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The gardens at Raynham and their destruction, c. 1700-1735

TOM WILLIAMSON & LOUISE CRAWLEY

Abstract: This article examines the development of the landscape of Raynham Hall, Norfolk, England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and presents two hitherto unrecognised sketches by William Kent. It argues that Raynham was one of the first places in England where geometric gardens were removed in order to provide a largely open, parkland setting for the mansion. It attributes this innovation to William Kent and suggests that it was associated with Raynham's status as an early essay in Palladian architecture. Finally, it argues that more scholarly attention should be given to the connections between architectural styles, and modes of landscape and garden design, in eighteenth-century England.

Keywords: William Kent; Neo-Palladianism; landscape park

Introduction

The building of Raynham Hall in Norfolk, England, in the first half of the seventeenth century and the creation of the gardens around it have received a significant amount of scholarly attention, most notably from Linda Campbell and John Harris.¹ Much less has been written about the subsequent history of the landscape, in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.² This neglect is surprising, perhaps, given the amount published on the grounds of Norfolk's two other great seats of eighteenth-century power, Holkham and Houghton.³ This article examines the later development of the gardens under Charles, Second Viscount Townshend, who inherited in 1687; describes their destruction in the years around 1730; and considers William Kent's role in their demise and what his activities at Raynham may tell us more generally about the development of English landscape design.

The first gardens at Raynham

Raynham Hall (figure 1) was built by Sir Roger Townshend, who had inherited the estate from his father in 1603. Construction began in 1618, on a new site occupying rising ground overlooking the upper reaches of the River Wensum; the remains of the previous hall still survive, converted to a farmhouse, some 400 m to the west, close to the river. The new house was perhaps still not entirely finished in 1636/7 when Sir Roger died here: he spent much of his time at his maternal grandfather's house at Stiffkey on the north Norfolk coast and the design and construction of Raynham may have been something of a hobby. The house was at the cutting edge of fashion and heavily influenced by Palladian ideas. A compact triple-pile structure, it was symmetrical in terms of both external elevations and internal plan. Its principal façades featured Italianate shaped gables and, in the case of the east front, a central three-bay portico (figure 1).⁴ All these innovative features nevertheless co-existed with some more archaic ones. In particular, the house was



FIGURE 1. *Raynham Hall, Norfolk: the east front.*

entered through two entrance doors, placed in the end bays of the recessed centre of the west front, which gave access to screens passages running along either side of the great hall.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was widely accepted that Raynham had been designed by the great pioneer of English Neo-Palladianism, Inigo Jones. Such a belief is understandable; apart from its overall design being strongly informed by Palladian ideas, the hall's east façade is strikingly similar to that of Jones's Prince's Lodging at Newmarket in the neighbouring county of Suffolk, now lost.⁵ However, research by John Harris, Christopher Hussey, Linda Campbell, and others leaves no doubt that Raynham was in fact designed by Townshend himself, probably assisted by his 'mason', William Edge, who visited a number of buildings recently completed or under construction in both England and the Low Countries. These included Jones's Banqueting House at Greenwich and, almost certainly, the Prince's Lodging.⁶ Separately or together, the two men also visited a number of gardens, and Campbell has argued persuasively that the

symmetrical layout of those at Raynham displays an awareness of the latest Renaissance ideas.⁷

A map of East Raynham parish, surveyed by Thomas Waterman in 1621, shows the hall in elevation standing within a symmetrical arrangement of walled enclosures, covering in all around 11 acres (c. 4.5 hectares) (figure 2).⁸ Beyond this 'core' lay further compartments or enclosures and a wood covering an additional 35 acres (14 hectares). Inner and outer gardens lay on different alignments. The former shared the orientation of the hall, its own orientation decided by the alignment of the grand tree-lined approach running up the valley side to the west, at right angles to the contours. The outer areas, in contrast, lay conformable with the surrounding furlongs in the open fields, from which they had presumably been enclosed. Given that in 1621 the construction of house and grounds were still in their early stages, the precise status of what we are shown is uncertain, but recent archaeological survey work, including the use of ground-penetrating radar, confirms that the enclosures were constructed much as depicted and provides some details of what lay within them.⁹ That lying to the south-east of the house contained a parterre



FIGURE 2. *Raynham Hall and its gardens, as shown on Thomas Waterman's survey of 1621. North point added.*

