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A delicious retreat: The marine villa and its setting in England, *c.* 1760 to *c.* 1840

A contextual study. Main report.

Dr Kate Feluś

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SUMMARY

This study was commissioned to better understand the significance of Norris Castle on the Isle of Wight as a late 18th century marine villa and landscape. It compares Norris Castle with other villa developments on the island, the wider Solent area and at strategic points around the English coastline.

Marine villas were highly fashionable and numerous, from the late 18th century into the 19th century. Over time, with increasing demand for seaside land, their numbers have diminished considerably. In some places the house might survive, but its setting is lost. In a very few places the setting remains, but the house has gone. Therefore surviving ensembles of marine villas and their settings are now extremely rare.

The report concludes that Norris Castle and its setting is particularly fine and unusual. It is a rare surviving example as so many marine villas have been lost.

AUTHOR

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Front cover illustration: Norris Castle in 1823 by William Daniell. [R McInnes]

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DATE OF STUDY AND REPORT

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CONTENTS

‘The site [of Norris Castle] is very happily chosen and the style of its architecture worthily accords with the scenery in which it forms a conspicuous feature, and the enjoyment of which was probably the chief motive that induced the noble proprietor to fix his residence here. It stands on a commanding eminence near East Cowes, overlooking the opposite town and harbour, while from the tower of the lodge there is a very extensive land and sea prospect’.

William Daniell 1823 *A Voyage Round Great Britain*.

1 INTRODUCTION

In July 2019, Historic England issued a brief to commission a contextual study of historic marine and seaside villa landscapes. This was largely prompted by the need to better understand the context of Norris Castle on the Isle of Wight, where Historic England is advising on development proposals.

Norris Castle is a Grade I castellated residence overlooking the Solent on the north side of the island. It was designed in the late 1790s by James Wyatt (1746–1813), architect to George III. During the time of its first owner, Lord Henry Seymour (1746–1830), it was known as his 'marine villa'. The mansion is set in a designed landscape of around 56ha, within which is a castellated model farm attached to a castellated walled kitchen garden (listed Grade I). There is evidence that the landscape designer Humphry Repton (1752–1818) was involved in its layout.

Seymour retained Norris Castle until his death in 1830. It then passed through a number of private owners. The most recent sale was in 2015. The castle is now subject to plans by the current owner to turn it into a luxury hotel. This is to be developed in conjunction with the adjacent estate of Springhill: another, later, marine villa to the west.

This research report is the product of the contextual study of marine villa landscapes commissioned by Historic England. The significance and vulnerability of Norris Castle was the starting point but, as the study evolved, the extent of the loss of marine villas and the vulnerability of surviving examples became clear. Consequently, the validity of an exercise to understand marine villas as a distinct class of heritage asset was confirmed. As Norris Castle was the catalyst for this research, it forms a reference point throughout the report.

Aims

The aims of the study were:

1. To increase the general understanding of the marine villa and its landscape setting in late 18th and early 19th-century England.

2. To use this increased knowledge to further understand Norris Castle and its setting within the context of other similar scale, seaside properties (that is, villas not grand estates) of the period, from about 1780 to 1840. (Note: the concept of the marine villa continued throughout the 19th century and beyond). The study asked how typical, early and significant an example Norris is.

3. To assess the extent of surviving marine villas and their settings. Within this context, the study also aimed to ascertain how rare an example Norris Castle is.

The definition of a 'villa', and particularly what constituted a 'marine villa', is outlined in Section 2.

The importance of the Isle of Wight as a destination

It should be noted here, at the very start of this study, that the Isle of Wight was a particularly popular and fashionable place – in national terms – in which to build a villa during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Until the late 18th century, the island was very rural and undeveloped. It was a place of small-scale farmers and fishermen, who may have engaged in a little smuggling on the side. Gradually, for three to four decades, from about the 1760s, outsiders started to settle on the island and build cottages and villas. One particularly important early figure among them was John Wilkes, a radical MP and pamphleteer, who sought retreat and retirement on the island. Gradually, the beauty of the landscape started to be appreciated by seekers of the Picturesque: those looking for the sort of interesting topography that might be worthy of a painting. Consequently, by the start of the 19th century, the island had become a highly desirable destination, not only for tourists, but also for those looking to stay longer, many of whom built themselves marine villas. During this period the Isle of Wight was, therefore, of national importance. This pattern of tourism and building reached its apogee with the development of a marine villa at Osborne by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in the 1840s. She had been introduced to the Solent, in general, and the island in particular, as a girl, including a stay at Norris Castle.

Methodology and sources

As a contextual study, this report necessarily took a (largely) broad-brush approach. As such, it looked at designed landscapes as part of an ensemble at a site, and – significantly – examined the wider setting of a site: its location and topography, as well as its relationship to other houses and settlements and, crucially, to the sea. The importance of the concept of the 'ensemble' was largely determined by the case of Norris itself, where the villa, ancillary buildings and landscaped setting survive essentially intact. However, it is important to bear in mind that the creators of such places – Seymour, for example – would not have seen houses and landscapes as separate, rather as one and the same, as an entity. The minutiae of how gardens were laid out is discussed to a certain extent in this report, but as the research evolved, it became clear that establishing the degree of survival of marine villas and their settings was of fundamental importance. This is because marine villas were highly fashionable and increased in number over at least a century, yet only a fraction of the sites survive. Furthermore, sites at which both villa and setting remain are even more rare.

Marine villa landscapes have never been written about before. Indeed, analytical literature on marine villas is sparse. The best piece that deals with the marine villa looks specifically at the Isle of Wight. It was written by furniture historian Dr Lindsay Boynton, who grew up on the Island, and it forms a chapter in the

book *The Georgian Villa* (1996), edited by Professor Dana Arnold.[1] In his chapter, Boynton adroitly summarises the development, local and national relevance, and significance of the marine villas of the Island. To continue Boynton's usage and in tribute to Jane Austen, who knew several of the places discussed (and to her heroine Fanny Price), the Isle of Wight is referred to in the following pages as 'the Island' – with a capital 'I'.

Perhaps coincidentally, or maybe significantly, at around the same time that the conference at which Boynton presented his research on marine villas was held (1995), English Heritage (the forerunner of Historic England) commissioned John Phibbs of Debois Landscape Survey Group to carry out a study of villa landscapes[2] to inform the development of the *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special historic Interest in England* (the *Register*). This report concentrated on rural and suburban villas and was completed in 1994. It does not specifically mention marine villas. The coincidental timing gives the impression that there was a heightened interest in villas and villa landscapes in the mid-1990s and a desire to understand them better and assess their significance. At the time there was at least one example of a marine villa landscape on the Isle of Wight that was identified as a possible site for designation.[3] This study confirms it has the merit for inclusion.

A large part of the research for this study was the identification of marine villa sites, both on the Island and along the north coast of the Solent. This was not how the research project was originally conceived. However, it was noted fairly early on that there had been a high number of losses, especially of architecturally significant marine villas, on the Isle of Wight.[4] This realisation was largely due to a report commissioned by the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team (AONB), titled *Paradise Lost: The lost buildings of the East Wight* (2018) by Professor Robin McInnes.[5] The losses ranged from the architecturally significant East Cowes Castle, built by the architect John Nash (1752–1835) for himself and located only 900m from Norris Castle, to less significant (although typical) sites, including several that have been lost to landslips and coastal erosion. East Cowes

1 D. Arnold (ed.) 1996 *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton. The paperback edition of 1998 is used and cited here. The book arose from a conference organised jointly by the Georgian Group and the Paul Mellon Centre in 1995.

2 Phibbs's methodology was initially to contact 172 civic societies across the country, asking them to suggest sites that might be considered villas. Only 35 made suggestions. The replies implied a lack of knowledge and/or interest in the designed landscape settings of these villas. Phibbs wrote in his introduction: 'While the houses may have been recorded and valued it seemed that very few people have ever thought of looking at their settings.'

3 The picturesque landscape setting for the cottage orné of Puckaster at Niton, in the south of the Island, was included on the list of candidate sites for registration, however, further research was needed and the site remains on Historic England's county review list (2003).

4 The most architecturally important marine villas on the Isle of Wight that have been lost are: East Cowes Castle, Fernhill, Hill Grove, St Clare, Tower Cottage, Steephill Castle and its precursor, the very early Steephill Cottage. Still more of the important extant examples had lost their settings.

5 McInnes is a geologist and engineer by training. His interest in coastal erosion has led him to use historic topographic views, meaning there is a good overlap between his work in this field and the existence and loss of marine villas, especially on the Isle of Wight.

Castle was demolished in 1963 and its grounds are now almost entirely covered by housing estates.[6] The degree of loss of marine villas on the Isle of Wight started to confirm the rarity of Norris as a surviving example and raised the question of how representative of a regional and national picture this was. Time limitations of the study meant that it was not possible to answer this question categorically on a nationwide basis, although research into a few carefully targeted areas suggested that the pattern of marine villa was true elsewhere.[7] For the north Solent coast – and for a significant distance either side, in both West Sussex and Dorset (going into east Devon) – the pattern of loss reflects that on the Island, and is, in fact, even more severe.

In order to identify potential marine villa sites and to establish the basic degrees of loss and survival, a methodology was devised using National Library of Scotland (NLS) digitised historic Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (usually the second edition, 25 inch to 1 mile), dating from about 1890 to about 1910. These were accessed via the NLS website and have the advantage of being georeferenced with satellite mapping. The historic layer can be made transparent, allowing viewers to see what is on the site today. The coastline was scanned for sites demonstrating features typical of the setting of a potential marine villa, such as lodges and drives, shrubbery walks, conservatories and glasshouses. It would be a time-consuming process to do this nationally, although it would be an effective and valuable task. As it is, using this methodology, the project identified almost 200 sites around the coast of England.

For the Isle of Wight, and especially along the north coast where Norris Castle is situated, the Solent is an important sphere of influence. Accordingly, the methodology was employed on a regional basis and used systematically for the whole of the Solent coast, working from east to west. Initially, the plan had been to define the Solent as running from Selsey Bill in West Sussex in the east, to Hengistbury Head in Dorset in the west. However, there were no seaside villas in West Sussex to the west of Selsey Bill. This raised the question of whether this was true for the rest of the West Sussex coast. Consequently, the consideration of historic maps was continued eastwards and the investigation quickly found an interesting cluster of marine villas at Aldwick, 8km north-east of Selsey, along the coast towards the seaside resort of Bognor Regis. This cluster proved to be a microcosm – in terms of its development, owners, architectural styles, landscape features and, ultimately, its decline. As there were only seven marine villas, it was possible to find out a little more about them. Their story is presented as a case study in Section 6. The detail that has been established with regard to the Aldwick cluster suggests that more in-depth research would be worthwhile on other groupings in the future.

As marine villa sites were identified using the NLS mapping they were listed and baseline information on each was compiled. This included their location, information on their settings *c.* 1900 and their degree of survival today. Also –

6 The outline of the designed landscape setting for the castle can be picked out in the pattern of the streets. In one of which a marooned gate lodge and a pair of gatepiers can still be found.

7 Although most targeted areas had one or two examples of marine villas, they were not built with the same profusion as on the Island and, to a lesser extent, the wider Solent.

where possible – basic information about owners, plus web-based references such as listed building descriptions or local history websites.[8] Information for sites identified in West Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight is included as an appendix.

The map-based methodology took precedence over the study of theoretical texts and pattern books. It became clear that it gives a better representation of what was actually laid out on the ground – in terms of the landscape setting and distribution of elements of a marine villa – than a description of a villa from a theoretical writer, such as J. C. Loudon, for example.

Within the scope of the study, a limited number of site visits were carried out, including to Eaglehurst in Hampshire, Pennsylvania Castle in Dorset and several sites on the Isle of Wight.[9] The study identified a further small number of surviving marine villa ensembles that should be visited in the future to confirm their condition on the ground. This will help to establish the rarity of intact ensembles.

For the purposes of this study 'intact ensembles' means that the house, ancillary buildings, such as stables, and landscape setting all survive, with the historic boundary of the plot intact. More ephemeral/delicate structures, such as glasshouses, may not survive. The condition of many of the survivals identified for this study is unknown.

Exceptions and limitations of the study

The desirability of marine villas and the fact that they were often secondary to a family's principal country seat and/or town house, and not handed down from generation to generation, meant that they changed ownership frequently and, with that, also changed names. Moreover, these names tended to be unimaginative, generic and simply descriptive: for example, Westfield or East Cliff. Consequently, when investigating individual exemplars of the type, it was sometimes difficult to ascertain their building date, original owner and subsequent development, particularly within the parameters of what was intended to be a largely desk-based assessment, relying on web-based resources.

Marine villas were not looked at nationally, except in broad terms, with a few carefully chosen areas pinpointed for investigation. The degree of loss was not assessed in national terms, but the indications are that the patterns seen on the Isle of Wight and along the Solent and immediate south coast are probably typical.

8 For example, the Hampshire Gardens Trust website is particularly helpful, including on several of the lost villa landscapes.

9 On the Isle of Wight, site visits were made to Binstead House (very private, so boundaries and beach only), Shanklin Chine/Rylstone, East Dene and the tunnel and drive of Undermount at Bonchurch, the site of Steephill Cottage/Castle, Marine Villa (previously Sea Cottage) and Lisle Combe (previously Captain Pelham's Cottage) at St Lawrence, and Puckaster Cottage at Niton. Eaglehurst (Hampshire) was viewed from Luttrell's Tower in the grounds.

However, the areas spot-checked beyond the Solent, south coast and Isle of Wight suggested that marine villas were less popular in other parts of the country. The early ones on the Isle of Wight were pioneers and the south coast was probably always popular.

Utilising the mapping of the National Library of Scotland website (NLS) meant that the snapshot provided dated from around eighty to one hundred years after marine villas were at the height of fashion. However, in some places findings were corroborated by use of the Ordnance Survey Drawings (OSDs) dating from the Napoleonic War period (held by the British Library). These were generally utilised where sheets are available on the Wikimedia Commons website, which is not ideal as some sheets are missing and the resolution is not high.[10]

Only marine – that is, seaside – villas were considered for this study. Suburban villas, for example, were not included.

Criteria

The broad criteria for villas to be included in the study were:

Villas generally needed to be stand-alone and not part of a suburban or urban development by about 1900. There were some early properties of note in Brighton, for example, which in their earliest incarnations might have constituted marine villas, but by around 1900 they had effectively (and long since) become town houses.

The plots had to exhibit at least some evidence of designed landscape and typical marine villa features.

For the Isle of Wight, the villas investigated were those with sea frontage – that is, with no development between the villa and the sea, with the exception of designed landscape and open cliff-top land. Villas sited a little inland but with sea views were not included, although in many cases they are likely to have been described as 'marine villas' at the time.[11] This is because there were so many marine villas on the Island. However, further away from the Island and the Solent, villas that were a little set back from the shore (generally no more than 800m) were considered by the study because, in these areas, there were fewer of them.[12]

10 For some sheets, higher resolution images from the author's own files were used.
11 Fairy Hill near Seaview is a case in point.
12 If the grounds of a villa were extensive, the house might easily be several hundred metres from the sea.

2 DEFINITIONS

What is a villa?

The villa in the 18th and early 19th centuries is an elusive and amorphous thing to define. It is perhaps helpful to think of it as a concept rather than a specific architectural type. In her introduction to *The Georgian Villa* (1996), Dana Arnold says: 'The identification of a villa type is problematical on several levels. First, the grouping together of buildings under the heading of a type implies a uniformity of function and form that may not be wholly accurate.'[13] However, it is true that the scale – of villa and its designed landscape setting – tends to be compact. She continues to observe that 'villas exist in a variety of architectural styles' and concludes that 'the variety of form, location and occupant ... shows that the villa was to some extent a state of mind in the Georgian period'. In other words, it was in the eye of the beholder – a Georgian observer would know a villa when they saw one.

The idea of the villa dates back to antiquity, and for those living in the 18th century the benchmarks were the villas of Pliny, including the *villa maritima* at Laurentinum, as described by Robert Castell in *The Villas of the Ancients Illustrated* (1728), and those of Palladio. The common thread that runs from Pliny through Palladio and into the 18th century is the association of the villa with the idea of retreat: for contemplation, relaxation and to escape the cares of worldly life. Arnold says: ' ... the idea of a villa transcends fashion and social strata, as it meets a need to relate to nature which still exists today.'[14] This rings true of the marine villas investigated in this study. Both the estates and farms of Pliny's villas and of those built by Palladio were intrinsically linked to their residences. Again, this fundamental connection between villa and setting is true of late 18th and early 19th-century marine villas in England.

How does a marine villa differ from a marine cottage?

Both marine cottages (usually those described as cottages ornés) and marine villas are investigated in this study because they are very closely related, often one and the same. They share many attributes – their scale, both in terms of the residence and the setting, is similar – and they are both expressions of the Picturesque.

In the 18th century, a marine villa might be a cottage orné, and a cottage by the sea might be described as a villa. The residence of Sir Thomas Brooke Pechell in West Sussex was very definitely described in 1807 as a cottage – it was thatched and clearly very picturesque (*see* Section 6) – but at its sale in 1827 it was listed as 'Marine Villa' and subsequently it was known as 'Aldwick Villa'. It is an example of how the two terms ('cottage' and 'villa') were linked in the minds of people at

13 D. Arnold (ed.) 1996 *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, pp. x–xii.
14 Ibid, p. xii.

the time – they knew what they meant.[15] The property's final name before it was destroyed by fire in 1909 – The Paradise – reflected its aesthetic qualities as a retreat. Another example of the interchangeability of the terms is the renowned Knowle Cottage at Sidmouth, Devon, which was described by one guidebook in 1837 as 'the elegant marine villa orné'.[16]

As with villas in general, definitions are tricky: there are always exceptions to the rule, always places that do not quite fit. In order to understand the contextual examples used in this report, it may be helpful to use the metaphor of a family tree.

The marine villa could be seen to have a genealogy. Its parents might be considered to be the increasingly popular suburban villa and the early seaside cottage (ornamented, not the sort lived in by humble workers). Suburban villas for the wealthy professional classes sprung up in the environs of the great cities (for example, London and Bristol) in the second half of the 18th century, but these trace their ancestry back to Lord Burlington's villa at Chiswick House, for example, and to Lady Suffolk's Marble Hill, Pope's Villa and the other Twickenhamshire villas on the River Thames (Fig 2.1). There are a few notable and influential examples of the marine cottage, which could be seen as parents of the marine villas discussed here. These were an off-shoot of the coastal (and near coastal) country house. A prime example is Boarn Hill Cottage on the Cadland estate in Hampshire, which was built as a fishing pavilion and Solent-side retreat from the main house, 5km away, along the coast on Southampton Water.[17] A near parallel, but also an early fully fledged marine villa, is Sir Richard Worsley's Sea Cottage at St Lawrence on the Isle of Wight, which was a satellite of his principal estate of Appuldurcombe, just 5km away. Marine cottages are also related to the trend for the cottage orné. Indeed, the seaside was a favoured place to build such an architectural confection. So, while the marine cottage might be considered a parent of the marine villa, it continued in its own adapted form.

At their most extreme in terms of scale and extent, marine villas are almost indistinguishable from the coastal country house sitting in its estate. Osborne House is a good example of this. It started out as a villa-scale residence and as a villa in intention, as did its landscape. But its royal occupation and the consequent need for space meant that it evolved into something far grander and more extensive than most villas. The landscape is very large for a marine villa. On the face of it, Norris Castle is also a little on the large side to be described as a villa. The inclusion of the model farm is unusual, and the scale of the kitchen garden is certainly grander and larger than was typical. However, if we look at the house in comparison to another gothick mansion by James Wyatt (1746 –1813) at Ashridge

15 West Sussex Record Office (WSRO), Add Mss 37, 312.

16 J. Harvey 1837 *Guide to Illustrations and Views of Knowle Cottage, Sidmouth: The Elegant Marine Villa Orné of Thomas L Fish Esq*. Sidmouth: J Harvey.

17 Southampton Water was, as this study sets out, a highly desirable location for marine villas. Cadland House, however, was really a typical large country estate and as a principal seat it is not considered here. *See also* Section 6.

Figure 2.1: Pope's Villa, Twickenham, *c.* 1759, by Samuel Scott, (1701/2–1772). [Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection]

in Hertfordshire, which is more than four times the size and lies at the centre of a vast estate, the idea of Norris as a mere villa seems a less outrageous proposition. So, it is useful to remember that the marine villa was more of a concept, and the intent of the owner must be a large part in its definition.

Finally, it should be noted that there was also a sub-type of the marine villa that did not have sea frontage but was built a little inland, with its landscape setting dominated by views of the sea. These, too, would have been termed 'marine villas' in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Knowle Cottage at Sidmouth, for example, is 800m or so from the sea. Luscombe Castle, further west along the Devon coast, which would also have been termed a marine villa, is about twice as far from the sea. In order to consider the closest parallels to Norris Castle, this study has tended to focus on those examples whose grounds met the sea.

Differences and similarities between rural, suburban and marine villas

In his article 'Family, society and the ornamental villa on the fringes of English county towns' (1978), T R Slater observed that suburban villas emerged in clusters, frequently on land sold by one previous owner.[18] This is something they have in common with many – although not all – marine villas. In some cases, marine

18 T. R. Slater 1978 'Family, society and the ornamental villa on the fringes of English county towns', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 4 (2), pp. 129–44. Quoted in J Phibbs 1994 'The villa garden' (unpublished report for English Heritage).

villas may have developed in clusters, because the pioneer owner highlighted the attraction of that section of the coast and other owners followed suit, either for fashionable or social reasons. Friends and families might be drawn together. For example, two villas were built on Christchurch harbour in Dorset: Sandhills for George Rose in 1785 and the adjacent Gundimore (1796) for his son.

Marine villas differ from affluent, middle-class, suburban villas in that a substantial number were built by wealthy landowners who had great estates – their principal seats – elsewhere. Marine villas were also built by younger sons, such as Lord Henry Seymour, and dowagers or wealthy widows (Henrietta Howard at Marble Hill might be seen as a pioneer, for example). But they were also constructed for the professional classes: of the cluster at Aldwick in West Sussex, one was built by a Chichester wine merchant and another by a wealthy merchant from London, who was later a lord mayor. For both of these men, their villa was a retreat, not a primary residence.

In terms of architecture and style of landscaping the grounds, both marine and suburban villas could be eclectic. However, it could be argued that topography – and the ever-present relationship with the sea – played the leading role in deciding how the grounds of a marine villa were laid out.

What is the Picturesque?

In addition to setting out what we mean – and far more importantly what the Georgians meant – by a marine villa, it is also necessary for our understanding of theses sites (especially those on the Isle of Wight) to keep in mind the concept of the Picturesque.

The Picturesque movement developed during the third quarter of the 18th century, when tastemakers began to seek out areas of the country with dramatic topography and/or architectural ruins or archaeological features worthy of a picture. The primary pioneer of the style was the Reverend William Gilpin, who published his *Essay on Prints* in 1768, in which he defined the Picturesque as 'that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture'. In 1782, he published *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770*. As implied by the title, this was the result of a tour made several years earlier – one of many during the 1770s. It reflects the fact that the movement was closely connected to the rise in leisure tourism. Seekers of the Picturesque would travel to places such as the Wye Valley and sketch the ruins of Tintern Abbey, for example, often using a Claude glass. This device was an oval darkened mirror, which the artist (very frequently amateur) used to produce an image with heightened dramatic qualities. Another popular device also used for sketching in this manner was the *camera obscura*.

Figure 2.2: The Picturesque – The East End of the Isle of Wight Undercliff by 1840 by George Brannon (1784-1860). [R. McInnes]

The general principles of Gilpin's theories were carried into landscape design and commentary on landscape design, particularly by Uvedale Price (1747–1829) and Richard Payne Knight (1751–1824). The professional landscape designer Humphry Repton was initially an ally, but a rift occurred and they ended up at odds with each other after the publication of Knight's *The Landscape* in 1794. The various permutations of the theories – and the cut and thrust of the arguments between commentators on landscape – are complicated and need not concern us here. The important thing to bear in mind is the significance of the broad aesthetic theory at the end of the 18th and start of the 19th centuries – and its effect on the appreciation of the landscape.

The rise of Picturesque tourism was also fuelled by a frustration that the Napoleonic Wars made travel on the continental difficult. The Wye Valley, the Lake District, the Peak District and Wales became the main destinations, and also, to a lesser extent, the Tamar Valley and the South Devon coast. Of all the Picturesque travel destinations, the Isle of Wight was the most popular because it combined dramatic topography and the sea; the South Devon coast was a lesser alternative. The two

main architectural expressions or responses to the Picturesque were the cottage orné and the castle. The Isle of Wight boasted many of the former and several of the latter. Sidmouth in Devon was also a prime location for cottages ornés.[19]

It may be helpful to end this section by quoting Boynton:

> 'The marine villa was a hybrid born out of the passion for the Picturesque crossed with a newly discovered attractions of the sea, both as seascape and as therapy which, along with the rise of the seaside resort, began in the late eighteenth century and gathered pace in the early 1800s. The Isle of Wight was a favourite hunting ground for seekers of the Picturesque along with the Lakes, Wales, the Wye Valley and the Derbyshire Peaks. All these were duly furnished with a complement of ornamented cottages. Only the Island – as it will be referred to from now on in deference to Fanny Price's well established usage – and comparable places by the sea were eligible to develop the marine villa.'
>
> L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D. Arnold (ed.) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 120.

19 L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D. Arnold (ed.) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 120.

3 NORRIS CASTLE

A summary of the development and significance of Lord Henry Seymour's marine villa.

Before looking at specific examples of marine villas in national, regional and local contexts, some key background points concerning Norris Castle are outlined here. The development of the site has been described in the Norris Castle Heritage Assessment by Ettwein Bridges Architects and in John Phibbs's report on the landscape, titled *Lord Henry Seymour's marine villa*.[20] It has also been elucidated by Historic England in its reassessment of the significance of the Norris Castle landscape and in updating the entry on the Register. The present study did not directly pursue further research on Norris specifically.

Norris Castle was built for Lord Henry Seymour (1746–1830), the third child and second son of Francis Seymour-Conway, 1st Marquess of Hertford. Through his father's family, he was related to some of the most interesting and influential tastemakers of the 18th century, including writer and politician Horace Walpole and pioneering female British sculptor Anne Seymour Damer. He was one of 13 siblings from a family with a reputation for quirkiness (at best) and madness (at worst). Lord Henry himself seems to have been something of an eccentric.[21]

The family's influential connections went beyond the arts. Lord Henry's elder brother's wife was the mistress of the Prince of Wales for 12 years from 1807. There was also an earlier family connection with the prince, who had tried to engineer the adoption of Minnie Seymour: the orphaned, youngest daughter of Lord Henry's brother, Admiral Hugh Seymour. Minnie had been left in the care of the prince's most famous mistress, Mrs Fitzherbert, who wanted to keep her. As executor of his brother's will, Lord Henry engaged in a legal fight with the prince and won.[22]

The Hertford family seat was the great estate of Ragley in Warwickshire. Here, two generations of the family – Lord Henry's father and then his older brother – employed James Wyatt as their architect. It is no surprise, perhaps, that Lord Henry later chose Wyatt to design his marine villa on the Isle of Wight.

By the time he had bought Norris Farm, Seymour had had a career as an army officer and politician. But lucrative sinecures seem to have allowed him to give up those positions and also fund the building of Norris Castle. The site was purchased in 1795, and construction began in 1799. In *A Tour to the Isle of Wight* (1796),

20 The Heritage Assessment used by this study is dated 17/01/2016 and marked as a draft, but it is assumed to be the most up-to-date version of the document. The main section of Phibbs's report on the landscape is undated, but the accompanying maps are dated March 2016.

21 His eccentricity was noted in his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, January to June 1830, p. 363.

22 S. David 1998 P*rince of Pleasure: The Prince of Wales and the Making of the Regency.* London: Little, Brown and Co, pp. 264–72.

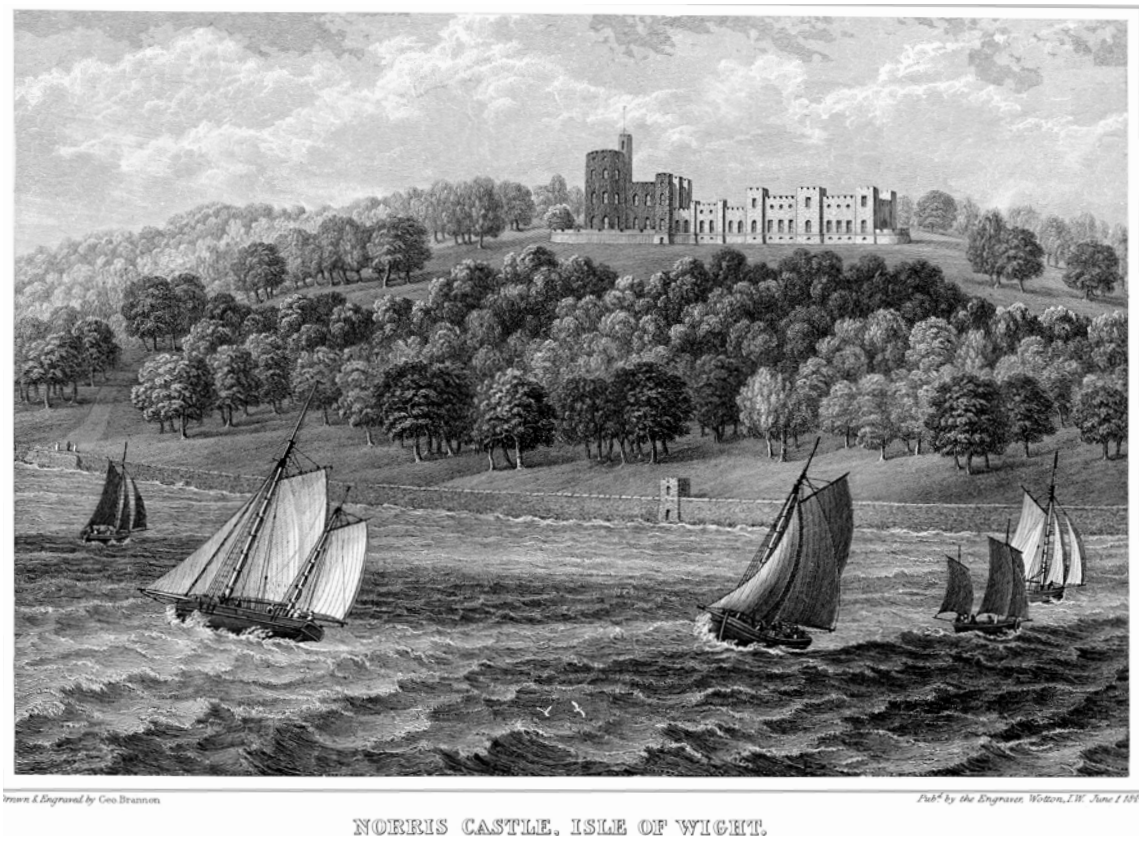


Figure 3.1: Norris Castle from the Solent *c.* 1840 by Thomas Barber (1771-1843) after H Bartlett. [R. McInnes]

Charles Tompkins states that 'the ground rising from East Cowes will shortly be ornamented with the houses of Lord H Seymour and Captain Thomson'.[23] This suggests that plans had been drawn up by then and alludes to other villa development in the immediate area. At first, like other marine villa builders elsewhere, Seymour lived in the pre-existing farmhouse.

The roughly triangular-shaped plot covered around 48ha of land to the east of East Cowes, with higher, level ground at the southern end fanning out towards lengthy beach frontage to the north. The house sits near the northern end, almost at the top of the slope down to the sea. It was placed roughly above the middle of the top of the triangle, with views out across the Solent. The slope below the castle is wooded, with a break in the centre allowing views to and from the sea (Fig 3.1). From the sea, the woods flank and frame the castle.

23 V. Basford and H. Thomas 2018 *Humphry Repton on the Isle of Wight*. Isle of Wight Gardens Trust, p. 8. Captain Thomson's villa was probably Slatwoods, one of the cluster at East Cowes.

The description of Norris by the artist William Daniell is highly pertinent – in fact, the most important account in many ways – because he saw it from the sea:

> 'Its site is very happily chosen and the style of its architecture worthily accords with the scenery in which it forms a conspicuous feature, and the enjoyment of which was probably the chief motive that induced the noble proprietor to fix his residence here. It stands on a commanding eminence near East Cowes, overlooking the opposite town and harbour, while from the tower of the lodge there is a very extensive land and sea prospect ...'[24]
>
> William Daniell 1823 *A Voyage Round Great Britain*.

It may be significant that the most dramatic end of the building is that of the round tower. This faces towards the direction from which the most important shipping would approach the Island, i.e. from Portsmouth.

To the south of the castle, Seymour built his model farm with attached walled kitchen garden. These, too, were castellated and stylistically apiece with the castle. The farm is made up of buildings for a variety of functions, set around three yards, with a bailiff's house prominently in the centre of the north-west range. The kitchen garden faces south-east. Along the inside of the north wall is a vinery, and there were two further free-standing, sunken glasshouses. Outside the south-east-facing wall, overlooking a small valley, is a terrace, likely to have been a garden and place to walk.

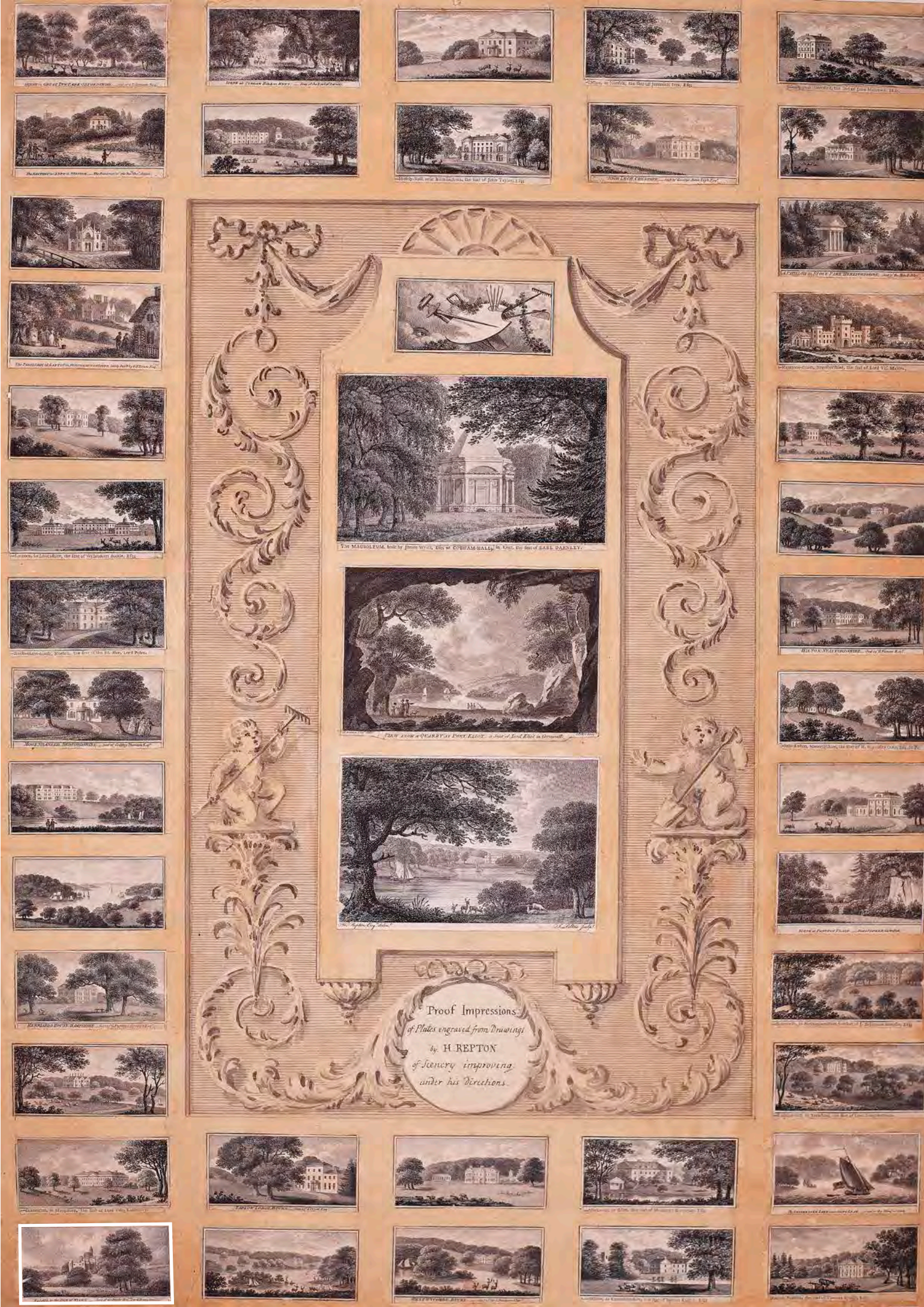
Some of the land immediately associated with the castle was in arable production, but much was planted with clumps and individual trees in the manner of parkland. There is persuasive evidence that the designed landscape setting for the castle was laid out with advice from Humphry Repton. From 1796 until (probably) 1801, he was in partnership with the architect John Nash, who built himself a marine villa – East Cowes Castle – less than 1km from Norris (first phase of building from about

24 The Royal Collection website gives an excellent summary of Daniell's *A Voyage round Great Britain* (1818–20): '... in 1813, William Daniell embarked on a journey around the coast of Great Britain to make drawings of the scenery and significant river ports. The intention of this journey was to address that "while the inland counties of England have been so hackneyed by travellers and quartos, the Coast has hitherto been most unaccountably neglected" excepting those sea resorts popular with the well-to-do. Daniell, starting at Land's End in Cornwall, made a series of tours over the next ten years. The resulting publication, issued in eight volumes between 1814 and 1825, provided an informative and dramatically illustrated overview of the British coastline. The 308 aquatints, which accompanied the text, were finely executed and often showed evocative scenes of shipwrecks, prosperous port towns, sea bird colonies and rugged coastlines.' *See*: rct.uk/collection/1124456/a-voyage-round-great-britain-undertaken-in-the-summer-of-1813-and-commencing-from

Figure 3.2: The west end of Norris Castle by George Stanley Repton (1786–1858), detail from his sketchbook dated 1797 to *c.* 1805. [© RIBA Collections]

Figure 3.3: The view of Norris Castle from the same angle (and possibly the same view point), as published in Peacock's *Polite Repository*, 1805. [Charles Boot]

Figure 3.4 (page 17): The Proof Impressions front sheet for Peacock's *Polite Repository* confirming Humphry Repton's involvement at Norris Castle (bottom left vignette). [© Oak Spring Garden Foundation]


The MAUSOLEUM, built by Jessee Wyatt, Esq. at COBHAM-HALL, in Kent, the Seat of EARL DARNLEY.
VIEW FROM a QUARRY at PORT ELIOT, a Seat of Lord Eliot in Cornwall.
Proof Impressions
of Plates engraved from Drawings
by H. REPTON
of Scenery improving
under his Directions.

