

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
THE ISLEWORTH FERRY GATE
AND THE ARCADIAN LANDSCAPE
(SYON VISTA LAWN, THE QUEEN'S COTTAGE
GROUNDS & SYON PARK)



HISTORIC ANALYSIS

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report was prompted by proposals in 2020 to build tall residential blocks at Gillette Corner on elevated land by the A4, one mile north-west of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (a World Heritage Site, WHS) and 0.25 miles from Syon Park (a major part of the WHS Buffer Zone and a key part of the historic setting).¹ Both sites are included at Grade I on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, indicating international significance. The necklace of the C18 Arcadian Thames flowing between Kew Bridge and Hampton Court has been creditably identified as a potential WHS for its worldwide influence, and this section of the river forms one of the jewels in that necklace.² Figures 1-3 show the WHS and buffer zone boundaries as well as marking key features addressed below (Figure 2).

The proposals affect an area on the riverside boundary of the WHS, and also the Syon Park setting which is addressed in this historic survey and analysis. Within the WHS the area covered here runs south from the Syon Vista lawn into the Queen's Cottage grounds, at the heart of which is the Isleworth Ferry Gate. Together this whole area epitomises the character of the Arcadian Thames, along a reach little altered since the late C18. The study area focusses on the environs of the Isleworth Ferry Gate. The history of the gateway and that of its Arcadian and botanic garden environs and significance have been poorly understood (except possibly formerly by the late Kew historian, Ray Desmond) and have never it seems been fully articulated.

This report, although not exhaustive, helps to fill that gap in understanding of the area. Documents relating to the construction of the gate c.1870-72 have identified a case study in the appreciation of and great weight given to the sensitivity of the C18 Arcadian character area in the design and siting of the gate, an approach which is still just as relevant today. This investigation enhances the understanding of this area, the manner in which it has been perceived since the C18 and the considerable efforts made to preserve the seminal Arcadian character.

1.2 THE AUTHOR

Sarah Rutherford, Dip. Hort. (Kew), M.A., Ph.D., is an historic environment consultant specializing in designed landscapes. She worked for English Heritage 1996-2003, as Historic Parks and Gardens

¹ P/2020/3099 & P/2020/3100 - Full planning application for the demolition of existing building and car park and erection of buildings to provide 473 residential units, a replacement retail foodstore with additional commercial, business and service space, and a flexible community space, and ancillary plant, access, servicing and car parking (400 customer spaces and 105 residential spaces), landscaping and associated works. Homebase Ltd, Syon Lane, Isleworth TW7 5QE

² E.g. in the Thames Landscape Strategy and GLA All London Green Grid SPG Chapter 5 and Area Framework 9 Arcadian Thames for GGA9 in which it is a stated aim to work towards achieving World Heritage Status for the Arcadian Thames.

Inspector and then as Head of the *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England*. Her MA in landscape conservation from York University is supplemented by a Ph.D. based on pioneering research into the landscapes of Victorian and Edwardian lunatic asylums. As a consultant since 2003 Sarah has prepared conservation plans and other appraisals for a range of historic landscapes and buildings. She is the author of several books including on Humphry Repton and Capability Brown. This report has been prepared to help clarify the significances of this area of the WHS and its setting.

2 THE STUDY AREA: THE ENVIRONS OF THE ISLEWORTH FERRY GATE

2.1 DEFINING THE AREA

The study area is broadly that part of the Kew WHS which will be most affected by the proposals at Gillette Corner (see Figure 1) and focusses on the Isleworth Ferry Gate. This Grade II Listed former public gateway operated for over 100 years (1872-c.1975) and comprises a feature embedded at the heart of this area of the C18 Arcadian Kew pleasure grounds. As a generally enigmatic feature, the understanding of the gateway formed a starting point for understanding the manner in which the whole area was treated, as it has been little altered since creation in the 1870s when the Arcadian character was still understood, highly valued and deliberately preserved.

The study area falls into two of the Character Zones identified in Section 2 the Kew WHS Management Plan 2020-25 (2019): the north section is in No. 7, the Syon Vista Zone, and the southern section is in No. 6, The South-Western Zone. The Isleworth Ferry Gate and the path leading into the gardens from it form the boundary between these zones. Beyond Kew areas of the buffer zone and setting to the west assessed include the tow path, River Thames and Syon Park and Mansion.

2.2 SOURCES

Although it has been impossible to visit archival repositories during the preparation of this report (October 2020-February 2021), key material has been obtained with the kind efforts of staff of the Kew Library and Archive via digitised material and from internet research. Ray Desmond's seminal *History of ... Kew* (2nd edn) provides invaluable information about nearby features integral to its setting, including the ha-ha, tow path, Queen's Cottage grounds, Syon Vista, etc.³

The Kew Archive contains correspondence documenting the establishment of the Isleworth Ferry gate in a copy letter book with relevant entries between May 1870 and February 1872, shortly after

³ Further evidence may be found in the structure itself (e.g. maker's mark, date, etc), in the Kew Library and Archive (e.g. Annual Reports, accounts), and in the Office of Works files at National Archive (identified below).

the gate was opened ('Kew Gates 1847-1913' - 1 vol, noted below as 'letters' and transcribed in Appendix 1). Isleworth Ferry Gate is mapped and mentioned from just after its opening, initially in the 1872 gardens guide book (Figure 12, the 1875 map which duplicates that in the 1872 edition). The treatment of the environs of the new gateway is recorded in the Annual Report for 1872, Director's Progress Report) which details the new paths connecting it with the pleasure ground and botanic garden as part of major works to the Pinetum. Desmond's *History* (2nd edn, 2007), provides contextual material about the running of Kew, together with Hooker's correspondence of this period with Charles Darwin and notes on the transcriptions online (<https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/>). This and other sources are given in Appendix 2. While this is probably not the full extent of surviving evidence together these sources provide a strong indicator of the history and rationale behind the history of the gate and its environs. Historic maps and images are given in Appendix 3, and recent photographs in Appendix 4. Appendix 5 shows key viewlines from riverside Kew over Syon Park, aligned on the 1930s Gillette Tower which since the 1930s has been a part of the historic scene.

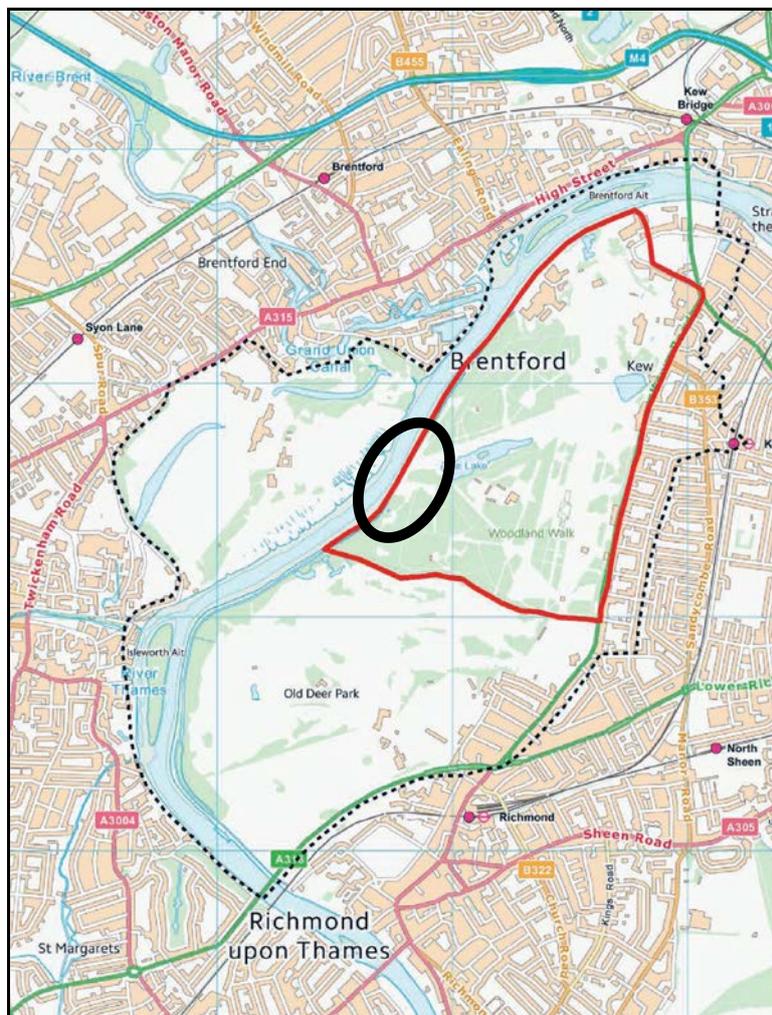


Figure 1 World Heritage Site Boundary and Buffer Zone Boundary Map (RBG Kew WHS Management Plan 2020-25). The red line indicates the WHS and the dotted black line the Buffer Zone. The core study area is ringed black.

