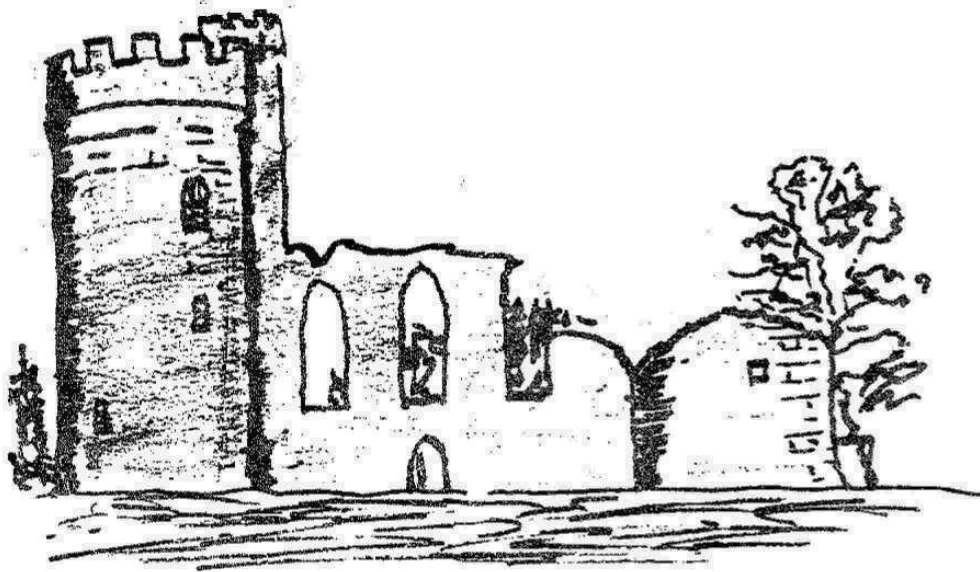


HAGLEY HISTORICAL AND FIELD
SOCIETY

OCCASIONAL PAPER NO.2

**THE FOLLIES AND OTHER FEATURES
OF
HAGLEY PARK
WORCESTERSHIRE**



THE CASTLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My thanks are given to Lord Cobham for allowing me access to Hagley Park. Compiling this paper without the experience of walking the whole area would certainly have led to different and probably wrong interpretations of many ideas.

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INTRODUCTION

The park today is a part of the Hagley Hall estate, which has been owned by the Lyttelton family since 1564. The 11th Viscount Cobham, John Lyttelton, is the current senior member of the family and lives in Hagley Hall.

The area of the 18 century park is a little over 90ha (218 acres) and much of it is used for farming deer and it also has extensive woodland areas. A number of small streams rise in the park. One forms much of the southern boundary and is known as Gallows brook. Another stream traverses much of the centre of the park and was dammed in four places to create ponds, which were important features in the 18th century park design.

Dr. T. Nash in his history of Worcestershire refers to the park at the time of Edward III 1327 - 77; the old hall, formerly on or near the cricket pitch, was said to be a hunting lodge at the time of its sale in 1564 and, again according to Nash, Sir Charles Lyttelton reimparked the area in 1694. The boundaries of the earlier parks have not been established but it is certain that they did not coincide with the present boundaries at all points.

Early parks were the preserve of the lord of the manor and could be divided or not according to their use, which could include grazing, coppiced areas, large tree areas, lodges (some with moats), fish ponds and rabbit warrens.

The park of the 18th century at Hagley, like many throughout the country, was the result of fairly stable conditions, which, in turn, led to surplus wealth.

Around 1715 a number of changes took place which may or may not have had any bearing on the use of wealth, but they are noted for the reader to consider.

1. The Stuarts had been succeeded by the Hanoverians on the throne.
2. The Whigs had taken over from the Tories in government.
3. Baroque architecture was giving way to Classical and
4. There was a desire for a natural English style to replace the French influence of the previous century and longer.

Thomas Lyttelton, the 4th baronet, died in 1751 but the castle and the rotunda were started in 1747, "therefore it could be assumed that Sir Thomas was not opposed to the idea of a "modern park" with appropriate ornaments. However, most of the credit must go to his son, George, the 5th baronet, who was created a baron in 1759.

The style of Hagley Hall is Palladian, and this was reflected in several of the follies built at this time.

