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A LINCOLNSHIRE HERMIT: WOLLEY JOLLAND (1745–1831)

Christopher Sturman

On Saturday 9th July 1791 the Hon. John Byng, on tour in Lincolnshire with Colonel Albermarle Bertie, arrived in Louth and took lodgings at the Blue Stone Inn. On inspecting the ruins of the Cistercian abbey in Louth Park, they encountered a local surgeon, Mr Pettener, who, in the early evening, took them to see one of the curiosities of the town, the garden and hermitage constructed by the Vicar of Louth, Wolley Jolland (Plate 1). Byng noted in his journal:

[The garden] is almost cover'd with cloisters, seats, &c, all made of roots of trees, and moss, to correspond with an hermitage in the centre, finish'd with curious taste, and trouble: therein are several rooms, recesses and chapels, all lighted by old stain'd glass (once in Tattershall Church); the ornamental parts are of fir cones; the tables of polish'd horse bones; with many inscriptions around, and upon the ground, from the Scriptures. It is throughout the work of infinite labour, and highly curious; and so must the framer of it be, who was not at home; but his lady was, and she shew'd us her house.

His note, penned that evening, recorded amongst other observations that Colonel Bertie found 'the hermitage too diminutive, and the passages too low', and Byng's own plan '(and to be proposed to Mr J.,) to have his gardener, at grand shewings, properly attired as an hermit, and to be found in some of the recesses, at his studies'.

The following morning, the tourists attended service at the parish church of St James:

We were introduced at eleven o'clock, into a grand pew in a noble church . . . When the minister appear'd, we were not a little surprised at the wildness of his eyes, his sallow skin, and black flowing locks (altogether Oateheitish). His reading was vehement, and turgid, especially in the lessons, but when he came to his sermon, where I expected declamation, he sunk into softness, and was inaudible, and unimpressive. The long service ended, (during which Coll B. sigh'd *piteously*) we . . . were then introduced to Mr J. . . . a man seemingly eaten up by pride and particularity, with attempts at every knowledge and art. We now, follow'd by our two lacqueys, made a thorough survey of his hermitage; of which an accurate description would fill six pages; wonderful is the art and labor, here bestow'd! . . . It would be supposed an almost impossible task, for Mr J. and his assistant, (oddity,) to have put together such a work in a few years! He, Mr J., appears to be composed of as many curious, and odd materials, as his hermitage. Our lacqueys were wonderfully surprised!

Byng and Colonel Bertie left Louth the following morning, glad to have relinquished their accommodation, 'the worst we have yet enter'd with shatter'd casements, and bacon drying upon the stairs'. Byng's next entry in his journal, and very much in the same tone as his thoughts on the Blue Stone Inn, was a final observation on Jolland: 'The steeple is a fine object; but the hermitage is, upon second thoughts, the business of vanity and folly.'¹

Byng's characteristically jaundiced account of Jolland and his hermitage is, for many with an interest either in the historic town of Louth or the eighteenth-century fashion for building hermitages, the most readily accessible description available. Byng's reaction was typical of the divided response to Jolland and his work; others took a less dyspeptic view. Jolland and his hermitage deserve more detailed exploration.



Plate 1. Mezzotint by David Lucas of the portrait of Wolley Jolland (1745–1831) by Richard Jones (1767–1840) issued in 1828 (the original oil painting is in St James' Church, Louth).

Wolley Jolland, the fifth child and second son of George and Justina Jolland, was born in Louth on 2nd September 1745.² His father, who practised as an attorney in Louth, had married Justina Wolley at Louth on 17th February 1736. He was Warden of Louth in 1748–49 and again in 1755–56, and was elected Town Clerk in 1762. Moves were taken to remove him from that office in 1780, as he appears not to have attended any meetings of the council, but they were unsuccessful, and he remained in office until his death in 1782.

Little is known of Wolley Jolland's early life; he may well have attended the Free Grammar School in the town. The writer of a memorial appreciation noted, 'it is said his father intended him for the profession of the law, but, yielding to the inclination of his son, he finally educated him for the church',³ and this is supported by the available evidence. For some time he appears to have worked with his father, for the corporation accounts for 1767 and 1769 are signed 'Wolley Jolland, Deputy Town Clerk'. He married Elizabeth Weightman, daughter of William Weightman, Rector of Yarborough on 19th December 1772. On 14th June in the same year he had been ordained deacon, becoming curate of Welton; he was ordained priest on 25th September 1774. On 26th July 1780 he was presented to the Vicarage of Louth.⁴

His father, who was noted for his somewhat unscrupulous activities, appears to have been partly instrumental in Wolley's obtaining the preferment. The Vicar of Louth since 1764 was Stephen Fytche (Alfred Tennyson's maternal grandfather). In August 1778, the Bishop of Lincoln was considering collating Fytche (his son-in-law) to another living, leaving a vacancy at Louth. On 20th August 1778 George Jolland sent to Samuel Pegge, who as Prebendary of Louth enjoyed the right of presentation to the living, a copy of a petition 'forwarded by this day's post to my Lord Bishop and signed by almost every parishioner together with the Warden and Assistants of this town and corporation',⁵ in favour of appointing Wolley to the vicarage. Fytche finally resigned the living in 1780 when he accepted that of Legbourne. Wolley was to write to Pegge on 23rd March 1780:

I am informed that Mr Fytche . . . , will in a short time vacate the living. In consequence of this information I take the liberty once more to petition you in favour of myself. The former application I made to you through our late worthy Bishop was attended with the names and approbation of the parish in general, which I flattered myself had some weight with you as I never received a denial of the favour I requested either from his Lordship or yourself.

If Sir I should be so happy as to succeed in my humble request to you, be assured it shall be my most earnest endeavour to discharge my duty conscientiously and to acquit myself in such a manner as to render me worthy of the favour I solicit.⁶

Jolland was instituted to the living on 3rd August 1780 and was to remain Vicar of Louth for over fifty years until his death in 1831.

