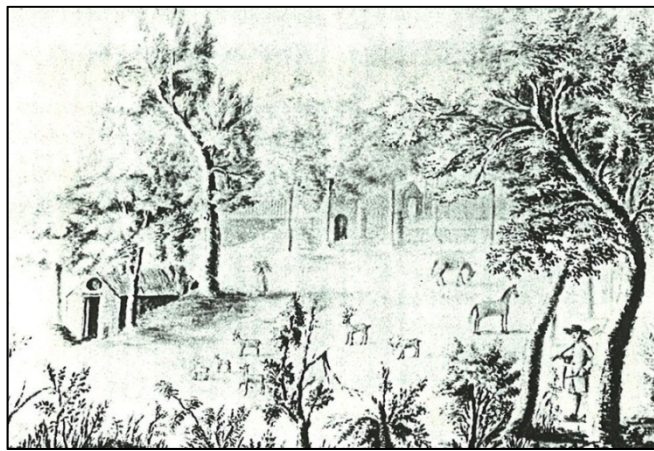


The Landmark Trust

THE BATH HOUSE



History Album

Written by Julia Abel Smith, 1991

Re-presented in 2014

The Landmark Trust Shottesbrooke Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3SW
Charity registered in England & Wales 243312 and Scotland SC039205

Bookings 01628 825925 Office 01628 825920 Facsimile 01628 825417 Website
www.landmarktrust.org.uk

BASIC DETAILS

Built c1748 for Sir Charles Mordaunt

Designed by Sanderson Miller

Mason: William Hitchcox

Plasterer: Robert Moore

Shellwork: Mary Delany and the Misses Mordaunt

Acquired by Landmark 1987

**Restoration: William Hawkes
of Hawkes, Cave-Brown-Cave**

Builder: Linford-Bridgeman Ltd

Foreman: Stuart Slater

**Plasterers: T.E.Ashworth Ltd (Bill Salter)
& Trumpers Ltd (Geoff Orton)**

Shellwork: Diana Reynell and assistants

Work completed 1991

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Summary

The stucco ... is meant to represent a wall worn by water drops, with icicles sticking to it. The festoons of shells are additional ornaments; or how could they come in that form unless some invisible sea nymph or triton placed them there for their private amusement? I should not wonder, indeed, that so pretty a place allured them.

Mary Delany 1754

The Bath House was built about 1748 for Sir Charles Mordaunt of Walton Hall. Like many of his contemporaries, Sir Charles enjoyed making alterations and improvements to his house and estate and took a fashionable interest in architecture. He was one of the local circle of gentlemen connoisseurs and amateur architects which included Lord Lyttleton of Hagley, Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury and not least, his good friend Sanderson Miller of Radway.

Almost certainly it was the last of these, Sanderson Miller, who provided designs for the Bath House. The building bears a close resemblance to his known works, such as the Shire Hall in Warwick; and he had a particular fondness for rooms of octagonal form, as here. No drawings exist, but in October 1749, Miller noted in his diary that he was settling "accounts with Hitchcox about Sir Charles' Bath". William Hitchcox was both Miller's stonemason and his valet. Since he seldom worked for anyone else, his involvement at Walton provides some firm evidence for attributing the design to Miller.

Since Classical times, exotic buildings have formed an important part of garden design. In the landscape gardens of the eighteenth century these were carefully placed to appear unexpectedly in the course of meandering walks, sometimes chanced on close to, sometimes glimpsed from a distance, adding interest and variety to the scene. On a practical level, such buildings provided shelter, and a place to enjoy the view, take a rest and have picnics. Along with temples and towers, bath houses were also popular, having strong associations with the Classical past, and the baths of Ancient Rome. They served moreover a double purpose.

At that time people took a bath mainly for medicinal reasons. We know Sir Charles suffered from gout and his doctor would certainly have advised him that a cold dip would be beneficial for this ailment. A cold bath was also held to calm the nerves, improve digestion, invigorate the spirits, and even help to retain "an equal bodily weight". Lengthy immersion was not advised, in case it resulted in a Horror!

The elegant octagonal room above the bath chamber is dominated by the plaster icicles, or stalactites, and the shell-work festoons, a refinement and contrast to the cave-like grotto below. It seems that this decoration was the idea of Mary Delany, whose sister Anne Dewes lived at neighbouring Wellesbourne Hall. Mrs Delany is better known for her paper flower pictures, but she also excelled in

shell-work. She decorated her own home near Dublin in this way, and also possessed an impressive shell collection. She sent a barrel of shells to Walton in 1754, and probably helped in their arrangement, supervising her sister and Sir Charles' daughters.

Having served as the setting for many picnics and tea-parties, and even a Victorian dinner to celebrate a christening, the Bath House finally fell out of use after the Second World War. Efforts by its owners to keep it in repair proved unequal to the destructive energy of vandals. Eventually it was brought to the attention of the Landmark Trust, as a charity which specialises in the rescue of small but distinguished historic buildings. A lease was signed in 1987.

REPAIR OF THE BATH HOUSE

The Walton Bath House was fully restored between 1987-91 by the Landmark Trust, under the direction of architect William Hawkes of Stratford-upon-Avon. The work was carried out by Linford-Bridgeman, a firm which specialises in historic building repair. The job of recreating the plaster icicles fell to Bill Salter, of T.E. Ashworth, with support from Geoff Orton of Trumbers. Diana Reynell was our 20th-century Mrs Delany, responsible for the shell-work.

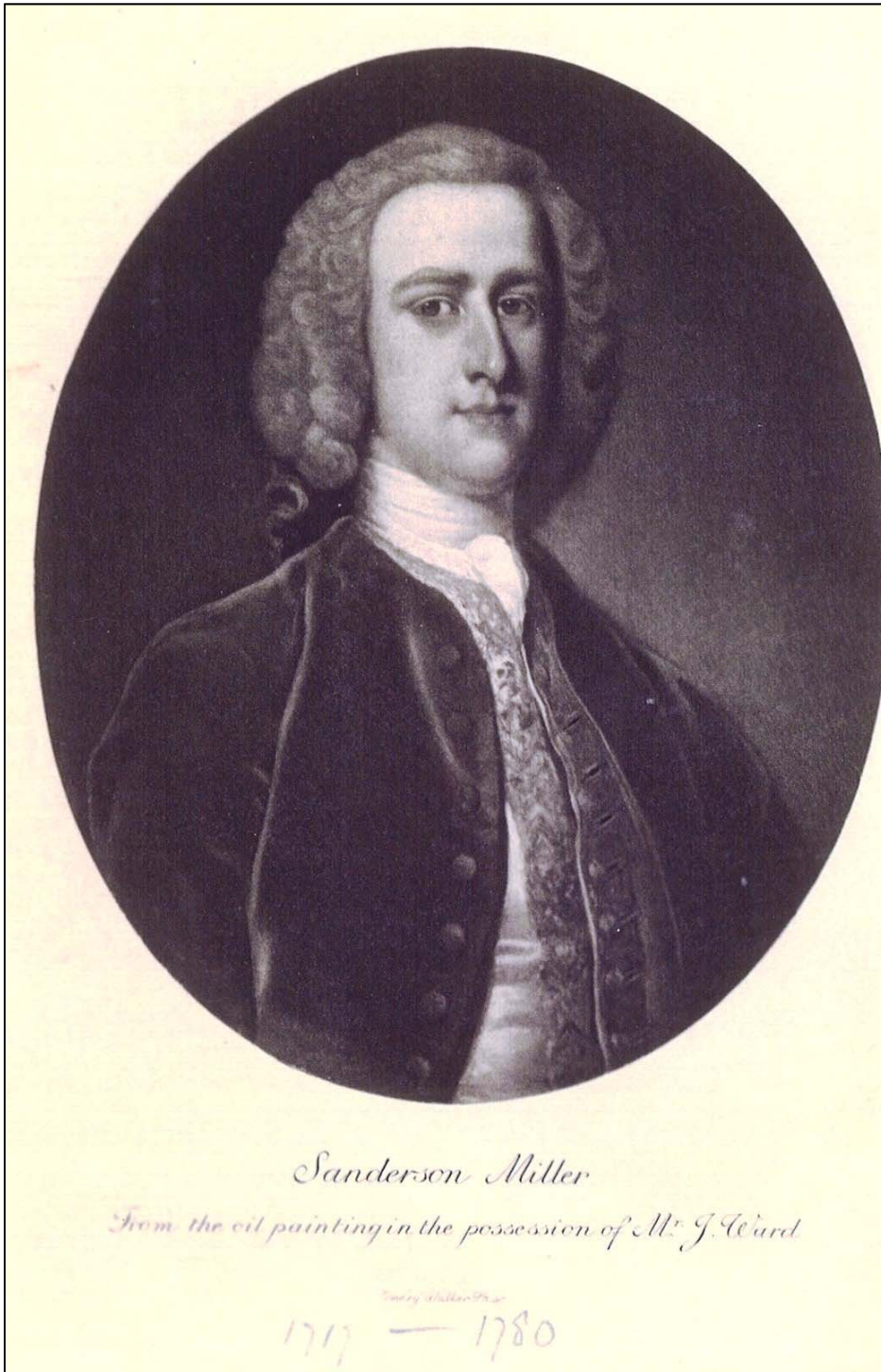
The task that had to be accomplished was a daunting one. In 1987, the vaulted ceiling had fallen in, most of the plaster on the walls had gone, and only shadows of the festoons survived. Windows and doors were broken, and very few floorboards were left. More seriously, the masonry vault of the bath chamber was in danger of collapse, and the whole building was showing a tendency to slide down the hill, causing the walls to crack. Fortunately, William Hawkes had made survey drawings before the building became completely derelict. The owners of the Walton estate had taken photographs of the interior at the same time, and had saved some of the shells. This information, together with a careful survey of what was left and historical research made it possible to work out the exact appearance of the main room.

Before any work could begin inside, the structure had to be made safe. The roof was repaired, and given a new covering of slates. The walls were patched with new stone where necessary, disturbing the existing masonry as little as possible. Lime mortar was used, although reinforced concrete was used to form a new floor to secure the vault of the bath chamber. For further strength, steel wires were threaded through several of the stones, to anchor them from above. Much of the surviving joinery was found to be sound, if battered. The window and door surrounds were repaired and put back in place. New sections of dado rail and skirting were made to match bits that were still there. A new floor of oak boards was laid. The window sashes were renewed, with the heavier glazing bars common to the mid-eighteenth century and new crown glass from France.

The exact positions of the shell festoons had been carefully marked by boards fixed to the wall, around which the new plaster could be applied. The original boards, to which the shells had been fixed with plaster of paris, were handed over to Diana Reynell, to start the process of recreating the shell-work. The new shells copy as closely as possible those used by Mrs Delany, both in type and arrangement. Each festoon is eight foot long, and some of the shells, such as the conches and tritons, are very large. This caused some alarm when the festoons were seen at ground level, but back in their proper positions on the walls, they were exactly right in scale. For the ceiling, new plaster icicles were made with moulds copied from old ones found under the floorboards. A short length of old cornice that survives above the main door, and old photographs, provided evidence for the way in which they were fixed. The central ceiling boss had vanished, and old photographs provided little evidence for its design. A new one had to be created, therefore, its form based on an idea of what its predecessor might have been like.

The chimneypiece is also a new design, since only the faintest traces survived of the original one. Its shell decoration echoes that of a chimneypiece at Wellesbourne Hall, probably the work of Mrs Delany or her sister. The central rosette contains the few surviving eighteenth-century shells.

A new drive and path were created and water and electricity brought to the building. The yew trees, planted in the eighteenth century to give an impression of antiquity, were cut back. Finally, a vista was cleared through the woods in front, to give a view of the countryside, and at the same time enable this elegant building to be more widely appreciated.



A Brief History

The Bath House was built about 1748 for Sir Charles Mordaunt, 6th Baronet, of Walton Hall. Like many of his contemporaries, Sir Charles enjoyed making alterations and improvements to his estate and took a fashionable interest in architecture. He was one of the local Warwickshire circle of gentlemen connoisseurs and amateur architects which included Lord Lyttelton of Hagley, Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury estate on which Astley Castle stands, William Holbech of Farnborough and not least, his friend Sanderson Miller of Radway.

In October 1749, Miller noted in his diary that he was settling "accounts with Hitchcox about Sir Charles' Bath etc." William Hitchcox was Miller's faithful mason, who rarely worked except under his direction; in the absence of any drawings or other documentation, his involvement would suggest that the design of the Walton Bath House may confidently be attributed to the squire of Radway.

The development of the 18th-century "natural" landscape brought with it a desire for new garden buildings which would provide accents for walks, as well as places in which to enjoy the view, take a rest and have picnics. Amongst the temples, follies and towers, bath houses too were popular. At that time people took a bath mainly for medicinal purposes. We know that Sir Charles suffered from gout and may have found a cold dip beneficial. The site of the little building was extremely practical as the bath was, and still is, fed by more than one of the many natural springs in the area.

The elegant octagonal room above the craggy bath chamber is dominated by the splendid plaster icicles and shellwork festoons over the windows. It appears that these were instigated by Mary Delany, whose sister Anne Dewes moved to neighbouring Wellesbourne Hall in 1744. Mrs Delany is better known for her cut-out paper flower pictures, many of which are now in the British Museum, but

she also excelled in shell-work, making nosegays and flowers, and decorating her own home near Dublin with shells, as well as possessing an impressive shell collection.

Having suffered dreadful vandalism, the Walton Bath House has been fully repaired between 1987-91 by the Landmark Trust, under the direction of William Hawkes, with Diana Reynell as our 20th-century Mrs Delany. Once again visitors can entertain notions dreamed up here by Sir Charles and his family, with the help of Sanderson Miller and Mrs Delany.



The *Asphodil Lilly*, a paper flower collage by Mrs Delany in the British Museum

The Building of the Bath House

The Architectural World of Sir Charles Mordaunt

A leading member of the Warwickshire gentry, Sir Charles Mordaunt represented his county in Parliament as one of the two Knights of the Shire. In the 18th century, the majority of M.P.s were, like himself, landowners, and his constituency was particularly rich in gentleman's estates: Charlecote, Ettingdon, Farnborough, Honington, and Compton Verney to name but a few. Sir Charles lived during the age of William Kent and Capability Brown, when the "improvement" of one's house and estate, as well as an informed interest in architecture, were recognised as gentlemanly pursuits.

Due to his parliamentary commitments, Sir Charles spent some time each year in London, where he could discuss the latest architectural topics. Nowadays we argue about Modernism, Post-Modernism, and the Classical Revival; in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, Sir Charles and his cronies no doubt disputed the merits of the Baroque, Palladian, Gothic, Rococo, and even Chinese styles. He came to maturity at the beginning of the reign of King George I, when Lord Burlington and his protégé,, William Kent, were actively promoting Palladianism and a purer Classicism at the expense of the Baroque style.

Through family contacts and local acquaintances Sir Charles was in touch with a number of important country houses and architectural developments. In 1720 he married Dorothy Conyers of Copped Hall in Essex. Her brother Edward married the Hon. Mathilda Fermor of the Pomfret/Leinster family, with whom Sir Charles became acquainted. Sir Charles's London house was at the back of St. James's and he would no doubt have taken a great interest in the erection in the 1750's of central London's only Gothick house at 18 Arlington Street. Quickly dubbed Pomfret Castle, it was built by the Countess of Pomfret, Edward and Matilda Conyers' sister-in-law.

Their daughter, Sophia Conyers (Sir Charles's niece), married Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Hall in North Warwickshire. Sir Roger was one of the most notable gentleman-architects and Arbury is one of the finest examples of an 18th-century Gothick house to rank with Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill.¹ He and Sir Charles became friends and when, after the death of his wife Sophia, Sir Roger went to Italy to assuage his grief, he wrote to her uncle from Florence in 1774, kindly enquiring: "Can we do anything for you in this Country? Books Music Perfumes Sculpture Painting - send your Orders we will execute them with pleasure". Although he never went on the Grand Tour himself, Sir Charles corresponded with many of those who had that pleasure.

Sir Roger Newdigate was involved in plans for rebuilding Copped Hall in the Palladian style during the 1740's for his brother-in-law, John Conyers, Sir Charles's nephew. It was possibly at Sir Charles's suggestion that his close friend, Thomas Prowse, M.P. for Somerset, was also consulted. Copped Hall was eventually erected in 1753 under the supervision of John Sanderson. (This house - now a gaunt shell - may be seen clearly from the M25 near Epping)

After the death of Dorothy Conyers, Sir Charles Mordaunt married Sophia Wodehouse of Kimberley Hall, in Norfolk

In 1769, Sophia and Charles Mordaunt's son, John, married Elizabeth, the daughter of Thomas Prowse. Prowse and Sir Charles were friends of long-standing, both temperate and well-read men with a common interest in architecture. He was the son of John Prowse of Compton Bishop and Berkley in Somerset. Prowse also worked for Lord Lyttleton on Hagley Hall with another of Sir Charles' friends and another Warwickshire neighbour, Sanderson

¹ Also part of the Arbury Estate from 1674 was Astley Castle, doomed by Sir Roger's enthusiasm for Arbury Hall to become a secondary seat. Eventually falling into complete ruination, Astley Castle was restored by Landmark from 2010 in a radical scheme that won the 2013 RIBA Stirling Prize.

Miller, the squire of Radway. It was probably Sir Charles Mordaunt who introduced the two men.

The 6th Baronet was not fantastically wealthy. He could not indulge his architectural interests by tearing down the old house at Walton and rebuilding to the designs of a fashionable architect like Colen Campbell or Henry Flitcroft. Later, in the 1750s, he indulged in a more cautious remodelling of the existing house. Until then, garden buildings were ideal for a man of taste only able to indulge in modest projects. With this in mind, it seems that Sir Charles asked Sanderson Miller to produce some plans for his bath house in the woods.

Sanderson Miller

Sanderson Miller was a gentleman-architect of private means who mainly specialised in the Gothick style but also produced elegant Classical designs for Hagley Hall and the Shire Hall in Warwick. As an amateur, he preferred not to be paid and as his name does not appear in accounts, it can be difficult to trace his work. He worked a great deal for his friends and was a popular and social man. Amongst others, he made designs for Roger Newdigate at Arbury Hall, George Lyttelton at Hagley, Lord Dacre at Belhus in Essex and Lord North at Wroxton.

In 1737 Miller's father, a wealthy merchant from Banbury, died, leaving his son the house and estate at Radway Grange whilst he was still at Oxford. One of his first projects was to gain him a certain amount of fame. This was the Gothic tower at Radway, erected on Edge Hill and begun on the hundredth anniversary of the famous Civil War battle in 1745. As at the Bath House, he designed an octagonal room affording magnificent views. William Hitchcox was the mason and Robert Moore the plasterer.

The next year Miller's friend, Mr Barrett, later Lord Dacre, wrote to him: "Your fame in architecture grows greater and greater every day and I hear of nothing else, if you have a mind to set up you'll soon eclipse Mr Kent, especially in the Gothick way in which in my mind he succeeds very ill". It must have been soon after this that Sir Charles began thinking about erecting his Bath House. Until 1748 national events had not been conducive to new buildings. The War of the Austrian Succession began in 1739 and brought with it nearly a decade of conflict; interest rates rose and land tax, particularly damaging to gentlemen like Sir Charles, was increased to 4s in the pound, while the price of grain hit a long-term low in 1743-44. In 1748, however, Peace was declared and the economic situation looked brighter.

Sir Charles probably chose Sanderson Miller as being one of his own circle. They shared antiquarian interests and a love of books. Asking for local news in 1744, Miller's friend Dean Swift had written:

Have you any rational neighbours who are neither Drunkards nor Sportsmen? I think Sir Charles Mordaunt is a little too far from you, but hang distance when taste is to be found at a journey's end.

Miller obviously respected Sir Charles as a fellow connoisseur.

In October, 1749, Sanderson Miller noted in his diary that he was settling "accounts with Hitchcox about Sir Charles's Bath etc." William Hitchcox was both Miller's stone mason and his valet, and since he rarely worked for anyone else, his involvement provides the best evidence that the design of the Bath House may be attributed to Miller. The attribution becomes even more certain when Miller's friendship with Sir Charles is taken into account, together with the strong stylistic similarities to his work elsewhere.

The Site of the Bath House

The Bath House is just the sort of romantic commission that Sanderson Miller would have enjoyed. Miller mainly worked in the Gothic vein, but the site at Walton demands the Classical style. Less than a mile behind the Bath Wood lies the Roman Fosse Way and to the south of the Hall, Town Field was supposed to contain traces of Roman buildings and Roman coins had been found there.

The Georgians enjoyed gentle whimsy. Just as Miller wished people to believe that his Gothic Tower at Radway was medieval, so in 1733 Mrs Delany (then still Mrs Pendarves) writes delightedly to Jonathan Swift that " My Lord Bathurst's wood house is now a venerable castle, and has been taken by an antiquarian for one of King Arthur's". In the same way it would no doubt have pleased Sir Charles greatly if people believed his classical bath house to be Roman - which in course of time and in local legend, it became.

The setting of the Bath House in its shady grove is in line with newly naturalistic landscape fashion based on the study of both Classical and Renaissance garden design in Italy, and put into practice by gardeners like William Kent at nearby Rousham. In the vicinity of the Bath House there are strong contrasts of light and shade, with the dark woods opening into a bright glade. The surrounding countryside is imminent, seen picturesquely from the windows of the octagon room. On a still afternoon the sound of the bath below, filling from underground springs, lends the atmosphere of water so beloved of the Italian designers; and they, too, preferred elevated situations with far distant views. Horace Walpole called William Kent a 'genius', an 'oracle... much consulted by all those who affected taste'.

Elysium did not yield up its treasures lightly. The old house at Walton would not have afforded a view of the Bath House: it was meant to be a surprise. Sir Charles and his family would have walked along the woodland path from the house and "stumbled upon" the little building obliquely. Turning around the visitor would have been rewarded with the rural views of woods and fields away across the valley of the Dene Brook.

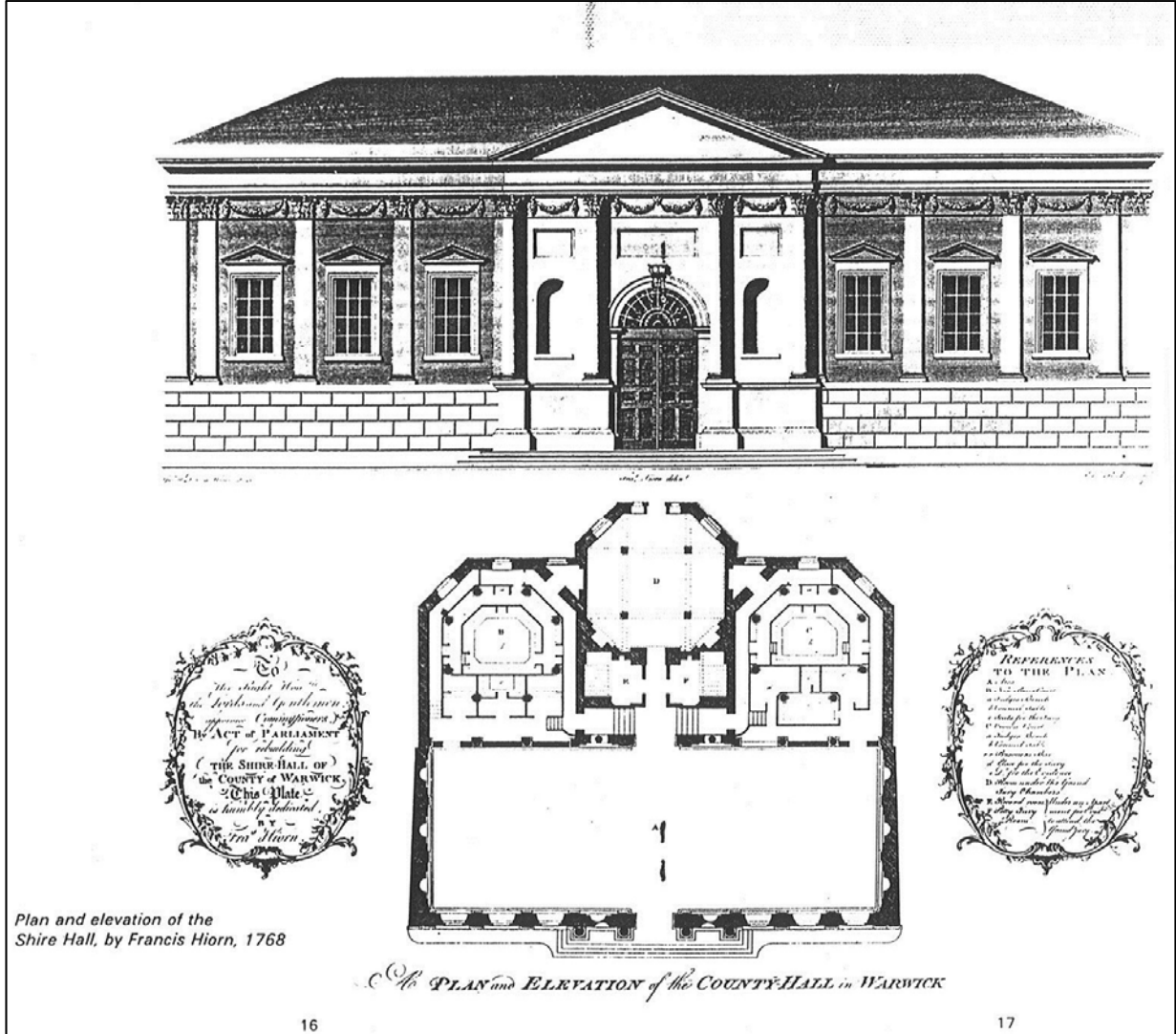
The Bath House is surrounded by yew trees. *Taxusbaccata* was known to Classical writers such as Virgil and Livy, who refer to its poisonous properties. Yews helped to evoke the atmosphere of antiquity and were therefore popular as a setting for 18th-century Classical bath houses. The Roman Bath at Rousham - an open octagonal pool in front of a small arched cave - is over-shadowed by yew trees. Similarly at Gibside, in Co. Durham, the classical Bath House, which has now completely disappeared, was in a yew grove high above the River Derwent.

The Exterior of the Building

The difference between the two storeys of the Bath House is immediately striking. The lower part emerging from the hillside is composed of gigantic stones and is a reminder of the ancient grottoes which, according to the Greek and Roman poets, housed the earliest shrines to the Gods. Above it the regular ashlar blocks are a deliberate contrast and a preparation for the refinement of the octagon room's interior.

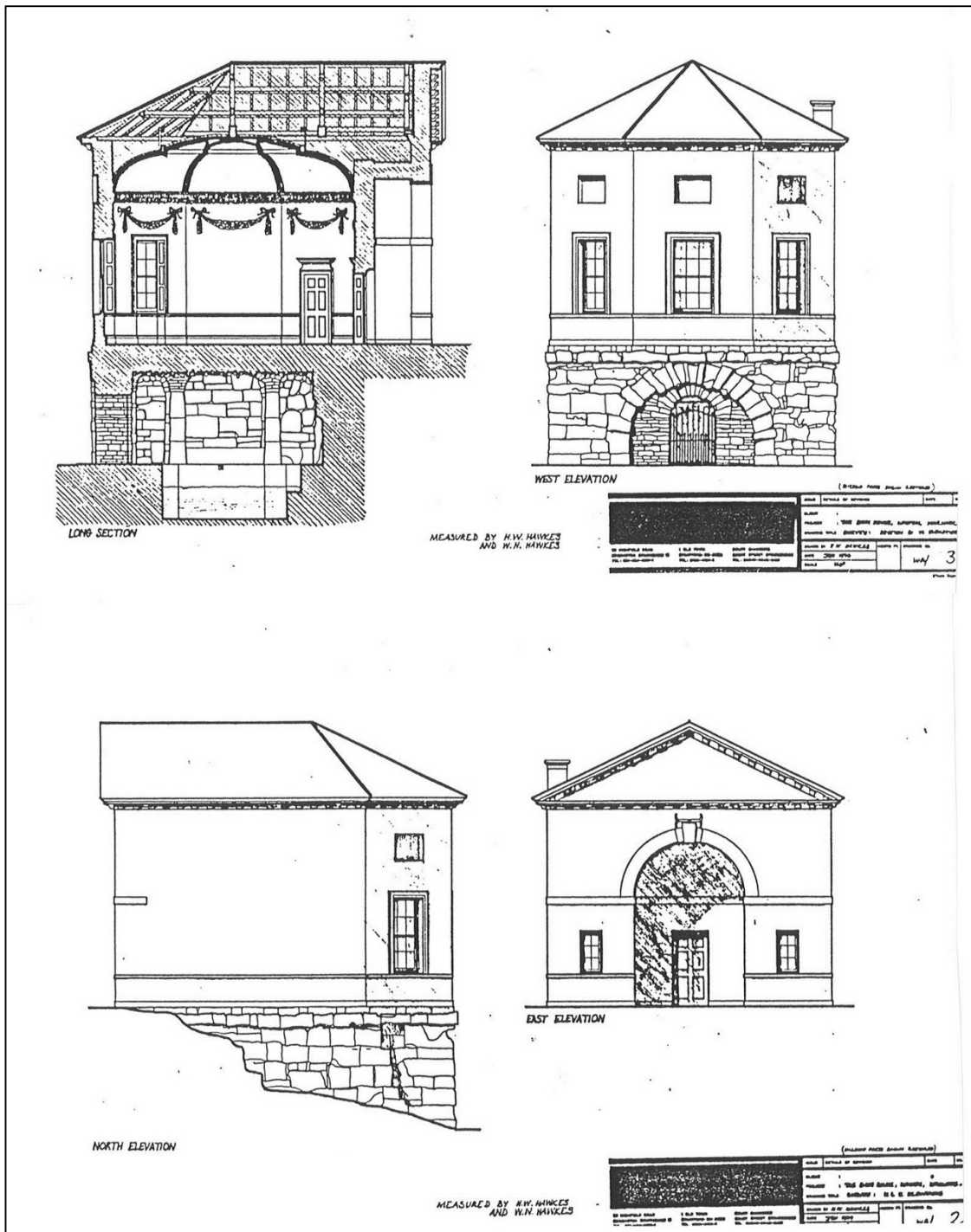
William Hitchcox was accustomed to visit the site before building commenced to check for available material; the stone for the Bath House was taken from the hill on which it is built. Detail on the exterior is kept to a minimum. This design anticipates Miller's treatment of the exterior of the Shire Hall at Warwick, built a decade later, with its rustic basement and pedimented entrance arch flanked by blank openings.

At the Shire Hall, Miller was responsible for the two Court rooms. Each of these consist of an octagon of free-standing pillars rising to an eight sided segmented dome not unlike the upper room of the Bath House. (Miller's friend Thomas Prowse criticised him for these octagon courts which he regarded as inelegant but Miller was not to be dissuaded). Miller seems particularly fond of this shape and used it at his own Gothic Tower at Radway as well as at the temple he designed for Lord North at Wroxton.



