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**Thomas Anson and the
Greek Revival**

Thomas Anson and Shugborough

Shugborough, the house and its estate, sits in the valley of the Trent in Staffordshire. The vale has the air of being a world of its own, somehow managing to be serene and beautiful in spite of the two main line railways which pass through it. In the 18th century the park became studded with monuments, partly fanciful and partly serious reproductions of Ancient Greek architecture, as its owner, Thomas Anson, transformed his patch of England into his own ideal Arcadia

These “improved” landscapes often have an air of mystery about them, of some kind of hidden meaning, or simply a haunting air of unreality. Shugborough, more than most, has a mystery at its heart. Most famously it has its Shepherds Monument, an enigmatic structure with a unique cryptic inscription. This presents an answered question to the visitor, made more curious by the lack of information about its creators, Thomas Anson himself and his architects. Thomas is virtually an invisible man, as if he has deliberately covered his traces. As the fragmentary clues are assembled both the meaning of Shugborough and its puzzling monument and the story of Thomas Anson, a man with secrets, begin to emerge.

There is no better description of the place as it was in the 18th century than Thomas Pennant’s in his “Journey to Chester,” published in 1811. Pennant was a close friend of Thomas Anson in his later years and, as he says himself, used Shugborough as a base from which to explore the wide variety of natural and historic features in the area. Pennant puts Shugborough, Thomas Anson’s house and its park, in its setting:

“From the middle is a view, of very uncommon beauty, of a small vale, varied with almost every thing that nature or art could give to render it delicious; rich meadows, watered by the Trent and Sow. The first, animated with milk-white cattle, emulating those of Tinian; the last with numerous swans. The boundary on one side, is a cultivated slope; on the other, the lofty front of Cannock Wood, clothed with heath, or shaded with old oaks, scattered over its glowing bloom by the free hand of nature.

“It is more difficult to enumerate the works of art dispersed over this Elysium ; they epitomize those of so many places. The old church of Colwich ; the mansion of the antient English baron, at Wolsely Hall; the great-windowed mode of building in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the house of Ingestre; the modern seat in Oak-edge; and the lively improved front of Shugborough; are embellishments proper to our own country.

“Amidst these arise the genuine architecture of China, in all its extravagance; the dawning of the Grecian, in the mixed gothic gateway at Tixall; and the chaste buildings of Athens, exemplified by Mr. Stuart, in the counterparts of the Choragic monument of Lysicrates’, and the octagon tower of Andronicus Cyrrhestes. From the same hand arose, by command of a grateful brother, the arch of Adrian of Athens, embellished with naval trophies, in honor of Lord Anson, a glory to the British fleet; and who still survives in the gallant train of officers who remember and emulate his actions.”(1)

Shugborough and its buildings are set in this Elysium, this sweet vale, in which also lie, beyond the confines of the estate itself, a range of historic houses which add richness to the landscape. Thomas Pennant obviously loves the place and sees it as it was surely meant to be – a world in miniature, a microcosm of culture. There are not only buildings that represent faraway places but also exotic animals. The white cows emulate those of Tinian, an uninhabited paradise visited by its owner's younger brother, George Anson, in his circumnavigation. The house and its gardens are a quintessence of the places explored by the Admiral and by Thomas Anson, but such a place is not simply a fanciful showplace. The twin hearts of the house in Thomas Anson's day would have been its drawing room, a place for conversation, and its library for study and contemplation. Later in the 18th century the place was extended into a moderate sized stately home, but the core of the house is still the villa of a studious patron of the arts and sciences.

Thomas Anson, seems to have been a man of extreme modesty. No-one could be more self-effacing. Very few documents in his writing are known to exist, though, somewhere, surely, there must be archives of letters to friends lying in wait for rediscovery. There are enormous gaps in the family archives, now in Staffordshire Record Office. Letters to him exist from a few correspondents –but not many. It may be that Thomas asked for his personal documents to be destroyed at his death, leaving only relics of certain special friends and relations. For example, any letter from Elizabeth Anson, wife of his brother the famous Admiral, was preserved. There is a batch of letters about the purchase of his sculpture collection and letters from James "Athenian" Stuart, the architect who was his most important creative friend. Apart from that there is almost nothing. Or so it seemed when I began to research this book.

Important clues had a habit of appearing unexpectedly.

Two letters in Thomas's own writing turn out to have survived by accident, lost among Lady Anson's letters, and one fascinating letter to Thomas from Lady Anson was enclosed, unnoticed, in her letters to her husband. These chance survivals contain fascinating clues to Thomas's interest in landscape gardening and to a bizarre scandal. Far more exciting were two dramatic anecdotes, stories told by Thomas Anson and published by friends after his death. Both of these have led to major revelations.

Who were his friends? Some are known from a few valuable records – his will, an unusually brief document, includes six names of friends were legatees, and the list of people who received mourning rings is a snapshot of his friends and family at the time of his death. But of these names, known from this and other evidence to be close friends, why is there no trace of correspondence from Richard Owen Cambridge, the satirist, from Lord Lyttelton, whose landscape at Hagley was a rival to Shugborough, from Anton Kammel, a composer who called Anson his "dear old friend", or from Benjamin Stillingfleet, botanist and original "bluestocking"?

Of course it is probably too much to expect much in the way of letters to survive from two hundred and fifty years ago, but in the case of Thomas Anson the extreme modesty, (or is it deliberate secrecy and self-censorship?), extends to other people's historical record. Why is it that the period when the garden was first landscaped and the first follies were built is the only completely blank period in the life of architect

and astronomer Thomas Wright? And why is it that of all his patrons and projects it is only Anson and Shugborough that are mentioned nowhere in Wright's journals?

Thomas Anson is, to us, more invisible than many landowners and society figures of the time. There is no portrait which is certainly of him. A picture exists which might be his portrait, but it was bought by the family in the 19th century and no-one knows its provenance. The absence of a portrait of the house's owner is particularly noticeable when there are portraits of his brother, and parts of the house seem to be a shrine to the Admiral, and of Elizabeth, the Admiral's very much younger, witty and highly political wife.

Typically frustratingly for the researcher there is evidence that there *was* a portrait. Robert Orme, historian of the East India Company, was so moved by a legacy in his old friend's will that he commissioned a bust of Thomas from the leading artist Nollekens – and one of himself.

“To perpetuate the memory of his friend, Mr. Orme had a handsome white marble bust of Mr. A. executed by their mutual friend Nollekens in his best manner, which was conspicuously placed in his library. It was a most admirable likeness; and after Mr. Orme's death was, by his executor, sent to the representative of Mr. Anson, as the most proper person to preserve such a memento of his ancestor.”(2)

Orme's bust of himself illustrates his entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, but there is no trace of Anson's bust today, either the original or a copy. Copies were listed as being still on sale after Nollekens' death.

Who, then, was Thomas Anson, and what is the attraction of this invisible man?

He is generally known only as the elder brother of Admiral George Anson, who famously sailed round the world in the early 1740s, captured a Spanish treasure ship, became immensely rich on the proceeds, rose to the highest position in the Admiralty and helped reform the navy – even introducing the familiar blue uniforms of 18th century officers. But what of Thomas?

Thomas Anson was the son of a wealthy lawyer and, after 1720, the master of Shugborough Hall, originally a quite modest William and Mary house in a beautiful valley of the River Trent five miles from Stafford but, after his reconstruction, a delightful gentleman's villa set in exotic gardens.

His friend, the botanist and travel writer Thomas Pennant was one of several people who left obituaries or eulogies, all of which agree about Thomas's character:

“My much-respected friend the late Thomas Anson, Esquire, preferred the still paths of private life, and was the best qualified for its enjoyment of any man I ever knew; for with the most humane and the most sedate disposition, he possessed a mind most uncommonly cultivated. He was the example of true taste in this country; and at the time that he made his own place a paradise, made every neighbor partaker of its elegancies. He was happy in his life, and happy in his end. I saw him about thirty hours before his death, listening calmly to the melody of the harp, preparing for the

momentary transit from an earthly concert to an union with the angelic harmonies.”(2)

Pennant’s story of the harp may seem sentimental but it is true:

There is a list of bills to be paid at Anson's death in the Staffordshire Record Office which includes:

'For hire of harp £1 13s 6d'

This paragraph is, it appears, a reliable description of Thomas Anson. Others who knew him agree with the basic points:

“He possessed a mind most uncommonly cultivated.”

He was a scholar and a gentleman.

“He was the example of true taste in this country.”

Note that Pennant goes as far as to say “in this country”, not merely in Staffordshire.

“He made his own place a paradise, made every neighbor partaker of its elegancies.”

He was not the kind of landowner to make his estate a symbol of his own wealth and power. As time went on the estate grew but it was never, in Thomas’s time, ostentatious. The “elegancies” were for other people’s benefit.

Thomas may be invisible but, considering the small number of mentions, references and anecdotes that exist, it is surprising how many preserve his tone of voice. In the rare and treasured examples when friends pass on a piece of news or an anecdote they very often pass on his exact words.

“...the earthquake was a very trifling one...”

“...it will be a shabby race...”

“...going up and down mountains takes a deal of time and is too tedious when one is alone...”

He comes over as a person with a dry, laidback, understated, manner. Many of the glimpses of him are from his old age, when, from our point of view, he was most active, so at times he may seem, perhaps, a slightly camp, witty, old man. He never married, as far as we know.

Every fragment that appears, and new and unexpected fragments keep appearing, strangely, gives a glimpse of an attractive figure. Digging and uncovering traces of a long ago life is as exciting as revealing a lost city. He must be there, quietly in the shadows, at many an intellectual gathering or elegant party. Very occasionally someone, like James Boswell, notices him, but most of the life of that witty and enquiring world is lost, apart from its works – the landscapes, architecture and music.

The more one looks at Shugborough and at Thomas Anson himself the more one senses a buried treasure, a secret, a glimmer of gold. There are certainly mysteries, with one extraordinary tragedy at their heart, but there is also a treasure, not a treasure of gold, or an occult secret, but a web of ideas – a golden web that spreads through the eighteenth century, bearing fruit in the works of a small, remarkable, group of people.

The works, the creative products, are sometimes literary, but at Shugborough they are of large and material form, buildings, and, as vital, gardens and landscapes. The golden web is made of the ideas that inspired them. It is usually called “The Greek Revival”, a convenient and reasonably accurate term. Architecturally it can be lost in a broader “Classical Revival”, but the inspiration that drives wealthy people or institutions to imitate the style of Imperial Rome is not the same that produces a modest Doric Temple in which one sits to look at a beautiful vale. The dream of Greece was touched with ideals of democracy and of a divine simplicity. As the various characters who come and go in this story will demonstrate, in their own words, the Greek Revival also has, lying behind it, a vein of philosophy and a particular view of the world.

This web of ideas was delicate and vulnerable. There was no organised campaign, controlling group or conspiracy, only a handful of men and extraordinary women keeping alive ideas that were often at odds with the mood and attitudes of the time, the rigidly materialist 18th century.

Sometimes it does look as if Thomas Anson might have been an “eminence grise” at the very centre of this web. Perhaps this impression is simply the product of his extremely unassuming character – a mirror of others’ light – and yet evidence is emerging to suggest that he was, invisibly, more of a dynamic influence, quietly encouraging the ideas and careers of his friends and inspired by his own pioneering adventures.

Amongst this network of friends the philosopher and musician James Harris and the poet and translator Elizabeth Carter stand out as the intellectual lights. More well known and well studied today is James “Athenian” Stuart, the first architect and designer to promote authentic Greek influence. (4) This study will follow these lives as far as they shed light on the principal theme, and touch on others on the fringes of the story. A complete surprise, undiscovered until the 21st century, is the importance of music. Two intriguing composers and several other musicians will pass through the Golden Web.

Another figure who really lives in a world of his own but traces a very eccentric tangent to the circle, is the mathematician, astronomer, landscape designer, architect, poet, visionary and possibly ladies’ man, Thomas Wright. Wright is one of the most interesting characters of the century and he has never been given a full length biography. As a close friend of Elizabeth Carter, tutor to aristocratic families, and as the architect of Shugborough he knits together people and places, then spins off like a comet.

The mystery, and at times this is an authentic detective story, focuses inexorably on one precise spot – the enigmatic frustrating inexplicable Shepherds Monument, one of the oddest garden buildings in Britain and the source of all kinds of wild theories.

This exploration will show that Shugborough's strangest structure is indeed central to the story.

Though the main actors in the story are artists and people of ideas it is useful to begin with a look at the Ansons' family background and how they came to occupy a position close to the highest and most powerful people in society and government.

Thomas Anson was born in 1695 or thereabouts. The exact date of birth is unknown. He was the eldest son and heir of William Anson, a wealthy lawyer. William built Shugborough Hall probably not long before the time of Thomas's birth. The house began as a plain William and Mary brick building, simple and modest in appearance.

The known facts about Thomas Anson's early life are sparse. He was entered into the Inner Temple in 1708, at the age of 13. It seemed to be pattern that prospective lawyers were enrolled into the law before they went to university. Thomas entered St John's College, Oxford on 2nd June 1711 at the age of 15, then after his time there he returned the Inner Temple where he was called to the bar in 1719.

He was described as a "practising lawyer" like his father, and he became a bencher, a member of the governing body, of the Inner Temple in 1746. It is remarkable that almost no trace of his legal career remains. Extraordinarily in his own will, written in July 1771, Thomas says:

"I make this my Last Will and Testament which I would wish to have understood according to the plainest and most obvious meaning of the words, being unacquainted with forms..."(4)

It may be that, as a barrister, he had very little contact with this kind of legal process, but it may also be an example of his dry humour and understatement. It is possible that he never practised as a lawyer – which would not have been particularly unusual for people who had been trained at the Inns of Court at the time – but he did have legal friends who may have known him in his professional role.

In 1720, the year after he was called to the bar his father died but Thomas cannot have turned his attention to his inheritance for long as he left the country for an unusually long Grand Tour only three years later.

Though these are the few facts that exist of his early years it is possible to put them into a wider context and explain how Thomas, and his younger brother George, later Admiral Lord Anson, came to move close to the circles of power.

Thomas Anson was the least visible, in the public eye, of a very powerful and close knit family group.

The key to the family's position in society was Thomas and George's mother Isabella Carrier. Isabella and her sister Janette were co heirs of Charles Carrier of Wirksworth, Derbyshire. Isabella brought added wealth into the family, Very little is known of her, and there is no known date of her death. She outlived her husband, William, as her name appears on documents concerned with Derbyshire property in the 1730s.

The family had wealth, as landed gentry, but their social and political influence stemmed entirely from their uncle, Thomas Parker, First Earl of Macclesfield (1667-1732) He was married to Isabella's sister Janet (Janette or Jenette). Through him the extended family became extremely powerful in politics, was particularly active in the legal world, and also formed close connections with the world of science.

Thomas Parker, like Thomas Anson, was trained at the Inner Temple. He rose to be Lord Chancellor in 1718. This made him a figure of enormous power in politics and the law. He exerted his power beyond the acceptable limits and was accused of abusing his position to support his friends and favourites. In the end, he was accused of abusing legal finances, resulting in his impeachment and imprisonment in the Tower of London. This does not seem to have affected the careers of his family circle.

Aside from his legal career Lord Macclesfield was a free thinker and keen on scientific and legal controversies. He was a personal friend of Isaac Newton and returned to London after his disgrace to be a pall bearer at Newton's funeral in 1727. Thomas Parker's membership of the Royal Society was personally proposed by Isaac Newton in 1712.

Macclesfield's support for free thinkers included his employment of mathematician William Jones as a tutor for his son George, later the 2nd Earl of Macclesfield. Jones may have also taught the Ansons.

Parker's close links with the Ansons is shown by the fact that he was, with Thomas Anson, an executor of William Anson's will, made in 1715.

Thomas Anson's cousin, Lord Macclesfield's son, George Parker (c1697- 1743), later 2nd Earl of Macclesfield was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1706, two years before Thomas Anson. He was not called to the bar, but was at Cambridge University until 1718. He was trained in mathematics by William Jones, employed by his father as tutor, and Abraham de Moivre. Jones may also have taught the Ansons.

George Parker was principally a scientist, though, due to his father's influence, he had the office of Teller to the Exchequer and MP for Wallingford 1722-27. William Jones proposed George Parker for membership of the Royal Society in 1722.

Between 1720-22 he toured Italy. His travelling companion Edward Wright published an account of their travels in 1730, including a brief mention of seeing Vivaldi perform in Venice:

"It is very unusual to see priests play in the orchestra. The famous Vivaldi whom they call the Prete Rosso, very well known among us for his concertos, was a topping man among them in Venice" (6)

The 2nd Earl of Macclesfield, built up an important private observatory at Shirburn Castle and his lasting claim to fame is his support, with Lord Chesterfield, for the change to the Gregorian Calendar in 1752. This was unpopular with many people both because it meant the apparent loss of eleven days when the calendar was adjusted to the European style and because the Gregorian calendar was seen as "popery". Until 1752 the year officially began in March and writers often dated letters written in the

first three months of the year with double dates, for example 1740/1. If only one year is given it may be that, in Gregorian style, it is actually the year later. This has a serious effect on historical research in this period.

The 2nd Earl's son, Thomas, Lord Parker is also mentioned in Lady Anson's correspondence with Thomas Anson showing a continuing close connection with the Macclesfield side of the family. On December 29th 1749 she writes to Shugborough:

“Lord Parker arrived a few days ago from Paris, & has brought a letter from Monr. St George for you, and an Almanack, which is of the finest Etrennes Mignones I ever beheld, except two of the same which my Lord delivered yesterday morning, from St George also, to your Brother and me. – Lord Parker has likewise brought over six dozen of French Gloves, which lye now upon a Chair by me ‘till your Commands are known concerning them.” (7)

M. St George was a French naval officer who became a friend of the Ansons after his capture at the Battle of Finisterre. Lady Anson sometimes has to distinguish him carefully from Prince Charles Edward Stuart who used St George as a pseudonym. In November Lady Anson wrote that St George had communicated with no-one but Lord Parker, and that only for a “commission for two fans that he wanted.” Such luxury goods greatly dominated the minds of these 18th century ladies and gentlemen.

The Almanac “Etrennes Mignonnes” was an annual publication of curiosities and information for the forthcoming year.

By far the most important person in the family circle, and, after 1748, George Anson's father-in-law was Philip Yorke (1690-1764), who rose to be Lord Chancellor, as the Earl of Hardwicke, was one of the most powerful people in the country.

Yorke began his career as articled clerk to Charles Salkeld where he became a life-long friend of Thomas Parker (c1695-1784), another Parker relative, nephew of the 1st Earl of Macclesfield, from Park Hall, Staffordshire. This Thomas Parker entered the Inner Temple on 3rd May 1718 and was called to the bar 19th June 1724.

The Dictionary of National Biography (DNB) suggests that Yorke became tutor, presumably in law, to Thomas Parker, five years his junior, at the time when Yorke entered the Middle Temple (as distinct from the Inner Temple where the Parkers and Thomas Anson were trained).

Acting as tutor to Thomas Parker gave Philip Yorke access to Lord Macclesfield. As DNB says the Parker connections “provided a rocket boost” to Yorke's career. In 1720 Lord Macclesfield made Yorke Solicitor General. Yorke became Lord Chancellor in 1737 and also negotiated a position in the Exchequer for his son, also Philip.

George Anson's rise to the highest position of authority in the Admiralty is sometimes assumed to have been due to his marriage to Elizabeth Yorke (1725-1760), Lord Hardwicke's daughter, in 1748. The true situation is more complicated. Philip Yorke seems to have been something of an upstart, owing his success to the support of the

Parkers, or to his use of them to his own advantage. He was only six years older than his son-in-law and the marriage was another way of raising himself into a position of power over the family that had set his career on its course.

Elizabeth's brother, Lord Hardwicke's eldest son, Philip married Jemima Campbell, Marchioness Grey, granddaughter of the Duke of Kent. Thomas Wright, the architect and landscape designer who transformed Shugborough in the 1740s, spent a great deal of time at the Kent's home at Old Windsor and at Jemima's home at Wrest Park.

Though Thomas Anson, with his legal background, was at the heart of the Macclesfield circle there is no reason to suppose that he was ever dominated by Lord Hardwicke. His legal career has faded from history. He was a "bencher" of the Inner Temple, a member of the governing body, and his later friends included a circuit judge who may have worked with him, but his life was dominated by other things. He played his part as a whig MP for Lichfield, it seems, purely to please Elizabeth, Lady Anson with whom he spent a great deal of time.

Thomas wrote to Lord Hardwicke that he had little interest in the

"cabal, intrigue, and ...huddle of politics." (8)

Elizabeth stayed at Shugborough often while her husband, Admiral Anson, was otherwise occupied by the navy. She visited Bath and Buxton with Thomas, and wrote him lively and informative letters. Some have suggested that there was a romantic relationship between, but it has to be remembered that she was thirty years younger than him. They do seem to have shared a love in literature and art, and her interest in Poussin and the world of idealised shepherds and shepherdesses must have played a part in the making of the mysterious Shepherds Monument.

Apart from Elizabeth Anson these family members and the world of high politics fall into the shadows as the story of Thomas Anson, Shugborough and the Greek Revival emerges into the light after two and a half centuries of obscurity.

SOURCES

Most of the people discussed in this chapter have entries in the Oxford DNB Online. This is accessible to anyone with a public library membership number. The databases on the Inner Temple and Royal Society websites are also useful sources.

1) Thomas Pennant: The journey from Chester to London (1811). Available on Google Books. (All quotations, unless otherwise stated, follow the spelling of the originals.)

2) Robert Orme: Historical fragments of the Mogul Empire (F Wingrave, 1805) Available on Google Books

3) Thomas Pennant: The journey from Chester to London (1811).

4) Stuart is covered in spectacular detail in S W Soros (ed.): James 'Athenian' Stuart: The Rediscovery of Antiquity (Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design & Culture) (Yale University Press, 2006)

5) Thomas Anson's will is available from the Public Records Office website. There are several copies in the Staffordshire Record Office.

6) Quoted in John Booth: Vivaldi (Omnibus Press, 1990). Available on Google Books.

7) Staffordshire Records Office. Anson Papers. D615/ P (S) / 1/ 3

8) 8th Feb 1748, British Library Add.15955, f. 106, quoted in Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke: The House of Commons 1754-1790 (HMSO, 1964)

Anson in Italy

Sir John Eardley Wilmot was a judge who had worked on the Midland Circuit and at one point turned down the offer to replace Lord Hardwicke as Lord Chancellor. On the day Thomas Anson died (30th March 1773) he wrote a personal obituary for him in his journal. It was a habit of his to make brief notes about people he had known when they passed away. Perhaps Wilmot, as well as being connected with the Hardwicke circle, had known Anson in his role as a barrister - if he had, in fact, ever had an active career in the law, as it seems Anso spent a lot of his time out of the country:

Wilmot wrote:

“On the 30th of March 1773, Thomas Anson, esquire, of Shuckborough, in the county of Stafford, departed this life: he was the elder brother of lord Anson, who died without issue, and inherited his great acquisitions. He was never married, and, in the former part of his life, had lived many years abroad; was a very ingenious, polite, well-bred man, and dignified all his natural and acquired accomplishments by his universal benevolence and philanthropy.” (1)

For such an invisible man as Thomas the number of laudatory comments such as this is quite surprising. They all agree on his philanthropy and taste.

Fragmentary evidence exists about Thomas’s travels in the 1720s which supports Wilmot’s comment.

Thomas was on a tour of Belgium, France and Italy in 1723 with two friends, one at least was a companion from the Inner Temple. The excursion lasted at least at least two years and perhaps more.

Lord Whitworth, a government representative at the Congress of Cambrai (a long running conference in which France and Britain mediated between Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor) wrote to Lord Polwarth in July from Spa, Belgium:

“Mr Mytten, Mr Anson and Mr Degg, three English gentlemen who have been here for some time and design to take Cambray in their way to Paris desire your lordship’s protection. They are pretty modest gentlemen, and Mr. Anson, who is nephew to my Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Macclesfield, has been particularly recommended to me by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as Secretary of State and Mr De la Faye. When he has been about a month in Paris, he designs to come back and make some stay at Cambrai.” (2)

At this time Thomas was seen as a protegee of Lord Macclesfield, the Lord Chancellor and the Ansons' uncle. Charles Delafaye was a Civil Servant, at that time Secretary to the Lords Justices of England. Alexander Hume Campbell, Lord Polwarth, was one of the British ambassadors to the Congress of Cambrai.

Ingamells' 'Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800', a rich source of information, suggests that Mytton was William Mytton, a wine trader and one of the extensive Shropshire family.

It is far more likely that this fellow traveller was William Mytton's younger brother James (1696-1764). James Mytton, youngest of a large generation of the Myttons of Halston, Shropshire, lived in Richmond and there are many references to him in the Anson papers in the Staffordshire Archives. Identification is not always certain as the writers rarely use a first name or even an initial. He isn't always even given a "Mr". For example, Lady Anson refers to "the problem of Mytton's almshouses" in a letter to Admiral Anson in 1759. The almshouses were Houblon's Almshouses in Sheen Road, left to the care of James Mytton by his great aunt Susannah Houblon, widow of John Houblon, governor of the bank of England. She died in 1759. The will also required that Mytton's sister Esther be allowed to live for the rest of her life at Ellerker House, Richmond, which became James Mytton's home.

James Mytton was left in charge of Thomas's business while he was in the east in 1740/1. He visited Paris with him in 1748 and, seems to have been a regular visitor to Shugborough. One of Lady Anson's letters mentions him being there as late as 1756. Mytton was a neighbour at Richmond of Daniel Wray, an antiquarian friend of Philip Yorke and the Wrest Park set.

He seems to have been Thomas's longest lasting friend. Thomas Pennant, who left the detailed description of Shugborough quoted in the previous chapter was Mytton's nephew. After the death of his brothers James Mytton found himself the senior member of the family, supporting Pennant and his other nephews and nieces, including the father of Mad Jack Mytton, the famous huntsman of the turn of the century.

James Mytton, like Thomas Anson, was unmarried.

Another of Mytton's nephews, also called James, travelled in Italy many years later. He was an art collector and member of the Dilettante Society and must have been the Mr Mytton who received a mourning ring when Thomas died, his uncle having died in 1764.

Ingamells gives no evidence that Mr Mytton travelled into Italy with Anson and Degge. Perhaps he returned to England after visiting Paris and Cambrai.

Simon Degge, (1707- c1765) of Blithbridge (Blythe Bridge, according to the Royal Society database), was a Staffordshire friend, and a contemporary of Thomas's in the Inner Temple, having been entered four years after Thomas in 1712.

Ingamells dictionary (3) gives no clues to Thomas Anson's whereabouts for the next year. It is possible that he had returned home before setting off again for Italy, but there are traces of Simon Degge and it is possible Anson was still travelling with him.

On 22nd May 1724 Degge was in Rome when he, Richard Rawlinson and Benjamin Calvert visited the palace of Cardinal Spada. In July he was in Siena, and back again in Rome in December.

In the last few months of 1724 Thomas Anson was following a different itinerary.

In September 1724 he was in Padua with Alan Brodrick, who also a member of the Inner Temple, according to Ingamells, though he is not listed on the Inner Temple database. Thomas and Alan Brodrick signed the visitors' book of the University of Padua together. This was a tradition for Grand Tourists and the book contains the names of over 2000 British travellers.

Simon Degge arrived in Padua a few months later. On February 17th 1725 he signed the Padua visitors' book with a group of others including Lucius Cary, and Benjamin and Francis Lambert. One of them made a note that they were "all safe and sound arrived here from the Carnavale of Venice." (3)

(The visitor's book later lists Simon Degge's brother, William, who joined the Society of Dilettanti with Thomas Anson, visiting Padua in 1732 with George Knapton, the portrait painter for the society.)

The three contemporaries of the Inner Temple Alan Brodrick, Simon Degge, and Thomas Anson may have been fellow travellers throughout this period, though occasionally diverting to other cities. All were in their early thirties. The usual image of a Grand Tourist is of a very young man, in his teens or early twenties, travelling with a guardian or tutor, taking the opportunity to gather a wide variety of experience of the world, not necessarily cultural. This group of friends were visiting the usual haunts of educational tourists, but wandering backwards and forwards and apparently being in no hurry to return.

Such tours were often a chance to collect art works, whether valuable or merely souvenirs. There is no evidence that Thomas Anson bought objets d'art on this trip, though there is a pietro duro table top at Shugborough which may come from this period. Brodrick not only bought pictures but also sat for his portrait in Venice.

There were, of course, many other distractions and amusements in Italy that would not be accessible back home. Apart from these, and we know very little of Thomas's private life, there was music. In his last years music was as important to Thomas as architecture, sculpture and botany. Italy was the focus for high quality music throughout the 18th century even when the other arts and the political power of its various states was declining.

Venice, Naples and Rome in particular were full of music, in every theatre, every church and every street corner. In 1725 Vivaldi had returned to Venice as an opera composer after promoting his career elsewhere, and his Four Seasons dates from this period. In Padua Tartini was starting his career, founding his violin school in 1726 at which Thomas's friend of his old age, Anton Kammell, studied.

Thomas Anson met up with Simon Degge again in Rome by April 1725. Alan Brodrick and Sir Gerard Aylmer left Rome for Naples in March 1725. Anson and Degge stayed in Rome for Holy Week. Easter Day was 1st April in 1725.

The spectacle of Holy Week and Easter, with the processions of penitents followed by the grand celebrations of Easter, were an attraction to Grand Tourists. What did they

make of it? Was it just curiosity about an alien culture? Some tourists, most notoriously Sir Francis Dashwood, went out of their way to mock the ritual and the attitudes of the catholic church. On his Grand Tour a few years later, if Horace Walpole can be believed, Dashwood joined a group of penitents, who were scourging themselves at midnight, and strode up the aisle cracking a horsewhip and terrifying them all.(4)

Though Dashwood and Thomas Anson certainly knew each other in later years as fellow members of the Society of Dilettanti, the Egyptian Society and the Divan Club, this kind of behaviour seems very far removed from Anson's serious and modest style.

Thomas Anson's religious interests, if any, are a mystery. It is very curious that the largest and most ostentatiously placed of the pictures that survive from his collection at Shugborough is a very strongly catholic subject. The Immaculate Conception by Miguel Jacinto Melendez is now hung as the focus of the Red Drawing Room, the grandest of the room built after his time. The painting is dated 1731 so it was probably acquired by Anson long after the Grand Tour years. In the more intimate interior of the house as it was before 1800 it must have seemed even more striking.

Thomas and Simon Degge and an unidentified Thomas Kemp followed Brodrick to Naples on 4th April . On 24th May Anson and Degge had returned to Rome and were leaving again, heading towards Florence.

In the following months Brodrick was also in Northern Italy, including visits to Parma and Venice.

Degge was still in Italy in March 1726 when he was reported as being in Milan. There are no further traces of Thomas Anson. He may still have been with Degge or Brodrick but simply not mentioned in the sources. As it is it appease his tour may have lasted two years or more. This is a long time but not enough to account for Wilmot's comment about "many years abroad." It is only one of several known journeys and there may well have been more.

Brodrick was back in England in August 1727 when he was involved in the event that has proved to be his only lasting claim to fame – a historic Cricket Match at Godalming with the Duke of Richmond's 11. Brodrick and Richmond drew up "Rules of Agreement" for their match which became the basis for the rules of Cricket ever since. I have found no evidence that Thomas Anson was a cricketer. There was a bowling green at Shugborough.

Alan (or Allan) Brodrick's relationship with Thomas Anson may be slight. They may have been passing acquaintances or they may have been part of a circle of close friends from the same legal background (and in Degge's case from the same part of England).

As with so many things in this story it would be helpful to know more about their relationship, if any, as Alan Brodrick reappears ten years later as one of the most important patrons of Thomas Wright, the architect who transformed the house and gardens at Shugborough in the 1740s. By that time Brodrick had become the 2nd

Viscount Midleton, of Peper Harow, Surrey. He was one of the Commissioners of Customs and M.P. for Midhurst. He married, in 1729, Mary youngest daughter of Algernon, Earl of Essex. Wright stayed with Midleton several times, teaching his family and members of the Earl of Essex's family.

(The editor of Thomas Wright's Early Journal wrongly identifies Lord Midleton as Francis Willoughby, who was actually the completely unrelated Lord Middleton, and whom, coincidentally, Wright met in his 1750 travels.)

There is no trace of Thomas Anson's and Simon Degge's return from Italy but the rare and valuable clues that do survive suggest a continuing connection between them. They appear in together in the next known document mentioning Thomas Anson, his election to the membership of the Royal Society in 1730. Four years later Thomas's name appears next to Simon Degge's brother William's in the list of founder members of the Society of Dilettanti but Simon disappears from the scene.

(Ingamells wrongly gives Degge's date of death as 1727. It was a complicated Derbyshire family with several cousins and uncles all called Simon and the details have been confused with a second cousin, Simon, died in 1729. It is unfortunate that two of Anson's companions are wrongly identified, but it is only by a very careful investigation of family dates and clues in other documents that the correct identities of Mr. Mytton and Mr. Degge have been established.)

While the travellers were away Thomas's uncle, Thomas Parker, Earl of Macclesfield, the Lord Chancellor became involved in a serious charge of corruption. He was accused of encouraging the misuse of legal funds, for himself and other Masters in Chancery. He resigned in January 1725 and was tried in the House of Lords during May. He was found guilty, imprisoned in the Tower of London and ordered to pay £30,000 fine.

He retired to Shirburn Castle where he and his son, with the help of William Jones, built up a famous scientific library which has only been broken up and sold since 2000. One of Macclesfield's few visits to London after his disgrace was to be a pall bearer at his friend Isaac Newton's funeral in 1727. He died on 23rd April 1732. His son, astronomer and politician George, the Anson's first cousin, succeeded him as the 2nd Earl of Macclesfield.

SOURCES

The details of the travels of Anson and his contemporaries are from - John Ingamells: A dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1791-1800 (Yale UP, 1997)

(1) [John Eardley-Wilmot: Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir John Eardley Wilmot, Knt. \(Printed by J. Nichols and son, 1811\) Available on Google Books.](#)

(2) [Alexander Hume-Campbell Marchmont](#) , Earl of; [Walter Hugh Hepburne-Scott Polwarth](#) , Baron; [Henry Paton](#) : Report on the manuscripts of Lord Polwarth, preserved at Mertoun house, ([Great Britain. Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts.](#) HM Stationery Office, 1931) Available on Google Books.

(3) The visitors' book is included in *Monografie storiche sullo Studio di Padova*, 1922, and can be searched on Google Books with a creative use of key words.

(4) *Sir Francis Dashwood: The Dashwoods of West Wycombe*, Aurum Press 1990

Nature's Laws

Fellow travellers Thomas Anson and Simon Degge were elected to the Royal Society on May 14th 1730. (1)

A connection with the Royal Society is hardly surprising. Thomas's uncle, the 1st Earl of Macclesfield (1666? – 1732), had been proposed as a member by Isaac Newton in 1712 and after his disgrace one of his rare appearances in public was as a pall bearer at Newton's funeral in 1727. Anson's cousin and fellow barrister of the Inner Temple, the astronomer George Parker, soon to be the 2nd Earl of Macclesfield, had been proposed by his tutor William Jones (c1675-1749) in 1722.

Anson and Degge were proposed to the Royal Society by William Jones and Rev. Zachary Pearce, both of whom were intimately connected with Thomas's uncle Lord Macclesfield and the Parker family.

Zachary Pearce, was at one time Chaplain to the 1st Earl of Macclesfield and by 1730 both Chaplain to the King (1721-1739) and Rector of St-Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster (1724-1756).

Pearce seems to have been a toady to the Earl of Macclesfield and the typical image of an 18th century cleric who was more interested in classics than religion. In his own autobiography, written in the third person, he tells how he came to be known to the Earl:

"In the year 1716, he caused his first edition of "Cicero de Oratore",, with notes and emendations, to be printed at the press of that University." (Cambridge). "When that work was almost finished, a friend of his, and fellow of the college, asked him, 'to whom he designed to dedicate that edition to ?' His answer was, ' that he had not the happiness to be acquainted with any of those great men, to whom such things are usually

dedicated.'
"His friend immediately replied, ' I have the honour to be so well known to Lord Parker (then Chief Justice of the King's Bench), that I will undertake to ask his Lordship's leave for your dedicating it to him, if you will give your consent for my doing so.' Mr. Pearce returned the gentleman his thanks, and readily consented to it."
(2)

His friend asked the then Lord Chief Justice Parker who accepted the dedication. Pearce was not able to thank Parker personally for a while but when he was finally able to go to London he....

"made a visit to his patron Lord Parker, who received him in a very obliging manner, invited him to dine with him the next day, at Kensington, and there put into his hands a purse which contained fifty guineas. Mr. Pearce, at times, renewed his visits to his Lordship, and was always very kindly received by him."

Parker immediately offered Pearce the post of Chaplain, not, it is clear, on any religious basis but on the strength of his edition of Cicero.

“His Secretary came soon out to Mr. Pearce, and said, that his Lordship desired him to stay till all the company was gone, and that then he would see him. He did so, and being brought to the Lord Chancellor, he, among other things, said, that ‘he should now want a chaplain to live with him in his house;’ and he asked Mr. Pearce, ‘if it would suit with his convenience to live with him in that capacity.’ With this Mr. Pearce very readily, and with thanks, complied; and, as soon as his Lordship had provided himself with a proper house, he went into his family as his chaplain, and there continued three years.”

Pearce worked his way up to more profitable positions with Parker’s support but it seemed appropriate that a more senior clergyman should have a Doctorate of Divinity, which Parker did not have.

“Then said the Lord Chancellor, ‘the Archbishop of Canterbury, Doctor Wake, has the power of conferring a Doctor’s degree in Divinity, and I will ask him to bestow that favour on you.’ I thanked his Lordship, and he spoke to the Archbishop some few days after, who readily consented to it, and the degree was conferred accordingly, June 1st, 1724.”

In thanks for this Pearce dedicated his edition of “Longinus on the Sublime” to Parker – not, of course, a theological work but a Hellenistic treatise on beauty. Perhaps, if Thomas Anson knew Pearce through his uncle’s household, any relationship they may have had would have been on the basis of Cicero and Longinus rather than theology. Pearce was not, though, purely a classicist. He published theological works and sermons, arguing for the truth of miracles and for missionary works to New World. In his earlier days he had also written occasional satirical pieces for the literary journals.

This kind of use of influence to gain places for friends or flatterers was absolutely commonplace in the early 18th century. Thomas Anson would not have been immune.

Zachary Pearce had a part to play in Isaac Newton’s Chronology of the Ancient Kingdoms. A shorter version of this study of biblical history had appeared and had been criticised for its unscientific lack of references. Pearce met Newton through Macclesfield. His autobiography tells how

“In the year 1725, and about five months before Sir Isaac died, I had the honour of a visit from him at my house in St. Martin’s Church-yard, to which he walked, at his great age, from his house near Leicester-fields. He staid with me near two hours, and our conversation chiefly turned upon his Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms..”

Newton explained that he had not wanted the short version published and Pearce advised him to produce a final copy, from many manuscripts, that could be published as a definitive version. Newton set about doing this, with a further visit from Pearce to Newton’s house.

“A few days before he died, I made him a visit at Kensington, where he was then for his health, and where I found Mr. Innys the bookseller with him: he withdrew as soon

as I came in, and went away; and I mention this, only for confirming my account by one circumstance, which I shall mention before I conclude. I dined with Sir Isaac on that day, and we were alone all the time of my stay with him: I found him writing over his Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms, without the help of spectacles, at the greatest distance of the room from the windows, and with a parcel of books on the table casting a shade upon his paper. Seeing this, on my entering the room, I said to him, ‘ Sir, you seem to be writing in a place where you cannot so well see.’ His answer was, ‘A little light serves me,’ He then told me, ‘that he was preparing his Chronology for the press, and that he had written the greatest part of it over again for that purpose.’”

William Jones was an associate of Isaac Newton, and a free thinker. William Stukely, the antiquarian, wrote that he was invited to meetings of an “infidel Society” in 1720 by Martin Folkes, a senior figure in the Royal Society and that “Will Jones the mathematician and others of a heathen stamp” attended. (3) Stukeley declined the invitation. Jones was an active freemason and proposed Masonic friends to the Royal Society.

Jones’s lasting contribution to mathematics was the establishment of the symbol “pi” and it was his publication on this which brought him to the notice of Newton. Jones became tutor to Philip Yorke in about 1706. At the same time Jones became tutor to George Parker. Jones’s son, the poet and expert on Indian culture, Sir William Jones, (1746-1794) believed his father had been connected with George Anson early in his career:

“From his earliest years Mr. Jones discovered a propensity for mathematical studies, and, having cultivated them with assiduity, he began his career in life by teaching mathematics on board a man-of-war; and in this situation attracted the notice and obtained the friendship of Lord (Mr.) Anson.” (4)

This is impossible as far as the dates go, but the idea may have stemmed from a misremembered anecdote about his father’s link with Anson. It seems highly likely that Jones would have acted as tutor in mathematics, including navigation, to Thomas and George Anson as well as to their cousin George Parker and Philip Yorke, later Lord Hardwicke. Jones would, then, stand out as a very important influence linking these people together early in their lives. The Dictionary of National Biography mentions that one reason for his intimate connection with the Parkers is that he had helped George Parker resolve an “Italian Marriage”, presumably a product of George’s Italian tour in 1720.

Jones continued to be closely connected to the Parkers. He helped build up the library at Shirburn Castle, in Oxfordshire, with George Parker, 2nd Earl of Macclesfield. The library was “large and splendid...the most valuable of mathematical books to be found in England.”(5) The library survived until it was finally sold in 2004.

Once having been elected to the Royal Society Thomas Anson, not surprisingly for such an elusive character, vanishes from the record. He did not sign the Charter Book or pay admission fees, but there is no trace of him having been ejected. Simon Degge, on the other hand, continued to be listed as a Fellow of the Royal Society until 1760.

The family connections with the Earl of Macclesfield and the names of Pearce and Jones on the proposal of Thomas Anson to the Royal Society suggest a personal link with the great scientist, Isaac Newton. It is hard to imagine that Anson would not have known him. Though his involvement in the Royal Society may not have been very deep there are other clues that he had a serious interest in Newton's ideas. There were original editions of Newton's "Principia" and his more esoteric "Chronology of the Ancient Kingdom" in the Shugborough library, according to the catalogue of the great sale in 1842 when the bulk of the contents were sold off to pay for the 1st Earl's gambling debts. Also, in 1728, the year after Newton's death "Thomas Anson Esq." was one of the subscribers of Henry Pemberton's "A view of Isaac Newton's Philosophy". Pemberton was another scientist who had assisted Newton in his old age. (6)

At this time there were very close links between the Royal Society and Freemasonry. A large number of people were both Fellows of the Royal Society and freemasons. In the 1720s and 1730s Freemasonry was being developed into an organised structure and its rituals, derived from ancient lodges of stonemasons, were being developed into a complicated symbolic system. The most important figure in this process, and the most likely creator of the modern rituals, was Dr Desaguliers, a leading supporter of Newton and the Royal Society. Both Dr. Desaguliers and William Jones, amongst others, regularly proposed their masonic colleagues to the Royal Society.

There is no sign that Thomas or George Anson were ever freemasons. This may seem surprising considering their connection with William Jones. Though the records of early Masonic lodges are incomplete the relationship between freemasonry and the Royal Society has been studied in depth by Masonic historians. (6)

William Jones, a member of the Queen's Head Lodge, is known to have proposed at least 8 fellow freemasons to the Royal Society between 1711 and 1738, twice as many as Dr Desaguliers, by far the most influential figure in both organisations at the time. Neither Thomas Anson nor Simon Degge appears in the list.

Though Anson might have known Newton and had a serious interest in his new scientific views there is a possibility that he might not have been attracted by the society or the order. The worldview that tended to dominate both the Royal Society and Freemasonry was quite different from the worldview of philosophers inspired by Ancient Greece. Newtonian science tended (though this is, of course, an oversimplification) to be materialistic, stressing the mechanical laws of nature. A person who fell under the spell of Platonic philosophy would argue that matter may not exist at all in a meaningful way.

Men like William Jones and Dr Desaguliers influenced the spread of Deism in both the Royal Society and Freemasonry. "Deists" were clerics who adapted their theology to the new science. God was the creator, but there was no room for the supernatural in the machine. Religion was a system of divinely ordained moral laws that were a counterpoint to the physical laws of the universe. This rapidly became the dominant view of the Church of England. (8)

There were various opponents to such a view. "Enthusiasts", and reformers like John Wesley, might accept the Newtonian universe but still believe in the supernatural

intervention of the Holy Spirit and in miracles. Another alternative philosophy was Idealism, which went back to a completely radical starting point usually inspired by ancient philosophy.

The most extreme Idealist was George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne. Berkeley opposed Locke and Newton by arguing that, in effect, there was no such thing as a material universe. Science could and should help us understand material things (or what appear to be material things), but ultimately there is no material reality. Berkeley enjoyed making logical arguments against the reality of matter but it is wrong to think that he simply claimed matter does not exist. The Idealist view is that reality is what we experience. Matter is subservient. What is real is what is in the Mind – and, if an Idealist is also a Platonist, the Mind is also the Mind of God. (Berkeley is not directly connected to the circle examined by this book, though his son was at one time engaged to Catherine Talbot, friend of Lady Anson and Elizabeth Carter. Carter enjoyed his book "Siris" though she wrote to Miss Talbot: "I fairly confess I have no clear idea what one half of it means.")

Amongst the circle around Thomas Anson James Harris stands out as the philosopher of the Greek Revival. His Idealism is more directly inspired by Ancient Greece than Berkeley's. Harris is the key source of information on Thomas Anson's later activities, and was a friend of other key characters in the story, particularly the architect James Stuart.

His work seems to put on record the ideas which lie behind the movement as a whole and behind the development of Shugborough, particularly in his "Three Treatises", philosophical dialogues which take place on walks through the idyllic landscapes of English country houses, in fact inspired by Wilton House near Salisbury. "Three Treatises" (1744) was in the library at Shugborough and could be read as the sacred text of the Greek Revival - not just for its dialogues on Art, Music and Happiness but for the immense amount of references to Greek philosophers included in voluminous footnotes. Harris expressed his Platonic view of the world in a visible climactic point in his "Hermes", a theoretical study of language. The sense of importance of his statement (guaranteed to antagonise Dr Johnson) is emphasised by the wonderful way in which the text is reduced to only two lines on the page. The rest is a mass of small print annotations and Greek references:

"The WHOLE VISIBLE WORLD exhibits nothing more, than so many *passing* Pictures of the *immutable Archetypes*." (9)

The Archetypes are the fundamental realities in the Mind of God. Harris's world is deeply Platonic and idealistic, though the majority of his writing is Aristotelian.

Harris's Hermes is dedicated to Lord Hardwicke and its later editions have a frontispiece by James "Athenian" Stuart, the most important artist of the Greek Revival. Harris's family archives are the principal source of information about Thomas Anson's musical life and he passes on one of the most important anecdotes about him in his "Philological Enquiries".

