Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

Pete Smith

Rufford Abbey was largely demolished in 1956, although the remains of the former Cistercian abbey buildings, and part of the 16th- or 17th-century house into which the abbey buildings were converted, are displayed as ruins. The house, built for one of the most influential politicians of Charles II’s reign, the first marquess of Halifax (‘the Trimmer’), is here attributed to a recently discovered architect, William Taylor. Around the house lay a huge baroque garden designed by a gardener whose name appears to have been Thonous. In the 1730s Sir George Savile, seventh baronet, a fellow of the Royal Society who was evidently interested in hydrostatics, designed waterworks in a form which was technically complex, but which might be aesthetically categorised as rococo; his designs are without any known parallel. Sir George’s son, the eighth baronet, famous as a pioneer of parliamentary reform, replaced most of his predecessors’ gardens by a landscape garden of standard later 18th-century type, and engaged John Platt of Rotherham to construct useful buildings for the estate.

Fig. 1: Survey plan of the gardens, Rufford Abbey, about 1690 (Plan II).
famous for the Earl of Shrewsbury's house which within our remembrance George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury built with that magnificence, as beseemeth so great an Earle, and yet such as was not to be envied."

The sixth earl's second wife was the inveterate builder, Bess of Hardwick, and she may have influenced the conversion of the former lay brothers' range of the abbey buildings into a country house. In 1590 the Rufford estate passed to Gilbert Talbot (1552–1616), seventh earl of Shrewsbury. Little is known about the house's development before the 17th century, but in 1611 Sir John Holles, sheriff of Nottingham, in charge of searching Rufford Abbey for hidden arms, described it thus:

"The house within, a confused labyrinth, underneath all vaults; above entries, closets, oratories, many stairs down and up, trap doors to issue forth and trap doors to lead into garrets, so as in my search I was never so puzzled in my life."

Even so, the house was large enough to accommodate James I and the prince of Wales, who visited three times (August 1612, September 1616 and August 1619) to indulge the king's favourite pastime, stag hunting in Sherwood Forest. It may have been better to accommodate the king's retinue that the house was enlarged in the early 17th century. A survey plan of 1637 by John Bunting includes a block plan of the abbey (Fig. 4) which suggests that the former west range of the monastic cloister had been converted and extended on its eastern side. The south cross-wing, including the surviving kitchen, also appears to have been in existence by this date. The house appears then to have occupied roughly the same dimensions as the present ruins. The surviving west front of the house, with its large mullion and transom windows (Fig. 3), and the gabled south block, must pre-date Bunting's survey, although the Elizabethan-style porch on the west front was remodelled by Anthony Salvin between 1837 and 1841.

Around 1580 Lady Mary Talbot, the seventh earl's younger sister, married Sir George Savile (c.1550–1622), first baronet, of Thornhill, 2 miles south-east of Dewsbury, Yorkshire. The death of the seventh earl in 1616, and his younger brother, Edward, the eighth earl, in 1618, both without male heirs, led to the partial break-up of the Shrewsbury estates. Through this division Lady Savile's descendants eventually inherited the Rufford estate. In fact Sir George Savile died in 1622, and it was only in 1626 that his grandson, another Sir George (1611–26), the second baronet, actually inherited Rufford Abbey, on the death of Jane, the dowager countess of Shrewsbury. The second baronet died in December that same year, at the age of 15, and his estates and title passed to his 14-year-old brother, Sir William, the third baronet. Rufford Abbey therefore became part of the Savile estates, which were mainly in the West Riding. Thornhill Hall was a moated late medieval house which would probably have remained the Savile's principal residence if it had not been for the events of the Civil War.

SIR WILLIAM SAVILE (1612–44), THIRD BARONET

Sir William came into his inheritance in 1633. In that year the imbalance between the Saviles' increased wealth and status, and the small scale and old-fashioned appearance of their principal houses, was emphasized in a letter from Sir William's uncle, Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford:

"Considering that your houses in my judgement are not suitable to your quality, nor yet your plate and furniture, I conceive your expense ought to be reduced to two thirds of your estate, the rest saved to accommodating of you in that kind."

Sir William entertained Charles I at Rufford on his way to Nottingham to raise his standard in 1642, and was appointed governor of the royalist garrison at York in 1643, but died there of camp fever on 24 January 1644. His wife, Anne, daughter of Thomas, Lord Coventry, held Sheffield Castle for the king in 1644, even though she
four sons and one daughter, and died in 1670. His second wife, Gertrude Pierrepont, granddaughter of the first earl of Kingston, of Thoresby Hall, Nottinghamshire, whom he married in November 1672, bore him a single daughter, and outlived him by over 30 years, dying in 1727.

Sir George rose to the highest political influence in the last years of Charles II’s reign and again in the first years of William and Mary’s. In James II’s reign his authorship of The Character of a Trimmer, advocating expedient, non-partisan decisions, gave him the name ‘the Trimmer’ under which he was immortalized first by Burnet and then by Macaulay. Thus, although accounted a cavalier for his entertainment of the duke of York, against Shaftesbury, whom he regarded as a threat to the king’s peace. Again, although he opposed the exclusion of the duke of York in 1680, and was thus wrongly reviled as a promoter of popery, he opposed James’s ecclesiastical policy, and his earl of Sunderland, had rebuilt Althorp House, Northamptonshire, to the design of William Taylor. Finally, the Hon. Mary Coventry, youngest sister of Savile’s mother, was married to Sir Henry Frederick Thynne, and their son, the first Viscount Weymouth, altered Longleat House, Wiltshire, in 1662, also to the design of William Taylor.

Though Halifax rarely resided at Rufford, he spent much money improving it and its gardens. In 1658 he moved the main Nottingham to Doncaster road, which ran immediately to the south of the house (Fig. 4), further to the north and west. This was presumably the first step towards laying out new gardens around the house and the creation of a new stable block and stable yard. The former, south-west of the abbey, was the first addition which he made, and can only have been begun after the repositioning of the road, perhaps to accommodate visits such as that made by the duke of York from 1 to 3 August 1665, when vast quantities of food were consumed. Built of brick with stone dressings, it is a quadrangle over 100ft (30m) square, with entrance archways in the centres of its north, east and west sides (Fig. 5). A large stable yard was laid out east of the stable and south of the house, and a separate coach house was built to the north, where the present coach house stands today. The stable building was altered in the 1790s and roofed in about 1890 by the architect John Birch for the first Lord Savile (1818–96), but it retains much of its original brick walling, especially on its north front. The surviving two-light stone mullion windows appear to be original in form, though much renewed in the 19th century. The size of the stable building suggests that a large number of horses, reputedly 20, were to be accommodated, mostly for hunting, and it is possible that the building also contained a riding house. It was one of the earliest quadrangular plan country house stables to be built in England.

In 1669 Halifax acquired a site on the west side of St James’s Square in London. He began paying rates in 1673 on a newly completed house there, known as Halifax House in his lifetime, and subsequently the site of no 17 and 18. We extensive alterations were carried out there in 1678 and 1679, recorded in the accounts for 1678 to 1680 of William Turner, Halifax’s steward in London. These accounts also record works to Rufford Abbey, and include the payment of £5 ‘To Mr Willm Taylor the Architector by my Lords ord.’. Taylor was a London carpenter and surveyor, first identified by Howard Colvin.

GEORGE SAVILE (1633–95), FIRST MARQUESS OF HALIFAX
Lady Savile’s eldest son, Sir George, the fourth baronet, was born at Thornhill on 11 November 1633. He was educated in London and Shrewsbury up to the age of 13, when he was sent to France to escape the clutches of his guardian, Lord Wharton. He visited Italy and Holland and returned to England in June 1652, aged 18. During his minority his estates, vested in trustees, were exempt from the fines and confiscations suffered by many royalist landowners. These estates included 40,000 acres (16,200ha) in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, 16,800 acres (6,800ha), including the Rufford estate, in Nottinghamshire and a further 7,000 acres (2,800ha) in Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Oxfordshire and Shropshire, with a total rental of £6,550 in 1651. In 1656 he married Lady Dorothy Spencer, daughter of the first earl of Sunderland, of Althorp, Northamptonshire, who brought a dowry of £10,000. She bore him was nine months pregnant. She and her children were eventually allowed to retire to the relative safety of Rufford Abbey by the besieging forces. In 1648 Thornhill Hall was garrisoned as part of the siege of Pontefract Castle, and was attacked by parliamentary forces under Colonel Charles Fairfax and Sir Henry Cholmeley on 18 July; when the house was blown up and burnt. Although shattered fragments of the house still survive, Thornhill Hall was never rebuilt. Rufford became the main seat of the Savile family and thus the focus for their architectural and horticultural endeavours.

Fig. 5: Stable block, Rufford Abbey, from the north-west.

Fig. 6: First- and second-floor plans of Rufford Abbey in 1938, with the north wing highlighted.
Some time before 1664 Halifax enlarged Rufford Abbey to redress the shortcoming that Strafford had pointed out to his father some 30 years earlier. An inventory taken in 1642 lists only 37 rooms,\(^{30}\) while the hearth tax returns for Nottinghamshire in 1664 record Rufford as the third largest house in the county, with 58 hearths.\(^{31}\) In 1674 the hearth tax returns show further expansion, to 61 hearths.\(^{32}\) Robert Thoroton’s Antiquities of Nottinghamshire, first published in 1677, described it as the home of ‘Sir George Savile, baronet, who much in larged and adorned this place [Rufford], and is since created viscount Halifax’.\(^{33}\)

This enlargement is illuminated by William Turner’s accounts for 1678 to 1680, which include a number of entries itemized for Rufford. These items are internal decorative features, and suggest that building work was nearing completion. They include payments to Mr Smith of Lambeth of £29 ‘in full of his bill for Locks and Bolts sent to Rufford’,\(^{34}\) and to Andrew Duwitt ‘for 100 skins of gilt leather for ye eating Parler att Rufford’ and ‘for gilt leather for Rufford for ye Chapell and Beuffrut’.\(^{35}\) There is also a payment for ‘Goods bought for Rufford £310. 08. 06’, which include ‘a carved wooden chimney piece, another of the same, nine marble chimney pieces, and two large gilt sconces’,\(^{36}\) and further payments in the accounts for November 1678 to June 1679 for an additional marble chimneypiece, a carved door and five pairs of sconces.\(^{37}\) Payments for November 1679 to March 1680 reflect even more clearly preparations for immediate occupancy, including a bible and prayer books, three dozen additional cane-bottom chairs, glass and paper.\(^{38}\)

In January 1680 Halifax wrote that he anticipated ‘seeing my small works at Rufford, having only yet had the pleasure of disbursing for them’.\(^{39}\) In February, when he finally arrived there, he wrote to his brother, Henry:

\[I am once more got to my old tenement; which I had not seen since I had given orders to renew and repair it. It looketh now somewhat better than when you last was here; and besides the charm of your native soil, it hath something more to recommend itself to your kindness, than when it was so mixt with the old ruins of the abbey that it looked like a medley in superstition and sacriledge, and though I have still left some decay'd part of the old building, yet there are none of the rags of Rome remaining. It is now all hereyze, which in my mind looketh pretty well, and I have at least as much reverence for it now as I had when it was encumbered with those sanctified ruins. In short, with all the faults that belong to such a misshapen building, patch’d up at so many several times … I find something here which pleaseth me.\]
The north wing

It is probable that these fragments of information refer to the new north wing. From Halifax's description it appears that this wing may have replaced what remained of the former abbey church. Its very thick stone wall may even have incorporated some of the west front of the church, though no evidence of this was identified during its demolition in 1956. The north wing survived into the 20th century (Fig. 6) largely unaltered, apart from the insertion of sashes and the addition of a first-floor bay window asymmetrically on the north front by Salvin in 1837–41 (Figs 7 and 8). The wing had three storeys, a hipped roof, dormer windows and a prominent modillioned cornice, contrasting with the older gabled house to the south. The ground floor, which linked to the basement of the pre-existing house, was slightly lower than the two equal-height floors above. The north front (Fig. 7) was the most ordered elevation, being symmetrical, nine windows wide and with a central doorway. All the windows had plain, raised shouldered surrounds, and the dormers had alternating triangular and segmental pediments. The only distinctive feature of this front was the grouping of modillons in threes: on the west front they were grouped in fours (Fig. 8), and on the east return they were grouped in two threes flanking a group of six (Fig. 9).

The much longer west front (Fig. 8) had an eight-window facade, although its roof ran on behind an earlier gabled wing retained from the old house. This very unusual arrangement spoils the symmetry of the new facade. The east front (Figs 9, 10 and 11) had six windows, more generously spaced, two of them in a one-window deep projection at its north end. A plan of the gardens made about 1680 (see Fig. 13) shows that there was a gap between the north wing and the older building, containing an apparently open passage reached by a flight of steps at the east end. The passage and steps are also shown on a proposal drawing for altering this front made in 1734 (see Fig. 17). The gap was later infilled by Salvin's broader staircase wing.

The principal room in the north wing was the Long Gallery on the first floor, 108ft long by 22ft wide (33m x 6.7m), a late example of the type, and one of the few rooms in the wing which was photographed with its original decoration before the house was demolished in 1956 (Fig. 12). Its walls were lined with bolection panelled wainscot, still surviving in 1956, although the two fireplaces on the east wall were evidently replaced in the 18th century. It is not clear whether the plaster ceiling, whose pattern was adapted from that in the Long Gallery at Hardwick, made in the 1590s, was thus old-fashioned, or whether it was put up by Anthony Salvin, who introduced a similar patterned ceiling over his new staircase, possibly a copy of the ceiling in the Long Gallery. Salvin was certainly responsible for the only other alteration to the gallery, the Jacobean-style bay window added at its north end.

Long galleries are rare in post-Restoration houses, although that at Rufford was not unique. There are long galleries at Althorp, built in 1666–8,43 and at Bolsover Castle (remodelled in 1666–7),46 Nottingham Castle (1674–84),47 Longleat (1682–6),48 Chatsworth (1687–96), Sudbury (1670s–1690s) and Shavington, Shropshire (1679–85).49 It might be that the type survived as the idiosyncratic requirement of a particular group of neighbours, friends and relations, were it not for William Taylor's Long Gallery at Longleat. Furthermore, Halifax House also had a Long Gallery, even rarer in a London town house, but presumably also the work of William Taylor, and strengthening the case for Taylor's authorship of the north wing at Rufford.

The north end of the Long Gallery occupied most of the western half of the first-floor north elevation. A similar proportion of the eastern half was taken up by the room identified as the 'Gallery Bedroom' on a plan made in 1938 (Fig. 6), which was the most important bedroom in the wing, overlooking the north parterre. It too was photographed before demolition, when it
The chimneypiece may be one of the nine marble chimneypieces shipped from London and accounted for by William Turner. The overmantel, which consisted of a carved mantel shelf with a raised bolection-moulded panel above, was flanked by ornately carved drops like those in the Long Gallery. The walls were hung with tapestries in bolection-moulded frames.

It is not possible to be certain that William Taylor designed the north wing. But if he did, it also raises the possibility that he was responsible for the facade added in 1691 to Barrowby Hall, Lincolnshire, a house owned by Halifax’s brother, Henry Savile, until the latter’s death in 1687, and lived in by Halifax’s son, William, Lord Eland, thereafter.

The gardens
In 1881 Leonard Jacks recorded that the Long Gallery contained ‘a large picture of what is supposed to be the abbey in former days’, which might well have shown the house and its gardens in the 17th century. But the earliest surviving topographical views date from the last quarter of the 18th century, by which time both baroque and rococo gardens at Rufford had been laid out and swept away. However, they are recorded in a number of design drawings, one letter and a survey. Few of the drawings are signed, though some are dated. There are no surviving accounts to assist in their interpretation, but some remaining topographical features within the garden can help to elucidate what was actually constructed. The garden plans appear to fall within three different phases, corresponding to the three periods of building work on the house: about 1680, about 1695, and between 1728 and 1736.

The first baroque gardens
Bunting’s survey of 1637 (Fig. 4) gives no indication of gardens, although it includes ‘The Parks’ of 445 acres (180ha) south-west of the house, which had been established in the 16th century. What may be the earliest surviving garden design, here called Plan I (Fig. 13), a detailed ink drawing with delicate colour-washing, dates from around 1680, after the completion of the north wing, for it also gives the ground-floor plan of this in detail.

Plan I is not complete: the southern part has been lost, and only part of the gardens in front of the east and west sides of the house are shown. But all these are shown in outline on another, cruder survey drawing, Plan II (Figs 1 and 14). This plan does not show the Bath-Summer House built in 1728 (see Figs 23 and 24), and has previously been dated to around 1725, but it also does not show the evidently mature trees which are drawn in a letter of 1725 (Fig. 15), and must therefore pre-date the latter by some time. It may even pre-date the fire of 1692 (see page 135): an exchange of letters between Halifax and his heir, Lord Eland, in 1690, reveals that one of the features shown on Plan II, the Wilderness, was in existence by that date.

By combining the information from both these drawings it is possible to reconstruct the gardens in detail. Plan I shows a rectangular parterre, approximately 330ft (101m) long and just over 250ft (76m) wide, immediately north of the house about 1680, about 1695, and between 1728 and 1736.

The centre of this parterre is not aligned symmetrically on the central doorway of the north wing, but a few feet to the east. Four large rectangular lawns are laid out around a central circular pond or bed (identified by a grey wash on Plan I). Each of these lawns has a square...
wells and narrow beds or channels to its north and west sides.

The gravel court east of the house is shown bounded to the east, like the parterre, by a narrow bed or channel, backed by a brick wall. At the south-east corner a long flight of steps leads up to a raised platform, labelled 'Terras Walk' on Plan II, with a rectangular lawn surrounded by gravel, and backed by a stone balustrade (washed in yellow on Plan I). A further flight of steps at the west end of this terrace leads up to a passage in the narrow gap between the north wing and the projecting gabled wing of the older house, presumably at first-floor level, as an elevation drawing of 1734 confirms (see Fig. 17). At the west end of this terrace is a door, shown with a pediment on the 1734 drawing.

To the south of the 'Terras Walk' is another parterre, marked 'Fountain Court' on Plan II; this was about 120ft (37m) square, and extended the full length of the recessed central section of the east front of the old house. Plan II shows four presumed lawns around a large, circular central feature, presumably a pond, with the eponymous fountain at its centre, although both lawns and pond are washed in grey. The lawns were separated by gravel paths, and Plan II shows that Fountain Court was surrounded by narrow beds on all four sides. On the east side was a wall with a central gateway, and to the south lay a building separating the court from the 'Wood Yard'.

Along the west, entrance front of the house lay three irregular rectangular courts, marked as 'The Greene Courts' on Plan II. Plan I shows that at least the two northern courts were separated by a wall without any openings. The northern court, about 85ft by 70ft (26m x 21m), in front of the west facade of the north wing, contained a rectangular lawn surrounded by a gravel path. This court had a stone wall (washed in yellow on both Plans I and II) separating it from the raised 'Gravel Terras Walke' to the west, and a brick wall to the south with narrow beds or channels along both these sides. The two southern courts were divided by a bridge, which still survives today, forming the access to the main entrance of the house. The larger southern court extended beyond the south front of the house, and was bounded on its south side by a return of the 'Gravel Terras Walke' which separated it from the stable.

Plan II covers a larger area than Plan I. It shows the kitchen garden south-east of the house, the entrance to the west and the Wilderness to the north. The kitchen garden is shown as an irregular oval south-east of the stable yard. It is bounded by a stream on its north-western side feeding a pair of short canals laid out in an L-shape. The garden is divided by cross paths into roughly rectangular plots edged with trees, presumably fruit trees.

The rectangular entrance court between 'The Gravel Terras Walke' and 'The Road from Nottingham' is shown bounded by a brick wall, and subdivided into three, either by fences or stone walls, shown as yellow lines. The southern two-thirds, about 140ft (43m) square, is shown traversed by two double rows of trees forming a slightly angled avenue between a gate to the road and the main entrance of the house. The eastern part of the remaining third is marked 'Cherry Holt'. The western part is shown to have contained an enclosed 'Bowling Green' with a small building at the centre of its western side. The tree-lined 'Road from Nottingham' a large, irregular trapezoid-shaped area is shown, with a central ride continuing the avenue across the entrance court. On either side of this ride open courts are shown, each with five regularly laid out clumps of trees planted in squares.

North of both the entrance court and the 'Kings Garden', Plan II (Fig. 1) shows a trapezoid-shaped 'Wilderness', over 200ft (61m) long and on its eastern side about 100ft (30m) wide. It shows trees divided by grass paths into two parts, with a path running round the boundary. Both parts have diagonal paths, grass circles at their intersections, and half or quarter-circles where they meet the boundary path. The longer western part also has a path running north-south.

The outline of some of this garden layout is still visible today. The southern half of the 'Kings Garden' can still be identified (Fig. 16). The present Queen Mother’s Walk runs parallel to the 'Gravel Terras Walke', though further to the east, and the east side of the north parterre followed the line of the present ditch, though slightly further west. The present 'Lime Tree Avenue', which was the main drive, follows the line of the avenue across the entrance court shown on Plan II.

