

THE MAKING OF ORANGE GROVE

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The land that became Orange Grove had until the Dissolution been the 'litten' or churchyard of the Priory, but in 1572 both Abbey Church and litten came into the hands of the Corporation. Immediately south of the litten the so-called Upper Abbey Orchard was private property, part of the large estate (successively owned by the Colthurst, Hall and Kingston families) that occupied the south-east segment of the city and stretched beyond the municipal walls down to the river. A narrow opening, St Peter's Gate, allowed passage between the Corporation litten and the private orchard.

When the city acquired it, the litten was an open space sloping gently from north to south. Just north of it, fronting Boatstall Lane, stood two houses (sites 8 and part of 7D on Fig. 1). By the time John Speed published his Bath map one was Lady Catherine Weston's, while the other, abutting it on the west, belonged to the Sly family. Around 1585 the Corporation allowed a large strip on the north of the litten, near these houses, to be enclosed and eventually leased other tracts on the north-west, but otherwise the litten remained public space. Shooting butts were established there in 1597 and before 1614 part had been sufficiently levelled to make a bowling green. Bowling, then as now, took two forms. Skittles or ninepins was an old favourite and had persisted in spite of periodic bans; Bath may have had several alleys and there is clear evidence of one, seemingly at the Bear Inn, in 1608.¹ The other game of trundling bowls across a sward towards a target 'jack' had become popular in the later Elizabethan period and enjoyed special status under the Stuarts as a Court and gentry sport, an excuse for heavy betting as well as a healthy exercise recommended by physicians. By 1634 Bath had two greens. The 'outer' one on the litten served ordinary citizens. The 'inner' and better green lay further south on the private Orchard that had been cleared of the trees, and a statue on a pedestal, that appear on earlier maps. This was the more exclusive green 'where only Lords, Knights, Gallants, and Gentlemen, of the best rank and quality, do daily meet...to recreate themselves, both for pleasure and health'.² It remained in use

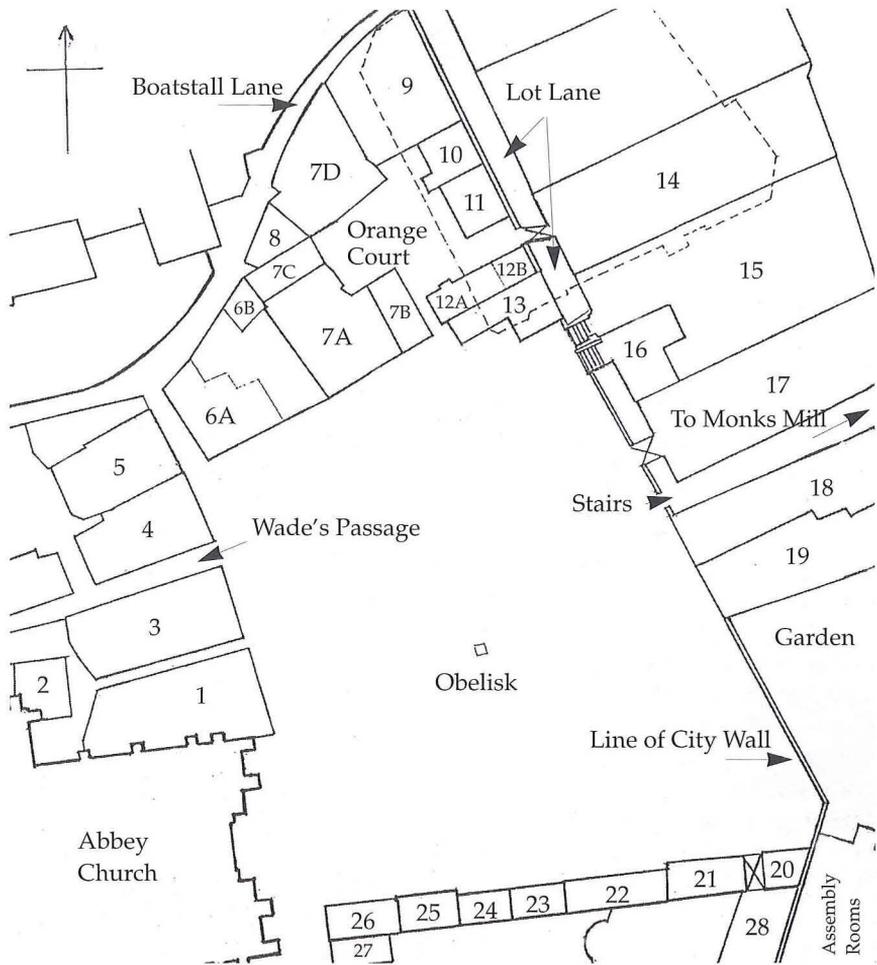


Fig. 1 Plan of the evolved Orange Grove identifying sites referred to in the text. Outline of present Empire Hotel is shown dashed.

into the next century and in 1700 was the arena for a notable contest between the quality and the citizens, doubtless for high stakes.³ The game had then long ceased on the Outer Bowling Green, even though this name was sometimes still employed to denote the site. It may be that the Outer Green first fell into disuse during the Civil War, but if so it was restored about 1648 by a new tenant, Walter Werratt, who erected a

house, or more likely a tavern, on the north-east side by the city wall (site 13). In 1677 Werratt's lease of the green ran out and thereafter he was restricted to managing the bowling green house and a skittle alley. The end of bowling here must have provided the stimulus for laying out a new residents' green west of St Michael's church.

It had become evident that Bath needed a set of public walks equivalent to those at its rival spa, Tunbridge Wells, where its valuable summer guests could rendezvous and parade. In 1674 the Corporation invited subscriptions to a fund for railing sections of the city walls to make pleasant promenades with views of the countryside. The following year it laid out walks immediately east of the Abbey Church, overlooking the Inner Green, and paid for eighty sycamore trees to be planted in formal rows, properly staked and protected by hawthorn. Municipal records henceforth often record payments for keeping the walks tidy and the trees pruned. In 1682 the Council determined that a further amenity was needed and built a 'house of ease' or public privy at the north-east corner of the walks near the city wall; this required periodic cleansing and in 1702 was removed to a more discreet location behind the bowling green house (site 12B). Meanwhile, to make the walks more select, a railing had been set up along their long north side, and two entrance gates erected facing the Abbey Church. Other improvements came in 1694 when the walks were finally gravelled (much of the material hauled from Lambridge). The rest of the Outer Green, from which riders had been prohibited in 1683, was levelled further, a turf bank established between this and the somewhat lower walks, and several ancient elm trees replaced by new ones from Bathford.

A schematic view of the main features towards the end of the seventeenth century appears on Gilmore's well-known map (Fig. 2, oriented with west at the top). Between Abbey Church and city walls lay the Gravel Walks, canopied by sycamores and enlivened on the south side by summer 'raffling shops', booths selling and sometimes raffling fancy goods and small luxury items. By 1700 one of the walks was said to hold a skittle alley – unless this was in fact near the old bowling green house (behind the 'screen' depicted by Gilmore?) which John Porch tenanted from c. 1692 and surely operated as a tavern. The trees in the walks made convenient objects for displaying lampoons⁴ and during the hours of promenading the city waits might be commissioned to provide music. Reaching the walks from the baths and pumps and the lodgings around them still entailed a detour, so people generally took a short cut through the Abbey Church. As early as 1676 the antiquary Anthony à Wood