THE FOLLIES AND FEATURES

The follies and other ornaments in an 18th century park had a dual purpose. First, to lead the eye towards a point in the distance and, secondly, to provide a talking point often associated with architectural styles, classical stories, poets and other topics.

In describing the various features of Hagley park a route has been selected which it is believed could have been used to show off each feature in turn to its best advantage. It is a zig - zag route, like the Leasowes at Halesowen where the route designed by Shenstone is recorded, and many other examples.

From Hagley Hall the visitor would have taken a path to the right of the church which curves and climbs in a south easterly direction. Nearing the top of the hill is the site of **MILTON'S SEAT**. This was a large bench seat for at least four people and on the back were some of Milton's lines from the "Morning Hymn" in Paradise Lost, as follows:

"These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair: Thyself how wonderous then,
Unspeakable! Who sitt'st above these heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine."

The view from here is magnificent looking over Worcestershire towards the Shropshire hills and beyond. Even if the walkers did not need a rest, the pause to look at the view must have been mandatory,

On reaching the top of the hill and turning towards the east, one sees a "barrow" or burial mound. At least it looks like one. The mound was excavated by Dr. Thorpe, Head of the Geography Department, University of Birmingham (d.1978) and no evidence was found to suggest it was anything but a landscape feature. It is worth noting that Bishop Lyttelton had excavated a number of bronze age barrows adjacent to Stakenbridge Lane around the time that the park was being landscaped and the creation of this barrow would have provided an opening for learned conversation on the Bishop's activities.

From the barrow the eye is led to the **CASTLE**, an imposing Gothic building faced with sandstone. There are four towers, but only one is intact. The others are deliberately truncated. Sanderson Miller was the architect, and work had already begun in 1747. A few years later he was involved, with others, in the design of Hagley Hall, a very different style of architecture. It is extremely likely that some, or all, of the stone came from Halesowen Abbey.

Moving from the castle down the hill on its north side, the monument to **ALEXANDER POPE** can be seen at the edge of the trees covering the hillside.

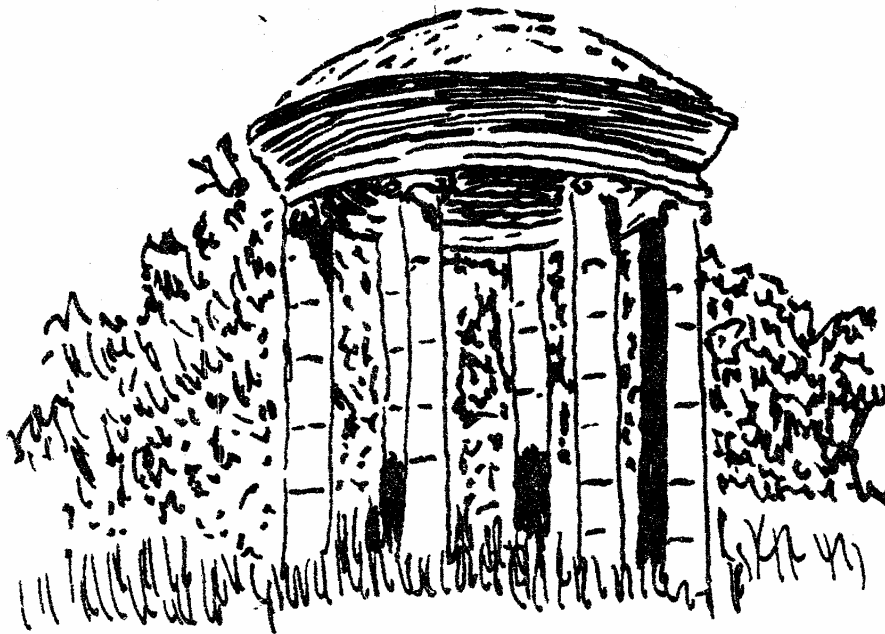
The monument, originally with an urn on top, measures some 1.30m (4') in height and the body is 0.66m square (2' 3"). The Latin inscription reads:

“Alexandro Pope poetarum Anglicanorum
elegantissimo dulcissimoque
vitorum castigatori acerrimo
sapientiae doctore suavissimo
sacra esta. Ann.Dom.MDCCXLIV”

The translation is:

“Sacred to the memory of Alexander Pope the sweetest and most elegant of English poets the severest chastiser of vice and the most persuasive teacher of wisdom. A.D. 1744”

From Pope's monument the visitor crosses the stream and bears right to see the **ROTUNDA**. This structure, with eight Ionic columns and a domed roof, is in a sad state of repair, but when newly built it must have been very impressive. It is of a similar date to the castle and it is likely that Sanderson Miller was also responsible for it.



THE ROTUNDA

Looking down the valley from the Rotunda one sees many mature trees but in the mid - eighteenth century it is fairly certain that the next major eye catcher would have been the **PALLADIAN BRIDGE**, some 300 metres to the west. In recent times the remains of the bridge have been vandalised. However, the original Palladian building at the back of the bridge was removed by the 4th Lord, George Lyttelton (who died in 1876), following damage after a tree fell on it.

Between the Rotunda and the Palladian Bridge are three pools and it should be remembered that, with the exception of waterfalls and fountains, water should be viewed from above.

Continuing the walk on the north side of the stream one would have seen a monument to **WILLIAM SHENSTONE**. This was similar in style to Pope's but has been moved nearer the Hall for reasons of security.

The inscription in English reads:

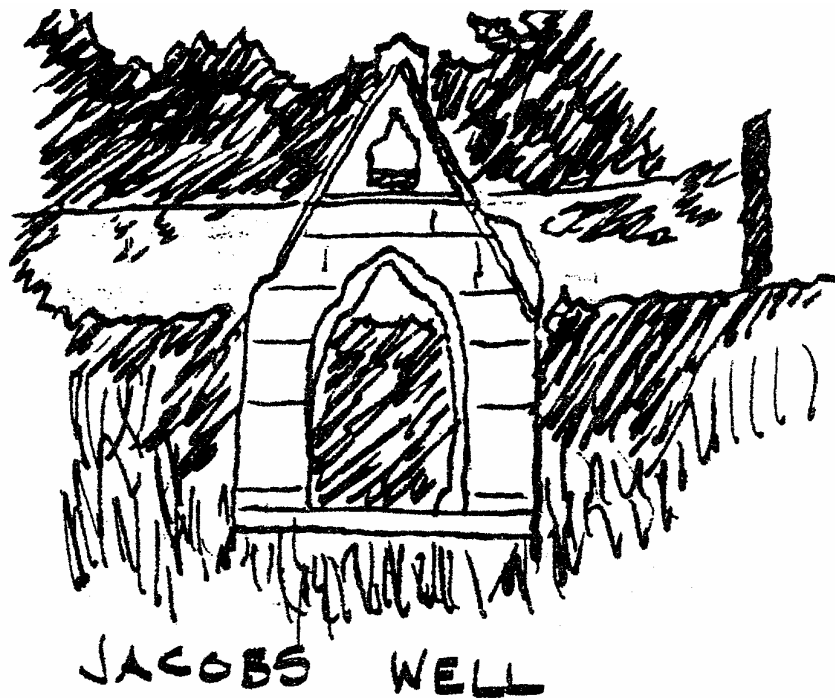
"To the memory of William Shenstone Esq.,
in whose verses were all the natural graces,
and in whose manners was all
the amiable simplicity of pastoral poetry,
with the sweet tenderness of the elegiac.

It is suggested that the trail would have led across the dam of the first pool and then continued west down the valley. Somewhere before the Palladian Bridge and the pool above it would have been **THE GROTTTO**. The Grotto is described in Clentine Rambles 1882, as lying to the west of the above monuments and was originally fed by a stream, now diverted, and goes on to say that "Time, and the rude hands of ill behaved visitors, in years gone by, when the park was open to all who came, have done much to rob this spot of the beauties that it once possessed". Vandalism is not only a late 20th century problem!

Observations made in the recent past have failed to locate the site of this folly.

At the Palladian Bridge, the view up the valley would probably have included some waterfalls, but no evidence exists today.

After crossing the Bridge one headed north towards the next major feature which was Thomson's Seat but a short distance before the site of the seat is **JACOB'S WELL**, This is a cusped stone arch capped by a miniature bell cote opening in Gothic style. The ground is damp around the "well" and it was probably a spring in the past but is of little practical use now.



A quotation is carved on the well which reads "O ye wells bless ye the lord." This is taken from the Benedicite, Omnia Opera in the service of Morning Prayer.

It is possible that Jacob, when written in the Latin form, can be a translation of James and is therefore linked to Thomson's seat.

A short distance to the west of the well and above a small quarry is the site of **THOMSON'S SEAT**. According to the Gentleman's Magazine of 1801, it was "a handsome octagonal building embowered with trees", and it had the inscription –

"Ingenio immortal Jacobi Thomson, poetae
sublimis, virini boni. Aediculam, hanc,
in secessu, quasi vivus dilixit,
post mortem ejus constructum, dicat
dedicatque Georgius Lyttelton"

Translated it reads:

"To the immortal genius of James Thomson, a sublime poet, and a good man, this temple built after his death in the retreat, which, when living he loved is erected and dedicated by George Lyttelton"

This was the first building on the site and it was destroyed when one of the 'embowering' trees fell on it. It was replaced by a rustic summer house in 1853 and this survived for a little over a hundred years. Another inscription was placed in the new "seat" as follows:

“Ingenio immortalis Jacobi Thomson
 aediculum hoc in secessu quem amabat
 vivus dicaverat Georgius Lyttelton:
 illapsa ab ore semirutam amovit
 et modestiorem hanc sedem reposuit
 Georgius alter MDCCCLIII

This is similar to the first inscription but some 100 years later. ‘The translation reads –

“A temple, that had been dedicated by George Lyttelton, to the immortal genius of James Thomson in this recess, which in life he used to love, but which was half destroyed by the fall of a tree, was removed, and this more modest seat substituted for it by George the second of his name. 1853”

The views to the west, towards Shropshire, are essentially the same as in the 18th century except that the number of individual fields must have increased following the enclosure acts of that period.

Moving north again, about 100m, to the high point looking towards Wychbury Hill both the **TEMPLE OF THESEUS** and the **OBELISK** can be seen. It is a matter of speculation if these two features were ever intended to be points on a walk or just objects to be observed from the Hall and further afield.

The Temple was built to drawings made by James “Athenian” Stuart after his visit to Greece in 1751. The building is a scaled down version of the original except that it lacks depth. Recently restored it still suffers from vandalism.

The Obelisk, or Hagley Monument, is believed to have been erected by Sir Richard Lyttelton, a brother of George, 1st Baron. From this viewpoint the walker should drop down to the old main road and follow it back towards the Hall. In a short distance, and to the left, the **PRINCE’S PILLAR** is to be seen. The column has the Prince of Wales feathers on its base, Corinthian decorations at the top, with a statue of the Prince in Roman dress on the top.

Following the modern fence down hill brings the tour to its starting place by the church. A glance through the fence shows a deep ditch which runs up the far side of the valley and is thought to be part of the boundary of an earlier park.

CONCLUSIONS

Reading books written by local authors in the 19th century, it is probable that there were other follies and features of which no trace survives. It is hoped that work will continue to conserve the surviving ones but it must be appreciated that the concept of the Park as laid out in the 18th century cannot be reproduced; the view down the valley from the Rotunda for instance is filled with trees that have taken two and a half centuries to grow. This is true of all the areas in the Park.

The present day mix of conservation and development is to be applauded and it is hoped that these efforts will be both appreciated and encouraged.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Hanover, Frederick Lewis (1707 - 1751), Prince of Wales, elder son of George II m. Augusta. Son became George III.

Lyttelton, George (1709—1773), 5th Baronet and 1st Baron (1759).
 Son of Sir Thomas. m 1. Lucy Fortescue (d1747)
 2. Elizabeth Rich.

Secretary to Frederick, Prince of Wales
 M.P. for Okehampton in 1735
 Friend of John Thomson
 A minor poet and writer of prose.
 Builder of Hagley Hall (1754 - 60), rebuilt the chancel of St. John's church (1754) and was responsible for much of the layout of the follies and features in the park.

Lyttelton, Thomas (1685 - 1751), 4th Baronet
 Son of Sir Charles. m. Christian Temple (d1748)
 Knight of the shire in 3 successive parliaments;
 One of the lords' commissioners at the Admiralty for 14 years
 The castle and rotunda were both started during his lifetime and it is probable that the overall concept was shared with his son.

