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Woudstra, J. orcid.org/0000-0001-9625-2998 (2017) The history and development of groves in English formal gardens. In: Woudstra, J. and Roth, C., (eds.) *A History of Groves*. Routledge , Abingdon, Oxon , pp. 67-85. ISBN 978-1-138-67480-6

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The history and development of groves in English formal gardens (1600-1750)

Jan Woudstra

It is possible to identify national trends in the development of groves in gardens in England from their inception in the sixteenth century as so-called wildernesses. By looking through the lens of an early eighteenth century French garden design treatise, we can trace their rise to popularity during the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century to their gradual decline as a garden feature during the second half of the eighteenth century. This chapter shows that their identification as wildernesses at times determined some of their design inspiration, though there were also trends that were adapted from the continent. It records the invention, during the first decade of the eighteenth century, of the use of shrubs in graduated arrangements, positioned according to height, which sparked a trend that came to be known on the continent as the *bosquet à l'angloise*. Later, this was incorporated as one of the prime elements of the pleasure ground of the landscape garden, the shrubbery. A celebration of classical culture in England from the 1710s onwards brought an interest in groves and a new imagery that saw them presented as haunts of dryads (wood nymphs) and satyrs, for which the densely planted continental type wildernesses were considered to be unsuitable. This review investigates how the changing meaning of groves and wildernesses affected their design and maintenance. It highlights how transnational and local trends interacted with, and bridged, various garden styles.

The Theory and Practice of Gardening (1712)

When Antoine Joseph Dézallier d'Argenville (1680-1765) produced his soon to be famous *La theorie et la pratique du jardinage* in 1709, in which he fleshed out the text according to chapter headings by Jean-Baptiste Alexandre le Blond (1679-1719), he presented a modern worldview. It looked at garden making as an art in an aesthetic sense and in its practicalities, and provided clear guidance for the disposition of gardens; but there was no reference to either meaning or symbolism. With an international appeal that led to its being translated into English¹ and German, and with pirated editions in The Netherlands, it promoted gardens, groves and a range of water features in what was described as 'the style of Le Nôtre'. He considered woods and groves as 'the Relievo of Gardens', there to contrast with the flatter parts, being pierced with alleys to create 'the Star, the direct Cross, S. Andrew's Cross, and the Goose-Foot', as well as including a range of ornamental features such as cloisters, labyrinths and bowling greens which he increased in a later edition. The woodland areas within these designs were to be neither too small, nor so large as 'to leave great Squares of Wood naked, and without Ornament'. For the treatment of these he provided patterns for six types of woods and groves. These patterns clearly influenced later designs of groves and by identifying types and trends in the design of groves before the publication of the treatise and afterwards it is possible to investigate innovation in the design of these features and the extent of their modernity.

Six types of groves

Dézallier d'Argenville explained that groves and woods were the 'most noble and agreeable in a Garden', that they offered the 'greatest Relief' in the summer heat and provided the opportunity for walks in the shade. So he saw them mainly serving

comfort first and pleasure second. The six types of woods and groves were distinguished with respect to their layout and design. The categories included: 'Forests, or great Woods of high Trees; Coppice-Woods, Groves of a Middle Height, with tall Pallisades; Groves opened in Compartments, Groves planted in Quincunx, or in Squares, and Woods of Evergreens' (figure 1).

<figure 1 here>

'Forests, and great Woods of tall Trees' covered a considerable area of 'at least a League, or many Acres in Compass', densely planted with tall growing species 'which form a very thick tufted Head'. They were generally laid out in a star shape with a large circle in the middle, with ridings for hunting but no hedges or rolled walks. They had a 'wild and rural' character. Normally these woods were sown either broadcast or in lines six foot apart, but the best way was to plant well-rooted plants six foot apart which were left to grow out to 'a lofty Stature' (figure 2).

<figure 2 here>

'Coppice-Woods' were cut down to the base every nine years, a process which was phased by dividing the wood in nine parts so that one could be cut every year. In France there was an obligation to leave sixteen 'Tillers' or individual shoots per acre, plus old standards, which ensured that such woods would gradually be transformed into Forests. These woods were sown or planted in a similar manner to forest woods, but set three foot apart; the tops of the plants were cut back in order to create multiple branches and 'spread themselves to a bushy Tuft'.

