

HISTORY AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE LANDSCAPE

The Thames from Hampton to Kew has seen great changes in its landscape and human settlement patterns from prehistoric hunters to today's working communities. In its suburban relationship to London it has also changed considerably from an out-of-town retreat for royalty, courtiers and a cultural elite to a haven for commuters and weekend leisure.

The Geological Base

The London basin was formed some 70 million years ago when all Britain was covered by sea. London clay, which was to provide such good local building material, was inherited from this chalky mud. As a result of the great earth movements, at the time of the Alpine folding, the saucer-like structure of the London Basin was formed as a downfold between the chalk of the Chilterns to the north and the North Downs to the south, some 25 million years ago. But for the purpose of this study, the story begins only half a million years ago when the river carved out its present course. The Thames originally flowed through the Vale of St Albans, which became blocked by a great glacier, diverting the river in a southerly direction to its position today.

Around 300,000 BC, after a succession of cold and warm phases three terraces were formed at different levels where the ice sheets ended. The gravel terraces were in some places capped with 'brickearth' soil, a wind-borne deposit very like the loess of the Continent, which is found between Strawberry Hill and Marble Hill, in limited quantities on the opposite bank around Ham House, and at Isleworth and Brentford. Human occupation along the Thames is known at this time through hand-axes found, for instance, at Ham and Brentford. These all-purpose Stone Age tools, used for chopping up carcasses, slashing wood and cutting roots of edible plants, belonged to the hunter food-gatherers who had arrived from the warmer south of the Continent in pursuit of migratory herds. The excavated bones of the animals they hunted belong to successive warm and cold periods, indicating that at times there were elephants and hippopotami drinking or wallowing in the Thames, while in icy periods there were reindeer and mammoth in the area.

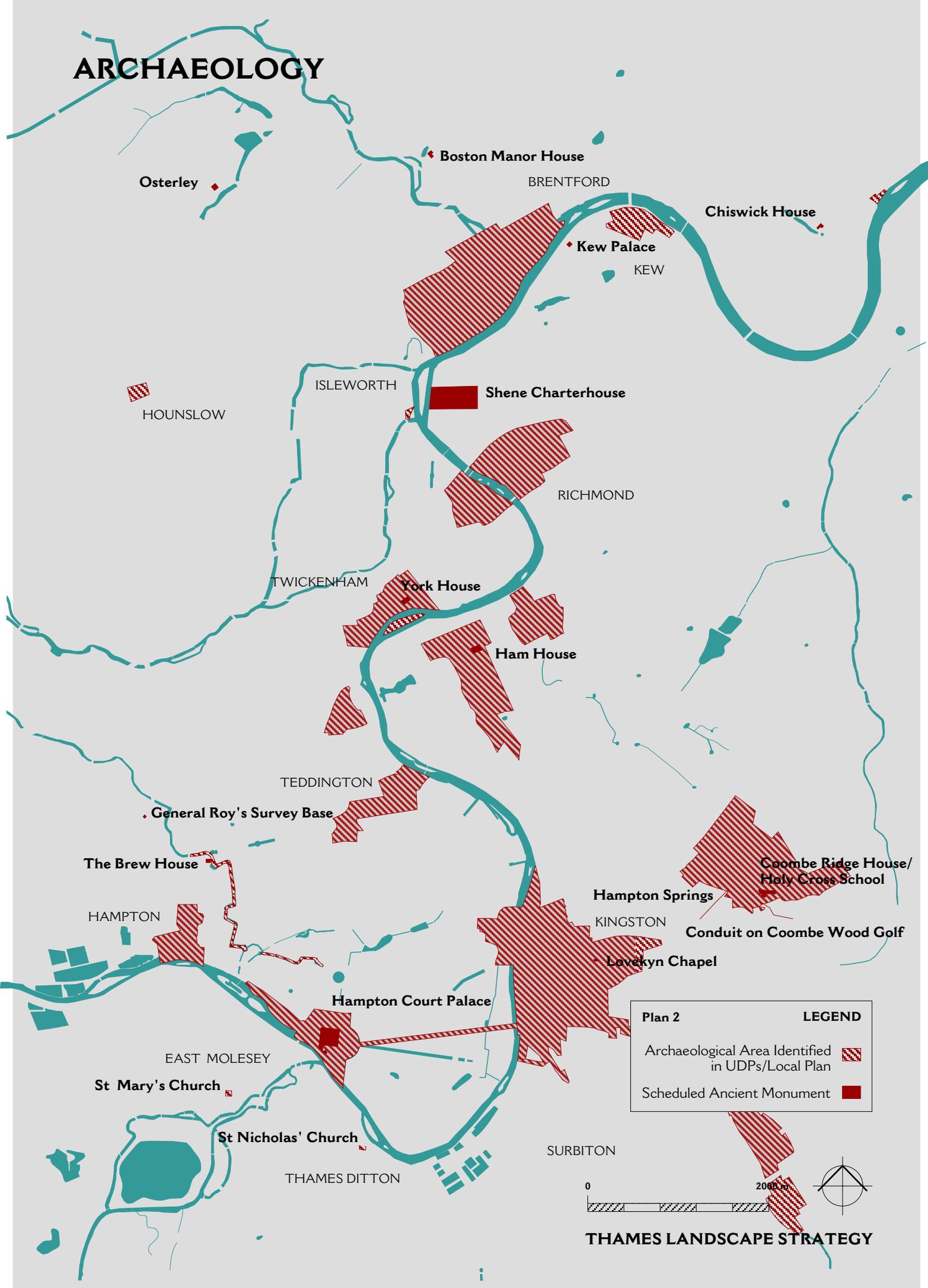
The fluctuations in the warm and cold periods lasted until about 100,000 BC, and each change affected the flow of the river. The extra water caused by a melt from a glacial period would increase the strength of the Thames, cutting a deeper channel. When the climate became warmer, the river would slow. As this process repeated itself, each previous floodplain was left as a terrace. The landscape gradually acquired the meanders of the '*fair-winding Thames*' which were to be so favoured by picturesque artists, landscape designers and, more practically, by the earlier farmer settlers.

