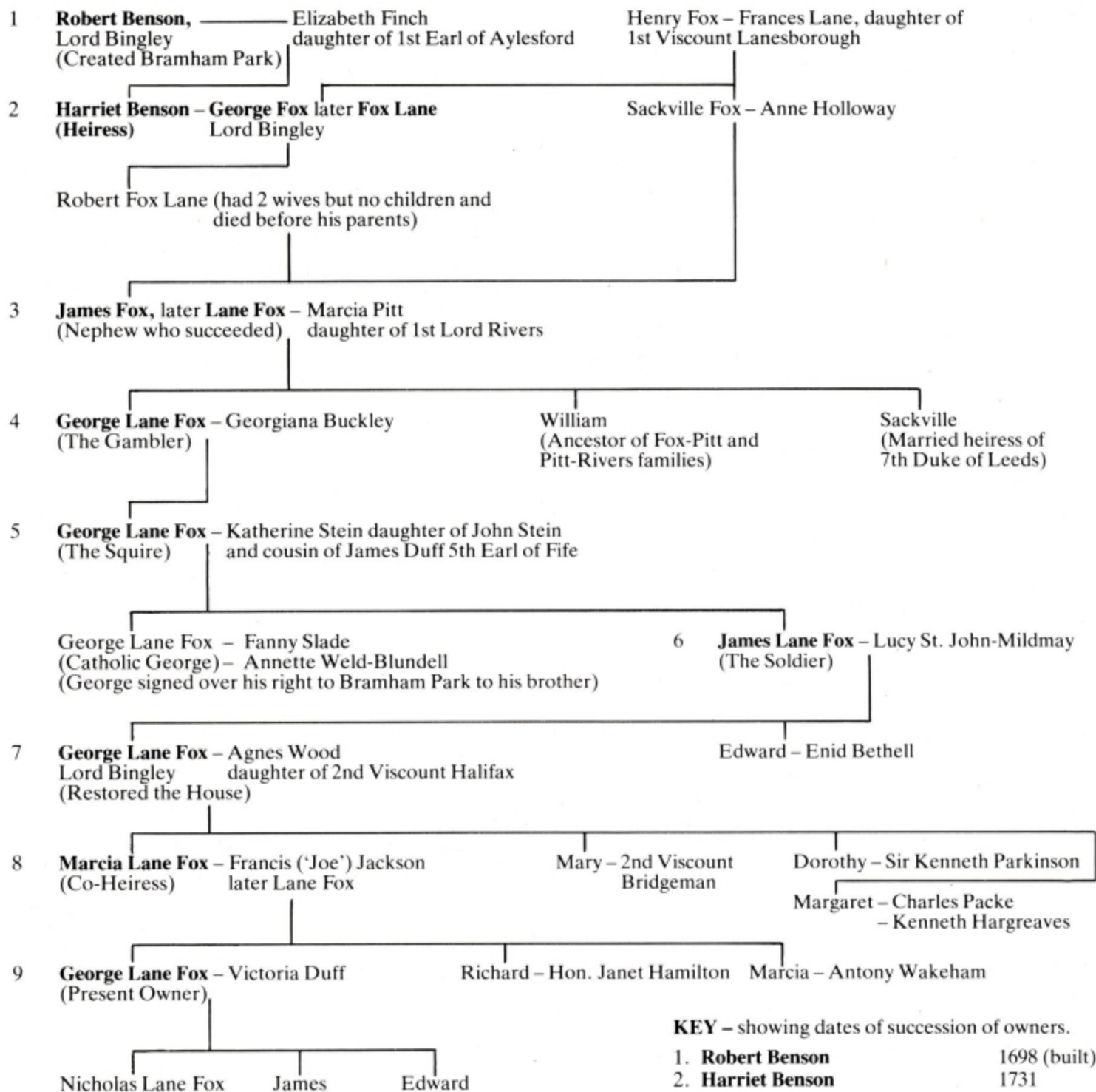


BRAMHAM PARK



The family at Bramham Park



KEY — showing dates of succession of owners.

1. Robert Benson	1698 (built)
2. Harriet Benson	1731
3. James Fox	1771
4. George Lane Fox (The Gambler)	1821
5. George Lane Fox (The Squire)	1848
6. James Lane Fox	1896
7. George Lane Fox	1906
8. Marcia Lane Fox	1947
9. George Lane Fox	1971

Note: Owners of Bramham Park are printed in bold type and numbered by generations.



Bramham Park has belonged to my family for nine generations, ever since Robert Benson first created it at the end of the 17th century. Successive generations of landlords and tenants have co-operated to make the estate an efficient agricultural community of friends, centred upon the House, Garden and Park.

Beautiful things are created in order to be shared, so I hope that you will enjoy Bramham Park with us, and help the family which lives here to preserve its beauty for the future.



George Lane Fox

The Story of Bramham Park

The house and gardens at Bramham express the spirit in which the country house and its environment were created during the first half of the eighteenth century and afford a rare opportunity to enjoy a fine Queen Anne house surrounded by pleasure-grounds planned and planted as a cohesive whole. The gardens, inspired by the work of the great Frenchman, André le Nôtre, are so completely preserved that John Wood's plan c.1725 would serve as a guide today. The house, though damaged by fire in 1828, is virtually unaltered on the outside with its flanking colonnades and wings, a spacious forecourt, fine stable block and monumental gate-pillars.

