

# Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey

Ripon, North Yorkshire, UK

Photographs by Alan Ward 1985, 1997

# Notes on the Making of the Photographs

Studley Royal is an early eighteenth-century water garden, that was later expanded to make a landscape garden that incorporated the ruins of the adjacent Fountains Abbey. John Aislabie inherited the Studley estate and park in 1693. Beginning around 1715, Aislabie transformed the valley of the River Skell into canals, ponds and cascades by significant earth moving and planting (3-10). John Aislabie's son William inherited the Studley estate in 1742 and added a more naturalistic design with curving paths, conifer planting and architectural structures on the steep wooded slopes bordering the valley – in contrast to the flat lawns and regularly shaped basins of water (15-21). These later additions to the site include architecture with the Temple of Piety overlooking the semi-circular pond (7-9), the Temple of Fame on a ridge above the valley (16) and Ann Boleyn's Seat on a hillside with a view to the abbey (17-18).\*

Beyond the south end of the garden along the River Skell, the former twelfth-century Cistercian abbey of Fountains, was initially a captured view of the remains of the structure (19-20). At this time, there was a fascination with ruins, which coincides with an interest in the past and the rise of the scientific study of history. At Studley Royal, it was perhaps an affection for a lost period, with the ruins valued for their age and

romantic associations, rather than the religious foundations of the abbey. William Aislabie expanded the Studley estate by adding the abbey property in 1767. He extended the garden in the fashion of the time with paths fit to the slopes and a large curving lawn as the foreground to the view of the abbey (18-21).

The photographs show the remains of Fountains Abbey framed by trees that terminate the vista at Studley Royal in an allegorical way with ruins in the landscape, as depicted in popular paintings of the period. What was originally an inward-oriented religious domain was transformed into quite the opposite: an integral part of an outward-looking and expansive landscape garden. Several images show the remnants of the cloistered spaces of the abbey - idealized geometric shapes which were small Edens, where paths crossed in daily devotional life (26-27). An outer courtyard opened to the outside world for trade and commerce as the secular counterpart to the sacred inner world (28). The photographs were done in mostly flat, even light with the aim to express the quiet and serene beauty of this harmonious blend of a largely intact eighteenth-century landscape garden, that incorporates the remains of medieval monasticism.

# List of Photographs

1. Entrance to Studley Royal deer park, 1997
2. Lime Avenue terminating on the 1871 St. Mary's Church, 1997
3. Crossing at the weir, north end of the water garden, 1985
4. View south along River Skell converted to a canal, 1997
5. Canal and Octagon Tower, 1997
6. Serpentine tunnel to Octagon Tower, 1997
7. The Wrestlers, canal and Temple of Piety, 1997
8. Moon and Crescent Ponds, Temple of Piety, 1997
9. Galen, circa 1730, Temple of Piety, 1985
10. Overview looking north of canal and ponds, 1997
11. Banqueting House, 1985
12. View south of Drum Fall and rustic bridge, 1997
13. View south of sculpture and rustic bridge, 1985
14. View north of sculpture and canal, 1997
15. Path along hillside and steps, 1997
16. Temple of Fame, 1997
17. Ann Boleyn's Seat, 1985
18. View to abbey from Ann Boleyn's Seat, 1997
19. Path along River Skell and abbey, 1997
20. Cascade and abbey, 1997
21. Path approaching abbey, 1997
22. Chapel, 1997
23. Nave of the chapel, 1985
24. South aisle of the chapel, 1985
25. Dining hall, 1985
26. Cloister, 1997
27. Entrance to monk's frater, 1997
28. Passage to the river, 1985

























































# Notes

\* See the UNESCO World Heritage Site listing for Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey and the history of both sites at [national trust.org.uk/visit/yorkshire/fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal-water-garden/history-of-fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/yorkshire/fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal-water-garden/history-of-fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal)