

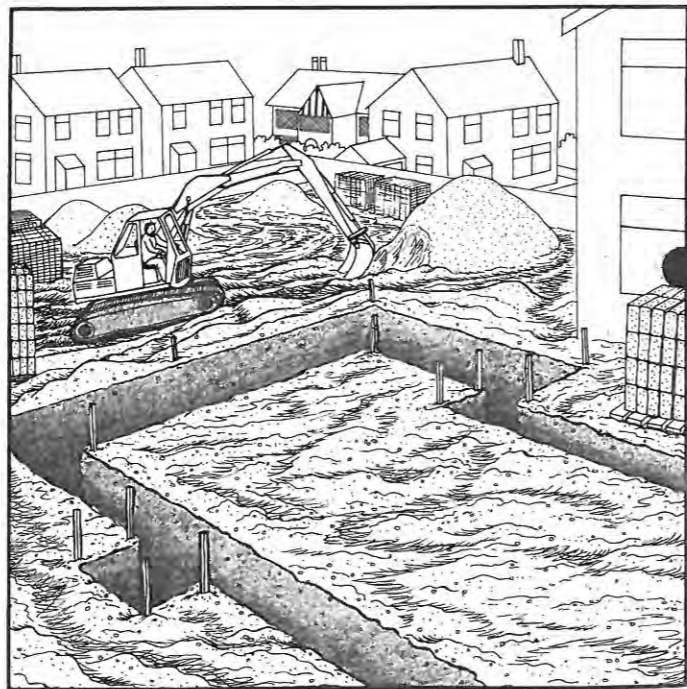


These remains at Wall in Staffordshire are in the care of English Heritage and the site and a small museum are open to the public and, of course, to schools. The Romans called the place LETOCETUM. On the Watling Street it was first a military base and later a town. The visible remains are a mansio (a motel for travellers on official business) and a bath-house nearby.

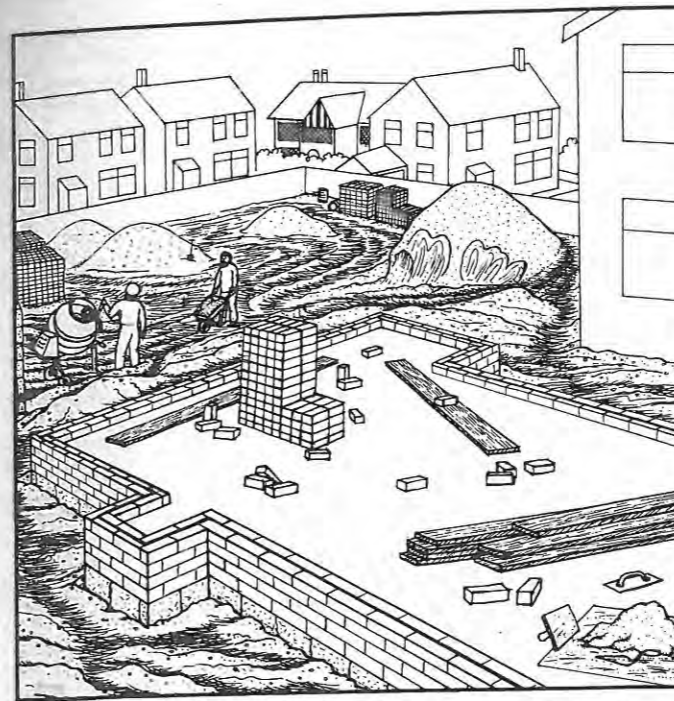
The photo above does illustrate a problem. There are many sites like Wall with remains of buildings no more than 50cm high. There are also, of course, splendid ruins like those at Rievaulx Abbey in North Yorkshire. At least, some parts of it are splendid like the church but most of the cloister and the infirmary block exist only at ground level. An imagination is required to conjure up a 3-dimensional image of what the buildings were like in the past. I don't think that people (children or adults) find it easy to step into the Dr Who telephone box in their minds and actually create this image for themselves. To do this I think two 'inputs' of information are required before peering down at the ruins.

First, a knowledge is required of the buildings of the past and what went on in them. What is a reredorter? What would it have been like? Surely some basic reconstruction of the building must exist in the mind before we can 'people' it with the sights, sounds and smells of medieval life? After all, the monks did not squat in a roofless loo or kneel down to pray with the rain splashing down on the high altar or eat in silence in a dining room with no floor, or indeed scale sheer walls (the stairs have now gone) to get to bed! Some of this preparation can be done in the classroom before the visit. It needs to be thought-out carefully, though, so that the excitement of seeing a ruin like Rievaulx for the first time is not spoilt.

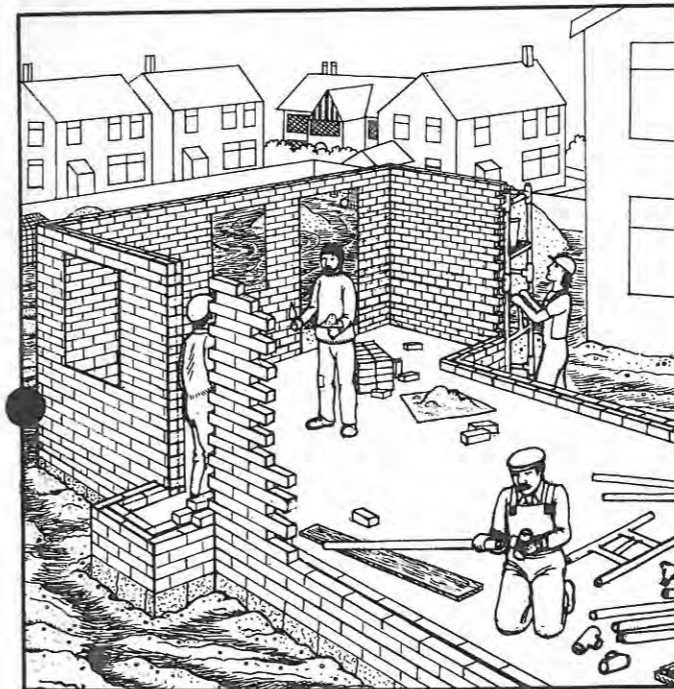
The second piece of foreknowledge needed to appreciate low ruins concerns the techniques of construction. If we accept that we are very often asked to look at a building which does not go much beyond the damp course, as it were, then it seems a good idea to look at some modern comparisons. I've used these ideas below successfully with children and adults to prepare them for the 'shock' of trying to understand ancient monuments.



