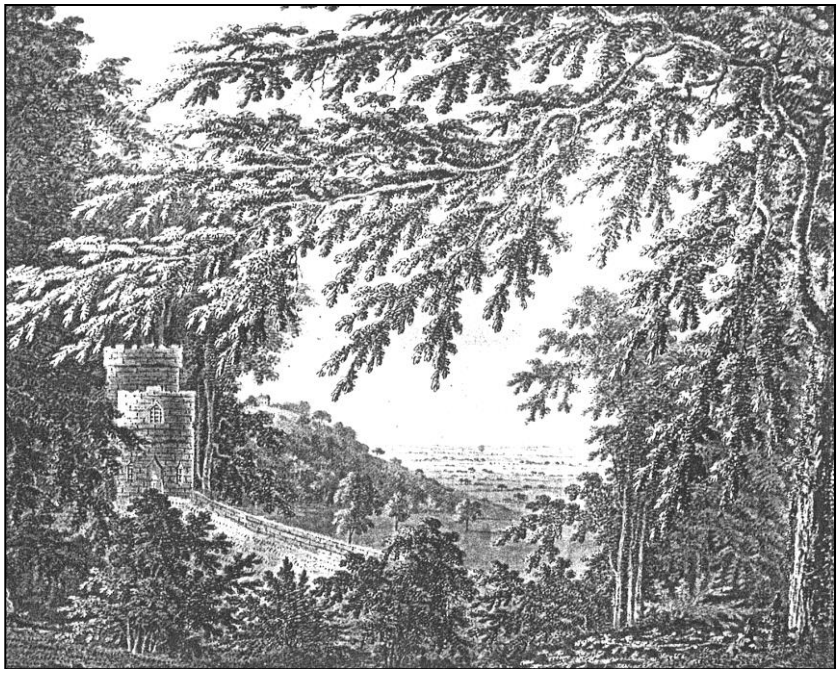
The Landmark Trust

KNOWLE HILL
History Album



Written and researched by
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BASIC DETAILS

Built	**House and Garden: c1700** **Gothic Summerhouse: 1760s**
Listed	**Grade II**
Landmark Tenure	**Freehold**
Acquired by Landmark	**1989 -1994**
Opened as Landmark	**Easter 1994**
Architect	**Rodney Melville and Partners**
Main Contractor	**Edward Wood and Son**
Foreman	**Bill Hickingbottom**
Archaeologist	**Christopher Currie**

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Knowle Hill, the Summerhouse. The cottage is just visible on the left, behind the wall.

Knowle Hill, the cottage, from the courtyard.

Summary

Like many properties rescued by the Landmark Trust, Knowle Hill is a fragment, an intriguing memory of something once larger and finer. The fragment here is not just of a building, but also of a most interesting garden. Historical and archaeological research show that in the two converging valleys which make up Knowle Hill we have the remains of a garden created around 1700, which has undergone little structural alteration since 1770.

In 1686, Walter Burdett, a younger son of the neighbouring estate of Foremark, rented 45 acres of land called Knowle Hills from the Cokes of Melbourne. Burdett was a barrister practising in London who retired to the country after his father's death in 1696. In 1701, he moved into a new house he had built for himself at Knowle Hill, on the western side of a little valley. Around his house, Walter formed a garden. Its character was Italian, an unusual choice for that period. The natural landscape was allowed to blend evocatively with the more formal layout of terraces and pools, to conjure up an Elysian world in miniature. Walter emerges from letters as a likeable and sociable person, entertaining a constant stream of visitors. Among them were Thomas Coke of Melbourne, whose guardian he had been, along with his own family, and neighbours such as the Curzons, the Harpurs of Calke and Lord Chesterfield from Bretby.

On his death in 1732, Walter Burdett left Knowle Hill to his niece, Jane Hopegood. She sold it soon after to a young man named Nicholas Hardinge, who had local connections but worked in London, where he was Clerk to the House of Commons. Until his death in 1758 he used Knowle Hill as a retreat, and wrote long poems praising its idyllic qualities.Then, in 1766, Knowle Hill was bought by Walter's great-nephew, Sir Robert Burdett of Foremark. From 1759-63, he had rented it from Mrs Hardinge and lived there with his family while Foremark was rebuilt. Now, however, he demolished the main house. In its place, possibly over some former stables, he built a custodian's cottage, and a Gothick summerhouse, which soared like a ruined castle on the valley's edge. Walter Burdett’s house, which rose up the slope from the valley floor, and apparently resembled an Italianate structure of terraces and steps, with a mysterious rock-cut chamber in its midst, was left as an intriguing classical ruin. Knowle Hill was now a pleasure garden, to be visited for picnics and other light-hearted excursions. In the 19th century it became a popular resort for people from nearby towns. The sense of mystery and decay was strong, but attractively so.

When Knowle Hill was first suggested to the Landmark Trust in 1987, decay had gone nearly to the limits of destruction, to the concern of many local people. The two wooded valleys had been leased to the Forestry Commission about 1950. The surrounding land was later sold to a neighbouring farmer, along with two pools in the valleys.

Finally, in 1982, the buildings, which had scarcely been lived in since 1958, were sold to a private owner but remained for the most part empty, growing ever more

ruinous. Knowle Hill was not forgotten, however. Alerted by local conservationists, Landmark began negotiations to reunite the property. Buildings and pools were acquired in 1989 and the woods followed in 1993, when the felling of conifers suddenly allowed the central area of the garden to be appreciated as a whole for the first time. By then, repairs to the buildings were well underway and at Easter 1994, the first visitors arrived to stay in this most secluded place.

Knowle Hill – the Buildings and their Repair

The brick buildings around the walled courtyard were mainly built by Sir Robert Burdett in 1769, but contain fragments of Walter Burdett's earlier buildings. The lower range on the east has been much reduced in size, firstly around 1900 and again in 1992-4, by Landmark. The two-storeyed west range may have started as a single storey building, open-fronted, perhaps a stable of about 1700. The spaces between the timber posts were filled in with brick when the cottage was added above in 1769.

When Landmark took on Knowle Hill all the buildings were ruinous and the summerhouse range was falling into the valley. Some hard decisions had to be taken, since the cost of repairing everything would have been huge. Farm buildings on the north side of the courtyard were no longer needed so these were clear candidates for demolition, leaving just one gable. The northern rooms of the summerhouse were even sadder to part with. They had Gothick windows and contributed to the picturesque outline of the building. However, if Knowle Hill was to survive at all, and be repaired at a reasonable cost, these too had to go. Even so, complicated structural engineering was needed to hold the outer wall securely in place.

The cottage now contains most of the Landmark accommodation for five people. Water and electricity had to be brought in, and kitchen and bathroom provided. The repairs were carried out in as careful and conservative a way as possible, to preserve the character of the rooms, with their small fireplaces and casement windows. The glass in these windows is new. On the east is what remains of Sir Robert's summerhouse. Until about 1900, when it was re-roofed, this range was considerably taller, rising in the centre to a tower. This and a crenellated parapet gave the summerhouse its dramatic profile from below. A photograph of c.1880 enabled the parapet and part of the tower to be reinstated in 1994.

Inside the summerhouse, stone steps lead down to two rooms on a terrace cut out of the side of the hill. Their outer walls are stone and they are lit by windows which have been altered to give them Gothick heads. North of these rooms is an open terrace, with shallow niches in its inner retaining wall. This terrace belongs to the 1700 garden layout. The rooms at its end may be the remains of a gazebo inside which a flight of steps led up to the main terrace. The main room of the summerhouse is the garden room, now the sitting room for the Landmark, called Pemik's Room after the benefactor who enabled its repair. Although derelict,

enough detail survived of joinery and plasterwork to allow the new work to be copied from it. The extent to which the range has subsided can be seen by comparing the levels of the dado rail either side of the garden door. The window in the outer wall is new, but the colour on the walls is copied from traces of the old paint.

The restoration was carried out under the supervision of Rodney Melville and Partners of Leamington Spa, with the work being done by the Derbyshire building firm, Edward Wood & Son. The foreman was Bill Hickingbottom.

Knowle Hill – A Tour of the Garden

The two valleys now owned by Landmark formed the heart of Walter Burdett's garden. The planned landscape was once larger, however, running from the wood to the south called Gorsey Ley, round the western skyline to Seven Spouts (embracing the Knoll which gives the place its name). An exploration of this perimeter is well worthwhile, particularly the embankment forming one edge of a great canal and duck decoy on the edge of Gorsey Ley, but for present purposes, only the main circular walk at the centre will be described.

Walter's guests would have arrived by carriage up a gently graded drive which leaves Warswick Lane where the two valleys meet. When Knowle Hill became a detached pleasure garden for Foremark Hall, the approach seems to have been changed to the one used now, from Seven Spouts, to which a ride led from Foremark.

Whether before 1770 or after, you are soon drawn to the south, to the lawn onto which Sir Robert's pretty garden room opens. This broad main terrace is supported by a substantial wall, and from it, the best views of the Trent valley could once be enjoyed. At its southern end, there may have been a small grotto in an alcove where the ground rises to close the view, with steps leading up to a bower of pleached limes and a seat. To the left of the alcove, however, the visitor could glimpse, in the distance, a flash of white water on a cascade at the head of the valley. From this water tumbled down a rill between grassy banks to the valley floor.

Drawn towards the cascade, you find yourself on a walk up the valley, going past the alcove with the ground falling away on the left. On the right the ground rises to an upper terrace. This is nearly as broad as the main terrace, with a stone wall on its outside and lines of trees on both inner and outer edges. It was until recently known as the Pleasure Ground, and formed an alternative place to stroll and enjoy the view. Continuing along the narrow main walk, above the rill, you are soon beside the cascade, at the edge of a rectangular pool. From the higher ground on the right, early visitors would have glimpsed a little building at the far end, in the opposite corner. To reach it, they followed the walk along the western side of the pool, enjoying the still water fringed by alders. At the far end, a raised platform allows a view in reverse, back down the valley towards the house. The

little building seen before stood over the stream which enters the pool at its south-east corner. Possibly a pavilion, for shelter, it may also have contained apparatus for holding back water, allowing it to be released on special occasions to make a good show on the cascade.

A bridge over the stream tempted visitors across it, and the agile can still follow the same route, to walk down the eastern side of the pool enjoying a new set of views down the valley. This walk ends in a promontory level with the lawn, giving a fine prospect of the buildings on the opposite bank. There may once have been steps down the bank, beside what seems to have been a wall spanning the valley at this point, but now, undergrowth permitting, you have to slither to the valley floor, before walking northwards along it. From here you can enjoy to the full the dramatic effect of the Gothick summerhouse. Beyond and below it is the Italianate terrace which was, it seems, part of Walter's house. The tumble of brick and stone in front formed service rooms, from which steps led up to where a tunnel runs into the hill. For special guests, candles were placed in the niches at the sides of this tunnel, and in the circular chamber at its end. Here a rock-cut seat allows you to pause and enjoy the excitement of all underground places, and the meditations they give rise to.

Refreshed by this interlude, you may continue down the valley, choosing to walk along the bottom, or at a slightly higher level on a terrace possibly once edged with yews. As you near the end of the walk, the sound of water is heard again. You soon find yourself on a small embankment, below which the water once tumbled over another cascade, before flowing on towards the Trent.

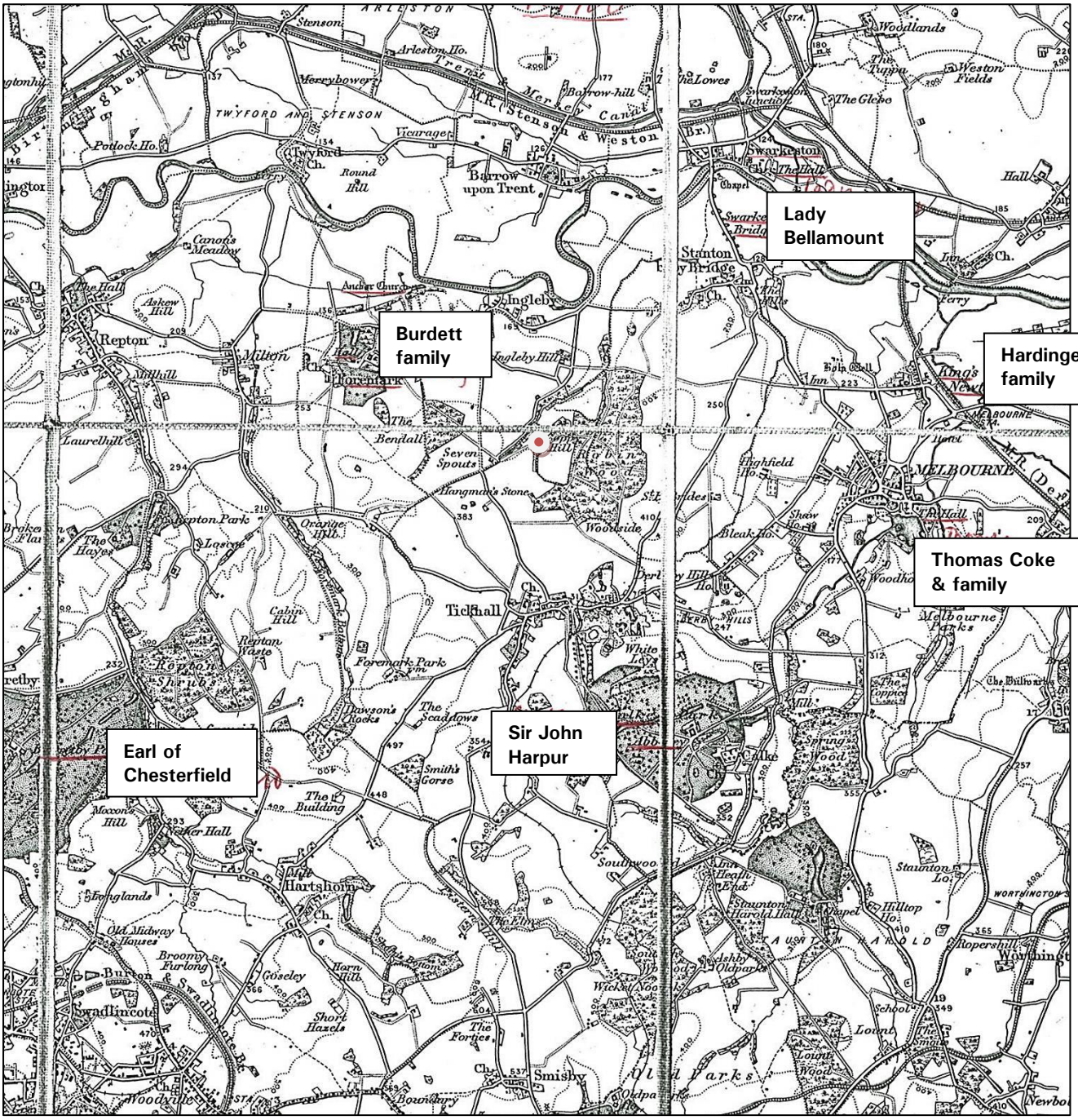
Here again you have a choice. You can return to the house up Walter's carriage drive or, attracted perhaps by a louder sound of water from the adjoining Seven Spouts valley, you can turn your back on the Trent. Here you must imagine a walk cut through the wood, running uphill in a south-westerly direction. After a few minutes, a waterfall is glimpsed between the trees, and before long you are standing beside a ruined basin, into which a shute of water falls. Admiration having duly been expressed, you are naturally drawn to see what lies above. Once, you could make your way up the bank by steps, by now you must scramble, to find yourself by another rectangular sheet of water fringed by trees. In the corner to your left stands a fine beech tree, the direct successor of one admired by visitors in the 18th century.

Beyond it, you may then have noticed, with relief, another bower or pavilion, placed on a buttressed platform projecting into the south-east corner of the pool. Wearied by the walk uphill, you could gratefully rest for a few moments, your need anticipated by the gardener's art. The energetic might then feel tempted to walk up to the top of the knoll, site of a supposed ancient burial mound. From there, the Trent valley spreads into the eastern distance while behind, your eye can follow the line of trees planted on the western horizon to define the limits of Walter Burdett's small Arcadia, to the heart of which you can now return.

Introduction

The story of Knowle Hill as it survives today begins in 1686, when Walter Burdett was admitted as a copyhold tenant of the manor of Castle Donington for a piece of land called Knowle Hills, covering 45 acres. The previous tenant had been his brother, Robert Burdett. Castle Donington formed part of the estate of the Coke family of Melbourne, who had acquired the manor in 1633, when the tenant of Knowle Hills was William Sacheverall. He and John Sacheverall were still the tenants in 1666 when they were accused of cutting down trees without the permission of their landlord.

Knowle was first mentioned in documentary sources in 1260, when it was referred to as 'Le Cnol' (abutting onto another piece of land called 'Le Scrub'), which were granted to 'John, the forester of Tickenhale.' In 1328, a strip of arable land measuring half an acre at 'Knolfurlong' was granted to William of the Warde. There is no reference to any house, or any other structure, at Knowle in any medieval documents, or in the court books of the manor of Castle Donington. Later, the land which now makes up Knowle came to be linked with three acres of woodland called Gorsey Ley, to the south-east. The 45 acres of land which Walter Burdett leased in 1686 were described simply as a close, or enclosed field, bounded on the east by Ingleby Coppice, on the south and west by Gorsey Ley and Ticknall Field, and on the north by Ingleby Heath. In 1688 Walter took on the tenancy of Gorsey Ley itself. The fieldnames suggest in the medieval and early modern periods, the landscape around Knowle was a mixture of arable open fields, ploughed in strips, along with small, enclosed fields, woodland and grazing in the form of heathland commons and 'waste' ground ('Le Scrub' is particularly suggestive of this).



Knowle Hill with some of its neighbours in 1770.

Walter Burdett had close links with his landlords, the Coke family. Burdett was born in 1646, the third son of Sir Francis Burdett, 2nd Baronet, of Bramcote in Warwickshire and of Foremark, two miles from Knowle. The name Walter came from his mother's family; her father, Sir John Walter, was a distinguished lawyer who became Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer. Walter followed him into the legal profession, typical for many younger sons of the gentry in the 17th century. He was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1667/8 and called to the Bar in 1674. He was practising in London in 1685, with chambers at the Inner Temple, and was described as being 'of the Inner Temple' in the will of John Coke of Melbourne, drawn up in 1689/90.

John Coke died two years later, and his will appointed Walter and John Burdett as his executors and guardians of his five children. On the death of his own father in 1656, when he was just three years old, John Coke had been left to the guardianship of Walter's father, Sir Francis Burdett, and had been raised at Foremark alongside Walter and John. Walter, in his turn, played an active role in the upbringing of John's son, Thomas Coke, the heir to Melbourne, and his brothers and sisters. A large collection of letters from between the 1690s and 1711 survived at Melbourne, written by family and friends to Thomas Coke. These are now in the British Library, and include several letters from Walter, as well as numerous references to him and to Knowle, which show the warmth of the friendship between the two families.

Although Walter Burdett had taken on the tenancy of Knowle Hill in 1686, it was not until after 1696, when Sir Francis died, that he began to spend any length of time in Derbyshire. His eldest brother, Robert, had inherited the title and the estates at Foremark and Bramcote. Their mother, along with Walter's unmarried sisters and his brother John, continued to live at Foremark, where they were joined by Walter. In the 1690s Walter was in his fifties, and it may have been his intention to retire to Derbyshire from legal practice in London (although he still retained chambers at the Inner Temple until at least 1699).

Walter may have used the fields at Knowle Hill for game rearing and for breeding horses, an obsession for much of the gentry in the late 17th century. In December 1698 Walter wrote to Thomas Coke that 'I made bold to send you this week from Knowle Hills some dozen little birds', perhaps shot in the small wood of Gorsey Ley. In 1698/9 he sold a horse to a friend of Thomas Coke's as a 'summer hunter', whilst in 1700 another was descended on the mare's side from 'my Lord Chesterfield's Strawberry Barb', who was 'so gentle that my boy rides him about Knowle Hills, and I have been tempted with money for him as far as twenty pounds at two years and a quarter.' Hunting, shooting and riding was all-consuming interests for many men of Walter's status and background, and his two brothers in particular.

It seems likely that is was in the 1690s that Walter first conceived of turning Knowle Hill into a residence for himself, perhaps intended as a hunting lodge or retreat from London and Foremark. It is tempting to equate this with a brief note by Celia Fiennes in 1698, of her journey from Derby to Staunton Harold when she saw 'a fine park of some gentleman in which was a summerhouse on the side of a hill among fine tall trees.' However, since Celia was probably on the road across Swarkestone Bridge it would have been difficult to see Knowle Hill itself (although the bridge is visible from Knowle).

