

# **Maids, Wives and Widows: Female Architectural Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Britain**

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**This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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# Abstract

## **Maids, Wives and Widows: Female Architectural Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Britain**

**Amy Lynn Boyington**

This thesis explores the extent to which elite women of the eighteenth century commissioned architectural works and the extent to which the type and scale of their projects was dictated by their marital status. Traditionally, architectural historians have advocated that eighteenth-century architecture was purely the pursuit of men. Women, of course, were not absent during this period, but their involvement with architecture has been largely obscured and largely overlooked. This doctoral research has redressed this oversight through the scrutinising of known sources and the unearthing of new archival material.

This thesis begins with an exploration of the legal and financial statuses of elite women, as encapsulated by the eighteenth-century marriage settlement. This encompasses brides' portions or dowries, wives' annuities or 'pin-money', widows' dower or jointure, and provisions made for daughters and younger children. Following this, the thesis is divided into three main sections which each look at the ways in which women, depending upon their marital status, could engage in architecture. The first of these sections discusses unmarried women, where the patronage of the following patroness is examined: Anne Robinson; Lady Isabella Finch; Lady Elizabeth Hastings; Sophia Baddeley; George Anne Bellamy and Teresa Cornelys. The second section explores the patronage of married women, namely Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey; Amabel Hume-Campbell, Lady Polwarth; Mary Robinson, Baroness Grantham; Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough; Frances Boscawen; Elizabeth Herbert, Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery; Henrietta Knight, Baroness Luxborough and Lady Sarah Bunbury. The third and final section discusses the architectural patronage of widowed women, including Susanna Montgomery, Countess of Eglinton; Georgianna Spencer, Countess Spencer; Elizabeth Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort; Elizabeth Home, Countess of Home; Elizabeth Montagu; Mary Hervey, Lady Hervey; Henrietta Fermor, Countess of Pomfret; the Hon. Charlotte Digby; the Hon. Charlotte Boyle Walsingham; the Hon. Agneta Yorke and Albinia Brodrick, Viscountess Midleton.

Collectively, all three sections advocate that elite women were at the heart of the architectural patronage system and exerted more influence and agency over architecture than has previously been recognised by architectural historians.

# Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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# Preface

All dates, as far as it has been possible to ascertain, are given according to the modern Gregorian calendar, which ran eleven days ahead of the old Julian calendar, with the year changing on 1 January, rather than 25 March. Where events took place on the Continent, or where ambiguity may arise, both dates are given, with the Julian ('Old Style') preceding the Gregorian (or 'New Style'). England officially adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, following the passing of The Calendar (New Style) Act 1750.

All archival material has been transcribed retaining, as far as possible, the original spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, underlining and paragraphing. As a result, the use of *sic* has been omitted.

The third edition of the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) style guide has been used for this thesis.

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# List of Abbreviations

Add. MS	Additional Manuscripts collection
BHO	British History Online
BL	British Library, London
BLARS	Bedford and Luton Archives and Record Service, Bedford
BM	British Museum, London
BRO	Berkshire Record Office, Reading
GA	Gloucester Archives, Gloucester
HAA	Holkham Hall Archives, Holkham Hall
Hon.	The Honourable
LA	Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online version)
PWDRO	Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth
SHC	Surrey History Centre, Woking
SM	Sir John Soane's Museum, London
SoL	Survey of London
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum, London
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Services, Leeds

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I have received excellent assistance and advice at the many archives and record offices that I have visited during the course of this PhD, but I would particularly like to acknowledge Dr Frances Sands, Curator of Drawings and Books at the Sir John Soane's Museum, London, as well as the staff at the British Library, London; the National Archives, Kew; Bedford and Luton Archive and Record Services, Bedford; Gloucester Archives, Gloucester; Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth; Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon; Surrey History Centre, Woking; and Lincolnshire Archives, Lincoln.

# Introduction

Except for members of fashionable London society, most eighteenth-century ladies stayed in the background, interesting themselves in their family, in entertaining, in household cares, clothes, and all minutiae of family life. When not bearing children they enjoyed an active social life, they visited, attended balls, played cards, read novels, rode to hounds and wrote letters – but none of this made any discernible impression on the character of the times. Indispensable yet insignificant, they played out unobtrusively their vital role in the life of the ruling class.

G. E. Mingay, 1963.<sup>1</sup>

The role that elite women played in eighteenth-century society has long been subject to misinterpretation and undervaluation. Mingay's mistaken assumption that elite women had no discernible impact on their surroundings or society is an excellent example of the warped impression that historians maintained well into the twentieth century. As a consequence of this misconception, women's role in architecture was easily overlooked. Traditionally, historians have advocated that eighteenth-century architecture was purely the pursuit of wealthy male patrons and their male architects – women of this period could not practice architecture professionally. As such, history has recorded that it was men who owned grand estates and houses; who commissioned famous architects; who embarked upon elaborate architectural schemes; who collected great art collections and who had the financial and legal independence to do so. Women, of course, were not absent during this period, but their subordination both in law and in the eyes of society had, until recently, resulted in the perception that women could not and did not commission architectural works. The role of the elite woman was reduced to that of a daughter, wife and mother, forever dependent and lacking agency.

Research into women's lives in pre-industrial Britain has become increasingly popular in recent decades, but investigation into female architectural patronage remains extremely sparse. This thesis explores the extent to which elite women of the eighteenth century commissioned building schemes in Britain and the extent to which this was affected by their marital status. This research aims to dispel the assumption that elite women were constrained to the spheres of domesticity and motherhood. Instead, it will be purported that, rather than being passive observers of the architectural landscape, elite women possessed the agency, intellectual inclination, and the opportunity to engage actively with architecture. This proposition is not equivalent to the statement that women were the equals of men. Instead it will be shown that women operated within the societal constraints imposed upon them.

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<sup>1</sup> G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1963), pp. 226-27.

To fully understand the extent to which an elite woman could patronise architecture, this research is categorised by marital status: unmarried, married and widowed. The differing legal, financial and social restrictions wrought by the various marital statuses significantly affected female agency, and consequently architectural patronage. These distinctions have not been considered before and have confirmed that elite women were far more autonomous than traditionally perceived. This reassessment of female architectural patronage has provided a truer understanding of the role that elite women played in eighteenth-century society.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this thesis the term ‘elite’ retains its regular meaning: ‘a group of people regarded as the best in a particular society or organization’.<sup>2</sup> In the context of this thesis, it will be taken to mean women who possessed high social status or wealth. This definition is not restricted to the aristocracy, but will include families who had recently elevated their status through dynastic alliances, accrued great fortunes through business or were prominent in politics or at Court. Lastly, those members of the gentry who had strong social or familial ties to the upper echelons of society will also be included in this definition.

This elite status brought with it a multitude of implications. The first of these is that elite social status, especially in the eighteenth century, was strongly correlated with wealth. This is important, first and foremost, because architectural projects were expensive. Women who had access to a source of great wealth were therefore enabled to interact with architecture. A unique example of this is that of courtesans who were often extremely wealthy but accrued this wealth through entrepreneurial methods rather than familial capital. Furthermore, these women were immersed within a social elite that instilled in them the ambition and expectation to act independently within the architectural sphere, as well as providing them with the confidence to do so.

Furthermore, it would be helpful to define what exactly constitutes an ‘architectural project’. For the purpose of this thesis, this will be taken to mean any situation in which money was expended on the interior or exterior of a building with a domestic purpose, as well as its immediate aesthetic surroundings. This ranges from the simple maintenance of a building, to the fitting out and furnishing of an interior, to significant alterations and adaptations of existing buildings, to designing and creating entirely new buildings. In addition, garden architecture and landscaping will also be considered because it allowed for architectural experimentation on a smaller scale. As such, it was subject to different fashions and is an equally valid form of architectural expression.

In a similar vein, the role of ‘architectural patroness’ deserves to be expounded upon. In what follows, this term will refer to any woman who had agency to autonomously influence a building project. This influence took many different forms, from managing a project or acting as an agent for a family member, to ordering

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<sup>2</sup> Maurice Waite (ed.), *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 230.

remodelling schemes and commissioning entirely new buildings. In all such cases, women also had varying degrees of involvement with the design process, which was dependent upon their personal inclinations as well as the architectural opportunities available to them. As such, these factors will be touched upon when discussing each patroness individually.

## Social Connections

This thesis discusses numerous women, who, by virtue of their social networks, communicated with one another upon the subject of architecture. The nature of these social connections could take multiple forms, including kinship, friendship groups, and political affiliations. This inevitably had an impact on the opportunity women had to involve themselves with architecture and their ambition to do so. For instance, a prospective patroness could benefit from a friend or family member who had experience in commissioning architects, managing workmen and supervising building schemes. Furthermore, likeminded women with an intellectual interest in architecture had the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss designs and partake in architectural drawing. In other cases, especially for those women who held a position at Court, architectural endeavours could be influenced by a desire to imitate or flatter members of the royal family.

As will be explored, the ties of kinship could have a significant influence on a woman's architectural aspirations. A poignant example, which will be discussed later, is that of the female members of the Yorke family, in which a passion for architecture was shared between a mother and her daughters, as well as other members of the family, including aunts, cousins and in-laws. A friendship circle with a similar type of influence was that of the famed bluestocking society, where their penchant for the celebration of the arts and the exchanging of idea, naturally influenced the collaboration in the field of architecture, as with Elizabeth Montagu and Frances Boscawen.<sup>3</sup> Finally, architectural inspiration could derive from a position at Court, as the architectural projects of royal patronesses served as an example to their female courtiers. This was evident within the Court of Caroline of Ansbach, whose courtiers, the Ladies Hervey and Pomfret, both went on to build impressive townhouses of their own.

## Literature survey

Elite women's involvement in architecture has remained, to this day, an under-researched area of architectural history. Royal women have naturally received the greatest academic attention, as their

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions on the bluestocking society, see Elizabeth Eger (ed.), *Bluestockings Displayed: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz, *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Vivien Jones (ed.), *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); Gary Kelly (ed.), *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785*, 6 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999); Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).



architectural projects are more easily identifiable. As a result, there is now an increasing body of work that recognises the architectural patronage of royal women as highly influential and important to the field of architectural history.<sup>4</sup> The architectural projects of elite women, ranging from royal courtiers to courtesans, are not as widely known, due to the assumption that women did not possess the agency to build, as well as the difficulty in identifying surviving archival sources that prove female architectural patronage.<sup>5</sup> Further, the transient nature of buildings has resulted in a bias towards the investigation of buildings that have survived to the present day, rather than those that have not. As such, the buildings constructed, modified, embellished or decorated by women have often been lost or irrevocably changed through the ages, thus rendering their involvement difficult to recognise.

The 1970s saw women briefly alluded to within the context of architecture, but this was either extremely limited or constrained to the traditionally 'feminine' sphere. In 1978 Mark Girouard, for example, in his history of the country house, identified only eight female patrons, from the medieval period to the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> And in John Fowler and John Cornforth's *English Decoration in the 18th Century*, although numerous references were made to women's tastes regarding interior decoration, this was undermined by their chapter highlighting female home-making, entitled 'Ladies' Amusements', because it served only to trivialise women's role in the eighteenth-century interior.<sup>7</sup>

The artificial distinction between architecture and interior decoration relied upon by architectural historians, particularly in the twentieth century, has contributed to the neglect of female patronage. The creation of a fashionable interior was arguably as important to the patron as the exterior in the eighteenth century. Successful architects, such as William Kent and Robert Adam, were therefore as proficient at designing lavish interior decorative schemes as they were at designing elaborate façades. This was particularly evident in contemporary architectural books, such as Kent's *The Designs of Inigo Jones (1727)* and Robert and James Adam's *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, Esquires (1778)*, where designs for both the exterior and interior were provided.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, from the mid-century, archaeological publications became increasingly influential in dictating the latest architectural tastes and arguably had a greater influence on

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<sup>4</sup> For discussions on female Royal patronage, see Joanna Marschner, David Bindham and Lisa Ford (eds), *Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press: London: Historic Royal Palaces, 2017); Joanna Marschner, *Queen Caroline: Cultural Politics at the Early Eighteenth-Century Court* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014); James Anderson Winn, *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Clarissa Campbell Orr, *Queenship in Britain, 1660-1815: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> For an insightful discussion about the difficulty in identifying seventeenth-century female patrons, see Anne Laurence, 'Women Using Building in Seventeenth-Century England: A Question of Sources?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 13 (2003), pp. 293-303.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (London & New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> 'Ladies Amusements', in John Fowler and John Cornforth, *English Decoration in the 18th Century* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1974), pp. 248-53.

<sup>8</sup> William Kent, *The Designs of Inigo Jones: Consisting of Plans and Elevations for Publick and Private Buildings* (London, 1727); Robert and James Adam, *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, Esquires*, vol. 1 (London: Printed for the authors, 1778).

interiors rather than exteriors. Thus, the fact that Robert Adam's *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (1764) had twenty-nine female subscribers, illustrates that women were interested in architecture as an intellectual pursuit, and were able to take inspiration from the latest archaeological discoveries.<sup>9</sup> Thus, by placing interior decoration on a more even footing with the overall architectural scheme, female agency, taste and patronage becomes more visible.

More recently, the misconception regarding the role women played in architecture, particularly within the country house, has received much greater academic attention. Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh's *The Woman's Domain* and Joanna Martin's *Wives and Daughters* have both successfully re-established women's place within the context of the English country house.<sup>10</sup> By reclaiming women's involvement in the management of the house and estate, and by reasserting their crucial role in the survival and longevity of such houses, both works succeeded in placing women back at the centre of the elite landed class. This recovery of women's history was highlighted in 2004 when a series of Yorkshire country houses launched simultaneous exhibitions which explored female architectural involvement which, with its accompanying publication *Maids and Mistresses*, sought to 'demonstrate that the country house was, and is, a place where women played an active and important role'.<sup>11</sup> This increased research into women and the country house demonstrates its significance in gaining a 'richer, fuller, truer understanding of these remarkable buildings and their inhabitants'.<sup>12</sup>

All three publications effectively present new case studies highlighting female architectural agency in relation to patriarchal ancestral seats. This new scholarship indicated that women often vacated their 'private' sphere to engage with the traditionally perceived male responsibilities of financial management, architectural projects, landscaping and collecting.<sup>13</sup> However, despite this progress, all such studies still focused too heavily on the traditional female associations within the country house; namely marriage, children, servants and 'feminine' pursuits.<sup>14</sup> Dana Arnold perceptively argued as early on as 1998 that this has had the negative consequence of marginalising women's involvement by presenting it as a sub-category rather than as part of the 'mainstream history' which still remains a male preserve.<sup>15</sup> In her chapter 'Defining Femininity' Arnold succinctly, but briefly, highlights the various ways in which women engaged in, and were represented

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Adam, *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (London, 1764).

<sup>10</sup> Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh, *The Woman's Domain: Women and the English Country House* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1993); Joanna Martin, *Wives and Daughters: Women and Children in the English Country House* (Hambledon & London: Continuum, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Larsen (ed.), *Maids and Mistresses: Celebrating 300 Years of Women and the Country House* (York: Yorkshire Country House Partnership, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see James Lomax, 'Temple Newsam: a Woman's Domain', in Ruth Larsen (ed.), *Maids and Mistresses*, pp. 89-105.

<sup>14</sup> Dana Arnold, 'Defining Femininity: Women and the Country House', in Dana Arnold (ed.), *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and Society* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), p. 79.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

by, country house architecture in Georgian Britain. By no means comprehensive in her approach, Arnold admits that the scope of her work was simply to encourage further investigation into the subject:

There is no doubt that further research and a re-evaluation of the way in which designs for country houses and their interiors were developed might well reveal that women played a much greater part in this area of county house history.<sup>16</sup>

Significantly, none of the aforementioned studies considered female architectural agency independent of the country house. Once more, female patronage was considered as only possible within the context of the domestic setting. Rosemary Baird's pioneering research in *Mistress of the House*, went some way in redressing this gap in women's involvement in architecture.<sup>17</sup> Baird presented ten case studies of elite women and their architectural achievements, ranging from 1670 to 1830. Her research was an important step forward in showcasing the scale and diversity of female architectural patronage, and demonstrated that women also engaged in projects distinct from the country seat. She highlighted that women were active in the design, commissioning and management of building schemes, which was a significant advancement in the re-examination of female involvement in architecture.

Of course, previous investigation into the lavish townhouses of wealthy patronesses has been a constant, albeit a sporadic, area of research in recent decades. For example, Lady Isabella Finch's house in Berkeley Square, and the grand houses of the Countess of Home and Elizabeth Montagu in Portman Square, have all been researched.<sup>18</sup> This academic interest, however, was largely inspired by the famous architects associated with the projects, namely William Kent, James Wyatt, James Stuart and Robert Adam, rather than the patronesses themselves. Nonetheless, such research has been essential in highlighting the fact that elite women were unrestrained in their architectural ambitions, and possessed the agency to commission the most fashionable architects of the times.

Since Baird's publication, however, only two additional studies have continued the specific research into female architectural patronage, namely Lucy Worsley's assessment of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley's 'remarkable remodelling' of Welbeck Abbey and Judith S. Lewis's investigation into whether elite women considered the grand patriarchal seats of Britain to be their homes.<sup>19</sup> Both studies presented new examples of female architectural patronage, which indicates that this area of study still remains woefully under-

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses 1670-1830* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> For example, see John Harris, 'William Kent's 44 Berkeley Square', *Apollo*, vol. 126, no. 306 (August 1987), pp. 100-04; Clifford Musgrave, 'A London palazzo: 44 Berkeley Square', *Connoisseur*, (June, 1964), pp. 74-80; Kerry Bristol, '22 Portman Square: Mrs Montagu and Her 'Palais De La Vieillesse'', *British Art Journal*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2001), pp. 72-85; Eileen Harris, 'Home House: Adam versus Wyatt', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 139, no. 1130 (May, 1997), pp. 308-21; Lesley Lewis, 'Elizabeth, Countess of Home, and Her House in Portman Square', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 109, no. 773 (August, 1967), pp. 443-53.

<sup>19</sup> Lucy Worsley, 'Female Architectural Patronage in the Eighteenth Century and the Case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley', *Architectural History*, vol. 48 (2005), pp. 139-62; Judith S. Lewis 'When a House Is Not a Home: Elite English Women and the Eighteenth-Century Country House', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2 (2009), pp. 336-63.

researched. Collectively, the research presented by Baird, Worsley and Lewis has highlighted that elite women did commission significant building schemes during the eighteenth century, but due to the constraints of time or space the scope of their investigations was limited. As a result, Baird only presented ten case studies, Worsley one and Lewis three. Which, although valuable contributions, they would be the first to admit that their research is by no means comprehensive, and did not intend to be.

Other works have briefly considered female patronage, including Henrietta Howard's creation of Marble Hill House, Twickenham, and Mary Delany's experimental garden architecture in Ireland, such as her grotto for the Bishop of Killala, Co. Mayo, and the Beggar's Hut at Delville House, Co. Dublin.<sup>20</sup> Lady Burlington's patronage, skills as an amateur artist, and association with William Kent were also explored in an exhibition at the Orleans House Gallery in 1999, entitled: *Pallas Unveil'd, The Life and Art of Lady Dorothy Savile, Countess of Burlington (1699-1758)*.<sup>21</sup> Although female architectural patronage featured in all three publications, exploration of the theme was fleeting because it was not part of the central narrative.

More recently Amanda Vickery in *Behind Closed Doors* has presented case studies drawing attention to the architectural endeavours and interior decorative schemes of various women ranging from the aristocratic Sophia Petty, Countess of Shelburne to the more modest middle-class Martha Dodson of Cookham.<sup>22</sup> Vickery sought to place her study within the 'uncharted space *between* architectural history, family and gender history and economic history'; a much broader scope which naturally limits its usefulness to this study in that its focus is not purely architectural patronage.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, Vickery's investigation into the 'colourful universe of gender negotiation' within the context of the Georgian home is invaluable in understanding the social constraints experienced by elite women of this period.<sup>24</sup>

Of all these studies none have explicitly considered female architectural patronage within the context of marital status. Vickery goes the furthest in this direction by examining the social and financial restrictions experienced by women within their various marital statuses, but she does not always relate this directly to their architectural agency and autonomy. Considering that marital status was such an important aspect of identity in the eighteenth century, it is important to investigate women of all statuses to prevent constructing an argument on an unrepresentative or overly limited sample of women. By dividing the research in this thesis into subcategories based on marital status, it has been possible to deliver a comprehensive overview as well as lending additional credence to the argument that women of all statuses engaged in architecture.

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<sup>20</sup> Tracy Borman, *King's Mistress, Queen's Servant: The Life and Times of Henrietta Howard* (London: Vintage, 2010); Julius Bryant, *Marble Hill* (London: English Heritage, 2002); James Howley, *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 27 & 39.

<sup>21</sup> Mark De Novellis, *Pallas Unveil'd, The Life and Art of Lady Dorothy Savile, Countess of Burlington (1699-1758)*, exhibition catalogue (Twickenham: Orleans House Gallery, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

In the last eight years, since Vickery's publication in 2009, there have been no further studies into female architectural patronage in the eighteenth century except for Adriano Aymonino and Manolo Guerci's joint research into the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland's transformation of Northumberland House.<sup>25</sup> Baird's 2003 fourteen-year-old publication therefore remains the most comprehensive investigation and, as has already been shown, is limited in its range of examples. There is obvious scope for a deeper examination into female architectural patronage and room for the discovery of previously overlooked female patrons. The more female patrons identified the stronger the case is for arguing that women were at the heart of eighteenth-century architectural patronage. This in turn will allow historians to more accurately comprehend the true relationship that elite women had with their male peers, and will therefore enable a more precise understanding of elite eighteenth-century society.

This thesis therefore seeks to bring a plethora of new sources to bear on the subject of female architectural patronage. Although great advances have been made within this field, the prevalent bias of investigating male architectural patrons means that previously investigated bodies of evidence have not been properly explored. This has resulted in the casual overlooking of archival sources relating directly to female patronage. Archives relating to even the most comprehensively researched country houses still contain much documentation that has previously been deemed uninteresting or insignificant, often because of the gender of its authors. Analysing this previously neglected evidence and the uncovering of entirely new primary evidence has aided in creating a more complete understanding of the eighteenth century, its architecture and the role of women in this period. It has demonstrated, in some cases, that elite women had far greater economic and social freedom than is currently understood by historians, which will therefore not only benefit architectural historians in their examination of female agency in eighteenth-century Britain, but will also benefit associated disciplines such as art history, gender history, economic history and social history.

## New primary sources

As your ladyship always so kindly interests yourself in the comforts of our habitation I take the liberty of inclosing a plan I took of our House at Gloster with all its bendings & turnings, perhaps you will kindly consider in what manner we can connect the two ends of the House together without passing thro' the Hall.

Mary Yorke, *née* Maddox (1779)<sup>26</sup>

This thesis focuses entirely on elite women, as these were the women who possessed the financial power to commission new works. The choice of elite women encompassed by this thesis was dictated by the surviving archival evidence located around the country. Consequently, the case studies presented are distributed

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<sup>25</sup> Adriano Aymonino and Manolo Guerci, 'The Architectural Transformation of Northumberland House under the 7th Duke of Somerset and the 1st Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, 1748-86', *The Antiquaries Journal*, vol. 96, (2016), pp. 315-61; see also, Adriano Aymonino, 'The Musaeum of the first Duchess of Northumberland (1716-1776) at Northumberland House in London', in Susan Bracken, Andrea Galdy, Adriana Turpin (eds), *Women Patrons and Collectors* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Bedford and Luton Archives and Record Service (hereafter BLARS), L30/9/111/22, Mary Yorke to Marchioness Grey, 20 October 1779.

primarily throughout England, with a few examples from Scotland and Ireland. This wide-ranging spatial context has allowed for a greater analysis of female patronage throughout the country, but no attempt has been made to make a comprehensive survey of every architectural patroness throughout the eighteenth century. The number would simply be too great to be encompassed in a three-year PhD. Many of the architectural patronesses discussed in this thesis were selected because of the rich, hitherto overlooked, archival material that survived relating to their architectural projects. The manuscripts that have been consulted include correspondence, diaries, accounts, bills, receipts, inventories, plans, drawings and maps. All of these were sought in the relevant public holdings (Bedford and Luton Archives and Record Service, Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Gloucester Archives, Lincolnshire Archives, Surrey History Centre, the British Library, the National Archives and the Sir John Soane's Museum).

When exploring the architectural endeavours of the Hon. Anne Robinson, the extensive collection of correspondence relating to the Parker family of Saltram and the related Robinson family proved invaluable. At the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office hundreds of letters survive to and from Anne dating from 1778 to 1813, particularly between her and her brother Frederick Robinson and his wife, Hon. Katherine Gertrude Robinson, *née* Harris.<sup>27</sup> And at the Bedford and Luton Archives and Record Service there survives much of the correspondence between Anne and her brothers, namely Thomas Robinson, 2nd Baron Grantham dating 1771-9 and Frederick Robinson dating 1780-8.<sup>28</sup> The examination of Anne's predominantly overlooked correspondence has enabled this thesis to explore her interaction with architecture for the first time.

When researching Elizabeth Herbert, Duchess of Beaufort's architectural patronage at Stoke Park, Gloucestershire, the Beaufort Family of Badminton and the Berkeley Family of Stoke Gifford archive was consulted at the Gloucestershire Archives. Although Badminton House has been the subject of much academic investigation, Stoke Park, which became the Duchess's dower house, has remained neglected. Consequently, the surviving archival material relating to the Duchess and her ownership and remodelling of Stoke have also been overlooked. This thesis has thus investigated and analysed the Duchess's papers within this context for the first time.<sup>29</sup>

The building schemes of the Yorke women, namely Jemima Yorke, 2nd Marchioness Grey and Countess of Hardwicke, and her two daughters, Lady Amabel Polwarth and Lady Mary Grantham, feature regularly in this thesis, due to the sheer scale of surviving archival material located in the Bedford Archives. An

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<sup>27</sup> Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (hereafter PWDRO), Parker family of Saltram and Robinson Papers, 1259/1/1-82, letters from Anne Robinson to her brother, Frederick Robinson, 1778-91; 1259/2, letters of Hon. Katherine Robinson, 1786-1806.

<sup>28</sup> Bedford and Luton Archives and Record Service, Wrest Park [Lucas] Manuscripts, L30/17/4, Lord Grantham to Anne Robinson, 1771-9, L30/17/2, Frederick Robinson to Anne Robinson, 1771-9, L30/15/50, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, 1780-8.

<sup>29</sup> Gloucestershire Archives (hereafter GA), D2700/QP4/6, the 4th Duchess's Papers (1768-89), particularly D2700/QP4/6/4, letters to the Duchess from Silas and Jonas Blandford enclosing accounts on general estate affairs; 1771-87; D2700/QP4/6/1, 4th Duchess's Papers relating to her estates, 1768-89.

extraordinary quantity of the correspondence between these three women and their immediate circles survives, enabling a close scrutiny of their architectural patronage.<sup>30</sup> In addition, an abundance of architectural drawings, plans, bills and receipts form part of this substantial collection, which further enriched the analysis conducted.<sup>31</sup> Supplementary material, including the digitised diaries of Lady Polwarth, of which there are thirty-seven volumes located at the West Yorkshire Archive Services (Leeds), served to augment the exploration of the Yorke women's architectural patronage further.<sup>32</sup>

This plethora of valuable archival material allowed for Lady Grey's architectural patronage at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, and No. 4 St James's Square, London, to be scrutinised thoroughly for the first time within the contrasting contexts of her married life and widowhood. Her daughters' building schemes have also never before received any academic investigation, despite there being such a rich archive documenting their lives. Analysis of Lady Polwarth's creation of Polwarth Lodge in Putney Heath was possible due to the numerous architectural drawings, plans and receipts relating to the project.<sup>33</sup> The surviving primary evidence concerning Lady Grantham's projects primarily consists of her copious correspondence, which is located predominantly in the Bedford Archives.<sup>34</sup> Her detailed and illuminating correspondence provided the basis for the investigation into her architectural involvement at Newby Park, Yorkshire, and her management of the Robinson estates during her son's minority. These manuscripts have never been examined in relation to female architectural patronage.

The holdings of the British Library proved extremely fruitful for examining many of the patronesses in this thesis. Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough's involvement at Blenheim Palace and her commissioning of Marlborough House is well-known, but had not been thoroughly researched with regards to the Duchess's patronage, and therefore warranted a re-examination. For this the Blenheim Papers proved invaluable.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, while Georgiana Spencer, Lady Spencer, has received much attention, the Althorp Papers concerning the remodelling of Holywell House, St Albans, have been largely ignored. The

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<sup>30</sup> BLARS, L30/9, correspondence of Marchioness Grey and her circle, c. 1730-1800; L30/9a, letters of Marchioness Grey, 1740-75; L30/11/122, letters to Lady Polwarth from her mother, Marchioness Grey, 1761-94; L30/11/240, letters from Lady Grantham to her sister Lady Polwarth, 1780-1829; L30/23, correspondence between Lady Polwarth and her cousin, Jemima Mary Gregory, 1765-94.

<sup>31</sup> BLARS, L31, family papers of the Grey family, 1573-1899; L33, maps, plans, watercolours, architectural drawings etc. relating to the Wrest Park estate, 1715-1933.

<sup>32</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Services (hereafter WYAS), Leeds, WYL150/7/6, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, 37 vols, 1769-1831.

<sup>33</sup> For example, see BLARS, L33/261-4, plans and drawings relating to Polwarth Lodge; L31/283-284, receipts signed by John Yenn, architect, 1791-2.

<sup>34</sup> For example, see BLARS, L30/11/240, correspondence between Lady Grantham and her sister Lady Polwarth, 1780-1829; L30/9/81, letters from Lady Grantham to her mother Marchioness Grey c. 1780-96; L30/9/60, letters from Lady Polwarth to her mother Marchioness Grey, 1772-95.

<sup>35</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61353, correspondence of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough with Sir John Vanbrugh, Samuel Travers, Nicholas Hawksmoor, Henry Wise and others, concerning the building and gardens of Blenheim Palace, 1705-25; Add. MS 61357, correspondence, particularly with Sir Christopher Wren and his son, accounts, estimates, and narratives of the Duchess of Marlborough, relating to the building and furnishing of Marlborough House, 1710-F15.

correspondence from George Harcourt, 2nd Earl Harcourt, to Lady Spencer, and from Lady Spencer to Caroline Howe, were crucial in revealing Lady Spencer's Gothic architectural agenda.<sup>36</sup>

For the investigation into Teresa Cornelys's grand building schemes at Carlisle House, Soho, the legal documentation relating to the various court cases that she was embroiled in proved highly useful.<sup>37</sup> These legal manuscripts form part of the original Public Record Office collection and are now located at The National Archives in Kew. The hundreds of preserved eighteenth-century London newspapers that form part of the 17th-18th Century Burney Collection of Newspapers were used in conjunction with the legal documentation, and allowed for an accurate examination of Teresa's architectural exploits.<sup>38</sup> The newspapers consulted include the *Public Advertiser*, the *General Evening Post*, and the *London Chronicle*.

The Sir John Soane's Museum proved to be a valuable resource for this thesis, particularly in relation to the architectural projects of Frances Boscawen at Hatchlands Park, Surrey, Elizabeth Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, at Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park, and Agneta Yorke at Sydney Lodge, Hampshire.<sup>39</sup> The surviving architectural drawings and plans of Sir John Soane and Robert Adam examined in this thesis have, surprisingly, attracted limited academic scrutiny in relation to their female patrons.

When researching Albina Brodrick, Viscountess Midleton's management of the Brodrick estates and completion of Peper Harrow House, the Brodrick Family Papers were consulted at the Surrey History Centre. Of particular interest were Lady Midleton's account books, one of which was set up to record all accounts of the Brodrick English and Irish estates, entitled 'The Right Hon Lady Viscountess Midleton, in account with her son Lord Viscount Midleton', covering the years of her son's minority from 1765 to 1776, and the other was a ledger of 'Accounts branched from the Cash Accounts of the Rt Hon Lady Viscountess Midleton 1765-71', recording her household and business accounts.<sup>40</sup>

The archival material of this thesis was supplemented by a plethora of published primary material, including letters, diaries, journals and household accounts. Surprisingly, however, these publications have been heavily neglected with regards to female architectural patronage, which has therefore allowed this thesis to

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<sup>36</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75623, correspondence between Lady Spencer and Caroline Howe, May-June 1784; Add. MS 75684, letters from Lord Harcourt to Lady Spencer, 1783-1814.

<sup>37</sup> The National Archives, (hereafter TNA), C 107/149, *Cornelys v Fermor* (1760-1); TNA, C 12/1289/16, *Cornelys v Bodycoate* (1762); TNA, C 12/1585/16, *Fermor v Cornelys* (1763); TNA, C 12/1471/1, *Cornelys v Fermor* (1763-4). Later additional cases involving Teresa can be found at TNA, C 12/1518/16, *Fermor v Chamberlain* (1772); TNA, C 12/392/28, *Cornelys v Burger* (1772).

<sup>38</sup> BL, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, this collection has now been digitised and contains over one million newspaper pages.

<sup>39</sup> The Sir John Soane's Museum (hereafter SM), Adam volume 35/80-3, 22/11-14, 11/3, 11/6-11, 15 drawings relating to Hatchlands Park, 1758-9; volume 41/54, 41/79v, 29/3/1-12, 29/3/8v, 29/3/11v, 81/2/49, 17 drawings relating to Pembroke Lodge, 1788-90 and 1792-3; volume 59/38-9, 46/3/16-20, 80/1/58-9, 81/2/82, 81/2/45, 81/2/8-9, 81/2/22, 14 drawings relating to Sydney Lodge, 1792-6.

<sup>40</sup> Surrey History Centre (hereafter SHC), Brodrick Estate Papers, particularly G145/Box64/8; G145/Box44; also numerous architectural drawings survive for the design of the new house, such as G145/91/4-6, 1753, and G145/92/37, 39-43, 45, 48, 1750s.



investigate and showcase numerous unknown patronesses. The *Correspondence of Emily Duchess of Leinster (1731–1814)* published in three volumes (1947-57), for example, allowed for the architectural projects of the famous Lennox sisters, namely the Ladies Caroline, Emily, Louisa, and Sarah, to be scrutinised.<sup>41</sup> The previously overlooked patronage of Lady Sarah, therefore, has been examined in depth within this thesis.

## Structure

The structure of this thesis consists of three main parts, each of which explore the architectural patronage of women within each marital status, namely unmarried, married and widowed. Each part is then divided into chapters which examine different themes and questions. These chapters are illustrated through a series of case studies which scrutinise the architectural schemes of various eighteenth-century women.

### Part 1 Unmarried Women

The first part of this thesis investigates the patronage of unmarried women. Due to the constrained social, legal and financial status of unmarried women of the eighteenth century, it has largely been assumed by historians that they did not have the opportunity to interact with architecture in any capacity. Scholarly research has instead focused on their exciting married and widowed counterparts, who displayed, in a greater number, their architectural agency.<sup>42</sup> The fates of the unmarried daughters of the elite have, on the whole, been largely forgotten, especially in relation to their architectural exploits. Amanda Vickery states that such women were vulnerable to exploitation by their families, and were usually used as ‘unpaid housekeepers, nursery maids and sick-nurses, tutors, chaperones, companions and surrogate mothers’.<sup>43</sup> Their interaction with architecture, therefore, has only been seen in relation to how they used and managed the buildings that they lived in.

Although this was indeed the case for many unmarried women of the period, this section seeks to highlight and discuss the exceptions to this rule. It will demonstrate that in rare circumstances single women could shape their surroundings if they chose to do so. The first chapter of this section, therefore, will explore the architectural endeavours of the unmarried Anne Robinson, whose influence at Saltram House, Devon, and at her London properties deserves investigation. Anne is the most conventional ‘spinster’ considered by this thesis, who as an unmarried daughter was free to assume the role of surrogate mother to her niece and nephew upon the death of her sister, and consequently also became the chatelaine of Saltram for her brother-in-law. Yet, despite these traditional roles, it will be shown that Anne was also able to pursue her architectural ambitions both at the patriarchal country seat and at her rented London residences.

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<sup>41</sup> Brian Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster, 1731-1814*, 3 vols (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1949-57).

<sup>42</sup> For example, all ten of Baird’s case studies are of married or widowed women.

<sup>43</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 188.

Secondly, this section will explore, with two examples, the building projects of unmarried women who possessed their own independent fortunes. In the case of Lady Isabella Finch, her financial independence was secured through her position as Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess Amelia, and Lady Elizabeth Hastings' substantial fortune was inherited. Both women used their independent wealth to commission significant architectural schemes that displayed their status, illustrious lineage and taste to the world.

Thirdly, the architectural agency of elite courtesans and mistresses will be discussed, which has hitherto, remained a neglected area of research. Although numerous biographies of famous courtesans and mistresses exist, they predominantly focus on the exciting and risqué lives of their heroines without investigating or analysing the buildings that they lived in and shaped.<sup>44</sup> Kate Williams' excellent biography of Emma Hamilton does, perhaps for the first time, explore a mistress's influence over architecture, as she highlights Emma's involvement at Merton Place, Surrey, the country seat of her lover, Horatio Nelson.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, this section seeks to continue this progressive research by investigating the architectural ambitions of three dynamic and influential mistresses of the eighteenth century, namely Sophia Baddeley, George Anne Bellamy and Teresa Cornelys. It will be demonstrated that these women used architecture in various ways and for various purposes, such as furthering their careers as courtesans, maintaining their place amongst the elite, displaying their fashionable taste, and creating legacies for their children.

## **Part 2 Married Women**

The second part of this thesis will examine the architectural patronage of married women. With such great restrictions placed upon women's freedom it is possible to see why architectural historians have typically overlooked the fact that elite wives were very often involved in architectural schemes. On the whole it has been assumed that wives were simply relegated to the 'woman's domain', allowed only to run the household, rather than create the house itself. This assumption has been compounded by surviving architectural plans and drawings which are often dedicated to the husband and not the wife, and the building accounts were usually compiled purely for the husband's inspection. It is therefore easy to understand why the misconception that only men built has prevailed so forcefully to the present day. This section aims to dispel this myth by presenting five chapters illustrating how wives often had similar architectural agency as their husbands.

The first chapter of this part considers married women's patronage within its conventional context. Wives were expected to become the mistress of their husband's house and to manage it efficiently and effectively.

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<sup>44</sup> For example, see Katie Hickman, *Courtesans* (London: Harper Collins, 2004); Barbara White, *Queen of the Courtesans: Fanny Murray* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014); Julie Peakman, *Peg Plunkett: Memoirs of a Whore* (London: Quercus Publishing Ltd., 2015); Frances Wilson, *The Courtesan's Revenge* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> Kate Williams, *England's Mistress: The Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton* (London: Random House, 2006), pp. 274-84. This was briefly explored in the Greenwich Maritime Museum's exhibition: 'Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity' (November 2016-April 2017) and in its accompanying catalogue: Quintin Colville and Kate Williams (eds), *Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), pp. 245-49.

This of course was a socially accepted interaction with architecture and for many wives it was indeed the only interaction they had during their married lives. However, it will be demonstrated that even within the most traditional of circumstances wives were still involved in architecture, especially regarding the redecoration of their marital home. This they did with great competence and flair, relishing the opportunity to showcase their fashionable tastes.

The seventh chapter of this thesis will consider whether elite wives challenged their traditional role as mistress of the house and engaged in architecture more directly. Using the Yorke women as the focus of this argument it will be demonstrated that elite wives of the eighteenth century were far more active within the realm of architectural patronage than has commonly been accepted by historians. They not only assisted their respective husbands with building schemes, but also commissioned and directed others independently. Although men had financial control, this by no means limited their wives' interaction with architecture. The common academic assumption that married women could not and did not participate in architectural commissions is thus undermined.

The creation of the marital home was, more often than not, the equal endeavour of both the husband and the wife. Although interior decoration has traditionally been considered the responsibility of the wife, the fact that wives often directed noteworthy architectural improvements either with or independently of their husbands, is highly significant. Thus, Marchioness Grey's architectural patronage will be considered at her ancestral home at Wrest Park as well as Lady Polwarth's management of Wrest Park in her mother's absence, and Lady Grantham's involvement in the remodelling of Newby Park will be examined. These cases studies will illustrate the true extent to which wives could involve themselves in architecture and will also indicate that in some marriages architectural patronage was a joint enterprise between spouses.

Chapter eight puts forth the argument that wives of military and naval husbands could often wield considerable architectural power in the absence of their husbands. The eighteenth century saw sustained periods of warfare, including the Spanish War of Succession (1701-1714), the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748) the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), the American Revolution (1776–1783), and the French Revolutionary Wars (1793–1802). Consequently, wives of naval and army officers were frequently tasked with the responsibility of maintaining their family's finances and estates whilst their husbands were at war. Moreover, wives were often charged with the responsibility of overseeing grand building projects on behalf of their husbands and were therefore expected to liaise with architects, contractors and workmen. The level of involvement that wives had in the overall direction of these buildings could vary depending upon the character of the lady, the scale of the build, and the length of time that their husband was absent.

Hitherto, the role that naval and army wives have played in the realm of architecture has received little attention. The glories and victories of their illustrious husbands have dominated history, resulting in the casual neglect of the important part that wives played in the background. Country seats that were built

using the spoils of war may not have existed had it not been for the dedication of the many loyal wives who managed the projects in their husbands' absence.

In this chapter the remarkable architectural endeavours of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough (1660-1744), will be considered. During her heroic husband's absence, she commissioned Sir Christopher Wren and his son to build a grand London house for her family on Pall Mall, and she also oversaw the building of Sir John Vanbrugh's Blenheim Palace. The Duchess of Marlborough's involvement in architecture was exceptional, as befitting her high rank, her forceful nature and her exceptional wealth. Her achievements will be compared to the smaller, but no less significant, projects of Mrs Boscawen, who remodelled her London house in Audley Street in 1748 and jointly commissioned a new house at Hatchlands with her husband, Admiral Boscawen. Significantly, Mrs Frances Boscawen, as a lady of taste and fashion, gave Robert Adam one of his first country house commissions to design the interiors of Hatchlands. Both patronesses possessed considerable architectural agency while their husbands were away and were often determined to pursue their own ideas of taste and convenience. Significantly, they did this with the approval of their husbands, which further indicates that architecture was perceived as a far more equal venture in the eighteenth century than has traditionally been believed by historians.

Chapter nine examines the exceptional circumstances that allowed unhappily married wives to escape their oppressive husbands by patronising architecture. The case study presented investigates the architectural patronage of Elizabeth Herbert, Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery, who escaped her abusive husband by obtaining the lease of Hill Lodge in Richmond Park from George III and Queen Charlotte. With the income that she earned from her position as Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen, she was able to commission Sir John Soane to remodel Hill Lodge, which she subsequently renamed Pembroke Lodge. This chapter presents Lady Pembroke's patronage as an example of how architecture could be utilised as a means of security, as well as a means of establishing an independent home where women were free to express their own identity.

Chapter ten concludes this section by exploring the way in which socially disgraced wives embraced architecture to cope with their banishment to the countryside. This chapter will investigate the architectural exploits of Henrietta Knight, Lady Luxborough, at Barrells Court, Warwickshire, and Lady Sarah Bunbury at her elder sister's house Frescati House, Dublin, and her own at Molcomb House, Sussex. Both wives were exiled following their scandalous extra-marital affairs and both were banished from society for the remainder of their lives. Architecture, therefore, became the focus of their passion, not only out of necessity but also as a form of distraction. To varying degrees both patronesses were able to reconcile themselves to their fates, but only once they were able to create a home that enabled them to reclaim some form of dignity.

## Part 3 Widowed Women

The third part of this thesis will consider the architectural achievements of widowed women. Widowed women were perhaps the most likely category of women to commission architectural schemes because they possessed the greatest social, financial and legal autonomy. Following the deaths of their husbands, widows were free to forge their own way in society, and thus were also free to pursue their own architectural ambitions.

Chapter eleven will investigate the conventional scenarios within which widowed women could interact with architecture as was accepted and expected by Georgian society. Many widows, as was stipulated in the marriage settlement, were bequeathed a life interest in either a dower house or a London house, thus providing a smooth transition (in theory) from marital life to widowhood. The dower houses of Susanna Montgomery, Countess of Eglinton, at Kilmaurs Place and Auchans Castle, Ayrshire; Georgiana Spencer, Countess Spencer, at Holywell House, St Albans, and Elizabeth Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort, at Stoke Park, Gloucestershire, will each be examined in turn. All three widows demonstrated a desire to engage in architecture, and to different extents were also able to go beyond the necessary repairs to direct schemes that suited their architectural inclinations. As will be demonstrated, Lady Spencer was thus able to pursue her Gothic vision at Holywell, while the Duchess of Beaufort was able to remain at the forefront of aesthetic fashion by constantly redecorating the interiors of Stoke.

When a family did not possess a dower house, a widow was free to rent or buy a house of her choice using the money provided by her jointure. This usually took the form of a town house and, as such, many widows flocked to London to establish themselves at the heart of fashionable society. For the wealthiest of widows, or for the most architecturally ambitious, the only option was to commission an entirely new London house. This thesis therefore will briefly consider the significance of the well-known examples, namely Elizabeth Montagu's Montagu House, Elizabeth Home, Countess of Home's Home House and Henrietta Fermor, Countess of Pomfret's 'Pomfret Castle'. Additionally, the unknown patroness, Mary (Molly) Hervey, Lady Hervey, will be considered for the first time in relation to her French vision at No. 25 St James's Place.

The final category within this chapter will discuss the suburban villa, a form of residence that was often leased, bought or built by widows as the perfect-sized retreat from the dirt of the city. Villas were more affordable and convenient than large country houses and could be remodelled easily. This thesis will present four separate case studies which will explore the various designs and ambitions advocated by their patronesses, as well as the differing reasons behind their creation.

The final chapter, chapter twelve, will consider some of the more unconventional, or unusual, scenarios in which widows interacted with architecture. The complexities of human nature and of inheritance occasionally provided widows with great social, political and financial power. As will be discussed, in some situations widows were granted life interests in their late husbands' estate, entrusted with the great

responsibility of maintaining them efficiently and profitably. On occasion, a widow's life interest was also accompanied with the additional obligation of completing the construction of their late husband's country seat. Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, completed the monumental Blenheim Palace in her husband's memory, as did Margaret Coke, Countess of Leicester, at Holkham Hall, for her late lord. In both examples, accompanying trusts were established appointing the newly widowed women as powerful trustees to ensure that the funds allocated from the estate were spent properly and that the remaining work was completed appropriately.

The building schemes of widows who managed the family estates in their sons' name, whilst minors, will be explored in more depth within this section. In these cases widows had a vested interest to protect their son's and heir's estates until they reached their majority. During these periods widows could commission architectural projects in the name of their sons, as demonstrated by Lady Mary Grantham at Newby Hall, Yorkshire. Others completed schemes begun by their late husband in the name of their sons, as with Lady Albinia Midleton at Peper Harow, Surrey. In both of these examples it will be illustrated that widows wielded considerable power as the head of the family and thus were conscious of creating a befitting legacy not only for their heirs, but also for their family name.

The final theme examined by this thesis will discuss the architectural ambition of widows who inherited their family's ancestral seats. Occasionally when the male line of great families died out, the estates and grand country seats could be inherited by female relatives. Widowhoods, therefore, provided the perfect opportunity for these women to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors and embark upon architectural schemes of their own. This was evident at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, where Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey, commissioned a large-scale refurbishment of her rambling ancestral seat.

Before examining each marital status, however, the legal and financial status of elite women of the eighteenth century must first be considered, as this is key to understanding the true extent of female architectural patronage. Elite women were constrained by the legal, financial and social restrictions placed on them by the patriarchal society. This will be examined in the first chapter with a discussion of the purposes and consequences of the eighteenth-century marriage settlement.

# Chapter 1

## The legal and financial status of women: the marriage settlement

While there is considerable literature on marriage in the eighteenth century it is rarely discussed at length in books on female architectural patronage. As this thesis is based around the concept of marital status, it is essential that it begins with a discussion of what that meant in the eighteenth century. It is important to note that marriage was a serious affair for the elite land-owning classes. The aim, first and foremost, was to advance or maintain the wealth, social status and land-owning capacity of the parties involved. Marriage was seen as a union between two families rather than the private union of two individuals, and thus arranged marriages were the norm. Marriage was, quite literally, a business contract and thus from a very young age elite girls were raised with the sole purpose of securing a ‘good match’. A family’s determination to marry their daughters into elite families could be extremely cold-hearted in some instances. For example, when Margaret Brownlow died of smallpox in 1710 before her wedding to Peregrine Bertie, the future Duke of Ancaster, her family were so loath to lose the connection that her sister Jane simply replaced her at the altar.<sup>46</sup>

Prior to the wedding ceremony, lengthy negotiations on behalf of the bride and bridegroom occurred, culminating in the signing of the marriage settlement. This settlement or contract principally stipulated the financial arrangements agreed between the parties; namely the bride’s portion (dowry), the wife’s ‘pin-money’, the widow’s dower or jointure, and the provisions made for any children that should arise from the union.<sup>47</sup> Each of these will be discussed below. The most common form of settlement was the ‘strict settlement’ which was primarily designed to protect the groom’s estate by entailing it upon the eldest son

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<sup>46</sup> Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Comet of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> For discussions on marriage settlements see Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 102-51.

produced by the marriage.<sup>48</sup> The objective was to defend primogeniture and to keep the estate intact for future generations.

## The bride's portion or dowry

To secure an elite husband, young women of the eighteenth century hoped to have settled upon them a large marriage portion, or dowry.<sup>49</sup> The bride's 'fortune' could be in the form of cash, securities, bonds, mortgages and land.<sup>50</sup> Randolph Trumbach purports that the average value of a bride's portion was £25,000, but this related principally to brides marrying peers, and neglects to consider the untitled landed elite.<sup>51</sup> This was an enormously large amount of money, especially when, according to Robert D. Hume, '52% of families had income under £25 per annum; 83% had income under £50; 94% had income under a £100' in the 1760s.<sup>52</sup> Hume further states that the sum of £1 in the early eighteenth century corresponds to approximately £200-£300 in buying power today.<sup>53</sup> The women investigated within this thesis were therefore considered to be extremely wealthy, particularly when an average maid or footman was 'lucky to take home £3 a year'.<sup>54</sup>

Portion sizes varied considerably amongst the elite depending on the ambitions, status and wealth of the families involved.<sup>55</sup> For example, in 1708 Lady Catherine Tufton, daughter of the 6th Earl of Thanet, brought to her marriage to Edward Watson, Viscount Sondes, the Earl of Rockingham's heir, a sizeable portion of £13,000.<sup>56</sup> However, upon the marriage of Charles Bertie of Uffingham and Bathsheba Mead in 1731, a smaller portion of only £5,000 was brought to the union.<sup>57</sup> This variance can be explained by the difference in social status of the two unions; the aristocratic Tufton and Watson families evidently demanded a dowry that reflected their elevated status and wealth, whereas the Bertie and Mead families, although socially ambitious, were of the middling-ranks of society and had less fortune to negotiate over.

Naturally, the size of the marriage portion was subject to inflation in early modern England, as stated by Daniel Quinlan and Jean Shackelford:

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<sup>48</sup> Erickson, *Women and Property*, p.102.

<sup>49</sup> Christopher Clay, 'Marriage, Inheritance, and the Rise of Large Estates in England, 1660-1815', *The Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., vol. 21, no. 3 (1968), p. 507.

<sup>50</sup> Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p. 81.

<sup>52</sup> Robert D. Hume, 'The Value of Money in Eighteenth-Century England: Incomes, Prices, Buying Power—and Some Problems in Cultural Economics', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 77, no. 4 (2014), p. 377.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>54</sup> Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Amy Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 86-9; Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 205-06.

<sup>56</sup> Lloyd Bonfield, *Marriage Settlements, 1601-1740: The Adoption of the Strict Settlement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 116.

<sup>57</sup> Huntingdonshire Archives, CON 2/6/15, Marriage Settlement, 26 July 1731.



Between 1475 and 1725, the average size of the aristocratic dowries increased dramatically from £625 to over £9,500, and in all likelihood, so did marriage portions conferred by untitled land-owners.<sup>58</sup>

Consequently, during the course of the eighteenth century, aristocratic dowries increased in relation to land inflation, resulting in some astronomical figures. For example, in 1787, when Edward Stratford, 2nd Earl of Aldborough, married his second wife, the Hon. Anne Elizabeth Henniker, he announced:

My wife brings me Fifty thousand pounds hard cash down, and will at her Father's death and Aunt's death succeed to one hundred and fifty thousand more. She is certainly the first match in England, and I'm happy enough to be preferred to English noblemen.<sup>59</sup>

The bride's particularly large fortune indicates that not only was she the sole heiress of her father's estate, but that her family also sought to use it to advance their social status via a high-ranking marriage. Further, it demonstrates that upon marriage, the bride's marriage portion became the property of her husband, to be used as he saw fit. Uses could include the extension of the patriarchal estate, the paying off of debts or for the investment of children's portions. When William Etrick, a gentleman with grand aspirations, married Catherine Wharton of Old Park in 1752, he used his wife's portion to pay off £2,000 from the mortgage of his mansion at High Barnes, County Durham.<sup>60</sup> The importance of this injection of ready cash was such that after careful financial management in 1777-8 the Etrick family were able to erect a larger, more fashionable country house, thereby proclaiming their social advancement.<sup>61</sup>

The size of the bride's portion was not only of great importance to the groom and his family, but also to the bride herself. This was due to the fact that the size of her wife's annuity and widow's jointure were directly correlated to the amount that she brought to the marriage.

## The wife's annuity from her husband or 'pin-money'

For the bride, one of the most important features of the marriage settlement was the inclusion of a liberal annuity, referred to as 'pin-money'.<sup>62</sup> An example of a very substantial, and business-like, offer of marriage including pin-money, was described by Elizabeth Seymour, Duchess of Northumberland, in her journal in 1767:

Lord Thanet was married to Miss Sackville. Beauty without Art in this case its reward; he had never spoken to her when he wrote to her Mother the following proposals: 800£ a year pin money, 3000

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<sup>58</sup> Daniel Quinlan and Jean Shackleford, 'Economy and English Families, 1500-1850,' in Robert Rotberg (ed.), *Population History and the Family: A Journal of Interdisciplinary History Reader* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2001), p. 55.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in T. U. Sadleir (ed.) 'Letter from Edward, 2nd Earl of Aldborough, to his Agent at Belan', *Co. Kildare Archaeological Journal*, vol. 7 (1912-14), p. 334.

<sup>60</sup> Bailey, *Unquiet Lives*, p. 86.

<sup>61</sup> John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland Enjoying Territorial Possessions Or High Official Rank, But Uninvested with Heritable Honours*, vol. 3 (London: Henry Colburn, 1836), p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> For discussions on pin-money see Susan Staves, 'Pin money' in O. M. Brack (ed.), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, vol. 14 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 47-77; Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 131-61.

jointure, and 50,000£ for younger children. He follow'd his letter so soon that he got to her Ladyship before her answer had reach'd his Lordship, and as may be supposed was favourably received by Mother and Daughter.<sup>63</sup>

The purpose of pin-money was to allow wives the freedom to purchase their own luxuries without having to seek the approval of their husbands each time. Susan Staves claims that pin-money also sought to protect wives and children from particularly miserly or spend-thrift husbands, who would otherwise neglect the needs of their families.<sup>64</sup> Frances Boscawen lamented Lady Harriet Foley's financial status after her marital breakdown: 'driven from her home [...] jewels seiz'd, cloaths seiz'd [...] she has not pin-money or settled maintenance at present, so she may be reduc'd to a dernière chemise!'<sup>65</sup> Such a comment reflects the precarious financial situation a vulnerable wife could find herself in if pin-money was not established before marriage, or if payments failed to materialise during the marriage. Husbands could be taken to court for their failure to make the necessary payments which would suggest that both legislators and courts sought to protect wives' separate property. In practice, however, the courts soon ruled that arrears of more than one year could not be collected, indicating that the notion of a wife saving or investing large sums of money was actively discouraged.<sup>66</sup>

After all, upon marriage, a woman's legal standing in common law became that of *feme covert*, meaning that her legal identity was eclipsed by that of her husband's, resulting in her inability to contract, sue or be sued independently.<sup>67</sup> It further resulted in her property and even her debts becoming that of her husband's, in direct comparison to that of a *feme sole*, which referred to an unmarried or widowed woman. Therefore, the very idea of a wife's separate property or economic independence (advocated by the concept of pin-money) was illogical in the eyes of the law.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, elite women jealously guarded their entitlement and the popularity of pin-money continued throughout the eighteenth century. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, famously had one of the most lavish of annuities, that of £4,000, and yet she still managed to accrue debts of £3,000 in 1776.<sup>69</sup> In contrast, her sister Henrietta (Harriet), Lady Duncannon, later Countess of Bessborough, was provided with only £400 a year by her father-in-law, Lord Bessborough, due to the fact that he had gambled away most of the family fortune, leaving the estate heavily indebted.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> James Grieg (ed.), *Diaries of a Duchess, Extracts from the Diaries of the First Duchess of Northumberland, 1716-76* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), pp. 76-77.

<sup>64</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 133.

<sup>65</sup> Frances Boscawen to Mary Delany, Glan Villa, 6 July 1776, in Lady Llanover (ed.), *Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, 1st ser., vol. 2 (London, 1861), p. 234.

<sup>66</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 142.

<sup>67</sup> Erickson, *Woman and Property*, p. 24; Erickson, 'Common Law vs. Common Practice: the Use of Marriage Settlements in Early Modern England', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., vol. 43, no. 1 (1990), p. 24.

<sup>68</sup> Rachel Wilson, *Elite Women in Ascendancy Ireland, 1690-1745: Imitation and Innovation* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), p. 28.

<sup>69</sup> Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> Janet Gleeson, *An Aristocratic Affair: The Life of Georgiana's Sister, Harriet Spencer, Countess of Bessborough* (London: Bantam, 2006), p. 52.

The size of the annuity, therefore, could vary greatly, but Eileen Spring argues that the amount related directly to the size of the portion brought to the marriage, and was often correlated to the portions accruing interest.<sup>71</sup> Deborah Wilson purports that ‘the percentage of pin-money to portion ranged from 4 per cent to 10 per cent’.<sup>72</sup> This is evident in the marriage settlement between Thomas Coke, 1st Earl of Leicester, and Lady Margaret Tufton, where it was agreed that she would be paid £400 per annum, which was 8 percent of the £5,000 marriage portion paid before the marriage. However, this was only a third of her whole portion of £15,000, the remaining £10,000 was to be paid at a later date, which actually means that her pin-money was a meagre 2.6 percent.<sup>73</sup> Upon the death of Thomas Coke’s grandmother, Lady Anne Walpole, Lady Margaret’s pin-money was to be increased to £500 per annum (10 percent of the £5,000 or 3.3 percent of the £15,000).<sup>74</sup> Thomas Coke was far more generous to his daughter-in-law, Lady Mary Campbell, providing her with a £5,000 annuity, which was a staggering 25 percent of her £20,000 marriage portion.<sup>75</sup>

Of course, some settlements were harsher than others, with wives receiving very little pin-money, as demonstrated by the marriage settlement of Sir William Lee of Hartwell and Lady Elizabeth Harcourt, which stipulated that she would receive only £200 per annum, for her £8,000 marriage portion (a mere 2.5 percent).<sup>76</sup> To compensate for this, her jointure of £1,200 was above the normal 10 percent of the portion, coming in at 15 percent. Further, the marriage settlement of Henry Nevill, eldest son of George Nevill, 1st Earl of Abergavenny, to Mary Robinson provided an annuity of £300 for Mary, which was a meagre 1.2 percent of her gigantic portion of £25,000.<sup>77</sup> However, further clauses in the settlement stated that upon the death of various relatives, the annuity could increase to a more appropriate £1,000 (4 per cent). In this case, Mary Robinson was the daughter of a prosperous lawyer, John Robinson, who rose to be a prominent politician and government official. The large dowry was therefore the price for marrying into the aristocracy.

## The widow’s dower or jointure

On the death of her husband an elite woman might, dependent upon the marriage settlement, either enjoy ‘dower’ or ‘jointure’. The common law practice of dower entitled the widow to one-third of her husband’s real property and one-third of his chattels or moveables on his death.<sup>78</sup> The practice of dower, however,

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<sup>71</sup> Eileen Spring, *Law, Land and Family: Aristocratic Inheritance in England, 1300-1800* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 53.

<sup>72</sup> Deborah Wilson, *Women, Marriage and Property in Wealthy Landed Families in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 68.

<sup>73</sup> D. P. Mortlock, *Aristocratic Splendour: Money and the World of Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007), p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> A. M. W. Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and his Friends*, vol. 1 (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head: 1908), p. 50.

<sup>76</sup> Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, D-LE/6/2, Articles of Agreement (Marriage Settlement), 13 June 1763.

<sup>77</sup> East Sussex Record Office, ABE/25C/1, Marriage settlement (demise for 99 years and declaration of trust), 29 Sep 1781.

<sup>78</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 29.

had become largely extinct amongst the aristocracy by 1700, and had been replaced with jointure. Jointure came into prominence during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a means of keeping the estate intact for the heir. It has been argued by Elieen Spring that had dower continued, aristocratic widows might have eventually controlled one-sixth of aristocratic land by the eighteenth century, a prospect which would have severely threatened male land control.<sup>79</sup>

There has been much debate amongst historians regarding the pervasiveness of jointure over dower and its consequence upon female property rights of the eighteenth century. Spring argues that, '[w]hereas the widow's right in earlier periods is calculated as a right over her husband's land, in later periods it is calculated as a return on her own fortune. The husband's land, the very item that dower was all about, has dropped off the balance sheet'.<sup>80</sup> However, John Habakkuk states that a widow's future was more secure with jointure as it was 'protected against any actions of the husband which might endanger the estates, and, in law at least, against any general deterioration of the family fortunes'.<sup>81</sup> Despite this, the amount of jointure that a widow might enjoy was entirely dependent upon the portion of land or capital that she brought to the marriage. The amount of jointure to be paid at the death of a husband was decided during the marriage negotiations, and was subsequently immortalised in the marriage settlement.

During the eighteenth century, the typical proportion between the jointure and the marriage portion was £100 for every £1000.<sup>82</sup> For example, during the marriage negotiations of Lord William Fitzwilliam and Lady Anne Watson-Wentworth (d. 1769) his solicitor remarked that: 'The lady's portion is proposed to be £15,000. To follow the usual method of making jointures, it would be proposed to settle for that fortune 1500 a year in lands'.<sup>83</sup> In Ireland, the same procedure was generally followed, demonstrated in 1780 when Simon Digby of Landenstown, Co. Kildare, pledged 'to settle a hundred per annum present maintenance for every thousand he shall receive [with his eldest son's bride], and the like for jointure, but must have at least £3,000 now deposited'.<sup>84</sup> This standard arrangement lasted well into the nineteenth century, with portions of £10,000 to £30,000 returning at least a ten percent jointure within aristocratic circles.<sup>85</sup>

This rule could vary, of course, depending upon the generosity of the groom's family, or the husband himself in his will. For example, George Clavering-Cowper, 3rd Earl Cowper, gave his widow £500 per annum despite the fact that she had only brought a marriage portion of £4,000.<sup>86</sup> Further, Lady Elizabeth Howard

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<sup>79</sup> Spring, *Law, Land and Family*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>81</sup> John Habakkuk, *Marriage, Debt, and the Estates System English Landownership, 1650-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 81.

<sup>82</sup> Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, p. 82.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, p. 82, n. 44.

<sup>84</sup> National Library of Ireland, Smythe of Barbavilla Papers, MS 41,597/2, Ralph Smythe to John Cooke, 1780, as quoted in A. P. W. Malcomson, *The Pursuit of an Heiress: Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland 1740-1840* (Belfast: Ulster Historic Foundation, 2006), p. 27.

<sup>85</sup> Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 67.

<sup>86</sup> Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, p. 82, n. 44.

was granted a jointure of £800 even though her marriage portion was £6,000, upon her marriage to Nicholas Lechmere in 1719.<sup>87</sup> A generous husband could resettle his estate during his lifetime and increase his wife's proposed jointure if the estate prospered enough to do so. This was evidenced by the rise in Margareta Foster's, *née* Burgh, agreed jointure upon marriage in 1764 of £200 per annum to a staggering £2,000 in 1810.<sup>88</sup> This ten-fold increase was exceptional, but such a provision was required as the Fosters' rank, status and fortune had risen significantly during the course of their marriage. John Foster became Speaker of the Irish House of Commons in 1785, and Mrs Foster was elevated to the peerage in 1790 as Baroness Oriel, and then Viscountess Ferrard in 1797. Perhaps fortuitously for the family's estate, Lady Ferrard predeceased her husband by four years in 1824.

Such liberality was not common and many widows felt pressured into accepting unfairly low annuities for fear of burdening the heir's estates. For example, upon the death of her husband in 1761, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu received an annuity of £1,200, but had she claimed her widows' right to one-third she would have been entitled to a staggering £800,000 in money and £17,000 a year in rental income.<sup>89</sup> A further example of the precarious financial situation a new widow could find herself in was illustrated by the surprisingly harsh treatment by Lord Hervey to his wife Lady Mary Hervey, in his will in 1743:

Whatever I am obliged to leave my wife by the writing signed at our marriage she must have. I leave her nothing more. And tho' I have given her power to dispose of something at her death it is with this proviso that she leave all the money, plate, and jewels I permit her to dispose of to some one of her children born during our wedlock.<sup>90</sup>

This rather heartless treatment did not go unnoticed by society who considered it a scandal that Lady Hervey was to receive so little, as demonstrated by a letter from Fanny Russell to her brother:

Lord Hervey's will has made a great noise, and he has finished his charming character by it. Lady Hervey has made the best of wives and mothers, yet he leaves her nothing but her jointure, which she must have; and has ordered his eldest son, immediately after his death, to carry away his eldest unmarried daughter away from his wife to Mrs Horner [...] Lady Hervey's jointure is but 300 a year, so it is to be hoped Lord Bristol will add to it.<sup>91</sup>

With aristocratic widows of this period usually receiving an annuity of £1,500,<sup>92</sup> Lady Hervey's jointure of only £300 was particularly low. Lady Sarah Cowper also received a small annuity upon the death of her husband in 1706, of only £400.<sup>93</sup> Other widows were extremely fortunate, receiving generous jointures, such

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<sup>87</sup> Carlisle MSS, A5/52, Articles on the marriage of the Rt. Hon. Nicholas Lechmere Esq., with the Rt. Hon. Elizabeth Howard, 11 April 1719, as cited in Ruth Larsen, 'Dynastic Domesticity: The Role of Elite Women in the Yorkshire Country House, 1685-1858' (Doctoral thesis, University of York, 2003), p. 125.

<sup>88</sup> Malcomson, *The Pursuit of an Heiress*, p. 36.

<sup>89</sup> Larson, 'Dynastic Domesticity', p. 202.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Dorothy M. Stuart, *Molly Lepell, Lady Hervey* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1936), p. 119.

<sup>91</sup> Frances Russell to Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Russell, 26 August 1743, published in HMC Russell-Astley, *Report on the Manuscripts of Mrs. Frankland-Russell-Astley, of Chequers Court, Bucks* (London, 1900), p. 285.

<sup>92</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 95.

<sup>93</sup> ODNB online, 'Cowper, Sarah, Lady Cowper (1644-1720)'.

as that of Isabella, Lady Carlisle, who began receiving her significant jointure of £2,000<sup>94</sup> in 1758 and in 1812 the 1st Marquess of Salisbury secured for his daughter, Lady Emily Cecil (1789-1858), the considerably large jointure of £3,000, despite only providing a portion of £15,000.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps one of the most lavish jointures was awarded to Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, who received a staggering £20,000 per annum, beginning in 1722.<sup>96</sup>

Widowhood, therefore, could provide an elite woman with immense independent wealth. However, as Lloyd Bonfield argues, the true value of the jointure depended upon the length of the widowhood.<sup>97</sup> If a wife was bereaved in her youth and outlived her husband by many years her annuity could soon amount to a significant fortune, as with Juliana, Duchess of Leeds, who was paid the vast sum of £190,000 during her sixty-three-year widowhood.<sup>98</sup> Jointure provided a widow with financial stability and social independence, thus often providing her with the greatest freedom that she had ever experienced.

In 1707, a year into her widowhood, Lady Sarah Cowper relished her autonomy: 'Lead your life in freedom and liberty, and throw not your self into slavery'.<sup>99</sup> The famous bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu also appreciated the freedom that widowhood provided and with a jointure of £7,000 per annum it is unsurprising that she was reluctant to relinquish it: 'One would not put on fetters without some good cause, liberty is so very agreeable'.<sup>100</sup> These sentiments were shared by Mary Delany, *née* Granville, who, upon the death of her first husband, relished the opportunity to manage her own finances: 'As to my fortune, it was very mediocre, but it was *at my own command*'.<sup>101</sup>

## Provisions for daughters and younger children

The final part of the marriage contract regarded the financial provisions made for the children (other than the heir) that may arise from the union.<sup>102</sup> It became increasingly common in the eighteenth century for an elite family's wealth to be 'more equitably distributed between the male heir and 'excess children'' as a means of preventing the 'downward social mobility' of such children.<sup>103</sup> Thus it became the practice for stipulating in the marriage settlement how much such children could hope to expect upon marriage, upon reaching their majority or upon the deaths of their parents. These provisions were often dependent upon the sexes of the children as well as the number, and were often subject to change in response to the deaths of parents,

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<sup>94</sup> Castle Howard, Carlisle MSS, A5/63, Marriage settlement, Henry, Earl of Carlisle and Isabella Byron, 6 June 1743.

<sup>95</sup> Malcomson, *The Pursuit of the Heiress*, p. 28.

<sup>96</sup> Ophelia Field, *The Favourite: Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2002), p. 385.

<sup>97</sup> Bonfield, *Marriage Settlements 1601-1740*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>98</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 95.

<sup>99</sup> Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, DE/P/F32, Lady Sarah Cowper's Diary, vol. 4 (1707), pp. 26-27.

<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott (sister), in Reginald Blunt (ed.), *Mrs. Montagu 'Queen of the Blues', Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, vol. 2 (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1923), p. 178.

<sup>101</sup> Llanover (ed.), *Autobiography*, 1st ser., vol. 1, p. 109.

<sup>102</sup> For a discussion on the provisions made for younger sons, see Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, pp. 87-97.

<sup>103</sup> Bonfield, *Marriage Settlements, 1601-1740*, p. 121.

siblings or other family members. In 1719, for example, the 2nd Duke of Devonshire, upon the marriage of his eldest son, settled on his potential grandchildren ‘£10,000 for one, £20,000 for two or three, and £6,000 each for four or more, with no regard to sex’.<sup>104</sup>

Provisions could also be altered during the resettling of the estate, which could happen at any time, but usually at the death of the male head of the family. In 1796, the 12th Earl of Derby drew up a Deed of Appointment to appoint the portions of his younger children in pursuance to his marriage settlement, which stated that after his death his eldest child, Lady Charlotte Stanley, was to receive £28,000 and his youngest child, Lady Elizabeth Cole, was to receive £2,000.<sup>105</sup> The discrepancy in provisions is indicative of the utter dependency that daughters had upon their parents and the unfairness that parental preference could have on their financial situations. An example of a much fairer settlement is evidenced by the 2nd Marquess of Downshire’s will dated 24 November 1790:

My wish is, having by my settlements the power to divide £40,000 as I may think fit, and as my boys will serve their country and have many ways of providing for themselves, and as the dear girls have not such opportunities but must patiently wait the caprice, the love or perhaps the avarice of some man to obtain a settlement, I, having considered the subject to the best of my judgment, do advise, ordain and fix that the division of the said £40,000 shall be and is to be divided in proportions equal to the proportion of 7 to 10 or thereabouts, the boys to have the lesser, the girls the larger, number.<sup>106</sup>

In this settlement Downshire recognised the fact that his daughters were wholly dependent upon his ability to provide them with an adequate fortune to attract a groom. His sons were consequently slightly discriminated against, as they were able to carve out their own paths through paid employment.

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<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Trumbach, *Rise of the Egalitarian Family*, p. 89.

<sup>105</sup> Lancashire Archives, DDK/26/5, Deed of Appointment, 7 July 1796.

<sup>106</sup> Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Downshire Papers, D/671/D/14/2/20, Prerogative will of the 2nd Marquess of Downshire, made 24 November 1790 and proved 7 October 1801, as quoted in Malcomson, *The Pursuit of the Heiress*, p. 31.

# Part 1

## Unmarried Women



# Chapter 2

## Surrogate mother and chatelaine for deceased female relative

Marriage was, of course, not a universal state, and Vickery purports that ‘probably as many as one in five women in Georgian England never married’.<sup>107</sup> She further states that ‘the single life was seen as a miserable predicament, not a heroic freedom’.<sup>108</sup> Kimberley Scuttle argues that ‘it can be assumed that these women did not remain unmarried out of choice, but rather circumstances denied them a proper husband’.<sup>109</sup> Whether this was due to the lack of a marriage portion, the inclination of the family, or the lack of a suitable husband, spinsterhood often condemned women to a life of familial dependency and exploitation.

The lack of financial autonomy experienced by these women did limit their opportunity to engage with architecture. They were expected to live with family members and to dedicate their lives to the assistance of their families. This could take various forms and could come with a range of responsibilities, such as nursing the sick, lady’s companion, surrogate mother or chatelaine of a country pile. When Sir Francis Willoughby gained control of his estate in 1687 he asked his seventeen-year-old sister, Cassandra, to manage Wollaton Hall, Nottingham, for him, which she did until her marriage in 1713.<sup>110</sup> In this particular case, Cassandra’s role as mistress was emancipating, as she herself acknowledged, ‘This proposall I was much delighted with, thinking it would be no small pleasure for me to be Mrs of Wollaton, and to doe whatever I had a mind to’.<sup>111</sup>

As mistress of Wollaton, Cassandra not only had the same social status as a married woman, but she also had the opportunity to engage with architecture. Wollaton had been vacant since 1643 so it was in great

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<sup>107</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 208.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>109</sup> Kimberley Scuttle, *Women, Rank, and Marriage in the British Aristocracy, 1485-2000: An Open Elite?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 48.

<sup>110</sup> In 1713, Cassandra married as his second wife James Brydges, who was later created Earl of Carnarvon in 1714 and Duke of Chandos in 1719. For biographies of her life see Joan Johnson, *Excellent Cassandra. The Life and Times of the Duchess of Chandos* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1981); Rosemary O’Day (ed.), *Cassandra Brydges, Duchess of Chandos, 1670-1735: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).

<sup>111</sup> A. C. Wood (ed.) *The Continuation of the History of the Willoughby Family, by Cassandra, Duchess of Chandos* (Eton, Windsor: Shakespeare Head Press for University of Nottingham, 1958), p. 125.

need of repair, however it was not until 1688 when her younger brother Thomas inherited the house, that a series of improvements was commissioned.<sup>112</sup> Cassandra was integral to the rebuilding project and was responsible for purchasing new suites of furniture from London.<sup>113</sup> Her influence at Wollaton is indicative of the architectural potential that an unmarried women could have if the opportunity presented itself. The following case study investigates this potential further by exploring the architectural agency of Anne Robinson.



Fig. 1 *Anne Robinson*, after John Downman, c. 1780.

## **The Hon. Anne Robinson (1742-after 1812)**

Anne Robinson was the daughter of Thomas Robinson, 1st Baron Grantham, of Newby Park, Yorkshire (fig. 1). Although Anne never married, she held the prestigious position as chatelaine of Saltram House, Devon, for more than twenty years. As chatelaine, it was not her role to commission new buildings, but to maintain the property for her male relatives. However, within the constraints imposed upon her, Anne exercised architectural agency and initiative in commissioning various repairs, which were within the scope of her responsibilities. Anne was also able to rent modest London houses, over which she had more control. She commissioned various redecorations and also refurnished these houses, which, because of her financial capacity, was the extent of the architectural scope available to her.

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<sup>112</sup> Sir Francis Willoughby died in 1688 aged 20 years old; Elizabeth Hagglund, 'Cassandra Willoughby's visits to country houses', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 11 (2001), p. 186.

<sup>113</sup> ODNB online, 'Willoughby, Cassandra [married name Cassandra Brydges, duchess of Chandos] (1670–1735)'.

Despite this, as with many of her unmarried contemporaries, her story has become obscured. Her role has been reduced to that of ‘Aunt Nanny’, a woman who assumed the position of surrogate mother to her nephew, John ‘Jack’ Parker, and niece, Theresa Parker. Academic attention has instead been lavished upon her younger sister, Theresa, who married John Parker of Saltram in 1769. Theresa’s architectural achievements at Saltram have been much celebrated, as have the endeavours of her predecessor, Lady Catherine Parker, *née* Poulett.<sup>114</sup>

But what of Anne’s role at Saltram? Following her sister’s early death in 1775, Anne became the undisputed mistress of Saltram until her nephew reached his majority in 1793. Even after this, she retained her position until her niece married the Hon. George Villiers in 1798, and beyond this she split her time between London and Saltram until her death. Consequently, her control over Saltram lasted longer than either her sister, who had been mistress for six years (1769-75), or that of Lady Catherine, who had been mistress for fifteen years (1743-58). It is astonishing, therefore, that so little research has been conducted into the extent to which Anne exerted architectural agency at Saltram and its environs (fig. 2).

As an unmarried woman, Anne’s financial situation was entirely reliant upon the generosity of her male relatives. Presumably Anne’s father provided her with an allowance until his death in 1770, which was then continued by her elder brother, Thomas Robinson, 2nd Baron Grantham (1738-1786). We do not know how generous this allowance was, but seemingly it was not enough for Anne to set up an independent household in either London or the countryside. As was typical of unmarried women at the time, Anne divided her time between the houses of her friends and family. For example, in 1771 she lived with her sister at Saltram during the summer,<sup>115</sup> then for part of the autumn she resided at Grantham House, her elder brother’s London house,<sup>116</sup> and for part of the winter she went to live with the Pelhams at Stanmer House, Brighton.<sup>117</sup>

## **Anne becomes mistress of Saltram for her brother-in-law**

Anne’s varied (and unsettled) life was irrevocably changed when she became the *ipso facto* mistress of Saltram following her sister Theresa’s death in 1775. This role came with both elevated status and responsibility,

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<sup>114</sup> For particular investigations into the architectural influence of Theresa and Lady Catherine, see Lummis and Marsh, *The Woman’s Domain*, pp. 63-76; Baird, *Mistress of the House*, pp. 220-36. For general histories of Saltram, its collections and family, see Ceri Johnson, *Saltram, Devon* (National Trust guidebook, 1998); rev. edn (2001); Ronald Fletcher, *The Parkers at Saltram, 1769-89: Everyday Life in an Eighteenth-Century House* (London: BBC Books, 1970); Nigel Neatby (ed.) *The Saltram Collection* (London: The National Trust, 1977); Clifford Musgrave, ‘Saltram House: an Adam house of the West Country’, *Connoisseur*, vol. 191, (Jan 1976), pp. 20-29; Henry Avray Tipping, ‘Saltram, Devonshire: the seat of the earl of Morley’, *Country Life*, 59 (23 Jan 1926), pp. 124-33; (30 Jan 1926), pp. 160-70; John Cornforth, ‘Saltram, Devon’, *Country Life*, 141 (27 April 1967), pp. 998-1001; (4 May 1967), pp. 1064-68; (11 May 1967), pp. 1160-64; John Cornforth, ‘The making of the Saltram landscape’, *Country Life*, 142 (14 Sept 1967), pp. 594-97.

<sup>115</sup> BLARS, L 30/17/4/2, Lord Grantham to Anne Robinson, Paris, 12 June 1771.

<sup>116</sup> BLARS, L 30/17/4/10, Lord Grantham to Anne Robinson, Madrid, 21 October 1771.

<sup>117</sup> BLARS, L 30/17/4/11, Lord Grantham to Anne Robinson, Escorial, 3 November 1771

and provided Anne with a clear sense of purpose. Anne had a great affection for Saltram, borne out of the many months she had stayed there with her sister. The grand remodelling of Saltram that had been led by Theresa during her married life was continued sporadically following her death (fig. 3). For example, Robert Adam's new Neo-Classical library, located in the east wing, was converted into a dining room in 1780, for which he designed (and executed) a pair of urns lined with zinc, for the cooling of wine.<sup>118</sup> The reason for this functional change is unknown, but it is likely that the existing 'Eating Room' in the south wing was located an inconveniently long distance from the kitchen, which was on the north side of the house.<sup>119</sup>

As a result of this alteration a new library had to be created elsewhere, which Anne reported as nearly complete in December 1780.<sup>120</sup> Anne's part in these alterations is difficult to ascertain. She was certainly present during these alterations, and in January 1781 she supervised moving the books into the new library, thus indicating her general role in the day-to-day management of the project.<sup>121</sup> In a letter to her brother, Frederick 'Fritz' Robinson, she also expressed her regret at leaving Saltram whilst it was in the midst of so much activity, which demonstrates her close association with the improvements.<sup>122</sup>



**Fig. 2 Photograph of the south front of Saltram House.**

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<sup>118</sup> SM, Adam volume, 25/158, [24], 'Vase and Pedestal for the Sideboard at Saltram', November 1780; [25] 'Design of a Vase and Pedestal for the Sideboard at Saltram', November 1780.

<sup>119</sup> SM, Adam volume, 50/66, [24], 'Plan of a House and Offices for John Parker Esqr near Saltram' (unexecuted), September 1779.

<sup>120</sup> BLARS, L 30/15/50/14, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 31 December 1780.

<sup>121</sup> BLARS, L 30/15/50/15, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 28 January 1781.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

In 1784 John Parker was elevated to the peerage as the 1st Baron Boringdon, following which he continued to commission a flurry of further improvements at Saltram, including the planting of 38,000 trees that arrived by ship<sup>123</sup> and the building of a Grape House.<sup>124</sup> Unfortunately Parker died in 1788 leaving the estate encumbered with debts, and with no bequests left to Anne in recognition of her integral role at Saltram. Although Anne's position was now uncertain, she felt nothing but love and gratitude for her late brother-in-law:

I am perfectly satisfied with respects to my circumstances, they are as much as I ever was entitled to, and I have so liberally and confidentially shared in all the Happiness, Comforts and advantages of this House and Fortune that I cannot but think myself under many and great obligations and must ever return a grateful and tender remembrance of the real Love, Esteem and Regard I know he had for me. As to making a more ample provision for me, you know he could not do it without increasing your trouble and Jack's difficulties, neither of which could have been comfortable to me.<sup>125</sup>

Discussions followed about Anne applying for a position at Court, as this was one of the only methods in which an elite, unmarried woman could earn a living. As a courtier Anne would have been able to independently maintain her place in high society, without being dependent on her family.<sup>126</sup> Anne's sister-in-law, the Hon. Katherine Gertrude Robinson, *née* Harris, appears to have assisted Anne in gaining an introduction to Queen Charlotte via her connection to Elizabeth Townshend, Viscountess Sydney<sup>127</sup>, who was closely linked to the Court:

I cannot help thanking you once more for the trouble you have taken upon this occasion [...] if any thing good turns up so much the better; but I cannot say I am very anxious about it & shall be content to go on as well as I can without.<sup>128</sup>

Although Anne did attend Court occasionally, including one of Queen Charlotte's gatherings in October 1789, nothing materialised from these efforts.<sup>129</sup> From the tone of her letter it does not seem that Anne was overly enthusiastic at the prospect of serving at Court and rightly so, because it could be a dull and gruelling experience.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> BLARS, L30/15/50/57, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 20 December 1784.

<sup>124</sup> BLARS, L 30/15/50/58, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 18 January 1785.

<sup>125</sup> BLARS, L30/15/50/141, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 21 May 1788.

<sup>126</sup> Susan Weber (ed.), *William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 57.

<sup>127</sup> Lady Sydney was a Lady of the Bedchamber from 1791-1818.

<sup>128</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/58, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Saltram, 26 October 1788.

<sup>129</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/71, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Privy Garden, 8 October 1789.

<sup>130</sup> For example, see Lucy Worsley, *Courtiers: The Secret History of the Georgian Court* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), pp. 96-97; Borman, *King's Mistress, Queen's Servant*, pp. 116-17.

## Anne continues on as mistress of Saltram for her nephew

In any event, once the Parker finances and estate had been settled, it was discovered that Saltram did not need to be sold after all.<sup>131</sup> Anne, therefore, retained her position as mistress of Saltram for her nephew 'Jack', the 2nd Lord Boringdon, in his minority. As Jack was away at school and then at Oxford University, the daily management of the house, garden and estate fell to Anne. It was during this period that Anne's influence over Saltram was undoubtedly at its greatest: not only did she continue in the traditionally female role as mistress of the house, her responsibilities also extended to include various tasks relating to the estate at large.

In 1790 such was Anne's control over Saltram's management that she contemplated an overhaul of the manner in which the servants were to be remunerated:

I am meditating a great reform in this family, Board wages are so much cheaper than Housekeeping that I think there can be no doubt of the proposing of the change, we talked of it when Mr Ley<sup>132</sup> was here. When I come to Town I will shew you the different calculations.<sup>133</sup>

She gave no further details about whether this reform was carried out or whether it was successful, but it does demonstrate that she was very conscientious and competent in her book-keeping. It is interesting that she only contemplated this after Lord Boringdon's death and not before. As Jack was still a minor, it is possible that Anne felt a greater degree of autonomy which made her bolder in her assertions. Nonetheless, Anne saw it as her duty to maintain Saltram for her nephew, and directed improvements in his name. For example, in October 1790 she wrote proudly of the improvement to the park, 'you cannot think how much the wood is improved by the few [trees] that were cutt down here last winter; and I hope Jack will see the propriety of ordering more to be felled'.<sup>134</sup> Her responsibilities also extended to the organisation of general repairs and maintenance to the house:

I have a long story to tell about the repairs of this House [...] I have been obliged to send for Mr Parlby, the last wet winter having damaged the stucco and indeed the very walls of the House so much that Sally said she could not undertake to keep the House at all dry another winter, Mr Parlby made a bad report of the whole house, particularly the south front and the south Bow, I wrote Mr Ley word, who said he could not possibly undertake to do the whole house, and he thought the worst parts might be patched, so that I have compromised, and agreed with Mr Parlby that only the south west front, of the south Bow, shall be new done entirely from top to bottom and the sashes of the upper floor to be painted outside which, lather is finished, so that at the moment we are all litter and scaffolding and stink, but I hope another week will clear it all away [...] I hope I have not done too much but it was high time something should be done as the paper in the Bow rooms was much

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<sup>131</sup> Lummis and Marsh, *The Woman's Domain*, p. 83.

<sup>132</sup> Mr Henry 'Harry' Ley and Mr John Ley (brothers) were family friends from Trehill, near Exeter. They carried out various legal work for the Parkers, and were joint-executors of John Parker, 1st Lord Boringdon's estate. Fifteen letters from the brothers to Fritz survive at BLARS, L30/15/33/1-15, 1789-91.

<sup>133</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/47, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 17 January 1790.

<sup>134</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/61, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 24 October 1790.

damaged and the velvet wet and spotted in many places; I am afraid Jack will not be very well pleased to find the place look in such disorder, as I think he will be here before it is finished.<sup>135</sup>

Evidently, although Anne had the power to commission repairs, she was clearly mindful of the potential expenditure and thus felt it necessary to garner the support of her brother. A week later, as the repairs neared completion, Anne was again worrying about the size of the project: 'I am afraid Mr Ley will think there is too much done, but it wanted a great deal and was in a shocking state'.<sup>136</sup> This would suggest that, as an unmarried woman, Anne's architectural autonomy was certainly curtailed, therefore limiting her architectural scope to maintenance and repairs.

## Jack reaches his majority

Anne's control over Saltram diminished further when Jack returned from his Grand Tour in 1794 because he had reached his majority and was able to manage the estate in his own name. He also brought with him his mistress, Lady Elizabeth Monck, daughter of the 2nd Earl of Arran, who subsequently spent much time at Saltram. Despite the possible tensions that may have arisen over the management of Saltram, Anne seems to have navigated this successfully enough, because in 1796 she was still at Saltram reporting that she and Theresa were busy attending to the soft furnishings:

We have been routing out old stores and have prevailed to have some of the old Chintz made up for Curtains & chair covers and I am going to proceed with great alacrity with the chairs as they are more admired and approved of than ever, I have but five more to do.<sup>137</sup>

The stores of 'old Chintzs' were from Lady Catherine's 'hoarding up' according to a succeeding letter from Anne, which indicates that she was again conscious of the balance between updating the interior décor and the cost this could incur.<sup>138</sup> This letter also signals that the influence that she once had over the aesthetic direction of Saltram was at an end, with her role reduced to needlework. Nonetheless, by recycling old fabrics, Anne was able to display conspicuously her talent for household economy, a virtue widely praised in contemporary manuals.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/74, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 16 July 1791.

<sup>136</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/75, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 24 July 1791.

<sup>137</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/297, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Saltram, 25 September 1796.

<sup>138</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/304, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Saltram, 9 November 1796.

<sup>139</sup> For example, see, Anon., *The New British Jewel; or, Complete Housewife's Best Companion* (London, [1770?]); Richard Bradley, *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director, in the Management of a House, and the Delights and Profits of a Farm*, 6th edn, (1732).



**Fig. 3 Photograph of the west front of Saltram House.**

As was natural for an heir to do upon his inheritance, Jack set about ordering a great many improvements to Saltram during the latter half of the 1790s. His sister Theresa, now twenty years old, was delighted with the works carried out in the park: 'I believe I always thought Saltram the summit of perfection & beyond the reach of improvement, for I have no idea that it could be so much alter'd for the better as I find it is. The whole Place looks vastly larger & handsomer'. She continued on to praise the alterations that had been carried out to the house, stating that they 'are also very numerous, & make the house much larger, more habitable & comfortable'.<sup>140</sup>

Anne respected her nephew's architectural and aesthetic direction, commenting that, 'the alterations inside and out [...] I do assure you I approve very much and think great improvements'.<sup>141</sup> When her nephew was away on business, the responsibility of directing the workmen and craftsmen fell to Anne once more:

I am very busy, or at least think so, in superintending a great work which is nothing more than the entire alteration of the library, which is to have new book case and a new Chimney piece, the Book cases are to be sett into the wall which will make more space, and are to go down to the ground and higher up which will make more room for the books.<sup>142</sup>

This is clear evidence of the fact that even the most conventional of unmarried women possessed an interest and took delight in the orchestration of significant architectural schemes. Even though her influence over the design of the library was limited, her participation in the project provided her with a clear sense of

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<sup>140</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/262, Theresa Parker to Mrs Robinson, Saltram, 8 October 1795.

<sup>141</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/263, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Saltram, 18 October 1795.

<sup>142</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/309, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Saltram, 14 December 1796.



autonomy. Her niece was delighted with the end result, reporting that the 'Library is wonderfully improv'd' and that the new mahogany book cases 'look very well indeed'.<sup>143</sup>

## Anne's London residences

In 1788, perhaps because of the financial uncertainty that followed Lord Boringdon's death, Anne took out a lease upon a house in Parliament Street. This was to be Anne's very own residence until she gave it up in 1799. For the first time in her life, Anne was able to pursue her own architectural ambitions without the need for permission from a male relative or friend. As such, it is unsurprising that she immediately set about transforming the interiors to suit her taste:

I really forgot whether I mentioned my House in my last or not all that was done. I liked it very well, I have ordered the Parlours to be painted, as I find Mr Templar<sup>144</sup> is to pay half of what is done now, I have chose a white paper for the three rooms one pair of stairs and a handsome bleu border, and a bleu stormont for the furniture, & have given a list of what I shall wont for Mrs Kelly who has promised to do everything as cheap as good as possible, I have given her a draft for fifty pounds.<sup>145</sup>

Anne was evidently excited about the prospect of creating a comfortable, fashionable town house of her own. As she was often at Saltram, she left the purchasing of necessary furniture to Bridget Kelly, *née* Parker, sister of the 1st Lord Boringdon, who lived in Dean's Yard, Westminster. The difficulty of furnishing her house by proxy was that she had to rely entirely upon the aesthetic judgement and bargaining skills of her kinswoman:

I am in correspondence with Mrs Kelly about some Chairs which I am afraid are very dear and not pretty, she calls them Japan with Green silk & stuff Damask bottoms (which wont suit my bleu furniture) & Chairs & window stools and a sophia, for forty Guineas, she has offered 35 – I have wrote to her my objections & hope she has not agreed for them. I should think I might have 6 chairs at 2 or 3 Gs a piece and a sophia with bleu Stormont covers which would look much better and cost much less.<sup>146</sup>

Although money was an ever-present concern for Anne, it is still apparent that she was determined to create the most aesthetically pleasing arrangement. Her dismissal of second-hand furniture suggests that she was not going to sacrifice taste for money. Moreover, she also ordered some bespoke pieces of furniture from a Mr Crighton, who was also charged with overseeing the painters in her absence:

I was in hopes my House would have been quite free from smell of paint, and that the painter would have been out long ago as there was only the stair case and parlour to do when I saw it in Oct; I am afraid Mr Crighton has not looked much after them, I should think the sooner he puts the furniture in that was bespoke of him the better, which was all the Beds two Bath Stoves for the second floor and the Carpets for the first and the stair case, Mrs Kelly was to try to get everything else, and to lay in the Coals when they were cheapest. I hope you like the paper and the border.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/227, Theresa Parker to Mrs Robinson, Saltram, 27 July 1797.

<sup>144</sup> Anne's landlord.

<sup>145</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/37, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 17 October 1789.

<sup>146</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/39, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 4 November 1789.

<sup>147</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/44, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 17 December 1789.

Despite Anne's best instructions to Crighton, he failed to complete his commission on time. This resulted in Anne having to rely on her brother and his wife to check in on the progress of the house. To her dismay, they were required to organise more than she had anticipated, leading Anne to think that Crighton was 'angry that he has not an order for more things'.<sup>148</sup> She also entrusted her brother and sister-in-law to order anything that was needed, which they did with great care.<sup>149</sup>

Anne's determination to create a fashionable home extended to the ordering of a new chimney-piece for her principal reception room:

I find I am really to have a new Chimney piece in my room in Parliament St as Mrs Kelly wrote me word it is very Elegant and a very pretty device so what it is to be I cannot tell, but I hope it will not disgrace the Candlesticks that are to ornament it.<sup>150</sup>

This indicates that she was prepared to lay out large sums of money when required, especially if it would substantially enhance the aesthetic of her rooms. Such sums suggest that she was also intending to remain at Parliament Street for a long period, which she did for eleven years. However, by the summer of 1799 she wrote to her sister-in-law of the necessity to move out of Parliament Street as it was 'so out of repair' that she could not 'live in it another year'.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, she felt that she could not 'afford to do anything to it' and did not have the inclination to do so because it was inconveniently distanced from her niece's residence in Grosvenor Street.<sup>152</sup> Her landlord refused to repair it without raising the rent, which she claimed was expensive enough at £120 a year with taxes, especially as she hoped to find an 'unfurnished lodging for 40 or 50£ without taxes, if [she came] to town at all'.<sup>153</sup>

Anne dabbled with the idea of living at Saltram for a year or two as it was 'the shortest way of paying all [she] owe[d] and having something to go on with'.<sup>154</sup> Once again it is apparent that Anne felt the financial strain, which occasioned her consideration of a self-imposed exile at Saltram. However, Anne succeeded in finding a smaller residence relatively quickly because in July 1799 Theresa remarked that she had been to see Anne's new house, 'which I like very much considering she lives so little at home, it is certainly big enough for her, & quite neat & pretty'.<sup>155</sup> Although Anne was fifty-seven by this point it had by no means diminished her eagerness and desire for creating a fashionable space within which she could entertain her friends and family. She 'ordered it to be fitted up with a bleu paper and a green bays all over the room which will make it very warm and comfortable', and even had her 'Glasses new framed and Gilt quite plain the look very handsome'.<sup>156</sup> Anne's desire for an independent house that she could be the sole mistress of was evidently a mark of status for an unmarried woman in Georgian Britain. Lack of means prevented

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<sup>148</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/45, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 27 December 1789.

<sup>149</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/46, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, Saltram, 4 January 1790.

<sup>150</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/104, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Stanmer, 17 August February 1790

<sup>151</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/444, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Parliament Street, 19 February 1799.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/446, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Parliament Street, 26 February 1799.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/452, Theresa Villiers to Mrs Robinson, Debrow House, 15 July 1799.

<sup>156</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/483, Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson, Stratton Street, 6 December 1799.

more elaborate works but Anne is a clear example of an eighteenth-century woman with an interest in interior design, who took charge of and altered her surroundings.

# Chapter 3

## Unmarried women with an independent income

Anne Robinson's desire for architectural independence was shared by Lady Isabella Finch, who famously commissioned William Kent to build her a magnificent London townhouse in Berkeley Square. Although these spinsters were worlds apart in social prominence, they were united in their architectural ambitions and their need to influence the architecture around them. Lady Isabella Finch was far more ambitious with her building scheme, but this was possible because of her superior financial status, independently earned through her position at Court. Additionally, as she was one of the first ladies at Court, her political and social influence was such that it demanded a lavish residence, where she could entertain in great style. Anne's ambitions, of course, were far more traditional and modest in their outlook, and thus she was content with and delighted in simply being able to commission new decorative schemes in rented London residences. In short, the difference between Lady Bell Finch's and Anne Robinson's positions provided Lady Bell with a much larger architectural scope.

### Lady Isabella Finch (1700-1771)

Lady Cecilia Isabella (Bell) Finch was the daughter of Daniel Finch, 2nd Earl of Nottingham, later 7th Earl of Winchelsea, and his second wife Anne Hatton. The Finch family was famed for their dark swarthy appearance; Horace Walpole once described Strawberry Hill as 'brownier than Lady Bell Finch'.<sup>157</sup> Lady Isabella was known to all simply as Lady 'Bell' Finch. In *c.* 1738 Lady Bell was appointed as the first Lady of the Bedchamber to Princess Amelia, eldest daughter of George II; a lucrative position yielding a salary of £400 per annum.<sup>158</sup> This provided Lady Bell with financial independence and allowed her to remain unmarried for the entirety of her life. This is perhaps a surprising choice considering that all five of her sisters went on to make prestigious marriages, for example, Lady Henrietta Finch married William Fitzroy, later 3rd Duke of Cleveland, and Lady Charlotte Finch married Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset.

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<sup>157</sup> Horace Walpole to the Countess of Ailesbury, Strawberry Hill, 31 July 1762 in W. S. Lewis (ed.), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 48 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83), vol. 38, p. 165.

<sup>158</sup> Weber (ed.), *William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain*, p. 173.



Fig. 4 Exterior of No. 44 Berkeley Square, created for Sir John Soane's Royal Academy lectures on William Kent, 19th century.

### **Commissioning William Kent to build a town house at No. 44 Berkeley Square**

Lady Bell's Court position provided her with the necessary status and social power that she would otherwise have only been able to obtain through marriage. In addition, her financial situation allowed her to afford an independent household which further provided her with the means to display her taste and hospitality. Lady Bell's intelligence and competence with business matters soon saw her acting as Princess Amelia's

personal and business secretary. She regularly corresponded with Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, successfully representing the Princess's interests, as well as dealing with other matters such as patronage and politics.<sup>159</sup> In 1761, in a letter to the Duke of Newcastle, the true extent of Lady Bell's influence is apparent, 'Her RHss. Places an intire confidence in me as to what relates to her Finances'.<sup>160</sup>

Thus, as one of the first ladies at Court, it is of little surprise that Lady Bell sought to create an elegant and fashionable new house of her own, where she could entertain her illustrious guests in splendour and comfort. In accordance with her visions of grandeur and her elite aesthetic ambition she commissioned William Kent, the renowned (and royal) architect, between 1742 and 1744 (fig. 4). It is likely that Lady Bell was influenced in her choice of architect through her connection at Court, as Kent had been the favoured architect of Queen Caroline. Queen Caroline had commissioned Kent for numerous projects, including the pioneering garden buildings at Richmond Gardens, such as the Hermitage (1730), and Merlin's Cave (1735), as well as the sixty feet long and thirty feet wide library at St James's Palace.<sup>161</sup>

Due to Kent's association with No. 44 Berkeley Square, its architectural history has received much academic interest, especially more recently as part of the Victoria and Albert Museum's 2014 exhibition entitled *William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain*.<sup>162</sup> The accompanying catalogue of the same title contains the most recent reinvestigation into Lady Bell's creation, in David Watkin's essay 'Town Houses'.<sup>163</sup> In this essay Lady Bell's house is examined along with Kent's No. 22 Arlington Street, built for the Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, in two phases between 1741 and 1750. Watkin speculates that a possible rivalry between the two patrons may have resulted in the spectacularly elaborate interiors.<sup>164</sup> This possible rivalry is interesting as it suggests that elite unmarried women had the opportunity of competing on the male-dominated architectural stage. Both patrons were desirous of creating the most fashionable abode where they could display their wealth, learning and taste.

The cost for building No. 44 was substantial, approximately £7,000, so it is assumed that Lady Bell must have been in possession of an inherited fortune, perhaps from her father who had died in 1730. The building accounts entitled 'Artificers Employ'd on the Rt. Honble the Lady Isabella Finch's Acct. at her new House in Berkeley Square London', though incomplete, provide a detailed insight into the construction and decoration of the house.<sup>165</sup> No. 44 consisted of two principal rooms of display, namely the staircase hall

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<sup>159</sup> See ODNB online, 'Finch, Lady (Cecilia) Isabella (1700–1771)'.

<sup>160</sup> BL, Add. MS 32919, f. 122, Lady Bell Finch to the Duke of Newcastle, Berkeley Square, 19 February 1761, as quoted in Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c.1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 119, n. 33.

<sup>161</sup> Marschner, *Queen Caroline*, pp. 45-71.

<sup>162</sup> See Mark Girouard, '44, Berkeley Square, London', *Country Life*, 132 (27 December 1962), pp. 1648-51; Arthur Oswald, 'Georgian London: No. 44 Berkeley Square, The Residence of Wyndham Damer Clark, Esq.', *Country Life* 86 (8 July 1939), pp. 12-17; Harris, 'William Kent's 44 Berkeley Square', pp. 100-04; Musgrave, 'A London palazzo: 44 Berkeley Square', pp. 74-80.

<sup>163</sup> David Watkin, 'Town Houses', in Weber (ed.), *William Kent*, pp. 173-77.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.* p. 174.

<sup>165</sup> SM, Building Accounts 39B, as cited in Watkin, 'Town Houses', in Weber (ed.), *William Kent*, p. 174.

(fig. 5), described by Horace Walpole as ‘a beautiful a piece of scenery, and considering the space, of art, as can be imagined’, and the Great Room on the first floor.<sup>166</sup> Both spaces were designed to impress; the staircase, covering three floors, is full of theatrical Classical detail, with the first floor Ionic columned screen, the Vitruvian scrolled wrought iron railings and the magnificent domed ceiling.<sup>167</sup> The Great Room is equally impressive, the ceiling consists of a combination of ‘octagons, lozenges and squares in the coving’ and is ‘painted in grisaille’ with a series of Classical figures.<sup>168</sup> A surviving drawing of the coffered ceiling located at the RIBA British Architectural Library designed by Kent is inscribed with the names of the intended figures, with ‘Jupiter’ intended for the central octagon, flanked by ‘Appollo’ and ‘Diana’.<sup>169</sup> The surrounding lozenges are filled with representations of the elements and seasons. One can only speculate whether Lady Bell had any direct influence over the chosen arrangement or whether Kent guided his ambitious client in the ways of Classical decoration.

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<sup>166</sup> Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, vol. 4, 3rd edn (London: J. Dodsley, 1782), pp. 242-43.

<sup>167</sup> Royal Institute of British Architects (hereafter RIBA) Architectural Library, SD92/7, measured drawing, plan and two sections of the staircase at No. 44 Berkeley Square, with scale, attributed to Stephen Wright.

<sup>168</sup> Watkin, ‘Town Houses’, in Weber (ed.), *William Kent*, p. 177.

<sup>169</sup> RIBA Architectural Library, SC50/2, Design for the coffered ceiling of the saloon at 44 Berkeley Square, London, ca. 1742-44, designed by William Kent, drafted by Stephen Wright.



Fig. 5 Section of the staircase hall of No. 44 Berkeley Square, created for Sir John Soane's Royal Academy lectures on William Kent, 19th century.



Kent and Lady Bell clearly had a successful relationship because in his will he bequeathed her his ‘veined Alabaster Vase with brass ornaments gilt [...] together with my four models of Newton, Lock, Woollaston and Doctor Clark’.<sup>170</sup> These were the modellos of Queen Caroline’s statues that she selected for her Richmond Hermitage (1730), as part of her ‘pantheon of Worthies, representing British excellence in science and philosophy’.<sup>171</sup> Kent’s bequest suggests that Lady Bell was also appreciative of great learning, and this is further corroborated by the fact that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu later remarked in 1752 that Lady Bell was ‘the only Lady at Court that has [a Library]’.<sup>172</sup> Care should be taken with this comment, however, as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was famously waspish in her commentary. Elite women had the capacity to collect books and build libraries, as Queen Caroline demonstrated at St James’s Palace, but the extent to which they did still remains an under-researched area of history.

Although the contents and size of Lady Bell’s library remain unclear, it is known that she paid for various subscriptions, including Archibald Bower’s *The History of the Popes, from the Foundation of the See of Rome to the Present Time* (1750), Elizabeth Carter’s 1758 translation of the works of Epictetus, and Stuart and Revett’s *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762).<sup>173</sup> Patricia Hamilton has speculated that Lady Bell may also have owned a copy of John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), thus suggesting that Kent’s bequest was even more pertinent, and furthers the argument that Lady Bell sought to consciously exhibit her elevated learning through architectural display.<sup>174</sup>

## No. 44 Berkeley Square as an expression of political influence

Following the completion of No. 44, Lady Bell entertained in great style, hosting regular gatherings that often included Princess Amelia. Horace Walpole unkindly remarked upon the reserved atmosphere at No. 44, stating in 1754 that ‘we had a funeral loo last night in the great chamber at Lady Bel Finch’s’.<sup>175</sup> Nonetheless it was a residence frequented by some of the most influential politicians in the country, including Sir Robert Walpole and Lady Bell’s old friend the Duke of Newcastle. Her property enabled her to informally exert political influence, as Elaine Chalus states, ‘She was at the centre of the political world in her own right and had her own networks of political contacts’.<sup>176</sup> Such was her status that when her sister-in-law, Lady Charlotte Finch, *née* Fermor,<sup>177</sup> attempted to present an illegitimate daughter of John Finch, Lady Bell’s brother, to the Princess Amelia, Lady Bell flatly refused. This ‘excellent civil war in the

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<sup>170</sup> TNA, PROB, 11/761, Will of William Kent, made 13 October 1743, codicil 10 April 1748, proved 18 June 1748, as quoted in Watkin, ‘Town Houses’, in Weber (ed.), *William Kent*, p. 172.

<sup>171</sup> Catherine Arbuthnott, ‘Kent and Italy’, in Weber (ed.), *William Kent*, p. 79.

<sup>172</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Lady Bute, 1 March 1752 in Robert Halsband (ed.), *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, vol. 3: 1752–1762 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 8.

<sup>173</sup> Patricia L. Hamilton, ‘In Search of Lady Isabella’s Library; or, A Question of Access’, *ABO: Interactive Journal for Women in the Arts, 1640-1830*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2012), p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>175</sup> Horace Walpole to Conway, 5 June 1764, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, vol. 38, p. 397.

<sup>176</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life*, p. 119.

<sup>177</sup> Royal governess to the children of George III and Queen Charlotte, 1762-1793.

house of Finch' culminated in Lady Bell prohibiting William Finch (her brother and husband of Lady Charlotte) from ever entering No. 44, responding to his insult that she wished to cause Lady Charlotte to miscarry: 'This is not the place to be indecent, and therefore I shall *only* tell you, that you are a rascal and a villain, and that if ever you dare to put your head into my house, I will kick you downstairs myself'.<sup>178</sup>

This quote demonstrates Lady Bell's feisty and thoroughly independent nature, indicating that she was perfectly capable of determining Court politics if she desired. It also highlights the importance of No. 44 in her life, with non-admittance being the ultimate mark of displeasure. The pride that Lady Bell evidently felt for her residence is further demonstrated in her will, where she was determined that the beneficiary 'make no Alteration in the building or disposition of the rooms on the first and second Floors of the said house or in the Furniture of the said Rooms'.<sup>179</sup> Her will also made provision for £30 to be given to the beneficiary for the sole purpose of maintaining the property.<sup>180</sup>

This discussion regarding Lady Bell's architectural exploits has sought to continue the argument that unmarried women, when the opportunity allowed, could instigate architecture on the grandest scale. Lady Bell's house was on a par with the London houses of her male contemporaries, which further demonstrates that eighteenth-century women were equally desirous of displaying their wealth, status and taste as men. Sadly, the correspondence between Lady Bell and her architect is missing and the level of control she sought to exercise over its design remains unclear. Nevertheless, Lady Bell's architectural ambitions are beyond doubt. In furtherance of this argument, the following case study aims to argue that not only did unmarried women seek to display their architectural agency in London, but that they were equally capable of displaying such ambition at their ancestral seats – traditionally the preserve of the male head of the family.

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<sup>178</sup> Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 10 April 1747, Arlington Street, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 19, pp. 389-90.

<sup>179</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, Finch Hatton Papers, FH 4208, as quoted in Rachel Stewart, *The Town House in Georgian London* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 49.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

# Chapter 4

## Heiresses

Heiresses who remained unmarried prove interesting to this thesis because they had the advantage of possessing their own fortune, which thereby enabled them to interact with architecture on a scale often denied to dependent single women such as Anne Robinson. These women also had the advantage of not having to marry for money or rank, as their fortune and family name provided them with the necessary social status to move within the highest echelons of society. When an heiress inherited the ancestral seat, the likelihood of her adding her own architectural mark to the property increased significantly.

The patriarchal need to further the family name through the medium of architectural display was also shared by female inheritors of such country seats. As will be demonstrated at a later stage of this thesis, Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey, *née* Campbell, significantly added to and improved Wrest Park, her ancestral seat, both during her marriage and widowhood. It was her ambition to ensure that the Grey family name was not forgotten, despite the fact that the Dukedom of Kent had died out with her grandfather, Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Kent in 1740. Throughout her life she continued to remodel the house and re-landscape the park, to ensure that it remained at the forefront of fashion, whilst also retaining its illustrious heritage.

In a similar vein Lady Elizabeth Hastings (always known as Lady Betty Hastings), the heiress of the Hastings ancestral seat, Ledston Hall, and the acknowledged head of the Hastings family (whilst her half-brother Theophilus Hastings, 9th Earl of Huntingdon, was still in his minority), embarked on a series of significant improvements. Lady Betty remained unmarried throughout her life, using her fortune to commission a series of charitable works as well as the remodelling of Ledston Hall and re-landscaping of the gardens. The following case study will demonstrate that Lady Betty sought to engage with architecture not only to fulfil her Christian duty, but also to ensure that the Hastings family remained prominent amongst her contemporaries. Her commissions were calculated to modernise and beautify Ledston, whilst also ensuring that her superiority of taste was displayed for future generations to acknowledge. As the outright owner of the Ledston estate Lady Betty had the greatest architectural opportunity available to her, which was an unusual situation for a woman in the eighteenth century. Whether Lady Betty capitalised on this opportunity

to display her architectural agency is significant, therefore, and it will be argued in this chapter that she often did so.



Fig. 6 Principal front of Ledston Hall, by John Preston Neale, 1822.

## Lady Elizabeth Hastings (1682-1739)

Lady Elizabeth (Betty) Hastings was the daughter of Theophilus Hastings, 7th Earl of Huntingdon, and his first wife, Elizabeth, eldest daughter and coheir of Sir John Lewis of Ledston Hall in Yorkshire.<sup>181</sup> On the death of her brother, George Hastings, 8th Earl of Huntingdon, in 1704, Lady Betty inherited her grandfather's Ledston estate which yielded £3,000 per annum (fig. 6).<sup>182</sup> In his will, her brother bestowed

<sup>181</sup> A comprehensive biography can be found in Beatrice Scott, 'Lady Elizabeth Hastings', *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 55 (1983), pp. 109-12.

<sup>182</sup> For discussions on Lady Betty's finances and investing activity, see Anne Laurence, 'Lady Betty Hastings (1682-1739): Godly patron', *Women's History Review*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2010), pp. 201-13; Anne Laurence, 'Women investors, "that nasty South Sea affair" and the rage to speculate in early eighteenth-century England', *Accounting, Business and Financial History*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2006), pp. 245-64; Anne Laurence, 'Lady Betty Hastings, her half-sisters and the South Sea Bubble: family fortunes and strategies', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 4 (2006), pp. 533-40.

upon her Ledston in exchange for the relinquishment of her claim to their father's Huntingdon estate, whereupon the Huntington estate passed to their eight-year-old step-brother, Theophilus Hastings, 9th Earl of Huntingdon.<sup>183</sup> In addition, Lady Betty also inherited a Norfolk estate (from her maternal grandmother) which yielded a further £400 per annum, but she soon sold this for 'near £5,000'.<sup>184</sup> Consequently, at the age of just twenty-two Lady Betty was a wealthy heiress, with a fortune 'not so great as to be called splendid, yet sufficient to enable her to afford an illustrious example of active goodness and beneficence'.<sup>185</sup>

## Charitable architectural patronage

Lady Betty did not take possession of Ledston until 1707, after which she spent the following four summers in Yorkshire, permanently moving there in 1711.<sup>186</sup> Despite her eligibility, Lady Betty never married, preferring instead to dedicate her time to her house and estate where she became renowned for her piety, philanthropy, and intelligence. Her life was posthumously celebrated as an example of model female behaviour, in Thomas Barnard's, *An Historical Character Relating to the Holy and Exemplary Life of the Right Honourable the Lady Elizabeth Hastings* (1742).<sup>187</sup> She generously took in her four impoverished half-sisters, the Ladies Ann, Frances, Catherine, and Margaret; together they lived in pious harmony, attending prayers four times a day.<sup>188</sup>

A deeply religious and charitable woman, Lady Betty staunchly believed in educating the poor, and thus in 1721 she built and endowed a girls' school in Ledsham, as remarked upon by the antiquary Ralph Thoresby:

We walked to Ledsham, where this pious lady is now erecting a very handsome and convenient vicarage-house, and also a very noble charity-school, wherein twenty poor girls are to be wholly maintained with food, raiment, and learning.<sup>189</sup>

This example of charitable architectural patronage was an acceptable and established mode of female benevolence, and allowed Lady Betty to pursue her Christian duty as well as her architectural ambition.<sup>190</sup> Her engagement in the local community furthered the Hastings family reputation and prominence. She also

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<sup>183</sup> George Hastings Wheler (ed.), *Hastings Wheler Family Letters: 1693-1704. Lady Betty Hastings and her Brother*, Part 1 (London: privately printed at the Chiswick Press, 1929), p. 17; Laurence, 'Godly Patron', p. 220.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Reuben and Sholto Percy, *The Percy Anecdotes: Women* (London: T. Boys, 1822), p. 132.

<sup>186</sup> Laurence, 'Lady Betty Hastings (1682-1739): Godly patron', p. 211.

<sup>187</sup> Thomas Barnard, *An Historical Character Relating to the Holy and Exemplary Life of the Right Honourable the Lady Elizabeth Hastings* (London, 1742).

<sup>188</sup> Diary entry of Ralph Thoresby, 14 February 1721, in Rev. John Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F. R. S., Author of the Topography of Leeds (1677-1724)*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), p. 313.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Lady Betty's sister-in-law Selina, Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791), was also noted for her charitable and religious works. She founded 64 chapels in England and Wales and founded the 'Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion', a Calvinistic movement within the Methodist church. For further discussion, see Faith Cook, *Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001); Boyd Stanley Schlenker, *Queen of the Methodists: the countess of Huntingdon and the eighteenth-century crisis of faith and society* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997); Edwin Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim: A Reassessment of the Life of the Countess of Huntingdon* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995).

generously bequeathed £1,000 towards the building of the Holy Trinity Church, Leeds,<sup>191</sup> together with an ‘additional benefaction of 20/ per annum to be settled upon the vicarage, if the town will do the like’.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, she founded various local schools including Aberford, Collingham, Thorp Arch, and Ledsham as well as financially supporting Mary Astell’s girls’ school at Chelsea. In her will she bequeathed the manor of Wheldale to Queen’s College, Oxford, for the support of five poor scholars drawn from twelve named schools in the north of England. This may have been influenced by Queen Caroline’s gift of £1,000 in 1733, highlighting the fact that elite women, even if not courtiers, could be inspired by their royal superiors in architecturally-related and charitable endeavours.<sup>193</sup>

## **The remodelling of Ledston as an expression of dynastic ambition**

Lady Betty’s architectural scope reached beyond the charitable sphere to include that of dynastic ambition. She subscribed to William Kent’s *Designs of Inigo Jones* (1722) so her intellectual interest in architecture is clear. As the effective head of the Hastings family, Lady Betty embarked upon a series of improvements to the ancestral seat. It is argued that she remodelled Ledston in a concerted attempt to increase the profile of her family and as a means of conspicuously displaying her family’s status. Frustratingly, the distinct lack of primary evidence regarding Lady Betty’s improvements makes it difficult to establish the true scope of her project. However, it is generally accepted that during her tenure from 1711 to 1739 she modernised the principal rooms and re-fenestrated the principal elevation of Ledston Hall.<sup>194</sup> It is thought that William Thornton, a York carpenter-cum-architect, assisted in these alterations.<sup>195</sup> Further, the amateur architect William Benson, Lord Bingley, of Bramham Park, is also reputed to have been involved.<sup>196</sup> Howard Colvin mentions in his *Biographical Dictionary* that there is a drawing in private hands of Ledston Hall in the Palladian style, inscribed with ‘Lord Bingley’s plan for finishing Ledstone’.<sup>197</sup>

The fact that a drawing in the Palladian style exists is significant because it may suggest that Lady Betty had originally contemplated a far greater remodelling project than was eventually executed. By the beginning of the eighteenth century Ledston Hall had been the product of various building schemes, beginning with the Witham family who converted the old Cluniac priory into a courtyard house following the dissolution; this was then enlarged by Thomas Wentworth, later Earl of Strafford, in *c.* 1630, who added a large south wing as part of his scheme to convert Ledston from a U plan to a grand E plan; Sir John Lewis (Lady Betty’s grandfather) then acquired the property in 1753 whereupon he completed the E plan and built an additional

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<sup>191</sup> Diary entry of Ralph Thoresby, 3 November 1721, in Hunter (ed.), *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 327.

<sup>192</sup> Diary entry of Ralph Thoresby, 10 November 1721, in Hunter (ed.), *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 328.

<sup>193</sup> Laurence, ‘Godly Patron’, p. 203.

<sup>194</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, rev. by Enid Radcliffe, *Yorkshire: West Riding*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 305-6.

<sup>195</sup> Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 3rd edn (New Haven, CT & London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 978; Derek Linstrum, *West Yorkshire: Architects and Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1978), p. 61.

<sup>196</sup> Colvin, *Dictionary of British Architects*, p. 122.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

north range and service wing.<sup>198</sup> Thus, at the time of Lady Betty's inheritance, the property was distinctly seventeenth century in style and rather outdated. Her contemplation of a grand Classical remodelling scheme may indicate that she was desirous of maintaining her family's status through the most fashionable architectural style of the period.

Bingley's Palladian proposal sought, amongst other things, to move the principal entrance from the east to the west, and to include a large portico that would lead into a grand saloon behind.<sup>199</sup> Lady Betty evidently considered the potential cost too great and thus proceeded with a series of smaller, but effective changes. She succeeded in updating the east façade (the principal elevation) with the replacement of mullioned windows with sashes on the first and second storeys (figs. 6 & 7). This elevation was the most important as it was seen by all visitors, so it is assumed that Lady Betty consciously chose to modernise it as a priority. She also commissioned the intricate wrought iron railings on the entrance staircase, including her initials in the ironwork as a clear declaration of her involvement in the scheme, proving that she was keen to remind both her contemporaries and descendants of her contribution to the family seat. Her initials can also be found on various lead rainwater heads on the east front.

Less is known of Lady Betty's improvements to the interiors, but Derek Linstrum advocates that she was responsible for remodelling several of the principal rooms, including 'the Dining Room [which] has fine quality woodwork, including a buffet in a niche, painted to match the Derbyshire marble linings of the lower part'.<sup>200</sup> This assertion is corroborated further by Pevsner's *Yorkshire: The West Riding* where it is purported that Lady Betty was responsible for creating the entrance hall, the dining room, as well as various details in the north wing and 'the large second-floor room'.<sup>201</sup> It is apparent then that, although Lady Betty did not commission a grand Palladian remodelling scheme, she nonetheless endeavoured to update her house incrementally with the latest Classical motifs.



**Fig. 7 *Ledston Hall*, by John Settrington, 1728.**

<sup>198</sup> Pevsner, rev. by Radcliffe, *Yorkshire: West Riding*, pp. 304-5.

<sup>199</sup> Linstrum, *West Yorkshire Architects*, p. 61.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> Pevsner, revised by Radcliffe, *Yorkshire: West Riding*, p. 306.

## Commissioning Charles Bridgeman to re-landscape the Ledston gardens

Lady Betty was not content with simply improving the house, she also commissioned the celebrated garden designer, Charles Bridgeman, to remodel her gardens. In 1722 Thoresby visited Lady Betty again, recording in his diary that, ‘we walked about the gardens [...] then my Lady showed me what alterations were made, and what farther designed there’.<sup>202</sup> He further mentioned walking ‘amongst the shady trees, in the new terrace walks, where were the statues’.<sup>203</sup> This account suggests that Bridgeman began work in 1722, which is corroborated by a contemporary account from ‘C. Fox’, possibly the Hon. Charlotte Fox, daughter of Sir Stephen Fox, who reported in June (year unknown) that: ‘My Lady is making good alterations in her garden. I believe it will be very pretty when it is done, but I doubt that will be a great while. The garden is very little’.<sup>204</sup>

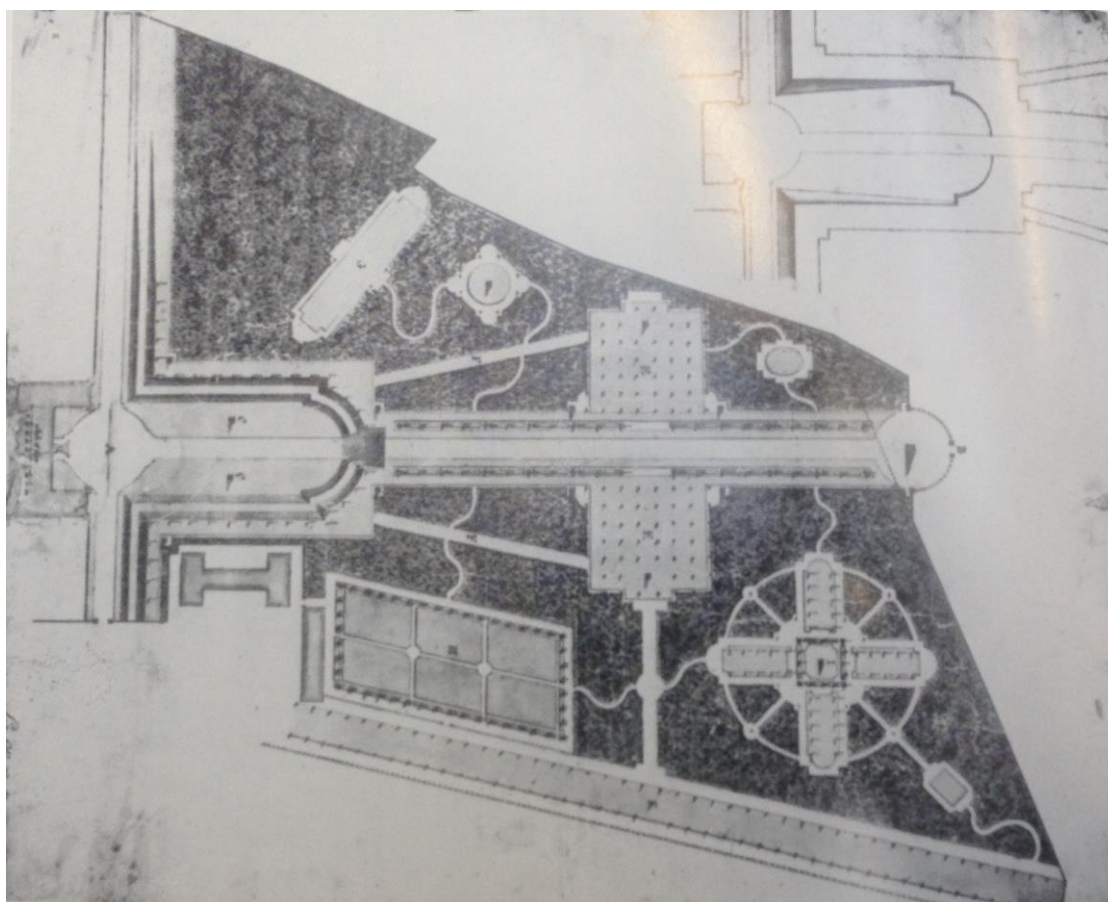


Fig. 8 Plan of Ledston Hall and gardens, attributed to Charles Bridgeman, c. 1731.

<sup>202</sup> Diary entry of Ralph Thoresby, 16 May 1722, in Hunter (ed.), *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 337.

<sup>203</sup> Diary entry of Ralph Thoresby, 17 May 1722, in Hunter (ed.), *Diary*, vol. 2, p. 339.

<sup>204</sup> National Library of Ireland, Family Papers of Smythe and Barbavilla, MS 41,580/36–39, C. Fox to Mrs Jane Bonnell, Ledston, 6 June, undated [c. 1720].



Three drawings of Ledston's new garden design survive, all attributed to Bridgeman. One located at Otterden Place (home of Lady Betty's descendants) is inscribed with 'Lady Eliz Hastings at Ledstone Park', and depicts 'an asymmetrical layout, with a strong central axis, lawns, grass banking, and dense woodland containing walks, open groves, and irregular bosquets' (fig. 8).<sup>205</sup> This drawing has been reproduced in Peter Willis's *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden* and appears to dwarf the house in its scale and grandeur.<sup>206</sup> The other two drawings are part of the Gough Drawings at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, one of which is inscribed on the back with 'Lady Betty Hasting's House' and 'Lady Hasting'.<sup>207</sup> Willis has dated all three plans to c. 1731, which is curious considering the fact that work had certainly begun at least ten years earlier. Two payments to 'Mrs Bridgeman' recorded in the Hoare's Bank ledgers dated 27 March 1731 and 5 April 1731 for £5 19s. 6d. and £21 respectively may suggest that the drawings of the garden were created for Lady Betty in 1731 upon its completion.<sup>208</sup>



**Fig. 9** *Ledston Hall*, by John Settrington, 1728, depicting Bridgeman's garden, enclosed by high walls.

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<sup>205</sup> Peter Willis, *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Elysium Press Publishers, 2002), p. 61 and pp. 180-81.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, Plate 48b [c. 1731].

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180, the references for which are: Bodleian Library, M.S. Gough Drawings a.3 fol. 19 [Plan of Ledston Hall and Park], M.S. Gough Drawings a.4. fol. 85 [Plan of Ledston Hall and Park, Yorkshire].

<sup>208</sup> John Bold and Edward Chaney (eds), *English Architecture Public & Private: Essays for Kerry Downes* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 249, n. 10.



Fig. 10 *Ledston Hall*, by John Settrington, 1728.

Regardless, it is apparent that Lady Betty was determined to express her superior taste through her gardens. The fact that she commissioned Bridgeman is significant, as he was, according to Horace Walpole in *The History of Modern Taste in Gardening* (1780), ‘the next fashionable designer of gardens’ after Charles London and Henry Wise.<sup>209</sup> Bridgeman introduced new ideas to landscape gardening, such as the inclusion of ‘wilderness, and [...] loose groves of oak’, that, according to Walpole, demonstrated ‘the dawn of modern taste’.<sup>210</sup> It is purported therefore that Lady Betty commissioned Bridgeman not only to create the most fashionable gardens of the time, but also as a conspicuous mark of status. The fact that Bridgeman was later appointed as the royal gardener to George II and Queen Caroline served to lend further status and importance to Lady Betty’s gardens. However, Queen Caroline had long supported and admired Bridgeman’s work, having asked him to attend her gardening conference ‘for the leading garden theorists and practitioners’, in September 1719.<sup>211</sup> Thus, perhaps Lady Betty was encouraged by this display of royal favour, and sought to commission a garden worthy of royal approval.

The garden architecture commissioned to populate the new gardens is also of exemplary taste and style, as demonstrated by the brick pavilion which is Classical in appearance, complete with a stone serliana.<sup>212</sup> This pavilion has been attributed to William Thornton and was probably used as a banqueting house by Lady Betty and her sisters, as its location at the north end of the raised terrace commands beautiful views over the gardens and surrounding countryside.<sup>213</sup> It was completed during the latter 1720s and is featured in one of John Settrington’s paintings of Ledston Hall (he painted four in total) in 1728 (fig. 9).<sup>214</sup> The set of

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<sup>209</sup> Horace Walpole, *The History of Modern Taste in Gardening*, ed. John Dixon Hunt (New York: Ursus Press, 1995), p. 41.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>211</sup> Marschner, *Queen Caroline*, p. 33.

<sup>212</sup> Toby Barnard and Jane Clark (eds), *Lord Burlington: Art, Architecture and Life* (London: Hambledon Press, 1995), p. 103.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Reproduced in John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House: A History of Country House and Garden View Painting in Britain 1540-1870* (London: Sotheby Park Bernet, 1979), pp. 192-93.

Settrington paintings was apparently commissioned before the gardens were truly complete, which suggests that Lady Betty sought to own visual representations of her gardens to both commemorate and record her achievement at Ledston (figs 7, 9 & 10).

To conclude, this case study has sought to highlight the fact that elite unmarried heiresses possessed similar levels of autonomy and architectural ambition as their male counterparts. When a woman became the *ipso facto* head of the family her control over the estate and interaction with architecture appears to have courted little contemporary censure. In this case, Lady Betty placed her architectural mark upon the patriarchal ancestral seat as a means of maintaining her family's prominence in the local community as well as on a national scale. Moreover, as Lady Betty exemplified the culturally approved feminine virtues of piety and charity, her architectural endeavours at Ledston were regarded as further demonstrations of her sound judgement and taste.

# Chapter 5

## Courtesans, mistresses and enterprising women

The eighteenth century could arguably be described as *the* era for celebrity courtesans. The seventeenth century, had of course, seen many women vie for the exalted position as royal mistress to Charles II, but beyond the royal circle mistresses were less celebrated. Further, the nineteenth century, with its retrenching of family ideals and the general return to Christian values, meant that the sex industry was driven further underground.

The eighteenth century, however, was the age of celebrity, with print shops, newspapers and artists clamouring to make their fortune from the image and tales of the nation's latest obsession. Fanny Murray, Kitty Fisher, Nelly O'Brien, Sophia Baddeley, Mary 'Perdita' Robinson, Charlotte Hayes, Emma Hamilton and Elizabeth Armistead, were some of the most famous courtesans of the eighteenth century. Their fame was garnered not only from their beauty and notoriety, but also from their meteoric ascent from obscurity to the height of wealth and luxury.

Successful courtesans could amass great wealth which they used to increase their visibility by establishing grand, fashionable households in the capital. They competed with one another 'in ostentatious displays of extravagance, to attract [...] the richest and most prestigious lovers'.<sup>215</sup> Once a suitable benefactor was found, he was expected to take her into high keeping, providing her with all the necessary trappings. Sir Richard Atkins, 6th Baronet of Clapham, did just that, when he took Fanny Murray into his protection around 1746, by providing a 'splendid equipage, a numerous retinue, an elegant furnished house, and a handsome allowance'.<sup>216</sup> Atkins later purchased the lease of 'an elegant country house near Richmond, which he suitably furnished' for Fanny, indicating that she was also able to enjoy the pleasures of both town and country life as much as any of her social superiors.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> White, *Queen of the Courtesans*, p. 105.

<sup>216</sup> Anon., *Memoirs of the celebrated Miss Fanny M[urray]*, 2nd edn (London, 1759), p. 147.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

An appropriate residence or residences, therefore, was clearly a mark of accomplishment and of the utmost importance to a courtesan who wished to maintain her place at the forefront of fashionable society. Her house provided her with the veneer of respectability, which allowed her to host fashionable assemblies and to entertain lavishly. It is surprising, therefore, that the lodgings and houses of these women have attracted so little academic interest. Of course, this may be due to the lack of surviving evidence, or because courtesans lived such transient lives, constantly moving from lover to lover and from property to property. Nonetheless, the following discussion aims to throw some light upon the architectural surroundings of courtesans, in which it will be argued that these women were often some of the most pioneering in their architectural and aesthetic choices.

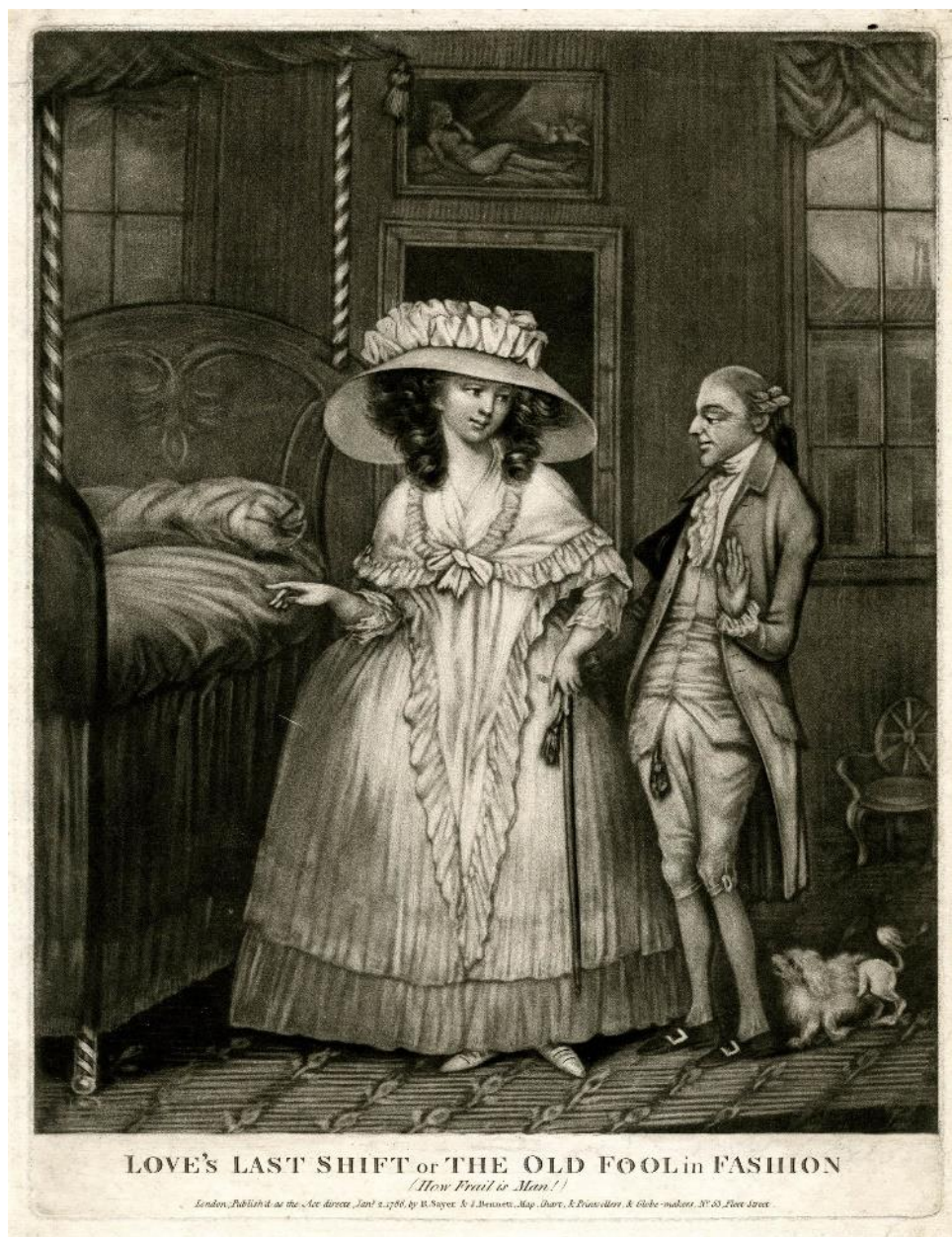


Fig. 11 *Love's Last Shift or the Old Fool in Fashion*, by R. Sayer & J. Bennett, 1786. This engraving depicts the lodging of a middling prostitute.

## Lodgings

Prostitutes could live either in brothels, protected by an ‘abbess’, or in a bawdy-house, protected by a bawd, but they often lodged privately.<sup>218</sup> *Harris’s List of Covent Garden Ladies*<sup>219</sup> provides an insight into the locations and types of accommodation that the middle-market prostitute lived in, for example, a ‘Miss D-vis’ lived at ‘No. 22 Upper Newman-street’ in 1793, and occupied only the parlour.<sup>220</sup> A ‘Miss Godf-y’ also resided at this same house, but she occupied the first floor.<sup>221</sup> These accounts indicate that it was very common for prostitutes to rent only a room or a series of rooms, depending upon what they could afford (fig. 11). The quality of their accommodation could therefore fluctuate substantially. This unpredictability is highlighted in the account of ‘Mrs. Clif-lme’ who lived on the first floor of ‘No. 11 Berner[s] Street’, as it was stated that ‘how long she will keep it we cannot answer’.<sup>222</sup> Presumably, the quality of the interior decoration and furnishings would have been of a low standard. This was firstly due to the fact that these apartments were often ready furnished, which therefore provided little aesthetic opportunity, and secondly, it was unlikely that these women had the capital to commission redecoration of any scale. The life of the prostitute at the bottom end of the scale was sad and sordid and their lodgings were the same.

## High class courtesans

At the high end of the scale, successful courtesans could afford the best accommodation and live in the greatest style. Landlords would provide well-furnished rooms, but due to the unpredictable nature of the prostitutes’ business, they would often double the rent, charging a weekly rent that ‘far exceed[ed] the yearly house rent with all the taxes’.<sup>223</sup> Despite this great expense, courtesans would endeavour to customise their apartments as fashionably as they could afford, as Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz reported in 1790: ‘their apartments are elegantly, and sometimes magnificently furnished; they keep several servants, and some have their own carriages’.<sup>224</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that a courtesan’s status as a lady of fashion was marked by the quality and tastefulness of her accommodation, as well as expensive clothing, jewellery, servants and carriages. For example, when Sally Sailsbury, a famous courtesan from the beginning of the century, became the mistress to a ‘Man of Quality’, she was quickly ‘removed to Villiers-Street in York-Buildings; where, a Sumptuous Apartment was

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<sup>218</sup> Dan Cruickshank, *The Secret History of Georgian London: How the Wages of Sin Shaped the Capital* (London: Random House, 2010), p. 130.

<sup>219</sup> *Harris’s List* was an annual directory of prostitutes published from 1757-95, reputedly by Samuel Derrick, and aimed to give brief accounts of the physical appearance of each lady as well as their sexual preferences.

<sup>220</sup> Hallie Rubenhold (ed.), *Harris’s List of Covent Garden Ladies* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2012), p. 16.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>223</sup> Ivan Bloch, *Sexual Life in England: Past and Present*, trans. William H. Forster (London: Arco, 1958), p. 98, referring to Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, *A Picture of England: Containing a Descriptions of the Laws, Customs, and Manners of England*, translated from French (Dublin: P. Byrne, 1790), p. 189.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

fitted for her Reception'.<sup>225</sup> This was a signal to the world that she was now under the protection of one particular man and unavailable to potential suitors.

The architectural endeavours of two famous society beauties, namely Sophia Baddeley and George Anne Bellamy, will now be explored. Both women managed to secure for themselves wealthy protectors who set them up in suitably grand style. Both were ostentatious in their architectural display, and during their lifetimes were mistress to a number of grand houses both in town and in the country. The architectural opportunities available to these women were predominately constrained to the interiors of their houses, and minor remodelling schemes to their country villas. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, while courtesans were often able to accrue significant wealth, their funds were not ample enough to purchase their own residence outright, or to commission significant architectural works. Secondly, they were expected to keep up the appearance of luxurious living, upon which most of their income was spent, leaving little for long-term goals, such as architectural undertakings.



**Fig. 12 Mrs Baddeley with a Cat, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1772.**

<sup>225</sup> Capt. George Walker, *Authentick Memoirs of the Life Intrigues and Adventures of the Celebrated Sally Salisbury: With True Characters of Her Most Considerable Gallants*, vol. 4 (London, 1723), pp. 19-20.

## Sophia Baddeley (1745-1786)

Sophia Baddeley was an actress, who, following the separation from her husband, realised that she could sustain herself with the assistance of wealthy benefactors (fig. 12). The fact that Sophia was married but separated provided her with the freedom to pursue a lifestyle of wealth and luxury. Sophia's first protector was the Hon. William Hanger who immediately took a 'handsome lodging in Dean Street, Soho, [and] hired her a carriage at his own expence'.<sup>226</sup> This engagement was not to last and Sophia soon set up home with her old school friend Mrs Elizabeth Steele, in St James's Place.<sup>227</sup> Steele at this time was also separated from her husband (who had been declared bankrupt), so it is possible that she attached herself to Sophia in an effort to benefit from Sophia's wealth. In any event, it seems as though the relationship was of mutual satisfaction, with Sophia bringing in the money and Elizabeth running the household and managing the finances. Following Sophia's early death in 1786 Elizabeth published *The Memoirs of Mrs. Sophia Baddeley, Late of Drury Lane Theatre* (1787) in six volumes, probably as a means of securing an additional income for herself.<sup>228</sup>

### Mistress of Peniston Lamb, 1st Viscount Melbourne, and her fashionable establishment in Grafton Street

In c. 1771, Sophia became the mistress of the wealthy Peniston Lamb, 1st Viscount Melbourne. Elizabeth and Sophia soon moved into an elegant house in Grafton Street, for £200 a year. As Melbourne found this location conveniently located to his Piccadilly House, he soon took over the rent and thus Sophia was set for the foreseeable future.<sup>229</sup> This London property was central to Sophia's image as one of the most desirable and fashionable women about town. As such, it was the focal point of her decorative and aesthetic ambitions:

At times she was rather whimsical; she would one day put up furniture in the house, and next day pull it down, and was always changing. Nothing, either of dress or furniture pleased her long. We had workmen of some denomination always in the house, such as upholsterers, painters, carpenters and the like.<sup>230</sup>

Sophia's extraordinary wealth during this period allowed her to remain at the forefront of decorative fashion, which probably accounts for the constant change of furniture and furnishings mentioned. A rare glimpse into the manner in which Sophia decorated her house suggests that she sought to live at the height of luxury:

Her house in town was as elegantly furnished as a good taste and money could make it; the walls of her drawing-room were hung with silk curtains, drawn up in festoons, which she had done, in imitation of Madame du Barre's room, at Versaille, Lewis the Fifteenth's mistress, and every thing

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<sup>226</sup> Elizabeth Steele, *The Memoirs of Mrs. Sophia Baddeley, Late of Drury Lane Theatre*, vol. 1 (1787), p. 23.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>228</sup> Elizabeth Steele, *The Memoirs of Mrs. Sophia Baddeley, Late of Drury Lane Theatre*, 6 vols (1787).

<sup>229</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 119.

<sup>230</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 149.



proportionally elegant and costly; so that she lived, and made an appearance equal to a woman of the first rank.<sup>231</sup>

Sophia's ambition to imitate the luxurious interiors of Louis XV's mistress is significant because it indicates that she considered her architectural and social aspirations to be limitless. She and Elizabeth had visited Versailles previously, remarking that they 'were highly delighted with what [they] had seen'.<sup>232</sup> Sophia would have seen Madame du Barry's apartment and evidently approved of the French fashions, considering it the epitome of taste.

Although little is known of the furniture that Sophia purchased, it is assumed that it was of the most fashionable mode; she did have 'a pretty side-board of plate' worth a staggering £300, as well as silver candlesticks.<sup>233</sup> Additionally, as was the fashion of the time, Sophia indulged in the purchasing of porcelain from 'the great china-shop' in Coventry Street which totalled £13 9s.<sup>234</sup> She also had an interest in art and when at 'a sale of pictures, at Christie's, in Pall-Mall' a painting of 'a miser' was purchased for her by a Mr Thomas Stanley and two paintings of fruit were purchased for her by Sir Cecil Bishopp, probably the 6th Baronet.<sup>235</sup> She no doubt used these objects to decorate her rooms, thus pleasing her benefactors as well as allowing her to showcase her refined taste.

The purpose of the Grafton Street residence, therefore, was for Sophia to entertain her male admirers in a suitably glamorous fashion. From the *Memoirs* it is possible to ascertain that the principal reception rooms consisted of a drawing room and a parlour. These rooms proved very useful when, on occasion, Sophia's admirers would arrive at the same time. For example, on one occasion William Douglas, 4th Duke of Queensberry and 'Captain Fawkner' arrived at the same time and so were shown into the parlour, where 'a harpsichord being in the room, at the joint request of the gentlemen, Mrs. Baddeley sung them a song'.<sup>236</sup> However, in the interim (as fate would have it), two further admirers arrived, so they were tactfully shown into the drawing room to await Sophia.<sup>237</sup>

Within these reception rooms Sophia would also host a variety of entertainments for her admirers, including morning concerts 'with accompaniments by people of fashion', where she would sing songs from different operas, all with 'great taste and judgement'.<sup>238</sup> In the evenings she would host sumptuous dinners where her table 'was set out with elegance' with 'all sorts of French and Spanish wine' to entertain her 'nobler

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>234</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 4, p. 136.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>236</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 185.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 151.

friends'.<sup>239</sup> With these entertainments, Sophia not only showcased her taste and desirability, but also maintained her place as one of the most fashionable and popular women in London.

## A villa in Hammersmith

In furtherance of Sophia's desire to be seen to be fashionable, she also decided to rent a suburban villa, a 'ready furnished house at Hammersmith-hope'.<sup>240</sup> They purchased the lease from Frances Abington (1737-1815), a fellow actress, and agreed to pay £250 for her furniture. The location of this property is unknown, but it is probable that this house was regarded as a suburban retreat by Sophia and Elizabeth; a place to which they could escape the demands of the city and of Melbourne. Elizabeth remarked upon the beauty of the house:

The situation being near the river, she said it was delightful, and we were induced to go and see it [...] We went and could not but admire it's beauty, it's neatness, and elegance, qualities which were apparent in every thing Mrs. Abingdon possessed, and shewed us that she had equally as refined a taste in furnishing a house, as in making up a dress.<sup>241</sup>

This, therefore, demonstrates that occupying multiple houses, and the tasteful decoration of all, was a mark of status for elegant single women of this period. Elizabeth, in the *Memoirs*, almost boasts about the fact that they occupied and maintained so many properties at once: 'This, with Grafton-Street house, and the house at Brighthelmstone was the third residence we at one time possessed'.<sup>242</sup> Being the mistress of a wealthy aristocrat enabled both Sophia and Elizabeth to live the high life, showing off their wealth through their elegant abodes. In keeping with her extravagant lifestyle Sophia soon ordered a series of improvements to her new property:

On arrival at Hammersmith-hope, we found the improvements going on, but not completed. A large bow-window was made in the front of the house, with a flat leaden roof and ballustrades, and a long room built over the kitchen for a laundry. We found twenty men at work, and made them happy by our ordering them a dinner at the public house'.<sup>243</sup>

The additions that Sophia commissioned for her Hammersmith retreat is demonstrative of the fact that elite courtesans were also able to patronise architecture. The inclusion of a bow-window and ballustrades indicate that she was conscious of the property's aesthetic effect, whereas the inclusion of a laundry suggests that she was anxious to make it more convenient. It is assumed that Sophia was instrumental in its architectural direction, because when she later met the Duke of Northumberland there for a secret rendezvous, her loyal friend covered for her when Lord Melbourne appeared at Grafton Street, stating that she had gone to Hammersmith 'for a ride, and to give some directions about the house'.<sup>244</sup> The alterations

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-98.

<sup>240</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 154.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., pp. 154-55.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>243</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 117.

<sup>244</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 3, pp. 80-81.

were certainly not trifling and amounted to a significant sum, as indicated by Elizabeth's shock at the builder's bill:

[I] proposed settling with the builder, for the additions he had made to Hammersmith house, which Mrs Baddeley designed to pay. And when I looked over the bills, I was amazed; they came to seven hundred and fifty-nine pounds, eleven shillings, and eight-pence. My surprize at this, made me fly to her to tell her of it. She received the intelligence with great unconcern; said, we had a lease of it, and that it was now a good house, and I must set it down to the article of her extravagance.<sup>245</sup>

It is apparent that Sophia's engagement in architecture was another mark of her ostentatious display; a method of ensuring that she remained fashionable and in the public eye. Her architectural whims enabled her to display her wealth and status and partake in the elite pursuit of conspicuous consumption. Sophia's success rested on her ability to attract the wealthiest men, and to do this she needed to display her charms and taste within the finest setting. For Sophia, high spending on her appearance and surroundings was paramount to her maintaining her place within elite society. It also ensured that her independent style of living was maintained, allowing her to live the life of a lady without the societal and financial restrictions wrought by marriage.

George Anne Bellamy, a fellow actress, and later mistress to John Calcraft, also displayed an interest in architecture. In contrast to Sophia, George Anne lived with Calcraft at his many residences and played the integral role as hostess. In this capacity she managed his properties, assisted in his business and also orchestrated the architectural improvements to his country residence, Holwood Park. Thus, as an unmarried woman with few prospects, as Calcraft's mistress, her status was elevated, signalling her out as a woman of fashion and prominence. When she and Calcraft eventually parted ways, she was still able to maintain her status by setting up a fashionable independent home, which she redecorated in the latest style. The income from her acting and the credit she could command as a fashionable lady enabled her to cling on to high society. However, as will be demonstrated, George Anne was atrocious with money, just as Sophia Baddeley had been, and thus soon ran up huge debts, forcing her to live in lower-status residences, and eventually within the rules of the King's Bench Prison. George Anne, therefore, provides a valuable insight into how significant the status of a residence and its aesthetic was to the social status of an unmarried actress and mistress of this era.

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid, pp. 188-89.

## George Anne Bellamy (c. 1727-1788)

George Anne Bellamy was the illegitimate daughter of James O'Hara, 2nd Baron Tyrrawley (fig. 13).<sup>246</sup> Although Lord Tyrrawley educated and initially provided for his daughter, when she decided to live with her mother, he cut all financial ties. Her mother had long been involved in the theatrical world<sup>247</sup> so it was not long before George Anne followed, aged 'just fourteen'.<sup>248</sup> Her professional debut was in November 1744 when she played the capital role of Monimia in Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* at Covent Garden Theatre.<sup>249</sup> George Anne's acting career soon took off; with her beauty, youth and talent she quickly became the talk of the town.<sup>250</sup>



Fig. 13 *George Anne Bellamy*, after Francesco Bartolozzi, 1785.

<sup>246</sup> Apparently her name was supposed to be Georgiana or Georgiane, but was misheard at the Christening. Shortly prior to George Anne's birth her mother married Captain Bellamy, master of a trading vessel in Lisbon, which accounts for her surname.

<sup>247</sup> For an account of Mrs Bellamy's theatrical life, see Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, vol. 2: Belfort to Byzand (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Illinois University Press, 1973), pp. 3-6; for a general account of her life, see Cyril Hughes Hartmann, *Enchanting Bellamy* (London: Heinemann, 1956).

<sup>248</sup> George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy, Late of Covent Garden Theatre, Written by Herself*, vol. 1 (London: printed for the author, 1785), p. 48.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-59.

<sup>250</sup> For an account of Mrs Bellamy's theatrical life, see Philip H. Highfill et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors*, vol. 2, pp. 6-20.

## Mistress of John Calcraft and the management of the Brewer Street household

George Anne initially became the mistress of Sir George Montgomery Metham during the latter 1740s, giving birth to his son George in December 1749. He set her up in Lisle Street, Leicester Fields, and later in St James's Square, but in c. 1752 she became bored with him and instead took up with his friend John Calcraft.<sup>251</sup> Calcraft was a successful army agent who had risen up under the patronage of Lord Granby and Henry Fox (to whom he was allegedly related) and through them gained a series of lucrative positions and commissions. George Anne became the 'domesticated wife' of Calcraft and moved into his house in Brewer Street where he agreed to pay 'one hundred guineas a quarter' for the housekeeping.<sup>252</sup> George Anne always believed that Calcraft intended to marry her, but unbeknown to her and society Calcraft was actually already married to a woman called Bridget (surname unknown) from Grantham, from whom he had separated. Upon Calcraft's death in 1772 this came to light when she made a successful claim for dower against his estate.<sup>253</sup>

George Anne ran the Brewer Street household with great enthusiasm, regularly entertaining Calcraft's friends and colleagues:

We had company to dinner and supper every day, which consequently was productive of an expence three times as large as what Mr. Calcraft allowed me [...] Mr Fox generally honoured us with his company at dinner [...] The Marquis of Granby and General Hervey, were either at breakfast, dinner, or supper, and some days all three. To entertain such guests required delicacies; and I piqued myself upon understanding a bill of fare as well as any *maitre d'hotel* in London.<sup>254</sup>

Just as Sophia Baddeley had taken pride in the suppers that she had provided for her well-connected admirers, so too did George Anne. However, rather than seeking to procure pecuniary benefit directly for herself, she sought to impress Calcraft's associates in the hopes of encouraging advantageous deals or commissions for Calcraft. In fact, in her memoirs, she claimed the credit for successfully brokering a number of deals for Calcraft from Sir John Mordaunt, General Campbell and Colonel Honeywood.<sup>255</sup> Although it is possible that George Anne embellished or exaggerated her role in these procurements, it is indicative of the influence that women could wield in business, albeit in the disguise of a domestic setting. The power of political hostesses of this era is well-known, with Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, and Elizabeth Lamb, Viscountess Melbourne, being two such famous examples.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-13.

<sup>252</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 2, p. 176.

<sup>253</sup> Dorset Historic Centre, D-RWR/L/6, Papers in Chancery cases concerning will of John Calcraft Esq. (1772) and right to dower of Bridget Calcraft, 1773-90.

<sup>254</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 2, p. 196.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>256</sup> For further discussion, see Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c.1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

Therefore, the power that women could also wield over business transactions was no doubt considerable during this era, although certainly less visible. At a later date when Calcraft was required to go to Bath for his gout, George Anne was entrusted with reading all of his private correspondence and writing ‘to him the substance of them every night’, demonstrating that women could also be visibly and directly involved in the maintenance of a business when necessary (or when permitted).<sup>257</sup>

## Establishing an architectural legacy at Holwood Park, Kent

In 1754 Calcraft’s business was doing well enough for him to purchase the lease of a villa in Kent, called Holwood Park (fig. 14).<sup>258</sup> Upon Calcraft’s insinuation that he would settle the house upon George Anne and their daughter,<sup>259</sup> she eagerly set about improving the property:

During [his] fits [of gout] he used to say that he intended this seat for my daughter and myself; upon which account I spared no expence to clean and beautify it...It not having been tenanted for four years, I found it required nearly as much cleaning as the Ægean [Augean] stable. For the house had as many inhabitants of the vermin kind, which were overrun with weeds, had of frogs, toads, and other reptiles. This made the task, which I had undertaken to see performed myself, not only troublesome but expensive.<sup>260</sup>

Such was her enthusiasm for the project that she both directed and paid for the improvements herself, describing her efforts ‘as my Hurculean labour’.<sup>261</sup> She enlisted the assistance of various friends, including General Campbell who sent a gardener and ‘supplied me with as many shrubs and exoticks from Combebank. He likewise favoured me with his advice how to lay out the ground, which consisted only of eleven acres’.<sup>262</sup> In addition, she also commissioned a series of garden buildings to increase the beauty and efficiency of her (potential) country seat:

In the garden I built a hot-house, a succession-house, a green-house, and an ice- house. And I completed the whole of this undertaking, within four months; that is to say, from the beginning of February to the latter end of May.<sup>263</sup>

The exaggerated tone used by George Anne in these extracts indicates that she considered this project to be a great undertaking. As she was creating a legacy for herself and her daughter she had a clear vested interest in improving Holwood Park. Her efficiency in achieving this was also a cause for celebration, as she further expressed in her *Apology*: ‘The expedition with which I had rendered it completely habitable, excited the wonder of every one who heard of it, and obtained me their praises’.<sup>264</sup> At the end of the project

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<sup>257</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 3, p. 83.

<sup>258</sup> Lancashire Archives, DDK/1217/13, Conveyance of Holwood House between Mr Nicholas Linwood and Mr John Calcraft, 28 February 1754.

<sup>259</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 1, p. 183.

<sup>260</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 2, pp. 196-97.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

she claimed that she had ‘expended six hundred pounds’ in total, which was a significant amount even for a successful actress.<sup>265</sup> This explicitly demonstrates that unmarried women, even of dubious backgrounds, could direct significant architectural works. The fact that George Anne even used her own money in this instance, is further evidence of the direct role that unmarried women could play in the architectural patronage system.



Fig. 14 *Holwood Park, Kent*, after Robert Nixon, published 1795.

### **Elevated status: the move to Parliament Street**

As Calcraft’s business went from strength to strength so too did the size of his retinue, with the constant hiring of ‘additional clerks and servants’.<sup>266</sup> This therefore made it necessary for the acquisition of a much larger residence, one which ‘was both roomy and elegant’, but also ‘situated contiguous to the public offices’.

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid. p. 199.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid, p. 221.

<sup>267</sup> George Anne wished to have no part in the acquisition of such a property, perhaps fearing that she may be required to organise the move or supply some of the capital. As such she declared that she ‘would no longer be the ostensible housekeeper’, especially as she was £1,200 in debt, and thus she embarked upon a Continental tour.<sup>268</sup>

Upon her return she was pleasantly surprised to find that Calcraft had purchased the lease of a grand house at No. 43 Parliament Street. According to George Anne they now had at least thirty servants plus a ‘reputable *maître d’hotel* named Guince’ which indicates the social heights to which they both aspired.<sup>269</sup> In accordance with this lavish style of living, Calcraft provided George Anne with the considerable sum of £2,500 a year ‘for the table’ which including ‘the produce from the farm, presents, &c. was fully sufficient to maintain, in this point, the magnificence we were entered into’.<sup>270</sup> This was the apogee of George Anne’s fashionable residences. Calcraft’s wealth enabled her to live the lifestyle of a lady of fashion, with considerable social status. She commanded a great household, hosted magnificent entertainments and could retreat to their country residence at any point she chose. However, despite this elevated arrangement George Anne’s relationship with Calcraft was uncomfortable. She did not love him and he became increasingly frustrated with her unchecked lavish spending. Consequently, they separated in the early 1760s, with Calcraft taking Elizabeth Bride, a younger actress, as his new mistress in 1763.<sup>271</sup>

### **Decrease in residential status: Jermyn Street and Brewer Street**

Following this separation, George Anne at some point ‘took a house in Jermyn-Street’ where she was able to live in a ‘degree of elegance little inferior to what I had been accustomed to’.<sup>272</sup> She immediately refitted the property, including reupholstering the drawing room and ‘best bedchamber’, during which time the ‘upholsterer’s man secreted nine yards of damask, a quantity of chintz, and some very fine Dresden china, which were presents’.<sup>273</sup> The luxury products stolen indicate that George Anne was determined not to lose her position within society. Her creation of an independent tasteful house, with its conscious display of luxury, allowed her to continue in the same social circles as she had done with Calcraft, even if she could not actually afford to entertain as lavishly as she once had.

Following her mother’s death in 1771 she moved into her mother’s old house in Brewer Street, where she once more set about remodelling the interiors to suit her taste. Her various friends and admirers assisted in furnishing the house, knowing that her finances were not as easy as they could be:

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 2, p. 225.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>271</sup> Highfill et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors*, vol. 2., p. 329.

<sup>272</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 3, p. 193.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 194.



Comte Haflang having heard of my distress, told me he would pay for the furniture on my first floor, which came to one hundred and twenty pounds; and desired I would fix a time of payment with the upholsterer. Mr Woodward complimented me with two capital basso relieves, for the door; three handsome girandoles, a beautiful grate, &c &c. And as every person with whom I was intimate presented me with some ornament or other, my house, in appearance, was a little cabinet.<sup>274</sup>

George Anne utilised architecture and interior decoration to enhance her financial situation, by sub-letting the ‘best part’ of the house to a respectable newly-married couple, ‘a brother of the great Parker’.<sup>275</sup> Thus, although reduced in her circumstances, George Anne’s enterprising nature allowed her to live comfortably and respectably.

### **The final fall: Kings Bench Prison**

In 1772 Calcraft died, but despite George Anne’s quiet hopes, he did not leave any of his considerable fortune to her, and neither did he bequeath her Holwood Park that she had spent so much of her money and attention on. However, he did provide a portion of £5,000 for his two children by her. The bulk of his estate passed to his eldest son with Elizabeth Bride, John Calcraft the Younger. With no great pay-out and no reliable income, the remaining years of George Anne’s life were ones of gradual decline as her escalating debts proved too great to pay off, despite the generosity of her friends. Significantly, her last residence was in Eliot’s Row, St George’s Fields, where she lived under the ‘Rules’ of the King’s Bench prison and was by all accounts destitute.<sup>276</sup> Living ‘within the Rules’ indicates that although she had been able to buy her way out of the squalor of the cells, she was still a prisoner, confined to the ‘three-square-mile area around the prison walls’.<sup>277</sup> The ‘Rules’ were full of amenities, such as taverns and shops, and although prisoners could not leave, they could still buy things in and receive visitors.<sup>278</sup> Occasionally the ‘Rules’ would be home to famous inhabitants, for example, in the early 1810s Emma Hamilton, mistress of Horatio Nelson, voluntarily committed herself to the ‘Rules’ as a temporary means of avoiding arrest from her creditors.<sup>279</sup>

Many of the genteel prisoners were able to leave the ‘Rules’ once their fortunes were revived, but unfortunately for George Anne, she was not to be so lucky. She died there on 16 February 1788. The gradual decline in the type of her residence, therefore, directly mirrored her steady decline in fortunes and status. Her eventual social disgrace is indicative of the precarious financial status that an unmarried woman possessed. While the mistress of Calcraft, George Anne enjoyed all the privileges of married life without suffering from the social and legal constraints imposed upon her respectable female counterparts. She enjoyed wealth and some social status, and was able to exercise her autonomy over the architecture and management of the houses under her control. However, when Calcraft’s financial and social protection was

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<sup>274</sup> Bellamy, *An Apology*, vol. 4, p. 178.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>276</sup> ODNB online, ‘Bellamy, George Anne (1731?–1788)’.

<sup>277</sup> Williams, *Emma Hamilton*, p. 350.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 350-51.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

removed, George Anne found herself exposed to an increasingly fraught and unpredictable lifestyle, which was reflected in the declining status of her residences.

The discussions regarding Sophia Baddesley and George Anne Bellamy have sought to demonstrate the importance that architectural and aesthetic taste played in their lives. In continuation of this theme, the architectural endeavours of Teresa Cornelys will be considered. Teresa Cornelys, *née* Imer, is famous for having taken London by storm with her lavish subscription balls and concerts for the nobility and gentry during the 1760s and 1770s. An Italian-born opera singer, Teresa moved permanently to London in 1759, quickly facilitating for herself a meteoric rise to fame and fortune.<sup>280</sup> With her ‘sound judgement [...] uncommon taste and an imagination inexhaustible of inventions’, she became the ‘fairy queen’ of London, committed to ‘gratifying the English nobility with entertainments’.<sup>281</sup> Observing the success of outdoor entertainments enjoyed by the *beau monde*, such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh Gardens, Teresa spotted a lucrative opportunity to create an indoor equivalent. Thus, she leased the out-dated seventeenth-century Carlisle House in Soho Square and transformed it into a ‘fairy palace, for balls, concerts, and masquerades’.<sup>282</sup>

## Teresa Cornelys (1723-1797)

Teresa’s architectural achievements differ from every other architectural patroness discussed in this thesis because she utilised architecture to heighten the success of her commercial venture. Whereas women like Sophia Baddeley and George Anne Bellamy spent most of their earnings on maintaining the appearance of leading a lavish lifestyle, Teresa Cornelys purposefully set money apart for architectural schemes to further her business goals. This also extended the scope of her architectural opportunity, since, by doing so, she attained full autonomy over the building projects undertaken at Carlisle House.

Teresa’s foray into the musical entertainment business relied wholly upon Carlisle House, the architectural ‘stage’ upon which everything was hinged. Consequently, during Teresa’s occupation of Carlisle House, she invested vast sums into the continual improvement and augmentation of the property’s aesthetic, as well as its functionality. Due to the unusual nature of her achievements, it is unsurprising that Teresa has already received some academic attention in relation to Carlisle House.<sup>283</sup> However, it is still thought prudent to highlight some of the most impressive elements of her architectural success.

In October 1759, Teresa moved to London, as the mistress of John Fermor, a married clergyman. Although Teresa’s marital status was less than favourable, she was determined to make her fortune amongst the

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<sup>280</sup> Teresa had worked in London for a few months in the mid-1740s as an opera singer, with no success.

<sup>281</sup> von Archenholz, *A Picture of England*, pp. 246-47.

<sup>282</sup> Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 22 February 1771, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, vol. 23, p. 271.

<sup>283</sup> For a biography of Teresa, see Judith Summers, *Empress of Pleasure* (London: Penguin Book Group, 2004); for an excellent overview of Teresa’s activities at Carlisle House see F. H. W. Sheppard (ed.), ‘Soho Square Area: Portland Estate, Carlisle House, Soho Square’, in *Survey of London: Volumes 33 and 34, St Anne Soho* (hereafter SoL), (London: London County Council, 1966), pp. 73-79, accessed via *British History Online* (hereafter BHO); see also Cruickshank, *The Secret History of Georgian London*, pp. 193-202.

English *bon ton*. She posed as a widow, despite being married to Signor Poppeatti and the mistress of Fermor, and had a daughter Sophie – a child of the infamous Casanova. Far from constraining Teresa's ability to succeed, these factors together with her determined character served to fascinate the elite. Consequently, Teresa soon had the friendship and patronage of the notorious Elizabeth Chudleigh, a society beauty and Maid of Honour to Augusta, Princess of Wales. In Chudleigh, Teresa found a kindred spirit, as Chudleigh was equally ambitious and equally risqué, posing as an unmarried lady to maintain her position at Court, whilst being secretly married to Augustus Hervey, later 3rd Earl of Bristol. Chudleigh later became the mistress of Evelyn Pierrepont, 2nd Duke of Kingston-upon-Hull, and then his bigamous wife in 1769.

## **Establishing an Assembly for the 'Nobility and Gentry' at Carlisle House, Soho Square**

With Chudleigh's encouragement, Teresa set about establishing her subscription balls and quickly decided that Carlisle House, with its vast interconnecting reception rooms and impressive grand staircase, was a fitting venue to entice the upper echelons of society (fig. 15).<sup>284</sup> With Fermor's financial assistance, she negotiated a lease in April 1760 from the 2nd Duke of Portland's lessee, Paul Saunders, the famous tapestry maker, at £180 per annum unfurnished, with an additional sum for the use of Saunders' furniture, at £20 for the first year, £15 for the second, and £10 for the third.<sup>285</sup> During the summer of 1760 Teresa set about updating the interiors of Carlisle House as swiftly as possible, ensuring that it would be ready to receive its guests by late November. On 22 November 1760 the first meeting was announced on the front page of the *Public Advertiser*:

The Nobility and Gentry, Subscribers to the SOCIETY in Soho-Square, are acquainted that the first Meeting will be on Thursday the 27th Instant at Seven, the second the 11th of December, and the third postponed to the 1st of January 1761. The Subscribers are desired to send their Subscriptions to those they have subscribed to, and shall receive a Ticket and the Remainder before the next Concert.<sup>286</sup>

Chudleigh headed a committee of ladies that decided who was eligible to subscribe to Teresa's exclusive balls and concerts and soon people were clamouring to be allowed in. When visiting the following year, the German Count Friedrich von Kielmansegge explained the process of obtaining a ticket:

Several ladies have a book, in one of which every one signs his name, paying five guineas for twelve nights. In order that only those people may be subscribers who are known to one of the ladies, the subscription books are kept by the ladies only, and the power to admit or exclude whom they like is confined to them, and is not given to the owner of the rooms, who is an Italian of the name of Cornelia.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Summers, *Empress of Pleasure*, pp. 106-07.

<sup>285</sup> TNA, C 12/1471/1, *Cornelys v Fermor*, (1763, amended 1764); C 12/1585/16, *Fermor v Cornelys* (1763); Sheppard (ed.), 'Soho Square Area', pp.193-202; Summers, *Empress of Pleasure*, pp. 107-08.

<sup>286</sup> BL, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, *Public Advertiser*, Issue 8128, 22 November 1760.

<sup>287</sup> Count Friedrich von Kielmansegge, *Diary of a Journey to England the Years 1761-1762*, trans. by Countess Kielmansegge (London: Longmans & Co., 1902), p. 196.

The first meetings of cardplaying and dancing proved highly successful, which encouraged Teresa to embark on a grand remodelling project at Carlisle House, with the intention of enlarging and beautifying it to accommodate and attract even more subscribers.



Fig. 15 Carlisle House, by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd, 1850. Teresa's two-storey addition is located behind the new house, containing the concert room above and the supper room below.

## The grand remodelling of Carlisle House in 1761

Enthused by her initial success, Teresa purchased the lease from Saunders in May 1761 for £1,950.<sup>288</sup> She then engaged Samuel Norman, a carver, gilder, cabinetmaker and upholsterer, to draw up plans for the enlargement and improvement of Carlisle House.<sup>289</sup> The principal purpose of the works was to demolish the adjoining buildings at the back of the house that ran along Sutton Street. This included the back

<sup>288</sup> Sheppard (ed.), 'Soho Square Area', SoL, pp.193-202.

<sup>289</sup> Details of Samuel Norman's involvement can be traced through the various court cases involving Teresa during the 1760s: TNA, C 107/149, *Cornelys v Fermor* (1760-1); C 12/1289/16, *Cornelys v Bodycoate* (1762); C 12/1585/16, *Fermor v Cornelys* (1763), C 12/1471/1 1763-4) *Cornelys v Fermor*. Later additional cases involving Teresa can be found at TNA, C 12/1518/16, *Fermor v Chamberlain* (1772); C 12/392/28, *Cornelys v Burger* (1772).

buildings as well as the old Roman Catholic chapel (installed by the envoy of the King of Naples during his occupation between 1754-58), that had hitherto been the location for her concerts. In its place was to be erected a new building which would consist of a large concert room on the first floor, with a supper room underneath (fig. 15). To ensure that professional standards were maintained, Teresa also engaged Jacob Leroux, a surveyor/architect of Dean Street, to superintend the building works, but he may also have been responsible for the design of the new concert room.<sup>290</sup>

By all accounts the exterior of the new building was unremarkable, constructed from 'good sound Bricks' with the 'whole to be Covered with the best Tavistock Slates', and the window arches 'Rub'd and Gauged of Grey Stocks'.<sup>291</sup> It was the interior that was to be the focus of Teresa's creative efforts. In addition to the new concert and supper rooms, the building project created a 'Waiting Room [at the] Gable End of [the] New Building', with music rooms above, two tea rooms, a 'large Front Card Room', and a 'Yellow Waiting Room', as well as renovating the existing marble hall and grand staircase.<sup>292</sup>

The scale of the new rooms was astounding, intended to impress from the outset:

The Concert or Principal Room to be 80 Feet long and 35 feet wide in the Clear and 30 Feet high in the Clear. The Supper or under Room to be 79 Feet 9 Inches long and 34 Feet 5 Inches wide in the clear and 12 Feet high.<sup>293</sup>

The concert room was to be the most dramatic of all, with symmetrically-lined windows on the north and south walls leading the eye towards a magnificent coffered semi-dome on the east wall. This impressive architectural feature crowned the space for the orchestra, which was raised on a wooden dais 'out of a good stone Colour'.<sup>294</sup> An engraving from a later date entitled 'Meeting of the School of Eloquence' supposedly depicts the concert room with the grand semi-dome framed by an elegant moulded archivolt supported by two Doric columns (fig. 16).<sup>295</sup> The 'walls were finished with festooned garlands depending from the entablature' and the flat ceiling 'appears to have been decorated with Rococo stucco-work arranged in oval panels flanking a central circle within a square frame'.<sup>296</sup> The supper room underneath was equally lavish, decorated with 'Cullums in the middle of the Room with Doric Capps and Bases on a Portland Stone'.<sup>297</sup>

Teresa's taste in furnishing her new rooms was expensive, with Norman supplying £730 7s. 9d. worth of goods for the concert room alone, including 'a fine large glass seventy-six by forty-four head, forty-four by twenty-four in a glass bordered burnished gold frame' costing £262.<sup>298</sup> The supper room was supplied with

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<sup>290</sup> TNA, C 12/1289/16, *Cornelys v Bodycoate* (1762), 'The further Several Answer of Samuel Norman one of the Defendants to the Bill of Complaint of Teresa Cornelys, 4 February 1763'; Summers, *Empress of Pleasure*, p. 119.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> TNA, C 12/1289/16, *Cornelys v Bodycoate* (1762), 'The Third Schedule...?'

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> Sheppard (ed.), 'Soho Square Area', SoL, pl. 26a.

<sup>296</sup> Sheppard (ed.), 'Soho Square Area', SoL, pp. 193-202.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> TNA, C 12/1289/16, *Cornelys v Bodycoate* (1762), 'The Third Schedule...?'; Summers, *Empress of Pleasure*, p. 120.

goods costing £124 17s. and the ‘Grand Waiting Room [with] Octagon Glass Doors’ was supplied with £100 5s. 6d. worth of goods.

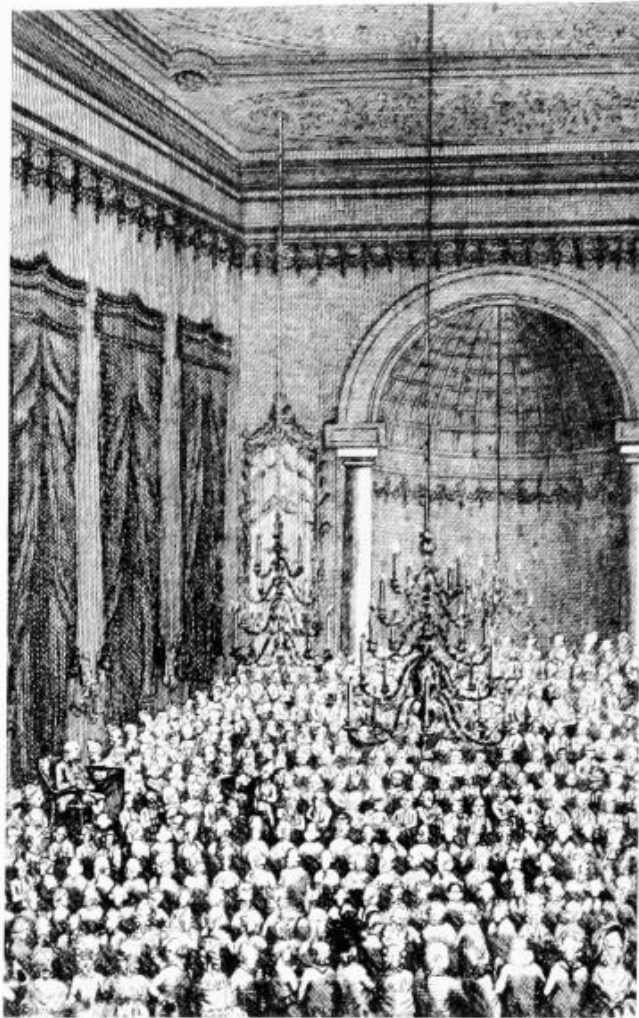


Figure 16. *Meeting of the School of Eloquence*, artist unknown, n.d.

Although Fermor was still financing the works, this project was very much Teresa’s, as evidenced by the fact that she included a copper plate with the following inscription to be built into the foundations:

Not Vain but Grateful In Honour of the Society [of her first subscribers] and my first Protectress  
Ye Honble Mrs. Elizabeth Chudleigh is Laid the First Stone of this edifice June 19 1761 by me Teresa  
Cornelys.<sup>299</sup>

Teresa’s inclusion of her name, as well as that of her patroness, is indicative of the pride that she felt in her architectural endeavour, as well as the optimism that she felt for her entertainment business. It is demonstrative of the fact that women could commission significant building schemes if they had the capital to do so. The perception that women did not engage in architecture or business during this period is

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<sup>299</sup> Sheppard (ed.), ‘Soho Square Area’, SoL, pp. 193-202.

therefore completely undermined. Upon completion, Teresa's taste was celebrated and exalted, serving to increase her fame further. Kielmansegge's account, following his visit in 1761, provides an accurate insight into the nature of Teresa's assemblies, as well as the positive reception of her architectural and aesthetic taste:

On the 26th we went to Court, and in the evening to an assembly at Soho. This consists of a concert and a ball, which take place every fortnight in a fine room, which has been much improved this year [...] The rooms in which they play, as well as the large ballroom, are very fine and beautifully lighted, and exceedingly well furnished. The vocal and instrumental music, by an orchestra at the end of the room, begins at seven o'clock and lasts until nine; dancing afterwards goes on until one or two. Tea, lemonade, and cake are served in two rooms.<sup>300</sup>

From this point, with her assemblies regularly and prominently advertised, and subscriptions constantly sought after, Teresa enjoyed a decade of great success. She held regular assemblies once or twice a month and played hostess to the most prominent names in society. Such was the general approval of Teresa's assembly rooms and her ability to orchestrate extravagant balls, that Carlisle House was often chosen as the venue for grand society and royal events. For example, on 24 January 1764 Carlisle House was used for a subscription ball hosted by the Dukes of Devonshire and Grafton in honour of the marriage of Princess Augusta, elder sister of George III, to the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick:

The ball, last night, at Carlisle-house, Soho, was most magnificent: one hundred and fifty men subscribed, at five guineas each, and had each three tickets. All the beauties in town were there, that is, of rank, for there was no bad company. The Duke of Cumberland was there too; and the Hereditary Prince so pleased, and in such spirits, that he stayed till five in the morning.<sup>301</sup>

The fact that Carlisle House was chosen for such a prestigious event is significant because it suggests that Teresa's house was equal, if not superior, to the grandeur of aristocratic and royal residences. Leicester House, for example, had been used for the celebratory state dinner following the wedding ceremony on the 16th, and a grand ball was hosted by the Queen at Buckingham House on the 23rd.<sup>302</sup> It is also suggested that Carlisle House was one of the few venues of sufficient prestige and reputation that was hireable for such an occasion, thus highlighting Teresa's entrepreneurial talent in discovering such a niche in the market. As von Archenholz remarked in his account of England:

The magical genius of this woman knew how to vary her entertainments in a thousand different shapes [...] A whole *suite* of rooms were richly furnished, so as to imitate the manners and luxury of foreign nations, in the Indian, Persian, and Chinese stiles, while nine thousand wax-candles, placed with great art, produced a fine effect to the spectators.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Kielmansegge, *Diary of a Journey to England*, p. 196.

<sup>301</sup> Horace Walpole to Lord Hertford, Arlington Street, 22 January 1764 (but partly written on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>), in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 38, p. 291.

<sup>302</sup> Queen Charlotte's Birthday Ball, opened by the newly married royal couple; BL, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, *London Chronicle*, Issue. 1106, 21-24 January; Horace Walpole to Lord Hertford, Arlington Street, 22 January 1764 (but partly written on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>), in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 38, p. 290.

<sup>303</sup> von Archenholz, *A Picture of England*, p. 247.

## Threat of Almack's and the further improvement of Carlisle House

During 1764 a potential threat to Teresa's success arose. William Almack set about building a set of assembly rooms in King Street, St James's, in purposeful rivalry to Carlisle House, intended to be open to both sexes of the nobility and gentry, whose entry would be controlled by a committee of ladies. Such a blatant poaching of Teresa's successful formula prompted her to respond by commissioning further architectural improvements to her venue. In October a letter to the editor of the *Public Advertiser*, from a reader called 'Curious', wrote wishing to know:

[T]he nature and design of Mrs. Corelys's plan, as well as the motives for erecting a second set of rooms, when her's are universally allowed, by all who have seen them, to be so magnificently elegant, and so commodiously complete.<sup>304</sup>

Evidently, Teresa was determined not to be outdone by Almack and sought to improve Carlisle House by adding a further suite of rooms. Progress was not as swift as Teresa would have liked, causing her to announce on 23 November that building works were behind schedule:

It is with the utmost Concern that Mrs. CORNELYS now finds it impossible for her to comply with her Engagements to open her Assembly at the Time promised. Her Subscribers, who have ever had Transactions with Workmen, will not be surprized that she has been disappointed in her Expectations of finishing the Improvements and Alterations to her House at the Time she expected.<sup>305</sup>

Nonetheless, by December she was once again open for business, with Horace Walpole reporting that, 'Mrs Cornelis, apprehending the future assembly at Almack's, has enlarged her vast room, and hung it with blue satin, and another with yellow satin'.<sup>306</sup> However, in the following spring, ever conscious of satisfying her clientele, she was again planning further improvements:

MRS. CORNELYS begs Leave to acquaint the Nobility and Gentry [...] that [...] she is now contriving some Alterations [...] in order to remove the disagreeable Inconveniencies arising from the Heat, she proposes, on the next Assembly Night, to accommodate them (as soon as the Company begins to be numerous) with Tea, &c. below Stairs, as well as above, and to continue it during the Remainder of the Season; but on the next Year, the Nobility and Gentry, may depend that proper Ventilators will absolutely be erected in the Great Room; by which Complaints of excessive Heat will be obviated.<sup>307</sup>

These practical improvements indicate that Teresa was fully aware of the fact that her rooms could become uncomfortably hot with the great crush of bodies. Her constant desire to improve and beautify Carlisle House ensured that she successfully maintained her place in London's social scene, and in October 1765 she had again commissioned further embellishments:

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<sup>304</sup> BL, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, *Public Advertiser*, Issue 9341, 10 October 1764.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., *Public Advertiser*, Issue 9379, 23 November 1764.

<sup>306</sup> Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Arlington Street, 16 December 1764, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 10, p. 138.

<sup>307</sup> BL, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, *Public Advertiser*, Issue 94678, 22 March 1765.



It is said, the alterations and additions to Carlisle house in Soho-Square, performing by Messrs. Phillips and Shakespeare, together with all the new embellishments and furniture adding thereto by Mrs. Cornelys, will this year alone, amount to little less than 2000*l.* and that, when finished, it will be, by far, the most magnificent place of public entertainment in Europe.<sup>308</sup>

Teresa placed this announcement in the *London Chronicle* as a clever means of advertising to her subscribers that Carlisle House would, once again, be offering something new for the upcoming season. The hyperbolic language used is indicative of the fact that Teresa was conscious of the competition that Almack's posed, but was still confident that her venue would win the battle. To entice her subscribers further, in November she placed another tantalising announcement in the papers: 'We are told that Mrs. Cornelys, amongst her other elegant alterations, has devised the most curious, singular, and superb ceiling to one of the rooms that ever was executed, or even thought of'.<sup>309</sup>

This notice highlights that Teresa was once more pushing the boundaries of interior décor, commissioning an elaborate ceiling of a design entirely unique. Once the alterations were complete, Carlisle House and its hostess received every form of praise and approval. Carlisle House was celebrated for its 'matchless Elegance' and Teresa was lauded for having 'eminently distinguished herself for her superior Taste'.<sup>310</sup> Subscribers thought that raising the subscription price to a guinea perfectly acceptable, as Teresa's 'Taste, Improvement, and *extraordinary* Expences, amply demand such a trifling Return'.<sup>311</sup> A report in the *London Chronicle* in March 1766 would even suggest that Teresa had finally won the battle against Almack's:

A lady of fashion, who subscribes both to Mrs. Cornelys's, and to Mr. Almack's, and who is remarkable for what the French call the *Jeu d'Esprit* being asked the other day, by a great personage, her opinion of each place, readily replied, "Going to Almack's, Sir, is only like going to Church, but going to Mrs. Cornelys's, is like going to Heaven at once."<sup>312</sup>

Although at the height of fashionable power and having apparently triumphed over Almack, Teresa still could not rest architecturally. It was probably at this point, during the latter 1760s, that she redecorated two of her rooms in the Chinoiserie taste and commissioned a wooden 'Chinese bridge' to connect the main house to the new building.<sup>313</sup> The *Survey of London* (1966) in its account of Carlisle House has speculated that Thomas Chippendale may have been responsible for the bridge and the furnishing of Teresa's Chinese rooms, as he was later listed as one of her main creditors.<sup>314</sup> Chippendale was certainly very fashionable at the time, as was the demand for Chinoiserie. Teresa's new rooms and bridge were yet another attraction for the *beau mode*, that served to keep the subscriptions flooding in. Teresa experimented even further by

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., *London Chronicle*, Issue 1381, 24-26 October 1765.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., *London Chronicle*, Issue 1393, 21-23 November 1765.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., *Public Advertiser*, 26 November 1765, Issue 9694; *Public Advertiser*, Issue 9702, 5 December 1765

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., *Public Advertiser*, Issue 9694, 26 November 1765.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., *London Chronicle*, Issue 1437, 4-6 March 1766.

<sup>313</sup> Sheppard (ed.), 'Soho Square Area', SoL, pp. 42-51.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

later incorporating a grotto which contained, ‘natural evergreens planted round the walls’ as well as ‘a natural well, with a living spring’.<sup>315</sup>



Fig. 17 *The World in Masquerade*, by James Cole, n.d. depicting one of Teresa’s glamorous balls located in her grand concert room.

## Diversification: masquerades

Basking in her apparent triumph Teresa began a series of masquerade balls which became her most successful venture yet. Every person of rank and beauty flocked to Carlisle House in costumes of the most elaborate and expensive nature. The famous courtesan Sophia Baddeley, mentioned previously, was naturally present at many of these balls, as her friend Elizabeth Steel recorded:

[A]s a masquerade was to be at Carlisle-house in a few days, we proposed to go to it. Mrs. Baddeley’s dress was that of a shepherdess; mine, a domino, with a man’s hat and feather [...] The rooms were crowded.<sup>316</sup>

An engraving by James Cole entitled ‘The World in Masquerade’ depicts a scene from one of Teresa’s masquerades (fig. 17).<sup>317</sup> The engraving is set in a large, elaborately decorated room, with mirrors

<sup>315</sup> George A. Ward (ed.), *Journal and Letters of the Late Samuel Curwen, Judge of Admiralty, etc., An American Refugee in England from 1775-1784* (New York: C. S. Francis, 1842), pp. 289-90.

<sup>316</sup> Steele, *The Memoirs*, vol. 5, pp. 149-50.

<sup>317</sup> BM, 1850,1109.50, ‘The World in Masquerade’, engraved by James Cole, n.d., c. 1771.

surrounding the walls interspersed with Ionic pilasters. At the opposite end of the room the coffered semi-dome of the orchestra's location can be seen. The room is lit with hundreds of candles, both hanging from the ceiling in beautiful chandeliers or adorning the walls in fashionable sconces. Dominating the scene, of course, are the numerous guests all decked out in fantastical costumes. Another engraving entitled 'The Soho Masquerade Conference between the Premier and his Journeyman', provides a depiction of the high-quality furniture present at Carlisle House, including ornate gilt pier glasses, consoles, and chandeliers (fig. 18).<sup>318</sup> These engravings, despite their satirical nature, suggest that Teresa remained the queen of London's elite entertainment world.

In 1772 however, Philip Elias Turst opened his elaborate assembly rooms, the Pantheon, on Oxford Street, in direct competition with Teresa's Carlisle House. Unlike Almack's, the Pantheon posed a real threat to Teresa's near monopoly of the entertainment market. Designed by James Wyatt, its principal room, the rotunda, contained a spectacular coffered dome, around which on the east and west sides were grand colonnades, which screened the aisles and first floor galleries.<sup>319</sup> The purpose-built assembly rooms were met with widespread excitement and approval, with Horace Walpole exclaiming the following year that 'the Pantheon is still the most beautiful edifice in England'.<sup>320</sup>

In response to this threat Teresa commissioned further alterations to Carlisle House. This time she embarked upon the task of 'changing the position of her fine long gallery from that of the North and South to East and West'.<sup>321</sup> Described by the press as a 'female Hercules' many speculated whether this ambitious plan could be carried out successfully.<sup>322</sup> When it came to protecting her establishment as the most fashionable in town, there was apparently nothing that would stand in Teresa's way.

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<sup>318</sup> BM, 1868,0808.9876, 'The Soho Masquerade Conference between the Premier and his Journeyman', anonymous engraver, 1770.

<sup>319</sup> For a discussion of the architectural history of the Pantheon see Sheppard (ed.), 'The Pantheon', in *SoL: vols 31-2, St James Westminster, Part 2*, (London, 1963), pp. 268-83, accessed via BHO.

<sup>320</sup> Horace Walpole to the Rev. William Mason, Strawberry Hill, 29 July 1773, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 28, p. 102.

<sup>321</sup> BL, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, *London Evening Post*, Issue 6900, 26-28 March 1772

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, *London Evening Post*, Issue 6898, 21-24 March 1772.



Fig. 18 *The Soho Masquerade Conference, between the Premier and his Journeyman*, Anon., 1770. Teresa's rich furnishings are finely displayed, including columns, chandeliers and gilt pier-glasses.

## Bankruptcy and disgrace

Despite Teresa's continued conspicuous display of wealth and grandeur, in reality she was facing bankruptcy, and by 1772 her creditors finally caught up with her. Her atrocious grasp of financial management resulted in her confinement in the King's Bench debtor's gaol – similar to George Anne Bellamy's predicament in the 1780s. Teresa's property was seized by her creditors and an attempt was made by them to sell the lease of Carlisle House and all its contents at auction.<sup>323</sup> The auction failed to attract potential buyers, so a consortium of Teresa's creditors clubbed together to purchase the lease and contents for the greatly reduced price of £15,000.<sup>324</sup> This marked the end of Teresa's twelve-year monopoly over London's party-goers and effectively marked the beginning of her gradual decline. Although she did return to Carlisle House to manage assemblies and concerts for her creditors, she was never able to replicate the great successes of the previous decade. Plagued by continued debts and increasing competition Teresa's heyday was gone – she eventually ended up in Fleet Street prison, where she died in 1797 aged seventy-four.<sup>325</sup>

This tragic conclusion is reminiscent of George Anne's ignoble end and again illustrates how precarious the life of a single woman could be in Georgian Britain. Nevertheless, this exploration of Teresa's architectural schemes at Carlisle House has sought to demonstrate how ambitious women could be with architecture

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, Issue 136533, December 1772.

<sup>324</sup> Summers, *Empress of Pleasure*, pp. 243-44.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., p. 282.

during this time. Teresa exploited the most fashionable architectural styles of the day, ranging from Classical, Rococo to Chinoiserie. Additionally, as the leader of taste, she constantly embarked upon novel and unusual architectural schemes in order to win her subscribers' continued support, such as the inclusion of a fanciful grotto and the 'Chinese bridge'. Such schemes demonstrate Teresa's experimental and enterprising nature, not just in business but also in architecture.

# Part 2

## Married Women

# Chapter 6

## Conventional interaction with architecture

### Mistress of the house

Setting up home was the first significant step a newly married woman would undertake. She was the mistress of the house and therefore the responsibility of managing the household fell to her. Schooling and education in the skills of household management began at a young age, and thus, social and familial expectations were high, as demonstrated by Lord Halifax's instructions to his daughter Elizabeth in 1688:

[T]he *Government* of your *House, Family, and Children*, which since it is the Province allotted to your Sex, and that the *discharging it well*, will for that reason be expected from you, if you either desert it out of *Laziness*, or manage it ill for *want of skill*, instead of a *Help* you will be an *Incumbrance* to the *Family* where you are placed.<sup>326</sup>

Ingrid Tague states that, 'women's "government" of their households was part of the implicit bargain offered them by conduct writers: total submission to their husbands in return for complete authority over the household'.<sup>327</sup> This authority included the control of the household accounts, which many elite wives took great pride in overseeing. Lady Griselle Baillie, *née* Hume (1665-1746), for example, kept exceedingly detailed accounts from 1692 to 1746 that were split into six main categories including: household expenditure, sundries (including education), servants' wages, men-servants' wages, family clothing, and furniture and furnishing.<sup>328</sup> These accounts offer a fascinating insight into the manner in which Lady Griselle managed the houses under her control, including Mellerstain House, Kelso (country seat), a townhouse in Edinburgh and a townhouse in London. What is more important, for this study, is what these accounts reveal about the role she played regarding the aesthetics of her residences.

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<sup>326</sup> George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, *The Lady's New Years Gift: Or, Advice to a Daughter* (London, 1688), p. 56.

<sup>327</sup> Ingrid Tague, *Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690–1760* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), p. 98.

<sup>328</sup> Robert Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *The Household Book of Lady Grisel Baillie 1692-1733*, 2nd ser., vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1911), p. xxxiv.

The accounts demonstrate that Lady Griselle was involved with regular improvements and repairs of the houses under her control, as well as the entire fitting out of others. In July 1720, Lady Griselle recorded payments for the improvements to Mellerstain House, including £3 10s. for '3 concave chimneys and 120 foot hewin lintels and rebets for highting the House', and a further £26 for mason and glazing work.<sup>329</sup> This refers to the old tower house that was later demolished to make way for the new house designed by William Adam and his son Robert Adam. Prior to this commission, the gardens were constantly undergoing improvement for which Lady Griselle regularly recorded payments for plants and trees, including £4 1s. 6d. for '300 Limes and 90 frute trees' in January 1715.<sup>330</sup>

In 1715 the family moved to an unfurnished house in London, which prompted a host of payments for the repairing, decorating and furnishing of the property, all of which fell under Lady Griselle's jurisdiction. The very first payments were for essential maintenance including the 'scouring all the wanscote of new house at 20d a day', 'For white washing the House',<sup>331</sup> 'Repairing the Roof of the new house'.<sup>332</sup> Further payments for glazing, painting, joinery, smiths work and the transportation of pictures all take place during the summer of 1715.<sup>333</sup> Lady Griselle's detailed accounts regarding the repairs suggest that it was she who was responsible for the architectural works and, significantly, not those of her husband, George Baillie. George was occupied, at this time, with his duties as MP for Berwickshire and as one of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty, and thus entrusted such business to his competent wife.

Great sums were spent on the upholstery, such as £36 'For 6 pices Green Damask for hangings, chairs and window curtains from Piter Hambly' and £26 paid to John Sanderson for 'makeing 8 Damask window Curtins with 4 seats'.<sup>334</sup> Further sums were laid out for three pieces of yellow damask and 'blew Bundet' for window curtains, as well as £46 for 'a yellow Moyhair and stuff Tourdelie [and] 2 window curtains'.<sup>335</sup> Lady Griselle was evidently determined that her town house would be equal to any other great entertaining house in London.

Other luxury purchases included a walnut tree writing desk, black Japan frames for pictures, a Japan tea table, six cane chairs and '12 japan chairs, 2 Arm chairs, 2 stools'.<sup>336</sup> Lady Griselle selected choice marble pieces to enhance her rooms, such as a red and white marble table and a purple and white Devonshire marble table.<sup>337</sup> Moreover, it is known that she commissioned a series of pieces from the famous cabinet-

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<sup>329</sup> Mellerstaine, July 1710, 'Sundries', in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 26.

<sup>330</sup> London, January 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 31.

<sup>331</sup> London, 21 June 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 34.

<sup>332</sup> London, 24 June 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 35.

<sup>333</sup> London, 30 July 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 35; London, 7 Aug 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 35.

<sup>334</sup> London, 26 Aug 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 181; London, 16 Nov 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 188.

<sup>335</sup> London, 18 Sept 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> London, 18 Sept 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 185.



maker, James Moore, which further demonstrates Lady Griselle's desire to remain at the forefront of fashion. From Moore she commissioned:

For 10 walnut tree chairs wt mated seats	£14
For a yellow Callamanca easie chair	£5
For a litle folding walnuttree table	£1
For 10 chairs stuf back and seat beside the Damask	
at 1£ 15s and 4 squar stools of the same at 1£ 6s	£22 14s
For a settie stuff of the same above	£4 6s
For a fram to a fire screen	£1 1s 6d
For a walnut tree book case	£3
For a fram to a marbel table	£1 10s <sup>338</sup>

It is clear from Lady Griselle's accounts that in her conventional capacity as 'mistress of the house' she was able to control far more than her servants and children. In fact, she had the sole responsibility of maintaining the properties under her care as well as the complete refitting and redecorating of the London house. This demonstrates that even within the traditionally accepted role as wife and household manager, women could exert great power in shaping their environments. The following discussion will therefore examine the extent to which wives influenced the redecoration of their marital homes.

## Redecorating the ancestral seat or marital home

On entering the role as the new mistress of the patriarchal ancestral seat, it was often expected that she would want to exert her taste upon its interior decorative scheme. The benefit of this was twofold. Firstly, it provided the perfect opportunity to update outmoded décor from previous generations, and secondly, it allowed the wife to create an environment of her choosing. The timescale for this could range significantly, from immediately after the wedding to years later, depending upon the family's financial situation, social commitments, and personal inclination.

For Emily, Countess of Kildare (1731-1814), it was not until 1759, twelve years into her marriage to James FitzGerald, 20th Earl of Kildare, that she and her husband decided to update the interiors of their country seat, Carton House, Co. Kildare. Although a joint endeavour, Lady Kildare was very much in charge of the direction of the project, as demonstrated by her letter to Kildare:

[T]his morning I am setting out for Carton, where I hope to find a great deal done in my absence [...] My dear Lord Kildare, don't let Louisa forget the India paper, and if you see any you like buy it as once, for that I have will never hold out for more than three rooms, and you know we have four to do; for I have set my heart upon that which opens to the garden being done, for 'tis certainly now our best and only good living room. I really think Carton House when 'tis spruced up will be vastly pretty and full as fine as I wou'd ever wish a country house to be. I have seized upon the blue paper that was for the great room here. Don't be angry, you may have enough for that before winter, and it will make one of the middle apartments at Carton so pretty, with the fine chintz furniture lined with blue silk, that I have taken out of the old beds.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> London, 16 Nov 1715, in Scott-Moncrieff (ed.), *Household Book*, p. 187.

<sup>339</sup> Lady Kildare to Lord Kildare, 10 May 1759, in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence*, vol 1., p. 80.

Lady Kildare's taste was very much *en vogue*, but this came at a great cost, much to her devoted husband's dismay:

There is so great a doubt whether the hundred and fifty yards of the same India taffeta can be got, and the price is so much, besides all the hazard of getting it safe to Ireland, that I desired Lady Louisa not to buy it till she heard again from you. I could wish my dear Emily would think of things that were not so difficult to get and so dear, if to be found, to furnish Carton with.<sup>340</sup>

Nevertheless, Lord Kildare followed his wife's orders and whilst in England found and purchased the expensive taffeta, 'I have got ten pieces of taffeta, which I hope I shall bring safe; they cost sixty-five guineas, too much to lose at Custom House'.<sup>341</sup> This interaction demonstrates that internal decoration was certainly perceived as a socially accepted female pursuit. The mistress of the house was able to express her taste and femininity without encroaching upon the masculine ideals of architecture.

Of course, this was not always the case, and in circumstances where an entirely new stately home was commissioned by the husband, it was sometimes he who directed both the external and internal decorative schemes. Such was the situation at Holkham Hall, where Thomas Coke, later created Earl of Leicester, commissioned a grand Palladian seat in north Norfolk. Holkham Hall was his creation and thus it reflected his taste and vision. His wife, Lady Margaret Coke, dutifully remained in the background throughout the project until Coke's death in 1759. The reason for this was likely her natural modesty, but also because Coke was establishing a new patriarchal dynasty, of which Holkham was the masculine manifestation of his ambition.

Nevertheless, in most examples, ranging from the aristocracy to the middling classes, female influence was generally the norm. In 1744, the newly remarried Mary Delany was entirely occupied with the redecoration of her marital home, Delville House, Dublin: 'I have workmen of all sorts in the house - upholsterers, joiners, glaziers, and carpenters - and am obliged to watch them all, or their work would be but ill-finished'.<sup>342</sup> Again, although a joint project between husband and wife, Mary was in control of its overall direction and enjoyed describing its progress to her sister Mrs Anne Dewes:

My English room is quite unfurnished again and under the painter's hands. I have had it painted a sort of olive, somewhat lighter than my brother's, for the sake of my pictures, and because the room is very light. I have had the frieze painted with festoons of flowers and shells alternate, and you can't imagine what a pretty effect it has; as soon as the room is dry, which will be about a fortnight hence, I shall be very busy in replacing my goods.<sup>343</sup>

Her language clearly indicates the pride and possession that she felt for the project and suggests that the discussion of interior decorative schemes was exceedingly common amongst female correspondents. Indeed, for correspondents who had not visited the house of their friend or relative, detailed descriptions

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<sup>340</sup> Lord Kildare to Lady Kildare, 15 May 1759, Pay Office, in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 85.

<sup>341</sup> Lord Kildare to Lady Kildare, 19 May 1759, Pay Office, Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 90.

<sup>342</sup> Mrs Delany to Mrs Dewes, Delville, 26 July 1744, in Llanover (ed.), *Autobiography*, 1st ser., vol. 2, p. 319.

<sup>343</sup> Mrs Delany to Mrs Dewes, Delville, 23 Sept 1744, in Llanover (ed.), *Autobiography*, 1st ser., vol. 2, p. 330.

and regular updates were the only methods that enabled them to visualise the scheme. Mrs Delany articulated this perfectly as her project came to a close:

My house is now furnished very completely. Is it not strange, my dear sister, that you and I should dwell in houses that *neither of us have seen* - that I should be *unacquainted with your home and you with mine*.<sup>344</sup>

Significantly, she claimed possession of the marital home as ‘my house’, thus signifying her status as mistress of the house. It also demonstrates that elite married women often felt autonomy within their marriages; a concept that is not always considered by historians. Although legally and financially constrained, many married women were still able to influence the aesthetic and architectural schemes around them. For example, when Sir George Lyttelton, 5th Baronet, created 1st Baron Lyttelton in 1756, set about building Hagley Hall in Worcestershire, his wife’s opinion carried great weight:

Dear Miller – Upon showing the Plan of the House to my wife she finds it so different from what she desired of Mr. Barrett, and so inconvenient in many respects, that I believe that no alterations that can be made in it will answer our purpose. We therefore desire that you will try your skill in the Greek Architecture, being persuaded that no other Gentleman Architect will have so great a regard to the convenience as you, or know so well how to give us the rooms that we want. We are pretty indifferent about the outside, it is enough if there by nothing offensive to the eye; but Lady Lyttelton insists upon dark closets and back stairs. She wishes too for a small room of separation between the eating room and the Drawing room, to hinder the Ladies from hearing the noise and talk of the Men when they are left to their bottle, which sometimes happen even at Hagley.<sup>345</sup>

His wife, Elizabeth, Lady Lyttelton, *née* Rich (1716-1795), objected so strongly to the Gothic designs proposed by Sanderson Miller, that she prevailed upon her friend Thomas Barrett Lennard, 17th Baron Dacre, to enlist John Chute to produce designs in the Classical tradition.<sup>346</sup> Chute, described by Walpole as ‘an able geometrician and an exquisite architect, of the present taste, both in the Grecian and Golthick styles’, produced an abundance of Classical designs, many of which now reside in The Lewis Walpole Library.<sup>347</sup> Chute’s plans were later incorporated by Miller to create the Classical house that stands there today, built between 1754 and 1760.

Lady Lyttelton’s influence over the design was significant, leading Lord North to comment in 1751, that ‘If an Italian House is built at Hagley, it is by my lady’.<sup>348</sup> Evidently, in this instance, Lady Lyttelton was responsible for changing the entire direction of the design, from Gothic to Classical, as suited her preference. Her influence was such that Sir George gave her free reign over the improvement and modification of the

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<sup>344</sup> Mrs Delany to Mrs Dewes, Delville, 7 Sept 1745, in Llanover (ed.), *Autobiography*, 1st ser., vol. 2, p. 386.

<sup>345</sup> Sir George Lyttelton to Sanderson Miller, June 1752, Tunbridge, quoted in Lillian Dickins and Mary Stanton, *An Eighteenth Century Correspondence* (London: John Murray, 1910), p. 285.

<sup>346</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, rev. by Alan Brooks, Nikolaus Pevsner, *Worcestershire*, [rev. and expanded edn], (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 335.

<sup>347</sup> Quoted in Dickins and Stanton, *Correspondence*, p. 284; Numerous surviving plans and drawings by Chute, located at The Lewis Walpole Library, Folio 49 3490, ‘Slight sketches of architecture’ by John Chute, Esq., of the Vine in Hampshire, 1753.

<sup>348</sup> Quoted in Dickins and Stanton, *Correspondence*, p. 283.

plan form, as demonstrated in his letter to Miller: 'I can trust you and my wife in making any alterations you please in the Plan'.<sup>349</sup> This demonstrates that although Sir George was financing and commissioning a new patriarchal seat for the Lyttelton family, and was therefore considered the overall patron, Lady Lyttelton's crucial influence should not be overlooked. She was involved in every aspect of the design stage and was determined to achieve her own architectural ambitions.

Moreover, this project was the joint architectural endeavour of both husband and wife, as Lady Lyttelton herself expressed in a letter to Miller: 'At last Hagley House is absolutely set upon, both as to the inside and the outside and perfectly to the satisfaction of Sir George and myself'.<sup>350</sup> Mutual satisfaction was clearly very important to both spouses who wished to create a marital home that reflected their joint status, taste and wealth.

This desire for spousal architectural satisfaction was also evident at Castle Ward, Co. Down, where the differing architectural tastes of Bernard Ward, later 1st Viscount Bangor, and his wife Lady Ann, *née* Bligh (d. 1789), were incorporated in a dramatic fashion. There, the two principal façades sport differing architectural styles; the entrance front and the rooms behind are staunchly Palladian, as advocated by Lord Bangor, while the garden front and the rooms to the west are distinctly Gothic, as advocated by Lady Ann. Mary Delany remarked in 1763 that 'Mr. Ward is building a fine house...*He* wants taste, and *Lady Anne Ward* is so whimsical that I doubt her judgement'.<sup>351</sup> Despite this disapproval, Lady Ann successfully achieved her architectural ambition and, as Desmond Guinness and William Ryan stated in *Irish Houses and Castles*, the finished ensemble is 'one of the strangest architectural compromises ever perpetuated'.<sup>352</sup>

This concept of architectural compromise will now be explored further in the following chapter, where it will be argued that elite wives were often joint architectural patrons with their husbands. As has already been hinted at, wives possessed architectural and stylistic preferences and were not afraid to influence their husbands' building schemes to achieve their goals.

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<sup>349</sup> Sir George Lyttelton to Sanderson Miller, June 1754, quoted in Dickins and Stanton, *Correspondence*, p. 287.

<sup>350</sup> Lady Lyttelton to Miller May 1753, quoted in Dickins and Stanton, *Correspondence* pp. 286-87.

<sup>351</sup> Mary Delany to Bernard Granville (her brother), Mount Panther, 29 August 1763, in Llanover (ed.), *Correspondence*, 2nd ser., vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>352</sup> Desmond Guinness and William Ryan, *Irish Houses and Castles* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 94.

# Chapter 7

## Equal marriage, joint patronage?

In the eighteenth century, three women from the Yorke family were involved in building schemes during their married lives. The architectural achievements of these women have never before received thorough academic attention, nor have they been considered within the context of their marital status. The following examination, therefore, is the first time that the scope and significance of their involvement and control over architecture is scrutinised. The abundance of surviving primary evidence, located at the Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Service, has provided new insights into the level of architectural interest that elite women of this period possessed.

### **The Yorke family**<sup>353</sup>

The three women that form the subject of this discussion are Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey and her two daughters, Lady Amabel and Lady Mary. Lady Amabel married Alexander Hume-Campbell, Lord Polwarth, in 1772 (after which she was referred to as Lady Polwarth), and Lady Mary married Thomas Robinson, 2nd Baron Grantham, in 1780 (after which she was referred to as Lady Grantham).

These three aristocratic women provide an excellent example of how architectural discourse flourished within female kinship networks. All three women wrote regularly to one another upon the subject of architecture, offering advice and providing descriptions, including sending hand-drawn plans when required. Moreover, women from their extended family circle, such as aunts, cousins, and sisters-in-law, as well as friends were also included within this architectural dialogue.

During their married lives, all three women demonstrated, to varying degrees, a practical interest in architecture and landscaping. Lady Grey had the greatest influence and involvement because Wrest Park was *her* ancestral home, which gave her the authority to commission and manage building schemes as she

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<sup>353</sup> Limited academic research has been conducted into the significance of the Yorke family, however, for a biography of the founding member, see Philip Chesney Yorke, *The Life and Correspondence of Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913).

saw fit.<sup>354</sup> Lady Grantham also had a significant influence over the remodelling of her marital home at Newby Park, Yorkshire, because she and her husband shared a passion for creating the perfect marital home. In contrast, Lady Polwarth had little involvement in building schemes during her marriage, but this was simply due to a lack of opportunity rather than a lack of interest. In reading the case studies of these three women, it is prudent to keep in mind the varying scope of architectural opportunity that was available to them.

## Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey (1722-1797)



Fig. 19 *Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey*, by Allan Ramsay, 1741.

<sup>354</sup> The primary discussion on the history of the old Wrest Park from 1700 onwards is to be found in James Collett-White, 'The Old House at Wrest – Part II', *The Bedfordshire Magazine* 23, no. 177 (summer 1991), pp. 4-12. This only briefly touches upon Marchioness Grey's involvement and is repeated in James Collett-White (ed.), 'Inventories of Bedfordshire Country Houses, 1714-1830', *Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, vol. 74 (1995), pp. 243-51. The house being discussed was replaced by the current one, built 1834-38.

