



CONSERVATION AREA 35

CHILLINGTON



The cover map of Staffordshire was first published by Hermann Moll in 1875. It gives special emphasis to the roads, rivers and parkland. The County boundary differs from the present one, as parts now in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire are included.

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING COMMITTEE
CIVIC AMENITIES ACT 1967

CONSERVATION AREA 35

CHILLINGTON



PURPOSE OF DESIGNATION

The rapid changes now taking place in town and village, whilst giving practical benefits, also threaten many beautiful and historic areas with destruction or despoliation. Such areas, often unique in character due to rich variation in types of buildings, trees and open spaces, form an important part of the national heritage.

In the past, individual buildings of architectural or historic interest have been protected by legislation, whereas attractive groups of buildings, often of little individual value, and areas of character, beauty or historic importance have been mainly unprotected.

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967, remedies the deficiency by enabling local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas those "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

Potential conservation areas exist in many towns and villages, varying in size from complete centres to groups of buildings. Although often centred on historic buildings, they may include features of archaeological importance, historic street patterns, village greens or areas of particular character.

Staffordshire has been strongly influenced by the effects of the Industrial Revolution and consequent growth of industry and population. The pressures resulting from this growth cause considerable problems in terms of visual environment, nevertheless many areas and settlements of good traditional character still remain in the towns, villages and country estates. Their preservation cannot be considered in isolation, without taking into account the natural growth and future needs of people, commerce and industry.

Conservation is the means by which existing character can be preserved and enhanced with due regard for other demands. Designation of the Conservation Area followed by detailed design proposals will form the basis for positive action, but ultimate success will depend on active public interest and support.

CONSERVATION AREA * CHILLINGTON

The transformation of a landscape, the continuance of one of Staffordshire's longest traditions and a treasury of craftsmanship in stone, wood, plasterwork and metalwork are all to be found in the Chillington Estate. Sited only 7 miles north-west of Wolverhampton and 10 miles south-west of Stafford, Chillington retains an atmosphere of security and tranquillity that is in contrast to much that is ephemeral and discordant outside.

That part of the Chillington Estate which forms the Conservation Area is approximately rectangular in plan, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long from west to east and 1 mile wide from north to south. It is divided approximately into two halves by a large sheet of water known as The Pool, to the west of which is the dense woodland of Big Wood, whilst to the east is The Park, now largely devoted to agriculture. The Hall lies near the centre of The Park and faces east and south. A series of minor roads surround the Estate and provide views of the woodland and of the Hall.

The element of continuity is provided by the Giffard family who have been owners of Chillington since the late 12th century. Nothing physical of that period survives for the mediaeval house was completely rebuilt in Tudor times by Sir John Giffard. A stone chimney-piece, dated 1547, is now the main evidence of Sir John's activity. There is little more because of the further rebuilding that took place in the 18th century, with the result that Chillington Hall as it is to-day presents the external appearance of a Georgian mansion. The impression given of a single design is, however, illusory. The south wing and the offices behind are attributed to the architect, Francis Smith, and belong to the time of Peter Giffard whose initials with the date 1724 appear on the rainwater heads. To him should also be assigned the bowling green with its wrought-iron gates, the octagonal dovecot, and the exquisitely carved oak staircase that gave access to the upper floors of the south wing.

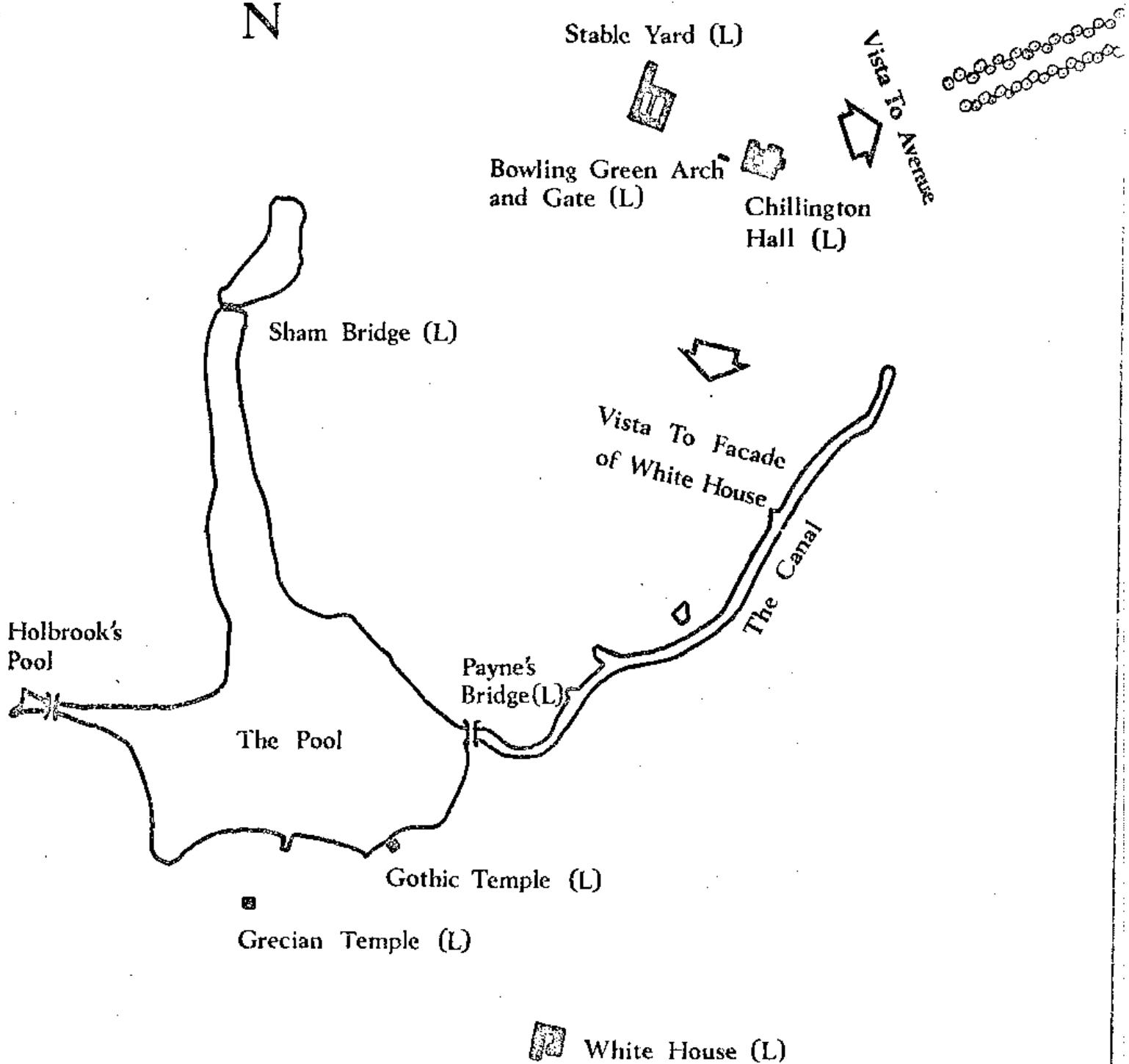
The second phase of 18th century building is associated with Thomas Giffard who employed John Scane, then a young architect, for the purpose.

It was Soane who included Peter Giffard's south wing in a symmetrical composition and added, as the central feature, a great Ionic portico. Soane who was once described as "the most original architect since Vanbrugh" is now chiefly remembered by the house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, that he left to the nation for use as a museum. Soane worked at Chillington from 1785 onwards, and the characteristics of his style are best evidenced by the saloon which forms the main circulating area beyond the entrance hall: the domed ceiling and the clerestory lighting are typical of the man.

Since the 18th century there have been few alterations so that Chillington Hall in its present form is largely of Soane's design and represents a notable example of the work of one of England's most notable architects. The national importance of Chillington Hall is recognised by the Department of the Environment who have classified it as a Grade I building of special architectural or historic interest.

As at Shugborough, Weston and other estates in Staffordshire, the architectural interest of Chillington is not limited to the principal mansion. The land-owners of the 18th century were concerned to create for themselves an environment that would reflect their love of precision and orderliness. The member of the Giffard family who primarily set about achieving this aim was Thomas Giffard's father, also called Thomas, who demolished most of the cottages that had formed the village of Chillington and between 1756 and 1776 employed two of the finest architects of the day to transform the Chillington estate into one of the loveliest parks in the County. It was Capability Brown who created a string of three artificial pools, altered the contours and planted trees, while James Paine designed the buildings that gave substance to the atmosphere of sophistication and detachment.

The labours of Capability Brown and James Paine introduced a natural beauty of artificial creation that is still to be enjoyed. The water, woodland and sheep-grazed pasture form what was intended to be and is an idyllic combination. Individually, the most important contri-



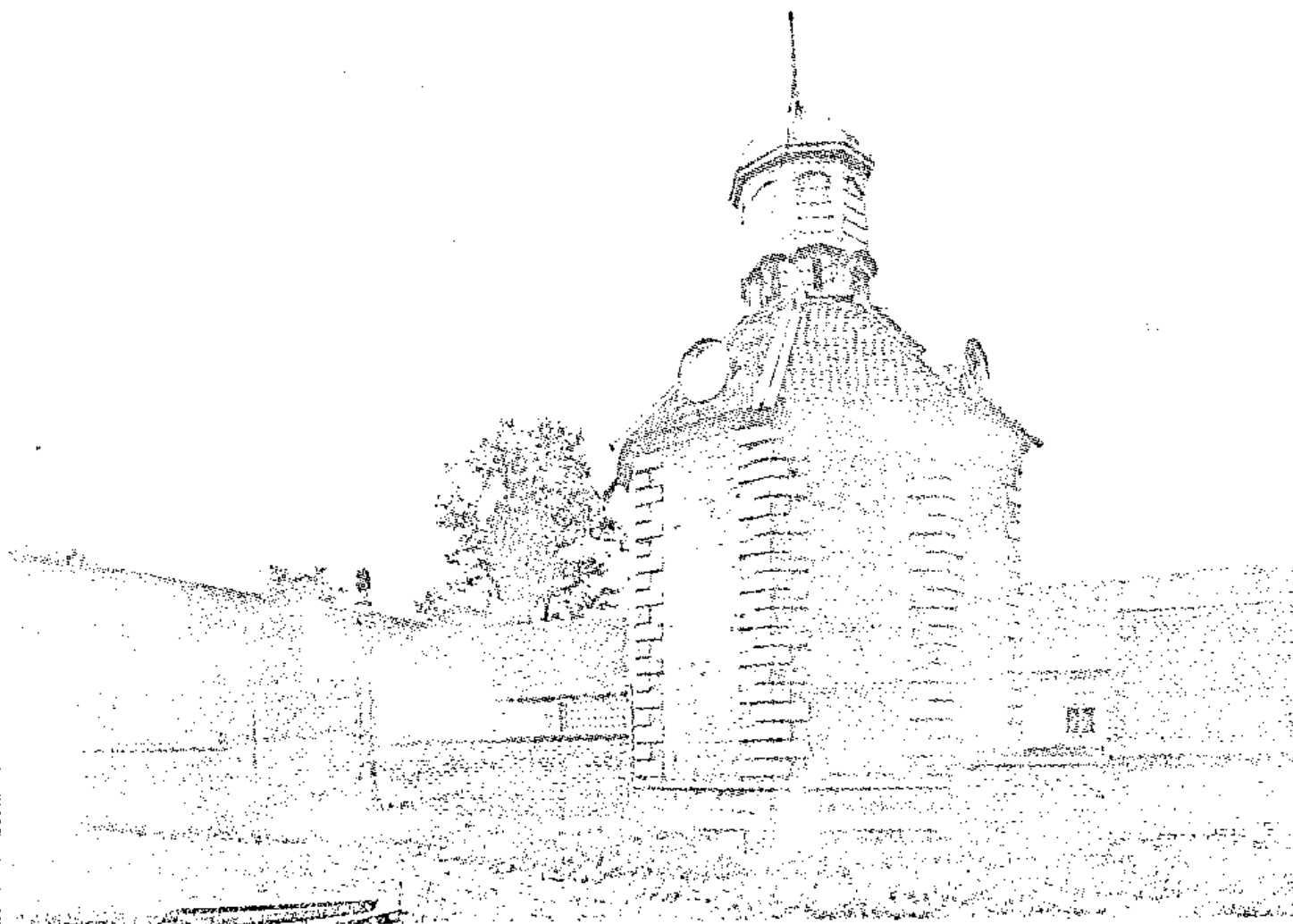
(L): Buildings listed by the Secretary of State for the Environment as of special architectural or historic interest



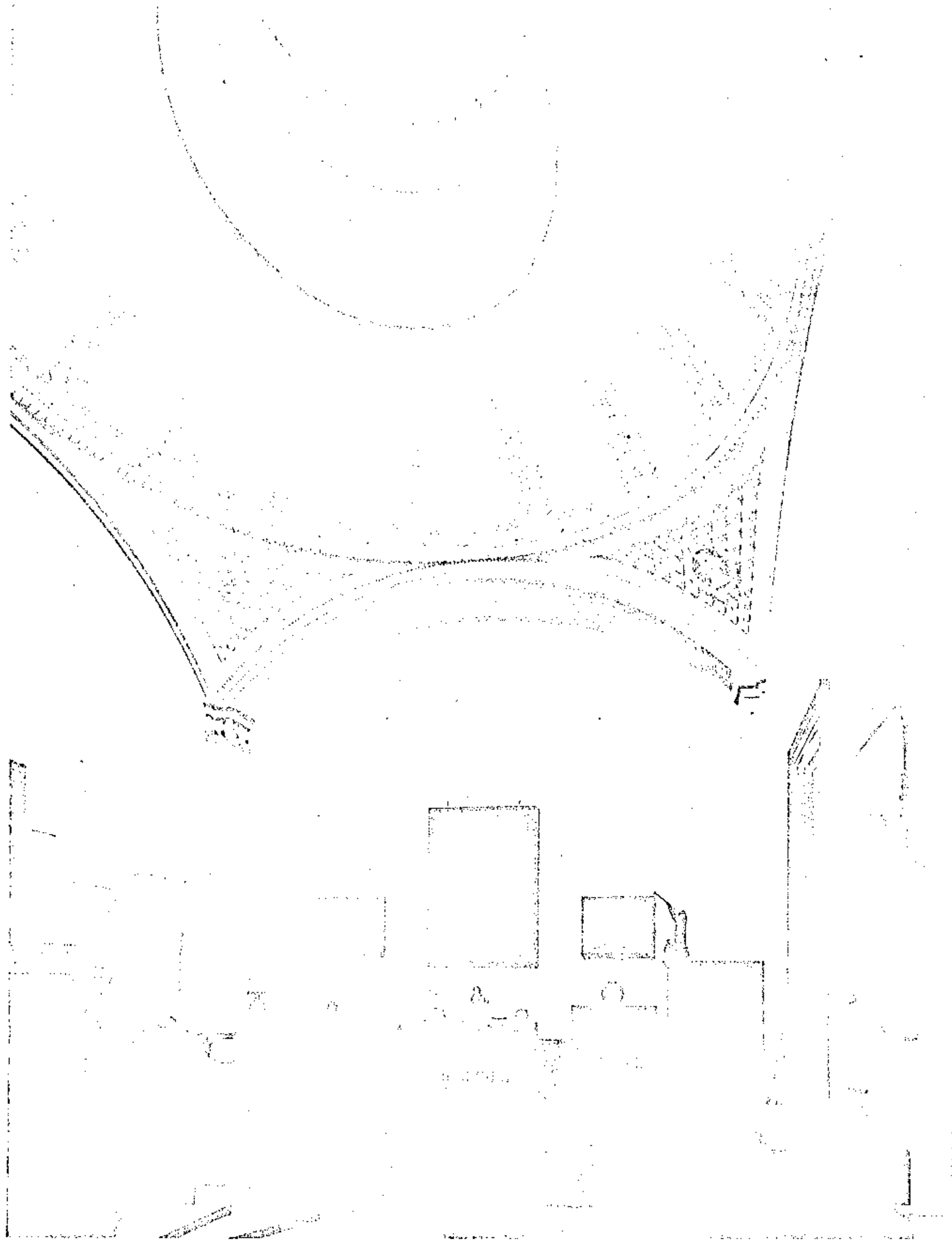
THE IMMEDIATE SETTING OF CHILLINGTON HALL



THE HALL



STABLE YARD



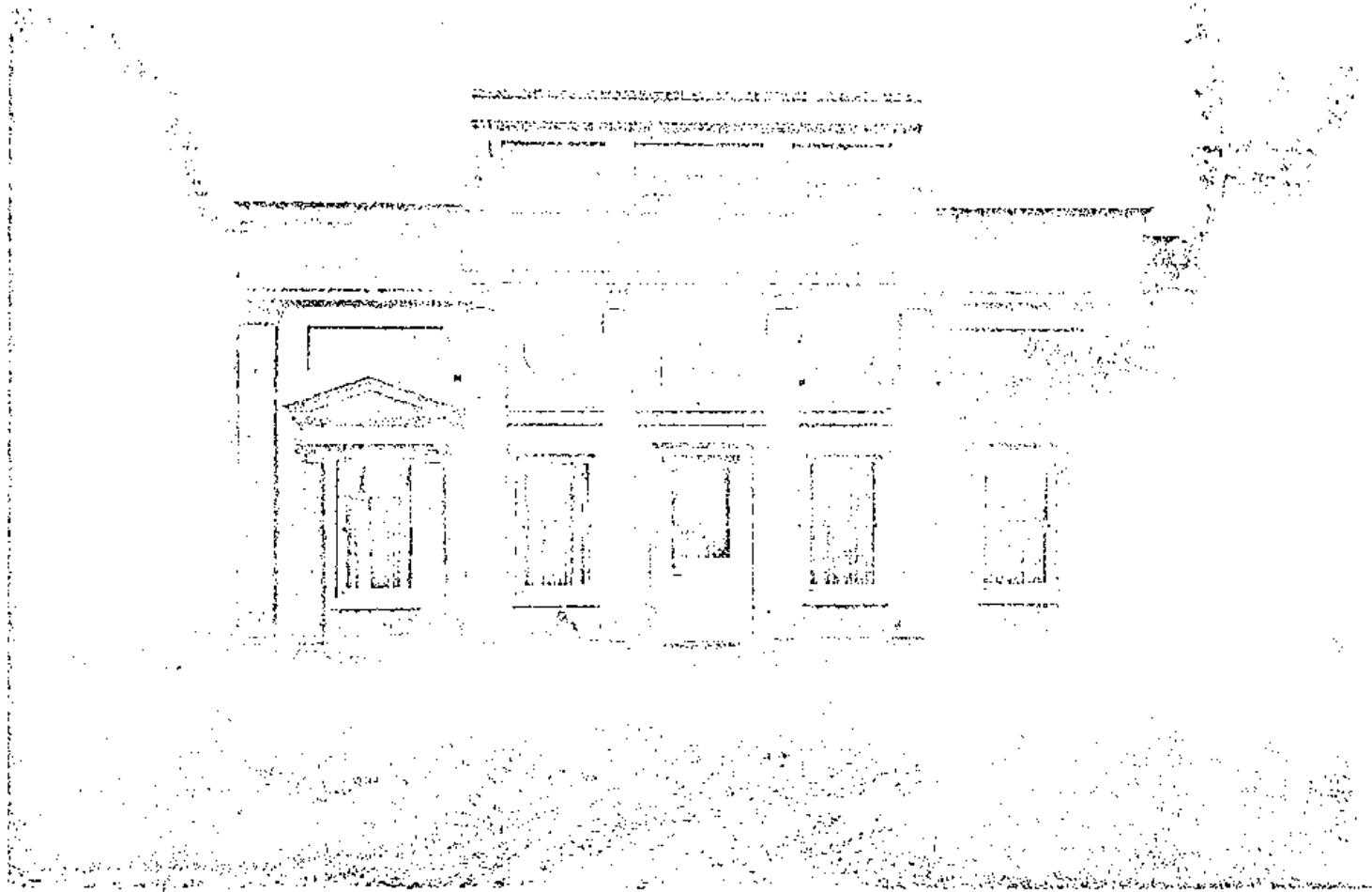
SALOON

butory building is the Grecian Temple which was rated so highly by the Department of the Environment as to be assigned the same grade as the Hall itself. It has been attributed to Robert Adam. But almost equally vital are Paine's Bridge and the Sham Bridge which were both listed by the Department of the Environment as Grade II items. The Gothic Temple is also important but is regrettably now a ruin.

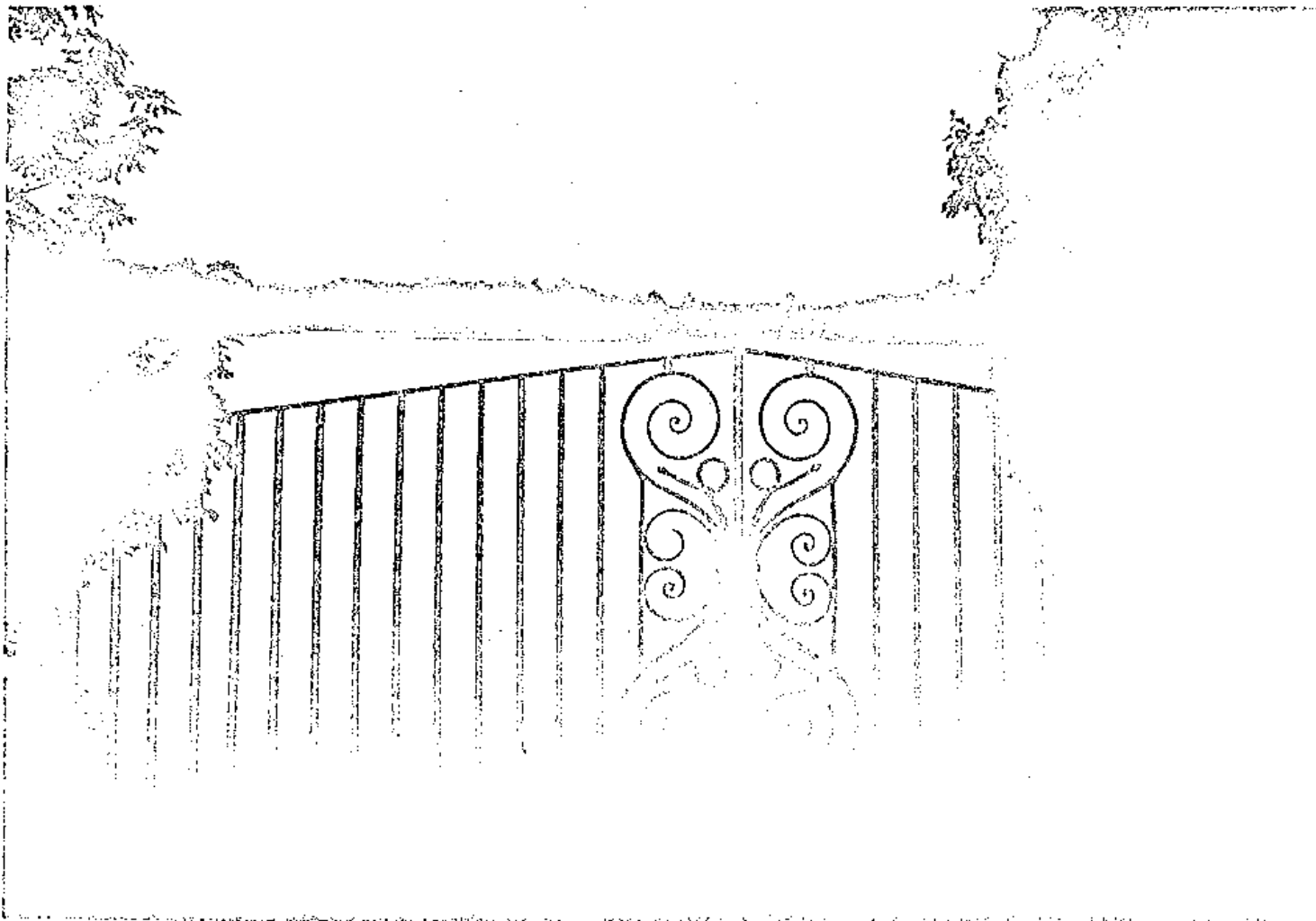
The approach to Chillington Hall from the east is by means of an imposing avenue of oaks stretching altogether $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles. Two notable features along this avenue are the monument known as Giffard's Cross where Sir John Giffard is reputed to have shot a panther in the 16th century, thereby saving the life of a mother and her child, and Avenue Bridge over Telford's Shropshire Union Canal. So as to be in keeping with the setting, the parapets of this bridge have been scrupulously designed in a classical style.

The Chillington Estate still belongs to the Giffard family whose tombs may be seen in the chancel of the parish church at Brewood, a village already designated as a Conservation Area. Some relief to the heavy financial responsibility of retention of such property was afforded when some of the buildings at Chillington Hall were recently restored with the aid of a grant under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act, 1953. Much of the financial burden has, however, fallen upon the owners in preserving the Hall and the essential features of the grounds. Special problems are the upkeep of buildings that have outlived their usefulness, or are far too large for modern requirements, and the management of the woodlands to maintain their intrinsic beauty and their aesthetic and practical function by means of carefully planned felling and replacement planting.

The purpose of designation is to draw attention to the importance of Chillington Hall and Estate, and to emphasize the amenity value that they possess. Designation will ensure that the Estate is retained as far as possible in its present form and that any changes made do not reduce the overall value of the composition and individual buildings.



GRECIAN TEMPLE



PAYNE'S BRIDGE AND POOL

Based upon the Ordnance Survey
Map with the sanction of the
Controller of H.M. Stationery
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Boundary of Conservation
Area : ———

Scales :
Metres : 0 500
Feet : 0 2000

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CCR 4/400 D1

FUTURE ACTION

The Conservation Area has been carefully considered by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the District Council and local amenity bodies.

A specific responsibility is placed upon the Local Planning Authority and the Minister to take account of the character of the Conservation Area when exercising their planning duties and grant-giving powers. Development proposals affecting such areas may also be advertised and account taken of representations received in determining each case.

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967, makes it clear however that designation of a conservation area is only a prelude to action for preserving and enhancing its character and appearance. The present document is concerned with the reasons for designation. It analyses and defines the basic qualities of the particular features and groups of buildings which it is considered make a significant contribution to the character of the Area.

Policies for this and other designated Conservation Areas will be set out in subsequent documents, and these will include recommendations to developers on types of development, on design and on materials considered suitable. The policies may include requirements for detailed information on particular classes of applications, advertisement of applications and proposals for retention of important buildings.

It is hoped that improvement and enhancement of conservation areas will not be completely dependent upon long-term proposals, and that in the short term account will be taken of the opportunities afforded by individual development.

Public participation in the conservation programme is essential to attract local interest and to support voluntary action by amenity bodies in restoring and improving the beautiful parts of environment.