The fire of 1692

On the night of 23 December 1692 a serious fire damaged the older part of Rufford Abbey. The damage was reported in the letters of Jonathan Challoner, one of Halifax’s servants. On 24 December he wrote that the fire had begun in the yellow damask chamber and nearly reached Lady Halifax’s chamber before anything could be removed, but that it did not reach the new
buildings. Two days later Chaloner wrote that the fire had consumed 21 rooms of the old building and all the furniture, although everything in the King's Chamber and the Velvet Chamber had been removed and saved. On 31 December he mentioned that the fire had burned part of Halifax's bedchamber and had reached the end of the great gallery and the evidence closed. Finally, on 4 January 1693, he wrote:

This day I had a surveyor to compute the damage only of the building consumed – he says that many of the walls, and stacks of chimneys fallen down, and the front of the flat building, which last fell within a day or two after I came home. In case your lordship design to rebuild it, after the same manner as it was before, it will (as he has computed it, all materials included) cost 2100 Ls. The ruins are in length 30 yds the breadth 13 yd. 60

Evidently it was the older, southern, part of the house which was damaged. Since the west and south fronts with their mullioned windows and Jacobean gables still survive, presumably the 'flat building' which fell was the east front.

Letters from John Birch, Halifax's steward at Rufford, detail the progress of the work. On 1 September 1694 he wrote:

The roof is now all up, and Eustace's men hath begun already to Tyle, and the plumbers begins [sic] to cast Lead on Monday week. So I hope it will all be covered in by a fortnight after Michaelmas at furthest. 66

On 16 March 1696 he wrote:

I hope the joiners by ye latter end of May will have finished their works, all but ye floors will but be laid rough, by reason ye deals are not dry. Both pair of a Gates in ye yard before ye Coach House are hung. 65

He also recorded problems with the roofs caused by heavy snow and disputes between himself and the surveyor. 67 As his letters refer mostly to carpenters' work and interior fitting-out of new rooms, work must have been nearly complete by early 1696. William III, while staying nearby at Welbeck Abbey, visited Rufford on 1 November 1695, and would have found the restoration largely completed. 68 But his former Lord Privy Seal would not have entertained him; the Trimmer had died on 5 April from the effects of vomiting.

The architect with whom Birch disputed (presumably the same as the surveyor who computed the replacement cost in January 1693) was Charles Renny, an architect and surveyor from Rotherham. 69 Some elements of Renny's east elevation may be recorded in a drawing of 1734 which proposed further changes (Fig. 17). 70 This drawing does not distinguish between what it records and what it proposes, so Renny's contributions can only be guessed. It shows a nine-bay facade, repeating the architrave type of Taylor's north wing, but on larger first-floor windows. The ground-floor windows are smaller, and might perhaps have survived the fire. The three at the north end have ogee-headed lights, apparently lighting the chapel. The two bays at each end lack the third storey of the north wing, but have a similar eaves cornice and a garret storey with similar dormers. The central five-window attic was presumably the addition proposed, so the original facade would have consisted of just the ground and first floors, with a continuous cornice and dormers.

The 1734 drawing does not record the double-flight garden stair in the centre of the east front (Fig. 18), which is also shown in a garden plan (Plan V; see Fig. 20) of about 1695. There are a number of examples of similar stairings dating from the 1690s. One was built on the west front of Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, around 1695, and another at West Dean House, Wiltshire, around 1700, for the fifth earl of Kingston-upon-Hull – the nephew of Halifax's second wife – whose main seat, Thoresby Hall, adjoined the Rufford estate. 71 Both these more ornamented examples were probably designed by William Talman, but the stair at Rufford was embellished by a rusticated arch and oval windows, like those found at Worton House, Buckinghamshire, in 1704. 72 It is possible that its absence from the 1734 drawing indicates an intention to remove it at that time, because it was certainly shown in the garden plans drawn up around 1695 by an otherwise unknown Mr Thonous.

THONOUS'S GARDENS

Halifax was succeeded as second marquess by his son, William (1655–1700), although only for five years. 73 But his former Lord Privy Seal had evidently already been responsible for improvements at Rufford. In 1690 he had told his father 'that Rufford lodge was in ruins, the great gates dilapidated and the gardens neglected … the chief blame is to be laid at your Lordship's door for not visiting 'em oftner'. 74 Halifax replied: 'You are to tell me your opinion what you would have done in everything about the house and park, since you are to be more concerned in it than I am for the remainder of my life.' 75 In October 1695, six months after Eland's succession as second marquess, work in the garden was under discussion; on 7 October John Birch wrote that he had 'discoursed Jackson about removing the stairs of the Terras wall'. By the following March this was in progress; on 16 March Birch wrote that 'ye stairs of ye Terras are going on with as fast as possible'. 76

It may be this phase of gardening activity at Rufford that is recorded in four plans and one elevation drawing, here called Plans III, IV, V and VI. 77 Plans III and V are large-scale finished plans, both precisely drawn in black ink with colour wash and similar distinctive scale bars. Plan IV is a variant detail of Plan V. Plan VI is a sheet with two drawings on it, both with similar scale bars to Plans III and V. One of these gives the plan of an amphitheatre whose site cannot be definitely located. The other gives the plan and elevation of a treillage arbour covering the ends of two terraces. The verso of Plan V is inscribed 'Mr Thonous's(? Plan for East Side of ye House', but all appear to be in the same hand, different from that of Plans I and II, and four have the distinctive style of scale bar. 78 None is dated.

The first and largest of these designs, Plan III (Fig. 19), inscribed 'New Wilderness' on the reverse, proposed a remodelling of the gardens to the north of the north wing. It retained the basic outline of the King's Garden, though remodelled: the four lawns were to be shifted slightly to the west to align the central avenue on the central doorway of the north front; the gravel paths were to be widened, particularly the central one; the
central feature and statues were to be removed and the surrounding beds and hedges replaced with topiary cones or pyramids, probably yews. Beyond the King's Garden the earlier Wilderness was to be removed and replaced with banks of trees on either side of a broad and widening avenue, which divided into three and extended about 550yds (500m) northwards as far as the present Wellow Road. The present Broad Ride, though replanted in the late 18th century, occupies the same position as the original central avenue, although there is no sign today of the radiating avenues.

Either side of these radiating rides the plan proposed four irregularly shaped wilderness gardens within a trapezoid bounded by the Nottingham Road to the west, the Wellow Road to the north and a long straight canal to the east.

The north-west wilderness was to be triangular with a single serpentine path. The south-west wilderness was to be trapezoid, with a complex set of paths and open glades. The two wildernesses to the east were to be nearly rectangular, the southern one with diagonal cross paths and a mount with a spiral ramp in the north-west corner, and the northern one with crossing zigzag and half-circle paths; an attached flap shows the same arrangement in reverse. Plan IV is a sketch of an even more complex alternative for the south-west wilderness, indicating the sites for statues and seats. Plan III also proposed a 700yd (640m) long canal, bordering the eastern side of the entire northern garden. If constructed, it would have been sited roughly where the western stream, which feeds the present lake, is today (see Fig. 35).

The north-west wilderness was to be triangular with a single serpentine path. The south-west wilderness was to be trapezoid, with a complex set of paths and open glades. The two wildernesses to the east were to be nearly rectangular, the southern one with diagonal cross paths and a mount with a spiral ramp in the north-west corner, and the northern one with crossing zigzag and half-circle paths; an attached flap shows the same arrangement in reverse. Plan IV is a sketch of an even more complex alternative for the south-west wilderness, indicating the sites for statues and seats. Plan III also proposed a 700yd (640m) long canal, bordering the eastern side of the entire northern garden. If constructed, it would have been sited roughly where the western stream, which feeds the present lake, is today (see Fig. 35).
radial avenues were first designed for Vaux le Vicomte in the 1670s and were further developed at Versailles in the 1680s. The long straight canals, one ending in a cascade, also suggest knowledge of new French fashions in gardening. The complex circular pond at the centre of the ‘Fountain Court’ was evidently to be retained, although the four small grass plats were to be replaced by a gravel circle edged with grass, and approached down a double-flight stair from the first floor of the house. Altogether 21ft (6.5m) wide, 10ft 6in (3.2m) deep and 14ft 6in (4.4m) high, it has a square-planned pavilion on each terrace and a narrow one over the steps. All three pavilions have triangulated roofs whose apexes are at the same height, so the middle one is much steeper. All the apexes have carved finials. The square-planned pavilions each have a round-headed door. The walls of all three parts and the roof of the central one have a herringbone pattern \textit{treillage}, while the roofs of the square-planned pavilions have a pattern of open circles and rosettes within rectangular frames. There is no indication on the drawing of where this arbour might have been sited: Plans I and II show two adjacent terraces linked by steps where the ‘Kings Garden’ abuts ‘The Gravel Terras Walle’, but there are eight steps on Plan I, instead of the three shown in Plan VI. If this elevation is by Thonous, it is his only elevation drawing in the series, and suggests that he may have been a more accomplished garden designer than architect. The designs contain some evidence of their date. The retention and adaptation of some features from Plans I and II (the ‘Kings Garden’ from Plan I, and the ‘Terras Walle’, ‘Wood Yard’ and the corner of the kitchen garden from Plan II) indicate that they post-date the latter. They certainly pre-date 1738, when a map by John Reynolds of the adjoining Thoresby estate (see Fig. 31), which includes a fraction of the northern part of the Rufford estate, shows the triple ride proposed in Plan III, evidently realized by that date.78 The cascade illustrated in Plan V was extant at least two years earlier, as ‘the Cascade in the New Park’ was discussed in a note dated 13 September 1736.79 Both probably drawn up some 40 years earlier still. Plan V (Fig. 20) includes a block plan of the house without the off-centre projection on the east side, suggesting that these designs were part of a scheme for remodelling the entire east front of the house, a radical re-modelling which is most likely to have been considered after the fire of 1692. These designs may therefore have been drawn to complement Charles Renny’s rebuilding of the southern half of the house, completed in 1665. Although Renny was ‘to be regularly seen in Rotherham market-place’,76 there is no indication of who Thonous was, and no garden designer of that name is known from elsewhere. It is possible that, as his name suggests, he was French. Triple radial avenues were first designed for Vaux le Vicomte in the 1670s and were further developed at Versailles in the 1680s. The long straight canals, one ending in a cascade, also suggest knowledge of new French fashions in gardening. The complex maze-like paths within the wildernesses, although recurrent in the early 18th century, were a novelty in the 1690s. The earliest examples were designed by Le Nôtre for Versailles in the 1670s.80 It is possible that the Saviles were acquainted with these examples, for Halifax’s brother, Henry Savile, with whom he regularly corresponded, was Envoy Extraordinary to the court of Louis XIV in 1672–3 and 1678–83.81 Halifax’s son, Lord Eland, had travelled extensively in Italy, Spain, France and the Low Countries between 1685 and 1687, and may also have seen such novel garden features. One or other of them may have recruited Thonous. Although the extent, confidence and splendour of the proposals can be accounted for by the Saviles’ wealth and position, it is difficult to account for their extreme novelty in the 1690s without such knowledge.

SIR GEORGE SAVILE (1678–1743), SEVENTH BARONET

The second marquess left three daughters, one of whom was eventually to marry the architect earl of Burlington, and to inherit the house in St James’s Square. When the second marquess died in 1700 the peerages became extinct, but the baronetcy, created for the first marquess’s great-grandfather, was inherited by a bachelor cousin, as sixth baronet. At the latter’s death in 1704 the baronetcy passed to his great-nephew, George Savile, then a student at the Middle Temple, and son of the rector of Thornhill; he inherited Rufford, along with most of the estates and an income of £6,000. Sir George saw himself as a country squire and did not aspire to high office, but he sat as MP for Yorkshire from 1728 to 1734 as a follower of his political, Sir George’s principal achievement was the act of Parliament of 1731 which replaced Latin with English as the language of the law. His interests were practical and scientific, and he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1721. In 1722...
he married Mary, the daughter of John Pratt of Dublin and Cabra Castle, co. Cavan, although reputedly the daughter of Henry Petty, first earl of Shelburne. They separated in 1734, on account of her affair with William Levinz, a county neighbour, and Sir George lived on alone at Rufford until his death in 1743.

The Bath-Summer House

The first heated swimming pool in Britain had been constructed in 1703–4 by one of a circle of south Yorkshire and north Nottinghamshire fellows of the Royal Society, who had a particular interest in hydrostatics.85 It may be that Sir George’s scientific interests, apparent in his own fellowship of the Royal Society, inspired him, too, to build a bath-house at Rufford in 1728. His architect was John Hallam, a protégé of Sir George’s neighbour, Sir Thomas Hewett of Shireoaks Hall, Nottinghamshire, who was himself interested in hydrostatics. From 1719 to his death in 1726 Hewett held the post of Surveyor-General of the King’s Works, and Hallam, also a native of Nottinghamshire, was Secretary to the Board and Clerk of Works at Whitehall, Westminster and St James’s until he was deprived of his official posts on Hewett’s death. Although Hallam was only a joiner by origin, his drawings for the Bath-Summer House at Rufford reveal that he was an accomplished draughtsman and creative designer (Fig. 23).86

The Bath-Summer House was built between 1728 and early 1730 by Robert Birch, mason, and John Bloydon, joiner.87 Constructed south of the stable yard, on part of what was the kitchen garden in the 1680s (Fig. 1), the Bath-Summer House still survives, and is one of the earliest examples of 18th-century treatments for ‘palsies, convulsions, hypocondriacal [sic] and gouty pains, rickets, rheumatic pains and even the “blew devils”’.88 It was converted into a conservatory in the 19th century, though it has recently been restored and re-converted for the display of sculpture. It had a pool or canal (which partially survives), 85ft (26m) long and 12ft (3.7m) wide, surrounded by a rectangle of high brick walls, with an entrance doorway at the north-western end and an open-sided summer house at the opposite end. The pool was lined in stone with steps down and a sluice gate at one end for regulating the water intake. It narrows at its south-east end to pass through the central intercolumniation of the Doric colonnade on the north-west elevation of the summer house itself, where the pool was shallower. The colonnade is flanked by two towers, lit by circular windows and topped with ball finials; one tower gave access to the roof and the other acted as a changing room or store. Above the colonnade the roof has a balustrade and urns (Fig. 24); within, there are three stone niches on each wall. The other side, facing out onto the gardens, has a three-sided, canted bay window with large sashes, which overlooks a circular basin. John Hallam drew four different designs for this elevation, including a pointed or two-sided bay (Fig. 23), a dodecagonal bay and an irregular bay. From the basin, water was fed into a straight canal, about 300ft (91m) long, which extended to the south-east. This canal no longer exists, but a straight shallow ditch marks its original position.

