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Hogarth's House as Hogarth saw it

Val Bott

A print issued by Jane Hogarth (Pl 1) shows a scattered row of buildings with high garden walls, seen across a large field where harvesting has begun. In the foreground a figure with a staff and hat sits resting with his dog beside the path. The print, which is unlike any other by Hogarth, was published in 1781, some years after his death, and appears in Jane's list of prints for sale as 'A Landscape'. Hogarth's biographer, John Nichols,¹ wrote in that year, 'This view, I am informed, was taken in 1750 but not designed for sale.'

Several impressions survive and the manuscript notes on different examples confuse rather than clarify the identification of the view. One impression of the print in the British Museum has a manuscript note stating that it shows 'Mr Ranby the Surgeon's House'. Horace Walpole annotated another example in the same collection as 'View of Hogarth's House at Chiswick etched by himself'. A third impression, in the British Museum, is said to have been 'taken from Hogarth's window at Chiswick'. Yet another, in the Crickitt Collection² at Hogarth's House, Chiswick, carries a manuscript note 'View of Mr Ranby the surgeon's house etcht by Hogarth given to me by his widow', with the initials 'WB'.

These varying descriptions cannot all be correct, and various attempts have been made to identify exactly what is depicted in this image. Ronald Paulson, for example, mentions that he had been unable to identify Ranby's country residence in Chiswick, but suggesting that it could be the larger house in the etching, with Hogarth's to its left.³ He sees a resemblance to Hogarth's surviving house in the second building from the left despite the absence of the first-floor bay window. His discussion focuses on Ranby's property and remains inconclusive. Using the techniques of the local historian rather than the art historian, this paper attempts to identify the only Chiswick image Hogarth seems to have produced.

The house in the Chiswick landscape

The riverside parish of Chiswick lies on low ground within the loop of a large meander of the Thames. At the downstream, easterly, curve of this meander is a settlement then known as 'Chiswick Town' and today usually called Chiswick Mall. Here was a centre of activity close to St Nicholas' parish church: the shingle draw dock where barges could be loaded and unloaded whatever the state of the tide; a community of fishermen, breweries and malthouses; a few shops, in Church Street; and the ferry to Barnes (Pl 2).

Hogarth moved to his summer cottage, his 'little country box', in 1749. It was the last house at the northwest corner of the village. Alongside his high garden wall ran a lane which is now the dual carriageway of the A4, and beyond the lane lay the huge open space of Chiswick Common Field, stretching almost to the road through Turnham Green which linked London and the West Country. Beyond that, to the north, the ground rises towards Acton and Ealing.

To the south of Hogarth's House, beyond the high garden wall, lay orchards and nursery gardens and a scattering of houses along today's Burlington Lane (the A316). These included Chiswick House, Hogarth's near neighbour to the southwest. This lane ran westwards from Chiswick Town to

the parish's other riverside village, Strand on the Green. South of the lane were extensive Thames-side meadows, with drainage channels and avenues of trees, and Barnes and Mortlake across the water.

The view from Hogarth's window

Though this is not clear from Rocque's map, Hogarth's Chiswick home stands right in the northeast corner of its plot (see Pl 3); a line of headers in the brickwork indicates that the house may have been constructed onto an existing boundary wall. This means that almost all its main windows look out over his garden and face north-west, apart from a tiny second floor window (possibly inserted later) on the back wall of the house facing south-east, and a first-floor sash window with a view to the north from the room usually said to have been Hogarth's bedroom.

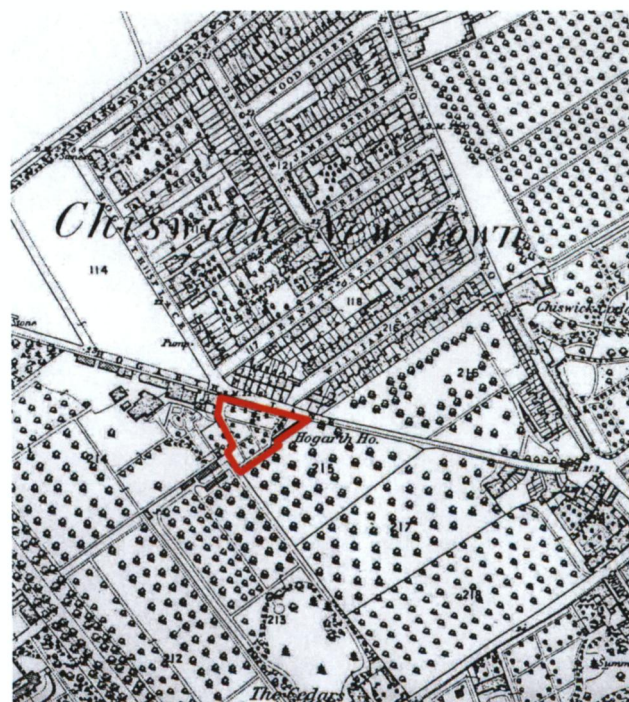
John Rocque's survey of London and its environs was completed in 1745, shortly before Hogarth took the house, and reveals its rural setting. Even today, with so much building around the house, it is clear that it would not have been possible to gaze from any of these windows across a large field to a lane with a group of houses like these.

Hogarth is known to have used an outbuilding in the garden as a studio/workshop but this has long since gone. A watercolour sketch of 'Hogarth's shop' (Pl 6), presumably taken from inside his garden, is pasted into an extra-illustrated copy (no. iii) of Thomas Faulkner's *History of Antiquities of Brentford, Ealing and Chiswick* in Chiswick Library's Local Studies Collection. This book was published in 1845 with a print of a very similar view. Both the print and the watercolour may have been made nearly a century after Hogarth took his house and they show a structure which seems no longer to be a studio – there are small coops or kennels built against it, with a ribbed plank to enable poultry to climb to the higher doorway, and a perch against the upper window.

Could a window of this 'shop' have provided this view across the local landscape? From this evidence it was very modest and lay within Hogarth's garden. It appears to have an opening in the gable on the garden side, and a large triangular window to the left of the chimney which would have provided maximum light to the studio. It is unlikely, however, that there would have been a view beyond the high garden walls from this structure. The description of the image as a 'view from Hogarth's window' is therefore the least convincing of the three.

'Mr Ranby's House'

Hogarth's friend, John Ranby, was Principal Surgeon to King George II and to the Chelsea Hospital. Hogarth painted affectionate portraits of Ranby's two children in 1748-1750 (Tate Britain) and it is tempting to suggest that Ranby and other friends such as Thomas Morell and James Ralph attracted Hogarth to Chiswick when he wanted a country home after the stiflingly hot summer of 1749. They may surely have influenced his final decision to purchase, although it seems that for some years Hogarth had been accustomed to escaping to Chiswick from London during the summer. Ranby moved into his property in Chiswick in 1748



1 The etching issued by Jane Hogarth in 1781. British Museum

2 Extract from John Rocque's map of London, surveyed 1741-5. Hogarth's House is the last house at the north-west corner of the village of Chiswick.

3 Hogarth's House in 1867, showing position of the house in north-east corner of its plot; paths connecting the house; the two entrance gates; and the studio/workshop in the north-western corner of the garden. Ordnance Survey, 25' to 1 mile

and stayed until 1754, when he moved to Fordhook in Ealing, to Henry Fielding's former house.

Both Hogarth and Ranby are listed as ratepayers in the Chiswick Parish Churchwardens' rate books⁴ for 1749, with Hogarth's house valued at £7 and Ranby's at £12. These relatively modest houses stood alongside some very substantial ones. Their near neighbours included the Earl of Northampton, whose house and garden were valued in 1750 at £120, and Lord Burlington, whose property included his house and garden (at £180) and additional land valued at a further £147. At Chiswick House Lord Burlington had not only built his famous villa but from the 1720s had been acquiring neighbouring estates to extend his gardens and park. The Earl of Northampton's house, known later in the 18th century as Morton Hall, had been constructed by Sir Stephen Fox in the 1680s and came to the Northamptons by the marriage of Fox's daughter to the 4th Earl. Fox had purchased the Prebendal Manor of Chiswick in 1685 and subsequently erected and moved to a second substantial house (Manor Farm House) in Chiswick Lane. The 5th Earl of Northampton died in 1754 and in the following year his son-in-law, the Hon George Townsend, was listed as the occupier of both the Earl's house and of a property described as 'late Ranby's'.

