# Stourhead

Stourton, Wiltshire, UK

Photographs by Alan Ward 1985, 2007, 2014

## Notes on the Making of the Photographs

Stourhead in Wiltshire was designed by its owner Henry Hoare II, who inherited the property in 1724, and began building a landscape garden in 1744. As compared to earlier Renaissance inspired gardens, the new less rigid approach in making landscape gardens allowed for an imaginative landowner like Henry Hoare, with a refined eye and some knowledge of forestry and horticulture, to engage the building trades to realize a design like Stourhead.

He incorporated the existing village of Stourton and its medieval church (27-29), located at the bottom of a steep narrow valley, or combe, into the design. The combe connects to the larger valley of the River Stour, supplied by springs which allowed an earlier owner to construct fish ponds on the site(10). Hoare boldly constructed a massive earthen dam at the end of the valley to make a five-hectare lake (11-13). He laid out a walking circuit around Stourhead Lake, beginning at an upper elevation overlooking the water, and concluding at Stourton village at the lake edge (27-28).

Henry Hoare made an homage to classicism with a sequence of oblique views from paths to structures designed to evoke the past, while descending into the valley and along the lake edge. Temples, bridges, grottoes and monuments bring the vision of the gardens of Rome and the Italian countryside to Stourhead (5,7,8,11,12).

The photographs are arranged following the circuit around the garden beginning with the Palladian style house, which is located more than 450m from the lake (1-3), meaning that Hoare's landscape garden was designed to stand on its own. The first building constructed in the garden was the Temple of Flora designed in 1744 (8). Hoare engaged architect Henry Flitcroft to design the temple and other structures, including the Palladian bridge added in the 1760s (23-26), the Temple of Apollo in 1765 (7), as well as the Pantheon built 1753-54 (12). The Pantheon is the most prominent architectural structure in the garden and was used as a resting place on the circuit, as well as social space.\*

I initially visited Stourhead in the mid-1980s on a sunny day in the afternoon. It was not favorable conditions for photography. I returned in 2007 and was fortunate to be able to stay in the small eight-room inn on the site in Stourton, that Hoare had created for visitors. A guest has the option of getting a key to the garden to enter at any time. I set out before sunrise the following morning. It was a magical time when the garden was enveloped in very soft light with mist rising from the lake. I was the only person in the garden, while birds and rabbits were on the dew-covered lawns. It seemed like the solitary and tranquil experience a visitor might have encountered more than two hundred years ago when staying at the inn at Stourton, and strolling through the garden in the early morning.

# List of Photographs

- 1. Palladian style house built 1721-1725, 2007
- 2. Entrance Drive to house, 2007
- 3. View from entry, 1997
- 4. Tree on grounds of the house, 1997
- 5. Obelisk and fir allée, along path to lake, 2014
- 6. Path to the lake, 2014
- 7. View to Temple of Apollo and Palladian bridge, 2007
- 8. Approach to Temple of Flora, 1985
- 9. Origin of the River Stour to supply the lake, 2007
- 10. Path on two-mile circuit around lake, 1997
- 11. Lake Stour and Temple of Apollo, 2007
- 12. Pantheon, focal point of garden, built 1753-54, 2007
- 13. Tree along west side of lake, 2007
- 14. Planting along west side of lake, 2007
- 15. View from the portico of the Pantheon, 1997
- 16. Temple of Flora and Palladian bridge, 2007
- 17. Cascade from the lake, 2007
- 18. Turner Paddock Lake from path on dam, 2007

- 19. Path to Temple of Apollo, 2007
- 20. Approach to Temple of Apollo, 1985
- 21. Sculptural niche on Temple of Apollo, 1985
- 22. View of Lake Stour from the Temple of Apollo, 2007
- 23. Palladian bridge built in the 1760s, 2007
- 24. Garden used as a park, 2007
- 25. View back to bridge and Pantheon, 2007
- 26. View back to bridge and Pantheon through trees, 2007
- 27. Bristol High Cross, erected 1765, 1997
- 28. Fourteenth-century church in the village of Stourton, 2007































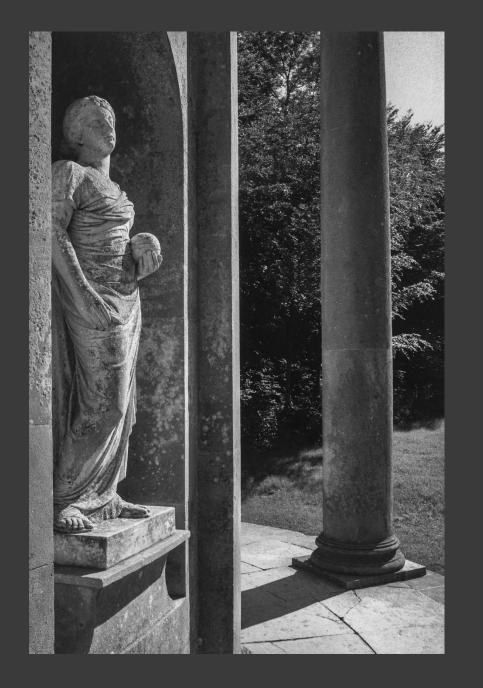


























## Notes

#### Selected Publication of the Photographs:

Linden-Ward, Blanche, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* 

\* See Kenneth Woodbridge, *The Stourhead Landscape,* The National Trust, 1996

All Photographs © Alan Ward