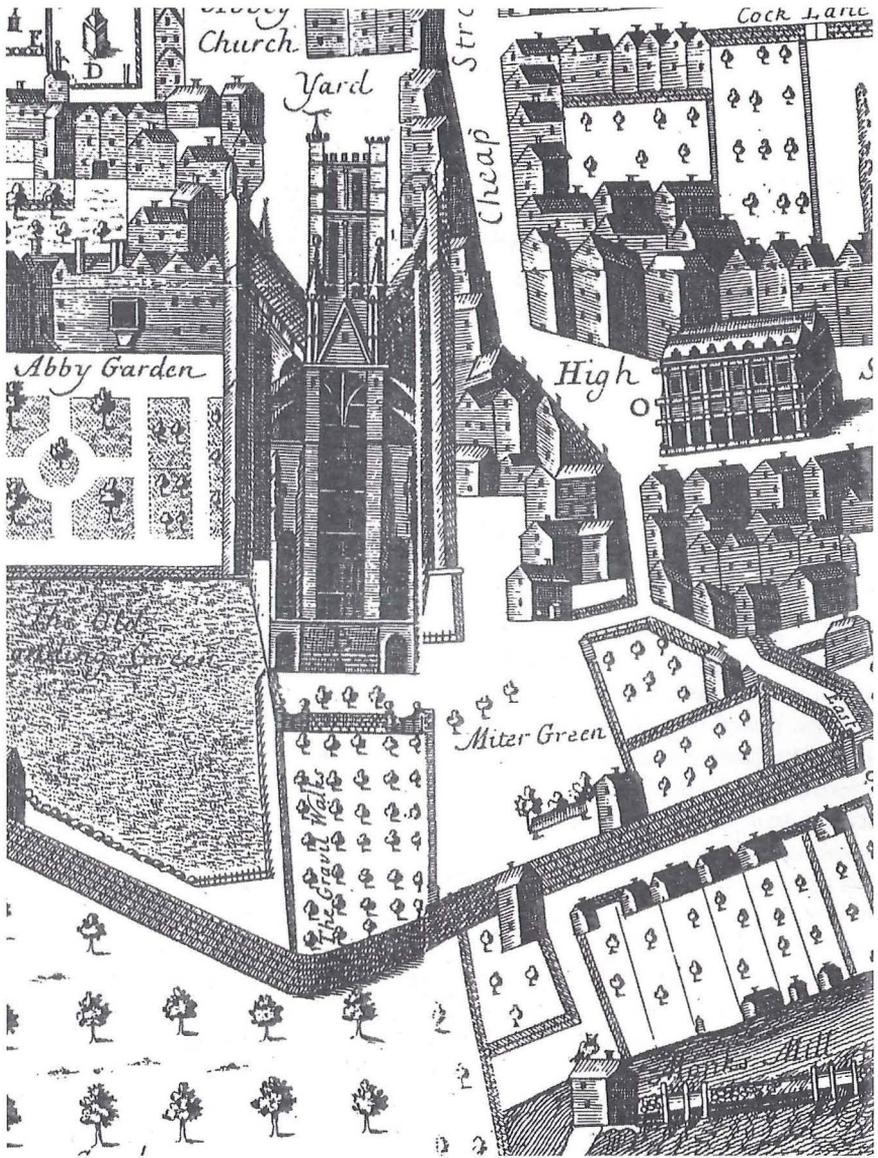


Fig. 2 Detail of the future Orange Grove site from Gilmore's Bath plan of 1694.

regretted that the constant tramp of visitors en route for the walks and bowling green had obliterated inscriptions on funerary slabs in the south aisle by the chancel.⁵

Near the church's north-east corner the Gilmore map shows a small enclosure, though not to scale and omitting or displacing a mid-seventeenth-century building that stood behind it on an outer angle of the transept (site 2). Both the enclosure – a garden – and the building were leased to the Watts family and very likely served already as an alehouse. It would prove a valuable plot for future development. North of the garden spread two other properties (sites 4 and 5): the first with a house of c.1686 occupied from 1700 by George Griffeth, one of the musicians who serenaded visitors in the walks; the other comprising a garden and stable held by Councillor Charles Child, an apothecary, and hence a place where medicinal plants may have grown.

To the north or right of the words 'Miter Green' (an error for 'Outer Green?') Gilmore depicts gardens divided by walls inaccurately placed on the map and showing a single house instead of the two (probably Tudor/early Stuart) houses that in reality stood here side-by-side. One of these (ex-Lady Weston's), together with the two gardens abutting the city wall, belonged to a leading brazier, Alderman John Axford, for the large leasehold enclosure of 1585 (mentioned earlier) had begun to split up further. Soon after 1700 Axford's son rented to the Corporation the plot behind bowling green house for the new public privy. North of Axford's property Boatstall Lane descended via the East Gate to the riverside quay, the ferry to Bathwick, and various small buildings and gardens on the low terrain below the city wall. Some of these buildings had commercial applications for tanning, dyeing and brewing; one was a workshop, another a slaughterhouse, and fishermen and boatmen seem to have leased others. Lot Lane skirted the city wall on its way to Monks Mill at the end of the weir which powered it. While still described in contemporary leases as a corn- and cloth-fulling mill, Monks Mill probably found its textile business on the wane by this date. The separate building seen on Gilmore's map where Lot Lane bends towards the Avon would soon disappear, leaving only stables. Like other buildings bordering Lot Lane these stables would be eventually replaced during the transformation of this side of the Grove.

The investment prospects in the still unexploited area east of the Abbey Church had not gone unnoticed by members of the Corporation, and the heady royal visits of 1702 and 1703 can only have bolstered confidence. Two councillors, Axford and Child, already owned land here.

Between 1701 and 1708 other notable citizens staked their claims. The moving force may well have been the important Masters family, particularly Alderman Richard Masters, lessee of the Hart Lodging in Stall Street and Mayor of Bath in 1701–02. Before his term of office was out he secured half of Anne Watts' garden near the Abbey Church (site 3), the other half (site 1) going to his colleague, the recently-elected Councillor William Collibee, another of Bath's thriving apothecaries. Meanwhile the Council had assented to the piecemeal development of a strip of Gravel Walks that bordered the wall of the Inner Bowling Green, turning the simple raffling shops into permanent structures. The strip was narrow – no more than a dozen feet deep – but even so must have required the felling of at least one row of sycamores and the excavation of basements. In 1702 Masters himself leased a central plot in the strip with a frontage of nearly 38 feet (site 22) and erected a shop on the eastern part. Next to him on the Abbey Church side a well-to-do clothworker, George Stirridge, put up a smaller shop (site 23), and beyond that William Long and George Trim, both councillors, claimed another two plots (sites 24–25), Long's being specified as 'where the Jew's shop formerly was'.⁶

A fresh bout of activity began in 1705. Masters sold out to a milliner, John Cornish, who proceeded to extend the premises. Two more plots were taken on his east (sites 21–20) where the goldsmith Philip Hayes and the saddler Walter Chapman, another councillor, built on either side of the entrance to St Peter's Gate, which now led to the first properly paved walk in Bath, the origin of Terrace Walk. Closer to the Abbey Church, Councillor Richard Morgan, a maltster who had obtained William Long's plot, and the clothier Councillor George Trim likewise built onto the lengthening row of shops (sites 24–5). The terrace was then

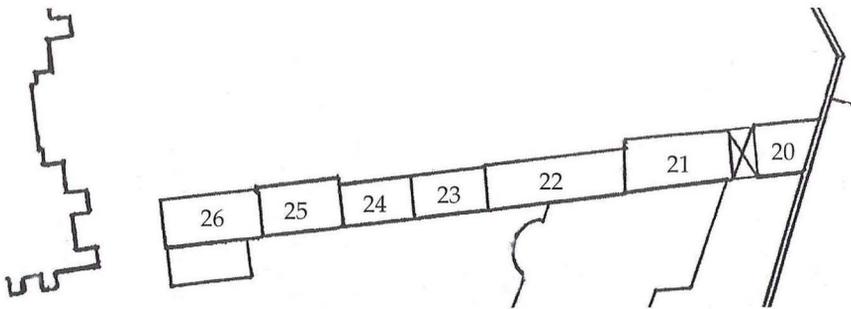


Fig. 3 The development of shops on the south side of the Grove.

completed with a final shop (site 26), put up in 1707 by Councillor Henry Townsend, landlord of the Bear Inn. By now all the row except Walter Chapman's had upper storeys and two had overhanging eaves. Early in 1708 the majority gained extra space by digging out cellars under Gravel Walks ten feet beyond their frontages. Another line of sycamores must have been sacrificed, but the gain included a broad parade, paved almost certainly in limestone flags, that ran before the shops and linked up with the embryonic Terrace Walk. The final touch came around 1709 when Walter Chapman added upper rooms to his property by the city wall and joined with his neighbour Philip Hayes in bridging over St Peter's Gate leaving only a passageway beneath (between sites 21 and 20).