Influenced by the Italian school of architecture and Palladio's writings, Bramham is the creation of a remarkable man – Robert Benson, 1st Lord Bingley.

His father, Robert Benson, an attorney of Wrenthorpe near Wakefield, had raised money for King Charles's cause but, after early setbacks, seems to have prospered under the Commonwealth. Sir John Reresby considered him 'the most notable and formidable man for business of his time; one of no birth . . . he had raised himself to be clerk of assize of the northern circuit, and to an estate of £2,500 per annum'. He died in 1676 leaving an infant son Robert, who in the last years of the century completed his education with a grand tour of Europe.

He was made a Deputy Lieutenant for the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1700 and from 1705 was Member of

Parliament for York. Although considered by some to be 'of mean extraction' he had much to commend him – good looks, cultivated tastes, a command of several languages, and a large fortune. He came into his own on the formation of the Tory ministry of 1710, becoming successively Commissioner of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. On his appointment as Ambassador to Madrid in 1713 he was created Lord Bingley, but he was out of office from the Queen's death in 1714 until appointed Treasurer of King George II's Household in 1730.

Lord Raby writes of Benson as ' . . . a good manager . . . has saved 5 or 6000 pounds or more . . . travelled in Italy where he had the good fortune to strike a friendship with my Lord Dartmouth by whose means he married a daughter of Lord Guernsey'. The lady in question was Lady Dartmouth's sister, Elizabeth Finch, eldest daughter of Heneage Finch, later 1st Earl of Aylesford.

We have no documentary evidence as to the architect of the house. James Gibbs, Giacomo Leoni, and Thomas Archer have all been suggested – certainly Archer was responsible for Bingley's house in Cavendish Square, but it seems unlikely that the same hand would have produced the unusual elevations of Bramham. The stable building is the work of James Paine, and John Wood is known to have worked at Bramham as a young man, but this may have been some years later.

Building probably began around 1699/1700 and it continued for at least



Robert Benson, 1st Lord Bingley, 1676-1731 — builder and designer of Bramham Park.



Hon. Harriet Benson, wife of George Fox Lane.





The house before restoration circa. 1900 – notice the self-sown elm tree growing beside the front steps.

ten years. In the same letter of 1710 Raby tells us Benson was 'elected a burgess for the city of York and is building a house 12 or 14 miles from thence'. This differs from Colen Campbell's statement that 'additional improvements were happily finished by the noble patron, Anno 1710' which appears, with a plan and elevation of the entrance front, in the second volume of Vitruvius Britannicus published in 1717.

Most probably the whole conception, including the choice of site, was Benson's own. His architectural knowledge and ability were much esteemed by his contemporaries. He helped Raby with his plans for Wentworth Castle, and a letter from Lord Bute to the Earl of Strafford (as Raby had become) chides him for being 'so mery with your humble servant as to prefer my loe taste in architecture to the consummated experience of Bingley'. The Duke of Chandos later consulted Bingley on the design for Cannons.

Benson was a director of the

South Sea Company and appears to have come well out of the Bubble as his daughter Harriet, who succeeded to Bramham in 1731, was heiress to a considerable fortune. She married George Fox, whose family can be traced back to a William Fox of Grete, Worcestershire at the time of King Edward IV. George's grandfather, Joseph, while an army officer in Ireland, had married the eldest daughter of Lord Blayney, and their son Henry married Frances, the daughter of Sir George Lane the Irish Secretary, later 1st Viscount Lanesborough. George succeeded to the Lane estates on the death of his uncle the 2nd Viscount and in 1751 assumed the additional surname. Like his father-in-law George Fox Lane was Member of Parliament for York from 1742 to 1761, and in 1762 was created Lord Bingley. His only son Robert, although married twice, died before him leaving no heirs, and in 1773 the title again became extinct.

The 2nd Lord Bingley willed his English and Irish lands to his

nephew James Fox, a scholar and raconteur, Member of Parliament for Horsham, and a friend and supporter of William Pitt. He married Marcia, daughter of George Pitt, 1st Lord Rivers, in 1789 and three years later they moved to Bramham. 'Jemmy' Fox was a keen huntsman who devoted himself to the estate and organized the Bramham Moor Hunt on regular lines. With the succession in 1821 of his son George the family fortunes deteriorated. A member of the Prince Regent's hard-drinking set, George's marriage to the witty, extravagant Georgiana Buckley was a disastrous failure, and expensive settlements following a deed of separation together with his gambling debts drained much capital from the estate, already somewhat starved of funds by his father's lavish provision for his wife and younger children.

The fire of 1828 destroyed many of Benson's treasures, and for financial reasons the house remained empty for 78 years, although the garden was kept up.



View of the house from the park.

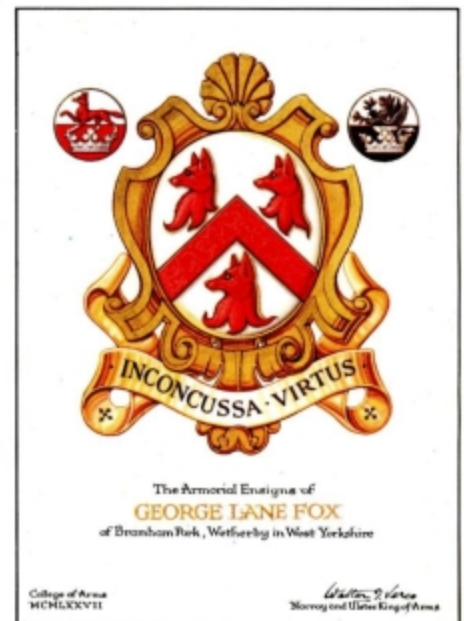
George the gambler died in 1848 and was succeeded by George 'the Squire' who devoted himself to paying off his father's debts and husbanding the family resources. He brought back the hounds from Harewood where they had been since Jemmy's death. A fine amateur coachman he was also interested in agricultural improvements and much loved by his tenants but neither he nor his second son James, who succeeded in 1896, could afford to rebuild.

It is to James's son George Richard that we owe the restoration of the house at Bramham.

In 1906, with his architects Detmar Blow and De Billory, he set out to recreate Robert Benson's design, the only new external feature being the curved double staircase in the middle of the garden front, said to have been copied from Fontainebleau. By 1914 the major reconstruction was complete, although interior improvements continued throughout

the war in which George served with the Yorkshire Hussars, the regiment he later commanded. While devoting himself to Bramham and its tenants he was also Member of Parliament for Barkston Ash from 1906 to 1931, and for political services the Bingley title was revived for him in 1933. He married the Hon. Agnes Wood, daughter of the 2nd Viscount Halifax, and on his death in 1947 was succeeded by the eldest of his four daughters, Marcia.

She had married in 1929 Captain (now Colonel) Ward-Jackson who later took the name of Lane Fox. Marcia died at the beginning of 1980 but her husband lives in the adjoining Little House. Bramham is now the home of their elder son, George, his wife Victoria, and their sons Nicholas, James and Edward – so three generations of the family still live here.



The Garden

The landscape-garden at Bramham Park was created in the first decade of the eighteenth century. The broad walks, avenues, vistas, and ornamental water-features follow, in miniature, the style of Le Nôtre's famous French gardens at Versailles, Vaux le Vicomte, and others.

Described by Campbell as 'curious gardens laid out with great judgement', similar gardens often surrounded important houses of the period. What distinguishes Bramham is that the formal 70-acre garden and related woodland area remain almost as originally laid out over 250 years ago. Throughout its history, the owners have resisted later 'improvements' and maintained Robert Benson's basic design.

The walls of the original Parterre now enclose a rose garden. The dragon's mouth in the centre of the rock formation was probably to feed a small waterfall into a pond in the depression below. Sections of a pipe have been found in the rising ground behind, where the view is enclosed by The Queen's Hollow now planted with trees, species roses, and bulbs. The north vista from the centre

of the garden front is closed by the Ionic portico of Paine's Temple. Built between 1750-62, it contains some fine stucco work and may originally have served as an Orangery. Between 1906-14 it was consecrated as a chapel, and the statue of Robert Benson and monument to his daughter Harriet – possibly by Carlini – were transferred from the original chapel in the north wing. From the east terrace a narrow hedge-lined avenue some 500 yards long leads westward past the chapel. After expanding momentarily into a diamond-shaped *salon*, it resumes its path round an angle to the intersection of five ways marked by a large stone urn depicting the four seasons known as the Four Faces. Along one path can be seen the distant T Canal, to reach which we cross first the Quarter Mile walk which stretches from near the house to an open temple also of Ionic style.

From correspondence between Benson and his gardener, Fleming, we learn that the T Canal was under construction in 1728, and a drawing for an aqueduct at Bramham appears in John Wood's plans, together with a

Flowers among the flagstones.
Paine's Orangery, now the Chapel.



The Rose Garden.





The T Pond before the 1962 gale.

reference to the great reservoir.

From the centre of the cross piece of the canal it is possible to appreciate the breadth and vision of Benson's plans. We can see the replanting made necessary by the 1962 gale which uprooted over 400 mature trees

The Octagon, known as the 'Gothic Temple'.



in the garden alone, and realize that it was in a similar early stage of growth that he saw his design. Along the short arm the eye continues to the Pleasure Grounds of Black Fen and the temple known locally as 'Lead Lads' from the lead statuettes which once adorned its roof. The long arm is framed by beech and lime trees indicating the distant woods where the springs rise which feed the canal and Obelisk Ponds. In the opposite direction a grass walk, bordered in springtime by daffodils and wild flowers, slopes away to the house.

South-east of the canal is the Gothic Temple, a summer house beside the bowling green. The pointed windows and doorways have intersecting tracery, and circular openings are set in arched triangles above. The stools and tables inside are late eighteenth century. A cistern in the roof served the house as a water-tower before the advent of a mains system. Across the lawn the Dog's Graves area on the left is being replanted with magnolias and ilex to

The Four Faces.



provide a contrast with the formal avenues of beech.

The Broad Walk stretches from the chapel across the garden front of the house to a series of water basins known as the Obelisk Ponds. We descend two or three steps to a square sunken garden, the wall facing us embellished with dragons' mouths and shallow basins. This backs onto the main pools, six in all, of various shapes and sizes. Southward, the water issues in cascades down a series of terraces with flights of steps on either side. The elaborate water system was restored in the 1960s with the help of a generous grant from the Historic Buildings Council.

Across the park an avenue of beech-trees connects the garden with Black Fen, planted at the same time, where avenues continue the vista layout. Beyond a ha-ha can be seen

the Round Temple, possibly modelled on Kent's design for the Temple of Ancient Virtues at Stowe. This temple and the Ionic one in the garden were both in existence in 1750 and were probably designed by James Paine. The Obelisk surmounted by an urn, 200 yards beyond the Round Temple, was erected by George and Harriet Fox Lane in memory of their son Robert.

Returning to the house, the eye is caught by the unusual height of the colonnade which joins the house to the South Wing, originally the kitchen. Passing through this colonnade the visitor returns to the forecourt and the entrance to the house.



The Obelisk.

A view of the garden before the gale.





The Broad Walk.
The Obelisk Ponds.

Bramham Park has been fortunate in being owned by the same family from its inception to the present time. Justifiably proud of the garden, and exercising laudable restraint during the nineteenth century when misdirected enthusiasm was rampant, the owners have been content to preserve the original design. In the same spirit the present occupants continue the loving care of this unique eighteenth-century garden.



Tour of the House

The Hall

From the ramped approach, steps lead directly into the Hall, a 30 ft cube.

The furniture is mostly of oak, seventeenth century, two of the chairs showing the royal crown. The eighteenth-century long-case clock has movements by Millards of Tewkesbury and the giltwood seventeenth-century style chandelier was made for the room in 1910.

The Imari jars are seventeenth and eighteenth century, and the plates on the mantelpiece Delft.

The portrait of Queen Anne by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) was presented by her to Lord Bingley after a visit to Bramham, as was the bust of the Queen as a small child. Lord Bingley and his wife Lady Elizabeth Finch are both attributed to Kneller, while the portrait of Robert Benson senior is by Van der Bank. The two battle paintings are by Jacques Courtois, called le Bourguignon. The large picture of the Duke of Cumberland is a fine example of the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792).

The Hall.



The Library

The leather-bound volumes in this room are all that remain of Benson's original library. As well as books on natural history and field sports there is a set of House of Commons journals 1605-1731, which include a record of the indictment of Charles I. The eighteenth-century marble topped lacquered cabinet and the nineteenth-century mahogany and satinwood chest of drawers are both Dutch. Above the fireplace are some typical dark blue pieces from an eighteenth-century Meissen dessert service.

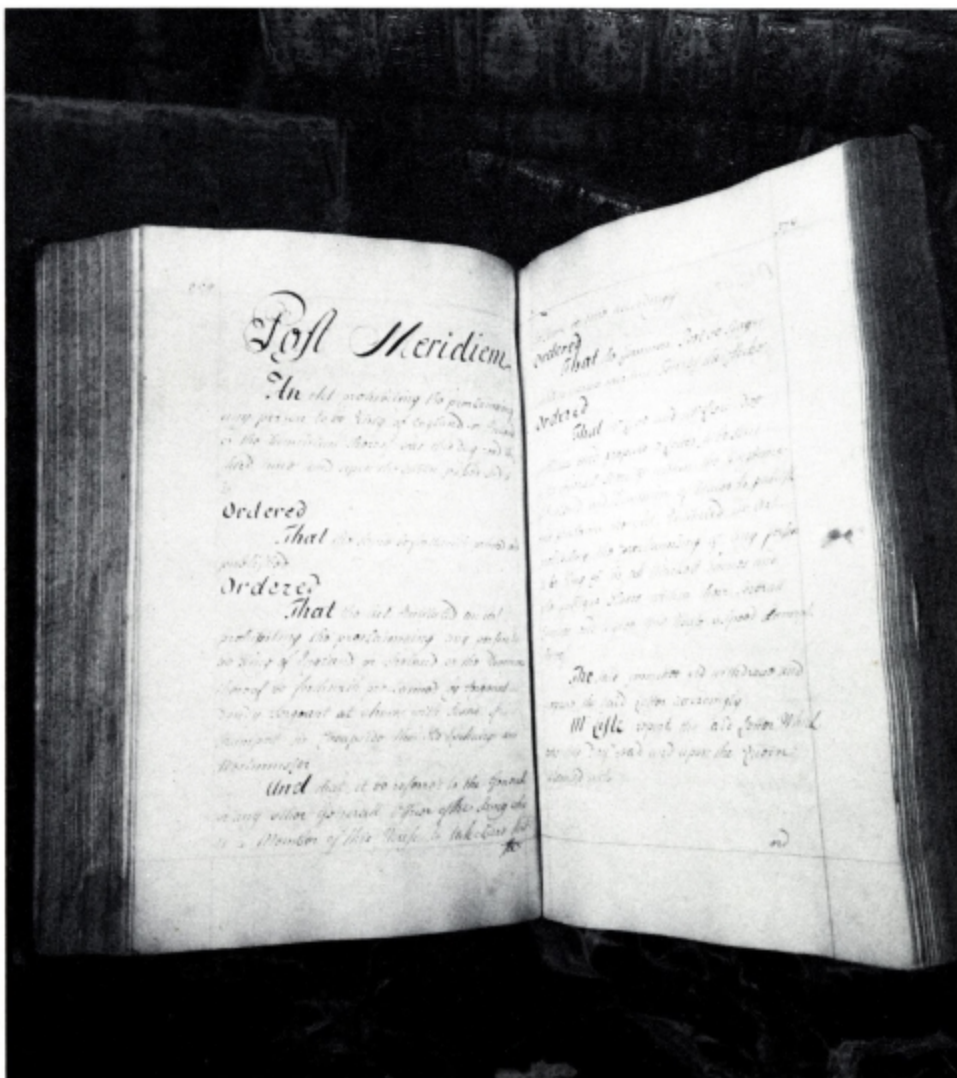
The hunting scenes are by J. N. Sartorius (1759-1828) and the two coaching pictures by C. C. Henderson. The picture of Lord Rivers coursing is by Agasse (1767-1849). James Fox, nephew and successor of George Fox Lane, was painted by Edridge in 1801. The painting by Walker recalls a local incident when Gascoigne of Parlington, while hare-hunting, came upon two local parsons who had shot his quarry. The protesting carrier of the gun is said to have been the innocent victim of the other, who had foisted the weapon on him and pocketed the hare!



The East Room

Used as a bedroom after the 1906 restoration, this room has now been redecorated in the Italian style for use as a dining room. Some of the chairs are Sheraton, c. 1790, the others Victorian copies, one or two of which bear the maker's label. On the mahogany dining table is displayed part of the 1st Lord Bingley's notable collection of plate. The sugar castors are by W. Fawcary 1718 and 1723, and the plates are examples of the work of Joseph Allen and Mordecai Fox. The parcel silver gilt tankard is dated 1699, (and can be taken to pieces for cleaning.)

The leopards, painted at Exeter menagerie in 1808 are another fine example of the work of the Swiss artist, Agasse. The greyhounds, bred by George 'The Gambler', won the two gilt cups on the sideboard in 1821.



The Library.

House of Commons journal, 1648.



'Leopards painted at Exeter Menagerie' by J. L. Agasse.
Trumpet and banner of the Household Cavalry.



Part of Robert Benson's silver-gilt plate.

The North Room.

The North Room

This drawing-room served as a dining-room after the restoration of 1906. Originally the State Bedroom, Queen Anne is thought to have slept here when she visited Bramham.

The mahogany sideboard is of Georgian style and remained in the house throughout the seventy-eight years it was unoccupied.

The silver gilt cup, dated 1818, was

won at a coursing meeting. One of the sofas is Georgian, the other a recent copy.

The state trumpets and banners of the Household Cavalry were used at the proclamation of King Edward VIII (the late Duke of Windsor) in 1936.

The picture of George Pitt, Lord Rivers, on horseback is by T. Gooch.

The charming portrait of Harriet Benson is attributed to Seeman (1694-1744). She married George Fox Lane, himself later created Lord Bingley, and his portrait is probably the work of P. Mercier (1689-1760). The painting of George Pitt is by Kneller; and that of the present owner was painted by Teasdale in 1954.





The Long Gallery.

The Gallery

This replaces three small rooms of roughly equal size. The six carved and gilt mirrors are twentieth-century copies of the original Chippendale mirror in the bedroom.

Most of the furniture is French, except for a half-round table of the Adam period. Five of the marbled side tables, in the style of William Kent, have on them jars and covers of Imari ware. The *dos-à-dos* bureau, thought to have been made for Louis XV, was brought to England by the Duke of Newcastle in 1802. It later passed to the Radcliffe family, Mrs. Lane Fox purchasing it from Sir Everard Radcliffe of Rudding Park, near Harrogate in 1973.

A number of Meissen pieces from

the dessert service are displayed in this room.

With the exception of Popham Conway, attributed to Lely, the portraits are mainly of the family, Henry Fox and George Pitt are by Kneller. Lady Frances Finch, who was formerly thought to be by Mary Beale, is now attributed to the Irish painter Garrett Morphey. Either side of the fireplace are companion pictures by Benjamin West (1738-1820) of James Fox, M.P. and his wife, Marcia. The former originally wore a red hunting coat but fearing his constituents might consider he spent too much time away from Parliament he had the coat repainted a sober black!



Watercolour by H. B. Ziegler c. 1825. The Garden Front of the house – note that the bay was removed in 1906.



Marcia Bridget, daughter of James Lane Fox by Sir William Beechey.

Part of the Meissen dessert service.

'Man in a Red Cloak' by J. Jordaens.



Beyond the centre doorway hangs J. J. Masquerier's (1778-1855) portrait of Marcia's brother George Pitt, 2nd Lord Rivers, and beyond is a charming full-length study by Sir William Beechey (1753-1839) of James and Marcia's daughter.

Between them is a portrait by Highmore (1692-1780) of the Countess of Aylesford, mother of the first Lady Bingley. On the south wall the four smaller portraits are of Lady Frances Sackville by Kneller; William Pitt and the Hon. Frances Lane attributed to Reynolds and Morphey, and James Lane Fox, by Hoppner (1758-1810). The large central portrait of George Fox Lane in his Lord Mayor's robes is a copy of one

Painted by T. Hudson in 1758 which hangs in the Mansion House, York.



Obelisk Ponds and Gothic Temple by H. B. Ziegler.

Watercolours by H. B. Ziegler c. 1825.

Left: The Garden Front of the house – note that the bay was removed in 1906.

Right: Obelisk Ponds and Gothic Temple.



Mrs Lane Fox's Sitting Room

The carved panelling and mouldings at this end of the house are largely original. The doorway from this room to the bedroom may be the work of Jean Berard, one of two Frenchmen imported to help William Thornton, clerk of works at Beningbrough. The walnut and ivory bureau and chest and the set of chairs are probably south German.

The four classical landscapes are by Vogelsang (1688-1753) and the flower painting by Campidoglio (1610-1670). The hunting scene is by Wootton. The bearded man in a red cloak by J. Jordaens (1593-1678) is possibly a fragment from an Adoration of the Magi showing Caspar offering frankincense. The nobleman wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece is by F. Pourbus (1545-1581) and the picture of the white horse is by James Ward (1769-1859) a forebear of Colonel Lane Fox, the present owner's father.

The battle scenes are by van Huchtenborgh and Courtois. "Orizonte" who painted the Landscape was in fact a Fleming, J. F. van Bloemen (1662-1740), and the pictures of ships are by an Englishman, Frederick Calvert.

There is a watercolour of the present owner as a child, and a delightful group of family miniatures.

The Principal Bedroom

On the occasion of his marriage, the present owner was presented by his farmer friends with the portrait of his wife, Victoria.

The four poster bed is a copy of one at Hampton Court Palace. The Chippendale mirror is c. 1750. Contained in the overmantle which survived the fire is a portrait of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough by Kneller.

The Staircase

The collection of Sporting and Animal paintings includes works by Jacques Laurent Agasse, Luke Cradock, John E. Ferneley, Benjamin Killingbeck, Charles Henry Schwanfelder and G. T. Stubbs.

Tom Smith, Huntsman of the Bramham Moor Foxhounds for 31



Mrs. Lane Fox's sitting-room.

Mr. and Mrs. Lane Fox's bedroom.



The Staircase.

years, was painted by two artists; J. W. Brooke was a portrait painter and George Wright specialised in animals. The more-than-life-size picture of George Lane Fox by Sir Francis Grant was presented to the Squire's wife by his grateful tenants, accompanied by two beautifully illuminated scrolls.

Upstairs rooms

Whenever possible, three upstairs rooms will be open to the public if these are not being used by guests of the family. One of the bedrooms contains the set of Ziegler water colours showing views of the house, park and surrounding countryside.

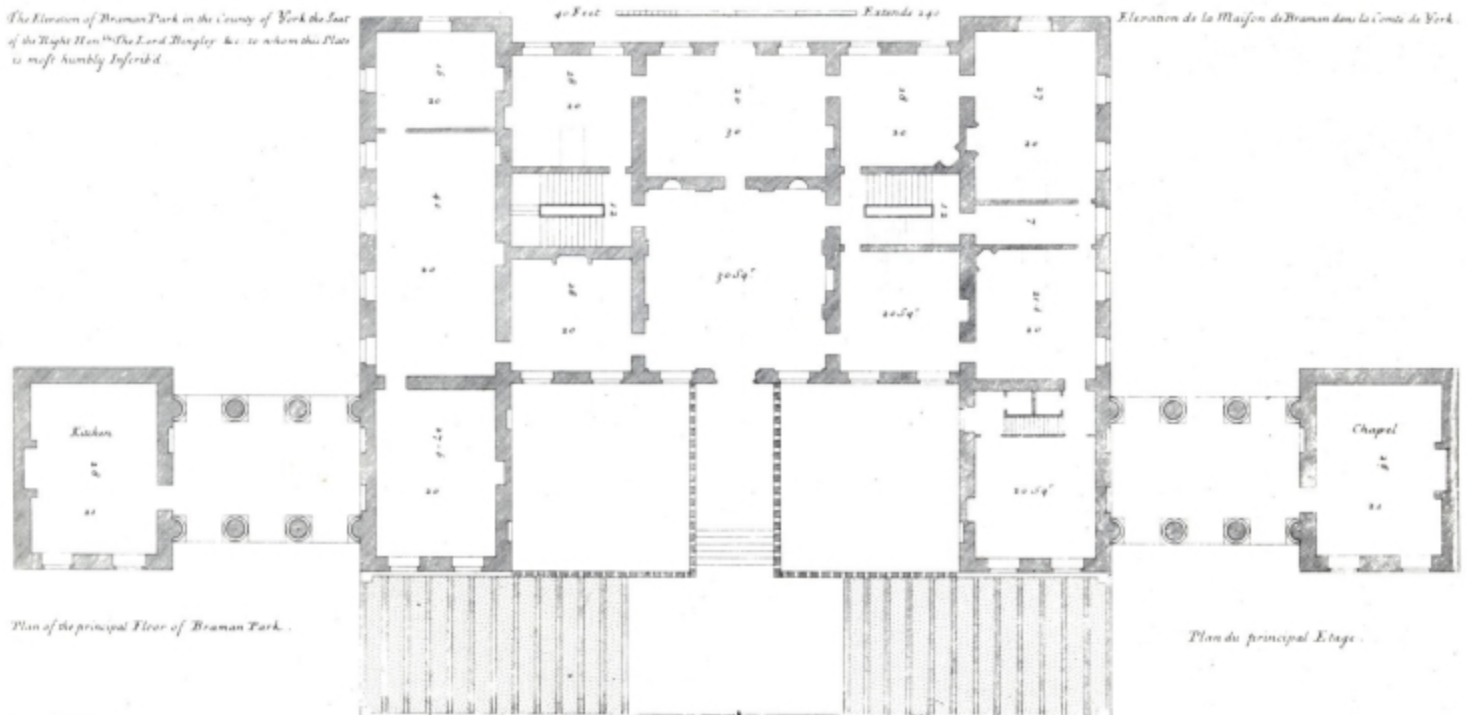
'The Horses'

The house at Bramham is haunted by no ghostly presence. However there is a story that riderless horses galloping away from the Battle of Bramham Moor in 1408 can still be heard in the park. One morning in the 1930s Colonel Lane Fox was out riding when he heard what he took to be the Bramham Moor Hunt staff cantering across the park and held a gate open for them. Only when the sound had faded did he realise he had heard 'the horses'.

Visitors will appreciate that it may sometimes be necessary to rearrange rooms where items are required for use or are loaned for exhibitions.

Plan of Bramham Park from *Vitruvius Britannicus*.

The Situation of Bramham Park in the County of York the Seat of the Right Hon^{ble} the Lord Stangley See to whom this Plate is most humbly Inferred.



Plan of the principal Floor of Bramham Park.

Plan du principal Etage.

C. Campbell Delin.

Plan of BRAMHAM PARK.

(*Vitruvius Britannicus*).

from the original drawing.

Bramham Park.

Back cover:
View from the front of the house.

— Watercolours by H. B. Ziegler.

Back flap:
Aerial view of the house and
garden from the South West.



H.M. Queen Anne,
by Sir Godfrey Kneller.
The Queen presented the picture to
Robert Benson, who was a friend as well
as a member of her court.

H.R.H. The Duke of Cumberland,
by Sir Joshua Reynolds.
Cumberland, brother of King George II
was an efficient general, much respected
by his soldiers. Unfortunately he is only
remembered as “the butcher of
Culloden”.

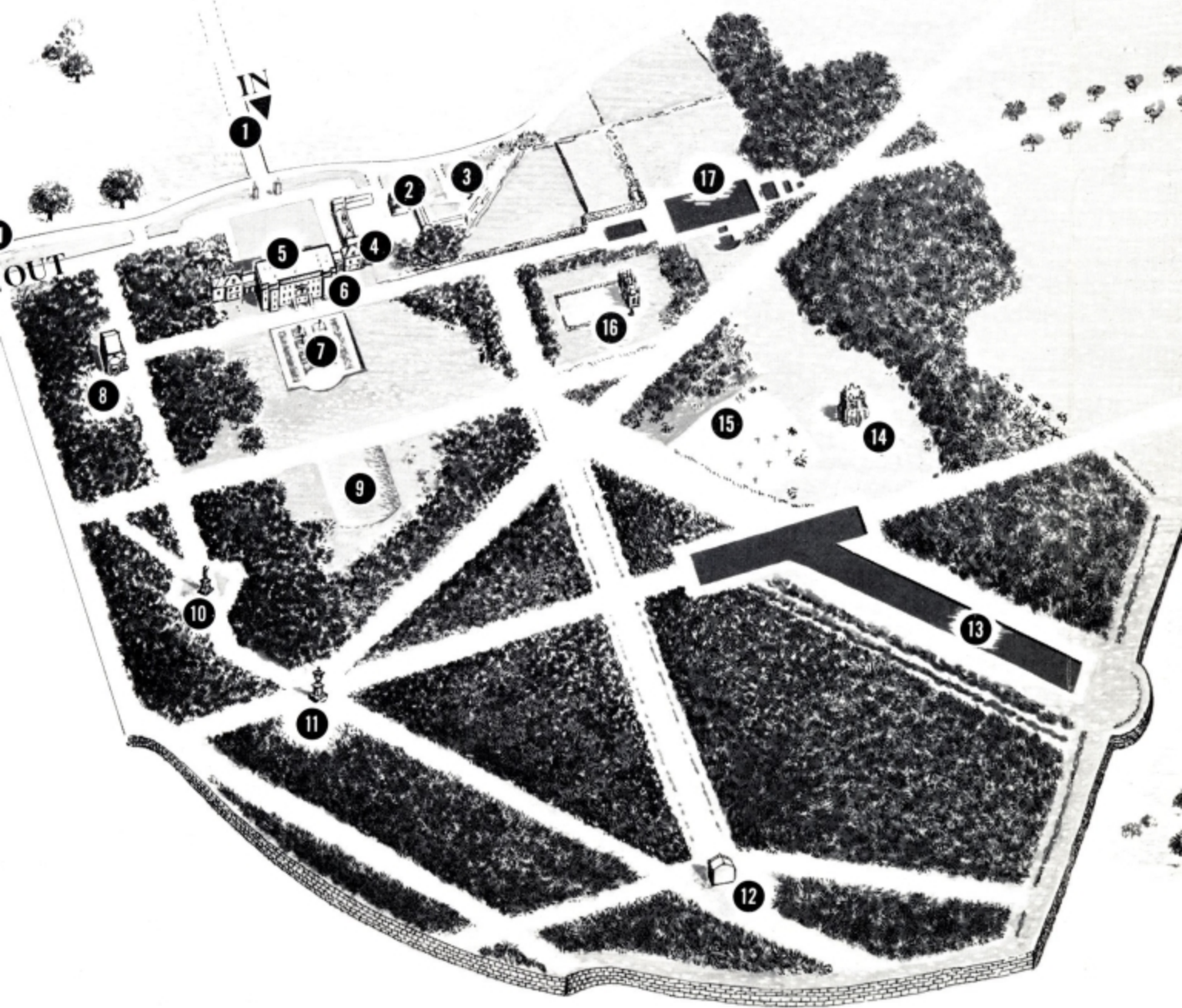
The Cascades – a watercolour by
H. B. Ziegler.