Miller, Sanderson (1716 - 1780), an architect who had numerous influential contacts and his work, especially in the field of Gothic revival, can be found in many parts of the country. Examples of Palladian architecture by him are also fairly common.

Milton, John (1608 - 74). Best known for his "Paradise Lost" 1665 and his "Paradise Regained" 1671. A blind poet of the Puritan Revolution composed sonnets and lyric poems but later wrote prose tracts supporting liberty in religion, education and the press.

Palladio, Andrea (1508 - 80). An Italian stone mason who developed as an architect. His Neo - Classical style was copied by Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren in the early 17th century, but it was the 18th century before the Palladian style really took off in England.

Pope, Alexander (1688 - 1744). A cripple from childhood, with stunted growth (4' 6" in height). A satirist, known for his translations of Iliad 1715 - 20 and parts of Odyssey.

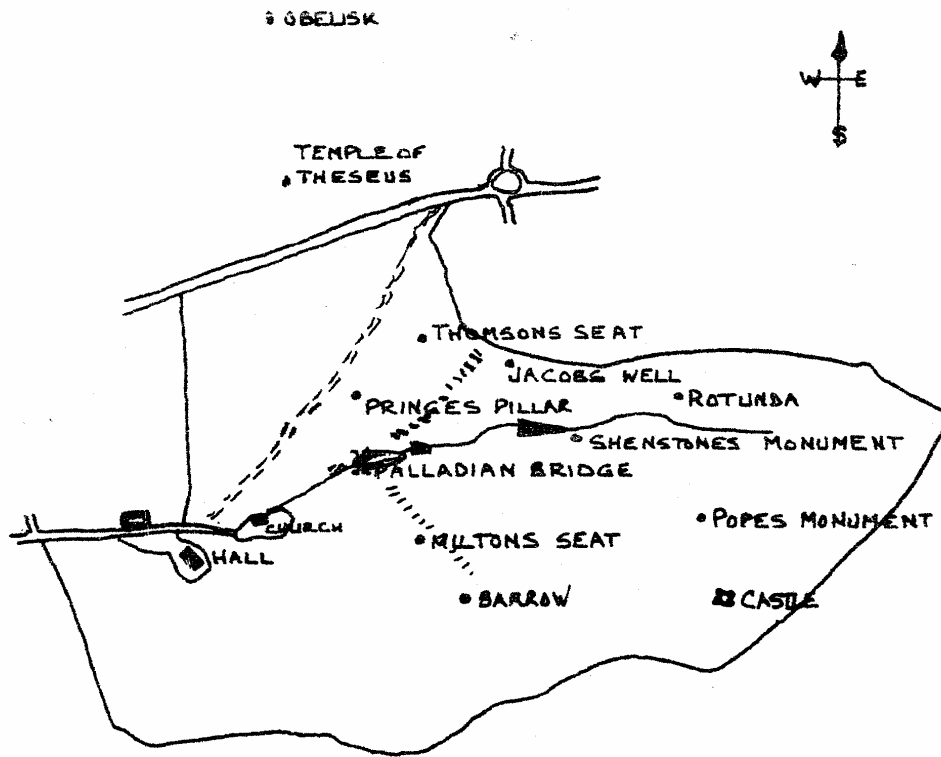
Shenstone, William (1714 - 1763). A minor poet. Best known for his "landship gardening" at the Leasowes, Halesowen. A neighbour of the Lyttelton family, who enjoyed a friendly rivalry over the development of their respective parks.

Stuart, James (1713 - 1788). Visited Rome 1741 and Athens 1751 drawing and measuring the original classical buildings. The latter visit earned him the nickname "Athenian". The Temple of Theseus at Hagley is probably his earliest reproduction of a classical building in this country.

Thomson, James (1700 - 1748). A Scottish poet who wrote "Winter" 1726, "Summer" 1727, "Spring" 1728 and these were published together with "Autumn" and collectively called "The Seasons" 1730. This was revised in 1744. He was a friend of the Lytteltons and visited Hagley. He wrote "Liberty" 1735/6, dedicated it to the Prince of Wales, who gave him a pension.

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FOLLY SITES IN HAGLEY PARK.