



THE
GEORGIAN
GROUP

Lucy Abel-Smith, 'Danckerts and Badminton',
The Georgian Group Journal, Vol. III, 1993,
pp. 78–81

DANCKERTS AND BADMINTON

Lucy Abel-Smith

Henry Herbert, 3rd Marquis of Worcester and 1st Duke of Beaufort¹ (1629–1699) was born into one of the greatest recusant families in England and Wales. This was a grave disadvantage by the middle years of the 17th century when vast tracts of the family lands including the important Raglan Castle in Monmouth were sequestered. However, by the 1660s, by dint of both skill and a good marriage, Worcester had become a rich and powerful courtier, politician, landowner and Protestant. The latter transformation contributed not a little to the build up once more of the Herbert estates, and indeed to their extension.

It was natural that Worcester should wish his achievements recorded and he chose Hendrick Danckerts (1630–1679) to carry this out. Danckerts, who had visited England briefly in 1650, arrived on a more permanent basis to work for Charles II in 1666, painting harbours and the royal palaces. The Dutchman was also a master of sensitive landscape sketches and interesting *capricci*, obviously at home with subjects which required accuracy as well as those of imagination. He appears, albeit for paltry sums, in the extant Badminton archives from 1669–1672² joining an increasing number of royal craftsmen who worked for the Worcesters in the 1670s and 1680s.

The work of Danckerts also fitted into the collection of contemporary Flemish and Dutch art which the Marquis was buying for Badminton both through agents such as Lely, and at “Out Cry” (i.e. at auction) “in the “Dutch manner” at Somerset House which he describes in a letter in 1674.

Among the seats that Danckerts painted was “Troy with Monmouth in the background”.³ Troy is shown in its original state as it was not rebuilt until 1682 (for the marriage of Worcester’s son Charles and Rebecca Child). The house had been bought from a cousin, Sir Charles Somerset, in 1662, but the price had been one which set even the Marquis aghast. However, he points out in a letter to his wife that it was in the middle of the Welsh estates and played a vital role in their consolidation.

Economics were an important reason for the choice of subject but so too was emotion. Raglan Castle was included in the portfolio of paintings. The castle had been largely destroyed by the Parliamentarians in 1643 as an important symbol of royalist power (it has been shown that the Earl of Worcester gave over £600,000 in the King’s cause) and from its destruction the earl emerged a pauper.⁴ The castle was palatial, housing a spectacular library and surrounded with fine gardens. Here, the young Henry was brought up and was indeed left Raglan by his grandfather. At sequestration Cromwell himself took Raglan and it was Cromwell with whom the young Henry Herbert made friends on his return to England in 1650 on coming of age after having been abroad for about six years. Raglan was among the first of the family estates that young Henry bought back in 1652 as “Mr Herbert of Westminster”. In subsequent deals he was named, “Lord Herbert of Raglan”. Although the land was recovered, the castle was not rebuilt, perhaps being too remote from London.

Gloucestershire was more convenient, and in 1655 he inherited Badminton from a recusant cousin, Elizabeth Somerset. From the time of his marriage in 1657 to the rich widow Mary, Lady Beauchamp, daughter of Sir Henry Capel, the stage was set for the transformation

of this late-medieval courtyard house into a great palace in possible emulation of Raglan. Danckerts was called in once more to record this new seat of power – at least the north and east facades – all that were complete by the time the duke died. Two magnificent drawings are in the British Museum, possibly the forerunners of paintings now lost,⁵ and the details may be checked against an engraving in the Badminton Collection dated 1699.⁶ The drawings are similar in style, both composed on three conjoined pieces of paper and both are rimmed in black. More importantly, both have a few colour notes and in places, colour washes of great delicacy.

The familiar north front,⁷ (Fig. 1) later illustrated by Knyff, is architecturally more sophisticated and has drawn comparisons with the Somerset House river front by John Webb built between 1661–64. No architect is known for this stage of Badminton’s development, and Webb’s contribution has been doubted because of the seemingly unnecessary complexity of the handling of the fenestration and floors on either side of the centre bay.⁸ The argument that this was to mask the earlier building which still lurks behind the 17th-century facades is unconvincing. The grandeur of this facade is topped by a small lantern cupola, all that the narrow roof space could support. This, in 1709, held “one elbow cane chair”. The outer wings on this facade take up the strangely naive “eyebrows” which sit on the string course of the east front, argue for a single building campaign.

