

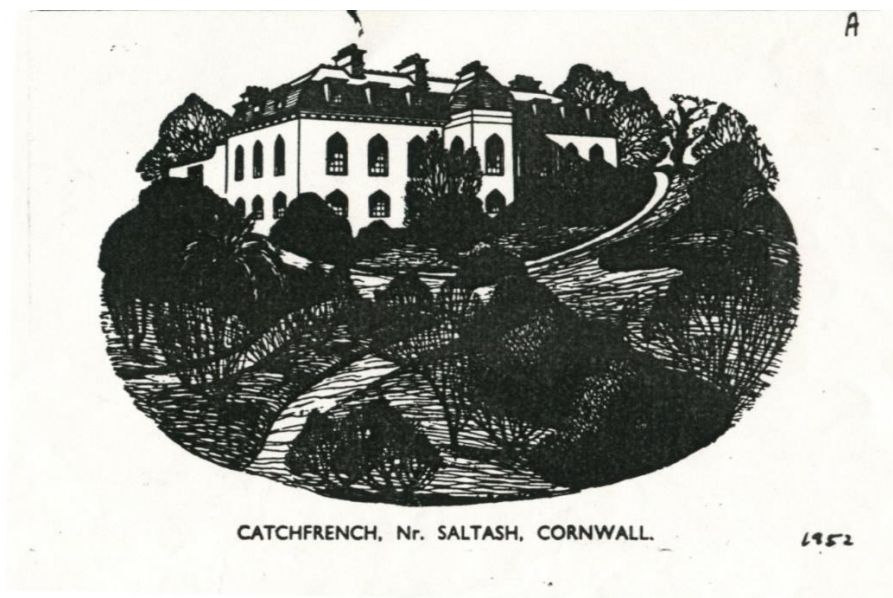
Humphry Repton and Catchfrench

Judy & John Wilks

We arrived at Catchfrench at the end of September 1987. I received a telephone call shortly thereafter requesting an opening of the gardens the following summer. Having explained that the grounds were terribly overgrown and full of detritus, the caller said, "You do realise it's a Repton landscape, don't you?" We had no idea that now we were custodians of something so interesting and important. The search was on! I delved into the history and John and myself, with the help of our County archivist, tracked down the 'Red Book', which we found with Col. Bob Glanville and his wife Rosa, who generously invited us to visit them to see the 'Red Book', which we were able to photograph.

The C.G.T. carried out a recording of the grounds in 1990 and a subsequent registering by English Heritage meant we were able to access grant funding towards further clearing following the storms.

I hope to show in this short talk an exciting and exhausting restoration programme at a wonderful Repton landscape and also his use of features from the earlier Elizabethan era.



Our opening slide shows an illustration of the house in 1952 and the low shrub planting as envisaged by Repton.

The photograph of the carriage is included because it was used in the opening sequence of a television programme of Repton's influence at Catchfrench.



A brief history of Catchfrench up to the arrival of Humphry Repton.

13C Lay Canon's house attached to the Abbey of St. Germans. Subsequently the house burned down, being rebuilt in 1580 by George Kekewich – carved lintel above entrance.

1646 Dorothy Kekewich married Francis Fox of St. Germans, beginning the long association of the Fox family in Cornwall.



1716 Catchfrench passed into the Glanville family – commemorated by a sundial in the courtyard. The Sundial can be seen above the left door.