Walter Burdett at Knowle Hill

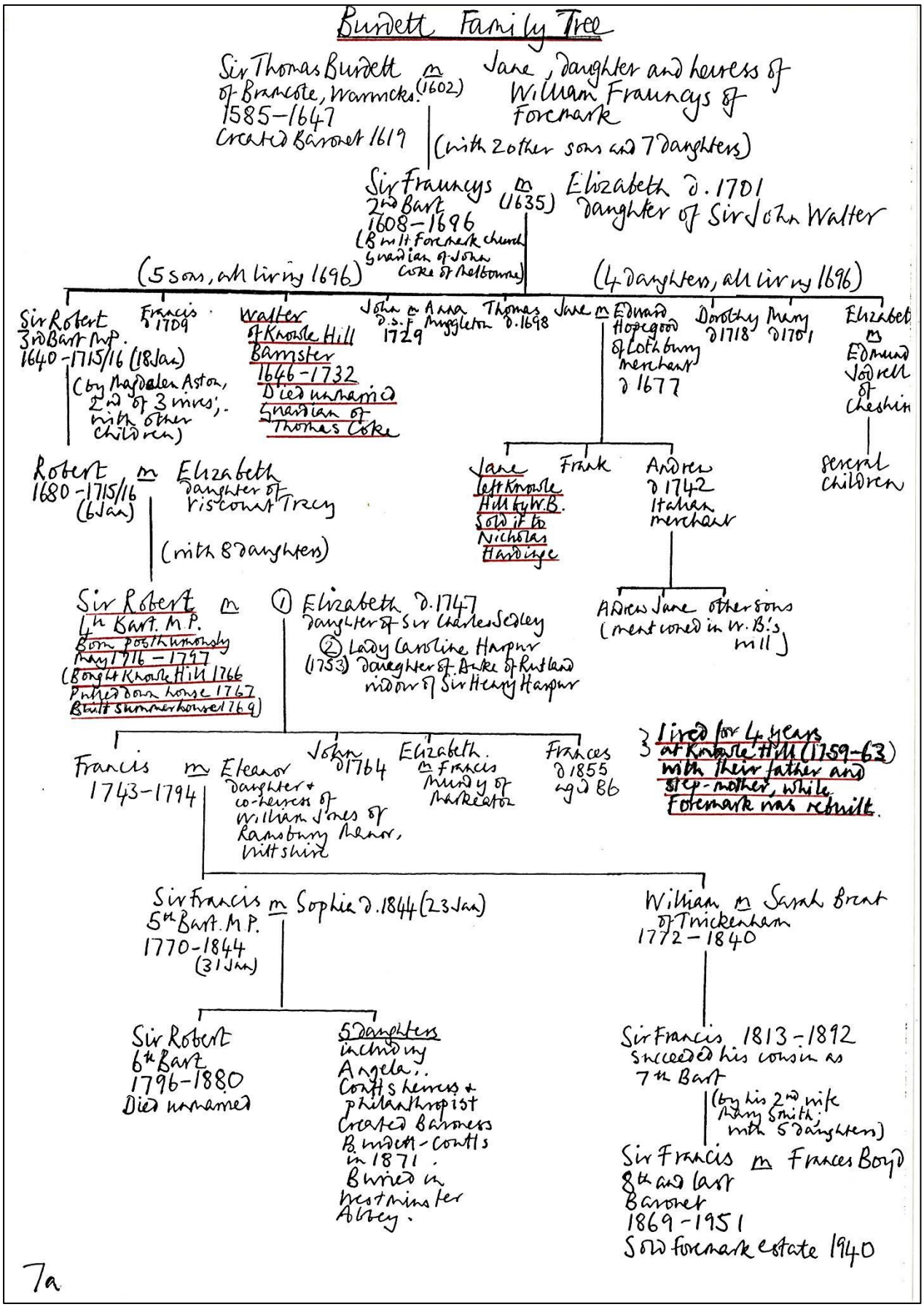
In 1712 William Wooley, in a manuscript of his *History of Derbyshire*, described Knowle Hill as:

> A place of a peculiar pleasant and retired situation where an hermit in old times would have chosen to have made his cell. Mr Walter Burdett, an elderly bachelor of the ancient family, has made a very agreeable habitation, suitable to his humour and circumstances, where two knowles or hills covered with woods and two pleasant valleys on each side, with two murmuring rivulets running along them, to which natural disposition he has added a great deal of art which renders a most delightful place which, with his kind hospitality, causeth it to be much resorted to.

The first hint that Walter was creating a house and garden at Knowle Hill comes in 1699, when he leased an additional 4 acres in the north part of Gorsey Ley. The tenancy agreement notes that the piece of land ran 'from a corner of Ticknall field to the the Northwest Corner of the Long pool in the said Gorstey leys and by the pool and from the east end of the pool to Engleby coppice.' This is the first reference to the pools and canals which are now such an important feature of the landscape, and show that the construction had certainly begun on the gardens by 1699. Gorsey Ley is now in separate ownership, but on the edge of the wood a substantial earthwork bank is visible which once formed the edge of an ornamental canal. The archaeology of the site suggests that there may have been a small pool at the western end of the canal which was enlarged by Walter in the 1690s to form a canal.

Such features were ubiquitous in gardens of this period, at all levels of elite society. As well as their ornamental function, canals and pools were used for breeding both fish and ducks for the table. At the south-western end of the canal was a curved tail that was typical of a 'duck decoy' into which the ducks would be lured and then captured using nets.

The 'dozen little birds' that Walter sent Thomas Coke in 1698 may have been ducks, which he joked that he called 'swans, so that you'll guess I'm fain to


Burdett Family Tree
Sir Thomas Burdett of Bromcote, Warwicks. 1585–1647 Created Baronet 1619
m (1602)
Jane, daughter and heiress of William Fraunceys of Foremark
(with 2 other sons and 7 daughters)
Sir Francys 2nd Bart 1608–1696 (B in lt. Foremark church Guardian of John Coke of Melbourne)
m (1635)
Elizabeth d. 1701 daughter of Sir John Walter
(5 sons, all living 1696)
(4 daughters, all living 1696)
Sir Robert 3rd Bart MP. 1640–1715/16 (18 Jan)
Francis d 1709
Walter of Knowle Hill Barrister 1646–1732 Died unmarried Guardian of Thomas Coke
John m Anna d.s.p. Nuggleton 1729
Thomas d. 1698
Jane m Edward Hopegood of Lothbury merchant d 1677
Dorothy d 1718
Mary d 1701
Elizabeth m Edward Lovell of Cheshire
several children
Robert 1680–1715/16 (6 Jan)
m Elizabeth daughter of Viscount Tracy
(with 8 daughters)
Jane left Knowle Hill by W.B. Sold it to Nicholas Hardinge
Frank
Andrew d 1742 Italian merchant
Andrew Jane other sons (mentioned in W.B.'s will)
Sir Robert 4th Bart. M.P. Born posthumously May 1716 – 1797 (Bought Knowle Hill 1766 Pulled down house 1767 Built summerhouse 1769)
m ① Elizabeth d. 1747 daughter of Sir Charles Sedley
② Lady Caroline Harpur (1753) daughter of Duke of Rutland widow of Sir Henry Harpur
Francis 1743–1794
m Eleanor daughter & co-heiress of William Jones of Ramsbury Manor, Wiltshire
John d 1764
Elizabeth. m Francis Mundy of Markeaton
Frances d 1855 aged 86
3 lived for 4 years at Knowle Hill (1759–63) with their father and step-mother, while Foremark was rebuilt.
Sir Francis 5th Bart. M.P. 1770–1844 (31 Jan)
m Sophia d. 1844 (23 Jan)
William m Sarah Brent of Twickenham 1772–1840
Sir Robert 6th Bart 1796–1880 Died unmarried
5 daughters including Angela. Coutts heiress & philanthropist Created Baroness Burdett-Coutts in 1871. Buried in Westminster Abbey.
Sir Francis 1813–1892 succeeded his cousin as 7th Bart
(by his 2nd wife Mary Smith: with 5 daughters)
Sir Francis m Frances Boyd 8th and last Baronet 1869–1951 Sold Foremark estate 1940
7a

magnify whatever I have. These fowl come to you by the name of turkeys, and I wish you, your Lady and sister a Merry Christmas with them.' In later letters there are specific references to ducks on the canal in Gorsey Ley, including an occasion when sixty were counted there.

So, in the late 1690s Walter had begun work on adapting existing features on his land to enhance his new gardens, blending together the practical and the beautiful. At the same time, work must have been taking place on the construction of a house. Walter was certainly entertaining guests at Knowle by the summer of 1700, writing to Thomas Coke,

> The extraordinary favour you did me last Wednesday in sending me a dish of trout to entertain my good friends Sir Nathaniel Curzon, his Lady, daughters and sons, my sister Dorothy, niece Jodrell and brother John, at Knowle Hills, has given you the trouble of this my humble and hearty thanks. If wishing and drinking your health will occasion it, I am sure you are very well, as also my Lady Mary (Thomas's wife) and all who have been of my charge.

Although this entertainment could have taken place in the open air, it seems likely that there was some form of building at Knowle by this date, strengthened by the discovery of a brick dated 1699 on the site. By December 1701 Walter was staying at Knowle Hill, and was regularly writing to Thomas Coke at Melbourne from Knowle, rather than from Foremark Hall. In January 1702 his nephew Burdett Jodrell wrote to Coke that 'Uncle Walter is now settled at Knowle Hills.'

Unfortunately, there are few other documentary references to the construction of the house or gardens. Work was still continuing in 1702, and in May Walter wrote to Thomas Coke that,

> By your command I have finished a bower upon your ground for cousin Nellie Curzon. It comes in all to 6s 4d which is almost half as much as my rent, but I do not pretend to deduct, because stoppage is no payment. My Lord Chesterfield and Lady Catherine are come well down. You have a team of young ducklings wild upon your canal in Gorstey Leys: I think there is sixteen and you have also six young horses there which, if you do not fence from the bower, will hinder the growth of the thicket about it.

He was also busy working on 'making a gallop around the walk at the canal' in December of the same year. The letters to Thomas Coke often refer to Knowle Hill as being Coke's, clearly a private joke between the friends in reference to Coke as Walter's landlord at Knowle. These works were probably finishing touches to the gardens.

The main work of forming the terraces around the house, the cascade and the other features in the valley had probably been completed by then. The house and garden had been completed in one phase, probably during 1699-1701.

Walter Burdett's House

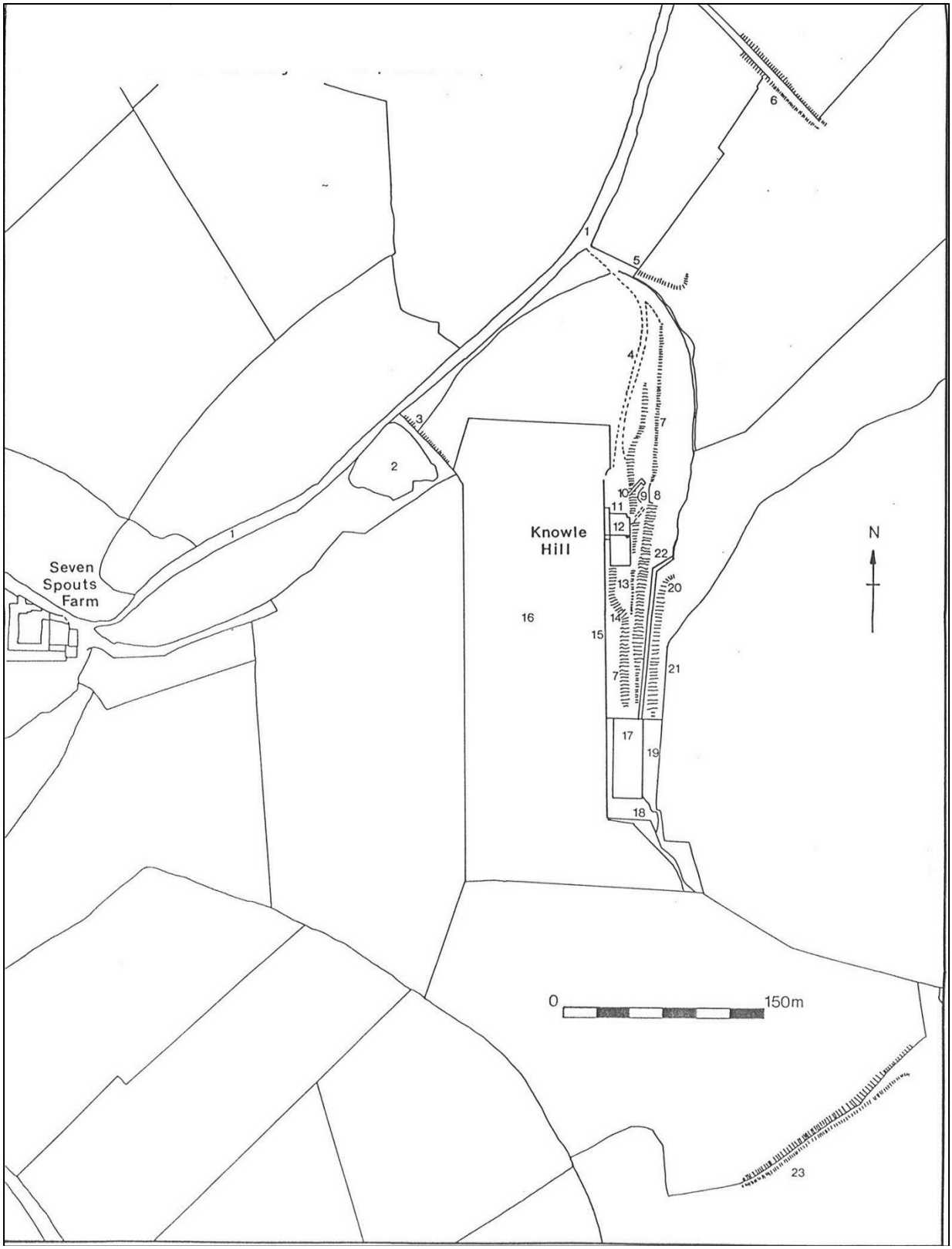
Unfortunately, no contemporary description of the house has been found. In some verses written soon after Walter's death in the 1730s it was called 'an artless cottage, elegant though plain.' It is difficult to take this at face value – the term cottage was often applied to quite substantial houses in the eighteenth century, and the verses may have been intended to emphasise the nature of Knowle as a place of rural retirement. In John Dryden's translations of Virgil's Georgics, published in 1667, the poet yearns for 'a soft, secure, inglorious life – a country cottage near a crystal flood, a winding valley and a lofty wood.'

Thereafter, the earliest account of the house dates from over thirty years after its demolition in 1767. In 1802 Britton and Brayley's *Beauties of England and Wales* noted that:

> Knowle Hills, between one and two miles east of Foremark, is a beautiful retired spot, surrounded by fine woods and plantations of oak and beech. Here, in the mouth of a narrow dell, stood a singular but pleasant house, climbing from the bottom of the dell to the summit of its western bank.

Later writers have nearly all based their accounts of Knowle on this one. Dr Robert Bigsby in his *History of Repton*, published in 1854, added that the demolition of the house was 'greatly to the regret of many admirers of its wild romantic situation and extraordinary mode of structure.' This account certainly does not suggest a humble cottage – most accounts agree that the architecture of the house was unusual, and that it was situated on the side of the hill.

The most likely location for the house is to the north of the present courtyard, directly above the Italian Alcove or *exedra* and the rock-cut chambers. The written evidence for the house suggests that it rose from the valley floor to the top of the valley. Archaeological recording during renovations of the terraces around the Alcove and the chambers in 1995 revealed extensive foundations which showed that the buildings in this part of the garden were more extensive



Chris Currie's archaeological plan of the garden earthworks at Knowle Hill.

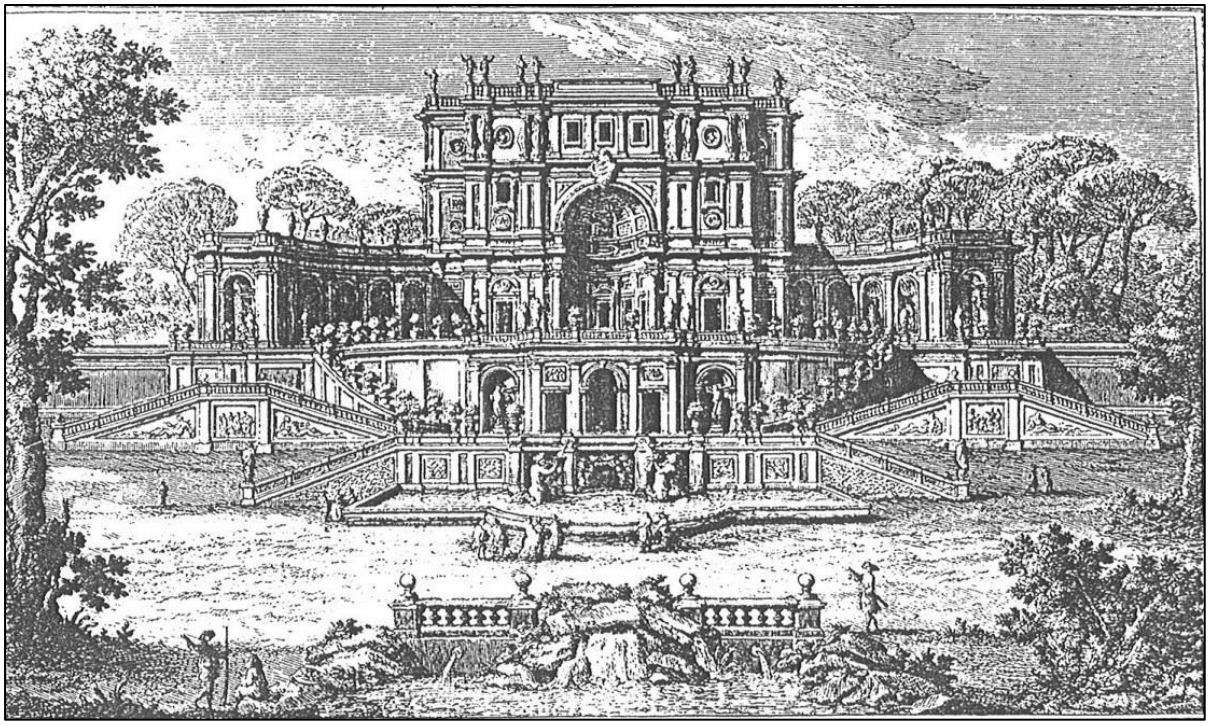
1. Warsick Lane (track)
2. Seven Spouts Pond
3. Ornamental waterfall leaving Seven Spouts Pond
4. Original approach drive to Knowle Hill?
5. The 'Lower Cascade'
6. Earth bank across line of stream, possible old pond dam
7. Garden terraces
8. The 'Cellars', an artificial cave/grotto
9. The Italianate Alcove (baroque term - 'teatro')
10. Stone steps
11. Outer courtyard, possible site of original house
12. Inner courtyard
13. Site of grass plat
14. Brick alcove below the 'mount'
15. Stone wall
16. Rectangular enclosure
17. Pond known as the 'garden pond'
18. Remains of brick structure
19. Raised walkway around pond
20. Possible viewpoint and termination of raised walkway
21. Foundations of stone wall, former boundary to garden
22. The Cascade
23. Dam bank to Gorsey Ley 'canal'

and more complex than previously thought. The rock-cut chamber was revealed to be at first floor level compared to the foundations in the valley bottom, and was reached from within the building by a set of stone steps leading up from the ground floor. The walls of the ground floor were built partly of bricks which have been dated to the late 17th or early 18th centuries. Within them were the remains of alcoves, most likely used for storage, ovens, and open drains. It seems probable that these foundations are the service floor of Walter Burdett's house, which then rose up alongside the terraces to the top of the valley, with the main rooms of the house on the higher levels.

The archaeologist Chris Currie, who oversaw the archaeological work, initially suggested that the house at Knowle could have been arranged in such a way that the rock-cut chamber could have appeared as part of a series of terraces and grottos situated below the house, whilst still being connected to it. Certainly, such an arrangement was typical in Italian Renaissance gardens and would have been in keeping with the character of the gardens. However, the more recent archaeological work caused Currie to reassess this theory, as the bulk of the house appears to have been located in the bottom of the valley, rather than

sitting at the top. This may mean that the rock-cut chamber would have originally been concealed (either wholly or partially) by the structure of the house. It may even have been part of the original service rooms, and only later converted into a garden structure. However, other evidence suggests that the chambers were part of Walter's ornamental landscape.

The demolition of the house in 1767 means that it is impossible to be certain about the architecture, appearance or exact location of the house without further archaeological excavation.



