

PAGES FROM AN ARCHITECT'S NOTEBOOK

John Nash; some minor buildings in the Isle of Wight. Part 1 Nigel Temple M.Litt., PhD., ATD, RWA.

The architect John Nash (1752–1835) entered into partnership with Humphry Repton (1752–1818), landscape gardener, in about 1796. Repton's two architect sons – John Adey Repton (1775–1860) and George Stanley Repton (1786–1858) – were assistants in the practice that ended acrimoniously in about 1802. As a result, John (who was deaf) joined his father (who had no formal architectural training), and George remained with Nash to become his chief assistant. He left Nash's office, not long after marriage in 1817, to set up an independent practice.

During his years with Nash, George Repton kept several notebooks. We are concerned here with only two of them. One is in the RIBA Drawings Collection. Undated, the contents suggest that it was used from about 1800 to 1805. Its pages are watermarked 1798. The second notebook, at the Art Gallery and Museums and Royal Pavilion, Brighton, is a companion volume, the inside top board of which is inscribed with George Repton's name and the date January 1805. There is no complete watermark, but fragments make up 1799. This note-book contains drawings of or for fifty subjects. The comments below are drawn from a catalogue raisonné of the notebook, made by the present writer. For convenience and differentiation, the notebook at the RIBA is referred to here as the RIBA Notebook (or RIBANB) and the one at Brighton as the Pavilion Notebook (or PNB). The former has been foliated; hence (e.g.) RIBANB ff.93r-93v. The latter has been paginated, hence (e.g.) PNB 30,31. Several references are made to Sir John Summerson's *The Life and Work of John Nash* (1980) – referred to here as Summerson, *Nash* (1980). Sir John earlier wrote the first biography of this architect.

Commentaries on four further buildings will appear in the next issue of this journal.

PNB 30, 31

The RIBA Notebook contains thirteen subjects that can readily be associated with the Isle of Wight, and the Pavilion Notebook includes seven more. Of these twenty, five are inscribed with the name Ward. This summerhouse-cum-gazebo (figs. 1, 2) is one, and PNB 112–113 the other design bearing his name in the Pavilion Notebook. Another cottage appears in the RIBA Notebook, as do what the RIBA *Catalogue* identifies as a 'chimney-piece' (in fact a covered seat), and an ingenious though tortuous arrangement of four cottages, each of triangular plan, contained within a rectangle.¹ These two subjects will be enlarged upon under PNB 112-113.

The Island and some of its leading residents must have become well known to George Repton. Several of his drawings in the RIBA Notebook are of local scenes. George wrote to his family from East Cowes Castle,² and Farington noted the frequency of his visits³. Nash appears to have enjoyed entertaining: one notable instance was in August 1817. The Prince Regent's cook had been at East Cowes Castle for several days, but Nash was to be disappointed in his expectation of the Royal guest, '*& the Turtle &c being*

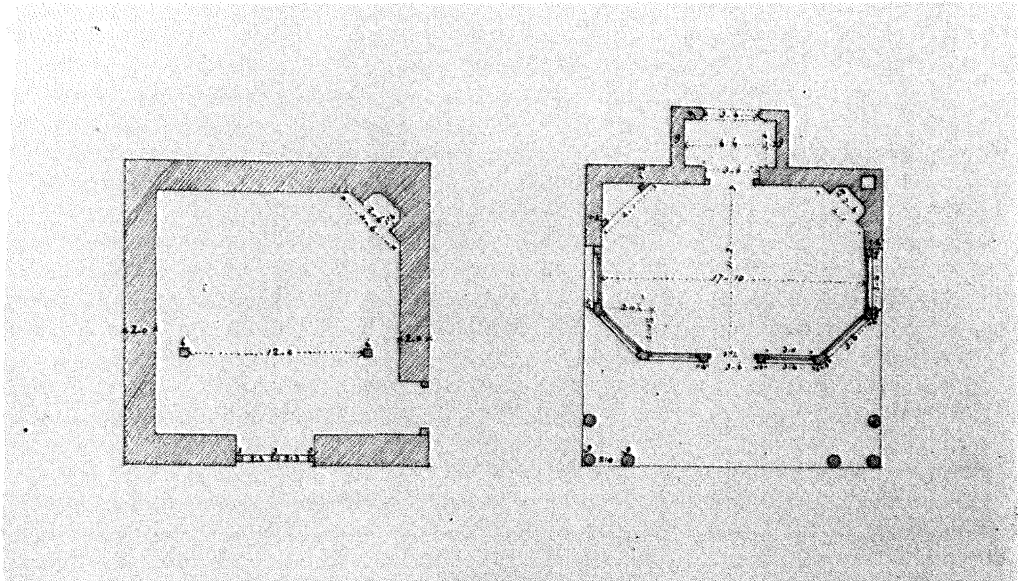


Figure 1. Ground plan and plan of upper floor of a gazebo or summer house for George Ward. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

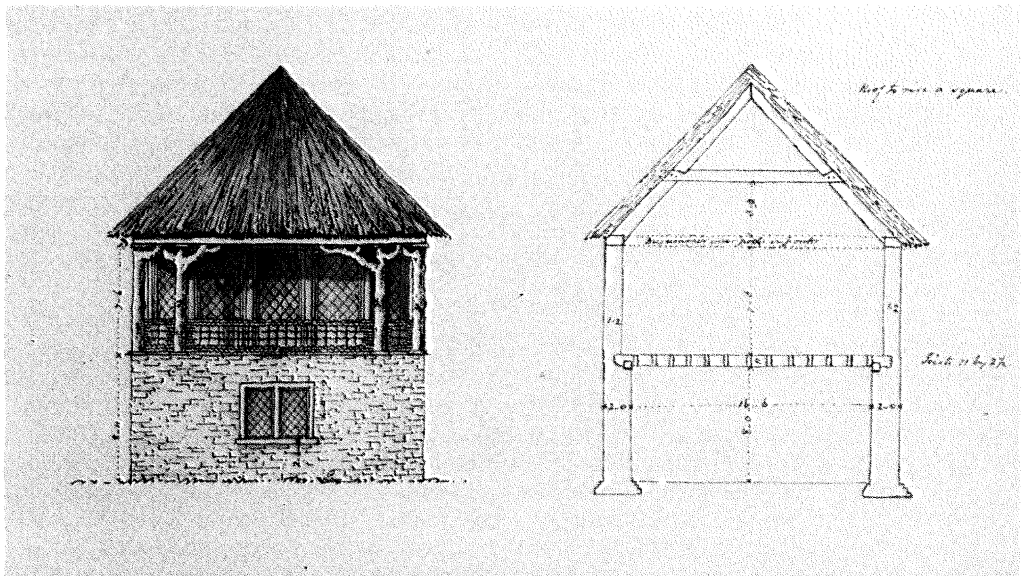


Figure 2. Elevation and cross section of a gazebo or summer house, inscribed 'Mr Geo Ward / I of Wight'. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

in a spoiling state, He yesterday sent invitations to the neighbour families to a Ball & Supper last night & 120 persons accepted His invitation.' And he was not averse to welcoming uninvited strangers even to view his house when he was already occupied: '*. . . on ringing the door bell a servant came & very civilly shewed us into the Dining room in which a table was very genteelly set for dinner for 7 persons . . . The servant then told us we might pass through the opposite room, "The Drawing room", in which was Mr Nash with company, all of whom were seated when we entered, and we only passed through the middle of the room to the Conservatory. Mr Nash bowed.*'⁴

Some of Nash's local clients were also his friends, and there would have been reciprocal visits for both social and professional reasons. As George Repton made drawings of some buildings for them and would almost certainly have managed work during Nash's absence (as he did at Blaise Hamlet), it is likely that he, too, came to know Nash's Island associates, if not socially in the full sense, at least professionally.