The poet and translator Elizabeth Carter, closest friend of the architect Thomas Wright, rebuilder of Shugborough and designer of its first monuments, loved Plato more than

Aristotle. In her poem to her friend Miss Lynch she is thinking very precisely of this Platonic, emanationist, world-view:

*“...trace perfection to th' eternal spring:
Observe the vital emanations flow,
That animate each fair degree below...”(10)*

She fussed about Harris's strictly adherence to Aristotle in a letter to Mrs Montagu (June 17th 1769):

“Aristotle is, no doubt, very respectable from an amazing depth and precision of understanding; but it was unenlivened by a single ray of poetic genius, and utterly destitute of the colouring of imagination.” (11)

In fact Harris, in both his “Three Treatises” and “Hermes” praises Imagination as a way of approaching truth.

A generation later Sir William Jones, the son of the mathematician, became the first European to love deeply Indian culture and he saw the similarity between the Hindu concept of “maya”, illusion, and Harris's “passing Pictures.” As a young lawyer and poet Jones lived with Earl and Lady Spencer as tutor to their son. At the time Jones published his first poetry James “Athenian” Stuart was completing the spectacular classical decoration of her London home, Spencer House, on the other side of St James Square from Thomas Anson's house, where he was also working. Jones, in the introduction to his “Hymn to Narayena” explains Maya as:

“...the system of perceptions...which the Deity was believed by Epicharmus, Plato, and many truly pious men, to raise by his omnipresent spirit in the minds of his creatures...”(12)

To the Hindu, Truth may be approached by rejecting all the images (not just the ones you don't like):

*“Delusive Pictures! Unsubstantial shows!
My soul absorb'd One only Being knows,
Of all perceptions One abundant source,
Whence ev'ry object ev'ry moment flows:
Suns hence derive their force,
Hence planets learn their course;
But suns and fading worlds I view no more:
God only I perceive; God only I adore.” (13)*

Jones could hardly make the parallel between his Hindu universe and Neo-Platonism clearer. Compare his:

*“Of all perceptions One abundant source,
Whence ev'ry object ev'ry moment flows”*

With Elizabeth Carter's lines

*“...the vital emanations flow,
That animate each fair degree below.”*

And the same concept is behind Harris's:

“so many passing Pictures of the immutable Archetypes.”

Even Thomas Wright, who had no classical education, revealed that he saw the universe this way in his “Second Thoughts”. He suggests that matter is not a thing having its own existence but is “an eternal and infinite mode of the Divine Imagination.”(14)

The Deist and Idealist debate may seem esoteric but it has immensely important implications. For a materialist or a Deist Creation is separate from God (if God is involved at all) and is therefore something which may be used or exploited by man with his intellect and power. To the Idealist, the world is not separate from the divine but is an "emanation", part of a cosmos which is ultimately a unity. Beauty and truth as experienced in nature and the arts are not merely symbols of the sacred but are actual experiences of the sacred seen through a world which is only apparently material.

Such an attitude leads to a very high regard for nature and art and a detached attitude to the merely material. Such attitudes were an important force in the romantic movement of the late 18th century but they were there in the earlier Greek Revival. Jones, and Thomas Taylor the Platonist, who continued the translating of the works of Plato begun by Harris's friend Floyer Sydenham, are the links between these faint sparks of Platonic thought in the mid 18th century and William Blake and the romantics.

These ideas were revolutionary and could be distrusted, hated, or mocked by generally very good people like Dr Johnson. Johnson was on the opposite side politically to the Ansons and a man of the “real world”, of enormous compassion and sense. He parodied James Harris's views in his novel “Rasselas”, and famously mocked Bishop Berkeley (by kicking a heavy stone he said “I refute it thus!” of Berkeley's “immaterialism” – actually not a logical argument at all) but he was a lifelong friend of Elizabeth Carter. He said that his “old friend Mrs Carter could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus.” (Puddings were a speciality of Elizabeth Carter and are described in her letters to Catherine Talbot. Sometimes they were spoiled by too much alcohol.)

In the 1750s an Idealist may delight in sitting in his Doric Temple and gazing at nature and beyond to the world of Platonic Ideas and Divine Truth but by the end of the 18th century, with war, commerce and the industrial revolution revealing the power of materialism, a Platonist like Thomas Taylor could cry out that

“ Materialism, and its attendant Sensuality, have darkened the eyes of the many, with mists of error...Impetuous ignorance is thundering at the bulwarks of philosophy, and her sacred retreats are in danger of being demolished...Rise, then, my friends and the victory will be ours.”(15)

This was no philosophical game but a serious battle for the souls of Britain.

Taylor was a self-confessed pagan but a Platonist or Idealist may also be an orthodox Christian. Berkeley's Idealism was designed to show that all reality was in the Mind of God. George Lyttelton and Elizabeth Carter were devout Anglicans (with some touches of controversy in Carter's case). James Harris lived in the Close at Salisbury and enjoyed cathedral worship however intensely classical he could be in his philosophy. He very strongly states that his purpose is to revive ancient philosophy to argue against the materialism of John Locke and against atheism.

Thomas Anson himself, of course, tells us nothing directly of his own beliefs (even omitting any kind of religious language in his will, an unusual document for the period), but it begins to be clear that the rather hazy movement which can conveniently be called "The Greek Revival" is first and foremost a revival of ideas, a revival of Greek philosophy as a weapon against materialism and as an inspiration for a high regard for beauty in art and nature. Thomas Anson stands at the very centre of the movement and as glimpses of his life emerge he begins to appear as key figure in promoting these ideals. Shugborough, his estate, was, and still should be, the sacred centre of this world.

SOURCES

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3) Mr Burdy: The Lives of Dr. Edward Pocock: The Celebrated Orientalist by Leonard Twells, Dr Zachary Pearce, Bishop of Rochester and Dr Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol, b themselves and of the Rev Philip Skelton (Rivington, London, 1816) Available on Google Books

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5) For William Jones and the relationship between the Royal Society and Freemasonry see Trevor Stewart: English speculative freemasonry: Some possible origins, themes and developments - in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* Vol. 117 (For the Council of the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle Limited, 2005)

6) Henry Pemberton: A View of Isaac Newton's Philosophy (1728). Available on Google Books.

7) Trevor Stewart op. cit. This article lists everyone known to be both an FRS and a member of a Masonic lodge, as well as of other contemporary clubs dedicated to esoteric thought, including

John Byrom's "Cabala Club".

8) For Deism I referred to Gordon Mursell: English Spirituality, vol. 2,(SPCK, 2001) and for Idealism I have referred to the introduction by Howard Robinson in George Berkeley: Principles of Human Knowledge, Three Dialogues

(Oxford 's World's Classics, 1996)

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10) Elizabeth Carter: Poems on several occasions (1759) Third edition (1776) Available on Google Books.

11) Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, to Mrs. Montagu, Between the Years 1755 and 1800. Ed. Montagu Pennington, 1817

12) Sir William Jones, Hymn to Narayana. Quoted in Kathleen Raine: Blake and Tradition, (Princeton University Press, 1968)

13) Ibid

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15) Thomas Taylor, Concerning the Beautiful, (1792)

The Society of Dilettanti

The exact origins of the Society of Dilettanti are obscure. To begin with it was a club for gentlemen who had visited Italy, with a Dilettante interest in Italian and classical art. Horace Walpole made an often quoted comment on the society which may not be particularly accurate:

“the nominal qualification is having been in Italy and the real one being drunk; the two chiefs are Lord Middlesex and Sir Francis Dashwood, who were seldom sobre the whole time they were in Italy.” (1)

In 1731, or thereabouts, a Venetian painter, Bartolomeo Nazari, was commissioned to record the foundation of the Society. He painted several copies of the picture, showing a group of gentlemen on board a ship at Genoa. The three identified figures are Sir Francis Dashwood, Lord Middlesex and Lord Boyne. The society may not have been formally established until after the travellers' return, possibly not until 1734.

It is extremely difficult to judge what kind of person the notorious Francis Dashwood actually was. Many of the stories about him were spread by political enemies and people, like Walpole, who simply enjoyed a bit of gossip. Dashwood did have his “Monks of Medmenham”, often wrongly referred to as “The Hell Fire Club”. The original “Hell Fire Club” was a rakish group of libertines who had been active earlier in the century. Women and drink were certainly important in Dashwood's life but there was a serious side to his character. He had travelled more extensively than most, not only in Europe but into the Ottoman Empire in 1738/9 when travelling was serious adventure. In contrast to his famous debaucheries he produced a revised Book of Common Prayer for use in the American colonies in 1772, a project connected with his close friendship and support for Benjamin Franklin.

If Thomas Anson was as sobre minded as the various obituaries claimed it is hard to know what he would have made of Dashwood. There are surprisingly detailed records of the so-called “Hell-Fire Club” and its members and Anson's name appears nowhere. Thomas Anson was closely involved with Dashwood in two other clubs which Sir Francis led in the 1740s, the largely forgotten Egyptian Society and Divan Club. Oddly there is very little evidence of his active membership of the influential and long lasting Society of Dilettanti.

“A List of Members of the Society of Dilettanti according to the Order of Election, dating from 6th March 1736” was published as an appendix to William Richard Hamilton's “Historical Notices of the Society of Dilettanti”, in 1855. (2)

This is, if it is as it claims, a list of members in the order in which they were elected. There are 44 members listed as having joined by 1736 of which William Degge and Thomas Anson are 18th and 19th. There is no sure way of knowing when they became members, but it would be a reasonable guess from the position on the list that it was sometime before 1736, perhaps in 1734 or 1735.

William Degge was the brother of the Simon Degge who had travelled in Italy with Thomas. There is no trace at all of any further connection between Anson and William Degge.

The 1736 membership list identifies Degge as having been born in 1698, second son of Simon Degge of Derby and a Lieutenant Colonel of Dragoons. Beyond this there are very few traces of him. There are hints that he was a friend of David Garrick in his youthful days in the army. A letter from Garrick in Lichfield to his father, Captain Peter Garrick in Gibraltar, in the Staffordshire Archives, has a note on it by William Degge, apologising for breaking the seal. (3) He may have been the Hon. Colonel William Degge, who, with his wife Mary, is mentioned in documents concerning a mortgage in Tipperary in 1741. (4)

Over the years it has been taken for granted that it was Anson's membership of the Society of Dilettanti which led to his connection with James Stuart and the building of the series of Greek buildings based on Stuart's "Antiquities of Athens", which was published by the society, but the relationship of Thomas and the society is typically elusive.

The records of the early years of the Society, currently in the care of the Society of Antiquaries, include two books of attendance lists. These are strangely unhelpful to the historian as the lists of names do not give the dates of the meetings. The only clues to the dating are in the forms of the names recorded. Sir Francis Dashwood, for example, becomes Lord Le Despencer in later entries. Thomas Anson's name appears nowhere on these lists and the conclusion has to be that though he may have been elected a member he did not attend meetings.

Of the 44 members listed in 1736 very few have any later known connection with Thomas Anson. At least twenty of them were at least ten years younger. Thomas took his "Grand Tour" when he was 29, whereas many Grand Tourists were teenagers with tutors, often clerical gentlemen, like Rev Joseph Spence who toured Italy in 1730-1733 with the young Lord Middlesex, who was 19 when they set off. A barrister of more mature years might not feel much in common with these young men. Though Walpole's comment about the society may be exaggerated it is possible that the tone of the Society in its early days was not the kind of thing he would have had any sympathy with.

Two of the original 44 members had a later association with Thomas through the Divan Club - Sir Francis Dashwood and William Ponsonby Earl of Bessborough. The Divan Club required their members to have made more adventurous journeys than the commonplace Grand Tour and which had a serious interest in the art and culture of the Middle East in spite of the trappings of light hearted ritual and dressing up. Greece, of course, the true fount of civilisation, was part of the "Sultan's Dominions", as the Divan Club put it, and not easily accessible to young gentlemen who travelled to soak up culture and sow wild oats.

The other two Dilettanti members whose names appear later in the Anson documents are Simon, Lord Harcourt and Thomas Villiers, later Viscount Hyde (1756) and Earl of Clarendon (1776)

Simon Harcourt (born 1714) is the first name on the 1736 member list, and yet he only returned from Italy, aged 20, in 1734. This small piece of evidence may suggest that the formal organisation of the club, including the listing of members, only began in that year. Harcourt was the first President of the Society, so in this case his name may be placed first in seniority rather than according to the date he joined.

Harcourt occupied various royal and government positions. He was a Lord of the Bedchamber to George II from 1735-57. In the war against the Jacobite rebellion he became a Colonel and in 1772 was promoted to General. He acted as ambassador to Mecklenburg where he was responsible for arranging the marriage of Princess Charlotte and the Prince of Wales, later George III. He is more likely to have been involved with Lord Anson than Thomas in everyday life. Harcourt and Lord Anson escorted the Princess to London. Horace Walpole wrote that he was not well suited to the role of governor to the Prince because he could teach him no "other arts than he knew himself, hunting and drinking." (5) "...his wisdom has already disgusted the young Prince; 'Sir, pray hold up your head. Sir, for God's sake, turn out your toes!' Such are his Mentor's precepts!"(6)

This, of course, may be as flippant as most of Walpole's comments but it does imply that Harcourt was not very seriously interested in the finer points of the Arts. He was not very sensitive or liberal in his attitudes to the development of his estate. It was Harcourt who notoriously removed an entire village in order to improve his landscape, inspiring Oliver Goldsmith's poem "The Deserted village."

Harcourt did employ Stuart at Nuneham Courtney, and this may have been due to an Anson connection. He is the only original member of the Society of Dilettanti to be on the list of recipients of mourning rings after Thomas's death, but some of these names are of people who had been colleagues of George Anson who had died nine years earlier. Horace Walpole, in a more positive mood, thought the removal of the village was worth it, and that the church, designed by Harcourt and Stuart together was "the principal feature in one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world." (7)

Thomas Villiers, Viscount Hyde, and Earl of Clarendon (1709-1786) spent many years abroad after 1737 as envoy-extraordinary to the court of Augustus III, elector of Saxony and king of Poland. He returned to England in 1747 and was elected MP for Tamworth. On 24 December 1748 he was made a lord of the Admiralty and so, again, his later connection with Thomas might well be through George Anson and the political world, as he became a neighbouring MP in the same election which saw Thomas elected MP for Lichfield. One of Lady Anson's letters reveals that he was at Shugborough at the end of 1749. She wrote on 29th December:

"Be so good to forgive this scrawl, which is wrote in great hurry, as I expect to up Stairs to tea every minute. If that Giver of Dinners Mr Villiers is with you you will, it is hoped, present to him many compliments from two Receivers of Dinners whom he entertained the day he left London." (8)

Thomas Villiers, 1st Earl of Clarendon was related to Thomas's fellow traveller in Italy Alan Brodrick, 2nd Earl of Middleton. He married Charlotte, daughter of Algernon Capell, Earl of Essex. Brodrick was married to the Earl's sister. Both ladies were

students of Shugborough's first architect Thomas Wright when he stayed with Lord Middleton in Surrey in 1739.

Thomas Villiers also lays claim to have been the first person to commission a Doric Temple from James Stuart, three or four years before Lord Lyttelton at Hagley. Whether or not this lost building at his home "The Grove" was the first building by Stuart after his return from Athens is a question which will need to be asked when looking at Stuart's work at Shugborough.

Stuart and Revett's project to survey the buildings of Ancient Greece was first proposed in 1748. While they were in Italy they met members of the Society of Dilettanti who proposed them for membership in 1751. This turned the Society's attention from Italy to the far less explored world of Greece, then part of the Ottoman Empire and rarely visited. Greece, of course, to the classically educated mind, would be the real source of civilisation of which Italy was only a pale reflection. It is important to emphasise how little was known in detail about authentic Greek art and how exciting the prospect of seeing these priceless treasure must have been.

The first volume of Stuart's and Revett's "Antiquities of Athens" appeared in 1762. By this time Stuart was already designing buildings and interiors inspired by their research

If Thomas Anson was not directly involved in the Society of Dilettanti it is strange that he very rapidly became involved with Stuart, possibly within ten months of his return to England. The series of monuments at Shugborough for which Stuart was responsible are often seen as a showcase for the Society of Dilettanti

Could it be that Anson, though invisible as far as the records of the Society are concerned, had a direct connection with the commissioning of Stuart's and Revett's project? Before 1750 the focus of the Society had been on Italy and a fairly frivolous interest in classical art. The Athenian project gave the Society a new sense of purpose and seriousness. It is hard to detect any serious motivation amongst the original group of collectors and Grand Tourists who launched the Society in 1732. Thomas Anson, though, was a person of a quite different character and his pioneering enthusiasm for the Greece went back to the time when the other founder members would have travelled no further than Rome, Venice or Naples.

(1) Quoted in: Sir Francis Dashwood: The Dashwoods of West Wycombe (Aurum Press, 1987)

(2) In Lionel Cust & Sidney Colvin: History of the Society of Dilettanti (Macmillan, 1898)

(3) Staffordshire Record Office S.MS.511 (from on-line catalogue)

(4) National Library of Ireland, Collection List A 14, Trant papers.
<http://www.nli.ie/manuscriptlist/..%5Cpdfs%5Cmss%20lists%5CTrant.pdf>

(5) DNB on line

(6) Horace Walpole Letter Vol. 1 – Project Gutenberg

(7) quoted in University of Oxford Botanic Garden, Harcourt Arboretum Restoration/
Development Plan, Report April 2003.
www.kimwilkie.com/images/projects/uk/harcourt/harcourt_arb_report.pdf

(8) Staffordshire Record Office. Anson Papers. D615 P (S)/ 1/ 3

Sailing to Tenedos

Though there are so few clues to the early life of Thomas Anson there are, among them, a small number of extraordinarily dramatic anecdotes. In the two most significant cases they are stories told by Thomas to friends or associates who published them after Thomas's death, many years after the events to which they refer. These momentary openings of windows into his life are priceless gifts and it is impossible not to feel that they have been preserved in time for a reason, as if he wanted to leave just a few clues to the most important events in his life.

Philosopher James Harris passes on a fragment of conversation in his "Philological Enquiries", published in 1781.

"WHEN the late Mr. Anson (Lord Anson's Brother) was upon his Travels in the East, he hired a Vessel, to visit the Isle of Tenedos. His Pilot, an old Greek, as they were sailing along, said with some satisfaction, "There 'twas our Fleet lay." Mr. Anson demanded, "What Fleet?" "What Fleet?" replied the old Man (a little piqued at the Question)—"WHY OUR GRECIAN FLEET AT THE SIEGE OF TROY". This story was told the Author by Mr. Anson himself."

This story has occasionally been quoted, even, incredibly considering the clear wording of the first sentence, in a biography of James Harris, as an incident in George Anson's life. The source itself is important. James Harris was the key intellectual figure of the Greek Revival, the philosophical part of the Golden Web. He knew Thomas in his later life, certainly from the 1760s, and his family's archive is the main source of information on Thomas's musical activities.

One of the few documents in Thomas's handwriting is a diary of a journey to the eastern Mediterranean in 1740/1. The diary gives little more than the dates of arrival at various ports but it is enough to make it clear that the story passed on by James Harris must refer to a different voyage. Thomas went as far as Egypt and Aleppo but nowhere near the island of Tenedos, now Bozcaada in Turkey, about 100 miles north of Izmir, then known as Smyrna.

Some writers have guessed that there was an earlier trip. Ingamells' Dictionary lists a possible trip to the Levant in 1734. This guess, in fact correct, is based, oddly, on a misinterpretation of a document in the Staffordshire Records Office. This letter, dated 25th September 1734 was wrongly imagined by an earlier researcher to be a "Firmen" or passport for a traveller in the Ottoman Empire. The Staffordshire Records Office has always, until now, listed it as being in Hebrew. It is in fact written in Armenian. When I first attempted to get a translation I sent a copy to an Armenian historian at the British Museum who provided a very fragmentary and misleading translation,

explaining that the letter was written in a difficult mixture of Armenian and Persian, used by merchants in the 18th century.

Fortunately the original translator could make out the name of Shariamans in the letter and, thanks to the wonders of the internet, a search for this name led to Sebouh Aslanian of Columbia University who is studying Armenian merchants in Europe in the 18th century. With very great thanks to Sebouh Aslanian this document has been read for the first time in 274 years. It reveals that there was a journey to the East but the letter is not a firmen. The right deduction, of a trip to the Levant in 1734, had been made for the wrong reasons.

In Italian:

To Signor Bortolo di Pietro, Armenian merchant, Livorno .

Letter head:

In the Name of God

To your honorable lordship, Mister Bortolo

In the year 1734 September 25 in Izmir (known to European travellers as Smyrna)

The letter begins with formulaic introduction by Babajan of Avetik (the author of the letter) telling Mr. Bortolo di Pietro of the Sharimanian family in Livorno that he (Babajan) is at his service and always willing to carry out his duties, but that he has not received any letters or orders from Bortolo to respond to him in kind.

Babajan then states that he is writing this letter to ask for a favor.

He writes that "an Englishman arrived from England [ingleterra] in this place [i.e., in Izmir] stating that he is a lord of a great household and is a very good man. In truth, few kind/good men among the English such as this man are to be found [here?] and he is a good friend of your servant [i.e., Babajan]. His name is Master Tomasso Anson. I was conversing with him one day and remembered your good reputation to him. Since he is returning [to Livorno] with this same English ship, he asked your servant [i.e., Babajan] for a [letter of] recommendation, so that if he has any needs in that place [i.e., Livorno], I beg you to provide services to him without any charge, for providing services to such nobility will not go to waste....

I have recommended you to him so you may show him your friendship to your servant [i.e., Babajan] by going to pay your respects to him at the Lazzaretto [Nazaret? or at the quarantine?] ... The Mister [Tomasso Anson] will go to France from that place [i.e., Livorno] in order to return to his country from there...I beg of you to [provide

your services to Tomasso Anson] and write back to your servant [i.e., Babajan]. May your lordship [i.e., Bortolo] have a long life and always be filled with joy.

From your menial servant, Babajan of Avetick "

This letter reveals that Thomas Anson was in Smyrna on 25th September 1734, preparing to return to Livorno where he would need to spend time in quarantine, as was customary, before travelling on to France. Smyrna is the nearest port to Tenedos, so the incident of the Greek Fleet took place shortly before this. There is no clue about the rest of his journey, though other travellers who reached Smyrna would move on up the Hellespont to Constantinople . He may have come to Smyrna by way of Greece , but Greece was a lawless place and fewer travellers had managed to reach it in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The letter implies that Thomas has asked Babajan of Avetick, a merchant who does business with the Shariamanian family, for an introduction to Mr. Bortolo di Pietro of the Sharimanian family in Livorno . It would be interesting to know what particular business Bortolo was in. "Count" David Shahrmanian, in Livorno, was a diamond merchant. It is very unlikely that Thomas Anson would be interested in diamonds, especially in 1734, ten years before Admiral Anson returned hugely wealthy from his circumnavigation.

There is a bizarre and horrific connection between this document and the Cat's Monument at Shugborough. In one of her letters Lady Anson referred to it as "Kouli Kan's Monument".

Kouli Khan was Nadir Shah, who became Shah of Persia in 1737. Presumably the cat, represented on the monument by a Cheshire Cat-like stone animal, was the first of a line of Persian cats owned by Thomas and named after the Emperor.

In 1747 Nadir Shah had four merchants burned alive in Isfahan's Central Square over an argument about a jewel-studded horsecloth that, presumably, the Emperor wanted for himself. Two of the merchants were Jewish and the other two were catholic Armenians – one being Harutiun (Aratoon) Shahrmanian. This would have probably been the uncle of "Bortolo di Pietro of the Sharimanian family" and brother of "Count" David Sharimanian of Livorno.(2)

Tenedos (its modern name is Bozcaada) is a place of enormous symbolic meaning. As the old sailor had said it was the place where the Greek fleet lay in hiding at the siege of Troy. The Greeks retreated there after apparently abandoning the siege, but they had left behind the mysterious wooden horse.

The island is mentioned in Homer's Illiad and more explicitly stated to be the hiding place of the fleet in Virgil's Aeneid.

Alexander Pope's translation of the Illiad, Book 1:

*“O Smintheus! sprung from fair Latona's line,
Thou guardian power of Cilla the divine,
Thou source of light! whom Tenedos adores,
And whose bright presence gilds thy Chrysa's shores.”*

John Dryden's translation of the Aeneid, Book 2:

*“In sight of Troy lies Tenedos, an isle
(While Fortune did on Priam's empire smile)
Renown'd for wealth; but, since, a faithless bay,
Where ships expos'd to wind and weather lay.
There was their fleet conceal'd.”*

Thomas Anson would probably have read these texts in their original Greek and Latin. One wonders how well he communicated on his journey. He would have sailed on English ships, either navy or merchant ships on the important cloth trade route to Smyrna, but he must have needed Greek to talk to the old Greek sailor. Ancient Greek may not have helped very much.

There was an English community in Smyrna, and an English factory, complete with a chaplaincy, that had been active for a hundred years. Tourists were extremely rare in 1734 but there had been a few who had described their travels in writing and mentioned Tenedos and its relationship to Troy.

T. Smith, in 1668, wrote a diary of a voyage to Smyrna and Tenedos.

*“We past by Lemnos, and were up with the Island Tenedos; a fine Champaign Country,
only with one Hill toward the middle of it. The Castle to the N. E. part of the Isle: over
against which lye three small Islands in a strait Line. Here we came to an Anchor. We
saw the Ruins of Troas at a distance, but did not think it safe to go ashore.”*

A traveller in 1701, Ellis Veryard, described crossing to Troy from Tenedos:

*“Proceeding in our Voyage, we anchor'd under the lile of Tenedos, about Five Miles
from the Ruins of the antient City of Troy ...It's about Thirty Miles in compass, rocky
and barren ; so that it produces little, saving a small quantity of Wine, which is much
esteem'd in the Levant. Next Morning we cross'd over to the main Land, and went on
Shore to visit Troy. The Water was so very shallow near the Shore, and so fill'd with
Ruins (on which, I suppose, the Sea has gain'd) that we were forc'd to wade a
considerable way to get on Land, where we came at length, tho' not without some
difficulty. This is said to be the place where the antient Ilium ftood...It's celebrated in*

History for one of the greatest and most flourishing Cities in Asia Minor, but principally for the fatal War it maintain'd for divers Years against the Grecians.” (4)

A very detailed geography and history of Tenedos was published in “Relation d’un voyage du Levant” (1718) by Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, and this was one of a collection of books on eastern travel that Thomas bought for his library either in preparation for his journeys or as a reminder of them. Tournefort gives a print of the island showing the harbour and the fort. The island had been a constant cause of conflict as a strategic point in the Hellespont, several times controlled by the Venetians and after 1657 by the Ottoman Empire.

The Armenian letter and James Harris’s anecdote show Thomas to have been an adventurous traveller, apparently travelling alone. He was certainly not sailing with his brother. George Anson had served in the Mediterranean fleet in the 1720s but by 1734 was in Carolina. What is particularly surprising about this discovery is that the voyage to Tenedos predates by several years the journeys of any of his fellow members of the Divan Club, the society for eastern travellers which Thomas joined in the 1740s. Francis Dashwood and Lord Sandwich, seen as pioneers, travelled east in 1738/9, four years later. Thomas Anson’s trip to Tenedos happened at about the time that the Society of Dilettanti was formalised and fourteen years before that Society began to look further east than Italy with its support of Stuart’s and Revett’s expedition.

The manuscript diary from 1740/1 is a proof of a later trip to the Ottoman lands. There might have been more. How many of the “many years abroad” that John Eardly Wilmot wrote of were spent travelling in such exotic places? Where exactly did Thomas go on what must have been a lengthy trip in 1734? Did he visit Athens?

Surely if he had someone would have mentioned it. Greece was known to be lawless and dangerous and Stuart and Revett came near to death when they were drawing the ruins of classical Greece. Perhaps this encounter with an old sailor was the closest Thomas was able to get to Athens – but on a way he had found himself even closer to the roots of Greece than Stuart and Revett through his contact with the old sailor’s memory – as if time meant nothing. For anyone with a love of that world strong enough to inspire him to make this journey that encounter would be powerfully symbolic. What would his feelings have been when he returned to England?

There is no one else in England in the 1730s who would have had a stronger motivation to encourage other travellers and researchers – and in doing so set the first spark to the Greek Revival.

There is a portrait at Shugborough which may be of Thomas, though its provenance is unknown. This painting may well be another souvenir of this 1734 Eastern journey

The portrait is assumed to be by Vanderbank or “school of Vanderbank.” It shows a man, in early middle age. Thomas was 39 in 1734. He is wearing a turban, a common replacement for a wig if in a state of undress. He has a rather louche air, and wears an open shirt. He is holding a hand-held sundial. He looks like a traveller returned from a voyage. If the portrait is by Vanderbank himself the picture has to date from no later than 1739, the year of Vanderbank’s death. Vanderbank also painted a portrait of Lady Elizabeth Yorke, Lady Anson to be, at about the same time, dressed as a shepherdess. This is also at Shugborough.

It is easy to imagine this painting to be a portrait of Thomas Anson freshly returned from a very dramatic journey and, for him at least, the experience that would bring him close to the very roots of Greek culture and inspire his part in the Greek Revival.

(1) Staffordshire Records Office. Anson Papers. D615/PA/2. The letter is included in a bundle of correspondence with John Dick, Anson’s agent in Livorno.

(2) Sebouh Aslanian: Trade Diaspora versus Colonial State : Armenian Merchants, the English East India Company, and the High Court of Admiralty in London , 1748–1752¹

(http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/diaspora_a_journal_of_transnational_studies/v013/13.1aslanian.html)

(3) Finnegan, Rachel, ‘The Divan Club, 1744-46, (EJOS, IX 2006, No. 9, 1-86)

www2.hum.uu.nl/Solis/anpt/ejos/pdf9/Finnegan-V06.pdf

(4) Publications from 1700-1740 mentioning Tenedos can be searched on Google Books

Expanding the Estate

When Thomas Anson succeeded his father in 1720 his house was a fairly modest William and Mary style building built by the wealthy lawyer, William Anson from Derrington, in the 1690s. It would have been impressive in comparison with the small village of Shugborough which lay across the meadows near the site of the present farm. The village consisted of cottages, farm and mills (manufacturing paper) and did not form part of William Anson's property. During the course of the 18th century the village and a wide area of surrounding land was gradually absorbed, piece by piece, into an ever growing Shugborough estate. It was a slow process. The old village remained in the landscape throughout Thomas Anson's time and is a feature of several of the landscape paintings in the house. The last cottage was demolished as late as 1805.

The removal of a village and the development of a landscape park began as early as the 1730s. It is impossible to tell at what point Thomas Anson began to plan such a change seriously. The family had not been exceptionally wealthy, certainly not in comparison with the great aristocratic estates, though Thomas's mother, Elizabeth Carrier, would have brought extra wealth as her dowry. The first property acquired by Thomas was the fulling mill. It had been in the possession of the Dudson family, and the lease was acquired by Thomas in 1731. This mill was some way from the house, and the bulk of the village lay in between. Fulling mills are used to clean woollen cloth. Thomas kept extensive flocks of sheep on his land and had a serious interest in agriculture and the development of modern methods as his connection with the agricultural reformer Nathaniel Kent demonstrates in the later part of his life. The acquisition of a working mill in 1731 may have been simply a practical business investment but it is perfectly possible that he had begun to have a vision of a classical landscape park after his Italian travels in the 1720s.

After his voyage to Asia Minor, which may have kept him away from home for a considerable time, he began his large scale take-over of the village. By this time he may well have begun to have grand designs inspired by his travels and enthusiasm for the art and ideal landscapes of Ancient Greece.

Frederick Stitt, whose study of "Shugborough. The End of a Village" is the source of the detailed information about the purchasing of property in the area, pointed out that the evidence suggested that Thomas had formed a plan for the estate well before George Anson set sail on the voyage that would make him wealthy between 1740 and 1744. Stitt suggests that the "new found wealth created the opportunity to indulge existing ambitions." Now the development of Shugborough can be put into the context of Thomas's unusual travels and interests it is possible to see that these ambitions were more inspired by cultural than a desire for wealth, power or ostentatious property.

The 1741 tax return shows that Thomas had acquired a quarter of the village property before he set off on his voyage to Egypt, which coincided with the start of George's great voyage which resulted in his capture of Spanish treasure and his circumnavigation.

The property acquired between 1731 and 1741 included some land away from the house, including, in 1737, Gillwicket Close, near Haywood Park. In 1739 he had acquired the houses near the millpond and was in occupancy of a property called The Leas.

These were patchy acquisitions but they suggest that the plan was to acquire the entire surrounding land and, ultimately, the whole of the vale stretching south of the house. The large scale purchasing began after Lord Anson suddenly found himself immensely wealthy, with more purchases between 1747 and 1756. There is no way of knowing whether Lord Anson's wealth would have contributed to the purchases. Even by 1747 his elder brother was an unmarried man in his 50s and so the idea that George might have children of his own and finally inherit Shugborough must have been in the air. After George married Elizabeth Yorke in 1748 he bought Moor Park, a very expensive property. His brother advised, says Lady Anson, on "combing", or improving, the grounds. George may have seen Moor Park as his permanent seat. It was a much grander place than Shugborough at that point.

Thomas was buying up property beyond the confines of the valley as early as 1750, particularly extensive estates in Staffordshire and Norfolk which he bought from the 1st Earl of Leicester who probably needed the money to pay for his massive house at Holkham.

Elizabeth Anson died childless in 1760 and George died in 1764 and all the wealth came unexpectedly to Thomas. From that date he was able to enlarge his house, build a grand house in London, and complete the expansion of the estate on a far larger scale than he could ever have anticipated in 1747

By 1773, the year of Thomas's death, most the most of the buildings on the land acquired had been demolished, but it would be wrong to see Thomas as a ruthless developer. The gradual removal of the village was a very different process compared to Lord Harcourt's demolition of a village simply for picturesque effect. The paintings of the park by Nicholas Dall show that some cottages and buildings remained in the late 1760s, visible around the Tower of Winds. These included a row of cottages which had been built new not long before the pictures were painted. These are marked as "Almshouses" on a 1771 plan, but there is no evidence that there was ever a charitable trust in existence to look after the poor and elderly in the village. Stitt wondered if Dall's pictures showed the views as they were intended to become rather than they actually were at the time, but the travel diary of the young Irish MP and lawyer John Parnell described the new cottages as they were in the summer of 1769.

Parnell found two rows of between 20 and 30 small but "very neat" brick houses with a "little street between them." Parnell thought these houses were for estate workers but he found that they were for "poor people who kept little huts bordering on...a common or hearth called Cank."

Parnell says these are the "first thing that strikes you on Entering the approach to his house" and that from the street of cottages you "enter a Plain low farm gate and drive on a gravel'd road open to the lawn" towards the house.

This can only mean that he arrived from the Lichfield Road past the present farm and that these cottages were, indeed, two rows quite close to the Tower of the Winds. Parnell is describing his arrival at the house and there is no reason to question the accuracy of his description, even though it may seem to disagree with Stitt's deductions.

Perhaps against the fashion of the day, rather than remove unsightly poor people from his landscape, Thomas had built new cottages in view of the house, very close to the Tower of the Winds, and had moved people into them from parts of the Chase that he was improving into "as fine a sheep walk as can be wished."

The village, including these new cottages, was demolished around 1800 by a later generation who had grander ideas, removing the more fanciful parts of the park and expanding the house from a villa to a stately home. The old village finally vanished, though the inhabitants were moved to well built new cottages in the nearby villages of Great and Little Haywood, most of which (part from "The Ring" between the two villages) still exist.

SOURCES

- 1) Frederick Stitt: Shugborough. The End of a Village (Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th Series Vol. 6)
- 2) Extracts from John Parnell's diaries from original in London School of Economics, anonymous transcription, William Salt Library, Stafford

The Death of Lord Scarbrough

Considering the scarcity of information that survives about Thomas Anson, apparently so unassuming and reticent, it is quite extraordinary that two of his friends included dramatic and significant anecdotes about him in their published works. In both cases a brief paragraph is enough to open up an entire chapter in his life and both mark what must have been pivotal moments that affected him intensely. It is curious and even haunting that both of these brief fragments contain, verbatim, Thomas's own words. It is almost as if he had passed on stories that must have affected his listeners deeply but which would only reveal their full significance to a future generation.

Erasmus Darwin tells of an extraordinarily dramatic event in Thomas Anson's life in his "Zoonomia", (1794-6). Darwin was part of the Lichfield literary set, not necessarily a group of people closely involved with the Ansons. Though he may have known Thomas over many years but their only recorded encounter was in the 1770s when the Lanthorn of Demosthenes, Shugborough's last monument, was being completed. It's likely that this story was told thirty years after the event and published another twenty years after that.

The anecdote is brief and Darwin attempts to keep its subject anonymous. There are no other references to the incident in the Shugborough archives and yet, because it refers to a notorious and shocking event it is possible to fill in the background of the story in detail from other contemporary accounts.

Darwin writes:

"Mr. Anson, the brother to the late Lord Anson related to me the following anecdote of the death of lord Sc-. His lordship sent to see Mr. Anson on the Monday preceding his death and said,

"You are the only friend I value in the world, I determined therefore to acquaint you, that I am tired of the insipidity of life, and intend to morrow to leave It."

Mr. Anson said after much conversation, that he was obliged to leave town till Friday, and added,

" As you profess a friendship for me, do me this last favour, I entreat you, live till I return."

Lord Sc- believed this to be a pious artifice to gain time, but nevertheless agreed, if he should return by four o'clock, on that day.

Mr. Anson did not return till five, and perceived by the countenances of the domestics, that the deed was done. He went into his chamber and found the corpse of his friend leaning over the arm of a great chair, with the pistol on the ground by him, the ball of which had been discharged into the roof of his mouth, and passed into his brain." (1)

Lord Sc- can very easily be identified. He was Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarborough, who committed suicide on January 29th 1740 (New Style).

The story as told here suggests that this must have been a shocking experience. Lord Scarbrough had sent for Thomas specifically to talk about his intention of committing suicide on the Monday. Thomas persuaded him to restrain himself until he returned to London on the Friday. Scarbrough agreed to wait. Thomas was delayed and Scarbrough shot himself only a short time before Thomas Anson finally arrived, only an hour later than he had promised.

Thomas Anson would have felt himself to be responsible. This would inevitably produce an appalling sense of guilt.

Richard Lord Scarbrough was born November 30th 1686. He was military man, and fought against the Jacobites in the first rebellion of 1715. He succeeded to the title in 1721, became Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, a Privy Counselor and Knight of the Garter and Master of the Horse in 1727. He very close to George II and trusted with negotiations with the Frederick Prince of Wales over the Prince's budget at a time when the Prince and King were not on speaking terms. Horace Walpole said he had wisdom but no wit. He was considered a man of honour and out of place in a frivolous age. He was a close friend of Lord Chesterfield, who, Walpole said, had wit but no wisdom.

"He had not," says Lord Chesterfield," the least pride of birth and rank; that common narrow notion of little minds..." (2)

Scarbrough visited Chesterfield on his last day, the Friday on which he shot himself:

"The morning of the day on which he accomplished this resolution, he paid a long visit to Lord Chesterfield, and opened himself to him with great earnestness on many subjects. As he appeared somewhat discomposed, his friend pressed him to stay and dine with him, which he refused, but tenderly embraced him at parting. It happened in the course of the conversation, that something was spoken of which related to Sir Wm. Temple's négociations, when the two friends not agreeing about the circumstances, Lord Chesterfield, whose memory was at all times remarkably good, referred Lord. S. to the page of Sir W.'s memoirs, where the matter was mentioned. After his lordship's death the book was found open at that very page, several other books being piled about him, with the pistol in his mouth ." (3)

"Lord Chesterfield and his world" by Samuel Shellabarger has this account, partially based on Horace Walpole:

"At eight o'clock on the evening of January 29 1740 Chesterfield was called suddenly from the House of Commons (where he been attending the debate on the Place Bill) with the news that Lord Scarbrough was dead or at the point of death from a stroke of apoplexy. He had had one or two previous attacks, so that the news could not have been altogether a surprise. But when Lord Chesterfield reached his house he found that the cause of death had not been apoplexy but suicide. Lord Scarbrough had ordered his chair for six o'clock in the evening to carry him to Lady Hervey's. When he failed to appear a valet entering the Earl's room discovered that he had put a

bullet into his head. He had spent that morning with Chesterfield discussing, among other matters, Lord Temple's negotiations.” (4)

Frances Countess of Hertford wrote another account of the events:

TO THE COUNTESS OF POMFRET.

Feb. 4th. 1740.

”The news will, before this time, have informed you of my lord Scarborough's death; but perhaps the tragical manner of it may yet be unknown to you. On the 30th of January he sent for my lord Delaware ; to whom he talked more than two hours, about a bill to be brought into the house of lords, to enable my lord Halifax to pay his sisters' fortunes. After which he sent to know whether my lord Essex dined at home; and upon hearing that he did not, he ordered a dinner in his own house, and appointed to meet my lord and lady Harvey, and lady Anne Frankland, at the duchess of Manchester's, to play at cards, at seven o'clock, at which time he ordered his chariot: but when his valet-de-chambre went up to let him know that it was come, he found him dead on the floor, with a pistol lying by him, which he had discharged in at his mouth. The balls were lodged in his brain, and had not penetrated his skull. Every thing was agreed on for his marriage, which was to have taken place very soon. It is said, that the duchess of Manchester's affliction, and that of lady Anne Frankland, are inexpressible.” (5)

Lady Anne Frankland was Lord Scarborough's daughter. Lady Hertford seems to be wrong about the date of the suicide. She writes January 30th when all other sources say January 29th. There are other slight differences in detail. Lady Hertford gives very precise information about Lord Scarborough's plans for later that day, his planned evening of cards at the Duchess of Manchester's. Lady Hertford's letter was written on the day of Lord Scarborough's funeral so she would have had time to have gathered all the information that was around and heard all the gossip. (8) The version in “Lord Chesterfield and his World” states he was going to Lady Hervey's, but Lady Hertford's letter is so detailed that it is seems convincing evidence.

It is interesting to put the evidence of Scarborough's last day together.

On the 30th (in fact 29th) of January he sent for "my lord Delaware ; to whom he talked more than two hours" (Lady Hertford).

On the 29th January Lord Scarborough had been to see Chesterfield. Chesterfield “*pressed him to stay and dine with him, which he refused, but tenderly embraced him at parting.*” (Walpole).

“...he ordered a dinner in his own house” and arranged to go to the Duchess of Manchester's at 7.00pm. He ordered his “chariot” for this time.” (Lady Hertford)

“Lord Scarborough had ordered his chair for six o'clock in the evening to carry him to Lady Hervey's (Horace Walpole)

“... but when his valet-de-chambre went up to let him know that it (the Chair or Carriage) was come, he found him dead on the floor” (Lady Hertford)

Thomas Anson says he returned at 5.00 on the Friday, an hour later than his appointment.

“He went into his chamber and found the corpse of his friend leaning over the arm of a great chair, with the pistol on the ground by him, the ball of which had been discharged into the roof of his mouth, and passed into his brain.” (Thomas Anson to Erasmus Darwin)

Whether Scarbrough planned to go to the Duchess of Manchester’s by carriage or Lady Hervey’s by chair (and Lady Hertford is probably more reliable than Walpole) the idea that Scarbrough had made it clear that had plans for the evening is a puzzling detail. Did Scarbrough make these plans in the hope or expectation that Thomas Anson would fulfil his appointment and save him from suicide? Scarbrough seems to have been a man of deep and melancholy honour. He may have held his promise to Anson as serious vow. He had promised Thomas Anson that if he came back by four o’clock that Friday he would abandon his plan of suicide and go out to play cards. As Anson did not return on time Scarbrough found himself obliged to stick to his vow.

This may seem a rather exaggerated code of honour but it is horribly credible. For such a character the thought that Anson would have known that he had broken his word would have been intolerable.

If this is the true interpretation Thomas’s guilt would have been entirely justified.

“ At eight o’clock on the evening of January 29 1740 Chesterfield was called suddenly from the House of Commons.” (Lord Chesterfield and his World.

Someone sent a message to the House of Commons – either a servant or could it have been Thomas Anson? – but this did not reach Chesterfield for two hours and he was the next on the scene, between two and three hours after the actual suicide, sometime after 8 o’clock.

The only inconsistency in these various points of view is the time when the valet found Scarbrough dead. Anson may have exaggerated the time to make it sound even more of a tragic narrow miss, arriving one hour too late, or the chair or carriage might have arrived early. The solution must be that Thomas arrived just after the chair had come and the valet had found Scarbrough dead, sometime between five and six.

The most mysterious feature of this story is that none of the reports of the incident mention Thomas Anson. And yet Scarbrough had called him:

“the only friend I value in the world.”

This is a remarkably three dimensional account of an incident 250 years ago. Though it seems to be startlingly clear what actually happened, and no doubt that it was devastating incident, several questions remain:

What was Thomas Anson's relationship with Scarborough?

Why did Lord Scarborough shoot himself?

The second of these may not have any bearing on the first. There are several possible answers and the truth may be a mixture of them all. Is it possible that one of these involved Thomas Anson in some way?

There are several different explanations of his suicidal mood –

1

An accident a few days before had affected his thinking.

This may be a simple invention to cover a more personal reason, though there are several hints of ill-health.

2

He was upset by political gossip.

“Richard (Lumley), second Earl of Scarborough. He killed himself in 1740, in consequence, as it is said, of having betrayed a state secret to the Duchess of Manchester, for which he was reproached by Sir Robert Walpole.” (6)

This theory certainly circulated at the time. A satirical pamphlet “A court secret” is supposed to have been inspired by this idea and it was said to be by George (later Lord) Lyttelton, later a friend of Thomas Anson's.

3

He was caught between his mistress and his fiancée.

No less a person than Voltaire tells this version, and adds an anecdote about Scarborough's character :

“The earl of Scarborough has lately quitted life with the same indifference as he did his place of master of the horse. Having been told in the house of lords that he ruled with the court, on account of the profitable post he held in it, My lords, said he, to convince you that my opinion is not influenced by any such consideration, I will instantly resign. He afterwards found himself perplexed between a mistress he was fond of, but to whom he was under no engagements, and a woman whom he esteemed, and to whom he had made a promise of marriage. My lord Scarborough, therefore, killed himself to get rid of difficulty.” (7)

4

He was embarrassed by scandal around his brother.

In his will Scarbrough disinherited his brother Thomas who was the object of a scandalous memoir by Con Phillips (probably ghost written by Paul Whitehead) published in 1749. Phillips claimed to have been raped at the age of 13 by a gentleman. Some interpreters assumed this was Lord Chesterfield but it seems to have been Thomas Lumley, later the third Earl. The book was dedicated to the 3rd Earl which threw people off the scent but it seems the dedication was a very dark kind of irony.(8)

The book was a scandalous best seller, even read by Elizabeth Carter:

Elizabeth Carter to Catherine Talbot

Deal, Dec 16th 1749

"I do not know whether you may think I am likely to profit much by Mrs. Phillips's but my evenings next week are to be employed in hearing it read. Most people here give it a high character."(9)

5

His daughter, Lady Anne, had been suffering in a disastrous marriage. Lady Hertford explains:

"Poor lady Anne Frankland is another topic of conversation; who is already parted from her husband, and, I think, without any one person giving her the least share of blame. It seems that he parted beds with her before she had been three weeks married, and on all occasions behaved towards her with the utmost cruelty. However, she made no complaint till he insisted on her leaving the house, when she begged of him not to force her to do that; and told him, that, provided he would allow her to have the sanction of being under his roof, she would submit to any thing. His answer was, that, if she continued there, he would either murder her or himself. She then applied to my lord Scarborough, who spoke to her husband with great warmth : he did not lay any fault to her charge, but only declared that she was his aversion, and persisted in the resolution of forcing her to leave him, or killing her or himself. It is said that he returns her fortune, allows her six hundred pounds a-year, and has given her a thousand pounds to buy a house. His strange conduct towards her has been so contrary to his former character, that his friends rather ascribe it to madness than his natural disposition." (10)

Several of these may play a part in his decision, though the words which Thomas Anson reported it imply simple ennui:

"I am tired of the insipidity of life, and intend to morrow to leave it."