Most of the investors probably saw the Grove simply as a good property speculation. Some were simultaneously busy with other ventures. George Trim, for example, was building the street of houses just outside the city wall on the north that still bears his name. William Long took a 42-year lease on Monks Mill and the stables near the Grove in 1703 and like Trim won the right to breach the city wall to improve access. The Masters family were consolidating their own interests. Philip Masters, a poulterer by trade, sold off certain holdings on the north-west of the Grove in 1705 but retained a significant plot on the north (site 6A-B); by 1708 James Masters was living in a house there. Richard Masters also divested himself of two plots – the one in Gravel Walks to John Cornish, and his garden near the Abbey Church (site 3) to another up-and-coming councillor, the baker Thomas Atwood, who was active in the property market and had another nearby plot ripening for development. The fact that Richard Masters took a half stake in the Inner Bowling Green in 1708 shows, however, that he still believed in the potential of the neighbourhood. His move may well have been inspired by the arrival on the scene of an entrepreneurial London tradesman, Thomas Harrison.

Impressed no doubt by the seasonal descent on Bath of dozens of professional gamblers (including the royal groom-porter himself) and encouraged by the recently-established local gamester Richard Nash, Harrison arranged with the current owner of the private estate south of the Grove, John Hall, for a conveyance of land on which to erect an assembly room where fashionable visitors could socialise and indulge their passion for cards and dice. The Corporation had no say in this but nursed its resentment over an innovation it did not control. Though Harrison's £1000 investment was a simple enough building with grounds partly laid out in walks, it threatened Council members' interests, took gambling and assemblies away from Corporation properties, and offered

a rival promenade to Gravel Walks. All the same, in its control over the city wall the Corporation held a trump card. The Assembly Room stood immediately outside the wall and had to have an opening through it onto Terrace Walk to be viable. In 1710, armed with a High Court ruling, the Council not merely refused this permission, it built the wall higher to obstruct the Assembly Room's windows. This in turn was a provocation that angered Harrison's aristocratic backers. When they threatened to tear the offending wall down, the Corporation moderated its stance and allowed a doorway for a nominal rent, yet continued to press an expensive but futile case against Harrison and the Hall estate for some years to come.⁷ Gradually, however, it must have become apparent that the Assembly Room was an asset to the spa, attracted moneyed visitors, and by its proximity to the Grove encouraged business there. The freedom of the city given to Nash, Harrison's chief associate, in 1716 was perhaps some recognition of the fact.

Even to its own members the Council did not award automatic building rights, as William Collibee found in 1708 when he was denied permission to build on his half of the former Watts garden (site 1) – presumably to avoid impeding the Abbey Church or having to allow Thomas Atwood the right to develop more of *his* plots in the vicinity. Collibee had suffered another inconvenience the previous year. Mindful of the copious quantities of spa water being prescribed at the elegant new Pump Room and of its mildly diuretic effect, the Council sited a 'Pass house [privy] for the use of Ladys frequenting this City' behind Collibee's garden, in a corner of the transept near Anne Watts' house. This remained one of Bath's useful minor institutions well through the eighteenth century.⁸

The antiquary Samuel Gale, visiting in 1705, noted the 'pleasant prospect of the river and adjacent hills' to be obtained from the platform of the Grove,⁹ where accumulations over the centuries had raised ground levels well up the inner face of the city wall. Indeed, from the Grove side the wall stood low enough to constitute a hazard, and in 1709 was railed between the bowling green house and Walter Chapman's (sites 13 and 20) to prevent children falling over onto Lot Lane below. Southwards, through the passage next to Chapman's, the way led past the Assembly Room to another bowling green house, better known as Benjoys (Bengy's) coffee house. This should not be confused with a small building raised by Walter Chivers c.1713 on the north of the Inner Bowling Green (site 27): this backed onto the westernmost shop in the Grove, apparently opening into it across the property divide. When in 1714 Chivers

surrendered his leasehold on the green, he retained this building (which had its own chimney and may have served refreshments) and also reserved his right to play bowls – an indication the game was still being played here at that date (and probably as late as 1721). When the wealthy London druggist Humphrey Thayer acquired the lease in 1716, a number of shops already lined the green along Terrace Walk. Their arrival suggests that the shops in the Grove had proved commercially successful and were being imitated.

Several of the Grove shops had already changed hands though. Most of the owners had put in tenants, but the barber-turned-milliner Samuel Ditcher, who had bought George Trim's in 1708 (site 25), was one long-term owner-occupant, as was the milliner John Cornish who traded from the largest and highest-rated shop (site 22) and who in 1724 would also take on the next-door shop to the east (site 21). Walter Chapman's small end-house, overlooking the river, had long been let to Thomas Harrison, keeper of the Assembly Room, and both this and Cornish's were in 1717–18 insured with the Sun Fire Office in London.

The upkeep of the Grove was in theory shared between residents and the authorities. From the 1707 Bath Act onwards householders were supposed to sweep before their premises three times a week and at night hang out lanterns for prescribed periods. The Corporation took its own responsibilities lightly if expenditure listed in the Chamberlain's accounts may be trusted. Certainly it re-gravelled the Walks around 1712 and had them cleaned three years later, and generally kept the public privies in a usable condition; but the sycamores were now left unpruned and by the 1730s had grown enormous, 'the boughs spreading so far, that many people were obliged to dine by candle-light at four o'clock in the afternoon, in the month of May'.¹⁰ In 1718 Thomas Atwood and Walter Chapman, with civic blessing, laid a main sewer through the Grove, and in 1722 the constables' 'cage' or lock-up was relocated from the Marketplace to the north side of the Grove (and fixed most likely between sites 6A and 7A where the 'watch house' later stood). Diagonally opposite, near Walter Chapman's (site 20), was the designated sedan-chair stand.

The Atwood-Chapman sewer benefited their considerable holdings north of the Abbey Church which they were actively promoting. In 1716 there was talk of completing the passageway that already existed in large part between the Churchyard and Grove. Atwood had built on either side of the intended passage and probably bridged over it at this period, and Chapman owned both the *Star & Garter* on the north side and a brewery

on the south. The same year 1716 Colonel John Pocock, the local cavalry commander during the failed Jacobite rising in the West, tried to capitalise on his new prominence with a £2000 scheme to develop much of the upper Grove, but the Corporation was unwilling to go so far. Even Thomas Atwood's quite modest application in 1717 to develop *his* plot (site 3) was refused at first – and then allowed on condition his building went no higher than fourteen feet. In the end it was not Atwood who began construction but Thomas Sheyler, coffee-house-keeper (or 'chocolate-man'), who was linked with Atwoods and Chapmans through marriage connections.

Built by summer 1718 and enlarged in 1721–2, the coffee house brought a new social dimension to the Grove. It was an institution going far beyond its ostensible purpose of providing hot drinks, alcohol and light meals; it was a male preserve, a clubroom, somewhere to read the newspapers, write letters, catch the gossip, discuss events, make deals, meet and make friends. Bath had a coffee house as early as 1679,¹¹ presumably the one known c. 1690 as the Turk's Head in the Marketplace.

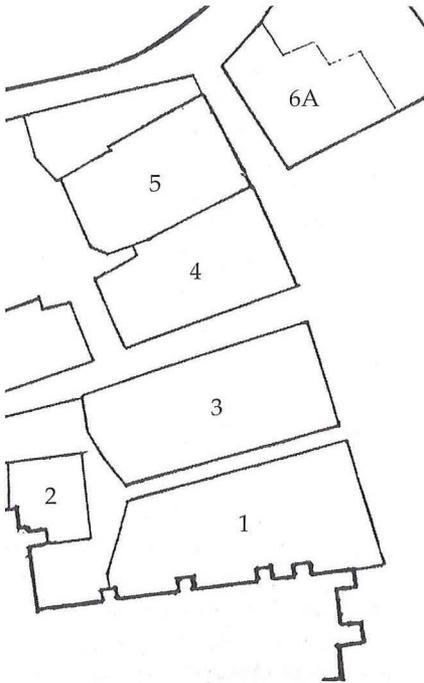


Fig. 4 Property development around the entrance to Wade's Passage at the west side of the Grove.

