

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Maritime Greenwich (UK)

No 795

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Maritime Greenwich
<i>Location</i>	London Borough of Greenwich, England
<i>State Party</i>	United Kingdom
<i>Date</i>	11 July 1996

Justification by State Party

The Renaissance and Baroque compositions of the Queen's House and the Royal Naval College represent masterpieces of human creative genius.

Criterion i

These buildings and their park setting had a seminal impact on developments in architecture and landscape design in Britain.

Criterion iv

The cultural, architectural, maritime, and scientific developments embodied in these buildings together form an ensemble of outstanding universal significance.

Criterion vi

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Maritime Greenwich constitutes both a *group of buildings* and a *site*. It may also be considered to be a *cultural landscape* as defined in paragraph 39(i) of the *Operational Guidelines* (1997).

History and Description

History

Greenwich has been favoured by humankind since the Bronze Age at least, as demonstrated by the burial mounds and the large 1st-4th century AD Roman villa that have been discovered in the modern Park.

It has long associations with royalty. In the 8th century it was owned by Ethelrada, niece of Alfred the Great. In the 15th century the estate was the property of Duke Humphrey, uncle of Henry VI, and it was first developed as a royal residence when that king and his wife, Margaret of Anjou, built the Palace of Placentia, where the Tudor monarchs Henry VIII, Mary I, and Elizabeth were all born. James I of England and VI of Scotland settled the palace upon his wife, Anne of Denmark, who in 1616 commissioned the building of the Queen's House from Inigo Jones, Surveyor of the King's Works. The project was suspended when the queen's health failed the following year (she died in 1618), but Jones resumed work for Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, around 1630. It was completed just before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1640.

During the Interregnum, Parliament used the palace as a biscuit factory, and also kept Dutch prisoners there, so it was in a sadly deteriorated condition when the monarchy was restored. Charles II commissioned André Le Nôtre to design the park (although the eventual layout probably owes more to Sir William Boreman). He also commissioned a new palace from John Webb. Part of Placentia was demolished in 1664 to make way for a wing of the new palace.

With the accession of William II and Mary II as joint monarchs in 1688 the days of Greenwich as a royal residence ended, because its situation was inimical to the king's asthma. However, in 1692 the queen ordered that building of the palace should continue, but in a new form, as a hospital for retired seamen. The master plan was devised by Sir Christopher Wren, assisted by his pupil Nicholas Hawksmoor. The complex took many years to complete, and was to involve the services of other leading architects, including Colen Campbell, Thomas Ripley, James "Athenian" Stuart, and John Yenn.

In 1807 the Queen's House became a school for young seamen, with the addition of long colonnades and wings, the work of Daniel Asher Alexander.

During the 17th century study of the role of astronomy in navigation developed rapidly, and in 1675 Wren and the scientist Robert Hooke designed and built the turreted Royal Observatory on the bluff overlooking the old palace for John Flamsteed, the first English Astronomer Royal. Greenwich established its pre-eminence in this field and it was here that in 1884 the Greenwich Meridian and Greenwich Mean Time were adopted as world standards for the measurement of space and time.

In the 18th century the little town of Greenwich attracted aristocrats and merchants, who built villas there, some of which survive (the most important is probably the Ranger's House). Although the departure of the royal court and the rise of dockyard-related industries robbed the town of its fashionable character, it remained prosperous, favoured in particular by sea captains, naval officers, and merchants. Its earlier timber-framed houses were

gradually replaced during the 18th and 19th centuries by two- and three-storeyed brick terraces.

Since 1937 the Queens' House and its associated buildings have housed the National Maritime Museum. The Royal Naval College has been located in the former Royal Naval Hospital since 1873. It will be vacating the buildings during 1997; at the time of writing this evaluation the future tenants have not been decided, but there are strong indications that the buildings will be shared by the Museum and the new University of Greenwich.

Description

The focus of the Greenwich ensemble is the *Queen's House*, the work of Inigo Jones and the first true Renaissance building in Britain - a striking departure from the architectural forms that preceded it. It was inspired by the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano, which Jones had seen during his studies in Italy. Its cubic galleried hall, tulip staircase, and loggia overlooking the park are in the finest Palladian manner, combining classical proportion and simplicity. It was to be the direct inspiration for classical houses and villas all over Britain in the two centuries that followed its construction.

