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TWO 'CRYSTALLINE'¹ VILLAS OF THE 1760s

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It was common for rising City and other London figures in the 18th century to aspire to a villa in the environs of London.² Two such, newly completed, villas were recorded in summer 1765 by the architect William Newton, who had been apprenticed to the architect William Jones from 1750, was subsequently in the office of Matthew Brettingham and had set up on his own by 1764.³ On the evidence of Newton's drawings,⁴ he was interested in studying contemporary architects' work in order to refine his own style.⁵ The two drawings to be considered here stand out as a pair on account of their similarity in plan; they are second-generation palladian, astylar villas of very compact form, sited (as will be shown here) to see and be seen. As will also be shown here, these two villas were building before Newton was practising on his own, but that he could not anyway have been their architect is strongly suggested by the topographical nature of these two thumb-nail sketches⁶ and his incorrect spelling of both patrons' names. Equally, the particular character of the buildings themselves inescapably projects another as their author, one who is especially associated with such a plan type, namely Sir Robert Taylor,

an architect who has been shown as favouring elevated sites:⁷ just how close a connection can be made, it is the intention of this article to show. Both villas are given by Newton in plan and elevation, the sheet showing 'Mr Bearing's at Southgate'⁸ is dated 'July 1765' (Fig. 1), while that of 'Mr Morrice's, Puttney Common',⁹ carries the more precise date 'Sept 1st., 1765' (Fig. 2).

The identity of these two villas has long remained unresolved, but it can now be shown that they are Beaver Hall, Southgate and Dover House, Putney Heath, demolished in 1870 and 1923 respectively. The name of the 'Bearing' villa can be established from an untitled late eighteenth century architectural drawing of a house which shows not only a plan that is clearly an extended version of that recorded by Newton in 1765, but also the same elevation as that in a print of Beaver Hall, Southgate, by J. Hassell, dated 1804. From this start the occupants can be tracked back in the rate books. In the case of the 'Morrice' house, the evidence is found in an abstract of title and in the rate books, which can be tracked chronologically to show that it is Dover House.

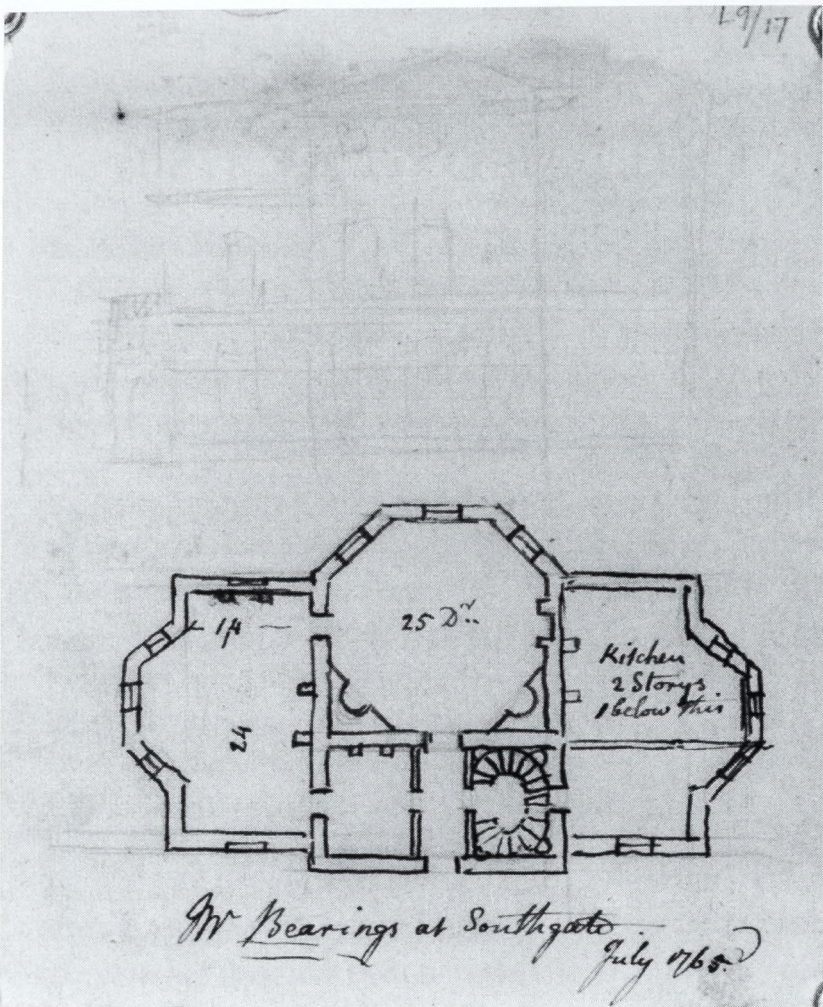


Figure 1. William Newton, Sketch plan and north-west elevation of ‘Mr Bearing’s at Southgate, July 1765.’
Royal Institute of British Architects.

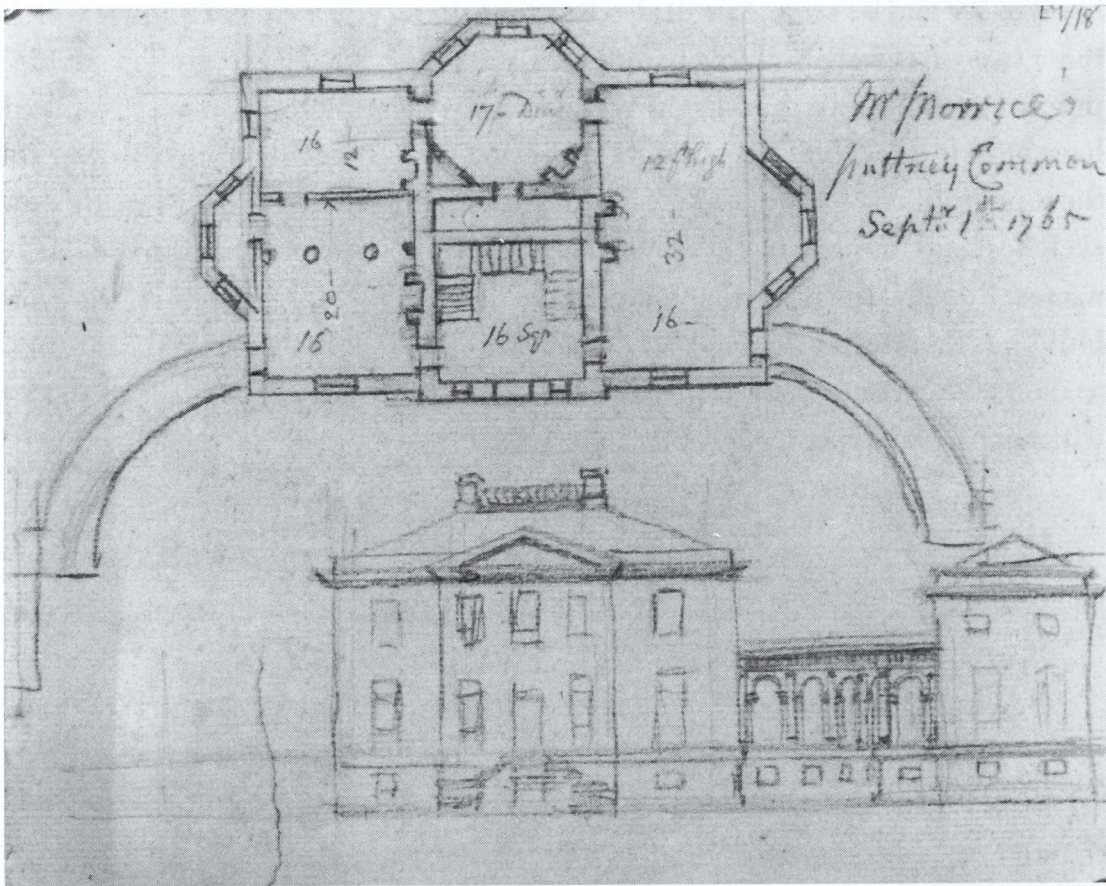


Figure 2. William Newton, Sketch plan and south elevation of ‘Mr Morrice’s Putney Common, Sept^r. 1st. 1765.’
Royal Institute of British Architects.

