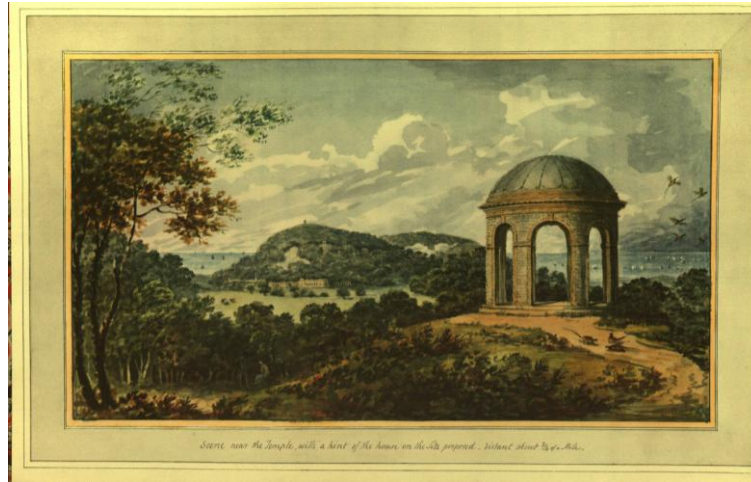


## Bringing Landscape to Life: Humphry Repton and Environmental Change

A workshop for researchers, managers, curators, interpreters, owner and appreciators of designed landscapes

18-19<sup>th</sup> June 2012, University of East Anglia



### Participants

#### Project team members:

Stephen Daniels (SD)  
Paul Warde (PW)  
Sarah Spooner (SS)  
Lucy Veale (LV)  
Ben Cowell (BC)  
Simon Naylor (SN)  
Keith Zealand (KZ)  
Malcolm Fisher (MF)  
Rob Coleman (RC)

#### Other:

David Adshead (DA)  
John Alban (JA)  
Peter Coates (PC)  
Keir Davidson (KD)  
Jon Finch (JF)  
Jon Gregory (JG)  
Nicola Johnson (NJ)  
Charlotte Kennett (CK)  
Liz Larby (EL)  
David Moon (DM)  
John Phibbs (JP)  
Mick Thompson (MTh)

Martin Towsey (MT)  
Charles Watkins (CW)

## Summary Report

### Catton Park visit



On Monday afternoon Sarah Spooner guided us on a walk around Catton Park, just north of the city of Norwich. Catton is the site of Repton's first commission, for Jeremiah Ives, in 1788. Sarah provided copies of historical maps to trace the development of Catton Park and pointed out landscape features linked to Repton's design.



## Workshop

Paul Warde (UEA) welcomed everyone to the workshop before an introduction to the project was provided by Stephen Daniels and Lucy Veale (Nottingham). The project is something of a return journey for Steve, who contributed to the Repton exhibition at the Sainsbury Centre at UEA in 1982. Steve noted how the intervening years have witnessed huge changes in landscape interpretation, moving from garden history to incorporate environmental and landscape history

as well as change, together with an increasing obligation to include public engagement and impact in research. Landscape scores well here, as an inherently multidisciplinary arena drawing on collective expertise.

In the frontispiece to his memoir, Repton depicts himself as the three ages of man – the Sheringham Park commission lit up his later life, marking a return to Norfolk, and providing a complex and interesting commission. At the outset of the project we found ourselves deliberating how best to commemorate the bicentenary of the Sheringham Red Book, wanting the outcome to be in the spirit of the Red Books themselves, and taking inspiration from Repton's interest in theatre and music (he played the flute and his play *Odd Whims* was staged in Norfolk barns). Catton Park (the location of the pre-workshop visit on Monday – see photos) was Repton's first commission but he had an earlier commitment to the county of Norfolk, contributing to Armstrong's *History* in 1781. The project considers the effect of the landscape on the designer in shaping their sensibility, as well as the designer's effect on the landscape. Repton's 'before' and 'after' view of 'the burst' at Sheringham where the new house comes in to view, was a key site in his rearrangement of the landscape. Here we see how Repton compressed the topography in many of his views. It should be remembered that the Sheringham commission is something of a tragic story – Cotman's image of the unfinished Hall very unusual. How best to build in a longer history of environmental change, of human settlement, and geological history into this story? The Faden map (1797) shows a densely layered landscape history. Repton's view of coursing on the beach at Sheringham suggests the longer history, even in Repton's time there was an awareness of coastal erosion and the power of nature's forces (through the gulling of water and the effect of the wind on the development of trees). Sheringham features in Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* published by the popular travel publisher John Murray (1830-33). Charles Dickens also visited Sheringham and wrote to raise awareness of coastal erosion. Our aim is to bring new understandings of the Earth's history and the theatre of nature into the design story to raise its profile.