When the Queen's House was adapted in 1807 for use as the Royal Hospital School, it was linked by means of large Tuscan colonnades to wings on either side, in the Palladian tradition. A westward extension of 1873-74 is the Neptune Hall, with a powerfully articulated Doric frontispiece to the south.

The *Royal Naval College*, the most outstanding group of Baroque buildings in Britain, is also the most complex of Christopher Wren's architectural projects. The four main components, aligned on the Queen's House, are arranged symmetrically alongside the Thames.

The oldest is the King Charles Building, begun in 1664 by John Webb as the first element of a planned royal palace, but not completed until 1694, when the project for the Royal Naval Hospital was launched. It is a monumental two-storey structure with three-storey pavilions at each end. Facing the King Charles Building and complementing it is the Queen Anne Building, begun in 1698 by Wren to mirror Webb's but not completed until 1742. The undercroft of the former royal palace survives in the basement.

Behind these two buildings are the two remaining elements of Wren's plan, each surmounted by a massive dome: these frame the Queen's House when viewed from the river. The King William Building was begun by Wren and completed by his brilliant assistant, Hawksmoor. It is especially renowned for its monumental Painted Hall, with an exceptional Baroque decorative ceiling, the work of Sir James Thornhill. The last element in Wren's plan to be completed was the Queen Mary Building, designed by Thomas Ripley and built in 1735-50. The original chapel was destroyed by fire in 1779 and replaced by a magnificent neo-classical structure, designed by William Newton and James Stuart.

Among the other buildings that make up the Royal Naval College, mention should be made of the Trafalgar Quarters, a colonnaded brick structure built in 1813 as living accommodation for the officers of the Royal Hospital.

Greenwich Royal Park is formal in plan, arranged symmetrically on either side of its main north-south axis, which is aligned on the Queen's House. However, this is not apparent, since the land surface is irregular and so it gives the impression of an English landscape park. The original planting was largely of sweet chestnuts and elms. Some ancient chestnut trees survive, but the latter have fallen victim to Dutch elm disease and have been replaced with limes and planes. However, the lines of the avenues have been maintained.

The *Old Royal Observatory* is sited on the brow of Greenwich Hill and dominates the landscape. At its core is Flamsteed House, a multi-functional building, the ground floor of which served as the residence of the Astronomer Royal. Above is an octagonal room which was used by the Royal Society for meetings and dinners. This is surmounted by the famous time-ball, which indicates Greenwich Mean Time daily at 13.00. Flamsteed's observatory was little more than a hut on the south side of his house, but this developed progressively from 1720 onwards into the present Meridian Building. This houses Airy's Transit Circle and its tower is surmounted by a dome for a refracting telescope. Adjacent is the former New Physical Observatory (1890-99), which is cruciform in plan and crowned by a terracotta dome.

The nominated area also includes a number of handsome private houses of the 17th-19th centuries. On the eastern side of the Park is Vanbrugh Castle, the home of Sir John Vanbrugh, the architect of Blenheim Palace. It is built consciously in medieval style. The original phase has three storeys and basement with two battlemented angle towers and a central round tower projecting from the main west front. The Ranger's House, built in 1700-20, is a handsome seven-bayed building in red brick, with a tripartite frontispiece and a doorway with Ionic columns. The Trafalgar Tavern fronting on the Thames is an elegant building in Regency style, with cast-iron balconies and canopied bow windows.

Part of the town of Greenwich is included in the nominated area, and here, too, there are several high-grade private houses and terraces. St Alfege's Church is one of the outstanding works of Nicholas Hawksmoor, built in 1711-14 to replace a collapsed medieval structure. It is a cruciform church in Portland stone with a west tower. Also within the nominated area is the *Cutty Sark*, a tea-clipper built in 1869 and the fastest ship in the world at that time. The vessel is berthed in a special dry-dock and maintained as a museum.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The nominated site is entirely located within Conservation Areas designated according to the

provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. In these, protection is exercised by the London Borough of Greenwich and monitored by English Heritage, the national agency for heritage protection and management in England (set up under the National Heritage Act 1983).

All the public monuments and most of the buildings in the town centre and around the park are protected by being included on the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, established under the terms of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953. Authorization must be obtained for any works that affect the exteriors (and in certain cases the interiors also) of these properties.

The Royal Park is registered as a Grade I landscape in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. It contains a number of archaeological sites, including a group of Bronze Age burial mounds, and these are protected as ancient monuments (as defined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979), the control of which (but not their management) is vested in English Heritage.

The view from the Park over the buildings of the Museum and College towards St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London is protected as a Strategic View, monitored by the relevant intermediate local administrations.

There are more than a hundred private owners of properties within the nominated area. The public monuments and the Royal Park are owned directly by the Crown.

Management

All the buildings are currently in use, or under active consideration for re-use. The Park is managed by the Royal Parks Agency on behalf of the central government. The National Maritime Museum is administered by Trustees nominated by the central government.

The freeholds of the Royal Naval College and certain other properties in Greenwich are owned by the Greenwich Hospital Trust, a Crown Charity established in 1694. It is currently responsible for the management of the site of the College and its buildings.

The London Borough of Greenwich has the statutory duty of monitoring development within the designated Conservation Areas. Its 1994 Unitary Development Plan recognizes the necessity for maintaining the character of the town's historic heritage. Working with the Greenwich Waterfront Development Partnership, the local regeneration agency which brings together community, business, and local and central government interests to attract public- and private-sector funding to the area, the London Borough prepared in 1994 and is currently implementing an Action Plan for the town centre.

Substantial financial resources are made available to Maritime Greenwich by central government. In the fiscal year 1996/1997 around £2 million (c US\$3 million) is currently being allocated for maintenance

and other projects at the Royal Naval College, £10.5 million (c US\$15 million) to the National Maritime Museum, and £1.6 million (c US\$2.4 million) to the Royal Park.

The area nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List is a logical one and can be managed effectively using the various forms of statutory control at the disposal of national and local agencies. The proposed buffer zone is an effective one, covered by Conservation Area constraints. It includes a small area on the opposite (northern) bank of the Thames, sited on the main axis running down the main avenue of the Royal Park through the Queen's House and the central axis of the Royal Naval College group.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The public buildings (Royal Naval College, National Maritime Museum, Observatory, etc) and the Royal Park have been the object of systematic conservation and maintenance for more than a century by various government departments and agencies.

The privately owned buildings have been subjected to regular monitoring for many decades, first by the Historic Buildings Division of the now defunct Greater London Council (formerly the London County Council), and subsequently by English Heritage. Listing as Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest and Conservation Area status has made it possible the owners of such properties to benefit from grant-aid from central and local government in recent decades. Rigorous control is exercised over the application of such funding so as to ensure that the nature and quality of conservation interventions are in conformity with current best practice.

Authenticity

The ensemble of buildings and landscape that constitutes this nominated site has preserved a remarkably high degree of authenticity in every sense of the term.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Greenwich in January 1997. The ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Gardens and Sites and a distinguished French architectural historian specializing in this period were also consulted.

Qualities

Maritime Greenwich is a unique ensemble of buildings and landscape of exceptional artistic value, the work of a number of outstanding architects and designers. The unquestioned value of the major architectural works is supported and enhanced by a series of smaller buildings that give the ensemble a special character, and this, too, is heightened by the site itself, which reflects a understanding of the

relationship between culture and nature over several centuries. At the same time, it is of considerable scientific significance by virtue of the contributions to astronomy and to navigation made by the Royal Observatory and by the Royal Naval College. The buildings in the town and around the Park reflect the domestic side of the society that produced the public masterpieces.

Comparative analysis

It is impossible to identify any monumental and artistic complex with which Maritime Greenwich might be compared.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

ICOMOS is especially concerned about the future use of the Royal Naval College complex (see "History" above). The current position is that the UK Ministry of Defence has set up the Greenwich Foundation, which will take responsibility for the College when it ceases to be a Defence Establishment. Its chairman is Sir Angus Stirling, lately Director General of the National Trust. This is a charitable company whose terms of reference are "to preserve for the benefit of the nation the Royal Naval College site, buildings, and monuments as being of historical, architectural, and artistic importance (including their immediate environment) and to educate the public thereon." It will be working closely with the Greenwich Hospital Trust, as freeholders, and the Royal Navy, to ensure a smooth handover, starting at the end of 1997 and expected to be completed in summer 1999.

It is therefore recommended that the World Heritage Committee should express to the State Party its concern that this important cultural complex should pass to institutions that are appropriate to its nature and setting.

ICOMOS is also surprised that there is no overall management plan for the entire site. This is urgently needed, giving special attention to the severe problem of traffic passing through the site and taking account of the study of the Park carried out by the Royal Parks Review Group. There should also be decisive action regarding certain more recent intrusions, such as the tennis court in the Royal Naval College and some ancillary structures in the National Maritime Museum. It should also incorporate the results of a detailed analysis of the Park and its requirements.

The State Party has informed ICOMOS that a working group has been set up to prepare an overall management plan for the nominated property.

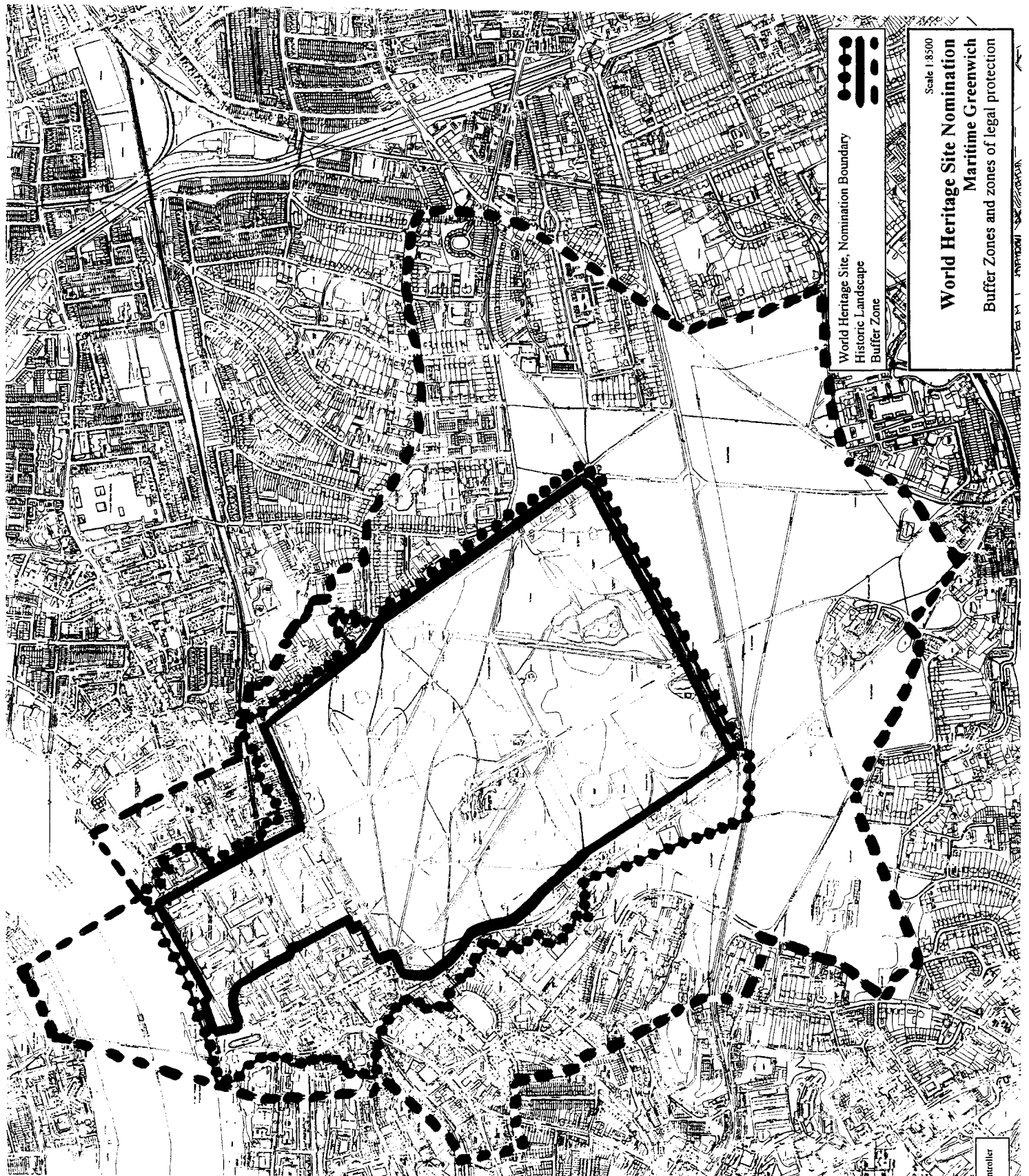
Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i, ii, iv, and vi*:

The public and private buildings and the Royal Park at Greenwich form an exceptional ensemble that bears witness to human artistic and scientific endeavour of the highest quality, to European architecture at an important stage of its evolu-

tion, and to the creation of a landscape that integrates nature and culture in a harmonious whole.

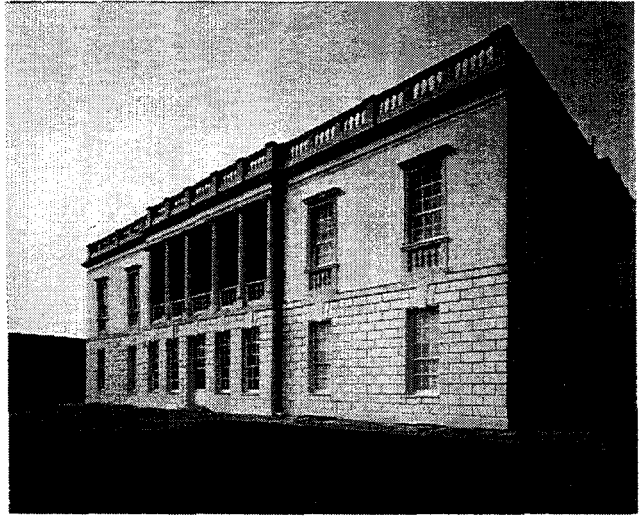
ICOMOS, September 1997



Greenwich :
Plan indiquant la zone proposée pour inscription, désignée paysage
historique et la zone tampon /
Map showing nominated area, designated historic landscape, and buffer zone



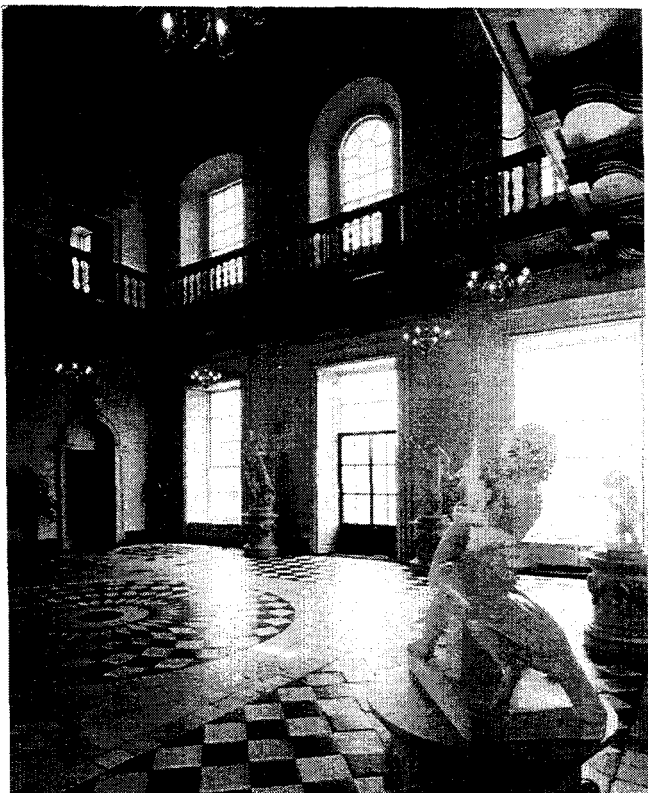
Greenwich :
Le pavillon du roi Guillaume, Royal Naval College /
The King William Building, Royal Naval College



a.

Greenwich :

**Queen's House : a. extérieur, b. vestibule /
Queen's House : a. exterior, b. entrance hall /**



b.



Greenwich :
Observatoire royal /
The Royal Observatory