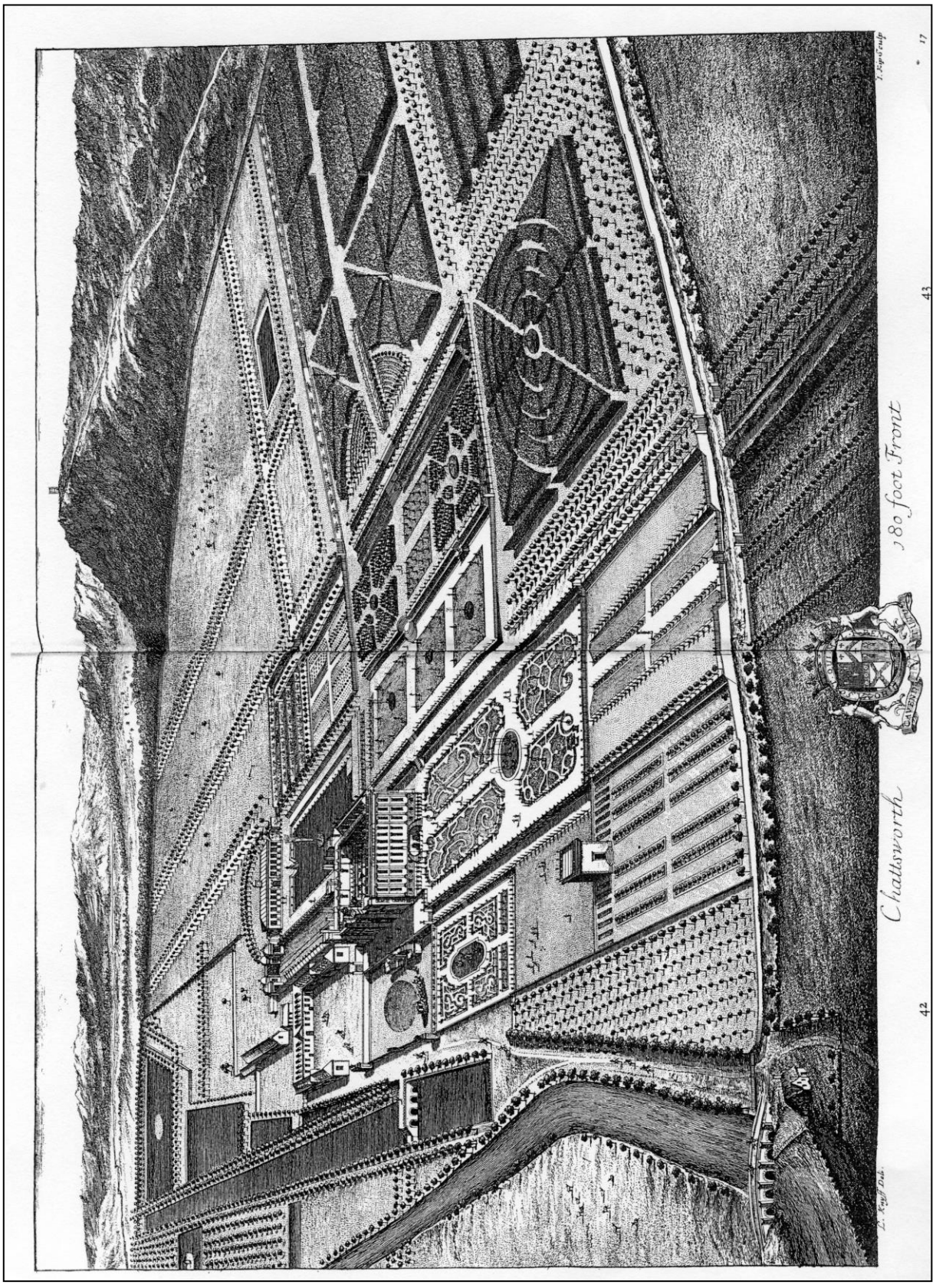
A Roman villa, designed c. 1625 by Pietro di Cortona, showing the kind of ornamental terrace that Walter Burdett may have tried to emulate at Knowle Hill.

Walter Burdett's Garden

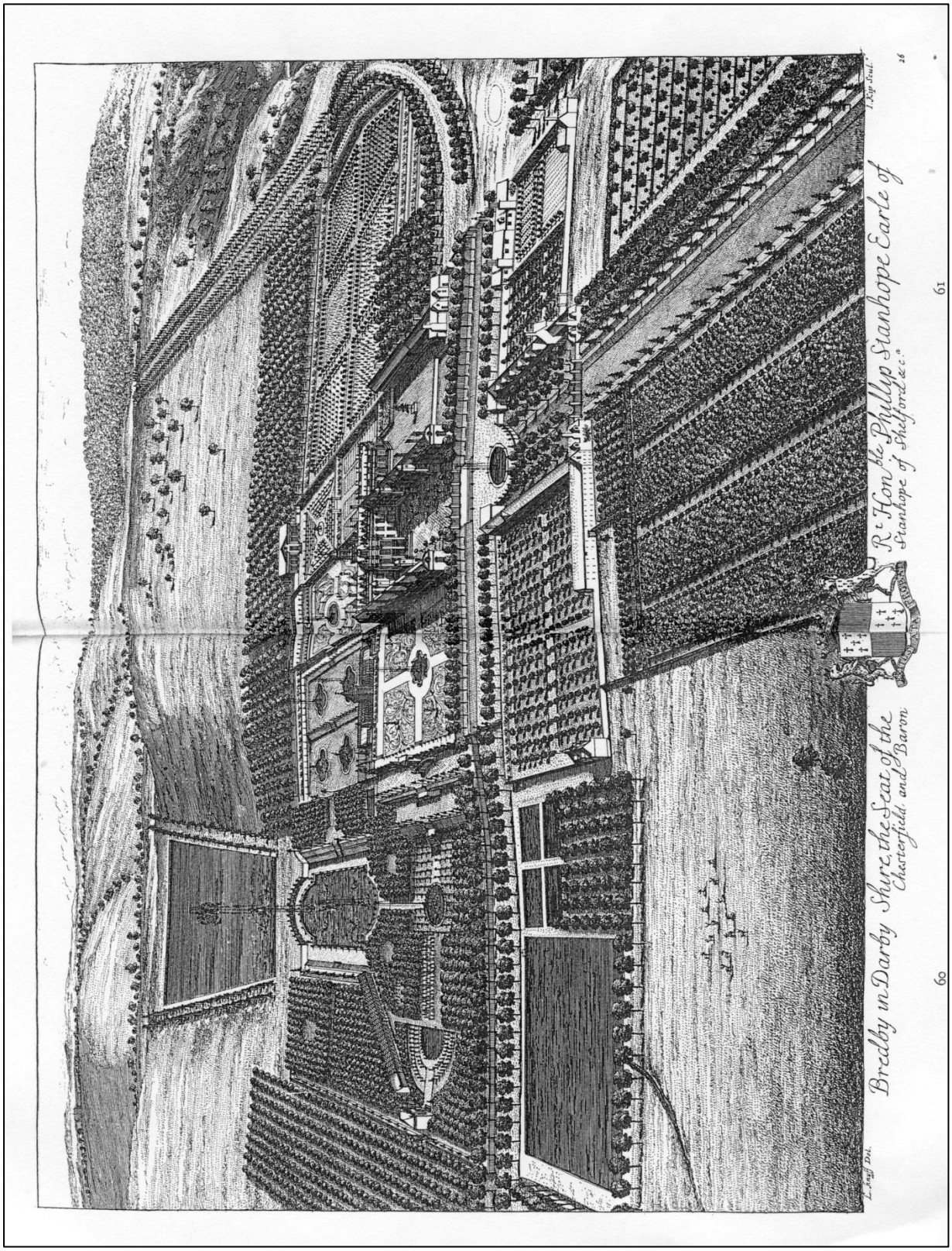
The garden that Walter created at Knowle in the closing decade of the 17th century was certainly formal in style – much more formal than it appears today. It is an important, and curious, garden which was directly influenced by the Italian Renaissance in its original form and layout. Although the Renaissance had influenced English gardening since the early Tudor period, it is comparatively rare to find a garden which appears to be wholly Italian in its inspiration, and on a relatively small scale. English gardens in the late 17th century were inspired by a mix of continental influences, including Italy, but also drawing on examples from France and the Low Countries. Such gardens were immortalised by the artists Leonard Knyff and Johannes Kip in *Britannia Illustrata*, published in 1707, which reproduced engraving of country houses and their grounds from all over England. Complex floral parterres, geometric canals, fountains, arbours, banqueting houses, mounts were all contained within the walled gardens of the English elite, and were usually surrounded by a deer park criss-crossed with a mesh of avenues.

A key element in the Italian Renaissance garden was variety. This was provided both by movement between different levels and through contrasting areas containing here a formal garden layout, there is a 'natural' wood or grove intersected by walks. Statues, fountains, arbours and grottoes added further elements of surprise and delight. Equally important were opportunities for views over the surrounding countryside, whether cultivated or wild, with which the outer areas of the garden might be allowed to blend.

The English in the earlier 17th century had been strongly influenced by Italian gardens, both those described by classical poets such as Pliny the Younger and the more tangible models formed, often on the same sites, in the Renaissance. Travellers to Italy came back full of enthusiasm, and they and others realised their new ideas at home.



Chatsworth in 1707, from Kip and Knyff's *Britannia Illustrata*.



Bretby Hall, to the east of Knowle, in 1707, from Kip and Knyff's *Britannia Illustrata*.

Then, in the decades around 1700, the fashion veered more towards the French-Dutch variations of the formal garden. There might still be a terrace, but the design was more uniform, the gardens tended to be larger and there was a tendency in the grandest examples to impose order on the outside world, rather than leave it as a foil to the artistry contained within.

Significantly, the true Italian garden could be realised on a modest scale and within quite a small area. John Dixon Hunt in *Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination 1600-1750* (1986) has shown that Italian gardening was particularly suited to, and recommended for, those of modest means, the lesser nobility and gentry. Hunt shows too that the Italian strand of garden design did not vanish, to re-emerge in the 1720s as the English landscape movement. Instead, it continued as a minor theme throughout the period, to be taken up again and developed by designers such as William Kent and Alexander Pope. Many such gardens were later absorbed into more grandiose Baroque layouts or swept away in the ruthless landscaping of the later Georgians. Knowle Hill on the other hand was simply allowed to decay.

Even in its decayed state, we can see that Walter Burdett's garden fell into the Italian pattern, by nature of its terraces and cascade, its views and the way it fits in with what Woolley calls the 'natural disposition' of its setting. All the more so if the ruined *exedra* did indeed form part of a criss-cross structure of steps and ramps of the kind which, derived originally from the Roman Temple of Fortune at Praeneste, has become a shorthand symbol for Italian gardening. Too much has been lost to be certain of that other essential ingredient, classical statuary. Nor can we be sure of the planting or the formal arrangements of paths and flowerbeds – though the owner in 1735 declares it then to be 'guiltless of parterre'.

Two Derbyshire houses were illustrated in *Britannia Illustrata*; Chatsworth itself, with a large and complex formal garden in the Franco-Dutch style, and Bretby Hall, just a few miles to the east of Knowle. The gardens here were created by

Philip Stanhope, the 2nd Earl of Chesterfield, incorporating a mixture of features which included Italianate style terraces descending from the house, and a number of ornamental pools. Walter's garden is different from these grandiose expressions of the power of the landed elite. It was planned and created on a more modest, gentry scale – it is extremely unusual to find such gardens surviving in the modern landscape. Despite later changes, many elements of Walter's garden survive in earthwork form.

At Knowle the rectangular pond was a formal, geometric feature of the garden, originally surrounded on all sides by a terraced walk raised about 1.5 metres above the level of the water. The brick foundations of a building at the southern end of the pond may have been connected with the artificial waterworks, including fountains and the cascade, within the garden, perhaps to build up a head of water before the waterworks were turned on for visitors. The walk around the pond continued along the boundary of the garden, where a stone wall survives in places, to a viewing point close to the cascade, and allowing an excellent view of the site of Walter's house.

The cascade was one of the key features of Walter's garden, although not as grand as the contemporary cascade created at Chatsworth in 1701, with its grand cascade house designed by Thomas Archer. A brick-lined pit at the top of the cascade is likely to have been provided access to a sluice controlling the flow of water. Close to the house the cascade channel was lined carefully with brick, but further away the brick channel gives way to a lining of large, flat stones which have the appearance of being part of the natural stream bed, but which are in fact part of the lining of the cascade itself. Surviving cascades of this date are incredibly rare, and the survival of the cascade at Knowle is all the more remarkable given than examples on this scale are more modestly constructed than those on the scale of Chatsworth, for example. Certainly, much of the cascade at Knowle has been eroded and survives in relatively poor condition, its very existence could easily have been missed without careful archaeological recording.

Alongside the house were a series of steep earthwork terraces descending the valley sides – a typical feature of the period. The steep terraces at Powis Castle, created in the 1680s, are comparable with Knowle although on a different scale. Despite the natural slope of the valley, such earthworks represent a considerable amount of effort and labour in the 1690s. The upper terrace terminates in a feature known as the 'mount', although it is not a true mount, with a brick alcove cut into it and a flight of steps leading to a flat area, known as the 'grass plat.' The alcove probably originally contained seating for visitors. On this terrace was an avenue of trees, now only visible as stumps, which ended in a group of small-leaved limes around the 'mount' and a stone seat set against the wall. On the lowest terrace are two yew trees which may have formed part of the original planting scheme.

The Italian Alcove *(exedra)*, set within the terraces, is a semi-circular structure with traces of alcoves within it which may have been the setting for classical statues. Immediately below the alcove is the entrance to the underground chamber, which has been interpreted as being a grotto, entered through a brick tunnel which emerges into a sandstone chamber incorporating various alcoves and seats, with further chambers and tunnels leading some 25 metres into the hillside. However, as discussed above this feature remains rather enigmatic in terms of its original purpose.

The pond at Seven Spouts was almost certainly in existence when Walter began to create his garden, and was repurposed to become a part of the designed landscape. There are traces of an early 18th-century stone revetment running along the dam bank, and a waterfall was created over the dam bank into a large, stone lined basin, with a fall of nearly 3 metres – an impressive garden feature.

The later history of the site, and in particular its ownership by the Forestry Commission, means that the original planting scheme of Walter's garden is difficult to reconstruct and for the visitor to imagine. Certainly, the planting would

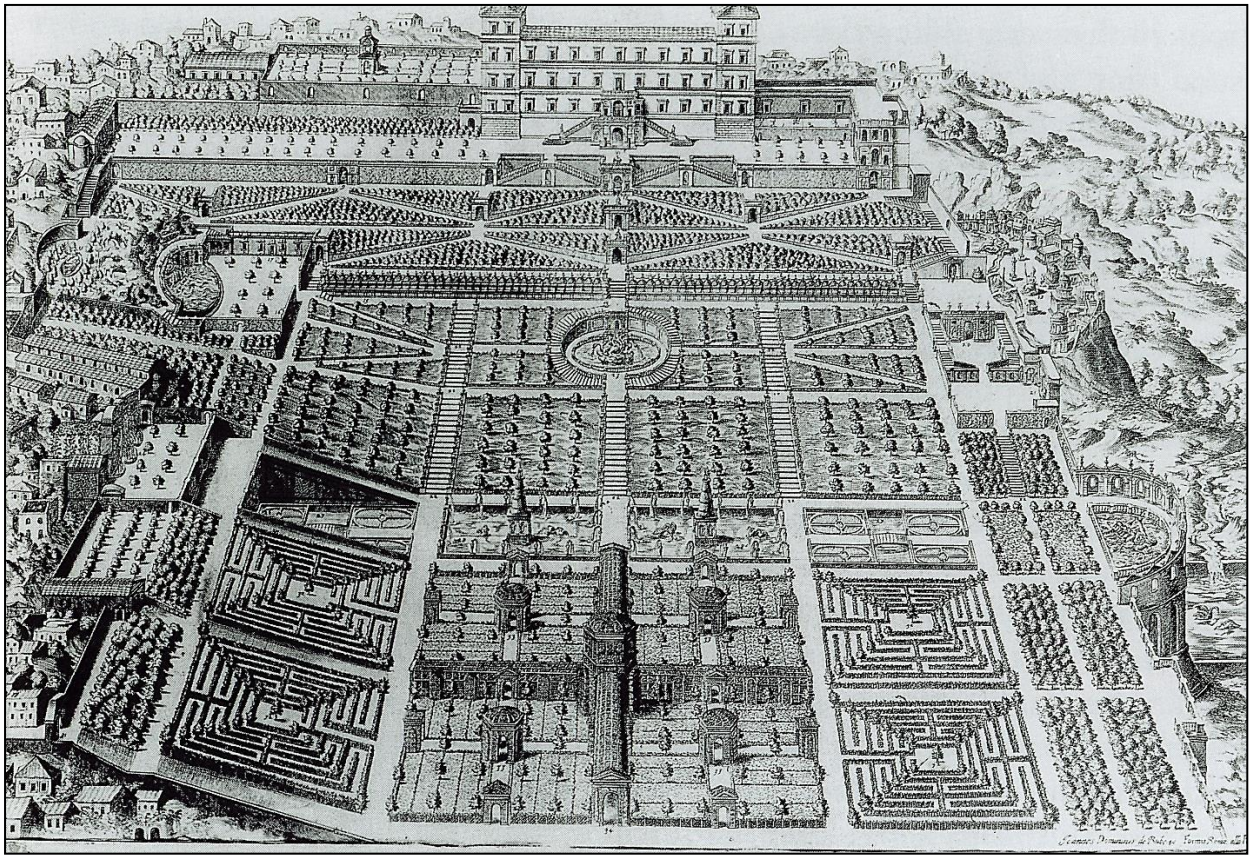
have been much more formal, and the landscape as a whole less wooded, than today. There is some evidence to suggest that the terraces were line with yew trees, but beech and lime are also mentioned in early accounts of the gardens.

Around the rectangular pond are alders, oaks and beeches which are probably 19th-century in date, but perhaps the descendants of the original planting scheme.

Although later sources, like the poems of Nicholas Hardinge, place Walter's garden within the increasingly naturalistic fashions of the 1730s, the garden that Walter created in the 1690s and 1700s was certainly a formal one, and its appearance would have been very different from the romantic and picturesque landscape which exists at Knowle today (largely as the result of later 18th-century developments). Knowle's importance lies in its Italianate form, which was highly unusual in England in this period, and which later became extremely influential.

In the early 17th century the English had fallen under the spell of Italian gardens, both those described by classical poets like Pliny and Virgil, but also those which were created in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, like those at Tivoli. Significantly, Italian gardens of this type could be realised on a modest scale and within a relatively small area. This, in particular, is one reason why the garden at Knowle Hill is so important as it represents the remains of a garden of this type at a more modest, gentry level, rather than the grand Italianate layouts which were typical in aristocratic circles.

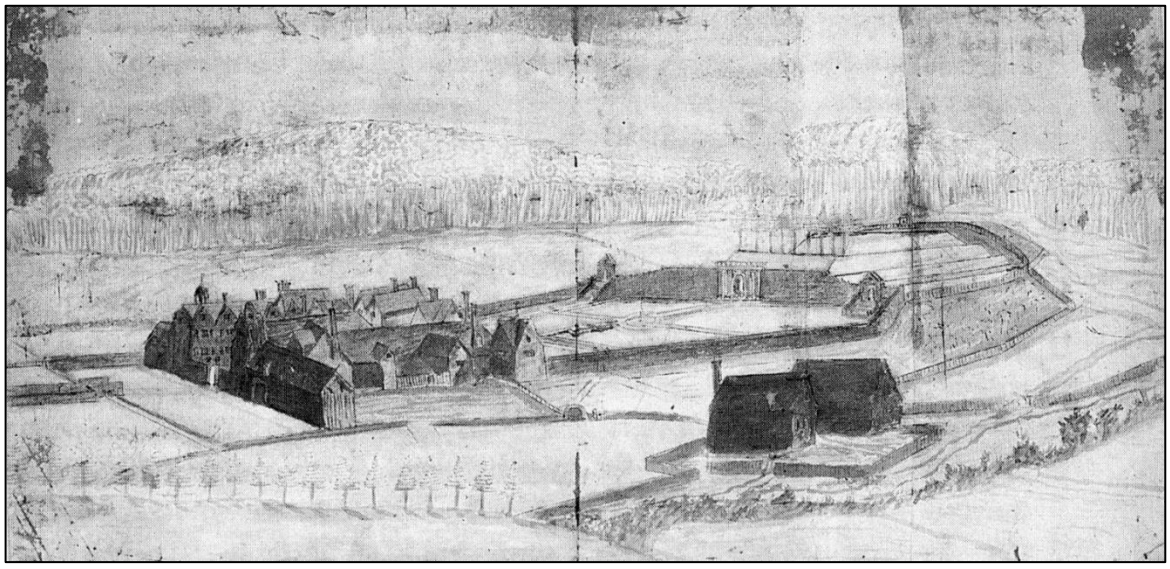
Even in its decayed state, Walter's garden fell into the Italian pattern, by nature of its terraces and cascade, its views and the way that it was carefully moulded to its setting. However, much has been lost, particularly the classical statuary which was an essential ingredient of such gardens, and which would have carried a range of ideological and mythological meanings for Walter and his guests.



The Villa d'Este near Rome in 1573. The famous terraced gardens were visited by many of the Englishmen and women on the Grand Tour.

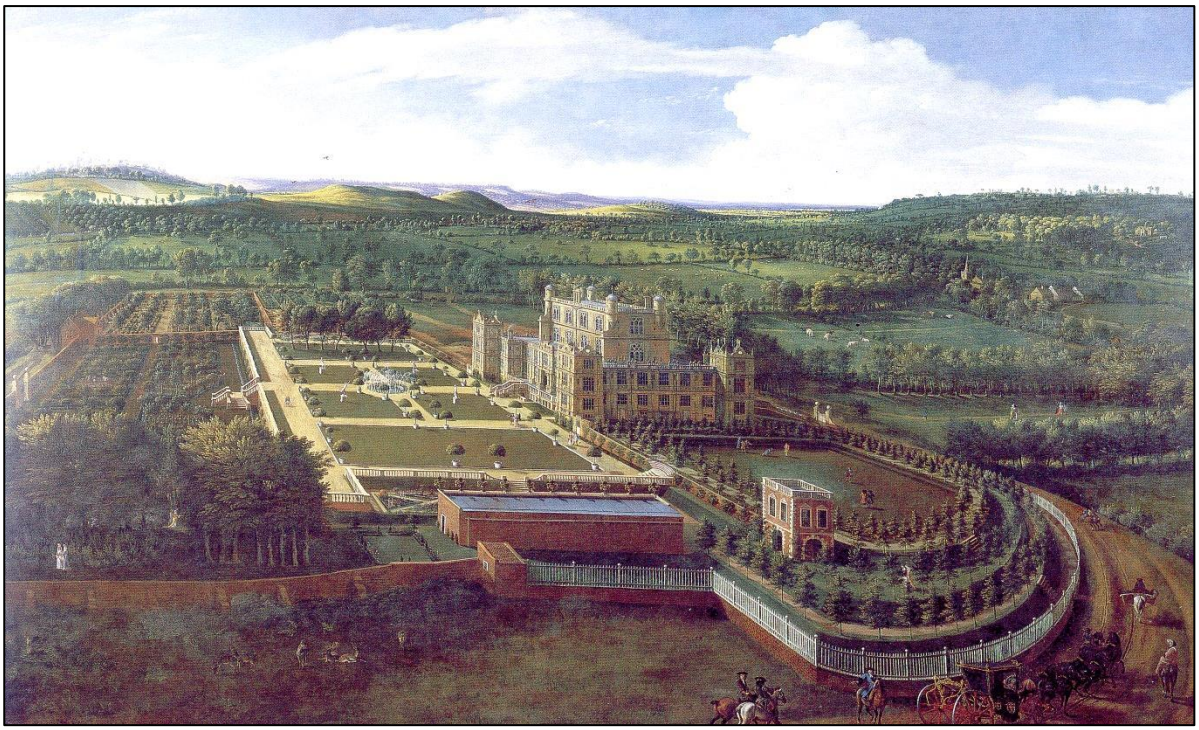
It is also difficult to be sure of the original planting scheme, although in 1735 the garden was described as being 'guiltless of parterre' – either these complex formal flowerbeds had been removed by 1735, or (and more interestingly) they had never been created in the first place. A key element in the Italianate garden was variety. This was provided both by movement between the different levels of a garden and through different areas of the garden which contrasted formal gardens with more 'natural' features. Statutes, fountains, arbours and grottos added further elements of surprise and delight for visitors. Equally important was the opportunity to view the surrounding countryside, whether cultivated or wild, with which the outer areas of the garden might be allowed to blend.

How did Walter come to make what his contemporary, Joseph Addison, called a 'Terrace-Garden'? It could be that he looked no further than England itself, where examples of Italianate terraced gardens were not difficult to find. Among the most notable were the terraced gardens at Wootton and Albury, both in Surrey, designed in the 1650s and 1660s by John Evelyn, the first for his brother, George Evelyn, and the second for Henry Howard, within an existing Italianate garden created by his grandfather, the Earl of Arundel and Surrey. Both Evelyn and the Howards had visited Italy themselves, but it was also possible to learn of such gardens indirectly, as did John Aubrey, who drew Italianate designs for his own garden at Easton-Piercy in Wiltshire in 1669 without ever visiting Italy. Moving in aristocratic circles and living in London, not only could Walter have known and seen English Italianate gardens, but he could also have seen prints of Roman gardens bought back by travellers to Italy, and read the books and accounts written by some of them. Addison, for example, mentions 'the Terrace Garden of Verona that travellers generally mention' and says that Tivoli, with its Villa d'Este, is 'described in every itinerary.' Such sources would have been easily available to Walter.

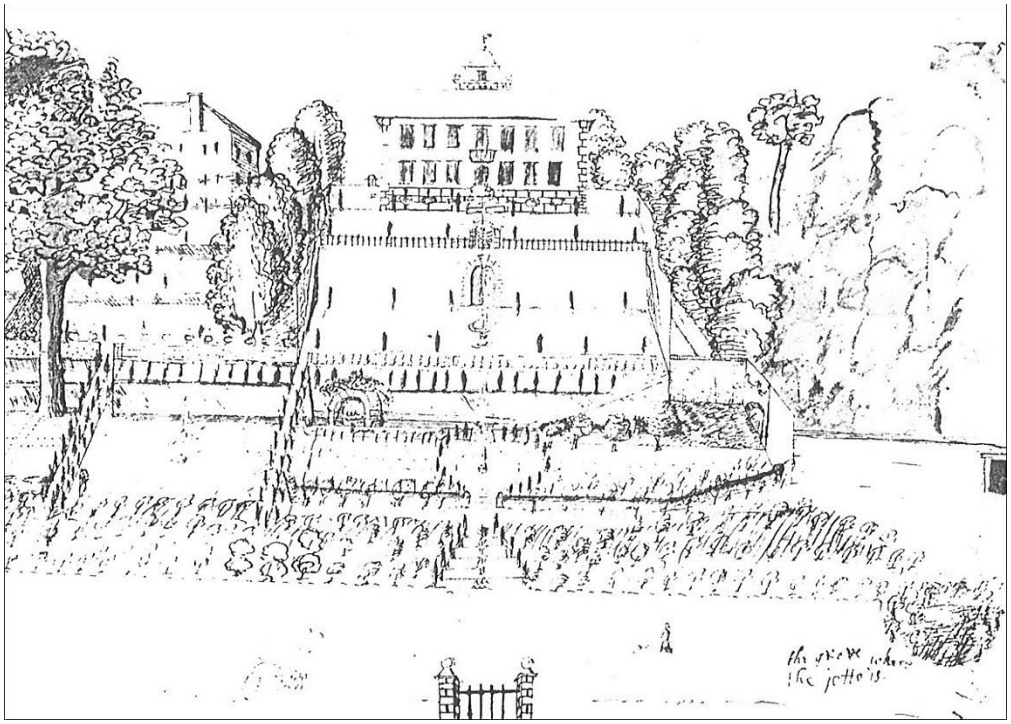


Wootton, Surrey in 1652. The Italianate terraced gardens were designed by John Evelyn for his brother.

There is, however, another closer link with Italy. Walter's eldest sister Jane had married Edward Hopegood, a merchant of Lothbury who traded in the Mediterranean, through the port of Messina in Sicily and probably through Naples and Leghorn. He was succeeded by his son, Andrew, who was described by the Gentleman's Magazine on his death at 78 in 1742 as 'an eminent Italian merchant.' Andrew and his brother Frank are mentioned in the Coke letters, and wrote themselves to Thomas Coke, who had often stayed with their mother in Lothbury during his youth. The Hopegoods were close to Walter: it was to his niece, Jane, that he left Knowle Hill in 1732, with the remainder of his estate passing to Andrew. He stood godfather to Andrew's daughter. Both in his brother-in-law and nephew, therefore, he had a source of first-hand knowledge of Italy. He might even have gone there himself with them, to see the wonders and the gardens of Rome.



Wollaton Hall, near Nottingham, painted by Jan Siebrechts in 1695. Although the house is Elizabethan, the gardens shown here were laid out in the late 17th century in the Italianate style.



John Aubrey's proposed but never realised, Italian garden for his house at Easton Piercy in Wiltshire, drawn in 1669. He sold the house soon afterwards.

Llanerch, Denbighshire, painted by an unknown artist in around 1660. The gardens were laid out by Mutton Davies in 1660, and are an excellent example of an Italianate style garden on a scale that was similar to Knowle Hill.

Caves and Grottos

Placing Walter's garden within the Italian tradition helps us to understand one of its most puzzling features – the underground chamber. Some have argued that this belongs to the later 18th century, in the style of High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire and Hawkstone in Shropshire. This would mean that it was created by Sir Robert Burdett in about 1770 when the garden was being reshaped in the 'picturesque' style. However, it is possible that Sir Robert's picturesque garden was as much the result of neglect as of planned alterations. It is beginning to look more and more likely that the chamber was created in the 1700s by Walter himself, although as noted above its relationship with the likely position of the house is complex.

Caves have always been associated with a contemplative life, suitable for hermits and anchorites. John Aubrey, for instance, in his life of the anatomist William Harvey (1578-1657) noted that 'he did delight to be in the dark, and told me he could best then contemplate. He had a house heretofore at Combe, in Surrey… where he had caves made in the Earth, in which in Summer time he delighted to meditate.' Aubrey also mentions that there were several caves or 'grots' at Albury in Surrey, in the garden created in the 1640s by the Earl of Arundel. Both William Harvey and Arundel had spent time in Italy, where grottos were one of the chief ingredients of the Renaissance garden, and one that was constantly remarked upon by English tourists. Genuine ancient examples were discovered in Italy in the 17th century, and word of them reached England in the same period; 'grottos, galleries and several underground retirements' on Capri and in the area around Rome were mentioned by Addison. Landmark's Sant' Antonio at Tivoli has its own Ancient Roman grotto.

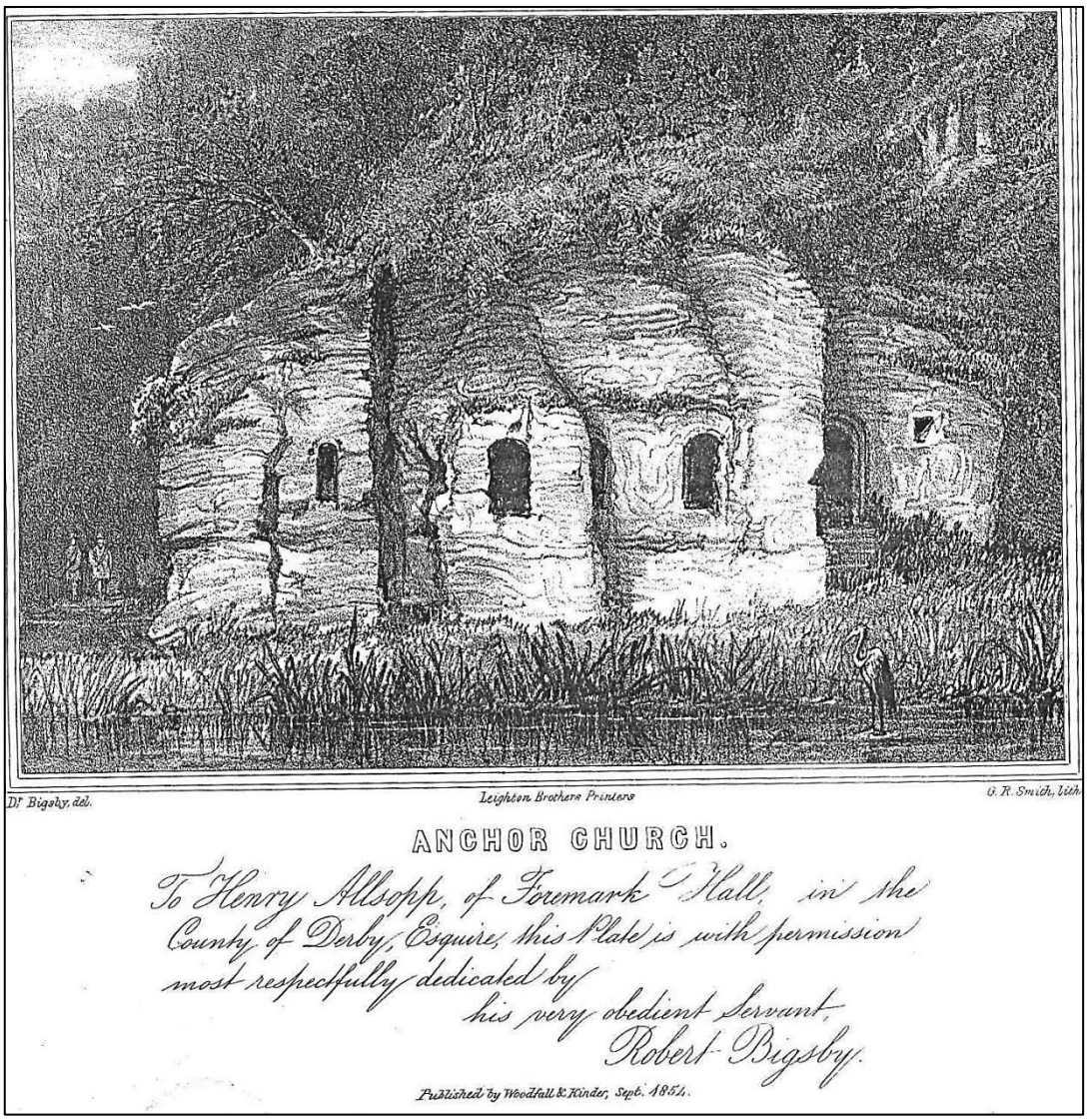
There was also a genuine rock hermitage close at hand: the Anchor church, only a mile or two away on the banks of the Trent. This was later enlarged (possibly by Sir Robert Burdett) but was described by William Woolley in 1712 as 'a large

cave dug out of a rock in the form of a chapel... as tradition informs us, an anchorite's cell and it really is a most solitary, pleasant place.' It was in fact occupied until 1658, during Walter's childhood, when the Repton parish register records 'buried ye foole at Anchore Church.' Such people, and stories, would have lent colour to local tales of hermits and anchorites and could have inspired Walter at Knowle Hill.

The idea of Knowle as a hermitage occurs in one of Walter's own letters to Thomas Coke in 1704 where he bemoans the 'need to retire till the sun gets a greater power to this hermitage.'

Later, in verses written in 1735 by Nicholas Hardinge, the new owner of Knowle Hill, there are references to a 'cave's retreat' and a 'cave's recess' as well as a 'Pierian cell' – the cell, or cave, of the Muses. Another writer, Dr Sneyd Davies, talks specifically of a grotto. It is possible that this all refer to the alcove on the main terrace south of the present summerhouse, but it is also possible that they refer to the rock-cut chamber.

The most likely use of the grotto or cavern in Walter's lifetime was simply to add to the excitement for those exploring the garden, and for contemplation. Grottos were also commonly used for allegorical scenes with their decoration, particularly with reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This might go as far as a moving display powered by hydraulics, or simply statues set amongst exotic minerals, stones and shells, often with a fountain. There is little within the chamber now to suggest any former schemes of decoration, or its former use.



Anchor Church, a rock-cut chamber which functioned as a chapel and hermitage.

Walter Burdett himself

At Knowle Hill Walter created a garden of great beauty and charm which was appreciated both in his own day and afterwards. What was he like himself? To his contemporaries, Walter seems to have been as attractive as his home was agreeable.

As to his physical appearance, we have no idea – if a portrait ever existed it has long since vanished. We do have a number of written sources, however. From these the picture we build up is of a likeable and sociable person, who enjoyed the company of his family and neighbours and who was enjoyed by them in turn. William Woolley speaks of Walter's 'kind hospitality' and his many visitors. A more personal voice is heard in the letters that Walter wrote to Thomas Coke. His name also frequently crops up in those written by Elizabeth, or Betsy, Coke to her brother. She spent much of her time at Melbourne, looking after Thomas' affairs, and wrote him long chatty letters full of news.

Walter's first appearance in one of her letters, in 1698 at a party at Mrs Curzon's house in Derby would seem characteristic: 'Cousin Walter was there you may be sure and danced with the ladies till late at night.' Whenever a party of pleasure is mentioned, Walter seems to have been in the thick of it, giving toasts or making the company laugh. Yet he also had deeper qualities: one sympathizes instantly with someone who has the wisdom to say, as Walter did in 1689 of a row between Lord Huntingdon and his son: 'As for my part, I believe neither of them, that I may retain a better opinion of both.'

The affection which Walter clearly had for Thomas Coke is clear in all his letters, however playful the greeting to his 'ever honoured Patron' from 'your observing gamekeeper, devout chaplain and humble servant.' A typical example is one which he wrote early in 1701 on hearing the news that Thomas' wife, Lady Mary, had given birth to a daughter:

> Tis well it is not 'Old Mr Coke', for so it must have been if my Lady had brought you a Son… My mother prays for you and yours; she says, Happy is the bearing whene'er 'tis begun, that begins with a daughter and ends with a son. Your own birthday was kept here with drinking your health yesterday.

A year later he was evidently doing his best to console the young wife during her husband's absence. Lady Mary wrote to her husband 'I think Wat Burdett is almost become your rival if compliments will make you jealous.' When she died in January 1704 it was to Walter that Thomas soon turned for comfort. A spring visit to Knowle had been a regular event, but this year he spent of the whole of April there. Lady Mary's father, Lord Chesterfield, wrote to him: 'If solitude has any charms, you cannot want for them at Knowle Hills.' In June, after Thomas' return home, Walter wrote:

> I have the usual Sunday dinner here today, and if you please to come privately to your old quarters of retirement, you know that you and your company must be welcome. But if you have a mind to have the bells ring for you, and be public, wherever you please, I will be ready with my calash (coach) and retinue to attend your entrance.

For the next few years, Thomas' two small daughters lived at Melbourne with their aunt Elizabeth. Walter kept an eye on the family and played the kind uncle when needed, as in January 1710 when Elizabeth wrote to her brother:

> Your daughter by her sheep and some presents for playthings has entrusted me with her purse till it is come to twenty pounds, which I suppose will compass two tickets in this state lottery… Poor Miss Betty comes in with her one guinea, being all she is worth, which given her by my cousin Walter Burdett to make up the sum.

The Cokes were not the only people to be entertained at Knowle Hill. Nephews and nieces like the Jodrells and the Hopegoods stayed regularly, as did other cousins. In 1709 Elizabeth Coke reported that 'Knolehills has been near full (but not quite) for some time.' The neighbouring gentry and nobility also made their way there – the Earl and Countess of Chesterfield, the Harpurs of Calke Abbey, the Hardings of King's Newton and various members of the Curzon family. A typical gathering was described by Elizabeth in August 1710:

> Walter Burdett sent his chaise for us yesterday to see his niece Betty Jodrell. In our way we met Lady Catherine [Clarke – another Chesterfield daughter] and Mrs Phillips coming to Melbourne, who went with us to Knowlhills, and in the afternoon Sir John Harpur and my lady came in. My governor according to custom drank the ladies health too fast.

As he grew older, however, there are signs that a little of Walter's good humour deserted him, perhaps due to ill health. In 1710 Elizabeth hints at offence being taken at Thomas Coke's apparent neglect of him, caused by his duties at court as Vice-Chamberlain to Queen Anne. The Melbourne letters cease soon afterwards, so we do not know if their friendship was mended.

More seriously, Walter's behaviour to his own family at a time of some sadness seems to have been, at the least, insensitive. In January 1715 Walter's elder brother, Sir Robert Burdett, died only twelve days after the death of his own eldest son, also Robert. According to the normal rules of succession, Walter, as the next surviving brother, became the baronet. However, the widow of Walter's nephew, Robert, was pregnant at the time of his death and if the child was a boy, he would be the rightful heir.

The stone slab found in Repton churchyard with Walter named as a Baronet. In fact he lived until 1732.

The expectation of this happening may not have been high. Robert and his wife had already had eight daughters, and the child may not have lived. Rather than living the situation in limbo until after the birth, Walter assumed the title straight away, confirmed by the recent discovery of a stone stab in Repton churchyard with an inscription reading '1715 Sir Walter Burdett, Baronet.' It seems to have come from a position inside a building as it is unweathered. Did Walter have it carved in anticipation, or even in self-mockery, recording the time when he might have become a baronet?

The child was a boy, born in May, and assumed the title of Sir Robert Burdett, 4th Baronet, straight away. There is a tradition that there was ill feeling between the two families, perhaps not unreasonably, and later writers mentioned that Walter fell out with his relatives and therefore left Knowle Hill to Nicholas Hardinge rather than to the Burdetts.

However, Walter's will, drawn up in September 1732, shortly before his death, bears out all the earlier impressions of his good nature and kindness. It is a long document of which the essentials are that he left to his neice, Jane Hopegood (in addition to his chariot and six best mares, with harness and postillon's cost and cap and £100) 'all my estate at Knowle Hills and Gorsey Leys, my two cottages at Ticknall and three half acres in Ticknall meadow, and the Tyth of Knowl Hills (given me by Sir John Harpur Bart) and all my other real estate on the South side of the Trent.' On her death this was all to go to her brother Andrew Hopegood (the Italian merchant, also appointed executor) or his son, also Andrew, together with all the remainder of his estate, real and personal, including property on the north side of the Trent and in Ingleby, subject to debts and other bequests.

These bequests were many. His other nieces and nephews received £50. In the next generation, the young baronet and his sisters were to have £30 each (except Mary, 'who owns me for her godfather', who was also to have his crimson velvet side saddle and £10 to buy a horse). His goddaughter Jane

Hopegood was to have 'all my Japan and China utensils.' Her brother, Andrew Hopegood junior, was to have Walter's silver tankard and 'each of her other brothers a silver pott with ears commonly called the College potts.' Three cousins received sums of varying size, and one, Mrs Mary Ffisher, was to have 'my watch which usually hung over my chimney in my bedchamber.' His senior man servant and maid servant each received £10, another man and a maid £5.

His bequests of chattels provide a tantalising glimpse inside the house:

> I also give to the Hon the Lady Harpur my best mirror, my collection of glasses behind the north willow chamber door and my ivory snuff box and to Sir John Harpur (for the sake of the Blade) my basket-hilted sword and best case of Cozen's pistols and my Tent. I also give the pictures of Mrs Sarah Curzon and that usually called St Mary Magdelene to the said Mrs Curzon's eldest brother living. I give to our representative in Parliament, Mr Godfrey Clarke, my watch with minutes and seconds.

For us, Walter's most important bequest was his garden, which continued to charm generations of visitors. By the time of his death the more formal tradition of gardening was beginning to soften into the naturalistic style of the landscape movement, under the influence of designers like William Kent and patrons such as Lord Burlington. Italian models now reigned supreme, in both architecture and garden design.

There seems to have been a general agreement in his lifetime that Knowle Hill was an ideal place of retirement and retreat. A new generation was to respond to these qualities even more strongly, corresponding as they did with all that was now most admired. In a classically educated age, the words to express this admiration were inevitably inspired by the Latin poets. The next owner of Knowle Hill, Nicholas Hardinge, wrote in one of his own poems that 'beneath cool steeps, in lofty wood array'd, Place and protect me with extended shade.' He was under no illusion that what Walter Burdett had created, and he had now acquired, was a small Elysium.

Plan and view of the gardens at Chiswick, engraved by J. Rocque in 1736, showing the taste in gardening made fashionable by Lord Burlington, with the help of William Kent, at his villa near London.

An Appreciative Owner: Nicholas Hardinge 1735-58

Jane Hopegood did not keep Knowle Hill for long. A spinster, already in her 60s and living in London, it was perhaps never intended that she would make it her home. There is no record of the sale, but it must have taken place between the granting of probate in March 1733 and 1735 when we know that it was in the hands of Nicholas Hardinge. She could hardly have found a better person to take it on, nor a more appreciative one.

Hardinge was the eldest son of the Rev. Gideon Hardinge, vicar of Kingston on Thames. His first cousin was John Hardinge, of Kings Newton, near Melbourne, who married Thomas Coke's sister Alice. In 1734 Nicholas had inherited estates in Chellaston and Osmaston in Derbyshire from another relation. He was already launched on a successful career, having been appointed Clerk to the House of Commons in 1731, a post which he held until 1752 when he became Joint Secretary to the Treasury. He was also law-reader, and later attorney-general, to William, Duke of Cumberland. He owned other property in Kingston, and in Kent through his wife's family.

Hardinge purchased Knowle Hill just before his marriage to Jane Pratt in 1738, as an occasional rural retreat, but also adding to his portfolio of property in Derbyshire. His visits to Knowle grew less frequent as he grew older and spent more time in London. He was described as being of 'Knoll Hills' in the dedication to a 1748 poem by Dr. Sneyd Davies. Hardinge wrote his own poems in praise of Knowle in 1735, both of which were called 'Rhapsodies' and contain numerous allusions to the work of both Virgil and Horace. His poetry explored the qualities of a pastoral landscape designed to refresh the spirit of someone wearied by the affairs of state. Like Horace, Hardinge would retire to the countryside and 'studious of ease, by no ambition fir'd, Far from the Senate, faction's hateful seat, Inglorious loiter in this nook's retreat.'

Although the poems are romantic and conventional in terms of their depiction of a classical landscape as painted by Claude Lorrain, they do give us a recognisable written description of Knowle Hill:

> Where lurks my cave's recess, my lov'd abode,
> Near Trenta's playful stream, her bank, the road.
> Beyond that rising dale with harvest crown'd,
> Impending woods the secret nook surround.
> Lead me, ye Muses, to the lov'd retreat,
> Lead to Nollilula's inviting seat,
> Where, by a fountain's gentle source supplied,
> Down the soft bank sill ebbs the silver tide,
> Where interwoven trees an arch have made,
> And the sun trembles through the dusky shade,
> Cheers the gay mead, adorns the tufted hills,
> And sheds new lustre on the falling rills.
> Why should I ask the happy scene to change .....

Here, the nymph Nollilula lives on rising ground above the River Trent, surrounded by woods with a silvery stream, sloping banks and arched trees giving shade.

> This was my wish - Fate's pleasing gift - a farm
> Not unadorn'd in rural beauty's charm;
> A garden, clean, though guiltless of parterre,
> A sylvan shade o'erspread - a fountain near,
> Whence fresh-distill'd perpetual water glides,
> Whose glist'ring path its verdant slope divides;
> Trees o'er the gentle precipice incline
> Their social tops, no creatures of design,
> Roof'd by no art a pendent canopy -
> Swift through that slope arcade my raptur'd eye
> Ascends to yonder hills majestic round,
> Where tufted saplings grace the landscape's bound...

Hardinge had purchased a rural retreat, a productive farm in beautiful surroundings, with a garden that was not cluttered with old fashioned parterres, with a cascade, sloping banks, shady trees and far views of the distant hills. Hardinge went on to contrast his own joy in this rural serenity with others who ‘chase the bounding stag, or vex the feather’d race’, and to ask his old friend to visit his ‘Pierian cell.’ The guest is asked to survey ‘What Pope or Kent may

satisfied admire, or Pelham praise, and Burlington desire' – a garden which would be admired by the leaders of fashion on a national stage.

> Tempt me no more that Alpine scene to range,
> Or with delight those wonders to exchange.
> Though mountain summits oft aspire between,
> Beneath a parching sun, with mantles green,
> Though Darwent there in wild meander flies,
> Though Darley's Vale allures romantic eyes,
> Though Matlock's verdant cliffs heav'n-born appear
> To musing Fancy, what I seek is here.

He ends by listing other famous landscapes and scenery from Italy and Derbyshire before concluding that at Knowle, 'what I seek is here.'

It is unclear whether Hardinge made any changes to Walter's garden. He may have made minor alterations, although the tone of the poems suggest that he was delighted to find a ready-made rural retreat in a style which was fashionable in the 1730s. In 1748, Dr Snyed Davies addressed a poem to Hardinge in which he also extolled the virtues of Knowle, and warns the English not to always travel abroad in search of beauty and antiquity:

> Content thyself in far though humble scenes,
> Thy secret Nola's vale and verdant brow,
> Her grotto's waving slopes, and pendant groves,
> And lapse of murm'ring rills, reflecting gleams
> of lustre from the sun's meridian blaze;
> Nor less illumin'd when the moon full orb'd
> Hangs o'er the mirrour down the shelving glade,
> And glitters on the gently falling stream.
>
> Enjoy thy cave's recess, Pierian shade,,
> And blissful mansion - here thy Lesbian Muse
> Attend, here tune the magic shell amidst
> The vocal bow'rs, and echoing Trent's applause.
> Here feast when wrangling Senates are at rest,
> Repos'd on Latian flow'rs and Attic thyme.

Demolition and a new Summerhouse

Nicholas Hardinge died in 1758. The following year Sir Robert Burdett, 4th Baronet, Walter's great-nephew, began to rebuild Foremark Hall. To house his family whilst work was in progress, Sir Robert leased Knowle Hill from Hardinge's widow, at a rent of £55 per year. This sum was carefully recorded in his cash book, now in the Wiltshire Record Office with other family papers. He commissioned the architects, the Hiorns of Warwick, to carry out some minor repairs and redecoration at Knowle (for which they were paid £23: 8 shillings).

On 9th February 1759 Sir Robert wrote that he 'removed my family from Foremark to Knowlehills.' The new Foremark Hall was completed in 1763, and the family returned home in July of that year.

The rebuilt Foremark Hall in 1805.

In 1766 Sir Robert purchased Knowle from Mrs Hardinge, making an initial payment of £1,250 (the remainder of the sale price is not recorded). The family enjoyed visiting Knowle for picnics and to explore the pleasure grounds, but the house itself was no longer needed, and in 1767 Sir Robert had the house demolished, to the regret of many. One mourner might have been Joseph Wright of Derby. It has been suggested that Knowle Hill is the setting for his portrait in 1765, of Peter Burdett, a map-maker who probably wished to convey an (unproven) kinship with the right sort of Burdett.

Mr and Mrs P.P Burdett, painted in 1765 by Joseph Wright of Derby, possibly at Knowle Hill.

In 1769 the estate accounts record several cartloads of brick going to Knowle Hill, and other carts carrying lime for mortar. Payments were also made to a mason and a joiner. The result was this cottage, added as an upper storey to an existing, possibly open-fronted shelter, together with service buildings on the north side of the yard. Some of the timbers used were probably old, taken from the earlier house.

The new building occupying the whole east side of the courtyard was intended purely for pleasure: a Gothic summerhouse for the family to use on their visits. This was described by Birtton and Brayley in 1802:

> To a remnant of the upper part of the house that was left standing, a neat little room has been attached, with ornamental doors and windows opening upon a small glass plat, or terrace. The prospect from the room is confined by a grove of beech and lime trees, through which a narrow walk leads to a pond surrounded by alders, but admitting through their intervals, a view of a wood of oaks, forming a pleasant screen. From the terrace the dell opens to the north, and north-east, and suffers the eye to survey the extensive meadows which skirt the Trent, in which Swarkestone bridge appears a very ornamental object. By the margin of a limpid pool, in one part of this charming retirement, is an ancient beech, of uncommon magnitude.

A painting of 1795 by Robert Marris, and a photograph of c1880, show the building to have had crenellated parapets and a romantically irregular outline when seen from below, to make it look like a ruined castle.

The extent to which the summerhouse overlaps with an earlier building is unclear. Certainly, older bricks have been reused in the structure, and in the room below the garden room the hearth could date from an earlier building of around 1700, although this may just have been the elementary kitchen for the summerhouse meant for little more than heating food and boiling water.

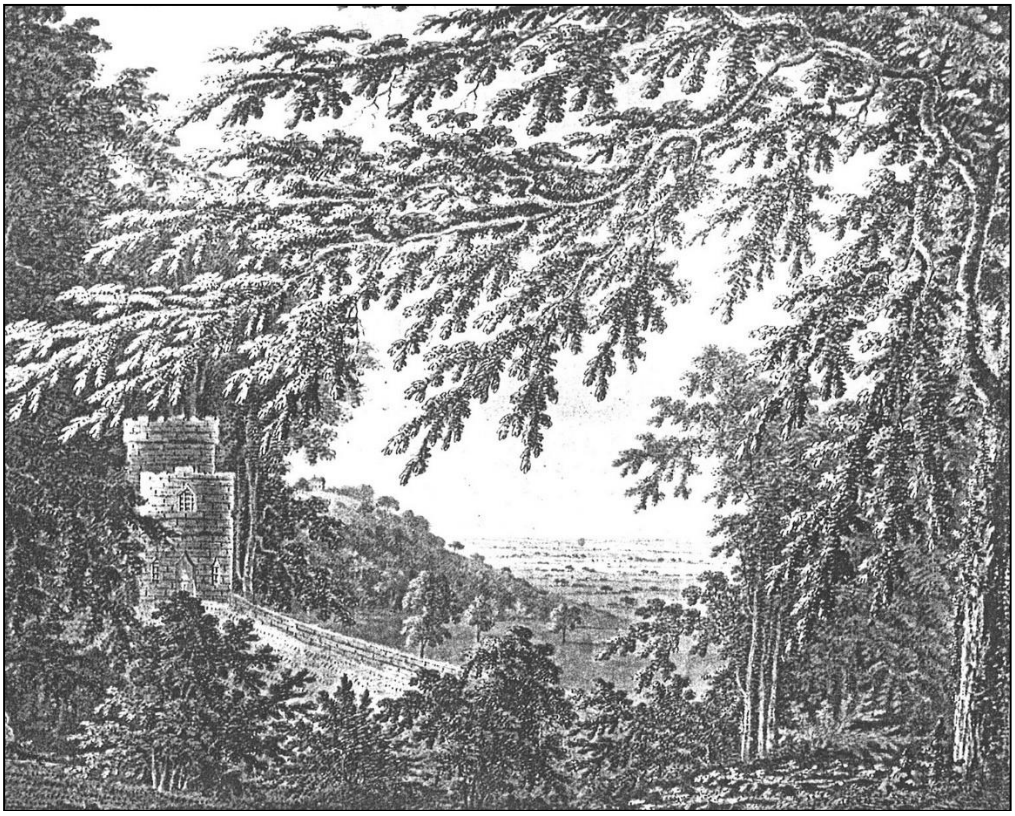
Sir Robert's addition of the Gothic summerhouse to Knowle Hill gave the garden a new character in the style of the Picturesque, in tune with the Romantic taste of the period.

It is difficult to say whether Sir Robert also made changes to the gardens at the same time to bring them into line with this new mood, or whether he simply allowed nature to take its course as Walter's more formal garden began to become over-mature. No evidence has yet been found that he made any changes to the terraces or watercourses.

The estate accounts contain many payments relating to Knowle Hill, but all are for general estate management rather than specific work on the gardens – regular payments were recorded for the head gardener at Foremark, Mr Brand, but nothing directly relates to Knowle.

Sir Robert clearly, however, made regular use of his new property at Knowle. Like Walter, he kept horses, and the accounts regularly record payments for oats and oatmeal at Knowle. There may also have been kennels, since horseflesh was also purchased, and Sir Robert was a keen sportsman. Fish were bred in the two ponds, the 'garden stew' and the 'great pool', probably the pool in the main valley and Seven Spouts respectively. These were regularly drained to collect the carp and tench.

In 1768 a Mr Knighton was paid for cutting an opening or clearing in Gorsey Leys, and in 1770 the timber was sold for £111.0.6d. In the 1780s there were payments for a new orchard and for work in the woods which were being productively managed, as was typical of the later 18th century.



Knowle Hill painted by Robert Marris in 1795.

A photograph of the Gothic summerhouse taken from the valley in the 1880s, by W. D. Fare who lived at nearby Melbourne Hall.

Picturesque Decay

Robert Marris painted his watercolour in 1795 from the mount at the end of the upper terrace, showing the 'grass-plat' and the clear view to the north and north-east, with Swarkestone bridge in the distance. The valley bottom was open, with only scattered trees. By the 1880s, photographs show that the valley had become more overgrown, and by the 1950s tall elm trees stood alongside the buildings. From 1770 onwards the landscape at Knowle continued to evolve, but in a process of gradual decline as Walter's formal gardens gradually became overgrown and wooded.

This decline was mirrored by the gradual withdrawal of the Burdett family from their Derbyshire estates. Sir Robert died in 1797, having spent most of his life at Foremark apart from visits to London and his other estates. He visited Knowle frequently, as he did Anchor Church where Dr Robert Bigsby records that Sir Robert often used to dine in the summer. Sir Robert's son, Francis, died before him, so he was succeeded by his grandson, also Francis, then aged 27.

Sir Francis Burdett was a radical politician (once imprisoned in the tower for inciting riots), who married Miss Coutts, a daughter of the banking family. He inherited estates in Wiltshire and Berkshire from his mother, and began to spend more time in Wiltshire and in London, although still visited Foremark and Knowle. By 1817, Foremark had been leased to a tenant. Towards the end of their lives – he and his wife died within 8 days of each other in 1844 – the Burdetts seem to have visited Knowle more regularly. On one occasion they were joined by Miss Louisa Costello, a writer of romantic stories, who published a story called *Johanne of the Long Hair* around Knowle and Anchor Church, based on old local legends about the hermit of Anchor Church. Louisa wrote a description of Knowle Hill, based on the stories told by the tenants of the cottage (gamekeepers and woodsmen):

> The spot is called Knowle Hills; and all that remains of the old building is now formed into a pleasure-house, before which is a beautiful lawn, where the peasants in the neighbourhood are allowed occasionally to keep revel, and dance to the sound of sweet music, making the woods re-echo."I have often" said an old man who shows the place, "lingered here when all were gone, and voice after voice had died away in distance, and enjoyed the perfect solitude of this spot, where usually not a sound is heard but the wind amongst the old trees, and the rustle of the ivy waving to and fro along the ancient wall, where you see that strange face carved, that seems as if it was looking over the battlements, watching what is going on. Some say, on moonlight nights the whole figure has been seen, and it looks like a knight in armour: it walks, with a stately step, all round this green, where once stood a tower, in which a great crime is said to have been committed, and it pauses at the little low door-way you see there, utters a deep sigh, and vanishes. I myself never saw anything of the kind, but there were two very old women, who lived here once together, and took care of the ruins, and they used to hear and see strange things - chains rattling, and screams and groans that were awful. One of the old women died, and used to come back to the other and tell wonderful secrets: so she said: but she went too, and since her time, I don't know how it is, but nothing out of the common ever happens."

The 'strange face' was one of two primitive carving which used to sit on the south wall of the courtyard, and which were later moved to Ridgway Farm in Repton, but have since disappeared.

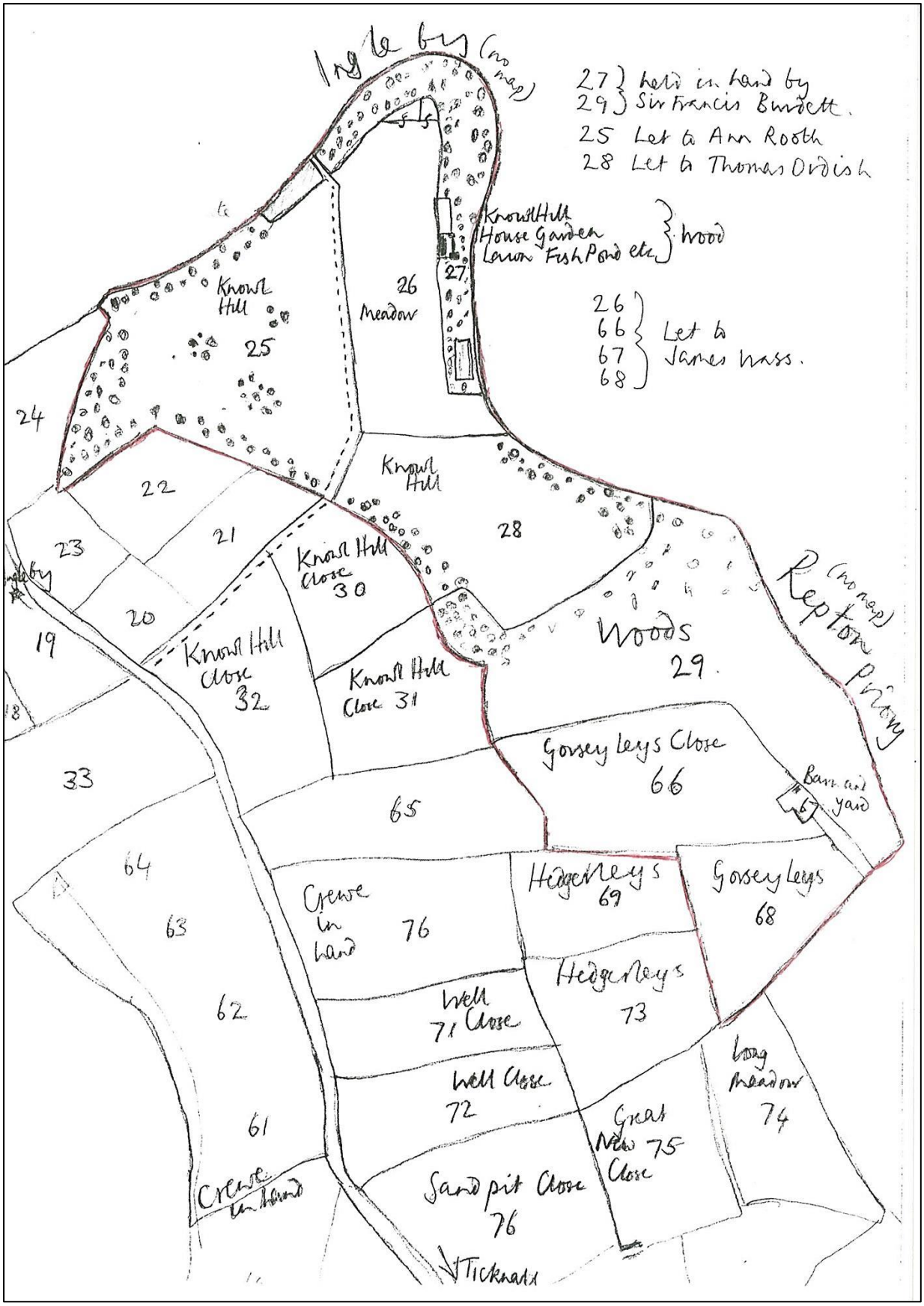
In the later 19th century the Burdett's continued to lease Foremark, but Knowle was visited regularly by tourists. In 1854 Dr Robert Bigsby wrote that 'Knowle Hills is a favourite place of resort through the summer, through the charms which its recluse beauties afford to the lovers of the picturesque.' The most vivid description of Knowle in the 19th century was given by Dr Spencer Hall in 1869 in *Days in Derbyshire*:

> We soon came to a spouting spring, giving the name of Seven Spouts to a farm-stead close by; and a little further on, we saw an enormous beech, lying prostrate by a lone pool, evidently thrown down by a recent storm; and there was a strange old world gloom about the whole scene, deepening at every step we took. A camp of gipsies; sheep at rest under a large old thorn; rocks cropping out of the wayside slopes, and plumed with dark firs and other trees, and many kindred features of rural solitude, had caught our minds by the way, before we came to that lone pool and prostrate tree. But this seemed on the threshold of a scene more solitary and silent still; when,

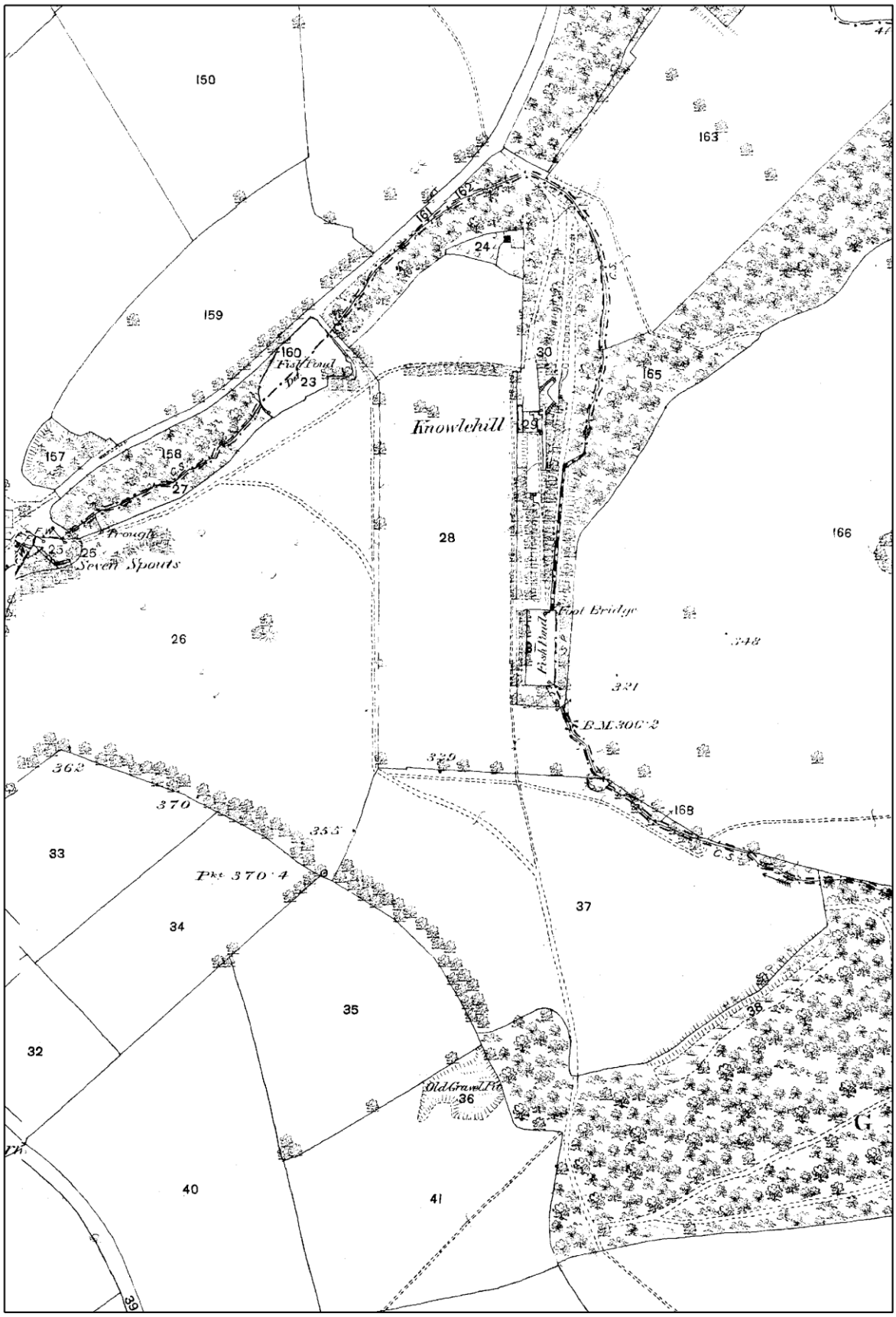
> suddenly, from the thick screen of trees before us, came the sounds, not only of numerous human voices - voices of mirth and glee - but of musical instruments, awakening the echoes with tones anything but ancient, though very harmonious, and corresponding to moods of mind the reverse of pensive and gloomy. We were now at a gate leading to the site of what was once the mansion of Knoll Hills; and among its vestiges were gathered on the day of our visit a Baptist sabbath-school party, from Willington, and a pleasure-party from Derby - the former accompanied by their chapel choir, and the latter by a spirited and well-organised quadrille band! Waggons, flys, carts and gigs, decorated with flags, were there, about which climbed and played merrily a number of children; the Derby party were having a dance upon a lawn; the Sunday-school teachers were taking tea in a dwelling made of part of the outbuildings of the old mansion; refreshments were supplied for those who had not made other arrangements by an innkeeper from Repton.

The photograph taken of Knowle Hill in about 1880 (see page 46), by a tenant living at Melbourne Hall, records the summerhouse as seen by Dr Hall. A description of it was also written in the 1890s by Mrs Ollerenshaw in a letter to the *Derbyshire Advertiser* in 1953. She had lived in the cottage with her grandparents, probably the Samuel Topliss, a woodman, who is recorded as living there in the 1891 census. She remembered the garden room as 'a long, narrow dining room with table and chairs, one gent's and one ladies alternately.' A very narrow stair led to the upper floor which then existed, which contained china closets 'in which were some very small wash hand basins.' There were summer garden parties and a harpist played music for dancing. On one occasion she was given a sovereign by Baroness Burdett-Coutts, the daughter of Sir Francis. Her grandfather would show visitors around the tunnels with a lantern.

At a Landmark open day in 1994 one visitor told the story of his grandfather, as a young man, walking back past Knowle Hill on his way to meet a young lady at Ingleby. On his way back, in the dusk of a late summer evening, he would pause by the wall, to watch young ladies dancing on the lawn. Such gatherings were soon to become a thing of the past.



Tithe Map of 1843 (tracing). Land outlined is Foremark estate. Everything else is Calke Abbey estate.

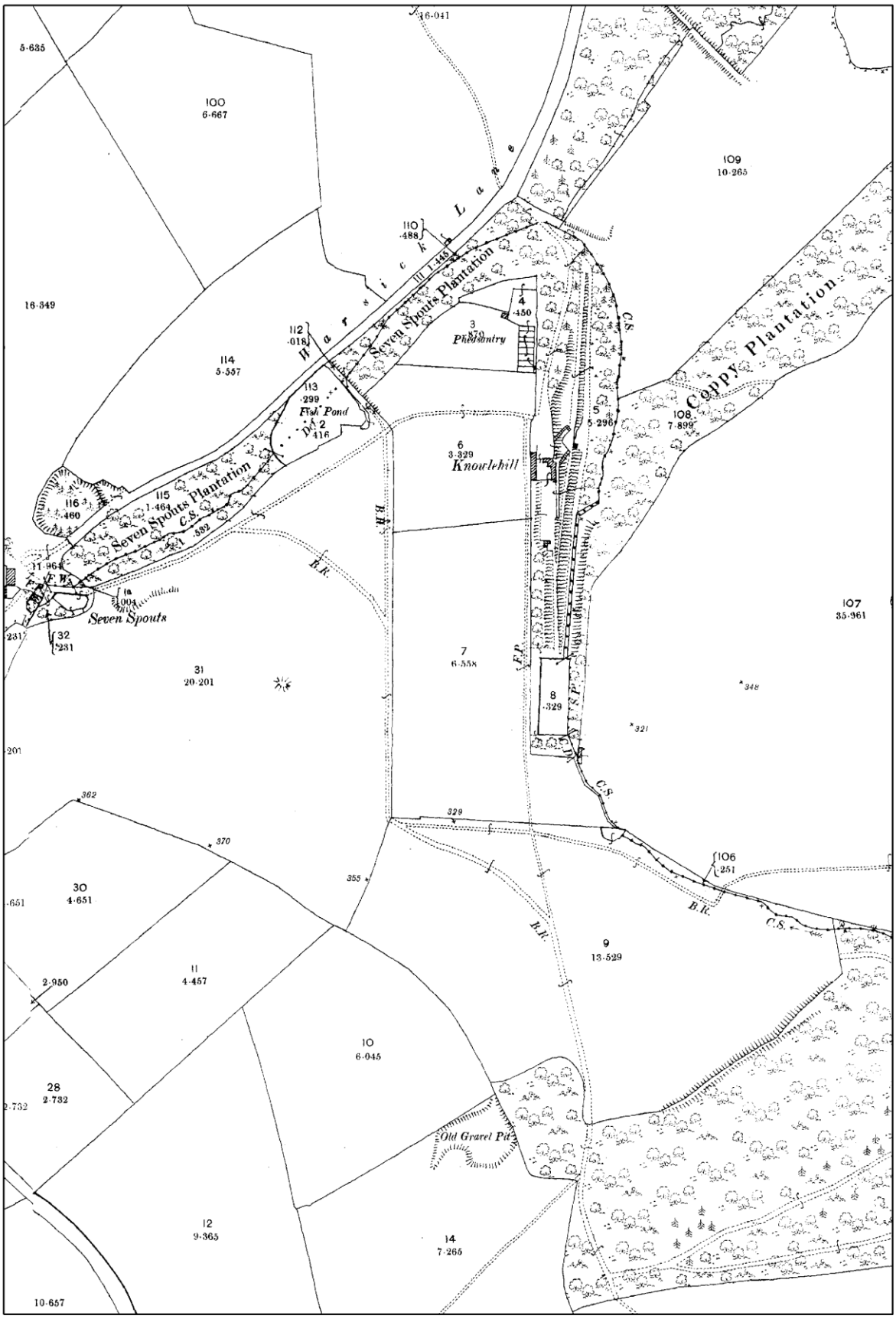


Knowle Hill on the Ordnance Survey of 1882, First Edition, 25" to 1 mile.

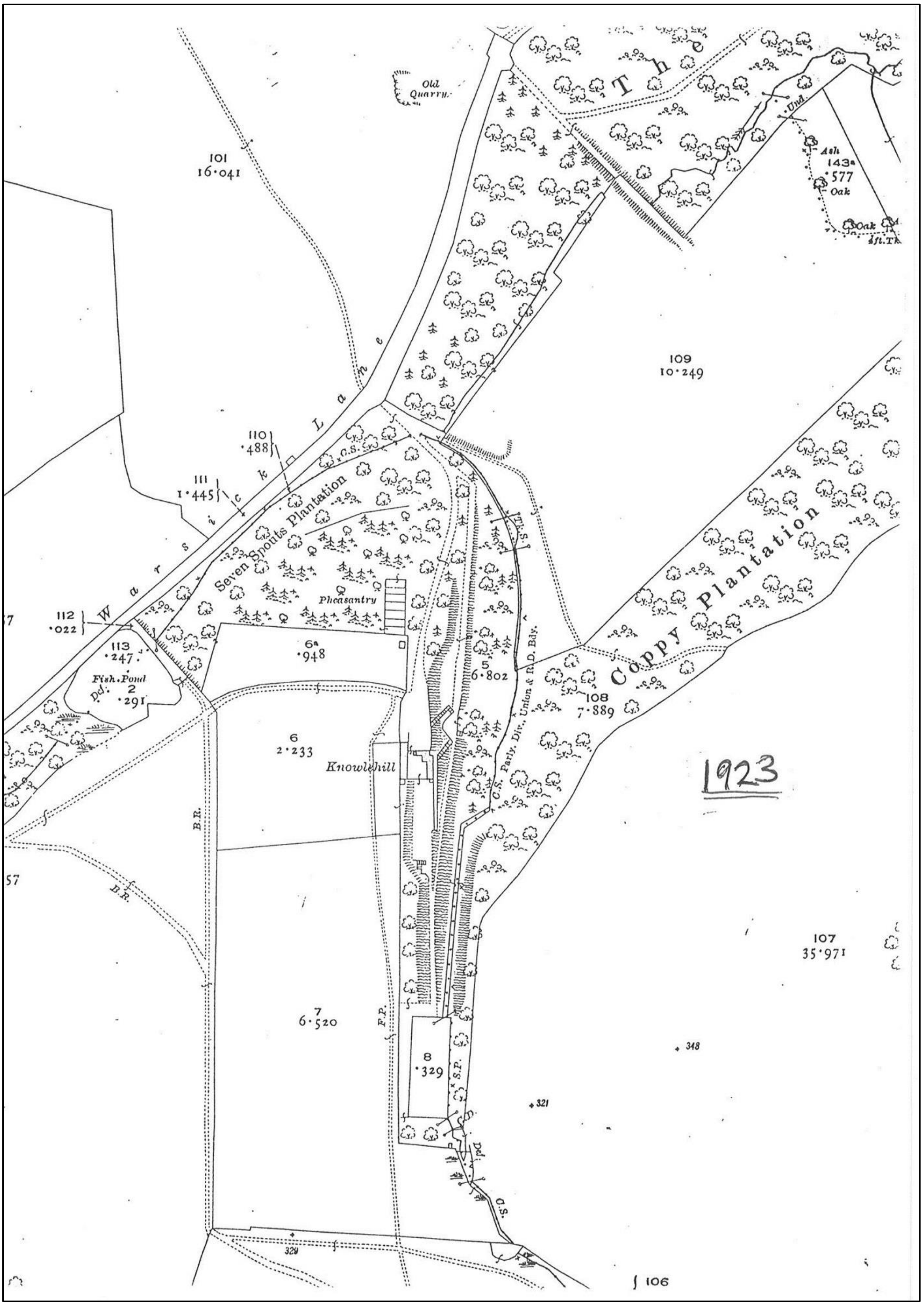
The Last Occupants and Final Decline

The 1882 Ordnance Survey map shows the woods as being roughly the same at those shown on the Tithe Map of 1843. By 1901 a large area had been fenced off for use as a Pheasantry, with breeding pens – a typical feature for such estates in this period. By the 1920s most of the paths within the garden were no longer being shown on the Ordnance Survey maps, the Seven Spouts pool appears to have silted up and the Seven Spouts plantation had been extended over the area of the Pheasantry, with a mixture of conifers and deciduous trees. The landscape was now clearly being managed for shooting and forestry, which again is typical for an outlying portion of a landed estate like Foremark in the early 20th century. The summerhouse was used for shooting lunches, and had lost its Romantic profile with a new and lower pitched roof in the early 1900s. The cottage had been extended to the north before 1882 and was added to again on the south between 1901 and 1923.

Successive gamekeepers lived in the cottage around the First World War, first a man called Craven, then Mr Turner. Sir Francis Burdett, the 8th Baronet, lived mainly at Ramsbury but took a close interest in the management of the woods, and no tree was felled without his permission. During the 1930s Sir Francis tried to find a tenant for Foremark Hall, without success, and in 1938 most of the contents were sold. The agent was also trying to lease the shooting rights to the estate in the same year. Knowle Hill was part of the Robin Wood shoot, and a letter survives in which Mr Turner was asked to made ready for 'some gentlemen' who were coming to view it: 'Please have a good fire in the luncheon room and you had better tell Mrs Turner that they may want to look through your house.' The Turners moved out in 1939, but the agent wrote to refuse them the estate dray for their furniture as the horse was ill, and he also took Mr Turner to task for spreading rumours that the house was haunted. A new keeper, Mr Cross, moved in. His daughter, now Mrs Gamble, returned to Knowle in 1991 and noted down her memories. The lawn to the south of the buildings was then planted with



Knowle on the 1901 edition of the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map.


Old Quarry
101
16·041
Warsick Lane
110
·488
111
1·445
112
·022
113
·247
Fish Pond
2
·291
Seven Spouts Plantation
Pheasantry
6a
·948
6
2·233
Knowlehill
5
6·802
109
10·249
108
7·889
Coppy Plantation
143a
·577
Ash
Oak
1923
107
35·971
7
6·520
8
·329
B.R.
F.P.
S.P.
C.S.
C.S. Parly. Div., Union & R.D. Bdy.
348
321
329
106

1923

The Cross family at Knowle Hill in 1939 (copies of photographs belonging to Mrs Gamble).

rhododendrons, and inside the courtyard was a spring from which they drew water. One of the buildings on the north side was used as a wash house, with a copper, where Mrs Cross washed all of the family clothes. In another was the only toilet. The garden room still contained its long tables and chairs, and was to be kept clean and was not to be used by the family.

In the cottage, the present dining room was the family living room, with a range for cooking and heating water. There were cupboards in which Mr Cross kept his guns. The present kitchen was a scullery, with a water pump and sink. To the west of the house an area was fenced off as a vegetable garden, and the family kept their own chickens, with other food delivered from Derby. The Crosses did not remain at Knowle for long, after the outbreak of war they moved to Leicester.

In 1940 the Foremark estate was sold, first to the Prudential Insurance Company and then to the Church Commissioners. In 1943 a new tenant moved into Knowle, the sculptor Ronald Pope and his wife, who lived here for fifteen years. He built a kiln against the south wall of the courtyard, and had a potter's wheel

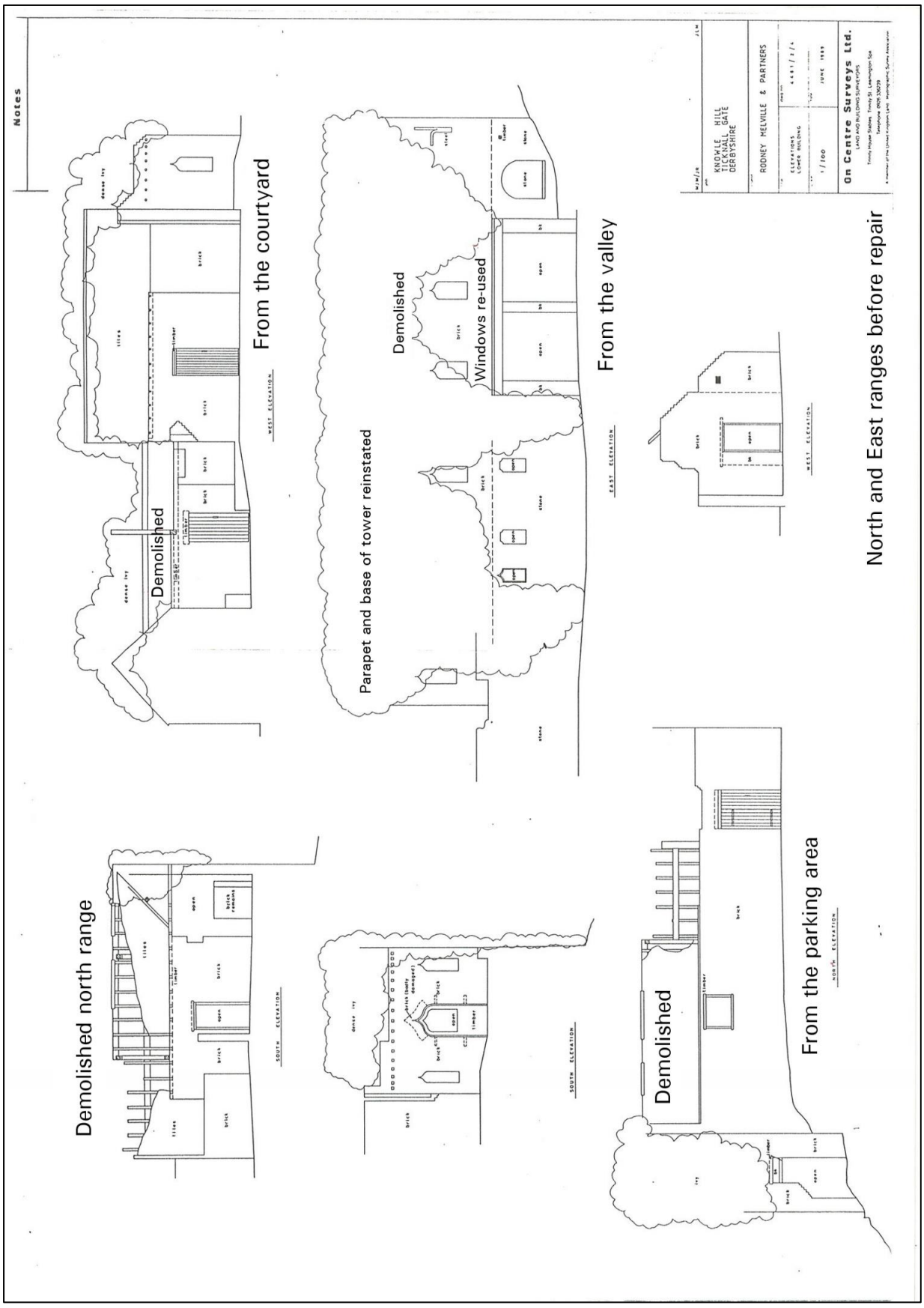
Knowle Hill Gamekeeper, Andrew Craven, with badgers, by Walter Mayell. He died at Knowle Hill in 1914, aged 59.

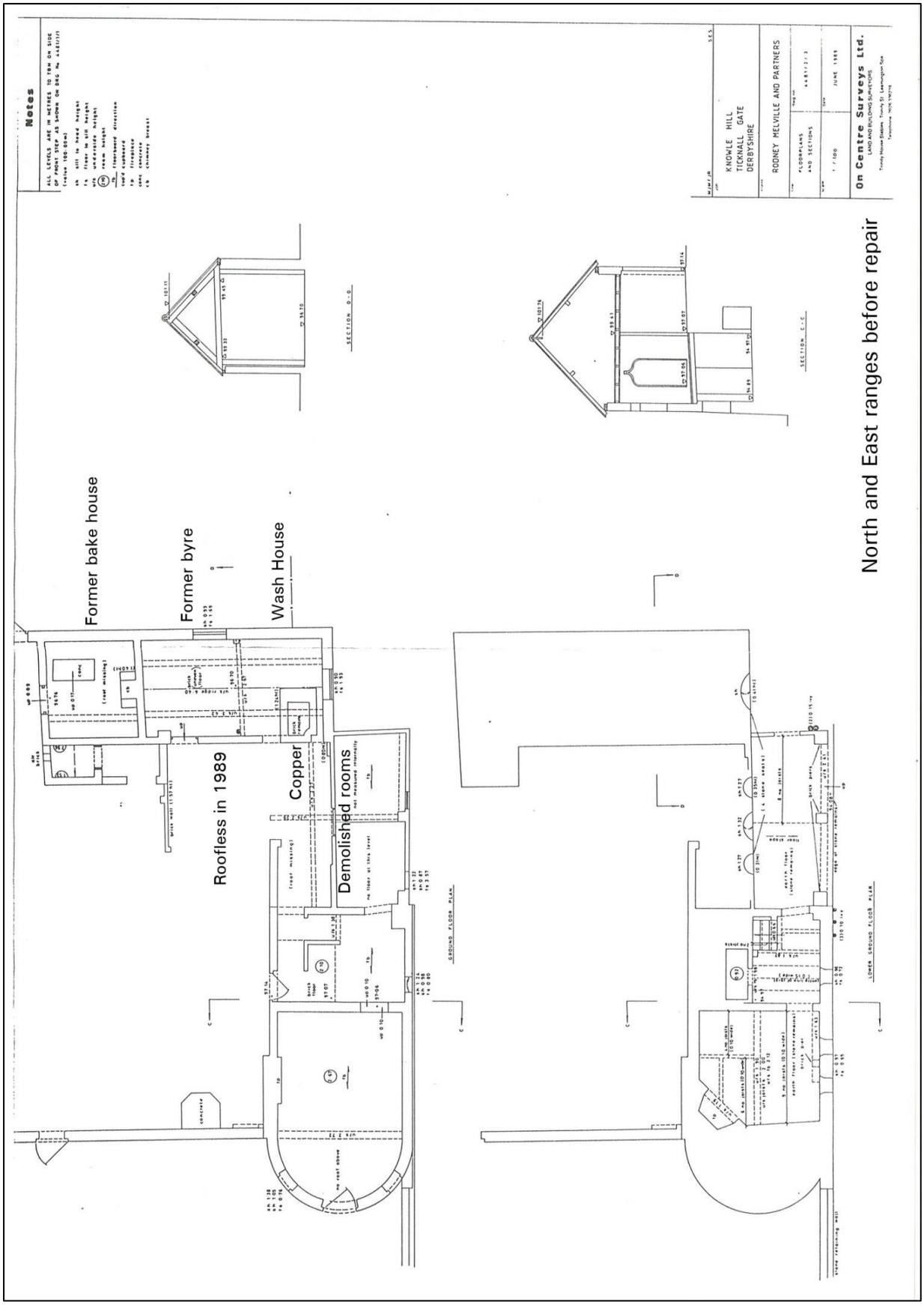
and power saw in an old bakehouse on the north. His workshop was in one stable under the cottage and his studio in the end bedroom. The garden room, known as Sir Francis' Room, was becoming derelict, its parapet collapsing, and the Popes kept chickens there. The garden still had its trees, which appear in Pope's photographs of Knowle. The upper terrace had trees along the wall, but otherwise the ground was clear all the way to the pool. Immediately below the summerhouse were some large elms, which had red squirrels living in them. At the top, the garden fence had gone, and a donkey lived in the field.

Whilst the Popes lived at Knowle the woods on the estate were all leased to the Forestry Commission. When they left in 1958 the felling had begun. Aerial photographs taken soon afterwards show the whole area, including Coppy Plantation, Gorsey Leys and Robin Wood clear felled. In their place new plantations were created, mainly of conifer, with the occasional stand of poplar or notofagus, the South American beech.

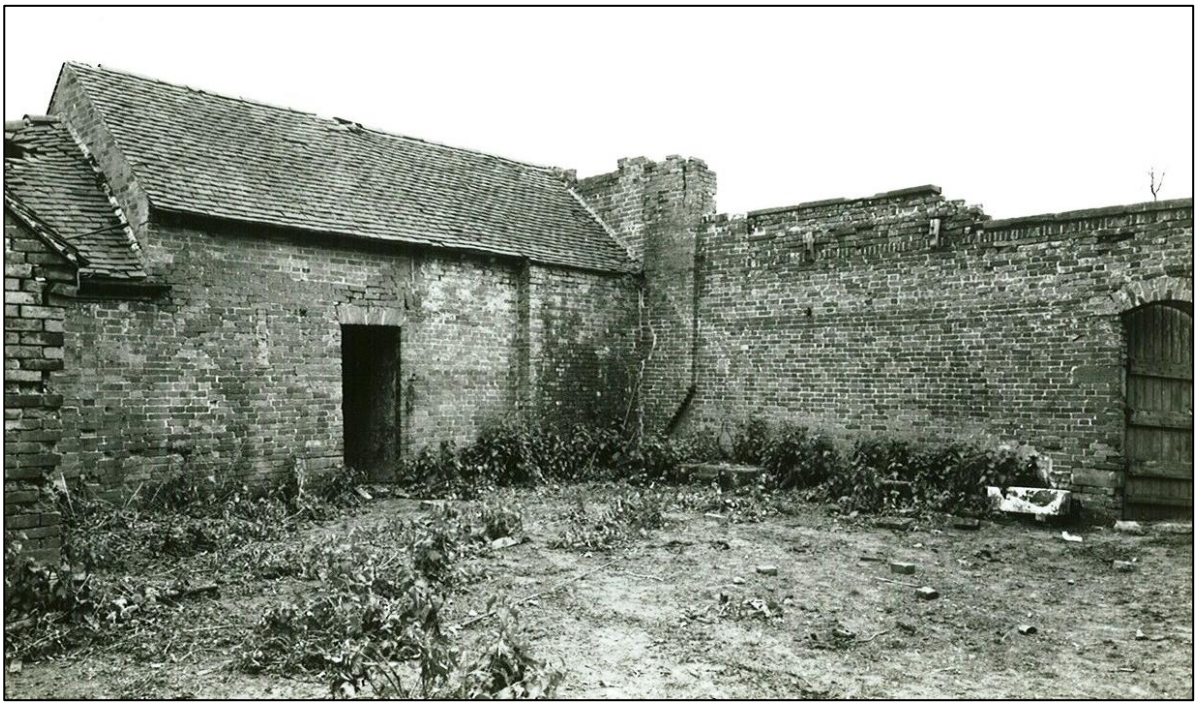
After 1958 the cottage remained empty, until it was purchased in 1978 by Mr. J. Smedley who planned to live there, although his plans came to nothing. The surrounding fields were bought by Mr M. Stanton, a neighbouring farmer, whilst a syndicate bought the shooting rights. With each additional owner, the chances of Knowle Hill ever resuming its character as a garden became more remote.

By the time Knowle Hill was first suggested to Landmark in 1987 by Rodney Melville of John Bucknell Associates, decay had gone nearly to the limits of destruction to the concern of many local people. Landmark began negotiations to acquire the freehold and reunite the property with the help of Bill Ritson of Land Agents, Ritson & Co, Ticknall. Buildings and pools were acquired in 1989 and the woods followed in 1993, when the felling of conifers suddenly allowed the central area of the garden to be appreciated as a whole for the first time. By then, repairs to the buildings were well underway and at Easter 1994, the first visitors arrived to stay in this most secluded place.


Notes
From the courtyard
Demolished
Demolished north range
Parapet and base of tower reinstated
Demolished
Windows re-used
From the valley
Demolished
From the parking area
North and East ranges before repair
KNOWLE HILL
TICKNALL
DERBYSHIRE
RODNEY MELVILLE & PARTNERS
1/100
On Centre Surveys Ltd.


Former bake house
Former byre
Wash House
Roofless in 1989
Copper
Demolished rooms
North and East ranges before repair
KNOWLE HILL
TICKNALL GATE
DERBYSHIRE
RODNEY MELVILLE AND PARTNERS
On Centre Surveys Ltd.
LAND AND BUILDING SURVEYORS

Knowle Hill in 1976 (RCHME photos)



The east range.

The north side.

The cottage in 1976.

Knowle Hill in 1976, before the buildings on the north and east sides of the courtyard had collapsed.

The open terrace below the east range, once enclosed by a ceiling of the floor of a range of rooms which have been demolished.

Knowle Hill in 1988, before restoration

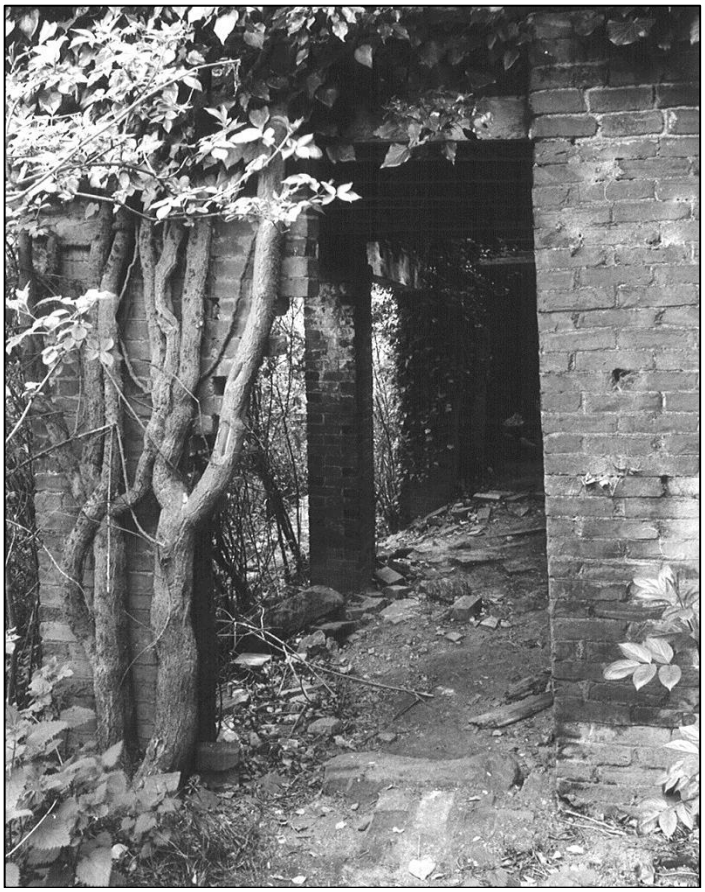
Knowle Hill, in 1988. Photographs by Richard Hayman.

1988

The cottage in 1988.

Steps of west range.

The north range in 1988.



Below the northern end of the summerhouse, or east range.

The east range, or summer house, from the courtyard.

From the south lawn.

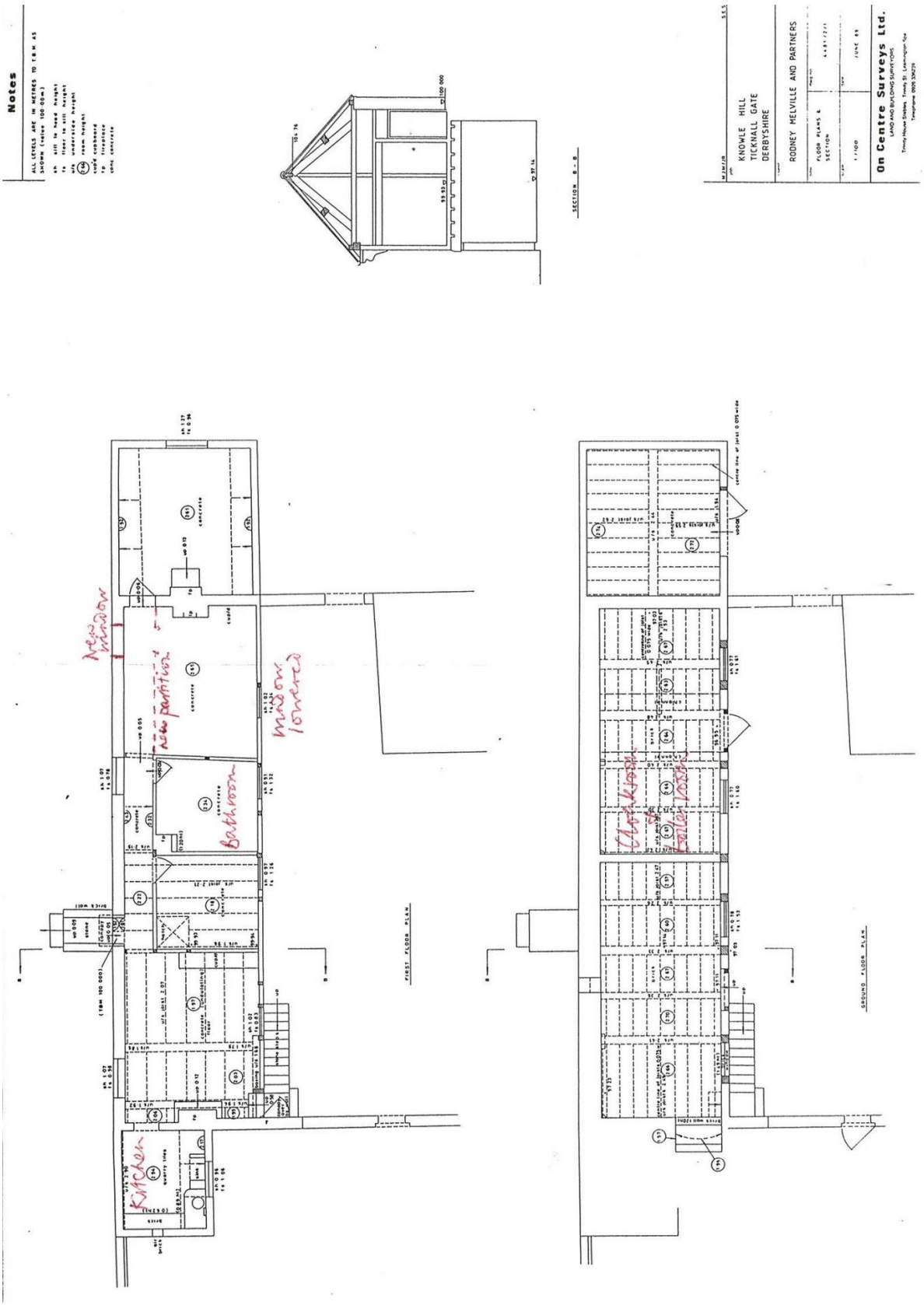
The west range in 1988.

The Restoration of Knowle Hill

The Landmark Trust took on Knowle Hill in 1989, when the buildings were in a ruinous state, with the east range literally falling into the valley. Some hard decisions had to be taken, since the cost of repairing everything would have been astronomical. The buildings against the north wall of the courtyard were no longer needed so these were clear candidates for demolition. The northern rooms of the east range were difficult to part with – they also had Gothic windows and contributed to the Picturesque outline of the building from below. However, if the building was to survive at all, and be repaired at anything like a reasonable cost, these too would have to go. Even so, complicated structural engineering was needed to secure the outside wall, tie it back to the side walls, and underpin it from below. The long cracks in the north courtyard wall can still be seen, where they were stitched with concrete and then filled with tiles. The amount that the east range had subsided can be seen most clearly when comparing the levels of the dado rail on either side of the garden door in the drawing room.

The repair of this room was enabled by a legacy from a benefactor, at whose wish it is to be called Pemik's Room. A generous grant was also given by Derbyshire County Council. The restoration began in the summer of 1992 and was completed early in 1994, under the supervision of Rodney Melville and Partners of Leamington Spa, by the Derby building firm Edward Wood & Son. The foreman was Bill Hickingbottom.

The extent of the work can best be judged by comparing the 'before' photographs with the building as it is today. The approach was on the whole a conservative one – as much as possible of the original building, including any old plaster on the walls, was preserved. Some details were missing entirely, but fortunately old photographs, such as those taken by Ronald Pope in the 1940s and a set taken for the National Buildings Record in 1976, helped to fill most of the gaps. This was particularly so in Pemik's Room, where the original fixtures and fittings were reinstated fully.



The cottage, or west range, before restoration.

The photograph of about 1880 showing the summerhouse in its original form was also very useful. Found by the Melbourne historian Howard Usher whilst work was in progress, this allowed a change in plan.

Instead of reinstating the roof to its altered form, with projecting eaves, it was possible to reinstate the crenellated parapet, and give some indication of the tower. Taken with the tall north-east gable, which was left standing for the same reason, the building has thus regained its proper function in the landscape.

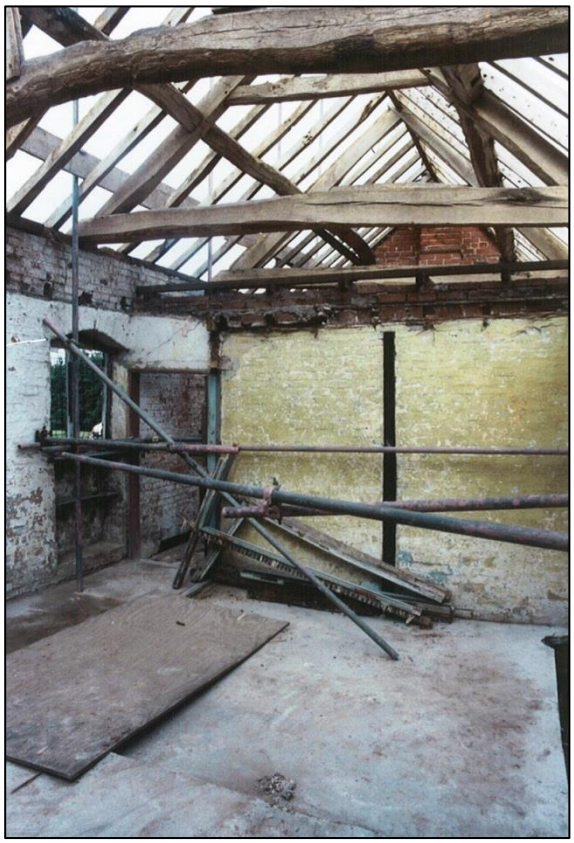
The West Range

The cottage was in a less dramatic state of decay than the summerhouse, but it too needed extensive repairs. It had been proposed at first to use the cottage for bedrooms, with everything else across the yard. With the decision to demolish half of the summerhouse, however, the cottage came to play a larger role in the lives of those who stay here. The present arrangement of rooms reflects its own former use more closely.

The appearance of the cottage from the outside has scarcely been altered. One new window on the west side reflects the only major change inside, where a new corridor was formed by making a partition in the middle bedroom. The window in the same bedroom was lowered to balance the dining room window in the east face and to make it easier to see out. The other windows and doors were repaired where they existed, and the frames at least survived in most cases, or replaced with exact copies of the old ones where these had been lost or broken. A charming detail is the canopy over the windows on the west side, echoing those over the two doors, all of which were reinstated.

Before any joinery could be fitted, however, structural repairs were needed. The building was very damp, because of the ground against it on the west. A large trench was therefore dug on this side and a waterproof membrane fixed to the back of the retaining wall. The trench was then filled with gabions, stone done up

Damp proofing on the west side.



Repaired limeash floor in what is now the bathroom, with repaired roof above.

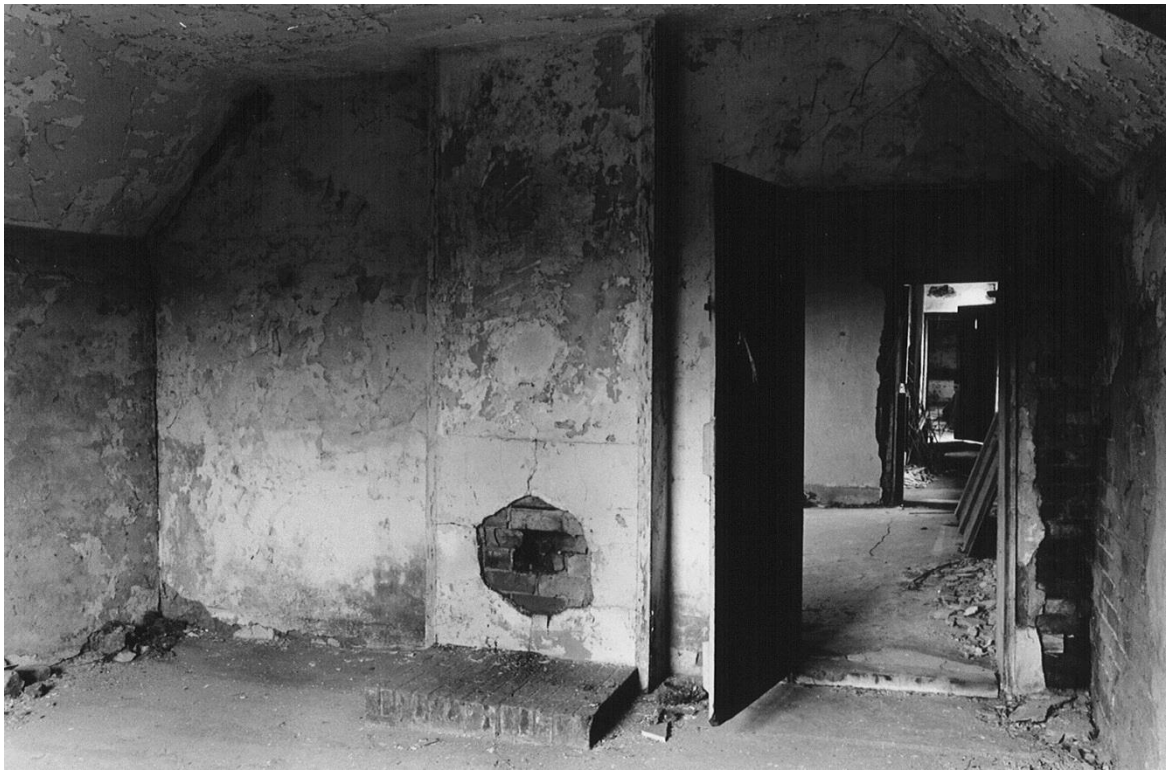
Looking from the single bedroom to the present bathroom. Both ceilings and partitions in this part of the cottage were too decayed to repair and had to be completely renewed.

in mesh bags, to allow the ground to drain efficiently.

The ends of the first floor beams had rotted due to the damp inside the walls. These were repaired and brick piers built beneath them to give extra support. The roof was then stripped of its tiles and the frame repaired. Old rafters that were still sound were grouped together on the east slope, with new oak rafters used on the more visible west slope. Enough old tiles survived in good condition to make up the east side, with just a few secondhand ones bought in. The west slope has entirely secondhand tiles.

The tops of the chimneys were rebuilt at the same time. The central one came in useful to provide a flue for the new boiler fitted on the ground floor. New chimney pots were copied from one broken one that was left, and from photographs. The walls also needed attention. Some bricks had perished and had to be cut out, and the north-west corner had to be rebuilt. At the south end, the kitchen wall needed underpinning. The walls were repointed only where the mortar had failed, using a mix of lime and local sand. On the east side, the timber framing was also repaired where necessary, and the lavish crossheads at the ends of earlier iron ties were left in place. The gutter on this side had been made of timber, supported on timber brackets. which were repaired. A new lead-lined oak gutter was fixed, with a few extra steel supports for safety. All the other new gutters and downpipes are cast iron.

Apart from the boiler room and the cloakroom next to it, the ground floor of the west range has been left as it was found, with the floors simply made good, and the walls limewashed. One door was found lying, broken, in the courtyard and was repaired, with the other made to match it. The windows were repaired and reglazed. The steps leading up to the cottage were repaired, and a new handrail fitted.



The north bedroom in the cottage in 1988.

The passage, looking north.

Inside the cottage, first floor beams and a number of joists had rotted. The repair of these was not straightforward, however, since the floors themselves are not ordinary floorboards but are made of limeash, an early form of cement, probably used here to provide extra insulation. Landmark was keen to keep these floors, even though the limeash was broken in places, particular in the dining room. All the joists and battens on which the limeash was laid had therefore to be repaired and strengthened from beneath. This was done successfully, including the fixing of extra insulation, and the limeash itself repaired from above.

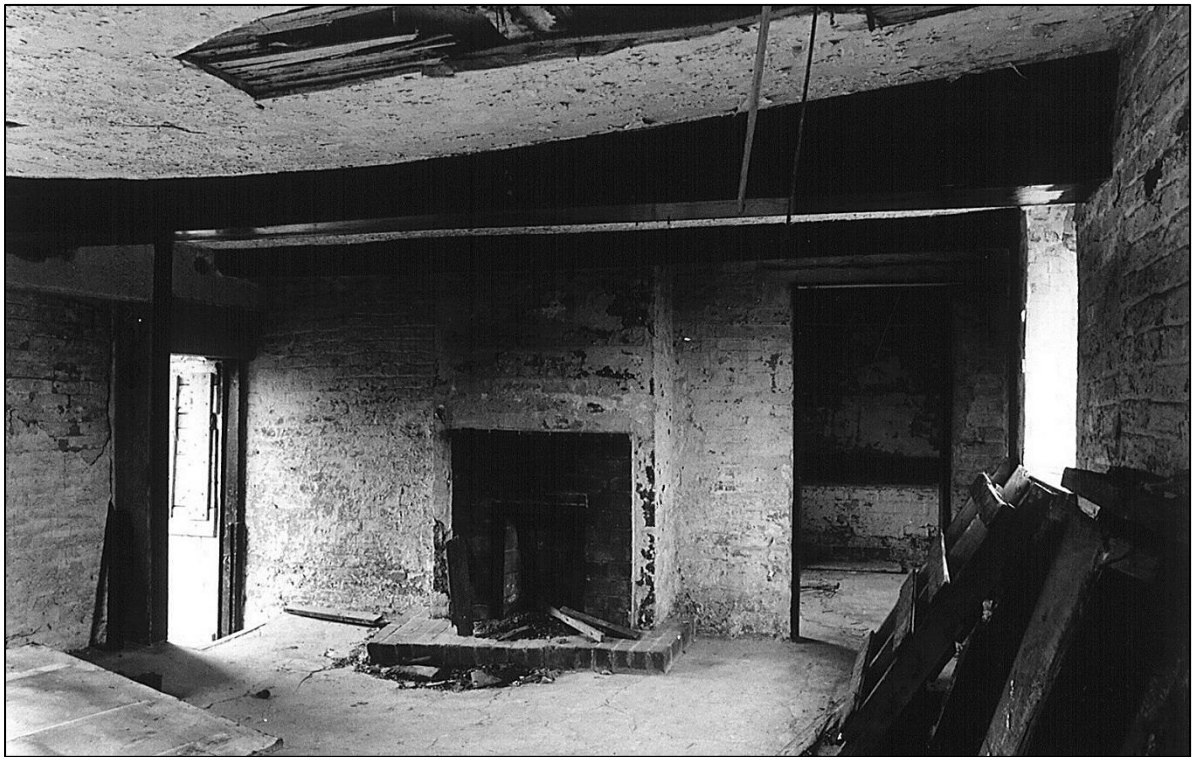
Insulation was fixed to the thinner east wall of the cottage too, and all round the end bedroom. The west wall was simply drylined. The whole interior was then finished with limehair plaster applied to wire mesh. All the ceilings, apart from that in the end bedroom, had to be renewed, most of them already having fallen in or near collapse. In the dining room, a new ceiling had been inserted beneath the original one, making it very low. The new ceiling was fitted at the earlier height, and a new beam inserted copying an original one in that position.

The fireplace in the dining room was opened up to its full size and a new surround fitted, and a new stove. The grate in the middle bedroom was unfortunately stolen soon after Landmark bought Knowle Hill, so new grates had to be fitted here and in the end bedroom.

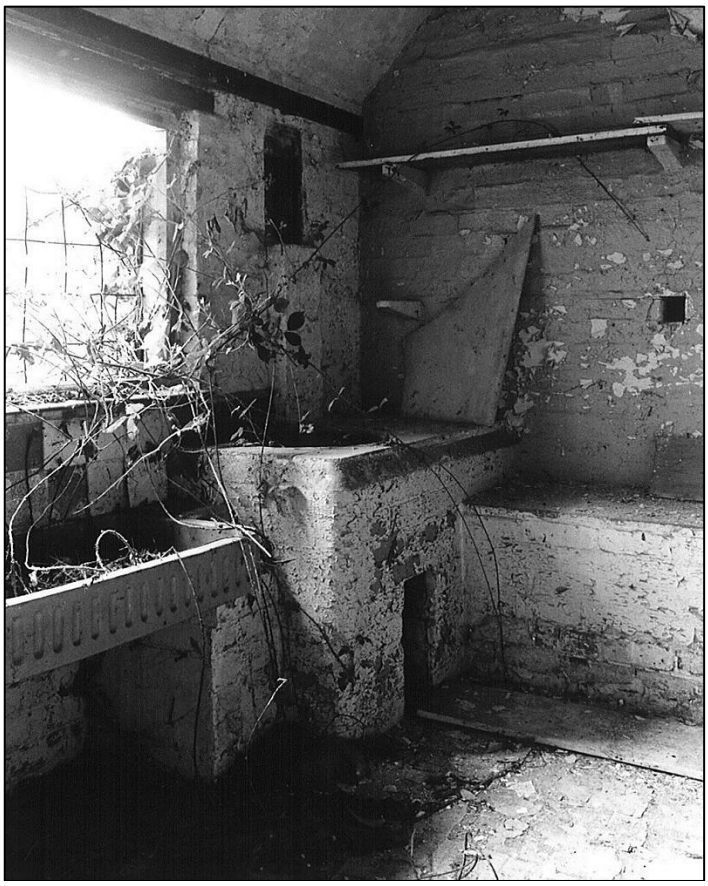
In the kitchen, an old copper and sink were taken out to make way for the new fittings, with the top shelf replacing one that was there, on the same brackets. The door surrounds all existed, but several new doors were needed. These were all copied from surviving doors in the bathroom and single bedroom. The skirting boards are all new. In its decoration, Knowle Hill has come up in the world, but not too much. To balance this, the new glazing, all made by Norgrave Studios of Warwickshire, uses a German glass which provides the right amount of variation in colour and is not too perfect for its surroundings.

**The middle bedroom, now divided by the passage in 1988.
The grate was stolen in 1989.**

The dining room, looking north.

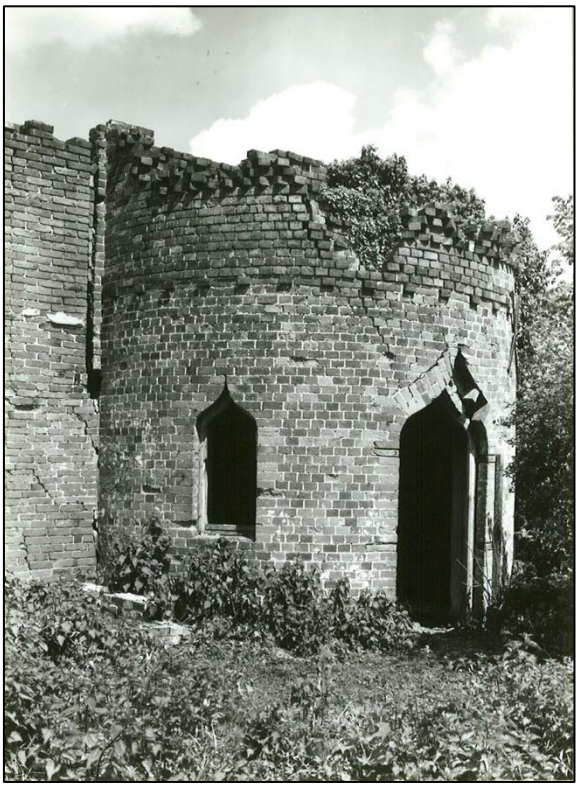


The dining room in 1988.

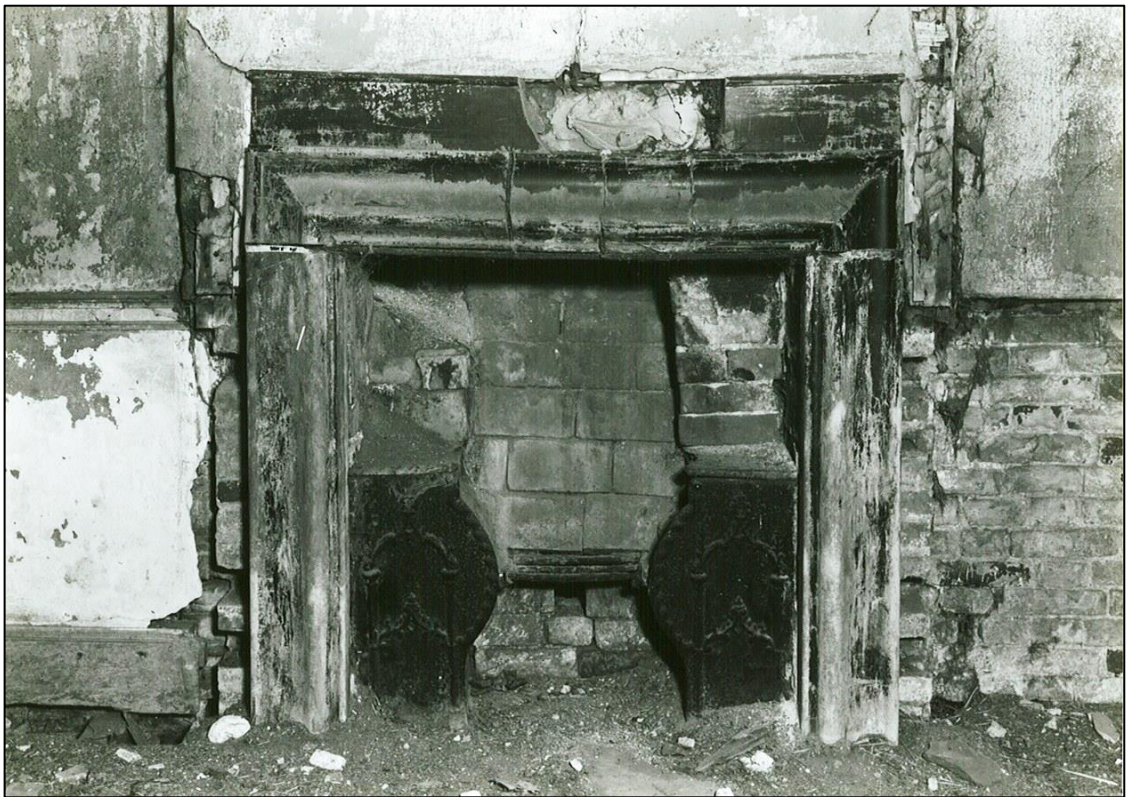


The kitchen.

The Garden Room in 1976 (RCHME)



The garden room in 1976 before the fittings were stolen and the parapet fell in almost completely.



The garden room in 1976 (RCHME).

The garden room showing further decay in 1988.

The East Range

Little could be done to the summerhouse before its north end was demolished and the courtyard wall underpinned. Scaffolding was then needed both to carry out the work and prop the building up at the same time. Once this was in place, work could start dismantling the roof and rebuilding collapsed areas of wall, such as the north-west corner.

The north end was to be rebuilt with two windows taken from the demolished rooms. It involved a tricky feat of construction, in that it had to continue the line of its stone base, which leans in one direction, while on the north-east corner it had to meet the east wall, which leans in another. The geometry of the building is therefore not conventional. The stone lintel of the door on the lower ground floor was repaired and strengthened too.

To hold the building securely, a concrete ring beam was formed at eaves height. The roof structure was then put back, using as much as possible of the old timber. Some tiles were also salvaged, but a good many secondhand ones were needed too, with secondhand ridge tiles. The roof went back with one important difference.

On the east, or outer face, the wall was continued upwards as a crenellated parapet, with a hidden gutter. The good principal of 'repair as found' was here waived because of the important of the buildings earlier profile in the wider design of the garden. It helped that the 1880s photograph was so clear that the number of bricks could be counted. The restoration did not go so far as to reinstate the full upper storey and tower.

A mix of restoration and repair was used for the parapet above the southern bow. Here the jumbled brickwork of the crenellations mostly survived. Where one of these crenellations was still there, it was built up again.

Looking from the terrace up to the door into the garden room in 1988.

The gate room to the garden room, now the window looking over the terrace in 1988.

The summer house ready for repair. Secondhand bricks were used for rebuilding the parapet alongside those salvaged from the site.

Lead roof on the southern bow.

New tuck pointing on the parapet.

Mike Kent of Rodney Melville & Partners (left) checks the position chosen for the new window.

Where it was missing, the brickwork was built up enough to make a secure parapet, but no more. To match the rest of the bow, the parapet had to be 'tuck' pointed, with a fine line drawn in the mortar of each joint, a method now rarely found but once common in brickwork. A special tool was made to draw the line exactly right. The flat roof of the bow is lead. The gable above it was repaired much as found under a thick growth of ivy.

The Summerhouse interior

Inside, as already described, Pemik's Room is much as it was when it was owned by Sir Francis Burdett. The fireplace, doors and windows are all copies of what was there. Much of the plaster on the east and north walls is old. This was carefully taken off at the start of the work and replaced when the walls had been drylined, with new plaster to make up. Small fragments of the original cornice were also refixed and the rest copied from them by the specialist plastering firm, Trumpers of Birmingham. The ceiling is also entirely new, carefully laid to disguise the fact that the floor is not quite level. The oak floor is also new, fitted with grills for a hot air heating system – it would have been a pity to spoil the room with radiators.

The colour on the walls is similar to traces of old paint, but not an exact copy. There had been one other change to the room, the insertion of a third window in the side wall. This was especially asked for by Landmark's founder, Sir John Smith, to give a view of the valley.

For the windows in the lobby outside, old frames were repaired and reused with new casements. A partition that covered the stair was taken down, and the stone steps opened up and repaired, and a new handrail fitted. The stone paving inside the door was found beneath later brick paving and was also repaired. The higher part of the floor always had floorboards.

The garden room in 1988.

A fragment of the cornice. Small fragments were refixed where possible and the rest was copied by a specialist plastering firm.

Pemik's Room, named after the supporter who made possible its restoration, ready to be plastered.

Old plaster refixed to the walls, and integrated with the new; also old, darker, pieces of cornice.

The two inner ground floor rooms have just been tidied up and left plain. The inner room has a new brick floor and contains the electric heating plant. This did once have a plaster ceiling, so this was put back to hide the insulation for the floor above.

Services and Outside Works

Apart from the two buildings, there were also the courtyard walls to repair. Part of the south wall was missing next to the summerhouse bow and had to be rebuilt, as did a higher part at the west end. Large areas of the north wall also had to be entirely rebuilt. The east wall was left low both to let light into the courtyard and to give a better view. The stone coping was copied from the old walls on the east side of the south lawn, yet to be rebuilt.

Some of the brick paving in the courtyard already existed, but much of the eastern half had to be laid down new. The cobbled path and hard area north of the yard were found when the ground was dug away and were made good. The steps leading up to the west side of the cottage are new, as is the brick path there and all the fences.

One of the things which had foiled previous attempts to restore Knowle Hill was that it had no electricity or mains water. The invisible work of providing these services can be one of the major costs when making a remote building habitable. Here the heating of the cottage is in fact gas fired, fuelled by liquid propane gas stored in the tank in the parking area. Electricity and water mains still had to be laid, involving negotiations with the owners of neighbouring land. Water does not only come into a building: drains and a septic tank had also to be installed. The long track from Seven Spouts Farm was repaired and a new length laid across the field.

The Garden

The repair of the buildings at Knowle Hill was completed in early 1994 and the building furnished in March, in time for the first visitors. Work on the repair and revival of the garden had then only just begun, and will continue for much longer. When the Forestry Commission handed over the land in the two valleys in 1993, they generously agreed to clear any trees we wanted before this date. First to go was a stand of conifers on the south lawn. A number of small trees were also taken down on the Pleasure Ground beyond it, as part of the eventual plan to reinstate this as a clear area leading to the upper pool.

In the valley, more caution was used. The aim in the end is to clear most of the conifers away and reinstate the open view of the Trent valley. In the meantime, there is the question of maintenance. Trees are quickly replaced by undergrowth. As a first stage, therefore, just the trees which crowded to the western bank were taken down, to give space. Small trees and bushes on the bank itself were also cleared away, with the help of teams from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

1994 saw the levelling and reseeding of the south lawn and bank. Some further clearing was done below the buildings, where an old flight of steps was discovered, but this caused problems too. With nothing to hold it, the bank there began to erode badly, with the possibility that the retaining wall could collapse. Garden restoration is a tricky business, and damage can be easily caused.

A phased programme of works continues gently recovering and maintaining the garden when funds allow and managing the woodland. The plan overall is retain the wild and romantic character of Knowle Hill as established in the late 18th century, but to reinstate the main walks and views from Walter's garden, and to make it possible to enjoy the garden features, such as the rock-cut chamber, without danger to people or to the structures themselves.

The original drive in 1943, with mature trees.

The grass plat in 1989, still planted with conifers.

The grass plat in 1993, after clearing.

Since the restoration of Knowle Hill began, many people have given us help, encouragement and information. Few visitors, indeed, have failed to be captivated by it, as seems always to have been the case. There is every reason to hope that this will hold true for the future and that Walter Burdett's creation will continue to be 'a delightful place... which is much resorted to.'

Aerial view of Knowle Hill today.