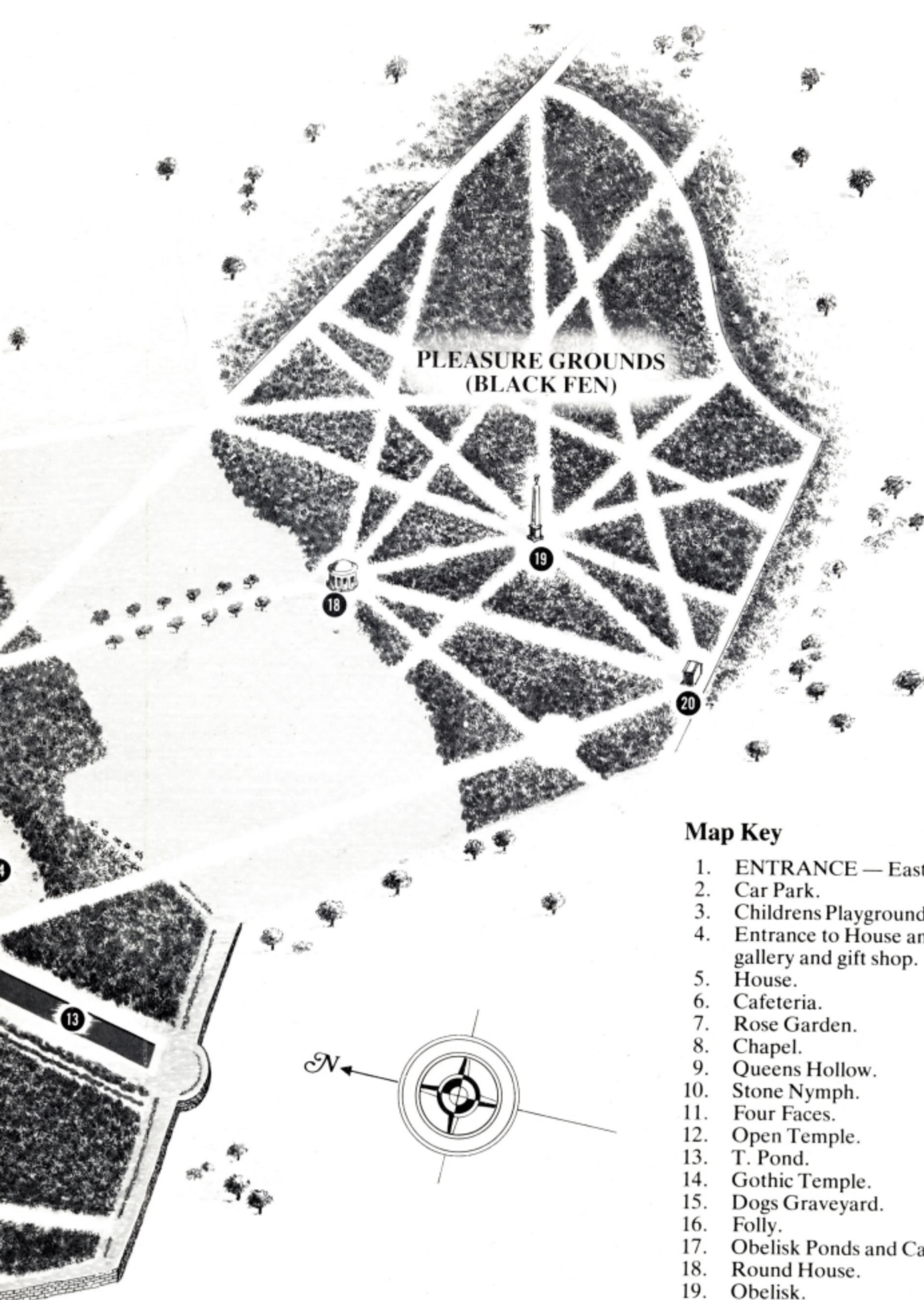


ramham Park

n of the Garden
d Black Fen.

FRONT PARK





**PLEASURE GROUNDS
(BLACK FEN)**

Map Key

1. ENTRANCE — East drive from
2. Car Park.
3. Childrens Playground and Picnic
4. Entrance to House and Grounds
gallery and gift shop.
5. House.
6. Cafeteria.
7. Rose Garden.
8. Chapel.
9. Queens Hollow.
10. Stone Nymph.
11. Four Faces.
12. Open Temple.
13. T. Pond.
14. Gothic Temple.
15. Dogs Graveyard.
16. Folly.
17. Obelisk Ponds and Cascades.
18. Round House.
19. Obelisk.
20. 'Lead Lads' temple.
21. EXIT.

