

# Stourhead

Stourton, Wiltshire, UK

Photographs by Alan Ward 1985, 2007, 2014

# Notes on the Making of the Photographs

Stourhead in Wiltshire was designed by its owner Henry Hoare II, who inherited the property in 1724, and began building a landscape garden in 1744. As compared to earlier Renaissance inspired gardens, the new less rigid approach in making landscape gardens allowed for an imaginative landowner like Henry Hoare, with a refined eye and some knowledge of forestry and horticulture, to engage the building trades to realize a design like Stourhead.

He incorporated the existing village of Stourton and its medieval church (27-29), located at the bottom of a steep narrow valley, or combe, into the design. The combe connects to the larger valley of the River Stour, supplied by springs which allowed an earlier owner to construct fish ponds on the site(10). Hoare boldly constructed a massive earthen dam at the end of the valley to make a five-hectare lake (11-13). He laid out a walking circuit around Stourhead Lake, beginning at an upper elevation overlooking the water, and concluding at Stourton village at the lake edge (27-28).

Henry Hoare made an homage to classicism with a sequence of oblique views from paths to structures designed to evoke the past, while descending into the valley and along the lake edge. Temples, bridges, grottoes and monuments bring the vision of the gardens of Rome and the Italian countryside to Stourhead (5,7,8,11,12).

The photographs are arranged following the circuit around the garden beginning with the Palladian style house, which is located more than 450m from the lake (1-3), meaning that Hoare's landscape garden was designed to stand on its own. The first building constructed in the garden was the Temple of Flora designed in 1744 (8). Hoare engaged architect Henry Flitcroft to design the temple and other structures, including the Palladian bridge added in the 1760s (23-26), the Temple of Apollo in 1765 (7), as well as the Pantheon built 1753-54 (12). The Pantheon is the most prominent architectural structure in the garden and was used as a resting place on the circuit, as well as social space.\*

I initially visited Stourhead in the mid-1980s on a sunny day in the afternoon. It was not favorable conditions for photography. I returned in 2007 and was fortunate to be able to stay in the small eight-room inn on the site in Stourton, that Hoare had created for visitors. A guest has the option of getting a key to the garden to enter at any time. I set out before sunrise the following morning. It was a magical time when the garden was enveloped in very soft light with mist rising from the lake. I was the only person in the garden, while birds and rabbits were on the dew-covered lawns. It seemed like the solitary and tranquil experience a visitor might have encountered more than two hundred years ago when staying at the inn at Stourton, and strolling through the garden in the early morning.

# List of Photographs

1. Palladian style house built 1721-1725, 2007
2. Entrance Drive to house, 2007
3. View from entry, 1997
4. Tree on grounds of the house, 1997
5. Obelisk and fir allée, along path to lake, 2014
6. Path to the lake, 2014
7. View to Temple of Apollo and Palladian bridge, 2007
8. Approach to Temple of Flora, 1985
9. Origin of the River Stour to supply the lake, 2007
10. Path on two-mile circuit around lake, 1997
11. Lake Stour and Temple of Apollo, 2007
12. Pantheon, focal point of garden, built 1753-54, 2007
13. Tree along west side of lake, 2007
14. Planting along west side of lake, 2007
15. View from the portico of the Pantheon, 1997
16. Temple of Flora and Palladian bridge, 2007
17. Cascade from the lake, 2007
18. Turner Paddock Lake from path on dam, 2007
19. Path to Temple of Apollo, 2007
20. Approach to Temple of Apollo, 1985
21. Sculptural niche on Temple of Apollo, 1985
22. View of Lake Stour from the Temple of Apollo, 2007
23. Palladian bridge built in the 1760s, 2007
24. Garden used as a park, 2007
25. View back to bridge and Pantheon, 2007
26. View back to bridge and Pantheon through trees, 2007
27. Bristol High Cross, erected 1765, 1997
28. Fourteenth-century church in the village of Stourton, 2007













































































# Notes

## **Selected Publication of the Photographs:**

Linden-Ward, Blanche, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery*

\* See Kenneth Woodbridge, *The Stourhead Landscape*, The National Trust, 1996