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FIGURE 3. *The east front of Raynham Hall: sketch by Edmund Prideaux, c.1725.*

broadly similar to that drawn on the map; that immediately to the north-east was largely occupied by an orchard, planted in 1621; while the outer enclosure further to the north-east was also densely planted and probably represents the 'thicket' which the surviving accounts indicate was established in 1619/20 and which, dissected by paths, appears to have been a kind of 'wilderness'. The accounts also describe the making of an 'arbou' within what was probably a pre-existing wood which the map shows lay immediately to the north of the hall; the construction of a bowling alley, in 1619; and the creation of a kitchen garden, which probably occupied the enclosure lying immediately to the north-west of the hall, given that the kitchens and service areas were located at this end of the building.¹⁰ There are also references to the making of 'double walks', and of a 'triple walk' on the north side of the wood, and to 'checker hedges', one on the 'northe parte of the wodde' and the other 'next the bridge'. The latter appears to have spanned the Wensum, its

site now drowned beneath the eighteenth-century lake, and was designed by William Edge in 1619 as part of the main western approach to the hall.

There were some changes to the Raynham landscape in the decades following Sir Roger Townshend's death in 1637. His successor, his son Roger, probably did little but the latter's brother Horatio, who succeeded in 1648 and who became First Viscount Townshend in 1661, made some limited modifications to the interior of the house and in the 1660s undertook further work in the grounds. A new orchard was established, suggesting that the old one was cleared — perhaps too close to the hall for the more refined tastes of the Restoration period — but the greatest expenditure was on the deer park.¹¹ This had probably been created by Sir Roger in the 1630s and included land to the west of the river, in the adjacent parish of West Raynham, as well as extending to the west, north and east of the hall, covering around 450 acres (c. 182 hectares) in all. By 1667, following a spate of purchases, it covered 812 acres (c. 330 hectares).¹² Nevertheless, while there were changes of some importance in this period, the essential framework of garden enclosures shown on the map of 1621 seems to have remained intact when Horatio died in 1687.

The later geometric gardens

Horatio was succeeded by his son Charles, Second Viscount, who lived until 1738 and whose successive modifications of the Raynham landscape are the main concern of this article. Charles only came to live permanently at Raynham after he had returned from a Grand Tour and married his first wife, Elizabeth Pelham, in 1697. In 1699, he was said to be fully occupied making changes to the house and its grounds, changes which continued for several years.¹³ Those to the hall included the replacement of the two entrances on the west front with a single central doorway, various modifications to the internal plan, and alterations to the fenestration of the east façade and the addition of rustication to its ground floor. The changes to the gardens were in some ways more extensive. Edmund Prideaux visited Raynham in or shortly after 1725 and made a number of important sketches, which show that the grounds had been transformed along simpler, crisper, and more open lines (figures 3–6).¹⁴ They represent a classic example of the stripped-down, less enclosed geometric style, which became fashionable in England around 1700, characterised by broad expanses of lawn, neat gravel paths, simple topiary, and hedging. This is often seen as a stage in the progression towards, or even as a form of,

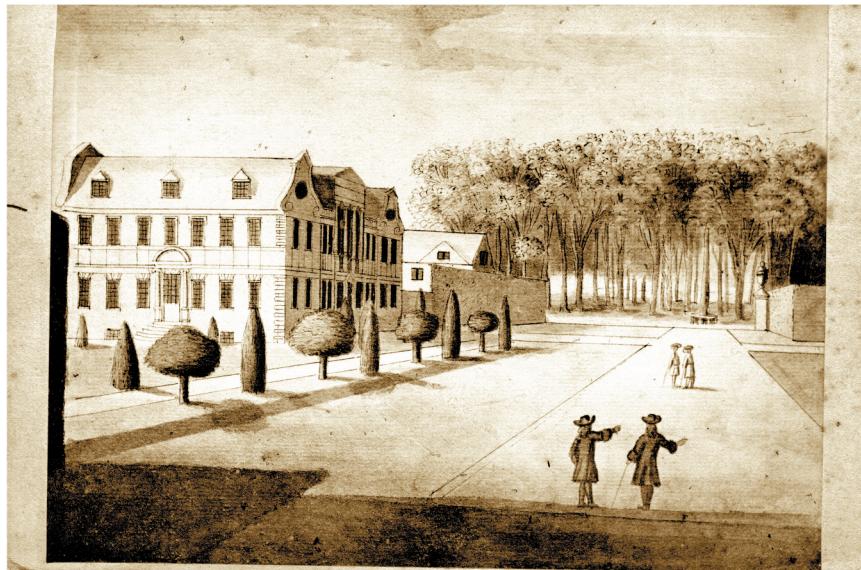


FIGURE 4. *The east front of Raynham Hall, looking north: sketch by Edmund Prideaux, c.1725.*

more ‘naturalistic’ gardening, but is arguably better considered as a distinct phase of geometric design, largely unrelated to what was to follow.

