

of groups of children in the background'.³¹ In December 1858 the pool once again formed the backdrop for a 'grand comic pantomime' at Sadler's Wells entitled 'Harlequin and Old Izaak Walton; or, Tom Moore of Fleet-street, the Silver Trout, and the Seven Sisters of Tottenham',³² and in 1887 the pond featured in the pantomime 'The Frog Who Would a-Wooing Go' at the Marylebone Theatre.

* * * * *

Acknowledgements

With thanks to

Georgina Eliot and Alexis Ashot
at Christie's, London

JOHN CASTLES ('MASTER OF THE GROTTOS') AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY GROTTOS OF LONDON

By Michael Cousins

On 21st October 1738, the *Daily Gazetteer* made the following announcement (*fig. 9*):

A curious fine Grotto is just finished at St. Mary-le-Bone by Mr. Castle, the Gentleman who presented his Majesty with his Arms in Shell-Work, and who made the Grotto in the Garden belonging to Sir Robert Walpole at Chelsea.¹

This is the first evidence of the grotto at Marybone (or Marylebone), and the existence of John Castles, grotto-builder.² Compared to the likes of Thomas Bushell, Thomas Wright, Stephen Wright, and, of course, Joseph and Josiah Lane, Castles is rather the forgotten man of grotto-builders. Yet he is an essential,

and quantifiable bridge between the work of the seventeenth-century artisans, with notable creations at Wilton, Woburn, and Enstone, and the equally famous designs of the eighteenth century at Painshill, Oatlands, and Ascot, for example. Considering the number of grottoes constructed during the latter period, the names of their builders remain generally unknown; to that extent, Castles fairs somewhat better. Besides St. Marybone, the news item of 1738 also provides confirmation that he was responsible for the grotto at Chelsea (although his patron was actually Catherine, Lady Walpole, Sir Robert's first wife). Frequently referred to as 'Castle' in newspapers, the few legal documents that exist concerning the grotto-builder always refer to 'Castles', and so this spelling has been adopted throughout the current article.

We know next to nothing of Castles' youth – when and where he was born, or how he took up a trade, or a career in shell-work and decoration of grottoes – but it is evident that he had limited literacy, having to have his mark witnessed on documents. It is probable that he was related to Anne Castle – possibly his mother rather than his wife – who first appears in the Marybone (or Mary Bone) rate books in 1735, but not after 1737.³ The first mention of Castles is as the lodger of a Major Delaine in 1739, but thereafter he appears as the principal rate-payer in his own right, which continued to be the case right up to his demise in 1757.

But before embarking on his most famous enterprise, the Great Grotto at Marylebone, it is worth recounting the history of the first piece of work that Castles is known to have been involved with: Lady Walpole's grotto at Chelsea.

Lady Walpole (c.1682–1737) appears to have determined to build a grotto at Chelsea early in 1734.⁴ A letter from Aaron Hill indicates that her Ladyship must have called on him at his house in Petty France, Westminster, to see his 'rude beginnings of rock-work' and 'a little obelisk of Jersey shells,

31. *The Times*, 27 December 1851, p.3.

32. *The Times*, 28 December 1858, p.7.

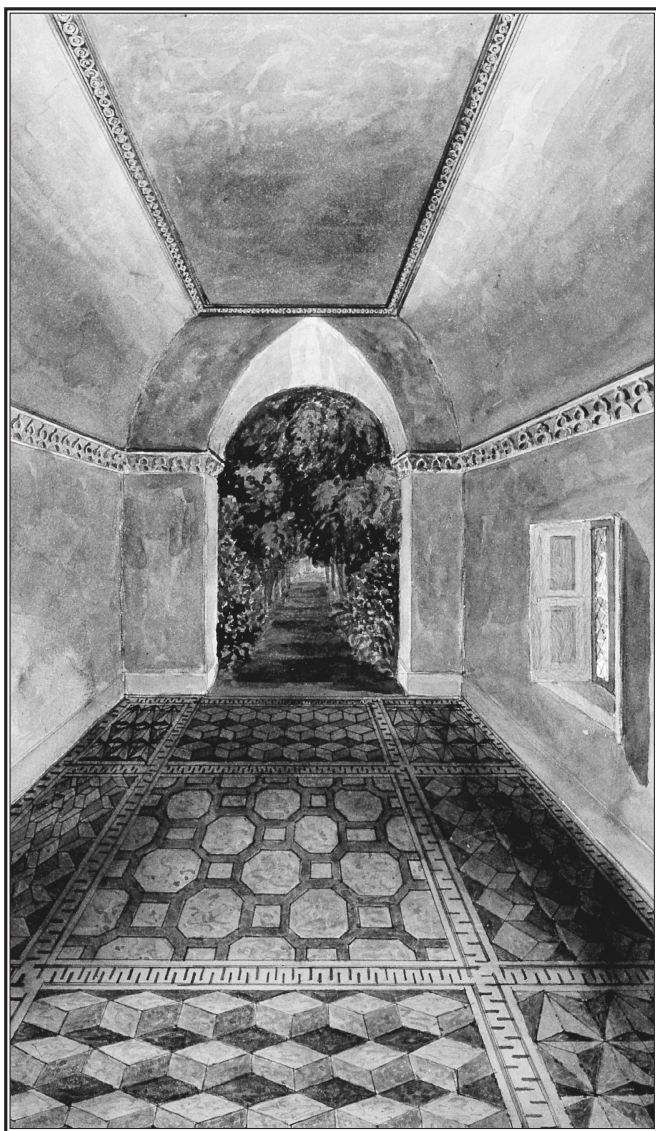
1. *Daily Gazetteer* (London Edition), Saturday 21 October 1738, Issue 103 [1038], p.2, News section.

2. Previous accounts of the Great Grotto have used various old press cuttings from the Westminster City Archives (hereafter referred to as WCA) as a principal source. The publication year of each has been handwritten on the respective cutting; unfortunately on some key pieces the dates have been misread, particularly the aforementioned extract, as can also be evinced by comparison to the actual corresponding eighteenth-century newspapers in other collections. This, plus incorrect assumptions about the location and extent of Castles' establishment, have led to quite misleading accounts of the Great Grotto, e.g. Arthur Ashbridge, 'The Royal Grotto in High Street, Marylebone: An Historical sketch', *The Marylebone Mercury and West London Gazette*, [weekly], No. 3402, London, Saturday 20 January 1923, p.2; Oliver Bradbury, 'Rites of Passage', *The Marylebone Journal*, vol. 2, no. 5 (October–November 2006), pp.38–40; and Ivor Hoole's 'A Guide to the Alleys, Courts, Passages, and Yards of Central London' [Geocities] is just a wonderful piece of creative writing about Castles and the grotto.

3. WCA, Marylebone Rate Books. A Mrs Castle is mentioned under 'Tottenham Court Rd' at the end of 1734, who, it seems, then moved to Marylebone. An Anne Castle is recorded as being buried in the parish of St Marylebone on 1 April 1746 (Parish Registers, vol. no.p89/MRY1/3).

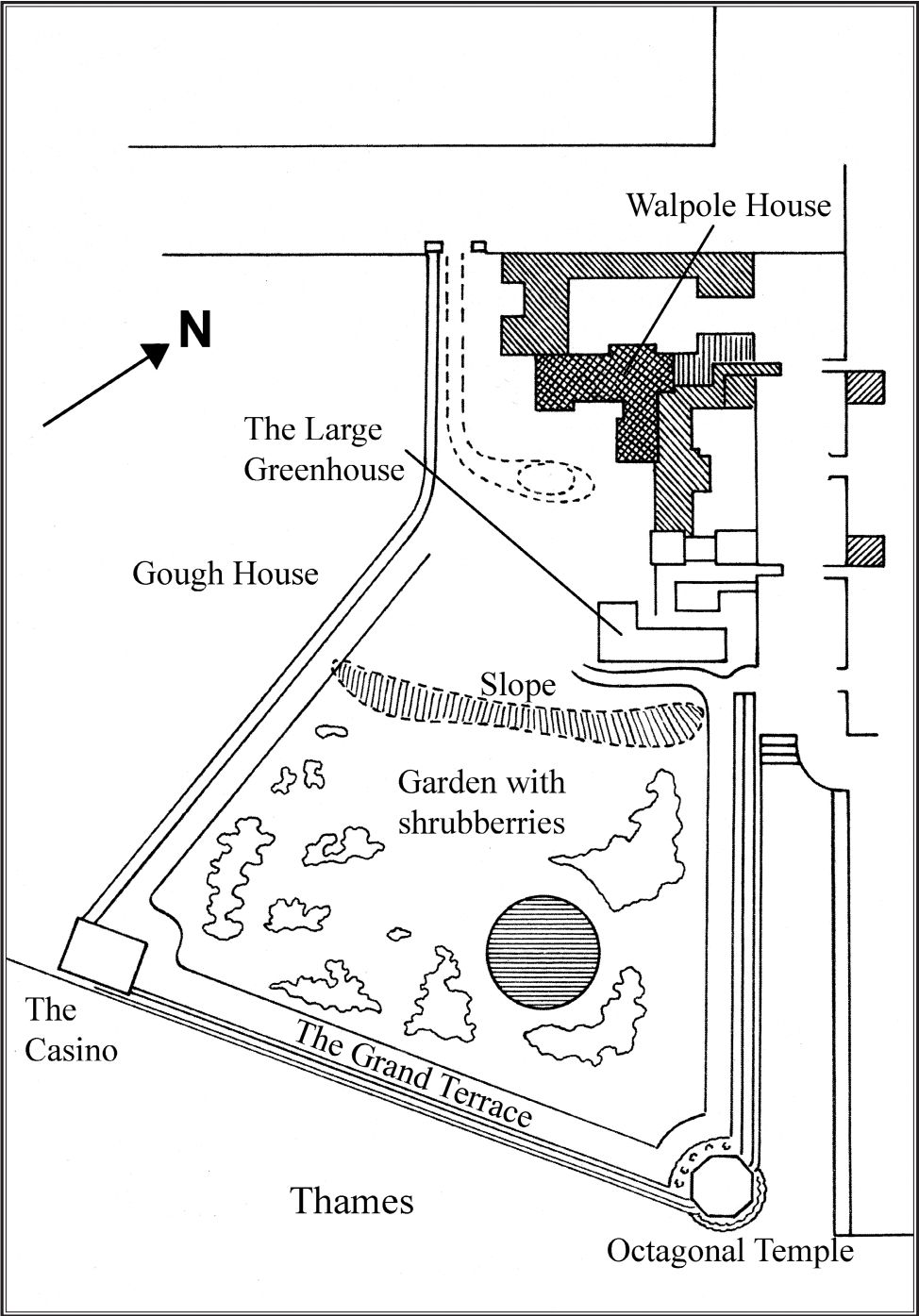
4. Catherine Shorter, Lady Walpole, married (1700) Sir Robert Walpole. She died of dropsy, at 9pm in the evening of 20 August, at Sir Robert's house in Chelsea, and was buried in Houghton Church (*London Evening Post*, 20–23 August 1737).