Plan and elevation of the Shire Hall, by Francis Hiorn, 1768

The Shire Hall at Warwick, designed by Sanderson Miller, 1754-8 and executed by William and David Hiorn



The Bath House at Walton, measured and drawn by the Hawkes

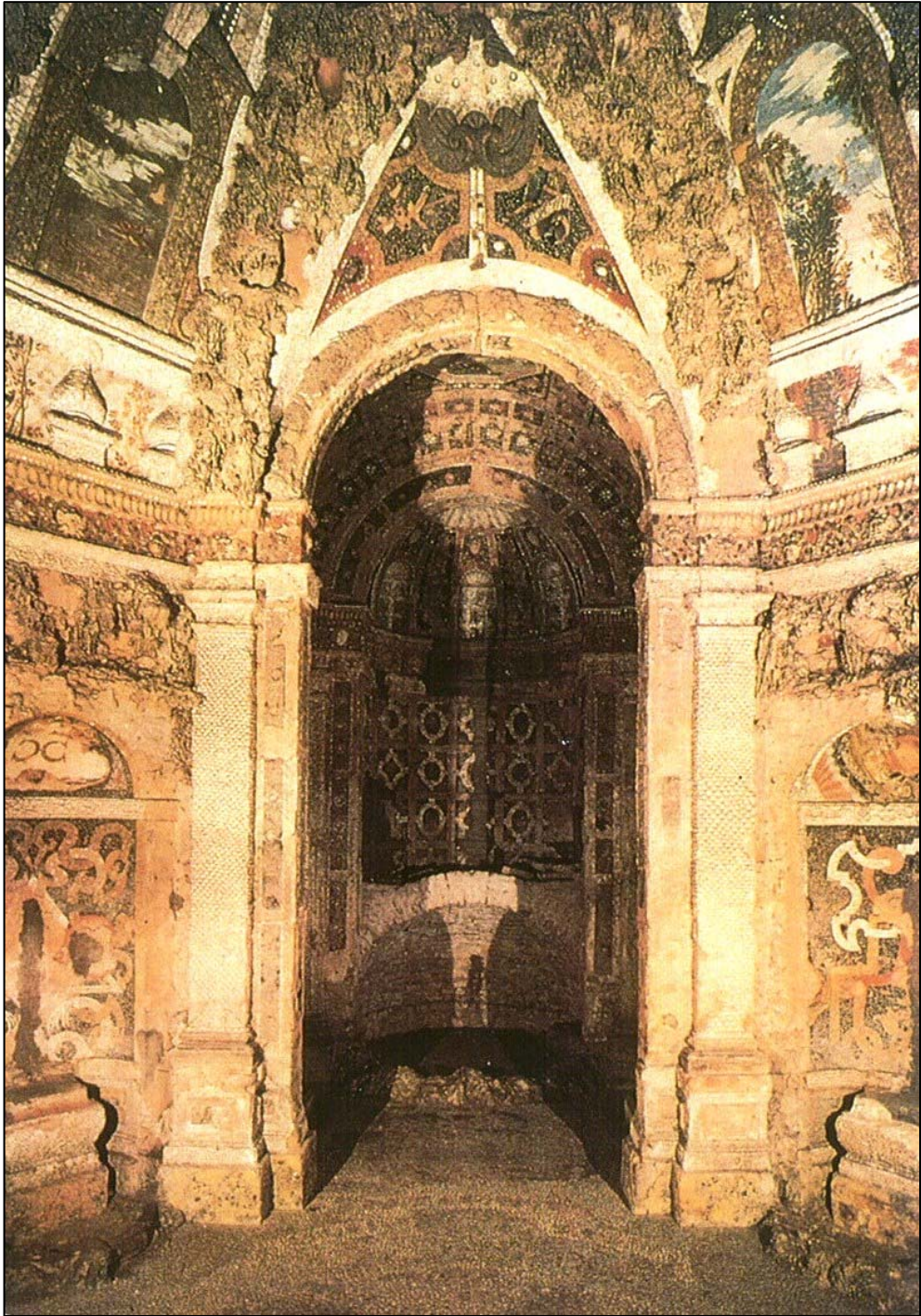
The Interior - tea parties and shell grottoes

The Bath House also provided a picnic place. We know that the family sometimes took tea there, possibly after what must have been a bracing dip in the room below. John Dobson writing from Naples to his favourite cousin, Mary Mordaunt, Sir Charles's daughter, imagined himself rubbing a magic ring:

I put this on my Finger and neither Armies by Land nor Fleets by Sea
arrest my Passage; Gently alighting on ye pavement (floor) of ye Bath
Room I become an Invisible Guest at ye Tea-Table, and enjoy that
Conversation in which you maintain so bright a Part. Sir Charles
complains the Tea is weak Miss Mordaunt says the Kettle never boil'd,
but I have drain'd the Pot".

In 1750 Mrs Delany describes a meal at Lucan: "We dined in the cold bath - I mean in its anti-chamber; it was as pleasant as a rainy day could be when we wanted to roam about." This sort of informal meal in a garden building was popular and Lord North writes to Miller in 1749 (when the Walton Bath House was being erected) hoping that he will join them "to cold meat and iced cream at the Chinese House" at Wroxton.

The upper room, so elegant and symmetrical, is dominated by the eight splendid shell festoons, above which the ceiling is decorated with plaster icicles. Both shells and water, flowing or frozen, form an important part of the iconography of the grotto. The Romans were fond of grottoes. In Book IX of his *De Re Aedificatoria*, Alberti describes how they covered the interior walls of their garden grottoes with artificially wrought surfaces composed of small chips of pumice, stone or spongy travertine, mixed at times with green ochre to simulate patches of moss. He remembers seeing an ancient grotto in which a spring gushed out from a wall encrusted with sea-shells of various kinds, particularly oyster shells, which the artist had arranged in attractive variegated patterns. Alberti's prescription was adopted by many artists in 16th-century Italy, when the grotto again became a favourite garden ornament.



The grotto at the Palazzo Te, Mantua

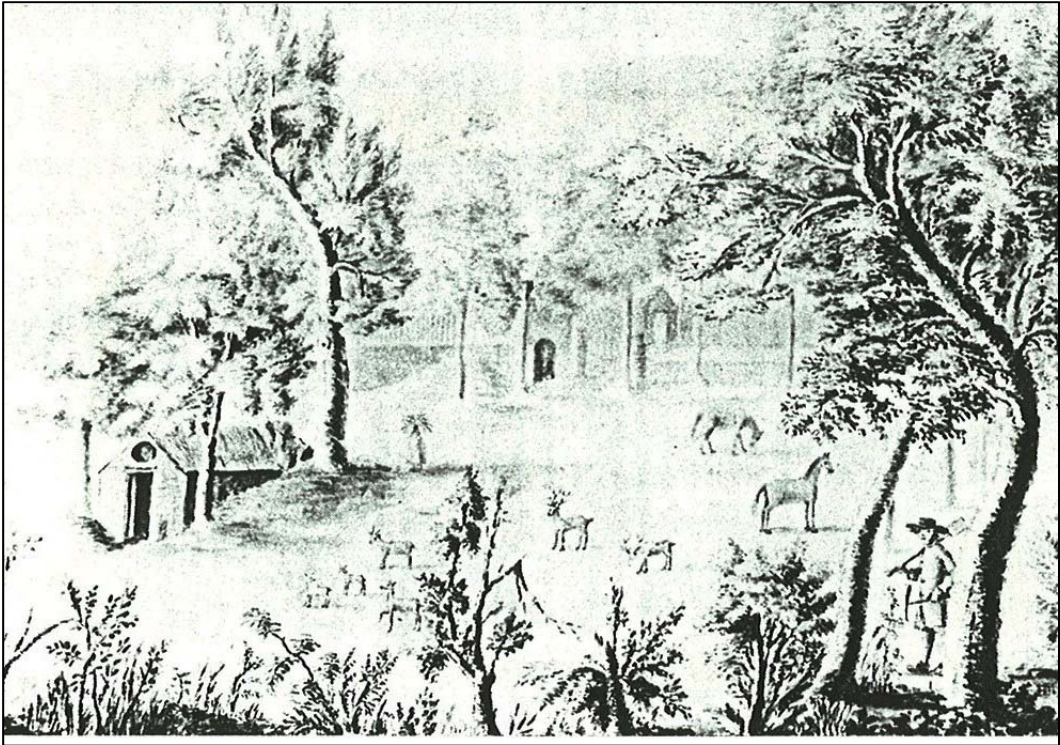
With other Renaissance ideas, the vogue for grottoes passed from Italy to France where an early example can be found at the Jardin des Pins at Fontainebleau, constructed in the 1540s for Francis I. One of the great French grotto builders was Bernard Palissy (c.1510-c.1590) who created two memorable ones, for the Duc de Montmorency at the Chateau at Ecoeu and for Catherine de Medici at the Tuileries Palace. At these grottoes Palissy sought to create an impression of weather-beaten ruggedness born out of primeval antiquity, where natural forces rather than human hands had slowly and blindly changed the elements.

A similar aspiration for the Bath House was expressed by Mrs Delany's to her sister Mrs Dewes of Wellesbourne Hall in December, 1754, when the interior decoration was nearly complete:

The stucco of the cold bath is meant to represent a wall worn by water-drops, with icicles sticking to it. The festoons of shells are additional ornaments; or how could they come in that form unless some invisible sea nymph or triton placed them there for their private amusement? I should not wonder, indeed, that so pretty a place allured them.

To Bernard Palissy, shells represented something mildly menacing. They were the habitations of aqueous creatures living in the dark cavern watered by a spring, which was his grotto. In one of his creations he proposed decorating an artificial crag with "several lizards, lobsters, snakes and vipers, which would crawl about on the rock and the lower part would be decorated and enriched with an infinite number of frogs, crabs, crayfish, turtles and sea spiders, as well as every kind of sea shell."

Fortunately, the Walton bath chamber with its stone stalactites boasts no such tenants and its two benches and pretty view are altogether more welcoming. The shells belong to the elegant province of the room above and are there for purely decorative purposes.



**"A view of ye cold Bath filld in Delville garden."
A drawing by Mrs Delany showing the Bath House to the bottom
left. (photocopy taken from p.87 of Ruth Hayden's book on Mrs
Delany published; BM publications (London Library))**

Mrs Delany

Shell collecting was a fashionable pass-time for 18th-century ladies and some of them created wonderfully intricate grottoes, which absorbed much of their leisure hours. At Goodwood the small shell pavilion on the hill above the house was decorated by Sarah, 2nd Duchess of Richmond and her daughters; and at Wimborne St. Giles the grotto was built by the Earl of Shaftesbury from 1745-50 to please Susan, his wife. Very few ladies, however, possessed the virtuosity of Mary Granville, later Mary Delany, who was famed for her shell collection and decorative powers.

Mrs Delany was born in 1700 into court circles. Her father's older brother was created Lord Lansdowne by Queen Anne and her aunt was a Maid of Honour to Queen Mary. At the age of 17, to her horror, her uncle arranged for her an utterly distasteful marriage with Alexander Pendarves of Roscrow, Cornwall. The ceremony took place at Longleat and in her memoirs she wrote: "I was married with great pomp. Never was woe drest out in gayer colours, and when I was led to the altar, I wished from my soul I had been led, as Iphigenia was, to be sacrificed." At this time Mr Pendarves was over 60.

After seven years of marriage and much misery - Mr Pendarves set the servants to spy on her every movement - she was widowed at the age of 23. She became interested in shells whilst she was staying in Ireland and writes from the seat of the Bishop of Killala in County Mayo in 1732 that she was busy gathering shells for a grotto. By 1734 she had quite a collection and had arranged them in a cabinet in her house in Lower Brook Street. She wrote in a letter that year:

I have got a new madness, I am running wild after shells. The beauties of shells are as infinite as of flowers and to consider how they are inhabited enlarges a field of wonder that leads one insensibly to the great Director and Author of these wonders.



MARY GRANVILLE
(Mrs. Pendarves)

From an enamel picture given by Erskine Sandford,
Esqre., to the Baroness de Bunsen.

Two years later she was busily making a grotto for her uncle, Sir John Stanley, at his house in North End to the West of Chelsea.

In 1743, she married the Rev. Patrick Delany from Delville outside Dublin, who was a friend of Jonathan Swift and, unusually for that time, a vegetarian. The next year, her sister Ann and her husband John Dewes moved to the hall at Wellesbourne. Dr. and Mrs Delany spent the summer of 1746 at the new house and she must have met Sir Charles Mordaunt then, for in January 1747 he paid her a visit in London.

Mrs Delany had gained something of a reputation for shellwork decoration. In June, 1750, she visited a cold bath at Lord Chief Justice Singleton's at Drumcondra, back in Ireland, which sounds similar to that at Walton. "In one part of the garden there is a cold bath that opens with an arch like a cave, this is put under my care to adorn and make something of, and I have presumed to undertake it".

When Mrs Delany was staying with her sister in October, 1753, she visited Sanderson Miller. Lord Guildford (North) writes to Miller regretting that he is unable "to see the good company from Radway before Monday. That day we shall receive the visit with great pleasure, if it be agreeable to them; I will be ready to attend Mrs Delany about the garden by 12 o'clock when I hope we may again have some fine weather." Perhaps it was at Miller's suggestion that Mrs Delany was asked to choose the shells for the Walton festoons. In June, 1754 Mrs Delany was again at Wellesbourne.

Procuring shells - scallops, conches, giant clams - was not always easy. Foreign shells were expensive and even ladies like Mrs Delany made expeditions to the local sea shore when they were needed in quantity. She often asked sea captains who were sailing to distant parts to bring her back barrels of shells. She collected some from the West Indies, Naples and the Channel Islands.

In July 1754, on her return to Ireland, she writes to her sister;

I have not yet got shells large enough for the festoons and fear it will be in vain to make them here, but I will send a barrel of shells to Sir Charles Mordaunt's. Should I do it here there would not be time enough for the putty to dry, and the shells would be all jumbled together before they reach Walton. I will do my best, and shall be very glad of an opportunity of obliging Sir Charles Mordaunt; my compliments to his house.

She is still having problems later that month:

On examining my shells I find I have none that will by themselves make considerable figure enough for festoons for Sir Charles Mordaunt's cold bath, but will do very well to mix with others, so that it would be in vain to make a festoon here; but I will send a cask of shells.

By 18th November, 1754, the shells had arrived at Walton and after what must have been a busy commission finding all the large shells required, Mrs Delany could write happily to her sister:

I am glad you have found any shells you like, and was much diverted with your dialogue at Walton. I designed the large barrel as well as the box for you, and put all the largest shells, and those fittest for Sir Charles's work, in the smallest barrel: if you resign any of yours it is entirely your own generosity, as I explained this morning to Sir C.M., who made me a visit. He says his daughters were ornamenting shells by your instruction; a few may do well for aught I know, but I should fear for the place they are to be in - they would look too minute, and that the shells in their natural form would do best, but if large shells are not to be had you must do as well as you can.

By 'ornamenting the shells' she means sticking smaller shells onto larger ones, as Mrs Dewes did on one of her shell mantelpieces still in existence at Wellesbourne Hall.

In December, 1754 Mrs Delany writes from the house of her friend, the Duchess of Portland, at Bulstrode, outside Beaconsfield, with a clue to the pasterer and creator of the icicles:

I believe what Mr Moor says is true, and that the shells project more than the stucco, but unless I saw them up together I cannot say that is a fault. Pictures project more than the hanging or wainscoat where they hang, and so do all the ornaments.

‘Mr Moor’ is very probably Robert Moore, Sanderson Miller's plasterer, who originally worked for him on the Gothic Tower at Radway. Moore came from Warwick and also worked at Arbury and Hagley where Miller was involved. The icicles and shells complement each other well - the many colours of the shells contrasting with the creamy-white icicles, all set off by the marine blue walls - a favourite colour of Mrs Delany.

From all of this, it is clear that Mrs Delany was closely involved in directing the design of the festoons at Walton, and in guiding her sister and the Mordaunt girls, who seem to have done much of the work of mounting the shells on the boards. Whether she took part in the work herself is not clear, but the last letter certainly implies that she did. It is also hard to believe that such a lively and accomplished end result was achieved without her.