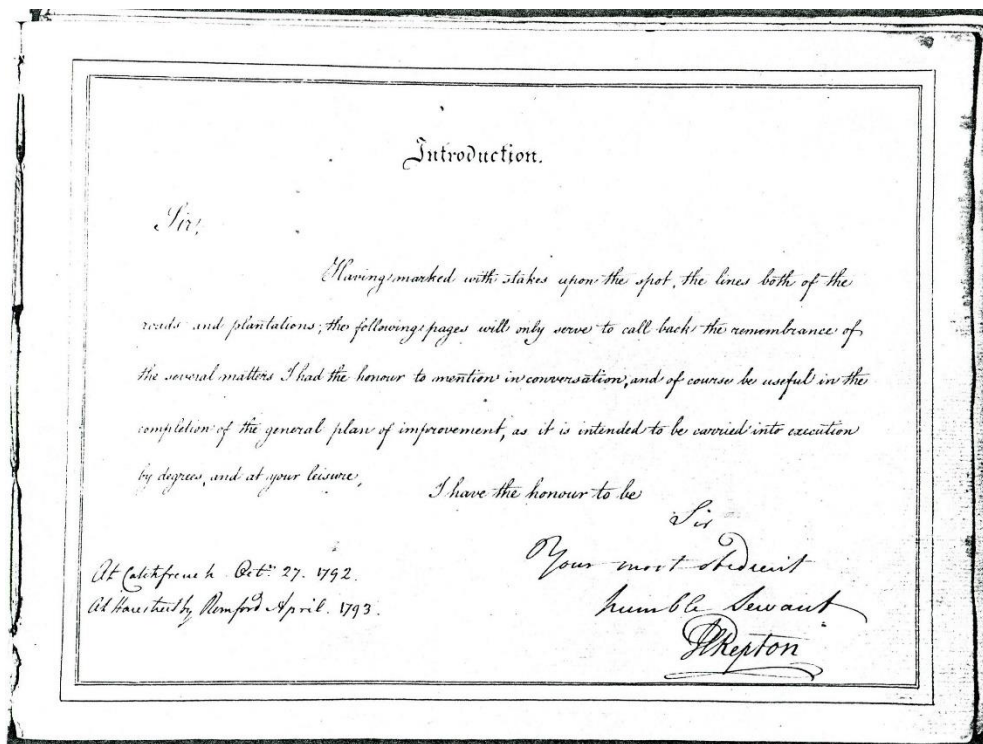
1726 Part of the house was re-modelled in the Gothic style with crenelated battlements. This was the house around which Repton created his improved landscape. The Glanvilles and the Eliots of Port Eliot had become related by marriage and Francis Glanville was also an M.P. so would have known Repton's reputation from William Pitt, also.



1792 Francis Glanville commissioned Humphry Repton who spent several days at Catchfrench supervising his proposals and setting them out with stakes.



1793 Repton produced his 'Red Book' for Catchfrench and during the following few years all his planting proposals were implemented – much of the planting of laurel was to screen the house from the Turnpike which ran through the estate.



Introduction from the 'Red Book'

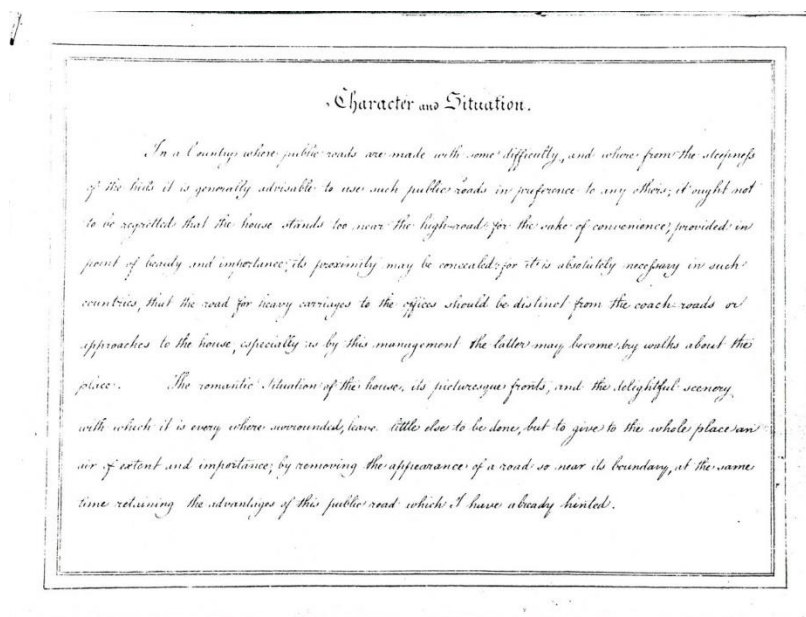
"Sir,

Having marked with stakes upon the spot, the lines both of the roads and plantations, the following pages will only serve to call back the remembrance of the several matters I had honour to mention in