A curious fine Grotto is just finished at St. Mary-le-Bone by Mr. Castle, the Gentleman who presented his Majesty with his Arms in Shell-Work, and who made the Grotto in the Garden belonging to Sir Robert Walpole at Chelsea.



9. Advertisement placed in the *Daily Gazetteer*, 21st October 1738
(COURTESY CITY OF WESTMINSTER ARCHIVES CENTRE)

10. The interior of Lady Walpole's Grotto in the Grounds of Walpole House, Chelsea,
watercolour by Elizabeth Gulston or Marianne Rush
(COURTESY THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON & CHELSEA LIBRARIES SERVICE)



11. The Layout of the Grounds at Walpole House, Chelsea
(REPRODUCED FROM 'MIRROR OF THE TIME', 1809)

over a grotesque portico for *Pallas*, against the park-wall', which he had previously described to Alexander Pope.⁵ Unfortunately Hill was absent at the time of Lady Walpole's visit; but his subsequent letter makes clear the line of her enquiries. It is so rich in contemporary detail, especially about grotto- and shell-work, that it is worth quoting at length:

The shadowy beginnings of a rockwork, in my speck of garden, are not yet in a condition to have deserved the honour of your Ladyship's eye. They ought to have been veiled from so penetrating a judgment; for, I know, your genius is celebrated for its taste and propriety, in this kind of ornament.

But, my servants having informed me, that your ladyship seem'd desirous to know, what *compositions* I use, in cementing the *pebbles*, and *shell-work*, and where, and at what rates, the *blue stones* are to be procured, I take the liberty to address a written answer to your hand, because it would charm me, to see a fancy so able and elegant, exerting itself this way, in a situation so tempting, and so nobly adapted, as your Ladyship's garden at *Chelsea*, where the decline of the ground toward the river, and the neighbourhood of *London*, added to the dignity, which the work would receive from the name and rank of its owner, would do honour to our country's taste, in an improvement, at once, the most beautiful and neglected, of all our garden embellishments.

And yet, it is the *imagination* that does all, in this amusement. The expence is trifling, and inconsiderable — not so much as *Terras* is necessary, except on the *roofs* or *copings* of places exposed to the wet: But on the sides, even on those open places, and on every part of such, as are covered, nothing further is requisite, than a mixture of two parts of hard, round sand, with one part common lime, well beat together, with a moderate proportion of hair. This is to be laid pretty thick on the work, designed to be covered, and the

stones, shells &c. pressed hard and close into the mortar, which will grow dry enough, in two or three hours, to be proof against all weather.

The *blue stones* are chosen *clinkers*, from the *glass-houses*. They are produced from the breaking of melted pots, filled with metal, for their finest sorts of *glass*. These will be of no further cost, than an inconsiderable present to the *workmen*, added to the very small expence, of having them picked out of the *cinder heaps*, and brought in boats to your garden.

I procured my *shells*, at first, at very chargeable rates, from the *toy-shops*, here in town; but I have since had them brought me from the places of their growth, at less than the twentieth part of what they before used to cost me.

My intent was, to cover a little town garden, by way of model for a design, which I have some thoughts of executing, at large, where I have more room, in the country. But I find myself so crowded, as to want space, even for a model. [...]

If any of your Ladyship's servants bring word to my house, that they have your permission, at some time, when least inconvenient, to shew me that part of your garden, where the rock-work is designed to be raised, I shall more fully conceive both the purpose and occasion, which the situation may point out, and will, very readily, do myself the honour, to send your Ladyship whatever hints may offer.⁶

Hill's letter also makes it clear that the grotto was to be a structure above ground, as were several other examples for the period, such as the original grotto at Stowe (built 1739–46), and Merlin's Cave, Richmond (built 1732, demolished 1766). Shells were soon coming in, as noted in a verse that appeared in the last issue of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1734:

6. *Ibid.*, pp.190–93, letter of 30 May 1734.

5. *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill Esq., consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems...*, 4 vols (London: Printed for the Benefit of the Family, 1753), vol. 1, pp.179–80, letter of 7 November 1733 to Mr Pope.

On PRESENTS of shells (*mention'd in the NEWS*)
from the Islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Sark, and
Alderney, for Lady W - - P - - E's grotto at
Chelsea.

WHILST patriots murmur at the weight
Of taxes that support the state;
Of taxes that support the state;
See how the isles obeysance pay
To W - - P - - E's most auspicious sway!
Each little isle with generous zeal
Sends grateful ev'ry precious shell:
Shells, in which *Venus* and her train
Of nymphs ride stately o'er the main,
(The rarities in south-sea found
in these thrice happy isles abound)
To make the W - - P - - E grotto fine,
And rival Grotto *Caroline*.

Blessed effects of lasting peace!
Our wonders day by day increase.
Ridotto, grotto, temple, busto,
Become the universal gusto.
Balls, operas, gambling, masquerading,
Banish religion and fair trading.
Assemblies full, thin congregations,
A fondness for expensive fashions,
Whims to our ancestors unknown,
Are *finenesses* familiar grown.
Th' infections with the news goes down
To ev'ry modish country town;
Where all affect to imitate
The vain amusements of the great,
And where 'twill soon be vulgar thought
To entertain, but in a *grot*.⁷

Further lines appeared in January 1735, and it was reported in early September that year that 'The Grotto which the Right Hon. the Lady Walpole is making in her Gardens at Chelsea is near finish'd, and for the Beauty and Rarity of the Shells, will greatly exceed any thing of that kind in England.'⁸ In 1736, Robert West (1716-1742) presented his own 'little *èchantillon* of an attempt' at a verse on the subject ('The Grotto') to Horace Walpole, the inveterate arbiter of taste of the eighteenth century.⁹ Not everyone, however, was as enamoured by Lady Walpole's creation. The

Duchess of Portland was one such person, and following her visit to see it she wrote to Mrs. Ann Granville (sister of the noted Mrs. Delaney):

I have been to see Lady Walpole's *shellery*,
(for *grotto* I will not call it,) it is a fine
thing, but I can't say that it pleases me.
That regularity is abominable; besides, all
the red coral is *painted*—mine shall not be
made after that model!¹⁰

It would seem, therefore, that construction and decoration of the grotto took less than a year; however, it is unlikely that Castles' involvement extended to erecting the underlying structure (*fig. 10*). But where Castles was living whilst working on this project is unclear – his name does not appear in any of the poor rate books for Chelsea,¹¹ suggesting that he was living with Anne Castles, his mother(?), and walked – a round trip of some five to six miles – or was discreetly lodging on site.

Sir Robert Walpole died on 25th March 1745, and just over a year later a newspaper reported: 'To be sold, the Right Hon. The Earl of Orford's house, gardens, etc. at Chelsea. For further particulars inquire at John Ellis, Esq. in Cowley Street, Westminster.'¹² The property failed to sell, and so it was leased, initially, to the Duke of Newcastle; just a year further on, another advertisement appeared, which mentioned:

.... a curious GROTTTO of Shells and
Water-Works; a fine PAVILLION, with
a Drawing-Room, and Rooms over that;
a fine Octagon Summer-House, a very
long Green-House, an Ice-House...¹³

It is not known when the grotto disappeared – a newspaper cutting from the *Mirror of the Time* for 1809 'is more or less a commentary on the passing of the old house, and a description of its last state', at a time when Colonel J.W. Gordon was erecting a

7. *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 4 (December 1734), p.697.

8. *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 5 (January 1735), p.47; *General Evening Post*, Saturday, 6 September 1735; issue 303, news section, under LONDON, 9 September. The same item appeared in the *London Evening Post*, of the same day, issue 1218.

9. *Horace Walpole Correspondence*, ed. by Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, 48 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1937-83), vol. 13 (1948), pp.117-18, Richard West to Walpole, Christchurch, 31 October 1736.

10. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany...* ed. by Lady Llanover, 3 vols, 1st series (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), vol. 1, p.608, the Duchess of Portland to Mrs Ann Granville, Whitehall, 21 June 1737.

11. Kensington Local History Library, Poor Rate Books. The books covering the period from 1728 to 1742 have been checked and there are no references to a 'Castle' or 'Castles' living in Chelsea.

12. *Daily Advertiser*, Monday 31 March 1746, issue 4739.

13. *Daily Advertiser*, Saturday 28 March 1747, issue 5050.

new house and enlarging the garden.¹⁴ It noted that 'Facing the Thames stands a greenhouse, about 60ft. long, a grotto etc. ...' suggesting that the structure – whatever its condition – was still present then, and visible above ground (fig. 11).

The earliest advertisement announcing public viewing of *The Great Grotto, Marylebone* would seem to be that of 12th May 1739, 'which is allow'd by all who have seen it to be one of the greatest Curiosities in Europe'. The premises could be located by a 'Piece of Shell-Work over the Door, where constant Attendance is given every Day, Sundays excepted.' Entry price at its opening was 2s 6d per person, with the principal entrance door being on the south, from Burying Ground Passage (subsequently named Paradise Street, now Moxon Street) rather than Paddington Street at the north.

'A great Number of Persons of Distinction' had previously resorted to see the grotto ahead of its public opening. To this were quickly added 'their Royal Highnesses the Duke of Cumberland, and the Princesses Amelia, Caroline and Mary', who visited first on 16th May, followed by 'his Grace the Duke of Kent, the Lord Viscount Glenorchy, and above 60 other Persons of Distinction' on the 21st.¹⁵ The three princesses, this time accompanied by Princess Louisa, visited again on 23rd August, followed the day after by the Duke of Cumberland again, all to see the grotto 'with which they were very delighted'.¹⁶

By 26th July, it was noted in the papers that the entry price had been reduced to 1s.¹⁷ Further 'plugs' continued to appear in both the news and classified ad sections of the newspapers, including 'Lines' purported to have been 'sent by an unknown Hand, on seeing the Grotto':

Know that in all Beauties Pow'r Divine
Makes Nature Art and artful Nature shine:
What more for Man could watery Natives do,
Than yield their Lives, their Clime,
and Dwellings too;
Bereft of all, see how with artful Hand,
Their once defensive Booths adorn the Land;
Clad with the Spoil, their Monarch views the
Plain,
And governs still, an Emblematick *Main*;
And with the rest Triumphantly proclaim
The Ocean's Product, and the Worker's Fame.
Describe this Grotto he who can,
The Work of Nature, and the Art of Man.

Belt.¹⁸

More poetic strains appeared a month later:

VERSES writ Extempore, by a Gentleman, on
Mr. Cattle's GROTTTO in Mary-le-Bone.
FAIN would I *Castle's* curious Art rehearse,
And make his GROTTTO eternize my Verse ;
Where he in Shell-Work has such Fancy shewn,
As few can equal; but excell'd by none.
Here Art and Nature in strict Union meet,
And speak the great Performer's Skill compleat :
For where so e'er we turn our searching Eyes,
New Scenes of Beauty charm us by Surprize ;
Such various Figures both of Shade and Light,
With pleasing Wonder, strike the ravish'd Sight ;
That whilst with Transport round the
whole we're tost,
Amid'st the sweet Variety we're lost.¹⁹

Once broadcast to the metropolis, grotto-building became *de rigueur*, and anyone of note needed to be seen as engaging in this art: it was announced in the papers, for example, that 'His Grace the Duke of Newcastle is going to have a fine Grotto erected in his Gardens at Clermont [*sic*].'²⁰ Ultimately this did not actually transpire until several years later, in 1750, when it was erected under the auspices of Stephen Wright.²¹

In 1740, Castles added to exhibiting his grotto as a sole means of income by advising

14. This reference comes from Hugh Phillips F.S.A., *The Thames about 1750* [with illustrations] (London: Collins, 1951 [1952]), pp.164–65, wherein the author notes: 'In the John Burns Library, now in the L.C.C. Library, County Hall, Westminster, is an interesting press cutting book which was probably formed by Thomas Faulkner, the Chelsea historian, in the early nineteenth century. It contains a cutting from the 'Mirror of the Time', 1809.' The original press cutting book has not been traced.

15. See the respective news sections of the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, Tuesday 20 March 1739, issue 1370; *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, Thursday 17 May 1739, issue 1420; *Daily Gazetteer (London Edition)* Tuesday 22 May 1739, issue 1222.

16. *Daily Gazetteer (London Edition)*, Saturday 25 August 1739, issue 1304, news section.

17. *London Evening Post*, Thursday 26 July 1739, classified ads.

18. *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, Thursday 9 August 1739, issue 1492. This may have been a self-publicity stunt by Castles himself, although considering his level of illiteracy, this seems unlikely.

19. *Read's Weekly Journal Or British Gazetteer*, Saturday 29 September 1739, issue 786, news section.

20. *Daily Gazetteer (London Edition)*, Monday 10 September 1739; issue 1317. See the business / news section.

21. See Michael Symes, 'The Garden Designs of Stephen Wright', *Garden History*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Spring 1992), pp.11–27.

Pl E10/8/3/2

John Castles of the Parish of S.^t Mary le Bone in the County of Middlesex Yeoman Proposes to take for Building a peice of Ground Situate in the said parish of S.^t Mary le Bone belonging to the R.^t Hon.^{ble} Henrietta Cavendishs Hollers Countesse of Oxford and her Trustees, being part of the lower Church Field now in the possession of John Hall, fronting East upon a Brick Wall belonging to several Gardens behind several Houses in Marybone Town, West upon Vacant Ground tell to the said John Hall, North upon a Lane called Paddington Lane and South upon a way or Passage leading to the Burying Ground and containing from North to South in the East Front One hundred Ninety Seven feet five inches or thereabouts and from North to South on the West Front Two hundred Ninety Seven feet five inches or thereabouts and from East to West on the North front for the space of Forty feet or thereabouts and then running Southward in a line One hundred feet or thereabouts and then running Eastward in a line Twenty feet or thereabouts, and from East to West on the South front sixty feet or thereabouts (as is more particularly described by a plan on the back hereof) for the Term of Ninety Nine years from Lady day 1744, at the Rent of One peppor corn for the two first years of the said Term and at the yearly rent of Four pounds ten Shillings for the remainder of the said Term under the usual Covenants for building there. Dated this eight and Twentieth day of February 1743.

John. Castles

His mark,

Witness. William Ward

Let articles be made pursuant to these Proposals.

Hennetta Cavendish Holler Esq^r & Mortimer

Robt Harley
James Ward

12. John Castles' 'Proposal' for acquiring lands at Marylebone, 28 February 1744

(COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM MANUSCRIPTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: PORTLAND PAPERS PL E10/8/3/2)

readers that 'He Sells all Sorts of curious Shells, and performs Shell-Work at reasonable Prices'; there could have been no better response to this than the news report of a subsequent stately visit, when 'her Royal Highness the Princess Carolina was pleased to purchase a large Quantity of Shells, in order to divert herself in the curious Art of Shell-Work'.²²

John Castles possibly considered that he had cornered the capital's market for shell-work and decoration of grottoes, and he may well have had a monopoly, that was, at least, until 1744 when the first overt competition came from a Mr. Perrott who operated in the Five Fields, Chelsea:

This Day is open'd, a spacious Grotto, which for its Beauty and Number of curious Shells and magnificent Glasses, interspers'd with various sorts of Fountains, far exceeds any thing of the Kind in Europe. To be seen by Day-Light any Hour of the Day, at Perrott's, in the Five Fields, Chelsea. He likewise hath to dispose of, the greatest Number of foreign Shells of any Man in England.²³

His opening advertisement is seemingly targeted at Castles, plus he was only charging half the entry fee of that for the Great Grotto. There was also the added attraction in the area of the nearby Ranelagh Gardens, which more than balanced that of Marybone Gardens, situated just by Castles' exhibit. Castles responded almost immediately by informing the public of his 'beautify'd and enlarg'd' grotto, emphasising that 'To say any thing of Praise of this Grotto would be needless, it having been already seen by the most Curious, and acknowledg'd to be beyond Expression'.²⁴

But this was part of a grander scheme already initiated by Castles. At the beginning of 1744, he had taken legal steps to extend his enterprise, to which end he put forward a proposal 'to take for Building a peice [*sic*] of Ground Scituate in the said parish of S.^t Mary le Bone belonging to the R.^t Hon.^{ble} Henrietta Cavendish Holles Countess of Oxford and her Trustees.' Articles, with a term of ninety-nine years starting that Lady Day,

were drawn up and signed on 28th February 1744²⁵ (*fig. 12*). The rent was 'one pepper corn for the two first years of the said Term and at the yearly rent of ffour pounds ten Shillings for the Remainder of the said Term under the usual Covenants for Building there.'

This document is invaluable as it confirms that the ground associated with the Great Grotto (and its garden) stretched from Paddington Lane (Street) at the north to the Passage leading to the Burying Ground (Paradise Street) at the south. Rocque's *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, and Borough of Southwark* (1746) (*fig. 14*) clearly shows the run of houses making up 'Marybone Town' and the garden wall to the rear of these properties that formed the east boundary of Castles' 'domain', which was narrower and longer than previous accounts have stated. The land to the west, between the grotto and the Burying Ground was 'Vacant Gro.^d in y^e possession of John Hall' (*fig. 13*).