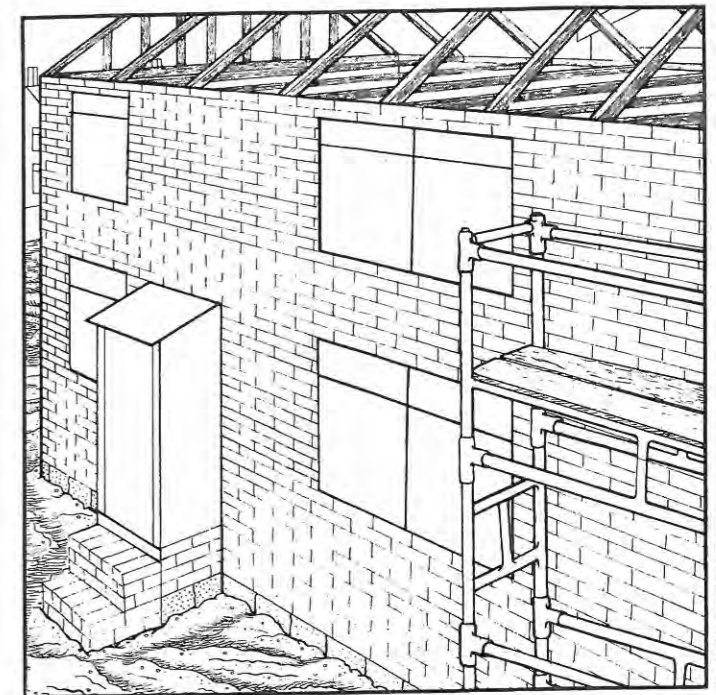
On a modern housing estate. At this stage the house is measured out and the trenches for the concrete foundations are dug. Archaeologists can usually discover foundation trenches even when the stone or wooden walls that sat in them originally have been removed, or 'robbed-out' as an archaeologist would say.



Here the builders have got as far as the damp course. Archaeologists of the future will be grappling with sites like these! Can you build up a picture of the completed house from what you see here? It's not as easy as you think even though you may be very familiar with the particular type of house shown here at foundation level. Another point to note here is how small the building and in particular each room look. Try to imagine where the tele and the armchairs are going.



In archaeological terms this next drawing falls into the category of experiment or reconstruction. If this were an archaeological site the archaeologists would have to use knowledge of similar buildings, or perhaps accounts or illustrations, to reconstruct windows, doors and upper storeys. The building is beginning to get bigger, don't you think?



Now that the roof is beginning to go on it looks almost homely. The rooms, if you could see them, look big now — try taking all the tables and chairs out of your classroom and see what a difference it makes. Once you tile, glaze and carpet and fill it with objects and people it will look just right. Now look back at the photo of Wall and do the same!

You could 'teach' these ideas in the classroom by, for example, photocopying these drawings for display and discussion or by getting your pupils to draw out the sequence themselves. I've also used various modelling methods — plasticine bricks or Lego. You might want your pupils to see these building operations at first hand — remember, though, that building sites are very dangerous.

In the next issue of REMNANTS I want to take this exercise one stage further and look at the problem of using plans and elevations but show how they may be used to advantage in understanding ruined ancient structures.

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## English Heritage and GCSE

Leafing through the wealth of material published on the subject of the General Certificate of Secondary Education, I am struck by nothing so much as the relevance and potential of our man-made environment, sites, buildings and historic landscape for a wide range of disciplines and subject areas, especially for the practical coursework elements of the new syllabuses.

The purpose of this article is to look at ways in which the English Heritage Education Service can help you with resources and facilities to develop effective strategies for the elements of courses based on the use of evidence and the direct experience of pupils in problem solving tasks. Free admission to our sites for pre-booked school groups is one of the major benefits that we can offer. To actually fund journeys out of school for fieldwork is a major problem and free admission may help to bring the study of a major site within the range possibility.

In the Education Service we, like you, have been reading the national criteria for different subject areas and studying the almost bewildering range of potential syllabuses. What is clear to us is that you will, in increasing numbers, be doing fieldwork on aspects of the man-made environment with groups of GCSE

students as well as studying the major properties in our care. Our sites can provide a basic well identified and manageable fieldwork element in the coursework of individual students. This will prove an important key to the development of successful coursework strategies in many disciplines.

For the study of history and archaeology, the uses are clear, especially in the "History Around Us" section of the Schools History Project. Reading the national criteria it is clear that the historic environment is a major element of the primary evidence used by historians and can profitably be linked with the study of artefacts and archives. The sites provide material for the study of many historic periods.

The study of a building's growth and development, sections demolished, additions in different styles and materials for a variety of purposes, will develop pupils' visual awareness and powers of deduction. It also promotes an understanding of cause and consequence, of continuity and change, similarity and difference. Studying a site or building and the people who built it and lived in it may also serve to develop a pupil's understanding of the social and cultural values of people of the past. It may help students to achieve an empathetic reconstruction of their ways of thinking, ideas, attitudes and beliefs. To process through the cloisters of a monastery and into the church chanting and singing hymns may simply give a concept of size and location, but may also provide an impression of the life of the monks, their duties and vows. The location of a house or castle, the accommodation of its inhabitants, the relationship between different parts of the buildings and their functions will all give a greater understanding of its history and the people who lived in it. The historical graffiti of prisoners in the Tower of London or Dover Castle give a vivid insight. These are but a few suggestions. . .

The study of sites and buildings can stimulate an interest in and an abiding personal enthusiasm for a pursuit of knowledge about the past. Young people who develop a love and understanding of historic buildings and sites will carry this on throughout their lives, it will even increase as they grow older.



Stonehenge in watercolour with scratching out by J. M. W. Turner.

For other disciplines sites may be equally useful. For art and design students, the use of the man-made environment and, of course, individual special sites may provide excellent direct experience, indeed, the use of our sites for inspiration is well documented in the work of such artists as Constable and Turner as well as contemporary artists like David Gentleman. For students of architecture the sites may also be used to enhance observation by the study of architectural detail and structure and to give a knowledge of historical forms and designs.

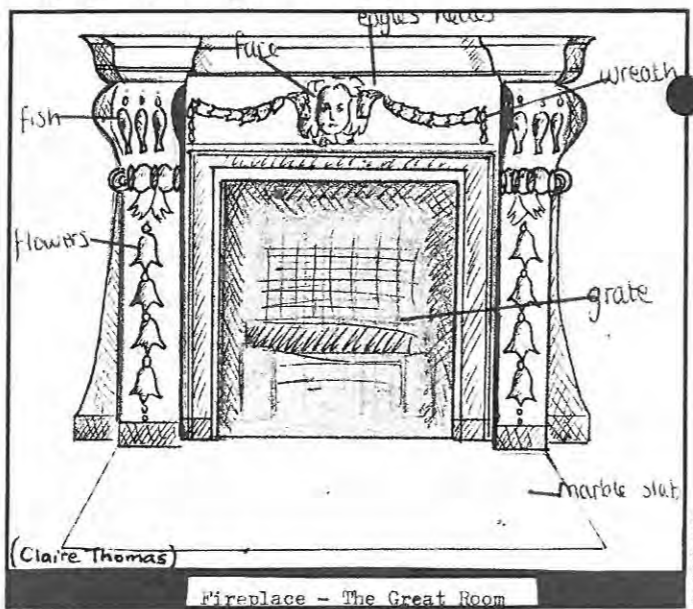
The same historical structures may likewise repay the study of craft, design and technology students as the subject of detailed surveys, projects on the use of materials and the principles of structural engineering. What about problem solving exercises in the design of exhibitions, graphics, shops and other facilities for our sites? The work of our craftsmen, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc, in conserving and reconstructing the historic fabric may also be of great interest.

I wonder how many English teachers have used our sites as a stimulus for drama, poetry, descriptive or imaginative prose. The mystical beauty and sunlit peace of our sites on a summer's day

may contrast dramatically with the brooding mystery of a site enveloped in autumn mist or racked by winter storm. In the same way in view of the national initiatives and many local projects to improve oral communication, have you considered that the major benefit of a site visit might be the problem solving exercises and class discussion that it stimulates?