In 1694 Robert Sheyler removed it, or set up a new one, at the upper corner of Cheap Street, run by Robert's widow Elizabeth and their son Robert after his death. It was this establishment that spread in 1718 to the Grove, strategically positioned at the entrance to the planned way through to the Churchyard. Soon after its extension a contemporary called it a 'fine spacious square room...for the *Gentlemen* to meet in..., to converse together, and to read the *Advices* of the Times, which was provided there for their entertainment'.¹² Its only competitor, Benjoy's at the end of Terrace Walk, seems to have been less exclusive,¹³ whereas Sheyler's adopted the new principle of subscription to keep up its social tone. Once Sheyler had been allowed to build, William Collibee could not be refused similar right on his garden just south (site 1), and here in early 1720 he raised his long-intended house, taking care not to obstruct the Abbey Church windows but ignoring the other Council stipulation not to build against the buttresses. It soon became home to Francis, 2nd Lord Hawley, an eventual tenant of Harrison's Rooms through his ambitious wife Elizabeth (Mrs Hayes).

The new coffee house, as well as the ballroom added to Harrison's in 1720, turned out to be a timely speculation. Over the next few seasons visitors thronged the spa in unprecedented numbers and the Grove came into its own. John Macky described Gravel Walks at this period as 'spacious and well shaded, planted round with Shops filled with every thing that contributes to Pleasure; and at the End, a noble Room for Gaming [i.e. Harrison's]...'.¹⁴ Another visitor especially noted the paved walk east of the Abbey Church between the lime trees (he meant sycamores) and the 'very handsome Toyshops like those in London'¹⁵ – in other words the gift shops specialising in fancy goods, jewellery, millinery and the like. Among the similar businesses round the corner in Terrace Walk the most significant newcomer was a bookshop and circulating library managed by the enterprising James Leake (site 28).

In 1721 Leake probably took over the stock of the bookseller Henry Hammond on marrying Hammond's daughter. Whether Hammond then had premises on Terrace Walk is uncertain, but by late 1722 Leake was ensconced at the northern end of the Walk in a building close against the rear of two of the Grove shops (sites 21 and 22) and taking much of their light. With his background in the London book trade Leake stood well-equipped to introduce a circulating library at Bath, and indeed this metropolitan innovation was highly suited to a spa where time often hung heavy on the hands of invalids and active visitors alike. Moreover Leake boasted a wide literary acquaintance (the novelist Samuel

Richardson became his brother-in-law) and his library – ‘filled from the Cornice to the Skirting’¹⁶ with every sort of publication from standard classics to the latest political pamphlet or fashionable novel (and even pornography)¹⁷ – achieved rapid popularity not only for its treasure of reading matter but, like the coffee house, as a meeting place and centre of news and gossip. One witness speaks of it crowded with customers and of them leaving for their lodgings with piles of books.¹⁸

All this tended to increase traffic through the Grove and made a better route to the Churchyard and Pump Room imperative. The earliest reference to ‘Wade’s Passage’, as the new way was at once titled, dates from 1723. Whether General Wade, scourge of the Jacobites and recently elected one of Bath’s M.P.’s, had anything directly to do with it remains a moot point; the name may simply derive from the presence of the General’s town house at the Churchyard end of the passage, and reflect the city’s current anxiety to stress its Hanoverian loyalties. On the other hand Wade’s concern for the Abbey Church is attested by the marble altarpiece he donated in 1725–6,¹⁹ and he must surely have deplored the building’s function as a public thoroughfare. Little was probably needed to complete the passage but to pull down, with appropriate compensation, the central section of a property belonging to Thomas Atwood. The fact that Atwood was chosen an alderman in January 1723 and Mayor in 1724 may not therefore be pure coincidence. Wade’s Passage itself, once created, became a commercial artery, lined with small shops to tempt visitors and residents in their frequent progression to and from the Grove. Some traders had shops on the spot already and others moved in to take advantage of the site – the poulterer Robert Gifford, for instance, whose family business here lasted for the next fifty years.

Across the other side of the Grove towards the river a different project was brewing. The Duke of Chandos was not alone in recognising that the spa was suffering from a chronic lack of good-quality accommodation. Well-to-do visitors were not prepared forever to put up with beds in garrets as they had in recent busy seasons. Chandos Buildings near the Cross Bath would help to alleviate the pressure, but John Wood’s plan for Queen Square was directed as much at long-stay residents as at visitors. More still needed to be done, and here the still undeveloped eastern side of the Grove beckoned invitingly. Near all the spa amenities, yet on the rural edge of town, it now attracted serious speculative attention.

Never one to miss a trick, John Wood proposed a classical terrace: a colonnade along the city wall would articulate a richly ornamented façade topped by a balustrade.²⁰ The hint was ignored and building

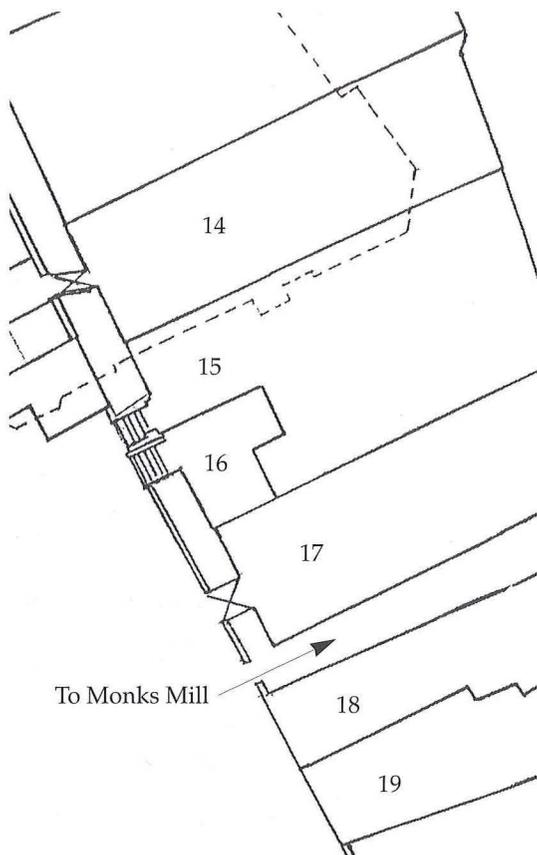


Fig. 5 Lodging and other houses built immediately outside the city wall on the east side of the Grove.

proceeded piecemeal. Thomas Sheyler of the coffee house was first to move. He acquired the plot with William Long's former stables (sites 18–19) and erected a pair of narrow, plain, but decently-proportioned houses with three storeys onto the Grove. His builder Richard Jones, soon to be Ralph Allen's clerk-of-works, later explained how the stone for the job, from Combe Down quarries, reached Monks Mill by water before being wheeled up to the construction site.²¹ The houses further north all required the demolition of properties along Lot Lane and faced the added complication of having to bridge the lane and obtain permission to pierce or cross the city wall. Next after Sheyler's came the most elaborate house, soon dubbed 'Iron Gates', by an architect unknown – though the unlikely name of the 3rd Earl of Burlington has sometimes been invoked (site 17).

Four giant columns, carrying an entablature crowned with urns, restrained an otherwise fussily detailed façade remarkable for its splendid wrought-iron gates (Fig. 6); inside, the oak staircase was a major piece of craftsmanship.²² Clearly intended as a *tour de force*, the building was owned and commissioned by one of the spa's eminent apothecaries, John Moore.

The next two houses (sites 15–16), built in plainer style c.1729–33, were another speculation by Thomas Atwood and went with his simultaneous acquisition of the bowling green house (site 13). Site 16 had however been held for some time on two separate leases and in c.1732 Atwood sold the small plot nearest the Grove to Samuel Bush, another apothecary (once apprenticed to his new neighbour John Moore), for him to develop. The eastern part, built in close association with site 15, became in effect an L-shaped property with a tall, double elevation to the river, ideal for lodgings. Beyond Atwood's rose another substantial house, entered at the Grove level via a six-foot-wide bridge over the city wall and Lot Lane (site 14). Sooner or later this was notable for its fine interior wood panelling and became known as Winchester House.²³ Its construction in 1730 was financed by Dr Bennet Stevenson, minister of the Presbyterian congregation that met in Frog Lane and which included the apothecary John Moore and the brazier John Axford among its members.