Gillian Clegg⁵ has attempted to locate Ranby's house by matching information given in the rate books to the buildings in the etching. Interpreting the rate books is complex; the properties are listed in groups within specific areas of the parish. The houses in the vicinity of Chiswick House, including Ranby's and Northampton's, are grouped with Corney House, while Hogarth's, despite its proximity to them, is included in another group under the heading of Chiswick Town. The sequence of the listing and the actual locations are not absolutely clear, though Clegg believes that the list of ratepayers proceeds from east to west along Burlington Lane, and that the named occupiers can then be matched to known properties using information from other sources. As described above, ratepayers who can be identified with specific properties include the Earl of Northampton and Lord Burlington, Northampton's neighbour to the west. Ranby's property is listed before these two which would indicate a site to the east of Northampton's.

On this basis Clegg suggests that one interpretation of the etching could be that it shows the north side of Burlington Lane viewed from the south, with the higher land of Acton on the horizon. The house with tall chimneys relates well to surviving images of Northampton's house, and the dome of Chiswick Villa appears faintly above the tree line at the extreme right of the picture. The rooflines visible amongst the trees between these two houses would then be their stabling and outbuildings. Clegg identifies the second property from the left in the etching as Ranby's.

To make this interpretation work in relation to the buildings on the ground, the printed image would have to have been reversed from that in the original sketch. However, the reversal of the printed image is not quite sufficient to explain the relationships between them and the landscape, unless this is a composite view rather than a realistic record. The farmland in the foreground bears no resemblance to the field pattern with drainage channels and avenues of trees known to have existed at this time to the south of Burlington Lane. In fact, the open arable land crossed by pathways in the foreground bears a strong resemblance only to Chiswick's large Common Field.

Clegg recognises the difficulties inherent in describing the view as being taken from Hogarth's window, already discussed above. However, she discounts Horace Walpole's

identification of the etching as showing Hogarth's own house rather than Ranby's because of the impression in the Crickitt Collections with the handwritten note, '*View of Mr Ranby the surgeon's house etched by Hogarth given to me by his widow*'. She concludes that Mrs Hogarth would surely not have mistakenly identified her own house, which she was still using until her death, and feels that it is unlikely that the person who wrote the manuscript note might have been mistaken, especially if he was an enthusiast who was delighted to write on his print that he had actually met Mrs Hogarth.

'View of Hogarth's House in Chiswick, etched by himself'

The fact that these two identifications of the print are not wholly convincing leaves us with Horace Walpole's suggestion that the etching shows Hogarth's House itself. If Walpole's identification of the print is correct then this is the only surviving image of the house from the 18th century.

During 2006 a conservation statement and schedule of works were prepared to support a bid for funding for Hogarth's House. This required a careful examination of all the relevant historical information⁶ and a study of the structure itself. The building has been extended several times – first by the addition of an upper floor, then by raising the single-storey scullery to the full height of the house on the south side and the construction of a single-storey kitchen extension beyond that. In addition, the projecting oriel window of the central first-floor room was added to give additional space and status to this room. Stylistically, all of these alterations date from the period 1740–1760. Further evidence supports the fact that this work was carried out for the Hogarths, as the rate book valuation of the property increased during their tenure from £7 in 1749 to £10 in 1752.

One of the aims of the planned future work at Hogarth's House is to provide level access from the pavement. There are three gateways through the wall facing the A4 (Pl 5): a single gate with steps down close to the front door, now used by all visitors, a small gate further west, which has long been boarded over, and an ugly modern double gate used for access by garden contractors, which has no steps. As the plan is to open the double gateway during opening hours, research was done specifically to find a record of the kind of gates that had been hung at this entrance in the past.

Most surviving images of the House date from the second half of the 19th century or the early 1900s. Several sketches and prints, produced around the time it was acquired as a memorial to the artist in the early 1900s, show the single gate entrance beside the house. Only a fine 1897 watercolour by TM Rooke (Pl 4), now displayed in Hogarth's House, shows the view from the lane in detail, with crenellated wooden gates. Rooke lived in nearby Bedford Park for much of his long life, and several of his careful watercolours of the Chiswick area are in the Local Studies Collection at Chiswick Library. He received commissions from Ruskin for accurate record sketches of historic buildings which suggests that his picture should be a reliable source of information.

This recent detailed study of every surviving image in relation to the structure and the garden wall suggests that Walpole's identification of the etching is correct. In it, the artist has observed the many details with such care that that the second building from the left matches the surviving Hogarth's House very well. It has the angled end wall facing out onto the lane, and the same number and disposition of floors and windows, including the two dormers in the older section of roof to the left. The view is looking towards the south, and the light falling on the north-east end of the build-



4 *Hogarth's House* by Thomas Matthew Rooke (1842-1942), 1897. Watercolour. Rooke's careful sketch, looking east, shows the urns Garrick gave to Hogarth stand on the gateposts near the house. The stone finials from the double gate have been found in the garden. Rooke shows a vertical line of contrasting bricks to the right of the bay window which mark the end of house before the 3-storey extension was added. London Borough of Hounslow, Hogarth's House



5 The same view in 2007. The double gateway has been widened and its gatepiers rebuilt and only a slope in the wall shows where the outbuildings stood. Photo: Lars Tharp

6 'Hogarth's shop'. Watercolour by an unknown artist. Pasted into an extra-illustrated copy (no. iii) of Thomas Faulkner's *History of Antiquities of Brentford, Ealing and Chiswick*. Chiswick Library, Local Studies Collection. London Borough of Hounslow



ings suggests that the artist was working in the morning. The hills beyond, no longer visible today because of later suburban building, represent the distant rising land of then-fashionable Roehampton. Only the projecting first-floor oriel window is missing. Perhaps it is the absence of this distinctive feature that has led viewers of the print to dismiss the accuracy of Walpole's description, when everything else points to its being a view of Hogarth's own country home.

The garden wall in the etching appears at first glance to have been strengthened by buttresses, but there are none on the real wall. What the print may actually show is a line of bollards, perhaps placed along the edge of the footpath in front of the wall to protect it from being damaged by horses and vehicles. The arrangement of the three gates in the wall is the same as today, but the double gate opens into an outbuilding at the west end of the garden. The height and profile of the outbuilding in the etching appear to mirror those in the watercolour sketch discussed above, with a small opening in the gable as well as a steeply sloping roof on the left. In this position, at the bottom of the artist's garden, the large triangular window to the left of the chimney in the watercolour would have provided light from the north-east by which he could work. And beyond this section of the studio, further left in the watercolour, appear the roofs and chimneys of the buildings immediately adjoining; these are only partially shown, but do resemble those in the same location in the etching.

Further details strengthen the case for the identification of the etching as showing Hogarth's house. Rocque's map shows a series of paths criss-crossing the common field; the man resting in the foreground of the picture appears to be sitting beside one of them. To the left of the wall of Hogarth's House the artist has shown what appears to be a railing or fence. This is probably not the continuation of the wall along the line of Hogarth Lane, as appears at first glance, but may instead be the boundary of the triangular plot with two buildings, shown between Hogarth's House and the words 'The

Bowling Alley' on Rocque's map.

A further version of the etching came to light, during the writing of this paper, in the collection of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum.⁷ This item is among Hogarth memorabilia which was formerly the property of the Phillips family, descendants of Jane Hogarth's relatives. A slip of paper, pasted to lie across the mounted etching and signed by EA Phillips, confirms the use of the outbuilding with the words '*Paintin [sic] Room over Stable Chooach [sic] House*'.

Hogarth's house in its context

The buildings included to the right of Hogarth's house in the etching are recognisable as Northampton's and Burlington's houses, but they lay at a much greater distance to the south west than is suggested by the image. Perhaps it was the artist's intention to show them closer together than they were in reality.