BEAVER HALL, SOUTHGATE

Beaver Hall stood on an elevated site half-way down the east side of the former lane that is now Waterfall Road, Southgate, in grounds (now built over) sloping down to the New River.¹⁰ Hassell's description of the site in his *Views of Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Seats*, accompanied by a print of the house (Fig. 4), is as follows:

Few situations enjoy so many advantages, or exhibit such variety of scenery, as this elegant mansion, standing in the midst of a freehold domain of forty-three acres, and elevated on a delightful height. This charming villa has a commanding view of MUSWELL HILL, HENDON, and the surrounding luxuriant country.

The NEW RIVER divides the grounds from those of the Duchess of Chandos and Isaac Walker, Esq. and followed by the eye for upwards of a mile through the valley, greatly heightens the beauty of the prospect¹¹

Likewise, Hassell's *Picturesque Rides Round London* describes Beaver Hall as

a very handsome stone building, built on a rising ground and surrounded on three sides by immense woods. It is so situated as to become a noticeable object for miles around.¹²

It might seem natural to assume that Newton's spelling is a phonetic rendering of Baring,¹³ whereas the seemingly more unlikely truth is that it is a corruption of another German immigrant name, Berens. The rate books for the South Street ward of Southgate in the parish of Edmonton, Middlesex, are patchy at this period, but in 1764 and 1765 record a Mr Berens assessed for a house at £52,¹⁴ being the next property to Lord Carnarvon, who by the time of the next surviving rate books of 1774–5¹⁵ had succeeded his father as 3rd Duke of Chandos. The rate books give no first name for Mr Berens, but the *Gentleman's Magazine* records the death of a John Berens, Esq., of Broad Street, a Hamburg

merchant, who died at Southgate on December 31, 1787,¹⁶ and the 1789/90 deeds of sale on behalf of John Berens's 'widow and devisee'¹⁷ confirm the house that can now be shown to have been Beaver Hall was 'lately erected by the said John Berens'.¹⁸ These documents make plain that most of the 43 acres in which the house stood were purchased from Sir George Colebrooke of neighbouring Arno's Grove. The corresponding deeds for the sale from Colebrooke to Berens of 'that New Brick Messuage Tenement or Dwelling House lately erected by the said John Berens' and its grounds of some 30 acres are dated 21 and 26 January, 1763.¹⁹ As this document refers to a completed house, its date gives a *terminus ante quem* for the completion of Beaver Hall. Sir George Colebrooke at the time he sold²⁰ Arno's Grove in 1762 was in the process of altering that house to the designs of Robert Taylor, as confirmed (within Taylor's lifetime) by Watts in his *Views of Seats* of 1779,²¹ who makes it clear that the scheme was completed by a subsequent owner, Sir William Mayne, 1st Lord Newhaven.²² Thus it may well have been through Colebrooke that John Berens found his architect.

It is now well established that Taylor had a high proportion of City merchants and bankers among his patrons for whom 'he designed offices in London and villas in the country'.²³ Thus not only does John Berens, who was additionally in 1769–71 a London Assurance director, fit the typical profile of Taylor's characteristic patrons, but he was the brother of another Taylor patron, Herman Berens.²⁴ John Berens was at first in partnership with his brothers Herman and Joseph, but by 1784 was on his own at 46 Old Broad Street.²⁵ Herman Berens was also a party to both the purchase and sale of Beaver.²⁶ In 1767–9 Herman employed Taylor to enlarge his house at Kevington, Kent;²⁷ this can

now be presumed to have been on the strength of the building of Beaver Hall.

Nonetheless an attribution of Beaver Hall to Taylor must rest on an analysis of its style, its plan and elevations. Newton's plan (Fig. 1) shows a compact villa with a canted-bay show front, which we now know commanded the view. The interior has the stairs to one side of a tripartite hall which leads into an octagonal saloon beyond, flanked by elongated spaces, each with a canted bay placed centrally in the side wall, bays which the elevation makes clear were only one storey high. The right hand of these spaces is divided by a partition running off-centre into the bay, with the consequence that the fireplace in the larger of the two resulting rooms was placed off axis in order to be central on its own wall.²⁸ This plan is almost identical to, but less resolved than, Taylor's slightly later Asgill House,

Richmond of 1761–4 (Fig. 3).²⁹ Asgill is famed both for its deep eaves and for its reference to Palladio's *Redentore* motif of a pediment within a pediment, implied in its roof line, with the result that the outer bays are a storey less than the centre. But neither eaves nor *Redentore* motif was prefigured at Beaver, which Newton shows topped by a parapet and with the flanking bays the same height as the central three. However, Newton noted, on the right-hand room of his plan, that the kitchen was of '2 storeys 1 below this', an arrangement characteristic of Taylor's houses, for example Danson Hill, Chute Lodge and No. 10 Downing Street.³⁰ Thus by taking the date of the house and the patron's circumstances together with these features, namely the plan, the side bays and the double-height basement kitchen, there is a compelling case for an attribution to Taylor as architect of the 'Bearing' house.

The earliest previously identified occupant of Beaver Hall was John Henry Schneider.³¹ He bought the property from Mr. Berens's executors for £5,500 on 29 and 30 September 1790.³² Born in Berne in 1747, he emigrated to London and established himself as a Baltic merchant, becoming naturalised in 1769;³³ he first appears in the trade directories in 1783 in Basing Lane, off Bow Lane, and in the Southgate rate books in 1799,³⁴ the first date they are extant following a gap from 1775. The rate books give out again after 1800 until 1825, but on the basis of Hassell's 1804 print of the house (Fig. 4), which is captioned as the seat of John Locke, Schneider may have died by then.

Hassell described Beaver Hall as 'formerly the residence of John Henry Schnieder, Esq. Merchant, who expended an immense sum of money in modernising the house, laying out the grounds and building the billiard room, greenhouse, dovecot and a variety of convenient out offices'. He says, in addition:

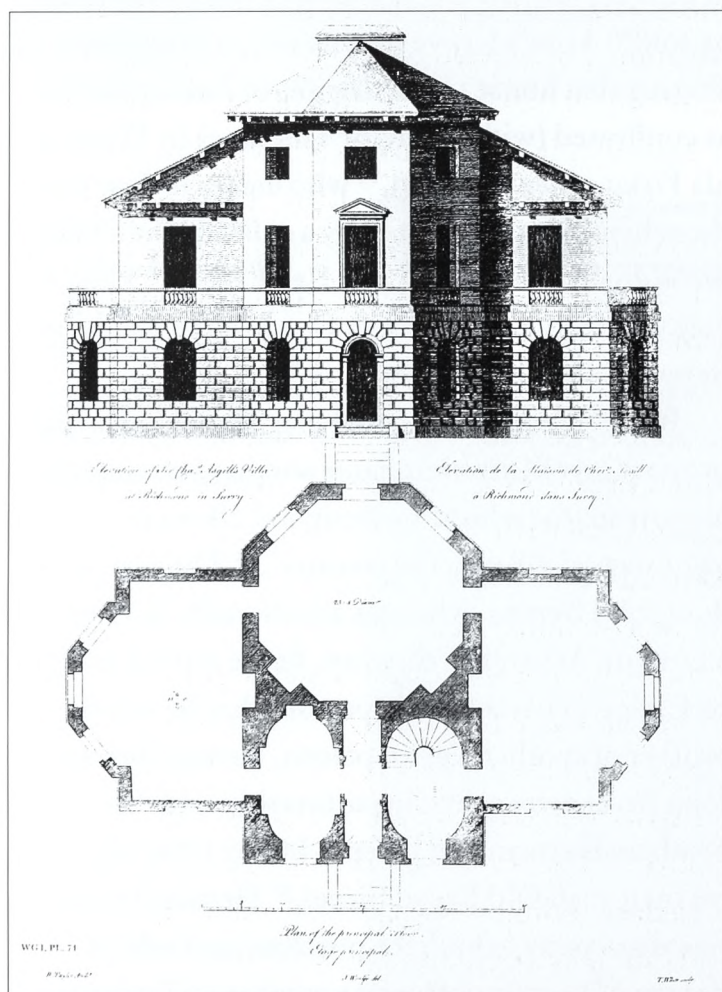


Figure 3 Asgill House, Richmond. *Vitruvius Britannicus*.

