

Thomas Anson

of

Shugborough

and

The Greek Revival

Andrew Baker

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in Thomas Anson began in 1982, when I found myself living in a cottage which had formerly been occupied by a seamstress on the Shugborough estate. In those days very little was known about him, just enough to suggest he was a person worth investigating, and little enough material available to give plenty of space for fantasy.

In the early days, I was given a great deal of information about the background to 18th-century England by the late Michael Baigent, and encouragement by his friend and colleague Henry Lincoln (whose 1974 film for BBC's "Chronicle" series, *The Priest the Painter and the Devil* introduced me to Shugborough) and the late Richard Leigh.

I was grateful to Patrick, Earl of Lichfield, and Leonora, Countess of Lichfield, for their enthusiastic support. I presented my early researches at a "Holy Blood and Holy Grail" weekend at Shugborough. Patrick Lichfield's step-grandmother, Margaret, Countess of Lichfield, provided comments on a particularly puzzling red-herring.

Over the next twenty years the fantasies were deflated, but Thomas Anson remained an intriguing figure. I have Dr Kerry Bristol of Leeds University to thank for revealing that Thomas really was a kind of "eminence grise", an influential figure behind the scenes of the 18th-century Greek Revival. Her 2006 conference at Shugborough was the turning point. The time was ripe for new discoveries.

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Chapter 1

Thomas Anson and Shugborough

Thomas Anson was the elder brother of Admiral, Lord Anson, circumnavigator, naval reformer and, thanks to the capture of a Spanish ship carrying treasure from South America, a man of unexpected wealth. Thomas has remained in the shadow of his famous brother George, but in more recent years he has begun to emerge as an intriguing character, a collector and patron of the arts, and also a traveller. Even though new discoveries about his life have been made, he remains a man of mystery.

In 1720, Thomas inherited the modest country estate of Shugborough Manor, as it was originally known, from their father, William Anson, a lawyer who had important political connections.

Shugborough, the house and its estate, sits in its own vale in Staffordshire, at the confluence of the rivers Trent and Sow. It is a “locus amoenus”, one of those comfortable places which are somehow separated from the larger world. Thomas has been remembered as the “improver” of this landscape, turning it into an Arcadian paradise and enhancing it with a variety of follies and monuments. The most important of these, as far as architectural history goes, is a series of buildings designed by James “Athenian” Stuart – who created a veritable “shop window” for the new Greek Revival style of the period.

Thomas is usually seen as a man of taste and culture, which he was, and, very unfairly, as an “armchair collector”, buying classical sculpture from Italy to decorate his house, as if he were an effete old aesthete, escaping into a world of private fantasy.

He certainly acquired much of his sculpture collection as an older man, after inheriting his widowed brother’s wealth in 1762, but the Thomas who has been rediscovered nearly two hundred and fifty years after his death was as much of an adventurer as his brother.

There is no better description of the place, as it was in the 18th century, than by Thomas Pennant (1726-1798), in his *Journey to Chester*, published in 1811. Pennant was a close friend of Thomas Anson in his later years and a nephew of Anson’s close friend, James Mytton. Pennant, as he says himself, used Shugborough as a base from which to explore the wide variety of natural and historic features in the area.

He describes Thomas Anson’s house and park, in its setting:

THOMAS ANSON OF SHUGBOROUGH

From the middle is a view, of very uncommon beauty, of a small vale, varied with almost every thing that nature or art could give to render it delicious; rich meadows, watered by the Trent and Sow. The first, animated with milk-white cattle, emulating those of Tinian; the last with numerous swans. The boundary on one side, is a cultivated slope; on the other, the lofty front of Cannock Wood, clothed with heath, or shaded with old oaks, scattered over its glowing bloom by the free hand of nature.

It is more difficult to enumerate the works of art dispersed over this Elysium; they epitomize those of so many places. The old church of Colwich; the mansion of the ancient English baron, at Wolsely Hall; the great-windowed mode of building in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the house of Ingestre; the modern seat in Oak-edge; and the lively improved front of Shugborough; are embellishments proper to our own country.

Amidst these arise the genuine architecture of China, in all its extravagance; the dawning of the Grecian, in the mixed gothic gateway at Tixall; and the chaste buildings of Athens, exemplified by Mr. Stuart, in the counterparts of the Choragic monument of Lysicrates', and the octagon tower of Andronicus Cyrrhestes. From the same hand arose, by command of a grateful brother, the arch of Adrian of Athens, embellished with naval trophies, in honor of Lord Anson, a glory to the British fleet; and who still survives in the gallant train of officers who remember and emulate his actions.¹

Shugborough and its buildings are set in this Elysium, this sweet vale, where also lie, beyond the confines of the estate itself, a range of historic houses which add richness to the landscape. Thomas Pennant obviously loved the place and saw it as it was surely meant to be seen – a world in miniature, a microcosm of culture and nature.

Later in the 18th century, the place was extended into a moderate-sized stately home. The core of the house is still the villa of a studious patron of the arts and sciences. The twin hearts of the house in Thomas Anson's day would have been its Drawing Room, a place for conversation and music, and its Library for study and contemplation.

When I first became intrigued by Thomas Anson (1695-1773), in the 1980s, hardly anything was known about his life, but the few facts that were available gave the impression that there was something unusual about him. Throughout his life he seemed to have had some connection with the most advanced of ideas. In 1730 he was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and, a few year later, a member of the artistically influential Society of Dilettanti. At the very end of his life, in the early 1770s, Matthew Boulton and Josiah Wedgwood, both at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution, each contributed in different ways to Shugborough.

From this early interest, I had an idea that the silent and invisible Thomas – there was no certain portrait of him – might have been a kind of “*éminence grise*”, a quietly influential patron of the arts and sciences, over many years.

Perhaps there was very little justification for this idea, but an air of mystery was supported by the earlier stages of his development of the house and landscape, in the late 1740s. Before the historically important Grecian buildings, there had been earlier follies: a mix of Oriental, Classical and Gothic styles. These were assumed to have been the work of the fascinatingly eccentric architect and cosmologist, Thomas Wright of Durham, and yet, surprisingly, no records exist of his involvement with Thomas Anson and Shugborough.

The most mysterious product of this period is the enigmatic “*Shepherd’s Monument*”, with its marble relief of Poussin’s “*Et in Arcadia Ego*” and an unsolved cipher inscription. No-one could agree when this strange structure had been built. In fact, in the 1980s, much of the available information on anything to do with Thomas Anson was full of inexplicable mistakes. His London house, built for him by James Stuart, was often misleadingly described as “*Lord Anson’s house*”, even though George Anson (1697-1762) had died before it was built.

Thomas Anson seems to have been a man of modesty and secrecy. No-one could have been more self-effacing. Very few documents in his own writing are known to exist. The only substantial collection of his letters that survive are to his brother George, now held in the British Library. Those letters are mostly about politics and business, although they do contain evidence of some very dramatic incidents. There are few allusions to anything artistic, or about the development of the house and gardens. There are no extant estate management records from Thomas’s lifetime.

It is as if Thomas asked for his personal documents to be destroyed upon his death, leaving only relics of certain special friends and relations. For example, any letter from Elizabeth Anson, wife of his brother, the famous Admiral, was preserved. There is a batch of letters about the purchase of his sculpture collection from his last decades, and letters from James “*Athenian*” Stuart, the architect who was his most important creative friend in his later years. Apart from these, there is almost nothing. Or so it seemed, until before the turn of this century, when new information began to appear – all of it surprising.

Despite the lack of records, it is still possible to get an impression of Thomas as a person. He may have been a quiet individual, but people remembered things he said. Lady Anson, George’s wife, was entertained by his “*elegant badinage*”. Sometimes his tone of voice comes through:

“It [the earthquake] was a very trifling one...”

“It will be a shabby race...”

“Going up and down mountains takes a deal of time and is too tedious when one is alone.”

Thomas Pennant’s words about Thomas Anson on his death are not simply a poetic fantasy:

My much-respected friend the late Thomas Anson, Esquire, preferred the still paths of private life, and was the best qualified for its enjoyment of any man I ever knew; for with the most humane and the most sedate disposition, he possessed a mind most uncommonly cultivated. He was the example of true taste in this country; and at the time that he made his own place a paradise, made every neighbor partaker of its elegancies. He was happy in his life, and happy in his end. I saw him about thirty hours before his death, listening calmly to the melody of the harp, preparing for the momentary transit from an earthly concert to a union with the angelic harmonies.²

In 2000, historian Kerry Bristol published an article on the architect and interior designer James Stuart (1713-1788), which led to the rediscovery of the hidden Thomas Anson.³ She showed that Stuart’s career depended on his connection with the Ansons, or rather, with Thomas rather than George.

Although George, Lord Lyttelton (1709-1773), is credited with building the first authentically Greek building in England, his Doric Temple at Hagley in 1758-9, this came about as the result of Thomas’s patronage. Perhaps it is more accurate to say, “the first building which was intended to be authentically Greek”, as Kerry Bristol has shown that it was really based on a Roman model.

After a conference on Stuart at Shugborough in 2006, I started researching Thomas from scratch. Yes, it seemed my old idea of Thomas as a hidden “*éminence grise*” was true, at least as far as Greek Revival art was concerned. My personal suspicion was that there was something deeper behind this – that the Greek Revival in architecture was the visible and fashionable effect of a resurgence of ideas, what I will call, for convenience, the “Platonic Revival”, as the key ideas within it derive from the works of Plato. There was very little justification for this, especially as the 18th century is often thought of as a time of materialism, when Plato’s ideas of the Divine Truth in Nature were considered airy-fairy and deeply unpopular, only to be rediscovered by the Romantics at the end of the century.

And yet, there was all that Arcadian imagery, in the beautiful vale at the confluence of two rivers.

I set about putting together all the facts I could find about Thomas Anson, trying to dismiss any preconceptions. Within a few days, I had discovered whole areas of his life that had gone completely unnoticed. And why had no-one in Britain noticed that one name in his will was that of the forgotten composer, Anton Kammell?

The only article in English on Kammell reveals that the source for the connection between Kammell and Thomas Anson was the family papers of James Harris, from 1732 until his death in 1780, many of which have been published in more recent years.⁴ Harris was a classical scholar and the most prominent promoter of Platonic philosophy in England in the mid-18th century. His works, I discovered, expressed exactly the ideas that I had sensed lay behind the Greek Revival.

Not only had I found Thomas's musical world, and discovered that in later life he hosted concerts at his London home, 15 St James' Square, but a simple Google search for "Thomas Anson" AND "James Harris" led to an astonishing anecdote which Thomas had told Harris, and he had published some years later. Suddenly, I had a completely new view of Thomas as an adventurous traveller.

What were his own ideas and beliefs? Even now, that is very hard to define. Was he actively involved in the philosophy of the Greek Revival, as well as the complex politics of the time, or was Thomas simply a detached observer? This was a period of almost constant war in Europe and beyond, and, closer to home, the Jacobite Rising; when, in 1745, Charles Edward Stuart was attempting to regain the British throne for the Stuart dynasty.

I wrote a book length text, simply getting everything down in writing and making it available online by 2010. Since then some new discoveries have been made. Things seem to be "hidden in plain sight", most dramatically the lost portraiture bust of Thomas Anson which I suddenly noticed for the first time a few years ago. And now, in 2019, other important pieces of evidence have presented themselves, also hidden in full sight.

The day Thomas Anson died, on 30th March 1773, Sir John Eardley Wilmot (1709-1792) wrote a personal obituary for him in his journal:

On the 30th of March 1773, Thomas Anson, Esquire, of Shuckborough, in the county of Stafford, departed this life: he was the elder brother of lord Anson, who died without issue, and inherited his great acquisitions. He was never married, and, in the former part of his life, had lived many years abroad; was a very ingenious, polite, well-bred man, and dignified all his natural and acquired accomplishments by his universal benevolence and philanthropy.⁵

Wilmot was a judge, which might suggest that he knew Thomas Anson, a barrister, though never a practising one, through legal associations. The connection might also be local; Wilmot had been at school in Lichfield with Samuel Johnson and David Garrick. Whatever his relationship with Thomas might have been, there is no reason to doubt his statement that Thomas "had lived many years abroad".

There has always been an assumption that Thomas had travelled, but until the new wave of material began to appear, the only evidence for his foreign travels had been a notebook in the Staffordshire Record Office in which Thomas had listed dates of arrival and departure for a journey along the full length of the Mediterranean, in 1740-41. This was both puzzling and confusing. What on earth had he been doing, travelling extensively at a time of war? How did this very bare record of a lengthy journey relate to Wilmot's statement about living abroad, not merely travelling?

It is typical of the way in which the story of Thomas Anson has emerged that the most dramatic evidence for his adventurous life remained hidden in full sight, until January 22nd 2019. Incredibly, even embarrassingly, I had had a photocopy of the crucial document for well over thirty years, since, I think, 1983.

This is a poem titled *To Thomas Anson Esq. of Shuckborrow*. There is a pencilled note on the manuscript in the Staffordshire County Record Office that reads: "probably by Rev. Sneyd Davies".⁶ It is, indeed, by Davies, as will be shown in detail in Chapter 12. The poem probably dates from 1750, when Sneyd Davies certainly visited Shugborough.

Its subject is Thomas the traveller, now living peacefully in his elegant house with its new Drawing Room and Library and newly landscaped garden, at leisure to contemplate the exotic places he has visited.

TO THOMAS ANSON ESQ. OF SHUCKBORROW

After thy Course of various Travel run,
& to his morning-glories trac'd the Sun,
Here, Anson, rest; the busie Toil is o'er,
And Waves & Tempests recommend the Shore.
See from this Haven length of Waters past;
Look from this Summit to the dreary Waste,
Enjoy by turns thy pleasures & thy pains,
The burning sands & aromatic Plains;
Here to reflection Desarts wild be brought,
Or in the Citron grove refresh thy thought.
What Europe, – and what Asia yields, is thine;
For Thee it's splendour & Decays combine,
Where fretted Gold Alcairo's roof adorns,
Or Temp'l'd Balbeck her lost grandieour ourns.
To please thy view, Time check'd his cruel pow'r,
And sav'd the mouldring shrine, & falling Tow'r.
What tho' Palmyra boast her pillar'd pride,
Tho' by Minerva's Fane Illisus glide;

Can thy stretch'd Wish beyond Possession roam,
Or sigh for beauties, which thou wan'st at Home?
Does Lycus roll his stream thro' fairer Meads?
Or Tempe's self a fresher Verdure spreads?
May not that broken Pile's disorder'd state
(Columns expressive of the stroke of Fate)
Hap'ly recall to thy attentive eye
Some lov'd Remain of fair Antiquity?
Here may'st Thou oft regale in Seric Bow'r,⁷
Secure of Mandarin's despotic Pow'r,
Behold thy Eastern structures rise, nor fear
The Sultan's frown, or Turban'd Officer.
Safe from their servile yoke, their arts command,
And Grecian Domes erect in Freedom's land.

Perhaps, when I first saw this poem, in the 1980s, it looked like a fanciful string of exotic allusions. Reading it again in January 2019, I wondered if it might literally be true. Could Thomas really have been to all these places?

Woven into the convoluted language is a series of ancient sites:

Alcairo (Cairo)
Balbeck (Baalbek, in Lebanon)
Palmyra (Syria)
"Minerva's Fane" and "Ilissus" (Athens)
Lycus (several Greek rivers)
Tempe (Valley in Thessaly, near Mount Olympus)

There is no doubt that Thomas had been to Cairo on his 1740-41 voyage through the Mediterranean. He had also, as I discovered ten years ago, certainly been in Asia Minor in 1734.

Why should we doubt the words of the Rev. Sneyd Davies? The poet was a prebendary in Lichfield and, later, Archdeacon of Derby. He also left a description of a visit to Shugborough in 1750, which might have been his only visit. The poem could well be a record of what he had seen and heard on that occasion.

But there is a sequel to this, which demonstrates how the story of Thomas Anson has become confused and lost in the mists of time. A longer version of this same poem was published in 1816 under the misleading title *To Lord Anson*, and this has often been quoted as an elegy for George.

THOMAS ANSON OF SHUGBOROUGH

The 1982 influential best-seller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* quotes the poem,⁸ taken from Sampson Erdeswicke's *A Survey of Staffordshire*, published in 1820.⁹ The authors say that it was read aloud in Parliament after George Anson's death. If this is true, the confusion surrounding this poem would date from 1762, but there is no mention of this parliamentary reading in Erdeswicke's book.

The extended version adds some additional locations:

The radiant splendour in *Versailles* display'd,
And the mild beauty in *Frescatis* shade;

Thomas certainly went to Versailles. "Frescatis" is Frascati, near Rome.

Can fam'd *Pactolus* grace a richer mead...

The River Lycus in Turkey is replaced by the "Pactolus". Thomas had certainly been nearby in 1734.

The additional section of the poem, the part that is often quoted but does not appear in the shorter manuscript, gives a description of the enigmatic Shepherd's Monument:

Upon that storied marble cast thine eye,
The scene commands a moralizing sigh;
Ev'n in *Arcadia's* bless'd *Elysian* plains,
Amidst the laughing Nymphs, and sportive swains,
See festal joy subside, with melting grace,
And pity visit the half-smiling face;
Where now the dance, the lute, the nuptial feast,
The passion throbbing in the lover's breast?
Life's emblem here, in youth and vernal bloom,
But Reason's finger pointing at the tomb!

When George Hardinge published this extended version as *To Lord Anson*,¹⁰ he had, presumably, seen the line "Here, ANSON, rest thy labour is no more" and assumed that the poem was about George Anson, in spite of the fact that none of the places mentioned had any connection with him. Hardinge mentions that he had met Thomas Anson, which must have been during his last summer at Shugborough in 1772, but their conversation apparently did not help clarify the confusion.

It is astonishing that no-one who has referred to this poem has ever questioned its subject. As it stands, it is a record of an extraordinary traveller.

Even if not every detail of this catalogue of exploration is true, it speaks of a Thomas

Anson as an adventurer at a time when such travels were rare. Very few English travellers had visited Palmyra. Richard Pococke was there in the late 1730s. In the early 1750s, the antiquarian Robert Wood and the rich Jacobite James Dawkins went there – they published their illustrated account of the spectacular ruins in 1753.¹¹

These were travellers who talked about what they had seen, brought back antiquities and kept written accounts or journals. Pococke even brought an Egyptian mummy back to England. Thomas seems to have kept silent. In the mid-1740s, Anson and Pococke were both members of the short-lived Egyptian Society. There might have been conversations and the sharing of experiences, but, even now, after so many new discoveries have been made, there are only two witnesses who left records of Thomas's travels that we can read today. They are Sneyd Davies in his poem, and the philosopher, James Harris.

The other evidence we do have is Shugborough itself. Davies's poem gives a perfectly reasonable interpretation of the place as a "theatre of memory", distilling both Thomas's and George's travels, as they return to a familiar place to reminisce and contemplate.

But what is it that Thomas would be contemplating in his own Arcadia? What prompted him to make these treacherous journeys, when travelling in the "Sultan's dominions" could be extremely dangerous?

There is always the possibility that Thomas went to these places on commercial business. Several of his friends had trade connections with "Turkey merchants". Political matters took him to Paris and Versailles, but neither trade nor official business would take him as far as Palmyra or Baalbek. His motivation must have been cultural or spiritual. There is no evidence that he brought back relics; he does not seem to have been travelling as an antiquarian. His collecting came much later, after his years of travelling. Were these journeys more in the nature of a pilgrimage, searching for something beyond the physical, which the ancient world represented?

The longer revised version of the poem alters:

What tho' Palmyra boast her pillar'd pride,
Tho' by Minerva's Fane Illisus glide...

to:

Palmyra's columns to thy mansion guide,
And bid Minerva's Fane resume its pride.

The reference to "Illisus" makes it clear that "Minerva's Fane" is the Parthenon in Athens, dedicated to the goddess Athena but known as the "Temple of Minerva" by those people, well into the 19th century, who were more familiar with Roman deities than Greek.

Looking at Hardinge's account of Sneyd Davies's memoirs gives no indication that the poet

was interested in Greek philosophy. To anyone who knew about Plato, and few did at that time, the mention of the River Ilissos would remind them of Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, when Socrates and Phaedrus walk along the river and discuss Love and Beauty under the shade of a plane tree. It is a key moment in Platonic literature. Would Thomas Anson's thoughts have turned to Plato when he read those lines, as he walked alongside the river in his own grounds and contemplated his monuments and sculptures?

Thomas Anson was born on 11th April 1695 and baptised on 10th May, at the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Colwich, Staffordshire. He was the seventh of ten known children born to William and Isabella Anson.¹² The dates (and times) of births of the children (four sons and six daughters) are recorded in a Holy Bible, 1688 edition, belonging to Thomas Anson, but which may not have been an original family Bible. The National Trust Collections catalogue give this description:

...Two initial and six final endpaper leaves annotated with genealogical notes, 1795-1941. Additional folio with manuscript record of baptisms and burials, transcribed for 1629-1803, and pasted in on first endpaper. ...Thomas Anson Esqr. Shugborough; pasted over previous owner's plate, possibly that of Richard Banner. Upper margin of title page cut away, with small inscription added in corner: Wm Anson 1695.¹³

Curiously, the inscription "Wm Anson 1695" is the year of Thomas Anson's birth. In about 1745, Thomas purchased many books from the library of Richard Banner (see Chapter 11). His name "Thomas Anson Esqr." indicates ownership, not that it was necessarily Thomas who "pasted over the previous owner's plate", although he may have done. The mystery is who transcribed the baptism details? And why are the burials, apparently recorded on the additional folio, not all found in the Colwich parish records?

The eldest son, William, born in January 1687, died in infancy. With five older sisters, this is how Thomas became the eldest surviving son and heir of William Anson, a wealthy lawyer and ancestor of the Earls of Lichfield. There is no trace of the younger son (also named William), only the lives of Thomas (b.1695) and George (b.1697). Their father, William Anson (1656-1720), rebuilt Shugborough Hall probably not long before the time of Thomas's birth.

The known facts about Thomas Anson's early life are sparse. He was entered into the Inner Temple in 1708, at the age of 13. It seems to be a pattern that prospective lawyers were enrolled into the law before going to university. Thomas entered St John's College, Oxford on 2nd June 1711, at the age of 15. St John's College was associated with the legal profession. Who were his contemporaries? What were his interests other than law?

In 1745, when the Jacobite rebels were moving south, it seemed likely that Shugborough would be directly in their path to Lichfield as they moved onwards to London. Thomas

sent his sisters away to the university city for their safety.

There is one reference to Oxford in Thomas's letters to George. This is a letter dated November 25th 1745 (quoted at length in Chapter 9), when he says:

I look upon Oxford in all Times & Events as the safest and most sacred of all places.¹⁴

From Oxford, having already entered the Inner Temple, he was called to the bar in 1719. Not until 1746 did he become a bencher, a member of the governing body of the Inner Temple. If Thomas was ever a practising lawyer, it is remarkable that no trace of his legal career remains.

Extraordinarily, his own will, written in July 1771, reads:

I make this my Last Will and Testament which I would wish to have understood according to the plainest and most obvious meaning of the words, being unacquainted with forms...¹⁵

It may be that, as a barrister, Thomas had very little contact with this kind of legal process, but his chosen language may also be an example of his dry humour and understatement.

In 1720, the year after he was called to the bar, his father died. Thomas cannot have turned his attention to his inheritance for long, as only three years later he left the country for an unusually long Grand Tour.

While these are the few facts that exist of his early years, it is possible to put them into a wider context and explain how Thomas, and his younger brother George, later Admiral Lord Anson, came to move close to the circles of power and strategic political influence.

The key to the family's position in society was Thomas and George's mother, Isabella Carrier. Isabella and her sister Janet were co-heirs of (Robert) Charles Carrier of Wirksworth, Derbyshire. There was another sister, Elizabeth.

Isabella Carrier married William Anson, on 20th April 1682, bringing added wealth into the family. Very little is known about her and her date of death is unknown. She outlived her husband, William, as her name appears on documents concerned with Derbyshire property in the 1730s.

Thomas and George's paternal grandfather, William Anson (1628-1688), married Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Stafford of Botham Hall, Derbyshire, who died in 1668. Her mother was a Parker, a maternal surname that features repeatedly in the story of the Anson family.

Although the family had wealth, as landed gentry, their social and political influence stemmed largely from Thomas's uncle, Thomas Parker, 1st Earl of Macclesfield, who, in 1691, married Thomas's mother's sister, Janet.¹⁶ Through him, and the marriage of second cousins, the extended family became extremely powerful in politics and was particularly active in the legal world. They also formed close connections with the world of science.

Thomas Parker (1667-1732), like Thomas Anson, was trained at the Inner Temple. He rose to be Lord Chief Justice from 1710-18 and became Lord Chancellor in 1718. This made him a figure of enormous power in politics and the law.

Parker, nonetheless, exerted his power beyond acceptable limits and was accused of abusing his position to support his friends and favourites. In the end, he was found guilty of abusing legal finances, which resulted in his impeachment and imprisonment in the Tower of London. This does not, however, seem to have adversely affected the careers of those in his family circle.

Aside from his legal career, Lord Macclesfield was keen on scientific and legal debates. He was a personal friend of Isaac Newton and returned to London after his disgrace to be a pall bearer at Newton's funeral, in 1727. Thomas Parker's membership of the Royal Society had been personally proposed by Isaac Newton in 1712.

Macclesfield's support for free thinkers included his employment of mathematician William Jones as a tutor for his son George, later the 2nd Earl of Macclesfield. Thomas Parker's close links with the Ansons is also shown by the fact that, as his brother-in-law, he was, with Thomas Anson, an executor of William Anson's will, made in 1715.¹⁷

William, whose Latin name Guilielmi (Guglielmus) is written in the same hand, makes provision to settle his estate upon his seven named children: Elizabeth, Isabella, Jennet, Anna, George, Joanna and William, "my body to be buried at the discretion of my Executors", given as 'brother' Lord Chief Justice Parker and his eldest son Thomas Anson. What later happened to his eldest daughter Elizabeth is unknown and there are no records of his youngest son William, who was clearly alive in 1715 when William Anson made his will (the firstborn William and another daughter both having died in infancy – making ten children in all, of whom eight were living at the time of his death).

Thomas Anson's cousin, Lord Macclesfield's son, George Parker (c.1697-1764), was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1706, two years before Thomas. He was not called to the bar and was at Cambridge University until 1718. He was trained in mathematics by Abraham de Moivre and William Jones, who may also have taught the Ansons.

George Parker was principally a scientist. William Jones proposed Parker for membership of the Royal Society in 1722. Between 1720-22 he toured Italy, before becoming MP for

Wallingford (1722-27). His travelling companion, Edward Wright, published an account of their travels in 1730, including a brief mention of seeing Vivaldi perform in Venice:

It is very unusual to see priests play in the orchestra. The famous Vivaldi whom they call the Prete Rosso [red priest], very well known among us for his concertos, was a topping man among them in Venice.¹⁸

Thomas travelled to Italy in 1723, the year after his cousin returned. As we shall see, music proves to have played an important part in Thomas Anson's life.

George Parker, 2nd Earl of Macclesfield, built-up an important library in his private observatory at Shirburn Castle, when he was President of the Royal Society. There is a reference in one of Thomas's letters to George of a plan to visit Shirburn, but no evidence that he actually went there.

The second Earl's lasting claim to fame was his support, with Philip Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773), for the change to the Gregorian Calendar in 1752.¹⁹ This was unpopular with many people because it meant the apparent loss of eleven days when the calendar was adjusted to the European style, and because the Gregorian calendar was seen as "Popery". Until 1752, the year officially began in March and writers often dated letters written in the first three months of the year with double dates, for example, 1740/1. If only one year is given it may be that, in the Gregorian style, it is actually the following year. This can have a confusing effect on historical research in this period.

By far the most important person in the family circle, especially after his marriage in 1748, was George Anson's father-in-law, Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke (1690-1764), who rose to be Lord Chancellor. He became one of the most powerful men in the country.

Yorke began his career as articled clerk to Charles Salkeld, where he became a life-long friend of Thomas Parker (c.1695-1784), another Parker relative, nephew of the 1st Earl of Macclesfield, from Park Hall, Staffordshire. This Thomas Parker entered the Inner Temple on 3rd May 1718 and was called to the bar on 19th June 1724.

The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* suggests that Yorke became tutor, presumably in law, to Thomas Parker, five years his junior, at the time when Yorke entered the Middle Temple²⁰ (as distinct from the Inner Temple where the Parkers and Thomas Anson were trained). Acting as tutor to Thomas Parker gave Philip Yorke access to Lord Macclesfield. These connections "provided a rocket boost" to Yorke's career.²¹ In 1720 Lord Macclesfield made Yorke Solicitor General. He became Lord Chancellor in 1737 and negotiated a position in the Exchequer for his eldest son, also Philip Yorke (1720-1790).

George Anson's rise to the highest position of authority in the Admiralty is sometimes assumed to have been due to his marriage to Elizabeth Yorke, Lord Hardwicke's daughter,

in 1748. The true situation is more complicated. Philip Yorke seems to have been something of an upstart, owing his success to the support of the Parkers, or perhaps to his use of them to his own advantage. He was only six years older than his son-in-law, and the marriage was another way of raising himself to a position of power over the family that had set his career on its course. It might be closer to the truth to think of Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, as someone who owed his position to the Ansons and Parkers, rather than the other way around. The Ansons were already part of a powerful political dynasty. Nevertheless, looking towards the future:

His [George's] position at the heart of the political establishment was cemented by his marriage to the daughter of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke.²²

His older brother, Thomas Anson, with his legal background, was also at the heart of the Macclesfield circle, but there is no reason to suppose that he was ever dominated by Lord Hardwicke. Thomas is often said to have had no interest in politics. He only once spoke in the House of Commons, and wrote on one occasion:

There is indeed such Cabal, Intrigue and such a Huddle of Politics.²³

This might, however, be misleading. There is evidence that Thomas had friends in very high places before George's voyage brought him to fame and power.

John Montagu, Lord Sandwich (1718-1792), who later became George's political master at the Admiralty, had been involved with Thomas's cultural pursuits before George returned, in 1744, from his circumnavigation around the globe, which brought him wealth and fame.

Before George Anson's departure, Thomas appears to have had a mysterious relationship with Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarbrough, a man close to King George II and his son, Frederick, Prince of Wales – who killed himself in January 1740.

Thomas's surviving letters to George from the 1740s show a deep involvement in political and military activities.²⁴ But was this conventional party politics, or did the brothers have other interests and loyalties?

NOTES: Chapter 1

- ¹ Thomas Pennant, *The Journey from Chester to London*. Printed for Luke White, Dublin, 1783. Available on Google Books.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Kerry Bristol, 'The Society of Dilettanti, James "Athenian" Stuart and the Anson family', *Apollo, The International Art Magazine*, No. 461, 2000, pp.46-54.
- ⁴ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Papers of James Harris 1732-1780*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- ⁵ John Eardley Wilmot, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir John Eardley Wilmot, Knt. Late Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and one of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council*. Printed by J. Nichols & Son, London, 1811. Available on Google Books.
- ⁶ Staffordshire Record Office, , *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/2/5 This collection of personal papers and bound letters held at the National Archives, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: D615/(D), (E), (M), (P), (S), DW03, DW1474, DW1840 and D5800, also includes deeds and estate papers, maps and plans..
- ⁷ "Seric" means silken.
- ⁸ Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, Henry Lincoln, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Jonathan Cape, 1982, p.153.
- ⁹ Sampson Erdeswicke, *A Survey of Staffordshire: Containing the Antiquities of that County*. John Nichols, London, 1820, pp.154-55.
- ¹⁰ The poem *To Lord Anson* can be found on pp.160-1 in George Hardinge's *Biographical Memoirs of the Rev. Sneyd Davies D.D. Canon Residentiary of Lichfield in a Letter to Mr. Nichols*. Fifty copies printed for Nichols, Son & Bentley; not for sale, but for Mr. Hardinge's friends, and those of Dr. Davies. London, 1817. <https://archive.org/details/biographicalmem00davigoog/page/n154>
- ¹¹ Robert Wood, Giovanni B Borra and James Dawkins. *The Ruins of Palmyra, otherwise Tedmor in the Desert*. 1753. <https://archive.org/details/ruinsPalmyraoth00Wood>
- ¹² For Baptisms of Thomas Anson and his siblings see Staffordshire Parish Records. D874/1/1 Also www.ancestry.co.uk www.findmypast.com and other genealogy resources.
- ¹³ Holy Bible, 1688. National Trust Collections, Shugborough Estate, Staffordshire. www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3189522
- ¹⁴ British Library, *Letters from Thomas Anson to Admiral George Anson, 1743-1749*. MSS Add. 15955, November 25th 1745.
- ¹⁵ Staffordshire Record Office, *Wills and administration of members of the Anson family 1661-1772*. Thomas Anson, 1772. D615/EL/69 The Will of Thomas Anson, dated Feb 27th 1772, written originally in July 1771, can also be found on [ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858. National Archives, PROB 11: Will Registers 1773-1776. Piece 0986: Stevens, Quire Numbers 105-152. Probate date 30th April 1773.
- ¹⁶ Parker, Thomas (1667-1732), of Bridge Street, Derby, and Essex Street, London. *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1690-1715 (5 Vols.)*. Eds. D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley, Cambridge University Press, 2002. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/parker-thomas-1667-1732>
- ¹⁷ Staffordshire Record Office, *Wills and administration of members of the Anson family 1661-1772*. William Anson, 1715. D615/EL/69 The Will of William Anson of Shugborough Manor, made in 1715, can be found on [ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858. National Archives, PROB 11: Will Registers 1773-1776. Piece 0986: Stevens, Quire Numbers 105-152. Probate date 27th October 1720.

- ¹⁸ John Booth, *Vivaldi*. Omnibus Press, 1990.
- ¹⁹ The Calendar (New Style) Act 1750 introduced the Gregorian calendar to the British Empire, bringing Britain into line with most of Western Europe. With the change-over from the Julian calendar that began on 25th March, the year 1752 began on 1st January. This meant that the year 1751 was a short year. Then to align the calendar with that in use in Europe, at the beginning of September 1752 Britain 'lost' 11 days when 2nd September was followed by 14th September. The 'New Style' date is used throughout this study.
- ²⁰ Yorke, Philip (1690-1764), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), originally published in 63 volumes by Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1900. Vol. 63. Entry by Peter D. G. Thomas <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30245>
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Nicholas Kingsley (Chairman of the National Council on Archives, 2001-2005), *Landed families of Britain and Ireland*, 'Anson of Shugborough Hall, Ranton Abbey and Orgreave Hall, Earls of Lichfield'. <http://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2014/12/149-anson-of-shugborough-hall-ranton.html>
- ²³ British Library, Op. cit. MSS Add. 15955, 8th Feb 1748. This comment is often cited as being in a letter to Lord Hardwicke. The letter has no name and may be incomplete; but it is in the archive collection of letters to George Anson.
- ²⁴ The present author has worked from scans of the surviving collection of *Letters from Thomas Anson to Admiral George Anson, 1743-1749*. MSS Add. 15955, held in the British Library. Likewise, there are relatively few letters in the collection from Admiral Anson, though what there are contain important material. The BL catalogue gives individual folio numbers but the letters themselves do not appear to be numbered. They are mostly in chronological order, but some are not. Not all are dated but most of those that are not can be put into order by datable references within them. A few of the letters have been quoted in earlier studies, sometimes inaccurately or misleadingly.

Chapter 2

Anson in Italy

The earliest of Thomas's travels for which there are records, was a tour of Belgium, France and Italy, beginning in 1723. His excursion lasted at least two years, and perhaps longer.

The previous year, Thomas had sold his shares in the South Sea Company. This was two years after the "South Sea Bubble" when the value of shares in the company had plummeted. Thomas, even in 1722, was a wealthy young man, having received £2444-8-11d for his dividend (approaching £500,000 in today's terms). He would have been able to indulge in the luxuries and temptations of a European tour.

A letter of Attorney from Thomas Anson, witnessed by his brother, George Anson, records the following:

Letter of Attorney from Thomas Anson esq, of the Inner Temple, [London], to William Oaker gent, of Lincoln's Inn Fields, [London], to receive his Christmas South Sea dividend and sell £2444-8-11d, his total South Sea Company stock. Signed and sealed. Witnesses, including his brother George Anson. 4 May 1722.¹

Thomas was first reported in Belgium with Mr Mytton and Mr Degge, seeking the protection of the British ambassador to the Congress of Cambrai (a long running diplomatic confederation in which France and England mediated between Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor).

Lord Charles Whitworth, a government representative at Cambrai, wrote in July to Lord Polwarth, Alexander Hume-Campbell, 2nd Earl of Marchmont, one of the British ambassadors to the Congress, from Spa, Belgium:

Mr. Mytten, Mr. Anson and Mr. Degge, three English gentlemen who have been here for some time and design to take Cambrai on their way to Paris desire your lordship's protection. They are pretty modest gentlemen, and Mr. Anson, who is nephew to my Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Macclesfield, has been particularly recommended to me by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as Secretary of State and Mr. De la Faye. When he has been about a month in Paris, he designs to come back and make some stay at Cambrai.²

At this time, Thomas was seen as a protégée of Lord Macclesfield, the Lord Chancellor and the Ansons' uncle. Charles Delafaye was a civil servant, at that time Secretary to the Lord Justices of England.

Ingamells' *Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800*, a rich source of information, suggests that Mytton was William Mytton, a wine trader and member of an extensive Shropshire family.³ It is, however, far more likely that this fellow traveller was William Mytton's younger brother James Mytton, the youngest of a large generation of the Myttons of Halston Hall, Whittington, Shropshire, who lived in Richmond.⁴ (Identification is not always certain as writers of the time rarely use a first name or even an initial. Only very intimate friends would use first names in a conversation.)

Much later, Lady Anson refers to "the problem of Mytton's almshouses" in a letter to her husband, Admiral Anson, in 1759.⁵ These were Houblon's Almshouses in Sheen Road, left to the care of James Mytton by his great-aunt Susannah Houblon, widow of John Houblon, Governor of the Bank of England. Her death, in 1759, would have likely prompted Lady Anson's letter. Susannah Houblon's will also bequeathed that Mytton's sister Esther be allowed to live for the rest of her life at Ellerker House, Richmond.

James Mytton (1696-1764) is described as "of Richmond" in the list of subscribers of Emanuel Mendes da Costa's book, *A Natural History of Fossils*, published in 1757.⁶ La Costa was a Fellow of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies of London. I have been unable to trace Mytton's Richmond address, though a letter to la Costa, from his nephew, Thomas Pennant, was written from "James Mytton Esq's. in Richmond", on 9th April 1755.⁷

James Mytton, who appears to have been Thomas's longest lasting friend, was left in charge of Thomas's business affairs while he was in the East in 1740-41. They both visited Paris in 1748 and Mytton seems to have been a regular visitor to Shugborough. One of Lady Anson's letters mentions him being there as late as 1756.

Thomas Pennant, who gave the detailed description of Shugborough quoted in the first chapter, was Mytton's nephew. After the death of his brothers, James found himself the senior member of the family, supporting Pennant and his other nephews and nieces.

One of James Mytton's nephews, John, travelled in Italy for many years. John Mytton (1737-1783) was an art collector and member of the Dilettanti Society. He must have been the "Mr Mytton" who received a mourning ring on the death of Thomas (see Chapter 20), his uncle James having predeceased Thomas in 1764. The eccentric "Mad Jack" Mytton (1796-1834), the famous huntsman at the turn of the century, was the grandson of this John Mytton.

Though it is reasonable to assume that it was James Mytton, Thomas's particular friend,

who travelled to the continent with Anson and Degge, Ingamells' *Dictionary* gives no evidence that he was with them in Italy. This does not, however, mean that he was not one of their party. The evidence, as can be gleaned from extant documents, is very fragmentary and James Mytton, at any point in his life, is hard to pin down. James Mytton, like Thomas Anson, was unmarried.⁸

Simon Degge (1797-c.1765) of Blithbridge,⁹ was a Staffordshire friend and a contemporary of Thomas at the Inner Temple, having been entered four years after Thomas in 1712.

Ingamells gives no clues as to Thomas Anson's whereabouts for the next year. It is possible he had returned home after visiting Paris and Cambrai, before setting off again for Italy, but there are traces of Simon Degge and it is conceivable that Anson was still travelling with him.

On 22nd May 1724, Degge was in Rome when he, Richard Rawlinson and Benjamin Calvert visited the Palazzo Spado, the palace named after the Cardinal Spada. In July he was in Siena, and back again in Rome in December.¹⁰

In the last few months of 1724, Thomas Anson was following a different itinerary. In September 1724 he was in Padua with Alan Brodrick, another member of the Inner Temple, according to Ingamells (although he is not listed on the Inner Temple admissions database¹¹). Thomas and Alan Brodrick both signed the visitors' book at the University of Padua. This was a tradition for Grand Tourists and the book contains the names of over 2,000 British travellers.¹²

Simon Degge arrived in Padua a few months later. On February 17th 1725, he signed the Padua visitors' book with a group of others, including Lucius Cary and Benjamin and Francis Lambert. One of them made a note that they were:

all safe and sound arrived here from the Carnavale of Venice.¹³

The visitor's book later lists Simon Degge's brother, William, who joined the Society of Dilettanti with Thomas Anson, visiting Padua in 1732 with George Knapton, the portrait painter for the Society.

The three contemporaries of the Inner Temple: Alan Brodrick, Simon Degge and Thomas Anson, may have been fellow travellers throughout this period, occasionally diverting to other cities. All were in their late twenties or early thirties. The usual image of a Grand Tourist is of a very young man, in his teens or early twenties, travelling with a guardian or tutor, taking the opportunity to gather a wide variety of experience of the world. While such tours were not necessarily cultural, they were often a chance to collect art works, whether valuable or merely as souvenirs.

This group of friends were visiting the usual educational tourist haunts, wandering back and forth, apparently in no hurry to return. There is no evidence that Thomas Anson bought objets d'art on this trip, though there is a pietra dura tabletop at Shugborough which may come from this period.

There were, of course, many other distractions and amusements in Italy that would not be accessible back home. Apart from this, and we know very little of Thomas's private life, there was music. In his later years, music was as important to Thomas as architecture, sculpture and botany. Italy was the principal place for high quality music throughout the 18th century, even when the other arts and political power of its various states were in decline.

Alan Brodrick and Sir Gerard Aylmer left Rome for Naples in March 1725. Thomas Anson had met up with Simon Degge again in Rome by April. They stayed in Rome for Holy Week. Easter Day was 1st April in 1725. The spectacle of Holy Week, with the processions of penitents followed by the grand celebrations of Easter, was an attraction to Grand Tourists. What did they make of it? Was it just curiosity about an unfamiliar culture?

Some tourists, most notoriously Sir Francis Dashwood, went out of their way to mock the ritual of the Catholic Church. On his Grand Tour a few years later, if Horace Walpole can be believed, Dashwood joined a group of penitents who were scourging themselves at midnight and strode up the aisle cracking a horsewhip, terrifying them all.¹⁴

Dashwood and Thomas Anson certainly knew each other in later years, as fellow members of the Society of Dilettanti, the Egyptian Society and the Divan Club, yet this kind of behaviour seems very far removed from Anson's discernibly reserved and modest style.

Thomas Anson's religious inclinations, if any, are unknown. Entries in the family Bible indicate that his parents recognised the Christian festivals, noting the births of his sister Jennet on Candlemas Day 1690 and his brother George on St Georges Day 1697.¹⁵

There were a few religious paintings, including *Susanna and The Elders*, copied from Guido Reni. It is curious that the largest and most ostentatiously placed of all the pictures that survive from the collection at Shugborough is of a very strongly Roman Catholic subject. *The Immaculate Conception* by Miguel Jacinto Meléndez, is now hung as the focus of the Red Drawing Room. This striking picture, dated 1731, seems too large to have hung in the house before this grandest of the rooms was added thirty years after Thomas's death. Perhaps these large religious paintings were later acquired by his heir, George (Adams) Anson or George's son, Thomas Anson, 1st Viscount Anson?

Thomas, with Simon Degge and an unidentified Thomas Kemp, followed Brodrick to Naples on 4th April. On 24th May, Anson and Degge, having returned to Rome, were leaving again and heading towards Florence. In the following months, Brodrick was also

in northern Italy, including visits to Parma and Venice. Broderick not only bought pictures but also sat for his portrait in Venice.

Degge was still in Italy in March 1726, when he was reported as being in Milan. There are no further traces of Thomas Anson. He may still have been with Degge or Brodrick but simply not mentioned in the sources, yet it appears that his tour may have lasted two years or more. This is a long time, but not long enough to account for Eardley Wilmot's comment: "many years abroad".¹⁶ It is only one of his several known journeys, and there may well have been others.

Brodrick was back in England in August 1727, when he was involved in the one event that has proved to be his only lasting claim to fame – a historic cricket match at Godalming with his friend Charles Lennox, the 2nd Duke of Richmond's XI. Brodrick and Richmond drew up articles of agreement for the match, which later, in 1744, became the basis for the "Laws of Cricket" and have remained so ever since.¹⁷ I have found no evidence that Thomas Anson was a cricketer. There was, however, a bowling green at Shugborough.

Brodrick's relationship with Thomas Anson may be slight. They may have been passing acquaintances or they may have been part of a circle of close friends from the same legal background (and in Degge's case, from the same part of England). As with so many things in this story, it would be helpful to know more about their relationships, if any. Especially as Alan Brodrick reappears ten years later as one of the most important patrons of Thomas Wright, the architect who transformed the house and gardens at Shugborough in the 1740s.

By this time, Alan Brodrick (1701/2-1747) had become the 2nd Viscount Midleton. He unexpectedly inherited his father's estate at Peper Harow in Surrey, owing to the death of his elder half-brother only a few months earlier, in 1728. He was one of the Commissioners of Customs and MP for Midhurst. Brodrick married, in 1729, Mary, eldest daughter of Lieutenant General Algernon Capell, the 2nd Earl of Essex. Wright stayed with Midletons several times, teaching the children of their family and members of the Earl of Essex's family.

The editor of 'The Early Journal of Thomas Wright of Durham', published in 1951,¹⁸ wrongly identifies Lord Midleton as Francis Willoughby, who was a completely unrelated Lord Middleton, and whom, coincidentally, Wright met on his travels in 1750.

There is no trace of Thomas Anson's and Simon Degge's return from Italy, but the rare and valuable clues that do survive suggest a continuing connection between them. They appear together in the next known document mentioning Thomas Anson: his election to the membership of the Royal Society in 1730. Four years later, Thomas's name appears next to Simon Degge's brother William in the list of founder members of the Society of Dilettanti, but Simon disappears from the scene.

THOMAS ANSON OF SHUGBOROUGH

It is unfortunate that two of Anson's companions have, in the past, been wrongly identified. Ingamells incorrectly gives Simon Degge's date of death as 1727.¹⁹ It was a complicated Derbyshire family with several cousins and uncles all named Simon, and the personal details have been confused with a second cousin, Simon, who died in 1729. It is only by a very careful investigation of family dates and clues in extant documents that the correct identities of Mr Mytton and Mr Degge are established.

While the travellers were away, Thomas's uncle, Thomas Parker, Earl of Macclesfield, the Lord Chancellor, became involved in a serious charge of corruption (mentioned in the previous chapter). After being accused of encouraging the misuse of legal funds, for himself and other Masters in Chancery, he resigned in January 1725 and was tried in the House of Lords during May. Found guilty, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London and ordered to pay a £30,000 fine.

Thomas Parker retired to Shirburn Castle. He died on 23rd April 1732. His son, the astronomer and politician George Parker, succeeded him as the 2nd Earl of Macclesfield.

NOTES: Chapter 2

- ¹ William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, *South Sea Company Papers*. S.MS 478/1/35
- ² Alexander Hume-Campbell Marchmont, Earl of; Walter Hugh Hepburne-Scott Polwarth, Baron; Henry Paton, *Report on the manuscripts of Lord Polwarth, preserved at Mertoun House*. Great Britain Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (HMC). HM Stationery Office, 1931. Available on Google Books.
- ³ John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800*. Compiled from the Brinsley Ford Archive. Yale University Press, 1997.
- ⁴ There are many references to James Mytton in the *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield* in the Staffordshire Record Office.
- ⁵ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/2
- ⁶ Emanuel Mendes la Costa, *A Natural History of Fossils*. Printed for L. Davis and C. Reymers (printers to the Royal Society), 1747. Available on Google Books.
- ⁷ Warwickshire County Record Office. CR2017/1878, April 9th 1755.
- ⁸ The peerage entry for Thomas Anson reads: "He died in 1773, unmarried."
<http://www.thepeerage.com/p1692.htm#i16917>
- ⁹ Blythe Bridge, formerly Blithbridge, is a community that was built near the bridge over the river Blithe.
- ¹⁰ John Ingamells. Op. cit.
- ¹¹ See <http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/>
- ¹² The visitors' book at the University of Padua is included in *Monografie storiche sullo, Studio di Padova*, 1922. Available on Google Books.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Sir Francis Dashwood, *The Dashwoods of West Wycombe*. Aurum Press, 1990.
- ¹⁵ Anson Family Bible, 1688. National Trust Collection, Shugborough Estate, Staffordshire.
www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3189522
- ¹⁶ John Eardley Wilmot, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir John Eardley Wilmot, Knt*. Printed by J. Nichols & Son, 1811. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁷ Harry Altham, *A History of Cricket, Vol. 1 (to 1914)*. George Allen & Unwin, 1962.
- ¹⁸ Edward Hughes, 'The Early Journal of Thomas Wright of Durham', *Annals of Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1, March 28, 1951. Taylor & Francis Online.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00033795100202151>
- ¹⁹ John Ingamells. Op. cit.

Chapter 3

Nature's Laws

Fellow travellers, Thomas Anson and Simon Degge, were elected to the Royal Society on May 14th 1730. They were both proposed to the Society by William Jones and Rev. Zachary Pearce.¹

A connection with the Royal Society is hardly surprising. Thomas's uncle, the 1st Earl of Macclesfield, had been proposed as a member by Isaac Newton in 1712, and, after his disgrace, one of his few visits to London and rare appearances in public was, as mentioned, as a pall bearer at his friend Isaac Newton's funeral in 1727.

The Anson's first cousin and fellow barrister of the Inner Temple, astronomer George Parker, soon to be 2nd Earl of Macclesfield, had, in 1722, been proposed to the Royal Society by his tutor William Jones.

William Jones and Zachary Pearce were both intimately connected with Thomas's uncle, Lord Macclesfield and the Parker family. Zachary Pearce was at one time chaplain to Thomas Parker, 1st Earl of Macclesfield and, by 1724, held the positions of chaplain to the King (1721-1739) and rector of St-Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster (1724-1756).

Pearce seems to have been a 'toady' to the Earl of Macclesfield, an 18th-century cleric who was more interested in classics than religion. In his autobiography, written in the third person, which also tells of the lives of Dr Edward Pocock and others, he explains how he came to be known to the Earl:

In the year 1716, he caused his first edition of "Cicero de Oratore", with notes and emendations, to be printed at the press of that University (Cambridge). When that work was almost finished, a friend of his, and fellow of the college, asked him, "to whom he designed to dedicate that edition to?" His answer was, "that he had not the happiness to be acquainted with any of those great men, to whom such things are usually dedicated." His friend immediately replied, "I have the honour to be so well known to Lord Parker (then Chief Justice of the King's Bench), that I will undertake to ask his Lordship's leave for your dedicating it to him, if you will give your consent for my doing so." Mr. Pearce returned the gentleman his thanks, and readily consented to it.²

His friend duly asked the then Lord Chief Justice Parker, who accepted the dedication. Pearce was not able to thank him personally for a while, but when he was finally able to go to London:

...[he] made a visit to his patron Lord Parker, who received him in a very obliging manner, invited him to dine with him the next day, at Kensington, and there put into his hands a purse which contained fifty guineas. Mr. Pearce, at times, renewed his visits to his Lordship, and was always very kindly received by him.³

Parker immediately offered Pearce the post of chaplain, not, it is clear, on any religious basis, but on the strength of his edition of *Cicero*.⁴

His Secretary came soon out to Mr. Pearce, and said, that his Lordship desired him to stay till all the company was gone, and that then he would see him. He did so, and being brought to the Lord Chancellor, he, among other things, said, that "he should now want a chaplain to live with him in his house;" and he asked Mr. Pearce, "if it would suit with his convenience to live with him in that capacity." With this Mr. Pearce very readily, and with thanks, complied; and, as soon as his Lordship had provided himself with a proper house, he went into his family as his chaplain, and there continued three years.⁵

Pearce worked his way up to more profitable positions with Parker's support, but it seemed fitting that a more senior clergyman should have been awarded a doctorate in Divinity, which Pearce had not. Macclesfield saw a way round this:

Then said the Lord Chancellor, "the Archbishop of Canterbury, Doctor Wake, has the power of conferring a Doctor's degree in Divinity, and I will ask him to bestow that favour on you." I thanked his Lordship, and he spoke to the Archbishop some few days after, who readily consented to it, and the degree was conferred accordingly, June 1st, 1724.⁶

In appreciation, Doctor Pearce dedicated his edition of *Longinus on the Sublime* to Lord Macclesfield – not, of course, a theological work but a Platonic treatise on Beauty.⁷ This is interesting, as it shows that one of the main characters in Thomas Anson's early life, his extremely influential uncle, had also, perhaps, at least a passing interest in Platonic philosophy.

Conceivably, if Thomas Anson knew Pearce through his uncle's household, any relationship they may have had was likely by virtue of Greek philosophy rather than theology. This could point to the beginnings of Thomas's enthusiasm for Greece and what its culture stood for. Pearce was not purely a classicist; he published theological works and sermons, arguing for the truth of miracles and for missionary works to the New World. In his earlier days, he had also written occasional satirical pieces for literary journals.

Zachary Pearce (1690-1774), who met Newton through Macclesfield, played a part in Isaac Newton's *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms*.⁸ When a shorter version of this study of Biblical history had appeared, it was criticised for its lack of unscientific references. Pearce's autobiography tells how:

In the year 1725, and about five months before Sir Isaac died, I had the honour of a visit from him at my house in St. Martin's Church-yard, to which he walked, at his great age, from his house near Leicester-fields. He staid with me near two hours, and our conversation chiefly turned upon his Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms.⁹

Newton explained that he had not wanted the short version published, so Pearce advised him to produce a final copy, from many manuscripts, that could be published as a definitive version. Newton set about doing this, with a further visit from Pearce:

A few days before he died, I made him a visit at Kensington, where he was then for his health, and where I found Mr. Innys the bookseller with him: he withdrew as soon as I came in, and went away; and I mention this, only for confirming my account by one circumstance, which I shall mention before I conclude. I dined with Sir Isaac on that day, and we were alone all the time of my stay with him: I found him writing over his Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms, without the help of spectacles, at the greatest distance of the room from the windows, and with a parcel of books on the table casting a shade upon his paper. Seeing this, on my entering the room, I said to him, "Sir, you seem to be writing in a place where you cannot so well see." His answer was, "A little light serves me." He then told me, "that he was preparing his Chronology for the press, and that he had written the greatest part of it over again for that purpose."¹⁰

Thomas's other proponent to the Royal Society, William Jones (c.1675-1749), was also an associate of Isaac Newton (1642/3-1727), and a free thinker. William Stukeley (1687-1765), the antiquarian, wrote that he was invited to meetings of an "Infidel Society", set up in 1720 by Martin Folkes, a distinguished mathematician and a senior figure in the Royal Society. He was also a noted atheist and a prominent Freemason. Stukeley declined the invitation, saying, rather impolitely, that it was:

Where Will Jones, the mathematician, & others of a heathen stamp assembled. He invited me earnestly to come thither but I always refused.¹¹

What, exactly, did Stukeley mean by "a heathen stamp"? Were these people atheists or more inclined to the "heathen" philosophies, which included Plato? Stukeley was a committed Christian and a clergyman, with bold ideas about the ancient Druids, who he liked to think were precursors of Christianity; in effect, honorary members of the Church of England.

The fact that William Jones was an active and important early Freemason, an organisation that demands of its members a belief in a Deity, would imply that he was not an out-and-out atheist. Jones, like many others, was a Fellow of the Royal Society as well as a Freemason. His lasting contribution to mathematics was the use of the Greek letter π to represent the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. He was the first to compute the value of Pi to 100 decimal places. It was his work on this concept that brought him to the attention of Newton. Jones was also interested in navigation, publishing a book, *Of the Whole Art of Practical Navigation*, in 1702.¹²

Jones corresponded with John Machin (1680-1751), a professor of astronomy who served as secretary to the Royal Society for nearly 30 years, from 1718. He was also a member of the commission appointed to determine the calculus dispute between Leibniz and Newton, in 1712. Patricia Rothman, in her 2009 article, 'The Man who Invented Pi', says that in a letter to Jones, Machin used fanciful language to complain about Newton's lunar theory:

...she (the moon) has informed me that he (Newton) has abused her throughout the whole course of her life, giving out that she is guilty of such irregularities and enormities in all her ways and proceedings that no man alive is able to find where she is at any time.¹³

Jones, who came from the Isle of Anglesey, became tutor to Philip Yorke, later Lord Hardwicke, and father of George Anson's future wife, Elizabeth, in about 1706. At the same time, he became tutor to George Parker, son of the Earl of Macclesfield and the Ansons' cousin. The fact that Jones was so closely connected with the Parker family, who linked the Ansons to political and intellectual centres of power, supports the supposition that Jones was equally close, perhaps also as a tutor, to the Anson brothers in their youth.

William Jones's son, the poet and expert on Indian culture who established links between the languages of Latin, Greek and Sanskrit, Sir William Jones (1746-1794), believed that his father had been connected with George Anson early in his career:

From his earliest years Mr. Jones discovered a propensity for mathematical studies, and, having cultivated them with assiduity, he began his career in life by teaching mathematics on board a man-of-war; and in this situation attracted the notice and obtained the friendship of Lord (Mr.) Anson.¹⁴

This is impossible as far as the dates go, but the idea may have stemmed from a misremembered anecdote about his father's link with Anson. His father had died when he was about three years of age.

It seems reasonable to suppose that Jones would have acted as tutor in mathematics, including navigation, to Thomas and George Anson, as well as to their cousin George

Parker and, at the same time, to Philip Yorke, later Lord Harwicke. Jones would, then, stand out as a very important influence, bringing these individuals together early on in their lives.

Jones continued to be closely connected to the Parkers. When Thomas Parker retired to Shirburn Castle, in Oxfordshire, after his disgrace, he and his son, George Parker, 2nd Earl of Macclesfield, with the help of William Jones, built up their famous scientific library. The library, with its important relics of Jones and Isaac Newton, survived until it was finally broken up and sold, in the year 2004.

Once having been elected to the Royal Society, Thomas Anson vanishes from the record, just as he does with the Society of Dilettanti a few years later. He did not sign the Charter Book or pay admission fees, yet there is no trace of him having been ejected. Simon Degge, on the other hand, continued to be listed as a Fellow of the Royal Society until 1760.

The family connections with the Earls of Macclesfield and the names of Pearce and Jones, having proposed of Thomas Anson to the Royal Society, suggests a personal link with the great scientist, Isaac Newton, who served as President of the Royal Society from 1703 to 1727. It is hard to imagine that Anson would not have known him. Whilst his involvement in the Royal Society may not have been great, there are other clues that he had a serious interest in Newton's ideas.

In the Shugborough Library were original editions of Newton's *Principia*¹⁵ and his more esoteric *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms* (assisted by Zachary Pearce),¹⁶ according to the catalogue of the great Sale in 1842, when the bulk of the contents were sold to pay for the gambling debts of the 1st Earl of Lichfield.¹⁷

In 1728, the year after Newton's death, "Thomas Anson Esq." was one of the subscribers to Henry Pemberton's *A View of Isaac Newton's Philosophy*.¹⁸ Pemberton was another scientist who had assisted Newton in his old age. He had brought the two organisations together by proposing many of his Masonic friends to the Royal Society.

There had been close links between the Royal Society and Freemasonry since its founding in 1660.¹⁹ Many people were both Fellows of the Royal Society and Freemasons. In the 1720s and 1730s Freemasonry was growing into an organised structure; its rituals, derived from the ancient fraternities of stonemasons, were being developed into a complex symbolic system.

The most important figure in this development, and the most likely creator of the modern rituals, was French-born Dr John Theophilus Desaguliers (1683-1744). Another clergyman, he was elected to the Royal Society in 1714 as experimental assistant to Newton.

William Jones, a member of the Queen's Head Lodge, is known to have proposed at least

eight fellow Masonic colleagues to the Royal Society between 1711 and 1738, twice as many as Dr Desaguliers, who, as a promoter and lecturer on Newton's ideas, was by far the most influential figure in both organisations at the time. In 1719, Desaguliers became the third Grand Master of what would become the Premier Grand Lodge of England.

There is no record that Thomas or George Anson were ever Freemasons. This may seem surprising considering their connection with William Jones. This is not, however, conclusive as the records of the Lodges in this period are incomplete.

Jones and Desaguliers were among those men who influenced the spread of Deism in both the Royal Society and Freemasonry. "Deists" were clerics who adapted their theology to the new science. God was the creator, but there was no room for the supernatural in the machine. Religion provided a system of divinely ordained moral laws that were counterpoint to the physical laws of the universe. This rapidly became the dominant view of the Church of England.

There were those who were naturally opposed to such a view. Enthusiasts and reformers like John Wesley, might accept the Newtonian universe but still believed in the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit. Another alternative philosophy which opposed materialism was Idealism inspired by Platonic principles.

The most extreme Idealist was George Berkeley (1685-1753), the Anglo-Irish philosopher and Bishop of Cloyne. Berkeley opposed Locke and Newton by arguing that, in effect, there was no such thing as a material universe. Science could, and should, help us understand material things (or what appear to be material phenomena), but ultimately there is no material reality.

Berkeley enjoyed making logical arguments against the reality of matter, but it is wrong to suggest that he simply claimed matter does not exist. The Idealist view is that reality is what we, as individuals, experience. Matter is subservient. What is 'real' is what is in the Mind, and – if an Idealist is also a Platonist – the Mind, by its very nature, is also the Mind of God.

(Whilst Berkeley is not directly connected to the circle of people discussed in this book, his son was at one time engaged to Catherine Talbot, friend of Lady Anson and Elizabeth Carter. Talbot and Carter enter this narrative in Chapter 7.)

Carter apparently enjoyed Berkeley's book *Siris*,²⁰ though she wrote to Miss Talbot:

I fairly confess I have no clear idea what one half of it means.²¹

She was, presumably, referring to the part of the book that was not about the wonderful effects of drinking tar-water. Her lack of comprehension is odd considering that she was

a Platonist herself. She also knew something of Newton's philosophy. In 1739, the Platonic Elizabeth Carter published *Isaac Newton's Philosophy Explain'd for the Use of Ladies*, translated from the work by Count Algarotti.²²

Though there might seem to be a clear distinction between Deism and Idealism, it is often very difficult to determine where individual thinkers stand.

How do we classify Newton? He was unorthodox in his religious beliefs, but was he, strictly speaking, a materialist? William Blake, a hundred years later, saw him as the enemy of imagination and the soul, and yet Newton was, throughout his life, an alchemist. His mathematics is based purely on a scientific approach, but his quest was for an understanding of the principles that were the basis of every level of existence, material and immaterial.

Newton was, perhaps, too much of a genius to be easily defined. It was perfectly possible for people to be Platonists, or Idealists, and to be fascinated by Isaac Newton's work. It is worth remembering that Newton was a good thirty years older than many of the other individuals mentioned.

The world of Thomas Anson and his friends seems to show that the Greek Revival, in architecture and the visual arts, was accompanied, and preceded by, a revival in Greek ideas, particularly in Platonic philosophy.

There was very little interest in Plato in the 18th century. By 1800 such ideas resurfaced and had an influence on the Romantic movement in literature, most directly on the poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley. This earlier Platonic Revival has gone largely unnoticed and forgotten by many, yet it not only predated and inspired the Greek Revival in the visual arts but promoted an attitude towards the value of Nature that was opposed to Deism and the prevailing materialism of the age.

Thomas Anson, as patron, was an important figure in this now largely forgotten circle of artists and philosophers. He might have had no conscious intention, or vocation, to support these ideas; it is impossible to know what his own attitudes were, apart from a very few hints given by his own words that survive, and what others said about him.

His association with James Harris (1709-1780), who Thomas certainly knew well, may have been through music rather than philosophy. Harris was a promoter of Platonic ideas and a supporter of Floyer Sydenham (1710-1787), who, now almost forgotten, was probably the most interesting philosopher of the Greek Revival period.

Harris and Sydenham saw themselves as disciples of Harris's uncle, Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671-1713), 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury was an influential philosopher

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throughout the 18th century, and an important influence on the Enlightenment in Europe. He is sometimes described as a Deist, because he did not appear to believe in a God who intervened in the world or operated a system of divine reward and punishment. His philosophy is all about Virtue and living in accord with Nature. As Nature has Divine Truth within, a life of Virtue was, in a spiritual sense, one that followed "Nature's Laws".

Shaftesbury's moral philosophy could be attractive to a Deist, but to his admiring nephew, James Harris, Ashley Cooper was a Platonist. His uncle's philosophy derived from the Platonic belief in a Divine Law within Nature – knowing Nature can reveal spiritual truths as well as scientific knowledge.

To Harris, the enemy was John Locke (1632-1704), with his concept that the human mind was born as blank page, a "tabula rasa" to be formed entirely by experience. This was an ancient idea, but one totally opposed to the Platonic view that there are Divine Truths within the human soul and in all things, which experience helps us to discover.

It would be wrong to suppose that Thomas Anson agreed with James Harris who had "a seething dislike of Locke,"²³ or that he followed any particular doctrine. There was a bust of Locke in his Library (see Chapter 20).

Anson seems to have been an explorer of ideas as well as of ancient places, what became known as "Picturesque". There is no doubt that he had a serious interest in Beauty, as manifest in both Art and Nature. To the 18th-century Platonist, Beauty could lead to Truth and Virtue.

NOTES: Chapter 3

- ¹ See <https://royalsociety.org/> I also have a copy of the relevant page of the record book supplied by the Royal Society.
- ² 'Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester', in *The Lives of Dr. Edward Pocock: The Celebrated Orientalist by Leonard Twells; of Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester, and Dr. Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol, by themselves and of the Rev. Philip Skelton by Mr Burdy, in Two Volumes. Vol. 1.* Printed for F. C. & J Rivington, London, 1816. Available on Google Books.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Zachary Pearce, *Cicero de Oratore*, 1716, and *Cicero de Officiis*, 1745 (no longer in print). See *A Reply to the Defence of the Letter to Dr. Waterland: By the Author of the Reply to the Letter* (Zachary Pearce). Printed for J. Watts, London, 1732. Available on Google Books.
- ⁵ 'Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester'. Op. cit.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Zachary Pearce, *Longinus on the Sublime*. Latin translation from 1762 (Fifth edition). http://hodoi.fltr.ucl.ac.be/concordances/longin_du_sublime/lecture/default.htm
- ⁸ Sir Isaac Newton, *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*. Printed for J. Tonson, and J. Osborn and T. Longman, London, 1728. Available on Google Books.
- ⁹ 'Dr. Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester'. Op. cit. pp.359-438.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ David Boyd Haycock, *William Stukeley: Science, Religion, and Archaeology in Eighteenth-Century England*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2002. pp.51 & 227.
- ¹² William Jones, *A New Compendium Of the Whole Art of Practical Navigation*. Printed by J. Matthews, London, 1702. Available on Google Books.
- ¹³ Patricia Rothman, 'The Man Who Invented Pi', *History Today*, Vol. 59, Issue 7, July 2009. <https://www.historytoday.com/archive/feature/man-who-invented-pi>
- ¹⁴ Sir John Barrow, *The Life of George, Lord Anson*. John Murray, 1839. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁵ Sir Isaac Newton, *Principia. The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy. In Two Volumes*. Printed for Benjamin Motte, London, 1724. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁶ Sir Isaac Newton, *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms*. Op. cit.
- ¹⁷ A copy of the 1842 Shugborough Sale Catalogue is held at the William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, with the title *A Catalogue of the Splendid Property at Shugborough Hall, Stafford to be Sold at Auction on the Premises on Monday the 1st Day of August 1842*. Sc B/1/1
- ¹⁸ Henry Pemberton, *A View of Isaac Newton's Philosophy*. First edition, London, 1728. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁹ For the relationship between The Royal Society and Freemasonry see *English Speculative Freemasonry: Some possible origins, themes and developments* by Bro Trevor Stewart PM, Quatuor Coronati Lodge, No. 2076 Prestonian Lecturer, 2004. Coronatorum, Vol. 117, for the Council of the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle Limited, 2005. <http://web.mit.edu/dryfoo/Masons/Misc/TS-Origins.pdf>
- ²⁰ George Berkeley, *Siris: A Chain of Philosophical Reflexions and Inquiries Concerning the Virtues of Tar Water, and divers other Subjects connected together and arising from one another*. Dublin and London, 1747. Available on Google Books.

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- ²¹ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the Year 1741 to 1770: To which are Added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, Between the Years 1763 and 1787; Published from the Original Manuscripts in the Possession of the Rev. Montagu Pennington. In Four Volumes. Vol. I.* Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1809. Available on Google Books.
- ²² Elizabeth Carter, *Isaac Newton's Philosophy Explain'd for the Use of Ladies: in six dialogues on light and colours.* London, 1739. A translation of Count Algarotti's *Il Newtonismo per le Dame*, 1737, Available on Google Books.
- ²³ Clive T Probyn, *The Sociable Humanist, the life of James Harris, 1709-1780.* Oxford University Press, 1991.

Chapter 4

The Society of Dilettanti

The exact origins of the Society of Dilettanti are obscure. To begin with it was a club for gentlemen who had visited Italy, with a “dilettante” interest in Italian and Classical Art. This is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as:

a person who cultivates an area of interest, such as the arts, without real commitment or knowledge.

Horace Walpole made an often-quoted comment on the Society, which may not be particularly accurate:

...the nominal qualification is having been in Italy and the real one being drunk; the two chiefs are Lord Middlesex and Sir Francis Dashwood, who were seldom sober the whole time they were in Italy.¹

In 1731, or thereabouts, a Venetian painter of the late-Baroque, Bartolomeo Nazari, was commissioned to record the foundation of the Society. He painted several copies of a picture showing a group of gentlemen on board a ship at Genoa. The three identified figures are: Sir Francis Dashwood, Lord Middlesex (Charles Sackville), and Lord Boyne (Gustavus Hamilton). The Society may not have been formally established until after the travellers’ return, possibly not until 1734.

It is extremely difficult to judge what kind of person the notorious Francis Dashwood really was. Many of the stories about him were spread by his political enemies and others, like Walpole, who simply enjoyed a bit of gossip. Dashwood did have his “Monks of Medmenham”, often wrongly referred to as “The Hell Fire Club”. The original Hellfire Club was a rakish group of libertines who had been active earlier in the century, led by Philip, Duke of Wharton. Dashwood’s club, whose members included John Montagu (Lord Sandwich), Sir William Stanhope and the painter William Hogarth, became known as the ‘Order of the Knights of St Francis’.² Women and drink certainly featured in Dashwood’s life but there was a serious side to his character. He had travelled more extensively than most, not only in Europe but into the Ottoman Empire in 1738-39, when travelling was a serious adventure.

In contrast to his infamous debaucheries, much later, in 1773, Dashwood co-produced an

Abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer for use in the American colonies; a project connected with his close friendship and support for Benjamin Franklin.³ He was also briefly Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1762-63.

If Thomas Anson was as sober-minded as his various obituaries claim, it is hard to know what he would have made of Dashwood. There are surprisingly detailed records of the so-called Hellfire Club and its members, and Anson's name appears nowhere. Thomas Anson was closely involved with Dashwood in two other clubs which Sir Francis led in the 1740s: the largely forgotten Egyptian Society and the Divan Club. Oddly, there is very little evidence of his active membership of the influential and long-lasting Society of Dilettanti.

Some account of the Society was printed for private circulation by the then Secretary, Mr William Hamilton, entitled, *Historical Notes of the Society of the Dilettanti*.⁴ 'A List of Members of the Society of Dilettanti according to the Order of Election', dating from 6th March 1736, claims this to be the order in which members were elected.⁵ There are 44 members given as having joined by 1736. The names of William Degge and Thomas Anson are given as 18th and 19th. There is no sure way of knowing when they became members, but it would be reasonable to assume from their positions on the list that it was sometime before 1736, perhaps in 1734 or 1735.

There is no trace of any further connection between Anson and William Degge, brother of the Simon Degge who, as discussed in the previous chapter, had travelled in Italy with Thomas. The 1736 membership list identifies Degge as born in 1698, the second son of Simon Degge of Derby and a Lieutenant Colonel of Dragoons. Beyond this, there are very few traces of him. He may have been the Hon. Colonel William Degge, who, with his wife Mary, is mentioned in documents concerning a mortgage in Tipperary in 1741.⁶ There are hints that he was a friend of David Garrick in his youthful days in the army.

A letter from David Garrick in Lichfield to his father, Captain Peter Garrick, Brigadier-General Kirk[e]'s regiment, in Gibraltar, has a note by William Degge, apologising for accidentally breaking the seal. The contents of the letter are curious:

Mr [Richard] Rider, the new Chancellor [of Lichfield diocese], has obtained Brigadier Kirk[e]'s permission for his coming to England [on leave], but he must keep it secret. On death of Chancellor 'Reins' [Henry Raynes], the Bishop put Rider and his eldest son into the patent. The Garricks now rejoice still more than his other friends.⁷

Over the years it has been taken for granted that it was Anson's membership of the Society of Dilettanti that led to his connection with James Stuart, and, subsequently, the building of the series of Greek structures at Shugborough. These were based on Stuart's and Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens*, which was originally published by the Society.⁸ The relationship between Thomas and the Society of Dilettanti is typically elusive.

The records of the early years of the Society, presently in the care of the Society of Antiquaries, founded as far back as 1707, include two books of attendance lists.⁹ These are disappointingly unhelpful to the historian as the lists of names do not give the dates of meetings attended. The only clues are in the forms of the names recorded. Sir Francis Dashwood, for example, becomes Lord le Despencer in later entries. Thomas Anson's name appears nowhere on these lists; the conclusion has to be that while he may have been an elected member, he did not attend meetings.

Of the 44 members listed in 1736, very few have any later known connection with Thomas Anson. At least twenty of them were at least ten years younger. Thomas took his Grand Tour when he was 29 years old, whereas many Grand Tourists were in their teens, accompanied by tutors, often clerical gentlemen; for example, the Rev. Joseph Spence toured Italy in 1730-33 with the young Lord Middlesex, aged 19 when they set off. A barrister of more mature years might not feel he had much in common with these young men. Although Walpole's comment about the Society may be exaggerated, it is possible that the dilettante tone of the Society in its early days was not the kind of thing that Thomas would have had much in common with.

