

GOSFORD HOUSE PLEASURE GROUNDS & POLICIES



The designed landscape at Gosford, one of the finest in Scotland, is the masterwork of Francis Charteris of Amisfield (1723-1808), who became the 6th Earl of Wemyss on the death of his exiled Jacobite elder brother David Wemyss, Lord Elcho in 1787.

Francis 6th Earl of Wemyss Francis followed in the footsteps of Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk, who was from 1732 the first of the “improvers” – Scottish landowners who aspired to transform barren wastes into agriculturally productive, aesthetically pleasing landscapes. On 4 August 1791 he laid the foundation stone for the magnificent New House, designed by Robert Adam, exactly aligned on Edinburgh Castle.

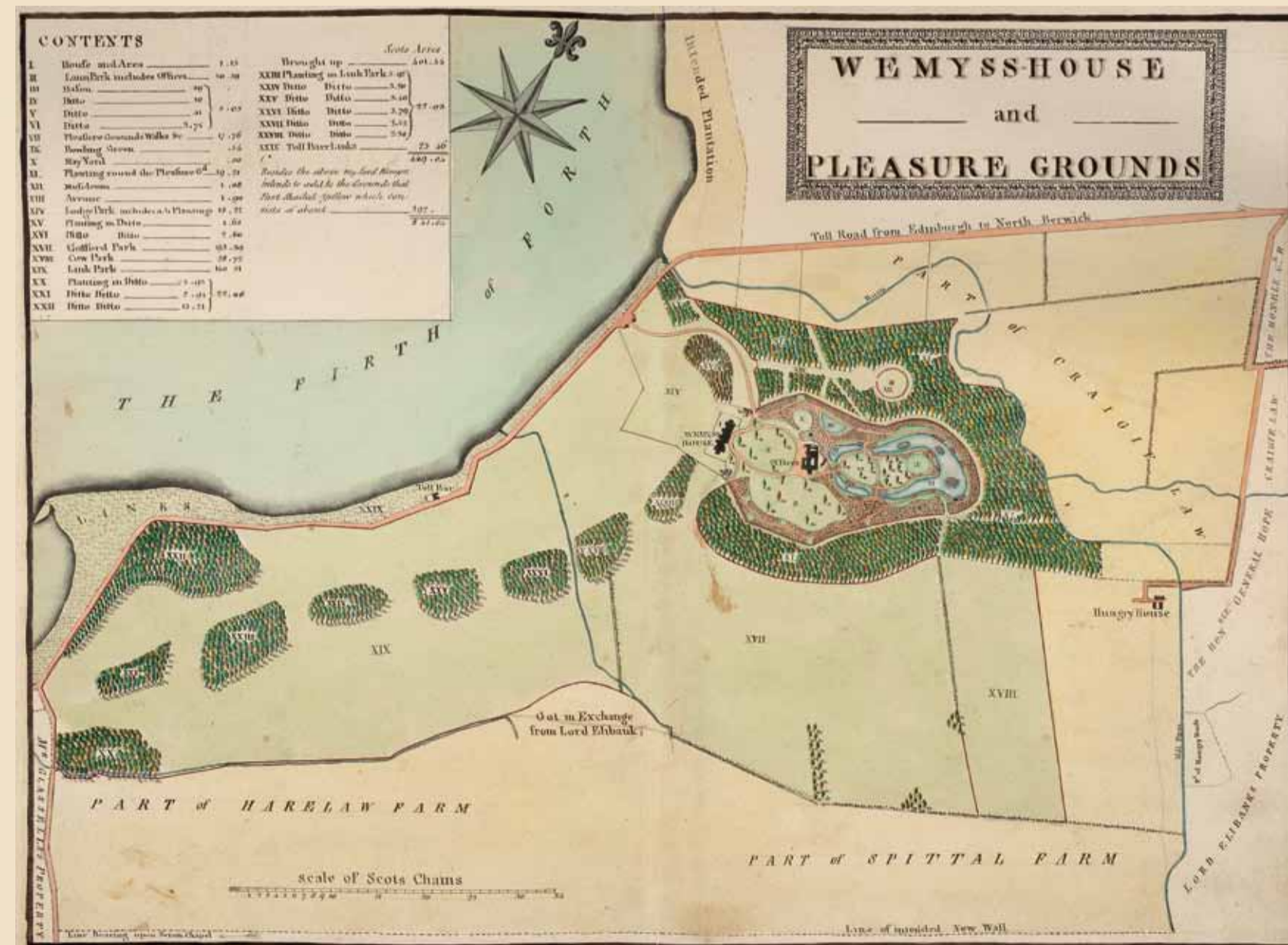
Francis purchased Gosford, a ‘black desolate spot, without a shrub or a stick near it, staring on the sea shore’, from the Wedderburns of Gosford in 1784. In 1790 he built the stables, to the design of William Newton of Newcastle. In 1789 he asked Robert Adam to design a magnificent New House. In 1790 he commissioned James Ramsay to design and lay out around the New House a vast landscape in the *beautiful* style, with pleasure grounds, comprising curvaceous lakes, parkland trees, lawns and shrubs, sheltered by woodland and drained by 5 ½ miles of stone sunk fences. North of the lakes to the designs of Thomas Harrison of Lancaster, he built a necropolis, with a 64-niche mausoleum, surmounted by a scaled-down replica of the Great Pyramid, visible along a processional avenue, surrounded by a substantial tenemos wall and sunk fences. West of the New House he planted 11 clumps in crescent formation, and built a park wall and lodges along the coast.



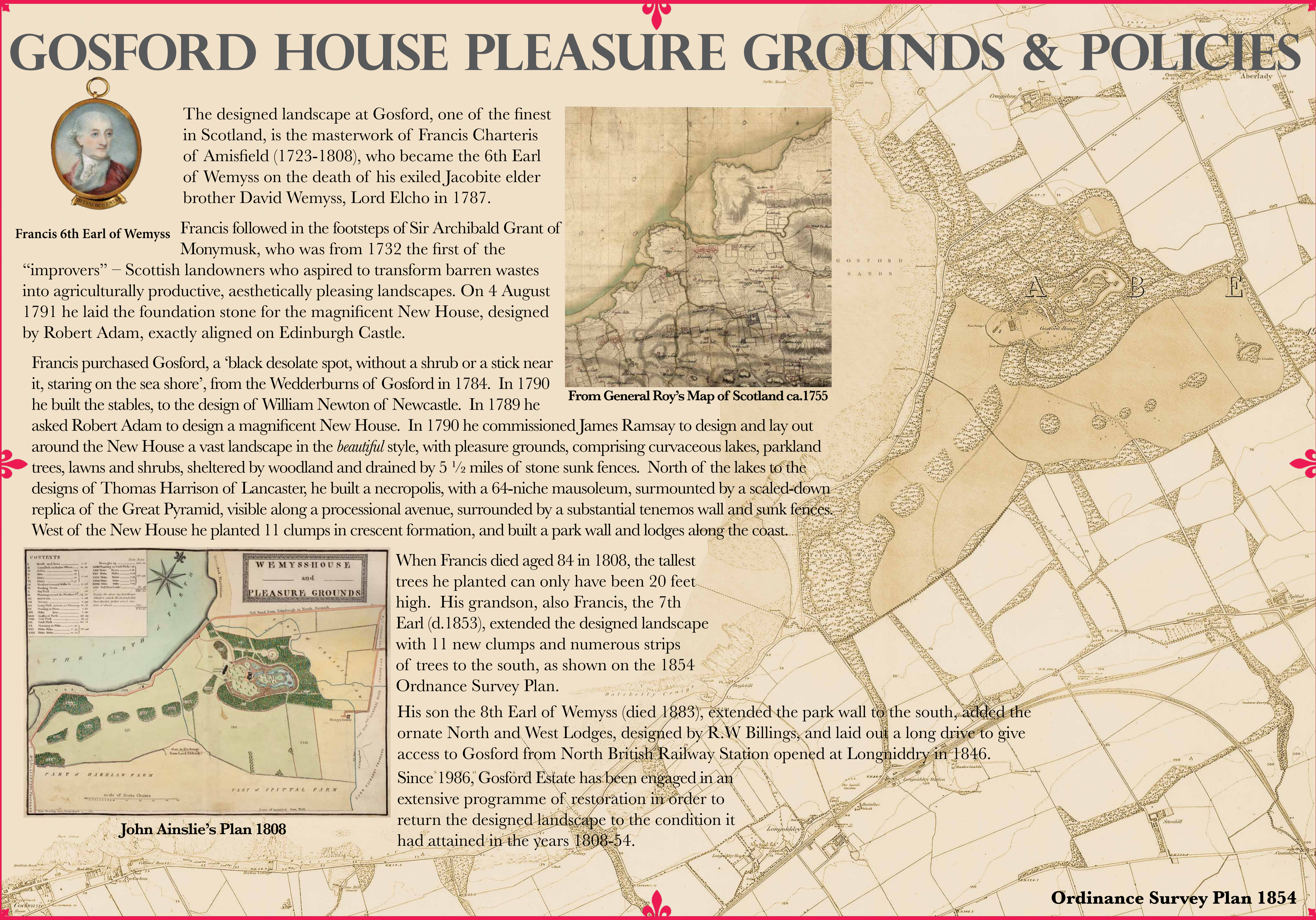
From General Roy's Map of Scotland ca.1755

When Francis died aged 84 in 1808, the tallest trees he planted can only have been 20 feet high. His grandson, also Francis, the 7th Earl (d.1853), extended the designed landscape with 11 new clumps and numerous strips of trees to the south, as shown on the 1854 Ordnance Survey Plan.

His son the 8th Earl of Wemyss (died 1883), extended the park wall to the south, added the ornate North and West Lodges, designed by R.W Billings, and laid out a long drive to give access to Gosford from North British Railway Station opened at Longniddry in 1846. Since 1986, Gosford Estate has been engaged in an extensive programme of restoration in order to return the designed landscape to the condition it had attained in the years 1808-54.



John Ainslie's Plan 1808



Ordnance Survey Plan 1854