Prideaux’s two views of the east front (figures 3 and 4) show that all internal walls had been removed from the area of the ‘inner garden’, together with some of the external walls. This probably happened around 1712, when the estate accounts record payments for ‘pulling down the wall of the Great Garden’.¹⁵ One of the sketches (figure 3) appears to show that the north-eastern boundary of the inner gardens was now formed, at least in part, not by a wall but by a fosse or ha ha, suggesting in turn that the ‘outer garden’ had now been thrown into the park. The other shows that part of the north western wall had been demolished, allowing unrestricted views into the adjacent area of woodland (figure 4). The two other sketches show that a wilderness — an area of ornamental woodland, dissected by hedged paths — had now been established on the slope to the west of the house, flanking the main approach. The latter itself took the form of an avenue, wider than that shown on the 1621 map, the trees of which were set in tall hedges. Beyond, the river Wensum had now been dammed, to create the substantial lake, which still exists (figures 5 and 6).

The making of the wilderness is described in a contract, unfortunately lacking its associated plan and undated, although almost certainly drawn up around 1700.¹⁶ This states that the area to the south-west of the hall, either side of the main approach, was to be levelled and prepared and then:

Laid into ye several works as ye Draft Prescribes, the Hedge Lines of which works to be planted with hornbeams of two sizes ye Smaller Size of about 2 foot high and Better and ye larger Size of 4 foot high and Better: the Quarters to be plantd with ye sevll. Varietys of Flowering Trees Undermentioned ye walkes to be laid all with Sand and ye Center places to be planted with Spruce and Silver Firs.

The ‘Flowering Trees’ were to be lime, horse-chestnut, wild service, laburnum, guelder rose, lilac, bladder sena, wild olive, ‘sprit’ (variegated) sycamore, beech, and birch. The document ends with the memorandum: ‘that there is noe Edgings of Thymes, Lavenders, Thrift, Box or any other sorts of Edgeing, to be planted in all these 2 Devisions’. The proposals fit well with the wilderness illustrated by Prideaux, except that they fail to mention the trees, heavily trimmed, embedded in

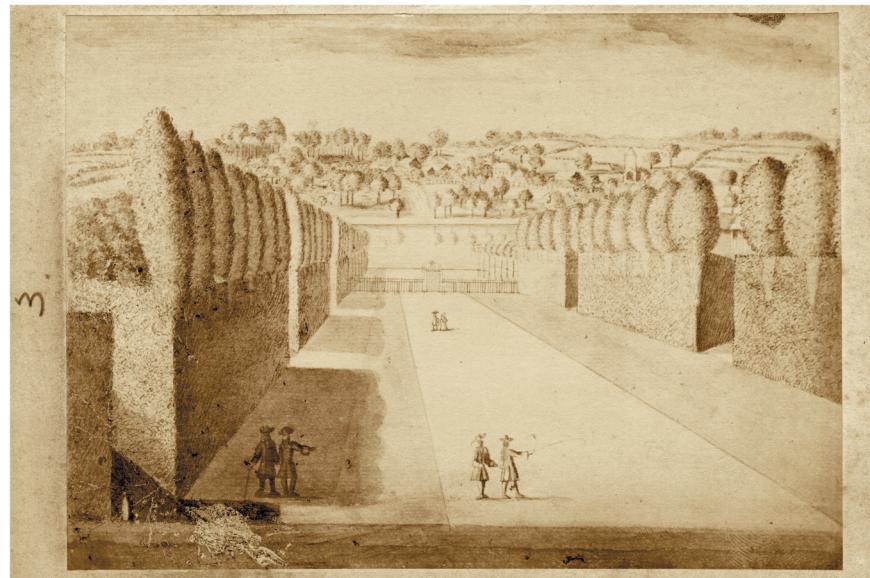


FIGURE 5. *View from the front of the house, south-west towards the lake, showing the avenue and wilderness: sketch by Edmund Prideaux, c.1725.*

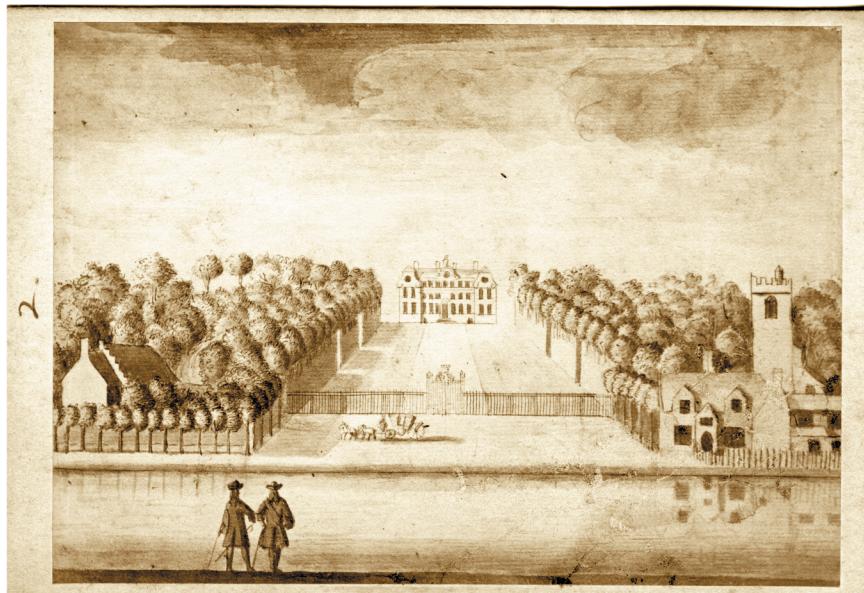


FIGURE 6. *The west front of Raynham Hall, viewed from beyond the lake: sketch by Edmund Prideaux, c.1725.*

the hedges lining the main approach. Most were removed, together with the wilderness itself, a few years after Prideaux prepared his sketches but nine remained at the far, south-western end, still survive, and are visually very different from the trees comprising a nineteenth-century replanting of the avenue. They are limes (*Tilia × Europa*) with girths ranging from 4.5 to 5.6 m, suggesting that they were planted around 1700, probably shortly before the wilderness itself was created. Although Prideaux displayed a measure of artistic license in his illustrations, the trees depicted would be consistent with a planting date some 25 years earlier.

The contract goes on to describe how the Parlour Garden — that is, the parterre garden shown on the 1621 map to the south-east of the hall — was to be transformed into ‘4 Quarters of Grass’, separated by gravel walks and surrounded by borders planted with ‘a Choice Collection of ye finest sortes of Hardy Evergreens’: yews, variegated hollies, junipers, ‘Cedars of Lycia’, laurel, and variegated box. These are presumably the topiary, clearly illustrated in two of Prideaux’s views, planted around the area’s margins (figures 3 and 4). The border next to the house was to be planted with flowering shrubs.

These were to include several kinds of honeysuckle, syringa, cytisus, hypericum, sweet briar, scorpion senna, and althea. All the borders were to be edged with ‘... some of ye Sorts of Thymes: Thrift; Pincks; or Box’. In addition, a strip of ground ‘lyeing next the Great Garden Wall’ was to be fenced off from the Parlour Garden with a hedge of Spruce and planted up as a flower garden, ‘fitt to Receive the Choicest and best sortes of Flowers’. The hedge referred to is presumably that just visible on the extreme left of Prideaux’s view of the east front (figure 3). The works were, in all, to cost the substantial sum of £460.

Prideaux prepared other sketches of major residences in the mid-1720s, in Norfolk and beyond, most of which — like other contemporary plans and illustrations, such as those published in the third volumes of Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus* in 1725 — show grounds laid out in this rather simplified geometric style. Already, some — like Raynham — were bounded in part by sunken fences or ha-has, allowing views out across adjacent parkland.¹⁷ Such designs were still, however, highly structured and ‘formal’ in appearance, and the sharp shift in the character of the Raynham landscape which occurred next suggests that these ‘late geometric’ gardens are not best understood as a step towards the ‘naturalistic’ styles of the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

The end of the Raynham gardens

Most of the features shown in Prideaux’s sketches appear well-established and, such as it is, the evidence suggests that most were created between 1699 and 1715, perhaps with a hiatus from 1709 until 1711 when Townshend was abroad for much of the time, serving as ambassador extraordinary to the States-General of the United Provinces. But one important feature, the lake, had only just been created and signals the start of a new phase of activity at Raynham.

Following the accession of George I in 1714 Townshend served in the administration of Robert Walpole, whose seat at Houghton lay a mere 6 miles (10 kilometres) to the north west of Raynham.¹⁸ In the mid-1720s, however, relations between the two men cooled, and Walpole’s rebuilding of Houghton Hall, and re-shaping of its landscape, between 1720 and 1732 stimulated renewed activity at Raynham (Townshend allegedly saw ‘every

stone that augmented the splendour of Houghton as a diminution of the grandeur of Raynham').¹⁹ In 1724, Townshend commissioned William Kent, already employed at Houghton (and soon to be active at Holkham, also in Norfolk) to remodel the hall. The works, for which Thomas Ripley (also involved at Houghton) was executive architect, mainly involved the interior décor, but included some changes to the internal layout, alterations to the fenestration and the construction of a new service wing to the north-west of the hall, replacing on a slightly different site the seventeenth-century building shown by Prideaux in one of his views of the east front (figure 4).²⁰