1798 to 1800). Repton is presumed to have helped to lay out the grounds there.[25] At this time, Repton's son, John Adey Repton (1775–1860), worked as an architect in Nash's office. In 1801, his younger brother, George Stanley Repton (1786–1858), also went to work for Nash. A view of Norris by Humphry Repton was included in Peacock's *Polite Repository* of 1805 (Fig 3.3). The proof sheet for the engravings (Fig 3.4) bears a roundel in the centre of the views, stating: 'Proof Impressions of plates engraved from drawings by H Repton of scenery improving under his direction', which suggests, whatever the level of his involvement at Norris, that Repton considered it a site at which he was involved in the design of the landscape.[26]

In addition to the castle (plus attached service buildings, including stables), farm and kitchen garden, there were a number of smaller structures throughout the designed landscape. Seymour built a sea wall along the whole of the seashore of the property, a feature seen at marine villas elsewhere. This provided a raised walkway above the beach. Sections of the wall survive, although in poor condition. At the western end of the wall, and built into and above it, is the bathing house, a multi-functional resort building. It may have had a seawater bath and it was probably used for changing before and after sea bathing, for serving refreshments and perhaps for storing small boats (Fig 3.5). This building survives, although also in poor condition.[27] At the eastern end of the wall was a slipway, now lost. There was also an alcove seat and a (possibly later) summerhouse, also lost. All these features were connected by walks and drives. Up above, between the castle and the farm, is the pump house.

The tower mentioned in the description by William Daniell (above) survives and is known as Fort Norris (Fig 3.6). It had several purposes: first, as a lodge at the principal entrance to the estate (from the direction of East Cowes), at the start of the 'U'-shaped drive. It also served as a panorama tower and had a role as a daymark for shipping. This last may have been a pre-existing function, as the building could have been adapted from an earlier structure, possibly a windmill.[28] The tower was

25 Repton and Nash worked in partnership for around five years from 1796, before they fell out over money and possibly also Nash's refusal to credit the work of John Adey Repton. Despite several sources providing evidence for the end of the partnership, a conclusive date is hard to pin down, although 1801 looks most likely. When the rift happened, John Adey left Nash to work with his father, but George Stanley Repton remained. By 1820, George Stanley was working for himself.

26 The view published by Peacock shows the west end of the castle – seemingly an odd choice of view to publish – with the service end of the house to the fore and the round tower of the polite end of the house to the rear. It compares closely with a picture in George Stanley Repton's's sketchbook (Fig 3.2), apparently taken from the same view point, suggesting father and son might have sat side by side sketching Norris together. George Stanley Repton's sketchbook is dated to between 1797 and *c.* 1805. In 1797, he was just 11 years old.

27 The bathing house at Norris Castle is hard to read at present. It may have been altered and adapted later. For listed building description, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1438948

28 For listed building description, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1267370

Figure 3.5: West Cowes from Lord Henry Seymour's Bathing House, October 1825, by Capt. Thomas Hastings, (1778–1854). Hastings was a skilled amateur artist, who exhibited at the Royal Academy. He worked at Cowes as a customs officer from 1825 to 1833. [Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection]

also used at some point for signalling, and special apparatus were fitted on the top.[29] In this, it was similar to several buildings overlooking Plymouth harbour at Mount Edgcumbe (Cornwall). Given Seymour's direct connection with the Royal Navy, it is possible he wanted to be of service.

Like a number of other marine villas investigated for this study, Norris Castle hosted royalty.[30] The Prince Regent visited in 1819. The young Princess (later Queen) Victoria stayed at Norris with her mother in 1831 and 1833.[31] Shortly after becoming queen, Victoria considered buying Norris, in 1839 and 1845, but

29 John Phibbs, pers. comm., January 2020.

30 For example, Sandhills, near Christchurch, and Pennsylvania Castle, Portland, both of which were built by friends of George III.

31 Ettwein Bridges Architects 2016 'Norris Castle Heritage Assessment', p. 13. Queen Victoria also stayed at Eaglehurst on the north side of the Solent. By the time of her visits, Lord Henry Seymour had died and the castle belonged to his brother George.

Figure 3.6: Seymour Lodge (Fort Norris), 12 July 1826 by Capt. Thomas Hastings (1778–1854). Hastings was a keen archer and one of the founders of the Society of Carisbrooke Archers in 1829. [Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection]

ultimately decided on Osborne House instead. However, she continued to visit the castle and used it as extra accommodation for guests at Osborne, including her grandson, Wilhelm II, and the king of the Netherlands.[32]

Over the 35 years that Seymour owned Norris, he increased its land holdings, to the extent that it grew beyond a scale that was typical for a marine villa. Seymour died in 1830 and his youngest brother, George, inherited the estate. When George sold Norris Castle to Robert Bell in 1839, the land was more or less the original plot. So, what Bell bought was a marine villa, not a great estate. After Bell, Norris was sold to the 9th Duke of Bedford and it became a favourite home of the dowager duchess. It then passed to Lord Ampthill, brother of the Duke of Bedford. Through the 20th century, it changed hands several times, most recently in 2015.

32 Historic England 'Norris Castle', *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*.

National Heritage List for England
Official list entry
Reasons for designation

Norris Castle, a landscape park and pleasure grounds laid out from about 1799, is registered Grade I for the following principal reasons:

Rarity: as an exemplar of a Regency marine villa estate.

Architecture: as the contemporary landscaped setting for an architectural ensemble of outstanding significance, including a Gothic Revival castle, castellated model farm and lodge by one of England's most notable architects, James Wyatt.

Authenticity: as a well-preserved, essentially single-phase, designed landscape.

Degree of survival: the overall layout remains largely in its entirety and there have been few changes or alterations.

Designer: Humphry Repton, one of England's greatest late 18th and early 19th century landscape designers, is likely to have been involved in the design of the landscaped park.

Walled garden: as one of the grandest examples of a late 18th century castellated walled garden in England.

Vistas and external views: for the manner in which the landscape appropriates the natural topography, and for the controlled views along the approaches, as well as the commanding view of the Castle, in its setting, from the sea.

Historic interest: as a landscape laid out according to Picturesque principles, which also encapsulates late 18th century agricultural improvements during the Napoleonic Wars.

Historic association: as an estate closely linked to the 19th century royal family in which The Prince Regent, Queen Victoria, Kaiser Wilhelm and the King of the Netherlands visited.

Group value: with the Grade I-listed house and model farm, Grade II-listed lodge, Pump House, Bathing House, sea wall (a 50m length), two cattle shelters and four stone-lined ponds, as well as the adjacent Grade II* registered park and Grade I-listed house at Osborne.

Historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000927

Figure 3.7: Norris Castle from the south-west, 1823 by William Daniell RA (1769–1837). Lord Henry Seymour opened the grounds of Norris to the public, as suggested by the number of figures in this view. Given examples elsewhere, it is likely that the peacocks were not merely artistic licence. [R. McInnes]

4 UNDERSTANDING THE MARINE VILLA

Having established **what** constituted a marine villa in the 18th and early 19th centuries in Section 2 of this report, here the specific concept of a marine villa is expanded. This section describes **why** marine villas evolved, **who** built them, **when** they were built and **how** – that is, what made up an ensemble of marine villa and setting.

The marine villa: a new departure

Before the fashion for marine villas, which began in the 1760s and picked up pace from the 1790s, houses tended to be hidden from the sea. Even during the period when marine villas were becoming popular, houses were built out of sight of the sea. When putting forward his plans for Sheringham in Norfolk in 1812, Humphry Repton was at pains to shelter the house behind a hill. Being an East Anglian, he understood the implications of the weather coming off the North Sea. At Caerhays Castle, in milder Cornwall (designed by John Nash and built in 1807–10), the house was tucked behind a hill, which sheltered it from prevailing south-westerlies. Until around the 1860s, when part of another hill was cut away to provide work for unemployed fishermen and miners, it did not even have a sea view, despite being only about 300m inland.[33] On the Isle of Wight, earlier manor houses and mansions are all nestled in sheltering valleys. The connection of residence with sea only started with the development of marine villas and the rise of tourist seaside resorts.

The most renowned coastal house and designed landscape of the 18th century was Mount Edgcumbe on the western side of Plymouth Sound, now in Cornwall but, until the 1840s, in a detached part of Devon. The house is Tudor in origin, a former hunting lodge set in a deer park. It belonged to the Edgcumbe family of Cotehele, further up the River Tamar. Over the centuries, Mount Edgcumbe became the family's principal seat, perhaps in part because it was closer to the centre of things, sitting on a sloping site with views across the water to the important naval port of Plymouth. From around the 1730s (for about a century), a designed landscape of note spread by increments along the coast. But the core of the design, including detached pleasure grounds, developed on the more sheltered areas of the estate, overlooking the safe anchorage of the Hamoaze at the mouth of the Tamar (Fig 4.1). In relation to this study, it is interesting to note that most of the more exposed parts of the design (mainly drives peppered with seats and eye-catchers), appeared at the same time as the emergence of a general desire to be near the sea, from around the 1770s to the 1820s.

Mount Edgcumbe was so frequently visited, painted and published that it seems highly likely that features developed there were emulated in other seaside designed landscapes – even modest-sized ones, as many marine villas were. Certainly, elements of the design at Mount Edgcumbe that were well known, such as the zigzag paths and the garden battery, are echoed in other marine villa landscapes.

33 C. Williams 2011 *Caerhays Castle*. Falmouth: Pasticcio, p. 36.

Figure 4.1: View of Mount Edgecumbe from the Blockhouse, undated, by James Mason (1710–1783), after Samuel Scott and George Lambert. The flag on the roof of the adapted 16th century blockhouse and the battery of 16 cannons show the close connection between the daily life of the estate and the Royal Navy at Plymouth. The garden battery was a feature that was repeated in several marine villa landscapes. Mount Edgcumbe house, resplendent in its eye-catching white render, can be seen in the distance to the left of the blockhouse-cum-temple. [Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection]

Influences and pioneers

Mount Edgcumbe was the centre of a great estate and a principal seat. However, by the 1760s and 1770s, a small handful of seaside houses were being built for the primary purpose of being by the sea. Four warrant discussion here, in chronological order: Kingsgate (Kent), Abbotsbury Castle (Dorset), The Moult (Devon) and Highcliffe Castle (on the Hampshire–Dorset border).[34] All four were either of typical size for a marine villa and/or use and intention on the part of the builder. One of the earliest cottages ornés on the Isle of Wight also dated to this period: Steephill Cottage (*c.* 1770). It is discussed in Section 7.

34 Possibly even earlier than Kingsgate and The Moult was East Cliff House in Hastings. However, this appears to have been, even then, in the centre of the town and on a plot too small to be considered a marine villa setting. For this house, Kingsgate and The Moult, *see*: M. Hunter 1998 'The first seaside house?', *The Georgian Group Journal*, VIII, pp. 135–42.

In 1762, Henry Fox – 1st Baron Holland – and his wife first went to stay in a modest, probably pre-existing house at Kingsgate, near Broadstairs on the north Kent coast. Fox's main seat was Holland House, then a country estate just outside London, but now well within its urban sprawl. Consequently, Kingsgate does not seem to have been intended as a main country seat, rather a 'retreat' in the manner of many later marine villas. The fact that the couple found a place they liked and rented a house there, before buying land and specifically building a retreat, is a pattern echoed in the history of many other marine villas. Fox's Kingsgate was a conscious emulation of a Roman seaside villa and it is said to have been inspired by Cicero's villa at Formia, on the coast south of Rome. Situated on a cliff top above a small cove, the setting for Fox's villa was laid out as a pleasure ground, with an architecturally eclectic range of eye-catchers, including a stable block built in imitation of a medieval castle (this survives).[35] Like many other villas, it has a very complicated history; the house changed hands many times and was rebuilt.[36] The site, although not intensively covered in development like others elsewhere, has long been fragmented and, with the loss of the original house, it is too compromised to be considered an important survival. However, Kingsgate remains a significant waymarker in the story of the development of the marine villa in late 18th-century England.

The second example of a pioneering seaside residence was probably closely connected to Kingsgate, because it was built for Fox's sister-in-law, Lady Ilchester. The Ilchesters had two great houses in the West Country: Melbury, north-west of Dorchester and Redlynch near the Dorset–Somerset border. The estates had long included land around the village of Abbotsbury, (typically) just inland, at the west end of Chesil Beach. As the fashion for sea bathing started to take hold, the Ilchesters began to stay at the old manor house in the village. However, this was too small for their needs, and a new purpose-built house near the sea was proposed. In 1762, plans were drawn up with the help of Charles Hamilton, owner of the renowned landscape garden of Painshill. Horace Walpole was also probably consulted. The house was finished by the summer of 1765, when Lady Ilchester and her children first stayed there to bathe in the sea. The house is known as Abbotsbury Castle or Ilchester Castle, but Lady Ilchester referred to it as 'Pin Money Castle', which suggests that it was built for her out of her allowance.[37]

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35 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holland_House,_Kingsgate

36 The listing entry for the rebuilt house at Kingsgate: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1273614. The listing entry is dated 1950. Given the importance – and possible influence of Lord Holland's villa – it is remarkably hard to find further information on it. *See* also the listing description for the remains of Neptune's Temple: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1239838 and for the stables: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1239636. For what is now the Captain Digby Inn, but was built as something like a banqueting house, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1239637. Only part of the present pub is original; some of the building fell into the sea and much of what remains is 19th century.

37 J. Martin 2004 *Wives and Daughters: Women and Children in the Georgian Country House*. London: Hambledon, pp. 271–72.

Sitting right above Chesil Beach, the site was so windswept that the pleasure ground adjoining the house was very limited. However, a garden was developed (probably first as a productive one) in a sheltered valley 500m inland from the house. This was further developed by later generations of the Ilchester family. Unlike the castle, which was demolished in the 1930s, the garden remains, known now as Abbotsbury Gardens (registered Grade I).[38] Pin Money Castle was similar in plan to Lord Bute's Highcliffe Castle (described below) and The Pavilion at Aldwick (*see* Section 6) in that it had two double-height, projecting bay windows either side of the central door fronting the sea. Unlike other similar examples, Pin Money Castle was given a gothick treatment, with pointed windows and a crenellated parapet.[39] Like Highcliffe and The Pavilion, it too was extended several times and the purity of the original architecture was gradually lost.

By date, the next proto-marine villa that has come to light during this study is The Moult, overlooking the Kingsbridge estuary at Salcombe in Devon. It was constructed in 1764 for John Hawkins and, according to his son, it was built as 'a mere pleasure box'.[40] The exact appearance of Hawkins's house is unknown. He died the same year that it was built and his widow sold it in 1780 to Henry Whorwood of Holton Park, Oxfordshire.[41] Abraham Hawkins, son of John, credited Whorwood with 'superior talents and judgement in the just distribution and proper embellishment of rural ornament' to which the 'sheltered and charming spot chiefly owe its celebrity'. This sounds rather like the laying-out of some sort of designed landscape setting. When completed, the property was described as 'the masterly design of Mr Whorwood', which displayed such 'exquisite taste … as to render it an object of delight to every beholder of cultivated understanding'. It is likely that a good many of the 'beholders' would have seen the villa from the water or from the land on the other side of the estuary. The house was again extended in the early 19th century and it is probably from this date that its present appearance as a Tudoresque cottage orné derives.[42] Although the size of the site was limited by its position on a rocky headland, with a small, sandy bay on each side and wooded rising ground behind and above, by 1906 the setting included a (seemingly) walled kitchen garden with glasshouses, terraces and zigzag paths and a number of other ornamental garden features. At least one 18th-century summerhouse is included in the listing for the building, and a battery also appears to survive.[43] The Moult is now two very upmarket holiday homes. Judging from its website and from the overlays of the second edition OS map with modern aerial mapping, it appears that

38 HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000707
39 For images of the castle, *see*: lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh_dorset_abbotsburycastle_info_gallery.html
40 M. Hunter 1998 'The first seaside house?', *The Georgian Group Journal*, VIII, 135–42. Further research is needed to establish where Hawkins's principal residence was. It seems likely it was relatively local. This is another typical marine villa pattern.
41 Henry Whorwood, or at least his widow, may also have been connected to one of the villas at Aldwick. *See* Section 6.
42 For images of the present house, *see*: themoult.co.uk/houses/salcombe-moult/gallery/
43 HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1213027

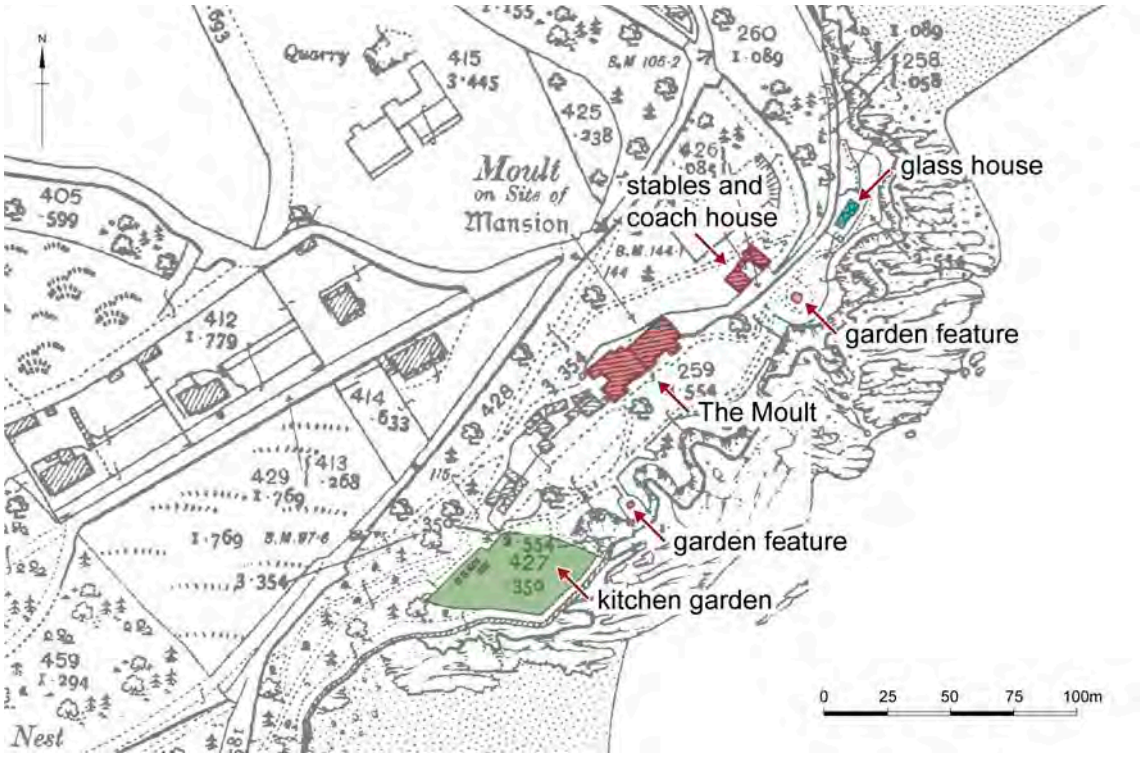

Figure 4.2: Detail of the second edition OS map, published in 1906, showing The Moult and its setting, within its compact site defined by the topography. Garden features include the kitchen garden, additional glasshouse, zigzag paths, summerhouse and possible battery. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

the setting is intact, making this – potentially – a particularly important surviving example of an early marine villa ensemble. In fact, even as a marine villa of the 1810s (as opposed to 1764), it is significant as an intact ensemble.

During the early 1770s, just a few years after the building of The Moult, the Earl of Bute made his first visit to the New Forest, Hampshire, to look for plants.[44] He started building what would originally have been a proto-marine villa in 1775. In an unimaginative manner, typical of many marine villa builders, he called the house Highcliffe. He was probably, in part at least, attracted by the mild climate, which would have allowed him to grow a wider range of plants than he could at his main seat of Luton Hoo in Bedfordshire. Like The Moult – although on a far greater scale – the house was extended several times until it became very grand. That house was demolished in 1794. Despite the scale of Highcliffe, it was still first and foremost a retreat – an important part of the intent of a marine villa. In *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places* (1806), John Feltham described it thus:

44 historychristchurch.org.uk/content/history/highcliffe-castle-3

Figure 4.3: High Cliffe, Dorset, from the East, 1783, by Adam Callender (1750–1817). By this date the original house had been extended (possibly twice), but the core of the modest proto-marine villa with its pair of bays flanking the central door can just be discerned. Given Bute's botanical interest the view also perhaps speaks of the difficulty of establishing trees on windswept cliff tops. The landscape was laid out by 'Capability' Brown. A small rotunda type temple can be seen near the middle of the view. [© Victoria & Albert Museum]

> 'The late Earl of Bute having taken a fancy to this place erected a magnificent house in the neighbourhood, on a lofty eminence, which commands one of the most beautiful sea views in the kingdom, partly from the proximity of the Isle of Wight on one side, and partly from the opening into the channel on the other. To this place his lordship would often retire from his noble seat of Luton, in Bedfordshire, for the express purpose of the obtaining a sound sleep, which he declared he could find here, when it was to be had nowhere else.'
>
> John Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*. p. 274.

Marine villa and seaside resorts

Sea bathing for health and pleasure dates back to at least 1710, when it is documented as taking place at Whitby, Bootle and Liverpool.[45] In 1750, Dr Richard Russell published his *Dissertation on the Use of Sea Water in the Diseases of the Glands*, in which he advocates not only bathing in seawater, but drinking it, too. It was also acknowledged that the climate at numerous places on the coast was good for health. Early seaside resorts took on many of the attributes of spa resorts such as Bath and Tunbridge Wells. Many of the new seaside resorts also had springs of fresh water with which to develop spas.

The five earliest resorts to emerge during the second half of the 18th century were Scarborough, Margate, Hastings, Brighton and Weymouth. While many marine villas developed away from resorts, some were associated with them, often located just outside the town. This is true of the cluster of villas at Aldwick in West Sussex, in relation to the resort of Bognor, which developed initially as Hothamton, from the late 1780s. It is likely to be the case with a number of the Kent sites, too. In some places, residences that might have been considered marine villas were subsumed into the town and effectively became town houses. One example is the Marine Pavilion at Brighton, developed by George, Prince of Wales, which morphed into the exotic Royal Pavilion with Indian and Chinese inspired styling. The prince's pavilion was close to, but not actually adjacent to the sea (around 400m from it), and the town grew up around it. Brighton was already burgeoning when the prince started visiting, so his pavilion was probably never a retreat in the same way as most marine villas. The pavilion did have its own pleasure grounds though, with gravel walks. However, in the early days, at least, trees proved hard to establish and Feltham's *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places* notes 'an attempt at a plantation'. George's mistress, Mrs Fitzherbert, also had a small seaside villa on the other side of the Steine, which was by then a town house. It, too, had a touch of the exotic in its architecture: the Egyptian portico blew down in the winter of 1805, which illustrates the ongoing perils of building so close to the sea.[46]

Land prices

It is possible that, early on at least, coastal land was relatively cheap because houses had, thus far, tended to be built inland. Therefore, for the affluent classes, it was quite affordable to build a villa. Logic suggests that as demand increased and supply reduced, the price of land by the sea rose. So, by around the mid-19th century, it became increasingly common for earlier marine villa landscapes to be subdivided and smaller residences built within their plots. Many examples suggest that this was often done to provide subsidiary marine villas for family members.

45 S. Berry 2005 *Georgian Brighton*. Chichester: Phillimore, p. 16.
46 J. Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*. London, pp. 79–80.

The presumed relative cheapness of coastal land might also explain why some villas appear to have been built for widows. In some cases, dowagers might have had houses in London and also spent a portion of their time not at the country estate, but by the sea. This aspect of the economics of the marine villa warrants further research.

Who built villas and why?

The working classes of fishing communities had probably long built houses by the sea. Several views of the cottages at the foot of Luccombe Chine in the Isle of Wight give the impression that the dwellings were barely more than shacks, built on sites exposed to the power of the sea and threatened by landslips from above (*see* Fig 7.1).[47] Presumably, the occupiers eked out a subsistence existence and such building sites were cheap. But as the fashion for being beside the sea started to take off, fuelled by perceived health-giving benefits, a broad range of the affluent and wealthy classes built seaside houses. Examples of marine villa builders identified by this study range from dukes and earls down to wealthy tradesmen, merchants and sea captains. The properties belonged to families and singletons, bachelors and dowagers. Some were owned merely for the generation it took for the family to grow up. As one might expect, villas owned by those at the lower end of the social scale could be fairly modest, yet they still exhibited typical features, as discussed below. At the very top of the social scale are marine villas built for the monarch: the Royal Pavilion for George IV and Osborne House for Queen Victoria. Other members of the royal family had seaside houses, too: the Duke of Cumberland at Brighton and the Duke of Gloucester at Weymouth. They were responsible for introducing George IV and George III, respectively, to those resorts.

As might be expected, it is usually the male head of a family who is credited as the builder or owner of many of the marine villas researched for this study. Some of these marine villas were family holiday homes, places to take the children to enjoy the delights of the sea. A distinct group of others were built by, or for, women – often for widows or second wives. Seaside resorts were considered desirable places to live for ladies whose funds might be limited, but who still required society and respectability.[48] Examples of such marine villas include Sandridge on the River Dart in Devon, which was built as a dower house. Belfield at Weymouth may also have been a dower house. Several of the Aldwick cluster were noted as the property of women in *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide* (1828). They include The Pavilion, which was seemingly built for the Countess of Newburgh, rather than her husband, probably around the time she was widowed.[49] Another example is Sydney Lodge, perhaps originally the finest marine villa built on Southampton Water,

47 For further examples of humble workers' cottages on the shore, *see*: R. McInnes 2016 *Isle of Wight Landscape Art: An Illustrated Dictionary 1650–1930*. Chale: Cross Publishing. For example, figures A11, A22 and A41.

48 R. White 2017 *Cottages Ornés: The Charms of the Simple Life*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p. 115.

49 R. Dally 1828 *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide*. Chichester: William Mason, pp. 75–76.

where the client was a second wife. Its name suggests it was always intended for the offspring of that marriage, who would not be expected to inherit the main estate (*see* Section 5).

The building of villas for second wives and their offspring may be connected to land being more affordable near the coast. This might also be true for younger sons. Lord Henry Seymour was a second son and unlikely to inherit his family's estates. As such, the building of Norris Castle might have killed two birds with one stone. It provided him with a rural alternative to a house in London, which he would be expected to have, and a seaside bolt-hole at the same time. That primogeniture was irrelevant to many examples of marine villas was perhaps a factor in many of them changing hands so frequently – which is certainly a distinct pattern in their ownership.

Younger sons often pursued careers as naval officers and there are many examples of associations between marine villas and naval men. The Royal Navy was a route by which young men without their own wealth could make a fortune. In Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1817), the successful and lucrative career of Captain Wentworth is reminiscent of Captain Thomas Williams (later Admiral Sir Thomas Williams), husband of Austen's cousin, Jane Cooper and commanding officer of her brother Charles. The wealth he derived from capturing privateers allowed him to build a marine villa, Brooklands, a little way up the River Hamble from Southampton Water; it survives as the best-preserved ensemble of the group around Southampton Water. Joseph Sydney Yorke, a naval officer and the second son of a second marriage, inherited Sydney Lodge, which was built for his mother.[50] He was apparently responsible for adding the gun battery. An example on the Isle of Wight is West Hill at West Cowes, built for Captain (later Admiral) Christian in the 1770s.[51]

The importance and influence of the Royal Navy in this period was probably connected to the rise in yachting for recreation and there is evidence that the conception of a number of marine villas, especially on the Isle of Wight, was due to the rise of leisure sailing in the Solent. For example, the Marquess of Buckingham (later created a Duke) was a founder member of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes in 1815, and he had a marine villa in a prominent position at Ryde, neighbouring that of Earl Spencer. Both men already had great country houses – Stowe in Buckinghamshire and Althorp in Northamptonshire, respectively – besides secondary houses elsewhere and properties in London, and it is fair to assume that they built their villas by the sea for retreat and recreation.

A final group for whom marine villas were built was those suffering from ill health, who sought mild climates, sea air and access to the water for bathing. There is some evidence that this was the reason Sans Souci, overlooking Poole harbour in Dorset, and Luscombe Castle in Devon were built.

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50 His father – Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke of Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire – was also a second son.

51 W. Cooke 1808 *A New Picture of the Isle of Wight*. London: Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, p. 137.

Figure 4.4: Detail of the view across Bembridge harbour, by George Brannon, 1836. Hill Grove is the classical, domed villa on the right, which contrasts with the gothick Northwells on the left. [R. McInnes]

Aesthetic Style

As discussed in Section 2, there was no accepted architectural style for a villa and the same was true for marine villas. They were eclectic. Many were of cottage orné style: some rustic and thatched, some more loosely Tudor in influence. Others were classical or Italianate and a few were gothick. The most extreme cases of this last style were the few castellated villas on the Island, as well as Pennsylvania Castle in Dorset (*see* Section 6).

The wild scenery of the Isle of Wight Undercliff called for picturesque cottages rather than sleek classical lines. One cannot imagine John Nash's Hill Grove, set on a gentle slope above Bembridge harbour (Fig 4.4), being sited in the rocky Undercliff. Architectural pattern books with building designs were probably used, as few marine villas have documented architects. While investigating nearly 200 examples of villas for this study, it was noticeable that architects are seldom mentioned and landscapers never.

Similarly, the style of landscaping was not rigid. There were prerequisite elements (described below), but the way a plot was laid out was more a response to the topography of the site. One place might be characterised by its streams and cascades, taking advantage of the natural flow of water from springs to sea, another for its terraces. On the Island Norris Castle, for example, was characterised by its fine views across the Solent, and Hill Grove by its outlook over the bustle of Bembridge harbour. Puckaster on the Island (*see* Section 7) illustrates the concept of finding a site, seeing its capabilities and then planning the house and garden. Pennsylvania Castle on Portland fits this pattern, too.

Marine villa features

Many of the features listed below are equally found in other villa-type properties of the same period. However, some are likely to be distinctive of marine villas, because of the topography and the essential relationship with the sea. These elements are the ones that were looked for during this study when scanning the coastline using the digitised historic mapping. Obviously, the smaller the site, the fewer the elements, and the smaller those elements tended to be. This is especially true of drives and glasshouses.

Shape of the plot

The shape of the plot was, of course, to a certain extent determined by land ownership, and the land available for purchase at the time of the original building of the marine villa. However, loosely speaking, there are some patterns that can be discerned for plot shapes. Clearly, it depended on the topography, but plots were often triangular or trapezoid, splaying out towards the water, to maximise beach frontage. This happened at enough sites for it to be an element worth noting. On the Island, Norris Castle and Springhill (Cowes), Norton Lodge (Yarmouth) and Binstead House (also known as The Keys) all show a similar triangular shape. On the mainland, Aldwick Place, The Paradise and Barn Rocks at Aldwick and Bay House at Gosport all had triangular plots. Brooklands in Fareham is more trapezoid (*see* Fig 6.8).

Orientation of the house

Marine villas frequently faced south-east, on south-facing coasts at least. Their principal façades, often with bays, porches or verandas, had a southerly aspect, and the secondary, usually shorter, façades faced south-west into the prevailing wind. All but one of the Aldwick cluster and many in the Undercliff conform to this pattern. The north-facing location of Norris Castle meant that its orientation was not quite as relevant because it had the shelter of the land on its south-west side. The walled garden here, with its high sheltering walls, would have been a resort when the wind was greatest, too. Where a house does not face south-east, there tend to be topographical reasons for it. For example, Pennsylvania Castle was probably built on a north–south axis, with its main façade facing due east, so the ruins of Rufus Castle became an object at an oblique angle in the view.

Lodges, drives and paths

A small gate lodge and a drive were standard features of marine villas. Some drives could be fairly short, in which case they would generally curve up to the property to prolong the approach a little longer. Whether there were one or two drives was generally dependent on the size of the plot. Even in larger establishments, drives doubled up as part of a circuit walk. Paths through shrubberies could sometimes loop several times in order to get the most path into a small area, as seen at The Paradise. On steeper sites, paths zigzagged down the hill, for example at Binstead House and Pennsylvania Castle. At East Dene (Bonchurch, Isle of Wight), paths through the shrubbery are a hybrid of the two styles.

Planting

Unless a site was already in existence (perhaps as a farm), it could be hard to establish planting in exposed coastal locations, at least at first. As mentioned above, even the Prince of Wales struggled to get trees to grow at his pavilion in Brighton.[52] By 1803, there were shrubberies there though. Perhaps once these were established, with shrubs tolerant of the conditions, they gave enough shelter for trees to take hold. The dominance today of old holm oaks in the garden at Eaglehurst (Hampshire) on the north side of the Solent perhaps testifies to this.

The marine climate, especially in the south of England, was mild. Given the period during which marine villas became fashionable, and the location of many of them along the south coast, it is not surprising that newly introduced exotic plants featured in marine villa gardens[53]. This was apparently one of the reasons why the Earl of Bute built Highcliffe in Dorset. Conservatories were almost invariably attached to marine villas, which also suggests a penchant for exotics to a certain extent, and these were often augmented by glasshouses in kitchen garden areas. Close to the house, scented plants were often grown, and verandas provided good places to plant climbers. The Paradise was particularly known for its verandas.

Most marine villas had at least a small paddock, and these were often dotted with trees, like miniature versions of parkland on large estates. At Knowle Cottage, Sidmouth, a large paddock was known grandly as 'the outer park'. Yet it had a gravel walk not a drive, and the whole site was only about 12ha at its height.[54]

52 The architect Robert Lugar also wrote of the difficulty of establishing trees in the garden of the cottage orné-type villa of Puckaster, which he designed on the Isle of Wight.

53 S. Rutherford 2018 *Hardy Plants and Plantings for Repton and Late Georgian Gardens (1780-1820)* Historic England Research Report 20/2018 HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/results/reports/20-2018

54 The area of the designed landscape of Knowle Cottage is an estimate of size extrapolated from the second edition OS map (25 inch to 1 mile), at which date the original boundaries had already been compromised.

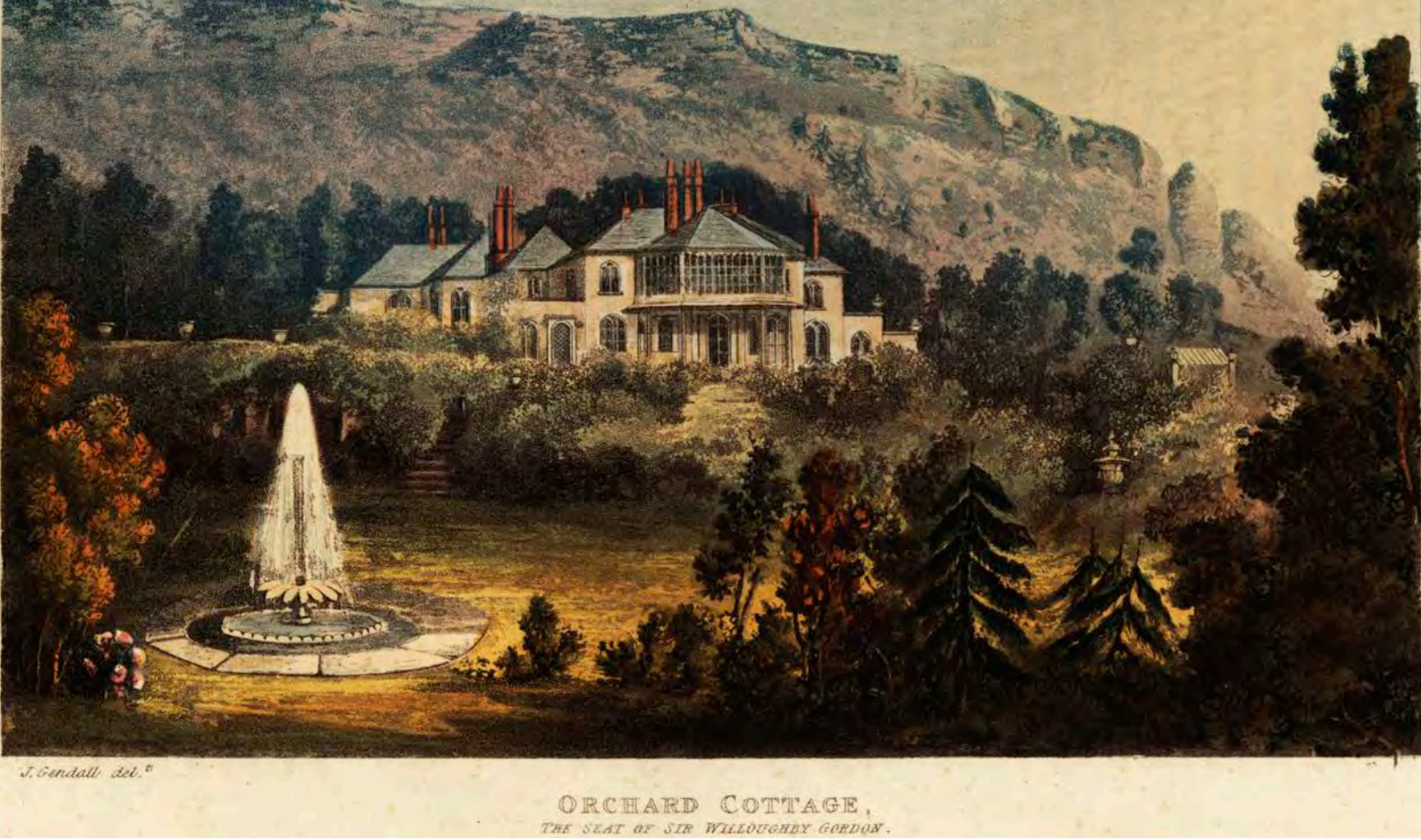

Figure 4.5: Orchard Cottage, the Seat of Sir Willoughby Gordon by John Gendall (c. 1790–1865) in Rudolph Ackerman's *Repository of Arts*, published 1826. [Florilegius/Alamy Stock Photo]

Kitchen gardens

Production of fruit and vegetables was important if the owners were to stay for extended periods of time, and most marine villas had some form of kitchen garden. As few examples of marine villas remain intact, it is impossible – in many cases – to tell whether these gardens were sheltered by walls. Some may have been partially walled; others appear to have been protected by shrubberies. It would have been important to offer some kind of shelter in order to allow crops to grow in difficult conditions by the sea. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Seymour built his walls so high at Norris. At some sites, the productive gardens were in several separate enclosures, presumably to fit them into the optimum locations within a site. This was true at Puckaster in the Undercliff, where there were at least two partially walled kitchen gardens, and at The Paradise (*see* Fig 6.27). At East Dene (at the other end of the Undercliff), the walled kitchen garden was developed on three levels to make it work on the steep hillside plot. This had the benefit of an extra south-facing wall.

Most marine villa kitchen gardens included glasshouses, probably in a variety of forms: some free-standing, others built against walls. At Westfield House (Bonchurch, Isle of Wight), an extensive curved range of glass was built into what

appears to have been the grass terraces of the garden.[55] Marine villas and cottages ornés were being developed at the same time as the technology of glasshouses was coming on in leaps and bounds. So, not only were the cottages and villas hyper-fashionable, so too were their conservatories and glasshouses.

The time of year that the family was in residence would have taken advantage of the growing season of the summer months. Kitchen gardens, while functional, would have been important parts of a tour of the garden of a marine villa, just as they were at a country house.[56]

Farms and stables

So few marine villas survive that it is hard to say, reliably, how many had their own farms. However, the second edition OS maps mark and name the farms for a reasonable number of marine villas. Still more had clusters of ancillary buildings mapped. These could have had an agricultural purpose, but were not named as such. Enough examples are recorded that it is reasonable to assume a farm was a prerequisite for at least larger marine villas. Like Norris Castle, The Paradise included arable fields within its fairly modest 2.8ha plot when it was advertised for sale in 1827. The Paradise also had a dairy and 'three enclosures of rich pasture land of fine herbage'.[57] It is likely that the small paddocks that often characterised marine villa layouts provided grazing for the house cow or, if large enough, a small dairy herd. Where marine villas were within easy reach of the main estate, however, the ability to produce food was less important. For example, Sea Cottage at St Lawrence was less than 5km from its parent house of Appuldurcombe.[58]

With kitchen gardens, dairies and farms, some marine villas could be fairly self-sufficient, and presumably fish and shellfish were also sourced nearby. There was a lobster pond and several oyster ponds marked on the waterfront below the marine villa at Warsash (Hampshire) on the OS map of 1909. It is likely that it was these peripheral areas and facilities – kitchen gardens, arable, grazing and farms – that were lost first when villa sites were subdivided. As the 19th century wore on, and roads improved and the railway network spread out, produce that was not home-grown or home-raised was easier to come by and the need for self-sufficiency reduced.[59]

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55 The range of glass does not survive. It was replaced by holiday chalets, more or less on the same footprint, probably built in the 1970s.