Our planned exhibition takes inspiration from viewing chambers, magic lantern and peep shows, playing on Repton's own enthusiasm for theatre and spectacle. There are three main elements to the installation in the Visitor Centre barn; a touch screen Red Book featuring most of the illustrations from Repton's original and exploring his design methods; an audio-visual slide show of image, short captions and music addressing each of the exhibition themes (Repton and Sheringham, 1812, and the environmental history of the Park) in turn; and a cabinet of curiosities which will tell the longer environmental and cultural history of the design and the Park through objects and sliding 'reveal' images. A map and timeline will also feature.

Questions and comments on the exhibition suggested that we might tie the theme into contemporary issues; social problems and coastal erosion etc. The events of 1812 and new developments in scientific thinking of the time will feature (some through newspaper headlines). The installation will take inspiration from a theatre set with a clear contrast between front and back stage. One area will look like Repton's study/library – John Phibbs reminding us that Repton apparently had around 400 pigeonholes for correspondence from clients.

**David Adshead (Head Curator at National Trust) - Conserving and presenting designed landscapes: perspectives from the National Trust.**

David commented on the extraordinary range of people participating in the workshop, a number representing different Repton landscapes, from Ashridge, Woburn and Sheringham. David pointed out that restoration is a topic that promotes healthy debate. It is always difficult to wind the clock back and, after 115 years of the National Trust (NT), there is still no magic code or law for managers to follow, different decisions are made at different places and most reflect their time. David emphasised the key place of research in what the NT. There are few truly 'wild' places that survive but there are many landscapes that, although not consciously designed (instead formed by their function), are still considered beautiful (Nedderdale or Sutton Hoo). Today our focus is on consciously designed landscapes, designed to have a visual and artistic effect (the restoration of Stowe is a classic example). Restorers need to be aware of the dangers of lionising one figure or period. Roy Strong aimed to restore William and Mary gardens at the expense of all others, erasing the subsequent layers of history. The restoration of the Hampton Court gardens were at the time controversial (particularly the removal of old yew trees), but with hindsight the dominant feeling is that the interventions have illuminated the place.

The current working definition of conservation is 'the careful management of change', with the ambition being to reveal the special qualities of places and to protect and enhance them. It is important to see designed landscapes at dynamic, and part of the pleasure of gardens is about witnessing change.

Like Repton, NT is concerned with both theory and practice. David drew on material from the NT policy papers on gardens and landscape parks (1995), and on curatorship (2000). Designed landscapes are complex properties, designed for effect but also likely to incorporate wildlife, archaeology and public access value. Management must assess relative significance and reconcile conflicts between different uses and values (historic (age), rarity, aesthetic, biological, horticultural (plant collections), associations with particular events and people etc), and will strike a balance between maintenance and renewal. Dereliction is seen to represent the failure of management. Each property has a statement of significance documenting its significance, history and character. NT believes that one should always work to an ideal, aiming high and then working back to a way to realise outcomes.

Stourhead is one of the great restoration projects where later layers of rhododendrons were removed (in contrast to their celebration at Sheringham where the collection has been improved and conserved). A drawing of Stourhead enabled good decision-making. There are distinctive differences between NT properties, Kedleston and Calke for example but 'preservation as found' as practiced at Calke Abbey, is rarely applicable to landscape. Restoration should provide enjoyment and the date chosen for the restoration should be a sustainable option. However any restoration will be a product of its time and adaptation and creativity is possible. One constraint for NT is the necessity of opening to visitors and enriching the cultural resource. The tower/gazebo at Sheringham enables visitors to enjoy the landscape without being visible, making it a transformative intervention.

David concluded by highlighting some conservation challenges;

- An image of Stourhead by Bamfield shows a public road cutting through the park.
- Fleet Cross cascade, where the lake level was artificially raised

There are all sorts of changes in landscapes that make things complicated. At Wimpole NT decided to create a Brownian lake to mark an anniversary – the source of information was a topographical view on a Wedgewood desert plate. The restoration was informed by the aim to recreate the mid-nineteenth century landscape, although it was already accepted that no attempt should be made to recreate one specific design and should not erase significant subsequent layers. The Red Book included a design for a lower garden which the owners commented ‘would be expensive and the effect not good’, but a flower garden was created on the site at a later date. At Stowe, following the acquisition of the coaching inn by NT, visitors now approach the Park in the direction that Repton intended, and as a result the interpretation and perception have changed. Repton’s work has been unpicked in certain places, which nature conservationists often like (Attingham). Going against Repton is challenging owing to the seductive images that he produced.