Thomas had a later association with two of the original members whom he met through the Divan Club: Sir Francis Dashwood (1708-1781) and William Ponsonby (1744-1806), who became Viscount Duncannon and later the Earl of Bessborough. Ponsonby, as Lord Duncannon, is mentioned in Thomas Anson's letters to his brother George. In one letter from 1747, Thomas says that he was expecting to meet him at Chatsworth, the home of Duncannon's father-in-law, the Duke of Devonshire.¹⁰ On that occasion, Thomas was travelling to Chatsworth with another early Dilettanti member, Lord Harcourt.

Harcourt's brother-in-law, George Venables-Vernon, Lord Vernon (1709-1780), became the father-in-law of Thomas's heir, George Adams, who, in January 1763, married his daughter Mary (her mother was Mary Howard). Vernon's mother was the daughter and heiress of Thomas Pigot, a name we shall encounter again later. When his father died in 1719, Vernon inherited Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire. Lord Vernon's third wife (after the deaths of the previous two) was Martha, daughter of Simon Harcourt,¹¹ the only son of Simon, 1st Viscount Harcourt.

Simon Harcourt (1714-1777) is the first name on the 1736 Dilettanti members list, and yet he only returned from Italy in 1734, aged 20. This small piece of evidence may suggest that the formal organisation of the Club, including the listing of members, only began in that year. Harcourt was the first President of the Society, so his name may be placed first in seniority rather than according to the date he joined.

Harcourt occupied various royal and government positions. He was a Lord of the Bedchamber to King George II from 1735-57. In the war against the Jacobite rebellion he became a Colonel, and, in 1772, was promoted to General.¹²

In August 1761, a delegation led by Lord Harcourt with Lord Anson, departed for Germany to bring back Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Harcourt had been appointed as special ambassador responsible for negotiating the marriage of Princess Charlotte to King George III. On the evening of 8th September 1761, the day of her arrival in England, the wedding of Princess Charlotte and King George III took place, in the Chapel Royal of St James's Palace.

Horace Walpole wrote that Harcourt was "civil and sheepish", not well-suited to the role of governor to the Prince because he was unable to teach him:

[any] other arts than what he knew himself, hunting and drinking.¹³

He disparagingly said:

...call him Harcourt the wise! his wisdom has already disgusted the young Prince; "Sir, pray hold up your head. Sir, for God's sake, turn out your toes!" Such are his Mentor's precepts!"¹⁴

This, of course, may be as deliberately flippant as are many of Walpole's comments; but it does imply that Harcourt was not very seriously interested in the finer points of the Arts. Neither was he very sensitive or liberal minded in his attitudes to the development of his estate. It was Harcourt who notoriously removed an entire village in order to "improve" his landscape, inspiring Oliver Goldsmith's poem *The Deserted Village*, published in 1770.¹⁵

Harcourt was to employ James "Athenian" Stuart at Nuneham Courtney in Oxfordshire, which may have been owing to an Anson connection. He succeeded to the family titles and estates in 1727, on the death of his grandfather (his father died in Paris in 1720, when he was a child). Horace Walpole, in a more positive mood, thought the removal of the village was worth it, and that the church, designed by Harcourt and Stuart, was:

the principal feature in one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world.¹⁶

Harcourt is the only original member of the Society of Dilettanti to be on the list of recipients of mourning rings after Thomas's death (see Chapter 20).

Another early member of the Society of Dilettanti with whom Thomas had a continuing connection was Thomas Villiers (1709-1786), Viscount Hyde and 1st Earl of Clarendon. Villiers spent many years abroad as a diplomatic minister, in 1737 as Envoy Extraordinary to the court of Augustus III, elector of Saxony and King of Poland, and, in 1740, as Minister Plenipotentiary. In 1742-43 he was envoy at Vienna to the court of Maria Theresa of Austria. He reported on the war of the Austrian succession before being sent to Poland,

where Augustus had taken refuge after being driven out of Saxony by Frederick the Great of Prussia. It was Villiers, as Envoy Extraordinary to the court of Frederick II, who was initially instructed to make proposals for peace with Saxony.

On his return to England in 1747, Villiers was elected MP for Tamworth, and, on 24th December 1748, he was made a Lord of the Admiralty. So again, his later connection with Thomas might well have been through George Anson and the political world. Villiers became a neighbouring MP in the same election which saw Thomas Anson elected MP for Lichfield.

Thomas Villiers, 1st Earl of Clarendon, was related to Thomas's fellow traveller in Italy, Alan Brodrick, 2nd Earl of Midleton. In 1752, Villiers married Charlotte, daughter of William Capell, 3rd Earl of Essex, and Lady Jane Hyde. As noted in Chapter 2, Brodrick was married to the daughter of the 2nd Earl. Both ladies were tutored by Shugborough's first architect Thomas Wright, when he stayed with Lord Midleton in Surrey in 1739.

Villiers also lays claim to have been the first person to commission a Doric Temple from James Stuart, three or four years before Lord Lyttelton at Hagley. Whether or not this lost building, at his home "The Grove", near Watford, was the first building by Stuart after his return from Athens, is a question which will need to be asked when looking at Stuart's work at Shugborough (Chapter 16).

Stuart's and Revett's project to survey the buildings of Ancient Greece was first proposed in 1748. During their time in Italy they met members of the Society of Dilettanti, and, in 1751, were proposed for membership. This turned the Society's attention from Italy to the far less explored world of Greece, then part of the Ottoman Empire and rarely visited. Greece, of course, to the classically educated mind, would be the real source of civilisation of which Italy was only a pale reflection. It is important to emphasise how little was known about authentic Greek Art and how exciting the prospect of seeing these priceless treasures must have been.

The first volume of Stuart's and Revett's ambitious book, *The Antiquities of Athens*, appeared in 1762.¹⁷ By this time, Stuart was already designing buildings and interiors inspired by their visit to Greece.

If Thomas Anson was not directly involved in the Society of Dilettanti, it is strange that he very rapidly became involved with Stuart, possibly within ten months of his return to England. The series of monuments at Shugborough, for which Stuart was responsible, are often seen as a showcase for the Society of Dilettanti.

Could it be that Anson, invisible as far as the records of the Society are concerned, had a direct connection with the commissioning of Stuart's project with Nicholas Revett? Before

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1750 the Society seems to have had a limited and rather frivolous interest in Classical Art. Stuart's and Revett's Athenian project gave the Society a new sense of serious purpose. It is hard to detect any serious-minded motivation amongst the original group of collectors and Grand Tourists who launched the Society in 1732. Thomas Anson, however, was a person of a quite different character and his pioneering enthusiasm for Greece possibly went back to the time when the other founder members had travelled no further than Rome, Venice or Naples.

Could Anson have been to Athens, as well as to Italy, by the time he joined the Society of Dilettanti? The poem by Rev. Sneyd Davies (quoted in Chapter 1) implies that he had. Thomas may, in fact, have been a more adventurous traveller than many of his fellow members.

One other aspect of the Society of Dilettanti might be significant to the story of Thomas Anson. This is that a large proportion of the early members were supporters of Frederick, Prince of Wales (1737-1744), who became the centre of political machinations of those who detested King George II. This included Sir Francis Dashwood and Lord Middlesex.

Did Thomas Anson, and his wider circle of family and close friends, belong to this faction?

NOTES: Chapter 4

- ¹ Sir Francis Dashwood, *The Dashwoods of West Wycombe*. Aurum Press, 1987.
- ² Edwin Beresford, Chancellor, *The Hellfire Club*. P. Allan, 1925. See also 'The Hellfire Club'.
<https://www.hellfirecaves.co.uk/history/hellfire-club/>
- ³ Benjamin Franklin and Sir Francis Dashwood, *Abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer*. 1773.
See <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Franklin%20Abridged/index.html>
- ⁴ William Hamilton, *Historical Notes of the Society of the Dilettanti*, London, 1855, cited by William White in *Notes and Queries*, Mar 17 1860, p.203. Available on Google Books.
- ⁵ Published as an appendix to William Richard Hamilton's *Historical Notices of the Society of Dilettanti*, Op. cit. Cited by Lionel Cust (compiler) and Sir Sidney Colvin (editor) in *History of the Society of Dilettanti, Revised with Supplementary Chapter, Additional List of Members, &c.*, Printed for the Society, Macmillan & Co., London, 1914.
<https://archive.org/details/historyofsociety00custrich>
- ⁶ National Library of Ireland, Collection List A 14, Trant Papers.
<http://www.nli.ie/manuscriptlist/..%5Cpdfs%5Cmss%20lists%5CTrant.pdf>
- ⁷ William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council. *Garrick Family Papers*. S.MS 511
- ⁸ James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens: Measured and Delineated*. Printed by John Haberkorn, London, 1762. <https://archive.org/details/antiquitiesAthe1Stua>
- ⁹ See Society of Antiquaries <https://www.sal.org.uk/>
- ¹⁰ British Library, *Letters from Thomas Anson to Admiral George Anson, 1743-1749*. MSS Add. 15955, July 1747.
- ¹¹ George Venables-Vernon, 1st Lord Vernon, Baron of Kinderton.
<http://www.thepeerage.com/p1327.htm#i13263>
- ¹² Harcourt, Simon (1714-1777), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*, originally published in 63 volumes 1885-1900, by Smith, Elder & Co. Vol. 24. Entry by Martyn J. Powell.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12245>
- ¹³ Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second, Vol. I*. Second edition, Revised. Henry Colburn, London, 1846, p.86.
- ¹⁴ Peter Cunningham (Ed.), *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, in Nine Volumes, Vol II*. R. Bentley, London, 1857, p.289.
- ¹⁵ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*. 1770. See <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-deserted-village/>
- ¹⁶ Cited in University of Oxford Botanic Garden, 'Harcourt Arboretum Restoration/Development Plan', Report April 2003. <https://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/>
- ¹⁷ James Stuart and Nicholas Revett. Op. cit.

Chapter 5

Sailing to Tenedos

There are very few clues to the early life of Thomas Anson, yet there are, among them, a small number of extraordinarily dramatic anecdotes. In the two most significant cases, they are stories told by Thomas to friends or associates who published them after his death, many years after the events to which they refer. These momentary openings of windows into his life are priceless gifts, and it is impossible not to feel that they have been preserved in time for a reason, as if he wanted to leave just a few clues behind to the most important events in his life.

The philosopher James Harris passes on a fragment of conversation in his *Philological Enquiries*, his last work, published in 1781:

WHEN the late Mr. Anson (Lord Anson's Brother) was upon his Travels in the East, he hired a Vessel, to visit the Isle of Tenedos. His Pilot, an old Greek, as they were sailing along, said with some satisfaction, "There 'twas our Fleet lay." Mr. Anson demanded, "What Fleet?" "What Fleet?" replied the old Man (a little piqued at the Question) — "WHY OUR GRECIAN FLEET AT THE SIEGE OF TROY". This story was told the Author by Mr. Anson himself.¹

This story has occasionally been quoted, even, incredibly, considering the clear wording of the first sentence, by others as an incident in George Anson's life. That it came from a reliable source is itself important. James Harris was the key intellectual figure of the Greek Revival, the philosophical part of the "Golden Web". He knew Thomas in his later life, certainly from the 1760s, and the Harris family archive is the main source of information on Thomas's musical activities.²

Ingamells' *Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800* lists a possible trip to the Levant in 1734.³ This guess, in fact correct, is based on a misinterpretation of a document in the Staffordshire County Record Office.⁴ This letter, dated 25th September 1734, was wrongly interpreted by an earlier researcher to be a "Firmen" or passport for a traveller in the Ottoman Empire. The Staffordshire Record Office has always, until now, identified the letter as being in Hebrew. It is in fact written in Armenian.

When I first attempted to get hold of a translation, I sent a copy to an Armenian historian at the British Museum who provided a very fragmentary and misleading translation,

explaining that the letter was written in a difficult mixture of Armenian and Persian, used by merchants in the 18th century. Fortunately, the original translator could make out the family name of Sharimanian in the letter and, thanks to the wonders of the internet, a search for this name led to a student at Columbia University, who was studying Armenian merchants in Europe in the 18th century. It is with very grateful thanks to Sebouh Aslanian, that this document has been read for the first time in 274 years.⁵

The letter reveals that there was a journey to the East, but the letter (translated from Aslanian's Italian) is not a "Firmen". The correct deduction, of a trip to the Levant in 1734, had been made, but for the wrong reasons.

To: Signor Bortolo di Pietro, Armenian merchant, Livorno

[Letterhead] In the Name of God
To your honorable lordship, Mister Bortolo

In the year 1734, September 25 in Izmir⁶

The letter begins with formulaic introduction by Babajan of Avetik [the author of the letter] telling Mr. Bortolo di Pietro of the Sharimanian family in Livorno that he [Babajan] is at his service and always willing to carry out his duties, but that he has not received any letters or orders from Bortolo to respond to him in kind. Babajan then states that he is writing this letter to ask for a favor.

He writes that "an Englishman arrived from England [Ingleterra] in this place [i.e. in Izmir] stating that he is a lord of a great household and is a very good man. In truth, few kind/good men among the English such as this man are to be found [here?] and he is a good friend of your servant [Babajan]. His name is Master Tomasso Anson. I was conversing with him one day and remembered your good reputation to him. Since he is returning [to Livorno] with this same English ship, he asked your servant [Babajan] for a [letter of] recommendation, so that if he has any needs in that place [Livorno], I beg you to provide services to him without any charge, for providing services to such nobility will not go to waste...

I have recommended you to him so you may show him your friendship to your servant [Babajan] by going to pay your respects to him at the Lazzaretto [Nazaret? or at the quarantine?] ...The Mister [Tomasso Anson] will go to France from that place [Livorno] in order to return to his country from there... I beg of you to [provide your services to Tomasso Anson] and write back to your servant [Babajan]. May your lordship [Bortolo] have a long life and always be filled with joy.

From your menial servant,
Babajan of Avetick

This letter reveals that Thomas Anson was in Smyrna on 25th September 1734, preparing to return to Livorno where he would need to spend time in quarantine, as was customary, before travelling on to France. Smyrna is the nearest port to the Turkish island of Tenedos,⁷ so the incident of the Greek fleet took place shortly before this. There is no clue about the rest of his journey – other travellers who reached Smyrna would usually move on up the Hellespont to Constantinople. He may have come to Smyrna by way of Greece, but Greece was a lawless place and few travellers in the 17th and 18th centuries had managed to reach it.

The letter implies that Thomas has asked Babajan of Avetick, a merchant who does business with the Shariamanian family, for an introduction to Mr Bortolo di Pietro of the Sharimanian family in Livorno. It would be interesting to know what particular business Mr Bortolo was involved with. “Count” David Sharimanian, in Livorno, was a diamond merchant. It is very unlikely that Thomas Anson would be interested in diamonds, especially in 1734, ten years before Admiral Anson returned hugely wealthy from his global circumnavigation.

There is, however, a bizarre and horrific connection between this document and the Cat’s Monument at Shugborough (see Chapter 11). In one of her letters, Lady Anson refers to it as “Kouli Kan’s Monument”.⁸ Kouli Khan was Nadir Shah, who became Shah of Persia in 1737. Presumably the cat, represented on the monument by a stone Cheshire cat-like figure, was the first of a line of Persian cats owned by Thomas and named after the Emperor.

In 1747, Nadir Shah was assassinated. He had four merchants burned alive in Isfahan’s Central Square,⁹ over an argument about a jewel-studded horsecloth that, it would appear, the Emperor wanted for himself. Two of the merchants were Jewish and the other two were Catholic Armenians – one being Harutiun (Aratoon) Sharimanian.¹⁰ This would have probably been the uncle of “Bortolo di Pietro of the Sharimanian family” and brother of “Count” David Sharimanian of Livorno.

Tenedos is a place of enormous symbolic meaning. As the old sailor had said, it was the waters where the Greek fleet lay in hiding at the siege of Troy. The Greeks retreated there after apparently abandoning the siege, where, according to legend, they left behind the mysterious wooden horse.

The island of Tenedos is mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad*:

O Smintheus! sprung from fair Latona’s line,
Thou guardian power of Cilla the divine,
Thou source of light! whom Tenedos adores,
And whose bright presence gilds thy Chrysa’s shores.¹¹

It is more explicitly stated in Virgil's *Aeneid* to be the hiding place of the fleet:

In sight of Troy lies Tenedos, an isle
(While Fortune did on Priam's empire smile)
Renown'd for wealth; but, since, a faithless bay,
Where ships expos'd to wind and weather lay.
There was their fleet conceal'd.¹²

Thomas Anson would probably have read these texts in their original Greek and Latin. One wonders how well he was able to communicate on his journey. He would have sailed on English ships, either navy or merchant vessels, along the important cloth trade route to Smyrna, but he must have needed some basic conversational Greek to be able to talk to the old sailor – ancient Greek may not have helped very much.

There was an English community in Smyrna and an English factory, complete with a chaplaincy, that had been active for a hundred years, its foundation associated with Alexander the Great. Tourists were extremely rare in 1734 and of those who had described their travels in writing, very few mention Tenedos and its relationship to Troy.

Thomas Smith, who, as chaplain, accompanied the English Ambassador to Constantinople in 1668, wrote in his diary of their voyage to Smyrna and Tenedos:

We past by Lemnos, and were up with the Island Tenedos; a fine Champaign Country, only with one Hill toward the middle of it. The Castle to the N.E. part of the Isle: over against which lye three small Islands in a strait Line. Here we came to an Anchor. We saw the Ruins of Troas at a distance, but did not think it safe to go ashore.¹³

Another traveller in 1701, Ellis Veryard, described crossing to Troy from Tenedos:

Proceeding in our Voyage, we anchor'd under the lile of Tenedos, about Five Miles from the Ruins of the antient City of Troy... It's about Thirty Miles in compass, rocky and barren; so that it produces little, saving a small quantity of Wine, which is much esteem'd in the Levant. Next Morning we cross'd over to the main Land, and went on Shore to visit Troy. The Water was so very shallow near the Shore, and so fill'd with Ruins (on which, I suppose, the Sea has gain'd) that we were forc'd to wade a considerable way to get on Land, where we came at length, tho' not without some difficulty. This is said to be the place where the antient Ilium stood... It's celebrated in History for one of the greatest and most flourishing Cities in Asia Minor, but principally for the fatal War it maintain'd for divers Years against the Grecians.¹⁴

A detailed geographical history of Tenedos was published in *Relation d'un voyage du Levant*, in 1718, by Joseph Pitton de Tournefort.¹⁵ This was one of a collection of books on

Eastern travel that Thomas purchased for his library, either in preparation for his journeys or as a reminder of them. Tournefort gives a printed map of the island showing the harbour and the fort. Tenedos had been a constant cause (or recipient) of conflict as a strategic point in the Hellespont, and was several times controlled by the Venetians, and, after 1657, by the Ottoman Empire.

It is significant that both the Armenian letter and James Harris's anecdote portray Thomas as having been an adventurous traveller, apparently journeying alone. He was certainly not sailing with his brother. George Anson had served in the Mediterranean fleet in the 1720s, but, by 1734, he was in Carolina off the eastern coast of North America – where the colonists still preserve his memory in the name of Anson county.

What is particularly surprising about this discovery is that Thomas's voyage to Tenedos predates by several years the journeys of any of his fellow members of the Divan Club, the Society for Eastern travellers and explorers, which he joined in the 1740s.¹⁶

Francis Dashwood, Lord le Despencer and John Montagu, Lord Sandwich, seen as pioneers, travelled to the East in 1738-39, four years after Thomas Anson's trip to Tenedos – which took place at about the time the Society of Dilettanti was formalised. This was fourteen years before the Society began to look further east than Italy, with the support of Stuart's and Revett's expedition.

There is a manuscript notebook in the Staffordshire archives which records Anson's tour of the full length of the Mediterranean in 1740-41¹⁷ (see Chapter 8). This raises other questions. Did he make other trips in his early years? How many of the "many years abroad" that John Eardly Wilmot wrote of in his memoirs were spent travelling in such exotic places?¹⁸ Where exactly did Thomas go on what must have been a lengthy trip in 1734? Did he visit Athens? The anonymous poem (referred to in Chapter 1, and given in full in the Appendix), written in 1767, long after his return from his "various travels", implies that he did.¹⁹

Whatever it was that brought Thomas to this part of the ancient world, here he was, at the very roots of Greek civilisation. For anyone to whom the country of Greece carried with it the ideals of Beauty and Truth, his encounter with the old Greek sailor would have felt deeply symbolic. It is also intriguing that no other writer seems to have passed on any reference to this journey – that was left to James Harris, the most enthusiastic philosopher of the 18th century Greek Revival.

There is a portrait at Shugborough which may be of Thomas, of unknown provenance, ascribed in the "manner of John Vanderbank the younger" (1694-1739). Dated c.1730 in the National Trust Collections catalogue, it is titled 'An Unknown Virtuoso or George, Admiral Lord Anson, but possibly Thomas Anson, MP (1695-1773)'.²⁰

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This painting may have been purchased in London, where the artist was working, but it could equally be another souvenir of Thomas's 1734 Eastern journey. It shows a man, in early middle age (Thomas was 39 in 1734), wearing a turban; a common substitute for a wig when not fully attired. He has a rather louche air, wears an open shirt and is holding a hand-held sundial. He looks rather like a traveller recently returned from a voyage.

It is easy to imagine this painting to be a portrait of Thomas Ansonc, freshly returned from a long and dramatic journey. For him at least, the experience would have brought him close to the very roots of Greek culture and was to inspire his part in the Greek Revival, as is evident in the house and landscape at Shugborough.

NOTES: Chapter 5

- ¹ James Harris, *Philological Enquiries, in Three Parts*. C. Nourse, London, 1781.
<https://archive.org/details/philologicalinupt1and2harriala/page/n6>
- ² See Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World. The Family Papers of James Harris 1732-1780*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- ³ John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800*. Compiled from the Brinsley Ford Archive. Yale University Press, 1997.
- ⁴ Staffordshire Record Office, *Correspondence from Sir John Dick (British consul at Leghorn) and others regarding purchases of antiquities in Italy, 1765-1771*. D615/P(A)/2
- ⁵ Sebouh Aslanian, Columbia University. Personal communication, 2007.
- ⁶ Izmir was known to European travellers as Smyrna, an ancient city on Turkey's Aegean coast.
- ⁷ The modern Turkish name for Tenedos is Bozcaada, an island in the north-eastern part of the Aegean Sea.
- ⁸ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/310A
- ⁹ Isfahan is now a large city in Iran, with an ancient history.
- ¹⁰ Sebouh Aslanian, 'Trade Diaspora versus Colonial State: Armenian Merchants, the English East India Company, and the High Court of Admiralty in London, 1748-1752', *A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1, Spring 2004, pp.37-100. <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/204800/pdf>
- ¹¹ Alexander Pope's translation of Homer's *The Iliad*, Book 1.
See https://archive.org/details/iliad_popetranslation_1506_librivox
- ¹² John Dryden's translation of Virgil's *The Aeneid*, Book 2.
See <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.html>
- ¹³ The Royal Society (London), *Philosophical Transactions: Giving Some Account of the Present Undertakings, Studies and Labours of the Ingenious, in Many Considerable Parts of the World*, Vol. 19, for the years 1695, 1696 and 1697, p.615. Printed for S. Smith and B. Walford, printers for the Royal Society, 1698. Available on Google Books. Other publications from 1700-1740 mentioning Tenedos can also be found.
- ¹⁴ Ellis Veryard. *An Account of Divers Choice Remarks, as Well Geographical as Historical, Political, Mathematical, Physical and Moral, Taken in a Journey Through the Low-Countries, France, Italy and Part of Spain; With the Isles of Sicily and Malta. As Also a Voyage to the Levant...* Printed by S. Smith and B. Walford, London, 1701. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁵ Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un voyage du Levant*. 1718. Available (in French) on Google Books.
- ¹⁶ Rachel Finnegan, *The Divan Club, 1744-46*. EJOS, IX, No. 9, 1-86, 2006.
https://www.academia.edu/26760741/The_Divan_Club_1744-46
- ¹⁷ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/2/4
- ¹⁸ John Eardley Wilmot, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir John Eardley Wilmot, Knt. Late Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and one of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council*. London, 1802. Printed by J Nichols & Son, 1811. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁹ The Anonymous 1767 Descriptive Poem is given in full in the Appendix.
- ²⁰ National Trust Collections, Shugborough.
<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1271032>

Chapter 6

Expanding the Estate

When Thomas Anson succeeded his father in 1720, he inherited, at the age of 25, a fairly plain William and Mary style house, simple and modest in appearance. The two-storey red brick house (the top storey was added later) was re-built in 1693-95 by the wealthy lawyer, William Anson, from Dunston in Staffordshire.

The Ansons had been resident in Dunston, situated north of Penkridge, since before the end of the 16th century where they regularly appear in the parish registers [which date from 1572].¹

It would have been an impressive building in comparison with other houses in the small village of Shugborough, which lay across the meadows near the site of the present farm. The village consisted of cottages, farms and two mills, first mentioned in 15th century documents but which did not form part of William Anson's property.

Shugborough Mill – the Lower Mill – ground corn, while the other – the Upper Mill – was for fulling. These were located between the new House and the village. The Upper Mill was located where the farm now stands, and was converted for paper-making in 1670 until its closure around 1800. The Lower Mill was between 150-200 yards from the mouth of the Sherbrook, a stream flowing out of a spring on Cannock Chase, which supplied the power. This ground corn for the village until 1770 when it became a fulling mill when the Upper Mill changed to paper-making.²

The original moated manor house, dating from at least the beginning of the 14th century, formerly belonged, together with the surrounding lands, to the Bishops of Coventry and Lichfield.³ The estate had passed, in 1546, at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, to William Paget in exchange for "certain parsonages and impropriations".⁴ Owing to their Catholic inclinations during the Protestant reign of Queen Elizabeth I, much of the Paget's family property was, however, confiscated.

Although the Paget's rank and honour was restored in 1603 by James I, part of their property, which included Shugborough, was sold by the crown to William Whitmore in 1613, along with Haywood, Coley and Oakedge. Whitmore sold the estate to John and Thomas Whitbie, alias Whitby, in 1621.⁵

EXPANDING THE ESTATE

Thomas's great-grandfather, William Anson (c.1580-1645), a local lawyer who had been admitted to Lincolns Inn in 1597,⁶ purchased the Shugborough estate from Thomas Whitby in 1624. His wife, Joan, was a daughter of Richard Mitchel (or Whitehall) of Oldbury, Warwickshire.

An abstract of the original deed, which included the stone-built medieval manor house and eighty acres of land, records:

John Whitbie of Honslow, Middlesex, to William Anson of Lincolns Inn, Middlesex, for £1,000. The manor house called Shuttburrowe Manor House in Shuttburrowe in County Stafford & all manner of houses, buildings, barns, stables, edifices, dove-houses, orchards, gardens, backsides, courtyard, moat & waters, & fishing.⁷

Within the park was the original farming village of Shugborough, which, long after William Anson's death in 1645, and that of his son, also named William Anson (1628-1688), still existed one hundred years later. His son, William Anson III (1656-1720), was the father of Thomas and George.

There is a document in the Staffordshire Record Office, dated 2nd April 1694, that refers to a "feoffment" regarding the manors in Staffordshire which Thomas, father of Thomas Parker, purchased from Richard Biddulph. The description refers to "Thomas Parker, George Parker and William Anson to William Mills", indicating that the relationship between the Anson and Parker families concerning land ownership goes back to at least the late 17th century.⁸

The catalogue of the *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield* makes this observation concerning the pocket almanacks which William Anson used as notebooks:

Of the personal notebooks the most important series are those of William Anson, kept 1694-1720. These include expenses and notes about erecting the new house at Shugborough (central portion of the present one) as well as farm, estate and brick making accounts and a library catalogue (c.1719?).⁹

During the 18th century, houses in the village and a wide area of surrounding land were gradually absorbed into an ever-growing Shugborough estate. It was a slow but diligent process. Even with change, the old village remained part of the landscape throughout Thomas Anson's lifetime. The last of the old cottages was demolished as late as 1805.

Thomas certainly acquired property in the village and the surrounding valley and woodlands, but did he intend to remove the village, as other landowners had done, simply to improve the view from his house?

By the time of George Anson's death in 1762, the land in front of the house had become

an elaborate landscape of lakes and follies, with a cascade and a pagoda. The Triumphant Arch was already being constructed on the slope below the forest of Cannock Chase, but the village was still there. It is featured in several of the landscape paintings by Nicholas Dall that can still be seen in the house, and which record the landscape in the last few years of Thomas Anson's life and the years immediately after his death.

It is impossible to know at what point he began to plan his elaborate landscape. None of the exotic decorative features can be dated any earlier than 1747. It is quite possible that before this time, Thomas was simply securing leases and buying up neighbouring properties, or, as some writers suggest, "squatting" to absorb vacant property into the estate as it became available, with no immediate plans of a grand design.

The first property acquired by Thomas was the fulling mill, used to clean woollen cloth. It had been in the possession of the Dudson family. Thomas procured the lease in 1731 and enlarged the millpond to create a small lake. The mill was some way from the house; most of the village lay in between, with its cottages leading down to the Essex Bridge across the River Trent.

Thomas kept extensive flocks of sheep on his land and had a genuine interest in agriculture and the development of modern methods. His connection with the agricultural reformer, Nathaniel Kent, demonstrates this, especially in the later part of his life (see Chapter 19).

After his voyage to Asia Minor, which may have kept him away from home for a considerable length of time, he began his large-scale take-over of the village. By this time, he may well have begun his grand designs for the estate, inspired by his travels and enthusiasm for the ideal landscapes and art of ancient Greece.

Frederick Blair Stitt (1923-2016),¹⁰ whose study *Shugborough, The End of a Village* is the source of detailed information about Anson's purchasing of property in the area,¹¹ points out evidence that indicates Thomas had formed a plan for the estate well before George Anson set sail on his voyage that, between 1740-44, would make him wealthy. Stitt suggests that "new-found wealth created the opportunity to indulge existing ambitions."¹²

This raises an important question. Did George contribute any money at all to the development of Shugborough before his death? There is no evidence whatsoever to indicate that the expansion of the estate, the landscaping and the extensions to the house, had anything to do with George's wealth. The land was acquired by a piecemeal approach. The landscaping and building of the monuments took place over many years, beginning in 1747. The first monuments were modest, the Pagoda and Obelisk were initially built of wood. Surely, Thomas Anson, as inheritor of the estate of a wealthy lawyer, who, in 1722, had sold his shares in the South Sea Company, would have been able to accomplish such things with his own financial resources?

More to the point, would any 18th-century younger son consider giving his elder brother money? It wouldn't be done, unless there was an idea or arrangement, as Thomas was childless, that the estate would eventually be inherited by George's offspring, if there were any. Buying property to enlarge the family estate as an investment for the future might be understandable, but for gifts from George to be used to create a fanciful landscape to Thomas's taste seems unlikely.

After George married Lady Elizabeth Yorke (1725-1760), Lord Hardwicke's eldest daughter, in 1748, he bought Moor Park, a very expensive property in Hertfordshire. He already owned Orgreave Hall near Lichfield, which George kept as his permanent seat. Moor Park was a much grander place than Shugborough at that time.

The 1741 tax return shows that Thomas had acquired around a quarter of the village before George set sail on his voyage, and before he himself travelled to Egypt. The properties he secured in the decade between 1731 and 1741 also comprised some land away from the house, including, in 1737, Gillwicket Close, near Haywood Park. In 1739 he had acquired the houses near the millpond and was in occupancy of a property called "The Leas". These were patchy acquisitions, but they do suggest that the plan was to gain the entire surrounding land and, ultimately, the whole of the vale stretching south beyond the house. More property was later added to the estate between 1747 and 1756.

It is apparent that Thomas was expanding his land purchases beyond the Vale of Shugborough from 1750, or possibly earlier. By the time of his death, he owned the extensive estates in Staffordshire which George had bought from Lord Leicester, land in Norfolk neighbouring Lord Leicester's estate at Holkham, and property in Hampshire that had also belonged to George. To unravel the history of all the parcels comprising his property, and to identify exactly which assets were originally Thomas's purchases and those that came with deeds or leases inherited from George, would be a complex task.

Elizabeth Anson died childless in 1760 and George died two years later, in 1762. All their wealth came unexpectedly to Thomas. With this sudden increase in fortune he was able to further enlarge his house, build a grand house in London, and complete the expansion of the estate on a far larger scale than he could ever have imagined in 1747.

The Nicholas Dall paintings indicate that some buildings in the old village might have been demolished before Thomas's death in 1773, but there is no sign that there was any wholesale demolition to remove the village entirely, and no evidence that this was ever the intention. In fact, the reverse is true.

These pictures show some of the cottages and buildings that remained in the late 1760s, visible around the Tower of the Winds. This gives a Picturesque effect, which might have been intended, as the original Tower of the Winds in Athens, an octagonal monument on the Acropolis hill, is surrounded by other buildings.

Most interestingly, the pictures show a row of cottages which had been newly built not long before Dall painted the views. These are marked as “almshouses” on a 1771 plan, but there is no evidence that there was ever a charitable trust in existence to look after the poor and elderly in the village. That the cottages were new would corroborate the National Trust’s dating of Dall’s paintings to c.1768. Stitt wondered if these pictures showed the views as they were intended to become, rather than as they actually were at the time. There is no reason to doubt their accuracy as records of the estate as it was when Dall painted them.

The travel diary of the young Irish MP and lawyer, John Parnell (1744-1801), described the new cottages as he saw them in the summer of 1769. He found two rows of “between 20 and 30 small” but “very neat” brick houses with a “little street between them.”¹³ Parnell thought these houses were for estate workers, but he found they were:

for poor people who kept little huts bordering on ... a common or heath called Cank.

They are:

[the] first thing that strikes you on Entering the approach to his [Anson’s] house and that from the street of cottages you enter a Plain low farm gate and drive on a gravel’d road open to the lawn towards the house.¹⁴

This can only mean that Parnell entered the village from the Lichfield Road, and passed the present farm. These cottages were, indeed, two rows quite close to the Tower of the Winds (mentioned in more detail in Chapter 16).

The fact that Thomas built new cottages as late as 1769, and that these were some kind of “almshouses”, surely contradicts any idea that he had an intention of removing the village in the ruthless manner of Lord Harcourt, whom he certainly knew, and who, as noted in Chapter 4, also employed James “Athenian” Stuart at Nuneham Courtney.

There may have been a practical benefit in this generosity to the poor. Thomas was in the process of improving part of the Chase, possibly in the area where the “little huts” had been, turning it into what Parnell called “as fine a sheep walk as can be wished.”¹⁵

The village, including these new cottages, was demolished in around 1800 by a later generation who had grander ideas, removing the more fanciful parts of the park that Thomas Anson had designed to be a “Perfect Paradise”, and expanding the house from a gentleman’s villa into a stately home.

By the early 19th century the old village had finally vanished; the inhabitants were moved to well-built new cottages in the nearby villages of Great and Little Haywood, most of which (apart from “The Ring” between the two villages) still exist.

NOTES: Chapter 6

- ¹ Kevin Salt, *Shugborough and the Anson Family*. <https://www.kevinsalt.co.uk/440175041>
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ *History of Pirehill Hundred by Walter Chetwynd of Ingestre, 1679*, reprinted in Staffordshire Historical Collections, Vol.1914, pp.129-132. Cited by Kevin Salt, Op. cit.
- ⁵ Kevin Salt. Op. cit.
- ⁶ Nicholas Kingsley (Chairman of the National Council on Archives, 2001-2005), *Landed families of Britain and Ireland*, 'Anson of Shugborough Hall, Ranton Abbey and Orgreave Hall, Earls of Lichfield'. <http://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2014/12/149-anson-of-shugborough-hall-ranton.html>
- ⁷ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/D/1
- ⁸ Ibid. D3359/52/6/55
- ⁹ Ibid. D615/P (overview).
- ¹⁰ Frederick Blair Stitt was the former Staffordshire County archivist and Librarian of the William Salt Library. See <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23257962.2017.1283610>
- ¹¹ Frederick Blair Stitt, *Shugborough, The End of a Village*. Staffordshire Record Society, Collections for a History of Staffordshire, Fourth Series, Vol. 6, 1970, pp.86-110.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ *John Parnell's Journal, 1769* (extracts, anonymous transcription). William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, CB/Shugborough/8. Original at London School of Economics, LSE Library Misc. 38.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 7

The Death of Lord Scarbrough

Considering the scarcity of information that survives about Thomas Anson, apparently so unassuming and reticent, it is quite extraordinary that two of his friends included dramatic and significant anecdotes about him in their published works. In each case, a brief paragraph is enough to open-up an entire chapter in his life, and both mark what must have been pivotal moments that affected him intensely. It is curious and even haunting that both these brief fragments contain, verbatim, Thomas's own words. It is almost as if he had passed on stories that must have affected his listeners deeply, but which would only reveal their full significance to a future generation.

Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) tells of an extraordinarily dramatic event in Thomas Anson's life in his *Zoonomia*, written between 1794-96.¹ Darwin was part of the Lichfield literary set, which was not necessarily a group of people closely involved with the Ansons. While he may have known Thomas over many years, their only recorded encounter was in the 1770s when the Lanthorn of Demosthenes, Shugborough's last monument, was being completed. It is likely that this story was told thirty years after the event and published another twenty years later.

The anecdote is brief and Darwin attempts to keep its subject anonymous. There are no other references to the incident in the Shugborough archives and yet, because it refers to a notorious and shocking event, it is possible to fill in the background of the story in detail from other contemporaneous accounts.

Darwin writes of that fateful date, in January 1740:

Mr. Anson, the brother to the late Lord Anson related to me the following anecdote of the death of lord Sc-. His lordship sent to see Mr. Anson on the Monday preceding his death and said, "You are the only friend I value in the world, I [am] determined therefore to acquaint you, that I am tired of the insipidity of life, and intend to morrow to leave it."

Mr. Anson said after much conversation, that he was obliged to leave town till Friday, and added, "As you profess a friendship for me, do me this last favour, I entreat you, live till I return."²

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Lord Sc- believed this to be a pious artifice to gain time, but nevertheless agreed, if he should return by four o'clock, on that day. However,

Mr. Anson did not return till five, and perceived by the countenances of the domestics, that the deed was done. He went into his chamber and found the corpse of his friend leaning over the arm of a great chair, with the pistol on the ground by him, the ball of which had been discharged into the roof of his mouth, and passed into his brain.³

“Lord Sc-” can very easily be identified as Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarbrough, who committed suicide on January 29th 1740.

The story as told here suggests that this must have been a shocking experience. Lord Scarbrough had sent for Thomas specifically to talk about his intention of committing suicide on the Monday. Thomas persuaded him to restrain himself until he returned to London on the Friday. Scarbrough agreed to wait. Thomas was delayed and Scarbrough shot himself only a short time before Thomas Anson finally arrived, apparently only an hour later than he had promised to be there, at Scarbrough's request.

Thomas Anson would have felt himself to be responsible. This would inevitably have led to an appalling sense of guilt.

Richard Lumley, Lord Scarbrough, was born on November 30th 1686. He was military man and fought against the Jacobites in the First Rebellion of 1715. He succeeded to the title in 1721, became Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, a Privy Counsellor and Knight of the Garter, and Master of the Horse.⁴ Scarbrough was very close to George II and entrusted with negotiations with Frederick, Prince of Wales over the Prince's budget, at a time when the Prince and King were not on speaking terms.

Lord Scarbrough (1686-1740) was a close friend of Philip Stanhope (1694-1773), Lord Chesterfield. Scarbrough visited Chesterfield on his last day, the Friday on which he shot himself. As Matthew Maty, Principal Librarian of the British Museum and Secretary to the Royal Society, writes in his *Memoirs of Lord Chesterfield*, published in 1777:

The morning of the day on which he accomplished this resolution, he paid a long visit to Lord Chesterfield, and opened himself to him with great earnestness on many subjects. As he appeared somewhat discomposed, his friend pressed him to stay and dine with him, which he refused, but tenderly embraced him at parting. It happened in the course of the conversation, that something was spoken of which related to Sir Wm. Temple's negotiations, when the two friends not agreeing about the circumstances, Lord Chesterfield, whose memory was at all times remarkably good, referred Lord. S. to the page of Sir W.'s memoirs, where the matter was

mentioned. After his lordship's death the book was found open at that very page, several other books being piled about him, with the pistol in his mouth.⁵

Samuel Shellabarger gives this account in *Lord Chesterfield and his World*, published in 1951, which reiterates Chesterfield's earlier meeting with Scarbrough:

At eight o'clock on the evening of January 29 1740 Chesterfield was called suddenly from the House of Commons (where he been attending the debate on the Palace Bill) with the news that Lord Scarbrough was dead or at the point of death from a stroke of apoplexy. He had had one or two previous attacks, so that the news could not have been altogether a surprise. But when Lord Chesterfield reached his house he found that the cause of death had not been apoplexy but suicide. Lord Scarbrough had ordered his chair for six o'clock in the evening to carry him to Lady Hervey's. When he failed to appear a valet entering the Earl's room discovered that he had put a bullet into his head. He had spent that morning with Chesterfield discussing, among other matters, Lord Temple's negotiations.⁶

Frances, Countess of Hartford, wrote an account of events in a letter to the Countess of Pomfret, dated February 4th 1740:

The news will, before this time, have informed you of my lord Scarbrough's death; but perhaps the tragical manner of it may yet be unknown to you. On the 30th of January he sent for my lord Delaware; to whom he talked more than two hours, about a bill to be brought into the house of lords, to enable my lord Halifax to pay his sisters' fortunes. After which he sent to know whether my lord Essex dined at home; and upon hearing that he did not, he ordered a dinner in his own house, and appointed to meet my lord and lady Hervey, and lady Anne Frankland, at the duchess of Manchester's, to play at cards, at seven o'clock, at which time he ordered his chariot: but when his valet-de-chambre went up to let him know that it was come, he found him dead on the floor, with a pistol lying by him, which he had discharged in at his mouth. The balls were lodged in his brain, and had not penetrated his skull. Every thing was agreed on for his marriage, which was to have taken place very soon. It is said, that the duchess of Manchester's affliction, and that of lady Anne Frankland, are inexpressible.⁷

Lady Anne Frankland was Lord Scarbrough's daughter. Lady Hartford seems to be wrong about the date of his suicide. She writes January 30th when all other sources give January 29th. There are other slight differences in detail. Lady Hartford gives very precise information about Lord Scarbrough's plans for later that day – an evening of cards at the Duchess of Manchester's. Lady Hartford's letter was written on the day of Lord Scarbrough's funeral, so she would have heard the gossip and had time to gather all the information that was around. Samuel Shellabarger's much later version also states he was going to Lady Hervey's, but Lady Hartford's letter is so detailed that it seems convincing.

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It is interesting to piece together the evidence of Scarbrough's last day.

On the 30th (in fact 29th) of January, he sent for

"my lord Delaware; to whom he talked more than two hours." (Lady Hartford).

On the 29th January, Lord Scarbrough had been to see Chesterfield,

"[who] pressed him to stay and dine with him, which he refused, but tenderly embraced him at parting." (Matthew Maty)

"...he ordered a dinner in his own house" and arranged to go to the Duchess of Manchester's "at seven o'clock, at which time he ordered his chariot." (Lady Hartford)

"Lord Scarbrough had ordered his chair for six o'clock in the evening to carry him to Lady Hervey's." (Samuel Shellabarger)

"...but when his valet-de-chambre went up to let him know that it [the chair or carriage] was come, he found him dead on the floor." (Lady Hartford)

Thomas Anson says he returned at five o'clock on the Friday, an hour later than his appointment.

"He went into his chamber and found the corpse of his friend leaning over the arm of a great chair, with the pistol on the ground by him, the ball of which had been discharged into the roof of his mouth, and passed into his brain." (Erasmus Darwin)

Someone sent a message to the House of Commons – perhaps a servant or could it have been Thomas Anson?

"At eight o'clock on the evening of January 29 1740 Chesterfield was called suddenly from the House of Commons." (Samuel Shellabarger)

The message did not reach Chesterfield for two hours and he was the next on the scene sometime after eight o'clock, between two and three hours after the actual suicide.

Whether Scarbrough planned to go to Lady Montagu's, the Duchess of Manchester's by carriage (chariot) or Lady Mary Hervey's by chair, the idea that Scarbrough had made it clear that he had plans for the evening is a puzzling detail. Did Scarbrough make these plans in the hope or expectation that Thomas Anson would fulfil his appointment and save him from suicide?

Richard Lumley seems to have been a man of deep and melancholy honour. He may have held his promise to Anson as a serious vow. He had promised Thomas Anson that if he came back by four o'clock that day, he would abandon his plan of suicide and go out to play cards. As Anson failed to return on time. Scarbrough found himself obliged to comply with his vow.

This may seem a rather exaggerated code of honour, but it is horrifically credible. For such a character, the thought that Anson would have known that he had broken his word would have been intolerable. If this is the true interpretation, Thomas's guilt would have been entirely justifiable.

In the event, Scarbrough acted with fatal decisiveness. On other occasions he could be highly indecisive. Horace Walpole said he had "wisdom but no wit". He wrote of Scarbrough in his marginal notes on Maty's *Memoirs of Lord Chesterfield*:

Lord Scarbrough's gloomy mind, though steady to honour, was so fluctuating that he twice sold his seat at Stanstead, and twice paid a very large sum to break off the bargain.⁸

The only inconsistency in these varying points of view is the time when the valet found Scarbrough dead. Anson may have exaggerated the time to make it sound even more of a tragic narrow miss, arriving one hour too late, or the chair or carriage might have arrived early. The reality must be that Thomas arrived just after the chair had turned up and the valet had found him dead, sometime between five and six o'clock.

The most mysterious feature of this story is that none of the reports mention Thomas Anson. And yet Scarbrough had called him, "the only friend I value in the world."⁹

This is a remarkably three-dimensional account of an incident that occurred over two hundred and fifty years ago. It seems to be startlingly clear what actually happened, and no doubt that it was devastating.

Two key questions remain. What was Thomas Anson's relationship with Scarbrough? And why did Richard Lumley, Lord Scarbrough, shoot himself?

The second of these may not have any bearing on the first. There are several possible answers and the truth may be a mixture of them all. Is it possible that one of these scenarios involved Thomas Anson in some way?

These are the different explanations that might account for Scarbrough's suicidal mood:

1. An accident a few days before in his carriage, when he received a knock on the head, had affected his thinking.

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This may be a simple invention by his friends to disguise a more personal reason; there are several hints of ill-health.

2. He was caught between his mistress and his fiancé.

No less a person than Voltaire tells this version, and adds an anecdote about Scarbrough's character:

The earl of Scarbrough has lately quitted life with the same indifference as he did his place of master of the horse. Having been told in the house of lords that he ruled with the court, on account of the profitable post he held in it, My lords, said he, to convince you that my opinion is not influenced by any such consideration, I will instantly resign. He afterwards found himself perplexed between a mistress he was fond of, but to whom he was under no engagements, and a woman whom he esteemed, and to whom he had made a promise of marriage. My lord Scarbrough, therefore, killed himself to get rid of difficulty.

He adds a footnote:

Lord S....h's immediate motive for suicide was said to be remorse for having weakly discovered to a lady a secret of state, intrusted to him by his sovereign: but, in truth it seems to have been the effect of a temporary delirium, owing to a constitutional disorder.¹⁰

3. He was embarrassed by scandal around his brother.

In his will, Richard, Lord Scarbrough disinherited his brother Thomas, who was the object of a scandalous memoir by Teresia Constantia Phillips. 'Con' Phillips claimed to have been raped at the age of 13 by a gentleman.¹¹ Some interpreters assumed this was Lord Chesterfield, but it seems to have been Thomas Lumley (c.1691-1752), who became the 3rd Earl of Scarbrough. As the memoir was dedicated to the 3rd Earl, this threw people off the scent, but it seems the dedication was a very dark kind of irony. The book was a scandalous best seller, even read by Elizabeth Carter, the poet, translator, and close friend of architect and astronomer, Thomas Wright.

Elizabeth Carter wrote from Deal to Catherine Talbot, on December 16th 1749:

I do not know whether you may think I am likely to profit much by Mrs. Phillips's but my evenings next week are to be employed in hearing it read. Most people here give it a high character.¹²

4. His daughter, Lady Anne, had suffered in a disastrous marriage.

Lady Hartford explains:

Poor lady Anne Frankland is another topic of conversation; who is already parted from her husband, and, I think, without any one person giving her the least share of blame. It seems that he parted beds with her before she had been three weeks married, and on all occasions behaved towards her with the utmost cruelty. However, she made no complaint till he insisted on her leaving the house, when she begged of him not to force her to do that; and told him, that, provided he would allow her to have the sanction of being under his roof, she would submit to any thing. His answer was, that, if she continued there, he would either murder her or himself. She then applied to my lord Scarbrough, who spoke to her husband with great warmth: he did not lay any fault to her charge, but only declared that she was his aversion, and persisted in the resolution of forcing her to leave him, or killing her or himself. It is said that he returns her fortune, allows her six hundred pounds a-year, and has given her a thousand pounds to buy a house. His strange conduct towards her has been so contrary to his former character, that his friends rather ascribe it to madness than his natural disposition.¹³

5. He had betrayed a government secret to his fiancé, the Duchess of Manchester, which she then disclosed.

Richard (Lumley), 2nd Earl of Scarbrough, killed himself in January 1740, in consequence, it is said, of the King discovering his error in judgement, for which he was reproached by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole.¹⁴

This was the story that certainly circulated at the time. It was told in a satirical publication *The Court-Secret: A Melancholy Truth*, which claimed to be “translated from the original Arabic, by an adept in the oriental tongues.”¹⁵ In the story, published in 1741, the Vizier represents Robert Walpole. The Sultan’s adviser, Achmet, is Lord Scarbrough, who betrays the secret of a declaration of war to his beloved Fatima, the Duchess of Manchester. This publication is believed to have been written by George (later Lord) Lyttelton, who became a friend of Thomas Anson’s.

Lyttelton was one of the “Patriotic Whigs” who were opposed to Walpole, and was closely connected to Frederick, Prince of Wales, “with whom he became a great favourite.”¹⁶ Lyttelton and his Hagley Park set had close links with Thomas Anson and Shugborough, from the 1750s. Could their relationship have dated back as far as 1740? It is always possible that Lyttelton may have had sympathy for Scarbrough, who had been the go-between for the King and the Prince in their financial arguments and put the blame for his death on Prime Minister Walpole – as reflected in the story.

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Several of these possibilities may have played a part in Scarbrough's decision to kill himself, at the age of 53, ostensibly on the eve of his intended marriage.

The words he said to Thomas Anson imply simple ennui:

I am tired of the insipidity of life, and intend to morrow to leave it.¹⁷

The usual descriptions of Scarbrough portray someone out of place in the flippant and corrupt world of the 1740s. He was considered a man of honour who did not belong in a frivolous age. His sensitive and depressive mood may have run in the family; his father also committed suicide.

This dramatic incident, as told to Erasmus Darwin, shows how much remains ambiguous. Whatever his connection with Scarbrough might have been, it establishes that Thomas was involved with the highest levels of government, and yet, apparently, invisibly and in secret. This was before his brother George had departed on the voyage that would bring him fame, fortune and power.

Did Thomas Anson's friendship with Scarbrough have something to do with the political intrigues of the Patriotic Whigs and Frederick, Prince of Wales? After the prince's death in 1751, there may have been good reasons for his supporters to destroy any correspondence. This might also be the cause of some of the gaps in the story of Thomas Anson. His connection with Lord Scarbrough does, nevertheless, remain a mystery.

In 1740, Thomas Anson was a minor country landowner and barrister. Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, a protégée of the Ansons' uncle, Lord Macclesfield, had become Lord Chancellor in 1737. He was closely associated with Lord Scarbrough at court. Thomas Anson may have had legal as well as family connections with Thomas Parker, the Lord Chancellor, but there is no record at all of Anson's legal career. During the 1720s and 1730s he may have spent time abroad, but he may also have continued a practising career as a barrister, perhaps on the assize circuit, while in England. It is unlikely that Anson had any professional legal relationship with Scarbrough. As a barrister, he would not have acted as a solicitor or legal advisor to any particular client.

The world of politics and the court was very small, everyone knew one another, but Thomas Anson did not become an MP until 1747, and then, seemingly, only unwillingly. His connections with the highest political world of government might seem to date from the dynastic marriage of Lord Anson and Elizabeth Yorke – and perhaps, even then, he appears to be a peripheral figure in such high society. Yet, all his *visible* social connections were intellectual or related to the arts.

Anson clearly had political connections, but was he involved in political activities which

were *invisible*? Like Thomas's friend of his later years, George Lyttelton, and several of the early members of the Society of Dilettanti, Scarbrough was closely connected with Frederick, Prince of Wales, and Lord Lyttelton was his Secretary. By the time Thomas became an MP, Lyttelton was Secretary to the government Treasury (1744-1754).¹⁸ Is this significant?

The incident of Scarbrough's death, and Thomas's part in it, is as enigmatic as it is dramatic. Somewhere, embedded in all this obscurity, there might just be clues to the more veiled aspects of Thomas's life.

There is, indeed, a connection between this mystery and another of the most curious enigmas of Shugborough – the lack of any evidence of the involvement of astronomer-architect Thomas Wright in the landscaping and building of the monuments and extensions to the house.

Why is there no mention of Wright in the Anson archives? And why is there no mention of Anson or Shugborough in any of the surviving records of Thomas Wright?

Could the answer to the mystery of Wright's invisibility in the story of Shugborough lie in Thomas Anson's sense of guilt over the tragic event of the death of Lord Scarbrough?

Scarbrough had been Wright's patron.

NOTES: Chapter 7

- ¹ Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia; or, the laws of organic life*. Vol. 2. London, 1796. Available on Google Books.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Lumley, Hon. Richard (1686-1740), of Stansted Park, Sussex, and Lumley Castle, co. Durham. *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1690-1715 (5 Vols.)*. Eds. D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley. Cambridge University Press, 2002. <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/lumley-hon-richard-1686-1740>
“These volumes contain 2,041 biographical articles and 314 constituency articles. They cover the ascendancy, dominance and fall of Sir Robert Walpole; the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 and the difficulties of the Tory party in responding to it.”
- ⁵ Matthew Maty, *Miscellaneous Works of the Late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, with Dr Maty’s Memoirs of his Lordship’s Life*. Dublin, 1777. Available on Google Books.
- ⁶ Samuel Shellabarger, *Lord Chesterfield and his World*. Biblio & Tannen, New York, 1951. Available on Google Books.
- ⁷ Bingley, W. M. (Ed.), *Correspondence between Frances, Countess of Hartford (afterwards Duchess of Somerset) and Henrietta Louisa, Countess of Pomfret between the years 1738 and 1741. (3 Vols.) Vol. 1*. Printed for Richard Phillips, London, 1805. pp.188-9. Available on Google Books.
- ⁸ Robert Samuel Turner (Ed.), *Horace Walpole’s Marginal Notes, written in Dr. Maty’s Miscellaneous Works and Memoirs of the Earl of Chesterfield*. 2 Vols., 1777, p.25. Available on Google Books.
- ⁹ Erasmus Darwin. Op. cit.
- ¹⁰ Tobias George Smollett, Thomas Francklin, and others, *The Works of M. de Voltaire. Translated from the French. With Notes, Historical and Critical*. Printed for J. Newbery, R. Baldwin, W. Johnston, and others, Salisbury, 1762, p.33. Available on Google Books.
- ¹¹ Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women’s Writing in Britain, 1660–1789*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teresia_Constantia_Phillips
- ¹² Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the Year 1741 to 1770: To which are Added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, Between the Years 1763 and 1787; Published from the Original Manuscripts in the Possession of the Rev. Montagu Pennington. In Four Volumes, Vol. I*. Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1809. Available on Google Books.
- ¹³ Bingley, W. M. (Ed.), Op. cit. pp.113-4.
- ¹⁴ Joseph Shackell, *The Olio; or, Museum of Entertainment*. Vol. VI. London, Printed by Shackell & Carfrae, 1831. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁵ Ascribed to George Lyttelton. *The Court-Secret: A Melancholy Truth*. Now first translated from the original Arabic, by an adept in the oriental tongues. First printed 1741, London, for T. Cooper. Reprinted 1742, London, for T. Brown. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁶ Lyttelton, George (1709-73), of Hagley Hall, Worcs., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754 (2 Vols.)*. Ed. R. Sedgwick, Boydell & Brewer, The Stationary Office, 1970. <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/lyttelton-george-1709-73>
- ¹⁷ Thomas Anson cited by Erasmus Darwin. Op. cit.
- ¹⁸ ‘Lyttelton, George (1709-73), of Hagley Hall, Worcs.’ Op. cit.

Chapter 8

The Lure of the Exotic

In September 1740, George Anson set sail on what would become a round-the-world voyage. The intention behind this major expedition was to attack and even plunder, Spanish treasure in the South Atlantic. The squadron, led by Commodore Anson's *Centurion*, consisted of eight ships and 1854 men. Only 188 of the crew returned. With such a loss of life, largely owing to scurvy and lack of fresh water, the voyage was a human disaster, but on the way, Anson captured a Spanish treasure ship *Nuestra Señora de Covadonga*. In the 18th century, and into the 19th, according to the laws of Prize Money, officers and crew kept a proportion of their takings from captured enemy vessels. As a result, Anson earned around £91,000. The seamen received a proportionately smaller amount, but even so, their rewards were equivalent to £20 or a year's wages.

George Anson's voyage between 1740-44 has been studied and written about over the years, including the publication of a bestselling book, in 1748.¹ Yet no-one previously seems to have noticed that Thomas set sail with his brother on the *Centurion*, which, by all accounts, arrived at Juan Fernandez on 11th June 1741, with very few men fit for duty. Thomas had no intention of going with him in pursuit of the Spanish. He was, in effect, hitching a lift on the first part of his own voyage around the Mediterranean. Thomas parted from George and the *Centurion* at Cape Finisterre and continued his journey on a succession of other Royal Navy ships.

This expedition began only seven months after the death of Lord Scarbrough, who had committed suicide on January 29th 1740. It seems reasonable to suggest that Thomas's voyage may have been influenced by Scarbrough's death. Could it have been a way of escaping the weight of guilt at having arrived too late for their pre-arranged appointment? It was certainly not a holiday. Was it usual for a tourist to travel around the Mediterranean in naval ships, especially at a time of war – or was this journey, in some way, on official business?

George had been in North Carolina for some years before being given command of this expedition, so he had not yet become closely involved in the world of politics in London. Thomas became a very unenthusiastic MP for Lichfield in 1747, but his political connections are mysterious. What were his political activities, if any, in his earlier years?

Family connections with Thomas Parker, the Earl of Macclesfield (until his death in 1732),

and a life-long connection with Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, and his family, would have provided opportunities to become involved with machinations at the highest level of power. Yet the most important person in the political world to whom Thomas can be directly linked on this stage is Lord Scarbrough – whose most interesting activity was in the disputes between the King and his son, Frederick, Prince of Wales.

Could Thomas's political connections have been more concerned with the circle around the Prince, a focus for Whiggish hopes and ambitions?

There is a small leather pocketbook in the Staffordshire Record Office which contains the barest notes of his journey. This is one of the very few existing documents in Thomas Anson's own handwriting.² By chance, there are also letters from the merchant Francis Congreve (1702-1742), a member of a Staffordshire family who met Thomas in Cairo during his travels in the Middle East. Thomas's own notes give only the dates of arrival at various ports, apart from some incomplete cryptic instructions on the first page:

Mr. M to answer my Bills I draw upon him.

Mr. Lascelles Demd to be discharged at my Return if not disc'g by Mr. Mytton.

Mills(?) has orders to pay 75(£?) yearly of demd by a certain person purs. (?)

"Mr. M" is Thomas's long-standing friend James Mytton (1696-1764), with whom he travelled to Spa, in Belgium, in the 1720s, and to Paris in 1748. He was a regular visitor at Shugborough in the 1750s. Whatever the nature of their relationship, it seems that Mytton was, in some way, Anson's business manager while he was away.

"Mr Lascelles" could be Henry Lascelles (1690-1753), of an extensive Yorkshire family who made a fortune through Barbados sugar plantations and the slave trade. The note "to be discharged" suggests a loan to Mr Lascelles that Thomas intends to cancel.

"Mills" is mentioned in several of Thomas's letters to George from the 1740s. He was William Mills (1689-1749), one of several generations of lawyers in Leek, Staffordshire.³ The Mills family is believed to have taken over the business of the Parker family in Leek, including that of Thomas Anson's uncle, Thomas Parker, Earl of Macclesfield, who died in 1732.

But who is the "certain person" who is to be paid £75 yearly by Mills? And does "purs." mean pursuant to something unexplained? This was a considerable amount of money in 1740, enough for a person of the middle-classes to live comfortably.

The air of mystery continues in the only surviving letters from James Mytton to Thomas,

dating from shortly after Thomas's return from this lengthy journey, as will be shown.

One could ask who was supposed to see this note? The notebook was, apparently, one he took with him, so the notes seem to have been written as reminder to himself or as a sketch for a letter to his agents back home. The only substantial piece of writing is less mysterious and suggests a practical purpose for the journey. It consists of instructions for the preservation of plants:

Many sorts of Roots of Plants may with very little trouble be so ordered as to grow again when brought over & set tho' after a long voyage, particularly those that are Bulbous, tuberous & Fleshy. Such as ye Roots of Tulips, of Lillies, Crocus's. Onions, Garlicks, Squills, anemones, Potatos, yawns etc. These & all like Roots may be sent as early & safely as seeds if taken up out of ye Ground, & laid to dry till ye Ships come away & then only put in very dry Moss, Coton or Sand. Seeds to be well dry'd before put up & afterwards kept dry.⁴

This is the earliest written evidence of what must have become one of Thomas's principal interests – gardening and botany. Whilst the landscape of Shugborough may be more memorable for its buildings, those follies (later described) were probably only a small part of an integral landscape in which exotic planting was just as important. Thomas's library would have held a fine collection of books on foreign plants, and several of his friends in later life, including Benjamin Stillingfleet and Thomas Pennant, were botanists.

Other travellers to the Middle East in earlier years returned with ancient relics and artefacts. Dr Pococke even brought back an Egyptian mummy. Presumably Anson came back with seeds, roots and bulbs. This peaceful purpose contrasts dramatically with the motive for George Anson's voyage. It is certainly strange that Thomas should have set off to look for exotic blooms at a time when travel in the region was extremely dangerous and English trade in the Levant was suffering as a result. Perhaps his personal interest was secondary to some other, unknown, purpose?

On September 13th 1740, Thomas "came into Spithead from Torbay", more than likely on board the *Centurion*. The fleet gathered here, on the Solent at Portsmouth, and sailed on September 18th.⁵ On 29th September:

[he] parted with Capt Anson about ten of ye Morning. 44½ Cape Finisterre being SE by E abt 45 leagues.⁶

Thomas travelled on a series of naval ships. There were breaks on land, including four days at Lisbon, sailing from there on October 7th, and five days on Gibraltar. On November 20th, Thomas "went on board the *Roseby*", which took him to Alexandria and up the Nile to Cairo, where he arrived on December 5th.⁷

Francis Congreve wrote from Cairo to his brother William in Minorca, on 2nd January 1740/1. Thomas had left Cairo on 5th December according to his notes, though Congreve dated a letter to his brother, which he gave to Thomas to deliver, on the 8th December:

As the whole time of Mr. Anson's stay here has been nothing but hurry I am sure his goodness will excuse any deficit or omission on my part in not abandoning myself entirely to his services which his merit deserved had he made a longer stay or I been more leisure.⁸

(Quotations that follow, unless referenced otherwise, are from Congreve's letters held at the Staffordshire County Record Office.)

He was unable to act as a guide to a possibly unexpected guest:

I am sorry I could not, from the hurry of business which a ship from home always brings with her, attend him constantly in visiting of Curiosities of the Place.

It is a great pity that Thomas made no notes at all about the curiosities he saw. He could hardly have avoided the pyramids.

Congreve later wrote to his brother, eager for news from Minorca:

I have not received any of your favours, my last was at 8 Dec by Mr. Anson, who is gone to Aleppo, & promised to deliver my letter & a small bundle of Coffee for you to Capt Vincent of the St Albans Man of War who no doubt calls at Port Mahon with the Turkey Convoy.

The coffee that Thomas delivered to Minorca took a long time to arrive. William Congreve, on Minorca, made a note on a letter from his brother, dated May 8th 1741:

received a bag of coffee & a letter from my Brother by Mr Anson.⁹

By that time, Thomas, having carried the coffee with him to the eastern end of the Mediterranean, was on his way home.

Congreve again wrote to his brother, on 28th January:

I had a very civil letter from Mr. Anson in Cyprus, whence he was to depart the next day to Aleppo.

Thomas's log notes that he arrived at Cyprus, via Alexandria and Rosetta, on December 25th. He stayed there over Christmas until January 8th, when he made a two-week voyage to Scanderoon (İskenderun) on the Turkish coast,¹⁰ from where he was to make an over-

land journey to Aleppo.¹¹ It is hard to know why it should have taken two weeks to travel from Cyprus to İskenderun, but there are no intervening ports of call in the log.

Having set out from Scanderoon, he arrived at Aleppo on January 26th for a three week stay. Aleppo, in present-day Syria, was one of the three principal bases of the Levant Company, with Smyrna and Constantinople. It was one of the oldest inhabited and largest cities in the Ottoman Empire, with a wealth of spectacular buildings and a population of mixed races and faiths. There was a small English community who were mainly engaged in business, with a certain amount of horse riding and falconry for amusement. What would have brought Thomas to this ancient city, the furthest point on his Mediterranean journey?

The details of his journey are minimal. The notebook says only:

January 26th. Arrived at Aleppo
February 16th. Set off from Aleppo¹²

Of course, there is no certain evidence beyond these statements, but this was a long enough period in which to make the journey to Palmyra.

As the poem *To Thomas Anson Esq. of Shuckborough* by Rev. Sneyd Davies, says:

What tho' Palmyra boast her pillar'd pride...¹³

Here is Thomas Anson in the nearest city to Palmyra,¹⁴ the site of some of the most impressive Greco-Roman ruins in the East. It was five days travel through the desert to Palmyra. Richard Pococke had made the trip only a few years before. The next known travellers across the desert were Wood and Dawkins, in 1751. The remarkable fact, bearing the poem in mind, is that Thomas was in a position to go to Palmyra in 1741. He had just the right amount of time to make the journey between January 26th and February 16th.

Surely, the conclusion has to be that Thomas did make the journey, and that this was the object of the expedition? There is no justification for doubting Sneyd Davies.

It is very hard to emphasise enough just how extraordinary such a journey would have been, and Cairo is only one of the adventurous destinations mentioned by Davies in his poem; there is no doubt that Thomas went there. Some of the other locations could have been visited on this same trip. Would it have been possible for Thomas to have visited Baalbek in the two weeks it took him to travel from Cyprus to Scanderoon?

Neither is there any doubt that Thomas had made a previous journey, in 1734, which Davies may not have been aware of, and when, on that occasion, he came within sight of Troy. He had, from the evidence that survives, opportunities to go to Athens – to the 18th-

century mind, the most symbolic and important centre of ancient culture.

These are the journeys of someone with a unique attraction to the ancient world. Pococke was a serious antiquarian; Lord Sandwich and Francis Dashwood were reckless young men. Thomas Anson's travels might, indeed, be thought of in terms of a pilgrimage.

Thomas's notebook gives details of his return journey. The year was 1741.

May 2nd Got into Port Mahon
May 5th Sailed from Port Mahon
May 20th Off Gibraltar
June 1st Parted from Admiral Haddock at Cape St Vincent
June 20th Arrived in ye Downs
June 27th In London¹⁵

Port Mahon is the capital of Minorca. This is where Thomas left the coffee for Francis Congreve. While he does not mention the ship on which he returned, he parts from Admiral Haddock at Cape St Vincent, a landmark in south-west Portugal where ships travelling to and from the Mediterranean would often stop.

Nicholas Haddock (1686-1746) was Commander-in-Chief of Britain's naval forces in the Mediterranean between 1738 and 1742. This indicates that Thomas, having been accepted on board the vessel of the Admiral, would have probably returned to the southwestern-most point of Europe in style.

There is a small cache of correspondence in the Staffordshire Record Office, between Thomas Anson and James Mytton, dating from December 1741. These *'Miscellaneous Letters'* include the only known letters from Mytton.¹⁶ The survival of this group of documents highlights the absence of any other letters from Mytton, who clearly seems to have been involved in Thomas's business interests. There are passing references to Mytton in letters from others which show that he was often at Shugborough. The survival of these few letters, saved because they are primarily about a financial transaction concerning George Anson's property in North Carolina, draws attention to the lack of any of Thomas's personal correspondence other than the letters from his brother and sister-in-law, and correspondence concerning his collecting and business dealings with James "Athenian" Stuart in the 1760s.

As George was away on his voyage and Thomas had also been out of the country, Mr Mytton had read the communication from Benjamin Whittaker, the Solicitor General of North Carolina, and passed it on to Thomas once he had safely arrived home. The Carolina business appears to have concerned payment for properties and associated taxes. Whilst these are, indeed, business communications, they do contain small clues

about Thomas's life at the time, and of his relationship with Mytton.

(Extracts from Mytton's and Whittaker's letters to Thomas that follow, unless otherwise referenced, are from "Miscellaneous Letters, 1764-1773" held in the Staffordshire Record Office.¹⁷)

Thomas's reply to Benjamin Whittaker, dated December 21st 1741, apologises for the delay in dealing with the matter:

I was not in England when the letter you favoured me with dated 31st October 1740 arrived. I staid a fortnight in London where my own affairs call me very seldom...

Whittaker's letter had arrived in London when Thomas was in the Mediterranean, having left his business affairs in the hands of James Mytton who does not seem to have responded to Whittaker at the time. On his return home to England in June 1741, Thomas arrived in London before writing from "Shutborrow Manor". By the end of the 1740s it had been transformed into Shugborough.

The sections of Mytton's letters which are not about the Carolina business are deliberately cryptic:

The person arrived from Bath... There was an appointment ...to meet him and our Tower St acquaintance to talk over the affair.

Was "The person" mentioned above the "certain person" who was to be paid £75 per year in accordance with instructions in Thomas's notebook?

Tower Street was the area of London where, at the docks and quays to the south, wealthy merchants and traders unloaded many of the goods and imports. So, who was their "Tower St acquaintance"?

"The affair" had something to do with shipping. Some ships had taken on more provisions than had been required. There were "ugly difficulties" and seems to have been a suggestion of fraud, yet the whole thing appears to have been unintentional. They all "agreed to meet tomorrow at Mead's." This may have been Dr Richard Mead (1673-1754), the English physician who spent time at the university of Padua and was a Fellow of the Royal Society and a Freemason.

Mead was a collector of paintings, rare books, classical sculpture, gems and zoological specimens, which he made available for study at the library in his Bloomsbury house. His collection consisted of 10,000 volumes. ...After his death, it took 56 days to auction them to book collectors from England and abroad. His "Genuine and Entire Collection of Valuable Gems, Bronzes, Marble and other Busts and Antiquities" was auctioned...on 11-15 March 1755.¹⁸

It is not clear if Thomas Anson bought any of his books or made any purchases from Mead's sale in 1755.¹⁹

In another letter, Mytton says, "I was unfortunately abroad when Mr. Clements called." This probably means simply "out" (away from home or out of the office) rather than out of the country. Mr Clements was a man of business who is often named in Thomas's letters to George. He had brought "the enclosed bill upon Mr. Hanbury." Anson and Mytton were engaged in some kind of trade, but "the gum affair will turn out ill."

And what is this?

I have received two hampers of about 5 doz each from Portsmouth... Mr. Eddoes writes that the weather is too severe to venture the rest... I have taken the best I can and wrapped it well in straw...

Could these "5 doz" be bottles of wine or spirits? "Mr Eddoes" could be John Eddowes of Nash, Eddowes and Martin, merchants of Cheapside, who specialised in linen amongst other things.

According to a Mytton family genealogy, James Mytton had been apprenticed in 1713 to Josiah Diston (1667-1737) of Blackwell Hall, Basinghall Street, London.²⁰ Diston was a cloth factory owner, banker and MP. It is possible that Mytton had continued his connections with this business. Was his trade in some way involved in importing goods for Thomas Anson, perhaps connected with his trips to the Levant and the Mediterranean?

These few surviving letters from Mytton to Anson are invaluable for glimpses of an aspect of Thomas's life that remains otherwise unknown, and for raising unanswered questions.

There are a few more personal details which give the impression that Mytton was more than a business manager. His London address is given as Bow Street. Later, in the 1750s, Mytton's home was in Richmond (discussed in Chapter 2).

Thomas describes Mytton to Benjamin Whittaker in North Carolina as "our particular friend". He signs one of his letters to Thomas with:

I am ever & most affectionately yours,
J Mytton

Mytton mentions his sister, mother of the naturalist, Thomas Pennant:

I am to thank you for some excellent venison. I gave part of it to my sister Pennant and the rest to Richmond where it will be very acceptable. A chearfull Christmas and many happy years to you all.

There is a useful index of the names of subscribers to various books published in the 18th century, oddly hidden within the *U.K. and U.S. Directories 1680-1830*.²¹ Several entries for James Mytton show that his literary and cultural interests were not dissimilar to those of Thomas Anson. The titles (the latter two are mentioned in this narrative) include:

The History of London from its Foundation by the Romans to the Present Time. Containing a Faithful Relation of the Publick Transactions of the Citizens; accounts of the several parishes; parallels between London and other Great Cities; ...with the several accounts of Westminster, Middlesex, Southwark, and other parts within The Bill of Mortality. In Nine Books. William Maitland, London, 1739.

A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels; ...in Europe, Asia, Africa and America... (Vols. 1 & 2). John Green, London, 1745.

A Voyage Round the World: In the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV. George Anson, compiled by Richard Walter, London, 1748.

All the Works of Epictetus which are now Extant; ...Translated by Elizabeth Carter, with an Introduction, and Notes, by the Translator. London, 1758.

If more was known about James Mytton, we would know a lot more about Thomas.

Lord Sandwich and Francis Dashwood became the leaders of two London clubs for travellers to these exotic places: the Egyptian Society and the Divan Club. Thomas Anson was an active member of both, in contrast to his apparent lack of activity in the Society of Dilettanti. Although these clubs included adventurers and more serious scholars and antiquarians, Thomas's trip predates those of any of the other members.

John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, had travelled in the Levant between 1738 and 1739, returning to England at the age of only 21. His journey was far more than a young man's Grand Tour. Most gentlemen went no further than Italy to gain their experience of the world. Sandwich was an extraordinary adventurer; he was always a man of great energy and enthusiasm.

Sandwich became an important figure in George Anson's career after he returned on the *Centurion* from his voyage in the Pacific, having safely rounded the Cape of Good Hope, arriving at Spithead on 15th June 1744:

Good fortune favoured him at the last, and as he came into the Channel a thick fog hid him from the French fleet which was cruising in the Soundings; he passed safely through it, and anchored at Spithead on 15 June 1744. The treasure which he had brought home amounted to about £500,000. This was landed at Portsmouth, sent up

to London, and paraded in triumph through the city in a procession of thirty-two wagons, the ship's company marching with colours flying and band playing.²²

From 1744, Lord Sandwich and Admiral Anson worked together at the Admiralty, and, in 1748, Sandwich became First Lord of the Admiralty. He was succeeded by Lord Anson in 1751. It is intriguing that Sandwich's association with Thomas predates his association with George.

Sandwich started the short-lived Egyptian Society in 1741. The three other founder members were Dr Richard Pococke, who had been in Palmyra a year before Thomas's possible visit; Dr Perry, possibly Charles Perry, the traveller and medical writer; and the Danish explorer Captain Norden.²³ Lord Sandwich was elected as Sheik, and the secretary, known as "Reis Effendi", was Jeremiah Mills until replaced by his cousin, Dr Pococke.

On 11th December they invited the antiquarian William Stukeley to join them as an Associate Member of the new Society. The four founders had all travelled to Egypt. Stukeley was not well travelled but he was a man with a passion for antiquity, constantly developing his theories about ancient civilisations, and studying archaeological remains and cultural, religious beliefs.

William Stukeley (1687-1765), who was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1718, was particularly interested in the Druids, or his interpretation of ancient British culture, an interest he shared with Dr Pococke. Rev. Jeremiah Mills (1714-1784) and Dr Richard Pococke (1704-1765) were both churchmen and had travelled extensively together. Their letters and notebooks were published in two volumes, in 2011 and 2012, by Rachel Finnegan.²⁴

Other members drawn into the Egyptian Society included John Montagu (1690-1749), the 2nd Duke of Montagu, and Martin Folkes (1690-1754). Stukeley had certainly known Folkes for a long time. In 1720 he had written disapprovingly of an invitation from Folkes and William Jones to a meeting of an "Infidel Club"²⁵ (see Chapter 3).

The Egyptian Society was founded not long after Thomas had returned from his Mediterranean tour which had included a visit to Cairo, but he did not become a member until a few months later. Thomas Anson was proposed for membership to the Society on 2nd April 1742, as "having been in Egypt". His signature is recorded in the Minute Book in the British Library.²⁶

In fact, while there is no evidence that Thomas had any interest in the Society of Dilettanti, he is recorded as attending meetings of both the Egyptian Society and the Divan Club. The Egyptian Society may have enjoyed exotic titles for its officers and perhaps an element of dressing up (in which the Divan Club certainly did indulge) but there was also a serious interest in antiquities and exploration.

In view of Thomas's own interest in medals in his later life, it is noteworthy that medals formed a particular interest of the Egyptian Society. Martin Folkes (who was to become president of the Society of Antiquities from 1749-54), was given the responsibility for inspecting the Egyptian medals, and part of the business of the Society was the engraving of the medals and printing of a catalogue. At the meeting on 2nd April 1742, when Thomas Anson was proposed for membership, Dr Pococke "shewed the design of a copper plate for the series of Egyptian medals."²⁷

A feature of Egyptian Society meetings was a symbolic sistrum, the rattle held in representations of Isis. At one of the earliest meetings that took place in January 1741/2, before Thomas was an elected member, Stukeley gave an impromptu lecture on the symbolic meaning of this Egyptian rattle.²⁸

Stukeley, the son of a lawyer from Holbeach, Lincolnshire, was, at that time, living in Stamford, Lincolnshire, where as a cleric he had the living of All Saints, so he was rarely in London. He may not have met Thomas Anson. Isis, with her rattle, appeared a few years later in the Drawing Room at Shugborough.

The last meeting of the Society was 16th April 1743, by which time the Divan Club was already active. The Divan Club was founded by Sir Francis Dashwood, who had also been one of the founder members of the Society of Dilettanti (his family had made their money from trading silks in the Levant). He travelled to Smyrna and Constantinople in 1738-39. Lord Sandwich was, once again, a founder member. Membership was limited to those people who had travelled "in the Sultan's dominions" – the area ruled by Turkey, which meant that it would be open to a wider range of travellers than the Egyptian Society.

Dashwood had his portrait painted by Knapton whilst wearing Turkish costume, as "Il faquir Dashwood Pasha," in about 1745; one of over twenty portraits Knapton painted for the Society of Dilettanti, including others of Dashwood. The presence of Sir Francis Dashwood might suggest that the Divan Club was another excuse for a party and getting drunk, as Horace Walpole claimed was the principal purpose of the Society of Dilettanti. There might have been an element of truth in this, but it does appear that the members had a serious interest in travel.

Thomas did not sign up to the Divan Club until two years after the demise of the Egyptian Society. He was elected on 1st March 1745 and attended seven meetings, acting on one occasion as "Reis Effendi" or secretary. His brother, George Anson, was also a member at the very end of the Club's existence. He was proposed by Lord Sandwich and elected to the Divan Club on 31st January 1746. He attended only three meetings.

Among other members were Richard Owen Cambridge (whose father had been a "Turkey merchant"), a satirical poet and a friend of Thomas until his death, and a "Mr. Wright" who might have been the architect Thomas Wright. It is hard to imagine that

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Wright would have been very keen to travel as far as the “Sultan’s dominions”, as his own journal reveals that he suffered from sea sickness.²⁹

Another Divan Club member with connections to the Ansons was “Mr. Vernon”, Admiral Edward Vernon, of Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire. He is only listed as having attended meetings in 1744, before Thomas joined.

Both the Egyptian Society and the Divan Club were short-lived, but they did bring together people who had an interest in both the contemporary world of the Ottoman Empire and in ancient Egypt. The last meeting of the Divan Club was held on 25th May 1746. Only three members attended.

There is no evidence that Thomas Anson was involved with Sir Francis Dashwood’s more riotous activities at Medmenham or West Wycombe caves. These may not have begun until a few years after the end of the Divan Club.

The Anson brothers would continue to have close connections with Lord Sandwich.

NOTES: Chapter 8

- ¹ George Anson, *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1740-44*. Third edition. John & Paul Knapton, London, 1748. Available on Google Books. Republished by John Masefield (Ed.), *A Voyage Round the World in the Years 1740-4 by Lord Anson*. J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1911.
- ² Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/2/4
- ³ 'Leek: Leek and Lowe'. *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 7, Leek and the Moorlands*. Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1996. British History Online: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol7/pp84-169>
- ⁴ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Staffordshire Record Office, *Congreve Letters*. D1057/M/G/4/11
- ⁹ Ibid. D1057/M/G/4/14
- ¹⁰ İskenderun was historically known as Alexandretta and Scanderoon.
- ¹¹ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family*. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/2/4
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Ibid. D615/P(S)/2/5
- ¹⁴ Palmyra is an ancient ruined city in the present-day Syrian desert, north-east of Damascus, that was once one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world.
- ¹⁵ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/2/4
- ¹⁶ Ibid. *Miscellaneous Letters, 1764-1773*. 'From J. Mytton, R. Jackson, Benjamin Whittaker, J. Goodall to Thomas Anson re business.' D615/P(S)/1/6
- ¹⁷ Letters quoted from Whittaker and Mytton to Thomas in 1740-41 for some reason appear in the above collection from 1764-1773.
- ¹⁸ Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Mead
- ¹⁹ *A Catalogue of the Genuine and Entire Collection of Valuable Gems, Bronzes, Marble and other Busts and Antiquities, of the late Doctor Mead. Which (by Order of the Executors) Will be Sold by Action by Mr. Langford, at his Hotel in the Great Piazza, Covent Garden On Tuesday the 11th of this Instant, March 1755, and the four following Days*. Retrieved from <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/123243#page/1/mode/1up>
- ²⁰ See Richard Williams, *Mytton of Halston*, Sept 03 1999. <https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/mytton/9/>
- ²¹ U.K. and U.S. Directories 1680-1830. Retrieved from www.ancestry.co.uk
- ²² George, Baron Anson (1697-1762) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB), originally published in 63 volumes by Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1900. Vol. 02. Entry by N. A. M. Rodger. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/574>
- ²³ The most detailed source for the Egyptian Society and Divan Club is by Rachel Finnegan, 'The Divan Club 1744-46', *EJOS IX*, No 9, 1-86, 2006. <http://www.pocockepress.com/DivanClub.pdf>
- ²⁴ Rachel Finnegan (Ed.), *Letters from Abroad: The Grand Tour Correspondence of Richard Pococke & Jeremiah Milles. Volume 1, Letters from the Continent (1733-34); & Volume 2, Letters from the Continent (1736-37)*. Pococke Press, 2011 & 2012.
- ²⁵ David Boyd Haycock, *William Stukeley: Science, Religion, and Archaeology in Eighteenth-century England*. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2002. p.51 & p.227.

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- ²⁶ 'The Egyptian Society (London, England)', British Library MSS Add. 52362 (microfilm), includes membership lists, the Society's laws and reports of members' papers.
- ²⁷ Rachel Finnegan. *Op. cit.*
- ²⁸ Stuart Piggott, *William Stukeley: An Eighteenth-Century Antiquary*. Second edition, Thames & Hudson, London, 1985.
- ²⁹ Edward Hughes, 'The Early Journal of Thomas Wright of Durham', *Annals of Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1, March 28, 1951. Taylor & Francis Online.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00033795100202151>

Chapter 9

Thomas the Spy?

John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich (1718-1792), had been an early traveller in the East and was a founder and leading member of both the Divan Club and the Egyptian Society. As Thomas Anson had been proposed to the Egyptian Society in April 1742, his connection with Sandwich predates that of his brother George, who, at that time, was still sailing round the world.

In 1744, Lord Sandwich became one of the Commissioners of the Admiralty, under the Duke of Bedford. On his return from his voyage, George Anson became MP for Heydon, Yorkshire, and joined the Board of the Admiralty. This placed George in a position of political power and influence, but the political situation in the 1740s was far more complicated than a simple two-party system of Whigs and Tories.

The government was dominated by Henry Pelham as Prime Minister, but the real power was in the hands of Pelham's older brother, Thomas Pelham-Holles, the Duke of Newcastle. In theory, George, and Thomas from 1747, were MPs in the Party of Pelham, but that did not necessarily mean their loyalties lay with Pelham or Newcastle.

Sandwich's political master was the Duke of Bedford, John Russell (1710-1771), and it is reasonable to assume that George Anson looked up to the Duke of Bedford as well – from 1744-48 Bedford was First Lord of the Admiralty. He then became Secretary of State for the Southern Department until June 1751, a position previously held by the Duke of Newcastle.

The surviving evidence of the Anson letters, and the documentation of Jemima Grey and her husband Philip Yorke, George's brother-in-law from 1748, confirms regular meetings with Bedford and visits to the Duke's country home at Woburn. The head of the Yorke family was, of course, Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor, who, in 1739, had purchased Wimpole Hall, a country house in Cambridgeshire.

The political focus of both George and Thomas seems to have been Lord Sandwich, and, ostensibly, support for Bedford rather than Pelham or Newcastle. Sandwich succeeded Bedford as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1748, after the Peace Treaty which ended the War of the Austrian Succession, when he was the British representative. Sandwich continued to work in partnership with George Anson until he was removed by Lord

Newcastle in 1751, at least in part because Newcastle suspected him of having more loyalty to his rival, the Duke of Bedford, and distrusted them both.

In other words, there was a party within the Whig party, the “Patriotic Whigs,” with Bedford at its head, but with Sandwich as a dominant figure. The Patriotic Whigs had a particular interest in the British Navy and the need for sea power.

What this means, throughout the 1740s, is that Thomas, even as an MP, was not necessarily serving the government, but may have been serving this party within a party, or perhaps an even smaller party within that. The political complexities of such a situation might be one of the reasons why surviving documentation is so patchy.

The only large collection of letters from Thomas is a group of about 60 of his letters to George. These are held in the British Library and cover the period from 1743 (a letter sent to George whilst he was at sea) to the beginning of 1749.¹

(All the quotations that follow in this chapter, unless otherwise referenced, are from this same collection of Thomas’s correspondence with George, held in the British Library.)

Why should there be no letters from the following decade? And why have these letters survived?

As in the case of the few surviving letters from James Mytton, the survival of this collection draws attention to what must be missing – most tantalisingly of all, Thomas’s letters to his sister-in-law, Elizabeth, Lady Anson. His letters to his brother are mostly about politics and business, with very few indications of his cultural or personal interests. His letters to Elizabeth, with whom he appears to have a close friendship, would have been far more revealing.

Only a few years before Thomas Anson began working to transform the Vale of Shugborough into a place of peace – his Elysium – it was in danger of becoming the front-line of a war zone. Not only were the Jacobites, led by Charles Edward Stuart, advancing south through Cheshire, but the French appeared to be gathering forces for an invasion.

Piercy Brett (c.1709/10-1781), the son of a master in the navy, who had served as a junior officer with George Anson on his circumnavigation, was back in action in the English Channel. On 9th July 1745, in command of the *Lion*, he exchanged fire in a day-long battle with the French ships *Elizabeth* and the *Du Teillay*, carrying Charles Edward Stuart and his supplies and money to support his cause. Although the *Lion* suffered severe damage, the *Elizabeth* was forced to return to France, dashing the dream of The Young Pretender of raising a Scottish army.²

The situation back home was very alarming. Thomas writes to George:

October 28th 1745

I fancy Mytton is quite out of Spirits for I never hear from him. Remember me to Adair ye first time you see him & tell him if it not much trouble, I should be very glad he would send me a List of our Troops & ye Officers in the North and what are their supposed Compliments.

Again, "Mytton" must be James Mytton, with whom Thomas travelled to Spa, Belgium, and was perhaps with in Italy two years later, in 1724 (discussed in Chapter 2). Mytton was a "particular friend" of Thomas until his death in 1764, but what was his relationship with George and the Admiralty?

"Adair" is another friend who is frequently mentioned in letters from the 1740-1760s. In his memoirs, George Thomas Keppel (1799-1891), 6th Earl of Albemarle, whose eldest son was titled Lord Bury, quotes some of the letters from this collection. He identifies Adair as William Adair,³ the army Agent in Pall Mall, a great friend of the Keppel family, and of Lord Bury in particular.⁴

William Adair was, in effect, a military banker. According to archived documents, he was Paymaster of the Marines in 1755-56, handling enormous sums of money. He became very wealthy himself, as the records of his Suffolk estate, Flixton Hall, verify. He was a subscriber to the de-luxe "royal paper" edition of Anson's Voyage in 1748.⁵ Adair's main claim to fame, as far as 21st century internet searching is concerned, is that he was a victim of a notorious forging case in 1775. He died in 1783.

Mytton and Adair, often mentioned together, were clearly important figures in Thomas Anson's life.

There is an odd comment in a letter from Elizabeth Anson in 1748, that Mr Adair and Mr Mytton had been discussing seeing Lord Anson:

...in a carriage with a lady ... or was it Mr Keppel?"⁶

In another letter from 1750, Lady Anson writes to Thomas:

I have not seen Messrs Adair and Mytton yet, the latter is very busy buying wedding cloathes – for his niece.⁷

Is there a touch of naughtiness in these pieces of gossip?

Thomas's letter of October 28th 1745 continues:

THOMAS THE SPY

...I am not sorry to hear the Rebels advance, that the Affair may come to a Decision without delay. Tho the Dutch should not to be counted upon, surely we have without 'em a Force much superior to the Scotch, & nothing but strange cowardice or worse can make ye issue doubtful...

Almost a month later, he writes:

November 25th 1745

Mr. Wade's [General Wade] returning to Newcastle & the rebels continuing their march with such rapidity has struck a general terror. They were at Lancaster on Friday which was the last acct I heard of 'em, and they seem to make their point directly at our gentlemen about Lichfd who take it as intended for 'em. I was yesterday to wait upon the Duke of Richmond where I met with our old Friends Skelton Price & Ellison (?) I made 'em from my heart an offer of anything I was capable of accommodating of serving them in...

...I shall send my Sisters away tomorrow night or next morning by easy Stages the Oxford Road by Henly & Stratford which is ye safest Route & they may perhaps halt a day or two when they are out of the reach of Disturbance. I look upon Oxford in all times & events to be ye Safest and most Sacred of all Places, an easy distance from London & I shall continue hovering about my own Fields as long as I can without falling into ill hands which I shall endeavour to guard against.

He adds a PS:

Send to ye Stage Coach on Saturday next for a Doe & send Mytton & Adair a piece.

In a letter that follows, the Rebels are getting closer:

December 2nd 1745

I passed all that day at Lichfd where I found myself in the midst of my acquaintance particularly the Aide de Campes. Everybody in Spirits & jollity impatient for action, & no fear but that the Rebels might slip (sic) into Derbyshire, Wales or return by the way they came. The last acct of 'em then, was that the main Body was at Manchester & Partys at Knotsford. The don't by all accts exceed 7000...

...The last Batalion of Guards got into Lichfd at 3 yesterday & Ld Albemarle came in the moment we sat down to dinner. I left 'em about 8 o'clock & the Duke [of Cumberland] proposed to be at Stafford today & the 8 Bat of Guards were to march there this morning. About eleven this morning Sir W Bagot and Sir Phil Musgrave call'd upon me in a violent Hurry to let me know that the artillery which halted at Rugeley, &

was to have gone to Stafford, had pass'd thro Haywood for Stone, & the Duke of Rich [Richmond] had taken the same route, wch was true (?) But they added that the Occasion was an Express rc'd that the Rebels upon a mis-information of their strength taking 'em to be no more yn 2 or 3000 had advanc'd near Newcastle [under Lyme], so that the Engagement woud probably be the next day.

Sir Walter Bagot, of Blithfield Hall, was the father of William Bagot to whom Thomas left his collection of medals (see Chapter 20). Sir Philip Musgrave (c.1712-1795), was MP for Westmorland, married to Jane Turton of Orgreave, Staffordshire.

I told 'em my first care was where I shou'd take my stand to see the Battle most commodiously, but I fancyd the thing was premature. We mounted our horses for further Intelligences & at the Park brook saw all the Guards march full of health & Spirit. Ld Albemarle came in the Rear who told me soon after I left 'em they recd an acct that the Rebels were at Macclesfield & Stopford last night. I askd where Mr. Wade was. He shook his head & said he was not so near them as was expected. He could not stop to refresh himself tho' he was so near me & said he should [be at] Stafford tomorrow morning. You will find by this last Motion that ye Rebels incline towards Derbyshire as if they had a mind to slip both Armys & speak with you in town...

The battle might almost have taken place on his doorstep. Thomas had somehow missed John Montagu, Lord Sandwich:

Mytton who enjoins me to write upon pain of his highest Displeasure, which I shou'd have done, but that he desires me to direct to Q Street my next so that you will take care to send him this scrawl if he is not with you & save me the trouble of repetition, especially as I am now you'll imagine pretty much employ'd & have my House full of soldiers. ...Ld Albemarle read me a letter he had had from his Pupil as he calls him. Tell Adair Ld Bury is the most charming of the Sons of Men...

Lord Albemarle, George Keppel (1724-1772), the 3rd Earl and Viscount Bury until 1752, "the most charming of the Sons of Men", was the son of Willem van Keppel, 2nd Earl of Albemarle (1702-1754), and brother of Augustus, 1st Viscount Keppel.

At that moment, the Aide de Camp to the Duke of Cumberland, presumably one of the Aides de Camp Thomas, had found himself amongst soldiers in Lichfield. Very shortly, the troops moved out of Stafford:

December 4th 1745

You will share my Disappointmt when I relate ye sequel after ye Alarm of ye mid-night march & most positive Assurances that the Rebels were at Newcastle; I went

THOMAS THE SPY

to Stone in ye morning full of ye battle I was to see & met Crowds of People coming back in gt Consternation who cry'd out It was begun. I heard no firing, when I came I found all the Trops in and about ye Town upon heaps. I forc'd my way to the Duke's [Cumberland's] Quarters where I learn'd that ye Rebels were at Leek. Having been long tir'd to death I got home as fast as I could, & find ye Rascals left Leek at one this morning and tis suppos'd will be at Derby tonight. The troops are all returning in great haste & all measures are taken for forwarding their march, & I suppose either to intercept or overtake 'em, wch does not seem to be very practicable. Two thousand are quarter'd in this Paris & a Company at least upon yr humblest...

A few days later, Thomas sends another letter to George:

December 7th 1745

I fancy there has been a general Panic about London, upon the Rebels seeming to make a Point that way. But it appears that they understand their Business better & yesterday morning about 8 o'clock march'd out of Derby & lay at Ashborn & ye adjacent villages as they had done on Wednesday or Tuesday last. This I had certain Intelligence of last night, wch considering the Uncertainty of their Motions rous'd me pretty early this morning; and I contin'd prepar'd to fly at a minute's warning, 'til a person I sent to reconnoitre brought an acct that at about ten this morning he saw at about three quarters of a mile distance the whole body pass along a valley at the other side of Weaver Hills three miles from Ashborn, ye road to Newcastle or Leek, for they might turn either way after he lost sight of 'em. Our Army was last night at Meriden & Coventry, I have heard nothing of 'em today. All the most credible accounts agree that the Number of them does not exceed seven Thousand, 3 or 4000 good troops, the rest Rabble & boys. The Pretender's son, who was generally in the rear before the Army was so near 'em has since march'd at the head: He is something under six foot high, wears a Plad, walks well, a good Person enough but a melancholy aspect, speaks little, & was never seen to smile. So much for Rebels and Armys. My situation is still ye same, between two fires, & the Prospect of fear does not mend upon us. Can you send me any Consolation? Let Mr. Degge know I saw 'em at all well at Blithfd yesterday, tho in ye height of Alarm. If you think Mytton will insist upon hearing it will be less trouble to send him this to Richm [Richmond] than for me to transcribe in this Confusion.

His comment "the Prospect of fear does not mend upon us" conveys the seriousness of the situation. Two more letters follow:

December 9th 1745

They marched out of Leek yesterday, and are probably returning by the same route they came. The rebels are greatly exasperated at their reception in Derby: their leader

THOMAS ANSON OF SHUGBOROUGH

was observ'd to be much more gloomy than usual; their ladies wept; and their whole body marched out with visible dejection and despair. They have plundered and ravaged, murdered two or three people, and wounded others, so that their name is in horror and detestation. Their cruelty will probably increase, if they have time to exert it, which I fancy the Duke will not give them.

There was still concern about the possibility of a French invasion, but the threat of the rebels was decreasing:

Saturday 14th December 1745

I have just rec'd a letter from Jones the Postmaster of Stone dated Dec. 14th at 5 o'clock in which he says tht they had that minute an acct that the Rebels marched out of Preston yesterday, & that our horse marched in that afternoon, & it was thought would be up with them by noon today.

Thomas had news from the lawyer William Mills:

He says he escap'd very well in every thing but his Cellars, which they have quite clear'd and spoil'd his Xmas, & tht of many others.

Those who had occupied Mills's house and cleared his cellars included the Prince himself:

On 3 December a detachment under Lord George Murray passed through Leek on its way to Ashbourne. The main force with the prince arrived in Leek later the same day and took up quarters there, the prince staying at the house (later called Foxlowe) of William Mills, a lawyer. The Quaker meeting house was broken into and used as a stable. The troops began to leave for Ashbourne and Derby in the small hours of the 4th. Some remained behind and tried to seize the horses of people coming to the market; two of the soldiers were arrested and sent to Stafford gaol. The prince, retreating from Derby, was back in Leek on 7th December. The vanguard of his army went on to Macclesfield and the rest followed on the 8th.⁸

Thomas also wrote to George of Lord Sandwich, concerned for his health:

I rec'd a letter from Ld Halifax two days ago from Birmingham, in which he says his friend Ld Sandwich desir'd he would thank me for my Enquiry after his Health, wch tho' upon the mending hand was no so far recover'd as to enable to accept of ye visit I intended the next day. That his Fever had left him, but wth great Weakness & Lowness of Spirits. Spirits & Strength he doubtles not woud return soon & he shoud then be glad etc. He has been dangerously ill almost beyond Hope. I am extremely concerned both in public & private respect that the Board [Admiralty?] is so indispos'd at such a juncture. Heavn restore & preserve it.

The pursuit of the Rebels eventually led to the Battle of Culloden, on April 16th 1746. The war with France continued.

A year later, on April 9th 1747, George Anson set sail from Plymouth on a voyage that would lead him to a notable victory.

Thomas wrote him a note, undated, as if hoping to catch him before he departed. Election business was in the air:

...the Borough wch should not be neglected if you have a Scheme of that kind...

But the most interesting information concerns something quite different from war and politics:

Lemeri has done the Plates & desires 3 or 400£ to go on wth the dishes, of wch there will be no more than are absolutely necessary at present & you may add whenever you please. I shall advance him the money if you think fit. The Chocolate is sent & the Tablecloths ordered. Pray put yr Secretary in mind of ye name of the Ships & Commanders you go out wth. I write this from Mr. Bristow's. The Club salute you.

Mr Bristow was probably William Bristow FRS, who was elected to the Society of Dilettanti on December 7th 1740, the same day as Lord Sandwich. A few months later, according to the database of Fellows of the Royal Society, he was elected on 25th March 1741/2, proposed by Lord Sandwich, the Duke of Montagu, and others.⁹ Mr Bristow, Army Paymaster for Ireland, is described as:

a gentleman of learning & curiosity, versed in philosophical and natural knowledge.¹⁰

"Lemeri", was Paul de Lamerie, a London silversmith. The silver was for George's London entertaining.¹¹

A few weeks later, on May 14th 1747, Lord Anson led his squadron in the First Battle of Cape Finisterre, off the coast of north-west Spain. This was an outstanding victory, with Admiral Anson in command on board the *Prince George*. The artistic Piercy Brett was Captain of the *Yarmouth*. The dramatic conclusion of the battle, when 14 British ships attacked a French 30-ship convoy during the War of the Austrian Succession, and captured a number of ships, was the scene in which the French commander, Chevalier de St George, commander of the *Invincible*, surrendered his sword to Admiral Anson.

St George, a man of extreme elegance and good manners, declared,

“Monsieur, vous avez vaincu l’Invincible et la Gloire vous suit.”

This was an elegant witticism, as *la Gloire* was another of the French ships.

This was a major blow to the French and an occasion of fame and glory for Admiral Anson. A surprising effect of this incident was that St George immediately became a close friend of both George and Thomas Anson. He returned to England with George and visited Shugborough in 1748, some time before the family party when the Ansons and Yorkes gathered for a kind of housewarming in celebration of the redeveloped Shugborough Manor (see Chapter 18).

The victory of Finisterre was rewarded by George’s elevation to Baron Anson of Soberton, in 1747. Soberton was Lord Anson’s country house in Hampshire, near Southampton, which was convenient for Portsmouth. Other letters in the British Museum collection show that Thomas had been at Soberton, reviewing building works and landscaping on behalf of his brother.

Anson’s second-in-command on board the *Centurion*, Piercy Brett, was promoted to Captain, although there was at first an issue over his appointment when Lord Anson declined his peerage until the situation was resolved.

Whether it was thanks to the treasures from this voyage or to Thomas Anson’s own means, that Shugborough was developed into the estate that can still be visited today, remains a matter of debate.

As this study shows, Thomas’s development of his estate predates George’s voyage. There is no evidence to suppose that George Anson provided funds for any of the works during his lifetime. Thomas was, of course, considerably wealthier upon George’s death, in June 1762, Elizabeth having predeceased him.

Upon George’s return to England, political matters dominate Thomas’s letters. There were machinations about George’s parliamentary seat of Heydon, something Thomas called “the Heralds affair”, about which he’d received long letters from Mytton and Adair.

In July 1747, he asks George when he will come north to be seen at the Lichfield races. This was part of Thomas’s campaign to become MP for Lichfield at the imminent elections:

...you know your Presence there is absolutely necessary upon public & political consideration. You will contrive it as is most agreeable to you. If Mytton or Adair or any other of yr Acquaintance would be of the Party, the more the better I fancy.

Becoming an MP was an enormously expensive business and included buying property with which to bribe the burgesses:

In 1744 Gower deserted the Tories and allied himself in government with the Whigs. His new allies in Staffordshire were Admiral Lord Anson and Thomas Anson of Shugborough, and together they determined to take control of Lichfield from the corporation and the neighbouring gentry. In preparation for the election of 1747 they purchased at least 13 burgages and gave bribes, spending an estimated £20,000 to secure the election of Gower's son Richard Leveson-Gower and of Thomas Anson, and [later] causing Lady Anson, Thomas's sister-in-law, to characterize Lichfield as 'the borough of Guzzledown'.¹²

This election business, which was not to Thomas's taste, is, perhaps, one aspect of Thomas's life that needed financial support from his brother and their political allies.

Thomas showed no enthusiasm for parliament himself. He writes to George, not to Lord Hardwicke as is often credited, on February 8th 1747/8:

Mr. P-m took the Solicitor General out of the house to day for an hour so that he is now upon the list, which is now extremely numerous. There is indeed such Cabal, Intrigue and such a Huddle of Politics that certainly no one person can be taken against the field...I never had less satisfaction in my Life. The last night we sat til 12 without any Progress & then divided whether we should sit three hours longer.¹³

He refers to the Prime Minister as "Mr. P-m" and says, "I have never had less satisfaction in my Life.". At one point, Thomas explains that he has received a letter requiring his presence in the House and had answered that he would try to be there on the last day.

George Anson married Lady Elizabeth Yorke in April 1748. She was only 22 years of age at the time, when he was 52. It was a political marriage of a kind, though to what end is hard to define. Her father, Lord Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor, was a contemporary of Thomas and George, and, as we saw earlier, owed his career to their uncle, Thomas Parker, the 1st Earl of Macclesfield. The marriage would keep George within this sphere of influence, but Elizabeth was an independent young woman, a political activist in her own right, working with her brother, Philip Yorke.

When Philip Yorke (1720-1790) married Jemima (née Campbell), 2nd Marchioness Grey (1723-1797), on 22nd May 1740, she became Countess of Hardwicke. On the death of her maternal grandfather, Henry Grey, the Duke of Kent, she inherited his estate at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, that same year. Not until the death of his father, in 1764, did Philip Yorke inherit the Wimpole estate.

Philip Yorke was the eldest son of six known siblings: Charles, Elizabeth, Joseph, James and Margaret. Charles Yorke (1722-1770) entered parliament and in 1750 was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. It was Charles who collaborated with his brother Philip in the *Athenian Letters*, a small private edition published in two volumes in 1741 and 1743,¹⁴ which also involved Catherine Talbot. Having been appointed Lord High Chancellor, he committed suicide in January 1770. His eldest son, also Philip Yorke, became 3rd Earl of Hardwicke.

Joseph Yorke (1724-1792) served in the War of the Austrian Succession and was Minister Plenipotentiary at The Hague during the St Germain affair (see Chapter 15). He had no known children and is buried at Wimpole. James Yorke (1730-1808) was Dean of Lincoln at the time of Thomas Anson's death, in 1773. Thus, the traditional pattern prevailed with the eldest son the heir, the second son joining the army, and the next son the church.

Elizabeth's letters to Thomas, over a twelve-year period from 1748 until her death in 1760, are the most informative source available on the next stage of his life. The collection of letters between Thomas and George end at the beginning of 1749. After this, no letters survive from Thomas to either George or Elizabeth, although a few paragraphs in his hand are occasionally inserted into Elizabeth's letters to her husband.

On May 10th 1748, Elizabeth Anson wrote to her sister-in-law, Jemima Yorke, from the Admiralty, where she was living:

I come next, in order of consequence, to another which is really serious, tho' by the light easy manner in which your letter treats it, it does not seem to have been thought so at Wrest: I mean the proposal made to Mr. Yorke to accompany Mr. Anson to Paris. I am desired by Mr. Anson, with his compliments, to assure my brother that he does really intend going to Paris, being persuaded, that this will be time for seeing more of the French nation, by reason of the ferment of spirits they must now be in, than can be known at any other season. He thinks the conversation there will be apt to furnish some reasonable guesses at the motives of distress which France, one would think, have, to induce them to agree to any tolerable terms, at a time when there seemed nothing capable of giving them any opposition. If I understand his project right he designs going over with Lord Anson & staying five or six weeks in all:- and I suppose, if his Party wished it, he might take the two pacific armies in his way; which last scheme alone, is carrying many people from hence, I am to add, from Mr. Anson, that he shall be extremely glad of Mr. Yorke's company in this expedition;- and with that I will leave it to his own resolution & curiosity. – This scheme, if it takes place, will make your Ladyship to oblige your friends by parting your time among them, and I should hope it might be so managed as not to be very tiresome to yourself.¹⁵

This expedition, at a time when England was still, officially, at war with France, appears to have been Thomas's own idea. He has taken it upon himself to find out what motives France might have in accepting the peace agreement. This is puzzling, as are so many things about his activities. It is not what one would expect of someone who avoids the "Huddle of Politics", despite this kind of diplomatic mission being very different from long, tedious hours in parliament.

Lady Anson writes that "if his Party wished it" her brother-in-law might go and observe the armies on the way. Her letter suggests that he is not going on behalf of his party but for his own interest, or, perhaps, with some other group of people he is involved with. The Peace was controversial. There was very likely a variety of different factions with very different views of the benefits of peace, depending on its terms, which invariably was unlikely to suit everyone.

Elizabeth writes of "the proposal made to Mr. Yorke" of going to Paris with Thomas, implying that Thomas has invited Jemima's husband to accompany him. She seems to have made a mistake or misunderstood what had been said, and has, perhaps, been rather presumptuous.

After hurrying away to dine, she returns and adds:

I was obliged to break off in order to dress to dine out, and am now returned from visiting at half an hour after tea, so that I run a risk of being too late for the Post while I add a few lines to this scrawl, the most material of them will be to correct the above account of Mr. Anson's Paris journey, by telling Mr. Yorke, that it is not yet certain whether he intends going with Lord Anson, or in a Packet, and that he designs staying six weeks at Paris, so that his whole expedition will probably take up two months.¹⁶

It seems that having spoken to Thomas, she is now, in effect, putting Philip Yorke off. Although her brother is not mentioned in Thomas's letters, a letter from Elizabeth, in June 1748, to Thomas in France, explains that he did not, after all, travel with Philip Yorke, but with Mr Mytton.

Thomas crossed the channel to The Hague with George, rather than on the public Packet Boat. He wrote a long letter to George from Rotterdam on "Sunday 19th", which was in May 1748, describing the situation on their arrival:

The morning after we parted from you at the Hague, we arriv'd at Harlem in an ill hour. We found the magistrates in a Fright, the Populace in a Fury, the Burghers all under arms, but most of 'em favouring the Disorder they were sworn to suppress, & obeying the Burgomasters no farther than their own Schemes or Inclinations led 'em. The gates of the town were shut, & nobody permitted to go in or out. I sent to the

burgomaster to represent my Case & desire leave to proceed. After some Difficulty he granted an Order, but as my servant was passing wth it by the grand Guard he was stop'd and told by the commanding officer, that the Order signif'd nothing: after a consultation he desir'd we would be ready at the Gate, & in half an hour he woud take care it should be open'd: After an Hour's waiting we sent again & were answer'd wth a Compliment & a Refusal. We were then forc'd to amuse our selves wth the Proceedings of the Mob, who were busy pulling down Houses & throwing all the Furniture & whatever cou'd be found into the Canal, for no part of the Plunder was to be appropriated upon pain of Death. Seven of the Pactors or Fermiers houses were demolish'd whilst we staid in the town, many abuses & some Murders. After 5 or six hours I went to the Guard Room, where I was very civilly receiv'd & promis'd all that lay in their power; application was made to the Burgomaster & in a quarter of an hour I was conducted to the Gate by an officer & a considerable body of the Bourgeois Soldats, who made a very good Contrast with the Prussians we had lately seen. However I fancied I was now secure of my point; but when we were advanc'd to the Gate three of four Ragamuffins wth guns & swords, said they would loose their Lives, rather than produce the Keys: A Conference was held for half an Hour, in wch they treated all their Superiors wth a Delicacy of Language peculiar to a drunken Dutchman, wch wou'd suffer in any Translation. The issue was that my Guard retir'd to their posts, expressing great Concern & Regard for me. However I found means at last, shock'd wth seeing anarchy wth all its Horrors, to make my escape thro' another Gate, & got off in a voiture to Amsterdam; where there were Crowds of People constantly stopping the coachman to enquire how things went at Harlem, not so much for Curiosity as Imitation, & according to all Appearances the sedition may spread far. The Occasion of it is this. Since the introduction of the two pcent the People have suffered intolerable oppression. They are much inclin'd to the Prince, & willing to contribute to the State a great deal more than it receives at present, but are convinc'd that not above a third part of what is raisd upon 'em comes into the Treasury, believing the rest is wasted by wt they call here Pactors and Fermiers who wth their Spy Informers are said to amount in the Seven Provinces to near Fifty thousand; & the Burgomasters find their Account in protecting & encouraging their Exactions. The Abolition of this System is what the People require, & will hardly be pacify'd without Redress. Perhaps this Conjuncture if the Prince has spirit & conduct might be improv'd to very good purposes, & furnish an opportunity of discrediting his enemies & framing a new System to the general Satisfaction. I am just setting out for Antwerp & hope to be at Paris by Thursday. I am Lady Anson's & yours entirely.

Pray write to Shugborough.

Thomas went to Brussels and to Breda, where the peace negotiations were taking place. There is no letter describing what happened, but from there Thomas travelled to Paris with letters from Lord Sandwich to the French ministers.

Sandwich (John Montagu) was the leading negotiator in the peace talks; he reported on progress in detail to the Duke of Newcastle (Thomas Pelham-Holles). There were intricate disagreements with M St Severin, the French Minister Plenipotentiary. In May, Sandwich reported that he had broken off negotiations as they could reach no agreement.¹⁷

In October 1748, Henry Pelham wrote despairingly:

...the French ministers saw the loose unintelligible manner that St. Severin and my lord Sandwich were carrying things on in; ...And yet poor Sandwich still says, St. Severin is the man, and adheres to his old opinion!¹⁸

The British Prime Minister, Henry Pelham (Newcastle's younger brother), was having meetings with Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, the Duke of Bedford and others, at Powis House, Lord Hardwicke's London home and the London base of Lady Grey.

The political factions at the time were wildly complicated and would need a special study to fully comprehend, but, bearing in mind Pelham's attitude towards Sandwich, it does seem likely that Thomas Anson was not acting on behalf of the government, but working secretly for Lord Sandwich, who continues to negotiate with St Severin without the government's knowledge.

This might have been because he believed it was the best way to conclude the peace, but it could also mean that Sandwich had policies of his own which the government did not share. Only three years later, Pelham sacked him from the Admiralty because, as previously mentioned, the Prime Minister suspected Sandwich's first loyalty was to the Duke of Bedford. But exactly what his loyalties were, is a mystery to the present writer, who knows very little about such political entanglements.

(Extracts continue from the British Library collection of Thomas's correspondence with George.)

Thomas wrote to George on "Sunday 24th June" (Sunday was actually 23rd June):

My Dear Lord,

I have been in some pain about your Passage; the Wind was contrary & it blew a perfect Storm at the time I fancy'd you at Sea. In my way to Paris where I arriv'd on Friday I stop'd half a day at Brussels, & while we were at Supper Monsr St Severin came in to the Hotel de Flandre: Several Persons waited upon him immediately, & among others Marechal Saxe, who staid wth him above half an hour; So that it was past eleven when I sent to desire leave to wait upon him. After many compliments on acct of the Letter He told me was returning to Aix to carry on & if possible to hasten the great Work of Peace; & that he had found the same good Disposition in the King & the ministers preserv'd or rather improv'd & did assure me that (tho'

there were great appearances that Spain woud accede, yet) in all events their Party was taken, & in case She did not they wou'd conclude without her. I told him I suppos'd it would be a Work of Time to adjust such various & extensive interests: He said he believ'd not, & after what had been already done so decisively, if the others brought the same Disposition as himself he could not see that any long time was required. He ask'd me whether I had Letters to anybody else. I told him I had one to Monsr de Puysieux from Lord Sandwich, Then, says he, all others wou'd be superfluous: You will find our court compos'd of Persons not only of the highest Rank & Consideration but of the greatest Frankness & Rondeur, pursuing a fix'd & known plan superior to all chicane & ambiguity; I could not help saying that Ld Sandwich wou'd convince him that our Court was as happily circumstanc'd in regard to Persons, as well as Sentiments & manner of Proceeding. But, says he, there is one Thing, wch has given Umbrage, & which I am greatly concern'd for; that the Time for Cessation of Hostilities is not likely to be obervd in relation to Genoa & the Mediterranean, & that Admiral Byng has given Notice of a Prolongation of the Term, a thing so contrary to the tenour & force of the Article that he could hardly believe it tho' the Accts were positive: Genoa was a Point of Honour, on which the King was extremely delicate. I said I fancy'd the Proclamation must prevent all Mistakes, but that if any such had happen'd I hoped it might easily be set right; Yes, says he, but if it shou'd be carry'd out voyes de fait, how shall we adjust it: I told him there was a thing I beg'd I might have leave to mention to him...

Thomas told St Severin that the troops in Brussels did not expect to be moved soon. They were unaware hostilities were coming to an end. St Severin assured him that the troops were moving:

Wch I shou'd be convinc'd of by finding the Road to Paris covr'd with Soldiers, Officers & baggage returning to France, which indeed we found in a prodigious degree, & to our great inconvenience... The greater part of the French troop make a much worse appearance in every respect than those we saw at Breda...

Thomas reports that Maréchal de Saxe, Maurice, Count of Saxony, who became Marshall of France, is recovered. He describes him as:

...tall, black, wears his own hair or an imitation... and keeps a Company of Players always attending him and 2 or 3 of the actresses wait upon him every morning for his amusement...

Travelling on to Paris required buying passports, which was further inconvenience. In Paris, Thomas came across Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie), who had been threatening the peace at Shugborough less than three years earlier. He writes:

I saw the Pretender's son yesterday, who walks about forlorn & neglected.

Thomas asks George to pass on what he thinks appropriate to the Duke of Bedford. The mission was not to be kept secret from him (Bedford, John Russell, had been the First Lord of the Admiralty until February of that year), but did Mr Pelham and the Duke of Newcastle know of it?

An undated page adds that he and Mr Mytton met the elegant M St George in Paris, where they were able to enjoy the reflected fame of Thomas's brother:

I have but a moment to tell you how many acknowledgments & Honour, I have rec'd upon yr acct & the light in wch you appear here, to that degree that Mytton is in as great Transports as when ye Triumphs were quite fresh. I should perhaps flatter you but that it happens I am present taken up wth myself just returnd from Mr. Puyseux with the Pleasure of finding my self flatter'd by the Person in the World from whom it comes most reducing. Je sais que vous etes eclaire & que vous etes vertueux, je n'ai rien a craindre, je n'ai rien a manager avec vous. [I know that you are enlightened and that you are virtuous, I have nothing to fear, I have nothing to manage with you.] But my Design is that you should thank Ld. Sandwich. St. George has behavd beyond all Imagination, but has never heard from you. I hope Lady Anson rec'd my fine letter.

If there was a great purge of confidential documents, either by Thomas himself or his heirs, this collection of letters to George must have been out of reach. None of Thomas's letters to Elizabeth survive, as already noted, including the "fine letter" referred to. Lady Anson mentions it tantalisingly in her own letter to Thomas in Paris, dated June 25th. (The manuscript has a later pencil date added, "June 25th 1749", which is an obvious archivist error.)

(Extracts from Elizabeth, Lady Anson's letters are from the Anson Papers in the Staffordshire County Record Office and follow on from the reference below.)

She writes, as commanded by her husband, in return for:

the long & entertaining dispatches he [Thomas] has received from you...¹⁹

She has received her "fine letter":

...the Titles of the Chapters, which your letter contains, excite our curiosity and impatience very highly, as they promise that your Memoirs will be extremely entertaining...

Unfortunately, there is no reason to suppose that Thomas ever wrote any memoirs. As previously mentioned, much of his personal correspondence was lost or destroyed.

Elizabeth writes to Thomas that she has visited her brother-in-law and comments on “Mr. Heathcote’s ferme ornée” (husband of her sister Margaret), and that she has seen “Lord Lincoln’s Terrasse”. She continues:

...[but] how trifling that must sound, to one who spent four days at the magnifique Palais de Versailles... An evening spent at Vauxhall, or Ranelagh, or at what is still worse, a Summer Assembly, must likewise appear very insipid to one who passes his time in the lively amusement of Paris. – Or what is sailing to Lambeth in his Grace’s Barge, as the Poet expresses it, which by means of the Archbishop’s politeness we have done twice, but without the least danger of drowning, in comparison with the honour, you might have had, of running the risk of breaking your neck in company with the French King?

...You are certainly on the side of the water with every thing important, as well as elegant. We hope much from the Rondeur of your French Ministerial Friends...

The King, George II, was in Hanover. As Elizabeth writes, “there is no King in Israel.” His long absences, especially at times of crisis, were one of the reasons he was so disliked. She deplores the situation:

...and I beg my account of the low state of Monarchy here, may not tempt you, or them, to send us over the young Gentleman, whose forlorn & neglected condition we heard of from you, with so much pleasure...

Small details in Elizabeth’s letters can shed light on other aspects of Thomas’s life, not elsewhere discussed. There is small piece of news in her long letter from June 25th 1748:

As to your domestic affairs in this neighbourhood, I can give but little account of them; only one circumstance has reached me, which, as I think it cannot but be agreeable to you, I must inform you of it; it is, of the neighbours you are likely to have in Spring Garden, Mr. Sloper having taken the house next to yours for Mrs. Cibber; so that yours is like to be a voisinage recherche. – But perhaps, tho’ this was new to me a few days ago, it may have been known to you some time, & might be one reason for your choice of the House.

Spring Gardens, where Thomas Anson had either bought or rented a house, ran between the Admiralty and St James’ Park. Part of it still exists, the rest built over by extensions to the Admiralty buildings.

“Mrs. Cibber”, who was to be Thomas’s next-door neighbour, was Susannah Cibber, sister of the composer Thomas Augustine Arne (1710-1778). She was Handel’s favourite singer for his oratorios and had sung the lead part in many of his greatest works. The Cibbers were, however, not without scandal. Susannah was taken to court by her hus-

band, Theophilus Cibber, son of the actor and manager Colley Cibber, for “criminal conversation” with John Sloper – who has “taken the house”. In fact, the three of them had been living in a *ménage à trois*. The jury had no sympathy for Cibber and awarded him a nominal £10 damages.²⁰ By 1748, Susannah had moved into acting and became one of the leading actresses of the time, working with David Garrick.

George Anson adds a few amusing lines to his wife’s letter, in his rather less elegant hand:

You will perceive I have employ’d a much better correspondent to answer your letter than myself, and you know me too well to imagine that any thing can make me enter into a dispute with Ladys who will certainly have the last word in all arguments and consequently will keep the field of Battle, which is always looked upon as a sort of victory; my Compliments to Mitton and St George.

It is George’s “Compliments to Mitton” which reveals that James Mytton was Thomas’s travelling companion on this mission rather than Philip Yorke. Elizabeth must have realised that it was his intention to travel with Mytton and not Philip before adding the latter part of her letter to Jemima, on May 10th.

Elizabeth adds greetings to M St George in French, congratulating him on his marriage and hoping he will soon visit England again. He appears to have visited Shugborough earlier in the year, and would return, with Lord and Lady Anson, in 1750 (Chapter 13).

Paris was the place to buy luxury items. Thomas had been there on business. Although Britain was officially at war with France, there were still commissions to buy, including for Archbishop Secker, guardian of Elizabeth’s friend, Catherine Talbot:

One of the large prints of Cardinal Polignac ... for the Archbishop of Canterbury.

...the Lord Chancellor begs you will buy one of the large paper editions of Cardinal Polignac’s *Anti-Lucretius*...

...and Elizabeth would like some of the elegant paper on which Thomas writes.

Elizabeth signs her letter:

Mr. Anson’s most obliged, most faithful and obedient
(tho’ very troublesome and talkative) servant

E. Anson

She squeezes in a typical quip:

It delights me to think, that the pretty Gentleman who, you say, represents you, must at the same time represent the City of Litchfield.

Who might “the pretty Gentleman” have been?

There is a puzzling sequel to the French adventure. In August 1748, Thomas wrote to his brother, partly to find out when he would be arriving at Shugborough where Lord and Lady Anson would be meeting her brother, Philip Yorke, with his wife Jemima Grey and her aunt Lady Sophia Grey.

The opening of Thomas’s undated letter is mysterious:

I have returned you Lord Sandwich’s letter & inclosed one Mr. Selwyn sent me from Paris, which you will restore to me. Please to let my lord know that I was never at all interested or affected wth the Thing but there was something in the manner wch I own hurt me a little ‘til it was explained. That uneasiness is intirely removed & I shall never have a thought about it more & wish you would not. I had the good fortune to have all the Letters return’d me safe & particularly the most obliging & the most agreeable letter that ever was writ from Lady Anson...²¹

What was “the Thing” which Thomas claims not to have been interested in? Lord Sandwich was still in France, working towards the conclusion of the Peace Treaty, which he did not sign until October. Whatever “the Thing” was, it seems to have something to do with Lord Sandwich and the peace negotiations. Perhaps it related to Thomas’s presence in Paris and his own efforts to find out what the French were thinking? Is the fact that whatever it was that “hurt me a little ‘til it was explained”, reassuring George that he too should not be uneasy, a hint that Thomas’s mission was not official? Something odd is going on...

The reference to another letter, from Mr Selwyn, which Thomas wants returned, raises further questions. And who is “Mr. Selwyn”?

A possible answer is George Augustus Selwyn (1719-1791), 2nd Baron Edgcumbe, who had followed his father as MP for Ludgershall in 1747. This Selwyn had a connection with Lord Sandwich, or he did a few years later, as both were members of Sir Francis Dashwood’s Hellfire Club. Selwyn was a wit, a friend of Horace Walpole, and a rather wild character. He spent a lot of time in Paris – he might have been there in 1748 – but would he have been in Paris on any political business? The use of the form of name “Mr. Selwyn” could, however, imply that this is a reference to George Selwyn’s father, John, who was Paymaster of the Marines at the time.

The Peace Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was finally signed on 18th October, 1748.

Thomas's wrote to George on October 24th:

If I had no other Reason to like the Peace than the Astonishmt and Dejection it has thrown the Party into, that would be alone sufficient Recommendation, but I have many more, & I think a Peace so general & so circumstanc'd has a fair Chance to be lasting. Ld Sandwich will appear with great Eclat.²²

Is "the Party" the Whig party? If so, this supports the idea that Thomas and George were not entirely loyal to Prime Minister Pelham and more committed to John Montagu, Lord Sandwich, whom Thomas had known before these days of war and peace. His career would, however, come to a lengthy pause when Pelham dismissed him in 1751.

There is some justification for thinking of Thomas as a spy – not for the government, but for this "party within a party". If this speculation is true, it might give another very good reason why, after 1749, the documents dry up. With Lord Sandwich's sacking in 1751, any political material in the letters might have become too controversial.

There was another dramatic event in 1751 – the sudden death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, on 31st March, at the age of 44.

Throughout this story are glimmers of political support for the Prince, against the detested King, George II, the last British monarch to be born outside Great Britain. Ironically, despite the Law of Succession which prevented Catholics succeeding to the throne, King George was a prince elector of the Holy Roman Empire from the date of his coronation on 11th June 1727 – when Handel was commissioned to write four new anthems, including *Zadok the Priest* – until his death in 1760. In 1752 he was conveyed by Piercy Brett to Germany on the *Royal Caroline*, for which Brett was awarded a knighthood.

When the Prince died unexpectedly, leaving Frederick's son, George, as heir, his parliamentary supporters would hastily have to cover over their traces.

The Coronation of King George III took place on 25th October 1760. He reigned until 1820, for the remainder of the life of Thomas Anson, and that of his heir George Adams.

NOTES: Chapter 9

- ¹ British Library, *Letters from Thomas Anson to Admiral George Anson, 1743-1749*. MSS Add. 15955
- ² Nancy Tonkin, 'Beckenham has never been found wanting in time of war'. Beckenham Heritage Group, 1993. <http://www.beckenhamheritagegroup.co.uk/?p=571>
- ³ A note in pencil inserted in the *Correspondence from Sir John Dick (British consul at Leghorn)* to Thomas Anson, D615/P(A)/2 in the Staffordshire Record Office, wrongly identifies Adair as Robert Adair, Sergeant-Surgeon to George II, who was married to Lady Caroline Keppel.
- ⁴ George Thomas Keppel, 6th Earl of Albemarle, *Fifty Years of My Life, the Memoirs of George Thomas Keppel, Earl of Albemarle. In Two Volumes, Vol. 1*. Macmillan & Co., London, 1876. p.94. <https://archive.org/details/fiftyyearsofmyli01albeuoft>
- ⁵ George Anson, *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1740-44*. Third edition. Printed by John & Paul Knapton, London, 1748. Available on Google Books.
- ⁶ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/1/61-3
- ⁷ *Ibid.* D615/P(S)/1/1/17B
- ⁸ 'Leek: Leek and Lowe'. *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 7, Leek and the Moorlands*. Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1996. British History Online: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol7/pp84-169>
- ⁹ The Royal Society. See <https://royalsociety.org/>
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ I am grateful to Patricia F Ferguson, National Trust Advisor on Ceramics, for this information.
- ¹² 'Lichfield: Parliamentary Representation' retrieved from <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol14/pp92-95>
- ¹³ British Library, *Letters from Thomas Anson to Admiral George Anson, 1743-1749*. MSS Add. 15955, 8th Feb 1748.
- ¹⁴ Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, *Athenian Letters: or, the Epistolary correspondence of an agent of the King of Persia, residing at Athens during the Peloponnesian War*. Printed by James Bettenham, London, 1741 & 1743. Vol. 1 held at the British Library, G2109.
- ¹⁵ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, *Letters from Elizabeth Anson to Jemima Grey*. L30/9/3/1
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ William Coxe, (Ed.), *Memoirs of the Administration of the Right Honourable Henry Pelham, Collected from Family Papers, and Other Authentic Documents. In Two Volumes, Vol. 1*. Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, & Green, London, 1829. p.496 ff. <https://archive.org/details/memoirsofadminis01coxe>
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* Vol. 2. p.316.
- ¹⁹ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/3 and following.
- ²⁰ Richard Hindry Barker, *Mr Cibber of Drury Lane*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1939. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theophilus_Cibber
- ²¹ British Library. Op. cit. August 1748.
- ²² *Ibid.*

Chapter 10

The Case for Wright

There seems to be something about Shugborough that suggests a mysterious undertone, something elusive lying under the surface; some intangible idea that has been partly lost under the grandiose rebuilding at the end of the 18th century, but still glimmers ethereally in the Spirit of the Place and under the grass.

At its heart is the Shepherd's Monument, with its relief of Poussin's *The Arcadian Shepherds* and a never explained inscription. Even without the inscription, often assumed to be some kind of cipher, the monument is a complicated and tantalising puzzle.

Who designed it? When was it built? What does it mean?

It will only be possible to suggest answers to these questions when all the evidence has been examined, and as much as possible has been understood of the people involved in its design and purpose, and what their ideas and motives might have been.

In a series of *Country Life* articles in 1971, Eileen Harris suggests that the architect of the first wave of developments: the enlargements to the house, gardens and the first group of monuments, was Thomas Wright of Durham.¹ In 1979, Harris produced a catalogue of Thomas Wright's design work, including the various buildings at Shugborough, as an introduction to a lavish reproduction of his published designs for *Arbours and Grottos*.²

It was the mysterious Shepherd's Monument that caught her attention, as it does so many who visit Shugborough. The monument seems to be comprised of several elements: an inner arch of rusticated stone, an outer portico of rustic columns, and a roof. The outer columns and pediment are almost certainly the work of James Stuart; an undated drawing in the British Museum matches the rustic columns exactly³ (see Chapter 12).

The inner arch is very similar in shape to an arbour design by Wright, published in his original two volume *Arbours and Grottos*, in 1755.⁴ The basic form of this inner element is very similar to a simple arbour or alcove included in a design at Badminton, from 1750.⁵

Although there is something puzzling and complex about the monument, and while Stuart must have had a hand in it several years after the original garden designs were completed, Harris proposed that the Shepherd's Monument was, at its heart, a work by

Thomas Wright – that he had been the man who transformed Shugborough in 1748.⁶

Thomas Wright (1711-1786) is an extremely attractive and fascinating character, and a small number of enthusiasts have explored different aspects of his life since Harris's article. His astronomical work has been republished and more of his landscapes have been rediscovered and restored, yet there are volumes of manuscripts in Newcastle Public Library which have hardly been touched. These contain his poetry, notes on mythology and sketches for a Utopian fantasy, *The Fortunate Islands*.

Wright's authorship of the Shugborough work has been accepted for thirty years but has always been accompanied by a question mark because of a complete lack of contemporary documentation, either in the Anson archives in Staffordshire Record Office or in Wright's own surviving notes.

Wright's 'Early Journal', published in *Annals of Science* in 1951, gives an impression of his career as a tutor in London and various country houses.⁷ The most illuminating record of his life, however, is in the surviving correspondence between the poet Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot,⁸ who was an intimate friend of Jemina Grey and Elizabeth, Lady Anson.

Elizabeth Carter was born in 1717, the daughter of a clergyman, Nicholas Carter of Deal, in Kent. Her mother had died when Carter was about ten. She was well educated and became proficient in many languages, including Greek. Carter is known today as one of the first women writers to earn enough to live on independently through her work as a poet, and as the translator of the Stoic philosopher, Epictetus. Her translation became a surprising best seller.⁹

It was her friend Catherine Talbot, living with her widowed mother in the household of Bishop Secker (later the Archbishop of Canterbury), who seems to have first set her on this course. Catherine's reply to Elizabeth's letter from Deal, dated June 20th 1749, shows the bishop took an interest in her translation and even supplied his own version:

The Bishop of Oxford says your translation is a very good one; and, if it has any fault, it is only that of being not close enough, and writ in too smooth and too ornamental a style. Epictetus was a plain man, and spoke plainly; a translation that should express this would, he thinks, preserve more the spirit of the original, and give an exacter notion of it. ... You will be so good to return me both your translations, and my Lord's, when you have compared them.¹⁰

By the 1750s, Carter was the leading female intellectual of the "Bluestocking" social circle, led by Mrs Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800). Born Elizabeth Robinson to a wealthy Yorkshire family, she married Edward Montagu, the grandson of the 1st Earl of Sandwich.

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This Edward Montagu (1625-1672) had served Oliver Cromwell but played a part in the restoration of King Charles II. Her model of hosting intellectual conversation in her London salons, where men and women were able to speak as equals and engage in discussion on contemporary topics as well as literature and art, appealed to Carter.

By the time she first met Thomas Wright, Elizabeth Carter was already a published poet, writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine*.¹¹ This is quite extraordinary for a woman of only twenty, mixing with London literary and scientific society. It is also quite astonishing that as a young woman she had studied Plato (c.428-c.348 BC).

Carter wrote, in a poem to her friend Miss Lynch:

To calm Philosophy I next retire,
And seek the joys her sacred arts inspire,
Renounce the frolics of unthinking youth,
To court the more engaging charms of Truth:
With Plato soar on Contemplation's wing,
And trace perfection to th' eternal spring:
Observe the vital emanations flow,
That animate each fair degree below:
Whence Order, Elegance, and Beauty move
Each finer sense, that tunes the mind to love;
Whence all that harmony and fire that join,
To form a temper, and a soul like thine.

This could hardly be more Platonic, particularly the lines:

Observe the vital emanations flow,
That animate each fair degree below...

Another of Carter's poems to Miss Lynch, from 1744, refers to the myth of the two Venuses from Plato's *Symposium*:

With mystic sense, the poet's tuneful tongue
Of Urania's birth in glitt'ring fiction sung.

Again, she directly praises Plato:

What shining visions rose on Plato's thought!
While by the Muses gently winding flood,
His searching fancy trac'd the sov'reign good! –
The laurell'd Sisters touch'd the vocal lyre,
And Wisdom's goddess led their tuneful choir.

So, Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806), in her early twenties, had studied Plato's *Symposium* in depth, his discussion on love, principally between men.¹² Was this a normal part of a young lady's education at the time? Even a hundred years later it would have been considered a rather suspect book.

The translation of Plato's dialogue concerning love, *The Banquet* by the Greek scholar Floyer Sydenham (1710-1787), published in two parts, in 1761 and 1767, promises a new edition of the original. He avoids any implication of homosexuality and omits Plato's final section that might have been deemed offensive in the English language.¹³ It would not, however, be offensive to a reader of Greek such as Elizabeth Carter.

Miss Lynch must have understood the Platonic meaning of these poems. She lived in Canterbury, where Elizabeth's father was one of the six preachers of Canterbury Cathedral, and would have met Thomas Wright when he stayed with the Carters in Deal, in August 1741.

Carter wrote to her friend Mrs Underdown, on 9th February 1742:

Oh dear! Now I talk of hearing & seeing, Miss Lynch & I have clubb'd our wits to compose the strangest Letter that ever was seen or heard of to puzzle Endymion.¹⁴ Do not say any thing about it for tis a great Mystery but we will show it to you when you come here.

...Miss Lynch & I lie & talk of a night till we fall fast asleep with a Sentence in our mouth & wake half choked with it next Morning.¹⁵

Thomas Wright (1711-1786) came from a quite different place and social background. He was the son of a yeoman carpenter in county Durham, who, by sheer force of personality, found his way into high society as a teacher of mathematical subjects to young ladies.

It is not known how Carter met Wright. She seems to have been a friend rather than a student. He introduced her to the mysterious world of scientists and philosophers, as she writes to her friend Mrs Underdown, on June 23rd 1738:

I have lately met with much pleasure in the acquaintance of Mr. Wright a great mathematician & a very ingenious and good natured Man. He has introduced me to Dr Desaguliers & I have two or 3 times been at his House which is the strangest looking place I ever beheld & appears very much like the Abode of a Wizard. The Company that frequents it is equally singular consisting chiefly of a set of queer looking people called Philosophers.¹⁶

Carter's extensive correspondence with Wright was lost in the 19th century – a tragedy,

as it could have explained so many mysteries. Carter knew of Wright's theories. It was Wright who introduced Elizabeth Carter to his student Catherine Talbot, which led to many letters being exchanged between them – informative, fascinating and entertaining. These were published after Carter's death, in February 1806, at the age of 88, by her nephew, Montagu Pennington, in 1809.¹⁷ As we saw earlier, the introduction of Carter to Talbot led, in turn, to Carter's most important work – her translation of the works of the Stoic philosopher, Epictetus.

Wright developed visionary ideas. His main vocation was cosmology and attempting to explain his view of the immensity of space and its infinite galaxies.

Wright visited Carter at her home in Deal and they planned a "romantic trip to the Goodwin Sands"¹⁸ – and yet Wright scarcely mentions her name in his journal.

She had written a poem in his honour, addressing him as "Endymion". It was published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* that same month, June 1738.¹⁹

WHILE clear the night, and ev'ry thought serene,
Let Fancy wander o'er the solemn scene:
And, wing'd by active Contemplation,
rise Amidst the radiant wonders of the skies...
Where ev'ry star that gilds the gloom of night
With the faint tremblings of a distant light,
Perhaps illumes some system of its own
With the strong influence of a radiant sun.

The first version of the poem ends with the lines:

All view the happy talents with delight
That form a Desaguliers or a Wright.

Eileen Harris has pointed out some specific design details in support of her identification of Wright at Shugborough; for example, a feature of plasterwork that matches rejected drawings for his only major house design, Nuthall Temple, built about seven years later.²⁰ But would Wright, if he had worked at Shugborough, been responsible for the design of the plasterwork? There is no reason to doubt Philip Yorke's comment in one of his letters that the plaster was by Vassalli, a very busy artist in the Midlands who specialised in decorative interior plasterwork.²¹ (This is discussed further in Chapter 11.)

On the other hand, Wright did, it seems, design similar detail at Nuthall, in Nottinghamshire. There was also, now long gone, a bow window on the north front, which Jemima Grey thought was "ridiculous", but bow windows were a typical feature of Wright's

architecture. He designed one for Tollymore in Ireland, which would have been in 1747 at the time of his visit, but actually built later. He also designed a bow window for his own house at Byers Green, Durham, where here, at least, it was part of the overall cosmological scheme, designed to catch the movement of the sun.

A building that feels, though this is hardly firm evidence, closest to the mood of Shugborough, is the Menagerie at Horton, near Northampton – the only complete house by Wright that survives. This has a plaster ceiling with a symbolic scheme that certainly reflects Wright's ideas and his cosmological interests, showing Father Time, the sun, and the signs of the zodiac revolving around the heavens.

The overall mood of the Menagerie, beautifully restored by the late Gervase Jackson-Stops and occasionally open to the public, matches very closely the eccentric and cosy feel of the Library at Shugborough, with its plasterwork images of the Liberal Arts and Greek philosophers. The Library certainly belongs to the first period of development, and, if it can be judged on this similarity of mood alone, would happily be ascribed to Thomas Wright. His descriptions of his villa at Byers Green suggest that his own house, with its cosmological theme and bow window, was a sister to the Menagerie and to the modest villa that Thomas Anson's old William and Mary house had been transformed into.

For the most part, the Wrightian landscape has a characteristic mood – a playful and fanciful mix of different styles: Gothic, Classical and Chinese. At Shugborough there was a very good reason for this eclecticism: to reflect Admiral Anson's circumnavigation but also, and just as importantly, Thomas Anson's travels and interest in "foreign" cultures. Wright's Irish work, designed but not necessarily built during his 1746-47 tour, reflects a similar combination of styles.

There has been no suggestion of any other candidate responsible for the first developments at Shugborough. The only person for whom a case could (and perhaps should) be argued is Sanderson Miller, who worked at Hagley from 1749 onwards. From about this time at least, Hagley and Shugborough were close relations. The Ansons were regular visitors to Hagley, the home of Lord Lyttelton, who was one of the Bluestocking cultural circle surrounding Elizabeth Montagu and an enthusiastic supporter of Elizabeth Carter and James Harris.

Miller's list of work includes a note that he "advised" at Shugborough, in 1749, for the Classical Ruin on the far side of the river,²² and, perhaps, the Cat's Monument, in 1752, which may have been connected to the Pagoda.

Wright, according to George Mason, in his *Essay on Design in Gardening* of 1768:

...understood drawing, and sketched plans of his designs; but never contracted for work.²³

Miller would have organised the construction from Wright's plans, just as he was responsible for the construction of Stuart's Doric Temple at Hagley. Sanderson Miller did, however, design the folly at Wimpole in 1749-50, according to Historic England, but it was not actually built until 1768-70.²⁴

Why is there no documentary proof of Wright's work at Shugborough?

The historical record is sketchy for most of his career, but there are traces of Wright's relationship with the Yorkes at Wrest Park. Catherine Talbot mentions his praises of Wrest in a letter to Elizabeth Carter in 1745.²⁵ Elizabeth Yorke, Jemima Grey's sister-in-law, must, surely, have met Wright on her visits to Wrest, several years before she married George Anson.

There is only one mention of Wright's name in Lady Anson's letters, when she describes, to Jemima, a room by "your Mr. Wright" at Stoke Gifford (see Chapter 14),²⁶ where Wright lived with his patron Norborne Berkeley, Lord Botetourt, in the 1750s.

Surely Elizabeth Yorke was referring to Wright when she wrote to Jemima, after her first visit to Wrest, in 1745:

Your ladyship will easily believe I do not as yet very well know where I am, for I expect to go to billiards after dinner and hear some tunes on the harpsichord, doubt whether we shall drink tea at the pavilion or bowling-green, do not know what object to look for in the prospect, can't guess what book you and I shall read next, miss the terrestrial maps extremely, the agreeable companion of my walks much more, and was vastly disappointed last night on asking about 9 o'clock what star that was which shone so bright on the left hand [of] the north window in the library to find the person I addressed knew neither the star nor the place.²⁷

Wright left a sketchy journal of his early life, which was not published until 1951, by Edward Hughes.²⁸ Wright's 'Early Journal' gives an outline of his work before his visit to Ireland and has added notes of his later travels and important projects – but with no mention of Shugborough. If all the evidence of his career, including other references to his architecture and the Carter/Talbot correspondence, is assembled in chronological order, a very clear gap is revealed. This is the period between his trip to Ireland in 1746-47 and a meeting with Elizabeth Carter in 1748. This is precisely the period in which the Shugborough work must have been carried out. This is tantalising.

One step towards understanding what might have been going on at Shugborough, is to look at Wright's architectural career as a whole.

There is a very revealing letter, written to Wright by Rev. Spencer Cowper in 1753. Wright had spent Christmas 1745 at his home in Canterbury, in the company of Elizabeth Carter

and other young ladies. Spencer Cowper (1713-1774), who was the Dean of Durham from 1746, continued to be Wright's friend in his retirement. On 11th November 1753, he wrote to Wright:

I am sorry the stars have used you ill... You certainly have now a more ready way to get at the favour of the Great than by your celestial knowledge. Your display of that was but laying a lane before them which contracted all their greatness into an atom; it is true it magnified their Creator – but what is that to them? Now you lay before them their own greatness, and what is really the fruit of your genius shall here after be shown as the contrivance and art of the great proprietor.²⁹

When Cowper writes: "Now you lay before them their own greatness,"³⁰ he is referring to Wright's architectural embellishments of their estates and landscapes, in contrast to his teaching of astronomy which made everything seem insignificant in comparison with the infinite universe. As Cowper had known Wright since 1745, this suggests that Wright had only seriously considered following a career as an architect not long before 1753.

Wright's 'Biographical History', compiled from his own notebooks and manuscripts³¹ after his death, by his friend George Allan of Darlington, and published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1793, gives his early education:

...he made some progress in the mathematicks; being obliged to quit his study of the languages, on account of a great impediment of speech, he was entered an apprentice to a clockmaker in 1725, and at leisure-hours applied himself closely to the study of astronomy. On account of some dissensions in his master's house, in September, 1729, he ran away from his servitude, and soon after obtained a discharge from his indentures; and then sat down with singular industry to study navigation, astronomy, geometry, and the abstruse branches of the mathematicks.

...His employment in the summer months in London was making mathematical instruments... and [he] taught navigation with great success.³²

Looking closely at Thomas Wright's known work, there is a possibility that his architecture only, in fact, began with his Irish trip, when he produced drawings principally for Lord Limerick, great-uncle of Lady Grey. This was closely followed by work at Shugborough and then at Wrest.

Eileen Harris's catalogue includes several earlier projects which may not be by Wright at all. Harris includes a garden plan of Culford Park, the seat of Earl Cornwallis in Suffolk, drawn in 1742,³³ which may not be a design for a garden but a piece of cartography. Wright taught Cornwallis's daughters (and son); Surveying was one of his topics, along with Geometry, Architecture, Perspective, Opticks, etc.³⁴

Wright drew a frontage for the Duchess of Kent's house at Old Windsor, in 1743. This may have been an early architectural project. Harris's catalogue also lists a Doric Temple at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, in 1744.³⁵ If this is by Wright, it would be his first complete building. There is a drawing of his temple in the Avery manuscripts,³⁶ but this may be a drawing of an existing building rather than an original design. If it is his design, then it has an uncharacteristically classical structure.

The only other Wright drawings that date from before his Irish tour are of gardens at Cassiobury, Hertfordshire, the home of the Earl of Essex, brother-in-law of Wright's long-standing patron, Alan Brodrick, Lord Midleton (referred to in Chapter 2). Again, these may not be his designs but drawings of existing features. Wright was a very good draughtsman and a known artist to his students. His drawings can be very fine indeed, as can be seen particularly in the detailed and beautiful work in his *Arbours and Grottos*.³⁷

There are hints in the Carter/Talbot correspondence that Wright's trip to Ireland in 1746 was because he had upset Elizabeth Carter, perhaps in some romantic way, and wanted to get away.³⁸ There could be some truth in this. His 'Early Journal' says he "resolv'd upon a strong invitation" to go.³⁹ The purpose of the invitation from Lord Limerick, James Hamilton, was to explore Irish antiquities for his book *Louthiana*, a study of antiquities that focussed on the county of Louth, which was published in 1748 and dedicated to Lord Limerick.⁴⁰ The work is divided into three books: the first devoted to ancient forts and earthworks; the second to castles and towers; and the third to miscellaneous antiquities and curiosities.⁴¹ A sequel remained unpublished.

The antiquarian interest was a by-product of Wright's cosmology. He had explored Stonehenge whilst at Wilton with Lord Pembroke. Both Pembroke and Wright's "best friend in London", Roger Gale, were associates of William Stukeley and had surveyed Stonehenge and Avebury with him. To Stukeley, the great Neolithic temples were cosmological. The idea of ancient and lost knowledge of the universe preserved in these ruins became a life-long obsession for Wright. This is particularly apparent in his fragmentary Utopian text *The Fortunate Islands*.⁴²

While the inspiration may have been fanciful, Wright's description of Newgrange, Ireland's most important ancient site, is a valuable record of how it appeared before the passage tomb was spectacularly restored in the 20th century.

Wright was, indeed, only at Tollymore in county Down for nine days, but he left drawings that were in use many years later. Both the Tollymore estate and the town of Dundalk were owned by Lord Limerick, whose wife and her sister, the Duchess of Kent, had been Wright's pupils and were his patrons. Wright's Dundalk work could have occupied a lengthier stay. Tollymore has also been the subject of a further study by Eileen Harris.⁴³

Dr Pococke, an extensive traveller throughout Britain and overseas and a prolific writer,

the mummy collecting member of the Egyptian Society mentioned earlier, described Dundalk House in 1752, as:

...a walk with elm hedges on each side, an artificial serpentine river, a Chinese bridge, a thatch'd open house supported by the bodies of fire trees...⁴⁴

At Tollymore House, Pococke saw:

...a thatched open pavilion, a Gothic Watergate over a canal, a cascade, a barn, a hermitage, a Barbican gate and a folly.⁴⁵

Thatched or Root Houses were another typical feature of Wright's eccentric and eclectic landscapes. There is no evidence that there was ever such a building at Shugborough, although it has been suggested that there may have been one on the island behind the Chinese House. There was certainly a thatched house at Wrest, a garden with a very close relationship to Shugborough, and which parallels the close family relationship of the Yorkes and the Ansons. This example at Wrest was built soon after the developments began at Shugborough.

Ideas were passed from family to family and imitated in a friendly rivalry. There may well have been other features in the Shugborough landscape that were never referred to in letters at the time and have since vanished. It is very significant that the Shepherd's Monument, now the most unusual and alluring of all the features, is not mentioned in any surviving letter or diary until more than eight years after the first developments.

The work that Wright would have been involved in at Shugborough was a step forward from the Irish designs. It was an integrated remodelling of a plain house into a fairly modest gentleman's villa. While it may have had features that made it seem like a tribute to Lord Anson and his voyages, the house was designed to suit the tastes and interests of Thomas Anson, as a cultured bachelor.

