar Star by the King of Sweden, a title that King George permitted him to use.

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THE NORTHERN LADS

By Ron McEwen

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a broad Scots accent would have been a common sound in Kew village due to the disproportionate number of Scots gardeners working and living in Kew Gardens. The following article, which is an extract from an article published in December 2013 in *Sibbaldia*, a journal of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, gives an account of the most important of these gardeners.¹

Before the emergence of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the leading centre of botanical and horticultural science in England was the Chelsea Physic Garden. Founded in 1673, the physic garden was given added acreage in 1722 by Sir Hans Sloan, who was of Ulster Scots stock and the successor to Sir Isaac Newton as President of the Royal Society. At the same time Philip Miller, the son of a Scottish market gardener, was recruited to take charge of the Physic Garden, and under his inspired management Chelsea became pre-eminent. Miller received visits from current and future celebrities in the natural sciences, including Carl Linnaeus, the

9. Ji Cheng, Yuan Ye, *Manual of Garden Design*, 1634 was the first book on the theory of garden design. It advocated a natural look, which although man-made, borrowed from the existing scenery and beyond the walls of the garden. The Manual also gives specific instructions: the most important element is the siting of the primary buildings and the view from them, ideally they should be in the north of the garden and face south overlooking the best scenes; the garden should be enclosed on all sides by high walls; ancient trees and high hills will allow the borrowing of scenery beyond the garden; spaces should be subdivided; there should be water, to contrast with rock and mirror scenic objects; lattice windows and gates; the source of water should be hidden.

1. Basic biographical information is taken from Ray Desmond, *Dictionary of British and Irish botanists and horticulturalists* (Taylor & Francis, London, 1994). For the history of Kew Gardens, Ray Desmond, *The history of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew*, 2nd edn, (Kew Publishing, London, 2007) is the main text.