All this activity on the east side of the Grove was matched by the transformation of the Inner Bowling Green on the Kingston estate. Bowling came to an end here in the early 1720s leaving Bath bereft of a good green, for the bowling ground near St Michael's had also succumbed to building blight by 1716 on the eve of laying out Green Street. The carefully groomed turf²⁴ south of the Grove must soon have deteriorated under the impact of football and the other sports and pastimes that John Wood lists in his account of the evolution of this area.²⁵ He himself was kept busy with plans for Ralph Allen, the Wiltshire family, the ex-singer and casino-mistress Dame Lindsey, and the principal leaseholder Humphrey Thayer, who all had designs on the site. The outcome was a north wing and garden extension to Allen's post-office, a small concert room, a new suite of assembly rooms (i.e. Thayer's/Lindsey's), and the remodelling of the shops on Terrace Walk, which was now widened to 27 feet.²⁶ It was probably around this time that Leake's garden, which ran behind the shops in the Grove, was raised to the level of their ground-floors. The Corporation allowed Thayer to remove the wall between the Abbey Church and the first shop (site 26) and to substitute an iron railing, but took care this time to safeguard the daylight to the next three shops (sites 25–23).

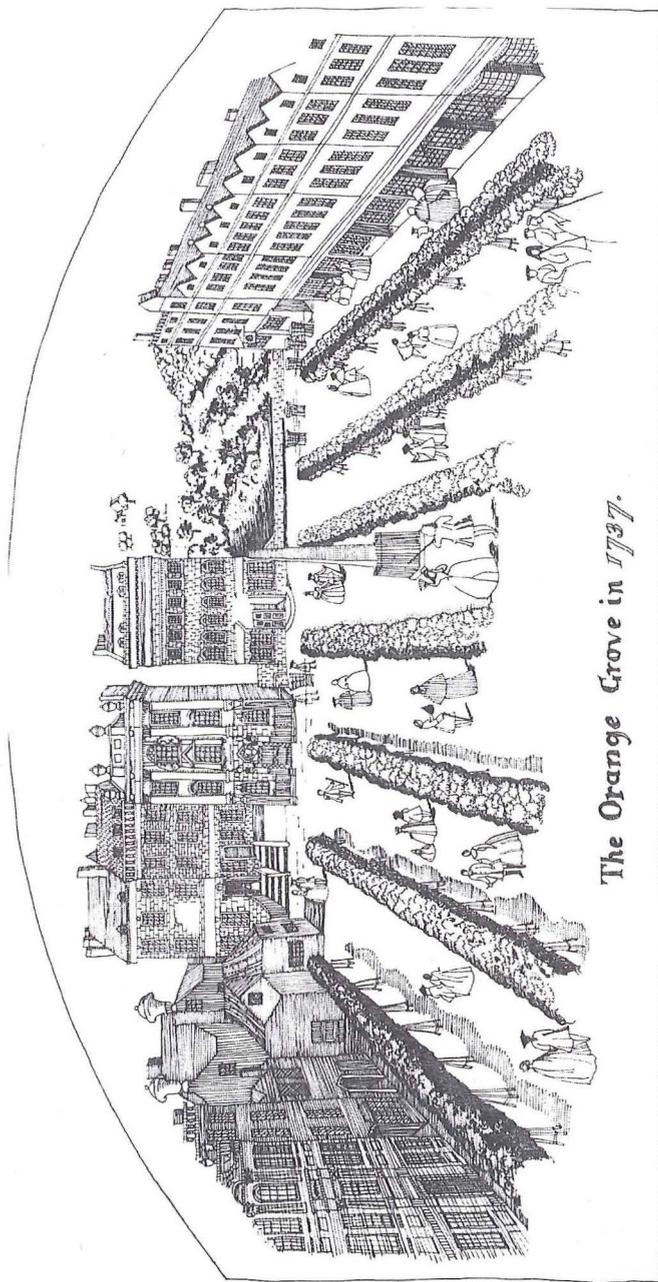


Fig. 6 Fan view by Thomas Robins depicting Orange Grove from the west with some artistic licence (see note 43). Redrawn by Barbara McLaughlin from the original. (Courtesy Bath Central Library)

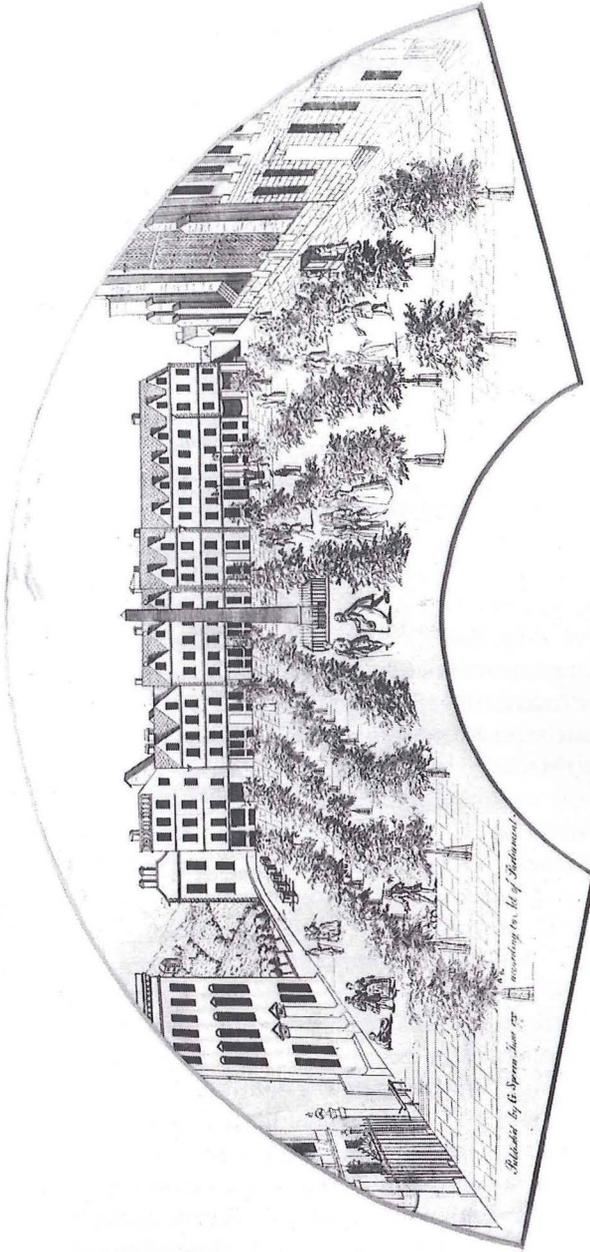


Fig. 7 Fan view by George Sperring (Sperring) showing Orange Grove from the north around 1737. (Courtesy of the Victoria Art Gallery)

The irregular line of tall houses on the east side of the Grove, together with other new construction on the north, imparted to the whole space a much greater feeling of enclosure. Although John Wood claimed it was the improvement of Terrace Walk that triggered off the fresh laying out of the Grove in the early 1730s, the Council may equally have had in mind the concept of the formal town square, increasingly popular and currently being realised in Wood's own Queen Square. The buildings around could not be regularised but the central planting could, and by the end of 1732 the mature trees (with their abandoned rooks' nests) had all been felled and sold off for timber. The gates, wall and fencing surrounding Gravel Walks went as well, before the entire space was re-levelled and planted with neat rows of elm saplings. Interestingly enough, the supervisor of this last operation was Thomas Robins whom the Corporation paid for supplying and establishing the trees.²⁷ The likelihood that this was the well-known drawing-master is made almost certain by the existence of a fan print by Robins depicting the replanted Grove from the west (Fig. 6). Clearly visible in the engraving is the obelisk erected about 1735 at Nash's instigation to commemorate the successful health cure undertaken by the Prince of Orange in 1734. A permanent advertisement of the virtues of the hot springs, it marked too the transition of the informal Grove into the somewhat more dignified Orange Grove. John Wood, writing in the 1740s, felt the improvements gave the Grove the fillip it needed, for since then 'this Open Area hath grown more and more in Repute; and People of Fortune have lately preferred it to any other Place, within the Walls of the City, to take up their Abode in, during their stay at Bath.'²⁸

Yet well before that the investment in property, shops and other amenities was paying off. Viscount Perceval's diary, for instance, indicates the sort of clientèle frequenting the coffee house in autumn 1730 when he regularly met there for *ad hoc* discussions on political, religious and literary questions with Members of Parliament (including the Speaker), the Dean of Exeter, and various nobility and gentry.²⁹ By the 1740s it was reckoned to have 300–400 such subscribers in a full season. Around 1731 it passed from the Sheylers to their relations the Morgans, who had earlier been concerned in a shop on the south side of the Grove (site 24). In 1733 the Mayor, Richard Morgan II, protected his son Charles' interests in the coffee house by thwarting John Wood's plan to upgrade facilities at the Pump Room in a way that might have drawn off trade.³⁰

Most of the retailers in business in Orange Grove about this date can be identified. On the parade the shop nearest Abbey Church (site 26), the

first to have a bow-fronted display window, was John Wicksteed's, toyman, china-dealer and seal-engraver. His wife Sarah probably tended the shop from c.1737 while he himself managed the water-powered jewellery-mill ('Wicksteed's Machine') that he had set up in Lyncombe. A signboard over the door in the Grove advertised 'Stone Seals', meaning the coats-of-arms, crests and ciphers he engraved on Brazilian pebblestone at this mill and set in gold mounts.³¹ The business prospered into the later eighteenth century despite family disputes and the shop continued on this site until c.1767.