At Sheringham, Keith’s management has slowly brought back the beauty. The NT intervention of the gazebo means that the visitor can now enjoy new sources of movement in the landscape; windmills, steam train etc. At Wimpole, Repton recommended placing a boat on the lake so it seems likely that this is the kind of intervention Repton would have approved of.

NT now looks after 8 sites with Repton Red Books, 9 if you include Ashridge (where NT owns the park but not the gardens), here the temptation to restore the rose beds has been resisted. At Tatton the body of water was never built, but owing to later salt mining, a lake did appear! Other NT properties (Felbrigg and Blickling) received advice from Repton or featured in his drawings for the *Polite Repository*. David’s concluding message was that every generation reviews what its predecessors have done, and uncovers new information to ensure that an exacting scholarly approach is taken.

### **PANEL 1: Aesthetics of landscape, design and the relationship between artifice and nature**

1. How to have a public discussion about beauty?
2. What are the implications of environmental ideas and values ingredient to past phases of Sheringham’s development for understanding and managing the landscape now?
3. Can past narratives of the relationship between ‘nature’ and ‘artifice’ provide a useful way of understanding and explaining current issues of conservation and change?

#### **Charles Watkins:**

Charles’ biography of Uvedale Price (a contemporary of Repton) has just been published (co-authored by Ben Cowell of NT). In 1812 Price wrote his ‘Ode to Moscow’. The tension between artifice and nature is central to the understanding of parks and gardens. Charles explained that he last visited Sheringham Park in 1984. He pointed out that many owners emphasise continuity over change, certainly in terms of ecology (in woodland management). Charles focused on trees, pointing out that the removal of trees and dead trees are just as important and beautiful as planting/leaving trees. Charles then showed images of trees in different settings; a sycamore at Tintern Abbey (the sycamore usually seen as a difficult tree, like *R.ponticum* it is perhaps easiest to imagine that it should have been cleared, but Wordsworth poetry encourages romantic associations between the tree and the place), an ancient oak fenced off in a park (trees are subject to change and decay and in areas where there is public access and safety concerns, veteran tree management often means fencing off and explaining value in

terms of insects, age, history, timber, relations to deer and other animals, to the public through signs); another ancient oak on a farm (where horses have previously been allowed to nibble they are now prevented following payments for protection from grazing); a cedar encircled by a smart fence at Rufford Abbey (supposedly planted by Charles II, its top trimmed every year on the King's birthday?); and a cedar on the Foxley estate (now dead, new cedars have been planted as replacements). So how do we explain change as well as celebrating continuity? And how do we bring in the whole park, complete with its woodlands, tenant farms and workers?

**David Moon:**

David's recent work has focussed on Kielder Water and Forest and the Steppe region in Russia and Ukraine. How should we talk about beauty? David recommended the way that we did during the Catton trip - in the field whilst experiencing it for ourselves. David recounted the past phases of Kielder's development from rough pasture and grouse to fast growing conifers and the construction of the reservoir, to a resource for recreation and leisure. The phases reflect the landscape management, usage and mixed ownership. Artworks now adorn the park and the SSSI designated habitat is home to the red squirrel. Yet the dominant reaction is that this is 'not an English landscape', going against national preconceptions. Instead it is what is expected of the Nordic region. David also spoke about the nature reserve of Askania Nova on the Ukrainian steppes, where an area of grassland has been 'protected for all time' as an example of virgin territory, and the unique flora protected from ploughing since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, the owner has brought in wild grazing animals, including wild horses that once lived in the region, from all over the world and created a dendro-park and artificial lake. The components of the reserve offer differing perspective on beauty and scientific value in landscapes.

**Stephen Daniels:**

Steve acknowledged that it is hard to get academics to discuss aesthetics and beauty but that both are really important for the public. The Red books are a complex text of reflections on aesthetics and morality among others, and provide a language about beauty which we inherit unwittingly - debates about the picturesque and the sublime. Steve also talked about the notion of value - how can landscape help us to understand value? Access is also important - the temple at Sheringham was originally designed as a point of public access. Repton generally practiced a light touch approach, small adjustments producing transformative experiences. He was conscious of the fragility of his designs (although he often wrote others out of his designs), and built in a sense of impermanence, landscapes accommodating change.

**Discussion:**

JF: Aware that other cultures have a rich vocabulary for the environment but that we don't, it might be an idea to look to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and identify continuities to today's environment as it is now seen as somewhere that does have value.

JP: Theorists confused nature and art in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when they were consciously entangled. Other cultures didn't - we could look to France. The sycamore was regarded as a tree of good luck and was commonly planted outside houses (by Brown), a practice that Wordsworth was probably aware of.

KD: Picturesque controversy - it may be useful to pick specific examples of what Repton considered to be beautiful.

DA: Is the 18<sup>th</sup> century the last time we discussed beauty? No, could also look to William Morris, Ruskin. Are we embarrassed to talk about beauty collectively? Perhaps it takes individuals – in the Regency period beauty was intellectualised and debated.

SD: A language of landscape and of talking about landscape.

JP: Archaeologies, and other ‘ologies’ come out on top as they can be quantified and described, and can be used to raise money too.

NJ: You can’t raise money for beauty.

DA: There is a tendency to try to measure everything rather than seeing the big picture.

BC: Beauty does appear on the NT statutes and beauty does have some power and effect (AONBs).

DA: NT doesn’t talk about its main statutes.

NJ: Beauty is learned.

MF: Opening up ideas and informing the public through exhibition.

PW: AONBs have a complicated management structure, resisting the environmentalising of everything so as to appear neutral. But they do privilege a certain type of expertise, people love nature but not the environment.

CW: Raising questions about the attribution of landscapes, proving that a landscape is a Repton, or a painting a Turner, named curators or authors. How do we celebrate a Repton design but also illustrate how many other people have been involved in the landscape’s creation and management?

JP: Repton worked beauty into the wider context of comfort and convenience, domestic meaning.

SD: Regard for vernacular things and a regional aspect. Steve is now on the National Ecosystem Assessment, helping to give beauty a weight against other values.

## **PANEL 2: Relationships with a wider world and public**

1. What is the changing meaning of a landscape, designed for a specific time, when situated in a much longer environmental history?
2. How can the mentality as well materiality of this past landscape best be communicated in the present?
3. All landscapes can be seen into and seen out of. What kind of obligations and relationships do landscape managers need with those who live alongside them?

### **Ben Cowell:**

Landscape is a difficult concept for NT who prefer ‘the outdoors’ as a handier version of landscape. A distinction is drawn between consciously authored landscapes, or those acts of co-creation over time – a creative commons.

There are two traditions of NT: curatorial and fieldwork. Ben’s role is to present the NT’s position on the issues of the day. During the recent planning debate, a distinction was drawn between town and countryside. The poster ‘Up for grabs’ used an image that could be read as either a landscape we would want to oppose or a landscape we would want to keep. Simon Jenkins has previously suggested ‘listing’ landscape as we do buildings but there is an important distinction between the two so how would you go about it? Looking at the image of Catton in the 1780s, windmills are evident, they are also particularly pertinent today, how do we allow change whilst protecting development?

It may also be worth exploring new ways of communicating landscape through technology. The new NT app 'Soho Stories' offers a new level of NT engagement in London, with GPS triggering speech. Sound interventions in the landscape. The British Museum series 'A History of the World in 100 Objects' was consciously not on television but radio to encourage understanding. Ben then spoke about Runnymede, a place connected with a significant moment in history, a local meeting Ben attended provoked strong views, as many felt that NT could make more of the site which is mentioned in the Magna Carta. But it is also valued as an open space, one that lacks experience. It was originally protected in the Enclosure Act of 1815 for its significance for horse racing. Should NT open a visitor centre here? It is imperative to attract more tourists but this is open common land.

**Mick Thompson:**

Emphasised that everyone has a different view or interpretation of landscape. MF has already emphasised that only 20% of visitors see Sheringham as a Repton landscape. Choosing a date to focus a display/restoration on is impossible at Ashridge. Through mentality and materiality it is a matter of picking and choosing to convey development over time. A firm background in research is very important. Mick highlighted the importance of seeing into and out of the landscape as it doesn't all belong to you, how best to explain decisions to the community and to practically get them on board.

**Peter Coates:**

Much of Peter's research has been focussed on wilderness and the American National Parks, being examples of wilderness by design. He introduced the notion of 'authored ecosystem's – paying attention to those that introduced plants and animals and brought flora and fauna home. Peter also reminded us of Repton's phrase 'native beauties' and the native v non-native species debate, would it be dangerous to link this to beauty?