Alongside this extensive programme of architectural modernisation, the surrounding landscape appears to have been transformed along what were arguably highly innovative or at least unusual lines. The first stage in this new phase, as already noted, was the construction of the lake in the valley to the west of the hall. The household accounts for the period between July 1724 and March 1725 are full of payments to the 'Pond Men', and in September 1724 William Fenne, the steward, informed Lady Townshend that the 'new pond is a making'. There are payments to labourers for removing alders, and for 'taking up trees in the pond'.²¹ A professional pond-maker, a Mr Kindersley, was in charge of the works, which cost a total of £1,227 (£1,100 for the initial construction, a further £127.2.6 for additional work).²² Kindersley was paid in March 1725, suggesting that the lake had only just been completed when Prideaux prepared his views. It is shown clearly on a map preserved in the Raynham archives, unfortunately undated and probably from the 1740s, but certainly earlier than 1758 for a second map, bearing this date, shows an almost identical arrangement of features together with proposals for new planting, which the undated map shows only in pencil (figures 7 and 8).²³ The water covered an area of c. 25 acres (c. 10 hectares) and was retained by a substantial dam but seems to have been largely spring fed, the river running in a separate bypass channel parallel to its eastern edge. This was culverted where it crossed the vista from the hall (the 1758 map marks the channel as 'the Canal that serves the Engine with Water', marking the 'Engine'— an early pump house, supplying the mansion itself with water — at the northern corner of the lake). The lake was not just an adornment to the landscape. A boat for rowing or sailing on it was purchased in 1727; in 1726, it was stocked with fish.²⁴

The novelty of the Raynham lake should be emphasised for, as Wendy Bishop has recently noted, ornamental lakes of irregular or semi-regular form, while they had precursors in large parkland fish ponds, only really began to be constructed as

features of designed landscapes in the 1720s.²⁵ That at Raynham followed hard on the heels of the example just created at Blenheim in Oxfordshire and preceded the construction of that at Holkham in North Norfolk by 5 years (one was mooted from around 1722 at Houghton, but environmental constraints precluded its successful construction).²⁶ Other aspects of the new Raynham landscape, however, created almost immediately after Prideaux had made his sketches, were even more novel.²⁷

In December 1731, Lord Carlisle visited Raynham and was able to describe how 'the four fronts lays [lie] open to the Park'.²⁸ The following year the Earl of Oxford reported that 'The House stands free from all walls. Those my Lord pulled down and made his kitchen ground and fruit garden, quite out of sight of the house upon the decline of the hill'.²⁹ As the two maps just mentioned show, the new kitchen garden was located immediately to the north-east of the church, its site cut back into the hill — there is still a massive earthwork bank here (figures 7 and 8). Even the wilderness had now gone, for Oxford's description of how 'you look upon the lawn which is upon the decline at the bottom you have this most noble lake of water' clearly suggests a sweep of open turf on this side of the hall, leading down to the lake. Its demise is probably signalled by the payments recorded in 1729 for 'taking up the wilderness quarters', and for '37 labourers working in the wilderness and the new ground'.³⁰ In 1732, there were payments for 'digging the fosse' (i.e., ha ha), with others in 1735.³¹

There is little doubt that the landscape created by the early 1730s was much as shown on the undated map. Thomas Wright of Durham was employed at Raynham as a mathematics teacher in 1745–6 and a rough sketch made by him of the east front, almost certainly at this time, similarly shows an absence of any gardens.³² The map, however, omits two important features. One is not depicted because it lay beyond the surveyed area; a pyramid, built of wood, is described by Oxford, 'raised to be a termination of the view of the house'.³³ Its base survived within living memory, close to what was formerly a geometric cut through what was almost certainly a pre-existing area of woodland on the north-eastern edge of the park, in the adjacent parish of Toftrees. In 1729, one of the Raynham tenants received an abatement for land 'layd into the vistoe'.³⁴ The other feature not shown is the 'fosse', or ha ha, mentioned in the household accounts. This is, however, shown on the 1758 map, running along the line of the present ha ha beside the hall, but then with a central gap — its ends marked by urns on pedestals — and with extensions that curved north eastwards rather than, as

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FIGURE 7. Undated map showing Raynham Hall in its 'deformalised' landscape, with lake to the south-west (base of illustration). The kitchen garden, built in the late 1720s, lies within the polygonal enclosure beside the parish church. Ideas for new planting have been sketched out in heavy pencil (compare with figure 8).

today, terminating (the western end) or turning south (the eastern end). The undated map shows only the urns. These may have been survivors from the earlier gardens, for one of Prideaux's views shows something very similar, although apparently in a slightly different location (figure 4). But they may have been the urns 'from Bath' for which William Kent was paid in 1735.³⁵

