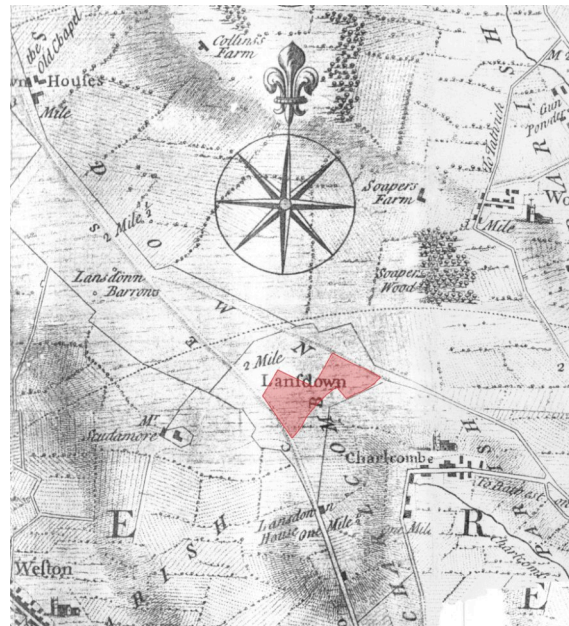
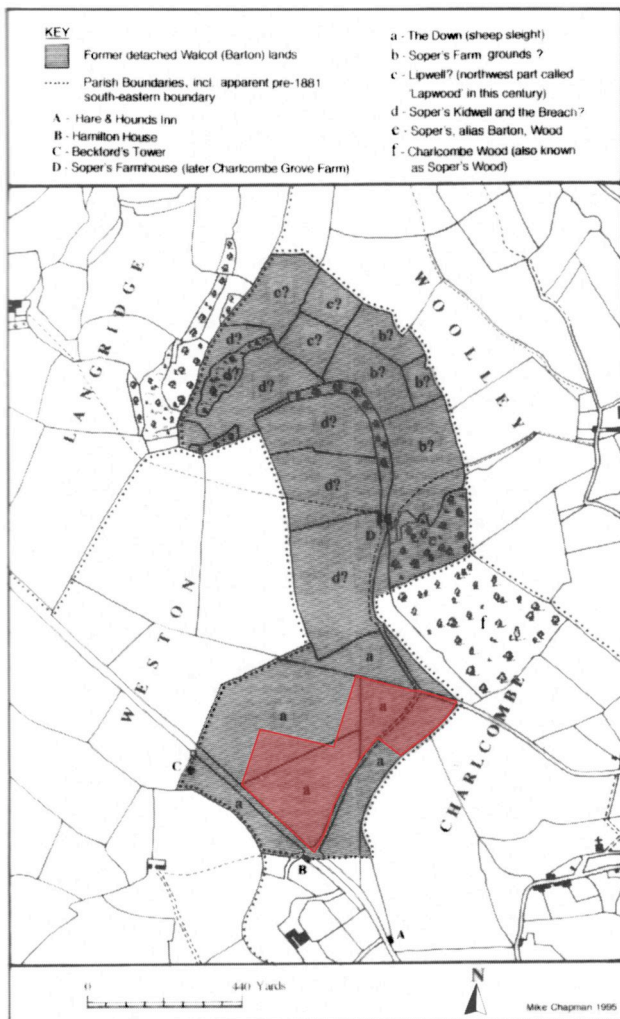


## THE ENSLEIGH MOD SITE ON LANSDOWN

### ‘Sopers’ and ‘Ensleigh’

The MOD site at Ensleigh once belonged to a property which almost certainly had its origins in Saxon times. Lansdown, originally an entirely open area of rough grazing shared ‘in common’ between the neighbouring manorial villages, at an early period came to be divided up, each manor being allocated its own separate area surrounded by a stone wall - a pattern that can be seen elsewhere on the downs surrounding Bath (see also Foxhill below). For some reason, one of these areas at the southern end of the down became attached to the manor (later parish) of Walcot adjoining the city. Throughout most of middle ages Walcot (then known as the Barton of Bath) was owned by the Prior of Bath Monastery, and although the detached part on Lansdown belonged to the Prior’s own farm or ‘Barton Grange’, this area itself existed as a separate farm estate called ‘Soper’s’, presumably named after a certain tenant, Thomas le Sopare, whose house is mentioned in the Priory papers in 1296.

In 1547 this small estate was said to consist of ‘Sopers’ (a farmhouse and grounds, ‘anciently enclosed with a stone wall containing about 50 acres’), ‘Lipwelles Wood’ and ‘Mydlewood’, together with the present Sopers Wood. Although the latter lay in the manor of Charlcombe, it was evidently managed by the tenant of Sopers Farm. The estate was still known by this title until the end of the 19th century when renamed Charlcombe Grove Farm and Charlcombe Wood. Attached to the estate also was a ‘portion of pasture of lez Lawncedown’, part of which later became the site of the MOD establishment. This was a sheep ‘sleight’ or summer pasture ground for one of the Prior’s numerous sheep ‘ranches’ on the surrounding downs, in this instance for the Barton Eweflock consisting of 360 sheep which was grazed in the winter on the Ham (now site of the Southgate precinct). Although the sheep flocks had already disappeared by the 18th century, the sleight seems to have remained pasture ground until the early 20th century.



Above: The unenclosed outlines of Lansdown, including the sheep sleight, on Thomas Thorpe’s map of five miles around Bath in 1742. The MOD site is shown in red. The characteristic ‘funnels’ for herding livestock onto the exit roads are still visible.

Left: The former detached part of the parish of Walcot (until 1881) at the south-eastern end of Lansdown.

Whilst the sleight was always referred to as '*le downe ... called Lansdown ... next to a certain farm called Soper's*', it was probably also known traditionally as 'Ensleigh'. If this was so, it raises the possibility of another Saxon settlement in the area (perhaps called 'Enna's Leigh or Clearing'), which may account for certain early remains found on the MOD site.

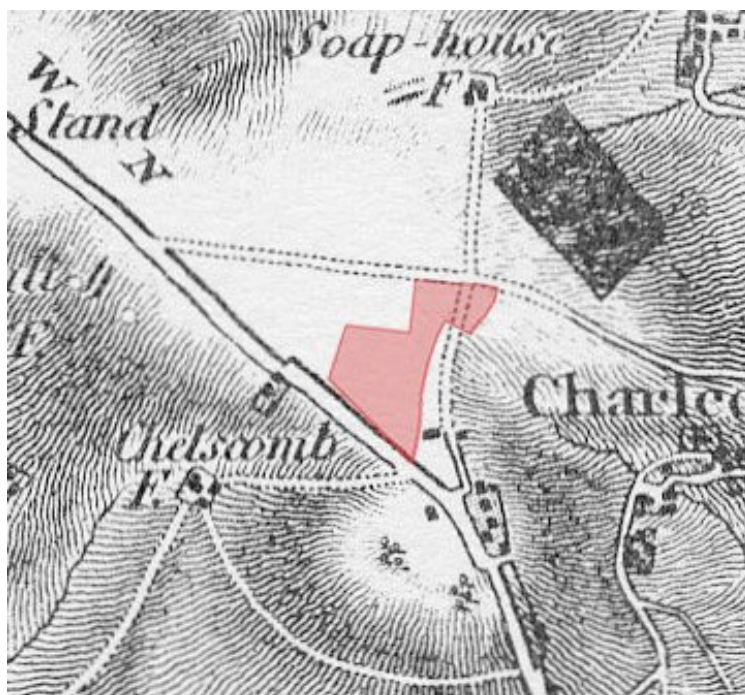
### Lansdown Roads

Various prehistoric trackways crossed Down, the most prominent survivor being the present Lansdown Road, thought to have been a branch (later adopted by the Romans) of the so-called 'Jurassic Way', which ran along the Cotswold Edge towards the Somerset Marshes. It later became the main road between Bath and Gloucester, and in 1707 was taken over by the Bath Turnpike Trust as far as the summit near the Hare & Hounds. Although the jurisdiction of the trust was extended to the county boundary at the Granville Monument in 1757, this route was eventually superseded in the early 1800s by the New Gloucester Road (the present A46 from Lambridge) in order to avoid the steep climbs.

Another route thought to be prehistoric was Colliers Lane leading from Lambridge past Charlcombe village and Sopers Wood. This now terminates at Ensleigh, but originally continued westward to join the main Lansdown road opposite the two Lansdown Barrows. Although this section of the road was closed in the early 19th century, much of its course can be still followed by the public footpath which runs along the north side of the MOD boundary and across the playing fields.

Throughout the 18th century the Lansdown road ran across open grassland and was very popular with visitors for riding out and airing, or taking in the views and visiting the battlefield site. Indeed, complaints were made when the Down was finally enclosed in the 1790s, and a subscription was even proposed to keep it open, but only the broad verges remain today. It was therefore a relatively busy thoroughfare, particularly during the time of the race meetings or of the ancient annual Lansdown fair, both held near the old Chapel and adjoining farm. The latter remained the only habitation on the Down until the early 18th century when the Hare and Hounds Inn (originally called Lansdown House) was established at the southern end. Although possibly of 17th century origin, it became prominent following the improvement of the main road with the resulting increase in traffic, and would have provided relief for horse teams reaching the top of the Lansdown Hill. Many other inns of this kind were set up at the summit of the downs surrounding Bath at this time.

Just beyond the Inn was the entrance from the main road into the old lane leading to Sopers Farm which followed the parish boundary around the crest of the Down. This route was stopped up in the mid 19th century and replaced by Granville Lane, which rejoins the original route at the present junction with Colliers Lane.

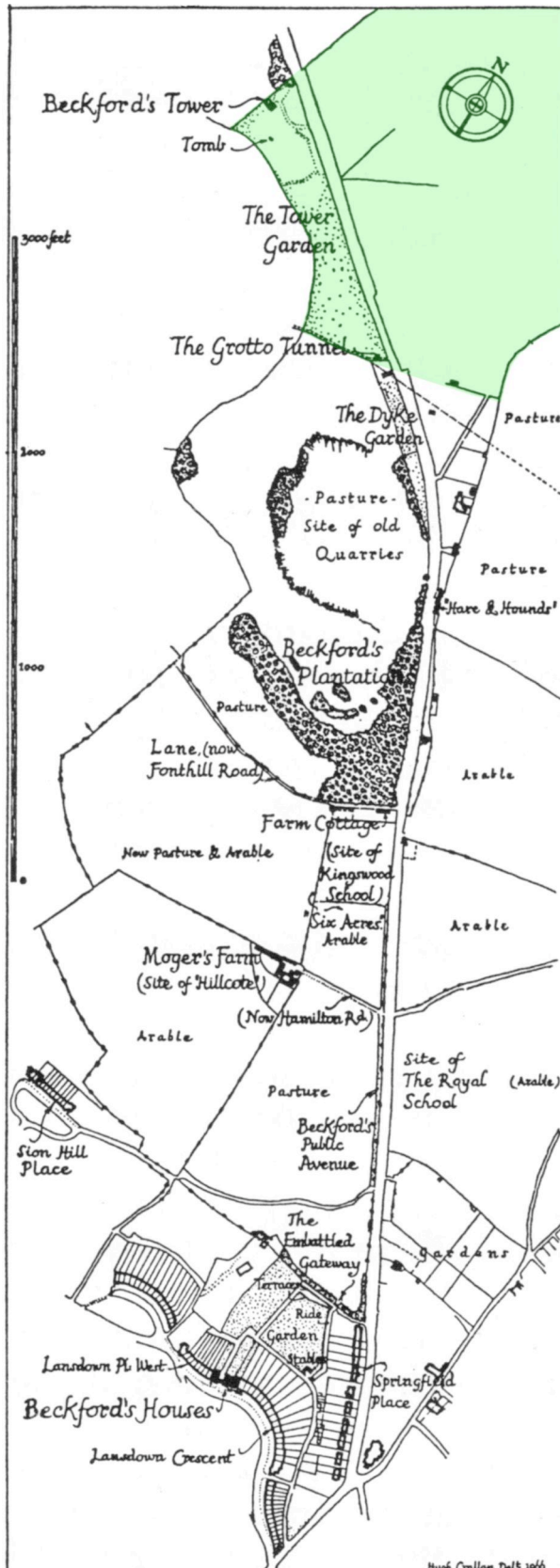


Left: The original layout of the roads and lanes at the south-eastern end of Lansdown, shown on the OS one-inch map, c.1810-1815.



## Beckford's Ride

The next building to appear on the Down, at the southern end in 1823, was William Beckford's Tower, for which he acquired the whole strip of Soper's sleight on the west side of the main road. Leading back down the hill, he acquired other grounds adjoining the road to produce a continuous property, a mile long, linking the Tower with his house in No.20 Lansdown Crescent. Along this strip, known as Beckford's Ride (properly, a walk) he created gardens, plantations and rustic seats with views over the Avon Valley, all forming a sequence of linked landscape episodes which culminated at the Tower.



One obstacle to his plan was the ancient right of way to Chelscombe Farm (then part of the parish boundary) on the south side of the Tower Garden, but Beckford avoided this by driving a grotto-like tunnel beneath it. The southern entrance to the tunnel was disguised with an ornamental Italianate building situated at the northern end of another splendid garden about 40 yards long called the Dyke or Ditch Garden, created out of an old roadstone quarry. At the other end of the garden was a plantation walk composed of fossils that wound its way through flowering shrubs and ornamental trees. This then led out into a large quarry area on the crest of the Down containing arched fragments of old workings which Beckford retained unaltered as a picturesque reminder of the ruined Baths of Caracalla near Rome. Continuing on down the hill the walk passed through a large tree plantation (above the later Kingswood School) and below that, an avenue of lime trees parallel with the main road. Both of these features still exist as prominent reminders of Beckford's work.

