

THE ENSTONE MARVELS

March 2013 - Stephen Wass





The Enstone Marvels and detail of the grotto, views from Plot 1677

The village of Enstone, some 20 kilometres north–west of Oxford was home to one of the most extraordinary collections of water powered special effects or *giochi d'aqua* as they are termed in Italian, known collectively as the ‘Enstone Marvels’. Completed in 1636 by Thomas Bushell they became known as one of the wonders of the age and were subject to a well-documented visit by King Charles I and his queen Henrietta Maria in that same year. Their fame was enshrined in Robert Plot’s *Natural History of Oxfordshire* of 1677 which not only had detailed descriptions of the site but also two memorably detailed engravings. Widely illustrated in most books on garden history it has been assumed that the actual site of the Marvels would have little to show given that they were comprehensively demolished in 1846. A preliminary visit in March 2013 has shown that while this may have been the case there is still plenty of material around that, subject to archaeological investigation can reveal more of the nature of this remarkable site.



Enstone, on Stoney Bridge looking south towards the River Glyme. The Marvels were behind the trees, centre right.

The general location of the Marvels has never been entirely lost. They stood on the northern side of a broad steep sided valley cut in the underlying Chipping Norton Oolitic limestone by the eastward flowing River Glyme. Plot tells us that a natural spring known as the Goldwell was being cleared on the orders of Bushell when it became clear that he had accessed something of a natural phenomenon, in particular a ‘petrifying well’ a source of water high in Calcium which is so ordered that dripping water rapidly coats nearby objects in a layer of calcite. It is unclear whether Bushell’s intention in settling here was from the outset to create something special or whether it really just a happen chance that Bushell decided to capitalise on. What is obvious is that even today at least half a dozen springs bubble up out of the ground here.



Le Jardin des Fontaines Pétrifiantes near Grenoble in France, could this resemble something Bushell discovered when he cleared the undergrowth?

As he is the pivotal figure in the story of the Enstone Marvels it is worth considering in outline the career of their originator Thomas Bushell. The information that follows is taken from the on-line version of the Dictionary of National Biography. There is a more detailed account of his life penned in 1932 by J.W. Gough but I have not yet been able to track down a copy. Bushell was born some time before 1600 to a family of minor gentry from Cleeve Prior near Evesham. He had a chequered childhood with little education and a certain amount of wayward behaviour before, at the age of 15, entering the service of Sir Francis Bacon. Bacon was one of the foremost natural philosophers of the day and his interest in scientific method and technology must have done much to form Bushell's view of the world. Bacon clearly took to the young Bushell and began to remedy some of the defects in his education. They shared an interest in current technologies and became concerned in the refinement of certain techniques for draining and ventilating mines.



Sir Francis Bacon and his protege Thomas Bushell

After Bacon's fall from grace in 1621 Bushell took himself off, in the face of allegations of corruption, to the Isle of Wight and then the Calf of Man where he claimed to have lived the life of a hermit subsisting on herbs and whatever else grew nearby for three years. He was able to return to Bacon's service in the final years of his life and when his mentor died in 1626 Bushell was set up with a marriage to an heiress and was able to take on the small estate in Enstone the same year. He then spent the next decade in improving the property including building the grotto and attached banqueting house, which even at the time astonished his contemporaries with its extravagance given that he only had leasehold on the property. One Lieutenant Hammond who visited in 1635 remarked that it was all 'a mad gim-cracke sure'. All this lead up to the royal visit of 1636 when Bushell was able to make a pitch to Charles I for the opportunity to take over the royal silver mines in Wales. Is it too cynical to suggest that attracting this kind of royal patronage was part of his motivation for creating the Marvels in the first place? Bushell's ambitious proposals for the mine workings were clearly not costed and he rapidly ran up huge debts. He was obviously an accomplished salesman for as Aubrey says in his *Brief Lives*, 'his tongue was a chaine and drew in so many to be bound for him and to be ingaged in his designs that he ruined a number'. Nevertheless in 1637 the crown issued letters patent to enable him to set up a mint in Aberystwyth. At the outbreak of the Civil War the mint was moved to Shrewsbury and in 1643 Bushell and his coining operation followed the king to Oxford. From there he was sent to Bristol and ended the war as commander of the garrison on Lundy, only surrendering to Parliament in July 1646. He tried to float a variety of new mining ventures in the west country during the years of the Commonwealth and like many Royalists was disappointed by the lack of success he had in trying to press his claims for financial compensation with the newly restored Charles II. All this lead to his final years being ones of perpetual debt and occasional imprisonment. Finally in 1633 he was granted a position of 'gentleman of the privy chamber extraordinary' which gave him some measure of protection. He died in 1674 and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.



An Aberystwyth silver threepence minted by Bushell

We have little information about Bushell's relationship with Enstone during the Civil War years and afterwards except to note that according to Plot the works had fallen into disrepair and things were not put right until 1674 when presumably upon Bushell's death the lease reverted to the landowner

the newly promoted 11 year old Earl of Lichfield. Sir Edward Lee, the fifth baronet Quarrendon was created earl by Charles II on the occasion of the boy's betrothal to the King's illegitimate daughter Charlotte Fitzroy.

Although Bushell was clearly the originator of the Enstone Marvels some of the more remarkable features were added by the Earl of Lichfield which of course poses a number of questions. Given his tender years one wanders on whose advice the decision was taken not only to restore but also extend the Marvels. Was this by way of acknowledging and celebrating the arrival of a new earl by means of a high profile building project which demonstrated how much in touch he was with current technological wonders? It has to be said, however, that by the time of Plot's visit in the 1670s such things were already looking slightly old-fashioned, perhaps the young earl had not been particularly well advised.