Next door (site 25) Ditcher's millinery shop was still there in 1731, it seems, but eventually the toyman George Sperring (or Speren) took the tenancy. It is tempting to think this may have happened about 1737 when Sperring published a fan view of Orange Grove similar to that of Thomas Robins, only this time taken from the north with the parade of shops deliberately highlighted as if for publicity (Fig. 7). The Sperrings traded here until the mid-1780s, and though they never owned their shop they did eventually acquire the adjoining premises (site 24) after its long tenure with John Jacobs (the plasterer who eventually built it) and his widow Elizabeth. This shop had a variety of tenants. In the 1730s and 1740s it was occupied by a jeweller of likely Huguenot descent, Peter Goul(l)et, who took several apprentices at this period.

The next house along the terrace (site 23) held a milliner, Ann Walton, by 1736, but seems to have been sublet for a time to a toyman and jeweller, John Pyke, before reverting to the Waltons in the 1750s. It was associated with dress and fashion for the rest of the century. Beyond it the most spacious shop in the row (site 22) belonged to the milliner John Cornish until c.1727, but then assumed the role it retained into the nineteenth century with the arrival, almost certainly at this address, of a bookseller, James Warriner, son of a coffee-house-keeper and originally apprenticed to that trade. Whether he followed Leake's example in launching a circulating library is unrecorded, but his successor about 1740, William Frederick, certainly did and also like Leake embarked on publishing. Frederick's and Leake's were the 'two excellent booksellers shops' mentioned by the philosopher and physician David Hartley in 1742 as he tried to tempt a friend to settle at Bath.³²

The use to which the neighbouring house (site 21) was put in the first half of the century remains curiously obscure considering its prominent position at the entry to Terrace Walk. Owned but not occupied from 1724 by the milliner John Cornish, it may have been a small tavern, but this is only to judge from the sign of the King's Head that hung outside in 1748

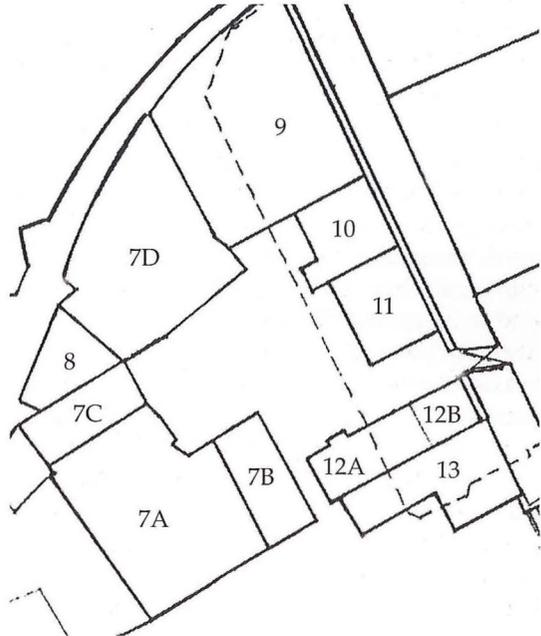
when a jeweller, James Tilly, lodged there and perhaps used the small rooms over the passage. These would be suitable for such a craft, as they were for the well-known watchmaker Richard Laurence when he first started up in Bath about 1753. On the other side of the passage the Chapman property had ceased to be a private house and undoubtedly had commercial tenants, a wigmaker and a hatter-and-hosier eventually among them.

Lack of space alone would have prevented the shops on the parade from dealing in bulky products, but this was not the sole reason they specialised in relatively small, high-value goods. Retailing at Bath was roughly zoned. Perishable foodstuffs were sold in and around the market; mixed commodities including drapery and grocery wares on the angular line of Stall, Cheap and Northgate streets; and luxury or tourist-trade items mainly in Abbey Churchyard, Orange Grove and Terrace Walk – visitors' Bath. Shops that appeared on the western margin of the Grove towards the middle of the century followed the same rule. By 1750 the sign of the Hand & Solitaire at the busy corner opposite Morgan's coffee house advertised the presence of another jeweller, Moses Roubel, formerly chief craftsman to the highly reputed toyman and jeweller Paul Bertrand on Terrace Walk. Next to him on the north (site 5) a Bristol wine merchant, Edward Gillam (married to an Axford), gave way in 1753 to a mercer and draper. At the other side of the coffee house the property nestling against the Abbey Church (site 1) eventually divided in two, one part becoming a milliner's. Only one building in Orange Grove may have had a rather more disreputable character, the tavern tucked decently out of sight behind the coffee house and reached by a narrow alley (site 2), yet that again is only to judge by the name it went by, *Sot's Hole*, before turning into the more respectable-sounding *Ring of Bells*. Otherwise Orange Grove bore the stamp of gentility.

A number of shops supplemented their retail trade by taking in visitors. These included the two bookshops, Frederick's on the parade and Leake's just round the corner in Terrace Walk. Leake's was favoured by several noblemen: the 1st Viscount Perceval, the great 4th Earl of Chesterfield, and the 2nd Earl Cowper. Lord Cowper's brother, the Dean of Durham, preferred Mrs Atwood's lodging-house beside the Avon (site 15 and the rear of 16). In 1744 the riverside setting and the view from his window above 'an agreeable cascade' made a lasting impression, for he several times referred to it over the years. The river at Bath, he recalled later, might often look 'foul and yellow' but it greatly improved the prospect. 'The house, where I lodged looked full upon it, and if you saw

it you wd think it the prettiest scituated of any in the whole place.'³³ Still, the views were equally fine next door above at Bennet Stevenson's (subsequently Purdie's) lodging house, as the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu would have appreciated when she stayed there.³⁴ It was probably at one of the houses this side of the Grove that attracted Lady Luxborough in 1752 and where she found mahogany furniture, clothes presses and down beds among the luxurious appointments.³⁵ Nonetheless she would have paid no more than the standard Bath price of ten shillings a room per week and five shillings a garret for servants – which is what another visitor was charged for accommodation at the splendid 'Iron Gates' (subsequently known as Nassau House, site 17) twenty years later.³⁶ Long-stay guests might secure special terms, as no doubt Mercy Doddridge did during her tedious recuperation at Susannah Axford's in 1742–3 (site 7A).³⁷

Fig. 8 The creation of Orange Court on the north side of the Grove.



It was no accident that Mercy Doddridge, wife of the eminent nonconformist scholar Philip Doddridge, chose these lodgings because most of the Axfords too were Dissenters. This fact throws light on the creation of Orange Court, an enclave on the north of the Grove. Until the early 1730s most of the Axford land in this area remained garden,

though the old house that Lady Weston once occupied had survived in Boatstall Lane (part of site 7D), albeit in a fragile state if this is the building called 'Tumbledown Dick' in 1747. About 1726, however, it appears that a small house was put up by the city wall (site 10) as a residence for Jane Axford, Susannah's unmarried sister-in-law. This provided the springboard for more active development once Bennet Stevenson, the Axfords' religious pastor, had erected his imposing lodging house almost opposite in Lot Lane with a bridge onto the Axford land (site 14). By 1737 building work was in full swing. On the east side the largest lot, with a corner near the East Gate, had gone to Mary Chandler, a familiar figure at Bath for her milliner's shop near the Pump Room. Recently Leake had published a verse *Description of Bath* she had penned, a eulogy of the spa with a dedication to Princess Amelia no less. But while the repeated editions must have yielded her handsome royalties, still more relevant to her leasehold in the Grove was that her father had been minister at Frog Lane until Bennet Stevenson succeeded in 1719. Meanwhile Stevenson was building on his own account with new houses on either side of the bridged way to his lodging house (sites 11–12, presumably doing away with the public privy on 12B in the process). About the same time Jane Axford's house (site 10), now sandwiched between Chandler's and Stevenson's, passed to John Billingsley, one of a whole dynasty of Dissenting ministers, who set to work extending the premises. Contrary to the Corporation's expressed wishes all these buildings encroached on the city wall, but in return for a rent increase the developments were allowed. It is worth observing that the religious link was no barrier to perfectly secular uses. As the former bowling green house (site 13) was refashioned around 1740 into an annexe of Atwood's lodging house, Bennet Stevenson's adjoining new building simply replaced it as a tavern, the *Star* (later re-named the *Sun*), with the landlord Edward Reyner moving from one to the other. Billingsley's house, moreover, soon became a wine merchant's, while Mary Chandler's turned into the *Grove* tavern and lodgings after her death. Given its complement of two large kitchens, five rooms at parlour level, another five at dining level, five attics and six garrets, the main part of this building must have been intended for lodgings from the start. In the 1740s though, before the tavern got going, the smaller part housed Philip Masters' jeweller's shop for a while. More intriguingly, the itinerant science lecturer Benjamin Martin made it his base in 1748; the large 'experimental room' then served as the venue for lecture courses accompanied by demonstrations on his extensive apparatus.³⁸

Long before then the conversion of the Axford gardens into Orange Court had been completed by further infilling on the west side. This would have begun in the mid-1730s as provision was made for Susannah, recent widow of Jacob Axford who had been heir to the property. The roomy-looking house on the south-east (site 7A) was therefore built as lodgings and managed for some thirty years by Susannah, who held both this and the adjoining buildings (sites 7A–D). Behind the lodgings a much smaller building reached from Orange Court (site 7C) housed Benjamin Axford, probably Susannah's son, after his return to Bath in the later 1740s from post-apprenticeship training in London. Next to the lodgings on the east, the small house fronting the Grove (site 7B) was let to Samuel Tompkins, a former Thames waterman who operated a daily wherry service to-and-from Bristol and had a sash-windowed pleasure boat available for excursions.³⁹ This river connection would be continued by the enterprising William Purdie, new tenant of Bennet Stevenson's lodging house (site 14). Having established a wine merchant's shop on the premises, Purdie extended his business in the mid-1750s by leasing Spring Pleasure Garden across the Avon and the ferry serving it.

Immediately west of Susannah Axford's lodgings stood the constables' watch house, later the subject of a memorable complaint by her daughter both for its dirty shutters and the shoeblack who plied his trade outside.⁴⁰ Space for the watch house (between sites 6A and 7A) must have been leased to the Corporation by Samuel Bush of Dyrham, who inherited site 6 when his father-in-law, the poulterer Philip Masters, died in 1720. The large corner building here (site 6A) was another lodging house, in use as such by 1714 in the time of James Masters and no doubt continued by Thomas Lippeat and his wife Frances (Masters) through the 1720s and 1730s.

About 1740 Orange Grove was substantially complete and changes over the next few decades were mainly cosmetic. In 1745 part of the city wall on the east side received a stone balustrade. The Council ensured that the elm trees were regularly pruned and the walks regravelled, and in 1753 laid a diagonal pavement between the Terrace Walk entry and Wade's Passage to formalise a much-trodden short cut. Many of the houses had obtained their own water supply between 1726 and 1751, but not the terrace of shops on the parade which had to depend on the Market-place pump until they were belatedly connected in the 1790s. Nor did all the properties have drainage into sewers. Indeed a stairway had been created in 1731 between sites 17 and 18 specifically 'for the convenience of

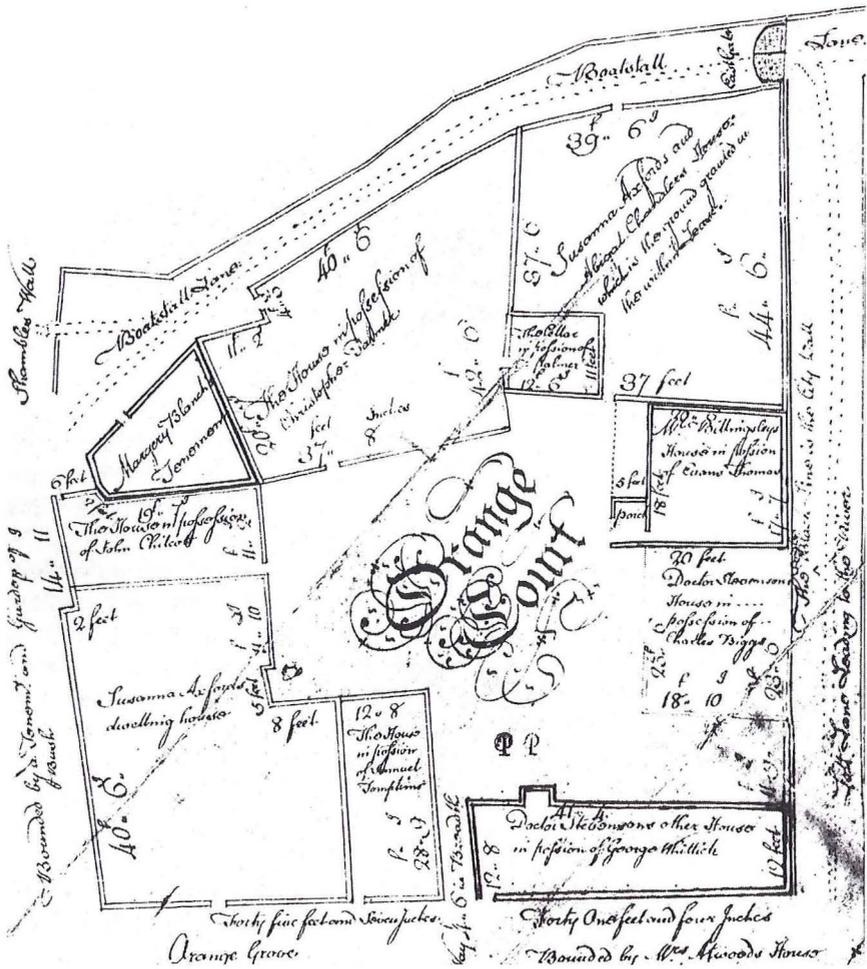


Fig. 9 Orange Court properties from a lease of 1747.

the tenants in the Walks, to carry away their soil'.⁴¹ It was these stairs that in 1760 became the new way to the Spring Garden ferry when Purdie transferred it from its accustomed crossing point above the weir; the stairs were removed in 1777, the ferry having been superseded by Pulteney Bridge.

Orange Grove during the first four decades had been the spa's key growth-point, a magnet for investment, a place of mounting economic activity, a constant resort of the wealthy and fashionable. The chief tradespeople resided between the Pump Room and the Assembly Room, noted a document of 1739: 'this Part of the Town the Corporation and other Proprietors are continually improving for the better Accommodation of those that so often frequent it...'.⁴² This was its heyday before other centres of gravity began to exert their contrary pulls. Serious competition started with John Wood's massive development of the Parades in the 1740s, followed by the extension of Simpson's (once Harrison's) Rooms, the arrival of the Parade Coffee House, and the opening of the Orchard Street theatre, all around 1750. The famous pedestrian walk from South Parade to the enlarged Pump Room certainly passed through Orange Grove, but made it more of a transit space on the route than a distinct focus. The Grove's long-standing function of meeting-place and smart promenade was usurped by the new Parades, and these also challenged its forte in stylish lodgings. Nevertheless, despite the evolution of other zones of attraction in Milsom Street and the Circus district, any dramatic decline in the Grove's fortunes was staved off for several more decades by Bath's ever-increasing popularity with visitors. The fashion shops and the convenient accommodation remained; the coffee house was able to shrug off competition; the bosky square was still an agreeable spot to pass through or linger in.

Change nevertheless there was, and before the end of the century the sense of exclusiveness was ebbing away. Gift shops, milliners and perfumers could still be found, and Meyler's bookshop and library contrived to keep up the literary tradition, but trades that once would have been frowned on had invaded. By 1800 site 5 housed a butcher; an umbrella-maker worked in one of the Orange Court houses (where his wife also ran a dame school); and a coal merchant and a coachbuilder had moved into two of the fine houses on the east side. Walter Chapman's old house (site 20) and the rooms over the passage no longer existed, pulled down in 1788 to open up Terrace Walk and eliminate a congested corner often made hazardous by passing sedan chairs. Already there was talk of making a road all the way from Pulteney Bridge to Pierrepont Street, a scheme not realised until the following century with the gradual transformation of the whole of Orange Grove – the sweeping away of Wade's Passage and the houses on the west, the felling of trees to install a central garden, the building of the police station in 1865, and between 1893 and 1901 the refronting of the row of shops, the building of the

Guildhall extension and the huge block of the Empire Hotel, and the achievement of the long-desired through road destroying a soda-water factory, the Athenaeum, and a tall-chimneyed dyeworks as it went.

The Orange Grove that Nash knew can only be reconstructed jigsaw-fashion from many pieces of evidence haphazard in their survival. What is perhaps most revealing about the story of its evolution is the close-knit relationships of many of those involved. Atwoods, Chapmans, Sheylers, Morgans, Masters, Bushes, and many lesser names are found to have complex family ties (not all teased out in this account) and most properties were passed on through chains of inheritance well into the future. But there are clearly other linkages: through membership of the oligarchic Corporation, through trades and apprenticeships (jewellers, milliners, apothecaries, and others), through religious affiliation, and doubtless through financial, economic and social networks that spread even beyond Bath. That property ownership was advantageous and profitable may be inferred from the steeply rising 'fines' the Corporation was able to charge whenever leases were renewed. Lengthy tenancies suggest that shopkeepers and others were satisfied with their returns – though the odd bankruptcy did occur. By most tests of urban development Orange Grove was an eighteenth-century success – and one that might have been maintained but for the phenomenal expansion of the upper town. Once the city's social centre of gravity moved decisively northwards the Grove's decline could not be stopped.

Notes

References have been deliberately limited to points of general interest and to identifying quotations. *Fully* annotated copies of the text have been placed with Bath Record Office, Bath Archaeological Trust, and the Policy Conservation and Landscape Section, Bath City Council.

- 1 Hist. MSS. Comm. 80, Sackville 1, pp.339–40.
- 2 *A Relation of a Short Survey of 26 Counties...1634*, ed. L.G. Wickham Legg (London, 1904), pp.108–09 (spelling modernised).
- 3 *A Step to the Bath, with a Character of the Place* [by Ned Ward?] (London, 1700), p.163.
- 4 *Ibid.* p.159.
- 5 Anthony à Wood, *Monumental Inscriptions in the Churches of Bath* (London, 1881), p.5.
- 6 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Books, 2 Dec 1702.

- 7 Ibid. 27 Dec 1714.
- 8 Ibid. 17 Feb 1706/7. *Bath Journal* 7 March 1757 p.4.
- 9 Samuel Gale, 'A Tour through Several Parts of England...1705' in *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, ed. J. Nichols, Vol. 3 [1780?], p.23.
- 10 Francis Fleming, *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures...of Timothy Ginnadrake*, Vol. 3 (Bath, 1771), p.23.
- 11 *Cal. State Papers Dom. 1679-80 (Charles II)* pp.402-03, 416-17.
- 12 *Characters at the Hot-Well, Bristol...and at Bath...1723* [by Robert Whatley] (London, 1724), p.xxv.
- 13 'While others so stingy,/Penny-pot it at Bengy's', *The Pleasures of the Bath* (Bristol, S. Farley, 1721).
- 14 John Macky, *A Journey through England* (London, c.1722), pp.128-9.
- 15 Bath Central Library, MS. B914.238, 'Diary of a Tour by Three Students from Cambridge (1725)', p.118.
- 16 *The Orrery Papers*, ed. Countess of Cork and Orrery, Vol. 1 (London, 1903), p.100.
- 17 R.S. Neale, *Bath 1680-1850: a Social History* (London, 1981), pp.23-4.
- 18 *An Essay against Too Much Reading* [by Thomas Goulding] (London, 1728), sep. pag. p.21.
- 19 Susan L. Sloman, 'General Wade's altar-piece for Bath Abbey', *Burlington Magazine* Aug. 1991, pp.507-10. It is true John Wood claimed that Wade was the main contributor to the Passage, but Wood would not want to give credit to an Atwood.
- 20 John Wood, *An Essay towards a Description of Bath* (1749/1765, repr. Bath, 1969), p.245. Wood points out that the east side of the Grove and the Lot Lane area often served as a 'common jakes' and that the improvements around 1730 removed a great nuisance and raised land values - Ibid. pp.245-6.
- 21 Bath Central Library, MS B926, 'The Life of Richard Jones', pp.4-5
- 22 Mowbray A. Green, *The XVIIIth Century Architecture of Bath* (Bath, 1905), p.11. *Bath Daily Chronicle* 25 July 1898, letter by J.F. Meehan.
- 23 Mowbray A. Green, pp.11-12.
- 24 A French visitor to Britain noted that bowling greens were kept as neat and smooth as velvet: Guy Miège, 'The present state of Great Britain' in *Aristocratic Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. D.A. Baugh (New York, 1975), p.37.
- 25 John Wood, op. cit., pp.243-4.
- 26 For this development see *The Kingston Estate within the Walled City of Bath* [by Elizabeth Holland and Mike Chapman] (Bath, 1992).
- 27 Bath Record Office, Chamberlain's Accounts, 2 Sep 1734 (1732-3), 30 May 1738 (1736-7).
- 28 John Wood, op. cit., p.343.
- 29 Hist. MSS. Comm. 63, Egmont Diary 1, 'Diary of Viscount Percival, 1730-1733', pp.108-18 passim.
- 30 John Wood, op. cit., p.270.
- 31 British Library, Handbill printed for John Wicksteed (Bath, 1741).
- 32 W.B. Trigg, 'The correspondence of Dr. David Hartley and Rev. John Lister',

- Trans. Halifax Antiquarian Soc.*, 1938–40, pp.264–5.
- 33 Spencer Cowper, *Letters of Spencer Cowper, Dean of Durham, 1746–64*, ed. E. Hughes (*Surtees Soc. Pub.* 165, Durham, 1956), letters dated 19 Sep 1744, 10 Apr 1745, 8 Nov 1747.
- 34 Sydney Sydenham, *Bath Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century* (Bath, 1907), p.9.
- 35 Marjorie Williams, *Lady Luxborough Goes to Bath* (Oxford, 1946), p.8. Her landlady was Mrs Hodgkinson.
- 36 William Mawhood, *The Mawhood Diary*, ed. E.E. Reynolds (*Catholic Rec. Soc.* 50, London, 1956), p.50.
- 37 Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD, 1702–1751* (Northants Rec. Soc. 29, Hist. MSS. Comm. JP 26, London, 1979), letters 792 and 870.
- 38 *Bath Journal* 11 Jan 1747/8 and 26 Sep 1748; also 12 Dec 1748 for the death of Martin's lodger.
- 39 *Gloucester Journal* 15 Apr 1740, *Bath Journal* 11 Jun 1744.
- 40 Bath Record Office, Improvement Commissioners' box, n.d.
- 41 Bath Record Office, Bath Corporation Minute Book, 25 Feb 1730/1.
- 42 *Case of the Inhabitants in the Suburbs of Bath...in relation to the Hire of Chairs* (Bath, 1739).
- 43 The re-drawing follows the much-darkened original in Bath Central Library as closely as possible, but leaving any doubtful areas blank. Robins' image gives a good idea of the Orange Grove's enclosed character but takes some liberties with actuality – in particular: (1) on the left, the lodging house at 6A has moved eastwards to overlap 7A, (2) Orange Court buildings are inaccurate and the lodging house behind at site 14 has been omitted, (3) the house 'Iron Gates', site 17, protrudes out of line with 15–16, (4) on the right, one shop is lost from the row, but not the end, bay-windowed one, (5) the central planting seems to be in hedges, but compare Fig. 7.

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