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Picturesque Woodland Management: The Prices at Foxley

Charles Watkins, Stephen Daniels and Susanne Seymour

In late eighteenth century Britain there were two entirely different modes of woodland management.¹ The first was the traditional management of long established or ancient woodland, the second was the management of new plantations of broadleaved and coniferous trees. Although the specific management of these woods was very different, ancient woodlands and new plantations were frequently found together on the same estates. Traditional management of coppices, for example, was carried out alongside the planting and clear felling of introduced conifers. There was however considerable variation from one region to another in the relative proportions of the two types of woodland. In some areas, such as the Dukeries of Nottinghamshire for example, the landscape was dominated by the vast stretches of new woodland planted throughout the eighteenth century in the burst of enthusiasm known as the 'spirit of planting'.² In other places, where the proportion of established woodland was higher, the new plantations were intermixed with existing ancient woodland. Herefordshire, characterised by an 'ancient' cultural landscape of small fields, thick hedgerows and a high proportion of woodland, was such a region.³

Uvedale Price (1747–1829) drew on his own experience of woodland management on his Herefordshire estate, Foxley, when developing his theoretical approach to the Picturesque. Price celebrated 'the different qualities and uses of trees, the advantages of a river to commerce, to agriculture or manufactures; [and] the local history and geography of an extensive prospect' as adjuncts to the enjoyment of landscape.⁴ We argue here that an understanding of Price's woodland management and the geography of Foxley is crucial to an understanding of Price's views on Picturesque woodland management.⁵

FOXLEY AND THE PICTURESQUE

The Foxley estate, situated about eight miles northwest of Hereford, came into the Price family through the marriage of Robert Price I (1653–1732), Baron of the court of exchequer, to Lucy Rodd, one of the co-heiresses of Foxley, in 1679. Foxley Court itself was situated in a small valley surrounded on all but its south eastern side by a horseshoe shaped belt of hills. Robert Price's son (Uvedale Tompkyns Price, 1685–1764), grandson (Robert Price II, 1717–1761) and great-grandson (Uvedale Price, 1747–1829) continued to expand the estate through the purchase, inheritance, and exchange of many small properties. By the time it was sold to the Davenport family in the 1850s, in order to pay the debts of Uvedale Price's son, Sir Robert Price, it comprised 4,330 acres all virtually in one ring fence. An extract from the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey One-Inch Map (1833) shows the situation of the estate. (Fig. 1)