The remodelling of the east front

A rudimentary drawing dated July 1734 is endorsed ‘Draught from Mr Birch of Part of the East side of Rufford House as Proposed to be Altered’ (Fig. 17).90 Mr Birch can be identified as Robert Birch, the mason who carried out the stonework on the Bath-Summer House in 1728–30, since another drawing in the same hand refers to the author as ‘Mr Birch the mason’.91 This drawing omits the external stair which Thonous’s plans illustrate, and which was probably added about 1695 (Fig. 20). The stair is shown in both late 18th-century views of the east front (Figs 10 and 11)92 and it survived to be photographed in the 1950s (Fig. 18). Perhaps the proposal intended that the stair should be removed, though this would have cut off the important suite of rooms contained in this range from the garden below. Whatever the reason, this proposal was not acted upon.

The room at the south end, referred to as the Dining Room on the 1938 plan (Fig. 6), was, on the basis of stylistic analogy, fitted up around 1734.
It had a deep arched alcove on its south side, too deep for a buffet, and presumably a bed recess; this was infilled in the late 19th century with a glass cabinet containing ‘a magnificent collection of racing cups, mostly trophies (won) by the late Mr Henry Savile.’ Tall pilasters flanked the alcove, with richly carved spandrels to the arch. The room had a high quality white marble chimneypiece with console brackets, and double leaf doors with six raised and fielded panels.

Around 1737 slight alterations were allegedly made to the stable block, perhaps also to Birch’s design.

Sir George Savile’s gardens

Although he inherited in 1704, the earliest surviving evidence of Sir George’s interest in gardening is found in an illustrated letter from his steward, Thomas Smith, dated 7 April 1725. This letter (Fig. 15) shows the house, referred to as ‘Rufford Hall’, and various avenues, woods and sightlines with captions. The house is on the left, with ‘Wellow Park’ at the top, ‘The Brail Wood’ at the bottom and the ‘Old Park’, or entrance avenue, across the centre of the page. The letter concerns itself not with the gardens but with the surrounding woodlands, and particularly with ensuring that open views and rides were cut through them to give the best views. Such concerns were not evident in the designs of the 1680s and 1690s, and are indicative of the interest in the wider landscape that would eventually lead to the landscape gardens of the later 18th century. The position now occupied by the culvert behind the Bath-Summer House is the site of a proposal shown on an unsigned, undated drawing here called Plan VII (Fig. 25), for three canals, one shown leading from a curved edge which is labelled ‘Walk Round ye Bath Bason’. Each of these canals is 7ft (2.1m) wide: two have central bulges containing heart-shaped islands, and the other has a meander or serpentine. Each is labelled ‘Stream of Water’ and the heart shapes are both labelled ‘Island’.

Another drawing, Plan VIII (Fig. 26), showing heart-shaped beds or basins, may be presumed to have come from the same hand, although also unsigned and undated. But an inscription on the verso identifies it as ‘My Masters Draught Plan’. Although this inscription might have been made by a draughtsman or apprentice who referred to the designer as his master, it is more likely that ‘My Master’ was the master of the house, Sir George Savile. To the left of the heart shapes he has drawn two sets of three interlocked circles, the upper ones with concentric, the lower with eccentric borders. These exercises, drawn with the geometrical subtlety of an engineer, are consistent with the interests of a fellow of the Royal Society, and additionally suggest the possibility that the geometrical ingenuity of the various bath-house proposals may originate in another (Ison) ‘My Master’s Draught’, drawn in fair by Hallam. The inscription on the verso also reveals that Plan VIII is a design for ‘the Parterre on the East Side of Rufford Hall’, and the shape of the enclosure around the beds or basins corresponds to that of the parterre illustrated in Plan V including the ‘Terras Walk’ of Plans I and II. The right (eastern) end of the drawing appears at first sight to be blank, but careful observation reveals a long rectangular feature outlined faintly in pencil. This must be a southward extension of the canal bordering the east side of the north garden in Plans III and V and pencil lines indicate what appears to be a bridge crossing it. The introduction of water to this area would allow the shapes to be basins rather than beds, perhaps more to the taste of a hydraulic engineer. The shaded areas, which taper to points too fine to be planting, may be slopes. The large and simple parterres of the 1690s were out of fashion by the 1730s and this experimental design is evidently moving towards the complex rococo layouts produced by designers like Thomas Wright in the 1750s.

The bridge can be identified as that shown in another drawing, Plan IX (Fig. 27), dated 2 January 1734. This is an elevation of a bridge corresponding in length to the bridge on Plan VIII, and the inscription refers to the ‘North and South Ends of the Arch’, which agrees with the bridge’s orientation on Plan VIII. The width of the canal (indicated by dotted lines) and the length of the abutments also seem to correspond closely to the parterre design. The inscription on this drawing also states that ‘the Crown of the Arch … maybe affected by the Wheels of Carriages’, suggesting that the bridge formed part of a carriage drive which led to the double-flight stair on the east front. The former Fountain Court in front of these steps had already been redesigned as an open circle in Plan V, wide enough to turn a carriage. It may be that the intention was to move the entrance to the house to the eastern side.

Just over a month later, on 13 February 1734, a draughtsman with the same handwriting, on this occasion identified as ‘Mr Birch’, drew the elevation of grass and stepped ramp, Plan X (Fig. 28). It is inscribed ‘Draught from Mr Birch the Mason of Part of the Wall and Palisade of the Parterre on the East side of Rufford House’. It shows a brick parapet with regular stone piers on the right, and a wooden palisade on the left, which might thus be interpreted as the less formal side, furthest from the house. The annotations reveal that parapet and palisade flank, from right to left, ‘Port of Parterre Wall’, ‘Two Yards Gravel’, ‘Five Yards Grass Terrace’, ‘One Yard Steps’, ‘Six Yards Grass Walk’; evidently this route was not for carriages. The length of parapet furthest to the left is extended downwards, and inscribed ‘Canal otter Grate’, indicating that it represents a channel over a canal, here used to exclude otters. Presumably the garden canals were stocked with fish.
The parapet wall shown in Birch’s drawing is of a similar height to the parapet shown in a drawing for gates, Plan XI (Fig. 29), which is inscribed June 11, 1734. Drafted of Gates & Palkades for East Side of Rufford House, bespoke of Mr Foulgham this day.104 James Foulgham (1712–70), the second son of the better-known ironsmith, Francis Foulgham, was an ironsmith in Bridlesmith Gate, Nottingham.105 A memorandum dated 11 June 1734 evidently refers to these same gates: ‘The said James Foulgham is to Paint the Work before it comes from Nottingham and to pay the Carriage to Rufford; Sir George to find a Mason (and Lad) to fix up the Said work with Mr Foulgham.’106 The drawing shows a central pair of gates with an elaborate overthrow enclosing a cartouche, and flanked by ornate openwork piers with elaborate finials. Railings either side are shown ramped up to the gate piers and supported by lower, but equally ornate, openwork piers, and are themselves shown flanked by fronds of iron vegetation in a triangular format set on the parapet walls. The site of these gates is not indicated, but a pair of gates of similar design survived to be photographed at the north end of the Broad Ride in the 1950s.107 They may have been moved to this site some time after 1734.