Peter used the example of Arnos Vale cemetery in Bristol - the site was full by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and in a state of dereliction. Recently a HLF grant was awarded to the site to restore/rediscover the site and the graves. Part of this involved arresting and reversing the damage done by self-seeded trees (including sycamore). These actions were not uncontested, as many liked the fact that flora and fauna were in control and promoted the site as a place of wildlife. There are worries that subsequent layers of the landscape will be lost. At Gettysburg National Memorial site (a Runnymede equivalent), the focus has been on the creation of a pre-battlefield environment, reinstating the sacred nature of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to access meaning. Deer have been culled and view lines restored in order to bring back the view that soldiers saw. Not everyone has been impressed, with some celebrating nature's attempts to fight back. Unruly nature will succeed as it preceded us and all efforts to control it are therefore temporary.

**Discussion:**

JP: Aware of how much archaeology and SSSIs are in designed landscapes – both are so rich precisely because parks haven't changed much for such a long time. A great designed landscape defies change. Great design is not temporary.

JF: It doesn't feel like archaeology leads the way, not design that matters but the patterns of ownership. It is important to widen the sense of value to include the public to ensure protection.

JP: Arnos Vale is a designed landscape that lost its integrity. Can a designed landscape that doesn't have statutory protection protect itself?



DA: Talked about the app for Arnos Vale which explores the relationship between real and virtual worlds – will this make the real boring?

JF: Thought that gaming software is potentially useful, sound effects an interesting introduction.

PC: Importance of creating a multisensory experience of landscape, introducing the smells of place.

MT: Provided a note of caution through recent experience of the Kew Gardens app which drained his phone battery very quickly!

PW: Landscape engagement is supposed to be elevating, making you a better person.

SD: Noted that engagement with Repton can be a fantasy experience – Repton talks about smell in the Uppark Red Book. The app has the ability to open up the imaginative space of landscape and the theatrical and the real are in constant conversation at Sheringham – an amphitheatre.

DA: Digital models can help us see into an imaginative past.

BC: Important to consider the expectations of visitors – technology can be used in successful and creative ways (the projection of images of council houses onto Buckingham Palace for the Jubilee celebrations).

DM: Does NT seek to explain the beauty as well as the significance of its places?

PC: Beauty of Orford Ness?

PW: Strategy of inviting artists in to produce interventions/responses.

NJ: Shingle Street sound installation, one of the responses was ‘isn’t it beautiful’, the mismatch between the work and the place made it beautiful.

MTh: Repton was an artist himself so we should emphasise the artistry. Or is Repton acting as a mediator to help people think about issues?

SD: Notion of a revelation, removing to reveal a beauty and structure underneath.

### **Jonathan Finch – ‘Humanising as well as animating beautiful scenery’ – re-examining Humphry Repton in the Modern World.**

Jon wanted to raise questions about significance, considering how we engage with designed landscapes as a part of our cultural heritage. What is their social relevance? And how do we engage with public perception? Bringing together biography and landscape (following Mabey, Sinclair and Seabald) may offer some opportunities.

Jon drew out some of the global aspects of the Yorkshire landscape – on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1802 at Harewood, Repton, Lascelles and Wilberforce are believed to have rowed together on Brown’s lake. The event providing an opportunity to bring together different biographies, Repton features in narratives on people and place.

Sheringham was one of the last and favourite commissions but why did he look back on it so fondly? His personal connection with Abbot Upcher? The association with Nelson? The fact that he was coming towards the end of his career? Or returning to Norfolk where he had developed his love and attachment to landscape? The Sheringham Commission provided the opportunity for him to re-immers himself in the character of landscape in a place with a rich agricultural capacity (arable and pasture). Social management was also included in the design to a greater extent than elsewhere meaning that it is the most complete articulation of Repton’s mature sense of landscape. His relationship with the Upchers represented a confluence of lifeways. Repton got on best with the mercantile elite, people like Jeremiah Ives (owner of Catton Park), though in his desire for acceptance he was continually disappointed (at Holkham and

Harewood where his alienation was self-imposed after a falling out over his designs for the gatehouse), this makes it more significant that he had a good relationship with the Upchers. In the Red Book for Sheringham there are plentiful references to stable communities, the family and children (woods of the owner's own creation), and to children leaving home (the timing was significant to Repton).

The commission at Endsleigh (1814) showed a similar emphasis on family, including a children's garden, and a sense of a life cycle, an 'infant river'. This 'mood' was probably brought on by Repton's carriage accident in 1811 that led him to become increasingly reliant on his family. Sheringham captured a sense of autobiography for Repton, there is a sense of happiness in the landscape.