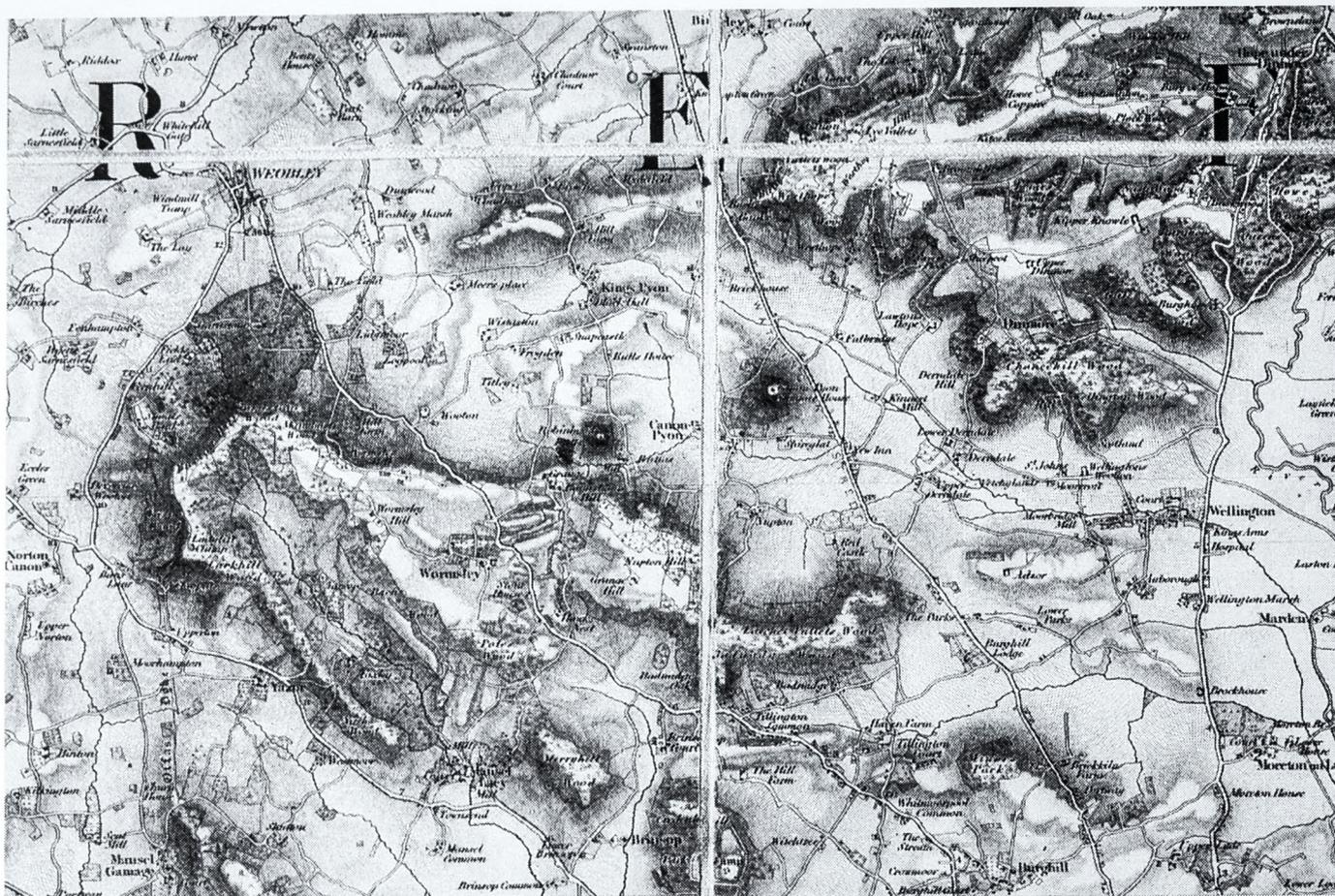


Fig. 1 First Edition of the Ordnance Survey One-Inch Map (1833) showing the situation of the Foxley estate. Department of Geography, University of Nottingham.

Foxley is in the central Herefordshire Plain, the soils being mainly heavy loams derived from the Old Red Sandstone. In the eighteenth century the area was characterised by a corn livestock system, with many large scale livestock enterprises, especially cattle. The production of apples for cider, and hop growing were also very important.⁶ In his advocacy of the Picturesque, Uvedale Price was often accused, notably by William Marshall, of celebrating sterile rocky, ruinous and weed choked landscapes. But there is abundant evidence of Price's commitment to agriculture and to his use of progressive farming techniques. For instance, he carried through Benjamin Stillingfleet's experiments on improved pasture; he added improving covenants (for example on draining) to new leases; and his letters to Sir George Beaumont (then improving his own estate at Coleorton) contain agricultural advice. In his *Essay on the Picturesque*, Price celebrates landscapes that are flourishing, populous, domesticated and need to be worked industriously to keep them so.

The estate is most famous as an exemplar of Picturesque estate management. Although many of the estate records for Foxley have been lost, three important documentary sources for the study of the layout of Foxley in the eighteenth century survive. These are first, a list of the various architectural improvements and plantings made by various members of the Price family between 1719 and 1773; second an estate survey carried out in 1770 for the young Uvedale Price; and third, a detailed estate management plan of 1774 by the land agent Nathaniel Kent.⁷ This evidence shows that successive members of the Price family all made important contributions to the development of the landscape. The overall planting plan, although not explicit, was determined to a large extent by the topography of the valley.

By 1770, when Uvedale Price was in his early twenties, the woodland landscape of Foxley had already undergone over a hundred years of planting. The cores of ancient woodland on the steeper slopes had been extended by the establishment of new woodland most of which tended to emphasize the sense of enclosure of the horseshoe shaped valley of Yarsop. When the belt of encircling wood had been completed Foxley had achieved the compositional coherence Price desired. He upheld his own estate as above any other in 'the appearance as well as reality of being one person's property'. Price enjoyed, in his words, 'extensive distances' in views from the summit of Foxley but he was careful to distinguish these from the ambitious 'prospects' characteristic of parks designed by Capability Brown and his followers. At Foxley, long views over the county were to be combined with, and controlled by, 'near views' focusing on such detail as trees, shrubs and earth banks. Price's Picturesque was grounded or rooted in the land.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT BY UVEDALE PRICE

The area of woodland kept in hand by Uvedale Price increased from around 500 acres in 1770 to about 700 acres in 1774. Most of this increase can be accounted for by the transfer of much of the woodland growing on the hill slopes around the head of the Yarsop valley which had previously been let to tenants. The remodelling of the estate was a vital instrument in enabling Price to take full control of both the woodland and the whole landscape at Foxley. There appear to be no surviving wood books or timber accounts for this period, but there is a scatter of evidence indicating that most of the woodland was managed commercially.

The Groves

More than half the woodland kept in hand by Uvedale Price was classed by Nathaniel Kent as 'open woods and groves'. These were relatively open areas of standard trees with pasture. That the area was managed as wood pasture in the 1770s is indicated by Kent's assessment that the 400 acres of grove pasture was worth £30 at 1/6 acre. In addition to their grazing value, the 'necessary thinning' of the groves would result in a further £50 per year. The combined grazing and timber value of the groves would therefore be about 4/- per annum. Unfortunately, apart from Kent's estimates, no estate records survive to show income from timber while Uvedale Price was in control of the woods. Nationally timber prices fell from 1760 to 1790, but began to rise with demand for naval timber from 1790–1826.⁸ Evidence that Price was producing timber for this particular market is given by an advertisement of March 1795 in the *Hereford Journal* offering oak timber 'fit for the navy' for sale at Yazor.⁹ The timber was for sale in seven lots and comprised 1,752 individual trees. Some of this advertised timber was in the grove woodland, but much also took the form of standard trees growing in the coppices.

The Coppices

There was a very strong market for coppice products in late eighteenth century Herefordshire. Kent in his Foxley survey notes that 'Wood under regular course of felling is the most profitable estate in the county of Hereford, being always a ready money article, and the management of it is so well known that it is needless for me to give any particular direction about it'¹⁰ This high price was partly due to a local demand for hop poles, but Clark in his *General View* of the county for the Board of Agriculture notes that in addition, a 'vast quantity of wood is sent down the Severn to Bristol and other markets for making

hoops and hop poles'.¹¹ This high demand is reflected by the value of the 300 acres or so of coppice at Foxley. Nathaniel Kent suggests that about 12 acres should be felled each year, and that the coppice should be worth 12/- per acre, which is three times the value of the groves, and considerably more than the average value Kent gives to 'profitable land good and bad'. Nine acres of coppice wood in Walks Coppice at Foxley described as of 'excellent growth for Hoops, Hop-poles, Railpoles &c' was advertised for sale in the *Hereford Journal* of 4 February 1795. The market for coppice products held up, and if anything, increased, through the last two decades of the eighteenth century though there is some evidence that there was a decline around 1810.¹²

New woodland

Apart from managing existing woodland, Uvedale Price extended its acreage by the purchase of existing woodland, planting of new areas, and through exchange. In 1773, for example, he purchased an area described as 'coppice wood ground' near to Lady Lift at Yazor, from his neighbour Sir John Cotterell.¹³ This purchase helped to thicken the existing border of woodland around Foxley. In addition, there is fragmentary evidence that he was planting new areas of woodland. A covenant on a lease of 1781 on a farm at Mansell Lacy, for example, permitted the landlord 'to plant with wood and take into his own hands as coppice ground any parts of the before mentioned premises making a reasonable deduction in the rent for the same'.¹⁴ This particular covenant had not been put in any of the leases devised by Kent seven years earlier in 1774.

In 1812, there was a particularly interesting exchange of land between Thomas Andrew Knight, the brother of Richard Payne Knight, and Uvedale Price. A valuation of the timber on the 115 acres of land exchanged shows that Uvedale had gained a considerable number of trees by the exchange, particularly pollard oaks, but also oak, ash and elm timber trees.¹⁵ In a letter to Sir George Beaumont in July 1812, Price describes this exchange as 'new lands that are of real consequence to the beauty, connection and comfort of my place'.¹⁶ The value that Price put on the horseshoe of woodland around Foxley is shown by a letter from Peploe, the owner of the Garnstone estate to the west of Foxley, to Knight, in which he states that in discussions Price had suggested that he 'was willing to give up to you in exchange, whatever was not absolutely necessary, in his view of it, to complete the wooded boundary of his property'.¹⁷ Indeed, for the purposes of the exchange, Knight's surveyor Harris was instructed to value fields 'in view of Foxley' at a shilling per acre more than the agricultural value.¹⁸