It might then be helpful to enlarge a little on social and topographical aspects of some clients and their possessions in order that George's drawings for Island subjects may be seen in a fuller local context. This will be done in the main under this present subject and under Ward's accompanying cottage design PNB 112, 113.

George Ward (1751/2–1829), '*an upstart financier of immense wealth who had built up a property empire in the island*' (Summerson 1980:150) was involved with Nash over many years. The two men were neighbours, Ward's Bellevue, which he renamed Northwood Park, commanding views over Cowes, Nash's Castle dominating the opposite heights little more than a mile across the Medina estuary. Their estates contained and overlooked the twin townships and waterfronts of this nearest Island harbour to mainland England. It provided a sheltered and convenient gateway to gently undulating interior landscapes and a point of departure for marine excursions around the coastline that defined their bounds. Such exclusive attractions had long encouraged men of means to build rather grand residences there and tempted seekers of the picturesque to describe and portray the scenic delights they discovered. Both Ward, '*a Merchant of great eminence in the City of London*',⁵ and Nash, an ambitious architect already climbing to the top of his profession, were of the former class, unlike John Hassell, who appeared as an artist-topographer, to publish his *Tour of the Isle of Wight* in 1790. This substantial work of nearly five hundred pages in two volumes was illustrated with thirty aquatint plates very much in Gilpin's manner; and Gilpin himself had completed the text of a book that commented on the Island's scenic qualities seventeen years earlier still. As it happened, *Observations on the Western parts of England* (to which were added '*a few remarks on the picturesque beauties of the Isle of Wight*') did not appear in print until 1798 – the year that Nash started building East Cowes Castle.

Even before Queen Victoria demolished Georgian Osborne House in 1845 to build her own £200,000 residence in its place, the Island had become a most fashionable retreat '*for parties of pleasure*'. George IV had favoured it with his patronage (the King bought Debourne Lodge, Cowes, from Ward; later it was burnt down⁶) and Victoria's conspicuous and widely publicised extravagance accelerated the popular invasion that led to rapid decline towards the commercial holiday resort of today. Similarly, Hassell was followed by many other writers of less painterly vision who produced smaller but sometimes exceptionally well illustrated works. Albin, Barber, Brannon, Bullar and Cooke were prominent early contributors to what became a flood of readily portable and informative guide books.

In August 1843, one temporary resident from Bayswater was moved, when touring with her ailing husband and young daughter Agnes, to write *Glimpses of Nature*. . . , '*designed to assist and encourage young persons in forming habits of observation.*' (Loudon 1844). '*"Your papa," resumed Mrs. Merton, "has been ordered to try change of air for the benefit of his health, and he has determined to go to the Isle of Wight for a week . . . taking no servant with him, . . . and as my time will be principally occupied in*

attending on him, you must contrive to take care of yourself"⁷ Agnes was about ten years of age: her mother, thirty-six.

'Mrs Merton' was Jane Wells Loudon, and papa none other than John Claudius Loudon. She finished writing her book on November 20th, and on December 14th 1843, John Claudius Loudon, one time critic of Humphry Repton, but later editor of all Repton's important works, was dead. So perhaps it was with some feeling that she noted passing East Cowes Castle, where great plans were in hand to build nearby one hundred and fifty new villas set in a gardenesque layout at East Cowes Park.⁸

The Pavilion Notebook provides the sole known reference to this first Isle of Wight design drawn by George Repton (figs. 1, 2). Close scrutiny of estate plans and the Tithe Map⁹ has failed to identify the site of this gazebo, which is not surprising when it is of such simple plan, only twenty feet square and possibly never built. There are, however, clues to the architect's intentions. First, access to the octagonal upper chamber is only by way of the porch, built to the rear on that level. This either suggests that the shelter was to be constructed against a raised terrace or that it was to be built into a steep slope. The latter suggestion is supported by the two-foot thickness of the lower cell walls – greater than was normal for even a substantial two floor cottage. Here the vertical load is negligible. Second, orientation: given the 180° sweep of view from the elevated platform, it is likely that the building would be so placed as to take advantage of a remarkable prospect – perhaps towards the Hampshire mainland or across the estuary towards East Cowes and Norris Castles. Otherwise this might have been a garden shelter, placed for a view, but also as a decoration in the landscape; an occasionally useful retreat serving also as a permanent architectural embellishment in fashionable taste.

The tree trunk porch is a favourite Nash device and the instruction 'Roof to rise square' (the angle of the rafters at the ridge should be 90°) has, with very few exceptions, proved a good guide in spotting cottages associated with Nash, even if much mutilated or altered since building.

No chimney shaft is shown in the elevation (Nash's standard treatment was to show square-plan shafts to be set at 45° upon the sack: another aid to identification). Repton did sometimes forget to put chimneys in at all, yet it is known that (by 1810) Nash was very well aware of the importance of chimneys in picturesque cottage design: he might settle for the minimum or recommend the elaborate (as promoted by Uvedale Price in *Essays on the Picturesque*). Here the chimney shaft could have been the crowning feature, especially if seen against hanging woods from some middle-distant point, smoke being emitted from it by chance or arrangement on a still evening, to add movement to the scene and painterly quality to an atmospheric sylvan setting. This is just what Humphry Repton had advocated for Woodman's Cottage in Blaise Woods,¹⁰ and Nash must have been well aware of such conceits both in theory and in practice.

PNB 112, 113

It has previously been recorded that Nash designed Cowes church tower and the Doric lodge alongside it for Ward, and there was a second classical lodge at the northern entrance of Northwood Park. It will be shown that one other lodge, and possibly two, still standing, were to Nash's design, but before turning to these it will be timely to deal briefly with a number of buildings referable to Ward, though not directly relating to the Pavilion Notebook designs.

To take the three RIBA Notebook subjects first: the cottage (f. 27r) has not been found. It is known that there were decoratively designed dwellings around Northwood, notably nearby West Hill, '*the residence of the Misses Ward, a cottage in the English rustic style*' (Barber 1834:38) and Moor House, a Gothic villa belonging to Mrs James Ward (*idem*). These, clearly, were substantial residences compared with this minute thatched dwelling. It might well have served as a gardener's cottage in Ward's park, which Barber



Plate 1. Egypt Cottages, Cowes, March 1981. (N. Temple)

(*idem*) describes as being '*highly ornamental and tasteful, in situation much resembling those attached to the Parsonage, and to Mr. Fleming's seat, at Binstead; but they are less picturesque and romantic, as regards the descent towards the shore,*'¹¹ at which point Ward had provided for the benefit of the public a quay, so that passengers could disembark from the steam packets without recourse to small boats. Ward had been busy planting his grounds with trees as (even years after his death) Bellevue belied his renaming it Northwood Park. It is conceivable that the covered seat (RIBANB 30v, 31r) which Repton's detailing implies (despite its obviously ephemeral construction) was for an exposed situation backed by some judiciously grouped planting.

The last Ward-Nash RIBA Notebook design (ff. 93r, 93v) shows a cluster of four triangular cottages ingeniously contrived to fit within a rectangular plan: a novelty that would be expensive to build and which would prove to be of great inconvenience to its inhabitants. Such a distinctive configuration – a rectangular core with four miniature 'pavilions' at its angles – one would expect to spot immediately on the Tithe Map, but no such information has been found there, or elsewhere, to reveal the site.

Presuming that a building was constructed to this design, unamended, and bearing in mind that a dozen persons might have lived in the complex, one would doubt if two generations, let alone nearly two hundred years, could pass without there being seen major improvements made to the cramped accommodation that it offers. Even if the pavilions were not demolished to facilitate enlargement, it is likely that the recesses between them would be utilised as living space. This, in turn, would necessitate reforming the roof. In either case, that singular plan would vanish, to comply with a norm, and would no longer stand out on a map.

The chimney formed a structural core, so alterations around it would leave this more or less intact. Technically very demanding to build, the shafts (which echo the overall plan of the building) would, even if not of great stature, have added an apt and conspicuous finishing touch.

To the north-west of Northwood Park is a locality called Egypt, where stand four brick-built cottages once owned by the Wards. It is said that they housed family retainers. Egypt Cottages (Plate 1) are about the same width as Repton's design, but markedly greater in length. It is though intriguing to discover that living-room fireplaces are set across the inner angle and rise through a common central stack which forms the core of the block. It is topped by an ornate brick shaft – normally hidden from view, being placed in the valley of two tiled gables; but the form of the shaft having once been seen (and surely it was built to be seen) one's suspicion of a relationship between Egypt Cottages and Nash deepens. The Tithe Map shows a block divided into four equal dwellings, as now.¹²

If there is indeed a connection here with Nash and the RIBA Notebook drawings, it appears either that Egypt Cottages were soon largely rebuilt or that drastic amendments were made before building began. It is immediately obvious that the place is much altered.¹³ Alternatively, as in other such cases, it is possible that Nash's designs as such never left the drawing board; that they were submitted to a client and, although influential, were never acted upon, the client and his builder interpreting the drawings to suit situations and fancy when the occasion arose, perhaps at a different site.

We must now turn to the point of this excursion, to identify the subject of PNB 112–113 (fig. 3, 4), and in this we shall be disappointed, though (as with the four cottages) the issue is not cut and dried. Moreover the drawings will lead to a previously unrecorded building that may with assurance be attributed to Nash or an associate.

One of the most entertaining aspects of Nash's cottage designs as a body is the manner in which components of a very simple architectural vocabulary are assembled and re-assembled in various ways to give many different asymmetrical compositions. Thus they are all of a family changing from time to time in minor characteristics, though not always in their general profile (some designs are near-repeats). Then changes of scale, in materials for walls and roofing, the treatment of chimneys, and of course different situations, extend the variations further, even of similar designs.

This cottage for Ward is no exception, for the main elevation is composed of elements in common with Oak Cottage, Blaise Hamlet, Bristol (1810–11), the overall profile being reversed. A further striking resemblance to Wards's design is the cottage for Lord Vernon (RIBANB 40v, 41r). The garden front of Jasmine Cottage, Blaise Hamlet, embraces the same major features and we shall shortly add an eighth variation on this favourite theme, though no cottage complying precisely with the PNB 112–113 design has been found. Two recently discovered in Herefordshire are very close.

In 1801 – eight years after buying Bellevue – Ward had a map made of his estate.¹⁴ His house and outbuildings are shown. 'Egypt' is named. To the west lie numerous fields, their boundaries firmly outlined, like some of the roads. Others are less confidently indicated, some tracks and footpaths being very tentatively shown. One dotted-in way meanders in a south-westerly direction from the mansion to cut across eight fields and emerge at that point on the Cowes-Gurnard road opposite a conspicuous round house (Place Road). This decorative cottage has a conical roof with festooning 'barge boards' and an ornate central brick chimney (Plate 2). Folklore has it that the Round House was designed by Nash, but documentary proof has yet to be found. Once known as Gurnard Lodge, it was owned by George Henry Ward and described in the Apportionment dated September 1846 as Turnpike House, in the occupation of the Commissioner for Roads. And to judge by appearance and siting it might well have been designed as a toll house, as distinct from a lodge.¹⁵

This survival is, of course, of great interest, but on looking diagonally (north-east) to the opposite corner of the junction with Baring Road we see a more substantial stone building which (though of no less importance) has been overlooked by historians and locals alike, probably because of its diverting neighbour. This, Debourne Lodge¹⁶, was clearly built as a lodge at the entrance of that leisurely track that became the long drive to

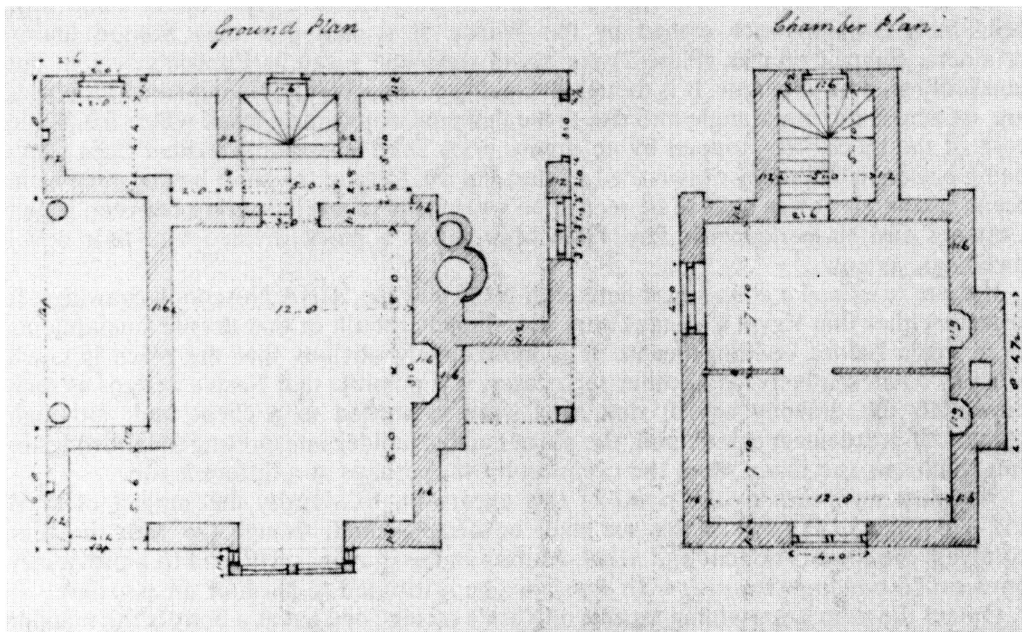


Figure 3. Ground plan and chamber plan for a thatched cottage for George Ward. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion. Brighton.

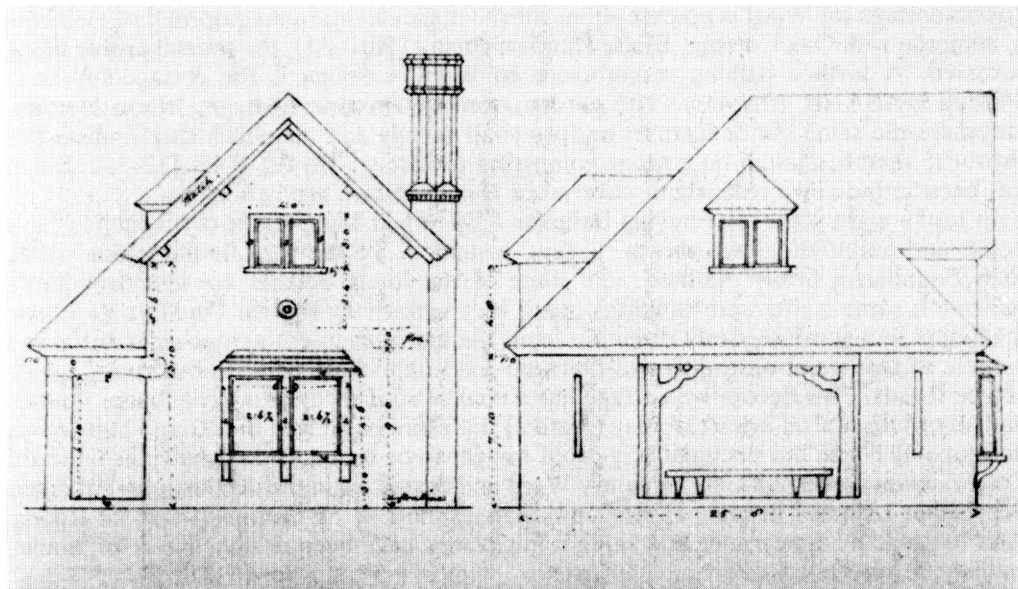


Figure 4. Two elevations of a thatched cottage, inscribed 'Mr G Ward'. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