'Woods of a middle Height with tall Pallisades' were a type of grove that could commonly be found in (French) gardens. They were 'styled of a Middle Height', so that the selection of lower species and management with judicious pruning enabled them to be maintained at a maximum height of thirty or forty feet. This type of grove was associated with features such as 'Halls, Cabinets, Galleries, Fountains', and its squares or quarters were surrounded with hedges and 'Lattice-work' with beautifully finished gravel walks. After carefully laying out and planting these features, the middle of the wood would be planted with elms, chestnuts and so on in rows six feet apart and three feet within the rows. As soon as these were established the areas in between the rows were sown or planted with acorns, chestnuts and others to form a 'Thicket and Brushwood', while the trees within the rows would 'form the Head of the Grove, if Care be taken to trim their Branches, and conduct them to their proper Height' (figure 3).

<figure 3 here>

'Groves that are open, and in Compartments' had trees planted along the walks or alleys surrounding the various quarters, but there were no trees within the squares. The walks were planted with lime trees or horse chestnuts and the hedges were maintained at a height of three or four feet, so that it was possible to see people in other walks. The interior of the squares included compartments and grass cutwork, adorned with pyramid yews and shaped flowering shrubs.

'Groves planted in Quincunx' were those where tall trees were planted in 'several Alleys or Rows' in quincunx formation or at right angles, that is, in squares. There were no hedges and the ground consisted of short turf with an alley through the

middle, or of rolled and raked soil. The exactness of the alignment of trees within the rows and between them was ‘all the Beauty of them’.

‘Woods of Ever-Greens’ were considered to be the most desirable, but were not used much because they took too long to establish. They were to be planted ‘in the same manner as the others’, so no specific detail was provided.

The English scene

Remarkably Dézallier d’Argenville’s account relates almost entirely to practical and aesthetic considerations and makes no reference to the meaning or symbolism of these elements in gardens, or suggest that they were places for the imagination. So it presents little ‘theory’ in a traditional sense. The French word *bosquet* was said in the original text to derive from the Italian *Boschetto*, a little Wood of small Extent’ and was translated as grove in the English edition by John James.² However by that time in Britain the name ‘wilderness’ was frequently applied to such areas, as it had been since its first use in the sixteenth century. A whole range of other terms were also occasionally used, such as thicket, boscage, coppice, wood, or more rarely, forest, most of which denoted something about the intended character or nature of the area; but it was wilderness that was commonly used and most lasting. The use of this term has confounded generations of observers by the apparent paradox that the groves were included within the confines of the designed landscape, a contradiction heightened by the fact that they were artful, that is, of a highly contrived nature.³

One of the earliest surviving accounts of an actual wilderness is by Anthony Watson, c.1582. Describing the wilderness at Nonsuch, he suggested that it enabled withdrawal ‘from those riches of pleasure and prosperity’ in the garden ‘to less accessible places’ suggesting this related to an area outside the garden wall for quiet seclusion and meditation. Working by contrasting opposites he noted that a wilderness might be called a desertum although it wasn’t deserted, thus clearly referring to the desert in the biblical sense. On the south side there was what probably was a bower, described as ‘the canopies’ that were ‘trimmed in a circular shape’. The walk to the west side appeared as if it had been designed for classical woodland gods and fauns. Birds and other animals were harboured in the many beautiful trees there. There were dwarf apple trees, blackberries and strawberries; there were cherries, oaks, walnuts, ash and elms, periwinkle, pears, hazel, maples, berberis, planes, sycamores, honeysuckle, figs, briars, thorns, dog roses, yew, juniper, elder, box and olive, plums, ferns, vines, Persian fruit and roses. To the north was a large plane tree with wide spreading branches that provided dense shade ‘for people to feast under’, converse, listen to the birds and animals and see the caged exotic pheasants and partridges. It was also home to a variety of exotic animals, including lions and boars, bear, deer, Indian ass, crocodile, panther, wolf, tiger and snakes.⁴ In other words Watson’s account provided both practical and philosophical reasons for wildernesses in gardens. It clearly worked on the dichotomy of a wilderness in a garden, and a garden (of Eden) in the wilderness.