By contrast the new Home Economics courses do not at first glance make use of historical material but students may be fascinated by the first hand evidence of the domestic arrangements of our ancestors, their kitchens, dining rooms, washing and toilet facilities. Such objects may provide the contrasts that highlight current practice and when students continue their studies to A level historical background is an important element of many of the syllabuses.

Meanwhile, have the geologists thought to analyse the variety of stones used at different periods for phases of construction? What are their origins and what are the implications in economic terms for the acquisition and transportation of such materials? What about the wearing qualities and strengths of different types of stone and their durability as building material? The geographers may also use sites and monuments in their study of their trade routes and settlement patterns, demographic surveys, mapping, the planning of land usage, etc.

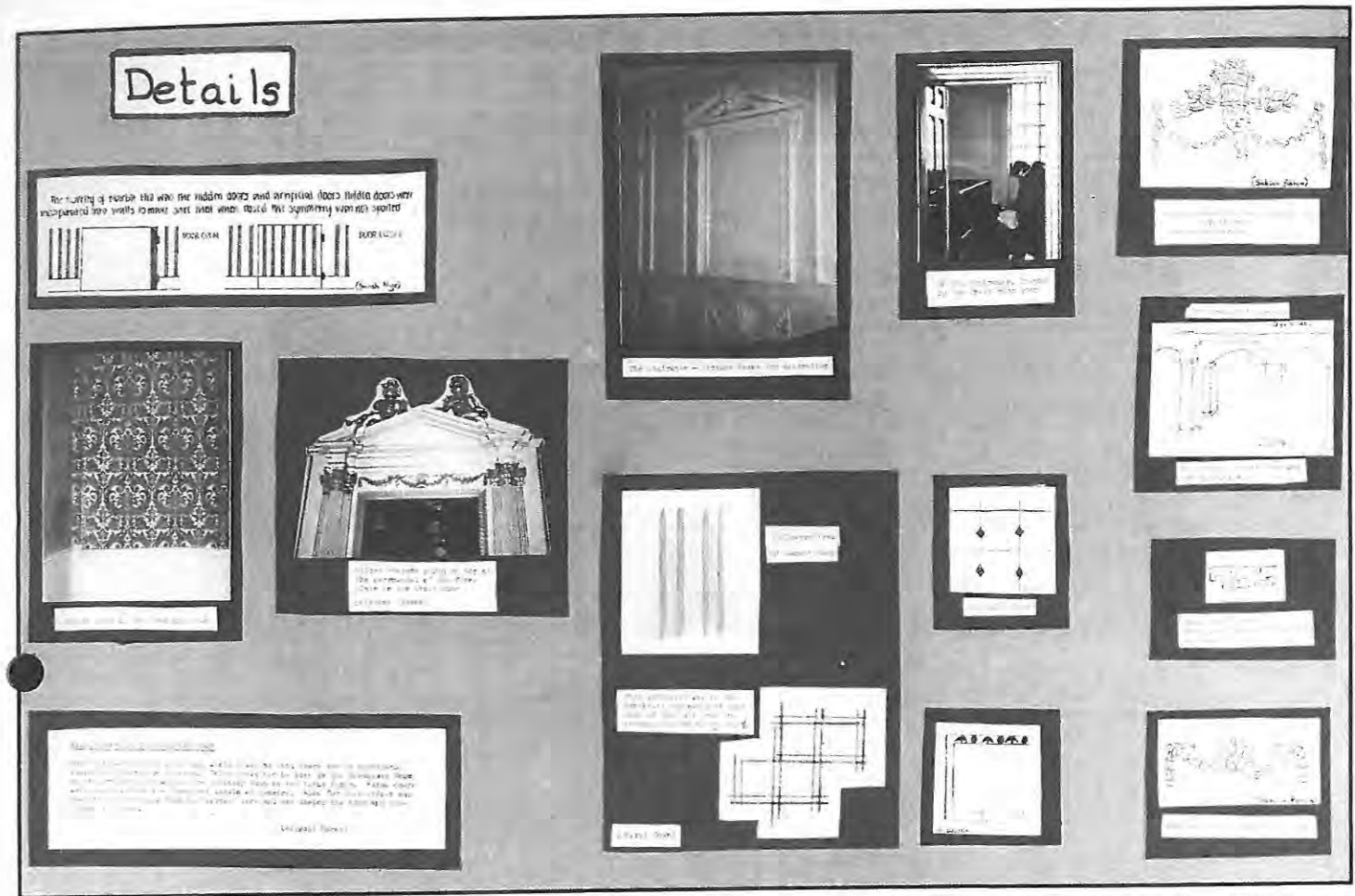


The development of fieldwork skills is important for all age groups. The methods and techniques originally acquired in the primary school will be developed and refined in the work of pupils submitting practical coursework as an element of their GCSE examinations. Continually, in talking to pupils of all phases, we find that the practical fieldwork elements of their courses, where they have had to go out into the field and put into practice the classroom theory they have learned, have been tremendously important in crystallising the work that has gone before. They return refreshed and with a renewed enthusiasm for their studies, because the fieldwork has shown them the relevance and practical application of their previous work. In the same way, although it is much more difficult to quantify, where a site or an historic area has been used as an inspiration for art, drama or writing, it is invariably effective.

We have been looking at ways in which we can help and support you in teaching the new courses by providing resources and facilities. Our organisation consists not only of the buildings that are open to the public and the people who maintain their fabric, but also the academic experts who carry out the important research necessary before a building or site can be given the legal protection of being listed or scheduled or before it can be opened to the public. Our archaeologists and scientists survey, excavate, record, study and conserve.

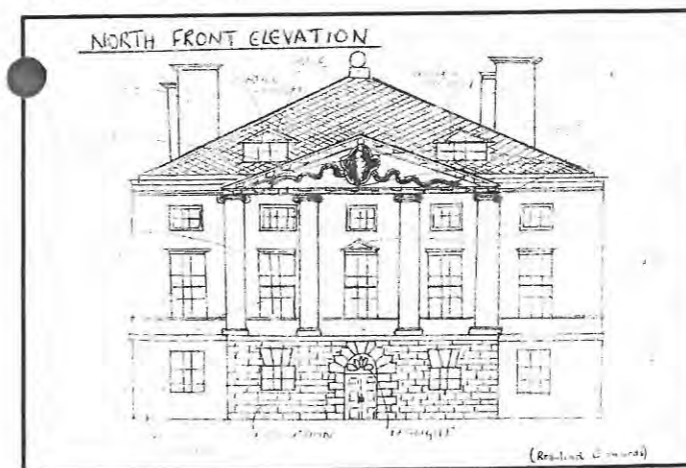
The Education Service has been established to make these resources more readily accessible to young people and their teachers.

When you are planning to visit one of our sites and need general background information, we can send you a Teachers' Site Information Sheet. There will eventually be one for each of



the properties that we open to the public: they cover practical site information about access and facilities, a site description, ideas for the teacher and a bibliography. They are available free of charge.

The research that has gone to produce these leaflets has entailed the production of much more detailed information and bibliographies. This information can be made available if you have specific requests or enquiries. It is held both centrally and by our Area Custodians, at the addresses that you apply to for free admission to monuments.



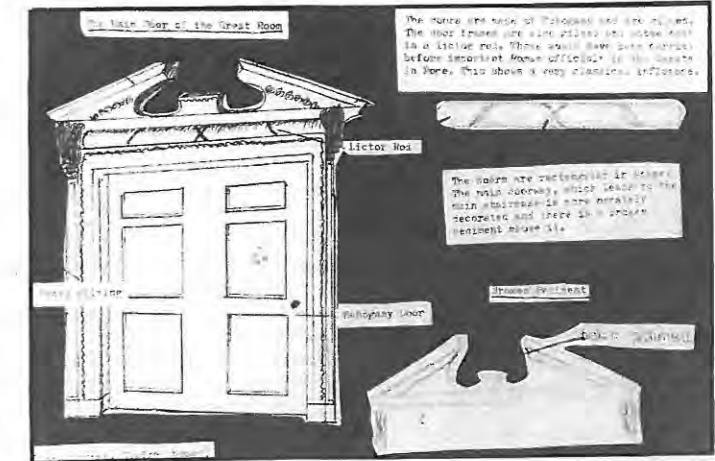
Site specific teachers' packs and packs of documents are intended to help teachers to prepare for, conduct and follow-up a visit to a site or sites. They may cover one site or a series of sites linked by period or location. There is no standard format but they may contain any of the following elements: teachers' books, information for pupils, activity sheets, documents or slides. The contents will vary with the individual site. Some contain materials specifically designed for GCSE fieldwork projects.

We have already produced the materials for Osborne and the Isle of Wight sites. Packs for Tilbury Fort, Rochester Castle, Pevensey Castle, Cleeve and Muchelney Abbeys, Goodrich

Castle, Avebury, Wharram Percy Deserted Medieval Village and Byland Abbey will be produced during 1987.

Educational slide packs with notes dealing with the historical background and architectural and archaeological history of sites are also being produced. These may be part of a teachers' pack or may stand in their own right.

A wide variety of different posters and wallcharts is also being produced. A series of aerial views of castles and later fortifications showing their development is to be published early in the summer term. They will be available singly or as a set with



teaching notes.

Our general series of booklets, Education on Site, covering more general issues to help teachers to use historical sites has got off to an excellent start with "Living History" which deals with the use of drama and role play as a means of interpreting historic sites. Volumes dealing with the use of prehistoric sites, castles, churches, country houses and buildings in the urban environment will be published during 1987.

We already have available on free loan through CFL Vision (formerly Central Film Library) a number of films and videos including "Looking at a Castle", and "Looking at Prehistoric

Sites". These films are specially designed to help young people to study a building and understand what they see. We also lend films free of charge direct from our mail order office in Ruislip. Titles available in this way include "Pickering Castle" and "Living History" a training film for teachers which complements our 'Education on Site' booklet.

We are gradually opening Education Rooms on our sites for use by visiting schools. The type of facility provided varies enormously from site to site, ranging from a covered shelter with chairs and tables to a resource collection of publications, slides, videos, aerial photographs, plans and even handling collections. There may also be equipment for measuring and surveying. At some sites we have the additional benefit of a teacher seconded from the Local Education Authority: in many cases they are working on GCSE projects with local schools.

We also organise and participate in a very large number of in-service training courses for teachers throughout the country. These range from "Learning from the Past" the week-long residential course that we organise in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science to individual site-specific sessions for groups of local teachers. If you feel that we could

help you in developing GCSE projects in this way, please contact the Regional Education Officer for your area.

Although the materials and resources that I have described above are beginning to be produced, we still have a long way to go before all our sites will be covered. If, when you have made use of one of our properties or any of our materials, you have any comments or ideas, or if you feel that you can make an in-put into the materials that we are providing, please do contact us so that they can be built into future materials, courses or publications. If materials are not available for the property that you wish to study, please contact the Regional Education Officer for the area concerned, as they will certainly be able to help you with ideas of contacts, sources and resources that are not necessarily in print.

As we gain experience of the use of the historic environment for GCSE coursework or hear of teachers who are developing interesting schemes we shall include material in Remnants. If you would like to share your own projects through these pages, please write to us, we should be delighted to hear from you.

Alison Heath

## Super Sites competition



Lord Montagu giving English Heritage membership to Brian Thompson, Head of Darell Primary School.

During the autumn of 1986 DOE and English Heritage have been running a competition encouraging children to study major historic buildings in London and helping teachers to make use of the tremendous educational potential of buildings they might not have known before. Entries from the schools had to be in the form of either a wallchart or a game based on first-hand observation of one of the buildings involved. The competition

was sponsored by Gateway Foodmarkets and the Evening Standard. The judges included William Waldegrave, Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment, Bob Holness of Blockbusters, Timothy Hornsby of DOE, Gene Adams, ILEA, Juliet Allan, Head of the Crown Buildings Advisory Group and Tim Pocock of the Evening Standard. They had a very hard time selecting the winners from a wealth of excellent entries.



William Waldegrave and Bob Holness present the prizes to St Francis' Junior School.

They were:  
8 and under;  
Prior Weston Primary School, EC1  
for work on the Jewel Tower  
9-12 years; Wallchart  
Darell Primary School, Richmond  
for work on Ham, Chiswick  
and Marble Hill Houses  
Runner up  
St Francis' Junior School, Stratford  
for work on Eltham Palace  
9-12 years; Game  
Kingswood House School, Epsom  
for work on Ham House  
13-17 years; Wallchart  
Newstead Wood School, Orpington  
for work on Eltham Palace  
13-17 years; Game  
St Paul's School, Barnes  
for work on Kensington Palace

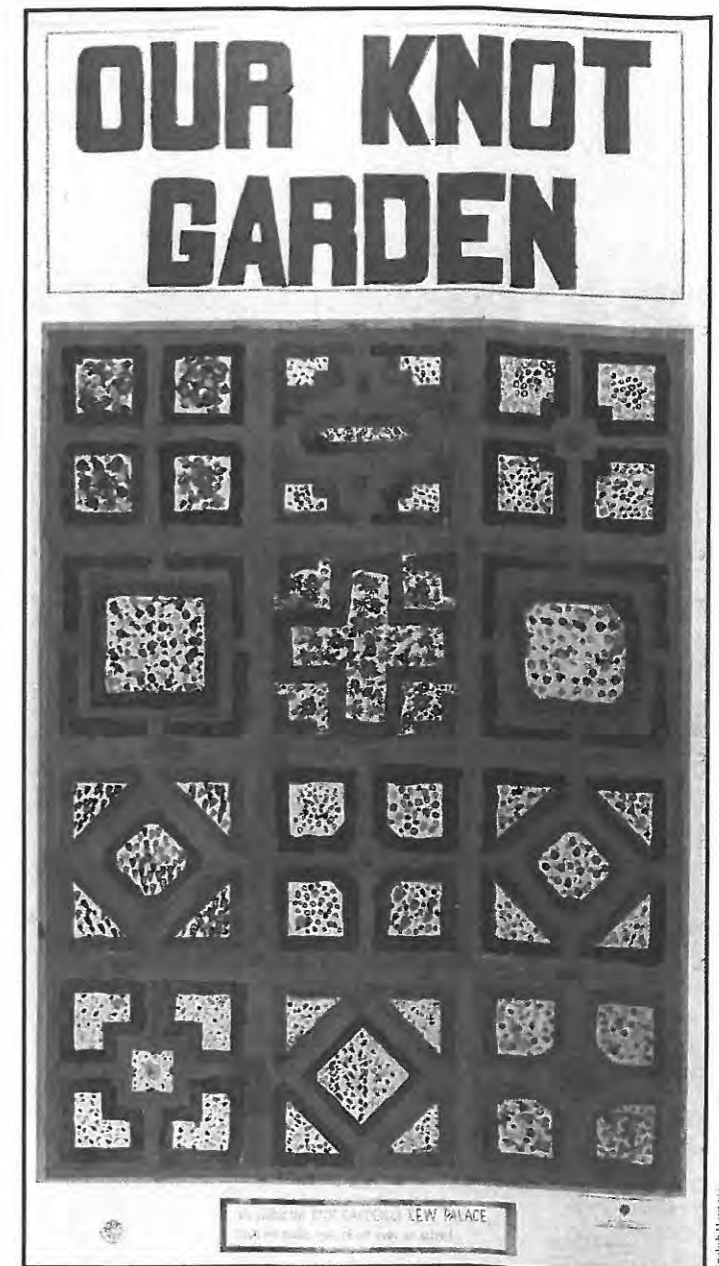
The prize giving took place at the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall on Monday 2 February 1987 and was followed by a celebratory tea.