**Left: Detail taken from the 1838 tithe map of the parish of Charlcombe showing the full extent of Beckford's Walk. The old sheep sleight belonging to Walcot parish is shown in green.**

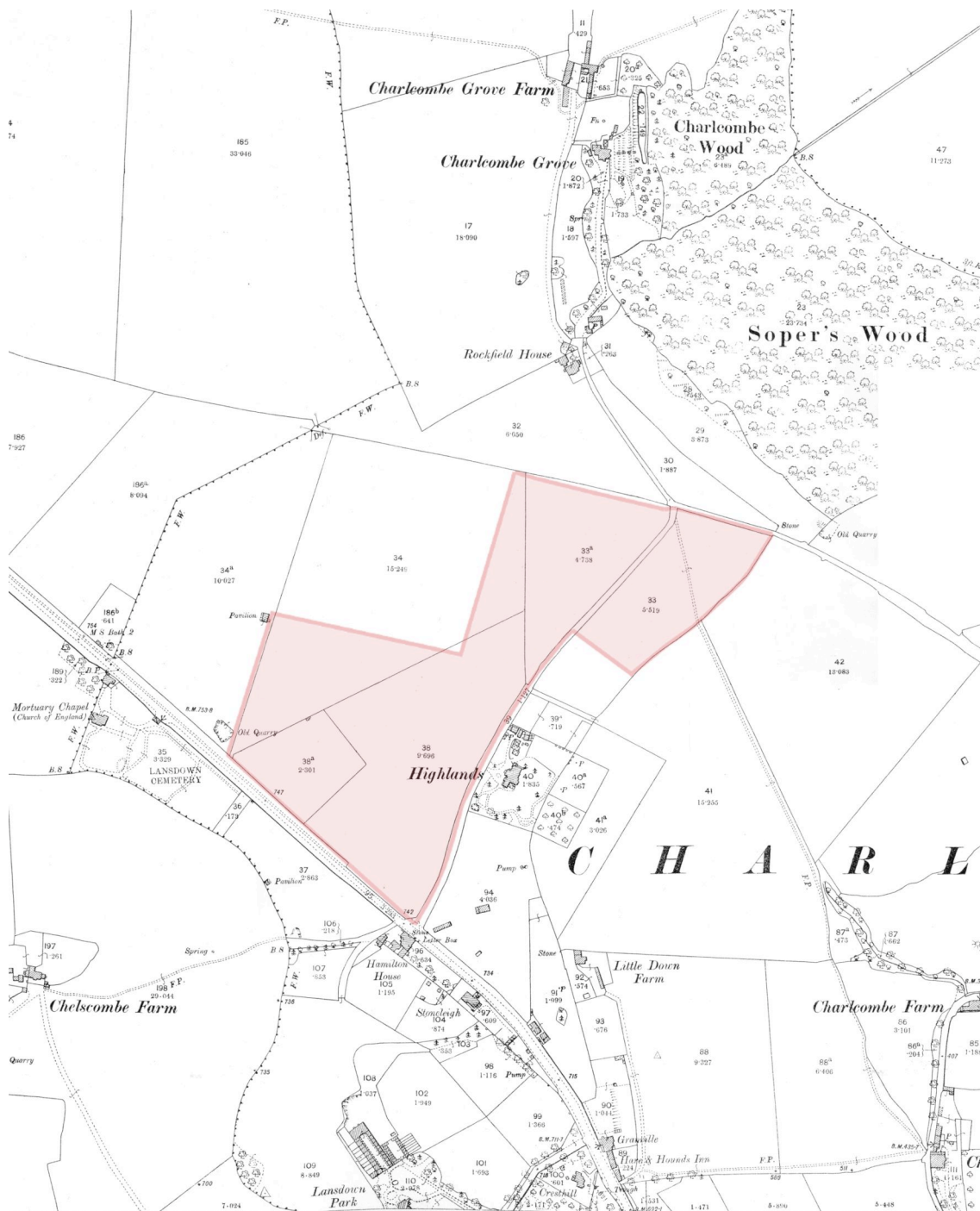
The object of the Tower and landscaped walk was to provide a private 'retreat', away from the bustle of the town, taking advantage of what Beckford proclaimed 'The finest prospect in Europe', and which he likened to the paintings of Claude or to the Roman Campagna; 'I shall never forget how I first passed over that land of the Dead, strewn with ruins and covered with green turf ... This scene [Lansdown] recalls to me my dreams and meditations there. The surface is smoother, but it has the same dun colour, the same "death-like stillness" and "dread repose"'.

Indeed, on his own death in 1844, he requested being buried in the Tower Garden - next to the graves of his beloved dogs - although, being unconsecrated ground, this was hardly possible. When the premises were put up for auction, it is not surprising that the Tower and its ornamental garden were quickly acquired for a Pleasure

Ground. However, Beckford's daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, 'being shocked at hearing that her father's beautiful little domain was to be perverted to a tea-gardens' bought back the Tower and part of the garden which she presented to Walcot parish as a cemetery. Beckford's wish was therefore fulfilled (although without the dogs), and the tower remained a mortuary chapel until 1973 after which it was adapted under the Beckford Tower Trust partly as a dwelling and partly to house a small Beckford Museum.

### Later Retreats

Beckford's 'retreat' evidently set a precedent, as other isolated residences were built nearby not long after his death. The first of these, about 1851, was 'Hamilton House', situated by the road immediately on the south side of the footpath to Chelscombe Farm, just inside the Walcot boundary in what was previously the Dyke Garden. It was initially occupied, and probably built, by one Ambrose Cooper, and titled 'Sea View', but in 1853 it was taken over by a Mrs. Mary Jowett, who changed the name (presumably in honour of the Duchess) and lived there for many years. Later in the century it became a Preparatory School run by F.E. Rogers, MA.



Detail of the south-eastern end of Lansdown taken from the 1902 OS 25-inch map, with the MOD site superimposed in red.

The next to appear was 'Ensleigh' in about 1860, on the opposite side of Lansdown road, situated on the edge of the Sleight beside Granville Road. This was occupied and probably built by a Bath barrister, Charles H. Weston, whose family remained there until about 1902. The house then came into the ownership of Henry P. Minchen esquire who changed its name to 'Highlands'. Also on the east side, near Sopers Farm, 'Charlcombe Grove' was built in about 1864 by E.F. Slack esquire of Slack & Simmons, Solicitors of Manvers Street. Beckford's large quarry then became the site of 'Lansdown Park', on the west side, in 1866, followed in the 1870s and 1880s by 'Stoneleigh' and 'Cresthill', adjoining the road. It was also during the latter period that 'Granville' by the Hare & Hounds, and 'Rockfield House towards Sopers were built, as also Little Down Farm overlooking Charlcombe Village. This situation remained unchanged until the late 20th century when all the residences beside of the main road were demolished for modern housing development, leaving little of what may have survived of Beckford's works, and only the names of Hamilton House, Stoneleigh and Lansdown Park have been retained by later buildings.