Entirely without comparison in 18th-century garden design is a third drawing in the same hand as Plans VII and VIII, doubtless ‘the Master’s’, Plan XII (Fig. 30).108 It shows an aqueduct, flowing between two surfaces marked ‘Canal: Walk’, consisting of three parallel sluices, the outer ones marked ‘Shallow Sluice’, and the central one ‘Deeper Sluice’. To left and right extend channels marked ‘Flood: Gutter’, one of which ends in a circle, perhaps a well or sump. Ahead of the aqueduct, beyond two dotted lines (perhaps representing a bridge), is a trefoil-shaped pool, whence a channel leads to a series of pools in the form of the numbers 1735; dotted lines indicate links between these, presumably subterranean channels. The last of these runs into an ‘Aquaduct to ye Lake’, indicating that a lake of some sort was planned or even in existence at Rufford at this date; the present lake was not created until the 1750s. Unfortunately there are no notes on the drawing which indicate its position, but it may have been connected to the canals in front of the Bath-Summer House. It is captioned ‘Plan of Sluces – Flood-Gutters, Cataract-Aquaduct & from Wilderness-Canal’. The figure ‘1735’ is not meaningless; the drawing is dated June 25/1735.

Memoranda record distances between individual garden features and numerous water features, although not always identifiably. One, dated 13 October 1733, refers to the ‘Stew Ponds’ and a ‘Great Pond’; another, dated 5 June 1735, refers to a ‘Cataract of Water for the Great Canal over against the Cave Walk in the Wilderness’ and to a ‘Lake’; while a third, dated 13 September 1736, refers to ‘the mount in the New Canal’ and a ‘Cascade in New Park’.

SIR GEORGE SAVILE (1726–84), EIGHTH BARONET

The seventh baronet died on 16 September 1743 and was succeeded as eighth baronet by his son, also George, then aged 17. This was ‘Independent Savile’, famous as the pioneer of parliamentary reform, and leader of the Yorkshire Association. He sat as MP for England’s largest county from 1759 to 1783, and was a political ally of the second marquess of Rockingham, whose base was at Wentworth Woodhouse, Yorkshire.109 The wildernesses either side of these avenues, if they were ever realized, had been allowed to grow out by 1738, as the contrived wildernesses of the Versailles style had been succeeded by a more naturalistic approach. The Thoresby survey does not show the long eastern canal proposed by Thonous (Fig. 19), but instead shows a serpentine canal within the eastern wilderness, reaching as far as the Wellow Road and fed by a straight aqueduct running parallel to and east of the house. The aqueduct ran parallel but 100yds (91m) west of the line of Thonous’s proposed long canal, and was presumably added in the 1730s. A surviving ditch follows its line along the east side of the former King’s Garden. The Thoresby survey also shows that the bowling green and its pavilion, shown on Plan II (Figs 1 and 14), were still in existence in 1738.

Fig. 29: James Foulgham, proposal elevation of iron gates, Rufford Abbey, 11 June 1734 (Plan XI).
in the obliteration of a large part of the more unusual baroque and rococo gardens at Rufford. He introduced new crops, including hops, which supplied the local brewing industry. Between 1743 and 1747 he and his trustees purchased the villages of Ollerton, Boughton, Kirton and Egmanton for £22,000 from the Markham family, thereby increasing the size of the Rufford estate by a further 1,860 acres (752ha) to 9,910 acres (4,010ha); and by the time of his death he had enclosed nearly 2,000 acres (809ha) of previously common land.

Sir George landscaped the park east and south of the house, and added a lake, complete with islands, east of Thonous’s avenues and the north-eastern wilderness, all of which is illustrated in John Chapman’s county map of 1774 (Fig. 32). The lake may be dated by agreements for building a bridge and ‘Dam on the New River at Rufford’ drawn up with the architect and builder John Platt of Rotherham in February and July 1758. As a local architect, Platt was an obvious choice, but he would also have had the particular recommendation of Lord Rockingham, for whom he acted as mason for most of his life. The recreational value of the lake was not overlooked: the earliest known view of it (Fig. 33) shows a small sailing boat, and Sir George had a boat house built on the west bank. But it also provided a head of water to power a corn mill, prominently positioned at its northern end, which may also be attributed to Platt. The mill was built of brick with prominent stone quoins in the slightly old-fashioned manner characteristic of his work. It has two storeys, a hipped roof behind an eaves parapet, and an octagonal lantern like a provincial town hall. Three bays face the lake; the central one breaks forward and is pedimented, and has an open arch for the water wheel. The cupola was removed as early as 1790, and the windows on the south side, facing the lake, were removed when the building was enlarged and converted into a saw mill in the 19th century. But the north façade survives, similar in style, although the fenestration may have been altered in the 19th century, giving a slightly unorthodox six bays (Fig. 34). The overflow from the lake was channelled through a cascade, which has been much altered.

In 1765 Sir George was granted permission to re-route the Nottingham Road even further to the west away from Rufford Abbey. He was one of the trustees of the Turnpike Trust which built the road that still exists today. The two late 18th-century watercolour views show the gardens at this time (Figs 10 and 11). They illustrate no planting around the house, but mown lawns with only the outline of the baroque and rococo gardens, which had evidently been grabbed up. To mark the visit of King George III in 1786 Sir George replanted the Broad Walk with Dresden beeches, which were cut down by the War Office during their occupation of the house; the replacements are only now reaching maturity. Sir George was evidently less concerned with his house than his grounds. It may have been in his time that the whole house was given sash windows with narrow glazing bars, and that two new chimney pieces were set up in the Long Gallery. But nothing else survives within that may be attributable to his initiative.

RICHARD LUMLEY-SAVILE (1757–1832)

In 1784 the eighth baronet was succeeded by his nephew, the Hon. Richard Lumley, second son of the fourth earl of Scarbrough, for whom he acted as mason for most of his life. As a local architect, Platt was an obvious choice, but he would also have had the particular recommendation of Lord Rockingham, for whom he acted as mason for most of his life. The recreational value of the lake was not overlooked: the earliest known view of it (Fig. 33) shows a small sailing boat, and Sir George had a boat house built on the west bank. But it also provided a head of water to power a corn mill, prominently positioned at its northern end, which may also be attributed to Platt. The mill was built of brick with prominent stone quoins in the slightly old-fashioned manner characteristic of his work. It has two storeys, a hipped roof behind an eaves parapet, and an octagonal lantern like a provincial town hall. Three bays face the lake; the central one breaks forward and is pedimented, and has an open arch for the water wheel. The cupola was removed as early as 1790, and the windows on the south side, facing the lake, were removed when the building was enlarged and converted into a saw mill in the 19th century. But the north façade survives, similar in style, although the fenestration may have been altered in the 19th century, giving a slightly unorthodox six bays (Fig. 34). The overflow from the lake was channelled through a cascade, which has been much altered.

