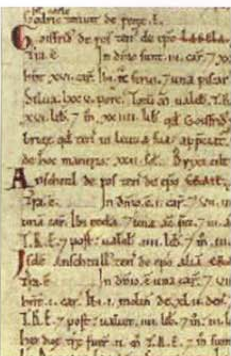


The History

From the still calm of the Augustinian canons through to the rock and roll of The Beatles; through Sir Charles Barry, architect to the 19th Century super-rich, and the most famous of all landscape designers, 'Capability' Brown, Trentham has had a colourful history. For years the playground of one of England's most prosperous dynasties – Trentham's past is every bit as exciting as its future. In this first section we chart the heady highs, the gradual decline and the imminent revival of this magnificent Estate.

1086

The earliest record of Trentham comes in the Domesday Book. It is described as a royal manor, valued at 115 shillings. A priest who owns two ploughs is also mentioned, suggesting that Trentham may have had a church.



Extract from the Domesday Book

Ranulf Gernon, Earl of Chester

1150-52

After being granted the manor by Henry I, Ranulf Gernon, Earl of Chester, establishes a priory of Augustinian canons.



Henry II

1153

Ranulf dies, passing Trentham on to his infant son, Hugh. Henry II takes this opportunity to reclaim the manor for the Crown and, subsequently, creates a Royal Deer Park.



1315

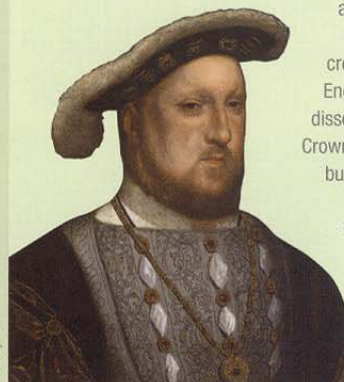
The land is largely devoted to sheep farming and in this year Trentham appears as an exporter of wool in a Florentine list. It seems that while the manor is of little religious significance, it is relatively wealthy.



Henry VIII

1536

Of religious significance or not, like other monasteries across the country, it feels the change in religious climate after Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell create the Church of England. Trentham is dissolved in 1537. The Crown leases the priory buildings, along with the rectory, to Richard Trentham.



1537

Trentham is dissolved

1538

The Estate is exchanged by Henry VIII with Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Yet almost immediately after taking ownership of Trentham, Suffolk sells it to Sir Thomas Pope, Treasurer of the Court of Augmentations.



Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk



Sir Thomas Pope

1540

However, Pope doesn't own Trentham for long either, selling it to Wolverhampton wool merchant James Leveson in return for 1000 marks and a rent of £105 per annum. Leveson and his successors pay this rent – purchased by the Crown from Pope in 1541 – until 1948. The dissolution of the monasteries has given the sharp-eyed Leveson an opportunity to found a landed dynasty and, beside Trentham, he also buys land from Stone Priory, Lilleshall Abbey and Wombridge Priory. For over three hundred years Trentham was to become a playground for his family's growing wealth and occasionally over-active imagination.

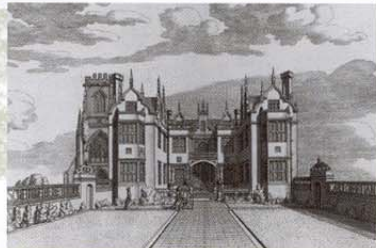
1599

The first surviving evidence of Trentham Hall comes in the form of a plan of the manor drawn by Henry Fletcher.

1630-39

Trentham under the Levesons continues to evolve and change. Sir Richard Leveson (James Leveson's great-great grandson) demolishes the old hall and builds a new mansion.

Walled gardens are created in the grounds, while fruit trees and willows are also planted. Despite the fact that Sir Richard Leveson is imprisoned for being a royalist during the Civil War, remarkably the hall and gardens remain largely intact.



Trentham Hall, 1686

1707

Lord Gower commissions architect William Smith of Warwick to re-design the old hall. According to Smith's brother Francis the brief was straightforward – the hall should be “both larger, higher and handsomer than it was before”. It is a sentiment that various architects and landscape designers would subsequently take to heart.

1703

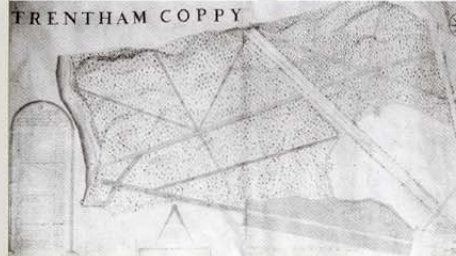
Sir John Leveson-Gower is created 1st Baron Gower of Stittenham.