Although the Yorke dynasty had considerable influence and wealth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the women in this prominent family have received surprisingly limited scholarly investigation, and their architectural achievements are virtually unknown.

Jemima, Lady Grey (fig. 19), was the daughter of John Campbell, Lord Glenorchy, later 3rd Earl of Breadalbane and Holland and his wife, Amabel, daughter of Henry Grey, 1st Duke of Kent, and his first wife, Jemima, *née* Crew.<sup>355</sup> When the Duke of Kent's last surviving son George Grey, Earl of Harold, died in his infancy, Lady Grey became the heir to the barony of Lucas of Crudwell; a title that could be inherited by women. At this point, the Duke decided that his granddaughter should become the sole heir to his vast estates. In May 1740, therefore, the title of Marquess Grey was created for the Duke with remainder to the 'heirs male of his body; and in default of such issue, the dignity of Lady Grey to Jemima Campbell'.<sup>356</sup> Consequently, when the Duke later died on 5 June 1740, not only did Lady Grey succeed to the marquessate, she also inherited the Grey estates which included manors in Burbage, Leicestershire, Colchester, Essex, Crudwell, Wiltshire as well as the ancestral country seat at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, and the London house in St James's Square.

On 22 May 1740 Lady Grey married Philip Yorke, the eldest son of Philip Yorke, Baron and later Earl of Hardwicke, Lord Chancellor, and owner of the Wimpole Hall estate in Cambridgeshire. The marriage was a dynastic affair with the aim of uniting the long-established Greys to the socially-ambitious Yorkes.

### **Arrival at Wrest Park**

In 1743, the Yorkes settled into Lady Grey's ancestral home, a grand, old, rambling house that had been built in a piecemeal fashion since the sixteenth century. Although Wrest had been described by John Macky, a Scottish writer and spy, as 'a very magnificent, noble seat, with large parks, avenues and fine gardens' in 1724, by the time the Yorkes occupied the property, it was very much out-dated.<sup>357</sup> In fact, the house itself had been little altered since its seventeenth-century remodelling, which had included the construction of the imposing, Classical north front between 1672 and 1676.<sup>358</sup> Consequently, in a bid to modernise Wrest, they commissioned a constant succession of alterations throughout their marriage that succeeded in making Wrest a fashionable and convenient residence.

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<sup>355</sup> For a short biography of Marchioness Grey, see Joyce Godber, 'Marchioness Grey of Wrest Park', *Bedfordshire Historical Society*, vol. 47 (1968), entire volume. Although a good introduction to Marchioness Grey and her circle, the work neglects their architectural involvement; see also ODNB online, 'Yorke, Jemima, suo jure Marchioness Grey (1722–1797)'.

<sup>356</sup> BL, 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers, *London Gazette*, Issue 7914, 27-31 May 1740.

<sup>357</sup> John Macky, *A Journey through England*, vol. 1 (London: John Hooke, 1724), p. 304.

<sup>358</sup> BLARS, L31/230-41, building accounts, c. 1676; briefly discussed in James Collett-White (ed.), 'Inventories', pp. 244-45.

Wrest, May 14<sup>th</sup> 1749

We arriv'd through a great deal of Heat yesterday, about Two o'Clock to Dinner & I shall be very to return to London. — Our Compagnon de Voyage was L. Willoughby. — If you want any other Reason for this little Expedition than the Exchange of Smoke for fresh Air & the enjoying this beautiful Verdant which the Country affords at present, I will give you for One that we came to look after our Workmen, & that I am sure has a busy important Sound. — The new Room is begun, & that part of the poor Old House which has come down for this modern Non-fangled Thing to rise looks indeed a little ruinous. The new Walls which we hoped to have seen pretty far advanced, have been so civil to stop of themselves (I believe) through the seeming Pretence of a Delay in some Materials, that they might not hinder our passage into the Garden. A small Obstacle indeed they are, but no Impediment, for not being so greatly elevated as the Walls of Rome they may not only be Jump'd but Stepp'd over: & by the Help of a Board & one of L<sup>d</sup> Willoughby's common-siz'd Steps, the Entrance to the Garden from the Hall-Door is still

Fig. 20 Copy letter of Lady Grey to Lady Mary Gregory mentioning the building of the Flitcroft dining room, 14 May 1749.



## The Yorkes commission Henry Flitcroft to build a fashionable dining room

In 1749, Henry Flitcroft was commissioned to design and construct a large new dining room on the south front (fig. 21). Flitcroft was a fashionable architect, regularly employed by William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, second son of George II, in Windsor Great Park.<sup>359</sup> By commissioning Flitcroft, the Yorkes were consciously seeking to increase the status of their house. Lady Grey took great enjoyment from her first foray into architecture, and regularly updated her correspondents on its progress. In a letter to her friend and bluestocking, Catherine Talbot, she referred to the room as ‘the great room’, signifying its intended high status and significance.<sup>360</sup> A further mention of the dining room, in a letter (fig. 20) to her kinswoman Lady Mary Gregory, reveals Lady Grey’s joint involvement in the commission:

[W]e came to look after our Workmen [...] The new Room is begun, & that part of the poor Old House which has come down for this modern new-fangled Thing to rise looks indeed a little ruinous.<sup>361</sup>

This correspondence highlights the significance of female social networks during the eighteenth century, and illustrates that women regularly corresponded about the architectural projects they were involved with. During much of the build, Yorke was in Paris, confidently entrusting the management and direction of the project to his capable wife:

I have not yet been at Nanettes,<sup>362</sup> but I cannot go there to choose with Judgement till I have some Instruction from You, & in particular I want to know what Reuben’s & Pousoins we have already, or I may be in danger of taking duplicates [...] I wd recommend it to you to carry over My Lord<sup>363</sup> &c. to see the Alterations at Wrest when ye Room is a little more advanced.<sup>364</sup>

This excerpt is demonstrative of the collaborative relationship shared by the Yorkes. Moreover, it highlights the point that husbands were often called away for substantial periods of time on various forms of business, whether it was political, military, or financial. During these absences, their wives continued the direction and management of building schemes and were able to influence the design schemes if they wished. In this instance, Yorke sought his wife’s instructions about the paintings as she was nearest to the collection both at Wrest and at their London house in St James’s Square. The challenge of ensuring that the project continued successfully was enthusiastically embraced by Lady Grey, and indicates that eighteenth-century marital relationships were more equal than is often perceived by historians.

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<sup>359</sup> For his various commissions at Windsor Great Park, see Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>360</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/5/124, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wrest, 18 May 1749.

<sup>361</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/2/32, Lady Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, Wrest, 14 May 1749.

<sup>362</sup> Possibly a Parisian art dealer.

<sup>363</sup> Referring to Philip’s father, Philip Yorke, Lord Hardwicke (1690-1764), of Wimpole.

<sup>364</sup> BLARS, L30/9/113/24, Philip Yorke to Lady Grey, Paris, 24 August 1749.



**Fig. 21** South front of Wrest Park, unknown artist, 1831. The Flitcroft dining room (1749) is located in the centre with the bow window and the new drawing room wing (1763) is immediately on the left.

### **The Yorkes' first foray into garden architecture**

Just as the Yorkes were passionate about modernising their marital home, they were equally determined to express their architectural taste in the form of ornamental garden buildings. Wrest was renowned for its extensive formal gardens; they had been created by the 11th Earl of Kent in the 1680s and 1690s, and continued by his son, the 1st Duke of Kent, throughout the early eighteenth century.<sup>365</sup> Consequently, the gardens consisted of a multitude of canals, terraces, avenues, as well as various buildings, including the Bowling Green House, Thomas Archer's Baroque Pavilion (1707-11), and Cain Hill House (1717).<sup>366</sup>

### **The Mithraic Altar and Root House**

The Yorkes sought to improve and add to the gardens by commissioning a series of alterations, including adjustments to the canals, the construction of a bridge over the Serpentine canal, and the commissioning of

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<sup>365</sup> For discussions about the 1st Duke's garden at Wrest, see Linda Cabe Halpern, 'The Duke of Kent's garden at Wrest Park', *Journal of Garden History*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1995), pp. 149-78.

<sup>366</sup> For a detailed discussion of the garden's development, see Linda Cabe Halpern, 'Wrest Park 1686-1730s: Exploring Dutch Influence', *Garden History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2002), pp. 131-52.

a Mithraic Altar (1748) and Root House (completed in 1749). As early as June 1747, Lady Grey consulted Lord Lyttelton of Hagley Hall, regarding her intention to build the altar and root-house.<sup>367</sup> The design of the Mithraic Altar has been attributed to Thomas Wright, astronomer, mathematician, architect and garden designer, who tutored Lady Grey in the winter of 1741-42.<sup>368</sup> Thomas Wright is also credited with designing the cryptic Shepherds Monument (1748) at Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire, the home of Thomas Anson, brother-in-law to the Yorkes. It is likely, therefore, that the Yorkes were influenced by the Shugborough monument and decided to commission one for themselves. Completed in 1748, Lady Grey claimed that the altar had gained ‘fame and praise’ during the summer, baffling visitors with its two inscriptions.<sup>369</sup>

In November 1748 she joyfully informed Catherine Talbot about her venture into garden architecture:

We have all been out this morning consulting over Root-houses & fixing a proper spot for a Habitation of the Priest of Mithras. It is really a very retir'd pretty quiet Place, & I begin already to want you to see it.<sup>370</sup>

Evidently, part of the pleasure of adding to Wrest’s architectural landscape was for Lady Grey to share it with her friends. She enjoyed entertaining and liked the prospect of experiencing it with her guests. Her friends in turn developed a particularly fond appreciation for the beauty of Wrest and were grateful for the hospitality she showed them. Lady Charlotte Capell’s letter demonstrates this perfectly, as she thanked Lady Grey for the ‘friendly reception we met at Wrest, and for the agreeable time we spent there, which we shall ever think of with gratitude and pleasure’.<sup>371</sup> Furthermore, many praised and congratulated Lady Grey’s architectural endeavours, as Lady Charlotte Capell again illustrates:

To return to Wrest, we were all much pleased with the pagan altar, it was new to us, for it was not even begun when we were there. It was generally approved of, I assure you. I want to know who was the chief inventor - it really does honour to their taste, it is quite an uncommon thing. I admire the upper cornice vastly with the broken pieces falling down.<sup>372</sup>

The accompanying root house was designed by a friend of the Yorkes, Thomas Edward, a critic and poet who dabbled in garden architecture. His desire to please his powerful patrons resulted in its efficient construction, leading Yorke, whilst in Paris, to remark: ‘Your Description of Mr. Edwards & the Root House is excellent, & if He instead of Mr. Flitcroft had been the Architect for the Room, It had been finished long ago’.<sup>373</sup> Lady Grey had the sole direction of the architectural scheme, and therefore had influence over its design and creation. Her direct involvement and delight in the project is further evidenced in her letter to Catherine Talbot:

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<sup>367</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/1/142, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wrest Park, 11 June 1747.

<sup>368</sup> Mark Leslie Brack, *The Nature of Architecture: The Origins of the Rustic Tradition in Eighteenth-Century British Architecture* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), p. 214.

<sup>369</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/2/11, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wimpole, 14 September 1748.

<sup>370</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/5/119, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wrest Park, 1 November 1748.

<sup>371</sup> BLARS, L30/9/21/1, Lady Charlotte Capell to Lady Grey, Cashibury/Cassiobury, n.d.

<sup>372</sup> BLARS, L30/9/21/4, Lady Charlotte Capell to Lady Grey, Cashibury/Cassiobury, 1748.

<sup>373</sup> BLARS, L30/9/113/24, Philip Yorke to Lady Grey, Paris, 24 August 1749.

[T]his place is the very busiest scene you can imagine. All kinds of business [...] Roots & Faggots that compose a House erecting in the Garden under Mr Edward's direction, who has great fame in the World as a Wooden Inigo. It is placed near the Altar at one end of the grove that stands in, & will look very rustic & suitably to the Ancient Persic Simplicity.<sup>374</sup>

Part of the Yorkes' attempt to put their stamp upon the gardens involved making alterations to the great Serpentine canal and constructing a new Chinese bridge. According to Lady Grey's correspondence, these alterations were also under her sole management: 'I am called upon to visit my Workmen at the Serpentine Canal who are adding to its meanders & improving it very much. It is at present the great Object of my attention'.<sup>375</sup>

The phrases 'my workmen' and 'my attention' demonstrates that she had claimed possession and responsibility for the work. This is further corroborated in a letter in which she mentioned that much of her time had been taken up with her bricklayer and carpenter: 'I have duly attended them for some Hours in the Morning at the Bridge'.<sup>376</sup> This indicates that she was very much the lead patron in this instance, consulting directly with the craftsmen to ensure that the bridge was created to her specification. It is purported that this was not unusual for elite wives of this era, especially when the architectural schemes were located at their ancestral homes. It is quite obvious that they would wish to have a degree of influence over the direction of any building project that would one day be inherited by their heir.

### **The Yorkes commission Lancelot 'Capability' Brown**

Keen to keep up with the latest landscaping fashions, the Yorkes later commissioned Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to improve the landscaping of the gardens as a whole. Lady Grey had observed Brown's work at Stowe in 1748 and at Moor Park, the home of Admiral George Anson, 1st Baron Anson and Lady Anson, *née* Yorke, in the mid-1750s, and was inspired by his naturalistic styles. Lady Anson was Lady Grey's sister-in-law, and a regular correspondent who shared similar intellectual pursuits, as well as a passion for the arts.<sup>377</sup> Both Lady Anson and Lady Grey subscribed to the first volume of Stuart and Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762), thus highlighting their shared intellectual interest in the latest architectural discoveries and fashions.

In deference to her grandfather's garden layout, however, Lady Grey only commissioned Brown to soften the lines of the canals, walks and terraces:

[T]he whole when finished will appear one stream running in where the Brook now comes into the Garden, & winding on till it is lost among bushes &c, beyond the furthest Bank of what is now the

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<sup>374</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/5/132-133, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wrest Park, 3 August 1749.

<sup>375</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/5/118, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wrest Park, 13 October 1748.

<sup>376</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/5/166, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wrest Park, 31 May 1750.

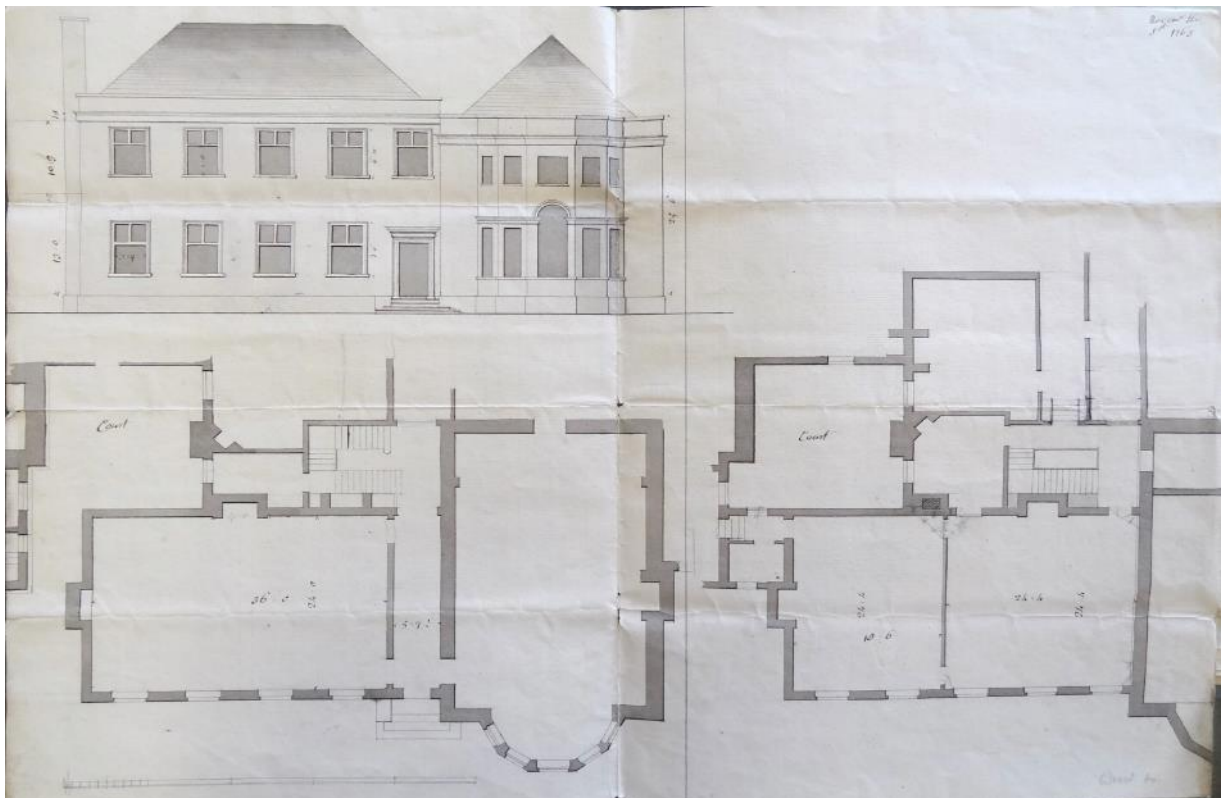
<sup>377</sup> ODNB online, 'Anson [*née* Yorke], Elizabeth, Lady Anson (1725–1760), political correspondent and political manager'.

Mill-pond; or Vice-Versa (which you please) coming out of those Bushes & running through the Garden till it goes out (where the Brook runs) into the Country.<sup>378</sup>

Relations between patroness and landscaper were such that in 1760 she erected a monument in his honour, commemorating his involvement at Wrest. The only other known patron's monument to Brown was erected by George Coventry, 6th Earl of Coventry, at Croome Park, Worcestershire, after Brown's death in 1797, commemorating his 'inimitable and creative genius'. It is significant then, that Lady Grey's monument was the only one created during Brown's lifetime. The inscription upon the plinth reads:

These gardens originally laid out by Henry Duke of Kent, were altered by Philip Earl of Hardwicke and Jemima Lady Grey, with the professional assistance of Lancelot Brown Esq. in the years 1758, 1759, 1760.

This inscription is noteworthy because not only does it demonstrate the immense pride that Lady Grey took in the project, it also places her contribution on equal terms with that of her grandfather and husband. It signifies that wives were considered no less capable in the direction of landscaping and garden architecture than their husbands. Lady Grey remained friends with Brown and later she and her husband invited him to re-landscape the grounds of Wimpole Hall following Yorke's accession to the earldom of Hardwicke in 1764. Agneta Yorke, *née* Johnson, Lady Grey's sister-in-law, later wrote glowingly of her competence at directing these improvements in 1771: 'The Description your Ladyship gives of Wimple convinces me how much your taste and Mr Browns Capability have improved that place'.<sup>379</sup>



**Fig. 22 Presentation drawing of the new drawing room, by John Smith, 1763, depicting the elevation, ground and first floor plans.**

<sup>378</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/3/20, Lady Grey to Lady Mary Gregory, Wrest Park, 3 October 1758.

<sup>379</sup> BLARS, L30/9/97/20, Agneta Yorke to Lady Grey, Tittenhanger, 13 October 1771.

## A new drawing room is added to the south front

In 1763, twenty-three years into their marriage, the Yorkes decided to make further alterations to the south front of Wrest. A letter from John Smith, Clerk of Works at Kensington Palace (1761-83), to Philip Yorke dated 13 October 1763 includes an 'Estimate for rebuilding the Drawing room' for £294 7s. 0d.<sup>380</sup> Enclosed with the letter was a set of six plans for the ground floor and first floor alterations labelled 1 to 3, which still survive.<sup>381</sup> The plans provide three different options for remodelling the drawing room (which the Yorkes had decorated in 1749 with wallpaper) and a neighbouring room, as well as the bedchamber apartment above.

An additional set of four plans dated 'Octo<sup>r</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> 1763' illustrate more clearly how the rooms were to be remodelled.<sup>382</sup> Essentially, the aim of the project was to create a large drawing room of four bays from the two smaller existing rooms.<sup>383</sup> On the first floor, the bedchamber and accompanying dressing room were to be made into larger and more convenient rooms.<sup>384</sup> One of the purposes of the alteration was to make the south front appear more uniform from the gardens. A final presentation drawing (fig. 22) of the proposed elevation, ground floor and first floor plans dated 'Novem<sup>r</sup> the 1<sup>st</sup> 1763' together with an updated estimate of £429 5s. 0d. demonstrate how the project had quickly expanded to ensure that the most appropriate and elegant arrangement was achieved.<sup>385</sup> The costs were broken down into six categories, of which the carpentry and joinery was by far the most expensive:

Bricklayer & Plaisterer	137.18.0
Carpenter & Joiner	229.16.0
Mason	23.4.0
Plumber & Glazier	17.4.0
Smith	4.10.0
Painter	<u>17.3.0</u>
	£429 5s 0d. <sup>386</sup>

It is possible to assume that Lady Grey was not involved in this project due to the fact that the architect seems only to have corresponded with her husband. Furthermore, there appears to be no mention of the building works at Wrest in her correspondence at this time. In October 1763, when visiting Wimpole Hall with her daughters, her youngest daughter Lady Mary (aged six) fell seriously ill, which forced them to go to London to seek medical advice.<sup>387</sup> Lady Mary did not fully recover until February the following year which may explain why Lady Grey neglected to mention the remodelling project.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> BLARS, L31/260, John Smith to Philip Yorke, Kensington Palace, 13 October 1763.

<sup>381</sup> BLARS, L31/261-265, five variant plans for the drawing room alterations.

<sup>382</sup> BLARS, L31/269-272.

<sup>383</sup> BLARS, L31/270 for the existing layout and L31/269 for the new plan.

<sup>384</sup> BLARS, L31/271 for the existing layout and L31/272 for the new plan.

<sup>385</sup> BLARS, L31/263 for the final presentation drawing; L31/266, 'Estimate for building the Drawing room &c at Wrest', John Smith, n.d., c. 1763.

<sup>386</sup> BLARS, L31/266, 'Estimate for building the Drawing room &c at Wrest', John Smith, n.d., c. 1763.

<sup>387</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/8/145, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, Wimpole, 18 October 1763.

<sup>388</sup> BLARS, L30/9a/8/152, Lady Grey to Catherine Talbot, London, 10 February 1764.

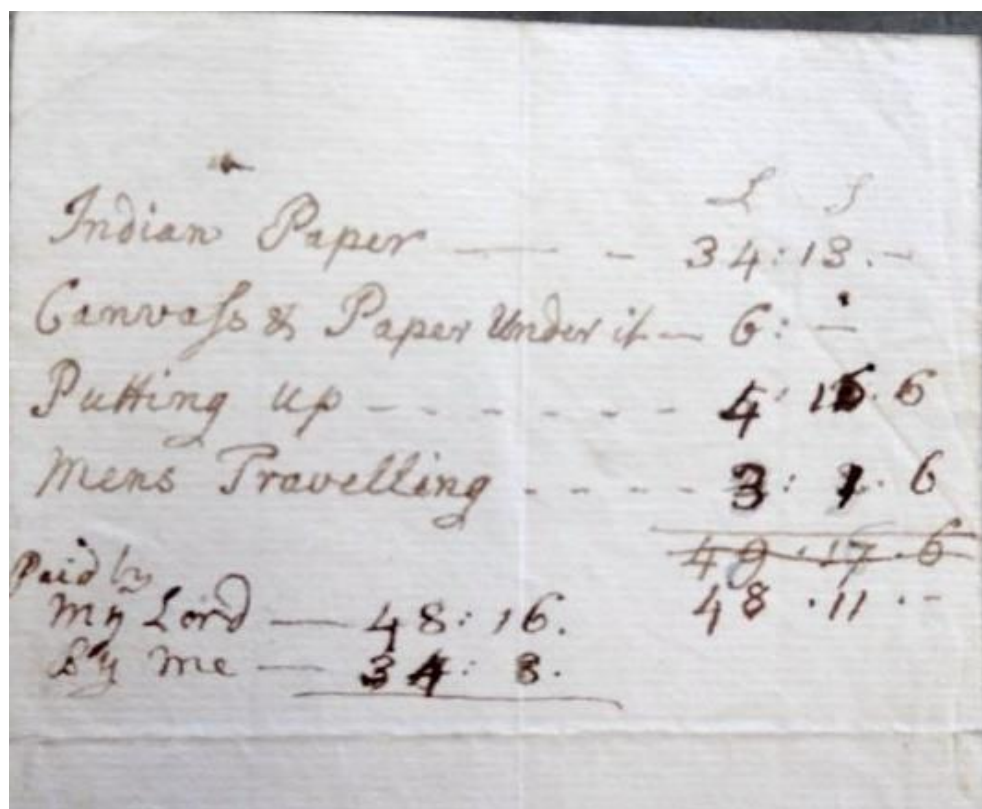


Fig. 23 A bill in Lady Grey's hand illustrating the division of costs for the Indian wallpaper, c. 1760s.

Nevertheless, it seems highly unlikely that she was uninterested in the scheme given the pleasure that she had taken in the previous improvements at Wrest. An undated bill for hanging Indian wallpaper in Lady Grey's hand may well relate to this remodelling project (fig. 23).<sup>389</sup> It is of particular interest because she recorded that her husband, 'My Lord', paid £48 16s. and that she paid £34 8s., clearly demonstrating that although estimates and bills were often sent to her husband by architects and workmen, it is in no way conclusive evidence that he was the sole patron. This bill for Indian paper signifies that Lady Grey and her husband shared the responsibility for their architectural endeavours and shared the financial costs accordingly. This discovery is significant because it indicates that although wives were not able to finance projects independently, they were often directly involved in the design and direction.

<sup>389</sup> BLARS, L31/273, Bill for hanging Indian paper, n.d., c. 1760s

## Amabel Hume-Campbell, Lady Polwarth (1751-1833)

Lady Polwarth was the eldest daughter of Marchioness Grey and Philip Yorke. After her marriage to Viscount Polwarth in 1772, the newlyweds resided at Wrest Park until they found a suitable country seat of their own. Lady Polwarth's parents, who had inherited the Wimpole estates in 1764 now split their time between Wrest, Wimpole and London. Whilst her mother was absent, Lady Polwarth assumed the role as her mother's deputy by supervising the various landscaping and building works in progress at Wrest, as evidenced by the following:

The new Seat is just finish'd, & completely painted & it answers very well. It looks light & airy, without aiming at anything fine, has a very good View up the Canal, & all our Neighbours approve of it.<sup>390</sup>

In comparison to her mother and sister, Lady Polwarth interacted with architecture the least during her marriage; this was due to a distinct lack of opportunity rather than a lack of inclination. As her mother's deputy, she could never independently commission projects at Wrest Park and when she was engaged in a project she had to constantly seek her mother's approval:

Some of the Trees are cut down about the Terrass, & if you please, I will give Orders that all who were mark'd near the House, & the Outline from the Bowling-green, shall be fell'd whether Mr Brown honours us with his Visit, or not, but I doubt that Bowling-green Row, would rather impede Walking.<sup>391</sup>

Furthermore, when she and her husband did eventually move into their own marital home, Southill Park, in 1779, there was nothing to be improved because its previous occupant, George Byng, 2nd Viscount Torrington, had only just completed its significant remodelling. As Lady Polwarth stated, 'Nothing is wanting for any family but linen & china', which may explain why there is no evidence of the couple having commissioned any architectural changes to the property in the two years of their occupation.<sup>392</sup>

The final limiting factor to Lady Polwarth's ability to commission architectural projects was the fact that her marriage only lasted nine years, as Lord Polwarth died young in 1781, after a protracted illness. Thus, Lady Polwarth's marriage had failed to present her with an adequate opportunity to engage in architecture. For most of it she was based at Wrest managing her mother's projects and when she finally occupied her own property, the house was too complete to justify a new building scheme. Consequently, it was not until her widowhood that Lady Polwarth was finally able to demonstrate her capability as an architectural patroness.

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<sup>390</sup> BLARS, L30/9/60/56, Lady Polwarth to Lady Grey, Wrest Park, c. 1775.

<sup>391</sup> BLARS, L30/9/60/184, Lady Polwarth to Lady Grey, Wrest Park, 12 February 1779.

<sup>392</sup> BLARS, L30/9/60/195, Lady Polwarth to Lady Grey, Leighton Buzzard, 6 May 1779.



## Mary Robinson, Baroness Grantham (1757-1830)



**Fig. 24 *Portrait of Lady Grantham*, by George Romney, 1780-1.**

Lady Mary (fig. 24), the younger daughter of Marchioness Grey, married Thomas Robinson, 2nd Baron Grantham in 1780. Although her marriage was even shorter than her sisters, lasting just six years before the death of Lord Grantham in 1786, she was able to exert her architectural agency at Newby Park, their marital home in Yorkshire. The predominant reason for this was because Newby, by the time of the Granthams' occupation, was exceedingly run-down, not having been lived in for twelve years. Thus, the Granthams were presented with the perfect opportunity to commission alterations and improvements to both house and park.

Soon after their wedding in 1780, the newlyweds moved into Newby Park (now Baldersby Park), which they rented as their country house (fig. 25). Newby Park was owned by the trustees of Lord Grantham's uncle, Sir Norton Robinson, 5th baronet, who had been certified insane ten years previously.<sup>393</sup> Newby Park had been designed in 1721 by Colen Campbell, for Sir William Robinson, 4th baronet. Its elevation and plan featured in the third volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus*.<sup>394</sup> In 1765 William Chambers added garden buildings to the park including a pheasantry and a menagerie.<sup>395</sup>



Fig. 25 *Newby Park, Yorkshire*, after John Preston Neale, 1822.

## The Granthams remodel Newby Park

By 1780, upon the arrival of the newlyweds, it was apparent that after sixty years without modernisation, major improvements were necessary. Lady Grantham reported to her sister:

I regret much not having shown you the plans as without them I shall make a very awkward hand at description [...] The Mansion itself has undoubtedly the fault of not having been lived in for a dozen years, & therefore certainly wants cleaning & modernizing, tho' it is less dirty that I could have expected, among other amendments, all the windows must be covered, for with modern ideas it is impossible to bear them: a Hall of entrance will be a very good Room when boarded & covered & a

<sup>393</sup> Judith Goodison, 'A puzzle solved: furniture at Newby Hall, Yorkshire', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 151, no. 1270, (January, 2009), p. 28.

<sup>394</sup> Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, vol. 3 (London, 1725), pl. 46.

<sup>395</sup> Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, p. 239.

very long Gallery which opens into it is to be made a Library & promises to be a very comfortable Room, & some Day or other I hope to see you take a Run in it: a very pretty Apartment over it is next year to be fitted up for me.<sup>396</sup>

Lady Grantham discussed the proposed alterations as though she had ownership, thus signalling that she considered herself jointly involved and responsible for creating the perfect marital home with her husband. Just as her mother had been jointly involved with the various architectural schemes at Wrest Park, so too was she at Newby Park. In a further letter to Lady Polwarth, Lady Grantham reinforced this idea by using the pronoun 'we' in her discussion:

[W]e are all busy with plans & schemes for improvements to the place which I shall have great pleasure in looking & talking over with you; they are very much what Ld G proposed many years ago, but as he cannot see to their being performed; a Mr Belwood, a Yorkshire Architect has the altering of the house; who seems a very civil, intelligent man & is not too great to execute other people[s] schemes: the Roof which alas must be quite new & [the new] Apartment is the part destined for next year; & the Architect has made out a very convenient one indeed.<sup>397</sup>

It is likely that William Belwood, a local architect, had been recommended by William Weddell, (Lord Grantham's distant cousin and neighbour) following the former's competent execution of various alterations at Weddell's country seat, Newby Hall, in *c.* 1777. From Lady Grantham's comments it is apparent that her husband was to be credited with the design of the alterations, and indeed he has been described as a capable amateur architect.<sup>398</sup> However, from 1780 to 1782, Lord Grantham was President of the Board of Trade, which meant that he was often away in London on business, leaving the general management of the project to Lady Grantham. She took to the project with great gusto and regularly updated Lady Polwarth of her progress. This was initially hampered by Belwood's illness:

[T]ho' we are in frights about our house, as the Surveyor having had a very long fever has delayed the work very much; but the workmen are to be hastened as much as possible.<sup>399</sup>

Undaunted, Lady Grantham was able to encourage her workmen to complete what could be done without the architect, and then she turned her attentions to the grounds:

[F]or the grounds we had recommended a Mr [Migeel?], formerly foreman to Mr Brown from whom he has borrowed some conceit, but was said to have done well at Ld Scarborough's; he has certainly given a very good plan for the alterations to the Park &c, as they tend to show as much as possible the pretty feature of the place, the River Swale [and] for next year, a gravel road through the Park will be the chief thing undertaken; a very necessary improvement as I have found the want of it.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/1, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Park, 29 August 1780.

<sup>397</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/4, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Park, 3 October 1780.

<sup>398</sup> Corinne Miller and Sylvia Thomas (eds), *Drawing from the Past: William Weddell and the Transformation of Newby Hall* (Leeds: Leeds Museums and Galleries, 2004), p. 27.

<sup>399</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/4, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Park, 3 October 1780.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

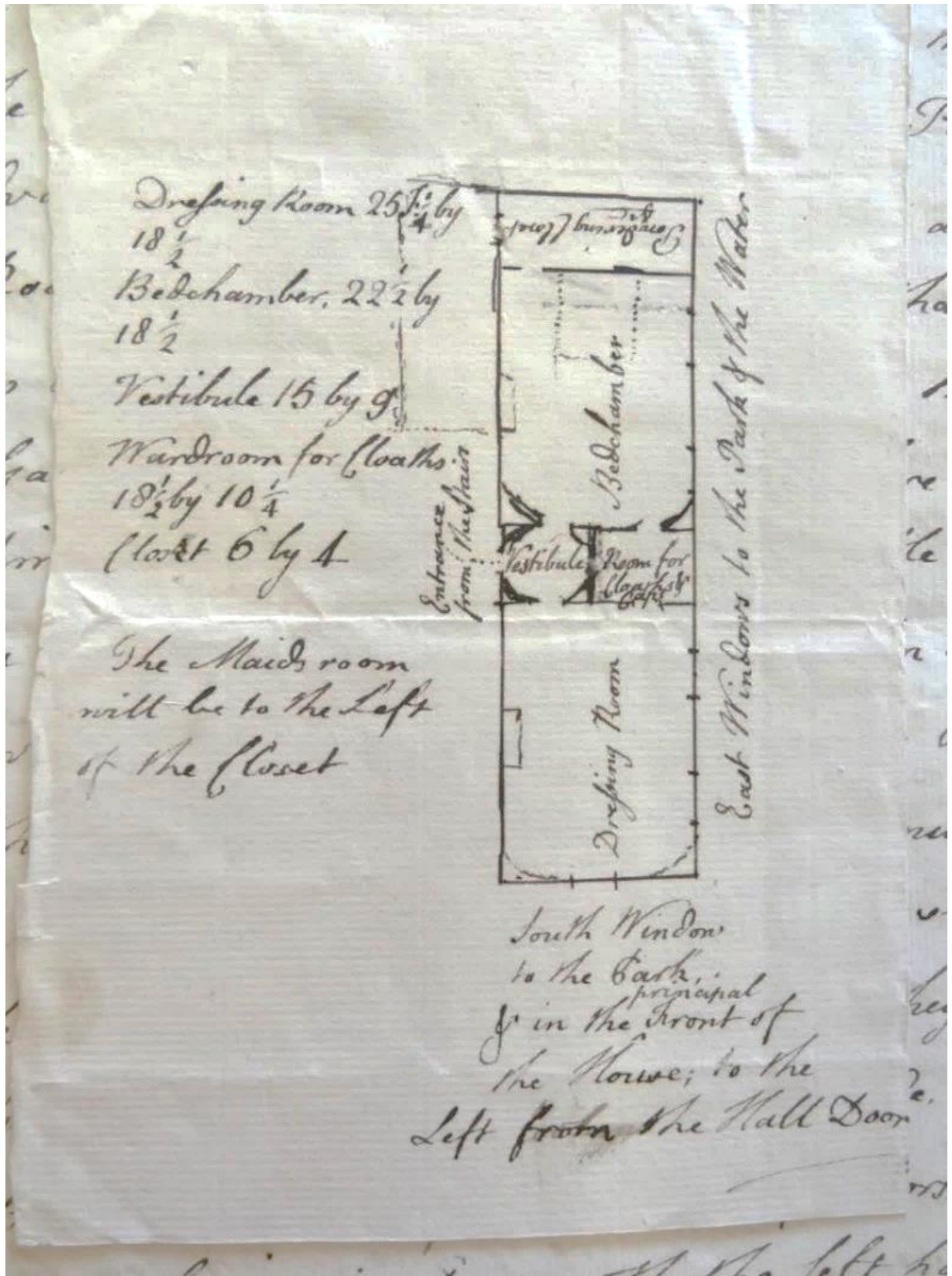


Fig. 26 Lady Grantham's rough sketch of the arrangement of her new apartment in the east front of Newby Park, 10 August 1781.

## Lady Grantham's direct involvement in the creation of her bedchamber apartment and the nursery for her children

Within the house, a whole host of alterations was underway, the most significant being Lady Grantham's bedroom apartment, located over the long gallery. When explaining the arrangement of her new apartment to her sister, Lady Grantham took the trouble to include a plan:

I inclose a miserable scrawl to give a very inadequate idea of the disposition of the rooms which are very conveniently disposed, but have sent the measures that Mrs J Yorke may amuse herself in disposing them right, for I do not suppose I have kept to any proportion in the plan.<sup>401</sup>

This plan still survives and illustrates the locations of the dressing room, bedchamber, powdering room, 'Room for Cloaks & Caps', vestibule and the maids' room (fig. 26). Lady Grantham also indicated the position of the windows on the south and east fronts, as well as all doorways, fireplaces, and even the proposed location of the bed in the bedchamber. Her plan is very detailed, and, despite her self-deprecating tone, would have more than adequately enabled her sister to understand the apartment's arrangement.

The inclusion of the plan is important for two reasons, firstly, it indicates that elite women of this period were capable of drawing architectural plans/sketches, and secondly, it again illustrates the level of interest that women had in architectural discourse of this period. These plans did not require the professional's precision, but still required some level of knowledge regarding proportion and scale. Elite women would have had access to the many architectural authorities of the day, including *Vitruvius Britannicus*, and some even subscribed, thus enabling them to gain inspiration. In the first volume, published in 1715, there were eight female subscribers, accounting for fourteen copies, and in the third volume this increased to fourteen women, accounting for eighteen copies.<sup>402</sup> Although a small percentage of the subscribers as whole, it still illustrates that women were conspicuously displaying their interest in architecture. With the assistance of these books, elite women were able to practice architectural drawing as an intellectual pursuit and as a practical means for conveying plan forms to friends, family, architects and workmen.

As well as *Vitruvius Britannicus*, female subscribers can be found listed at the beginning of most of the fashionable architectural publications of the era. For example, four women subscribed to Giacomo Leoni's *The Architecture of A. Palladio in Four Books containing a Short Treatise on the Five Orders* (1715), eighteen women subscribed to Kent's *The Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727), three women subscribed to Robert Castell's *Villas of the Ancients* (1728), two women subscribed to James Gibbs's *Book on Architecture* (1728), five women subscribed to Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* (1754), seven women subscribed to William Chambers's *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (1757), thirty-one women subscribed to Stuart and Revett's

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<sup>401</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/18, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Park, 10 August 1781.

<sup>402</sup> Lucy Rumble, "Of Good Use or Serious Pleasure": *Vitruvius Britannicus* and Early Eighteenth Century Architectural Discourse' (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2001), p.63.

*Antiquities of Athens* (1762), and (as mentioned previously), twenty-nine women subscribed to Robert Adam's *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (1764).<sup>403</sup>

The fact that Lady Grantham also took the time to include the exact measurements of the rooms is noteworthy, for example, the bedchamber was measured as '22 ½ by 18 ½'. This would suggest that she was fully interacting with the architectural project and desired to be intimately acquainted with every detail. Additionally, it is notable that she included the measurements specifically for her aunt, 'Mrs J Yorke', which signifies that elite women enjoyed drawing and sharing plans on a more regular basis than has previously been considered by historians. This is evidence that elite women interacted with architectural drawing both for practical and recreational reasons, because Mrs Yorke, it would seem, engaged in drawing precise plans purely for the intellectual satisfaction that she gained from it.

Lady Grantham further described the rest of the alterations, which included an entire new roof, a new staircase, and another bedchamber apartment.<sup>404</sup> By 1782, Lady Grantham's new apartment was near completion, and it is evident that she chose to decorate it with paint and paper, as was fashionable at the time:

As to the House, when it will be fit to receive my Sister, is more than I can yet tell; for the Painters do not finally finish in my new Rooms till tomorrow, it is impossible to judge when the smell will go off: the Paper & boarder is done, & answers extreamly well; as to the Apartment in the other Front, that is certainly very backward & will have workmen in it for a long time.<sup>405</sup>

Lady Grantham's pleasure in her completed apartment is further evidenced by a glowing letter to her mother the following year: 'the Apartments of the upper floor [are] quite finished, & looking very neat & clean; my own rooms answer particularly well, & make a very compleat apartment'.<sup>406</sup> By this point, in 1783, the main focus of the alterations was to create bedrooms for her young boys, Thomas, Frederick and Philip. As a mother, Lady Grantham had further reason to influence the building scheme, to ensure that the nursery was as comfortable and convenient as possible. As such, the new rooms for her boys were located close to her new apartment, on the east side of the house:

If people visited [they] would still think us in confusion, as the ground in sight of the house on the East side is now altering & part of the Wing is pulled down, & will be begun in a few Days to be rebuilt again, to make among other things, rooms for the Children, near my own, which is much wanted; so that Workmen will still be within hearing, but after having had them in the house itself,

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<sup>403</sup> Giacomo Leoni, *The Architecture of A. Palladio in Four Books containing a Short Treatise on the Five Orders* (London: printed by John Watts, 1715); Kent, *The Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727); Robert Castell, *Villas of the Ancients* (London, 1728); James Gibbs, *Book on Architecture, Containing Designs of Buildings and Ornaments* (London, 1728); Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* (London, 1754); William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines, and Utensils* (London, 1757); James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* (London: John Haberkorn, 1762).

<sup>404</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/18, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Park, 10 August 1781.

<sup>405</sup> BLARS, L30/9/81/36, Lady Grantham to Lady Grey, Newby Park, 5 July 1782.

<sup>406</sup> BLARS, L30/9/81/50, Lady Grantham to Lady Grey, Newby Park, 30 May 1783.

they may be put up with out of Doors, & my Sister may assure herself they will be too far from the Apartment I destine for her to disturb her in the morning.<sup>407</sup>

A further important aspect of the alterations was to make Newby Park fit to receive and host guests. In her earlier correspondence, Lady Grantham kept alluding to the fact that the apartment for her sister was not yet complete. However, by the summer of 1783 the house was, at last, ready to receive Lady Polwarth. Naturally, she too enjoyed participating in architectural discourse, and at the earliest opportunity wrote of Newby to her evidently curious mother:

The Park is not very large, but well cover'd with Wood, & many of the Trees picturesque, there is a Road made through it to & from the House, & a neat Gravel Walk of about half a Mile or more which goes round on Half of the Park is to the Road like the String to the Bow. Behind the House was once an old Garden which they are demolishing to let in more of the River, which is a Pretty Stream; & the boldest Feature of the Place is a natural Terrass to the west of the House with a hanging Bank of the Wood through which you catch the Water, & which may some Day or other be improv'd & a little open'd. The Rooms below Stairs in the House are of good Sizes, but old & ill-decorated, or rather not at all so; my Sister's Apartment is a very pretty one, & the Bedchambers fitted up last year, are also very neat. The Wing for the Nursery is now rebuilding, so that on the East Side of the House, the Grass is cover'd with Rubbish & Workmen.<sup>408</sup>

Lady Polwarth's critical assessment of Newby Park corroborates the fact that, where Lady Grantham had direct influence, namely the gravel walk and the new apartment, the end result was positive, describing them as 'neat' and 'pretty'. Her sister's approval suggests that Lady Grantham's joint involvement in the remodelling of Newby Park (although not yet complete) was successful. Given the Granthams' obvious enthusiasm for Newby Park, it is perhaps all the more tragic that Lord Grantham died three years later, leaving his young widow with three young sons and an incomplete house.

Marchioness Grey's work at Wrest Park, carried on by her eldest daughter, and her younger daughter's work at Newby Park provide us with clear insights into the true position that such women held within society. What is obvious is that far from being downtrodden, browbeaten subordinates, they possessed more agency than has traditionally been believed. As the archival evidence demonstrates, these three women had the agency and authority to direct building schemes as they desired, which suggests that such autonomy extended beyond the sphere of architecture and into society as a whole.

The next chapter will strive to discuss the extent to which naval and military wives had control over their husbands' estates and architectural schemes. This provides an interesting and hitherto overlooked class of married women, who had a far greater degree of independence than those discussed in this chapter.

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<sup>407</sup> BLARS, L30/9/81/52, Lady Grantham to Lady Grey, Newby Park, 14 June 1783.

<sup>408</sup> BLARS, L30/9/60/287, Lady Polwarth to Lady Grey, Newby Park, 18 July 1783.

# Chapter 8

## Absent husbands: did the wives of military and naval husbands wield greater control over architectural projects?

### Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough (1660-1744)

Sarah Churchill, *née* Jennings, is famed for her notorious temper, her turbulent relationship with Queen Anne, her involvement in public affairs, and her significant fortune (fig. 27). She has fascinated both architectural historians and biographers alike, but all that is generally known of her architectural endeavours is her volatile working relationship with Sir John Vanbrugh over the building of Blenheim Palace.<sup>409</sup> Sporadic research has been conducted into her architectural patronage within the last two decades, which has sought to redress this gap in knowledge.<sup>410</sup> It is generally accepted that the Duchess was an unusual woman for her time, apparently unrestricted by her gender, which therefore allowed her to compete upon the architectural stage with her male contemporaries. Nonetheless, the significance of the Duchess's architectural accomplishments in relation to her role as a military wife have yet to be analysed. If her husband, John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, had not been involved in the army, or if the eighteenth century had been a peaceful century, would the Duchess have had the opportunity to commission and manage large building schemes as she did?

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<sup>409</sup> For biographies, see David Green, *Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (London: Collins, 1967); Frances Harris, *A Passion for Government: The Life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); and Field, *The Favourite*.

<sup>410</sup> Ruth Smith, 'Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough: An Analysis of her Relationship with Architecture' (unpublished MA dissertation, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1998); Hilary Shepherd Webb, 'The Architectural Activity of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough' (unpublished MA dissertation, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2011); Kathleen Szpila, 'Sarah Jenyns Churchill at Blenheim Palace – Setting the Record Straight: A re-evaluation of the activity of the first duchess of Marlborough as patron of the arts' (unpublished PhD thesis, Temple University USA, 1997); *idem*, 'An Eighteenth-Century Artemisia: Sarah Churchill and the Invention of the Blenheim Memorials', in Cynthia Lawrence (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs* (Pennsylvania: State University Press, 1997), pp. 189-206.



It will be argued that the Duchess's interest and involvement in architecture was not born out of necessity due to the absence of her husband. Rather, it will be demonstrated that the Duchess enjoyed building in her own right and probably would have done so even if her husband had chosen a different career. Just like her ambitious husband, the Duchess was obsessed with status, power and wealth. Architecture, therefore, provided her with the perfect medium through which she could compete with other ruthless courtiers in the display of her rank and supremacy. Compared to the majority of women discussed in this thesis, Sarah Churchill was exceptional, both because of her high status and her enormous wealth. Because of these factors, she had both the opportunity to engage with architecture, and it served the concrete purpose of enhancing both her and her husband's status. It is still significant, however, that given this opportunity, she capitalised on it, and did so with great autonomy and independence.



Fig. 27 *Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough*, after Sir Godfrey Kneller, c. 1702

## The Duchess of Marlborough's first foray into architecture

Early into the Marlboroughs' marriage (which had taken place c. 1677) the Duchess was given the unusual freedom of managing the family's finances, as she explained in one version of her memoirs:

Soon after my Marriage, when our affairs were so narrow that a good degree of frugality was necessary, Ld Marlborough, though his inclination lay enough that way, yet by reason of indulgent gentleness that is natural to him, he could not manage matters so as was convenient for our circumstances. This obliged me to enter into this management of my family.<sup>411</sup>

Although the accuracy of this statement is unknown, it may have been more convenient for the Duchess to control the purse-strings due to the fact that her husband's career regularly took him away. This control was later exerted in 1686, over the remodelling of the Marlboroughs' first house, Holywell House in St Albans. For this, they commissioned the up-and-coming architect William Talman.<sup>412</sup> Holywell House was the Duchess's ancestral home so it is highly probable that she was instrumental in its direction. This is similar to Marchioness Grey's involvement at Wrest Park; both wives were determined to create a suitable family home. Furthermore, as 1686 was such a politically charged time, being a year after the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685, it is highly likely that Marlborough would have been spending much of his time at Court calculating his next career move. Consequently, the Duchess would have been charged with the management and day-to-day progress of the project.

## The Spanish War of Succession and a gift from Queen Anne

The dawn of the eighteenth century saw England join forces with the Dutch Republic and the Holy Roman Empire to fight in the War of the Spanish Succession against Spain and France. As Master-General of the Ordnance, Marlborough was given command over the entire allied army, resulting in his regular and prolonged absences from home. Thus, the Duchess was very much in charge of the family's residences and finances.

Upon Queen Anne's succession to the throne in 1702, she rewarded her favourite courtier with the lucrative posts of Mistress of the Robes and Groom of the Stool. In addition, she also presented the Duchess with the rangership of Windsor Great Park which came with the use of the Great Lodge, a house built during the Commonwealth by Colonel James Byfield. Almost immediately, the Duchess set about remodelling the house.<sup>413</sup> An abstract of accounts confirms the Duchess as patroness, entitled: 'An Abstract of Severall

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<sup>411</sup> Quoted in Field, *The Favourite*, p. 41.

<sup>412</sup> Frances Harris, 'Holywell House, St Albans: An early work by William Talman?', *Architectural History* vol. 28 (1985), p. 32; Frances Harris, 'William Talman's First Country House', *Architectural History*, vol. 40 (1997), pp. 110-14.

<sup>413</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Duchess's involvement at the Great Lodge, see Roberts, *Royal Landscape*, pp. 334-37.

Workemens bills for worke done for Her Grace the Dutchess of Marlboro att her Lodge in the Great Parke'.<sup>414</sup> The abstract is dated 6 June 1706 and covers payments totalling a staggering £2,513.<sup>415</sup> The workmen listed in the abstract mostly belonged to the Works department at Windsor Castle, suggesting that the Duchess's royal connection helped to facilitate this building project, thereby illustrating the influence royal patronesses exerted over their courtiers' architectural schemes.<sup>416</sup> Great Lodge became one of the Duchess's favourite country retreats, claiming her highest praise: 'in the lodge I have everything convenient & without trouble'.<sup>417</sup> As the Duke was absent on the Continent at this point, it is without question that the Duchess had the sole direction of the building scheme.

## **The Duke of Marlborough's glory at the Battle of Blenheim**

The Battle of Blenheim, the first great victory for the allied forces in the Spanish War of Succession, was won on 13 August 1704. John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, successfully defeated the French and returned from the Continent to great acclaim on 14 December. In the midst of celebration, Parliament advised Queen Anne to consider bestowing a gift upon Marlborough appropriate to the great service that he had wrought for England and the nations of the Grand Alliance. Schemes for monuments in London were proposed, but these were ultimately rejected in favour of the grant of 'some house and lands belonging to the Crown as a proper mark of distinction to remain in his family for perpetuating the memory of his eminent services'.<sup>418</sup>

On 17 January 1705, the Queen proposed the grant of the royal manor of Woodstock, a comparatively small property set within 15,000 acres in Oxfordshire, together with a pension of £5,000 per annum for Marlborough's life. Three days later, the House of Lords passed the bill and in their address to the Queen stated that: 'We, your Majesty's most Dutiful Subjects [...] desire that at your expense graciously [are] pleased to erect the House of Blenheim as a monument of His [Duke of Marlborough] glorious actions'.<sup>419</sup>

Marlborough commissioned the relatively inexperienced playwright-turned-architect, John Vanbrugh, to design his new country seat. He was a surprising choice if one considers the stiff competition he faced from Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723), the celebrated and established architect of St Paul's Cathedral. It is perhaps more likely that political influences helped secure the commission, Vanbrugh being a committed Whig and reputable member of the Kit-Kat Club. Thus, on 17 June 1705, Vanbrugh signed the warrant that placed himself and his assistant Nicholas Hawksmoor in charge of the building works at Woodstock.

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<sup>414</sup> Blenheim Archives, GI/Box 10/Misc. bundle, as cited in Roberts, *Royal Landscapes*, p. 334, n. 7.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Roberts, *Royal Landscape*, p. 334.

<sup>417</sup> Giles Worsley, 'Wicked Woman of Marl', *Country Life*, 185:11 (14 March 1991), p. 44.

<sup>418</sup> Quoted in Harris, *A Passion for Government*, p. 114.

<sup>419</sup> Quoted in 'Report from the Select Committee on the Duke of Marlborough's Pension', as published in *Parliamentary Papers: Reports from the Committee upon Expired and Expiring Laws*, Session 31 January-17 July 1787, vol. 16, (London: ordered to be printed by the House of Commons, 1837), p. iii.

At dusk the following day, the foundation stone was laid ‘under My Lady Duchesses Favourite Bow window’.<sup>420</sup>

## The Duchess’s reservations about Blenheim Palace

From the very beginning of the Blenheim project it was clear that this great house was to be a celebration and glorification of Marlborough’s military success (fig. 28). Consequently, it was Marlborough who decided upon the architectural plan, style and scale. Although the Duchess had no qualms about her husband taking control of Blenheim, she did have extreme reservations over the scale of Vanbrugh’s design and over his projected cost for the build.

In fact, when Sidney Godolphin, the Lord Treasurer, instructed Sir Christopher Wren to provide an independent estimate,<sup>421</sup> he reported back with the staggering sum of £100,000.<sup>422</sup> This was more than twice Vanbrugh’s estimate, and indicated to the Duchess that the scheme was already dangerously over budget. In later life, she mentioned that, ‘at the beginning of those works I never had spoake to him [Vanbrugh], but as soon as I knew him & saw the maddnesse of the whole Design I opposed it all that was possible for me to doe’.<sup>423</sup> Such was her concern about the size of the scheme, that she pressured her husband to consider putting a halt upon the proceedings:

[I]f Lady Marlborough and you are of an opinion that it is not a proper time for the Queen to make such an expence, as Lady Marlborough informes me this house will cost, it will be no great uneasiness to me if it be lett alone.<sup>424</sup>

Despite the Duchess’s attempts to encourage her husband to rethink the scale and cost of Blenheim, it still went ahead. Godolphin advised her to think of Blenheim more as a national monument than a private residence.<sup>425</sup> This effectively placed the project out of her immediate control, limiting her ability to influence the design or scale of Blenheim, and placing her husband firmly at the helm. Nevertheless, over the course of the entire build the Duchess made it her mission to scrutinise everything that Vanbrugh did; she was determined to curb his ostentations. This, of course, did little to encourage a fruitful or collaborative relationship between the two, and eventually culminated in Vanbrugh’s resignation in 1716.

## The Duchess as her husband’s deputy

Between 1705 and 1711, the Duke was constantly engaged on the Continent leading the Grand Alliance’s campaign against France. The Duchess, therefore, naturally assumed control of the Blenheim project, as

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<sup>420</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61353, f. 3, John Vanbrugh to Marlborough, London, 22 June 1705.

<sup>421</sup> 'Warrant Book: July 1705, 16-20', in William A. Shaw (ed.) *Calendar of Treasury Books, Volume 20, 1705-1706* (London, 1952), pp. 347-57, accessed via BHO.

<sup>422</sup> Adrian Tinniswood, *His Invention So Fertile: A Life of Christopher Wren* (London: Pimlico, 2002), p. 335.

<sup>423</sup> Green, *Sarah Duchess of Marlborough*, p. 105.

<sup>424</sup> Lord Marlborough to Sidney Godolphin, near Louvain, 12/23 July 1705, in H. L. Snyder (ed.), *The Marlborough-Godolphin Correspondence*, vol 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), (henceforth MGC), p. 461.

<sup>425</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61434, f. 27, Sidney Godolphin to the Duchess, 13 September 1705.

her husband's onsite representative. The Duke, who was now in his fifties, saw Blenheim as his eventual retirement retreat, and thus trusted his wife with the task of ensuring that the architectural scheme progressed efficiently and effectively. Samuel Travers, the paymaster at Blenheim, wrote glowingly of the Duchess's management in his update to Marlborough:

I came last night from Woodstock where I left the Work going on prosperously, tho it cannot proceed with such expedition as the Grand Business of mankind does under Your Graces Wife & Happy Conduct.<sup>426</sup>

This comment clearly indicates that it was not unusual for the Duchess to have assumed overall management at Blenheim, and suggests that it was probably expected. This is corroborated by the fact that Godolphin (even at the beginning of the build) had also deferred to her judgement during Marlborough's absences: 'I am resolved not to determine any alteration [...] without Lady Marlborough's opinion'.<sup>427</sup> It is clear that her influence was not limited to simply overseeing progress or costs, but also extended to making decisions regarding the details of various designs and alterations. Marlborough, of course, trusted his wife entirely to make these decisions:

If the wals he [Vanbrugh] speakes off do not cost much, what he says of there being a time for them to dry is reasonable, but I leave it intierly to you to order what you think is best, and what pleases you I am sure I shal like.<sup>428</sup>

Further examples are evident throughout their correspondence, such as: 'As to the house and bridge, whatever you judge best, I shall be well pleased with'.<sup>429</sup> It is possible to argue, therefore, that the Duchess's architectural judgement was trusted and followed. This suggests that, although her husband was certainly the lead patron, in his absence the Duchess, *ipso facto*, assumed this role. It is curious, therefore, that the Duchess's involvement in the building of Blenheim has received such limited academic attention.

## Duke and Duchess as joint patrons

Although the Duchess exerted considerable power over the Blenheim project whilst Marlborough was absent, she certainly did not wish to exclude him. It was a collaborative venture and as such many decisions were made via the hundreds of letters that passed between them. In June 1709, the Duke informed his wife that 'The two suites of hangings which were made in Bruxelles by Vanbrouke's measures cost me above eight hundred pounds, so that if possible thay should serve for the roomes that they were intended for, being sure in England there can be none had so good and fine'.<sup>430</sup> The tapestry referred to is the eight-

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<sup>426</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61353, f. 13, Samuel Travers to Marlborough, 4 June 1706.

<sup>427</sup> Sidney Godolphin to Lord Marlborough, St James's, 19 April 1706, referring to Sir Christopher Wren's model of the 'parade at Woodstock' in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 1, pp. 522-23.

<sup>428</sup> The 'wals' refers to the foundations of the bridge; Marlborough to the Duchess, Meldert, 16/27 July 1707, in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 2, p. 851.

<sup>429</sup> Marlborough to the Duchess, Meldert, 17/28 July 1707, in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 2, p. 853.

<sup>430</sup> Marlborough to the Duchess, Abby of Looz, 13/24 June 1709, in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 3, p. 1284.

panelled set depicting the Story of Alexander which was eventually hung in the Marlboroughs' private apartments.

A further example of the collaborative approach to Blenheim is evidenced by the fact that Vanbrugh sent architectural drawings and details to the Duchess to consider, before being sent on to the Duke:

Your Grace will receive by my Lord Herveys Servant to morrow the Designe you desir'd to See of the Manner intended for furnishing the Salon, The Pannells at the bottom are to be of Wainscote, and run even without any breaks, so that there will be room for about Twenty Chairs besides Tables The Pillasters and Don Moldings are to be of Marble, with the Moldings About the Niches where the Figures Stand. The Figures intended for these Niches are now in the Palace of a Gentleman in Italy [...] All above the Pillasters is to be Wainscote enrich'd. <sup>431</sup>

This excerpt demonstrates that the Duchess was at the centre of the decision-making process, on a par with her husband. Her previous experience of building schemes had furnished her with the necessary knowledge to engage with and influence the design of the Saloon. Significantly, she was Vanbrugh's first point of call in this instance, and it can be reasonably inferred that this was the case with many of the decisions that had to be made during the building process.

Nonetheless, on occasion the Duchess overruled both Vanbrugh's and her husband's wishes, especially when she considered a particular scheme to be full of folly. This was evident in 1709 when she objected to Vanbrugh's desire to have two greenhouses. Vanbrugh justified the need for two to balance the south elevation, stating that the one attached to the Kitchen Court was simply 'to preserve the trees in Winter', whereas the one attached to the Stable Court was to be suitable 'for a distinct retired room of Pleasure, furnished with only some of the best Greens, mixed with pictures, Busts, Statues, Books'.<sup>432</sup>

As was the Duchess's nature, she considered the second greenhouse to be an unwarranted waste of space, materials and money. Consequently, she halted all works upon it, overriding the Duke's desire to proceed:

As to what concerns Woodstock, I have already assured you of my aproving intierly of what you have ordered; but as to the design for the orange houses, that must in its due time go on, notwithstanding it hinders the *ven* from the gallerie.<sup>433</sup>

The Duchess, nonetheless, remained steadfast, later stating that 'The second green house, or a detached gallery I thank God I prevented being built; nothing, I think can be more mad than the proposal, nor a falser description of the prospect'.<sup>434</sup> Her boldness in supplanting both Vanbrugh's and her husband's wishes with her own is testament to the confidence that the Duchess had in her own architectural preferences.

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<sup>431</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61353, ff. 68-9, Vanbrugh to the Duchess, London, 14 July 1709.

<sup>432</sup> Vanbrugh's memorandum to the Duchess, 8 July 1709, in Bonamy Dobrée and Geoffrey Webb (eds), *The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, vol. 4 (London: Nonsuch Press, 1927-28), p. 33.

<sup>433</sup> Marlborough to the Duchess, 14/25 July 1709, in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 3, p. 1311.

<sup>434</sup> Vanbrugh to Lord Ryallton?, Blenheim, 18 July 1709, endorsed by the Duchess, in Dobrée and Webb (eds), *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 36.

This is also demonstrative of the power and control that military wives could wield over building schemes in their husbands' absence. They were provided with an opportunity to directly and significantly alter building schemes and, in this case, the Duchess did so with determination. This is further corroborated by the fact that in 1710, following the dismissal of Godolphin from his office as Lord Treasurer, the Duchess took the drastic step of halting all works at Blenheim until she knew that payments from the Treasury would continue under the new Tory Lord Treasurer, Robert Harley. Of course, this distressed Vanbrugh greatly and he immediately complained of the situation to the Duke:

[T]his morning Joynes and Bobart told me, they had rec'd a Letter from the Dutchess of Marlborough to put a stop at once to all sorts of Work till your Grace came over, not suffering one Man to be employ'd a day longer.<sup>435</sup>

The fact that the Duchess took this step without the knowledge or consent of her husband again illustrates the extent to which she had control of the project, and the extent to which her husband trusted in her judgement.



Fig. 28 *Blenheim House*, unknown artist, c. 1750s.

<sup>435</sup> Vanbrugh to Marlborough, Oxford, 3 October 1710, in Dobrée and Webb (eds), *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 48.

## The Duchess clashes with Vanbrugh

As might be expected, the Duchess's forceful approach to the management of the building works did not win favour with Vanbrugh. The extent of the quarrels will not be examined in detail here, as they have been competently analysed in previous scholarly works.<sup>436</sup> However, it is necessary to highlight the possible reasons behind the difficult relationship and to consider whether this would have occurred had Marlborough not been at war.

As early as 1706 Godolphin informed the Duke of the friction between the Duchess and the architect:

My Lady Marlborough is extremely prying into it [Blenheim] and has really not only found a great many errors, but very well mended such of them, as could not stay for your own decision. I am apt to think she has made Mr. Vornbrugge a little [annoyed] but you will find both ease and convenience from it.<sup>437</sup>

It is perhaps indicative of the times, that Vanbrugh found it troublesome to deal with the Duchess. Although she was no less wealthy or powerful than Vanbrugh's previous and subsequent male patrons, this was still not enough to command his unbridled cooperation. Until this point, Vanbrugh's most significant commission had been Castle Howard for the 3rd Earl of Carlisle, and thus, the Duchess was his first (and only) patroness. It is arguable, therefore, that Vanbrugh resented the Duchess's involvement due to his conscious or unconscious belief that architecture was a pursuit only suitable for men.

Throughout her life, the Duchess had constantly challenged the gender boundaries placed upon her due to her sex. By exploiting her rank, power, wealth and her close relationship with Queen Anne, she had long involved herself in male-dominated spheres, such as politics and economics. Architecture, therefore, was no exception, especially when the building in question was to be lived in by her family and successive generations of the Churchills. The Duchess dealt with Vanbrugh as any disgruntled patron may have done, and yet, because she was a woman, her objections were received with annoyance and impatience. This is aptly demonstrated in the Duchess's letter to her good friend Charlotte Clayton, *née* Dyce:

Sir John has given Lord Marlborough an estimate in which he tells him all is to be complete for fifty-four thousand three hundred and eighty-one pounds; and because I can't believe that such a sum will do all, when thirty-eight thousand so lately did nothing, I am thought by him very troublesome and quite stupid.<sup>438</sup>

It is evident, therefore, that a degree of misogyny was inherent which would not necessarily have been an issue had the Duke also questioned Vanbrugh. The Duchess, however, was certainly not free from blame;

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<sup>436</sup> For a competent discussion of the relationship between Vanbrugh and the Duchess of Marlborough, see Samuel J. Rogal, 'John Vanbrugh and the Blenheim Palace Controversy', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 33, no. 4 (1974), pp. 293-303.

<sup>437</sup> Godolphin to Marlborough, Woodstock, 25 September 1706, in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 2, p. 694.

<sup>438</sup> Duchess to Mrs Clayton, c. 1716, quoted in William Coxe, *Memoirs of the Duke of Marlborough*, vol. 6 (London, 1820), p. 572.



her autocratic manner and obsession with control rendered her, in some instances, difficult at best. In later life, she freely admitted that she had made an enemy of Vanbrugh 'by the constant disputes I had with him to prevent his extravagance'.<sup>439</sup>

Nonetheless, even if one overlooks the individual flaws of Vanbrugh and the Duchess, one cannot ignore Vanbrugh's repeated incompetence regarding inaccurate estimates and failed deadlines. Even the Duke became frustrated with Vanbrugh in 1709, stating that: 'I agree intierly with you that Mr. Van Brooke must be carefully obsarved, and not suffered to begine any new worke, but to aply all the mony to the finishing what I directed before I left England'.<sup>440</sup>

The fact that Marlborough also voiced concerns about his architect demonstrates that the Duchess was not being unreasonable in her objections and concerns. Furthermore, in one clear instance regarding Woodstock Manor, Vanbrugh openly defied the Duchess's commands which only served to infuriate her further. Part of his scheme was to preserve the old royal manor of Woodstock as an interesting architectural contrast between the historical and the modern. He stated his case in a memorandum entitled 'Reasons offer'd, for Preserving some Part of the old Manour', including a sketch (now lost), dated 11 June 1709.<sup>441</sup> The Duchess, however, misunderstood Vanbrugh's intentions, believing that he was planning to restore the old manor for his personal use and so ordered it to be pulled down and the materials recycled. Instead of complying with his patroness's wishes, not only did he spend near £1,000 upon its restoration, he was actually in residence seven years later.<sup>442</sup>

This raises the question: would Vanbrugh have been so bold had the Duke ordered him to demolish the old manor? It further raises the point that perhaps Vanbrugh took advantage of the Duke's absence and considered the Duchess's commands less absolute. It is significant, therefore, that following the Duke's debilitating stroke in May 1716 Vanbrugh only lasted six months under the Duchess's reign before he handed in his dramatic resignation.<sup>443</sup>

## **The Duchess of Marlborough as the sole patron at Marlborough House**

Since 1695, the Marlboroughs had kept lodgings at St James's Palace, but by 1709 relations between Queen Anne and her once favourite steadily deteriorated, forcing the Duchess to plan accordingly. She decided to build her own London house (fig. 29), and as early as June 1708 Marlborough was already referring to 'the house [you] have a mind to build'.<sup>444</sup> This demonstrates that the lead architectural patron in this instance

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<sup>439</sup> Duchess to Mr Hutchinson, quoted in A. T. Thomson, *Memoirs of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough and the Court of Queen Anne*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), p. 459.

<sup>440</sup> Marlborough to the Duchess, Camp before Tournai, 20 June/1 July 1709, in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 3, p. 1289.

<sup>441</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61353, ff. 62-65, Vanbrugh to the Duchess, 'Reasons offer'd, for Preserving some Part of the old Manour', 11 June 1709.

<sup>442</sup> Vanbrugh to the Duchess, London, 10 July 1716, in Dobrée and Webb (eds), *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 72.

<sup>443</sup> Vanbrugh to the Duchess, Whitehall, 8 November 1716, in Dobrée and Webb (eds), *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 85.

<sup>444</sup> Marlborough to the Duchess, 3/14 June 1708?, in Snyder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 2, p. 1003.

was the Duchess and not her husband, as he was preoccupied both with Blenheim Palace and with war. This is significant, because it indicates that elite wives of this period were capable of commissioning building schemes independently of their husbands, albeit with their financial and moral support.