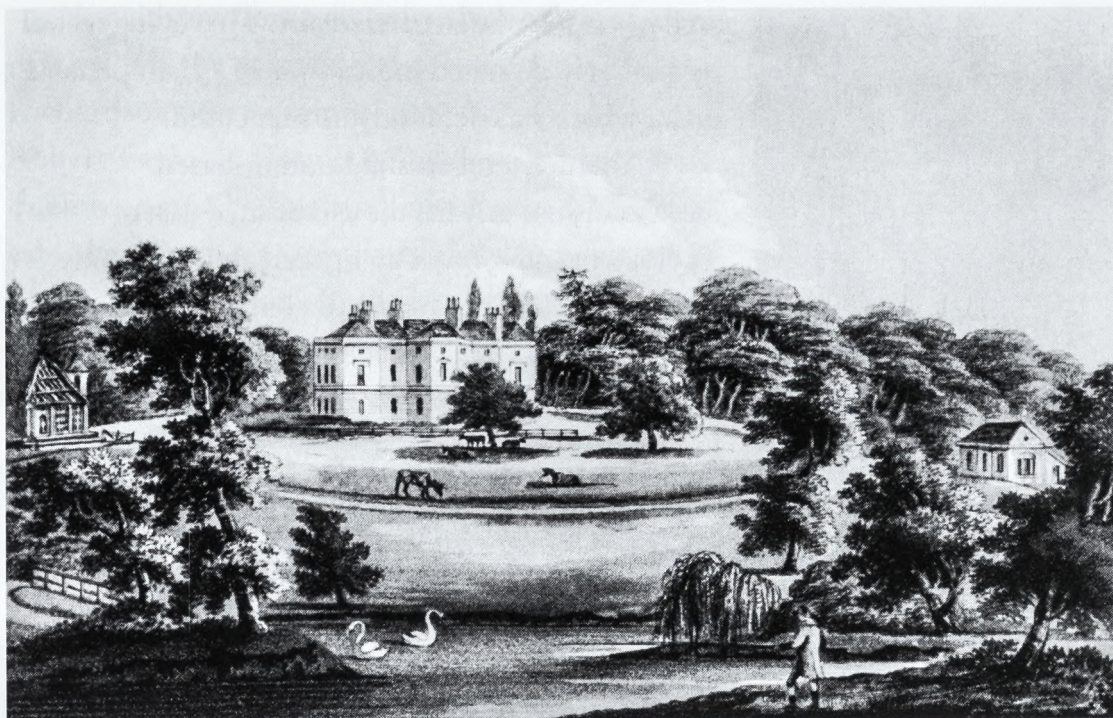


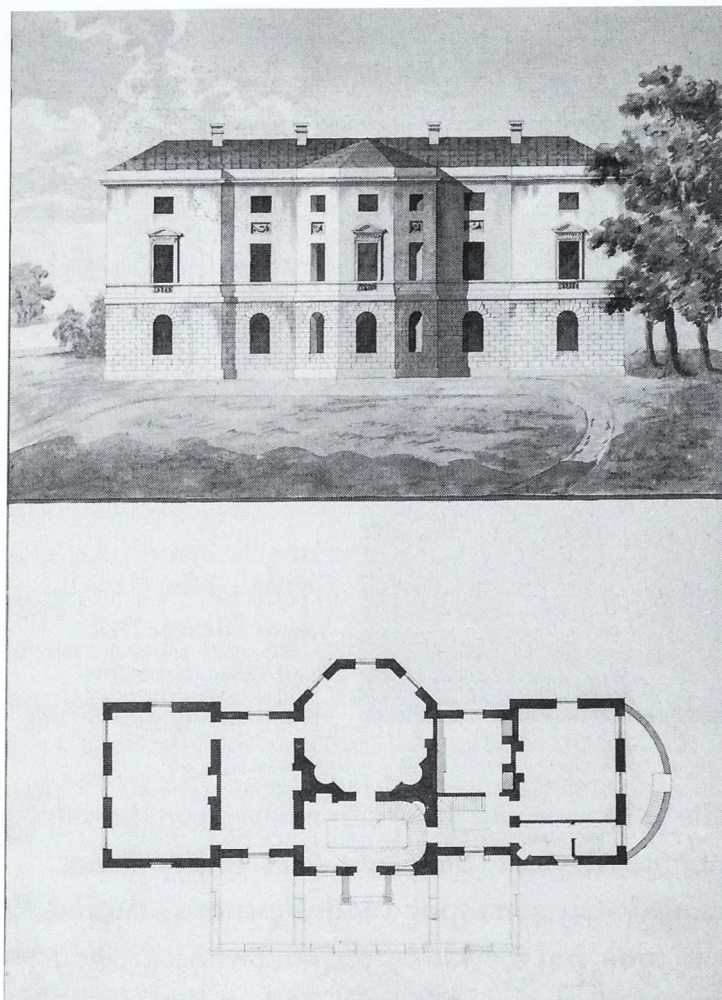
Figure 4. John Hassell, View of Beaver Hall, Southgate, from the south. *Guildhall Library*.

The approach to the house is striking; the entrance under a portico of the Doric order. Opposite, as you enter, is an octagon drawing room, overlooking the lawn, and fitted up in a plain but elegant manner; on the left is the small, and adjoining, the large dining room, which occupies the whole depth of the house, and is about forty feet long, by thirty feet wide . . .

On the right of the octagon room is a breakfast parlour, correspondent to the small dining room, while the library adjoining the parlour forms the other extremity of the house. A geometrical stone staircase leads up to the principal bedchambers, which are numerous, spacious, and lofty.

Nearly in the middle of the lawn, and parallel to each other, are two very tasteful and elegant buildings, being a billiard room and greenhouse; the grounds here are separated by an Ha-ha, traversing the grass plot. In apertures on each side of the large window in the billiard room, are emblematical figures of Spring and Summer, with tablets denoting the elements peculiar to each season; air to Spring, water to Summer: at the two extremities of the green house, are Autumn and Winter, with the elements of earth and fire; . . . On the left of the billiard room is an aviary, and at a short distance an ice house, protected from the sun by lofty trees, forming an open grove, relieving the back and eastern side of the house.³⁵

Hassell's view and description have been the only published ones of the house. Clearly they do not immediately correspond with Newton's plan and elevation, but they do correspond with a previously unidentified drawing from Sir Albert Richardson's collection (Fig. 5).³⁶ This includes a plan as well as an elevation, and the central part of the plan does correspond with Newton's, albeit shorn of its canted side bays. In addition, the segment-shaped area, with stairs leading downwards, at the south-west end, is placed so as to lead to the double-height kitchen commented on by Newton. It evidently shows Berens's villa with the additions noted by Hassell; indeed it may be the proposal drawing for these additions, and even seems to have the name 'Schneider' indistinctly inscribed at the base. The drawing proposes two additional large rooms, one at each end, enlargement of the main stair to fill the hall, and the provision of a secondary stair in the space that now communicated with the new library.³⁷ The room identified by Hassell as the breakfast parlour is shown fitted out with presses and thus may originally have been intended as the library. The drawing has subsequent additions on the entrance front sketched in pencil, which may



well never have been carried out. This is suggested by similarly sketched indications of a giant pilaster order which was definitely not executed.

Schneider, a successful London-based merchant, similarly fits the established cast of Taylor's patrons, but Taylor died almost exactly two years before the registered date of purchase. However, it must have become apparent fairly quickly that Mrs Berens was minded to sell. If Schneider began negotiating for the house immediately after Berens's death in December 1787, and started building work before the legal transfer was finalised (just as happened when the house was first built and, as will be shown below, was the case with the building of Dover House), then there was time to retain Taylor before his death on 27 September 1788.

Figure 5. Sir Robert Taylor or his office (attributed), Beaver Hall, Southgate, south-east elevation and plan. *Christie's Images*.



Figure 6. Beaver Hall, Southgate, south-east front, c.1870. *London Borough of Enfield*.