In general descriptions of Scarbrough show someone out of place in the flippant and corrupt world of the 1740s. The sensitive and depressive mood may have run in the family as his father also committed suicide.

Thomas Anson's connection with Lord Scarbrough is still a mystery.

In 1740 Thomas Anson was a minor country land owner and a barrister. Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke, a protegee of the Ansons' uncle Lord Macclesfield, had become Lord Chancellor in 1737 and was closely associated with Lord Scarbrough at court. Thomas Anson may have had legal connections with the Lord Chancellor though there is no record at all of Anson's legal career. During the 1720s and 1730s he may have spent time abroad, but he may have continued a practising career as barrister, perhaps on the assize circuit, while in England. It is unlikely that Anson had any professional legal relationship with Scarbrough. As a barrister he would not have acted as a solicitor or legal advisor to a particular client.

The world of politics and the court was small, everyone knew everyone, but Thomas did not become an MP until 1747, and then only unwillingly. He does not seem to have moved in the high political world until after the dynastic marriage of Lord Anson and Elizabeth Yorke –and perhaps even then he was only a peripheral figure in such high society. All his visible social connections were intellectual or artistic.

Scarbrough's background was military, and that would seem to have no relevance to Thomas Anson's life. He was well known as the friend of Lord Chesterfield, *sobre chalk* to Chesterfield's frivolous *Cheese*, but Anson appears nowhere in Chesterfield's life either.

On the whole a legal connection may be the most likely but is there some other social world in which Anson and Scarbrough might overlap?

Scarbrough was not a member of the Royal Society. There is no sign that he had been a traveller. Sadly 18th century biographies rarely mention hobbies and pastimes. Scarbrough was, as were most of the leading aristocracy, a subscriber to Lord Middlesex's first attempt at an opera season which had involved many members of the Society of Dilettanti, but not Thomas Anson. There is, though, an indirect connection between Scarbrough and Anson which is worth examining very closely. Scarborough was the principal patron of Thomas Wright, the architect who is usually assumed to have transformed the house and landscape of Shugborough.

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(2) *The Annual register...for the year 1777* (Dodsley, 1794) Page 22. Available on Google books.

(3) *Ibid*

(4) Samuel Shellabarger: *Lord Chesterfield and his world* (Biblio-Moser, 1971)

(5) *Correspondence between Frances Countess of Hartford (afterwards Duchess of Somerset) and Henrietta Louisa, Countess of Pomfret between the years 1738 and 1741*. Vol. 1 (Richard Phillips, 1806) Available on Google Books.

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The Lure of the Exotic

In September 1740 George Anson set sail on what would become a round the world voyage. The intention behind this major expedition was to attack, and even capture, Spanish possessions in the South Atlantic. The squadron, led by Commodore Anson's "Centurion", consisted of eight ships and 1854 men. Only 188 of the crew returned. With such a loss of life the voyage could be seen as a disaster, but on the way Anson captured a Spanish treasure ship "Covadonga". In the 18th century, and into the 19th, officers and crew kept a proportion of their takings from captured enemy vessels. As a result Anson earned around £91,000. The seamen received a proportionately smaller amount, but even so it their rewards were equivalent to £20 or a year's wages.

Though George's voyage had been studied and written about over the years, including in a bestselling book immediately after his return, no one has previously noticed that Thomas set sail with his brother on the Centurion. He had no the intention of going with him in pursuit of the Spanish. He was, in effect, hitching a lift as the first part of his own voyage round the Mediterranean. Thomas parted from George and the Centurion at Cape Finisterre and continued his journey on a succession of other Royal Navy ships.

This expedition began only seven months after the death of Lord Scarbrough, who had shot himself on January 29th 1740 (New Style). Considering the overwhelming sense of guilt that anyone would feel after such an experience it seems reasonable to suggest that this voyage may have been influenced by Scarbrough's death. Could it have been a way of escaping the weight of guilt? It was far more than a holiday in the modern sense. Was it usual for a tourist to travel round the Mediterranean in navy ships - and at a time of war?

Anson was in Italy in the 1720s and in Asia Minor in 1734 but there may have been other equally adventurous unrecorded journeys. Fortunately a sketchy record of the 1740/1 trip survives.

There is a small leather pocket book in the Staffordshire Record Office which contains the barest of notes of his journey. (1) This is one of the very few documents in Thomas Anson's own handwriting. By chance there are also letters from the merchant Francis Congreve, a member of a Staffordshire family, who met Thomas in Cairo. Thomas's own notes give only dates of arrival at various ports, apart from some partly cryptic instruction on the first page.

*"Mr M to answer my Bills I draw upon him
Mr Lascelles Demd to be discharged at my Return if not disc'g by Mr Mytton.
Mr Mill(?) has orders to pay 75(£?) yearly of demd by a certain person purs.(?)"(1)*

Mr Mytton must be his long term friend James Mytton, with whom he travelled to Spa in the 1720s and who was still visiting Shugborough in the 1750s. He had probably been given responsibility for Thomas's business while he was away.

Mr Lascelles could be Henry Lascelles (1690-1753), one of an extensive Yorkshire family, who made a fortune through Barbados plantations and the slave trade. “To be discharged” suggests a loan from Thomas to Mr Lascelles that Thomas intended to cancel.

“Mr Mill?” is very hard to read and most likely is another reference to Mr Mytton. But who is the “certain person” who is to be paid £75 a year – a considerable amount of money in 1740, worth £8,600 today?

It sounds like there is someone Thomas is unwilling to name for whom he has responsibility, and an on-going one? Could there have been a woman (or man) involved? Could there have been an early unsuitable marriage? Blackmail? This is pure conjecture, but there is something odd here, and the air of mystery darkens if there is a connection between the voyage and the death of Lord Scarbrough.

One could ask who was supposed to see this note? The diary was, presumably, one he took with him, so the note seems to have been written as reminder to himself or as a sketch for a letter to his agents at home.

The only substantial piece of writing in the diary is less mysterious and suggests a practical purpose for the journey. It may be copied from a book or from notes from a gardener. It consists of instructions for the preservation of plants:

“Many sorts of Roots of Plants may with very little trouble be so ordered as to grow again when brought over & set tho’ after a long voyage, particularly those that are Bulbous, tuberous & Fleshy. Such as ye Roots of Tulips, of Lillies, Crocus’s. Onions, Garlicks, Squills, anemones, Potatos, yawns etc. These & all like Roots may be sent as early & safely as seeds if taken up out of ye Ground, & laid to dry till ye Ships come away & then only put in very dry Moss, Coton or Sand. Seeds to be well dry’d before put up & afterwards kept dry.” (2)

This is the earliest evidence of what must have become one of Thomas’s principal interests – gardening and botany. Though the landscape of Shugborough may be more memorable for its buildings, those follies were probably only a small part of an integrated landscape in which exotic planting was just as important. Later Thomas’s library would have a fine collection of books on foreign plants and several of his friends in later life, including Benjamin Stillingfleet and Thomas Pennant, were botanists.

Other travellers to the Middle East in the years just before this came back, like Dr Pocock, with ancient relics and artefacts, including a mummy. Presumably Anson came back with seeds and roots. This peaceful purpose contrasts dramatically with the motive for George Anson’s voyage. It is certainly strange that Thomas should have set off to look for exotic blooms at a time when travel in the region was extremely dangerous and English trade in the Levant was suffering as a result.

The details of the journey are minimal.

On September 13th 1740 he “came into Spithead from Torbay”, presumably on board the Centurion. The fleet gathered there and sailed on September 18th.

On 29th September Thomas:

“parted with Capt Anson about ten of ye Morning. 44 ½ Cape Finisterre being Se by E abt 45 leagues.”

He travelled on a series of Royal Navy ships, but there were pauses on land, including four days at Lisbon, sailing from there on October 7th, and 5 days on Gibraltar.

On November 20th Thomas “went on board the Roseby” which took him to Alexandria and up the Nile to Cairo where he arrived on December 5th.

Francis Congreve wrote from Cairo to his brother William in Minorca on 2nd January 1741. Thomas had left Cairo on 5th December according to his notes, though Congreve dated a letter to his brother, which he gave to Thomas to deliver, the 8th December.

“As the whole time of Mr Anson’s stay here has been nothing but hurry I am sure his goodness will excuse any deficit or omission on my part in not abandoning myself entirely to his services which his merit deserved had he made a longer stay or I been more leisure.” (3)

Congreve was unable to act as a guide to a possibly unexpected guest:

“I am sorry I could not, from the hurry of business which a ship from home always brings with her, attend him constantly in visiting of Curiosities of the Place.”

It is great pity that Thomas made no notes at all about the curiosities he saw. He could hardly have avoided the pyramids.

Congreve later wrote to his brother, eager for news from Minorca.

“I have not received any of your favours, my last was at 8 Dec by Mr Anson, who is gone to Aleppo, & promised to deliver my letter & a small bundle of Coffee for you to Capt Vincent of the St Albans Man of War who no doubt calls at Port Mahon with the Turkey Convoy.”

The coffee that Thomas took to Minorca took a long time to arrive as it was only on July 4th 1741 that Congreve was able to write to his brother:

“I am glad you had rec’d the Coffee by Mr Anson.”

On 28th January Congreve wrote to his brother:

“I had a very civil letter from Mr Anson in Cyprus, whence he was to depart the next day to Aleppo.”

Thomas’s log notes that he arrived at Cyprus, via Alexandria and Rosetta on December 25th. He stayed there until January 8th when he made a two week voyage to Scanderon, (Iskanderun, once Alexandretta) on the Turkish coast, from where he was to make an overland journey to Aleppo. It is hard to know why it should have taken

two weeks to travel from Cyprus to Iskanderun, but there are no intervening ports of call in the log.

He set out for Aleppo from “Scanderon” and arrived on January 26th for a three week stay. Aleppo was one of the three principal bases of the Levant Company, with Smyrna and Constantinople. It was one of the largest and most ancient cities in the Ottoman Empire, with a wealth of spectacular buildings and a population mixed races and faiths. Thomas returned to England, after delivering the package of coffeeto Minorca, in the Spring of 1741.

Though there was a British community involved with Levant trade in Turkey it was not a common destination for tourists. Beyond the major trade centres travel could be dangerous. Stuart and Revett ran into serious, life-threatening, trouble exploring Athens in the early 1750s. European travellers in Turkish lands were rare and liable to be taken for spies. Thomas Anson was a very rare tourist in 1734 on the trip which took him to Smyrna and Tenedos, and probably other unknown destinations. During the later 1730s a few adventurous, or simply reckless, travellers had followed him, notably Lord Sandwich, two years before Anson’s Egyptian trip, Francis Dashwood and more serious historians or early archaeologists like Dr Pococke.

John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, had travelled in the Levant between 1738 and 1739, returning to England at the age of only 21. His journey was far more than a young man’s grand tour. Most gentlemen went no further than Italy to get their experience of the world. Sandwich was an extraordinary adventurer, and a he was always a man of great energy and enthusiasm. After 1748, as First Lord of the Admiralty, he would become Thomas’s brother George Anson’s closest collaborator in the development of the Royal Navy.

He was, therefore, an enormously important figure in George Anson’s career after the Commodore, and Admiral to be, returned from his circumnavigation. It is intriguing that his association with Thomas predates his association with George.

Thomas’s travels in Italy had qualified him for membership of the Society of Dilettanti. His more exotic journeys allowed him to be a member of two other clubs, the Egyptian Society and the Divan Club, of both of which he was an active member.

Sandwich started the short-lived Egyptian Society in 1741. On 11th December he and his three other founder members, Dr Pococke. Dr Perry and the Danish explorer Capt. Norden, invited the antiquarian William Stukeley to join them in the new society. (4) The four founders had all travelled to Egypt. Stukeley was not well travelled, but he was a man with a passion for antiquity, constantly developing his theories about ancient civilisations, their religious beliefs and their archaeological remains.

Stukeley was particularly interested in the Druids, or his interpretation of Ancient British culture, an interest he shared with Dr Pococke. Other members drawn into the Egyptian Society included the Duke of Montagu and Martin Folkes.(5)

Folkes had known Pococke (who later described Thomas Wright's Irish buildings)at least as early as May 1734 when they had met in Italy. Pococke’s cousin, Jeremiah Milles, later to be Egyptian Society secretary, was there with him. (Both became

senior clergymen in Ireland). It is a possibility that Thomas Anson was also in Italy about that time as he was in Smyrna in September 1734, and he was certain to have visited Italy on the voyage out just as he was expected to visit the Armenian merchant's friends in Livorno on his journey home.

William Stukeley had certainly known Folkes for a long time. In 1720 he had written disapprovingly of Folkes and William Jones invitation to a meeting of an "Infidel Club." Presumably that group, if it ever existed, was a meeting of free thinkers of a general kind. Such clubs, sometimes informal gatherings, others, like John Byrom's Cabala Club with organised meetings, tend to merge into one another and share many of the same members in the 1720s to 1740s. The Egyptian Society seems to have gradually merged with the Divan Club.

The Egyptian Society began while Thomas was away on his expedition. Lord Sandwich was elected as Sheik, and the secretary, known as Reis Effendi was Jeremiah Milles until replaced by his cousin Dr Pococke. Thomas Anson was proposed for membership to the Society on 2nd April 1742, "as having been in Egypt". His signature is in the minute book in the British Library. (5)

In fact, while there is no evidence that Thomas had any interest in the Society of Dilettanti he is recorded as attending meetings of both the Egyptian Society and the Divan Club.

The Egyptian Club may have enjoyed exotic titles for its officers and perhaps an element of dressing up (which the Divan Club certainly did indulge in) but there was also a serious interest in antiquities. In view of Thomas's own interest in medals in his later life it is interesting that medals formed a particular interest in the Egyptian Society, with Martin Folkes being given a responsibility for inspecting Egyptian medals and part of the business of the Society was the engraving and printing of a catalogue of them. Dr Pocock "shewed the design of a copper plate for the series of Egyptian medals" at the meeting on 2nd April 1742 at which Thomas Anson was proposed for membership.

A feature of Egyptian Club meetings was a symbolic sistrum, the rattle held in representations of Isis, and this was to reappear a few years later in the Drawing Room at Shugborough. One of the roundels in the plaster ceiling shows Isis with her sistrum, undoubtedly referring to Thomas's Egyptian voyage, just another roundel shows Confucius as allusion to George Anson's visit to China on his circumnavigation.

The last meeting of the Club was 16th April 1743 by which time the Divan Club was already active.

The Divan Club was founded by Sir Francis Dashwood, who had also been one of the founder members of the Society of Dilettanti. He had travelled to Smyrna and Constantinople in 1738-9.

Membership was limited to people who had travelled "in the Sultan's dominions", the area ruled by Turkey, which would therefore be open to a wider range of travellers than the Egyptian Society.

Dashwood had his portrait painted by Knapton in fancy dress, as “Il faquir Dashwood Pasha” in about 1745.

The presence of Sir Francis Dashwood and the element of fancy dress might suggest that the Divan Club was another excuse for a party, and getting drunk, as Horace Walpole had suggested was the principal purpose of the Society of Dilettanti. There might have been an element of that, but it does appear that the members had a serious interest in travel.

Thomas did not sign up to the Divan Club until two years after the end of the Egyptian Society. He was elected on 1st March 1745 and attended seven meetings, acting once as “Reis effendi” or secretary.

His brother George Anson was also a member at the very end of the Club’s existence. He was proposed by Lord Sandwich and elected to the Divan Club 31st January 1746. He only attended three meetings

Among other members were Richard Owen Cambridge (whose father had been a “Turkey merchant”) who remained a friend until Thomas’s death, and a “Mr Wright” who may have been the architect Thomas Wright, though it is hard to imagine that Wright would have been very keen to travel as far as the Sultan’s Dominions. He suffered from sea sickness and his journeys by sea had been fairly disastrous.

Whether or not this Mr Wright was Thomas Wright there is a possibility that Thomas Anson could have known Wright through these clubs in the mid 1740s. Wright was certainly influenced by William Stukeley’s obsessions with the Druids as the keepers of ancient wisdom and his early career in London was dominated by the Earl of Pembroke and Roger Gale, colleagues of Stukeley in his expeditions to Stonehenge and Avebury. It is perfectly possible that Anson might have heard of Wright or met him through Stukeley at the Egyptian Society. What would his feelings have been if he had known that Wright’s patron had been Lord Scarbrough, for whose death Thomas had a disturbing responsibility?

Both the Egyptian Society and Divan Club were short lived, but they did bring together people who had an interest in both the contemporary world of the Ottoman Empire and ancient Egypt.

The last meeting of the Divan Club was held on 25 May 1746. Only three members attended. One of the last to join was Lord Coke, later Earl of Leicester, from whom Thomas Anson was to buy extensive estates in Norfolk after 1750, but Leicester’s letters to Anson in 1750 do not imply they had met before.

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(1) Staffordshire Record Office. Anson Papers. D615/P(S)/2/4

(2) Ibid

(3) Congreve letters - Staffs Record Office D1057/M/G/

(4) Stuart Piggott: William Stukeley. An eighteenth-century antiquary (Revised Edition) (Thames & Hudson 1985)

(5) The most detailed source for the Egyptian Society and Divan Club is by Rachel Finnegan: The Divan Club 1744-46 (EJOS IX, 2006, No 9 1-86 ISSN 0928-6802) available on: <http://www2.let.uu.nl/Solis/anpt/ejos/pdf9/Finnegan-V06.pdf>

The Jacobites

The only important series of surviving letters from Thomas Anson himself deal with a dramatic close-shave of history. Only two or three years before Shugborough became a beautiful oasis with its new gardens and landscape war came dangerously close. Thomas was at Shugborough in the winter of 1745 within a few hours ride of the approaching army of the Jacobites and Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

He kept his brother George informed of events, riding himself to Stone to hear news from Newcastle-under-Lyme, and sending agents up towards Ashbourne. The original letters are in the British Library. (1)

December 4th '45 Wednesday

Dear Brother

You will share my disappointment when I relate the sequel after your alarm of your midnight march and most positive assurances that the Rebels were at Newcastle. I went to Stone in the morning full of the battle I was to see and met Crowds of People coming back in great Consternation who cry'd out 'it was begun'. I heard no firing, when I came I found all the Troops in and about the Town upon heaps. I forc'd my way to the Duke's (Cumberland) Quarters where I learn'd that the Rebels were at Leek. Having been long tir'd to death I got home as fast as I could, and find the Rascals left Leek at one this morning and tis suppos'd will be at Derby tonight.

Shugborough, 7 December 1745

...the rebels yesterday marched out of Derby and lay at Ashburn and the adjacent villages. A person I sent to reconnoitre saw the whole body pass along a valley at the other side of Weaver Hills, the road to Newcastle or Leek.

The rebels exceed 7,000: 3,000 or 4,000 good troop, the rest rabble and boys. The Pretender's son marched at the head. He is something under 6 feet high, wears a plaid, walks well, speaks little, and was never seen to smile. My situation is still the same - between two fires.

Shugborough 9 December 1745

They marched out of Leek yesterday, and are probably returning by the same route they came. The rebels are greatly exasperated at their reception in Derby: their leader was observ'd to be much more gloomy than usual; their ladies wept; and their whole body marched out with visible dejection and despair. They have plundered and ravaged, murdered two or three people, and wounded others, so that their name is in horror and detestation. Their cruelty will probably increase, if they have time to exert it, which I fancy the Duke will not give them.

Shugborough 14th December 1745

The rebels marched out of Preston yesterday, our horse marched in that afternoon, and it was thought it would be up with them by noon today.

The threat of further war continued during the next few years and there were rumours of spies and plots into the 1750s. Lady Anson, George Anson's wife and daughter of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, was in a unique position to know what was happening in the political world and seems to have contacts within the Georgian secret service. Her brother, Colonel Joseph Yorke, was in Europe and an important source of intelligence for his father, the Lord Chancellor, and the government. Elizabeth Anson kept Thomas up to date with the Prince's movements, and, it seems, Thomas was in a position to report back to her about the Prince when he spent six weeks in Paris in June 1748.

"We hope very much from the Rondeur of your French Ministerial Friends; and I beg my account of the low state of Monarchy here, may not tempt you, or them, to send us over the young Gentleman, whose forlorn & neglected condition we heard of from you, with so much pleasure."(2)(June 28th 1748 – wrongly dated 1749 in the Staffs Record Office Catalogue)

The Prince had been in France and was still plotting, hoping a dynastic marriage with the daughter of Frederick the Great would give him wider support. His presence in France was an embarrassment at that time because of the negotiations of the Peace of Aix-La-Chapelle which would end the war between France and England. (3) Thomas was acting as a messenger or in some kind of official capacity in Paris and Versailles, though he was also making the excursion a long holiday with his friend James Mytton.

On 13th June 1749 Lady Anson writes to Thomas of "Mr Speaker's most magnificent Speech to his Majesty" which was "as long as a court sermon and went through everything that had been done this session." (Presumably Lady Anson was in the speaker's gallery, taking a close interest in the "Day's Entertainment."

He *"....represented the Bill for giving the Money to Mr Radcliffe's Children as a Money Bill, & it was accordingly passed as such. Mr. Radcliffe's master, the Young Pretender, after having been long lost has at last appeared at Venice, where he is now said to be, in the meantime great search has been made for him in France, where all Passengers upon some of the Great Roads have been stopped & examined."* (3)

Lord Hardwicke had presided over the trial of Charles Radclyffe, one of the Prince's closest friends and supporters and his condemnation to death and execution in 1746 was described by the old edition of the Dictionary of National Biography as a "gross miscarriage of justice". (4) As Radclyffe was a French citizen he should not have been tried as a British traitor. The government was making provision for Radclyffe's children.

The threat from the Prince, though it was increasingly only a threat in his own imagination, continued for several years. Almost incredibly he visited London himself in 1750 to meet potential supporters. In October 1750 he was reported to be in England yet again "in the heart of the kingdom, in the county of Stafford ." (5)

The Anson's attitude to Bonnie Prince Charlie seems straightforward, but James "Athenian" Stuart, whose name occasionally caused confusion on his travels, was a catholic, and may have been a Jacobite supporter. His principal patron, until his death in 1757, was James Dawkins, who was a fervent Jacobite at least until 1753 when he helped in the ongoing negotiations between Charles Edward Stuart and Frederick the Great. James Stuart lived in Dawkins' house after his return from his architectural expedition to Greece and he may still have been living in Dawkins' house when he first met Thomas Anson and became one of his closest friends.

SOURCES

- (1) The letters are quoted in full in - Captain S W C Pack CBE MSc ADC RN: Admiral Lord Anson (Cassell 1960)
- (2) Staffordshire Record Office. Anson Papers.D615 P (S)/1/3
- (3) Ibid
- (4) Dictionary of National Biography (DNB Online)
- (5) Andrew Lang: Pickle the spy. (Available on Google Books)

The Case for Wright

There seems to be something about Shugborough that suggests secrets, something lying under the surface, some idea that has been partly lost under the grandiose rebuilding of the end of the 18th century but still glimmers under the grass.

At the heart of the place is the Shepherds Monument with its relief of Poussin's Shepherds of Arcadia and a never explained inscription. Even without the inscription, often assumed to be some kind of cipher, the monument is a complicated and tantalising puzzle. Who designed it? When was it built? What does it mean? It will only be possible to suggest answers to these questions when all the evidence has been examined and as much as possible has been understood of the people involved and what their ideas and motives might have been.

In a series of *Country Life* articles in 1971 Eileen Harris suggested that the architect of the first wave of developments, the enlargements to the house, the gardens and the first group of monuments, was Thomas Wright of Durham. (1) This work was at least partly complete by August 1748 when Jemima and Philip Yorke visited. Harris later produced a catalogue of Thomas Wright's design work, including the various buildings at Shugborough, as an introduction to a lavish reproduction of his published designs for "Arbours and Grottoes" in 1979. (2)

It was the mysterious Shepherds Monument that caught her attention. The monument seems to have several elements - an inner arch of rusticated stone and an outer portico of rustic columns and roof. The outer columns and pediment are almost certainly the work James Stuart as an undated drawing in the British Museum matches the rustic columns exactly. (3) The inner arch is very similar in shape to an Arbour design by Wright published in his volume of "Arbours and Grottoes" in 1755. The basic form of this inner element is even more similar to a simple arbour or alcove included in a design for a garden for Badminton from 1750. (4) Though there was something puzzling and complicated about the monument, and though Stuart must have had a hand in it several years after the original garden designs were made, Harris proposed that the Shepherd's Monument was, at its heart, a work by Thomas Wright and that he had been the man who transformed Shugborough in 1748.

Thomas Wright is an extremely attractive and fascinating character and a small number of enthusiasts have explored different aspects of his life since Harris's article. His astronomical work has been republished and more of his landscapes have been rediscovered and restored, but there are volumes of manuscripts in Newcastle Public Library which have hardly been looked at. These contains poetry, notes on mythology and sketches for a Utopian fantasy "The Fortunate Islands".

Though Wright's authorship of the Shugborough work has been accepted for thirty years there has always been a question mark by it because of the complete lack of contemporary documentation, either in the Anson archives in Staffordshire or in Wright's own surviving notes.

Wright left a sketchy journal of his early life which gives an impression of his career as a tutor in London and country houses but the most illuminating record of his early life is the correspondence of the poet and translator Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot, also, by chance, an intimate friend of Elizabeth Yorke, later Lady Anson.

Elizabeth Carter was born in 1717, the daughter of a clergyman, Nicholas Carter, of Deal in Kent. She is known today as one of the first women writers to earn enough to live on independently through her work as a poet, and as the translator of Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher. Carter's translation became a surprise best seller, and from the 1750s she was the leading female intellectual of the "bluestocking" social circle led by Mrs Elizabeth Montagu. By the time she first met Wright she was already a published poet, writing for the Gentleman's Magazine. This is quite extraordinary for a woman of only twenty, mixing with London literary and scientific society.

It's also quite extraordinary that this was a young woman, a daughter of a clergyman, who had studied Plato. She wrote, in a poem to her friend Miss Lynch:

*"To calm Philosophy I next retire,
And seek the joys her sacred arts inspire,
Renounce the frolics of unthinking youth,
To court the more engaging charms of Truth :
With Plato soar on Contemplation's wing,
And trace perfection to th' eternal spring:
Observe the vital emanations flow,
That animate each fair degree below :
Whence Order, Elegance, and Beauty move
Each finer sense, that tunes the mind to love;
Whence all that harmony and fire that join,
To form a temper, and a soul like thine."*

This could hardly be more Platonic, particularly the lines:

*"Observe the vital emanations flow,
That animate each fair degree below..."*

Another of Elizabeth Carter's poems to Miss Lynch, from 1744, refers to the myth of the two Venuses from Plato's Symposium:

*"With mystic sense, the poet's tuneful tongue
Of Urania's birth in glitt'ring fiction sung."*

And, again, directly praises Plato:

*What shining visions rose on Plato's thought!
While by the Muses gently winding flood ,
His searching fancy trac'd the sov'reign good ! -
The laurell'd Sisters touch'd the vocal lyre,
And Wisdom's goddess led their tuneful choir.*

So Elizabeth Carter, in her early twenties, had studied Plato's "Symposium", his discussion of love, principally between men, in depth. Was this a normal part of a young lady's education at the time? Even a hundred years later it could be considered a rather suspect book. Presumably Miss Lynch understood the Platonic meaning of these poems. She lived in Canterbury and would have met Thomas Wright when he stayed with the Carters in Deal in August 1741. Carter wrote to her friend Mrs Underdown 9th February 1742:

"Oh dear! Now I talk of hearing & seeing, Miss Lynch & I have clubb'd our wits to compose the strangest Letter that ever was seen or heard of to puzzle Endymion. Do not say any thing about it for tis a great Mystery but we will show it to you when you come here.

Miss Lynch & I lie & talk of a night till we fall fast asleep with a Sentence in our mouth & wake half choked with it next Morning."

"Endymion" was Thomas Wright.

Wright, who was born in 1711, came from a quite different place and social background. He was the son of a yeoman carpenter in Durham who, by sheer force of personality, found his way into high society as a teacher of mathematical subjects to young ladies.

It is not known how Carter met Wright. She seems to have been a friend rather than a student. He introduced her to the mysterious world of scientists and philosophers. She wrote to her friend Mrs Underdown on June 23rd 1738:

"I have lately met with much pleasure in the acquaintance of Mr Wright a great mathematician & a very ingenious and good natured Man. He has introduced me to Dr Desaguliers & I have two or 3 times been at his House which is the strangest looking place I ever beheld & appears very much like the Abode of a Wizard. The Company that frequents it is equally singular consisting chiefly of a set of queer looking people called Philosophers."(5)

Carter's extensive correspondence with Wright was lost in the 19th century – a tragedy as it might have explained so many mysteries. It was Wright who introduced Carter to his student Catherine Talbot, which led to a fascinating and entertaining correspondence which was published after Carter's death by her nephew. The introduction of Carter to Talbot led in turn to Carter's most important work, her translation of the works of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus.

Wright developed visionary ideas and his main vocation was cosmology, and attempting to explain his view of the immensity of space and its infinite galaxies. Carter knew Wright's theories. She wrote a poem in his honour, addressing him as "Endymion". It was published in the Gentleman's Magazine in the same month, June 1738.

*"WHILE clear the night, and ev'ry thought serene,
Let Fancy wander o'er the solemn scene:*

*And, wing'd by active Contemplation, rise
Amidst the radiant wonders of the skies...*

*“Where ev'ry star that gilds the gloom of night
With the faint tremblings of a distant light,
Perhaps illumines some system of its own
With the strong influence of a radiant sun.”(6)*

The first version of the poem ends with the lines:

“All view the happy talents with delight

That form a Desaguliers or a Wright.”

Wright visited Carter at her home in Deal and they planned a “romantic voyage to the Goodwin sands” - and yet Wright scarcely mentions her name in his Journal. There are hints in the Carter/Talbot correspondence that one of the incentives for Wright to travel to Ireland in 1746 was to get away from Elizabeth Carter whom he had upset in some way.

Eileen Harris pointed out some specific details of design in support of her identification – for example a feature of plaster work that matched drawings for Wright’s only major house design, Nuthall Temple, built about seven years later. But would Wright, if he worked at Shugborough, have been responsible for the design of plasterwork? There is no reason to doubt Philip Yorke’s comment in one of his letters that the plaster was by Vassalli, a very busy artists in the Midlands. On the other hand Wright did, it seem, design that kind of detail at Nuthall. There was also, now gone, a bow window on the north front, which Jemima Grey thought was “ridiculous”, but bow windows were a typical feature of Wright’s architecture. He designed one for Tollymore in Ireland (which would have been designed in 1747 but actually built after Wright’s visit there) and for his own house at Byers Green, Durham. Wright explained that the bow window was designed to catch the movement of the sun. In his own house, at least, it was part of the cosmological scheme of the design.

On the whole the Wrightian landscape has a characteristic mood – a playful and fanciful mixture of different styles – Gothic, classical and Chinese. At Shugborough there was a very good reason for this eclecticism – to reflect Admiral Anson’s circumnavigation but also, and just as much, Thomas Anson’s travels and interest in other cultures. Wright’s Irish work, designed but not necessarily built during his tour in 1746-7, has a similar mixture. Dr Pococke (the mummy collecting member of the Egyptian Society) described Dundalk House in 1752:

“...a walk with elm hedges on each side, an artificial serpentine river, a Chinese bridge, a thatch'd open house supported by the bodies of fire trees...”

At Tollymore House Pococke saw

“a thatched open pavilion, a Gothic Watergate over a canal, a cascade, a barn, a hermitage, a Barbican gate and a folly.”(7)

Thatched or Root Houses were another typical feature of Wright's eccentric and eclectic landscapes. There is no evidence that there was ever such a thing at Shugborough though it has been suggested without any real evidence that there may have been one on the island behind the Chinese House. There was certainly one at Wrest, a garden with a very close relationship with Shugborough which parallels the close family relationship of the Yorkes and Ansons. This example at Wrest was built soon after the developments at Shugborough. Ideas were passed from family to family and imitated in a friendly rivalry. There may well have been other features in the landscape that were never mentioned in letters at the time and have since vanished. It is very significant that the Shepherds Monument, which seems now the most unusual and most tantalising of the features of the gardens is not mentioned in any letter or diary until more than eight years after the first developments.

A building that feels, though this is hardly firm evidence, closest to the mood of Shugborough is the Menagerie at Horton, near Northampton, the only complete house by Wright that survives. This has a plaster ceiling scheme that certainly reflects Wright's ideas, his cosmological and symbolic interests, showing Father Time, the sun, and the signs of the zodiac. The overall mood of the Menagerie, beautifully restored by the late Gervase Jackson-Stops and occasionally open to the public, matches very closely the eccentric and cosy feel of the library at Shugborough, with its plasterwork of the liberal arts and Greek philosophers and writers. The library certainly belongs to the first period of development and if it could be judged on this similarity of mood alone it would happily be ascribed to Thomas Wright. His own descriptions of his own villa at Byers Green suggest that his own house, with its cosmological decorations and bay windows, was a sister to the Menagerie and the modest villa that Thomas Anson's old William and Mary house had been transformed into.

No one has ever suggested any other candidate for the first developments at Shugborough. The only person for whom a case could (and perhaps should) be argued is Sanderson Miller. Miller worked at Hagley from 1749 onwards. From about this time at least Hagley and Shugborough were close relations. The Ansons were regular visitors to Lord Lyttelton, who was one of the bluestocking cultural circle around Elizabeth Montagu, an enthusiastic supporter of Elizabeth Carter and James Harris. Miller's list of work includes some "advice" at Shugborough, in 1749, for the Classical Ruin on the far side of the river, and 1752, which may have been connected with the pagoda.

Wright, according to George Mason,

" understood drawing, and sketched plans of his designs; but never contracted for work." (8)

Miller would have organised the construction from Wright's plans, just as he was responsible of the construction of Stuart's Doric Temple at Hagley.

Lady Anson's mentions Miller's design for a gothic ruin for Lord Hardwicke at

Wimpole Hall in a letter of 1750. He may have had a role in the gardens at Wroxton, roughly contemporary with Shugborough, which also included Chinese and Gothic features and a canal – but which lacks the lightness of touch of Wright’s projects.

An attribution of Shugborough to Wright is completely reasonable and to anyone who gets to know his character it seems to belong to him. And yet -

Why is there no documentary proof of Wright’s work at Shugborough?

Of course the historical record is sketchy for most of his career, but there are mentions of his relationship with the Yorkes at Wrest Park. Catherine Talbot mentions his praises of Wrest in a letter to Elizabeth Carter in 1745. There is, in fact, one mention of Wright in a letter from Lady Anson to Jemima Grey at Wrest, but she refers to “your Mr Wright” as the designer of a room at Stoke Gifford, Wright’s base between 1750 and his retirement to his home village of Byers Green, County Durham

Wright’s “Early Journal” (9) gives an outline of his work before his visit to Ireland in 1746/7 and has added notes of his later travels and important projects – but with no mention of Shugborough. If all the evidence of his career, including other references to his architecture and the Carter/Talbot correspondence, is assembled into a chronology a very clear gap is revealed. This is the period between his trip to Ireland in 1746-7 and a meeting with Elizabeth Carter in 1748.

This is precisely the period in which the Shugborough work must have been done.

This is tantalising.

One step towards understanding what might have been going on at Shugborough is to look at Wright’s architectural career as a whole.

There is a very revealing letter written to Wright by Rev. Spencer Cowper in 1753. Wright had spent Christmas 1745 at the home of Spencer Cowper in Canterbury, in the company of Elizabeth Carter and other young ladies. Cowper continued to be Wright’s friend in his retirement as Cowper became Dean of Durham. On 11th November 1753 Spencer Cowper wrote to Wright:

“I am sorry the stars have used you ill...You certainly have now a more ready way to get at the favour of the Great than by your celestial knowledge. Your display of that was but laying a lane before them which contracted all their greatness into an atom; it is true it magnified their Creator – but what is that to them? Now you lay before them their own greatness, and what is really the fruit of your genius shall here after be shown as the contrivance and art of the great proprietor.”(10)

(This letter is often quoted as being from the poet William Cowper. The error was made in a 19th century edition of the poet’s letters.)

Cowper writes “Now you lay before them their own greatness”, through his architectural embellishments of their estates and landscapes, in contrast to his teaching of astronomy which made them seem insignificant in comparison with the infinite universe. As Cowper had known Wright since 1745 this does suggest that

Wright had only seriously thought of following a career as an architect not long before 1753.

Looking closely at Wright's known work there is a possibility that his architecture only in fact began with his Irish trip, in 1746-7 in which he produced drawings principally for Lord Limerick, great-uncle of Lady Grey, closely followed by work at Shugborough and then Wrest.

Eileen Harris's catalogue includes several earlier projects which may not be by Wright at all.

Harris includes a garden plan of Culford Park, seat of Earl Cornwallis, drawn in 1742. This may not be a design for a garden but a piece of cartography. Wright taught Cornwallis's daughters (and son), and surveying was one of his topics, along with Geometry, Architecture, Perspective, Opticks etc.

Wright drew a frontage for the Duchess of Kent's house at Old Windsor in 1743. This may have been an early architectural project. Harris's catalogue lists a Doric Temple at Blickling Hall in 1744. If this is by Wright it would be his first complete building. There is a drawing of this by Wright in the Avery manuscripts, the group of his drawings now in America, but it may be a drawing of an existing building rather than an original design. If it is his design it is an uncharacteristically classical structure.

The only other Wright drawings that date from before the Irish tour are of gardens at Cassiobury, Hertfordshire, the home of the Earl of Essex, brother in law of Wright's long lasting patron Alan Brodrick, Lord Middleton. These may not be designs but drawings of existing features. Wright was a very good draughtsman. His drawings can be very fine indeed, particularly the detailed and beautiful work in Arbours & Grottoes. He was known as an artist and teacher to his students.

Catherine Talbot implied that Wright went to Ireland because he had upset Elizabeth Carter, perhaps in some romantic way. There could be some truth in this. His Journal says he "resolv'd upon a strong invitation" to go. The purpose of the invitation from Lord Limerick was to explore Irish antiquities for "Louthiana", a study of Irish antiquities which was published in 1748. A sequel remained unpublished.

The antiquarian interest was a by-product of Wright's cosmology. He had explored Stonehenge while at Wilton with Lord Pembroke. Both Pembroke and Wright's "best friend in London" Roger Gale were associates of William Stukely and had surveyed Stonehenge and Avebury with him. To Stukeley the great neolithic temples were

cosmological and the idea of ancient and lost knowledge of the universe preserved in these ruins became a life long obsession for Wright, particularly in his fragmentary Utopian text "The Fortunate Islands." (11) Though the inspiration may have been fanciful Wright's description of New Grange, Ireland's most important ancient site, is a valuable record of how it appeared before it was spectacularly restored in the 20th century.

Wright was, indeed, only at Tollymore for nine days, but he left drawings that were used many years later. His Dundalk work could have occupied a lengthier stay.

The work Wright would have been involved in at Shugborough was a step forward from the Irish designs. It was an integrated remodelling of a plain house into a fairly modest Gentleman's villa. It may have had features that made it seem a shrine to Lord Anson and his voyage but the house is designed to suit the taste and interests of Thomas Anson, as a cultured bachelor. It cannot have been the result of a quick visit.

At Shugborough the rebuilding of the house would have needed investigation into the original structure, the design of the two "kiosks" or small wings for the Drawing Room and Library, and work in partnership with artists and plasterers. Overall there is no doubt that the scheme of decoration is to Thomas Anson's specification.

Wright's additions may have been designed during one visit but they were not all completed at the time. Some things probably sketched at that time were built later – certainly the Cat's Monument and Pagoda.

Another aspect of the Shugborough project which has not been examined in detail is the elaborate water features. There were lakes on two levels and a cascade between them falling through a Palladian Bridge, a typical Wrightian feature. These must have required elaborate planning and major structural work. This combination of bridge and cascade is another feature that echos the landscape at Tolleymore.

Lady Grey's visit in August 1748 fixes the date by which time the extensions to the house were ready. By this time it is likely that some of the landscape features were in place - the Chinese House (from Piercy Brett drawings) and its associated island and Chinese Bridges; the gardens re-laid, with serpentine paths to add a more romantic feature to old formal gardens; the gothic ruins and pigeon house. Though there is no reason to doubt Piercy Brett's contribution to the Chinese House the Chinese Bridges which were probably by Wright, matching the Chinese Bridge which Pococke saw at Dundalk House.

Another absolutely vital element of this scheme that has not been examined in detail until very recently, thanks to an inspired head gardener, Joe Hawkins, is the fact that the 1747-8 plan must have involved planting and gardening – integrating Thomas Anson's interest in exotic plants. John Parnell mentioned oriental planting in the journal of his visit in 1769.

After 1748 Wright became renowned for planting. He went to Stoke Park when Norborne Berkeley had already begun his landscape work but at Stoke planting was far more significant than follies or other structures. Where did Wright gather his experience? To George Mason the expertise in planting was Wright's principal skill.

If we accept, for the sake of the argument, that Shugborough is Wright's project, and that at this time Wright only made designs for patrons who supported him in his other work, we can then ask why and how did he come to work for Thomas Anson.

The only clue, and it seems to be a very significant one, is the last letter to Catherine Talbot in which Elizabeth Carter describes meeting Wright.

She writes to Catherine Talbot from her uncle's home in Enfield on June 14th 1748, two months before Lady Grey wrote describing the new work at Shugborough:

“After a week of constant hurry of visiting and company, we came on Thursday to this place, where we spend our time more quietly, Mr. Wright is with us, and a clever lively woman who talks excellent French, but they depart to-day. I forgot to tell you, the Monday before we left town Mrs. Darby and I drank tea with Mr. Wright, Miss Ward was to have been of the party, but was engaged before I could let her know it, so to be sure there is a spell set against her going there as well as your's. He shewed us all manner of worlds, and I believe Mrs. Talbot and you would have been pleased with his system of the universe, which is founded upon an hypothesis amazingly grand.” (12)

This must refer to Wright’s last scientific, cosmological publication – the final published form of the cosmology on which he had been working since he first came to London. Wright “shewed” Carter “all manner of worlds”. These may have been older illustrations but Carter had been in touch with him throughout his career and would have been familiar with his earlier work. It is more likely to imply that he had produced all or part of the many elaborate illustrations for his culminating work - multiple universes surrounding the “Eye of Providence”, tracks of comets and “a Partial view of Immensity.” She writes that it was something new and “amazingly grand.” This was in June 1748. The book was printed in 1750, the same two year span as lay between the completion of Louthiana (actually written in 1746) and its publication in 1748.

In other words the preparation of the book took place in the missing year, between July 1747 and June 1748. Carter’s letter to Wright is dated the day after a letter from Lady Anson to Thomas in Paris where he has gone for six weeks on government business. It is intriguing that Wright has returned to London, after being unseen for two years, at the same time as Thomas Anson has left for Paris.

Whether or not Wright and Anson were at Shugborough until that coincidence of dates there is a strong possibility that the work on “An Original Theory” was done at the same time as the work at Shugborough.

Could there be a connection between the “An Original Theory” and Shugborough?

The only sure point of contact between Thomas Wright and Thomas Anson’s lives is the axis on which the whole solution turns – Lord Scarbrough.

Scarbrough was Wright’s first and most important patron. After unsuccessful and foolhardy attempts to set himself up as teacher Wright had the good luck to meet Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarbrough at the home of Rev. Daniel Newcombe in Durham. Wright must have made a remarkably strong impression of Scarbrough, apparently a very serious minded man, as he brought Wright to London and introduced him to the Lords of the Admiralty. Wright mentions Sir Charles Wager and Sir Thomas Franklin. They gave their support for the publication of Wright’s Pannauticon, a navigational system. This was in 1734 when Wright was only 23.

Lord Scarbrough obtained permission for a dedication to the King and recommended him to the 9th Earl of Pembroke. Through Lord Baltimore, another Admiralty Lord, Wright was introduced to Frederick Prince of Wales.

In 1735 the Earl of Pembroke also became a patron and Wright was given the use of his library and had visits to Wilton. He also met the antiquary Roger Gale, who Wright calls his best friend in London. Pembroke and Gale were both associates of William Stukeley and this must be where Wright's interest in ancient antiquities, and in Druids in particular, comes from.

Wright's relationship with Scarbrough continued in spite of these other important supporters.

In 1739 Wright noted in his Journal that he gave Lord Scarbrough a "private lecture". This coincided with a period in which he was developing his "Elements of Existence", a step towards his grand cosmology. Wright's vision of the multiple universe continued, in various forms, throughout his life. It was his main obsession, and it was this which must have made him strange but impressive, rather than his enthusiasm as an unconventional teacher of mathematics. To Elizabeth Carter he was "your conjureship." This was the kind of person who inspired Lord Scarbrough back in Durham in 1733.

Scarbrough died in January 1740. Wright makes no mention of this catastrophe in his Journal.

There are many ways in which Thomas Anson might have become aware of Wright.

He might have heard of him from William Stukeley at the Egyptian Society. He might have known of Wright through Philip Yorke and Jemima Grey but he would not have known him as an architect. Anson may have known Wright in London through his teaching work in the winter season rather than through Wrest Park. Wright had stayed at Wrest several times in the 1730s, even more with the Duchess of Kent, Jemima Grey's grandmother, at Old Windsor, but, though his journal mentions an invitation to Wrest in 1745 there is no sign he went. That summer Catherine Talbot was there but did not mention him in her letters or journal. The evidence suggests that Wright only returned to Wrest to design garden improvements after 1748.

It would be very surprising indeed if Wright were not occasionally a visitor to the Yorke family's London home, Powis House. If he were so welcome at the country seat in the summer, why not in London where he could have been very well known to Thomas Anson.

Certainly there were the close links with the Greys, but he could have known Wright at any time from 1734 onwards. He may have kept up a friendship with Alan Brodrick, Lord Middleton. Wright stayed many times with Middleton at Peper Harow. Middleton's wife's niece and Wright's student at Peper Harow, Lady Charlotte Capell, married Thomas Villiers, Viscount Hyde and later Earl of Clarendon in 1752. Villiers stayed at Shugborough in 1752 and a few years later became one of Stuart's earliest patrons. It was a very small world.

Anson may have met Wright through Lord Scarbrough himself – the man who had called Anson "*the only friend I value in the world.*" If there was any evidence at all to explain Anson and Scarbrough's friendship it might shed light on this, but the actual

circumstances in which Anson could have met Wright makes no difference to the case.

The solution for Wright's involvement at Shugborough, surely, is that Thomas Anson was taking the place of Lord Scarborough,

The suicide drama was still on Anson's mind thirty years or so later when he told the story to James Harris. His actual emotions are hard to guess but it would be hard not to feel a sense of responsibility as Scarbrough had waited for Anson and then kept his word – and shot himself.