The rebuilding of the house would have required investigation into the original structure, particularly in relation to the design of the two "kiosks" or small wings for the Drawing Room and Library. Overall, there is no doubt that the scheme of decoration is to Thomas Anson's specification, working in partnership with other artists and plasterers.

Wright's additions, both inside the house and in the gardens, may have been conceived during one visit, but they were not all completed at the time. They cannot have come about as the result of a quick visit around the estate; the designs of some structures probably sketched at that time were built later – certainly the Cat's Monument and the Pagoda.

Another aspect of the Shugborough project, which has not, to date, been examined in detail, is the elaborate water features. There were lakes on two levels and a cascade

between them falling through a Palladian Bridge, a typical Wrightian feature. These must have required elaborate planning and major structural work. This combination of bridge and cascade is another feature that echoes the landscape at Tollymore.

Lady Grey's visit in August 1748 confirms the date when the extensions to the house were ready to view. This work was at least complete in part when Jemima and Philip Yorke describe what the place was like (see Chapter 11). By this time, it is likely that some of the landscape features were also in place: the Chinese House and its associated island and Chinese bridges; the garden lawns relaid and serpentine paths added to bring a more romantic feature to the old formal gardens; the Gothic ruins and the pigeon house. While there is no reason to doubt Piercy Brett's contribution in providing drawings for the Chinese House, the Chinese bridges were probably by Wright and match a similar structure that Dr Pococke saw at Dundalk House.

Another absolutely vital element of this scheme, that has not been examined in detail until very recently, thanks to an inspired Head Gardener, Joe Hawkins, is the fact that the 1747-48 plan must have involved planting and gardening – integrating Thomas Anson's interest in exotic plants with the design and architectural aspects. In his journal, John Parnell mentioned seeing oriental planting on his visit in 1769.⁴⁶

After 1748, Wright became renowned for planting. He went to stay at Stoke Park when his patron Norborne Berkeley had already begun his landscape work; at Stoke planting was far more important than follies or other structures. Where did Wright gather his experience? To George Mason, his expertise in planting was Wright's principal skill.⁴⁷

If we accept, for the sake of the argument, that the eclectic landscape at Shugborough is Wright's project, and at this time Wright only created designs for patrons who supported him in his other work, we can then ask why and how did he come to work for Thomas Anson? The only clue, and it seems to be a significant one, is in her last letter to Catherine Talbot when Elizabeth Carter describes meeting with Wright.

She writes from her uncle's home in Enfield, north of London, on June 14th 1748, two months before Lady Grey describes the new work at Shugborough:

After a week of constant hurry of visiting and company, we came on Thursday to this place, where we spend our time more quietly, Mr. Wright is with us, and a clever lively woman who talks excellent French, but they depart to-day. I forgot to tell you, the Monday before we left town Mrs. Darby and I drank tea with Mr. Wright, Miss Ward was to have been of the party, but was engaged before I could let her know it, so to be sure there is a spell set against her going there as well as your's. He shewed us all manner of worlds, and I believe Mrs. Talbot and you would have been pleased with his system of the universe, which is founded upon an hypothesis amazingly grand.⁴⁸

This must refer to Wright's final scientific publication – the form of cosmology on which he had been working since he first came to London. Wright "shewed" Carter "all manner of worlds". These may have been older illustrations but, as she was in touch with him throughout his career, Carter would have been familiar with his earlier work. It more likely implies that he had produced all or part of the many elaborate illustrations for his culminating work, which included multiple universes surrounding the "Eye of Providence", tracks of comets and "a Partial view of Immensity".

These concepts were included in his book *An Original Theory*, printed in 1750.⁴⁹ This was the same two-year time span which lay between the completion of *Louthiana*, written in 1746 and its publication in 1748.⁵⁰ In other words, the preparation of *An Original Theory* took place in the missing year, between July 1747 and June 1748.

Carter's letter to Wright, on June 14th 1748, is dated the day after a letter Lady Anson wrote to Thomas in Paris, where, as mentioned in the previous chapter, he is spending six weeks on government business. It is intriguing that Wright returned to London, after being absent for two years, at the same time as Thomas Anson left for Paris.

Whether or not Wright and Anson were at Shugborough until those dates coincided, there is a strong possibility that his work on *An Original Theory* was done at the same time as the work at Shugborough. This poses the question, could there be a connection between *An Original Theory* and Shugborough?

The only sure point of contact between Thomas Wright and Thomas Anson, which could provide answers, is the axis on which the whole wheel turns – Lord Scarbrough.

Scarbrough was Wright's first and most important patron. After unsuccessful and foolhardy attempts to set himself up as teacher of mathematics, and giving up all thoughts of becoming a seaman, Wright had the good fortune to be introduced, by the Rev. Daniel Newcombe, to Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarbrough. From this period:

Mr. Wright's better stars were now ringing upon him.⁵¹

Was this the same clergyman who had disapproved of Wright's marriage to his daughter, causing him to consider leaving the country? Did this experience perhaps explain why he went to Ireland in 1746, possibly after some kind of romantic upset with Elizabeth Carter?

The Rev. Mr. Newcome, of Sunderland, who had been Mr. Wright's bitter adversary in former years, now became his very warm patron and friend; ...becoming fully acquainted with his extensive genius and good disposition of heart, he invited him to live with him... During Mr. Wright's stay in this clergyman's hospitable mansion, he completed his *Pannauticon*, the *Mariner's Universal* magazine; ...⁵²

Wright must have made a remarkably strong impression on Scarbrough, apparently a very serious-minded man, as he invited Wright to London and introduced him to the Lords of the Admiralty. Wright mentions Sir Charles Wager and Sir Thomas Franklin, who gave their support for the publication of his *Pannauticon*, a mathematical instrument for navigation.⁵³ This was in 1734, when Wright was only 23 years old.

Lord Scarbrough obtained permission for a dedication to the King, and through Lord Baltimore, another Admiralty Lord, Wright was introduced to Frederick, Prince of Wales. Scarbrough recommended him to Henry Herbert, the 9th Earl of Pembroke, who, in 1735, also became a patron. Wright was given the use of his library at Wilton, near Salisbury – a privilege indeed. He also met the antiquary Roger Gale, who Wright was to call “his best friend in London”.

Sir Roger Gale (1672-1744) was a member of the Society of Antiquities, and, as Treasurer of the Royal Society, his introduction allowed Wright to present his *Pannauticon*. As Pembroke and Gale were both associates of William Stukeley, this connection must have begun Wright’s interest in ancient antiquities, and Druids in particular.

Wright’s relationship with Scarbrough continued, as well as the beneficence of these other important supporters. In 1739, Wright noted in his journal that he gave Lord Scarbrough a “private lecture”.⁵⁴ This coincided with a period when he was developing his work on *The Elements of Existence*, another step towards his grand cosmology.⁵⁵

Wright’s vision of a multiple universe persisted, in various forms, throughout his life. It was his main obsession, and it was this preoccupation which must have made him seem strange but impressive, rather than his enthusiasm as an unconventional teacher of mathematics. To Elizabeth Carter, he was “your conjureship”.

Wright was the kind of person who inspired Lord Scarbrough in Durham, back in 1733. Yet when Scarbrough died in January 1740, Wright makes no mention of this catastrophe in his journal.

How did Thomas Anson get to know Thomas Wright? There are many ways in which Anson might have become aware of Wright. He might have heard of him from William Stukeley at the Egyptian Society. He might have known of Wright through Philip Yorke and Jemima Grey, but he may not have known him as an architect. Anson could have known Wright in London through his teaching work in the winter season, rather than through Wrest Park. Wright had stayed at Wrest several times in the 1730s, and even more frequently with the Duchess of Kent, Jemima Grey’s grandmother, at Old Windsor.

Wright’s journal mentions an invitation to Wrest in 1745.⁵⁶ That summer Catherine Talbot was there, but she does not mention him in her letters or journal. This was also the time

of Elizabeth Yorke's first visit to Wrest, and her letter, quoted earlier in this chapter, shows that her interest in astronomy was in the air that summer.

In November 1748, Jemima's aunt, Lady Anne Sophia Grey (1730-1780), the youngest daughter of Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Kent, and his second wife, Lady Sophia Bentinck, married the Right Reverend John Egerton. His mother was Lady Elizabeth Bentinck. Egerton became well known to Thomas Wright. He later held the office of Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, in 1768, and, in 1771, became Bishop of Durham.

It would be very surprising indeed if Wright were not an occasional visitor to the Yorke family's London home, Powis House. Originally built in the 1690s for William Herbert, Hardwicke leased the mansion in the mid-18th century. If Wright was so welcome at their country seat in summer, why not in London where he could well have been acquainted with Thomas Anson. After 1748 he only returned to Wrest to discuss landscape and garden improvements.

Certainly, there were close links with the Greys and Wright had been Lady Sophia's tutor, but Anson could have met Wright at any time from 1734 onwards. He may have kept up a friendship with Alan Brodrick, Lord Midleton, of Peper Harow in Surrey, where (as mentioned in Chapter 2) Wright stayed many times. Midleton's wife's niece, daughter of the Earl of Essex and Wright's student at Peper Harow, Lady Charlotte Capell, married Thomas Villiers, Viscount Hyde and later the Earl of Clarendon (see Chapter 4). Villiers stayed at Shugborough in 1752, and a few years later became one of Stuart's earliest patrons. It was a very small world.

Anson may even have met Wright through Lord Scarbrough himself – the man who had called Anson "the only friend I value in the world."⁵⁷ If there is any evidence at all to explain Anson and Scarbrough's friendship, it might shed some light on his knowing Wright, but the actual circumstances in which Anson could have met Wright makes no difference to the case.

The explanation for Wright's involvement at Shugborough, surely, is that Thomas Anson was taking the place of Lord Scarbrough, as his patron.

The suicide drama was still on Anson's mind thirty years or so later, when he told the story to James Harris. His tangible emotions are hard to guess, but it would have been difficult for him not to feel a sense of responsibility. Scarbrough had waited for Anson and then kept his word – and shot himself.

If Thomas Anson knew of Wright's connection with Scarbrough, or whenever he may have discovered it, the idea of Anson taking over Scarbrough's patronage might easily have arisen. It would be a small way of salving the guilt, or perhaps repaying a debt of friendship. If this was the case, Anson's offer of patronage would have had nothing to do

with architecture. It would have been patronage of Wright's cosmological work – which climaxed with *An Original Theory*, published in 1750, yet it was sufficiently prepared for Elizabeth Carter to be told about it in June 1748.

Could there be a parallel with Wright's Irish journey, where the main focus was his work on *Louthiana* and the architecture was a gift to his patrons? Perhaps Anson was supporting the completion of *An Original Theory* and, at the same time, he was able to work with Wright on developments at Shugborough?

This seems to be an irresistible conclusion. The extraordinary force of honour, guilt, and responsibility that came from the Scarborough tragedy, and the convoluted scenarios that followed, would explain the mystery and secrecy that has lasted two hundred and fifty years.

An Original Theory, or New Hypothesis of the Universe, published by subscription in 1750, was Wright's most important publication.⁵⁸ Among numerous influential and aristocratic names listed, George Anson was a subscriber, as were the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke, Marchioness Grey and the Earl of Pembroke, as well as his new patron, from 1749, Norborne Berkeley and his sister the Duchess of Beaufort. Thomas Anson is not listed, and, surprisingly for such an important work, there is no dedication. If the book had been supported by Thomas Anson in memory of Richard Lumley, Lord Scarborough, then this would be easy to understand.

The Preface explains the author's intention:

The author of the following Letters having been flattered into a Belief, that they may probably prove of some Use, or at least Amusement to the World, he has ventured to give them, at the request of his Friends, to the Publick. His chief Design will be found an Attempt towards solving the Phaenomena of the Via Lactea, and in consequence of that Solution, the framing of a regular and rational Theory of the known Universe.⁵⁹

The phrase, "at the request of his Friends" is interesting. These must include Elizabeth Carter as well as his patrons and students – in fact, all those who knew him as the cosmological visionary. Knowing Wright's wild spelling and "coptic" handwriting (as Carter described it), one wonders if Elizabeth Carter helped him to turn his sketches and language into correct English, between 1748 and the publication. He would have needed an editor, and she does not appear as one of the subscribers.

His "amazingly grand" hypothesis, as Carter described it, may seem a bold claim; it was a courageous step to talk not only of the solar system but, as Elizabeth Carter wrote, of an infinite universe composed of galaxies "whose every star perhaps illuminates some system of its own."⁶⁰

Wright's major claim to fame as an astronomer is his explanation of the Milky Way – that what we see from our position on Earth, on its far edge as a river of stars, is actually a galaxy. This concept was taken up in Europe by Immanuel Kant, though not quite as Wright had explained it. Kant saw the reality of the galaxy more correctly than Wright understood it, but Wright's ideas had opened-up astronomy to consider patterns and structures far vaster than the Earth's solar system.

An Original Theory is in the stylised format of a series of letters to an imaginary friend:

Sir,

Reflecting upon the agreeable Conversation of our last Meeting, which you may remember turned upon the Stars...⁶¹

Who did Wright picture in his mind when he wrote these words? Was he addressing Lord Scarbrough, Lord Pembroke, Miss Carter, Thomas Anson – maybe all of them?

The most distinctively Wrightian section of the book, which features some spectacular cosmological prints, is his description of the many alternative worlds that make up the universe. These are complete universes, each revolving on their own centre marked by an individual "Eye of Providence", all encircling the divine centre of the entire cosmos.

Wright believed in reincarnation. He refused to believe that a perfect universe can include damnation – souls are reborn in better or worse universes, nearer or further from the divine centre:

Here and here alone centr'd in the Realms of inexpressible Glory, we justly may imagine that primogenial Globe or Sphere of all Perfections, subject to the Extreme of neither Cold nor Heat, of Temperance and Duration. Here we may not irrationally suppose the Vertues of the meritorious are at last rewarded and received into the full possession of every Happiness, and to perfect Joy. The final and immortal State ordain'd for such human Beings, as have passed this Vortex of Probation thro' all the Degrees of human Nature with the supreme Applause!⁶²

Wright's cosmology is inseparable from his landscape design, or, perhaps, more truthfully, his landscape design and architecture is always subservient to his cosmology.

As Leila Belkora puts it:

Mr Wright was not so much an astronomer as a somewhat eccentric philosopher.⁶³

He describes an infinite range of alternative universes:

THE CASE FOR WRIGHT

Here a group of Worlds, all Vallies, Lakes and Rivers, adorn'd with Mountains, Woods and Lawns, Cascades and natural Fountains; there Worlds all fertile islands, cover'd with Woods, perhaps upon a common Sea and filled with Grottoes and romantick caves. This Way, Worlds all earths, with vast extensive lawns and Vistoes, bounded with perpetual Greens all interspersed with Groves and Wildernesses, full of all Varieties of Fruits and Flowers. That World perhaps subsisting by soft Rains, this by daily Dews, and Vapours; and a third by a central, subtle Moisture, arising like an Effluvia, through the Pores and Veins of the Earth...

Round some, perhaps, so dense an atmosphere, that the inhabitants may fly from Place to Place, or be drawn through the Air in winged Chariots, and even sleep upon the Waves with safety... And hence it is obvious, that there may not be a Scene of Joy, which poetry can paint, or Religion promise, but somewhere in the Universe it is prepared for the meritorious Part of Mankind. Thus all Infinity is full of States of Bliss, Angelic Choirs, Regions of Heroes, and Realms of Demi-Gods; Elysian Fields, Pindaric Shades, and Myriads of enchanting Mansions.⁶⁴

The extraordinary mystery of the universe and its possible explanation that Thomas Wright elucidates and sheds light upon, suggests that his visionary, unorthodox and slightly outlandish book, might well have been completed amongst those same Elysian Fields that he helped to create – at an “Inchanted Mansion” in the centre of England – at Shugborough, in Staffordshire.

NOTES: Chapter 10

- ¹ Eileen Harris, 'A Flair for the Grandiose, The Architecture of Thomas Wright of Durham – II', *Country Life*, 2 Sep 1971, pp.546-550.
- ² Eileen Harris (Ed.), *Thomas Wright, Arbours and Grottos: A facsimile of the two parts of Universal Architecture (1755 and 1758), with a catalogue of Wright's works in architecture and garden design by Eileen Harris*. Scholar Press, London, 1979.
- ³ Undated drawing in the British Museum, MSS Add. 22153 cited by David Watkin in *Athenian Stuart, pioneer of the Greek Revival*. George Allen and Unwin, 1982.
- ⁴ Thomas Wright, *Arbours and Grottos* published in two volumes of *Universal Architecture: Book I, Six Original Designs of Arbours; Book II, Six Original Designs for Grottoes*. Published by the author, London, 1755 & 1758.
- ⁵ MS at Badminton House, Wilts. Reproduced in Thomas Wright, *Ibid*.
- ⁶ Eileen Harris, 'Architect of Rococo Landscapes. Thomas Wright – III', *Country Life*, 9 Sep 1971, pp.614-5.
- ⁷ Edward Hughes, 'The Early Journal of Thomas Wright of Durham', *Annals of Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1, March 28, 1951. Taylor & Francis Online.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00033795100202151>
- ⁸ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the Year 1741 to 1770: To which are Added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Veseley, Between the Years 1763 and 1787; Published from the Original Manuscripts in the Possession of the Rev. Montagu Pennington. In Four Volumes, Vol. 1*. Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1809. Available on Google Books.
- ⁹ Elizabeth Carter, *All the Works of Epictetus which Are Now Extant; Consisting of His Discourses, Preserved by Arrian, in Four Books, the Enchiridion, and Fragments*. Printed by S. Richardson, London. 1759. Republished as Elizabeth Carter, *The Complete Works of Epictetus*. CreateSpace (Amazon), 2017.
- ¹⁰ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter: with a New Edition of her Poems, some of which have never appeared before*. Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1807, p.111. Available on Google Books.
- ¹¹ *The Gentleman's Magazine* was a monthly magazine published in London in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Founded by Edward Cave, alias 'Sylvanus Urban', it began with the January 1731 issue and ceased publication in 1907. For an online catalogue see <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=gentlemans>
- ¹² A translation by Benjamin Jowett of Plato's *Symposium* c.360 BC. Retrieved from <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>
- ¹³ Floyer Sydenham, *The Banquet, a Dialogue of Plato Concerning Love*, 1761. The second part, 1767. Printed by H. Woodfall for W. Sandby, and R. & J. Dodsley.
- ¹⁴ "Endymion" refers to Thomas Wright.
- ¹⁵ Gwen Hampshire (Ed.), *Elizabeth Carter, 1717-1806 – An Edition of Some Unpublished Letters*. University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2005. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁷ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, ... Op. cit*.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁹ 'To thee, Endymion' by Eliza, originally published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 8, 1738, p.324. Available on Google Books.

- ²⁰ Eileen Harris, 'A Flair for the Grandiose,' Op. cit. p.547.
- ²¹ Joyce Godber, *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park*. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society. Vol. XLVII, 1968.
- ²² Susan Weber Soros (Ed.), *James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity*. Yale University Press, 2006, p.324.
- ²³ George Mason, *An Essay on Design in Gardening*. Printed for Benjamin White, London, 1768. Available on Google Books.
- ²⁴ Historic England. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1317807>
- ²⁵ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.). Op. cit.
- ²⁶ Cited in Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- ²⁷ Joyce Godber. Op. cit. p.25.
- ²⁸ Edward Hughes. Op. cit.
- ²⁹ Quoted by Eileen Harris (Ed.) in *Thomas Wright, Arbours and Grottos*. Op. cit.
- ³⁰ This letter by Spencer Cowper is often quoted as being from the poet William Cowper. The error was originally made in a 19th-century edition of the poet's letters.
- ³¹ Thomas Wright manuscripts and summary biography. Durham University Library Special Collections Catalogue, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. See http://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/view?docId=ark/32150_s1nz805z75w.xml
- ³² 'Biographical History of Mr. Thomas Wright', *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle*. Vol. LXIII, Part 1, Printed by John Nichols, London, 1793, pp.9-12. Available on Google Books.
- ³³ Eileen Harris (Ed.). Op. cit.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ The group of Thomas Wright's drawings, the Avery manuscripts, is now in America.
- ³⁷ Eileen Harris (Ed.). Op. cit.
- ³⁸ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.). Op. cit.
- ³⁹ Edward Hughes. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas Wright, *Louthiana: or an Introduction to the Antiquities of Ireland*. Louth, Ireland, 1758. Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1079225/louthiana-or-an-introduction-to-the-antiquities-of-ireland-by-thomas-wright> Republished by Gale ECCO, Print Editions, May 28, 2010.
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- ⁴² The text of *The Fortunate Islands* is held by Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- ⁴³ Eileen Harris, 'Thomas Wright and Viscount Limerick at Tollymore Park, County Down', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*. Vol.16, 2014.
- ⁴⁴ Eileen Harris (Ed.). *Thomas Wright, Arbours and Grottos*. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ *John Parnell's Journal, 1769* (extracts, anonymous transcription). William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, CB/Shugborough/8. Original at London School of Economics, LSE Library Misc. 38.
- ⁴⁷ George Mason. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁸ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.). Op. cit. p.261.

- ⁴⁹ Thomas Wright, *An Original Theory, or New Hypothesis of the Universe*. London, 1750.
Republished as *Thomas Wright of Durham*. New York, American Elsevier, Inc., 1971.
- ⁵⁰ Thomas Wright, *Louthiana*:... Op. cit.
- ⁵¹ 'Biographical History of Mr. Thomas Wright'. Op. cit.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Thomas Wright, 'Pannauticon', *The Universal Mariners Magazine*, 1734. No copy survives.
- ⁵⁴ Edward Hughes. Op. cit.
- ⁵⁵ Thomas Wright, 'The Elements of Existence, or, A Theory of The Universe'. Central Library, Newcastle upon Tyne. Wright MSS Vol. VII, pp.1-15.
- ⁵⁶ Edward Hughes. Op. cit.
- ⁵⁷ Thomas Anson cited by Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia; or, the laws of organic life*. Vol. 2. Printed for J. Johnson, London, 1796. Available on Google Books.
- ⁵⁸ Thomas Wright, *An Original Theory*... Op. cit.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.). Op. cit.
- ⁶¹ Thomas Wright. Op. cit.
- ⁶² Leila Belkora, 'Thomas Wright: Visionary of Stellar Systems'. *Minding the Heavens: The Story of our Discovery of the Milky Way*. Institute of Physics Publishing (IOP), Bristol and Philadelphia, 2002. pp.35-73. <https://epdf.pub/minding-the-heavens-the-story-of-our-discovery-of-the-milky-wayfce20e2e1acf5782d6a3aa848e6385b52224.html>
- ⁶³ Thomas Wright. Op. cit.
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Chapter 11

Shugborough Transformed

The first stage of the transformation of Shugborough was completed by late summer 1748, when the first visitors left a record of what they saw.

There is very little evidence in the surviving letters from Thomas Anson to George of exactly when the work was carried out, and very little sign in those letters of Thomas's artistic interests. Neither is there any mention of Thomas Wright, who is assumed to have designed the new Library and Drawing Room and planned the gardens with their water features and follies.

The first stage of the work would have been the extensions to the house and the building of the Chinese House. These are the only features that Jemima and Philip Yorke mention having seen on their visit. The Chinese bridges must have been built later, at around the same time, perhaps, as the Gothic pigeon house and some of the landscaping.

On October 12th 1747, Thomas wrote to his brother:

The two fine jars and the three Chinese Lanthorns together with the Stampers came safe.¹

Following these arrivals, the building works must have been in progress when Thomas wrote again on October 25th:

The getting clear of my Workmen & a little Purchase I am about will probably keep me here til the middle of the week.²

The "little Purchase I am about" is not revealed. The monuments, including the Chinese House, the Pigeon House and the Cat's Monument are discussed in more detail shortly.

Elizabeth and George visited Jemima's country house at Wrest Park, in June 1748. On their return, Elizabeth wrote to Jemima:

Lord Anson speaks of everything at Wrest in a manner that becomes one of its warmest admirers.³

Elizabeth suggested that her brother Philip and his wife Jemima should visit Staffordshire with her in the summer of 1748. This would, presumably, be the first visit of Lady Anson to Shugborough, following her marriage to George in the April, and the first opportunity for Thomas to show off the new work, even if decoration was still in progress.

On July 18th, Thomas writes to George:

Joe mumbles something about Chinese pictures of Birds & Flowers upon paper which you talked of for her Chinese Room, which she is very busy about.⁴

It is easy to forget that Thomas's unmarried sisters lived with him, and that they might have influenced the decoration. Joe was Johanna, the youngest of Thomas's siblings, born in 1699.

His letter also reports that he had been to Buxton with Piercy Brett, who was suffering from rheumatism and hoped the waters would cure it. From there they went to stay for two nights with the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, after which Brett returned to Buxton. Thomas mentions that Brett was "almost as transported" by Chatsworth as Captain St George must have been when he visited Shugborough earlier in the year.⁵

Jemima and her husband, with her aunt, Lady Sophia Grey, left Wrest Park on July 25th 1748. Although Sophia was eight years younger than Jemima, with the death of her mother, Lady Amabel de Grey, in 1726, when Jemima was a young child:

She was brought up by him [her maternal grandfather, Henry Grey] with his two youngest daughters Mary and Anne Sophia. At the Duke's London house at 4 St James Square, Piccadilly she met Catherine Talbot, who became an intellectual companion and lifelong friend.⁶

With overnight stops at Northampton and Coleshill near Birmingham, they arrived at Sugnall Hall, to the west of Stafford, where they stayed with Jemima's father, John Campbell, Lord Glenorchy (1696-1782). From Sugnall they made excursions to Trentham and Hawkstone, where they saw, as Philip Yorke wrote in his travel journal, "the romantic wildness" of Sir Rowland Hill's spectacular landscape.⁷

There was still no fixed date for George and Elizabeth's arrival. Thomas wrote to George on July 30th, from Shugborough:

The Chinese Pictures you say I must answer you about are upon paper, Pheasants & Flowers, and will be found in the dark Closet in the Bedchamber. I beg leave to borrow the General Flag of the Acapulco. It may be deposited here safely to be return'd when call'd for, & I may in the mean time contrive to make an occasional Display of it...

I will expect Brett soon, for I fancy the rains will drive him from Buxton.⁸

This might have been Piercy Brett's first chance to see the Chinese House, for which he is believed to have provided the design.

(Extracts from the letters that follow from Thomas to George, unless otherwise referenced, continue from the British Library collection.)

Thomas again writes to George:

Monday 1st Agt (1748 – but 1st August was a Thursday in 1748)

I got home the third day by painfull marches... I have found all well here and the country in high beauty. I have a good deal of work upon my hands. If you have no scheme for the two marble tables that lye in your passage I could make a good use of 'em & should be glad to beg them. In that case it would be proper to send them to Scheemaker to fetch em away & polish 'em with all expedition. All the Company at Sugnall are well & I shall have the honour of visiting 'em in two or three days. Wm Mills is to come over hither and has recd yrs about Knightley.

While the date of this letter is unclear, it shows that Scheemakers, who carved the relief of Poussin's "Et in Arcadia Ego" was already working for Thomas.

There are several letters mentioning plans for George to buy property from Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester, in Knightley, west of Stafford. William Mills, the lawyer in Leek, was dealing with George's plans to buy his run-down estate. Leicester was raising money to help complete his vast house, Holkham Hall, in Norfolk. The value of Knightley was still being discussed in March 1749. Eventually, George also bought extensive property neighbouring the Holkham estate, which Thomas inherited when he died, in 1762.

This was the beginning of a close relationship between the Anson and Coke families which led to the marriage, on 15th September 1794, of Thomas Anson (1767-1818) and the 15-year-old Anne Margaret Coke (1779-1843), daughter of Thomas Coke of Holkham Hall (see Chapter 19). Thomas Anson II was the son of George Adams (whose mother was Thomas's sister Jennet) and his wife Mary, the daughter of George Venables Vernon. George Adams legally changed his name to Anson on inheriting the Shugborough estate.

Thomas appears to have been involved in several property deals on behalf of George, but there is no evidence that George ever contributed financially to Shugborough.

Another letter from August 1748, which includes puzzling comments about "the Thing" concerning Lord Sandwich and Mr Selwyn, pleads for a time of arrival and refers to the value of Knightley:

Mr. Yorke and the Ladies have put off their coming to Ingestre to Wednesday sennight. We are impatient to hear you have fixed your time... Master Eld says Knightley is well worth 14000£ & not much more...

“Master Eld” was Francis Eld (?1692-1760) of Seighford, a village close to Knightley, who was Master in Chancery, a post he “bought” from the Anson’s uncle, Lord Macclesfield, shortly before Macclesfield was impeached for such corruption (see Chapter 1).⁹

There was still no answer from George, so Thomas wrote again. He was in Stafford with:

Lord Trentham, Offley, and half a dozen more who are now at cards.

Lord Trentham was John Leveson-Gower, 1st Earl Gower (1694-1754), who served as Lord Privy Seal from 1744 until 1754. Around 1730, he enlarged Trentham Hall in Staffordshire, building a hall based on the designs of Buckingham House (Palace). His sons, Grenville and Richard, were also politicians. “Milord Gower” was rumoured to have been the bogus St Germain (see Chapter 15).

Offley is likely to have been John Crewe Offley (1681-1749), another politician and former Deputy Lieutenant of Staffordshire in 1703, who gained the Newcastle seat of Sir John Leveson-Gower that same year but was unseated the following year, owing to bribery on both sides.¹⁰

In the same letter, Thomas refers to the rioters (discussed in Chapter 9):

We have finished the mighty affair at Stafford, brought all the rioters at Stafford Lichd and Burton to submit to the verdict...

There was still no answer about George and Elizabeth’s arrival:

Saturday

We were greatly disappointed that we had no Letter to day to fix yr arrival. Mr. Yorke & his Ladies put off their coming into this neighbourhood til Friday next in hopes of meeting Lady Anson here, & I should not despair of your prevailing wth ‘em to stay the Races. Put James in mind of the Chocolate & of any furniture there may be for the Chinese house, for we propose to take advantage of Lady Anson’s here to finish it.

Elizabeth wrote to Jemima on August 13th (the Yorkes would have been at Sugnall by then) that her journey to Staffordshire would take in Blenheim.¹¹ If Lord and Lady Anson set off according to plan, they would reach Shugborough shortly before Jemima arrived at Ingestre, the home of Catherine Talbot.

Philip Yorke writes, “from Ingestre we went to Mr. Anson’s at Shugborough.” The decorating was still going on when the Yorkes’ arrived, in August 1748. Philip and Jemima give us the first description of what the place was like:

He has added two wings to his house, in one of which is a fine room of 38 by 24 [ft] with a large bow window in the middle, ornamented in stucco, and with large pictures of architecture painted at Bologna.¹²

There is no mention of the ceiling at this stage. Philip Yorke does mention the ceiling in his notes of a later visit in 1763, so perhaps the room was unfinished, although it is hard to imagine how this could have been the case. The paintings must have been designed to be suitable for the space and made to fit the plaster.

Philip continues, describing the grounds:

The ground which surrounds the house is but a few acres, and disposed in the manner of a *ferme ornée*.¹³

This is an important point. There was nothing grand about Thomas Anson’s house as it was in the 1740s. The concept of a “*ferme ornée*” suggests a small farm which was intended to be “Picturesque”. In her letter to Thomas in Paris, Lady Anson mentions visiting Mr Heathcote’s *ferme ornée* (see Chapter 9). This was Normanton Hall in Rutland, the home of Sir Gilbert Heathcote, MP for Shaftesbury from 1761-68, and his first wife Margaret, Elizabeth’s sister, who died childless in 1769.

Shugborough, as it was now, rather than the former Shutburrow Manor, would still have been a working farm, and not just for show. It was a modest gentleman’s villa – not forgetting Thomas’s unmarried sisters, Isabella, Anna and Johanna, who lived with him.

Jemima Grey wrote, on 30th July 1748, to her half-sister, Lady Mary Gregory:

We met Lord and Lady Anson at Mr Anson’s as we proposed. ...it [this place] is very small, very neat and pretty. Imagine a little green spot with the house and a shrubbery by it filling up the middle; the Trent winding along one side of it, and a canal round two others which begins where the river turns off to a large bridge that makes a very good object, and where another stream joins it. In the canal is a Chinese house and a Chinese boat extremely pretty, and a green walk encompasses these with some scattered trees upon it, and your view across the water is bounded everywhere by hills and woods at different distances. The house has some fine rooms lately added to it, and one exceedingly odd and pretty that is the library.¹⁴

This is exactly what the Library was, and still is today, “odd and pretty”, designed for comfortable study and recreation, rather than for ostentatious show.

Jemima, Philip and Sophia departed on 23rd August and made their next stop at Lichfield. After her visit to Shugborough, Elizabeth travelled on to Woburn, home of the Duke of Bedford, where she received a letter from Catherine Talbot which had missed her in Staffordshire.¹⁵

Lady Anson's letters to Thomas and Jemima Grey confirm that she made her second visit to Shugborough the following year, in September 1749.

Sneyd Davies, Rector of Kingsland, Herefordshire, and resident canon at Lichfield in the 1750s, visited Shugborough in 1750. Could this be the date of his poem *To Thomas Anson Esq. of Shuckborough* (quoted in Chapter 1), giving the exotic locations to which Thomas had travelled?¹⁶

Davies wrote his impressions of his visit to Shugborough, in a letter to the Bishop of Lichfield:

Eccleshall, July 30th 1750

Of all that I have yet seen, and I have seen almost every thing, Mr. Anson's place captivates the most. It has the happiest and the most graceful union of Grecian taste and of Oriental magnificence, particularly one room. — I find it thus delineated upon my tablets:

Mr. Anson's — a beautiful house and river; grounds well disposed; Chinese buildings and bridges; a church-like pigeon-house; excellent modern ruins. — He has erected a pile of broken arches, and of imperfect pillars, to counterfeit the remains of antiquity. — The architect could not perform his part satisfactorily without finishing the whole. Then comes Mr. Anson with axes and chissels to demolish as much of it as taste and judgment claimed; and this without affectation, for he is very disciplined, grave, and sensible.

As we meet him frequently upon visits at other houses, I look upon his peep at Kingsland as a lucky circumstance, from the marked notice which he takes of me.¹⁷

A later visitor, John Parnell, wrote:

I must hasten to describe a Place I never heard of before last night and yet in my opinion Deserves to be accounted one of the finest improvements in England. I mean Mr. Anson's.¹⁸

Jemima and Philip Yorke were back at Shugborough in 1763, after the deaths of both George and Lady Anson. Elizabeth died on 1st June 1760 and George two years later, at Moor Park, on 6th June 1762.

SHUGBOROUGH TRANSFORMED

Jemima wrote to her daughter of “Mr. Anson’s palace of fairyland...”.¹⁹ Yet it must have felt very empty.

She says,

...[the] apartment in which I am lodged contains best productions of India; Finest chintz and paper, China, Japan, painted glass etc.;

She was,

writing at a rosewood table and bureau that perfume the room; [the] dressing-glass has a beautiful shepherdess and landscape painted upon it.²⁰

Was she actually staying in the Chinese House?

Even in 1769, when the house had been further extended by Stuart, it was far from grandiose. As Parnell writes in his journal:

...a convenient moderate siz’d Brick mansion to which...he added two wings and raised the center a story and Plaisterd or stuccoed the whole to give it the air of a uniform stone Building.

The house has some Rooms vastly neatly fitted up tho not Large the Library side of the House very Elegant, the cornices are particularly neat a la grec and the ceiling finished in a very pretty taste.²¹

Parnell describes the gardens dotted with antique statues and herms (stone pillars topped with busts, often of the god Hermes or a satyr) and sums up his impression of the house:

...this mixture of fine Peces of antiquity with the garden makes it look like an old Roman Villa as I conceive did not the Rich meads on the other side of the River coverd with cattle bring back the English farm to mind.²²

This is surely exactly the effect that was intended, and, twenty-one years after the first descriptions of the estate, the place still brings “the English farm to mind.” This ideal pastoral landscape was also a practical, working one.

The next stages in the transformation of the house and the estate – the water features and first monuments – would have been a complicated project. While the vision would have been Thomas Anson’s, and the leading figure, presumably, Thomas Wright, there would have been a “committee of taste”, as Laura Mayer calls it,²³ whereby a number of different artists and craftsmen would have worked together. This sometimes controversial term is also used in an article on ‘Strawberry Hill Gothick’.²⁴

The need for the architect and stuccatoro, Francesco Vassalli, to work together is most obvious in the Drawing Room and Library, where the architecture and interior design was most likely planned as a whole, adhering to Thomas Anson's individual requirements and decorated to his specifications.

Philip Yorke mentioned in his journal, in 1763, that Vassalli lived "in the neighbourhood" and worked in many West Midlands houses, including Hagley Hall, for Lord Lyttelton.²⁵ Vassalli later worked with James Stuart.

There is no doubt that the overall scheme was the vision of Thomas Anson. It is very individual and has unique features of personal significance. Where else in an English country house can one find plaster images of Isis and Serapis, which reflect Thomas's journey to Egypt and his membership of the Egyptian Society?

It has to be assumed that the Drawing Room and Library were complete when the Yorke's visited in 1748. It is hard to imagine how the Library could possibly have appealed to Jemima as "odd and pretty" without its intricately decorated ceiling; the two rooms reflecting Thomas's eclectic taste and interests. In the Library, Athene is surrounded by roundels of Greek philosophers and poets – Socrates, Euclid, Homer and Sapho.

The ceiling of the Drawing Room, depicting Fame and heroes, is decorated with a plaster copy of Guido Reni's Apollo and The Hours from his Baroque fresco, *Aurora*. Of the four plaster roundels, two are representations of Isis (with her sistrum, which was the symbol of the Egyptian Society) and Serapis, with a corn measure on his head, alluding to Thomas's Egyptian trip. The iconography belongs to the Greco-Roman period rather than ancient Egyptian, with its mythology of Isis and Osiris. The third roundel shows a Maenad, one of the wild followers of Dionysus, with vines in her hair. In some versions of the myth, the Maenads were also the destroyers of Orpheus. The fourth roundel, above the window, shows Confucius, bringing into the house the Chinese theme – perhaps in honour of George Anson's travels, or it is possible that Thomas took an interest in the Chinese philosopher himself.

There was a serious interest in the thought of Confucius at the time. The 1842 Shugborough Sale catalogue shows that Thomas Anson's Library contained the 1687 Latin edition of his classic works.²⁶ The frontispiece of *Sinarum Philosophus* is the source of the image of Confucius,²⁷ which is depicted in the roundel in the ceiling of the Drawing Room.

How long had the work taken? When did it begin?

In 1745, Shugborough had been threatened by the Jacobite Rebellion, as Thomas's letters to George reveal. There is no trace of Thomas's life in 1746. Was this a time of peace at home when Thomas, now about 50 years old, might have begun to think of retiring to his

country estate? Perhaps, during this unknown period, he was in Italy again, looking for art for his extended house. Maybe the designs for the *capricci* paintings²⁸ which cover the walls of the Drawing Room were ordered on an unrecorded visit to Italy. Paintings are, however, less likely as the new rooms had no wall-space for the hanging of pictures. Thomas may already have been buying antique sculpture.

A very significant purchase Thomas certainly made around this time was the library of Richard Banner of Little Aston Hall.²⁹ Remarkably, considering how much of Thomas's collection was sold in the Shugborough Sale of 1842, 170 books survive that came from Banner, including possibly the Holy Bible, 1688 edition, with pasted genealogical notes of the Anson family (see Chapter 1). The purchase of this collection either demanded a new Library to house more books, or when Thomas was planning and building his extensions on the house, between 1745 and 1756, his purchase of Banner's books was intended to fill the shelves of his proposed new Library.

This purchase, the exact date of which is unknown, strongly suggests that the plan to extend the old house as the retirement villa of a scholarly gentleman, pre-dated the marriage of George Anson and Lady Elizabeth Yorke, in 1748. Parnell was, surely, seeing exactly what Thomas wanted to be seen, when he described the house as like an "old Roman Villa". The famous classical models for such a retreat were Pliny's seaside villa at Laurentum and Cicero's at Tusculum.

The Library, a comfortable place for serious study and conversation, beneath an elaborately decorated mythological ceiling that suggests a devotion to classical, particularly Greek literature, art and ideas, was complete, it seems, in 1748. This predates by several years the beginning of the Greek Revival in the Arts, inspired by James "Athenian" Stuart's return from his trip to Greece, and in which Shugborough was to play a key role.

The Drawing Room (set out as a Dining Room for many years under Shugborough's management by Staffordshire County Council) would have been a space for entertaining, though this small villa would never have been suitable for more than a few resident guests at any one time. The iconography, undoubtedly of curiosity to visitors, would have been a conversation point, suggesting sacred mysteries, oriental philosophies and a fascination with the ancient world, as depicted in the *capricci* paintings. As mentioned, the room cannot have been designed to display actual pictures; there is no available wall space, but it could well have displayed statues and sculpture and would have been an ideal place for playing and listening to music.

The house was encrusted with further grandiose extensions after Thomas's death, during the time of his great-nephew, Thomas, 1st Viscount Anson, and his wife, Anne Margaret Coke. Buried within are the principal rooms of Thomas Anson's villa; an artistic unity with his unique and intriguing iconographic design scheme can still be discerned by visitors today.

Thomas left very few traces of his ideas and opinions in writing. The original conception of his house, detached from its later accretions, remains as his deeply personal statement.

The only other building project mentioned in 1748 is the Chinese House, when work was still in progress. There is no mention of the elaborate lakes and water features. The entire landscape scheme, which would have required detailed surveying for the design and creation of the first group of follies, is almost certainly Thomas Wright's, but Wright may not have been at Shugborough in person after 1748. As with Tollymore and Dundalk in Ireland, he might have left a portfolio of plans and designs which were then executed over several years, possibly by others.

THE CHINESE ISLAND

The Chinese House is still the centrepiece of Shugborough's most photographed view, despite the course of the river having changed and the original bridges replaced by 19th-century iron. The simplicity and lack of unnecessary detail gives it a pure and timeless quality. This is largely due to the original drawings having been made in China by Captain Piercy Brett, whose contribution to the lives of both Thomas and George Anson is often underestimated, before his quiet retirement to Beckenham, in Kent. It has an authenticity of style quite unlike any other 18th-century pastiches of Chinese architecture.

Thomas Pennant is the only source for Piercy Brett's involvement:

The Chinese house, a little farther on, is a true pattern of the architecture of that nation, taken in the country by the skilful pencil of Sir Percy Brett: not a mongrel invention of British carpenters.³⁰

Brett's drawings and detailed charts became the basis of the illustrations in the best-selling account of the epic *Voyage*, first published in 1748.³¹

The Chinese House would have reminded Lady Anson of the island of Tinian, in the South Pacific, which Lord Anson visited on his circumnavigation. Tinian was uninhabited at the time, and Anson's *Voyage* describes it as a green and lush place, stocked with fruit and vegetables, and a surprisingly large number of small cattle which may have been left by Spanish settlers.

The cattle of Tinian certainly had a place in Lady Anson's mind when she wrote to Thomas, on December 29th 1749:

Next to my Enquiries after My Friends at Shugborough, I desire to ask after Their Friends the Cows, whose Sickness I hope does not damp the mirth of Christmas amusements. – I hope they are well, and likely to remain so, I desire to recommend

a Companion to them, who is, I am told, and indeed am much inclined to believe, from the acquaintance I have had with her Family, very worthy of that honor, both as to Beauty & Merit. She is about six months old and according to the description I have had of her will very well deserve to be called Tinian, being White, with coloured Nose & Ears... So much for Moggy who waits your command.³²

With any garden of the 18th century, it is important not to perceive the buildings as separate from the overall design. The garden is a harmonised mix of natural features, careful planting and structures, which complement *The Reign of Nature*, as David Jacques subtitles his excellent book on Georgian Gardens.³³

At Shugborough there must have been very expert gardeners. Thomas's interest in botany is reflected in the brief notes of his 1740-41 voyage (see Chapter 8). He had the opportunity to bring back plants himself – a cheaper and more practical alternative to the endless artefacts or Egyptian mummies that his Divan Club acquaintances returned with from their travels.

In former years there was a grand Green House at Shugborough – possibly a completely vanished Thomas Wright predecessor. Thomas Anson sent pineapples to London for Lady Anson, and Joseph Banks, the leading botanist of the late 18th century, had seen an unusual means of growing peaches on his travels in 1767 (described in Chapter 19).³⁴

The importance of botany, as well as the seriousness of Thomas Anson's interest in Asia, is demonstrated by the extensive catalogue when the library at Shugborough was sold, in 1842.³⁵ Books on Chinese, Japanese and Oriental culture, particularly botany, included:

Bibliotheque Orientale, M d'Herbelot, 1697

Antiquitates Asiaticae, Chisull, 1727

Memoirs and Observations made in a late Journey through the Empire of China.

Père Louis Le Compte, London: Tooke, 1697 (translated from the Paris edition).

Le Compte was a Jesuit missionary. His volume includes:

...memoirs and observations, topographical, physical, mathematical, mechanical, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical; made in a late journey through the empire of China and published in several letters, particularly upon the Chinese pottery and varnishing, the silk and other manufactures, the pearl fishing, the history of plants and animals... the state of Christianity, with many other curious and useful remarks.³⁶

Engelbert Kaempfer was the first person to mention hostas in Western scientific literature. His *Amoenitates Exoticae* includes two varieties: Joksan, vulgo Giboosi and Giboosi altera.³⁷

The Chinese Island and the rest of the garden would have featured whatever viable Oriental plants were available. It was not simply an exotic scene but a living celebration of the world's variety of species in colour and form. The eclectic nature of Shugborough, and other gardens designed by Wright, might also have had a philosophical purpose in demonstrating the universal nature of Truth and Wisdom.

At the same time as Thomas Anson and Thomas Wright were creating the Shugborough landscape, Frederick, Prince of Wales, was developing his botanical garden at Kew. He built a "House of Confucius" in 1749, a year or so after the Shugborough Chinese House. The Kew structure, designed by Joseph Goupy, was far more ornate and less authentic with decoration that featured images of Confucius, as depicted in the Drawing Room at Shugborough.

There was also a Chinese House on an island at Wroxton, Oxfordshire, the seat of Frederick, Lord North (1732-1792), who became the British Prime Minister from 1770 to 1782. This may have dated from the end of the 1740s and might have been built by Sanderson Miller, who, as mentioned in the previous chapter, "advised" on the construction of some of the buildings at Shugborough.³⁸ From the illustration in David Jacques' *Georgian Gardens*,³⁹ this could have been a copy of the Shugborough Pavilion.

When John Parnell, writing in 1769, described part of the planting around the Chinese House at Shugborough, he used the terms Chinese and Indian interchangeably, as "Indian" could refer to anything from any part of the exotic East:

I must observe that around the Chinese temple there are abundance of fine Larch which are here Justly placed as being Indian trees ... from the Chinese House the walk passes by Riverside with an Edge of flowering shrubs and exotic trees to the Left screening the garden wall.⁴⁰

Much later, in about 1780, 'The Chinese House' was painted by Moses Griffith as seen from the river, with the house reflected in the water.⁴¹

The walled garden survived near the house until the farm was built at the end of the 18th century. The Doric Temple was originally at its entrance.

THE GOTHIC PIGEON-HOUSE

There was a Gothic Pigeon House behind the Chinese House. It is one of the vanished buildings that may have been damaged by the flood of 1795 or removed when the river was redirected at the end of the 18th century.

The Gothic and the Chinese often sit side by side in Rococo gardens. Thomas Wright's

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Irish designs included a mixture of Gothic features and Chinese; sometimes the two styles merge into a single blend, with pointed arches and Chinese ornament. A most impressive example of this unique combination of Rococo and Gothic is the light and airy interior of Shobdon Church, Herefordshire, built in the 1750s.

The church-like Pigeon House, at the start at least, failed in its purpose, which was primarily to provide a source of food.

Lady Anson wrote to Thomas on November 1st 1749:

Sorry was I to hear so indifferent account of the Pigeons, whose having so little Taste would almost make one suspect them to be of the same Race with those Birds upon the Tuscan Altar you and I contemplated so long, of which it is doubtful whether they are Doves or Crows ... they had so little sense of the many Beauties of their new Palace that you cannot wonder if Lady Grey and I durst not trust ourselves to the conduct of such simple animals...⁴²

THE BOATHOUSE

The Chinese House (and possibly the Pigeon House) sat on a small island linked to the main garden by a Chinese bridge. A second bridge led to further woodland and a boat-house. This would have had a matching boat for rowing, or sailing, along the river and later the canal.

Jemima Grey, in her letter of 30th July 1748 to her half-sister Mary Gregory, mentions a "Chinese Boat".⁴³ The boat would have been an essential part of the garden concept, and the view from a gently moving craft would have been part of the intended effect.

Lady Anson enjoyed a "navigation" on the river on her last visit to Shugborough in 1759. She wrote to Lord Anson, indicating that she was certainly visiting alone that year:

We had the finest navigation these two days upon the River that is possible. Every new point one sees this place from it appears in a new light of beauty; and I should be very sorry to leave...⁴⁴

The placing of some of the features may have been determined by where they would make the most of the view from the river. This is most likely the case with the last of the structures to be built, some twenty years later – the Lanthorn of Demosthenes – positioned on a bank above the River Sow (see Chapter 16).

There is a painting, signed by Moses Griffith, titled 'The East Front of Shugborough and the Essex Bridge', dated by the National Trust Collections catalogue as 1780. It shows a

small rowing boat visible in the foreground.⁴⁵ Another of Griffith's watercolours, 'The East Front of Shugborough from the River Sow', is undated.⁴⁶

In about 1769, "Moses Griffith was apprenticed to the antique dealer Pennant."⁴⁷ Griffith (1749-1819) studied drawing and engraving and he would often accompany Thomas Pennant, a fellow Welshman, on his tours:

He produced hundreds of delicate watercolours and vignettes for the beautiful extra-illustrated editions of the Welsh and Scottish tours produced by Pennant and his family at Downing; he also did commissions for similar work for Pennant's friends...⁴⁸

THE RUINS

The Ruins were in place by 1750, when Sneyd Davies writes:

He has erected a pile of broken arches, and of imperfect pillars, to counterfeit the remains of antiquity.⁴⁹

Davies saw the ruins as an important part of Thomas's landscape, a reminder of the ancient, and dangerous, places he had visited on his travels, including, according to his poem in Thomas's honour, Palmyra and Balbek (see Chapter 1).

The ruined colonnade that is visible in Nicholas Dall's paintings might have been inspired by the spectacular colonnades of Palmyra, though the most famous drawing of that ancient structure, by Robert Wood, was made on Dawkins' and Wood's expedition of 1750-51.⁵⁰ By this time the Shugborough ruin was already in place, and, according to Sneyd Davies, was a memorial of Thomas's visit to Palmyra ten years earlier.

The artificial stone Druid, only visible in the 1775 paintings by Nicholas Dall, does not appear to be there in his pictures from Thomas's lifetime.

In about 1780, Griffith painted several watercolours of the monuments and the grounds, including 'The West front of Shugborough' with the River Sow and the Ruin in the foreground.⁵¹

THE CAT'S MONUMENT

When Lady Anson wrote to Thomas from Bath, on 16th August 1749, to suggest a quarry from where stone could be obtained to create the Cat's Monument, the idea had obviously already been discussed. The eccentric nature of this structure could be attributed to

Wright, in which case it is likely that he had already supplied a drawing.

Elizabeth calls it “Kouli-Kan’s Monument”.⁵² The most likely source of the name, as Lady Anson usually spells it, is the 18th-century Thamas Kouli-Kan (Khan), the Nadir Shah (Emperor of Persia) and conqueror of India, who died in 1747. It seems likely that the eccentric-looking stone cat resembled one of Thomas’s Persian cats, named after the Emperor (see Chapter 5). Was this before or after the Emperor had burned one of the Shariamans’ family at the stake? Descendants of Kouli-Khan were still in the area nearly twenty years later. This was, presumably, long after the demise of Thomas’s cat, Kouli-Kan, who it seems was the ancestor of a family of cats at Shugborough.

The botanist Joseph Banks visited Shugborough in 1767. He wrote in his travel journal (which is held in the National Library of Wales):

Here I saw also two animals which were new to me, the first was the Persian Cat which differs from the common cat in nothing but the extreme length of her hair which is long and the thickness of her tail which is twice as thick as a common [cat]. Mr Anson tells me he had a Breed of these for many years but that only one is now left all the rest he ownd dyed of a distemper which affected the Cats in this Countrey, especially at Stafford where almost all dyed he says, also that they are of various colours like our cats but the one I saw was quite white.⁵³

Among other exotic creatures that Banks saw roaming about at Shugborough were the goats known as “muffoli”, which had recently arrived from Corsica. According to James Boswell:

...there are now two of them at Shugborough in Staffordshire, the seat of Mr. Anson, who has a rich assemblage of what is curious in nature, as well as of what is elegant in art.⁵⁴

Boswell may have heard about the muffoli from Banks, as he does not seem to have met Anson before 1772 (see Chapters 16 and 18). In a passage that was deleted but became a footnote, he wrote that Anson kept one muffoli:

...as a Pet and was very fond of, for it was very diverting.⁵⁵

It was John Dick, who acted as Thomas’s agent for supplying his purchases of classical sculpture from Italy, who had sent the goats, in 1760, to Anson himself. On 30th January 1767, he wrote from Leghorn (Livorno):

Mr Biddell has also taken charge of two tame live animals which I have taken the liberty to send to you, on a presumption that they may be somewhat curious in England, they were sent me by a very Respectable Person in Corsica and are called

“Miufri. The one is a Male and the other a Female, I have never heard of them, but in that Island, and are extremely wild, these having been taken young, are tamed. I wish you may think them worth your acceptance.⁵⁶

There were other curious creatures. In 1769, John Parnell describes:

...a Bird from the India’s calld a crown Bird which makes a Beautiful Appearance in shape like a Heron with a tuft of feathers on the Head like spun (?) glass so fine very tall and oddly shaped – has lived there ten years.⁵⁷

In 1764, James Stuart noted in a letter to Thomas:

Mr. Goodall has got the biscuits for the Crown bird.⁵⁸

Joseph Banks saw this bird in 1767:

From thence we went into the Kitchen garden where we saw the Pavonina or Crown Bird who had lived here for some time upon sea Biscuit and what he could pick up which the Gardener said was a good deal especially when dung was brought into the garden.⁵⁹

Goats appear on the four corners of the pedestal of the Cat’s Monument, yet if the monument was built soon after Lady Anson wrote about the possible source of stone, these cannot be the “muffoli” that James Boswell mentions in his *Account of Corsica*.⁶⁰ They are more likely to be associated with the goats belonging to the Bagots of Blithfield Hall. (William Bagot’s poem that refers to the “shepherdesses tomb” is mentioned in the next chapter.)

If the Cat’s Monument dates from 1749 or 1750, it was certainly altered, or added to, at a later date. The artificial stone panel on the front of the monument appears to be a design by James “Athenian” Stuart. It seems to be identical to panels he made for the Marble Hall at Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire, one of his very earliest projects in 1755. It could have been, in effect, a spare, which was later added to the Cat’s Monument a few years after it was originally built, by which time the muffoli may well have been there. This may provide evidence that Stuart’s connection with Shugborough began as early as 1755.

THE PAGODA AND PALLADIAN BRIDGE

In a letter to her husband George, Lady Anson writes:

Mr. Anson says the skeleton of his pagoda is up.⁶¹

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This was the long vanished wooden Pagoda, which was under construction in November 1752. It was the first Pagoda in England, predating that at Kew by ten years.

When the architect Sanderson Miller mentions in his diary that he “advised” at Shugborough in 1752,⁶² this may well have been advice on the practical realisation of a Wrightian sketch for the Pagoda.

The so-called Palladian Bridge and cascades were part of an elaborate water scheme that has completely vanished. In 1769 Parnell elaborates:

...[a] fine Peice of water falling from a still finer and really noble Peice of water above it at one End is a Pagoda very Pretty at the other a Palladian Bridge from the arch of which falls the water.⁶³

On 3rd October 1772, Thomas Sayers wrote a lengthy bill for work on the estate which included “repairs to the pagoda”.⁶⁴

The Pagoda survived to be featured in the landscape paintings by Nicholas Dall. An undated watercolour of the ‘Palladian Bridge and Cascade’, which was probably painted by Griffith in about 1780, shows that it was not, in fact, a bridge, but a small colonnade placed on the lake above the cascade.⁶⁵

Much later, the catastrophic flood in 1795 caused devastating damage to the landscape and washed away the large Chinese pagoda. As a result, the lake stretching from the Tower of the Winds was drained and a new cut for the River Sow was dug by hand further away from the house and gardens.

The original cut of the Sow (now known as the ornamental arm) became a slow-moving canal, which still floods but with less ferocity than the main river.⁶⁶

THE OBELISK

Also built around this time was a wooden Obelisk on the hill, possibly not far from the junction of the farm drive and the Lichfield Road. This blew down in the 19th century. It is visible in Dall’s pictures of the landscape but impossible to date.

John Parnell, in his journal, mentions that the Obelisk gave the impression that Anson’s property was more extensive than it actually was, as it stood beyond the boundary of the estate.⁶⁷ There may also have been other features that have been lost.

It is possible that the caves at Haywood Cliffs, probably produced by quarrying, were originally part of the landscape. They may have once been used as a hermitage and have,

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more recently, served this role as the home for a modern-day hermit as part of a National Heritage art project.

There is a curious horned face carved in the sandstone that resembles those on the Shepherd's Monument. This brings us back to the most puzzling of all the features and raises several questions.

When was it built? Who designed it? What does it mean?

NOTES: Chapter 11

- ¹ British Library, *Letters from Thomas Anson to Admiral George Anson, 1743-1749*. MSS Add. 15955, October 12th 1747.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, *Letters from Elizabeth Anson to Jemima Grey*. L30/9/3/5
- ⁴ British Library. Op. cit. July 18th 1748.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ James Collett-White (Introduction), *The Social, Political and Cultural History of Rich and Powerful Women*, 'Part 1: The Correspondence of Jemima, Marchioness Grey (1722-97) and her Circle'. Digital publication of Bedfordshire Archives & Records Office. http://www.ampltd.co.uk/digital_guides/aristicratic_women_part_1/Introduction-by-James-Collett-White.aspx
- ⁷ Joyce Godber, *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park*. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society. Vol. XLVII, 1968.
- ⁸ British Library. Op. cit.
- ⁹ Elde, Francis (?1692-1760), of Seighford, nr. Stafford. *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1715-1754 (2 Vols.)*. Ed. R. Sedgwick, Boydell & Brewer, The Stationary Office, 1970. <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/elde-francis-1692-1760>
- ¹⁰ Offley, John Crewe (1681-1749), of Madeley, Staffs, and Crewe Hall, Cheshire. *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1690-1715 (5 Vols.)*. Eds. D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley, Cambridge University Press, 2002. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/offley-john-crewe-1681-1749>
- ¹¹ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service. A typed reference list of *Letters from Elizabeth Anson to Jemima Grey* covering L30/9/3/1-17 was supplied to the present author.
- ¹² Joyce Godber. Op. cit.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, *Transcripts/Extracts of Correspondence of Jemima Yorke, (Marchioness Grey) sent to Lady Mary Gregory 1748-1757, Vol. 2*. L30/9a/2
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Staffordshire Record Office. *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/2/5
- ¹⁷ Ibid. Sneyd Davies's letter is also quoted in John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century, consisting of Authentic Memoirs and Original Letters of Eminent Persons; and intended as a sequel to The Literary Anecdotes, Vol. I*. Printed by Nichols, Son & Bentley, London, 1817, p.639. It is followed by the poem *To Lord Anson* pp.640-41. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁸ *John Parnell's Journal, 1769* (extracts, anonymous transcription). William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, CB/Shugborough/8. Original at London School of Economics, LSE Library Misc. 38.
- ¹⁹ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, *Correspondence from Jemima, Marchioness Grey (Jemima Yorke, née Campbell), mother of Amabel, 1761-1794*. L30/11/122/14
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ *John Parnell's Journal*. Op. cit.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Laura Mayer is the author of *Capability Brown and the English Landscape Garden*. Shire Publications, 2011.

- ²⁴ Lenora and Miss Jessel, 'Strawberry Hill Gothick: the art of gloomth and the beauty of horror', 28 Sep 2016. <https://hauntedpalaceblog.wordpress.com/tag/committee-of-taste/>
- ²⁵ Joyce Godber. Op. cit.
- ²⁶ See *A Catalogue of the Splendid Property at Shugborough Hall, Stafford to be Sold at Auction on the Premises on Monday the 1st Day of August 1842*. William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council. Sc B/1/1
- ²⁷ Confucius, *Sinarum Philosophus*, 1687. See T Meynard, *Confusius Sinarum Philosophus (1687): The First Translation of the Confucian Classics*. Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu, 2011.
- ²⁸ The term 'capriccio' is generally interpreted to reflect a dreamlike portrayal or juxtaposition of the subject of a work of art. "Capriccio often takes existing structures and places them into re-imagined settings and characteristics. The paintings can be anything to re-imagining a building in the future as ruins, or placing a structure in a completely different setting than which it exists in reality." The etymology the present author feels rather fitting for Thomas Anson is "derived from the Italian word *capretto* which roughly translates to the unpredictable movement and behavior from a young goat. This suggests that the art style is unpredictable and as open as the imagination can make it." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capriccio_\(art\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capriccio_(art))
- ²⁹ *John Parnell's Journal*. Op. cit.
- ³⁰ Thomas Pennant, *The Journey from Chester to London*. Printed for Luke White, Dublin, 1783. Available on Google Books.
- ³¹ George Anson, *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1740-44*. Third edition. Printed by John & Paul Knapton, London, 1748. Available on Google Books.
- ³² Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/3
- ³³ David Jacques, *Georgian Gardens: The Reign of Nature*. B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1983.
- ³⁴ *Joseph Banks' Travel Journal, 1767*, (extracts). National Library of Wales.
- ³⁵ From a copy of the 1842 Shugborough Sale Catalogue. Op. cit.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitates Exoticae*. Original in German, 1712. Kaempfer's drawings of these species are now in the Sloane Collection of the British Museum.
- ³⁸ Susan Weber Soros (Ed.), *James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity*. Yale University Press, 2006, p.324.
- ³⁹ David Jacques. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁰ *John Parnell's Journal*. Op. cit.
- ⁴¹ National Trust Collections, Shugborough.
<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1270629>
- ⁴² Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/1/17B
- ⁴³ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service. *Transcripts/Extracts of Correspondence of Jemima Yorke, (Marchioness Grey) sent to Lady Mary Gregory*. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁴ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/2/28
- ⁴⁵ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. Op. cit. object/1270622
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.* object/1270624
- ⁴⁷ Griffith, Moses or Moïse: *Benezit Dictionary of British Graphic Artists and Illustrators, Vol. 1*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, p.493.

- ⁴⁸ 'Life and work of Moses Griffith', *Curious Travellers*. <http://curioustravellers.ac.uk/en/life-and-work-of-moses-griffith/> A "four-year AHRC-funded research project, launched in September 2014 and jointly run by the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies (CAWCS) and the University of Glasgow, [explores] Romantic-period accounts of journeys into Wales and Scotland."
- ⁴⁹ George Hardinge. Op. cit.
- ⁵⁰ Robert Wood (1716-71), *The Ruins of Palmyra, 1753*. See Royal Collection Trust <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1071056/the-ruins-of-palmyra>
- ⁵¹ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. Op. cit. object/1270626
- ⁵² Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/310A
- ⁵³ *Joseph Banks' Travel Journal*. Op. cit.
- ⁵⁴ James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, The Journal of a Tour to that Island; and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*. Printed for Edward & Charles Dilly, London, 1768. Available on Google Books.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid.
- ⁵⁶ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(A)/2
- ⁵⁷ *John Parnell's Journal*. Op. cit.
- ⁵⁸ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/6/13
- ⁵⁹ *Joseph Banks' Travel Journal*. Op. cit.
- ⁶⁰ James Boswell. Op. cit.
- ⁶¹ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/1/43
- ⁶² Susan Weber Soros (Ed.). Op. cit.
- ⁶³ *John Parnell's Journal*. Op. cit.
- ⁶⁴ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/6/29
- ⁶⁵ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. Op. cit. object/1270625
- ⁶⁶ Cited in Shugborough: A Complete Working Historic Estate. www.shugborough.org.uk
<https://shugborough.wordpress.com/2016/01/12/flooding/>
- ⁶⁷ *John Parnell's Journal*. Op. cit.

Chapter 12

The Shepherd's Monument

The Shepherd's Monument has been the source of confusion and mystification for over two hundred and fifty years. The complex mysteries of the monument, a rustic arch framing a marble relief based on Poussin's painting "Et In Arcadia Ego", lie in the puzzle of its dating, the meaning of its undeciphered inscription, and in the interpretation of the monument as a whole.

David Watkin, in his *Athenian Stuart*, calls it "one of the most romantic of English garden buildings" that unites in one place the Romantic and Classical aspects of 18th century art.¹

Thomas Pennant gives a description that suggests the monument had a particular significance for Thomas Anson:

The beautiful monument in the lower end of the garden, does honour to the present age. It was the work of Mr. Schemecher, under the direction of the late Mr. Anson. The scene is laid in Arcadia. Two lovers, expressed in elegant pastoral figures, appear attentive to an ancient shepherd, who reads to them an inscription on a tomb,

ET IN ARCADIA EGO!

The moral resulting from this seems to be, that there are no situations in life so delicious, but which death must at length snatch us from. It was placed here by the amiable owner, as a memento of the certainty of that event. Perhaps, also, as a secret memorial of some loss of a tender nature in his early days; for he was wont often to hang over it in affectionate and firm meditation.²

Sir Thomas and Arthur Clifford, in their *A Topographical and Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall*, also quote Pennant's description and point out that he has "overlooked" the mysterious inscription:

The meaning of these letters Mr. Anson would never explain and they still remain an enigma to posterity.³

The monument has been dated by various researchers to any number of different years between 1748 and 1767. The most frequently quoted explanation of the curious nature of

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the structure is that it is a work by Thomas Wright from 1748-50, with additions by James Stuart in about 1763.

The monument can be considered as having three distinct parts, each of which may have had a separate designer whose work could date from different years. There is a rustic arch in stone, carved to look wild and natural; within this arch is a white marble frame supporting a bas-relief based on Poussin's painting. This depicts three shepherds by a tomb, one standing and two kneeling, who are both pointing out the tomb's inscription to a female figure standing calmly to one side.

The inscription reads:

Et in Arcadia Ego

which is usually interpreted as:

"I (death) am also in Arcadia."

This is generally accepted to mean that even in an idyllic pastoral world, death cannot be escaped.

Beneath the relief is a plaque with a cryptic inscription:

O.U.O.S.V.A.V.V

D.

M.

In front of this relief as if to give it further protection, is an outer arch of two rustic columns and what is described as a "Doric entablature" or "aedicule" – the portico of a shrine. There is no doubt, as Thomas Pennant states, that the relief is by Scheemakers, a leading Flemish sculptor of the time, who was working in Britain from as early as 1740.

As mentioned in Chapter 10, an undated drawing in the British Museum by James "Athenian" Stuart exactly matches the rustic columns of the Shepherd's Monument.⁴ This design is illustrated in Dora Wieberson's *Sources of Greek Revival Architecture*,⁵ and by David Watkin in his *Athenian Stuart*.⁶ It may have been a sketch of a ruin seen on Stuart's trip to Greece, or it could have been designed specifically for this monument. It does, nevertheless, provide evidence that at least this part of the monument is the work of Stuart.

A simple alcove, of typical Wrightian design, may have been built first, and the outer columns and pediment added later by Stuart. A closer examination of the structure suggests that the inner alcove-like part could have existed as a free-standing building without the section that is assumed to be by Stuart.

There is also a possibility that Wright's design was for a plain alcove, with a seat, and the idea of the Poussin relief came later. That might, however, be an unnecessary over-complication. The monument, as a focus for contemplation and mystery, seems to be an integral part of the landscape scheme, as was possibly its intended purpose.

An important piece of evidence cited by Eileen Harris, in her identification of Thomas Wright as the architect of the first phase of developments at Shugborough, is based on the similarity of the Shepherd's Monument to one of Wright's own drawings.⁷ In Wright's published book of designs for arbours, the first of an intended series of three volumes of *Universal Architecture* in 1755, one of his drawings resembles the shape of the rough stone arch in which the relief is placed.⁸

There is also a drawing of an arbour, as part of a general plan for a garden at Badminton House from 1750, which is even more similar to the inner rustic arch of the Shepherd's Monument. Both these designs are for wooden structures, not "rustic" stone, so the actual resemblance is in form rather than material.

A close look at Wright's 1755 print does show, however, what appears to be a "frame" rather similar in shape to that which supports the Scheemakers' relief. This might uphold the idea that the relief was originally fixed into a simple Wrightian alcove, which later had the outer columns and roof added to give better protection to the precious marble. It may, of course, simply have been to make the monument more elaborate, which could also be said of the figures around the top of the roof and the images on the front of the structure.

There is no documentary evidence of the monument's origin, and, oddly, it does not appear in any of the many drawings and paintings that exist from Thomas Anson's lifetime. Yet the monument is the most written about of all the Shugborough features, even in 18th-century sources.

As with many other historical puzzles, the facts are complicated by errors made by an earlier writer, which then became repeated over and over again by later researchers who relied on the initial researcher's work, or tried to make the facts fit their own preconceived theories.

The greatest source of confusion stems from an article in *Country Life* magazine in 1954 by Christopher Hussey (1899-1970), its architectural editor in the 1920s who wrote a series of articles on English country houses.⁹ He states that the poet Anna Seward wrote a poem inspired by the Shepherd's Monument, which includes the verse:

Whose verdant top the spiry cypress crowns,
And the dim ilex spreads her dusky arms
To shade th'ARCADIAN Shepherdesses tomb:
Of PARIAN stone the pile: of modern hands

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The work, but emulous of ancient praise.
Let not the Muse inquisitive presume
With rash interpretation to disclose
The mystic ciphers that conceal her name.

Hussey confused a short poem by Anna Seward, which was enclosed with a letter from Lady Anson to Thomas,¹⁰ with a quite unrelated anonymous poem about Shugborough (see Chapter 1). The lengthy poem which includes this verse and describes the estate in detail, with many allusions to the ancient past, is given in full in the Appendix.

This poem is clearly dated 1767, seven years after Lady Anson's death. The style in no way resembles any of Seward's verses, being in Miltonic blank verse rather than rhyming couplets. As the Seward poem must have been included in Lady Anson's letter at the outset, and the long poem is separately bound and clearly dated, it is very hard to see how Hussey made this serious error.

One possible cause of the confusion is that there are two copies of the letter by Lady Anson which she sent to Thomas with the Anna Seward poem.¹¹ One of these, a rough draft, gives the date as September 20th. The neat copy adds "Monday", which makes it possible to determine the year.

Establishing the date of the construction of the Shepherd's Monument turns out to be, as Holmes would say, "a three-pipe problem". There are more 18th-century references to this monument than to any other feature of the Shugborough landscape, but with no certain record of its construction it is very hard to arrive at a definitive answer to its dating or origin – let alone its meaning.

If Eileen Harris is correct and there are elements of Thomas Wright in the building, then the design would almost certainly date from 1747-48, assuming the planning of the landscape and its structures was conceived in its entirety. This would have had to happen before Wright moved on to his new life with Norborne Berkeley at Stoke Gifford, by 1750.

It should be said that while the concept and design might date from 1747-48 there is good reason to suggest that the Shepherd's Monument was not physically in place in 1748.

When Philip Yorke, Lady Anson's brother and husband of Jemima, Marchioness Grey, visited Shugborough in August 1763, he wrote to his father, Lord Hardwicke, describing:

...many embellishments since I saw it in 1748... I shd not omit to mention the Bas Relief from Poussin's Arcadian Picture, the most elegant Piece of modern sculpture I ever beheld & does great honour to Scheemaker's chisel...¹²

This same letter mentions the foundations of the Greenhouse or Orangery, proving that this large but lost building was being rebuilt in 1763, and no earlier. Philip Yorke clearly states that he was seeing the monument, or at least the relief, for the first time, and that this was one of the “embellishments” made since he and Jemima visited in August 1748.

In 1763, Philip Yorke probably saw the monument as it appears today, with additions by Stuart, who had certainly been working at Shugborough for several years by then. If it had not been there when Philip and Jemima visited in 1748, given that there seems to be a fifteen-year gap before their next recorded visit, then when did it appear?

The poet William Shenstone (1714-1763), famous for his garden “The Leasowes” at Halesowen, described the monument in 1759. The Ansons are known to have been regular visitors to The Leasowes in Shropshire, and to Lord Lyttelton’s neighbouring Hagley Hall in Worcestershire. Hagley is the estate which has the closest links to Shugborough, through shared connections with artists and craftsmen, and the friendship of George Lyttelton and Thomas Anson.

Shenstone’s letter to Mr Graves, dated October 3rd 1759, refers particularly to inscriptions and mottos:

Now you speak of our Arcadias, pray, did you ever see a print or drawing of Poussin’s Arcadia? The idea of it is so very pleasing to me, that I had no peace till I had used the inscription on one side of Miss Dolman’s urn, “Et in Arcadia Ego.” Mr. Anson has the two shepherds with the monument and inscription in alto relievo at Shugborough.

Mr. Dodsley will borrow me a drawing of it from Mr. Spence. See it described, vol. I. page 53. of the Abbe du Bos, “sur la poesie et la peinture”.¹³

Curiously, there is no mention of the Latin phrase in published descriptions of “Miss Dolman’s urn”, a feature at Leasowes, either in Shenstone’s own works or in later guide-books to his garden, which remained a tourist attraction long after its creator’s death. It is possible that Shenstone decided an inscription was superfluous.

Shenstone’s comment, “Mr. Dodsley will borrow me a drawing of it” refers to the Poussin picture. This indicates that copies of the painting were readily available. These would have been of the second version of the subject that Poussin painted, now hanging in the Louvre and often reproduced. Poussin’s earlier picture was little known at the time, as will be explained later.

Shenstone mentions Abbé du Bos’s book, translated into English with the shortened title *On Poetry and Painting*, in which he gives a description of the Poussin picture:

THE SHEPHERD'S MONUMENT

In the middle thereof you see the monument of a young maid, snatched away in the flower of her age; which appears from her statue lying on the tomb, in the manner of the ancients.¹⁴

The Abbé's letter, written in French, is also cited in John Gilbert Cooper's *Letters Concerning Taste*, first published by William Shenstone's friend John Dodsley, in 1755:

After having observ'd that it was a Landscape in ancient Arcadia.¹⁵

It is hard to understand why, but du Bos's description is inaccurate. On the face of it, what he describes is the Louvre version, but wrongly claims that the tomb in the painting depicts a young maid whose body can be seen lying upon it. The tomb in the painting is a plain stone box but, as a plain carving on white marble would not be clearly visible, the Shugborough relief adds an urn. This also gives it the appearance of being funereal.

Perhaps du Bos based his description on a copy or drawing of Poussin's earlier version of *The Arcadian Shepherds*, which has the added detail of a corpse on the tomb. The Abbé gives the impression that it could be a shepherdess's tomb, which may explain why the author of the 1767 poem assumes that to be the subject, as does William Bagot of Blithfield Hall in his poem of 1772.

There is, however, nothing whatsoever in either of the two Poussin paintings to imply that the tomb is of a shepherdess; neither do any of the literary influences suggest this. Virgil's poetic *Eclogues*,¹⁶ which anyone with a taste for Arcadian matters would have known, mentions a tomb of a shepherd called Daphnis. If Thomas Anson associated Poussin's painting with Virgil, then he is more likely to have imagined it as the tomb of a shepherd than a shepherdess.

How would Thomas and his contemporaries have referred to the monument? Today, it is commonly referred to as "The Shepherd's Monument".

The earliest dated reference to the Shugborough monument proves to be the letter from Lady Anson enclosing a poem by Anna Seward. The letter is dated "Coleshill, September 20th, Monday".¹⁷ There are two copies of this letter in the Staffordshire County Record Office. As explained, the first is a draft and does not give the day of the week. This has led to the letter being misdated. Lady Anson often omits the year, but it is simple to calculate which year this must be. September 20th fell on a Monday in 1756. Other clues in the letter confirm this to be the correct year.

On her return to London from Shugborough, Elizabeth writes to Thomas from Coleshill, near Birmingham, where she says she expects to take lunch on the way to Wimpole, her father's estate in Cambridge. She explains to Thomas, in a section not included in the draft,

that she may have to sleep at Coleshill as she was expecting to meet “Mr. Dean and his poor daughter” there. Is this a reference to a person named Dean or more likely to the Dean of Lichfield, who, from 1745-1776, was John Addenbrooke? Dr Addenbrooke was rector of Sudbury, Derbyshire, from 1736, and was closely acquainted with the Vernon family of Sudbury Hall.¹⁸

In Lady Anson’s letter to Thomas, she writes that she had been going through Lichfield, when:

Mr. Seward, with a smiling bow, stopped the coach and civilly excused himself for not having made a visit to Shugborough since the races.¹⁹

Seward then presented her with a packet containing some verses:

Imagining it to be a copy of those I had been before favoured with a sight of I was in no great haste to open it.²⁰

Dr Seward, appointed as Canon Residentiary at Lichfield Cathedral in 1749, had lived at the Bishop’s Palace in Cathedral Close since 1754. He is mentioned in one of two rare fragments of correspondence between Thomas and George that survive in the Anson archive. These are short paragraphs added by Thomas to letters from Elizabeth to her husband.

One of these is a brief but fascinating reference to a journey to Monmouthshire. The other is a letter from Buxton dated October 9th – the year is 1753. It begins by assuring Lord Anson that his wife has safely returned from a ghastly stay at Buxton (the letter Lady Anson sent to her husband from “Purgatory” in Buxton, dated September 22nd, is given in Chapter 14). Thomas’s comments on electioneering, must, however, refer to the Lichfield by-election in November 1753, following the death of Richard Leveson-Gower.

He also mentions a letter he has received from Dr Seward:

I find that he and some of our friends intend to come over tomorrow.²¹

This establishes that Thomas Seward (1708-1790) was a political supporter and knew Shugborough at least as early as 1753. His daughter may have visited with him at that time, or at any time thereafter.

When Lady Anson did read the verses, she took them to be in the handwriting of Dr Seward’s daughter, Anna (1742-1809), yet wondered if they were actually written by her or her father.

The poem is headed:

THE SHEPHERD'S MONUMENT

On an Emblematical Basso Relievo after a famous picture of Nicholas Poussin
Representing Shepherds pointing to the following Inscription on a Monument
in Arcadia

It continues:

Et in Arcadia Ego

The silent Monk, in lonely cell immured,
From every folly, vice, and care secured,
Should inward turn calm Meditations Eye,
And Life employ in studying how to Die.

This very dull short verse, with an equally long title, is a meditation on death and has no specific connection with the Poussin picture, only with the Latin phrase of the inscription.

Lady Anson writes that the (literary) performance must be:

...greatly inferior to its subject, as that requires a much more masterly hand to do it justice.²²

Neither Lady Anson's letter nor the poem make any reference to the cipher inscription that sits below the Poussin relief.

From Coleshill, she continued on to Wimpole. There is a letter to Thomas dating from just after her arrival, shortly after she had met with Dr Seward:

Wimpole 24th September

You laugh at Eucharistic epistles my dear Mr. Anson & I am not able to write them, it is therefore certainly best not to attempt any: not but that I might endeavour to prove my Taste by stringing together all, both the ancient & the modern phrases that express Beauty and Enjoyableness in a Place; and to shew how much I had enjoyed it & do still in continual Happiness in being there.

Elizabeth had left Thomas's old friend, Mr Mytton, at Shugborough:

I shall abridge what remains, & only desire my compliments to Mr. Mytton & hope his cold is better.

She ends with a PS:

I hope the chaise returned safe & carried back my thanks for it and the Peaches.²³

The poem enclosed with this letter is the earliest record of the existence of the Shepherd's Monument. It was certainly there in September 1756 to inspire Anna Seward, who, born in 1742, would have been only been 14 years old. Was the monument seen by Anna Seward in the same form as it is now, with its rustic columns by Stuart, or did she see the presumed Thomas Wright original? The answer, of course, depends on being certain when James "Athenian" Stuart first worked at Shugborough.

Until recently, the idea that Stuart could have supplied a design in 1756 would have seemed unlikely. The reason for this is because all the documentation concerning Stuart's work at Shugborough dates from the 1760s. However, the beginning of their working relationship has been pushed back by the more recent research of Kerry Bristol.²⁴

Thomas Anson and James Stuart, as will be explained later, were together at Hagley in 1758 when Lord Lyttelton was thinking about building his iconic Doric temple. Anson's patronage of Stuart could have begun a few years earlier, in 1755, when Stuart returned from his trip to Greece – where he and Nicholas Revett made the architectural drawings that would become the basis of their book, *The Antiquities of Athens*.²⁵

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a panel attached to the front of the Cat's Monument which appears to be identical to those designed by Stuart for the Marble Hall at Wentworth Woodhouse, South Yorkshire. This was one of his earliest commissions on his return from Greece. Stuart wrote, on September 28th 1755, to the Marquess of Rockingham, asking for details of Wentworth Woodhouse.²⁶ His creation of the panels for the Great Hall must have followed over the next few months; unfortunately, there is no record of the completion of the decoration until 1768.²⁷

The artificial stone panel on the Cat's Monument could be the earliest work by Stuart at Shugborough. It is possible that Stuart began his work there in 1755 or 1756, and that his additions to the Shepherd's Monument could have been in existence in 1756.

Though it cannot be proven, it is perfectly possible that the Shepherd's Monument is the earliest surviving structure in which Stuart played a part – in which case, it would be the earliest structure of the Greek Revival. The monument is, nevertheless, a building of historical importance in addition to its symbolic value as a meeting place of Classical and Romantic styles, as David Watkin recognises in his *Athenian Stuart*.²⁸

If the Shepherd's Monument could be proven to have existed before 1756, there would be no doubt that it was built in two stages, and that it began as a structure in the style of Thomas Wright's arbours.

Until 2019 there seemed to be no evidence that the monument had existed before 1756. However, the situation changed with the re-identification of the poem *To Lord Anson* published by Sneyd Davies, as a poem about Thomas:

THE SHEPHERD'S MONUMENT

Upon that storied marble cast thine eye,
The scene commands a moralizing sigh;
Ev'n in Arcadia's bless'd Elysian plains,
Amidst the laughing Nymphs, and sportive swains,
See festal joy subside, with melting grace,
And pity visit the half-smiling face;
Where now the dance, the lute, the nuptial feast,
The passion throbbing in the lover's breast?
Life's emblem here, in youth and vernal bloom,
But Reason's finger pointing at the tomb!

If this poem had been an elegy for George Anson it would be of no value in dating the Shepherd's Monument, as it would have to date from no earlier than 1762 (the year of George's death). As the first chapter of this study explains, this is, in fact, a poem about Thomas Anson, in the role of an adventurous traveller, who subsequently retires to lead a contemplative life at Shugborough; to enjoy his achievements, the company of friends and his music, as we shall see in Chapter 18.

George Hardinge (1743-1816), who published the poem posthumously in 1817, in his *Biographical Memoirs of the Rev. Sneyd Davies*,²⁹ must be held responsible for the confusion. The poem itself addresses "Anson", without identifying *which* Anson. The manuscript of the shorter version of the poem is clearly titled *To Thomas Anson Esq. of Shuckborrow*³⁰ (see Chapter 1). Hardinge must have had access to a copy of the longer version of the poem without this title. He would have seen the list of exotic locations mentioned in the verses and assumed they referred to George, even though none of these locations have any relevance to George Anson's famous exploits.

George had, in fact, travelled extensively in the East. He was posted in the Mediterranean early in his naval career, so he had probably set foot in the "Sultan's dominions" which qualified him for membership of the Divan Club. As noted in Chapter 5, by the year 1734 George Anson was in Carolina off the eastern coast of North America.

Hardinge was prone to confusion:

These lines, elegant, ingenious, and appropriate as they are, come with a disadvantage against them to me; for I was presented by Mr. Anson himself at the time of my visit with a Poem on the same topic, written by his neighbour and friend, the father of this Lord Bagot, which I cannot enough lament that I either mislaid, or gave or lent away, especially as I never could obtain a copy of them. — I am pretty sure they exist; but where they are now deposited, I have reason to fear that it is under the hermetical seal of his request, that no copy of them should be taken. I recollect in particular the affecting Episode of his Muse upon the "Et in Arcadia ego" to which DAVIES alludes.³¹

Sneyd Davies certainly visited Shugborough shortly before July 30th 1750, when he wrote an account of his visit to the Bishop of Lichfield (see Chapter 11). It is possible that he visited Shugborough on other occasions and added the lines about the Shepherd's Monument at a later date, but this is unlikely and there is no evidence of any such return visit.

As George Hardinge comments:

When Davies wrote his lines to *Lord Anson* upon this enchanting spot, is not ascertained. — Perhaps at a period not very distant from this.³²

What can be said is that the Sneyd Davies poem, with its possible dating to 1750, adds weight, if nothing more, to the theory that the Shepherd's Monument was there as early as 1750. If it *was* already there in 1750, this would mean that the monument was built in two stages: as a Wrightian alcove by 1750, and with Stuart's additions to protect the precious Scheemakers' relief possibly added as early as 1756.

While unprovable, this makes more sense, one might think, than the idea that the monument was built in one piece from a design, originally by Wright, onto which Stuart had drawn his "aedicule". If there had been no existing monument onto which to fix the relief when Stuart came on the scene, it would have been simpler for Stuart to have made an entirely new design rather than adding to what was a very simple drawing by Wright of a structure yet to be built.

The dating of the enigmatic Shepherd's Monument does, of course, affect its interpretation. Is it part of an integrated scheme, developed by Thomas Wright and Thomas Anson in 1747-48, with an underlying philosophical meaning; or was the relief an afterthought, added a few years later, perhaps inspired by Elizabeth Anson's penchant for the pastoral accoutrements of shepherds and shepherdesses?

The poem by Bagot, dated April 25th 1772, deposited in the Staffordshire Record Office,³³ and quoted in Chapter 18 as an important clue to Thomas Anson's musical connections, refers to the Shepherd's Monument in these lines:

O! co'd you see how Nature pours
Profuse her verdure & her flowers,
Her earliest, freshest bloom,
Embroidering all the hallow'd ground
With blue-bells, daisies, violets, round
Your shepherdesses tomb!

Nothing else at Shugborough has had such a rich poetic life – since the 18th century to the present day – as the Shepherd's Monument.

THE SHEPHERD'S MONUMENT

NOTES: Chapter 12

- ¹ David Watkin, *Athenian Stuart: Pioneer of the Great Revival*. George Allen & Unwin, 1982.
- ² Thomas Pennant, *The Journey from Chester to London*. Printed for Luke White, Dublin, 1783. Available on Google Books.
- ³ Sir Thomas Clifford and Arthur Clifford, *A Topographical and Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall in the County of Stafford*. Paris, 1817. Available on Google Books.
- ⁴ Undated drawing in the British Museum, MSS Add. 22153 cited by David Watkin. Op. cit.
- ⁵ Dora Wieberson, *Sources of Greek Revival Architecture*. Zwemmer, 1969.
- ⁶ David Watkin. Op. cit.
- ⁷ Eileen Harris, 'Cracking the Poussin Code: the key to the Shepherd's Monument at Shugborough'. *Apollo, The International Art Magazine*, Vol. CLXIII, No. 531, May 2006. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Cracking+the+Poussin+Code%3A+the+key+to+the+Shepherd%27s+Monument+at...-a0146059112>
- ⁸ Eileen Harris (Ed.). *Thomas Wright, Arbours and Grottos: A facsimile of the two parts of Universal Architecture (1755 and 1758), with a catalogue of Wright's works in architecture and garden design by Eileen Harris*. Scholar Press, London, 1979.
- ⁹ For back issues of articles and photographs from *Country Life* magazine see <https://www.proquest.com/products-services/Country-Life-Archive.html> or <https://www.countrylife.co.uk/news/get-back-issues-of-country-life-magazine-8651>
- ¹⁰ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/3/25 and 24A
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Joyce Godber, *The Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park*. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Vol. XLVII, 1968.
- ¹³ William Shenstone, *The Works in prose and verse of William Shenstone Esq., in Two Volumes, Vol. 2*. Printed for J. Dodsley, London, 1769. <https://archive.org/details/worksinversepros02shen>
- ¹⁴ Abbé du Bos (Jean-Baptiste), *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music, Vol 1*. Translated into English by Thomas Nugent. Printed for John Nourse, London, 1748, Ch. VI, pp.45-47. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁵ John Gilbert Cooper, *Letters Concerning Taste*. Printed for R. & J. Dodsley, London, 1755, pp.133-4 (du Bos's letter is given in French). Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁶ George Mackie, Rev., *The Eclogues of Virgil, translated into English Verse*. London, Printed by Gilbert Stanley, 1847. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁷ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit.
- ¹⁸ See 'Collection of letters primarily from members of the Venables-Vernon family of Sudbury, Derbyshire, to the Reverend John Addenbrooke, Dean of Lichfield, 1744-1776,' held in the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections. GB 159 MS 107 <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/880b4bae-c7f0-3123-84e1-2cd6f0b43d2d>
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.* D615/P(S)/1/1/
- ²² *Ibid.* D615/P(S)/1/3/25 and 24A
- ²³ *Ibid.* D615/P(S)/1/3/26
- ²⁴ Kerry Bristol, 'The Society of Dilettanti, James "Athenian" Stuart and the Anson family', *Apollo, The International Art Magazine*, No. 461, 2000, pp.46-54.

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- ²⁵ James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens: Measured and Delineated*. Printed by John Haberkorn, London, 1762. <https://archive.org/details/antiquitiesAthe1Stua>
- ²⁶ Susan Weber Soros (Ed.), *James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity*. Yale University Press, 2006.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* p.342.
- ²⁸ David Watkin. *Op. cit.*
- ²⁹ The poem *To Lord Anson* can be found on pp.160-1 in George Hardinge's *Biographical Memoirs of the Rev. Sneyd Davies D.D. Canon Residentiary of Lichfield in a Letter to Mr. Nichols*. Fifty copies printed for Nichols, Son & Bentley; not for sale, but for Mr. Hardinge's friends, and those of Dr. Davies. London, 1817. <https://archive.org/details/biographicalmem00davigoog/page/n154>
- ³⁰ Staffordshire Record Office. *Op. cit.* D615/P(S)/2/5
- ³¹ George Hardinge. *Op. cit.* See <https://archive.org/details/biographicalmemo00hard/page/160>
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Staffordshire Record Office. *Op. cit.* *Anson Papers*. D615/P(S)/2/5

Chapter 13

Hidden Meanings

It has been established that the earliest reference to the Shepherd's Monument is in Lady Anson's letter dated Monday, September 20th 1756, enclosing a poem by the young Anna Seward. If Stuart's connection with Thomas Anson began soon after his return from Greece, as early as 1755, the possible date of the artificial stone plaque added to the Cat's Monument, Anna Seward might have seen the monument as we see it today – with the aedicule and columns added by Stuart to give extra protection to Scheemakers' beautiful and precious marble relief.

It is a reasonable and attractive conjecture to suppose that Rev. Sneyd Davies wrote his poem *To Thomas Anson Esq.* in both its short and longer versions, shortly after his visit to Shugborough which he described in his letter to the Bishop, on 30th July 1750.

If this is the case, then the Shepherd's Monument existed by 1750 as an original structure by Wright, as depicted in his *Arbours and Grottos*.¹ As mentioned in the previous chapter, this is very similar to the arbour illustrated in his 1750 design for Badminton, which appears in a plan for a very eccentric but symbolically unified garden.² The Badminton arbour includes, among other things, a "talismanic grove", where trees were to be planted according to a pattern based on the magic square of Jupiter. Wright thought in terms of unified symbolic schemes.

If this early date is correct, it is possible to consider the Shepherd's Monument as a part of a unified scheme at Shugborough, albeit one with a rather wild and fanciful mix of styles, just as in the landscapes to which Thomas Wright contributed in Ireland in 1746-47, not long before the work must have begun at Shugborough.

The iconography of the Drawing Room, with Isis and Serapis, a Maenad and Confucius, the ceiling fresco replicating Reni's image of Apollo and The Hours, and the Library with its Greek philosophers (described in Chapter 11), together with the monuments which include the Pagoda, the Cat's Monument and the Shepherd's Monument, might all be part of an overall conception which would have been planned in detail by Thomas Wright and Thomas Anson together.

All the evidence that survives from 1748, comprising the references to work in progress and the reports left by the first visitors to the house when the transformation had begun,

suggest that the initial plans were still not complete that summer. The extensions to the house had been built, and the Chinese House was awaiting Lady Anson's visit for its decoration to be completed. The Cat's Monument was not yet built when Lady Anson visited in 1749, but she knew that a monument to Kouli-Kan was intended. The Pagoda followed, probably in 1752.

Another reason to suspect that the Shepherd's Monument was in place in 1750, as an original version, is that the Arcadian world of shepherdesses and shepherds occupied Elizabeth Anson's mind following her visit to Shugborough in August 1750, via her route to Wrest. She had, of course, also visited in the summers of 1748 and 1749.

Her letter to Jemima Grey from Shugborough, dated August 20th, talks of "the Captain", who has travelled with them. This is Captain St Georges who had surrendered his sword to George Anson at the battle of Finisterre (see Chapter 9). He had been very impressed by Wrest Park:

Our fellow-traveller the Captain... [did not know] our noblemen's seats & modern improvements, so that Wrest was the first fine place he ever saw, and he declared in the coach that he could have stayed there with all his heart, and thought if such a place belonged to one it would be almost impossible to help living there at least 10 months of the year.³

Assuming "the Captain" is St George, it is odd that he was in such raptures over Wrest when letters, which appear to be from 1748, imply that he has been to Chatsworth, as grand a nobleman's seat as could be found. Did their "fellow-traveller" journey onwards with Lord and Lady Anson to Staffordshire? Presumably he did, which would, in part, explain the fantasy of Elizabeth's letter that follows, the first portion written in French.⁴

Lady Anson wrote to Thomas from Wimpole, on September 20th 1750, to thank him for her stay, in raptures having read the endless pastoral novel *L'Astrée*. She was at her father's, Lord Hardwicke's house in Cambridgeshire, with Lady Grey and Mr Yorke.

Gentil Berger [Kind Shepherd],

Since I left the pleasant banks of your beautiful Lignon, I have not ceased to complain of jealous Time which with such swiftness has carried me away from the happy moments I spent. For sure, if there is one place on the turning Globe of this World where one spends days spun with Gold and Silk, it is among those flowery Vales, those shady hills, those clear rippling waters, and especially those very friendly Shepherds and Shepherdesses found there. It is so that one can admire nothing else in any other plains, not even the herds that wander there. I believe then that there is no need to tell you how vexed I am to be so far removed from such great happiness, and from you, my kind Shepherd, to whom I owe so much of what I have tasted of

it: Alas, I wish I could be more worthy and more capable of making a similar return, but poor as I am, I can only assure you that as my heart merits better the name of Mirror of True Recognition, unlike the fountain in the gardens of the Palace of the Louvre, the one of the Fountain of True Love, such that if you looked into it you could see yourself, as lovers one could see each other in this beautiful Spring, before the bad Fairy cast a spell on it.

So far, Dear Sir, *Astrée* has helped me to thank for your kindest Entertainment, and tho' the Language is drawn from Fiction, the Sentiments are most sincere. I think I have nothing to add to my acknowledgements, except mentioning that our journey was as prosperous as it was wrong way Bias (as you say at Bowls) and we made a very material discovery by it, wh.[ich] is, that we may prolong our next visit to you, by a day or two saved in the journey by Relays of Horses.⁵

L'Astrée is Honoré d'Urfé's classic French Arcadian novel.⁶ There was a copy of the original French edition, in five volumes, in the Shugborough Library. It has a very simple plot about the shepherdess *Astrée*'s search for her lover *Céladon*, whom she originally believes to have drowned in the River Lignon. Many stories of other shepherds and shepherdesses are strung onto this basic pastoral story.

Unlike Sir Philip Sidney's Elizabethan prototype, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, dedicated to his sister, Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke,⁷ the scene of *L'Astrée* is a real landscape in the region of Flores, with recognisable locations in the area surrounding the author's own estate in the South of France. The landscape is authentic, but the book is set in an imaginary past of pastoral Druids, whose Celtic deities represent the various aspects of one true God. It is a romance with a Platonic undertone.

Its riverside setting would make it an ideal book to drift into whilst sitting by the river at Shugborough. The River Sow, to Lady Anson, becomes "your beautiful Lignon". A curious detail is that she refers in her letter to the "Fountain of True Love", a feature of the book, although her reference to "The Mirror of True Recognition" does not seem to be mentioned in *L'Astrée*, as far as the present writer can discern.

In later years, it seems that Lady Anson visited Shugborough alone, but in 1750 it has to be assumed that George accompanied her, as Elizabeth's letter to Thomas goes on to mention that "mon Berger" had returned to "la grande Ville, London". This was only a few weeks after Rev. Sneyd Davies had written to the Bishop of his visit to Shugborough. Could the Shepherd's Monument have already been there, and described in the longer version of his poem? It may also have been seen by Elizabeth, probably for the first time, not mentioned in her letter but adding mystery to her holiday reading of *L'Astrée*.

It is possible, then, that the Shepherd's Monument was a focus for contemplation inspired by the Arcadian world of *L'Astrée*, on the banks of the River Sow in the summer of 1750.

Given Elizabeth's interest in this imagery, the obvious question is, did Lady Anson influence the conceptual scheme of the Shugborough landscape?

There are reasons to suppose that Lady Anson had a personal interest in Poussin's theme of the Arcadian shepherds, but, as with many aspects of this narrative, the facts are not at all clear. In one of the two almost identical portraits of her by Hudson, she is holding a copy of Poussin's earlier version on the theme of the Arcadian shepherds.

There are two quite different paintings by Poussin (1594-1665), on the theme of the Shepherds of Arcadia. They were painted a decade apart.

The earlier version, c.1627, referred to as *The Arcadian Shepherds* (or *Les Bergers d'Arcadie*), which is now at Chatsworth House, shows shepherds finding a tomb, beneath which is a River-God holding an urn. The later Louvre version, painted in 1637-38, was originally known as *Et in Arcadia Ego*, but is sometimes also called *The Arcadian Shepherds*.⁸

This later version is the basis of the Scheemakers' relief on the Shepherd's Monument at Shugborough. It shows three shepherds gathered next to a tomb in a classical pastoral landscape, with the addition of a serene shepherdess in the foreground. She has her right hand placed on the shoulder of one of the shepherds, who is looking up at her.

There has been much speculation about the symbolism of this composition and the location of the mountains shown in the background. In both versions, the tomb has the inscription "Et in Arcadia Ego" which translates "I (death) too am in Arcadia". The meaning is that even in this idyllic world one cannot escape death. In the later version, the shepherdesses' serenity might reflect the artist's stoic philosophy.

In 1747, the art collection of artist and collector Jonathan Richardson the Elder was sold.⁹ The sale included a drawing of the first version of *The Arcadian Shepherds*, possibly an original sketch by Poussin. This was in Lady Anson's possession by 1750.

It is not known whether Lady Anson bought the picture herself, or if it was originally purchased by someone else. Whether or not she bought it herself in 1747 or it was bought for her, this suggests that her interest in the imagery predates her marriage, in 1748, to George Anson.¹⁰ It cannot be said, however, that her taste for things Arcadian predated the conception of the Shugborough landscape. If the Shepherd's Monument is part of an integrated scheme by Thomas Wright and Thomas Anson, the initial idea must have originated before, or during, 1747 – work was underway in the autumn of that year.

Lady Anson was a talented artist. Some years earlier she had copied a portrait of Dante. She was probably staying at Wrest Park at the time. Elizabeth Yorke, as she then was, was a regular visitor at Wrest, as was their mutual friend, Catherine Talbot.

Her brother wrote a poem in honour of the event, later published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1770:

ODE to the Hon. Miss YORKE, (afterwards Lady Anson,) on her copying a Portrait of Dante by Clovio. By her Brother, the (late) Hon. Charles Yorke, Esq.¹¹

FAIR artist! well thy pencil has essay'd
 To lend a poet's fame thy friendly aid;
 Great Dante's image in thy lines we trace;
 And while the Muses train thy colours grace,
 The Muse propitious on the draught shall smile,
 Nor, envious, leave unsung the gen'rous toil.

Catherine Talbot, who stayed at Wrest Park in the summer of 1745, wrote to Elizabeth Carter about advice given to her by the artist Goupy. Joseph Goupy (1689-1769) taught Frederick, Prince of Wales, and, in 1736, he was appointed Cabinet Painter to the Prince of Wales.¹² It is possible that he might have been engaged as an art tutor to the ladies, in the absence of Thomas Wright.

Elizabeth's letter to Jemima, following her visit, implies that Wright had been at Wrest that summer, or, at least, his influence was still apparent with the interest in astronomy in the air (see Chapter 10).

Jemima Grey joked at Wrest about her efforts at reading Dante, and her fear of being stuck in one of the lower circles of hell forever. Catherine Talbot wrote to Elizabeth Carter, a close friend of Thomas Wright but not part of the Wrest circle, about her difficulty with Dante. Elizabeth's reply to Catherine, on August 8th 1745, offers solace and adds that she'd had the same trouble with Divine Comedy:

It is a great consolation to me to find you are not a perfect mistress of Dante, for I was greatly mortified in looking over it last summer to perceive it so much beyond my comprehension, whereas I now think it very marvellous I could make out a single line.¹³

The three-quarter length portrait of Lady Elizabeth Yorke, Lady Anson, at Shugborough, from the studio of Thomas Hudson (1701-1779), shows her holding a drawing of Dante. The National Trust Collections catalogue queries the date of this portrait as 1751(?). It gives this detailed identification:

The drawing of Dante is the one in red & black chalk, bearing the marks of Jonathan Richardson the Elder (Lugt 2184; cf. the drawing of Et in Arcadia Ego ascribed to Poussin, ...) and Thomas Hudson (Lugt 2432), that is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum. Ascribed to Giulio Clovio when acquired, but later (along with the related

painting in the Kress Collection in the NGA in Washington) to Battista Naldini by Federico Zeri, it is currently attributed to Carlo Dolci (by David Scrase).¹⁴

This catalogue entry implies that the Dante portrait shown is not Elizabeth's own copy but one that had belonged to Jonathan Richardson the Elder, and, after him, by Thomas Hudson, the painter of her portrait. Yet the poem by her brother, Charles Yorke, identifies "her copying a Portrait of Dante by Clovio" – presumably the same one described in this catalogue entry. If this is the case, and her brother was not mistaken, the question is, how did Elizabeth have access to the original in 1745 if it was then owned by Jonathan Richardson, whose collection was not sold until 1747?

There is also the matter of how it is possible to be sure that Hudson's portrait shows the original, then believed to be by Clovio, rather than Elizabeth's copy? This is puzzling, but it can at least be said that the presence of the ascribed Clovio picture declares Lady Anson's interest in both Poussin and Dante.

There used to be an almost identical copy of Elizabeth's portrait at her father's country house, Wimpole. In this copy, she is holding a drawing of the original version of Poussin's *Arcadian Shepherds*. The Wimpole copy was sold to a private collector in 1967.¹⁵

In a letter to Jemima Grey, Elizabeth says:

I have nothing to do here but sit for my Portrait.¹⁶

Written on 7th June 1750, from Lord Hardwicke's house at Carshalton (historically in Surrey), this letter probably marks the date of the twin Hudson portraits – the pair in which Elizabeth is holding, respectively, the Dante portrait and the Poussin picture.

As both portraits are almost identical, it seems reasonable to suppose they were painted at around the same time. Perhaps one was by Hudson himself and the copy by one of his assistants, the "School of Hudson", following Elizabeth's instruction to create another version but to alter the Dante image to Poussin's *Arcadian Shepherds*.

Eileen Harris, in her 2006 *Apollo* article, 'Cracking the Poussin Code: the key to the Shepherd's Monument at Shugborough', suggests that the version with the Dante sketch is earlier, and dates from 1747. She writes:

[it] may be identified with the portrait that Thomas Birch saw at Hudson's studio in 1747.¹⁷

The picture which Thomas Birch is said to have seen may not necessarily have been one of the pair of Hudson portraits referred to. There is another Hudson portrait in the National Trust Collections at Wimpole, dated 1745, which the catalogue identifies as 'Lady Elizabeth

Yorke, Lady Anson (1725-1760) or [her sister] Lady Margaret Yorke, Lady Heathcote (1733-1769)¹⁸ in a fanciful blue-green-beribboned shepherdess costume, holding a shepherd's crook.

Yet another, earlier, portrait of Elizabeth Yorke, Lady Anson, exists at Shugborough, in the style of Sir Godfrey Kneller, which was previously said to be by John Vanderbank the younger (1694-1739) or the "School of Vanderbank", but is now attributed by the National Trust Collections catalogue to Michael Dahl (1656/9-1743):

A three quarter-length portrait of a young woman, seated, turned slightly to the right, gazing at the spectator, brown hair with a ringlet falling on her right shoulder, wearing a white satin dress, holding a wreath of flowers, two lambs beside her, a distant view of trees and sky to the right.¹⁹

The Poussin sketch, shown in the Wimpole copy, was still at Shugborough in the 1970s, in the private apartments of Patrick, 5th Earl of Lichfield, who inherited Shugborough in 1960 from his grandfather, the 4th Earl. Its present whereabouts is unknown. A footnote in Eileen Harris's article reads:

The drawing, now in the collection of the Earl of Lichfield, is inscribed 'Poussino' and has the collector's mark of Jonathan Richardson, whose 'entire collection of Italian and other drawings', including several attributed in Poussin, was sold at auction by Mr. Cock, at Covent Garden, 22 January 1747 and the 17 following nights.²⁰

If Elizabeth did acquire this Poussin sketch from Richardson's 1747 sale, her interest in the Arcadian theme could be said to predate the Shugborough developments, but this is by no means certain.

There is, however, another piece of evidence that Lady Anson had an interest in Poussin and *The Arcadian Shepherds* in the long summer of 1750. A few weeks after sitting for her portrait, in August 1750 she wrote to Jemima Grey that she was copying:

5, 6, 7 or 8 hours a day ... the Duke of Devonshire's picture.²¹

The painting had been lent to her at her father's London home, Carshalton.

This is intriguing. Eileen Harris suggests she was copying the Chatsworth version of Poussin's *Arcadian Shepherds*.²² This is the oil version of the same design as the one shown on the pencil sketch that Elizabeth holds in the Wimpole portrait. This original painting was certainly at Chatsworth after 1761, but it is not known when it was purchased.

Copying so many hours a day must mean that she was making an oil copy of the painting. If so, it has not survived. If her copy was of the earlier version of *The Arcadian Shepherds*,

it is a strange coincidence that this previously little-known picture should have come into her life three years after she had acquired a pencil sketch of it, possibly by the artist himself.

It is, of course, possible to speculate that the painting she was copying, which she says was “the Duke of Devonshire’s picture”, could have been the actual Poussin original, which is still at Chatsworth in the collection of the Duke of Devonshire:

...acquired by William Cavendish, third Duke of Devonshire (1698-55) before 1750.²³

This would, perhaps, solve much of the puzzle. There does, however, appear to be no evidence to support the view that Elizabeth owned the Poussin sketch shown in the 1750 portrait, or that she had an interest in Poussin before the year 1750. This is worth stressing as Lady Anson is often thought to have played an influential role in the ideas behind Shugborough.

1750 is a key year. It is worthwhile to summarise:

In June 1750, Elizabeth Anson sat for her portrait by Hudson, one version of which shows her holding the pencil sketch of Poussin’s earlier version of *The Arcadian Shepherds*.

In August 1750, Elizabeth copied “the Duke of Devonshire’s picture”, which might have been the original Poussin painting of *The Arcadian Shepherds*.

At some unknown date, shortly before the end of July 1750, Rev. Sneyd Davies made a visit to Shugborough. He describes this visit in a letter to the Bishop, dated July 30th 1750. In the longer, published, version of his poem, *To Thomas Anson Esq. of Shuckborough*,²⁴ Davies included a passage which refers to “the tomb” – the Shepherd’s Monument – suggesting that his visit may have inspired the following lines:

Where now the dance, the lute, the nuptial feast,
The passion throbbing in the lover's breast?
Life’s emblem here, in youth and vernal bloom,
But Reason’s finger pointing at the tomb!

By August 20th 1750, Lady Anson was at Shugborough, presumably with George and possibly with Captain St Georges. This was her month-long visit during a summer of shepherds and shepherdesses.

In September, Elizabeth was at Wimpole, where she wrote her letter to Thomas in the style of *L’Astrée*, thanking him for her visit to Shugborough.

The critical question is, did the Shepherd's Monument exist at Shugborough in 1750?

Was Elizabeth's summer of shepherds and shepherdesses inspired by the Monument, perhaps a newly unveiled conversation piece for the long summer holiday or, conversely, did her Arcadian summer inspire the creation of the Shepherd's Monument?

If the Shepherd's Monument first found physical form in 1750, the relief by Scheemakers would have been ordered sometime earlier; it would have been envisioned before then. Wright's simple arbour setting must have been designed at around the same time, or possibly earlier, as the relief would have depended on Wright's design. Both may have originated during the same period, in 1747-48, when the extensions to the house and gardens were being planned.

Assuming this was the case, the Shepherd's Monument can be viewed as part of the original symbolic scheme for Thomas Anson's Shugborough – his philosophical villa in a romantic, poetic landscape. It is then reasonable to "read" the Monument as part of the same integral scheme as the Library and Drawing Room.

On balance, until new discoveries are made, it seems a logical deduction that the Shepherd's Monument was part of the original scheme for Shugborough, in 1747-48, and that Wright designed a setting at that time for a relief to be made by Scheemakers, which would have been ordered but not supplied until a year or so later. The Monument would have been built in its original form in readiness for the summer of 1750. In late 1755, or early 1756, Stuart would have added the "aedicule" to protect the precious marble relief, installed during the interim or possibly just before his addition.

If this is the correct interpretation, based on evidence presently available – and again, it is by no means certain – Sneyd Davies could have made another visit several years later and written his poem then, we cannot be sure. However, it is hard to see how Elizabeth, Lady Anson, could have played a central role in creating the scheme for the house and gardens, as much of the work pre-dates her marriage to George, in April 1748. It should also be remembered that Elizabeth was only 25 years old in August 1750.

There seems to be no proof that it was Elizabeth who bought the Poussin sketch from the Richardson sale in 1747. It is depicted in the copy of her 1750 portrait that was once at Wimpole, but, as mentioned, the entry in the National Trust Collections catalogue confirms that the Dante sketch in the Shugborough copy came from the Richardson sale, and was previously owned by Thomas Hudson.²⁵ This raises other questions. Did Hudson once also own the Poussin sketch? If it had belonged to Elizabeth, then when did it come to Shugborough? It is not listed in the Shugborough Sale catalogue of 1842.²⁶

The Poussin sketch was shown, apparently, in Patrick Lichfield's private apartments, in

Henry Lincoln's 1974 television documentary *The Priest, the Painter and the Devil*.²⁷ An examination of the sketch might reveal more clues regarding its provenance in this convoluted puzzle.

All this might be viewed as conjecture, and to diminish Elizabeth's role in the story of Shugborough. Throughout this narrative, based on available evidence, this is clearly not the case. Elizabeth seems to have been closely involved with her brother-in-law Thomas from the moment she came onto the scene. She stayed at Shugborough for several summer holidays – after 1750 she probably came without her husband.

There are surviving letters of more than one occasion when Thomas accompanied Elizabeth on a holiday. She spent time in Bath and Buxton with Thomas as a kind of chaperone on their travels, perhaps. Elizabeth's letters give more hints of his personality and interests than anything else that survives. His letters to her, which must have been amusing, would have been very revealing.

Many creative and philosophical ideas would no doubt have been discussed in London during the "season". There is, however, very little trace of either Thomas's or Elizabeth's independent or shared social lives in the city, apart from music at St James' Square (Chapters 15 and 18).

For all these uncertainties, the Shepherd's Monument, drawing together all the poetic strands of Arcadia and its meditative reflections on death, seems central to the scheme of the original Shugborough landscape. Did it have further hidden significance to Thomas Anson, and perhaps to Elizabeth, maybe to them both? Does the cipher inscription relate to an undiscovered secret, or is it simply intended to give a mysterious quality to the more obvious stoical symbolism and the transient nature of earthly life?

We know that the image on the Shepherd's Monument is derived from Poussin's later version of the subject of *The Arcadian Shepherds*, generally known as "Et in Arcadia Ego". It is one of Poussin's most famous paintings and still hangs in the Louvre today, where it was hanging in 1750.

It is important to clarify that the marble relief on the monument differs from this painting in several ways. It is "portrait" rather than "landscape" oriented, so the composition had to be adjusted to suit the shape. Thus, it is a mirror image of the original. As Shenstone writes in his letter of October 3rd 1759:

Mr. Anson has the two shepherds with the monument and inscription in alto relievo...²⁸

The mirror image is simple to explain. Scheemakers would have worked from an engraving. Engravings are, as a rule, in reverse; they are cut onto the plate by the engraver who

then prints in mirror image onto paper to create a “pattern”. Eileen Harris’s article gives an example of this technique by Bernard Picart.²⁹

There is also an urn added to the tomb, interpreted by some researchers as a sarcophagus. This urn is also easy to explain. As previously mentioned, the relief on a very plain tomb would be difficult to represent in the medium of white marble.

Why, then, is the monument, and the relief itself, designed to be portrait-shaped, rather than as a closer copy of the original? The answer might simply be that it was a more suitable shape for the structure envisaged, which is, it seems, a standard Thomas Wright form. An alternative reason might be that the monument was originally intended to reproduce the earlier version of the subject. This is the painting depicted in the sketch in Lady Anson’s portrait, which Eileen Harris suggests was “an apparent preparatory drawing”.³⁰

This earlier Poussin painting is little known, whereas the Louvre version is a famous, revered and much copied image. Could it be that Thomas Anson originally envisioned that the relief would be based on the earlier version of the painting? He certainly knew the Duke of Devonshire and visited Chatsworth. It is also quite possible that the Duke had been the owner of the pencil sketch.

Even if the earlier picture had been the inspiration for the Shepherd’s Monument, the reason why the finished relief is based on the Louvre picture may simply be that Scheemakers had easy access to prints of the later version, but was unable to gain access to a copy of the Chatsworth picture, or the sketch, when he came to work on his carving.

Looking at the relief as it stands, it is very hard to imagine what it would have been like if the image had been copied from the first version, which shows only the shepherds approaching a tomb. The eye-catching focus of the existing relief in Poussin’s second painting is the shepherdess, with her calm and serene gaze, and her connection with the shepherd to the right of the picture.

This uncertainty about the intended design means that any attempt to look for hidden meanings in the Shepherd’s Monument as a complete structure, must inevitably be tentative. The stoic tone – which cannot be easily defined – is one of an acceptance of the reality of death, while, at the same time, the shepherdess represents all that is eternal.

Eileen Harris’s article, which refers to one of the present author’s unfortunate early writings, suggests that the Shepherd’s Monument is a memorial to the Prime Minister, Henry Pelham.³¹ Pelham died on the 6th March 1754. The memorial urn to Pelham at his house, Esher Place, Surrey, which dates from 1755-56, also shows the Louvre version of the Poussin shepherds, “Et in Arcadia Ego”.

There are several problems with this theory. Lady Anson’s interest in Poussin certainly

dates from before Pelham's death, and no later than her Wimpole portrait. Was Thomas Anson devoted enough to Pelham to build a memorial to him in his own garden? As Thomas's letters to George indicate, the Ansons' attitude to Pelham may not have been so straightforward. If Thomas Anson was loyal to Lord Sandwich, as intimated by his secret mission to France, it was more than likely that he would have viewed Pelham as an enemy. As explained in Chapter 9, in 1751, Pelham's brother, the Duke of Newcastle, had sacked Sandwich because of his loyalty to the Duke of Bedford, yet he had appointed George Anson as First Lord of the Admiralty in his place.

Harris's article has much useful information and supports the theory that Stuart's work for Thomas Anson, and his partnership with Scheemakers, can be dated to 1755-56. However, as Scheemakers had been involved in the work at Shugborough as early as 1748, this does not affect an earlier dating for the Shepherd's Monument.

The other puzzling feature is the cipher inscription. There are eight letters separated by dots:

O.U.O.S.V.A.V.V

And below this, on either side:

D.

M.

What does it mean? "D.M." is a common feature of Roman funerary monuments (of which there were examples in the garden at Shugborough.) The letters stand for "Diis Manibus", which refer to the Manes, dedicated to the shades or the spirits of the dead. This certainly implies that the monument in its entirety should be viewed as a memorial.

Assuming it *is* a memorial, there are no clues to whom it is or may be dedicated. The 1767 descriptive poem implies a lost love, a shepherdess, but there is no reason to suppose its anonymous author knew anything of its true meaning.

As the Cliffords' comment in their *Description of the Parish of Tixall*, quoted in the previous chapter:

The meaning of these letters Mr. Anson would never explain and they still remain an enigma to posterity.³²

There is no reason to doubt that Thomas Anson kept the enigma to himself. If the monument had been conceived as a memorial, perhaps to his parents, there would be no need for such obscurity. A monument shrouded in mystery, surely, was the intended effect, and perhaps it should be allowed to live on as an enigma. The meaning is in the mystery.

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In recent years, there have been many attempts to come up with an explanation or translation of the inscription. Most of these totally depend on non-historical elements. There are many claims from those who believe they have “solved the riddle”, some of which can be viewed online, that range from the quite ingenious to mere conjecture. For any solution to be convincing it must tie in with what is known of the people responsible for its creation, and with their ideas and philosophies.

An interpretation that has often been cited, and needs to be put into proper context, is that the letters stand for the first line of a kind of verse:

Out Your Own Sweet Vale, Alicia, Vanishes Vanity.
Twixt deity and man thou, shepherdess, the way.

This poetic fragment came from Margaret, Countess of Lichfield. It presents a mystery in its own right, but in no way can it be considered as a piece of historical evidence.

Lady Lichfield invited a friend, Oliver Morchard Bishop, to go through the Anson Papers in the early 1950s – the archived letters show his pencilled guesses of their dates. It seems likely that the confusion over the authorship of the anonymous long poem (see Appendix) with Anna Seward goes back at least to this time.

In a letter written by the Countess to the present author in 1983, she assumed the poem to be by “The Swan of Lichfield” (Anna Seward).³³ She also believed that the monument was “put up to Lady Anson, the Admiral’s wife, by Thomas Anson after she died.”³⁴ This is obviously impossible, as the earliest reference to the Shepherd’s Monument is in Lady Anson’s letter of September 20th 1756,³⁵ over three years before her death.

Lady Lichfield’s letter implies that she was recollecting the actual lines of a verse:

The poem was told me as a child by the curate at my home Whittington in the valley of the Lune in Westmorland, Yorkshire and Lancashire. A quite lovely part of the world. Do you know it? I was astounded when the letters fitted even to the U for You. In those days (& before) lovers used to scratch on windows with a diamond ‘I L U’ that meant ‘I love you’. So the U is right, for it means ‘you’ in lovers language.

Now this Alicia story is a lovely story & a long one & belongs to the Latin & Greek scholars who knew how the Romans were weaned from worshipping their Gods and Goddesses to becoming Christians. In my youth the clergy were great scholars & this curate was no exception, in fact he was brilliant. He was a wonderful storyteller & kept us enthralled. He told us there are 7 hills outside Rome & on one of them was a Shepherdess called Alicia whose name means “the light of all happiness.” To follow her you had to give up all the vanities of the world & be simple, pure, tender & loving & guide & guard her flock from all evil. Selfless devotion was the service of

this Shepherdess Alicia. Thus were the Christian virtues taught the Romans by turning their Gods and Goddesses into Christians by these means. No scholar ever agrees that my childlike story of Alicia can be the answer. Perhaps it is too good to be true and too simple. Who will ever know?

But I tell it to you. The V.V at the end of the line jogged my memory & Vanishes Vanity came to me & then the whole line & when each word fitted each letter I was astounded. I tell it you for what it is worth & make of it what you will.³⁶

This seems to be clear enough, but no-one, in spite of every effort, including the resources of the internet, has ever found a story of a shepherdess called Alicia in the hills of Rome.

Unfortunately, Lady Lichfield's explanation of the Alicia story poses more questions than answers. In a personal conversation between the present author and Patrick, Lord Lichfield, he suggested that she had simply invented words to match the letters.

This likelihood is supported by a later letter written by the Countess to researcher Paul Smith, on 18th May 1987. She describes at length her discovery (or invention) of the Alicia lines.

Dear Mr. Smith,

...You must take what I am going to tell you for what it is worth, because I still don't know if this is a 'fluke' or fact, but it is astounding how well it fits and this is how it happened.

I was always fascinated by the fact that nobody knew the meaning of OUOSVAVV and then the D and M on either side below, and I used to stand in front of it for ages and ages trying to wrack my brains as to all the myths and stories I had ever been told. When I was a child we had a curate called Mr. Prince who helped our very old Rector. He was a wonderful man with children, for although he was extremely learned and a great Greek scholar he was also full of the most enormous amount of Greek mythology and legends which, as you will know, are utterly fascinating. I always felt that as these were Roman letters on the Shepherdess monument that it would not be Greek mythology, so I wracked my brains to try to remember the Roman ones which he told us. Suddenly one day the penny dropped, and I remembered the following story:

He told us that outside Rome are seven hills and one of the hills had a shepherdess called Alicia which I think means 'Joy and Happiness'. The beauty of Alicia's character was her utter simplicity devoid of all vanity. She was very beautiful and completely unselfconscious and unaware, for her whole life was dedicated to the care of her sheep and seeing they came to no harm from the roaming wolves. He had

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a marvellous little book and he used to read the poems that went with these stories, but I could not remember the one about Alicia. It was many years before [when] one day I was showing some friends round the garden and when we came to the Shepherd monument I told them the story about Alicia the Shepherdess and suddenly I looked at the letters and the penny dropped, and I quoted "Out of your own sweet vale Alicia vanish vanity twixt Deity and Man, thou Shepherdess the way". I was absolutely astounded and positively shaken that suddenly these words had come to me. The people who I was showing it to were rather dull and not very impressed with anything, so I could not go into it further with them, but when they went I told my husband and he said to me "Are you sure you aren't making it up?" and I said "NO, how could I have, it was all so quick and spontaneous and vivid."

Now having told you this I suppose you do realise that this monument was put up to the Admiral's wife, Lady Anson. (Incidentally, she is not called 'Lady Elizabeth' as she would have had to be the daughter of an Earl, a Marquis or a Duke if she was called that, but her correct title is 'Lady Anson' and her Christian name is Elizabeth, but it is not put into the title. You may wonder why I am 'Margaret, Countess of Lichfield', but that is correct because I could choose to be called either 'Dowager' or 'Margaret' when my husband died. I do hope you don't mind me telling you this, but as you are writing a book it is as well to get these kind of details right and I am sure you will see that it is.)

To go further, this lovely picture of Lady Anson dressed as a Shepherdess goes to show Thomas Anson's line of thought concerning her. Do you think that your interpretation, which I think is correct and agree with, marries up with mine? I am not well up in these matters but would love to see if anybody could show any connection between the two. I still prefer yours to mine, as I still don't know if mine was a fluke or a fact, but it is quite extraordinary how the letters fit. I would love to know who gave you the translation of the letters OUUSVAVV – D.M. which I gave to the National Trust and to the present Lord Lichfield.

I think I ought to tell you what gave me the tip-off to my own translation, it was the V V at the end of the top line and 'Vanishes Vanity' popped straight into my head, and the rest followed. As you know from the time that Thomas Anson put this monument up everybody from great scholars to ordinary everyday people have been trying to find out what these letters meant, but none had succeeded – and suddenly the words came to me!

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,

Margaret Lichfield
Margaret, Countess of Lichfield

P.S. By the way the “U” in OUOSVAVV stands for “your” because one of the D.M. “lover codes” in those days when young men scratched with a diamond on the glass of his loved ones window, he scratched “I L U” for I love you.³⁷

It seems clear that the lines were not entirely remembered by the Countess but were invented to fit the letters, inspired by a half-remembered story of saintly shepherdesses as told by the young curate, whom she identifies as Mr. Prince. Perhaps the curate had been telling of her namesake, Saint Margaret or Marina?

The elderly rector of Whittington at the time was Rev. Edward Pigot, who took office in April 1857. Born on 18th October 1818, Pigot eventually resigned from the living in 1905, at the age of about 86.³⁸ There was a Rev. Herbert Prince who was curate at Whittington, recorded in the 1901 census, aged 27, living at High House, Whittington. According to *Crockford's Directory 1908*, Prince was curate at Whittingham for a short while, in 1900-01,³⁹ when Margaret was only one or two years old. After his time at Whittington he was at Habergham, near Burnley, Halifax, Kendal, and then became vicar of Cockerham, Lancashire.

It would have been possible, of course, for the Dawson-Greene family to have kept in touch with Mr Prince after he left Whittington, but there is always the possibility that Margaret was confusing him with a later clergyman, John Hodgkin, who, in 1901, became the curate to Edward Pigot and succeeded him as rector in 1905, remaining at Whittington until his death in 1941. Hodgkin married the rector's daughter and was a keen motorcyclist and photographer.⁴⁰ Was he also a scholar of Greek mythology, or could it really have been Herbert Prince that Margaret, Countess of Lichfield, remembered?

There is undoubtedly no historical value in these lines about Alicia. They were an invention, possibly inspired by a partially remembered story told to a very young child by a story-telling curate. It is always possible that someone else, perhaps a member of her family, had later repeated this story to her. The shepherdess Alicia cannot be substantiated but remains a strangely haunting red-herring in the story of Shugborough.

Margaret, Countess of Lichfield, has had a lasting influence on the story of Shugborough, and was the source of far more than misleading myth. It is worth clarifying who she was.

Born Violet Margaret Dawson-Greene on 20th June 1899, her father was Colonel Henry Dawson-Greene of Whittington Hall, Lancashire. In 1921 she married Lieutenant-Colonel Humphrey Burgoyne Philips, who died in 1951. By this time, Margaret (known as Peggy) and her first husband had divorced, and, in 1949, she became the second wife of Thomas Edward Anson, 4th Earl of Lichfield (1883-1960), son of Thomas Francis Anson, 3rd Earl of Lichfield and Lady Mildred Coke.⁴¹ Thomas Edward Anson died in 1960, two years after the death of his son (by his first marriage to Evelyn Maud Keppel), Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas William Arnold Anson, Viscount Anson.

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This Thomas Anson (1913-1958) was the father of Thomas Patrick John Anson,⁴² better known as Patrick Lichfield, to whom Margaret became step-grandmother. Patrick's mother, Anne Bowes-Lyon (1917-1980), was a niece of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. His parents divorced in 1948. It was the death duties following the death of Patrick's father shortly before his grandfather that led to the sale of the Shugborough estate to Staffordshire County Council. Margaret, Countess of Lichfield, died in 1988.

Lady Lichfield's friend, the author Morchard Bishop (his real name was Oliver Stonor), suggested another interpretation, which has been quoted at various times:

*Optimae Uxoris Optimae Sororis Viduus Amantissimus Vovit Virtutibus.*⁴³

The Latin translates as:

Best of wives, best of sisters, a most loving widower vows virtuously.

This begins in the style of a standard Roman funerary inscription but makes little sense in the context of the Anson family at the time the Shepherd's Monument was built.

The Ansons' mother may have been the "Best of wives, best of sisters" given her sister's marriage to Thomas Parker, Lord Macclesfield, but who could be the "most loving widower"? Assuming the date of the inscription is the same as that on the relief, then it can't have been George Anson as Elizabeth was alive until 1760. Could Thomas have had a secret marriage and been a widower? It's possible but unlikely and would, surely, have been recorded somewhere.

Morchard Bishop suggested this interpretation in a letter to Lady Lichfield in 1951, but there is no suggestion that it is anything other than his own invention.

The only solution to the inscription, which fits everything that is known about the background and history of the monument, was suggested by Steve Regimbal, an American lawyer and playwright.⁴⁴

He noticed the eight letters of the inscription O.U.O.S.V.A.V.V are the initial letters of a Latin translation of Ecclesiastes 12:8 in the King James Bible:

Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity.

The Latin (translated from the English), is:

ORATOR UT OMNIA SUNT VANITAS AIT VANITAS VANITATUM

This is a correct translation from the King James Bible into Latin, rather than Jerome's Vulgate Latin version which was used by the Western Catholic Church for centuries.

Regimbal's solution may seem odd at first, but, in analysis, the Latin word *Orator* is a valid translation of "Preacher" (the King James Bible uses the word "Ecclesiastes" meaning "Teacher" or "Preacher"). *Ait* is the formal "spoke" or "declare" as in "saith". The word *sunt* translates as "they are" making it (the vanities) plural, giving emphasis to the sentence. This phrase matches the stoic mood of the monument and the Poussin picture perfectly.

Ecclesiastes is one of the Wisdom books of the Old Testament, commonly ascribed to Solomon. It is interesting to look at this verse, from the King James Bible, in context:

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.⁴⁵

Not only is this verse fitting for a memorial to death: "shall the dust return to the earth" and "the spirit shall return unto God", the wise preacher seeks "words of truth". The word "goad" in the final line: "the words of the wise are as goads" is not intended as provocation but to rouse, move or inspire, "given from one shepherd". This could even be read as Thomas Anson's own legacy beyond the inscription "vanity of vanities".

There is, however, no reason to suspect that the meaning of the inscription is any more esoteric than the simplicity of meaning conveyed in Poussin's *The Arcadian Shepherds* – a meditation on the inescapability of death.

A letter by William Shenstone, dated December 23rd 1743, mentions an inscription on a monument at Lord Lyttelton's Hagley Park:

Mr. Lyttelton has built a kind of alcove in his park, inscribed "Sedes Contemplationis" near his hermitage. Under the aforesaid inscription is "OMNIA VANITAS", the sides ornamented with sheeps bones, jaws, skulls etc festoon wise. In a niche over it, an owl.⁴⁶

Considered to be a memorial to Lyttleton's late wife, this seems very much like a precursor of the Shepherd's Monument, in the garden that has close links to Shugborough.

Joe Hawkins, the former Head Gardener at Shugborough, now Head of Landscape at Hagley, suggests that:

...It was George Lyttelton's poetic and aesthetic sensibilities combined with his broad literary knowledge that gave the Park this deeper philosophical dimension, and its seats and temples were often adorned with tablets inscribed with lines or verses from classical authors such as Horace and Virgil, generally extolling the delights and virtues of the country life over the corruption and vanities that were then (as they are today) found in courtly or city life.⁴⁷

This comment about Lord Lyttelton and Hagley could equally be said of Thomas Anson and Shugborough.

If the Shepherd's Monument was indeed in place in 1750, it would have struck a chord with the peculiar mood of the time. There was a sense of impending doom in the air. In 1750 England was struck by earthquakes.

Handel's last oratorio, *Theodora* had its first performance on the 16th March. It is now considered one of Handel's greatest works, a uniquely meditative story of persecution and sacrifice. The fear of earthquakes kept audiences away. Everyone who was able left London for their country retreats. Handel knew it was one of his best pieces, and its failure must have been hard to bear. When two musicians asked for free tickets for a later performance of his *Messiah*, according to Dr Burney, Handel replied:

Oh your servant, meine Herren! you are damnable dainty! you would not go to Theodora – there was room enough to dance there, when that was perform!⁴⁸

In the world of music, this was the end of an era. It was not just the end of Handel's career, but the turning point in musical style. Handel's Baroque was soon superseded by new Rococo and Classical fashion.

The first earthquake in London was on 8th February:

On Thursday, February 8, about noon, the first earthquake of the year struck. It shook London. People felt the chairs in which they sat shaking, and heard crockery rattling on their shelves. The lawyers in Westminster Hall were alarmed, and in Grosvenor Square residents ran out of their houses. In Southwark, a slaughterhouse collapsed, and a chimney fell in Leadenhall Street. It seemed that the tremor was confined to the London area; it was 'just perceived' at Richmond in Surrey and Bromley in Kent, and not felt at all at Barnet, Deal, and Canterbury.⁴⁹

There was another earthquake in London on March 8th. Catherine Talbot wrote to Elizabeth Carter on March 9th, returning some sections of her Epictetus translation:

Would you believe it, that my mind was so dissipated by a week or two of innocent gaiety, and my spirits by the return of perfect health grown so flippant and lively, that I felt not the awful terrors of the second shock on Thursday, nor could bring my mind to any degree of seriousness, till the conversation of wiser and stronger minds than mine, had yesterday talked down its levity. I was when it happened in a profound sleep, from which I was awaked by my mother's screaming dreadfully. Alarmed with the thought of some more immediate home distress, the trembling of the house was over, before I could collect my thoughts to attend to it.⁵⁰

Catherine refers to "the second shock on Thursday" when she happened to be asleep, in the early hours of March 8th (mistranscribed in the report below as a Tuesday):

On Tuesday [Thursday], March 8, a month after the London earthquake, at about one o'clock in the morning, wakeful persons in the city thought to feel another quaver. For about half an hour after five o'clock, the sky flickered with continual lightning. Then this ceased, and a minute or two later, the earthquake came.

The shock was more violent than that of February 8. Sleepers were awakened by it, and some were so alarmed that they ran from their houses almost naked. Those in the open spaces of the city felt the ground move 'very perceptibly'. Dogs howled. Church bells clanged. Crockery was thrown from household shelves; a lady of Piccadilly, a connoisseur of old china, had her collection instantly ruined. Several chimneys fell, and the earthquake claimed a victim, a maid in Charterhouse Square, who was thrown out of bed and broke her arm.⁵¹

An undated letter from Lady Anson to Catherine Talbot may come from this time. The archive catalogue suggests the year as 1760, which was not a year for earthquakes.⁵² There were further tremors in Warrington on April 4th, Spalding on August 23rd, and Northampton on 30th September. The year was clearly 1750.

The "wiser and stronger minds" who had "talked down its levity" at the time of the shock of this second earthquake may have included Thomas Anson. As to the earthquake, Mr. Anson says, "It was a very trifling one..."⁵³

He told her that she may turn her thoughts to the expectation of a great comet in a few years. This would have been Halley's Comet. In 1705 Edmond Halley had examined reports of a comet that approached Earth in 1531, 1607 and 1682. He concluded that this was the same comet which appeared about every 75 years – the first time a comet's orbit had been calculated – and predicted that it would return in 1758. This is a further reason for dating Anson's remark a decade earlier than 1760.

Thomas Anson's comment is particularly interesting. Portents may have been in the air in March 1750, and the idea of returning comets is a major feature of Thomas Wright's *An Original Theory*, published that same year.⁵⁴ If the suggestion of Anson's patronage of Wright is true, and his work on this book was the real reason for Wright's involvement with Anson, then Thomas would have known of the content at least two years before its publication.

Curiously, the last hint of a meeting between Thomas Wright and Elizabeth Carter is a letter in the correspondence from Catherine Talbot to Elizabeth Carter, dated April 5th 1750, which also refers to the earthquake:

The churches were full all the morning; but at night the streets and open places were crowded. Many messages came hither to enquire where my Lord preached, and whether there were not to be prayers in the church at eleven. Thousands spent the night in Hyde Park, and Lincoln's Inn Fields. Those who did the least, sat up half the night, except some very few. The moon, stars, and aurora, were well contemplated – But there is something frightful in such a general panic ... I was happy to learn from Mr. Wright that Miss Peggy Carter [Elizabeth's oldest sister] has not suffered by these alarms.⁵⁵

The earthquakes of 1750 were a very small-scale prelude to one of the greatest natural disasters of recent history – the Lisbon earthquake on 1st November 1755, when up to 100,000 people perished in three different shocks that reduced most of the city to ruins.

Elizabeth Carter began her work on translating the Stoic philosopher Epictetus in 1749, as discussed in Chapter 10. Copies of her unfinished work circulated between friends long before its publication. She wrote:

Let death and exile, and all other things which appear terrible, be daily before your eyes, but chiefly death, and you will never entertain any abject thought, not too eagerly covet anything.⁵⁶

Could her commentary be on the meaning of Poussin's painting; the presence of the tomb in Arcadia representing the inescapable reality of death and the transitory nature of material things?

It would have a poignant significance to a family like the Ansons, who had become immensely wealthy by an accident of war.

NOTES: Chapter 13

- ¹ Thomas Wright, *Arbours and Grottos* published in two volumes of *Universal Architecture: Book I, Six Original Designs of Arbours; Book II, Six Original Designs for Grottoes*. Published by the author, London, 1755 & 1758. See also Eileen Harris (Ed.). *Thomas Wright, Arbours and Grottos: A facsimile of the two parts of Universal Architecture (1755 and 1758), with a catalogue of Wright's works in architecture and garden design by Eileen Harris*. Scholar Press, London, 1979.
- ² The MS is at Badminton House, Wiltshire. I also have a larger copy of Wright's works from Badminton House.
- ³ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, *Letters from Elizabeth Anson to Jemima Grey*. L30/9/24
- ⁴ The English Translation of the first portion of Lady Anson's letter is by Chris Lovegrove, former editor of the *Journal of the Pendragon Society* (1965-2009). Translation provided by Paul Smith.
- ⁵ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/3
- ⁶ *L'Astrée* by Honoré d'Urfé, published in French between 1607 and 1627. Translation with commentary available from Google Books.
- ⁷ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. 1590. Held in the British Library. Retrieved from https://archive.org/stream/cu31924013123330/cu31924013123330_djvu.txt
- ⁸ *The Arcadian Shepherds* by Nicolas Poussin. See <https://joyofmuseums.com/museums/europe/france-museums/paris-museums/the-louvre/the-arcadian-shepherds-by-nicolas-poussin/>
- ⁹ Eileen Harris, 'Cracking the Poussin Code: the key to the Shepherd's Monument at Shugborough'. *Apollo, The International Art Magazine*, Vol. CLXIII, No. 531, May 2006. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Cracking+the+Poussin+Code%3A+the+key+to+the+Shepherd%27s+Monument+at...-a0146059112>
- ¹⁰ It is the painting of *The Arcadian Shepherds* that began Lady Anson's interest in Poussin.
- ¹¹ 'ODE to the Hon. Miss YORKE' published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XL, 1770, p.38. See also John Nichols (Ed.), *A Select Collection of Poems: with Notes, Biographical and Historical, the sixth volume*. Printed for J. Nichols, London, 1780. Available on Google Books.
- ¹² Joseph Goupy (Biographical details), *The British Museum*. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioId=123111
- ¹³ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the Year 1741 to 1770: To which are Added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, Between the Years 1763 and 1787; Published from the Original Manuscripts in the Possession of the Rev. Montagu Pennington. In Four Volumes, Vol. 1*. Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1809. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁴ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1271067>
- ¹⁵ Richard Andrews and Paul Schellenberger, *The Tomb of God: The Body of Jesus and the Solution to a 2,000 Year-Old Mystery*. Little & Brown, London, 1996, p.88. Cited by Eileen Harris. Op. cit.
- ¹⁶ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service. Op. cit. L30/9/3/17
- ¹⁷ Eileen Harris. Op. cit.
- ¹⁸ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. Op. cit. object/207889
- ¹⁹ Ibid. object/1271069
- ²⁰ Eileen Harris. Op. cit.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.

HIDDEN MEANINGS

- ²⁴ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/2/5
- ²⁵ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. Op. cit. object/1271067
- ²⁶ *A Catalogue of the Splendid Property at Shugborough Hall, Stafford to be Sold at Auction on the Premises on Monday the 1st Day of August 1842*. William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council. Sc B/1/1
- ²⁷ Henry Lincoln, *The Priest, the Painter and the Devil*. The second in the 'Chronicle' series, BBC2, 30 October 1974, repeated in 1979 (produced by Roy Davies). *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, co-authored with Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, was first published in 1982 by Jonathan Cape, London as an unofficial follow-up to the three BBC TV documentaries.
- ²⁸ William Shenstone, *The Works in prose and verse of William Shenstone Esq., in Two Volumes, Vol. 2*. Printed for J. Dodsley, London, 1769. <https://archive.org/details/worksinversepros02shen>
- ²⁹ Eileen Harris. Op. cit.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Sir Thomas Clifford and Arthur Clifford, *A Topographical and Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall in the County of Stafford*. Paris, 1817. Available on Google Books.
- ³³ Margaret, Countess of Lichfield. Personal communication, 1983.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/3/25 and 24A
- ³⁶ Margaret, Countess of Lichfield. Op. cit.
- ³⁷ With thanks to Paul Smith for permission to quote from the letter he received from the Countess, Lady Lichfield, in May 1987.
- ³⁸ Gerald Hodgson, *Whittington Village, 'Rectors of Whittington 1200 to 1941'*. http://whittingtonvillage.org.uk/html_pages/st_michaels/st_michaels_rectors.html
- ³⁹ *Crockford's Clerical Directory, 1908*. Accessed via ancestry.co.uk
- ⁴⁰ Gerald Hodgson, *Whittington Village, Village, 'Rev. John Hodgkin'*. http://whittingtonvillage.org.uk/html_pages/hodgkin/rev_john_hodgkin.html
- ⁴¹ Violet Margaret Dawson-Greene. <http://www.thepeerage.com/p1033.htm#i10330>
- ⁴² Thomas Edward Anson, 4th Earl of Lichfield. <http://www.thepeerage.com/p870.htm>
- ⁴³ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(A)/26
- ⁴⁴ Steve Regimbal cited in 'Shepherd's Monument Mystery: Yet Another Undeciphered Inscription'. Article by Ellen Lloyd, September 29, 2018. <http://www.ancientpages.com/2018/09/29/shepherds-monument-mystery-yet-another-undeciphered-inscription/>
- ⁴⁵ See <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Ecclesiastes-12-8/>
- ⁴⁶ Marjorie Williams, *The Letters of William Shenstone*. Basil Blackwell, 1939.
- ⁴⁷ Joe Hawkins, *Hagley Hall, 'History'*. <https://www.hagleyhall.com/hagley-park/history/>
- ⁴⁸ Theodora is quoted in many sources, including Wikipedia.
- ⁴⁹ Christopher Chatfield, *The Gallery of Natural Phenomena, '1750 The Year of Earthquakes'*. Retrieved from <http://www.phenomena.org.uk/earthquakes/page42/page42.html>
- ⁵⁰ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), Op. cit.
- ⁵¹ Christopher Chatfield. Op. cit.
- ⁵² Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service. *Correspondence between Catherine Talbot (1721-1770) and Lady Elizabeth Yorke (1725-1760), later Lady Anson, c.1744-1760*. L30/21/1
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- ⁵⁴ Thomas Wright, *An Original Theory, or New Hypothesis of the Universe*. London, 1750.
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Chapter 14

Romantic Landscapes

The Greek Revival that runs as a thread through the story of Thomas Anson and Shugborough is more of a matter of ideas and attitudes than of art and architecture. At the heart of the “Greek Revival”, and the deeper “Platonic Revival” within, was a rediscovery of meaning and Truth in Nature. By 1759, landowners like Lord Lyttelton might build his temple as a place to sit and contemplate the Beauty of his estate, whether wild or “improved”.

The developments at Shugborough that took place only a few years earlier, with their own philosophical significance, were in a different style – a fanciful mixture of exotic buildings and arbours. The roots of the new ideas were already present at Shugborough, particularly in the complex imagery of the Shepherd’s Monument, which can lay claim as the gateway to the Greek Revival. In a very short time, the Rococo mix of Classical, Gothic and Oriental was becoming outdated, as the taste for the Natural became fashionable.

The seeds of what we think of as Romanticism were already planted by 1750. Thomas Wright became a follower of the new trend that can be seen as a rejection of idealised Classicism, immediately after the transformation of Shugborough. A priceless fragment, in the form of a paragraph which Thomas adds in his own hand to a letter from Elizabeth to her husband George, while she was spending time with his brother visiting Bath in Somerset, reveals that Thomas Anson was eagerly exploring the new taste for Romantic landscapes in 1757.¹

The last reference to Thomas Wright in the correspondence between Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot is a letter dated August 12th 1752, when Elizabeth wrote to Catherine looking back over their friendship, reflecting on her gratitude to Mr Wright, and perhaps trying to make up for a disagreement:

I always think with gratitude of the obligation I owe Mr. Wright. It was he who first excited my curiosity about you, and kindly contributed all in his power to gratify it, All the expectations which he had raised fell below my own experience: and that realities may sometimes exceed our most lively imagination, is a useful and very pleasing truth on which you so civilly congratulate me, indeed I never have found, nor desire to find any such thing.²

There is a vague sense that Mr Wright has become a figure from the past. Even in 1750 there is no mention of him in Carter's other letters. Although Catherine Talbot's letter to her friend Elizabeth mentions him when she refers to the earthquake, in April 1750, Carter's last mention of Wright was almost two years previously, in June 1748. This was when he had been explaining his theory of the universe to her, at her uncle's house in Enfield, Middlesex.

This may, however, be an illusion. Carter's letters to Wright do not survive and neither do his to her, although they must have existed when Montagu Pennington (1762-1849) wrote his memoirs of his aunt. As her executor, he was left all of Elizabeth's letters following her death, in 1806. He reproduced one letter from Wright to introduce the correspondence between Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot in his *Series of Letters*, published in 1809,³ but no others.

By 1750, Wright had moved his base north of Bristol to Stoke Park, the home of Norborne Berkeley (c.1717-1770), MP for Gloucestershire and later 4th Baron Botetourt, where he cut himself off from earlier friends. Wright may have met Berkeley in 1749, or during the mysterious lost year of 1748 when he seems to have worked at Shugborough. He had completed and published his *Original Theory* in 1750,⁴ and was turning his attention to landscapes and architecture at a time that was certainly a major turning point in his life.

How did he meet Berkeley? There is a faint clue in the fact that Berkeley and his sister and brother-in-law, the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, stayed with Sir George Lyttelton at Hagley in 1753, when Berkeley visited William Shenstone's garden at The Leasowes. Perhaps Berkeley had been a visitor to Hagley during Wright's time at Shugborough and they had met through the connection between Anson and Lyttelton.

In July 1750, Wright and Berkeley were busy rebuilding the house at Stoke Park. Berkeley's godson, George Barclay, wrote to the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, describing that busy time:

...surrounded with Masons, Stone-cutters, Sculptors, Plasterers, Painters, Carpenters, Joiners, Smiths, Glaziers, and all the Implements of House-building. But as Pain, as well as Pleasure is checkered, he has got a most agreeable companion in Mr. Wright, I truly think so, Mr. Bacon (his Countryman) gives him a great Character.⁵

Soon after this exhausting work was completed, Wright and Berkeley went on an extraordinary horse-back holiday. Wright wrote a detailed account in a manuscript which has since disappeared, following its publication in 1875 in *The Reliquary*, a quarterly archaeological journal.⁶ After 1750 there are just a few notes of other journeys.

Although Wright had a hand in the rebuilding of the house at Stoke Park, his most

important contribution was his share in the laying out of the grounds. These became a showcase of a more romantic, picturesque style of planting, featuring exotic shrubs from other parts of the world, including America. By the end of the 18th century, it was for this landscape work that Wright became best known.

Berkeley had already begun redesigning the gardens before Wright arrived. Did Wright learn the specialist skills and knowledge required for elaborate planting from Berkeley, or had he studied the subject before? Where did he learn such skills? Perhaps over many years of staying in some of the most beautiful country estates he had developed an enthusiasm, and with it a knowledge of flowers and shrubs, and the ways in which they could be arranged throughout the seasons as a composition for suitable effect.

Thomas Wright's work at Stoke Park, which dates to within a few years of Shugborough, was more fascinating for its planting than its garden buildings. In fact, many years after he first worked there, he wrote to Lady Beaufort to recommend that a particular structure should be removed.

Wright's later sketches include detailed plans of planting, but there seems to be no precedent in his earlier work and no evidence that he had designed planting schemes before Shugborough, where exotic plants were one of the central interests of Thomas Anson. This had begun during Thomas's early travelling days and developed through his friendships with botanists Benjamin Stillingfleet and Thomas Pennant.

When George Mason described Stoke Park in his book *An Essay on Design in Gardening*, he praised Wright's work both here and elsewhere, including his management of the woodland:

The pieces of woodland in that domain are neither remarkable for extent in themselves, nor for the size of their timber; yet the management of them gave me, more than any thing I had seen, an idea of what might be done by the internal arrangement of a wood.⁷

Thomas Anson and Lady Anson, wife of the Admiral who was engaged in naval work, both visited Stoke Park while they were staying at Bath. Elizabeth's letter to Jemima Grey, on the 25th November 1755, is an important source for Stoke Park and the only time when Wright's name is mentioned in any of the Anson correspondence.⁸

Lady Anson writes that she:

...dined in an Octagon Room with four windows (built by your Mr. Wright) just at the angle of the House at the centre of the Prospect.⁹

The Octagon Room was one of the south-facing corner rooms at the front of the house. It

is interesting that Lady Anson refers to him as “your Mr. Wright”. She clearly associates Wright with Jemima at Wrest Park, in Bedfordshire. Surely, she must have known that Wright had been responsible for the Shugborough work.

As far as can be gleaned from Wright’s own notes, he had worked at Wrest, home of the Greys since the 14th century, long before Jemima married Philip Yorke, Lady Anson’s brother. Wright had been invited to Wrest as early as 1745, but he might not have been able to go due to previous engagements. As previously mentioned, the ladies were contemplating cosmology that summer.