Early Settlement

There was a gradual thaw from 13,000 BC and no further glacial periods. The sea levels rose and by 6,000 BC Britain was finally cut off from the Continent. The coastal regions flooded and people moved inland towards the area that was to become London. There was a changing relationship between man and the landscape as conditions became more suitable for permanent settlement, agriculture and the domestication of sheep and cattle. By 5,000 BC the tundra-like landscape changed and the plants and animals became much the same as today. There was easy access to water but the gravel was well-drained and the brickearth and accumulative alluvial deposits beside the Thames were easily workable for the early farmers, contrasting with the hinterland London clay. In the early settlement era there is evidence of pottery-making, and by 4,000 BC metal-working all through the area. There was a religious cult associated with the Thames and some Bronze Age artefacts recovered from the river are thought to be sacrificial offerings.

**'But I'd have you know that the waters
of mine
Were once a branch of the River Rhine
When hundreds of miles to the East I
went
And England was joined to the Continent.'**
Rudyard Kipling

ARCHAEOLOGY



Osterley

Boston Manor House

BRENTFORD

Chiswick House

Kew Palace

KEW

HOUNSLOW

ISLEWORTH

Shene Charterhouse

RICHMOND

TWICKENHAM

York House

Ham House

TEDDINGTON

General Roy's Survey Base

The Brew House

HAMPTON

Hampton Court Palace

EAST MOLESEY

St Mary's Church

St Nicholas' Church

THAMES DITTON

Hampton Springs

KINGSTON

Coombe Ridge House/
Holy Cross School

Conduit on Coombe Wood Golf

Lovekyn Chapel

SURBITON

Plan 2	LEGEND
Archaeological Area Identified in UDPs/Local Plan	
Scheduled Ancient Monument	



The Thames was always the obvious route for traders and colonisers linking Britain through the Rhine with Europe. The first arrivals in the re-colonisation, after the landbridge with Europe was broken, probably came from Northern France and Belgium about 4,000 BC. There was a greater range of settlements and increased population along the Thames valley about 1,000 BC, when bronze came into use. The use of iron is dated about 800 BC, when horse-riding was introduced and there was then greater evidence of warfare with hillforts being set up on high ground above the Thames valley. The last wave of immigration, shortly before the coming of the Romans, was by the Belgae. Julius Caesar described them as a Celtic people who '*came to plunder and stayed to till*'. They seem to have been better organised than the indigenous Iron Age tribes and introduced coinage. Belgic coins from 125-50 BC have been dug up at Kew.

The tradition that Caesar crossed the Thames in the area in 54 BC is discussed in the Brentford Landscape Character Reach (Chapter 3-Reach 12). With Caesar we reach the period of written history and have a record of the names of the tribes and some of the Celtic chiefs he encountered. The early nomadic hunters had only been grouped in small bands but settled farming led to co-operative organisation and eventually to a tribal system. We know from Caesar that the Thames formed a natural tribal physical barrier and that when he crossed the ford from the southern bank he was confronted by Casivellaunus, who ruled what became Saxon Middlesex.

The Roman order finally collapsed in Middlesex in the early 5th century and 100 years later the East Saxons began to colonise the area. Situated between the East and the West Saxons, it became known as Middlesex, the earliest record of which is in a Saxon charter of 704. The Saxons developed territorial rather than tribal boundaries and introduced the idea of kingship and a feudal society. A chain of contiguous Anglo-Saxon kingships grew up which was the beginning of our shire system. It was the advanced administrative system instituted by the Saxons that made the Norman Domesday Survey possible in 1086.

In Saxon times the recognisable pattern of the village settlement of the area from Hampton to Kew emerges. Villages were not new to England, although most of those which existed in Romano-British times were probably deserted by the 5th century. The Saxon place names are of great interest as they often give the name of the village magnate, such as Tudda at Teddington, or the reason for their choice of site. The Thames itself, however, like all other important rivers vital to the topography, still bears the inherited Celtic name, thought to mean 'dark river'. The Brent or Brigantia signifies a 'holy river', to which is added the Saxon suffix 'ford' at Brentford, indicating its importance for settlement. The suffix 'ey' as in Molesey (Mull's island) comes from the Anglo-Saxon '*ieg*' or island and, as with the '*eyots*', or '*aits*', on the Thames, denotes land on a gravel terrace above the floods. The bends in the river, the Saxon '*hamms*' where the water meadows flooded and provided additional fertile alluvial deposits, were particularly favoured by farmers as at Petersham (*Peohtric's ham[m]*) and Twickenham (*Twicca's ham[m]*) between the Thames and the Crane. Kingston, as its name implies, has special royal connections. During the 10th century, West Saxon kings were crowned in Kingston until the Danish King Canute succeeded Edmund Ironside (despite the latter's short-lived victory at Brentford in 1016) and ended the West Saxon dynasty.

The Influence of the Crown on the Landscape

The mediaeval kings began a process of royal control of the landscape between Hampton and Kew, which is now vested in the Historic Royal Palaces, the Crown Commissioners, the Royal Parks and the Royal Botanic Gardens. In 1197 Richard I gave up his royal prerogative over the river in return for a cash subvention. Ever since the Thames from Staines downstream has been under the control of the City of London. The City's Committee for the Thames and Canal Navigation was succeeded in 1857 by the Thames Conservancy, now part of the National Rivers Authority. The Port of London Authority assumed responsibility for the tidal Thames in 1908.

**'Royal-towered
Thames'**
John Milton



The royal palace at Shene, and later the palace at Hampton Court, were refuges for pleasure and from plague, with easy river transport from Westminster. London was polluted and smoke-filled from the prevailing west winds. To escape the pollution, William III, who suffered from asthma, abandoned Greenwich palace to the east of London and moved up-wind to Hampton Court as his out-of-town palace. There was always ready provision for the court at the Thames-side palaces. Holinshed reported that the river at Richmond had such a supply of fish in Tudor times that there was *'no river in Europe able to exceed it'* with salmon, shrimp, flounder, gudgeon, dace, lamprey and roach. Not only were the fish plentiful but the royal larder could also be supplied with venison from the hunting grounds adjacent to the palaces.

The greatest amount of land under royal control was that reserved for hunting. The local populace was not necessarily excluded from the royal open chase hunting grounds but was subject to the Forest Law imposed by the Normans. Parks surmounted with pales were enclosed for more ready-to-hand sport and to supply the royal larder. Feudal barons and bishops could obtain licences to empark for their own convenience. These parks multiplied in the 12th century with the introduction of fallow deer which were easier to keep in a confined space than the native species. The parks of mediaeval kings connected with Shene palace are described in the Landscape Character Reach relating to the Old Deer Park (Chapter 3 - Reach 10).

But for his death in 1547, Henry VIII might have subjected the whole of Surrey to forest law. The amalgamation of manors into the honour of Hampton Court was largely to serve his passion for hunting and to extend to his great new Nonsuch Palace. By the end of Henry's reign, the honour comprised vast areas of Surrey and Middlesex, scattered with hunting lodges where the King might expect entertainment. In London there were the great royal parks extending from Whitehall to Hampstead Heath for the chase, but after Henry VIII's death, Hyde Park, at the centre of his sport, became a place of assembly with parade grounds and horse racing. The ladies of the Stuart court at St James's palace tamed the deer in its park and spoiled the sport, and the monarchs became dependent on Greenwich and Richmond palaces for their nearest real hunting grounds.