Richard Lumley-Savile continued his uncle’s policy of improvement and tree planting; in 23 years he planted a further 491 acres (199ha) of woodland, combined with an extension of the open parkland to the south-east. The earliest Ordnance Survey map shows this as it was in 1885 (Fig. 35). The lake had acquired a more irregular outline, particularly at its south-east corner, and the shelter belt in the north-east had become the huge New Park Wood, cut through with straight rides converging on a rond point. To the north-west this wood was linked by the Sandland Bank Plantation to the wood east of the lake, and to the south it was linked to Kennel Wood. From
here the extended park stretched away to the south and east. One of the few known views of this park shows it from the east (Fig. 36). Most of it was converted into a golf course in the 20th century.

LATER HISTORY
When the Revd John Lumley-Savile succeeded his brother Richard as seventh earl of Scarbrough in 1832, he inherited the Scarbrough estates, but refused to give up Rufford as required in Sir George Savile’s will. A ‘mean, grasping and cruel man’, he spent little money on developing either of his estates. On his death in 1835 the peerage and both estates passed to his son, John.

In 1836 the eighth earl engaged the architects John Woodhead and William Hurst of Doncaster to make alterations and additions to the service buildings. But between 1837 and 1841 he engaged Anthony Salvin to carry out a major remodelling of the house in the Jacobean Revival style. Salvin’s alterations included the remodelling of the porch on the west front, the new bay window at the north end of the Long Gallery, the new staircase wing on the east front and a new cupola over the south front, replacing the old cupola visible in late 18th-century views (Figs 10 and 36). Internally Salvin, with the assistance of Frederick Crace, remodelled many of the rooms, including the brick ball, with its Jacobean-style chimneypiece, the Library, with its elaborate plaster ceiling, and the Drawing Room or Saloon, which they remodelled in an eclectic French Empire style. Salvin also restored the medieval vaulted rooms to the former west range of the abbey. These alterations, which also included work to Ley Fields and Wellow House, two houses on the estate, cost a total of £13,167 1s 1½d. The work was overseen by the Clerk of Works, Robert Wilkinson.

One of the eighth earl’s first actions on inheriting was to contest the will of Sir George Savile in a High Court action, which he eventually won, so that at the dawning of the Victorian age the estates of the Saviles and the Scarbroughs were legally combined. This joining of these estates was only short-lived, however, because the eighth earl died unmarried in 1856, and the Scarbrough estate passed to a Lumley cousin. Rufford passed to the eighth earl’s illegitimate son, Captain Henry Savile. On his death in 1887 it passed to another of the eighth earl’s illegitimate sons, Sir John Savile, then ambassador to Italy, who was created Lord Savile in 1888. The stables were remodelled for him about 1890 to the design of yet another Mr Birch, the architect John Birch.

The first Lord Savile died in 1896, and by special remainder his peerage was inherited by his nephew, John Lumley-Savile, who died in 1931. The house was closed up by his widow in 1932, and in 1938 her son’s trustees sold the house and its 18,000 acres (7,300ha) estate to the local property developer Sir Albert Ball. The nationalization of coal royalties in 1938 meant that the huge income produced from coal mining, developed on the estate since 1917, came to an end. The contents of the house were sold in a ten-day auction in October that year and much of the estate was auctioned off in the following month. The house and its park were purchased by Henry de Vere Clifton, another local developer, though almost immediately the house and grounds were requisitioned by the War Office. After the Second World War the former army huts were used by the Forestry Commission and the Civil Defence Corps occupied the stable block from 1950.

By this time the house had fallen into a poor state of repair and, although serious attempts were made to find a new use for it, the repair costs proved prohibitive. In 1952 the county council purchased it and the surrounding 120 acres (49ha) of garden and parkland, and, after further unsuccessful attempts to find a use for the buildings, demolition and archaeological investigation began in 1956. In 1959 the county council designated the surviving gardens and park as a country park, and in the intervening years it has been successfully developed into a popular recreational centre, with the ruined fragment of the abbey buildings, in the care of English Heritage, at its heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
I am grateful to Lord Savile, Nottingham University Archives and Nottinghamshire Archives Office for allowing me to reproduce their documents and illustrations. This article began life as a lecture on the gardens given at a one-day conference on 15 July 2007, organized by Sue Blackwell for the Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust. I would like to thank Paul Norton, the Project Officer for Interpretation at Rufford Abbey, for sharing his detailed knowledge of Rufford; RNalys Cooper, Sally Jeffery and Derek Adlem for their observations and advice; and Richard Heslings for his continued encouragement, assistance and editorial skills. I would particularly like to thank Professor Mark N Brown for sharing the results of his researches into the first marquess of Halifax.

NOTES
I am grateful to Mark N. Brown for bringing this information to my attention and for providing this transcription.

64 Colvin, op. cit., 851.

65 NAO, DD. SR 215/13/11.


67 Smith, Wiltshire, forthcoming.


69 Colvin, op. cit., 851.

70 Colvin, op. cit., 651.

71 Chaworth-Mracek, Devonshire MS, 4 box, 4. handle. 69, 55; 133, 6.

72 As also the Crown of the Wall Brick. – The North and South Ends of the Arch in Sight to be of Warsop Stones, if they can be got large enough. As also the Crown of the Wall Brick. – The North and South Ends of the Arch in Sight to be of Warsop Stones, if they can be got large enough. As also the Crown of the Wall Brick. – The North and South Ends of the Arch in Sight to be of Warsop Stones, if they can be got large enough.

73 The Cypress garden which I have seen is another almost identical drawing, NAO, DD. SR 202/11A, entitled ‘Plan of Bridge over the Great Canal at Rufford’. My thanks to Michael Brook for bringing this to my attention.

74 NAO, DD. SR 202/1 (left side). At first sight this drawing could just as easily be interpreted as a projecting stage rather than an amphitheatre, but the shading on the upper sections definitely indicates that the shapes of the top on the back represents a different stage. The reference to ‘Great Pier’ might refer to a series of smaller, more shallow stages. This area might have been on the west side of the Nottingham to Doncaster road, and there is definitely no sign of this or any other development in the next century. (See Mary Hiscock, ‘Dotted Line expresses the Shape of the Bottom of the Canal, very shallow and an easy Slope for Six Feet from the Shore. – ...’). – The reference to ‘Great Pier’ might refer to a series of smaller, more shallow stages. This area might have been on the west side of the Nottingham to Doncaster road, and there is definitely no sign of this or any other development in the next century. (See Mary Hiscock, ‘Dotted Line expresses the Shape of the Bottom of the Canal, very shallow and an easy Slope for Six Feet from the Shore. – ...’)

80 Smith, op. cit., 651.


84 NAO, DD. SR 215/2/25 (left side). It may be noted, however, that the buttresses to this parapet are

85 NAO, DD. SR 215/2/25 (left side).

86 George Birch was paid £98 15s 0d. to start the task of redecorating the House in 1694. He had been recommended to Savile by John Hardman (Savile’s father-in-law) in 1692 and was also known to have painted his father’s house before his death. 17 Nov. 1694: self defence against criticism and Renny26 Nov. 1694: carpenters etc.

87 The necessary repairs were undertaken by personal communication from the late Sir Howard Colvin, who did not publish his findings before his death. 17 Nov. 1694: self defence against criticism and Renny26 Nov. 1694: carpenters etc.

88 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

89 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

90 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

91 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

92 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

93 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

94 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

95 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

96 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

97 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries

98 Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries