



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BARTON HALL

The upwardly mobile commission
'A Gentleman's Residence'¹



Sketch of plan from Red Book

Building on a budget

Humphry Repton sent a Red Book to Charles Tibbits in early 1794. Tibbits wanted to be seen to have 'made it' but didn't want to spend too much on his new estate. Even though Repton made relatively modest proposals only some were implemented.

What was implemented:

- planting a new woodland and shrubbery (1)
- a circuit gravel path around the parkland (2)
- a 'green-house' or orangery, although it wasn't built until about 1820 (3).

What was not implemented:

- digging a new branch of the river to make an island (4)
- diverting the turnpike road away from the Hall (5).

Charles Tibbits' new Hall and parkland was an impressive sight on important roads and may have raised the status of the family. His son married well and in 1804 Charles was the first Tibbits to become High Sheriff of Northamptonshire.

¹ quote from the Red Book

Wicksteed Park – 'The place where fun was invented'

How many of the millions of visitors to Wicksteed Park would know of its association with Humphrey Repton?

As we stand in the famous Rose Garden featuring the charming statue of Charles Wicksteed's dog, Jerry, there is a clear view of Barton Hall where, in 1793, Charles Tibbit invited Humphry Repton to redesign the landscape. A Red Book on Barton Hall was produced demonstrating his vision.

Though almost a century between them, these great visionaries may have more in common than first supposed. Certainly, Charles Wicksteed would have agreed with Repton's statement, '*For the honour of the country, let the parks and pleasure-grounds of England be ever open*' and Humphry Repton may well have approved of Wicksteed offering a '*Gateway to Health and Happiness*'.

Find out more

To find out more visit our website www.northamptonshiregardenstrust.org



The Orangery today visible from Barton Hall Hotel



Early wooden slides at Wicksteed Park – no Health and Safety rules in those days!

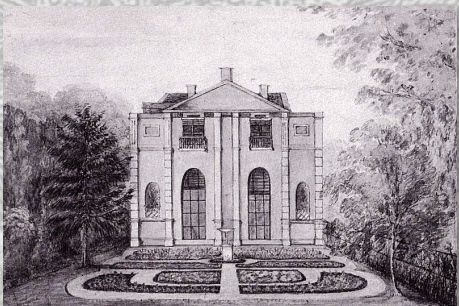


NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AYNHO PARK

What happened after Repton's visit?



Was this Holm Oak Avenue at Aynho influenced by Repton's plan?



Could the small parterre and terrace in this watercolour, painted c.1834, have been Repton's in concept?

His published works

- *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* (1795)
- *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1803)
- *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening* (1806)
- *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1816).

Humphry Repton spent ten days at Aynho in 1796/7 and prepared two plans (which do not appear to have survived); the Corner Lodge approach drive may have been his idea.¹

A letter and accounts prove that Repton visited and prepared plans for Aynho Park but there is no evidence as to what work, if any, was carried out.

¹Courtesy of Historic England list entry

Sir

At my return from Suffolk last night I found the honor of your letter dated the 4th which I lose no time in answering by transmitting the accounts of my visits.

I am sorry to see so large an account [for]^a when so little has been actually done – but I hope you will consider that my part of the business – the planning – has been doubled from the consideration of two distinct Sites – As there is no part of my profession so unpleasant as that of fixing the price of my time – I generally put my visits on the plan of an establishment & if you should see occasion for my future Services at Aynho – I should rather have it understood that I [would]^a will in future make my visit to Aynho for one two or 3 days or as long as may be necessary to mark out all that is to be done in the course of the Season for twenty five Guineas each visit – which is in the proportion I receive from other concerns.

I have the honor to be Sir

Your most obedient humble Servant

H Repton

His dislike of business

Although a very talented landscape designer, Repton had no head for business. In his letter he says

“there is no part of my profession so unpleasant as that of fixing the price of my time”.

Reproduction of Letter and accounts from Humphrey Repton to W R Cartwright dated 11 Feb 1798

To W.R. Cartwright Esq
Memo from H Repton

1796	December 2	To at & from Aynho. 7 days at 5 Guineas	£36	15	0
		Expenses to & from home distance 84 Miles & 2/6	10	10	0
		Map of the Ground for the New Site	5	5	0
			52	10	0
		Cash paid on Account September 3 1797	£10	10	0
			42	0	0
1797	September 1	To at & from Aynho 3 days	15	15	0
		Expenses – as before	10	10	0
		Map of the Ground (for the old Site)	5	5	0
			£73	10	0



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COURTEENHALL

The house on the hill

‘A beautiful knoll’¹



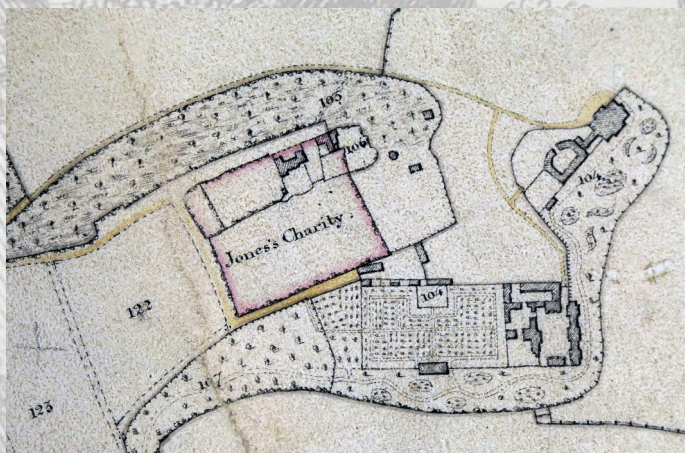
How the stables look today

Sir William Wake, of Courteenhall and Waltham, 8th Baronet (1742-1785) rebuilt the stables.

A letter from his great-grand-daughter Matilda says that they were rebuilt in 1784 but there's no other evidence and we can't be sure that she remembered the right date.

¹*Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening (1795)*

Garden historians often rely on letters or accounts, like those from Aynho, and maps to piece together who did what, when and why. We can use the map below from 1835 to show that only some of Repton's suggestions were implemented.



The rebuilt Courteenhall House as it looks today

There is a Red Book for Courteenhall and we know that Sir William's son, another William, invited Repton to design his parkland in 1791.

The Red Book arrived in March 1793.

Repton also advised on the location for a new house. The old Elizabethan house was demolished, and the new house was built on a hill to provide good views of the surrounding landscape.

The map shows that there was a flower garden in front of the house. A path and flower beds led past the kitchen garden to woodland. It's not exactly what Repton proposed but it is similar. The woodland path went all the way round the parkland to the church, rectory and village.

The detail also shows that the view of the house from the drive is shielded by woodland giving guests a 'wow' moment as they see the house.



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE NORTON HALL

Still a mystery ...

The medieval manor house at Norton was bought by the Knightley family of Fawsley in 1588 to accommodate some of their extensive family. They enlarged the existing house, but little further development took place until the Hall was purchased by the Botfield family in 1800.

As often happens, the new owners wanted to make their mark on the (by then) unfashionable house and its gardens and parkland, and so in 1809 Humphry Repton and his son were employed to create new designs.

Their designs for Norton appear to be held at Longleat (the Marquesses of Bath eventually inherited the Hall), but it is not known whether these were laid out in one of Humphry's famous Red Books.

It is however unlikely that the Reptons' designs were carried out on the house at least since early photographs show that the house was rebuilt in a Tudor Gothic style, not characteristic of the Reptons' work.

Nor is it known at present whether any of their landscaping suggestions were implemented by the Botfields. The house was blown up by The Royal Engineers in 1952.

Today?

The site of Norton Hall and its park remains enigmatic, private and with no public Rights of Way.



Neale (1825)

REPTON'S LEGACY

Repton's work links the landscape design of the eighteenth century and the gardenesque movement of the early Victorian years. At the end of his life he said:

"as a landscape designer I have never been surpassed by a more successful rival. My own profession, like myself, was becoming extent."

From *Celebrating Humphry Repton 2018* www.thegardenstrust.org



Was he the first to consider the garden from the perspective of a wheelchair user?

It is highly likely that he was. In 1811 Humphry had a serious carriage accident, after which he often had to use a wheelchair.

Images of Aynho, Courteenhall, Finedon Hall and Harlestone Park are reproduced with the kind permission of Northamptonshire Record Office



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