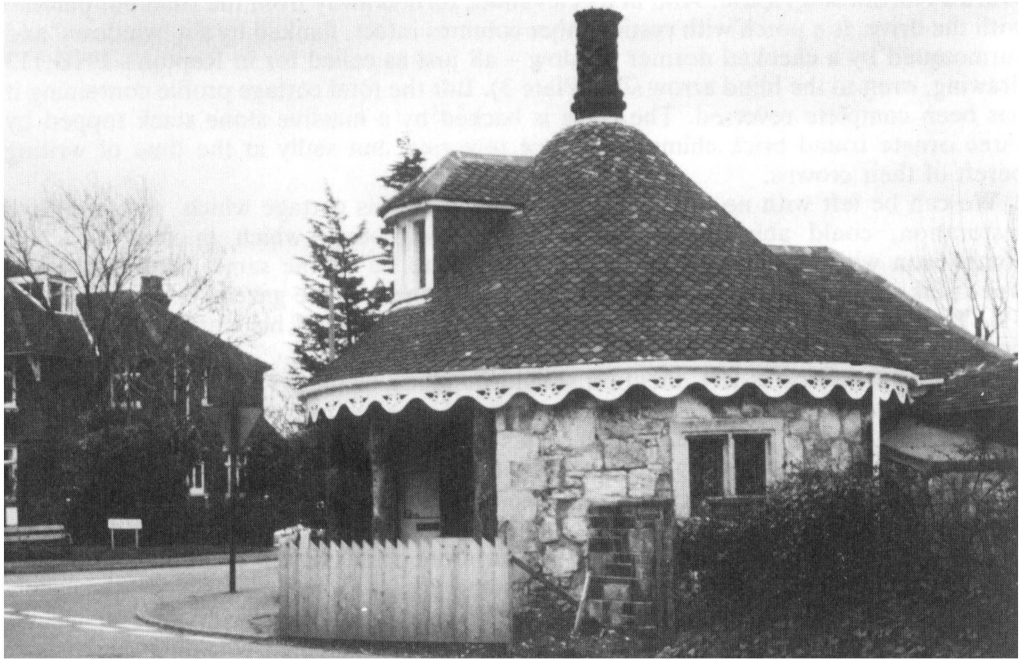


Plate 2. The Round House, at the corner of Place Road, Cowes, 1981. (N. Temple)



Plate 3. Debourne Lodge, at the corner of Baring Road, Cowes, March 1981. (N. Temple)

Ward's Northwood House. And in its elevation, turned away from the road but parallel with the drive, is a porch with rustic timber columns intact, flanked by slit 'windows' and surmounted by a chequered dormer window – all just as called for in Repton's PNB 113 drawing, even to the blind arrow slits (Plate 3). But the total cottage profile containing it has been complete reversed. The ridge is backed by a massive stone stack topped by three ornate round brick chimneys – once towering, but sadly at the time of writing bereft of their crowns.

We can be left with no doubt about the origin of this cottage which, with sensitive restoration, could ably partner its attractive neighbour, which in turn on close comparison with Debourne Lodge would appear to be by the same hand. While the tree-trunk motif is common to both, it is also prominent in the gazebo design (PNB 30, 31). Ward had classical domestic lodges, while the outposts of his empire were decked out in the rustic style.

Before Northwood is left, mention should be made of papers in the British Library that came from the house, including a portfolio of architectural drawings that appear to be in part from Nash's office; as well as others bearing the name of G. J. J. Mair.¹⁷ Those concerning Fort Thomas show an embattled and turreted mansion with a circular tower. Over a battlemented parapet, it looks out to sea. The plans include accommodation for 'Sr G & Lady Thomas' and bedrooms for the three Misses Thomas are shown as well. Pencil calculations suggest that these were more than mere presentation drawings. While Nash's signature does not appear on the sheets (some of them clearly water-marked 1820) a note on one is of interest bearing in mind the subject of PNB 52, 53 (*q.v.*). There is no record of a residence for Sir George Thomas, Bt. in published lists of Nash's works, but Waverley House, East Cowes has features characteristic of Nash's work.¹⁸

PNB 52, 53

It is commonly understood that the Oglanders came to the Isle of Wight with the Normans. Since at least the twelfth century they have lived near Nunwell and did so continuously in Nunwell House from 1522 (Oglander 1971) until 1980. Even now, by conversion of the carriage house for domestic use, the Oglanders retain a living link with the estate. As the Pavilion Notebook is inscribed inside the front cover with the date 1805, it might well be hoped that the brewhouse drawings there inscribed 'Sir Wm Oglander' (figs. 5, 6) would give strength to the one known claim in print that Nash worked on the house during the first decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁹

Neither Colvin nor Davis, nor Summerson even in his 1980 biography of Nash, mention Nunwell at all. Pevsner does so, but connects only the stables with Nash's name. Positive evidence is called for to substantiate the claim and it is disappointing to find that the muniments room at Nunwell (formerly the brewhouse) bears no arithmetical relationship to Repton's drawings or recognisable resemblance to them. In no way do they fit. Yet the necessary proof has come to light elsewhere. Nash carried out extensive repairs to Nunwell and, what is more, prepared the plan for a grand new mansion for Sir William. The drawing, unsigned, but inscribed on the reverse side 'Mr. Nash's plan for a House at Nunwell',²⁰ delineates a building of ingenious arrangement displaying three quite different columned facades and an eleven-bay conservatory (fig. 7).

While this is not the place to examine in general the Oglander Papers, or specifically the plan in any detail, both warrant some attention in the context of Nash's recorded body of work; and of the eight documents directly concerning building at Nunwell, two have a bearing on Repton's drawing, indirect and negative as that bearing appears to be. Signed by Nash and dated February 1807 are the 'Particulars and Estimate of Repairs wanting at Nunwell', to a total estimated cost of £1954. As the paper reveals that a brewhouse already existed and that it was in need of no more than 'whitening' and one

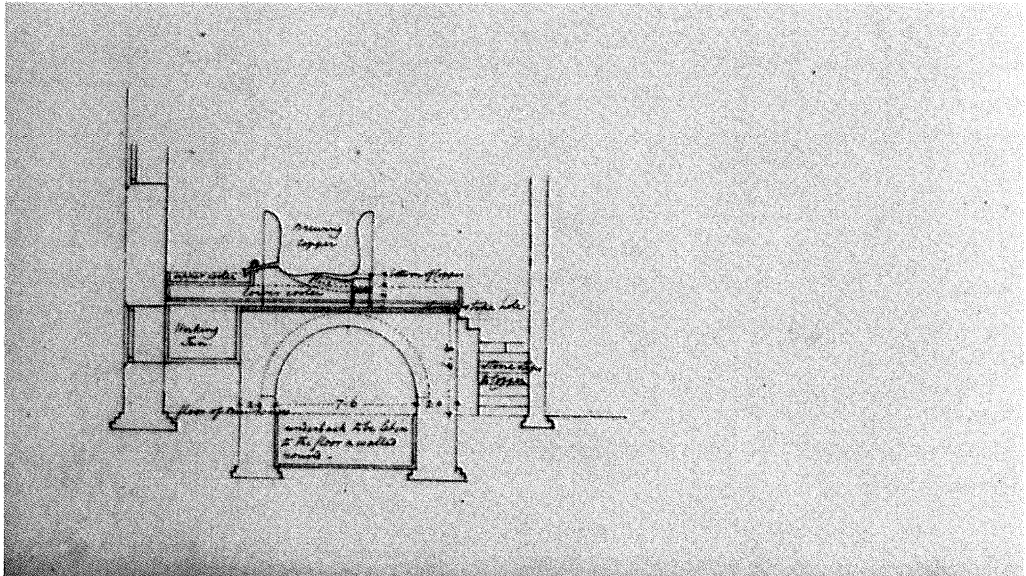


Figure 5. Section of a brewhouse for Sir William Oglander. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

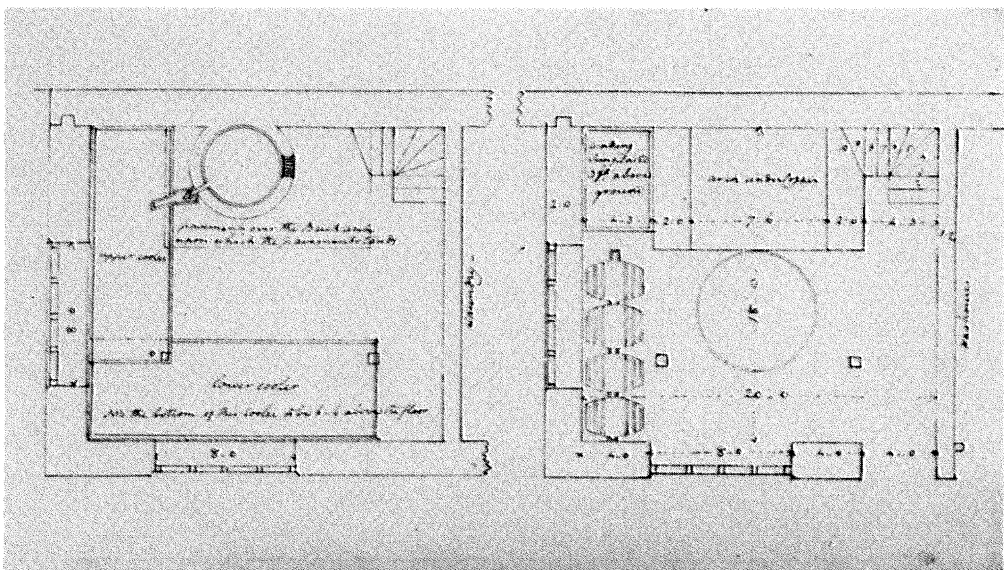


Figure 6. Plans of a brewhouse, inscribed 'Sir Wm Oglander'. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

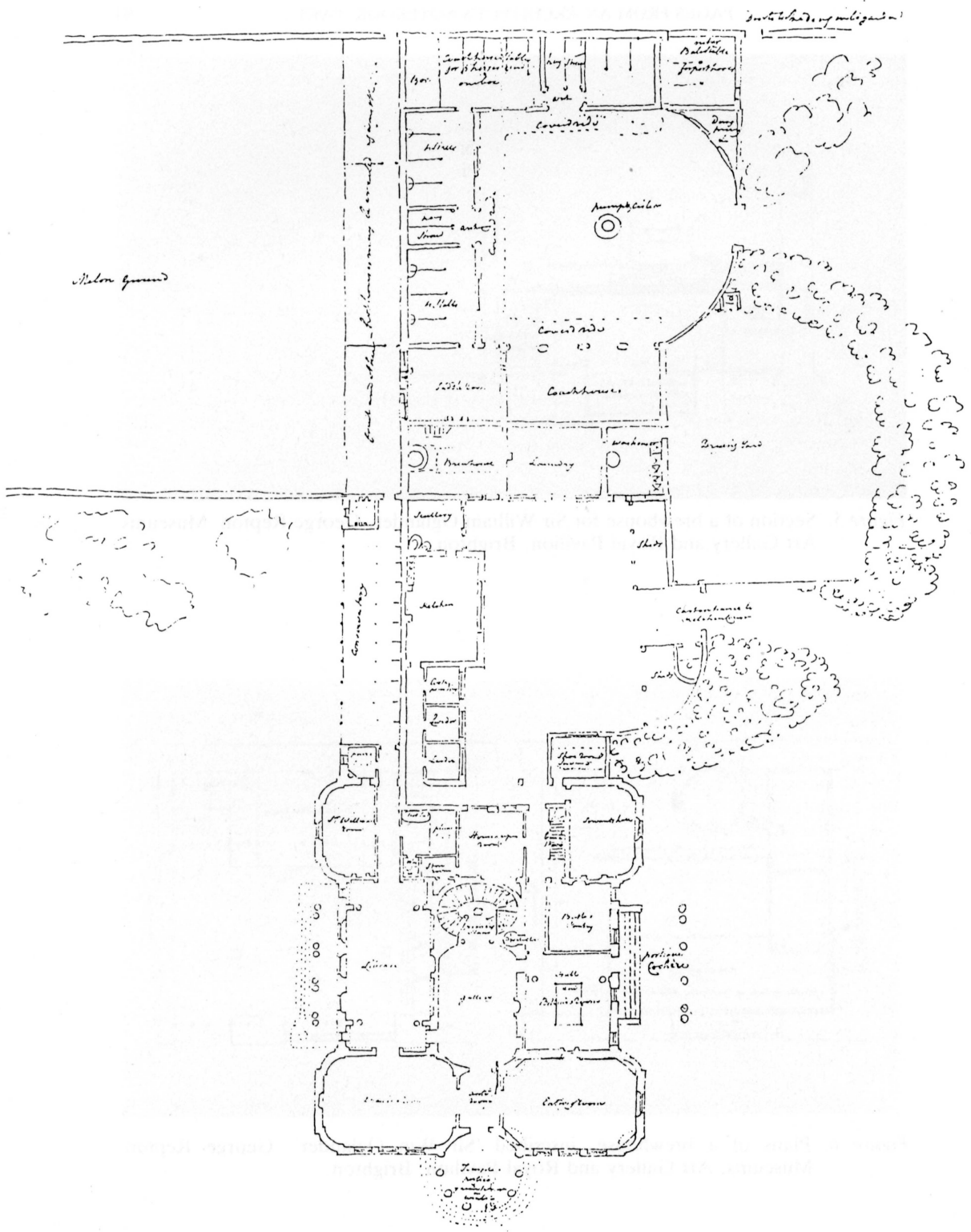


Figure 7. Plan for a large country house, inscribed 'Mr. Nash's plan for a House at Nunwell.-'. Isle of Wight Record Office OG87/21H.

minor repair, it would appear that any question of converting existing premises, re-equipping a brewhouse or of building anew did not formally arise at that time. It is, though, quite possible that George Repton's Pavilion Notebook drawings relate to an unadopted option: alternatively that work not detailed in the initial estimate was put in hand once operations had begun. While a bill for carting tens of thousands of bricks to Nunwell might support such a theory (Nash's estimate does not suggest building on this scale), the probability is diminished by inclusion of that same item and exact charge in Nash's account rendered to Sir William in 1808,²¹ an account, incidentally, totalling almost precisely the original estimate submitted fourteen months earlier. It also follows that Nash's plan for a new house, if prepared before February 1807, was rejected in favour of refurbishing the old; also that Sir William, having by 1808 just spent £2000 on repairs, would have been unlikely to have commissioned plans for a complete new building to be erected in the immediate future.

What can be said of the new plan for Nunwell House is that it relates in some ways to several other large country house plans drawn up and built to Nash's design. For example, it is much like Aqualate, Staffordshire (1808) for which plans are in the Pavilion Notebook (PNB 32, 33). Then there were three castles – Caerhays (c.1808), Ravensworth (1808–c.1824) and Shanbally (Davis, c.1814, also c.1818 given: Summer-son, 1818–19). All have a feature in common with the new Nunwell. Their ground floors contain a large gallery from which leads an impressive flight of stairs.²²

In making here the convenient comparison with Aqualate Hall, it will be noted that both plans have a central axis longitudinally bisecting the gallery which is entered indirectly from the east. Major rooms are grouped broadly symmetrically about the gallery, at the north end of which the stairs rise. To the south is an ante-room between two large octagonal chambers. This ante-room also leads to the garden via a central concave bay – a feature, in the case of Nunwell, developed by external columns into a circular 'Temple portico & Greenhouse in Winter'.²³ Nunwell is also more animated and less angular, its wall junctions normally being turned by a radius inside and out. While no elevational drawings have been found, there is every indication of a classical exterior (which alone sets Nunwell apart from the other gallery houses named) with some influence from France in the handling of forms.

Perhaps Sir William Oglander (6th and penultimate baronet) laid aside Nash's plan on grounds of expense. Perhaps, though, his inheriting a mainland estate in Dorset brought new considerations to bear on his plans for the traditional family seat.

Sir Robert Strode built Parnham Hall, Dorset, in 1554. Having passed to the Ogländers by marriage, it became Sir William's, but apparently in a run-down state.²⁴ In 1807, with Nash again his architect, he not only undertook essential repairs, but set about reorganising, enlarging and embellishing the whole. Four years later the task was done, whereas work estimated at Nunwell had been completed in little more than one. It is then possible that Parnham became Sir William Oglander's new 'Nunwell'; or perhaps his new Nunwell only appeared on paper some years after Parnham was done, never to be built.

One range of domestic offices abutting the back of Parnham Hall is stone built, partly stripped out and now in use as a furniture-making workshop. Its very low, eight-foot-long windows with three mullions and segmental heads, its interior width, doorway, angled steps to the platform, and other features too, all comply either closely or exactly with Repton's brewhouse dimensions. Only the depth is significantly different from the measurements inscribed. Yet the number of coinciding features, the placing of windows on both floors, the brickwork supports and raised platform that remain combine to prove beyond reasonable doubt that this is the brewhouse Repton drew.²⁵

A British Library folio of architectural drawings²⁶ details a building named Fort Thomas – a maritime residence that has every appearance of being by the hand of Nash. These unsigned and undated drawings are commented upon under PNB 112–113; but of

immediate interest is the following note on one of the drawings: *'This Brewhouse Washhouse Bakehouse and Laundry over to be fitted up in every respect like that of Mr. Nashs at East Cowes Castle'*.

PNB 56, 57

When, in 1808, William Cooke published the first edition of his *New Picture of the Isle of Wight*, he included an engraving depicting the 'Lodge or Cottage Entrance to St. John's', made after a sketch by 'J. Bonham, Esq.'. The plate is dated 1808. In the smaller second edition of 1813, the same view of two thatched cottages – one either side of a gated entrance – is shown again. Here, although the plate has been re-engraved, it has also been cut down (as have some others in the book) to fit the new format. Consequently the illustration (dated 1812) tells us rather less, as the right-hand cottage has been bisected vertically. The two texts, however, are to all intents the same.

Cooke observed of these inward-facing rustic buildings and their immediate environs: *'The taste of Mr. Repton has here been conspicuous, giving to this estate an ornament beyond what a more laboured and costly edifice would have conferred, and thus furnishing an additional gratification to the numerous annual visitors to the island, whose amusement and convenience it appears the liberal wish of Mr. Simeon to promote.'*

Cooke continues with his description: *'Within an handsome railing and gateway the avenue commences, between two charming cottages of stone, whose thatch is disposed in a pleasing manner, and in front thrown forward over a rustic porch, formed by natural trunks of trees.'* The author then tells of the jessamine, roses, clematis and virgin's bower that entwined the rustic columns. But the lodges were unique for a reason quite different from appearance alone. Cooke found the interiors *'not unworthy of remark . . . the one affording a comfortable residence for the cottager who attends the gate; the other an occasional retreat for company, where a few books, some neat suitable furniture, and the pleasing novelty of the situation, must give a charm that a fastidious taste can hardly fail to allow.'* In the porches were rustic seats – an additional and agreeable apartment.²⁷

Between them, engraving and text describe exactly what George Repton drew with such care on PNB 56–57 (fig. 8,9), for it will be noticed that while only one cottage is shown the tip of thatch and one tree-trunk column on the margin of PNB 57 indicate that a companion was intended. Even so, the lodge drawn out might well have stood alone. The third, very slight perspective drawing (PNB 59) might be a visualisation, a sketch from memory, or a quick graphic note made on the spot: as will be seen, it is unlikely to have been the first of these possibilities. Not only does the perspective comply with an undated lithograph by J. Tayler,²⁸ with an amateur drawing,²⁹ and with an engraving made by Peltro from a Himphry Repton original for *Peacock's Polite Repository* for 1806, but Humphry himself describes the entrance in *Theory and Practice*, published three years earlier still. He wrote of the cottages that they *' . . . attract the notice of all who visit the island; and while one is a comfortable residence for a family, the other consists of a room near the road side, from whence the mind derives peculiar satisfaction in seeing the constant succession of visitors who leave their homes in search of happiness.'*³⁰ Without this first-hand inside information on the reason for the cottages having been paired, we might have questioned Repton's consistency when he wrote shortly afterwards: *'Ridiculous Park Lodges . . . the most common expedient is a pair of small square boxes on each side of the gate, making, together, one comfortless, smoky house of two rooms, separated by a gate into the park. It is the gate, and not the habitation of the man who keeps the key, which requires to be marked with importance. . .'*³¹

We have now established that the St. John's lodge must have existed by 1803, but no knowledge of the client (Edward Simeon) or of the location of the entrance lodges or of what other work might have been carried out by Nash or the Reptons has been intimated.

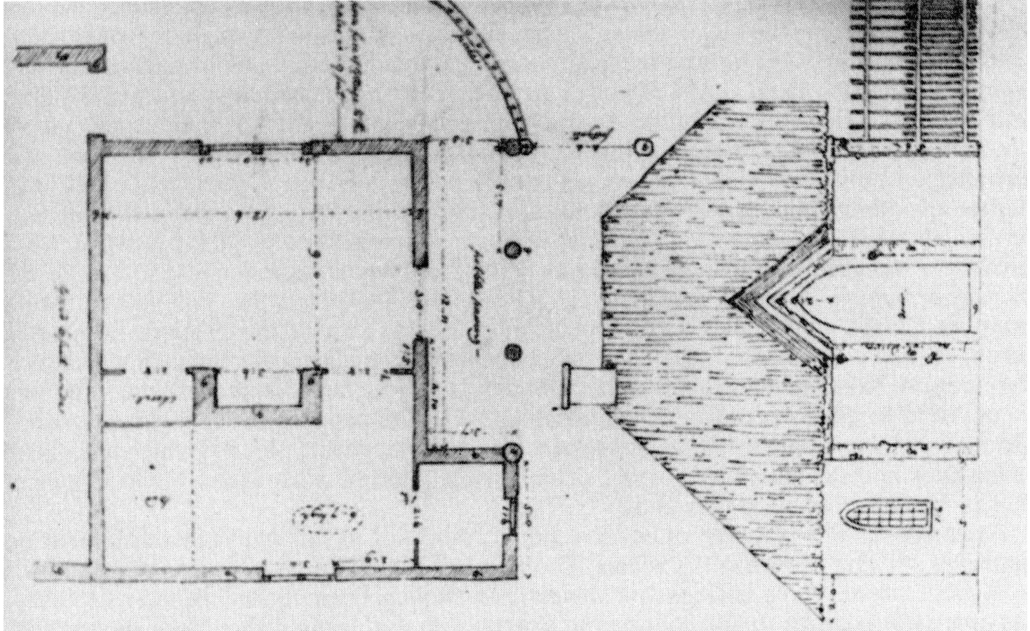


Figure 8. Part elevation and part plan for a gated entrance cottage. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

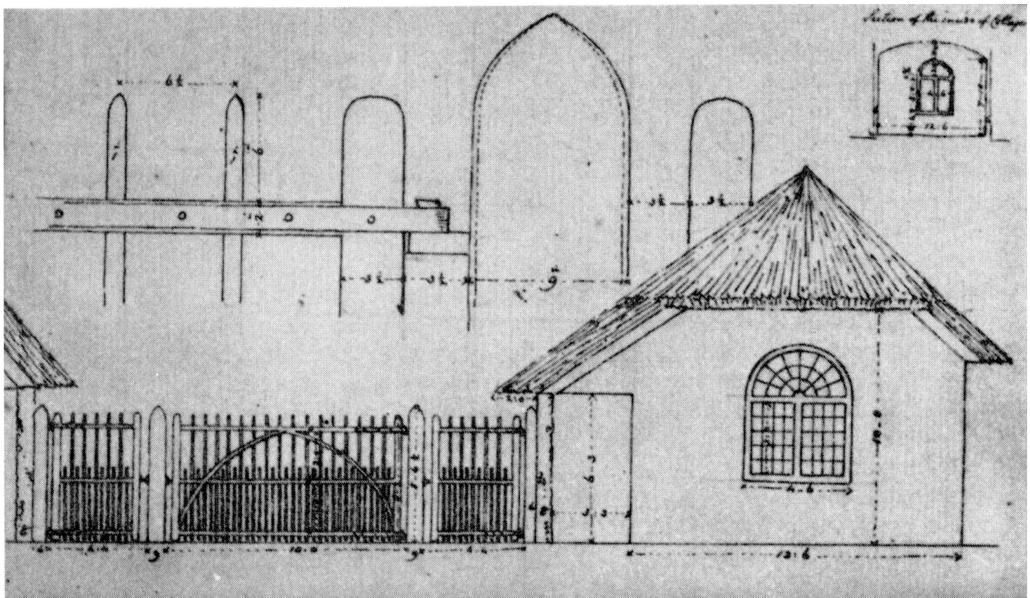


Figure 9. Elevation for a gated cottage – one of a pair – with details of gates and interior. George Repton. Museums, Art Gallery and Royal Pavilion, Brighton.

On May Day 1812 Tayler & Co. of Newport published a map of the Isle of Wight, surveyed by James Clarke. It shows clearly one building either side of the only drive leading to St. John's House and these are named 'Lodge'. Cooke (1808) tells us that the '*simply elegant approach to Mr. Simeon's grounds*' was on the road from Ryde to Brading and St. Helens, thus describing the 'Lodge' just as marked by Clarke, to the south of the house and only a short distance from it. No such lodges are there today; and while the entrance and drive are clearly shown on the Tithe Map of 1839,³² no lodge, or for that matter any other building either, is shown at that point. *Barber's Picturesque Illustrations of the Isle of Wight* (undated in its first edition, but published in 1835) gives us what proves to be a fruitful lead when stating that '*Two pretty rustic lodges . . . mark the private or family entrance to St. John's*', (Barber 1835:20) for the Tithe Map, while omitting Clarke's lodge, shows a double lodge to the west of the grounds, almost in Ryde. A long winding drive that enters between the cottages passes through woodlands and avenues to arrive eventually at the house and outside the lodge is a circular widening in the road to give a presence and turning circle at the place of arrival and departure. Oddly the Apportionment of 1840 that describes the serpentine plot 94 (which links both lodge sites and contains most of the drive), while naming it Monkton Mead Coppice, makes no reference to lodges at all.³³

Attractive as the entrance must have been, it did not in fact gain the whole-hearted approval of every visitor to the island. The Revd. William Norris,³⁴ is one who damned with faint praise these cottages of '*a new and singular description*' (Cooke 1808:90). Having paid sixpence to the boatman at Portsmouth and rubbed shoulders aboard with '*an assemblage of the lowest dregs of the People*', he was carted ashore at Ryde and proceeded to St. John's, about the grounds of which strangers were permitted to roam only by the express permission of the owner. But he did visit the lodge and his observations upon it are worth quoting at some length: '*At the entrance to the Avenue leading to the House are two Lodges in the Cottage stile supported by Gothic arches of the Oak Tree. There is too much ornament and Finery in these Cottages to render them pleasing or harmonious, tho' they are artificial Cottages they should still bear a close affinity to – natural ones and if such Consistency had been observed these would have had a much more pleasing effect.*'

*'Mr. S. has decorated one of these Buildings as a Tea Cottage and ornamented the inside with great propriety but I question whether he might not have chosen a more interesting spot in some corner of his Park or amidst some of his Pleasure Grounds, as this stands by the side of the Road exposed to the view of every passing Traveller – The old Woman who inhabited the Cottage said she preferred her own simple dwelling to such a splendid House, she was there her own mistress could invite her Friends, and go out a leasing, but now she was controuled by the will of another –'*³⁵

The parson's tour was made as early as 1799. As Simeon bought the estate only in 1796 it is possible that both Repton and Nash were involved in planning the grounds and water-front Marina – in which a band played to entertain the public during their Sunday evening promenades. It was an embattled embellishment to the heavily wooded coastline when seen from the bay, and its tower provided a commendable viewing point of Portsmouth, Gosport and Spithead. Another engraving by Peltro, from Humphry Repton's original of the Marina, appeared in *Peacock's Polite Repository* for 1802, and Cooke used an engraving of his own as the frontispiece to the first edition of his *New Picture of the Isle of Wight*. This plate is dated 1808.

There is ample proof that some designs for cottages originating from Nash's hand were repeated (with modifications) at various places over a number of years; also that George Repton detailed some of the drawings and communicated them to the client. Shortly before Humphry is known to have been working for Simeon he had produced a Red Book for John Langston, at Sarsden, Oxfordshire. That was in March 1796 – a month after his Red Book of Blaise. George was responsible for a lot of building at Sarsden and



Plate 4. The Lodge, Sarsden Glebe, Oxfordshire. (N. Temple)

in the year of his father's death, in 1818, a deed of exchange of lands at Sarsden was drawn up between Langston (who was patron of the church and rectory) and the rector, Charles Barter, who had been married at Sarsden church to Elizabeth Langston in 1817. By July 1818 a house described as having been newly built was on one plot and it was to be known henceforth as The Glebe, or as the Parsonage House. That building is now called Sarsden Glebe and drawings for it made by George Repton are at the RIBA.³⁶ Subsequently, a storey was added to the house.

However, in the context of the Pavilion Notebook, it is not so much the house as a relatively minute building that first attracts our attention, for the main entrance is marked by a single lodge to the right of the gate (Plate 4). It complies in almost every way – inside and out – with George Repton's drawings. Even the interior segmental arch over the window (seen in Repton's miniature detail) and the tree trunks are alike. There is no thatch: Sarsden Glebe Lodge is under modern tile.³⁷ Apart from this unimportant replacement and there being no small Gothic window alongside the entrance door at Sarsden (one is shown on PNB 56 and in Peacock's illustration), there is no apparent difference between the Pavilion Notebook drawings and the lodge at Sarsden. Yet another variant was found by the present writer in Hampshire, in mid-1987. We are now faced with the problem of identifying the designer of the St. John's lodge. It would not have been George Repton. He was only a child in the mid-1790s, but Humphry, though not claiming to have designed it, writes possessively and with thinly-veiled pride. He also drew the entrance for Peacock to publish, but that is not necessarily proof of his authorship, though Cooke never even hints of a hand other than Repton's as having worked at St. John's.

The last design (PNB 119) in the Pavilion Notebook includes the only dated drawing – October 1818. Humphry died in March of that year. Sarsden Glebe was newly built and George had not yet severed his professional connection with Nash. The lodge drawings

appear half-way through the Pavilion Notebook (inscribed 1805), so it can safely be presumed that they were not made therein for Sarsden Glebe; and by that date they could not have been made especially for St. John's either. George's drawings could, then, have been made as a record for possible future use (for example, at Sarsden) or they could have been prepared in about 1810 for another client and situation at present unknown, conceivably in Hampshire. On the other hand, he could have been recording a design known to have been made by his father, one of which he was perhaps a little proud and within easy reach of East Cowes Castle.

Whatever its intended purpose, this set of drawings, when put into a context of known dates and buildings, demonstrates that one cannot take it for granted that designs appearing in the Pavilion Notebook necessarily originated in Nash's office during the years the George Repton was there. Such might be the assumption and this is but one of several instances that illustrate the need for a cautious approach.

Acknowledgements

Mr John Barrow, Mr Clarke (Debourne Lodge), Mr & Mrs John Makepeace, Mrs Denys Oglander, Mr Malcolm Pinhorn (with whom there have been exchanges of information), and Mr & Mrs Christopher Russell. Also Mr R. Brinton, Mr J. O'Donnell and Mr C. Webster; The British Architectural Library, British Library, Hampshire County Library, Hampshire County Record Office, City of Portsmouth Record Office, Winchester Public Library. Brighton Art Gallery, Museums and Royal Pavilion gave permission to research G. Repton's notebook, and for material in it to be reproduced. In the context of Sarsden, I am grateful to Miss Judy Hutchinson and the Oxfordshire County Record Office.

Notes

1. RIBANB ff. 93r–93v.
2. Huntington, HM 40915–20. RIBANB f. 5r, 5v, 6r, f. 13v, 19r, 19v, 20r.
3. Greig, J., *Farington Diary*, viii: 159.
4. Greig, J., *Farington Diary*, viii: 142–143, 6 Sept. 1817.
5. *Burke's Landed Gentry*, 1886: date of birth 31 Aug. 1751; but as 1752 elsewhere. He also had houses in Soho; see B.L. Add MS 18.159. D.N.B. see Ward, William.
6. See PNB 112–113.
7. Loudon (1844: 2–3). Gloag (1970: 182–219) reprints from *Self Instruction for Young Gardeners*, 1845, Jane's life of her husband.
8. Hampshire R.O.: Folio, Isle of Wight, with plan and three lithographic visualisations of the completed project – which includes examples of virtually every pattern-book villa style of the day. The scheme was unsuccessful. As late as 1874 we are told by A. Brannon, in his *Pleasure Visitors Companion in making the tour of the Isle of Wight*: 96–97 that '... should the speculation of the Park ever take with the public to the extent of remunerating the vast expenditure which has been incurred in laying out the grounds and making the spacious roads, certainly this quarter will eclipse all the rest of the Island in the aggregate of elegant residences and beautiful villas, each enjoying the most interesting prospect which can possibly be imagined. Some large and very handsome houses have been built, but the speculation has not yet been carried out to the extent, which under all the circumstances, might have been expected.'
9. Hampshire R.O.: Tithe Map, Northwood parish 1845. There are a number of separate Awards relating to the I.o.W., each being based on an ancient ecclesiastical parish. Those with which we will be concerned range 1839–1847 (Maps), 1840–1847 (Confirmation of Awards).
10. Bristol Art Gallery: Red Book of Blaise.
11. See also Barber 1834: 22–23.
12. Hampshire R.O.: Northwood Parish, 1845.
13. The writer has been into one cottage. A resident believed that the stairs had been moved (now parallel with the back wall) and that a floor had been added.
14. I.W.R.O., Ward MP2: 'Bellevue, the Seat of George Ward Esqr., Debourn Farm, and Church Bargain . . .', 1801. Also, see Ward 1068, plan of roads and footpaths with distances and 'New house' at Bellevue. Robert Lugar's *Architectural Sketches for Cottages . . .* (1805) is dedicated to George Ward. Occupied and in good condition, Spring 1981.
15. There was a larger dwelling of this same name at one time owned by Ward and sold by him to George IV in 1820. It stood by the Parade and was later burnt down (I.W.R.O. 1059–1067: 1061 includes a plan of the house). Mr. M. Pinhorn and the writer researched these papers independently (and, it transpired, concurrently).

17. BL, Add MSS 18, 159 (ff. a-U): folio bought at Northwood sale. Fort Thomas, a-h (some drawings missing). Also drawings present for additions to the Fountain Inn, Cowes, 1823; for proposed improvements to G. Ward's house in Soho Sq.; for Welcombe House, near Stratford-on-Avon, plan George Mair, 1838. Also at BL, Ward correspondence.
18. Waverley House, E. Cowes, has a Nash-like roof, dormers, rear windows and a Gothic porch much as at Double Cottage, Blaise Hamlet, and at a Moccas Lodge, Herefordshire. The BL material was independently researched. Mr. M. Pinhorn adds that there is no record that the Fort Thomas plans were executed, but that a house was built for Thomas. St. Thomas Villa, E. Cowes, now Waverley Park (I.W.R.O. Jerome Papers), may well be largely Nash's work and the house in question.
19. c.1808 Nash tore out the panelling (Aspinall-Oglander 1945: 175).
20. Isle of Wight R.O.: Oglander Papers.
21. I.W.R.O., Oglander Papers: To R. Read Taylor, July 1807, freight of 45,800 bricks £18.6.4. Carting 39,400 bricks from Brading Quay to Nunwell £14.15.6. Total £33.1.10. Bill approved and signed by Nash. Nash's account to Oglander 2 April 1808: abstract of bills of work done at Nunwell, to Read and Taylors Bricklayers, for cartage, £33.1.10.
22. Plans: RIBA; Shanbally (Co. Tipperary), for Viscount Lismore. G.S. Repton's RIBA Notebook, *Catalogue*, Nash [9] 1-8. Summerson (1980, pls. 18A,B) for reproductions of two elevations and annotated ground plan by GSR. For a commentary on PNB 32, 33, see Temple, N. (1986). 'Pages from an architect's notebook: John Nash – some new light on Aqualate Hall', *Staffordshire History*, 4: 40-51.
23. Presumably Nash had removable glazed screens in mind. These could be taken out in summer to make an open pavilion. He recommended them at Barnsley Park, Gloucestershire, for Mr. Musgrave's conservatory.
24. 'Parnham House', *Country Life*, 29 August & 5 September, 1908. Makepeace, J., *Parnham*, n.d.
25. For far more detailed drawings for a contemporaneous country house brewery see Lugar, R., 1807, *The Country Gentleman's Architect*, pl. 21. In his text he is proud to mention that within a chamber measuring 18' x 12' (much smaller than Repton's) he has combined a brewhouse, washhouse and bakery. The 'Washhouse' chamber indicated by Repton on his plans would have been in the room adjacent to the brewhouse. That also survives.
26. BL, Add MSS 18, 159.
27. Cooke (1808: 90-92); pp. 86-89 gives an account of St. Johns and the Marina and includes a plate showing Simeon's house.
28. Author's Collection: J. Taylor. Drawn from Nature. 'Lodges at St. John's.'
29. Winchester Public Library, Local Collection: inscribed 'Lodge entrance to St. Johns – seat of Sir Rd. Simeon Bart.' This would date the drawing 1824-1854.
30. Loudon, J. 1840. *The Landscape Gardening . . . of the late Humphry Repton*: 252-253.
31. *idem.*: 350.
32. Hampshire R.O.: by this date Sir Richard Simeon had extensive stabling etc. on the opposite side of the road from the formal (south) entrance to the house.
33. Mr. Roy Brinton of I.W.R.O. confirms (by independent research) that this was indeed the site of the lodge illustrated by Cooke.
34. Portsmouth R.O.: PCRO 11A/23/7. Norris Diary. I am grateful to Mr. Malcolm Pinhorn for bringing this item to my attention.
35. Portsmouth R.O.: Norris Diary.
36. RIBA *Catalogue*, p. 116, [29]; also Sarsden House and church [30], etc. See also Temple, N. 1979. *John Nash and the Village Picturesque*, and Temple, N. 'Sarsden, Oxfordshire'. *Journal of Garden History*, 6 (2): 89-111.
37. Temple, N. 'Reptoniana'. *Journal of Garden History*, 3(1): 55-57, including illustrations from Cooke, and by Taylor. The father of the present owner of the Sarsden Glebe lodge, who bought the property early in the 20th century, said that at that the roof was of Cotswold tile.

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