1695

Reverend George Plaxton, chief estate agent of the Leveson-Gower Estates and described by Sir John Leveson as a “very ingenious man and a good scholar”, starts an ambitious programme to transform Trentham. His proposed scheme includes a pair of canals, a long walk and a long avenue.

1720

John, 2nd Baron Gower, extends and improves the land, enclosing Kings Wood bank as well as building a brick wall around the park. Some elements of this period's design can still be traced in the Woodlands today.



Trentham Coppy, 1727

1721-1803

Granville Leveson-Gower, 2nd Earl Gower is educated at Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford, went on to become MP for Bishop's Castle, then Westminster and finally Lichfield. On the death of his father Granville entered the House of Lords. In 1786 he was created Marquess of Stafford.

1737-38

Trentham Hall is again remodelled, this time with Francis Smith of Warwick while Giuseppi Artari works on its interiors.

1741-42

Yet more work takes place in the garden including the construction of a stone bridge over the Trent by Richard Trubshaw, a well-regarded Staffordshire builder.

1746-48

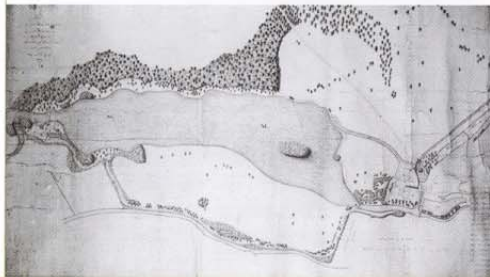
The “long gravel walk” on the causeway between the two canals is removed and a single lake created. But Trentham's biggest makeover is yet to come.



Guests approaching Trentham through South Park

1759-1780

The landscape designer Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (so called due to his habit of telling clients their gardens have "great capabilities") is commissioned by Granville, 2nd Lord Gower. Over the next 21 years he has an enormous impact on the Estate. The lake is enlarged, the park wall is repaired and expanded, Tunstall Fields, to the west of the hall, is turned into parkland and, elsewhere, two neo-classical lodges are built at the south-west end of the lake and a sunken fence is created to separate the lawn from the Deer Park. Finally the house is, once again, re-designed by the architect Henry Holland.



Capability Brown's plans for the Estate, 1759



1st Marquess of Stafford

1803

Granville, 1st Marquess of Stafford dies and is succeeded by his son George Granville.

The 2nd Marquess of Stafford marries Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, who owns vast tracts of Scotland

and is considered to be the wealthiest heiress in the country. The pair subsequently make themselves deeply unpopular north of the border, after the Marquess instigates the "Highland Clearances", effectively destroying the traditional highland way of life by resettling thousands of families and replacing them with sheep.

Back at Trentham, and with money not exactly a problem, the couple set a programme of new works and improvements in motion.



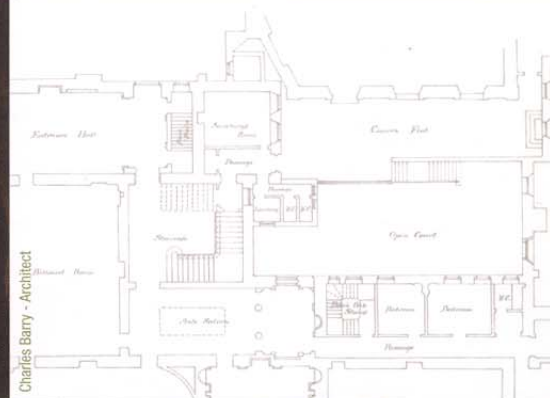
2nd Duke of Sutherland

1833

George Granville was created the 1st Duke of Sutherland but dies 6 months later. His successor George Granville, 2nd Duke of Sutherland, along with his wife Duchess Harriet, embark upon an extensive rebuilding scheme. Thus began the era that created Trentham in the form seen today. Celebrated architect Charles Barry visits Trentham for the first time and, with Granville's approval, quickly instigates a £123,000 building programme. Barry extensively redesigns the hall including rebuilding Tatham's dining room and conservatory as well as putting a belvedere tower over the old kitchen. The Orangery, Sculpture Gallery and Clock Tower were added and in 1842 he rebuilds Trentham church. His statue which crowns Monument Hill at the southern end of Trentham Lake, still dominates the local landscape just as his family dominated the locality during its long period of ownership.



Charles Barry - Architect



South west view showing Barry's palatial Trentham Hall, c1835

1793

Still not quite satisfied, Earl Gower commissions a 90ft-wide iron bridge to be built over the Trent. The remains of one arch can still be seen beneath the current bridge.