It is useful to re-contextualise Sheringham in Repton's autobiography, connecting the design to national events beginning with the Norfolk hero Nelson. Nelson's naval engagement was part of a global conflict but revolution and internal disorder was the main threat to the nation. Repton held a paternal attitude toward the nation's poor and demonstrated an awareness of the regional geography of poverty. At Sheringham he recommended the poor should have supervised access to the woods as the patron of the estate would need them to form a ready army should an invasion occur. In the context of a European crisis, with revolution lurking, 'all country seems in arms', part of the appeal of Sheringham was that it lay outside of the weaving district. Repton had encountered threat of disorder posed by the Luddites in an 1810 commission in Leeds. The domestic environment was challenged by the external threat.

Jane Austen's novels are located in and around estate landscapes, and some have critiqued Austen as insular and lacking references to the wider world. Repton himself is referenced in *Mansfield Park* (Repton would have been working on the Sheringham commission whilst Austen was writing *Mansfield Park*). Through Mr Rushworth, Austen features a satire of improvement, and the danger of losing a sense of place. There are references to the poet William Cowper in both Austen and Repton. In Thomas Love Peacock's novel *Headlong Hall*, the character Marmaduke Milestone becomes a label for undesirable change. Edmund Burke made a distinction between improvement (English) v. innovation (French revolution). The relationship between the landowner and his community was of crucial importance. Austen also references the absent power of the Empire (the estate owner in *Mansfield Park* is forced to travel to Antigua to his plantations). The unseen Caribbean and the absent landscape underpin the domestic landscape – and then it all goes wrong. The colonial possessions are outlying agricultural estates (Mill), and global connections are part of the sense of economic and improved landscapes.

Much of Jon's work has focussed on connecting Harewood and plantations in the Caribbean. Some of this has looked at the material culture of the plantation, identifying pottery remains. What were the impacts of the plantation at home? What was the relationship between the planting elite and the manufacturing sector? These connections are yet to be made at Sheringham. In 1808, Repton's son, the Reverend Edward Repton married into the Hubert family who had connections with colonial possessions in Montserrat and were accused of importing slaves post abolition. Repton's child leaving home led to contact with the colonial horizon. Austen had two brothers in the navy and was well aware of the country's colonial possessions. These were casual but important relationships with the colonial world – Repton

was also acquainted with William Wilberforce. The Upchers were an evangelical family, Abbot's father had invested in a Negro school and worked against the slave trade. Following Abbot's death, his wife Charlotte was supported by Thomas Fowell Buxton, an important abolitionist and social reformer. Jon concluded by emphasising how landscape embodies social relations and connections.

SD: Links between slavery and the brutalisation of farm labourers at home – Repton mentions labourers being driven by the whip.

JF: Vocabulary of slavery did enter that of agriculture in Britain, techniques were also following (manuring).

PC: Asked about the importation of Caribbean plants.

JF: It was popular to acclimatise plants from the East Indies in the West Indies with some of the early botanical gardens established in the West Indies. Glasshouses at Harewood were arranged geographically.

CW: Pointed out that when slavery is brought up in *Mansfield Park* it is simply ignored.

### **PANEL 3: Anticipation, resilience and fragility**

1. How should a designed landscape be conserved and displayed when there is no longer the economy and labour which once sustained it?
2. Can we design for the unexpected?
3. As Repton's future, what do we think future generations might want from us?

#### **Paul Warde:**

Paul's work at Wicken Fen also considered the implications of the loss of labour that created the landscape. He raised questions relating to the labour of gardening, with labour intensive work likely to get even more expensive, what will the future hold?

Paul pointed out that in Repton's time people didn't appear to think much about environmental change as a negative thing. Instead there was a concern with conveying ideas and landscapes to future generations, for posterity. Every generation was convinced that they knew how to impress future generations. We are not so sure, but are convinced that future generations do want a history. Inheritance of concern and care.

Designed landscapes carry their history with them and therefore become important places. Good designs can also become laboratories for ecological change and management strategies. They are sites that endure and have special status. Trees live and also die – should we ritualise their removal? The management of the whole landscape is more important to the overall story. In Repton's time, environmental thinking was restricted to a concern over resources, soil exhaustion, wartime high prices etc, taking land out of production to create a park with the primary function of providing enjoyment is the biggest legacy, taking the land out of the world of economic necessity.

#### **Keir Davidson:**

Keir focussed on the Red Books, identifying two kinds of Repton gardens, i) detailed pleasure gardens and ii) those where the footprint is much softer. In the latter we need to know more about what Repton and his clients saw, but how do we recapture the original vision for visitors?

The Upchers were a religious family (including many Reverends among them) and one can read a religious component to the beauty of Sheringham, 'an earthly paradise'. Repton pulled together Cook Flower's planting to create perfection. In the Red Book for Catchfrench, Repton similarly considered balance, weaving together the shapes of the landscape to create a landscape of peace and prosperity.