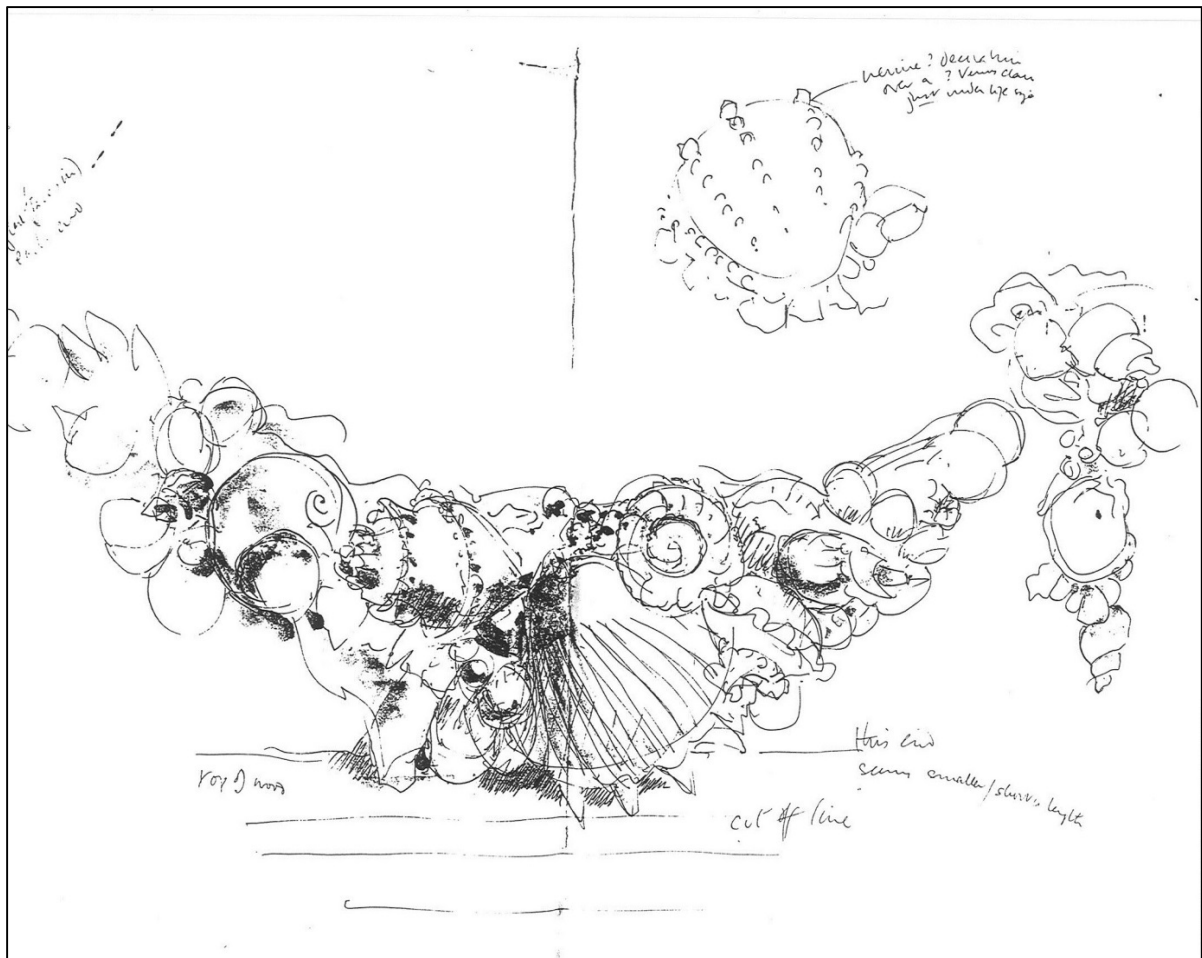
After Sir Charles

In 1778 Sir Charles died and in April that year Mrs Delany, then aged 78 herself, dined with the new baronet, Sir John. Clearly her work at the Bath House had been a success and the rest of the family had approved. Sir John's grandson, another John, held the Bath House in great affection. Every Sunday evening whilst at Walton he and his wife Carrie would take a walk and their destination was often the Bath House. On 29th May and on 2nd July, 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession, Sir John Mordaunt bathed "in the Bath Wood", the only reference we have of one of the family actually using the bath itself.

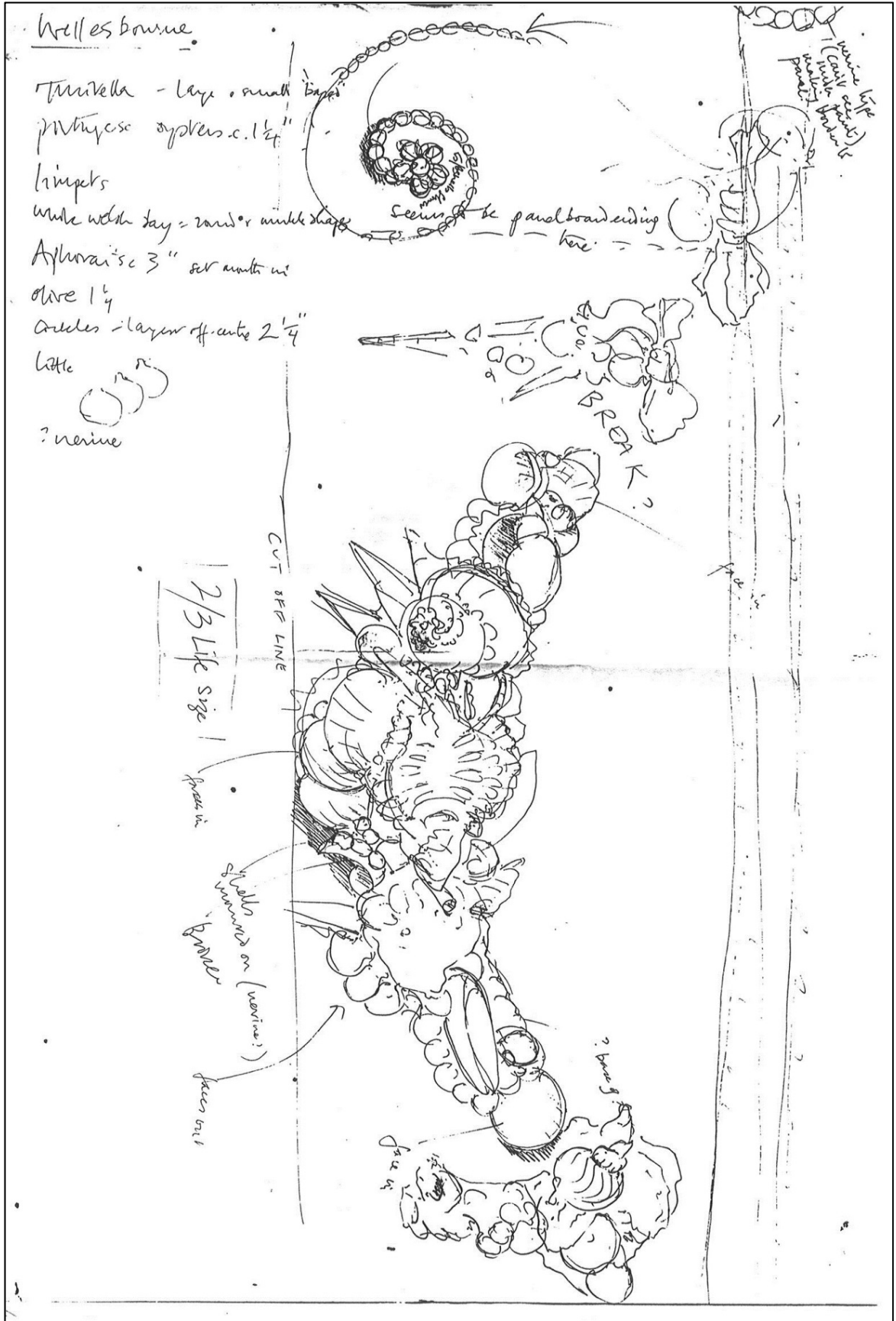
On 5th July, 1839, their first daughter, Mary Augusta, was born. On 5th August his diary entry records that he was arranging tables etc. in the Bath House and on 13th August Mary Augusta was christened at Wellesbourne. That evening, in a gesture of which Mrs Delany would surely have approved, Sir John and Lady Mordaunt entertained 34 people to dinner in the Bath House.

Julia Abel Smith

June 1991



Sketches by Diana Reynell of the shellwork at Wellesbourne Hall which provided useful clues for the design of the Bath House festoons.

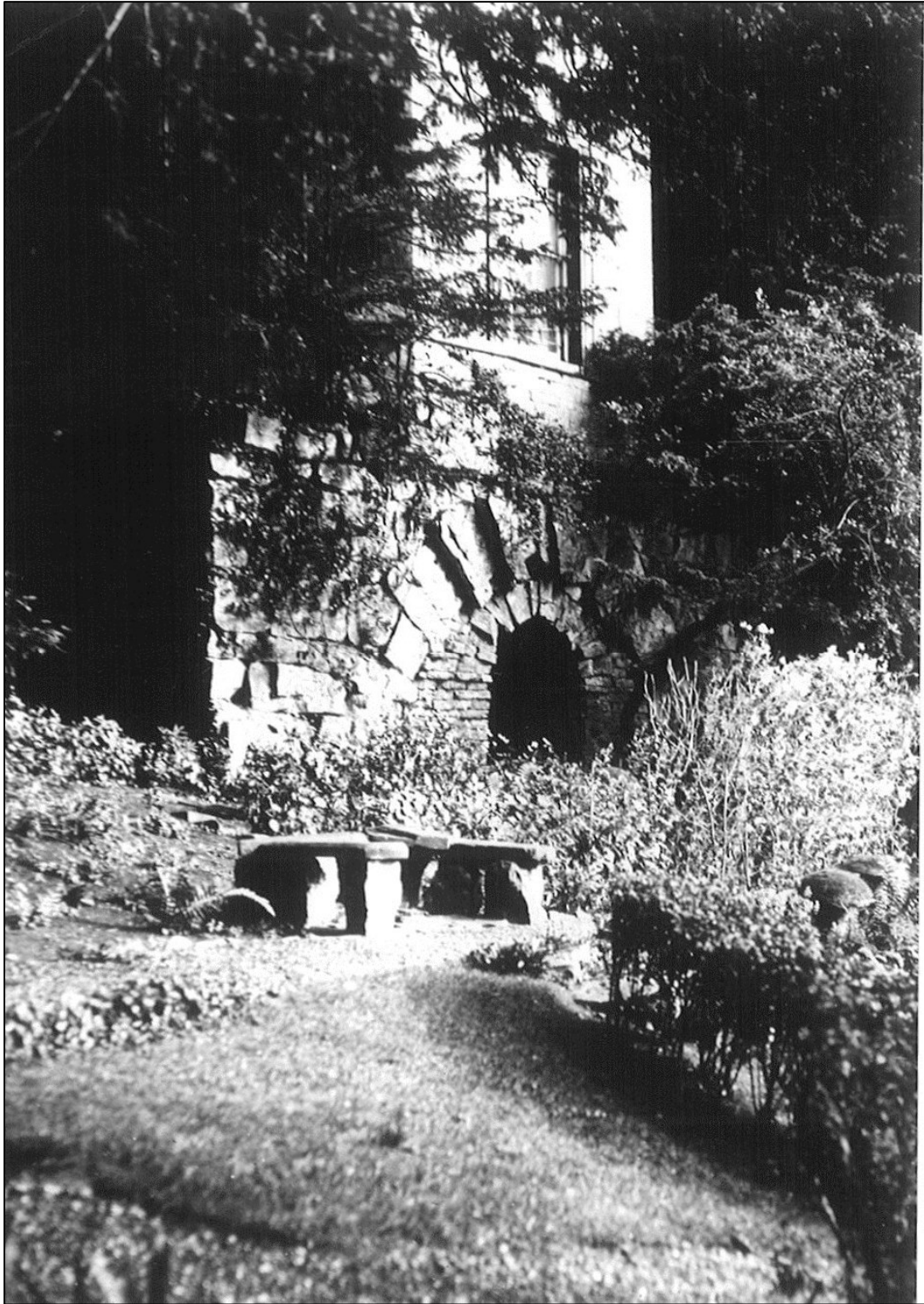




**The fireplace at Wellesbourne Hall, with shellwork by Ann Dewes,
probably under the guidance of her sister, Mary Delany**



One of the flower pictures for which Mrs Delany is best known



The Bath House in 1930 from the Leamington Spa Courier



**"Wellesbourne Roman Bath, Walton, from the Leamington Spa
Courier 1930**



A photograph taken before the estate replaced the windows and repaired the roof in about 1970 after the most thorough campaign of destruction by vandals



Notice the small section of frieze that survived





The space into which the bathroom stairs had to fit, above, and below.





Destruction of the ceiling and cornice was almost total



The kitchen



These photos were taken about 25 years earlier in the 1960s



Photographs such as this proved invaluable to the restoration team

The Restoration of the Bath House

The story of the Bath House over the last thirty years is typical of the fate of many such buildings: an owner struggling to keep the roof on and the windows in, but without the funds to carry out a full repair from resources needed more urgently elsewhere on the estate; young trespassers working equally hard towards an opposite result, using branches to sweep away the shells of the festoons, kicking in windows and door panels, scouring their names (and other mementos) on the plaster; overgrown trees and undergrowth gradually obscuring the building from sight, and blocking off all access to it; and a few intrepid architectural enthusiasts keeping a watch on the building, and working towards a timely rescue.

Chief among these was the architect William Hawkes, who with his father measured and drew the building in about 1964, and photographed it before the plaster vault fell in shortly afterwards. It was he, too, who identified its likely architect, in the course of working on his thesis on Sanderson Miller. And he who enlisted the support of the Georgian Group, who in turn suggested the Bath House as a worthy object for rescue by the Landmark Trust.

Mrs Sally Sample Aall, President of the Port Royal Foundation of New York, also took an interest, and generously offered to give a grant towards the restoration of the shellwork. Negotiations were happily concluded in December 1987, with Sir Richard Hamilton granting Landmark a lease of the building at a peppercorn rent.

William Hawkes, who practiced from Stratford-upon-Avon, was the obvious choice of architect for the restoration. However, since he had not then worked for Landmark, some advice was given at the beginning by Philip Jebb, a regular architect for the trust at the time. It was his idea, for example, to fit the bathroom into the void above the entrance, reached by a new stair squeezed into

the narrow space above the stone steps down to the Cold Bath. The kitchen could then be fitted into the corresponding lobby on the other side of the entrance, leaving the main room as a glorified bed-sitter.

As is very often the case with the buildings tackled by Landmark, providing access to them, and services, is a major part of the undertaking. Before any work could start, a new drive had to be laid along the line of an old track at the top of the escarpment, to allow the builders to get within reasonable reach; and undergrowth cleared to create space in which to operate around the building itself. Water, electricity and drainage had also to be installed over considerable distances, with all wires buried underground, as is Landmark's practice whenever possible.

Meanwhile the architects were busy with the invisible, but vital, work of thoroughly preparing for the restoration, as described by William Hawkes:

A full survey was carried out and drawn up, including all the mouldings to full size, and the location and conditions of the exterior stonework. Before any of the old work was removed to enable repair to be carried out, all the remaining elements were photographed, measured and plotted. In addition the location of the original wall surfaces was recorded by inserting stainless steel rods through the crumbling plaster and into the masonry behind. These rods have been left permanently in position and served both as fixings for the new work and precise reference points of original work. The decayed plaster could then be taken down, carefully preserving any evidence of original features or marks indicating shadows of earlier mouldings. Joinery was treated in a similar manner, decisions being made on what could be reused and what could be remade.

Since many original features had disappeared in the decay of the building, the Hawkes' original survey and photographs, together with some taken at about the same period by Lady Hamilton, proved invaluable at this point in providing detail for the reinstatement of the interior. The historical background of the building was provided by William Hawkes himself, through his knowledge of Sanderson Miller, by Lady Hamilton who has written two books on the Mordaunt family, and by Julia Abel Smith on everything to do with Mrs Delany.

By the time all this was done, the scheme for the building's conversion drawn up and agreed, consents gained from the District Council, and approval from English Heritage, who were giving a grant towards the repairs, over a year had passed. A builder had then to be appointed, so it was not until October 1989 that the work actually started. The major part of this was to be carried out by Linford-Bridgeman of Lichfield, already well known to Landmark for their work at Swarkestone and at Canon's Ashby, as well as at Chipping Campden and Ingestre, which jobs were both in progress at the same time.

The structural problems were the first to be dealt with, and to enable the work to continue throughout the winter a temporary roof was put over the whole building. The roof was stripped; the trusses and rafters were reasonably sound, but required some general strengthening with steel straps. Then new green slate from the Burlington quarry in the Lake District was laid in diminishing courses.

Far more tricky was the repair of the vault of the bath chamber, which was in danger of collapse, with some stones having already fallen. The cause of this was the settlement of the whole building, which because of the watery clay of the subsoil, had twisted and slid slightly downhill, so that the structure was no longer stable. There was no way in which this could be reversed, so the structure had to be supported in its existing position.

In the words of William Hawkes:

The very flat stone vault over the Cold Bath was gently supported and unsafe sections removed. Loose stone and rubble was then cleared from the top of the vault and each of the pendant stones was drilled from above and anchored with stainless-steel ties, producing an effect like a metallic hedgehog. A "butter" coat of concrete was poured on and followed by a reinforced concrete slab, spanning from wall to wall and holding the vault securely in position.



The roof structure under repair



The slope down to the building became a morass of mud, so a walkway was constructed.