56 Kitchen gardens as part of a tour were described satirically by William Beckford to Sir Isaac Heard: 'Show Lady Heard that she shall not be worn to death with seeing Sights, nor crammed to satiety with French Ragouts, nor pressed into rumbling Carriages, nor drenched with unwholesome dews by Evening Excursions, nor worried out of bed in the Morning to drive to Kitchen or Flower gardens, Alms-houses or Pigeon-houses, Farms, Temples or Plantations …' Fonthill 24 July 1799, in L Melville 1910 *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill*. London: Heinemann, p. 256.

57 WSRO, Add Mss 37, 312.

58 There may have been a limited kitchen garden at Sea Cottage during Sir Richard Worsley's period. There was certainly one there by the mid-19th century.

59 The kitchen garden at The Pavilion, by then known as Craigweil, was probably lost when the house was redeveloped just after World War I. The area became part of the ornamental garden.

Given the status of most of the early marine villa builders, owners would be expected to arrive in their own carriage. Consequently, somewhere to accommodate horses and store the carriage was needed. At The Paradise, facilities could accommodate two carriages and eight horses.[60] Next door, The Pavilion had a stable block of an unusual plan, almost semicircular, which seems to imply something architecturally interesting (*see* Fig 6.35).[61] Neither of these survive, but a few marine villa stable blocks do remain, at The Moult and at Sea Cottage for example, the latter of which included a carriage house. At Sydney Lodge, the stable block also survives, but it has been compromised by modern industrial additions.[62]

Seats, viewpoints and lookouts

As with paddocks planted in imitation of parkland, marine villa landscapes adopted the fashion for eye-catchers, which had been prevalent through much of the 18th century and applied it to the setting of this new sort of residence. Such buildings provided much needed shelter from the wind, and also viewpoints from which to look out at the ever-changing sea. All the particularly early examples of marine villas discussed at the start of this section included garden buildings within their designed landscape. Henry Fox had an eclectic selection at Kingsgate. At Abbotsbury, there were sheltered seats in the castellated wall around the immediate setting for the house.[63] At The Moult, a summerhouse, thought to date to the 18th century, is included within the listing. The Earl of Bute had a rotunda on the cliff at Highcliffe, which can be seen in the view by Adam Callender (Fig 4.3). As fashions changed, classical rotundas were unlikely to be built and eye-catchers took on a more picturesque appearance. They were built on rocky outcrops in rustic styles. The garden of Steephill Cottage had 'romantic seats, and a pleasing Hermitage lined with moss'. It also had a feature interpreted as a lookout (based on patterns elsewhere). A good example of this survives at Puckaster (*see* Fig 7.12). Towers also provided excellent lookouts, as at Eaglehurst and Fort Norris at Norris Castle.

Water features

Where the topography of a site lent itself, picturesque designs might include streams and waterfalls, as at many of the marine villas in the Isle of Wight Undercliff, including Steephill Cottage and Sea Cottage, where some of the rocky streams and little bridges survive. An engraving of The Orchard (also in the Undercliff) includes a prominent more gardenesque fountain in front of the house (Fig 4.5). Although this marine villa survives, aerial mapping suggests that the garden area has contracted and it is unlikely that the fountain remains.[64] The second edition

60 Sale catalogue 1827, WSRO, Add Mss 37, 312.
61 Seen on the tithe map (1840) and the second edition OS map (1912).
62 For The Moult stable block, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1289278 and for Sea Cottage stables, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1225534 For an image of the entrance façade of Sydney Lodge, with stable block attached, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1111924
63 J. Martin 2004 *Wives and Daughters: Women and Children in the Georgian Country House*. London: Hambledon, p. 272.
64 The villa of The Orchard survives, but the garden appears to have contracted, probably due to a landslip. A fountain was still mapped in 1898.

OS maps plot fountains at many sites, but it is impossible to tell whether they were original to the late 18th and early 19th-century design, or later Victorian additions. The paddocks of Norris Castle and Springhill feature small ponds of a distinct character (some are mapped at Osborne, too), which may have originally had an agricultural purpose. These appear to be unique to this northern tip of the Island (east of the Medina; Northwood on the west side does not appear to have had them).[65]

Boathouses, bath(ing) houses, batteries and flag poles

Boathouses, bathing houses, gun batteries and flag poles all feature in some of the marine villas, but none of these elements seem to have been obligatory. Considering that many of the marine villas investigated for this study must have been frequently accessed by water (particularly those on the Island) and also considering the popularity of recreational yachting during this period (especially among the class of people who built the earliest marine villas), it is perhaps surprising how few sites appear to have had their own boathouses at the time of the second edition OS maps (*c.* 1900). It has been suggested that Norris Castle is unusual in having a slipway but no boathouse, yet in this it actually seems typical.[66] Many marine villas had landing stages, but not boathouses. For example, Sydney Lodge on Southampton Water had a landing stage, but seemingly no boathouse. It is likely that where a marine villa was close to a harbour (Hamble in the case of Sydney Lodge), larger vessels would dock or moor there and a carriage or horse would be used for transport to the house.

A large part of the attraction of the marine villa was sea bathing. A few villas had documented bathing houses, which were presumably more or less changing rooms by the sea. Perhaps they were places to store a bathing machine, although no specific references to this were seen in the course of this study. A tidal seawater bathing pool (still surviving) at Binstead House is a rare feature (*see* Fig 7.22). Pennsylvania Castle had both a bath, known as Penn's Bath, and a boathouse on the cove. Penn's Bath survives. It is above the high tide mark and must presumably have had seawater pumped up to it, if it was a salt water bath. Alternatively, it could have been fed by a spring from above. The bathing house for Norris Castle survives, although in poor condition (*see* Fig 3.5). Its scale suggests it was a multi-functional building, with spaces possibly for changing, dining and viewing the Solent.

On the high ground above the water, some villas had small batteries of cannon. Two particular documented examples have been found during this study: Sea Cottage (*see* Fig 7.6) and Sydney Lodge (*see* Fig 6.7). It is possible that there might have been more, but batteries fell out of fashion and did not appear as features mapped

65 These pools have been noted by John Phibbs in his report on Norris titled *Lord Henry Seymour's marine villa* (2016).

66 John Phibbs, pers. comm., Norris Castle, January 2020.

by the OS. Photographs of the garden of The Moult show a feature that looks very much like a battery.[67] At Pennsylvania Castle, there is another possible candidate (*see* Fig 6.18).

Another semi-military associated feature, shown in some contemporary views of marine villas, is the flag pole. This could have been used for signals (as at Mount Edgcumbe, Fig 4.1), as patriotic display or merely for decorative purposes. Flag poles are seen in images of Norris Castle, Sea Cottage and Alver House (*see* Figs 3.6, 7.6 and 6.4, respectively).

Menageries

In the 1830s, one of the enchanting aspects of Knowle Cottage was its menagerie, containing 'rare foreign animals, whose habits of gentleness permit that they should roam about the park, by which the character of the whole is sustained'.[68] The favourite of these animals was the kangaroo. There were also 'Cape sheep' and two 'beautiful and very rare small buffaloes', but the 'greatest curiosity' were the 'ali packas'. As well as the mammals, there were a variety of exotic birds, including several species of pheasant, parrot and ostrich. At John Wilkes's Villakin at Sandown (Isle of Wight), the garden was ornamented with Chinese pigs, peacocks and guinea fowl.[69] It is likely that birds often ornamented marine villa landscapes; peacocks are seen in a couple of the views of Norris Castle (*see* Fig 3.6, for example).

Public consumption and social use

Although the concept of marine villas was one of retreat and retirement, to which the fashion for sea bathing was added, there was a wider social aspect to them. Privacy went hand in hand with public knowledge and, to a certain extent, consumption. The tension between the two is symbolised by the notice 'Sea Cottage is not Shew'd' attached to the gate of Sir Richard Worsley's marine villa at St Lawrence.[70] Topographical literature and local guidebooks often included descriptions. The cluster of villas at Aldwick was described in one of the early guides to Bognor, which recommended the ride along the beach towards Pagham, for which the views of the seaward side of the villas (each listed by the author) were the main attraction. Other sites were open to the public, for example Knowle Cottage on Mondays 'in the season'. Specific guidebooks were published describing features and attractions of some marine villas, including Knowle Cottage and Steephill Castle.[71] Some owners went further. Edward Simeon, the owner of

67 *See*: themoult.co.uk/houses/salcombe-moult/gallery/
68 J. Harvey 1837 *Guide to Illustrations and Views of Knowle Cottage, Sidmouth: The Elegant Marine Villa Orné of Thomas L Fish Esq*. Sidmouth: J. Harvey, p. 27–29.
69 L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D Arnold (ed) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 122.
70 Ibid, p. 124.
71 Descriptions of Knowle, 1837, cited above. For a description of Steephill, *see*: J. Morgan Richards 1914 *Almost Fairyland: Personal Notes Concerning the Isle of Wight*. London: John Hogg.

St John's House at Ryde and a client of Repton, had a 'marino' on the water's edge – seemingly a gothick or Moorish boathouse-cum-banqueting house, at which music was performed for the enjoyment of the public strolling through the nearby woods.[72] The bathing house at Norris seems to be similar in terms of scale and range of likely functions and, therefore, might have been used in this way. Pennsylvania Castle was supposedly 'used for entertainments', although whether these were public or private is unknown.[73]

72 V. Basford and H. Thomas 2018 *Humphry Repton on the Isle of Wight*. Isle of Wight Gardens Trust, p. 4.

73 According to an interpretation board close to the original entrance to Pennsylvania Castle, at the top of the walk down to the cove.

5 NATIONAL CONTEXT: EXAMPLES OF MARINE VILLAS AROUND THE ENGLISH COAST

Although the Isle of Wight and the Solent were researched intensively within the timescale of this study, it was not possible to look around the whole coast of England systematically (let alone the UK) to find marine villa sites in the same way.[74] However, a small number of places were strategically chosen and spot-checked for the existence of marine villas: two northern locations (one a sheltered river estuary – a good place to build marine villas – the other a resort) to help consider whether the marine villa was a southern phenomenon; the environs of two trade ports (which meant an affluent merchant class who could afford to build such houses); the environs of several seaside resorts; and, finally, coastal locations with dramatic and picturesque scenery. Some of these places fall into more than one category. A key word search of John Feltham's *Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places* of 1806 using the terms 'villa' and 'cottage' was also carried out, but it did not reveal any great insights or particular clusters. From this spot-checking exercise, it was possible to draw some preliminary conclusions about marine villas in a national context.

Distribution

Marine villas did not tend to be built where the landscape is topographically uninteresting or particularly inhospitable, for example low-lying coastal marshland. Nor were they built where steep cliffs plunged down to the sea, for example in North Devon and North Somerset, where one might have expected the landscape to be seen as picturesque enough to be an attraction. On the other hand, estuaries and rivers were popular locations, because they gave shelter from the elements and also offered up the interest of the comings and goings of shipping. River villas, such as Sandridge (by John Nash) on the River Dart in Devon, for example, should perhaps be considered as a subset of marine villas. Sandridge had aspects in common with marine villas, including its relatively small scale and the fact it was essentially a dower house. However, the disadvantage of being by a tidal river was that the owner and their guests had a view dominated by mud twice a day.[75]

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74 In Ireland, at Blackrock south of Dublin, there was a cluster of fine and early examples built for the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. The most famous was Frascati, belonging to the Duke and Duchess of Leinster. This is where Duchess Emily (daughter of the 2nd Duke of Richmond) had a 'school' for her 20 children, who swam in the sea before lessons and gardened and made hay in the afternoon. Frascati was built in 1739 and extended later; its development as a marine villa essentially dates to the 1760s. It was demolished in 1983. Maretimo (1770s, also lost) seems to have been the other most significant one. These two examples are, therefore, contemporary with the very earliest examples in England. *See*: www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/history-heritage/big-houses-of-ireland/the-big-houses-of-dun-lao/marine-villas-frascati-an/index.xml and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackrock,_Dublin

75 These 'not quite marine villas' may have also evolved from and been influenced by riverside country houses, such as Pentillie Castle and Port Eliot in Cornwall.

Figure 5.1: Summary of areas spot-checked for marine villas. [© Historic England]

Good transport links were another factor determining the geographical location of marine villas. One of the attractions of the Solent and the Isle of Wight was their relative proximity to London. There were good roads to Portsmouth and Southampton too. This was also the case with the Kent coast. Other potential sites were more of a trek from the metropolis, such as the South Devon coast, for example. But the attraction in Devon was the well-publicised mild climate. Consequently, marine villas did get built there, but in less of a concentration, particularly in comparison to the Isle of Wight.

It seems that marine villas often related to new and developing seaside resorts, but not always. Some were independent of resorts, and some resorts do not appear to have attracted villa builders and have few, if any, marine villas nearby or associated with them.[76]

Locations checked for marine villas nationally and examples found

Starting with Scarborough in the north and working clockwise around the country, a summary of locations spot-checked using the NLS second edition OS mapping is given here (Fig 5.1).

Yorkshire coast: Scarborough

Scarborough was one of the five earliest seaside resorts in the country.[77] The second edition OS maps were checked for marine villa-type properties along the coast either side of Scarborough. By 1912, it is likely that some examples had been lost to development as the town grew. A small cluster around Londesborough Lodge in the centre of the town, overlooking South Sands, comprises survivals dating from the 1830s and 1840s. They appear to have had features in common with marine villas elsewhere, although their scale is small.[78] Some limited landscape setting remains. More research would be required to establish how extensive the setting was originally and what, if anything, might have been lost. Following the coast southwards, the only other site that exhibits (on the map at least) typical marine villa characteristics is Wheatcroft Cliff, a late 19th-century villa. This was lost to a landslip in 1993.[79]

Suffolk coast: Felixstowe and Dovercourt

Heading a considerable way south, but also dominated by the North Sea, is the Orwell estuary. Here, at Felixstowe, on the north bank, there was a cluster of four marine villas. They were fairly small scale and, with the exception of one, which probably dated to the mid-18th century (but was rebuilt in around the 1840s), they were all built in the late 19th century. From Google Earth and the NLS overlays, it looks as though there are fragmentary remains of their settings, and from Google Street View, it seems that sea defences have been erected against the bottom of their seaside gardens, thereby further eroding any remains of the original design. Across

76 Discussing the cottage orné, a popular form of marine villa, Roger White observes the near total dearth of them in the environs of Brighton. R White 2017 *Cottages Ornés: The Charms of the Simple Life*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 131–32.

77 The others are Brighton, Margate, Hastings and Weymouth. S. Berry 2005 *Georgian Brighton*. Chichester: Phillimore, p. 16.

78 Londesborough Lodge is listed as 'late 1830s villa with simplified neo-Greek detail': HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1258289. Next door is a villa of the 1840s, which now houses Scarborough's art gallery: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1273502. Also listed are Woodend: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1258213, the White House: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1258290 and Park Dene: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1247226

79 houseandheritage.org/2018/06/22/wheatcroft-cliff/

the Orwell, on the south side of the estuary, lies Dovercourt, a suburb of the port of Harwich. In the 1840s, property developer John Bagshaw conceived an ultimately unsuccessful plan to create a new seaside resort there. He built one terrace of houses and a marine villa for himself: Cliff House. This no longer exists. It was demolished in 1909 and its setting repurposed as a public park in 1911.[80]

Kent coast: Whitstable, Margate, Kingsgate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate

Moving further south again, the Isle of Thanet on the Kent coast was popular with marine villas builders. The OS second edition mapping from about 1900 shows that there were a reasonable number of typical-looking sites strung out along the coast at this time. Here, largely, they seem to relate to seaside resorts (particularly) those of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs. It is possible that there had once been more marine villas, but some had been lost and others eroded by this date. The close proximity to London and good railway connections would also have led to pressure of development. The most important marine villa on the Kent coast was Kingsgate (*see* Section 4). Just east of Thanet is Whitstable Castle (formerly known as Tankerton Tower), which dates to the 1790s and appears to be relatively intact and worthy of further investigation.[81] A significant loss is East Cliff Lodge at Ramsgate. The house dated from 1794 and was built in a heavily crenellated, gothick style for the politician Benjamin Bond Hopkins.[82] In 1803, it was used by Queen Caroline as a summer retreat, and from 1830 it was the home of the Jewish philanthropist Moses Montefiore. It was painted by J M W Turner.[83] The house was demolished in 1954, and the setting is now a public park (undesignated).

South coast: West Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset

Moving clockwise around the coast, the villas of the Sussex, Hampshire and Dorset coasts are discussed in more detail in Section 6, as is the Isle of Wight in Section 7.

South Devon coast

Another area of the country that was not investigated in depth for this study, but that is undoubtedly worthy of further research, is South Devon. Indications are that, after the Isle of Wight and the Solent, certain areas of South Devon were the most desirable places in which to build marine villas in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. One of the earliest coastal houses of marine villa scale (and seemingly intention), The Moult, overlooking the Kingsbridge estuary at Salcombe, has already been described in Section 4.

In the important naval port of Plymouth, one might expect to find similarities with Portsmouth, which influenced the development of marine villas on the Isle of Wight and along the Solent. The banks of the Rivers Tamar and Plym and

80 K. Feluś 2008 'Cliff Park and Cliff Gardens, Dovercourt: A survey and interim assessment of the historic landscape' (unpublished report for Essex County Council).
81 For the house of Whitstable/Tankerton Castle, listed Grade II, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1121141
82 By that date Benjamin Bond Hopkins was the owner of the famous estate of Painshill in Surrey.
83 'East Cliff, Ramsgate' https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1140624/east-cliff-house-ramsgate-watercolour-turner-joseph-mallord/

their tributaries were (and, to a certain extent, still are) the site of many large country estates, including Mount Edgcumbe (*see* Section 4), Port Eliot, Pentillie, Antony and Saltram.[84] However, the area around Plymouth does not seem to have attracted the builders of marine villas in the same way as Portsmouth. The family at Mount Edgcumbe had a smaller subsidiary house across the Hamoaze at Stonehouse, but they used it as their winter villa, whereas the majority of marine villas were summer retreats. The greater distance between Plymouth and London, in comparison to Portsmouth and London, was probably a large factor in the lack of marine villas in the area.

Despite the considerable journey time from London to South Devon, several locations along this stretch of coast became popular because it was thought to have a mild climate, favourable for those suffering from illness. After the French Revolution (1789-1799) and during the Napoleonic Wars (1803 -1819), doctors who could no longer suggest the (even greater) journey to the South of France for their patients, instead, prescribed the sea air and gentle climate of South Devon.

As explained in Section 2, marine villas were often built in the cottage orné style, and cottages ornés were often described as marine villas. Sidmouth had a particularly high concentration of such cottages. It is possible that they were built here because, being east of the River Exe, it is closer to London and a simpler journey from the capital. In comparison to the small resorts on the coast between Exeter and Plymouth, it was nearer the turnpike road. The best-known cottage-villa in Sidmouth is Knowle Cottage, built for Sir Thomas Stapleton, Lord le Despencer, between 1805 and 1810 (Fig 5.2). It was later extended by Thomas Fish, who bought it in 1820. It was regularly open to the public and guidebooks describing it were published.[85] Although Knowle was around 900m inland, the sea dominated the views on the sloping site. Few of the other Sidmouth villas had a sea frontage either, but the sea was the reason they were there. The second edition OS map (which for Sidmouth is particularly late, 1934) shows several smallish villas around 400m from the sea on the western edge of the town. Of this cluster, none survive as ensembles and few of the villas seem to be intact. It is likely that they were built in the later 19th century and of limited note in terms of their settings.

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84 All these sites except Saltram are in Cornwall. For Mount Edgcumbe, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000134 (landscape) and HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1160959 (house). All the listed garden buildings and scheduled monuments are too numerous to note here. For Port Eliot, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000426 (landscape) and HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1140516 (house). Like Mount Edgcumbe, there are other listed structures within the designed landscape. For Antony, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000647 (landscape) and HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1311081 (house). This site also has further designated structures. For Pentillie, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1140189. For Saltram, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000699 and HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1386230 (also several other listed structures).

85 J. Harvey 1837 *Guide to Illustrations and Views of Knowle Cottage, Sidmouth: The Elegant Marine Villa Orné of Thomas L Fish Esq*. Sidmouth: J. Harvey.

Figure 5.2: View from the Drawing Room of Knowle, Sidmouth, 1823 by James Fidlor. [© Sidmouth Museum Archives]

Two marine villas that do survive stand out on the early 20th-century mapping, both with what appear to be relatively intact settings. The first is the gothick Sidholme, just east of Knowle Cottage, and the other is Peak House. Sidholme was built in 1826 for the Earl of Buckinghamshire.[86] It is situated in an area known as the Elysian Fields, and the setting is rather puzzling. The tithe map of 1840 shows it in a fairly limited plot, closely neighboured by several other presumed villas. However, given the quality of the building and the status of the owner, this may be indicative of an early subdivision or erosion of the plot. Alternatively, it could simply be inaccurate mapping, because it does not correlate very well with the later OS map. Given the levels of loss of marine villa ensembles, more work should be done on this example, including a site visit to establish if there are surviving design features in the garden. The house is listed Grade II* and, at the time of writing, it was a hotel run by the Christian Guild.[87]

86 Seemingly, George Hobart-Hampden, 5th Earl of Buckinghamshire.
87 For Sidholme, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1097928

Figure 5.3: A section of the tithe map for Sidmouth, 1840. This particularly fine and detailed tithe map shows Peak House (bottom left) set in its triangular plot, and a few of the other neighbouring villas. Cliff Cottage and the site of the later Connaught Gardens are on the small headland at the bottom right. The areas shown in a chequer pattern of green and blue appear to be kitchen gardens. [Devon County Council and Devon Heritage Centre Publ]

Closer to the sea, set above the cliffs west of the town, is Peak House (Fig 5.3). Its plot, as mapped on the second edition OS map, was typical of marine villas of the late 18th and early 19th centuries: vaguely triangular, splaying out to give the widest views of the sea. It had two lodges, a gently winding drive that doubled up as part of a circuit walk, paddocks and lawns in front of the house dotted with small clumps of trees, a small shrubbery, a kitchen garden and ancillary buildings. The glasshouses have been lost from the kitchen garden and a couple of small dwellings have been built within it but, relatively speaking, this is an intact site. The plot today seems to encompass around 7ha (a fairly typical size), but may have originally been a little bigger, including more land on the east side. However, the house is not the original marine villa, rather a rebuild of 1904 on the same site. The original was plotted on the OSD of 1806.

Connected with this property was what appears to have been a detached pleasure ground and associated cottage (*c.* 1820), on the rocky outcrop that separates the west beach from the east beach at Sidmouth. The original cottage – known first as Cliff Cottage, and later Sea View – does not survive, but the garden remains, albeit in an adapted form. It is now known as Connaught Gardens, converted into a public park in the 1930s, and one of the very few sites associated with marine villa landscapes of the period that is included on the Register.[88] This site has not been investigated for this study, but further research would be worthwhile to better understand its early role and put it in context as part of a marine villa landscape.

Moving westwards along the coast from Sidmouth, the next resort is Exmouth. It has not been considered by this study, but it is also worthy of further investigation because it is situated at the estuary of the Exe and, therefore, has a degree of shelter. It is also close to prosperous Exeter.

One further site of importance – which was a marine villa in intention and would have been considered so at the time – should be mentioned here: Luscombe Castle. Built in the castle style between 1800 and 1804, it was designed by John Nash for Charles Hoare (of the banking family). It is set on the hillside above Dawlish, further along the coast, west of the River Exe.[89] Although the estate is large (10ha of garden set in a wider designed landscape of 140ha), the deliberate choice of location for the health-giving benefits of the sea and its intended use as a retreat mean that it could be considered a marine villa. Hoare and his wife had been visiting this section of the coast for a number of years for the sake of Mrs Hoare's health, renting houses before buying land and building Luscombe. The landscape (Grade I) was laid out by Humphry Repton, who produced one of his 'Red Books', in which he presented his design ideas, in 1799.[90]

Cornwall coast

Cornwall was not investigated for this study, due to time constraints. However, it is likely that its remoteness, at least until the coming of the railways, meant it was not accessible enough for the building of marine villa as retreats. Likewise, in many places, its topography was not conducive. Houses and settings that, elsewhere, might have functioned as marine villas do exist though. At the estuary of the Fal are the small estates of Quaker merchant families: Trebah, Glendurgan, Carwinion and Budock Vean. They all have the compact scale of a marine villa and date within the period discussed in this study (1820s and 1830s). They overlook the sea (and the mouth of the river) and the water becomes the ultimate destination point in the garden. But these were permanent residences, so they were subtly different. Trebah, Glendurgan and Carwinion have all become notable for the horticultural interest of their gardens.

88 For Connaught Gardens, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001532
89 For the listed building description of the house at Luscombe, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1164298
90 For the register entry for the park and garden at Luscombe, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000486

North Devon and North Somerset coast

Moving northwards again, up the western coast, this study briefly considered the coast of Exmoor in North Devon and North Somerset, largely because of the picturesque qualities of the landscape. But these were very remote areas in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, not accessible enough for retreats. The second edition OS mapping did not show any typical examples of marine villas. However, one possible site was Ashley Combe just outside Porlock, which was improved in the 1830s for Ada Lovelace, mathematician and daughter of the poet Lord Byron.[91] The house was originally built in the 1790s, but it is not known if this was a retreat, or what the scale of the estate was. However, there were tunnels to the beach and other picturesque, marine villa-type elements, such as terraces and zigzag paths. The house was demolished in 1974 but the garden remains, in a neglected state. In North Somerset, the seaside resort of Minehead was considered, but the second edition OS map shows only two very small-scale, probably Victorian, villas – one lost, one surviving – with three houses within its original, rather small, plot. The map does not even give the house a name.

Ports of Bristol and Liverpool

The west coast ports of Bristol in the south and Liverpool in the north were highly prosperous by the end of the 18th century, their wealth built on Atlantic trade (inextricably linked to slavery in the West Indies). There was, therefore, an affluent middle-class population, which would likely have had the means and inclination to build seaside retreats. Both cities are associated with river estuaries, which again might suggest the presence of marine villas.

Unlike Liverpool, the port of Bristol is slightly inland, up the River Avon, which flows through a gorge along much of its route from the sea to the city. This does not allow for riverside villas of the type seen elsewhere. It might be expected, therefore, that the affluent merchants of Bristol would have headed to the mouth of the Avon to build their marine villas. Accordingly, a section of the coastline west of Bristol, along the Severn estuary, has been investigated, roughly from Portishead in the south to Oldbury-on-Severn in the north. The seaside resort of Clevedon, slightly further south, was not looked at because it is essentially Victorian.[92] Only one property displaying the scale and features typically seen mapped for marine villas was identified: Hollywood just outside Portishead (although it was problematic to find out any more on its history online). The rectangular plot gives the impression of a Victorian rather than Georgian property. To the north of the mouth of the Avon, the land is much more low-lying, marshy in places and characterised (on the second edition OS map) by small farms and orchards. The mud flats of the Severn at this point are vast at low tide and therefore unattractive. No villas were found here.

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91 *See*: exmoorher.co.uk/Monument/MSO7970 For images, *see*: mineheadonline.co.uk/ashley.htm

92 One possible example in Clevedon is the Royal Pier Hotel, which started life as Rock House, built in 1823. Its site is likely to have meant it was always urban and rather too limited for a designed landscape of any note.

In Liverpool, the port was developed on the estuary. By the time of the second edition OS map (1908), Liverpool was a vast sprawling city, taking in many places that had once been detached towns and villages. It is difficult to tell whether the extensive dock developments erased any marine villas, but this seems likely. In 1908, the west bank of the estuary (the Birkenhead/Wirral side) was less developed and a few sites that warrant further investigation were identified. There are enough suggestions of marine villas that it would be a valid exercise to research the possibility of sites along the Mersey, on both banks. One of the very latest sheets of the OSDs, made in 1836, covers the Wirral and it adds to the evidence for marine villas on this side of the Mersey. The area around Liscard and the tellingly named New Brighton (near the northern end of the Wirral) look to have been good locations for marine villas. Liscard Castle was a castellated villa built in about 1810 (and in the mid-19th century referred to as a marine villa), just over 1km from the waterfront, although at the time there may have been nothing between it and the Mersey.[93] Neither villa nor setting survives, both having succumbed to residential development. Liscard Vale (*c.* 1830s) to its east and fronting the river does survive, however, and much of its original setting is now a public park, known as Vale Park (undesignated).

Summary

By strategically spot-checking a variety of locations nationally, around the coast of England, it seems apparent that very few places – if any, with the possible exception of South Devon – had the intensity of marine villas found on the Isle of Wight and along the Solent coast. However, using late-19th century mapping means that sites already lost by about 1900 are not readily identified. Nevertheless, this desktop survey found enough sources online (that is, some of the OSDs and the Devon tithe maps) to qualify and clarify the findings made using the NLS mapping.

This exercise has given useful pointers for further research, including areas that might be looked at in the future. They include the Mersey estuary, which might warrant further investigation to establish the level of loss of marine villas, which would give some context to the patterns of loss and survival on Southampton Water, with which it has some similarities. Further research should also be done into potential sites along the South Devon coast in order to establish with confidence that this was also a hotspot for marine villa builders.

93 *See*: artuk.org/discover/artworks/liscard-castle-wallasey-wirral-67534

6 REGIONAL CONTEXT: THE MARINE VILLAS OF THE WIDER SOLENT AREA

> '...A "never failing source of interest and beauty". [The] general appearance [of the Solent] is that of a noble river flowing with a rapid tide, enriched with fleets of war and merchantmen securely riding at anchor, and innumerable smaller craft sailing in every direction...'
>
> George Brannon 1831 edn *Vectis scenery: being a series of original & select views, exhibiting the picturesque beauties, local peculiarities, and places of particular interest in the Isle of Wight,* p. 7.

Historically, the Solent has always been strategically important, with the naval base of Portsmouth and the trade port of Southampton on its waters. The strait of water between the Isle of Wight and the mainland has been a place to shelter from the enemy and from the weather. The Isle of Wight is the barrier that gives this protection. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Isle of Wight drew tourists seeking the picturesque, but its popularity was also connected to the Solent, which influenced the north of the Island in particular. This close connection between the Island and the Solent suggested that it would be worthwhile to investigate the presence of marine villas along the north coast of the Solent. The two sides of the stretch of water are visually related in views back and forth. There is also an intrinsic attractiveness to the Solent, especially looking towards the Island, with sea in the foreground, the Downs rising behind and shipping a constant source of movement that enlivens the views.

Boats must have been crossing from mainland to Island, and vice versa, for millennia. Even today, most visitors arrive on the Island on ferries from Portsmouth, Southampton or Lymington. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, both Portsmouth and Southampton were used as departure points for tours of the Island. John Feltham's *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-bathing Places* informed readers that from Southampton to Cowes (a distance of 25km) the 'mail packet sails every morning, soon after the arrival of the post from London'. It carried passengers at 'one shilling each, and about noon another vessel proceeds on the same terms, but parties may engage one, at any hour of the day, on easy terms'. The journey time in fair conditions was an hour and a half, which is remarkable considering the Southampton to Cowes car ferry today takes around one hour. The crossing could also be part of the experience if conditions were good:

> 'Nothing can be more delightful in fine weather, and with a favourable breeze, than this little voyage ...'
>
> John Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places.* London, p. 167.

Figure 6.1: The wider Solent area showing principal geographic features and selected villa locations mentioned in the text. [© Historic England]

As well as the functional boats making their way to and from the Island, from the early 19th century the Solent led the way in the rise of recreational yachting. Because the Solent is an area that is fairly easy to define – it stretches from Hurst Spit in the west to Selsey Bill in the east – it also suggested itself for a more detailed study of where, when and for whom marine villas were built. Furthermore, it was a good exemplar against which to test the known loss of villas on the Isle of Wight: did the pattern of loss also stretch to this side of the water?

In order to establish where villas were built, it was first necessary to devise a way of identifying villa sites and then their survival. A methodology was developed – outlined in the Introduction – of using historic mapping with a modern underlay. The exercise started at the eastern end of the Solent and worked systematically westwards along the coast. As the sites were noted, a brief check of web-based sources was carried out to attempt to ascertain building dates and further information, such as owners and whether the house (if it survived) was listed. No sites identified in West Sussex and Dorset – and only one site in Hampshire – have landscapes listed on the *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*.[94] While this methodology has been effective, it should be noted that it only gives a snapshot of marine villas as they existed in about 1900 (the date range for the sheets used is 1897 to 1912). By the end of the 19th century, quite a few marine villas had already started to be eroded by the development of seaside towns, for example St John's at Ryde on the Isle of Wight. Others had been diminished by in-fill, with smaller villas built within the grounds of the original, such as Hotham Park House at Bognor. And some had been lost, or started to be lost, to coastal erosion, for example Mrs Esdaile's villa at Aldwick (*see* Aldwick cluster pp. 76–100).

94 Cadland, previously known as Boarn Hill Cottage, Hampshire (Grade II*).

As no marine villas were identified in West Sussex, west of Selsey Bill, the area of the regional study was extended eastwards to the mouth of the River Arun. Thus, the NLS mapping was used systematically from Littlehampton on the Arun, for around 160km westwards to Hengistbury Head in Dorset, thereby taking in the western coastline of West Sussex, all of the coastline of Hampshire and the eastern coastline of Dorset.[95]

By extending the study east of Selsey Bill, a discrete cluster of marine villas was found around Aldwick, now a suburb of the seaside resort of Bognor Regis. Having established the basic information of dates of construction, architectural style, builders and owners, as well as the degree of survival, the Aldwick cluster proved to be a microcosm of the findings from elsewhere along the Solent and on the Isle of Wight. It is probably nationally representative – as far as patterns of ownership and typical features are concerned, for example. As there were only seven marine villas in the cluster, a little more in-depth research was carried out and their story is presented here as a case study. Before that, however, a summary of findings in Hampshire and Dorset is given.

Hampshire

Given the importance of Portsmouth as a naval base, it might be expected that there would be more marine villas near the harbour. However, it seems likely that potential villa owners with connections to Portsmouth chose to build on the north side of the Isle of Wight, or further around the coast towards and into Southampton Water (Fig 6.2). *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-bathing Places* indicates that there was a regular boat service from Southampton to Portsmouth and it should be borne in mind that connections by water were probably faster than those by road, although both towns would have been well-connected to London by coach.[96]

By the end of the 19th century, there was one property that might be considered a marine villa on Hayling Island, east of Portsmouth. But Lama House was built in 1897 and so is beyond the scope of this study (it does not survive). To the west of Portsmouth, at Alverstoke, now part of Gosport, there are two surviving villas: Alver House (now known as Alverbank) built in 1842 (Fig 6.4) and Bay House, designed in about 1840 by Decimus Burton (1800–81).[97] The latter was built for Alexander Baring, Lord Ashburton, who owned The Grange near Winchester.

95 The distance of approximately 160km includes Southampton Water and the lower reaches of the Itchen and the Hamble. The Solent Forum lists the coastline of the Solent as 241 miles (388km) in length, but that includes all of Langstone and Portsmouth harbours and their inlets, plus the western portion of Chichester harbour and even further up the Itchen and Hamble rivers than this study investigated. It also considers the area west of Hurst Spit to the Dorset border. *See*: solentforum.org/solent/our_coastal_zone/

96 J. Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*. London, p. 167.

97 For Alver House, now known as Alverbank, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1234064 and for Bay House, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1276633. A report in *The Times* records the purchase date of the land for Bay House as 1840. *See*: fortgilkicker.co.uk/bayhouse.htm

Figure 6.2: From the Window at Cadland, 1824 by Anne Rushout (1768–1849). This view of Southampton Water was taken from the old Cadland House, looking east across the parkland laid out by Lancelot Brown. It reinforces the description of Southampton Water from the *Guide to All the Watering and Sea-bathing Places*, 1806 quoted below. [Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection]

This example echoes the pattern of a country house owner building a marine villa within fairly easy reach of their family seat. Bay House is now a school and the landscape largely lost under modern buildings. Alver House is a hotel and is separated from almost all of its landscape, part of which is now a public park. The sections of the historic designed landscape now within the public park have been combined with other land and, consequently, its villa-like qualities are disjointed and eroded to a high degree.[98]

Further west along the coast is Southampton Water, which, with the lower reaches of the Rivers Hamble and Itchen, was a highly desirable location in which to build a marine villa. *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-bathing Places* describes it thus:

> 'Southampton Water, the noble estuary of the Test and the Itchin, is of sufficient breath for greatness, its shores charmingly varied and enlivened with buildings and plantations ... down this channel Southampton appears to great advantage, as well as the elegant seats which extend beyond it ... On the New Forest side, which is finely wooded, the neat little towns of Hythe, Cadland, Fawley and Calshot Castle which stands at the mouth of the estuary all open in succession'.
>
> John Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*. London, pp. 167–68.

98 research.hgt.org.uk/item/alverbank-hotel/

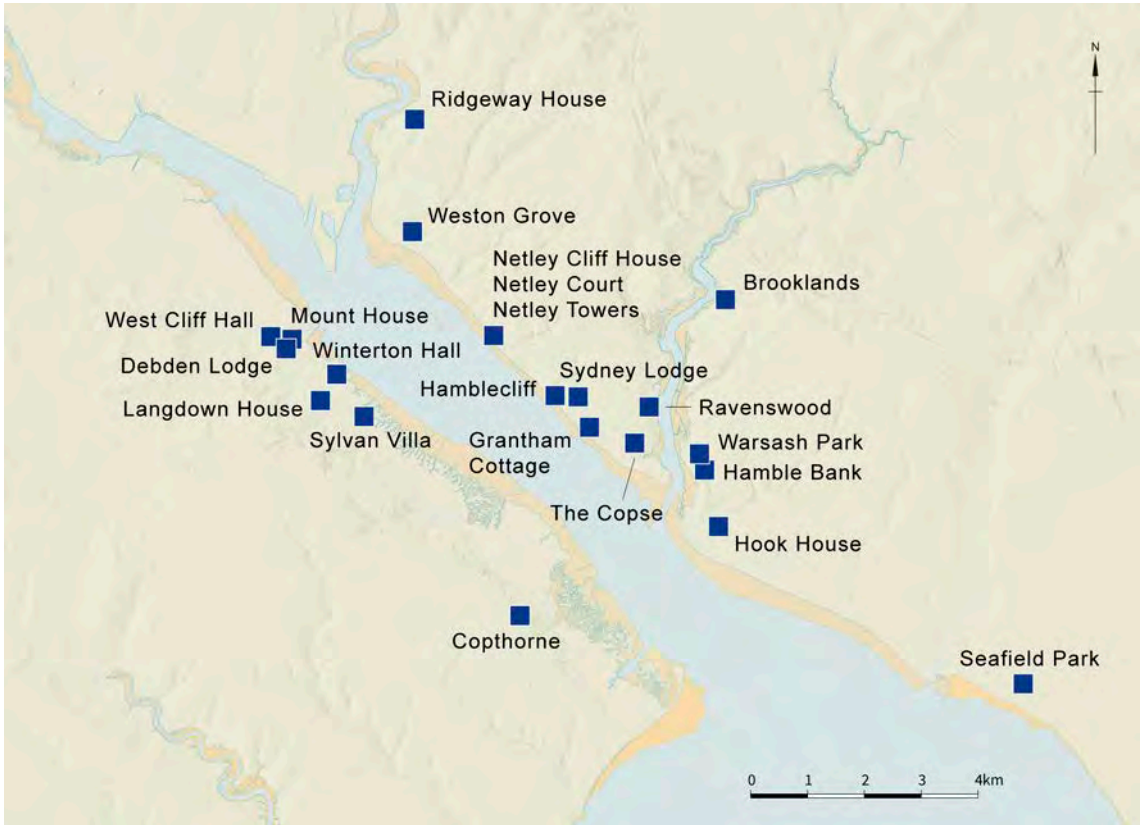

Figure 6.3: Southampton Water showing the locations of marine villas. (The map does not include Old Cadland, which was almost opposite Sydney Lodge, or Bournehill Cottage and Eaglehurst which lie further south). The best preserved ensemble of marine villa and setting is Brooklands on the Hamble. Hamblecliff appears to also be relatively intact, in that the house and most of its setting survive, but it was not visited for this study and the condition is unknown. At all the other sites either the house or the landscape are lost, or both.
[© Historic England]

On the eastern bank, the guide notes the 'picturesque ruins' of Netley Abbey, Hamble Church, Hook House (*see* Appendix) and other gentlemen's seats, 'which are thrown into different perspective by the course of the vessel and the indenting of the shore'. By this, it means that their attractive qualities are increased by seeing them from changing perspectives.