## **Sports**

For a long time the Down has been used for sports grounds, starting with the racecourse in the late 18th century, but a cricket ground can also be identified as early as the 1840s, again at the northern end. This trend has continued ever since, and many pavilions can be seen on early 20th century maps in the fields surrounding the MOD site. The most suitable fields lay on the east side of Lansdown Road, but some on the west were also reserved for this purpose, while being leased out to farmers. The owners of these grounds were often local sports clubs (such as cricket and tennis), but most were probably acquired by the many private schools (such as Kingswood) which appear around Bath around the middle of the 19th century - usually situated on the outskirts, where pupils were less likely to be distracted by the attractions of the city. There are indications that the field occupied by the MOD was being used as a sports ground at the time of its acquisition, although this has not yet been confirmed.

## THE FOXHILL MOD SITE ON COMBE DOWN

### The Saxon Downs

Following a pattern that can be seen elsewhere on the downs surrounding Bath (see Ensleigh above) those above Foxhill were originally grazed in common by the neighbouring manorial villages until divided up during the Saxon period, in this case between Lyncombe & Widcombe (then known as 'Clifton') and Monkton Combe (then simply known as 'Combe'), both manors then belonging to the Monastery at Bath. The MOD site occupies part of an area formerly known as 'Green Down' or 'East Down' which lay in the manor (later parish) of Lyncombe & Widcombe, bounded on the south-east side by a projecting area known as 'Combe Down' belonging to the manor or parish of Monkton Combe. The boundary between these two is described in a Charter of 970 AD (when 'Cliftune' was granted to the monastery by King Edgar) as being marked by a '*hege raewe*' (possibly a row of trees rather than a hedged enclosure). The same boundary today, which runs along the outside of the perimeter fence of the MOD compound, is marked by various 19th century boundary stones together with a drystone wall dating from at least the time when the monastery was dissolved in 1539 and its lands sold off to private landowners.

### The Bishop's Park

An important early change in this area came with the creation of a deer park by the Norman bishop, John of Tours, who moved his see to Bath after being granted the Abbey and City in 1091 by William Rufus. The Great Park as it was known - presumably the scene of King John's hunting expeditions during his visits to Bath between 1212-1216, covered the southern part of Claverton Down and extended westward across the head of Widcombe to the eastern boundaries of Combe Down and Green Down mentioned above. The park was securely enclosed with a substantial bank and ditch, much of which has survived and, although continually renewed in the course of time, remains of the original Norman wall can still be seen adjoining the lane which runs along the Combe Down boundary and the extreme eastern end of the MOD site.

This lane, always known as Hanginglands Lane (named from the adjoining steeply wooded grounds lower down towards Perrymead) is sometimes called Pope's Walk, but this properly refers to a garden path below Prior Park mansion. That the lane originates with the creation of the park is suggested by the Saxon charter above, which already describes this section of the boundary as the *aerning-hyrste* or 'woodland ride'. It was sometimes also called 'the way to Combe', and evidently served as a route from Lyncombe and Widcombe via Blind Lane which, after skirting the western wall of the park, continued across the down towards Monkton Combe village. Reaching the brow of the down, it crossed another ancient trackway (the present North Road) running along the length of the down, described by Leyland in the mid 16th century as an alternative route from Bradford-on-Avon to Bath and Bristol along the southern wall of the Park. At this crossing there was once a wooden cross, described in the Charter as the *tunnes treow*, the 'Township Cross', but later known as 'St. Gregory's Cross'. John Wood claimed this was one of those erected by St. Augustine and his followers during their mission to convert the English, but it had long disappeared before his time. The area around this crossing, at the head of Ralph Allen's Drive, was still known by this name into the early 19th century.

Although Fox Hill Lane, which appears to have derived its name from several grounds below the down in Lyncombe Vale called Foxholes, also joined the Bradford road on the summit, it mainly functioned as a field way to the Common Fields of Widcombe. These lay mainly on the slopes below the down towards Lyncombe Vale, but also reached up onto the top of the down as far as the Bradford Road between the east side of the Lane and Entry Hill. Further west, and on the south side of the road, the rest of the down appears to have remained quite open and bare, as vividly described by John Leyland on his way across the down to Entry Hill; '*... to Bath 2 good miles al by mountayne ground and quarre, and litle wood in syte.*'



## The Ralph Allen Estate

Ralph Allen's first acquisitions outside Bath, made between 1726-1728, were in the parishes of Widcombe and Monkton Combe in order to obtain the stone quarrying rights on Combe Down which he exploited in the area on the south side of North Road. In doing so, he also acquired practically all the surrounding downland, including Green Down which by that time had become enclosed into three fields. Indeed by 1750 all the downs on the south side of the city, ranging from Bathampton Down to Odd Down, had come into his possession. In 1233, not long before the bishopric was moved from Bath to Wells, the bishop granted the western end of the Great Park (i.e. the upper reaches of Widcombe) to the Prior of Bath Monastery. Although Prior Park, as it became known, was broken up after the Dissolution, Allen brought the various parts together in order to recreate the original park as the setting for his mansion and garden grounds.



Detail copied from Ralph Allen's estate map showing the fir plantations and 'coach roads' around the edge of the downs. Prior Park mansion is on the extreme right.

A map of Allen's estates commissioned by him towards the end of his life shows the impact he had on the landscape surrounding Bath. In many places around the skyline he planted various fir plantations or 'forests', including one along the northern side of Green Down (plots 67 – 'Colthursts', 70 & 71 on the map) which consisted of a long belt running between Hanginglands Lane and Fox Hill. This belt continued on westward over the former Widcombe Field and eastward into Prior Park grounds where it was known as the Rookery (presumably deciduous). Although Allen planted many native trees, the large number of firs which he used was a remarkable innovation. Being mainly reserved for the skyline, and '*... disposed in a manner which bespeaks the taste as well as the munificence of Mr. Allen*', they were seen as '*...the pride and ornament of the surrounding country*'.

Also prominently marked on the map are the many driveways which Allen laid out around his estate (few of which survive today) reaching as far as Bathampton Down to the east, and beyond Fox Hill to the west. They mostly followed the edge of the downs and were evidently designed to take advantage of the fine views. Richard Jones, Allen's Clerk of Works, estimated that these drives (or 'coach roads' as he called them) measured in total at least ten miles in length. In a letter of 1763, Samuel Derrick, a Master of Ceremonies in Bath, wrote, '*The ride bordering the grounds is miles in extent in which the views of the city, river and adjacent country are every minute so varied that to me it wears the appearance of a fairy ground, nothing can be more enchanting*'.

On Green/Colthursts Down the map shows two of these 'rides', one on the outer edge of the fir belt, the other on the inside. At the eastern end, the inner ride merely turned south along the side of Hanginglands Lane to the main road, but the outer ride continued across the Lane by the present 'Dry Arch' or 'Rustic Bridge', with another branch crossing the Lane further down on the level. On the opposite side of the Lane, these drives divided again to skirt the Rookery and other plantations before crossing over Ralph Allen's Drive, either to the entrance of Prior Park Mansion, or to the Lawns behind. The terracing that can still be seen at the top of the field on the west side of Ralph Allen's Drive are possibly remains of these rides.