THE WOODLAND PICTURESQUE

One of the most interesting and important features of the landscape of Foxley is the ride system developed by the Prices. Denis Lambin has shown that as early as 1757 Robert Price II had planned a series of rides six or seven miles long which were designed to take in diverse views and maximise the Picturesque potential of the estate. Several of the viewing points, or stations, remain today, and the principal route can be reconstructed through a combination of map and field evidence. From the mansion it ran through Darkhill Wood up to the Cold Bath. Isaac Taylor's *New Map of the County of Herefordshire* (1786) marks a 'Cold Bath' in Darkhill Wood. The site of this bath and spring with associated stone walling has recently been rediscovered and is located just to the north of the ride. Such eighteenth century baths were also to be found at Downton Castle and at The Lodge, Richards Castle.¹⁹



Fig. 2 View of the Ladylift clump in the nineteenth century. Private collection.

From the Bath there are fine views across the sequestered Yarsop valley to Bach Wood. The next station was the *Ladylift Clump*, a group of Scots Pines. (Fig. 2) The origin of this feature is obscure: possible reasons for its planting include its use as a marker for drovers or as a symbol of the Jacobite sympathies of Uvedale Tompkins Price. Whatever its original function, it became well known as a hilltop clump visible for miles from the surrounding countryside. From here the celebrated extensive views across the county towards Hay could be enjoyed. A popular guidebook of 1805 enthuses over the vast extent of the views:

‘now spreading into bold hills mantled with rich woods, and again declining into luxuriant vales teeming with fertility, and animated by a thousand springs, the numerous orchards, cornfields, hop-grounds and meadows intermingled with castles, seats and villages and bounded by a bold range of distant mountains’²⁰

These provided a contrast to the more intimate views across the Yarsop valley and the enclosed nature of the ride through woodland. Today it is less noticeable, and some of the views have been obscured, because of the growth of trees. Much of the open land which formerly surrounded the clump is now woodland.

From Ladylift the ride then rounded the head of the valley through Walks Wood and Shukes Bank and, following the contours, crossed open land before entering Bach Wood. From the ride there were further varied views both into the valley, and out into the surrounding countryside. Price describes his composition of woodland views in his correspondence with Sir George Beaumont and noted in 1812 that his woods were ‘brim full of beautiful groups and compositions both of a near and distant kind’. His method was to

‘begin by taking away everything that may injure the trees and groups that are likely at last to be left, and I open up the compositions little by little but as I must have an eye to profit I leave a number of trees which do no other harm than that of hiding what is at last to be displayed’.²¹

Price enjoyed taking artists around Foxley. In a letter to Samuel Rogers written in 1823 when he was 76 years old he takes delight in being able to lead an artist who was 'particularly averse to having anything pointed out to him as a good subject' to a viewing point where the artist took 'his stand exactly where I wished, and where I had secretly conducted him, and draw the composition as if he had discovered it himself, *tale quale* and *con amore*'. In the same letter he describes how this picture-making '... is a most amusing and interesting operation; it is, however, a very nice one, and the varied frame of each composition, itself an essential part, is to be studied almost to a twig'.²² He spent a lot of time in his later life 'retouching' his 'pictures' and with the assistance of two workers he termed 'squirrels' and 'well provided with high ladders and various cutting implements', removing the 'random foliage' that began to 'disturb [his] compositions, and hide some of the distances'.²³ Price was constantly comparing his compositions to those of painters:

'Rembrandt would delight in [my yews] and give full effect to their black massy trunks and spreading branches; but I should beg Claude's assistance for the aerial tint of a distant mountain that I have let in, and that appears in one or two instances, under the canopy. I long to shew you what relief and value they give to each other'.²⁴

At the highest point of Bach Wood, near the disused quarry, extensive views could be obtained across the north of the county. These have been depicted in Anthony Devis's (1729–1817) *Foxley*. (Fig. 3) From here the ride probably skirted Pole Wood and Merryhill Wood before entering the village of Mansell Lacy. The route would then have taken in Nash Wood and the Ragged Castle a Picturesque tower built by Robert Price II in c.1740 before returning to the mansion. (Fig. 4)



Fig. 3 Anthony Devis, *Foxley*.

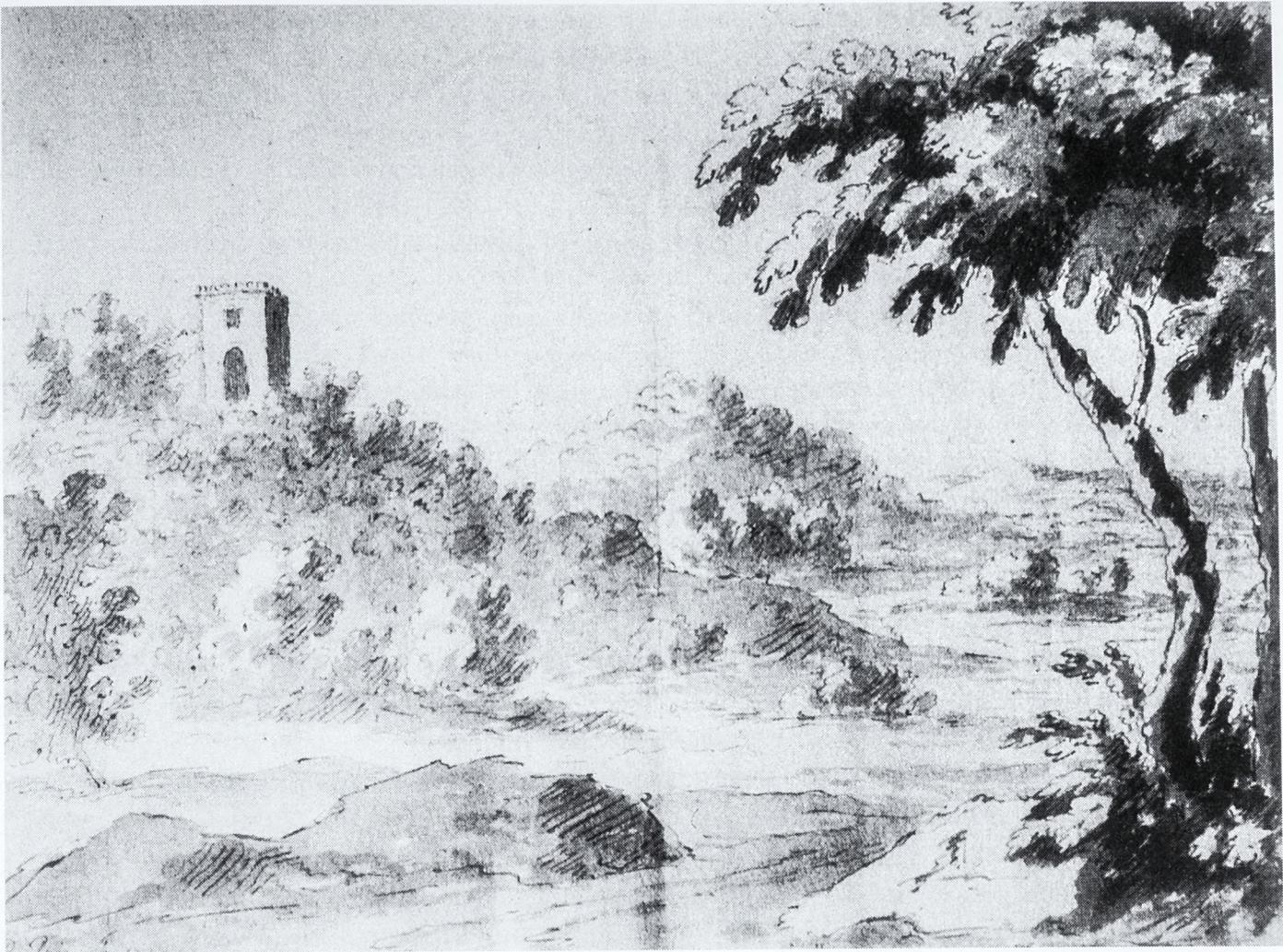


Fig. 4 View of Ragged Castle, Foxley. 1744. Hereford and Worcester County Libraries.

Much of the route remains a ride today; in some places it is no longer used but can be traced, in other places it has been obscured by the construction of later tracks. In several places the construction of the ride, owing to the nature of the terrain, necessitated the construction of substantial walls and drains. Several large ornamental trees, including Cedars of Lebanon, dating from the early part of the nineteenth century survive along the route. The details of the banks and cuttings adjoining the route are frequently the quintessence of the Picturesque with tortuous roots clutching exposed boulders and encrusted with ferns and mosses.

Uvedale Price inherited a landscape which had been created gradually over the previous hundred years by members of his family. Existing areas of ancient woodland were modified and extended. Rides were developed to allow carriages to take in the extensive and diverse views over the famously productive Herefordshire countryside. Although many agricultural improvements were made, including the removal of hedgerows and the enlargement of fields, the agricultural landscape remained varied. This inherited, ancient landscape encouraged him to criticize the disconnected and massively rearranged landscapes associated with Brown and his followers. Price stated that

'He therefore, in my mind, will shew most art in improving, who *leaves* (a very material point) or who creates the greatest variety of landscapes; . . . not he who begins his work by general clearing and smoothing, or in other words, by destroying all those accidents of which such advantages might have been made; but which afterwards, the most enlightened and experienced artist can never hope to restore.'²⁵

In his essays he stressed the importance of aiming for variety of form, of light and shade, and of tint in woodland management.²⁶ The emphasis on 'connection' is strong. He was concerned that newly established plantations should connect with existing woods:

'... of whatever trees the *established* woods of the country are composed, the same, I think, should prevail in the *new* plantations, or those two grand principles, harmony, and unity of character, will be destroyed.'²⁷

Price was particularly critical of the planting of blocks of conifers between existing broadleaved woods:

'It is very usual... when there happens to be a vacant space between two woods, to fill it up with firs, larches, &c.; if this be done with the idea of *connecting* those woods, which *should* be the object, nothing can be more opposite than the effect:... such harsh and sudden contrasts of form and colour, make these insertions for ever appear like so many pieces of patchwork'²⁸

Commenting on introduced trees, he considered it 'not enough that trees should be naturalized to the climate' they must in addition be 'naturalized to the landscape, and mixed or incorporated with the natives'. He likens a 'patch of foreign trees planted by themselves in the out-skirts of a wood' of native species to 'a group of young Englishmen at an Italian conversazione.' He was not, however, opposed to the introduction of new tree species. He planted many Cedars of Lebanon at Foxley as scattered individual specimens, several of which remain today. Indeed he celebrated plants 'of foreign growth' with their 'beautiful, but less familiar foliage among our natural trees'.²⁹

Woodland management at Foxley in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was not very different from that carried out on neighbouring estates such as Moccas and Garnons.³⁰ In this part of Herefordshire the mixture of enclosed and open fields, orchards and hop yards, old woodlands and new plantations, combined with a varied topography, favoured the development of a productive, Georgical Picturesque. What makes the woodland management at Foxley important and distinctive is the way in which the Prices developed their rides to take advantage of the picturesque potential of the estate and the way in which Uvedale Price consciously composed views as pictures. Price maintained his picturesque landscape until his death in 1829. He also maintained his views on the importance of variety and connection. For the last 20 years or so of his life his scholarly activity was concentrated on writing an essay on the pronunciation of Greek and Latin. In the introduction to this work, printed in 1827, he reaffirmed his view that 'variety and connection' are 'indispensable in the composition and arrangement of scenery.'³¹

the engravers' interpretation of the work than to the actual painting'.

- 37 D. Solkin, *Richard Wilson: the Landscape of Reaction*, exh. cat., London, Tate Gallery, 1982, p. 70.

PICTURESQUE WOODLAND MANAGEMENT: THE PRICES AT FOXLEY

- 1 For discussions of these different modes of management see for example Oliver Rackham *Ancient Woodland: Its History, Vegetation and Uses in England*, London 1980; Charles Watkins *Woodland Management and Conservation* Newton Abbot 1990; N.D.G. James *A History of English Forestry*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1981.
- 2 See, for example, Susanne Seymour 'The spirit of planting': Eighteenth-century parkland improvement on the Duke of Newcastle's north Nottinghamshire estates *East Midland Geographer* 12 1989, pp. 5–13; Charles Watkins 'An historical introduction to the woodlands of Nottinghamshire' in C. Watkins and P.T. Wheeler (eds) *The Study and Use of British Woodlands* Rural Geography Study Group of the IBG 1–24 1981. See also Stephen Daniels 'The political iconography of woodland in later Georgian England' in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds) *The Iconography of Landscape*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 59–60.
- 3 See the essays in Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins (eds) *The Picturesque Landscape. Visions of Georgian Herefordshire*. Department of Geography, University of Nottingham, 1994.
- 4 Uvedale Price *Essays on the Picturesque* 3 Vols (London 1810) Vol. 2, pp. 247–8.
- 5 For fuller discussions of the Foxley estate see Denis A. Lambin 'Foxley: the Price's estate in Herefordshire', *Journal of Garden History* 7 (1987) pp. 244–270; and Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins 'Picturesque landscaping and estate management: Uvedale Price and Nathaniel Kent at Foxley' in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds) *The Politics of the Picturesque*, Cambridge University Press 1994, pp. 13–41.
- 6 For Herefordshire agriculture see E.L. Jones 'Agricultural conditions and changes in Herefordshire, 1660–1815' *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club* 37 1962, pp. 32–55; William Marshall *The Rural Economy of Gloucestershire; including its Dairy: together with the Dairy Management of North Wiltshire and the Management of Orchards and Fruit Liquor in Herefordshire*, London 1789; and Joan Thirsk (ed) *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* Volume V 1640–1750, 1984 I Regional Farming Systems.
- 7 The list of improvements has a strange history. It was discovered by Bryan Little on the flypage of a copy of James Gibbs' *Book of Architecture* which he saw in an antiquarian book dealer's shop in London in the 1950s. He made a transcript of this list, but did not purchase the book, which cannot now be traced. Little made use of information from this list in a BBC Midland Home Service radio broadcast on 20 May 1956. The script of this broadcast was discovered by the authors in Hereford City Library. Bryan Little kindly provided a photocopy of his full transcript of the marginalia when we wrote to him in 1988. The 1770 survey is entitled *A book of survey containing the Manors of Yazor, Mancellacey, Bishopstone . . . with the contents and yearly estimates of Uvedale Price Esq. of Foxley . . . in the year of our Lord 1770* Hereford County Record Office (HCRO) D 344. This is referred to as the '1770 survey'. The 1774 survey by Nathaniel Kent is entitled *A Survey of Foxley and its appendages in the County of Hereford, the estate of Uvedale Price Esq.* This survey was discovered by Major D.J.C. Davenport in 1988. It is a small bound volume. The following statement is on the last page: 'This estate was surveyed, modelled and set by me upon the agreements contained in this book in the year 1774' Signed Nath. Kent, Fulham 20.9.1774'.
- 8 Oliver Rackham, *Ancient Woodland*, 1980, p. 201.
- 9 *Hereford Journal* 18 March 1795.
- 10 Nathaniel Kent *1774 Survey*.
- 11 John Clark *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Hereford* London 1794, p. 32.
- 12 John Duncumb *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Hereford* London 1805; Herefordshire and Radnorshire Nature Trust *A Herefordshire woodland survey*, Hereford 1984.
- 13 HCRO B 47/- D303–07.
- 14 HCRO B 47/- H70–1 D97.
- 15 See Table 1.6 on p. 38 of Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds) *The Politics of the Picturesque*, Cambridge 1994, for the valuation of timber in this exchange.
- 16 Uvedale Price to Sir George Beaumont, 14 August 1812, Coleorton MSS.
- 17 HCRO Knight papers T74 728.
- 18 HCRO Knight papers T74 728 5.
- 19 See David Whitehead 'Sense with sensibility: landscaping in Georgian Herefordshire' in Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins (eds) *The Picturesque Landscape* Department of Geography, University of Nottingham 1994, pp. 16–33.
- 20 E.W. Brayley and J. Britton *The Beauties of England and Wales*, London 1805, p. 581.
- 21 Uvedale Price to Sir George Beaumont, 11 November 1812, Coleorton MSS.
- 22 Letter from Price to Samuel Rogers May 25 1823. In P.W. Clayden (ed) *Rogers and his contemporaries* London, Smith Elder 1889, pp. 356–7.

- 23 Letter from Price to Samuel Rogers, July 26 1824. In Clayden (1889) as note 22 p. 384.
- 24 Letter from Price to Samuel Rogers, May 25 1823. In Clayden (1889) as note 22 p. 360.
- 25 Uvedale Price *Essays on the Picturesque, as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and on the Use of studying Pictures for the Purpose of improving real Landscape* London 1794; 1810 edition, Volume I p. 345.
- 26 Price as note 25 p. 264.
- 27 Price as note 25 p. 266.
- 28 Price as note 25 p. 266.
- 29 Price as note 25 pp. 266–7 fn.
- 30 See Susanne Seymour, Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins *Estate and empire: Sir George Cornwall's management of Moccas, Herefordshire and La Taste, Grenada, 1771–1819* Department of Geography, University of Nottingham, Working Paper 28 (1994).
- 31 Uvedale Price *An essay on the modern pronunciation of the Greek and Latin languages* Baxter, Oxford 1827. p. 241.

BECKFORD, FONTHILL ABBEY AND THE PICTURESEQUÉ

APPENDIX A

According to an account of the theatrical circumstances of the Nelson visit to Fonthill in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, LXXI, pt. 1 (Jan.–June, 1801) pp. 297–98.

'The Company being assembled by five o'clock [at Fonthill Splendens], a number of carriages waited before the house to receive them. The several parties, as arranged for each, took their places. Lord Nelson was loudly huzzaed by the multitude as he entered the first coach. They all proceeded slowly and in order, as the dusk of the evening was growing into darkness. In about three quarters of an hour, soon after having entered the great wall which incloses the abbey-woods, the procession passed a noble Gothic arch. At this point the company was supposed to enter the Abbot's domaine, and hence upon a road winding through thick woods of pine and fir, brightly illuminated by innumerable lamps hung in the trees, and by flambaus moving with the carriages, they proceeded betwixt two divisions of the Fonthill volunteers; accompanied by their band playing solemn marches, the effect of which was much heightened by the continued roll of drums placed at different distances on the hills. What impression at this dark hour, the blaze of lights, partly stationary and partly moving, as reflected from the windows of the carrages or gleaming on the military armour, together with music echoing through the woods; what impression, I say, this *ensemble* of light, sound, and motion, must have made on those who could quietly contemplate it all at a distance, may be

left to imagination, without any attempt to describe it

The company on their arrival at the Abbey could not fail to be struck with the increasing splendor of lights and their effects, contrasted with the deep shades which fell on the walls, battlements, and turrets, of the different groups of the edifice. Some parts of the light struck on the walls and arches of the great tower, till it vanished by degrees into an awful gloom at its summit; over which, mounted on a staff of 50 feet, the broad sheet [The Vice-Admiral's flag, in compliment to Lord Nelson] of colours could at some moments be discerned, by catching lights mysteriously waving in the air

[At the end of the evening] the company delighted and charmed broke up, and departed at 11 o'clock, to sup at the Mansion-house [i.e. Splendens]. On leaving this strange nocturnal scene of vast buildings and extensive forest, now rendered dimly and partially visible by the declining light of lamps and torches, and the twinkling of a few scattered stars in a clouded sky, the company seemed, as soon as they had passed the sacred boundary of the great wall, as if wakng from a dream, or just freed from the influence of some magic spell'.

APPENDIX B

A contemporary account of the tower's fall was subsequently published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XCV (July–Dec. 1825), p. 557, as follows:

FONTHILL ABBEY

We lament to state that this splendid architectural structure has become a pile of ruins, of which the annexed letter, dated Fonthill Gifford, Dec. 21 gives some particulars:-

I embrace this opportunity of giving you the earliest intelligence of the fall of that fine (but flimsy) architectural structure, Fonthill Abbey. The Tower fell in at three o'clock this afternoon, destroying the Hall, the whole of the octagon, and great part of the Galleries, North and South, together with the first crimson room, having quietly dsconded into the fountain court, leaving the grand entrance standing with the organ *in statu quo*, and the statue of the late Alderman Beckford in its niche, as if it remained to point to the ruins of his son's ambition. Only one accident occurred, although the servants were engaged in taking out some of the windows, and had fortunately just escaped in time to avoid being buried in the ruins. Mr Farquhar had taken the precaution to move to the East wing, together with Mrs Mortimer and her children. The latter had been in the daily habit of playing in the galleries.

A fuller and somewhat more embellished account followed a year later in *The Gardener's Magazine*, XI, (Sept. 1835), in 'Notes on Gardens and Country Seats', which was probably written by its editor, J. C. Loudon: