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SOME DESIGNS BY JOHN JAMES

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John James was acknowledged by contemporaries as one of the most reliable and experienced surveyors of his day. It is likely that many buildings in which he had a hand remain to be identified. Research has been hampered by the lack of a body of personal papers. One line of enquiry has so far been little explored: that of his drawings, for it can be argued that his draughtsmanship, as opposed to his designs, is very distinctive and reasonably consistent.

The starting point for considering John James's drawings is one of the few he signed.¹ This is an elevational drawing of the park front of Inigo Jones's Queen's House at Greenwich (Fig. 1). His signature can be seen on the bottom right "J James del." in his characteristically neat hand. The scale below the central five bays is equally neat. The drawing is meticulously finished and enlivened with four types of hatching: evenly spaced vertical hatching to the two bays either side of the centre; more closely spaced horizontal hatching to the walls within the loggia; close-spaced vertical hatching to the architectural elements inside the loggia — the door and window surrounds, cornice, etc — and cross-hatching to the window spaces and the door in the loggia. There is more closely spaced horizontal hatching to the chimney stacks. This extensive use of ruled hatching is a technique more characteristic of engraving than drawing.

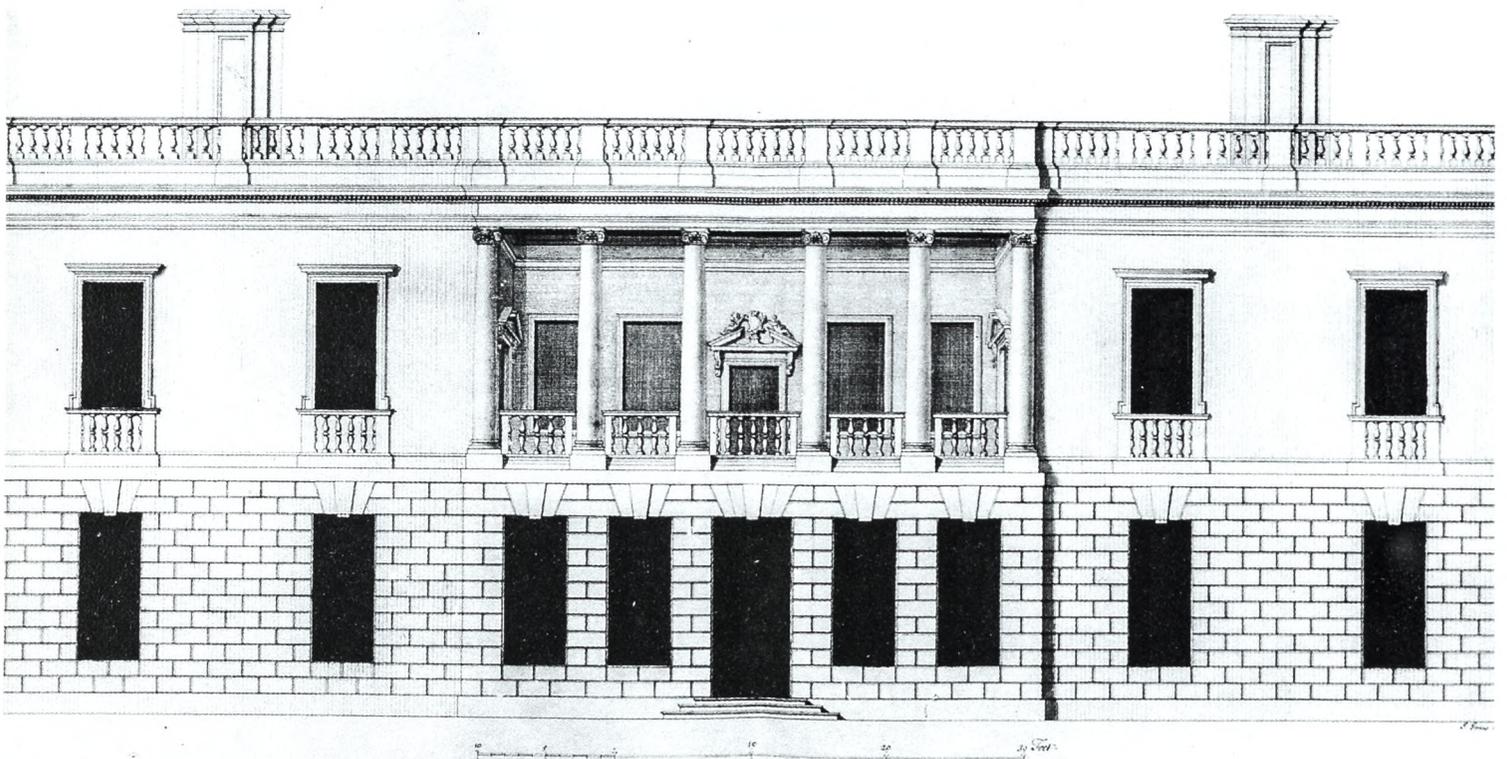


Fig. 1. John James, drawing of the park front of the Queen's House, Greenwich, c.1708 (Worcester College, Oxford).

The drawing bears no date. When was it made and why? The answer to the first question may suggest the answer to the second. The elevation shows the park front of the Queen's House much as it is today, that is with the ground floor windows lengthened by two courses of rustication. The windows were lengthened and sashes installed around 1708 when the Queen's House became the official residence of the first Governor of Greenwich Hospital, Sir William Gifford, who was also Ranger of Greenwich Park. James was then Store-keeper and Assistant Clerk of the Works to the Hospital. In 1711 James included Sir William in a long list of referees many