The Sheringham sea is full of ships, Newcastle colliers bringing coal – These are prosperous scenes. How do we recapture Repton's idealised vision of paradise? Perhaps through embracing changes that he would have approved of; steam train, wind farm etc. Capturing the view from the house, and seeing the house from the temple. Sheep and cattle still graze in front of the house, but maybe Repton would not have been so keen on the wild flower meadows. Keir also drew attention to Repton's drawings of the house, the cross sections much more than architectural plans, instead showing the Upchers using the house as a family home.

### **Simon Naylor:**

Simon talked about his project titled 'Anticipatory History of landscape and wildlife' which had a Cornwall context. Environmental change is often framed through loss and guilt – perhaps we need a new vocabulary to imagine our future? The name of the project was adopted from 'anticipatory adaptation' – in regard to climate change any interventions are seen to result in positive outcomes, regardless of the degree of actual change. The project also encouraged a deeper appreciation of history, creating experimental accounts of history to help with future change. Simon highlighted the importance of highlighting change and dynamism over permanence, avoiding nostalgia and loss, but remaining weary that if we accept dynamism we may fail to prevent people from taking negative actions. A scientific underpinning is important. Possible tools include repeat photography, art, and mapping erosion lines, anticipatory history as a conceptual tool.

### **Discussion:**

SD: World in motion paradigm perhaps creates a suspicion of landscape and of history. Repton's generation of a large volume of paper material raising issues about curating Repton on paper, in the record office etc. An inventory of the Red Books and other archival material is needed (it is worth a lot of money!). On vision versus view – in 1812 Repton's designs elsewhere were collapsing, in contrast to stable Sheringham. In *Fragments*, Repton presented an archaeology of his practice, an assemblage of motifs, perspectives and a map of possibility. Underlying paradise is anxiety – there is always trouble in paradise. The vision collapses with Abbot and Repton's deaths.

DA: Identified a resonance with Churchill looking out from the garden at Chartwell, the hyper real, and valuing what you are about to lose.

KD: A resurgence of interest in Repton reflects these new concerns.

CW: Repton's is always a productive paradise.

JP: Repton worked at a time of rapid environmental change, particularly in relation to game and shooting and the creation of the game reserve in the mid eighteenth century. Gamekeepers also moved into the park as the shooting did. Owners began planting woods for game that was a big environmental change. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century parks were also growing grass, Repton advocated including stock in the park all year round but this created a design problem –

needing new paths for walking – a big agricultural change. There were tensions between public and private places, with environmental change often triggered by social change.

PC: Pointed out the rhododendrons were first introduced as cover for game.

SD: Whereas shooting was considered a selfish and private pursuit (driven shooting was beginning at this time which involved the breeding of pheasants in large numbers), Repton recommended coursing on the beach.

PW: Significance of fauna in management, affecting planting, now we have dog walkers and bird watchers, some of whom are conducting environmental monitoring on the ground. What changes will society go through over the next 100 years? There are likely to be changes in social conditions and fauna too as well as climate. What are our expectations?

CW: In relation to the first question, NT members conserve and pay!

DA: Repton was to some extent a victim of his own prose, his hidden subtleties or waffle! Much to learn about re-reading Repton.

#### **PANEL 4: Restoration and fidelity**

1. How can the designed landscape be interpreted as one that was (with the house) a space that was lived in, worked on and moved through as well as looked at?
2. How can we meaningfully bring together the 'archive' of designed landscapes with the record of designs and intentions (often fragmentary and arbitrary survivals) in the documentary record? Can these be usefully or informatively curated together?
3. What does it mean, and what kind of obligations might it imply, for someone (like Repton) to be an 'author' of a landscape?

#### **Martin Towsey:**

Martin is charged with looking after horticulture on the Bedford estates, her Grace tells Martin what is beautiful! The second 5-year plan at Woburn is now underway, the Red Book is held onsite making it easy to consult. The majority of Repton's interventions in the park are intact (although visitors approach the house from a different direction), and most of the recent work has taken place in the gardens. An 1838 plan is used as the terms of reference, a time considered to represent the high point of horticulture in the Park, incorporating designs by Repton, Holland and others. The publication *Hortus Woburnensis* (1833) a catalogue of over 6,000 ornamental plants cultivated at Woburn Abbey is another useful source.

Repton's illustration of the Chinese dairy included a rockery which was never built where Repton placed it but has recently been discovered elsewhere. Planting in the 1950s as part of the model village had covered up the rockery that contains 20 different types of aggregate. This year the pavilion will be put back on top of the rockery.