Trentham Hall, 1781



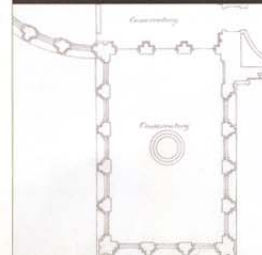
Trentham Hall, 1794

1808

Architect Charles Heathcote Tatham completes a new Mausoleum within the cemetery, now on the east side of the A34. He is also responsible for the addition of single storey wings to the east and west sides of the south front of the hall.



However, perhaps his greatest achievement is creating the Italian Flower Gardens. Divided into three terraces, the gardens are flanked on the east by a wrought iron trellis and on the west by a shrubbery. Barry created the shape and form of the Italian Gardens but he was no plantsman and the celebrated innovative planting schemes were the work of head gardener George Fleming.





1850

A series of head gardeners including George Fleming and Zadok Stevens make sure Trentham is one of the most celebrated gardens in the country. Sadly though there was one factor none of them could control...

1905

As pollution increases, Trentham's allure wanes. The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland abandon the house and offer it to the County Council. After due consideration it politely declines.



1924

Several tennis courts and a bowling green are built in the east pleasure ground and a bandstand is erected east of the Italian Garden. Meanwhile many of the glasshouses are dismantled.



1938

The twin lodges originally flanking the main entrance to the Hall are rebuilt in their present location on the A34, opposite the entrance to the Sutherland Mausoleum.



1939-45

During the war years Trentham plays temporary host to the London Clearing Banks and serves as a transit station for allied troops (including the French Foreign Legion). It is also used for military training purposes and as a control point for POWs. Memorials to some of those who spent time at Trentham in this period can be seen in the gardens today.



1872

Increased industry in the Potteries begins to have a negative impact on the local environment. Gardening journalist D.T. Fish reports that the River Trent is "the foulest blot on Trentham" describing "a foul slimy sewer, brimful of the impurities of every dirty crowded town that hugs its banks". Sadly the Trent also provided water to Trentham's lake and its fountains which means the once-beautiful features are ruined by the stench of brown sewage.



1911

Trentham Hall is sold for recovery of the materials to a local builder, Young & Son, and promptly demolished. The contents of the house are sold for a paltry £500. Meanwhile Trentham Park Golf Club is established in the north west corner of the park.



1931

Trentham Gardens Ltd is founded to maintain and manage the gardens that are finally opened to the public. A new Ballroom is built on the site of the Kitchen Gardens and an "Art Deco" outdoor swimming pool built by the Lake.



In the post war years Trentham is famous as a venue for dances and entertainment with many famous bands performing including a little-known beat combo called the Beatles in 1963.

1979

The Estate is sold to John Broome for redevelopment into a leisure park along the lines of nearby Alton Towers and planning consent is obtained in 1982.



1980

The Department of the Environment lists several buildings of "special architectural or historic interest". They include what remains of Trentham Hall, The Duchess's Cottage, the Grand Entrance and Orangery, and the Italian Garden balustrades.



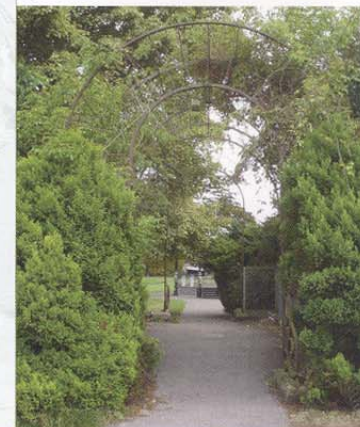
1985

NCB drains Trentham Lake and reinforces its eastern banks, before reflooding it in 1986. The swimming pool is demolished.



1991

A nine-hole pitch and putt golf course is established in the former arboretum. A thirty-lane golf driving range follows in 1992.



1984

John Broome's scheme does not proceed largely because of problems with subsidence caused by coal mining in the area and the National Coal Board buys the Estate.



1996

St Modwen Properties PLC and German investor Willi Reitz buy Trentham and immediately state their intention to "regenerate and restore the historic Estate and gardens", turning it into "a premier tourist and leisure destination of national significance, providing an incomparable facility for the residents of North Staffordshire". Trentham Leisure Ltd submitted plans to the local planning committee and after six years of lengthy negotiations and a public enquiry, permission is finally granted to revive the gardens in 2003.

Keeping with Trentham's long-standing tradition of big-budget regeneration, the new owners plan a £100m development programme.

Now the work begins in earnest.