of whom he had “served in the business of their Buildings”.² He presented Gifford with a proof copy of his translation *A Treatise of the Five Orders of Columns in Architecture*, from the French of Claude Perrault, published in 1708.³ It seems reasonable to conclude that John James was in charge of the alterations to the Queen’s House for Sir William Gifford and that the drawing was made at that time. The drawing shows some minor features which have since disappeared — a cartouche in the broken pediment of the loggia door surround and putti reclining on the slopes of the pediment to either side.

One building which is known to have been designed by John James is the church of St George’s Hanover Square, Westminster, one of the Fifty New Churches. A drawing of the north side elevation which has long been attributed to James survives in the RIBA Drawings Collection (Fig. 2). The drawing probably dates from 1720 when James’s proposals were accepted by the Commissioners for New Churches as it shows a number of differences in detail from the elevation as executed in 1721 to 1725. The most important changes were made to the portico. In execution a square column was inserted at the back of a deeper portico directly in front of the pilasters at either end and with a narrow stretch of walling between pier and pilaster. Pedestals were added to each side of the portico gable and to its apex for the statues (which were never made). Other adjustments were made to the tower bay immediately behind the portico. In the pediment of the raised attic a cartouche flanked by swags was substituted for the looped swag shown in the drawing. The base of the tower was given a plain frieze and the bellchamber stage considerably altered in detail. Pairs of columns to each angle were reduced to a single pair at each corner, set diagonally. The height of the bellchamber windows was adjusted to give room for an extra panel above, with palm sprays, and the swag between the capitals of the bellchamber columns was replaced by a festoon. The profile of the dome was raised in execution, its ribbing simplified and the turret given a more demonstrative finial.

The draughtsmanship of the church elevation has much in common with that of the signed drawing and comparison between the two further supports the attribution. There is a minimum of freehand detail in both drawings. In each the roof is shaded and hatched with horizontal lines spaced at diminishing intervals towards the ridge. James was by no means alone