At the western end, both rides crossed Fox Hill (the outer one possibly by means of some form of bridge) into an area of plantation on the former Common Fields of Widcombe which Allen seems to have turned into a grassed 'park' ground with a wide central drive. After passing through or around the edge of the plantation, the two rides met in the central drive before continuing southward to what appears to have been a formal gateway into the Bradford Road, somewhere opposite the entrance to Horsecombe Brow.



Detail taken from the J.Charlton map of Lyncombe and Widcombe of 1799, showing Green Down

### The 19th century

A map of Widcombe drawn up in 1799 by the Trustees of Bruton Hospital (who had acquired the lordship of the manor after the Dissolution) shows that most, if not all, of these plantations and rides were still in existence, but by the 1820s the Ralph Allen estate had been broken up and the whole area of the downs was ripe for development. The fir plantations had become mature and there is frequent reference to them being block felled. By the time of the 1839 Widcombe Tithe Apportionment, only the Rookery in Prior Park remained, together with a few clumps in the field later called The Firs on the south side of North Road. The Green Down fields, as elsewhere, became more intensively cultivated, with Fox Hill Farm on the west side already in appearance, the two adjoining fields being further subdivided into three. The other field, formerly called Colthurst's Down, is called the Beeches in the Apportionment, and on the later 1884 OS map it can be seen that the firs had been replaced by a single line of deciduous trees.



Other developments included the rapid expansion of open-cast quarrying, particularly in the Combe Down area on the south-west side of the MOD site, adjoining North Road. The road itself had already been brought under the control of the Bath Turnpike Trust, at Ralph Allen's request, in 1763, and the tithe map shows a turnpike house next to the Bradford Road at the junction with Fox Hill. In Ralph Allen's time the only building on the down other than his own quarrymen's houses was Stonehouse, possibly of 17th century origin, but by 1839 Combe Down village was already growing rapidly, consisting of a mixture of quarrymen's dwellings and residences for convalescents who benefited from the healthy airs of the down. It was at this time that the Jews Burial Ground, Greendown House and Greendown Place made their appearance on the south side of the Bradford Road. By 1884 some small-scale quarrying had taken place beside the road on the opposite side in the Green Down field, possibly for roadstone, together with the appearance in 1881 of a tank or water-tower of the Combe Down Water Works (demolished in 1964).



Detail taken from Cotterell's map of Bath of 1852.

By 1839 changes had also taken place on the slopes below Green/Colthurst Down. In what had formerly been a group of common fields called 'Loup's Hills', or simply 'The Hills', a residence then known as 'Woodlands' (the present 'Fersfield') had been built with its own private grounds and an entrance drive leading up from Perrymead. There was also a rear entrance from Blind Lane, later provided with a Lodge. Further to the west, on the opposite side of Fox Hill Lane, Foxhill Grove had also been built, possibly before 1800. Later, by 1884, 'Woodlands' had been renamed 'Warners' (the name Fersfield being adopted soon after), and the grounds enlarged, allowing two new entrance drives to be put through, connecting with Fox Hill Lane from the west, as appears today.



Detail taken from the 1884 OS 25-inch map.

### 20th century

In the first half of the century, before the acquisition of the Green Down fields for the MOD establishment, there were few changes in the immediate neighbourhood, except for the appearance of open cast quarrying along the southern edge of the Beeches - presumably an extension of the workings on the Combe Down side. However, the 1902 OS map shows that the southernmost field of Green Down by the road was already being developed for housing, as a few buildings are shown of what was to become Ralph Allen Park, ranging each side of the water works tower. This development was certainly complete by 1930, including the rank of houses in Fox Hill Lane. Behind the houses fronting the road were some tennis courts, together with premises belonging to the Combe Down Water Works. Both of these were cleared away for the MOD site, as also Fox Hill Farm. Unlike the other sites mentioned above, this area was served by electric trams between 1904 and 1930, along the Bradford Road, terminating at Shaft Road.



Detail taken from the 1936 OS 25-inch map.

## THE WARMINSTER ROAD MOD SITE IN BATHWICK

### Bathwick Fields

In the Middle Ages the area containing the MOD site was part of one of the open arable fields of the Manor of Bathwick which, until the Dissolution, belonged to the Nunnery of Wherewell in Hants. In 1726 the manor was purchased by William Pulteney who, with a view to its development, commissioned a map a year later which shows that this area had been enclosed into several large fields; The Twenty Acres (containing the MOD site) and, on its west side, The Fourteen Acres. The Twenty Acres was bounded on the south by a local parish road leading from Bathwick village to Bathampton and Claverton known as Hampton Way, a name adopted for the fields above it towards Hampton Down. Along the northern boundary of the field the map shows a strip of plantation or orchard overlooking the crest of the steep field below known as 'Undercliff' (or merely, 'The Cliff') and a larger field on the west towards the village called 'Friz [Furze] Moore'. These two, adjoining the Avon, appear to have been rough pasture grounds containing several marl pits along the river bank.

At the western end of Twenty Acres was the manorial (or parish) boundary between Bathwick and Bathampton which ran down the hill to the sharp bend in the river now known as Pile Corner. In the corner where the boundary met the river, on the steep slope below the Twenty Acres, was a small plot of ground containing a market garden, orchard and cottage, accessed from Hampton Way by a pathway along the parish boundary. This plot appears to have been a new smallholding which, becoming known soon after this date as 'The Folly', was presumably thought to be a risky venture.



The northern sector of Bathwick, with the village on the left, as shown on a Pulteney estate map of about 1790, with the MOD site superimposed in red. The map was surveyed in order to identify the springs and streams. The fields are numbered: 1. The Folly garden. 2&3. The Cliff. 4. The Twenty Acres. 5. Friz Moore. 7. The Fourteen Acres. Note that the footpath crossing the Twenty Acres was still in use up to the time the MOD establishment was built.



## The Pleasure Gardens

By the 1750s however, Bathwick was already being drawn into the developments taking place on the opposite side of the river in Georgian Bath. Two pleasure grounds popular with the visitors had been opened up in the parish; Spring Gardens (by the town weir) and Bathwick Villa (near the later Forester Road), accessed by the Bathwick ferry crossing on the site of the later Pulteney Bridge. The rest of the parish being still essentially rural, it also provided an attractive circular route for visitors along Hampton Way through the Avon valley towards Bathampton, then renowned for its beauty (often referred to as Arno's Vale, from its resemblance to Tuscany), although relatively inaccessible from the city, as noted by Philip Thicknesse in his *New Prose Bath Guide*, 1778;

‘.. some of the Bridle-Roads being known to but few, should be pointed out ... The pleasantest of which is, from BATH to *Claverton*, the lower Way; passing ... from *Bath Wick* to *Bath Hampton* ... After entering that Village, a broad, handsome Road [Bathwick Hill] offers itself on the right Hand, which leads up to the Race-Ground, on *Claverton*; but instead of ascending the Hill, take the first left-hand Lane [Hampton Way], which leads through a Variety of beautiful Meadows, not far from the Margin of the River, and afford[s] also many picturesque Objects ... Just below the Church at *Bath Hampton*, there is a Ferry-Boat, which conveys Horses and Carriages ... and lands you near *Bath Easton*: but it is not always passable; and indeed it is necessary to smooth the Brow of the *Jezabel* who is the *Bateliere*, as well as the Face of the Waters, to pass over it *calmly*.’

