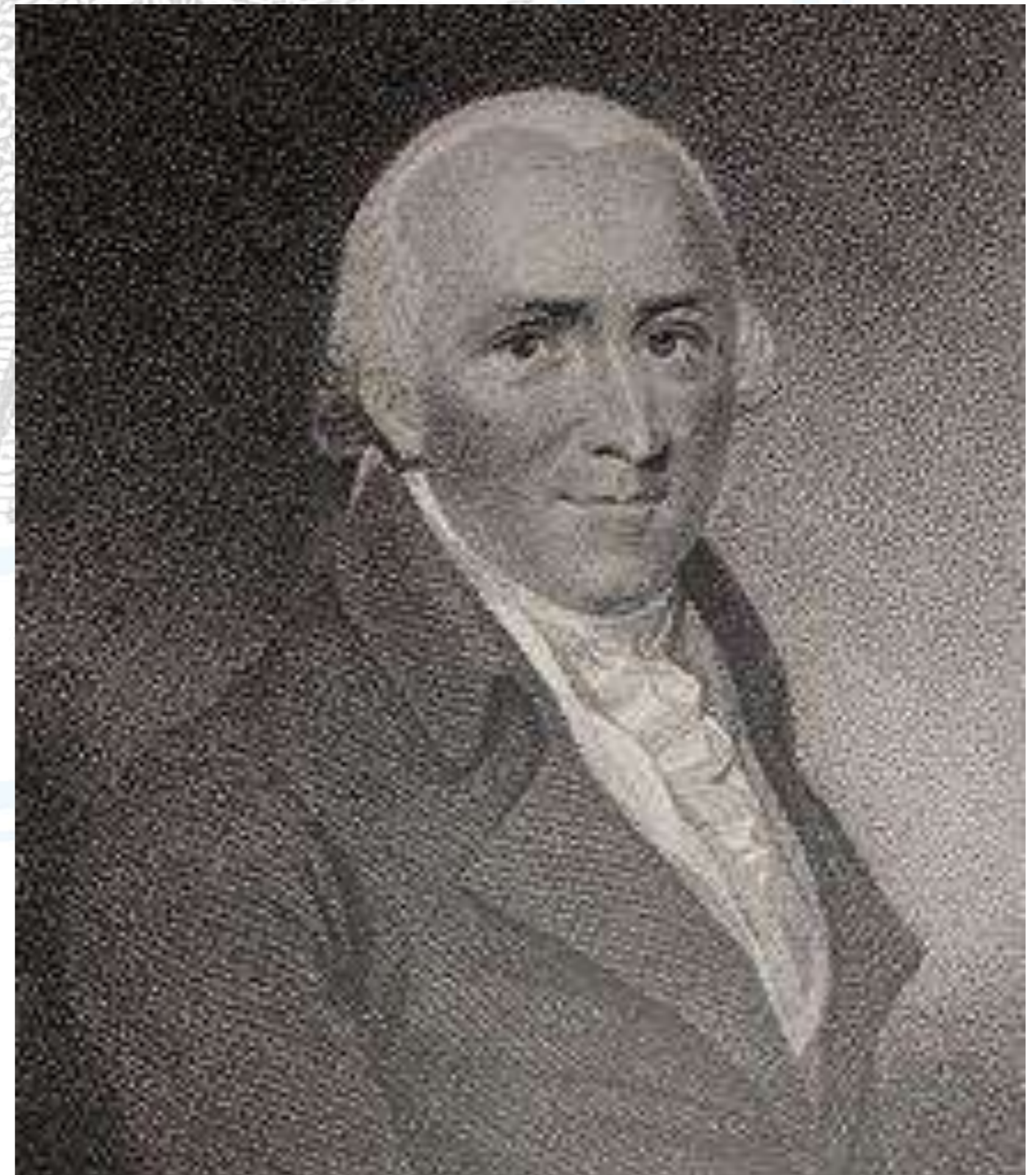
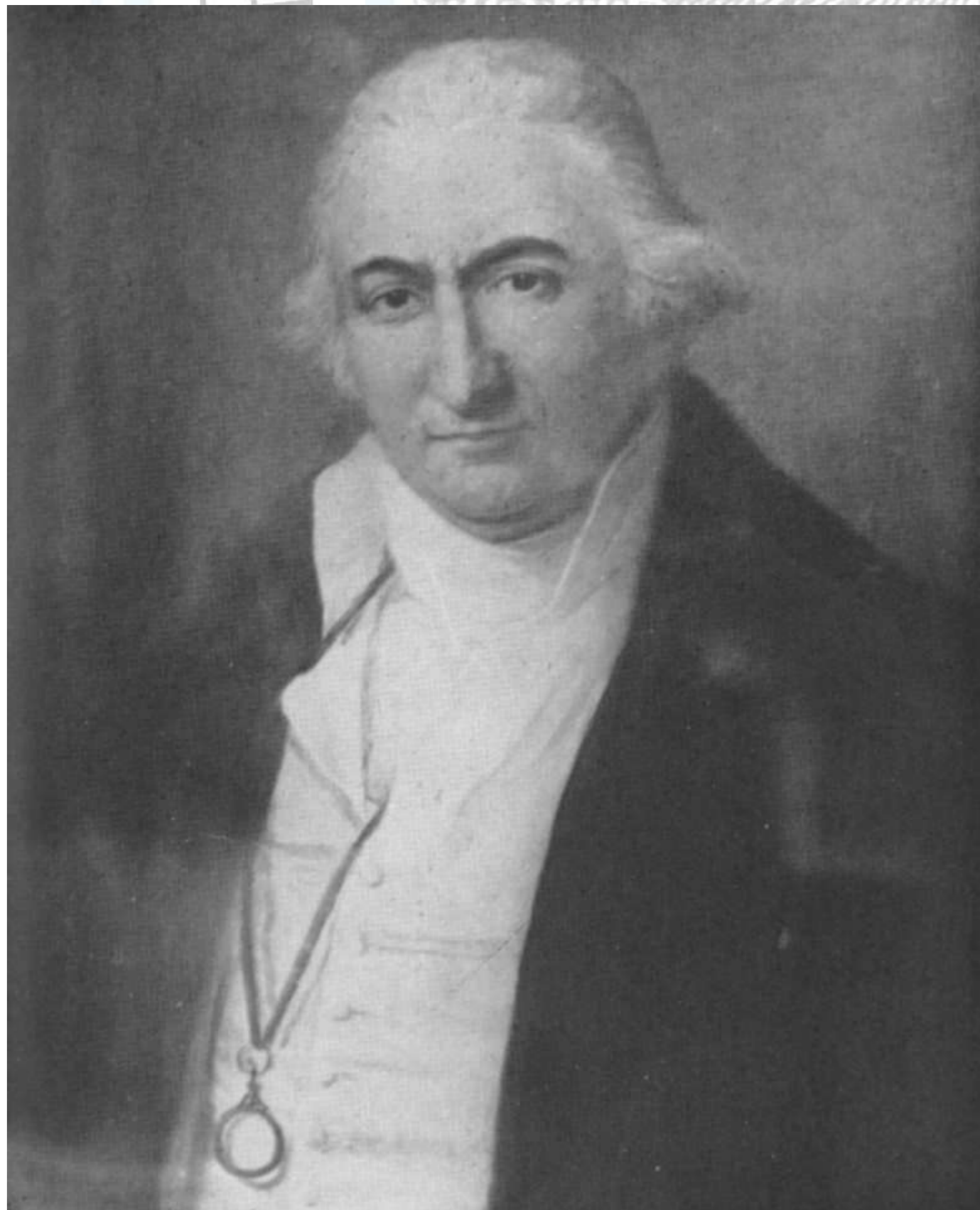