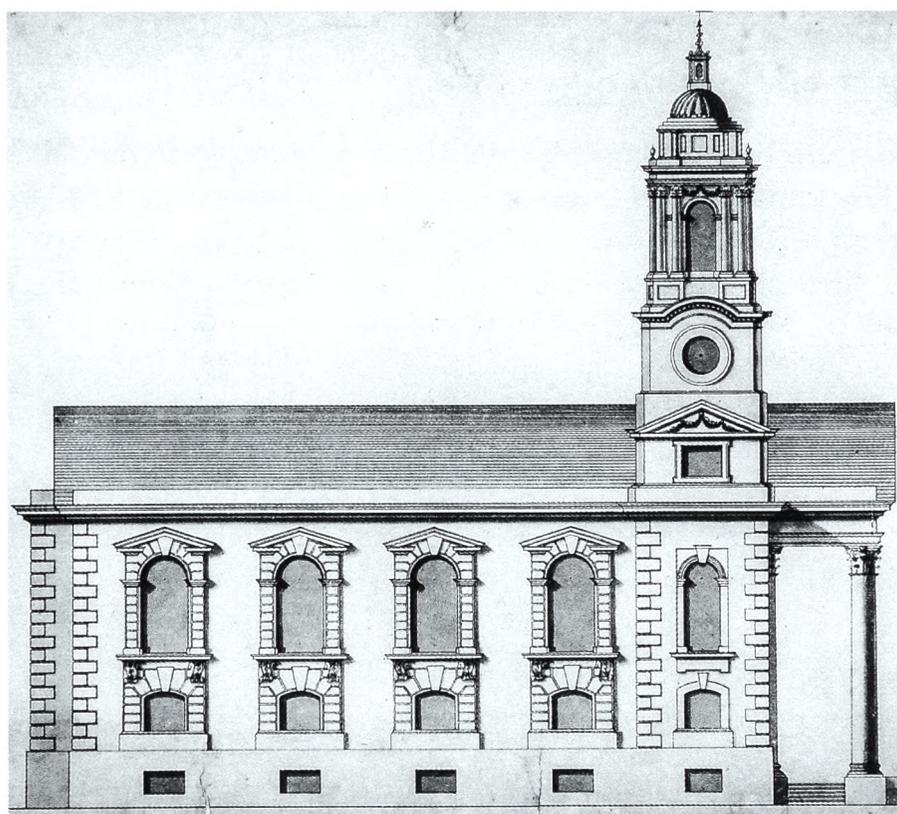


Fig. 2. John James, design for St George’s Hanover Square, 1720 (British Architectural Library).

in using this type of hatching for roofs, but it is rarely so distinct in drawings by other surveyors and is eminently characteristic of his painstaking drawing style.

The next drawing has not hitherto been attributed to any architect. It is an elevational drawing for a great house, with a neat scale indicating a front approximately 163ft in length (Fig. 3). Stylistically the design does not bear the stamp of any of the well-known “names”, such as Archer, Hawksmoor or Vanbrugh, but if it is compared to the drawing of the north side of St George’s Hanover Square there are enough points of similarity to suggest it is by the same hand. The draughtsmanship of the house front elevation is very competent, in the same meticulous ruled-line style as the drawings of the Queen’s House and St George’s Hanover Square. The roofs of the church and the house are hatched and shaded in the same way. There is vertical hatching to the mansion’s chimneystacks to indicate that they are on a different plane, as in the outer bays of the drawing of the Queen’s House. The treatment of the Corinthian columns of both the house and the church is very close, especially in the way the capitals are represented.



Fig. 3. John James, attributed, design for unknown great house (British Architectural Library).

The house elevation bears no inscription which might help to date it or aid identification. It was first published by John Harris in one of a series of guides to the RIBA Drawings Collection, which owns the drawing, *Georgian Country Houses*.⁴ It may not be for a country house, but for some great town mansion. As John Harris himself notes the design is “a working up of the facade of Marlborough House” of 1709-11.⁵ They share the distinctive feature of a niche between the windows of the two outer bays. Both Marlborough House and the unidentified house front have 11-bay elevations with the same 2.2.3.2.2. rhythm. The giant Corinthian order employed in the unidentified house front gives it a more palatial air and the 3-bay centre and 2-bay ends are more fully articulated as pavilions in the French manner of Montagu House. James Brydges 1st Duke of Chandos asked John James to make designs for his Edgware seat, Cannons, after his dismissal of William Talman in 1714. James could also have been asked to make designs around the same time for the Duke’s proposed town house in Cavendish Square.

One of John James’s designs for Cannons has been identified among the Stowe papers in the Greater London Record Office, a design for the north front (Fig. 4). It has several points of similarity to the unidentified great house elevation, both from the point of view of style and of draughtsmanship. Both designs are distinguished by a high, very visible, hipped roof breaking forward over the end bays and have elongated urn finials to the ridge ends which are almost

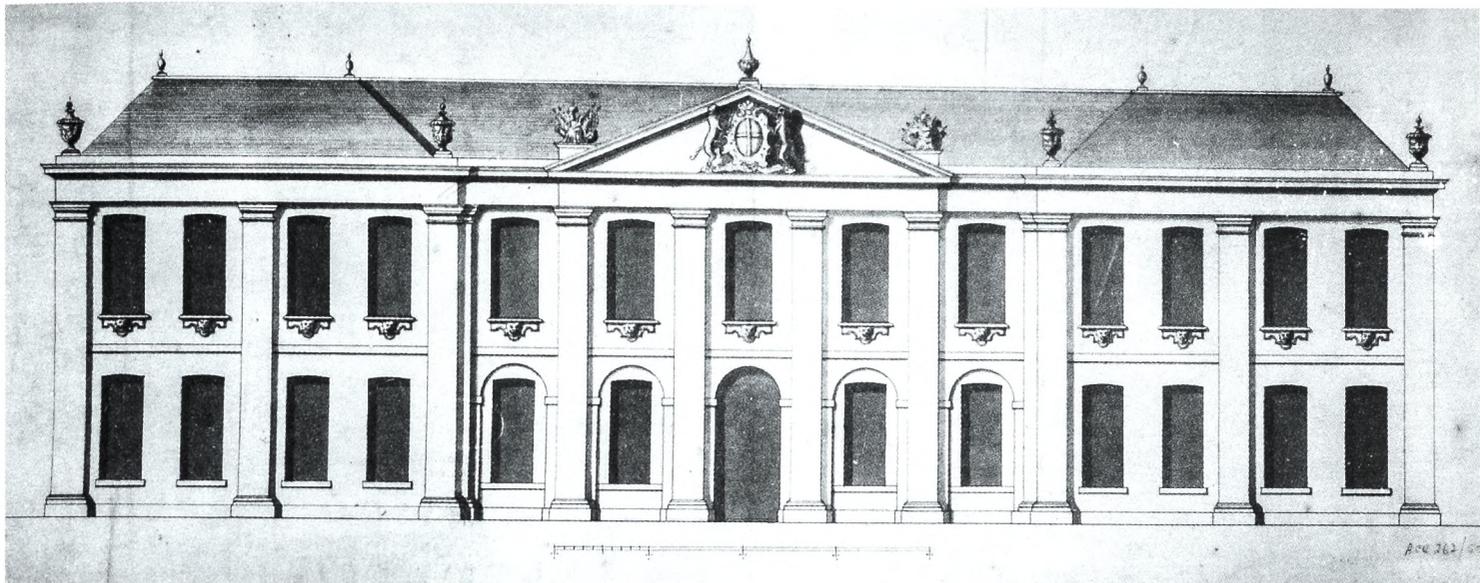


Fig. 4. John James, design for north front of Cannons, Middlesex (Greater London Record Office).

identical. A giant order is used to articulate both facades: Corinthian for the possible town house front and Doric for the Cannons elevation. John James used a very similar high hipped roof on the church of St Lawrence Whitchurch, Little Stanmore, the parish church for Cannons, which he rebuilt for the Duke of Chandos in 1714 to '16.

It is worth comparing the designs for Cannons and the unidentified great house with the principal front of Appuldurcombe on the Isle of Wight built about 1701-13 (Fig. 6). This has been ascribed to John James by L.O.J. Boynton on the basis of a number of references to James in correspondence between the client Sir Robert Worsley and his father-in-law Viscount Weymouth — one of James's known patrons.⁶ As in the two previous house designs Appuldurcombe was given a prominent hipped roof. The roof over the main block is very like the roof of the Cannons design and the double-slope roofs to the projecting pavilions resemble the roof over the centre of the unidentified great house. The attic storey with its strip pilasters topped by urns or statues also resembles the attic to the 3-bay centre of the same house design. The pedestals between the ground and first floor windows at Appuldurcombe resemble those below the ground floor windows in the unidentified house facade. The emphasis on the outer bays which is such a marked feature of the front of the Isle of Wight house is already present in the two house designs discussed above, in less pronounced form, as well as in the garden front of Herriard House



Fig. 5. Waldershare Park, Kent, before the fire of 1913 (courtesy H.M.Gilbert).

projecting pavilions, that is a niche with a keyblocked head set in a rectangular surround. It is similar to the treatment of the round-headed window in the tower bay of St George's Hanover Square.