Lady Anson goes on to describe the effect of the grounds:

I need not add that the paths about the Ground, and the variety of foreground the Trees give to different parts of the Landscape, as one changes one’s situation in walking about must be delightful, when the weather will permit one to enjoy them. Our Curiosity was by this time so excited that we determined to employ all the daylight we could get in seeing and get home in the dark.¹⁰

The “we” is Lady Anson and her brother-in-law, Thomas. According to Edward Hughes, the editor of his ‘Early Journal’,¹¹ Wright mentions no journeys away from Stoke Park during 1755, so it is possible that he was there when they visited.

One of the few letters in Thomas Anson’s own handwriting that has survived in the Staffordshire Record Office is because it was enclosed in one of Lady Anson’s letters to her husband. The previously mentioned paragraph that Thomas adds to Elizabeth’s letter from Bath must date from the spring or summer of 1757, as he refers to Lord Lyttelton under that title. (Sir George Lyttelton was created Baron Lyttelton of Frankley, in Worcestershire, on 18th November 1756.)

Thomas confirms that he had been to Stoke Gifford previously and hoped to return “in a better season”, presumably when the weather was improved:

I shall take my final leave tomorrow morning. Capt Parker who desires the honour of being remembered to you, goes with me as far as Mr. Berkeley’s, who I hear is at Stoke, so I shall quit myself of a promise made him that if he would permit me to see his place in December I would certainly revisit it in a better season. God’s country, as Lord Littleton calls Brecknockshire, I shall not reach. Going up and down mountains takes a deal of time and is too tedious when one is alone. Mr. Allen says that Monmouthshire, which I shall see thoroughly is a fine part of Wales. We dined yesterday at Prior Park.¹²

This is a wonderful and precious fragment of Thomas Anson’s own tone of voice. The “too tedious when one is alone” may sound effete, but Thomas was 62 years old by this

time, when his taste for adventure and dangerous travel had no doubt diminished, but he remained at the forefront of fashion in visiting new landscapes. A large part of his life as a man of taste still lay ahead, as we shall see in the companionship he courted and the concerts he arranged in his last years.

He refers to “Mr. Allen”, Ralph Allen, the wealthy promoter of Bath and Prior Park, his own spectacular house and garden at Bath. Thomas is going on to Monmouthshire. It is a reasonable guess that he was on his way to Piercefield, a spectacular estate with views overlooking the Wye Valley. To reach Wales, he would have crossed over to Chepstow by ferry, only a few miles beyond Stoke Gifford (following the route now taken by the Severn Bridge).

Thomas Wright had visited Bersfield (as he spelled it) on his summer jaunt with Norborne Berkeley, in 1750:

Betwixt this and Chepstow on the same side of the River is a noble situation, with woods and lawns, above the rocks, which are there most romantic, with a very extensive prospect of the Severn, Wye, and Gloucestershire &c. belonging to Mr. Morris, the place is called Bersfield but much in want of a suitable mansion house.¹³

The “suitable mansion house” was not built until 1785 and is now a ruin. The prospect of the River Wye became a “locus classicus” for the new Picturesque taste.

Richard Owen Cambridge, a friend of the Ansons and of James Harris, had failed to buy Piercefield in 1748, but he did help its owner Valentine Morris, who inherited Piercefield in 1743, lay out its walks to enhance the views over the valley. It became one of the most spectacular and admired of the Picturesque landscapes.

Richard Owen Cambridge (1717-1802) was a member of the Divan Club with Thomas until it folded a few years earlier (his father had been a “Turkey Merchant”).

Lady Anson dined at Cambridge’s house, Mount Ararat, at Richmond, in April 1750:

Mr. Cambridge will make his Place very pretty; he has a charming view of the River now he has opened it.¹⁴

Cambridge was a neighbour of James Mytton and the antiquarian Daniel Wray, a regular guest at Wrest Park. When Charles Yorke published the first volume of his *Athenian Letters*, Wray contributed under the signature ‘W’.¹⁵

Mount Ararat was often the away from London base for James Harris, the most important thinker of the Greek Revival period. Harris praised Cambridge in the last of his books,

Philological Enquiries,¹⁶ which goes out of its way to celebrate his friends and is also the source of the anecdote about Thomas Anson on Tenedos.

Cambridge was a notorious gossip. Lady Anson writes:

Mr. Cambridge has just stepped in with news of new government appointments.¹⁷

Of himself, he wrote:

My body light, my figure slim,
My mind dispos'd to mirth and whim.¹⁸

Boats were his particular hobby and Cambridge eagerly discussed his ideas with Lord Anson. He built a thirty-seat pleasure boat in Venetian style, a twelve-oared barge and a successful "flying prow" boat, based on descriptions from George Anson's voyage. At his seat at Whitminster on the Severn, a few miles from Piercefield and the confluence of the Wye and Severn, he specialised in "promenades en bateau", where he once entertained Frederick, Prince of Wales on the river.¹⁹

With his connections to Thomas through the Divan Club and to Lord Anson, also through the philosopher James Harris, a regular visitor to his Richmond house, Cambridge remained a friend for over thirty years. He was one of the people on the list of friends and political acquaintances who received a mourning ring at the time of Thomas's death (see Chapter 20). Cambridge was also one of the subscribers to Thomas Wright's beautifully produced, but financially unsuccessful *Universal Architecture*. Only the first two volumes, *Arbours and Grottos*, were published in 1755 and 1758.²⁰

Anson's copy of Cambridge's satirical poem *The Scribleriad*²¹ is one of the books from his collection which survives in the Shugborough Library (see Chapter 17).²² The hero Scriblerus was named after the "Scriblerus Club", a London-based informal association of authors whose influential writers included Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope – Cambridge's poem attempted to imitate the satirical style of Pope.

Cambridge was an influential writer on gardens and landscapes. He was a contributor, along with Horace Walpole and George Lyttelton, to *The World* magazine from 1753-56, a journal that specialised in the latest landscaping ideas, edited by Adam Fitz-Adam and later Edward Moore, a protégée of Lord Lyttelton.

In an article published in *The World*, in 1754, Cambridge wrote:

I remember the good time when the price of a haunch of venison with a country friend was only half an hour's walk upon a hot terrace; a descent to the two square fish ponds overgrown with frog spawn: a peep into the hog sty or a visit to the pigeon

house. How reasonable was this when compared with the attention now expected from you to the number of temples, pagodas, pyramids, grottos, bridges, hermitages, caves, towers hot houses, etc.²³

This could almost be a dig at Shugborough, where the pagoda had been built only two years earlier, in 1752.

The new fashion was for improving nature and working with the Spirit of Place, creating landscapes reminiscent of paintings by artists such as Poussin and Claude Lorrain. The enthusiasm for natural rather than artificial or geometric gardens was part of the new way of looking at the world – ideas and architecture typical of the Greek Revival.

It might be thought that the “improvement” of estates created artificial landscapes, idealised and remote from wild Nature. This, however, was a time when travel in search of the Romantic and Picturesque was unusual and not easy to accomplish. An “improved” landscape was intended to celebrate Nature, and, to the Platonically inclined, the Divine Truth within it.

An aspect of this same movement was a vogue for the sublime. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), wrote of the aesthetic effect of dramatic and even terrifying landscapes. His *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*²⁴ was certainly appreciated in Mrs Montagu’s social circle, as she wrote to Elizabeth Carter:

Here I was interrupted by a visit from my friend Mr. Burke. It is a noble privilege in a London life that one can never be too long in the same temper; whether willingly or unwillingly, one must steer “from grave to gay, from lively to severe”. I am very glad you liked Mr. Burke’s book, he is as good and worthy as he is ingenious.²⁵

The date of Burke’s book, which was published in 1757, is significant. The Greek Revival, as expressed by Lord Lyttelton’s Temple built in 1758-59, is inseparable from this new interest in Nature – the Romantic does not become detached from the Classical.

Thomas Anson’s botanist friend Benjamin Stillingfleet (1720-1771) had been one of the first to write of the dramatic effect of experiencing the Alps. Not until 1811 was his life and works compiled and published, when William Coxe put together the *Literary Life and Select Works of Benjamin Stillingfleet*.²⁶ Lord Lyttelton had similarly been one of the first to write in “Picturesque” terms of the landscapes of Wales, referring to Brecknockshire as “God’s Country”.²⁷ Thomas Anson may well have known of his journey into Wales before setting off on his own journey across the Severn in 1757.

1757 was also the publication year of Thomas Gray’s *The Bard*, his Pindaric Ode about the destruction of the Druids by Edward I, an early example of the use of poetry to create a romantic and storm-tossed view of Wales.²⁸ Gray was a rare character for the period, a

student of Plato, yet he published nothing directly resulting from his studies.

A few years earlier, Lady Anson, travelling with Thomas, had explored Dovedale and the equally romantic landscapes of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, but she was unimpressed. The Spa at Buxton, which she was presumably visiting for her health, turned out to be a very unpleasant experience. In one of Lady Anson's letters from Buxton which gives no year, Thomas adds his own comments to his brother about an election at Lichfield,²⁹ which dates this visit to 1753 (see Chapter 12).

(References in Lady Anson's letters that follow come from the same archive in the Staffordshire County Record Office.³⁰)

She sent this letter to her husband, with the heading "Purgatory", dated September 22nd:

Scarborough with all its evils was a Palace of delights to this place. Constant stinks all over the House, an absolute destruction of Breakfast from the badness of Butter, with the like, are among the trifling inconveniences. But the two capital grievances, & which I do not think I shall ever be able to endure, are the bathing, & the noise. The first unites all the inconveniences of hot & cold bathing as it is necessary to tip over head, & feels very cold while one is in the water, where one is obliged to stay several minutes, tho I could not bear it the prescribed eight minutes this morning, & then one comes out with the chillness of warm bathing instead of the glow wch makes one pleasant instant in coming out of cold water. But if this could be re-submitted to, the other I doubt will really have any bad effects. I mean the almost Eternity of Noise. I lost one night's sleep in Ashbourne, & yet the Inn there was the Cave of Quiet compared with this, lastnight I could not get to sleep 'till One o'clock, & then rather because I was tired out than because there was any cessation of walking over my head, talking of each side, rumbling chairs & tables all round, all which waked my a half hour after five this morning and continues still & I have now the Headache, & am quite stunned & unable to understand anything I attempt to read, wch is yet the only amusement I can propose, as there can be no such thing as walking without the Temptation of a Prospect or the Shelter of Trees, in both of which respects Stilton & Newmarket have the advantage of this place, and as any partys from it are impossible from the distances & nature of the Country...

I own obligation to Mr. Anson beyond all power of return, for exchanging his own Elysium for this worst of Purgatorys, yet I am concerned he ever came; for my own sake as much as his & could wish he would leave me, & forget he has ever seen me here. Miss Anson who was so good to intend coming was prevented by a cold.

She adds a PS:

Mr Anson allows the description of the place to be strictly just...

Only the presence of Thomas makes this visit to desolate Buxton bearable. He is, incidentally, nearly thirty years her senior. On the way to Buxton they made some visits, including one to Staffordshire's own romantic landscape:

...we dined at Mr. Vernon's [Sudbury Hall] on Wednesday, saw Dovedale & Mr. Okeover's Raphael yesterday which is by far the finest Picture I have seen.

On the 28th of September, Lady Anson wrote a lengthy paragraph to her husband, in praise of her brother-in-law's virtues:

Indeed, I find, wch I thought impossible, my Love & Regard for your Brother rise higher every instant: it is not possible to owe more to a friend than I do for him, he bears with me when I am unreasonable, sometimes pitys me kindly, sometimes chides me gently, advises me with friendship & judgement, reproves me with Sense & Knowledge, forms me with his Politeness, & amuses me with all the art of the elegant badinage.

But she did not share his taste or enthusiasm for wild landscapes:

...every day's experience tending to convince me how much better it is to live among Knowls than Hills, in a beautiful inhabited cultivated country, rather than what is called romantic Country.

Long before the "Romantic Movement" in literature is usually thought to have begun, such wild places were referred to as "romantic country". While Shugborough is a gentler landscape, Anson did plant pines and fir trees on large areas of Cannock Chase to give the impression of an alpine backdrop to the park.

The 1767 anonymous poem (see Appendix), which describes many aspects of Shugborough, ends with a Romantic view of Thomas Anson's domain. He and his immediate circle were at the forefront of this new taste for the Picturesque and wild Nature. This foretaste of the Romantic period is significant. Before the 1750s it seems that few people took any notice of mountains, rivers, forests, or of nature in its wilder forms – especially close to home, as distinct from foreign travels.

In fact, the term "Picturesque" was coined by Rev. William Gilpin (1724-1804), a schoolmaster. To Gilpin, this meant a view that would look good in a picture; nature, in his eyes, needed to be adjusted to make a satisfactory composition. In 1770 he wrote his *Observations on the River Wye*, which was not published until 1782.³¹ This book, which covers the area around Piercefield (Bersfield), and those that followed, popularised the idea of sketching holidays in a period when travel became much easier. For all practical considerations, local inns and hotels in these faraway places would have flourished and must be comfortable enough for the new tourists.

The word “Romantic” to describe such spectacular views was, however, in use several years before Gilpin. Wright uses this term in an account of his trip to the Wye, in 1750. A few years earlier, Elizabeth Carter had referred to plans for a “romantic trip to the Goodwin Sands” with him (mentioned in Chapter 10).³²

It is all too easy to categorise the ‘History of the Arts’ into neat periods. The “Romantic” is often thought to follow the “Classical”. The truth is, this taste for romantic landscape and adventurous trips to wild places appears during the same time frame as the classical style emerges in music and art. At the same time as Lyttelton and Anson are exploring Wales, James Stuart is beginning his career as a Neo-classical architect. The two principal ideologies of the Greek Revival are opposite and complementary sides of the same coin.

The distinction between this early interest in the “romantic” and the fully-fledged Romantic period, is that the latter was dominated more by sensation and feeling, the individual experiencing emotion through nature to give value to their own outlook; whereas the Classical mind, no less interested in aesthetics but more concerned with antiquity, was less personal. This is not, however, a hard and fast rule with clear cut differences.

The individualist viewpoint soon began to emerge with Rousseau’s *Confessions*, an autobiographical book devoted to the author’s personal experiences and intimate feelings. It was written in the 1760s, partly when Rousseau was in exile in Staffordshire, but not published until 1782.³³

Thomas Wright has no further part in this narrative, other than mentioning his retirement. After his period with Norborne Berkeley, during which time he had become more of a landscape artist than a professional architect, he purchased the house where he was born in Byers Green, Durham, and, with some additional land, built himself a villa.

He describes the place where he lived out his days with his natural daughter, Elizabeth, and her mother, which was published posthumously in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in March 1793, by his friend George Allan of Darlington:

I cannot well call it a villa from its miniature, situated as it is in a vast amphitheatre, bounded by high hills on every side, through which a beautiful river winds at about 20 miles to the sea. ...The house stands in the centre of a plantation of my own rearing, mostly of forest trees and flowering shrubs of every kind both foreign and domestic... rich with various evergreens and flowers.

Here I have perfect tranquillity though in a village, having no house nearer than a hundred yards.

ROMANTIC LANDSCAPES

...When I indulge myself with poetic ideas I can naturally conceive myself with an Olympus before me, a mount Heamus on one side and Panassus on the other.³⁴

The house itself was designed as a cosmology in miniature, rather like his only surviving house, the Menagerie at Horton Park, Northamptonshire, with its ceiling images of time and the zodiac:

That of the sofa part is the Sedes Beatorum, or supreme heaven, with the hours and times disposed around it.³⁵

Wright's interest in puzzles and mysteries is reflected in the motto over the Dining Room door, which he said was transposed in Greek characters to make it more difficult to read:³⁶

MIHI VIVAM QUOD SUPEREST AEVI

Give me no more years than those which I am due

This seems to be the same kind of cryptic puzzle as the inscription on the archetypal Romantic and Classical structure, the Shepherd's Monument.

As George Allan wrote of Thomas Wright, in 1793:

There was something flighty and eccentric in his notions and a wildness of fancy followed even his ordinary projects.³⁷

NOTES: Chapter 14

- ¹ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/117B 1
- ² Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.). *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the Year 1741 to 1770: To which are Added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, Between the Years 1763 and 1787; Published from the Original Manuscripts in the Possession of the Rev. Montagu Pennington. In Four Volumes, Vol. 1*. Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1809. Available on Google Books.
- ³ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter: with a New Edition of her Poems, some of which have never appeared before*. Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1807. Available on Google Books.
- ⁴ Thomas Wright, *An Original Theory, or New Hypothesis of the Universe*. London, 1750. Republished as *Thomas Wright of Durham*. American Elsevier, Inc., New York, 1971.
- ⁵ David Lambert and Stewart Harding, 'Thomas Wright at Stoke Park', *Garden History*, Vol. 17. No. 1, Spring, 1989, pp.68-82.
- ⁶ Thomas Wright, 'Tour Through Part of England in the year 1750, with Norborne Berkeley, Esq., Prince, and the Late Lord Botetourt', *The Reliquary, Quarterly Archaeological Journal and Review*, 15, 1875, pp.216-220. Copy from Durham University Library, Palace Green, Durham.
- ⁷ George Mason, *An Essay on Design in Gardening*. Printed for Benjamin White, London, 1768. Available on Google Books.
- ⁸ This refers to the *Letters from Elizabeth Anson to Jenima Grey* held at the Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, and the *Anson Papers* at the Staffordshire Record Office.
- ⁹ Quoted by Mark Laird, in *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Edward Hughes, 'The Early Journal of Thomas Wright of Durham', *Annals of Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1, March 28, 1951. Taylor & Francis Online.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00033795100202151>
- ¹² Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/117B 1
- ¹³ Thomas Wright. Op. cit.
- ¹⁴ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/3
- ¹⁵ Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, *Athenian Letters: or, the Epistolary correspondence of an agent of the King of Persia, residing at Athens during the Peloponnesian War*. Printed by James Bettenham, London, 1741 & 1743. Vol. 1 held at the British Library, G2109.
- ¹⁶ James Harris, *Philological Enquiries, in Three Parts*. C. Nourse, London, 1781.
<https://archive.org/details/philologicalinupt1and2harriala/page/n6>
- ¹⁷ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit.
- ¹⁸ See <http://www.twickenham-museum.org.uk/detail.asp?ContentID=59>
- ¹⁹ Austin Dobson, "Cambridge, the Everything" in *Eighteenth-Century Vignettes*. Third Series, 1907, pp.179-205. *English Poetry 1579-1830, Spenser and the Tradition*. Retrieved from <http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/BiographyRecord.php?bioid=34067>
- ²⁰ Thomas Wright, *Arbours and Grottos* published in two volumes of *Universal Architecture: Book I, Six Original Designs of Arbours; Book II, Six Original Designs for Grottoes*. Published by the author, London, 1755 & 1758.
- ²¹ Richard Owen Cambridge, *The Scribleriad: An Heroic Poem in Six Books*. Printed for R. Dodsley, London, 1751. Available on Google Books.

- ²² The copy at Shugborough does not currently appear in the National Trust Collections catalogue but has been seen by the present author.
- ²³ Edward Moore, *The World*, 1789. National Trust Collections, Tatton Park, Cheshire.
<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3033093> Quoted by David Jacques in *Georgian Gardens: The Reign of Nature*. B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1983.
- ²⁴ Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Printed for J. Dodsley, London, 1757. Available on Google Books.
- ²⁵ Matthew Montagu, *The Letters of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu with some of the letters of her correspondents*, Vol 3. Wells & Lilly, Boston, 1825. Original from Harvard University.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044020490371;view=1up;seq=9>
- ²⁶ W. Coxe (Ed.), *Literary Life and Select Works of Benjamin Stillingfleet: Several of Which Have Never Before Been Published*, Vol. 1. Longman, Hurst & Rees, London, 1811. pp.125ff. Available on Google Books.
- ²⁷ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/117B 1
- ²⁸ Thomas Gray, *The Bard*. Printed by Samuel Bentley, London, 1757. Available on Google Books.
- ²⁹ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615P(S)/1/2/34
- ³⁰ Ibid. D615/P(S)/1/1/379 and following.
- ³¹ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales, etc. relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the summer of the year 1770*. Published 1782. Second edition, printed for R. Blamire, London, 1789. <https://archive.org/details/observationsonr00gilpgoog/page/n9>
- ³² Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot...* Op. cit.
- ³³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau*. 1782.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3913?>
- ³⁴ George Allan, 'Mr Wright's Description of his Villa at Byers Green'. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1793. pp.213-16. Also quoted on the website of 'Thomas Wright House', now a guest house. <http://thomaswrighthouse.com/about-thomas-wright/>
- ³⁵ George Allan, Op. cit.
- ³⁶ Ibid
- ³⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 15

St Germain and the Great Secret

A letter from Lady Anson to Thomas sheds light on one of the most intriguing and notorious characters of the 18th century, Count St Germain. He was a composer and violinist, reputedly an alchemist who had discovered the secret of eternal life. He claimed to be three hundred years old. He made every effort to create an aura of mystery around himself and his origins, admitting that “Comte de Saint Germain” was a pseudonym. Most recent writers believe him to have been the son of the deposed Prince of Transylvania, which would explain his wealth and convincing aristocratic manner.

Lady Anson’s letter had gone unnoticed until the present writer stumbled across it in the bound archive volume of her letters to her husband. It had been written to Thomas as an appendix to a letter to Admiral Anson, who was in Bath taking the waters for his gout. After a couple of pages addressed to her husband, she says that what follows is for Mr Anson and adds some racy gossip, which was obviously more to Thomas’s taste than George’s.

The most significant part of this addendum to her letter is Elizabeth’s comments on St Germain. She is extraordinarily indiscreet; what she tells is taken from the mouths of the Secret Service, at the time operating in the Admiralty building where she was living. St Germain may seem to have been a harmless eccentric, but for a few weeks he managed to entangle himself in international politics. What she had to say of his behaviour and alleged purpose could have led to serious implications.

Even though she treats the affair as simply gossip, Elizabeth was in a privileged position to know more than most women about what was going on in the world of politics. In the case of St Germain, doubly so, as her brother, Joseph Yorke, was directly involved in this captivating case, in his capacity as Minister Plenipotentiary at The Hague.

Lady Anson and Thomas would have been interested in this political intrigue in 1760, but during the 1740s they are very likely to have known the Count as a musician. They could well have met him at London society gatherings where he had first appeared in 1745, and heard his private music making.

As Horace Walpole wrote:

He sings, plays on the violin wonderfully, composes, is mad, and not very sensible.¹

By chance, the most detailed source of information on this man of mystery in the period in question is Lady Anson's sister-in-law, Jemima, Countess Grey.

St Germain was already known as a composer before Lady Grey heard him perform in a private recital at Lord Morton's house. According to David Hunter, he had contributed some arias to a "pasticcio" opera, *L'Incostanza delusa* (Inconstancy outwitted), performed at the Haymarket Theatre from 9th February to 20th April 1745.²

Jemima Grey knew about music. Shortly before her encounter with St Germain she had witnessed the spectacle of the great firework display to celebrate the Peace of Aix-La-Chapelle, with music by Handel. Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot were also there in the crowd, when Miss Talbot's mother was terrified by the explosions.

Lady Grey gives an account in her letter to Lady Mary Gregory, on 8th May 1749:

But now I think of it I forgot in my last to mention a great & extraordinary Event, one of those unexpected fortunate Events which may happen perhaps once in a whole Life... Guess it if you can? Nothing less I assure you than the Hearing St. Germain Play.

...We went accordingly, met him at Dinner & spent the whole Evening together. After Tea, Coffee &c, his Violin, a Harpsichord & two or three other Instruments appeared & they began. But unfortunately he had a dress'd Coat on which confin'd his Arms, & makes him always very miserable, & there followed many Ceremonies & variety of Consultations about getting a Habit more to his Mind. At last a little Linen Bedgown of Ldy. Browne's was proposed by her Ladyship (who was come in to be of the Party as well as Sr. Robert) a Messenger dispatch'd for it into the next Street, & le Comte when attir'd in it made as much the figure of a Harlequin as you ever saw.

But his Play indeed is delightful! The Violin in his Hands has all the Softness & Sweetness of a Flute, & yet all the Strength of the loudest Strings: his Execution is not of that rapid prodigious kind as Veracini & Geminiani; but his Play is more easy & harmonious & his Excellence is Softness. He piques himself you know upon the Expression of the Passions in his Music especially the Tender Ones, & both his Composition & his Manner are almost all *Affettuoso*: for his Musick is entirely fitted to his own way of Performing & would be nothing I am convinced from anybody else.

This very expressive, emotional style of performing seems very similar to the style of Anton Kammell, who came to London twenty years later and became a close friend of

Thomas Anson's (see Chapter 18). There was clearly a fashion for the romantic and expensively dressed virtuosi.

Jemima continues:

After he had Play'd a considerable time, Frasi who had been appointed to meet him arrived after the Opera. She is his Favourite Singer I find, he teaches her his Songs & sings Duetts with her & her Only: but he also sung some Songs alone & his Manner then is past all Description... He has absolutely no Voice, what he sings with is entirely Feign'd & so low that in a large Room it is quite lost, yet he will raise it sometimes to Thunder out a Song of Rage as much as he will Languish in One of Love: for his Action is still more Expressive than his Sounds. He Accompanies himself without Book, & addresses himself in all he has to express to the Company: he Frowns & Scowls & Threatens & looks like a Fury when he is to be in a Passion, & is so terribly soft & languishing in his Tender Fits that there is no supporting it. – Woe! be to the Person within the reach of his Eye! for he makes Love so violently they must have a most Inflexible Countenance to stand it. As he is wholly possess'd by the part he is Acting, I believe it would be address'd equally to an Old Man or a Young Woman who was his next Neighbour, but poor Miss Yorke who happened to be in that Situation, & not much used to be so address'd nor understanding what he was saying, would have been very glad to be out of it, & look'd so Embarrassed we were not a little diverted. – In short we stay'd there till Twelve o'clock at Night, & were very much entertain'd either by him or at him the whole Time. – I mean the Oddness of his Manner which is impossible not to laugh at, otherwise you know he is very sensible & well-bred in Conversation.³

Having heard St Germain play, a few days later Lady Grey invited him to join her family, who were resident at Lord Hardwicke's, her father-in-law's London home, Powis House (she returned to Wrest on May 14th). As everyone was in London for the peace celebrations, this would have included her husband, Sir Philip Yorke, Lady Anson's brother, and it is possible the Ansons were there as well.

Her description of the Count is given by David Hunter in his 2003 article in *Musical Times*:

He was here at the Concert on Wednesday, & as a great Favor staid late on purpose to give us a Couple of Songs when most of the Company were gone. It is vastly agreeable as well as Odd to hear him. His Skill is certainly very great, & his Songs are as much suited to his Expression in Singing as his Solos are to his Playing. I had never heard Justice done them before... No Fine Lady can stand at his Elbow while he Sings, & fancy herself a real Object of all that Languishment without its going to her Heart.

He is an Odd Creature, & the more I see him the more curious I am to know some-

thing about him. He is everything with everybody: he talks Ingeniously with Mr. Wray, Philosophy with Ld. Willoughby, & is gallant with Miss Yorke, Miss Carpenter & all the Young Ladies. But the Character of Philosopher is what he seems to pretend to, & to be a good deal conceited of: the Others are put on to comply with *Les Manieres du Monde*, but That you are to suppose his real Characteristick; & I can't but fancy he is a great Pretender in all kinds of Science, as well as that he really has acquired an uncommon Share in some.

– Well! so much for Monsr. le Comte de St. Germain.⁴

Was Thomas Anson at this musical *soirée*? It is reasonable to suppose that he might have been, as a member of the extended family of Yorkes. There is, of course, evidence that he was in contact with Jemima Grey and her husband at that time.

On 3rd May 1749, Thomas had been one of 1000 guests at a Masquerade party, according to a letter from Jemima to Mary Gregory. Of those who attended the performance by St Germain, she mentions Thomas, her brother Charles and her two sisters-in-law, her brother-in-law Mr. Heathcote, the French Captain, Chevalier St George (friend of George Anson), Catherine Talbot and the antiquarian Daniel Wray.⁵

Mary was Jemima's half-sister, the youngest daughter of Henry Grey, Duke of Kent, with whom she was brought up. Mary married David Gregory, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford (from 1756-1767). She died in 1761 at the age of 41.

For many years the only book about St Germain was by Isabel Cooper-Oakley, published in 1912.⁶ She did not know of these detailed descriptions of his social and musical activities which bring him to life so vividly. Her book mixes history with the wild fantasies that grew up around him after his (presumed) death. All kinds of esoteric legends are associated with St Germain. Cooper-Oakley does, helpfully, give an incredibly detailed background of his political activities, which directly relate to Lady Anson's letter.

St Germain claimed to have been to India with Clive in 1755 and brought back certain secrets, including what he claimed was a method of purifying diamonds. After 1757 he was becoming a well-known figure in Paris. Cooper-Oakley suggests that some of the more scurrilous stories which circulated at the time were started by an imposter, who pretended to be St Germain in the Paris Salons. She quotes a "Heer van Sypesteyn":

Many of the wild stories had probably nothing to do with M. de St. Germain and were invented with the object of injuring him and making him ridiculous. A certain Parisian wag, known as "Milord Gower", was a splendid mimic, and went into the Paris salons to play the part of St. Germain – naturally it was very exaggerated, but very many people were taken in by this make-believe St. Germain.⁷

She mentions other sources that suggest the bogus St Germain to be Lord Gower. Could this possibly be true?

If this mimic really was Lord Gower, and this incident took place as late as 1757, as Cooper-Oakley implies, the only person who could rightfully use that title in 1757 was Granville Leveson-Gower (1721-1803), Lord Trentham. He had been First Lord of the Admiralty in 1749, and briefly MP for Lichfield, in the second seat, side by side with Thomas Anson, in 1754. Though from a Tory family and a former Jacobite, he had been persuaded to support the Duke of Newcastle, as had the Ansons.

Granville Leveson-Gower, later the 1st Marquess of Stafford, became an increasingly powerful figure. Outside his political role he was an important influence in Staffordshire industry, supporting Wedgwood and the development of the canals (see Chapter 19).

A more intriguing candidate for the role of "Milord Gower" is Granville's younger brother, Richard, who shared the Lichfield seat with Thomas Anson in 1747. Richard Leveson-Gower was involved with the peace negotiations at the Hague as secretary to Lord Sandwich, as was Thomas Anson the following year. However, the Duke of Bedford thought there was:

no other system of life for him to pursue, but an idle one.⁸

This may be a trivial anecdote with little substance but, given Thomas Anson's mysterious involvement with Lord Sandwich and the connections between Thomas and both Lord Gowers, it is worth a passing mention.

Richard Leveson-Gower died on 19th October 1753,⁹ at the age of 27. On 25th December 1754, Granville became Lord Gower on the death of their father, John Leveson-Gower. Could he really have been this frivolous young imposter in Paris in 1757? His later career suggests a man of seriousness and dignity.

Other versions of the story suggest "Milord Gower" was a French spy:

There lived in Paris a wag, called Milord Gower, because he took off the English so imicably. He had been engaged during the Seven Years war as a spy upon the British army, and the courtiers now employed him in all sorts of tricks and mystifications. This Milord Gower was conducted, under the name of Monsieur de St. Germain...¹⁰

In March 1760, St Germain arrived at The Hague claiming to be on a secret mission on behalf of King Louis XV. The King of France was keen to negotiate with England to break up the system of alliances that lay behind the Seven Years War. This devastating war involving all the European powers spread to the New World and India. England was opposed to France, who had planned to invade England in 1759, but were pushed back at

the battle of Quiberon Bay on November 20th. This defeat may have been a reason for the King of France to try a new approach. By 1760 St Germain had become an intimate of King Louis XV and his mistress, Madame de Pompadour.

Cooper-Oakley cites letters from an English diplomat, Mr Mitchell, to Lord Holderness, that refer to the Count amusing the French King:

...[with] experiments in Chemistry and that French King had him a present of the Château de Chambord.¹¹

Some sources give the impression that these experiments were purely scientific, others that St Germain was being kept by the King as a pet alchemist, having been given the Château de Chambord as a base for his mysterious experiments. The truth would reveal a lot more about the King's character in this supposedly rational age.

There is an enormous amount of documentation about St Germain's mission. Isabel Cooper-Oakley includes letters from both sides. Those of most interest to this study are letters from and to Joseph Yorke, Lady Anson's brother, who, as Minister Plenipotentiary at the Hague, was directly involved with St Germain when he first arrived.

The most important question, of course, is whether St Germain had any authority at all to act as an official representative, or was he simply mad as Walpole suggests?

The Comte d'Affry, French Ambassador at the Hague, was strongly opposed to St Germain and did everything he could to undermine the Count. The evidence in his favour does suggest that he believed he was acting for the King, yet in his own letters he talks about the King's weaknesses and lack of decision making. There is always the possibility that St Germain simply imagined what he was doing was what the King really wanted.

The King's reputation was at stake, not only his political reputation but also his credibility. The official French view tends to support the image of the Count as a scientist whom Louis XV was enthusiastically, and expensively, supporting. If people in France and England were to believe he was a charlatan, it would imply that the King was gullible or foolish.

By March 21st, the Secretary of State, Lord Holderness, had written a secret letter to St Germain by way of Joseph Yorke. The French King and the British Government were interested in discussions, but both were very wary indeed. By March 28th, Joseph Yorke had told St Germain that he needed to produce proof that his mission was legitimate. Ambassador d'Affry had received a letter from the Duc de Choiseul at Versailles, stating that there was no truth in St Germain's claims. Joseph Yorke, who referred to the "romance of Count St Germain", wrote that on talking to St Germain about this, "for the first time, I caught him wavering a little."¹²

Nothing more was done about any official negotiations. The Count moved on to Paris and the affair seems to have died down, but at the end of April (or beginning of May) 1760, St Germain, no longer treated seriously as a French agent, turned up in London.

Lady Anson notes his arrival in a letter to her husband, Admiral Anson, who was at Bath with Thomas at the beginning of May:

St Germain is come, & has been with Ld Holderness, he is not confined, & the present Idea seems not to be that he has acted a deceitful part.¹³

Clearly, she knew who the Count was and there was no need to explain the background. Lady Anson, living at the Admiralty, was in an ideal position to pick up details of the story and pass it on, even though she admitted herself that it was a secret.

Her letter to Thomas, which she encloses with a letter to George on May 2nd 1760, only a few weeks before her death, gives more details:

M St Germain is I believe under some kind of civil custody of a Messenger, & has been desired to leave this Country soon, for he cannot be permitted to stay in it. I am whispered, as a secret, that he tells some odd things, & says more: shows letters from many people of fashion in France, but rather of Friendship than of business, & some from people of Family whom he appears to have asked for money. He talks of his own general Benevolence, meaning no harm to any country; wishing well to France; would have assisted the French King if he would have followed his advice & relieved his subjects from the weight of Taxes; says he has it in his power to give the K. of France more than his Majesty can give him; with other such hints that seem to mean the Great Secret...¹⁴

This gives an insight into the Count's own view of the situation. He "would have assisted the French King" if he had taken "his advice". This may refer to the failed peace negotiations. Perhaps he had gone so far as to act on behalf of the King without his knowledge. But the most dramatic claim here is that not only would the Count's advice have "relieved his subjects from the weight of Taxes", but he could give the King of France "more than his Majesty can give him". This claim and "other such hints", Lady Anson interprets to mean "the Great Secret".

In other words, the Count seems to be confirming everyone's suspicions that his work for Louis XV was not simply a matter of entertaining chemical experiments but encompassed alchemical projects to create limitless wealth. If it became common knowledge that St Germain was involving himself at the centre of the country's rulership, the general populace would believe that King Louis had fallen for the charismatic Count's ideas and was also supporting him at great expense. This would be deemed hugely wasteful in terms of money and make the King appear extremely foolish, to say the least. It would have been

in many people's interest to suppress an embarrassing truth.

Lady Anson continues, saying that the Count:

...owns the fluctuating state of French Politicks, and the present ascendant of the D. of Choiseul, to whom he has foretold that (which?) would ruin France: Madame de Pompadour is, he says, against to-morrow what she was for to-day. He talks of Chambord & the money he has laid out there, but that he is very indifferent about, tho' he supposes the Castle is already taken from him; he had a Guard allowed him there, but he despises, he says, those little greatneses. This is a small, & I conclude a very trifling sample of what he has said, & yet is not to be talked of I believe. I understand it comes of Mr. Wood who was sent to him in consequence of his writing a letter to throw himself at Mr. Pitt's feet. Upon the whole it seems, like all the rest relating to the Man, odd, inconsistent and wild.

This, tho. it may appear to you a small matter, is my best anecdote.¹⁵

Her letter suggests that St Germain had lost his support and was looking for a new home. As he suspects, "the Castle is already taken from him".

St Germain may not have been welcomed by the political world, and his stay in London for a while did not go unnoticed. *The London Chronicle* on June 3rd 1760 included an account of the "mysterious foreigner".¹⁶ There is also a set of violin solo sonatas published in London c.1758,¹⁷ which might date from this visit, but, given the slow process of musical publication, more likely dates from a few years earlier.

Lady Anson finishes her gossip with:

Don't you tell your Batchelor Friends these strange stories. Indeed I do not know why I tell them you.¹⁸

This might be thought of as a revealing choice of phrase. Thomas's "Batchelor Friends" presumably included James Mytton.

It seems reasonable to suppose that Lady Anson wrote such a lengthy anecdote knowing that Thomas was familiar with the Count. He would have known of him as an adventurer and was possibly acquainted with him as a musician who had made an impression on London Society in the 1740s. It is quite probable that he had met the mysterious St Germain at Jemima Grey's party in 1749. He was certainly at the masquerade party on 3rd May, according to Jemima's letter to Mary Gregory.

In later years, the Count wandered around Europe and apparently finally settled in the German town of Eckernforde, where he died in 1784. Reports of his wanderings refer to

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his alchemical experiments, but it remains very difficult to separate fantasy from reality.

He does seem to have had some genuine scientific knowledge which he used for down-to-earth commercial work, including the manufacture of face potions. Perhaps he had no clear idea himself of what was real and what was make-believe. There is no doubt that he was a moderate composer and a charismatic violinist. The town of Eckernforde continues to promote performances of his music.

Some believe the Count is still alive.

NOTES: Chapter 15

- ¹ Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service, *Transcripts/Extracts of Correspondence of Jemima Yorke, (Marchioness Grey) sent to Lady Mary Gregory 1748-1757, Vol. 2. L30/9a/2*
- ² David Hunter, 'M. St Germain, the Great Pretender'. *Musical Times*, Winter 2003.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Bedfordshire Archives & Record Office. Op. cit.
- ⁶ Isabel Cooper-Oakley. *The Comte de St Germain*. Published by the Library of Alexandria, 1912. Available on Google Books. Republished as *The Count of St Germain*, by Rudolf Steiner Press, 1970.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Leveson Gower, Hon. Richard (1726-53), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754 (2 Vols.)*. Ed. R. Sedgwick, Boydell & Brewer, The Stationary Office, 1970. <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/leveson-gower-hon-richard-1726-53>
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ R. Ackermann, *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics, for January, 1815*. Vol. XIII, pp.19-20. Available on Google Books.
- ¹¹ Isabel Cooper-Oakley. Op. cit.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/2/462
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Isabel Cooper-Oakley. Op. cit.
- ¹⁷ Jean Overton-Fuller, *The Comte De Saint-Germain: Last Scion of the House of Rakoczy, 'Seven solos for a violin'*, Appendix II, pp.310-312. East-West Publications (UK) Ltd., London, 1988.
- ¹⁸ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit.

Chapter 16

James “Athenian” Stuart

The Doric Temple at Hagley Hall, in Worcestershire, is generally accepted as the earliest surviving building of the Greek Revival period. It is certainly the earliest to be built in baseless Doric order, the simplest possible form, and ideal as a place to sit and gaze at the beauty of Nature. This was a far cry from the Classical architecture of buildings inspired by Rome, intended to express grandeur and imperial power.

The Temple at Hagley was designed and built by James Stuart for George, Lord Lyttelton, sometime before 1760. J Mordaunt Crook, in his classic book *The Greek Revival*, says of the year 1758-59, usually given as the date of the construction of the temple, “the date is sacrosanct” – the starting point of the Greek Revival movement.¹ 1759 is, as will become clear, the more likely date for its actual construction. Hagley is given credit as the place of the starting point of the Greek Revival because of this iconic and historic building, considered by Mordant Crook to be the key structure of the movement.²

The Doric Temple at Shugborough is an almost exact copy of the one at Hagley, assumed to have been built no earlier than 1760. As the mists of time fade, it is becoming clear that Hagley does not stand alone. Its Doric Temple might have materialised before that at Shugborough but the inspirations behind the Greek Revival go back much further.

The revival of Greek style in architecture may have begun, physically, at Hagley, but the key building in the rediscovery of Greek ideas, poetically and philosophically, is the Shepherd’s Monument, which may have appeared in its initial form almost ten years earlier.

The architect, designer and painter, James Stuart, had the most important artistic influence on Greek Revival design. Architectural historian Kerry Bristol has argued that Thomas Anson was a key influence in the development of his work and that his support was an important factor in Stuart’s career.³

James Stuart (1713-1788), later known as “Athenian” Stuart, and his colleague Nicholas Revett, announced their plans in 1748 to travel to Greece, and to measure and draw Greek architecture. They travelled to Greece in 1751, via Venice, where Sir James Gray, the British Resident, nominated them for membership of the Society of Dilettanti.

The first volume of Stuart’s and Revett’s *The Antiquities of Athens*, not published until

1762,⁴ and subscribed to by both Thomas and George Anson, illustrates mainly smaller late classical buildings, which, by chance or design, were suitable for copying as garden monuments or to provide features for other architectural schemes. This proved to be a wise move, and, even before the book was published, their drawings were being copied for architectural and interior design projects. Although the buildings covered in the first volume were mostly of a later period than the great classical days of Athens, they satisfied a fashionable desire for Grecian taste. Thus, Stuart became known as the pioneer of Neoclassicism.

The first mention of the Hagley Temple as a concept is in a letter from Lord Lyttelton to Mrs Montagu, the leading hostess of intellectual and artistic London society.

In October 1758, Lyttelton writes:

Mr. Anson and Mr. Stewart who were with me last week are true lovers of Hagley, but their Delight in it was disturbed by a blustering Wind, which gave them colds and a little chilld their Imagination itself. Yet Stewart seems almost as fond of my Vale, as of the Thessala Tempe, which I believe you heard him describe when I brought him to see you. Nor could the East Wind deter him from mounting the Hills. He is going to embellish one of the Hills with a true Attick building, a portico of six pillars, which will make a fine effect to my new house, and command a most beautiful view of the country.⁵

Lyttelton's letter is a very important document for several reasons. Firstly, it proves that Stuart and Anson already knew each other in October 1758. It is generally assumed that the Hagley Temple was the first building to epitomise the Greek Revival, and that Shugborough followed with an almost exact copy a year or so later, possibly in 1760. This, in turn, has led some writers to assume that all of Stuart's work at Shugborough must have been from after this date, including his part in the design of the Shepherd's Monument.

If the Hagley Temple was still only an idea in October 1758, it can be surmised that it was probably built in 1759. It was not actually constructed by Stuart, but by Sanderson Miller. Miller was himself an architect, but, as mentioned in Chapter 10, he also took responsibility for translating the drawings of other artists into practical buildings, including carrying out some work at Shugborough.

Secondly, the letter clearly places the idea of a portico in the landscape. Lyttelton, an early enthusiast for the Picturesque, may have seen his own Hagley valley as an imitation of the "Thessala Tempe". The Greek classical style is intimately connected with the beginnings of the "Romantic" love of Nature, whether portrayed as Mediterranean or an English Arcadia. This is an immensely important point.

The Greek Revival, as far as this study is concerned, is a movement of ideas, not just in

art and architecture. It is a matter of expressing an attitude to the world of the value of aesthetics in art and nature. It coincided with and reflected the developments in philosophy and other aspects of the Age of Enlightenment. A Doric Temple may have been a tribute to ancient Greek taste, but it was also a place to sit and contemplate Nature and the Truths beyond the surface of the material world – to contemplate “the Forms”, or “Divine Ideas”, as James Harris wrote in his *Three Treatises* of 1744.⁶

Harris was a friend of Lyttelton, a literary colleague who was certainly aware of these Platonic philosophical concepts. In the 1750s, the fashion for landscapes turned to the natural and romantic. Thomas Anson had visited various places which followed this new style, including Thomas Wright’s Stoke Park, north of Bristol.

Lyttelton’s letter reveals that Stuart was already known to Mrs Montagu in 1758. She was to become one of his most important patrons. Lyttelton may have introduced Stuart to Mrs Montagu, but at what point Thomas Anson came into the picture is uncertain. This is the earliest documentary proof of Stuart and Anson working together, yet the evidence, as it can be pieced together, suggests that the partnership of Anson and Stuart may have predated his association with Mrs Montagu by several years.

Kerry Bristol, in her article published in *Apollo* magazine in 2000, argues that many of Stuart’s commissions owed their origins to introductions by Thomas Anson, of which Hagley Park was the first.⁷

However, the Hagley Temple was not Stuart’s first architectural project. Interestingly, his two earliest commissions, for which there is documentary evidence, both came from Thomas Anson’s contemporaries in the early days of the Dilettanti Society, and with whom he definitely had a continuing friendship.

The first of these individuals is Thomas Villiers (1709-1786), Lord Hyde and later Earl of Clarendon, who, on his return to England became MP for Tamworth between 1747 and 1756 (see Chapter 4). This period was especially significant, as from 1748-56 Villiers was also one of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty, serving under both John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, and George, Baron Anson.

One of Lady Anson’s letters reveals that Villiers was at Shugborough at the end of 1749. She wrote to Thomas, on 29th December 1749, saying that as she expects him to be at Shugborough when the letter is received, to thank him for his hospitality:

Be so good to forgive this scrawl, which is wrote in great hurry, as I expect to up Stairs to tea every minute. If that Giver of Dinners Mr Villiers is with you you will, it is hoped, present to him many compliments [from the] two Receivers of Dinners, whom he entertained the day before he left London.⁸

Stuart also built a Doric Portico for Lord Hyde at The Grove, in Hertfordshire. This has since vanished and may not have been a prototype of the two almost identical Doric porticos at Hagley and Shugborough. There is a reference to "Mr. Stewart's six column Grecian Doric Portico" at The Grove, in Sanderson Miller's diary for September 21st 1756.⁹

Curiously, this is the day after the first definitive dated evidence of the Shepherd's Monument, which is the letter from Elizabeth Anson enclosing the poem by the young Anna Seward.¹⁰

If Stuart's contribution to the monument had been completed by September 1751, it is possible that the Shepherd's Monument could predate the temple at The Grove.

Villiers, who married the heiress of the Hyde family, continued to be involved in Stuart's work well into the 1760s, when he writes to Lady Spencer about Stuart's slow and expensive progress at her house.¹¹

Simon Harcourt (1714-1777), 1st Earl of Harcourt between 1727 and 1749, governor to the Prince of Wales in 1751, and, in 1761, after his accession to the throne, to George III, was another of the recipients of a mourning ring at Thomas Anson's death (see Chapter 20). His various government positions and role in negotiating the marriage of Princess Charlotte to the King, bringing her back from Germany with Lord Anson, is discussed in Chapter 4.

Lady Harcourt, formerly Rebecca Samborne Le Bass, had been looking at Stuart's drawings as early as February 1756, only four months after his return from Greece,¹² but it is possible that Stuart had begun work at Shugborough several months before this date.

If Stuart was already working for the two Dilettanti members most closely connected to Thomas Anson as early as this, it is perfectly possible that his additions to the Shepherd's Monument could date from as early as 1756, in which case previous estimates of the dates of Stuart's work at Shugborough were misguided.

Susan Weber Soros's fabulously illustrated *James "Athenian" Stuart, The Rediscovery of Antiquity*¹³ and articles elsewhere, now suggest that Stuart's work for Anson started in 1756. The beginning of their working relationship could date from even earlier, immediately upon Stuart's return from Athens.

An article in the *V&A online Journal*, in 2008, by Julius Bryant on Stuart's villas and country houses, accepts that Anson was Stuart's most important patron.¹⁴ This supports the view that Stuart may have initially been working with experienced builders and craftsmen, including, perhaps, Sanderson Miller at Shugborough, and that the expansion of Stuart's clientele began with Anson's neighbours, who included Lord Lyttelton. It is reasonable

to suggest that Anson introduced Stuart to his Dilettanti Society friends, Viscount Villiers and Lord Harcourt.

If this was the case, Anson must have been in a position to meet Stuart as soon as he came back to England, in October 1755. As with Thomas Wright, Anson seems to have played a key role in James Stuart's life, and yet neither left any clue telling us how their relationship began. Many of Stuart's patrons had connections with the Ansons' wider social circle.

There is also a mystery about Anson's relationship with the Society of Dilettanti. As mentioned in Chapter 4, although he was one of the earliest members, there is no evidence of his continuing involvement with the Society – and yet the two Dilettanti members who certainly did commission architecture from Stuart, were the two individuals most closely connected with Anson.

This raises the question, did Thomas Anson have an invisible role in the background of the Society's support for Stuart? Alternatively, did he somehow approach the artist when he arrived in London to live with the notorious Jacobite Dawkins?

James Dawkins (1722-1757), eldest son of a wealthy sugar plantation owner in Jamaica, was elected to the Society of Dilettanti in 1755 at the proposal of James Stuart, two years before his death at the age of 35. Notably, it was Dawkins who funded Stuart's and Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens*, the first volume published in 1762 by the Society (see also Chapters 4 and 12).¹⁵

It should be mentioned that some time before this, Stuart approached Charles Watson-Wentworth, the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham. Stuart had noted his name in a list of subscribers to his Greek project, presumably in the hope that they would be interested in his original work. One of the features he designed for Rockingham's vast house, Wentworth Woodhouse, Britain's biggest private home just outside Rotherham, was a series of stucco panels for the Grand Salon. As mentioned in Chapter 12, the panel on the Cat's Monument at Shugborough appears to have been copied from one of these designs.

Another possible piece of evidence that Stuart was working at Shugborough earlier than previously thought possible, is a reference in Lady Anson's letter of 17th July 1756, to "the project of a greenhouse".¹⁶ This probably refers to her initial ideas that resulted in Stuart's Orangery.

As the year 1756 was previously thought to be far too early for Stuart's involvement, it has been suggested in the past that there may have been an earlier greenhouse which was replaced by Stuart's elaborate building. This seems to be an unnecessarily complicated theory. While it may not have been built until much later – Philip Yorke saw the foundations under construction in 1763 – it could well be the case, as Lady Anson indicates, that

Stuart was already discussing the greenhouse project in July 1756. The Greenhouse, or Orangery, was not actually completed until 1764.¹⁷

The Cat's Monument, which may be based on a Thomas Wright design, was certainly not yet built in 1749, when Lady Anson wrote of a possible source of stone for "Kouli Kan's monument" (see Chapter 11).¹⁸ There is the possibility that the complete structure could date from the same period as Stuart made his additions to the Shepherd's Monument.

There is certainly a relationship between the two monuments. Since the vegetation has more recently been cleared, the Cat can be seen to appear to look across the river towards the Shepherd's Monument. The two may have been deliberately sited to give this striking and undoubtedly meaningful relationship – but is this part of an original 1747-48 scheme or a later development?

The sculptor Scheemakers had been working for Thomas Anson from the very beginning of the transformation of Shugborough. He is mentioned in a letter dated August 1st 1748, when Thomas wrote to George about the polishing of marble tables.¹⁹

Stuart and Scheemakers were established partners after 1759, the year they began their monument to Admiral Howe in Westminster Abbey. Many of Stuart's first monumental designs, including the Howe memorial and one for Lord Hardwicke at Wimpole, were dependent on the Anson connection.

Ingrid Roscoe, who has studied Scheemakers' career in detail and written his entry in *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain, 1660-1851*,²⁰ suggests 1756 as the date of the Poussin relief. This is a logical deduction if the early date of the monument, as implied by Rev. Sneyd Davies's poem,²¹ is wrong. If this earlier date is incorrect, the alternative interpretation would be that the monument was entirely built by 1756, from Stuart's adaptation of a Thomas Wright sketch. The Shepherd's Monument would therefore be Stuart's oldest surviving structure.

However, at the time of writing (July 2019) this seems the less likely alternative. The Shepherd's Monument, as seen today, can, nevertheless, still be said to be the earliest surviving building in which Stuart played a part. It is also the first known documented structure of the Greek Revival. Whatever the actual date of the monument's original construction, it is true to say that the Greek Revival, as an architectural movement, began at Shugborough in 1755-56, and not at Hagley in 1758-59.

Stuart's work at Shugborough covers a period of up to 17 years, from 1756 until Anson's death in 1773. The series of garden monuments are historically significant, as were the alterations to the house.

Philip Yorke wrote to his father, Lord Hardwicke, on August 22nd 1763:

Appartments whc are fitted up and furnished with all the Elegance & ornaments wch the Arts of Italy & the Magnificence of China can afford... I do not admire Stewart's Paintings in the vestibule; they are hard and the colouring is (...?) I have not hinted this to Mr. Anson.²²

He may be referring to a painted room which was demolished when the house was again extended at the end of the 18th century. The existence of this room had been forgotten until a few years ago, when pieces of brightly painted plaster were found under the floorboards. In Stuart's time an upper floor was added to the Wright extension, creating space for further bedrooms. The painted room may have been part of this new extension.

Yorke's phrase "I do not admire Stewart's Paintings in the vestibule" suggests there may have been paintings on the walls, certainly in the hallway, as well as decoration of the rooms. Lord Hardwicke was equally unimpressed by Stuart's talent as a painter, as he replied to his son, Philip Yorke:

...the Owner of Shugborough will go on to comb, dress, & improve it, in the manner you represent. He has all the means of doing it in his hands. He had always Tast... In Designs for Sculpture. He is I believe in the right to make use of Stewart's Scavoir-faire; but I wonder He suffers him to daub his House with his Pencil... He is certainly no Painter.²³

Stuart created a painted room with similar details at Spencer House, St James' Place. His Greek inspired style spread to every part of interior design, including decorating the furniture. In 1769, the agriculturalist and travel writer Arthur Young (1741-1820), who was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1774, wrote:

The carving and gilding is all unrivalled; the taste in which every article throughout the whole house is executed, is beyond conception just and elegant...²⁴

At Shugborough there are two simple and elegant pier tables, now in the Red Drawing Room, and tripod stands designed for the Library. These show the fine detail and high quality of Stuart's designs, though it seems his own painting was not of such excellence.

A major commission for painted interiors came from Philip Yorke in 1766, by then 2nd Earl of Hardwicke, which is surprising given his derogatory comment to his father about Stuart's painting only three years earlier. Other commissions came from Sir William Bagot, Thomas Anson's friend and neighbour, for a Green House at Blithfield Hall.

In November 1764, Stuart was trying to build support for his (successful) application to succeed William Hogarth as Serjeant Painter at the Office of Works. James Stuart also became Surveyor to the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, thanks officially to Lord Anson, but no doubt originally due to Thomas's influence.

THE DORIC PORTICO (~1760)

Although documentary evidence for the work of James "Athenian" Stuart at Shugborough survives, including a fascinating collection of letters to Thomas Anson, there is still a haze of confusion surrounding the Doric Portico.

The Portico is virtually identical to Lord Lyttelton's Temple at Hagley, built by Sanderson Miller from Stuart's design, situated to command a view in contrast to the Shugborough Portico which is on low ground.

Surviving illustrations show that it was originally the grand entrance to the walled garden; the outline of the door can still be seen in the back wall of the structure. The date of the walled garden is uncertain and may have predated the Portico.

There is a typically puzzling reference in Lady Anson's last letter to Thomas at Shugborough. On 24th May 1760, she tells him:

Mr. Stewart desires to be informed of the number & size of your Dorick columns; having made the Drawing of your Portico, which he wants to make the Scale to before he sends it.²⁵

It is difficult to determine what Lady Anson actually means here. "The number & size of your Dorick columns" suggests that Stuart is asking for dimensions of some columns that already exist. Could this be true?

As the Shugborough Portico, usually dated to 1760, is an almost exact copy of the one at Hagley, it is curious why Stuart needed further details or why there should be any question about the "number & size". This puzzling reference by Lady Anson may be the reason why the Doric Portico at Shugborough has been dated to 1760. There is, however, always the possibility that her comment, as quoted by David Watkin in his *Athenian Stuart*,²⁶ actually refers to something else. There seems to be no simple way of knowing.

THE ARCH OF HADRIAN (1761 onwards)

The story of the Shugborough monuments becomes very much clearer with the Arch of Hadrian. It was the first building to be based on the drawings that Stuart and Revett made in Greece, which were not published in their book *The Antiquities of Athens* until 1762.²⁷

An estimate for its construction of Portland stone, from builder John Hooper, dated November 1761, gives the cost as £282/14s/1d.²⁸

The Arch became a memorial for Lady Anson. Horace Walpole, who had been very

impolite about the marriage of Lord and Lady Anson in 1748, wrote to William Wentworth, 2nd Earl of Strafford, on June 7th 1760, the week of her death, at the age of only 34 years old:

I dare say you are sorry for poor Lady Anson. She was exceedingly good-humoured, and did a thousand good-natured and generous actions.²⁹

There is, of course, no written record of what her death meant to Thomas. Thomas and Elizabeth seem to have had an unusual friendship and relationship for a brother and much younger sister-in-law. She was a regular visitor to Shugborough and an influence on its design from 1748, when Thomas wrote to George that the Chinese House was waiting for her presence to be completed (see Chapter 13).

Catherine Talbot wrote to Elizabeth Carter, on June 24th 1760:

I had to-day a very painful, though a very gratifying message from Lord Anson with a mourning ring.³⁰

Her brother Joseph was still affected by her death three years later. In 1763, Elizabeth Carter, having met him in Holland, writes to Catherine Talbot:

Well, we did dine with Sir J. Yorke yesterday, who has a very fine house, and appears as an ambassador extraordinary should do. You will love and honour him more than ever, for talking of nothing so much as of Lady Anson, whose death he declared to be the greatest loss he ever had, or ever could have: he talked of her likewise the night before, and every occasion seems to bring her to his thoughts.³¹

George Anson died two years after Elizabeth, in June 1762. Jemima, Marchioness Grey, describes seeing the Arch of Hadrian the following summer, in August 1763:

We have been this Morning through a very Stormy Wind on one of the Neighbouring Hills that commands a very fine prospect, & on which is erected a triumphal Arch out of Mr. Stuart's Athenian designs & under his Direction. A most beautiful Structure that has been long begun, but will now I understand (by a Drawing Shewn but not mention'd) be applied to a different purpose from what could be first intended.³²

Scheemakers carved the "trophies" for the Arch as memorials to Lord and Lady Anson. In August 1764, Stuart wrote to Thomas Anson:

Scheemakers is very happy that you approve his Trophies. He says he cannot take less than 800£ & wishes to have the (as he hinted to me) payment completed as he is about purchasing the house he lives in...³³

The medallions on the lower stage were not added until much later. Stuart writes to Anson on 7th June 1769:

Mr. Scheemakers has modelled one of the medallions for the Arch & I am much pleased with it, Neptune & Minerva are establishing naval discipline – he is pleased with it himself.³⁴

There is a watercolour painting by Moses Griffith depicting the monuments, titled 'An Extensive View of the Park and Monuments at Shugborough'.³⁵ Another of his paintings is of 'The Triumphal Arch', dated by the National Trust Collections catalogue to about 1780, and referred to as:

a copy of the Arch of Hadrian, Athens but incorporating monuments to Admiral Anson and his wife Elizabeth Yorke.³⁶

THE GREEN HOUSE (1763-4)

Lady Anson implied that a greenhouse had been contemplated in 1756, yet the elaborate Orangery or Green House, sadly now lost, may have only begun in 1763. It stood on the site of the present rose garden.

Philip Yorke wrote to his father, Lord Hardwicke, in August 1763, indicating that the foundations were newly laid at the time of his visit (the first in fifteen years), having arrived at Shugborough with Thomas from a visit to Hagley:

The place has received many embellishments since I saw it in 1748 & the owner is still improving it both within doors and without – I cannot help comparing it with the Virgin's Chappel at Loretto – wch remains in its original State an ordinary Brick Edifice, whilst the superstition of its Votaries has surrounded it with one of the finest & most costly churches wch the Romish religion has to boast of – Thus Mr. Anson has left his small Family Hall, little drawing room & narrow passage, but added to them on each wing Apartments wch are fitted up and furnished with all the Elegance & Ornaments wch the Arts of Italy & the Magnificence of China can afford. He still meditates further Additions to the House, in order to gain more room for guests and is enlarging the Offices. In his Garden he is laying the foundation of a handsome Green House, designed by Stewart, and in his Grounds he is erecting an Arch of Portland Stone...³⁷

His letter goes on to describe the Poussin relief of the Shepherd's Monument, which Philip does not seem to have seen before.

The Green House was a showplace for sculpture as much as for plants, as the 1767

anonymous poem describes:

... the ravish'd eye
Surveys the miracles of Grecian art
In living sculptures, godlike shapes & forms
Excelling human!

The work displayed included modern statues, most probably based on classical originals of Hymen and Narcissus, Flora, and a particularly striking Adonis.

In 1770, a mural by Nicholas Dall, who painted landscapes and several views of the house, was installed in the Orangery. James Stuart wrote to Thomas, on 25th September 1770, describing the designs:

Mr Dall has shown me the designs for the pictures in the green-house & library. The subject for the Green house is a view of the temple of Minerva Polias with the Caryatides, on the principal ground, & in the distance he has introduced what remains of the Odeum of Pericles, both of them Subjects engraved for my second volume... The waterfall, with the scenery accompanying it, he has contrived with great ingenuity. I think it will have a wonderful effect, it must astonish & delight every spectator.³⁸

THE TOWER OF THE WINDS (1764 onwards)

The Tower of the Winds was begun in 1764, based on the Horologium (clock) of Andronikos Cyrrestes, in the old agora in Athens c.48 BC. The original building had relief carvings of the winds on its eight sides.

Joseph Banks, later President of the Royal Society, who visited Shugborough as a young botanist in 1767, was unimpressed. He wrote in his journal:

But the Temple of the Winds is what he seems to have least of all succeeded in here he has left the ancient design making two Porch entres instead of one and leaving out that most elegant freeze said to be the work of Phideas, to which the Building certainly owes the most of its beauty in the original as this plainly shews for want of it appears scarce more Beautiful than a common Octagon Pidgeon house.³⁹

There are two watercolour paintings by Griffith of 'The Tower of the Winds'. One has a large tree to the right of the foreground, with the Tower set back in the centre.⁴⁰ The other depicts the Tower surrounded by a small lake and shows the reliefs of the winds, which may have been painted trompe l'oeil panels.⁴¹ Perhaps the reliefs were not yet added when Banks visited, accounting for his derogatory comment.

The anonymous poem of July 7th 1767 describes them:

And cheif thy stately tower ANDRONICUS CYRRHESTES,
TEMPLE OF THE WINDS since call'd.
Mark, on the gorgeous frize in high relief
Embossed, the powers of air, gigantic forms.

The basic design of the tower from Stuart's and Revett's illustrations in their book *The Antiquities of Athens*,⁴² was frequently replicated in variations, including the building of a tower at West Wycombe designed by Nicholas Revett for Sir Francis Dashwood.

The Tower of the Winds was converted into a dairy at the end of the 18th century.

THE LANTHORN OF DEMOSTHENES (1764/5-67)

The Lanthorn of Demosthenes was planned in 1764. Thomas may have been familiar with the writings of Plutarch (c.46-c.119 CE), whose *Parallel Lives* also recount the life of Demosthenes.⁴³

It is interesting to discover that Thomas Anson was responsible for the positioning of the monuments, as Stuart indicates in his letter of June 1764:

I cannot figure to myself where the lanthorn of Demosthenes can be placed to more advantage than on the spot you showed me near to the Ladies seat. I long to know the spot. ... Pray is the place for the lanthorn of Demosthenes any where by the Canal & near the fine Clump of Trees Just at the Angle, pardon my inquisitiveness. I can't help thinking about it.⁴⁴

Andrew King has pointed out to the present author that a late 18th-century map shows a "Seat with two columns" near the drive from Milford, then the Lichfield Road.⁴⁵ This could be the "Ladies seat".

Stuart's reference to "by the Canal" must mean one of the artificial waterways, now lost, which included Wright's cascades and colonnaded bridge. It is possible that the Lanthorn was intended to be seen from the river, while sailing or rowing in an ornamental barge.

In the collection of paintings at Shugborough is Griffith's watercolour of the 'Lanthorn of Demosthenes. Choragic Monument of Lysicrates' of unknown date, "with a humpback bridge in the foreground."⁴⁶

Other Wrightian landscapes, in Ireland as well as at Wrest, incorporate canals. The Trent and Mersey canal was not built until 1770. The Lanthorn was already standing, without

its tripod and bowl, in 1767 – the year it is mentioned in the anonymous poem. The completion of the Demosthenes Lanthorn with its large tripod made by Josiah Wedgwood from Stuart’s design, is explained in Chapter 19.

When Doctor Johnson visited Shugborough in 1764, he wrote a satirical Latin epitaph on the Tower of the Winds. Curiously, Boswell’s *The Life of Samuel Johnson* suggests his visit was to “Lord Anson’s seat”. He criticises Johnson because, apparently, within half-an-hour of his visit, he was making critical remarks of their host, whom Boswell took to be Admiral Anson.⁴⁷ Even if Boswell had been at Shugborough in 1764 with Johnson – a political enemy of the Ansons – he could not possibly have met Lord Anson, who died in 1762. As Boswell did not publish his book until 1791, it is likely that this story is garbled.

As mentioned in Chapter 11, Boswell describes the Corsican goats in his earlier book, *An Account of Corsica*, published in 1768.⁴⁸ His confusion possibly supports the assertion that he had not met Thomas Anson before the dinner that took place in March 1772 at Mrs Montagu’s, in honour of Paoli (see Chapter 18).

By the end of Thomas Anson’s life, the Shugborough estate was an impressively varied landscape of follies, waterways, statues and wilderness. Even the open expanses of grass and meadows were, as Sir John Parnell wrote in 1769:

...fertile to a great degree and bespangled with the finest flowers which grow naturally in fine meadows.⁴⁹

15 ST JAMES’ SQUARE (1763-66)

When Lord Anson died in June 1762, Thomas inherited his brother’s estate at Moor Park, which he sold for £25,000. He also inherited Admiral Anson’s London house, 15 St James’ Square. This provided the opportunity for his largest commission from Stuart, when he was already 67 years of age.

Previously, Thomas’s London home was in Spring Gardens, adjacent to St James’s Park. He must have remained living there during the three years it took to build his spectacular new house (the Admiral’s old house was demolished in 1763). It was the first stone-fronted house in St James’ Square, and the first house in London to incorporate elements from Stuart’s and Revett’s *The Antiquities of Athens*,⁵⁰ both externally and internally.

Scheemakers worked extensively on details for 15 St James’ Square at the same time as his work at Shugborough. This included volutes for capitals based on the Temple of Minerva Polias, the original built by the 4th-century BC Greek architect, Pythius. These scroll-like ornamental designs, which are found on Ionic columns, also featured on the mural by Nicholas Dall in the Green House.

In June 1764, the first floor was reached. Stuart wrote:

The grand function of wetting the first floor was performed last Saturday when upward of 50 men had their bellies full of Beef pudding and Ale and your health was drank with very cheerfull huzzas, the Masters treated themselves and I had the honor of being president.⁵¹

The house was completed in 1766, by which time Thomas Anson was the rate payer. Stuart was immensely proud of the building, with three storeys and a basement.

Lady Sophia Shelburne, wife of Prime Minister William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, told Anson that it was:

a topic of much conversation among the Connoisseurs in Architecture.⁵²

Much of the decoration of this important house survives, even with various extensions and alterations in the 1790s and other modifications since. Such a showcase of a house was designed to be experienced by visitors, and, as we shall see in the following chapters, the building came alive in the late 1760s with a series of breakfast concerts, when the latest music and finest musicians complemented the most exquisite taste in design.

NOTES: Chapter 16

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- ³ Kerry Bristol, 'The Society of Dilettanti, James "Athenian" Stuart and the Anson family'. *Apollo, The International Art Magazine*, Vol. 152 9461, 2000, pp.46-54.
- ⁴ James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens: Measured and Delineated*. Printed by John Haberkorn, London, 1762. <https://archive.org/details/antiquitiesAthe1Stua>
- ⁵ Susan Weber Soros (Ed.), *James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity*. Yale University Press, 2006, p.324.
- ⁶ James Harris, *Three Treatises – The First Concerning Art; The Second Concerning Music, Painting and Poetry; The Third Concerning Happiness*. Printed by H. Woodfall jun., London, 1744. Available on Google Books.
- ⁷ Kerry Bristol. Op. cit.
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- ¹⁴ Julius Bryant, 'James 'Athenian' Stuart: The architect as landscape painter'. *V&A online Journal*, Issue No. 1, Autumn 2008, ISSN 2043-667X. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-01/james-athenian-stuart-the-architect-as-landscape-painter/>
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- ²² Susan Weber Soros (Ed.). Op. cit. p.272.
- ²³ Ibid. p.273.
- ²⁴ 'Building Spencer House (1756-66)'. <https://www.spencerhouse.co.uk/history/building-spencer-house/>
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- ²⁹ John Wright (Ed.), *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, Vol. III, 1759-1769*. Philadelphia, Lea and Blanchard, 1842, p.67.

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- ³⁶ Ibid. object/1270617
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- ³⁹ *Joseph Banks' Travel Journal, 1767*, (extracts). National Library of Wales.
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- ⁴¹ Ibid. object/1270633
- ⁴² James Stuart and Nicholas Revett. Op. cit.
- ⁴³ Plutarch's *Parallel Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* is a collection of biographies that recounts the lives of 50 historical figures. For a translation of Demosthenes by John Dryden see <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/demosthe.html>
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Chapter 17

That Universal Strain

The Library at Shugborough was no pretentious status symbol but a cosy gentleman's study at the heart of a modest villa, a place for repose and serious contemplation. It contained the fruits of the Classical and Ancient world, according to the 1767 anonymous poem:

Nor shall the CLASSIC Library remain
Unsung, replete with learning's genuine stores:
Not metaphysic dream, or sceptic doubt,
Or fierce polemic wrangle; but the songs
Of ancient GREECE, that universal strain
That earth & Heaven applauded, & the Gods
With rapture stoop'd to hear....¹

Many books survived from Thomas's father's time, when the library of William Anson occupied just part of the space of the new structure. A large number of books had been bought wholesale from the collection of Richard Banner of Little Aston Hall, in 1746 or 1747, as explained in Chapter 11.

A century later, in 1842, Thomas Anson's collection of books and art treasures was offered up for sale almost in its entirety,² to pay for the gambling debts of Thomas, 2nd Viscount Anson (1795-1854), which had disastrous consequences. Before the library was catalogued a few years ago, it had been assumed that everything of value had been lost, but several important relics of the 18th-century collection were found to have still been there, resting on the shelves, unnoticed. These surviving books include several that were either written by Thomas's friends, or had a personal significance to him. This suggests that the family were aware of certain titles that were important to Thomas and bought them back for posterity in the 1842 sale.

The Shugborough Library contained all the standard classics that a studious gentleman of culture would be expected to own. These included very fine and valuable volumes of Aldine editions of Greek literature, published in Venice in the early 16th century. There were also, not surprisingly, books of architecture and art, including a complete set of Piranesi engravings. There were classics of travel literature and early texts on horticulture. The sciences were represented, notably, by a 1713 edition of Newton's *Principia*. Thomas

also possessed a copy of Newton's *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* of 1727 – as noted in Chapter 3, this was the work that Zachary Pearce, one of Thomas Anson's two proponents to the Royal Society in 1730, had assisted Newton with in the 1720s.

James Harris, the leading philosopher of the Greek Revival, which is generally understood to have begun in the 1750s, was an enthusiast Neo-Platonist when such appeal went against the spirit of the time. His writings give an idea of the intellectual and artistic background to the Age of Enlightenment. It was Harris who shared Thomas Anson's symbolically significant story of his encounter with the old sailor on the isle of Tenedos (see Chapter 5).

James Harris, MP for Christchurch, was born in Salisbury in 1709, the eldest son of James Harris by his second wife, Lady Elizabeth Ashley Cooper. His father's first wife was Catherine Cocks, whose sister Margaret married Philip Yorke, later 1st Earl of Hardwicke, and Lord Chancellor from 1737 to 1756.

Harris's principal work, *Hermes: or, A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar*, published in 1751, was dedicated to Lord Hardwicke.³ James Harris was a trustee, with Thomas Anson and Sir Thomas Parker (Thomas Anson's uncle), of various codicils to Lord Hardwicke's will (d.1764), and it is Harris and his family that are the source of Thomas's musical activities in his last decade.

James Harris's *Three Treatises* of 1744 stand as the first published work of a now mostly forgotten revival of interest in Greek philosophy, particularly the works and ideals of Plato that underpin the Greek Revival.⁴ The first two treatises, which are in fact Platonic dialogues, *Concerning Art* and *Concerning Music, Painting and Poetry*, are rather dry and academic, but the third, *Concerning Happiness*, launches into flights of philosophical fancy from a character called Theophilus, who is probably modelled on Harris's friend Floyer Sydenham, to whom the treatise is dedicated.

The dialogue is an imagined conversation whilst strolling through the grounds of Wilton House, near Salisbury, home of the Herbert family. The speeches include Stoic views of the universe in which every person is part of a whole, each person's life depending on one another and on every part of the universe, down to "the smallest Atom":

THIS whole UNIVERSE itself is but ONE CITY or COMMONWEALTH — a System of Substances variously formed, and variously actuated agreeably to those forms — a System of Substances both immensely great and small, Rational, Animal, Vegetable, and Inanimate. As many Families make one Village, many Villages one Province, many Provinces one Empire; so many Empires, Oceans, Wastes, and Wilds, combined, compose that Earth on which we live.⁵

The object of this contemplation is Truth, and from a virtuous life inspired by Truth, comes Happiness. The enthusiastic Theophilus comes to a climax:

HERE let us dwell; — be here our Study and Delight. So shall we be enabled, in the silent Mirror of Contemplation, to behold those Forms, which are hidden to Human Eyes' — that animating WISDOM, which pervades and rules the whole — that LAW irresistible, immutable, supreme, which leads the Willing, and compels the Averse, to co-operate in their Station to the general Welfare — that MAGIC DIVINE, which by an Efficacy past Comprehension, can transform every Appearance, the most hideous, into Beauty, and exhibit all things FAIR and GOOD to THEE, ESSENCE INCREATE, who art of purer Eyes, than ever to behold Iniquity.

BE these our Morning, these our Evening Meditations — with these may our Minds be unchangeably tinged — that loving Thee with a Love most disinterested and sincere; enamoured of thy Polity, and thy DIVINE ADMINISTRATION...⁶

Thomas Anson's copy of the first edition is in the Library at Shugborough.⁷ The second edition, in 1765, has a frontispiece by James "Athenian" Stuart.