If Thomas Anson knew of Wright's connection with Scarbrough, whenever he may have discovered it, the idea of Anson taking over Scarbrough's patronage might easily have arisen. It would be a small way of salving the guilt, or repaying a debt of friendship.

If this is so Anson's offer of patronage would have had nothing to do with architecture. It would have been patronage of Wright's cosmological work – which climaxed with “An Original Theory”, published in 1750 but prepared enough for Elizabeth Carter to be told about it in June 1748.

Could it be there is a parallel with Wright's Irish journey in which the main focus was work on “Louthiana” and the architecture was a gift to his patrons? Perhaps Anson was supporting the completion of “An Original Theory” and, at the same time, was able to work with Wright on the developments at Shugborough?

It seems to be an irresistible conclusion. The extraordinary force of honour, guilt, and responsibility that came from the Scarbrough tragedy would explain the mystery and secrecy that has lasted two hundred and fifty years.

“An Original Theory of the Universe”, of 1750, was Wright's most important publication. George Anson was a subscriber to the book, as were the Lord Chancellor, Lord Hardwicke, Marchioness Grey and the Earl of Pembroke as well as his new patron, from 1749, Norborne Berkeley as his sister the Duchess of Beaufort. Thomas Anson is not listed, and, surprisingly for such an important work, there is no dedication. If “An Original Theory” had been supported by Thomas Anson in memory of Lord Scarborough this is easy to understand.

The Preface explains that the intention of the book:

“The author of the following Letters having been flattered into a Belief, that they may probably prove of some Use, or at least Amusement to the World, he has ventured to give them, at the request of his Friends, to the Publick. His chief Design will be found an Attempt towards solving the Phaenomena of the Via Lactea, and in consequence of that Solution, the framing of a regular and rational Theory of the known Universe.”

The “request of his Friends” is interesting. These must include Elizabeth Carter as well as his patrons and students – all those who knew him as the cosmological visionary. Knowing Wright's wild spelling and “coptic” handwriting (as Carter described it) one wonders if Elizabeth Carter helped him turn his sketches into correct

English between 1748 and the publication. He would have needed an editor. She is not one of the subscribers.

The “amazingly grand” hypothesis may seem a large claim, but it was a bold step to talk not of the solar system but of an infinite universe composed of galaxies whose every star, as Carter wrote,

“Perhaps illumines some system of its own”

Wright’s major claim to fame as an astronomer is his explanation of the Milky Way - that what we see as a river of stars is a galaxy seen from our position on its far edge. The idea was taken up in Europe by Immanuel Kant, though not quite as Wright had explained it. Kant saw the reality of the galaxy more correctly than Wright had actually explained it, but Wright had opened up astronomy into considerations of patterns and structures far vaster than our solar system

The book is in the stylised format of a series of letters to an imaginary friend.

“Sir,

Reflecting upon the agreeable Conversation of our last Meeting, which you may remember turned upon the Stars...”

Who did Wright picture in his mind when he wrote these words? Lord Scarbrough? Lord Pembroke? Miss Carter? Thomas Anson? All of these?

The most distinctively Wrightian section of the book, which features some spectacular prints, is his description of the many alternative world which make up the universe. These are complete universes, all centering on their own centre marked by an individual “Eye of Providence”, and all circling a single divine centre of the whole cosmos.

Wright believed in reincarnation. He refuses to believe a perfect universe can include damnation, so souls are reborn in better or worse universes, nearer or further from the divine centre:

“Here and here alone centr’d in the Realms of inexpressible Glory, we justly may imagine that primogenial Globe or Sphere of all Perfections, subject to the Extreme of neither Cold nor Heat, of Temperance and Duration. Here we may not irrationally suppose the Vertues of the meritorious are at last rewarded and received into the full possession of every Happiness, and to perfect Joy. The final and immortal State ordain’d for such human Beings, as have passed this Vortex of Probation thro’ all the Degrees of human Nature with the supreme Applause!”

Wright’s Cosmology is inseparable from his landscape design, or, perhaps more truthfully, his landscape design and architecture is always subservient to his cosmology. He describes the infinite range of alternative universes:

“Here a group of Worlds, all Vallies, Lakes and Rivers, adorn’d with Mountains, Woods and Lawns, Cascades and natural Fountains; there Worlds all fertile islands,

cover'd with Woods, perhaps upon a common Sea and filled with Grottoes and romantick caves. This Way, Worlds all earths, with vast extensive lawns and Vistoes, bounded with perpetual Greens all interspersed with Groves and Wildernesses, full of all Varieties of Fruits and Flowers. That World perhaps subsisting by soft Rains, this by daily Dews, and Vapours; and a third by a central, subtle Moisture, arising like an Effluvia, through the Pores and Veins of the Earth.....

“Round some, perhaps, so dense an atmosphere, that the inhabitants may fly from Place to Place, or be drawn through the Air in winged Chariots, and even sleep upon the Waves with safety....

“And hence it is obvious, that there may not be a Scene of Joy, which poetry can paint, or Religion promise, but somewhere in the Universe it is prepared for the meritorious Part of Mankind. Thus all Infinity is full of States of Bliss, Angelic Choirs, Regions of Heroes, and Realms of Demi-Gods; Elysian Fields, Pindaric Shades, and Myriads of enchanting Mansions.”

At Shugborough he helped create Elysian Fields and an Incharnted Mansion in the centre of England – in Staffordshire. This extraordinary mystery and its possible solution suggest that this visionary, unorthodox and slightly crazy book might have been completed amongst those same Elysian Fields.

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Shugborough Transformed

Doctor Sneyd Davies (Rector of Kingsland, Herefordshire and resident as a Canon at Lichfield in the 1750s) visited Shugborough in 1750 and wrote his impressions:

“Mr. Anson's—a beautiful house and river; grounds well disposed; Chinese buildings and bridges; a church-like pigeon-house; excellent modern ruins. — He has erected a pile of broken arches, and of imperfect pillars, to counterfeit the remains of antiquity.—The architect could not perform his part satisfactorily without finishing the whole. Then comes Mr. Anson with axes and chissels to demolish as much of it as taste and judgment claimed; and this without affectation, for he is very disciplined, grave, and sensible.

“Of all that I have yet seen, and I have seen almost every thing, Mr. Anson's place captivates the most. It has the happiest and the most graceful union of Grecian taste and of Oriental magnificence, particularly one room.—I find it thus delineated upon my tablets.” (1)

(This implies Sneyd Davies had included a drawing with his letter. Was it of the library?)

“As we meet him frequently upon visits at other houses, I look upon his peep at Kingsland as a lucky circumstance, from the marked notice which he takes of me”

The same Dr Sneyd Davies wrote an elegy for Admiral Anson (after 1762) which alludes to the Shepherds Monument – “Reason's finger pointing to the tomb.”

What kind of country seat was the remodelled Shugborough? One suited for the entertainment of important people and political neighbours, perhaps – but they would tend to be neighbours rather than passing celebrities. Staffordshire was two or three days journey from London. Far more probable is that Shugborough was to be place of retirement, a place to pursue his artistic interests, and, at the same time, a suitable place for brother his sister-in-law to visit (though the letters that survive suggest that Lady Anson always visited alone when her husband was occupied with naval business or war. It always has to be remembered, too, it was a place for his unmarried sisters to live.

A later visitor, John Parnell wrote:

“I must hasten to describe a Place I never heard of before last night and yet in my opinion Deserves to be accounted one of the finest improvements in England. I mean Mr Ansons.”(2)

Even in 1769 when the house had been further extended by Stuart it was far from grandiose:

“...a convenient moderate siz'd Brick mansion to which...he added two wings and raised the center a story and Plaisterd ot stuccoed the whole to give it the air of a uniform stone Building.”

In fact the alterations to the house in 1747/8 were modest – a new drawing room for social events (now the dining room), with a bedroom attached, no doubt for the grand visitors, and a wonderfully comfortable and cosy gentleman's library and sitting room.

“The house has some Rooms vastly neatly fitted up tho not Large the Library side of the House very Elegant, the cornices are particularly neat a la grec and the ceiling finished in a very pretty taste.”

Lady Grey and her husband Philip Yorke were the first visitors to leave any comments on the changes. She wrote that:

“the house had some fine rooms lately added to it, and one exceedingly odd and pretty that is the Library.”(3)

Parnell describes the gardens dotted with antique statues and herms and sums up the impression of the house:

“...this mixture of fine Peces of antiquity with the garden makes it look like an old Roman Villa as I conceive did not the Rich meads on the other side of the River coverd with cattle bring back the English farm to mind.”(4)

This is surely exactly the effect that was intended.

Thomas Anson emerges an adventurous traveller, a man of quiet humility and discretion. He may have been a man of secrets – at least legal confidences. He was interested in new ideas until the end of his life, in the arts and sciences, and yet he stood a little to the side, listening but saying little – or not being noticed in the journals and letters of his acquaintances.

If it may be assumed for the moment that Wright was the architect and landscape designer involved it becomes possible to imagine the world of ideas that inspired the place. It is not a building or garden project which exists purely as a visual spectacle, it is an expression of the ideas and imagination of its creators.

In the cases both of Thomas Anson, whose overall vision it must have been, and Wright, who would have been a leading figure in a “committee of taste” (as Laura Mayer has called it) their imaginative world is unusual, unconventional and unexpected. A close look at the work that was planned in that period reveals something of the concept behind it, making Shugborough a world in miniature.

It was a complicated project. A number of different artists and craftsmen must have worked together, particularly on the extensions to the house. It is hard to imagine Thomas Wright passing through and making a few sketches. The Library and Drawing Room would involve careful structural planning. The Library, eccentrically and attractively, is half within the old house and half in the link between the old house

and the extension. It's a very clever use of space. The extensions also created the absolute minimum of disruption for the house guests and the sisters who lived there.

The plaster decoration of the Drawing Room has, we assume, details that are purely Thomas Wright's design – those that Eileen Harris found in his drawings for Nuthall Temple, six or eight years later. It may have features that are purely the work of the plasterer, Francesco Vassalli. Philip Yorke mentioned in his journal in 1763 that Vassalli lived “in the neighbourhood” and he worked in many West Midlands houses including Hagley Hall for Lord Lyttleton. Vassalli later worked with James Stuart and the accounts clearly charged separately for parts that were Stuart's design and parts that were his.

In the library there are paintings designed to fit the space by Nicholas Dall. There would be the commissioning and management of builders and craftsmen. Over all of it would be the guiding imagination of Thomas Anson, who would have to explain and discuss his ideas with his team.

There is no doubt that the scheme was personally supervised by Thomas Anson. It is very individual and has unique features of significance to himself. Where else in an English country house will you plaster images of Isis and Serapis, reflecting his Thomas's Egyptian journey?

The ceiling of the Drawing Room (now the Dining Room) is decorated with a plaster copy of Guido Reni's Apollo and the Hours. There are four roundels. Two of them are representations of Isis (with her sistrum, which was the symbol of the Egyptian Society) and Serapis (with a corn measure on his head), alluding to Thomas's Egyptian trip. The iconography of the later period Isis and Serapis rather than the ancient Egyptian Isis and Osiris is possibly derived from Plutarch. The third shows a Maenad, one of the wild followers of Dionysus with vines in her hair. The fourth, above the window, shows Confucius, bringing into the house the Chinese theme in honour of George Anson's travels. It's hard to see how earlier writers have seen this as Dionysus. It is very obviously a Chinese figure – but, then, it is odd that the maenad appears without Dionysus.

The garden features would have similar complications, with planting and even reconstruction of waterways as part of the plan as well as bricks and mortar.

This is no quick weekend job, but a gradual process of planning and development. The conclusion has to be that Thomas Wright was a house guest for a fairly lengthy period, either in the latter part of 1747 or in the winter and spring. There would be all manner of surveying activities, consultations with collaborators, and, as well as that, time to work on his “Original Theory” and discuss his “*hypothesis amazingly grand.*”

THE CHINESE ISLAND

The Chinese House is still the centre piece of Shugborough's most photographed view, even though the course of the river has changed and the original bridges have been replaced by a nineteenth century iron one. The simplicity and lack of unnecessary detail of the Chinese House give it a pure and timeless quality. This is

due to its origins in drawings made in China by Captain Piercy Brett. It has an authenticity quite unlike other 18th century pastiches of Chinese style.

Thomas Pennant is the only source for Piercy Brett's involvement.

"The Chinese house, a little farther on, is a true pattern of the architecture of that nation, taken in the country by the skilful pencil of Sir Percy Brett: not a mongrel invention of British carpenters." (5)

Sir Piercy Brett (1709-1781) sailed on Admiral Anson's circumnavigation, becoming Second Lieutenant on Anson's ship "The Centurion". His drawings became the basis of the illustrations in the best selling account the epic journey published in 1744. There is no reason to believe that Chinese House was built separately from the rest of the landscaping in spite of the often repeated idea that it was built first of all the garden buildings, in 1747. This is actually unlikely if not actually impossible as the elegant Chinese House is part of a Chinese Island. The small island sits in the ancient moat, two sides of which became part of the landscaping. The original shape of the moat is hard to imagine now, but on 18th century illustrations it appears to have become an ornamental lake in front of the house, possibly very liable to flooding. The island is unlikely to have been a feature of the original moat and it has to be assumed that reconstruction of the existing water into an ornamental canal was part of Thomas Wright's overall scheme. He is thought to have made similar alterations of older formal canals at Wrest shortly after his supposed work at Shugborough.

Probably at a later stage the Chinese House was used to display Admiral Anson's Chinese Porcelain and Mirrors. The porcelain service cannot have been brought back from China on the great voyage as it has a pattern based on Shugborough themes, the costume of shepherds and shepherdesses, and their crooks and bagpipes, and very English ruins suggesting the Shugborough landscape. These must have been painted from designs sent to China from England. If the service belonged to the Admiral it is likely to have been at Moor Park, his country seat from 1752 to his death in 1762 before it came to Shugborough. The interior of the Chinese House had a colourful decoration in red, green, blue and gold and a chinoiserie ceiling which has been moved into the house.

The Ansons would not have been able to have an ornamental island in their grounds without thinking of the island of Tinian which Lord Anson visited on his circumnavigation.

Tinian was uninhabited at the time, and "Anson's Voyage" described it as a green and lush place, stocked with fruit and vegetables and, surprisingly, a large number of small cattle which may have been left by Spanish settlers.

The cattle of Tinian certainly had a place in Lady Anson's mind. She wrote to Thomas on December 29th 1749. As she wrote in this letter "it is the fashion to go out of Town for the Holydays."

"Next to my Enquiries after My Friends at Shugborough, I desire to ask after Their Friends the Cows, whose Sickness I hope does not damp the mirth of Christmas amusements. – I hope they are ell, and likely to remain so, I desire to recommend a

Companion to them, who is, I am told, and indeed am much inclined to believe, from the acquaintance I have had with her Family, very worthy of that honor, both as to Beauty & Merit. She is about six months old and according to the description I have had of her will very well deserve to be called Tinian, being White, with coloured Nose & Ears.....So much for Moggy who waits your command.” (6)

A few months earlier she had asked if

“...the Mrs Ansons know of any clever dairy maid fit to attend upon the Alderney Cows which are to come to Carshalton I should be much obliged to them for Intelligence of her.” (7)

Cows, especially picturesque cows, were part of the landscape, not just for practical purposes. In his 1763 notes Philip Yorke referred to the view of a “ferme ornee”, implying that the farm opposite the house had also become part of the overall scene.

The description of the island of Tinian had a curiously roundabout influence on garden design. The hero of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s novel “Julie ou la nouvelle Heloise” (1761) sails with Anson, and on his return finds that the heroine has created an idyllic, English style, garden which reminds him of the wild paradises he had seen with Anson, Tinian and Juan Fernandez.

“I was looking at the wildest, loneliest spot in the whole of Nature, and I seemed to be the first mortal who had ever penetrated within this wilderness.” (8)

This Rousseau garden, of deliberate natural simplicity, then became a model for real English gardens. Viscount Nuneham, the son of Thomas Anson’s Dilettante Society friend (and fellow patron of James “Athenian” Stuart) Lord Harcourt, designed just such a garden at Nuneham Courtney with William Mason, author of an epic poem on “The English Garden.” Viscount Nuneham was a keen supporter of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Many original editions of Rousseau’s works, including Julie and the “Discourse on Inequality” were in Thomas Anson’s library. Was Thomas an enthusiast for this revolutionary thinker and extremely difficult, crotchety, man? Rousseau lived for a year at Wootton in the Staffordshire Moorlands in 1766, with an easy ride of Shugborough. It is tempting to think of him visiting the house that commemorated Anson’s voyage, which he had used as such a convenient plot device in his novel, and seeing a distant relative of Julie’s garden and the flower garden at Nuneham Courtney.

With any garden of the 18th century it is important not to think of buildings as things apart from the overall design. The garden is a carefully harmonised mix of natural features, careful planting and structures which complement the “Reign of Nature”, as David Jacques subtitles his excellent book on Georgian Gardens.

Thomas Wright’s later work at Stoke Park , which closely followed Shugborough, was more fascinating for its planting than its garden buildings – in fact many years after he first worked there he wrote Lady Beaufort, to recommend that a particular structure should be removed. Wright’s later sketches include detailed plans of

planting. There is no evidence at all that he had designed planting schemes before Shugborough. Where did he learn such skills? Perhaps over many years staying in some beautiful country estates during his summers he had developed an enthusiasm, and with it a knowledge, of flowers and shrubs and the ways in which they could be composed for appropriate effect.

At Shugborough there must have been very expert gardeners. Thomas Anson's interest in botany is visible in his brief notes in the diary of his 1740-1 voyage. He had the opportunity to bring back plants himself – a cheaper alternative to the endless classical remains or Egyptian mummies his Divan Club acquaintances brought back from their travels. In later years there was a grand greenhouse at Shugborough, and perhaps a completely vanished Thomas Wright predecessor. He sent pineapples to London for Lady Anson and Joseph Banks, the leading botanist of the late 18th century, saw an unusual means of growing peaches on his visit in 1767.

The importance of botany, as well as the seriousness of the interest in Asia, at Shugborough is demonstrated by the catalogue of the library as it was when it was sadly sold in 1842. Books on Chinese, Japanese or oriental culture, and particularly botany, included: (9)

M d'Herbelot Biblioteheque Orientale -1697 –

Chisull Antiquitates Asiaticae - 1727

Père Louis le Compte's Memoirs and Observations made in a late Journey through China - London: Tooke, 1697 / translated from the Paris edition.

(Le Compte was a Jesuit missionary. The volume includes “memoirs and observations, topographical, physical, mathematical, mechanical, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical; made in a late journey through the empire of China and published in several letters, particularly upon the Chinese pottery and varnishing, the silk and other manufactures, the pearl fishing, the history of plants and animals ... the state of Christianity, with many other curious and useful remarks.”)

Engelbert Kaempfer's Amoenitates Exoticae 1712 which included two hostas: Joksan, vulgo Giboosi and Giboosi altera.

(Kaempfer's drawings of these species are now in the Sloan Collection of the British Museum . He was the first to mention hostas in Western scientific literature.)

Engelbert Kaempfer's History of Japan 2 v. 1728 (giving an Account of the ancient and present State and Government of that Empire; of Its Temples, Palaces, Castles and other Buildings; of its Metals, Minerals, Trees, Plants, Animals, Birds and Fishes; of The Chronology and Succession of the Emperors, Ecclesiastical and Secular; of The Original Descent, Religions, Customs, and Manufactures of the Natives, and of their Trade and Commerce with the Dutch and Chinese. Together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam . Written in High-Dutch by Engelbertus Kaempfer, M. D. Physician to the Dutch Embassy to the Emperor's Court; and translated from his Original Manuscript, never before printed, by J. G. Scheuchzer, F. R. S. and a member of the College of Physicians, London. With the Life of the Author,

and an Introduction. Illustrated with many copperplates. Vol. I/II. London : Printed for the Translator)

The Chinese Island, and the rest of the Garden, would have featured whatever viable oriental plants were available. It was not simply an exotic scene but a living celebration of the world's variety.

The philosophy and spirituality of the East are also an inseparable part of the scheme – and there are good reasons for thinking of the 1747/8 Shugborough as an integrated concept. The interior design of the house is integrated with the gardens. Thomas Wright had not been involved in any such schemes before, but shortly after Shugborough he designed, on his own, a garden for Badminton in which all the features, buildings and planting, had an elaborate symbolic meaning. It may have used ideas he had picked up at Shugborough. It was never put into practise but the garden had a “Temple of Manly Virtue”, a wood planted according to the magic square of Jupiter, and an arbour which would have resembled the inner part, the hypothetical original form, of the Shepherds Monument . The Badminton design is a very formal and obvious example of an overriding concept. The Shugborough project may have been less rigidly structured but it does appear to have a theme or message in its seriously playful eclecticism.

There was a serious interest in the thought of Confucius at the time. Thomas Anson's library contained the 1687 Latin edition of the works of Confucius, “Confucius Sinarum Philosophus”. The frontispiece of this book is the source of the portrait of Confucius which appears in a roundel in the plaster ceiling of the Drawing Room. The scheme integrates the ground and the house. There is a subtlety and complexity in the integration of gardening, building, art and ideas which sits unusually well with the overall effect of lightness and wit.

Though Chinoiserie in general was a fashion in the mid 18th century the Chinese House was something of a pioneer building – and the vanished pagoda was certainly a pioneer.

Frederick Prince of Wales was developing his botanical garden at Kew and he built a “House of Confucius” in 1749, a year or so after the Shugborough Chinese House. The Kew House was far more ornate and less authentic. It was designed by Joseph Goupy and the decoration featured illustrations of the life of Confucius. There was also a Chinese House on an island at Wroxton, Oxfordshire, the seat of Lord North. This may have dated from the end of the 1740s and may have been built by Sanderson Miller, who “advised” on the construction of some buildings at Shugborough in 1749 and 1752. From the illustration in David Jacques' “Georgian Gardens ” it could be a copy of the Shugborough pavilion.

John Parnell, writing in 1769, described part of the planting around the Chinese House. He uses the words Chinese and Indian interchangeably.

“I must observe that around the Chinese temple there are abundance of fine Larch which are here Justly placed as being Indian trees...from the Chinese House the walk passes by Riverside with an Edge of flowering shrubs and exotic trees to the Left screening the garden wall.”(10)

(The walled garden survived near the house until the farm was built at the end of the century. The Doric Temple was originally its entrance.)

GOTHIC PIGEON-HOUSE

There was a gothic Pigeon House behind the Chinese House. It is one of the vanished buildings. It may have been damaged by floods or removed when the river was redirected at the end of the century. The gothic and the Chinese often sit side by side in rococo gardens. Sometimes the two styles merge into a single blend with pointed arches and Chinese ornament. The most effective example of this is the light and airy interior of Shobdon Church, Herefordshire, built in the 1750s. Thomas Wright's Irish designs include a mixture of gothic features and Chinese.

The Pigeon House, at the start at least, failed in its purpose. Lady Anson wrote to Thomas on November 1st 1749 :

“Sorry was I to hear so indifferent account of the Pigeons, whose having so little Taste would almost make one suspect them to be of the same Race with those Birds upon the Tuscan Altar you and I contemplated so long, of which it is doubtful whether they are Doves or Crows...they had so little sense of the many Beauties of their new Palace that you cannot wonder if Lady Grey and I durst not trust ourselves to the conduct of such simple animals...”(11)

BOATHOUSE

The Chinese House (and possibly the Pigeon House) sat on a small island linked to the main garden by a Chinese Bridge . A second bridge led to further woodland a boathouse. This would have had a matching boat for rowing, or sailing, along the river and the canal. The boat would have been an essential part of the garden concept, and the view from a gently moving craft would have been part of the intended effect. The placing of some features may have been decided according to the view from the river. This is most likely the case with the last of the structures built some twenty years later, The Lanthorn of Demosthenes, which is placed on a bank above the River Sow.

It may not be a wild guess that the boat would have been an addition by Thomas's satirist and gardener friend Richard Owen Cambridge. Cambridge had been a member of the Divan Club with Thomas until it folded a few years before. He was one of the writers, with Horace Walpole and George Lyttelton, of “The World”, a journal that specialised in the latest ideas of landscaping.

Lady Anson dined at Cambridge's house, Mount Ararat , at Richmond , in April 1750:

“Mr Cambridge will make his Place very pretty; he has a charming view of the River now he has opened it.” (11)

His Richmond home, very close to Thomas's friend James Mytton and the antiquarian Daniel Wray, a regular at Wrest Park, was often the out of London base for James Harris, the most important thinker of the Greek Revival. Harris praised Cambridge in

his last book, “Philological Enquiries” which goes out of its way to celebrate his friends and also includes the anecdote of Thomas Anson on Tenedos.

Cambridge was a notorious gossip. Lady Anson writes:

“Mr Cambridge has just stepped in with news of new government appointments.”

He wrote of himself:

*“My body light, my figure slim,
My mind dispos'd to mirth and whim.”* (12)

Boats were Cambridge’s particular hobby and he eagerly discussed ideas with Lord Anson. He built a thirty seat pleasure boat in Venetian style, a twelve oared barge, and a successful boat with a “flying prow” based on descriptions from Anson’s voyage. He specialised, at his seat at Whitminster on the Severn, in “promenades en bateau” where he once entertained Frederick, Prince of Wales on the river.⁽¹³⁾ With his connections to Thomas through the Divan Club (his father had been a “Turkey Merchant”), through Lord Anson, and through James Harris, Cambridge remained a friend over thirty years. He was one of those on the list of friends and political neighbours who received a mourning ring at Thomas’s death. He was also one of the subscribers to Thomas Wright’s beautifully produced but financially unsuccessful “Universal Architecture” (only the first two books, Arbours and Grottoes appeared) in 1755.

Lady Anson enjoyed a “navigation” on the river on her last visit to Shugborough in 1759. She wrote to Lord Anson:

“We had the finest navigation these two days upon the River that is possible. Every new point one sees this place from it appears in a new light of beauty; and I should be very sorry to leave...” (14)

THE RUINS

Sneyd Davies, quoted above, mentions “a pile of broken arches, and of imperfect pillars, to counterfeit the remains of antiquity” in 1750. “A tour through the whole Island of Great Britain” published in 1748 also mentions the ruins, and the Essex Bridge that links Shugborough to Great Haywood. This guide must have been extremely up to date when it was published unless the ruins had been built before the rest of the landscaping. They seem, though, to have been very much part of the overall scheme.

These monuments, and the new Drawing Room and Library, were probably all in place when Lady Grey visited in 1748. Other features were certainly added after that date.

THE CAT’S MONUMENT

Lady Anson, in Bath on 16th August 1749, wrote to Thomas to suggest a stone quarry which could make the Cat’s Monument. The idea had obviously already been

discussed. The eccentric nature of this structure could be accounted to Wright, in which case it is likely that he had supplied a drawing. She calls it “Kouli-Kan’s Monument” (15).

The most likely source of the name, usually spelled as Lady Anson spells it, is the 18th century Persian Emperor Kouli-Kan – the European name for Nadir Shah, emperor of Persia and conqueror of India who died in 1747. It seems most likely that the eccentric looking cat was one of Thomas’s Persians and named after the Emperor. Was this before or after the emperor had burned one of the Shariamans family at the stake?

Descendants of Kouli-Khan were still there nearly twenty years later.

The botanist Joseph Banks visited Shugborough in 1767 and mentioned that he saw two animals new to him, Persian Cats and Corsican goats.

Thomas Anson told Banks that his cats had died of distemper apart from one last survivor, which was pure white. Perhaps all the cars had been descended from Kouli Khan who had, presumably, died twenty years before.

The Cats Monument was altered later. Coad Stone panels are almost certainly designed by Stuart as they resemble work he did for Wentworth Woodhouse very early in his career - useful evidence for the dates of Stuart’s involvement at Shugborough. The Corsican goats, (which John Dick supplied to Anson in 1760) are also represented on the monument. These creatures seem to have been “Muffoli”. James Boswell mentions them in his “Account of Corsica”. He probably heard of them from Banks as he did not meet Anson until 1772.

“...there are now two of them at Shugborough in Staffordshire, the seat of Mr. Anson, who has a rich assemblage of what is curious in nature, as well as of what is elegant in art.”(16)

There were other curious creatures. In 1769 John Parnell described:

“...a Bird from the India’s calld a crown Bird which makes a Beautiful Appearance in shape like a Heron with a tuft of feathers on the Head like spun (?) glass so fine very tall and oddly shaped – has lived there ten years.”(17)

Joseph Banks saw this bird two years earlier:

“From thence we went into the Kitchen garden where we saw the Pavonina or Crown Bird who had lived here for some time upon sea Biscuit and what he could pick up which the Gardener said was a good deal especially when dung was brought into the garden.”(18)

THE PAGODA AND PALLADIAN BRIDGE

Lady Anson also mentions the long vanished wooden pagoda under construction in November 1752. This was the first pagoda in England, predating the pagoda at Kew by ten years. The architect Sanderson Miller mentions in his diary that he “advised” at

Shugborough in 1752 and this may well have been advice on a practical realisation of a Wright sketch. The Palladian Bridge and cascades were part of an elaborate water scheme that has completely vanished, and were typical of Wright's style.

Parnell writes of a

"fine Peice of water falling from a still finer and realy noble Peice of water above it at one End is a Pagoda very Pretty at the other a Palladian Bridge from the arch of which falls the water."(19)

OBELISK

Also built around this time was a wooden obelisk on the hill, perhaps not far from the junction of the farm drive and the Lichfield Road. This blew down in the nineteenth century. It is visible in Dall's pictures of the landscape but impossible to date.

There may have been other features that have been lost. It is possible that the caves at Haywood Cliffs, probably produced by quarrying, were originally part of the landscape, as a hermitage. They have acted this role recently as the home for a modern day hermit as an art project. There is a curious horned face carved in the sandstone that resembles those on the Shepherd's Monument – but that raises the several questions of that most puzzling of all the features - When was it built? Who designed it? What does it mean?

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The Shepherd's Monument

The Shepherd's Monument has been the centre of confusion for two hundred and fifty years. The complex mystery of the monument lies in the puzzle of its dating and origins, and in the meaning of its undeciphered inscription.

David Watkin, in his 'Athenian Stuart' calls it 'one of the most romantic of English garden buildings', and it unites in one place the romantic and classical aspects of 18th century art. (1)

Thomas Pennant gives a description that suggests that the monument had a particular significance for Thomas Anson:

“The beautiful monument in the lower end of the garden, does honour to the present age. It was the work of Mr Schemecher, under the direction of the late Mr Anson. The scene is laid in Arcadia. Two lovers, expressed in elegant pastoral figures, appear attentive to an ancient shepherd, who reads to them an inscription on a tomb,

ET IN ARCADIA EGO!

The moral resulting from this seems to be, that there are no situations in life so delicious, but which death must at length snatch us from. It was placed here by the amiable owner, as a memento of the certainty of that event. Perhaps, also, as a secret memorial of some loss of a tender nature in his early days; for he was wont often to hang over it in affectionate and firm meditation.”

Though Pennant's description of the Scheemakers relief, based on Poussin's "Et in Arcadia ego" is not necessarily accurate there is no reason to doubt the latter part of Pennant's interpretation. His description of Thomas listening to a harp before his death proves to be true.

Clifford's "Historical Description of the Parish of Tixall" quotes Pennant's description and points out that he has "overlooked" the mysterious inscription, saying:

“The meaning of these letters Mr Anson would never explain and they still remain an enigma to posterity.” (2)

The monument has been dated by various writers to almost any year between 1748 to 1767. The most frequently quoted explanation of the monument is that it is a work by Thomas Wright, from 1748-50 with additions by James Stuart from about 1763.

The true dating of the monument is absolutely critical for any understanding of its meaning, and may affect our understanding of Shugborough's significance as a whole.

It is a strange hybrid, hard to explain architecturally if it is the work of one person.

The monument could be seen as having three distinct parts, each of which may have a separate designer and may date from separate times. There is a rustic arch in stone carved to look wild and natural. Within this arch is a white marble frame supporting a relief based on Poussin's painting "Et in Arcadia Ego". Shepherds look at a tomb on which is carved the Latin phrase, which is usually interpreted as "I (death) am also in Arcadia." Even in an idyllic pastoral world Death cannot be escaped.

Beneath the relief is a plaque with a cryptic inscription:

O.U.O.S.V.A.V.V

D. M.

In front of this, as if to give it further protection, is an outer arch of two rustic columns and what is described as a "Doric entablature". There is no doubt that the relief is by Scheemakers, a leading sculptor of the time (working from as early as 1740). A drawing in the British Museum by James "Athenian" Stuart exactly matches the rustic columns. This may have been a sketch of a ruin found in his trip to Greece or it may be a design for this monument. It is evidence that at least this part of the monument is the work of Stuart. (3)

It has been suggested that the monument was built in separate stages. A simple alcove, a typical Thomas Wright design, may have been built first, and the outer columns and pediment added later by Stuart. The Scheemakers relief may not have been part of the original structure. There is, however, no physical sign that the monument was built at two different times

Eileen Harris based her identification of Thomas Wright as the architect of the first phase of developments at Shugborough on the similarity of the Shepherds Monument to one of Wright's own published drawings.

Wright published a book of designs for arbours, the first of an intended series of three volumes of "Universal Architecture" in 1755. The first of these resembles the shape of the rough stone arch in which the relief is placed. (4)

There is also a drawing of an arbour on a general plan for a garden in his 1750 designs for Badminton which is even more similar to the inner rustic arch of the Shepherds Monument.(5)

Both these designs are for wooden structures, not "rustic" stone, so the actual resemblance is completely superficial.

A close look at Wright's 1755 print does show however, what appears to be a "frame" rather similar in shape to the frame which supports the Scheemakers relief.

This might support the idea that the relief was originally fixed in a simple Wright alcove which later had the outer columns and roofing added to give better protection to the precious marble.

There is no documentary evidence of the monument's origin and it does not appear in any of the many drawings and paintings that exist of the grounds from Thomas Anson's lifetime, even though every other structure is illustrated— and yet it is the most talked about of all the Shugborough features in 18th written sources.

As with many other historical puzzles, the facts are complicated by errors made by one writer which are then repeated over and over again by later researchers who put too much faith in the first writer's work, or who try to force the facts to fit a preconceived theory.

The greatest source of confusion stems from an article in a 1954 *Country Life* by Christopher Hussey. The author states that the poet Anna Seward wrote a poem inspired by the Shepherds Monument which includes the phrases:

*“Let not the muse inquisitive presume
With rash interpretation to disclose
The mystic ciphers that conceal her name.” (6)*

Hussey confused a short poem by Anna Seward, enclosed in a letter from Lady Anson, with another long anonymous poem about Shugborough. The long poem describes the estate in detail and is clearly dated 1767, seven years after Lady Anson's death. The style in no way resembles any of Seward's verse, being in Miltonic blank verse rather than rhyming couplets. As the Seward poem has presumably always been enclosed in Lady Anson's letter and as the long poem is separately bound and clearly dated it is very hard to see how Hussey made this mistake. The consequence of this fatal and inexplicable error is that the long poem is still referred to as by Anna Seward. This is a grim demonstration of how essential it is to look closely at the original documents.

The closest contender, in style, for the authorship of this poem is Richard Jago, who wrote in a ponderous Milton verse. He was a close friend of William Shenstone, whose letters include an early reference to the Shepherds Monument. Passages in Jago's "Edge Hill", published in 1767, the year of the anonymous poem, are similar, down to detailed use of language. Jago's wife came from nearby Rugeley and Jago was also a close associate of Sanderson Miller who worked at Shugborough in the 1750s and 1760s interpreting Wright's and Stuart's designs in stone and brick.

Establishing the date of the Shepherds Monument's construction turns out to be, as Holmes would say, a three pipe problem. There is, in fact, more evidence about it than any other feature of the Shugborough improvements before the series of James Stuart recreations of "The Antiquities of Athens" after 1760. And yet it is hard to arrive at a definite answer to its dating or authorship – let alone its meaning.

If Eileen Harris is correct and there are elements of Thomas Wright in the building, then the date, perhaps of an original simpler structure, has to be 1747/8. There is, however, a good reason to suppose the Shepherds Monument, as it is now, that is a monument supporting a relief of Poussin's "Et in Arcadia Ego", was not there in 1748.

Philip Yorke, Lady Anson's brother and husband of Jemima, Marchioness Grey, visited in August 1763 and wrote to his father, Lord Hardwicke describing, as he writes, the "many embellishments since I saw it (Shugborough) in 1748."

"I shd not omit to mention the Bas Relief from Poussin's Arcadian Picture, the most elegant Piece of modern sculpture I ever beheld & does great honour to Scheemaker's chisel..." (7)

This same letter mentions the foundations of the Green House, or Orangery, proving that this large but lost building was being built in 1763 and no earlier.

This clearly states that Philip Yorke was seeing the monument, or at least the relief, for the first time and that it was one of the "embellishments" made since Philip and Jemima visited in August 1748. It was not part of the first phase of the landscaping.

This then raises other questions. If the structure owes anything to Wright was he ever at Shugborough after this date? He need not have been. Both Cat's Monument and Pagoda may have been designed in 1747/8 but were certainly built later, in 1749 and 1752 respectively. Wright may have provided drawings for buildings that did not materialise until years later. He certainly did this in the case of his Irish projects.

Though Philip Yorke probably saw in 1763 the monument as it appears today there is still the possibility that it was built in two stages, incorporating an earlier Wright structure – and also the possibility that the relief was placed in a plainer alcove some years after the original alcove had been built.

If, on the other hand, the building is not by Wright at all, and was not built in the first phase of development, could it be entirely the work of James Stuart and predate the Greek structures he is known to have built at Shugborough in the 1760s?

William Shenstone, a poet famous for his garden "The Leasowes", at Halesowen, described the monument in a letter in 1759. The Ansons are known to have been regular visitors to the Leasowes and its neighbour, Lord Lyttelton's Hagley Park. Hagley is the landscape which has the closest links to Shugborough through shared artists and the friendship of George Lyttelton and Thomas Anson.

Shenstone's letter, to Mr Graves, is dated October 3rd 1759 and it particularly deals with inscriptions and mottos.

"Now you speak of our Arcadias, pray, did you ever see a print or drawing of Poussin's Arcadia? The idea of it is so very pleasing to me, that I had no peace till I had used the inscription on one side of Miss Dolman's urn, "Et in Arcadia Ego." Mr. Anson has the two shepherds with the monument and inscription in alto relievo at Shugborough.

"Mr. Dodsley will borrow me a drawing of it from Mr. Spence. See it described, vol. I. page 53. of the Abbe du Bos, "sur la poesie et la peinture." (8)

Curiously there is no mention of the Latin phrase in published descriptions of "Miss Dolman's Urn", a feature at The Leasowes, in Shenstone's own works or in later

guidebooks to his garden. The Leasowes remained a tourist attraction long after its creator's death. It is possible that Shenstone decided that an extra inscription was superfluous.

“Mr Dodsley will borrow me a drawing of it”, referring to the Poussin picture, proves that copies of the painting were easily available. These would be of the second version of the subject that Poussin painted, now in the Louvre, and often reproduced. The far less known “Chatsworth” version was first catalogued at Chatsworth in 1761 and its history before that date is unknown. There is evidence that it was in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire eleven years earlier.

Shenstone mentions Abbe du Bos's description of the Poussin picture. This is quoted in John Gilbert Cooper's “Letters concerning Taste”, published by Shenstone's friend John Dodsley in 1755. It is hard to understand why but du Bos's description is inaccurate. On the face of it, it is a description of the Louvre version but it wrongly claims that the tomb in the painting is of a Shepherdess whose body can be seen lying upon it.

The tomb in the painting is a plain stone box. The Shugborough relief adds an urn as the plain tomb would not be clearly visible on a white marble carving and to make it more clearly funereal.

Perhaps du Bos based his description on a copy or drawing of Poussin's picture which had added the detail of a corpse on the tomb.

The reference from Du Bos, the idea that it is a Shepherdess's tomb, may explain why the author of the 1767 poem assumes that to be the subject, as does William Bagot of Blithfield Hall in a poem dated April 25th 1772. There is nothing at all in either of Poussin's paintings to imply that the tomb is that of a shepherdess, nor anything in the possible literary influences. Virgil's Eclogues, which anyone with a taste for Arcadian matters would have known mention a tomb of a shepherd called Daphnis. If Thomas associated Virgil with Poussin's Arcadia he is more likely to have imagined it as a tomb of a shepherd than a shepherdess.

Bagot writes:

*“O! co'd you see how Nature pours
Profuse her verdure & her flowers,
Her earliest, freshest bloom,
Embroidering all the hallow'd ground
With blue-bells, daisies, violets, round
Your shepherdesses tomb!” (9)*

Though these poems refer to a Shepherdess there is no reason to suppose that Thomas Anson ever thought of it as “The Shepherdesses Tomb.” We can accept Clifford's statement that Mr Anson would never explain the meaning of the cipher inscription and take it that he would be secretive about the monument as a whole. It is always referred to these days as “The Shepherd's Monument”, but this title is not used in any of the eighteenth century sources. The earliest use of the name so far discovered is in Art Index, 1932. (Google Books)

In 1772 George Hardinge (1743-1816), later a judge, then newly called to the bar, gave Thomas Anson a copy of Dr Sneyd Davies's ponderous elegy for Lord Anson which also refers to the Shepherd's Monument. This was presumably written shortly after Lord Anson's death in 1762.

*"Upon that storied marble cast thine eye,
The scene commands a moralizing sigh ;
Ev'n in Arcadia's bless'd Elysian plains,
Amidst the laughing Nymphs, and sportive swains,
See festal joy subside, with melting grace,
And pity visit the half-smiling face ;
Where now the dance, the lute, the nuptial feast,
The passion throbbing in the lover's breast?
Life's emblem here, in youth and vernal bloom,
But Reason's finger pointing at the tomb!" (10)*

Hardinge tells the story in his "Biographical memoirs of the Rev Sneyd Davies D D Canon Residentiary of Lichfield."

"These lines, elegant, ingenious, and appropriate as they are, come with a disadvantage against them to me; for I was presented by Mr. Anson himself at the time of my visit with a Poem on the same topic, written by his neighbour and friend, the father of this Lord Bagot, which I cannot enough lament that I either mislaid, or gave or lent away, especially as I never could obtain a copy of them.—I am pretty sure they exist; but where they are now deposited, I have reason to fear that it is under the hermetical seal of his request, that no copy of them should be taken. I recollect in particular the affecting Episode of his Muse upon the "Et in Arcadia ego" to which DAVIES alludes."

Fortunately the copy of the poem by Bagot does survive, deposited in the Staffordshire Record Office with the manuscript of Sneyd Davies's poem.

Nothing else at Shugborough had such a rich poetic life in the 18th century as the Shepherds Monument.

It is important to establish the date of the earliest reference. This proves to be the letter from Lady Anson which enclosed a poem by Anna Seward.

The letter is dated: "Coleshill, September 20th, Monday."

There are two copies of the letter in the Staffordshire Record Office. The first is a draft and does not give the day of the week. This has led to the letter being misdated. Lady Anson often omits the year, but it is simple to calculate which year this must be. September 20th fell on a Monday in 1756. Other clues in the letter confirm this to be the correct year.

She writes back to Shugborough from Coleshill, which she explains is the place where she expected to take lunch on her journey back to Wimpole, her father's estate in Cambridge. She explains to Thomas, in a section not included in the draft, that she

may have to sleep at Coleshill as she was expecting to meet “Mr Dean and his poor daughter” there. They may have miscalculated the length of their own journey.

In the letter Lady Anson writes to Thomas that she had been going through Lichfield , returning to London from Shugborough, when “*Mr Seward, with a smiling bow, stopped the coach and civilly excused himself for not having made a visit to Shugborough since the races.*” (11)

Dr Seward had lived in the cathedral close at Lichfield since 1754. He is referred to in one of the only two letters from Thomas to George Anson in the Staffordshire Record Office. They are now bound with Lady Anson’s letters to her husband and they may only have survived a purge of Thomas’s manuscripts because they are unsigned. One of the two is a brief but fascinating letter referring to a journey to Monmouthshire. The other is dated Wednesday October 9th, the year is therefore 1754. It begins by assuring Lord Anson that his wife has safely returned from a ghastly stay at Buxton, and then goes on to slightly incoherent details of electioneering. (Thomas’s trip to Monmouthshire and Lady Anson’s experiences of Buxton will be discussed in the next chapter.)

Granville Leveson-Gower, who had held one of the two Lichfield seats, had succeeded to the title of Lord Trentham in April, which necessitated a by-election. His successor was Henry Vernon of Hilton Park . The letter mentions various people involved with the campaign including Captain Porter, who may have been Dr Johnson’s step son, and Mr Mence, possibly Rev Benjamin Mence, whom Lady Anson mentions in a letter to Catherine Talbot. He had been, purely by the way, the best counter-tenor in England and had sung for Handel and as a vicar choral at Lichfield Cathedral.

“By a letter from Dr Seward I find that he and some of our friends intend to come over tomorrow.” (12)

This establishes that Dr Seward was a political supporter and knew Shugborough at least as early as 1754. His daughter may have visited with him, or at any time after.

Lady Anson’s letter of September 20th 1756 says that Seward presented Lady Anson with a packet containing some verses.

“Imagining it to be a copy of those I had been before favoured with a sight of I was in no great haste to open it.”

When Lady Anson did read the verses she took them to be in the writing of Dr Seward’s daughter, Anna, though she wonders if they are actually by her or her father.

The short poem is headed:

“On an Emblematical Basso Relievo after a famous picture of Nicholas Poussin Representing Shepherds pointing to the following Inscription on a Monument in Arcadia :

Et in Arcadia Ego”

*'The silent Monk, in lonely cell immured,
From every folly, vice, and care secured,
Should inward turn calm Meditations Eye,
And Life imploy in studying how to Die. '*

The very dull poem is a meditation on death and has no particular connection with the Poussin picture. Lady Anson writes that the performance must be “*greatly inferior to its subject, as that requires a much more masterly hand to do it justice.*”

Anna Seward was born in 1742. She would have been 14 in 1756.

This letter does not make any reference to the cipher inscription that sits under the Poussin relief.

From Coleshill Lady Anson continued on to Wimpole. There is a letter to Thomas dated “Wimpole 24th September”, without a weekday or year, which almost certainly comes from the same year. (Staffordshire Record Office D615/P (S)/ 1/3/26)

“You laugh at Eucharistic epistles my dear Mr Anson & I am not able to write them, it is therefore certainly best not to attempt any: not but that I might endeavour to prove my Taste by stringing together all, both the ancient & the modern phrases that express Beauty and Enjoyableness in a Place; and to shew how much I had enjoyed it & do still in continual Happiness in being there.” (13)

She had left Thomas’s old friend Mr Mytton at Shugborough:

“I shall abridge what remains, & only desire my compliments to Mr Mytton & hope his cold is better.”

She ends with a PS:

“I hope the chaise returned safe & carried back my thanks for it and the Peaches.”

So, the Shepherds Monument, certainly including the Poussin relief, existed by September 1756. Was the monument seen by Anna Seward the same as it is now, with its rustic columns by Stuart?

This is still a very difficult question, and there is no certain proof. For a long time it has been accepted by many people that the monument as it stands is a mixture of elements by Thomas Wright and James “Athenian” Stuart, as well as the relief itself, by Scheemakers.

Did Anna Seward see a simpler structure by Wright that Stuart altered later?

Though the idea that it is a mixture of Wright and Stuart is attractive it may be an unnecessarily complicated explanation – and there are no obvious signs on the structure itself that it was built in two separate stages. There is no apparent join.

Until recently the idea that Stuart could have supplied a design in 1756 would have seemed unlikely as all the documentation of Stuart's relationship with Thomas Anson came from the 1760s, but in the last few years there has been a great deal of new research and this has produced some surprises. It appears now that it is perfectly possible that the building Anna Seward saw in 1756 had been built by Stuart. If this could be proved to be the case the monument would have another significance – as the earliest surviving building, or even the first architectural work, by the first great designer of the Greek Revival – in fact as the symbolic gateway to the Greek Revival itself.

This chapter has tried to amass all the evidence concerning the dating of the structure and the puzzle of its architect. An equally complex question, of course, is what does the multi-layered mix of architecture, art and cryptic inscription actually mean? The next chapter will attempt to bring together the ideas floating around in the Anson circle, the mood of the time, and, in particular, Lady Anson's unusual interest in Poussin and his Arcadian Shepherds.

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Hidden Meanings?

The evidence for the dating of the Shepherd's Monument suggests that it might belong to the mid 1750s rather than from the first period of work at Shugborough in 1748. The mood of the monument seems to match the peculiar mood of that decade, a mood that perhaps encouraged an interest in Stoicism and helped make Elizabeth Carter's translation of Epictetus such a literary success.

A general interest in Stoicism with its acceptance of the vicissitudes of life and detachment from the world may have chimed with an atmosphere of fear and alarm.

England was struck by earthquakes.

Handel's last oratorio, *Theodora*, had its first performance on the 16th March. It is now seen as one of Handel's very greatest works, a uniquely meditative story of persecution and sacrifice. The fear of earthquakes kept the audiences away. Everyone who was able left London for their country houses. Handel knew it was one of his best pieces, and its failure must have been hard to bear. When two musicians asked for free tickets for a later performance of *Messiah* Handel answered, according to Dr Burney:

"Oh your servant, meine Herren! you are damnable dainty! you would not go to Theodora - there was room enough to dance there, when that was perform!"(1)

In musical life this was the end of an era. This was not just the end of Handel's career, it was the turning point in musical style. Handel's baroque was soon superseded by new rococo and classical fashion.

The first earthquake in London was on March 2nd. Catherine Talbot wrote to Elizabeth Carter on March 9th, returning some sections of her Epictetus translation.

"Would you believe it, that my mind was so dissipated by a week or two of innocent gaiety, and my spirits by the return of perfect health grown so flippant and lively, that I felt not the awful terrors of the second shock on Thursday, nor could bring my mind to any degree of seriousness, till the conversation of wiser and stronger minds than mine, had yesterday talked down its levity. I was when it happened in a profound sleep, from which I was awaked by my mother's screaming dreadfully. Alarmed with the thought of some more immediate home distress, the trembling of the house was over, before I could collect my thoughts to attend to it."(2)

The "wiser and stronger minds" who had talked "down its levity" at the time of the first shock of the earthquake may have included Thomas Anson. An undated letter from Lady Anson to Catherine Talbot in Bedfordshire Record Office may come from this time. The archive catalogue suggests 1760, not a year for earthquakes:

"As to the earthquake Mr. Anson says it was a very trifling one" and he told her that "she may turn her thoughts to the expectation of a great Comet in a few years."(3)

This one of several precious snippets that give us Thomas Anson's tone of voice, understated, ironical, and humorous.

The Record Office suggests a date of ten years later, but 1750 was the great earthquake year, with further tremors in Warrington on April 4th, Spalding on August 23rd, and Northampton on 30th September.

Thomas Anson's comment about the comet is particularly interesting. Portents may have been in the air in March 1750, but the idea of returning comets is a major feature of Thomas Wright's "An Original Theory on the Universe". The book was published in 1750, but if the conjectures about Thomas's patronage of Wright are true and that the work on this book was the real reason for Wright's involvement with Anson then Anson would have known of it two years earlier than its publication.

Curiously the last hint of a meeting between Thomas Wright and Elizabeth Carter in the Carter and Talbot correspondence is from a letter from April 5th 1750 which also refers to the earthquake. Catherine Talbot wrote to Elizabeth Carter:

"The churches were full all the morning; but at night the streets and open places were crowded. Many messages came hither to enquire where my Lord preached, and whether there were not to be prayers in the church at eleven. Thousands spent the night in Hyde Park, and Lincoln s Inn Fields. Those who did the least, sat up half the night, except some very few. The moon, stars, and aurora, were well contemplated— But there is something frightful in such a general panic.....I was happy to learn from Mr. Wright that Miss Peggy Carter has not suffered by these alarms."(4)

(Peggy was Elizabeth Carter's oldest sister)

The earthquakes of 1750 were a very small scale prelude to one of the greatest natural disasters of recent history - the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 in which anything up to 100,000 people died. This event was a monumental shock to Europe, less than a year before the first known reference to the elegiac Shepherd's Monument.

Elizabeth Carter began her work on translating the Stoic philosopher Epictetus in 1749, the year after Thomas Wright may have been working at Shugborough. Her translation circulated between friends throughout the 1750s and Stoicism caught the spirit of the times. She was supported in some technical details by James Harris, philosopher and musician friend of Thomas Anson and the publication of the book, which made her the first woman author to be able to live on her income as a writer, was supported by Anson's friend and architectural rival, Lord Lyttelton.

Carter carefully explains in her introduction that she cannot agree with much of the Stoic philosophy because it is, to her, illogical or against Christian teachings. She is particularly eager to criticise Epictetus's justification of suicide, for example. The simplest tenets of Stoicism, as explained in Epictetus, concern detachment from the world, and the acceptance of those things that are beyond one's power to change.

"Require nothings to happen as you wish, but wish them to happen as they do happen, and you will go on well." (5)

“Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things.”

“These reasonings are unconnected: ‘I am richer than you. Therefore I am better’; ‘I am more eloquent than you, therefore I am better.’ connection is rather this: ‘I am richer than you, therefore my property is greater than yours.’”

Perhaps this could have a relevance to the Shepherd’s Monument:

“Let death and exile, and all other things which appear terrible, be daily before your eyes, but chiefly death, and you will never entertain any abject thought, not too eagerly covet anything.”

This could be a commentary on the meaning of Poussin’s painting, the presence of the tomb in Arcadia and the reality of death. These examples would also have an extra significance to a family like the Ansons who had become immensely wealthy by an accident of war.

Poussin, working a century before the Ansons time, was influenced by Stoicism and painted pictures on openly Stoic themes as well as his philosophical Arcadian paintings. Elizabeth, Lady Anson might not have been aware of Poussin’s general interest in Stoicism but she had a peculiar interest of her own in his “The Shepherds of Arcadia”.

There are two quite different pictures by Poussin of this subject. An earlier one, now at Chatsworth, shows Shepherds finding a tomb, and beneath it river god holding an urn. The later Louvre version, which is the basis of the Scheemakers relief, shows shepherds and a philosophical shepherdess next to a tomb in a classical landscape.

In both versions the tomb has the inscription “Et in Arcadia Ego”, meaning “I (death) too am in Arcadia”. Even in this idyllic world you can’t escape death.

In 1747 artist and collector Jonathan Richardson’s collection was sold. The sale included a drawing of the first version of the Shepherds of Arcadia, possibly an original sketch by Poussin. This was in Lady Anson’s possession by 1750. It is still in the Earl of Lichfield’s private collection. (6)

It is not known whether Lady Anson bought the picture herself or whether it was originally bought by someone else. Perhaps it could have been bought by Thomas as a wedding present?

Lady Anson had shown an interest in art and in copying pictures before 1750. There was a room at Wimpole decorated with her copies.

Some years earlier she had copied a portrait of Dante, and her brother had written a poem in honour of the event. She was probably staying at Wrest Park at the time. Catherine Talbot, who had been staying there in the summer of 1745, wrote to Elizabeth Carter about advice given her by the artist Joseph Goupy who might have been engaged as an art tutor to the ladies in the absence of Thomas Wright.

ODE to the Hon. Miss YORKE, (afterwards Lady Anson,) on her copying a Portrait of Dante by Clorio. By her Brother, the (late) Hon. Charles Yorke, Esq. (7)

*“FAIR artist! well thy pencil has essay'd
To lend a poet's fame thy friendly aid;
Great Dante's image in thy lines we trace;
And while the Muses train thy colours grace,
The Muse propitious on the draught shall smile,
Nor, envious, leave unsung the gen'rous toil.”*

Jemima Grey, at Wrest Park, joked about her efforts at reading Dante and her fear of being stuck in one of the lower circles of hell forever. This was presumably at about the same time when her two friends, Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Yorke, might have been at Wrest together.

Elizabeth Carter replied to Catherine Talbot that she had had the same trouble with the Divine Comedy:

“It is a great consolation to me to find you are not a perfect mistress of Dante, for I was greatly mortified in looking over it last summer to perceive it so much beyond my comprehension, whereas I now think it very marvellous I could make out a single line.”(August 8th 1745) (8)

Sometime in the 1740s Hudson painted a portrait of Elizabeth Yorke, as she then was, holding the Dante drawing, which is now in the saloon at Shugborough. This is dated “before 1748” because it must date from before her marriage. The Dante drawing would suggest that it probably dates from 1745, the time when the young ladies were studying “The Divine Comedy”.

In August 1750 Lady Anson wrote to Jemima Grey that she was copying '5, 6, 7 or 8 hours a day' 'the Duke of Devonshire's picture', lent to her at her father's London home, Carshalton. This is intriguing and Eileen Harris suggests she was copying the Chatsworth version of the Shepherds of Arcadia. This was certainly at Chatsworth after 1761, but it is not known when it was bought. The Duke had a house near Carshalton.

In another 1750 letter to Jemima Grey Lady Anson refers to sitting for her portrait. An almost, but not quite, identical copy of the Hudson portrait exists which is probably this 1750 portrait. It is ascribed to “School of Hudson”, so it could be a revised version of the earlier picture, not necessarily copied by Hudson himself. The only significant difference between the two pictures is that in the 1750 version Lady Anson is holding the drawing of Poussin's Shepherds of Arcadia. This used to be at her family home, Wimpole, but it was sold to a private owner in 1967.

Assuming that this portrait, in which she holds the valuable Poussin drawing, was painted in 1750 it is not the only evidence that the theme of Poussin's Shepherds was very much in Lady Anson's mind in that year.

Lord and Lady Anson visited Shugborough in August 1750, via Wrest. By 8th September they were at Wimpole with Lady Grey and Mr Yorke. Lady Anson wrote to Thomas from Wimpole to thank him for her stay.

“Gentil Berger...”(9)

The first portion is in French and refers to Honore D’Urfe’s endless pastoral novel “Astree”. Lady Anson was probably reading the copy in the Shugborough library.

(Translation from Priory-of-sion.com)

Kind Shepherd,

Since I left the pleasant banks of your beautiful Lignon, I have not ceased to complain of jealous Time which with such swiftness has carried me away from the happy moments I spent. For sure, if there is one place on the turning Globe of this World where one spends days spun with Gold and Silk, it is among those flowery Vales, those shady hills, those clear rippling waters, and especially those very friendly Shepherds and Shepherdesses found there. It is so that one can admire nothing else in any other plains, not even the herds that wander there. I believe then that there is no need to tell you how vexed I am to be so far removed from such great happiness, and from you, my kind Shepherd, to whom I owe so much of what I have tasted of it: Alas, I wish I could be more worthy and more capable of making a similar return, but poor as I am, I can only assure you that as my heart merits better the name of Mirror of True Recognition, unlike the fountain in the gardens of the Palace of the Louvre, the one of the Fountain of True Love, such that if you looked into it you could see yourself, as lovers one could see each other in this beautiful Spring, before the bad Fairy cast a spell on it.

Wimpole, Sept.20th.

So far, Dear Sir, Astrée has helped me to thank for your kindest Entertainment, and tho' the Language is drawn from Fiction, the Sentiments are most sincere. I think I have nothing to add to my acknowledgements, except mentioning that our journey was as prosperous as it was wrong way Bias (as you say at Bowls) and we made a very material discovery by it, wh. is, that we may prolong our next visit to you, by a day or two saved in the journey by Relays of Horses.

The same letter includes a reference to Sanderson Miller’s gothic ruin for Lord Hardwicke at Wimpole:

"Mr Miller has compleated his scheme for the Ruin to the approbation of every body, and when it is finished it is to be called Chicheley Castle, the auncient Seate of Archbishop Chicheley, in the reigne of Henry the 5th."

This neatly fixes the date for that design, though it was over twenty years before it was built. Sanderson Miller is also a forgotten “third man” at Shugborough, having been asked for advice on the Classical Ruin across the river from the house, as well as on an unknown project in 1752 – perhaps the building of the Pagoda. This does not mean he designed these things. He was heavily involved with Lord Lyttelton at

Hagley, and was responsible for the construction of Stuart's Doric Temple 1759. He may have continued to advise at Shugborough into the Stuart period – accentuating the close links between Hagley and Shugborough. (10)

Lady Anson's Poussin drawing, featured in her 1750 portrait, is the "portrait" shaped first version. Scheemakers relief on the Shepherd's Monument is based on the far more famous Louvre version, "Et in Arcadia Ego" which is originally "landscape" shaped. Scheemakers has had to squeeze the Poussin image into the "portrait" shape without altering the detail. He added an urn to the top of the tomb to make the tomb more recognisable in the medium of a white marble relief.

In detail Scheemakers is very close to the original, with the other major difference that his carving is mirror image.

This is understandable as most prints of Poussin's picture available in the 18th century reversed the image, a common quirk of engravings in which the etcher has engraved a plate from a drawing and the image is reversed when printed. Eileen Harris gives an example of a reversed print, by Bernard Picart, in her article "Breaking the Poussin Code" in Apollo Magazine (2006).

There is a simple explanation for this complication of the changing shape of the image. If the Scheemakers relief was commissioned as a result of Lady Anson's enthusiasm for Poussin and shepherds in 1750 it is very likely that the sculptor would not have had access to the version of the picture that Lady Anson knew and of which she owned a sketch.

The earlier Chatsworth version of the subject was little known, and in the private possession the Duke of Devonshire. Lady Anson had the drawing and she may have painted her own copy, but it is highly likely that Scheemakers would only have had access to prints of the Louvre version, such as the mirror image example illustrated in Eileen Harris's article. He would surely have had instructions about the size and shape of the relief he had been commissioned to carve and so he would have had to adapt the Louvre version to the portrait format. He may not even have been aware that there were two different versions of the picture.

This does not help establish a definite date for the Scheemaker's relief, except that it is reasonable to guess that the commission came sometime after 1750, the summer of Lady Anson's Poussin and Shepherdess interest.

If this is the case it is unlikely that Thomas Wright designed any of "The Shepherd's Monument" as such as his career had taken him in a different direction in 1750 and it is likely all his Shugborough work was planned in 1748. Of course he could have sketched one of his typical arbours or alcoves at a later date. It may or may not be a coincidence that the Wright design which is most similar to the hypothetical original Shepherd's Monument, the inner rustic part, is the alcove sketch for Badminton from 1750. It is just possible that Scheemakers was asked to make a relief to fit an existed structure by Wright – though this begins to seem like a fantastically complicated theory considering that Stuart also had a hand in the final product some years later!

There are other clues to support the Stoic interpretation of the monument.

A letter by William Shenstone on December 23rd 1743 mentions an inscription at Lord Lyttelton's Hagley Park that might be related to the Shepherd's Monument:

“Mr Lyttelton has built a kind of alcove in his park, inscribed “Sedes Contemplationis” near his hermitage. Under the aforesaid inscription is “OMNIA VANITAS”, the sides ornamented with sheeps bones, jaws, skulls etc festoon wise. In a nitch over it, an owl.”(10)

This does seem very much like a precursor of the Shepherd's Monument, in the garden that has closest links to Shugborough, and the “all is vanity” motto, though of biblical origin, matches well the Stoic mood. Over the years people have suggested that the cryptic inscription on the monument might have some connection with the theme of “omnia vanitas.”

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The inscription on the Shepherds Monument shows eight letters separated by dots:

O.U.O.S.V.A.V.V

And below this on opposite sides:

D. M.

The “D M” is a common feature of Roman funerary monuments (of which there were examples in the garden at Shugborough.) The letters stand for “Diis Manibus”, dedicated to the shades. This certainly implies that the monument as a whole should be seen as a memorial. The meaning of the other letters must, surely, relate to the significance of the relief and to the meaning of the monument as a whole.

If it is a memorial there are no clues to whom it may be dedicated. The 1767 poem implies a lost love, a Shepherdess, but there is no reason to suppose its anonymous author knew anything of its true meaning. The Cliffords' History of Tixall says:

“the meaning of these letters Mr Anson would never explain and they still remain an enigma to posterity.”

There is no reason to doubt that Thomas Anson kept the answer to the enigma to himself.

A possible candidate for the subject of this complex memorial is the Ansons' mother. There is no known date of her death and no memorial to her in Colwich church – but neither is there a memorial to their father, who died in 1720, or to Thomas himself.

In recent years there have been many attempts to come up with an explanation or translation of the inscription. Most depend on completely non-historical elements. Any convincing answer must tie in with what is known of the people responsible for it and their ideas. Of course there may be a startlingly mystical answer or a clue to an occult secret, but such things would go against everything that is known about Thomas Anson and his friends.

An interpretation that has often been quoted and needs to be put in its proper context is that the letters stand for the first line of a kind of verse:

“Out Your Own Sweet Vale, Alicia, Vanishes Vanity.

Twixt deity and man thou, shepherdess, the way.”

This tantalising and poetic fragment came from Margaret, Countess of Lichfield, grandmother of Patrick Lichfield and great-grandmother of the present Earl. It is a mystery in its own right, but is certainly not in any way a piece of historical evidence.

Lady Lichfield invited a friend, Oliver Morchard Bishop, to go through the Anson Papers in the early 1950s, and they still show his pencilled guesses of their dates. It seems likely that the confusion of the anonymous long poem with Anna Seward goes back to this time, as in a letter to me written in 1983 Lady Anson assumes the long poem to be by “The Swan of Lichfield.” She also believed that the Shepherd’s Monument was “put up to Lady Anson the Admiral’s wife by Thomas Anson after she died.” This is obviously impossible as the earliest reference to the monument is in Lady Anson’s letter of September 20th 1756, over three years before her death.

Unfortunately Lady Lichfield’s comment on the “Alicia” fragment poses more questions than it answers:

“The poem was told me as a child by the curate at my home Whillington in the valley of the Lune in Westmoreland, Yorkshire and Lancashire. A quite lovely part of the world. Do you know it? I was astounded when the letters fitted even to the U for You. In those days (& before) lovers used to scratch on windows with a diamond ‘ I L U ’ that meant ‘ I love you. ’ So the U is right for it means ‘you’ in lovers language.

“Now this Alicia story is a lovely story & a long one & belongs to the Latin & Greek scholars who knew how the Romans were weaned from worshipping their Gods and Goddesses to becoming Christians. In my youth the clergy were great scholars & this curate was no exception, in fact he was brilliant. He was a wonderful storyteller & kept us enthralled. He told us there are 7 hills outside Rome & on one of them was a Shepherdess called Alicia who’s name means “the light of all happiness.” To follow her you had to give up all the vanities of the world & be simple, pure, tender & loving & guide & guard her flock from all evil. Selfless devotion was the service of this Shepherdess Alicia. Thus were the Christian virtues taught the Romans by turning their Gods and Goddesses into Christians by these means. No scholar ever agrees that my childlike story of Alicia can be the answer. Perhaps it is too good to be true and too simple. Who will ever know?

“But I tell it to you. The V V at the end of the line jogged my memory & Vanishes Vanity came to me & then the whole line & when each word fitted each letter I was astounded. I tell it to you for what it is worth & make of it what you will.”

This seems to be clear enough but no-one, in spite of every effort and the resources of the internet, has ever found a story of a shepherdess called Alicia on the hills of Rome. This letter implies that Lady Lichfield remembered actual lines of verse but a conversation with Patrick, Lord Lichfield suggested that she had invented words to

match the letters. This possibility is supported to a letter she wrote to Paul Smith in 1987:

"... one day I was showing some friends round the garden and when we came to the Shepherd monument I told them the story about Alicia the Shepherdess and suddenly I looked at the letters and the penny dropped, and I quoted "Out of your own sweet vale Alicia vanish vanity twixt Deity and Man, thou Shepherdess the way". I was absolutely astounded and positively shaken that suddenly these words had come to me. The people who I was showing it to were rather dull and not very impressed with anything, so I could not go into it further with them, but when they went I told my husband and he said to me 'Are you sure you aren't making it up?' and I said 'NO, how could I have, it was all so quick and spontaneous and vivid.'"(11)

Whether or not there ever was a story of a shepherdess Alicia told by the curate (identified as Mr Prince in this letter) it seems that the lines were not remembered but invented to fit the letters. This is the only reasonable explanation. The two lines make no sense as poetry in terms of metre or even grammar. This story, though mysterious in its own right, is a red herring and not in any way a piece of historical evidence.

Lady Lichfield's friend, the author Morchard Bishop, (his real name was Oliver Stonor) suggested another interpretation that has been quoted at various times: (12)

"Optimae Uxor is Optimae Sororis Viduus Amantissimus Vovit Virtutibus."

This translates as:

"Best of wives, best of sisters, a most loving widower vows virtuously."

This begins in the style of a standard Roman funerary inscription but it makes little sense. If it were authentic it would be difficult to imagine who was writing. The Ansons' mother may have been "best of wives and best of sisters" given her sister's marriage to Lord Macclesfield, but who would the "most loving widower" be? Assuming the inscription is of the same date as the relief it can't have been George Anson as Elizabeth was alive until 1760. Could Thomas have had a secret marriage and have been a widower? It's possible but unlikely. Morchard Bishop suggested this in a letter to Lady Lichfield in 1951 and there is no suggestion that it is anything other than his own invention.

The only solution to the inscription which fits everything that is known of the background and history of the monument was suggested by Steve Regimbal, an American lawyer and playwright.

He noticed the eight letters of the inscription are the initial letters of a Latin translation of "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity." (13)

The Latin translation, from the English, is:

ORATOR UT OMNIA SUNT VANITAS AIT VANITAS VANITATUM

This may seem odd at first but this is an absolutely correct translation into Latin of the text in the King James Bible, as distinct from the text of the vulgate Latin Bible. “Orator” is the most likely word to come up with for “Preacher”, though the Latin bible has “Ecclesiastes”, the title of the biblical book the phrase comes from. “Ait” is the formal “spoke” or “declared” which gives extra emphasis in this sentence.

I have confirmed with two classics authorities that this is a correct translation from English into Latin.

This phrase matches the Stoic mood of the monument and the Poussin picture perfectly. It is also directly related to Lord Lyttelton’s “Omnia Vanitas” monument which Shenstone described long before the Shepherd’s Monument was built. Thoma Anson was a close associate of Lord Lyttelton who was, in turn a supporter of Elizabeth Carter and James Harris.

It may be that the Latin was produced in this way to be more cryptic, or it may be that there was no Latin Bible at hand. On the whole it seems a typical piece of 18th century mystification. Thomas Wright, for example, wrote of a Latin inscription in his own home written in Greek to make it more difficult to read.

This may not be the final answer but it is so appropriate it hardly seems worth expending any more energy on the puzzle unless some other useful clue should turn up.

If this is the answer it may be that the Shepherd’s Monument is not a memorial to any individual but a more generally philosophical conception.

To sum up-

The ideas and meaning of the Shepherds Monument seem to belong to the period after 1750, the years of earthquakes, of the fashion for Stoicism and of Lady Anson’s interest in Poussin.

It is hard to remove Thomas Wright from the equation altogether though there is no evidence that the monument (as such) existed in 1747/8 and it is unlikely that Thomas Wright ever visited Shugborough after this date. The inner part looks like a Wright alcove. Its stylistic similarity to other Wright designs was one of the clues that led Eileen Harris to identify Wright as the architect of the first phase of the developments at Shugborough. It is possible that the design began with a Wright drawing of an alcove, like his sketch for Badminton. There is a slight possibility that Scheemakers had been commissioned to produce the relief several years before 1756 and that it was originally intended to be placed in this hypothetical Thomas Wright alcove - but this seems to be an over complicated theory.

On the whole the monument seems to belong to the 1750s – and most probably from near the time of its earliest known mention in 1756. If it does date from 1756 or thereabouts, with or without an element of Wright in it, could it be that its final form is really the work of James Stuart – usually thought to have appeared on the scene several years later? If this strange structure could be proved to be the work of the

leading architect of the Greek Revival it would have a whole new layer of historic significance.

SOURCES

- 1) Quoted in many sources, including the Wikipedia article on Theodora.
- 2) A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot vol. 1 (Rivington, 1809) Available on Google Books
- 3) From the list of letters from Lady Anson to Jemima, Countess Grey. Bedfordshire Records Office.
- 4) A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot vol. 1 (Rivington, 1809) Available on Google Books
- 5) Epictetus: Moral discourses, enchiridion and fragments, translated and introduced by Elizabeth Carter (Everyman's Library, Dent, 1910)
- 6) The source for Lady Anson's interest in Poussin is – Eileen Harris: Cracking the Poussin Code (Apollo Magazine, 6th August 2007. Available on-line.)
- 7) A select collection of poems with notes. The sixth volume. (J Nichols, London, 1780) Available on Google Books.
- 8) A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot vol. 1 (Rivington, 1809) Available on Google Books
- 9) Staffordshire Records Office. Anson Papers. D615/P (S)/1/3. The English Translation is from <http://www.priory-of-sion.com/>
- 10) William Shenstone: The Letters of William Shenstone (Basil Blackwell, 1939)
- 11) On <http://www.priory-of-sion.com/>
- 12) Staffordshire Record Office. Anson Papers. D 615/P (A)/ 26

Romantic Landscapes

The “Greek Revival” that runs as a thread through the story of Thomas Anson and Shugborough is more of a matter of ideas and attitudes than of art and architecture. A new interest in nature and landscape is as much part of it as a desire to build reproductions of Greek buildings. The landowner, like Lord Lyttelton, might build his temple as a place to sit and contemplate the beauty of his estate, whether wild or “improved”. The 1748 developments at Shugborough, though only a few years earlier, were in a different style - a fanciful mixture of exotic buildings. In a very short time this rococo mixture was becoming out of date as a taste for the romantic and natural became fashionable – a taste that was far closer to the spirit of the Greek Revival and its recovery of Arcadia.

Thomas Wright followed the new fashion in the 1750s and a priceless fragment reveals that Thomas Anson was eagerly exploring the latest romantic landscapes in 1757.

The last reference to Thomas Wright in the Carter/Talbot correspondence dates from August 12th 1752 when Elizabeth Carter wrote to Catherine Talbot looking back over their friendship, and perhaps trying to make up for a disagreement:

“I always think with gratitude of the obligation I owe Mr. Wright. It was he who first excited my curiosity about you, and kindly contributed all in his power to gratify it, All the expectations which he had raised fell below my own experience: and that realities may sometimes exceed our most lively imagination, is a useful and very pleasing truth on which you so civilly congratulate me, indeed I never have found, nor desire to find any such thing.”(1)

There is a vague sense that Mr Wright has become a figure from the past. Even in 1750 there is no mention of him in Carter’s own letters. Her last mention of Wright was in June 1748 when he had been explaining his theory of the Universe to her at her uncle’s house at Enfield.

This may be an illusion. Carter’s letters to Wright do not survive and neither do his to her, though they must have existed when Montague Pennington wrote his memoirs of his aunt in the early 1800s. He printed one letter from Wright to introduce the Carter and Talbot correspondence, but no others.

By 1750 Wright had moved his base to Stoke Park, north of Bristol, the home of Norborne Berkeley, MP for Gloucestershire and later Lord Bottetourt and cut himself off from his earlier friends. Wright may have met Berkeley in 1749, or during his mysterious lost year of 1748 when he seems to have worked at Shugborough. This was certainly a major changing point in his life. He had finished his “Original Theory”, published in 1750, and was turning his attentions to landscapes and architecture. How did he meet Berkeley? There may be a feint clue in the fact that Berkeley and his sister and brother-in-law, the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, stayed with Sir George Lyttelton at Hagley in 1753 and Berkeley visited William Shenstone’s garden “The Leasowes”. Perhaps Berkeley had been a visitor at Hagley during

Wright's time at Shugborough and Wright had met him through the Anson and Lyttelton connection. (2)

In July 1750, Wright and Berkeley were busy rebuilding the house at Stoke Park.

Berkeley's godson George Barclay wrote to the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort describing Berkeley

“surrounded with Masons, Stone-cutters, Sculptors, Plasterers, Painters, Carpenters, Joiners, Smiths, Glaziers, and all the Implements of House-building. But as Pain, as well as Pleasure is checkered, he has got a most agreeable companion in Mr Wright, I truly think so, Mr Bacon (his Countryman) gives him a great Character.”(Lambert & Harding: Thomas Wright at Stoke Park) (3)

Soon after this exhausting work Wright and Berkeley went on an extraordinary horse-back holiday. Wright wrote a detailed account in a manuscript which has disappeared but it was printed in 1875 in *The Reliquary*, a quarterly archaeological journal. It was published as a “Tour through part of England with Narbon Berkeley, Esq., Prince, and late Lord Botetourt. By T. W” After 1750 there are just a few notes of other journeys. Wright spent most of his time in retirement at Byers Green, Durham.

Wright had a hand in the rebuilding of the house at Stoke Park but his most important contribution was his share in the laying out of the grounds. These became a showcase of a more romantic, picturesque, style of planting, featuring exotic shrubs from other parts of the world, including America. At the end of the eighteenth century it was this work for which Wright was known. George Mason described Stoke Park and praised Wright's work there and elsewhere in his “*Essay on Design in Gardening*”.

“The pieces of woodland in that domain are neither remarkable for extent in themselves, nor for the size of their timber; yet the management of them gave me, more than any thing I had seen, an idea of what might be done by the internal arrangement of a wood.”(4)

Berkeley had already begun redesigning the gardens before Wright arrived. Did Wright learn the specialist skills and knowledge required for the elaborate planting from Berkeley or had he studied the subject before? There seems to be no precedent in his earlier work except at Shugborough where exotic plants were one of the central interests of Thomas Anson from his early travelling days to his friendships with botanists Benjamin Stillingfleet and Thomas Pennant.

Thomas Anson and Lady Anson, the Admiral's wife, visited Stoke Park, while they were staying at Bath while the Admiral was engaged in naval work. Lady Anson's letter to Jemima Grey, on the 25th November 1755, is an important source for Stoke Park and the only time when Wright's name is mentioned in any of the Anson correspondence, either in the Grey papers at the Bedfordshire Record Office or the Anson papers In Stafford.

Lady Anson writes that she:

“dined in an Octagon Room with four windows (built by your Mr Wright) just at the angle of the House at the centre of the Prospect.”(5)

It is interesting that Lady Anson refers to him as “your Mr Wright.” She clearly associated Wright with Jemima at Wrest Park. Did she not know that Wright had been responsible for the Shugborough work? As far as can be gleaned from Wright’s notes he had worked at Wrest before Lady Anson’s brother Philip Yorke had married Jemima. He had been invited in 1745 but he seems to have had previous engagements. This was the year in which Goupy was at Wrest as drawing master instead of him and the ladies were studying Dante. Shortly after the Shugborough developments he was at Wrest building (amongst other things) a Mithraic Altar (with its own cryptic inscription) and a RootHouse and reconstructing canals

The “Octagon Room” at Stoke Park was one of the corner rooms of the South Front. Lady Anson goes on to describe the effect of the grounds:

“I need not add that the paths about the Ground, and the variety of foreground the Trees give to different parts of the Landscape, as one changes ones situation in walking about must be delightful, when the weather will permit one to enjoy them. Our Curiosity was by this time so excited that we determined to employ all the day-light we could get in seeing and get home in the dark”

The “we” is Thomas Anson and Lady Anson. Wright mentions no journeys away from Stoke Park during 1755 in his Early Journal Journal so it is possible that he was there when they visited.

One of the two letters in Thomas Anson’s handwriting that has survived by accident in the Staffordshire Records Office because it was enclosed in one of Lady Anson’s letters reveals that he returned to Stoke Park about eighteen months later. The date must be in the Spring or Summer of 1757 as he refers to Lord Lyttelton under that title. Sir George Lyttelton had been created Baron Lyttelton of Frankley on 18 November 1756.

“I shall take my final leave tomorrow morning. Capt Parker who desires the honour of being remembered to you, goes with me as far as Mr Berkeley’s , who I hear is at Stoke, so I shall aquit myself of a promise made him that if he would permit me to see his place in December I would certainly revisit it in a better season. God’s country, as Lord Littleton calls Brecknockshire, I shall not reach. Going up and down mountains takes a deal of time and is too tedious when one is alone. Mr Allen says that Monmouthshire, which I shall see thoroughly is a fine part of Wales. We dined yesterday at Prior Park.”(6)

This is a wonderful and precious fragment of Thomas Anson’s own tone of voice. The “too tedious when one is alone” may sound effete, but Thomas was sixty two years old by this time and his taste for adventurous and dangerous travel had probably dimmed. He was at the forefront of fashion, though, visiting these new landscapes, and a surprisingly large part of his life as a man of taste still lay ahead.

Mr Allen, Ralph Allen, was the rich promoter of Bath and Prior Park his own spectacular house and garden at Bath.

Thomas is going on to Monmouthshire. It is a very reasonable guess that he is crossing over to Chepstow by the ferry (only a few miles beyond Stoke Gifford, following the route now taken by the Severn Bridge) and that he is on his way to Piercefield.

Richard Owen Cambridge, a friend of the Ansons (one of Thomas Anson's mourning ring recipients) and of James Harris, had failed to buy the spectacular estate above the River Wye in 1748 but he did help its owner Valentine Morris lay out its walks and views over the Wye Valley. It became one of the most spectacular and admired of the picturesque landscapes.

Wright visited "Bersfield" on his summer jaunt with Norborne Berkeley in 1750:

"Betwixt this and Chepstow on the same side of the River is a noble situation, with woods and lawns, above the rocks, which are there most romantic, with a very extensive prospect of the Severn, Wye, and Gloucester shire &c. belonging to Mr Morris, the place is called Bersfield but much in want of a suitable mansion house."
(7)

The "suitable mansion house" was not built until 1785 and is now a ruin. The prospect of the River Wye became a locus classicus for the new picturesque taste.

Richard Owen Cambridge, a satirist and writer on landscape, may have known Thomas Anson since the 1740s as both were members of the Divan Club. Cambridge remained a close friend until Thomas's death when he was one of the recipients of a memorial ring.

Lady Anson mentions Cambridge as a gossip ("Mr Cambridge has just stepped in with news of new government appointments" she wrote in June 1757) and Horace Walpole called him "The Cambridge Mail".

Cambridge was an influential writer on garden and landscape in "The World" a magazine from 1753-1756 edited by Edward Moore, a protégée of Lord Lyttelton

Lady Anson visited Cambridge's own garden at Twickenham in April 1750 – "*Mr Cambridge will make his place very pretty; he has charming view of the river now he has opened it.*"(8)

In 1754 Cambridge wrote in *The World*:

"I remember the good time when the price of a haunch of venison with a country friend was only half an hour's walk upon a hot terrace; a descent to the two square fish ponds overgrown with frog spawn: a peep into the hog sty or a visit to the pigeon house. How reasonable was this when compared with the attention now expected from you to the number of temples, pagodas, pyramids, grottos, bridges, hermitages, caves, towers hot houses etc etc"(9)

This could almost be a dig at Shugborough. The Shugborough pagoda had been built only two years before, in 1752.

The new fashion was for improving nature and working with the Spirit of the Place, producing landscapes which would be reminiscent of the paintings of Poussin, and Claude Lorrain. The enthusiasm for natural rather than artificial or geometric gardens is part of the new way of looking at the world of which the Greek Revival, in ideas or architecture, is a symptom.

The Greek Revival in architecture is generally considered to have begun in around 1758 with Lord Lyttelton's Doric temple as its first famous example. This temple was a place in which to sit and look out at a natural landscape, which Lyttelton called his "Vale of Tempe". The new interest in Greek style brought with it the desire for ideal wildernesses, Arcadia found in Britain. The romantic quest for nature and the Greek revival go hand in hand.

Part of this same movement was the fashion for the sublime. Edmund Burke wrote of the aesthetic effect of dramatic and even terrifying landscapes in his "*Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*" in 1757.

Burke's book was certainly appreciated in Mrs Montagu's social circle:

Mrs Montagu wrote to Elizabeth Carter:

"Here I was interrupted by a visit from my friend Mr. Burke. It is a noble privilege in a London life that one can never be too long in the same temper; whether willingly or unwillingly, one must steer "from grave to gay, from lively to severe". I am very glad you liked Mr. Burke's book, he is as good and worthy as he is ingenious."(10)

Thomas Anson's friend Benjamin Stillingfleet had been one of the first to write of the dramatic effect of the Alps, and Lord Lyttelton had been one of the first to write in picturesque terms of landscapes of Wales. His "Account of a Journey into Wales" was written in 1756, though published in 1774, and is a very early "romantic" description of wild landscapes. Thomas Anson may well have known this work before he set off on his own journey across the Severn in 1757 – prompting his reference to Lord Lyttelton's view of Brecknockshire as "God's Own Country."

1757 is also the publication year of Thomas Gray's "The Bard", a poem about the destruction of the druids by Edward 1st, an early example of a poem creating a romantic and storm-tossed view of Wales.

A few years earlier in 1754, Lady Anson, travelling with Thomas, had explored Dovedale and the equally romantic landscape of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, but she was unimpressed.

The Spa at Buxton, which she was presumably visiting for her health, was a very unpleasant experience. She dated this letter to her husband "Purgatory September 22nd,"

“ Scarborough with all its evils was a Palace of delights to this place. Constant stinks all over the House, an absolute destruction of Breakfast from the badness of Butter, with the like, are among the trifling inconveniences. But the two capital grievances, & which I do not think I shall ever be able to endure, are the bathing, & the noise. The first unites all the inconveniences of hot & cold bathing as it is necessary to tip over head, & feels very cold while one is in the water, where one is obliged to stay several minutes, tho I could not bear it the prescribed eight minutes this morning, & then one comes out with the chillness of warm bathing instead of the glow wch makes one pleasant instant in coming out of cold water. But if this could be re-submitted to, the other I doubt will really have any bad effects. I mean the almost Eternity of Noise. I lost one nights sleep in Ashbourne, & yet the Inn there was the Cave of Quiet compared with this, last night I could not get to sleep ‘till One o’clock, & then rather because I was tired down than because there was any cessation of walking over my head, talking of each side, rumbling chairs & tables all round, all which waked my a half hour after five this morning and continues still & I have now the Headache, & am quite stunned & unable to understand anything I attempt to read, wch is yet the only amusement I can propose, as there can be no such thing as walking without the Temptation of a Prospect or the Shelter of Trees, in both of which respects Stilton & Newmarket have the advantage of this place, and as any partys from it are impossible from the distances & nature of the Country etc” (11)

Only the presence of Thomas Anson (nearly thirty years her senior by the way) makes this visit to desolate Buxton bearable:

“I own obligation to Mr Anson beyond all power of return, for exchanging his own Elysium for this worst of Purgatorys, yet I am concerned he ever came; for my own sake as much as his & could wish he would leave me, & forget he has ever seen me here. Miss Anson who was so good to intend coming was prevented by a cold.”

She adds a PS:

“Mr Anson allows the description of the place to be strictly just...”

On the way to Buxton they had made some visits, including one to Staffordshire’s own romantic landscape:

“...we dined at Mr Vernon’s on Wednesday, saw Dovedale & Mr Okeover’s Raphael yesterday which is by far the finest Picture I have seen.”

Lady Anson did not feel enthusiastic about such wildernesses. On the 28th of September she wrote a lengthy paragraph to her husband in praise of her brother-in-law’s virtues:

“Indeed, I find, wch I thought impossible, my Love & Regard for your Brother rise higher every instant: it is not possible to owe more to a friend than I do for him, he bears with me when I am unreasonable, sometimes pitys me kindly, sometimes chides me gently, advises me with friendship & judgement, reproves me with Sense & Knowledge, forms me with his Politeness, & amuses me with all the art of the elegant badinage.”

But she did not share his taste for wild landscapes:

“...every day’s experience tending to convince me how much better it is to live among Knowls than Hills, in a beautiful inhabited cultivated country, rather than what is called romantic Country.”

Though Shugborough is a gentler landscape Anson did plant pines on Cannock Chase to give an Alpine impression. He and his immediate circle were at the forefront of this new taste for the picturesque and wild nature. This foretaste of the romantic period is significant. Before the 1750s it seems as if no-one took any notice of mountains, rivers, forests, or of nature in its wilder forms, at all – especially not close to home, as distinct from foreign travels.

In fact the term “picturesque” was coined by William Gilpin in his *Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales, etc. relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the summer of the year 1770*, not published until 1782. To Gilpin “picturesque” meant a view that would look good in a picture, and nature, in his eyes, needed to be adjusted to make a satisfactory composition. This and his following books popularized the idea of sketching holidays in a period when travel became easier and, presumably, local inns in these faraway places became hotels that would be comfortable enough for the new tourists. Gilpin’s first book covers just the area of Piercefield and its views of the Wye. The word “romantic” to describe these views was in use several years before this. Wright uses it in his account of his trip to the Wye in 1750, and a few years earlier Elizabeth Carter had referred to plans for a “romantic trip to the Goodwin Sands” with him.

The 1767 anonymous poem describing the estate ends with a romantic view of Thomas Anson’s domain. By then large areas of Cannock Chase had been planted with firs to give a backdrop to the park. He was doing what he could to bring a touch of the picturesque to his generally rather flat landscape:

*“Along the sunny ridge that overhangs
Eastward thy fair demesnes, & wide commands....
Westward, with near approach, & bolder swell,
The wavy hills rise mountainous, befringed
With gloomy groves of never-changing leaf,
Cedar, or pine, or fir: plantations vast,
And venerable! ...
...Oft let me wander, when the morning ray
First gilds thy groves & streams, & glittering towers,
And meditate my uncouth DORIC lay...”*

It is so easy to see the history of the arts in neat periods. Romantic is often thought to follow classical. In fact this fashion for landscape and adventurous trips to wild places appears at exactly the same moment as the classical style emerges in music and art. At the same time as Lyttelton and Anson are exploring Wales James Stuart is beginning his career as a Greek Revival neo-classical architect. The two things are opposite sides of the same coin.

The distinction, though, between this early interest in the “romantic” and the full fledged Romantic period is that the later fashion was dominated more by individual feeling, the individual experiencing emotion and nature and giving value to their own outlook, whereas the classical mind would be less personal. This is not, though, a hard and fast difference. The individualist viewpoint began to emerge not long after with Rousseau’s “Confessions”, a whole book devoted to the author’s intimate feelings, which was written in the 1760s, partly when Rousseau was in exile in Staffordshire, but not published until 1782.

Though Thomas Wright has no further part to play in the story of Shugborough it is worth saying something of his retirement. He left a large amount of unpublished manuscripts, most of which are in Newcastle Public Library. These cover scientific and mythological subjects, some alarmingly ambitious, and they include several accomplished poems. Though he writes in his Journal that he retired to Byers Green to “prosicute” his studies these projects must have been begun during the 12 years or so that he was based at Stoke Park. He travelled north from Stoke Park on several occasions to work on his house.

His cosmology was still the continuing theme. At some point he wrote his “Second Thoughts” on his Theory of the Universe. This is, at first sight, bizarrely primitive compared to the original book. The strangeness confirms the idea that Wright was a visionary who could not find the language that would express his vision. From the 1730s he had struggled with the idea of multiple universes that must share a common, divine, centre. In “Second Thoughts” they are inside each other, like Russian dolls, and the stars are volcanoes on the inside of the shell. (12)

Today he could simply call these universes “dimensions” and any science fiction fan would know what he meant.

He was a man out of his time, crackpot on the surface, but with something of a visionary.

Wright’s only publications after this were his designs for Arbours and Grottoes – also a financial failure.

There is a completely unknown and unpublished work which unites all Wright’s obsessions.. It may have been a product of his years at Stoke Park or of his retirement at Byers Green. It is a fragmentary sketch, over 100 pages, of a vision of Wright’s own Utopia. “The Fortunate Isles or a Discovery of the New World” brings together his interest in Druids, Cosmology, Architecture, Landscape Design and almost everything else under the sun.

It was a massive project, madly ambitious according to its optimistic table of contents.

The opening letter sets a fictional background for the book, which is imagined as a manuscript on plates of lead in the Erse tongue found “enclosed in a stone chest or case amongst the ruins of Herculaneum.”

The introduction rings in most of the knowledge of the Druids which Wright would have learned from classical writers, including a story from Lucian that Hercules

Ogmios (Hercules as an old man) led people by golden chains attached to their mouths to Britain. Wright includes a drawing of this. The chains represent language and knowledge. "Ogmios" was later interpreted as a reference to ancient celtic "Ogham script."

The fragments that survive are from Book 1 and describe a City called Heliopolis. This is clearly intended to be in the centre of an idealised ancient Britain. Wright, wonderfully, mixes Druid theories from Stukeley, classical sources including Plato's legend of Atlantis, with his own cosmology:

"In the centre of the sacred island upon a spacious hill, sheltered from the south by green mountains rising above each other like a natural theatre and overlooking all the rest of the island is the City of Heliopolis to which a double serpentine approach leads through the woods and over the neighbouring mountains." (13)

The "serpentine approach" is taken from Stukeley's plans of Avebury.

The centre of the city is a Temple of the Sun, the Solarium, which is surrounded by a circle of temples. The Emperor "alternately inhabits" these "according to the sign of the zodiac or month of the year." The temples, with a circumference of three miles, are linked by "rich triumphal arches" in which "all the productions of nature are represented". On the outside of this is a terrace overlooking the city, with 360 statues, "dedicated to the phases of the year."

"Below them, on the declivity of the hill, are many winding walks, little lawns and grottos, with several promontorial projections on which are erected elegant temples of various constructions peculiar to the most distinguished attributes of the Deity."

"Below all these and circumscribing the whole hill is a circular river of limpid water, which rises out of an alabaster rock at about three eighths of the ascent, and from thence in a spiral manner and forming many and various cascades it leaves the imperial garden and enters the city at a great cataract...I forgot to say that the spring head rushes out of a golden urn at the upper end of a natural grotto or cave, richly adorned with shells, 100 feet long and above fifty feet wide, in which are many compartments of exquisite design and invention, with the river genius in a reclining posture resting upon the urn which is supported on a bed of amethyst....."

The general scheme of the Druidic solar city is oddly prophetic of the writings of John Michell in the 1960s and 70s, such as "The View over Atlantis" and "The Dimensions of Paradise". The city at the sacred centre of the island reflects Wright's cosmology in "An Original Theory". The city is a microcosm of the universe.