In the period 1744 to 1747, Perrott still continued to peddle his wares, as did Castles who was also 'Taking on commissions in the Town or Country'; but others soon entered the fray in what might be described as an early turf war. In May 1747 the following anonymous advertisement appeared:

To be SOLD,
At the Star in the Pav'd Passage over-
against the Gold-Smith's Shop, Leading
into Well-Close-Square;

ALL Sorts of Conque SHELLS, and
other Sorts of curious Foreign Shells for
Grotto's, likewise curious Collection
Shells, and fine small Shells for Frame
Work, and Flowers. Likewise,
Ornamental and Useful China, with
several other Curiosities.

Note, I have lately bought a large
Quantity of Rose, Tulip and Lilly-Shells;
which I will Sell at Six-pence a Dozen,
and all other Shells, Fifty per Cent.
cheaper than any in or about London.

Any Gentleman or Lady by sending
their Servant, or a Line, shalt be us'd the

22. Respective news sections of the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, Thursday 15 May 1740, issue 1734; *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, Saturday 28 June 1740, issue 1772.

23. *Daily Advertiser*, Monday 7 May 1744, issue 4151, news section.

24. *Daily Advertiser*, Thursday 17 May 1744, issue 4160.

25. University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections: Portland Papers PL E10/8/3/2. It needs to be remembered that before the year 1752, two calendar systems were in use in England: the Civil or Legal Year began on March 25, while the Historical Year began on January 1. Hence the written date of 28 February 1743 on this legal document equates to 28 February 1744 in the historical calendar.

same, as if they come themselves.

This is no Marybone Puff.²⁶

Within weeks Castles responded with a lengthy advertisement of his own, which in the absence of any drawings of the grotto,²⁷ provides the most complete picture of his shell-work:

At MARY-LE-BON is to be Seen,
CASTLE's *Great and Inimitable*
GROTTO, or SHELL-WORK, *so much*
admired by the Curious. To this great
Mastership of Art, the Inventor and
Performer has added the most wonderful
and surprizing Aqueducts of Water-
Works, playing in various Shapes and
Forms; the Whole is now beautified in
so high and elegant a Taste as cannot be
describ'd or parallell'd. You see *Neptune*
riding on his Car, with Sea Nymphs
spouting Water round him; also the
King's-Arms in Shell-Work, beyond
Imagination.

There is also a commodious Cold-
Bath ornamented as the Grotto; the
Water is a pleasant Spring, which fills
and empties every two Hours; with
convenient Rooms to dress in, and a
pleasant Garden to walk in. Subscribers
to pay a Guinea a Year, or Half a Guinea
a Quarter.

To be seen at One Shilling each
Person. Subscribers to the Bath Gratis.

The Performer of this Work has
and sells the greatest Variety of Shells in
Europe, with proper Cement for fixing
them, and performs this Work in Town
or Country, at Reasonable Rates.²⁸

This all begs the question as to whether
income from visitors to the Great Grotto alone
was sufficient to fund these additional works –
not just the ornamentation but the cold-bath
and the pleasant garden. The entrance fee for
the casual visitor had not changed, but the
prospect of regular users of the bath seems to
have prompted Castles to consider the option
of subscriptions. Nevertheless, 1747 marked the

peak of advertising of the Great Grotto by
John Castles.²⁹

After 1747, however, Castles seemingly
disappears from circulation – there is a
complete absence of advertisements in the
newspapers, and his name does not appear in
association with the grotto again until 1756, at
which time he was able to build a new grotto.
The money, it would appear, came from
commissions outside the capital, and hence
beyond the scope of this article, but there is
circumstantial evidence to associate him with
the grotto at Goodwood, ornamented around
1748–50, and in 1754 the Rev. Richard Pococke
wrote of St Giles, Dorset, that 'There is a most
beauteous full Grotto finished by Mr Castles
of Marybone'. The dates of these works
correspond perfectly with his absence³⁰ (*fig. 15*).

By the turn of the mid-eighteenth
century, grottoes had become central features
of venues of entertainment in London, as well
as amusements for private dwellings, and
several other persons were offering their
expertise in shell decoration, with individuals
from not-so-expected trades getting in on the
act. A watch-chaser, for example, advertised:

To be SEEN,

At Mr. BOWER's, Watch-Chaser, at the
Golden-Head near East-Street in Red
Lion-Street, Holborn, at One shilling
each Person,

A Most elegant Composition of
ROCK and GROTTO WORK, in
Imitation of Nature, wherein several
Caverns appear hollowed under the
Rocks, and extend to a great Distance.
Among these are hewn different wild
and delightful Scenes, with Cascades,
Fountains of Water playing, and many
other Beauties impossible to describe.

The whole Work is ten Feet in
Height, embellished with a curious
Variety of the most beautiful and rare
Shells, Corals, Mosses, and Sea
Production, and likewise with such
Animals as are proper to the Subject.

There are Festoons of Flowers, Masks,

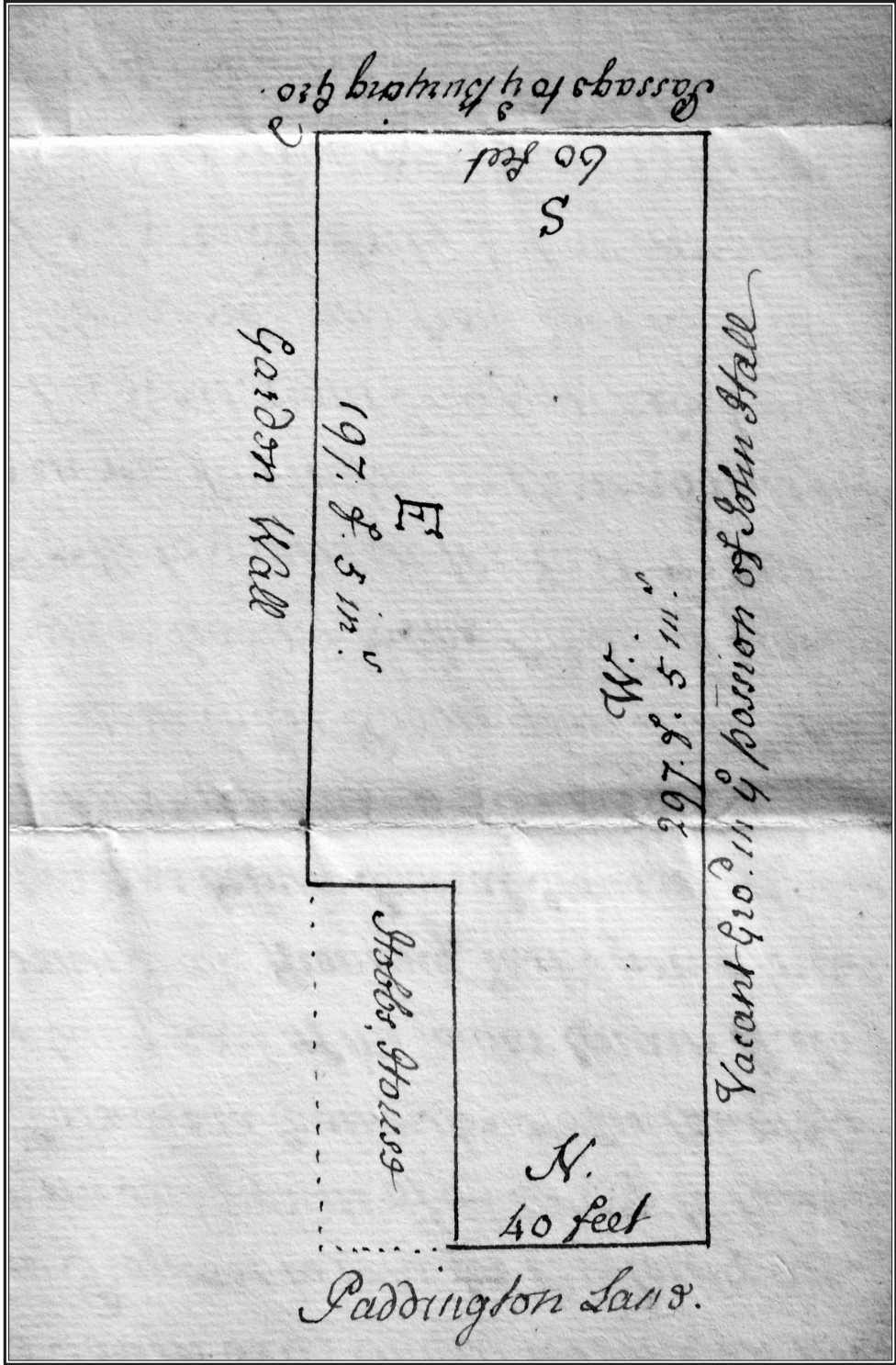
26. *General Advertiser*, Saturday 16 May 1747, issue 3918.

27. In a personal communication to the author from architectural historian John Harris, he recalled seeing a drawing of a grotto in a grangerised copy of Lyson's *The Environs of London* in a collection in America. To date, inquiries to, and investigations by, the respective staff at probable institutions have failed to locate any such image.

28. *General Advertiser* (1744), Monday 1 June 1747, issue 3931, classified ads section.

29. Daniel Lyson in his *The Environs of London* ..., 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. & W. Davies, 1792–96), vol. III (1795), p.252, states that the Great Grotto was 'frequently advertised in the newspapers about the year 1744'.

