



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LAXTON

The unfortunate commission ...

In January 1806, George Freke Evans from Limerick married his cousin's widow, Lady Carbery, thereby acquiring the estate of Laxton. Almost immediately, he invited Humphry Repton and his architect son, John Adey Repton, to visit and work began on altering and improving the house adding stables, an orangery and an imposing gatehouse to mark the entrance to a house of such grandeur.



Gatehouse (visible from road)



You can view the house and stables from footpaths

Was this the beginning of the model village?

Close to the medieval church the Reptons were asked design a village consisting of a School House, a public house – The Stafford Knot, a rectory and several cottages. The model village of Laxton is a lasting example of the quintessential vision of an English village.



Laxton Parsonage (Private Collection)



The Stafford Knot



The School House

What went wrong?

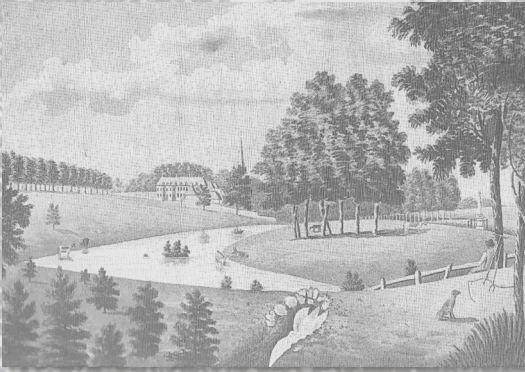
Working for Freke Evans, however, was not a happy experience and Repton was dismissed from the job in December 1808. Repton was paid for his first visit but not for anything else. Repton disliked the business aspect of his profession, often not delivering his plans on time.

William Carter was subsequently commissioned to finish the work, still mostly following Repton's designs but Freke Evans was frequently altering plans, even of a structural nature. It is interesting to note that eight years later Carter was also being refused payment by Freke Evans.



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FINEDON HALL

“a perfect model of
ancient symmetry”



Schnebellie Engraving (1790)

Sir William Dolben inherited the family estate in 1756. With his son John English he updated Finedon Hall in 1780. By about 1790 they had also improved the grounds of the Hall, by:

- damming the Town Brook and creating a lake with an island
- planting a shrubbery to make a walk to the lake and to hide the kitchen garden wall
- keeping a small boat to row on the lake and picnic on the island.

In 1792 they built a wooden memorial to Joseph Wilcocks of Barton Seagrave Hall, a family friend.

What improvements did Repton suggest?

1. He thought the kitchen garden hid the lake from the Hall and suggested moving it behind the house (where it is now).
2. He wanted to dig a second lake and plant more trees and a shrubbery to hide a row of ‘ugly’ houses on the other side of the Town Brook.
3. Repton didn’t like the formal south avenue but didn’t want to cut the trees down.

But Sir William and John English rejected most of Repton’s suggestions. They probably planted some trees and shrubs, but that’s all.

Dolben the abolitionist

Sir William was a leading anti-slavery campaigner.

As an MP, he was instrumental in the Slave Trade Act 1788, known as the ‘Dolben Act’, which improved the conditions slaves endured on British slave ships.

Sadly he died in 1814, nineteen years before slavery was abolished.



Map showing how the parkland looked when Repton visited Finedon Hall in 1793.



Sketch drawn by Sir William’s grand-daughter, Julia, in 1815 showing little change since 1790



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

HARLESTONE PARK

Present day Northampton Golf Club



1. 'before'

Robert Andrew inherited Harlestone Park in 1807 and immediately commissioned Humphry Repton and his son John Adey Repton, an architect, to improve the house and parkland.

The first watercolour is a painting by Humphry Repton showing the Hall and park **before** any changes.

The second is the same painting with the overlay lifted showing how it will look **after** the improvements have been completed.



2. 'after'

We don't know why Robert Andrew spent so much on improving his house and parkland. But we do know that by the mid-1820s he owed about £85,000 and couldn't pay his debts. He sold his lands at Crick, Creaton and Great Addington but he still had to sell Harlestone Park. The sale, to his neighbour Lord Spencer, went through after he died in 1831.



This map from the 1829 sales particulars shows just how much Robert Andrew had built.

1. Huge new stable block (can be viewed – parking at St. Andrews church)
2. Large kitchen garden
3. Remodelled house with a new front
4. Terrace and ha-ha
5. Boathouse
6. The dam was ornamented to look like a bridge
7. Fish ponds became a long lake with an island
8. Entrance drive was rerouted over the dam.



Wonderful view from the clubhouse bar

Do you play golf?

9% of the sites with golf are associated with Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and around 13% with Humphry Repton

From 'Golf Courses as Designed Landscapes of Historic Interest' by the European Institute for golf course architects 2007

Why not find out the story of your golf course?



Northamptonshire Gardens Trust
www.northamptonshiregardentrust.org