We need to look closely at Robert Plot's account of his visit for it is one of the most exhaustive descriptions we have of a seventeenth century wonder and together with the detailed engravings presents us with an unparalleled picture of such effects. Plot, born in 1640, was an Oxford scholar who began work on his *Natural History of Oxfordshire* in June of 1674 completing it three years later. Such a full account particularly as far as the 'nuts and bolts' of the Marvels are concerned are invaluable, especially when we come to reconstructing the arrangements for the House of Diversion at Hanwell. There is one curious error, Plot says that the spring was discovered by Bushell '73 or 74 years since' which is odd because this would make Bushell active on site at the age of 5 or 6 over 20 years before he leased the property!

Exc. But the *Water-works*, that surpass all others of the County, are those of *Enston*, at the *Rock* first discovered by *Thomas Busbell* Esq; about 73 or 74 Years since, who cleansing the Spring then called *Gold-well*, though quite over-grown with Briars and Buihes, to place a *Cistern* for his own drinking, met with a *Rock* so wonderfully contrived by *Nature* her self, that he thought it worthy all imaginable Advancement by *Art*.

51. Whereupon he made *Cisterns*, and laid divers *Pipes* between the *Rocks*, and built a House over them, containing one fair *Room* for *Banqueting*, and several other small *Closets* for divers Uses, beside the *Rooms* above; which when finisht in the Year 1636, together with the *Rock*, *Grove*, *Walks*, and all other the Appurtenances, were all on the 23^d of *August*, by the said *Tho. Busbell* Esq; presented to the then *Queen's* most excellent *Majesty*, who in company with the *King* himself, was graciously pleased to honour the *Rock*, not only with her *Royal* Presence, but commanded the same to be called after her own *Princely* Name, *HENRIETTA*: At which time as they were entering it, there arose a *Hermite* out of the ground, and entertain'd them with a *Speech*; returning again in the close down to his peaceful *Urn*. Then was the *Rock* presented in a *Song* answer'd by an *Echo*, and after that a *Banquet* presented also in a *Sonnet*, within the *Pillar* of the *Table*; with some other *Songs*, all set by *Simon Iwe*.

52. Which *Structure*, with all the Ingenious Contrivances about it, continued in a flourishing Condition for some few Years, till the late unhappy *Wars* coming on, it became wholly neglected, and so sensibly decayed, till at last it lapsed (being next door to Ruine) into the Hands of the Right Honourable and truly Noble Lord, *Edward Henry* Earl of *Lichfield*, Lord of the *Soil*; who in the Year 1674. not only repaired the broken *Cisterns* and *Pipes*, but made a fair Addition to it, in a small *Island* situate in the Passage of a *Rivulet*, just before the Building set over the *Rock*; which though the last in erection, is yet the first that presents it self in the exterior *Prospect* of the whole Work, *Tab. 11.* wherein the Figures,

1. 1. Shew the Water of the Rivulet.

H h

2. 2.

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1. 2. 1. The Island in the middle of it.
3. 3. The Pales round it standing on a stone Wall.
4. 4. An artificial Rock erected in the middle of the Island covered with living aqueous Plants.
5. 5. The Keeper of the Water-works that turns the Cocks.
6. 6. A Canopy of Water cast over the Rock, by an Instrument of Brafs for that purpose.
7. 7. A Column of Water rising about 14 Foot, designed to toss a Ball.
8. 8. The Streams of Water from about 30 Pipes set round the Rock, that water the whole Island, and sportively wet any Persons within it; which most People striving to avoid, get behind the Man that turns the Cocks, whom he wets with a Spout of Water that he lets fly over his Head; or else if they endeavour to run out of the Island over the Bridge, with
9. 9. which are two other Spouts, whereof that represented at a 11, strikes the Legs, and that at 12 the Reins of the Back.
10. 10. The Bridge over the Water lying on two Treffles.
11. 11. The Steps leading into the Grove, and toward the House, where you pass by
12. 12. a Table of black Marble.
13. 13. A Cistern of Stone, with five Spouts of Water issuing out of a Ball of Brafs, in which a small Spaniel hunts a Duck, both diving after one another, and having their Motion from the Water.
14. 14. The way up into the Banqueting-room over the Rock, and other Closets, &c.
15. 15. The Passage between the Cistern and Building.
16. 16. The iron Grate that gives Light to the Grot within.
17. 17. The Passage down to the Grot.
18. 18. The Windows of the Banqueting-room.
19. 19. The Grove and Walks behind and on each End of the Building.
20. 20. Being now come down into the Grot by the Passage 18, Tab. 11. and landing at the Bottom of the Stairs, Tab. 12. a. on a large half pace before it bb. The Rock presents it self made up of large craggy Stones with great Cavities between them, ccc &c. out of which flows Water perpetually Night and Day, dashing against the Rocks below, and that in great plenty in the dryest Seasons, though fed only with

a single *Spring* rising in a piece of ground call'd *Ramsall*, between *Enston* and *Ludston*. The natural *Rock* is about 10 Foot high, and so many in Breadth; some few *Shelves* of Lead *dd*, and the Top-stones only having been added (easily to be distinguish'd by their *Dryness*) which have advanced it in all about 14 Foot high.

54. In the *half pace* just before the *Compartment eee*, upon turning one of the *Cocks* at *f* rises a *chequer Hedge* of *Water*, as they call it, *gggg*; and upon turning *another*, the two side *Columns* of *Water hh*, which rise not above the height of the natural *Rock*; and of a *third*, the middle *Column i*, which ascending into the *turn* of the *Arch*, and returning not again, is received into hidden *Pipes* provided for that purpose: Into *one* whereof, terminated in a very small *Cistern* of *Water* behind a *Stone* of the *Rock*, and having a *Mouth* and *Languet* just above its *Surface*, the *Air* being forced into it by the *Approaches* of the *Water*, a *Noise* is made near resembling the *Notes* of a *Nightingale*: But when that *Pipe* is filled there is then no more singing, till the *Water* has past away by another *Pipe* in the lower part of the *Rock*, which when almost done, there is heard a *Noise* somewhat like the *Sound* of a *Drum*, performed by the rushing in of *Air* into the hollow of the *Pipe*, which is large, and of *Copper*, to supply the place of the *Water* now almost gone out; which done, the *Nightingale* may be made to sing again.

55. From the turned *Roof* of the *Rock*, by help of the brass *Instrument k*, and turn of a *Cock* in one of the *Closets* above, they can let down a *Canopy* of *Water ll*; from the *Top* also they can throw *arched Spouts* of *Water* crossing one another, and dashing against the *Walls*, opposite to those of their rise, as at *mn* and *op*; and *others* that rise out, and enter in again to the *Roof* at some *Distance*, never falling down at all at *qr* and *st*. Which *Falls* of *Water* may be also delicately seen, turning the *Back* upon them as well as looking forward, by help of a *Looking-glass* placed in the *Wall* opposite to them, which could not be possibly represented in the *Cut*. And some of these *Waters* (I must not say which) being often used by way of *Sport* to wet the *Visitants* of the *Grot*, that they might not avoid it by running up the *Stairs*, and so out into the *Grove*, by turning a *Cock* in another of the *Closets*, they can let fall *Water* so plentifully in the *Door uu*, that most *People* rather chuse to stay where they are, than pass through it: which is all concerning

H h 2

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cerning the inner *Prospect* of the *Rock*; what remains being only a *Representation* of the *Arch* of *Stone ww* built over it, with two *Niches x y* one of each side, and the *Grate z* at the *Top*, through which they look down out of the *Banqueting-room* into the *Grot*. Of which no more, but that behind the *Rock* there is a *Cellar* for keeping *Liquors* cool, or placing *Musick* to surprise the *Auditors*; and behind that the *Receivers* of *Water* to supply the *Pipes*, &c.

We also have a publication; *The Several Speeches and Songs at the Presentment of the Rock at Enstone to the Queens Most Excellent Majesty* which details the celebrations which quite typically greeted their majesties Charles and Henrietta, a performance which included a hermit arising from the depths, a playing no doubt of the special effects and sundry sonnets and songs set by one Simon Ive. We are even more fortunate in having from 1857 the extraordinarily detailed 465 page and exhaustively titled: *Parochial history of Enstone, in the county of Oxford: being an attempt to exemplify the compilation of parochial histories from antiquarian remains, ecclesiastical structures and monuments, ancient and modern documents, manorial records ... &c., &c* by the Reverend John Jordan. It is worth reproducing the full text of his comments on the Marvels as it gives a remarkable and unusually full account of the monument's latter days and ultimate demolition.

THE ENSTONE WATERWORKS.—In, or about, perhaps somewhat before the year 1626, there came to reside here one Thomas Bushell, Esq. and Isabell his wife, for they had a son Francis baptized the 8th of June, 1626. This Mr. Bushell was a person of considerable talent, attainments, and ingenuity, all which he exercised in so admirable a manner here, as to have constructed some highly interesting and effective waterworks, which became so celebrated, that they were visited by numerous and distinguished persons, and were at one time one of the most remarkable hydrostatic displays existing in this kingdom. They have, however, been suffered to fall into decay, and entirely to perish, yet to rescue them from utter oblivion we have collected the following brief record of them from various sources.

DR. PLOT, in his *Natural History of Oxfordshire*, gives two good engravings both of the exterior and interior waterworks formed at Enstone, and very fully describes them. They were situated on the East side of the road passing through Neat Enstone, and on the North bank of the stream that runs beneath the road. There, in former times, was a spring, which from its rich freshness was called Goldwell. In its vicinity Mr. Bushell had his residence, of which, however, there are no remains, and but few traces in the adjoining fields. In cleansing this spring, at that time overgrown with briars and bushes, he was attracted as well by the richness of the water as by the peculiarity of the

ENSTONE WATERWORKS.

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rocks around it, and deeming the whole place capable of much improvement, "he made," says Plot, "Cisterns, and laid divers Pipes between the rocks, and built a house over them, containing one fair room for banqueting, and several other small closets for divers uses, beside the rooms above." It was not, however, the Goldwell alone that afforded a sufficient supply of water for the ornamental display here contrived, for the pipes spoken of above were designed to bring additional force of water from a distant spring, which Plot describes as "rising in a piece of ground called Ramsall, between Enston and Ludston." Within the last few years these very pipes, made of freestone and carefully cemented together, were met with, in digging the foundation of the small house that stands on the left hand side of the road, at the top of the hill going out of Neat Enstone, towards Chipping Norton, and are now employed in supplying that house with water, in its cellar, which has an unfailing well within it, of most excellent water, derived from the very spring, and brought by the very pipes, that originally fed the once celebrated waterworks.

Upon the completion of his works by Bushell, in 1636, they were specially honoured by a royal visit from Charles I. and his queen Henrietta, the latter commanding that they should thenceforth be called by her name. Yet such is the uncertainty of all human honour, that the names of Goldwell and Henrietta are alike unknown at Enstone, and would not now probably survive, but for the record of them by Dr. Plot. I have met with only one exception to this, that of a lady resident here from her youth, who remembers the waterworks well, when she was a girl, seventy years since, under the name of Queen Henrietta's Waterworks, and describes them as remarkable not only for their play of water, but for the imitation of a nightingale's notes ingeniously contrived by the action of water pressing upon and expelling air from artificial tubes. The ceremonies and compliments performed on this remarkable occasion are described by Plot with his customary quaintness and indistinctness, thus: "As they were entering it, there arose a Hermite out of the ground, and entertained them with a speech; returning again in the close down to his peaceful urn. Then was the Rock presented in a song, answer'd by an Echo, and after that a Banquet, presented also in a sonnet, within the pillar of the table; with some other songs all set by Simon Ire." Should the curiosity of the reader be excited to acquire further information as to how a Rock can be presented in a song and a banquet in a sonnet, he is referred to a publication of the time, entitled "*The several Speeches and Songs at the Presentation of the Rock at Enstone to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty*," 4to Oxon. 1636, and to "*Wood's Athen. Oxon.*" vol. iii. p. 1007, ed. Bliss, as well as to "*Evelyn's Diary*," vol. i. p. 383, ed. 1850. Indeed the last named authority we will cite, as the passage is not very long. In Sep. 1664, Evelyn came, in

company with Viscount Cornbury, and as his Lordship's guest, to Cornbury Park, and on the 20th he writes thus, in his usual quaint style. "Hence to see the famous wells, natural and artificial Grotts and Fountains, called Bushell's Wells, at Enstone. This Bushell had been Secretary to my Lord Verulam. It is an extraordinary Solitude. There he had two mummies: a Grott where he lay in a Hammock like an Indian."