His own retirement home, where he lived with his natural daughter Elizabeth and her mother, was a miniature "Heliopolis", as is the Menagerie at Horton with its ceiling image of Time and the zodiac. His description of the Byers Green house was published posthumously in "The Gentleman's Magazine" in 1793. Describing the ceiling design of his own home he writes:

“That of the sofa part is the Sedes Beatorum, or supreme heaven, with the hours and times disposed around it.”

His interest in puzzles and mysteries is reflected in the motto over the dining-room door which is “transposed in Greek characters to make it more difficult to read:

MIHI VIVAM QUOD SUPEREST AEVI”

“Give me no more years than those to which I am due.”

George Allen of Darlington wrote, in 1793:

“There was something flighty and eccentric in his notions....”

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St Germain and the Great Secret

A letter from Lady Anson to Thomas Anson sheds light on one of the most intriguing and notorious characters of the 18th century, Count St. Germain. He was a composer and violinist, and was reputed to be an alchemist who had discovered the secret of eternal life. He claimed to be three hundred years old. He made every effort to create an aura of mystery around himself and his origins, admitting that “Count St Germain” was a pseudonym. Most recent writers believe him to have been the son of the deposed Prince of Transylvania, which would explain his convincingly aristocratic manner and his wealth.

Lady Anson’s letter had gone unnoticed until the present writer stumbled across it in the bound volume of her letters to her husband. It had been written to Thomas as an appendix to a letter to Admiral Anson, who was in Bath taking the waters for his gout. After a couple of pages addressed to her husband she says that what follows is for Mr Anson and she adds some racy gossip, which was obviously more to Thomas’s taste than George’s.

The most significant part of it is her comments on St Germain. She is extraordinarily indiscreet. What she tells is taken from the mouths of the secret service, then operating in the Admiralty building where she was living. St Germain may seem to have been a harmless eccentric but for a few weeks he entangled himself in international politics. His behaviour and what he had to say could have had serious implications.

Though she treats the affair as simply gossip Elizabeth was in a position to know more than most women of what was going on in the world. In the case of St Germain doubly so as her brother, Joseph Yorke, was directly involved in the case in his capacity as Minister Plenipotentiary at The Hague.

Lady Anson and Thomas would have been interested in his political intrigues in 1760, but in the 1740s they are very likely to have known him as a musician. They could well have heard him and met him at London society gatherings and private music making. He had first appeared in London in 1745. Horace Walpole wrote of him: “He sings, plays on the violin wonderfully, composes, is mad, and not very sensible.”

By chance the most detailed source of information on this man of mystery in that period is Lady Anson’s sister in law, Jemima, Countess Grey.

St Germain had already become known as a composer before Lady Grey invited him to perform at her St James’ Square house in 1749. He had contributed some arias to a “pasticcio” opera, “L’infedelta delusa” for the Haymarket Theatre in 1745.

Jemima Grey knew about music. Shortly before her encounter with St Germain she had witnessed the spectacle of the great firework display to celebrate the Peace of Aix La Chapelle with music by Handel. Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot were also there in the crowd. Miss Talbot’s mother was terrified by the explosions.

In May 1749 Lady Grey heard St Germain perform in a private recital at Lord Morton's house. Lord Morton had invited Lady Grey's family, resident at their London Home, Powis House. As everyone was in London for the peace celebrations this would have included her husband, Sir Philip Yorke, Lady Anson's brother, and it is possible that the Ansons were there as well. Lady Grey described St Germain in a letter to Lady Mary Gregory on 8th May 1749.

"But now I think of it I forgot in my last to mention a great & extraordinary Event, one of those unexpected fortunate Events which may happen perhaps once in a whole Life, & which help'd among other new & surprizing Things to make the last Thanksgiving Week so memorable. Guess it if you can? Nothing less I assure you than the Hearing St.-Germain Play. ...

"We went accordingly, met him at Dinner & spent the whole Evening together. After Tea, Coffee &c, his Violin, a Harpsichord & two or three other Instruments appeared & they began. But unfortunately he had a dress'd Coat on which confin'd his Arms, & makes him always very miserable, & there followed many Ceremonies & variety of Consultations about getting a Habit more to his Mind. At last a little Linen Bedgown of LcIy. Browne's was proposed by her Ladyship (who was come in to be of the Party as well as Sr. Robert) a Messenger dispatch'd for it into the next Street, & le Comte when attir'd in it made as much the figure of a Harlequin as you ever saw.

"But his Play indeed is delightful! The Violin in his Hands has all the Softness & Sweetness of a Flute, & yet all the Strength of the loudest Strings: his Execution is not of that rapid prodigious kind as Veracini & Geminiani; but his Play is more easy & harmonious & his Excellence is Softness. He piques himself you know upon the Expression of the Passions in his Music especially the Tender Ones, & both his Composition & his Manner are almost all Affettuoso: for his Musick is entirely fitted to his own way of Performing & would be nothing I am convinced from anybody else."(1)

This very expressive, emotional, style of performing seems very similar to the style of Anton Kammel who was in London twenty years later and who became a close friend of Thomas Anson's. There was clearly a fashion for romantic and expensively dressed virtuosi.

"After he had Play'd a considerable time, Frasi who had been appointed to meet him arrived after the Opera. She is his Favourite Singer I find, he teaches her his Songs & sings Duets with her & her Only: but he also sung some Songs alone & his Manner then is past all Description...He has absolutely no Voice, what he sings with is entirely Feign'd & so low that in a large Room it is quite lost, yet he will raise it sometimes to Thunder out a Song of Rage as much as he will Languish in One of Love: for his Action is still more Expressive than his Sounds. He Accompanies himself without Book, & addresses himself in all he has to express to the Company: he Frowns & Scowls & Threatens & looks like a Fury when he is to be in a Passion, & is so terribly soft & languishing in his Tender Fits that there is no supporting it. - Woe! be to the Person within the reach of his Eye! for he makes Love so violently they must have a most Inflexible Countenance to stand it. As he is wholly possess'd by the part he is Acting, I believe it would be address'd equally to an Old Man or a Young Woman who was his next Neighbour, but poor Miss Yorke who happened to be in that

Situation, & not much used to be so address'd nor understanding what he was saying, would have been very glad to be out of it, & look'd so Embarrassee we were not a little diverted. - In short we stay'd there till Twelve o'clock at Night, & were very much entertain'd either by him or at him the whole Time. - I mean the Oddness of his Manner which is impossible not to laugh at, otherwise you know he is very sensible & well-bred in Conversation."

Lady Grey invited St Germain to play at her own house in St James' Square.

"He [Saint-Germain] was here at the Concert on Wednesday, & as a great Favor staid late on purpose to give us a Couple of Songs when most of the Company were gone. It is vastly agreeable as well as Odd to hear him. His Skill is certainly very great, & his Songs are as much suited to his Expression in Singing as his Solos are to his Playing. I had never heard Justice done them before, even by his Other favorite Disciple. She fritters them & makes them so fine that they are nothing: she apes his Manner without having his Force. But I have persuaded myself since I heard him to wonder less at her being so Caught. No Fine Lady can stand at his Elbow while he Sings, & fancy herself a real Object of all that Languishment without its going to her Heart.

"He is an Odd Creature, & the more I see him the more curious I am to know something about him. He is everything with everybody: he talks Ingeniously with Mr. Wray, Philosophy with Ld. Willoughby, & is gallant with Miss Yorke, Miss Carpenter & all the Young Ladies. But the Character of Philosopher is what he seems to pretend to, & to be a good deal conceited of: the Others are put on to comply with Les Manieres du Monde, but That you are to suppose his real Characteristick; & I can't but fancy he is a great Pretender in all kinds of Science, as well as that he really has acquired an uncommon Share in some. - Well! so much for Monsr. le Comte de St. Germain...."

For many years the only book about St Germain was by Isabel Cooper-Oakley. She did not know of these detailed descriptions of his social and musical activities which bring him to life so vividly. Her book mixes history with the wild fantasies that grew up around him after his (presumed) death. St Germain is believed by some to be still alive and all kinds of esoteric legends are associated with him. Cooper-Oakley does, helpfully, give incredibly detailed background of his political activities, which directly relate to Lady Anson's letter.

St Germain claimed to have been to India with Clive in 1755 and brought back secrets, including what he claimed was a method of purifying diamonds. After 1757 he was becoming a well known figure in Paris. Cooper-Oakley suggests that some of the more scurrilous stories which circulated at the time were started by an imposter, who pretended to be St Germain in the Paris Salons.

She quotes a "Heer van Sypesteyn":

"Many of the wild stories had probably nothing to do with M. de St Germain and were invented with the object of injuring him and making him ridiculous. A certain Parisian wag, known as "Milord Gower", was a splendid mimic, and went into the

Paris salons to play the part of St Germain – naturally it was very exaggerated, but very many people were taken in by this make-believe St Germain.” (2)

She mentions other sources that confirm that the bogus St Germain was Lord Gower.

Could this possibly be true?

In 1757 Lord Gower was Granville Leveson-Gower, (1721-1803) who had been First Lord of the Admiralty in 1749, and briefly MP for Lichfield, in the second seat, side by side with Thomas Anson, in 1754. Though from a Tory family he was a supporter of the Duke of Newcastle, as were the Ansons. He became an increasingly powerful figure, later becoming Marquess of Stafford. Outside his political role he was an important influence in Staffordshire industry, supporting Wedgwood and the development of the canals.

Could he have been this frivolous young imposter in Paris in 1757?

He was not particularly young. He would have been 36, but that was probably a similar age to the real St Germain. His later career suggests a man of seriousness and dignity.

Whoever the impersonator was he must have been someone who knew a lot about the real St Germain in order to act a convincing parody. A genuine English gentleman who had moved in the same social circles as Lady Grey and the Yorkes a few years earlier certainly could have known the Count well enough to imitate him but it does seem rather unlikely behaviour for a serious politician. Perhaps someone was masquerading as Lord Gower masquerading as St Germain?

Curiously Anton Kammel, the composer who was a close friend of Thomas Anson in the last few years of his life, mentioned a "Lord Thenham" as a supporter. This could have been Earl Gower who was commonly known as Lord Trentham. In his time as an MP Lord Trentham's patronage of the opera had been used as reason to attack him by political opponents as it meant he encouraged foreigners!

In March 1760 St Germain arrived at The Hague claiming to be on a secret mission on behalf of King Louis XV. The King of France was keen to negotiate with England to break up the system of alliances that lay behind the Seven Years War. This devastating war involved all the European powers and spread to the New World and India. England was opposed to France, who had planned to invade England in 1759 but who were pushed back at the battle of Quiberon Bay on November 20th. This defeat may have been a reason for the King of France to try a new approach.

By 1760 St Germain had become an intimate of King Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour. The king had given him the Chateau de Chambord as a base for his mysterious experiments. Some sources give the impression that these were purely scientific, others that St Germain was being kept by the king as a pet alchemist. The truth would reveal a lot about the King's character in this supposedly rational age.

There is an enormous amount of documentation about St Germain's mission. Cooper-Oakley includes letters from both sides, and, of most interest here, letters from and to Lady Anson's brother Joseph Yorke who was Minister Plenipotentiary at the Hague and who was directly involved with St Germain when he arrived.

The most important question, of course, was whether St Germain had any authority at all to act as an official representative or whether he was simply mad.

The Comte D'Affry, French ambassador at the Hague, was strongly opposed to St Germain. He did everything he could do to undermine the Count. The evidence on St Germain's side does suggest that he did believe he was acting for the king, but in his own letters he does talk about the King's weakness and lack of decision. It is always possible that St Germain simply imagined that what he was doing was what the king really wanted.

The King's reputation was at stake, not only his political reputation but also his credibility. The official French views tend to support the image of the Count as a scientist whom Louis XV was enthusiastically, and expensively, supporting. If people in France and England were to believe that the Count was a charlatan it would imply that the King was gullible or foolish.

By March 21st the Prime Minister, Lord Holderness, had written a secret letter to St Germain by way of Joseph Yorke. The King and the British Government were interested in discussions but very wary indeed. By March 28th Joseph Yorke had told St Germain that he needed to produce proof that his mission was legitimate. The ambassador, D'Affry, had received a letter from the Duc de Choiseul at Versailles claiming that there was no truth in St Germain's claims. Joseph Yorke, who referred to the "romance of Count St Germain" wrote that on talking to St Germain about this "for the first time, I caught him wavering a little."

Nothing more was done about any official negotiations. Cooper-Oakley gives further letters from an English diplomat, Mr Mitchell, to Lord Holderness, which refer to the Count amusing the French King with "experiments in Chemistry and that French King had him a present of the Chateau de Chambord."

The Count moved on to Paris and the affair seemed to have died down, but at the end of April or the beginning of May 1760 St Germain, though no longer treated seriously as a French agent, turned up in London. Lady Anson noted his arrival in a letter to Admiral Anson, who was at Bath with Thomas, at the beginning of May:

"St Germain is come, & has been with Ld Holderness, he is not confined, & the present Idea seems not to be that he has acted a deceitful part."

Clearly she knew who the Count was and there was no need to explain the background to the Admiral. Lady Anson, living at the Admiralty, was in an ideal position to pick up the details of the story and pass it on, even though she admitted herself that it was secret. The letter to Thomas she enclosed with her letter to her husband on May 2nd 1760 (only a few weeks before her death) gives more details:

“M St Germain is I believe under some kind of civil custody of a Messenger, & has been desired to leave this Country soon, for he cannot be permitted to stay in it. I am whispered, as a secret, that he tells some odd things, & says more: shows letters from many people of fashion in France, but rather of Friendship than of business, & some from people of Family whom he appears to have asked for money. He talks of his own general Benevolence, meaning no harm to any country; wishing well to France; would have assisted the French King if he would have followed his advice & relieved his subjects from the weight of Taxes; says he has it in his power to give the K. of France more than his Majesty can give him; with other such hints that seem to mean the Great Secret.....” (3)

This gives an insight into the Count’s own view of the situation. He would have assisted the French King “if he had taken his advice”. This may be the case in his failed peace negotiations. Perhaps he had acted on behalf of the King without the King being aware of it. But the most dramatic claim here is that the Count’s advice would have relieved the King’s subjects “from the weight of Taxes” and giveN him more “than his Majesty can give him.”

These hints Lady Anson interprets to mean “The Great Secret.”

In other words, the Count seems to be confirming everyone’s suspicions that his work for Louis XV was not simply a matter of entertaining chemical experiments but included alchemical projects to create limitless wealth. If this were made common knowledge people would believe that Louis had fallen for the charismatic Count’s ideas and had been supporting him at great expense. This would have been seen as hugely wasteful in terms of money but it would also have made the King seem extremely foolish. It may have been in many people’s interest to suppress an embarrassing truth.

Lady Anson continues, saying that the Count

“....owns the fluctuating state of French Politicks, and the present ascendant of the D. of Choiseul, to whom he hasforetold that (which?) would ruin France: Madame de Pompadour is, he says, against to-morrow what she was for to-day. He talks of Chambord & the money he has laid out there, butthat he is very indifferent about, tho' he supposes the Castle is already taken from him; he had a Guard allowed him there, but he despises, he says, those little greatnesses. This is a small, & I conclude a very trifling sample of what he has said, & yet is not to be talked of I believe. I understand it comes of MrWood who was sent to him in consequence of his writing a letter to throw himself at Mr Pitt's feet. Upon the whole it seems, like all the rest relating to the Man, odd, inconsistent and wild.”

“This, tho. it may appear to you a small matter, is my best anecdote.”

This suggests that St Germain had lost his support and that he was looking for a new home, as he suspects “the Castle is already taken from him.”

St Germain may not have been welcomed by the political world but he did stay in London for a while. The “London Chronicle” of June 3rd included an account of the “mysterious foreigner.” There is a set of violin solo sonatas published in London

“c1758” which might date from this visit, but, given the slow process of musical publication, more probably date from a few years earlier.

Lady Anson finishes her gossip with:

“Don’t you tell your Batchelor Freinds these strange stories. Indeed I do not know why I tell them you.”

In later years the Cont wandered Europe and apparently finally settled in the German town of Eckernforde where he died in 1784. Reports of his wanderings refer to his alchemical experiments, but it is very difficult to separate fantasy from reality. He does seem to have had some genuine scientific knowledge and used it for down to earth commercial work, including the manufacture of face cream. Perhaps he had no clear idea himself of what was real and what was not, but there is no doubt that he was a moderate composer and violinist and the town of Eckernforde promotes performances of his music.

A quick search on Google will reveal the mind boggling after life of the Count in esoteric legend and fiction.

SOURCES

- 1) David Hunter: M. St Germain, the Great Pretender.(Musical Times, Winter 2003)
- 2) Isabel Cooper-Oakley: The Count of St-Germain (Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1970)
- 3) Staffordshire Record Office. Anson Papers. D615/P (S)/ 1/2/462)

James Athenian Stuart

The Doric Temple at Hagley Hall is generally said to be earliest surviving building of the Greek Revival. It is the earliest to be in a simple baseless Doric order, the simplest possible form, ideal as a place to sit and gaze at the beauty of the landscape, rather than any grandiose statement. It was built by James Stuart for George, Lord Lyttelton in 1758/9. Shugborough has an almost exact copy built in 1760. It would appear that Hagley pipped Shugborough at the post, but as the mists of time fade it is becoming clearer that Stuart owed his career to Thomas Anson more than anyone at that Shugborough has a claim to be the true the birthplace of the Greek Revival in terms of ideas and architecture.

The architect, designer and painter James Stuart was the most important artistic influence on the Greek Revival and Thomas Anson's support was an important factor in his career. Many of Stuart's patrons had connections with the social circle of the Ansons, Lord Lyttelton and Mrs Montagu. Architectural historian Kerry Bristol has argued that Thomas was the key influence. (1)

James Stuart, later known as "Athenian Stuart", and Nicholas Revett announced their plans to travel to Greece and measure and draw Greek architecture in 1748. They travelled to Greece in 1751, via Venice, where Sir James Gray, the British Resident, nominated them for membership of the Society of Dilettanti.

The first volume of the *Antiquities of Athens* (not published in 1762, and subscribed to by both Thomas and George Anson) illustrated mainly smaller late classical buildings which, by chance or design, were suitable for copying as garden monuments or to supply features for other architectural projects. This proved to be a wise move and even before the book was published the drawings were being copied for architectural and interior design projects. Though the buildings covered in the first volume were mostly of a later period than the great days of Athens they were satisfied a fashionable desire for the Grecian taste.

Thomas Anson may have had a stronger desire for the Greek than most if his 1734 Mediterranean journey was a quest for the roots of Greek culture. His garden already had pseudo-Greek ruins on the far side of the river, beyond the gothic ruins part of which survives as the seat of a Druid. Stuart's adventure would bring back knowledge of authentic Greek features, reflecting the Greek ideals of simplicity and truth. The ideal of simplicity would be the inspiration of Stuart's earliest buildings, his Doric Porticos, which are not based on any authentic originals but use the simplest order of baseless Doric columns.

The Temple at Hagley may not have been first Doric Portico that Stuart built, but it is the earliest surviving and has an iconic status.

The first mention of this temple, as a scheme, is in a letter from Lord Lyttelton to Mrs Montagu, the leading hostess of intellectual and artistic London society, in October 1758.

Lyttelton writes:

“Mr Anson and Mr Steward who were with me last week are true lovers of Hagley, but their Delight in it was disturbed by a blustering Wind, which gave them colds and a little chilld their Imagination itself. Yet Steward seems almost as fond of my Vale, as of the Thessala Tempe, which I believe you heard him describe when I brought him to see you. Nor could the East Wind deter him from mounting the Hills. He is going to embellish one of the Hills with a true Attick building, a portico of six pillars, which will make a fine effect to my new house, and command a most beautiful view of the country.” (2)

J Mordaunt Crook in his classic 'The Greek Revival' says 'the date is sacrosanct' – as the starting point of the movement. (3). This is open to question, but his statement shows how important he felt the event to be in cultural terms.

Lyttelton’s letter is a very important document for several reasons.

Firstly, it proves that Stuart and Anson already knew each other in October 1758. It has usually been assumed that the Hagley temple was the first building of the Greek revival and that Shugborough followed with an almost exact copy a year or so later, possibly in 1760. This in turn has led some writers to assume that all Stuart's work at Shugborough must come from after this date, including his part of the Shepherd's Monument. The Hagley portico was actually constructed by Sanderson Miller. Miller was an architect himself but he also took responsibility for converting other artists' drawings into practical buildings. He had advised at Shugborough in the 1750s perhaps seeing to the realisation of designs by Wright, including the Pagoda.

Secondly, the letter clearly places the idea of the portico in a landscape. Lyttelton may have seen his own Hagley valley as an imitation of the “Thessala Tempe” but he was an early enthusiast for the picturesque landscape. The Greek style is intimately connected with the beginnings of the romantic love of nature, whether Mediterranean or an English Arcadia. This is an immensely important point. The Greek Revival, as far as this study is concerned, is a movement of ideas and not just art and architecture. It is a matter of an attitude to the world and to the value of meaning in art and nature. The accuracy of a Doric Temple may be a tribute to the Greeks but it was also a place to sit and contemplate nature and the truths beyond the surface of the material world – to “contemplate the Forms”, or divine Ideas, as James Harris wrote in his “Three Treatises” of 1744. Harris was a friend and literary colleague of Lyttelton and Lyttelton was certainly aware of these Platonic philosophical concepts. In the 1750s the fashion for landscapes turned to the natural and romantic - and Thomas Anson had visited various places which followed the new style including Thomas Wright's Stoke Park.

Lyttelton’s letter reveals that Stuart was already known to Mrs Montagu in 1758. She was to become one his most important patrons. Lyttelton may have introduced Stuart to Mrs Montagu, but at what point did Thomas Anson come into the picture? Though

this is the earliest documentary proof of Stuart and Anson together the evidence, as it comes together, begins to suggest that the partnership of Anson and Stuart predated it by several years.

The Hagley temple was not Stuart's first architectural project. Interestingly the two earliest commissions for which there is documentary evidence were for the only two of Thomas Anson's contemporaries in the early days of the Dilettante Society with whom he definitely had a continuing friendship with. Thomas Villiers, Lord Hyde and later Earl of Clarendon(1709-1786) is mentioned in a letter from Lady Anson to Thomas in December 1749 when she mentions that she expected him to be at Shugborough when the letter was received. Simon, 1st Earl Harcourt., (1714-1777) was one of the recipients of a mourning ring at Thomas Anson's death.

Stuart built a Doric Portico for Lord Hyde at The Grove. The Portico has vanished and it may not have been a prototype of the two almost identical Doric Porticos at Hagley and Shugborough. There is a reference to "Mr Stewart's six column Grecian Doric Portico" at The Grove in Sanderson Miller's diary for September 21st 1756. (4) This date is precisely the day after the first written evidence of the Shepherd's Monument. If Stuart's contribution to the monument had been constructed by September 1751 it is possible that the Shepherd's Monument could predate the temple at The Grove.

Villiers continued to be involved in Stuart's work well into the 1760s when he writes to Lady Spencer about Stuart's slow and expensive progress at her house. In November 1764 Stuart was trying to build support for his (successful) application to succeed William Hogarth as Serjeant Painter at the Office of Works. He wrote to Thomas Anson that Lord Hyde had said that "nothing can contribute so much to it as a recommendation from Mr Anson."

This suggests that Hyde had a high opinion of Anson and of his influence.

In December 1756 Lord Harcourt wrote that he had "boldly adventured to follow a design of an old building which I have seen amongst Mr Stuart's drawings of Athens." Lady Harcourt had been looking at Stuart's drawings as early as February 1756, only four months after Stuart's return from Greece, but it is possible that Stuart had begun work at Shugborough several months before this date.

If Stuart was already working for the two Dilettante members most closely connected for Thomas Anson as early as this it is perfectly possible that the Shepherds Monument, and its Scheemakers relief, could date from as early as 1756 and that earlier estimates of the dates of Stuart's work were misguided. Articles in the fabulously illustrated in "James Athenian Stuart – The rediscovery of antiquity" (ed. Soros) by Kerry Bristol and others now suggest that Stuart's work for Anson started in 1756. If this is true the Shepherd's Monument could be Stuart's earliest architectural project, even though it may have been shared in a mysterious way with Thomas Wright. The article on by Julius Bryant on Stuart's villas and country houses accepts that Anson was Stuart's most important patron, that Stuart may first have been able to work with experienced builders and craftsmen (including, perhaps, Sanderson Miller) at Shugborough, and that the expansion of Stuart's clientele began with Anson's neighbours, including Lord Lyttelton. It is a reasonable possibility that Anson introduced Stuart to his Dilettante Society friends Villiers and Harcourt.

If so Anson must have been in a position to meet Stuart as soon as he came back to England in 1755. As with the case of Thomas Wright Anson seems to have had a key role in his life and yet neither left any clue about how it began. There is a mystery about Anson's relationship with the Society of Dilettanti. Though he was one of the earliest members there is no evidence of his continuing involvement with the Society - and yet the two Dilettanti members who certainly did commission architecture from Stuart were the ones most closely connected with Anson.

Did Anson have an invisible role in the background of the Society's support for Stuart, or did he somehow approach the artist when he arrived in London to live with the notorious jacobite Dawkins?

It should be mentioned, though, that even before this, Stuart approached Charles Watson-Wentworth, the 2nd Marquess of Rockingham. Stuart had noted his name in a list of subscribers to his Greek project, presumably with a hope that they would be interested in original work. One feature he designed for Rockingham's vast house, Wentworth Woodhouse, was a series of stucco panels for the grand saloon which seem to be related to panels on the Cat's Monument.

Another possible piece of evidence that Stuart was working at Shugborough earlier than previously thought possible is a reference in one Lady Anson's letters to "the project of a greenhouse" on 17th July 1756 probably refers to the first thoughts for Stuart's Orangery.

As this date has previously been thought far too early for Stuart's involvement it has been suggested in the past that there had been an earlier Greenhouse that was replaced by Stuart's elaborate building. This seems to be an unnecessarily complicated theory. Though the building may have not been built until much later (Philip Yorke saw the foundations under construction in 1763) it could well be that Stuart was discussing the "project of a greenhouse" in July 1756.

The Cat's Monument, which may be based on a Thomas Wright design, had certainly not yet been built in 1749 when Lady Anson wrote of a possible source for stone for "Kouli Kan's monument." The final version has artificial stone plaques which are similar to some of Stuart's very early designs for Wentworth Woodhouse. It is possible that the Cat's Monument plaques (and possibly the complete structure) could well date from about the same time as the completed Shepherd's Monument – and that this could well be as early as 1756.

There is a relationship between the two monuments. Now that vegetation has been cleared the Cat appears to look across the river towards the Shepherd's Monument. The two could well have deliberately sited to give this effect.

The simplest explanation is usually true – according to the principle of Ockham's Razor.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Stuart was, indeed, working at Shugborough by July 1756, and that the Shepherd's Monument was completed then.

Whether the monument was based on an existing Wright structure or simply adapted a Wright design (similar to the arbour drawing in “Arbours and Grottoes published only the year before) may never be known but though the structure is peculiar it is not visibly made in two parts.

If it is right that the monument was completed in July 1756 (and it cannot have been more than two months later than this) it has to be true that it was designed sometime before therefore Stuart’s working relationship with Anson must predate July 1756.

How much earlier than July 1756 would the Scheemakers relief have been commissioned? It would have to have been conceived at the same time as or before the final design for the monument. How quick a worker was the sculptor?

Stuart and Scheemakers became regular partners after 1759 the starting date of their monument to Admiral Howe in Westminster Abbey. Many of Stuart’s first monumental designs, including the Howe memorial and one for Lord Hardwicke, depend on the Anson connection. Ingrid Roscoe, who has studied his career in detail and written his entry in DNB, suggests 1756 as the date of the Poussin relief. She sees this as the start of the Scheemakers/Stuart partnership. This is true in a way – as it was the first project in which both were involved – but there is a strong possibility that the relief had been commissioned or already existed before Stuart came on the scene and that it was originally intended to be placed in a Wrightian alcove which may have already have been sketched.

Perhaps Stuart was called on to revise the design once the relief was ready for installation.

The details may never be known but the conclusion has to be that Stuart was first involved with Anson, his most important patron and the driving force in his career, some months before July 1756 and that the Shepherd’s Monument, as it stands now, was completed in that month. The mysterious structure brought together the three artists, Wright, Stuart and Scheemakers, the interest in Stoicism, Poussin, the mood of the early 1750s and whatever personal meanings were in Thomas Anson’s mind. At the same time Stuart and Anson were contemplating a Greenhouse, which became the Orangery, and, surely, the project to build the series of buildings based on "The Antiquities of Athens" was already forming in their minds.

If this is true the "sacrosanct" date and place in which the ideas of the Greek Revival came to life is not 1758 at Hagley but 1756 at Shugborough.

Stuart’s work at Shugborough covers a period of up to 17 years, between 1756 and Anson’s death in 1773. The series of garden monuments survive but there were also alterations to the in the house.

Philip Yorke wrote to his father Lord Hardwicke on August 22nd 1763:

“Appartments whc are fitted up and furnished with all the Elegance & ornaments wch the Arts of Italy & the Magnificence of China can afford...I do not admire Stewart’s Painintgs in the vestibule; they are hard and the colouring is (...) I have not hinted this to Mr Anson.” (5)

This may be a reference to a painted room which was demolished when the house was extended again at the end of the century. The existence of this painted room had been forgotten until a few years ago when pieces of brightly painted plaster were found under the floorboards. In Stuart's time an upper floor was added to the Wright extensions, creating space for extra bedrooms and the painted room may have been in this new extension.

They are now on display as tantalising fragment. Yorke's wording suggests there may have been paintings by Stuart as well as the decorations.

Lord Hardwicke was also unimpressed by Stuart's talent as a painter. He wrote to Philip:

"the Owner of Shugborough will go on to comb, dress, & improve it, in the manner you represent. He has all the means of doing it in his hands. He had always Taste...In Designs for Sculpture, He is I believe in the right to make use of Stewart's Scavoir-faire; but I wonder He suffers him to daub his House with his Pencil...He is certainly no Painter." (6)

Stuart created a painted room with similar details at Spencer House. His Greek inspired style spread to every part of interior design, including furniture and decorations. There are two elegant pier tables, now in the Red Drawing Room, which are simple and elegant, and tripod stands designed for the library. These show the fine detail and high quality of his designs, though it seems his own painting was not on such a high level.

THE DORIC PORTICO

Though documentary evidence for James "Athenian" Stuart's work for Shugborough survives, including a fascinating collection letters to Thomas Anson, there is still a haze of confusion about the Doric Portico.

It is virtually identical to Lord Lyttelton's temple at Hagley, which was built by Sanderson Miller from Stuart's design during 1759. The Hagley temple was built to command a view. In contrast the Shugborough version is on low ground and was originally the grand entrance to the walled garden. Old illustrations survive which show the door at the back. There is a mystery about the date of the walled garden. It may have predated the portico. It is possible that the Shepherds Monument originally stood against the wall – though parts of the foundation which became exposed when a tree fell in the 1990s suggest the wall was a short distance away from the monument.

There is a typically puzzling reference in Lady Anson's last letter to Thomas at Shugborough. She died on 1st June 1760 from an "epidemic sore throat and fever."

On 24th May 1760 she wrote to Thomas:

"Mr. Stewart desires to be informed of the number & size of your Dorick columns; having made the Drawing of your Portico, which he wants to make the Scale to before he sends it." (7)

It is quite difficult to work out what Lady Anson actually means here. “The number & size of your Dorick columns” suggests that Stuart is asking for dimensions of some columns that already exist. Could this be true? Did the portico already exist or did Thomas have some spare columns lying about? Does he mean to ask what size Thomas wants the columns to be? And yet Stuart has already made a “Drawing of your Portico.”

Could it be that the Portico had already been built, presumably by Sanderson Miller (perhaps an unsung third man in the architectural history of Shugborough) and Stuart’s sketch had not given dimensions? A lot must have been left to Miller if so, but this might have been the usual procedure. Wright did not make architectural plans for his designs, he simply drew sketches.

But surely Stuart would not need to question the number of columns?

There seems to be no simple solution. The fact is that the Portico is a copy of the Hagley one, so it is hard to see why Stuart needed to know any details.

THE ARCH OF HADRIAN 1761 onwards

The story of the Shugborough monuments finally becomes very much clearer with the Arch of Hadrian.

It was the first building to be based on the drawings Stuart and Revett made in Greece (not published until 1762). An estimate for the construction of this, from builder John Hooper, is dated November 1761. It cost £282 /14s/1d (2)

The arch became a memorial for Lady Anson. Horace Walpole wrote to the Earl of Strafford on June 7th 1760:

“I dare say you are sorry for poor Lady Anson. She was exceedingly good-humoured, and did a thousand good-natured and generous actions.”(8)

There is, of course, no written record of what her death meant to Thomas. The relationship may not have been romantic but she had been a regular visitor at Shugborough, a travelling companion to Bath and beyond, and was an enormous influence on the style of the house. To a certain extent the place was designed to suit her taste, particularly the Arcadian elements.

Catherine Talbot wrote to Elizabeth Carter on June 24th 1760:

“I had to-day a very painful, though a very gratifying message from Lord Anson with a mourning ring.” (9)

Her brother Joseph was still affected three years later when Elizabeth Carter met him in Holland:

Elizabeth Carter to Catherine Talbot in Holland 1763

“Well, we did dine with Sir J. Yorke yesterday, who has a very fine house, and appears as an ambassador extraordinary should do. You will love and honour him more than ever, for talking of nothing so much as of Lady Anson, whose death he declared to be the greatest loss he ever had, or ever could have : he talked of her likewise the night before, and every occasion seems to bring her to his thoughts.” (10)

The Marchioness Grey saw the Arch in August 1763:

“We have been this Morning through a very Stormy Wind on one of the Neighbouring Hills that commands a very fine prospect, & on which is erected a triumphal Arch out of Mr Stuart’s Athenian designs & under his Direction. A most beautiful Structure that has been long begun, but will now I understand (by a Drawing Shewn but not mention’d) be applied to a different purpose from what could be first intended.”(11)

Scheemakers, who may or may not have collaborated with Stuart on the Shepherds Monument, carved the “trophies” as memorials to Lord and Lady Anson.

In August 1764 Stuart wrote to Anson:

“Scheemakers is very happy that you approve his Trophies. He says he cannot take less than 800l & wishes to have the (as he hinted to me) to have the payment completed as he is about purchasing the house he lives in...” (12)

The medallions on the lower stage were added in 1769, as Stuart writes to Anson 7th June 1769:

“Mr Scheemakers has modelled one of the medallions for the Arch & I am much pleased with it, Neptune & Minerva are establishing naval discipline – he is pleased with it himself.” (13)

THE GREEN HOUSE 1763/4

Though Lady Anson implied that a Greenhouse had been contemplated in 1756, the elaborate Orangery or Green House, sadly now lost, may only have been begun in 1763. It stood on the site of the present Rose Garden. Philip Yorke’s letter to his father, Lord Hardwicke, in August 1763 suggests the foundations were newly laid at the time of his visit. Philip had arrived at Shugborough with Thomas from a visit to Hagley:

“The place has received many embellishments since I saw it in 1748 & the owner is still improving it both within doors and without – I cannot help comparing it with the Virgin’s Chappel at Loretto – wch remains in its original State an ordinary Brick Edifice, whilst the superstition of its Votaries has surrounded it with one of the finest & most costly churches wch the Romish religion has to boast of – Thus Mr Anson has left his small Family Hall, little drawing room & narrow passage, but added to them on each wing Apartments wch are fitted up and furnished with all the Elegance & Ornaments wch the Arts of Italy & the Magnificence of China can afford. He still meditates further Additions to the House, in order to gain more room for guests and is enlarging the Offices. In his Garden he is laying the foundation of a handsome Green

House, designed by Stewart, and in his Grounds he is erecting an Arch of Portland Stone.....”(14)

The letter goes on to describe the Poussin relief of the Shepherds Monument, which Yorke does not seem to have seen before.

The Green House was a showplace for sculpture as much as for plants, as the 1767 anonymous poem describes:

*“...the ravish’d eye
Surveys he miracles of Grecian art
In living sculptures, godlike shapes & forms
Excelling human!” (15)*

The work displayed included modern statues, presumably based on classical originals, of Hymen and Narcissus, Flora, and a particularly striking Adonis.

In 1770 a mural of by Nicholas Dall, who painted several views of the house and landscapes in the 1760s and 1770s, was installed in the Orangery.

Stuart wrote to Thomas (25th September 1770):

“The subject for the Green house is a view of the temple of Minerva Polias with the Caryatides, on the principal ground, & in the distance he has introduced what remains of the Odeum of Pericles, both of them Subjects engraved for my second volume....The water fall, with the scenery accompanying it, he has contrived with great ingenuity. I think it will have a wonderful effect, it must astonish & delight every spectator.” (16)

THE TOWER OF THE WINDS

The Tower of the Winds was begun in 1764, based on the Horologium of Andronikos Cyrrhestes, in the old agora in Athens. The original building had relief carvings of the winds on its eight sides.

Joseph Banks, later President of the Royal Society, but then a young botanist, visited Shugborough in 1767 was unimpressed.

“But the Temple of the Winds is what he seems to have least of all succeeded in here he has left the ancient design making two Porch entreys instead of one and leaving out that most elegant freeze said to be the work of Phideas, to which the Building certainly owes the most of its beauty in the original as this plainly shews for want of it appears scarce more Beautiful than a common Octagon Pidgeon house .” (17)

Watercolours of the Tower at Shugborough do show the reliefs of the winds, and the anonymous poem of July 7th 1767 describes the reliefs in detail:

*“Mark, on the gorgeous frize, in high relief
Embossed, the powers of air...” (18)*

It is most likely that the reliefs were painted trompe l'oeil panels and they had not been fixed when Banks visited.

The Tower of the Winds was converted into a dairy at the end of the century.

The basic design of the tower from Stuart and Revett's illustrations was frequently repeated in variations, including one by Nicolas Revett at West Wycombe for Sir Francis Dashwood.

THE LANTHORN OF DEMOSTHENES

The Lanthorn of Demosthenes was planned in 1764. It is interesting to discover that Thomas Anson was responsible for the positioning of the monuments. In June 1764 Stuart wrote:

"I cannot figure to myself where the lanthorn of Demosthenes can be placed to more advantage than on the spot you showed me near to the Ladies seat. I long to know the spot..."

"Pray is the place for the lanthorn of Demosthenes any where by the Canal & near the fine Clump of Trees Just at the Angle, pardon my inquisitiveness. I cant help thinking about it."(19)

By Canal, Stuart must mean one of the artificial waterways, now lost, which included Wright's cascades and colonnaded bridge. Other Wright landscapes, in Ireland, as well as Wrest, include "canals". The Trent and Mersey canal was not built until 1770, but the Lanthorn was already standing (without its tripod and bowl) in 1767 when it is mentioned in the anonymous poem. It is possible that the Lanthorn was intended to be seen from the river, while sailing or rowing in an ornamental barge.

Doctor Johnson visited Shugborough and wrote a Latin epitaph on the Tower of Winds. Curiously Boswell's Life of Johnson suggests this was a visit to "Lord Anson's seat" and that within half an hour of visiting Johnson was making critical remarks of their host. Johnson was a political enemy of the Ansons. As Lord Anson died in 1764 it is possible that this story is garbled. Boswell describes the Corsican Goats in his book about Corsica and met Thomas Anson in 1772 at Mrs Montagu's, but was he at Shugborough with Johnson in 1764?

By the end of Thomas Anson's life Shugborough was fascinatingly varied landscape, of follies, waterways, statues and wildernesses. Even the expanses of grass were, as Sir John Parnell wrote in 1769, 'fertile to a great degree and bespangled with the finest flowers which grow naturally in fine meadows.' (20)

15 ST JAMES SQUARE

After Lord Anson's death in 1762 Thomas inherited Moor Park, which he sold for £25,000 and Admiral Anson's London house, 15 St James Square.

This provided the opportunity for Anson's largest commission from Stuart. Previously Thomas had lived in Spring Gardens, by St James's Park as his London home, and he

must have remained there during the several years it took for build his spectacular new house. The Admiral's old house was demolished in 1763, but construction of the new house took three years. It was the first stone fronted house in St James Square and the first house in London to use elements from Stuart's Antiquities of Athens, both externally and internally.

In June 1764 the first floor was reached.

Stuart wrote:

"The grand function of wetting the first floor was performed last Saturday when upward of 50 men had their bellies full of Beef pudding and Ale and your health was drank with very cheerfull huzzas, the Masters treated themselves and I had the honor of being president"(21)

Scheemakers worked extensively on details for 15 St James Square at the same time as his work at Shugborough, including volutes for capitals based on the Temple of Minerva Polias which also featured on the paintings by Dall in the Green House.

In September 1766 Stuart wrote to Anson, about the servants: *"the insolence of your people is insurportable."*(22)

The house was completed in 1766, by which time Thomas Anson was the ratepayer. Stuart was very proud of the building writing that it was *"a topic of much conversation among the Connoisseurs in Architecture."*(23)

Much of the decoration of this important house survives, in spite of extensions and alterations in the 1790s. Such a showcase of a house was designed to be experienced by visitors and the building came alive in the late 1760s with a series of breakfast concerts in which the latest music and finest musicians were added to the latest taste in design.

Kerry Bristol writing in Apollo (2000), argues that many of Stuart's commissions in other places owed their origins to introductions by Thomas Anson of which Hagley Park was the first. A major commission for painted interiors came from Philip Yorke, by then 2nd Earl of Hardwicke, in 1766, which is curious considering his comments about Stuart's painting in 1763. Other commissions came from Sir William Bagot, Thomas Anson's friend and neighbour, for a Green house at Blithfield Hall. Stuart also became Surveyor to the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich, thanks officially to Lord Anson, but no doubt originally due to Thomas's influence.

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That Universal Strain

The library at Shugborough was no pretentious status symbol but a cosy gentleman's study at the heart of a modest villa, a place for repose and serious contemplation. It contained the fruits of the classical and ancient world, according to the anonymous 1767 poem –

*" Nor shall the CLASSIC Library remain
 Unsung, replete with learning's genuine stores:
 Not metaphysic dream, or sceptic doubt,
 Or fierce polemic wrangle; but the songs
 Of ancient Greece, that universal strain
 That earth & Heaven applauded, & the Gods
 With rapture stoop'd to hear...." (1)*

Thomas's collection of books and art treasures was offered up for sale almost in its entirety in 1842 to pay for the disastrous gambling debts of Thomas, 2nd Viscount Anson (1795-1854). A few important pieces were saved but most of the collection was lost.

The 1842 sale catalogue is a good indication of the content of Thomas's library and is a guide to his interests, though it is easy to forget that he must have had other treasures and other books at 15 St James Square. The London house and its contents was sold at the same time.

The library contained all the standard classics that such a studious gentleman would be expected to own. These included very fine and valuable volumes including Aldine editions of Greek literature published in Venice in the early 16th century. There were also, not surprisingly, books of architecture and art, including a complete set of Piranesi engravings. There were classics of travel literature and early texts on horticulture. On the science side there was a 1713 edition of Newton's "Principia" and, more esoterically, Newton's "Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms amended" of 1727, which William Jones had assisted Newton with in the 1720s.

An intriguing feature of the collection was a group of first editions, in French, of works by Jean Jacques Rousseau, including the novels "Emile" (1762), two editions of "La Nouvelle Heloise" (1761), "A Discourse on Inequality" (1755), letters (1769) and "Remarks on his writings" (1767).

This suggests that Thomas had a fairly serious interest in the philosopher.

Rousseau was a powerful influence on radical thinkers in England. The presence of his works in the library is an indication that even in his late sixties Anson was forward looking and even revolutionary in his thought. In "A Discourse on Inequality" Rousseau famously declared that man "is born free but everywhere is in chains", and that society corrupts the essential goodness of humanity.

Rousseau may seem remote from Shugborough but there were surprising points of contact in the 1760s.

In the novel “Julie, of the New Heloise” (1761) Rousseau sends a principal character on the voyage round the world with Admiral Anson. Rousseau had been inspired by descriptions, in Admiral Anson's “Voyage”, of the unpopulated islands, Tinian and Juan Fernandez. In 'Julie' the hero visits the islands and returns to find Julie has made a wilderness garden which captures their spirit:

'I was looking at the wildest, loneliest spot in the whole of nature, and I seemed to be the first mortal who had ever penetrated within this wilderness.' (2)

It is curious coincidence these descriptions in Anson's “Voyage” inspired Rousseau, who in turn influenced a taste for more natural garden design, notably in the second Earl of Harcourt's garden at Nuneham Courtney.

Rousseau came to England in 1766 as a temporary exile after the publication of his “Social Contract” which made him an outcast in Europe as a supposedly dangerous revolutionary.

He stayed at Wootton Hall, near Ellastone, Staffordshire, from March 22nd 1766. He passed his time walking to Dovedale, studying the wild plants, and writing his “Confessions”. Erasmus Darwin, an admirer, went out of his way to meet Rousseau “by accident” while walking. This was so obviously contrived that the philosopher was very annoyed. Though David Hume, who had invited him to England, persuaded George III to grant Rousseau a pension, Rousseau became neurotically suspicious of Hume and returned to France in June 1767.

At Wootton Hall Rousseau's closest friend was 22 year old Brooke Boothby who visited him again in later life and called him “a divine man”. Boothby had lived in Stafford in his school years and after 1772 was part of the Lichfield literary circle with Darwin and Anna Seward.

Rousseau was near enough to Shugborough to be able to make a day visit – or for Thomas Anson to make the trip to Wootton. If he was an enthusiast, as the collection of books suggests, or simply curious, a visit would surely have been irresistible.

The 1767 poem is dated July 7th, just after Rousseau left Staffordshire. It describes, with its invocations of the natural landscape as well as the artificial world of the gardens, an idyllic world which seems close to Rousseau's principle of “back to nature” as well as Greek ideals of harmony and beauty. The park was apparently open to passing shepherds and shepherdesses, and it was a place where wild animals were safe from shooting and hunting:

*“To every creature that the vital air
Sustains, is ANSON'S kind benevolence
Extended: beasts of chace, & fowl of game
Secure in his protection roam at large
Unpersecuted. Never here was heard
The hunter's barbarous shout, or clam'rous horn*

*To fright the peacefull shades; or murd'ring gun
To stain the hospitable fields with blood."*

Thomas Anson was socially conscious. As with other grand projects in country houses a large part of the object was to create employment:

*"Nor to the love of arts alone (tho' that
Well understood is praise) ascribe we all
These stately fabrics, this so splendid scene:
Humanity, attention to relieve
Industrious want, instruct, employ the poor,
His better motive. Sacred Charity
Bids every pile with happier auspice rise."*

Thomas's exercise of "sacred charity" included building new cottages in the village in the 1760s. The paintings by Dall suggest the village buildings were integrated into the landscape and local peasants were free to come and go. Nathaniel Kent wrote of his enlightened treatment of the tenants on his Norfolk properties.

The poem ends in a romantic and picturesque mood:

*"Along the sunny ridge that overhangs
Eastward thy fair demesnes, & wide commands....
Westward, with near approach, & bolder swell,
The wavy hills rise mountainous, befringed
With gloomy groves of never-changing leaf,
Cedar, or pine, or fir: plantations vast,
And venerable! ...
...Oft let me wander, when the morning ray
First gilds thy groves & streams, & glittering towers,
And meditate my uncouth DORIC lay..."*

A carving of a mask of Pan on the sandstone caves on the Haywood Cliffs, now separated from the house by canal and railway, suggests that they were part of the original landscape, a Rousseau style hermit's cave.