Waldershare and Appuldurcombe both certainly suggest the influence of Talman on their designer, but not his authorship. If John James designed the Isle of Wight mansion then it is likely that he designed Waldershare also. It cannot be offered as evidence but it is interesting to note that John James mentioned being in east Kent in a letter of about 1705 to Thomas Jervoise⁹ when he was putting the finishing touches to the house he designed and built for Jervoise at Herriard near Basingstoke, Hampshire. Sir Henry Furnese bought the Waldershare estate in March of that year. The new house was built between 1705 and 1711. Furnese's Bank of England account records a payment of £50 to a James dated August 16, 1707 without any further indication of the payee's identity.¹⁰

John James certainly did come into contact with Furnese over the building of St George's Church, Deal. Sir Henry was an important benefactor to the church and it may well have been at his recommendation that James was consulted from 1707. Furnese was an influential figure in the City, as a director of the Bank of England and the East India Company. A fellow director of the latter, Sir Gregory Page, was one of John James' most important clients and he was to supervise the building of East India House to designs by Theodore Jacobsen in 1726 to 1729.¹¹

Sir Henry Furnese died in 1712, by which time the house was complete. Badeslade's view of Waldershare, published in 1720,¹² shows the roof over the centre with an urn finial giving it an even closer resemblance to the front of the unidentified great house. The house was burnt out in 1913 and restored with some alterations by Sir Reginald Blomfield. The original stable block was unscathed. It is in the simpler manner more usually associated with John James, resembling the service wing and stable block of Baylies House, Slough, which James added in 1733-35. They do not resemble any service buildings designed by Talman.

Appuldurcombe and Waldershare, together with the designs discussed above and attributed to John James, make a convincing group. They point the way to a re-appraisal of the architecture of John James. It is only necessary to look at his design for the north elevation of St George's Hanover Square to appreciate that his oft quoted statement in a letter to the Duke of Buckingham "that the Beautys of Architecture may consist with the greatest plainness of structure" should be treated with caution. The words need to be seen in their context. The letter was written to the Duke to thank him for his support and to further urge his case for being made one of the surveyors for the Fifty New Churches. James was anxious to emphasize his ability to build handsome churches comparatively cheaply and without exceeding estimates. He was not objecting to conspicuous show as such. Like William Talman he had a plain manner and a more elaborate one for grander circumstances.

John James's grand manner obviously owes much to Talman but with a number of individual features which can probably be traced to his training under the Royal Carpenter Matthew Banckes. The most distinctive of these is the consistent use of the kind of high hipped roof which Banckes provided in 1700 for Winslow Hall, Buckinghamshire, and other houses. James, apprenticed to Banckes from 1690 to 1697, seems to have continued working for him another three years and may well have assisted his master at Winslow. Such a roof obviously gave greater scope for a carpenter than a leaded flat roof; it should not be forgotten that James's work as a master carpenter formed an important part of his business and that he generally contracted for the carpentry of any building he designed. With these high roofs went equally prominent chimneystacks, on occasions paired and joined by arches as at Appuldurcombe, Waldershare and Warbrook. James was not as confident a designer as Talman, who revelled in rich and sometimes strange details, but his talent should not be underestimated. Appuldurcombe is no fluke but an integral part of his career in the first two decades of the 18th century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank Stephen Croad and Sally Jeffery for their help and encouragement.

NOTES

1. Worcester College, Oxford, drawing no.210.
2. British Library, Add MSS 865 D F 556. Letter dated October 24, 1711, to the Lord Treasurer Robert Harley 1st Earl of Oxford.
3. Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1848*. London, 1978, 453.
4. John Harris, *Georgian Country Houses*, London, 1968, p1.3.
5. *Ibid.*, 5.
6. L.O.J. Boynton, *Appuldurcombe House*, 1967, 10-11.
7. John Harris, *William Talman: Maverick Architect*, London, 1982, 33-34.
8. *Ibid.*, fig.49.
9. Hampshire Record Office, Jervoise of Herriard papers, 44M69 Box PL 33.
10. S.R. Jeffery, *English Baroque Architecture: The Work of John James*, unpublished Phd thesis, University of London, 1986, 328.
11. Colvin, *op. cit.*, 454.
12. Thomas Badeslade, *Thirty Six Different Views of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Seats in the County of Kent*, London, 1720, pl.35.