Why might this be? The larger houses were certainly local landmarks with high status. Chiswick House was the home of Burlington and his protégé, William Kent, and Hogarth's antipathy to them is well documented. The Fox family connection with Northampton's house may provide a more friendly connection, as Hogarth had painted the Hervey conversation piece in about 1740, which included Fox's sons, another Stephen, the 1st Lord Ilchester, and his brother,

Henry, the 1st Lord Holland, both of whom had been born in Chiswick.

An explanation is needed for the inclusion of the house on the left of the group. The two larger properties stood in Burlington Lane, which runs behind Hogarth's house, but have been brought forward for the purpose of the picture. If the other house, which does appear in the etching to be slightly set back behind Hogarth's, were also situated in the same lane, it would lie in a sequence running from left to right in the picture, that is east to west. Gillian Clegg's identification of Ranby's house as lying to the east of the Earl of Northampton's is convincing, so this building may be Ranby's house. If so, then *two* of the descriptions of the etching are correct and it actually shows both Hogarth's house and Ranby's. Describing the etching as showing Ranby's house, when there were such august neighbours, may then perhaps be explained as a piece of humour.

Dating the image

The detailed study of the house for the conservation statement can help a little with dating the image which Jane Hogarth issued in 1781. The etching depicts the house after the addition of a third floor and the later extension of all three floors on the south side. The rafters of the hipped roof, of a three-storey house only two rooms wide, remain in the attic, within the present roof structure, showing clearly that there must have been two phases of work. Differences in the design of the panelling and the floor levels in the supposed second phase confirm this.

The evidence of harvesting activity in the etching suggests that it was made in late summer, which would have to be the summer of 1750, if John Nichol's suggested date is correct. Completion of two separate building projects between the autumn of 1749, when the Hogarths took on the house, and the following summer would have been very ambitious.

Much of this building work must have been finished by the time of the higher rate valuation of 1752, however, as no further increase occurs during the rest of the 1750s. Perhaps two phases of work could have been accommodated between 1749 and 1752. If the house was only occupied seasonally it may have taken longer for the household to discover their requirements, with the second phase of building implying that the acquisition of this house had been a success and was worth further investment. Only the grand oriel window was still to be added to the façade shown in the

etching. Commentators have pointed to its likeness in Hogarth's *The Times*, I, of 1762, and so perhaps this print privately commemorates the installation of the window around that time?

Assuming that the landscape etching is based upon a drawing by Hogarth, it is intriguing to imagine that in 1750, shortly after moving in, he could have been sketching out ideas for developing his property, indicating how it would look when finished – taller, broader and a little more conspicuous alongside his richer neighbours and friends. And did Mrs Hogarth's commissioning, in 1781, an etching of this earlier sketch coincide with the renewed interest in her husband's life and work that arose from the publication of John Nichol's *Biographical Anecdotes*? If she did, might she have pointed out different aspects of the landscape and its buildings to individual purchasers, and thus inadvertently have contributed to their (and our) confusion?

The author would like to thank Elizabeth Einberg, Sheila O'Connell, Ronald Paulson, Lars Tharp and, especially, James Wisdom, for much useful advice and information in the preparation of this paper.

1 J Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth*, London, 1781.

2 Sheila O'Connell identifies the original collector as Ingham Foster, in S O'Connell, 'Hogarthomania and the Collecting of Hogarth', in D Bindman, ed, *Hogarth & his Times*. London, 1997.

3 RB Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works: Third revised edition*, London, 1989, cat. 182.

4 Chiswick Parish Churchwardens' rate books, 1749-1762, microfilm reel 7, Chiswick Local Studies Library.

5 G Clegg, 'Mr Ranby and his House', in *Brentford & Chiswick Local History Journal*, No. 8 (1999).

6 *Report No. 3217 on Hogarth's House* by the Domestic Buildings Research Group (Surrey), May 1984, is particularly helpful in the dating of architectural details. Wyndham Westerdale of Acanthus LW Architects assisted with the dating of the house and prepared the schedule of works.

7 ABDAG 000208 (i), the gift of Lizzie Hogarth in 1939. The author is grateful to Elizabeth Einberg for this reference.