Marlborough agreed to give seven thousand pounds towards the building of the house, provided she bequeathed it to their heir after her death.<sup>445</sup> Nonetheless, Marlborough was far from enthusiastic about the prospect of the project, stating, 'I have no great opinion of this project, for I am very confident that in time you will be sensible that this building will cost you much more money than the thing is worth'.<sup>446</sup>

## **The Duchess commissions Sir Christopher Wren**

Despite Marlborough's reservations, his wife had indeed set her heart upon the project and begun to plan in earnest. On 31 August 1708, she secured from the Queen a lease of four and a half acres of land adjacent to the grounds of St James's Palace upon which to build a house.<sup>447</sup> Marlborough feared that the plot of land was too small for the Duchess's ambitions, however, in 1709 she was granted a further two acres, thus solving the problem.<sup>448</sup> The Duchess commissioned Sir Christopher Wren, Surveyor of the Royal Works for forty years, to design her perfect town house:

[T]he Duke of Marlborough was so good as to give me leave to make this house precisely as I liked to have it and to employ who I pleased, upon which I sent for Sr C. Wren and told him I hoped it would be no great trouble to him to look after the building I was going to begin.<sup>449</sup>

Wren was in his late seventies and, in this project as with others, he was assisted by his son Christopher, who held the post of Chief Clerk and Chief Ingrosser in the Office of Works.<sup>450</sup> It is noteworthy that the Duchess decided to commission one of the most famous architects of the time. Wren's domestic commissions were limited, but, interestingly, Wren had been regularly employed by successive Queens, suggesting that the Duchess was influenced by Wren's royal patronesses. Wren's queenly commissions included repairs and alterations to the Queen's Catholic Chapel in St James's Palace for Queen Catherine of Braganza, between 1682 and 1684, building The Queen's Apartment at Whitehall Palace begun for Queen Mary of Modena and completed for Queen Mary II, between 1688 and 1693,<sup>451</sup> as well as the works at Hampton Court Palace, between 1689 and 1693 and at Kensington Palace between 1686 and 1696 for

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Marlborough to the Duchess, Terbank, 20 June/1 July 1708, in Synder (ed.), *MGC*, vol. 2, pp. 1016-17.

<sup>447</sup> 'In August 1708, a Lease was granted for fifty years of the Friary and grounds attached, under the great Seal, in the name of certain Trustees, at a yearly rental of 5s., in consideration of the payment of £2000, the Leasees having the power to erect certain buildings to be approved by the Surveyor General', as quoted in 'Marlborough House, St. James's Park: Sir Christopher Wren, Architect for the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, 1709', in Arthur Thomas Bolton and Harry Duncan Hendry (eds), *The Royal Palaces of Winchester, Whitehall, Kensington...1660-1715*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for The Wren Society, 1930), p. 225.

<sup>448</sup> Harris, *A Passion for Government*, p. 154.

<sup>449</sup> Quoted in Green, *Blenheim Palace*, p. 106.

<sup>450</sup> Howard Colvin (ed.), *The History of the King's Works*, vol. 5 (London: HMSO, 1976), p. 471.

<sup>451</sup> Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, p. 1089.

Queen Mary II and her husband William III.<sup>452</sup> However, Wren's most recent royal commission was for Queen Anne, for whom he had built a range of state apartments in 1703.<sup>453</sup> It is purported, therefore, that the Duchess sought to emulate Queen Anne, over whom she was fast losing control, to regain her favour in a typically lavish fashion. She sought to use architecture to reassert her position within Court and within society. Marlborough House was to be a blatant display of wealth, power and status.

## A rejection of the Baroque

With Marlborough absent and uninterested in the project, the Duchess enthusiastically set about designing the perfect London house for her family. Almost as a reaction against the Baroque flamboyance of Blenheim, she took inspiration from the distinctly unornamented façades of the newly built Buckingham House for the 1st Duke of Buckingham and Heythrop Park for the 1st Duke of Shrewsbury. As was the Duchess's character, she was particular about the style of her house, and instructed Wren accordingly, stating that:

[H]e must promise me two things, First that hee would make the contracts reasonable and not as crown work [...] The other article was that hee must make my hous strong plain and convenient and that he must give me his word that this building should not have the least resemblance of any thing in that called Blenheim which I had never liked but could not prevail against Sr John. <sup>454</sup>

In later life, when furnishing her suburban villa, Wimbledon House, her preference for plainness was again evident: 'I am determined to have no one thing carved in the finishing of my house at Wimbledon, my taste always having been to have things plain and clean from a piece of wainscott to a lady's face'.<sup>455</sup> Such was her influence over the design and direction of Marlborough House that her sycophantic friend Arthur Maynwaring exaggeratedly declared that:

Sir Chris. Wren had no more hand in designing it [Marlborough House] than the bricklayers or masons' as they are his Instruments, He is yours [...] Your Grace sits at the head of the work & directs all the inferior Ranks of Officers, from Mr Wren to those that carry the Morter, who are all alike employ'd onely to finish what you have so well contriv'd.<sup>456</sup>

The design for Marlborough House, therefore, was consciously simple, consisting of a single two-storey (today it has four) block of thirteen bays (advanced three bay wings on the garden elevation), with a half-basement and a balustraded roof. Bright red Dutch bricks were used for the construction; these were smaller and cheaper than English brick, and were imported as ballast. The primary ornamentation upon the principal façade (garden front) was the rusticated stone quoins and the niches for statues.

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., p. 1090.

<sup>454</sup> Quoted in Green, *Blenheim Palace*, p. 106.

<sup>455</sup> Duchess to Lady Diana Spencer, 22 September 1732, in Gladys Scott Thomson (ed.), *Letters of a Grandmother. 1732 – 1735. Being the Correspondence of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough with her Granddaughter Diana Duchess of Bedford* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1943), p. 70.

<sup>456</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61459, f. 28, Arthur Maynwaring to the Duchess, summer 1709.

Little evidence survives relating to the early stages of construction, but, as to the positioning of the house, Maynwaring informed the Duchess that:

If the house be set in an equal line with her Majesty's Palace', it will have a view down the middle walk of her Garden [...] and being remov'd from all manner of dust & from the smoke of the houses in the Pell-Mell, you will live & sleep as it were in the middle of that Great Garden'.<sup>457</sup>

Much of the day to day dealings with Marlborough House were dealt with by the younger Wren, as evidenced by the numerous letters addressed to the Duchess regarding the latter stage of the building project, dated from September 1710, now located in the British Library.<sup>458</sup> Seven letters written by Sir Christopher (some in the hand of his son and some in an anonymous hand) were published by Arthur Searle in his 1982 article entitled "A Pleasing Example of Skill in Old Age': Sir Christopher Wren and Marlborough House'.<sup>459</sup> The letters of both the elder and younger Wren provide a fascinating glimpse into the working relationship between architect and patroness. Significantly, there are no letters addressed to Marlborough, signifying his minimal involvement in the scheme. This further demonstrates the extent to which military or naval wives could exert influence over architecture during this period.

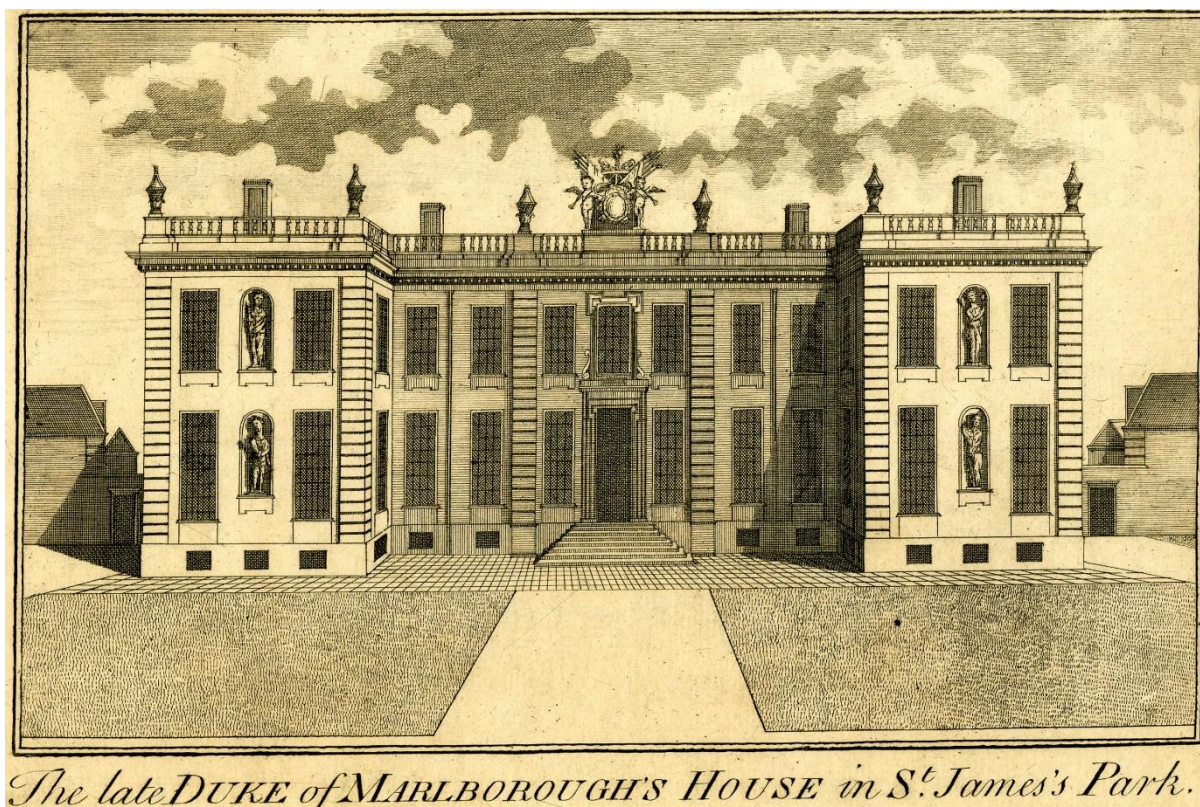


Fig. 29 *The late Duke of Marlborough's House*, by Henry Overton I, 1728-30.

<sup>457</sup> Quoted in Green, *Duchess of Marlborough*, p. 145.

<sup>458</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, ff. 5-33b, 37-40b, 43, 47, 51-66b, correspondence between Christopher Wren Jr and the Duchess, 1710-13.

<sup>459</sup> Arthur Searl, "A Pleasing Example of Skill in Old Age': Sir Christopher Wren and Marlborough House", *The British Library Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1982), pp. 36-45.

## Dispute over the rising costs

By September 1710 the shell of the house was complete, with the joiners busy at work panelling the interiors.<sup>460</sup> According to Sir Christopher, the two staircases were complete, except ‘for the Iron worke’ and the focus was upon ‘finishing the porter’s Lodge and place for the Cisterne, which must be don before the Courtes can be levelled and paved’.<sup>461</sup> Although this was a positive report, by the following February progress had slowed and relations between patroness and her architects deteriorated. Ever conscious of costs, the Duchess insisted on examining the proposed estimates of her tradesmen before contracting them. She even went so far as to insist on a lower estimate if she believed it unreasonable, as evidenced in this unpublished letter from Wren junior:

Whitehall, Feb 28 1710/11

Madam,

Mr Hobson the Joyner has given in another Proposal more reasonable than the last, The Prices, he say’s, are as low as he can afford, considering ye extraordinary goodness of ye workmanship [...] Madam, the 3 Estimates of ye Joyner, Carpenter & Painter, being ye chief articles of expense in your finishing of yr House, it will be proper that yr Grace be fully satisfied in ye Price, before ye workmen sett ther hands to a contract or proceed any farther. My father, I bless God, is well recover’d, and intends to work on yr Grace, when you please to command, with ye workmen, to settle this matter to yr own thought’s and He begs yr Grace would believe that no place where you can reside will be too far for him to render your service.<sup>462</sup>

The dispute over rising costs came to a head shortly after, when the Duchess ordered the radical action of stopping all works until the problems were resolved. This demonstrated the Duchess’s control over the project and her ability to ensure that her directions were followed. This is evidenced by a letter from Wren junior dated 8 March 1710/11: ‘No new Joyner’s work has been done since ye Grace’s Orders except what was actually in hand, and ready framed to set up’.<sup>463</sup>

Negotiations over the workmen’s estimates continued throughout March, with Wren junior constantly trying to convince his patroness of the worthiness of the men he and his father had employed:

I can only observe to yr Grace, that I know the Honesty of ye man, and am assured He would have been very glad to comply with ye Grace’s pleasure, could he have done it without loss to himself: He is one that values his reputation, and would not have put any of his worke to yr service, but what should be like ye rest of his performance in ye House, substantially good.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, f. 3, Sir Christopher Wren to the Duchess, Whitehall, 23 September 1710.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, ff. 5-7, Christopher Wren [jr] to the Duchess, Whitehall, 28 February 1710/11 March 1711.

<sup>463</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, ff. 8-9, Christopher Wren [jr] to the Duchess, Whitehall, 8 March 1710/19 March 1711.

<sup>464</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, f. 25, Christopher Wren [jr] to the Duchess, Marlborough House, 22 March 1710/2 April 1711.

The Duchess became increasingly frustrated with the Wrens' apparent inability to manage the contractors, believing that they were being taken advantage of due to Sir Christopher's old age and his son's relative inexperience. Furthermore, it was at this time that Sir Christopher was defending his character against those who accused him of incompetence, embezzlement and gross corruption in relation to the building of St Paul's Cathedral.<sup>465</sup> Such rumours and accusations did not go unnoticed by his patroness, who, for better or worse, decided to ensure that there was no possibility of such crimes being committed at Marlborough House.

On 29 March 1711, she wrote an impatient letter to Wren junior complaining about the lack of progress made in inducing the craftsmen to sign her contracts:

I [...] am extremely mortified to find that after all the trouble I have put you to & my self, in writing so many letters to settle this affair of the building, there is no one thing fix'd, or any appearance of having it done, any more then when I first desired it, which is now a whole year & a quarter [later].<sup>466</sup>

Thankfully, by 6 April, Sir Christopher had at last succeeded in persuading Mr Hopson, the joiner, to sign the Duchess's contract stating that he would complete the work in six weeks provided he was advanced the sum of £1000.<sup>467</sup> Mr Hopson was the son of Sir Charles Hopson who had worked with Wren on St Paul's Cathedral, thus indicating that the level of craftsmanship sought by Wren was of the very best, which may explain why costs were escalating against his patroness's wishes.

## **The Gentileschi ceiling paintings are installed**

Despite this progress, by the end of April, most works were still on hold whilst finances were being finalised. Nonetheless, a letter from Wren junior, dated 23 April, suggests that progress in the entrance hall (now the saloon) was being made with the fixing of the Gentileschi ceiling paintings, formerly at the Queen's House, Greenwich:

The Pictures design'd for the Hall are so large that they fill the whole Ceiling, and hardly allow room for the framing which is but small in proportion to the pictures; the Hall they came from at Greenwich was larger then yours, so that Mr. Walton was oblig'd to cutt them in such a manner as to fitt the Ceiling exactly, and the spaces between will appear small at that distance from the eye [...] it will be very handsome and proper; tho the room is a first room, it will be a very good one.<sup>468</sup>

Significantly, the Duchess chose to use the very same murals that Queen Henrietta Maria had commissioned from Orazio Gentileschi for her Great Hall, at the Queen's House Greenwich, c. 1636-8. The 'Mr. Walton' referred to was Peter Walton, the 'Mender and Repairer' or 'Surveyor and Keeper' of the Royal Collection pictures, appointed to succeed his father, Perry Walton, on 1 March 1701, at a salary of £200.<sup>469</sup> This,

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<sup>465</sup> Francis Hare, *Frands and abuses at St. Paul's. In a letter to a Member of Parliament* (London: 1712).

<sup>466</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, ff. 30-1, copy of letter from the Duchess of Marlborough to Christopher Wren [jr], 29 March 1711.

<sup>467</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, f. 45, Sir Christopher Wren to the Duchess, 6 April 1711.

<sup>468</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, f. 55, Christopher Wren [jr] to the Duchess, Whitehall, 23 April 1711.

<sup>469</sup> Oliver Millar, *The Queen's Paintings* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), p. 85.

therefore, highlights another royal connection to the Duchess's architectural project, and suggests that Queen Anne may have suggested the Gentileschi artwork to the Duchess, and to some extent, may have facilitated its transition into the Duchess's ownership. This once again illustrates the importance of royal influence over their courtiers' architectural schemes.

## **The Duchess dismisses the Wrens**

Such progress appears to have been isolated, because a letter written two days later by a dismayed Wren junior suggests his patroness had utterly lost her patience, to the point of introducing her own workmen to finish the interiors:

[W]e find to day a Painter primeing with Size, that is to say Sheep-skin oyl, and that so thin, that water & brick dust would have done as well, this way of painting is very ill, will peel off, & spoyle ye Wainscot and is never used but in poor tradesmen's Houses that can afford no better.<sup>470</sup>

This act was a clear indication of the point to which relations between the Wrens and the Duchess had deteriorated. Having lost faith in her architects, she took to the completion of Marlborough House herself. In later life she explained her actions, 'I began to find that this man from his age was imposed upon by the workmen and the prices for all things were much too high for ready money and sure pay, upon which I took the finishing part myself'.<sup>471</sup> This decision to complete the project herself is something that she later repeated at Blenheim and at Wimbledon House. Such decisive action also refutes the current academic opinion that women were unwilling, incapable, or were prevented from following their own design ideals during the eighteenth century. It indicates that elite women, if supported with the necessary capital and determination, could very easily dismiss their architects in favour of their own workmen. Such steps were rarely even taken by their male counterparts, as architects generally commanded enough respect to see a project through. Thus, the very fact that the Duchess dared to dismiss the Wrens suggests that she had great confidence in her own ability in commanding a large workforce to complete Marlborough House to her specification.

In a resigned tone, Sir Christopher wrote to the Duchess in the summer of 1711 mentioning that he 'was at a loss how to give your Grace Satisfaction, since you have been pleased to change your workemen for those who doe not think themselves concerned at all with me; neither have I now any place to sitt downe and examin any Bills or measurements'.<sup>472</sup> It is unfortunate that relations had deteriorated to such an extent, but the Duchess had such an obsession with control that it really was inevitable that she would consider herself the only person capable of completing the house as she desired.

The Duchess moved into the upper floor of Marlborough House in the Autumn of 1711, during which time she continued to direct the progress of the interiors.<sup>473</sup> The Duchess described how she was 'call'd to a very

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<sup>470</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61357, f. 59, Christopher Wren [jr] to the Duchess, Whitehall, 26 May 1711.

<sup>471</sup> Quoted in Green, *Blenheim Palace*, p. 106.

<sup>472</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS. 61357, f. 68, Sir Christopher Wren to the Duchess, Whitehall, 14 July 1711.

<sup>473</sup> Searle, 'A Pleasing Example', p. 44.

pleasant work, the furnishing of my new house', rejoicing in its near-finished state she exclaimed that she 'was so delighted that I thought there should have been some extraordinary Ceremony, as a Sack posset or throwing the Stocking'.<sup>474</sup> This statement indicates the great enjoyment and pride that she took from completing her great town house.

## The Marlboroughs go into exile

In 1712 the Marlboroughs were forced into self-imposed exile which lasted two years. Even during this unsettled period, however, the Duchess continued to manage the execution of the interior design. She commissioned Louis Laguerre to paint eight battle scenes from the Duke's military campaigns to decorate the grand staircase and the entrance hall (now the saloon).<sup>475</sup> From Frankfurt in June 1713 she wrote of the murals, 'I am very desirous of having it finished tho [...] [it] does not look like I should ever enjoy it'.<sup>476</sup> The subject of Laguerre's scenes was most certainly influenced by the Duke, and suggests that, although the house was very much the Duchess's creation, she was still conscious of the need to display and promote her husband's achievements. After all, it was through the Marlboroughs' joint careers that they had ascended to such rank and status.

During her exile, the Duchess kept in regular contact with her cousin Mr Robert Jennings, a wealthy London lawyer who she employed to monitor the progress and expenses of Marlborough House in her absence. On 7 May 1714, the Duchess wrote to Mr Jennings to ensure that Louis Laguerre's progress was properly supervised:

A very knowing Person (who came to see my house) has writ me word that the great Figures in the Hall are well of the kind, but that the Battles, which are small and at a great distance, are not stronge enough painted to be well seen. If this be rightly judged, as I fear it is, I am sure you will do what you can to have it mended in what is down as far as it can be, and prevent the same Fault upon the Staircases, but they will be seen much nearer than the Hall.<sup>477</sup>

It must have been a source of great frustration to the Duchess that she was unable to manage the final decorative details herself, especially as she was always so loath to entrust them to others. Nonetheless, following her return in 1714, she was able to eventually complete Marlborough House to her satisfaction. It became her main London residence, which she was to use for thirty-two years until her death in 1744.

The Duchess's interaction with architecture could be regarded as the exception to the rule. Her wealth, status and strong personality certainly did allow her to commission and direct building projects on a monumental scale that was not the norm for other aristocratic wives of the time. It is evident that she

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<sup>474</sup> Quoted in Harris, *A Passion for Government*, p. 186.

<sup>475</sup> For a discussion on Laguerre's murals, see Lydia Hamlett, 'Rupture through Realism: Sarah Churchill and Louis Laguerre's Murals at Marlborough House', in M. Hallett, M. Myrone and N. Llewellyn (eds), *Court, Country, City: British Art and Architecture, 1660-1735* (London: Yale Center for British Art, 2016).

<sup>476</sup> Quoted in Winston Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times*, Book Two (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 982.

<sup>477</sup> Duchess to Mr Jennings, 7 May 1714, quoted in Bolton and Hendry (eds), *The royal palaces of Winchester, Whitehall, Kensington and St. James's*, p. 229.



considered her involvement in the Blenheim project as essential in assisting her absent (and later incapacitated) husband, and thus could be explained as her simply fulfilling her marital duty. However, the fact that she eventually took over the entire Blenheim project and was the sole patron of Marlborough House does suggest that the Duchess possessed a mindset that was not necessarily the norm for elite wives at the time.

An example of a more representative female interaction with architecture is evidenced in the following case study, where Mrs Frances Boscawen (fig. 30), wife of the celebrated Admiral Boscawen, directed and managed architectural projects for her absent husband at their London residence and at Hatchlands Park. It will be demonstrated that the Boscawens worked together to create fashionable residences. However, when it came to the architectural design of Hatchlands, there was a clear division in roles. Admiral Boscawen was to have the direction of the exterior, and Frances was to have the direction of the interiors. This division of roles conforms more easily to the traditional ideals of female and male interaction with architecture. Nonetheless, just as the Duchess of Marlborough had been integral to the progress of the Blenheim project during her husband's absence, so too was Frances's involvement in the direction and management of the Hatchlands project.

## Frances Boscawen (1719-1805)



Fig. 30 *Frances Evelyn Boscawen*, by Allan Ramsay, 1747.

Frances (Fanny) Evelyn Glanville married Edward Boscawen on 11 December 1742 at the age of twenty-three. Edward Boscawen was an up-and-coming naval captain who had recently been given command over *HMS Dreadnought*, a sixty-gun ship. Almost immediately after the wedding Boscawen was again at sea, employed in the English Channel.

## Remodelling her house in Audley Street, London

Fanny, therefore, as a newly married woman, moved to London to set up home. She initially rented a small house in George Street, from Lord Carpenter, but in 1747 she moved into the grander house at No. 14 Audley Street:

I have been here six days, in which time I have caused an appraisement to be made of my goods in George Street, which I have sold to Lord Carpenter, and have finally settled with him, paying him only £30 for this last year's rent. I have had all my bells hung and moved myself into my dressing room. I have been at Bromwich's and have chosen the paper for my 3rd room, which is now actually putting up.<sup>478</sup>

As can be deduced, Fanny was enthusiastic about her new property and was in the midst of a major redecorating scheme. Fanny was well known for her sophisticated soirées, and later became one of the famed bluestockings, and thus, the perfect backdrop was needed. By December she delightedly informed her husband of the progress she had made:

[M]y room is quite ready; has been painted three times; the ceiling made white; the floor planed; the chimney-piece back and hearth finished – as well as the tables and glasses. My second room is not yet hung, not having been able to get any paper to my mind under an exorbitant price. At length, however, I have agreed for one, and Bromwich comes to put it up tomorrow. So that, upon the whole, my house is much nearer completed than you expect, I believe.<sup>479</sup>

The 'Bromwich' to which she refers was Thomas Bromwich (fl. 1740-87), a fashionable upholsterer and wallpaper manufacturer, whose business also included supplying furniture and soft furnishings. It is clear, therefore, that although Fanny complained of the prices incurred from her redecorating project, she was not prepared to sacrifice quality simply to save money. On 1 January 1748, Fanny hosted a party in her newly furnished dressing room, and was pleased to report that 'everyone admired my apartment, which is indeed a very pretty one and wants nothing but the approbation of its Lord'.<sup>480</sup>

Nevertheless, her scheme was far from complete and she soon wrote to her husband of the tasteful touches that she was adding: 'So elegant am I, that my fender is a Chinese rail'.<sup>481</sup> Her choice of Chinoiserie is further evidence of her desire to remain *en vogue*. In addition she declared that she wanted 'an abundance of chintz for my bow-window room', and had also purchased, 'Wilton carpeting of a very uncommon and pretty sort'.<sup>482</sup> The issue of taste was of the greatest importance to eighteenth-century society and Fanny was no exception. She was ever conscious of the impression her rooms would make: 'Taste I have always pretended

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<sup>478</sup> Frances Boscawen to Edward Boscawen, Audley Street, 14 November 1747, in Cecil Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife, Being the Life and Times of the Hon. Mrs Edward Boscawen from 1719 to 1761* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1940), p. 61.

<sup>479</sup> Frances to Edward, Audley Street, 11 December 1747, in Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>480</sup> Frances to Edward, Audley Street, 1 January 1748, in Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, p. 68.

<sup>481</sup> Frances to Edward, Audley Street, 11 January 1748, in Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*

to and must own I shall be greatly disappointed if you do not approve that which I have displayed in Audley Street.<sup>483</sup>

Fanny's competence at managing the entire redecoration project is obvious, but her excellent grasp of the family's finances was also key to its success. Her meticulous account books and her careful spending were a great source of pride to Fanny, as it enabled her family to live fashionably within their means:

I am so good an economist that I am never distressed, till Child's shop breaks! But jesting apart, I do reckon that I am a very house-wifely young woman [...] I am arrived at keeping my account book with perfect exactness, so that I know each of my expenses to a shilling.<sup>484</sup>

## The Boscawens purchase Hatchlands Park, Surrey

As early as 1748, Fanny was searching for a suitable country estate for her family and soon she discovered the perfect location: 'as to buying anything before you come - that is out of the question since Hatchlands is not to be had'.<sup>485</sup> Fanny fell in love with the Surrey estate, located just outside Guildford, but it was still owned by John Raymond, a London brewer. Despite looking around at other properties, in Fanny's opinion, nothing could compare to Hatchlands, 'my heart still fixed at Hatchlands'.<sup>486</sup> Fortunately, they did not have to wait too long as the property came on the market in 1750 and was instantly purchased by the Boscawens (fig. 31).

In 1755, the Boscawens borrowed a plan of 'Lady Essex's' house so that they could consider how they wished to design their intended country seat.<sup>487</sup> The Lady Essex in question was Elizabeth Capell, *née* Russell, Dowager Countess of Essex, who had been the second wife of William Capell, 3rd Earl of Essex. Lady Essex's widowhood was to last just over four decades and during *c.* 1753-4 she built herself a medium sized country house near Watford, adjacent to Cassiobury Park, the seat of the Earls of Essex. She named her house Russell Farm (now Russell's or Russell's Farm), after her maiden name; evidently proud of her lineage.

The house, which still stands (now divided into flats), bears remarkable resemblance to the Boscawens' creation at Hatchlands. Although Hatchlands is larger than Russell's, both are constructed of red brick, with slate roofs. The west fronts of both houses consist of a projecting, pedimented central section, and the south fronts of both consist of a central bow or bay window overlooking the gardens. It is purported that the Boscawens took inspiration from Lady Essex's house and adapted its design and plan to suit their own needs. Furthermore, the architect of Russell's was Stiff Leadbetter, the architect who was later commissioned by the Boscawens.

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<sup>483</sup> Frances to Edward, Audley Street, 8 November 1748, in Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, p. 129.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> Frances to Edward, Enfield Green, 21 July 1748, Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, p. 97.

<sup>486</sup> Frances to Edward, Enfield Green, 10 August 1748, in Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, p. 100.

<sup>487</sup> Edward to Frances, Petersfield, 8 April 1755, in Peter Kemp (ed.), 'Boscawen's Letters to His Wife, 1755-1756,' in Christopher Lloyd (ed.), *The Naval Miscellany*, vol. 4 (London: Navy Records Society, 1952), pp. 169-70.



Fig. 31 West front of Hatchlands Park

## Preparations for building the new house

In spring 1756, preparations for building the new Hatchlands house were underway, with Fanny acting as a crucial lynchpin between her husband and their architect:

I have been this morning hoping you have seen Mr. Ledbeater, as I think when I am sent away this summer it will be the best time to build, and fancy the middle of the third summer you would get into it.<sup>488</sup>

During the build it was decided that Fanny and the children should live at Levels Grove, a property close enough for Fanny to ‘have the use’ of her garden and ‘look at your walk and improve it, and see that things are not totally neglected’.<sup>489</sup> Edward clearly thought that having Fanny close to the building project would help to keep it on track. Furthermore, he informed Fanny of all his stylistic preferences for the house in the hope that she would ensure that his scheme was followed by Leadbetter:

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<sup>488</sup> Edward to Frances, *Invincible*, 17 May 1756, in Kemp (ed.), ‘Boscawen’s Letters’, pp. 209-10.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*

I have a plan of the building every day in my head and shall be glad to hear you have seen Ledbeater. I forgot to tell him I will not have a parapet wall, they always make the house leak. No care can prevent it, but to have the eaves hang over. I fancy he won't like it, but in this I will be absolute with him.<sup>490</sup>

From Edward's correspondence, it is apparent, that arranging a meeting with Leadbetter was more difficult than anticipated, because in June work had still not yet started, leading Edward to think about finding a different architect.<sup>491</sup> At this point Leadbetter was also employed by the 3rd Duke of Marlborough at Langley Park in Buckinghamshire and it is possible, therefore, that he was prioritising the Duke's commission over the Boscawens'. Fanny must have offered to write to their errant architect, because Edward replied with much encouragement: 'By all means write to Ledbeater, and if he comes tell him I will have no parapet wall'.<sup>492</sup> This is further evidence of the Boscawens' partnership with regards to the construction of their new family home and demonstrates that wives could be as involved in architectural schemes as their husbands. Fanny even participated in the search for suitable materials to build Hatchlands, and proudly declared to Edward that she had 'agreed for 50,000 bricks brought in from Peas Marsh at 25 sh. pr. thousand' which 'was a shilling cheaper than I expected to get them'.<sup>493</sup>

Leadbetter must have eventually responded to his patron's letters because a plan of the house in his hand survives at the Soane Museum, dated 1757.<sup>494</sup> It is a survey drawing of the ground floor and provides an insight into the original intended arrangement of the reception rooms. The Boscawens evidently wished to live in style, with a sophisticated suite of tastefully appointed rooms, which included a 'Large Dining Parlour', 'Lesser Dining Parlour', drawing room, 'Alcove Bedchamber' and dressing room, as well as a large central staircase. Although not very large in comparison to its grand neighbour Clandon Park, the proposed plan for Hatchlands was exceedingly elegant for a rising naval star and his bluestocking wife.

Throughout this period Fanny was in regular correspondence with her bluestocking friends, particularly Elizabeth Montagu, who visited in 1755, and was impressed with what she saw:

I walked round the park this morning. It does not consist of many acres, but the disposition of the ground, the fine verdure, and the plantations make it very pretty. It resembles the mistress of it, having preserved its native simplicity, though art and care has improved and softened it, and made it elegant.<sup>495</sup>

Again, this highlights the importance of female social networks in relation to architecture, and demonstrates that it was the norm to correspond on one's architectural preference, observations and inclinations. In fact, both Fanny and Elizabeth subscribed to Robert Adam's *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian* (1764), and bought the most copies of the female subscribers; Fanny purchased two sets and Elizabeth five. This may indicate that they were purchasing copies for their friends, thus reinforcing the idea of shared architectural

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<sup>490</sup> Edward to Frances, *Invincible*, 25 May 1756, in Kemp (ed.), 'Boscawen's Letters', p. 212.

<sup>491</sup> Edward to Frances, *Invincible*, 21 June 1756, in Kemp (ed.), 'Boscawen's Letters', p. 228.

<sup>492</sup> Edward to Frances, *Invincible*, 24 June 1756, in Kemp (ed.), 'Boscawen's Letters', p. 231.

<sup>493</sup> Frances to Edward, Level's Grove, 21 September 1757, in Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, p. 256.

<sup>494</sup> SM, Adam volume 35/80, 'Plan of first floor for the Honble Edwd Boscawen Esqr', 1757.

<sup>495</sup> Mrs Montagu to Mr Montagu, Hatchlands Park, 1755, Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Wife*, pp. 187-188.

interests among the bluestockings. In 1762 Elizabeth also subscribed to Stuart and Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens*, as did Fanny's daughter, the Duchess of Beaufort, which highlights the importance of social and familial networks in promoting new architectural ideas. As will later be discussed, Elizabeth was also involved and interested in architecture, championing the Classical style with the assistance of James Stuart and James Wyatt.

## A division of roles

Although Edward took the lead with the design of the house, this was a task willingly bestowed by Fanny, who preferred directing the interior decoration and furnishing. A letter from Edward dated August 1756 clearly indicates the division of roles between husband and wife:

I am very sensible in your condescension in letting me have the direction of our building, and much more so for you owning you do not understand it. Most wives meddle with all concerns, understanding or not. In return, you shall have the principal hand in furnishing, that is in directing all that is to be new.<sup>496</sup>

This quote perfectly demonstrates how an elite married couple could equally partake in the creation of a beautiful family home. Just as Edward had his preferences for the exterior and plan form, Fanny also had her preferences for the design of the interiors. Fanny had demonstrated her flare for design a decade earlier at Audley Street and now she embraced the challenge once more. Her influence is evident throughout, but it is significant that the balustrade of the main staircase is made of gilt metal in the Chinoiserie style. This was the style that she had used for one of her fenders at Audley Street and now she used on a greater scale. This work was completed before Robert Adam was commissioned in the winter of 1758-9 and would suggest that this was Fanny's aesthetic choice.<sup>497</sup>

## Robert Adam is commissioned

Robert Adam's work at Hatchlands has been described as his earliest country house commission following his return from the Grand Tour.<sup>498</sup> It is unknown why the Boscawens did not continue the interiors of Hatchlands themselves, but it is significant that they were amongst the very first to recognise his talent. It is highly likely that Fanny, as an arbiter of fashion and taste, sought to commission a decorative scheme that was fresh and innovative. The current trend for 'neo-Palladian pomposity' did not impress Fanny, but she found Adam's style refreshing, describing it as one 'of simplicity improved by art and care'.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Edward to Frances, *Royal George?*, 18 August 1756, in Kemp (ed.), 'Boscawen's Letters', p. 246.

<sup>497</sup> Christopher Hussey, *English Country Houses: Mid Georgian 1760-1800* (London: Antique Collectors' Club Ltd., 1986), p. 50.

<sup>498</sup> Lydia Greeves, *Houses of the National Trust* (London: National Trust Books, 2008), p. 164.

<sup>499</sup> Quoted in Joseph Rykwert and Anne Rykwert, *Robert and James Adam: The Men and the Style* (Architectural Documents), (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1985), p. 53.

A series of drawings made by the Adam office survive at the Soane Museum dated 1759, which contain the executed designs for the north and east walls of the 'Great Dining Room' (now the saloon).<sup>500</sup> Various beautiful designs for the ceilings survive, for the drawing room (now the library),<sup>501</sup> 'Admiral Boscawen's Bedchamber',<sup>502</sup> and the first floor withdrawing room (since demolished).<sup>503</sup> Of interest is Adam's inclusion of nautical motifs and naval trophies that were so relevant to the Boscawens, such as the ceiling of the original drawing room, which consisted of the figures of Neptune, Justice, Fame and Victory (fig. 32).<sup>504</sup> Furthermore, a design for a chimneypiece intended for the 'Great Dining Room' featured a tablet with a nautical scene, flanked by two caryatids.<sup>505</sup> This design was adapted upon execution and the nautical scene was replaced with a winged female in a chariot, the winged goddess of victory. This illustrates how proud the Boscawens were of their association with the navy and of Edward's professional triumphs.

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<sup>500</sup> SM, Adam volumes 35/82, [2] 'Section of the Great Dining Room For The Right Honble Admiral Boscawen', 1759; 35/83, [3] 'One End of the Great Dining Room for Admiral Boscawen', 1759; (4) 35/81, 'Copy of the Section of one End of the Rt Honble Admiral Boscawen's Dining Room', as executed, 1759.

<sup>501</sup> SM, Adam volume 11/3, [7] 'Design for a Ceiling for Admiral Boscawens Drawing Room'.

<sup>502</sup> SM, Adam volume 11/8, [13] Preliminary design for a 'Cieling for Admiral Boscawen', for a bed room on the first floor, as executed, 1759.

<sup>503</sup> SM, Adam volume 11/11, [12] 'Cieing for the Right Honble Admiral Boscawen His With Drawing Room', 1759.

<sup>504</sup> SM, Adam volume 11/3, [7] 'Design for a Ceiling for Admiral Boscawens Drawing Room'.

<sup>505</sup> SM, Adam volumes 22/11, [5] 'Design of a Chimney Piece for The Right Honble Admiral Boscawen Dining Room', 1759; 22/12, [6] 'Design of a Chimney piece for Admiral Boscawens Dining Room', 1759.



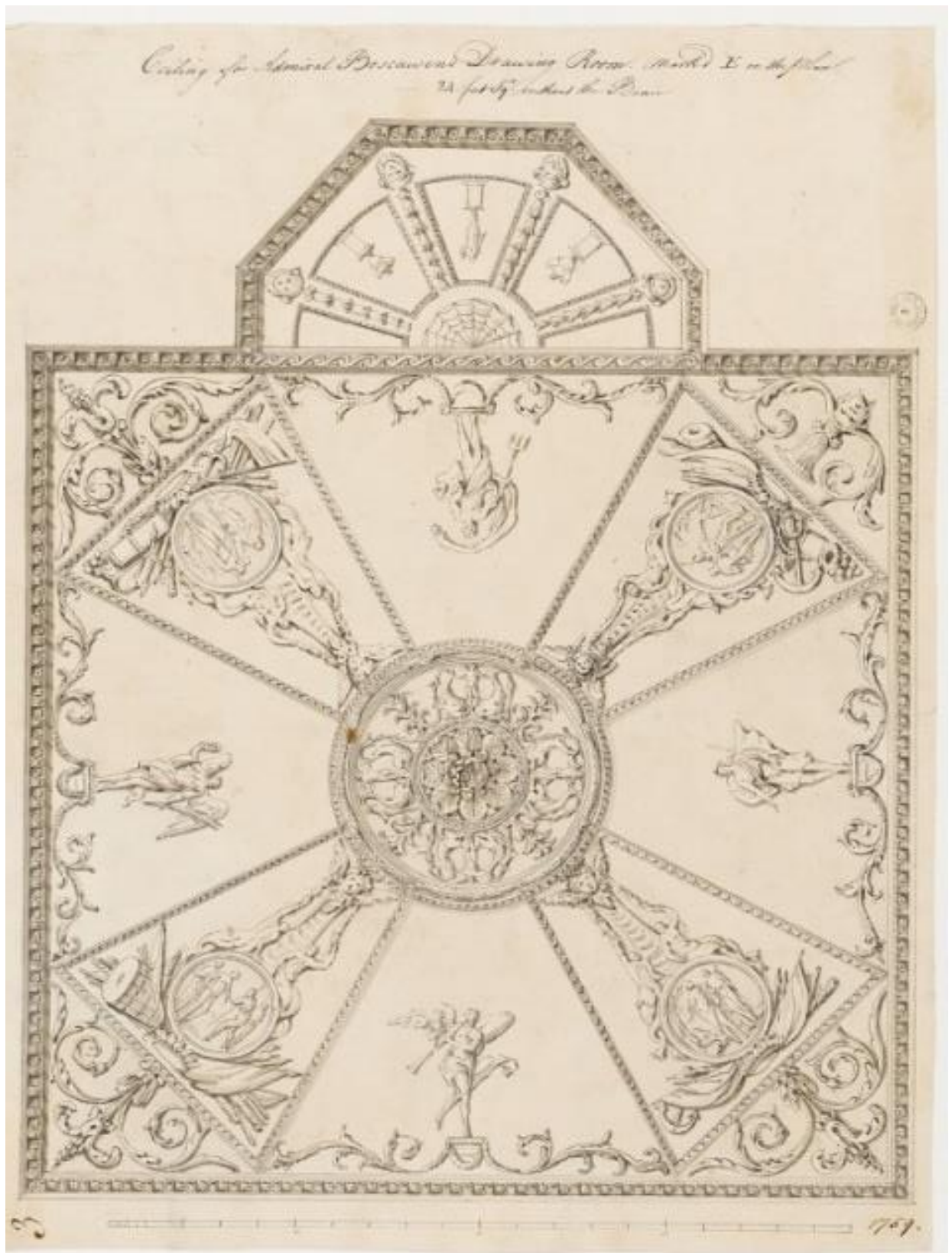


Fig. 32 *Ceiling for Admiral Boscawen's Drawing Room*, as executed, Adam Office hand, 1759.

As was the custom, all of Adam's drawings are described as being created 'for Admiral Boscawen', but this does not absent Fanny from the process. It is clear from both her husband's correspondence, as well as her own, that she was both interested in and involved with the decorating and furnishing of Hatchlands. Given her enthusiasm for the earlier refitting of the house at Audley Street, and her husband's obvious trust in her capabilities, it is easy to assume that the Boscawens commissioned Adam together. Moreover, it was Fanny who attended the day-to-day supervision of the decoration because the Admiral, when not at sea, was based at the Admiralty, Whitehall.

Furthermore, upon the tragically early death of the Admiral in 1761, Fanny commissioned Adam to design a funerary monument for St Michael Penkevil church, Cornwall, thus demonstrating her confidence at being a patroness (fig. 33). The executed monument is signed 'Robert Adam Archit. Michael Rysbrack Sculpt' and dated 1763. A mixture of fourteen (unexecuted) preliminary and finished drawings of the monument survive at the Soane Museum, of five variant schemes, dated 1761.<sup>506</sup> The sheer number of drawings suggests that Fanny was a very discerning patroness who would not settle for anything less than perfect for her beloved late husband's monument. The final scheme, as executed, featured a bust of the Admiral in Roman robes, surrounded by nautical trophies including an anchor and trident, placed upon a pedestal against a flat pyramid.<sup>507</sup> A large inscription written by Fanny commemorates the Admiral's life and laments his death.

This case study has demonstrated that, as an elite naval wife, Fanny Boscawen was able to command considerable control over the aesthetic direction of both her London residence and at Hatchlands Park. Whilst her husband was absent she acted as the sole patron of the Hatchland's project, concerning herself with every architectural and aesthetic detail in order to create an elegant home as befitting their rank. Their joint commissioning of Robert Adam illustrates their fashionable taste and demonstrates that the creation of Hatchlands was a joint affair. And yet, due to Edward's frequent absences, Frances must be described as essential to the project, for without her dedicated involvement it would have been impossible to complete.

Another patroness of Robert Adam was Mrs Mary St John, *née* Schuyler (d. 1786), who commissioned and directed the building of St John's Lodge, Welwyn, while her naval husband, the Hon. Capt. Henry St John, was at sea. However, in contrast to the Boscawens, the entire commission appears to have been conducted in Mary's name, as the surviving drawings at the Soane Museum are inscribed with 'For Mrs St John'.<sup>508</sup> The fashionable villa was completed in *c.* 1778, but the St Johns only had two years to enjoy it because

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<sup>506</sup> SM, Adam volume 54/2/20 [1] and 54/2/17 [2] belong to scheme one; 54/2/25 [3], 54/2/24 [4], 54/2/28 [5] and 19/23 [6] belong to scheme two; 54/2/32 [7] and 19/5 [8] belong to scheme three; 54/2/31 [9], 19/4 [10] and 19/3 [11] belong to scheme four; 54/2/18 [12], 54/2/29 [13] and 19/2 [14] belong to scheme five.

<sup>507</sup> SM, Adam volume 19/1 [15], 'Design for a Monument for the Right Honble Admiral Boscawen', as executed, 1761.

<sup>508</sup> For example, see SM, Adam volume 45/17, [6] 'South front of a New Design For Mrs St John at Wellwyn in Hertfordshire', 1775; Adam volume 45/20 [4], 'Plan of the Principal Story of a house for Mrs St John at Wellwyn in Hertfordshire', 1775.

Captain St John met his untimely end in 1780. Arguably, therefore, Mary was not only the lead patron of St John's Lodge, but the sole patron – enabled by her husband's long absences at sea.



Fig. 33 *Design for a Monument for the Right Hon[our]able Admiral Boscawen, as executed, by Robert Adam, 1761.*

# Chapter 9

## Architecture as security

For unhappily married women their husband's houses were often oppressive and restrictive.<sup>509</sup> However, on occasion, when an independent means of income was established, women could escape the constraints of their husbands by establishing separate households, or in exceptional circumstances they could build themselves a house of their own. A famous example of this is Marble Hill House, Twickenham, built by Henrietta Howard (1689-1767), mistress to George II when Prince of Wales, between 1724 and 1729. Henrietta was married to the violent Charles Howard, later 9th Earl of Suffolk, who treated her appallingly.<sup>510</sup> In 1717 she wrote of her tortured position, stating how Howard governed her 'with Tyranny; with Cruelty, my life in Danger, then am I not free? [...] Self preservation is ye first law of Nature, are Married Women then ye only part of human nature [that] must not follow it?'.<sup>511</sup>

In 1723 the Prince presented his mistress with £11,500 of stock in trust as well as all the furniture, furnishings and jewellery in her own and her servants' rooms at Leicester House and Richmond.<sup>512</sup> The settlement stipulated that 'Charles Howard shall not have anything to doe or intermedle' with the gift and that Henrietta was to use the gift as she pleased 'as if she was sole and unmarried'.<sup>513</sup> The Prince therefore provided Henrietta with her financial freedom, finally severing the bond between herself and her tyrannical husband. This injection of capital, together with her salary as Princess Caroline's Woman of the Bedchamber, enabled Henrietta to immediately set about planning and commissioning her grand Twickenham villa.

Henrietta enlisted the help of Lord Herbert, later 9th Earl of Pembroke, to oversee Colen Campbell's initial drawings of her house, and later employed Roger Morris to assist in the building. She was passionately involved in Marble Hill's creation, and was evidently a strong advocate for Palladianism, as indicated by her subscriptions to Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1725) and William Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727).<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>509</sup> Lewis, 'When a House Is Not a Home', pp. 336–63.

<sup>510</sup> See Borman, *King's Mistress, Queen's Servant*, pp. 14–27.

<sup>511</sup> Quoted in Bryant, *Marble Hill*, p. 32.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>513</sup> Norfolk Record Office, NRS 22955, Z76, Settlement in Trust for Henrietta Howard on separation from Charles Howard, as quoted in Borman, *King's Mistress, Queen's Servant*, p. 129.

<sup>514</sup> William Kent, *Designs of Inigo Jones Consisting of Plans and Elevations for Public and Private Buildings* (London, 1727).

The completed Palladian villa was Henrietta's declaration to the world that she was free and independent, able to express herself through architecture and art. Her status as a lady of quality was solidified through her elegant house and allowed her to live a happy and fulfilling life until her death in 1767.

The case of Henrietta Howard is an unusual one, but one that demonstrates how significant independent wealth and property were to abused wives of the eighteenth century. The following case study, regarding the Countess of Pembroke (fig. 34), will now explore a less known example of female architectural patronage used as a form of security and escape. Her architectural scope was heavily constrained, being a neglected wife with limited funds, and almost no independence. Despite this fact, through her position at Court, the Countess of Pembroke managed to regain a measure of financial independence. When royal favour gave her the opportunity to live independently, it is significant that she chose to spend what little she had on remodelling her place of residence.

### **Elizabeth Herbert, Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery (1737-1831)**



**Fig. 34** *Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke and the R[ight] Hon[ourable] George, Lord Herbert*, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1771.

Elizabeth Herbert, Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery, was the long-suffering wife of the brutish 10th Earl of Pembroke and 7th Earl of Montgomery. As the daughter of Charles Spencer, 3rd Duke of Marlborough, her marriage had been a dynastic affair, linking the two noble families together in 1756. Although the Pembrokes were to have two children, George, Lord Herbert, and Lady Charlotte, their marriage was an unhappy one.

Lord Pembroke was an unpredictable and quarrelsome character, described by his son in 1784 as ‘perhaps [...] the most unaccountable of all human beings’.<sup>515</sup> He scandalised society in 1762 by eloping with the young Miss Catherine ‘Kitty’ Hunter:

What a shocking [thing] this is of Lord Pembroke and poor Kitty Hunter. I pity both families of all things. Dowager Pembroke is miserable to the last degree, Mr Hunter quite distracted, and young Lady Pembroke very unhappy, but bears it better than expected; she is with her brothers at Blenheim.<sup>516</sup>

The affair resulted in a son, Augustus Retnuh Reebkomp, whose unorthodox names reflected both Hunter and Pembroke. Lady Pembroke was universally pitied; Elizabeth Montagu described her as ‘one of the best and most beautiful women in the world’ and Adam Smith, the Scottish political economist and moral philosopher, failed to understand Lord Pembroke’s motivations: ‘You know he is remarkable for having a very Handsome Wife, a Daughter of Marlborough, whom he never us’d well’.<sup>517</sup>

Remarkably, in March 1763 the Pembrokes were reconciled and lived together once again at Wilton House, their country seat near Salisbury, and Pembroke House in London.<sup>518</sup> However, from this point onwards they lived increasingly separate lives, especially as Lord Pembroke was posted abroad for prolonged periods in the capacity as major-general during the Seven Years’ War.

Although Lord Pembroke’s absences must have been a welcome respite to his wife, when they had to share the same house, life became almost unbearable for the gentle Lady Pembroke. In an effort to escape the unpleasantness of London and her husband, Lady Pembroke constantly tried to organise small holidays, especially to Brighton, for her daughter and herself:

My Dr George,  
I have been so low & nervous of late, & my head so full of vexatious things, that I did not chuse to write to you [...].  
Here I am *still*, nothing certain yet of where I am going, tired to death of being here, if it was not for Ld William’s Lodge in the Grove in the Green Park where Charlotte & I go most days to tea, (*he*

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<sup>515</sup> Lord Herbert to Rev. William Coxe, Bath, 11 September 1784, in Lord Herbert (ed.), *The Pembroke Papers (1780-94): Letters and Diaries of Henry, Tenth Earl of Pembroke and his Circle*, vol. 2 (London, 1950). p. 260.

<sup>516</sup> Lady Fox to Lady Kildare, 1762, in FitzGerald (ed.), *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 318.

<sup>517</sup> Hon. Thomas Fitzmaurice to Adam Smith, St. Mary Hall, Oxford, 26 February 1762, in Ernest Campbell Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross (eds), *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, vol. 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 83.

<sup>518</sup> Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Arlington Street, 25 March 1763, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, vol. 10, p. 52.

being still in Scotland) we shou'd die, but makes a sort of Villa. Whether I do or not go to Brighton is still a peut être que oui, peut être que non.<sup>519</sup>

It is clear from the depressed tone of her letter that Lady Pembroke was quite desperate to be free of her husband. Her lack of agency and independence is glaringly evident as she laments her virtual imprisonment in London. This signifies that when a marriage was not convivial and equal, a wife's place within it could be a most tortuous thing, rendering her forever dependent and subordinate. In these instances, elite wives were unlikely to have any involvement in the building schemes of their husbands. Architecture, in an unequal marriage, remained the preserve of the wealthy male.

## Lady Pembroke is granted Hill Lodge in Richmond Park

In 1780, fortune finally smiled upon Lady Pembroke, as George III and Queen Charlotte kindly granted her the use of Hill Lodge in Richmond Park:

I am just now delighted with having leave to take some Lodgings at a Keeper's Lodge in Richmond Park; it is a leave they do not in general like to give, but the K. & Q. have said a thousand civil things at the same time they have given me leave. I pay for them myself but it is so cheap that I can afford it; there are rooms enough for Charlotte & I to go & lye there, for a night now & then, & often to breakfast; it is but nine miles, & just in the place I like. You know a Villa has always been my Hobby Horse.<sup>520</sup>

This property enabled her, for the first time, to live independently from her husband (fig. 35). To date, Lady Pembroke's Lodge has received virtually no academic interest, save for Ptolemy Dean's gazetteer entry in his *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate*, published eighteen years ago.<sup>521</sup> An investigation into its evolution and significance is therefore prudent.

It would seem that Lord Pembroke, although not vocal in his objections, certainly resented his wife's good fortune and sought to intimidate her: 'He [Lord Pembroke] has been all round the Park wall backwards & forwards but has never enter'd it'.<sup>522</sup> Determined not to be bullied, Lady Pembroke immediately set about improving the landscape around the Lodge:

This day I have been all day on my feet 'till I can hardly stand, staking out where pales are to be put up to inclose ground of each side of me, for which I have leave with my own money, so I shall be quite in rags soon, as I cannot possibly buy any more gowns.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> Lady Pembroke to Lord Herbert, London, 31 August 1779, in Lord Herbert (ed.), *The Pembroke Papers (1734-80): Letters and Diaries of Henry, Tenth Earl of Pembroke and his Circle*, vol. 1 (London: J. Cape, 1942), pp. 234-35.

<sup>520</sup> Lady Pembroke to Lord Herbert, April 1780, in Lord Herbert (ed.), *The Pembroke Papers*, vol. 1, p. 464.

<sup>521</sup> Ptolemy Dean, *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 178-79.

<sup>522</sup> Lady Pembroke to Lord Herbert, Richmond Park, 21 August 1780, in Lord Herbert (ed.), *The Pembroke Papers*, vol. 2, p. 34.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

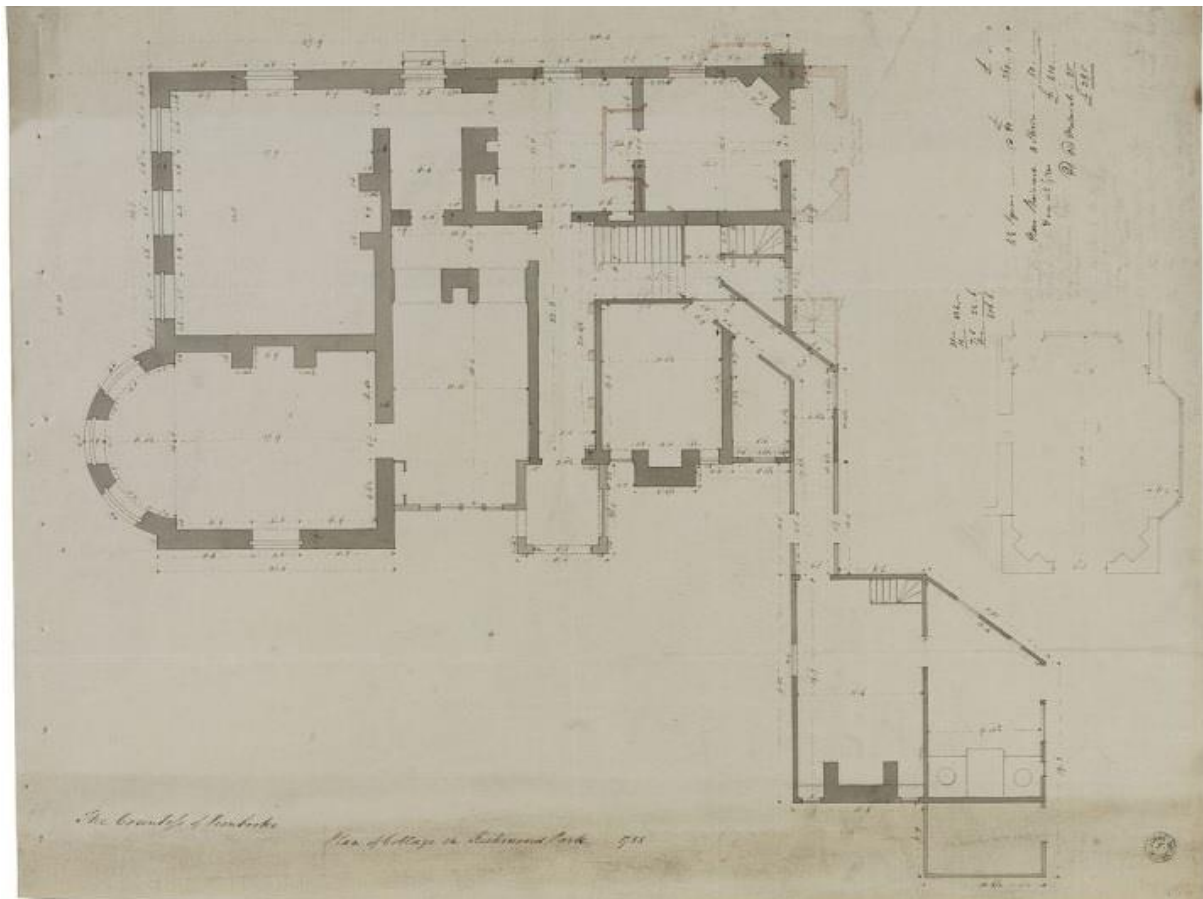


Fig. 35 Survey of Pembroke Lodge before alterations, Soane Office hand, 1788.

## Lady Pembroke commissions Sir John Soane to improve the Lodge

In 1783, Lady Pembroke was made a Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, a position that she held until the Queen's death in 1818. This position not only provided her with a salary but also further protected her from her husband. Moreover, her close proximity to the Royal Family enabled her to request permission to modify the old Lodge, which was granted in 1785:

My dear Lady Pembroke,  
 In order to convince you that I did not forget your commission I have the pleasure to acquaint you that the King not only grants your request, but does leave it to your judgement where abouts to place your Stables, being convinced of your good taste not to put it in any place where it can prove an Eye sore.<sup>524</sup>

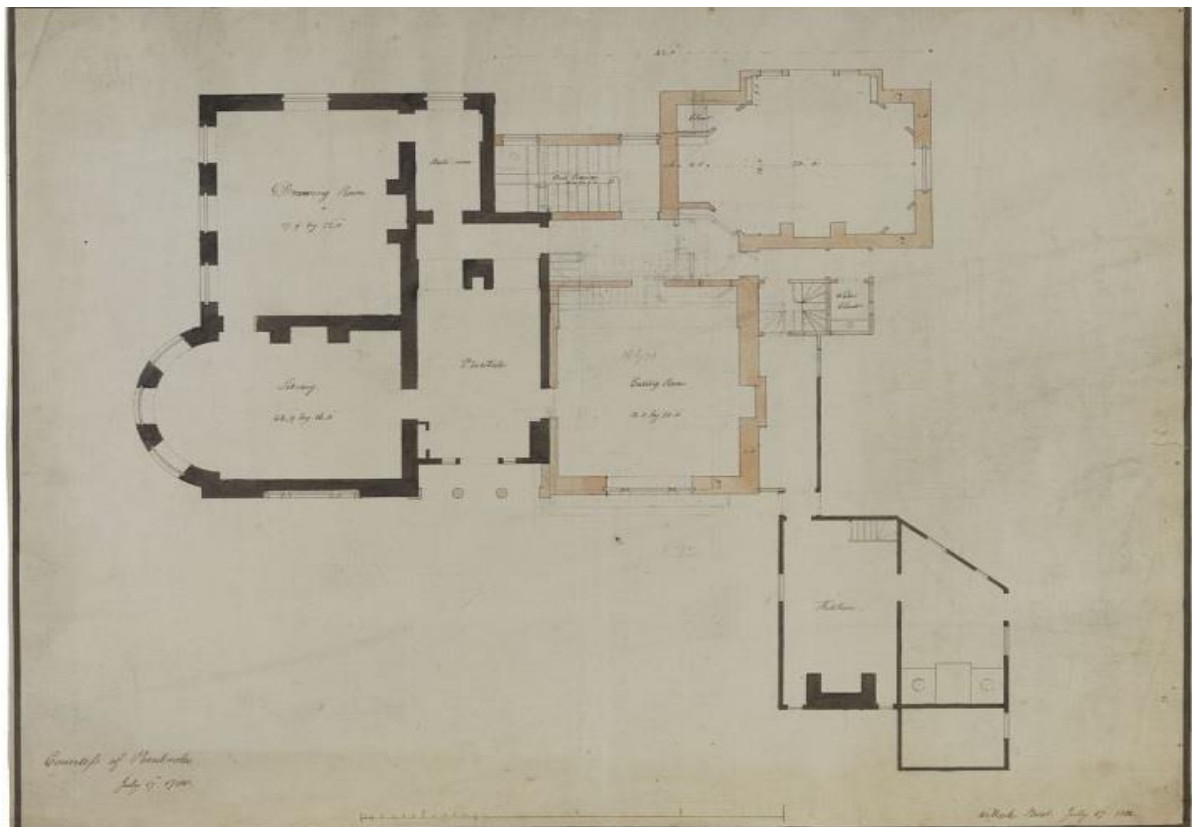
The fact that the design and location of the stables were left to Lady Pembroke's discretion is indicative of the trust and affection that the King and Queen had for her. In May 1785 she commissioned John Soane

<sup>524</sup> Queen Charlotte to Lady Pembroke, Queen's House, 26 March 1785, in Lord Herbert (ed.), *The Pembroke Papers*, vol. 2, p. 269.



to design the stable block, of which a drawing survives, attributed to Soane's pupil, John Sanders.<sup>525</sup> The design is of a compact brick structure complete with 'Hayloft, Granary, Grooms Chambers [on first floor], Stables, Coachhouses, Saddle & Harness Rooms'.<sup>526</sup> It is unknown whether this design was executed, but the following year Soane was again employed by Lady Pembroke to design a screened fireplace for the anteroom adjoining the entrance passage.<sup>527</sup>

The piecemeal fashion of Lady Pembroke's commissions suggests that she was financially constrained. However, she was clearly pleased with Soane's work because in 1787 he was commissioned by Dr William Coxe to design alterations for Bemerton Rectory, Salisbury. Coxe was intimately acquainted with the Pembrokes, as he had been selected as a travelling companion and tutor for their son, Lord Herbert, during his Continental travels 1775-80.<sup>528</sup> Lady Pembroke is likely to have promoted Soane's services to Coxe, thus illustrating the power a patroness could wield in the eighteenth century.



**Fig. 36 Presentation drawing, showing proposed design for alterations and additions to the north-west, attributed to John Sanders (Soane's pupil), 1788.**

<sup>525</sup> SM, (1) volume 41/54, Copy a presentation drawing for a stables and coach house, May 1785.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> SM (2) volume 41/79v, 7 July 1786, Design for a (?) stove, 7 July 1786.

<sup>528</sup> Coxe published details of some of his travels in William Coxe, *Travels in Switzerland and in the Country of the Grisons: In a Series of Letters to William Melmoth, esq. from William Coxe*, 1st edn, 3 vols (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1789).

## Further remodelling of Pembroke Lodge in 1788

Despite Lady Pembroke's financial limitations, in 1788 she decided to embark upon a major building scheme to construct a new west wing. Principally, this was to include a new drawing room, as demonstrated in a surviving plan of the ground floor and accompanying proposals of the interior (figs 36 and 37).<sup>529</sup> This plan, together with another entitled 'Plans and Elevations of Cottage at Richmond Park as it now is', provides an accurate representation of the size of the existing Lodge (fig. 35).<sup>530</sup> It indicates that the Lodge consisted of only two large principal rooms, one on the south front with a bow window, the other adjoining in the south west corner.<sup>531</sup> The rest of the cottage contained an irregular assortment of six small rooms, with the kitchen wing located in a separate block to the north east, connected by a small passage.

The new drawing room on the north-west front was polygonal in design and features unusual covered alcoves in each corner (fig. 37). Two presentation drawings of the new drawing room illustrate the proposed decorative finishing, which feature a wallpaper design that seemingly resembles the wire of an aviary, complete with winding vines that reach up to the ceiling.<sup>532</sup> This unusual interior design is likely to have been influenced by the Picnic Room (c. 1771) in Queen Charlotte's rustic cottage at Kew, which featured intertwining convolvulus and nasturtiums on the walls, ceiling and door mouldings.<sup>533</sup>

By embarking upon a larger building scheme, Lady Pembroke sought to create a more regular, harmonious plan form. A later drawing dated 17 July 1788 demonstrates how Soane proposed to remodel the house (fig. 36).<sup>534</sup> He sought to replace the middle of rooms in the east front with a large 'Eating Room' and by moving the main entrance slightly so that it opened straight into a large 'Vestibule'. This also created a symmetrical east front, by placing the entrance behind a portico in antis, with flanking Venetian windows, one to light the new 'Eating room', the other one being blind.

This proposed work was estimated at £800, which according to Soane, 'was considerably more than she wished'.<sup>535</sup> A later estimate of £500 and Soane's proposals to include three additional bedchambers above the new wing were also rejected.<sup>536</sup> This suggests that, although enthusiastic about remodelling her property, Lady Pembroke would not be reckless in her spending. Thus, according to a survey drawing completed in 1792, it is apparent that in the end, the north-west wing was the only major addition accepted by Lady

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<sup>529</sup> SM, (3) 29/3/5, 'The Countess of Pembroke, Plan of Cottage in Richmond Park', 1788; (8) 29/3/1 and (9) 29/3/2, Presentation drawings for finishings to the new drawing room, c. 1788.

<sup>530</sup> SM, (4) 29/3/6, 'The Countess of Pembroke, Plans and Elevations of Cottage at Richmond Park as it now is, Richmond Park', 6 April 1788.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> SM, (8) 29/3/1 and (9) 29/3/2, Presentation drawings for finishings to the new drawing room, 1788.

<sup>533</sup> Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: Harvill with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1998), p. 78.

<sup>534</sup> SM, (5) 29/3/8v, Presentation drawing, showing proposed design for alterations and additions to the north, 17 July 1788.

<sup>535</sup> SM, Journal No 1, 18 July 1788, p. 63.

<sup>536</sup> SM, (6) 29/3/8, 'Bedchamber Floor', 23 July 1788,

Pembroke.<sup>537</sup> However, she must have approved some works to be carried out on the first floor, because she accepted Soane's designs for a pair of corner bedchamber chimneypieces in December 1788.<sup>538</sup> In 1792, Lady Pembroke again commissioned Soane to design a new office block to include the kitchen, servants' hall and associated rooms.<sup>539</sup>

To conclude, Pembroke Lodge was a representation of Lady Pembroke's emancipation from her husband. She was able to use architecture to create her perfect sanctuary, separate from her husband, while also maintaining her respectability and dignity.



**Fig. 37 Presentation drawing showing proposed interior decoration for the drawing room, Soane Office hand, c. 1788.**

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<sup>537</sup> SM, (13) 29/3/10, 'The Countess of Pembroke, Plan of the Ground Floor', 9 December 1793.

<sup>538</sup> SM, (7) 81/2/49, 'Countess of Pembroke, Richmond Chimney pieces for 2 angle chimneys, one pair', 1788.

<sup>539</sup> SM, (12) 29/3/7, 'The Countess of Pembroke, Plan of the proposed Additions to Offices at Richmond Park, July 1792.

# Chapter 10

## Disgraced wives coping with social banishment through architectural patronage

### Henrietta Knight, Baroness Luxborough (1699-1756)

Lady Luxborough represents a highly unusual case of a woman who possessed complete architectural autonomy, whilst also being completely financially dependent. In her place of exile, she was free to undertake whatever architectural modifications she saw fit, but her ambitions had to be curtailed by her limited means. Her architectural scope was therefore constrained to those undertakings for which she had sufficient funds, such as minor remodelling and re-landscaping.

Lady Luxborough was the only daughter of Henry, first Viscount St John, and his second wife, Angelica Magdalene Pellisary.<sup>540</sup> Soon after her marriage in 1727 to Robert Knight, created Baron Luxborough in 1745 and Viscount Barrells and Earl of Catherlough in 1763, she was suspected of having an affair with her London physician, Dr Charles Peters.<sup>541</sup> Then in the mid-1730s she was again accused by her jealous husband of having an affair with John Dalton, a tutor in the household of her friend Frances Seymour, Countess of Hertford. As Horace Walpole later remarked, ‘Lady Loughborough, a high-coloured lusty black woman, was parted from her husband upon a gallantry she had with Dalton’.<sup>542</sup> Her husband’s apparent evidence of her adultery was a series of romantic letters from her to Dalton, which she claimed were simply ‘a silly but Platonick passion’.<sup>543</sup> Although she begged for forgiveness, asking him to punish her in any way he pleased except banishment from his house, which she claimed would ‘be the death of yr unfortunate wife’, he remained unmoved and exiled her to the country for the rest of her life.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>540</sup> For a biography, see Jane Brown, *My Darling Heriott: Henrietta Luxborough, Poetic Gardener and Irrepressible Exile* (London: HarperPress, 2006).

<sup>541</sup> ODNB online, ‘Knight, ‘Henrietta, Lady Luxborough (1699–1756)’.

<sup>542</sup> Horace Walpole to Mary Berry, Strawberry Hill, 4 September 1789, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, vol. 11, p. 65.

<sup>543</sup> BL, Knight Papers, Add. MS 45889 ff. 9-10, Henrietta Knight to Robert Knight Jr., n.d.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

## Banishment to Barrells Court, Warwickshire

Lady Luxborough (fig. 38) was thus publicly disgraced and forced to remove to Barrells Court, an old, run-down estate in Warwickshire. Her half-brother, Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, and her husband, agreed that she should live upon a meagre £500 per year, and that Knight would no longer be liable for any debts that she might accrue.<sup>545</sup> Stephen Bending states that her new geographical location ‘confirmed Henrietta Knight’s status as a woman in disgrace’ which ‘would insist on her shame’.<sup>546</sup> Parallels can therefore be easily drawn between Lady Luxborough’s forced retirement and Lady Sarah Bunbury’s at Goodwood, which will be considered later. It would seem that once a woman strayed from the path of social propriety and fidelity, society demanded a lengthy and public display of penitence and contrition in forced seclusion. In both cases, neither woman was able to repair their reputations sufficiently to ever fully participate in the fashionable world again.



**Fig. 38** *Henrietta, Lady Luxborough*, by John Scott, 1807.

<sup>545</sup> Stephen Bending, *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 212.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

At the age of thirty-four, Lady Luxborough's social life was thus irrevocably over; she was banned from London and Bath and prohibited from ever seeing her children again. Forced to live in a property that was so derelict that it 'had not half the windows up, no doors to the house, and the roof uncovered', her future looked bleak.<sup>547</sup> Consequently, in an attempt to reconcile herself to her fate and in a desperate attempt to distract herself from her misery, Lady Luxborough embarked on the 'wholesale remodelling of the house and gardens at Barrells'.<sup>548</sup> During her twenty-year tenure, Lady Luxborough, 'being a person of great taste and judgement, made many improvements', which included numerous alterations and additions to the garden.<sup>549</sup>

## **An intellectual interest in architecture and the improvement of Barrells**

Lady Luxborough had a demonstrable intellectual interest in architecture, because in 1748 when writing to her neighbour and poet William Shenstone, she welcomed him to borrow her copy of 'Inigo Jones's designs, as long as they can be of service to you'.<sup>550</sup> She was evidently referring to Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones* (1727), furthermore in 1749, she was in turn lent a copy of 'Gibb's book', which most likely referred to James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture* (1728).<sup>551</sup> She claimed that she would take care of the book, 'but never yet could admire his taste in Architecture [...] His building at Cambridge I have seen, but never could like'.<sup>552</sup> Her interest in these books indicates that she not only used them for inspiration but also as a means of furthering her knowledge of the latest architectural trends.

Her correspondence with Shenstone also suggests that she took an intimate interest into every detail of an architectural feature, for example:

I beg the favour of you to send me the height and thickness of your wall that has arches sunk in it, and the depth, breadth, and height of those arches; and let me know whether they are plastered on the inside, and if any ornament is on the top, or only a coping: it is to build in summer a bit of a wall (as you advised) to screen me from that cottage that is contiguous to my garden.<sup>553</sup>

This dedication to detail also manifested in her insisting on the correct implementation of symmetry and proportion:

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<sup>547</sup> Helen Sard Hughes, *The Gentle Hertford: Her Life and Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 145.

<sup>548</sup> Bending, *Green Retreats*, p. 220.

<sup>549</sup> John Hannett, *The Forest of Arden, Its Towns, Villages, and Hamlets: A Topographical and Historical Account of the District Between and Around Henley-in-Arden and Hampton-in-Arden in the County of Warwick* (London: Simkin, Marshall, and J. Russell Smith, 1863), p. 102.

<sup>550</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, Easter Sunday 1748, in Lady Luxborough, *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough, to William Shenstone, Esq* (Dublin: Printed for Caler Jenkins, 1776), p. 15.

<sup>551</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 8 November 1749, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 140

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>553</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, Easter Sunday 1748, in Luxborough, *Letters* p. 15.

The chimney in my study was not exactly in the middle of the room; which has occasioned my moving it twelve inches, and consequently moving Pope's bust to be in the centre.<sup>554</sup>

Lady Luxborough was evidently conscious of the latest Classical fashions in architecture, and that even with her constrained budget, she wanted to display her well-informed taste. When Shenstone suggested an elaborate ornamentation for over her chimneypiece, Lady Luxborough claimed that her 'forced economy forbids my following it: besides that good carving is too fine for my humble roof'.<sup>555</sup> She further wrote that her room was 'only hung with sixpenny paper' and was so low that there was no space for a grand ornament or architrave. However, in order to economise and achieve a fashionable aesthetic, she decided to employ 'my friend Williams (in New-Street, Birmingham) to paint the ornaments you would have had carved, in stone colours, pretty strongly shaded to appear to rise like carvings'.<sup>556</sup>

The advice provided by Shenstone was clearly valuable to Lady Luxborough, but Shenstone was by no means considered her superior in matters relating to architecture, as may be imagined. In fact, their exchange of knowledge was a mutual affair, she offered advice as often as he provided it. In December 1748, when Shenstone was considering a series of improvements to his country seat, The Leasowes, he sent Lady Luxborough descriptions and sketches of his proposals. In turn she commended him on his project, stating that, 'The room you describe, is of a good dimension, as well as elegant: the library will be the same, and will be a lasting pleasure to you', but when considering Shenstone's various designs for an ornamental garden building she was more forthright in her opinion:

You say nothing of the Sketches, so that I do not know which you have fixed upon: I think those I have marked with 2 and 3, are too common a shape, and would do better in a church than a grove; that you have wrote the inscription upon, is a better shape in my eye; but I think the top-ornament not very pretty, though better than the flame in the second. The garland of flowers mends the shape of the third: but I imagine you have fixed on the first, and think it will be very handsome. I do not think the pipe, &c. on the fourth would be ugly if hung by a ribband to the knot which joins the foliage; but I do not so well like the base of the urn.<sup>557</sup>

This passage illustrates Lady Luxborough's enjoyment in experimenting with ornamental composition, as well as her competence in providing sound advice. Surprisingly, however, when it came to the practical onsite management of workmen, she appeared to have a distinct lack of confidence:

I cannot venture to put up my pavilion this summer, unless you extend your kindness so far as to come over in the warm season for a few days, to instruct me and my workmen; for I am persuaded they will err, though Mr. Hands the Joiner will perform his part well, in laying out the ground as he has done in the woodwork; but the Masons I shall never manage, nor be able to instruct.<sup>558</sup>

Considering how assertive Lady Luxborough was in her letters regarding design, her willingness to relinquish managerial control to her friend is incongruous. It is possible that she genuinely did not know how to direct

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<sup>554</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, Easter Sunday, 1748, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 16.

<sup>555</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 28 April 1748, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 22.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>557</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 18 December 1748, in Luxborough, *Letters*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>558</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 23 March 1749, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 91.

the stone-masons, or perhaps she was conforming to the social norm of male leadership/dominance. However, this instance seems to be an isolated case because, on the whole, Lady Luxborough's correspondence suggests that she was invariably the only one taking the active lead in the direction of her projects. She was constantly occupied with staking out ground for new paths, walks, trees and groves, and beautified her picturesque vistas with carefully placed ornaments, such as an obelisk, a piping fawn,<sup>559</sup> and a highly-decorated urn.<sup>560</sup> Moreover, she regularly commissioned new buildings to enhance her fifty-acre garden including a summer house,<sup>561</sup> a pedimented pavilion,<sup>562</sup> and a thatched hermitage.<sup>563</sup> She took landscaping seriously, and in doing so also created a bowling green and a HaHa.<sup>564</sup>

Lady Luxborough's obsession with the pastoral, and with creating the perfect garden, was not only a distraction during her banishment, but also a method to repair her dire social status. The remodelling of Barrells enticed the fashionable world to visit her and her garden. In June 1749 she reported to Shenstone that 'the court has been honoured with Mrs. Kendall's coach and six, which found room sufficient', suggesting that she was at last deemed fit by society to visit.<sup>565</sup> However, although visitors approved of her house and garden, Bending argues, that Lady Luxborough's notoriety continued, because regardless of her design efforts, 'her landscape signal[ed] a place of retired disgrace, or worse, a bodying forth of the unrepentant epicure'.<sup>566</sup> Thus, society remained forever wary of Lady Luxborough, and despite her years of penitence, she was still regarded as a woman of questionable character.

## Lady Sarah Bunbury (1745-1826)

Lady Sarah Bunbury, *née* Lennox, was the one of the younger daughters of Charles Lennox, 2nd Duke of Richmond and Sarah Cadogan. Following the deaths of her parents, she was raised in Ireland by her elder sister, Emily FitzGerald, Countess of Kildare and later Duchess of Leinster, until the age of thirteen, whereupon she moved to London to live with her other sister, Caroline Fox, Baroness Holland. She was a reputed beauty, attracting the praise of Horace Walpole when he saw her act in a play at Holland House in 1761: 'Lady Sarah was more beautiful than you can conceive [...] When [she] was in white with her hair about her ears and on the ground, no Magdalen by Correggio was half so lovely and expressive'.<sup>567</sup>

Lady Sarah (fig. 39) was married the following year to Charles Bunbury, eldest son of Reverend Sir William Bunbury, 5th Baronet, of Barton and Mildenhall, Suffolk. Bunbury was a handsome and popular man, so

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<sup>559</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 8 September 1749, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 121.

<sup>560</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 25 February 1750, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 191.

<sup>561</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 4 January 1749, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 79.

<sup>562</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 4 June 1749, in Luxborough, *Letters*, pp. 97-98

<sup>563</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 27 May 1751, in Luxborough, *Letters*, p. 264.

<sup>564</sup> Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Barrells, 4 June 1749, in Luxborough, *Letters*, pp. 97-98

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>566</sup> Bending, *Green Retreats*, p. 229.

<sup>567</sup> Horace Walpole to Montagu, Arlington Street, 22 January 1761, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 9, p. 335.



the outlook looked bright. Lady Sarah approved of Barton Hall, her new home, 'I like this place vastly [...] they let me go on my own way here, & when once I do that, I am very comfortable'.<sup>568</sup> This promising start was not to last, however, especially when Bunbury's love for his horses took precedence over his fashionable wife.<sup>569</sup>



**Fig. 39** *Lady Sarah Bunbury*, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1838.

<sup>568</sup> Lady Sarah Bunbury to Lady Susan Fox Strangways, Barton, 10 June 1762, in the Countess of Ilchester and Lord Stavordale (eds), *The life and letters of Lady Sarah Lennox, 1745-1826*, 2nd edn, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1902), p. 121.

<sup>569</sup> Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 197.

## Lady Sarah elopes with Lord William Gordon: ‘She had thrown off all regard to decency’

In 1769, Lady Sarah scandalised society by absconding with her lover, Lord William Gordon, son of the 3rd Duke of Gordon, to Scotland.<sup>570</sup> Lady Mary Coke recorded the shocking incident in her diary:

Went to Princess Amelia’s Drawing room, which was very numerous. Ly Charlotte Finch told me there was a bad piece of news, & she fear’d it was true that Lady Sarah Bunbury was gone with Lord William Gordon, that she had desired Lady Louisa Conolly [her sister] to take care of the Child she lately lay in of which ‘tis supposed Ld William is father to & has left a letter for her husband, Sir Charles Bunbury & for Lady Holland [her eldest sister]. Tho’ I never thought Lady Sarah to be a Lady of the best conduct, I was much concern’d She had thrown off all regard to decency.<sup>571</sup>

The child, although called Louisa Bunbury, was actually the daughter of Lady Sarah and Gordon. Bunbury immediately sought a judicial separation in Doctors’ Commons, which was granted on 17 June 1769, and declared that:

Lady Sarah Bunbury, being of loose and abandoned disposition, and, being wholly unmindful of her conjugal vow, &c. did contract and carry on a lewd and adulterous conversation with [...] Lord William Gordon, and they had frequently carnal knowledge of each other.<sup>572</sup>

Thus, Lady Sarah’s reputation was utterly ruined. Her family arranged to protect her if she renounced Gordon and moved to live quietly and penitently on the Goodwood estate, the home of her brother, the 3rd Duke of Richmond. Lady Sarah eventually agreed and by December 1769 she was quietly installed in the small and lonely manor house of Halnaker, on the Goodwood estate, with her daughter, maid and a nurse.<sup>573</sup> Her new residence was a marked departure from the grandeur to which she had been accustomed. Halnaker, more akin to a cottage than a house, was outdated, ill-decorated and sparsely furnished – a visible representation of her reduced status.<sup>574</sup> This imposed social exile was to be Lady Sarah’s fate for the next twelve long years. Completely ostracised from society, even when the Duke entertained at Goodwood, Lady Sarah was obliged to remain out of sight.

## Assisting in the architectural direction of Frescati House, Black Rock, Dublin

It was not until 1774, following the completion of her formal divorce from Bunbury and a reversion to her maiden name, that Lady Sarah’s obscurity lessened a little.<sup>575</sup> Her family allowed her to leave Goodwood,

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<sup>570</sup> For a detailed account of the affair, see Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994), pp. 263-88.

<sup>571</sup> Diary of Lady Mary Coke for July 1768, in J. A. Home (ed.) *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1889), p. 495.

<sup>572</sup> Full details of the case are reported in Anon., *Trials for Adultery: or the History of Divorces Being Select Trials at Doctor’s Commons, for Adultery, Fornication, Cruelty, Impotence, etc.*, 7 vols, vol. 1 (London: Printed for S. Bladon, 1779-1781).

<sup>573</sup> Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, p. 288.

<sup>574</sup> Greig, *Beau Monde*, p. 199.

<sup>575</sup> Greig, *Beau Monde*, p. 200.

but generally only to attend family gatherings at Holland House, Castletown House and Carton House. In 1775 she took an extended trip to Ireland to stay with her sister Lady Louisa Conolly at Castletown House, Co. Kildare. Together they directed, and to some extent designed, the remodelling of their elder sister's (Emily FitzGerald, Dowager Duchess of Leinster) house at Black Rock, Dublin.<sup>576</sup> The Dowager Duchess had recently caused a minor sensation of her own by marrying William Ogilvie, the tutor of her children, in 1774. In an attempt to escape the ridicule of society, she, Ogilvie and ten of her youngest children moved to the Continent for a number of years. From there she relied heavily upon the competence and creative direction of her younger sisters in propelling the Black Rock project to its completion.

Lady Sarah took particular pains in fulfilling her duty as her sister's deputy. She had long been an enthusiast of architectural designs and plans, and took delight in drawing plans of her own, as evidenced by an earlier letter dated 1766:

I long to hear of your house being begun, I beg you will sent me the plan of it for I must have it; in the 1st place, I long to know the house you live in, 2ndly, I love plans of all things in the world, & Louisa & I divert ourselves with drawing some for small houses, villas, or for anybody that wants a house.<sup>577</sup>

Thus, given such earlier enthusiasm, it is of little surprise that Lady Sarah grasped the opportunity of directing the improvements at Black Rock. Her lengthy and incredibly detailed letters on the subject suggest that she threw herself into the project wholeheartedly, perhaps because it provided her with a clear sense of purpose and fulfilment.<sup>578</sup> In one such letter, Lady Sarah took the trouble to draw up a plan (since lost) for each floor, label each room with a number and include an accompanying explanation about how each room should be remodelled/reformed.<sup>579</sup> For the basement she suggested the following:

In the base floor, No. 1 was servants' hall, and I want it for a beer cellar. No. 2 is [the] steward's room. Nos 4, 5, [and] 6 are nothing, and I would make an arch in the wall between 5 and 6, fill up the wall to the passage, and let the men lie there. And No. 9 should have the passage 10 thrown into it, and be the servants' hall. And there would be no harm in its being a passage, nor in having it under the dining-room, as the broiled bones, the toasted cheese and all the riot that goes on at supper would not disturb you there, as it would be under your sitting-room. No. 8 is meant for the butler to lock up plate, but, as he has plenty of room in Nos 11 and 12, I think you might give that place to the footmen for another bedchamber, or take them a narrow strip off the No. 9, which is rather too big.<sup>580</sup>

Her description ran on to discuss the various possible arrangements for the housekeeper's room, the maid's room, steward's room and cellars. Her attention then turned to the arrangement of the first floor, where

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<sup>576</sup> Little information survives of Frescati House, since demolished, except for a basic and unreferenced account in Richard Watchorn, 'Frescati', *Dublin Historical Record*, vol. 56, no. 2 (2003), pp. 161-69.

<sup>577</sup> Lady Sarah Bunbury to Lady Susan O'Brien, Barton, 6 November 1766 in Ilchester and Stavordale (eds), *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, vol. 1, p. 204.

<sup>578</sup> For example, see Lady Sarah Bunbury to Emily, Duchess of Leinster, Castletown, 10 September 1775, in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence*, vol. 2, pp. 147-57.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

she chastised her sister by remarking on the arrangement of a bedchamber and dressing room: ‘how could you, dear sister, put two vile closets to shorten the dressing room, and have a door opening on the chimney in the bedroom, when you must know that at Stoke it is the only fault of the room, that one is frozen by the fireside?’.<sup>581</sup> She further argued that the excessive number of doors proposed for the floor needed rethinking, remarking that ‘the article of doors will be so immense’ considering that ‘at present you have at a moderate computation of sixty-five in all’.<sup>582</sup> Her practical and useful advice extended to the decorative scheme of the principal rooms, where she included a number of designs (since lost) by both herself and Owens (architect or surveyor) for ceilings, cornices, as well as the approximate pricing:

1.	Mr Owens’ design for the drawing-room, cornice	£40
2.	Ceiling in stucco	£70
3.	Design for the dining-room	---
4.	Design for the book room	---
	Total of the three rooms, exclusive of chimneys	£300
5.	A rough sketch of mine for fitting up the drawing-room ceiling in stucco about	£10
	Painting of it by Ryley at ten guineas per month	£30
	Cornice (like the dining-room cornice) and painted frieze about	£20
	Painting by Ryley over the chimney, glasses and door	£10
	Carved and gilt oak leaf border done here at two shillings per foot	£40
	220 feet of fluted finishing at one shilling per foot	£11
	70 yards of damask	£40
	Chimney-piece about	£30
	Sundries	<u>£9</u>
		<u>£200</u>
6.	Design for the slightest painting possible in the dining-room. Ryley may do it the summer six months completely	£60
7.	Design for a ceiling to suit it, if in stucco, cornice and all	£50
	If it can be painted on paper and stuck up, £10.	
	Price of doors, finishings and chimney-piece you must fix on.	
8.	A design of mine for a painted ceiling for the drawing-room	£70
9.	Lord Clanbrassil’s ceiling - above	£200
10.	Design for the painting of the circular room. Stucco work of it	£20. <sup>583</sup>

This list was accompanied with detailed suggestions about every decorative detail, which is demonstrative of Lady Sarah’s enthusiasm and competence for architectural schemes:

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<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., pp. 151-52.

Ryley cannot paint *on* the ceiling, therefore you cannot have the least scarp of his painting done any way but on paper or canvas, which is pasted up. And as any large piece with a white ground and ornaments painted on it would show the joining of the paper and be difficult to fasten up unless it fits into some moulding, I have endeavoured to draw such ceilings as have compartments and yet slight mouldings, as the stucco work is very expensive when added to the painting [...] Therefore I have concluded you will have such ceilings as suit Ryley's work best.<sup>584</sup>

The 'Ryley' referred to was Charles Reuben Riley (c. 1752-1798), a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was responsible for the decoration of the long gallery at Castletown for Lady Louisa Connolly, as well as various commissions at Goodwood.<sup>585</sup> Lady Sarah went on to suggest that the seven ceiling compartments should be filled with 'light Herculean figures' and the four corners 'with pretty ornaments'.<sup>586</sup> Lady Sarah had a competent grasp of the various decorative options available to her sister, which illustrates that she was confident of her own taste. For example, although Owens had already proposed a decorative scheme for the drawing room (which Lady Sarah described as 'common, handsome, plain Italian finishing'), she was self-assured enough to propose a scheme of her own:

My designs are more uncommon, more showy, and secure your not adding to them, for you cannot put pictures, or alter them at all; and the expense will, I believe, not exceed Mr Owens' by a hundred pounds. But then you may grow tired of a fancy finishing; so be very sure you will like it for ten or fifteen years at least; for by that time it will be dirty and old fashioned. In order to lessen expense as much as possible, I would advise you to paint your dining-room green, to put up what pictures you have with what frames you have, and get the rest made and gilt in Paris.<sup>587</sup>

Ever conscious of the proposed expense for her sister, Lady Sarah suggested a list of 'schemes' that her sister could use to economise. She suggested that if the oak leaf border was too expensive at £40 then the Duchess could 'get a foot of it carved and gilt in Marseilles; and as French gold is better and cheaper [...] [she] will get it done for half the money'.<sup>588</sup> She further suggested that 'instead of damask of fourteen shillings per yard, you may in France buy some French grey, green or white damask, satin, Indian taffeta or lutestring (or perhaps velvet), that will come cheaper; and as seventy yards is a small quantity, it can be smuggled over by Mr Power from Bourdeaux'.<sup>589</sup>

## Molecomb House, Goodwood

In March 1777, after eight years of penitence, Lady Sarah was delighted to report that 'I am going to have a house at last'.<sup>590</sup> Her brother, the Duke, agreed to build one for her on the Goodwood estate, at the location

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<sup>584</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>585</sup> Seán P. Popplewell, 'Domestic Decorative Painting in Ireland: 1720 to 1820', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, vol. 68, no. 269/270 (1979), pp. 52-53.

<sup>586</sup> Lady Sarah Bunbury to Emily, Duchess of Leinster, Castletown, 10 September 1775, in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 154.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Lady Sarah Lennox to Emily, Duchess of Leinster, Goodwood, 5 March 1777, in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 215.

of her choosing. The task of finding the best spot was difficult, reported Lady Sarah, because: 'It's like matrimony – if I choose wrong I shall repent it all my life. So that I do assure you, seriously speaking, I am not able to sleep or think of anything else'.<sup>591</sup>

Lady Sarah's passion for architecture was heightened throughout this project, as she was finally creating a home of her own, to suit her *own* inclination. Nonetheless, due to her diminished funds, economy was essential:

You cannot imagine how pretty my house is, I hope to get into it next summer, & have laid out occupation for myself for many years, as I am determined to furnish it by slow degrees, for the sake of my pocket as well as my amusement [...] I am only afraid I shall ruin myself in furnishing it, for nothing *ugly* should be put into so pretty a house, & to split the difference I mean to have everything *plain*, which is never *ugly* nor *dear*.<sup>592</sup>

By March 1780, Lady Sarah's careful direction ensured that she was at last able to move in to her new house, 'I am now up to the ears in blankets, beds, curtains, grates, fenders, chairs, tables, etc. etc., & I wonder I did not inform you that the price of blankets is fallen because of the American War'.<sup>593</sup> There, she was able to live very comfortably, economically and elegantly, though remaining in relative seclusion. Lady Sarah's control over architecture, both at her sister's house and her own, had provided her with a sense of purpose and usefulness during the long years of social obscurity. Upon the completion of Molecomb House, Lady Sarah was finally able to live independently and respectably.

Lady Sarah's involvement with architecture was both opportunistic and vicarious. She did not always have the opportunity, independence or finances to make her own mark, and so, during her periods of exile, was constrained to exercising her architectural creativity through her sister's project. Furthermore, she was delighted about the prospect of moving in to her own house at Molecomb, and contributed to its design wherever she was able. Lady Sarah represents a case in which the scope of a woman's architectural opportunity could fluctuate over time, despite an indisputable passion for architecture.

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Lady Sarah Lennox to Lady Susan O'Brien, 9 Aug 1778, in Ilchester and Stavordale (eds), *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, vol. 1, p. 273.

<sup>593</sup> Lady Sarah Lennox to Lady Susan O'Brien, 5 March 1780, in Ilchester and Stavordale (eds), *The Life and Letters of Lady Sarah Lennox*, vol. 1, p. 307.

# Part 3

## Widowed Women

# Chapter 11

## Widows challenging the architectural boundaries within socially accepted circumstances

### Vacating the marital home

In the eighteenth century, it was customary for a widow to vacate the marital home to allow her son or heir to assume his position as the head of the family. As the marital home was often the patriarchal ancestral seat, this move was often seen as essential in allowing the heir to fully embrace his responsibilities. This was not always an easy evolution, and some widows found it difficult to leave the home that they had lived in and managed for years. Such was the case at Wivenhoe Park, Essex, where the strong-willed mother of Isaac Martin Rebow, proved difficult to remove upon his marriage to his cousin Mary Martin in c. 1775. His mother, also named Mary Martin, had enjoyed being the undisputed mistress for forty-six years and was in no hurry to relinquish power to her daughter-in-law.<sup>594</sup> Such was her influence, that her son's engagement dragged on for seven years, during which time she refused to move until her new residence was refurbished to her exacting standards.

### Dower houses

Although Mary Martin dragged her feet when relocating to her dower house, she still embraced the challenge of remodelling it to suit her tastes. Considering the importance of dower houses in eighteenth-century society, it is perhaps surprising that their architectural histories have received such limited scholarly attention. Dower houses, or the houses reserved for widows, could vary drastically in size, condition, age and repair. These houses were often the neglected or rarely used properties on the ancestral estate and as such, were not always given to the widow in a respectable state.

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<sup>594</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 94-95.



In general, dower houses represented a fantastic opportunity for a woman to engage with architecture. In the remodelling of a dower house to suit a new occupant's needs and tastes, the prospective inhabitant had the opportunity to exercise complete control over every facet of the architectural process, if they were so inclined. The architectural scope ranged from repairs and maintenance in the case of Susanna, Dowager Countess of Eglinton, through to the complete remodelling of every aspect of the dower house in the cases of Georgiana Spencer, Countess Spencer, and Elizabeth, Dowager Duchess of Beaufort. These will now be discussed in turn.

## Susanna Montgomery, Countess of Eglinton (1690-1780)

When Susanna, Dowager Countess of Eglinton, moved into Kilmaurs Place, East Ayrshire, her dower house, it was in a terrible state of repair:

The house I am in is a very odd one at present, but I have leave to make the most of it, I hope to make it sum better than a minister's mans [...] I have carpenders and masons still working at it. It's necessity that makes me continue with them. It held out neither wind nor weat, and I twice fell through the floor. But as they do it by the piece, the expence comes to the same. So soon as it is habitable I'll intreat the pleasure of seeing you.<sup>595</sup>

Kilmaurs Place was the incomplete early seventeenth-century manor house of the 9th Earl of Glencairn, built on a small T-plan, consisting of two stories, with only a couple of good reception rooms. In comparison to her previous home at Eglinton Castle, it was a major reduction in size and status. Nevertheless, Lady Eglinton repaired Kilmaurs to her satisfaction and lived there until she was given the opportunity to restore and move into the far larger Auchans House, South Ayrshire, during the mid-1760s:

My son has given me the Ahans, and I intend going there. It's a very large house – quite out of repair but the room he had for himself; but this place is so damp, it is quite untolirable: and I'll do upe as much as will serve me.<sup>596</sup>

Auchans was a crenelated manor house, complete with towers, crow-stepped gables and a 'cone-covered staircase'.<sup>597</sup> Lady Eglinton, whilst busy restoring Auchans, was keen to see it furnished with portraits, two of which had gone missing:

I come to address you [...] for an order of delivery of three picktor belonging to me, which were poot upe into packing boxes and plast in the gallery of the Abby, with permission of the porter, to stand there till cal'd for by me. But the late Duke, without my consent or knowledge, unpacked the picktors, carried them to Hamilton, and, as I am told, has King Charles the First, and James Duke of

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<sup>595</sup> Lady Eglinton to Lady Frances Montgomery, Kilmaurs House, 12 November 1751, in William Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries, Earls of Eglinton*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1859), pp. 367-68.

<sup>596</sup> Lady Eglinton to Mr Moray, Kilmaurs House, 15 January 1762, in Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries*, vol. 1, p. 370.

<sup>597</sup> Alexander Hastie Millar, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Castles and Mansions of Ayrshire* (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1885), p. 18.

Hamilton, hung up in the Abbey [...] I am extremely anxious to have my picktors, and am resolv'd to spair no cost for the recover of them.<sup>598</sup>

When returned, these portraits allowed Lady Eglinton to express her support for the Stuart cause. Although involved in architecture during her widowhood, Lady Eglinton only engaged with it out of necessity in order to create a home suitable for her needs. Other widows saw architecture as a means of self-expression, a tool with which they could display their aesthetic preferences. This was illustrated by the Dowager Lady Spencer at Holywell House, which she inhabited from November 1783 following the death of the first Earl Spencer.

## Georgiana Spencer, Countess Spencer (1737-1814)



Fig. 40 Lady Spencer, and her daughter, Georgiana, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1771.

<sup>598</sup> Lady Eglinton to Baron Mure, Auchans, 4 January 1766, in William Mure (ed.), *Selections from the Family Papers Preserved at Caldwell, 1765-1821*, part 2, vol. 2 (Glasgow: Maitland Club, 1854), p. 56.

Upon her arrival at Holywell House, the widowed Lady Spencer (fig. 40) found the property to be in a bad state of neglect, having been largely untouched since Sarah Churchill's alterations in the late seventeenth century. The famed writer and philanthropist Hannah More, while staying in 1784, remarked upon the terrible heating at Holywell: 'It [the house] is at present a very cold one, though my lady has just told me there are twenty fires in it'.<sup>599</sup> Thus, similarly to Lady Eglinton, Lady Spencer decided to restore the house and, under her direction (but at the expense of her son), she oversaw the renovation and transformation of the old, decayed house into a comfortable, stylish Gothic villa.<sup>600</sup>

From the beginning of the project, Lady Spencer was concerned with the aesthetic, often lamenting to her friend Mrs Charlotte Howe (fig. 41) about her discontent with her architect George Shakespear's designs:

I am in more difficulties than ever about my house my Dear Howey. Shakespear made as I thought a strange hodge-podge of Gothic & Modern in his design for the Garden front. I knowing little more than my own ignorance in these matters sent him to Lord Harcourt, who consulted Ld Camelford upon it. They both agreed that Shakespear's design was detestable, but have settled nothing, so that all is at a stand, & Shakespear of course violently out of humour.<sup>601</sup>

George Harcourt, 2nd Earl Harcourt, was a strong advocate of authentic Gothic architecture and thus had no love for Shakespear's amateurish, incorrect interpretation of Gothic. After the meeting with Shakespear, Harcourt went so far as to state that his design 'could not be endured by any eyes the least conversant with picturesque effects'.<sup>602</sup> He commented that 'Shakespear's heavy regular parapet was a most abominable idea' and that 'it was not possible that either the drawing room end of the House, nor the opposite end could have been suffered to remain as Shakespear drew it'.<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>599</sup> Hannah More to her sister, Holywell House, March 1784, in William Roberts (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1834), p. 179.

<sup>600</sup> For a discussion on this transformation, see Frances Harris, 'Holywell House: A Gothic Villa at St Albans', *British Library Journal*, (1986), pp. 176-83.

<sup>601</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75623, Lady Spencer to Mrs Howe, 5 May 1784.

<sup>602</sup> BL, Althorp Papers. Add. MS 75684, Lord Harcourt to Lady Spencer, 29 April 1784.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

April 26 1784

There is no writing in any  
comfort my Dear Honey while  
I have people in my room which  
is now the case all day - as I have  
no room left but this - I have  
had another quarrel with  
Shakespeare & he has got the  
better, but he is very obstinate  
& so I conclude he is right -  
the room is to be 29 feet by  
20 (within a few inches) - the form is  
thus - the bow was to have been  
24 feet wide.

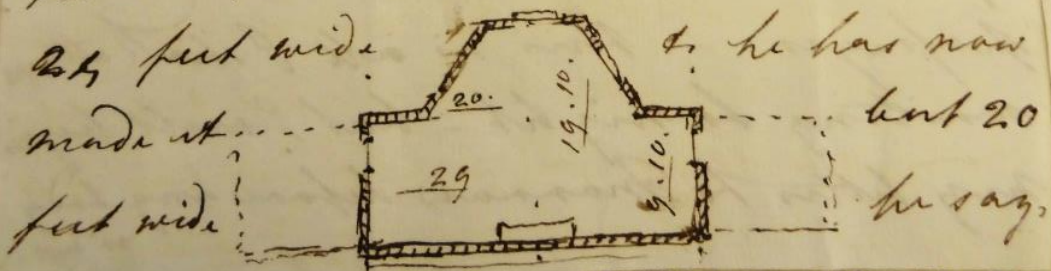


Fig. 41 Letter from Lady Spencer to Mrs Howe discussing Holywell House, with a sketch of a bow window, 26 April 1784.

## Determination to create the perfect Gothic villa

As Lady Spencer desired a house that conformed to the correct principals of Gothic, she sent Lord Harcourt a series of questions regarding various stylistic detailing, ranging from the size of the bow window, to the form of the arches, to asking his opinion about stuccoing the fronts (fig. 42).<sup>604</sup> Such detailed questions clearly illustrate the extent to which widows engaged in architectural projects and that, although Lady Spencer deferred to Harcourt's judgement in this instance, it is certainly clear that she was able to converse with him as an equal upon the subject of architecture. The following extract consists of Lady Spencer's questions on the left, with Lord Harcourt's answers on the right and note at the bottom:

Shall the arches be of the present form, or do you prefer any other	To remain as they are at present except, that I should advise, their being converted into real arches by removing the lower part of the brick work.
Shall the part under the bow window be inclos'd or open	Certainly open, I think.
Shall the bow of the window be 20 feet or 24 feet wide, the height can be but 12 feet 4	This is a question to which you alone can reply. Since I wrote the above <u>no</u> answer I have seen the plan and am rather inclined to 20 than to 24 feet.
Shall the Town & garden fronts be whiten'd & the roof slated instead of til'd	The Town front I care not about; <u>that</u> to the Garden would be much improved by being stuccoed, and that whole front should have an embattled parapet over it.
If the arches below are of a Gothic form should the windows above be made to correspond with them – or be plain sashes	The windows above, <u>undoubtedly</u> ought to correspond with the lower arches, but they may have sashes in them, and should <u>be lofty</u> : the arches mitred ones without any ornament over them; but in order to give an ancient & corresponding appearance to the whole front, the tow windows in the Drawing room & those in your intended dressing room, though they may without objection remain in their present form, ought to have the following sort of ornament; & a plain gothic moulding around them would be a great improvement.

\*When I answered the above queries, I had not seen Shakespear's plan. If you are partial to the old Arches, which I believe are really Gothic, because I have seen similar ones in other places, decide, at once, to retain them.<sup>605</sup>

In a further letter, Harcourt determined that if these alterations were included 'I think your Gothic front will be pretty picturesque & tollerably chaste, which is more than can be said for every part of the house on Strawberry Hill'.<sup>606</sup> It is interesting that Lady Spencer chose the Gothic style when she had been surrounded by Neo-Classicism throughout her married life, with Spencer House and the alterations at Althorp.

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75684, Lord Harcourt to Lady Spencer, Nuneham, 15 June 1784.

Gothicism was certainly gaining in popularity towards the end of the century, but it was still not a universal choice, which therefore demonstrates Lady Spencer's boldness.

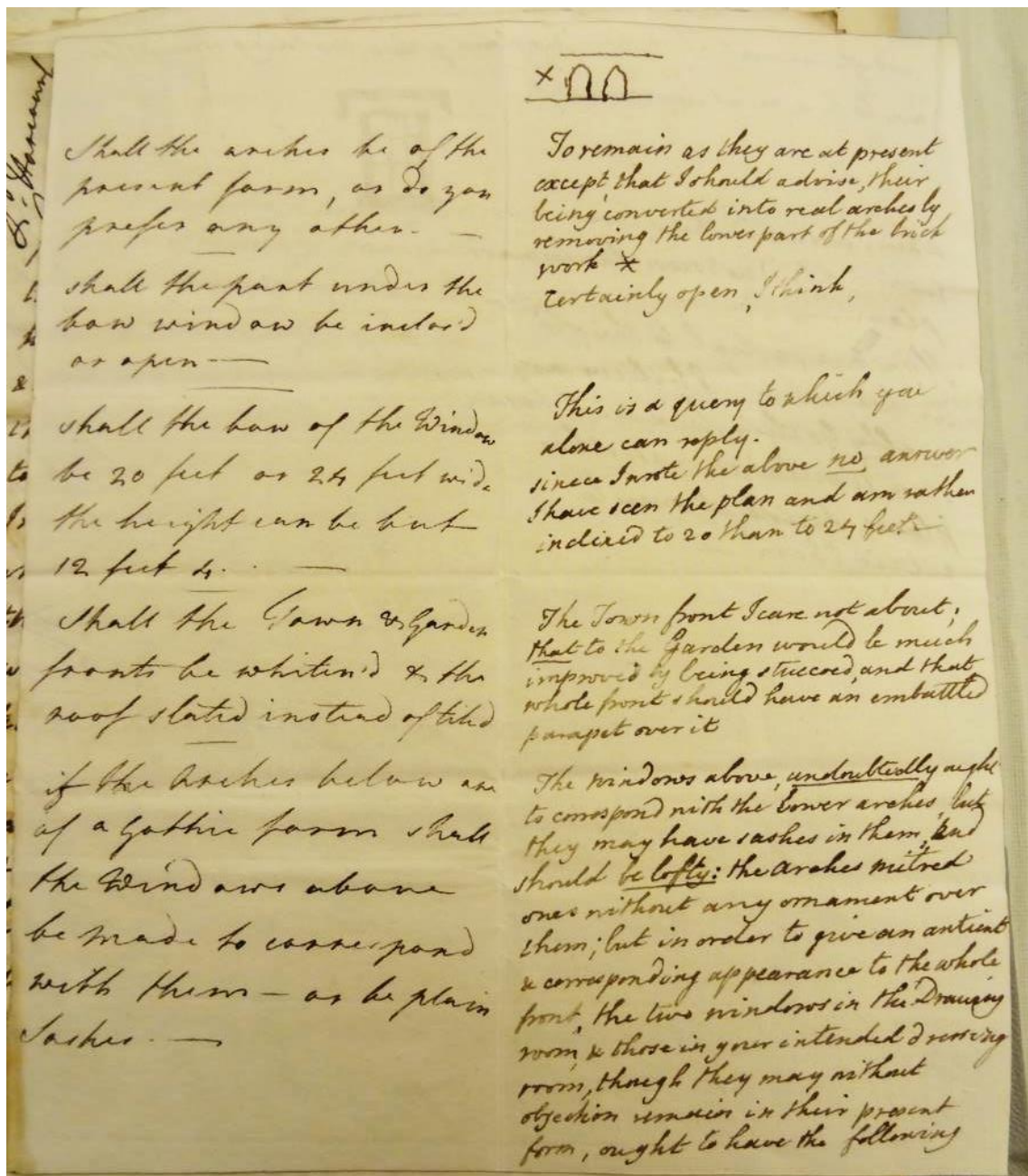


Fig. 42 Series of architectural questions asked by Lady Spencer and answered by Lord Harcourt, 29 April 1784.

## Lady Spencer's difficulties with her architect

Her Gothic vision proved harder to realise with Shakespear as her architect. Shakespear was a master carpenter by trade and, although he occasionally dabbled as an architect, the Gothic Revival style, certainly did not seem to be his forte.<sup>607</sup> He also proved to be obstinate in following his patroness's orders, especially on the height of the bow window room:

Shakespear has started a difficulty today which I do not like, he wants to persuade me to have the Bow window room the same height as the present Gallery which is only 10 feet— he says it will save a great deal of time & Expence that it will be much safer likewise as it will shake all that part of the house much to cut through the Ceiling beams &c & that it will be much warmer &c — in short he does not like to do it otherwise. I do not like to increase the expence unnecessarily but I think it will spoil the room quite & yet I plainly see he will yet get the better of me. I wish I had you to fight for me.<sup>608</sup>

Understandably, Charlotte Howe became increasingly angry on Lady Spencer's behalf and sought to provide her with encouragement and architectural solutions:

I am quite provoked at Shakespear, why had not you Holland my dear Lady Spencer: that I have always heard is clever in contrivances, for my part I wd give up any alterations rather than that room & I would have it thus, away with the dressing room that prevents the whole being equally heightened, the great outward room above might serve as a dressing room occasionally to that bedchamber, & I would have the Gallery all in one room, the height need not be above 13 feet, it will light that whole room I'll answer for it with 4 candles [...] I beg you will not determine hastily, nor let Shakespear get the better of you unless he convinces you, pray do not think of expence in it, does not your son wish you to be pleased?<sup>609</sup>

Howe's forthright opinions regarding Lady Spencer's architectural project, highlights the point that elite women would often offer their friends advice and suggestions regarding building projects, as many had experience in such ventures. In contrast to Harcourt's stylistic advice, Howe's principal points of argument concern that of comfort and convenience, suggesting that for women the eventual use of the rooms played a significant role in their construction. Howe's suggestion that Henry Holland would have been a better choice of architect is interesting, because it illustrates that elite women had the capacity to promote worthy architects into their circles. Holland, in collaboration with Lancelot Brown, had been commissioned by Harcourt to carry out alterations at his seat, Nuneham Park, Oxfordshire, between 1781-82. It is surprising, therefore, that Lady Spencer had not followed suit, especially as her son later employed him at Spencer House, between 1785-92, and at Althorp between 1787-89.

Nevertheless, despite Lady Spencer's difficulties with Shakespear, she did manage to convince him to raise the bow window room to 12 feet 4 inches.<sup>610</sup> Unfortunately, this was not the end of her troubles, as she

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<sup>607</sup> Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, pp. 859-60.

<sup>608</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75622, Lady Spencer to Mrs Howe, 6 April 1784.

<sup>609</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75622, Mrs Howe to Lady Spencer, 8 April 1784

<sup>610</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75622, Lady Spencer to Mrs Howe, 15 April 1784.

was later quarrelling with him over the proportions of the bow window itself.<sup>611</sup> Her perseverance eventually paid off, as the house was completed to her specification; an illustration in Britton and Brayley's *Beauties of England and Wales* (1808) depicts the Gothicised Garden Front.<sup>612</sup> The ensemble is pleasingly Gothic and features arches, battlements, Gothic window mouldings as well as the much-debated large bow window. Naturally, the design was met with mixed opinions, but, as Lady Spencer had created it to suit her taste and needs, she stated that 'the best plea I have, [was] that it was Convenient & I lik'd it'.<sup>613</sup>

## Elizabeth Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort (c. 1713-1799)

In contrast to Ladies Eglinton's and Spencer's predicament, Elizabeth, Dowager Duchess of Beaufort, was fortunate enough to receive an impressive dower house in a complete and modern state. Upon her brother's death in 1770, she inherited Stoke Park, Bristol, an imposingly large house perched upon Purdown Hill (fig. 43).<sup>614</sup> Her brother, Norborne Berkeley, 4th Baron Botetourt, remodelled the Elizabethan house in two phases to the designs of Thomas Wright of Durham. The first phase between 1749 and 1752 saw two single-storey octagonal rooms linked by an arched loggia added at the south-east and south-west corners. These rooms were later carried up between 1760 and 1764 to create three-storey towers, and were matched with identical towers on the north front. The interior was also completely remodelled during the latter phase as is indicated by payments to 'Paty', for a marble chimney piece for the drawing room, to Thomas Stocking of Bristol for his work on the ornamental ceilings with mouldings, and payments for the new Dutch oak staircase and dado.<sup>615</sup>

Arguably, therefore, the Duchess had little need to involve herself with architecture during her twenty-nine-year tenure at Stoke. This was not the case, of course, and the surviving Stoke estate papers document a series of constant and varied building works. The succession of building commissions directed by the Duchess consisted of the continuous repairs required to maintain the large estate as well as fulfilling her aesthetic and architectural desires. Just as Lady Spencer experimented with the Gothic, the widowed Duchess indulged in regularly updating the decorative schemes to conform to the latest trends.

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<sup>611</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75622, Lady Spencer to Mrs Howe, 26 April 1784.

<sup>612</sup> John Britton and Edward Wedlake Brayley, *Beauties of England and Wales, or, Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive, of each County*, vol. 7 (London, 1808), p. 108.

<sup>613</sup> BL, Althorp Papers, Add. MS 75627, Lady Spencer to Charlotte Howe, 22 June 1785.

<sup>614</sup> For Stoke's architectural and archaeological histories, see Kirsty Rodwell, 'The Dower House, Stoke Park, Bristol: A study in structural archaeology,' *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1-48.

<sup>615</sup> Gloucester Archives (hereafter GA), Beaufort (of Badminton) and Berkeley Family (of Stoke Gifford) Papers, D2700/QP3/6/6, building account vouchers, bundles 1-13 1760-3.



## The Duchess commissions a new decorative scheme at Stoke Park

Between 1776 and 1777, the Duchess commissioned an overall redecoration of Stoke's interiors as documented by a series of surviving letters between herself and her steward, Silas Blandford.<sup>616</sup> A letter dated 17 July 1776 provides an insight into the flurry of works being carried out:

I [...] am very sorry that the backwardness of the Alterations in the Rooms should be a means of keeping Your Grace from coming to Stoke as soon as you intended and (hope as the Carpenters work will be quite done by the latter end of this week all but the planeing of the floors and putting on the Locks, which is not to be done till after the upholsterers and Painter have done their work) it will not be long before it will be quite finish'd, it depends wholly on Mr Linnels forwarding it, for after this week nothing now can be done till further orders.<sup>617</sup>

The 'Mr Linnel' referred to was most likely the famous cabinetmaker John Linnell, as he had long served the Duchess and her family. He and his father, William Linnell, had worked closely with her when creating the pagoda-inspired Chinese bed,<sup>618</sup> for the Chinese Bedroom at Badminton House in *c.* 1754.<sup>619</sup> The exotic bed was one of his first 'bedroom suites' and came with matching furniture, including cabinets, armchairs and a dressing table.<sup>620</sup> Following this early patronage, Linnell must have again been commissioned by the Beauforts to furnish rooms in Beaufort House, Grosvenor Street, London, because, upon its sale to the Duke of Cumberland in 1761, an inventory detailing Linnell's furniture was made.<sup>621</sup> Additionally, between 1766 and 1777, Linnell was commissioned by the Duchess's son, Henry, 5th Duke of Beaufort, to furnish the new London house at No. 5 Grosvenor Square.<sup>622</sup> Linnell provided significant quantities of costly furniture, demonstrating the family's continued satisfaction in his work. Thus, it is perfectly understandable that the Duchess would wish to continue her patronage of Linnell during the redecorating and refurnishing of Stoke Park.

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<sup>616</sup> GA, D2700/QP4/6/4, letters to the Duchess from Silas and Jonas Blandford enclosing accounts, and on general estate affairs; some copy letters from her with observations on the accounts and estate business, 1771-87.

<sup>617</sup> GA, 2700/QP4/6/4, Silas Blandford to the Dowager Duchess of Beaufort, Stoke, 17 July 1776.

<sup>618</sup> The Chinese bed is now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London: W.143:1 to 26-1921.

<sup>619</sup> Stacey Sloboda, 'Fashioning Bluestocking Conversation: Elizabeth Montagu's Chinese Room', in Denise Amy Baxter and Meredith Martin (eds), *Architectural Space in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Constructing Identities & Interiors* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 130; Helena Hayward and Pat Kirkham, *William and John Linnell: Eighteenth-Century London Furniture-Makers*, vol. 1 (London: Studio Vista, 1980), pp. 74-75

<sup>620</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, W.55-1952 (cabinet); W.33 and W.34-1990 (two armchairs); W.55:1 to 24-1952 (dressing table); E.71-1929 for Linnell's original armchair design, *c.* 1752-4.

<sup>621</sup> GA, D2700/PB2/8, memorandum of agreement for sale of Beaufort House to the Duke of Cumberland, with plan, inventory and valuation of goods and furniture proposed to be sold [Linnell], 1761.

<sup>622</sup> GA, D2700/QJ3/14, Thomas Conway's accounts and vouchers (as auditor, and London steward; general payments for 5th Duke), including John Linnell's bill for furniture, and work done at Grosvenor Square, 1765-68.



Fig. 43 *Stoke-Gifford, Gloucestershire*, by F. Nicholson, 1798.

Although absent from the day-to-day management, the Duchess was wholly in control of the project, trusting her deputies to follow her instructions to the letter. For example, when it was time to paint the principal rooms, she sent specific commands detailing the exact colour she desired for each room:

Let the painter know I w'd have the rooms that are intended to be painted, namely the great Eating room, & drawing room below & the best bed Chamber & a Bow window above stairs, to be painted a dead white: the little closet between the Octagon & drawing room exactly in the same manner & colours with the Octagon, & the passages & little stair cases of a stone colour. The stucco of the vestibule & great stair case must be cleaned & that of ye vestibule that has already been painted should be painted again as a stone Color: the Ceiling of the Vestibule must be white washed.

It is evident that the Duchess's taste was for everything to be white and stone coloured; popular choices for the time, as they allowed decorative mouldings and motifs to be elegantly highlighted. A letter from Sir William Chambers to one of his clients in 1771 demonstrates that stone colour, in particular, was a very prevalent choice for new houses: 'If you have any Particular fancy about the Painting [of] your principal Rooms be pleased to let me know[,] my intention is to finish the whole of a fine stone Colour as us[u]al'.<sup>623</sup>

As well as a general overhaul of the interior décor, the Duchess also commissioned a range of repairs to enhance her property, such as ordering new sashes for the 'Octagon room'.<sup>624</sup> She had sought to economise

<sup>623</sup> Quoted in Ian Bristow, *Architectural Colour in British Interiors 1615-1840* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 153.

<sup>624</sup> GA, D2700/QP4/6/4, Silas Blandford to the Duchess of Beaufort, Stoke, 28 September 1776.

by reusing the glass from the old sashes for the new ones but this proved impossible as the glass kept breaking, leading Blandford to advise:

I believe these windows cannot be alter'd without having new Glass for the new Sash's and if done with the same sort of Glass the Twenty four lower squares will cost about 16s each and the twenty 4 upper squares about 2s 6d each.<sup>625</sup>

However, the Duchess decided against this extra expense and ordered the old ones to be re-fixed into their openings.<sup>626</sup> She also ordered a new cupboard to be made, the carpets to be repaired,<sup>627</sup> as well as the picture frames of her own portrait and her brother's to be gilded.<sup>628</sup> Two years later, she also ordered a new water closet to be built as John Grace, the carpenter, was paid £2 1s. 10d. for: 'Cutting out stuff & making a Cesterne & putting up & laying a Floor in the Water Closet & put in a door frame &c'.<sup>629</sup> It is clear that the Duchess wished to make her dower house as comfortable and convenient as she was able.

### **Continued decorative improvements between 1779 and 1789**

Throughout the decade of 1779-89, the Duchess commissioned a series of decorative alterations and improvements. In 1779, for example, small alterations took place in the bedchambers: 'Taking down window curtains & Bed Furniture altering window shutters taking off and putting in Locks &c'.<sup>630</sup> Other works include 'moving pictures & putting up beds',<sup>631</sup> and 'mending chairs & putting up pictures',<sup>632</sup> as well as a general repainting executed by Richard Hill.<sup>633</sup>

Two memoranda, dated 1782 and 1789, list the proposed alterations the Duchess intended for Stoke Park.<sup>634</sup> The types of works intended in 1782 ranged from cleaning and re-leading the 'Gothic Portico', to inserting a doorway between the 'Anti-Room and Book Room'.<sup>635</sup> The Duchess annotated the suggestions with her own questions and notes, including 'Could not the Dairy be made more commodious?' and 'Paving to the gravel paths'.<sup>636</sup> Such annotations demonstrate her intimate involvement in the architectural works and indicate that she was the driving force behind the aesthetic changes.

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<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> GA, D2700/QP4/6/4, Silas Blandford to the Duchess of Beaufort, Stoke, 4 October 1776.

<sup>627</sup> GA, D2700/QP4/6/4, copy letter from Urwick (master painter) to the Duchess of Beaufort in the Duchess's hand, Stoke House, April 1777.

<sup>628</sup> GA, D2700/QP4/6/4, Silas Blandford to the Duchess of Beaufort, Stoke, 13 April 1777.

<sup>629</sup> GA, D2700/QP3/9/38, 'No. 200', 17 September 1779.

<sup>630</sup> GA, D2700/QP3/9/38, 'Paid 12 February 1779'.

<sup>631</sup> GA, D2700/QP3/9/38, 'No. 201', 19 November 1779.

<sup>632</sup> GA, D2700/QP3/9/38, 6 December 1779

<sup>633</sup> GA, D2700/QP3/9/38, 'No. 200', 'Rec. 17 Sept 1779'.

<sup>634</sup> GA, D2700/QP4/6/1, Charles Evans to the Duchess of Beaufort, London 3 August 1782; GA, D2700/QP4/6/1, Charles Evans to the Duchess of Beaufort, 1789.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

The second memorandum relates to the alterations proposed for a number of principal rooms in 1789, such as the dining room, for which it was stated:

Dining Room to have new window curtains, window seats taken away, shutters fitted with new handles, to ditto, Ceiling to be white washed, walls straw colour in distemper, dado, shutters, sashes & dead white, doors to be clean'd and varnished.<sup>637</sup>

These alterations were presumably executed as various corresponding disbursements were made during this period in relation to the dining room. For example, James Dowell received payment 'for Ornaments for the dining room'<sup>638</sup> and for 'composition pateras for cornice to [the] Dining Room window curtains'.<sup>639</sup>

The Duchess's vast array of architectural commissions demonstrates that, even though she had inherited an estate in good condition, she still wanted to express her architectural and aesthetic taste, both inside the house and beyond. She was conscious of the latest fashions and, although Stoke Park was not as grand as Badminton House, she was evidently determined that the aesthetic arrangement would be no less lavish.

## Migrating to London and the search for a suitable residence

If the provision of a dower house was not feasible, or if the widow did not care for it, a London house was usually provided. For example, when William Weddell of Newby Hall died in 1792, it was considered the norm that the London house was bequeathed to his widow for life:

Poor Mr Weddell's Will was open'd... We have long known that Ld Grantham was the next Heir to Mr Weddell's entail'd Estate; we find he has left his unentail'd Yorkshire Estates to Mrs Weddell for her Life, & after her to the Robinson Family, which is a generous & honourable Disposition. The Town-House is hers.<sup>640</sup>

In some instances, of course, a London house could not be provided and thus the widow had to seek out a London residence to rent using her jointure. This was the case for the widowed Lady Jane Coke (1706–1761), who was obliged to leave her marital home, Longford Hall, Derbyshire, to make way for her nephew, Wenman Coke, in 1750. For reasons unknown, relations between herself and the Cokes were strained, leading her to comment in May 1751, that 'Mr Coke and his whole family have taken their leave of me, and I now neither see nor hear anything of them'.<sup>641</sup> Fortunately, she was a widow of considerable means, because not only did she have two jointures, she was also the recipient of the remainder of a trust that was set up to pay off her brother's (the deceased 1st Duke of Wharton) debts. Furthermore, in 1739, Lady Jane

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<sup>637</sup> GA, 2700/QP4/6/1, Charles Evans to the Duchess of Beaufort, 1789.

<sup>638</sup> GA, D2700/QP3/4/8, Stoke Cash Accounts, part 1, f. 120 r, 18 May 1790.

<sup>639</sup> GA, D2700/QP3/4/8, Stoke Cash Accounts, part 1, f. 129 r, 6 August 1790.

<sup>640</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/112, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 3 May 1792.

<sup>641</sup> Lady Jane Coke to Mrs Eyre, Saville Row, 6 May 1751, in Mrs Ambrose Rathborne (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke to Her Friend, Mrs. Eyre at Derby, 1747-1758* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1899), p. 73.

successfully campaigned for the termination of the abeyance of the Wharton baronetcy, and so she became the 7th Baroness of Wharton in her own right.

Consequently, although relations with the Cokes were regrettably sour, Lady Jane was a widow of rank and wealth and thus was able to establish herself comfortably and independently in London:

I am got into my new house, and vastly busy in hanging up pictures, &c. When all is done that I intend it will be very neat and comfortable, which is [...] not only that I pretend to do, but wish for, since I have long known magnificence never made happiness.<sup>642</sup>

In the 1780s, Agneta Yorke (1740-1820) was also on the lookout for a suitable London residence and informed her step-son, Philip Yorke, of an advertisement of a property in Berkeley Square that she had seen in a paper:

To let for a Term of Years a House desirably situated in the most eligible part of Berkeley Square fit for the immediate reception of a family. The furniture new & compleat to be disposed of at a fair valuation. Rent inclusive of Taxes 130£ per an. Enquire at Mr Dangerfields circulating Library Berkeley Square.<sup>643</sup>

Agneta was particular about the type of house that she required and commissioned Philip to view the property on her behalf:

I shall be extremely obliged to you if you will look at this House, enquire the particulars, and let me know your opinion of it, with the size & number of Rooms, whether any Coach House &c. – in short whether you think it would suit me [...] I should want 3 good Bedchambers and three Servants Rooms & if I have 2 good sized rooms one below & one above I shall be content. As to the furniture I should not want it probably.<sup>644</sup>

Elite widows who wished to maintain their status and claim their stake in society often gravitated to London to establish their new households. As Amanda Vickery states, ‘among the first occupants of Grosvenor Square were six noble dowagers, and four in Grosvenor Street’.<sup>645</sup> Of the seventy-four women living on the Burlington estate, London, during the eighteenth century, twenty-nine of them were widows.<sup>646</sup> New Burlington Street was particularly popular with seven widows occupying houses throughout the century, including Anne, Dowager Viscountess Irwin, Lady of the Bedchamber to Augusta, Princess of Wales, who lived at No. 5 from 1738 to 1764; Lady Middleton, widow of Alan Brodrick, 2nd Viscount Middleton, who lived at No. 7 from 1747 to 1755; and Lady Howard de Walden, widow of the 4th Baron Howard de Walden, who lived at No. 10 from 1797 to 1803.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> Lady Jane Coke to Mrs Eyre, Saville Row, 21 August 1750, in Rathborne (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>643</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, f. 426, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, n.d., c. 1787.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

<sup>645</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 136.

<sup>646</sup> F. H. W. Sheppard (ed.), ‘Cork Street and Savile Row Area: Table of notable inhabitants on the Burlington Estate’, in *Survey of London: Volumes 31 and 32, St James Westminster, Part 2* (London, 1963), pp. 566-72, accessed via BHO.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid.

Lady Jane followed suit by setting up her new residence in a fashionable area of London, at No. 9 Savile Row. Although she rejected the ostentations and grandiosity of hosting great parties, she reluctantly participated in society: 'I think while one lives in the world, its customs must be complied with, or else retire'.<sup>648</sup> Lady Jane's preference for the tranquillity found in the country triumphed the following year, when she relocated to Windsor for the summer with a companion, Mrs Skipworth.

## **The great dowager hostesses and the creation of the fashionable house**

Unlike Lady Jane, many elite widows took to entertaining with great enthusiasm, some becoming powerful lynchpins within society. Lady Betty Germain, although not a flamboyant character, still held regular entertainments at her house at No. 16 St James's Square, as Horace Walpole reported: 'The town is not quite empty yet. My Lady Fitzwalter, Lady Betty Germain, Lady Granville, and the dowager Strafford have their At-homes, and amass company'.<sup>649</sup> Even Lady Jane gave a glittering account of a party hosted by Lady Betty Germain, in 1752: 'There was more finery at the Birthday than ever I saw; don't imagine I was at Court, but went to Lady Betty Germain's, where great numbers came to show themselves'.<sup>650</sup>

## **Elizabeth Home, Countess of Home (1703/4-1784) and Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800)**

Wealthy dowagers who sought the limelight often decided to build fashionable and extravagant town houses, if they had the capital to do so. The two most famous examples are, of course, Elizabeth Montagu who commissioned Montagu House, and Elizabeth, Dowager Countess of Home, who commissioned Home House. Both widows used their wealth to realise their grand architectural ambitions and patronised the most fashionable architects of the day, namely James Stuart, James Wyatt and Robert Adam. Their projects have been examined in much detail by architectural historians in the past few decades, which this thesis seeks not to repeat, however, re-examining the patroness-architect relationship is prudent here.<sup>651</sup> Both cases represent the greatest architectural scope available to women of wealth, as their houses were completely new commissions, allowing for the fullest control over every aspect of the architectural process. The opportunity to engage so fully with architecture was inevitably borne of their immense fortunes.

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<sup>648</sup> Lady Jane Coke to Mrs Eyre, Saville Row, 16 March 1754, in Rathborne (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke*, p. 138.

<sup>649</sup> Horace Walpole to George Montagu, Arlington Street, 25 June 1745, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 9, p. 15.

<sup>650</sup> Lady Jane Coke to Mrs Eyre, Saville Row, 23 Dec 1752, in Rathborne (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke*, p. 124.

<sup>651</sup> For discussions of the construction of Montagu House, see Bristol, '22 Portman Square', pp. 72–85; Baird, *Mistress of the House*, pp. 188–219; for similar with regards to Home House, see M. Whinney, *Home House: No. 20 Portman Square* (London: Country Life Publications, 1969); Harris, 'Home House: Adam versus Wyatt', pp. 308–21; Lewis, 'Elizabeth, Countess of Home, and Her House in Portman Square', pp. 443–53.

## Rival town houses?

From the very beginnings of both projects, Elizabeth Montagu and Lady Home sought to build dazzling town houses to host opulent gatherings. Although contemporaries, these women envisaged hosting very different types of soirees; Elizabeth Montagu, who was famed for her sophisticated salons, intended her house to be the stage upon which polite society would congregate:

I believe by November [...] all the stars should be twinkling in the blue firmament I shall be wishing my great room finished & the Lustres glittering in it & my self sitting in the Center, beaux spirits in one hand, some gentlemen & fine ladies (without any esprit at all) on the other, feathered nymphs & great – maccaronies circulating about.<sup>652</sup>

Elizabeth Montagu's gatherings could be categorised as bluestocking salons, aimed to bring together the greatest minds and wits of the age. She was, after all, crowned as 'Queen of the Bluestockings', and played a central role within this intellectual community.<sup>653</sup>

The extravagant Lady Home was renowned for her lavishly hedonistic parties and therefore desired a house that could provide a suitably lavish backdrop for such occasions. A letter from William Beckford illustrates the dowager's proclivity for ostentatious entertaining:

I accepted yesterday [an invitation from] no less a personage in short that the Countess of Home, known amongst all the Irish chairmen and ruffraff of the metropolis by the name, style, and title of the Queen of Hell [...] Aware of my musical propensities she determined to celebrate my accession to Portman Square by a sumptuous dinner and a concert of equal magnificence. Last evening it took place and you never beheld so splendidly heterogeneous a repast as the dinner nor ever heard such a confounded jumble of good and bad music - such a charivari in fact - as the Concert.<sup>654</sup>

Although Beckford's description is unkind to his hostess, it does suggest that there was a desire amongst the *beau monde* for a less conspicuous display of wealth. Horace Walpole, when describing his experience at the rival Montagu House, applauded his hostess's success in creating a house that exuded refined, yet splendid, taste:

I dined on Monday with the Harcourts at Mrs. Montagu's new palace, and was much surprised. Instead of vagaries, it is a noble simple edifice. When I came home, I recollected that though I had thought it so magnificent a house, there was not a morsel of gilding. It is grand, not tawdry, nor larded and embroidered and pomponned with shreds and remnants, and clinquant like all the Harlequinades of Adam, which never let the eye repose a moment.<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Huntington Library, MO 6005, Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, 6 July 1777, as quoted in Baird, *Mistress of the House*, pp. 203-04.

<sup>653</sup> Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'The queen of the blues, the bluestocking queen and bluestocking masculinity', in Eger (ed.), *Bluestockings Displayed*, pp. 233-53.

<sup>654</sup> William Beckford, 1782, in John W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 106-07.

<sup>655</sup> Horace Walpole to William Mason, Berkeley Square, 14 Feb 1782, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 29, p. 184.

## Rival architects: Robert Adam, James Stuart and James Wyatt

Mrs Montagu hired the aging James Stuart to bring her Neo-Classical vision to life (as she had successfully employed him at her house in Hill Street<sup>656</sup>), but by 1780 her opinion and trust in the seemingly incompetent architect forced her to seek James Wyatt's help to complete the interiors:

[A]s soon as I get to London [I] will send you exact directions concerning the large looking glasses at ye end of ye Gallery, & will also talk with Mr Wyat concerning the difficult affair of ye Curve door, I had flatter<sup>d</sup> myself with ye hopes of a visit from Mr Wyat in his way to some Gentlemans in ye West, as he promised me, however I think I cannot fail of seeing him here or in London. I suppose he has not yet taken his Western journey, I shall write to him today that I may take any measures so as not to miss of him [...] his genius is so universal that he c<sup>d</sup> design the most beautiful Temple & superb palace or prettiest Cottage.<sup>657</sup>

Ironically, only five years earlier, Wyatt had been dismissed by Lady Home, and had been replaced by his rival Robert Adam. It is interesting that both patronesses experienced difficulties with their architects, resulting in their replacement. Wyatt's dismissal at Home House has been attributed to his apparent 'dilatatory' approach to his work.<sup>658</sup> On 24 February 1775, Lady Home complained to her new architect (Adam) that, 'M<sup>r</sup> Jam<sup>s</sup> Wyatt, & M<sup>r</sup> Daval are trying which of them can be most troublesome to me in their hasty demands for irregular payments'.<sup>659</sup> Similarly, Mrs Montagu's patience was constantly tested by Stuart's delays, escalating costs, inability to provide designs for his workmen, and his alcoholism.<sup>660</sup>

Understandably, by August 1780, Mrs Montagu had endured all she could and dismissed him. It could be argued, that both Stuart and Wyatt took advantage of their patronesses purely because they were women, venturing into the male-dominated sphere of architecture. The Duchess of Marlborough, after all, experienced great difficulties with John Vanbrugh at Blenheim Palace, despite her architectural experience. This, however, would ignore the obvious fact that although Lady Home could not work with Wyatt, Elizabeth Montagu could, and employed him both at Sandleford Priory (her country house) as well as at Montagu House. Furthermore, despite Stuart's unprofessional behaviour at Montagu House, he had, until the 1770s, enjoyed a largely successful career pioneering Neo-Classicism, particularly introducing the 'Greek Style' into British architecture.<sup>661</sup> Therefore, perhaps his unprofessional attitude towards Elizabeth Montagu

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<sup>656</sup> For discussions on Montagu's Hill House commission, see Rosemary Baird: "'The Queen of the Bluestockings": Elizabeth Montagu's house at 23 Hill Street rediscovered', *Apollo*, vol. 157 (August 2003), pp. 43-49; and *idem*. *Mistress of the House*, pp. 177-82; Kerry Bristol, 'The Painted Rooms of Athenian Stuart', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 10 (2000), pp. 167-79; David Pullins, 'Reassessing Elizabeth Montagu's Architectural Patronage at 23 Hill Street, London', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 150, no. 1263 (2008), pp. 400-04.

<sup>657</sup> Birmingham Central Library, Matthew Boulton Papers, Box 330, No. 28, Mrs Montagu to Matthew Boulton, Sandleford, 20 August 1780, as quoted in Bristol, '22 Portman Square', p. 80.

<sup>658</sup> Harris, 'Home House: Adam versus Wyatt', p. 309.

<sup>659</sup> BL, RP 3031/1, Lady Home to Robert Adam, 24 February 1775.

<sup>660</sup> Huntington Library, Montagu Papers, MO 5026, Mrs Montagu to Leonard Smelt, Bath, 26 April 1780, as cited in Bristol, '22 Portman Square', p. 80.

<sup>661</sup> He successfully published, Stuart and Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* (London: John Haberkorn, 1762).



was due to his declining health and chaotic personal life, rather than his reluctance to adhere to her directions.

Despite these difficulties, both widows successfully completed their grand London houses and were able to use them to host the parties that they had envisaged. It was their delight to entertain, and their guests were equally pleased with being invited. For example, in 1792, Lady Polwarth recorded one of her visits in her diary: 'Went to a Breakfast given at Mrs Montagu's, with all her shewy Rooms open'.<sup>662</sup> Both patronesses demonstrate how widowhood could provide great architectural opportunities and enabled women to patronise the most fashionable architects and advocate the most fashionable tastes.

## **The rejection of Classicism**

Although Lady Home and Elizabeth Montagu chose to pursue Classically-inspired designs for their townhouses, as was *à la mode*, other patronesses chose to reject this convention in favour of something bolder. Lady Mary Hervey's choice of the French-inspired style, and Lady Pomfret's choice of Gothic, demonstrated their architectural individualism. Both widows sought to please their own stylistic preferences and were unafraid to proclaim them to the world. In each instance, both patronesses were pioneering in their choice of style and had arguably been inspired by their earlier association with Queen Caroline. Lady Hervey had been a Maid of Honour to Caroline while Princess of Wales, from 1715 until her marriage to Lord Hervey in 1720, and Lady Pomfret was a Lady of the Bedchamber to Caroline from 1725 until the Queen's death in 1739.

## **Mary Hervey, Lady Hervey (1700-1768)**

Lady Hervey, *née* Lepell or Lepel, is an excellent example of the fact that widowhood allowed some women to experiment outside of the architectural norm. When she embarked upon her London house project at No. 25 St James's Place (fig. 44), Lady Hervey was determined to please only herself with its architectural style and form. As such, she chose Henry Flitcroft to build her a French-inspired mansion. In contrast to Lady Home and Elizabeth Montagu, her relationship with her architect appears to have been thoroughly positive, thus indicating that patroness-architect relationships really must be analysed individually.

To finance the project Lady Hervey must have used the £4,000 given to her in 1730, from her husband's lover, Stephen Fox-Strangways, for the Herveys' marital home in Great Burlington Street.<sup>663</sup> The reason that Lady Hervey received this sum and not her husband is unclear, but Lucy Moore suggests that it may

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<sup>662</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/131, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 21 May 1792.

<sup>663</sup> Lucy Moore, *Amphibious Thing: The Life of Lord Hervey* (London: Penguin Group, 2000), p. 91.

have been because Lady Hervey's money had originally been used to purchase the house, or that this was Hervey's way of giving his wife financial independence now that he was to cohabit with Fox-Strangways.<sup>664</sup>

Lady Hervey instigated her building project in 1747, as is demonstrated by a letter to her good friend Reverend Edmund Morris: 'I have a dozen plans, a compass, ruler, &c. lying before me, and expect Mr. Flitcroft every instant [...] Here comes the executor, so the architect must give her directions'.<sup>665</sup> Lady Hervey deliberately portrayed herself as the architect indicating the extent of her involvement. She clearly wished her correspondent to know that she was to be the driving force behind the style and form of the house.



Fig. 44 *View of the Queen's Walk, in the Green Park*, by Edward Dayes, 1797. The location where Lady Hervey's house once stood is indicated by the red arrow.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid.

<sup>665</sup> Lady Hervey to Rev. Morris, London, 10 December 1747, in Lady Hervey, *Letters of Mary Lepel, Lady Hervey: With a Memoir and Illustrative Notes* (London: John Murray, 1821), p. 111.

## Lady Hervey's French vision

Writing from Ickworth, Suffolk, (her late husband's ancestral home) the following January in 1748, she further stipulated that the house was of *her* design to suit *her* taste:

At present, my thoughts are greatly taken up with the plan of my house, which I have made entirely myself, and is to be executed next April. Perhaps you'll think I ought to begin such a plan the first day of that month: but though it may be, and certainly is, contrary to all palladian rules, yet, as it is for myself, and not for others, that I build it, I think I ought to consider my own convenience and taste in it.<sup>666</sup>

Lady Hervey was evidently very passionate about her house, controlling both the plan and the decorative form, and unapologetically rejected the popular Palladian style. This signifies that widows could be perfectly at ease with architectural tastes, styles and principles, and were keen to take total control in the planning and execution of their houses. Lady Hervey's learning was such that she was self-assured enough to reject the most conventional style of the time and pursue her own, rather alternative, architectural preference, that of the French style.

Lady Hervey was fluent in French, visited Paris regularly, and was known to be an unashamed Francophile. Her interest and passion for all things French may have been enhanced by the many publications in circulation relating to French architecture and popular French styles, such as the Rococo. These included Jean Mariette's multivolume publication *L'Architecture Française* (1727-38), Nicolas Langlois's *Architecture a la Mode* (1700-16), Jacques-François Blondel's *De la Distribution des Maisons de Plaisance, et de la Décoration des Edifices en General* (1737-38) and Matthias Lock's *A New Drawing Book of Ornaments* (1740).<sup>667</sup> Furthermore, the fine French-inspired Rococo interiors of Chesterfield House (1747-52), Westminster, a contemporary build to Lady Hervey's townhouse, may well have provided additional inspiration.

By April 1748, the pre-existing house was demolished, enabling the initial stage of building to begin:

I now quit you, Middleton and Horace, for Mr. Flitcroft, angles, feet, Greystock bricks, cornice, fascias, copeings, and, what not only torments me at present, but I fear will undo me in the end. My old house is now a heap of ruins and dust; but I hope out of its ashes there will soon arise a Phoenix house, where you will often eat as plain a dinner, see as fine a prospect, and as beautiful a verdure as at Nursling [Rev. Morris' house]. I build but part of my house at present; time, economy, or my heir, must finish it.<sup>668</sup>

Throughout 1748, Lady Hervey was constantly engaged with building, and by November she was pleased to report that: 'My house is covered in; 'twill be a very agreeable, but, I fear, a very dear one'.<sup>669</sup> Such great

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<sup>666</sup> Lady Hervey to Rev. Morris, Ickworth Park, 25 January 1748, in Hervey, *Letters of Mary Lepel*, p. 117.

<sup>667</sup> Jean Mariette, *L'Architecture Française*, 5 vols (Paris, 1727-38); Nicolas Langlois, *L'Architecture a La Mode ou sont les Nouveaux Dessins pour la Décoration des Bâtimens et Jardins* (Paris, 1700-16); Jacques-François Blondel, *De la Distribution des Maisons de Plaisance, et de la Décoration des Edifices en General*, 2 vols (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1737-8); Matthias Lock, *A New Drawing Book of Ornaments* (London, 1740).

<sup>668</sup> Lady Hervey to Rev. Morris, Ickworth Park, 2 April 1748, in Hervey, *Letters of Mary Lepel*, p. 125.

<sup>669</sup> Lady Hervey to Rev. Morris, London, 14 November 1748, in Hervey, *Letters of Mary Lepel*, pp. 138-39.

expenditure would have been a cause of concern for most widows, being confined to the annuity provided by their jointures. However, such a conspicuous display of spending by a widow was sometimes greeted with the disapproval of society. Lady Hervey was well aware of the possible censure, stating that by building her house, 'I please myself, and injure no one [...] let them condemn, wonder or ridicule'.<sup>670</sup>

Lady Hervey had the determination and the desire to use architecture to express her individualism and create her perfect home. She was self-aware enough to know that her expenditure was a risk, but she was also intelligent enough to strategise and economise where necessary. In March 1750, Lady Hervey encouraged Morris to go and visit her house, whereupon she defended her decision not to include bow windows on the principal floor:

If you say, as you did once before, that you wish I have made a bow window, consider what would have been the consequence of it; instead of those windows which now afford me as fine a view as possible, I should have had but one window that would have looked towards Chelsea and the country: from one of the oblique windows I should have looked into Sir John Cope's room [her neighbour to the south], and have afforded him a view of mine: from the other I should have seen the Duke of Devonshire's house [to the north], when the dust of Piccadilly would have permitted it.<sup>671</sup>

Practicality triumphed over fashion in this instance, again illustrating Lady Hervey's competence in executing her design. Nine years later, the house was finally nearing its completion, with Lady Hervey remarking that: 'My house and my gout, the one my amusement (for old people must not pretend to pleasures), and the other my torment, have taken me up so much, since I came to town.'<sup>672</sup> However, by this point, 25 September 1759, she was busily involved with the interior decoration: 'I am altering, fitting up, and completing my house, which is no small affair'.<sup>673</sup>

### **'Hôtel de Milady'**

Once completed, Lady Hervey fully embraced London life. She became a renowned hostess, hosting regular dinner parties and fully engaging with everything French. She hired a French chef, Jacques Lalliet, who delighted guests with excellent cuisine. William Douglas, 3rd Earl of March, wrote eagerly to his friend George Selwyn in October 1762, remarking upon Lady Hervey's hospitality:

I have just returned from the Hôtel de Milady (Hervey) [...] Never was anything so French as her dinner and the manner of being served. It is a charming home, and as I have rather a partiality for the French I am very glad of the entré.<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>671</sup> Lady Hervey to Rev. Morris, Ickworth Park, 17 March 1750, in Hervey, *Letters of Mary Lepel*, pp. 170-71.

<sup>672</sup> Lady Hervey to Rev. Morris, St James's Place, 25 September 1759, in Hervey, *Letters of Mary Lepel*, p. 261.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> Lord March to George Selwyn, Seymour Place, 20 October 1762, in John Robert Robinson, *'Old Q': A Memoir of William Douglas, Fourth Duke of Queensberry, K.T., One of 'the Fathers of the turf,' with a Full Account of his Celebrated Matches and Wagers, etc*, 2nd edn (London: S. Low, Marston and Company Limited, 1895), p. 274.

Her sophisticated soirees were well respected and introductions were eagerly sought, thereby indicating that Lady Hervey's house was a success. Widowhood provided her with the freedom to build in a manner that entirely suited her architectural preference, regardless of the prevailing fashion for Classicism.

## Henrietta Fermor, Countess of Pomfret (1698-1761)

A widow of equally ambitious stylistic choice was Henrietta Fermor, Dowager Countess of Pomfret, who commissioned a Gothic townhouse to be built at No. 18 Arlington Street (1757-60), otherwise known as 'Pomfret Castle'. This house, demolished in 1934, has rightly received extensive scholarly attention since the 1970s.<sup>675</sup> These studies have adequately presented the known evidence regarding the architectural history of the property, as well as the suite of Gothic furniture commissioned by Lady Pomfret to furnish her house. This discussion, therefore, simply seeks to further demonstrate that widowhood provided women with the chance to experiment with architectural styles in a way that they might not have been able to as married women.

The British penchant for Gothic Revival was still to take hold in the 1750s, and yet this was the time that Lady Pomfret chose to build the only Gothic townhouse in London. Gothic was more often used for the restoration of old buildings or for the construction of garden architecture and follies. It was not used for entirely new building schemes, which is why Lady Pomfret's choice of style is all the more fascinating. As Joanna Banham advocates, the 'first phase of Gothic Revival [...] was manifested in two parallel strands'.<sup>676</sup> The first was developed by prominent designers such as Thomas Chippendale as a means of providing a greater range of possible interior ornamentation for consumers alongside Rococo and Chinoiserie, and the second concerned the desire to return to the true antiquarian roots of medieval Gothic architecture, as with Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill villa.<sup>677</sup> Lady Pomfret's interest and passion for Gothic architecture resided in the latter strand, as evidenced by her argument for the preservation of old buildings:

I am always glad to hear of any remains of the old English grandeur; and am both amazed and provoked when I hear of people destroying those magnificent structures (made to last for ages) in order to erect some trifling edifice, whose chief merit consist in the vast expense, which often renders the builder unable to inhabit it when he has done; whereas to repair an abbey or castle in the same

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<sup>675</sup> Peter Lindfield, 'The Countess of Pomfret's Gothic Revival Furniture', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 22 (2014), pp. 77-94; Will Hawkes, 'Walpole Right or Wrong? More on No. 18 Arlington Street', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 21 (2013), pp. 204-11; Sarah Freeman, 'An Englishwoman's Home is her Castle: Lady Pomfret's House at 18 Arlington Street', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 20 (2012), pp. 87-102; Simon Houfe, 'A Taste for the Gothick: Diaries of the Countess of Pomfret I', *Country Life*, 161 (24 March 1977), pp. 728-30; Simon Houfe, 'Antiquarian Inclinations: Diaries of the Countess of Pomfret II', *Country Life*, 161 (31 March 1977), pp. 800-02; M. McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival* (New Haven and London, 1987), pp. 139-43; John Harris, 'Lady Pomfret's House: The Case for Richard Biggs', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 1 (1991), pp. 45-49.

<sup>676</sup> Joanna Banham (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Interior Design* (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), p. 182.

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.*

way as it was first built is a worthy monument both of the owner's piety to his ancestors, and care of his posterity.<sup>678</sup>

It is clear that prior to her practical interest in Gothic architecture, Lady Pomfret also possessed an intellectual interest in existing medieval buildings, as indicated by her subscription to Samuel and Nathaniel Bucks' *Perspective Views of the Ruins of the Most Noted Abbeys and Castles of England* (1726-39).<sup>679</sup> Her mention of 'some trifling edifice' further signifies her condescension and dismissal of the conventional architectural styles of the day, namely Classicism and more specifically, Palladianism. Furthermore, as Lady of the Bedchamber, it is likely that Lady Pomfret would have approved of the Gothic garden follies pioneered by Queen Caroline in the gardens of Richmond Lodge, particularly Merlin's Cave which was built in 1735. Merlin's Cave, designed by William Kent, was a thatched Gothic-inspired folly, built as a conscious declaration of Caroline's British patriotism, celebrating the ancient origins of British monarchy.<sup>680</sup>

Lady Pomfret commissioned Richard Biggs, Clerk of Works at Windsor Castle, to create her Gothic vision.<sup>681</sup> Lady Pomfret's diary entry recording that 'Mr Briggs came about my plans' and Biggs's three surviving plans at the Soane Museum, dated 1757, confirm his involvement.<sup>682</sup> Stiff Leadbetter was also employed, but seems to have been involved 'largely as a builder at Arlington Street'.<sup>683</sup> Together, Biggs and Leadbetter created a fanciful Gothic castle in the midst of Classical Georgian London. The completed façades consisted of all the necessary Gothic tropes including machicolations, turrets, embattled parapet, Gothic tracery and arched windows and doorways.<sup>684</sup> The interiors were equally dramatic, boasting a range of medieval-inspired decorative motifs such as *fleur-de-lis*, rosettes and quatrefoils, as well as Perpendicular tracery panelling upon the main staircase that was directly copied from Windsor Castle.<sup>685</sup>

The significance of Lady Pomfret's commission resides in the fact that she chose a style that was so obviously unconventional for a new townhouse. Just as Lady Hervey had unashamedly chosen to pursue her French-inspired fancy, so too did Lady Pomfret with her Gothic Revival project. It is clear that

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<sup>678</sup> Lady Pomfret to Lady Hartford, Florence, 30 July 1740, in T. Gillet (ed.), *Correspondence between Frances, Countess of Hartford, (Afterwards Duchess of Somerset,) and Henrietta Louisa, Countess of Pomfret Between the Years 1738 and 1741*, vol. 2 (London: Richard Phillips, 1805), pp. 30-31.

<sup>679</sup> Peter Lindfield, 'The Countess of Pomfret's Gothic Revival Furniture', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 22 (2014), p. 77.

<sup>680</sup> Joanna Marschner, 'Michael Rysbrack's Sculpture Series for Queen Caroline's Library at St James's Palace', in Diana Dethloff, Tessa Murdoch, Kim Sloan and Caroline Elam (eds), *Burning Bright: Essays in Honour of David Bindman* (London: University College London Press, 2015), pp. 27-28.

<sup>681</sup> There has been some confusion regarding the architect because Horace Walpole attributed the design to Sanderson Miller in Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Paintings in England [1760-1795]*, Frederick W. Hilles and Philip B. Daglian (eds), vol. 5 (New Haven: Yale University Press; London, H. Milford: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 161.

<sup>682</sup> Lady Pomfret's Diary, quoted in Houfe, 'Diaries', II, p. 801; SM, 43/5/5, Design for the courtyard front, inscribed on verso with Sketch of a Gothic Building, February 1757, SM 43/5/8, Copy of a design for the park front, hand of Richard Briggs, n.d.; SM 43/5/9, Copy of the Park Front design, slightly different, hand of Richard Briggs, n.d.

<sup>683</sup> Freeman, 'An Englishwoman's Home is her Castle', p. 91.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-94.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-98.

widowhood freed elite women from stylistic restrictions and enabled them to experiment as they saw fit. Their choices of style, however, were still traditionally seen as feminine, as they lacked the uniformity of the Classical ‘masculine’ styles. As Amanda Vickery advocates, such ‘diversions from uniformity and proportion [were perceived of as] feminine and undisciplined or effeminate and corrupt’.<sup>686</sup>

Thus, Lady Pomfret’s Gothic Revival house was most likely perceived by her contemporaries as a playful build, but certainly not a serious one. Similarly, Horace Walpole’s Gothic Revival villa was also seen as an experimental, unusual interaction with architecture, explained away by his eccentric and effeminate nature.<sup>687</sup> Nonetheless, Lady Pomfret’s deliberate patronage of the Gothic Revival demonstrates that she sought to make a stylistic statement. In this sense it is possible to state that both Lady Pomfret and Lady Hervey were stylistically pioneering and did much to promote these fledgling architectural styles in mid eighteenth-century London.

## Villas: the perfect suburban retreat

The hectic world of London society was not an appealing prospect for all widows and many decided to take a property just outside the capital. As mentioned previously, Lady Jane Coke was one such lady who preferred the tranquillity of the countryside to the social whirl of the *bon ton*. In fact, Lady Jane’s love of Windsor led her to search for a more permanent arrangement in October 1753: ‘my employment since my return to Windsor has been to look for a habitation that I could either buy or take a long lease of, but to no purpose’.<sup>688</sup> Her determination was such that she eventually found a suitable house in 1754:

I believe I wrote to you some time ago I had agreed for a house at Sunbury, but the Act must be had before the title can be a good one, and though I think I shall certainly have it, yet I cannot begin to make any alterations til I am sure, and there is a great deal to be done.<sup>689</sup>

By 1755, she proudly remarked to Mrs Eyre that, ‘Sunbury begins to look gay, and I wish myself there. I am building a large room and three servants’ rooms. Don’t you think it a great undertaking?’<sup>690</sup> Lady Jane’s obvious delight in her new house indicates that she was at last beginning to feel content with her situation, having both a town house to engage with society, and a country house to retreat to when it became too suffocating. Her wealth and independence as a widow enabled her to pursue her own whims, which materialised in the form of two modest properties.

As with Lady Jane, when finances would allow, widows sought to have both a townhouse and a suburban villa, so that they could enjoy the advantages of both lifestyles. As will be discussed, the main impetus

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<sup>686</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 258.

<sup>687</sup> Explored further in Matthew M. Reeve, ‘Gothic Architecture, Sexuality, and License at Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill’, *Art Bulletin*, vol. 95, no. 3 (2013b), pp. 411-39.

<sup>688</sup> Lady Jane Coke to Mrs Eyre, Windsor, 9 October 1753, in Rathborne (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke to Her Friend*, p. 60.

<sup>689</sup> Lady Jane Coke to Mrs Eyre, Saville Row, 26 Nov 1754, in Rathborne (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke to Her Friend*, p. 149.

<sup>690</sup> Lady Jane Coke to Mrs Eyre, 26 March 1755, in Rathborne (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke to Her Friend*, p. 157.

behind these builds was to create a convenient retreat from London where they could entertain their friends and family in suitable style. These villas became a further platform upon which widows could demonstrate their architectural and aesthetic sophistication. Often, widows built their villas as a means of creating a tangible legacy that could be bequeathed to a suitably deserving individual, usually a younger child or female relative or friend. Such houses were typically financed independently by the widows, and as such the architectural scope of the commission could take on whatever extent suited the patroness.

The following examination will focus, in turn, on the villas of four widows, two of which, Mrs Charlotte Digby and Mrs Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, successively bought and altered the same property in Thames Ditton. Lady Polwarth's endeavours at Polwarth Lodge will then be considered, as they provide an interesting example of how widowhood allowed for architectural self-indulgence. Finally, the villa of Mrs Agneta Yorke will be scrutinised, for which she commissioned the celebrated Sir John Soane.

## **The Hon. Charlotte Digby (1707-1778)**

This discussion will begin with the Hon. Mrs Charlotte Digby, *née* Fox, the wealthy widow of the Hon. Edward Digby. Charlotte came from a prominent Whig family, her father was the renowned politician Sir Stephen Fox, and both her brothers were elevated to the peerage through their political services. Stephen Fox-Strangways was created 1st Earl of Ilchester in 1756, and Henry Fox was created 1st Baron Holland in 1763. Her alliance with the Digby family of Sherborne Castle, Devon, cemented the union between these two powerful Whig dynasties.

Upon her husband's death in 1747, Charlotte was genuinely heartbroken: 'Nothing can add to my present misery. It is too great to continue in this state: it must either abate or I must sink under it'.<sup>691</sup> Little is known of the first eleven years of her widowhood, but in 1758 she took up residence at Fords Farm, a large villa located at Thames Ditton. Charlotte clearly intended to make herself a comfortable suburban retreat because she immediately set about enlarging Fords. This project provided her with much enjoyment, as indicated in a letter from Lady Caroline Fox, her sister-in-law, in 1759:

[Charlotte] is surprisingly well when she is at that place of hers, more amused with and more eager about the works there, both in her house and garden, than I could ever imagine I should have seen her.<sup>692</sup>

Unfortunately it is unknown how she altered the house, but Charlotte was obviously pleased with her work, because in September 1763 she purchased the freehold of Fords for £7,000 from George Tash, together with twenty-three acres purchased from John Johnson in October.<sup>693</sup> It is purported, therefore, that widows often engaged in architectural projects as a means of usefully occupying themselves. It provided them with

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<sup>691</sup> BL, Holland House Papers, Add. MS 51340, ff. 21-22, Charlotte Digby to Lord Ilchester, 3 December 1746.

<sup>692</sup> Lady Caroline Fox to Lady Kildare, 15 June 1759, in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, vol 1, p. 225.

<sup>693</sup> SHC, 188/4, Copy of court roll, manor of West Molesey: attested copy of surrender of John Johnston esq and admission of Hon Charlotte Digby, 17 October 1763.



worthy distraction from their potential loneliness and gave them a sense of achievement that they might not otherwise obtain during their widowhoods.

In 1764, Charlotte continued to expand her small estate by purchasing an island in the river Thames, known as Ditton Hill.<sup>694</sup> Furthermore, in 1771, she succeeded in diverting the highway that ran from Thames Ditton to Kingston away from her house, so that she could further extend her garden.<sup>695</sup> Evidently, Charlotte was establishing herself as a prominent lady of local society, because with these additional purchases of land Fords Farm became one of the largest estates in the area. Consequently, Charlotte's prominence and status were greatly increased within the local community, signifying that wealthy widows could easily influence the built environments that surrounded them.

The fact that Charlotte appears to have been successively improving, extending and enlarging her estate suggests that she was perhaps creating a legacy for one of her younger sons. Although her eldest son Edward was well provided for, having succeeded his grandfather as the 6th Baron Digby in 1752, her five younger sons had only received capital portions of £2,000 each from their father and a meagre allowance of £100 a year.<sup>696</sup> Thus, by establishing a respectably-sized estate, Charlotte was confident that she was providing a suitable inheritance for at least one of her sons. Upon her death in 1778, her estate at Fords passed to her fifth son, Colonel Stephen Digby.

## **The Hon. Charlotte Boyle Walsingham (1738-1790)**

In 1782, Col. Stephen Digby leased Fords Farm to the recently widowed Hon. Mrs Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, another widow of substantial means, who had inherited £40,000 from her mother, Lady Frances Coningsby in 1781.<sup>697</sup> Prior to her widowhood, she and her husband Commodore Hon. Robert Boyle Walsingham had happily lived in Clock Court at Hampton Court, so it is unsurprising that Charlotte wished to return to the area two years later. As befitted her rank, Charlotte also had a 'splendid' London house in Stratford Place that she had 'elegantly fitted up [with] her own Paintings & Drawings'.<sup>698</sup> Her obvious enjoyment of interior decoration was later expressed at Fords Farm together with the artistic assistance of her daughter.

In March 1783, a year into her lease at Fords Farm, Charlotte purchased the freehold, after which she enacted her own architectural scheme for the villa.<sup>699</sup> She reputedly paid £5,000 for '42 acres of land [...]

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<sup>694</sup>SHC, 188/5, Copy of court roll (attested copy), manor of Hampton Court: admission of Hon Charlotte Digby, 17 May 1764.

<sup>695</sup>TNA, C 202/159/18, Charlotte Digby's enclosure of the highway in Thames Ditton, 11 January 1771.

<sup>696</sup>Martin, *Wives and Daughters*, p. 394.

<sup>697</sup>Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, Hill Street, 1781, in Blunt (ed.), *Mrs Montagu 'Queen of the Blues'*, vol. 1, p. 113.

<sup>698</sup>Fanny Burney's journal entry, 15 December 1782, in Lars E. Troide and Stewart J. Cooke (eds), *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney: 1782-1783*, vol. 5 (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's Press, 1988), p. 204.

<sup>699</sup>SHC, 188/11-12, lease and release with covenant to surrender copyhold and assignment of fixtures and fittings for Fords Farm between 1) Hon Stephen Digby 2) Hon Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, 24-25 Mar 1783; 188/13,

House, Offices, Furniture &c.<sup>700</sup> Her plan for Fords Farm was more ambitious than that of her widowed predecessor; she demolished the existing villa and replaced it with a design of her own. An 1820 engraving of the south-west front depicts a villa of substantial size, the whole stuccoed and surmounted with a crenelated parapet (fig. 45).<sup>701</sup>



**Fig. 45 Boyle Farm, Thames Ditton, after Henry Gastineau, 1820.**

Charlotte's inclusion of Gothic Revival features may well have been influenced by her friend and neighbour, Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill. Once again, her championing of the Gothic Revival is indicative of the fact that widows were often bold in their choice of architectural styles. The completion of her house in 1787 gave occasion for Charlotte to rename her villa as Boyle Farm, clearly denoting the degree of pride that she felt for her achievement. The control that Charlotte was able to exert over her own finances and

covenant to produce deeds for capital message or mansion called Fords in Thames Ditton between 1) Hon Stephen Digby 2) Hon Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, 25 Mar 1783.

<sup>700</sup> Mary Hamilton's journal entry, 4 July 1783, in Elizabeth and Florence Anson (eds), *Mary Hamilton: Letters and Diaries 1756-1816* (London: John Murray, 1925), p. 141.

<sup>701</sup> SHC, 4348/4/49/2, engraving entitled 'Boyle Farm, Thames Ditton, seat of Lord Henry Fitzgerald', engraved by T. Barber after Henry Gastineau, for *Excursions Through Surrey* (London: Longman & Co., 1820).

architectural schemes impressed her friends, especially the courtier, diarist and bluestocking, Mary Hamilton, who wrote of it in her diary:

Mrs. W is very much pleased with this place [...] here she is sole mistress, & every thing around her being her own property, it *interests* & amuses her. Mrs. W. showed me the house & we walked in the Garden til near 10.<sup>702</sup>

Hamilton's remarks demonstrate just how passionate patronesses could become in the creation of their perfect homes. As with their male counterparts, women could find great enjoyment in architecture, especially if they believed that they were creating a legacy for their children. Charlotte had two children, a son, Richard, who died in 1788, but also a daughter, Charlotte, who would eventually inherit Boyle Farm along with her mother's large fortune.<sup>703</sup> As such, great care was taken in the execution of Boyle Farm, of which the interior was its shining glory.

### **Classical interiors executed by Miss Charlotte Boyle**

In contrast to the Gothic exterior, the interiors of Boyle Farm were distinctly Classical. Charlotte perhaps felt that a greater degree of domestic lavishness could be achieved with a Classical scheme. In a letter from the bluestocking Hannah More to her sister in 1787, it is revealed that Charlotte's daughter was instrumental in executing some of the interior decoration:

I never was so astonished as to see this large and very elegant house already completely furnished; all the beautiful purple and gold pilasters of the magnificent library, the chimney-pieces sculpture, as well as painting, both designed and executed by Miss Boyle. The doors are adorned with rich paintings copied from the Vatican; the panels pictures emblematic of the arts and sciences, from [...] Herculaneum, all done by that young lady in the short space of a year!<sup>704</sup>

The library was located on the first floor overlooking the gardens towards the river. Horace Walpole was also sufficiently impressed with the decorative scheme to mention it in a letter to the Earl of Strafford:

Miss Boyle, who has real genius, has carved three tablets in marble with boys, designed by herself. Those sculptures are for a chimney-piece and she is painting pannels in grotesque for the library, with pilasters of glass in black and gold.<sup>705</sup>

Miss Boyle painted twenty-eight 'verre églomisé' pilasters which exist to this day; she signed one with 'C. BOYLE NOVEMBER 2D 1786'. These pilasters of black and gold feature dancing Classical figures, garlands and birds, and are surmounted by intricate anthemion capitals. The proficiency with which Miss Boyle worked is exquisite and is demonstrative of the fact that women were often highly influential in the

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<sup>702</sup> Mary Hamilton's journal, in Elizabeth and Florence Anson (eds), *Mary Hamilton: Letters and Diaries 1756-1816*, p. 138.

<sup>703</sup> Charlotte Boyle married Lord Henry FitzGerald, younger brother of the Duke of Leinster, in 1791 and was created Baroness de Ros in 1806.

<sup>704</sup> Hannah More to her sister, Boyle Farm, 1787, in Roberts (ed.), *Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, vol. 1, p. 279.

<sup>705</sup> Horace Walpole to the Earl of Strafford, Strawberry Hill, 28 July 1787, in Lewis (ed.), *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35, p. 390.

execution of taste. More's reference to Herculaneum and the surviving details of Miss Boyle's work suggests that mother and daughter were pursuing a fashionable Neo-Classical decoration scheme. The archaeological discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum that had inspired famous architects such as Robert Adam and James Stuart were evidently as eagerly embraced by Charlotte and her daughter at Boyle Farm.

Further, the commentary from both Hannah More and Mary Hamilton about Charlotte's architectural endeavours, is indicative of the fact that these elite literary women were connected by their mutual passion for architecture and the arts. All three participated in bluestocking activities and it would seem that Charlotte's villa provided the perfect location for their sophisticated gatherings. On 13 June 1788, for example, she held a fabulous ball, which Frances Boscawen described as 'charming, abounding with dancing men and with great ladies'.<sup>706</sup> Nevertheless, despite such obvious displays of wealth and status, Charlotte did so with the decorum necessary:

Mrs Walsingham has a very large fortune in her own power, I have been told 5 or £6000 p<sup>r</sup> annum, besides money, she has every thing in stile, lives like a person of fashion; she is a good economist, & though she lives *expensively*, yet not *extravagantly*.<sup>707</sup>

Even though Charlotte was an independent woman with her own fortune, it is apparent that had she behaved too ostentatiously, she would have received society's censure. The ability to live fashionably, yet not too wastefully, was a bargain that widows often had to strike. Their architectural patronage was a clear declaration of their wealth and their ability to shape the environments around them. Thus, it often took a very wealthy or very strong-willed widow to embark upon such projects. Charlotte was certainly one such character, as she was determined to maintain her place within society and as such created a fashionable abode within which she could host the very best of parties.

## **Amabel Hume-Campbell, Lady Polwarth (1751-1833)**

When a widow did not have a child or a relative for whom to create a legacy, the creation of a perfect suburban retreat was a matter of pure architectural indulgence. In these cases, a widow's interest in architecture was not borne out of necessity, but was a direct form of self-expression. Such was the case with Lady Polwarth (fig. 46). She was widowed at the age of thirty; she had no children and would never remarry during her fifty-two-year widowhood. During her first decade as a widow she lived at No. 49 Upper Brook Street and enjoyed all that London high-life had to offer.<sup>708</sup> Lady Polwarth's diary for November 1786, for example, reveals a busy round of social calls to family and friends:

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<sup>706</sup> Frances Boscawen to her cousin, Rosedale, 13 June 1788, in Cecil Aspinall-Oglander (ed.), *Admiral's Widow, Being the Life and Times of the Hon. Mrs Edward Boscawen from 1761 to 1805* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1942), pp. 131-32.

<sup>707</sup> Mary Hamilton's diary entry, 10 July 1784, in Anson (eds), *Mary Hamilton: Letters and Diaries 1756-1816*, p. 219.

<sup>708</sup> For an account of Lady Polwarth's association with 49 Upper Brook Street see Anthea Jones, 'Letters from Mary Yorke, the wife of the Bishop of Ely 1781-1808', *PCAS*, vol. 94 (2005), pp. 150-53.

Thursday, Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Went to Mrs Francis, visited Mrs Maddox. Went at night to Ldy Grantham's. Ldy Eliza, Mr & Mrs Robinson were all there.  
Friday 24<sup>th</sup>. Dined at Ld Hardwicke's: visited Ldy Beauchamps.  
Saturday, Nov 25<sup>th</sup>. Visited Ldy Yorke, & went to Ldy Grantham's. N.B. Mrs Robinson & Miss Harris visited me in the morning.  
Sunday Nov 26<sup>th</sup>. Din'd at Ld Hardwicke's, went to Ldy Grantham's.<sup>709</sup>

Despite the conveniences of the city, Lady Polwarth soon desired a small country seat of her own to escape the pollution and chaos of the metropolis. In 1791, she purchased a villa in Putney Heath from Charles Bembridge, of the East India Company. The reason for this purchase was to be closer to her widowed sister Lady Grantham, who occupied the neighbouring villa, Grantham House.



Fig. 46 *Amabel Hume-Campbell, Lady Polwarth*, unknown artist, 1776.

<sup>709</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/9/063, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 9, 23-26 November 1786.

## Creating Polwarth Lodge

Although Bembridge's villa was arguably of an acceptable size for Lady Polwarth's needs, she clearly thought it inadequate and immediately employed the architect John Yenn to survey the property, for which he was paid £200 'on account of the intended Addition & Alteration to her Ladyships House on Putney Heath'.<sup>710</sup> Evidently, Lady Polwarth wished to update the property and remodel it to her own specification. By 5 October, work was already underway, as Lady Polwarth recorded in her diary that she 'saw mr Yenn in the morning'.<sup>711</sup> Yenn's progress must have pleased his patroness because he received a further £300 the following day 'on account of Building carrying on' at Putney Heath.<sup>712</sup> In December, Lady Polwarth's sister checked in on the building and reported 'that yr Buildings were near covered in a Week ago'.<sup>713</sup>

Although Lady Polwarth did not record the details of her architectural scheme in her diary, she regularly recorded her visits to see her architect and the progress at Putney. Over the course of 1792, she mentioned her meetings with Yenn a total of six times: once in April,<sup>714</sup> twice in June,<sup>715</sup> once in July<sup>716</sup> and twice in December.<sup>717</sup> When the villa reached various milestones, Lady Polwarth would elaborate a little more. For example, on the 28 July she wrote: 'My House at Putney is at last floor'd, but it will be some Months still before it can be live'd in'.<sup>718</sup> By 17 December, she was pleased to record that she 'Went to Putney to meet Mr Yenn [...] All is in a manner finish'd except the papering'.<sup>719</sup>

During 1793, Lady Polwarth directed the interior decoration of her villa, for which she chose fashionable wallpapers. By April, 'Bowers' had finished papering her bedchamber apartment<sup>720</sup> and in May, she settled upon the paper for her principal reception room, the 'Bow window Room'.<sup>721</sup> Lady Polwarth was also present to 'meet the Bellhanger' in May, to ensure that the most convenient arrangement was decided upon.<sup>722</sup> She eventually 'Came down to settle' in her Villa on 31 May.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> BLARS, L31/284/7, 'Receipt of Mr Yenn, Architect, £200 on Account Aug. 17<sup>th</sup> 1791'.

<sup>711</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/001, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 5 October 1791.

<sup>712</sup> BLARS, L31/284/6, 'Mr Yenn Surveyor's Receipt on Account £300 Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 1791'.

<sup>713</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/49, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Whitehall, 14 December 1791.

<sup>714</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/085, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 3 April 1792

<sup>715</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/146, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 4 June 1792; WYL, Leeds, 150/7/6/13/150, Diary, 11 June 1792.

<sup>716</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/180, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 28 July 1792.

<sup>717</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/256, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 17 December 1792; WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/265, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 26 December 1792.

<sup>718</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/180, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 28 July 1792.

<sup>719</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/256, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 17 December 1792.

<sup>720</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/14/088, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 14, 22 April 1793.

<sup>721</sup> WYAS, WYL150/7/6/14/097, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 14, 3 May 1793.

<sup>722</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/14/099, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 14, 6 May 1793.

<sup>723</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/14/114, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 14, 31 May 1793.

From the surviving receipts of money paid to Yenn, it is clear that progress was swift throughout the project. He was paid £500 in February 1792 and another £500 in July.<sup>724</sup> On 26 December, Lady Polwarth also recorded in her diary that she paid Yenn ‘another 1500£ for my Buildings at Putney’, although no receipt survives for this date.<sup>725</sup> Then in 1793, Yenn was paid £211 12s. 7d. ‘to pay Bills for the Garden’, in May he received a further £400, and in July he was paid the final balance of £1717 12s. 6d.<sup>726</sup> These sums indicate that the work carried out was significant with the receipted sums totalling £3,829 4s. 13d. If Lady Polwarth’s recorded £1,500 is added, the works cost the considerable sum of £5,329 4s. 13d. This strongly demonstrates that Lady Polwarth had embarked upon a substantial remodelling project, indicating that she wished to place her own architectural ‘stamp’ upon the property by altering both the elevations and plan.

A set of two elevations and two plans of Lady Polwarth’s house by Yenn shed some light upon the nature of the building scheme. The first elevation is of the rear of the house as it was before the work began, and illustrates that it was of two storeys with a basement and attic, and was of eleven bays, with the central three bays making up a large bow window that transcended both ground and first floors.<sup>727</sup> The matching plan is of the principal floor and demonstrates that the house, as Lady Polwarth bought it, featured a very compact plan, with the main reception room featuring the large bow window.<sup>728</sup> The flanking wings of two bays both consisted of staircases, presumably back stairs going down into the basement.

The second elevation is a watercolour of the front of the house, showing the additions and alterations (fig. 47).<sup>729</sup> Although this elevation is of the entrance front and the previous one was of the rear, it is still possible to deduce that the alterations were substantial. The façade was extended considerably, but remained well-balanced and well-proportioned. It is clear that Lady Polwarth wished to advocate a Classical architectural scheme, because the altered pavilions featured Venetian windows and the projecting three bays of the central block was surmounted by a pediment. The addition of a Classical porch, with four Tuscan columns, enhanced this effect.

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<sup>724</sup> BLARS, L31/284/5, ‘Receipt on Account from Mr Yenn Architect £500 Feb th 2d 1792’; L31/284/4 ‘Receipt from Mr Yenn Architect on Account £500 Paid July 28<sup>th</sup> 1792’.

<sup>725</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/265, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 26 December 1792.

<sup>726</sup> BLARS, L31/284/3; L31/284/2; L31/284/1.

<sup>727</sup> BLARS, L33/262, Elevation of the garden front prior to alterations, watercolour, by John Yenn, *c.* 1791.

<sup>728</sup> BLARS, L33/261, Plan of the principal floor prior to alterations, by John Yenn, *c.* 1791.

<sup>729</sup> BLARS, L33/264, Watercolour of the entrance front of the house, showing alterations, by John Yenn, *c.* 1791.



**Fig. 47 Entrance front of Polwarth Lodge, as altered, by John Yenn, c. 1791.**

The accompanying plan of the ground floor illustrates the disposition of the rooms after the alterations (fig. 48).<sup>730</sup> The main block remained the same, except for the creation of an entrance hall and the enlargement of the single storey connecting blocks. Evidently, Lady Polwarth enjoyed creating her own perfect paradise, lavishing great sums upon every aspect of the project. Considering that she sold it two decades later, it is apparent that she was simply indulging her architectural whims at the time. The villa became known as Polwarth Lodge, which again exemplifies the fact that widows enjoyed conspicuously displaying their wealth and taste within the local community.

In March 1792, Lady Polwarth lent her sister £4,000 so that she could purchase Grantham House, after which Lady Grantham embarked upon a remodelling scheme of her own, employing Yenn.<sup>731</sup> This neatly demonstrates the important role that widows played within the architectural patronage system, because it was due to her successful working relationship with Yenn that he was recommended. In December 1793, Lady Polwarth lent her sister a further £700 ‘for her Buildings at Putney’, signifying that Lady Polwarth was instrumental in Yenn’s continued employment.<sup>732</sup>

<sup>730</sup> BLARS, L33/263. Plan of the principal floor, showing alterations, by John Yenn, c. 1791.

<sup>731</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/13/077, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 13, 20 March 1792.

<sup>732</sup> WYAS, Leeds, WYL150/7/6/14/210, Diaries of Lady Amabel Yorke, vol. 14, 12 December 1793.



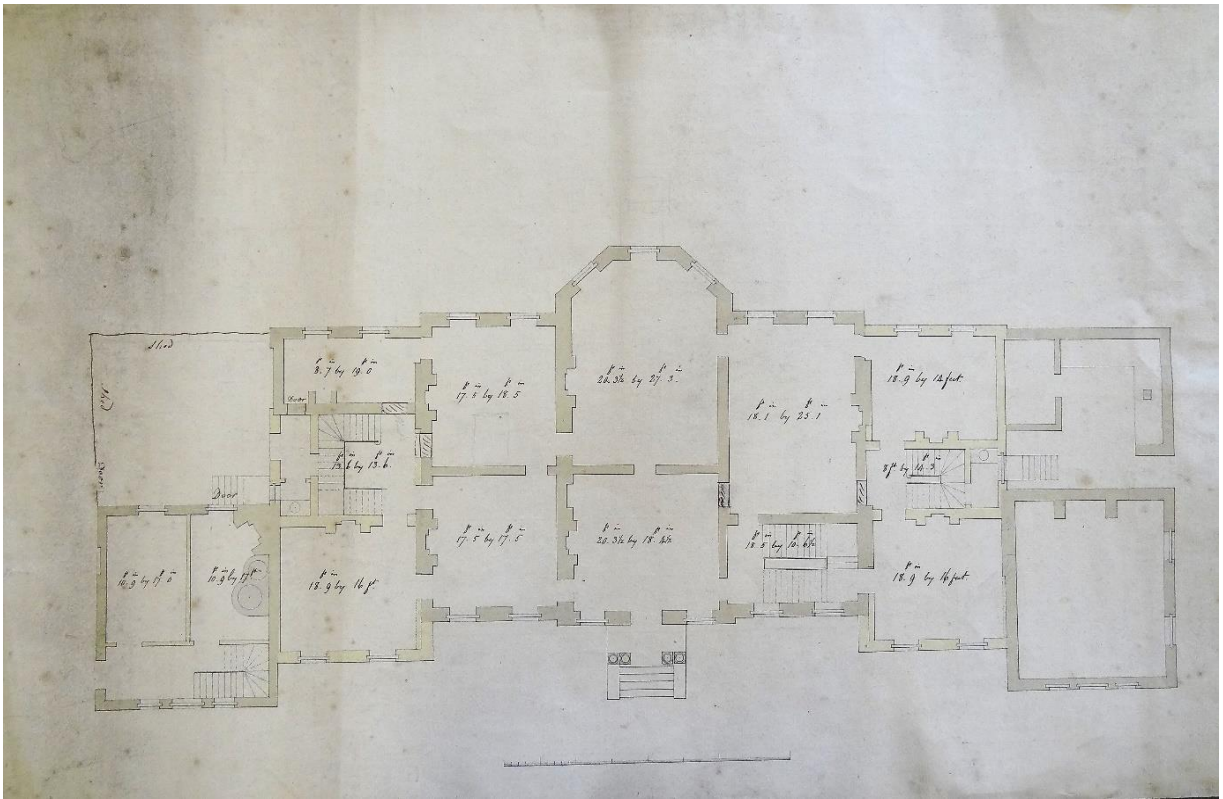


Fig. 48 Plan of the principal floor of Polwarth Lodge, as altered, by John Yenn, c. 1791.

## The Hon. Agneta Yorke (1740-1820)

Agneta Yorke, *née* Johnson, was the second wife of Charles Yorke, Lord Chancellor, and aunt of Lady Polwarth and Lady Grantham (fig. 49). She was widowed in 1770 with four young children under her care, the eldest of whom was her step-son, Philip Yorke, who later became 3rd Earl of Hardwicke in 1790, upon the death of his uncle. Until her step-son came of age in 1778, Agneta was responsible for the management of his estate and assets. This included the Tittenhanger estate, Hertfordshire, which had passed to her late husband through his first marriage to Catherine Freeman. Her responsibilities were numerous and diverse, including, for example, organising the drainage of the 'Brew House Pond to see what fish is really in it' in May 1773.<sup>733</sup> She also remained abreast of the state of the estate's crops, which in June 1775 were damaged by the great heat: 'my hay is reduced to half the quantity of former years, and my poor crops of corn I doubt will produce anything'.<sup>734</sup>



Fig. 49 *Agneta Yorke*, after Valentine Green, 1769.

<sup>733</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, f. 1, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, Tittenhanger, 31 May 1773.

<sup>734</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, f. 39, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, Tittenhanger, 21 June 1775.

Following Philip's coming of age, he offered his step-mother the use of Tyttenhanger for 'as long as is agreeable' to her.<sup>735</sup> With less income at her disposal, now that she had to rely on her jointure alone, Agneta expressed her concern about the financial viability of maintaining such a large house:

My income now, will not support the magnificence of a Town & Country residence, especially a House of such consequence as this, were it a small mansion only sufficient to Lodge myself & Family, with a garden answerable to the size, I might then find great convenience in such a retreat. But the keeping up this garden properly and the number of servants necessary to take care of so large a House, requires more money than I can spare [...] I must, to use a homely proverb, cut my Coat according to my cloth.<sup>736</sup>

This passage is indicative of the decisions that many elite widows faced when they had only their jointures to rely upon to live. Although Agneta clearly held a great affection for Tyttenhanger, it having been her home since 1770, its running costs were clearly a cause for concern. Despite Agneta's desire to scale down, Philip encouraged her to stay, and thus in 1783 she commissioned John Soane to undertake minor repairs to the house.<sup>737</sup> No drawings survive from this commission, so it is difficult to ascertain the extent of work carried out. Philip and Soane had struck up a friendship in Italy, whilst the former was on his grand tour, so it is very likely, therefore, that Philip encouraged his step-mother to patronise Soane.<sup>738</sup> At the same time that Soane was at Tyttenhanger for Agneta, he was also constructing a rusticated dairy at Hamels Park, for Philip's wife.<sup>739</sup>

### **Agneta's move to Sydney Farm, Hamble, Southampton**

During the 1780s, Agneta purchased Sydney Farm, a small villa near Southampton, so that she could better follow the naval career of her youngest son, Joseph Sydney Yorke. Soon after taking up her new residence, Agneta contemplated commissioning a series of improvements:

I am to settle a plan of reforming my Stable yard &c, & some additions to my Houses, a certain Mr Cocherill whom I have long known, & who is employ'd in building a very good House for a Gentleman near Southampton, is to be my architect, I shall therefore probably be immersed in Brick & Mortar next Spring.<sup>740</sup>

The nature of the project altered as it progressed and later encompassed a series of decorative updates, including repainting many of the principal rooms:

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<sup>735</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, f. 371, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, Tyttenhanger, 2 October 1782.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid.

<sup>737</sup> Dean, *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate*, p. 168.

<sup>738</sup> For further discussion on the Soane-Yorke relationship, see Pierre de la Ruffinière Du Prey, 'John Soane, Philip Yorke, and their Quest for Primitive Architecture', *National Trust Studies*, (1979), pp. 28-38.

<sup>739</sup> For example, see SM, (1) volume 41/30 recto, 'Elevation of the South Front of the Dairy at Hammels', 1783; (2) volume 68/6, 'Plan of the Dairy at Hamells' drawn three-dimensionally, 1783; (3) volume 68/7, Front elevation set among trees, 1783.

<sup>740</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, f. 422, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, Sydney Farm, 14 January 1787.

I am still in the midst of workmen and consequently great confusion, but I hope I see an end to it, tho' at some distance. It has however served for amusement hitherto, when the painting begins, it will grow a serious affair, and I am afraid will drive us out of the house for some days.<sup>741</sup>

Agneta obviously had a great desire to update the whole of Sydney Farm but was constrained by insufficient funds. Two years later, however, Agenta again considered embarking upon a further remodelling scheme, for which she asked Soane to put forward some proposals. He travelled down to survey Sydney Farm in 1789 and created plans but this scheme was never executed.<sup>742</sup> By 1792, Agneta was completely disillusioned, complaining that:

[Sydney Farm] is so cramped for space that it is very inconvenient, and I can by no means get any more Land about me. The Stables & Coach House too, must be rebuilt, which will cost 400£, and after all the House is old, & always wanting some thing done to it.<sup>743</sup>



Fig. 50 Presentation drawing of the entrance front of Sydney Lodge, by John McDonnell (Soane's pupil), 1793.

<sup>741</sup> BLARS, L30/9/97/114, Agneta Yorke to Lady Grey, Sydney Farm, 17 July 1787.

<sup>742</sup> Dean, *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate*, p. 179.

<sup>743</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, f. 499, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, Sydney Farm, 4 November 1792.

## Agneta commissions Soane to build a new villa

After having tried to make the best out of Sydney Farm for five long years, Agneta finally decided to purchase an entirely new parcel of land located a short distance away near the village of Hamble:

Enclosed is a very rude sketch of a Farm I am just going to purchase. It is that beautiful space of ground at Hamble [...] This will give you an idea of the extent and form of it. I have some thoughts of building a House upon it as it is certainly the most beautiful situation in the County, & the Fields already lie so well together only wanting to be laid down by the plow into Lawn or grass. Planting will be necessary, there being only one small coppice, besides the trees in the Hedgerows, of which there is no want. I have marked on the Plan, where the House should stand, tho there is not a single spot on the whole ground which does not afford a fine view. Where the Stable Yard and Garden should be, I must leave to one more conversant in such business to decide. The purpose of me troubling you with this, is to beg you would be so good as to speak to Mr Soane on the subject of building a small but convenient House for me, & to desire him to send me down some Plans.<sup>744</sup>

This passage is highly indicative of the agency that many elite widows possessed during this era. Agneta not only engaged in the property market and in architectural surveying/sketching, but also in the architectural patronage system itself. Her previous interactions with Soane and her step-son's clear admiration of his work must have influenced her decision to commission Soane to design her new villa. Agneta's autonomy was absolute, and although she had dabbled in the refurbishment of Sydney Farm, it is clear that she had always wanted to embark on a much grander scheme.

Similar to Lady Pembroke's commission in Richmond Park, Sydney Lodge has also received surprisingly limited academic investigation, except for Ptolemy Dean's gazetteer entry in *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate*.<sup>745</sup> The ensuing discussion, therefore, is reliant upon Agneta's numerous letters, previously overlooked by architectural historians, that demonstrate her architectural enthusiasm, autonomy and direction. An excellent example of her design ambition is evident in the following excerpt:

The sort of Plans I should like, would be a Square. The offices underneath & the Kitchen arched to prevent the smell of it in the upper stories. On the principal floor, two very good rooms (an Eating and drawing room) a Book Room & a Family apartment with all conveniences. In the attick or Roof some Bed rooms for company & maid servts. The mens sleeping room below in the offices (and the Butlers also). In this lower space I should wish all conveniences as Scullery, Larder, Hall, Butler & House Keepers Rooms & wine cellar &c. The Beer, coals and wood might be in the vaults in the area. You see my object is to have a low House, for I would have no Garrets over the Rooms I have specified. The windows of the Principal rooms should be down to the Floor and those of the Basement story only half way above Ground. The chimneys I should like to be almost level with the Roof & hardly visible. As I study use & convenience more than ornament or shew, I am very anxious for a Plan that should be perfectly comfortable with just elegance enough for pleasure.<sup>746</sup>

Undoubtedly, Agneta was a patroness with a very specific vision in mind and had carefully considered the architectural elements that she thought most important for her villa. She was extremely conscious of the

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<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> Dean, *Sir John Soane and the Country Estate*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>746</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, ff. 499-500, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, Sydney Farm, 4 November 1792.

fact that she wanted a compact and convenient house, but was also willing to indulge in a justified amount of architectural elegance (fig. 50). Agneta's planning was extensive, having already decided that she wanted her house 'faced with white brick and slated', the slate was to be procured 'from the Western coast' and the stone 'from Swanage or Portland'; all of which was to be transported by water.<sup>747</sup> Furthermore, she also stipulated how much she wished to pay for such a villa: 'I should hope the whole might be done for 1500£'.<sup>748</sup>

Her step-son evidently obliged because Soane soon sent 'six small variant plans and elevations' to Agneta for her consideration in 1792, followed by a visit with more plans sent in January 1793.<sup>749</sup> Eventually, Agneta was satisfied and building work commenced in the spring of 1793 as she happily reported:

The house I am building is about four miles from hence, and forces me out at least once a week. It is tiresome to visit it oftener, as the workmen seem to go on very slow, though I really believe that the contrary is the fact. But Mr. Soane is building I think a castle instead of a cottage which I originally designed and the foundation seems intended to rival that of the largest pyramid. Capt. Yorke is not sorry for this I dare say, but for my own part I feel that it will be so long about that the next generation will hardly be able to get into it. Mr. Emes has sent me a plan for laying out the ground, but I do not much admire it. Indeed nature has done so much for me, that a very little taste (though I fear some expense) will do all the rest with ease.<sup>750</sup>

Her close involvement in the design process and her scrutiny over the construction illustrates how seriously architectural patronesses took their role. Agneta was aged fifty-two at this point and was therefore very discerning when it came to the design of both her house and gardens. Her commissioning of William Emes, an eminent landscape gardener of the time, is indicative of her desire to remain fashionable, despite her disapproval of his plan. She was also continuously concerned about the cost and the scale of the project, stating that: 'I tremble at so great an undertaking, as making a place at my time of Life, in so alarming a period & with the Stocks tumbling down so fast every day'.<sup>751</sup>

Nonetheless, the project brought her great pride, and by October 1793 Agneta delighted to report:

The Season on the whole, has been extremely favourable for Building, and my House has gone on as fast as I could possibly expect – I flatter myself it will do Mr Soane much credit, as certainly for its size, it is a very compleat mansion, and its appearance Elegant, but it is not a Palace.<sup>752</sup>

Indeed, in its final form, Sydney Lodge was an architectural endeavour that reflected well upon both patroness and architect. Its refined use of Classical forms, together with its convenient plan, resulted in an elegant and sophisticated villa. To corroborate this sentiment, it was later featured in *The New Vitruvius*

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

<sup>749</sup> SM, Journal No 2, 1 December 1792, p. 305.

<sup>750</sup> BLARS, L30/9/97/129, Agneta Yorke to Lady Grey, Sydney Farm, 13 June 1793.

<sup>751</sup> BL, Hardwicke Papers, Add. MS 35386, f. 504, Agneta Yorke to Philip Yorke, Sydney Farm, n.d. c. 1792.

<sup>752</sup> BLARS, L30/9/97/130, Agneta Yorke to Lady Grey, Sydney Farm, 1 October 1793.

*Britannicus* receiving the following description: ‘The building is of white bricks, with Portland stone-cornices and dressings; the whole plain and simple, convenience being the principal object’.<sup>753</sup> In fact, the house was constructed of yellow brick, as illustrated in two of Soane’s presentation drawings of the ‘Entrance Front’ to the west (fig. 50), and the ‘Lawn Front’ to the east.<sup>754</sup>

Little is known of Agneta’s chosen decorative scheme, but Soane’s working drawings for the drawing room suggest a simple Classical style, and for the ‘Eating Room’, a cornice containing Bacchus masks, thyrsus and poppy detailing is evident.<sup>755</sup> A drawing of the chimneypiece for the ‘Eating Room’ is inscribed with the following details:

The whole of this Chimney piece to be of vein<sup>d</sup> marble of the best quality, executed in a complete & workmanlike manner agreeable to the design with vein<sup>d</sup> slab of Inch & half <sup>quarter</sup> thick for the sum of twenty Guineas.<sup>756</sup>

This signifies that every element of Sydney Lodge was to be finished to the highest and most polished of standards. For Agneta’s bedchamber, a drawing of a chimneypiece features incised jambs with oval patera at each corner, and Vitruvian scroll and rosette frieze detailing.<sup>757</sup> This again reflected Soane’s simplified and refined interpretation of the Neo-Classical style. Evidently, Agneta was a follower of this style, and promoted it through her patronage.

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<sup>753</sup> George Richardson, *The New Vitruvius Britannicus*, vol. 1 (London, 1808), p. 5 and plate X.

<sup>754</sup> SM, (2) volume 59/39, ‘Elevation of the Entrance Front’ (to the west) set in a landscape, 1793; (3) 46/3/16, ‘Elevation of the Lawn Front’ (to the east), 1793.

<sup>755</sup> SM, (8) 80/1/58 recto and verso, for the Drawing Room, 1794; (9) 80/1/59 recto and verso, for the Eating Room, 1794.

<sup>756</sup> SM (11) 81/2/45, working drawing of chimneypiece, 1794-5.

<sup>757</sup> SM (10) 81/2/82, ‘M<sup>rs</sup> Yorke’s Chamber’, 1794-5.

# Chapter 12

## Breaking the rules: widows using their position to pursue architectural schemes denied to them as single or married women

### Inheriting a life interest

In 1718, after a twelve-year marriage, Sir John Germain died, leaving the Drayton estate in Northamptonshire, to his widow Lady Betty Germain, *née* Berkeley (1680-1769), for life. Although she predominantly lived in London and in her own apartments at Knole House (the seat of her close friends the Duke and Duchess of Dorset), she diligently maintained the Drayton estate in her absence. During her fifty-year tenure, Lady Betty largely left the property as she had inherited it. However, she did commission the remodelling of the chapel, for which a surviving undated bill from George Worrall, Master Plasterer at the Office of Works, regarding Drayton survives. It is entitled: ‘The Prizes of the Plaster work to be Done For y<sup>e</sup> Lady Germain att Drayton house in Northamptonshire’.<sup>758</sup> A rough plan of the chapel floor also exists, specifying the number of ‘whole’, ‘half’ and ‘q<sup>er</sup> stones’ required to complete the geometric pattern of white and black squares and diamonds.<sup>759</sup> An accompanying note further records the number of tiles needed for paving the ‘Counting Room’ and the ‘New Eating Room’, suggesting that Lady Betty commissioned various updates throughout the house.<sup>760</sup>

Of particular interest is a rough pencil sketch of the combined ‘arms of Sir John Germaine’ and ‘L<sup>y</sup> Elizabeth Berkeley’, indicating that Lady Betty was actively seeking to immortalise the alliance between herself and her late husband.<sup>761</sup> This coat of arms was designed to be prominently displayed upon the wall of the new chapel, as evidenced by an accompanying sketch of the chapel walls.<sup>762</sup> This demonstrates that Lady Betty

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<sup>758</sup> BL, Coke Papers, Add. MS 69965, ff. 45-6, plasterers bill, n.d.

<sup>759</sup> BL, Coke Papers, Add. MS 69965, f. 53, rough plan of chapel floor, n.d.

<sup>760</sup> BL, Coke Papers, Add. MS 69965, f. 47, note relating to the paving of the chapel floor, n.d.

<sup>761</sup> BL, Coke Papers, Add. MS 69965, f. 48, rough armorial sketch, n.d.

<sup>762</sup> BL, Coke Papers, Add. MS 69965, f. 49, sketch of the chapel wall, n.d.



wished her architectural contribution to be remembered and appreciated by future Drayton occupants. This modest interaction with architecture suggests that, although Lady Betty was not a significant architectural patroness, she was still conscious of placing her mark upon her inherited country seat – a theme that will be explored more fully in the ensuing discussion. Furthermore, her subscriptions to William Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones* (1722) and Robert Castell's *Villas of the Ancients* (1728) suggests that she liked to keep abreast of the latest architectural trends, which may have influenced her modest commissions at Drayton.

## Completing architectural projects for one's deceased husband

For many elite women, widowhood furnished them with the opportunity to engage with architecture in a way that was often denied them as daughters or wives. In exceptional cases, however, widows were given no choice in the matter and were simply handed the responsibility of completing great building projects, as specified in the wills of their late husbands. This occurred in 1722, when Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, was charged with the completion of Blenheim Palace, and in 1759 Margaret Coke, Countess of Leicester, was charged with the completion of Holkham Hall.<sup>763</sup>

In his will, the late Duke of Marlborough dedicated £50,000 towards the completion of Blenheim Palace, together with the sum of £10,000 'a year to Spoil Blenheim, her [the Duchess's] own way', as Sir John Vanbrugh believed.<sup>764</sup> At Holkham, the late Earl of Leicester directed that £2,000 per annum was to be used for the completion of Holkham. He left the entirety of his estate to his 'deare wife [...] to be used occupied held and enjoyed [...] during her life,'<sup>765</sup> and appointed her, together with Ralph Cauldwell his steward, Matthew Lamb his lawyer, and Wenman Coke his nephew and heir, as trustees, to complete the building, decoration and furnishing of Holkham.

Interestingly, both patronesses hired men of their choosing to complete their respective country seats. At Blenheim, Vanbrugh had long since been absent from the site, following his resignation in November 1716. However in 1722, the Duchess rehired Vanbrugh's assistant, Nicholas Hawksmoor, perhaps following his encouraging and respectful letter dated 17 June, 'Your Grace, I am informed, is finishing the Bridge and other affairs, which I most certainly commend and applaud'.<sup>766</sup> Hawksmoor proved to be a steady, reliable and competent replacement, who followed his patroness's directions with respect. After years of arguments

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<sup>763</sup> For a detailed discussion on Lady Leicester's involvement at Holkham, see Amy Boyington, 'Margaret Coke, Countess of Leicester: A Re-evaluation of her Contributions to Holkham' (Master's dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2013), *idem*, Amy Boyington, 'The Countess of Leicester and Her Contribution to Holkham Hall', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 22 (2014), pp. 53-66.

<sup>764</sup> John Vanbrugh to Jacob Tonson, 18 June 1722, in Dobrée and Webb (eds), *Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 146.

<sup>765</sup> Holkham Hall Archives, DD/FD 56B (1), Office Copy of the Will and Codicil of Thomas Earl of Leicester, 1759.

<sup>766</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61353, f. 240, Nicholas Hawksmoor to the Duchess, Greenwich, 17 June c. 1722.

and undermining from Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor's subservient manner must have been a welcome relief for the Duchess.

Similarly, one of the first decisions that Lady Leicester made as mistress of Holkham, was to dismiss her late husband's executant architect, Matthew Brettingham, and replace him with James Miller, a carver who had been on site since 1748. Leo Schmidt argues that this was because the remaining work was simply 'ornamental rather than architectural', but this ignores the fact that Lady Leicester oversaw a series of significant architectural elements, including the construction of the Counting House, stables, coach houses, plus the entire fitting out of the Strangers Wing, chapel and Portico Room.<sup>767</sup> It seems more likely that Brettingham wished to expand his client base, and was consequently increasingly occupied with his other commissions, including Wakefield Lodge, Northamptonshire (1759), and Benacre House, Suffolk (1762-4). This enabled Lady Leicester to choose Miller, who she knew could be relied upon to follow her directions without fear of insubordination.

In both cases it is clear that each widow felt it absolutely necessary to hire someone with whom they were familiar, and who would not challenge their decisions during the projects. These were no trifling projects as building works continued for a further eight years at Blenheim (1722-30) and a further six at Holkham (1759-65), which demonstrates the extent of work that remained. Not only did these women embrace their building projects, diligently ensuring that their late husbands' visions were realised, they also pursued their own architectural and aesthetic goals where possible. A theme that is prevalent both at Blenheim and Holkham, as well as others, is the desire of these widows to use their architectural power to develop and enforce the idea of their family's legacy.

At Blenheim, the Duchess was particularly forceful with her idea of legacy, choosing to immortalise her late husband's military achievements through architecture. In accordance with this, in 1723, she commissioned Hawksmoor to design the triumphal arch as an appropriate entrance to the park, with the following inscription:

This gate was built the year after the death of the most illustrious John Duke of Marlborough by order of Sarah his most beloved wife to whom he left the sole direction of many things that remained unfinished to this fabric. The services of this great man to his country the pillar will tell you which the duchess erected for a lasting monument of his glory and her affection for him, MDCCXXIII.

She proudly proclaimed that it was she (and not the Duke's daughter and heir Henrietta) who was considered competent and trustworthy enough to bring Blenheim to its conclusion. In this instance, the Duchess was also bolstering her own legacy and involvement in the creation and completion of Blenheim. She had a notoriously difficult relationship with her daughters and grandchildren, causing her to re-write her will

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<sup>767</sup> Leo Schmidt, Christian B. Keller and Polly Feversham (eds), *Holkham* (Munich: Prestel, 2005), p. 126.

twenty-six times.<sup>768</sup> The inscription, therefore, was likely intended to remind her descendants to whom they were indebted.



**Fig. 51 The Column of Victory, n.d.**

The ‘pillar’ mentioned in the Duchess’ inscription refers to the Column of Victory, which she commissioned in 1727 and which was completed in 1730 (fig. 51). The first designs, having originated with Hawksmoor, were altered by Lord Henry Herbert and executed by William Townesend, the Oxford mason. The 132 foot Doric column is surmounted by a lead statue of the Duke of Marlborough dressed as a Roman general and holding a small figure of victory. Characteristically, the Duchess was involved with every stage of the execution, as is illustrated by the ten surviving letters that she wrote to Townesend:

I have this day receiv’d a Letter from my Lord Herbert, who says it is absolutely necessary for you to send to him a Section of the Pillar & Pedestal according to the Measures propos’d in the Contract. To explain this thoroughly, my Lord does not mean one with the Gross Measures; but what is requir’d, is, that every course of Stones, together with the Binding Stones, may there appear answerable to the scale. This he desires you would do immediately, & before you begin the Pillar.<sup>769</sup>

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<sup>768</sup> Field, *The Favourite*, p. 455.

<sup>769</sup> Located in the Berkshire Record Office (hereafter BRO), D/ESV/B/F30/1-10, 1727-1732, and published by Angela Green, ‘Letters of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, on the Column of Victory at Blenheim’, *Oxoniensia* for 1966, vol. 31 (1968), pp. 139-45; BRO, D/ESV/B/F30/1, Duchess of Marlborough to William Townesend, 4 April 1727, as quoted in Green, ‘Letters of Sarah Churchill’, p. 140.

By July 1729, sufficient progress had been made upon the dado for discussions about the marble blocks (upon which the inscriptions would be carved) to take place:

I have been in search of marble ever since I saw you & am now promis'd to have it to my Satisfaction. I send you the Plan of the Dado, which shews the Sizes of the marble & manner in which the Pieces are to be put together, which I am told is necessary for Strength. I hope to send the marble soon to Oxford, and I desire you would by the first opportunity return me the Plan, & let me have your opinion of it.<sup>770</sup>

The pillar was completed in 1730 as a permanent reminder to the country (and the Churchill family) of the gratitude that was due to the late Duke for his great victory at Blenheim. In a similar vein at Holkham Hall, Lady Leicester commissioned a marble inscription to be placed in the magnificent Marble Hall in 1764:

THIS SEAT, on an open and barren Estate,  
Was planned, planted, built, decorated,  
And inhabited the middle of the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Century  
By THO<sup>S</sup> COKE EARL of LEICESTER

For this, the carver James Miller, received payment for '3 Books of Gold' for the gilding of the inscription in 1764.<sup>771</sup> Lady Leicester evidently wished to commemorate her late husband's architectural achievement but, unlike the Duchess of Marlborough, she did not record her own involvement in its completion. This modesty was seen throughout the project and may signify that other elite widows were reluctant to steal the architectural limelight. Interestingly, however, the only times that Lady Leicester did record her contribution was on the Holkham Almshouses that she erected in 1757 and in the church of St Withburga (on the Holkham estate), which she extensively restored to the cost of £1,000.<sup>772</sup>

In the years 1767 and 1768  
This Church and Chancel were  
repaired and beautified at the sole expense of  
Margaret Baroness Clifford  
Countess Dowager of Leicester

This suggests that a widow's architectural involvement in charitable and religious buildings was regarded as appropriate during this period and, as such, the inscription is emblazoned with Lady Leicester's marital coat of arms, with the supporting Clifford wyvern proudly standing on equal terms with the Coke ostrich. The inclusion of the Clifford wyvern is particularly important because in 1734 Lady Leicester had successfully campaigned to George II for the termination of the abeyance of the Barony de Clifford in her favour, thus

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<sup>770</sup> BRO, D/ESV/B/F30/2, Duchess of Marlborough to William Townesend, 6 July 1729 as quoted in Green, 'Letters of Sarah Churchill', p. 140.

<sup>771</sup> Holkham Archives, E/A/44, Account Book 1760-66, f. 40, 1764; Boyington, 'Countess of Leicester: A Re-evaluation', p. 55.

<sup>772</sup> John Chambers, *A General History of the County of Norfolk, Intended to Convey all the Information of a Norfolk Tour*, vol. 2 (Norwich: John Stacy, 1829), p. 598.

becoming the 19th Baroness Clifford in her own right. Her pride in this achievement is evident and is a legacy that she immortalised through architectural detailing.

Further evidence of Lady Leicester's boldness is apparent in the execution of the Holkham chapel.<sup>773</sup> There, she updated her late husband's approved plan as published in Matthew Brettingham the elder's publication, *The Plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk*, 1761.<sup>774</sup> Lady Leicester increased the size of the family gallery to include a convenient fireplace and gib door to allow access from the Chapel Wing bedchamber apartments, indicating that she considered convenience as necessary as architectural appropriateness. Lady Leicester again included her marital coat of arms in the decoration of the room, prominently placed above the gallery, intricately carved and painted by Miller (fig. 52).<sup>775</sup> It is clear that Lady Leicester was very proud of her late husband's creation at Holkham and wished their successors to know to whom they were indebted.



**Fig. 52** Lady Leicester's marital coat of arms, located above the Chapel gallery at Holkham Hall.

In addition, Lady Leicester completely altered the aesthetic arrangement of the north, east and west walls. For example, upon the east wall behind the altar, she reduced the number of Corinthian columns intended to flank Guido Reni's *Assumption of the Virgin* from four to two columns and two pilasters.<sup>776</sup> This alteration provided space for the two flanking paintings of St Cecilia and St Anne that Lady Leicester commissioned from Giovanni Battista Cipriani. This commission signifies that widows were just as intrinsic to the

<sup>773</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Boyington, 'Countess of Leicester: A Re-evaluation', pp. 43-47.

<sup>774</sup> Matthew Brettingham [sr.], *The plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk* (London: Haberkorn, 1761), plates 14-15.

<sup>775</sup> HA, E/A/44, Account Book 1760-66, f. 47, 16 November 1765.

<sup>776</sup> Matthew Brettingham [jr.], *The Plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk, The Seat of the late Earl of Leicester, to which are added, The Ceilings and Chimney Pieces; and also, A Descriptive Account of the Statues, Pictures, and Drawings; Not in the former Edition* (London, 1773), p. 15.

patronage of the arts as their late husbands had been, and that widowhood could provide them with the opportunity to display their artistic taste, perhaps for the first time.

The Duchess of Marlborough also used her control of the Blenheim project as an opportunity to exert her taste. She commissioned Hawksmoor to design the chapel and unsurprisingly changed much of what had been intended by Vanbrugh. Vanbrugh's early plans to include an apsed western altar with a single central window were altered and replaced with two large arched windows.<sup>777</sup> This was necessary because the Duchess had abandoned much of Vanbrugh's scheme for the Stable Court, building only a third of what had been intended, so that the chapel became the furthest projecting part of the court. The Duchess's control over the design was absolute, as indicated by a handwritten note on the chosen geometric design for part of the paved floor: 'Agreed with y<sup>e</sup> Duchess of Marlborough to pave y<sup>e</sup> upper part of her Chapell, in This manner, out of y<sup>e</sup> fragments of her marble'.<sup>778</sup> The 'fragments' referred to suggest that the Duchess was economising once more, by reusing surplus and irregularly-sized marble pieces from other areas of the house.

The Duchess was able to indulge her own aesthetic preferences for the chapel, and later in 1732 she claimed full credit for its simplicity:

The Chappel is finish'd and more than half the Tomb there ready to set up all in Marble Decorations of figures, Trophies, Medals with their inscriptions and in short everything that could do the Duke of Marlborough Honor and Justice. This is all upon the Wall of one side of the Chappel. The rest of it is finish'd decently, substantially and very plain. And considering how many Wonderful Figures and Whirligigs I have seen Architects finish a Chappel withal, that are of no manner of Use but to laugh at, I must confess that what I have designed for this Chappel may as reasonably be call'd finishing of it, as the Pews and Pulpit.<sup>779</sup>

The principal focus for lavishness, within the chapel, was the great Marlborough monument. Just as Lady Leicester had commissioned a grand sarcophagus in Tittleshall Church for the late Lord Leicester, so too did the Duchess, albeit on a more elaborate scale. Designed by William Kent, executed by Michael Rysbrack, and completed in 1733, the Duchess oversaw every aspect of its design as specified in a surviving document signed by her.<sup>780</sup> The document stipulates that the cost of the monument was to be the staggering sum of £2,200 for which the 'Marble, Workmanship, Boards for Cases, carriage, charge of setting the monument up, & all manner of expences are included', and was to be completed in two years.<sup>781</sup>

The completed monument features the late Duke standing, with the Duchess at his feet with their two sons (who predeceased them), all dressed in Roman robes, flanked by allegorical figures of fame and history. The whole ensemble is full of iconographical and symbolic elements designed to immortalise the Duke's (and

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<sup>777</sup> Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, vol. 1, pl. 62.

<sup>778</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61354, f. 102, 24 October 1726.

<sup>779</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61477, f. 38, Duchess of Marlborough to Sir Philip Yorke, 24 May 1732.

<sup>780</sup> BL, Blenheim Papers, Add. MS 61354, f. 110, 27 May 1730.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

the Duchess's) place within British history.<sup>782</sup> The epitaph reads: 'To the Memory of John Duke of Marlborough and his two sons His duchess has erected this monument in the year of Christ 1733'. The Duchess blatantly omitted her surviving daughters, whilst also immortalising her own name and contribution. The Duchess, once again, utilised the arts to manipulate her descendants to ensure that the creators of Blenheim were never forgotten.

## **Managing the estate for the heir during his minority**

When the male head of the family died whilst his heir was still a minor, the guardianship of the heir and the management of the estate sometimes fell to his widow. In these instances, widows could wield considerable political and financial power. During these periods of tenure, it was the widow's responsibility to ensure that her son's estates were managed appropriately and that the properties in her care were maintained to a suitable standard. In other cases, widowhood provided women with the unbridled opportunity to engage in architecture, perhaps for the first time. This could include commissioning new buildings, purchasing others, or completing unfinished architectural schemes, all of which were done for the good of the estate, in the name of the male heir.

The following discussion will explore some of these themes. Firstly, the management of the Robinson estates by the widowed Mary, Lady Grantham, will be investigated because she remained in control for sixteen years, until her son and heir reached his majority. During this substantial period, she guarded her son's interests with vigour, successfully campaigning to the Court of Chancery for the two Yorkshire estates of Newby Hall and Newby Park to become part of her son's inheritance. The second case study will investigate Lady Albinia Midleton's management of her son's Brodrick estates during his minority. Her tenure lasted over a decade and included overseeing the construction of Peper Harow House, Surrey, her son's country seat. She also purchased a new London property to be added to the Brodrick estates, thereby providing a suitable London residence for her son upon his majority.

### **Mary Robinson, Baroness Grantham (1757-1830)**

Lady Grantham, was widowed on the 20 July 1786 at the age of twenty-eight. Left in her charge was the upbringing and education of her three young sons, Thomas, who was now the 3rd Lord Grantham, Frederick, and Philip. Despite her fondness for Newby Park, her marital home in Yorkshire, Lady Grantham immediately moved her young family to Grantham House, the large family villa on Putney Heath, built by Sir Robert Downing. The reason for her quick removal to London is unknown, but it is likely that she wished to be closer to her family and friends in her time of grief. Further, under the terms of her

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<sup>782</sup> For an in-depth discussion on the Marlborough monument, see Kathleen Szpila, 'An Eighteenth-Century Artemisia: Sarah Churchill and the Invention of the Blenheim Memorials', in Cynthia Lawrence (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe: Patrons, Collectors, and Connoisseurs* (Pennsylvania: University Park, 1997), pp. 189-206.

marriage settlement, Grantham House in Whitehall was to be at her disposal during her widowhood, allowing her to set herself up amongst society.<sup>783</sup>

The tenancy of Newby Park was taken over by Lady Grantham's brother-in-law, Frederick 'Fritz' Robinson. He was also the joint guardian of her children. Fritz and his wife soon set about continuing the improvements to Newby Park (fig. 53) that Lady Grantham and her late husband had so enjoyed.<sup>784</sup> Her interest in the progress of Newby Park was constant and upon receiving her annuity in July 1790 she wrote to Fritz of her generous intention to spend some of it on furnishing of the dining room:

It has long been my wish, but til now never so near in my power, to shew my regard for Newby by furnishing some one object there from some one design of Lord Grantham's; the one that occurred to me was the Tables in the Dining Room, with the vases & all the ornaments as made out in the design that you I believe kept; that would complete one Room, & be observed by those who saw it.<sup>785</sup>

It would appear that Lady Grantham sought to commemorate her late husband's memory by bringing some of his designs to life.<sup>786</sup> As such, she commissioned a pair of pedestals with vases, and two side tables to his designs, from Thomas Chippendale:

I wished to thank you for the kind approbation you have given to my scheme of the Sideboard Tables at Newby, & hope next Winter for your assistance in giving orders to Mr Chippendale; whom I agree with you will be the proper person to employ: Will you let me know what is the present state of the Room, because I cannot help thinking if it is not painted, it ought to be so, in the Colors that was originally thought of, supposing it was not to have been all white; I think if the Room is not quite compleated, it will not look of a piece with the elegance of the Tables, & I should not grudge the expense to make it what it ought to be; that article of expence I am ignorant of: perhaps you can give a general guess if 150£ would nearly answer it.<sup>787</sup>

It seems extraordinary that Lady Grantham would wish to finance the remodelling of a dining room in a house that she no longer occupied. However, Newby Park was the family seat of Sir Norton Robinson, 5th Baronet, who had been certified insane in 1770. As he did not have children, Lady Grantham's son had a claim to the Newby Park estate, which meant that she was most likely keeping an eye on his potential inheritance.

## **The management of Newby Park and Newby Hall**

1792 proved to be one of great change for Lady Grantham and her young family. The deaths of Sir Norton Robinson and Fritz Robinson of Newby Park resulted in uncertainty about its rightful inheritor. Furthermore, the unexpected death of William Weddell, a distant cousin of the Robinsons, resulted in the

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<sup>783</sup> BLARS, L22/127-128, Marriage settlement of Lord Grantham and Mary Jemima Grey, 15-16 Aug 1780.

<sup>784</sup> Goodison, 'A puzzle solved', p. 28.

<sup>785</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/214, Lady Grantham to Frederick Robinson, Putney Heath, 30 July 1790.

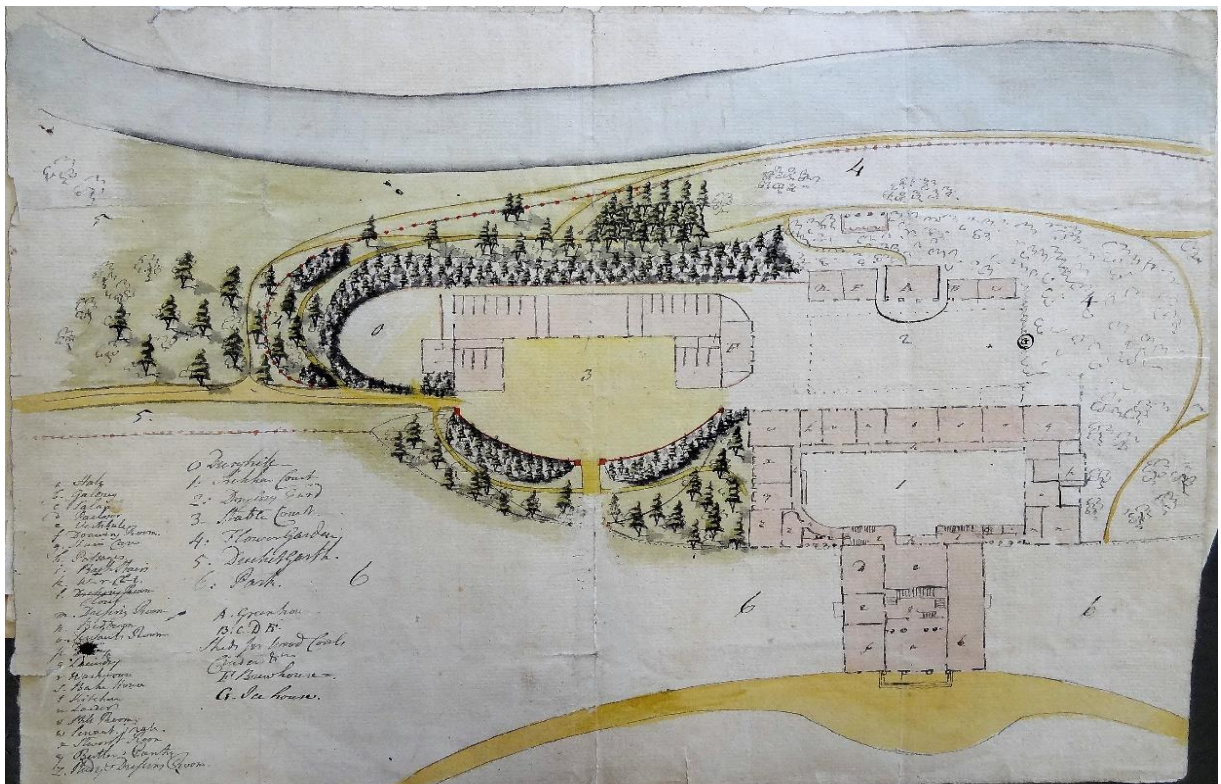
<sup>786</sup> For more detail upon the provenance and movement of the furniture see Goodison, 'A puzzle solved', pp. 28-31.

<sup>787</sup> PWDRO, 1259/1/218, Lady Grantham to Frederick Robinson, Wrest Park, 18 August 1790.



young Lord Grantham inheriting Newby Hall.<sup>788</sup> This quick succession of deaths resulted in the referral of Lord Grantham's inheritance to the Court of Chancery for clarification. During this lengthy period both estates were entrusted to Lady Grantham. This was a significant achievement because it meant that she had four substantial properties under her care, namely the two Yorkshire country houses, as well as her Putney villa and the London town house.

Newby Hall was a great addition to her property portfolio because it was credited for its architectural beauty as well as the collections it housed. Lady Bute, in 1785, described it as a house full of elegance and magnificence, 'all ornamented by Mr. Adams, in his highest (and indeed, I think) best taste'.<sup>789</sup> Such a house proved to be a great attraction to Lady Grantham's family and friends, who often embarked on the lengthy journey to visit.<sup>790</sup>



**Fig. 53** Block plan of the house and adjoining buildings with surrounding gardens and park at Newby Park, unknown hand, n.d.

However, the management of the Yorkshire estates was not straightforward because the Court of Chancery placed restrictions upon the finances until the case was settled. Consequently, Lady Grantham was forced

<sup>788</sup> For detailed discussions of the architectural history of Newby Hall, see Miller and Thomas (eds), *Drawing from the Past*; Jill Low, 'Newby Hall: Two Late Eighteenth-Century Inventories', *Furniture History*, vol. 22 (1986), pp. 135-75.

<sup>789</sup> Countess of Bute to Mrs Delany, Wortley, 20 August 1785, in Llanover (ed.), *Autobiography and Correspondence*, 2nd ser., vol. 3, pp. 277-78.

<sup>790</sup> BLARS, L30/23/108, Lady Polwarth to Miss Jemima Gregory, Wrest, 16 September 1793.

to maintain both properties on a strict budget that did not allow for improvements or additions. Her management of Newby Hall was rendered even more difficult by ‘Mr Bernard’, the land steward, who refused to cooperate:

I find this house in good order, the Plantations grown, & the walks in middling condition; the Steward is like his master, & with a specious appearance has refused me impertinently some accounts I wanted for my future plans; so I have been in a rage, & have written him down in the black book.<sup>791</sup>

The reason for his insubordination is unknown, but it is probable that it was his reluctance to accept Lady Grantham as his mistress, despite it being five years since the death of his previous master. Even after Lady Grantham repeatedly asked he still refused to provide her with the accounts she required: ‘I am in a greater rage than ever with Mr Bernard for refusing more impertinently than ever to shew me the accounts I want, & envy you more & more your power of turning off men of business’.<sup>792</sup>

This incident highlights the fact that, although elite women were very often mistresses of great houses and estates, they could still meet with sexism. Bernard may have resented having to work for a woman and petty insubordination was the main way in which he could express this. Judging by Lady Grantham’s reaction she was not one to suffer insubordination from an employee, and yet she did not dismiss him.<sup>793</sup> It is possible that she could not dismiss him because her claim to the estate was yet to be proven in court. Nevertheless, these passages also demonstrates how seriously Lady Grantham took her role in managing the estate effectively, especially the finances.

In 1799, seven years after the case had been referred to the Court of Chancery, Lady Grantham’s patience was finally rewarded as she was granted complete control of Newby Hall: ‘Now I must inform you, that the High Court have directed Newby Hall to be put into my hands at Christmas’.<sup>794</sup> Almost immediately, she set about commissioning a series of improvements to the house and park on behalf of her son:

I shall go to Newby Park for a day or two, & I have employed myself here in looking over our improvements, alas spending the savings of the High Court in fitting rooms, & building dog Kennels; besides thinning Plantations; with all which I am well satisfied.<sup>795</sup>

Soon after, Lady Grantham was also awarded complete control of the Newby Park estate:

[T]he Masters [...] in Chancery have at length given Newby Park into my care with £200 a yr for it & I have squeezed 15 a Yr more from Bernard which I find he had squeezed from the Estate [...] little can be done about its present state but preventing it from getting worse.<sup>796</sup>

Due to her capable management and her intelligent campaigning, Lady Grantham significantly increased her son’s inheritance, making him a noteworthy landowner. Until Lord Grantham reached his majority in

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<sup>791</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/66, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Hall, 3 August 1797.

<sup>792</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/67, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Hall, 10 August 1797.

<sup>793</sup> He is referred to in PWDRO, 1259/2/480, Lady Grantham to Mrs Catherine Robinson, Putney Heath, 21 November 1799.

<sup>794</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/458, Lady Grantham to Mrs Catherine Robinson, Newby Hall, 12 September 1799.

<sup>795</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/100, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Newby Hall, 22 July 1800.

<sup>796</sup> PWDRO, 1259/2/480, Lady Grantham to Mrs Catherine Robinson, Putney Heath, 21 November 1799.

1802, Lady Grantham diligently continued to maintain, improve and manage the Yorkshire estates with her customary proficiency.

Lady Grantham's endeavours demonstrate that widows could play a very important role in estate management during the eighteenth century. It is evident that she possessed complete autonomy, which enabled her to act as confidently as any male landowner of the period. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that although Lady Grantham's achievements have been discovered, it is possible that widows in similar circumstances have also been overlooked by historians. The following case study is one such example, where the extent of Lady Middleton's architectural endeavours has, until now, escaped the notice of architectural historians.

## Albinia Brodrick, Viscountess Midleton (d. 1808)

Albinia Townshend married George Brodrick, 3rd Viscount Midleton, in 1752. During their marriage, plans were made for the construction of a new house at the Midleton's family seat, Peper Harow, Surrey.<sup>797</sup> Various drawings were submitted, including a set from Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, which consisted of plans of the ground, first and second floors.<sup>798</sup> An accompanying 'Elevation of the South-west Front' is dated May 1752.<sup>799</sup> Other proposed plans were submitted by John Vardy in 1753, and an undated pair has been endorsed as 'Mr Flitcroft's Plans'.<sup>800</sup> In the end, (Sir) William Chambers won the commission, but this was not until 11 March 1765, when the contract drawings were signed with Lord Midleton (fig. 54).<sup>801</sup> The house was to be completed in three years 'for a sum of £8,190 to be paid as the Building proceeded by 12 different payments'.<sup>802</sup>



Fig. 54 Contract elevation of the north front of Peper Harow House, by Sir William Chambers, 1765.

<sup>797</sup> The complex building programme of the new Peper Harow house has previously been discussed by Michael Snodin (ed.), *Sir William Chambers* (London: V&A Publications, 1996), p. 158; John Harris, *Sir William Chambers: Knight of the Polar Star* (London: A. Zwemmer Ltd., 1970), pp. 240-41; Hussey, *English Country Houses, Mid-Georgian*, pp. 111-14.

<sup>798</sup> SHC, 1567/1&2, Brown's plans of the ground and first floors, n.d.; G145/92/86, Brown's plan of the second floor, n.d.

<sup>799</sup> SHC, 1567/3, plan showing 'Elevation of South-West Front with Bow Window in Center', 1752.

<sup>800</sup> SHC, G145/91/4&5, John Vardy's plans, 1753; G145/92/46-47, for 'Mr Flitcroft's Plans', n.d.

<sup>801</sup> John Harris and Michael Snodin (eds), *Sir William Chambers: Architect to George III* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 85.

<sup>802</sup> SHC, G145/Box64/8, f. 6 r., account book covering 3rd Lord Midleton's minority, 29 September 1767.

6.

*Middleton Her General Account with The Right Honourable... Cr  
Guardian of his Estates to Michaelmas 1767*

1767 Sept. 29		£	s	d
	By half a year for Lady Middletons Jointure due this day.....	500	0	0
	By half a years Interest of the Younger Childrens Portions.....	240	0	0
	By Ditto for Lord & Middletons Maintenance.....	250	0	0
	By Cash paid to W <sup>m</sup> Chambers Esq <sup>r</sup> towards finishing the House at Pepper Harra.....			
	By Cash on acco <sup>t</sup> part of £1000 this day paid.....	865	8	10
	By Account Materials delivered £182.6.5 whereof -			
	£125.12.0 value of part of the said materials belonging -	125	12	0
	to Lady Middleton in her own Right.....			
	By Cash in further part of the Contract.....	500	0	0
	By Ditto.....	500	0	0
	By Ditto.....	800	0	0
		2791	0	10
	Ballance due.....	142	7	4
		£	3923	8.2

The House at Pepper Harra by Contract dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 1763 was agreed to be built by William Chambers Esq<sup>r</sup> for the late Lord Viscount Middleton to be finished in Three years from the date of the Contract for a Sum of £8190 to be paid as the Building proceeded by Twelve different payments; At the time of his Lordships demise in September 1765 the Building was raised to the ground Floor only and Two payments of £500 each had been then paid on acco<sup>t</sup> thereof - Inclusive of some materials supplied by his Lordship and Credit given for the same in the Account amounting to £239.10.10. Upon his Lordships death Lady Middleton his Executrix was at Liberty to have determined the Contract upon payment of the Penalty being only £200 but advised if the Building was not completed the money which had been expended would be lost to the prejudice of the present Lord who Inherits this Estate under his Fathers Marriage - and Settlement; wherefore Lady Middleton by the advice of her Council & Friends Resolved as Executrix out of the personal Assets of her late Lord to make up the Sum of £1239.10.10 advanced before his Lordships death £3500. which completed the 5<sup>th</sup> first payments of the Contract and according to a reasonable Estimation fully answered all the money Expended in pursuance thereof before the late Lords death but as the Completion of the Building was wholly for the benefit of the Heir Inheriting the Estate her Ladyship conceived it most reasonable & just to carry the subsequent payments to his Use as above.

Fig. 55 Page from the account book set up to cover the young Lord Middleton's minority, entitled 'The Right Hon Lady Viscountess Middleton, in account with her son Lord Viscount Middleton', 1767.

## Completing Peper Harow for her son and heir

Unfortunately, Lord Middleton died a few months later in August, with his new house only ‘raised to the Ground Floor’.<sup>803</sup> Just as Lady Grantham had been, Lady Middleton was widowed with a young family, as George, the new Lord Middleton, was aged only eleven. It was her responsibility to ensure that the Brodrick estates were managed appropriately until George reached his majority. As such, a new account book was established entitled ‘The Right Hon Lady Viscountess Middleton, in account with her son Lord Viscount Middleton’ (fig. 55).<sup>804</sup> The book covers the accounts of all the Brodrick estates in England and Ireland and spans George’s entire minority, 1765-1776. On page six of this account book it states that, as the executrix of her late husband’s will, Lady Middleton was:

[A]t Liberty to have terminated the Contract [with Chambers] upon payment of the Penalty being only £200 but advised if the building was not completed the money which had been expended would be lost to the prejudice of the present Lord who inherits this Estate under his Father’s Marriage Settlement; wherefore Lady Middleton by the advice of her Council and Friends Resolved as Executrix out of the Personal Assets of her Late Lord to make up the sum of £1,239 16s 10d advanced before his Lordship’s death £3,500 which completed the five First payments of the Contract.<sup>805</sup>

Thus, by the time of her husband’s death a total of £1,239 16s. 10d. had already been paid to Chambers. In order to settle the balance necessary for the first five payments, Lady Middleton paid a further £2,261 10d. to make up the £3,500 required. This is evidence of an elite, widowed woman directly involving herself in a large, costly, architectural project for the benefit of her heir.

In a parallel ledger that spans 1765-71, written by Lady Middleton herself, regular payments were made to Chambers between 17 October 1765 and 4 March 1768.<sup>806</sup> She organised the accounts into a number of categories, the most prominent being ‘My Account as Executrix’ and ‘My Own Account’ which continue throughout. A total of twenty payments to Chambers were recorded from 1765 to 1768, but a number of these are repeats, for example on 11 February 1767, under the heading of ‘Executrix’, £1,000 was paid to ‘Mr Chambers in further part of his contract’, and then again under the heading of ‘By My Draft’ the same payment is recorded.<sup>807</sup> The latter was presumably a summary of the payments that she had ordered over the preceding months.

According to the ledger, Lady Middleton made a series of additional payments in her capacity as executrix in February 1766 for the work done at Peper Harrow, including £67 7s. 6d. to the plasterer Thomas Collins, £96 19s. to the stone mason George Mercer and £22 8s. to James Palmer, a blacksmith.<sup>808</sup> A further £77

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<sup>803</sup> SHC, G145/Box64/8, f. 6 r., account book covering 3rd Lord Middleton’s minority, 29 September 1767.

<sup>804</sup> SHC, G145/Box64/8, account book covering 3rd Lord Middleton’s minority, 1765-76.

<sup>805</sup> SHC, G145/Box64/8, f. 6 r., account book covering 3rd Lord Middleton’s minority, 29 September 1767.

<sup>806</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 1 r., 28 October 1765; f. 40 r., 8 February 1768 and 4 March 1768.

<sup>807</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 22 v., 11 February 1767; f. 21 r., 11 February 1767.

<sup>808</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 9 v., 20 February 1766.

10s. was paid to John Randall for some of the scaffolding.<sup>809</sup> Other than these payments, there is little mention of the building progress at Peper Harow throughout the following years; presumably all other payments were covered within Chambers' contract. There are two supplementary entries, however, where Lady Midleton authorised payments to Chambers that were not included in his contract, both of which were written under the heading of 'My Son the L<sup>d</sup> Visc<sup>t</sup> Midleton'. The first was made on 7 March 1767 to Thomas Collins for £14 15s. 6d., for his 'plaisterers work done at the new house', the second was made on 8 February 1768 for 'Slating the Stables' costing a further £18 19s. 7d.<sup>810</sup>

It is apparent that Lady Midleton's interest in architecture was largely practical, but her purchase of '16 Numbers of an add<sup>d</sup> Volume to Vitruvius Britannicus' would suggest that she did seek to improve her knowledge of the subject.<sup>811</sup> It is purported, therefore, that, although Lady Midleton did not involve herself directly with the building scheme at Peper Harow, she was still absolutely crucial to its progress and completion. Her careful management of the accounts demonstrates that she followed the progress with a keen eye, and was willing to authorise additional payments if the need arose. It is also likely that her lack of aesthetic direction was borne out of respect for her son's taste, who, upon coming of age, completed the interiors to his own specification between 1775 and 1777.

## Lady Midleton and her London houses

Lady Midleton's jointure was £1,000 a year, paid every six months in June and December, beginning 25 December 1765.<sup>812</sup> On 2 January 1766 Lady Midleton recorded under 'My Own Account' that she paid £200 to 'Miss Egerton for Rem[ainder] of her Term in a Lease of 21 Years of a House in Albemarle Street', and paid an extra £122 for 'goods and furniture'.<sup>813</sup> It is clear that Lady Midleton sought to establish herself in the midst of society during her widowhood and therefore chose a fashionable residence and location as befitted her rank. In July, she paid £50 to a 'Mrs Nichols & Mr John Mackay ½ years rent', suggesting that she was in full occupation of the house by this point.<sup>814</sup> The following year she commissioned a series of repairs and improvements; John Spencer was paid £13 6s. for his carpentry work and Mr Townsed, an upholster, was paid the large sum of £36 11s. for work carried out at 'my house in Albemarle Street'.<sup>815</sup> To keep up with the latest aesthetic trends Lady Midleton updated the upholstery every year, in 1768 this cost £12 and in 1769 it cost £11 19s.<sup>816</sup> These payments were recorded as having been made under her 'own account', which suggests that she used part of her annuity to maintain the residence.

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<sup>809</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 10 v., 22 February 1766.

<sup>810</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 23 v., 7 March 1767; G145/Box44, f. 33 v., 8 February 1768.

<sup>811</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 36 v., 8 February 1768.

<sup>812</sup> SHC, G145/Box64/8, f. 2 r., 25 December 1765.

<sup>813</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 7 v., 7 January 1766.

<sup>814</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 15 v., 24 July 1766.

<sup>815</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 25 v., 3 April 1767.

<sup>816</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 37 v., 3 March 1768; G145/Box44, f. 51 v., 7 March 1769.

Interestingly, the house in Albemarle Street was not the only London property under Lady Middleton's control. In her capacity as executrix, she recorded a payment of £17 2s. for land tax 'for the House in Charles Street'.<sup>817</sup> In October 1766, this house was purchased for £4,000 from Selina, Lady Raneleigh, after which a payment of £15 8s. 6d. was made for painting the exterior.<sup>818</sup> This house was purchased for the Brodrick estate; additional refurbishments took place in the following spring with £33 6s. paid to Benjamin Holmer, a smith and locksmith, and £24 was paid to 'Davidson' and 'Vandercomb' for their upholstery work.<sup>819</sup>

The impetus behind this activity was to prepare the house for its new occupant, William Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland, to whom Lady Middleton rented the property from 1767. An entry in Lady Middleton's ledger recorded on 1 April 1767 that £500 had been received from 'the Duke of Portland' for 'one year[s] Rent due at Lady Day 1767 for the House in Charles Street'.<sup>820</sup> Regular payments from the Duke continued throughout the ledger and were always recorded under the heading of 'Executrix', demonstrating that this house was part of the young Lord Middleton's inheritance. In 1768, just as Chambers was nearing the end of his contract at Peper Harrow, Lady Middleton commissioned him to attend to minor repairs at Charles Street, costing £6 2s. 3d.<sup>821</sup>

Lady Middleton's strong sense of duty ensured the young Lord Middleton inherited a well-kept estate with a brand new country house ready to inhabit. Furthermore, her astute management of the Brodrick finances enabled her to purchase a large London town house that proved to be a lucrative business decision, bringing in substantial capital to the Brodrick estate. Such dealings indicate that Lady Middleton, just like Lady Grantham, was a capable and competent estate manager who not only maintained, but increased, the value of her son's estate.

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<sup>817</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 13 v., 21 April 1766;

<sup>818</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 16 v., 7 October 1766; G145/Box44, f. 17 v., 26 November 1766.

<sup>819</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 22 v., 5 March 1767.

<sup>820</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 27 r., 1 April 1767.

<sup>821</sup> SHC, G145/Box44, f. 41 v., 8 Feb 1768.



## Widows updating their ancestral homes

When the male line of an ancient family ended, large estates, wealth and the responsibility of continuing on the family name often transferred to a female member. Although this did not necessarily suit the patriarchal nature of inheritance, it was the only way to prevent an established family from becoming extinct. In these cases, an heiress's property rights and assets were tightly guarded by the marriage settlement to prevent an unscrupulous husband from breaking up the estate. The ancestral home that came with the marriage, although legally the husband's, was usually respected as the joint property of husband and wife, to be inherited by their heir. This was the case at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, the ancestral home of Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey.

Widowhood, therefore, provided heiresses with the opportunity to commission large-scale remodelling projects upon their ancestral homes. For example, Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley, Countess of Oxford and Mortimer's (1694-1755) extensive remodelling of Welbeck Abbey was borne out of a passion for building and a desire to preserve and promote her illustrious lineage. Her friend Lady Mary Wortley Montagu approved of her scheme and thought it was also her duty to do so:

I think it extreme reasonable that you should take that of embellishing your Paternal seat...Indeed it is a sort of Duty to support a Place which has been so long dignify'd and distinguish'd by your Ancestors, and I believe all people that think seriously, or justly, will be of that Opinion.<sup>822</sup>

Lady Oxford's project was substantial and included the creation of new lodges, a service block, a driveway, a great hall, as well as two new bedchamber apartments. Throughout this scheme she advocated three distinct styles, namely Gothic, early English seventeenth-century Revival and Classicism,<sup>823</sup> indicating that Lady Oxford certainly revered her ancestors but was not bound by their architectural precedents. Instead, she chose to pursue alternative or 'modern' styles where appropriate, as is evident in the Palladian 'Alcove apartment' intended for her daughter and son-in-law.<sup>824</sup> Lucy Worsley's thorough discussion of Lady Oxford's architectural project suggests that her eclectic stylistic choices were carefully selected with the intended use of each space in mind.<sup>825</sup> This demonstrates that women were fully aware of architectural and aesthetic appropriateness and implemented them successfully within their projects.

As Lady Oxford's architectural endeavours have been competently analysed by Worsley, this thesis seeks only to reemphasise the point that Lady Oxford's scheme centred around the desire to immortalise her celebrated heritage, particularly the Cavendish line (her mother's family), from whom she had inherited great

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<sup>822</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Lady Oxford, Avignon, 2 July 1744 in Halsband (ed.), *The Complete Letters*, vol. 2, p. 332.

<sup>823</sup> For a detailed discussion on Lady Oxford's architectural endeavours at Welbeck, see Worsley, 'Case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley', pp. 139-62; Peter Smith, 'Lady Oxford's alterations at Welbeck Abbey 1741-55', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol. 11 (2001), pp. 133-68.

<sup>824</sup> Worsley, 'Case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley', pp. 155-56.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid*, p. 151.

wealth. This she successfully achieved through her decorative scheme. For instance, she included the Cavendish stags' heads throughout her Gothicised rooms, and bills for carving 'Bucks Heads and Horns' indicate that they were also gilded: '6 stags Heads Gilt in Gold'.<sup>826</sup> These were commissioned for the new 'North Venetian Gothick Room' that formed part of her private apartment and would have been used for the reception of visitors. This conscious display of family piety was further reinforced with the Gothic dining room ceiling which was 'painted w<sup>th</sup> ye Armes of my family & ye Marriages [...] in proper Colours'.<sup>827</sup>

It is evident that, through her architectural patronage, Lady Oxford not only sought to improve the grandeur of her ancestral seat, but also to claim her architectural stake in her great family's history. Her initials 'H.C.H.O.M' upon her north Gothic apartment proudly proclaim her involvement. In contrast, Marchioness Grey had a completely different agenda for her remodelling of Wrest Park. Her primary ambition was to update and modernise both her country seat and London house in St James's Square. As such, she advocated decorative styles that were very much *en vogue* at the time, namely Classicism and Chinoiserie. The following discussion will therefore investigate the extent to which Marchioness Grey was successful in her ambitions.

## Jemima Yorke, Marchioness Grey

When Lady Grey was widowed on 16 May 1790, she immediately commissioned George Byfield, architect and surveyor of the estates of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster (from 1803 onwards), to make additions to her London house at No. 4 St James's Square. Once completed in 1791, she then commissioned John Woolfe, an Irish-born architect and joint author of the fourth (1767) and fifth (1771) volumes of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, to undertake major alterations at Wrest Park.<sup>828</sup>

Poignantly, Lady Grey decided to embark upon her most costly and ambitious architectural projects as a widow. At the age of sixty-eight she cannot have expected to have enjoyed the finished building schemes for long, which makes her architectural works all the more significant. Her widowhood enabled her to reclaim complete control over her ancestral estate which in turn provided her with the social and financial emancipation to commission improvements as she saw fit. Further, as she would no longer be living at Wimpole it is likely that she sought to make Wrest as comfortable as possible for herself and daughters. As her eldest daughter, Lady Polwarth, was the heir to the Wrest estates, it is probable that she saw it as her duty to create a befitting architectural legacy. Just as the widowed Countess of Oxford had endeavoured to

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<sup>826</sup> Nottinghamshire Archives, DDP5.6/26/19 and 14, 1750, cited in Worsley, 'Case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley', p. 145.

<sup>827</sup> BL, Portland Papers, Add. MS 70432, Misc. 13a, draft letter from Lady Oxford to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Dover Street, 7 June 1740, quoted in Worsley, 'Case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley', p. 146.

<sup>828</sup> For further information on both architects, see Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, pp. 202-03; pp. 1081-82.

repair Welbeck Abbey ‘to incline my family to reside at ye only Habitable Seat of my Ancestors’, so too did Lady Grey at Wrest Park.<sup>829</sup>

## Alterations at No. 4 St James’s Square

As with most elite families of the eighteenth century, a grand London house was essential to maintain one’s place within society. As such, No. 4 St James’s Square had been in Lady Grey’s family since 1677/8 when Anthony Grey, 11th Earl of Kent, bought the property from Nicholas Barbon, a speculative builder.<sup>830</sup> This house burnt down in 1725 and was rebuilt by Lady Grey’s grandfather, the 1st Duke of Kent, with the aid of Edward Shepherd, a prominent London-based architect. Upon the Duke’s death on 5 June 1740, according to his will, the house was given to his widow, Sophia, Duchess of Kent, for sixty years provided she did not remarry.<sup>831</sup> On 21 June 1743, however, she leased the property to the Yorkes for fifty-six years at £300 per annum, and thus it became the Yorkes’ principal London house.<sup>832</sup>

Following her husband’s death in 1790, Lady Grey immediately selected George Byfield as her architect. In his early country house designs, Byfield had advocated a simple Neo-Classical style, as can be seen at Bassingbourne Hall for Sir Peter Parker in 1784 and Perdiswell Park for Henry Wakeman in 1787-8.<sup>833</sup> His talents for design were not required for Lady Grey’s commission, however, as the principal feature of the project was to add a back-stairs to the north front. This staircase was to serve all six floors, from basement to attic, and was to be used primarily by the serving staff.

An undated list of estimates for the building works intended by Lady Grey survives, entitled: ‘Particulars and description of the manner of performing and completing the several works to be done for the most noble the Marchioness De Grey at her house in St James’s Square’.<sup>834</sup> The estimate is divided into seven sections, detailing the work to be carried out by each trade: the mason, bricklayer, ‘plaisterer’, smith, plumber, painter and carpenter. The total estimate for this work was £432 3s. 9d. This estimate provides a useful insight into the nature of the alterations and enables one to examine in detail the works that were to be carried out.

Simultaneously, Lady Grey commissioned a series of decorative modifications for the interiors, signifying her desire to keep up with the latest fashions. These included the simplification of the colour schemes, as indicated by the details of the painter’s estimate:

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<sup>829</sup> BL, Add. MS 70432, Misc. 13c, draft letter from Henrietta to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Dover Street, 17 October 1747, quoted in Worsley, ‘Case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley’, p. 158.

<sup>830</sup> BLARS, L21/94-95, conveyance (lease & release) relating to No. 4 St James’s Square, 31 Jan-1 Feb 1677[78].

<sup>831</sup> BLARS, L32/11-13, Will of Henry Grey, Duke of Kent (3 official copies), 29 May 1740.

<sup>832</sup> BLARS, L21/124, Lease, 21 June 1743.

<sup>833</sup> Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, pp. 202-03.

<sup>834</sup> BLARS, L31/276, estimate for alterations at St James’s Square for Jemima, Marchioness Grey, n.d., c. 1790.

To paint all the wood work in dressing closet, bed room, dressing room, dining room and little drawing room five times best dead white. Doors and skirtings to these rooms once extra on account of their being chocolate colour. Gilding over chimney in dressing room, to be cleaned, and chimney piece in the little drawing room, parlour floor, to be cleaned and picked in white. Likewise to paint hall and stair case a fancy colour, the ornament & mouldings dead white. Baluster dead white and new gild them as before; handrail to be grained mahogany.<sup>835</sup>

Except for the main staircase, which was to be painted ‘a fancy colour’, the improvements involved simplifying the existing decorative scheme to a pure white. This simplification was echoed throughout the project, as demonstrated by the proposed work for the plasterer: ‘The ceilings and cornices of dressing room, bedroom and dressing closet to be washed, stopped, and whited, also the ceilings and cornices of dining room, little drawing room, hall and staircase’.<sup>836</sup> This desire for a plainer decorative scheme was perhaps encouraged by Byfield, but it seems more likely that it was Lady Grey’s aesthetic preference. This is evidenced by the fact that Lady Grey also decided against re-gilding and painting the balusters on the main staircase, despite Byfield’s insistence.<sup>837</sup> This determination for plainness suggests that Lady Grey was an advocate of the fresh Neo-Classical aesthetic prevalent at the time, and indicates that she sought to replace the out-modish, heavily ornamented interiors, that had probably been in place since her grandfather’s time.

Expenditure may also have been a persuasive factor for the simple decorative scheme, as demonstrated by Byfield’s suggestion of replacing an unfashionable marble side table in the ‘eating room’ with ‘a new mahogany side board’, because ‘new gilding and painting those heavy frames will be expensive’.<sup>838</sup> This signifies that although Lady Grey was intent on improving the family’s London house, she remained conscious of the costs and may have been deliberately curtailing its expense because she was already planning a far greater scheme at Wrest Park. Lady Grey’s ambition at St James’s Square can therefore be seen as a conflation of her desire to economically modernise functionality and ornamentation of the old house, whilst also conforming to the latest aesthetic penchant for the Neo-Classical taste.

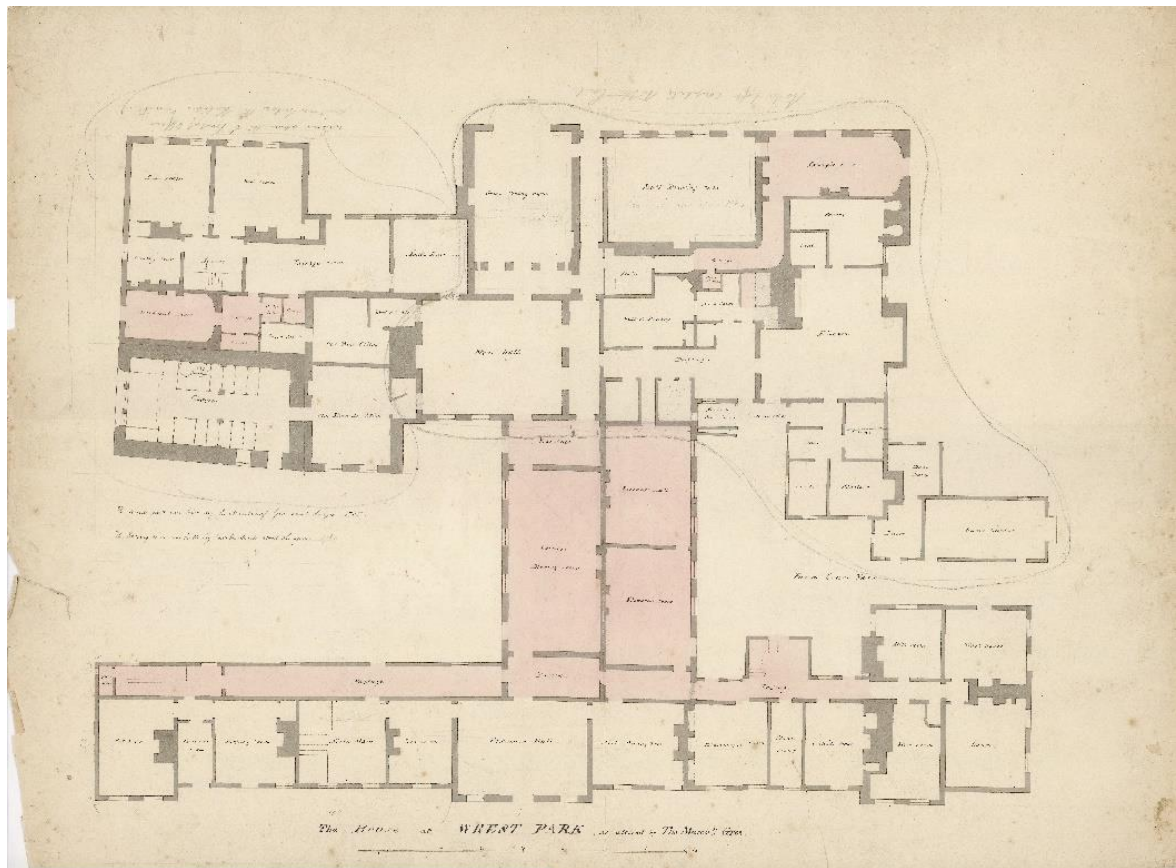
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<sup>835</sup> Ibid.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid.

<sup>837</sup> BLARS, L30/9/11/1, George Byfield to Lady Grey, Manchester Building, 14 August 1790.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid.



**Fig. 56** *The House at Wrest Park, as altered by The Marchioness Grey, unknown hand, 1824. The areas shaded red depict Lady Grey's additions, including the large connecting block in the centre, with the Chinese Drawing Room on the left.*

## The remodelling and improvement of Wrest Park

The following year, in 1791, once the work at St James's Square was complete, Lady Grey turned her full attention to Wrest Park (fig. 56). Aged sixty-nine, Lady Grey embarked upon her most expensive architectural project, with the estimate for the work totalling a significant sum of £4,888 - eleven times more than her project at St James's Square.<sup>839</sup> This substantial sum illustrates the large scale of the project and suggests that Grey was determined to make Wrest convenient and fashionable for her daughter and heir. Further, as the *ipso facto* head of the Grey family, the responsibility of re-establishing her ancient family's status and authority fell to her; this she chose to do through the medium of architecture. The estimate for Lady Grey's grand remodelling scheme survives, entitled: 'Estimate of the repairs alterations and additions to be done at Wrest House Bedfordshire, the seat of the Marchioness De Grey March 22 1791'.<sup>840</sup> This document provides a detailed insight into exactly how Lady Grey planned to improve Wrest and demonstrates that she had a clear architectural agenda that she wished to achieve before her death.

<sup>839</sup> L31/277, estimate for alterations at Wrest Park, 1791.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid.

## A new wing is commissioned to connect the north and south fronts

The greatest expense was laid out for ‘Building the new room from the vestibule of entrance to the present hall and rooms over it and passage’, which was estimated to cost £1,560.<sup>841</sup> This ‘new room’ was intended to provide a respectable and attractive high-status room, linking the entrance hall or vestibule of the north front to the great hall or ‘stone hall’ located in the south part of the house (fig. 56). Originally, all that had been there was a series of service rooms, and an open wooden colonnade that provided a covered link between the north and south fronts. In a letter from Lady Polwarth to her cousin, Jemima Gregory,<sup>842</sup> a valuable description of this part of the project is provided:

Lady Grey had it seems always intended to take down the open wooden colonnade in the court and build a room in its stead with a passage (or rooms) over it that should serve as a communication between the two sides of the house. When it was tried to join on this room to the old stewards room, it was discovered that old and new walls would never agree together, the whole west side of the court was therefore laid smack-smooth and a new brick building is raising in its stead, large enough for many a villa near London, with one large room to the court that may serve for a dining room or drawing room in hot weather, (as it looks east,) a servants hall and stewards room behind it, with windows to the kitchen court, and two sets of rooms over-head looking to the two different courts, with a passage of communication between them.<sup>843</sup>

Significantly, Lady Polwarth states that her mother had ‘always intended’ to commission this room, which suggests that widowhood provided a greater degree of architectural emancipation even when the marriage was a happy one. Furthermore, now that Lady Grey no longer resided at Wimpole Hall, the need for alterations at Wrest Park was now more pressing than before. As Amanda Vickery states, widows were the women most likely to ‘leave an architectural mark and shape an interior to their personal taste’.<sup>844</sup> Lady Grey was no exception; the new room in question was referred to as the ‘Chinese Drawing Room’, on an early nineteenth-century (*c.* 1824) plan of the ground floor, which suggests that Lady Grey decorated this room with fashionable Chinese paper (fig. 56).<sup>845</sup> She had long had a passion for Chinoiserie, as evidenced by the Chinese bridge that she commissioned in 1748, and the Chinese Pavilion she commissioned in 1760. Thus, in opposition to Worsley’s statement that widows’ did not commission ‘current styles that demonstrate[d] Classical knowledge or foreign travel’, Lady Grey’s advocacy of both Chinoiserie and Neo-Classicism indicates otherwise.<sup>846</sup>

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<sup>841</sup> Ibid.

<sup>842</sup> Daughter of Lady Mary Gregory (*née* Grey).

<sup>843</sup> BLARS, L30/23/99, Lady Polwarth to Jemima Gregory, Wrest, 25 August 1791.

<sup>844</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, p. 220.

<sup>845</sup> BLARS, L33/149, ground floor plan entitled ‘The House at Wrest Park, as altered by The Marchioness Grey’, paper watermarked 1824.

<sup>846</sup> Worsley, ‘Case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley’, p. 143.

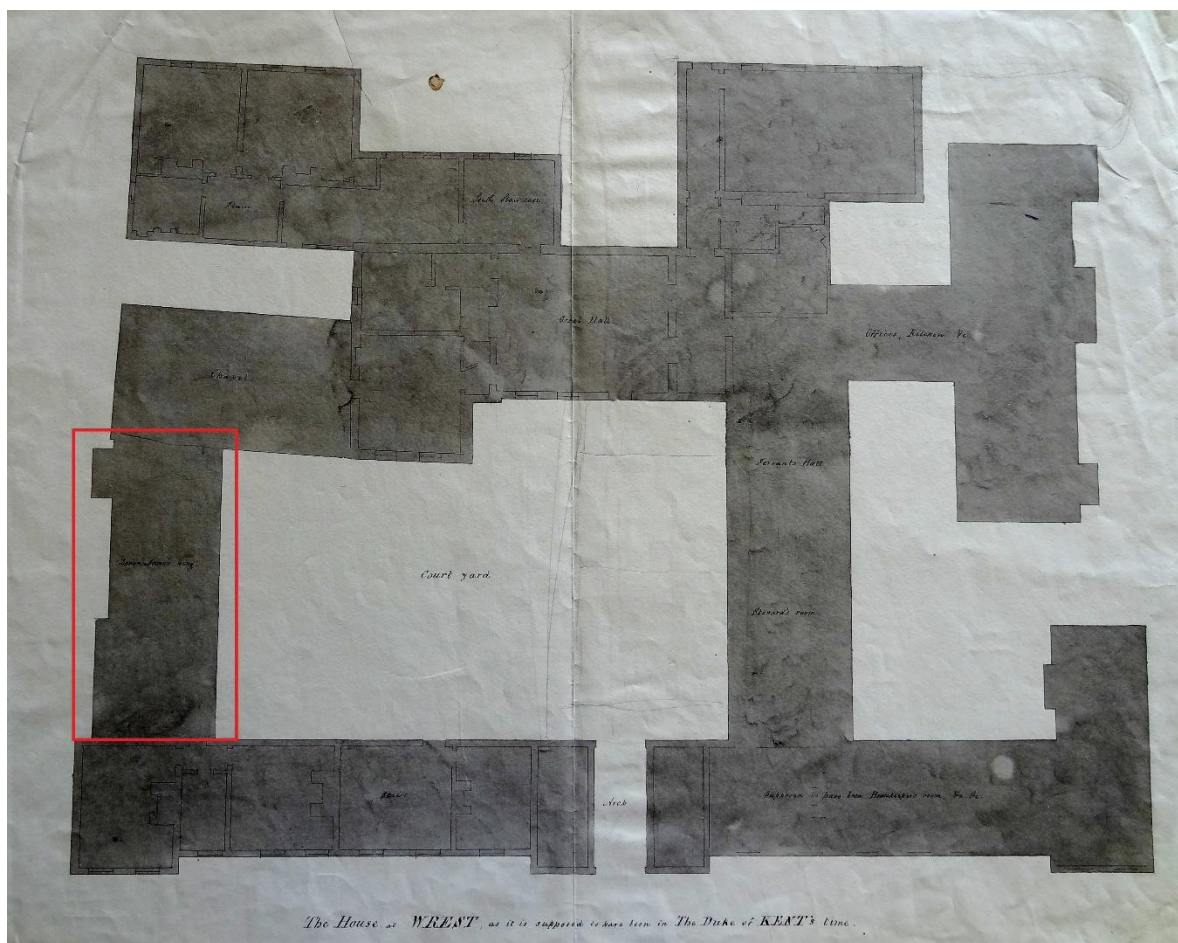


Fig. 57 *The House at WREST as it is supposed to have appeared in the Duke of KENT's time, unknown hand, n.d.* The 'Queen Ann's Apartment', located within the red box, was demolished by Lady Grey.

### Demolishing the old 'Queen Ann's Apartment'

Part of Lady Grey's alterations to the east front involved the demolition of a significant portion of the wing, as recorded by Lady Polwarth: 'I must add that Queen Ann's Apartment (as vulgarly called) is pulled down and that side of the court will be laid open to the garden, in what manner cannot be determined till we are got a little clear of brick and mortar'.<sup>847</sup> This was the only section of the house that Lady Grey decided to demolish, presumably because the wing was now obsolete as modern apartments were being created elsewhere (fig. 57).

<sup>847</sup> BLARS, L30/23/99, Lady Polwarth to Jemima Gregory, Wrest, 25 August 1791.

## Lady Grey's relationship with her steward and architect

From the surviving twenty-seven letters sent by the steward Joseph Pawsey, to Lady Grey between 1790-96, it is apparent that she maintained a very close watch on the management of her estate, and an even closer watch on her building project.<sup>848</sup> Pawsey consistently wrote to update Lady Grey and to ask for further instructions. From his deferential manner it is apparent that he respected his mistress, as evidenced by phrases such as, 'it shall be put in a way to your Ladyships mind and approbation' and 'if your Ladyship approves'.<sup>849</sup>

In contrast, however, it appears as though Lady Grey's chosen architect, John Woolfe, was not quite as concerned with pleasing his patroness. As the Wrest project dragged on into its third year, the previously patient Pawsey finally vented his frustration to Lady Grey:

Mr Crease the master of the painters, came here Thursday evening, and went away on Saturday, but Mr Woolfe (according to custom) disappointed him and did not come to Wrest...this behaviour in him I think very extraordinary, and very rude to Mr Crease, and a total neglect of Wrest House and the works there. He ought to have come and see how the painters go on and seen the plasterer who is now doing the plinth.<sup>850</sup>

Lady Grey's daughters were regular visitors to Wrest and in their mother's absence assisted in directing the workmen, as well as informing her of the progress made. They shared Pawsey's frustration with Woolfe, as Lady Grantham remarked in 1792 that 'every room is full of workmen, and none finished'.<sup>851</sup> Organisation did not improve, causing Lady Grantham to write angrily to her sister that she was 'much provoked she [Grey] did not rave her stupid surveyor into a better plan, for I am sure with any method the rooms in the north front might have been finished sooner'.<sup>852</sup>

Lady Polwarth fully agreed that Woolfe had performed poorly, but considered that the immense scale of the project might be the cause of delay:

I found there were many more additions and alterations in hand than I had imagined, and though I still think Mr Wolfe might have managed better than he has done, yet I less wonder now at the tediousness with which the work has proceeded now I know that it is really on an extensive scale.<sup>853</sup>

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<sup>848</sup> BLARS, L30/9/73/1-27, letters from Joseph Pawsey, Steward at Wrest Park, to Jemima, Marchioness Grey, 1790-96.

<sup>849</sup> BLARS, L30/9/73/5, Joseph Pawsey to Lady Grey, Silcoe, 26 May 1792.

<sup>850</sup> BLARS, L30/9/73/14, Joseph Pawsey to Lady Grey, Silcoe, 5 May 1793.

<sup>851</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/51, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Putney Heath, 28 June 1792.

<sup>852</sup> BLARS, L30/11/240/42, Lady Grantham to Lady Polwarth, Putney Heath, 10 July 1792.

<sup>853</sup> BLARS, L30/23/99, Lady Polwarth to Jemima Gregory, Wrest, 25 August 1791.



Lady Polwarth proceeded to describe the building works as ‘very much an image of the Tower of Babel’, continuing on to state that her ‘sister says the Confusion of Babel has attended all architects and workmen ever since’.<sup>854</sup>

Such comments suggest that Woolfe was not as committed to the Wrest project as he should have been. It could be argued that he felt less pressure to please his patroness simply because she was a woman, however this seems unlikely because he was simultaneously engaged with the alterations of No. 67 (formerly 36) Brook Street for another patroness, Miss Anne White, so his lack of enthusiasm can hardly be blamed on misogynist tendencies.<sup>855</sup> In addition, he was appointed Examining Clerk of the Works at Whitehall, Westminster and St James’s (1790-3), so it would seem that Woolfe had simply overstretched himself by embarking on so many significant roles at once, thus rendering him inefficient in the eyes of his aristocratic employers at Wrest. Furthermore, the fact that he died on 13 November 1793, before Wrest was fully complete, suggests that his poor attendance at Wrest may have been caused either by illness or old age.

Once Lady Grey had completed her extensive alterations at Wrest, one might have expected her to take the time to relax and enjoy them. This was not in Lady Grey’s character, and not only did she improve the gardens by directing a ha-ha to be built, she also commissioned a new dairy in 1796.<sup>856</sup> Less than a year after her ‘New Dairy’ (fig. 58) had been completed and only four years since the improvements to her beloved ancestral home had been concluded, Lady Grey died on 10 January 1797. Conceivably due to her mother’s thorough remodelling at Wrest Park, Lady Polwarth, created 1st Countess de Grey in 1816, did little to alter the house during her thirty-six-year tenure. It is probable that Lady Grey, despite her advanced years, had succeeded in making the old mansion as comfortable as it could be without demolishing it and starting again. That challenge fell to her grandson, Thomas, 3rd Baron Grantham (later 2nd Earl de Grey), who built a grand new house in the French style (1834-8).

The financial independence experienced by Lady Grey during her widowhood provided her with the necessary agency and enthusiasm to finally pursue her architectural ambitions. The wealth of evidence illustrates that she had a clear architectural agenda and that she succeeded in her principal aims of improving the functionality and decorative schemes of both her London and country houses. Lady Grey was evidently conscious of the future and wished to create an architectural legacy that would not only place her on a par with her ambitious ancestors, but would benefit her successors, namely her daughter and grandson.

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<sup>854</sup> Ibid.

<sup>855</sup> Sheppard (ed.), ‘Brook Street: South Side’, in *Survey of London: Volume 40, the Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 2 (The Buildings)*, (London, 1980), pp. 21-32, accessed via BHO.

<sup>856</sup> BLARS, L31/278, design for a ‘New Dairy at Wrest’, 22 May 1796.



# Conclusions

The discipline of architectural history had, until recently, focused its attention primarily on the careers of architects. The architect, his designs, and his commissions dominated the discipline, to the exclusion of other influences and inputs such as those of the patron or craftsmen. The importance of the patrons, and the control they could exert over design, has increasingly become a greater field of study. It is now accepted that architectural projects were always a collaborative effort in which patrons, craftsmen and architects played significant and differing roles. Until recently, architects, craftsmen and patrons, of course, were all assumed to be male, and the sphere of architectural design was therefore considered to be the preserve of men. Women were not permitted to practice as architects, and female craftsmen, although they existed, were rare. As this study has shown, however, women could and did engage in architectural patronage. This thesis has argued that, where women had the opportunity to do so, they freely and creatively applied their agency in the sphere of architecture.

By analysing women's architectural patronage within the context of their marital statuses, it has been possible to suggest that women were unrestricted in pursuing their architectural ambitions when their finances allowed. The differing legal, social and financial restrictions wrought by the various marital statuses appeared to have had no negative influence over the architectural agency of elite women. In fact, this thesis has demonstrated that female architectural engagement was accepted, encouraged and considered the norm amongst the social elite. Consequently, the prevailing academic perception that women rarely engaged in architectural patronage in the eighteenth century has been refuted.

The first section of this thesis investigated whether unmarried women were able to engage with architecture in any capacity, considering the fact that they experienced the greatest societal constraints. The discussion demonstrated that even the most conventional spinster of the eighteenth century could still pursue her architectural ambitions if the opportunity presented itself. This was highlighted in Anne Robinson's progression from managing Saltram House, where she was limited to commissioning repairs, to having complete control over the aesthetic direction of her own modest townhouse.

Moreover, it was proved that when single women possessed their own fortune, they often sought to display their taste through architecture. A lady's fortune could be accumulated in various ways, such as obtaining a Court position or through inheritance. Lady Bell Finch, for instance, commissioned William Kent to build her a fashionable townhouse, which she used as an instrument for her political and social ambitions. A class of women that have never been properly considered in terms of their architectural achievements is that of courtesans. It has been shown that these women engaged as broadly with architecture as any of their contemporaries. In some cases, due to the unique financial and social liberty experienced by courtesans,

they could be pioneering with their architecture, as with Teresa Cornelys, whose bold architectural statements laid the foundations of a successful business.

Secondly, the extent to which married women interacted with architecture was considered. Historically, the misconception that wives were uninvolved with building works of any scale has most likely prevailed because all financial transactions were conducted in their husbands' names. By examining surviving records, this thesis has demonstrated that wives could have a significant role in commissioning and managing building projects. This was highlighted through the exploration of Marchioness Grey's involvement at Wrest Park and Lady Grantham's at Newby Park. Both women demonstrated a passion for architecture and a great desire to create a perfect marital home with their husbands.

Crucially, the fact that husbands were often absent from the marital home, and thus unable to manage building projects, is explored for the first time within this thesis. By re-examining the building schemes of military and naval husbands, it has been possible to establish that such wives were actually the linchpins of these projects, as evidenced by the Duchess of Marlborough's involvement at Blenheim Palace and Frances Boscawen's at Hatchlands Park. This research has shown that if it were not for the enthusiasm and competence of these remarkable women, it is unlikely that either project would have been completed.

Even when marriages were unequal and unhappy, architecture could provide some solace to the abused or disgraced wife. This concept was explored through the architectural projects of three overlooked patronesses, namely Lady Pembroke, Lady Luxborough and Lady Sarah Bunbury. In all three case studies, each woman exhibited a real enthusiasm for architecture, and used it to either maintain or attempt to regain their standing within society. By tactfully displaying their architectural and aesthetic tastes, each lady was able to announce to the world that they should not be forgotten despite their unfortunate marital status.

The third section of this thesis advocated that elite widows were prolific architectural patronesses, unafraid of pursuing their own architectural agendas and capable of commissioning some of the most famous architects of the era. Their financial, legal and social independence enabled them to interact with architecture on an unprecedented scale. Firstly, the conventional circumstancing within which an elite widow could interact with architecture was examined, such as with dower houses, bequeathed London properties, or suburban villas. It has been demonstrated that even within these conventional circumstances women could seek to place their own architectural stamp upon a building, such as with Lady Spencer and the Duchess of Beaufort at their respective dower houses. Widows who moved to London could be more architecturally ambitious and seek to build their own townhouses in order to maintain their status within elite society. The townhouses of the Ladies Home, Hervey, Pomfret and Elizabeth Montagu were thus examined. Each patroness sought to display her wealth, taste and status through architecture, and as consequently pioneering in her architectural design.

The remodelling or commissioning of suburban villas was also a popular endeavour for widows who desired a fashionable retreat not far from the attractions of the city. The villa was the ideal size for widows to experiment with architectural styles in an affordable manner. The concept of creating a legacy for a younger child was also a prominent feature of the widow's villa, as demonstrated by Charlotte Digby, Charlotte Boyle Walsingham and Agneta Yorke. In these case studies, each patroness built or improved their villa with its inheritor in mind. This concept therefore challenges the idea of primogeniture and the patriarchal estate, and suggests that elite women were able to participate in landownership and inheritance just as effectively.

Significantly, when primogeniture was threatened, either by the lack of an heir or the minority of the heir, widows were sometimes presented with the unique opportunity of assuming the traditionally male role of head of the family. This occurred in various guises, ranging from inheriting a life interest in the patriarchal estate, to managing the patriarchal estate until the heir reached his majority. These circumstances were unconventional but when they occurred they provided widows with immense power, which presented further opportunities to engage with architecture. This ranged from the Duchess of Marlborough's completion of Blenheim Palace through to Lady Middleton's completion of Peper Harow and management of the Brodrick estates for her son. Furthermore, if the male line became extinct, women could inherit the patriarchal estate, as demonstrated by Marchioness Grey at Wrest Park. In these instances, widowhood was often embraced by women as the ideal opportunity to modernise and improve their ancestral seats for future generations.

This thesis has sought to build upon several pioneering works, particularly those of Baird and Worsley, showcasing that architectural patronage in the eighteenth century was not purely the pursuit of men. By conducting a deeper examination into the extent and variety of female patronage, and by exploring entirely new case studies within the contexts of the various marital statuses, this thesis strives to provide a broader exploration of the concept of female architectural patronage. Good examples include the Yorke sisters, Ladies Polwarth and Grantham, whose architectural schemes have been neglected until now, both during their married lives and widowhoods. Additionally, the discovery of the Duchess of Beaufort's building schemes at Stoke Park and the many exciting commissions of successful courtesans are further examples where previously overlooked material has been analysed. These new sources have proved essential in advocating that female architectural patronage was more prevalent than historians have stated.

It has been shown that elite women were involved in architecture in a great many ways, both practically and intellectually. Practically, they commissioned new buildings, ordered remodelling schemes and executed improvements and repairs; they managed and altered projects, designed interiors and liaised with architects and craftsmen. Intellectually, they enjoyed architectural discourse, drawing architectural sketches, plans and designs for various works; they also purchased, lent and borrowed books on architecture, such as *Vitruvius Britannicus*.

The endeavours of the women discussed have not been restricted to a particular type of build or scale. Instead, it has been demonstrated that women engaged with architecture in a variety of ways, from remodelling a villa, as in the case of Lady Powarth, to commissioning a grand new townhouse, as with Lady Hervey. The sphere of women's influence was not limited to interior redecoration, which has been the perception amongst architectural historians, but encompassed all aspects of architecture, including updating the exterior, modernising the plan and landscaping gardens and grounds. Garden architecture and re-landscaping was an essential element in the creation of a fashionable residence, and allowed for experimental and pioneering building works. Such projects in garden architecture were often advocated by women, and it is important therefore not to overlook them.

Representative examples of women engaging with all facets of architecture include Lady Spencer's Gothicising of Holywell House, Marchioness Grey's constant modifications to her ancestral home Wrest Park, and finally Lady Betty Hasting's re-landscaping of the gardens at Ledston Hall. Lastly, it has become apparent that women built for myriad reasons. They used architecture to display their wealth, taste and learning; as a means of self-expression; a way to reclaim their position within society; to host the grandest entertainments; to create tangible legacies for their heirs; or simply as a form of self-indulgence. This is evident from the body of work as a whole, which has drawn on a wide range of sources, including correspondence, diaries, account books, plans, drawings, bills, receipts, estimates, newspapers; many of which have never been thoroughly investigated.

This thesis has demonstrated the importance that female social networks could have upon the architectural ambition of its members. Lady Grey and her daughters, as well as members of the extended family, regularly and enthusiastically corresponded upon the subject of architecture, offering descriptions of projects, advice and encouragement. Elizabeth Montagu and Frances Boscawen were both aligned with the intellectual Bluestocking society, and it is significant that both engaged in large architectural projects and commissioned the most fashionable architects of the times, namely James Stuart and Robert Adam. Finally, Lady Hervey and Lady Pomfret both held Court positions in the household of Caroline of Ansbach, who was a prolific royal patroness and doubtlessly influenced her courtiers to patronise architecture as she had done. In a similar vein, Lady Bell Finch, also a courtier, built an elaborate townhouse designed by William Kent. In this, she was likely to have been influenced by Queen Caroline's previous patronage of Kent.

Due to the inherent limitations of the PhD, no thesis can ever hope to be comprehensive. Various patronesses and building schemes fell outside of the scope of this thesis. For example, Elizabeth Armistead's undertakings at St Anne's Hill and Mary Leigh's involvement at Stoneleigh Abbey, were both thoroughly analysed for this thesis, but have not been included because of the limitation of the word count. Additionally, numerous (hitherto) unexamined primary sources have been uncovered through the course of this PhD, which regrettably did not fit into the final narrative. For example, Elizabeth, Lady Heathcote,

was identified as a ‘new’ patroness; she commissioned the extensive remodelling of her Richmond house in the early nineteenth century, for which the bills and receipts were discovered at the Lincolnshire Archives.<sup>857</sup>

Moreover, numerous aspects of female architectural patronage have fallen outside the scope of this thesis, such as the patronage of royal and middle-class women. Elite women were selected because of the obvious fact that they possessed the financial power to engage in architecture. However, royal women also possessed this power, so it would be interesting to extend this research further. Fortunately, this gap is in part being redressed by the collaborative exhibition between Historic Royal Palaces and the Yale Center for British Art entitled: *Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World*.<sup>858</sup> Similarly the research could be extended down the social scale or across different time periods, particularly that of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, where even less research has been conducted. Hopefully this study has made clear that the subject of women’s role in architectural design is worthy of more attention, that women did take an active interest in design far more than might easily be supposed, and that in certain circumstances women made extraordinary contributions to architectural history. These accomplishments deserve to be remembered, and the fact that women flourished despite the restrictive legal and social climate of their age, makes their achievements all the more remarkable.

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<sup>857</sup> For example, LA, 2-ANC/12/D/36, Bill from Thomas Chippendale, 1800.

<sup>858</sup> Curated by Joanna Marschner, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 2 February-30 April 2017, Kensington Palace, London, 22 June-12 November 2017. This exhibition is accompanied by a detailed catalogue: Joanna Marschner, David Bindham and Lisa Ford (eds), *Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press: London: Historic Royal Palaces, 2017).

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L31/318: Bill for the new cold bath and bridge, Edward Stevens, 1770.

L33/146: Design for a new house, superimposed over the ground floor plan of the existing (old) Wrest Park house, 1818.

L33/149: Ground floor plan, entitled 'The House at Wrest Park, as altered by the Grey', paper watermarked 1824.

L33/213: Pencil drawing of the interior of the Library of Wrest Park house, by J. C. Buckler, 1831.

Papers relating to Southill Park, Bedfordshire:

L31/190: Inventory of the furniture at Southill Park, 1779.

Papers relating to Newby Park, Yorkshire:

L31/191: Inventory of household goods and furniture at Newby Park, 1786 (or 1795?).

L33/275: Block plan of Newby Park, adjoining buildings and park and gardens, n.d.

L33/276: Three ink sketches of Newby Park, mounted on one sheet of paper, two dated 24 June 1784.

Papers relating to Polwarth Lodge, Putney Heath:

L31/280: Particulars of a Villa &c. to be sold on the North side of Putney Common, *c.* 1800.

L31/281: Valuation of fixtures belonging to Charles Bembridge at his house on Putney heath, 10 Jun 1791.

- L31/282: Plan of the Bedchamber Wing to Lady Polwarth's House Putney Heath, *c.* 1791.
- L31/283-284: Signed receipts from John Yenn, architect at Polwarth Lodge, 1791-3.
- L33/261, Plan of the principal floor of Lady Polwarth's house prior to alterations, by John Yenn, *c.* 1791.
- L33/262, Elevation of the garden front prior to alterations, by John Yenn, *c.* 1791.
- L33/263, Plan of the principal floor, showing alterations, by John Yenn, *c.* 1791.
- L33/264, Watercolour of the entrance front of the house, showing alterations, by John Yenn, *c.* 1791

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- D2700/QP3/6/6: Building account vouchers, bundles 1-13, 1760-3.
- D2700/PB2/8: Memorandum of agreement for sale of Beaufort House to the Duke of Cumberland, with plan, inventory and valuation of goods and furniture proposed to be sold [Linnell], 1761.
- D2700/QJ3/14, Thomas Conway's accounts and vouchers (as auditor, and London steward; general payments for 5th Duke), 1766-76.
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- D2700/QB3/3/23: House and Park Account Book, 1776.
- D2700/QP3/1/6: Stoke Rentals, including disbursements made, 1787-98.

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- 1259/1/1-82: Letters from Anne Robinson to her brother, Frederick Robinson, 1778-91.
- 1259/1/200-35: Letters from Lady Grantham and her sons to Frederick Robinson, 1789-90.
- 1259/2/1-767: Letters of Hon. Katherine Gertrude Robinson (*née* Harris), particularly from her husband's family including, Anne Robinson (sister-in-law), Theresa Parker (niece), John, 2nd Lord Boringdon (nephew), Lady Grantham (sister-in-law), Thomas, 3rd Lord Grantham (nephew), Frederick J. Robinson (nephew), 1786-1813.
- 1259/5/20-22: Estate papers, 1784-93.

## **Surrey History Centre, Woking**

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- 188/4: Boyle Farm Deeds, copy of court roll, manor of West Molesey: attested copy of surrender of John Johnston esq and admission of Hon Charlotte Digby, 17 October 1763.
- 188/5: Boyle Farm Deeds, copy of court roll (attested copy), manor of Hampton Court: admission of Hon Charlotte Digby, 17 May 1764.
- 188/11-12: Lease and release with covenant to surrender copyhold and assignment of fixtures and fittings for Fords Farm between 1) Hon Stephen Digby 2) Hon Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, 24-25 Mar 1783.
- 188/13: Covenant to produce deeds for capital messuage or mansion called Fords in Thames Ditton between 1) Hon Stephen Digby 2) Hon Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, 25 Mar 1783.
- 4348/4/49/2: Engraving of Bolye Farm, by T. Barber after Henry Gastineau, for *Excursions Through Surrey* (London: Longman & Co., 1820).

### Papers relating to Peper Harow, Surrey:

- 1567/1-3: Peper Harow House, plans by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, 1752.
- G145/91/4-6: John Vardy's designs for Peper Harpw, 1753.
- G145/91/8-9: Designs, unknown hand, n.d., 1750s.
- G145/92/86: Plan of design for second storey of a mansion, showing single pile structure with two wings. Signed 'LB' Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, n.d., c. 1753.
- G145/92/37, 39-43, 45, 48: Various plans and drawings of Peper Harow, c. 1750s.
- G145/92/44: Plan of design for ground floor, signed 'W Chambers', n.d., 1750s
- G145/92/46-47: Designs for new house, unsigned, but endorsed with 'Mr Flitcrofts Plans' on verso, n.d., 1750s.
- G145/Box64/8: Account Book recording accounts of all English and Irish estates, entitled 'The Right Hon Lady Viscountess Midleton, in account with her son Lord Viscount Midleton', covering the whole period of the minority, 1765-76.
- G145/Box44: Ledger of 'Accounts branched from the Cash Accounts of the Rt Hon Lady Viscountess Midleton 1765-71', recording household and business accounts during her son's minority.
- PX/115/6/1: Engraving entitled 'Pepper-Harrow Park, The Seat of the Rt Honble Lord Vist Middleton, Surrey', engraved by J. Greig after Henry Gastineau for *Excursions through Surrey* (London: Longman & Co, 1820).

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Now digitised and freely available from the West Yorkshire Archive Service:

<https://library.hud.ac.uk/calmview/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=Yorke>

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