There is thus little doubt that already, by the early 1730s, Raynham Hall stood alone in an open, rather empty landscape of trees, grass and water. The view from the hall, to the southwest, was across open grassland, sloping down to a distant lake. To the north-east, the prospect was framed by two urns on pedestals, across an expanse of lawn bounded by woodland to the left and by a thinner scatter of trees to the right, out along the 'vistoe' to the distant 'pyramid'. Perhaps more importantly, looking towards the hall, the service range and yards were hidden by lines of trees — sweet chestnuts, to judge from surviving examples — accentuating the elegant, compact symmetry of the main building in this simple, uncluttered landscape. This must surely be the earliest example of an English country house set within a minimalist parkland setting, unaccompanied by any visible structured gardens.

The role of William Kent

That such an innovative landscape came into existence at precisely the same time as William Kent was actively involved in modernising Raynham Hall is unlikely to be coincidental, although only three pieces of evidence associate him with the design of the grounds. A letter from Kent to Townshend, dated October 1735, concludes with the words:

I cannot finish this letter without putting you in mind that I am still pleased with ye openings ye have made, but la vera scrivile [?] is to observe yt where there are great lights there must be scura [dark] in proportion, and where you have made openings & left two or three trees they must be group'd with fine elms &c: that you may see your designs finish'd con gusto [with taste].³⁶

Little in fact can be learnt from this cryptic passage, beyond the implication that by 1735 the final touches were being made to the new landscape. It is doubtful whether Kent's attribution of the design to Townshend himself necessarily precludes his own active involvement in its formulation. In addition there are two undated drawings in the Raynham archives, which,



FIGURE 8. 'Map of Raynham park ... wherein are described some new plantations which are thought proper to be executed', dated 1758.

previously unnoticed, can be attributed to Kent with some confidence.³⁷ One (figure 9) is a rough sketch of a wooden bridge in open-work 'Chinese' style. It leads across a watercourse to a narrow piece of land, with a larger body of water beyond, an arrangement reminiscent of the relationship between the lake and its bypass channel as shown on the two maps. The bridge is framed by an avenue, implying that it was to be located at the southern end of the surviving south-western section of the lime avenue and that there was an intention to open up the by-pass stream, which was then, and remains, buried in a culvert where it crosses the vista. This particular plan may not have been executed, but the wider ornamental planting that it suggests may have been, the 1758 map describing the area near the lake as the 'Water Gardens'. The other sketch shows a circular temple, which is described in a note attached as 'a front to a Cottage towards the Great Pit in Normans Barrow, to be seen from ye New Road, the Bridge & the Hard Lands' (figure 10). The location described was around the point where the parishes of East Raynham, Tittleshall and Patesley meet (National Grid Reference TF 890237), where the Ordnance Survey First Edition 6-inch map of 1885 shows a large gravel pit labelled 'Norman's Burrow'. There is no evidence that the cottage was ever erected, but it is noteworthy that the site lies well outside the park, around a mile (c. 2 kilometres) south of the hall and invisible from it (the 'bridge' referred to is that on the road from East Raynham to South Raynham and Weasenham St Peter, the modern A 1065).

Kent was, therefore, clearly involved in the landscape at Raynham, and it is hard to escape the conclusion that he was responsible for its most innovative features — its stark, almost minimalist simplicity and absence of complex gardens, which seem without parallel at such an early date. This suggestion, however, goes against the weight of modern scholarship, which has tended to move away from a simple view of Kent as the stylistic predecessor of 'Capability' Brown, and has certainly cast doubt on whether his landscapes already emphasised open parkland as the main setting for the mansion. Indeed, Phibbs and others have argued that, while serpentine and perhaps 'naturalistic' in layout, his designs generally co-existed with, or formed distinct compartments within, gardens and landscapes which were still essentially geometric in character, as at Stowe in Buckinghamshire or — closer to Raynham-Holkham in Norfolk.³⁸ More recently, David Jacques, in an important discussion of Kent's gardens, has emphasised how contemporaries celebrated their intricacy, complexity and variety, as much as their use of prospects