Humphry Repton Samuel Galton Junior and Warley Park



Celebrating Humphry Repton

1752 –1818

Early Life



Humphry Repton

Humphry Repton was born in Suffolk and after attending Norwich Grammar School he trained to be a textile merchant. He also spent time in Holland learning aspects of commerce as well as the language, which was useful for trading purposes. Following his marriage in 1773 he set up his own business but really didn't enjoy his work and the business failed. He inherited money from his parents in 1778 and lived comfortably with his family in Norfolk for a while after this, doing a little farming, some sketching and some writing. However, financial demands forced him to find a new career and for a brief while he was private secretary to William Windham, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Although for only a short period he '*made some connections with the great*' and also practised his sketching while travelling around. Both these would hold him in good stead for his future career.

Attempts at other work

Around 1786 Repton and his family moved to Hare Street, Essex to be nearer London and to enable him to look for more opportunities for employment. He tried his hand as a journalist, a political agent, a dramatist, essayist and artist, including writing a play and a collection of essays, but these enterprises were short lived and didn't bring in much money.

Whilst working for William Windham in Dublin Repton shared a house with the well known actress Sarah Siddons, and they continued their friendship on his return to England.

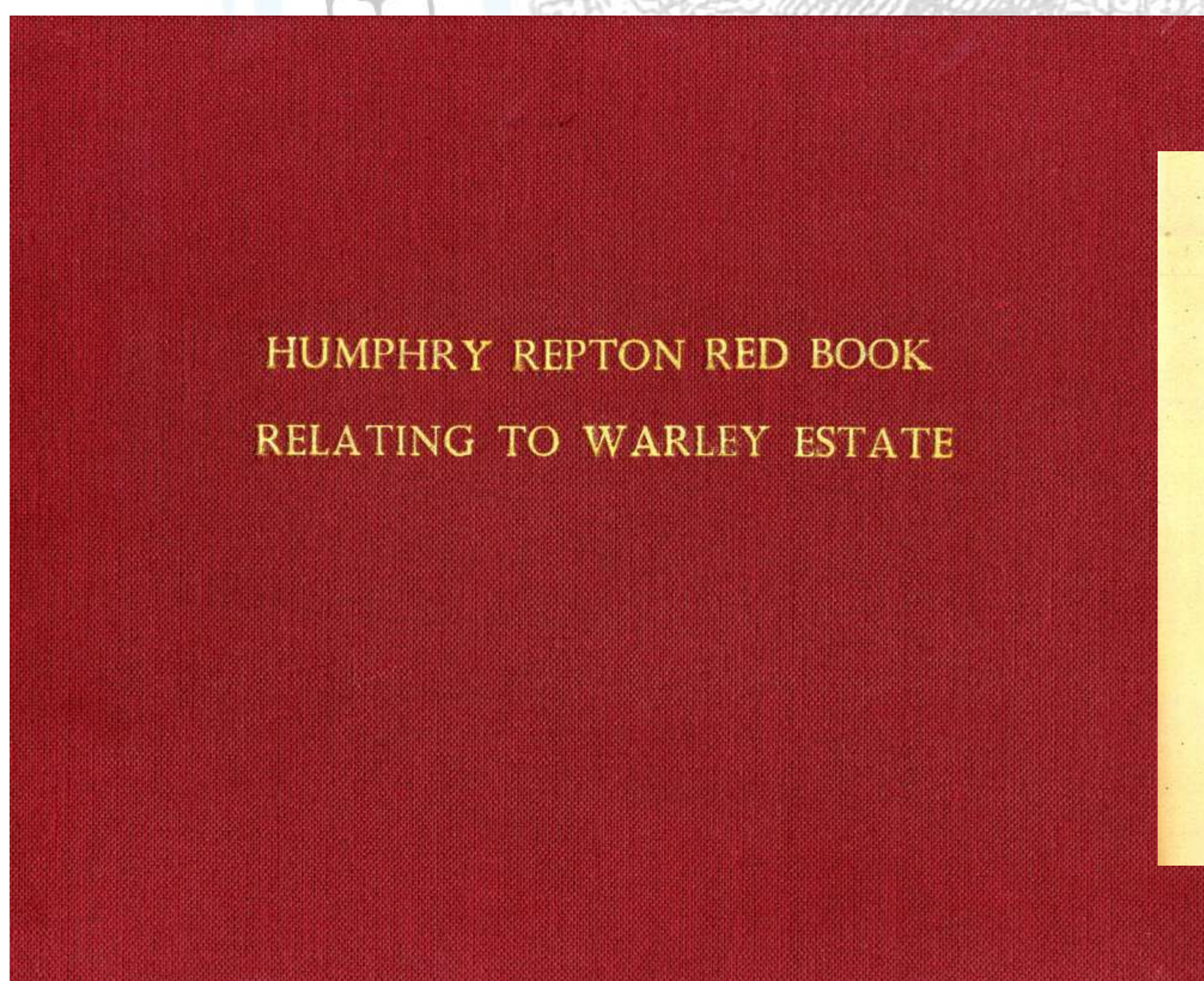
Repton's play was entitled '*Old Whims; Or Two at a Time*' and opened with a scene from a highway robbery. It was performed in Romford, Yarmouth and Alysham before an unnamed celebrity lost the manuscript!