It could be, of course, that these odds and ends encourage us to project attitudes onto the Thomas Anson which may not have been his, but it would be wrong to assume that all 18th century landowners had the same attitudes to their estates and peasantry. These pieces of evidence do suggest that the social views of a landlord inspired by the ideals of Greece could be extremely liberal. Equally the attitudes of some of the early industrialists were very far removed from 19th and 20th century stereotypes of capitalists. Some members of the Birmingham based "Lunar Society" were outspoken supporters of the French Revolution.

The sources of these social attitudes as well as philosophy of art can be found in the work of James Harris. Harris was certainly an acquaintance of Thomas Anson and his family records are the main source of information about Anson's musical life. Thomas's association with James Harris dated from July 1761 at the earliest, when Anson, Harris, and Thomas's cousin Sir Thomas Parker, were named as trustees in a

codicil to Lord Hardwicke's will. (4) They might have met long before this through Mrs Montagu's circle, through their shared enthusiasm for Greece or through a family connection. Harris was remotely related to the Lord Chancellor. His half sister, Catherine, was Lord Hardwicke's niece. Harris's second book "Hermes", published in 1751, was dedicated to Hardwicke. Harris's last book "Philological Inquiries" (1781) is the source of the anecdote of Thomas Anson sailing to Tenedos.

James Harris (1709-1780) is a forgotten figure these days. He may not have made a very significant impact on the world in the 18th century but he was the leading philosopher of the Greek Revival. Harris's work is a one man campaign against the materialism of the age and the philosophy that stemmed from John Locke. Harris's ammunition in the fight was the huge wealth of classical philosophy and his books are heavily annotated with the philosophical texts that support his arguments – with enough English translation to make them more widely intelligible.

His "Three Treatises", Dialogues on Art, Music Painting and Poetry, and Happiness, published in 1744, could be seen as the text book to the Greek Revival. It would be the ideal book to read while strolling around a classical garden, pausing for refreshment at a Doric Temple. In fact the dialogues are written in the dramatic context, following the style of Plato, of a walk from Wilton House to Salisbury. Though there is a lot of thorough logical discussion there are occasional interruptions when characters are allowed to go off into fanciful or poetic speeches. The style looks forward to some of the conversations in Thomas Love Peacock's novels of the early 19th century.

Thomas Anson's library held a first edition of "Three Treatises." The second edition, as well as Harris's later books, has a frontispiece by James Stuart, showing the close links between artists and thinkers of the Greek Revival.

Music was a very important part of Harris's life. He ran a music festival at Salisbury and was a close friend of Handel. His Treatise on Music, very much part of the baroque period, argues that music is not an imitative art but can create feeling which can help the mind assimilate the ideas of poetry.

The dialogue on Happiness in "Three Treatises" ends with rapturous speeches by a character called Theophilus, probably modelled on Harris's friend Floyer Sydenham, translator of Plato. These speeches include Stoic views of the universe in which every person is part of a whole, each person's life depending on each other – and:

"THIS whole UNIVERSE itself is but ONE CITY or COMMONWEALTH - a System of Substances variously formed, and variously actuated agreeably to those forms— — a System of Substances both 'immensely great and small, Rational, Animal, Vegetable, and Inanimate. As many Families make one Village, many Villages one Province, many Provinces one Empire; so many Empires, Oceans, Wastes, and Wilds, combined, compose that Earth on which we live."(3)

And reaches a climax, in which we can imagine these gentlemen of the Greek Revival contemplating Platonic philosophy in the strolls through their classical landscapes:

“HERE let us dwell ;— — be here our Study and Delight. So shall we be enabled, in the silent Mirrour of Contemplation, to behold those Forms, which are hidden to Human Eyes’ — that animating WISDOM, which pervades and rules the whole — that LAW irresistible, immutable, supreme, which leads the Willing, and compels the Averse, to co-operate in their Station to the general Welfare — that MAGIC DIVINE, which by an Efficacy past Comprehension, can transform every Appearance, the most hideous, into Beauty, and exhibit all things FAIR and GOOD to THEE, ESSENCE INCREATE, who art of purer Eyes, than ever to behold Iniquity.

“BE these our Morning, these our Evening Meditations — with these may our Minds be unchangeably tinged — — that loving Thee with a Love most disinterested and sincere; enamoured of thy Polity, and thy DIVINE ADMINISTRATION...”

Harris’s “Three Treatises” argue for the very high importance of art, in the broadest sense and that happiness comes only from the pursuit (not necessarily achieved) of a good life.

Another writer who had an important influence on the revival of classical ideals in the Arts – or his interpretation of them – was J. J. Winckelmann.

The only book to be held back from the 1842 sale, perhaps as a single representative example of Thomas Anson’s collection, was a copy of the French Translation of J J Winckelmann’s “Letter about the Herculanean Discoveries”, of 1762.

Winckelmann was the principle theorist of the Greek revival, though he never travelled to Greece himself. It was he who expressed the 18th century view of the purity of Greek art – of pure lines and white marble – which was not a true image of the art and architecture of the Greeks as it was at the time but an ideal. Later generations were shocked to discover Greek sculpture had been coloured.

Winkelmann’s attitude is likely to parallel Thomas Anson’s, the devotion to the “noble simplicity and quiet grandeur” of Greek Art. (Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture, 1755). “The only way for us to become great...is the imitation of the Greeks”. Winckelmann saw true beauty in classical sculpture in the masculine form. He was tragically murdered in a bedroom in Trieste on June 8th 1768 by a “fellow traveller”.

At the time of writing no-one has explained why this particular book by Winckelmann should have been kept back from the sale. (There are, in fact, other books from Thomas’s collection which are still in the library.) There is no evidence of a direct connection between Anson and Winckelmann, though John Dick, who acted as Thomas’s agent in the purchase of art in Italy, mentions in a letter that he had written to Winckelman for advice on a statue of Venus that Thomas was thinking of buying.

There is a further sign of the influence of Winckelmann in the 1767 anonymous poem which has inexplicably been ascribed to Anna Seward by some writers. It is clearly dated July 7th 1767 and has nothing at all to do with the poem Anna Seward’s father gave to Lady Anson in Lichfield in September 1756.

The lengthy poem is written in imitation of Milton, in blank verse, a style never used by Anna Seward.

Though many poets imitated Milton, including, in small doses, Lord Lyttelton, a possible candidate for the authorship is Richard Jago.

Richard Jago (1715-1781) was born at Beaudesert, Warwickshire, near Henley-in-Arden. He was a school friend of William Shenstone, the creator of the influential romantic garden at The Leasowes near Halesowen. Jago's "Edge-Hill" is a rambling poem in Miltonic blank verse which includes many passages describing both natural landscapes and man-made landscapes, including Shenstone's The Leasowes and also tributes to his friend Sanderson Miller, who built a

"Edge Hill" was begun in 1762 and published in 1767, the year of the Shugborough poem, which could almost be seen as a sequel or appendix to Jago's epic. It has passages which are very similar indeed to the landscape descriptions in Edge-Hill. It would be easy to imagine Jago visiting with either Shenstone (who certainly visited and wrote about the Shepherds Monument in a letter of 1759) or with Jago's close associate Sanderson Miller, a gentleman architect, who certainly worked at Shugborough in the 1750s and 1760s. Miller was an architect himself and also supervised the construction of buildings designed by others, including the Pagoda (and others) at Shugborough and Stuart's Doric Temple at Hagley. He was very likely the builder of the almost identical Doric Temple at Shugborough and the later Stuart building that were under construction in the 1760s.

There are very good reasons, therefore, to suggest that Jago might have visited Shugborough with Shenstone, Lyttelton, or while in the neighbourhood of his wife's family in Rugeley.

This is only a suggestion, of course, but compare a passage from the Shugborough poem with a passage from Jago's "Edge-Hill" in praise of Sanderson Miller:

SHUGBOROUGH POEM:

*Cedar, or pine, or fir : plantations vast,
And venerable! not in curious lines
Restrained, & cramp'd, nor on the summits clump'd
Bleak, & unthrifty; but profusely spread
Along the mountain slope for many a mile
To shade a country. Such the groves that grace
The shaggy sides of APPENNINE, or huge
PIRENE. Underneath a limpid lake
The molten chrystal of an hundred rills
Gushing from purple CANK'S salubrious sides
Collects, expansion pure, with verdant isles
Inlaid it's lucid bosom, & it's shores
With marble temples, glittering structures , crowned,*

EDGE HILL:

*His winding way, enlarging as it flows,
 Nor hastes to join Sabrina's prouder wave.
 Like a tall rampart, here the mountain rears
 Its verdant edge; and, if the tuneful maids
 Their presence deign, shall with Parnassus vie.
 Level and smooth the track which thither leads
 Of champaign bold and fair. Its adverse side
 Abrupt, and steep. Thanks, Miller!' to thy paths,
 That ease our winding steps. Thanks to the fount,
 The trees, the flowers, imparting to the sense
 Fragrance or dulcet sound of murmuring rill,
 And stilling every tumult in the breast!
 And oft the stately towers that overtop
 The rising wood, and oft the broken arch
 Or mouldering wall, well taught to counterfeit
 The waste of time, to solemn thought excite,
 And crown with graceful pomp the shaggy hill.
 So Virtue paints the steep ascent to fame." (4)*

A few words appear in both extracts: shaggy (used by Milton in *Paradise Lost*), rills, crowned.

The authorship could be proved if a sample of Jago's handwriting could be found to match the manuscript, but in the meantime the case for Jago's authorship is fairly convincing.

In the notes at the end of the poem the author, whoever it actually was, quotes (or more likely paraphrases from memory) Henry Fuseli's 1765 translation of Winckelmann's *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*)

Fuseli translating Winkelmann (1765):

Thus Raphael formed his Galatea, as we learn by his letter to Count Baltazar Castiglione where he says, " Beauty being so seldom found among the fair, I avail myself of a certain ideal image." (5)

The 1767 Shugborough poem:

Raphael did the same in his letter to Count Balthazar Castiglione, speaking of his Galatea, he says "Perfect beauty being so seldom found, I avail myself of a certain Idéal image.

This does show a very up to the minute interest in Greek revival ideas which would have pleased Thomas Anson.

The poem as a whole gives a very detailed picture of the wonders of the estate as they appeared to a visitor when it was at its height, with most of Wright and Stuart's improvements in place. The poet does, though, get a bit carried away –

"Hence on the TRENT, SINĒAN trophies shine:

*Airy Pagodas, elegant & light,
 With painted balustrades, & gilded spires;
 And Temples, that like broad pavilions spread
 Their ample roofs, with listed colours gay,
 Green, azure, purple, & distinct with gold;
 Here 'mid circumfluous waters aptly placed
 Cast a mixt radiance o'er the trembling stream."*

This is presumably inspired by the Chinese House but what were all these multi-coloured temples?

The paintings at Shugborough included landscapes by Claude and Gaspard Poussin (Nicholas's stepson). There is some doubt whether Thomas owned a genuine Nicholas Poussin, other than the small drawing of the Arcadian Shepherds which had originally belonged to Lady Anson. The advertisements for the sale of 15 St James' Square, or Lichfield House as it was known by 1842, mention paintings by both N and G Poussin. Gaspard, though a minor artist, was popular for his classical landscapes which are far more loose and romantic than Nicholas's. One of the Gaspars was striking enough to be engraved by an artist named Woolletts in 1764. There were a few religious paintings, including Susanna and The Elders, copied from Guido Reni. These large and very Roman Catholic subjects, particularly an "Immaculate Conception" must have been strangely dominating before the much grander Red Drawing Room was built.

The collection of sculpture, indoors and out, was more significant than the paintings.

The house and grounds were full of both genuine classical sculpture and modern copies. It is hard to imagine, now the gardens are quite bare, the effect of the many marble statues, herms and altars scattered about. A collection of letters from John Dick in Leghorn, dealing with the purchase of classical art, survives with letters from Stuart and the sculptor Scheemakers who was employed transporting, supplying and mending statuary as well as producing new work for Shugborough and 15 St James' Square. In 1767 he sent Anson a bill, in his mixture of Dutch and English, which includes:

*for two heds maid in to busts on pedestals 12.12.0
 for sending a statue in a cart to the wagon an openen 0.9.0
 for packin a figure of Flora 0.7.0
 for two men packing op sonderi tings 0.7.0
 for mending brutus and four locks of hair to Adonis 1.0.0
 payd for 8 heds from Rome 3.8.0 (6)*

This reveals that Flora and Adonis were new additions to the Greenhouse when the anonymous poet saw them.

The bill also includes a chimney piece made for the back parlour by John Flaxman the Elder, father of the neo-classical artist:

for a ciminy pies in the back parlor slab & corns 35.14.0

Between 1765 and 1771 Thomas Anson bought pictures from Italy through Sir John Dick, British Consul at Leghorn and sculpture from Joseph Nollekens, who had been Scheemakers assistant, in Rome. The bill quoted above shows that Nollekens sent the works to Scheemakers, who then arranged their transport, by wagon, to Shugborough.

Nollekens wrote long detailed letters to Thomas, and competed for the purchase of all kinds of classical sculptures with cardinals and the Pope. He carved a statue of Castor and Pollux in the classical style, which, though modern, reached the highest price of any sculptures in the Shugborough sale and is now in the Victorian and Albert Museum. There is a copy in the hall at Shugborough.

Other statues included Flora and Adonis in the Green House, centaurs which were originally in the Tower of the Winds, a Thalia, muse of comedy, which Thomas Pennant thought particularly fine, Roman sarcophagi (which often have the “DM” inscription) and many other ancient and modern works.

A large quantity was bought from a bankrupt merchant in Leghorn, in 1766, including many medals, which were a particular interest of Anson’s. As the 1767 poem says of the library:

*“...Nor to books alone confined
Thy learned Archives: here whate'er remains
Of rare antiquity (or for design
Curious, or circumstance, or workmanship
Inimitable) in Coins, or graven Gemms,
Camëo or Intaglio; sardonix,
Cenilean ophite, amethyst, the blood
Cornelian, & the jasper's flowery vein.
Endless the task & the irksome to attempt
Particular discription, & the song
Already droops, tho' gorgeous the detail.”*

Before setting off on his epic voyage with Captain Cook Joseph Banks (1743-1820) made a tour of England and Wales, visiting country estates and making notes of his observations in a journal which is now in the National Library of Wales. In 1768 Joseph Banks was a twenty-five year old gentleman naturalist but he was driven by an enthusiasm and adventurous spirit that would make him one of the leading figures in science in the 18th century. Through his friendship with Lord Sandwich (which later led him into the rakish activities of Francis Dashwood’s circle) Banks booked himself onto ‘the Endeavour’ as a self-funded naturalist.

He had other links with the Thomas Anson’s world. He corresponded with Anson’s friend Thomas Pennant, also a naturalist. Banks had plans to travel to Uppsala to hear the great classifier of nature, Carl Linnaeus, give lectures. Pennant mentioned in his correspondence that he was critical of Linnaeus’s classifications other those in his own field, botany. Botany, as well as agriculture, is an important theme in the Shugborough story. Benjamin Stillingfleet, one of Thomas’s closest friends in old age and a regular visitor to Shugborough, was one of Linnaeus’s strongest supporters in England, and also a correspondent of Pennant.

Banks was introduced to Shugborough, in late summer 1767, by another friend, John Sneyd of Bishton. Sneyd was one of the local gentry who would have regularly visited his near neighbour, Thomas Anson. While on the voyage of the Endeavour Banks lent Sneyd his own Herbarium.

Bank's journal includes a description of an encounter with Thomas Anson at the statue of Adonis. This is another anecdote which records Thomas's actual words:

"...went with Mr Sneyd [of Bishton] to Mr Ansons about 4 miles off at a place call'd Shuckborough to see his architecture and marble both which are reported to be beyond any thing else in their kind. Find a large company to dine there and are forc'd to content ourselves for this day, with taking our dinners and resolving to return and see things properly the next day: by an accident however found the estimation in which every thing there was held by its master.

Stealing from the company after dinner I got a candle and was employd in examining his chief marble which was an Adonis in the interior. He passes by. I took the opportunity of complimenting him by saying "truly sir this is a most elegant piece of workmanship"

"Indeed it is, sir" said he, and shewing me the different parts of it "there's a grace sir...Believe me the Venus of Medicis is clumsy to it."

Having said this he retired and left me to my contemplations.

The figure is certainly a very elegant one tho I can not prize it so highly, as its master does. He is represented not with the Chase, having just thrown a light robe over his shoulders to cool gradually. Probably the Game is suppos'd to lye at his feet as he rests himself upon one leg and seems to contemplate something lying before him with a look of satisfaction."(7)

The 1767 poet describes the statues in the Orangery or Greenhouse, including Flora "first protectress of this place" (which still exists at Shugborough in a beheaded state), "the sculptured forms of Demigods or heroes" and also writes:

*"nor shall the learned eye deem here misplaced
A smooth Adonis, thy transcendent form."*

The scholarly note at the end of the poem explains:

"Adonis, Thammuz & Osiris are the Greek, Phenician & Egyptian names for the same person. His statue is not misplaced in a Green house because under all these denominations he is looked upon by the best Mythologists as the Power of Vegetation: particularly the Vegetation of corn: whence in the fable that six months he lieth in Prosepine's lap, that is, whilst the seed of corn continueth underground; & the other six months, that is Spring & Summer he lieth with Venus."

This sculpture of Adonis seems to have been one which would have satisfied Winckelmann's ideals of beauty, as would Nollekens' Castor and Pollux.

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Elegant Entertainments

Thomas Anson's musical life has only emerged from the shadows since the year 2000. It is a curious indication of how little research had been pursued into his life that no-one before 2003 showed any sign of having looked at his will, (1) surely one of the most obvious sources of material about any life. Even more surprising, the first person to refer to the will in print was a Czech musicologist writing about a forgotten Bohemian composer. Antonin Kammel. (This is how the composer spelled his name himself. It is often written Kammell and sometimes even Camel or Camell.)

Kammel's name appears in three documents in the Staffordshire Records Office – the will, the fascinating list of people who received mourning rings as a memorial of Thomas's death, and in a poem by Sir William Bagot of Blithfield Hall.

Bagot's poem was written On April 25th 1772 to welcome Thomas back from London to Shugborough at the end of the London season. This was the Sunday after Easter.

*'Bring Attic Stuart, Indian Orme,
Kammell unruffled by a storm
Shall tune his softest strain;
And my Louisa will rejoice
To notes like his to tune her voice
With health restored again.'* (2)

(The copy says "probably" by Wiliam Bagot, but the poem is mentioned in George Hardinge's memoir of Dr Sneyd Davies. Thomas Anson himself showed the poem to Hardinge and told him it was by Bagot.)

Stuart was, of course, James "Athenian" Stuart, and Orme was Robert Orme, historian of the East India Company. These two were also recipients of money in Anson's will. Kammel's connection with Thomas Anson was rediscovered by Michaela Freemanova. Her article based on a collection of his letters in an archive in Prague was published in *Early Music* in May 2003 (3) By good fortune, the year before, Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill's published "Music and Theatre in Handel's World, the family papers of James Harris 1732-1780" (4), which includes several references to Thomas Anson's musical life and his music making at his new house at St James's Square. Burrows and Dunhill's book also revealed for the first time the connections between Thomas and James Harris, MP, philosopher of the Greek Revival and musical enthusiast.

In Thomas's last years, his very active 70s, music can be seen to have been of great importance. It is reasonable to assume it had been one of his interests throughout his life. A grandhouse, like 15 St James Square, wasn't just a private home, or a showcase for architecture and art, but a place for performances, dinners and conversation inspired by its classical style. It would need music to bring it to life. Antonin Kammel was the man who provided the music in the lavishly decorated rooms. The fact that he visited Shugborough, according to the poem by Bagot, and

received not just a mourning ring but a substantial gift in Thomas's will, suggests that he was a friend and not just a professional employee. Kammel referred to Anson as “my dear good old friend.” (5)

Thomas’s will is brief and very straightforward will. It begins without any pious language, unlike many wills of the century.

“I make this my last will and testament which I wou’d wish to have understood to the plainest and most obvious meaning of the words being unacquainted with forms.” (6)

This seems odd coming from a trained man of law. Is it ironical? Or does it support the view that he never practised? Or is it simply that as a barrister such things were not part of his experience?

The bulk of the estate (including extensive property elsewhere in Staffordshire and also Norfolk) was left to his nephew, George Adams. As it would have been obvious that Thomas would not have had any offspring George Adams would have been treated as the heir to the estate for many years – certainly since the death of Lord Anson in 1764.

Thomas’s two unmarried sisters were allowed to move any furniture they liked to Oakedge Hill, their house (with landscaping by William Emes) on the slopes of Cannock Chase) with annuities to his other surviving sisters. He also left money to a small but fascinating group of friends, four of whom would receive annuities, and one, Robert Orme, who would receive a lump sum.

There were annuities of £100 (£10,000 today) to James “Athenian” Stuart and “Mr Stillingfleet”, the botanist Benjamin Stillingfleet. Annuities of £50 (£5,000 today) went to Mr Kammel and to “Mr Kent”, who was the agricultural reformer Nathaniel Kent (1737-1810) whose career began as Thomas’s manager of his estates in Norfolk, which had been bought from Lord Leicester. A single payment of £500 (£50,000) went to Mr Orme, “in token of his long friendship”.

Apart from staff the only other named beneficiary was Sir William Bagot who was left “all my collection of medals”. This led to a fairly acrimonious dispute between Bagot and George Adams, (who took the name Anson), about whether this really meant all of them – ironically considering Thomas’s request that the words should be taken in their plainest sense.

Benjamin Stillingfleet (1702- 15th December 1771 – he died between Thomas’s will and his death in 1773) is sometimes said to have been the original bluestocking - which may seem surprising as the term is usually used of women. He was a regular visitor to Mrs Montagu’s parties, in which card playing was replaced by conversation. Stillingfleet was a great conversationalist, and the author of a poem on “The Art of conversation.” Though some writers disagree it does appear that the term bluestocking was in use from the 1750s and that this began because the always hard-up Stillingfleet tended to wear cheap blue worsted stockings rather than formal evening dress.

Mrs Montagu refers to Stillingfleet’s blue stockings in a letter, in which they seem to be a sign of sobriety which he had, at the time of writing, thrown off:

"I assure you our philosopher is so much a man of pleasure, he has left off his old friends and his blue stockings and is at operas and other gay assemblies every night".
(7)

Mrs Montagu may not have taken Stillingfleet seriously. He comes over as a crotchety but amusing character, popular at her own assemblies and those of Mrs Vesey. He was a valetudinarian, always talking about his health and the health problems of his friends. Apart from this his range of interests and his quite adventurous travels make him seem quite a close counterpart of Thomas Anson.

Though he was principally a botanist Stillingfleet was also a musician, a performer, amateur composer and theorist. While touring Europe, during which he wrote some of the first descriptions of the Alps to reflect the new enthusiasm for landscape, he organised amateur performances with his travelling companions, providing the music himself. William Coxe, who edited Stillingfleet's works, wrote that he after returning to England he

"increased his knowledge and love of music. In the midst of his botanical and classical pursuits, he dedicated a part of his time to the practice of this delightful art, being a tolerable proficient on the Violencello." (8)

Though he published no music of his own he did write librettos for other composers, largely unused, though he had an artistic success in 1760 with an adaptation of Paradise Lost for John Christopher Smith, who had been Handel's amanuensis.

In his later years Stillingfleet turned his attentions back to music with his "Principles and Power of Harmony" published anonymously in 1771. This which was based on a translation of Guiseppe Tartini's "Trattato di musica", originally published in Padua in 1754. This was a scientific study of the mathematical basis of harmony and Stillingfleet's own commentary helped explain Tartini's theories which tended to waver into the strange and mystical. The book was well received by Dr Burney, the leading historian of music at the time. He wrote of the book, published anonymously:

"...it was written by no half scholar or shallow musician; but one possessed of all the requisites for such a task." (9)

Mrs Montagu wrote to him praising his "Principles and Powers of Harmony" in words which were too obviously based on Dr Burney's review. Stillingfleet replied on 24th October 1771:

"...had the encomiums on my late book been the results of your own opinion i should have been apt to think that partiality had biassed your judgment; but the testimonies you use leave me no room to entertain such a suspicion." (10)

As the authors of "Paradise Lost in short" point out he almost immediately changes the subject and goes on to discuss a mutual friend's bilious complaint. He was also a friend, presumably through Anson, of James Stuart, who mentions him several times in his letters, in one, in 1764, trying to persuade him to visit Shugborough, presumably for his health. He was at Shugborough for two months or more in 1769.

Tartini, as translated by Stillingfleet, believes that the simplest music can be the most effective:

"Every nation," he adds, "has its popular songs, many of which are of antient tradition, many newly composed, and adopted by common consent. In general, they are extremely simple; nay, the most simple are generally the greatest favourites.....That the people listen with greater pleasure to one of these songs, than to the most exquisite song modulated through all the maze of harmony, is an observation as easy to make, as it is significant when verified...Nature has more power than Art."(11)

Stillingfleet, who reveals his high regard for Ancient Greece at every opportunity, adds that the lost music of Greece was believed to be simple and

"uncommonly touching, and capable of producing any effect almost within the limits of possibility."

And that the expressive style of Italian opera was in the same spirit:

"Those feelings of nature, which, as Tartini observes, are and must be common to us and the Greeks, have of late years put the Italian masters upon working the parts less in their opera music ; and have produced those thrumming bases, as they are called by our harmonists, by way of ridicule."

Such expressive and natural music is obviously more in harmony with this Greek Revival ideal than music which is based too much on abstract theory, counterpoint and fugue.

"I believe most men, if they dared to speak their own feelings, would talk the language of Tartini; but the dread of being thought to have a vulgar taste, puts them under restraints, and makes them undergo the fatigue of silently listening, with a dozing kind of attention, as if they were well bred, and ashamed to interrupt others, to what they are told is fine ; but which they cannot, with all their endeavours, be brought to think agreeable ; whereas, many of our old simple songs steal our affections, in spite of all our prejudices, and even when we are almost ashamed to be touched by such low and vulgar things ; but high-bred taste, like high-born pride, is sometimes forced to listen to the humble dictates of Nature, and enjoy a pleasure it does not openly avow."

The other musical legatee, Anton Kammel, had been a pupil of Tartini.

Kammel was born in Belec, Central Bohemia in 1730. His father was a forester and it was as an agent selling wood for ship's masts supplied by his employer Count Vincent Ferrerus Waldstein that he came to England in 1765. It seems likely that his real motive was to launch his musical career. His mast business was a disaster; the masts were not big enough to match the British navy standards, but his letters to Waldstein show that his career was successful, though unfortunately affected by ill health. (12)

Kammel had studied philosophy and law in Bohemia before becoming a student of Tartini, the leading violin teacher of the day, in Padua. Tartini had written the basis of Benjamin Stillingfleet's last publication, and he had also been the teacher of Maddelena Lombardini, another of the musicians who played at 15 St James' Square.

Kammel's letters, written in a mixture of languages including English, give the impression of a rather vain man, very concerned indeed that his art should be well rewarded, but his education suggests that he may have been a person of very wide knowledge and interests.

He arrived in London in March 1765, writing to Count Waldstein that it was the largest town he had ever seen and that "one even feels like entering some other world". Kammel travelled from The Hague with the Italian cellist and composer Francesco Zappa, then working for Lord Buckingham. Zappa was, indeed, the ancestor of zany rock genius Frank Zappa, who financed a recording of Francesco's work. Kammel "lived thriftily" with Zappa on his arrival in London.

The channel crossing was appallingly stormy, everyone having to work the water-pumps, and in the end all the luggage was "swimming in water". Kammel wrote that he arrived in London

"like a poor sinner taken to the gallows, one jacket, one shirt, one handkerchief and one hope."

Smart, even fabulously showy, clothes were essential for a solo musician who wanted to make the right glamorous impression. Kammel immediately had two new suits and six new shirts made "to be able to keep up the status of your Excellency as my most honourable Lord and Master."

A few months later, in August, Kammel was developing his wardrobe:

"...just in the last 8 days I have paid in London 87 guineas to the tailor, shoemaker and other people...here a virtuoso must be very clean, concerning his clothes and everything."

Kammel's letters talk a great deal about his earnings and expenditure. A leading musician could earn a lot of money but depended entirely on his own skill and on making the right connections. As he wrote in July 1766:

"I made much money here already through my old violin, (and) also lost a lot of it, as I must pay for everything very dearly..."

Fortunately he immediately made the acquaintance of Johann Christian Bach, the leading figure in music in London after the death of Handel in 1759, a music teacher to the Queen, and the promoter, with Carl Frederick Abel, of the most important series of public concerts. Bach must have recognised Kammel as a violinist of high quality. On April 10th 1770 James Harris attended a private concert at Sir Robert Throckmorton's which was led by Johann Christian Bach accompanied by Abel (on the viola da gamba, his principal solo instrument for which he composed many pieces, or on the cello), Johann Fischer on oboe (the busiest and best oboist in London) and

Kammel on violin. (13) This suggests that Bach thought Kammel a worthy and reliable performer and Bach seems to have regularly employed him in his other performances, orchestral instrumental or operatic.

Kammel had been given the names of various society contacts by Count Waldstein, and his musical connections will have led him to the people in London and in the country who would be interested in private music making. His first public concert was in March 1766:

“with such applause which I had not expected. Giardini and others were beaten, my work goes well.”

Over the next five years he developed a successful career as a performer in public and private concerts, including work in country seats, spending time with the family of Horatio Mann in Rutland. He dedicated his Opus 1 set of trios, already composed before his arrival, to Lady Lucy Mann in 1766. He also performed in Bath, giving a concert with oboist Johann Fischer and Thomas Linley Senior, the director of music at the spa.

Other concerts took him as far afield as Edinburgh, or as he confusingly called it “Edenbourg in Irland”. At the Edinburgh concert he performed a large scale work called a Pantomime - exactly what form it took is hard to define. It may be the piece that writes rather extravagantly about: when he says it:

“amazed everybody, all the Ladies and Lords and Gentlemen say that they haven’t heard anything similar in their lives. 52 solos for the Violin, which, to tell the truth, are very beautiful, and 6 for the Viola da gamba, which start in a very decorative way.”

Kammel saw his music as a way of charming ladies especially:

“When I play the Adagio one could hear the ladies sigh.”

“...young and old ladies and Misses....all of them in love, and I made them even more loving through my old violin.”

This emotional effect of performing is very reminiscent of the performances of Count St Germain twenty years earlier, and is keeping with the expressive style Tartini advocated.

Kammel is an attractive and interesting minor composer rather than a forgotten master, but his career sits at a time of change in musical style and fashion and he does have a claim to fame in the beginnings of classical style that has gone unnoticed.

His music is exclusively instrumental. He wrote solo sonatas for violin, duets, trios and quartets and some orchestral works, just two published violin concertos and two sets of overtures or symphonies. These would have been created for himself to perform and, presumably, also intended for his patrons, who received dedications, to play themselves. Fortunately all of Kammel’s known music was published and copies

of most of his known works are accessible in the British Library, Library of Congress and in many other collections.

Kammel's music is in the early classical, or rococo, style. It is melodious and elegant, recognisably in the same vein as earliest Mozart and Johann Christian Bach. It follows the ideals of simplicity and expression that Tartini taught.

It is difficult to match changing musical styles and fashions to the changing styles in architecture or literature but, perhaps simply by coincidence, the new "classical" style in music did appear at the same time as the Greek Revival in the visual arts. A key work in the change of musical taste was Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice". Gluck wanted to go back to the ideals of Greek theatre, removing the pure showiness of the fashionable opera and making everything subservient to drama.

"Orfeo ed Euridice" was first performed in 1762. The first London performance of Gluck's opera, in a version revised to suit London taste by J C Bach, was in April 1770, a few days before the concert at Sir Robert Throckmorton's in which Kammel performed with Bach. Kammel and the musicians who performed at Thomas Anson's London house are likely to have been involved.

As well as the emphasis on seriousness of expression there were contemporary changes in musical technique. The "Classical style" which appears in the 1760s tends to have simpler textures, more emphasis on form and structure for dramatic effect and an escape from the bass-line which dominated harmony in baroque music. Though this might have been partly due to a classical aesthetic it also helped produce music which depended less on the expert soloist and made more sense when played by amateurs. This was a new social influence on music. (14)

The instrumental form that most clearly demonstrates the new classical style is the String Quartet. Baroque chamber music would be underlaid by the continuo bass, a bass line with harmony filled in by a keyboard instrument. The String quartet, of 2 violins, viola and cello, abandoned the keyboard's harmonic infilling and began to make the four instruments more equal.

The string quartet was an ideal medium for private music making, but quite early on quartets did begin to be performed in public.

"Concert Life in Eighteenth-century Britain" by Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh analyses public performances of string quartets in London. The authors write that "the date of the first known performance of a string quartet on the London concert stage was 27th April 1769". Their table of performances by date reveals that this was, in fact, a quartet by Kammel. (15)

He was very much in the forefront as the next quartet listed is one by Pugnani in 1773. Quartets by Haydn, the greatest developer of the form, were not performed in public in London until 1778. "String Quartets: A Research and Information Guide" by Mara Parker (2005) has an entry for Kammel, referring to a 1981 article in "Haydn studies" by Zdenka Pilikova, which supports the suggestion that his significance may have been underestimated or overlooked:

“Antonin Kammel, a Bohemian contemporary of Haydn who contributed to the formation of the classical style, has largely been ignored. The works of Haydn and Kammel from the 1760s and 1770s share many common stylistic and structural features. At times Kammel’s works were known under Haydn’s name.” (16)

The 1769 performance would have been of one of the set of six quartets published in 1770 as Op. 4. Two other sets of six quartets followed in 1774 and 1775.

Though Kammel may not have been as important a figure in his art as James Stuart was in his, he was, like most of Thomas Anson’s friends, at the cutting edge of new style and ideas, though his works straddle both classical and baroque style, with several still retaining the baroque “Thorough bass”. It is worth remembering that Thomas Anson was in his seventies at the time his new house was ready for music and it is remarkable that he was still interested in the very latest ideas, in art and science, right until his death in 1773.

The publication dates of Kammel’s works appear to be a year or two later than the presumed date of composition.

The Quartets op. 4 are dedicated to George Pitt, Esq.

Pitt (1721-1803) was MP for Dorset and, from 1776. Baron Rivers of Stratfieldsaye, the house that later became the home of the Duke of Wellington. Kammel’s address in 1769, given on one of his concert advertisements, was “at George Pitt Esqr In Half-Moon Street Piccadilly” and his will in 1778 also gives his address as Half Moon Street. This was his own house, bought in 1771. Pitt was certainly his longest serving supporter, even in later years when Kammel’s career had been seriously affected by illness. He had even written to Count Waldstein hoping that Lord Rivers would travel with him to Carlsbad where he could meet his old employer.

The fragmentary evidence suggests that Pitt was heavily involved with music. He was briefly a director of the Italian Opera in the King’s Theatre for the 1770-1 season, even though at this time he had been appointed ambassador-extraordinary and minister-plenipotentiary to Madrid. It seems to have been quite common for ambassadors never to visit the places in which they were supposed to act as representatives of their country. His period of involvement with the opera may have included the J C Bach version of Gluck’s Orfeo. Horace Walpole’s letters give an intriguing hint of Pitt’s musical interest a few years earlier, writing to the Countess of Aylesbury on July 20th 1761:

“The new Queen is very musical.....George Pitt, in imitation of the Adonises in Tanzai’s retinue, has asked to be her Majesty’s grand harper. Dieu s’cait quette raclerie il y aura! All the guitars are untuned; and if Miss Conway has a mind to be in fashion at her return, she must take some David or other to teach her the new twing twang, twing twing twang.” (17)

This seems to imply a fashion for the harp had replaced a fashion for guitars. Could it be that George Pitt was a harpist himself?

In 1771 Elizabeth Harris wrote to her son that:

“Mr G Pitt was just arriv’d from Blanford races with no less than seven excellent musicians which he consign’d to Mr Harris.” (18)

Pitt provided musicians for some events from the band of his Dorset Militia.

Benjamin Stillingfleet, who spent much of his time living in his friend's houses, stayed with both George Pitt and Thomas Anson in 1769.

Stillingfleet wrote to Thomas Pennant, another botanist and nephew of Thomas Anson’s old friend James Mytton, on 20th October 1769, mentioning that he had been staying in Berkshire, and then Dorset before coming to Shugborough. He wrote:

“as you are so kind a to inquire after my health I must inform you that it is rather better than of late, and that I did look after plants while in Dorsetshire something more than I have done for years. I was moved to this by Mr Pitt’s curiosity in relation to the subject and by the fine weather which suffered me to be a good deal out of doors.” (19)

It is reasonable to assume that he had been staying with George Pitt at Stratfield Saye, which is in Berkshire, close to the border of Hampshire. Stillingfleet was always short of money (hence his supposed blue worsted stocking rather than black silk) and spent a lot of time in the houses of his friends. He was at Shugborough for at least two months that year.

Kammel was also at Stratfield Saye that winter. The birth of a daughter, Lucy was registered at the nearby Hartley Wespall on December 11th and she was christened at Stratfield Saye on 31st December 1769, suggesting that Kammel and his wife were staying there over Christmas and New Year and that she had been born at Pitt's house. Lucy did not survive long enough to be mentioned in his will.

Anton Kammel dedicated his next work, 6 duets for two violins op. 5 to Thomas Anson Esq.

Composer and diarist John Marsh probably heard these duos in August 1769:

“There was also a Mr Woodington who was staying there who play’d a capital fiddle for an amateur who supported Mr Lethin & with whom he also played a duet of Kammell’s.”(20)

The dating of the Op 5 duets is unknown but the Op 4 quartets, published in 1770, probably included the one performed in public in 1769. The duets were already in circulation in print when James Marsh heard them in 1769. Assuming the opus numbers are in the order of composition it is likely that the duets date from early 1769 at the latest. If so it is possible that Kammel and Anson’s musical association and friendship began some time before the start of Anson's London concerts at St James Square. Perhaps these duets were written to be played at Shugborough in the summer.

John Parnell enjoyed music at Shugborough in May or June 1769. He wrote in his journal:

“There has been this day, Thursday, a most agreeable meeting of the neighbouring gentry, Snead Clifford, Piggot etc who all play or sing and dance together here afterwards and have music again on the evening...”(21)

This seems to have been a whole day of music making with Sneyds, Cliffords and Bagots. This suggests that music was a very important part of life at Shugborough as well as at St James’ Square. This would have been only a month or two after the public performance of Kammell’s quartet. Could Kammel have been one of the musicians that Parnell heard? It is perfectly possible that Kammel had accompanied Thomas on his journey back to the country at the end of London season. Bagot’s poem, mentioning Kammel, Stuart and Robert Orme, welcomes them back to Shugborough at the end of the season three years later in 1772. It is likely that this was the last of a series of annual visits to the country for the group of friends.

A few years later Marsh played Kammel duets with a Colonel Stoppard. He was “much pleased” with them. Later he wrote a duet in imitation of Kammel. In 1776 Marsh was disappointed by Kammel’s performance at the Salisbury Festival of St Cecilia “he by no means as a professor seems to rank above mediocrity” – though this was probably due to the composer’s serious rheumatic illness. Marsh clearly knew him later personally as he visited a friend who was staying at Kammel’s London house in 1779.

What was probably the first complete public performance of Kammel’s Duets op. 5 took place at Stafford Library on September 8th 2007. The performers, Nigel and Kathryn Stubbs, as well as John Dunn and Kerry Milan who had played three of the duets at Shugborough in March 2007, were very impressed with the quality of the works. They are very tuneful and elegantly crafted, making very satisfying and substantial works for just two violins.

Kammel’s works were published in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin and The Hague. The opus numbers are likely to have been given by the publishers and in some cases are duplicated or even triplicated. Only a few works were published before Thomas Anson’s death in 1773:

Kammel’s early publications, with publication dates and dedications where known:

Op. 1 Six trios. Dedicated to Lady Lucy Mann. Published 1766.

These had been composed before his arrival in London.

Op. 3 Six sonatas for two violins and bass. Dedicated to Count Waldstein. Published by John Welcker in 1769.

Op. 4 Six quartets. Dedicated to George Pitt Esq. Published c1770.

Op. 5 Six duets. Dedicated to Thomas Anson Esq. Published by Welcker c1768

Op. 6 Six nocturnos. Dedicated to Lady Young of Delaford. Published c1770 (Elizabeth, Lady Young (1729-1801) was the wife of Sir William Young (1724/5-1788), governor of Dominica. There is a portrait of the family by Zoffany in the

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool from about this date which shows Sir William playing cello and the others singing and playing instruments. Sir William and Lady Young held private concerts in London. They were friends of James Harris, who attended seven of their concerts in 1770.(22) It seems likely from the dedications to Lady Young, Sir William Young (Nottornos op. 19) that Kammel performed at their concerts. Lady Young's father was Brook Taylor, a mathematician and Newton supporter as well as an enthusiastic musician. Her son-in-law, Richard Ottley was dedicatee of Kammel's op. 8)

Kammel published very few orchestral works. There is a set of six overtures which op. 10 dedicated to the Duke of Devonshire and a set of six symphonies op.18 published in 1782. The overtures are also, in effect, symphonies in the style of Johann Christian Bach, which are very close to the form of mid eighteenth century opera overtures, lasting only 10 minutes or so. By 1775 Haydn and Mozart were writing symphonies on a much larger scale – and in a style that seems wildly modern and avant-garde compared to the elegant symphonies of the early classical period. Kammel's only other orchestral works are a violin concerto op. 11 published in Paris in 1772 and a set of six symphonies published as one of two opus 18s in Paris in 1782.

Lady Shelburne, the wife of the Prime Minister William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, described a lavish event at 15 St James Square in April 1769 (not 1768 as given wrongly on the English Heritage website and elsewhere – the Harris papers and contemporary references confirm the date):

“Thursday Morning, April 13th. We breakfasted at Mr. Anson's, who gave a breakfast and concert to Mrs. Montagu, to which she very obligingly invited us. We called upon her and went together, and saw a very fine house, built and ornamented by Mr. Stuart. The company were Count Bruhl, Lord Egremont, Mr. and Mrs. Harris and their daughter, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Dunbar, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Scott, a M. de Vibre, M. de Maltête a President de Parlement, who came over expressly to see a Riot, but was deterred from going to Brentford by the French Ambassador, and condemned to pass this memorable morning in the calmer scene of Mr. Anson's house and entertainment.” (23)

The riot mentioned was over the political scandals of seditious MP John Wilkes.

This may have been a kind of house warming. The house had been completed in 1766 but Stuart was a slow worker and it may be that it was only then, in April 1769, that the house was fully decorated and ready to be shown off. Mrs Montagu was not only the leading light of the Bluestocking circle but also another important patron of James Stuart. She had commissioned him to decorate her house at 23 Hill Street, which already had Chinoiserie rooms by Robert Adam, in 1765. In 1767 she wrote that Stuart had painted “some of the sweetest Zephirs and Zephirettes in my bedchamber that ever I beheld'. Stuart was a notoriously slow worker and still at work at Hill Street in 1772.

Though this event was in Mrs Montagu's honour, and there would have been other guests not known to Lady Shelburne, it is wonderful that on this occasion the key figures of this story come together. Kammel would have been leading the orchestra.

This must be about the time he was composing his op. 4 duets for Thomas. Such an event, showing off Stuart's work, could hardly have happened without the presence of James "Athenian" Stuart himself. Also present was Elizabeth Carter, given the courtesy title of "Mrs" though unmarried, by this time the famous translator of Epictetus and a key figure, with Mrs Montagu and Mrs Vesey, amongst the bluestockings. No doubt Benjamin Stillingfleet would have been there – not a man to miss a free meal. And there also were the philosopher musician James Harris and his family.

Harris's family archive is a rich source of information on the musical life of the 18th century, including the music at St James' Square.

Louisa Harris wrote to her brother James Harris Jnr (original in French) on 13th April 1769 the day of the Breakfast concert for Mrs Montagu:

"Today my father, mother and Gertrude are all at a concert at Mr Anson's, and this evening Gertrude is to go to Almacks with lady Mar Hume, but as far me, having neither a ticket for Almack's nor an invitation to Mr Anson's concert I am spending my time pleasantly writing to you." (24)

(Almacks was the location of J C Bach's concerts.)

On 18th April 1769 James Harris wrote to James Harris Jnr:

"Lord Spencer's and Mr Anson's houses by Stuart, Lord Shelburne's by Adams are models of Grecian taste, not unworthy of the age of Pericles"

The Harris correspondence includes references to at least five different concerts, the first is the breakfast and concert for Mrs Montagu in April 1769, the others mentioned were in March and April 1772 and two in March 1773 only a few weeks before the 78 year old Thomas Anson died.

It is reasonable to deduce that Anson's concerts took place at the end of the season, in early Spring, each year and that the pattern was the same in each year between 1769 and 1773.

On the 27th March 1772 Elizabeth Harris wrote to James Harris Jnr:

"Yesterday morning we were all at that most elegant house of Mr Anson's to a breakfast and concert after, ever thing suited the elegance of the house. When breakfast was ended the room were open for people to walk about and admire – after that the concert, for which he had collected the best hands in town – Madame Sirman, Grasi, Fischer, Crosdale, Ponto, Kamell etc. Got home in time enough to snap a short dinner before the opera."

These names are indeed the leading musicians of the moment – and note the "etc".

Maddelena Lombardini Sirman was a Venetian violinist and composer who had recently arrived in London. Like Kammel she was a student of Tartini and an early composer of string quartets as well as concertos. Her quartets are small scale but

particularly expressive. She had an important connection with Tartini as he wrote her a long letter or essay on the art of violin playing which was published and translated into English by Dr Charles Burney. It is intriguing that Kammel, Sirmen and Benjamin Stillingfleet each had connections with Tartini and his literary or theoretical work.

Madame Grassi was one of the leading singers, later married to Johann Christian Bach. Johann Fischer, Giovanni Punto and John Crostill were the leading oboist, horn player and cellist of the period.

These musicians seem to have been regular performers under Johann Christian Bach's direction. James Harris heard a concert by Madame Grassi, Johann Christian Bach on keyboard, Fischer, Punto, Crostill and Kammel together at the Blandford Races in July 1773.

Elizabeth Harris mentions no keyboard player in her letter but there is likely to have been one amongst the "etc". Could J C Bach have been there? Surely she would have mentioned him, unless he was so ubiquitous it would seem unnecessary – and yet all these other performers were of Bach's close circle – his favoured virtuosi.

What music would this very starry group have been playing at 15 St James Square on 27th March 1772?

Madame Sirmen, though she later had a career as a singer, would have been a guest artist and she may have been able to perform one of her own new concertos, published in 1772, with a reduced orchestral accompaniment. There may have been instrumental pieces by Kammel – or by Bach – but the presence of Madame Grassi suggests that the concert would have primarily been of vocal music.

Though it is only speculation it is possible, and an almost irresistible guess, that the concert on 27th March would have featured extracts from J C Bach's new serenata (a short, and light hearted opera) "Endimione".