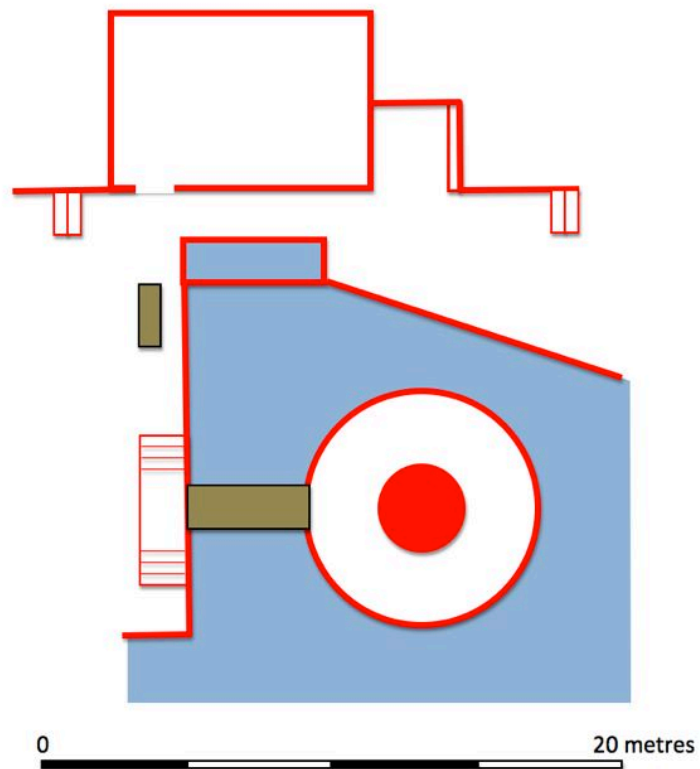
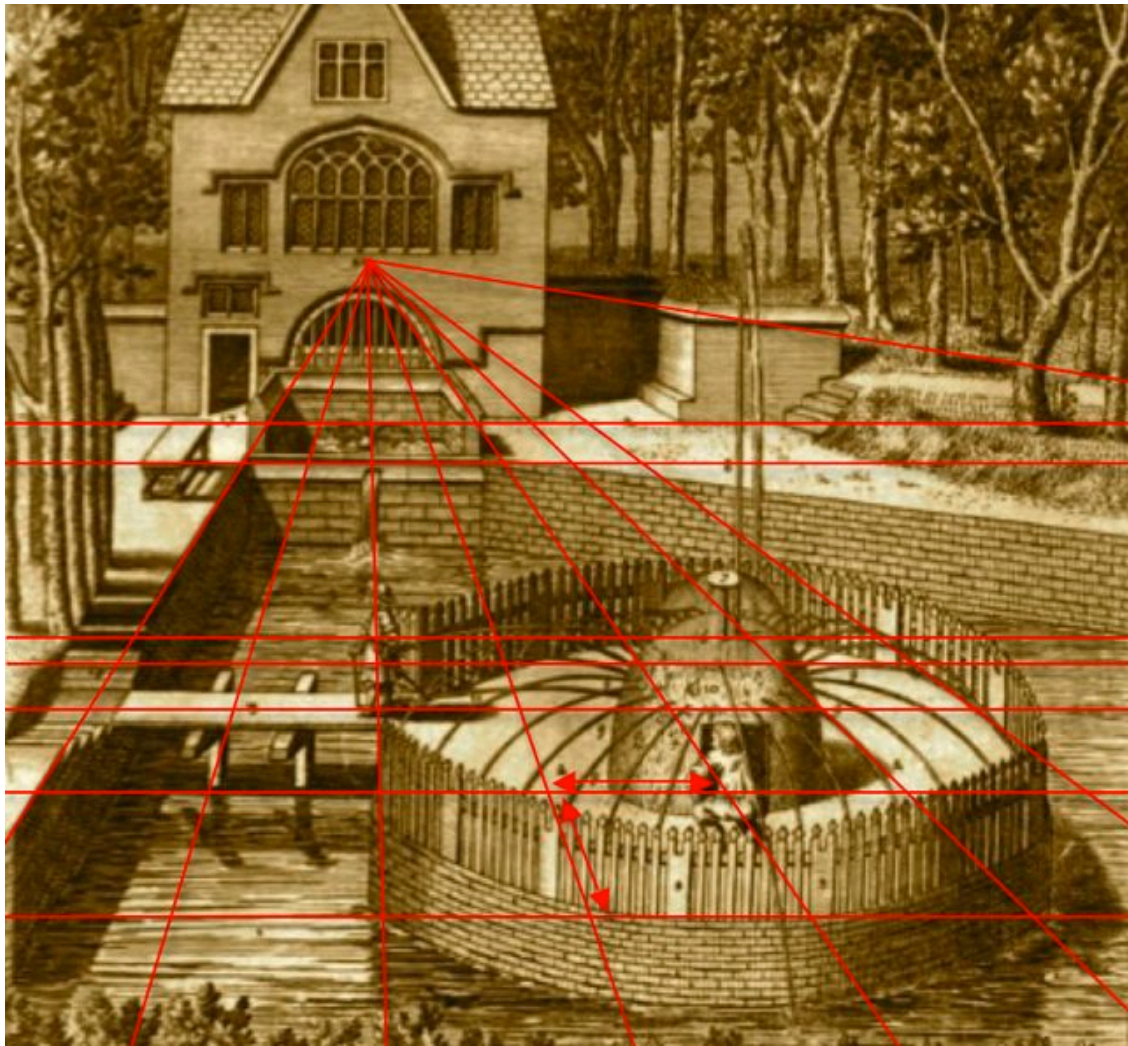
Bushell's works were confined only to the rock, and within the building erected by him, and these having become neglected and fallen into decay during the period of the Commonwealth, they eventually lapsed into the hands of the Earl of Litchfield, who, in the year 1674, both restored them and added also all the exterior works, which were even much more remarkable than the former, as the descriptions of Plot will in some degree explain, though certainly not so effectively as his engravings do. As, however, his is probably the only record remaining of them, we must content ourselves with his account, such as it is. Yet since it is impossible to give extracts even, or an epitome of his description without the illustrations accompanying them, we can do no more than refer the reader to his work.

