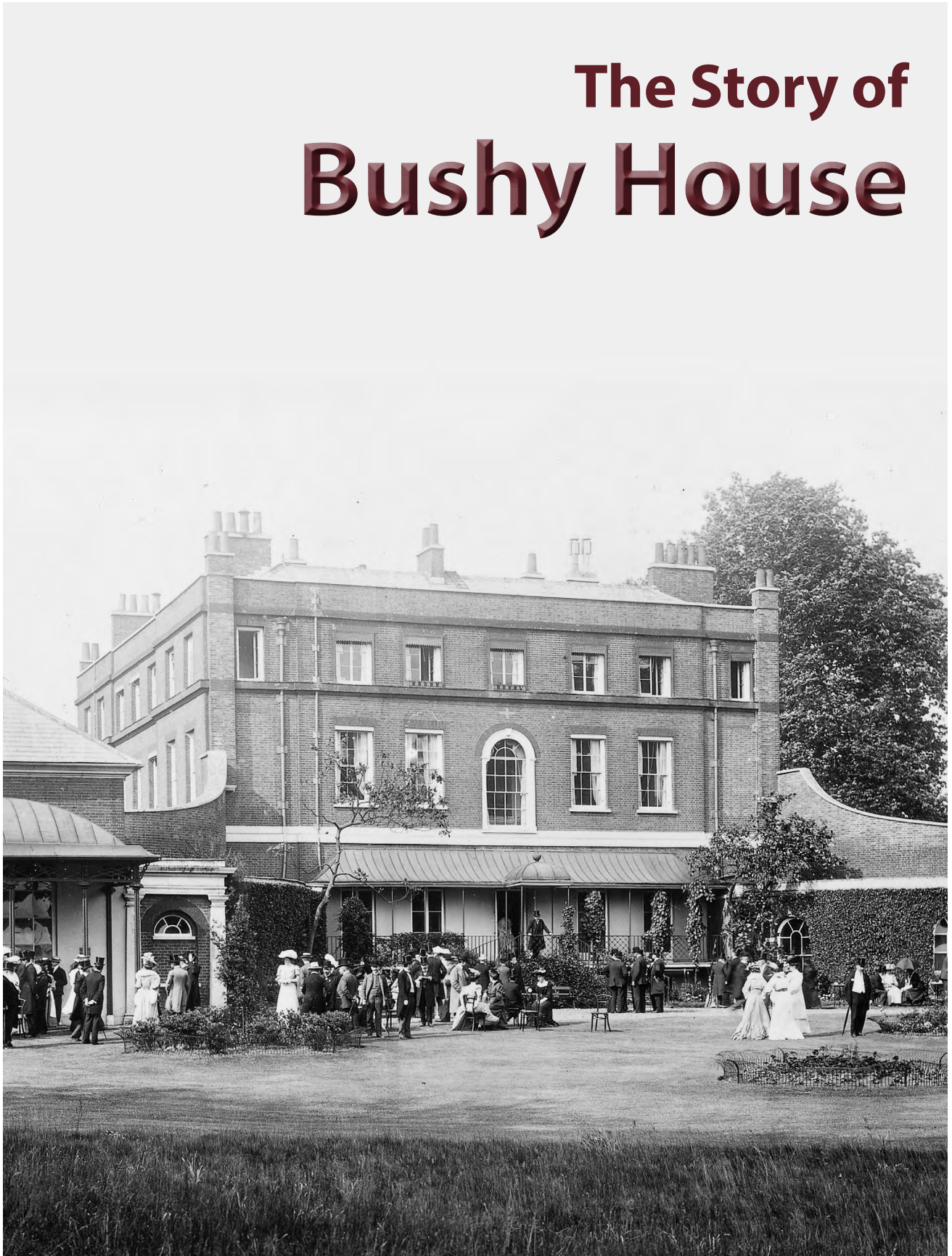


The Story of Bushy House



The Story of Bushy House

1663 (Probably designed by William Samwell)

1663-1713

EDWARD PROGER (1621-1713)

As a reward for his loyalty to Charles II during his exile, Edward Proger was made keeper of the Middle Park and was commanded by the King to build a 'Lodge for Our Service in one of Our Parks at Hampton Court called North Parke'. This keeper's lodge cost Proger £4000, an enormous amount of money which he spent the next 40 years attempting to recover from the Treasury. A pension of £400 a year was agreed in 1711-12 only two years before his death 'of the anguish of cutting teeth' at the age of 92. He lived in Bushy House until his death.

1713-1715

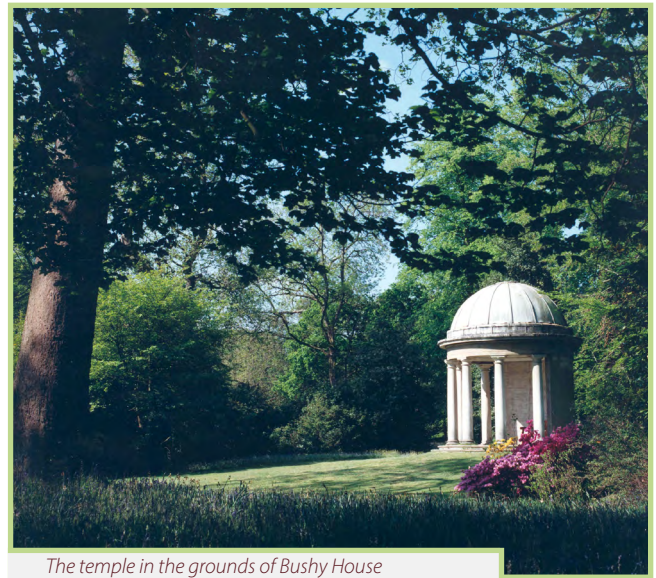
CHARLES MONTAGU, EARL OF HALIFAX (1661-1715)

A brilliant politician, he was a Treasury Lord in 1692, contracted the first national debt (a loan of one million pounds for the nation), and became the first Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1708 he purchased the keepership of the three parks from the Duchess of Cleveland, a former mistress of Charles II. He began repairing and rebuilding Bushy House but the extent of those works is not known; however, it was probably during this time that the corner pavilions were added. He lived in the 'Upper House' also in Bushy Park.

1715-1737

GEORGE MONTAGU, EARL OF HALIFAX (1684-1739)

Charles Montagu's nephew, he continued the repairs and usually spent half of his time in Bushy House.



The temple in the grounds of Bushy House

1737-1771

GEORGE MONTAGU DUNK, EARL OF HALIFAX (1716-1771)

Son of George Montagu, he was also a successful politician and became First Lord of the Admiralty, Head of the Board of Trade and Lieutenant General of Ireland.

1771-1797

LORD NORTH (1732-1792)

In 1754 he became the Member of Parliament for Banbury, a junior Treasury Lord in 1759, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons in 1767 and Prime Minister in 1770. During his administration he dealt with the many problems of the Indian and American colonies, the loss of the latter leading to his resignation. He and his wife then spent all their time at Bushy House until his death in 1792 and hers in 1797.

1797-1849

DUKE OF CLARENCE (1765-1837)

William, the third son of George III, became a midshipman in the Royal Navy in June 1779 aged 13. It was a hard life and taught the young William many of the bad habits that were to make him less than desirable as a husband. It was whilst he was in the navy that he first met Horatio Nelson whom he later honoured by building a temple in the grounds of Bushy House which contained a portion of the main mast of the Victory.



Bushy House in the spring

In 1789 he was made Duke of Clarence which effectively ended his naval career and from then onwards he led a fairly pointless existence until he met and fell in love with the famous actress Mrs. Dorothea (sometimes known as Dorothy or Dora) Jordan in about 1790. In 1797, the King offered him Bushy House recognising and accepting that William was already living with Dorothy. They often entertained the Duke's brothers at Bushy and for William's 41st birthday, a wonderful reception was organised attended, it is said, by all his brothers, the pretenders to the throne, and all quite drunk.

William and Dorothy had ten children who could often be seen playing in the garden with the animals as the Duke of Clarence had become a real farmer taking care of his garden, peach trees, flower garden, dairy cattle and other animals. The relationship between William and Dorothy came to an end in 1812. Dorothy left her beloved Bushy House and went to France where she died alone and in poverty in 1816.

In May 1816, Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Prince Regent and heir presumptive to the throne died in childbirth leaving only the Regent and the Duke of York between William and the throne. It was now necessary for William to marry an acceptable wife and so in 1818 he married Princess Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen. The couple lived in Bushy with William and Dorothy's children, the FitzClarences.

On the 26th June 1830, a doctor arrived from London at 6am to announce to the Duke that his brother the King was dead and to salute the Duke as the new king. The Duke is said to have returned to bed saying he had "always wished to sleep with a Queen". After the death of William in 1837 Adelaide returned to Bushy House, which remained her official residence until her death in 1849.

1865 -1897

THE DUC DE NEMOURS (1814-1896)

The second son of the French King Louis-Philippe, the Duc de Nemours was made Colonel de Cavalerie in 1825 and elected King of the Belgians in 1831, but his father refused that crown on his behalf as he did not wish to upset the British who were afraid that France would annex Belgium. After the revolution of 1848, Nemours went into exile in England where Queen Victoria had welcomed several members of the French Royal family. In 1865 the Duc de Nemours was offered Bushy House and it was from there that he tried to unite the exiled Royalists and restore the Bourbon Monarchy. He was allowed to return to France in 1871 but kept his 'ménage' at Bushy House in case of further violence in France. He was restored to his rank of Divisional General in the army but failed to restore the monarchy to France.

1897 - PRESENT DAY

THE NATIONAL PHYSICAL LABORATORY

After the Duc's death in 1896, his son returned Bushy House to the Crown. Queen Victoria had no use for it but at the time the Royal Society was looking for a home for their proposed National Standards Laboratory. Having considered Kew Observatory and a plot in the north-east corner of the Old Deer Park as possible locations, the Executive Committee of the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) decided that Bushy House would be the preferred location. And so in 1900 NPL's first director, Richard Glazebrook, was appointed and the National Physical Laboratory was established in Bushy House.

In 1901, work began on converting the ground floor and basement of Bushy House into a physics laboratory. Other parts of the building were arranged as temporary laboratories for electrical, magnetic and thermometric work, in addition to metallurgical and chemical research. The second floor and some of the first floor were set aside as a private residence for Glazebrook and his family.



Cannon Gate in the snow

The laboratory grew over the years until by the last decade of the 20th century it occupied almost 50 buildings, most of which were unsuitable for a scientific establishment entering the 21st century. The new laboratory complex replaced all but four of these buildings and NPL is now housed in facilities that are amongst the world's most extensive and sophisticated for measurement science. Although little scientific work now remains in Bushy House, it is still used as a conference facility for NPL.

Between 2018 and 2021, Bushy House underwent extensive repairs and restoration work to the main property and garden buildings.



The first metallurgical laboratory, 1906

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