This dichotomy can also be observed in the writings of Francis Bacon, a homo universalis, a politician, scientist and philosopher whose essays were much read. In his description of an ideal princely garden in 1625 he proposed that it should be laid out in three sections. There would be ‘a Greene’ at the entrance, the main garden and

the third section were proposed as a 'Heath or *Desart*', which he envisioned as a '*Naturall wildnesse*' without trees, but with thickets of sweet briar, honeysuckle and wild vine. There would be violets, strawberries and primroses planted in the '*Heath*' as these thrive in the shade and are sweet scented. There would be artificial molehills or Heaps either planted with wild thyme, or pinks, or germander, or any of periwinkle, violets, strawberries, cowslips, daisies, red roses, lily of the valley, red sweet williams, bear foot, and so on. Some of these heaps were to have small standards planted on top, of roses, juniper, holly, berberis, red currants, gooseberries, rosemary, bay or sweet briar. There would be shaded alleys planted with all sorts of fruit trees all around. Like the Nonsuch wilderness this visionary example reflects a desire for shade and variety despite the absence of trees, but otherwise relies on a similar range of plants and illustrates a longing to include a wide selection of species.⁵

The influence of Bacon's essay can be felt in the writings of Timothy Nourse (d.1699), who as a Roman Catholic convert was deprived of a fellowship in Oxford, and retired to the country. In 'An essay of a country-house' he presented an ideal vision in which he criticised Versailles and celebrated 'the Old Romans' and their accomplishments as well as more modern gardens like Frascati and Tivoli. Nourse's ideal garden was, like Bacon's, divided into three sections, with the third being the grove or wilderness that should be 'Natural-Artificial... as to deceive us into a belief of a real Wilderness or Thicket, and yet to be furnished with all the Varieties of Nature'. The proposed 'Boscage' was to 'represent a perpetual Spring' with private alleys or walks aligned with beech hedges. There were to be tufts of cypress, 'planted in the Form of a Theater', which probably meant that they were to be graduated according to height. There was to be a fountain in the lower part surrounded by statues. Fir trees were to be distributed 'in some negligent Order', as also laurels, phillyreas, bays, tamarisks, lilac, althea, fruits, pyracantha, yew, juniper, holly, cork oak, together 'with all sorts of Winter Greens', as well as wild vines, laburnum, Spanish ash, horse chestnut, sweet briar, honeysuckle, rose, almond trees, mulberries, and so on. There were also to be 'little Banks or Hillocks', planted with thyme, violets, primroses, cowslips, daffodils, lily of the valley, blue bottles, daisies, as well as 'all kinds of Flowers which grow wild in the Fields and Woods; as also amongst the Shades Strawberries, and up and down the Green-Walks let there be good store of Camomile, Water-Mint, Organy, and the like; for these being trod upon, yield a pleasant Smell'. The surrounding walls were to be planted with ivy, 'Canadensis' [?], phillyreas and the like, that is, a mixture of evergreen climbers and deciduous shrubs.⁶ It is clear this wilderness was to appeal to all the senses.

French influences

These examples appear to illustrate an English vision which was partially based on an imagined Italian one, interjected with biblical references. French influence becomes evident in 1625 as a result of Charles I's marriage to Henrietta Maria, daughter of the king of France (1609-1669). She imported various contingents of French artisans, including the garden designer André Mollet (c.1600-1665), who also worked for Dutch and Swedish nobility.⁷ In 1641-42 he was back in England at Wimbledon Manor, which Charles had acquired for Henrietta Maria, and where he implemented an extensive scheme for the gardens that included a wilderness. This was one of the items described in the Parliamentary Survey of 1649, prior to the sale of royal property during the Commonwealth, and consisted of 'many young trees, woods, and

sprays of a good growth and height, cut and formed into several ovals, squares, and angles, very well ordered; in most angular points whereof, as also in the centre of every oval, stands a Lime tree or Elm.’ There were 18 gravel walks in the wilderness and between it and the adjoining maze there was an avenue of lime trees and elms, interspersed with cypress trees, while on the south side it was enclosed with a tall hawthorn hedge.⁸

In his *Le jardin de plaisir* (1651) Mollet elaborated on the detail of bosquets, recommending hedges around the quarters of hawthorn, privet, phillyreas and similar, and the interior filled up with shrubs to form ‘*des bocages*’, thickets, in order to attract all kinds of birds so as to create a natural aviary, which he considered much more pleasant than an artificial one.⁹ In the English edition of 1670 he added that there were two types of wilderness, one planted with wild trees, and the other with all sorts of evergreens. He recommended the evergreens for gardens and the wild trees for parks and more remote places, since these were prone to grow higher and thicker, which he considered unsuitable for a pleasure garden. Arbours within the wilderness would help to provide cool shade during the summer, serving ‘either for studious Retirement, or the enjoyment of Society with two or three Friends, a Bottle of Wine and a Collation.’ Yet such arbours were not wholly recommended since they inhibited the flow of air and the hawthorn hedge plants did not grow well, looking dead from the inside.¹⁰ It is clear that these wildernesses contributed substantially to the amenities of gardens. As the plants were hardly ever named, their variety seems to have been secondary. The dichotomy of the English notion of wilderness was lost in this example.

This is also the case with various leading practitioners such as John Evelyn (1620-1706), who became one of the leading horticulturalists and foresters of the second half of the seventeenth century. He produced his widely read *Sylva* in 1662, publishing it two years later.¹¹ It set out to encourage replanting after the general depletion of timber for the navy and other purposes. Evelyn did not use the word wilderness in his writings, but preferred grove instead. As a royalist he had spent the initial years of the Commonwealth on the continent travelling and visiting houses and gardens; after his return to England in 1652 he set out to create his own garden at Sayes Court, Deptford, near London.

Sayes Court included a grove of a modest scale, measuring some 30 by 70 yards, which was laid out roughly in the shape of a double cross, with a circle in the middle around a mount. The width of the main walks was about 9 or 10 feet, but there were additional narrower walks referred to as close walks and ‘Spider Clawes’ that led to cabinets with hedges of alaternus. The mount in the centre was planted with bays and surrounded by a laurel hedge; the total of fourteen cabinets each had a great French walnut nearby: 24 were planted there. There were over 500 standard trees of oak, ash, elm, service tree, beech, and chestnut, amounting to an average planting distance of 4-5 feet. The walks were lined with trees too, and there were probably hedges, although these were not specified in the description. Additionally there were thickets of birch, hazel, thorn, wild fruits and evergreens.¹² This grove clearly adopted continental practice. While it may have been planted densely in order to anticipate substantial losses, in order for plants to survive in such incredibly dense plantings they must have been kept to manageable proportions by regular pruning.

These close spacings altered the perception of what these groves were all about, so in their translation of a French work on gardening by François Gentil, the horticulturalists and garden designers George London and Henry Wise were able to maintain that bosquets and groves were so-called ‘from Bouquet a Nosegay’. They believed that ‘Gard’ners never meant any thing else by giving this Term to this Compartment’, describing it as ‘a sort of Green Knot, form’d by the Branches and Leaves of Trees that compose it, plac’d in Rows opposite to each other.’ They defined grove as a ‘Plot of Ground, more or less, as you think fit, enclos’d in Palisades [hedges] of Horn-beam, the Middle of it fill’d with tall Trees, as Elms or the like, the Tops of which make a Tuft or Plume.’ At the foot of these elms, which were regularly spaced along the hedges, ‘other little wild Trees’ were planted that formed a tuft within, resembling a copse. Groves might occur in various shapes and forms, but were only proper for ‘spacious Gardens, belonging to the Men of the highest Quality’ because it was very expensive to keep them up.

London and Wise noted there were other types of groves which consisted ‘only of Trees with high Stems, such as Elms planted in right Angles’. Horse chestnuts might also be used for this type of planting, which ‘forms a sort of little Forest’. The ground surface below it should be ‘kept very smooth, and well roll’d’, or it might be turf. Such regular groves were particularly suitable near a palace, while irregular groves of this kind were more appropriate in ‘great Parks’.¹³ Groves ‘made into walks’ which, when well executed and maintained, ‘invite all that see them to walk in their Shade’, were normally planted at right angles, with elms spaced at fifteen foot. Trees with tall stems were most appreciated: ‘the Stems Ten Foot long at first, afterward you may raise them to Fifteen or Sixteen, always remembering that the tallest Elms are the finest.’ The aim was to have a ‘Bush at Top’, that is, one that was well spread, so that it provided adequate shade.¹⁴

The Mount at Kensington

While this translation was being published Wise himself had already been experimenting with an alternative manner of planting in the wildernesses to the north of Kensington Palace in 1704¹⁵, an area that had formerly been quarried for gravel. One old gravel pit had been converted to a terraced orangery for setting out greens with a sunken parterre in the base, and as a contrast, ‘on the other Side of it there appears a seeming Mount, made up of Trees rising one higher than another in Proportion as they approach the Center. A Spectator, who has not heard this Account of it, would think this Circular Mount was not only a real one, but that it had been actually scooped out of that hollow Space which I have before mentioned’.¹⁶

The general principle of arranging plants according to height and colour had long been applied, for example in the planting of borders, but this appears to have been the first time that this strategy was adopted for planting trees. While the significance of this may have escaped Wise, who did not mention it even as a footnote to his book, it was soon observed by other gardeners, and the principle was applied by Thomas Fairchild, for example in his 1722 proposal that London squares should be laid out as wildernesses.¹⁷ But this was later.

France and England

In contrast to France, in England there had been a prevalence of gardens divided into walled enclosures, with wildernesses regularly being contained in separately walled enclosures, or just outside in the park. These brick walls were being utilised for fruit growing which had become fashionable from the early seventeenth century and lasted till the 1720s when they started to be phased out. Evidence of the range of wildernesses and groves in some of the foremost contemporary gardens is provided in the bird's eye views of the seventy country seats depicted in Kip and Kniff's *Britannia Illustrata* (1707) (figure 4). These give some general context for groves in British gardens against which Dézallier d'Argenville's types and designs can be measured. There were fifteen with simple squares; ten irregular or maze like; ten in star and double cross shape; four in the shape of a cross; two with a St Andrew's cross; as well as seven rectangular, not a shape Dézallier d'Argenville referred to. The views suggest that the largest number of wildernesses (nineteen) were planted with fruit trees (which do not receive a mention in Dézallier d'Argenville's treatise); thirteen as groves in quincunx or open groves; eleven as woods; five as groves open in compartments; and three clipped or shorn that appear to represent groves of middle height.¹⁸ Remarkable in these views is the limited number of groves of middle height, despite the fact that they received more attention in the various treatises than other types, and also the apparent absence of coppice woods. The nature of the engravings leaves little opportunity for distinguishing woods of evergreens. Yet it is possible to conclude that when Dézallier d'Argenville's treatise appeared it was not representative of British practice.

<figure 4 here>

National differences were also observed by Stephen Switzer in 1718, when he judged the translation by John James of *The Theory and Practice* as 'the best that has appeared in this or any other Language', with a good layout and considerable judgement, 'but that being writ in a Country much differing, and very far inferior to this, in respect of the Natural Embellishments of our Gardens, as good Grass, Gravel, &c. makes a great Alteration in point of Design. Besides there are some considerable Defects in that way of Gard'ning, as well as in the Designs themselves, which I shall take more notice of in due Time and Place.'¹⁹

Yet he was inspired in his proposals for 'Rural and Extensive Gardening' by what he referred to as '*La Grand Manier*', the French style of Le Nôtre which consisted of 'large prolated Gardens and Plantations, adorn'd with magnificent Statues and Waterworks, full of long extended, shady Walks and Groves', and where 'all the adjacent Country be laid open to View'. He believed that gardens would be more valuable 'if the Beauties of Nature were not corrupted by Art'.²⁰ So he applauded the fact that the Earl of Carlisle had not followed a design by George London for a star in Ray Wood at Castle Howard, Yorkshire, which according to him would have spoiled it, and instead opted for a 'Labyrinth diverting Model' that respected the natural irregularities of the land and avoided existing trees.²¹ This point had also been made by Dézallier d'Argenville, but the engraved plans in the 1712 edition of the book did not reveal this and provided Le Blond's idealized examples,²² though this was corrected with two examples included in the second edition (figure 5). To Switzer, woods near the house would be 'design'd chiefly for Walking, to be as private as is consistent with its own Nature'; Dézallier d'Argenville saw this primarily as providing shade and communicating 'a Coolness to the Apartments', not an issue that would have to be pursued in North Yorkshire.

<figure 5 here>

English woods and rural groves

Stephen Switzer set out to promote 'Rural and Extensive Gardening', and discussed how to establish woods that were 'more Natural and Rural'. Rather than the so-called 'Set Wildernesses and Groves', that is, planted ones, he preferred to have coppices sown, and the 'Witch, Dutch Elms and Limes' would be eight, nine or ten feet tall after four or five years, and would out vie planted ones.²³ Coppices should be planted with oak 'and other natural Furniture of our Coppices' rather than with exotic shrubs. Switzer declared that 'a young Wood springing up 1, 2, 3, or 4 Foot high, is the pleasantest View in Nature, much more pleasant than what it is at full Growth', suggesting that it might incorporate some standards.²⁴

Not everyone agreed with this assessment though, and when Batty Langley reviewed the garden design of the past sixty years in 1728, he concluded that English gardens were 'the worst of any in the World'. Despite this he claimed that *The Theory and Practice* and Switzer's books were the very best on laying out gardens, while noting that 'even those are far short of *that great Beauty which Gardens ought to consist of*.' He believed this depended on 'the variety of its Parts', which should be disposed in such a way 'as to have a continued Series of Harmonious Objects, that will present new and delightful Scenes to our View at every Step we take, which regular Gardens are incapable of doing.' He also noted that traditionally most wildernesses consisted of evergreens, with yews, hollies, and other evergreens, as it was these that were grown at the various nurseries, and only rarely forest trees. Other observations were that they were often too far from the house, necessitating passing through 'the *scorching Heat of the Sun*', and that groves were too regular, like orchards and that instead they should copy, or imitate Nature.²⁵ So several of Langley's pleasure gardens consisted largely of groves with irregular outlines and no three trees in the same line (figure 6).

<figure 6 here>

One design for a rural garden had various open groves of horse chestnuts, of limes, of English elm; other groves had a mixture of standard holly, yew, bay, laurel, evergreen oak, box and phillyrea. All these trees were planted at the base with honeysuckle, sweet briars, white jasmine and various roses, and around the base of the stem were 14-16 inches wide circles with dwarf stocks, candy tuft, pinks, sweet williams, catch fly, and so on.²⁶ One plantation with serpentine and straight walks was planted with standards of oak, beech, elm, lime, maple, sycamore, hornbeam, birch, plane and similar, while hedges were planted with English, Dutch and French elms, lime, hornbeam, maple, privet, yew, holly, arbutus, phillyrea and Norway fir. There should also be fruit trees including plums, pears, apples and cherries.²⁷ He provided a list of scented plants to be planted in groves,²⁸ as well as a section entitled 'Of the Manner of Disposing and Planting Flowering Shrubs in the proper Parts of a Wilderness' which explained 'the most agreeable and pleasant Manner of disposing and planting of flowering Shrubs'.

In this he adapted the method as established by Wise at Kensington Palace. He divided the flowering shrubs into three classes, of highest growth, middling growth and the low 'Tribe'. The highest plants were to be positioned at the back, far enough

from the front to leave room for the other classes. The aim of the planting was to achieve 'a perfect Slope of beautiful Flowers'. Having divided the classes, the next consideration was the colour of the flowers. In order to create the 'greatest Variety' no two plants of the same colour were to be positioned next to or in front of each other. In the example Langley alternated a white and coloured shrub, providing a sequence of plants that was repeated and thereby formed a rhythmic arrangement. There were low hedges along the walks, with standard trees and jasmine and honeysuckle left 'to run up and about them in a wild and rural Manner'. The inside of the quarters at the back of the shrub planting was to be planted with 'the great Varieties of Forest-trees'.²⁹ As they were not intended to produce timber and were purely for pleasure they should be planted densely in order to provide shade immediately, or form thickets. Elms were to be planted at seven or eight feet, and horse chestnuts at eight, ten, twelve, or fifteen feet. In order to produce shade 'the Heads of your Plants' might be cut off so that they would be encouraged 'to spread very much'.³⁰

With the gradual development of the landscape garden over the ensuing years the Langley type groves continued to be adapted, and they ultimately evolved into 'shrubberies' when the term was invented in 1748, after which the name wilderness was gradually phased out. They soon came to be generally adopted, and gained further currency, also abroad, through Philip Miller's *The Gardeners Dictionary* (1731). This was particularly so through the various translations of Miller's work in German, Dutch and French: soon after these publications there were references to 'Engelsch Bosch' (English wood) in The Netherlands, 'englischen Lustgebüsch' in Germany and 'bosquet à l'angloise or à l'anglaise' in France. There they were ultimately all adapted to the way they were used in the landscape garden in England, and in the English garden abroad,³¹ as shrubberies.³²

While the dense Langley type planting lost its connection with 'grove', the notion shifted to more open groves, which continued to have its supporters, notably Thomas Whately in his *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), which was also translated into German and French and was an important guide to the new fashion for the landscape garden. He compared woods and groves and noted that 'the character of a grove is beauty; fine trees are lovely objects; a grove is an assemblage of them; in which every individual retains much of its own peculiar elegance; and whatever it loses, is transferred to the superior beauty of the whole.' Differences in shape and colour were only seldom seen as important; they were not to be thinly planted as they would be perceived as a number of single trees, particularly if there was no underwood, but this was not the case with a thick grove. In this instance different shapes and colour might become a consideration, which would also be the case within the groves, since they were also 'delightful as a spot to walk or to sit in'. In order to provide satisfaction only irregular planting would be appropriate.³³ We can see how Whately restricted the definition of groves to a specific type, namely that of the open grove.

This trend had started in the 1710s with a renewed interest in the classics that saw Alexander Pope translate Homer's *Iliad* (1715-20) and *Odyssey* (1726), in which gardens and groves regained importance as places of the imagination. In an epistle dedicated to Lord Burlington Pope criticised the densely planted regular (formal) groves: 'Grove nods at grove, each Alley has a brother,/ And half the platform just

reflects the other./ The suff'ring eye inverted Nature sees,/ Trees cut to Statues, Statues thick as trees'. The notes in a later edition explain: 'These groves, that have no meaning, but very near relation-ship, can express themselves only like twin-ideots by nods; which just serve to let us understand, that they know one another, as having been nursed, and brought up by one common parent'.³⁴ Pope's groves were inhabited by dryads, (wood) nymphs, which provided meaning and imagery that was championed, for example, in the sketches and designs by William Kent.³⁵ These new poetic groves heralded a break with the French formal grove.

Another example of this was at The Leasowes, where by 1746 the poet William Shenstone had re-created Virgil's grove in a form that remained celebrated into the 1770s. It was described as 'delightful':

... opaque and gloomy, consisting of a small deep valley or dingle, the sides of which are enclosed with regular tufts of hazel and other underwood, and the whole shadowed with lofty trees rising out of the bottom of the dingle, through which a copious stream makes its way through mossy banks, enamelled with primroses, and variety of wild wood flowers.³⁶

So rather than considering a grove as a planted feature, it is applied as a setting or garden, with the word grove used as a metaphor, much in the same way as Lady Luxborough used it to describe the whole of his layout.³⁷

Conclusion

While its effectiveness as a pattern book and general theory has not been investigated here, this chapter reveals that though Dézallier d'Argenville's treatise is often considered to be both a universal summary and influential, with respects to groves it neither summarized the English situation prior to its publication, nor had a significant impact afterwards. By the time French style bosquets, with very densely planted hedged quarters primarily for walking, shade and coolness, were first introduced in England in the 1640s there was already a characteristic tradition. The English practice of describing groves as wildernesses imbued them with a distinctive notion which influenced their meaning and character and resulted in differentiating design traditions. This unique perspective gave rise to different planting detail, and generated some innovative prototypes. Groves of middle height became the prime focus for English horticultural authors, who used them as a way to demonstrate their professional expertise in French gardening, but since they were not much depicted in contemporary illustrations, they do not appear to have been commonly applied in England.

Of the other categories or types referred to by Dézallier d'Argenville, groves opened in compartments occurred occasionally, with earlier instances at Ham House and Acklam, for example. Groves planted in quincunx or in squares were probably the favourite type in England, in a well-established practice that pre-dated him. In contrast, and as in France, there were few examples of woods of evergreens, with the best-known example probably that at Castle Howard, familiar through a description from the early 1730s. Forests, or great Woods of high trees, were a major focus from the 1660s, and coppices were common practice, but as in France these types were positioned at some distance from the house. Remarkable in Dézallier d'Argenville is

the absence of any mention of groves of fruit trees, which appeared commonly in England and The Netherlands.³⁸

It was an increased interest in horticultural riches that appears to have encouraged new ways of planting groves with shrubs and trees in a graduated manner, first at Kensington in 1704 and then everywhere else. This became a national tradition that also found its way abroad, first as an alternative way to infill the quarters of bosquets, as the *bosquet à l'angloise*, and then in the shrubberies of the English garden. Despite the fact that Dézallier d'Argenville might have heard about this type of planting he did not include this and, it was through various translations of Philip Miller's Dictionary of Gardening that these groves were introduced to the continent.

The early eighteenth century's renewed interest in classical culture included a search for meaning in the imagery of the antique, cultivated by Alexander Pope and others. This saw groves as haunts of nymphs and satyrs and required a different arrangement; this coincided with the advent of 'Rural and Extensive Gard'ning' in which gardens featured 'Rural Groves' that were open and planted in an irregular manner, rather than in squares or quincunx, as in the earlier more formal gardens. The new groves, like William Shenstone's Virgil's Grove, were intended as a visual, emotional experience, rather than for ritualistic use, or indeed the practical reasons that had directed design trends previously. By the middle of the eighteenth century the densely planted French type groves had substantially been replaced by two main types of groves, with one that became known as shrubbery in the English garden, known as English wood or grove on the continent; and the other rural groves that were mainly open, in the English landscape garden. Denser planting could be found there also, but now primarily in clumps and belts.

¹ John James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (London, 1712, 2nd ed. 1728).

² James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (1712), pp.48-51; 160-62.

³ For early wildernesses see: Jane Avner, 'Images of the wilderness in some Elizabethan gardens', *Actes des congress de la Société française Shakespeare*, 13 (1995), pp.9-25; Kristina Taylor, 'The earliest wildernesses: their meanings and developments', *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 28:2 (2008), pp.237-51.

⁴ Martin Biddle, 'The gardens of Nonsuch: sources and dating', *Garden History* 27:1 (1999), pp.145-183 (174-75).

⁵ Francis Bacon Lord Verulam, 'Of Gardens' in *Essayes of Counsels Civill & Morall* (London: Dent, 1903), pp.167-76.

⁶ Timothy Nourse, *Campania Foelix* (London, 1700), pp.297-344 (321-22).

⁷ Laurence Pattacini, 'André Mollet, Royal gardener in St James's Park, London', *Garden History* 26:1 (1998), pp.3-18.

⁸ 'Parliamentary Surveys, Surrey, No.72. Survey of Wimbledon' in Alicia Amherst, *A History of Gardening in England* (London: Quaritch, 1896), pp.315-27 (322).

⁹ André Mollet, *Le jardin de plaisir* (Stockholm, 1651), n.p.

¹⁰ Andrew Mollet, *The Garden of Pleasure* (London, 1670), pp.13-14.

¹¹ John Evelyn, *Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions* (London, 1664).

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- ¹² Evelyn's plan of the gardens (Add.MS 78628 A) can be viewed in detail via the British Library website:
<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/deptford/p/zoomify71993.html>.
- ¹³ George London and Henry Wise, *The Retir'd Gard'ner* (London, 1706), vol.2 pp.744-45.
- ¹⁴ London and Wise, *The Retir'd Gard'ner*, vol.2, pp.753-54.
- ¹⁵ Stephen Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica* (London, 1718), vol.1, p.83.
- ¹⁶ Joseph Addison in *The Spectator*, No.477, 6 September 1712.
- ¹⁷ Thomas Fairchild, *The City Gardener* (London, 1722), p.12ff.
- ¹⁸ Johannes Kip and Leonard Knyff, *Britannia Illustrata* (London, 1707); see: Jan Woudstra, 'The early eighteenth century wilderness at Stainborough', in *New Arcadian Journal*, no.57/58 (2004-05), pp.65-86 (70-1).
- ¹⁹ Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, vol.1, p.vii.
- ²⁰ Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, vol.1, p.xviii-xix.
- ²¹ Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, vol.2, p.198.
- ²² James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*, 1712 ed., p.15.
- ²³ Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, vol.1, p.272.
- ²⁴ Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, vol.3, p.x.
- ²⁵ Batty Langley, *New Principles of Gardening* (London, 1728), p.iii, xi, x [sic].
- ²⁶ Langley, *New Principles of Gardening*, p.viii.
- ²⁷ Langley, *New Principles of Gardening*, p.ix.
- ²⁸ Langley, *New Principles of Gardening*, p.184.
- ²⁹ Langley, *New Principles of Gardening*, p.181-83.
- ³⁰ Batty Langley, *A Sure and Easy Method of Improving Estates* (London, 1740), pp.56, 120-21.
- ³¹ Jan Woudstra, 'From *bosquet a l'angloise* to *jardin a l'angloise*: the progression of the mingled manner of planting from its inception to its decline and survival' *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes: An International Quarterly*, 33/2 (2013), 71-95.
- ³² See Mark Laird, *The Flowering of the English Landscape Garden: English Pleasure Grounds 1720-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999)
- ³³ Thomas Whately, *Observations on Modern Gardening* (London, 1770), pp.46-53.
- ³⁴ [Alexander Pope,] *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq.* (London, 1751), Vol.3 p.192.
- ³⁵ See David Jacques, 'William Kent's 'Notion of Gardening': the context, the practice and the posthumous claims', *Garden History* 44:1 (2016), pp.24-50 (26).
- ³⁶ Robert Dodsley, *The Poetical Works of William Shenstone* (London: C. Cooke, n.d.), p.xxxi.
- ³⁷ *Letters Written by the late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Esq.* (London, 1775), see e.g. pp. 56, 57, 278, 284, 346, 349.
- ³⁸ Jan Woudstra, 'The bosquet and wilderness', in David Jacques and Arend Jan van der Horst, *The Gardens of William and Mary* (London: Christopher Helm, 1988), pp.153-66.