The east facade⁹ (Fig. 2) might belong to a different house, different owner and be

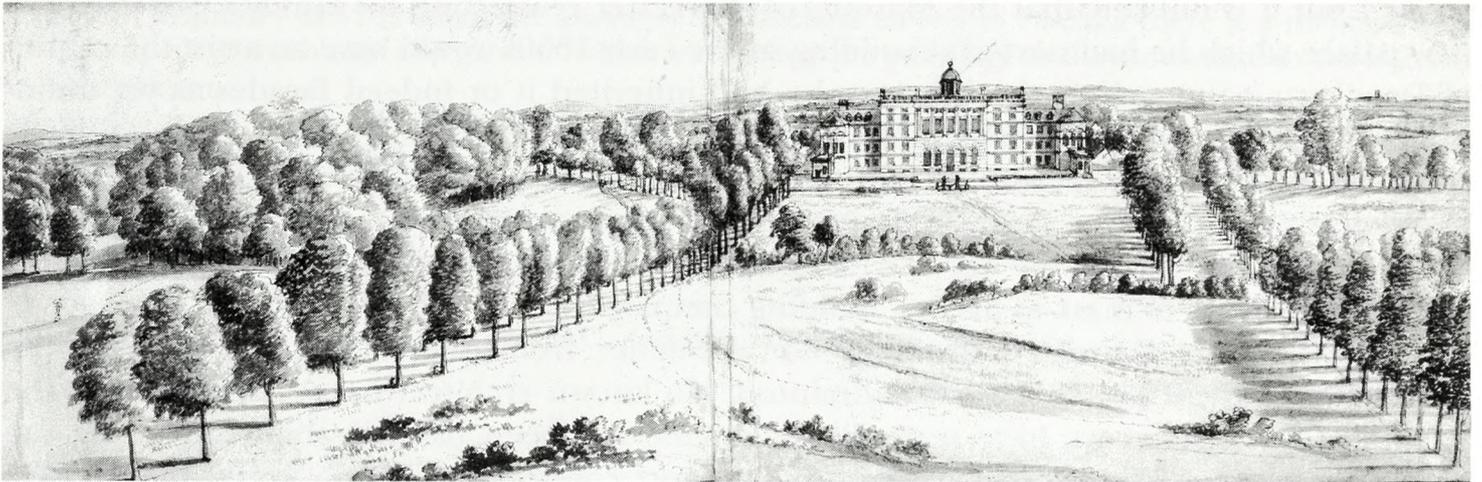


Fig. 1. Hendrick Danckerts, the north front of Badminton House, Gloucestershire (British Museum).

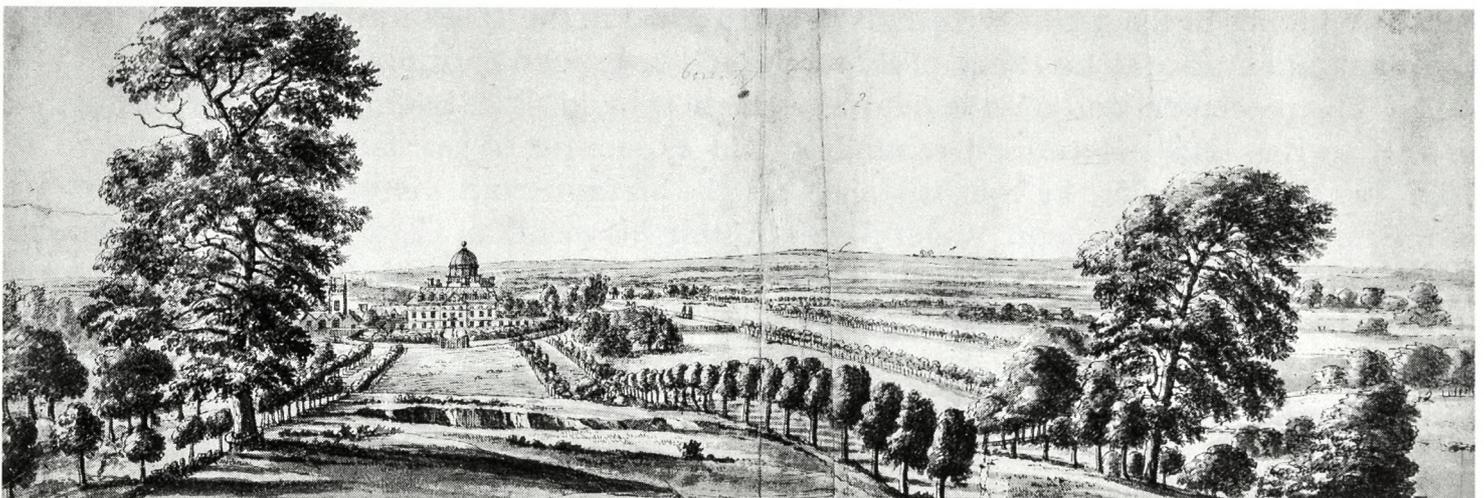


Fig. 2. Hendrick Danckerts, the east front of Badminton House, Gloucestershire (British Museum).

designed by a different hand. Again the details in the Danckerts' drawing are verified by the dated engraving of 1699 and the extant building, apart from the fact that this was to become the main garden front with a fine formal garden by London and Wise. There is one surprising element, given the accuracy of the rest, and that is that Danckerts has here inflated the cupola, added more sides and a viewing gallery, all of which would be visually and structurally impossible. What was Danckerts doing? Was this drawing slightly earlier and the construction fell down or was the artist, at the request of his patron, working from drawings of the house and playing visually in two dimensions for the best effects before the cupola was built? I mentioned his *capricci* above.

This brings in the question of the date not only of these drawings but also of these two facades. From the accounts that survive it would seem that a huge amount of building was carried out in the late 1670s and '80s from bricks to payment of craftsmen. There are also the duchesses' summaries about monies spent when it appears that most was spent in the '70s and '80s. However, there is a letter in the Badminton Archives to the Marchioness of Worcester from her son by her first marriage, the young Duke of Somerset (d.1671) from London, dated July 23, 1670 "I have been this afternoone want of imployment att Mr. Dankerts his house, where I saw the picture of Badminton front, which looks very finely for I can see no fault in itt only that the deere are very ill coulored, which I beleeve may be mended when Mr. Dankerts comes over who is now in Holland."¹⁰ We must assume the "front" is that on the north. There is, of course, no proof that these drawings have anything to do with the painting mentioned in this letter and they might be to do with the commission of 1674 for his bedroom.¹¹ but it is unlikely that the Marquis of Worcester reasserting his family's power with a new palace which he had started rebuilding in the early 1660s would have an artist the calibre of Danckerts paint merely the house as he had inherited it or indeed facades as yet unfinished. It may be that Danckerts composed the painting from drawings but a far more likely explanation is that the facades of both east and north were completed by 1670. (The west facade was not completed until 1709 when it appears on a survey of the estate and the south facade to this day reveals the core of the building inherited from Elizabeth Somerset which the Marquis strove to mask in his first building campaign.)

Neither the Danckerts drawings nor the letter from Somerset throw light on the authorship of these two facades at Badminton. No known architect has yet appeared in the accounts, although as we have seen, Webb's name has been banded about regarding the north facade especially in light of the duke's Court connections. Webb would hardly have designed the east facade. Here, it is possible, the duke was his own architect and as Andor Gomme has mentioned,¹² there were both practical and theoretical books on architecture in the library at Badminton although there is no proof that they belonged to the duke. From correspondence in the archives it seems he was abroad in the 1640s travelling possibly in Italy, Germany and France so his range of sources would have been enormous.

The piecemeal and diverse nature of the new building at Badminton is surprising in a patron so rich. His determined rebuilding and expansion of the family estates, started in 1652, was fairly complete by 1662 when he bought his father out. He was reckoned to be one of the richest men in England, Roger North putting his wealth at £2,000 per annum although it was certainly higher with income flowing not only from land but also from mining interests, timber, industry, court patronage and the East India Company amongst other sources. It appears likely that there was no overall plan and the house was meant to grow like a medieval castle with both the Duke and Duchess taking an intense interest. In January 166[?] he writes to his wife "was glad to find in yr. last that you employed yr. thought about our building and do approve much of what you say about bringing out the staircase only I doubt the stayres and carved work we have bespoke will serve, but bee lost". However, to add to our confusion and

speculation, he continues in the same letter that he was so worried about this double change of plan that "I dream't of it, but more pleasingly of the architect and of my friend". Could he be talking of his wife?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge with gratitude the generosity with which their Graces, the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort have allowed me to use the archival material both at Badminton, the Gloucester Record Office and the National Library of Wales. My thanks are also due to Mrs Margaret Richards, Archivist at Badminton who first brought the letter to my notice and who has been an unfailing source of knowledge, and to the archivists of The Royal Bank of Scotland (Child's Bank Accounts) and Hoares Bank.

NOTES

1. He became Duke of Beaufort in 1682 but for this article he remains the 3rd Marquis of Worcester.
2. There are varying sums for £4 12s 0d (RC 2/1); £6 10s (1672); £33 (1674) and in 1675 he was paid £6 10s (Childs Bank Accounts).
3. Illustrated in John Harris, "Neglected Views of Britain", *Country Life* July 11, 1991.
4. W. R. B. Robinson *The Earls of Worcester and their Estates 1526-1642*, B.Litt, 1958, Bodleian Library.
5. In an inventory of 1709 when the Dowager 1st Duchess moved to Chelsea there is a mention of a "prospect of the house and garden" which was among the paintings in the closet and on the stairs at Badminton.
6. Badminton Archives. Illustrated by Howard Colvin in *Country Life* April 4, 1968.
7. 1948-11-26-12 (28.8 x 86.3 cms).
8. Colvin, *ibid.*
9. 1948-11-26-11 (28.5 x 32.3 cms).
10. Badminton Archives, FMF 1/8/24.
11. Badminton Archives, FMF 1/32.
12. Andor Gomme, "Badminton revisited". *Architectural History* 27, 1984, 164.