

Broadwater Lake – a History.

Broadwater Lake was created in the 1750s and 60s, part of a designed landscape which followed the move away from the formal 'French style' to the new free 'English style' of gardens inspired by the arcadian scenes in the paintings of Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin.



Claude Lorrain 'The Roman Campagna'. c.1639 The Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York.

The 18th century Oatlands estate emerged from the lands on which had stood **the lost Palace of Oatlands**, part of King Henry VIII's necklace of royal houses which stretched along the Thames from Greenwich to Windsor. Henry conceived Oatlands as a palace for his Queen, briefly Anne of Cleves in **1540** then Catherine Howard whom he married there secretly in the same year, and ultimately Katherine Parr. The King was based at Hampton Court but visited Oatlands principally to enjoy the sport throughout the vast hunting grounds surrounding the two palaces.



Oatlands Palace in Tudor Times c. 1550. Source: Elmbridge Museum. elmbridgemuseum.org.uk

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Later James I's Queen, Anne of Denmark, (1603 – 1619) and Charles I's Queen, Henrietta Maria, (1625 -1647) both invested time and money modernising this favourite palace and expanding its gardens.



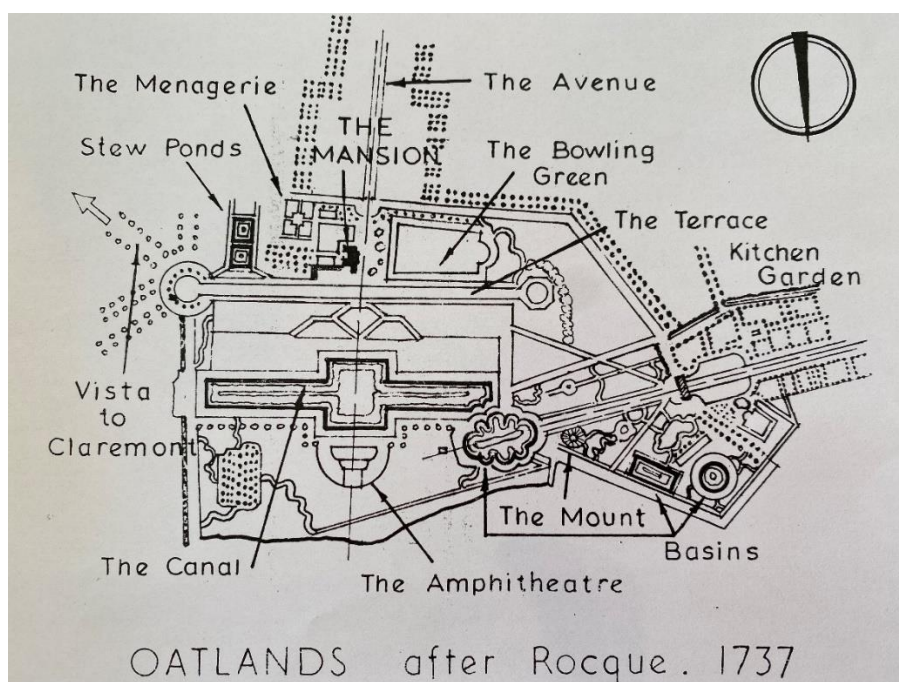
Oatlands Palace site location. 'Excavations at Oatlands Palace' Rob Poulton. 2010

Queen Anne of Denmark at Oatlands Paul van Somer. 1617. RCT. Hampton Court

During the Commonwealth, (1649 – 1660) along with many other royal houses, Oatlands was sold off and demolished to recoup the expenses of the Civil War. Much of the building materials were used to form locks and bridges for **the new Wey Navigation in the 1650s**.

Trees were cut down to build ships and the park became 'a barren place'.