At a later period, and when these waterworks were last in vogue, they were let to the tenant of the Litchfield Arms Inn, and were used by him as a place of assembly for the neighbouring gentry. From a member of the family of a former vicar of Enstone, Rev. S. Nash, whose wife's family, the Rodds, had a residence at the upper part of Neat Enstone, on the same side of the road as the waterworks, I have learned, that in the memory of Mrs. Nash, balls took place in the banqueting room described above, and that she had known of as many as sixteen carriages and four attending on one such occasion, and on another a carriage and six, all being coal black horses. The parties thus assembling met in the morning about ten, and having spent the day in conviviality, left on their return home as the evening approached.

Within the last few years all remains of the waterworks and the banqueting house have been demolished. For a long time the banqueting house had become a carpenter's shop, in the middle of which was still visible the square opening through the vaulting beneath, and the kind of cellar that had enclosed the rock still existed. But about the year 1846, even these relics were ruthlessly destroyed, the banqueting house was pulled down, and its materials used to build a small house adjacent; the vaulting of the cellar thus became exposed, and fell into decay; and now at last almost the very site is swallowed up in ruins, more thick and impervious than the briars and bushes from whence Thomas Bushell first emancipated the Goldwell.

So much for the literary and historical background, what is there to see on the ground today and beyond that what may be revealed by further archaeological study? The property described by Jordan as being built from the remains of the banqueting house remains on site to this day and is part of a house known as the Wells. As this was built 'adjacent' to the ruins one might expect the location to be close by although presumably not so close as to run the risk of subsidence into the subterranean grotto which was still in existence. One must assume that during the course of demolition useful stone would have been carted away as would any surviving pipes and other fittings and the grotto itself filled in with loose rubble and other less usable materials on site. It is questionable what else was removed from the grotto and it is possible that some of the decorative material was reused elsewhere (see below), however, it seems likely that structurally the grotto still could survive substantially intact below ground and that the material used to fill it would tell us much about the superstructure that Plot illustrated.

So where was it? There has been some additional development around the site and the current landowner has observed that no structural remains were found during related ground works so this narrows down the areas under consideration. The other factor which must be taken into account in locating the site of the grotto is the local topography as illustrated by Plot. This shows the way in which the building is terraced back into the valley side and how it relates to the level of the water in the adjacent pond. On the admittedly big assumption that Plot's picture is reasonably accurate and given the number of visual clues to scale we can convert this drawing into an admittedly speculative plan.



In the foreground perspective 2 metre squares are overlaid on the plan, this data and other measures such as the likely length of the table and the width of the door have been used in the plan.



The small cistern in the garden of the Wells, view from south-east.

If we now transfer the plan to an aerial view of the site we can begin see what options best fit the current topography. One important additional feature is that in the garden of the property is a small enclosed tank containing a spring and edged with stone coping very similar to that shown around the 'spaniel and duck' cistern. Could this be that cistern still amazingly preserved in position? Well it seems unlikely, the size is wrong, the construction rough and the location seems too high above current water levels. Nevertheless it could be a feature reconstructed roughly in place as a memento of the now vanished structure. Whatever the case the plan can be dropped into place in roughly the same location to give us a starting point for further debate about the exact position.



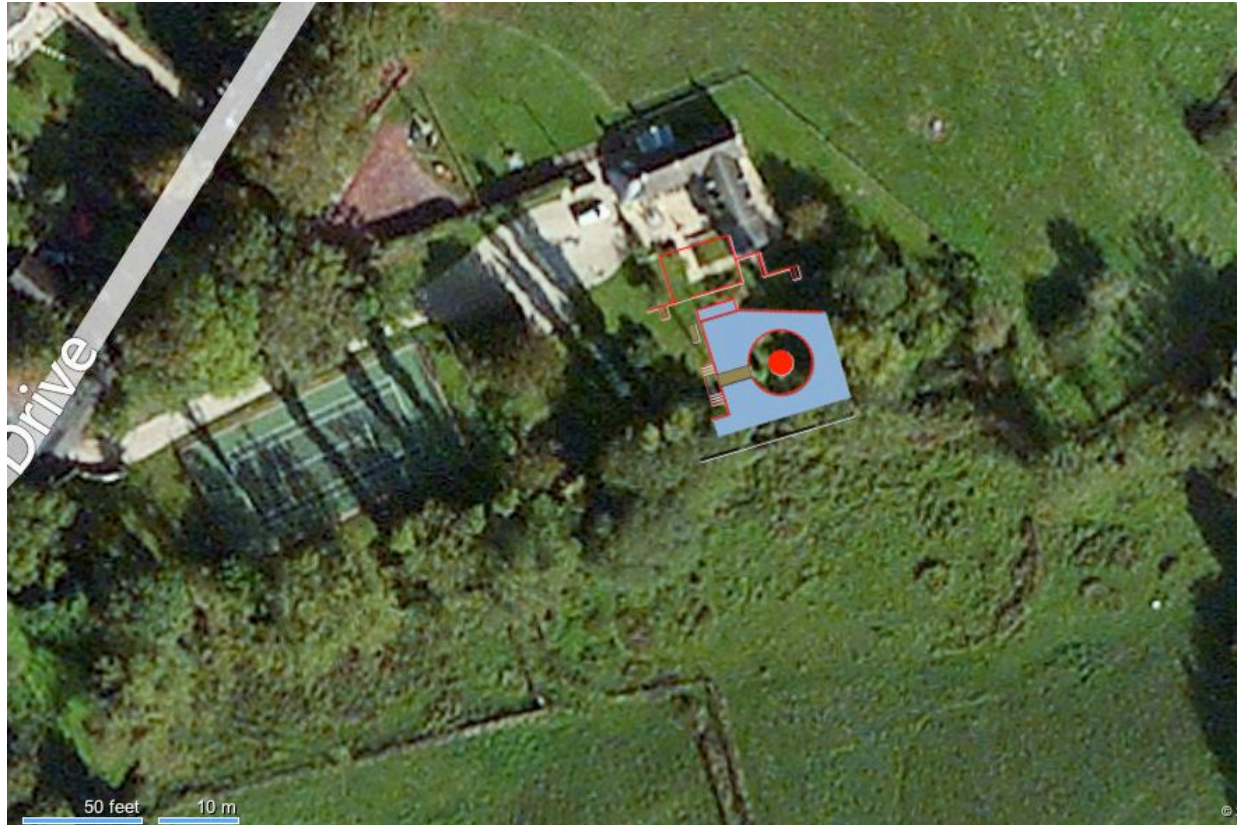
Shallow pool to the south of the Glyme, view looking west.