Charles I, according to Clarendon, was *'excessively affected to hunting and the sports of the field'* and found his father's old park at Richmond palace inadequate. In 1637 he made a new park up the hill of about 2,500 acres surrounded by 8 miles of brick wall. The Park included a large part of the commons of Richmond, Petersham, Ham, Kingston, Putney, Roehampton and Mortlake as well as private farms and some common fields. After much protest, a number of gates were made into the park for the exercise of local common rights.

Charles I's great new Richmond Park was not sold after his execution. Instead the Commonwealth government gave the Park to the city of London as an act of favour, in return for their support during the Civil War, and it was returned to Charles II at the Restoration. Lawrence Hyde, Earl of Rochester, was appointed Park Ranger in 1683 and obtained a lease of over 50 acres of the park, rebuilding Petersham lodge as a splendid mansion which he called *'New Park'*. It was probably Queen Anne's royal gardener, Henry Wise, who laid out a remarkable formal forest garden of walks and vistas on the park hillside. Hyde's *'New Park'* made a great contrast with the natural setting of the rest of the royal park, which Charles I had created as a traditional mediaeval deer park.

Gervase Markham described how the needs of the huntsman contributed to the beauty of such a deer park, where the tall trees on the brow of the hill, which are *'commonly called the views or discoveries of parks'*, contrasted in the landscape with the *'lawndes'* or grazing grounds and the valleys, which were *'coverts of places of leave for wild beasts'*. The central London royal parks, Greenwich and Hampton Court were all redesigned as formal or landscaped parks but Richmond, having remained in the main a natural deer park, is now not only a remarkable green lung and recreational space for south London but a haven for wildlife. Pembroke Lodge, a former molekeeper's house, was enlarged for the Countess of Pembroke into an elegant lodge by Sir John Soane, and later became the home of the Russell family. It is now a popular public restaurant with superb views over the Thames.



Hampton Court Palace



Richmond Palace



Kew Palace

ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS

William Chambers
Robert Adam

William Kent

John Barnard
James Paine
Sir John Barry

BRENTFORD

KEW

Inigo Jones
Lancelot Brown
Robert Adam
Charles Fowler
Sauthier
James Paine
Robert Mylne

William Chambers
William Kent
James Wyatt
John Nash
Decimus Burton
Richard Turner
Jeffrey Wyattville
William Nesfield
Gordon Wilson

HOUNSLOW

ISLEWORTH

Charles Bridgeman
William Chambers
William Kent
Lancelot Brown

Robert Taylor
Salomon de Caux
Frank Matcham

RICHMOND

Robert Adam

Alfred Dryland
Maxwell Ayrton

Inigo Jones
Christopher Wren

Quinlan Terry
Lewis Vulliamy
Manning Clamp

James Gibbs
Roger Morris
William Chambers
Humphry Repton

Batty Langley

James Paine
JMW Turner

Robert Mylne
Henry Laxton
Gilbert Scott

Colen Campbell
Roger Morris
Henry Herbert
Alexander Pope

John Giles
Robert Mylne
William Chambers
John Soane

TWICKENHAM

John James
James Gibbs

Charles Bridgeman

EM Barry
Edwin Cooper
James Wyatt

Alexander Pope
James Gibbs

Eric Lyons

Matthew Banckes
Lord Burlington
John Soane

Roger Morris
Stephen Wright
James Wyatt
Humphry Repton

Horace Walpole
Richard Bentley
William Robinson
John Chute
Thomas Pitt
Robert Adam
James Essex

James Gibbs
Charles Bridgeman

Gilbert Scott

William Kent

TEDDINGTON

Humphry Repton
John Nash

HAMPTON

Robert Adam
Lancelot Brown

Christopher Wren
George London
Henry Wise
Thomas Wright

KINGSTON

Ahrends, Burton, Koralek

André Mollet
Christopher Wren
William Talman
Daniel Marot
George London
Jean Tijou
Henry Wise
William Kent
Charles Bridgeman
Lancelot Brown
Ernest Law

Edwin Lutyens

EAST MOLESEY

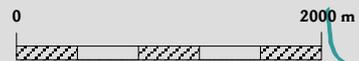
Plan 3 **LEGEND**

Projects of Architects and Designers

Residences of Architects and Designers

THAMES DITTON

SURBITON



The stretch of the Thames between Hampton and Kew, with its royal and noble patrons, is remarkable for the range and outstanding quality of its architecture – the Tudor and Wren palace of Hampton Court; the great castellated Syon House for Protector Somerset; the 17th-century Ham, home of Lauderdale, Charles II's most powerful minister; the gem of a Palladian villa at Marble Hill for George II's mistress; Horace Walpole's unique fantasy of Strawberry Hill; and the Princess Augusta's pagoda at Kew.

The effect of royal patronage on art and architecture is well appreciated but the Crown's influence on landscape design, although seldom celebrated, is equally important. Throughout the 17th century the best garden designers were brought over from Europe: Salomon de Caus to Richmond Palace by Henry Prince of Wales (James I's eldest son); Mollet to Hampton Court by Charles II; and Daniel Marot for the later baroque layout there by William III. In a reverse trend, after the 18th century our own English landscape gardening, patronised by the Crown and practised by Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, Capability Brown and William Chambers, was emulated all over Europe. Many of the most influential of their designs were laid out along this 11 mile stretch of the Thames. Queen Caroline, best remembered for the Serpentine in Hyde Park, claimed that it was she herself who introduced the landscape style, *'helping nature, not losing it in art'*, as she described it.

The Villa Landscape

The concept of the Thames villa as a classical retreat for the cultivated man from court and city emerged in the second decade of the 18th century. Lord Burlington led the way with his ideas for Chiswick, inspired by Palladio's version of a villa of the ancients. Pope, who provided the classical literary background to Burlington's architectural connoisseurship, moved into a Twickenham riverside house in 1719. He adapted the house as a Palladian villa, seeking Burlington's approval at every stage. Lord Pembroke headed the committee of taste for Marble Hill, the perfect new-built textbook Palladian villa for Henrietta Howard.

Marble Hill had the advantage over Chiswick of the ideal situation advocated by Palladio for a villa, *'delicious as can be desired, being situated on a hillock of most easy ascent, at the foot of which runs a navigable river'*. It was this *'animated prospect'* of the Thames, with laden barges and colourful pleasure craft, which delighted riverside residents from Hampton to Kew, particularly Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill. Garden buildings overlooking the river added to this pleasure. Garrick relaxed in his Thames-side Shakespeare temple; King William dined in his riverside banqueting house at Hampton Court; Pope wrote in his grotto; and John Gay composed in his Petersham summerhouse. At Syon an elegant pavilion-cum-boathouse looks out onto and adorns the river.

Many of the families were related or knew each other at court and it was a common sight to see noble families from neighbouring Petersham houses, the Dysarts, the Boyles and the Queensberrys, walking arm in arm along the river walks to Ham, where there was a riverside pavilion for refreshment.

Thames viewing mounts were also popular and they could be made readily from the spoil and changes of levels caused by sand and gravel extraction. Batty Langley made a renowned spiral mount out of a sand pit at Twickenham Park. Added to this, the high water-table made lakes of the pits (left from extracting gravels for terraces and garden paths) and these were used to advantage at Hampton Court House and Kew Gardens. The later massive quarrying for commercial ballast was to present a greater problem for the environment.



Horace Walpole's Villa at Strawberry Hill

**'We saw so many woods and princely bowers,
Sweet fields, brave palaces, and stately towers;
So many gardens drest with curious care,
That Thames with royal Tiber may compare;
Downers as plenty as flounders inhabit
an around'**
Horace Walpole



Lord Burlington's Villa at Chiswick

'What is there to make so much of in the Thames? I am quite weary of it; there it goes flow, flow, flow, always the same'
Duke of Queensberry

'Thank God! The Thames is in between me and the Duchess of Queensberry'
Horace Walpole



Henrietta Howard's Villa at Marble Hill

The People's Landscape

Soon after her accession Queen Victoria opened Hampton Court and Bushy Park to the public, and it immediately became a favourite excursion from London, Chestnut Sunday in Bushy Park in mid-May being an event which attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors. The fallow deer under the trees, believed to be descended from those of Henry VIII's time, were particularly popular with children. The colourful bedding displays along the Broad Walk, the Great Vine, planted 1769, and the famous maze never failed to delight. The London royal parks had been opened to the public for some time but in 1838 at Hampton Court Palace the general public were able to walk in royal gardens, and, as in *Three Men in a Boat* (1899), get lost in the royal maze.

Kew Gardens, which became the Royal Botanic Gardens, were also opened to the public by Queen Victoria in 1841. Unlike Hampton Court the gardens were not solely for pleasure but were destined to become a scientific institution. Sir William Hooker, the first Director, allowed the public in every afternoon, but finally in 1916 the 'in for a penny' charge was initiated. Even though charges have had to rise, Kew Gardens, as well as being pre-eminent for research, is still one of the most popular London excursions.

Marble Hill, now in the care of English Heritage, unexpectedly came into public ownership at the beginning of this century, through local initiative. The threatened development on the site, which would have ruined the famous view from Richmond Hill, started a local 'indignation' campaign, which ended in victory by Act of Parliament. This was the first time that public concern had saved a view as such, although public open space issues, notably Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest in 1871, had already been successfully contested. Sewers and roads had already been constructed when an action committee was set up. The committee consisted of all the local councils, the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society, the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, the Kyrle Society formed by Octavia Hill and her sister, the National Trust and the Thames Preservation League. Two eminent painters, Sir William Richmond and Sir EJ Poynter, President of the Royal Academy, also served on the committee.

'*The Richmond Hill (Preservation of View) Bill*' received royal assent in 1902 as '*The Richmond, Petersham and Ham Open Spaces Act*'. The original concern to save Marble Hill having been extended to the Surrey side of the Thames, 39 acres of Petersham Meadows and a riverside promenade were vested in the Richmond Corporation for preservation after negotiation with the Dysart estates at Ham. Marble Hill was bought by various local authorities and by public subscription and vested in London County Council, the chief contributor. Marble Hill and Turner's Arcadian view from Richmond Hill were saved for posterity.

The Ham Walks, which had come under the control of Richmond Council by the Act, had always been a favourite promenade. Cesar de Saussure, on a visit in 1726, reported that Ham had '*such fine walks and avenues of trees as to attract all the grand company from Richmond*'. The tree-lined paths, planted by the Lauderdale, are now being considered for re-instatement by the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames. When James Thomson, who lived at Richmond, asked his lady friend, '*Which way, Amanda, shall we bend our course?*' in *The Seasons*, her choice was almost certainly along Ham's '*embowering walks*'. A particular enjoyment and convenience of this riverside walk came from the separation of the bargeway and the walkway, so that the elegant nature seekers need not contend with bargemen and tow ropes on their path.

Horse-drawn barges disappeared with the transfer of freight to the railways and the towpaths were left to walkers and anglers with only sailing craft, pleasure steamers, rowing boats and the occasional passing motor barge on the river. The rural Thames came to be seen to be ideal for long-distance walking and eventually a scheme, the Thames Path, was envisaged for opening up the river from its source to London by negotiating new public rights of way, not covered by the towpath, which in the days of the ferries for man and beast, frequently changed sides of the river. After new links and footbridges have been made, the Countryside Commission will open the Thames Path National Trail in 1996 along Evelyn's '*sweetest river in the world*'.



Princess of Wales' Conservatory at Kew



The view from Richmond Hill, protected by the 1902 Act

'It was evening, the sun was just shedding his last parting rays on the valley; but such an evening, and such a valley! O, it is impossible I should ever forget them. The Terrace at Richmond assuredly affords one of the finest prospects in the world. Whatever is charming in nature, or pleasing in art is to be seen here.'

Goethe's friend, Pastor Moritz

The Thames as inspiration

This area has attracted poets, painters, actors and musicians since at least the 16th century. Some of the most influential figures in the history of the Landscape Movement are associated with this part of the Thames; notably Alexander Pope, James Thomson, JMW Turner and Horace Walpole. With the Thames as inspiration, the new prospect and nature poetry, in the pastoral tradition, fused with gardening to create what is acknowledged as the country's greatest contribution to European culture: the naturalised landscape garden. Voltaire, who visited Pope in 1726, went home, a visitor reported, to cultivate his own garden 'in the English Taste. There, says he, is the Thames - and there is Richmond Hills - no French Gewgaws - All is Nature'.

The first tourists and topographical artists from Europe came, not to admire the scenic beauties of the Thames, but to visit the royal palaces. Anthonis van Wyngaerde has left us splendid topographical drawings of Hampton Court and Richmond Palaces in the 16th century²⁰. John Macky claimed that his *Journey Through England* in 1714, later published in French, was the first systematic guide for travellers. He described Ham, New Park and the 'curious seats' and fine new gardens that had appeared along the banks of the Thames, particularly in the Twickenham area.

Defoe, writing in his *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* in 1724, also praised Hampton Court, Richmond and the elegant riverside houses in some detail, but he was the first commentator to see the Thames in terms of a collective landscape: 'But I find none has spoken of what I call the distant glory of all these buildings. There is a beauty of these things at a distance, taking them en passant, and in perspective, which few people value, and fewer understand; and yet here they are more truly great, than in all their private beauties whatsoever.'

Jan Siberechts, Leonard Knyff and Antonio Joli showed the beauties of such a representation of the Thames in their prospect views from Richmond Hill. The view has continued to inspire artists from Turner to Kokoshka and amateur painters and photographers in their droves.

In the mid-18th century two painters who lived in the locality, Augustin Heckel and Samuel Scott, painted well-known 'en passant' scenes from the river bank. It is thanks to them that we can appreciate, not only the details of the settings of Pope's villa and Marble Hill, but much about the working village scenes, which made their own picturesque contribution to the landscape. Scott was a marine painter, the English follower of Canaletto, and painted with relish not only details of the rigging and paraphernalia of the boats, but also the brickwork chimneys, timber yards, inn signs and eel traps. Heckel, as well as giving the wide view of the landscape, reveals much about the character of local industry: the little pugmill on Richmond hill to blend the London clay dug out from the hillside, the smoke from the brick kilns and the fishing weirs.

The diversity of the landscape is described in the landscape character reaches in Chapter 3. Even in the 18th century the aristocratic world of wit and fashion expected to have commercial neighbours who would not have been tolerated on country estates. There was a brick and tile manufactory in the Petersham meadows close to the much admired New Park garden; the stench of a tannery wafted into Pope's grotto; and Walpole had some of his precious stained glass windows blown out by a nearby gunpowder mill. Richard Wilson sought out more Arcadian Claudian scenes of the Thames to paint at Marble Hill and Syon.

The cult of perceiving beauty in landscape, nurtured on the Thames by the poets Pope and Thomson, was joined at the end of the century by a new mode of vision, that of viewing scenery with an eye for judging 'its capability of being made into pictures'. William Gilpin, the pioneer of the Picturesque, made a *Thames Tour* searching for such effects as early as 1764. He viewed the banks of the river from a boat noting anything that 'might be brought within a picturesque survey', while his brother Sawrey made sketches. Gilpin's *Tour* remains in manuscript but there were many Thames Tours published based on his theory of picturesque observation. Of these Boydell's *History of the River Thames*, published in 1794 with text by William Combe and aquatints by Joseph Farington, is undoubtedly

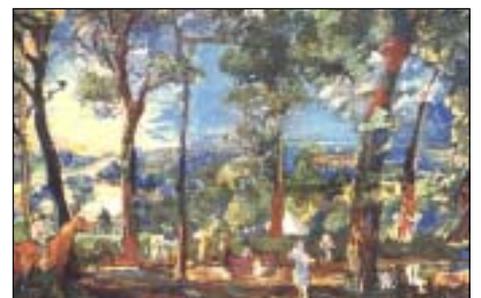
**'The Bard retires, and on the Bank of Thames
Erects his flag of triumph; wild it waves
In verdant splendor, and beholds, and hails
The King of Rivers, as he rolls along'**
William Mason



View from Richmond Hill - Rowlandson 1803

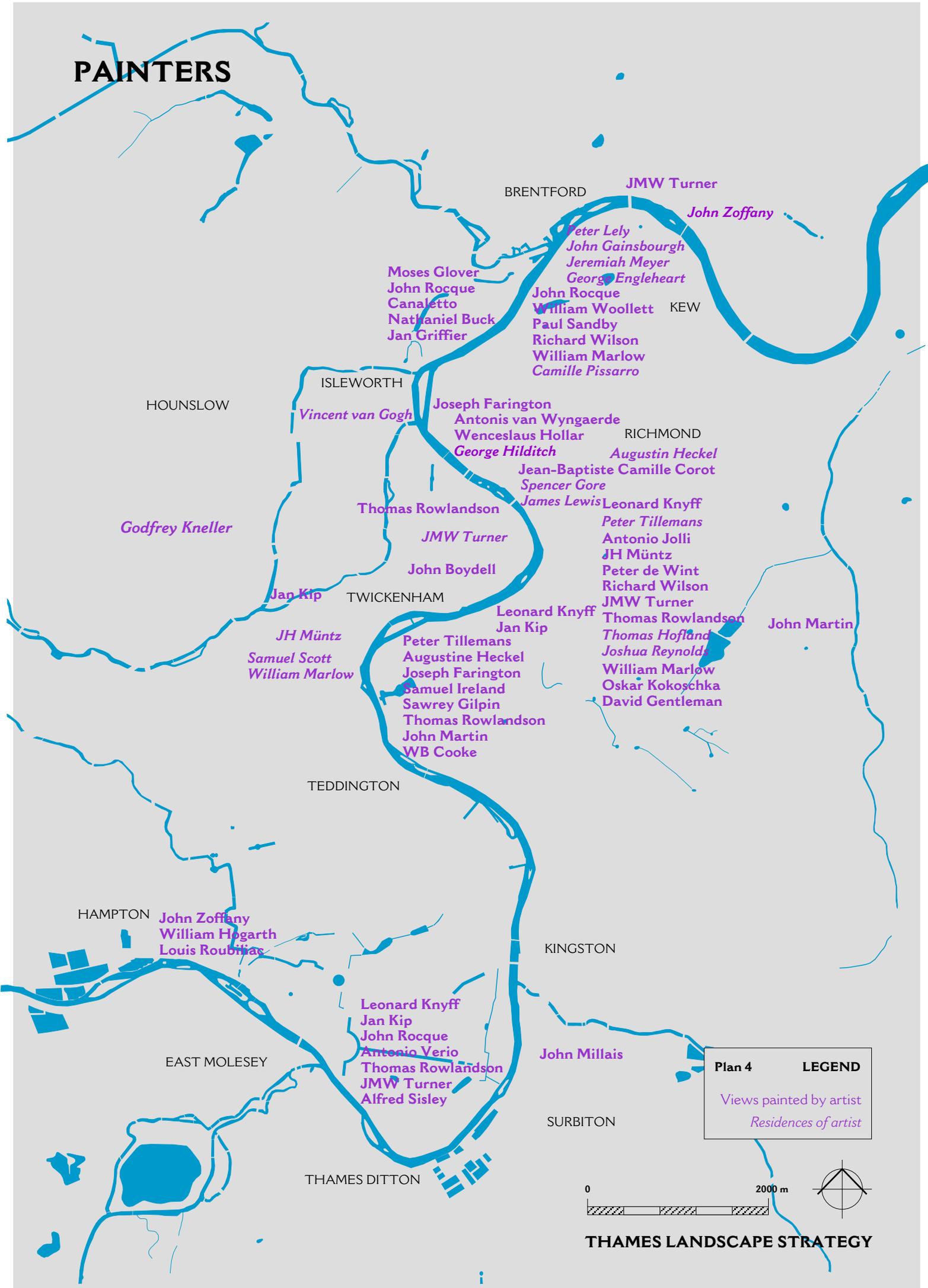


View from Richmond Hill - Turner 1819



View from Richmond Hill - Kokoshka 1962

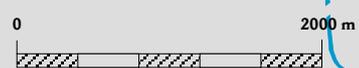
PAINTERS



Plan 4 **LEGEND**

Views painted by artist

Residences of artist



the most magnificent. The book was dedicated to Horace Walpole, a great patron of the Picturesque, and the picturesque Thames in particular.

JMW Turner was also devoted to the Thames, having lived at Brentford, Isleworth and Twickenham at different times in his life, and he painted many views of river scenes from Hampton to Kew. His Isleworth sketch books show an intimate knowledge of the working life of the river and its backwaters, but it is his idealised view of Thomson's 'matchless Vale of Thames' from Richmond Hill, which is his picturesque eulogy of the area. The impressionist painter, Alfred Sisley, who spent some time at Molesey in the 1870s, captured the carnival atmosphere of the happy crowds at Hampton Court, the Thames regattas, picnics, boaters, blazers, flags and swans. It is always the unifying Thames, in all its moods and aspects, which is at the heart of artistic inspiration and the Frenchman who said to Alexander Pope at Twickenham '*All this is very fine, but take away the river and it is good for nothing*', did indeed speak with truth.

**'I have seen the Mississippi.
That is muddy water.
I have seen the Saint Lawrence.
That is crystal water.
But the Thames is liquid history.'**
John Burns



Detail of the Thames near Isleworth - JMW Turner 1805