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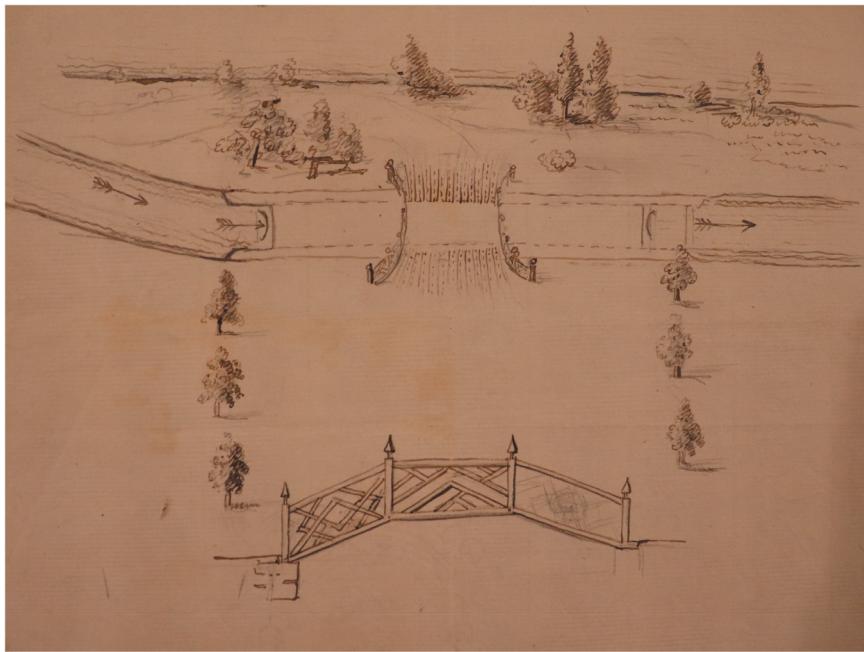


FIGURE 9. Sketch, attributed to William Kent on stylistic grounds, showing design for a bridge and waterside planting, probably in Raynham park.

out into the surrounding landscape: something clearly rather different from the setting of Raynham Hall, as described by Oxford and Carlisle, and as depicted on the two maps.³⁹ It was only in his ‘later’ works, from the mid 1730s that Kent supposedly began to show an interest in the wider landscape and in natural landforms, and even then only as part of compositions that included complex gardens.

But the example of Raynham, if we are interpreting the evidence correctly, suggests a more complicated story. As John Dixon Hunt has noted, in most places — Carlton House, Kensington, Richmond — where Kent was employed before 1735 he was not designing gardens from scratch, but working within recently completed (or still only partially completed) frameworks.⁴⁰ Often, moreover — at all these places, and at Chiswick — he was working with restricted, ‘suburban’ sites where a parkland setting could not be provided and where a particular emphasis was, perforce, placed on complex and varied gardens and on ‘concealing the bounds’, making the grounds seem larger than they really were.

But drawings prepared by Kent for two other relatively early sites where more space was available, Esher and Claremont in Surrey, suggest a different approach. Those for the latter, which probably pre-date 1734, reveal a keen interest in natural landforms and parkland scenery, and suggest a concern to treat the latter, as much as the extensive gardens here, as objects for improvement. His drawing of a proposed Palladian villa overlooking the old medieval tower at Esher, probably of c.1730, shows that he was already familiar with the idea of setting a great mansion in open parkland, with little or nothing in the way of significant gardens around it.⁴¹ Raynham seems to predate both these sites and seems to combine both approaches. It is particularly noteworthy that these three places were connected by family ties. Esher was purchased by Henry Pelham in 1729; Claremont was the seat of his brother Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle; while Raynham was the home of their sister, who married Charles Townshend in 1697.

Yet we do not mean to suggest that Kent’s innovative approach at Raynham simply reflected the space available and the scale of the canvas at his disposal. While Jacques’s recent review of Kent’s work has emphasised the influence of contemporary interest in ‘antique gardens’, ‘rural’ scenes and the supposed Chinese approach to landscape design, as well as that of history painting and theatre scenery, it rather downplays his enthusiasm for all things Italian and interest in the architecture of Andreas Palladio.⁴² As is well known, Kent was a key figure, with Colen Campbell and others who were patronised by or associated with Lord Burlington, in the promotion of the Palladian style. It was, again to repeat common knowledge, the second such attempt in England, following the still-born efforts of Inigo Jones in the first half of the previous century. Jones was almost as respected by members of Burlington’s clique as Palladio himself and in 1727 Kent was commissioned to edit a volume of his architectural works. In the mid-1720s, when Kent began to work at Raynham, these must have taken on a particular significance as few new buildings in a pure, or at least self-consciously, Palladian style had yet been built. Kent and Burlington only drew up the design for Chiswick House in 1725 and the building was not completed until 1729; Stourhead in Wiltshire was erected, to designs by Campbell, between 1722 and 1726; while more locally, Houghton was built between 1720 and 1730 but Holkham not begun until 1734. Only Mereworth in Kent, the shell of which had been completed by 1725, stood as a model for the new style in the mid-late 1720s, when Kent began working at Raynham. Buildings from the previous wave of



FIGURE 10. Sketch, attributed to William Kent on stylistic grounds, showing design for a cottage in the form of a classical temple.

Palladianism, and especially those designed by Jones himself, were thus of particular importance and interest to the fashionable elite.

As noted earlier, eighteenth-century commentators were unanimous in attributing the design of Raynham Hall to Inigo Jones. The *Norfolk Tour* of 1772 simply described Raynham as 'built by that excellent architect Inigo Jones'; 9 years earlier Lady Beauchamp-Proctor called it 'a very handsome house built by Inigo Jones'; while in 1731 the Earl of Carlisle, surely reflecting the beliefs of Townshend himself, thought it had been 'built by our Master Inigo Jones'.⁴³ It was one of a tiny number of private houses, including Stoke Park in Northamptonshire and Wilton in Wiltshire, for which such a claim could be made. Given the rising tide of enthusiasm for 'our Master', it is not surprising that Kent's alterations to the principal elevations were limited, probably restricted to the modernisation of the fenestration (the building had been 'lately ... sashed', according to Carlisle).⁴⁴

How, then, was the setting of such an important piece of architecture to be treated? Evidently, by removing all distracting structures and clutter — gardens, walls, avenue, wilderness — from its immediate vicinity, and by carefully screening from view the new service buildings erected to its north-west. Even in the wider

landscape of the park, there was only a single built structure — the pyramid, positioned over a mile away. The hall was to stand — exhibited — alone in the landscape, accompanied by groupings of trees and on a hill overlooking a lake in the middle distance, all with strong echoes of the siting of Italian villas and of the paintings of Lorraine and Poussin. The composition prefigured the kinds of landscape which Capability Brown was to create a quarter of a century later, and perhaps to a greater degree than anything else which Kent was to design, although his awareness of the possibilities of the wider landscape certainly increased as his career subsequently progressed, at places like Holkham, or Euston in Suffolk.

Conclusion

The relationship between the Palladian architecture (and Palladian associations) of Raynham Hall, and its setting at so early a date 'free of walls' and without structured gardens, should not be seen simply as an act of reverence for a building designed by Inigo Jones. It might also be read as a response to the question of how to create suitable landscape settings for Neo-Palladian mansions more generally. For it was an extreme example of a more general trend. Although no other great house in the 1730s or 40s seems to have been open to the park on all sides many of those newly built in Neo-Palladian style were — in marked contrast to earlier practice — free of gardens and enclosures on *one* side, usually the entrance front. This was, for example, true of all three of Raynham's principal Palladian neighbours in Norfolk. Houghton Hall looked out across gardens designed in simple 'late geometric' style to the west, but to the east parkland ran right up to the walls. The Coke's great mansion of Holkham, begun in the 1730s, and where Kent was also employed in the design of the grounds, had gardens to the south but looked out directly across open parkland to the north. Wolterton Hall, when completed in 1742, likewise only had gardens to the south. The north façade, framed by block plantations, lay open to the park or, at least, was separated from it by a featureless expanse of lawn. Contemporaries clearly thought that houses built in the new, more 'accurate' classical styles of the 1720s, 30s and 40s needed to be exhibited, on one side at least, without the distractions of gardens and enclosures of the kind which had accompanied houses of the previous generation. In the 1750s and 60s, under Capability Brown and his contemporaries, this process was taken a stage further. Although gardens did not cease to exist they became simpler and were, to a large extent, removed from the principal façades. Viewed towards its main elevations,

the house appeared to stand — as Raynham had already appeared to stand by the early 1730s — in open parkland.

Yet while the ensemble at Raynham may in some ways have pre-figured these later developments and may have been structured by some of the same aesthetic concerns, we do not mean to restate, in any simplistic manner, the old teleological argument, for a single developmental thread, by which Charles Bridgeman, Kent and subsequently Brown made ever closer approximations to ‘natural’ landscapes. For the 1758 map was a proposal which, if implemented, would have restored a measure of geometry to Raynham, filling the park with a pattern of woodland blocks, defining linear vistas focused on the hall, reminiscent of some of Charles Bridgeman’s work. The progression towards informality could evidently be reversed. Nor do we mean to suggest that the rise of the landscape park as the main setting for the mansion, and the associated removal of structured gardens and geometric features like avenues, was entirely or even mainly a consequence of the rise of neo-Palladian and subsequently Neo-Classical architecture. But changes in architectural styles may have been one influence on this development. We should, perhaps, make greater efforts to consider eighteenth-century architecture, and landscape design, as two parts of a single aesthetic endeavour: for after all Kent, Brown, and Repton all worked as both architects and landscape gardeners. The real lesson we might

learn from this study of Raynham, however, is that the examination of major country houses which were considered important by contemporaries, but which have been neglected by modern garden historians, can open up new avenues of research into, and encourage new ways of thinking about, the development of eighteenth-century landscape design.

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NOTES

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