Of the 21 marine villas (of various scales) on Southampton Water and its tributaries, probably the most architecturally important is Sydney Lodge, designed by Sir John Soane (1753–1837) and constructed between 1792 and 1796 (Figs 6.5 and 6.6).[99] Like Norris Castle, it appears to have been built on the site of a farm. Evidence gathered by the Soane Museum suggests that Soane's client was Agneta Yorke,

99 The listing description, written in 1955 (and seemingly never updated) states: 'The house is virtually unaltered and a fine example of Soane's expression of the classical theme, using a simplified system of details with extreme refinement.' *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1111924

Figure 6.4: Alverbank seen from the Solent c.1858, by Alfred Snape. Note the prominent flag pole, a common feature in the designed landscapes of marine villas. [Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2022]

second wife of Charles Yorke (second son of Philip Yorke, 2nd Earl of Hardwicke of Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire).[100] However, the coincidence of the name of the building and that of Agneta's second son – Joseph Sydney Yorke – suggests that it is possible the marine villa was always intended for him.[101] Joseph Sydney had a successful naval career, and was made a Rear-Admiral of the Blue in 1810 and Admiral of the Blue in 1830. The naval connection is highlighted by the presence within the designed landscape of a battery, clearly plotted and marked 'private saluting battery (6 guns)' on the second edition OS map (Fig 6.7).[102] Such features were popular in gardens of places with strong naval connections, for example Mount Edgcumbe (Cornwall) and Saltram (on the other side of Plymouth Sound

100 collections.soane.org/SCHEME963

101 Charles Yorke died in 1770, eight years after marrying Agneta. Their youngest child, Joseph Sydney, was just two. *See*: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Yorke

102 For the battery, *see*: www.hamblehistory.org.uk/shared/attachments.asp?f=0369febe%2Dca23%2D402b%2D8c2a%2Df1f27e2c7f91%2Epdf&o=Westfield%2DCommon%2Epdf, which states, 'On Westfield Common was a saluting battery built by Captain Yorke to salute ships arriving in the Roads off his Sydney Lodge estate. It contained six cannons he brought home from a Dutch frigate, the "Alliance", which he had captured in 1805.'

Figure 6.5: Elevation of the Entrance Front, 1793, by John McDonnell pupil of Sir John Soane. Sydney Lodge was one of the most typical and architecturally significant examples of a marine villa on Southampton Water. [© Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Photograph by Ardon Bar Hama]

Figure 6.6: Elevation of the Lawn Front Sydney Lodge, 1793, by John McDonnell. [© Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Photograph by Ardon Bar Hama]

in Devon). Admiral Sir Joseph Sydney Yorke was tragically drowned in 1831 while returning from HMS St Vincent, which was moored at Spithead. The yacht he was in was hit by lightning off Stokes Bay (in front of Bay House and Alver House) and capsized, with the loss of everyone on board.

Sydney Lodge was a little gem of a marine villa, set on rising ground, just north of where the Hamble met Southampton Water. The villa was located towards the back of its plot, which appears to have been defined by a pair of small streams running down to the sea either side of it, with a paddock in front of the house sloping to the water. The OSD shows it newly built in 1797, with a kitchen garden just north-west of the villa. The paddock was planted as parkland and, by the end of the 19th century, the house had a conservatory attached on the south-eastern corner and the kitchen garden was a roughly oval enclosure.[103] In 1809, another marine villa, Hamblecliff, was built on the western edge of the plot (Fig 6.7).[104] There was also a smaller villa, Grantham Cottage, just inside the eastern boundary. The relationship between the cottage and the bigger house is not known, but the fact that the former was linked to Sydney Lodge by a path suggests there was a connection – and Grantham was a name associated with the family. The early subdivision of the Sydney Lodge site illustrates a common pattern with other marine villas, although the site was large enough for it not to have been detrimental. The fact that Sydney Lodge was built for a widow, or perhaps her naval officer son, is also a commonality.

Furthermore, the fate of Sydney Lodge in the 20th century follows a common pattern, too. Somewhat remarkably, the house survives (listed Grade II*), but its connection with the sea is totally lost: a factory complex has been built in the flanking shrubbery and the paddock running to the waterfront. The other half of the site is housing. Although the pressure of residential development was more often the reason for the demise of many marine villas, especially during the 20th century, industrial demand for waterside frontage was another contributing factor.[105] In the case of Sydney Lodge, its position on Southampton Water and its proximity to Southampton docks made it desirable. In 1936, it was purchased by British Marine Aircraft and later sold to Folland Aircraft Ltd. Without the setting and the intrinsic connection to the sea, the qualities that made Sydney Lodge a marine villa are lost and its integrity and context are gone. The adjoining Hamblecliff House was also bought by British Marine Aircraft.[106] Today, it survives as flats. Its landscape has not been developed, but it is hard to ascertain the condition of what remains without visiting the property. Grantham Cottage was hit by a parachute mine in

103 It is not known if the kitchen garden was walled, and it is now lost. Further research might yield greater knowledge of this example.
104 research.hgt.org.uk/item/sydney-lodge/
105 Industrial demand for waterside frontage is likely to have also been the case on the Mersey.
106 *See* www.hamblehistory.org.uk/shared/attachments.asp?f=0369febe%2Dca23%2D402b%2D8c2a%2Df1f27e2c7f91%2Epdf&o=Westfield%2DCommon%2Epdf

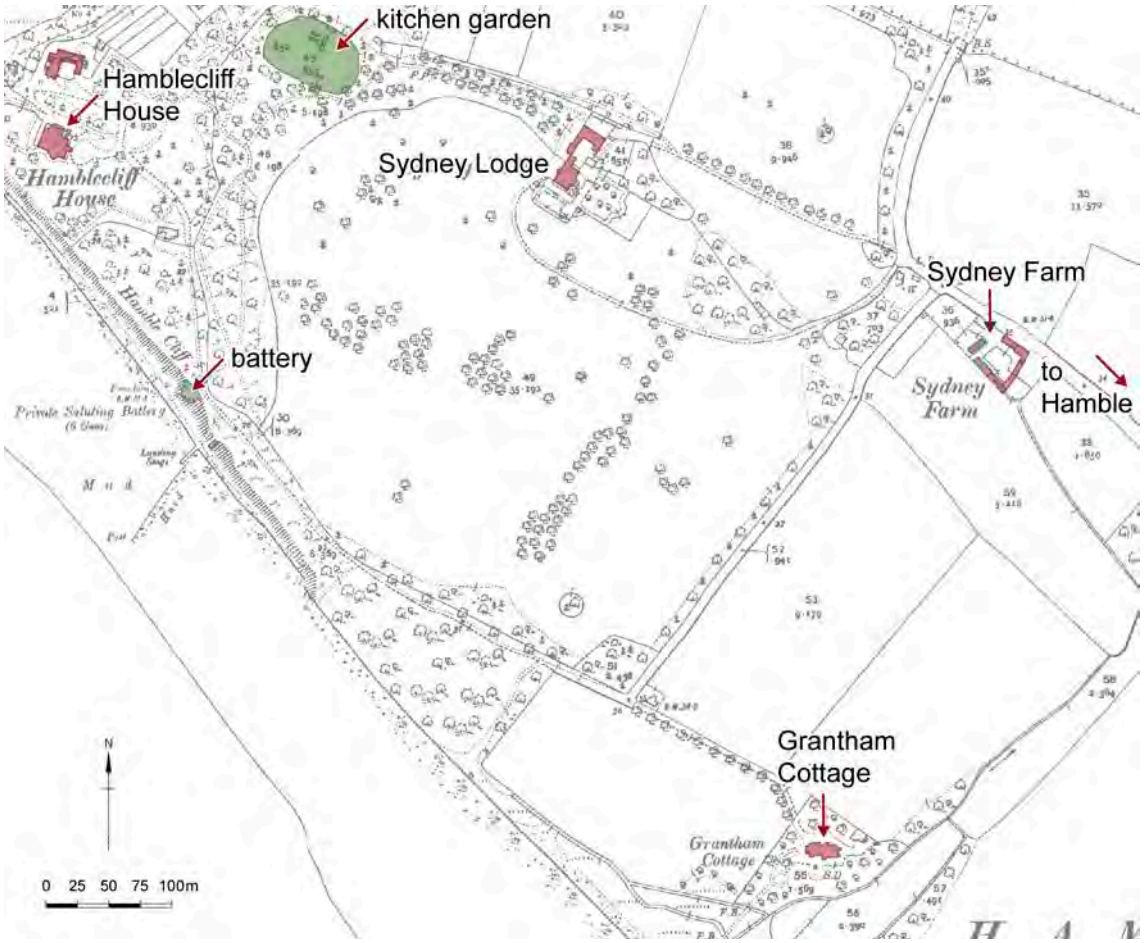

Figure 6.7: Detail from the second edition OS map 1902, showing the marine villa Sydney Lodge with Grantham Cottage and Hamblecliff, plus Sydney Farm, the battery and kitchen garden. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

1941 and seemingly abandoned.[107] The plot remains and the site is presumably waste ground on the edge of the neighbouring fuel depot. Sydney Lodge has been subject to a recent planning application (July 2019) for the redevelopment of some of the site from industrial to residential usage.[108]

107 For the demise of Grantham Cottage, *see*: www.hamblehistory.org.uk/shared/attachments.asp?f=e8dcc253%2Daf95%2D4af9%2D8895%2D4e49d35ab76b%2Epdf&o=Street%2Dnames%2Epdf

108 The development plans seen during the research for this study make no obvious reference to the history of the site, or attempt to reference earlier elements of design, despite the statement that the housing development (of 147 units) will 'deliver 1.3 hectares of public green space, a new play area, improved sports facilities and replacement car parking spaces', which indicates there will be more green space than there is today. *See*: ubu-design.co.uk/3-july-2019-ge-aviation-hamble/ and https://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/media/8255/appendix-e-vii.pdf

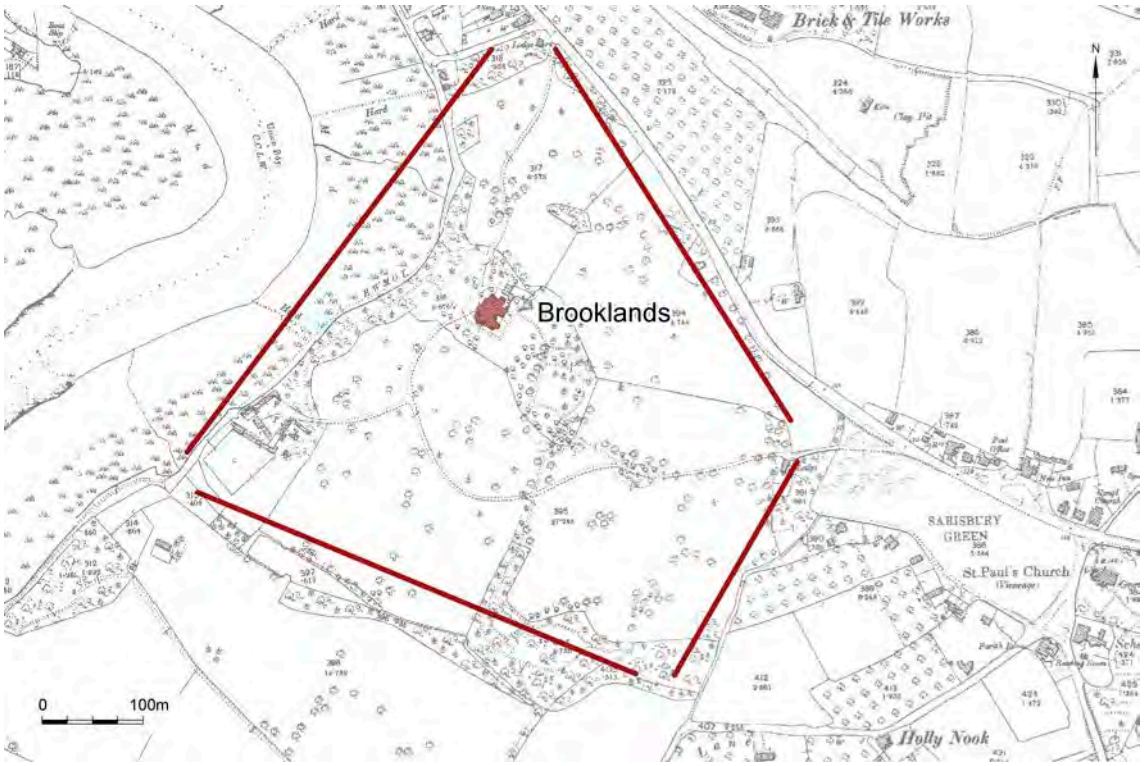

Figure 6.8: Brooklands, as shown on the second edition OS map, published 1897. The red lines highlight the typical trapezoid shape of the plot. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

Of the 21 Southampton Water marine villa sites, there is only one at which house and setting both survive intact: Brooklands, some way up the Hamble.[109] It was designed by John Nash for Admiral Sir Thomas Williams and built in 1800.[110] The site of Brooklands is a good one (Figs 6.8 and 6.9): the house sits on high ground that sweeps down to a loop in the river and affords, even today, what the Hampshire Gardens Trust calls 'magnificent views'.[111] The landscape has been associated with Humphry Repton. By 1897, the relatively large plot was mainly laid out as parkland, with two entrance drives, each guarded by a lodge, looping towards the house in a rough 'U' shape, one slightly shorter, the other slightly longer and reminiscent of Norris Castle. Other typical landscape features include an area of shrubbery walks

109 The house at Brooklands is listed Grade II*. Also listed is an icehouse: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1263646 and the 'garden cottage', supposedly a billiard room designed by Repton, Grade II: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1249663. The landscape, however, is not registered.

110 For a biography of Thomas Williams, *see* the *Dictionary of National Biography* and for the additional naval connection with Jane Austen's brother, Charles, *see*: jasna.org/publications/persuasions-online/vol36no1/mcmaster/

111 research.hgt.org.uk/item/brooklands/

Figure 6.9: A view across the River Hamble to Brooklands. [Peter Atkinson/Hampshire Gardens Trust]

behind the house and a kitchen garden. The location of Brooklands, so far up the river, means its definition as a 'marine villa' is somewhat tenuous, although it is a typical and, importantly, an intact example.

Of the two Southampton Water examples, Brooklands, on the Hamble, appears well cared for – the house is still a single residence. Moving further west, beyond Southampton Water and along the north Solent coast, there are two significant sites that warrant discussion: Boarn Hill Cottage and Eaglehurst. Boarn Hill Cottage, initially called The Sea Cottage, was a progenitor of the marine villa of the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Fig 6.10). It was originally built in the second half of the 1770s as a fishing lodge and retreat from its parent house, Cadland, 5km around the coast on Southampton Water. Both Cadland and The Sea Cottage were designed for the banker Robert Drummond by Henry Holland (1745–1806) and Lancelot Brown (1716–83).[112] A retreat such as this might have had limited accommodation for overnight stays and from that it was a simple step to erect further buildings by the (increasingly popular) sea for longer stays.

Boarn Hill Cottage has had an eventful past. The first incarnation, a thatched cottage, burnt down in 1785. But it was clearly an important part of the life and leisure of the Cadland estate and it was quickly rebuilt, this time with a slate roof.

112 For the designed landscape, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000280

Figure 6.10: Mr Drummond's Cottage, East Cowes, Isle of Wight (between 1797 and 1800) by Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827). Despite the title, this is in fact Sea Cottage, later called Bourn Hill, the site of the present Cadland House, on the north Solent coast in Hampshire. The view shows the second version of the cottage, the original thatched cottage orné of the mid-1770s burnt down in 1785, but was rebuilt with a slate roof. It was extended again in 1803. The scene suggests a pleasure party that has just arrived to sample the delights of the site. The downs of the Isle of Wight can be seen across the Solent. [Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection]

In 1803, wings were added, which might suggest that more accommodation was needed because it had taken on the role of a marine villa (which was, by then, highly fashionable). In 1865, it was extended again to become a dower house (a pattern seen in other marine villas). In 1916, it burnt down once more and was not rebuilt until 1935. The parent house of Cadland was requisitioned during World War II, then demolished in 1953 to make way for Fawley oil refinery. At this point, the enlarged Boarn Hill Cottage became the main residence of the estate and was known as Cadland. So, while the present house does not have particular historic integrity, its setting is a very rare surviving example not only of a 'Capability' Brown landscape on an intimate scale, but also of a detached pleasure ground designed for a very specific sort of building (Fig 6.11). This is reflected in its Grade II* status on the Register. However, the relevance to this study of what is now known as Cadland is as a demonstration of the early stages of the development of the marine villa.

Figure 6.11: Detail of the Ordnance Survey Drawing, 1797, showing the two sites of The Sea Cottage/Bourn Hill Cottage and Eaglehurst at the very end of the eighteenth century, just as the fashion for marine villas was burgeoning. At the top right of this detail Calshot Castle stands on its spit at the entrance to Southampton Water. Eaglehurst is near the centre (with the words 'Luttrell's Folly crossed through). Bourn Hill is merely marked as 'Cottage', in the bottom left, reflecting its then status as a retreat from the main house of Cadland. Here the radiating vistas of 'Capability' Brown's pleasure ground and hints of the circuit walk can be seen. This pattern of vistas is repeated on later maps of Eaglehurst, suggesting a (probably later) influence on the design. The original Cadland was to the north, just off this section of map. [© The British Library Board (Ordnance Survey Drawings: Beaulieu (OSD 75-2)]

Eaglehurst, just over 1km along the beach to the north-east, is more directly pertinent to this study. It is a relatively early marine villa, of unusual plan and gothick detailing, and it faces straight across the Solent towards Norris Castle. For a period from the 1830s, it also belonged to the Drummond family, so there was a direct relationship between the two sites. Before that, in its earliest incarnation, Eaglehurst is particularly significant. It might be presumed that Luttrell's Tower, which sits within the marine villa's grounds right above the beach, was built as an eye-catcher for Eaglehurst but, in fact, it pre-dates it (Fig 6.12). Evidence concerning the origin of the tower is scant, but within the context of the patterns of building and using marine villas elucidated by this study, one of the earliest documentary sources for the existence of the tower is especially interesting.

The first reference to the tower (sometimes called Luttrell's Folly at the time, sometimes merely Eaglehurst) dates from 1780, when it appears to have been recently erected.[113] The next source, John Hassell's *Tour of the Isle of Wight* (1790), is worth quoting at length:

> 'Eaglehurst, or as it is generally named by the inhabitants of the coast, Luttrell's Folly, is built close to the shore ... The building is very whimsical, but neat and agreeable to the sight. On top of it a round tower is erected which was originally intended to have a full view over the southern shores of the Isle of Wight: but unfortunately the director or architect forgot that the ground on which it stands is not of equal height with the intervening mountains on the island ... The kitchens, except being damp in winter, are equally convenient with the other parts of the house. Several subterraneous passages lead from the area to a number of marquees, to which the family retires when the turbulence of the weather renders a residence in the house disagreeable. In these tents there are several beds, and also a kitchen. The house being small, these retreats are both cool and agreeable. At their back stands a yew hedge, which protects them from the severity of the north and north-west winds. From hence another passage leads to a bathing house on the beach.'[114]

Hassell seems clear that the tower itself was the main retreat, augmented by a complex of marquees. Tents to extend the accommodation of a building were known elsewhere, including at John Wilkes's Villakin on the Isle of Wight (*see* Section 7). So, here we have, at the relatively early date of 1780, a marine villa being built in the form of a tower. Another parallel example has been identified in Kent. Tankerton

113 The Landmark Trust Luttrell's Tower History Album, p 9. *See*: landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/luttrells-tower-11322/#History. Luttrell's Tower is the only known surviving building designed by Thomas Sandby. For the listed building description, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1094367

114 The Landmark Trust *Luttrell's Tower History Album*.

Figure 6.12: The marine villa of Eaglehurst and Luttrell's Tower today. The sea is out of shot to the right of this view. [K Feluś]

Figure 6.13: Luttrell's Tower seen from the sea, with the marine villa behind. The entrance to the tunnel to the beach can be seen above the steps and gateway, which were designed in the early 20th century by Clough Williams Ellis. [Paul Rapson/Alamy Stock Photo]

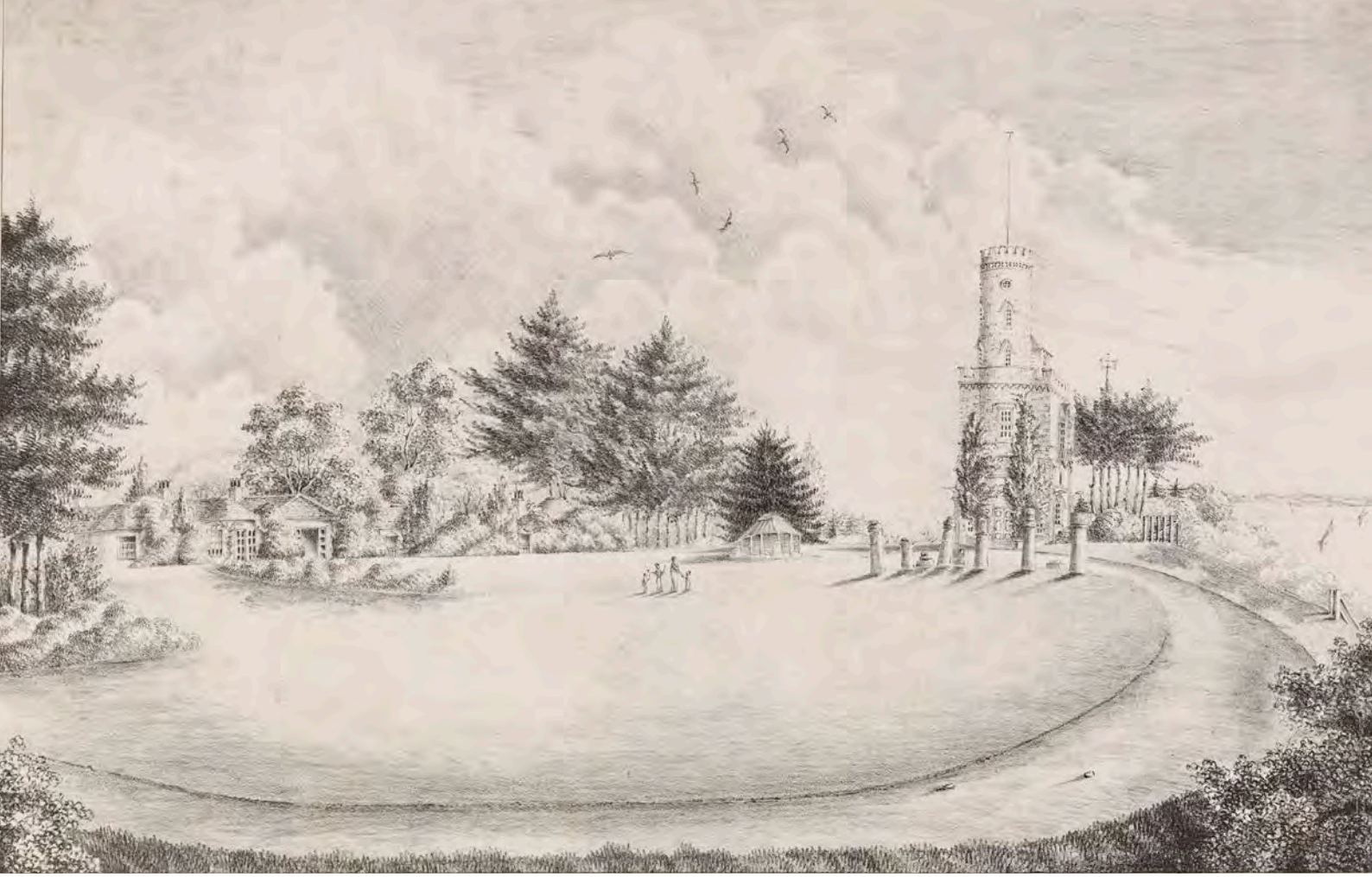

Figure 6.14: Eaglehurst, Calshot, Hampshire. The RIBA catalogue dates the view to 1830, but the print itself does not carry a date. The Right Honourable Earl of Cavan owned the estate from 1803 until his death in 1837. The villa on the left appears slightly more substantial than a series of marquees, but not yet the castellated structure it is today. [© RIBA Collections]

Tower, also known as Whitstable Castle, had its first phase of building in the 1790s. It also appears to have started its life as a marine villa in the form of a tower, before being later extended.[115]

Perhaps the site of Eaglehurst was found to be a particularly good one and, at some point, something more architecturally substantial was called for because, by the 19th century, a house was built a little way back from the sea, with the tower as the main object in its view (Fig 6.13).[116] This may have been a formalising of the site of the marquee complex. The present house is also highly idiosyncratic. The central section is single storey (in great contrast to the lofty tower), and its façade is dominated by three bay windows. It is flanked by crenellated octagonal pavilions, and the whole confection is wrapped up in white render with gothick details reminiscent of icing on a wedding cake. In documentary sources there is some suggestion that it was built like a tent, and it may be that the bricks-and-mortar

115 For Tankerton Castle, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1121141
116 For the house at Eaglehurst, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1094366

version of the villa emulated the earlier marquee version, perhaps in its floor plan.[117] As a marine villa, it is important to see the present house and tower as inextricably linked.[118] Like Norris Castle, Eaglehurst was another Solent-side retreat at which Queen Victoria stayed as a girl. Such visits must have influenced her love of the area, ultimately leading to her purchase of Osborne.

The plot of Eaglehurst was typically modest in scale, today covering around 10ha. This includes the lawn between the house and the tower, the walled kitchen garden behind the house (sheltered from the sea) and shrubberies on either side. There is also a lodge and a drive, but how much land either side of this was part of the design is unknown – the OSD suggests at least the field to the north of the kitchen garden. By the time of the second edition OS map of 1897, there were radiating vistas cut through the shrubbery on the east side of the house, reminiscent of the layout around Boarn Hill Cottage seen on the OSD of 1797 (*see* Fig 6.11). However, by 1897 the avenue seen on the OSD had gone. Today, banked mixed rhododendrons flank the lawn in the shrubbery on the east side, and generally the site is characterised by fine old holm oaks.

After Drummond bought the Eaglehurst estate, and for a number of years, it was subsumed into that of Cadland, to which it was connected by ornamented rides and drives. The Register description for Brown's detached pleasure ground of the present Cadland House pertinently suggests that Drummond 'thereby secured the seaboard between the southern and northern sections of the Cadland estate, which might otherwise have been threatened with C19 seaside development'.[119] Indeed, the marine villa ensemble of Eaglehurst has survived intact, and with its wider landscape setting it is remarkably unspoilt, too. This makes it a rarity.

Dorset

For this study the western end of the Solent has been taken as Hengistbury Head in Dorset. The coast further west has not been systematically investigated using the NLS mapping however sites identified are discussed in this section.

The coastline of Dorset is topographically varied. Between the marine villa-friendly harbours of Christchurch (just east of Hengistbury Head and partly sheltered by it) and Poole, the landscape immediately adjacent to the sea is characterised by cliffs and chines. Windswept and seemingly not very hospitable, this is where the now-sprawling resort of Bournemouth developed. West of Poole harbour is the Isle of Purbeck: remote, wild and windswept in the late 18th and 19th centuries (as

117 The Victoria County History says of Eaglehurst, it is 'prettily situated ... the house itself is somewhat of a curiosity, part of it having been built, according to local report, in imitation of the tent which its first owner had used while on active service ...' 'Parishes: Fawley', in W Page (ed) 1908 *A History of the County of Hampshire*, Volume 3. London, pp. 292–96.

118 Luttrell's Tower and the house of Eaglehurst are now in separate ownership. The house is private; the tower belongs to The Landmark Trust.

119 *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000280

described in the novels of Thomas Hardy). Even today, it is a sparsely populated area. Then comes Weymouth, a harbour-turned-resort made fashionable from the late 1780s by George III.[120] It may have had what we would describe as marine villas at first, but they quickly became town houses, as they did in Brighton. After Weymouth is the looming bulk of the Isle of Portland, not natural marine villa territory, but the location of Pennsylvania Castle, a significant site (*see below*). Then comes Chesil Beach, before the cliffs of west Dorset meet Devon, just after the resort of Lyme Regis.

The seaside resorts of Weymouth (one of the five earliest) and Bournemouth (somewhat later) have not been investigated for this study. Both were significantly built up by the time of the second edition OS maps of about 1900. For Bournemouth, a cursory glance shows a large-scale, sprawling, Victorian development of genteel mini-villas of the middle classes, which is likely to have eroded any earlier marine villas of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. By this date, Weymouth had also grown, although it had a different character. One interesting example of a villa residence lay just outside the town: Belfield (*see below*).

Within the western end of the Solent area was Highcliffe, the early marine villa of the Earl of Bute (*see* Section 4). It grew to be a country house in its own right, but, in its first incarnation, it was a villa in intention and use. Nearby, but in a slightly less exposed location at Mudeford, is Sandhills. It looks out one way across the salt marsh surrounding Christchurch harbour and the other way across 'The Run' at the entrance to the harbour and then out to sea, towards the Isle of Wight in the distance.[121] This villa was built on the spit on the east side of the harbour entrance in about 1785 for George Rose MP,[122] only 20km from his seat of Cuffnells in the New Forest. This is another example of a marine villa owner choosing a location within relatively easy reach of his main residence. The name of the villa was presumably a reference to the dunes that originally characterised the site. The OSD of 1797 suggests the setting for the villa occupied a slightly rising piece of ground (Fig 6.15).

By the time of the second edition map in 1898, Sandhills sat in a plot of around 6ha. Trees had been established and the map suggests a reasonable amount of vegetation, with clearer areas near the house. It appears that even today the environs are characterised by pines, possibly planted by Rose to tame the environment and provide some shelter around his villa. The second edition map also shows the typical elements of: lodge, drive, conservatory attached to the house,

120 When George III first visited Weymouth in 1789, he stayed in the seaside house of his brother, the Duke of Gloucester. There is some evidence that this had a garden. Given the scale of Weymouth at the time, it might have been an early marine villa. *See*: www.regencyhistory.net/2012/07/george-iii-in-weymouth.html and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloucester_House

121 Sandhills is listed Grade II, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1153853

122 Like many other villa owners, Rose had a naval connection, having been a sailor as a young man, before sustaining injuries in a battle in the West Indies. *See*: historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/rose-george-1744-1818 and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Rose_(politician)

Figure 6.15: Detail of the Ordnance Survey Drawing showing the area around Christchurch harbour, 1797. Sandhills, the marine villa of George Rose is circled. [© The British Library Board (Ordnance Survey Drawings; Christchurch Bay (OSD 75-1)]

Figure 6.16: Detail of the Ordnance Survey Drawing for Poole harbour, 1805. This shows Lilliput House and the presumably associated Lilliput Farm. [© The British Library Board (Ordnance Survey Drawings; Poole Harbour (OSD_66)]

kitchen garden with glasshouses (on the far side of a small stream), small jetty and boathouse on the beach. This map also shows that several smaller villas had been built within what is likely to have been the original plot. The largest of these was Gundimore, built in 1796[123] for Rose's second son, William, a poet.[124] This villa had a hint of the exotic and was said to be 'built in the style of a Turkish tent'.[125] Recent sale particulars found online (dating from 2015), show that it has been subdivided into three residences. None of the photographs of the interiors, which include rooms that were probably the finest in the house, show anything reminiscent of a Turkish tent. However, the external architectural details include a small tower with a vaguely exotic roof.[126] It is hard to tell if developments over two centuries have diluted the original style. The historic mapping does not suggest that Gundimore had its own landscape independent of Sandhills. Today, while Gundimore remains as three private houses, Sandhills is a holiday park and almost the entire plot is covered by static caravans. These are the final marine villas within the Solent area of Dorset.

Elsewhere in Dorset, five marine villas are noteworthy. The first two examples overlooked Poole harbour. One, marked on the OSD of 1805 as Lilliput House, is intriguing because it appears to show a definite designed landscape setting (Fig 6.16). Nothing remains of the house shown then and it has been hard to find further information about it because the name has been taken on by later houses on the site. Seemingly, it was built by 1783 for a man called Gulliver, who was reputedly a smuggler. It may, however, have been a permanent residence rather than a seaside villa retreat.[127]

Above the northern end of Poole harbour was Sans Souci, now Lytchett Minster School. Set a little back from the water's edge, but overlooking it, Sans Souci was the retreat of wealthy corn merchant Claude Scott, a friend of Repton and owner of Sundridge in Kent, designed by Repton in partnership with Nash. The house at

123 The List entry gives approximate date of 'early 19th century' however estate agents' sales details cite 1795. *See* note 126.

124 Gundimore is listed Grade II, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1153877 with the attached Scotts Cottage: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1110096 The listing description for Gundimore, written in 1976, is ambiguous about the exotic nature of the architecture: 'Of unusual design, said to have been built in the shape of a Turkish tent, complete with gilt arabic inscriptions to remind the original owner of his travels in the east.' This does not clearly explain whether the inscriptions survive, or how the tent-like structure manifested itself.
The exact date of the building of Gundimore requires further research. A date of 1796 has been suggested (*see* note 126). The OSD of 1797 does plot a cluster of three smaller buildings to the north-east of Sandhills, in approximately the correct location. One of these may be Gundimore, but their orientation does not correlate exactly with the way in which Gundimore is plotted on the first edition OS map (25 inch) of 1896. This may, however, be due to the scale of the mapping of the OSD series.

125 *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1153877

126 *See*: media.onthemarket.com/properties/1996228/doc_0_0.pdf

127 *See*: chineland.com/?page_id=43

Sans Souci has been altered beyond all recognition from the original design, and the landscape has been subsumed by school development. Many significant landscape features including a covered walkway and a grotto are now lost.[128]

Moving westwards again the next marine villa discovered is Belfield, built on high ground overlooking Weymouth in one direction and the Isle of Portland in the other.[129] More research would be needed to establish whether this was a retreat or a permanent residence, but it is certainly a villa in scale. If its use conforms with that of other marine villas, then it is a relatively early example, having been built in the late 1770s. There is some suggestion that it was built for the wife of Isaac Buxton. There are also references to it being the home of the grandmother of the abolitionist Thomas Fowell Buxton (Isaac's grandson). Consequently, Belfield may have, effectively, been a dower house or a lady's retreat, as seen elsewhere. The OSD of 1805 suggests a relatively small plot, consistent with a marine villa. By the time of the second edition OS map of 1902, the plot had already been reduced by the building of another, later villa at its east end. Belfield did, however, still have its lodge, drive, shrubbery (plus a number of unidentified small buildings within the pleasure ground) and tree-studded paddock to the east. There was also a farm, south of the road. The date of the road is unknown, but its straight course suggests it was probably 19th century and the name Buxton Road also implies a post-1800 date. The house was restored in 2014, but almost the entire garden has been developed for housing, probably after the Second World War.

The fourth marine villa in Dorset that is pertinent to this study is Abbotsbury Castle, also known as Ilchester Castle and Pin Money Castle. As a particularly early example, it has already been discussed in Section 4. The final example in Dorset is not far from Belfield and it is also associated with Weymouth. It is a highly significant surviving marine villa, particularly important to this study because it is one of the exemplars most relevant to Norris. Pennsylvania Castle on the Isle of Portland has close parallels in terms of owner/builder, architect and date.[130]

Pennsylvania Castle (Fig 6.17) was built around 1800 for John Penn (grandson of William Penn, founder of the US state of Pennsylvania) and designed by James Wyatt. Along with an unexecuted design of 1796/7 for Shoebury Castle in Essex, it is one of three seaside villas described by John Martin Robinson as Wyatt's 'little castle houses'. Penn apparently bought the land on Portland (or possibly the whole Isle of Portland) in 1797, making it contemporary with the acquisition of land for and the building of Norris Castle.[131] He is also something of a parallel with

128 Information from Sarah Fitzgerald, Dorset Gardens Trust.

129 For Belfield, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1313440

130 This site was visited for this study. As a marine villa with elements of intact designed landscape, it is interesting in its own right. The Dorset Gardens Trust has the site on its local list, but documentary research has been limited by a lack of sources. The surviving sections of the landscape would benefit from a thorough survey.

131 J. M. Robinson 2012 *James Wyatt 1746–1813: Architect to George III*. London: Yale University Press, p. 344.

Figure 6.17: The south-east front of Pennsylvania Castle, currently an exclusive hire holiday and wedding venue (November 2019). [Kate Feluś]

Seymour, being a confirmed bachelor. Penn family tradition apparently had it that he built the villa as a compliment to George III, who had pointed out the site when the two were on a ride together while staying at Weymouth.[132]

Pennsylvania Castle is built on a noticeably smaller scale than Norris Castle – in terms of the building itself, its landscape setting and its ancillary buildings.[133] It has a more intrinsically picturesque setting – even bordering on the sublime – perched on the edge of a rocky descent down to a small cove. It takes advantage of the more immediate borrowed landscape, including the ruins of the village church abandoned after the Easton 'earthquake', which lie between the castle and the sea (Fig 6.18). On a rocky outcrop to the north-east are the ruins of the 15th-century Rufus Castle (Fig 6.19). No longer visible because of the growth of trees, the remains of this castle may have influenced the orientation of Penn's marine villa, as they would have been visible at an oblique angle from the main vista, flanking the view directly out to sea. The medieval ruins may also have influenced the style of architecture for Penn's castle.

Originally, zigzag paths led down from the castle into a wooded declivity and thence through the churchyard and down to the cove (Fig 6.20). Slightly higher up there was a wooden bridge over a 'chasm' and a semicircular projection from the upper lawn in the style of a lookout, or possibly a gun battery. The level of survival of the original designed landscape is less than at Norris Castle. As at Norris, though, a

132 *See*: portlandhistory.co.uk/pennsylvania-castle.html

133 For the listing description of Pennsylvania Castle, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1203103. This description was written in 1951. The area below and across the combe from the castle is a scheduled monument, with a number of the features associated with the ruined church also listed.