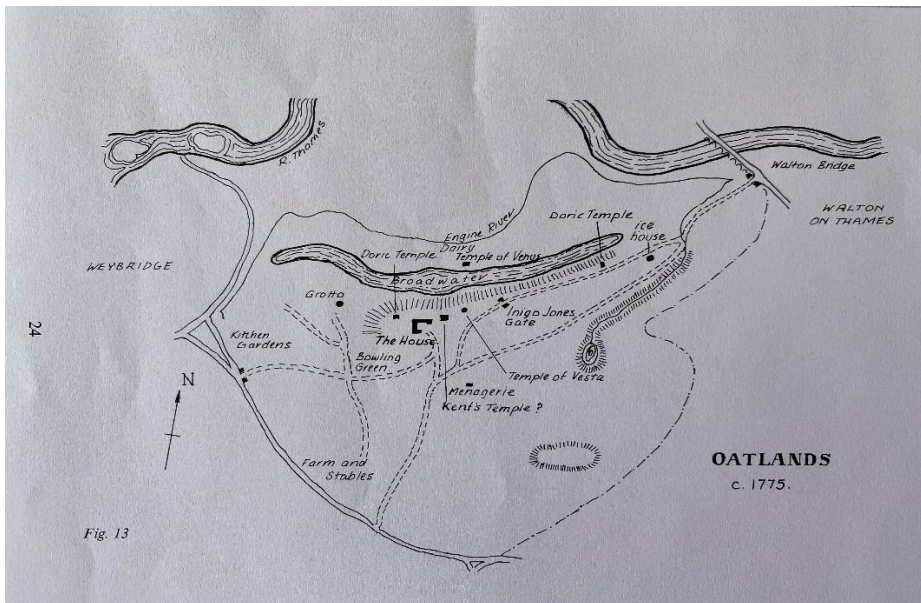
In 1716, after a period of uncertainty and neglect, Oatlands was left to **Henry Pelham Clinton, 7th Earl of Lincoln** who had a new house built in the fashionable Palladian style about a ¼ mile east of where Oatlands Palace had stood. He remodelled the estate and laid out formal gardens. The backbone of the landscape design was a Terrace more than half a mile in length with the House and entrance avenue to the south. The land to the north descended from the Terrace to the Thames. A series of 'a la mode' features including a cruciform canal, an amphitheatre, a bowling green and a menagerie punctuated the symmetrical design.



This plan, dated 1737, shows the layout of the landscape garden designed by the 7th Earl c. 1719. Source: Elmbridge Museum

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Henry Pelham Clinton (1720 – 94), 9th Earl of Lincoln inherited the Estate in 1730. From **the 1740s** onwards he decided to redesign the garden in the new free landscape style. The drawing below shows the completed layout c. 1775.



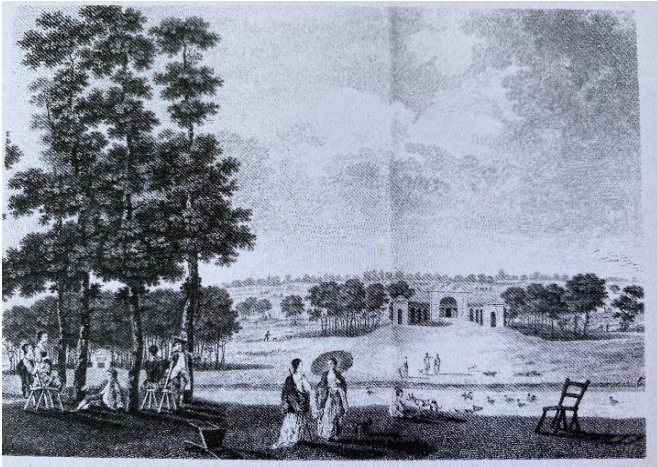
Map of Oatlands House and Landscaped Park c. 1775. Source: Elmbridge Museum

From the 1750s – 1780s as the Landscape developed, prints were published to show off the picturesque additions. The Terrace remained a significant feature from which to survey the panoramic views. It was grassed and broken up by the occasional tree. From the Terrace the grass sloped gently down to the reformed canal, now a natural looking lake – **the Broad Water**. Three quarters of a mile in length it was fed by springs. The eastern end was skilfully designed to create the illusion that it ran under Walton Bridge. (Trees and houses now obscure that vista!).



Images 1 – 5. 'Fairest Scenes: Five Great Surrey Gardens'. Michael Symes. 1988
1. The Lake and Terrace 1759.

4.