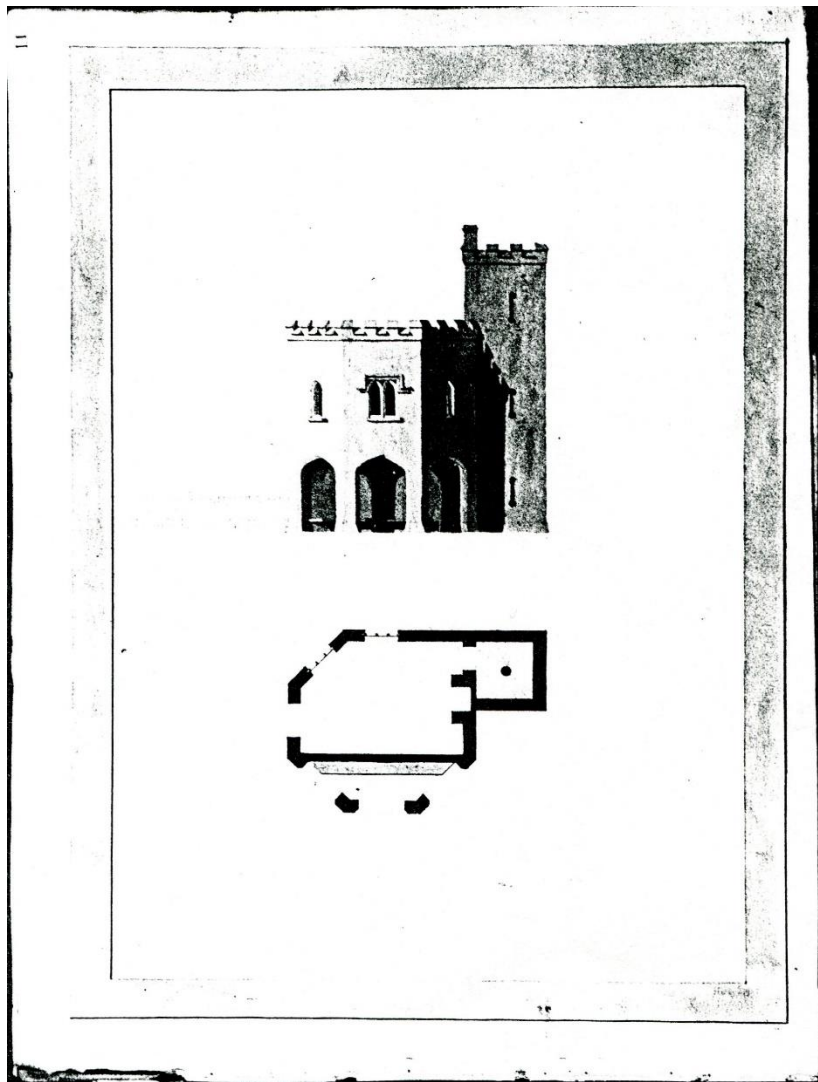
conversation, and of course be useful in the completion of the general plan of improvement, as it is intended to be carried into execution by degrees, and at your leisure. I have the honour to be Sir, your most humble servant."



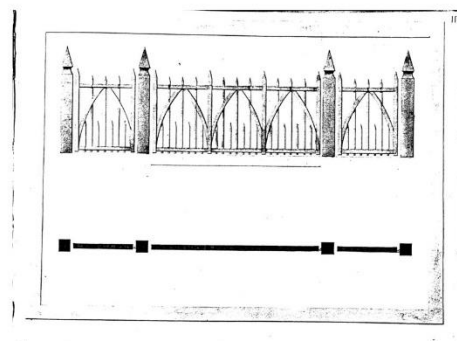
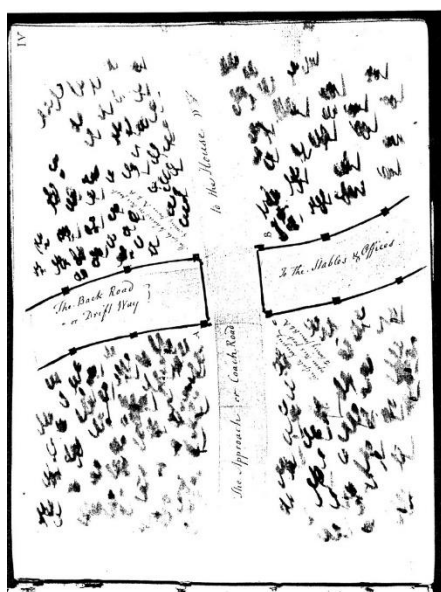
These slides show the Eastern approach: the 'Red Book' states "it ought not to be regretted that the house stands too near the high road for the sake of convenience, provided in point of beauty and importance, its proximity may be concealed."



Repton expected that the coach roads or approaches to the house should be managed to become walks and states: "The romantic situation of the house, its picturesque fronts, and delightful scenery with which it is everywhere surrounded, leave little else to be done, but to give the whole place an air of extent and importance."

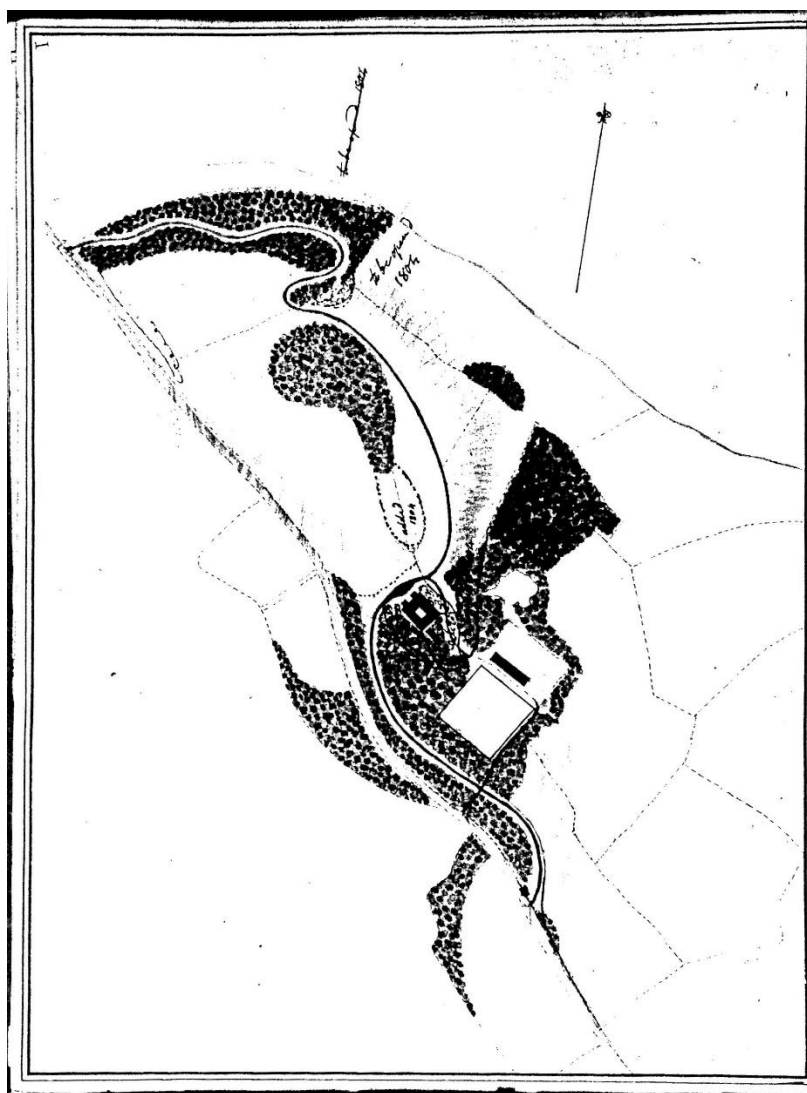


The East Lodge – here Repton provided for a covered seating area and a prospect tower. This was not implemented.

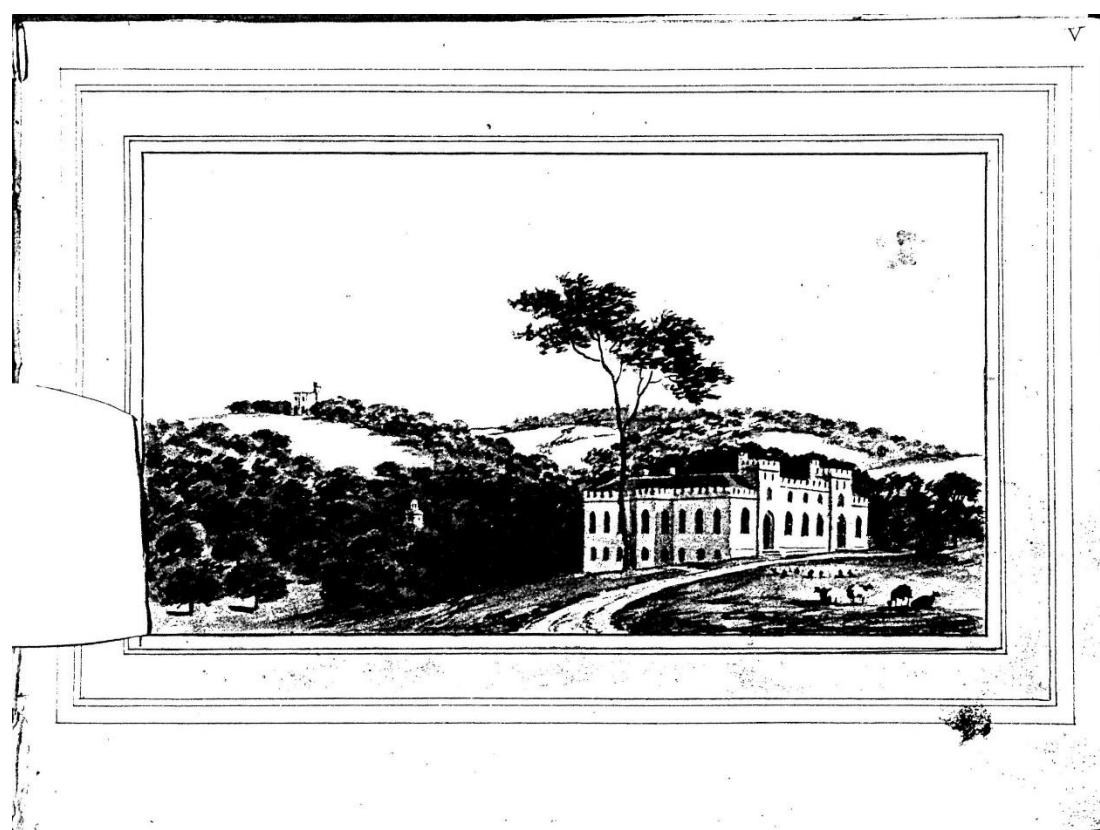
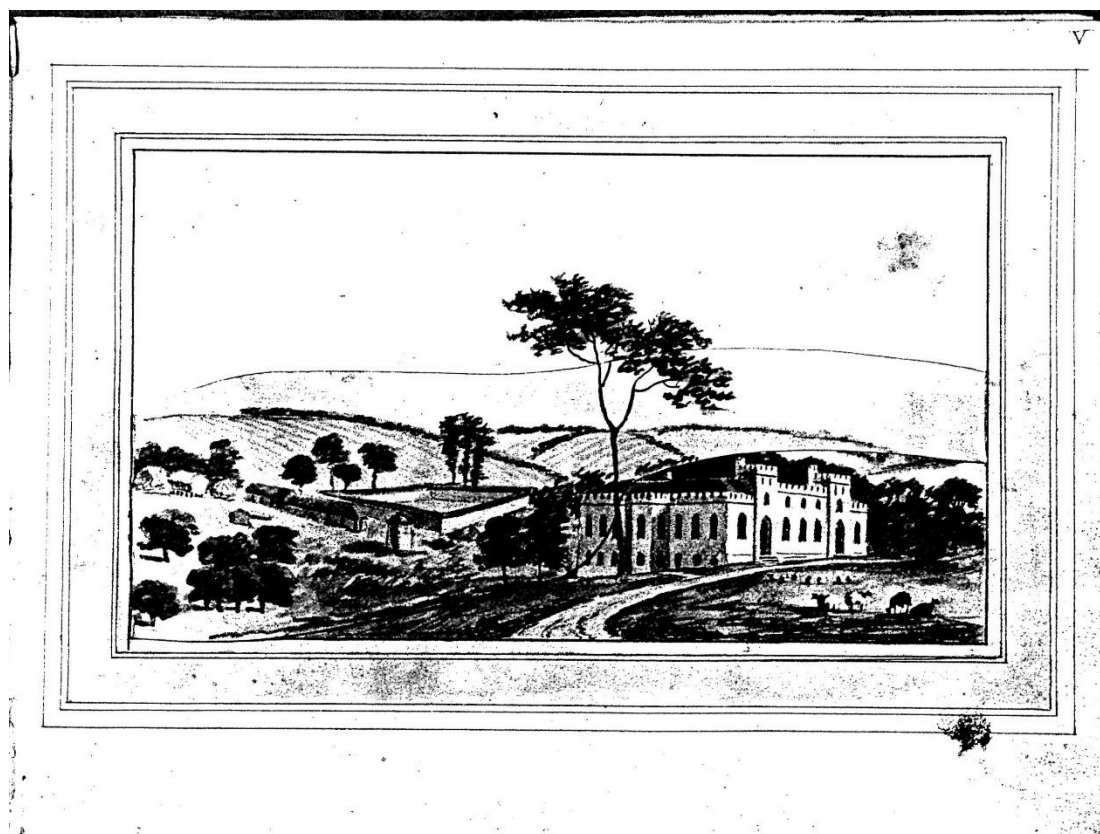


This is the Eastern approach as shown in the 'Red Book' illustrating Repton's desire that the coach road should remain open to facilitate its use as a walk, with the gates closed across the drift road to the stables

and offices. We used the design of the gate in the restoration programme for access from the Glen onto the Quarry Walk, which we shall see later.



This map shows the areas of planting implemented with one added in 1804 and the final one to begin in 1804. The Turnpike was closed in 1830.



The "Red Book" scene before and after the planting was implemented. In the first scene the walled kitchen garden is clearly visible from the West approach and very well concealed following the planting.



The house as it is today.



Various views of the West drive – Top left having approached through Black Alders Wood; Bottom left looking across the parkland to the Hanging Wood; Top right looking across to the North Lawn with the house appearing; Bottom right looking back from the carriage sweep to remains of the Knoll planting.



The view from the North lawn into the Parkland and the Hanging Wood looking down the North Lawn into the Glen.



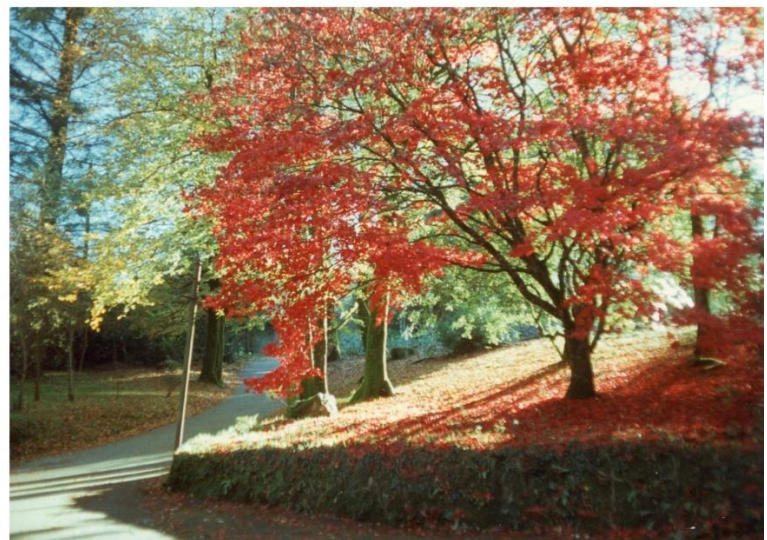
The Terrace – as this is steep ground into the Glen, Repton proposed a terrace surrounded by an ornamental fence: he proposed an “open Gothic parapet which, as the stone of Cornwall is difficult to work, may be executed in wood painted and sanded in imitation of the artificial stone of Code’s manufactory”. We found no evidence that this terrace was built, but low shrub planting was in place.



The View West – we refer to this as ‘The Repton Dip’ as he proposed removing 6 feet of earth in order to reveal a far cottage on the estate, estimating that removing about 50 loads of earth would reveal as many acres beyond it, in order to produce a ‘beautifully contrasted’ landscape.



The Knoll plantation was cut for timber during the war. This slide illustrates the new planting and its early progress.



The drift road to the stables with a Repton 'signature' stone at the junction.



The Repton design gate leading to the quarry walk.



The entrance tunnel into the quarry garden. To quote Repton from the 'Red Book' "This quarry will furnish an endless source of amusement if conducted with the same taste and skill which are displayed in the rock scenery of Port Eliot."



Scenes depicting the clearing and restoration of the quarry garden with some regeneration and steps up to a viewing platform.



These two photographs depict another of Repton's 'signatures'. Sweet Chestnuts planted 2 or 3 in a hole to produce a more wooded appearance. These were planted along the line of the straight Elizabethan Terrace.



The Upper Terrace showing the clearance of overgrown laurel and the regeneration.



Repton proposed this straight Terrace provide a walk from Little Knoll.



The upper storey of the Elizabethan ruin cleared and prepared to become a herb parterre enclosed by a Yew hedge.



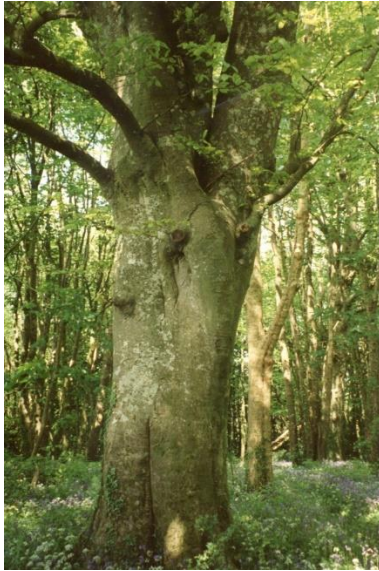
The herb parterre and partly grown Yew hedge.

The left hand picture shows the Elizabethan water system discovered during the restoration.

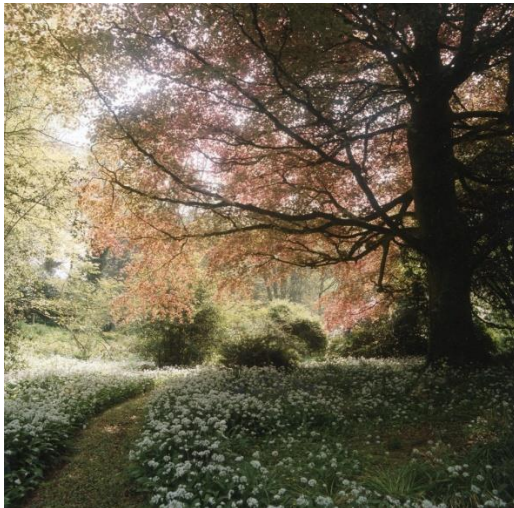
The lower scene is the ice house which was dedicated as prayer chapel.



There were 3 ponds at Catchfrench, this is the upper pond which was dry and overgrown by laurel, so it was cleared and the clay lining re-puddled. The middle pond was a stone built cistern and the lower pond was the farm pond, each to overflow into the lower one.



Two of a line of Beech trees which followed the Cornish hedge boundary of the Turnpike. This forms the boundary of Highpark Wood.



The re-instating of paths through Highpark Wood.



This slide shows the access from the front of the house through the Upper Terrace shrubbery to join the woodland walks.



This is the Glen showing some of the subsequent planting carried out by Treseders of Truro in the early 20th C.



The Glen cleared of debris ready for re-seeding.



An overview of the house and its immediate surroundings.



One of the Catchfrench peacocks showing off.

From a talk given to Cornwall Gardens Trust by Judy Wilks