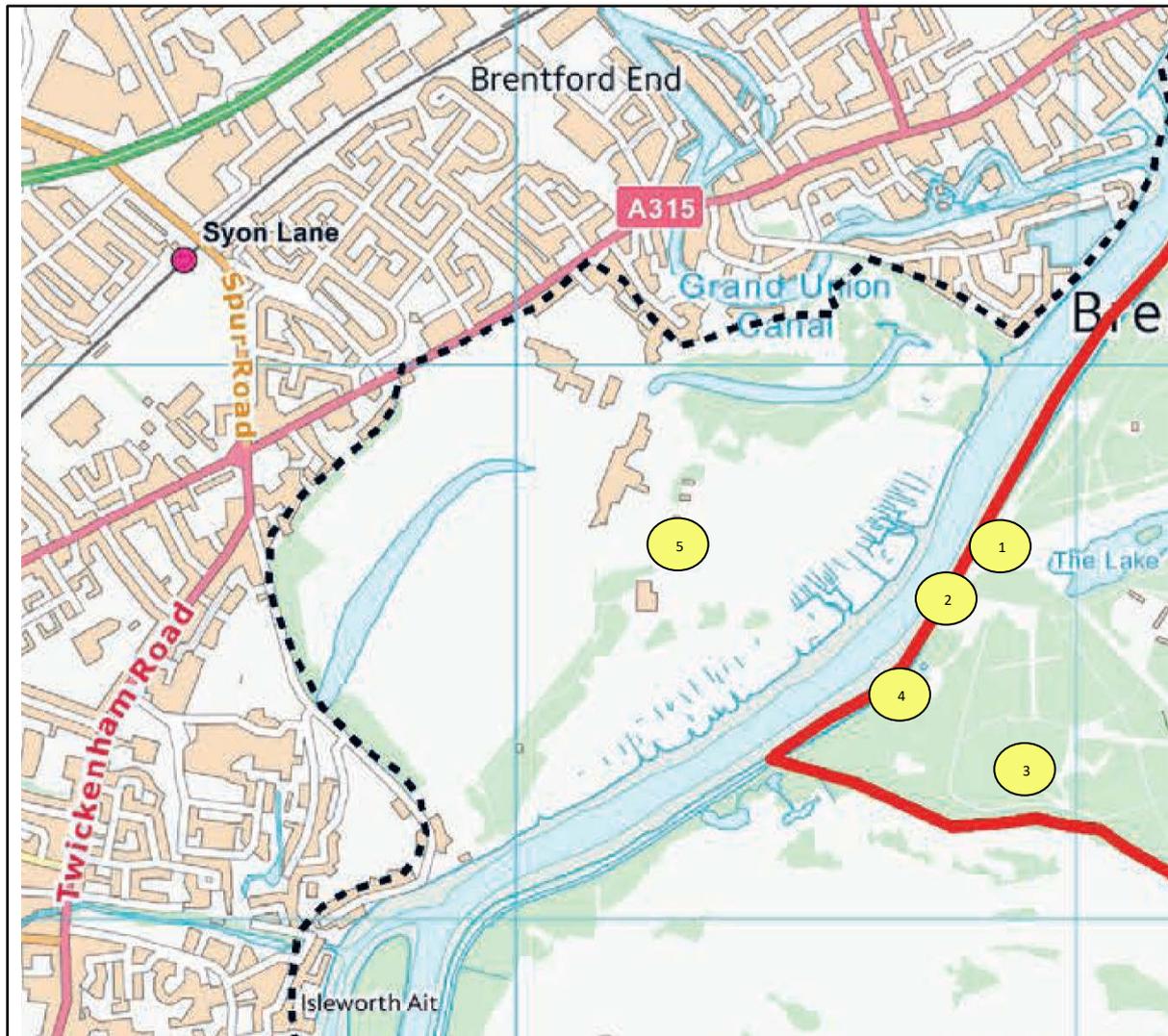


Figure 2 Key Features Map.

1. Syon Vista, west end where it opens into the lawn facing the river and Syon House
2. Isleworth Ferry Gate from Tow Path
3. Queen's Cottage
4. West edge of Queen's Cottage Grounds
5. Syon House set in Syon Park



Figure 3 World Heritage Site and Buffer Zone, Aerial Photograph.

3 HISTORY OF THE ISLEWORTH GATE WITHIN THE ARCADIAN LANDSCAPE

3.1 ARCADIAN ORIGINS

The gateway stands on the line of the early-C18 Charles Bridgeman riverside viewing terrace (Figures 4 & 5) for Queen Caroline, near the site of a former viewing pavilion (possibly that in Figure 6), for the now lost Richmond Lodge to the south in the Old Deer Park. The area around it includes areas re-landscaped by Brown in the mid-1760s such as what is now the Syon Vista Lawn and the 1767 ha-ha and boundary ditch (his work is mapped in Figure 9). This swept away the formal features to a great degree, although the remains of Bridgeman's formal canal and nearby mount survive in earthwork form in the south-west corner of the present Queen's Cottage Grounds.

Brown's work and its relationship with his landscape at Syon, begun in the 1750s and linked by the river, was much illustrated and admired in the later C18 (Figures 6,7,10,11). The Syon Vista (1852) leading from the great Palm House was part of the wider 1840s scheme by William Nesfield uniting much of the gardens which itself modified some of Brown's work. The vista focussed at the south end on Brown's naturalistic Arcadian character, and beyond this the River Thames and his work at Syon Park. Nesfield's vista and its relationship with the Brown landscape is mapped in Figures 12-14 and shown on 1921 aerial photographs (Figures 15-16).

3.2 ORIGIN AND SITING OF THE GATEWAY, 1870-72

In 1870 Joseph Hooker took some convincing that a public gate was necessary in this position (letters 17 May, 23 July, 1870). It was to serve those residents of Isleworth who would use the ferry opposite the church that then operated (painted by Turner in 1805, when he lived at Ferry House).⁴ It had been suggested several times (letter 17 May 1870), at last successfully by the vicar of Isleworth, and in 1870 a petition in support with nearly 300 local signatures was presented (letter 23 July 1870). Hooker recommended a light iron gate on the brick wall of the ha-ha serving a new bridge across the ha-ha, and a fence on either side of it to be funded by the Office of Works; new gravel paths and a gatekeeper and patrol staff (letter 17 May 1870) came under his responsibility.

At present it is not precisely clear how the position of the gateway was decided upon, but minimising its visibility in the Arcadian landscape was a key driver adopted by Hooker. The gate site may have originally been intended further north towards the line of the Syon Vista in a position

⁴ Isleworth Ferry ran from Isleworth Church Street and apparently accessed the south bank at a point now in the Old Deer Park. It existed from at least the C14 and is thought to have carried bricks across the river for the building of the Convent at Syon. A lane ran from Richmond Green to the ferry landing, which closed in 1774. The ferry ran until 1939 but by then landed on the south bank to the north at Isleworth Gate.

which would have been much more conspicuous in relation to that Vista. The position chosen is the furthest point south from the Syon Vista (i.e. in the direction of the ferry serving it) without encroaching upon the Queen's Cottage grounds, which then were the fenced, private property of Queen Victoria, closed to the public, largely unused, and becoming a nature reserve. The proximity of the gate to the fence is shown on Figure 13, a Key Map of 1898, a year before the Cottage grounds were opened to the public after the removal of the fence. Even as far south as it is, it is still over half a mile along the towpath from the landing point of the former Isleworth Ferry, and a quarter of a mile further on from the present closest point of the gardens to the ferry landing (which was then part of the Queen's private grounds).

Having been persuaded, or perhaps ordered, to accept this gate, Hooker's main objections were to the effect on the views of the appearance of the structure (letters 18 July, 13 Sept., 1871), and its position, which was originally intended 'in the centre of the finest Reach on the Thames stretching from Isleworth a mile above Brentford and a mile below it' and 'which cuts the best river views to the Pleasure Ground' and those to Syon House and park (18 July, 13 Sept. 1871). He needed to mitigate its effect as far as possible.

Hooker was very alive to the need to preserve the beauty and unaltered nature of this reach of the Thames and the Arcadian visual relationship with Syon House and park. This view and the relationship with Syon, already celebrated for over a century and a half, was initially a key feature of the riverside terrace for the lost Richmond Lodge, with grounds by Charles Bridgeman, and the views were later exploited by Capability Brown eventually uniting their design on sides of the river.⁵ The Arcadian beauty was little altered after this and continued to be preserved and renowned into the C19 and C20, and was remarked upon in many publications including C19 guide books and by Bean in the first history of Kew (1908).⁶

3.3 THE FORM OF THE GATEWAY

A draw bridge was proposed by the Office of Works.⁷ Notwithstanding the offensive behaviour of the man in control of the Office, First Commissioner Ayrton, Hooker objected to this type of bridge as damaging the renowned view, and instead proposed a swing bridge, this being less conspicuous

⁵ Brown worked at Syon 1750s-60s, and over the river at Richmond Lodge, Kew in the late 1760s and 1770s.

⁶ Bean, official *History of Kew* (1908) online. p. 6 notes terrace between the ferry gates is a favourite promenade; p. 51 a brief note of the IFG opened in 1872 with a drawbridge; p. 87 notes that the terrace with ha-ha 'opens up the finest panorama in Kew' describes scene, noble reach of Thames; p. 185 A reprise of the fine view of one of the noblest reaches of the river, and of Syon House and park.

⁷ The Office of Works had recently acquired control over all projects, buildings, maintenance and repairs at Kew, in a manner offensive to Hooker who was not informed officially and only learnt of it via one of his staff.

as it would never be raised (letter 18 July 1871). Ayrton, who was actively hostile to Hooker and wished to get rid of him, was not to be moved. His staff responded to Hooker that his opinion was that the drawbridge was not offensive (Ayrton had a valid point), and merely offered that it could be re-sited in a place specified by Hooker (letter 22 Sept 1871). While Hooker was unable to minimise the visual effect as much as he wished by using a swing instead of a draw bridge, he at least managed to mitigate it to some degree via the site he chose and the screen planting around it. The present small cast iron and timber structure was erected in late 1871 as far south as possible without entering the Queen's Cottage private grounds, which although her property were largely unmanaged and unvisited by her or the royal family.

The gateway was framed by fluted iron columns with Doric capitals supporting the winding mechanism. The path on the inner side was flanked by two iron turnstiles by Legrand, Sutcliff and Gell of Southall. The outer, towpath bank was modified to project into the ha-ha ditch as a bastion to shorten the length of drawbridge needed.⁸ The gateway supplier, cost and manufacturer (there may be a maker's mark on the structure) have yet to be identified. The size and modest construction were probably the result of the Office of Works' economy rather than Hooker's sensibilities, but the site as far south as possible without entering the private Queen's grounds was chosen by Hooker.⁹

3.4 OPENING

The work was complete by mid-January 1872 (letter 16 Jan 1872) and the gate was opened around this time. Hooker's two last letters to the First Commissioner noted that trespassers were habitually entering at the gate and requested some temporary fencing to stop this. The response to this has not been found, but the gate is now flanked on the brick ha-ha wall by spiked iron railings. The gate was in use by the time the 1872 guide book was published when it was mapped and noted (see Figure 12 for the similar 1875 edition).¹⁰ Hooker reported on the landscaping around it in the printed 1872 Annual Report.

⁸ The brickwork on the towpath side of the ditch was renewed in 2002 when the surroundings of the structure were cleared of vegetation. See Images of England photo at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251963>.

⁹ An internet search identified no similar structures, listed or otherwise, nor contemporary manufacturers' catalogues offering such structures for sale, as might be expected. Research in repositories may identify further contextual information.

¹⁰ Further information about the gate and its opening may be given in the Annual Report covering 1872 in the Progress section, but this has not been available to the author.

In conjunction with the opening in January 1872 many alterations were made to the paths to link the Isleworth gate with 'all the leading features of the grounds'.¹¹ This necessitated forming over 300 yards of gravel paths 12' wide, the alteration of others and the laying out of surrounding grounds, which were 'previously in an unkempt condition.' This fitted nicely with works near the lake which were completed or in progress, especially the completion of the Pinetum, which had been extended, so linking the Isleworth entrance nearly to the Pagoda to the south-east, and to King William's Temple to the north-east. Another new walk, 12' wide, joining that from the gate, linked the lower end of the lake to near the Pagoda to join the walk from the Lion Gate. A third new walk, 100 yards long, connected the gate with the Sion Vista, linking to the Palm House and Brentford gate, also through the Pinetum. Thus the new gate was embraced as party of the whole design and fully linked to the rest of the grounds. It seems that it was screened by Hooker from the wider surroundings using evergreen planting. A mature yew immediately to the north of the gate may survive from that scheme, although the planting to the south, mapped on late C19 and C20 Key Plans has gone.

3.5 LATER HISTORY

For over 25 years, the gate stood next to the private, fenced Queen's Cottage grounds. In 1898 the cottage and 37 acres were transferred and opened to the public in 1899 with the addition of a broad path with a light iron fence. This enabled the public to view the former royal grounds in a limited way while retaining their character which had become established as a nature reserve, overlying an area of a key part of the Richmond Lodge layout by Bridgeman, completely remodelled by Brown. This broad character of the Queen's Cottage grounds has persisted to today, but the later loss of the fence marking the boundary left the position of the gateway from the towpath seemingly floating at a random point above the ha-ha, with no obvious reason for this site.

The incorporation of the Cottage grounds was part of the uniting in the 1890s by the Director, William Thisleton-Dyer (who succeeded his father-in-law Hooker in 1885), of various parts of the gardens which were previously fenced. This included Kew Palace Grounds, acquired at the same time as the Queen's Cottage in 1898, and the removal of the fence between the botanic gardens in the north and the pleasure grounds in the larger south half since 1843, including the study area.

The gate and turnstile continued in use, unmodified, for over a century, as a minor entrance chiefly intended for local residents. At some point a small hut was added adjacent to the south of the turnstiles. A file at Kew (QA 0886) indicates that it was closed in 1975 around the time that the

¹¹ A full account is given in the 1872 Annual Report, Progress Report, p.3, and mentioned briefly in Desmond, R., *History of ... Kew* (2nd edn. 2007), 348.

considerably grander Cumberland Gate was shut.¹² The gateway was Listed at Grade II in 1983 indicating its architectural significance. The environs were repaired around 2002 (see photograph at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1251963>), with the wall supporting the projecting bank of the towpath rebuilt in brick and the area cleared of vegetation.

3.6 THE GATEWAY TODAY

Today the gate is fenced from the gardens, framed on the north side by evergreens and visible from the towpath. There is still popular confusion about whether it served a ferry immediately on the opposite side of the river from Syon, but there was none, and it was always intended to serve the public ferry to the south from Isleworth. At least one of the yew specimens on the north side seems to be an original specimen, contemporary with the gate (Figure 17), and fulfils the intended screening role. The shrubbery on the south side has been cleared, leaving the gate more exposed and visible than was intended and evidence of the former ticket hut in the surviving concrete base. The 1921 aerial photographs from above Syon Park show that externally it was largely hidden by flanking shrubbery. The western axis of the gate includes the dome of the great Syon Conservatory (listed GI) and the Gillette Tower beyond, which can both be seen in winter from the turnstiles, framed by the iron columns.

The prefabricated gateway has become a rare survivor of this type of structure because the small scale made this sort of gateway vulnerable to removal when superseded by more modern means. Sources searched online are silent about other examples extant, if any, as are contemporary C19 manufacturers' catalogues. The two turnstiles by a local firm are probably rare survivors too.

¹² Information on its closure in 1975 is in QA 0886.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The documentary evidence of the creation of the Isleworth Ferry Gate, particularly Hooker's correspondence, clearly indicates the continued high significance accorded to the Arcadian character and views over the river reach between Kew and Syon since the early C18. It demonstrates the continued importance of the views and character of this long Reach after the C18 works for Richmond Lodge by Bridgeman and Brown (which embraced and enhanced it) were absorbed into the C19 public and scientific gardens. Nesfield's Syon Vista (1852) overlooking Syon Park was predicated on framing the reciprocal views between Kew and Syon over the river, enhanced by Brown, affording a view from the river to Burton's vast but beautifully curvaceous Palm House.

The siting and type of structure of the Isleworth Ferry gate was therefore highly important, and carefully considered, and indeed fought for, by Joseph Hooker as Director of Kew, to minimise its impact on the extensive views and Arcadian character, for which he had the highest regard. The correspondence revealed that Hooker was highly aware of the Arcadian views and united character of Kew and Syon and tried strenuously to avoid any damage to these by close attention to the type of structure and its position and mitigation by planting a screen.

However, once the position and structure of the gate had been decided upon, Hooker ensured that it was firmly linked to the rest of the grounds via a network of paths laid out at a time when major works were carried out to complete the Pinetum. The gateway was now an integral element of the landscape design.

Since the entrance closed in 1975, over a century after it was opened, it has quietly receded into the scenery precisely because its original design and position minimised its effect. As Hooker so carefully contrived, it does not intrude on the reciprocal views between the internationally significant Syon and Kew Arcadian landscapes, over the river, which is one of the most important of designed landscape vistas. However, it was for a considerable proportion of the gardens' history the entrance which was the most scenically spectacular and, unappreciated by most visitors, sited in a key part of the Royal landscapes of both Bridgeman and Brown to serve the growing local population beyond the river. From the outset it framed a view towards the Syon Conservatory dome and from the 1930s of the Gillette Tower above this.

6 APPENDIX 1 CORRESPONDENCE IN FILE 'KEW GATES 1847-1913'

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The understanding of the Isleworth Ferry gate set out above is based largely on the transcription below of letters from various people in file Kew Gates 1847-1913. Images of the relevant letters were kindly supplied from the Kew Archives by Kiri Ross-Jones. A preliminary transcription is set out below. Some strike-throughs are transcribed where relevant. Indecipherable passages are marked '?????'. Square brackets indicate interpretation or other modern comment.

Desmond references to the gate are in the 2nd edn of his *History*, pp. 216, 249, 334, 348. He notes that after opening the gate in 1872 many alterations were made to the paths to link the gate with other parts of the gardens. His seminal *History of Kew* is essential to understand the earlier landscape phases and how the gate relates to these. He also devotes 6 pages to the contemporary battle in the early 1870s between JD Hooker and Ayrton, First Commissioner of the Works, who was tasked by Gladstone with conducting an economy drive but whose abrasive personality actively enjoyed conflict and argument to obtain his ends. This correspondence adds much detail of the area to Desmond's published account.

6.2 TRANSCRIPTION OF LETTERS IN KEW GATES 1847-1913

6.2.1 1870 Initiation of the Gate

JDH to the Board Royal Gardens Kew

17 May 1870

Sir

In reference to the Revd W ?T Richards' letter of May 10th herewith returned, I have to observe that it is not the first time that the Board has been petitioned upon the subject it relates to.

The following appear to me to be the main considerations upon which the Board may form an opinion as to the urgency of the case.

The very great and rapid ??? of the perimeter [?purlieu] of Isleworth, Springgrove Feltham, etc suggests the propriety of a gate at the point indicated in Mr Richards letter and all the more as the population referred to is of a class (the middle and lower middle) who very much enjoy such Gardens but who are cut off from it by the want of a Gate and consequent the distance to walk which is not exaggerated in Mr Richards' letter.

On the other hand such an entrance would not materially ????????? from the aforesaid parishes to the Botanic Garden proper and were it constructed there is little prospect of very great numbers

using it, partly because of the distance of the most populous parts of these parishes from the Isleworth Ferry and partly because of the objection many have to using a ferry which in wintertime the visitors by this gate would be very few indeed.

The question therefore resolves itself into ??? = which would be

A Under the department of the ?surveyor of works

1. A bridge across the ?fosse and haw haw
2. Light iron ~~or wire work~~ Gates on the brick wall of the Haw Haw and a fence on each side of it.

B Making gravel paths etc ~~levelling, earthworks~~ for say £25

C Maintenance

Gatekeeper and Patrol each £52

For ?access or accomm? uniform & patrol about £7

Etc

[JD Hooker]

23 July 1870

JDH to the Right Honble The First Commissioner of the Works

Sir

In reference to the further correspondence returned on the subject of an entrance to the Pleasure Grounds near the river end of the Sion Vista I have to observe, that the accompanying petition appears to confirm the view referenced? In my letter of May 17 as to the journey of visitors that would as yet avail themselves of it; for it contains about 290 names from an area of 2 ½ by ½ miles of persons living beyond the Isleworth ferry, which latter is ¾ of a mile from their desired (Sion Vista) entrance and 1 ¼ from their present (Brentford Ferry) entrance.

The Isleworth visitors to the Kew end of the Botanic Garden would gain little in ?utility by a Sion Vista entrance; but not so those who would use the Palm and Temperate Houses; for whereas it is a 3 miles walk from the Isleworth ferry and back via the Sion vista; taking? these objects ... [end of letter lost]

[Desmond (pp.220-21) notes that Ayrton visited Kew unannounced on 18 Dec 1870 and without telling JDH offered the Curator promotion to lay out grounds around Albert Memorial, and told Curator not to tell JDH.

Also in 1870 the Office of Works assumed responsibility for all projects, buildings, maintenance and repairs, but JDH was not told about this officially and only learnt of it via one of his staff]

6.2.2 1871 Discussions and Construction of the Gate

18 July 1871

JDH to [George Russell, Chief Secretary to the Office of Works¹³]

Dear Mr Russell

I have been viewing the site of the proposed Isleworth entrance with regard to paths and approaches? and hope that the ?matter of gate access?? swing bridge will be well considered. The spot is in the centre of the finest Reach on the Thames stretching from Isleworth a mile above Brentford and a mile below it and ??? [?whether on river or ?towing path?] which also cuts the best river views to the Pleasure Ground ??? [is also mentioning views from Sion House]

How will gates look in such a point of view perched on the top of a ha-ha and several feet above the towing path?

I cannot but think that this entrance which can never be much ?? should be as little conspicuous as possible and that a swing bridge would hence be best.

[Hooker]

13 Sept 1871

JDH to the ?Board [of Works?]

Sir

I have to state that Clerk of the Works has brought me a drawing of the proposed Draw Bridge of the Isleworth entrance into the pleasure grounds, and requested me to point out the intended site in order that he may proceed to [erect?] it at once.

Before my taking any step, I have to request Boards attention to the fact that the site in question is a most conspicuous one in the garden and that it ? of the Thames for 2 miles ??outside it; and I request that if a much less obtrusive structure should be substituted of that shown in the drawing then ?more capable of being ??? with both conspicuous ?????????????? being as attractive an ?entrance ???

¹³ In Darwin Correspondence online JDH to CD notes that JR is the 'only man in the office who knows and cares a rush for Kew and the Parks'.

~~The Board probably have not considered~~ that the site of the entrance is in the very centre of one of the most celebrated and beautiful reaches of the Thames, and is visible for a mile above and below it; that it is a favourite resort of artists, both in the garden and out of it; and that it immediately faces the windows of Sion House. The drawing shows a bridge which when draw up, with ??? a large square surface 7 feet width by 6.6 wide ??? suspending on the top of a ha ha high above the level of the path ??? the Thames and of the river bank; it will then be perched upon a very conspicuous object and I think an objectionable one for the view and which from the garden ?? a path structure blocked and such an object will be ?? very unsightly. I may add that in such a place as the edge of the ha ha it cannot be screened from the outside which presents it full front to the river... I have to suggest that a swing bridge ... to roll back horizontally on to the path would obviate these above objections.

?1st Commissioner to JDH

?Shelley Vicarage Yorkshire

19 Sept 71

My dear Sir

Your note of the 16th has been forwarded to me here in reply am fearful I cannot assist you as the place was made out in accordance with the ?First Commissioners instructions the draw bridge as proposed by you was submitted to the Director of Works and he consulted the FC [sic]. I thus ?? another place which was also declined and the one now approved was by the instructions personally of the FC regretting it is so.

[Etc etc]

[Sig difficult to decipher, possibly M Starie, seems subordinate to Ayrton, fearful of his position if he should be known to collaborate with JDH]

I must ask you to consider this private ...??

HM Office of Works etc SW to JDH

22 Sept 1871

Sir

With reference to your letter of 15th inst in which you object to the form of the proposed Draw-bridge for the Isleworth Entrance into Kew pleasure gardens, I am directed by the First Commissioner of her Majesty's Works etc to inform you that the subject has been fully considered, and I am to request that you will indicate the spot you suggest.

The First Commissioner is of the opinion that the Bridge will not be seen when the public are about the place as it will then be down; at other times it will have only the appearance of a gate and it will not be observed.

Etc George Russell

6.2.3 1872 Opening of the Gate and Teething Troubles

JDH to the Rt Honble the First Commr of the Works

16 Jan 1872

Sir I have to request Board's attention to the fact that the works connected with the Isleworth Entrance to the Royal Gardens, which are now completed, enable the public to trespass upon the property [~~both by night and day~~] which is no longer ?????.

I am etc Jos D Hooker Director

JDH to the Rt Honble the First Commr of the Works

6 Feb 1872

Sir I have to report that the grounds are habitually trespassed upon by the public at the [~~drawbridge~~ ~~by the~~] Isleworth Entrance: and I request that some temporary fencing may be erected ~~without~~ ~~delay~~ there for the protection of the property. [end of letter may be missing]

End of correspondence in this file sent by Kew Archive 27 Jan 2021

7 APPENDIX 2 OTHER SOURCES

Other sources add to the detail of the story of the gate. Not all those below have been seen.

7.1 CHARLES DARWIN CORRESP ONLINE: ISSUES BETWEEN JDH AND ACTON SMEE AYRTON

Transcriptions online at <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/DCP-LETT-9331.xml>

George Russell was the Chief Secretary and Acton Smeë Ayrton was 1st Commissioner since 1869, appointed by Gladstone on an economy drive. Gladstone did not understand science and certainly not Darwin's evolution theories. Desmond gives a long exposition of the issues in his *History of Kew* (Chapter 15, pp.220-29).

Itr JDH to CD 3 Mar 1874

I am much distressed by an affair in the Office of Works—of which the Chief Secretary, Mr. G. Russell, has been detected cheating at cards in the Turf Club! & it is said will have to resign his post. G.R. has been my right-hand man & support at the office for 17 years— he is the only man in

the office who knows & cares a rush for Kew & the Parks;⁶ & I can't conceive how business can go on without him, for Ayrton chasséed all the gentlemen from the office in 6 months, & except the 2 Secretaries & Galton, there is not a man with an approach to Education in it. Galton is hated by everyone—& the 2^d. Secretary, a nice enough fellow, is quite common place.⁷ I only hope that G.R's resignation (which is I hear unavoidable) may lead to the reorganization of the whole office on a very different footing from hitherto. On personal grounds G. R's. conduct has distressed and shocked me more than I can express.

N6 George Russell, grandson of the fifth duke of Bedford, had been employed since 1856 by the Board of Works, under whose jurisdiction the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and the royal parks fell. The Turf Club was an exclusive gentlemen's club in London, favoured by the aristocracy.

N7 Acton Smee Ayrton, notorious for his lack of gentlemanly qualities, had been appointed first commissioner of works in 1869 with the brief of cutting expenditure ([Port 1984](#), p. 162); he had interfered with Hooker's running of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (see [Correspondence](#) vols. 20 and 21). Douglas Strutt Galton, director of public works and buildings in the Office of Works, was considered 'a thousand times worse than Ayrton' according to Hooker (see [Correspondence](#) vol. 21, [letter from J. D. Hooker, 14 August 1873](#)). The secretaries were Algernon Mitford and Robert Callander, who served as the assistant or second secretary.