Garden pond, view looking west,

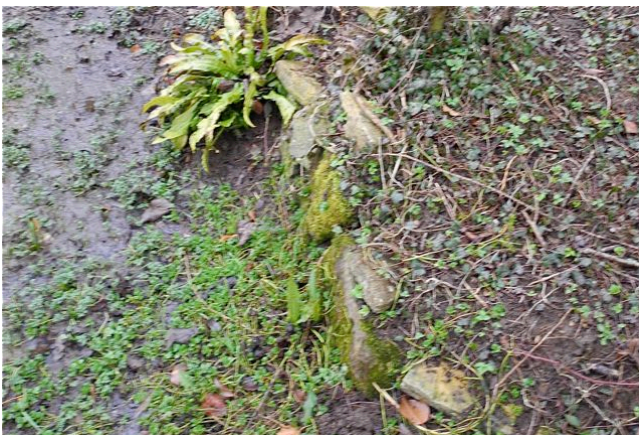
modern landscaping but a pool is shown in this position in the 1881 OS map

There is a large open area to the south of the river which is currently flooded and may have formed part of a larger pool associated with the works but this exercise does demonstrate that the whole thing could have been fitted in north of the current river course. If we relocate the site further to the west it overlaps with an existing pond which may reflect part of the original and a round picnic table would lie close to the site of the island!



Plan of Marvels superimposed on aerial view, north to top. Passing the cursor over the picture shifts the location to an alternate position

Whatever the precise location of the Marvels further investigation is likely to concentrate on detailed survey and careful examination of the gardens at water level to try and pick up traces of the walling round the island or the edging to the pool. Indeed there a stub of wall a little further to the west which could prove interesting. Other fragments are scattered around the immediate area all of which really need careful recording at some point in the future but for further clues about the Enstone Marvels we may need to look further afield.



Walling west of garden pond looking west.



Piece of calciferous stone beneath picnic bench, looking north.



Triangular coping stone on wall south-east of house looking north-east.

As well as features in the immediate vicinity of the grotto Bushell also had a grand house somewhere nearby and there were walks and terraces laid out around the extensive grounds. Little of this apparently remains. The field which flanks the property to the north and east does have some interesting earthworks most of which appear to be medieval ridge and furrow, relics of the open field system of cultivation, however there are other indications on the ground of some additional features that again could benefit from careful surveying.



The Wells is towards the bottom left. Ridge and furrow is clearly visible running almost north south as is a possible track way which cuts obliquely across it.

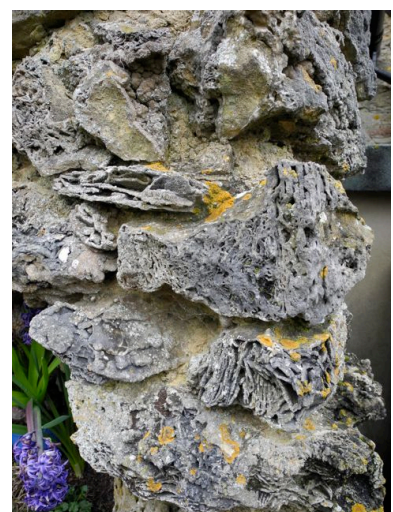


Ridge and furrow, view looking west.



Bank to possible track way, view looking north.

Given the scale of the demolition it would not be surprising if elements from the Marvels had been scattered round the village in the late 1840s and indeed there are a couple of notable features, however, it is important to recall that Church Enstone in particular had a number of other fine buildings, now lost, which could have contributed to these. The first is found attached to end of a cottage in the village which boasts its own grotto - a remarkable and unusual addition by any standard. Today it consists of what is in effect an open ended extension to the cottage. The arched opening, now glazed is flanked by two pairs of roughly formed niches and is crowned by a fifth niche which originally accommodated a stone bust. The old post card which show this also reveals the structure to have had a coarse string course paralleling a shallow gable surmounted by a parapet made of rough stones set on end. Inside there is a modern opening into the present day cottage and the interior also has a pair of niches facing each other from the side walls. The end wall is slightly wider than the body of the grotto and so has two stub walls which protrude a few centimetres at either end. The fabric of this structure is almost entirely composed of various forms of calciferous rock in a range of crystalline forms. The current owner was told that the stone came from a local quarry which is certainly possible and the grotto could have been erected as a small testimony to Enstone's former fame. Alternatively the materials could have been obtained from the removal of the Marvels themselves, there are certainly questions that need looking into here.



The grotto, view from south-west. An earlier view from a local postcard.

Detail of the walling material.