30. These, and other possible associations, have been fully-researched as part of a longer paper on John Castles' life and works.



13. Extent of Grounds to be acquired by John Castles at Marylebone
(COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM MANUSCRIPTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: PORTLAND PAPERS PL E10/8/3/2).

£c. curiously made of Shells, as also a Representation of Mount Helicon, consecrated to the Muses. The Statues of Jupiter, Juno, Apollo, Mercury, Neptune, Mars, and Venus are introduced in their proper Characters, and a Temple is exhibited, through which a Variety of Perspective Views are shewn in a very surprizing manner; so that if Novelty, Variety, and Beauty can give Satisfaction, it is presumed every Beholder will be entirely satisfied.³¹

And there was Mrs. Alice Brace, who seems to have started her business around 1753, and who clearly had her sights set on the female market:

Shells, Shell and Leaden Flowers, &c. LADIES may be assisted to make Shell Flowers, and Satin Flowers, to cover Temples, Baskets, Vases, Candle Branches, &c. with Shells to make Leaden Flowers, and gild or silver them, by ALICE BRACE, in Great Russell-street, Bloomsbury, opposite Montague House, Shells painted on the Blinds of her Windows: She sells the neatest Cement, Variety of Shells for Flowers and Grottos, and the most curious for Cabinet Collections, all Implements, as Drills, &c. [...] She buys curious Shells, Corals, &c...³²

Following the style of Castles, Perrott and others, by late 1754 she was also exhibiting a piece of shell-work on her premises, although intended 'To be Seen by the Nobility and Gentry only':

At Mrs. BRACE's in Great Russel-Street, Bloomsbury, Opposite Montague-House, any Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday Mornings, and most Afternoons,

A Very curious and expensive Piece of ROCK and SHELL-WORK, eleven Feet broad and nine Feet and half high, fixed in a Room; and plays Water from Top to Bottom in Variety of Cascades and Fountains, without wetting any Part of the Room; in it is a beautiful moving Landscape, some other rural

Representations, and many natural well-disposed Figures.

She still continues to wait upon Ladies at their Houses, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, to instruct them in all Kinds of Shell-Work, for the doing whereof, she sells the neatest and most useful Cement, all the proper Implements for Working, and as great a Variety and of the very best Sorts of Shells as can possibly be selected, at very reasonable Prices.

☞ She buys Shells, or will exchange with Ladies who have too many of one Sort, if they are valuable or curious.³³

The indefatigable Mrs. Brace resurfaces later; and as to the pleasure gardens of the period, it is possible that the proliferation of advertisements for, and popularity of these retreats made Castles reluctant to continue advertising himself, seeing the advantages of working in the country for patrons as more promising. That said, a number of the capital's pleasure gardens had either permanent, or temporary grotto features.³⁴

Bagnigge Wells (north Clerkenwell) became popular from 1759, lasting until 1841. The grotto here was 'a small castellated building of two apartments open to the gardens, [and] was brightly decorated in cockney fashion with shells, fossils, and fragments of broken glass'. Evidently this was one of the last structures to survive: 'The grotto, which was already in a very dilapidated condition, was destroyed by some passers by in the early morning of 6 April, 1841.'

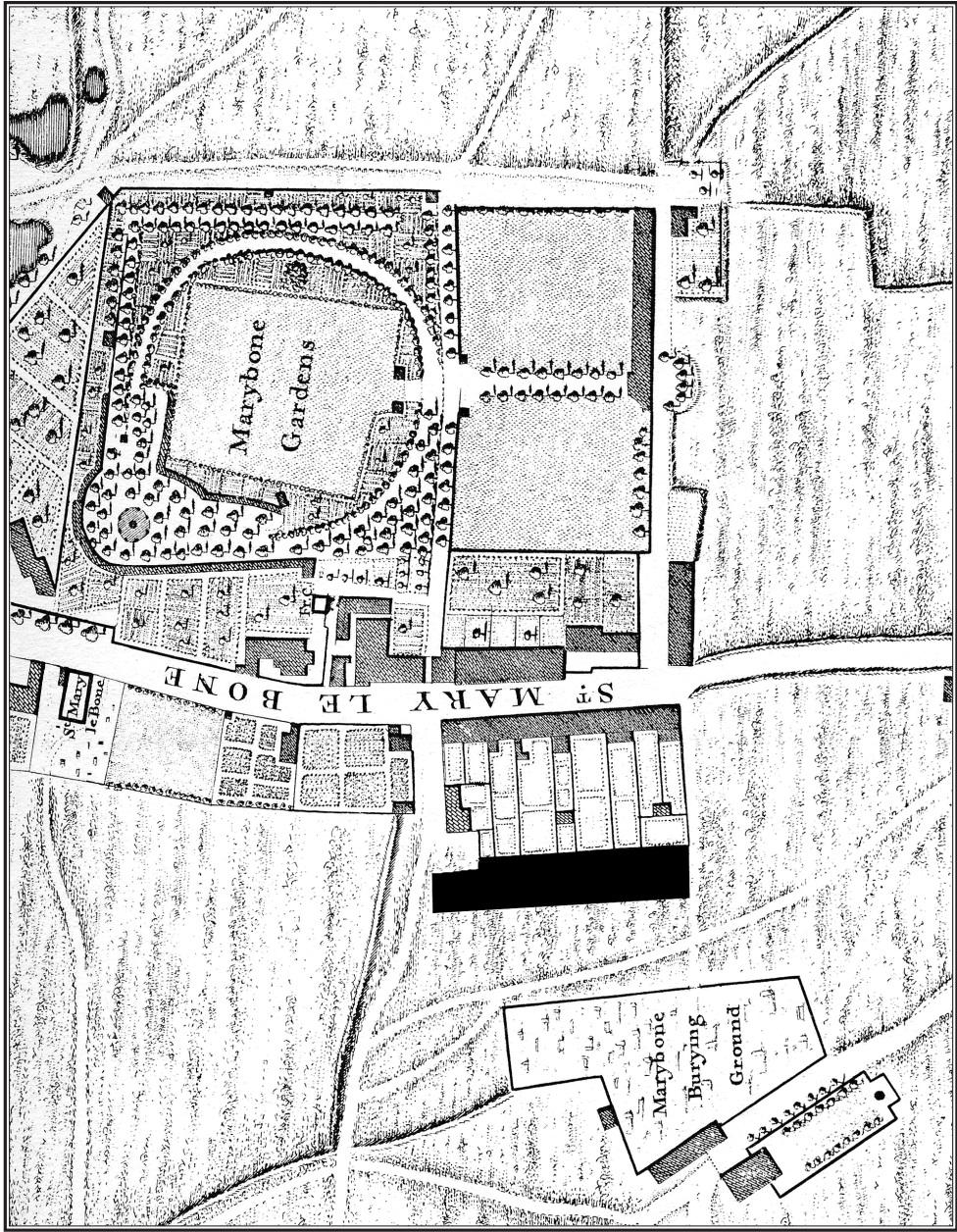
According to Warwick Wroth, the English Grotto, or Grotto Garden, Rosomon Street (or Row), was in existence in 1760, and 'was kept in (or before) 1769 by a man named Jackson, a successful constructor of grottoes,

33. *Public Advertiser*, Thursday 31 October 1754, issue 6242, classified ads.

34. The best source for this subject still remains Warwick Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1896). Quotes in this section, unless cited otherwise, are from the following pages of this work: 62, 66; 37-39; 241-46; 247-57.

31. *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, Tuesday 29 November 1748, issue 438, classified ads. An identical text appeared some three months later in the *General Advertiser* (1744), Friday 24 February 1749, issue 4473.

32. *Public Advertiser*, Friday 11 May 1753, issue 5783.



14. John Rocque's *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, and Borough of Southwark* of 1746, extract with John Castles' ground shown overlaid in black

and contrivances of water-works'.³⁵ In fact the man in question clearly had the property some four years earlier, as he was mentioned in the newspapers under less fortunate circumstances: 'Yesterday morning some rogues got into the garden of Mr. Jackson, in Rosomon's Row, where they destroyed the fine grotto, as well as roots, &c. and stole out of the summer house several silver spoons and other things of value.'³⁶ Some form of establishment still plied its trade there into the early nineteenth century.

On the south of the Thames were to be found Finch's Grotto Gardens and Cuper's Gardens. The former, named after Thomas Finch, a Herald Painter, 'who, having inherited from a relation a house and garden, opened both for the entertainment of the public in the spring of 1760'. Its 'grotto' credentials were limited, and the place was more properly a spa: 'In the centre of the garden was a medicinal spring over which Finch constructed a grotto, wherein a fountain played over artificial embankments and formed "a natural and beautiful cascade".' It was also one of the shortest-lived ventures, for what entertainments Finch laid on failed to pay their way, 'and in 1773 (?) he pulled down the grotto over the spring and rooted up the shrubs to form a skittle ground in connection with the tavern, which still continued to be carried on.'

Likewise, the eponymous Cuper's Gardens derived their name from Boyder Cuper, who rented some land in the parish of Lambeth from the end of the seventeenth century. The final entertainments here were wrung out in 1759, but the place was famous for a variety of performances, one of which had some grotto connotations. During the summer season of 1749, 'At CUPERS-GARDENS the Entertainments of Vocal and Instrumental Musick will be continued the remaining Part of the Season; and great Variety in the Fireworks will be exhibited every Evening;

and by Desire, this Evening Neptune will proceed from under the Grotto drawn by Sea Horses up the Canal, and sets Fire to an Archimedan [*sic*] Screw, and returns to the Grotto.'³⁷

For the 'Nobility, Gentry, and Curious in general' an even more elaborate example could be seen at the Lottery-Office at the corner of Spring-Gardens, Charing Cross:

THE PANTHEON, and admirable Piece of Mechanism, finished on a new Plan. The middle of this Machine represents a Grotesque Temple; in which, in various Shrines, are reported sundry of the Heathen Deities.—In the Wings, most of the Mechanical Arts are represented by Figures; who exhibit In an accurate and lively Manner, the various Actions and Attitudes necessary to their several Employments. They seem as tho' at real Labour, and receive their Motion from a Mechanical Power, which, 'tis presumed, was never before presented to the View of the Publick.—

This Machine is Ten Feet wide, and Nine Feet high. On the Top are two Figures, representing Jupiter and Neptune. Jupiter is seen to hurl a Fire-Ball, which sets Fire to one of the Wings of the Machine; upon which Neptune extinguishes the Flames, by commanding various Cascades of Water to descend from the Top of the Building.—The whole is adorned with Shell and Grotto Work, Cascades, Fountains, &c. &c. and affords sundry Hints to the Curious, for refining their rural Pleasures.

It is to be seen, without Loss of Time, by any Number of Persons, from Nine in the Morning 'till Nine at Night, at Two Shillings and Six-pence each.³⁸

James Stevens Curl also notes that the spring Sadler's Wells was enclosed within an artificial grotto of rococo design, and the presence of a gothick grotto at New Wells.³⁹

35. Here Wroth cites 'The continuator of Pinks (p.740) quotes advertisements of 1769, without, however, specifying the newspapers referred to.' The work alluded to by Wroth is: William John Pinks, *The History of Clerkenwell by the Late William J. Pinks with Additions by the Editor Edward J. Wood*, 2nd edn (London: Charles Herbert, 1881). The newspapers that eluded Wroth were: *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, Wednesday 3 May 1769; Issue 12 533, and Tuesday 13 June 1769; Issue 12 567.

36. *Lloyd's Evening Post*, Friday 31 May 1765, issue 1232, news section.

37. *General Advertiser*, Thursday 27 July 1749, issue 4606.

38. *General Advertiser* (1744), Monday 11 May 1752, issue 5479. This novelty continued to be exhibited the following year, but had now moved to 'a commodious Booth in the Rose-yard, near the Turnpike, Westminster-Bridge, on the Lambeth Side'. *Public Advertiser*, Monday 23 April 1753; issue 5767.

39. James Stevens Curl, 'Spas and pleasure gardens of London, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries', *Garden History*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Summer 1979), pp.27-68, but specifically pp.49 & 60.

In 1756, after an absence of some nine years from the newspapers, John Castles resurfaced, clearly having been able to reinvest in and overhaul his former establishment:

TO the CURIOUS in SHELL-WORK
MR. CASTLES at the Great Grotto at Marybone, begs Leave to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen that he has juft finished a new Grotto compofed of the moft beautiful and curious Shell-Work in Europe, to be feen for one Shilling each Perfon. His old Grotto he has altered into an elegant large Room, adorned with curious Shell-Work for the Reception of Ladies and Gentlemen for Breakfafting, which will continue all the Seafon as ufual. The cold Bath is now in exceeding good Order.⁴⁰

Yet overall, times were clearly hard for this genre of grotto owners, and death was never very far away either. In 1755 it had been noted that ‘*Perrot’s* inimitable Grotto may be seen for only calling for a pot of beer...’; a year later, ‘a very large and curious Collection of Shells, Stones, &c. collected by a very eminent Naturalist lately deceased; intended for Grotto Work’ were to be ‘sold in one Lot’.⁴¹ Another grotto never destined to be built. The well-being of Castles was no exception, and his health was also in decline, as the subsequent advertisement records:

TO be lett and entered on immediately, at Marybone, CASTLE’s Great GROTTTO, together with the House, Long Room, Cold Bath, and Garden-Ground, with a very good Trade, and capable of Improvement. The only Reason Mr. Castles is desirous of letting the same, is occasioned by his bad State of Health. Enquiries for further Particulars at the Place above.

Note, Breakfasting with Coffee, Tea, hot Rolls, &c. as usual. [1756]⁴²

40. *Public Advertiser*, Monday 17 May 1756, issue 6725, classified ads. The same advertisement appeared in the *Public Advertiser*, Tuesday 8 June 1756, issue 6746.

41. *Connoisseur (Collected Issues)*, Thursday 15 May 1755, issue LXVIII; *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, Wednesday 28 January 1756, issue 4482.

42. Photocopy of an original in WCA, Westminster Cuttings Box T137 BRO-CH (a typed, but not wholly accurate transcript can be found in the Ashridge Collection item 771). The original would appear to be an item referred to as ‘No. 1067 in the St. Martin’s Library Collection’. The cutting fails to provide an exact date, giving only the year, but subsequent events suggest it was after the aforementioned announcement of the revamp of the Great Grotto.

Sensing that his end was near, John Castles drew up his final will on 6th February 1757, his executors being Mr. John Osgood of the Sheriffs Office Furnivals Inn, Gentleman, and Mr. Bernard Young of Bury Street, St. James’s, Gentleman.⁴³ The *London Evening Post* for Thursday 10th February informed the public that ‘This week died at Marybone, Mr. Castles, Master of the Grottos there’, implying that he died on 7th, 8th or 9th of that month;⁴⁴ the parish register confirms that he was buried on the 13th.⁴⁵ John Castles was interred in the cemetery on the south side of Paddington Street, in what was later to become the recreation ground.⁴⁶ His gravestone, therefore, of which a pen and ink drawing exists,⁴⁷ was somewhat errant in its record of events and mistakenly adopted the date of his burial as the date of his death (fig. 16).

So what is one to make of two (almost identical) advertisements relating to ‘The Grotto Coffee-House at Marybone’ apparently dated 1754?

The Grotto Coffee-House at Marybone is now open for Breakfasting, Tea or Coffee, at Six-pence each Person. The Cold Bath at 1l. 6s. per Year. The Grotto to be seen for Six-pence each Person or each Person spending One Shilling in Wine, Punch, &c. may see the same gratis. Fine Ale, Cyder, &c. The greatest Variety of Shells selling off at prime Cost, resolving to deal no longer in that Way. [1754]⁴⁸

The handwritten dates on both that simply say ‘1754’, could be a slip.⁴⁹ There are a number of significant points that mitigate against Castles letting out his establishment at

43. PRB 11/827, fols 344–45; the will was proven on 15 February that year. It is evident from the bequests that Castles had a married sister, Elizabeth Marla, and a nephew ‘John Castles of the City of Dublin Coachmen’, but no surviving wife or children are mentioned.

44. *London Evening Post*, 10 February 1757, Issue 4566, under LONDON.

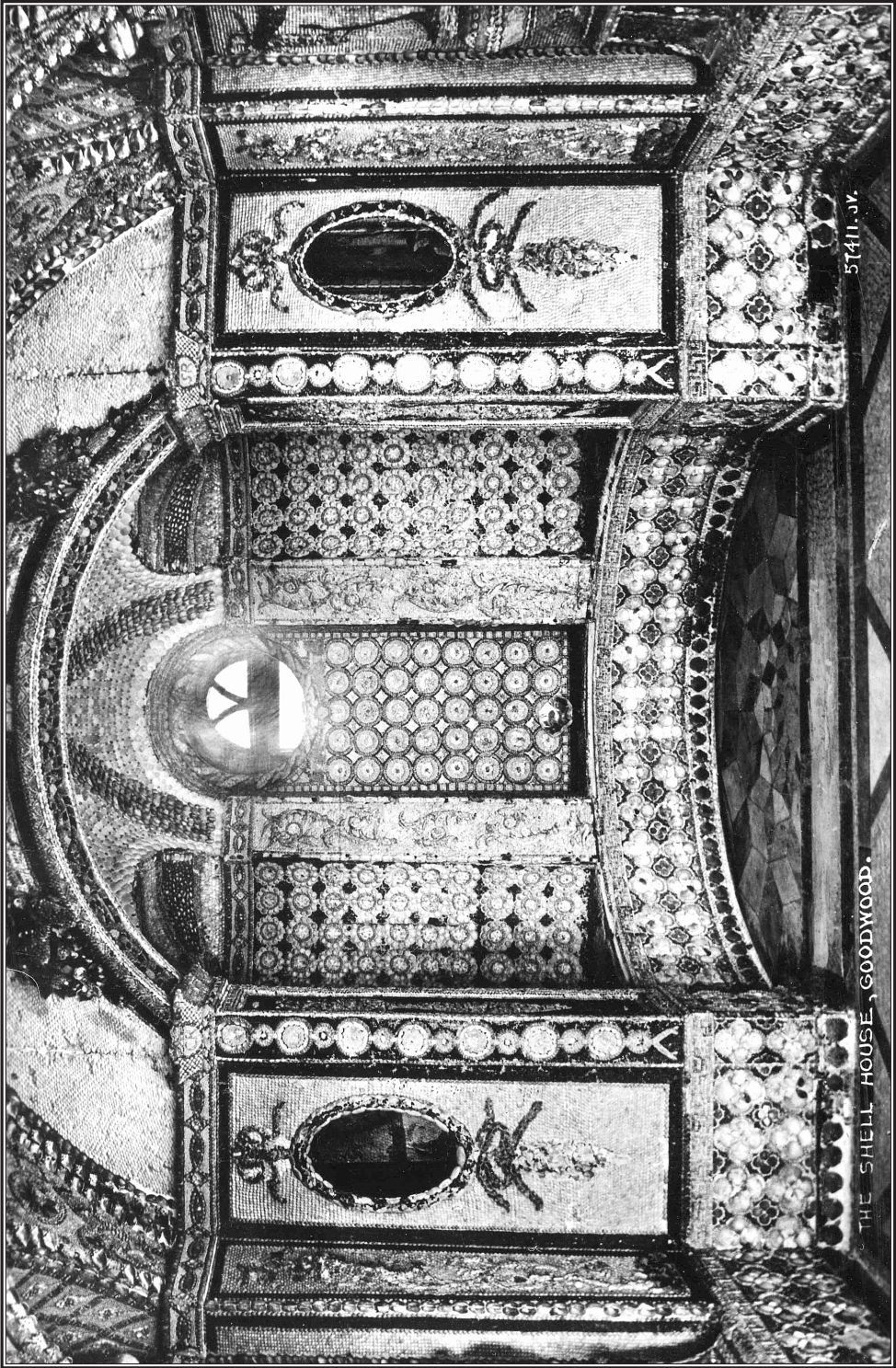
45. St Marylebone Parish Church, County of Middlesex, Parish Registers, Vol No P89/MRY1/4.

46. The cemetery on the south side of Paddington Street was consecrated in 1733; Castles’ original burial plot was number 1138. Sometime between the closure of the burial ground in 1853, and its reopening as a recreation ground on 6 July 1896, John Castles’ headstone was relocated – just one block away from where he created his famous grotto – against the east wall of the cemetery (58th stone, row F) and laid flat. See T II/147 Paddington Street Burial Register, under index tab C, and the accompanying plan in the front of the book.

47. WCA, Ashridge Collection 771.

48. WCA, Ashridge Collection 771.

49. The original newspapers for either advertisement have not, unfortunately, been traced.



15. The Shell House, Goodwood, postcard c.1930/40
(PRIVATE COLLECTION)

this time: first, that he was still paying rates in Marybone Town right up until the time of his death; second, that advertisements of 1756 still announce the establishment as 'Castle's Great Grotto'; third, that Castles' will gives his trade as victualler, which considering final advertisements made under his name, should be taken as the 'keeper of an eating-house', and not specifically as a seller of beer, wine, and such drinks (despite what other writers have pronounced).⁵⁰ It seems much more credible, and likely, that these insertions post-date Castles' death, possibly 1764 – this would certainly explain the line 'The Greatest Variety of Shells selling off at prime Cost, resolving to deal no longer in that Way'. And there is another reason that would support dating these advertisements to 1764, as will shortly be seen.

The previously-mentioned Alice Brace had also been unwell, 'moſt humbly asking Pardon for the many Diſappointments her former ill State of Health may unavoidably have occaſioned, hoping from her Recovery to be able to give a more general Satisfaction'. At this time – early 1757 – she had 'removed from Great Russell-ſtreet, Bloomsbury, to a Corner Houſe in Little Mortimer-ſtreet, a Street or two diſtant from Oxford Market, and very little diſtant from Cavendiſh ſquare'. She retained the 'Shells painted on the Blinds of her Windows' as a means of locating her.⁵¹ 1758 saw the arrival of Alice Brace at Marylebone, who, by 1760, had fortuitously set up at the 'next Houſe to the back Door of Caſtle's Grotto', i.e. on Paddington Street.⁵² Mr. Perrott went on to exhibit his skills in Glasgow in 1759, including 'the moſt exact and beautiful models of [...] Grottos and Shellwork', which included one of 'Sir Nathaniel Curzon's Grotto in Derbyſhire' and seven other pieces.⁵³

After Castles' death, one of his executors, Bernard Young, seems to have taken

up residence at the grotto,⁵⁴ but no advertisements to associate him with running the business have been found; yet the establishment was clearly still tagged with Castles' name. Young appears as the rate-payer from the time of Castles' death until the end of 1764.⁵⁵ The following year – 1765 – marked the arrival of the next grotto owner, one Richard Lloyd, and a new name for the venture: The Royal Grotto.

If the handwritten date of an auction advertisement is given credence, then Castles' Great Grotto had taken on the name of the Royal Grotto by the second half of 1765. The advertisement itself relates to an auction sale of 'Four ſubſtantial well built Houſes [...] pleaſantly ſituated in Paradice ſtreet, leading to the Royal Grotto at Marybone', and with 97 years of the term still to run, would have been erected around 1763.⁵⁶ (It may be mere coincidence that each house was '15 Feet in Front, and 26 Feet in Depth', which, if facing onto Paradise Street, would equate perfectly with the 60 foot width of the original plot.) But such domestication had apparently started some two years prior to this, with 'new well built Houſes, lett to good Tenants, ſituated on the Duke of Portland's Eſtate in Paddington ſtreet...'⁵⁷ Housing was clearly good business, and nothing was going to get in its way, and it is possible that some of the land formerly leased by Castles could have been given over to such building works.

A survey of 1768 clearly shows the development of this area – by this time Paddington Street, Grafton Court, New Burying Ground Passage (Paradise Street) and Barlow Street were well-established, with new buildings depicted.⁵⁸ In 1769, Richard Lloyd was advertising his acquisition of the property – the Royal Grotto – clearly named so as to

54. WCA, Marylebone Rate Books; *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, Monday 25 June 1759, issue 303, news section: 'Yesterday morning, between the hours of one and two, four or five villains attempted to rob Mr. Young's house, the Grotto, at Marybone, but by the vigilance of the master and his man they were disappointed.'

55. WCA, Marylebone Rate Books.

56. WCA, Ashridge Collection 771.

57. *Public Advertiser*, Tuesday 30 July 1765, issue 9582: advertisement for an auction by Mr Burnsall to be held on 8 August 1765. The houses had a 'neat ground rent' of £21 16s, with 95 years of the term to come, giving their approximate building date of 1761.

58. WCA, II/374/4 (Crace Collection): 'A Plan of the Bounds of the Parish of St. Mary Le Bone or Marybone in the County of Middlesex. With the Buildings Erected thereon Surveyed By Joseph Phillips and James Haywood 1768'. The map has now been conserved, and although damaged in places, it is possible to discern the advancements.

50. Boswell's famous dictionary of 1755 fails to provide any reference to victuals or its derivatives; the OED defines it as 'a purveyor of victuals or provisions; spec. one who makes a business of providing food and drink for payment; a keeper of an eating-house, inn, or tavern'. A licensed victualler is 'one who has a licence to sell food or drink, but esp. the latter, to be consumed on the premises'.

51. *Public Advertiser*, Wednesday 19 January 1757, issue 6943.

52. *Public Advertiser*, Tuesday 8 July 1760, issue 8010, classified ads section.

53. *The Glasgow Herald*, Monday 8 July 1861, issue 6704, art & entertainment section, citing the '*Glasgow Journal*, 12th February, 1759' for the original announcement.

maximise the association with the earlier visits of the royal family, and associated pieces of regal shell-work:

RICHARD LLOYD, begs leave to acquaint his friends, and the public in general, that he has taken the ROYAL GROTTTO, near the Gardens in Marybone, where he sells tea, coffee, wines, and punch; also fine Ringwood and Dorchester Beers, at the most reasonable rates. He has also to be seen, the grandest piece of shell-work that ever has been exhibited to the public in all Europe; consisting of his Majesty's coat of arms in a gilt frame, near five feet square, with Neptune and the Mermaid in full stature, with various other curiosities too tedious here to enumerate. The elegant Cold Bath, that is so well known for its virtues in curing various disorders incident to the human body, as has been experienced for many years past, is kept in great order, where subscriptions are taken in by the month or year, and due attendance given to all chance customers. He begs leave further to acquaint the public, that he has practiced electricity for some years, with great success, in various disorders, such as rheumatism, gout, palsies, agues, coldness in the feet, consumption, contraction of the limbs, cramp, deafness, dropsy, sprains, head ach, surfeits, swelling of all kinds, and tooth-ach. It is readily observ'd, that most of these are of the nervous kind, and perhaps there is no nervous complaint whatever, which would not yield to a steady use of this grand remedy.

N.B. He has several machines, so that if any gentleman or lady is desirous of being electrified at their own houses, they may depend on being waited upon on the earliest notice.⁵⁹

This venture lasted at least into 1774 when the site and all its trappings were to be sold, with 69 years of the original term entered into by Castles still to run.

Cold Bath and Grotto.

TO be SOLD, upon a Building Contract, for the Remainder of a Term of which 69 Years are unexpired at Lady-day, a Messuage or Tenement; consisting of a Long Room, ornamented with Shell-work; a Grotto adjoining, adorned with curious Shell-work; a Cold-bath and convenient Apartments, Kitchen and Cellars, Coach-house and Stable; together with a Piece of Ground sufficient to erect four or five Houses on, containing near 300 Feet in Length, 60 wide at one End, and 40 wide at the other End. The Premises are known by Castle's Grotto, at Marybone; and the House and Cold Bath are lett at 40*l.* per Ann to a good Tenant at Will. For further Particulars enquire of Mr. John Potts, Attorney at Law, Bury-street, St. James's.⁶⁰

In all likelihood there were no buyers as Richard Lloyd's name continues to appear in the rate books for the following year; and so the grotto lingered on into 1776 when it was advertised as being run by an Elizabeth Lloyd.⁶¹

ELIZABETH LLOYD, at the Royal Grotto, near the Gardens, Marybone, begs leave to acquaint all bathers, that the Cold Bath is in excellent order; it has the peculiar advantage of being supplied by a very strong spring rising immediately in the bath, so that there is a continual succession of fresh water. Subscriptions are taken in, and there are proper attendants always on the spot; and those who don't chuse to subscribe, may bathe at one shilling per time.—Electricity performed as usual.—Tea, Coffee, Wines, Rum, Brandy, fine Ringwood beer, &c. sold. A very curious Grotto to be seen.⁶²

The closing of Marybone Gardens on 23rd September 1776,⁶³ together with the increasing expansion of London and the need for new building could not have augured well for the grotto. And so it would seem – the rate

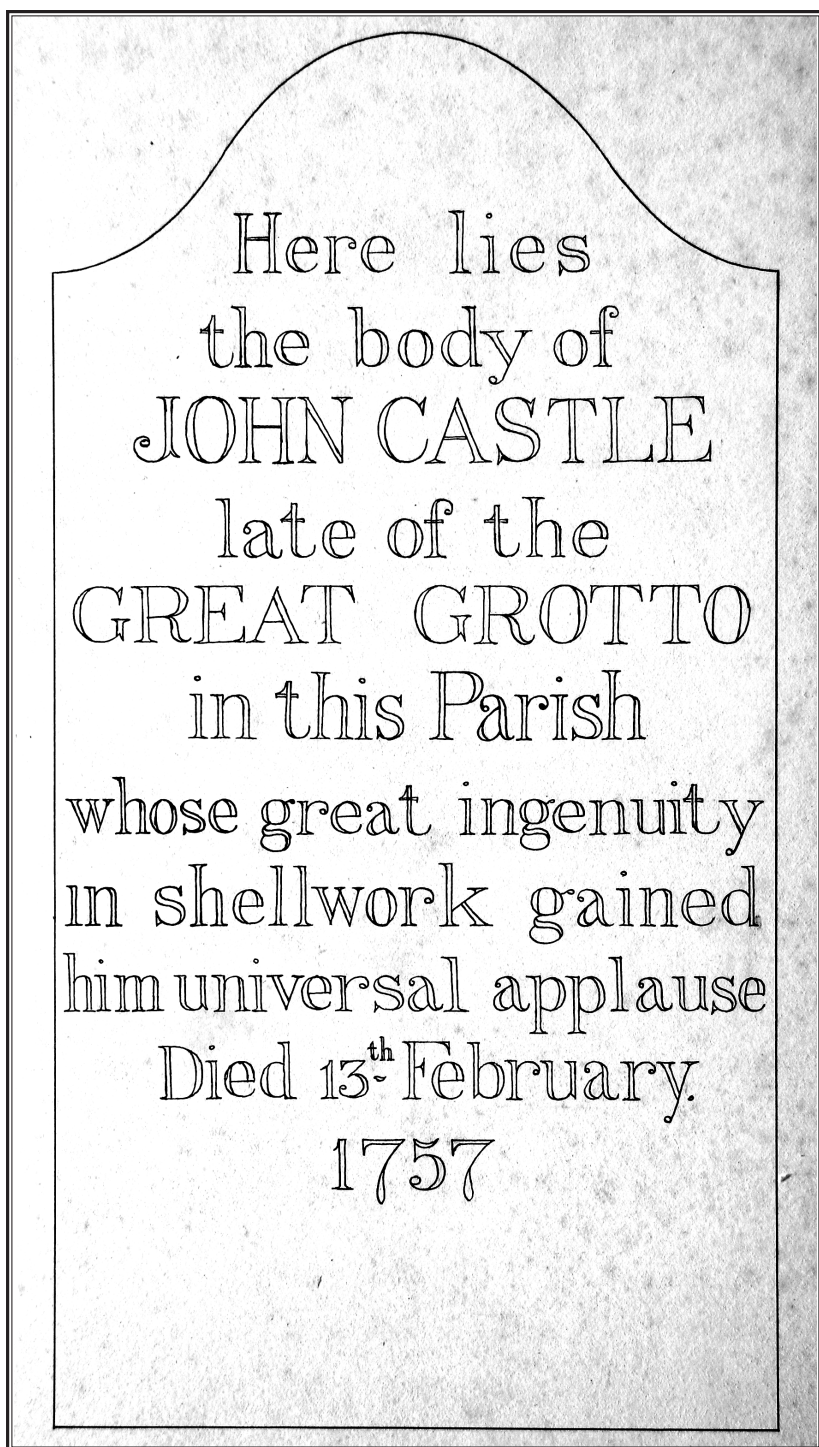
59. *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, Tuesday 6 June 1769; Issue 12 561. A copy of this advertisement appears in the Ashridge Collection, together with a second copy, but which has a hand-written date of 1768, which is clearly erroneous. The *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* for Friday 14 July 1769, issue 12 595, carried virtually the same announcement, although he seems to have stopped selling Dorchester Beers!

60. *Public Advertiser*, Friday 27 May 1774, issue 13034, classified ads. An identical piece appeared in the *Daily Advertiser*, Friday 3 June.

61. Strangely, the rate books for that year record a Mary Lloyd, but no Elizabeth Lloyd.

62. *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, Monday 3 June 1776, issue 14 751.

63. This was after several postponements, but the gardens remained open for a further two years – less entertainment – until building on the site commenced.



16. John Castles' Headstone
(COURTESY CITY OF WESTMINSTER ARCHIVES CENTRE, ASHRIDGE COLLECTION 771).



17. Interior of the grotto at St Giles, Wimborne, photograph March 1969
(© CROWN COPYRIGHT. EH)

books show continued occupation of either Mary or Elizabeth Lloyd at 4 Paradise Street (at last, a specific location for the grotto) until 1779, when it was noted as 'In building &c'. The indefatigable Alice Hemming Brace continued likewise, at 53 Marylebone High Street, through to 1780, although it is uncertain if she was still running her business at that time. A Daniel Delavall took up occupancy thereafter.

We hear no more of the grotto until well into the next century, after 1821 when the Police Office was opened in Marylebone, having been removed from Shadwell by order of Parliament: 'The back-way to the [Police] Office, is by Grotto Passage, in Paradise Street; the lock-up cells, with some adjacent cottages, having been erected on the site of an Exhibition of Shell-work, called the *Great Grotto*...' ⁶⁴ Later concerns were raised about the ad hoc, and unsanitary buildings that had risen: 'For instance, in the space between High Street and Burying Ground Buildings, at the back of the Police Court, on the site of the old Grotto Gardens, houses have been built on private ground, each separate range of houses enclosed, by a wall, and having one general door to each range of building opening into Grotto Passage, and by such doors shut off from communicating with the public paving, and constructed without sewage...' ⁶⁵ Grotto Passage exists today, the vestigial memory of what once was.

Of John Castles' grottoes, sadly only one example of his shell-work has survived, at St. Giles in Dorset (*fig. 17*), and even that has a slight shadow of doubt over it; his grottoes at Chelsea and Marylebone were swept away over two hundred years ago, as many others have also been lost in that time. Despite the eighteenth century seeing the greatest proliferation of grottoes, both in the capital and in the country, it is to be regretted that one plan announced in the newspapers in 1772 did not come to fruition, for surely it would have completed the ensemble of buildings and ornaments at no less a place than Kew: ⁶⁶

A beautiful collection of shells has lately

been presented to her Majesty by a gentleman from India, with which her Majesty intends to form a grotto in Kew-Garden. The lesser shells her Majesty has directed to be made in artificial flowers to adorn the grotto.

* * * * *

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Karen Lynch for introducing me to GALE – a constant companion throughout this research.

To Susannah Fleming for sharing her transcripts of relevant materials from the St. Giles's archives, the staff at Westminster City Archives and University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, and John Harris.

If any reader can assist with further information on John Castles, or further details of untraced newspapers, the author would be extremely grateful.

THINKING ABOUT 'RETHINKING PARKS'

By The Perambulator

Three years on from the beginning of what some might see as the beginning of the endgame in the long war between central and local government, in which parks budgets have been mown down in waves, Nesta (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have published a report enjoining us to 'rethink' parks.¹

The report takes as a given the projection that public funding for non-statutory services like parks will fall by 60% over the next decade. The impact of this unprecedented reduction is not the report's subject.² The battle to protect that funding is no longer even acknowledged: for the author of the report, a 'renowned parks innovator', it is not worth going over ground that has to all

1. Nesta and Heritage Lottery Fund, *Rethinking Parks: exploring new business models for parks in the 21st century*, Peter Neal, November 2013, <http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/rethinking-parks-new-business-models-parks>.

2. Depressingly, a 60% cut is identical to that suffered in New York following its bankruptcy, between 1974 and 1980, and which led directly to Central Park becoming, in the words of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the New York State Senator, 'a national disgrace'.

64. Thomas Smith, *A Topographical and Historical Account of the Parish of St. Mary-le-Bone* ... (London: John Smith, 1833), p.179.

65. WCA, T1/73, Parish of Saint Marylebone Vestry Minutes, vol. LXI, 19 June 1847 – 8 February 1848, pp.226–27, minutes for Saturday 27 November 1847 (printed papers).

66. *Middlesex Journal or Universal Evening Post*, Thursday 17 December 1772, issue 581, news section, under LONDON.