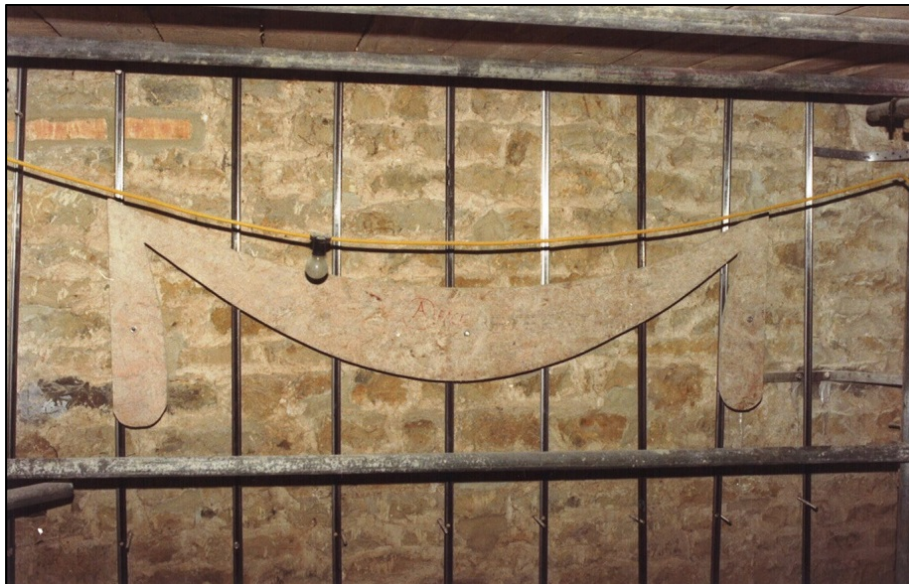
The platform for the new bathroom



Stuart Slater, Linford Bridgeman's excellent foreman, who supervised the restoration of the Bath House



The “metallic hedgehog” of ties supporting the rock work of the bath chamber



Boards marking the position of the festoons were left in place throughout the work. Below is a row of the steel rods, or pins, which were used to record the thickness of the original plaster

Attention was turned next to the external stonework. The settlement of the building had caused some of this to fracture, and quite substantial amounts of new stone had to be pieced in, especially in the rockwork base. Stone dug near the site, a magnesian limestone, had been used in the original work, and although outcrops of this were investigated, they proved too damaged by frost to use. A geologically-identical Barnsdale Bar stone from Yorkshire was used instead, left rough for the base, and dressed for the upper storey. The cornice and pediment were overhauled and missing parts made up with Hollington sandstone, again to match the original work there. In the course of these repairs, the original work was disturbed as little as possible, but inevitably some sections had to be dismantled. All new stone is bedded in a mortar of lime and sand only, without cement, in the traditional manner.

Movement had also distorted the vault of the upper room ("the resultant geometry is complex" in the opinion of the architect), and caused cracks to appear inside the building. The repair of these involved a difficult philosophical decision. Although much of the original plaster had fallen off the walls, or had been encouraged to fall, there were still some large patches remaining. The purist would retain these, and in general so would Landmark. However, in addition to enabling cracks in the walls to be stitched, there were other good arguments for removing all the plaster. The lintels over the doors and windows were decayed, and would have to be renewed. More seriously, much of the timber supporting the plaster was rotten, and had to be replaced.

Having made the decision to remove the plaster, another followed from it. In the past the building was for most of the time unused, and unheated. Domestic use, particularly that of a Landmark with irregular occupation and heating patterns, would lead to condensation, and set up exactly the right conditions for dry rot in the walls. Behind the new lime hair plaster, therefore, there is now a modern vapour barrier of polythene, with insulation, and no timber has been used in the cavity behind at all. The plaster itself has been applied to expanded metal mesh.

The steel rods recording the old surfaces proved vital at this point. Two things were revealed by them. Firstly, that the plaster was exceptionally thick and secondly, that the walls tapered towards the wall head, presumably to exaggerate the perspective and make the room appear taller. A similar effect was probably intended by the step in the vault, to carry the eye upwards. If the rods had not been inserted, the dimensions of the replastered room would have been wrong.

The original door and window surrounds were repaired and then put back in place. Some sections of skirting and dado rail survived, and new lengths were made to match them exactly. The glazing bars of the windows themselves were more problematical. The estate had inserted new windows in about 1970, copying those that were there before. There was some doubt, however, whether these were original to the building, or mid-19th-century replacements. They seemed much too delicate in scale compared to the rest of the joinery. In the end the new ones were made to a heavier pattern, more typical of the mid-18th century, and similar to those of another Sanderson Miller building, the Enville Museum. They are glazed with crown glass from Russia and France.

Conjecture also played a part in the design of the chimney piece. The original had disappeared completely, and the opening had been plastered over. The only clue to its design was a faint line on the plaster indicating its height. William Hawkes again:

Remote sensing photography with argon lighting was used to check for possible traces of the original profiles, but with no result. The details of the fireplace and its grate were the subject of much discussion with English Heritage. It was felt that the chimneypiece should be bold enough in scale and modelling to fit in with the architectural detail of the room. The final design is based on one by James Gibbs, whose book might well have been available to Sanderson Miller. The marble is Shelly Purbeck, and the grate 19th-century.

A new floor of oak boards was laid, as none of the old boards, which were also of oak, could be reused. The settlement of the building means that the floor slopes towards the front of the building. If this slope had been corrected, it would have meant re-jigging all the other fittings as well, so once again everything has been replaced to its established, if distorted, level.

Icicles and Shellwork

Now began the most exciting part of the whole project, with the reinstatement of the original decoration. Here again the preparation had been thorough. Some icicles survived, and under the floorboards two original moulds were found, presumably rejects. This showed how the icicles had been made, and suggested that they had been made on site. Ten new moulds were copied from these, and from surviving icicles, and the new icicles were cast in plaster.

Examination of the photographs taken before the vault had fallen, and of the slight remaining evidence, showed that on the ribs of the vault the icicles were set back at a slight angle, away from the upright, once again with the intention of deceiving the eye and making the vault seem taller. The original plasterer probably felt, too, that the icicles would look slightly absurd if only seen end on. To fix them, the ends are pressed into fresh plaster. The pattern is free and irregular, carrying out Mrs Delany's intention of "a wall worn with water-drops, with icicles sticking to it".

With a job of this complexity, and need for sensitivity, the only solution is to call in Bill Salter, from Yorkshire, who was responsible for such miracles of repair as the ceilings of the Culloden Tower and the vault at Ingestre. Finishing touches were provided by Diana Reynell. One small section of the old cornice can be seen at the left hand end of the rear wall.

When the task of restoring the shellwork was first considered, it was realised that finding the right person to do it was going to be the key to the success of the entire project. We could not have been luckier than in obtaining the services of Diana Reynell. Well-known for her restoration of the grottoes at Leeds Castle, Kent, and at Painshill, Surrey, she brought exactly the right experience to the Bath House. Her approach was to treat it from the beginning in the tradition of a

Renaissance Grotto, with each distinct element going to make up a unified whole.

The execution might in some ways be naive and provincial, but this did not detract from the intention behind it, and the enthusiasm of its creators. The festoons, which hang so gracefully from their bows, and are so lively and full of vigour, recalled to Mrs Reynell those on the front of the Buontalenti grotto at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, rather than the usually stiff examples of English ladies' shellwork, about one example of which Mrs Delany's friend, the Duchess of Portland, commented in 1737: "That regularity is abominable!". The dripping icicles of the vault had echoes of Italian frost-work, which provided another clue for the inspiration behind the scheme.

With these ideas in mind, Mrs Reynell set about the interpretation of what was left, and the search for clues for its restoration. A number of shells and fragments of shells had survived, either still in position, or rescued from the floor by Lady Hamilton. When the boards on which the festoons were made had been taken down, and their exact positions marked with dummy boards, a rubbing was made of the once complete and unbroken board. This showed up clearly (to an expert eye) the marks and imprints of the missing shells, so that these could be added to the list of replacements.

It also showed the positions and groupings of the shells, how small shells had clustered or trailed around larger ones, how others had projected over the edge of the boards onto the plaster, on which marks could also be seen. Each festoon differed from the others, but a picture was beginning to emerge of their original appearance, and of how to achieve it again.

At this point a visit was made to Wellesbourne Hall, to see the shellwork on a fireplace there, done by Mrs Delany's sister Mrs Dewes, or possibly by Mrs Delany herself. These were clearly much smaller in scale, and had been coated

heavily with gloss paint, but still gave Mrs Reynell an idea of the shape, weight and arrangement of such decorations, the way in which the shells were grouped to provide interesting forms, and piled against one another to create a feeling of abundance and vitality.

Wellesbourne also clarified another point, which had been mentioned in a letter of Mrs Delany's to her sister, in which she referred to shells being "ornamented", and her fear that the result would be too "minute" or fussy, her preference being for shells in their natural form. This had previously been interpreted as referring to their colour, and it was assumed that the shells were being painted. It is now clear that what she meant was the sticking of small shells onto others to make them appear larger. At Wellesbourne there was a clam decorated in this way, and at the Bath House there were also examples, such as a razor shell projecting through an ormer. It seems likely that the Bath House shells were always left in the natural colours.

Work now began on the festoons. The old boards, or what was left of them, were repaired, and backed with plywood for strength. New shells were obtained. All those used were ones which had been classified by Linnaeus in 1758, and were therefore known at the right period, and were of similar origin, such as the West Indies. Wherever possible these new shells were placed within the marks left by their predecessors.

The first stage of this work was done in Mrs Reynell's studio, and when the first few had been done, she sent photographs to Landmark for approval. A moment of panic ensued. Each of the festoons is 8 foot long, and some of the shells are very large, such as the conches and tritons. It was feared that the effect would be overwhelming. It was amusing, then, to find that something similar had occurred in 1754, when Mrs Delany wrote a soothing reply to what had obviously been an anxious letter from her sister about the projection of the shells. Diana Reynell and William Hawkes made the same soothing noises, and

as soon as the festoons were in place, they (and Mrs Delany, who more than once referred to the large size of the shells needed for the Bath House, to make "considerable figure enough"), were proved to have been right, and the festoons of an entirely appropriate scale and weight for the room.

The finishing touches to the festoons, the additions of smaller projecting shells such as the mussels and razor shells, were all done in situ. Finally the bows were added. Study of surviving fragments of lead, of an old photograph in which one appeared complete, and the shadows on the sections of plaster which had been carefully preserved, together with what seemed to be the equivalent of pencil marks for them sketched on the wall, showed the design of these. Further help came from very similar carved wood bows from a Rococo overmantel from Berkeley House, Gloucestershire, now in the V and A.

At the centre of each bow is a wooden boss, carved to appear like folded material, and with a small peg in the centre, for a shell, reminiscent again of the Buontalenti festoons. Nine of the old bosses survived, and seven new ones were carved to make up the set. The colour follows traces found on both the lead of the bows, and the bosses.

The ceiling boss and the shells on the fireplace are entirely Diana Reynell's design, and show how thoroughly she came to understand the thinking of the original creators. The ceiling boss had almost completely gone by the 1960s, only a few icicles clinging to its outer edge. Clues were taken from the rest of the icicle decoration, using some old ones, and from Mrs Delany's stated desire for the walls to evoke water dripping and slipping down the walls. In its designer's words, "the boss would drip in shells and icicle stalactites, to the central point where a special shell might be believed to be dripping or congealing".



The original icicles

The inspiration for the fireplace decoration came both from that at Wellesbourne Hall and from the festoons themselves. The central cluster is largely made up from those surviving shells, saved by Lady Hamilton.

The final effect of the shells and the plasterwork came as a surprise to everyone. It would have been almost impossible, from the sad ruin of 1987, to have imagined such an interior.



Icicles ready for mounting




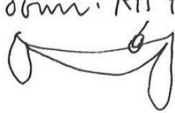
**Bill Salter, the plasterer, with the architect,
William Hawkes**



Diana Reynell helped with the final touches



Shells found at Walton Hall. Bath House

- 1 Lutraria. laid shiny side down & with a row of Littorina snail shells laid diagonally across, fixed with plaster & painted (same colour as wall = drab) Shellac shows underside. Loose.
- 2 'Queen' Conch -
2 small parts fit exactly replacements: These indicate 8"-9" shells. Loose
- 3 Omars. (a) laid shiny side down, with limpets (small) fixed with shellac & plaster simulating Barnacles growing all over back. Shellac shows underside. Loose
- 4 ~~Small fragment~~ Very thick fragment mother-of-pearl curved shell: indicates large Turbo-type? Green Turban
- 5 Whelks. in place.
- 6 Trails of snail and sea-snail shells going around marks of larger shells.
- 7 2 mussels (mytilus) in place: one protruding from end of drop with second (trace) clearly beside it. Blue shining interior side unpainted.
- 8 trails of Cockles clearly tucked around & under the spaces left by large shells.
- 9 Crab's claw (wooded) (C) 
- 10 Razor shell sticking horizontally out of LH Drop of (B)
- 11a Razor shell stuck at upwards angle through hole in rounded side of omer, omer placed face down. RH top (G) 
- 11 b Wrinkles

SHELL TRACES found Sept. 1990

- 12 Many mussel (*Mytilus*) fragments on and protruding from edges.
- 13 Land mussels.
- 14 Cockles. several sizes, inc. quite large
- 15 Scallops, esp. swag edges.
+ Queen scallops.
- 16 Razor shells.
- 17 *Fasciolaria* - ("Fox's heads")
- 18 Tellins.
19. Helmet shells. *Cassidae* ~~Cass~~
- 20 ? Tritons
- 21 Cone shells, *Comus*
- 22 Pen shells, *Perna*.
- 23 *Turkella*.
- 24 Bear's paw clam, *Hippopus hippopus*
- 25 Turbo
- 26 Crown conch
- 27 *Cerithis*
- 28 ? *Melo melo*
- 29 Spider or anthonitic conch
- 30 Oyster
- 31 Limpets
- 32 Sea Urchin
- 33 *Anobria*

ADDED

Large green turban.
may well be un. shell fragment referred to above
Murex - as at Wellesbourne.
Brown snails.
small clam (RH)







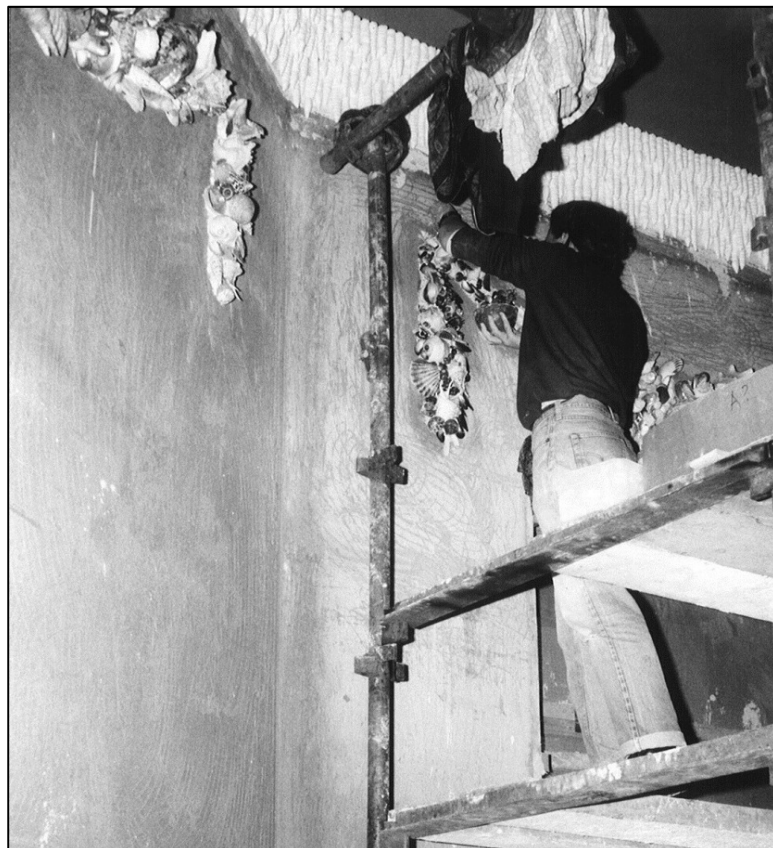
The boards on which Mrs Delany created the shell festoons. The impressions in the plaster revealed much information about the types of shell used and their arrangement.