Figure 6.18: The view down towards Church Ope Cove from Pennsylvania Castle. The projection from the low wall at the end of the green grass, right of centre, is the look-out, possibly once a battery. Rufus Castle is just out of shot on the left. [Kate Feluś]

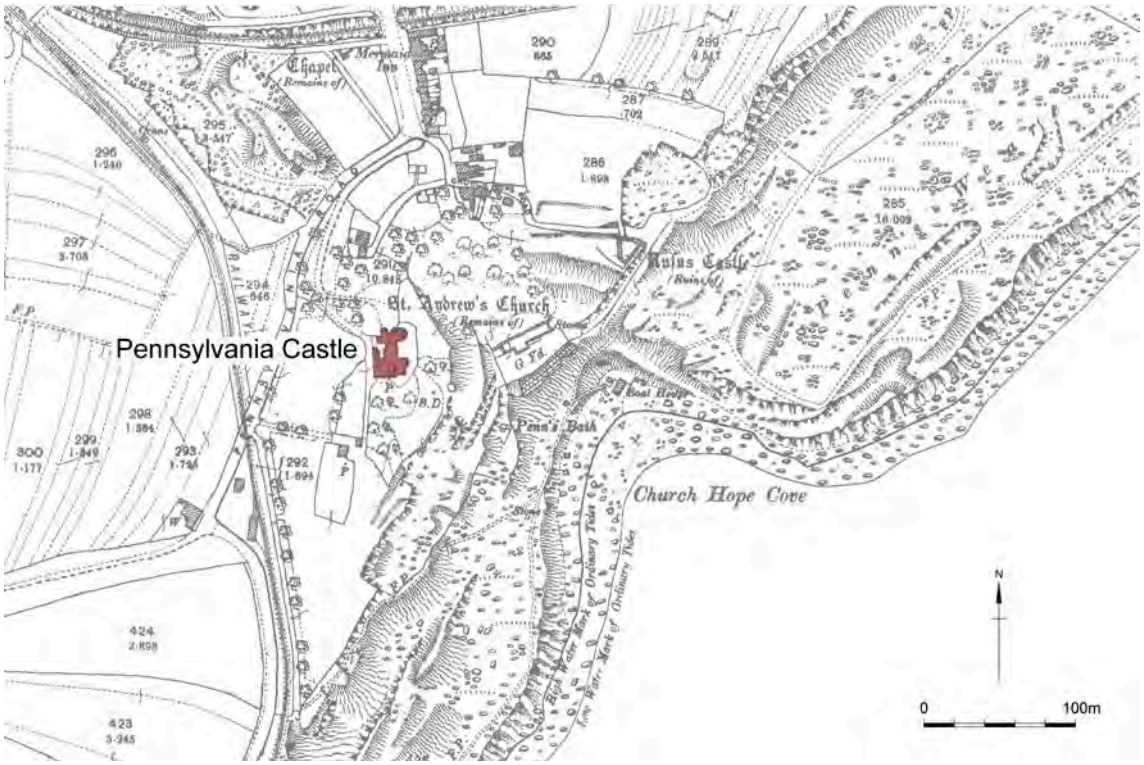

Figure 6.19: Detail of the second edition OS map, 1902, showing Pennsylvania Castle and its designed landscape setting. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

Figure 6.20: The view back up to Pennsylvania Castle from the Picturesque ruins of the church in the declivity on the way to the cove. The paths runs through the gothick archway (arrow on right), then through the remains of the churchyard and continues down hill. The chasm is highlighted with the arrow on the left. [Kate Feluś]

considerable area of the design, especially that on the steep, rocky ground between the castle and the cove (including the chasm), is overgrown and inaccessible, so it is hard to tell what survives. Unlike Norris, the setting of Pennsylvania Castle had a later layer of tweaking by W A Nesfield (1793–1881).[134] Furthermore, in the later decades of the 20th century, a complex of holiday chalets was developed within 60m of the house.

At Pennsylvania Castle, there is no stable block as such. A small castellated building to its south, now extended and known as The Hayloft, might once have served this purpose. But, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it was usual for visitors to Portland to arrive by boat.[135] It is, therefore, highly likely that when Penn visited his castle, he arrived by sea. Indeed, there was a boathouse in the cove below the castle. There are no obvious remains of a kitchen garden either, although the sale particulars of 1916 suggest that there was one and it is possible that it was sited south of the castle, where the holiday chalets are now. Local interpretation panels suggest Penn entertained here, although the architecture implies retreat more than society.

134 Further survey and research would be needed to establish with a reasonable degree of confidence exactly what Nesfield's contribution was. He is mentioned by name in a sale catalogue (date unknown, but distinct from the 1916 catalogue), seen on the site visit to Pennsylvania Castle. The site was marked by Nesfield on one of his maps of the country on which he circled places he had visited, presumably professionally. *See*: S Evans 2014 *Masters of their Craft: The Art, Architecture and Garden Design of the Nesfields*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, p. 167.

135 J. Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*. London, p. 437.

West Sussex

In West Sussex, the starting point was the early 19th-century seaside resort of Littlehampton, at the mouth of the River Arun. The study then moved westwards to the Hampshire border. The area east of Littlehampton was not considered, although a cursory glance at historic mapping showed nothing of note between Littlehampton and Worthing. East of Worthing, the connection with the Solent is negligible, and the influence of Brighton (with its own distinct history of development) is far greater.

As a general observation, it is remarkable how little development in general there had been along the coastal strip of western Sussex by 1911 (the date of the historic OS mapping used for this section of the study). Even east of the Arun, towards Worthing, there was only one site that might have been considered a marine villa: Mewsbrook House, on the eastern edge of Littlehampton. Today, the development (mainly residential) along the coastal strip from Littlehampton eastwards to Worthing is almost total. And from Littlehampton westwards, there is only one section of coast, about 3km, from the mouth of the Arun to Elmer that is not developed. Elmer is now an eastern suburb of Bognor Regis, and the sprawl of development here (again, almost exclusively residential) stretches westwards, unbroken, for more than 11km through Bognor Regis and out the other side, taking in Aldwick and only ending where it meets the entrance to Pagham Harbour.

In 1911, on the historic OS mapping, the notable presence in the landscape of this section of coastal western Sussex is glass: that is, commercial nurseries. In comparison to later developments, though, this is still on a relatively small scale. The lack of marine villas along this stretch of coast appears to confirm the connection between the picturesque and the marine villa: this flat and topographically undistinguished section of coastline was just not interesting enough. West of the Arun and almost all the way to the border with Hampshire, the land is generally flat, in many places marshy and windswept. The line of the coast around Selsey Bill at the tip of the Manhood Peninsula has shifted, even in the century or so since the historic maps used here were made. At the western end of this area are the tidal inlets of Chichester harbour, which one might expect to have been a more attractive environment than the huge, bleak, open spaces of the rest of the Manhood Peninsula. However, there is no map evidence for villas here, either. So, the coastline of western Sussex was evidently not a desirable location for marine villas of the period covered by this study. There is, however, one exception – Aldwick – which forms a useful case study for the initial development, further evolution, variety of style and, ultimately, demise of the marine villa in the Solent region, probably nationally.

In some places, marine villas related to the development of seaside resorts; in others, they seem to have preceded it. In West Sussex, the development of Littlehampton as a resort had not yet taken off (that was to come in the early 19th century). Bognor, around 9.5km to its west, began to be developed by Sir Richard

Hotham (a hatter and property developer from London) during the 1790s. He was already in his seventies by the time he came to Sussex for the health-giving benefits of the sea air. Even by the late 19th century, Bognor was relatively small and still distinct from Aldwick – 3km further west – where the only cluster of late 18th and early 19th-century marine villas in western Sussex was located.[136] The cluster of Aldwick villas and the resort of Bognor developed in parallel with each other. They were independent of one another, but each seems to have added to the attraction of the other.

In Bognor, Hotham Park House (also known as Bersted Lodge, Fig 6.21) was built for Sir Richard in 1792. It might be described as a marine villa, even though it was located about 400m inland.[137] At the time, there was no other development between it and the coast. Its location may illustrate a desire to be near the sea, yet somewhat sheltered from it. Perhaps Sir Richard agreed with the reasoning of Repton, who suggested a similar site for Sheringham in Norfolk in 1812. While only 1,200m from the sea, Sheringham was positioned with its back to the coast and tucked under a low hill, to give shelter from the harsh weather off the North Sea. Although it is a modest-sized country house, of villa scale, Sheringham has a larger estate, so does not qualify as a marine villa.

Sir Richard died in 1799, but Bognor continued to develop as a seaside resort. Over the following century, as the town grew, the designed landscape setting for his house was gradually eroded. As early as the late 1820s, two smaller villas (Sudley Lodge and Sudley Cottage) were built within the grounds of Hotham Park House – a typical pattern, played out at many other sites around the country. Another typical pattern is that the name of the house (which survives) changed several times in its history. Hotham Park House is not directly included in the analysis of the report because the study has limited itself to villas that are immediately adjacent to the sea.

136 There may have been other residences that could be described as 'marine villas' at Felpham, just east of Bognor, including Turret House, the holiday home of William Hayley (writer, friend and biographer of the poet William Cowper). His seat was at Eartham, north-east of Chichester, only 9.5km from Felpham as the crow flies. However, this property was not actually adjoining the coast, but about 400m back from the sea and more modest in size. Turret House was demolished in 1961. *See*: Fig 15 in G Young 1983 *A History of Bognor Regis*. Chichester: Phillimore.

137 Sir Richard Hotham's first residence in Bognor (built in *c.* 1787) started life as a farmhouse. He rebuilt it and named it Bognor Lodge. A little later (1792 or 1793), he built Chapel House, which was subsequently called Bersted Lodge then, confusingly, Aldwick Manor. Today, it is known as Hotham Park House. *See*: G Young 1983 *A History of Bognor Regis*. Chichester: Phillimore, p xix. Bognor Lodge survived into the 20th century but was demolished in the late 1930s.

Figure 6.21: Bersted Lodge, 21st September 1831 by Anne Rushout (*c.* 1768–1849). This is the marine villa built by Sir Richard Hotham and now known as Hotham Park House, Bognor. This view demonstrates the rather eclectic architecture and the informal parkland setting. Note the obligatory conservatory on the left side of the house. [Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection]

The Aldwick cluster

The Aldwick villas appear to have developed from around the late 1780s or early 1790s. A total of seven villas with seaside frontage were built between the end of the eighteenth century and around the 1850s. They were strung out along the coast more or less between Bognor Rocks and Barn Rocks. This location may have provided something of a bay-like feeling and possibly a degree of shelter (Fig 6.22).[138]

In a situation typical of villas elsewhere, only one of the houses of the Aldwick cluster survives: West House.[139] This, however, has lost its setting. A number of houses have been built in what was once its garden: at least 9 in what was the kitchen garden, at least 12 in the perimeter shrubberies and on the central lawn, and 2 in the relatively small area between the house and the beach. Furthermore,

138 The figure of seven marine villas in the Aldwick cluster includes the total known beach-front examples, even though one of the originals (Mrs's Esdaile's) had been lost by the time the final one (Colebrooke House) was built. It is unclear whether we should consider Aldwick Lodge as a marine villa, since it was a little inland. However, if it was considered so, then this would be an eighth villa in the cluster, and was one of the earlier ones.

139 West House was once the home of the garden historian Mavis Batey (1921–2013).

Figure 6.22: Detail from the Ordnance Survey Drawing 1805 showing the cluster of Aldwick villas between Barn Rocks and Bognor Rocks (*see* two left hand circles) . The landscape of Craigweil (also known as The Pavilion) connected the two. Note too the relationship with the up-and-coming seaside resort of Bognor, in the top right of the map, with Hotham's villa circled. [© The British Library Board (Ordnance Survey Drawings Arundel (OSD 83)]

Figure 6.23: The marine villas of Aldwick, as shown on the OS 6-inch map of 1896. From west to east: West House, Colebrooke House (the last to be built), Barn Rocks, Craigweil (previously The Pavilion), Aldwick Villa (soon to be known as The Paradise) and Aldwick Place. Mrs Esdaile's cottage, which succumbed to coastal erosion within a quarter of a century (*c.* 1820s), must have been east of Aldwick Place. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

Marine villa characteristics of the Aldwick cluster

- They were located close to, but detached from, an up-and-coming seaside resort.
- They were a discrete cluster and bordered one another.
- Several of the plots exhibited the common, roughly triangular shape.
- Their architectural styles were diverse and eclectic, with notable examples of both the Italianate villa and the cottage orné.
- The earliest villas probably date from the late 1780s and the 1790s.
- They were used as summer retreats.
- At least one may have been a sort of marine dower house.
- They were built/owned by a range of upper middle-class to aristocratic owners: from a Chichester wine merchant through to two of the most prominent Sussex land-owning families (with estates relatively nearby) and a retired Lord Mayor of London.
- They changed ownership and names fairly often throughout their history.
- One was lost to coastal erosion early in the history of the group.
- Of the seven seafront marine villas, only one survives and that one has lost around 90 per cent of its original garden. The cluster fell prey to the rush to the seaside of the interwar period.
- At least one may have had another villa built in its garden by the second half of the 19th century.

overlays of modern aerial photography onto late 19th-century OS mapping show that not only are all the other villas gone, but also none of the settings survive. However, on the ground, it may be possible to identify the odd tree that could perhaps once have been part of the gardens.

The marine villas of Aldwick, like those elsewhere, changed hands and names several times in their history, making it difficult to fully trace their development without substantial further research. However, some conclusions can be drawn, using evidence from tourist guides for the area (published in 1807 and 1828), the OSD of 1805, the tithe map of 1840 and the OS second edition mapping of

1911, as well as a knowledge of patterns elsewhere. *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide* (1828) by Richard Dally helpfully lists the marine villas and cottages of Aldwick in east–west order (Fig 6.23). With snippets of other evidence to corroborate this, a reasonably complete picture of owners and other details can be drawn. There are still gaps in our knowledge that might perhaps be filled with further research, beyond the scope of this study.

J Davis sets the scene in describing the attractions of Aldwick:

> 'The vicinity of this village to Bognor, and its pleasing situation on the seashore, tempt some visitors to reside in it during the summer, in preference to any other spot in this district. It is only half an hour's ride from the hotel, either along the beach or by the road. The former way is however preferable as it gives a view of the best dwellings of Aldwick Green, which mostly front the sea ...'
>
> J B Davis 1807 *The Origin and Description of Bognor or Hothamton: and an Account of Some Adjacent Villages*. London: Samuel Tipper. pp. 103–09.

The three 'dwellings on Aldwick Green' singled out for mention by Davis belonged to Mrs Wharwood, Sir Thomas Pechell (Fig 6.24) and Mr Poyntz. We can only conjecture which house Mrs Wharwood owned,[140] but in 1807 it was newly built in the cottage style and not yet 'clothed' with vegetation, although we may presume that this was the eventual expectation. Pechell (Fig 6.25), who was gentleman usher to Queen Charlotte,[141] built himself a marine cottage orné at Aldwick, which is consistently the most lyrically described by the guidebooks:

> 'It would be difficult to meet with, or conceive, a more enviable solitude than Sir Thomas Pechell's ... On a delightful eminence, commanding a variegated and extensive prospect, and at whose foot the sea breaks with an unavailing rage, you discover, hanging over the beach, a thatched cottage, more remarkable for simplicity than for its architectural ornaments. This building is long and low; it would even have appeared heavy but for two attic windows in the middle of the roof which give this rural cot a light and picturesque aspect. The windows are on a level with

140 'Wharwood' might be a misspelling of 'Whorwood'. Henry Whorwood owned The Moult in Devon (*see* Section 4). It is possible that this Mrs Wharwood was his widow, in which case she would be Mrs Grace Wharwood (née Treacher), who married Henry Mayne Whorwood in 1802. He died in 1806 and she was remarried in 1808, to Admiral Joshua Sydney Horton. This would make her a widow in 1807, at the time of the publication of Davis's guide to Bognor, which conforms to the pattern of marine villas being suitable places for widows.

141 For more on Pechell *see*: *A guide to the occupants of grace and favour apartments at Hampton Court Palace*. It states: 'Sir Thomas Brooke Pechell (d. June 1826), 2nd Bt; Maj-Gen and Gentleman Usher to Queen Charlotte, 1787–1818; MP, 1818–26, at his country seat at Aldwick. In 1783 he married Charlotte, second daughter of Lt-Gen Sir John Clavering, KB, C-in-C Bengal, and of Lady Diana West (*see* Apt 18), youngest daughter of John, 1st Earl Delawarr.'

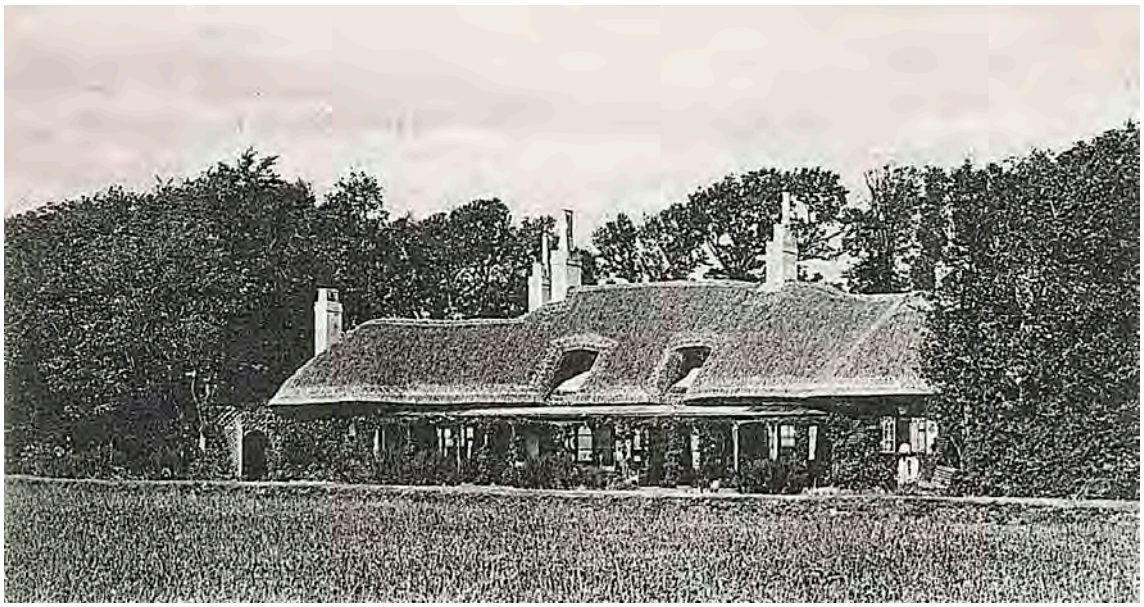

Figure 6.24: Sir Thomas Pechell's marine villa, known by around the end of the century as 'The Paradise', seen here from the direction of the sea, around 1886. This makes it clear what a long, low building it was. The tree trunk columns of the veranda are clearly visible. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO Ph4045)]

> the ground, and are ornamented in front with columns, or rather pillars, of the viranda, clothed with jessamines, honey-suckles, and fragrant shrubs of a similar nature, whimsically interwoven, and affording a delightful shade, while the soft gale defuses all around the fragrance of their variegated flowers.'
>
> J. B. Davis MD 1807 *The Origin and Description of Bognor or Hothamton: and an Account of Some Adjacent Villages*. p. 104.

This idyllic setting endured and a similar description was given more than 20 years later:

> '... [the] pretty thatched cottage ... [which] cannot fail to attract admiration, from the simplicity of its structure and rural appearance. The windows on the ground floor in the front are even with the lawn. Round the pillars which decorate the veranda are woven the rose, jessamine, the honeysuckle, and other shrubs ... affording a delightful shade, which with the intervening verdure of the lawn, between the cottage and the ocean, form an agreeable relief to the glare of the sparkling and busy waters beneath.'
>
> R. Dally 1828 *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide*. p. 76.

Figures 6.25 and 6.26: Companion portraits of Major Thomas Pechell and Mrs Thomas Pechell (Charlotte Clavering), 1799 by John Hoppner (1758–1810). [Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Helen Swift Neilson, 1945]

After the death of Pechell in 1827, the cottage was offered for sale. However, the 1828 guide names Lady Pechell as the owner (Fig 6.26), so it may not have sold immediately. In typical estate agent language, it was described as: 'A most desirable estate comprising that beautiful and much admired Marine Villa. Erected in the cottage style, possessing every comfort and convenience possible and calculated for a family of distinction; for the last thirty years the favourite residence of the late Sir Thomas Brooke Pechell, Bart.' The 'estate' comprised 2.8ha and it was approached from the landward side via a carriage drive between fine, lofty elms. All the principal rooms of the house were situated on the ground floor, with only the female servants' accommodation in the attic, under the thatch. There was an entrance hall, dining room, drawing room and library. All five of the bedrooms (some of which had dressing rooms or sitting rooms attached) opened out onto the lawn facing the sea, or the shrubbery to the west of the house. In the main part of the house, there was also a bedroom for the butler. The west wing contained 'the offices which are most conveniently arranged, Servants Hall, Butler's Pantry, Kitchen, and Housekeeper's Room, excellent cool Larder, china Pantry, Cellars' and a 'Scullery, with pump of good water'. Another building contained the laundry, with three servants' bedrooms above. There was also a 'cool Dairy fitted up with dutch tiles, large poultry yard, dairy maid's wash-house, poultry houses, wood house, and other convenient outbuildings', plus two carriage houses and stables for eight horses.

The setting of Pechell's marine villa included at least one kitchen garden, 'with lofty walls' containing fruit trees and a 'steined melon pit', tool houses and so forth. The particulars mention two further productive gardens: one is clearly shown on the accompanying plan, with the other depicted with the same convention as the arable. This one was, perhaps, the place for growing crops such as potatoes and other root vegetables (Fig 6.27, Nos 4 and 5).[142] Having a total of three relatively small kitchen gardens is seen elsewhere in similar establishments, for example at Puckaster on the Isle of Wight. In reference to protecting crops from the wind, Repton suggested it is better to have a number of small kitchen gardens in the right places than one large kitchen garden in the wrong place.[143] Given the challenges of growing produce so close to the sea, it is understandable why this might have applied here. Elsewhere, the grounds of the villa contained an area of shrubbery with gravel walks, a lawn in front of the house dotted with island beds and a small meadow, perhaps for the house cow.

By 1838 (when the 1828 guide was updated), the villa was the property of a Captain Sykes. It survived into the age of photography. Two views were taken in 1909, sadly after a fire (Figs 6.29 and 6.30). Despite the damage to the house, the remains still corroborate the description of a century earlier: the gothick windows are clear on the entrance side of the house (not visible in Fig 6.28 because of the creepers) as are the tree trunk columns, up which the fragrant plants climbed, on the seaward side of the building. By the time of the fire, the house was known, perhaps tellingly, as The Paradise. The OS map of 1911 plotted the footprint of the house but it was never rebuilt. Emily Croxton Johnson, its owner, made her home in the fisherman's chapel her husband had built on the shore, until her death 20 years later.[144] After this, the plot was sold and an Art Deco house named Strange Garden was built there. This survives today, but the garden has since been lost to in-fill development.

The third villa of note mentioned by the 1807 guide to Bognor is that of Mr Poyntz.[145] Identifying the owners of this house required a little more detective work, but they were traced based on patterns of marine villa ownership elsewhere. William Poyntz was married to the Honourable Elizabeth Browne who, on the unexpected death of her brother (attempting to shoot rapids on the River Rhine in a rowing boat in 1793), inherited the Cowdray estate, which lies 24km to the north of

142 Two separate and slightly different sale particulars, one with an annotated plan, are preserved at WSRO. *See*: Add Mss 37, 312.

143 H. Repton 1799 *Red Book for Plas Newydd*. Quoted in J Phibbs 2016 'Lord Henry Seymour's marine villa' (unpublished report on Norris Castle), pp. 21–22.

144 Emily Croxton Johnson renamed the villa 'The Paradise' in 1904. *See*: M Alford 2002 *The Paradise Rocks*. Chichester: Phillimore, p. 60.

145 In his 1807 guide, Davis notes: 'The three pretty cottages situated on the rising bank close to the shore …'. Yet from later photographs, Mr Poyntz's house (The Pavilion, later Craigweil) hardly looks like it should be described as a 'cottage', but this serves to illustrate how loosely these terms were used.

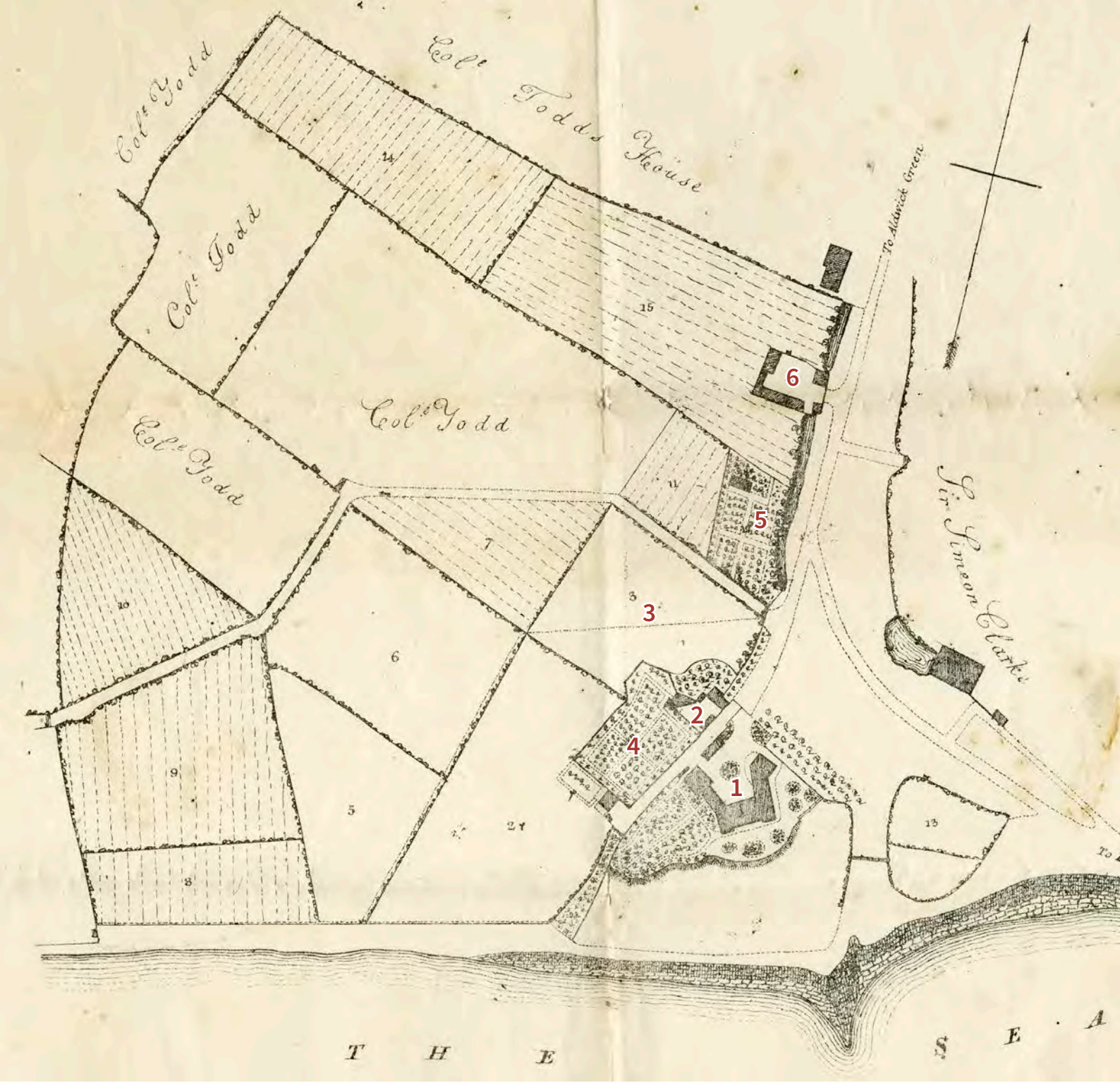

Figure 6.27: Detail from the 1827 sale catalogue plan for Aldwick Villa (later The Paradise). Numbers added in red: 1 = house and pleasure ground, 2 = sheds and outbuildings, 3 = drying ground, 4 = garden, 5 = 'garden ground and cottage', 6 = farm. Fields marked with lines were arable and those without lines pasture. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO Mss 37312)]

Figure 6.28: The entrance front of The Paradise, c.1886. Note the conservatory on the left. This may have been added in the later 19th century as, somewhat unusually, no conservatory is mentioned in the 1827 sale particulars. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO Ph 3993)]

Aldwick, on the other side of the South Downs (*see* Figs 6.31 and 6.32).[146] In 1815, Poyntz took a small party, including both his sons, aged 9 and 14, out in his yacht. As they returned home, a sudden gust of wind caught the sail, the boat capsized and all on board drowned, except Poyntz and the boatman.[147] The whole incident was played out in full view of the drawing room windows and the unfortunate Mrs Poyntz could only watch helplessly. The horrendous tragedy was widely reported, but only one account mentions the name of the Poyntz residence at Aldwick – The Pavilion.

The Pavilion was originally built 'after the Italian model' for Barbara Kempe, Countess of Newburgh (*c.* 1720–1797). It was later renamed Craigweil House

146 The death of Mrs Poyntz's brother happened the same year that old Cowdray House was gutted by fire. The two events, plus the drowning accident in 1815, supposedly fulfilled a curse 'of fire and water' on the family, handed out by a displaced monk at the time of the Dissolution.

147 For an original account of the accident, *see*: *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 85 (2), 1815, p. 79. The confirmation that the Poyntz family then owned The Pavilion is to be found in J. Maclean 1885 *Historical and Genealogical Memoir of the Family of Poyntz: or, Eight Centuries of an English House Part II*. Exeter, p. 224. The story is also related in J. Roundell 1884 *Cowdray: The History of a Great English House*. London: Bickers, and in D. G. C. Elwes 1876 *A History of the Castles, Mansions, and Manors of Western Sussex*. London: Longman and Co, p. 79.

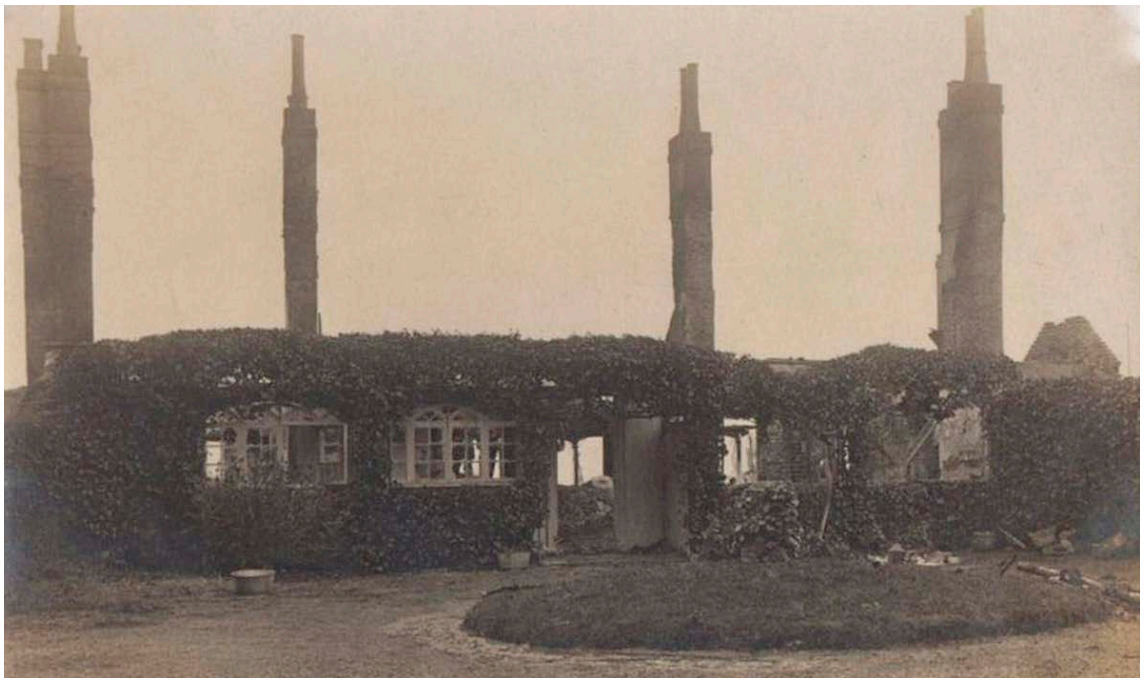

Figure 6.29: The Paradise after the fire that destroyed it in 1909. It was not rebuilt. Note the delicate gothick windows, which were hidden by the creepers in the view above. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office]

Figure 6.30: The garden front of The Paradise in the immediate aftermath of the fire that destroyed it in 1909. The tree trunk columns, up which scented plants once climbed, survived and are visible in this view. Note the trees in the background, possibly the elms which are described in historic accounts. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office]

Figures 6.31 and 6.32: Miniature portraits of William Stephen Poyntz, 1842 by William Egley (1798–1870) and Elizabeth Poyntz, *c.*1815 by William John Newton (1785–1869). Mrs Poyntz's portrait was taken the same year as the tragic event at Aldwick. [© Burghley House Preservation Trust Limited]

(sometimes misspelt Craigwell).[148] It is possible that this was the first of the villas at Aldwick. Lady Newburgh's seat, which had descended through her family, was at Slindon (11km to the north, as the crow flies). It is possible that the family already owned land at Aldwick and that is why she built her marine villa there. Perhaps her villa was the catalyst for the development of the other villas, and it was her presence that attracted further villa builders. It seems likely that Lady Newburgh's Pavilion was only built after she was widowed in 1786. It became – like others elsewhere – a sort of marine dower house. Lady Newburgh died in 1797. It seems likely that it was at this point that the house passed into the ownership of another of the important land-owning families of this part of Sussex: William and Elizabeth Poyntz, of Cowdray. Lady Newburgh was a friend of the Dowager Lady Montague, Elizabeth's mother.[149]

148 Barbara Kempe married James Radclyffe, later 4th Earl of Newburgh, in 1749. He died in 1786. *See*: slindon.com/history/slindon-history-group/ For her villa, *see*: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craigweil_House and https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol4/pp226-227#highlight-first. Note: Gwen Stabler in *A Pictorial History of Aldwick and Craigweil* (2005) suggested that the villa belonged at first to Poyntz then Newburgh, while Gerard Young in *A History of Bognor Regis* (1983) credits the building of The Pavilion to the Earl of Newburgh, not his wife. However, the 1828 guide clearly states it was built by Lady Newburgh 'after the Italian model'.

149 J. Roundell 1884 *Cowdray: The History of a Great English House*. London: Bickers, p. 128.

Figure 6.33: Craigweil, 1899, from the direction of the sea. The semi-circular or octagonal porch and the bay windows on the ground and first floor are probably the remains of the original house known as The Pavilion that was built for the Countess of Newburgh. The footprint shown on the tithe map (c. 1840) seems to confirm this. [By courtesy of the County Archivist,West Sussex Record Office (WSRO Ph4045)]

A photograph of The Pavilion (by then Craigweil) taken at the end of the 19th century (Fig 6.33) gives the impression that it had been extended at least two or three times since the original version (a pattern seen elsewhere, for example at Highcliffe and Abbotsbury Castle). The tithe map of 1840 shows a compact floor plan. At that date, it was not as large as The Paradise, for example, which was rather sprawling because almost all of the accommodation was on the ground floor. The Pavilion was, perhaps, extended backwards (away from the sea) and re-faced on the side facing the beach, possibly when an extra floor was added. One suspects that the core of the central block was original, as were the bay windows either side of the bow porch, and that perhaps the original villa was only two storeys rather than three. The photograph also shows a pair of conservatories, probably late 19th century, flanking the façade facing the sea. In 1919, The Pavilion was enlarged again by Arthur Du Cros, managing director of the Dunlop Tyre Company, who had purchased it two years previously.[150]

150 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craigweil_House and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Du_Cros

Figure 6.34: Detail of the 1840 tithe map showing West House (left), Barn Rocks (centre, in a seemingly empty plot and Craigweil (right) with its extensive shrubberies (left arrow) and kitchen garden to the north of the house (right arrow). [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO TD/W94)]

The 1840 tithe map shows that the plot itself was atypical, being wide but shallow (Fig 6.34). Indeed, it had the longest beach front of all the Aldwick villas. The house faced south-east though, as did all but one of the Aldwick villas and others elsewhere. Although not described lyrically like Pechell's, the grounds were extensive. The house was approached along a drive, with a lodge at the Bognor end, just north of The Paradise. The drive ran past a stable block to the north front of the house. To the north of that was a kitchen garden. To the west of the house were two or three sections of shrubbery, with walks winding through them. These were somewhat more intricate than those of most villas, a fact that expresses the relative scale of the grounds: there was simply more space to make paths. From the entrance front paths led around each side of the house to the lawn between the villa and the sea. The property also included a number of fields, likely to have been a mixture of pasture and arable, as at The Paradise.

By 1912 (OS map, Fig 6.35), the paddock to the immediate east of the house (and south of the stables) had a couple of small clumps of evergreen trees planted in it. This map shows the landscape had changed relatively little over the intervening 70 years. It also gives a little more detail than the tithe map. To the north of the stables and away from the sea was an orchard; to its west, behind the house in the kitchen garden, there were a number of glasshouses. By this date a secondary drive ran west, from the turning circle on the north entrance to the house towards the villas of Barn Rocks and Colebrooke House and thence connected with Barrack Lane,

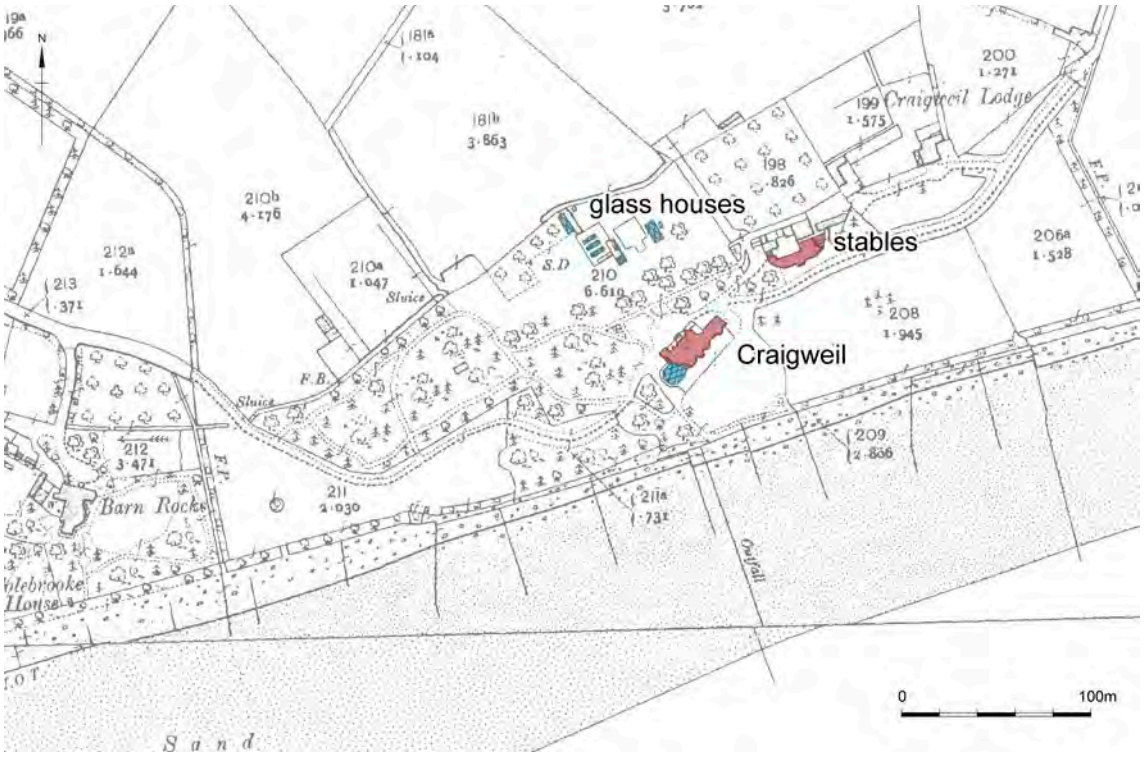

Figure 6.35: Detail of second edition OS map (1912) showing the setting for Craigweil. Note the curved front of the stable block north-east of the house, the conservatory attached to the house, the glasshouses indicating the kitchen garden north of the house and the winding shrubbery walks to its west. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

leading to Aldwick village. Thin strips of planting flanked either end of the property, presumably forming belts, for shelter from the wind, for privacy (both had footpaths on the outside) and to delineate the boundary.