It is not the purpose of this essay to examine Jolland's residence and role as a pastor, but it does appear that this 'gentle being . . . who loved his parishioners with a most lively and enduring affection'⁷ was somewhat eccentric, even unworldly. In the 1890s Richard Goulding recorded memories of Jolland, which to some extent complement the picture penned by Byng. Jolland would interpolate comments into his readings in church: 'after the account of the Passion he would say "here endeth this *dreadful* lesson"; after the story of Peter's denial ending with the words "And when he thought thereon, he wept", he would add, *as well he might*; and his comment on the "darkness which may be felt" was *a thick mist I take it*."⁸ A clear pointer to Jolland's unworldliness (in contrast to that of his wife) are these delightful manuscript verses written by Mary Parkinson of Ravendale in 1838 (albeit her translation of Virgil is somewhat free!):⁹

'Timeo Danaos et Dona Farentes' (A rogue's gift is not worth thank you) illustrated in a dialogue between the late Vicar of Louth and his lady.

Vicar

Come hither, my jolly, my dearest dear,
The good old Vicar cries;
Here's a sight will refresh you this Michaelmas time,
And your senses agreeably surprise.
You can hardly believe what a noble bird
My tenant from Mumby has sent;
And he hopes, honest Soul, that I'll not be severe,
Though he's just now unable to pay me his rent.
I'm sure I'll not hurt even a hair of his head, –
The bird is so fat and so plump;
And I vow that no trifle shall stop me today
From picking the bones of the rump.

Vicar's lady

Oh talk not of turkeys, his lady rejoins,
Your gift will no bargain be found
For minus our rent both this half year & last
The bird is five guineas a pound.

Before describing Jolland's garden and hermitage, some brief mention must be made of his elder brother George, born 10th August 1743, for his life is central to Jolland's conception of the hermitage (Plate 2). Under the influence of Samuel Dashwood, on 19th May 1759 he enlisted in the army, becoming an ensign in the 62nd Regiment of Foot. In 1760 he was in Ireland and in 1763 in America. In December 1769 he was appointed Captain in the East India Company's forces, serving in Madras and Poonamallee; in April 1773 he was appointed aide de camp to General Joseph Smith, the Commander in Chief, and was part of the force assembled in July 1773 at Trichinopoly to take Tangore. He died on 17th August 1773. General Smith wrote to the Company:

Poor Captain Jolland's complaints have (*sic*) been increasing every day since we left Trichinopoly. The surgeons were of the opinion nothing could relieve them but sea air, which advice came too late as he had not got nearer than Coottallum, about 40 miles or nearer to the coast when he quitted the world and its cares.¹⁰

Dr Parkinson of Ravendale was to note of a revealing conversation with Wolley Jolland in February 1829, 'George Jolland realised £3000 in the East Indies which he left to trustees for the purpose of discharging his father's debts'.¹¹

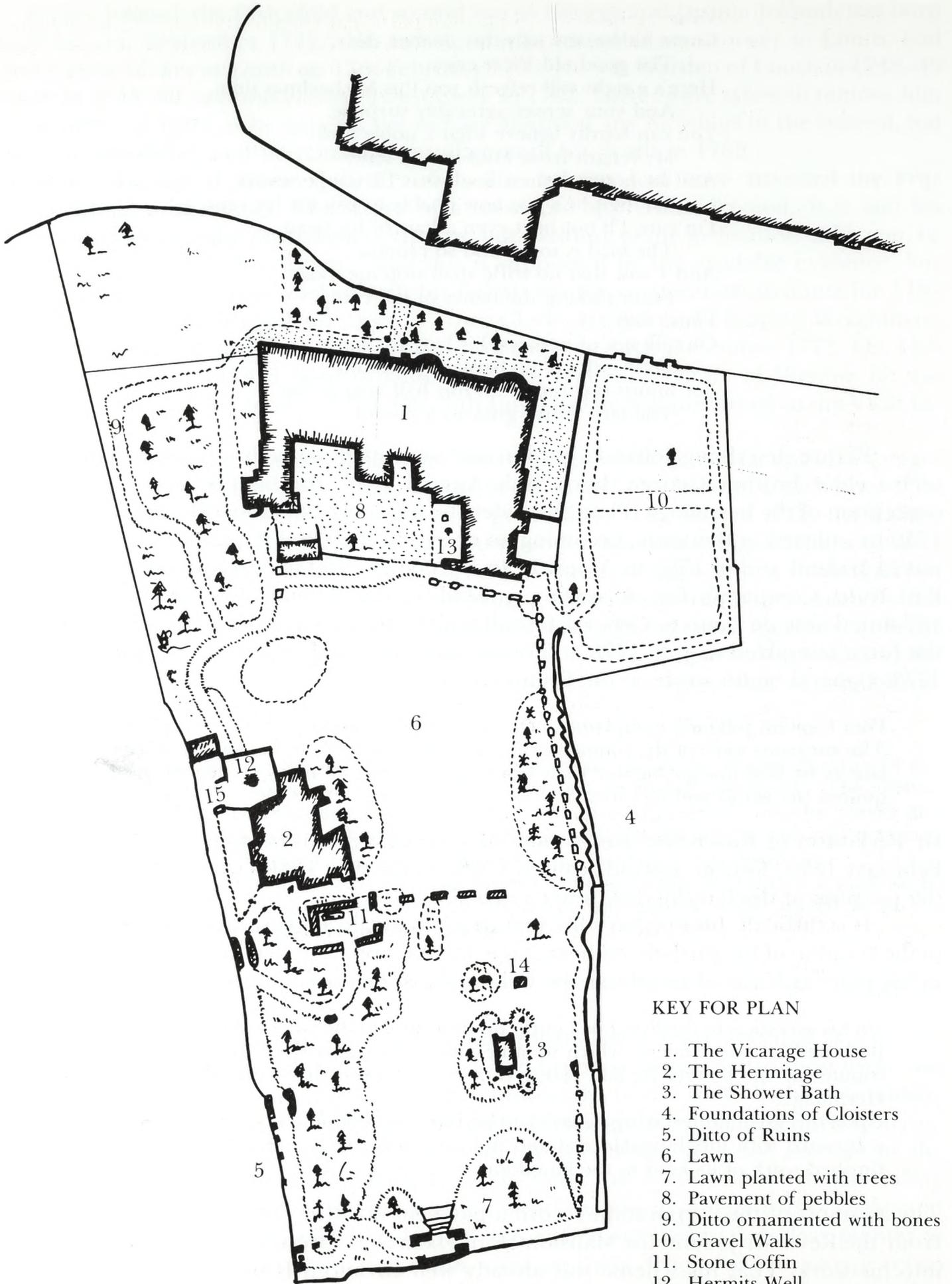
It is difficult, his brother's life and death apart, to suggest direct influences on Jolland in the creation of his garden and hermitage, but it is apparent that he conceived the work early in his years as Vicar of Louth; as the writer of his memorial appreciation was to note:

On his accession to the living of Louth, his gratitude to the Donor appears to have been excessive. It elicited his latent talent, which soon became a 'ruling passion'; and as if desirous of rendering tribute for the bounty he had received, he commenced that stupendous monument of art, his Hermitage.

Upon this great undertaking he lavished his lofty conception and extraordinary taste, and carrying it forward with indefatigable zeal and industry, it became, and still remains, probably the most finished work of its kind in the kingdom.

The accounts of the corporation record a payment on 14th January 1781 of fifteen shillings from 'the Revd Mr Jolland for Mansion House boards';¹² presumably these were incorporated into his work. That his scheme was already well advanced is supported further by a letter Jolland wrote to Pegge on 27th June 1782, anxious that as he might have to accept the living of Stenigot he would also have to resign that of Louth:

It is to you Sir that I am indebted for the greatest part of my comforts in life . . . I candidly own to you that I should hardly be tempted to quit my present happy situation for almost double its



KEY FOR PLAN

- 1. The Vicarage House
- 2. The Hermitage
- 3. The Shower Bath
- 4. Foundations of Cloisters
- 5. Ditto of Ruins
- 6. Lawn
- 7. Lawn planted with trees
- 8. Pavement of pebbles
- 9. Ditto ornamented with bones
- 10. Gravel Walks
- 11. Stone Coffin
- 12. Hermits Well
- 13. Kitchen Pump
- 14. Obelisk
- 15. Monument

Plate 2. Plan of the Vicarage and Hermitage by Charles Millar, 1831. (St James' Church, Louth).

emolument. I live here in the centre of my most particular friends whose affections and attentions are the greatest part of my enjoyment in life. [I] have laid out a great deal of money upon my vicarage and in my garden and am looking forward in the pleasing hope of seeing my improvements arrive to perfection; thus situated it must be something capital indeed that would bribe me to risk a change.¹³

Much of the work was probably complete by the late 1780s. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for January 1788 contained a poem, 'The Hermit's Address'; the footnotes identify the 'curious and much admired' hermitage as Jolland's. Pegge was to note of this poem ('written I presume by Mr. Jolland'), 'An hermitage in a large town is rather inconsistent'.¹⁴

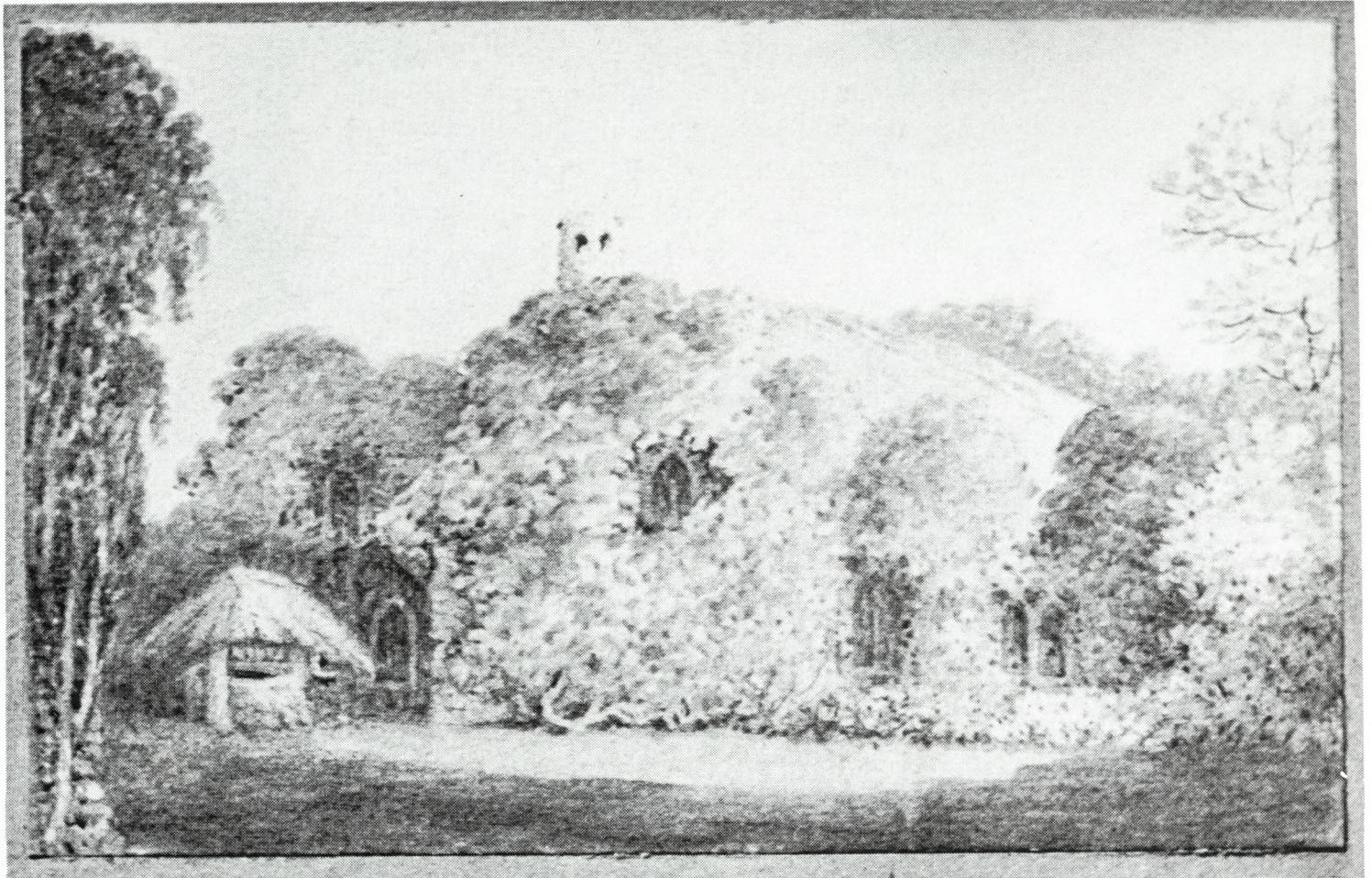


Plate 3. Jolland's Hermitage by Thomas Espin (1766–1822). Water-colour (Richard William Goulding Collection, Lincolnshire County Council).

Fortunately, in addition to Byng's account of 1791, a number of detailed descriptions of the garden and hermitage survive, as well as a plan of the Vicarage grounds made in 1831 (Plate 3). In general, in the following account of the garden and hermitage, I have drawn on that given in the appreciation of 1831, as it represents Jolland's full conception – though the other accounts further suggest it was very much 'complete' by the early 1790s.

Most visitors inspecting Jolland's work would have followed an established route. Thus Humphry Repton, who was taken to see Jolland when staying with the family of Sir Peter Burrell in 1790, would have started at the Vicarage, which he describes as 'profusely decorated with prints and drawings and various curiosities sent from his brother in India, to whose fond remembrance everything inside and out, seem to have been inscribed and consecrated'. A glass door opened onto the garden, 'with lawns and shrubberies neatly kept trim, the whole was surrounded by a wall against which was erected a complete covered way,

made of rude trees and thatched, and richly overspread with roses and creepers'¹⁵ (Plate 4). Those who approached this walk from outside the house would have passed Jolland's aviary 'formed of flints intermixed with rude pieces of stone, and overgrown with ivy'.

The cloister ran down the eastern side of the garden, according to the account of 1831, 'for upwards of seventy feet'. The description continues,



Plate 4. 'View of the Hermitage in the Vicarage garden, Louth, Lincolnshire' by James Bourne (1773–1854). Water-colour, 16cm × 22.5cm. (Sothebys).

[I]ts pillars are formed of timber fancifully covered with the bark of trees, round which is entwined a profusion of beautiful ivy. The floor is paved with flints, pebbles and sheep's bones, arranged in quatrefoils, &c.: its air of pensive gloom is enlivened by small windows of painted glass, on which are portrayed a variety of scripture characters: saints and apostles carved in wood look out from the ivy, and among it also the serpent that tempted Eve holds a prominent position.

Beyond this the visitor would have seen an 'apparently ancient obelisk', a direct expression of Jolland's indebtedness to Pegge, according to the inscription on its east side:

This rural Pile
 was raised
 by the Hand of Gratitude
 to proclaim to its beholders
 the benevolence of the
 Rev. Samuel Pegge,
 Prebendary
 of the prebendal Church of Louth,
 by whose disinterested kindness
 THE HERMIT
 was presented to his Living
 in the year of our Lord
 M,DCC,LXXX.

A path shaded by nut and mulberry trees led to another cloister, of ruder form, erected with chalk stones in their natural state, from which rough pieces of timber protrude their cooked arms, as if in wild and grotesque playfulness. In the centre is a rustic edifice, not inaptly termed a Pavilion: its seats, which occupy three recesses, are formed of the roots of trees and turf finely covered with moss. The floor of this lovely retreat is covered with flints and sheep's bones, in alternate squares: the steps, descending to a small umbraceous grass-plot, are inlaid with the same materials in the form of letters, and depict the last stanza of Pope's 'Universal Prayer.'

To thee whose temple is all space,
 Whose altar, earth, sea, skies;
 One chorus let all being raise!
 All nature's incense rise.

The choice of this stanza was appropriate: from this spot, the spire of St. James was seen to perfection (Plate 6).

In the south-west corner of the garden was 'a small alcove, denominated "Shakespeare's Gallery", containing a rustic seat and the works of the bard'. Close by was an urn commemorating Jolland's parents (his mother died in 1788) with these accompanying verses:

Sigh not, ye winds, as, passing o'er
 The chambers of the dead, ye fly;
 Weep not, ye dews, for these no more
 Shall ever weep, shall ever sigh

A path bounded on the west by a 'wild irregular fence covered with luxuriant ivy and a profusion of vegetation' led towards the Hermitage. By this path (according to notes taken on the spot and possibly compiled by Colonel Charles Nevett in the late 1780s), written 'upon a gothic tablet within an arch', was Parnell's celebrated poem 'The Hermit'. He describes the hermitage, 'The outside is composed of the roots of trees, moss and flints, the windows are Gothic and of painted glass, the roof is thatched'. Elsewhere in his notes he comments on remembering some carvings 'being taken down out of the south aisle of Louth Church and since have recognised them among the ornament[s] of the hermitage'.¹⁶

The sense of wonder on viewing the Hermitage is captured by Repton:

[At the end of the walk] were entered the Porch of the Hermit's Cell which I supposed was all I had to see, it contained the common furniture of a Hermit's retreat – the walls were covered with moss and the ceiling with pendant fern. After examining everything, a door (which I did not suspect) opened into the Dormitory where the Hermit slept. Its whole appearance was neat, and it well contrasted with the cell, by being entirely lined with crooked and peeled billets fancifully enriched by the knotty excressences found in the 'unwedg[e]able and knarled oak'. The bed consisted of milk white sheepskins and was raised above the floor so as to require a small staircase to reach it,



Plate 5. 'View of the Vicarage house from the garden, Louth, Lincolnshire' by James Bourne (1773–1854), showing Jolland's cloisters (and Jolland?) and the south-east wing of the former Vicarage house. Water colour, 16cm × 22.5cm (Sothebys).

made of the same kind of billets beautifully clean and polished – the lower part of this Dormitory was so well stored with everything the hermit could require that I again concluded we had seen all – When suddenly, a part of the wall with the wooden sofa on which I sat, gently moved back, and I found myself in a room somewhat larger and of totally different character! He said it was his Brother's Library – Books richly bound and some valuable Asiatic Manuscripts were ranged in the recesses on shelves pendant from festoons or supported by brackets of which the carving struck me as exquisitely delicate – but on closer inspection I found what I had taken for carved wood, was a collection of the most beautiful specimens of leaves whose outline and fibres were preserved and their substance destroyed, by insects, (or some corroding menstruum) to produce the effect. To these skeletons of vegetation, were added, some real skeletons of small birds, mice and other little animals – the whole being arranged in the most graceful forms [and with a knowledge of composition [deleted]]. The furniture was of Bamboo sent from India, and a large collection of china, and Indian trinkets continued the connection with the brother's memory.¹⁷

Here also, according to the 1831 account, was a 'representation of the cock that sounded an alarm to Peter's conscience, when he had denied his master'. Another room, not described by Repton, and considered by Nevett to give the appearance it had been 'hollowed from the very rock itself' was the Hermit's Kitchen:

The lowly fire-place, the mossy walls, the lantern with its frame of roots, the hour-glass supported by fangs, the hollow knot of oak which serves the purpose of tinder-box, the shells for food, and other correspondent utensils, forcibly characterize the habits of a recluse of the twelfth century.

But to return to Repton's visit:

[F]rom [the Library] another door concealed by books, opened into a dark winding passage, which I entered with some regret considering it the end of this scene of wonders – but suddenly the opening of another door displayed the Chapel or Oratory! The effect was magical! It was a fairy tale! Or the Arabian Night's Entertainment! It was all light and no shadow and the light appeared supernatural it fell upon sparkling gems of every colour which seemed to surround us. The only object I could first comprehend [perceive [over-written in pencil]] was an Altar, richly decked with a Silver Crucifix, and a Bible with golden clasps – near which was a skull exquisitely carved in white ivory. The inscriptions in the stained glass still alluded to his brother – and to his Heavenly Father. There was a solemnity in the unexpected scene that inspired something more than the common pageants of mortality can excite and I felt an awe, as if in more immediate presence of the Creator. My eyes moistened as I thought how often the pious Hermit had in this place invoked blessings upon a brother in whom for years every other thought had been absorbed. After a time I began to examine the mechanism of what had so taken me by surprise. The floor of the Oratory was paved with horses' teeth highly polished! These together with the white cloth on the Altar received reflections of a variety of the most brilliant colours from the very large Western window from whence alone the light came – this accounted for the vari[e]gated hues – but how to account for the glitter from the walls? No court dress bespangled with Tinsels could reflect the light like that which pattern of foliage, described on the walls! They were hung with Indian matting of the finest kind, on which the fanciful pattern had been wrought by unheard of means! The Hermit explained that having remarked on the leaf of a plant a glittering substance left by a snail – he determined to avail himself of it, – and by early rising and late watching he had collected hundreds of these little artificers – and altho' their motion was proverbially slow – by time, attention, and numbers, he had accomplished his design, having patiently directed each little workman in the track he should take and the part he should perform to produce this extraor[d]inary whole!¹⁸

It would not be too repetitious, I believe, to draw on the account of the chapel furnished by Nevett:

You return [from the Kitchen], and throo a concealed door pass into a small passage neatly paved with pebbles . . . 'tis lighted by a small window in the form of a crucifix with this [inscription] 'If this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done.' A large gothic door of painted glass also gives you a clear view of the passage. The roof and sides represent [?stone] in wood work. A pair of folding door[s] proclaim the entrance of the Chapel. Upon opening the doors the sight surpasses all description. The floor is of horses' teeth beautifully polished. The arch of the door you enter at represents a carving exquisitely finished, but is composed of no other materials than moss and fir apples . . . You enter and beheld (*sic*) a place which strikes you with awe, wonder and admiration. On the east is the Altar, the table of which is composed of horses teeth so exquisitely finished that they represent a marble of the finest veinery, the border is of large fir apples, and the feet of [large fir applies] – forming to the eye the carving of the most accomplished statuary. Upon the table is placed a skull as in a kind of gothic arch composed of moss and fir apples terminating in a cone . . . immediately over which is a window of painted glass, in the form of a crucifix, representing the bleeding Jesus on the Cross. Above are three gothic recesses of the same materials as before, the middle of which has a gothic window. The left hand recess contains an image of white marble, the [?lesser] only the base of one. The north and south sides have each near the roof a window and are ornamented by squares of moss and fir apples and terminated by gothic arches, something similar to the tops of prebendarys' seats in a Cathedral, and their points are ornamented by the fir apple, under which, in a recess of the above beautiful materials, is a tablet representing a young hermit in the attitude of devotion earnestly looking [at] a tomb with these [words] 'Omnia Vanitas,' under which are several lines, which if I gave in full would render my account too [?prolonged]. The subject is Repentance. I therefore shall pass on to the western end where, looking up you behold three gothic recesses, in the centre of which is an urn, the pedestal of which bears the Medallion of the deceased, over whose head a curtain appears as if drawn aside, and from behind Death with his dart, &c. The inscription round the Medallion tells you that [it is] sacred to the memory of Captain George Jolland . . . under which, in an arch beautifully [. . .] appears a tablet representing a monument with its base ornamented by the spear, the trumpet and other [?articles] belonging to a military life. Upon the monument appears Britannia in an easy posture resting upon her left hand, from which fall reversed the British Standards, her left (*sic*) is drawing aside a veil shewing the most pitying and afflicted countenance. Under the monument is the inscription:

Whoe'er thou art that looks on this sad shrine,
 One moment pause and add a tear to mine
 A manly tear to his fair memory due,
 Who felt such feelings as are known to few.
 High were the hopes his gallant spirit gave,
 All, all now turned in an Indian grave;
 In him the true relation fully shown,
 There liv'd indeed the brother and the son,
 There liv'd of [?true] and of friends the best,
 And oh! what blessings on his ashes rest.
 What tho' no weeping loves thy ashes grace,
 Nor polished marble emulate thy face,
 No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear
 Pleas'd thy pale ghost, or grac'd thy mournful bier,
 By foreign hands thy dying eyes were clos'd,
 By foreign hands thy decent limbs compos'd,
 By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
 By strangers honour'd and by strangers mourn'd.

But to the roof it arises into a kind of dome, whose circle is terminated by the fir apple, from the clusters of which, from the centre by a chain descends a lamp composed of a knot of wood ornamented by festoons of fir apples.¹⁹

Near to the Hermitage was the cemetery; 'its rude and singular walls are built of cinders, which, like every other part of this interesting retreat are covered with moss and ivy'. A stone coffin lay at its centre. To the north of the Hermitage was a herb garden and the hermit's yard, with a well formed from a hollowed-out tree-trunk (Plate 6).

Repton's final comment on his visit brings us back to the popular reaction to Jolland and his 'folly':

Were the [one half [deleted]] good people of Louth *wrong* in pronouncing him 'mad', when they saw him thus spending day after day? Let us hope their own days were spent better! We are all but tenants for life – and if his days were spent in thanksgiving and enjoyment – he might be *mad*, but he perhaps was less so than many who have passed their lives without either *enjoyment* or *thankfulness*.²⁰

Jolland died on 16th August 1831 aged eighty five. Tributes were generous. The *Stamford Mercury* wrote, 'The amiable conduct of this gentleman endeared him to all classes: his charity drew forth the affection of the poor man – his kindness and urbanity knit him to the more opulent classes'.²¹ He was buried on 23rd August at Yarborough:

On the day of interment, as a mark of respect due to his beloved memory, all the shops were closed, and his honoured remains (attended by a long train of friends who loved him in life and lamented him in death) were conducted to their yawning depository. The procession consisted of the Vicar's relatives and principal friends, the members of the corporation, eighteen clergymen of the town and neighbourhood, the children of the national school, and several of the principal inhabitants . . .

His wife soon followed him to the grave, dying on 31st October 1831; the *Mercury* obituary was fulsome:

Her self-taught cultivated mind, and her naturally powerful understanding, together with the suavity of her manners and her extraordinary talent for conversation, caused her society, particularly early in life, to be much sought after by her superiors in station; and subsequently, when she arrived at a maturer age . . . what distinguished her still more was, that she of all others was the person to whom in cases of difficulty and affliction recourse was continually had for consolation and advice.²²

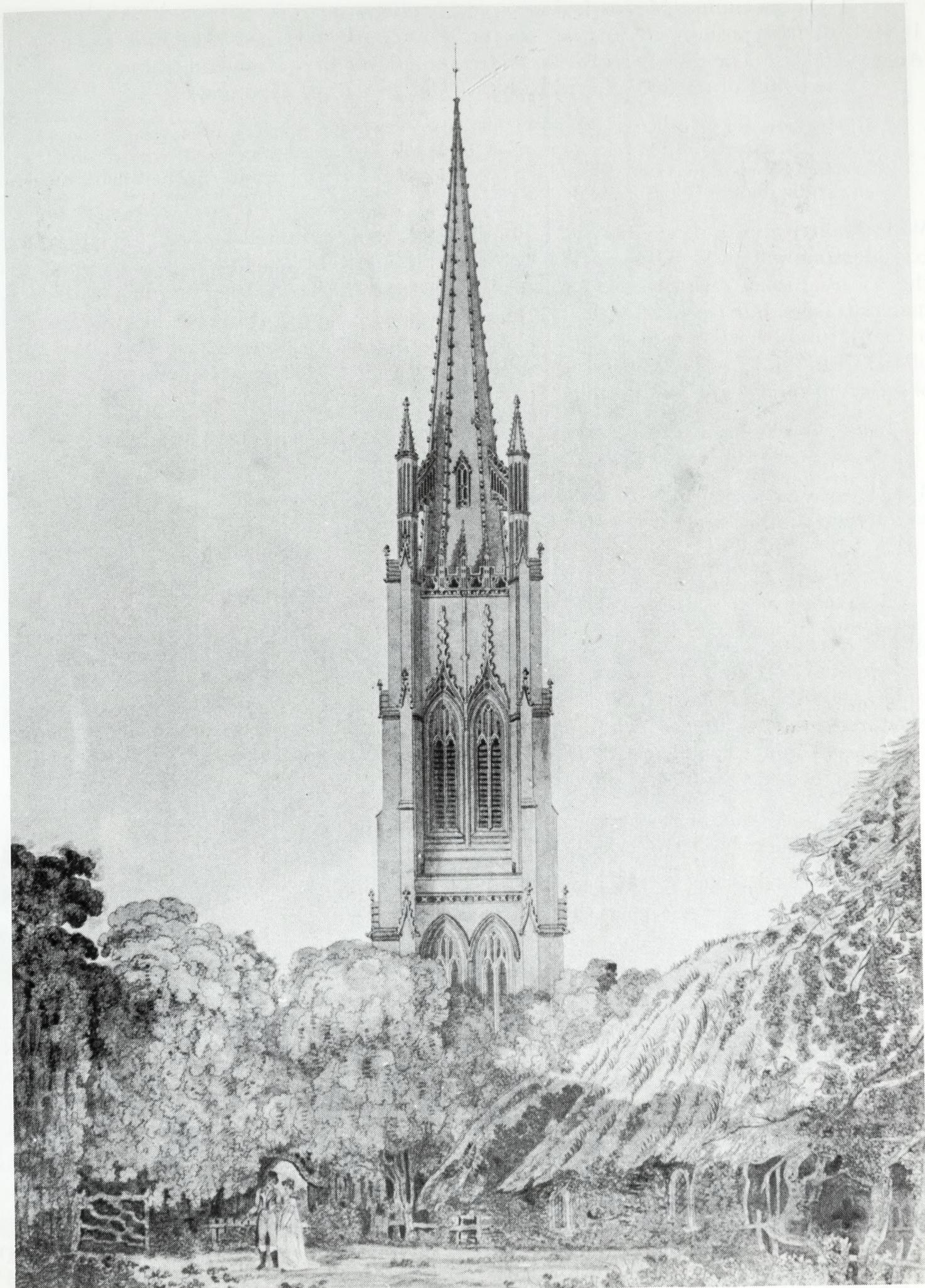


Plate 6. Jolland's hermitage and the spire of St. James by Thomas Espin (1767–1822).

In the meantime, Messrs Jackson sold his effects on 26th, 27th and 29th September 1831 at their Repository in Uppgate²³ (a further sale of silver and plate took place on 1st August 1832²⁴). The dissolution of his collection and the hermitage had begun.

The writer of the 1831 appreciation was to note of the Hermitage,

It must however be observed, that on some parts of the Hermitage most exposed to the weather decay has stamped its impress, and unless its progress be speedily arrested, it must soon lead to irretrievable ruin; too truly proving the evanescence of human pursuit – the perishable nature of all earthly things.

With the arrival of a new Vicar of Louth, E. R. Mantell, instituted on 8th December 1831, consideration was given to building a new Vicarage house. The conclusion of a survey was that the Vicarage had ‘from age and former neglect together with [the] original badness of materials fallen into irreparable decay’. The architect C. J. Carter (1784–1851), newly arrived in Louth from Brereton in Staffordshire, designed the new Vicarage, which was built at a cost of £937 10s.²⁵ Jolland’s hermitage and garden were soon to disappear. Allen writing in 1833 observed of the garden and hermitage,

little now remains to remind us of its former quiet beauties, and it is to be feared that little will soon be swept away by the devastating hand of *improvement*.²⁶

R. S. Bayley, author of the first history of Louth, *Notitiae Ludae*, of 1834, certainly reflected such a new attitude when he wrote of the Hermitage:

It pleases the eye of the loungee and the uninformed; but the man of real taste *can* only consider it a specimen of misemployed money, and a memorial of misdirected power. The most that can be said in its favour is, that it was a fair proof of amiable trifling.²⁷

Saunders’ county history of 1836 recorded ‘the remains of a small hermitage are still presented here’,²⁸ but by the mid 1840s, when William Brown painted his remarkable panorama of the town viewed from the spire of St. James, all that was left in the garden were some arches and an arbour, with an obelisk (possibly one of the pinnacles from St. James) Plate 7). All that remains today of Jolland’s remarkable handiwork is an urn, somewhat weathered, bearing the inscription:

Sacred to the memory of George and Justina, Revered Parents of the Hermit, interred in the adjoining Church where they rest from their labours.

Bayley, in conclusion, pronounces the verdict of the new Victorian age on the passing era of hermits and similar Georgian gimcrackry:

Folly, the standing inspiration of men, never allows them to rest. For when comparatively barbarous they affect refinement, and when civilized often sigh again for the desert; and from the gilt, carpets and wilderness of heterogeneous finery in the modern drawing-room, its inmates often cast an insincere and sickly desire towards the real wilderness. This was one of the directions of taste in the days of Wolley Jolland, over whose grave let charity lay the stone, and retire without writing an epitaph.²⁹

NOTES

1. C. Bruyn Andrews, ed., *The Torrington Diaries*, 2, 1935, pp. 380–385. Byng’s manuscript is at Lincoln Central Library, but contains no additional material germane to Jolland.
2. R. W. Goulding, *The Vicars and the Vicarage of Louth*, Louth 1906, pp. 16–18.
3. *The Late Wolley Jolland*, 2pp handbill printed by Jackson of Louth, unsigned, but dated ‘Kirk Smeaton, near Doncaster, 26th August, 1831’. A somewhat shortened version of this appreciation appeared in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, October 1831, pp. 375–376.
4. Lincolnshire Archives Office (subsequently L.A.O.) PD 136/31.

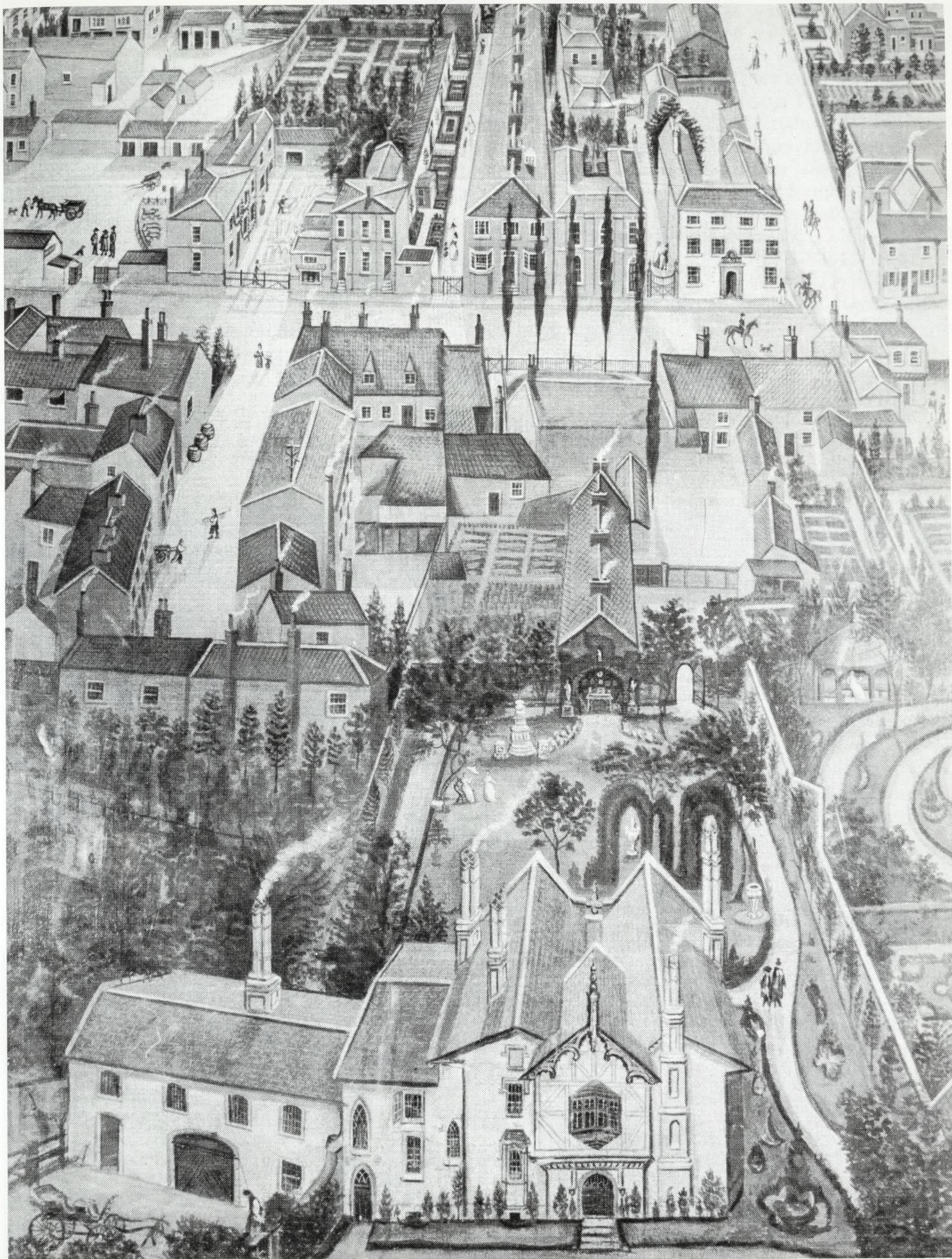


Plate 7. View of the new Vicarage and the garden from spire of St. James c.1847, by William Brown (1788–1859); little remains of Jolland's Hermitage and garden. (Louth Town Council).

5. Bodleian Library. M. S. Gough Linc. 10, fol. 34r.
6. Bodleian Library. M. S. Gough Linc. 10, fol. 53r.
7. *The Late Wolley Jolland*.
8. *The Vicars and the Vicarage of Louth*, p. 18; for other anecdotes about Jolland, see L.A.O. Goulding Papers 3/A/1 pp. 30–31, 123; 5/10/4.
9. South Humberside Area Record Office (subsequently S.H.A.R.O.), 361/T3/48. Jolland much admired Ravendale: he wrote to Mrs Parkinson, 'Ravendale and Paradise are synonymous, being each the seat of all that's good' (L.A.O. Dixon 16/9/15; date torn but ?c.1820).
10. Lieut-Colonel Charles B. Appleby, 'Captain George Jolland (1743 to 1773)', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 39, 1961, pp. 55–65.
11. S.H.A.R.O. 542/2/14, 26 February 1829.
12. L.A.O. LGS B/III/3 [Corporation Accounts 1780–81].
13. Bodleian Library. M. S. Gough Linc. 10, fol. 63.
14. *Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1788, p. 64; Bodleian Library. M. S. Gough Linc. 10, fol. 5^b.
15. British Library, Add. Mss. 62112, fols. 117v, 121–122; printed (though with a few errors of transcription) in George Carter, Patrick Moore & Kedrun Laurie, *Humphry Repton Landscape Gardener 1752–1818*, 1982, pp. 136–136. Repton commenced his account in these 'Memoirs' (compiled in 1814):

During one of my visits to this family the ladies asked me if I had ever seen The Hermitage at Louth? and it was spoken of as something so extraordinary and interesting that I determined to visit it. The result was far beyond all I could have imagined – it is one of those things which no pen can describe and yet knowing this, I am tempted to give some idea of it.
16. L.A.O. Cragg 2/35, pp. 114 & 10. Almost all the notes relating to Jolland's hermitage are made in pencil and, at times, are barely legible; the notes are read from the back to the front of the book. I have suggested a date from the late 1780s as the account indicates part of the Hermitage (? the Dormitory) to be unfinished (p. 126). The identification of the compiler as Colonel Charles Nevett was made when these notes were published (c.1880) by Charles M. Nesbitt of Louth in the Lincolnshire local press (newspaper cutting, L.A.O. 2 Binnall – Louth notebooks).
17. British Library, Add. Mss. 62112, fols. 123–124.
18. British Library, Add. Mss. 62112, fols. 124–126.
19. L.A.O. Cragg 2/35, pp. 90–72. Nevett's transcription of the final lines of the memorial inscription is incomplete; the last six lines are, in fact, lines 49 to 54 of Pope's 'Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady'.
20. British Library, Add. Mss. 62112, fol. 126.
21. *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury* (subsequently *L.R.S.M.*), 19 August 1831.
22. *L.R.S.M.*, 7 October 1831.
23. *L.R.S.M.*, 23 September 1831 (advertisement of sale); *A Catalogue of the Valuable Old China, Oil-Paintings, Prints, Library of Books, Furniture and Other Curiosities. Late the Property of the Rev. Wolley Jolland, Deceased . . .*, Louth 1831 [copy in Richard William Goulding Collection, Louth].
24. *L.R.S.M.*, 27 July 1832 (advertisement of sale).
25. L.A.O. MGA 171.
26. [Thomas Allen], *The History of the County of Lincoln*, Lincoln 1834, II, p.190.
27. [R. S. Bayley], *Notitiae Ludaee*, Louth 1834, p. 230. Cf also the marginal notes by E. J. Willson (1787–1854) of Lincoln on the account of the Hermitage in his copy of John Britton's, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, IX, 1807, p. 698 (Society of Antiquaries, 786/1):

Too much has been attempted in this curious whim; and the mixture of many of its ornaments is ingenious; such places should preserve a character of simplicity, which is quite destroyed by too much ornament. How *trashy* does all this look when you raise your eyes to the matchless steeple, towering in sublimity over all meaner objects!
28. [John Saunders], *Lincolnshire in 1836*, Lincoln 1836, p. 148.
29. *Notitiae Ludaee*, p. 231.