Repton the Landscape Gardener

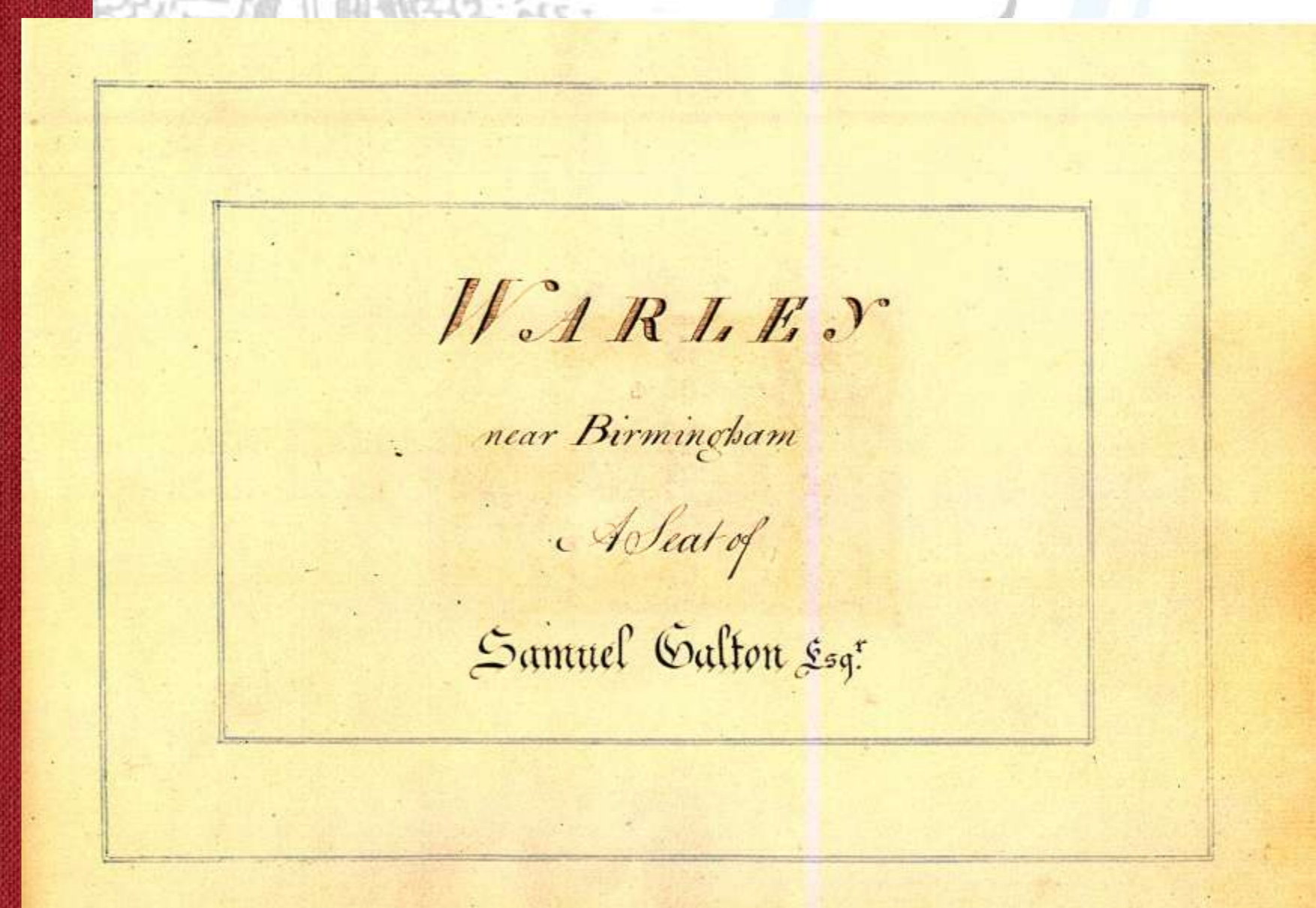
It is difficult to know how much the gap left following the death in 1783 of Capability Brown influenced Repton to move into the area of landscape gardening. Certainly he was encouraged by his childhood friend, James Edward Smith, who advised him to combine his gardening skills and artistic talents which he had developed following his move to Essex, and in 1788 Repton decided to use his '*natural taste for improving the beauties of scenery*' and become what he described as the first 'Landscape Gardener'.

Repton and his Red Books

Repton's unique selling point, and one of the reasons why so much is known about his work, is the production of a Red Book for many of his commissions. This was a volume bound in red leather which not only describes the proposed changes to the landscape of his client, and his reasons behind these proposals, but also illustrates the changes with water colours showing 'before' and 'after' pictures. His skill as an artist certainly helped with this, and whereas with Brown the client would receive maps of the proposals, with Repton they could actually envisage what the land would look like when the changes were made through the pictures he painted. Unlike Brown, Repton did not offer to have the work done, but produced the Red Books as suggestions to his clients and then left them to decide how much of his scheme to implement.



The front cover of the Red Book for Warley Park held in Smethwick Library



The frontispiece for the Warley Park Red Book

Repton produced a Red Book for the Prince Regent for the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, but his designs were never realised, the Prince engaging John Nash the well known architect to do the designs instead.

Repton's Commissions

It is believed that Repton received over 400 commissions, not all of them resulting in the production of a Red Book. Sometimes he was simply advising or making suggestions for changes, while in other instances, as at Warley, he designed the whole landscape from farmers' fields. There are many examples of his work which are still in existence today. These include: Longleat; Woburn Abbey; Bloomsbury Square; Russell Square; Attingham (Shropshire); Himley Hall; Ingestre (currently owned by Sandwell MBC); Stoneleigh Abbey; Hewell Grange (now a prison near Bromsgrove); Witley Court; and Moseley Hall, Birmingham.



Repton's self portrait, used on his business cards

Moseley Hall grounds were landscaped by Repton in 1792, two years before he came to Warley. These are the only two definitely known commissions in the immediate Birmingham area, although there are suggestions that he also did some work at Great Barr Hall.

Repton's Later Years

Repton continued to work all over England and Wales, travelling huge distances, which he estimated at over 4000 miles a year. However, from about 1808 onwards these travels were reduced and in 1811 he suffered a serious carriage accident which further curtailed his activities. He was in a wheelchair from 1814 onwards and wrote: *'I can bear a journey and look at a landscape from a chaise window – but I can neither stand 5 minutes nor walk 5 yards uphill'* (letter written in July 1814).

Repton's health deteriorated and he was able to do less and less and on 24th March 1818, he came down to breakfast, fell into the arms of his servant and "expired without even a groan!"

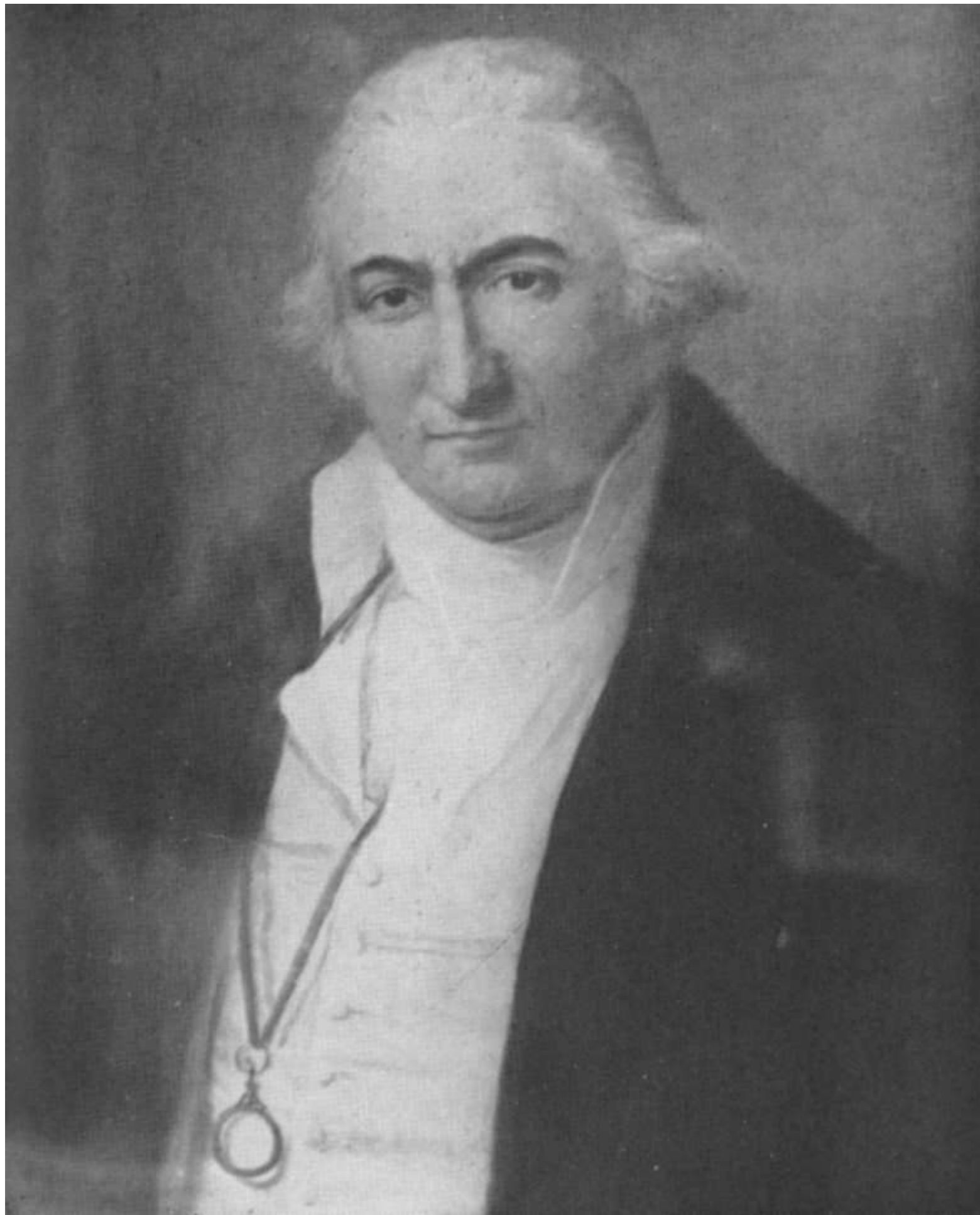
Repton's standard charge was five guineas a day plus expenses depending on how far he had to travel. For example letters from 1807 record rates of ten guineas for a first visit to within one stage of London, up to seventy guineas for journeys of over 140 miles.

In 1795, the same year that Repton produced the Red Book for Warley he wrote his first book, *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*, in which he sought to 'establish fixed principles in the art of laying out ground'.

Samuel Galton Junior

1753-1832

Early Life



Samuel Galton Junior

Samuel Galton Junior was a Quaker, a manufacturer of many objects, including guns, a banker, a naturalist and a member of the Lunar Society - a group of men who were interested in science and the development of ideas based in the West Midlands.

Samuel was born in Birmingham and in 1774 he joined his father in the family gunmaking business, Galton and Son.

He married Lucy Barclay in 1777 and they moved from the family home to live at Great Barr Hall in 1784. He did not own this property, however, and in 1792 he purchased Warley Hall estate. This estate had 2 farms on it which not only provided revenue, but it also gave Galton the opportunity to develop the land as a country estate for himself and his family. In 1794 Galton commissioned Humphry Repton to landscape the estate with a house and pleasure grounds for himself and his family, and Repton produced his Red Book with his proposals in March 1795.

Galton and the Quakers

During the period that his father, Samuel Galton, had been involved in the gun-making business, the Quakers did not seem to be too concerned about their work, or the fact that their guns were often used in trade for slaves in Africa. By the 1790s, however, The Quakers were speaking out against the slave trade and were finding the Galtons' position untenable. Following some pressure Samuel Galton Senior retired from the gunmaking business in 1795, but Samuel Galton Junior remained and put up a robust defence of his business, declaring other Quakers as hypocrites as their particular work – often in banking and commerce – would also have contributed to the slave trade and the Napoleonic wars which were by that time raging across Europe.

He wrote a long defence which was not accepted by the Quakers, who declared him '*not in unity with Friends*' and said that he was not welcome. However, it appears that he did continue to attend the meetings, and in 1804 when he passed the business to his son Samuel Tertius Galton, and put his efforts into setting up the Galton Bank which he founded the same year, Samuel was able to restore his relationship with the Birmingham Quakers.

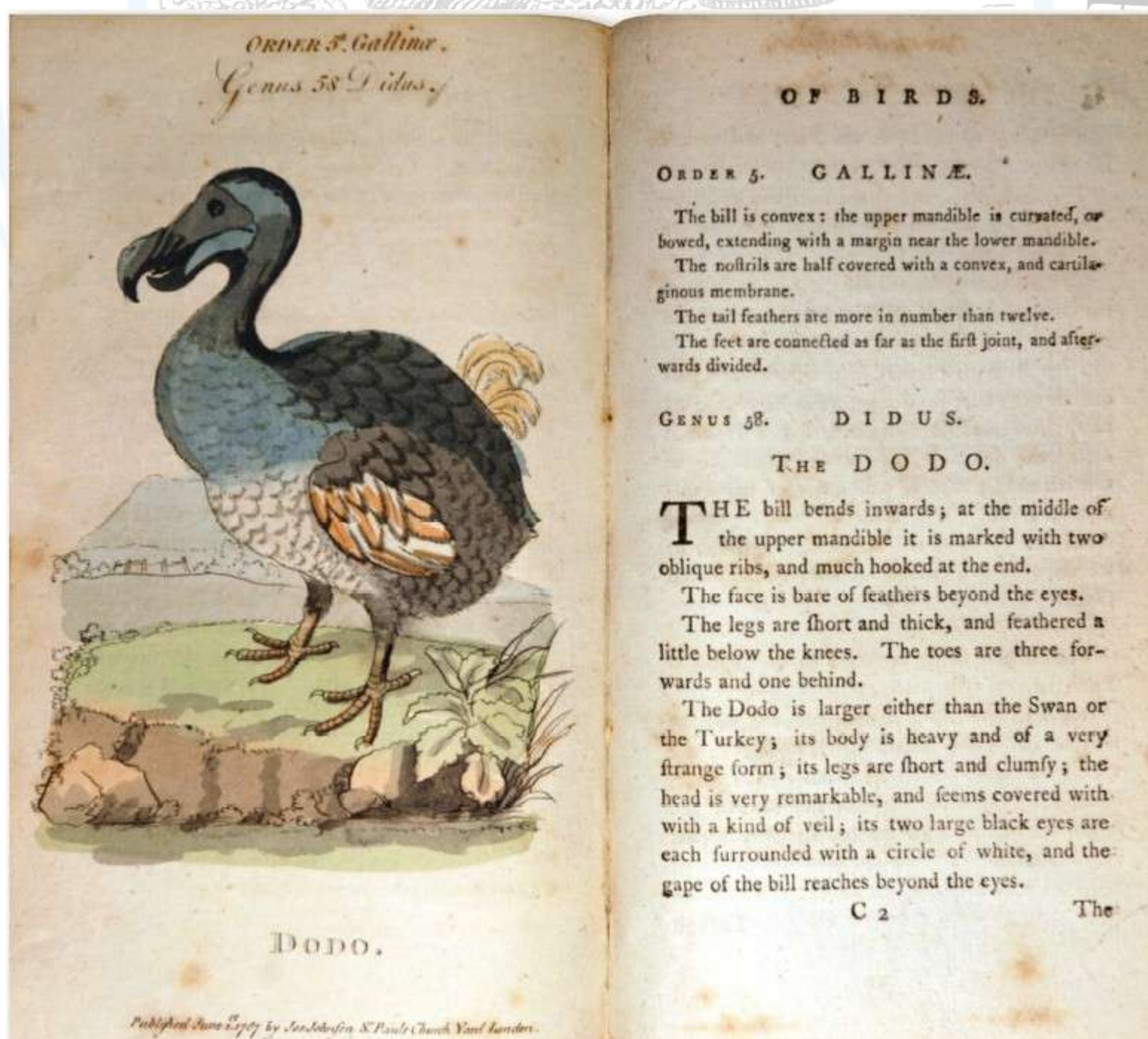
Galton and the Lunar Society

Samuel Galton Junior joined the Lunar Society in 1781. The Society was a club where prominent figures - industrialists, philosophers, scientists and intellectuals - met to discuss matters ranging from social order to the latest scientific and industrial advances.

He was seen as an amateur enthusiast whose interests leapt around from subject to subject. His daughter Mary said he had an *'insatiable thirst for knowledge'* and she wrote: *'He had a large folio blank book in which he was wont to set down stray pieces of knowledge... Information on diet, on training, on pugilism, on horses, on building, the various resistences of timber &c, &c'*. He had entitled it *The Book of Knowledge* and it ran to several volumes all of which have been lost.

Galton produced a paper entitled *'Experiments on the Prismatic Colours'* that showed if the colours of Newton's prism were drawn on a wheel in the proportions he suggests, when the wheel whirled round they would create white. This paper was sent to the Royal Society by Joseph Priestley, another member of the Lunar Society.

Galton wrote two books - *The Natural History of Birds* which was for children, and *The Natural History of Quadrupeds*. He was a member of the Linnean Society which promoted the new system of ordering the natural world, as developed by Carl Linnaeus.



Pages from Galton's *The Natural History of Birds*

Galton and the Warley Hall Estate

Samuel Galton Junior purchased the Warley Hall Estate from William Russell in 1792. William Russell was a friend of Joseph Priestley. They promoted religious and political reform, but were unpopular, and in 1791 what became known as The Priestley Riots resulted in both of their houses being burnt down. Priestley and Russell were forced to flee to America and subsequently Russell sold Warley Hall Estate, which he had not long purchased, to Samuel Galton for £7,300.

It was two years later, in 1794, that Galton commissioned Repton to draw up proposals for the landscaping of the estate. Repton visited Warley in July 1794 and the Red Book was delivered to Galton in March 1795. It appears as if many of his ideas were accepted and acted upon by Galton. However, he did not have a house built and continued to live initially at Great Barr and then, when the lease expired, he moved to the family home in Duddeston.

At some time around this period, however, Warley Tor was built. This was seen as a viewing tower with a dining room attached and was presumably used when the family were visiting the estate. The Tor was situated right at the top of the hill (where Harborne Road now is) and from there it was possible to see as far as Barr Beacon and Great Barr Hall.

Samuel Galton Junior never lived at Warley. He died in 1832, leaving a vast fortune of £300,000. It was left to his son, Hubert Galton, to have a house built (The Abbey) on the estate in 1819/20 and to live there.



Warley Abbey c1910

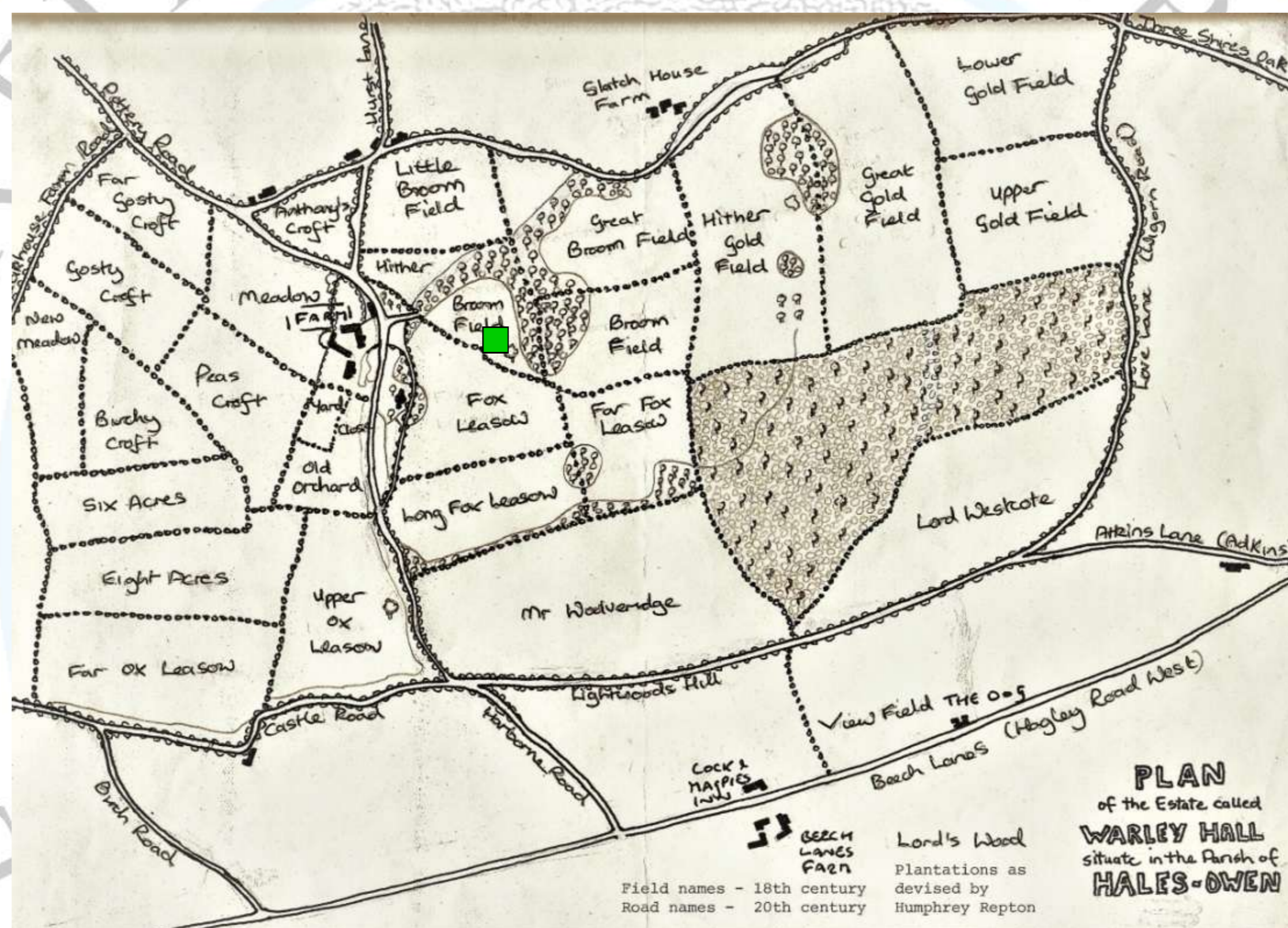
Samuel's idea, to have the Warley Hall estate laid out by the supreme landscape gardener of the time, Humphry Repton, to make it fit for him and his family to enjoy, was something that only the very rich could think of doing. The consequences for us, and the efforts of local people in subsequent years, have meant that we are in the fortunate position of being able to enjoy his 'estate' as a public park both now and in the foreseeable future.

Repton, Galton and the Warley Hall Estate

In July 1794 Humphry Repton visited the Warley Hall Estate, at the request of Samuel Galton Junior, to offer his designs for the landscape. By this time in his career Repton had already had around 100 commissions. He produced the Red Book for Warley in March 1795.

At the time of Repton's visit and proposals, the Warley Hall Estate covered 206 acres and the lanes that bounded it were (using their modern names) on the north Abbey Road, on the west Bleakhouse Road, on the south Castle Road and Lightwoods Hill and on the east Wigorn Road.

There were 27 fields, ranging from 1 acre to 14 acres in size, and a 28-acre wood called Norton's Wood. It was on these fields that Repton was to design a parkland for Samuel Galton Junior.



Repton's proposals for Warley

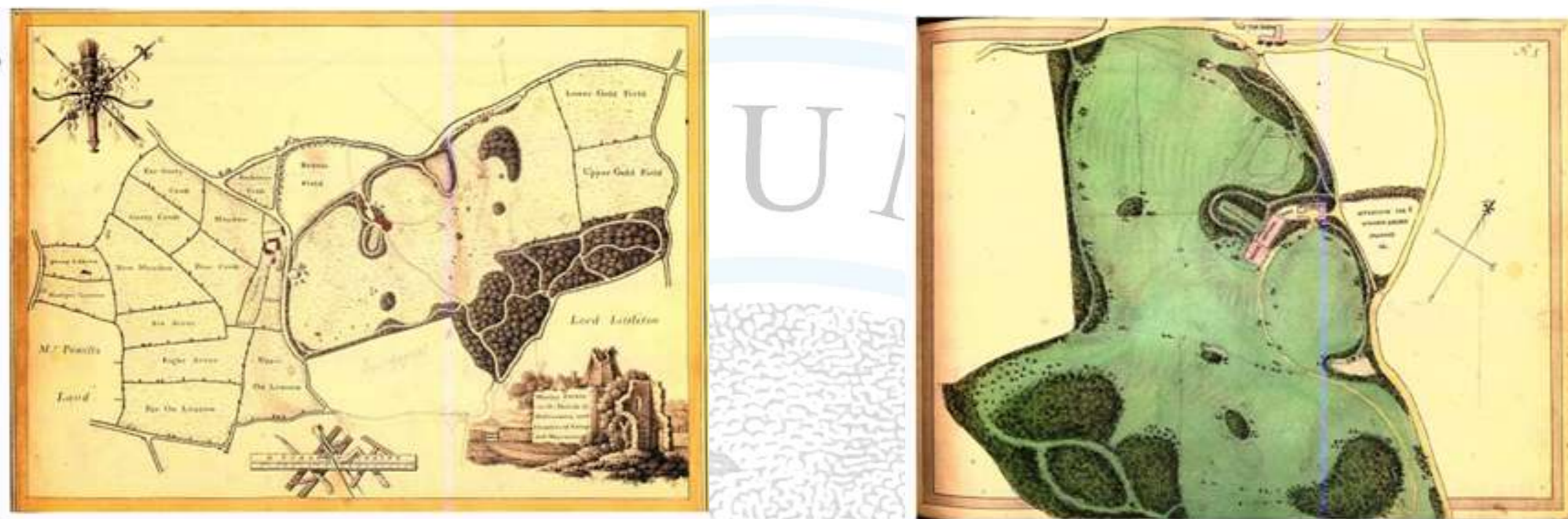
The Red Book consists of much explanation and justification of Repton's ideas, and is too detailed for the purposes of this exhibition. However, below are some of the watercolours he produced of the estate which were included in the book. These paintings showed Repton's 'before' and 'after' pictures of the landscape and with each is a short explanation of his thinking when creating the designs.

'The enlarged ideas and liberal principles of the Gentleman can never stoop to the contracted habits of low cunning so generally visible in the mere farmer. It is not prejudice, but daily experience that induces me to deliver this opinion'

'Elegance, simplicity, congruity and beauty are the immediate objects of my profession, and although they must occasionally be adapted to convenience and utility, yet they shrink from the sordid idea of yielding profit'

The maps of the estate

The first map shows Repton's proposals for the area which was to become the parkland, and the area which was to remain as farmland. The second map shows the estate in more detail. The house, when it was finally built, was in the position suggested by Repton, as were the stables, although the kitchen garden and orchard were further to the West, behind the house. However, the design of the house which Hubert Galton had built was completely different from that suggested by Repton. Hubert wrote to his brother Howard in 1818 saying that he had '*determined on a Gothic House*' and '*it had something of the character of an Abbey*'. Very different from Repton's idea of a classic Georgian house.



Before and after paintings of the proposed view from the house

Here, Repton is using the technique of taking the eye in particular directions, and he writes: '*The principal improvement consists in giving a better shape to the outline of the copse. In the deep bay or recess I have introduced a simple doric pavilion, which enlivens the great mass of wood, and serves to draw off the attention from another building, which is less appropriate to the scene, I mean the farmhouse and barn on the summit of the hill.*'

The doric pavilion was built and lasted until the early twentieth century. Nothing now remains but the site is known.



Before and after paintings across the valley

This is the view across the valley looking towards Barr Beacon in the far distance. Repton writes that the opposite bank will be enriched by the plantation. With regard to the pool and stream in the bottom of the valley he writes:

'I don't know how far the supply [of water] will warrant any great advantage to be taken of the occasional stream, throughout the whole length of the valley, but it will doubtless be sufficient to furnish such a pond, as may give variety to the walks, although it may not be a striking feature in the view from the house.'

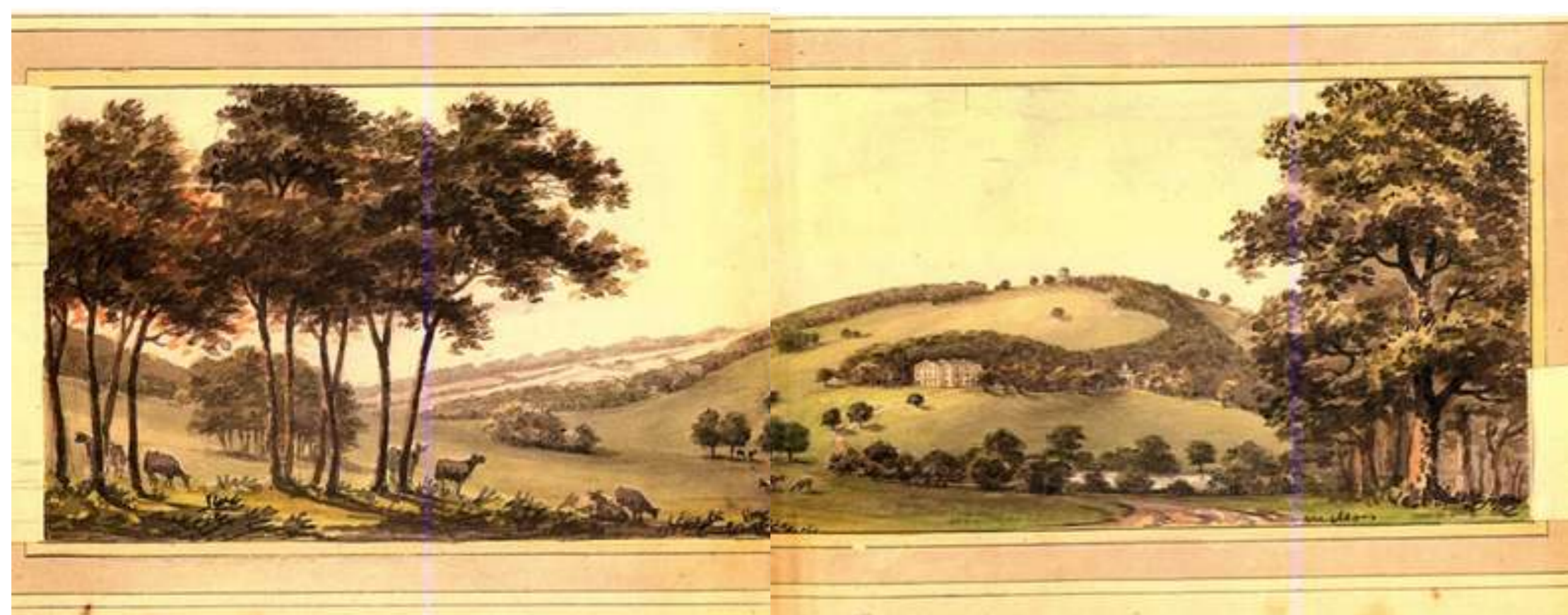
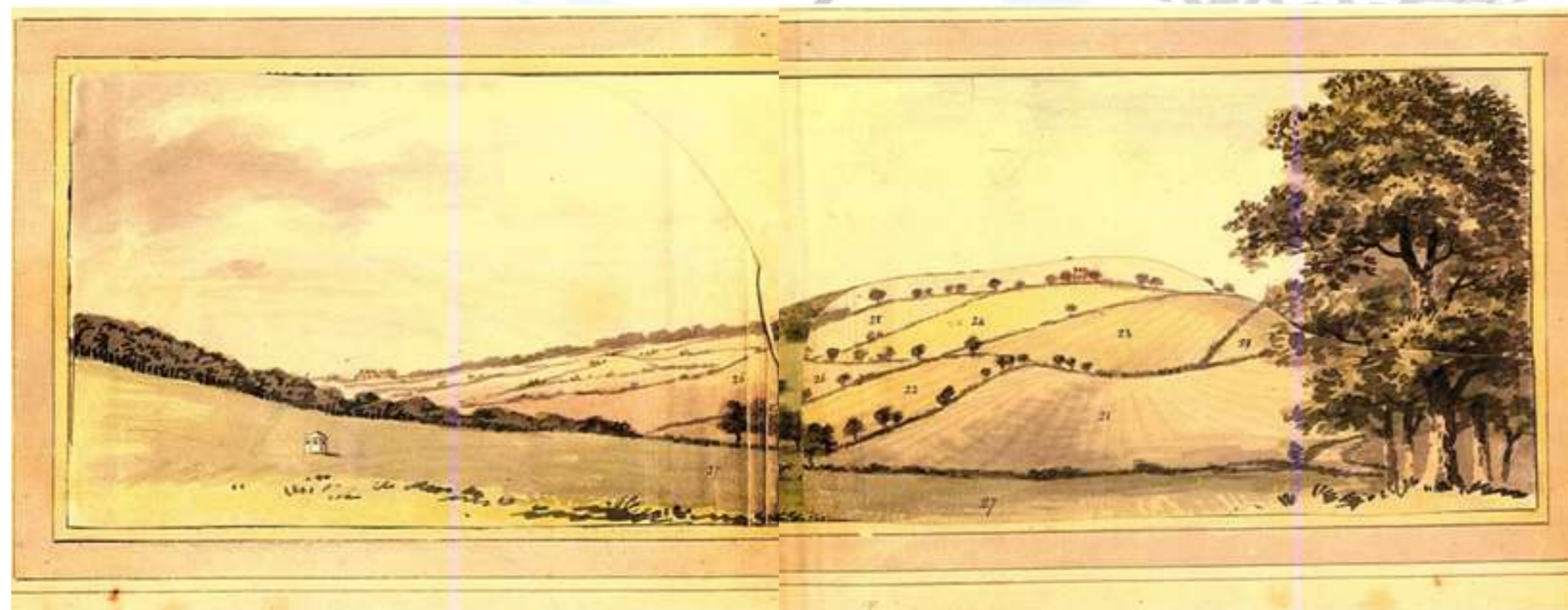
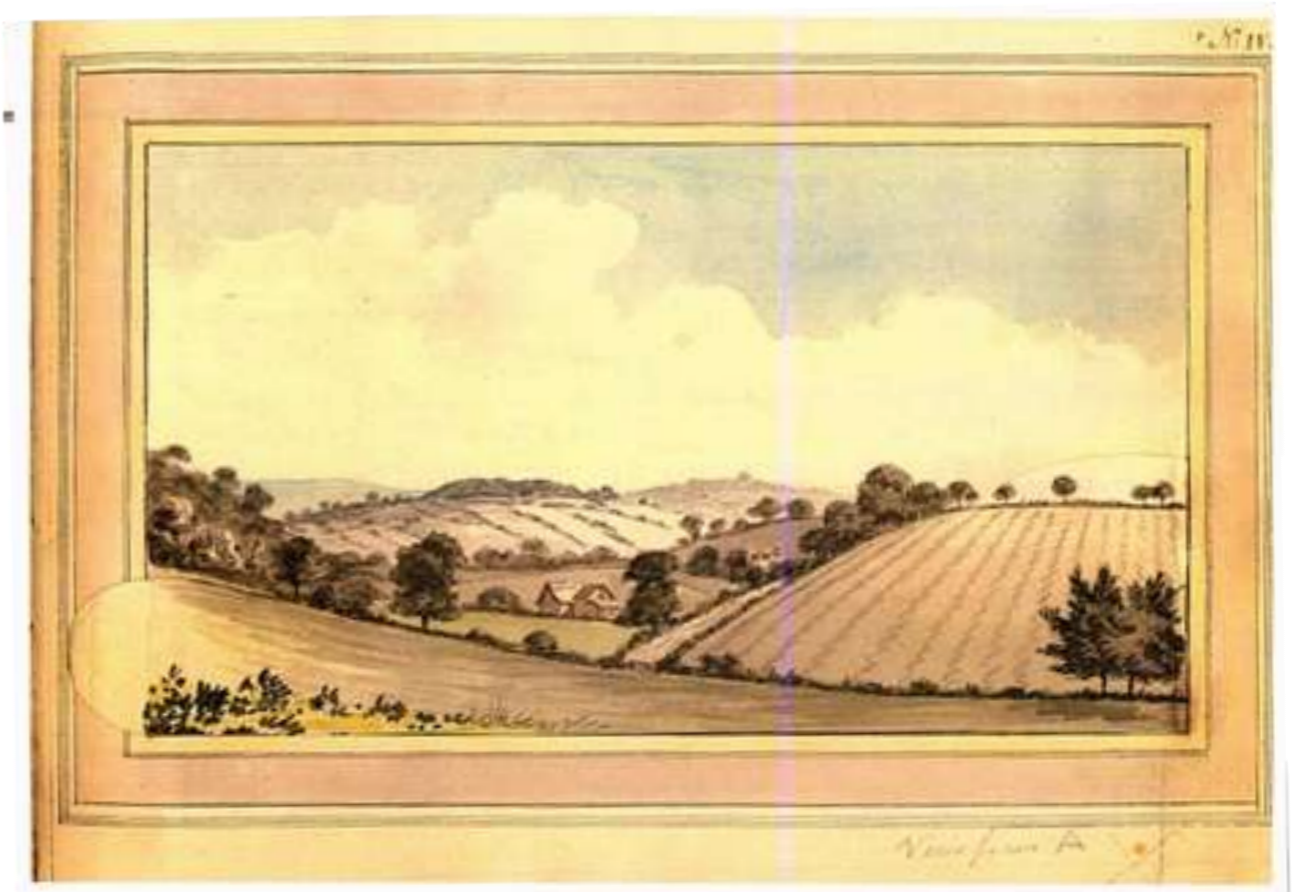
Repton wanted to make sure that there were no obvious boundaries to the land being designed, to give the impression that it stretched a long way. The trees at the top of the slope were to help give this impression.

The Approach

Repton's view was that the approach should be *'the best way to the house'*, and should give a favourable impression of the situation. He did not think that the visitor should suddenly come upon the house but be able to see it from a distance. He proposed:

to quit the public road a little beyond the limits of the map, and out of all view from the house; it passes for a short distance along the side of a plantation, and thro' a glade which opens upon that general view of the place represented in the following sketch. This road not being intended for carts and waggons, may be considered also as a neat gravel walk, and will be one of the most pleasing, to show the home scenery.'

This approach, which would have been from the top of what is now Abbey Road does not seem to have been adopted by Galton, and the carriageway was made from the dip in Abbey Road through the parkland to what is now Lightwoods Hill.



Acknowledgements
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provided.



Further Reading

Humphry Repton, Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England- Stephen Daniels. Very detailed book looking at some of Repton's work and ideas. It also lists all the known sites where Repton had some input into the landscape

A Place In Time – David Yates. History of Warley Woods through the centuries (available in the shop at Warley Woods)

The Lunar Men – Jenny Uglow. Important book on the history of the Lunar Society and the people involved in it

Empire of Guns – Priya Satia. New book on the importance of guns in the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the British Empire, with particular reference to Samuel Galton Junior.

There is also a lecture which Priya gave this summer at Birmingham University on this topic, available on Youtube

For anyone interested in learning more about Samuel Galton Junior and his family, the Galton papers are in The Library of Birmingham Archives. The reference is MS 3101 and the index can be viewed online. Go to www.birmingham.gov.uk/libraries and follow the link to the Archives.

Also see the Warley Woods Community Trust website: www.warleywoods.org.uk

Smethwick Local History Society website: www.smethwicklocalhistory.co.uk

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