Another member of the small circle of mid-18th century Platonists was Elizabeth Carter, a close friend of architect and astronomer Thomas Wright. Although she became famous as the translator of the Stoic Epictetus (see Chapter 10), Carter was a Platonist at heart.

She writes to Catherine Talbot:

I must confess I have a much higher pleasure in reading Plato, and the other philosophers who wrote before our Saviour, than Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and the others who lived after. The remarkable difference in the clearness of their notions, shews that they must have been acquainted with the Christian Religion; and that such men should have been acquainted with it, and borrowed their best lights from it, and yet not be Christians, gives one a very painful feeling.⁸

Thomas Anson was a subscriber to Carter's translation of the works of Epictetus. His copy is still at Shugborough.⁹

Another friend or acquaintance who is represented in the Library is Richard Owen Cambridge. There is a copy of his satirical poem *The Scribleriad*¹⁰ still at Shugborough (though it does not appear in the National Trust Collections catalogue the time of writing), as well as the journal *The World*, to which he contributed.¹¹ (Both are mentioned in Chapter 14.)

Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) was a writer of enormous importance in the revival of classical ideals in the arts. Thomas Anson's copy of French translations of Winckelmann's *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ancient Art*¹² and his *Letter on the Discoveries of Herculaneum*,¹³ are both in the Shugborough Library.

Winckelmann influenced a new understanding of Classical Art, which encouraged the 18th-century view of the purity of Greek Art – of clean lines and white marble – which was not a true image of the art and architecture of the Greeks as it originally was, but an ideal which appealed to 18th and 19th-century seekers after Beauty. Later generations were shocked to discover that Greek sculpture had been coloured.

Winckelmann expressed a devotion to what he termed the “noble simplicity and quiet grandeur” of Greek Art and saw true Beauty in classical sculpture in the masculine form. He believed:

The only way for us to become great... is [by] the imitation of the Greeks.¹⁴

There is no evidence of a direct connection between Anson and Winckelmann, although John Dick, who acted as Thomas's agent in the purchase of art in Italy, mentions in a letter that he had written to Winckelmann for advice on a statue of Venus that Thomas was thinking of buying. Dick expressed his doubts about the “crouching Venus” and sent Thomas a collection of testimonies giving opinions on it. Unfortunately, only one of his enclosed notes has survived; this is a copy of Dick's letter, written in French, to Winckelmann.¹⁵ There is a bill among the collection of letters which shows that Thomas did, in fact, buy the statue.¹⁶

Winckelmann was tragically murdered in a bedroom in Trieste on June 8th 1768, by a “fellow traveller”.

There is a further sign of the influence of Winckelmann in the 1767 anonymous poem which describes Shugborough in great detail, with many allusions to classical mythology. This lengthy poem is written in imitation of Milton's blank verse (see Appendix). Whilst many poets imitated Milton, including, in small doses, Lord Lyttelton, the most likely candidate for its authorship is Rev. Richard Jago.

Richard Jago (1715-1781) was born at Beaudesert, near Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire. The son of a rector, Jago also became a clergyman. He was a school friend of William Shenstone, the creator of the influential romantic garden at The Leasowes, near Halesowen (see Chapter 12).

Jago's *Verses to William Shenstone, Esq; on receiving a Gilt Pocket-Book, 1751*, first published in 1758, includes a verse that could possibly refer to Shugborough:

Whether the prospect strain the sight,
Or in the nearer landskips charm,
Where hills, vales, fountains, woods unite.
To grace our sweet Arcadian farm.¹⁷

Jago's *Edge Hill, or, the rural prospect delineated and moralized*, written in four books, is a rambling topographical poem in Miltonic blank verse, with many moral and descriptive passages of both natural and man-made landscapes, including Shenstone's Leasowes. It was begun in 1762 and published in 1767. *Edge Hill* was republished in Robert Dodsley's collection of *Poems, Moral and Descriptive*, in 1784.¹⁸

Thomas Anson subscribed to the first edition in 1767 (the year of the Shugborough poem), but his copy has since disappeared. There is, however, a copy in the National Trust Collections at Croft Castle, Herefordshire,¹⁹ and at Charlecote Park, Warwickshire.²⁰

The Shugborough poem has passages that are very similar indeed to the landscape descriptions in *Edge Hill*. It could almost be a sequel or appendix to Jago's epic. It would be easy to imagine Rev. Jago visiting Shugborough with Shenstone – who certainly visited and wrote about the Shepherd's Monument in his letter of 1759 – or with his close associate and friend Sanderson Miller, perhaps also with Lyttleton.

Sanderson Miller (1716-1780) was a gentleman architect himself, and certainly worked at Shugborough in the 1750s and 1760s. He inherited the estate at Radway Grange, in Warwickshire, in 1737, and redesigned the house in Gothic style. His octagonal tower was supposedly sited on the spot where King Charles raised the battle standard before the Battle of Edgehill, in 1642.

Miller supervised the construction of buildings designed by others, including the Pagoda and other buildings at Shugborough, also Stuart's Doric Temple at Hagley. He was very likely the builder of the almost identical Doric Temple at Shugborough and the later Stuart constructions that were underway in the 1760s. His patron was George Lyttelton.

There are very good reasons to suggest that Jago might have visited Shugborough with any one of these people, or while in the neighbourhood of his wife's family at Rugeley.

This is only a suggestion, of course, but one can compare a passage from the Shugborough anonymous poem of 1767 with a passage from Richard Jago's *Edge Hill*, written as a tribute in praise of Sanderson Miller, and note the similarities.²¹

The handwriting of the poem's manuscript does not appear to be Jago's own. Its neatly formed letters look more like the handwriting of a young person, perhaps Jago's daughter, copying the text as part of the subterfuge of anonymity. The case for Jago's authorship of the anonymous Shugborough poem is, however, fairly convincing.

THAT UNIVERSAL STRAIN

SHUGBOROUGH 1767 POEM

High grounds, & waving woods, at distance due
Close the fair landscape: INGESTRE'S awfull shades,
TIXAL'S grey towers, & CHARTLEY'S castled hill.
Westward, with near approach, & bolder swell,
The wavy hills rise mountainous, befringed
With gloomy groves of never-changing leaf,
Cedar, or pine, or fir: plantations vast,
And venerable! not in curious lines
Restrained, & cramp'd, nor on the summits clump'd
Bleak, & unthrifty; but profusely spread
Along the mountain slope for many a mile
To shade a country. Such the groves that grace
The shaggy sides of APPENNINE, or huge PIRENE.
Underneath a limpid lake
The molten chrystal of an hundred rills
Gushing from purple CANK'S salubrious sides
Collects, expansion pure, with verdant isles
Inlaid it's lucid bosom, & it's shores
With marble temples, glittering structures, crowned,

EDGE HILL

His winding way, enlarging as it flows,
Nor hastes to join Sabrina's prouder wave.
Like a tall rampart, here the mountain rears
Its verdant edge; and, if the tuneful maids
Their presence deign, shall with Parnassus vie.
Level and smooth the track which thither leads
Of champaign bold and fair.
Its adverse side Abrupt, and steep.
Thanks, Miller! to thy paths,
That ease our winding steps, Thanks to the fount,
The trees, the flowers, imparting to the sense
Fragrance or dulcet sound of murmuring rill,
And stilling every tumult in the breast!
And oft the stately towers that overtop
The rising wood, and oft the broken arch
Or mouldering wall, well taught to counterfeit
The waste of time, to solemn thought excite,
And crown with graceful pomp the shaggy hill.
So Virtue paints the steep ascent to fame.

In the notes at the end of the anonymous poem, the author quotes, or more likely paraphrases from memory, Henry Fuseli's 1765 translation of Winckelmann's *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, which expresses an interest in Greek Revival ideas and in the Platonic philosophy of Beauty:

Thus Raphael formed his Galatea, as we learn by his letter to Count Baltazar Castiglione where he says, "Beauty being so seldom found among the fair, I avail myself of a certain ideal image."²²

Compare this to what the poet says of the 1767 Shugborough poem:

Raphael did the same in his letter to Count Balthazar Castiglione, speaking of his Galatea, he says, "Perfect beauty being so seldom found, I avail myself of a certain Idéal image."²³

The anonymous poem of 1767 is given in its entirety in the Appendix.²⁴ As well as all the wondrous Arcadian allusions and mythological references, it gives a very detailed and colourful picture of the marvels of the estate as they appeared to visitors when it was at its height, with most of Wright's and Stuart's monuments and improvements in place.

The poet does, however, get a bit carried away. This extract is, one would imagine, inspired by the Chinese House and the Pagoda, but what are all those multi-coloured temples?

Hence on the TRENT, SINĒAN trophies shine:
Airy Pagodas, elegant & light,
With painted balustrades, & gilded spires;
And Temples, that like broad pavilions spread
Their ample roofs, with listed colours gay,
Green, azure, purple, & distinct with gold;
Here 'mid circumfluous waters aptly placed
Cast a mixt radiance o'er the trembling stream.
From hence, in wide expanse, the level mead
Spreads her smooth surface of continued green,

The contents of both Shugborough and 15 St James Square were put up for sale in 1842. *The Literary Gazette* for the 'Sale by Public Auction' on the premises of 15 St James' Square, or Lichfield House as it was known by 1842, on Tuesday June 14th, advertises:

the whole of the very superior furniture and effects...

as well as many ounces of gold and silver plate which likely included the Lemerì silver

(see Chapter 9), and a collection of fine paintings including by both N. and G. Poussin.²⁵

Gaspard Poussin (Nicolas's stepson, Dughet), a minor artist, was popular for his classical landscapes which are far looser and more romantic than those of Nicolas. One of Gaspard's paintings was striking enough to be engraved by an artist named Woolletts, in 1764.

The sale of the contents of Shugborough Hall was advertised for Monday August 1st, 1842 and the fourteen following days. A detailed list of items includes "valuable oriental sevres", porcelain, cut glass and linen, and, as at Lichfield House, the library of books and cellar of fine wines, together with:

the superior and complete furniture throughout the mansion [with] 25 best bed chambers. ...The state bed-chamber and dressing-rooms recently fitted up on the occasion of a royal visit.

...[and] antique statues and busts of finest Grecian and Roman sculpture.²⁶

The collection of statues and sculpture, both indoors and outside, was, nevertheless, more significant at Shugborough than the "splendid gallery of pictures" which, incidentally, the *Gazette* suggests was "formed by the celebrated Admiral Lord Anson".²⁷

The sale notification includes paintings by Claude, Guido, Poussin and other artists. There is some doubt as to whether Thomas owned a genuine Nicolas Poussin, other than, possibly, the small drawing of *The Arcadian Shepherds* which might originally have belonged to Lady Anson (though this is far from certain, as Chapter 13 explains). No authentic Poussin oil painting with provenance has been found that belonged to Thomas Anson's collection.

The house and grounds were full of both genuine classical sculpture and modern copies. There were nearly 80 specimens on offer, including the magnificent Castor and Pollux by Nollekens.²⁸ It is hard to imagine, now that the gardens are quite bare, the overall effect of the many marble and alabaster statues, busts and urns, some carefully positioned and others scattered about.

A collection of letters from John Dick at Leghorn, who dealt with the purchase of Classical Art, survives,²⁹ along with letters from Stuart which combine business and gossip,³⁰ and from the Flemish sculptor Scheemakers.³¹

Peter Scheemakers (1691-1781) was employed in transporting, supplying and mending statuary, as well as producing new work for both Shugborough and 15 St James' Square. Several of his monuments are in Westminster Abbey, including his best-known monument to Shakespeare. Others works include his memorial to Lord Hardwicke at Wimpole.

Ingrid Roscoe, in her article published in *Apollo* magazine, in 1987, on the partnership between 'James "Athenian" Stuart and the Scheemakers Family', writes that in 1767 Scheemakers sent Anson a bill (in pounds sterling), in his mixture of Dutch and English.³²

This included:

for two heds maid in to busts on pedestals	£12-12/-
for sending a statue in a cart to the wagon an open	9/-
for packin a figure of Flora	7/-
for two men packing op sonderi tings	7/-
for mending brutus and four locks of hair to Adonis	£1-0/-
payd for 8 heds from Rome	£3-8/-

This reveals that Flora and Adonis were new additions to the Green House when the anonymous poet saw them, which would have been before 7th July 1767. The bill also includes a pricey chimney piece made for the back parlour by John Flaxman the Elder, father of the Neo-classical artist:

for a ciminy pies in the back parlor slab & corns	£35-14/-
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Between 1765 and 1771 Thomas Anson bought pictures from Italy through Sir John Dick, the British Consul at Leghorn (Livorno), and sculptures from Joseph Nollekens, who was Scheemakers assistant in Rome.³³ The above bill confirms that Nollekens sent the works to Scheemakers, who then arranged their transport, by wagon, to Shugborough.

Thomas Anson's sculpture collection, and his dealings with John Dick and Joseph Nollekens, are discussed in Vicky Coltman's book, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain Since 1760*.³⁴

Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823) wrote long detailed letters to Thomas and competed for the purchase of all kinds of classical sculptures, including cardinals and the Pope. He carved a statue of Castor and Pollux in the classical style, which, although contemporary, reached the highest price of any of the sculptures in the Shugborough Sale of 1842.³⁵ It is now in the Victorian and Albert Museum, with a copy in the hall at Shugborough.

In one letter that refers to work at both Shugborough and St James's Square, Nollekens makes this amusing comment:

The antique statues and plaister figures are designed for yourself, if they would prove to your likeing, but if the subjects are ungracious or indecent, I propose to keep them for my study, as you know that sometimes excellent workmanship is bestowed on very disagreeable Ideas, but then the workmanship makes such pieces valuable to an artist.³⁶

Other statues included Flora and Adonis in the Green House; centaurs which were originally in the Tower of the Winds; a Thalia, the muse of comedy and bucolic poetry, which Thomas Pennant thought particularly fine; Roman sarcophagi (some of which have the "D.M." inscription); and many other ancient and modern works.

In about 1780, Moses Griffiths painted the classical statue of Adonis:

...a naked male figure with left arm raised, right arm extended and draped cloak, set in niche.³⁷

There is also a watercolour by Griffith of the statue of Thalia, also portrayed standing in a niche, which is still at Shugborough.³⁸ Her statue, like that of Adonis in the Green House, is no longer there.

A large quantity of statuary and other items was bought from a bankrupt merchant in Leghorn, in 1766, including many medals, which were of particular interest to Anson.

This extract of the 1767 anonymous poem also refers to gemstones, yet there is no indication that Thomas owned or purchased gems unless they were traded as part of his business dealings.

Nor to books alone confined
Thy learned Archives: here whate'er remains
Of rare antiquity (or for design
Curious, or circumstance, or workmanship
Inimitable) in Coins, or graven Gemms,
Camëo or Intaglio; sardonix,
Cenilean ophite, amethyst, the blood
Cornelian, & the jasper's flowery vein.
Endless the task & the irksome to attempt
Particular discription, & the song
Already droops, tho' gorgeous the detail.

Before setting off on his epic voyage with Captain James Cook (1728-1770), Joseph Banks made a tour of England and Wales, visiting country estates and making notes of his observations in a journal.³⁹ In 1768, Banks was a 25 year-old gentleman naturalist, driven by enthusiasm and an adventurous spirit that would make him one of the leading figures in science in the 18th century. Through his friendship with Lord Sandwich (which later led him into the rakish activities of Francis Dashwood's circle), Banks booked himself onto the *Endeavour* as a self-funded naturalist.

He had other links with the world of Thomas Anson and corresponded with Anson's

friend Thomas Pennant, the Welsh naturalist. Banks had plans to travel to Uppsala, near Stockholm, to hear the great classifier of nature, Carl Linnaeus, give lectures. Pennant mentions in his own correspondence that he was critical of Linnaeus's classifications other than those in his own field, botany.⁴⁰

Botany, as well as agriculture, is an important theme in the history of Shugborough. Benjamin Stillingfleet, one of Thomas's closest friends in his old age and a regular visitor to Shugborough, was one of Linnaeus's strongest supporters in England. He was also a correspondent of Pennant.

Joseph Banks (1743-1820) was introduced to Shugborough, in the late summer of 1767, by another friend, John Sneyd of Bishton, Colwich. Sneyd (not to be confused with Sneyd Davies) was a member of the local gentry who would have regularly visited his near neighbour, Thomas Anson. For the voyage of the *Endeavour*, Sneyd lent Banks his own Herbarium. Appointed as the expedition's botanist, he spent three months, in 1768, on the island of Tahiti. Many of his writings survive.

In the late 1780's Banks became involved with the agriculturist Arthur Young in opposing restrictions on the export of wool.⁴¹

Banks' journal includes a description of his encounter with Thomas Anson when, on one occasion after dinner, he was looking at the statue of Adonis, which the 1767 poem tells us was in the Greenhouse or Orangery. His anecdote records Thomas's actual words:

...went with Mr. Sneyd to Mr. Ansons about 4 miles off at a place call'd Shuckborough to see his architecture and marble both which are reported to be beyond any thing else in their kind. Find a large company to dine there and are forc'd to content ourselves for this day, with taking our dinners and resolving to return and see things properly the next day: by an accident however found the estimation in which every thing there was held by its master.

Stealing from the company after dinner I got a candle and was employd in examining his chief marble which was an Adonis in the interior. He passes by. I took the opportunity of complimenting him by saying "truly sir this is a most elegant piece of workmanship." ... "Indeed it is, sir" said he, and shewing me the different parts of it "there's a grace sir ... Believe me the Venus of Medicis is clumsy to it." ... Having said this he retired and left me to my contemplations.

The figure is certainly a very elegant one tho I can not prize it so highly, as its master does. He is represented not with the Chase, having just thrown a light robe over his shoulders to cool gradually. Probably the Game is suppos'd to lye at his feet as he rests himself upon one leg and seems to contemplate something lying before him with a look of satisfaction.⁴²

This sculpture of Adonis would likely have satisfied Winckelmann's ideals of Beauty, as would Nollekens' Castor and Pollux.

The 1767 poet describes "the sculptured forms of Demigods or heroes", in the Orangery or Green House, including "Light-robed Flora", which still survives in a beheaded state:

Light-robed FLORA first,
Protectress of the place, with garlands crowned,
...
Nor shall the learned eye deem here misplaced,
O smooth ADONIS, thy transcendent form.

The scholarly note at the end of the poem (given in the Appendix) explains:

Adonis, Thammuz & Osiris are the Greek, Phenician & Egyptian names for the same person. His statue is not misplaced in a Greenhouse because under all these denominations, he is looked upon by the best Mythologists as the Power of Vegetation: particularly the Vegetation of Corn: whence in the fable that six months he lieth in Prosperine's lap, that is, whilst the seed of corn continueth under ground; & the other six months, that is Spring & Summer, he lieth with Venus.

The "Vegetation of Corn" is traditionally associated with the goddess of the grain Ceres, through the allusion to her mother Proserpine (her Greek counterpart is Persephone). The god Adonis was, in Greek mythology, the mortal lover of the goddess Aphrodite – the surrogate mother of the mortal shepherd Adonis. The poet was clearly aware of the need for the land to flourish, and of the statue of Adonis in the Green House. The central figures in the Eleusinian mysteries are Persephone and her mother Demeter; the myth of her abduction by Hades is used to convey the importance of the cycle of the seasons.

Another intriguing feature of Anson's library collection was a group of first editions, in French, of works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). These included:

Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761) – two editions
A Discourse upon the Origin and the Foundation of the Inequality Among Mankind (1761)
Émile (1762)
Remarks on the Writings and Conduct of J J Rousseau by H Fuseli (1767)
Letters: Correspondence Complete De Rousseau (1769)

Rousseau was a powerful influence on radical thinkers in England. The presence of his works in the Library suggests that Thomas had a serious interest in the philosopher. It is an indication that, even in his late sixties, Anson was forward looking in his ideas.

Rousseau may seem remote from Shugborough, but there were surprising points of contact in the 1760s. In the novel *Julie, or the New Heloise*, published in French, Rousseau sends his principal character on a voyage around the world with Admiral Anson, having been inspired by descriptions in Anson's *Voyage* of the unpopulated islands, Tinian and Juan Fernandez.⁴³ His hero visits the islands and returns to find that Julie has made a wilderness garden, which captures their spirit:

I was looking at the wildest, loneliest spot in the whole of nature, and I seemed to be the first mortal who had ever penetrated within this wilderness.⁴⁴

It is beyond curious coincidence that these descriptions in Anson's *Voyage* inspired Rousseau, who, in turn, influenced a taste for more natural garden design among his contemporaries, notably the 2nd Earl Harcourt, at Nuneham Courtney, in Oxfordshire.

Simon Harcourt retired to Nuneham House, where, on 16 September 1777, he met his death by falling into a well, from which he was trying to extricate a favourite dog.⁴⁵ It was Horace Walpole who unkindly described him as "civil and sheepish" (see Chapter 4), yet he was closely connected with Thomas Anson, and was the first President of the Dilettanti Society and a patron of Stuart.

Rousseau came to England in 1766 as a temporary exile after the publication of his *Social Contract*, which made him an outcast in Europe where he was identified as a dangerous revolutionary. At that time, some members of the Birmingham based "Lunar Society", such as James Keir (see Chapter 19), were outspoken supporters of the French Revolution.

In his *Social Contract*, Rousseau famously declares the subject of his first book to be that "man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains," and argues that society corrupts the essential goodness of humanity.⁴⁶

From March 1766, Rousseau lived at Wootton Hall, near Ellastone, Staffordshire, where he passed the time walking to Dovedale, studying wild plants and writing his autobiographical *Confessions*, which was, in part, composed in a cave-like grotto in the grounds of Wootton Hall. It was published posthumously in 1782.⁴⁷

At Wootton Hall, Rousseau's closest friend was 22-year-old Brooke Boothby, who visited him again in later life. Boothby reputedly said:

I passed much of my time with this divine man, & my love and respect are grown into absolute adoration.⁴⁸

Sir Brooke again referred to Rousseau as a "divine man" in his letter of 14 September 1778, to Lord Harcourt:

It gives me very sensible pleasure that you should think me capable of writing the life of that divine man.⁴⁹

Boothby, who lived in Stafford during his school years, was, after 1772, part of the Lichfield literary circle with Erasmus Darwin and Anna Seward. Darwin, an admirer, went out of his way to meet Rousseau "by accident" whilst out walking. This was so obviously contrived that the philosopher was very annoyed. He was near enough to Shugborough to be able to make a day visit, or for Thomas Anson to make the trip to Wootton. If Anson was an enthusiast, as his collection of books suggests, or simply curious, a visit would surely have been irresistible.

Even though David Hume (1711-1776), the philosopher and empiricist who had invited Rousseau to England, found him the isolation of Wootton Hall and persuaded the King, George III, to grant him a pension, Rousseau became neurotically suspicious of Hume and returned to France in June 1767.

The date of the anonymous poem, July 7th 1767, is just after Rousseau left Staffordshire. It describes, with its invocations of the natural landscape as well as the artificial world of gardens, an idyllic world which seems close to Rousseau's principles of "back to nature" and the Greek ideals of Harmony and Beauty.

The park at Shugborough was apparently open to passing shepherds and shepherdesses, and was a place where animals were safe from hunting and shooting:

To every creature that the vital air
Sustains, is ANSON'S kind benevolence
Extended: beasts of chace, & fowl of game
Secure in his protection roam at large
Unpersecuted. Never here was heard
The hunter's barbarous shout, or clam'rous horn
To fright the peacefull shades; or murd'ring gun
To stain the hospitable fields with blood.

Thomas Anson was a socially conscious individual. As with other grand projects in many country houses, a large part of the objective was to create employment:

Nor to the love of arts alone (tho' that
Well understood is praise) ascribe we all
These stately fabrics, this so splendid scene:
Humanity, attention to relieve
Industrious want, instruct, emply the poor,
His better motive. Sacred Charity
Bids every pile with happier auspice rise.

Thomas's exercise of "Sacred Charity" included building new cottages in the village in the 1760s. The paintings by Dall suggest that these cottages were integrated into the landscape where the local peasants were free to come and go (see Chapter 6). Nathaniel Kent wrote similarly of his enlightened treatment of the tenants on his Norfolk properties.

The poem ends in a Romantic and Picturesque mood:

Along the sunny ridge that overhangs
Eastward thy fair demesnes, & wide commands...
Westward, with near approach, & bolder swell,
The wavy hills rise mountainous, befringed
With gloomy groves of never-changing leaf,
Cedar, or pine, or fir: plantations vast,
And venerable! ...
...Oft let me wander, when the morning ray
First gilds thy groves & streams, & glittering towers,
And meditate my uncouth DORIC lay...

A carving of a mask that resembles Pan on the sandstone caves of the Haywood Cliffs (mentioned at the end of Chapter 11), now separated from the house by the canal and railway, suggests that the caves were part of Anson's original landscape, incorporating a Rousseau-style hermit's cave.

It could be, of course, that all these anecdotes, woven together to tell a story as truthful as the evidence allows, encourage us, over two hundred and fifty years later, to ascribe a certain outlook to Thomas Anson which may not have been his own. It would be wrong, however, to assume that all 18th-century landowners had similar attitudes to their estates and towards the tenants and peasantry living and working on their land, or that they necessarily dismantled their villages. Equally, the attitudes of some of the early industrialists were very far removed from 19th and 20th century capitalist stereotypes.

These fragments of evidence suggest that the social views of a landowner, especially one inspired by the ideals of ancient Greece, could be extremely liberal and benevolent, knowing that they were, in fact, guardians of the land for future generations, living in precarious times of war.

The anonymous poet, in his covering letter of July 7th, 1767, addresses his recipient whom he clearly holds in high esteem, saying:

You will most likely be surprised at the inclosed fantastical inventory of certain of your goods and chattels.

THAT UNIVERSAL STRAIN

He concludes:

He has nothing further to add but to assure You he thinks all he says, tho' said in verse.

In the final words of the anonymous poet:

These to Thee, ANSON, from a nameless Bard,
Who seeks nor praise, nor patron:
One whose Muse,
Conscious of all her dignity (for Heaven
Of old ordained the Muse, by firm decree,
Severe dispens'eres of authentic fame
When virtue claims the wreath) will ne'er disgrace
Her genuine function, prostitute her praise
To curs'd Ambition, Power, or worthless Wealth,
With servile adulation: Pleased to bear
Her writings to Benevolence like Thine.

NOTES: Chapter 17

- ¹ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/2/5
- ² See *A Catalogue of the Splendid Property at Shugborough Hall, Stafford to be Sold at Auction on the Premises on Monday the 1st Day of August 1842*. William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council. Sc B/1/1
- ³ James Harris, *Hermes: or, A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar*. Printed by H. Woodfall, London, 1751. Available on Google Books.
- ⁴ James Harris, *Three Treatises – The First Concerning Art; The Second Concerning Music, Painting and Poetry; The Third Concerning Happiness*. Printed by H. Woodfall, jun., London, 1744. Available on Google Books.
- ⁵ James Harris, Op. cit. Second edition, 1765, pp.225-6.
- ⁶ Ibid. pp.233-234.
- ⁷ Ibid. First edition, 1744. See also National Trust Collections, Shugborough. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3215570>
- ⁸ Montagu Pennington, Rev. (Ed.), *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from the Year 1741 to 1770: To which are Added, Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter to Mrs. Vesey, Between the Years 1763 and 1787; Published from the Original Manuscripts in the Possession of the Rev. Montagu Pennington. In Four Volumes, Vol. 1*. Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, London, 1809. Available on Google Books.
- ⁹ Elizabeth Carter, *All the Works of Epictetus which Are Now Extant*. Printed by S. Richardson, London, 1759. See also National Trust Collections. Op. cit. [object/3188877](http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3188877)
- ¹⁰ Richard Owen Cambridge, *The Scribleriad: An Heroic Poem in Six Books*. Printed for R. Dodsley, London, 1751.
- ¹¹ Adam Fitz-Adam, *The World*, Vols. 1-4, 1772. National Trust Collection, Wimpole, Cambridgeshire. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3108305>
- ¹² Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Monumenti antichi inediti spiegati ed illustrati (Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ancient Art)*. Rome, 1767. Available on Google Books. See also National Trust Collections, Shugborough. <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3041592>
- ¹³ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Letter on the Discoveries of Herculaneum*. 1764 (published in French). See National Trust Collections, Shugborough. Op. cit. [object/3089297](http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3089297) Republished by Carol C. Mattusch, with introduction, translation and commentary as *Letter and Report on the Discoveries of Herculaneum*. Paul J. Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2011.
- ¹⁴ Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*. First edition in German (50 copies), 1755. Second edition, 1756. Translated by Henry Fueseli as *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, 1765. Republished by Open Court Publishing Co., 1987.
- ¹⁵ Staffordshire Record Office, *Correspondence from Sir John Dick (British consul at Leghorn) and others regarding purchases of antiquities in Italy, 1765-1771*. D615/P(A)/2
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Richard Jago, 'Verses to William Shenstone, Esq; on receiving a Gilt Pocket-Book, 1751' in *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes. By Several Hands. Vol. V*. Printed by J. Hughs, for R. & J. Dodsley, London, 1763, pp.70-72. First edition 1758. <https://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/works/o5156-w0320.shtml>

- ¹⁸ Richard Jago, 'Edge-Hill, or, the rural prospect delineated and moralized. A Poem, in Four Books' in *Poems, Moral and Descriptive*, pp.1-140. Printed for J. Dodsley, London, 1784. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁹ National Trust Collections, Croft Castle, Herefordshire. Op. cit. object/3084757
- ²⁰ Ibid. Charlecote Park, Warwickshire. object/3084756
- ²¹ A few words appear in both extracts: 'shaggy' (used by Milton in *Paradise Lost*), 'rills' and 'crowned'.
- ²² Johann Joachim Winckelmann, translated by Henry Fusseli, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*. London, 1765.
<https://archive.org/details/reflectionsonpa00fusegoog/page/n7>
- ²³ See Appendix, held in Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/2/5
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ 'Sale by Public Auction' at 15 St James' Square (Lichfield House) and Shugborough Hall, June 14th and August 1st 1842. *The Literary Gazette, and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, &c. for the year 1842*, No, 1324, London, Saturday June 4, 1842, p.389. Published by H. Colburn, London, 1842. Available on Google Books.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Staffordshire Record Office, *Correspondence from Sir John Dick ...* Op. cit.
- ³⁰ Ibid. *Miscellaneous Letters, 1764-1773*. 'Letters from James Stewart.' D615/P(S)/1/6
- ³¹ Ibid. 'References to Nollekens and Scheemakers.'
- ³² Ingrid Roscoe, 'James "Athenian" Stuart and the Scheemakers Family: A Lucrative Partnership Between Artist and Sculptors'. *Apollo, The International Art Magazine*, Vol. CXXVI, No. 307, September 1987.
- ³³ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. 'Letters and accounts from Nollekens in Rome 1765-1768.'
- ³⁴ Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain Since 1760*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- ³⁵ See the 1842 Shugborough Sale Catalogue. Op. cit. The catalogue includes annotated prices.
- ³⁶ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. 'References to Nollekens and Scheemakers.'
- ³⁷ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. Op. cit. object/1270623
- ³⁸ Ibid. object/1270619
- ³⁹ *Joseph Banks' Travel Journal, 1767*, (extracts). National Library of Wales.
- ⁴⁰ Thomas Pennant, *The Journey from Chester to London*. Printed for Luke White, Dublin, 1783. Available on Google Books.
- ⁴¹ Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks: President of the Royal Society, with Some Notices of His Friends and Contemporaries*. Cambridge University Press, 2011, p.310.
- ⁴² *Joseph Banks' Travel Journal*. Op. cit.
- ⁴³ George Anson, *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1740-44*. Third edition. Printed by John & Paul Knapton, London, 1748. Available on Google Books.
- ⁴⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise. Letters of Two Amans, Habitans of a Small City at the Foot of the Alps*. (Original in French), 1761. <https://www.rousseauonline.ch/Text/julie-ou-la-nouvelle-eloise-tome-premier-preface.php>

- ⁴⁵ Harcourt, Simon (1714-1777), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)*, originally published in 63 volumes 1885-1900, by Smith, Elder & Co. Vol. 24. Entry by Martyn J. Powell. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12245>
- ⁴⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right*. (Original in French), 1762. Translated by G. D. H. Cole, 1782. For a modern translation see Jonathan Bennett, 2017. <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/rousseau1762.pdf>
- ⁴⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau*. 1782. Privately Printed for the Members of the Aldus Society, London, 1903. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3913?>
- ⁴⁸ Quoted by Sjaak Zonneveld, *Sir Brooke Boothby: Rousseau's Roving Baronet Friend*. De Nieuwe Haagsche, 2003, p.83.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p.102.

Chapter 18

Elegant Entertainments

Thomas Anson's musical life has only emerged from the shadows since the year 2000. It is a curious indication of how little research had been pursued into his life that no one, before 2003, showed any sign of having looked at his will, surely one of the most obvious sources of material about any life. Even more surprisingly, the first known person to refer in a publication to Anson's will was a Czech musicologist, writing about a forgotten Bohemian composer, Antonin Kammell.

Kammell's name¹ appears in three documents in the Staffordshire Record Office: Thomas Anson's will,² the fascinating list of people who received mourning rings as a memorial of Thomas's death (see Chapter 20), and in a poem by Sir William Bagot of Blithfield Hall,³ who, as discussed shortly, was bequeathed Anson's medals on his death.

The occasion of Bagot's poem, written on April 25th 1772, was to welcome Thomas back to Shugborough at the end of the London season.

It was the Sunday after Easter when he wrote:

Bring Attic Stuart, Indian Orme,
Kammell unruffled by a storm
Shall tune his softest strain;
And my Louisa will rejoice
To notes like his to tune her voice
With health restored again.

The archive copy says "probably" by William Bagot. However, Thomas Anson himself showed the poem to Hardinge and told him it *was* by Bagot. This anecdote is mentioned in George Hardinge's memoirs of Rev. Sneyd Davies.⁴

Stuart was, of course, James "Athenian" Stuart, and Orme was Robert Orme, British historian of the East India Company. These two individuals were named financial beneficiaries in Anson's will.

Kammell's connection with Thomas Anson was rediscovered by Michaela Freemanova. Her article, co-authored with Eva Mikanov, based on a collection of his letters in an archive

in Prague, was published in *Early Music* in May 2003.⁵

By good fortune, the previous year, Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill published *Music and Theatre in Handel's World, the family papers of James Harris 1732-1780*,⁶ which includes several references to Thomas Anson's musical life and his music making at his new house at St James' Square. This book also reveals, for the first time, the connections between Thomas Anson and James Harris MP, philosopher of the Greek Revival and musical enthusiast, who directed music festivals at Salisbury for nearly fifty years.

In Thomas's last years, enjoying a very active 70s, music can be seen to have been of great pleasure and importance. It is reasonable to assume that music was one of his interests throughout his life. The grand house of 15 St James' Square was more than a private home or a showcase for architecture and art. It played an active role as a place for performances, social dinners and animated conversation, inspired by its classical style, and would need music to bring it alive. It is remarkable that Thomas also remained interested in the very latest ideas, in art and science, right up until his death in 1773.

Antonin Kammell was the man who provided the music in the lavishly decorated rooms. The possibility that he visited Shugborough, perhaps over several years, and the fact that he received not just a mourning ring but a substantial gift in Thomas's will, suggests that he was not just a professional employee but also a friend, as Kammell himself confirms when he refers to Anson as "my dear good old friend."⁷

Thomas's will, proved on 30th April 1773, is brief and very straightforward. It begins with no pious language, unlike many wills of the same century:

I make this my last will and testament which I wou'd wish to have understood to the plainest and most obvious meaning of the words being unacquainted with forms.⁸

These words (also given in Chapter 1) seem odd coming from a trained man of law. Is there irony in the wording or does it support the view that he never practised law? Or is it simply that as a barrister such testimony was not part of his experience? Perhaps, even if he was familiar with more flowery language, couched in legal terminology, he was aware that those reading it may not be.

The bulk of his estate, including extensive property elsewhere in Staffordshire and in Norfolk, was left to his nephew, George Adams (1731-1789). As it would have been obvious that Thomas had no offspring, it is likely that George Adams, the son of his sister Jennet (Janetta) and her husband Sambrooke Adams, who married on 15th July 1725, would have been treated as heir to his estate for many years – certainly since the death of Lord Anson, in 1764, when he had inherited Orgreave Hall.

George Adams was the fourth of five sons; none of his older brothers were still alive when Thomas Anson died; his older brother William (b.1729) died at the Siege of Pondicherry 1760-61 in India.⁹ Their father, Sambrooke Adams of Shropshire, was only 32 years of age when he died in 1734, leaving Jennet with young children.

Thomas's two surviving unmarried sisters, Anna (1693-1782) and Johanna (1699-1786), were allowed to move any furniture they wished to Oakedge Hall, the house that Thomas built for them on the slopes of Cannock Chase, landscaped by William Emes. He left an annuity to his other sister, Jennet (Janette/a), the mother of his heir (b.1690) who died before Thomas, in 1771. Their older sister, Isabella (b.1685), had died in 1769.

He also left money to a small but interesting group of friends, four of whom would receive annuities, and one, "Mr. Orme", was to receive a substantial lump sum. A single payment of £500 (£50,000 today) went to Robert Orme, "in token of his long friendship". There were annuities of £100 (the equivalent of £10,000 today) to James "Athenian" Stuart and to "Mr. Stillingfleet", the botanist Benjamin Stillingfleet. Annuities of £50 (£5,000 today) went to "Mr. Kammell" and to "Mr. Kent", Nathaniel Kent the agricultural reformer, whose career began as manager of Thomas's Norfolk estates, which George had bought from Lord Leicester.

Apart from his employees, the only other named beneficiary was Sir William Bagot, who was left "all my collection of medals". This led to an acrimonious dispute between Bagot and George Adams (who took the name and arms of Anson on inheriting), about whether this really meant *all* of them – ironic considering Thomas requested that his words should be taken in their plainest sense.

Benjamin Stillingfleet died on 15th December 1771, between the date of Thomas's will and his death in 1773.

Stillingfleet had been a regular visitor to parties hosted by the leading lady of an intellectual circle, Mrs Montagu, in which card playing was replaced by conversation. It was primarily an informal literary discussion group, mainly for women, including Elizabeth Vesey and others (see Chapter 10). Stillingfleet was a great conversationalist, and the author of the poem *An Essay on Conversation*, which begins:

The art of Converse, how to sooth the Soul.¹⁰

Benjamin Stillingfleet is sometimes said to have been the original "Blue stocking" – which may seem surprising, as the term usually refers to learned women. While some writers disagree, it does appear that the term "Bluestocking" was in use from the 1750s. This began because the always hard-up Stillingfleet tended to wear cheap blue worsted stockings rather than the black silk stockings of formal evening dress.

Mrs Montagu refers in a letter to Stillingfleet's blue stockings, which seem to be a sign of sobriety, but which he had, supposedly, at the time of writing, thrown off:

I assure you our philosopher is so much a man of pleasure, he has left off his old friends and his blue stockings and is at operas and other gay assemblies every night.¹¹

Stillingfleet may not have been taken seriously by Mrs Montagu. He comes over as a crotchety but amusing character, popular at her own assemblies and those of Mrs Vesey. He was a valetudinarian, always talking about his own health and the health of his friends. Apparently, during a period of poor conversation in Stillingfleet's absence, it was remarked that they were "nowhere without blue stockings."¹²

In the autumn of 1764, Thomas asked Stuart to pass on an invitation to Shugborough to Stillingfleet. The botanist was in Windsor, staying with a Mr Neville. Stuart wrote to Thomas:

I have paid a visit to Mr. Stillingfleet who I learned was with Mr. Neville, it is a very fine country about 28 miles from London. I went thither on horseback & to my surprise met Mr. Stillingfleet in the same equipage. He still complains of bad health, & was preparing to set out for Bath, all my arguments to bring him to Shugborough were ineffectual.¹³

In another letter, in 1769, Stuart wondered what had become of Stillingfleet. He was, in fact, at Shugborough, and wrote to Thomas Pennant, another botanist and nephew of Thomas Anson's old friend James Mytton, mentioning that he had been staying in Berkshire and then Dorset, before coming to Shugborough.

On 20th October 1769, Stillingfleet wrote:

I have been wandering about of late very much, first I went to Bath where I staid a month, then into Dorsetshire for two months, then into Berkshire for a month, from whence I came to Shugborough where I have been about a month. My travels have been merely of amusement, not like yours for the benefit of the public. My health will not admit of fatigue, and without that nothing can be done...

...as you are so kind a to inquire after my health I must inform you that it is rather better than of late, and that I did look after plants while in Dorsetshire something more than I have done for years. I was moved to this by Mr. Pitt's curiosity in relation to the subject and by the fine weather which suffered me to be a good deal out of doors.¹⁴

This "Mr. Pitt" was probably John Pitt, of Encombe, Dorset, uncle of George Pitt, whose

musical involvements are mentioned later.

Although he was primarily a botanist, Stillingfleet was also a musician: an amateur composer, theorist and a performer. Whilst touring Europe in 1742, as tutor to William Windham of Felbrigg, in Norfolk, Stillingfleet and the adventurer Richard Pococke went on an expedition with his students to explore the glaciers of Chamonix in France. Pococke had recently returned to Europe from the East and insisted on wearing Arab costume throughout the expedition.

Stillingfleet's description of the trip is one of the earliest recorded explorations of the Alps. The locals were astonished that anyone should be interested. Whilst in Geneva, he organised amateur performances with his travelling companions, providing the music himself.

William Coxe, editor of the *Literary Life and Select Works of Benjamin Stillingfleet*, published in 1811, wrote that after returning to England, he:

...increased his knowledge and love of music. In the midst of his botanical and classical pursuits, he dedicated a part of his time to the practice of this delightful art, being a tolerable proficient on the Violencello.¹⁵

Although he published no music of his own, Stillingfleet did write librettos for other composers, which went largely unused. He did, however, have an artistic success with an adaptation of *Paradise Lost* for John Christopher Smith in 1756-57, who had been Handel's amanuensis (copyist). This was first performed at Covent Garden in 1760.¹⁶

In the years that followed, Stillingfleet lived in a cottage on the estate of Richard Price, at Foxley, in Herefordshire. From here, Price and Stillingfleet toured Wales. Although close to home, this trip, like the Swiss expedition, was a very early example of his search for the Picturesque. George Lyttelton and Thomas Anson were in Wales some years later.

At Foxley, Stillingfleet worked with Price on the gardens, in a natural style. Price's son, Uvedale Price, is credited with developing ideas of the picturesque and a "back to nature" approach, yet he was actually following in the footsteps of his father and Stillingfleet.

In his later years, Stillingfleet turned his attention back to music, with his *Principles and Power of Harmony*, published anonymously in 1771.¹⁷ This was based on a translation of Giuseppe Tartini's *Trattato di musica*, originally published in Padua in 1754, a scientific study on the mathematical basis of harmony.¹⁸ Stillingfleet's own commentary attempted to explain Tartini's theories, which tended to waver into the strange and mystical.

Stillingfleet's book was, nevertheless, well received by the leading musical historian of the time, Dr Burney, who wrote:

...it was written by no half scholar or shallow musician; but one possessed of all the requisites for such a task.¹⁹

Mrs Montagu wrote to Stillingfleet praising his work, in words which were too obviously based on Dr Burney's review. Stillingfleet replied on 24th October 1771:

...had the encomiums on my late book been the results of your own opinion I should have been apt to think that partiality had biased your judgment; but the testimonies you use leave me no room to entertain such a suspicion.²⁰

As Kay Gilliland Stevenson and Margaret Seares, co-authors of *Paradise Lost in Short* point out in 1998, he almost immediately changes the subject and goes on to discuss a mutual friend's bilious complaint.²¹

Stillingfleet was also a friend, most likely through Anson, of James Stuart, who mentions him several times in his letters. In one letter, in 1764, Stuart tries to persuade Stillingfleet to visit Shugborough, presumably for his health.²² He was certainly at Shugborough for two months or more in 1769, a few months after the first known concert at Anson's new house, 15 St James' Square. Was Mr Kammell there at the same time? Stillingfleet could, perchance, have accompanied the violinist on his cello.

Stillingfleet, who reveals his high regard for Ancient Greece at every opportunity, adds that the lost music of Greece was believed to be simple,

...uncommonly touching, and capable of producing any effect almost within the limits of possibility.²³

Tartini's *Trattato*, as translated by Stillingfleet, suggests that the simplest music can be the most effective:

Every nation, [he adds], has its popular songs, many of which are of ancient tradition, many newly composed, and adopted by common consent. In general, they are extremely simple; nay, the most simple are generally the greatest favourites... That the people listen with greater pleasure to one of these songs, than to the most exquisite song modulated through all the maze of harmony, is an observation as easy to make, as it is significant when verified... Nature has more power than Art.²⁴

He also believed the expressive style of Italian opera was in the same spirit:

Those feelings of nature, which, as Tartini observes, are and must be common to us and the Greeks, have of late years put the Italian masters upon working the parts less in their opera music; and have produced those thrumming bases, as they are called by our harmonists, by way of ridicule.²⁵

The expressive power of Ancient Greek music was legendary; musicians had been trying to recreate its effects for centuries, most successfully in the Renaissance when such ambition inspired the development of the Baroque style, with harmonic accompaniments to dramatic vocal parts – the beginnings of opera. The power of such music depended on the Platonic (or, much older, Pythagorean) belief in Harmony as the inherent law in all Nature.

This ideal was best achieved through simplicity, like folk songs for example, rather than the complexities of polyphony, fugue and other such intellectual devices, as Stillingfleet explains:

I believe most men, if they dared to speak their own feelings, would talk the language of Tartini; but the dread of being thought to have a vulgar taste, puts them under restraints, and makes them undergo the fatigue of silently listening, with a dozing kind of attention, as if they were well bred, and ashamed to interrupt others, to what they are told is fine; but which they cannot, with all their endeavours, be brought to think agreeable; whereas, many of our old simple songs steal our affections, in spite of all our prejudices, and even when we are almost ashamed to be touched by such low and vulgar things; but high-bred taste, like high-born pride, is sometimes forced to listen to the humble dictates of Nature, and enjoy a pleasure it does not openly avow.²⁶

Though he expressed a traditional view, Stillingfleet's *Principles and Power of Harmony* is an important contribution to the study of the small circle of people who made up the intellectual Platonic Revival, perceptible behind the more visible Greek Revival.

The other musical legatee in Thomas Anson's will, Anton Kammell, had been a pupil of Tartini.²⁷

(Unless otherwise noted, biographical information about Kammell and quotations by him are from Michaela Freemanova's and Eva Mikanov's article, 'My honourable Lord and Father...': 18th-century English musical life through Bohemian eyes', published in Early Music, 2003.)

Kammell was born in Běleč, Central Bohemia, in 1730. His father was a forester, and it was as an agent selling wood for ships' masts, supplied by his employer Count Vincent Ferrerus Waldstein, that he came to England in 1765. It seems likely that his real motive was to launch his musical career. His mast business was a disaster as the masts were not big enough to meet British Navy standards. His letters to Waldstein indicate that his musical career was successful, despite being affected by ill health.

Kammell had studied philosophy and law in Bohemia before becoming a student in Padua of Tartini, the leading violin teacher of the day. As stated, Tartini's *Trattato* was

the basis of Benjamin Stillingfleet's recent publication. Tartini had also been the teacher of Maddelena Lombardini, another of the musicians who played at 15 St James' Square.

Written in a mixture of languages including English, Kammell's letters give the impression of a rather vain man, very concerned that his art should be well received and rewarded. His education suggests that he may have been a person of wide knowledge and interests.

On his arrival in London, in March 1765, he wrote to Count Waldstein that it was the largest town he had ever seen:

...one even feels like entering some other world.

Kammell travelled from The Hague with the Italian cellist and composer Francesco Zappa, then working for Lord Buckingham, with whom he "lived thriftily" when he first arrived in London. Zappa was, indeed, the ancestor of zany rock genius Frank Zappa and financed a recording of Francesco's work.

The channel crossing was appallingly stormy; everyone had to work the water-pumps and in the end all the luggage was "swimming in water". Kammell wrote that he arrived:

...like a poor sinner taken to the gallows, one jacket, one shirt, one handkerchief and one hope.

Smart, even fabulously showy, clothes were essential for a solo musician who wanted to make a glamorous impression. Kammell immediately had two new suits and six new shirts made. As he wrote to Waldstein:

...to be able to keep up the status of your Excellency as my most honourable Lord and Master.

A few months later, in August, Kammell was continuing to develop his wardrobe:

...just in the last 8 days I have paid in London 87 guineas to the tailor, shoemaker and other people... here a virtuoso must be very clean, concerning his clothes and everything.

Kammell's letters talk a great deal about his earnings and expenditure. A leading musician could earn a lot of money but depended entirely on his own skill and on making the right connections. As he wrote in July 1766:

I made much money here already through my old violin, also lost a lot of it, as I must pay for everything very dearly...

By a stroke of good fortune, Kammell soon made the acquaintance of Johann Christian Bach, the leading figure in music in London after the death of Handel, in 1759.

Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782), the eighteenth child of Johann Sebastian Bach, was a music teacher to Queen Charlotte, who married King George III in September 1761 (see Chapter 4), and the promoter, with Carl Frederick Abel, of the most important series of public concerts. In 1760, J C Bach became the organist at Milan cathedral and devoted much of his time to church music before coming to London in 1762, to première three operas at the Kings Theatre.

On April 10th 1770, James Harris attended a private concert held at Sir Robert Throckmorton's, 4th Baronet (1702-1791), whose ancestor Elizabeth Throckmorton married Sir Walter Raleigh. The concert was led by Bach and accompanied by Abel on the viola da gamba – his principal solo instrument for which he composed many pieces – or the cello. Johann Fischer, the busiest and best oboist in London, played the oboe, and Kammell the violin.²⁸ This suggests that Bach must have recognised Kammell as a violinist of excellence and considered him to be a worthy and reliable performer. He seems to have regularly employed him in his other performances: orchestral, instrumental and operatic.

Kammell saw his music as a way of charming the ladies, especially:

When I play the Adagio one could hear the ladies sigh.

...young and old ladies and Misses... all of them in love, and I made them even more loving through my old violin.²⁹

This emotional effect of such performing is very reminiscent of the performances of Count St Germain, at Jemima Grey's, twenty years earlier (described in Chapter 15), and in keeping with the ideals of simplicity and expressive style that Tartini taught and advocated.

Kammell is an attractive and interesting minor composer rather than a forgotten master, whose career sits at a time of change in musical style and fashion. He does have a claim to fame in being at the forefront of classical style, which has mostly gone unnoticed. His music is exclusively instrumental in the early Classical, or Rococo, style. It is melodious and elegant, recognisably in the same vein as early Mozart and Johann Christian Bach.

Kammell wrote mainly for violin: solo sonatas, duets, trios and quartets, and some orchestral works. He published one set of overtures or symphonies and some violin concertos which were printed in France, but only one seems to have survived. The concertos and solo sonatas would have been composed for himself to perform; most of his published works were intended for good amateurs. Fortunately, all of Kammell's known music was published.³⁰ The present author has compiled a thematic catalogue.³¹

The instrumental form that most clearly demonstrates the new Classical style is the string quartet. Baroque chamber music would be underlaid by the continuous bass line, with a keyboard instrument providing the harmony. The string quartet, comprising a first and second violin, a viola and a cello, abandoned the keyboard's harmonic infilling and began to make the four instruments more equal. While this was an ideal medium for private music making, quite early on quartets began to be performed in public.

Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh analysed the public performances of string quartets in London. They say, in their book *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 2004, that:

The date of the first known performance of a string quartet on the London concert stage was 27th April 1769.³²

The author's chronological table of performances reveals that this "first known performance" was, in fact, a string quartet by Kammell.³³ He was very much in the forefront, given that the next quartet listed is not until 1773, by Pugnani, the Italian violinist and composer.

Kammell's 1769 performance would have been of one of the set of six quartets he published in 1770, as Op. 4 dedicated to George Pitt, Esq. Two other sets of six quartets followed in 1774 and 1775. It is noteworthy that quartets by Haydn, the greatest developer of the form, were not performed in public in London until 1778.

An entry by Zdeňka Pilková in Mara Parker's *String Quartets: A Research and Information Guide*, 2005, supports the view that Kammell's importance may have been underestimated or overlooked:

Antonin Kammel, a Bohemian contemporary of Haydn who contributed to the formation of the classical style, has largely been ignored. The works of Haydn and Kammel from the 1760s and 1770s share many common stylistic and structural features. At times Kammel's works were known under Haydn's name.³⁴

Though Kammell may not have been as important a figure in his art as James Stuart was in his, he was, like most of Thomas Anson's friends, at the cutting edge of new style and ideas; his works overlap both Classical and Baroque styles, with several still retaining the Baroque "thorough bass".

Kammell's home address in 1769, given on one of his concert advertisements, reads:

"at George Pitt Esqr. In Half-Moon Street Piccadilly"³⁵

His will, made in 1778, also gives his address as Half Moon Street. By then Kammell was listed as the rate payer for the house.³⁶

George Pitt (1721-1803) was MP for Dorset and, from 1776, Baron Rivers of Stratfield Saye, the house in Hampshire that later became the home of the Duke of Wellington. Pitt was certainly Kammell's longest serving supporter, even in later years when his career was seriously affected by illness. The composer had written to Count Waldstein, hoping that Lord Rivers would travel with him to Carlsbad, where he could meet his old employer.

This fragmentary evidence suggests that Pitt was deeply involved with music. He was briefly a director of the Italian Opera at the King's Theatre for the 1770-71 season. His period of involvement with the opera may have included the J C Bach version of Gluck's *Orfeo*. This was when he had been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Madrid. It seems, however, quite common for ambassadors never or rarely to visit the countries where they were appointed to act as representatives.

Kammell and his wife spent Christmas 1769 at George Pitt's house, Stratfield Saye. Their first daughter, Lucy, was born there on December 11th and baptised at nearby Hartley Wespall on 31st December, which suggests that Kammell and his wife were staying at Stratfield Saye over Christmas and New Year. Lucy did not survive long enough to be mentioned in his will.

Anton Kammell dedicated his next work, Op. 5, six duets for two violins, to Thomas Anson Esq. The date of this composition is unknown, but probably also dates from 1769. The year of publication is almost certainly 1770 as the edition gives Kammell's address as Half Moon Street, where he appears to have moved the previous year. This suggests that the duets were written some time earlier, which would tie in very well with the date of the first known concert at Thomas Anson's new London house. It should be remembered that Thomas was in his seventies by the time 15 St James's Square was ready for music. This may well have been how Kammell was introduced to Anson.

Lady Shelburne described a lavish event held at 15 St James' Square, in April 1769:³⁷

Thursday Morning, April 13th. – We breakfasted at Mr. Anson's, who gave a breakfast and concert to Mrs. Montagu, to which she very obligingly invited us. We called upon her and went together, and saw a very fine house, built and ornamented by Mr. Stuart. The company were Count Bruhl, Lord Egremont, Mr. and Mrs. Harris and their daughter, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Dunbar, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Scott, a M. de Vibre, M. de Maltête a President de Parlement, who came over expressly to see a Riot, but was deterred from going to Brentford by the French Ambassador, and condemned to pass this memorable morning in the calmer scene of Mr. Anson's house and entertainment.³⁸

The riot which M de Maltête expected to see would have been sparked by the Brentford by-election that day, when the radical John Wilkes was re-elected. The house had been completed in 1766, but Stuart was a slow worker who had a reputation for liking his

drink, and it may be that only then, in April 1769, was the house completely decorated and ready to be shown off at what may have been a kind of housewarming.

Mrs Montagu was not only the leading light of the Bluestocking circle, but another important patron of James Stuart. She commissioned him to decorate her London house at 23 Hill Street, in 1765, which already had Chinoiserie rooms by Robert Adam. In 1767, she wrote that Stuart had painted:

some of the sweetest Zephirs and Zephirettes in my bedchamber that ever I beheld.³⁹

Stuart was still at work at Hill Street in 1772. On Edward Montagu's death in 1775, Elizabeth was left a very wealthy widow. She acquired the lease on 22 Portman Square, which she had rebuilt in 1777-81 to designs by Stuart.

Although this event, in April 1769 at 15 St James' Square, was held in Mrs Montagu's honour, and there would have been other guests unknown to Lady Shelburne, wife of William Petty, it is delightful to know that, on this occasion, several key figures of this story come together.

Kammell would have been leading the orchestra. Such an event, showing off Stuart's work, could hardly have happened without the presence of James "Athenian" Stuart himself. Also present was Elizabeth Carter, given the courtesy title of "Mrs", though unmarried. By this time, she was the famous translator of Epictetus and a key figure, with Mrs Montagu and Mrs Vesey, amongst the Bluestockings. Elizabeth Vesey (1715-1791) whose second marriage was to an Irish cousin, also hosted parties. Lord Egremont was probably the young George Wyndham, who later became a friend of Arthur Young (mentioned in Chapter 16).

A few weeks later, in May or June 1769, after the London season had ended and everyone had escaped to the country, John Parnell, who enjoyed music at Shugborough, wrote in his journal:

There has been this day, Thursday, a most agreeable meeting of the neighbouring gentry, Snead, Clifford, Piggot etc. who all play or sing and dance together here afterwards and have music again on the evening...⁴⁰

This seems to have been a whole day of music making with families of the local gentry. Snead was John Sneyd Esq. (1734-1809) of Bishton Hall, just south of Shugborough. His wife, the first of three, was Penelope, née Kynnersley.⁴¹

Thomas Clifford (1732-1787) married Barbara Aston in 1761, who, in 1768, inherited Tixall Hall, on the other side of the River Sow from Shugborough. Clifford began building a new hall in 1780. This was demolished in 1927. The imposing Elizabethan gatehouse, the

relic of an earlier hall, briefly residence of Mary, Queen of Scots and home of his wife's ancestor, Walter Aston, patron of Jacobean poets, remains.⁴²

Thomas Clifford seems to have shared an interest in the Arcadian or Golden Age with Thomas Anson. The gothic Dairy Bridge on the drive to Tixall Hall, draws the north side of the vale into the Arcadian mythology with its inscription:

Hic Ver Perpetuum

Here is Perpetual (Eternal) Spring.

Is "Piggots" a mishearing (or mistranscription) of the name Bagot of Blithfield Hall, or were they the Pigots of Patshull, whom Thomas knew but whose house was twenty miles away? Miss Pigot, daughter of the President of the East India Company, appears among those who received a mourning ring at the time of Thomas's death (see Chapter 20).

Parnell's note in his journal reveals that music played a very important part in the life of Shugborough as well as at St James' Square. The occasion would have been only a month or two after the public performance of Kammell's quartet. Could Kammell have been one of the musicians that Parnell heard play?

The 1772 poem by Bagot, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, implies that "Athenian" Stuart, "Indian" Orme, and Kammell were all familiar visitors to Shugborough. It is perfectly possible that Kammell had accompanied Thomas back to the country at the end of the London season. It is an attractive idea, even if nothing more definite, that the music making in 1769 was a product of the first of a series of summer holidays for Kammell with his patron, Thomas Anson.

Another important question to consider is where did this music-making take place? The most practical space in the house at Shugborough, as it was then, would have been the Drawing Room. Perhaps it should also be thought of as a Music Room, a space for musical performance under its elaborate mythological ceiling, surrounded by capricci paintings replicating the age of antiquity. There is also the possibility that Kammell may have composed some of his music here on such a summer holiday.

James Harris and his family had also been at the concert for Mrs Montagu. As mentioned, the Harris family archive is a rich source of information on the music of the 18th century, including the performances at St James' Square.⁴³

(Unless otherwise stated, the quotations that follow are from the Harris family papers, as cited by Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill in 'Music and Theatre in Handel's World', 2002.)

Louisa Harris wrote to her brother James Harris Jnr (originally in French), on 13th April 1769, the day of the breakfast concert for Mrs Montagu:

Today my father, mother and Gertrude are all at a concert at Mr. Anson's, and this evening Gertrude is to go to Almack's⁴⁴ with lady Mar Hume, but as far me, having neither a ticket for Almack's nor an invitation to Mr. Anson's concert I am spending my time pleasantly writing to you.

On 18th April 1769, James Harris wrote to his son, James Harris Jnr:

Lord Spencer's and Mr. Anson's houses by Stuart, Lord Shelburne's by Adams are models of Grecian taste, not unworthy of the age of Pericles.

The Harris correspondence includes references to at least five different concerts at St James' Square. The first is the breakfast concert in honour of Mrs Montagu in April 1769. The others mentioned were in March and April 1772, and two in March 1773 – only a few weeks before the 78-year-old Thomas Anson left his earthly paradise.

It is logical to deduce that Anson's concerts took place at the end of the season, in early spring, and that the pattern was the same each year between 1769 and 1773.

On the 27th March 1772, Elizabeth Harris wrote to James Jnr:

Yesterday morning we were all at that most elegant house of Mr. Anson's to a breakfast and concert after, every thing suited the elegance of the house. When breakfast was ended the room were open for people to walk about and admire – after that the concert, for which he had collected the best hands in town – Madame Sirman, Grassi, Fischer, Crosdale, Ponto, Kamell etc. Got home in time enough to snap a short dinner before the opera.

These names are, indeed, the leading musicians of the day – and note the "etc." Maddalena Laura Lombardini Sirmen was a Venetian violinist and composer who had recently arrived in London. Like Kammell, she was a student of Giuseppe Tartini and an early composer of string quartets as well as concertos. Her quartets are small-scale but particularly expressive. She obviously had an important connection with Tartini as he wrote her an essay-length letter on the art of violin playing, which was published and translated into English by Dr Charles Burney.⁴⁵ It is intriguing that Kammell, Sirmen and Benjamin Stillingfleet each had connections with Tartini and his literary or musical work.

Madame Cecilia Grassi was one of the leading singers at the time, later married to Johann Christian Bach. Johann Fischer, Giovanni Punto and John Crosdill were the leading oboist, horn player and cellist, all musician colleagues of Bach. James Harris heard a concert with Madame Grassi, Bach on keyboard, Fischer, Punto, Crosdill and Kammell, all together at the Blandford Races, in July 1773. George Pitt, 1st Baron Rivers, represented Dorset until 1774, where the races were managed by his son.

Elizabeth Harris mentions no keyboard player, but there is likely to have been one amongst the “etc.”. Could J C Bach have been there? Surely, she would have mentioned him, unless he was so ubiquitous it would seem unnecessary – and yet all these other performers were of his close circle – his favoured virtuosi. What music would this very starry group have been playing at 15 St James’ Square on 26th March 1772?

Madame Sirmen, though not an orphan herself, studied at the charitable hospice or Ospedali Grandi in Venice that trained orphan girls in music, and later had a career as a singer. She would have been a guest artist and may have performed one of her own new concertos published that year, in 1772, with a reduced orchestral accompaniment. There may have been instrumental pieces by Kammell – or by Bach – but the presence of Madame Grassi suggests that the concert would have been primarily of vocal music.

Though it is only speculation, it is possible, and an almost irresistible guess, that the concert on 27th March would have featured extracts from Johann Christian Bach’s new serenata, (a short, light-hearted opera). *Endimione* is a beautiful work and something of a forgotten masterpiece – which could be said of many of J C Bach’s works.

Bach had presented his adaptation of Christoph Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* in 1770, and this new work of 1772 may be seen today as a reaction to Gluck’s influence – a simple, structured mythological story. Fortunately, this delightful serenata has been republished and recorded, conducted by Bruno Weil, who comments that it could be mistaken for early Mozart. He calls it:

...a wonderful work, so full of humour it could almost be a comedy [and] the music is so damn good.⁴⁶

The first performance of *Endimione* was at the King’s Theatre on April 6th 1772,⁴⁷ only a week after Thomas Anson’s concert. The work features several arias with solo instruments accompanying. The first performance was for the benefit of flautist J B Wendling, but the original advertisement mentions that Mr Fisher (Johann Fischer) and Mr Ponta (Giovanni Punto) as well as Mr Wendling, would accompany songs.

It is easy to speculate that Thomas’s concert might have been a preview of part of *Endimione*? There is a mystery about why Bach wrote such a work at this time and who commissioned it? Was there a connection with George Pitt, even though his involvement with the King’s Theatre seems to have ended the previous year? An even more wild, and unashamedly delightful conjecture, might be to suggest that Thomas Anson may have played a part in the serenata’s commissioning? At the very least, it is a work that can be enjoyed as a perfect example of the kind of music that belongs to the Greek Revival world at 15 St James’ Square.

On 14th April 1772, Elizabeth Harris writes:

To morrow no music; Thursday again at Mr. Ansons.

James Boswell's correspondence reveals that he met Anson at Mrs Montagu's, the very same evening as Thomas's concert earlier that day.⁴⁸ She was hosting a dinner in honour of Filippo Antonio Pasquale di Paoli (1725-1807), a Corsican patriot and leader. Lord Lyttelton was there as well as the Archbishop of York, Robert Hay-Drummond, who was also a patron of English artists. Boswell's earlier confusion over Samuel Johnson's visit to Shugborough in 1764 (discussed in Chapter 16) may well be resolved by the fact that it is unlikely that Boswell had met Thomas before this dinner, on 26th March 1772.

As we saw in earlier chapters, Boswell had a long-standing interest in Corsica and Paoli. Thomas Anson was also a financial supporter of Paoli. In a letter of 11th April 1769, John Dick mentioned a problem with his "subscription" to the Corsican leader.⁴⁹

Only ten days after the Thursday concert that Elizabeth Harris and others attended, and the dinner in honour of Paoli, Sir William Bagot wrote his poem welcoming Stuart, Kammell and Orme to Anson's Shugborough. Considering the relative modesty of the house at that time, this must have been the entire house party – a close circle of friends meeting for what would, unknowingly at the time, be Thomas Anson's last summer at his idyllic Staffordshire villa.

Thomas returned to London where his concerts continued into the 1773 season, until within a week of his death, on 30th March.

On 23rd June, Anton Kammell wrote to Count Waldstein:

My dear good old friend Mr. Anson, the brother of the Admiral who defeated so much the Spaniards, died two months ago. I do not like to lose good friends, his death contributed a lot towards my illness, in his testament he left me 50 gineas yearly for the time of my life, my friend George Pitt, when he saw me so distressed after Anson's death, he also gave me by the law 50 gineas yearly, now I have 100 gineas yearly to spend as I wish.⁵⁰

Kammell published a series of interesting works during the period that Thomas Anson was his patron. The presumed publication dates given by the British Library are, however, misleading. All of Kammell's works, up to and including Op. 10, were composed and published before Anson's death. This is proven by the fact that his overtures, or symphonies, Op. 10, for which the ascribed date is 1775, were advertised for sale as early as March 1773.⁵¹

His six quartets, Op. 7, were dedicated to Countess Spencer. Thomas Anson could well be the link between Kammell and Lady Spencer – another important patron of James Stuart who had worked on lavish interiors for Spencer House at St James' Place before he

re-built 15 St James' Square for Anson. There was, and still is, a Music Room at Spencer House where Kammell's music might have been heard.

Three of Kammell's works were dedicated members of the Young and Ottley families. There is a portrait of the family of Sir William Young (1724/25-1788), Governor of Dominica, by Zoffany, in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, from about this date. It shows Sir William playing cello and others singing and playing instruments. Sir William and Lady Young also held private concerts in London; their friend James Harris attended several of their concerts in 1770.

Lady Young was the dedicatee of Kammell's nocturnos, Op. 6. Her daughter became the second wife of Richard Ottley (1730-1775), a rich Tobago plantation owner who lived in Argyll Street. Six solos, sonatas for violin with figured bass, Op. 8, were dedicated to Richard Ottley Esq. The Op. 9 set of six sonatas, described as being for piano, harpsichord or harp, with accompaniment of violin and cello, were dedicated to "Miss Ottley". This is Elizabeth Ottley, Richard Ottley's daughter by his first marriage.

Six overtures, Op. 10, were dedicated to the 5th Duke of Devonshire, William Cavendish, the grandest of Kammell's dedicatees, and the last who can be connected to the artistic world of St James' Square. The Duke married Georgiana Spencer, the daughter of Countess Spencer, on her seventeenth birthday, 7th June 1774. These overtures, or symphonies, must have been composed no later than 1772 and could have been performed at 15 St James' Square.

This is the only orchestral music that Kammell published in England. (At least one violin concerto was published in Paris, and two more were advertised.) Most of Kammell's publications were aimed at the growing market for mainly amateur music making; there would have been far less demand for works that required a full orchestra.

By the mid-1770s, Kammell was in serious financial difficulties, losing money in a banking disaster and investing a great deal in American land, which would turn out to be most unfortunate in the years leading up to 1776.

His later career was blighted by rheumatic illness, which took away the use of his hands and feet. Both J S Bach and George Pitt supported him throughout his later years.

Kammell died on 5th October 1784. His place of death and burial remain a mystery.⁵² He was survived by his wife, a penniless beauty apparently, not the rich woman he once told Count Waldstein he would marry, and several children.

NOTES: Chapter 18

- ¹ “Kammell” is how the composer himself spelled his name.
- ² Staffordshire Record Office, *Wills and administration of members of the Anson family 1661-1772*. Thomas Anson, 1772. D615/EL/69 The Will of Thomas Anson, dated Feb 27th 1772, written originally in July 1771, can also be found on ancestry. co.uk England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858. National Archives, PROB 11: Will Registers 1773-1776. Piece 0986: Stevens, Quire Numbers 105-152. Probate date 30th April 1773.
- ³ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)2/5
- ⁴ George Hardinge, *Biographical Memoirs of the Rev. Sneyd Davies D.D. Canon Residentiary of Lichfield in a Letter to Mr. Nichols*. Fifty copies printed for Nichols, Son & Bentley; not for sale, but for Mr. Hardinge's friends, and those of Dr. Davies. London, 1817.
<https://archive.org/details/biographicalmemo00hard>
- ⁵ Michaela Freemanova and Eva Mikanov, ‘My honourable Lord and Father...’: 18th-century English musical life through Bohemian eyes’, *Early Music*, Vol. XXXI, Issue 2, May 2003, pp.210-231.
- ⁶ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World. The family papers of James Harris 1732-1780*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- ⁷ Michaela Freemanova and Eva Mikanov. Op. cit.
- ⁸ The Will of Thomas Anson. Op. cit.
- ⁹ John Debrett, *Debrett's Peerage of England Scotland, and Ireland*. Printed for J. G. & F. Rivington, London, 1836, p.167. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁰ Benjamin Stillingfleet, *Literary Life and Select Works of Benjamin Stillingfleet, Vol. 2, Part 1*. Printed by J. Nichols & Son, London, 1811. Available on Google Books.
- ¹¹ Reginald Blunt and Emily J. Climenson, *Mrs. Montagu, "Queen of the Blues": Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800, Vol. 1, 1762-1776*. Constable & Co., London, 1923.
<https://archive.org/details/mrsmontaguequeen01mont>
- ¹² Geri Walton, ‘Benjamin Stillingfleet and the Bluestockings’. *Unique histories from the 18th and 19th centuries*. January 18, 2016. <https://www.geriwaltton.com/bluestockings-and-benjamin-stillingflee/>
- ¹³ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(S)/1/6/18
- ¹⁴ Warwickshire Archives. CR 2017/TP 367/14
- ¹⁵ William Coxe (Ed.), *Literary Life and Select Works of Benjamin Stillingfleet: Several of Which Have Never Before Been Published, Vol. 1*. Printed by J. Nichols & Son, London, 1811. Cited by Kay Gilliland Stevenson and Margaret Seares, in *Paradise Lost in Short: Smith, Stillingfleet, and the Transformation of Epic*. Farleigh Dickinson, University Press, 1998.
- ¹⁶ Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio: The Oratorio in the Classical Era. Vol. 3 of 4 Vols*. University of North Carolina Press, 1977. p.246.
- ¹⁷ Benjamin Stillingfleet, *Principles and Power of Harmony*. Published anonymously, printed by J. & H. Hughs, London, 1771. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁸ Giuseppe Tartini, *Trattato di musica*. Giovanni Manfrè, Padua, 1754. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/trattatodimusica00tart>
- ¹⁹ Kay Gilliland Stevenson and Margaret Seares. Op. cit.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid. p.181

- ²³ Benjamin Stillingfleet. Op. cit.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Michaela Freemanova and Eva Mikanov. Op. cit. pp.210-231.
- ²⁸ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill. Op. cit.
- ²⁹ Michaela Freemanova and Eva Mikanov. Op. cit.
- ³⁰ Copies of Kammell's known published works can be found in the British Library, the Library of Congress, and in many other collections.
- ³¹ Andrew Baker, 'Anton Kammell – A Thematic Catalogue'. <https://andrewbakercomposer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/kammel-catalogue-complete.pdf>
- ³² Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (Eds.), *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Mara Parker, *String Quartets: A Research and Information Guide*. Routledge, 2005, cites Zdeňka Pilková, Entry 150 in *Haydn Studies: Proceedings of the International Haydn Conference, Washington, D.C., 1975*, by Jens Peter Larsen, Howard Serwer and James Webster (Eds.). W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1981.
- ³⁵ Michaela Freemanova and Eva Mikanov. Op. cit.
- ³⁶ Andrew Baker, 'Antonin Kammel (Anton Kammell) a Bohemian Composer in 18th Century England'. <https://andrewbakercomposer.com/home/writings/anton-kammel-a-bohemian-composer-in-18th-century-england/>
- ³⁷ The year 1768 is incorrectly given on the English Heritage website and elsewhere. The *Family Papers of James Harris* and other contemporary references confirm the year to be 1769.
- ³⁸ Edmond Fitzmaurice, Lord, *Life of William, Earl of Shelburne, Afterwards First Marquess of Lansdowne, with Extracts from his Papers and Correspondence, Vol. II 1766-1776*. Macmillan & Co., London, 1876, pp.187-8. Available on Google Books.
- ³⁹ Susan Weber Soros (Ed.), *James "Athenian" Stuart, 1713-1788: The Rediscovery of Antiquity*. Yale University Press, 2006, p.246.
- ⁴⁰ *John Parnell's Journal, 1769* (extracts, anonymous transcription). William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, CB/Shugborough/8. Original at London School of Economics, LSE Library Misc. 38.
- ⁴¹ For the Sneyd family, see *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland, Part 2*. Fourth Edition, Harrison, London, 1863. Available on Google Books.
- ⁴² For detailed historical information about Ingestre & Tixall including the Cliffords, see. <http://www.tixall-ingestre-andrews.me.uk/>
- ⁴³ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill. Op. cit.
- ⁴⁴ Almack's was the location of J C Bach's concerts.
- ⁴⁵ Charles Burney (translator), *Letter from the Late Signor Tartini to Signora Maddalena Lombardini (now Signora Sirmen), Published as an Important Lesson to Performers on the Violin*. Printed for R. Bremner, London, 1779. <https://archive.org/details/imslp-letter-to-maddalena-lombardini-signora-sirmen-tartini-giuseppe> See also [https://imslp.org/wiki/Tutorial_Letter_to_Maddalena_Lombardini_\(Tartini,_Giuseppe\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Tutorial_Letter_to_Maddalena_Lombardini_(Tartini,_Giuseppe))
- ⁴⁶ Insert notes for Johann Christian Bach's *Endimione*, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 1999.

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- ⁴⁷ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill say the performance was at the Little Theatre at the Haymarket, although the concert advertisement reads The Theatre Royal.
- ⁴⁸ David Hankins and James J. Caudle (Eds.), *General Correspondence of James Boswell, 1757-1763: Research Edition: Correspondence, Vol. 9*. Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- ⁴⁹ Staffordshire Record Office. Op. cit. D615/P(A)/2
- ⁵⁰ Michaela Freemanova and Eva Mikanov. Op. cit.
- ⁵¹ *Saunders' Newsletter*, Dublin, 17th March 1773. Retrieved from <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>
- ⁵² Andrew Baker has written a short biography of Kammell which possibly solves the mystery of his death, and gives more details of his life, family and music. See <https://andrewbakercomposer.com/home/writings/anton-kammell-a-bohemian-composer-in-18th-century-england/>

Chapter 19

Science and Industry

One of the four friends who received annuities in Thomas Anson's will was "Mr. Kent". This was Nathaniel Kent, the agriculturalist.

Nathaniel Kent (1737-1810) was Thomas Anson's estate manager in Norfolk. In 1749, George Anson had bought an estate at Knightley, west of Stafford, from Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester, who, as explained in Chapter 11, was short of money for the completion of Holkham Hall. Soon after this purchase, George Anson gradually took over other unwanted estates in Norfolk from Lord Leicester.

This close connection with the Coke family resulted, two generations later, in the marriage of Anne Margaret Coke, daughter of Thomas Coke of Holkham, the succeeding Earl of Leicester, and Thomas Anson, son of Thomas's heir George Adams/Anson, who later became the 1st Viscount Anson. Anne Anson was a talented artist. She was to give birth to eleven children (eight sons and three daughters). Not all survived, but many had distinguished careers in the army and the church. Their eldest son, Thomas William Anson (1795-1854), inherited the Shugborough estate on the death of his father, in 1818.

Nathaniel Kent is another link between the two families, and it was Kent who introduced modern methods of farming, including crop rotation, into England, for which the later Earl, "Coke of Norfolk", became famous. It was Thomas, Viscount Anson, who built the model farm at Shugborough in 1805. Both his marriage and the farm owe their origins to Thomas Anson's support of Nathaniel Kent, who began his career as a diplomat:

My happy destiny threw me very early in life into what I may call the very lap of agriculture. In the capacity of secretary to Sir James Porter, at Brussels, I had an opportunity to make myself well acquainted with the husbandry of the Austrian Netherlands, then supposed to be in the highest perfection in any part of Europe. No spot was there to be found that was not highly cultivated. The industry of the Flemings was astonishing, and their care in collecting every sort of manure that could be usefully applied was highly commendable.¹

His turning to an agricultural career was largely dependent on Thomas Anson:

Coming to England in the year 1766, Sir John Cust, the then speaker of the House of

Commons, requested of me some written account of the Flemish husbandry, with which he expressed himself much pleased: and he and my first great friend, the elder brother of the late Lord Anson, who was the true friend of merit, and the encourager of science wherever he found it, advised me to quit the diplomatic path, and apply myself closely to agriculture, in which I had a handsome promise of assistance from the latter; I did not hesitate a moment in adopting their advice. About this time I made a most valuable acquaintance with the late Benjamin Stillingfleet, one of the greatest naturalists we had, who was considered as the English Linnaeus. It was he who impressed me with the importance of taking Nature for my guide, and of learning to deduce my ideas of the value of land, not from local enquiry which might mislead my judgment, but from the wild plants and grasses; as these would invariably express the voice of nature. Accordingly, where I found the oak and elm as trees, and the rough cock's-foot and meadow fox-tail as grasses, I was assured that such land was good. And where I found the birch-tree, the juniper-shrub and the maiden hair, and such creeping bent grasses I was equally certain that such land was poor and steril.²

Kent published his book *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* in 1775.³ This was, exactly as the title suggests, an attempt to encourage landed proprietors to take farming seriously. His ideas were practised on Anson's property in Norfolk, at Holkham, and later, in the early 19th century, formed the basis of the modern farm at Shugborough. This development, which came to fruition thirty years after his death, owed its origins to Thomas Anson.

Kent reveals another aspect of Thomas Anson's interests and character, saying that he was:

...the true friend of merit, and the encourager of science wherever he found it.⁴

The pursuit of Knowledge was as much a part of the Greek Revival ideal as the pursuit of Beauty. Modern scientific farming methods depended both on an understanding of agricultural processes and a concern for the people who lived and worked on the land.

In his book, Kent explains his outlook:

When a gentleman put his estate into my hands, I considered it was the highest trust he could repose in me; it was leaving it to me to mite out his fortune by allotting him what I thought proper upon the object submitted to me. It was therefore incumbent on me to take care of his interest, at the same time there was another person who had an equal claim to justice from me, which was the occupier, who had a right to be recompensed for his labour, judgment, and capital. In weighing these interests where there was doubt, I confess I gave the turn of the scale to the latter. Acting thus, the landlord and tenant in general expressed reciprocal satisfaction.⁵

Kent praises Mr Anson for his enlightened attitudes to his tenants. He describes the way in which they were given the wherewithal to take responsibility for repairs on their land, which would otherwise be left to the landlord and create more problems and expense:

This obvious inconvenience has been effectually remedied by Mr. Anson upon his estate under my care in Norfolk, by agreeing with his tenants to allow them all reasonable accommodations, and all necessary materials for repairs, but that they shall sustain the moiety of all expences for workmen's wages, unless tempests or accidents shall bring the expence of such workmanship, in any particular year, to more than six per cent, upon the rent; in which case the landlord pays the surplusage. The saving has already been considerable; and as no tenants have a better landlord, nor any landlord a better set of tenants, they find mutual convenience, and satisfaction, in this regulation; as others may do, if they will imitate it.⁶

Kent later managed the Royal estates at Windsor and Richmond. In 1808 he was awarded a goblet by Thomas Coke for his services to agriculture.

Both John Parnell and Joseph Banks describe features of the estate and improvements in agriculture that struck them as unusual on their respective visits to Shugborough, in 1769 and 1767.

Parnell refers to the development of the heath and, presumably, to the cottagers who had moved into the new cottages in the village:

I went across part of the Heath towards the obelique... and on my return towards Wolseley was amazed to find some Hundreds of acres inclosed all with a cheaveux de frize to secure them from the Deer and all Plowd up ready for improvement, they looked the most uniform completely Executed piece of Extensive farming I ever saw... about 1000 acres six hundred of which is taken off Cank Heath to the great Improvement of the county tho' not much relish't by the cottagers on the Heath.⁷

He also describes the tree planting:

...he [Anson] has thrown cheaveux de frize Round all the swelling Knowles which these lands abound in. Plowd them up deep as possible and planted Scots firs Laurel Larch and some chestnut on them...⁸

Elsewhere he saw:

...one uniform Beautiful Peice of Plowd Land and all to be sown this summer with Turneps an Improvement so Extensive as to amaze me. I mett Eight Bullocks to a Plow which were all Harnessed with yokes and Bons – they were the finest Plow of

Bullocks I ever saw. I got to the Plowman and had a conversation I much wanted...

...his masters manner of managing such great fallows was to Burn the coursest Parts and only slightly dung the others for the turnips. Dung replied I how can you have Dung sufficient... Why master [says the Plowman] has five thousand Load of muck at home.⁹

This was farming on a grand scale and seemingly directly under Thomas Anson's control. It is hard to imagine eight bullocks on one plough.

Parnell also noted:

The Harrows which followd the first ploughing were Drawn by seven fine Horses after each other. I never Beheld so great a Break Harrow...¹⁰

In the house, he encountered another estate worker:

There is now in the kitchen an Old Fellow a Bricklayer's Labourer who has been Drinking here these three nights and two Days... he has already drunk down three of four setts of his Companions.¹¹

Joseph Banks described a new method of growing peaches under glass in the garden:

Here also was a method of forcing fruit chiefly peaches which was new. It was called here the dutch way and done thus – the trees were naild against Frames of Beech made solid about two feet from them was a rais'd walk of Boards and the glasses resting upon the topps of the frames reached about three feet beyond this walk making the proper angle with the horizon this last interval when the glasses are put in is filled with Bark which by its fermentation supplies heat enough for the purpose and of a kind mire agreeable to the trees of that (yore?) the whole is constructed at a very less expence and is said to answer better than any other method.¹²

Industry, art and science came together in the figure of Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795). Born into a family of potters, he married his third cousin and became the grandfather of naturalist Charles Darwin. Wedgwood used the highest level of scientific expertise in the pursuit of art and in the establishment of a hugely successful and influential business.

Wedgwood may have encountered Anson as a collector of inspiring Classical Art, but their most renowned association came from the development of the canal network, a crucial feature of the Industrial Revolution. Haywood Junction, just outside the Shugborough estate, is the junction of two major canals which received Acts of Parliament on the same day, 14th May 1766, and would become the centre of the network.

In 1758, Thomas Anson, together with Granville, Earl Gower, and Thomas Broade, had commissioned a canal survey from Stoke-on-Trent to Wilsden Ferry, from James Brindley. As Lord Anson had no particular interest in the area by that time, it was very likely that Thomas was the real instigator. He continued to be a supporter of the Trent and Mersey canal in the 1760s.

Josiah Wedgwood was the inspiration for the canal project in its final form, with his partner Thomas Bentley and Erasmus Darwin, the extraordinary philosopher and poet from Lichfield. Wedgwood saw the canal as the answer to the transport of fragile pottery.

A meeting was held on 30th December 1765 at Wolseley Bridge, just south of Shugborough, to launch their plan. It was essential that Anson would support it as the canal had to pass through his land, alongside the Trent. Subsequently, Thomas Anson became one of 'The Company of Proprietors of the Navigation from the Trent to the Mersey'.¹³

The first sod was dug by Josiah Wedgwood at Brownhills, near Tunstall, on July 26th 1766. The following year, Wedgwood began work on his new factory at Etruria, which opened alongside the canal on 13th June 1769. The canal opened as far as Shugborough, from the south, on 24th June 1770, and reached Stoke-on-Trent in 1772.

It was in the latter years of the 1760s that Wedgwood developed his black basalt stoneware and began his range of Neo-classical vases. The canal was crucially important to his business success. The canal project demonstrates that Wedgwood and Darwin knew Anson from at least 1765. Darwin, who had a fertile mind, inventing steam cars and revolutionary theories of evolution, long before his famous grandson, became a close associate of Wedgwood.

By December 1770, Josiah Wedgwood had become a colleague of James "Athenian" Stuart, carrying on the inspiration of Greek design into his own work. It is reasonable to suggest that Thomas Anson is, once again, the link between Stuart and Wedgwood, and to the later stages of the classical Greek Revival. Wedgwood's immense dinner service for Catherine the Great includes views of the Shugborough landscape.

The last work on the monuments at Shugborough in Thomas Anson's lifetime was the completion of the Lanthorn of Demosthenes, originally planned in 1764. The structure had been built before 1767, when Joseph Banks saw it, but was left unfinished. As explained in Chapter 16, the original monument was to be capped by a tripod; Stuart's drawing shows a reconstruction of what this might have looked like.¹⁴

Wedgwood was discussing with Stuart the adaptation of an existing building, or erecting a new building, for showroom premises in the Adelphi, on the south side of the Strand. He wrote to his partner Bentley about this and to arrange a visit to Matthew Boulton's Soho Works in Birmingham, where they discussed whether it was a good thing or not for

Wedgwood to have a new London showroom for his wares, next to Boulton & Fothergill:

We agreed that those customers who were more fond of show & glitter than fine forms & the appearance of antiquity, wo'd buy Soho vases, and that all who could feel the effects of a fine outline & had any veneration for antiquity wo'd be with us.¹⁵

He continues, explaining the completion of the Lanthorn:

I forgot to tell you that Mr. Boulton was making an immense large Tripod for Mr. Anson to finish the top of Demosthenes Lanthorn, building there from Mr. Stuart's design. The Legs were cast & weighed about 5 cwt, but the workmen staggered at the bowl & did not know which way to set about it; a Council of the workmen was call'd & every method of performing this wonderfull work canvassed over. They concluded by shaking their heads & ended where they begun. I then could hold no longer, but told them very gravely they were all wrong, they had totally mistaken their Talents and their metals; such great works should not be attempted in Copper or in Brass. They must call in some able Potter to their assistance and the work might be completed. Would you think it? They took me at my word & and I have got a fine job upon my hands in consequence of a little harmless boasting. Mr. Stewart said he knew Mr. Anson wo'd glory in having the Arts of Soho and Etruria united in his Tripod, & that it wo'd be a feather in our Caps which that good gentleman would delight in taking every opportunity to shew for our advantage. So this matter stands at present but Mr. Boulton, Dr Darwin and I are to dine with Mr. Anson on New-Year's Day & shall talk the matter over again.¹⁶

It is interesting that Stuart still sees the promotional value of pleasing Thomas Anson, even at the age of 75, and Wedgwood could see the benefit of a little harmless boasting.

Eliza Meteyard, in her *Life of Josiah Wedgwood: From his Private Correspondence and Family Papers*, published in 1865, comments that Dr Darwin was invited to Shugborough, along with:

Wedgwood, Boulton, Keir and Bentley, if he is in the country.¹⁷

Apparently, the New Year's Day meeting, arranged for 1st January 1771, did not take place as Wedgwood was unable to attend due to trouble with his artificial leg. Nevertheless, the completion of the Lanthorn of Demosthenes brought together Anson and Stuart with Wedgwood – the revolutionary philosopher, the Greek Revival designer, and the industrialist – with Boulton, a key figure in the Industrial Revolution in Birmingham, and Keir, another contributor to science and industry.

“Keir” is James Keir (1735-1820), born in Stirlingshire he studied medicine in Edinburgh, but was attracted to the Midlands by the fame of his contemporary, Erasmus Darwin

(1731-1802), with whom he became a close friend. James Keir became a member of the Birmingham-based “Lunar Society” – so named because the Society met at full moon, supposedly so they could find their way home afterwards. It was an organisation for the great scientists and industrialists of the day, including Josiah Wedgwood, Matthew Boulton, James Watt and Joseph Priestley. The Society:

became the main intellectual powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution in England.¹⁸

It was Keir, primarily a chemist and glass manufacturer, who is assumed to have become manager of the Soho Engineering Works between 1778-1780, during Boulton’s and Watt’s absence on steam engine business.¹⁹ Like several other Lunar Men, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, in 1785.

Long after Thomas Anson’s death, Keir contributed enhancements to Darwin’s long poem, *The Botanic Garden*, published in 1791.²⁰ It comprises two parts: *The Economy of Vegetation*, which celebrates scientific, technological innovation and explores the history of the cosmos; and *The Loves of The Plants*, a poetic revision of Linnaeus’s classification for plants and living organisms, to which Keir “advised on corrections”.²¹

Keir was attacked for his support of the French Revolutionaries:

On 14th July 1791, Keir presided over a Birmingham dinner commemorating the start of the French Revolution, an event that precipitated the Priestley Riots. Keir was quick to justify the premise of the dinner and aided Priestley when rioters destroyed his house.²²

Joseph Priestley (1733-1780) was a scientist, credited with the discovery of oxygen. Thomas’s continuing interest in the sciences in his later years is shown by the fact that he was a subscriber to Joseph Priestley’s *The History and Present State of Electricity*.²³ His 1767 copy survives in the Library at Shugborough.²⁴

There is a direct link between Anson and Wedgwood’s own products. Wedgwood wrote to Boulton, on 3rd December 1772, describing a meeting between himself and Anson at Shugborough, regarding his medals and the order of a pair of vases. He expresses great concern for Thomas’s health:

Mr. Anson behaved with great politeness to me & admired our things very much. He has given me leave to mold from any of his medals, or anything else he has. He ordered a pair of the best painted vases we have & I intend sending a pair of 93s we have here @£10-10 unless you have any you think will do better. ...I left the patterns at Mr. Ansons and was to have gone again after this week with a Moulder but I cannot go till after the 12th. At parting he very politely made me a present of a silver medal of the late Ld. Anson & said if he liv’d till summer he would come & spend a

day with me at Etruria & his sisters will come with him, but his life is very precarious, I fear he will scarcely survive the winter.²⁵

This amalgamation of talents and personalities, and, above all, respect and mutual understanding, offers a useful reminder that there was not necessarily any opposition between the ideals of the Greek Revival and modern science and technology.

The intellectual aspirations of ancient Greece did not mean an escape into the past. It was about the pursuit of Truth and Beauty, inspired by Nature's laws, which encouraged Virtue and Love. These timeless principles and ideologies could ultimately drive new technologies and social experiments towards a better future.

NOTES: Chapter 19

- ¹ 'Account of the late Nathaniel Kent', *The Monthly Magazine; or British Register*, Vol. 31, Part I for 1811. Printed for Richard Phillips, London, pp.79-80. Available on Google Books.
- ² Ibid. See also Pamela Horn, 'An Eighteenth-Century Land Agent: The Career of Nathaniel Kent (1737-1810)'. *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. 30, 1982, pp.1-16.
<http://www.bahs.org.uk/aghr/articles/30n1a1.pdf>
- ³ Nathaniel Kent, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property*. Printed for J. Dodsley, London, 1775. Available on Google Books.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ *John Parnell's Journal, 1769* (extracts, anonymous transcription). William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, CB/Shugborough/8. Original at London School of Economics, LSE Library Misc. 38.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² *Joseph Banks' Travel Journal, 1767*, (extracts). National Library of Wales.
- ¹³ See <http://wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk/archives/archive-collections-/story/the-etruria-factory-archive/ chapter/ the-canal>
- ¹⁴ James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens: Measured and Delineated*. Printed by John Haberkorn, London, 1762. <https://archive.org/details/antiquitiesAthe1Stua>
- ¹⁵ Eliza Meteyard, *Life of Josiah Wedgwood: From his Private Correspondence and Family Papers, in Two Volumes, Vol. I*. Hurst & Blackett, London, 1865. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ See Erasmus Darwin House <https://www.erasmusdarwin.org/learning/erasmus-darwin/>
- ¹⁹ Kristen M Schranz, 'James Keir (1735-1820), A Renaissance Man of the Industrial Revolution.' Published in *Revolutionary Players* by West Midlands History. <https://historywm.com/file/historywm/james-kier-a-renaissance-man-of-the-industrial-revolution.pdf>
- ²⁰ Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden; A Poem, in Two Parts – Part I, The Economy of Vegetation. Part II, The Loves of The Plants, with Philosophical Notes*. Printed for J. Johnson, London, 1791. Available on Google Books.
- ²¹ Kristen M Schranz. Op. cit.
- ²² 'Letter from J Keir, Esq. to the Printer of the Birmingham and Stafford Chronicle, 20 July 1791', in *An Authentic Account of the Riots in Birmingham*. Birmingham; London, 1791, pp.29-37. Cited by Schranz, Ibid.
- ²³ Joseph Priestley, *The History and Present State of Electricity, with Original Experiments*. Second edition. Printed for J. Dodsley et. al., London, 1769. Available on Google Books.
- ²⁴ National Trust Collections, Shugborough.
<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3194275>
- ²⁵ This refers to a MSS letter dated 3rd December 1772, sent to the author on 10th April 2006 by the Wedgwood Museum, Stoke-on-Trent. www.wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk

Chapter 20

Lost and Found

On Friday, December 21st 1772, Josiah Wedgwood wrote to Bentley, his partner in London, about his concerns for Thomas Anson's health:

Mr. Anson is in a very dangerous way as to his health and I fear cannot live long. He gets little sleep, has constant pain at the pit of his stomach, ie. his Liver. His legs swell and I believe his body likewise. Perhaps it may be of some consequence to our friend Mr. Stuart to know Mr. Anson's situation.¹

Wedgwood had been continuing to find models for his products in Anson's medal collection at Shugborough:

I have taken a few molds from Mr. A-s medals to try how they will look. Mr. Sneyd thinks a good suit of Historical medals will do as well as anything fore us to form a Cabinet for young gentlemen. If so Mr. Anson's is an admirable cabinet for us.²

Five days later, Wedgwood reported from Etruria, where he had opened his new works next to the canal in 1769, that Mr Anson was returning to London:

Mr. Anson is going in a day or two to *Die in London*. He says he would rather die there than at Shugborough. His Vases have come here, so he will never see them, and perhaps when he has left Shugborough his sisters will think proper to take them in. However we will send them to day...³

Thomas travelled back to London. Despite his ailing condition, he continued to entertain at St James' Square.

On 5th March 1773, James Harris's daughter wrote to her brother (originally in French):

We were at a breakfast and a concert this morning at Mr. Anson's. Everything bespeaks good taste; the house is charming and exquisitely appointed, the music is by the best hands in England: in fact it was a total delight.⁴

On the 23rd March 1773, James Harris's wife, Elizabeth, wrote:

LOST AND FOUND

Friday at a breakfast and concert at Mr. Anson's at which all the fine world were assembled and all elegant to a degree.⁵

This was, one imagines, the final concert, but it was not the last music at 15 St James' Square.

As Thomas Pennant wrote:

He was happy in his life, and happy in his end. I saw him about thirty hours before his death, listening calmly to the melody of the harp, preparing for the momentary transit from an earthly concert to an union with the angelic harmonies.⁶

Thomas Anson died at Lichfield House, on 30th March 1773.

On 3rd April, Mr Goodall, Thomas's manager, wrote:

When I told Sir Charles Saunders [Admiral] that Mr. Anson was no more it shook him so much that I am afraid it will go hard with him.⁷

The list of bills to be paid by Mr Goodall after Thomas's death, included:

Hire of a Harp	£1-13s.-6d.
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Elizabeth Harris, wife of the philosopher James Harris, wrote a revealing tribute to Thomas Anson in a letter to her son on 6th April 1773. This is not quoted in full in Burrows and Dunhill's book that includes many of the Harris family papers.⁸ As a private letter rather than a published eulogy, this must give a reliable impression of how Thomas was seen by his friends:

Mr. Anson's death is a loss to many, the poor he was charitable to a degree, the artists of all sorts had his protection and partook of his generosity, and all his friends were sharers of his most elegant entertainments. His great fortune comes to Mr. Adams his nephew. Both he and Mrs. Adams are amiable people and deserve it.⁹

It seems probable that the extent of his generosity to the poor and his patronage of "artists of all sorts" will never been known. He does not appear to have indulged in spending his "great fortune" for his own benefit. Even his London house was more of a showcase for the work of Stuart, Kammell and other artists, than a private luxury home.

Mrs Harris's letter also confirms that George Adams, who would take the name Anson, was known at Shugborough and in London as Thomas's heir, and, it is reasonable to assume, was already resident at No. 15.

THOMAS ANSON OF SHUGBOROUGH

An interesting question to consider is to what extent George Adams was involved with the later developments at Shugborough, 15 St James' Square and his uncle's other cultural interests and activities? He had already inherited Orgreave Hall, near Lichfield, when Lord Anson died in 1764. Thomas had been preparing for his death for at least the past two years (his will was written in 1771) and he must have been ready, at least to some degree, to hand over his properties and his life's work as the future assets of his heir.

Other accounts, paid off by Mr. Goodall, included:

Mr. Goodenough, Coachmaker	£15-04s.-6d.
Mr. Nurse, Bookseller	£15-15s.-6d. (John Nourse, 1705-1780, bookseller, of The Strand.)
Mr. Regenie, Taylor	£11-11s.-6d.
Mr. Wagner, for hats	£6-05s.-6d. (Wagner was hatmaker to the King.)

Mr. Goodall gave instructions for the funeral.¹⁰ Thomas's body was to be carried back to Staffordshire, to be interred in the parish church of St Michael and All Angels, Colwich, leaving London on the Wednesday with the intention of arriving at Wolseley Bridge, near Colwich, at noon on Saturday. Mr. Goodall's accounts¹¹ give details of the route, and the itemised cost, of this four-day journey:

Turnpikes each way	£3-04s.-10d.
Breakfast at Kit's Inn (Barnet)	9s.-06d.
Dine at Dunstable	£1-13s.-06d.
Bate (horse feeding) at Towcester	£4-00s.-00d.
Dine at Foster's Booth (near Towcester)	17s.-06d.
Bate at the Black Dog	£3-00s.-00d.
Lay at Daventry	£2-00s.-11d.
Dine at Coventry	19s.-06d.
Bate at Meriden	£2-06s.-00d.
Lay at Coleshill	£1-04s.-07d.
Breakfast at Lichfield	11s.-11d.
Paid bill at Wolseley Bridge	8s.-00d.

The interment would be that evening. There were to be both a hearse and a carriage, each with six horses – but this may not have been just for the final short distance from Wolseley Bridge to the church. The cost of the bate (horse feeding), which is noticeably more expensive than meals for the people accompanying the hearse, would seem to indicate that the horses travelled some distance, possibly the lengthy journey from London, where their first stop was breakfast at Barnet. There is no record of those who travelled back to Colwich with Thomas's body.

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The instructions requested:

If the church is to be in mourning the Pulpitts, the desk and Communion table should be covered with fine Black cloth...

The servants as bearers and the under bearers will meet the corpse at Wolseley Bridge. The bearers will have hatbands and gloves...

Mrs. Warren will be allowed 10 gns & the other maids 5 pounds each to put themselves into proper mourning.¹²

The corpse was to be buried in linen and the coffin inscription was simply:

Thomas Anson
Died 30th March 1773

Thomas's will specified that there should be no memorial. The family vault is accessed through the choir stalls in St Michael's, Colwich. The vault was, presumably, created by Thomas (and perhaps George), as the first person to be buried there would have been their father, William Anson, in 1720.

The burying place of the Ansons is in the form of an Egyptian Catacomb.¹³

Thomas Patrick John Anson (1939-2005), better known as the royal photographer, Patrick, Earl of Lichfield, who inherited Shugborough in 1960 from his paternal grandfather, continued the family tradition by having no memorial when he was interred in the vault at Colwich. The memorials to George and Elizabeth Anson are 19th century.

Staffordshire County Record Office hold a list of people who were to receive mourning rings to mark the death of Thomas Anson. The Bagot family still possessed one in the 1980s, although the present author has unfortunately been unable to trace it. They were apparently decorated with pink enamel.

The following list comprises family members, formal acquaintances and political associates, including colleagues of George, Lord Anson (some of whom had died nine years earlier), as well as other personal friends of Thomas at the time of his death.

Ld. Hardwicke Philip Yorke, 2nd Earl of Hardwicke (1720-1790), son of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, brother of Elizabeth, Lady Anson.

Ldy. Grey Jemima, Marchioness Grey, in her own right (1723-1797), wife of Philip Yorke.

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Mr. Joseph Yorke	(1724-1792) Diplomat, brother of Philip Yorke and brother-in-law of Elizabeth Anson, who was involved in the curious incident of Count St Germain.
Dean of Lincoln	James Yorke (1730-1808), younger brother of Philip and Joseph.
Sir Charles Saunders	Admiral (1715-1775).
Mr. Goodall	Thomas's Manager.
Mr. Adair	William Adair (1700-1783), Army Paymaster, of Pall Mall, and, later, of Flixton Hall, Suffolk. He is mentioned in several letters, often in association with Mr. (James) Mytton.
Mr. Shepperd	?
Capt. Palliser	Sir Hugh Palliser (1723-1796), Naval officer in the Seven Years War, Admiral, became First Naval Lord under the Earl of Sandwich in 1775.
Capt. Campbell	John Campbell (1720-1790), sailed round the world with George Anson.
Ld. Gower	Granville Leveson-Gower, 1st Marquess of Stafford (1721-1803). In 1753 briefly one of two MPs for Lichfield with Thomas Anson, inherited the title of Earl Gower on the death of his father in 1754.
Mr. Gilbert	Thomas Gilbert (1719-1798), MP for Lichfield from 1768, following Thomas Anson.
Mr. Eld	Francis Eld (1733-1817) of Seighford, Staffordshire, nephew of Francis Eld, MP for Stafford until his death in 1760.
Mr. Sneyd	John Sneyd (1734-c.1809), of Bishton, High Sheriff of Staffordshre from 1763.
Mr. Curzon	Assheton Curzon (1730-1820), later Viscount Curzon, of Hagley Park, Rugele, where he built an interesting and extensive grotto which survives but is currently inaccessible.
Ld. Paget	Henry Bayly-Paget, 1st Earl of Uxbridge (1744-1812). His father (d.1769) had been Deputy Lieutenant for Staffordshire.

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Mr. Turton	John Turton (1688-1774) of Orgreave Hall, High Sheriff of Staffordshire from 1777.
Mr. Mytton	John Mytton (d.1784), nephew of James Mytton. cousin of Thomas Pennant, a Dilettanti Society member from 1764, grandfather of "Mad Jack" Mytton, huntsman.
Mr. Cambridge	Richard Owen Cambridge (1707-1802) of Twickenham, poet, gardener, satirist and builder of boats.
Mr. Pennant	Thomas Pennant (1726-1796), naturalist, antiquarian, nephew of James Mytton, cousin of John Mytton.
Adml. Keppel	Augustus Keppel (1725-1786), 1st Viscount Keppel, brother of Lord Albemarle, George Keppel (1724-1772), the 3rd Earl and Viscount Bury until 1752.
Miss A. Anson	Possibly Thomas's sister, Anna (1693-1782).
Mr. Stuart	James "Athenian" Stuart (1713-1788), architect and interior designer.
Mr. Kammell	Antonin (Anton) Kammell (1730-1784), composer and violinist.
Mr. Gilbert	Thomas's Steward.
Miss Pigot (?)	Possibly Sophia Pigot, daughter of George Pigot, 1st Baron Pigot, of Patshull Hall, Staffordshire, President of the East India Company.
Sir Wm. Wolseley	Sir William Wolsely (c.1692-1779), of Wolseley Hall, neighbour to Shugborough.
Sir Wm. Bagot	Sir William Bagot (1728-1798), of Blithfield Hall, to whom Thomas Anson bequeathed his collection of medals, and whose descendants possessed their mourning ring.
Lord Harcourt	Simon Harcourt (1714-1777), of Nuneham Courtney, one of the early members of the Society of Dilettanti, and a patron of James "Athenian" Stuart.
Mr. Orme	Robert Orme (1728-1801), historian of the East India Company, to whom Thomas Anson left £500.

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Mr. Lockwood	Butler?
Mrs. Page	Housekeeper?
Sir Thomas Parker	Thomas Parker (1695-1784), cousin of the Ansons, in his early legal career a colleague of Philip Yorke, later Earl of Hardwicke, rose to be Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer.
Ld. & Ldy. Parker	Thomas Parker, 3rd Earl of Macclesfield (1723-1795), son of George Parker, the Ansons' cousin. Lady Macclesfield was Mary Heathcote.
Ld. & Ldy. Vernon	George Venables-Vernon, 1st Baron Vernon (1709-1780), of Sudbury Hall. MP for Lichfield before Thomas Anson took the seat in 1747, and later MP for Derby. His third wife (married 1744) was a granddaughter of Lord Harcourt.

One of the mysteries surrounding Thomas Anson is the lack of any identifiable portrait. The 1730s painting, possibly by Vanderbank, described in Chapter 5, could well be of Thomas, but has no known provenance. A portrait certainly, at one time, did exist.

Robert Orme, historian of the East India Company, was so moved by the generous legacy of £500 in his old friend's will that he commissioned a bust of Thomas from the leading sculptural artist Nollekens – and one of himself.

To perpetuate the memory of his friend, Mr. Orme had a handsome white marble bust of Mr. A. executed by their mutual friend Nollekens in his best manner, which was conspicuously placed in his library. It was a most admirable likeness; and after Mr. Orme's death was, by his executor, sent to the representative of Mr. Anson, as the most proper person to preserve such a memento of his ancestor.¹⁴

This "admirable likeness" would have been made from a death-mask. After Orme's death, could it be that the marble bust, "sent to the representative of Mr. Anson", which until more recently seems to have been completely forgotten about, was still at Shugborough?

John Thomas Smith, in his book *Nollekens and his Times*, published in 1829, lists the works of the sculptor, and notes:

Mr. Deville of the Strand, having purchased of Mr. Goblet, Mr. Nollekens' principal assistant, the moulds of those busts marked with a (*), the reader will be gratified by knowing, that casts of them may be had as of above, at a very reasonable rate.¹⁵

The “Hon. Thomas Anson” is one of a fairly small number of names that is marked with an asterisk, indicating that a mould was made. What became of it? There were also plaster copies made, that may, to this day, still exist unrecognised.

A few years ago, when I was in the Library at Shugborough telling the National Trust Librarian, Harvey James, this story, I immediately looked up and saw a marble bust which I had not noticed before. It was an eerie moment. It is extremely life-like, and it does look as though it is made from a death-mask. I am quite sure that this is Thomas Anson, hidden in plain sight.

There is a copy at Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire, home of Lord and Lady Vernon. It is Gemma Roberts, House and Collections Manager at Shugborough, who I have to thank for recognising what is described in the National Trust Collections catalogue as “A marble bust of an unknown gentleman facing slightly left”¹⁶ as being that of Thomas Anson. The Vernon collection was transferred to the Treasury and then to the National Trust in 1967, following the death of the 9th Lord Vernon.¹⁷ As the Vernons were related by the marriage of their daughter Mary, to George, Thomas’s heir, and were recipients of mourning rings, it is not surprising that they bought or acquired a copy of Nollekens’ bust.

Thomas’s nephew, George Adams, adopted the name of Anson. As previously mentioned, Thomas had prepared for this continuity since at least 1771, the year he made his will. That same year he purchased land at Oakedge, on the side of Cannock Chase neighbouring Shugborough, where he built a house for his surviving sisters, Anna and Johanna. Jennet (Janetta), his only married sister and mother of George Adams, died in 1771. It is not known if her death prompted his other arrangements. Their older sister, Isabella, had died in 1769.

A sign of continuity in the development of Shugborough are the paintings by Nicholas Dall and Moses Griffith. Those by the Scandinavian artist Dall that portray the landscape around the estate, with many of the monuments and follies, date from 1769. In 1768 Nicholas Thomas Dall received the first premium given by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts for the best landscape.¹⁸ Other paintings of Shugborough date from 1775, after Thomas’s death. The watercolours by Griffith are from about 1780, during the time of George Anson II. Notably, none of the 18th-century paintings or drawings portray the Shepherd’s Monument.

Griffith also painted landscapes at Oakedge, where Thomas’s two elderly sisters were living. Anna died at the age of 89, her will was proved on 13 June 1782. Johanna, the youngest and last surviving sibling, died in 1786, also in her 80s.

Another Shugborough puzzle is the Druid, which now sits, very much eroded away, on the ruins by the river. Could this Druid have had any connection with Thomas Wright,

who had his own 18th-century fascination with these mysterious priests? In Wright's personal mythology, the Druids were the possessors of ancient astronomical wisdom, which, naturally, matched his own theories of the universe.

Druids would also have been on the mind of Elizabeth Anson when she read *L'Astrée* on the banks of the River Sow, in the summer of 1750 (see Chapter 13). The Druid Adamas is a leading character in romance, a figure of wisdom, who explains, in 17th-century style, the Celtic gods and goddesses as aspects of Christian deities.

The Shugborough Druid does not seem to be visible in the Dall paintings that can be dated to before Thomas's death. Neither is he apparent in the later paintings by Griffith. It is possible that the Druid could date from shortly before Thomas's death, and simply be invisible in Dall's earlier pictures, or it might be something that George Anson later added, continuing, in his own way, his uncle's work.

It is a Coade-stone figure, made from a mould using a hard-setting cement-like mixture. Artificial stone mouldings had been around for some time; Eleanor Coade bought an existing business in 1769. The plaque on the front of the Cat's Monument appears to be made of artificial stone and may date from 1755-56. There is an almost, but not quite, identical Druid at Croome Park in Worcestershire, seat of the Earls of Coventry since the 16th century, that looks as if it has been made from a second, slightly revised, mould.

Replicas of the Druid could be bought "off the shelf", just as one might buy a statue in a garden centre today, so its addition to the garden may not have had any special meaning and might simply add a touch of romantic mood. A Druid may well be considered a fashionable garden ornament for Mrs Coade's customers, but there is evidence that George Anson would have had some knowledge of what this figure stood for, especially as representing the late-18th century fascination for the wild and remote land of Wales.

Thomas's friends Benjamin Stillingfleet and Lord Lyttelton were both early travellers in Wales, in search of the "Picturesque" (see Chapter 18). Before the railways made travel much easier, much of Wales was extremely difficult to explore apart from the Roman road, now the A5, used by visitors to North Wales and to access the sea routes to Ireland. Thomas had followed Lyttelton into Wales, but not into the mountains.

But what of the harp which Thomas had listened to in his last days? It almost certainly would have been a Welsh harp. There were Welsh harpers at Queen Elizabeth's court in the 16th century, and there had been a fashion for harps for many years. Handel used a harp for "exotic effect" in some of his oratorios.

Kammell performed in concerts with Evan Evans, who, in 1769, became harpist to Sir Watkin Williams Wynn. Kammell's sonatas Op. 8, which must have been composed no

later than 1772 (See Chapter 18) are music for the harp, with accompanying violin and cello. Were these written for a professional or amateur harpist, who might have played for Thomas Anson?

Mr Goodall's accounts show that he paid for "hire of a harp" but not for a harpist. Who was the harpist? Did the musician not have his own harp which he could transport with him? One would assume that an established performer, or an aristocratic amateur, would have their own portable harp that could be carried, in some way, to St James' Square.

It is impossible to identify the musician with certainty, but there was a Welsh harpist, a promoter of ancient Welsh Druidic and Bardic lore, who had a connection with the Anson family in the years following Thomas's angelic concert.

This was Edward Jones, who, a few years later, at the height of his career, was the harpist to Frederick, Prince of Wales.

On the prince's succession to the throne, he became known as *Bardd y Brenin* ('the king's bard').¹⁹

Gemma Roberts noticed there was a watercolour of the lost Palladian Bridge in Shugborough Park, hanging on the wall above the door of the Library, which is attributed to this Edward Jones.²⁰ There is no ascribed date for the picture, but the existence of this watercolour shows that Jones knew Shugborough. He would have been there long enough to have enjoyed the leisure to paint this scene. Jones is not known as an artist, and there are no other pictures by him in the National Trust Collections catalogue.

Knowing that Thomas listened to harp music in his final days makes this unexpected discovery particularly intriguing, and a link to an interesting figure in the history of Welsh music. It raises the question, what was Jones's connection with the Ansons and Shugborough?

Edward Jones (1752-1824) was born in Henblas, near Llandderfel, a few miles from Bala. *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography* says:

He proceeded to London about 1775 under the patronage of members of the Welsh nobility.²¹

This was two years after Thomas Anson's death, in March 1773. Jones's biographical date is probably based on that of his first known public appearance in London, which Simon McVeigh's *Calendar of London Concerts 1750-1800* gives as April 3rd 1775.²²

It was an event of some historical significance. It was a benefit concert at which the

principal performers would have received the profits. Thomas's composer friend, Anton Kammell, played a concerto, and, as first violin, would have led the orchestra. This was the occasion of the first public appearance of Muzio Clementi as a harpsichord soloist.

The young Italian born Clementi (1752-1832) had been brought to England in 1769 by Peter Beckford (1740-1811), cousin of the art collector William Beckford. He lived at Peter Beckford's country house near Blandford, Dorset, until not long after Beckford's marriage, in 1773, to Louisa Pitt, daughter of Kammell's patron, George Pitt.

Clementi became the leading keyboard player in London, and a pioneer of the piano. His career as a composer eventually took second place to his business as a manufacturer of pianos. At the end of his life, around 1832, he lived in Lichfield, in a house rented from the Anson estate, now the Hedgehog Hotel. Did the aged Clementi ever visit Shugborough?

James Cervetto was the music master for the Bridgeman family at Weston Park, Staffordshire. He was the soloist in a cello concerto when Edward Jones played a harp solo on an "improved Welsh pedal harp", made by Jean-Joseph Merlin.²³ Ancient harps were diatonic, with strings corresponding to the white notes of a piano – they had to be retuned to play in other keys. In the 17th century, the triple harp developed with a set of strings at an angle to the others, tuned to the sharps and flats. It is the triple harp rather than the conventional pedal harp that became associated with Welsh harp playing. The traditional way of playing the Welsh triple harp was for the musician to rest the instrument on his shoulder.

Merlin, a Belgian (the wizard's name is a coincidence), was an astonishing character. He was a clockmaker, inventor, showman and maker of automata, also the inventor of roller skates. His demonstration of these at one of Teresa Cornelys's concerts ended with a disastrous collision with a large and valuable mirror. Cornelys was an operatic singer who hosted lavish entertainments in Soho Square, often beyond her means. A seductress, the father of her daughter was the infamous Casanova.

Until the early 1770s, Jean-Joseph Merlin (1735-1803) was the mechanical genius behind the automata made by jeweller James Cox, including the extraordinary silver swan, now in the Bowes Museum, county Durham. Merlin was the curator of Cox's museum, or exhibition of automata, in London's Spring Gardens, until about 1772. Merlin's creations, along with those of others, inspired Charles Babbage to work on computers. He also created a self-propelled "gouty chair", a wheelchair propelled by hand-turned winches – such a chair was listed in the 1842 Shugborough Sale catalogue.²⁴

An article by Margaret Debenham on Joseph Merlin, published in 2014, explains that his independent career as a musical instrument maker, including combinations of harpsichord and piano, began in early 1773.²⁵ She refers to a newspaper advertisement from February 1782, in which Merlin's former foreman and "chief finisher" of musical

instruments, Louis Lavigne Verel, in the process of setting up his own business, states that he had worked for Merlin for nine years. This means that Merlin must have begun his work on musical instruments at the beginning of 1773, shortly before Thomas Anson's death.

His first musical patent, for a device to add a pianoforte mechanism to a harpsichord, was granted on 12th September 1774. Five months earlier, in April 1774, J C Bach had performed on a newly invented harpsichord, possibly using this device invented by Merlin.

On 7th May 1775, Jones played Merlin's harp at a private concert at the house of the musical historian Dr Burney, at which the philosopher James Harris was present.²⁶ Burney's daughter, Fanny, thought Jones was "a very silly young man".²⁷ Whilst Phyllis Kinney, in her book *Welsh Traditional Music*, published in 2011, suggests this might have meant that he was "countrified"; he apparently played with "great neatness and delicacy, but little expression."²⁸ Fanny Burney writes as if she has not seen Jones before. This could indicate that he was new to the London scene in 1775, but other possibilities must remain open. Notably, Jones's pedal harp does not appear on Merlin's list of patents. Could it have been made before 1775?²⁹

In 1784, Jones published *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards*,³⁰ a collection of arrangements of ancient Welsh music that he claimed to have survived from the time of the Druids. It includes the first publication of *Ar hyd y nos*, "All through the night". By far the greater part of his book is a lengthy account of ancient Welsh culture, including the traditions of the Druids and Bards, giving all known classical sources. He makes imaginary connections with Biblical history that had been popular throughout the 18th century, referred to in the work of people like William Stukeley, for example. This work is, however, of more value as an account of 18th-century attitudes to Welsh history than as an historical record in itself – the kind of romantic and fanciful narrative that belongs to the world of the Coade-stone Druid.

Jones's later book, *The Bardic Museum, of Primitive British Literature*,³¹ includes English translations of many ancient Welsh texts, including poetry associated with Taliesin and extracts from the Mabinogion. His works might not always contain reliable sources but are culturally significant in their own right. The promoter (and inventor) of Druidic lore, Iolo Morganwg, detested Jones. Morganwg was a Radical whereas Jones was a Tory, who enjoyed his privileged position with the Prince of Wales.

His *Musical and Poetical Relicks* gives clear evidence of Jones's connection with the Ansons. The list of subscribers includes: Mr. George Anson of Shugborough, The Hon. Mrs. Anson, Miss Anson (not in the 1794 second edition), and Mrs. J Anson of Oakedge Hall. "Miss Anson" would have been a daughter of George and Mary Anson. "Mrs. J Anson" was Johanna, the last surviving of Thomas's sisters (given the courtesy title Mrs). This is the only case in which four members of the same family have subscribed to the book; it is one sign of Jones's very distinct connection with the Anson family and Staffordshire.

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There are only four institutional subscribers: The Imperial Library, Vienna; The Cymmrodorion Society, London; The Gwyneddigion Society, London; and The Cecilian Society, Lichfield's musical society.

Other subscribers with a local or family connections, as they appear in the list given in the first edition of Jones's *Musical and Poetical Relicks*, published in 1784,³² include:

Lord Bagot, Lady Bagot	Sir William Bagot of Blithfield Hall was left Thomas Anson's medals in his will. He wrote the 1772 poem given in Chapter 18.
Mr. Brown, Lichfield	Organist, probably of St Mary's, Lichfield.
Marchioness de Grey	Jemima, Marchioness Grey, wife of Philip Yorke.
Mrs. Giffard, Miss Giffard, Staffordshire	Of Chillington Hall, Staffordshire.
Viscountess Gower	Wife of Granville Leveson-Gower, after 1786 1st Marquess of Stafford.
Mr. Hann	Unidentified. In the 1794 edition he is listed as "Mr. Hann, Bath" of Little Heywood which suggests a professional or person of independent means – a musician?
Earl of Macclesfield	Thomas Parker, 3rd Earl of Macclesfield, the Ansons' cousin.
Thomas Pennant, Esq., Mrs. Pennant, of Downing	Naturalist and antiquarian.
Miss Seward, Lichfield	Anna Seward, who wrote the 1756 poem.
Mr. Savell Lichfield	Possibly John Saville, vicar choral at Lichfield, with whom Anna Seward had a close relationship.
Lord Vernon	George Venables-Vernon, 2nd Baron Vernon, brother-in-law of George Adams/Anson.

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Mr. Wickens, Lichfield	Church Warden of St Mary's, an acquaintance of Samuel Johnson.
Mrs. Charles Yorke Gower-Street	Née Agneta Johnson, widow of Charles Yorke, brother of Elizabeth, Lady Anson, and briefly Lord Chancellor before his death in January 1770, possibly suicide.
Mr Stuart Leicester Fields	Architect and interior designer, James "Athenian" Stuart.
Mr Kammell Halfmoon-Street	Anton Kammell, among the relatively small number of musicians.

Jones included an arrangement of a work by Kammell in his *Musical Miscellany*, published in 1810.³³ This is a collection of music for harp, harpsichord and piano, previously mentioned. Most of the pieces he gives are his own music, together with arrangements of traditional and more familiar tunes. Further to Kammell, only five other composers are named: Mozart (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791); Schobert (Johann Schobert, d.1767); Millico (Vito Giuseppe Millico, 1737-1802), leading castrato, whom Jones could have met through Dr Burney; Corelli (Arcangelo Corelli, 1653-713); and Abel (Carl Friedrich Abel, 1723-1787).

Kammell's connection with Jones is apparent long after his death. The relevant work is a nocturno, Intriguingly, this is made up of movements from three different nocturnos from Kammell's Op. 6, and are given in the present author's online 'Thematic Catalogue'.³⁴ The first movement is from No. 3,³⁵ the Menuetto from No. 1,³⁶ and the final Rondeau from No. 6,³⁷ originally "Allegretto grazioso". The whole set has been transposed into E flat.

The original set of nocturni was composed for two violins and a bass (continuo) in about 1770, dedicated to Lady Young of Delaford. They were probably written for the wedding celebrations of Sir William and Lady Young's daughter to Richard Ottley, the dedicatee of Kammell's Op. 9 sonatas for harp (see Chapter 18).

There is yet more evidence of a close relationship between Jones and Kammell in this collection, including a nocturno by Jones himself which is closely modelled on Kammell's own. This is in the same three movement form, with a similar march-like "Majestic" opening movement, a central minuet, and a finale "Cossack Dance".

What can be deduced from this evidence? It is impossible to prove whether (or not) Edward Jones was the harpist who had played for Thomas Anson in his last days. It is all too easy to make a neat story out of the fragments of documentation that exist – but there are reasons to enjoy such imaginings – especially as Thomas Pennant was there. He wrote:

I saw him about thirty hours before his death, listening calmly to the melody of the harp...³⁸

The fact that Pennant was Welsh and was present on this occasion, surely makes it probable that the harpist was Welsh. Perhaps Jones had been introduced by Pennant to Thomas Anson, even if only at the concert the week before his death. Pennant certainly knew Jones, and he and his wife were subscribers to *Musical and Poetical Relicks*.

Jones's first known public performance was in April 1775, nine years before publication of his book. This was a benefit concert with Kammell, who was responsible for arranging Thomas Anson's music. Jones could have met Kammell through Anson, before or after the performance at St James' Square.

It is established that Joseph Merlin began his career as a musical instrument maker no later than January 1773. Until evidence to the contrary is found, it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that it was Jones who played at St James' Square, that it was Merlin's harp that was hired, and that Anton Kammell arranged the performance for his "old friend".

Kammell's special relationship with Jones is demonstrated not only by his subscription to *Musical and Poetical Relicks* and the remarkable appearance of Jones's arrangement of his music, but also by his piece in imitation of Kammell which was included in his *Musical Miscellany*, 26 years later. By 1810 Kammell would have been an almost forgotten figure.

Jones was more than a passing visitor at Shugborough prior to the publication, in 1784, of the first edition of his book. He had had the time to paint his watercolour, of course, but his list of subscribers implies that he had been in Staffordshire long enough, whether on one extended visit or on several occasions, to make the acquaintance of the elderly Johanna Anson and several local dignitaries. Did he perform at a gathering at Shugborough, where people might have been encouraged to promise their financial support? He also had several acquaintances in Lichfield, possibly connected with the musical Cecilian Society, which was active until 1790. His wide range of subscribers with a Staffordshire connection suggests this was no fleeting visit.

If Jones *was* the harpist at St James' Square, then there is a possibility that he was at Shugborough as early as 1772, when Kammell, according to Bagot's poem, would have travelled there with "Athenian" Stuart, and "Indian" Orme. The most likely occasion of his visit to Shugborough would have been as a travelling companion of Thomas Pennant.

There is a collection of watercolours of Shugborough by Moses Griffith, most of them previously mentioned, currently hung in the same passage as the Edward Jones painting. As explained in Chapter 11, Griffith was Pennant's protégée and travelled with him on his expeditions, sketching the places they visited. It is easy to imagine that Jones was at Shugborough with Pennant and Griffith, sometime between Thomas's death (March

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1783) and 1784. This could equally have been after the death of his unmarried sister, Anna Anson, in 1782, who is not listed as a subscriber. It is also possible that Jones may have painted his picture of the Palladian Bridge under Pennant's or even Griffith's supervision.

Little is known about the social life at Shugborough after Thomas's death. These tantalising fragments of evidence open-up the question as to what extent did George Anson II continue his uncle's cultural or even musical interests? Jones was certainly there at some point during or after 1773. Why not Kammell also, who was receiving £50 a year annuity from Thomas's estate?

There is no doubt that the music of Edward Jones plays a part in the enduring soundtrack of Shugborough.

Harp music to beguile the Coade-stone Druid, perhaps?

NOTES: Chapter 20

- ¹ Ann Finer and George Savage (Eds.), *The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood*. Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1965, p.140.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid. p.141.
- ⁴ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World. The Family Papers of James Harris 1732-1780*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Thomas Pennant. *The Journey from Chester to London*. Printed for Luke White, Dublin, 1783. Available on Google Books.
- ⁷ Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/6/49A
- ⁸ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill. Op. cit.
- ⁹ Hampshire Record Office, *Family Papers of James Harris*. 9M73/G1260/11
I am grateful to archivist Rosemary Burrows for suggesting I obtain the complete text.
- ¹⁰ Staffordshire Record Office. *Miscellaneous Letters, 1764-1773*. 'Arrangement for reception of Thomas Anson's body at Wolseley Bridge and for mourning in the church, 1773.' D615/P(S)/1/6
- ¹¹ Staffordshire Record Office. *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/6/54
- ¹² Ibid. D615/P(S)/1/6/49A
- ¹³ William Parsons and Thomas Bradshaw, *Staffordshire General and Commercial Directory for 1818*. Manchester, Oct 21, 1818, page 1xxii. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁴ Robert Orme, *Historical fragments of the Mogul Empire, of the Morattoes and of the English Concern in Indostan*. Printed for F. Wingrave, London, 1805. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁵ John Thomas Smith, *Nollekens and his Times; Comprehending a Life of that Celebrated Sculptor; and Memoirs of Several Contemporary Artists*. Second edition in Two Volumes, Vol. 1, Henry Colburn, London, 1829. Available on Google Books.
- ¹⁶ National Trust Collections, Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire.
<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/653263>
I am grateful to Gemma Roberts, House and Collections Manager for the National Trust at Shugborough, for recognising this copy of a marble bust of an unknown gentleman as being of Thomas Anson.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Nicholas Thomas Dall, biography. Retrieved from <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/nicholas-thomas-dall-131>
- ¹⁹ Edward Jones biographical details, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*.
<https://biography.wales/article/s-JONE-EDW-1752>
- ²⁰ National Trust Collections, Shugborough. object/1270632
I am very grateful to Gemma Roberts, House and Collections Manager, for identifying this watercolour of the Palladian Bridge in Shugborough Park as by Edward Jones, harpist.
- ²¹ Edward Jones. Op. cit.
- ²² Simon McVeigh, *Calendar of London Concerts, 1750-1800*. Goldsmiths, University of London.
<http://research.gold.ac.uk/10342/>

- ²³ Joan Rimmer, 'Edward Jones's Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards, 1784: A Re-Assessment'. *The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol. 39, Sep.1986, pp.77-96.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/i234929>
- ²⁴ *A Catalogue of the Splendid Property at Shugborough Hall, Stafford to be Sold at Auction on the Premises on Monday the 1st Day of August 1842*. William Salt Library, Staffordshire County Council, Sc B/1/1
- ²⁵ Margaret Debenham, 'Joseph Merlin in London, 1760-1803: The Man behind the Mask. New Documentary Sources'. *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2014, pp.130-163. Published online 21 March 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14723808.2014.888175>
- ²⁶ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill. Op. cit.
- ²⁷ Phyllis Kinney, *Welsh Traditional Music*. University of Wales Press, 2011.
- ²⁸ Ibid
- ²⁹ Surprisingly, Merlin's first recorded patent is for a "rotisseur" or Dutch oven, filed on 29th January 1773.
- ³⁰ Edward Jones, *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards, Preserved by Tradition, and Authentic Manuscripts, from Remote Antiquity; Never Before Published. To the Tunes are Added Variations for the Harp, Harpsichord, Violin, or Flute, with a Choice Collection of the Pennillion, Epigrammatic Stanzas, or Native Pastoral Sonnets of Wales, with English Translations. Likewise a History of the Bards from the Earliest Period to the Present Time, and an Account of their Music, Poetry, and Musical Instruments, with a Delineation of the Latter*. Published by the author, London, 1784. A later enlarged edition was published in 1794. Available on Google Books. See also [https://imslp.org/wiki/Musical_and_Poetical_Relicks_of_the_Welsh_Bards_\(Jones,_Edward\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Musical_and_Poetical_Relicks_of_the_Welsh_Bards_(Jones,_Edward))
- ³¹ Edward Jones, *The Bardic Museum, of Primitive British Literature; and other admirable rarities; forming the second volume of Musical, Poetical and Historical Relicks of The Welsh Bards and Druids*. Printed by A. Straban, London, 1802. Available on Google Books.
- ³² The names of the local or family subscribers have been extracted by the present author from a much longer list as they appear in the first edition of Edward Jones's *Musical and Poetical Relicks*, Op. cit., 1784. The brief biographical details are his own.
- ³³ Edward Jones, *Musical Miscellany, for the Harp or Harpsichord*. 1810. Available on Google Books.
- ³⁴ Andrew Baker, 'Anton Kammell – A Thematic Catalogue'. <https://andrewbakercomposer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/kammel-catalogue-complete.pdf>
- ³⁵ Ibid. AK3/4/3
- ³⁶ Ibid. AK3/4/1
- ³⁷ Ibid. AK3/4/6
- ³⁸ Thomas Pennant. Op. cit.

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EPILOGUE

Platonists are often assumed to believe that this world is not real because it is ever-changing and much of what we perceive is illusory. This does not mean that the world around us, and our lives as human beings, should not be valued. It was the 18th-century Platonists and the Platonic Romantics (including poets such as Coleridge and Wordsworth) in the early 19th century, who saw a high value in Nature and stood against Deists and Materialists. A fundamental idea of the philosophical Greek Revival was that Nature holds universal Truths, and these same Truths lie within our souls – an inherent Divine Law.

The pursuit of Beauty in Nature and Art was integral to the pursuit of Truth. This was never an abstract philosophical quest; a life lived in accord or harmony with Truth and Beauty led to Virtue – every aspect of our lives: personal, social, moral and political, should be governed by Virtue. The point is that although this world is ever-changing, it holds timeless Truths within it, as do our souls, even in death. Knowing Eternal Truth through Nature, even its changeability and its discord, might, or might not, be the message of the enigmatic Shepherd's Monument.

Lord Lyttelton's Doric Temple, which he had discussed with Thomas Anson and James Stuart in 1758, was a place from which one might survey the landscape and contemplate Nature. These philosophical ladies and gentlemen really did wander around their parks discussing Beauty. As James Harris wrote, in a dedicatory note to Lyttelton, about a conversation:

...as we were walking together in the groves of Hagley, during the calm silence of a starry night... The scene was actual nature exquisite in its kind; the subject founded not in fiction, but in truth, and such a one, as might well become a wise & good man, the nature of whence those Beautys were derived.¹

Thomas Anson, Lord Lyttelton and Benjamin Stillingfleet had all travelled in Wales, not far away in miles, but still an adventure, in search of the Picturesque.

Shugborough changed considerably, especially around the year 1800, when, at the turn of the century, the more fanciful follies and water features were swept away, either by flood, or by changing taste. The vale is now crossed by two mainline railways and a canal. Yet, somehow it remains what it is, and has always been. The Spirit of Place endures.

The vale, enclosed and separate, bordered by the woodland on one side, tranquil in spite of passing trains, and a confluence of two rivers, is still an archetypal "locus amoenus", a "comfortable place" – an Arcadia.

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As James Stuart wrote to Thomas, in 1764, desperate to get away from the stresses of work on the London house, 15 St James' Square:

...the moment I break loose, I shall fly to Shugborough & enjoy that repose and tranquillity which I have so much need of, & which is not to be found elsewhere.²

It is curious that the most direct identification of this Spirit of Place is not at Shugborough but just across the River Sow at Tixall, where the Dairy Bridge is inscribed with the motto of the Golden Age:

Hic Ver Perpetuum
Here is Perpetual Spring

Such a place is one in which the qualities of Nature are in balance. It belongs to all the Muses.

The little-known philosopher of the Greek Revival, Floyer Sydenham, published the first of his projected editions of a translation of Plato in 1759, the year when the symbolically significant Hagley temple must have been built. Sydenham was supported financially by his old university friend, James Harris, and dedicated his "Io" to Lord Lyttelton. The dialogue is about poetic inspiration:

For they [the poets] assure us, that out of certain Gardens and flowery Vales belonging to the Muses, from Fountains flowing there with Honey, gathering the Sweetness of their songs, they bring it to us, like the Bees; and in the same Manner withal, flying. Nor do they tell us any Untruth. For a poet is a Thing light, and volatile, and sacred: nor is he able to write Poetry, till the Muse entring into him, he is transported out of Himself, and has no longer the Command of his Understanding.³

Shugborough is, perpetually, such a flowery vale of the Muses.

Andrew Baker

October 2019

¹ Clive T. Probyn, *The Sociable Humanist. The Life and Works of James Harris 1709-1780*. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 69.

² Staffordshire Record Office, *Records of the Anson Family of Shugborough, Earls of Lichfield*. D615/P(S)/1/6/

³ Floyer Sydenham, *Io, a Dialogue of Plato, Concerning Poetry*. Printed by H. Woodfall, London, 1759. <https://archive.org/details/iodialogueofplat00plat>

APPENDIX

The 1767 Anonymous Poem

This letter and the anonymous poem, together with the attached notes, can be found in the Staffordshire County Record Office.¹

July 7th, 1767

Sir,

You will most likely be surprised at the inclosed fantastical inventory of certain of your goods and chattels. If it sho'd amuse You for half an hour, the author of it will have fully obtained his end. He is under no apprehensions of your suspecting who he is: but, if he keeps his own council, he is sure You can never convict him. Certain as he is of remaining concealed, he has so insuperable an objection to anything of his composition appearing in print, that he most seriously enjoins You by no means to let it escape to the press. This request he is confident You will comply with, as Your doing otherwise wo'd give him real uneasiness.

He has nothing further to add but to assure You he thinks all he says, tho' said in verse,

& is very sincerely
your obedient humble Servant.

¹ Staffordshire Record Office, *Anson Papers*. D615/P(S)/2/5

Anson, to no man the celestial Muse
 Her festive strain of merited applause
 Bears gladlier, than to him whose generous aid
 Protects & cherishes the sister arts
 Of imitation.
 From the Muse proceeds
 All Harmony however to the sense
 Directed, immaterial: in the grace
 Of fair proportion, & harmonious form
 Perceptible, as in the number'd notes
 Of melting music, or of measured verse:
 The Muse's gift in either:
 Her's the lyre Of ORPHEUS,
 Her's the SYRACUSAN reed,
 A RAPHAEL'S pencil
 Her's & Her's the touch
 Whose exquisite sensation shapes the block
 To forms of GRECIAN beauty.
 She well pleased
 On the green margin of the Silver TRENT
 Sees at thy bidding ANSON, SCENES ARISE
 That might adorn ILISSUS, or the vale of
 TEMPE: glittering domes, & obelisks,
 Pillars & pyramids with pointed top
 Piercing the lawrel's shade: or where the slope
 Ascending gradual opens to the sun,
 Full to his orient beam the trophied Arch
 Turns it's vast portal, worthy to bestride
 The sacred road triumphant heroes passed via sacra
 To ROME'S dread CAPITOL.
 Along the mead,
 Reflected by the clear translucent stream,
 See where the stately colonnade extends
 It's pillar'd length: to shade the sculptured forms
 Of Demigods or Heroes, & protect
 From the cold northern blast each tenderer plant,
 The fragrant progeny of milder climes;
 Orange, or lime, or cedro from the banks
 Of ARNO, or PARTHENOPE'S soft shore.
 These in fair order rainged, stage above stage;
 Rear to the lofty roof their green heads, crowned
 At once with flowers profuse, & golden fruit,
 Asilvan theatre! & intermixt

Each aromatic shrub or scented leaf,
 Myrtle, & sweet geranium, cassia, balms,
 And balsams from ARABIA'S spicy vales.
 Here while we breathe perfume, the ravish'd eye
 Surveys the miracles of GRECIAN art
 In living sculptures, godlike shapes, & forms
 Excelling human!
 Light-robed FLORA first,
 Protectress of the place, with garlands crowned,
 Scatters with liberal hand a waste of flowers.
 Nor shall the learned eye deem here misplaced,
 O smooth ADONIS, thy transcendent form.
 How shall the Muse address Thee, lovely Youth,
 How celebrate? a mortal or a God,
 Doubtfull! for wide extended thy renown,
 And various: through mysterious EGYPT'S bounds
 In temples, & with sacrifice adored,
 OSIRIS! while on TYRE'S resplendent shore
 With annual obsequies, & plaintive song
 SIDONIAN virgins mourn their TAMMUZ slain.
 But every GRECIAN Muse, thro' DORIC land,
 Thro' SICILY'S resounding vales, still chaunts
 ADONIS' fate & CIPHEREA'S woe.
 Thus varying they record Thee: but thy grace,
 And matchless beauty, under every name,
 In every situation, all extoll,
 In life, in death, in action, or repose,
 Or sleeping in PROSPERINA'S cold lap,
 Or walking in CIPRIGNA'S rosy arms.
 Thy godlike semblance next commands the song,
 O BROMIUS, O LENĒAN; thy curle'd locks
 With ivy-berries crowne'd, thy awfull head
 Averted, air majestic, & thy youth
 Celestial, brightest progeny of JOVE!
 But what that Hero form, whose gloomy brow
 Contracted, speaks the workings of his soul?
 Eager his looks & piercing, but with care
 Emaciate his sunk cheek:
 The Dagger marks
 Th' Assertor of ROME'S liberties in vain
 CASSIUS the last of ROMANS.
 How shall words
 Paint the firm station, spirit, strength & grace

Of the young ATHLETE?
 How, MELPOMINÈ,
 Thy flowering figure? o'er thy vocal she;
 Inclined, in act preluding, to excite
 Notes, that resounding thro' the star-paved courts
 Of high JOVE feasting with th'immortal Gods
 Redouble their beatitude, & take
 On earth the ravish'd souls of righteous men
 And wrap them in ELYSIUM: but th'accursed,
 And reprobate, to wrath devoted, them
 Strange horror seizes, flight, & mild despair,
 Troubled, & frantic at the sacred sound.
 Nor to these proud arcades alone confined
 The works of ancient art; behold the lawn,
 With circling woods surrounded, skirted wide
 With many a Term, & many a laurel'd bust,
 Poet or Caesar; many a swelling urn,
 ETRUSCAN wrought, emboss'd with high relief,
 Of various argument. A Virgin here
 Dire sacrifice to NEMESIS DIVINE,
 Bleeds on the horrid altar. To the shore
 Here PHRIGIAN PARIS leads his ravished bride
 Bright ARGIVE HELLEN, source of endless woes.
 Observe you rising hillock's form,
 Whose verdant top the spiry cypress crowns,
 And the dim ilex spreads her dusky arms
 To shade th'ARCADIAN Shepherdesses tomb:
 Of PARIAN stone the pile: of modern hands
 The work, but emulous of ancient praise.
 Let not the Muse inquisitive presume
 With rash interpretation to disclose
 The mystic ciphers that conceal her name.
 Whate'er her country, or however call'd
 Peace to her gentle shade.
 The Muse shall oft
 Frequent her honour'd shrine, with solemn song
 Lyric, or elegiac: oft when eve
 Gives respite from the long days weary task,
 And dewy HESPER brightens in the west,
 Here shall the constant hind, & plighted maid
 Meet, & exchange their tokens, & their vows
 Of faith, & love.
 Here weeping Spring shall shed

Her first pale snowdrops, bluebells, violets,
 And Summer's earliest roses blossom here.
 Now new scenes open, other fabrics rise,
 Unusual forms! from climates far remote,
 Farther than DORIC, or IÖNIAN arts
 Extended, or ROME'S conquering eagles flew:
 By thy adventurous Race not unexplored,
 ANSON, whose indefatigable course
 Proceeding circled the terraqueous globe:
 Hence on the TRENT, SINĒAN trophies shine:
 Airy Pagodas, elegant & light,
 With painted balustrades, & gilded spires;
 And Temples, that like broad pavilions spread
 Their ample roofs, with listed colours gay,
 Green, azure, purple, & distinct with gold;
 Here 'mid circumfluous waters aptly placed
 Cast a mixt radiance o'er the trembling stream.
 From hence, in wide expanse, the level mead
 Spreads her smooth surface of continued green,
 Not boundless, tho' extensive: all around
 High grounds, & waving woods, at distance due
 Close the fair landscape: INGESTRE'S awfull shades,
 TIXAL'S grey towers, & CHARTLEY'S castled hill.
 Westward, with near approach, & bolder swell,
 The wavy hills rise mountainous, befringed
 With gloomy groves of never-changing leaf,
 Cedar, or pine, or fir: plantations vast,
 And venerable! not in curious lines
 Restrained, & cramp'd, nor on the summits clump'd
 Bleak, & unthrifty; but profusely spread
 Along the mountain slope for many a mile
 To shade a country. Such the groves that grace
 The shaggy sides of APPENNINE, or huge PIRENE.
 Underneath a limpid lake
 The molten chrystal of an hundred rills
 Gushing from purple CANK'S salubrious sides
 Collects, expansion pure, with verdant isles
 Inlaid it's lucid bosom, & it's shores
 With marble temples, glittering structures, crowned,
 And cheif thy stately tower ANDRONICUS CYRRHESTES,
 TEMPLE OF THE WINDS since call'd.
 Mark, on the gorgeous frize in high relief
 Embossed, the powers of air, gigantic forms.

First BOREAS, tyrant of the northern blast,
 Known by his surly frown, & weathered shell,
 Trump of the howling tempest. Caecias keen
 Shakes from his brazen shield the rattling hail.
 A youthfull form the next, of aspect mild,
 Bright Genius of the morning's fragrant gale,
 Sheds from his robe's loose bosom fruits & flowers,
 APELIOTES messenger of day.
 Then EURUS, NOTUS, ZEPHYRUS, & LIBS,
 And SKIRON hot, whose magazine of fire
 Burns the green herb, & blast the sickening year:
 High on the roof the glittering TRYTON poised,
 The adverse shore a TUSCAN colonnade
 Superbly bounds, beneath whose marble floor
 The glassy wave escapes with liquid lapse
 Smooth sliding; but a non precipitant
 Roars o'er the rough cascade with dashing sound,
 And rushes into TRENT. Recoiling TRENT
 Shrinks from the mighty tribute. But too long
 The pompous works of art engross the strain
 Inanimate & lifeless, while with life
 The landscape round us swarms: earth, air, & flood
 Peopled! with stately herds the meadows throng'd
 With generous steeds the pastures, & the hills
 With sheep, of various climes, & varied fleece,
 Innumerable! On the lakes & streams
 The aquatic fowl their silver bosoms have,
 Of every size & colour, from the swan's
 Majestic port, & shelldrake's glossy plume,
 To the dun shoals of waterhens & cootes,
 Whose dusky myriads darken half the wave.
 To every creature that the vital air
 Sustains, is ANSON'S kind benevolence
 Extended: beasts of chace, & fowl of game
 Secure in his protection roam at large
 Unpersecuted. Never here was heard
 The hunter's barbarous shout, or clam'rous horn
 To fright the peacefull shades; or murd'ring gun
 To stain the hospitable fields with blood.
 Nor to the love of arts alone (tho' that
 Well understood is praise) ascribe we all
 These stately fabrics, this so splendid scene:
 Humanity, attention to relieve

Industrious want, instruct, emply the poor,
 His better motive. Sacred Charity
 Bids every pile with happier auspice rise.
 The sumptuous Mansion claims the closing song,
 Adorned with all that elegance or taste
 Can furnish, to content the judging eye,
 Amuse or satisfie the curious search
 Of leisure or of learning. Forms that boast
 A RAPHAEL'S touch, breathe on the glowing walls,
 And vaulted roofs: whatever modern art
 Can add, in stucco raised, or fretted gold;
 Or ATTIC STUART'S learned hand supply
 Of ornament antique, & chaste design.
 Nor shall the CLASSIC Library remain
 Unsung, replete with learning's genuine stores:
 Not metaphysic dream, or sceptic doubt,
 Or fierce polemic wrangle; but the songs
 Of ancient GREECE, that universal strain
 That earth, & Heaven applauded, & the Gods
 With rapture stoop'd to hear:
 And what (tho' cramp'd
 In language to severer tone confined)
 Imperial ROME in manly cadence sung.
 That too which later in no barbarous age,
 When every art revived, & LEO reigned,
 On ARNO'S flowery banks, the TUSCAN Muse
 Warbled at will in pleasure's myrtle bower.
 The song was careless, but the harmony
 (What can it less when TUSCAN Muses sing?)
 Still takes the list'ning ear with ravishment,
 And braves the snarling Critic's idle rage.
 Here by no country, in no age, surpass'd,
 SHAKESPEAR'S immortal page, &
 MILTON'S song Celestial.
 Nor to books alone confined
 Thy learned Archives: here whate'er remains
 Of rare antiquity (or for design
 Curious, or circumstance, or workmanship
 Inimitable) in Coins, or graven Gemms,
 Camëo or Intaglio; sardonix,
 Cenilean ophite, amethyst, the blood
 Cornelian, & the jasper's flowery vein.
 Endless the task & the irksome to attempt

Particular discription, & the song
 Already droops, tho' gorgeous the detail.
 Let Envy snarle, & Ignorance condemn
 And scouling Critics censure –
 All within Profuse of ornament, the scene without
 Too crowded! – Little matters their applause,
 Or blame, while Science & the Muse approve.
 The Muse thy works, e'en Piety approves
 Thy filial attachment to the soil,
 The seat where fortune cast thy humbler lott
 In no unpleasing scene: not BRITAIN boasts,
 Throughout her varied isle, a fairer hill,
 A greener meadow, or a clearer stream.
 Along the sunny ridge that overhangs
 Eastward thy fair demesnes, & wide commands,
 Westward, with near approach, & bolder swell,
 The wavy hills rise mountainous, befringed
 With gloomy groves of never-changing leaf,
 Cedar, or pine, or fir: plantations vast,
 And venerable! ...
 ... Oft let me wander, when the morning ray
 First gilds thy groves & streams, & glittering towers,
 And meditate my uncouth DORIC lay:
 While the bright prospect to my mind recalls
 Scenes once beheld with rapture, from the heights
 Of CUMA, or HERCULEAN TIBUR'S brow.
 These to Thee, ANSON, from a nameless Bard,
 Who seeks nor praise, nor patron:
 One whose Muse,
 Conscious of all her dignity (for Heaven
 Of old ordained the Muse, by firm decree,
 Severe dispens'eres of authentic fame
 When virtue claims the wreath) will ne'er disgrace
 Her genuine function, prostitute her praise
 To curs'd Ambition, Power, or worthless Wealth,
 With servile adulation: Pleased to bear
 Her writings to Benevolence like Thine.

NOTES:

- Godlike shapes & forms Excelling human.

That the Grecian Statuaries, especially in the figures of their Deities, attempted a degree of beauty not to be found in nature, there is no doubt. The Apollo Belvidere is still a proof of it: his proportions are not human: his air (the result of those proportions) is divine. Raphael did the same in his letter to Count Balthazar Castiglione, speaking of his Galatea, he says

“Perfect beauty being so seldom found, I avail myself of a certain Idéal image. Nor shall the learned eye deem here misplaced, O smooth Adonis, thy transcendent form.”

- In act precluding, to excite Notes, that resounding &c.

(Quotes from Pindar, in ancient Greek)

- But the accursed, And reprobate, to wrath devoted, them Strange horror seizes – &c.

(More quotes from Pindar, in ancient Greek)

- By thy adventurous Race not unexplored

If there is any weight in the trifling criticism of the impropriety in general of mixing Greek & Chinese buildings in the same scene, the above circumstance is an ample justification of their extream propriety here, exclusively of their real beauty & situation.

From the heights Of Cuma, or Herculean Tibur’s brow. The former commanding the bay of Baia, & the Elysian fields, the latter Rome & her Campagna.

THOMAS ANSON OF SHUGBOROUGH

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