### A Masque of Peace

Pupils of Oak Lodge Primary School, West Wickham, had visited the Banqueting House as part of their work in preparing their entries for the competition and they had followed this up with a visit to their school by Michael and Alison Bagenal of the Box of Delights Project who taught them about masques and helped the children to produce their own. They were kind enough to come along to the Banqueting House accompanied by "Prince Charles and Princess Elizabeth" (the children of James I) to perform their Masque of Peace for us. It was a really exciting occasion as it is possible that no masque had been performed in the Banqueting House since the early years of the 17th century. Seeing the "royal children" seated on the stools beside the throne must have given many of the audience that special historic feeling.

### Super Sites Exhibition

A small travelling exhibition, produced by DOE, illustrating a selection of the entries to the competition and describing the educational facilities offered by the participating organisations will be touring London during the spring and summer of 1987.



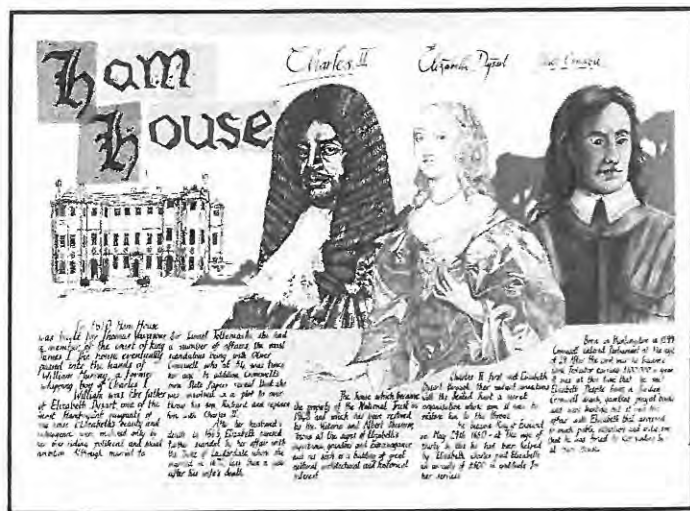
### SITWORK: The classroom outside the school

The English Heritage Education Service has produced a video for teachers based on the entries to the Super Sites competition. A successful visit needs careful preparation and skilful tasking of



the pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Meticulous observation and careful recording of what they saw were key elements in the work of the successful pupils. The film includes examples of the children's writing, drawing, mathematical and craft work based on the visits that they had made. The film will be useful to teachers of pupils of all ages as the fieldwork skills acquired initially through visits in primary school are developed and refined by students to assemble and assess the evidence that they require for fieldwork projects submitted as coursework for public examinations. 18 minute video. Available on free loan.

Brian Thompson is the head teacher of Darell Primary School, Richmond and Paula Tottman, Paul Clayton, Pam Alexander and Valerie Nott are all teachers there. They write of their experiences in studying Chiswick, Marble Hill and Ham Houses and Kew Palace on which they based their winning entry to the Super Sites Competition.



**WHAT SUPER SITES!**

When the Super Sites material came to our school, we saw that no less than four of the selected sites were reasonably close to the school. What attracted us to the competition was not simply that of the convenience of the sites, but, above all, the fact that the style of the Super Sites initiative seemed precisely that of good Primary School practice as we saw it. One of the basic ideas in our educational philosophy is the importance we give to first-hand experience. Much of the best work that we have done came from the impetus that direct observation and first-hand experience gives to teaching and learning. There were four local sites and we had four junior classes so all the juniors could take part. Super Sites was our kind of project.

In deciding which classes did what, we made two educational decisions and two more-or-less random choices. Kew Palace was the closest site so it seemed wise to have the youngest children studying it. Chiswick House seemed to us to be the most intellectually challenging site so we thought that some of our bright ten and eleven year olds might like to try to come to grips with Palladio, the English Renaissance and the classical antecedents of Palladian architecture. In addition, Chiswick House is designed with mathematical and geometrical harmonies that we felt our fourth year juniors might enjoy exploring for themselves. So the two conscious choices were made, and the other sites, Marble Hill House and Ham House, were given to the second and third year juniors.

Frankly it was with no great confidence that we started on the project. None of us had previously studied any of the houses. Teachers and children were all in the same boat and it seemed at the start of the term to be a rather frail craft. One thing we knew was that the children had all had some experience of making visits and the school's tradition of using careful observational drawing as a way of looking and seeing was well established by the junior years. Val Nott, who had inherited Marble Hill House, felt particularly pessimistic about the prospect ahead of her as she writes elsewhere. The house was built for Henrietta Howard,

**THE STONE LION**

The lion statue looks like it's going to jump out any minute, but it can't... It's only stone.

It looks like it's going to sleep but it can't... It's only stone.

It looks like it wants to go to sleep but it can't... It's only stone.

It looks like it's listening to everything we're saying but it can't... It's only stone.

It looks like it's staring at everything we do but it can't... It's only stone.

Wendy Baldwin

the mistress of George II, with funds provided by the king. A royal lovenest may be of rivetting interest to many people but seven and eight year olds are unlikely to be among them. The house itself is a severe Palladian edifice with few artefacts inside. But in the event the class working on Marble Hill House produced an enormous volume of work of great variety to an extremely high standard, some of the best primary school project work we had seen in the school.

We all agree that the reason for the success of the project was the procedure of feeding the children information before visiting the sites, and then encouraging each child to find aspects of the house during the visit follow-up. It was this delicate balance between making the children informed visitors, and then freeing them to find their own personal connections with the sites, that is the single most important principle that accounted for the



Cedars of Lebanon in the grounds of Chiswick House.

success of the topic work.

Each teacher with each group of children studied each site in some detail. We looked at the reasons why the houses are important enough to be considered part of our national heritage. We found out who had lived in them, and investigated the lives of the aristocrats and their households. In studying the outstanding personalities associated with the houses we saw the house as a vehicle for continuous biography.