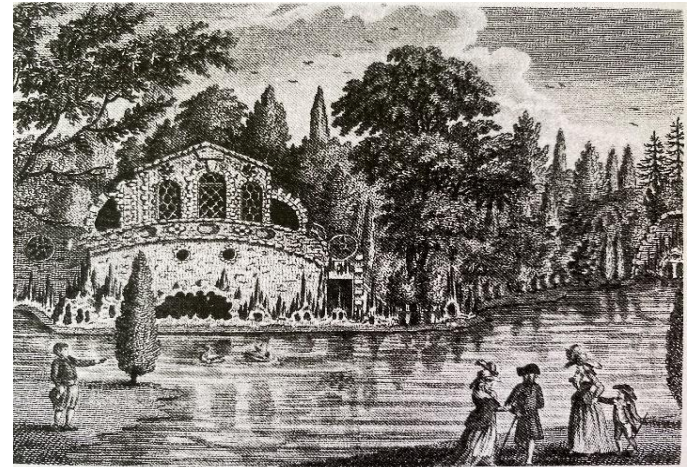
2. The Temple of Venus c. 1760 (built 1757 – 9)



3. The Lake from the Terrace c. 1760



4. The Temple of Vesta 1822 (built 1771 – 5)



5. The Grotto c. 1780 (built 1762-7; 1774 – 8)

In 1788 The 9th Earl of Lincoln, now also 2nd Duke of Newcastle, sold the Estate to **Frederick, Duke of York**. The Duke spent most of his time in London but his Duchess lived at Oatlands in seclusion enjoying her exotic menagerie and her dogs.

In 1794 a wing of Oatlands House burnt down. The Duke of York decided to rebuild it in the now fashionable Gothic style with crenellations, turrets and gables.



A print of Oatlands House. c.1810. The seat of the Duke of York. 'Weybridge Past'. Neil White 1999.

5.

In 1824 the Duke of York sold the Estate to Regency dandy Edward Hughes Ball Hughes. After this reckless gambler fled to France to escape his debtors it was leased for a short time to Lord Egerton MP.

In 1846 the Estate was finally divided into 64 lots and sold. Oatlands House was sold with 97 acres of land.

In 1850s it was sold to the London and South Western Railway Company who converted it into a hotel where many distinguished guests came to stay. The carriageway running through the park was converted into a public road called Oatlands Drive and large villas were constructed alongside.

During the Second World War Oatlands Hotel was requisitioned as a hospital for New Zealand troops. They used the Grotto for target practice. **In 1948** The Grotto was demolished by the Ministry of Works when it was considered unsafe.

The names of the large mansions built along the south side of Broadwater Lake were often kept when the grand houses were demolished in the late 20th and early 21st century to be replaced by new developments of flats and terraced houses.



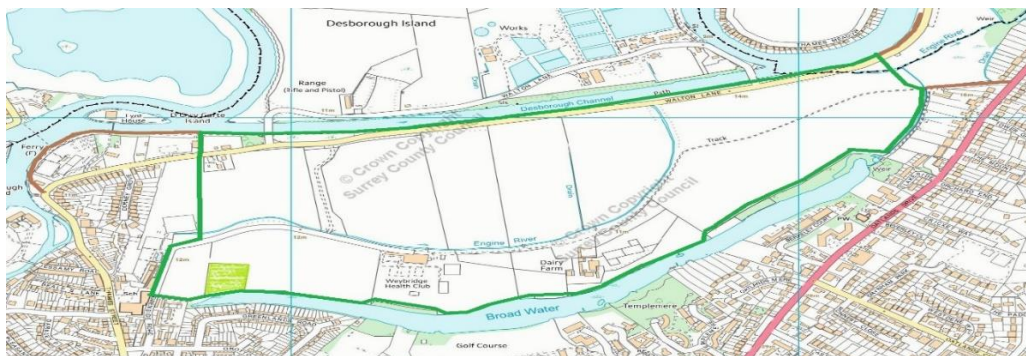
Portmore Park & District Residents Association



Elmbridge Liberal Democrats

By the beginning of the 21st century it was clear that Broadwater Lake needed urgent maintenance and conservation. Over 15 years Lesley Birch initiated and led a campaign to improve the condition of the Lake.

The Broadwater Conservation Society was formed and eventually Elmbridge and Surrey Councils agreed to fund a public path on the north side of the Lake.



Broadwater Lake Walk Map. Weybridge Society

In 2018 the Broadwater Path was opened between Greside Road and Cowey Sale giving residents of Weybridge and Walton on Thames along with visitors to the area access to a tranquil nature walk between the two towns.

The path was essential for the future of the Lake itself. Without public access the lake would not qualify for the public funding needed to stop it silting up. Without dredging the lake silts up and becomes marshland, growing rushes and self-seeded trees. In the years that residents pressed for the path, silting got worse particularly at the western Greenlands Road end. The middle length was also very badly affected until residents raised funds to dredge this section.

The Broadwater Conservation Society is now seeking public funding from national sources and wider local support so that this beautiful and historic man-made stretch of water can be saved.