Notwithstanding a complete lack of knowledge of for whom the drawing was prepared, Sir Albert Richardson perspicaciously attributed it to Sir Robert Taylor.³⁸ Despite being described subsequently as merely 'English School' at its Christie's sale, the drawing is very plausibly from a member of Taylor's office, which by the late 1770s, like other architect's offices, was producing proposal elevations with sketchy landscape backgrounds.³⁹ The drawing is also attributable to Taylor on grounds of architectural style. The inset panels are too neo-classical to have been included in the original facade of the early 1760s; indeed the interior of contemporary Asgill has rococo fittings. Assuming that the panels were added at the time of Schneider's 'modernising' in order to balance the weight of the extended elevation and also to update it stylistically, they are comparable to the neo-classical panels at Taylor's Heveningham Hall, Suffolk, of 1777–80.⁴⁰ Schneider's alterations, if not a very late scheme by Taylor himself, may at least be by one of his pupils. As Horace Walpole was at pains to emphasise, Taylor 'ever made it a point through life, to protect, support and recommend his more gifted pupils', and even on the point of death 'suspended the consolations of religion, literally half an hour, till he had finished various letters in favour of Mr Cockerell and Mr Craig the architects, to get them new patronage to secure them better in what they had got! In half an hour after he died.'⁴¹

It was presumably as a tenant that the merchant and shipowner John Locke lived at Beaver Hall.⁴² This must be so because Schneider's son John Henry Powell Schneider was back in the house by 1817, when his own son by his second marriage was born there.⁴³ J. H. P. Schneider is still recorded at Beaver in the rate books as late as 1850,⁴⁴ but shortly after that it was purchased from the Schneiders by

Joseph Thornton, a railway contractor, who occurs in the 1861 Census.⁴⁵ Finally the property was bought, in 1870, by John Walker, the then owner of Arno's Grove in order to extend his park. Not wanting another substantial house, he promptly demolished Beaver Hall,⁴⁶ just as his father had demolished the Duchess of Chandos's intervening Minchenden House in 1853, following his purchase of that estate. In this way the Walkers were pursuing their own 'green belt' policy, preventing neighbouring properties from falling into the hands of developers,⁴⁷ but nonetheless tearing down two architecturally significant houses.

Sometime before demolition the house was photographed, both close to and from across the New River (Fig. 6).⁴⁸ These views show both the elevated site and how the articulation of the original block is comparable to Taylor's 1760s villas, such as Asgill and Chute, and to the crystalline geometry in crisply cut ashlar of Sharpham, of c.1770. The photographs also show how, at some stage in the 19th century, either for J. P. H. Schneider or perhaps during Thornton's tenure, varying entablatures and segmental pediments were added over the first floor windows, with the consequent loss of the inset panels and the original, triangular, solitary pediment to the central bay; while shallower canted bays were added at each end and the side elevation was extended to five bays. A temporary postscript to the demolition of Beaver Hall was the salvage of the main staircase and many of the doors, windows and fittings for re-use in the building of Stone Hall in neighbouring Winchmore Hill, in 1872⁴⁹ for Alfred Walker, proprietor of Stone's Ginger Wine, like-named but unrelated to the Walkers of Arno's Grove. However, Stone Hall was, in turn, demolished in 1932 to make way for redevelopment.⁵⁰

DOVER HOUSE, PUTNEY HEATH

Referred to in 1797 by George Richardson merely as 'a Villa at Putney Park'⁵¹ and then called Roehampton House by Neale in his *Views of Seats*, 1826,⁵² this villa did not become known as Dover House until well into the 19th century. Richardson was referring to the fact that the house was built on land alienated from Putney Park, a manor of the Spencer family's, further north down the slope towards the Thames. The site, on a knoll on the already elevated ground to the north side of the track along the edge of Putney heath leading down into Roehampton High Street, afforded views through some 300° or more, nearly a complete circle, including north down the escarpment to the river Thames, west over Roehampton into Richmond Park, and finally south over the heath.

George Richardson described the house in 1810 as: pleasantly situated on the north-side of Putney-heath, commanding, to the south, a view of the various roads which intersect and enliven that spacious piece of uninclosed country; and to the north, an extensive prospect of the fertile meadows of Surry and Middlesex, through which the river Thames majestically winds in its course from Richmond to Fulham.⁵³

This praise was echoed by Neale in 1826:

The North Front of the house commands a most beautiful and striking view, over the River Thames, of the county of Middlesex, to Harrow, Hampstead, Highgate, &c.⁵⁴

Newton's spelling of the patron's name here as 'Morrice' threatens confusion⁵⁵ as the rate books, despite their known propensity for phonetic spellings, clearly show the occupant as one James Morris. He appears first in July 1764, rated at £100 for '58 Acres of Land in Putney Park' and '16 Acres of Land . . . in the hamlett Rowhampton',⁵⁶ there having been no mention of him in the March rate of that year. This dovetails with an abstract of title from John, Viscount Spencer (subsequently 1st Earl Spencer) of 6 November 1764, reciting 'that

the said James Morris had then lately laid out and expended a very considerable sum of money in the capital messuage or tenement then erecting and building by him' on fields and closes totalling 75 acres⁵⁷ formerly belonging to Putney Park and granting him a tenancy of 99 years at £148 per annum from Michaelmas 1763, Morris in turn undertaking to complete the house within the first two years.⁵⁸

Morris is described in this title deed as 'of Lambeth', and would now seem, as suggested by the noting of 'Jas Morris Esq. Exors.' in the February 1782 rate,⁵⁹ to have been the James Morris who died on 8 December 1781⁶⁰ and was buried in St Mary-at-Lambeth, where there is a severely plain wall monument to him by Flaxman in the north aisle. He is doubtless the same James Morris whose will, proved in the same year, bequeathed by codicil his dwelling at the east end of Westminster Bridge to his widow for her life, just as he had already devised his 'house in the country' to her during his lifetime.⁶¹ In the will James Morris mentions his brother Colonel Roger Morris, thereby identifying him as the eldest son of the architect Roger Morris, who had built houses on the approaches to Westminster Bridge.⁶² Roger Morris had worked at Althorp for Lord Spencer's uncle,⁶³ giving James the connection to obtain the Putney lease. According to Sir Howard Colvin, James Morris succeeded to his father's 'post as Master Carpenter to the Ordnance and lived the life of a gentleman in Surrey, of which county he was High Sheriff in 1764'.⁶⁴ His building Dover House would accord with this description of living in Surrey, while his shrievalty might indicate that the house was completed by the time he took office.

The architectural activity of Roger Morris has tended to overshadow the fact that the Morris family had extensive City, mercantile and colonial

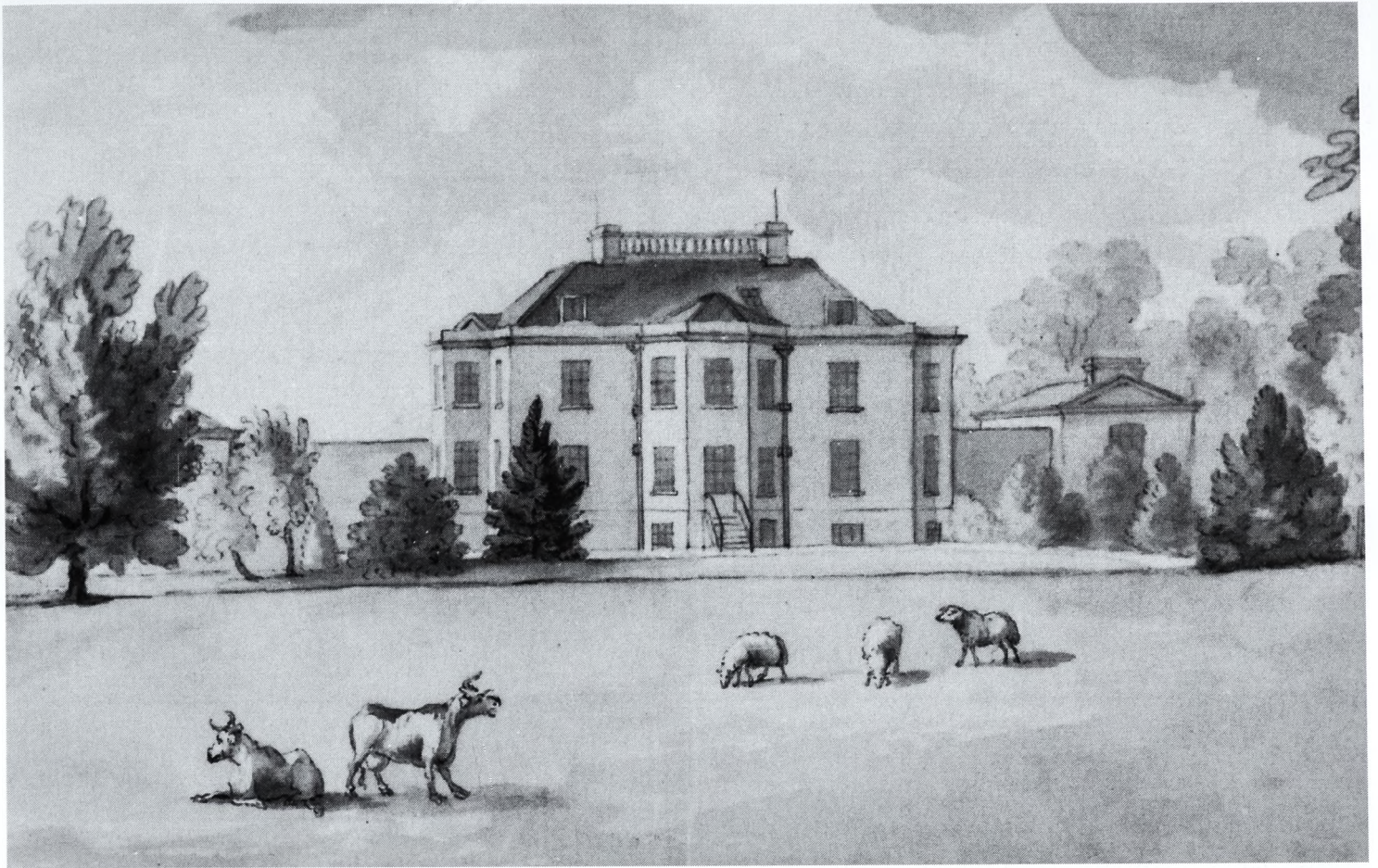


Figure 7. Drawing of a villa, endorsed 'James Mackpherson, Putney Heath', from the north (detail). *Minet Library*.

connections. Roger Morris's first wife was the daughter of a successful Turkey merchant and Bank director, Sir Philip Jackson. Jackson's own wife was a Vandeput, from another significant City family, while one of his sons became Governor of Bengal. Turning to James Morris himself, one of his sons was a Bank director, while a second son's wife was the daughter and sister of Bank directors and their son in turn, James's grandson, was Governor of the Bank.⁶⁵ Such connections assume significance in the light of Sir Robert Taylor's typical clientele and the fact that he was retained as surveyor to the Bank from 1764,⁶⁶ coincidentally while the building of Dover House was in progress. And although Roger Morris worked at Althorp,⁶⁷ so did Taylor, but not until 1772.⁶⁸

Any attribution of Dover House to Taylor must, nonetheless, rest on an analysis of its architecture. Newton's plan (Fig. 2) reveals that it was another

compact villa with a canted-bay show front, now known to have commanded the view, and faced in brick rather than ashlar. His elevation reveals two immediately noteworthy features. First, old fashioned for a house of the 1760s, the main roof is topped by a balustraded prospect platform set between the chimney stacks. Secondly, there are quadrant arcades the full height of the *piano nobile* with their own corresponding half-basements linking the villa to flanking service wings of one and a half storeys over a half-basement. The central block is of two storeys over a similar basement, or surbase, with a perron rising to the *piano nobile*, and as the canted side bays evident from the plan are not shown in the elevation, presumably they did not rise above the *piano nobile* (being hidden behind the quadrants); although, as will be shown, this is not certain.

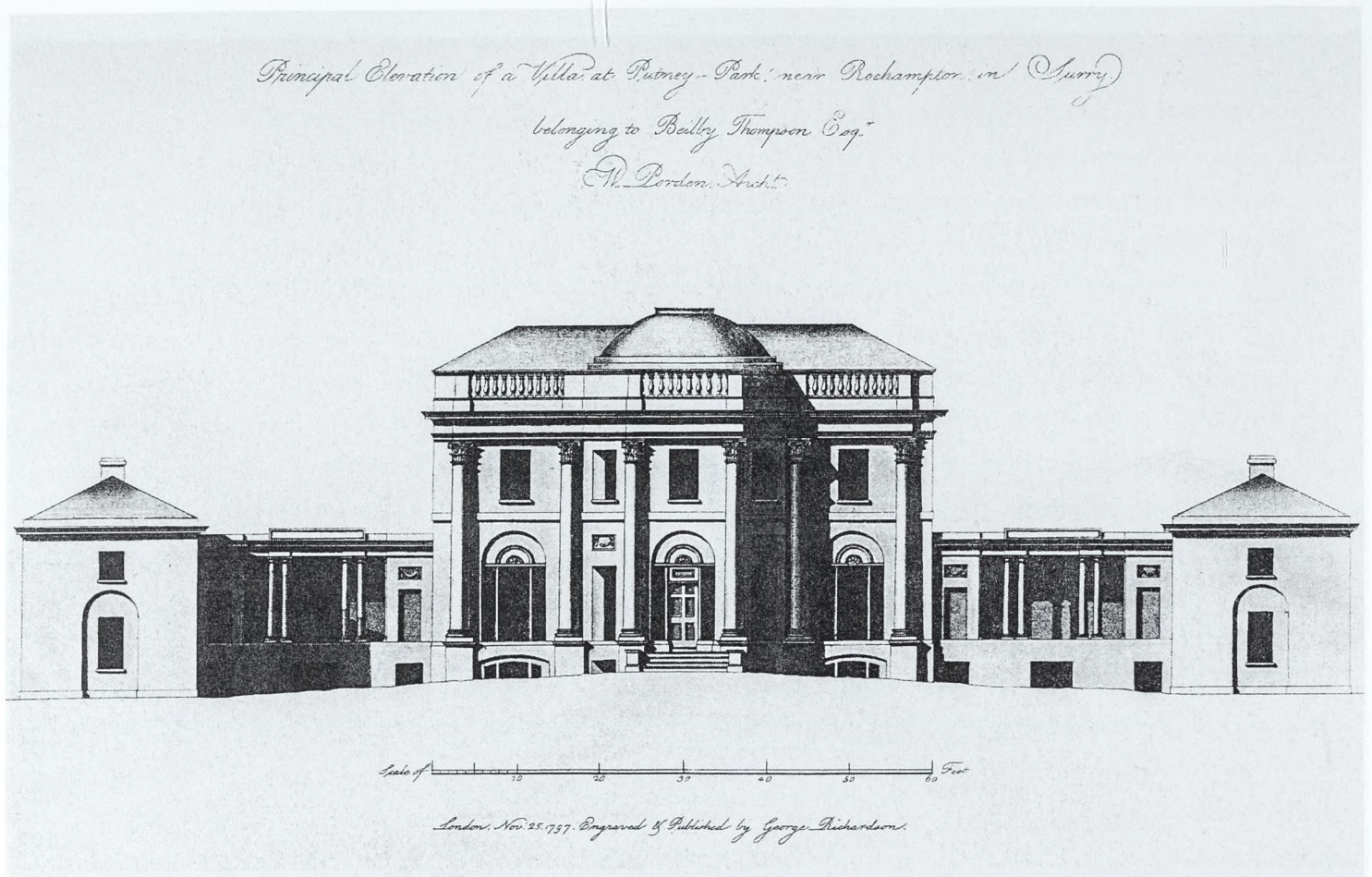


Figure 8. Dover House, Putney Heath, south elevation. *New Vitruvius Britannicus*.

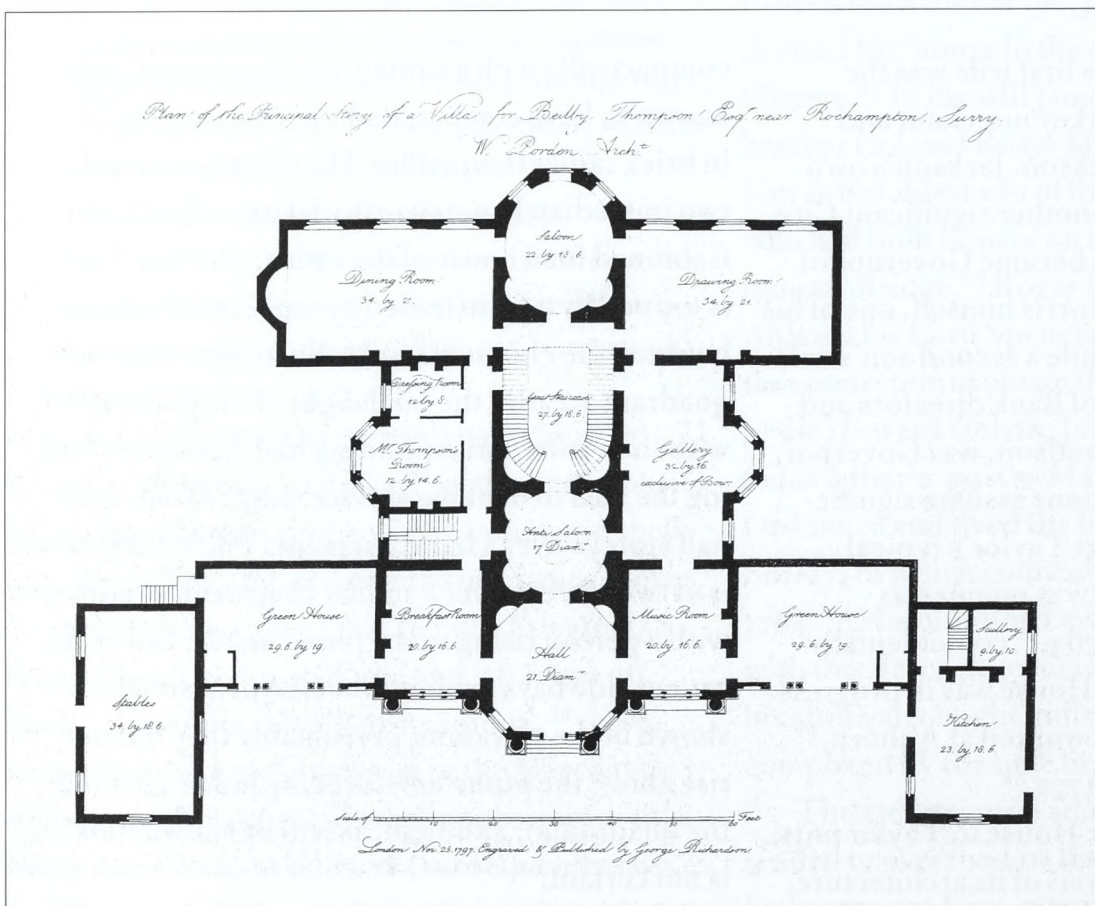


Figure 9. Dover House, Putney Heath, plan of principal storey. *New Vitruvius Britannicus*.



Figure 10. Dover House, Putney Heath, north front in 1923 shortly, before demolition. *London Metropolitan Archives.*



Figure 11. Dover House, Putney Heath, south front in 1923, shortly before demolition. *London Metropolitan Archives.*

Newton's plan shows the hall containing the stairs opposite the entrance which probably ascended one floor only. This space is separated from the octagon room by what would seem to be indicated as a secondary stair, presumably rising through the full height of the house to the viewing platform on the roof. On the right is one large room with a canted bay. The space symmetrically opposite on the left is divided into two and its canted bay is partitioned off. This last perhaps furnished linked eating spaces: a formal dining room with a columned screen to the serving end also giving access to a more intimate area in the canted bay.

Features in such a plan occur at Taylor's Asgill, and Danson Hill, but while being something of a mid-point hybrid of them, are not as resolved as either. Asgill has its main staircase at the front of the centre of the house. Danson Hill had dependant service wings linked by quadrants, but in its case these were merely screens (rather than arcaded passages), were at basement level and did not embrace the *piano nobile*. However, the superimposition of a taller Roman Doric order on an arcade is found in Taylor's *oeuvre* at the Lombard Street banking house of Sir Charles Asgill (1756), Bank Buildings (1764–46) and screen curtain wall at the Bank itself (1765–68; 1787).⁶⁹ Thus, with a patron of a background that might predispose him to employ Taylor and clear pointers to Taylor's style, both in plan and elevation, there is undoubtedly a case to be made for him as architect of Dover House.

Although the demands of the patron could always have been an issue at the time,⁷⁰ yet with its prospect platform and the way the quadrants embrace the full height of the *piano nobile*, both of which are unprecedented in Taylor's *oeuvre*, that case remains less certain than for Beaver Hall.

Successive changes of ownership (enumerated below) identify Morris's house with the house known from c.1831 as Dover House. This was the first house bordering Putney Heath west of Putney

Park Lane,⁷¹ yet the Minet Library, Lambeth, holds an anonymous wash drawing of a villa with wings, endorsed 'James Mackpherson, Putney Heath' (Fig. 7),⁷² looking to all appearances like a view of the back of the villa sketched by Newton.

MacPherson's house, latterly known as Gifford House, was the first one east of Putney Park Lane.⁷³ As it would seem inconceivable that two juxtaposed villas of the 1760s would have been so identical, and as the house in the drawing does not relate to the eventual form of Gifford House, it is arguably a view of Dover House. The qualification of this suggestion is that the service pavilions are a (half) storey lower whereas the canted side bays rise to the eaves, contradicting Newton's evidence. But the pavilions, as will be discussed below, could have been reduced and, as happened at Taylor's Danson,⁷⁴ the bays may have been raised fairly soon after the house was built.

The subsequent occupier of Dover House was Alexander Willock, sugar merchant, who in 1782 bought out the interest of Morris's widow via the executors, the purchase monies of £3,465 for the house and its attached land being noted in the record of the September 1782 rate, and assessed at £105–5s.⁷⁵ From the September 1784 rate the 'purchase money' noted is reduced to £3,360 and the assessed rate separated into £100 for the house and £4 'for premises pulled down',⁷⁶ indicating an alteration, perhaps, to the service pavilions. In the July 1793 rate Beilby Thompson's purchase of the house for £5,000 is recorded.⁷⁷ He immediately employed William Porden, whose scheme was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1794,⁷⁸ to enlarge and remodel the house. The scheme was published in Richardson's *New Vitruvius Britannicus* in 1810 (Fig. 8 & 9).⁷⁹

Photographs of the house (Fig. 10 & 11), taken just before its demolition, show how Porden's scheme as published in *New Vitruvius Britannicus* was only partially executed.⁸⁰ The original villa was intended to be retained, for 'the two smaller bows,

in the centre of the plan, are part of an old house built about forty years ago for John [*sic*] Morris, Esq.', as Richardson himself commented. He continued, 'The new buildings were intended to be very considerable; but Mr. Thompson's indifferent state of health, at that time, suddenly checked the project',⁸¹ and thus it was that only the south front was extended. Until demolition of the house this century the north and side facades of the 1760s house survived, with an added attic, although the north facade had had tripartite ground floor windows inserted. As this attic extended backwards from Porden's higher southern addition, it necessitated the raising of the cornice and insertion of blind panels above the first floor windows to disguise the heightened first floor wall-space on these surviving north and side elevations. The service pavilions in the photographs are markedly similar to those in the late 18th century drawing at the Minet Library; if this represents Dover House, they must have been retained by Porden. In place of the quadrants Porden linked these pavilions to the main house with paired conservatories in line with his advanced south front.

The plans and elevations given by Richardson show how Porden had proposed a vast aggrandisement of the house, more than doubling its plan. His south elevation is a debased essay in a fashionable neo-classicism inspired by his former master James Wyatt, reminiscent of Heaton Park, but altogether heavier and with the distinctly unacademic feature of a saucer dome over a canted bay. This last is so gauche as to suggest at first sight that he was remodeling an existing facade, but a comparison of Newton's and the *New Vitruvius Britannicus* plans confirms that Porden's south front was a new build.