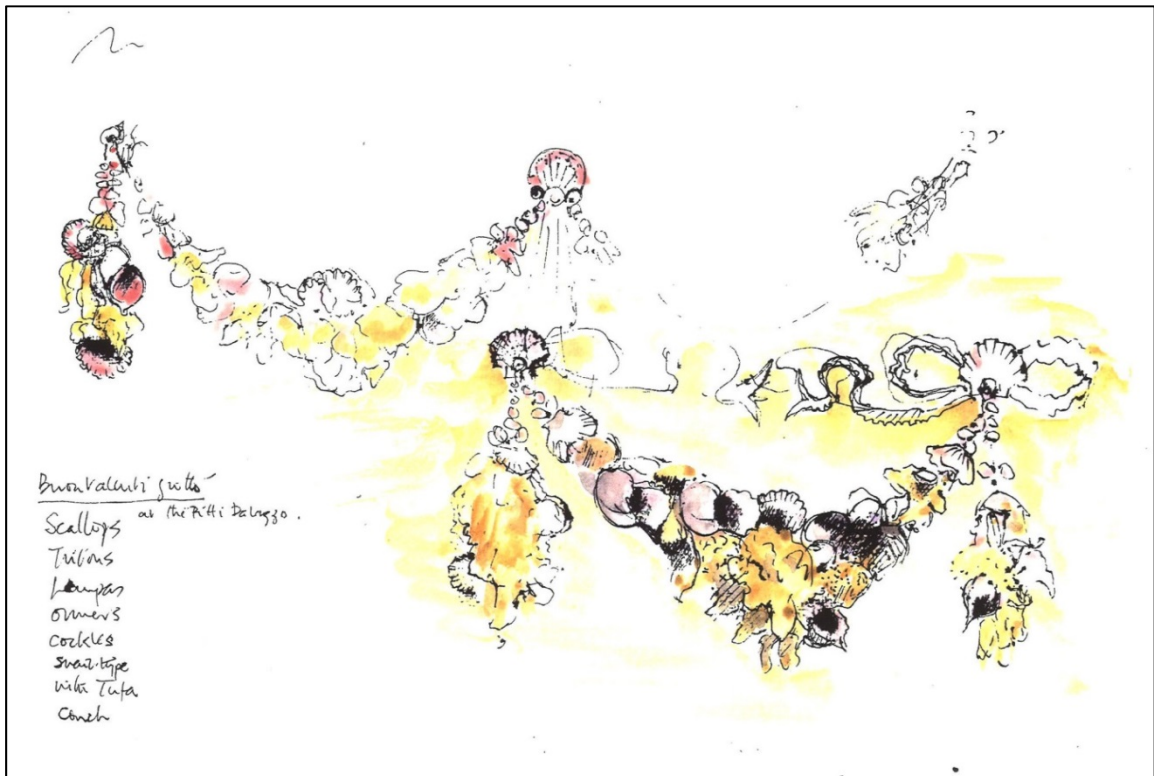


The boards marking the original positions of the festoons later served as mountings against which to fix the restored ones.



An unfinished festoon, soon after it was mounted on the wall. The smaller shells, and those that project over the plaster, were added in situ, as below and opposite.





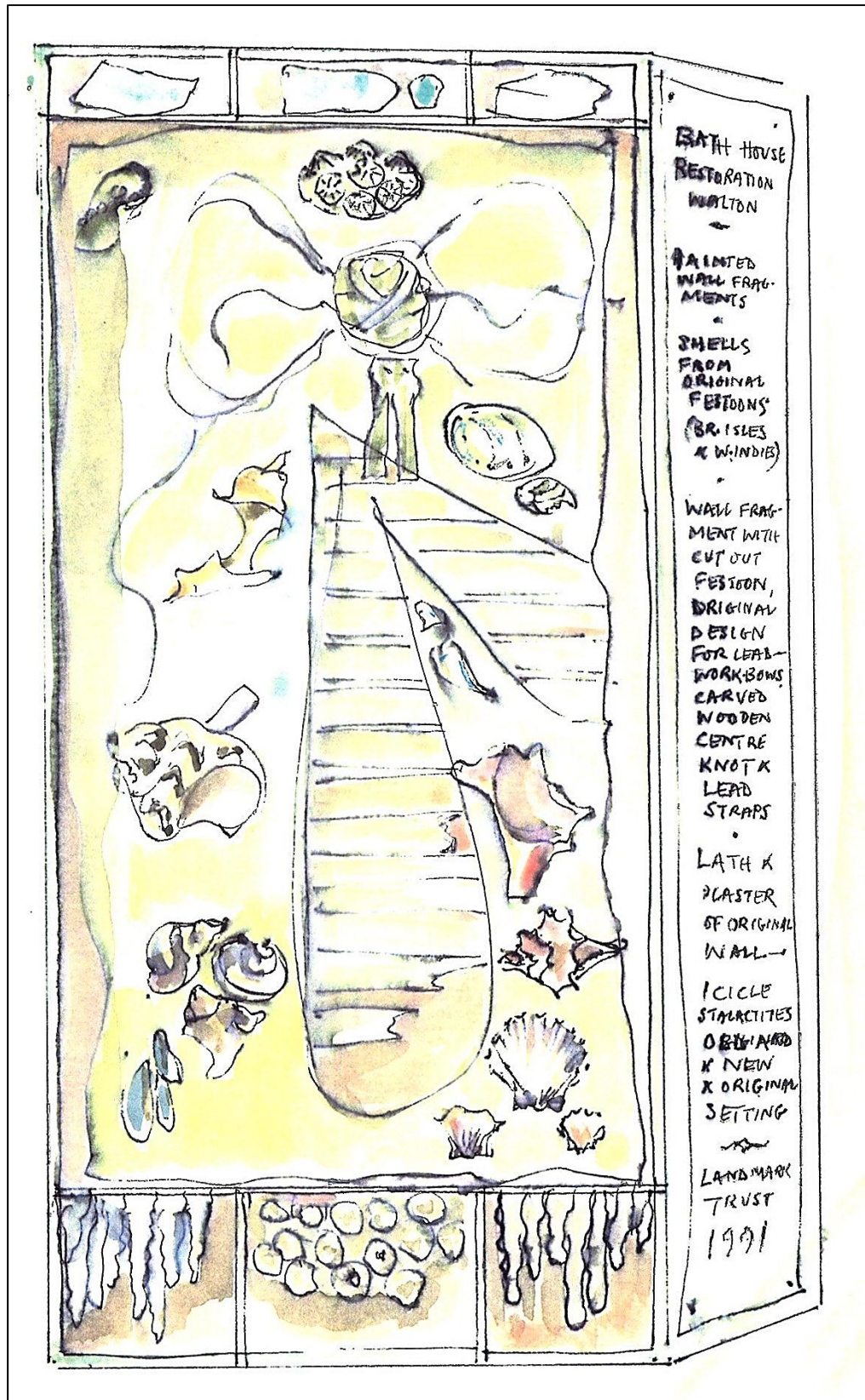
Diana Reynell's sketch of the festoons on the Buontalenti grotto in Florence

FINISHING OFF

The room was now complete apart from the painting of the walls. Flakes of paint from the old plaster were taken away for analysis. The original pigment was identified as a Prussian Blue, which was introduced into Britain early in the 18th century. Curiously, the walls had gone almost yellow, and it seems that the reason for this was that the paint was originally applied over a slightly oily surface plaster, which had affected the colour.

This result accorded well with Mrs Delany's views on decoration: blue was her favourite colour, which she considered appropriate almost anywhere, but especially suitable to a watery theme. She also liked the olive green of which traces were found on the lead bows of the festoons, which have been matched. The restored aquamarine colour is composed of Prussian Blue, with a touch of ochre, in a distemper base. A flat oil paint has been used for the joinery.

There were two jobs left for Diana Reynell. One was to design a cabinet to display fragments of plaster and shells, which provided evidence for the restoration, which is to go on the wall outside the bathroom. The other was the Rustic door to the cold bath. A door was needed to prevent some of the icy draughts from below whistling up into the main rooms, and various alternatives, such as an iron-studded door, or one made of moving rock-work, were considered before the twig version was settled on. The design was derived from panels at Carton, Co. Kildare, dating from c.1747. Branches and saplings of ash, both whole and split, were used for the surround and the frame of the door itself. The decoration is of burred elm bosses and ash twigs, with moss packed between.



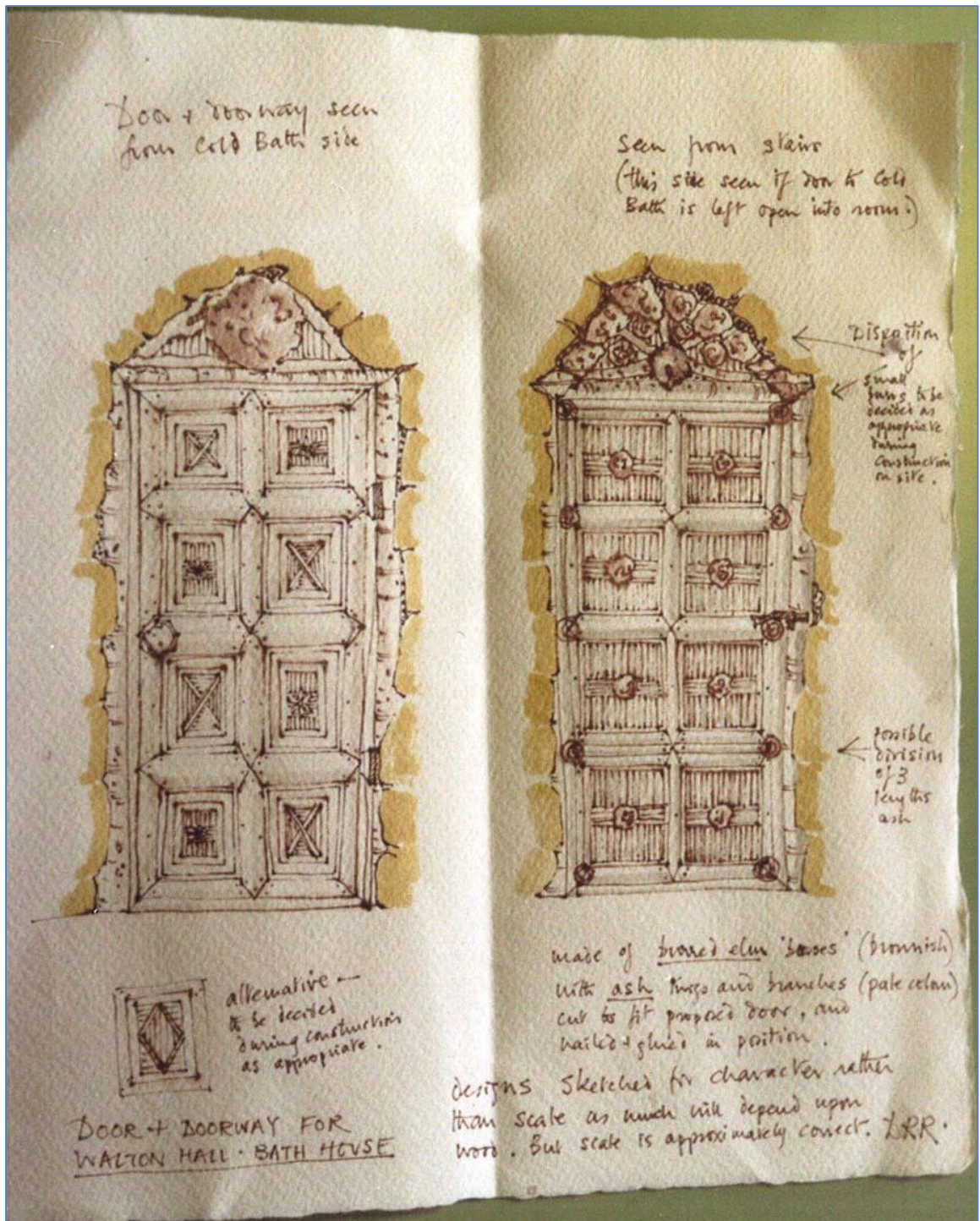
Diana Reynell's sketch of the decorative detail inside the Bath House.

The ash trees for the door came from below the Bath House, where the undergrowth and encroaching woodland were cut away to reinstate an open ride, providing the Bath House with a vista across the valley. A meandering path was laid from the drive at the top, avoiding the slippery slope up and down which the builders had toiled, often in a quagmire of mud. The grove of yew trees which form the building's Antique setting had grown very large and too close, and so have been carefully pruned.

The Cold Bath itself, whose back wall is the natural rock, is fed by springs which run through culverts under the paving from the corners, to a single spout. These were cleared and overhauled, and a new heavy brass plug fitted in the bath. Then, for several anxious weeks, the bath would not fill, and it was feared that extensive work would be needed to make it hold water. Just as soon as the work finished on the building, however, the water level began to rise and the Bath was soon nearly full to the brim.

Charlotte Haslam, July 1991

(relying heavily on William Hawkes and Diana Reynell)



Diana Reynell's designs for the door into the Cold Bath

A Short History of Baths and Bathing

The history of baths is of their gradually coming to be regarded as a necessity, instead of as a luxury or therapy, and of the slow diffusion of the habit from a select few in the higher reaches of society to the masses.

Alastair Laing

One of Sir Charles's purposes in building a classical bath house was to display a knowledge of, and sympathy for, Roman Antiquity. Whilst the ancient Greeks built public baths and attached importance to bathing, it was the Romans with their customary genius for organisation and love of luxury who developed the technique for bathing and planning bath buildings. This process reached its apogee with the great imperial *thermae* of Rome, notably those of Caracalla and Diocletian. These were social centres and the bath chambers were set either in the centre or at the rear of elegant gardens. In other rooms, lectures were given and poems read.

The process of taking a bath was as follows:

- 1) The bather undressed and left his clothes in a locker in the *apodyterium* 2) He was then anointed with oil in the *aliptherium* or *unctuarium*
- 3) He passed into a room where he could take violent exercise.
- 4) Afterwards he entered the *calidarium* or hot room and the *sudatorium* or *laconium*, a steam room. It was probably here that he was scraped of oil and perspiration with curved metal *strigiles*.
- 5) He then proceeded to the *tepidarium* or warm room.
- 6) Finally he passed to the *frigidarium* or cold room which contained a swimming pool, before taking a rest.

(The exact order in which the hot and cold baths could be taken was varied and often the steam room and hot room was combined).

In the great imperial *thermae*, there was only one set of public rooms and its usage varied. Sometimes men and women were admitted to the baths at different times and sometimes mixed bathing was permitted. Outside Rome, in the less cosmopolitan and racy areas, it was more common to find two different sets of rooms in the same establishment for men and women. This arrangement is found at the Stabaeum and Forum Baths at Pompeii.

Servants, who could move swiftly and unseen in underground passageways, administered to the needs of bathers. The rooms were heated by the hypocaust system and to light and roof these enormous spaces, the Romans developed ingenious systems of buttressing, cross vaulting and clerestory windows. The internal room planning, so rational and at the same time so intricate, was much admired by 18th-century architects like Robert Adam on their Grand Tour.

The Ancients also built baths at their private homes. There is a well-presented private bath at the Villa of Diomed at Pompeii and the younger Pliny describes his bath at his villa near Civita de Castello. The younger Seneca, a Stoic philosopher and Nero's tutor, noted that men expected their baths to have wide windows so that they might enjoy the scenery and acquire a healthy colour whilst bathing.

Roman baths, private and public, were often extremely lavish. Universally the floors were of marble or mosaic and the walls sheathed with marble to a great height and decorated above with stucco reliefs. Doors, capitals and window screens were freely gilded and important pieces of sculpture embellished the alcoves and entrances. Emulating this tradition at the Bath house at Gibside, County Durham, George Bowes installed statues there in 1735.

Contemporary references to the pleasures of baths and bathing are scattered through the works of Pliny the Younger, Juvenal and Suetonius. Seneca was a keen advocate of cold bathing in the sea and called it his "old art"; he was also

not averse to leaping into streams in the "Calends of January". The cult of bathing was brought to Britain with Julius Caesar and became highly developed, with quite small communities having their bath house.

Holy Wells and Washing

From early times it appears that wells and springs have been associated with miraculous cures. John Floyer, advocate of cold water bathing, claims in his *Enquiry into Right Use and Abuses of the Hot, Cold and Temperate Baths in England* of 1697 that "heathen priests grounded their worshipping of wells on the virtue of medicinal waters, attributing their cheap and sudden cures to a present Deity". The early Christians simply imitated this custom by dedicating medicinal springs to particular saints whereby the people "attributed all their cures to the merit of the saint and their own devotion, which was due to the physical virtue of cold springs, and God's blessing on a natural use of them".

However, public bathing encouraged excesses and early Christians were in general against ablutions in any form except of a religious nature. In monasteries, monks washed their faces and hands and their whole bodies only on Saturdays, in preparation for Sunday. In the Middle Ages, the Cistercians even forbade bathing altogether but this was untypical of medieval society as a whole, when the monied classes attended a good deal to personal cleanliness.

In the 12th century public baths were common and late Gothic tapestries and woodcuts indicate not only the existence of much outdoor bathing in garden pools but also of bath houses with large pools or basins of warmed water. When the Crusaders returned from the Eastern Mediterranean they brought with them ideas for baths and sweating chambers (known as *stufette* in Italian and "stews" in English). These often degenerated after a time into quasi-brothels and thus the meaning of the word *stew*, as later of *bagnio* and *bordello*, was changed.

The *Regimen Sanitatis*- a famous medieval guide to home medicine and hygiene - was clear about personal cleanliness:

Rise early in the morn, and straight remember
With water cold to wash your hands and eyes.

The Regimen's advice on warm baths was a little more guarded:

Wine, women, baths, by art or nature warm,
Us'd or abus'd do men much good or harm"

For practical reasons it advised taking baths when the weather was warmer.

The Reformation did much to discourage the general practice of bathing. With the discrediting of anything Catholic went an aversion to the saints and consequently their good offices at the holy wells. Thus the benefits of cold bathing were rejected along with the saints. As a common rule, nakedness was considered a religiously obnoxious state and suitable only for witches at the Sabbath.

However, Queen Elizabeth I installed a bath at Windsor and took a bath once a month "whether she need it or no"; the need, at that time, being medicinal and not for cleanliness. In about 1679 some Turkey merchants built a bath in Bath Street, Newgate Street, which was octagonal in plan and lit by a central oculus in the manner of the Ottoman hammams. A little later, the King's Bagnio was erected in Long Acre, Covent Garden by William Jennens, this time with a circular bath surrounded by a continuous arcade and covered with a cupola. These seem to have been the province of the rich as we can see from an advertisement published in the London Gazette in 1693:

John Valentine....is ready to build any Bagnio or Hummums, after the best manner, for persons of Quality, and others who are desirous to build the same.

The Cold Bath

Taking the waters became popular once again in the later 17th century as a medicinal precaution, with the emergence of Spas such as Tunbridge Wells, but cold bathing, rather than warm bathing like the Turkish baths, seems altogether to have lost its popularity. In his *History of Cold Bathing*, first published just after 1700, John Floyer regretted that for the last 100 years the practice had been much disused. For this, interestingly, he blamed the Church, which was clearly closely linked with the fortunes and fashions of bathing.

He pointed out that baptismal immersion - which had taught the people that cold baths were safe and useful - had continued until the reign of James I at which time the practice was regarded as superstitious. He believed that if the Church would propose "some proper devotions" appropriate to bathing, the devout would once again espouse the practice. As it was, "the want of a proper religious office to be used by the devout at the time of bathing and drinking waters, leaves all to a general debauchery of manners in such publick places and lessens the numbers of those who would come hither, if both the Ends of Devotion and Health are served by coming to those places".

Floyer's publications went into innumerable editions and were very influential. He warned against the absurd advice given to patients to frequent the hot baths at Bath as a remedy for *all* diseases. Whilst undoubtedly appropriate for "pituitous constitutions, serous, cold, flatulent and acerbic stomachs", the Bath waters were not to be seen as a universal elixir. Cold baths were a different proposition. Floyer used the Ancients to support his case and showed that the Romans concluded hot baths with cold water "which shews the good opinion they had of cold immersion."

The benefits of cold water included chilling the nerves, compressing the consistency of our animal juices, invigorating the spirits, digestion, circulation, and perspiration, and retaining an equal bodily weight. Amongst numerous other complaints, cold baths were especially efficacious for gout, asthma, and for ladies having had hard labours. The bath should be taken in warm weather and "the Demersion ought to be Sudden, and not gradual, to prevent a Horror". If the bather emerged cold and etiolated, he had immersed himself too long!

As a result of John Floyer's detailed medical treatises, many gentlemen built cold baths at their country estates. Sometimes they were inside as at Claremont, where Henry Holland built a cold bath for Clive of India beneath the south portico steps, or at Hagley where Sanderson Miller provided one for his friend George Lyttelton on the ground floor, with access to the smoking room. More often the bath was housed in a decorative building as at Walton, as an ornament for the landscape park. They therefore served a dual purpose. Sir Charles would have known of the Roman Bath erected at Rousham for James Dormer about 1740, which like the one at Walton was approached by an avenue of yews.

Improbable as it might seem to us, accustomed to our piping hot baths and showers, these spartan dips seemed to have cheered the spirits of those that took them. Mrs Delany's cousin, Mrs Foley, in September, 1740, claims that "the cold bath has done miracles and cured me already, but indeed I am far from being well". Five years later in May, Sanderson Miller's friend, Lord Dacre, tells him that, "The cold bath which I have gone into for three weeks past has quite recovered my weak nerves and restored me to good spirits and the Blew Devils are quite gone away, not I suppose, very well relishing the cold water". In October of the same year he makes a chilly remark with his customary cheerfulness: "the weather grows cold and nipping tho' I go still into my Bath".

Despite the hopes and beliefs of John Floyer, it does seem that the warm waters at Bath proved more popular; the city was of course the provincial centre of fashionable society.

Cleanliness and Swimming

Beau Brummel, in the Regency period, began to associate cleanliness with elegance and Dr. Richard Russell made Brighton popular in the late 18th century by advising that sea-bathing was beneficial for those suffering from scrofula. As a result sea-bathing resorts multiplied.

The Industrial Revolution brought with it a new feeling for personal cleanliness and this led to the erection of public bath houses, to compensate for the universal lack of home plumbing in poor homes. Those at Newcastle were built in 1781 and in 1809 the Portobello Baths were designed by William Sibald. 1821 saw the elegant Greek Revival Baths open at Southernhay in Exeter designed by John Lethbridge.

In 1844 the Lord Mayor of London called a meeting at the Mansion House to discuss the possibility of "promoting the establishment of Baths and Wash-Houses for the Labouring Classes". Sir George Grey, the new Home Secretary quickly provided a Bill and in August 1846 the Bill became The Baths and Wash-houses Act. The first parish to adopt the Act was St. Martin-in-the-Fields. It was a voluntary piece of legislation and gave powers to those local authorities which adopted it to provide baths and wash houses for the poorer classes. The charges were set at 1d for a cold bath and 2d for a hot with a clean towel for each. The buildings followed the same pattern throughout the country. They provided one or two plunge or swimming baths, a number of private or slipper baths, a wash house or laundry with a separate entrance and boiler rooms in the basement, together with quarters for the superintendent.

In 1878 the Act was changed to authorise the erection of swimming pools which could be covered in winter for other purposes, for example a gymnasium or dance floor. As the accent shifted to swimming, baths were often built as a complex, with library, public halls and town hall of imposing architecture. Thus poorer people were discouraged and as a result cottage baths were set up, installed in buildings which looked like houses. At home, meanwhile, baths were taken in tubs in front of the fire, filled by buckets of hot water. Bathrooms for the middle classes were fairly common by the middle of the 19th century and cleanliness was associated with respectability by the 1870s.

Ocean Liners provided some of the most luxurious swimming pools and on the Titanic, launched in 1911, the ship's "Turkish baths were Arabian, with Cairo curtains and suspended bronze lamps and a marble drinking fountain". At this time outdoor public pools became much more popular. The famous Blackpool Lido was built and a very exotic one appeared, a little surprisingly, in 1933 at Maidenhead. The "Showboat" Lido's cheerful exterior was painted in eau-de-nil and flesh pink and it enclosed a restaurant, ball room, clubroom and bar all designed by E. Norman Bailey and D.C. Wadhwa. The inter-war years saw swimming develop as a sport as well as for pleasure and in 1934 the Empire Swimming Pool was built at Wembley.

By this time bath rooms were common-place although still not universal in the poorest housing. Bathing at home for cleanliness and swimming for sport and leisure were the accepted philosophies. Perhaps due to our climate, Britain has not taken to the shower like the continent, although this apparatus was popular with the Victorians and there is an especially fine example at Erddig in North Wales. Today spa pools and jacuzzis (named after Signor Jacuzzi, the inventor from Italy) are the delight of the estate agents. Beginning with the luxury-loving Romans, it appears that the wheel has come a full circle.

The Mordaunts of Walton

The hamlet of Walton and its Hall lie in the valley of the Dene Brook. This was originally called the Wellesbourne. It runs northwards through Walton, being dammed to form a lake in the grounds of Walton Hall. To the East is the Roman Fosse Way, up the hill behind the Bath Woods. The Domesday Book records that the Count de Meulun held the estates of Walton in 1086. Eventually they passed to the Earl of Warwick who sold them to Simon de Wauton. Later in the 13th century Maud de Wauton married the first Lord L'Estrange and the manor passed to the L'Estrange family. In 1491 it was divided between two sisters, Anne and Margaret, the daughters of Thomas L'Estrange and they consolidated the family estates by marrying two brothers, Robert and John L'Estrange of Hunstanton in Norfolk.

Margaret L'Estrange's daughter and heiress, Barbara, was married to Robert Mordaunt. A prudent move on his part, for he thereby acquired estates both at Walton and Massingham Parva in Norfolk and in 1541 he bought out Anne L'Estrange's interests at Walton. Their son, Robert, died in 1602 and the manors passed to his nephew, L'Estrange Mordaunt, created 1st Baronet by James I in 1611. The Mordaunt family were originally linked with Bedfordshire and shared a common 15th-century ancestor with the Lords Mordaunt and Earls of Peterborough.

Sir John Mordaunt, 5th Baronet, and father of Sir Charles the Bath House builder, was the great grandson of L'Estrange Mordaunt. Born in 1650 during the Interregnum, Sir John represented the County of Warwickshire in Parliament as one of the Knights of the Shire. He spent much of his time away from home in London at the Mordaunts' house "over against the back gate of St. James's" and in Norfolk, overseeing his estate at Massingham.

Just before New Year, 1700, Sir John received an urgent summons from his fellow candidate, Sir Charles Shuckburgh, to return home immediately. Sir Richard Newdigate of Arbury was threatening to set up his son as a rival. Lady Hamilton in her book on *The Mordaunts* explains the threat:

In the Parliament of the time there were eighty knights of the shire, elected by the votes of the forty-shilling free-holders. Candidates for election were, however, chosen at meetings of the country gentlemen, and when possible no more than two names were put forward. The choice of the free-holders was therefore severely limited, and the nomination meeting of the gentlemen was one of the most important occasions in the election.... If unanimity could be preserved among the gentlemen, and a multiplicity of nominations avoided, the two baronets, Shuckburgh and Mordaunt, could be spared the expense of a poll.

In the event, Sir Roger's threatened rivalry did not materialise.

Sir Charles, 6th Baronet

In 1706 at the age of eight, young Charles Mordaunt went to school at Mr Pugh's in Isleworth, then a pretty village on the Thames. That he was not a keen correspondent is clear from the opening to a letter to his father in 1711:

Honored Sr - I received yours long since and should have answered sooner had I not thought too many of my letters would but trouble you.

After school at Isleworth, Charles went up to New College, Oxford.

Sir John died in 1721. The year before, Charles had married Dorothy Conyers - of the family from Copped Hall in Essex. By 1725 Charles had begun to renovate the house at Walton and Dorothy bewailed the fact that the workmen were not ready for the furniture. In August it was ready but "stinks horribly of paint." Charles and Dorothy had two daughters, Penelope and Dorothy, before Dorothy died in 1726. The vicar wrote to old Lady Mordaunt with the sad news, relating that "Poor Sir Charles is indeed in all the excesse of Grieffe."

Despite his very real sorrow at the loss of his first wife, Sir Charles had to begin thinking of finding a second. He still had no heir and the Mordaunt finances were not particularly buoyant. Eventually, four years later, in 1730, he became engaged to lovely Sophia Wodehouse of Kimberley Hall, Norfolk. Charles wrote to his mother from this house with happiness not perhaps unmixed with relief:

I hope to have reason to think it will not only be a real benefit to myself but all my Family. We all continue pretty well and are very agreeably entertain'd with concerts of Musick twice a day.

His happiness with Sophia, too, was short-lived. She gave him two sons, John and Charles, and a daughter, Mary, and then died in 1738. He was grief-stricken and seems to have turned to improving his estate and altering its buildings as a palliative.



Sophia Wodehouse as a girl.
(School of Kneller)

He was building the Bath House about 1748, but it was not completed until 1755. In 1750 he rebuilt the Chapel of St. James which had fallen into disrepair and his alterations "were much admired for the modesty and simplicity of its architectural style". (In 1842, the year of his mother's death, Sir John Mordaunt enlarged the chapel and it became the parish church of Walton.)

In the middle years of the 18th century Sir Charles rebuilt Walton House, possibly clothing an earlier E-shaped house in simple Classical dress with pedimented wings of three storeys. Perhaps he discussed his plans with his friends, Sanderson Miller and Thomas Prowse. Anyway, his alterations clearly gave him much pleasure for Mrs Delany writing to her sister in October 1754 exclaims:

If I don't fill my letter with "my house", you may be much obliged to me, the Dean [her husband] says I am like Mr Miller and his enclosures with Sir Charles Mordaunt - I lard all my conversation with something about "my house".

For over forty years Sir Charles was M.P. for Warwickshire. As an old man he was very well respected by his colleagues in the House. He was a skilful and elegant debator, and his nephew and London companion John Dobson,

wrote proudly to his cousin Jack Mordaunt, at New College, Oxford in 1755:

I have ye Pleasure to acquaint you that Sir Charles distinguish'd himself yesterday in a particular Manner upon ye broad Wheels: Notwithstanding ye Dryness & Insipidity of ye Subject, He cloath'd his sentiments in such a beautifull Dress that he obtain'd ye full Applause which was justly due to his Merit and Experience.

(Broad-wheeled vehicles were to be encouraged by exempting them from tolls for four years).



Elizabeth Prowse, wife of Sir John, seventh baronet.
(Portrait by Thomas Hudson)

Later Generations

For many years a widower, Sir Charles died at the age of 80 in 1778, with his son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren about him. He was succeeded by his eldest son John, who had married Elizabeth Prowse in 1769, the daughter of his father's friend and colleague in parliament, Thomas Prowse. Sir John became a Groom of the Bedchamber to George III, but for financial reasons he could not afford to have his wife and children with him in London. One of his duties was to sit in the King's bedchamber during his prolonged illness in 1788. Five years later Sir John, more from a sense of duty than desire, entered parliament as one of the two Knights of the Shire. Life at Westminster was busy, as War with France was declared in 1795. In 1802 he resigned his seat for health reasons and four years later he died, an event hastened by the sad death of his amiable second son, Jack.

With the threat of invasion in 1796, Pitt had proposed that "a species of cavalry, consisting of gentleman and yeomanry" should be raised to help with internal defences. Charles Mordaunt, heir to Sir John, assumed responsibility as an officer in the Warwickshire militia. He had travelled to Ireland and been shocked by the hardship of many of the Irish. On his return to England he fell in love with a childhood friend, Marianne Holbech of Farnborough Hall. Just before the death of his father and to his great pleasure, Charles had been elected as a Tory M.P.

In 1807 he was able to marry Marianne and they embarked on some alterations to Walton House under the supervision of Henry Hakewill, who later designed Rugby School. That year Charles and Marianne sold the long-held family estates at Massingham to raise money for the building works and for Charles's mother and four unmarried sisters. Charles enjoyed indifferent health and in 1820 after the death of the old King, resigned his seat in Parliament. Three years later he died.

In 1829 Sir John, 9th Baronet, came of age. In the Autumn of that year he set off on his Grand Tour with a great enthusiasm. He saw Paris, passed over the Alps to Italy via the dramatic Abbey at the Grande Chartreuse, stayed at Florence, Rome, Naples, Sicily and came back via Venice, Switzerland, Germany and Paris again. On his second major trip he visited Lapland, Denmark and Sweden. In 1834 he married Caroline Sophia, the second daughter of the Bishop of Rochester and they were married from the Bishop's Palace at Bromley. In time for their wedding he built in the Bath Wood a rustic Summer house, with a roof of thatch and walls clad in mosses arranged in a pattern of different colours. (This has now disappeared but was very similar to the Bear House at Killerton in Devon. John's sister, Mary, married his great Oxford friend, Tom Acland, who became the 11th Baronet of Killerton.)

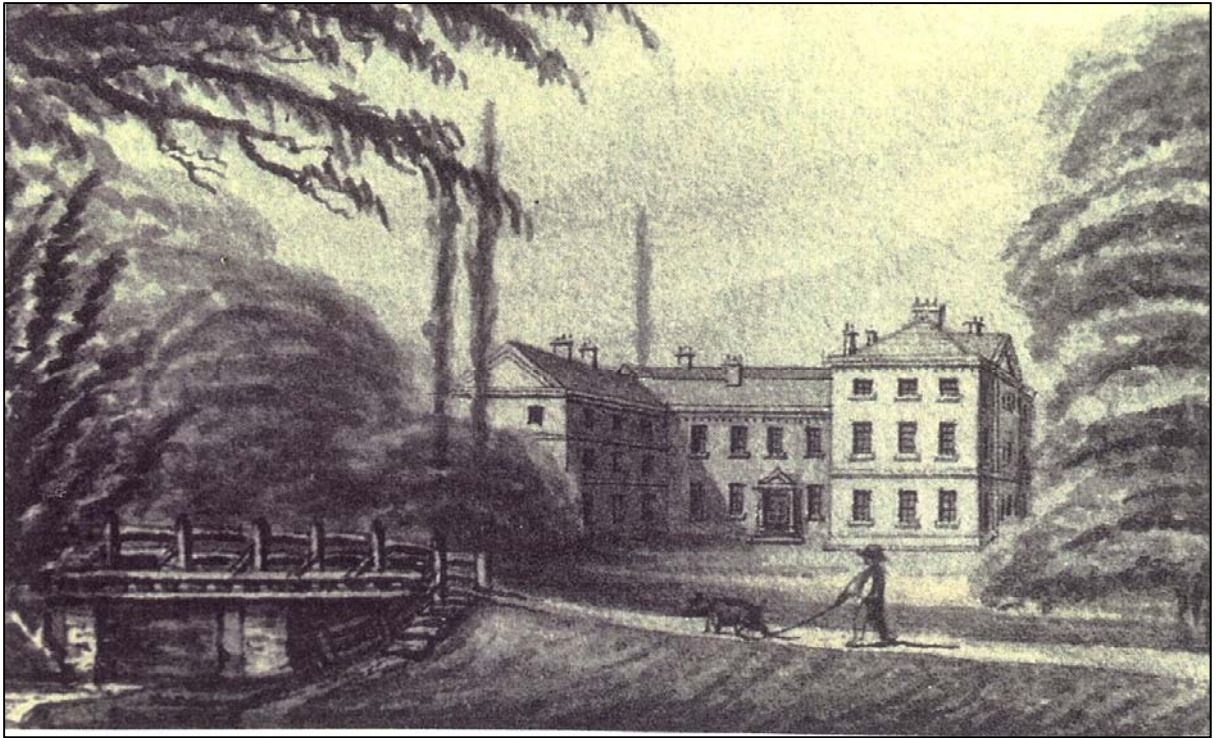
Sir John was elected M.P. in 1834 in the government of Sir Robert Peel. John and Caroline had a house at 41 Eaton Place and in February, 1835 her father presented them to King William. On 28th April, 1836, their first child, another Charles was born. John was a good archer and shot, and spent much time improving and planting his estate at Walton. In September, 1845 he was accidentally shot in the legs by his cousin from which he never recovered.

Walton House Rebuilt

Like his father, Sir Charles, 10th Baronet, went to Eton and Christchurch. He came of age in 1857 and set out on his travels with his brother Johnny. They went through France, via Malta to Egypt. Like all his family, Charles became a Tory M.P. but at the exceptionally early age of 23. Soon afterwards Charles and his mother made the momentous decision to rebuild Walton Hall and engaged Sir George Gilbert Scott to draw up designs. Work was proceeding in 1861 and the cottages in the village too were torn down and replaced by brick structures. A grand ball and other entertainments of the most expansive kind marked the opening of the new house, now to be called Walton Hall.

On 6th December, 1865 Charles married Harriet Moncrieffe, the fourth daughter of his mother's cousin Sir Thomas. She was soon to involve her husband in a royal scandal, resulting in an episode sadly out of keeping with the Mordaunt family tradition of steadiness combined with a deep sense of public duty. Christopher Hibbert in his biography of Edward VII describes Harriet Mordaunt as:

an attractive young woman of twenty-one occasionally to be seen at the Prince's parties at Abergeldie and Marlborough House, "so much liked in society", according to Lord Carrington, "such a pretty, pleasant, nice woman; everybody had a good work for her". But she always had been excitable and highly strung; and after the birth of her first child, whose threatened blindness she attributed to a fearful disease, she began to display symptoms of eccentricity verging on madness. Yet when she confessed to her husband, Sir Charles Mordaunt, that she had committed adultery "often and in open day" with Lord Cole, Sir Frederick Johnstone and several other men, including the Prince of Wales, he chose to believe her; and, having found a compromising diary in her locked desk, filed a petition for divorce.



Early 19th century views of Walton House, before it was rebuilt to designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott and renamed Walton Hall.



Elizabeth Hamilton describes the local tradition that on returning from a fishing trip in Norway, Sir Charles returned to find "the Prince leaning against one of the marble pillars of the front door languidly smoking a cigar, his hat at a jaunty angle as he watched Lady Mordaunt wheeling round in front of him in a little cart drawn by two trotting white ponies. Sir Charles allegedly produced a gun and shot the animals dead."

The Prince was cleared in the divorce case but Sir Charles was consigned to social wilderness and retired from political and public life. Afterwards he married Louisa Cholmondeley, daughter of the rector of Aldestrop. He died in 1897. His widow lived on at Walton for fifty years, until her death in 1947. The house and estate then passed to the eldest daughter of Sir Charles' second marriage, Adela Macrae and thence through the second daughter Irene, Lady Hamilton, to her son Sir Richard Hamilton. It was Sir Richard Hamilton who kindly granted the Landmark Trust a lease of the Bath House in 1987.

I would like to thank Lady Hamilton for her help with the Mordaunt family and William Hawkes for his help and advice on all concerning Sanderson Miller.

Julia Abel Smith

June 1991

A Gazetteer of Cold Baths and Bath Houses

Arno's Court, Bristol

Gothick, c. 1760, possibly designed by James Bridges. Described in 1821 as "a very elegant building used as a Cold Bath, with Dressing Rooms, having a lawn or pleasure ground in front". The facade and colonnade were rescued from demolition in the 1950s by Clough Williams-Ellis, who reassembled them at Portmeirion in North Wales.

Belhus, Essex

Sanderson Miller's friend, Lord Dacre, refers to his cold bath.

Burghley House, Northamptonshire

Among other buildings added between 1756-78 by Capability Brown.

Carshalton House, Merton, Surrey

The Water House, a tall, battlemented, pavilion built 1719-20 for Sir John Fellowes, probably to designs by Henry Joynes, an assistant of Vanbrugh. A water wheel in the basement provided power to pump water to a cistern in the top of the building, which supplied both the main house and a bathroom in the pavilion, which also contained a banqueting room and an orangery.

Claremont, Esher, Surrey

A cold bath was constructed below the south portico steps for Clive of India by Henry Holland 1771-4.

Corsham Court, Wiltshire

By Capability Brown, designed 1761 in the Gothick style, with a changing room above the bath chamber.

Dowdeswell Court, Gloucestershire

1773, an octagon set in an ilex-grove, with bath below and gazebo above. Ruinous.

Downton Castle, Herefordshire

Roman Baths with vaulted chambers, for (and by?) Sir Richard Payne Knight.

Drumcondra, Ireland

Mrs Delany undertook to decorate the cold bath for Lord Chief Justice Singleton in 1750.

Gibside, Co. Durham

Now vanished, but built 1734-5 for George Bowes, architect unknown. Set in a grove of yews above the River Derwent, with statues in niches. *The Newcastle Journal* in May, 1769, recorded that "some malicious persons have committed divers outrages in the woods and walks ... throwing a statue from the bath into the river".

Gunnersbury Park, Acton, Middlesex

Gothic bath and shell room built for Princess Amelia, favourite daughter of George II, now ruinous.

Hafod, Cardiganshire

At Thomas Johnes' mansion (Thomas Baldwin of Bath, 1786-8), the river terrace ran past the Cold Bath.

Hagley Hall, Worcestershire

In the remodelling of the house by Sanderson Miller et. al. 1754-60, a cold bath was provided on the ground floor, with access to the smoking room.

Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire

Sulphur Bath, 1759, probably by Jason Harris, a London Master Carpenter, who was also its builder. Two separate plunge baths with changing rooms linked by a colonnade. For a short time it was popular as a spa, and an inn was built 1760-2, to designs by Adam, to accommodate the visitors. Derelict. *The Fishing Boat House* Robert Adam, c. 1769, also contained a cold bath.

(Kenwood House, Middlesex)

Kings Weston, Gloucestershire

A project for a covered bath for Edward Southwell was proposed in 1708 by Mr Gilmore, engineer.

Lucan House, Co. Dublin, Ireland

Classical outside, Gothick within. Mrs Delany mentions dining in its ante-chamber in 1750.

(Melton Constable, Norfolk)

Middleton Hall, Carmarthenshire

A cold bath was erected over a chalybeate spring in the park by Sir William Paxton, whose new house was designed 1793-5 by S.P. Cockerell. The water could also be heated for a warm bath, however.

Ozleworth Park, Gloucestershire

Probably early 19th century, an open bath encircled by a covered walkway which includes a changing room. Derelict.

Painswick House, Gloucestershire

There by 1748, an open pool fed by a spring, spouting from a rocky alcove.

Raby Castle, Co. Durham

1752, Gothick, set in a wood. Probably designed by Sir Thomas Robinson.

Rousham House, Oxfordshire

Roman Bath, c. 1740, by William Kent for James Dormer. An open octagonal pool approached by an avenue of yews, in front of a small arched cave.

Rufford Abbey, Nottinghamshire

A "Bath Summer-House" designed 1729 by John Hallam for Sir George Savile.

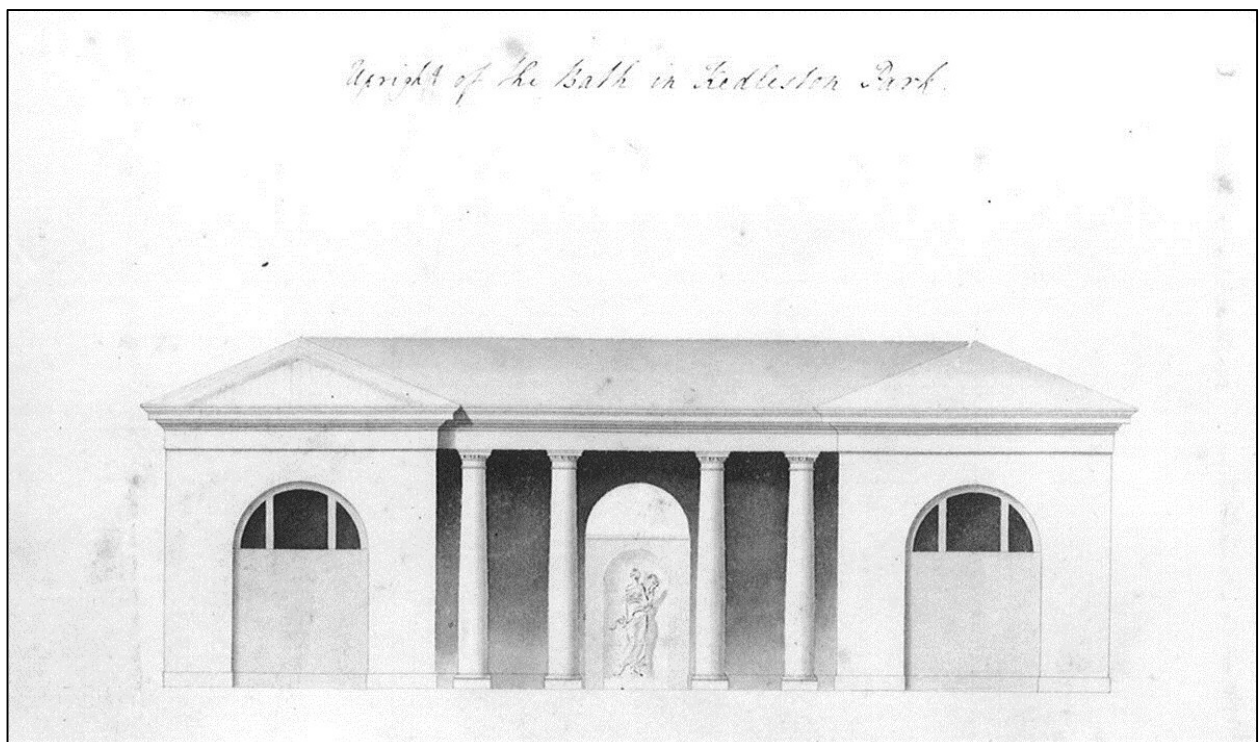
Ston Easton, Somerset

1790

(Wynnstay, Denbighshire)

Wimpole Hall, Camridgshire

Improvements to the house by the Earl of Hardwicke included a cold bath.



The Gothic Bath House

DERRICK GREEN

Vale Mascal was built in the London Borough of Bexley in 1746 on part of the Mount Mascal Estate stretching along the River Cray from Woollett Hall almost to Bexley village. The gardens were laid out professionally, probably between 1760 and 1775, either by 'Capability' Brown who was working in the area at the time

or one of his assistants. They were laid out along the River Cray where lakes, cascades, weirs and channels were formed and islands created. It was on one of these islands c.1766, the bath house was built.

Over the years the Vale Mascal Estate was split up and land sold off, with the ownership of the bath house changing hands several times. The last major land transfer was in 1935 when houses were built along the side of the North Cray Road near Bexley town centre, their gardens sloping down to the River Cray. It was at that time the resident of number 112 became the owner of the building.

In 1982 when the present owner bought the property she was told 'there is a brick shed at the bottom of the garden', mind you the bath house was very overgrown at the time with ivy on the walls and trees all around it.



It is listed Grade II*, the star representing the importance of its rarity value, and is situated in a very beautiful setting with six resident swans on the surrounding water who each day get fed a diet of bread and cornflakes by the lady who lives there. The bath house is a small building with a chapel like appearance, with flint walls and brick edging, supported by corner buttresses under a cruciform gabled roof, with a decorated chimney stack. The interior of the bath house has steps down to a plunge pool with a brick floor, a vaulted ceiling and a corner fireplace. Plunge pools with their icy cold water were reputed to have medicinal benefits.

To get the hydraulics to operate correctly it was built over a water course which was about 46 metres (150 feet) downstream from a weir where water was available several feet above the level of the plunge pool floor. The outfall from the plunge pool was laid with a slight drop from the pool to the River Cray. By adjusting the sluice gate at the weir and the one fitted inside the bath house it was possible to fill the pool to a depth of 1.22 metres (4 feet), or when required completely drain the pool for cleaning.

Tragedy struck in 1987 when the hurricane of the 16 October brought down a large ash branch across the roof of the bath house causing considerable damage. Initially it was feared that due to the large estimated cost of the restoration, the situation might be irretrievable. Eventually, however, a solution was found to raise the £18,000 necessary to restore the building, with money coming from Bexley Council's Heritage fund, the owner's insurers and the bulk of the amount required coming from English Heritage. In 1990 a local firm from Bexleyheath carried out a full restoration and brought the building back to its original 18th century appearance.

Charles Wesley baptised in Bexley in 1742 before the Vale Mascal estate was created, it would be nice to think that he or his brother came back in later years and carried out baptisms by immersion in the Gothic Bath House!

The gardens and bath house of 112 North Cray Road Bexley can be visited during the Open House London weekend in September each year.

With thanks to the Bexley Civic Society

ABOVE:
BEXLEY BATH
BELOW:
BEXLEY POOL