By the 1920s (Fig 6.36), the gardens had been redesigned in a more formal style, with straight paths lined by clipped box where the kitchen garden had once been. This was presumably contemporary with the alterations and extensions carried out by du Cros in 1919. By this date, Aldwick was not so remote as it had been a century earlier: Bognor was expanding, bringing with it new roads and the railway. Consequently, the need for a certain amount of self-sufficiency had dwindled.

The Pavilion had its swansong in 1929, when it hosted the ailing George V, who came to the coast to convalesce from a lung complaint. However, the bustle and stream of VIP guests at the house at the end of the 1920s was not to last. By 1933, the house was shut up (by some accounts after a fire) and in 1938 it was

Figure 6.36: Craigweil from the air, c. 1920s. The likely late 18th-century shrubbery walks can be seen on the left of the view, with an early 20th-century formal layout behind the house (seemingly on the site of the former kitchen garden) and the stable block to the right. [Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy Stock Photo]

demolished.[151] The site was quickly redeveloped. By this time, the mass of the middle classes had also discovered the delights of being beside the sea and demand for houses in these locations was high (Fig 6.37). Lady Diana Cooper (daughter of the Duke of Rutland), who spent holidays at West House, described the demise of the idyllic Aldwick she had known since the late 1890s, writing that 'corn fields had given way to villadom' – an interesting comment on what the word 'villa' had by then come to mean.[152]

The 1807 guide to Bognor, which provides the earliest written evidence (so far discovered) of the marine villas at Aldwick, singled out for mention one further property: that of Alderman Newnham. This was Nathaniel Newnham, city merchant, MP and Lord Mayor of London in 1782.[153] His house at Aldwick was called Barn Rocks and, like Poyntz and the Countess of Newburgh, he too had a country estate in Sussex. However, his seat, Newtimber, was further from Aldwick

151 M. Alford 2002 *The Paradise Rocks*. Chichester: Phillimore, 245–46; G. Young 1983 *A History of Bognor Regis*. Chichester: Phillimore, p 238; and G. Stabler 2005 *A Pictorial History of Aldwick and Craigweil*, pp. 93–94.

152 D. Duff Cooper 1980 *Autobiography*. p. 41.

153 For a biography of Newnham, *see*: histparl.ac.uk/volume/1790-1820/member/newnham-nathaniel-1742-1809 and discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/66a5a941-ae3c-4e85-b102-f7f8960cba87 and research.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/term_details.aspx?bioId=9253. For his will, *see*: discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D202587

Figure 6.37: An advert for the new houses on Craigweil estate. The sort of houses of the 'villadom' referred to by Lady Diana Cooper. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO Lib 6651)]

than Cowdray or Slindon, located 11km north of the burgeoning seaside resort of Brighton. This could, perhaps, suggest that Newnham valued the atmosphere of retreat and seclusion that is mentioned in descriptions of Aldwick:

> 'A quiet and sequestered spot where the man of letters can retire and shut himself out from the world ...'
>
> R. Dally 1828 *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide*. p. 77.

Newnham died at the end of 1809, but his widow continued her connection with Aldwick.

The house at Barn Rocks, like all the others in the group except West House, faced south-eastwards. A late Victorian or early Edwardian photograph, taken from the lawn south-east of the house, shows it to have been built on an irregular floor

Figure 6.38: Barn Rocks from the south-east, c1900. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO AM 588/1/1)]

plan (Fig 6.38).[154] It had projecting octagonal or hexagonal rooms and bays, and was loosely in the cottage orné style. However, with a fairly high-pitched, slate roof and tall, almost Tudor chimneys, it was rather different from The Paradise. Architecturally, it was more akin to Endsleigh, designed by Jeffry Wyatville (1766–1840) and built above the River Tamar in Devon as a retreat for the 6th Duke of Bedford. Barn Rocks pre-dates Endsleigh by at least seven years, thereby making it, possibly, an early example of this style.[155] It had an upper storey and some attics, as evidenced by at least one window in the photograph mentioned above. By the time of the photograph, it had a covered veranda running along the south-east side, but this may have been a later addition. Creepers, probably ivy, cover some of the walls at the north end, and that side of the house is flanked by trees, possibly part of a shrubbery.

The 1807 guide described the garden as being naturalistic and informal:

> 'Nature ... sports her beauties, improved, but not distorted by the helping hand of art: the simple ornaments of rural architecture add grace and animation to the landscape; art and nature seem to have united ... to form an enchanting retreat.'
>
> J. B. Davis 1807 *The Origin and Description of Bognor or Hothamton: and an Account of Some Adjacent Villages*. p. 108.

154 For a photograph, *see*: G. Stabler *A Pictorial History of Aldwick and Craigweil* 2005.

155 There were also several examples of cottage villas built in a similar style to those on the Isle of Wight, with irregular floor plans, Tudoresque chimneys and ornamented bargeboards.

This description of 1807 does not hint at the house being new, thereby suggesting that it could date back to at least the late 1790s.

The tithe map of 1840, which is unusually detailed in its plotting of the layout of the other villa settings in the cluster, merely shows the house set in a small enclosure with a curved front on the south-east, facing towards the sea (Fig 6.34). Beyond is a paddock between the house and the beach, and the drive leading from Barrack Lane is also shown. To the south-west of the house is another building, presumably the stables. This was later the site of Colebrooke House. The setting is shown in less detail than the neighbouring West House. Given the description of the garden in 1807, it is possible that this lack of detail reflects a lack of knowledge on the part of the cartographer, who had perhaps not visited Barn Rocks.

The second edition OS map of 1912 illustrates the layout of the plot, which had presumably evolved by this date. The entrance drive appears to have moved slightly further north of that shown on the tithe map, although it follows a parallel course (Fig 6.39). This may have changed when Colebrooke House was built within the original plot of Barn Rocks. The date for this later villa is unknown, but it was not in existence at the time of the tithe map. By 1912, Barn Rocks had a kitchen garden to its west, smaller than that of the more modest West House. The building in-between was probably the new stables. To the north of Barn Rocks was an orchard. On the south-east side was lawn, by this date flanked by shrubberies with paths through them. Immediately south of the house, on the very edge of the beach, was a small building that may have been a boathouse or a bathing house.

The setting of Colebrooke House was far more limited, as might be expected of what was effectively in-fill development. It, too, faced south-east, with limited lawn on that side of the house and limited shrubbery around its margins. A rectangular building ran parallel to the shore, right on the edge of the beach, and was connected to the main house by some sort of passageway. The function of this building is not known; it was rather larger than most boathouses and a different orientation to the sea. To the west were outbuildings and a small enclosed area that might have been used as a productive garden. Although the date of Colebrooke House is unknown, the prospect of another building within the original plot was raised as early as 1828, with the guidebook of that date saying that 'the ground belonging to Barn Rocks contains some very agreeable sites for building'.[156] This guide also reveals that after the villa was sold following Newnham's death, it belonged to Sir Edward Colebrooke, then a Mr Clark.

By 1828 (and probably well before), Mrs Newnham had moved to West House, the westernmost of the villas and the only one surviving today. It is possible that West House was also built on land that had originally been part of Barn Rocks. (It was not mentioned in 1807). However, both the listed building description for West House and the memoirs of Diana Duff Cooper, who owned the villa in the

156 Colebrooke House must have dated to after 1840 and could have been as late as the 1880s.

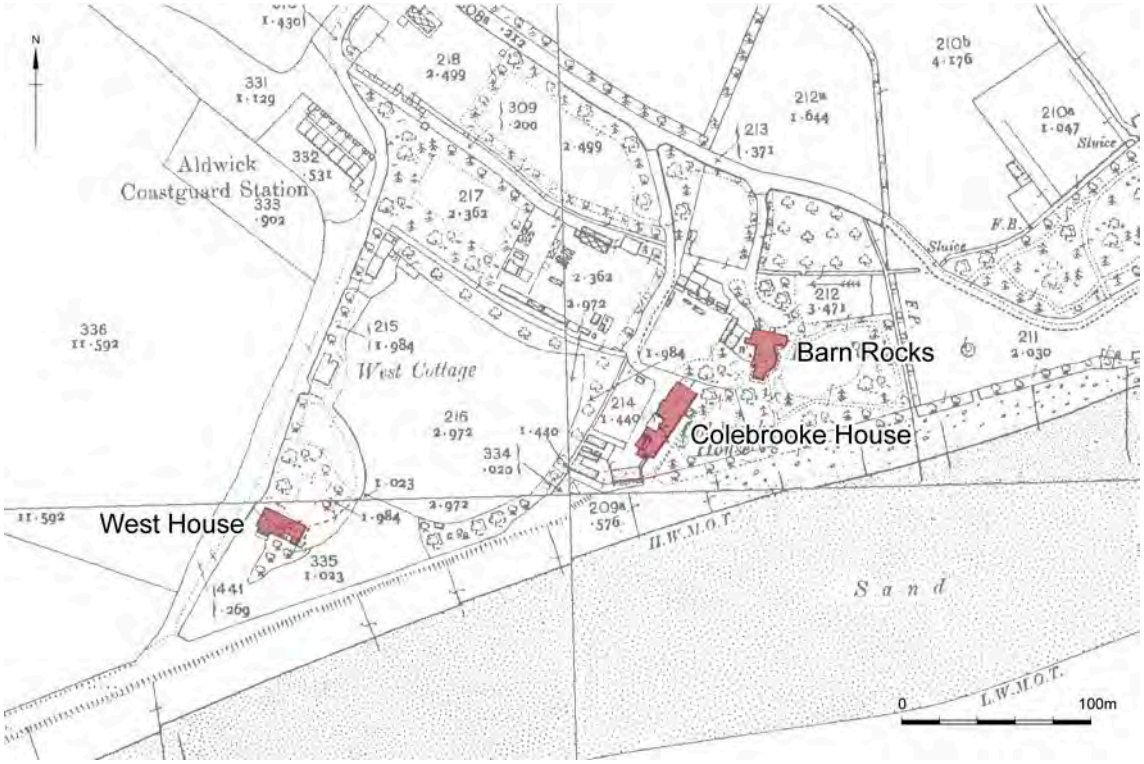

Figure 6.39: Detail of the OS map (1912) showing Barn Rocks, Colebrooke House and West House. All three villas are contained within triangular shaped plots. The western end of the pleasure ground of Craigweil is seen on the far right. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

early 20th century, suggest that it had started life as a farmhouse (Fig 6.40).[157] The orientation of the house, with its short end facing south-east, implies that it might have been adapted from an earlier building. The plot for West House was comparable in size with that of Barn Rocks, before Colebrooke House was built. It was approached via a short drive, guarded at the Barrack Lane end by a lodge (also surviving).[158] From the road, the drive curved southwards, with a small shrubbery on one side, so the house was not visible from the road. On the other side of the drive, views opened to the lawn or small paddock north of the house (Fig 6.39). This open area was circled by a perimeter walk, as shown on the tithe map and surviving in 1912. There was probably always a kitchen garden to the north of the lawn, but this was more clearly plotted in 1912, at which time it included several glasshouses of various sizes, suggesting structures such as vineries, and forcing pits or cold frames. Adjoining the kitchen garden was a rectangular lawn surrounded

157 D. Duff Cooper 1980 *Autobiography* and *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1027771

158 The lodge for West House survives and is listed. *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1027772

Figure 6.40: The south-east end of West House, taken across the paddock, possibly early 20th century. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO AM 588)]

by trees or shrubs by this date, perhaps a tennis court. In the shrubbery near the house, at the south side of the main lawn, a small building was plotted, perhaps a covered seat.

There are two villas of the Aldwick cluster that have not yet been mentioned: the two easternmost examples. They are described by the 1828 guide as: 'Mrs Esdaile's pretty house of true gothic architecture' and 'the residence of Sir Simon Clarke, Bart'. In the 1820s, Clarke owned a villa known as Aldwick Place. It was erected 'by the late Alexander Williams, a respectable wine merchant at Chichester, and was for several years the property of General Stuart'.[159] The 1828 guide to Bognor praised the

> 'great expenditure of the worthy Baronet ... to preserve this his favourite retreat from the sea, [which] has been of most essential service to the people of the neighbourhood; and the munificence and taste ... displayed in every improvement that has taken place on this estate under his superintendence ...'
>
> R. Dally 1828 *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide*. p. 76.

It is likely referring to the building of a sea wall, and the words 'essential service to ... the neighbourhood' and 'munificence' suggest that Clarke might have used local labour to construct the wall. This could have provided much-needed employment,

159 R Dally 1828 *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide*. Chichester: William Mason, p. 76.

as was the case with the creation of the sea vista at Caerhays in Cornwall in around the 1860s. It could also mean that the public was allowed to promenade along it. The sea wall itself might have been a parallel with that at Norris Castle. However, as the Aldwick wall is long since lost, it is hard to say. The author of the 1828 guide considered all the Aldwick villas to be vulnerable to the elements, introducing the list of properties with the words: 'On the margin of the sea, and threatened by its inroads, stands in succession …' At some point, the owner of The Paradise moved some of the Barn Rocks boulders from off shore and deposited them where his property met the beach, in an attempt to counteract the action of the waves.[160]

Little has been discovered about the builder of Aldwick Place, but the fact that Williams was a Chichester wine merchant is interesting because it shows that marine villas were owned by the affluent middle classes even in the early period of the fashion.[161] It is also another example of a villa owner building a further property not far from his primary residence. Aldwick is less than 10km from Chichester. Clarke is a less shadowy figure. His family had made their money in trade in the West Indies and owned land in Jamaica. At the time, he was said to be the seventh richest man in England.[162] His principal seat was an estate called Oak Hill, near Barnet (then Hertfordshire).[163] With a fellow investor, he amassed a prestigious and valuable art collection, which he sold in 1802.[164] Given his wealth, especially in comparison to Williams, and the reference to building a sea wall, it is likely that Clarke extended the house at Aldwick Place. It was probably extended again in the late 19th century, given its rambling appearance in a photograph taken from the beach in 1890 (Fig 6.41).[165]

The tithe map of 1840 shows a house on a slightly smaller footprint than its neighbour, The Paradise, and – like all but one of the others in the group – facing south-east (Fig 6.42). By this date, the garden immediately in front of the house bowed out in a semicircle, probably divided from the paddock by a fence or ha-ha. By then, there was a network of paths, probably surrounding a feature such as a statue or fountain, which suggests a gardenesque treatment, given the date. The outward curve of the garden echoes that at Barn Rocks, and to a lesser extent Craigweil, and this shape may have dated back to the original layout of the site.

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160 M. Alford 2002 *The Paradise Rocks*. Chichester: Phillimore, p. 59.

161 An Alexander Williams is recorded in deeds for property in Little London in Chichester at a date that correlates with what is known of his marine villa at Aldwick. The property included two counting houses with a cellar underneath them (in 1800, a spirit vault), with a stable yard, stable, coach house, dunghole and hayloft adjoining, described in 1794 as 'lately built by Alexander Williams'. *See*: WSRO, Add Mss 23175–23192. Assuming that Williams lived in central Chichester, the journey to Aldwick would have been between 8 and 9.5km.

162 For a biography of Clarke, *see*: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Simon_Haughton_Clarke,_9th_Baronet

163 Oak Hill is listed Grade II, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1078868

164 For Clarke's art collection, *see*: collections.soane.org/b9187 and piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb?path=pi/pi.link5.web&search2=6431

165 *See also* a murky, late 19th-century photograph of what appears to be the entrance to the house, published in G. Stabler 2005 *A Pictorial History of Aldwick and Craigweil*. Mulberry Press, figure number 68.

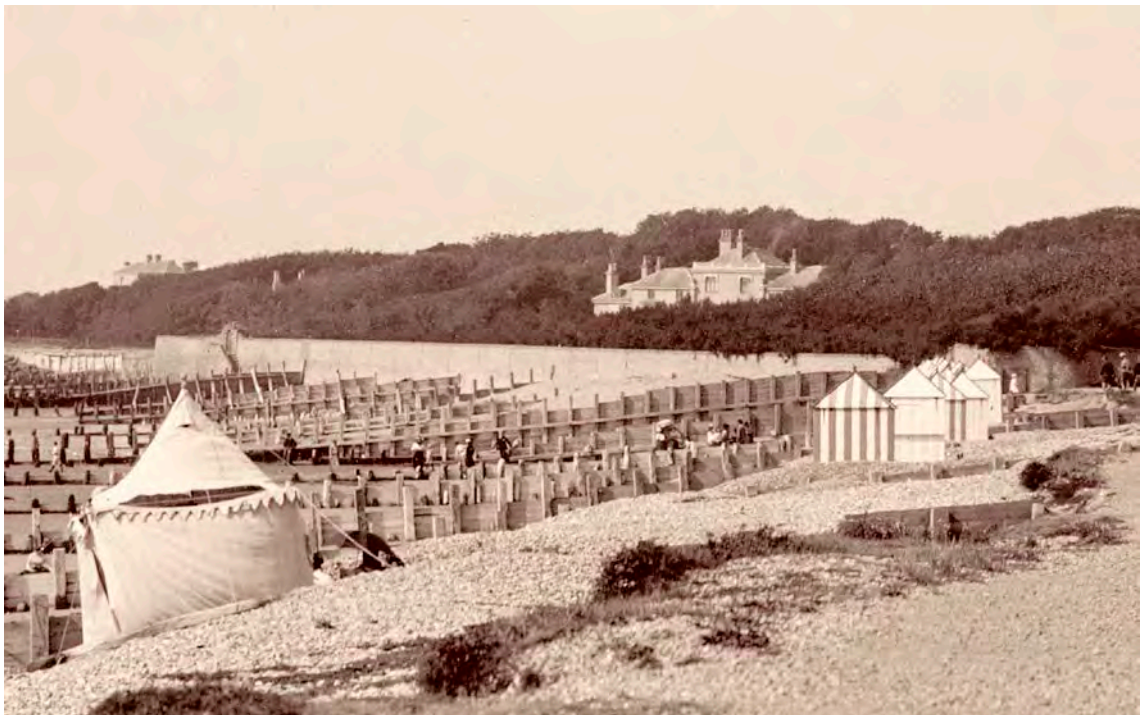

Figure 6.41: Aldwick Place and its sea wall seen above the groins on Aldwick beach in 1890. The chimneys of The Paradise and the rooftop of Craigweil can just be seen rising above the vegetation to the left. This view of Aldwick Place gives the impression of a house that, like Craigweil, had been extended several times. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO Ph 3969)]

In 1840, there was a small shrubbery outside the south-west side of the house, with a path to the beach. This probably also connected with the circuit walk around the perimeter of the paddock. To the north of the house was a building on a quadrangular floor plan, likely to have been the stables. To the west were other subsidiary buildings of unknown function; the kitchen garden was probably also to the west (from evidence corroborated by the OS map of 1912).

The 1912 map shows the outline of roads to be developed through what had been the paddock (Fig 6.43). By the late 1920s, the original house had been demolished, and in 1927 Rowland Rank (brother of the film magnate, J Arthur Rank) had a new house built on the site in the Arts and Crafts style. It was designed by Percy Meredith (1874–1938).[166] Even allowing for the inroads on the setting made by the start of suburban development, Rank's new house was still relatively secluded and must have enjoyed something of the old atmosphere of Aldwick, as described by Lady Diana Cooper in her autobiography. However, as the 20th century wore on, the pressure of development was too strong and the house was demolished in the 1960s.

166 M. Alford 2002 *The Paradise Rocks*. Chichester: Phillimore, p. 180.

Figure 6.42: Detail of the 1840 tithe map showing The Paradise on the left (within compartment 498) and to its right Aldwick Place (491). The circuit walk around Aldwick Place paddock (490) can clearly be seen. [By courtesy of the County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office (WSRO TD/W94)]

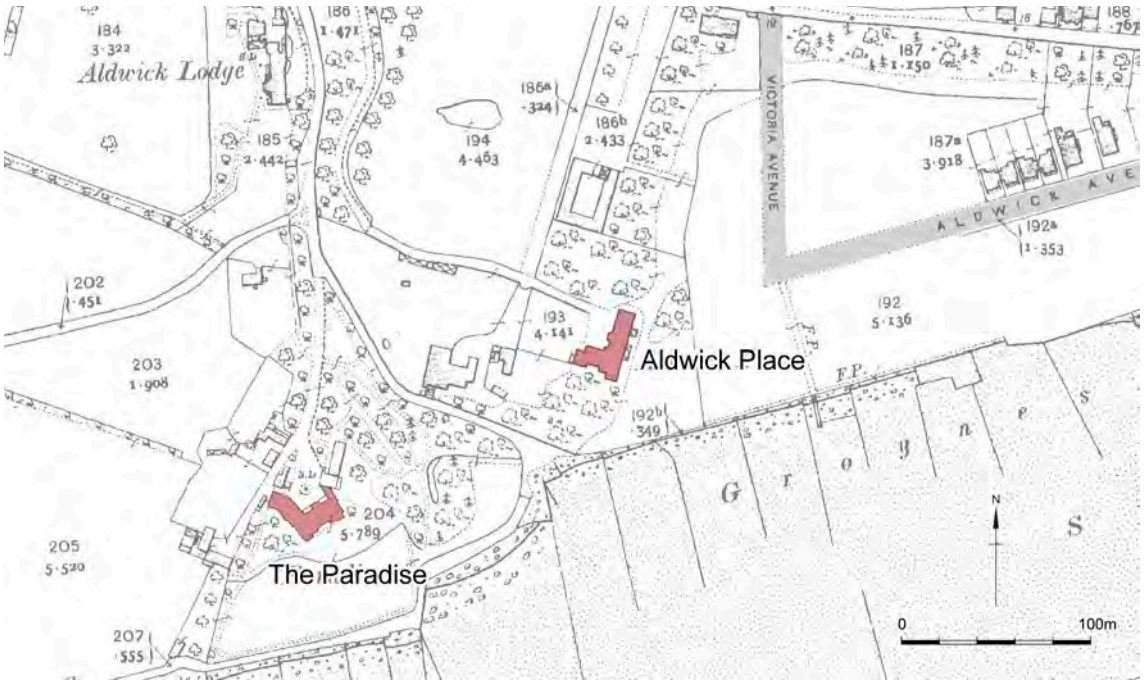

Figure 6.43: Detail of the second edition OS map (1912) showing The Paradise and Aldwick Place, in which the first roads of the coming development had already been laid out. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

As suggested by the sea defences built at Aldwick Place and The Paradise, it is possible that the erosion was more pronounced at the eastern end of this stretch of coast. In the early 19th century, Mrs Esdaile's 'pretty house of true gothic architecture' succumbed within around 25 years of being built, thereby providing an example of one of the major disadvantages of marine villas. Eliza Esdaile probably came to Sussex after her marriage to her second husband, Thomas Esdaile, who is noted as 'of Bognor' in the parish register of Marylebone.[167] As a younger woman, she had lived in Canada, where she became the lover of the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria.[168] Her villa, the easternmost of the cluster, was one of the six beachfront villas that were worthy of specific mention in the 1828 edition of *The Bognor, Arundel and Littlehampton Guide*, along with those of Sir Simon Clarke (Aldwick Place), the late Sir Thomas Pechell (Aldwick Villa/The Paradise), the Reverend Henry Raikes (The Pavilion/Craigweil), Mr Clarke (Barn Rocks) and Mrs Newnham (West Cottage/House).[169] A fierce storm caused great damage to Bognor and its environs in October 1820, and it may have been this that hastened the erosion that ultimately led to the demise of the villa.[170]

It is possible that Mrs Esdaile did not build her gothick villa, but that she bought Mrs Wharwood's house, which is mentioned in 1807 but not subsequently. Clearly, it was considered pretty and, if it was that of Wharwood, it was of the cottage style, with a gothick twist (not incompatible). The 1828 guide to Bognor says: 'Mrs Esdaile's house combines elegance with comfort, but the devouring element threatens its total demolition, unless some over-ruling spirit should direct its waves to another quarter less pre-judicial.' The sea continued its inroads, however, forcing Mrs Esdaile, who had been widowed in 1811, to extreme measures and the edge of financial ruin. So desperate was her situation that in 1831 she wrote to the Duchess of Kent asking for the repayment of money she had persuaded her husband to lend to the late duke. She wrote that although she had been left 'a comfortable independence', through 'disastrous misfortunes, resulting from the inroads which the sea made upon my late premises the Marine cottage, which commenced and increased for the last 12 years, until at length it reached to my very door, the only alternative left me was to have the house taken down and removed to a leasehold piece of ground'.[171] The cottage was re-erected inland, within part of the original setting of Sir Richard Hotham's house in Bognor itself. It was then known as Sudley Cottage and was rebuilt next to Sudley Lodge. This latter villa was designed and built in 1827 for the Earl of Arran, by John Shaw the Younger. He may also have been responsible for Mrs Esdaile's new house.[172] Sudley Cottage was loosely

167 *See* Esdaile family blog: esdailedescendants.blogspot.com/2011/
168 M. Gillen 1970 *The Prince and His Lady*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, pp. 271–72.
169 Only the villas of Pechell, Poyntz and Newnham were mentioned by name in the 1815 edition of *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-bathing Places*, but the publication implies that there were definitely others at this date. The 1806 edition mentions Bognor, although not in the most glowing terms, but makes no reference to the villas of Aldwick. This does not, of course, mean that they were not there.
170 For the 1820 storm, *see*: G. Young 1983 *A History of Bognor Regis*. Chichester: Phillimore, p. 80.
171 M. Gillen 1970 *The Prince and His Lady*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.
172 G. Young 1983 *A History of Bognor Regis*. Chichester: Phillimore, pp. 107–08.

gothick in style, so may well have included architectural elements salvaged from the original cottage at Aldwick, as suggested by Mrs Esdaile's letter. By 1838, when the guide to Bognor was updated, the property was known as Bognor Cottage and was said to have been 'erected by Mrs. Esdaile, having been removed from Aldwick in consequence of the encroachment of the sea'.[173]

Although Mrs Esdaile's 'marine cottage' was lost fairly early on to natural causes (as it were), one by one the other villas in the cluster also disappeared. Their demise was man made – they were all demolished to make way for development, as the massed middle classes wanted their own little piece of the seaside during the 20th century. Although West House remains, it too has suffered and more than 20 houses now sit in its original plot of around 3ha. In both their development and demise, the Aldwick properties are typical of marine villas elsewhere.

Summary

This study, particularly in its identification of, and focus on, the Aldwick cluster and the marine villas of Southampton Water, has added to the knowledge of what constituted a marine villa of the late 18th and early 19th centuries: how their integral elements were distributed across a site, who owned and built them, and – significantly – how few remain in existence as intact ensembles. As a result of this investigation, it is possible to say that there is no surviving parallel for Norris Castle in a strictly Solent context. This study has found no other castellated marine villas along the mainland coast of the Solent, and few marine villas on the scale of Norris. While several had modest-sized farms and kitchen gardens (necessary for a degree of self-sufficiency, especially when they were in use over the summer months), there is – again – nothing like the farm and kitchen garden complex at Norris. Moreover, within a regional context, Norris Castle was in the first wave of marine villas to be built (that is, late 1780s and 1790s).

The only parallel with Norris Castle in a regional context is Pennsylvania Castle, beyond the Solent, on the Isle of Portland in Dorset. Indeed, in stylistic terms, it is the only surviving parallel with Norris anywhere. Although the two sites share an architect and a similar building date, Pennsylvania Castle is on a far smaller scale, both in terms of house and the designed landscape. Moreover, the setting is less intact: the original landscape has a later layer of design, large sections are neglected and overgrown, and there is a complex of holiday chalets within sight of the castle.

173 *The Bognor Guide* 1838. Petworth: Printed by John Phillips, p 16. Mrs Esdaile's cottage was later owned by the Bowes-Lyon family, who nicknamed it 'The Den', a play on words referring to the lion's den. The OS map of 1912 gives it that name, too.

7 LOCAL CONTEXT: MARINE VILLAS ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

> 'So numerous are the charms of the Isle of Wight, so salubrious the air, and so mild is the climate, that we know not any situation which deserves better to be selected for a summer tour than this ...'
>
> John Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-bathing Places*. p. 167.

While the Isle of Wight provides the local context for Norris Castle as a marine villa – and putting Norris into context was the catalyst for the study – that local setting was of national importance when the concept of the marine villa was developing and becoming popular. Comparison with a strategically chosen selection of other coastal locations across England indicates that the Isle of Wight was probably the prime spot in which to build a marine villa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Another significant point with regard to marine villas on the Island is that, other than the designed landscapes of Norris Castle and Osborne House, none of the marine villa settings discussed below appear on the Register. Many are lost, of course, but a few remain undeveloped and relatively unaltered. There are quite a few examples of the villas themselves being listed, mostly at Grade II. East Dene at Bonchurch, Northwood House at West Cowes, and Sea Cottage and Lisle Combe at St Lawrence are notable Grade II* examples. Norris Castle and Osborne House are Grade I listed buildings.

On the Island, more than 70 individual marine villa sites (generally with immediate sea frontages) have been identified using a combination of sources. They include fairly modest-sized, later 19th-century examples. They were noted because, generally, the degree of loss is so great that highlighting any surviving ensembles, even Victorian ones, is a worthwhile exercise. Of the examples identified, probably around 45 date to before 1850.[174] As with the mainland counties already discussed, several major marine villa settings had already started to be eroded by about 1900 – St John's at Ryde is a prime example. The number of likely pre-Victorian sites where the house and landscape survive largely unaffected by later development (residential or industrial) is around 15. Of those, the number of sites that retain the integrity of the original landscape setting and the original marine villa is

174 However, there are quite a few examples on the Island for which a building date is hard to pin down without substantial further research.

considerably less, perhaps half.[175] And of those, only one is earlier than Norris Castle: Sir Richard Worsley's Sea Cottage at St Lawrence (now known as Marine Villa).[176] As with the wider Solent sites, those identified on the Island using the NLS mapping are listed in the appendix of this report.

The attraction of the Island and Picturesque tourism

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Island was a highly fashionable tourist destination, drawing those seeking quiet retirement, healthy sea air and, most of all, 'the Picturesque'. Within a relatively small area, the Island could boast the Downs, the rugged Undercliff – with thrillingly towering walls of rock and landscapes altered by landslip – and the ever-present sea (*see* Fig 7.1). Lord Henry Seymour built Norris Castle here on the Island, just as the fashion was starting to establish itself. Indeed, he can be seen as one of the first wave of marine villa builders.

The Island was well established as a destination by the time George Brannon, engraver and author of the guidebook *Vectis Scenery* (published annually between 1821 and 1875), wrote:

> 'The Isle of Wight has been so much and deservedly admired for the sweetness and variety of its landscapes, salubrity of air, and fertility of soil ... Many other parts of Great Britain certainly surpass it in the magnificent mountain and romantic scenery; but it is scarcely possible for any spot of the same narrow bounds to concentrate more of those qualities which at once charm the eye and animate the soul...'
>
> G. Brannon 1840 edn *Vectis Scenery*.

Until the last quarter of the 18th century, the Island was a quiet backwater, with a sparse population. It was a place of farmers and fishermen (and smugglers), of cottages (in the cruder sense) and smallish, solid manor houses, nestled in gentle valleys away from the rigours of the weather and the direct influence of the sea. In the initial decades of its fashionable status, the Island retained this character, because the trend established itself quietly at first. In fact, even today, large tracts of the Island still have a timeless quality and might even be recognisable to those

175 On the Island those pre-Victorian examples that stand out as seemingly intact, with their plots as mapped in *c.* 1900, are: Puckaster, Marine Villa/Sea Cottage, Lisle Combe/Captain Pelham's Cottage, East Dene, Binstead House, Chine Cottage, Norris Castle and possibly Steyne House (near Bembridge). Springhill is another example of an intact plot and ensemble and, although the house is not the original *c.* 1805 villa, it is on the same site. This in itself should not necessarily be seen as a devaluing of the site – given the rarity of intact ensembles and that, in this re-development of the house, it follows patterns of evolution of marine villa sites and ensembles elsewhere. Not all sites listed here were visited for the study.

176 Marine Villa/Sea Cottage was built in 1792. It is not wholly unaltered, but is largely intact. It is in divided ownership, which blurs the boundaries of the original 1790s site.

Figure 7.1: Luccombe Chine, 1840 by George Brannon. It shows St Boniface Down rising behind and the eastern end of the Undercliff. This view illustrates the difference between the cottages of the simple fishermen on the shore and exposed to the forces of the sea, (not to mention the potential for cliff falls), and the cottages ornés of the affluent classes on the rising ground above. The property now known as Luccombe Chine House and its tower can clearly be seen above the chine. [R McInnes]

who inhabited it 200 years ago. However, by the late 1860s, the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson had abandoned his Island retreat because too many tourists had come.[177] Interest in the landscape of the Island and the increasing number of visitors led to the publication of numerous topographical books and guides, the most famous being those published by Brannon. Thanks to all these books, the Island of the late 18th and the 19th century is remarkably well documented.

In contrast to other Picturesque destinations, such as the Wye Valley or the Lake District, the Island was relatively close to London. It also enjoyed good communication links. The road from the capital to Portsmouth was good because of the strategic importance of the naval port. The close proximity of the naval base also meant there was a great awareness of the Island, on the part of the naval fraternity,

177 When he left the Island Tennyson retained Farringford, his house at Freshwater. He spent the winters there and the rest of the year at Blackdown on the Surrey–Sussex border.

their families and close connections. (Seymour's brother, Hugh, was an admiral, for example). The connection to Portsmouth may also, in part at least, explain why the east of the Island was generally a preferable place for villa building. Even in the later 19th century, after the coming of the railway and the steamer, and the building of the military road (which runs from Blackgang on the southern tip of the Island along the south-west-facing coast to connect with Freshwater), the western end of the Island was less developed. It was at this quieter western end that Tennyson settled in the early 1850s. This stretch of coastline remains windswept, relatively featureless and prone to erosion and landslip.

At the start of the 19th century, the Solent became the prime place for recreational sailing. This was also influenced by the proximity of Portsmouth and, probably, by aristocratic connections with the upper echelons of the Royal Navy. The Royal Yacht Squadron (RYS) was founded in 1815, as The Yacht Club. The Prince Regent became a member in 1817, when the RYS was under the leadership of the Earl of Yarborough (inheritor of Sir Richard Worsley's estate and, by then, owner of Sea Cottage). When the Prince Regent became king in 1820, the club took on its present name.[178]

From the start of the fashion for visiting the Island, members of the beau monde travelled there. Particularly early visitors were the actor David Garrick and his wife, Eva Maria, the real glitterati of the time. They stayed for several weeks in late July and early August 1772. During their stay, the couple were entertained by the governor of the Island, Hans Stanley.[179] His secretary wrote to them from Paultons, Stanley's country estate in Hampshire, saying that his master:

> '... should be very much concerned if they left that country without his having the pleasure of seeing them at Steeple [Steephill]. Shall be much obliged to them if they will favour him with their company at dinner, any day they choose to appoint; and he has beds at their service if they will pass the night there. Mr Stanley will order them a yacht, if it is agreeable to them, to make any excursion upon the water ...'[180]
>
> D Garrick 1831 *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick: Volume I*. p. 479.

178 *See*: rys.org.uk/the-rys/history/timeline. *See*: 'Craven' (ed.) 1841 *The Sporting Review*, 6. London, p. 44. A number of the founder members of the Royal Yacht Squadron were villa builders.

179 J. Brooke and L. Namier 1985 *The House of Commons 1754–1790: Volume 3*. London, pp.468–72. For Hans Stanley, *see*: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Stanley. He committed suicide while staying with Earl Spencer at Althorp in Northamptonshire in 1780.

180 It is worth noting that Paultons is not far from the Hampshire coast (about 16km from Southampton), giving another example of a marine villa that was relatively easily accessible from the main estate.

A letter to Garrick from his friend Thomas Fitzmaurice, written from Shanklin shortly after the former departed, illustrates typical tourist activities from this early period – or at least typical for a pair of single men:

> 'Mr Barwell and I enjoyed our solitude exceedingly, though he, as you may believe, was now and then inclined to temper his solitude by a little gallantry in the afternoon with the young ladies belonging to the farm; whilst I, more savage like, was prowling among my ancient haunts upon the beach. He read and walked in the mornings; I wrote letters, and bathed. These recreations we hope again to resume for two or three days more; a longer time we shall not be able to afford'.[181]
>
> D. Garrick 1831 *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick: Volume I*. p. 480.

Early villa builders

Stanley can be seen as an early pioneer of Island marine villa building, along with Worsley and MP John Wilkes, who Lindsay Boynton wryly described as 'a pair of old roués'.[182] The earliest 'settlers' were interesting characters such as Wilkes, who had plenty of reason to seek 'retirement'.

Stanley (a grandson of the physician and naturalist Sir Hans Sloane) was a politician and diplomat, and twice governor of the Isle of Wight.[183] His residence at Steephill, on the south side of the Island, was a marine villa in concept. It was built in 'true cottage style' in about 1770 and was, therefore, one of the very earliest examples.[184] It was later the site of Steephill Castle (built in the 1830s), which seems to have incorporated at least some of the garden features of the earlier villa. Steephill is an early example of the re-use of a marine villa site on the Island.

At Steephill, Stanley had the 'honour to entertain ... foreign ambassadors and other persons of rank, who unite in praising this wildly romantic spot, where art

181 The letter from Mr T. Fitzmaurice is dated Isle of Wight, Aug 22nd 1772.

182 L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D. Arnold (ed.) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 122.

183 Stanley was governor of the Island from 1764 to 1766, when he became ambassador to Russia, then again from 1770 until his suicide in 1780. *See*: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Governors_of_the_Isle_of_Wight

184 Boynton considers Stanley's marine villa one of the three earliest. Besides Steephill Cottage, the other early example was Colonel Hill's St Boniface Cottage, set at the foot of St Boniface Down (now roughly where Upper Bonchurch meets Upper Ventnor), and therefore almost 400m from the sea. There is confusion over the identity and location of the third, Knowles. *See*: L Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D. Arnold (ed.) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton p. 120. McInnes gives a building date of *c.* 1760 for St Boniface Cottage, making it probably a little earlier than Steephill. It was demolished in *c.* 1912. *See*: R. McInnes, R 2018 P*aradise Lost: The lost architectural heritage of the East Wight*. Report for the 'Down to the Coast', p. 32.

conspires with nature to make everything appear awfully grand, and irregularly beautiful ...' In the gardens, the 'plantations consist of American and other exotic plants, watered by a cascade falling from a supereminent rock ...'[185] There was also a large conservatory attached to the house, which presumably housed exotic plants, too. Steephill Cottage was just above the present Ventnor Botanic Garden and would have enjoyed the same mild microclimate.