The final port of call for the day, not counting the excellent local pub, The Crown, was a fountain or water trough on the north side of the Bicester Road down towards Stoney Bridge. This is an unusually elaborate edifice for a village cattle trough. There is an inscription flanking the central cross which we unfortunately had neither the time nor resources to decipher. Oddly this impressive little structure does not seem to figure in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record, a curious oversight, but fortunately the ever reliable *Buildings of England* volume comes to the rescue:

FOUNTAIN. Memorial to Eliza Marshall, died 1856. Designed by *G.E. Street* and carved by *Earp*. A trough with a lion's-mask spout surmounted by an inscription with a Maltese cross and a frieze of acanthus. (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974: 594).

I have to say the lions had a very baroque feel to them, could they have been recycled? Whatever the case it's rather nice to see, ten years after the demolition of the Marvels someone trying to give a new fountain a special place in the village.



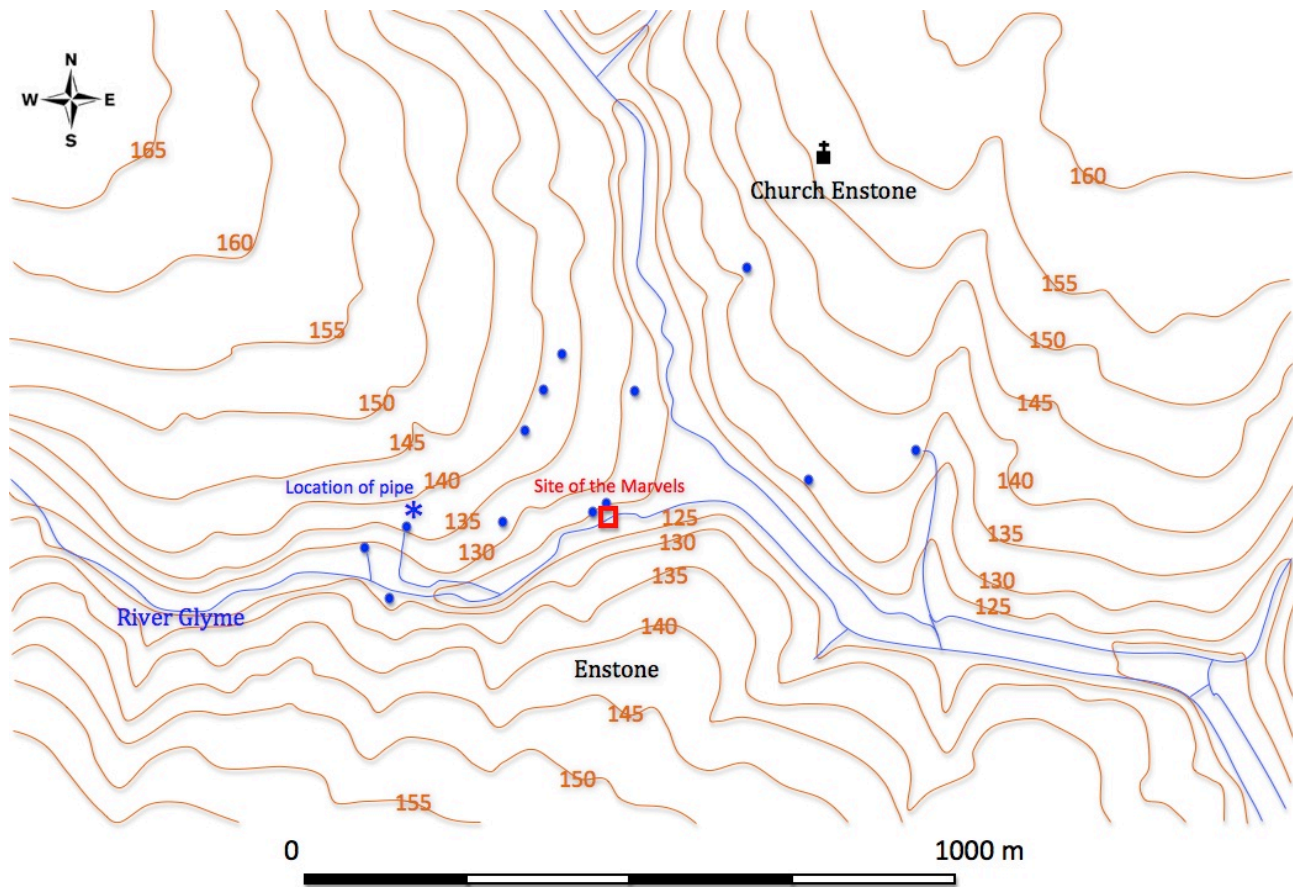
The memorial fountain, view from south-west.



Detail of upper lion's-mask spout.

Well, what a productive morning out and many many thanks to the members of the Enstone Historical Society and local residents who did so much to facilitate the visit and share their time and knowledge with me. I am sure that the Enstone Marvels will yet have the capacity to amaze and astonish us.

Water Supply



Enstone environs - contours redrawn from current OS 1:25000 map, springs (blue circles) taken from OS 1:2,500 map 1881

There can be no doubt that the location of the Enstone Marvels was brought about by a particular combination of geology and topography. The nature of the underlying rocks has determined the specific pattern of drainage involving springs and streams in the area and getting to grips with this will be a major part of the study. A start can be made by considering the interesting account in Jordan's 1857 history of Enstone (Jordan 1857: 19).

rocks around it, and deeming the whole place capable of much improvement, "he made," says Plot, "Cisterns, and laid divers Pipes between the rocks, and built a house over them, containing one fair room for banqueting, and several other small closets for divers uses, beside the rooms above." It was not, however, the Goldwell alone that afforded a sufficient supply of water for the ornamental display here contrived, for the pipes spoken of above were designed to bring additional force of water from a distant spring, which Plot describes as "rising in a piece of ground called Ramsall, between Enston and Ludston." Within the last few years these very pipes, made of freestone and carefully cemented together, were met with, in digging the foundation of the small house that stands on the left hand side of the road, at the top of the hill going out of Neat Enstone, towards Chipping Norton, and are now employed in supplying that house with water, in its cellar, which has an unfailing well within it, of most excellent water, derived from the very spring, and brought by the very pipes, that originally fed the once celebrated waterworks.

The small house referred to above, although much extended, survives to this day as does the cellar and well beneath it. We were fortunate in receiving an invitation from the current owners who have been in residence for many years and who have made considerable improvements to the property and gardens. The cellar itself is rectangular, roughly 3 by 6 metres, and lined with whitewashed rubble walls. It is a little over 2 metres deep. The well exists towards the south west corner as a rectangular shaft set in a modern concrete floor. The shaft is stone lined and roughly half a metre deep, there is some silting on the base and the remains of some metal fittings which may be part of a valve or pumping mechanism. the water within the shaft is remarkably clear. Apparently the level is fairly consistent and the supply has never failed. Currently there is no obvious pipework, as described above, associated with the well but if water is still channeled from a source further up the valley there must be a course for it to flow in and out of the cellar. Adjacent to the well a former opening which marks the position of the original flight of steps is now filled with concrete block work but a curved slab of stone survives as the original bottom step. A section of the 'very pipes made of freestone' is said to exist in the garden but we will need to wait until the winter months to examine it once the vegetation dies down.



The well in the corner of the cellar, view looking south west.

In the garden to the south of the house is a further spring known, as the current occupants were told when they moved in, as the Bushell. This formerly emerged into a shallow rectangular stone lined niche set back into the hill slope. Because of its fragile condition the water was re channeled into a modern pipe which now empties into a large rectangular stone lined pool attached to the south. Naming it after Bushell further underlines its significance in connection with the supply of water to the Marvels.

There is also an object lesson to be had here, imagine our excitement at the site of a weathered carved stone head emerging from the waters, imagine our disappointment to learn it was a garden gnome called Noah transformed by many years exposure to the elements.



The Dumbwell, view from east, south and south west.

The water flows into a further series of smaller pools and channels down towards the River Glyme which lies at the end of the garden to the south. Half way down is a well marked artificial terrace, around 2 metres high, which is reminiscent of the terracing in the former gardens to the south of the tithe barn in Church Enstone. Unsurprisingly there are several blocks of stone scattered round the garden which show heavy deposits of calcite as seen on the small grotto in Church Enstone.



Second pool looking north east.



Terrace looking north west



Example of calcite positioned next to second pool

One must assume that it may be possible to trace the course of Bushell's pipeline in the fields to the east and west and perhaps identify 'the piece of ground called Ramsall' where the supply originates. On the question of why water would need to be brought such a distance when there are clearly ample springs close by the Marvels Jordan suggests that there was a need for an 'additional force of water' but it is interesting that the owners report that the water here does not seem to have a petrifying effect and it may be that Bushell needed a supply that would not 'fur up' his pipes and fountains. As ever still plenty to do here.

MARVELS AND MORRIS DANCING



Morris dancing at Stowe House, Buckinghamshire 1844

Well it had to come, the collision of two major interests: morris dancing meet Enstone Marvels. Here is an extract from Jackson's Oxford Journal for May 19th. 1791. printed without comment on the back cover of *The Story of Enstone* by Graham Binns.

“A cake and ale feast will be held at Enstone, Oxfordshire, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday in Whitsun week next ensuing. A CROWN CAKE will be given to the Set of Maurice Dancers that appears at Enstone first on Whit Monday. A HALFCROWN CAKE will be given to the first set of Maurice Dancers on Tuesday and a GOLD LACED HAT will be danced for by the Maurices on Saturday. Enstone Wells being in high condition, and a large commodious Room over them. there will be a ball on each of the above nights”

For those not familiar with the habits of morris dancers this account clearly refers to the common custom of hosting Whitsun Ales in many Midland parishes. Originally brought in as fund-raising activities for churches after the reformation by the eighteenth century they had become social gatherings and from the point of view of the morris dancers offered lucrative money making opportunities (Chandler 1993a: 57). It was common practice for groups of dancers to travel some distance to participate in such events although there was usually a host side that would represent the village. What is interesting is that Enstone, despite being in the heartland of Cotswold morris dancing, does not seem to have had its own set of dancers and is forced, at least in 1791, to advertise to attract this essential component of the festivity. The notion of dancing competitively was also found frequently, for example Chandler quotes another account from Jackson's Oxford Journal, this time from May 21st 1808 pertaining to Brill in Buckinghamshire:

"HIS LORDSHIP... will give a PRIZE of RIBBANDS and a HAT of one Guinea value, to the best set of Oxfordshire morris"

Whit Monday is clearly more important than the Tuesday in terms of the need to attract quality performers although if that had been anything like the Brill example Saturday was when the big money could be made. The crown and halfcrown cakes referred to were usually large plum cakes, not dissimilar to those carried around by Bampton Morris to this day. It seems that the prizes were generally sold and the proceedings divided up amongst the dancers and musician.



The Dixon Harvesters, Gloucestershire morris in the late eighteenth century.

One wonders which local teams would have been attracted by the advertisement to turn up for the event. Chandler in his gazetteer of morris dancing in the South Midlands between 1660 - 1900 attempts to identify villages with active groups of morris dancers. The chief candidates for the late eighteenth century would have been Ascot-Under-Wychwood, Milton-Under-Wychwood, Spelsbury (which unusually had a women's team), Adderbury, Burford, Finstock and Woodstock although the records are fragmentary at best and there must have been others.

The fact that the Wells are in 'high condition' indicates that the Marvels remained in a reasonable state of repair right up to the end of the eighteenth century but by 1805 the poet Robert Southey who was passing through recorded,

"... we were told there were some water-works which would amuse us if we were in time to see them... It was but a melancholy site. The gardens made in the times of Charles I, above a century and half ago, and everything about them was in a state of decay. the water-works are of that kind which were fashionable in the days when they were made; ingenious devices for wetting the beholder from the sides, roof, floor and door-way of the grotto into which he had entered, and from every object which excited his curiosity.' (Southey 1808: Letter 34)

Perhaps the Whitsun ale with its accompanying advert was part of a last ditch attempt to maintain the Wells as a going concern.