"Endimione" is a beautiful work and something of a forgotten masterpiece – though that could be said of many of J C Bach's works. Bach had presented his adaptation of Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice" in 1770 and this new work of 1772 may be seen as a reaction to Gluck's influence, as a simply structured mythological story. Fortunately this delightful serenata has been published and recorded, conducted by Bruno Weil who calls it "a wonderful work, so full of humour it could almost be a comedy" and "the music is so damn good", and it could be mistaken for early Mozart. (25)

The first performance of "Endimione" was at the King's Theatre (Burrows and Dunhill say the Little Theatre at the Haymarket, the concert advertisement says "The Theatre Royal") on April 6th 1772, only a week after Thomas Anson's concert. The work features several arias with solo instruments accompanying. The first performance was for the benefit of flautist J B Wendling, but the original advertisement mentions that Mr Fisher (Johann Fischer) and Mr Ponta (Giovanni Punto) as well as Mr Wendling would accompany songs.

Was Thomas's concert a preview of part of "Endimione"? There is a mystery about why Bach wrote such a work at this time. Who commissioned it? Was there a connection with George Pitt, though his involvement with the King's Theatre seems to have ended a year earlier? Even more wild but delightful speculation might suggest that Thomas Anson might have played a part in the Serenata's commission. At the very least it is a work that can be enjoyed as a perfect example of the kind of music that belongs to the same world as 15 St James Square and the Greek Revival.

On 14th April 1772 Elizabeth Harris writes:

"To morrow no music; Thursday again at Mr Ansons"

Curiously James Boswell's correspondence reveals that Boswell met Thomas Anson on this same day at Mrs Montagu's. The evening was in honour of Filippo Antonio Pasquale di Paoli (1725-1807), a Corsican patriot and leader. Lord Lyttelton was also there, as well as the Archbishop of York. Boswell had a long standing interest in Corsica and Paoli. Boswell's book about Corsica, "An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to that Island", mentions Thomas Anson's "muffoli" or Corsican sheep. Anson had on his estate, wrote "a rich assemblage of what is curious in nature as well as elegant in art." (26)

Boswell does not seem to have met Anson before 1772 but he was told about the muffoli by John Dick, Thomas Anson's agent for his classical purchases. Dick had sent the muffoli to Anson himself. In a deleted passage Boswell wrote that Anson kept one muffoli "as a Pet and was very fond of, for it was very diverting."

Curiously Dr Johnson does seem to have visited Shugborough in the 1760s as he wrote a satirical Latin epitaph on the Tower of the Winds. Boswell criticised Johnson for being rude about his host, whom he took to be Admiral Anson. This is hard to explain according to the dating of the monument. Boswell's confusion possibly supports the supposition that he had not met Thomas before this 1772 dinner.

Only ten days after the Thursday concert that Elizabeth Harris planned to attend Sir William Bagot wrote his poem welcoming Anson, Stuart, Kammel and Orme to Shugborough. Considering the relative modesty of the house at that time this must have been the whole of the house party, and they should be considered a close circle of friends.

In spite of his age this was not the last of Thomas's musical seasons.

On 5th March 1773 James Harris's daughter writes to her brother (originally in French):

"We were at a breakfast and a concert this morning at Mr Anson's. Everything bespeaks good taste; the house is charming and exquisitely appointed, the music is by the best hands in England: in fact it was a total delight."

On the 23rd March 1773 Elizabeth Harris writes:

“Friday at a breakfast and concert at Mr Anson’s at which all the fine world were assembled and all elegant to a degree.”

This was, presumably the last concert. Thomas was 77 or 78 and died a week later on the 30th March.

On June 23rd Anton Kammel wrote to Count Waldstein:

‘My dear good old friend Mr Anson, the brother of the Admiral who defeated so much the Spaniards, died two months ago. I do not like to lose good friends, his death contributed a lot towards my illness, in his testament he left me 50 gineas yearly for the time of my life, my friend George Pitt, when he saw me so distressed after Anson’s death, he also gave me by the law 50 gineas yearly, now I have 100 gineas yearly to spend as I wish..’ (27)

It may be significant that Kammel published a burst of works after Anson’s death, the publications all dated by Grove’s Dictionary to c1775. Kammel had appealed to Count Waldstein for funds to publish his early trios. It is very likely that the dedicatees of the early works supported their publication. Could it be that Kammel’s income left to him by Thomas Anson, and doubled by George Pitt, was used to finance the publication of these works?

Op. 7 Six quartets. Dedicated to Countess Spencer. Published c1775

Lady Spencer was another important patron of James Athenian Stuart, who had worked on lavish interiors for Spencer House before he had built 15 St James Square. There was, and is, a music room at Spencer House where this music might well have been heard. Lady Spencer was also the patron of William Jones, son of the mathematician William Jones who was closely involved with the Ansons and Yorkes much earlier. Jones was a talented poet and became a very important expert in everything to do with Indian culture.

Op. 8 Six solos. Dedicated to Richard Ottley Esq. Published c1775

Richard Ottley (1730-1775) was a rich Tobago plantation owner who lived in Argyll St. His second wife was the daughter of Lady Young of Delaford, dedicatee of op. 6. His son, William Young Ottley, born in 1771, became a very important art collector, owning, for example, Botticelli’s Mystic Nativity.

Op. 9 Six sonatas, for piano, harpsichord or harp with accompaniment of violin and cello. Dedicated to Miss Ottley, who was probably the sister of Richard Ottley, Published c1775

Op. 10 Six overtures. Dedicated to the Duke of Devonshire. Published c1775

Op. 9 is intriguing. Early piano trios, including many of Haydn’s, were written as sonatas for keyboard with optional accompaniments of the strings and Kammel distinguishes these sonatas from his trios in which the parts would be more equal. It is very interesting that Kammel published a set of pieces in “c1775” which, unusually, can be played on the harp. Thomas Pennant reported that Thomas Anson was listening

to the music of the harp on his death bed, and this is proved to be true by the financial accounts of his funeral expenses in the Staffordshire Records Office. Could these sonatas have been the last music he heard? As publications dates generally follow a year or more after the composition dates it is quite possible, and if his old friend Kammel had composed music suitable for the harp it seems reasonable to guess that this would be what was played.

In fact Kammel was in serious financial difficulties, losing money in a banking disaster in and investing a great deal in American land which would be unlikely to bring in any profit. In June, when he was writing to Count Waldstein, he was suffering from “Low Spirit commonly Calld Blue Devils” (the blues, in later slang) and in the next few years his career would be blighted by rheumatic illness which took away the use of his hands and feet. Bach and George Pitt supported him throughout his later years. He died on 5th October 1784, though his place of death and burial are unknown. He was survived by his wife, a penniless beauty apparently, not the rich woman he once told Count Waldstein he would marry, and several children.

Elizabeth Harris wrote a revealing obituary for Thomas Anson in a letter to her son on 6th April 1773. This is not quoted in full in Burrows and Dunhill’s book. Several such private comments exist and they must give a true record of how Thomas Anson’s friends saw him.

‘Mr Anson’s death is a loss to many, the poor he was charitable to a degree, the artists of all sorts had his protection and partook of his generosity, and all his friends were sharers of his most elegant entertainments. His great fortune comes to Mr Adams his nephew. Both he and Mrs Adams are amiable people and deserve it.’ (28)

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Science and Industry

One of the four friends who received annuities in Thomas Anson's will was "Mr Kent".

This was Nathaniel Kent (1737-1810), agriculturalist.

He was Thomas Anson's estate manager in Norfolk. The Ansons had bought Staffordshire property from the Cokes of Holkham Hall in 1750 and after this gradually took over other estates in Norfolk from family. This close connection with the Cokes eventually resulted in the marriage of Anne Margaret Coke, daughter of the first Earl of Leicester and Thomas Anson, son of Thomas's heir George, who later became 1st Viscount Anson. Kent is another link between the two families and it was he who introduced the modern methods of farming, including crop rotation, into England which "Coke of Norfolk" became famous for.

Kent began his career as a diplomat:

"My happy destiny threw me very early in life into what I may call the very lap of agriculture. In the capacity of secretary to Sir James Porter, at Brussels, I had an opportunity to make myself well acquainted with the husbandry of the Austrian Netherlands, then supposed to be in the highest perfection in any part of Europe. No spot was there to be found that was not highly cultivated. The industry of the Flemings was astonishing, and their care in collecting every sort of manure that could be usefully applied was highly commendable."(1)

His turn to an agricultural career was largely dependent on Thomas Anson:

"Coming to England in the year 1766, Sir John Cust, the then speaker of the House of Commons, requested of me some written account of the Flemish husbandry, with which he expressed himself much pleased: and he and my first great friend, the elder brother of the late Lord Anson, who was the true friend of merit, and the encourager of science wherever he found it, advised me to quit the diplomatic path, and apply myself closely to agriculture, in which I had a handsome promise of assistance from the latter; I did not hesitate a moment in adopting their advice."

"About this time I made a most valuable acquaintance with the late Benjamin Shillingfleet, one of the greatest naturalists we had, who was considered as the English Linnaeus. It was he who impressed me with the importance of taking Nature for my guide, and of learning to deduce my ideas of the value of land, not from local enquiry which might mislead my judgment, but from the wild plants and grasses; as these would invariably express the voice of nature. Accordingly, where I found the oak and elm as trees, and the rough cock's-foot and meadow fox-tail as grasses, I was assured that such land was good. And when I found the birch-tree, the juniper-shrub and the maiden hair, and such creeping bent grasses I was equally certain that such land was poor and steril."

Kent published 'Hints for Gentlemen of Landed Property' in 1775. This was, exactly as the title suggests, an attempt to encourage landed proprietors to take farming seriously. The ideas in Kent's book were practised on Anson's property in Norfolk, at Holkham and later formed the basis of the modern farm at Shugborough in the early years of the 19th century. This development owed its origins to Thomas Anson even though it came to fruition thirty years after Thomas's death.

Kent reveals another aspect of Thomas Anson's interests when he calls him "*the true friend of merit, and the encourager of science wherever he found it*" The pursuit of scientific knowledge was as much a part of the Greek ideal as the pursuit of beauty. Modern farming depended both on an understanding of agricultural processes and a concern for the people who lived and worked on the land.

"When a gentleman put his estate into my hands, I considered it was the highest trust he could repose in me; it was leaving it to me to mite out his fortune by allotting him what I thought proper upon the object submitted to me. It was therefore incumbent on me to take care of his interest, at the same time there was another person who had an equal claim to justice from me, which was the occupier, who had a right to be recompensed for his labour, judgment, and capital. In weighing these interests where there was doubt, I confess I gave the turn of the scale to the latter. Acting thus, the landlord and tenant in general expressed reciprocal satisfaction."

Kent praises Mr Anson for his enlightened attitudes to his tenants in this book. He describes the way in which tenants were given the wherewithal be responsible for repairs on their land which would otherwise be left to the landlord and create more problems and more expense.

"This obvious inconvenience has been effectually remedied by Mr. Anson upon his estate under my care in Norfolk, by agreeing with his tenants to allow them all reasonable accommodations, and all necessary materials for repairs, but that they shall sustain the moiety of all expences for workmen's wages, unless tempests or accidents shall bring the expence of such workmanship, in any particular year, to more than six per cent, upon the rent; in which case the landlord pays the surplusage. The saving has already been considerable; and as no tenants have a better landlord, nor any landlord a better set of tenants, they find mutual convenience, and satisfaction, in this regulation ; as others may do, if they will imitate it."(2)

Later Kent managed the royal estates at Windsor and Richmond and he was awarded a goblet by Thomas Coke in 1808 for his services to agriculture. Thomas Anson, Viscount Anson, married Thomas Coke's daughter and built the model farm at Shugborough in 1805, but the marriage and the farm owe their origins to Thomas Anson's support of Nathaniel Kent.

Both John Parnell and Joseph Banks describe features of the gardening and agriculture that struck them as unusual in their visits of 1769 and 1767.

Parnell wrote:

"I went across part of the Heath towards the obelique...and on my return towards Wolseley was amazed to find some Hundreds of acres inclosed all with a cheaveux de

frize to secure them from the Deer and all Plowd up ready for improvement, they looked the most uniform completely Executed piece of Extensive farming I ever saw...about 1000 acres six hundred of which is taken off Cank Heath to the great Improvement of the county tho' not much relish't by the cottagers on the Heath.”(3)

These were presumably the cottagers who moved to the new cottages in the village.

“..he has thrown cheaveaux de frize Round all the swelling Knowles which these lands abound in. Plowd them up deep as possible and planted Scotsfirs Laurel Larch and some chestnut on them..”

Elsewhere he saw:

“...one uniform Beautiful Peice of Plowd Land and all to be sown this summer with Turneps an Improvement so Extensive as to amaze me. I mett Eight Bullocks to a Plow which were all Harnessed with yokes and Bons – they were the finest Plow of Bullocks I ever saw. I got to the Plowman and had a conversation I much wanted..

...his masters manner of managing such great fallows was to Burn the coursest Parts and only slightly dung the others for the turnips. Dung replied I how can you have Dung sufficient...Why master (says the Plowman) has five thousand Load of muck at home.”

This was farming on a grand scale and seemingly directly under Thomas Anson's control. It is hard to imagine eight bullocks on one plough, and Parnell saw noted:

“The Harrows which followd the first ploughing were Drawn by seven fine Horses after each other. I never Beheld so great a Break Harrow...”

In the house Parnell encountered another estate worker:

“There is now in the kitchen an Old Fellow a Bricklayer's Labourer who has been Drinking here these three nights and two Days...he has already drunk down three of four setts of his Companions.”

Joseph Banks noted a new method of growing peaches under glass in the garden:

“Here also was a method of forcing fruit chiefly peaches which was new. It was called here the dutch way and done thus – the trees were naid against Frames of Beech made solid about two feet from them was a rais'd walk of Boards and the glasses resting upon the topps of the frames reached about three feet beyond this walk making the proper angle with the horizon this last interval when the glasses are put in is filled with Bark which by its fermentation supplies heat enough for the purpose and of a kind mire agreeable to the trees of that (yore?). the whole is constructed at a very less expence and is said to answer better than any other method.”(4)

Industry art and science come together in the figure of Josiah Wedgwood. Wedgwood used the highest level of scientific expertise in the pursuit of art and in the establishment of a hugely successful and influential business. Wedgwood may well have encountered Thomas Anson as a collector of inspiring classical art but their most

dramatic connection came from the development of the canal network, a crucial feature of the industrial revolution.

Haywood Junction, just outside the Shugborough estate, is the junction of two major canals which received Acts of Parliament the same day, 14th May 1766, and would become the core of the network.

Lord Anson, Earl Gower and Thomas Broade had commissioned a survey of a canal from Stoke-on-Trent to Wilden Ferry, on the Trent, from James Brindley in 1758. As Lord Anson had no particular interest in the area by that time it was very likely that Thomas was the real supporter. He continued to be a supporter of the Trent and Mersey canal in the 1760s.

Josiah Wedgwood was the inspiration for the canal project in its final form, with Thomas Bentley, his partner, and Erasmus Darwin, the extraordinary philosopher and poet from Lichfield. Wedgwood saw the canal as the answer to the transport of fragile pottery.

A meeting was held on 30th December 1765 at Wolseley Bridge, just south of Shugborough, to launch the plan. It was essential that Anson would support it as the canal had to pass through Shugborough alongside the Trent. Thomas Anson was one of the “Company of Proprietors of the Navigation from the Trent to the Mersey.” (5)

The first sod was dug by Josiah Wedgwood at Brownhills near Tunstall on July 26th 1766. The next year Wedgwood began work on his new factory in at Etruria, alongside the canal, which was opened on 13th June 1769.

It was in the last years of the 1760s that Wedgwood developed his “black basaltes” stoneware and began his range of neo-classical vases. The canal was important to his business success.

The Canal opened as far as Shugborough, from the south, on 24th June 1770, and reached Stoke on Trent in 1772.

The canal project demonstrates that Wedgwood and Darwin knew Anson from at least 1765. Darwin, who had a fertile mind, inventing steam cars and revolutionary theories of evolution long before his grandson, became a close associate of Wedgwood.

The last work on the monuments in Thomas Anson’s lifetime was the completion of the Lanthorn of Demosthenes, originally planned in 1764. The structure was built before 1767, when Joseph Banks saw it, but it was left unfinished. The original monument had been capped by a tripod, and Stuart had drawn his reconstruction of what this might have looked like.

By December 1770 Josiah Wedgwood had become a colleague of James “Athenian” Stuart, carrying on the inspiration of Greek design from him into his own work. It is reasonable to suggest that Thomas Anson, again, is the link between Stuart and Wedgwood, and to the later stages of the classical revival. Wedgwood’s immense dinner service for Catherine the Great includes many views of the Shugborough landscape.

Wedgwood was discussing with Stuart the adaptation, or new building, of premises in the Adelphi on the south side of the Strand for a new showroom. Wedgwood wrote to his partner Bentley about this and about a visit to Matthew Boulton's Soho Works in Birmingham where they discussed whether it was a good thing or not for Wedgwood to have a showroom for his ware next to Boulton & Fothergill's showroom.

"We agreed that those customers who were more fond of show & glitter than fine forms & the appearance of antiquity, wo'd buy Soho vases, and that all who could feel the effects of a fine outline & had any veneration for antiquity wo'd be with us."(6)

He continues:

"I forgot to tell you that Mr Boulton was making an immense large Tripod for Mr Anson to finish the top of Demosthenes Lanthorn, building there from Mr Stewart's design. The Legs were cast & weighed about 5 cwt, but the workmen staggered at the bowl & did not know which way to set about it; a Council of the workmen was call'd & every method of performing this wonderfull work canvassed over. They concluded by shaking their heads & ended where they begun. I then could hold no longer, but told them very gravely they were all wrong, they had totally mistaken their Talents and their metals; such great works should not be attempted in Copper or in Brass. They must call in some able Potter to their assistance and the work might be completed. Would you think it? They took me at my word & and I have got a fine job upon my hands in consequence of a little harmless boasting. Mr Stewart said he knew Mr Anson wo'd glory in having the Arts of Soho and Etruria united in his Tripod, & that it wo'd be a feather in our Caps which that good gentleman would delight in taking every opportunity to shew for our advantage. So this matter stands at present but Mr Boulton, Dr Darwin and I are to dine with Mr Anson on New-Year's Day & shall talk the matter over again." (6)

The New Year's meeting did not take place, but Dr Darwin was invited to Shugborough with "Wedgwood, Boulton, Keir and Bentley, if he is the country" in January 1771. Wedgwood was not able to attend this time due to trouble with his artificial leg.

The completion of the Lanthorn brings together Anson and Stuart with Wedgwood, who would take the Greek Revival inspiration into its next phase, Darwin, the revolutionary philosopher, and Boulton, the key figure in Industrial Revolution Birmingham. It's interesting to note that even Stuart still sees the promotional value of pleasing Thomas Anson, even at the age of 75.

"Keir" is James Keir (1735 – 1820), born in Edinburgh, but attracted the Midlands by the fame of Erasmus Darwin and the "Lunar Society." He contributed improvements to Darwin's poem "The Botanic Garden" in 1787. In 1791 Keir proposed a toast at a Birmingham dinner on 14th July 1791 in favour of the French revolutionaries and the fall of the Bastille and precipitated the "Church and King" riots in which conservative workers were incensed by radical masters.

A final link the chain comes in a letter from Wedgwood to Boulton on 3rd December 1772, describing a meeting between Wedgwood and Anson that would have taken place in St James' Square.

'Mr Anson behaved with great politness to me & admired our things very much. He has given me leave to mold from any of his medals, or anything else he has. He ordered a pair of the best painted vases we have & I intend sending a pair of 93s we have here @ £10-10 unless you have any you think will do better.I left the patterns at Mr Ansons and was to have gone again after this week with a Moulder but I cannot go till after the 12th. At parting he very politely made me a present of a silver medal of the late Ld. Anson & said if he liv'd till summer he would come & spend a day with me at Etruria & his sisters will come with him, but his life is very precarious, I fear he will scarcely survive the winter.'(7)

Sadly Thomas died in early 1773 and never returned to Shugborough, but here at the end of his life he is contributing to the next stage of classical revival design.

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Epilogue

Thomas Anson died in London and was brought back to Colwich Church by a hearse with six horses. His funeral was simple. He was buried at St Michael's Church, Colwich, in what Pennant calls "the burial place of the Ansons, made a l'antique, in form of a catacomb."

The coffin inscription was simply:

'Thomas Anson

died 30th march 1773'

In the Staffordshire Record Office there is a list of people who were to receive mourning rings to mark Thomas's death. The Bagot family still possesses one. They were decorated with pink enamel.

The list defines Thomas's particular friends and acquaintances in 1773.

The names include:

Philip , 2nd Earl of Hardwicke and Jemima, his wife;

the Dean of Lincoln (James Yorke, younger brother of Lady Anson);

Lord Harcourt (a founding member of the Dilettante Society and another patron, presumably at Thomas's encouragement, of Stuart);

Mr Mytton (who must be John Mytton, a Dilettanti Society member since 1764 and now the head of the Mytton family. Thomas's old friend James Mytton, who died in 1764, was his uncle and, for a while, guardian);

Mr (Thomas) Pennant (John Mytton's cousin);

Sir Piercy Brett (who had supplied the design for the Chinese House);

Admiral Keppell;

Mr Adair (mentioned in letters from Anson's Italian agent John Dick);

Mr Stuart, (the architect);

Mr Cambridge (Richard Owen Cambridge, satirist and host of house parties in Twickenham, an old friend of Admiral Anson and a close friend of Thomas's musical friend James Harris);

Sir Thomas Parker (another cousin and old friend of Lord Hardwicke);

Lord and Lady Macclesfield;

Mr Orme (The East India Company historian and friend of Stuart and Anson);

Mr Kammel.

It is only at the end of his life that Thomas Anson begins to emerge from the shadows. A large part of his life is still unknown. Was he active as a barrister? How much of his first forty years did he spend abroad? As an older man the glimpses of his character do seem consistent – the witty and slightly camp badinage that Lady Anson talks about is supported by the occasional quotations of his own words that have been preserved.

He was a pioneer traveller – as the 1734 trip to Smyrna and Tenedos proves. This may have been an important inspiration for a lifelong interest in Greece. He does seem to have been a key figure in the career of James Stuart and thus an influence on the Greek Revival in architecture. But there is no reason, or need, to suppose that he or his friends were consciously promoting a clearly defined set of beliefs and ideals.

Whether it was deliberate or not, though, he and Shugborough stand at a turning point of styles and, more importantly, of attitudes to the world. Fortuitously Shugborough itself is a physical crossroads, made even clearer by now by the confluence of railways as well as rivers and canals. The industrial revolution and commercial age meets the classical and idyllic.

It is not a clear division. People could support industry and commerce and still be neoclassicists – as Wedgwood proves. The early Birmingham industrialists show that you could be manufacturers and businessmen at the same time as being social revolutionaries. On the whole Thomas Anson seems to belong to the more purely idealistic worlds rather than to the new world. Socially he seems to move in a different sphere from people like Erasmus Darwin and Wedgwood, though their paths cross. It would seem, as a whig, that he would be in an opposite camp to Dr Johnson, who could be a philosophical opponent of James Harris while remaining a friend to him and Elizabeth Carter and turning up at the same soirees.

It is equally not a clear division between classical and romantic. The romantic interest in landscape and nature comes from the same roots as classical architecture. They are two sides of one coin. You might be inspired by the Arcadian “back to nature” mood, with a dose of Rousseau, to develop wilder gardens and travel in mountain landscapes, without ever touching a Doric portico. When people think of the romantic period proper (after 1800?) they think of a time when poets were particularly concerned with their personal feelings (following Rousseau), whereas the romantic side of the 18th century would tend to go with a sense of restraint and form.

Thomas Anson came from an earlier generation. It is easy to forget that all the time he was working with Stuart and enjoying his “elegant entertainments” at 15 St James’ Square he was in his 70s.

Yet, throughout his life he was at the forefront of ideas. Many people who have explored the history of Shugborough have had a feeling that there was something

extraordinary about Thomas Anson. The anecdotes passed on by Seward and Harris, the fragments of Thomas's own writing, the notes and letters of people like Kammel, Stuart, Wedgwood and, of course, Lady Anson, so often contain actual reported speech so that, just for a moment, a window opens, or an image flickers on the moviola. Though there are so few clues to his life so many of them are vivid and bring to life dramatic and important moments, as if these clues had been deliberately left buried to be unearthed many years later and to act as the keystones for a reconstruction.

Was he a kind of "eminence grise" guiding major developments in 18th century art and thought? Or do we tend to invent a Thomas Anson to suit our fantasies?

There was certainly a danger of this over twenty five years ago when I first started investigating the story. All those years ago Shugborough was the focus of very zany ideas with no historical basis and the air of mystery seemed to support these mad speculations, with Thomas always as the shadowy figure at the centre. He certainly seemed the "eminence grise" then. I first heard of Shugborough in 1974 in Henry Lincoln's TV film "The Priest, the Painter and the Devil" and by 1982 by the time I came to live in an old estate cottage I knew Henry Lincoln and his co-authors of "The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail" and did what I could to investigate links between the house and their strange story, taking part in a "Holy Blood" seminar at the house in 1983. By 1990 it gradually emerged that the whole complicated story of the "Priory of Sion" and Rennes-le-Chateau was based on a rather amateurish hoax by Pierre Plantard, a French eccentric occultist and his friend Philippe de Cherisey, an alcoholic comic actor. (The "bloodline" idea was nothing to do with them. That was invented by Richard Leigh a possible explanation of the purpose of the imaginary Priory.) The vast quantity of pseudo-history and fiction that has been written since obscures the fact that there is simply nothing there. It proves the need always to go back to original sources.

Perhaps, however historically correct we try to be, we can't help create history to suit our personal tastes – or is there something more mysterious going on here? People involved with Shugborough often feel a personal connection. Either they are attracted to the place itself, as it is now or as it was in the past, or they have a sense that some aspect of the place has been waiting for them to uncover it.

I have deliberately avoided any personal elements in this book, but now after all the facts have been put in order as scientifically as I can manage, I can look back at the process of research and wonder how I came to follow some of these trails.

In 2005 I spent some days at Shugborough in the role of an imaginary composer from 1805, as part of an art project. The end product was a set of flute sonatas, performed there and in a concert in Stafford. At that point I knew nothing about any of Anson's real musical life. I had a vague feeling that Shugborough was about ideas and not just art and architecture.

Independently of Shugborough I had developed an interest in the faint line of Platonic philosophy in England. This may seem very esoteric but it just happens to appeal to me. There is a hazy tradition from Ficino in the Renaissance which emerged to influence the arts in Elizabethan England and which then went under the surface with

occasionally wonderful eruptions in the 17th century (particularly in the theology of the Cambridge Platonists). It re-emerged very influentially in the romantic period. I was able to use bits of Thomas Taylor in my imaginary 1805 character. But I knew nothing about the 18th century period. What linked 17th century Platonists with Taylor over a century later? Music and this quite specialist world of ideas just happened to have been important to me in recent years – but I had no reason to connect them with Shugborough.

After a completely bonkers “Holy Grail Weekend” in 2006, when I lectured on the Priory of Sion hoax, I decided to go back to the beginning and ask what I really knew about Thomas Anson. Within days I had read his will for the first time and seen the name “Mr Kammel”. I remembered the poem by Bagot which, I thought, mentioned a “Hammell” who would “tune his softest strain”. Here was Thomas Anson leaving a considerable sum to a musician.

Within hours I had found Anton Kammel on Grove Music on-line and contacted Michaela Freemanova in Prague who had written an article on him in 2003. She told me that Thomas was one of his most important patrons. She knew about the will and had ordered a copy from the Staffordshire Records Office to check the details. Her article then led to the spectacular 2002 book “Music and Theatre in Handel’s World” by Burrows and Dunhill. Suddenly I not only had a clear picture of Thomas Anson as patron of music but I had also discovered James Harris, my missing link in the Platonic tradition in the 18th century.

Suddenly Thomas Anson’s world had become exactly what I wanted it to be – and I have to wonder if anyone who hadn’t been a composer who happened to be interested in the philosophical side would ever have put these things together. No-one at Shugborough knew anything about either Harris or Kammel.

From then on things kept appearing. Kerry Bristol came along, eager to promote James Stuart, and able to explain that Anson had been his chief supporter – and, most excitingly, that their relationship began long before the Doric Temple in 1760. In 2007 a completely new period in Shugborough research was launched with a Thomas Anson conference, a far cry from the Holy Grail Weekend of 2005.

After that exciting start the two most astounding discoveries were the story of Lord Scarbrough which popped up on a Google Books search, (you need to look for Anfon as well as Anson as it doesn’t read 18th century long ‘s’s’) and the story of Tenedos. There were confusing references to Thomas’s travels but James Harris’s anecdote stood out as something extremely significant – but it had no clue about when it happened. Again, by pure chance, I had recognised that there was a letter in the archives in Armenian, but wrongly listed as Hebrew. It’s nothing like Hebrew, but I happened to have seen a book on Armenian music and I recognised the script.

Within a few hours I found an American expert on Armenian trade and the next day I had a translation which proved Thomas had been travelling in Asia Minor in 1734 – earlier than any of the well known tourists who formed the Divan Club and Egyptian Society.

All these things are discoveries with a personal significance – but surely not a matter of making the facts fit my imaginary Thomas Anson?

After three years I feel I have exhausted all the likely sources of information – but surely there must be more somewhere? Is there an archive of one the travelling companions of the 1720s that still holds letters from Thomas? Was anyone with him in Turkey in 1734? Did they leave any clues?

Putting the story so far into print is bound to encourage major new finds to pop up – perhaps contradicting the evidence in this book – though I have tried to be rigorously factual.

Some speculation has to be allowed or there would be no story.

Looking at the story as a whole I feel there is some slight reason to claim that Thomas Anson did have a unique role. It's not as if there was any conscious plan or conspiracy. He may simply have happened to be in the right place at the right time, but there is something about that visit to Tenedos.

He stands there, not only at a place which connected him to the Trojan War, but also talking to an old man who seemed to have a direct memory of that time. Surely he must have made the trip because he was already filled with thoughts about Ancient Greece. This was in 1734, before even the Society of Dilettanti, who looked no further than Italy to begin with, was formally established.

When he returned home (and, I believe, had his portrait painted as a returning traveller) he must have devoted his life to recovering the treasures of Greece – not just in art but in ideas. This dedication somehow led him to James Stuart as soon as Stuart returned from Greece. (Had Anson been there first?) For nearly twenty years Anson supported Stuart's career as well as a series of other like minded people in the arts and sciences.

The importance of this Greek ideal (and I am sure it is something more abstract than "Greek Revival Architecture") may not be immediately obvious but it was very clear to a few people like James Harris and Thomas Taylor a generation later.

In 1805 Coleridge wrote an often quoted passage in his notebooks that almost exactly sums up the crossroads at which Shugborough sits:

"Let England be Sir. P. Sidney, Shakespere, Spenser, Milton, Bacon, Harrington, Swift, Wordsworth; and never let the names of Darwin, Johnson, Hume, furr it over! — If these too must be England, let them be another England, — or rather let the first be old England, the spiritual, platonic, old England and the second with Locke at the head of the Philosophers and Pope of the poets, with the long list of Priestleys, Payleys, Hayleys, Darwins, Wm. Pitts, Dundasses, &c. &c. be representative of commercial G. Britain; these have their merits but are as alien to me, as the Mandarin Philosophers and Poets of China."

Coleridge is not referring to an idealised fantasy England but to a world of ideas. The old England, to his view, is a world where imagination and thought rules, rather than

science and commerce – though he says “these have their merits”. Interestingly Dr Johnson and Erasmus Darwin are named amongst the makers of the new materialistic world. Johnson certainly had his merits. He simply had a different world-view. He remained friendly with James Harris even though he called him a prig.

This “spiritual, platonic, old England has nothing to do with politics or even geography. It’s a way of seeing the world. Perhaps it’s something like Arcadia, Elysium or a renewed Golden Age discovered in a particular patch of the Earth. This might be what the landscape designers tried to make a little more visible through their improvements, or simply by arranging a well placed viewpoint.

It may be easy to misunderstand. “Commercial G. Britain” seems to have won, in spite of the efforts poets, musicians and artists.

There is a clear line from Thomas Anson’s world to Coleridge. James Harris supported Floyer Sydenham in his translation of Plato. Sydenham’s work was completed by Thomas Taylor, who became an out and out pagan. Taylor inspired the romantics – though in Coleridge’s case the discovery of Plato turned him from Unitarianism to more orthodox Christianity. There is a very important Platonic tradition in Christian theology from St Augustine onwards which runs through both Catholic and Protestant history.

Shugborough has to be part of “commercial G. Britain” to survive, but perhaps it’s time it also became a centre of ideas that reflect, in a twenty-first century way, the ideas that inspired so much new creativity in the 18th century.

The 1767 descriptive poem

Sir,

You will most likely be surprised at the inclosed fantastical inventory of certain of your goods and chattels. If it sho'd amuse You for half an hour, the author of it will have fully obtained his end. He is under no apprehensions of your suspecting who he is: but, if he keeps his own council, he is sure You can never convict him. Certain as he is of remaining concealed, he has so insuperable an objection to anything of his composition appearing in print, that he most seriously enjoins You by no means to let it escape to the press. This request he is confident You will comply with, as Your doing otherwise wo'd give him real uneasiness.

He has nothing further to add but to assure You he thinks all he says, tho' said in verse, & is

very sincerely
your obedient
humble Servant.

July.7.1767.

*Anson, to no man the celestial Muse
Her festive strain of merited applause
Bears gladlier, than to him whose generous aid
Protects & cherishes the sister arts
Of imitation. From the Muse proceeds
All Harmony however to the sense
Directed, immaterial: in the grace
Of fair proportion, & harmonious form
Perceptible, as in the number'd notes
Of melting music, or of measured verse:
The Muse's gift in either: Her's the lyre
Of ORPHEUS, Her's the SYRACUSAN reed,
A RAPHAEL'S pencil Her's & Her's the touch
Whose exquisite sensation shapes the block
To forms of GRECIAN beauty. She well pleased
On the green margin of the Silver TRENT
Sees at thy bidding ANSON, SCENES ARISE
That might adorn ILISSUS, or the vale
of TEMPE: glittering domes, & obelisks,
Pillars & pyramids with pointed top
Piercing the lawrel's shade: or where the slope
Ascending gradual opens to the sun,
Full to his orient beam the trophied Arch
Turns it's vast portal, worthy to bestride
The sacred road triumphant heroes passed via sacra
To ROME'S dread CAPITOL. Along the mead,*

Reflected by the clear translucent stream,
 See where the stately colonnade extends
 It's pillar'd length: to shade the sculptured forms
 Of Demigods or Heroes, & protect
 From the cold northern blast each tenderer plant,
 The fragrant progeny of milder climes;
 Orange, or lime, or cedro from the banks
 Of ARNO, or PARTHENOPE'S soft shore.
 These in fair order ranged, stage above stage;
 Rear to the lofty roof their green heads, crowned
 At once with flowers profuse, & golden fruit,
 Asilvan theatre! & intermixt
 Each aromatic shrub or scented leaf,
 Myrtle, & sweet geranium, cassia, balms,
 And balsams from ARABIA'S spicy vales.
 Here while we breathe perfume, the ravish'd eye
 Surveys the miracles of GRECIAN art
 In living sculptures, godlike shapes, & forms
 Excelling human! Light-robed FLORA first,
 Protectress of the place, with garlands crowned,
 Scatters with liberal hand a waste of flowers.
 Nor shall the learned eye deem here misplaced,
 O smooth ADONIS, thy transcendent form.
 How shall the Muse address Thee, lovely Youth,
 How celebrate? a mortal or a God,
 Doubtfull! for wide extended thy renown,
 And various: through mysterious EGYPT'S bounds
 In temples, & with sacrifice adored,
 OSIRIS! while on TYRE'S resplendent shore
 With annual obsequies, & plaintive song
 SIDONIAN virgins mourn their TAMMUZ slain.
 But every GRECIAN Muse, thro' DORIC land,
 Thro' SICILY'S resounding vales, still chaunts
 ADONIS' fate & CITHEREA'S woe.
 Thus varying they record Thee: but thy grace,
 And matchless beauty, under every name,
 In every situation, all extoll,
 In life, in death, in action, or repose,
 Or sleeping in PROSPERINA'S cold lap,
 Or walking in CIPRIGNA'S rosy arms.
 Thy godlike semblance next commands the song,
 O BROMIUS, O LENĒAN; thy curle'd locks
 With ivy-berries crowne'd, thy awfull head
 Averted, air majestic, & thy youth
 Celestial, brightest progeny of JOVE!
 But what that Hero form, whose gloomy brow
 Contracted, speaks the workings of his soul?
 Eager his looks & piercing, but with care
 Emaciate his sunk cheek: The Dagger marks
 Th'Assertor of ROME'S liberties in vain

*CASSIUS the last of ROMANS. How shall words
 Paint the firm station, spirit, strength & grace
 Of the young ATHLETE? How, MELPOMINÈ,
 Thy flowering figure? o'er thy vocal she;
 Inclined, in act preluding, to excite
 Notes, that resounding thro' the star-paved courts
 Of high JOVE feasting with th'immortal Gods
 Redouble their beatitude, & take
 On earth the ravish'd souls of righteous men
 And wrap them in ELYSIUM: but th'accursed,
 And reprobate, to wrath devoted, them
 Strange horror seizes, flight, & mild despair,
 Troubled, & frantic at the sacred sound.
 Nor to these proud arcades alone confined
 The works of ancient art; behold the lawn,
 With circling woods surrounded, skirted wide
 With many a Term, & many a laurel'd bust,
 Poet or Caesar; many a swelling urn,
 ETRUSCAN wrought, emboss'd with high relief,
 Of various argument. A Virgin here
 Dire sacrifice to NEMESIS DIVINE,
 Bleeds on the horrid altar. To the shore
 Here PHRIGIAN PARIS leads his ravished bride
 Bright ARGIVE HELLEN, source of endless woes.
 Observe you rising hillock's form,
 Whose verdant top the spiry cypress crowns,
 And the dim ilex spreads her dusky arms
 To shade th'ARCADIAN Shepherdesses tomb:
 Of PARIAN stone the pile: of modern hands
 The work, but emulous of ancient praise.
 Let not the Muse inquisitive presume
 With rash interpretation to disclose
 The mystic ciphers that conceal her name.
 Whate'er her country, or however call'd
 Peace to her gentle shade. The Muse shall oft
 Frequent her honour'd shrine, with solemn song
 Lyric, or elegiac: oft when eve
 Gives respite from the long days weary task,
 And dewy HESPER brightens in the west,
 Here shall the constant hind, & plighted maid
 Meet, & exchange their tokens, & their vows
 Of faith, & love. Here weeping Spring shall shed
 Her first pale snowdrops, bluebells, violets,
 And Summer's earliest roses blossom here.
 Now new scenes open, other fabrics rise,
 Unusual forms! from climates far remote,
 Farther than DORIC, or IÖNIAN arts
 Extended, or ROME'S conquering eagles flew:
 By thy adventurous Race not unexplored,
 ANSON, whose indefatigable course*

*Proceeding circled the terraqueous globe:
Hence on the TRENT, SINĒAN trophies shine:
Airy Pagodas, elegant & light,
With painted balustrades, & gilded spires;
And Temples, that like broad pavilions spread
Their ample roofs, with listed colours gay,
Green, azure, purple, & distinct with gold;
Here 'mid circumfluous waters aptly placed
Cast a mixt radiance o'er the trembling stream.
From hence, in wide expanse, the level mead
Spreads her smooth surface of continued green,
Not boundless, tho' extensive: all around
High grounds, & waving woods, at distance due
Close the fair landscape: INGESTRE'S awfull shades,
TIXAL'S grey towers, & CHARTLEY'S castled hill.
Westward, with near approach, & bolder swell,
The wavy hills rise mountainous, befringed
With gloomy groves of never-changing leaf,
Cedar, or pine, or fir: plantations vast,
And venerable! not in curious lines
Restrained, & cramp'd, nor on the summits clump'd
Bleak, & unthrifty; but profusely spread
Along the mountain slope for many a mile
To shade a country. Such the groves that grace
The shaggy sides of APPENNINE, or huge
PIRENE. Underneath a limpid lake
The molten chrystal of an hundred rills
Gushing from purple CANK'S salubrious sides
Collects, expansion pure, with verdant isles
Inlaid it's lucid bosom, & it's shores
With marble temples, glittering structures, crowned,
And cheif thy stately tower ANDRONICUS
CYRRHESTES, TEMPLE OF THE WINDS since call'd.
Mark, on the gorgeous frize in high relief
Embossed, the powers of air, gigantic forms.
First BOREAS, tyrant of the northern blast,
Known by his surly frown, & weathered shell,
Trump of the howling tempest. Caecias keen
Shakes from his brazen shield the rattling hail.
A youthfull form the next, of aspect mild,
Bright Genius of the morning's fragrant gale,
Sheds from his robe's loose bosom fruits & flowers,
APELIOTES messenger of day.
Then EURUS, NOTUS, ZEPHYRUS, & LIBS,
And SKIRON hot, whose magazine of fire
Burns the green herb, & blast the sickening year:
High on the roof the glittering TRYTON poised,
The adverse shore a TUSCAN colonnade
Superbly bounds, beneath whose marble floor
The glassy wave escapes with liquid lapse*

*Smooth sliding; but a non precipitant
 Roars o'er the rough cascade with dashing sound,
 And rushes into TRENT. Recoiling TRENT
 Shrinks from the mighty tribute. But too long
 The pompous works of art engross the strain
 Inanimate & lifeless, while with life
 The landscape round us swarms: earth, air, & flood
 Peopled! with stately herds the meadows throng'd
 With generous steeds the pastures, & the hills
 With sheep, of various climes, & varied fleece,
 Innumerable! On the lakes & streams
 The aquatic fowl their silver bosoms have,
 Of every size & colour, from the swan's
 Majestic port, & shelldrake's glossy plume,
 To the dun shoals of waterhens & cootes,
 Whose dusky myriads darken half the wave.
 To every creature that the vital air
 Sustains, is ANSON'S kind benevolence
 Extended: beasts of chace, & fowl of game
 Secure in his protection roam at large
 Unpersecuted. Never here was heard
 The hunter's barbarous shout, or clam'rous horn
 To fright the peacefull shades; or murd'ring gun
 To stain the hospitable fields with blood.
 Nor to the love of arts alone (tho' that
 Well understood is praise) ascribe we all
 These stately fabrics, this so splendid scene:
 Humanity, attention to relieve
 Industrious want, instruct, emply the poor,
 His better motive. Sacred Charity
 Bids every pile with happier auspice rise.
 The sumptuous Mansion claims the closing song,
 Adorned with all that elegance or taste
 Can furnish, to content the judging eye,
 Amuse or satisfie the curious search
 Of leisure or of learning. Forms that boast
 A RAPHAEL'S touch, breathe on the glowing walls,
 And vaulted roofs: whatever modern art
 Can add, in stucco raised, or fretted gold;
 Or ATTIC STUART'S learned hand supply
 Of ornament antique, & chaste design.
 Nor shall the CLASSIC Library remain
 Unsung, replete with learning's genuine stores:
 Not metaphysic dream, or sceptic doubt,
 Or fierce polemic wrangle; but the songs
 Of ancient GREECE, that universal strain
 That earth, & Heaven applauded, & the Gods
 With rapture stoop'd to hear: And what (tho' cramp'd
 In language to severer tone confined)
 Imperial ROME in manly cadence sung.*

*That too which later in no barbarous age,
 When every art revived, & LEO reigned,
 On ARNO'S flowery banks, the TUSCAN Muse
 Warbled at will in pleasure's myrtle bower.
 The song was careless, but the harmony
 (What can it less when TUSCAN Muses sing?)
 Still takes the list'ning ear with ravishment,
 And braves the snarling Critic's idle rage.
 Here by no country, in no age, surpass'd,
 SHAKESPEAR'S immortal page, & MILTON'S song
 Celestial. Nor to books alone confined
 Thy learned Archives: here whate'er remains
 Of rare antiquity (or for design
 Curious, or circumstance, or workmanship
 Inimitable) in Coins, or graven Gemms,
 Camëo or Intaglio; sardonix,
 Cenilean ophite, amethyst, the blood
 Cornelian, & the jasper's flowery vein.
 Endless the task & the irksome to attempt
 Particular discription, & the song
 Already droops, tho' gorgeous the detail.
 Let Envy snarle, & Ignorance condemn
 And scouling Critics censure - All within
 Profuse of ornament, the scene without
 Too crowded! - Little matters their applause,
 Or blame, while Science & the Muse approve.
 The Muse thy works, e'en Piety approves
 Thy filial attachment to the soil,
 The seat where fortune cast thy humbler lott
 In no unpleasing scene: not BRITAIN boasts,
 Throughout her varied isle, a fairer hill,
 A greener meadow, or a clearer stream.
 Along the sunny ridge that overhangs
 Eastward thy fair demesnes, & wide commands,
 Oft let me wander, when the morning ray
 First gilds thy groves & streams, & glittering towers,
 And meditate my uncouth DORIC lay:
 While the bright prospect to my mind recalls
 Scenes once beheld with rapture, from the heights
 Of CUMA, or HERCULEAN TIBUR'S brow.
 These to Thee, ANSON, from a nameless Bard,
 Who seeks nor praise, nor patron: One whose Muse,
 Conscious of all her dignity (for Heaven
 Of old ordained the Muse, by firm decree,
 Severe dispens'ers of authentic fame
 When virtue claims the wreath) will ne'er disgrace
 Her genuine function, prostitute her praise
 To curs'd Ambition, Power, or worthless Wealth,
 With servile adulation: Pleased to bear
 Her writings to Benevolence like Thine.*

NOTES.

- *Godlike shapes & forms*
Excelling human.

That the Grecian Statuaries, especially in the figures of their Deities, attempted a degree of beauty not to be found in nature, there is no doubt. The Apollo Belvidere is still a proof of it: his proportions are not human: his air (the result of those proportions) is divine. Raphael did the same in his letter to Count Balthazar Castiglione, speaking of his Galatea, he says "Perfect beauty being so seldom found, I avail myself of a certain Idéal image.

*Nor shall the learned eye deem here misplaced,
O smooth Adonis, thy transcendent form.*

Adonis, Thammuz, & Osiris, are Greek, Phenician & Egyptian names for the same person. - His statue not misplaced in a Greenhouse, because under all these denominations, he is looked upon by the best Mythologists as the Power of Vegetation: particularly the Vegetation of Corn: whence the fable that six months he lieth in Prosperine's lap, that is, whilst the seed of corn continueth under ground, & the other six months, that is Spring & Summer, he lieth with Venus.

*- In act preluding, to excite
Notes, that resounding &c.
(Quotes from Pindar, in ancient Greek)
- But the accursed,
And reprobate, to wrath devoted, them
Strange horror seizes - &c.
(More quotes from Pindar, in ancient Greek)
By thy adventurous Race not unexplored.*

If there is any weight in the trifling criticism of the impropriety in general of mixing Greek & Chinese buildings in the same scene, the above circumstance is an ample justification of their extream propriety here, exclusively of their real beauty & situation.

*From the heights
Of Cuma, or Herculean Tibur's brow.
The former commanding the bay of Baia, & the Elysian fields, the latter Rome
& her Campagna.*

The end.