As part of the geological feature of the Undercliff, the topography of the site allowed the garden to be truly picturesque:

> '... on the right, rises the garden; on a broad terrace, sheltered by the Rocky rampart, amongst whose detached fragments are some romantic seats, and a pleasing Hermitage lined with moss. Other springs, alike cool and pellucid, adorn and refresh the different walks, and form beautiful cascades ...'
>
> W. Cooke 1808 *A New Picture of the Isle of Wight* pp. 99–100.

There was also an ancient fig tree, a 'shady avenue' and a rustic gateway to the 'steep ascending road', and an 'umbrageous walk conducts to the seat on the opposite hill, towards the sea, whence the view is taken'.[186] Today, at the site of Steephill Cottage and the later castle (demolished in 1963), it is notable that there is a wooded knoll in the view between it and the sea. It is so prominent that it is highly likely to be the location of the 'seat on the opposite hill' described above.

Wilkes had been visiting the Island for many years before he settled in 1788 at Sandham (Sandown) Cottage, which he referred to as his Villakin. By this time, he was in his early sixties, with a reputation for radical politics. As a 'roué' (he had been a member of the notorious Hellfire Club), he may well have been in need of 'retreat from worldly cares'. His modest cottage, 'neither thatched nor pretty' according to Boynton, was essentially a marine villa.[187] It was judiciously extended in summer by the means of tented, canvas rooms attached to the main body of the house. One was called the 'pavilion' and was presumably for entertaining; another served as a dressing room for his daughter.

The site of the Villakin (Fig 7.3) was on raised ground on windswept heathland and it was hard to establish trees there. However, it was laid out with ornamental features. Many of these were perhaps more typical of the landscapes of the generation of 'Capability' Brown than later villa settings.[188] But there was a grass walk more than 120m long, which bordered a low cliff, and two alcove seats to

185 *Southampton Guide*, 1774, quoted by L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D. Arnold (ed.) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton p. 121.
186 W. Cooke 1808 *A New Picture of the Isle of Wight*. London: Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, pp. 99–100.
187 L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D. Arnold (ed.) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 121.
188 Wilkes was nine years younger than the famous landscaper.

Figure 7.2: The Ordnance Survey Drawing of 1793 gives a good impression of the wild ruggedness of the middle section of the Undercliff. Sir Richard Worsley's Sea Cottage and Hans Stanley's Steephill Cottage are marked with arrows. The Victorian seaside resort of Ventnor (right) had not yet developed and was merely a small collection of cottages and a mill. [© The British Library Board Ordnance Survey Drawings; Shanklin (OSD 68)]

take in the view and for shelter from the weather. The garden may not have been especially notable, but the location was a fine one: in the middle of Sandown Bay, with panoramic views out towards Selsey Bill and the Channel.

Wilkes and Worsley were frequently in each other's company. Boynton speculated that perhaps it was Wilkes's Villakin that inspired Worsley to build Sea Cottage at St Lawrence (Fig 7.4). This was finished in 1792. After the scandal of the separation from his wife, Worsley travelled the Continent for much of the 1780s.[189] When he returned to England in 1788, he was in need of a bolt-hole to which to retire. Sea Cottage was built in the wild cragginess of the Undercliff, just over 1km south-west of Steephill Cottage (Fig 7.2). In some respects, it was a miniature landscape garden of Brownian style, with a number of temples and eye-catchers, yet it also boasted the heightened picturesque possibilities of natural features such as rocky streams and little waterfalls. Then, of course, there was the sea. On the beach, there was a bathing house and above it a battery, which Boynton calls 'a highly individual mimic fort'. But, as we have seen, these existed elsewhere, so it was not unique.[190]

189 The scandal is documented in H. Rubenhold 2008 *Lady Worsley's Whim: An Eighteenth-Century Tale of Sex, Scandal and Divorce*. London: Chatto and Windus.

190 L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D. Arnold (ed.) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 124. The garden battery at Mount Edgcumbe is likely to have been a model. *See*: iwhistory.org.uk/RM/minorforts/

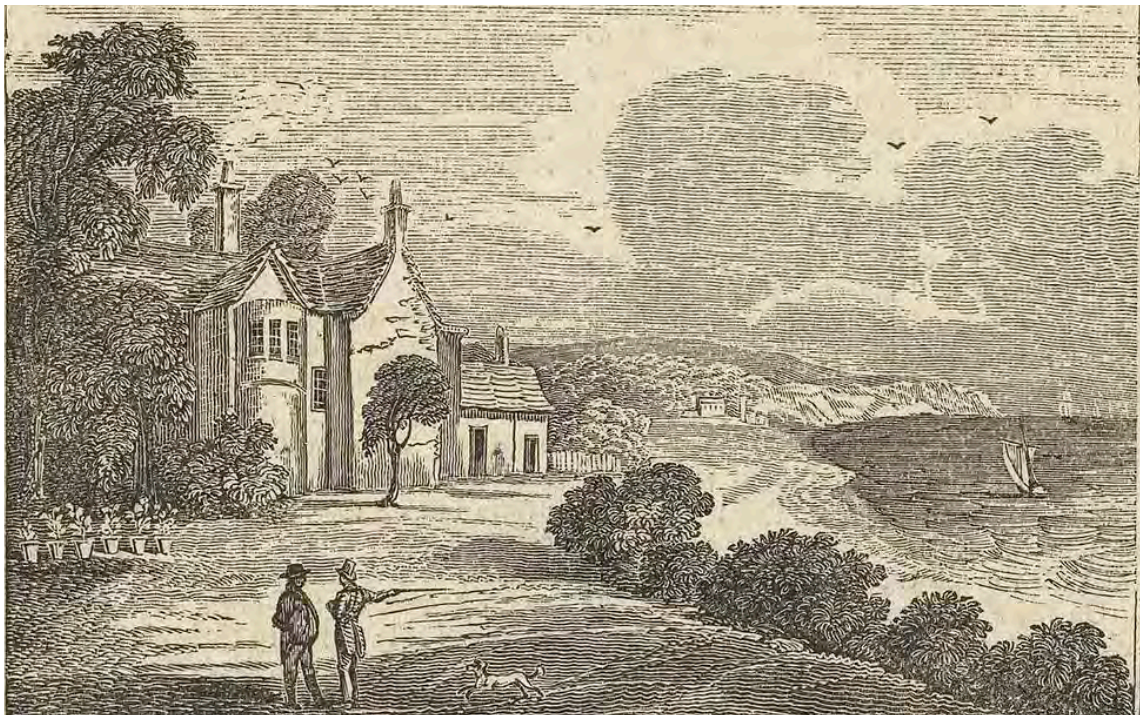

Figure 7.3: Engraving of John Wilkes's 'Villakin' overlooking Sandown Bay, published in 1832. As Lindsay Boynton noted, the house was not pretty but, as seen here, it had a typical marine villa feature of a bay window. It enjoyed an enviable site with panoramic views. [Royal Collecton Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2022]

Worsley's battery had six guns, like that at Sydney Lodge on Southampton Water. These were presented to him by George III. Some of the commentary written about them suggests that the battery had a defensive role. Given the threat posed by the French in the late 1790s, this is plausible, although the length of the Island coastline and its many small coves and shallow beaches would have meant that Worsley's battery was not likely to hold back an invading army for very long. Perhaps its existence is more significant in capturing the jittery mood of the time. John Phibbs has suggested that it was the threat of invasion at this time that determined Seymour's choice of a castle style for Norris.[191] The invasion scare of 1779, during the American Revolutionary War, when a Franco-Spanish fleet came within a whisker of landing men near Plymouth, would still have been well within living memory. The original French target for that mission was, in fact, the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth.[192]

191 John Phibbs, pers comm, Norris Castle, 10 January 2020. For the historical background on the French threat at that time, *see*: bbc.co.uk/history/british/empire_seapower/french_threat_01.shtml

192 *See*: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armada_of_1779. This scare was widely felt, especially in southern England. Fortifications, including in the Solent, were strengthened. At Mount Edgcumbe, on the south-west side of the strategically important Plymouth Sound, many trees on the coastal slopes, which had been carefully cultivated as part of the design, were felled in order to remove cover for a potential invasion from this direction.

Figure 7.4: Sea Cottage, 1840 by George Brannon. Note the Grecian temple greenhouse on the right of the view and the terraces of the vineyard between it and the house. [R McInnes]

Having recently returned from his travels in Europe, Worsley was determined to establish a vineyard at Sea Cottage. Steeped as he was in the Classics, perhaps he also had Pliny's villa in his mind. Although the wine was not very successful, the vineyard was renowned. *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places* described how:

> '... by a winding descent, the tourist now enters the plantations belonging to the cottage of the late Sir Richard Worsley, which, with its accompaniments, contains such an assemblage of natural beauty as fancy itself would find it difficult to conceive. In particular, the vineyard here has excited much public attention. It comprises, in all, more than 3 acres, planted with the choicest White Muscatine and plant Verd grapes, procured from Bretagne, with which the climate of this elysian spot, in a great measure corresponds ...'[193]
>
> John Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*. p. 187.

193 J. Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*. London, p. 187. Worsley died in 1805.

Figure 7.5: The remains of the Grecian temple greenhouse (November 2019). [Kate Feluś]

Remarkably, the terraces of the vineyard survive. This interest in production, bordering on eccentricity, is perhaps somewhat reminiscent of Seymour's farm at Norris Castle.

Guidebook descriptions of other garden features are confusing, perhaps conflating one eye-catcher with another. But the temple greenhouse is less obscure. It was shown prominently in engraved views and remained as a persistent feature until its roof collapsed under the weight of snow in around the 2000s (Fig 7.5). It seems to have been constructed of timber and lath and plaster, and rendered to appear as stone.

In the late 1830s, Worsley's great nephew, Captain Dudley Pelham (second son of Worsley's niece and heir, Henrietta), built his own marine villa in the grounds of Sea Cottage. Originally known as Captain Pelham's Cottage, it is now called Lisle Combe (Fig 7.7). Over time, the boundaries between the two properties changed, and the temple greenhouse sits, today, within the grounds of Lisle Combe.[194]

194 The ownership of Sea Cottage and Captain Pelham's Cottage was split, then later rejoined. The poet Alfred Noyes owned both houses for some time. When Sea Cottage was sold off again, the Grecian temple greenhouse remained within the garden of Captain Pelham's Cottage (renamed Lisle Combe by Noyes). Noyes wrote about the garden in his book *Orchard's Bay* (1936, *see* Fig 7.30).

Figure 7.6: An engraving of 1843 by George Brannon showing Sea Cottage (left), Captain Pelham's Cottage (Lisle Combe, middle) and Steephill Castle beyond. Sir Richard Worsley's battery of cannon can be seen near the middle of the view, by the flagstaff on the smaller, dark clifftop. The seaside resort of Ventnor is in the background on the right. [R. McInnes]

Despite the curmudgeonly Worsley fixing a notice to his gate, stating: 'Sea Cottage is not shew'd', it could not fail to be well known because of the notoriety of the man himself. Aside from the scandal involving his wife and her affair with a neighbour, Worsley was a major landowner on the Isle of Wight. His seat at Appuldurcombe was the finest country house – with the most extensive designed landscape – on the Island. With his position, he knew everyone and they knew him. Following the scandal, and after his return to England, he became MP for Newtown (Isle of Wight). He then had a term as ambassador in Venice, which allowed him to indulge his passion for art and add to his already impressive collection. When he returned – after a hasty escape from Venice as Napoleon's forces invaded – he spent most of his time at Sea Cottage. It was, after all, a house on a human scale in comparison to the palatial surroundings of Appuldurcombe, which became more of a museum. Appuldurcombe housed his collection of art and antiquities and was open to visitors. The fame of Sea Cottage and the rise of interest in its Undercliff location meant that it influenced the building of subsequent marine villas on the Island.

Figure 7.7: Captain Pelham's Cottage, now Lisle Combe (November 2019). [Kate Feluś]

Picturesque villas and their settings

Steephill Cottage and Sea Cottage were located in the Undercliff, which runs for around 10km from Blackgang to Bonchurch. When Stanley and Worsley built their marine villas there, it was inaccessible, with no road and only tracks winding around the rocky outcrops. With the rising cliff behind and the sea in front, it must have felt like going to the ends of the earth. Access was on foot, by horse or by donkey, although for centuries the easiest means of transport must have been by sea, into any of the little bays and coves. Boynton quotes at length from the novelist Mrs Radcliffe's description of her trip to the Undercliff, which she describes as 'a tract of shore formed by fallen cliffs, and closely barricadoed [sic] by a wall of rock of vast height ... a Druid scene of wildness and ruin' (*see* Fig 2.2). Her progress eastwards from Niton towards St Lawrence and then to the inn at Steephill was slow, with her husband leading her on horseback. She continued, describing 'amphitheatres of rock ... frequently covered with verdure and underwood with the wildest pomp ... [which] shelter here a cottage and there a villa among the rocky hillocks'.[195] She was not alone in making slow progress. Many visitors described being uncertain of where they were going because they could not see where the path in front of them led. Would-be visitors were appraised in the 1806 guide:

195 It is hard to be sure whether the 'cottages' described by Mrs Radcliffe in 1801 were the homes of humble workers or marine villas, as relatively few cottages ornés had been built by that date. It is possible that she used the term 'villa' to imply a polite property and 'cottage' a more humble one, although by 1801 cottages were highly fashionable.

> 'the scenery of Undercliff is beautiful to a high degree. Fields of every shape and magnitude, fragments of rocks intermix with cottages, gardens, lawns, and trees, with all the contrasts of rocks and waves, form a picture unrivalled, and fill [the] mind with admiration ...'
>
> John Feltham 1806 *A Guide to All the Watering and Sea-Bathing Places*

For several decades either side of the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Undercliff spawned cottage orné after cottage orné, and even a hotel was built in the same style.[196] Cottages and castles were the architectural embodiment of the ideals of the Picturesque. It is possible that no one built a castellated marine villa in the Undercliff until the 1830s for want of a site large enough. Level ground of any size would have been hard to come by and a castle-villa without a degree of scale would have had to be designed with great aplomb to work successfully.[197] One of the most attractive and widely known cottages ornés of the Undercliff is Puckaster, just south of Niton, towards the western end. It remains the best preserved today, both in terms of house and setting. Local legend has it that the garden was laid out before the house was built. This may have been because the layout of the site was determined according to its intrinsic, ready-made picturesque capabilities, which dictated where elements were distributed and how they related to each other. The uneven ground of the Undercliff must have been a tricky place in which to find a site suitable for building, and a villa of this date would have had certain prerequisites, including a picturesque setting. So, a rocky outcrop suggested a seat and lookout, two boulders close together might determine the course of a winding path and the span of an arch between them, and a clearer, more level area might suggest the site of the house itself. Therefore, it was just one step further to plant strategic areas before the construction of the house, rather than after it was completed.

The exact building date for Puckaster (Fig 7.8) is hard to pin down, as sources are contradictory. It could have been constructed in about 1815 and it was certainly in existence by the time it was illustrated by the architect Robert Lugar (1772/3–1855) in his *Villa Architecture* of 1828.[198] The client, James Vine, had apparently selected the design from an earlier pattern book by Lugar, *Plans and Views of Buildings* (1811), but it is presumed there was some adaptation of the design by the architect for the specific site and client. Vine may have been attracted to the Island for its rising interest as a fossil-hunting location; he was certainly a pioneer.[199] The garden

196 For the Sandrock Hotel at Niton, *see*: R. McInnes 2016 *Isle of Wight Landscape Art: An Illustrated Dictionary 1650–1930*. Chale: Cross Publishing, p. 58.

197 In the 1830s, Steephill Castle was built reusing the site of Steephill Cottage. Perhaps the earlier cottage sat on a particularly extensive and level site for the Undercliff.

198 R. White 2017 *Cottages Ornés: The Charms of the Simple Life*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 128–29. Lugar was born in Essex. He established himself in London in *c.* 1799 and developed a widespread practice as a country house architect. He published two pattern books, including *Architectural Sketches for Cottages, Rural Dwellings, and Villas* (1805; reprinted in 1815 and 1823).

199 H. S. Torrens 2014 'The Isle of Wight and its crucial role in the "invention" of dinosaurs', *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*, 113 (3), pp. 664–76.

Figure 7.8: Puckaster Cottage by George Brannon, 1829. This view was taken from the direction of the rocky outcrop of the look-out. [R. McInnes]

Figure 7.9: Puckaster Cottage (January 2020). Note the undulating topography and the curving sweep of the path. [Kate Feluś]

Figure 7.10: The rock outcrop and boulders lining the carriage sweep to the entrance to the house. The outcrop forms the basis of a rockery with steps on the right of the photograph. [Kate Feluś]

covered around 3ha.[200] Today, the house has been extended and re-roofed with tiles. However, it retains its character, including original panelling in the dining room and tree trunk columns outside the bay window that faces towards the sea (Fig 7.9).

The garden of Puckaster is a well-preserved gem. Its design takes full advantage of the varied topography, with terraces and sweeping winding paths, which negotiate many changes of level. A short drive curves from the lane to the house, with rocks and remains of planting bays on each side. The forecourt of the house is dominated by a huge bolder, which is the core of a rockery with steps worked into it (Fig 7.10). On the other side of the drive, a path curves away, running under an arch of rockwork (Fig 7.11). It connects into other paths around the garden, all of which survive with their original edging and guttering lined with pebbles. The cottage-villa is set towards the top of the site and the network of paths carries the visitor gently downwards to a rocky outcrop with steps cut into it. This served as a lookout, giving 360-degree views, both back up to the house and out to sea (Fig 7.12). There was a similar feature at Steephill Cottage, later incorporated into the landscape of Steephill Castle. Another lookout survives at Undermount at Bonchurch. Near the Puckaster lookout is a gateway through a wall, where a covered seat with sea views was located. A pebble floor survives. There were at least two kitchen gardens at Puckaster. The glasshouse of one remains, but is in a poor condition. After visiting the farther kitchen garden, visitors would follow the circuit path sweeping back up the hill to the house, terminating at the terrace on the east side (Fig 7.13). The intricacy of the designed landscape at Puckaster is likely to have existed elsewhere (although Puckaster was a celebrated example), but it is not so clearly read in any of the other surviving marine villas visited for this study.

200 There was also a farm at Puckaster, which was presumably part of the property, but this is not known for certain.

Figure 7.11: One of the paths curving through a rock-work arch. Note the defined edges of the path, which retains its pebble-lined gutters. [Kate Feluś]

Figure 7.12: The look-out. Steps carved out of the rock lead up to the view point, now with a sycamore growing on it. The roof of the cottage can just be seen in the centre. [Kate Feluś]

Figure 7.13: The pond (outside the dining room) is probably 20th century, but the low terraces beyond are likely to be original. The circuit path back up from the look-out and kitchen garden arrives at the house between the shrubs beyond the pyramidal piers. [Kate Feluś]

Although not as pioneering as Steephill Cottage or Sea Cottage, Puckaster was a relatively early marine villa of the Undercliff. As the fashion increased, the Niton section of the Undercliff saw the development of a large cluster of marine villas (Fig 7.14). Beauchamp, The Orchard and Mirables lay to the east of Puckaster. The Orchard may have slightly pre-dated Puckaster. Both The Orchard and neighbouring Beauchamp were slightly further away from the sea, tucked right under the Undercliff. Mirables (built before 1808) was described by William Cooke in *A New Picture of the Isle of Wight* (1808) as 'a delicious retreat', and it was engraved by Brannon in 1823. The Orchard was picturesque enough to be illustrated in Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics* in 1826 (*see* Fig 4.5).[201] Mirables and The

201 L. Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D Arnold (ed) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 127.

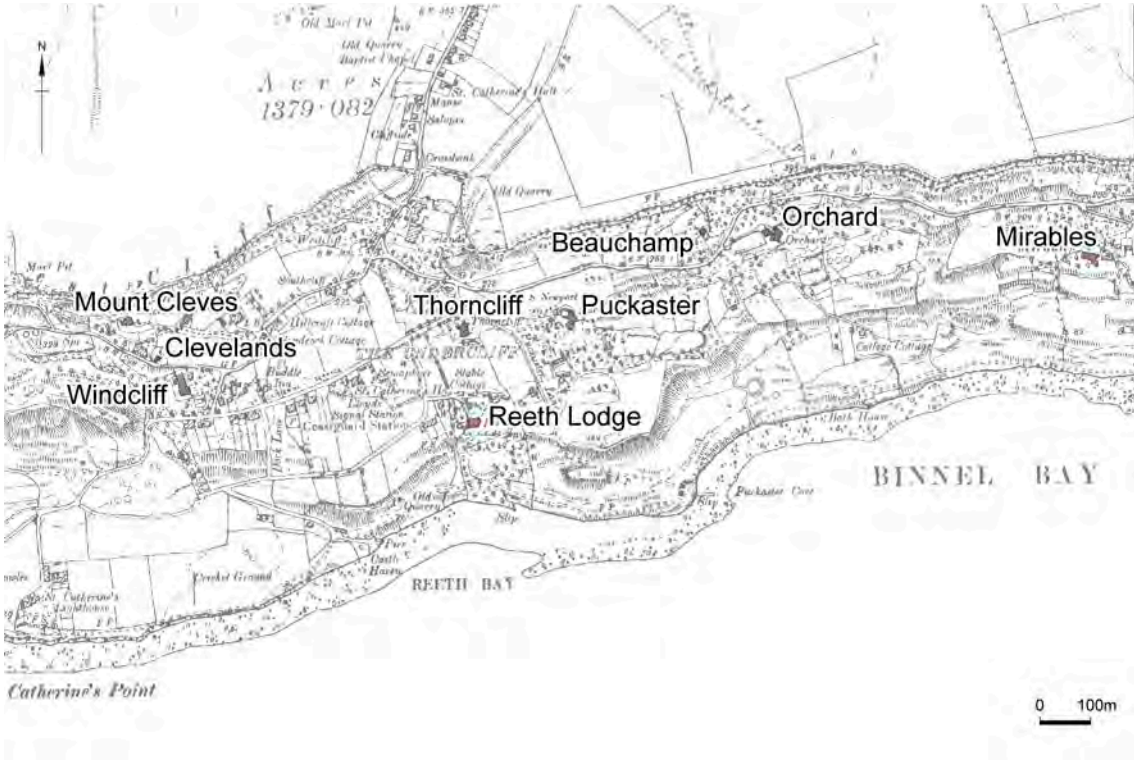

Figure 7.14: The 6-inch OS map showing the Niton Undercliff, with Puckaster Cottage and others mentioned in the text. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

Orchard survive, but Beauchamp was destroyed following a landslip in 2001.[202] To the west of Puckaster were the marine villas of Thorncliff, Reeth Lodge, Windcliff and Mount Cleves. Although they had smaller settings, they all had elements of designed landscape, including zigzag paths, fountains and cascades, glasshouses and kitchen gardens. Mount Cleves had a prominent obelisk, which might have acted as an unofficial daymark for shipping. There were also a number of other even smaller villas. The degree of survival of these lesser landscapes is unknown, but Reeth Lodge experienced a large landslip in 1994, which destroyed much of the garden. Westwards beyond Mount Cleves and Windcliff, the topography was too inhospitable for marine villas, although a few were injudiciously built at Blackgang. None have survived the landslips and erosion from the sea.

At the eastern end of the Undercliff, Bonchurch became a magnet for villa builders. Here, the topography was similar: undulating land forms, rocky outcrops and small bays. Behind the village towered St Boniface Down, its name a reminder of historic

202 For the effects of the 2001 landslip on Beauchamp, Beauchamp Cottage and their environs *see*: iow.gov.uk/Meetings/committees/Mod-development_control/16-7-02/PaperB2.htm For the listed building description of Orchard, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1219610 and for Mirables, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1271989

associations, which added further interest. In the 8th century the saint was said to have landed at Monk's Bay, just below the marine villa of East Dene (Fig 7.15).[203] This was built in the 1820s for a Mr Surman. It was acquired in the 1830s by yet another naval officer, Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne, the father of the poet Algernon Swinburne. It is the largest and best surviving of the Bonchurch cluster of marine villas. The Swinburne family seems to have added features and improved the property over the next couple of decades. The listing of the gate lodge suggests that it was built in 1854, but it is possible that the highly picturesque entrance drive, which curves to the house through a gully between towering walls of rock hung with creepers and sprouting fern, may pre-date the lodge.

The house sits at the top of a lawn that rolls down towards the sea (Fig 7.16). Behind it are hanging woods concealing picturesque rocky outcrops. As well as the dramatic drive, other original features of the setting survive. To the east of the house and lawn is an area of paths, some on terraces through remnant shrubbery. Beyond that, further to the east, is the walled kitchen garden, built on two levels and with a semicircular wall at the north end to make best use of the sunlight throughout the day. The footings of the glasshouses remain, as do the bothies and back sheds, now converted into a house.[204] East Dene has been in institutional use for many years – first as a convent and subsequently a hotel. Its most recent use was as residential accommodation, mainly for educational groups. Although the site is in divided ownership, as a marine villa ensemble it is remarkably intact.[205]

Over time, the Undercliff became more accessible. A road was built connecting Bonchurch in the east to Niton in the west, via the Victorian seaside resort of Ventnor, which sprang up in-between. The Victorians, with their passion for engineering, constructed a tunnel and brought the railway to the Undercliff. Ventnor was served by two stations, one of which was built within the setting of Steephill Castle. But the landscape bit back and the wilds of the Undercliff would not be totally tamed. Landslips forced the course of the through road to change several times in its history, most recently in 2014 when a section of the road between St Lawrence and Niton fell away.[206] It remains impassable. At the time of writing, there is no through route for vehicles along the Undercliff, thereby returning a sense of other-worldliness and providing a reminder of the power of the landscape.

In contrast to the rugged Undercliff, the north side of the Isle of Wight has a more gentle beauty. From the mainland – and from the Solent itself – the view of the Island is well worthy of a painting, with the coast sloping gently upwards and the

203 The house of East Dene is listed Grade II*. *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1224413. Other listed structures include a lodge, stables and cottage with octagonal dairy.

204 The kitchen garden of East Dene is now part of Carrigdene Farm. It was still being used productively in the 1980s. The bothies were converted into a house in the 1970s.

205 The residential outdoor educational centre that owned East Dene ceased trading as a result of the economic impacts of the pandemic. The property appears to have been sold in January 2021. At the time of preparing this publication, East Dene's future use remained uncertain.

206 One of the changes of the course of the Undercliff road ran right through the designed landscape of Beauchamp.

Figure 7.15: East Dene, Bonchurch by George Brannon, 1836. In its earlier incarnation, East Dene can be seen on the left of the view, peeping through the trees, with the small church of St. Boniface in the centre. The path through the landslip towards Luccombe and Shanklin is on the right. [R. McInnes]

Figure 7.16: The sea-facing facade of East Dene (August 1999). [Raymond Todd, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons]

Figure 7.17: The remains of the fernery in the shrubbery at East Dene (November 2019). [Kate Feluś]

Figure 7.18: Looking down at the entrance drive to East Dene, which runs through a rocky gorge, at the point at which a bridge (indicated by dashed lines) spanned the drive, (November 2019). [Kate Feluś]

Downs rising steeply in the background. The castle architecture of Norris adds a picturesque element to this view, as observed by the artist William Daniell in 1823 (*see* Section 3). Daniell implied that Seymour had deliberately chosen the site and the architecture of his marine villa to add to the enjoyment of the view of the Island from the Solent – for everyone. While cottages were considered picturesque, a castle allowed a greater scale of building. Castellated marine villas are much rarer than cottages. On the Island, there was Norris Castle and East Cowes Castle, as well as the slightly later St Clare at Ryde and Steephill Castle. The latter two were both designed by James Sanderson (1790–1835), dating to the late 1820s and 1830s, and they perhaps emulated East Cowes and Norris, which were long famed and lauded by that date.[207] Steephill was the only one on the south side of the Island. All but Norris Castle have been demolished. The suggestion of fortification (it cannot have been functionally fortified) was perhaps also a nod to genuine fortifications around the Solent, especially during a time of real threat from the French.

Another motive connected to Seymour's choice of architecture was perhaps the prominence that Norris Castle and the towers of the kitchen garden and farm complex would have for sailors. One of his younger brothers was a naval officer and he is likely to have had many other naval connections. Consequently, he would have been well aware of the use of landmarks for navigation. Furthermore, Fort Norris had signalling equipment installed on its roof. This was not unique. Several designed landscape features at the famed Mount Edgcumbe formed landmarks that helped to guide shipping into Plymouth and were mentioned in navigation manuals.[208] The prominent tower of Maker Church on the high ground above the house had long been used by the Royal Navy as a signal tower by the late 18th century.

Another important aspect of Norris Castle in relation to it being seen from a distance was its attraction to artists. After Osborne, and along with East Cowes Castle, it was probably the most painted, sketched and engraved marine villa.[209] This must have been partly because of its accessible location, close to the Solent and close to the port of Cowes, and partly because of its intrinsic attractiveness. Moreover, with the close proximity of East Cowes Castle, it added to the general allure of the location. It was painted from many angles by amateur artists such as

207 At West Cowes, there were also two much smaller properties, castellated but not castles: Moorhouse and Sir John Coxe Hippisley's Marine Villa. Moorhouse was long lost by 1908, but identified by Vicky Basford as likely to be the villa in a Thomas Rowlandson watercolour from the Yale Collection of British Art. *See*: collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1670678 (The thatched West Hill, Admiral Christian's villa, is in the background.) For the Coxe Hippisley villa, *see*: L Boynton 1996 'The marine villa', in D Arnold (ed) *The Georgian Villa*. Stroud: Sutton, p. 128.

208 For example, *Sailing Directions for the English Channel* (1835) by Captain Martin White.

209 This report has not considered the relative numbers of views of the prominent villas on the Island. This would be a valid study in itself, but Norris Castle was certainly one of the most frequently depicted, along with the now-lost East Cowes Castle. Robin McInnes confirmed that in his opinion only Osborne was painted more, pers. comm., March 2020.

Figure 7.19: A Rocky Headland on the Isle of Wight, with the ?East Cowes Castle or Norris Castle Beyond, 1827 by J M W Turner (1775-1851) from his Isle of Wight sketchbook [Finberg CCXXVII]. Given the topography, especially in relation to the sea, it is more likely to be the Norris Castle, possibly from beach below Norris Wood. [© Tate, London (2021)]

Captain Hastings (*see* Figs 3.5 and 3.6), by young men training to be architects such as George Stanley Repton and by the most famous living artist of the time, J. M. W. Turner (Fig 7.19).

Distribution of marine villas

As already mentioned, marine villas on the Isle of Wight in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were almost exclusively to be found on the eastern half of the Island. (The east–west split is roughly defined by following the north–south course of the River Medina down to Newport, then continuing the line to the south coast.) A small number in West Cowes and four around Yarmouth are the exceptions. The favouring of the eastern half of the Island was probably due to a combination of transport links and an attractive landscape.

As elsewhere, clusters of marine villas were frequent on the Island. The phenomenon of the cluster has, in part, to do with sales of land enabling villa development. In this period, farms in desirable locations were split into building plots. The breaking-up of Shanklin Farm in around the 1840s is documented in Boynton's research papers, now in the archives of the University of Southampton.[210] Clusters of marine villas are also connected to their builders' desire to find the most attractive locations. This is true of the various clusters in the Undercliff (Bonchurch, St Lawrence and Niton) and those around Shanklin Chine. The group in East Cowes, overlooking the mouth of the Medina – East Cowes Castle, Slatwoods, Springhill and St Thomas – is an important example. (Norris Castle is connected to the group, though not overlooking the river). Here, the desirability of the location was likely to have been self-perpetuating. As fine villas were built, the location became even more attractive and, therefore, even more desirable to would-be marine villa builders. The significance of this particular location was also connected to the importance of Cowes as a port and as a disembarkation point for travellers to the Island. Some of the villas here seem to date to the 1790s, so as a cluster its origins are early.[211] Of these, only Norris Castle and Springhill survive with their plots intact and undeveloped. As on the mainland, the popularity of some places led to the subdivision of original plots. After East Cowes, Ryde was probably the most popular location on the Solent at which to build a marine villa on the Island. For example, Buckingham Villa was built for the Marquess of Buckingham, a founder member of the Royal Yacht Squadron based at Cowes. The villa cluster on the west side of Ryde seems to be a little later than that at East Cowes, and it is possible that this was the second choice location for recreational yachtsmen, because the best villa spots at East Cowes had already been taken.

Commonalities

Marine villas on the Island tended to exhibit typical elements and arrangements within their ensembles of house and setting: that is, they were not different from their mainland marine villa counterparts. They had lodges, drives, shrubbery walks and seats to take in the view. They had conservatories attached to the house and glasshouses in their kitchen gardens. Like examples elsewhere, they often changed ownership and names throughout their history.

210 Boynton Collection, University of Southampton, Box 98.

211 As well as the marine villas highlighted in Fig 7.20, there was a villa belonging to a Mr Aduljo, the location of which is unclear. The building date of St Thomas is unknown. Slatwoods appears to have perhaps been the earliest, as there is a house in what looks to be an ornamented plot, in approximately the right location, on the OSD of 1793.

Survivals and losses

The high number of marine villas on the Island in comparison to elsewhere, in the context of the Solent and especially nationally, suggests that the Isle of Wight really was the prime location for building marine villas in the late 18th century and all through the 19th. This trend started long before Queen Victoria rebuilt Osborne in the early 1840s. The NLS digitised historic mapping was used to identify sites on the Island (as at *c.* 1900) and these are listed in the Appendix.

What follows is a summary of the most interesting examples, important losses and significant survivals. They are discussed in order of location, starting at East Cowes and working clockwise around the Island.

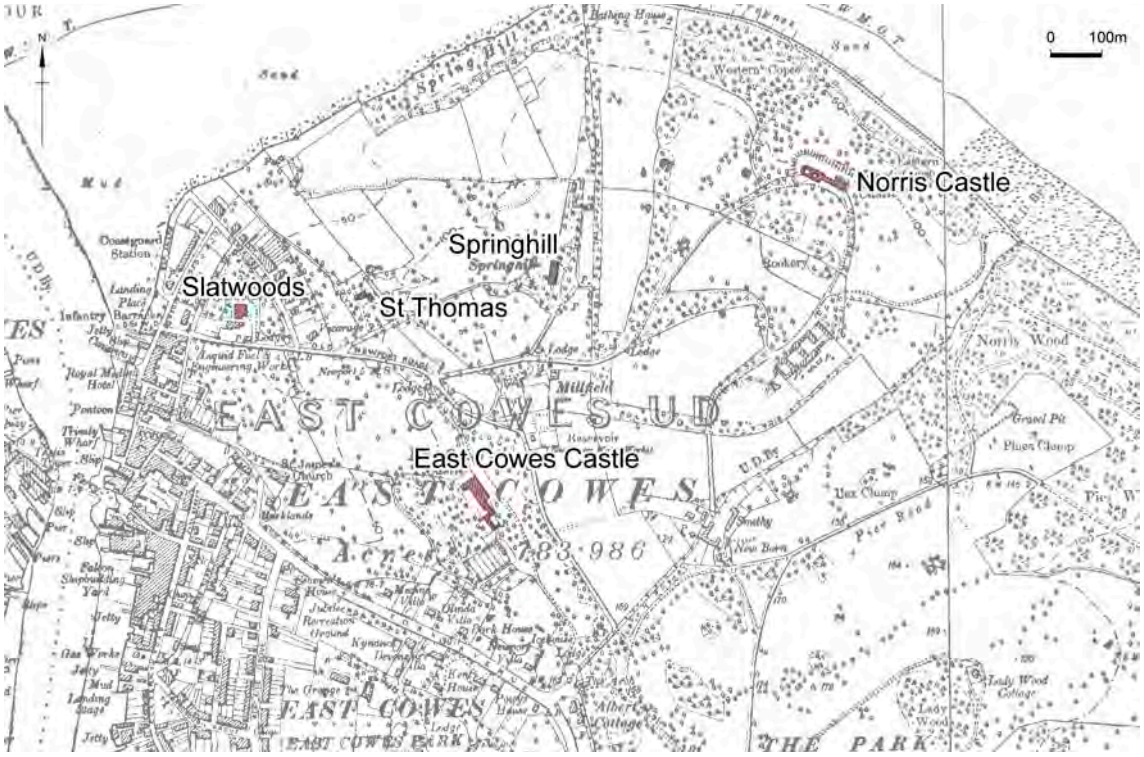

Figure 7.20: East Cowes from the 6-inch OS map, 1898. The marine villas of the late 18th century cluster are highlighted. Development continued to the south in the 19th century (marked East Cowes Park), but the earliest villas had views both across the harbour and out into the Solent. The exception was Norris Castle, which looked across the Solent towards Portsmouth. The edge of the parkland of Osborne House, is seen in the bottom corner and marked 'The Park'. [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

East Cowes

There was an important cluster of early marine villas at East Cowes, the earliest dating to (or presumed to date to) the 1790s. Of these, Slatwoods and East Cowes Castle have been lost completely. The house of St Thomas survives at the core of a holiday park of static caravans. Springhill, for which its first builder bought his plot in 1794 and which exhibits all the features typical of a marine villa, remains remarkably intact in terms of plot, boundaries and constituent parts. Although the house is not the original (which follows a pattern of redevelopment typical of many marine villas), the site is a rare and early survival as an ensemble.[212] Norris Castle, built in the second half of the 1790s, survives, with its marine villa in its original state and its landscape setting intact.

To this late 18th-century cluster was added a small 19th-century group slightly to the south, on high ground with views to the mouth of the Medina, but not actually having water frontage. At least some of these were intended as the start of a speculative development called East Cowes Park, begun in the 1840s. This grand vision, which included villas in a myriad of architectural styles grouped around a botanic garden, was never realised. None of the villas that were erected and are seen on the OS map of 1912 survive as ensembles.[213]

Binstead

About 6.5km south-east of Norris Castle, across Osborne Bay, is Binstead House (also known as The Keys), (Fig 7.21). It is situated immediately north of Binstead Church and appears to be an intact ensemble of marine villa and landscape. The house is listed (Grade II) and the listing description suggests it was built in the late 18th century. It was re-faced in the 1830s. The plot has not been eroded by development and the ensemble is intact. Historic mapping shows terraces and zigzag paths from the house down to the shore. Of particular interest is the rare survival of a (likely tidal-fed) seawater bathing pool and bath house behind it (Figs 7.22 and 7.23).[214] Along the beach, the vegetation is dense and probably unmanaged. The estate is very private.

Ryde

The gently sloping coastline around Ryde, with its excellent views across the Solent to Portsmouth, was a mecca for villa builders. To the west side of the town, two formerly prestigious villas survive: Buckingham Villa, built in 1812–13 for the Marquess of Buckingham, and Westfield built in about 1811 for Earl Spencer. Both properties have suffered from modern development and neither have intact settings, although Buckingham Villa has fared rather better than Westfield.[215]

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212 For more information on Springhill and its history, *see* Historic England, Springhill Designation Review, July 2019heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=1467425&resourceID=7

213 Kynance and Kent House, which were probably part of East Cowes Park, might survive, but neither have original settings and the condition of the villas is unknown.

214 Despite being a rare example, the bath and bathing house at Binstead are not listed.

215 For Buckingham Villa, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1234363 Westfield has undergone too much change to be designated, but its lodge retains some integrity and is listed. *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1238407

Figure 7.21: *View From Binstead Grounds Looking Towards Norris* by Queen Victoria, 1852. Queen Victoria visited many of the marine villas on the Island, especially on the northern side, including Binstead where she sketched in the garden. [Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2022]

Further uphill, slightly removed from the sea, was another cluster, probably built a little later. This includes Westmont (1819–21), which survives as part of Ryde School.[216] Some of the setting is undeveloped and now used as playing fields. To the east of the town was the villa of St John's, significant for its landscape by Humphry Repton. It had an attractive 'marino' on the waterfront (*see* Section 4). St John's started to be eroded by development as early as the 1860s. The villa and a fragment of the landscape around it survive, although the connection with the waterfront has long been lost. To the east lay St Clare, one of the four castellated marine villas on the Island. In 1830, Brannon described it: 'St Clare is a very beautiful villa of considerable dimensions, adorned with a lofty tower, and displaying all the

216 For Westmont, *see*: historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1222121

Figure 7.22: The surviving bathing pool at Binstead and the cottage, now extended as a house, as seen from the beach (August 2021). [© Historic England Archive, DP371163]

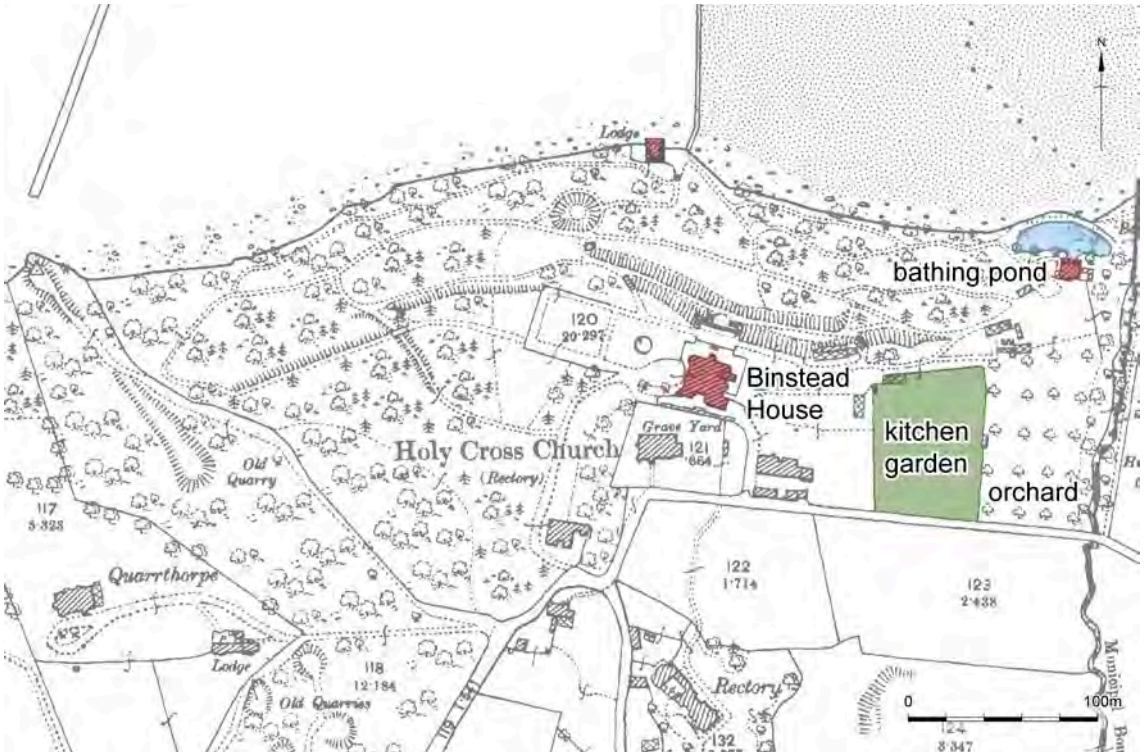

Figure 7.23: Detail from second edition OS map (1908) showing Binstead House and its setting. Note the zigzag paths, kitchen garden and orchard to the east of the house, the lodge on the waterfront and the 'bathing pond' and associated building (top right). [Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2023). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

picturesque variety and elegant likeness of the Gothic taste.'[217] It was demolished after World War II. The site was, until recently, a holiday park, but it is now closed and slowly decaying. Some historic trees may remain.

Bembridge

At Bembridge (*see* Figs 7.24 and 7.25), the most significant marine villa was Hill Grove, designed by John Nash for Earl Ducie and built in about 1814. Only the gatepiers survive. The classical, domed house sat on rising ground above the harbour, at the point the land turned outwards towards the coast. Consequently, the pleasure ground, if not the house, would have had views to the Solent, with the Hampshire hills in the distance, and nearer views of the bustle of the harbour. The second edition OS map shows signs of a typical marine villa layout in terms of its gardens and setting, but the erosion of this landscape by the development of residential roads had begun long before this time. A view by Brannon (*see* Fig 4.4) suggests that, by 1836, a road had sliced through the plot of Hill Grove. The house survived well into the 20th century until – by then derelict – it was demolished in the 1960s, despite being listed.

Brannon's 1829 and 1836 views show the gothick Northwells. This was a modest marine villa in a small setting. The house was a school for a time, but it is now holiday flats. Some limited setting may remain. To the north-east of Hill Grove, overlooking the Solent, two smaller marine villas survive with intact ensembles: East Cliff and Tyne Hall. They were probably built in the later 19th century.

Sandown

Divided from Bembridge by the rising bulk of Culver Down is Sandown, sitting in the centre of the wide arc of its bay. Although it was probably one of the finest spots for marine villas, by the end of the 19th century the town had developed and there were no notable examples plotted on the mapping from around 1900. A handful of houses in garden settings were built on the seafront, but they did not share the qualities of the marine villas of this study.

Shanklin

At Shanklin, by the end of the 19th century, a large group of marine villas, mainly built in the cottage style, clustered around the picturesque chine and on the cliff to its south. Mostly, their plots were of a small scale and their designed landscapes and ensembles were, therefore, limited. Tower Cottage, built in about 1825, at the very top of the chine was probably the most well known and it featured in many engravings.[218] This was demolished when its site became unstable. The best survival of villa and setting is a relatively late example, Rylstone, built in the cottage style around the 1860s.[219] Although the outline of its plot has not been eroded by development, it is in divided ownership and has been compromised by its

217 Quoted in R. McInnes 2016 *Isle of Wight Landscape Art: An Illustrated Dictionary 1650–1930*. Chale: Cross Publishing, p. 23.

218 R. McInnes 2016 *Isle of Wight Landscape Art: An Illustrated Dictionary 1650–1930*. Chale: Cross Publishing, p. 30.

219 For Rylstone, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1034300

Figure 7.24: The view looking across the mouth of Bembridge Harbour from St Helen's by Charles Tompkins (1757–1823). When compared with figure 7.25, below, it illustrates the rate of new building developments on the Island over a twenty year period. [R. McInnes]

Figure 7.25: A detail of an engraving of 1829 by George Brannon. Hill Grove (with the dome) can clearly be seen on the high ground near the centre, with gothick Northwells to the left. This was taken from a similar view point to figure 7.24, above, and illustrates the degree of development in just twenty years. *See also* Fig 4.4. [R. McInnes]

present use. The villa survives as a hotel and its setting is a public park, which has been municipalised. The kitchen garden has been turned into a crazy golf course. The current style of path surface and benches, and the fencing along the cliff-top walk at the edge of the garden, detracts from its historic quality and the dramatic views of the sea.

Luccombe

Between Shanklin and Bonchurch lies the hamlet of Luccombe, set at the top of a chine (Fig 7.1). There were two marine villas here: Chine Cottage and Rosecliff. The latter was lost to a landslip within the past couple of decades. Chine Cottage, which was probably built in the 1830s, survives. The setting includes a panorama tower, which survives, and walks into the chine. However, the chine has become inaccessible since 2017 due to a further landslip. There may be other elements of design remaining in the setting, but this site is clearly highly vulnerable.

Bonchurch

One of the first cottages ornés on the Island was built on the edge of Bonchurch in the 1760s. Tucked under the Downs, St. Boniface Cottage was some distance from the sea. Bonchurch went on to become very fashionable in the first half of the 19th century. The most important survival, East Dene, has already been discussed above.

Also worthy of mention is Undermount, built in the 1820s. It is unique in having a tunnel cut through a rocky outcrop to carry its entrance drive.[220] Above the tunnel is a lookout, similar to that at Puckaster and probably also that at Steephill. The lookout was illustrated in several contemporary engravings. The house is now in divided ownership and, therefore, the garden is also compromised. However, an impressively large conservatory survives at the west end of the house. To the west of the village, the Italianate villa of Westfield House (1850s) survives, but its setting – with terraced garden and curving glasshouse built into the hillside – is now a holiday park.

St Lawrence

To the west of the Victorian resort of Ventnor, the best examples at St Lawrence – Sea Cottage (now Marine Villa) and Captain Pelham's Cottage (now Lisle Combe) – have been discussed above. Their shared landscape is intact, although gently neglected, with the design legible in many places and capable of restoration.

To their west lies Old Park. This was converted from a (probably 16th-century) farmhouse to a cottage orné in the early 19th century and extended again later. In recent years it has been a hotel, and the design of the setting closer to the house has been compromised by 20th-century extensions. However, areas further from the house are likely to retain a good degree of integrity.[221]

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220 For Undermount, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1266777

221 Old Park recently closed as a hotel. The site was subject to a planning application in July 2019 to return it to domestic use (*see* Section 8), this has now happened.

Niton
The cluster of marine villas at Niton has already been discussed. The best example of a surviving ensemble is Puckaster.

Blackgang
The village of Blackgang is at the western edge of the Undercliff. It has experienced massive coastal erosion and landslips and no villas remain.

Yarmouth
There were very few examples of marine villas in West Wight. Those that were built here related to the ports of Yarmouth and Cowes. At Yarmouth, there were four examples by about 1900. Perhaps the most interesting – and extensive in terms of setting – is Norton Lodge, just west of the harbour, built in about 1760. More research is needed to establish if this was an early villa in intention, or a small-scale gentleman's residence near the sea. In the first half of the 19th century, it belonged to Rear Admiral Graham Hamond. The house (not listed and much extended) survives, but its setting is now a holiday park. Neighbouring it to the west, West Hill (pre-1846) survives, but its setting has succumbed to residential development. To the east of the town, the small-scale villa of The Mount was lost to the re-routing of a road along the shore. Further east, another small-scale villa, Eastmore, seems to survive (from overlays of modern and historic mapping), but has lost its setting. It would not be worth noting had it been in East Wight.

West Cowes
At West Cowes, Northwood House is a significant marine villa which, like East Cowes Castle on the other side of the Medina, enjoyed views over the harbour and the Solent. It was developed from the late 1790s, and is, therefore, a near contemporary example of East Cowes Castle and Norris Castle, but with a classical house (Fig 7.26).[222] Its associated landholding was extended several times, so by the end of the 19th century, like Norris, it sat in parkland of an extensive scale for a villa (around 80ha). However, during the 20th century, the extent of the designed landscape was reduced dramatically by the development of housing and a secondary school within the estate. Some open ground to the north of the school remains as a golf course. The house survives (listed Grade II*) and the core of the landscape around it is now a public park (not registered), with everything that can entail: poorly sited tennis courts, a children's playground and municipal planting. However, it does retain a significant collection of fine historic trees. Unfortunately though, these now hide the view of the water from the villa – and the view of the villa from the east side of the mouth of the river.

The most notable loss in West Cowes is West Hill, a cottage orné built in the 1770s for Captain – later Admiral – Christian.[223] It was described in 1808 by Cooke: 'The lawns and plantations around it are pleasing and though so close to the populous town [yet] it is as retired as if it were remote.' Its setting had been eroded by housing development by 1898 (OS map), and it was demolished soon after.

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222 For Northwood House, *see*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1223779
223 For more on West Hill, *see*: northwoodvillage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/nnAPR2013c.pdf

Figure 7.26: Northwood House, the Seat of George Henry Ward Esq, 1840 by William Westall (1781-1850). Here the house is shown soon after it was extended in the late 1830s. The River Medina and East Cowes Castle can be glimpsed between the trees on the left of the view. [R. McInnes]

Figure 7.27: Northwood House from the north, (November 2019). [Prior George, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license]

Landslip and coastal erosion

Coastal erosion and landslip have played a part in the demise of several of the significant number of marine villas on the Island. It is, therefore, worth reinforcing that this is a factor in the degree of loss of marine villa ensembles, and it remains an issue for some of the surviving examples. Most of those lost have already been mentioned: Rose Cliff at Luccombe, Beauchamp at Niton Undercliff and the garden of Reeth Lodge, also at Niton, for example. One of the most dramatic losses was Southland House at Blackgang (Fig 7.28).[224]

224 Southland appears to have looked a little like East Dene or Lisle Combe. A sale catalogue of 1849 suggests a building date of early 1840s or before. *See*: jsbookreader.blogspot.com/2014/10/lowcliffe-and-southlands-from-cradle-to.html

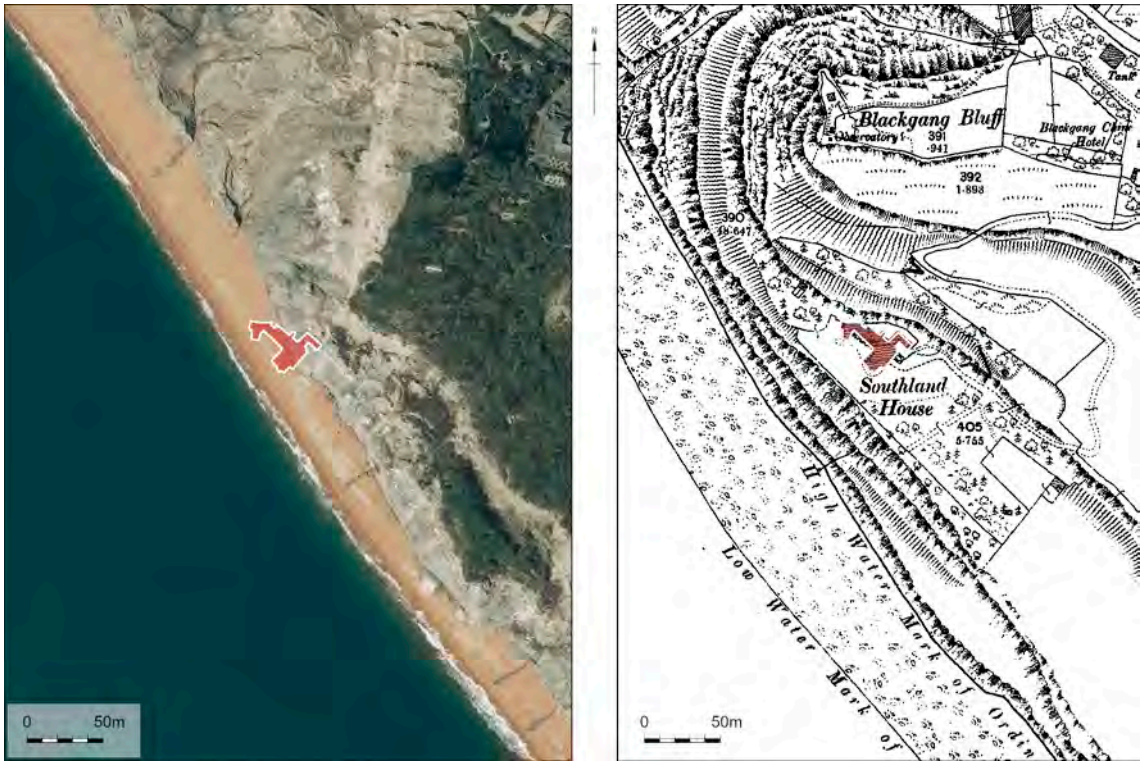

Figure 7.28: Modern aerial photography and detail of the second edition OS map (1898), illustrating the dramatic loss of Southland House, Blackgang, possibly built in the 1830s and lost *c.* 1908. [Aerial photography: © Getmapping Plc and Bluesky International Limited. Map background: © and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2022). Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024]

Summary

The Isle of Wight was notable for the sheer number of marine villas built along its coastline. These included early pioneering examples of the type. The evidence seems compelling that the Island was an early hotbed for the growth of the fashion, with its earliest examples being contemporary with the first examples identified nationally by this study (*see* Section 4). More work than the scope of this study allowed would have to be carried out on the development of the marine villa around the whole country to confirm this with certainty.

The great popularity of the marine villa on the Island was fuelled by a number of factors, including geographical location, tourism, connections with the Royal Navy and with amateur yachtsmen, and favour among professional artists (who went back to London and sold their paintings, thereby further spreading the word). This was all cemented by the royal connection with Queen Victoria.

A handful of marine villas and their ensembles do survive on the Island, in a variety of architectural styles: cottages ornés – of both the thatched and the more Tudoresque style – and classical villas. A small number of these surviving villas have intact landscapes. Given the rarity of surviving villa settings, the few best examples are worthy of being considered for designation.

The catalyst for this study was Norris Castle and the need to understand its context as a marine villa. When it was built, Norris was not unique on the Isle of Wight, being a close parallel to East Cowes Castle. But both were unusual on the Island (and on the mainland) in being marine villas of a castle style, and also relatively early examples. It is likely that their existence – and prominence, in terms of status, owner and location – influenced the later castle-style marine villas of St Clare and Steephill Castle (1820s/1830s).

Norris is the sole Island survivor not only in terms of buildings in the castle style, but also in terms of the whole intact ensemble of original marine villa, landscape setting, farm and kitchen garden, within a single ownership. It has never been compromised by development within its boundaries or by later layers of design. The farm and kitchen garden complex was always unique, and nothing of the scale and style was built on the Island (or elsewhere).

8 POST-SCRIPT: MARINE VILLAS IN THE 19TH, 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

This study has focused on the period up to around the 1830s. However, as the 19th century wore on, the popularity of the marine villa nationally – and particularly on the Isle of Wight – continued and, in many ways, led to its decline.

Literary connections and the fame of the Island into the 19th century

As the 19th century progressed, the Island continued to attract artists and, increasingly, literary figures, too. East Dene at Bonchurch was the residence of Algernon Swinburne, and Charles Dickens also went to Bonchurch to write. Most famously, Alfred, Lord Tennyson settled at Farringford at the quieter western end of the Island. His house was villa-like, but is sheltered from the sea by the hulk of the Down that now bears his name. He had initially been drawn there following in the footsteps of his literary hero, John Keats, who stayed in Shanklin in 1819. Tennyson went to the Island for its quiet and beauty, but left because he could no longer find retirement and retreat. This was partly because of the increasing number of visitors, as railways and steamships made it more accessible, and partly because he, himself, had made it too popular.

Steamships and railways

During the Victorian period, seaside resorts on the Island burgeoned. Piers were built for the steamers that docked carrying growing numbers of visitors. Ventnor is the archetypal Victorian resort, in that there was very little there, other than a mill and a few fishermen's cottages, up to that period. The beneficial climate and sea air continued to be acknowledged throughout the 19th century and a large hospital for tuberculosis patients was developed. This is now the site of the Ventnor Botanic Garden, which is home to a collection that testifies to the resort's mild climate. The importance of the steamer was not just an Island phenomenon. John Bagshaw, the would-be resort developer of Dovercourt in Essex, had intended to cash in on the steamers starting to dock in increasing numbers at Harwich.

Erosion and destruction

Many examples of late Georgian and Regency marine villas were the subject of redevelopment relatively early on. As previously mentioned, Humphry Repton's landscape at St John's at Ryde had been seriously eroded by the third quarter of the 19th century. In many cases, a glance at the second edition OS map of about 1900 shows marine villas with the majority of their settings intact, but with a corner of the plot eaten out here and there, and lesser, slightly smaller, villas built within them. The second edition OS maps also illustrate, in many places, the start

of the development of residential streets. The map of Aldwick of 1912 shows the road laid out in the parkland paddock of Aldwick Lodge, even though the houses had not yet been built (*see* Fig 6.43). As the 20th century progressed, in many places this development became complete – as happened at Aldwick and also in the prime marine villa locations of some stretches of Southampton Water. The pace of subdivision, erosion and ultimately destruction picked up significantly in the 20th century.

The dilution and renaissance of the marine villa

In short, marine villas were victims of their own success. The love affair with the sea, which had started in the later Georgian period, with its attractions for health and leisure, has never really abated since. From the 19th into the 20th century, everyone wanted a piece of the seaside (no matter how small) and that desire filtered down the social ladder of class and wealth, especially after World War II. Better roads and the rail network fuelled accessibility, and places that had once been summer retreats became permanent residences. This is noticeable in the ribbon development along vast stretches of the south coast, including parts of Hampshire and practically all of the section of the West Sussex coastline specifically investigated in this study. To an extent, the Isle of Wight escaped this, perhaps because of the topography of its coastline.[225] The West Sussex coast, with its long shingle beaches sloping gently back to the land, for example, must have made for easier building plots than many more challenging sites on the Island. This is yet another reason why the relationship between the Island and the marine villa remains significant.

Even today the super-rich want to re-create what the marine villas of the late 18th and early 19th centuries provided. In recent years, the contemporary classical architect Nigel Anderson of ADAM Architecture has designed a modern marine villa on the north Solent coast in the New Forest, not far from the early example of Eaglehurst and one of the important progenitors of marine villas, Boarn Hill Cottage (now Cadland).[226] In December 2019, Savills sold Quarrhurst, one of the Quarr cluster of smaller marine villas on the north coast of the Isle of Wight, as a building plot. It was marketed as 'a rare opportunity to acquire an extensive plot of heritage land with full planning permission'. By this date, the original marine villa (probably dating to the mid-19th century) had been demolished. The approved plans for the new dwelling make no reference to the previous history of the site, with the exception of the rebuilding of the stable block in a broadly mid-19th-century

225 The Isle of Wight is also afforded some protection by its status as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was designated in the second tranche of designations in 1963. The Heritage Coast designation (introduced in 1972) also confers landscape protection/planning controls.

226 For the Anderson design, *see*: adamarchitecture.com/project/replacement-regency-house-hampshire/. An alternative design, by Ben Pentreath, was based on John Nash's villa, Cronkhill, built in 1820 and listed Grade I. *See*: benpentreath.com/architecture/private-houses/marine-villa/

Figure 8.1: An early 20th century re-working of one of the original pools in the overlapping landscape of Sea Cottage/Marine Villa and Captain Pelham's Cottage/Lisle Combe. The image was used as the frontispiece of Alfred Noyes book about the garden, *Orchard's Bay*, published in 1939. Noyes, famous for his poem 'The Highwayman', lived there from 1929 until his death in 1958. [Kate Feluś]

style, making an odd juxtaposition with the planned, unashamedly modern, main residence. The guide price when advertised was £1,295,000.[227] The case of Quarrhurst not only illustrates the ongoing attraction of the concept of the marine villa, but also how – in our ignorance of their rarity – we continue to allow their destruction. This is despite the fact that the mid-20th century was the height of the period of vulnerability and destruction for remaining marine villas.

227 *See* the advert for Quarrhurst: search.savills.com/property-detail/gbwnrswns180072. The original marine villa had been demolished by the time it was advertised, with only the stable block remaining. Planning permission for a proposed replacement dwelling was granted in November 2017. *See* https://publicaccess.iow.gov.uk/online-applications/application

9 CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenon of the marine villa

The marine villa was a phenomenon of the late 18th and early 19th centuries when, for the first time, fashionable houses of the affluent classes were deliberately built by the sea. A true marine villa was a retreat, a summer residence, essentially a holiday home. The rise in the trend was linked to the aesthetic of the Picturesque, increased tourism (in part, connected to large tracts of Europe being inaccessible because of war) and the newly discovered attraction of the sea for its health-giving benefits – both sea bathing and a mild coastal climate. The development of the villa, in the Solent area at least, was also connected to the new fashion for recreational yachting and, to some extent, the social and cultural importance of the Royal Navy at the time.

The popularity of the marine villa filtered down the social scale over two centuries. Originally it was mainly – although not exclusively – an upper-class preserve. But, reasonably early on, the affluent middle classes were also building villas by the sea. By the end of the 19th century in some places – and into the 20th century in even more locations – the popularity of the marine villa, along with that of seaside resorts, increased the awareness and desirability of coastal retreats. Indeed, the success of the marine villa brought about its downfall. More and more people wanted one, which, in turn, led to pressure of development. Plots were fragmented, and smaller, lesser versions of the villa were built. Subsequently, many marine villas were erased altogether by urban and suburban development. This was generally residential, but waterfront locations were also desirable for industry. This vulnerability remains relevant today.

Locations

Allowing for the fact that it was not within the resources or timescale of this study to systematically trawl the whole coast of England looking for marine villas, the exercise of strategically spot-checking locations – and a more intensive investigation of the Isle of Wight and certain sections of the south coast – suggests that the highest concentration was on the Isle of Wight. The Island was the most desirable location in which to build a marine villa. This was followed by the north coast of the Solent, which shared a number of factors with the Island: relative proximity to London, connections with the Royal Navy and recreational sailing. Despite its distance from London, South Devon may have rivalled the Solent as the next most popular location. The desirability of the Kent coast is likely to have partially derived from good transport links with the capital.

Authorship, design, style and features

This report has focused on the ensemble of the marine villa – the house, ancillary buildings and designed landscape setting – and has established that there were distinct prerequisites for the settings of marine villas. Some of these were shared with suburban villas, but the close proximity to the sea – and the accompanying distinct topography – led to commonalities among many marine villas including lodges, drives and circuit walks, conservatories, stables, farms and kitchen gardens (almost always with glass), seats, lookouts, batteries, flag poles, bathing houses, landing stages, sometimes boathouses and, in many cases, plot shape.

Architectural styles were various. There was not a set style, although some tastes were more prevalent than others. Only a small number of the marine villas considered for the report have (or had) architects whose name is readily associated with them. A few were designed by significant well-known architects, others by provincial or local architects, and a couple of designs were derived from pattern books.[228] Some, particularly where the marine villa was converted from an existing cottage or farmhouse, might have been executed by local craftsmen to the specifications of the owner.

Named landscape designers are even harder to come by. Again, it is probable that the topography played a determining role in deciding the design – as did the scale of the site – and likely that much of the layout came down to an owner collaborating with their gardener, or perhaps a local nurseryman.[229] The situation is well summarised by Horace Walpole:

> 'The possessor, if he has any taste must be the best designer of his own improvements. He sees his situation in all seasons of the year, at all times of day. He knows where beauty will not clash with convenience, and observes in his silent walks or accidental rides a thousand hints that must escape a person who in a few days sketches out a pretty picture, but has had no leisure to examine the details and relations of every part.'
>
> Horace Walpole 1780 'History of Gardening' in *Anecdotes of Painting in England*.

228 For example, Robert Lugar's design for Puckaster Cottage, which was adapted from one of his pattern book designs.

229 At Luscombe Castle in Devon, the famous local nurseryman John Veitch seems to have been responsible for the planting, although Humphry Repton produced a 'Red Book'. *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000486 and S Shepard 2003 *Seeds of Fortune: A Gardening Dynasty*. London: Bloomsbury.

Given that 'contriving improvements' was carried out almost as a leisure pursuit by landowners in the 18th century, it is easy to imagine that an owner might want to tinker with their design, merely for amusement. This may be how we should interpret George Brannon's remark regarding Norris Castle: 'The grounds ... still continue under the active hand of improvement.' [230]

Degree of loss and rarity

While carrying out research for this report, it became apparent that there is a dearth of information on and analysis of marine villas. Consequently, there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding of them as a specific type of heritage asset. In the course of the project, the assumption was encountered – even on the part of some experts – that marine villas remain common.

However, the examples of two discrete groupings – the cluster at Aldwick in West Sussex and those along Southampton Water – suggest differently. To say that there were thousands of these sites (nationwide) may be true, but to assume that even hundreds still exist is incorrect in terms of the ensemble – and it is clear that in the minds of the creators of these places that villa and designed landscape setting were inextricably linked. For the Aldwick cluster, the number of intact ensembles out of the seven original documented waterfront marine villas is zero. So, the percentage of loss is 100 per cent. (One house remains, but without its setting.) Along the highly desirable stretch of waterfront either side of Southampton Water, a total of 21 waterside marine villas were identified, of which three survive. Therefore, there is a loss of around 85 per cent. Of those three surviving ensembles one dwelling is in divided ownership and another dwelling is in institutional use and has been greatly extended.[231]

Statistics for the Isle of Wight are harder to quantify, because there were so many marine villas. This study has tried to concentrate on examples built before about 1840, but it is difficult to find building dates for some places because their names are so generic. Therefore, further research is necessary to create a definitive list. Generally speaking, sites included in the study were ones at which there was no

230 G. Brannon in *Vectis Scenery* (1824, 1825, 1827), quoted in J Phibbs 2016 'Lord Henry Seymour's marine villa' (unpublished report on Norris Castle), p. 13.

231 'Intact ensembles' means that the house, ancillary buildings – such as stables and farms – and the landscape setting all survive, with the historic boundary of the plot intact. More ephemeral/delicate structures, such as glasshouses, may not survive. The condition of many of the survivals identified for this study is unknown. Of the three Southampton Water examples, Brooklands, on the Hamble, appears well cared for – the house is still a single residence. Hamblecliffe House, on the east side of Southampton Water, is now flats. Although modern aerial mapping suggests its plot is intact, the condition is unknown and it is likely to be in divided ownership. Westcliff Hall on the west side of Southampton Water is a care home, the house much enlarged. In the 1950s the adjoining mudflats were reclaimed, altering its relationship to the waterfront. The condition of the remaining landscape is unknown.

significant development between the villa and the sea, and where evidence of designed landscape (that is, lodges, drives, glasshouses and so forth) is suggested on the second edition OS maps – even when the site was of a relatively small scale.

Although the aim was to identify examples of marine villa ensembles, it is worth stressing that there are more survivals of houses than landscapes. However, it should also be noted that there are a small number of landscapes surviving without their houses. The significance of these, in the light of the degree of loss, should be considered. Designed landscape settings – pleasure grounds and paddocks or parkland – have been even more vulnerable than the houses themselves, because the land was highly attractive for development (both residential and industrial). The few examples where the setting survives and the villa does not tend to be smaller sites. In Hampshire, they include two either side of Fawley oil refinery and one at Hamble, also next to an industrial site, and on the Isle of Wight, one at Luccombe. One house was lost to fire in 1987 and was not rebuilt, one to a German bomb in 1941 and one to landslip. The fourth may have been abandoned because of requisitioning during World War II; the subsequent development of Fawley oil refinery immediately adjacent made it undesirable as a residence. With the pressure of development today, these sites may once again become sought-after places to live. Ideally, any new development should include (at the very least) an awareness of the former history of the site and any remnants of design that might survive.

Threats and opportunities

At many of the marine villa sites investigated, the villa itself is listed. So, as a building type, the marine villa is not without a degree of recognition and protection. But there are enough examples of the loss or inappropriate reuse of the setting to suggest that the designation of the house has not protected the landscape. As the designed landscape was so important to the experience of a marine villa, if the setting is lost then that villa's significance and integrity are undermined – even if the house itself survives.

During the course of the research, planning applications pertaining to several marine villa sites were discovered, both current and very recent. It was not the intention of the study to look for this information, but these applications became apparent as sites were researched. This raises the question of how many other applications might be ongoing that did not immediately come to light. On the Isle of Wight, recent planning applications involve Old Park at St Lawrence and The Priory at Seaview – both hotels.[232] In 2018, planning permission was granted to redevelop the site of Quarrhurst, on the north coast near Binstead (*see* Section 8), which was not even on the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust's local list.[233]

232 A planning application for Old Park Hotel was submitted in July 2019 and for Priory Bay Hotel in October 2018.

233 The site of Quarrhurst was sold in December 2019, with planning permission for a new 'contemporary' house. The fact that it was not on the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust's local list of sites is another illustration of how many such marine villa sites there are on the Island.

However, the redevelopment of sites also presents opportunities. The 1820s marine villa of Old Park was, until recently, a hotel, for which an extra accommodation block (of an inappropriate scale and style) had been built in the 1960s. Now a private property, a planning application of 2019 proposed the demolition of this block, plus other works and landscaping.[234] The detail of this was not seen for the study, but, in principle, it might be described as a gain. Other sites have returned to residential use from institutional use. At the time of the listing of the gothick villa of Northwells at Bembridge (1992), it had just ceased to be a school. It has now been converted into holiday flats, which is probably a more sympathetic use of the site. On Southampton Water, the greatest loss of a marine villa setting was that of Sydney Lodge. The landscape here was lost to industrial development in the 1930s. In July 2019, a planning application was made to redevelop some of the site from industrial to residential. This might have been an opportunity to re-create or, at the very least, reference elements of the former designed landscape, but the documentation seen during this study showed no awareness that the land had once been a designed landscape, let alone that of a marine villa. However, this case illustrates that there is the potential for marine villa sites to be reclaimed, even in a limited way.

Comparators with Norris Castle

When it was built, Lord Henry Seymour's castellated marine villa of Norris Castle was not unique on the Isle of Wight. Less than 1km away was the marine villa of the fashionable and successful architect John Nash: East Cowes Castle. While Norris overlooked the Solent, the views from East Cowes Castle were directed more towards the mouth of the Medina and the harbour of Cowes. The setting for Nash's villa was smaller, too, covering around 28ha in comparison to Seymour's 48ha. This pair of famous and much-depicted castellated marine villas was followed a little later by St Clare at Ryde and Steephill Castle in the Undercliff. The setting of St Clare was perhaps closest to Norris in terms of topography and vistas; it was located on a gently sloping site overlooking the Solent, with views towards Spithead. But it was a much smaller plot, probably covering only around 8ha. This might reflect the rise in the popularity of the marine villa on the Solent coast and the consequent rise in land prices and availability over the 30 years since Norris had been built. The plot for Steephill Castle, with its very different character determined by the steep, rocky site, covered at least 16ha.[235] Norris Castle, therefore, had the most extensive setting of any of the castellated marine villas on the Island and, moreover, it is the only one that survives, intact and legible. On the north side of the Solent, the landscape setting of Sydney Lodge was probably the most extensive of the Southampton Water villas. It covered around 56ha, so was of a similar scale

234 Thanks to the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust for bringing the plans for Old Park to my attention.

235 Although the plot of Steephill Castle may have been around 20ha, exactly what the designed landscape encompassed (despite several descriptions documenting it) is hard to establish on the ground, as so little remains.

to Norris Castle. Furthermore, it included an enclosed kitchen garden and a farm. Unlike Norris, though, two smaller villas had been built (at extremities) within its setting by the end of the 19th century and almost all the landscape was lost by the mid-1930s.

Two further important castellated marine villa comparators elsewhere have been discussed in this report. The first is Pennsylvania Castle on the Isle of Portland in Dorset (*see* Section 6). The villa is of a similar date to Norris; it is also by Wyatt and was also built for a bachelor. In fact, it is a scaled-down version of Norris. The scale of the setting is smaller, too, and rather different in character, being more akin to the rocky drama of the Undercliff. Neither the house nor the setting retains the integrity that Norris has; this is most noticeable in the development of holiday lodges within 60m of the castle.

The second example is Luscombe Castle in Devon – a Grade I building in a Grade I landscape – designed by Nash in the castellated style and built within a year of Norris Castle. The landscape here can firmly be attributed to Repton and it is influenced by its proximity to the sea. However, the house is much further removed from the water and stretches the description of a marine villa. It was not possible to see Luscombe Castle for this study and therefore determine how good a comparison it truly is.[236]

Of the few remaining ensembles in the marine villa hotspot of the Isle of Wight, Norris Castle is the second oldest by about five or six years. The oldest survival, Sea Cottage at St Lawrence (now known as Marine Villa), has had its historic boundaries blurred and the house and some of the original designed landscape are in divided ownership.[237] When considered in the context of surviving marine villas nationally, Norris is also an early example. In comparison to examples in Hampshire (and only including sites where both house and landscape are intact), only Eaglehurst – of uncertain date, but definitely built by 1797 – pre-dates Norris, with Brooklands, of 1800, following close behind. As already stated, other regions need further research, but within the intact ensemble examples uncovered by this study, only The Moult at Salcombe is earlier than Norris.

236 The other villa-like retreat of this period, which gives a precedent for such landscapes having Grade I status, is Endsleigh in Devon. It was built between 1810 and 1814, in the cottage orné style, for the Duke and Duchess of Bedford by Jeffry Wyatville, with landscaping by Humphry Repton. *See*: HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000428 and HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1317513

237 There is an overlap between the earlier designed landscape of Sea Cottage/Marine Villa and the slightly later Captain Pelham's Cottage/Lisle Combe next door. The integrity of the site is somewhat decreased by a *c.* 1960s house built on the northern edge, but the bulk of the site retains a high integrity.

Norris Castle as an exemplar

As suggested above, Norris Castle, its ancillary buildings and setting are all on a large scale for a marine villa. However, given everything else that is now known of such sites from this study, the description of Norris Castle as a marine villa is applicable.

It is possible that Norris Castle was a very real architectural response to a relatively brief period when the threat of invasion was actual and the Solent (on both sides) was particularly vulnerable. This may, in part, explain why so few marine villas were built in the style of a castle. William Daniell implied that the style was also consciously intended to enhance views of that side of the Island from the Solent. Building on this scale, Seymour could afford to make his villa a standout object in the view.

The stylistic reference to defensive architecture extends to the farm and kitchen garden. These are not only unique within the context of marine villas, but also seemingly unmatched among all historic kitchen gardens and – at the very least – rare for a farm.[238] As a suite of structures, the farm and kitchen garden together is also unique.[239]

Norris Castle has most of the constituent parts of a typical marine villa ensemble, but they were built and laid out in an idiosyncratic manner. The design of the landscape might be described as bold rather than intricate. But we cannot say definitively whether or not Norris was typical, because so few marine villas survive. Due to the degree of loss nationally we have, therefore, a limited number of sites with which to compare it – and none of them are quite like Norris.

Norris Castle as a survivor

The only harms that Norris Castle has suffered are the march of time and benign neglect. Given the frequency of changes of ownership, it is remarkable that it is so intact. Beyond this, none of the erosion or destruction that has happened elsewhere has befallen Norris: no early subdivision of the plot, no later residential development eating away at the boundary or covering the site completely, no later layers of design, no institutional or municipal use – not even as a public park like Northwood, its counterpart on the west side of the Medina.

238 Other examples of castellated farms include Stowe Castle, (Buckinghamshire), and there are castellated barns at Badminton (Gloucestershire), Home Farm at Raby Castle (County Durham) and Fort Putnam (Cumbria).

239 Susan Campbell, an authority on walled kitchen gardens, has stated that she has never seen anything like the castellated kitchen garden and farm complex at Norris Castle.

Final summary

Marine villas were highly fashionable and numerous from the late 18th century into the 19th century. Over time, with increasing demand for seaside land, their numbers have diminished considerably. In some places, the house might survive but its setting is lost. In a very few places, the setting remains but the house has gone. Therefore, surviving ensembles of marine villas and their settings are now very rare.

Our appetite for being by the sea remains undiminished two centuries later. The pressures of development mean that any villa setting that remains intact is extremely vulnerable. The owner of the intact marine villa ensemble of Puckaster, in the Isle of Wight Undercliff, said: 'That is why I stay here, to prevent it being developed ...' [240]

The ensemble of Norris Castle started its existence as a particularly fine and unusual example of its type. Over two centuries, with the passing of time and what is sometimes known as 'progress', its high value has been augmented by its increasing rarity, as the few other comparable examples have been lost.

240 The owner to Kate Feluś, pers. comm., 13 November 2019.

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