By this time however, the Pulteney Estate was rapidly being developed by William Pulteney's successor (also William Pulteney), culminating in the laying out of the Sydney Gardens in 1795. This had the effect of opening up new walks and rides to the east of the city and, for fashionable riding, a circular drive was laid out around the perimeter of the Gardens. With the new layout of roads, much of the winding route of Hampton Way was bypassed by a new avenue leading from the drive at the eastern end of the gardens, to join up with the original route near the present entrance of the MOD site. The new avenue, to be named Upper Great Pulteney Street, was evidently seen as a further extension of the building development, but Pulteney was also keen to open up a new turnpike road which, from his bridge in Bath, would pass along this route through Bathampton to another crossing at Bathford, thereby bypassing the existing London Road through Walcot and Batheaston. This was not only resisted strongly by the Bath Turnpike Trust, but also by the City Council, and the scheme was eventually dropped.

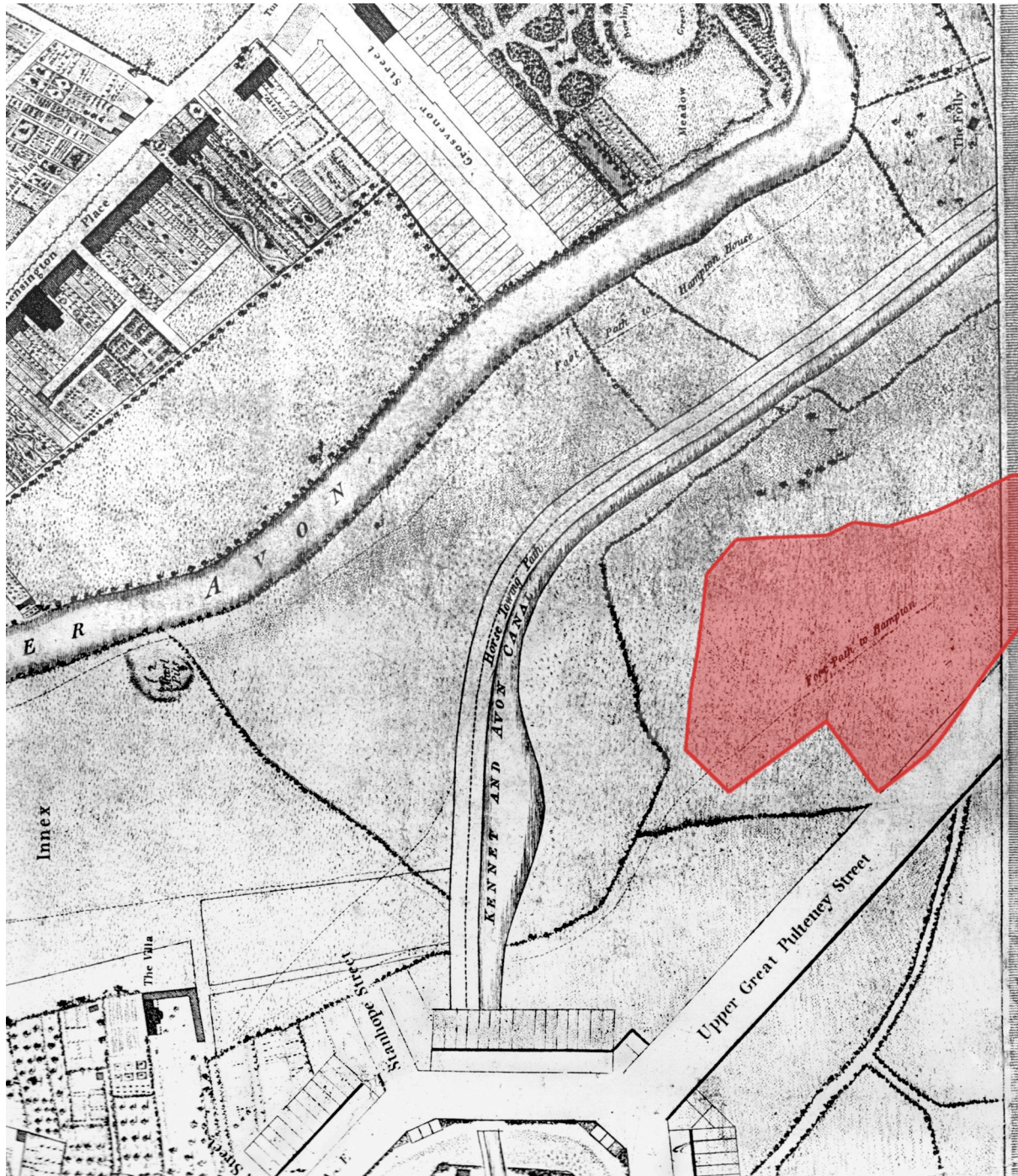
Just before these events, in 1791, a new riverside pleasure ground called the Grosvenor Garden Vauxhall had been opened up by John Eveleigh on the opposite side of the river by the London Road, which was initially very popular. These were laid out just below Pile Corner, opposite the Folly, from where a free ferry could be obtained. Unfortunately, competition from the Sydney Gardens, together with the tendency for the site to be flooded, led to the abandonment of the project by 1812.

## The Kennet & Avon Canal

Meanwhile, in 1794 authorisation had been given for the Kennet & Avon Canal to pass through Bathwick, and by 1798 construction was well advanced. Crossing the Bathampton boundary, it passed above the Folly grounds into Undercliff, just below the crest, after which it turned south into Friz Moore, cutting off the southern corner of the field on its way towards the Sydney Gardens and the tunnel under the gardens drive. The plantation in the strip above the canal in Twenty Acres seems to have disappeared by this time. By 1802 this section was complete as far as the proposed Lock Flight at Widcombe, and though commercial navigation was held up until 1810, the canal had an immediate impact as a leisure amenity.

The route through the Sydney Gardens was considered a particular asset, as expressed by the proprietor at the time; ‘*The novelty of the Kennet and Avon Canal which is carried through the Garden and Ride, and completed in the most handsome manner with Ornamental Iron Bridges and with improvements in the plantations, add considerably to the Picturesque Beauties for which this spot has been so universally admired*’. However, the towing path itself provided a ‘terrace’ from which one could admire the fine views between Bath and the Limpley Stoke valley, and became a popular route for such keen walkers such as Jane Austen. Although the pathway to the Folly from

Hampton Way had been cut off, a swivel bridge was provided by the Canal Company (thereafter known as the 'Folly Bridge') for a crossing which allowed an alternative route back to Bath.



**Detail from Harcourt Masters' map of Bath of 1806, showing the new Sydney Gardens and Kennet & Avon Canal. Note also The Villa pleasure ground to the left, and the Grosvenor Gardens, top, with the swimming bath to the left of the space marked 'Meadow'**

To deal with the brisk trade which ensued after 1810, various wharfs were opened along the approach to Bath, the furthest from the town being established on the inner side of the canal in the corner cut off from Friz Moore. Known as Darlington Wharf after one of Pulteney's successors, it contained a busy coal depôt, boat building yard and other utilities, and on the towpath side was the Bradford Boat Office where passengers boarded the 'high-speed' 'Scotch' boats during the 1830s and 1840s. The latter, which still survives, still displays its Humane Society signboard 'for lifebuoys and dragpoles'. Entrance to the wharf was through the present Darlington Road where there were also several cottages which owned the remaining fragments of ground which previously belonged to Friz Moore and the Fourteen Acres adjoining the main road. By the 1850s these grounds became a market garden known as the Bathwick Nursery which remained in existence up to WWII.



## **The River**

Since the Avon above the town weir never became navigable, it was increasingly used for pleasure rather than trade in the 18th century. The Grosvenor Gardens was an attempt to exploit this feature, and among its attractions were boating, fishing and, uniquely, a swimming bath adjoining the river. In 1815, a piece of riverside waste ground below the canal near a marl pit in Friz Moore, a little way downstream of the abandoned Grosvenor bath, was adopted for the site of a new swimming bath known as the Cleveland Swimming Baths, named after the then owner of Bathwick, the Duke of Cleveland. This was frequented by Bath gentlemen who paid a subscription of a guinea a year, and many notable citizens of appear on the list. These baths, designed by John Pinch, remain one of the earliest examples of out-door lidos in this country. Also built by Pinch a few years later was a rank of artisan houses called Hampton Row above the swimming bath which ranged along the towing path of the canal. Just downstream of the bath, a small tea-garden with boating facilities was opened soon after the opening of the Cleveland Bridge in 1827. It went on to become the venue of the Avon Rowing Club, founded in 1864, with lawns and tennis courts, and remains in business today as the Bath Boating Station and Restaurant.

On the opposite side of the river pleasure continued to have a strong influence despite the demise of the Grosvenor gardens. The baths had been converted to a fishing lake ('Grosvenor Pond') with an inlet from the river, notable for the of extraordinary size of the Pike there, and in 1830 Grosvenor footbridge, Bath's first suspension bridge, was built across Pile Corner near the site of the ferry. It was designed and built by Thomas Shew Esqr., an amateur artist, as a commercial enterprise (a toll of 1/2d was paid at the toll-house) to improve the value of his property at the eastern end of Grosvenor Place by attracting walkers to the pleasant walks on each side of the river - as expressed enthusiastically by Captain R.Mainwaring in his *Annals of Bath 1800-1830*; '*..The delightful walks which this bridge enables the pedestrian to accomplish are, indeed, infinite and unbounded. The beautiful scenery which unfolds itself in every direction, is enchanting to the eye of a picturesque traveller, and affords a rich display of subjects for his prolific pencil ...*'. Since the bridge led over to the Folly footpath, it was probably at this time that the owners of the Folly, still yeomen and dairy farmers, saw a profitable opportunity in also providing refreshments to the walkers. The suspension bridge over the river was released from toll (1/2d) in 1925 and replaced by the present ferro-concrete girder bridge in 1929, but the original piers and flood arches still remain.

## **The New Warminster Road**

The New Warminster Road (now the A36) was an ambitious scheme undertaken in 1834 by the Black Dog Turnpike Trust, which ran on an almost completely new route into Bath via Limpley Stoke to avoid the steep hills at Midford and Monkton Combe. Bypassing Bathampton, it joined up with Hampton Way at the present junction of Bathampton Lane to continue down the avenue to Sydney Gardens, the garden drives being converted to public roads. Foreshadowing the railway age, it was a considerable engineering project which met with much opposition, particularly from the Kennet & Avon Canal Company who were concerned that the road would cause land-slips onto the canal below. One of the arbitrators who spoke in favour of the road was the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who had just arrived in the area to design the future Great Western Railway. However the new road was hailed as a success, as it presented a fine entry into Bath from St.Georges Hill, where several fine residences such as Hampton House and Hampton Hall had already been built. In about 1852 another residence, Hazelwood, appeared at the top of the Avenue in a plot in the Twenty Acres, the only house to be built in 'Upper Pulteney Street'.

## **The Great Western Railway and after**

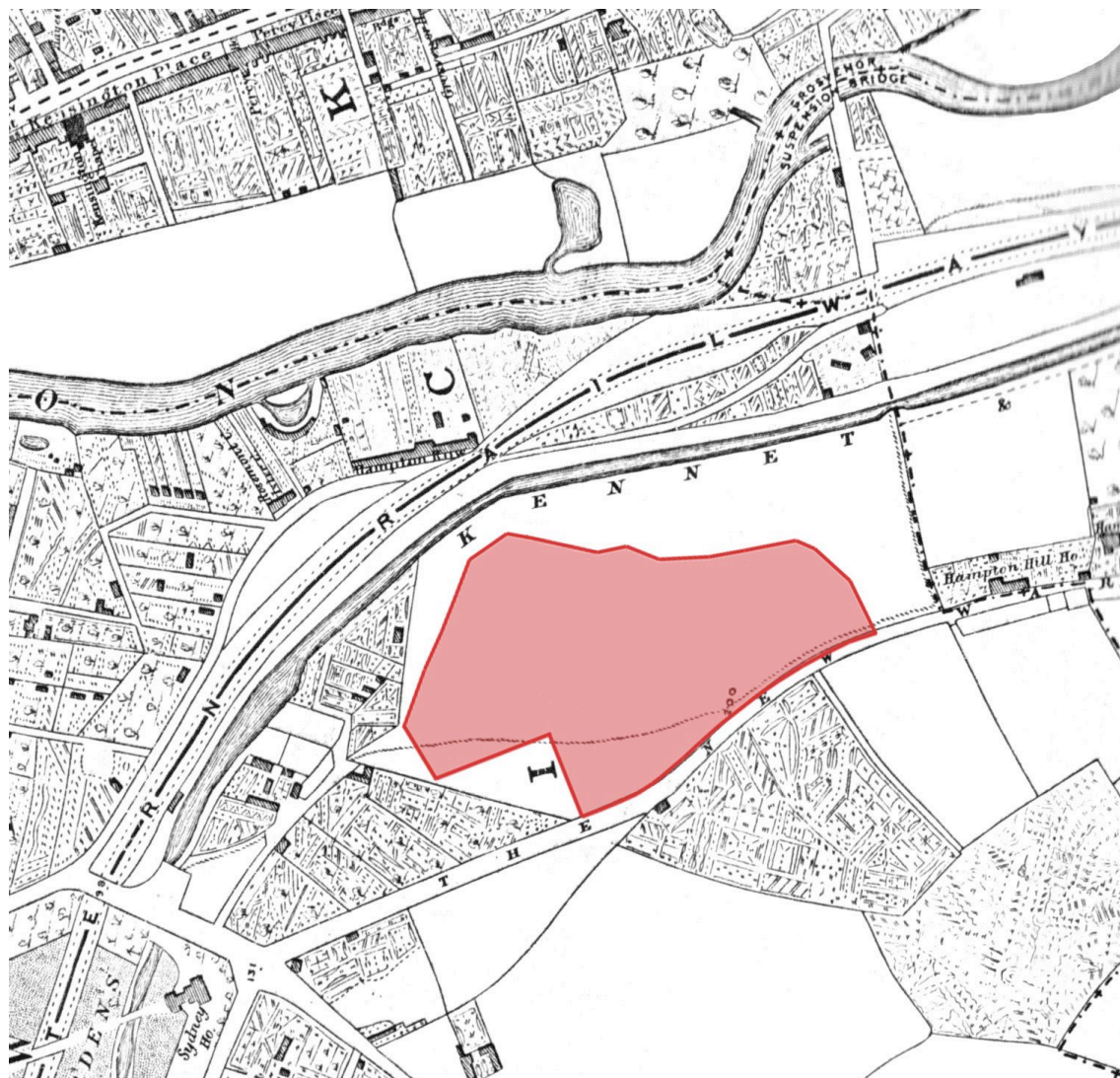
However, the construction of the Great Western Railway through Bath in 1840 was more intrusive. Roughly following the outer side of the canal, various deep cuttings and high embankments were necessary, particularly at the bend at Hampton Row. Here the canal had to be re-cut further into the hillside on a high embankment to allow room for the railway cutting, thereby isolating the curve of Hampton Row from the canal. Further along towards Pile Corner, the line was built on a high embankment close to the river bank which needed strengthening with piles - hence 'Pile Corner'. On the opposite side, the Folly was now enclosed by embankments on each side, and a pathway route

which formerly ran along the riverside was replaced by a new footpath which ran between the two, crossing over the railway (presumably by a level crossing) at Hampton Row.

Since much of the Folly premises was required for the railway, the property was completely redeveloped and the garden converted to a tea-garden. This was evidently successful, and by 1850 had acquired its own brewery, becoming the Folly Tavern. In 1861 it was again converted - this time to a pleasure ground with shrubberies, fountain, dance floor, illuminations &c., under the name of 'The Cremorne Pleasure Gardens' which ran until 1884 when it returned to use as an inn with brewery attached. Indeed, it remained in business until 1942 when it was damaged by a stray bomb during the Bath blitz. It was never repaired, and rapidly fell into ruins, so that today only a few fragments can be seen among the undergrowth.

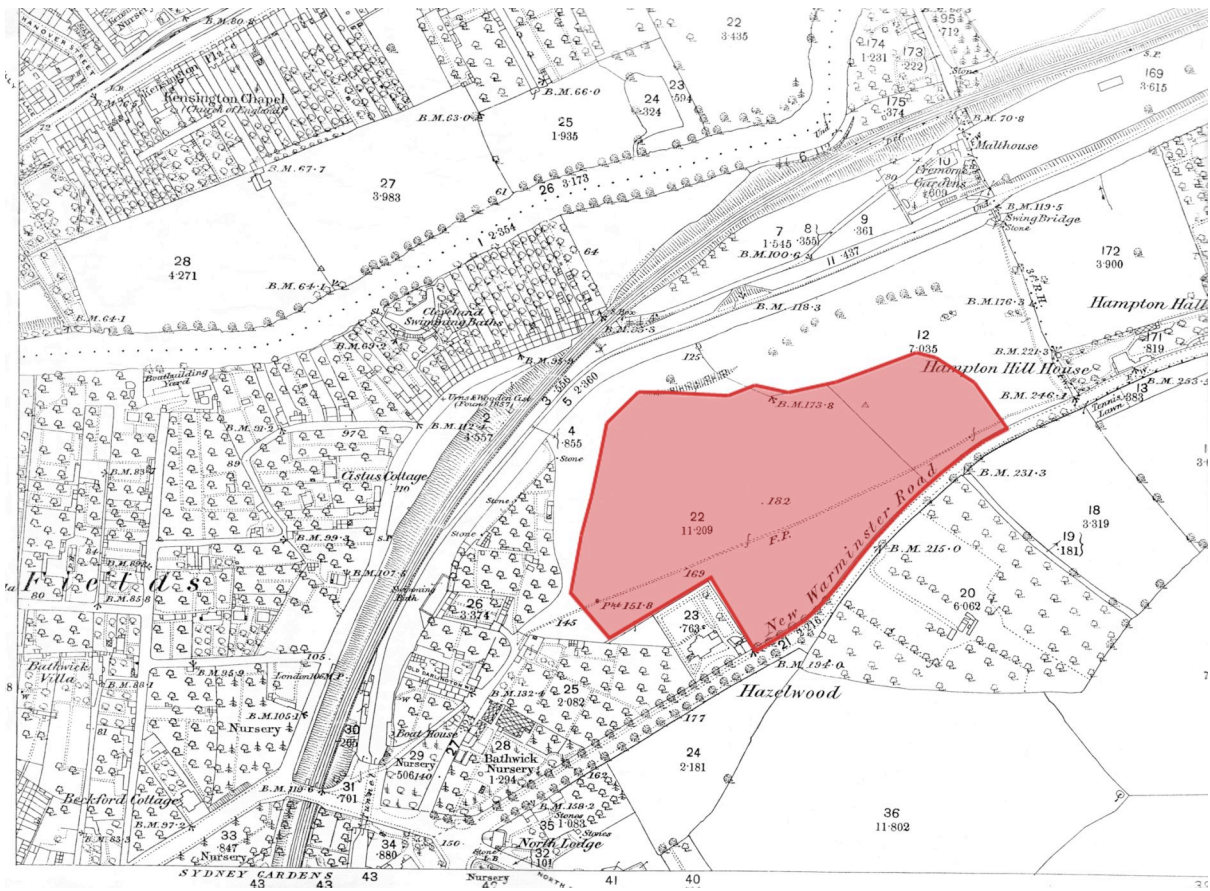
Being unable to compete with the railway, the canal was soon sold to the GWR, but continued in use for trading purposes. A new purpose was also found in 1869, at the eastern end of Darlington Wharf, for the city's first free public swimming bath, which was situated in the canal itself. For privacy it was fenced off from the rest of the waterway with iron sheets and gratings (supplied by Stothert & Pitt), with fenders at each end to protect it from collision with barges. Sited next to the coal yard, conditions were not ideal (hence its nick-name 'the Mud Hole') and the Corporation quickly acquired the Cleveland Bath a little further down the hill when it came up for sale in 1900.

However, by the end of the 19th century, this part of Bathwick began to settle down, and it is remarkable that no further changes of any significance took place until the building of the MOD establishment.



Detail taken from Cotterell's 1852 map of Bath, showing the new Great Western Railway. Not the curved roadway in front of Hampton Road, cut off by the railway, and below that the Cleveland Baths, and on the extreme left, the Boating Station. Note also on the opposite side of the river the Fishing Lake that replaced the Grosvenor Baths, and further upstream, the Grosvenor Bridge.





Detail taken from the 1885 OS 25-inch map.