Despite Richardson's publication in 1810 of Porden's remodelling of the house, within 16 years

Neale managed to state erroneously that 'The present Mansion . . . was erected from the designs of the late James Wyatt'.⁸² Neale does, however, add to our knowledge by indicating the use of some rooms in the house, writing that it 'contains, on the ground floor, a noble Suite of rooms, consisting of a Hall, Staircase, Breakfast-room, Dining-room, two Drawing-rooms, and a small Library, with two Sleeping Apartments in the wings.'

The house was next 'in the successive occupation of Earl Spencer (who inhabited it while his seat at Wimbledon was rebuilding); and of Lord Hawkesbury'.⁸³ Lord Hawkesbury's⁸⁴ tenancy was brief, around 1801,⁸⁵ and the 4th Earl of Buckinghamshire was in residence by 1802.⁸⁶ From 1811 to 1871 it was in the possession of the family of the Viscounts Clifden,⁸⁷ one of whom, as Lord Dover,⁸⁸ gave his name to the house. During his occupancy the house was famed for its social and literary gatherings.⁸⁹ After further changes of ownership, including a period when it was lived in by John Pierpont Morgan,⁹⁰ the house was demolished in 1923 and the site given over to a housing development.⁹¹

I am grateful to Giles Worsley for pointing out the two drawings by Newton in the first place and to Graham Dalling of the Enfield Local History Unit for showing me the Hassell print which started to unravel the Gordian knot left by Newton. Alan Dumayne and Dorian Gerhold, historians of Enfield and Putney respectively, have been most generous in imparting information and I am grateful for the assistance of John Orbell, archivist of ING Baring, and for his permission to inspect the Baring archive. Richard Hewlings gave me information about Roger Morris and his family, showing me copies of Roger Morris's will and the genealogical information which he found in Hereford Public Library.

NOTES

- 1 This term is interpolated from Pierre de la Ruffiniere du Prey, 'The Bombé-Fronted Country House from Talman to Soane' in *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House*, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1989, 35, wherein Sir Robert Taylor's Sharpham House, Devon is described as having 'crystalline angular geometry'.
- 2 George Richardson, *New Vitruvius Britannicus*, London, 1, 1810, 6, referring to the 'Villa at Putney Park', later known as Dover House, comments, 'The salubrity of the air, and the beauty of the scenery, unite in making this place a delightful retirement from the smoke and noise of the metropolis; where the quiet of rural amusements may be mingled with the charms of polished society, the adjacent villas being inhabited by families of fashion and distinction.'
- 3 Howard Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, New Haven and London, 1995, 702-4,
- 4 *Ibid.*, 702, wherein it is noted that a collection over 100 of his drawings was presented to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1891 (London, RIBA, Drawings Collection, hereafter RIBAD).
- 5 Eg. RIBAD, L9/92, Combe Bank, by Roger Morris, May 30th, 1765 'a pretty rural House/ moderately good Manner/ the View is most/ Excellent - but/ the Rooms/ are all badly/ lighted & / Irregular/ except ye Room A'; L9/93, Brackenbury House, Hammersmith, by the same; L9/94, Church of St. George, by Hawksmoor; L9/98, Manresa, by Chambers; L9/100, Mereworth Castle, by Campbell.
- 6 The incomplete elevation with only one canted bay and partial fenestration sketched for the Southgate house gives the barest essentials to indicate the whole scheme, while a cursory curved line seems to indicate a stair at the Putney house. Furthermore, bearing in mind Newton's comments about Combe Bank (see note 5), it is highly unlikely that he were retained by a 'Mr Morrice' who is shown in this article to have been the son of the architect of that house.
- 7 Marcus Binney, *Sir Robert Taylor*, London, 1984, 39.
- 8 RIBAD, L9/17.
- 9 *Ibid.*, L9/18.
- 10 Alan Dumayne, *Southgate, a Glimpse into the Past*, Southgate, 1990, 145.
- 11 John Hassell, *Views of Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Seats . . . in the Counties Adjoining London*, London, 1804-5, unpaginated (hereafter Hassell, *Views*).
- 12 John Hassell, *Picturesque Rides Round London*, London, 1817 (so given as reference by the journal *The Recorder* of Southgate, of March 14, 1912, but I have been unable to trace the original quotation in the edition of Hassell I examined).
- 13 John Orbell, *Baring Brothers & Co., Limited. A History to 1939*, London, 1985, chapter 1. Mr. 'Baring' would more likely have been John Baring (1730-1816), elder brother of (Sir) Francis Baring, the founder of the bank. He was occasionally resident in London, and as the eldest brother and head of the family's longer-established Exeter trading house, might have had the requisite resources. It must seem that the more famous, younger brother, (Sir) Francis Baring (1740-1810), founder of Baring's Bank, should have been excluded on the grounds of youth and lack of time since his arrival in London, as an apprentice at the age of 16, to have amassed the substance to fund the building of a villa by the time he was 25. Indeed, he was habitually overstretched at this period and especially after the establishment in 1763 of the Barings' London trading house, largely on account of the repeatedly heavy and unexpectedly sudden demands on his resources made by their Exeter house. An alternative possibility is that one of the Baring brothers rented the house in summer 1765 from Berens, although there is no traceable connection in the Baring archive.
- 14 London, Southgate Town Hall, Enfield Borough Local History Unit (hereafter Southgate), Mb1765/1/2.
- 15 *Ibid.*, Mb1774/2/4; Mb1775/1/3.
- 16 *Gentleman's Magazine* (hereafter *Gent. Mag.*), 1787, LVII, 1197.
- 17 She, who died February 17, 1803, 'was the daughter of - - - Small, esq. of St. Helena, married first to Felix Baker, esq. captain of an East Indiaman, who brought her from thence; secondly to John Berens, of Southgate,

- who died 1787, and lastly to Mr. Blackburn. She was interred, on the 24th in the Chapel of Southgate, with her second husband.' [*Gent. Mag.*, LXXIII, 199]. She and Blackburn may have been two of a kind; they married within 13 months of her being widowed and he certainly climbed at least as far in life as she, as noted in the magazine's record of his death on October 12, 1798, 'Of gall stones, of which he suffered the most excruciating pain, at his house in New Broad Street, aged 67, and immensely rich, John Blackburn, esq. of Bush-hill, Edmonton, formerly of Bush-lane, Cannon-street. He had been clerk to Peter Muilman, and afterwards to John Berens. Upon the failure or resignation of the person who had the contract for victualling Gibraltar, he undertook it, and also other Government contracts . . . His first wife . . . died 1785, aged 44, and he took to his second wife, 1787, the widow of his master Berens, who survives him. He was interred in the parish church of Edmonton on Saturday 20th.' [*Gent. Mag.*, LXVIII, 913].
- 18 London, London Metropolitan Archives [formerly GLRO] (hereafter LMA), MDR/1789/1/404 & 405 of January 27, 1789; MDR/1790/10/299 of November 29/30, 1790.
- 19 LMA, MDR/1763/2/35, 36 & 37.
- 20 The explanation of such a sudden sale is found in the death in 1761 of Sir George's next elder brother, Sir James of Gatton Park, Surrey, to whose baronetcy Sir George succeeded by special remainder. As Gatton, which had cost Sir James £23,000 in 1751, controlled a rotten borough, Sir George immediately bought the estate off his nieces and so sold Arno's. He remained in possession until early 1774, following his bankruptcy in late 1773 [G. E. C[okayne] (ed.), *Complete Baronetage*, V, Exeter, 1906, 116]. See also note 22.
- 21 W. Watts, *Views of Seats of the Nobility and Gentry*, London, 1779, pl.63.
- 22 Newhaven (died 1794) was also in 1774 to buy Gatton Park on Sir George Colebrooke's bankruptcy. [G. F. Prosser, *Surrey Seats*, London, 1828, 97] Bearing in mind Taylor's occasional role as estate agent [Marcus Binney, *op. cit.*, 66], might he not have so acted in both these sales by Colebrooke?
- 23 Colvin, *op. cit.*, 963; for a fuller analysis of Taylor's clientèle, see Binney, *op. cit.*, chapter 2.
- 24 *Gent. Mag.*, 1787, LVII, 1197; LMA, MDR/1763/2/35.
- 25 The Berens brothers were initially in Angel Court, Throckmorton Street, and then from 1767 at 4 New Broad Street [London, Guildhall Library, Trade Directories].
- 26 LMA, MDR/1763/2/35, 36 & 37; MDR/1789/1/404 & 5; MDR/1790/10/299.
- 27 Binney, *op. cit.*, 965.
- 28 But see note 37, below.
- 29 The octagonal saloon at Asgill is 24ft 4in diam., and the side rooms 14ft by 27ft 6in, making Asgill almost the same width as Beaver, but some 3ft 6in more from front to back [*Vitruvius Britannicus*, iv, London, 1767, pl.74].
- 30 London County Council, *Survey of London* (hereafter SOL), xiv, London, 1931, 122, discusses Taylor's role in the repairs and alterations to No. 10, including a new double-height, vaulted kitchen.
- 31 Hassell, *Views*, *loc. cit.*.
- 32 LMA, MDR 1790/10/299.
- 33 A. G. Banks, *H. W. Schneider of Barrow and Bowness*, Kendal, 1984, 1.
- 34 Southgate, Mb1799/4/3.
- 35 Hassell, *Views*, *loc. cit.*.
- 36 Christie's, London, Nov.30, 1983, *The Sir Albert Richardson Collection*, lot 5 (illustrated).
- 37 It is possible that the secondary stair was there already, occupying the 'room' in Newton's plan behind the stairs, the only one shown with no fireplace. This would make more sense of the way in which that side of the house had a partition running off-centre into the canted side bay, and is anyway analogous to the position of the upper flight of stairs at Asgill House. Beaver, with bedrooms extending right across the second floor, unlike Asgill, had more need of a secondary stair from the start.
- 38 Christie's, *loc. cit.*.
- 39 An example of such a style of drawing is that submitted by Taylor in 1778 for Long Ditton church, Surrey [LMA, DWOP/1885/3].
- 40 At Heveningham the panels disguise the fact that the link wings are of only two storeys.
- 41 Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 1762-71, v, 196-7.

- 42 Hassell, *Views*, *loc. cit.*.
- 43 Banks, *op. cit.*, 3.
- 44 Southgate, Mb1850/1(D).
- 45 Information from Mr Graham Dalling, local history officer, Southgate.
- 46 W. Round, *History of Southgate*, Enfield, 1906, 34.
- 47 Dumayne, *op. cit.*, 125, 147.
- 48 Southgate, topographical photograph collection.
- 49 Horace G. Regnart, *Memories of Winchmore Hill*, Enfield, 1952, 52.
- 50 Alan Dumayne, *Fond Memories of Winchmore Hill*, Southgate, 1990, 56–7.
- 51 Richardson, *op. cit.*, pl.19–21 (the plates themselves dated 1797).
- 52 J. P Neale, *Views of Seats*, 2nd. Series, III, London 1826, 'Roehampton House, Surrey'.
- 53 Richardson, *op. cit.*, 6.
- 54 Neale, *loc. cit.*.
- 55 A possible identification would have been Sir Humphrey Morice, 4th Bt. (1723–85), of Werrington, Devon, today best known as the sitter portrayed by Batoni reclining in the Roman Campagna with his dogs, who was the eponymous son of Humphrey Morice (died 1731), a Turkey merchant and Governor of the Bank of England, 1727–29. Sir Humphrey inherited a baronetcy in 1750 from a cousin along with the considerable wealth of his estate at Werrington. He passed extended periods in Italy on account of his health, but was in England during the time that Dover House was built. However he owned The Grove, Chiswick, and so was, on balance, an unlikely candidate as builder of Dover House. [London, Greater London Council, The Iveagh Bequest Kenwood, *Pompeo Batoni and his British Patrons*, 1982, cat.16].
- 56 London, Battersea Library, Wandsworth Libraries Local History Collection, Putney poor rate books (hereafter Putney P.R.), 1754–1769, 459.
- 57 The acreage for which Morris was rated (74 acres), although not quite the same, conforms more or less to the 75 acres he was leased; later rate book entries refer to 75 acres.
- 58 Kindly communicated by Dorian Gerhold, by whom it was seen at GLRO, where deposited by the GLC, but seemingly not catalogued to date.
- 59 Putney P.R., 1769–1783, 621.
- 60 *Gent. Mag.*, LI, 594.
- 61 London, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), PROB 11/1085, fol.604, dated 24 March 1767 with codicil of 10 September 1781; kindly communicated to me by Dorian Gerhold.
- 62 One of Roger Morris's ventures had been in speculative building on the approaches to Westminster Bridge (1740–42) [Colvin, *op. cit.*, 666] and in his will he bequeathed 'all that freehold Ground I lately purchased from the Commissioners for building Westminster Bridge . . . and all manner of Erections and Buildings Cranes Wharves and Vaults thereon erected' to his son James [PRO, PROB 11/708, fol.49; kindly communicated to me by Richard Hewlings].
- 63 Colvin, *op. cit.*, 667.
- 64 *Idem.*
- 65 Hereford, Hereford Library, LC920JAC; kindly communicated to me by Richard Hewlings.
- 66 Colvin, *op. cit.*, 963.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 668.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 965.
- 69 Binney, *op.cit.*, pls.7–8.
- 70 Might there have been an element of filial deference here?
- 71 Rev. Daniel Lysons, *Environs of London*, Supplement, London, 1811, VI, 63.
- 72 London, Lambeth, Minet Library, LP26/188/MAC.1, kindly pointed out to me by Dorian Gerhold.
- 73 Information from Dorian Gerhold.
- 74 Binney, *op. cit.*, 47.
- 75 Putney P.R., 1769–1782, 10.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 1784–1787, fol.10.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 1787–1794, fol.122 verso. Thompson, of Esrick, Yorks. (1742–99), unmarried, MP 1768–84 & 1790–96, at the time he entered Parliament was said by Lord Rockingham to be worth about £8,000 a year and in November 1783 was described by Lord Fitzwilliam as, 'more eager about the thing [a knighthood] I wrote about than can be imagined: his mind will never be at rest till his person is decorated some way or other; he pants for distinction' [Sir Lewis Namier & John Brooke, *History of Parliament, The House of Commons, 1754–90*, London, 1964, III, 523].
- 78 Colvin, *op. cit.*, 773. Thompson had previously, c.1784, built Wetherby (or Micklethwaite) Grange, Yorks., for which John Carr had submitted designs in 1772 & 1783 that were not taken up. That house has

- been ascribed to James Wyatt both stylistically and on account of the comment in a letter from Carr to Thompson of Feb. 9, 1784, about 'the alterations you have made to the great Mr. Wyatt's plan', but in view of Thompson's subsequent employment of Porden at Putney, it is very possible that the latter, who had returned to architecture in c.1783 after a stint as Paymaster in the army, was the author of the 'alterations' and the house, as built, it is here suggested, should be given to him [Colvin, *op. cit.*, 1116; Marcus Binney & Emma Milne (ed.), *Vanishing Houses of England*, London, 1982, 65].
- 79 Richardson, *op. cit.*, pls. 19–21.
- 80 LMA, Photographic Collection, A1451 & A1449.
- 81 Richardson, *op. cit.*, 6.
- 82 Neale, *loc. cit.*.
- 83 Lysons, *loc. cit.*.
- 84 Succeeded his father as 2nd Earl of Liverpool in 1808.
- 85 Information from Dorian Gerhold, based on examination of the Putney rate books.
- 86 *Idem.*
- 87 *Idem.*
- 88 George James Welbore Agar Ellis (1797–1833), created Lord Dover 1831 and so giving the name not only to this house but also to Dover House, Whitehall, where the widowed Lady Dover continued to live until her death in 1860, sharing it from 1848 with her son [SOL., xiv, 65–7].
- 89 Edward Walford, *Greater London*, London, n.d., I, 511; II, 409.
- 90 The Victoria History of the Counties of England, *Surrey*, IV, London, 1912, 80.
- 91 Information from Dorian Gerhold.