Woburn was one of the first stately homes to open to the public following pressure on the family following the introduction of death duties. Last year Repton's aviary/menagerie was reinstated. Repton's included homes for a lion and tiger that were the foundation of the safari park. The carnivores died and the herbivores were then released out into the park until the Zoo Act came into being. The aviary appears in *Hortus Woburnensis*, and the emphasis in the restoration has been the creation of a family friendly environment. Woburn oak was used in the construction as far as possible. The current focus is on the children's garden where the folly has been restored. The original planting appears not to have been matched to the soil conditions resulting in its failure, now Martin's team has been able to source new varieties of azaleas that

will be better suited to the soils. It should also be remembered that when the garden was designed only 6 people were enjoying the gardens, now they must cope with a huge footfall. The restoration has been relayed to the public through regular study days and podcasts and the message does appear to be getting through.

### **John Phibbs:**

John pointed out Red Books are not really a good guide to what Repton did (see Hazel Fryer's PhD). At Catchfrench, Repton is given the site plan, goes down, sets out parts of the landscape with sticks and makes further suggestions, he then goes back home and writes the Red Book as if his suggestions had been completed (the house was never completed). He then used the 'after' pictures to showcase more ideas. Endsleigh is another good example. Conversations were much more important than the Red Books to what happened on the ground. John issued a warning that the Red Books may actually do Repton a disservice, as they appear simple but are actually very complicated.

### **Nicola Johnson:**

Places are created to engender a certain sense of mind. How do we access the understanding of the past? What do we mean by public understanding? A wished for understanding? Do we want to hand over our expertise? We are the public and we are not stupid, historical truth is multi-layered. We assume that we can access the past through documents, literature etc and it is difficult to get people to disagree with this. But Austen was driven by a dramatic narrative as opposed to a desire to give an accurate account of the relationship between the house and the park. This was an historic moment, we hardly ever think about the house and the landscape making a moment. At Kedleston the house forms the political context.

One cannot legitimately bring a place or a property 'to life', and, although some attempts have been good, others are rubbish. Research helps us to make appropriate attempts that are in keeping with the spirit of place. Curators want to be in control – passing on what 'I' know is truthful and what 'I' deem to be valuable. At Uppark people want to know about the restoration work that followed the fire, so why are we not talking about it? Bringing a place to life is not about dressing up. Should we all be wielding scythes? Artistic and musical interventions (combined with curators giving up control) liberate the imagination. It is all about having a great day out and providing freedom of interpretation. Study days are good as they allow those who want to, to find out more. But it is important not to assume an understanding of the sensibilities of the past; younger people can feel a loss of a long-term historical context into which they can place things. Someone is now responsible for everything – we must either be defensive or brave.

### **Discussion:**

JP: It may be a mistake to think of a Repton park as different – do we deem landscapes as too weak to stand up for themselves? Any initiative must be place specific and research led. We should manage Sheringham as a farmland just as Repton did.

KZ: Interpretive panels destroy the imagination

PW: Different visitors on different occasions will want different things and a different spread of resources.

MTh: Identified different levels of interpretation, from brass rubbing trails where history and horticulture are split, to discovery boxes and podcasts.

JA: Any regimented guided tour should offer choices to get into.

SD: Could try to build in the history of visiting (a subject of satire during Repton's time).  
Introducing wit and humour, visitor decorum and the history of guidebooks (i.e. Stowe).

DA: Providing the visitor with tools to fire the imagination should always be about the basics; colour, light and space, and not any prior knowledge, instead a response to the poetry of place.

NJ: But you (DA) take with you cultural confidence meaning that you are comfortable not knowing, others aren't.

PW: Martin is not answerable to any statutory obligations, allowing him to rush ahead with what many would see as 'extreme' reconstruction.

MT: Visitors are engaging as the programme of restoration is revealed, part of the process of redesign. Sales of season tickets have increased and visitors enjoy talking to gardeners (who are allowed to chat for 5 minutes).

MTh: There aren't any interpretation boards at Ashridge, partly as a result of difficulties with planners. Modern techniques have also destroyed the ideas of some of the original structures.

JP: To what extent do you need to know more about it to see it as beautiful?

NJ: Need versus want – enhancement. We all want different things on different occasions, new things become interesting.

JP: There is a sense that Sheringham is a Repton and nothing else – he created a lasting mark. Elsewhere his designs combine with those of others.

SD: Repton took up design because he was really interested in good conversation. Today Sheringham has moved in and out of focus, accumulating value, a place that makes its context with layers of interest and complexity.

Everyone was thanked for his or her participation in the event and will be kept informed about project developments.