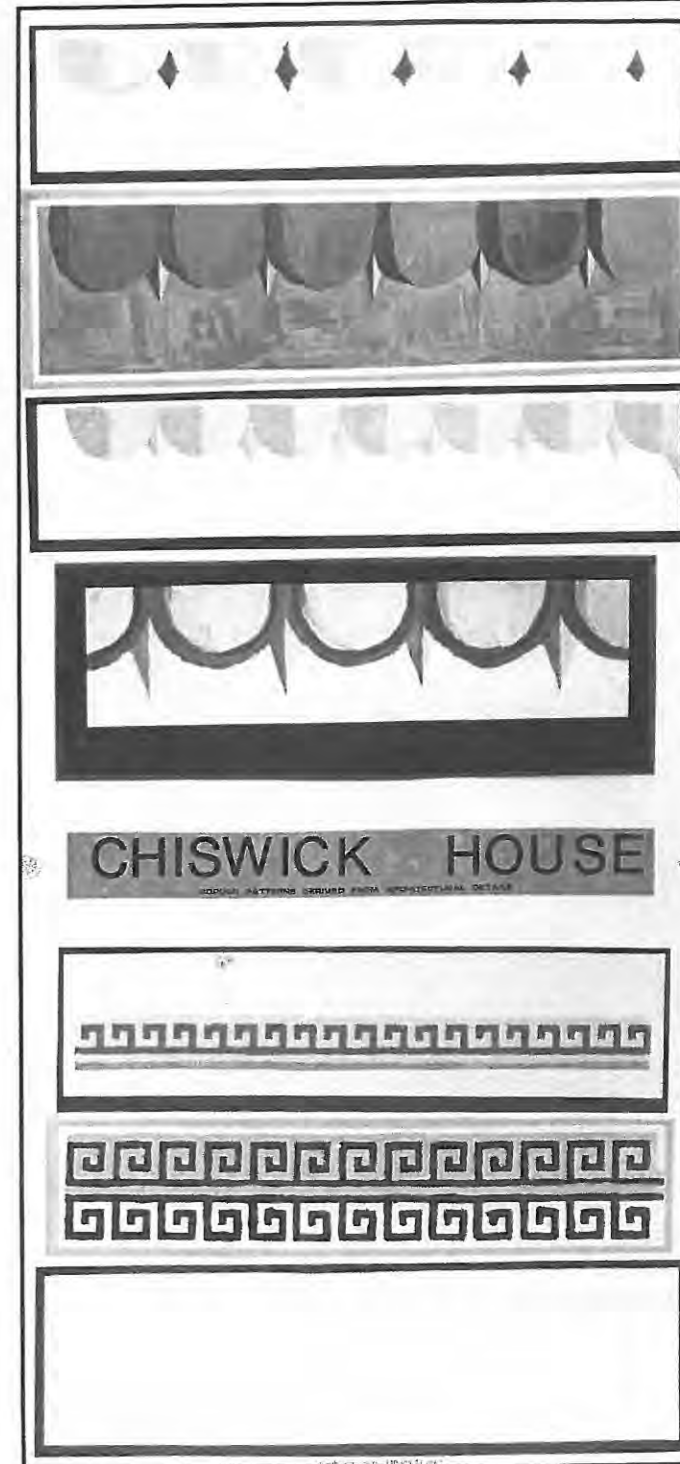
All four houses are architecturally remarkable and all have interesting reasons for looking the way that they do. Each park or garden, though very different from the others, is a major aspect of the experience of visiting the house, and all four gardens became the focus of major developments in the children's topic work. So it was that each of the four classes learned about the house, its setting and its history in class over a period of weeks in preparation for the visits. This work was tremendously important because it gave the children intellectual control of their own responses to the site during the visits. This is the antithesis of the visit where the class is given work sheets on site, missing words and phrases, and where they spend the visit dashing about experiencing a second-hand version of the teacher's own response to the house. In our opinion, fill-the-gap exercises empty minds.

Much of the preparation was idiosyncratic, even quirky. The fourth year junior class, for example, worked out versions of the complicated Greek key patterns or frets, used in the decoration of Chiswick House. They used long strips of squared papers of various kinds and elaborated the units into border patterns which they then coloured and painted into various tints and tones. They did the same with egg and dart patterns. When the work was mounted on a wall chart, it looked like a Post-modernist collage. The children had become familiar with some of the elements in the alphabet of classical ornamentation and they referred to this work frequently during visits to the house when they found variations of the patterns on the exterior and interior decoration of the house, on the urns, gateposts and plinths. Had they not worked out the design in the classroom they would not have looked out the examples with the same sense of triumph during the visits. This was a particularly useful exercise because other classes used the information when visiting other houses. Marble Hill House has many of the same decorative elements used on the exterior and interior.

The class studying Ham House became interested in John Bacon's Coade stone figure of Father Thames that dominates the entrance to the house. They made sketches and paintings of the figure, learned about its Roman background and made dozens of successful press prints of the figure.

Considering how much work was derived from these off-beat aspects of the sites it is clear that the sites are resources of almost limitless educational potential. How useful it would be to have guide books that set out these hooks which catch the children's attention.

All five (four teachers and the headteacher) of us were surprised by many of the unexpected things that caught the children's attention. At Kew Palace, for example, there was a



fold-away fishing kit made for the prince, complete with collapsible reel, rod and all the necessary angling tackle. . . certain, one should have predicted, to be interesting to seven or eight year olds, as indeed it was; but more children became engrossed in the wooden panelling, particularly the intricacies of the linen-fold carved on them, or intrigued by the faintly morbid attractions of the chair in which Queen Charlotte died, or fascinated by the depiction of the five senses in the pargeted areas of the ceiling of a bedroom. It would have been an ambitious class teacher of first year juniors who would have prepared for the children to sketch and discuss these.

We made the immensely important step of trusting the children's instinct to learn and to become engaged with the sites on the visits. The obvious thing to have done would have been to have prepared the dreaded work sheets with spaces for things to be sketched, words that needed to be found, gaps that needed filling, but we wanted to liberate the children to find their own different ways of relating to the sites and not force them all to view the houses through our preconceptions of their interests.

Our greatest tool in doing this is, as has been said, the school's tradition of first-hand observational drawing. The children are accustomed to drawing from objects, landscapes and buildings. We took with us pencils of different kinds, felt-tipped pens, charcoal, paints and pastels, material for making prints. . . all our portable art materials. The children had no choice about sketching or not sketching, but they were free to choose *what* they drew, *how* they drew it and *with what*. They also knew that the sketches had to be substantial enough for them to be used as the basis of further extended work back in the classroom. . . the detail of a tapestry chair in Marble Hill House became a tapestry design to be stitched. . . the little pencil drawing of the facade of the house could be developed into a painting as big as one wall of the classroom, the drawing of the Ham House harpsichord could lead to the search for the sound of the music played on it and that in turn to a desire to find out the kind of formal dances that may have taken place accompanied by the sound of the harpsichord in the room in which it was placed.



Back at school and the on-site sketches and writings had to be written and processed. Sketches became paintings, prints, enlarged to drawings, collages and embroideries. The children who visited Marble Hill House had discovered the servant's staircase, shown by the sympathetic guides but not normally shown to visitors. That glimpse of balustrade and stone, inspired plays, paintings, and extended fiction — a kind of Primary-School-meets-Jane-Austen genre. Each class was deeply interested in what the other classes had done at their sites and there was a tremendous amount of cross-learning and borrowing of inspiration. By the time we were a few weeks into the projects the approach to the site had broadened from a simple historical perspective to include imaginative fiction, factual writing, two and three-dimensional art work, music, drama, mathematics. . . there was practically no curriculum area that hadn't been engaged in the children's exploration of their site.

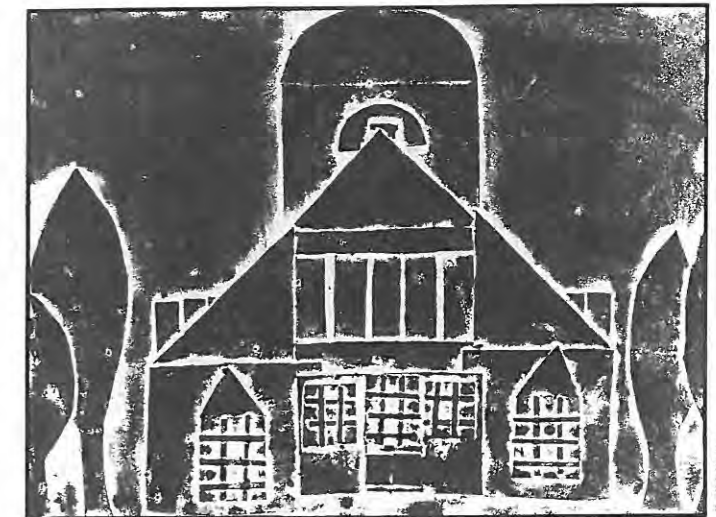
The older children studying Chiswick House could see the extraordinary mathematical qualities underlying the design of the house. We had been fortunate to have had the loan of plans and designs by one of the people at Chiswick House. These provided material to be explored with protractors, rulers and compasses. The children did their own versions of the ground plan of the house, each child's version of the plan was photocopied and the children then painted abstract mathematical designs pointing up the symmetry of the design and its geometrical intricacies.

We made second and third visits to the sites where this was possible. The parents of the children had been supportive and interested from the beginning. They told us of how enthusiastic the children were. Numbers of children took their parents to the sites and acted as guides to them. The parents provided us with transport, cars and station wagons so we could take small groups of children on repeated visits. Each visit seemed more useful than the one before.

By this time, the first of the wallcharts were starting to be prepared and as they saw their work mounted and displayed the children became aware of the quality of what they were doing.



Children from Prior Weston Primary School at the Jewel Tower, Westminster, preparing their entry to the competition.



The second year juniors had discovered that Henrietta Howard, may have invited Joshua Reynolds to sketch in the grounds of the house, a not-uncommon pastime of the period, so when the children revisited the house their teacher talked them into approaching the building through a time-warp, leaving the twentieth century behind at the coach and ignoring the Heathrow flight path overhead as they came into the park in role as artists at Henrietta's invitation to sketch in the grounds. Which is precisely what they did. This fantasy was given point and poignancy when a group of children established that they were sitting sketching under a walnut tree that was in Henrietta's garden over two hundred years ago, and beneath which others may have sketched the same building.

It wasn't all wonderfully successful. We didn't follow all of the enthusiasms as well or as far as we might have. In the end we stopped for Christmas and the attention of the junior school turned to carols and the end of the term. But we all felt that we could have gone on further and longer and that the children would have sustained their enthusiasm and interest.

Some of the benefits of the projects were fairly abstract and hard to measure. We could all recognise the enthusiasm with which the children worked and the quality of the writing and of the innumerable forms of recording used in the course of the project. But it is hard to quantify attitudes and industriousness. It is simpler to see the precision and care with which the children drew out plans and diagrams. This accuracy and quality of presentation is something that will be of great benefit in the course of the children's later education and beyond. All the children established historical markers that will stay with them as their sense of the past, of the history of their culture develops and deepens. There were many pieces of work by many children which they felt to be their best achievements ever and even if the quality and sensitivity cannot be easily measured, the children have set standards for themselves which will be reflected in the work they do in the future, just as the knowledge and skills they acquired will be developed and extended as their education continues. Perhaps it is brushing the bloom from the butterfly to spell out these things. The work mounted up into the wallcharts sent off for the exhibition, the little clay models, the drama, the needlework, the maths and the vast amount of writing, talking and listening involved in the projects, all these things speak for themselves and are of value in themselves.

The Super Sites competition led us to what was a relatively unconsidered and undervalued educational resource close to our school. We were all convinced by the project of the value of basing work on a super site and we will be revisiting the four houses with other groups of children at other times.

To say that we learned as much as the children in the course of this project is such an educational cliché; but it is nonetheless true and the five of us, along with over a hundred children, will not be able to walk or drive past the super sites without remembering the final term of 1986 and the project that taught us to look at four super sites with new and more informed eyes.

Brian Thompson  
Darell Primary School

## CHISWICK HOUSE

Bearing in mind that I had fourth year juniors, I chose Chiswick House. We felt that the style of the house and its history were more likely to be understood by older juniors with a more developed sense of the past. The staff of Chiswick House were extremely co-operative and provided us with additional material. This gave us some starting points and ideas about how to initiate the project.

Chiswick House is very mathematical in its design. The ground plan can be reduced to a grid of sixteen squares with a central octagon. Having looked at the ground plan we decided that our first visit would be to examine the facade of the house and, in particular, to look at the solid and plane geometrical shapes of the design. The children found rectangles, triangles, semi-circles and squares, rectangular solids, triangular prisms and cylinders. The sketches that they made on site reflected the mathematical interest of the house. We brought the sketches back to the classroom where the ideas could be further developed. Some of the architectural patterns which are a striking feature of the house were copied and painted. This work led to a search for the architectural origins of such a striking building. The children looked at the Parthenon in Athens, the Roman Pantheon and the buildings of Andrea Palladio, searching out the similarities and differences between temples and villas and Chiswick House.

Our second visit lasted a full day and we took with us *large and small squared paper of different sizes; grey, black, white and beige paper, also cut to different shapes and sizes; white lithographic paper; polystyrene press print tiles; fine and thick black felt tipped pens; drawing pencils of varying grades; the usual A4 plain paper; clip boards.*

We would have liked to have taken clay with us but it was too difficult to transport so we decided that we would use it at school after the visit.

I find that a lot of the best kind of descriptive writing and creative language use comes when children write about something close to their hearts or close before their eyes. We spent a lot of time drawing the house and sculptures and the gardens and then the children wrote choosing something they wanted to describe. They were given a small piece of paper (of an unthreatening size) and a limited amount of time. We assured those who were anxious about spelling that it was the ideas we wanted them to get down and that we would correct and work on the piece back at school. We were really pleased with their writings, some children came up with lovely images. I doubt very much whether the children would have come up with the same quality of writings had they been asked to do it at school away from the first-hand experience of the site.

At school the children used higher order reading skills to locate, interpret and evaluate relevant information from guidebooks and reference works. We looked at the social life in Georgian times, especially that concerned with entertainment and the arts, since Chiswick House is notably a house built for social entertaining, consequently it has no bedrooms or kitchens.

This part of the project gave the children an insight into characters and a style of living far removed from their own. It helped them people the house with Lord Burlington's guests. The study proved invaluable during a later guided visit when the guide asked the children to pause on the threshold of a room and imagine themselves as having just arrived at the villa in a horse-drawn carriage and about to join a party of people in the rooms. This also led on further to improvisations in drama lessons at school.

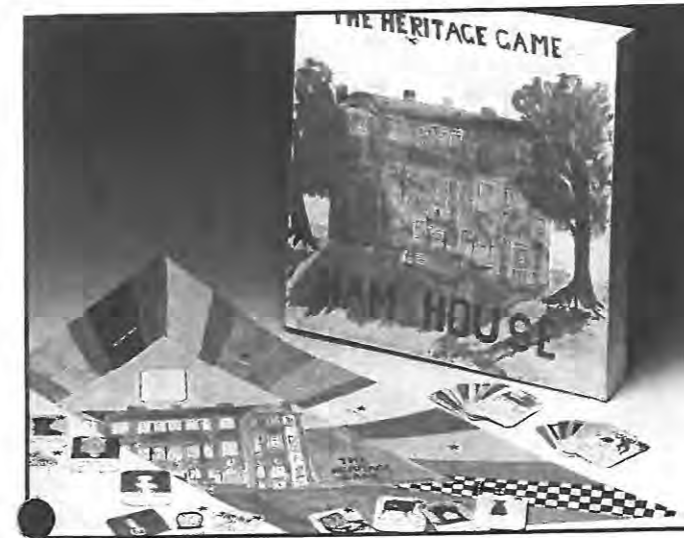
As with language work, so in the case of observational drawing, those children who do not normally regard themselves as being very able, produced work of real quality. Children can learn an enormous amount by looking and observing and questioning. We asked the children to choose a place from which

to draw the back elevation of the house and include a part of the garden to frame their view. All the class quietly concentrated on this exercise for about an hour, engrossed in their sketches. The children have had experience of printing techniques and we took polystyrene tiles and asked them to choose a herm, lion or sphinx or statue; a piece of sculpture to draw on the press print tile which we could print back at school. The card print of the cedars of Lebanon was done in a slightly different technique, whereby drawings were transferred onto card and the card cut out to make the basic shape to be printed onto an already printed background.

The architectural patterns were drawn on squared paper and worked up in scale and repeated back at school to make the border patterns. The children often chose to work in clay and they made figures clothed in styles contemporary with the house, tiles of the architectural patterns and standing slab sculptures of the facade of the house with free-standing trees and gates in front of it.

The value of the project can be judged in part by the quality of the response from the children. They learned many new things in many different curriculum areas and had the opportunity to exercise and develop skills. I hope that we succeeded in giving the children techniques and abilities that they will want to apply to other places and other topics both in and out of school and I hope that we have given them a deeper appreciation of their own environment.

Paula Tottman  
Darell Primary School

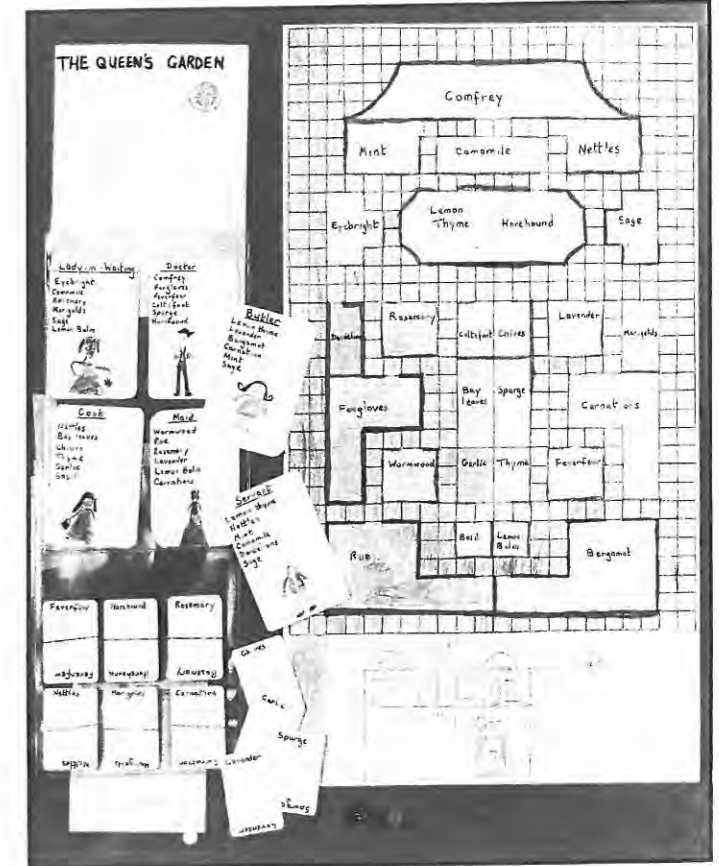


## HAM HOUSE

One thing that I became conscious of during this project, is the value of taking a house or site as the focus for topic work instead of taking a historical period. Taking a site seems to narrow the choice but it also *focuses* your study so you look harder and find clearer starting points for the children. If you start with a whole historical period or a civilization the options are tremendous, almost overwhelming and obviously they have to be generally book-based. This can lead to a lack of cohesion, to bitterness: while looking at a house as a starting point holds the study together and gives the children's work a sense of flow as their attention returns repeatedly to the building.

The children had a long time on preparation for the visit. We studied the history of the house and the families associated with it. We did ghost stories (because there are several ghosts supposed to haunt Ham House). We also had a glimpse of the house in the course of an environmental walk, and before the class made their major visit several of the children persuaded parents to take them to have a private preview. All the children were informed and enthusiastic and they all were greatly looking forward to visiting the house. The actual visit was the climax of the topic and brought everything together.

Paul Clayton,  
Darell Primary School.



## KEW PALACE

The initial difficulty with Kew Palace was the opening hours starting at eleven. It was only feasible for us to visit in the afternoons, also the Palace closed for the winter at the end of September. This meant that we were not able to do very much work on the interior of the house.

Fortunately the Queen's Garden at the rear of the Palace offered a lot of scope for our first year junior children. It had a knot garden, which meant that we were able to use it as the basis for a lot of maths — symmetry, drawings using spotted paper and grid papers, measuring and geometrical shapes.

We looked at the use of herbs for cooking, medicine, strewing on floors and nosegays. We took the idea of the Doctrine of Signatures, which is the idea that a medicinal plant looks like the part of the body it is intended to cure. Lungwort and eyebright are both examples of this. From this idea the children devised and invented their own imaginary plants and made a wall herbal of drawings, names and descriptions of these. Among others they did plants called nosebleeds, nailbiter, eyecry and boneplant.

We invented a game called The Queen's Garden with a board based on the house. There were the people who would have worked in the house, the butler, the maid, the doctor, the cook, the lady's maid and the footman. They had to progress round the garden and collect a set of the herbs that that particular person would have used — culinary herbs for the cook, medicinal herbs for the doctor, the butler collected for nosegays, the maid for strewing, the lady's maid for beauty preparations and the footman for infusions and teas.

Pam Alexander  
Darell Primary School

## MARBLE HILL HOUSE

On being asked to embark on a study of one of our local historic houses, I confess myself daunted by what I regarded as an unrewarding prospect. Having been built for the mistress of George II, it seemed a dubious area of study for eight year olds. I found myself confounded by what proved to be a most fruitful project with work in all areas of the curriculum, of a quality I could never have foreseen.

I made my starting point 1729, the date of the house's completion and my subject, Henrietta Howard (Countess of