December 1870, Acton Smee Ayrton had offered John Smith, the curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the superintendence of works in Hyde Park, without consulting Hooker (see L. Huxley ed. 1918, 2: 162; see also [letter from J. D. Hooker, \[2 October 1871\]](#) and n. 10).

<https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-7984.xml;query=ayrton;brand=default>

Nature v.6 11 July 1872 explains the dispute, Ayrton's intended course of action, and protests by Hooker's supporters about it.

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/28659404#page/229/mode/1up>

Debate on Kew and future of herbarium etc House of Commons 08 Aug 1872 see Desmond 220-24.

7.2 THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE (UNSEEN)

Files under WORK may have records of the Isleworth Gate 1870-72. E.g.

WORK 16/468 Kew Gardens Gates and Keys Generally 1863-1912

WORK 16/467 The Maintenance of ha-ha culverts banks and fences, Kew Gardens 1823-1915

Correspondence relating to the Kew archive material above may be in Out Letters e.g.:

WORK /91 01 Jan 1870-31 May 1870

WORK 1/95 01 Dec 1870-28 Feb 1871

WORK 1/96 01 Feb – 30 April 1871

WORK 1/100 01 Aug-31 Oct 1871

WORK 1/10301 Feb-31 Mar 1872

7.3 KEW LIBRARY (UNSEEN)

Annual reports, sections by JDH on Progress for 1871-72

e.g. in Kew Library Archive:

pK 1 KEW from *Edinburgh Review* 1873 vol. 138, pp 510-35, extract of Annual Report of Kew Gardens 1872, Item 4 report on progress at Kew, JDH.

7.4 KEW ARCHIVE

Kew Archive

1 file: Kew Gates 1847-1913 - 1 vol (see transcriptions above)

1 file QA 0886 1975 Ministers Correspondence. - Closure of the Isleworth & Cumberland Gates (unseen, see catalogue entry below)

7.5 PUBLISHED SOURCES

D. Oliver *Guide* 1872 (online Google books) <https://bit.ly/3rhT2Yp>

p. 89 mentions IF gate.

Map on title page shows IF gate as in use. It had only been opened late 1872 or early 1872.

WJ Bean, official *History* (1908) online *The Royal botanic gardens, Kew : historical and descriptive.*

<https://archive.org/details/royalbotanicgard00bean>

p. 6 notes terrace between the ferry gates is a favourite promenade.

p. 51 a brief note of the IFG opened in 1872 with a drawbridge.

p. 87 notes that the terrace with ha-ha 'opens up the finest panorama in Kew' describes scene, noble reach of Thames.

p. 185 A reprise of the fine view of one of the noblest reaches of the river, and of Syon House and park.

8 APPENDIX 3 HISTORIC MAPS AND IMAGES

These maps and images are presented largely in chronological order. The web site Layers of London <https://www.layersoflondon.org/> enables the overlay of some of these maps on each other and over the current map, to help position lost features.



Figure 4 1746, Map of London and 10 Miles Around, Rocque.

Bridgeman's pleasure grounds of Richmond Lodge (off map to the south), the Thames, Syon House and formal pleasure grounds, and approximate site of 1872 Isleworth Ferry Gate (ringed), just north of the terrace viewing pavilion.



Figure 5 c.1739 Richmond Lodge pleasure grounds by the river, facing the tree-lined avenue to the Lodge, somewhere south of the later Isleworth Ferry Gate, but north of Bridgeman's canal (the culvert is visible on the right).

Badeslade & Rocque, *Vitruvius Britannicus* vol. 4.

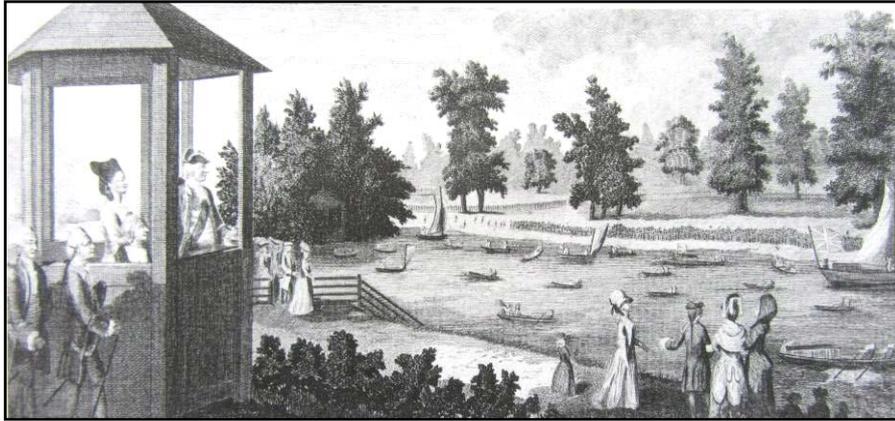


Figure 6 c.1740s 'Their Majesties viewing from a pavilion in Richmond Gardens ...' View south. This may be the terrace pavilion which stood just south of the later Isleworth Ferry Gate.



Figure 7 1749 View of Syon House from the towpath south-east of the mansion, Canaletto, before Brown's landscaping. Duke of Northumberland collection.



Figure 8 c.1760, Riverside view from the north-east, George III, Royal Collections Trust RCIN 980237. This shows the north and east fronts of Syon House.



Figure 9 1800, Map of Kew and Richmond after landscaping by Capability Brown removed Bridgeman's formal features. The Queen's Cottage and menagerie, river and approximate site of 1872 Isleworth Ferry Gate (ringed).



Figure 10 1796, watercolour of the Brown landscaped grounds of Kew and Syon, Boydell & Farington.

This is taken from a point north of the present Syon Vista lawn, showing the east front of Syon House. The ha-ha invisibly keeps users of the tow-path out of Kew, and the Syon ha-ha is invisible too, creating the impression of an single Arcadian park with the river running through.



Figure 11 Late C18 view, similar to Farington, showing the east and north fronts of Syon House. The frequency with which this view was illustrated indicates its great significance to the landscape design of both Kew and Syon.

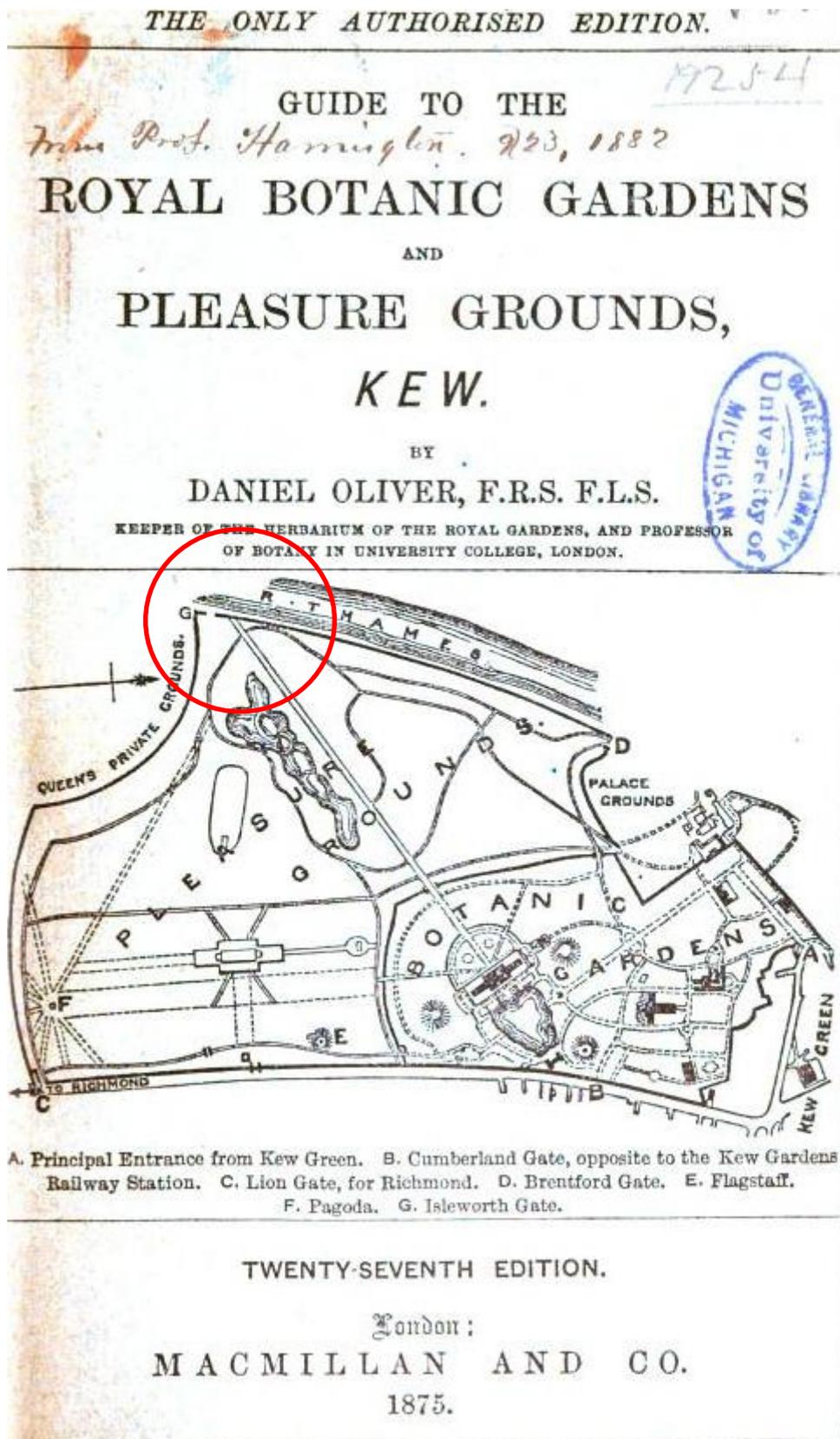


Figure 12 1875 Kew Guide Book, showing the entrance (G) at the Isleworth Ferry gate (ringed red), opened in 1872.

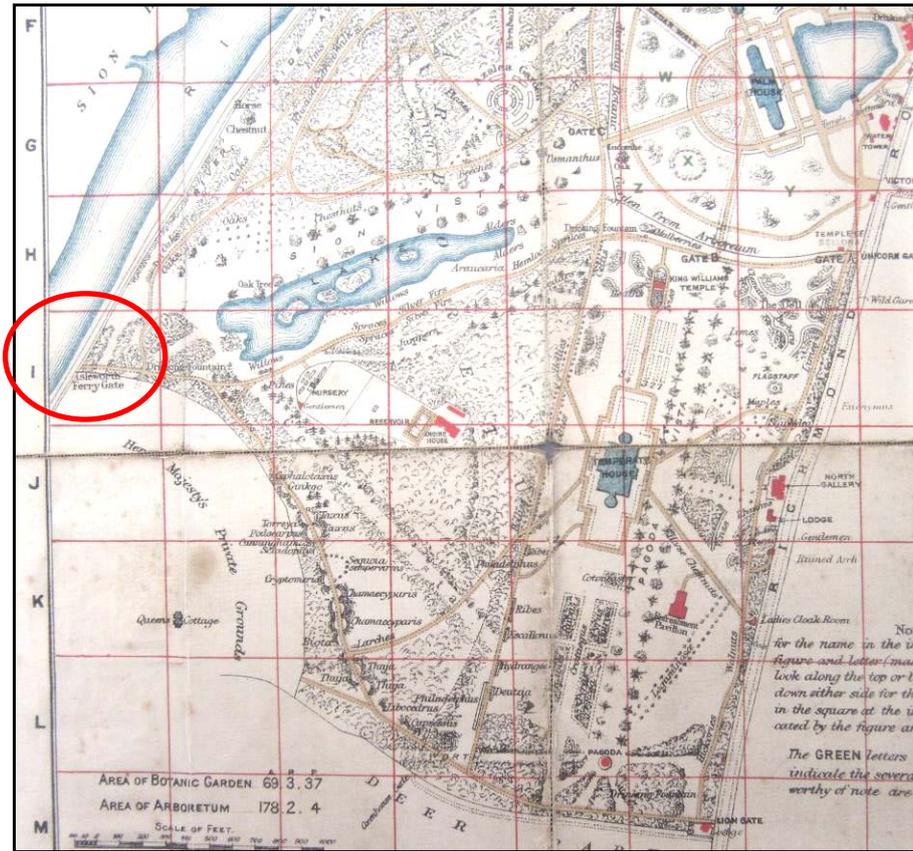


Figure 13 1898 Royal Botanic Gardens Key Map, showing the gateway adjacent to the private Queen's Cottage grounds.



Figure 14 1934 Royal Botanic Gardens Key Map, showing the gateway adjacent to the Queen's Cottage grounds, since the late 1890s part of the gardens.



Figure 15 1921, Aerial Photograph, view north-east from Syon Park along the Syon Vista and lawns, with the Isleworth Ferry Gate (site ringed) and the Queen's Cottage grounds to the right of this. Historic England EPW 001672.

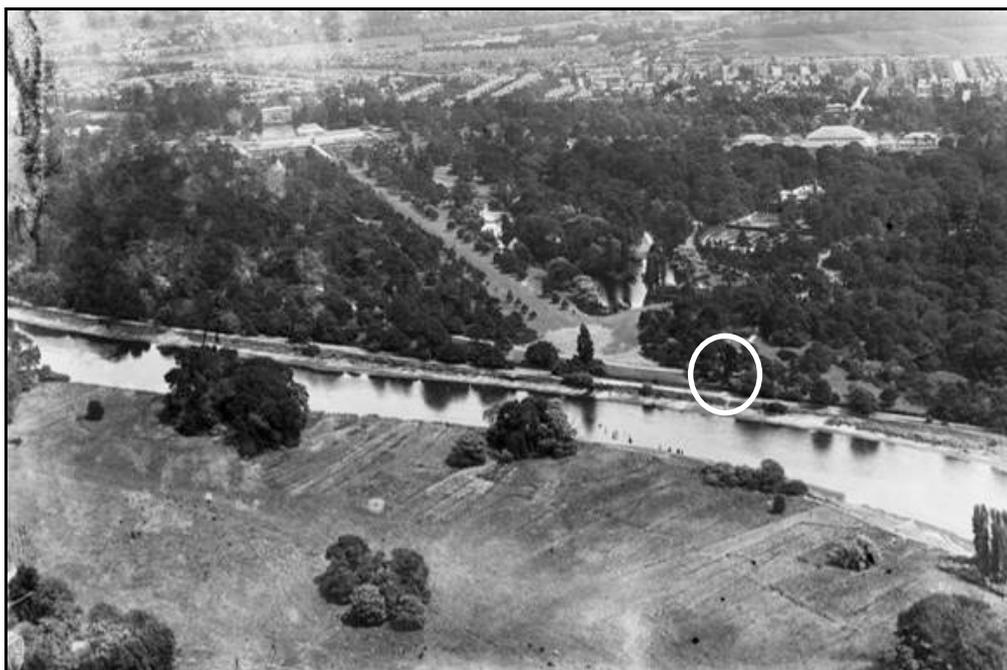


Figure 16 1921, Aerial Photograph, view east-north-east from Syon Park over the Syon Vista and lawns, with the Isleworth Ferry Gate (site ringed) and the Queen's Cottage grounds to the right of this. Historic England EPW 001673.

9 APPENDIX 4 RECENT VIEWS

9.1 ISLEWORTH FERRY GATE



Figure 17 2021 view from Kew over the ha-ha and river to Syon House, Park and pleasure ground.



Figure 18 The drawbridge from the towpath (Google Streetview).



Figure 19 View framed by Isleworth Ferry Gate, directly towards the Great Conservatory and the Gillette Tower (ringed in enlargement). 2009 Reference Views from Syon Vista Lawn. These views were shot in 2009 for ICOMOS UK and are copyright of ICOMOS UK and the photographer Gavin Kingcome. They are part of a suite of reference photographs for public non-commercial use and within that group are numbered 14a-d.



Figure 20 2009 ICOMOS View 14a south over the ha-ha, towpath and river towards the Old Deer Park.



Figure 21 2009 ICOMOS View 14b west over the ha-ha, towpath and river towards Syon House and Park. The green roof is a temporary marquee structure.



Figure 22 2009 ICOMOS View 14c north-west over the ha-ha, towpath, river and Syon Park to Brentford.

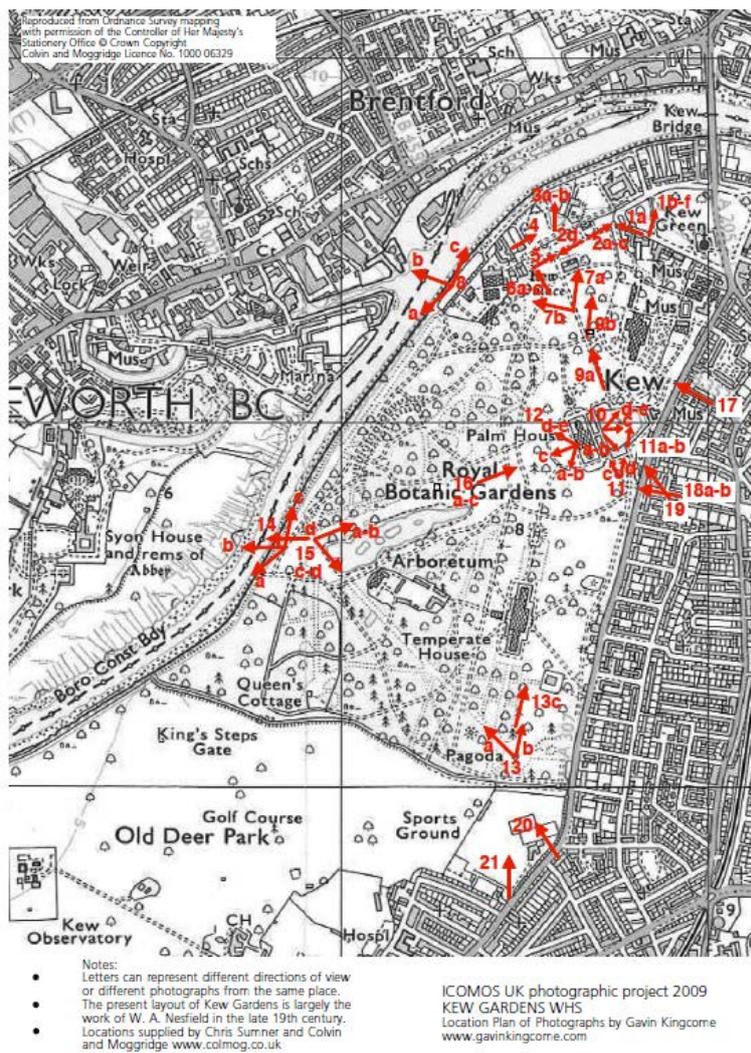
Note low level intrusions on the Arcadian view.

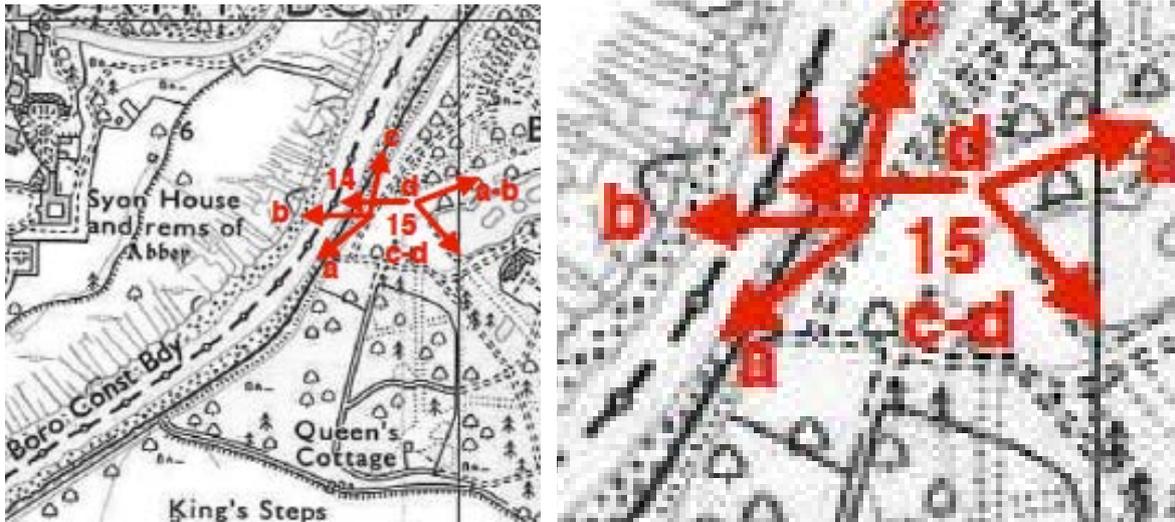


Figure 23 2009 ICOMOS View 14d Syon House from the east-north-east.

The green roof is a temporary structure.

Figure 24 Map of the reference views and detail of the directions of those above:





10 APPENDIX 5: SIGHT LINES FROM KEW RIVERSIDE OVER SYON PARK TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT SITE

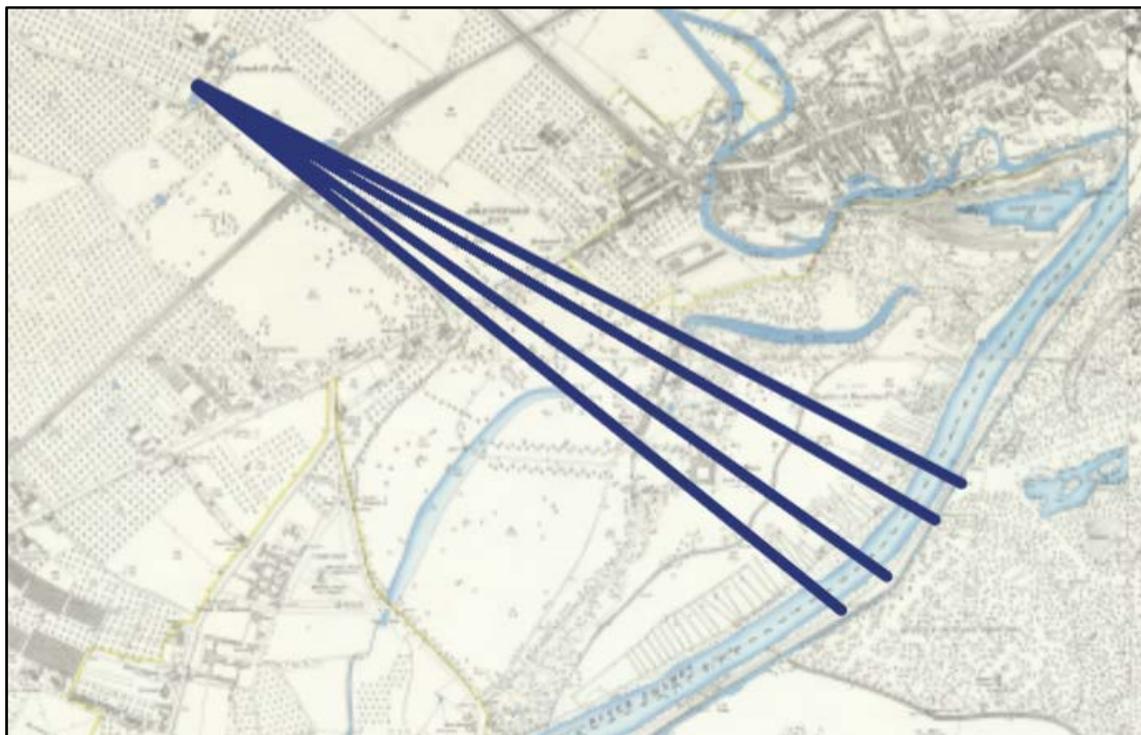


Figure 25 Four key view lines from Kew over Syon Park in the direction of the Gillette Tower, Ordnance Survey 25" scale late C19/early C20.

These mark the lines, from viewpoints north to south: from Syon Vista Lawn, Isleworth Ferry Gate, Canaletto painting viewpoint and from a viewpoint further south from the towpath in front of the Queen's Cottage Grounds.

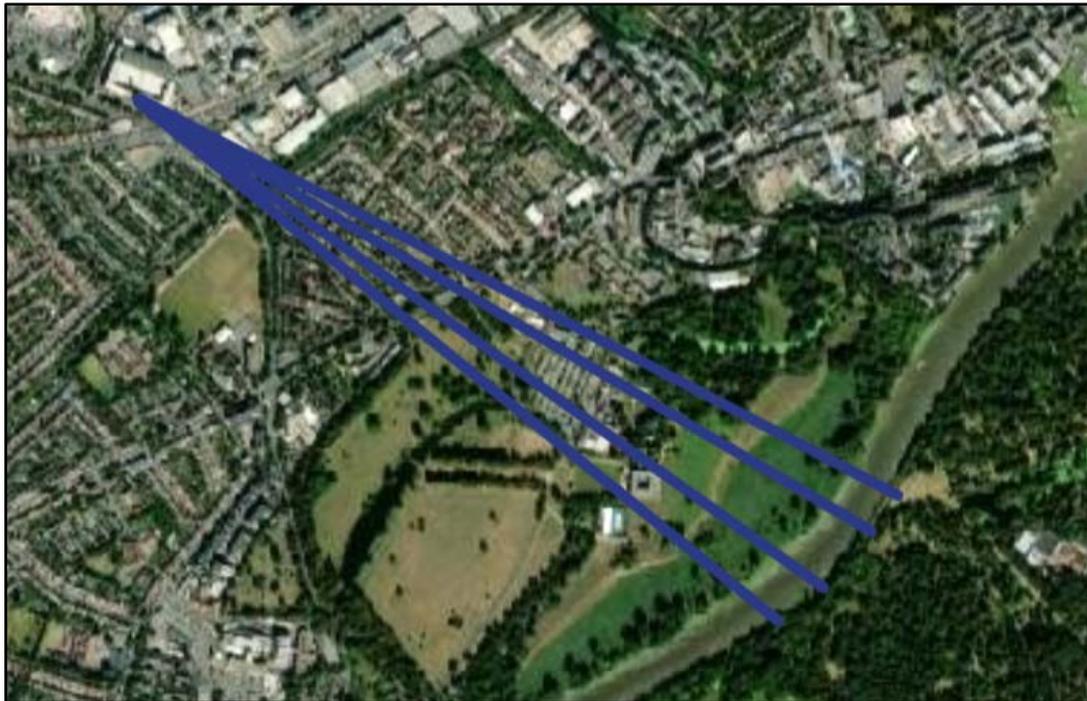


Figure 26 Four key view lines from Kew over Syon Park in the direction of the Gillette Tower; modern aerial photograph.

These mark the lines, from viewpoints north to south: from Syon Vista Lawn, Isleworth Ferry Gate, Canaletto painting viewpoint and from a viewpoint further south from the towpath in front of the Queen’s Cottage Grounds.

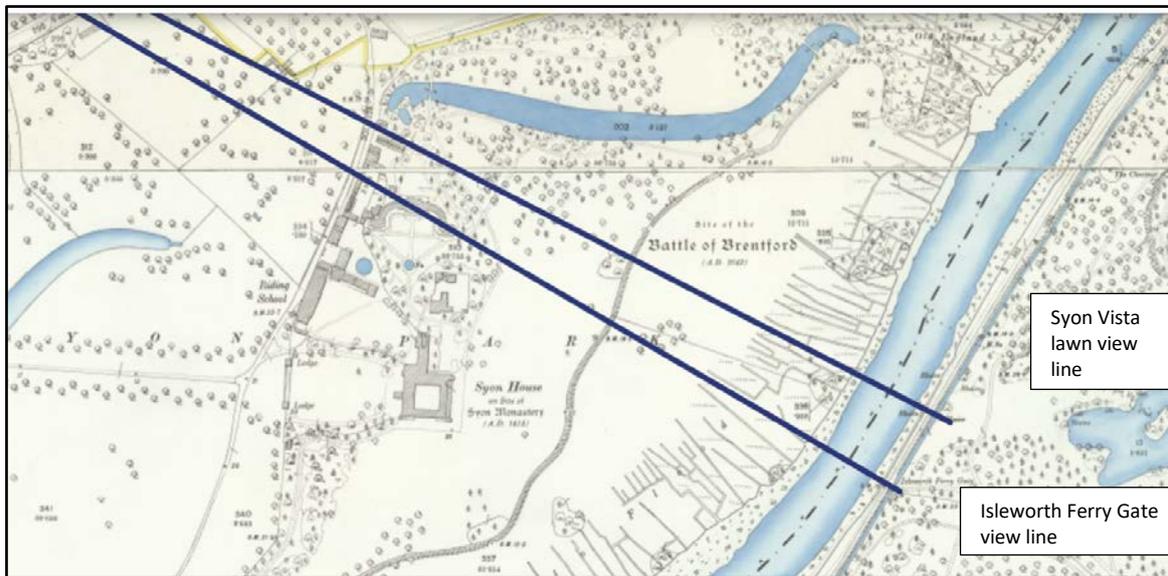


Figure 27 View lines for Syon Vista Lawn and Isleworth Ferry Gate, OS 25” scale late C19/early C20.

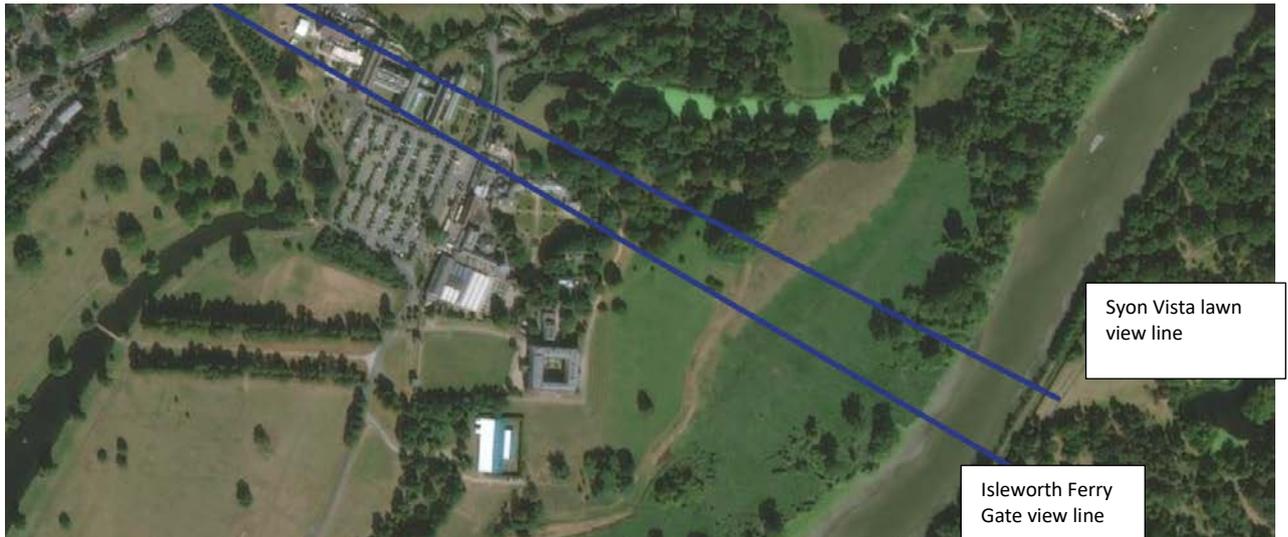


Figure 28 View lines for Syon Vista Lawn and Isleworth Ferry Gate, modern aerial photograph.

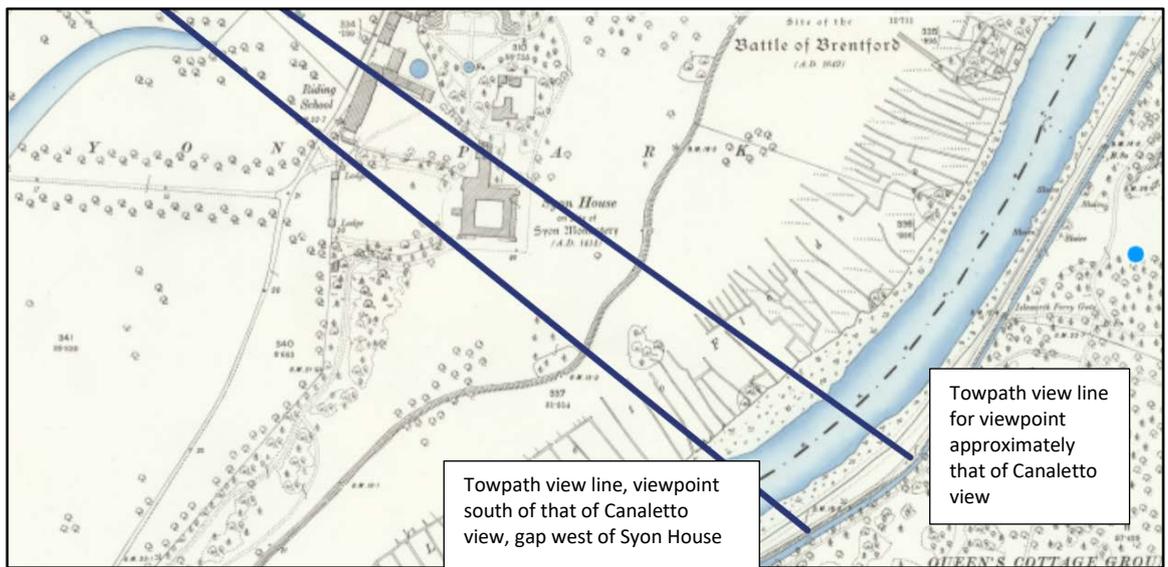


Figure 29 View lines for towpaths: Canaletto viewpoint and viewpoint further south; OS 25" scale late C19/early C20.

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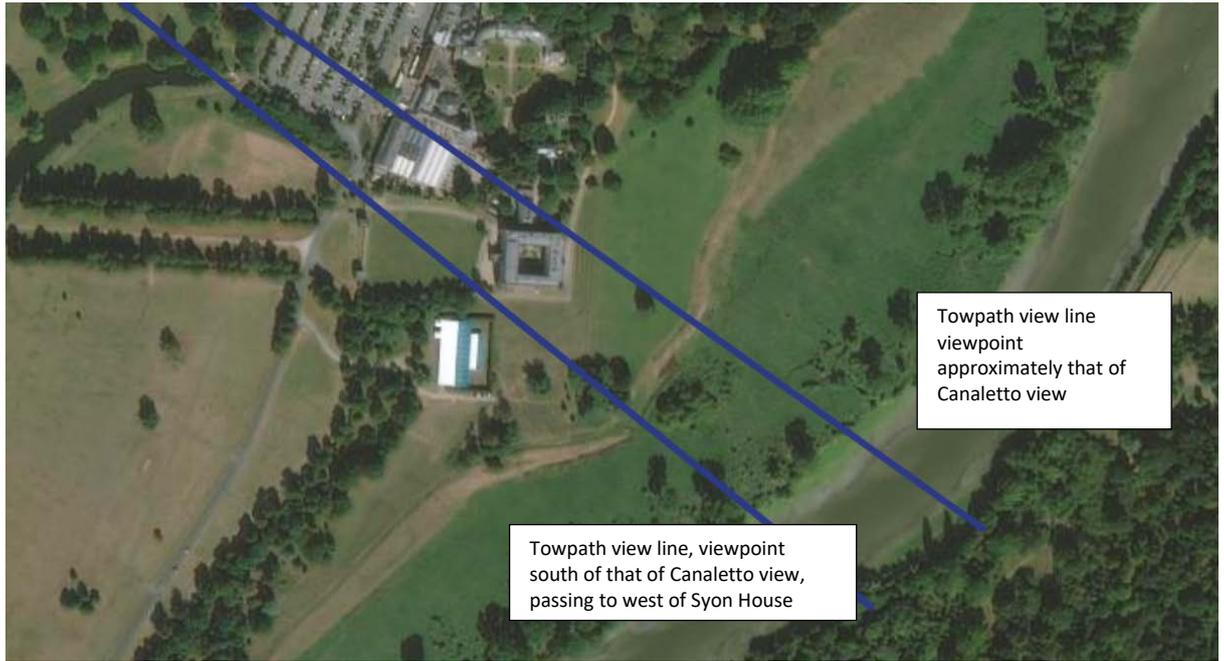


Figure 30 View lines for towpath: Canaletto viewpoint and viewpoint further south, modern aerial photograph.