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# BOLSOVER CASTLE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle-on-Tyne, died on Christmas Day, 1676. He was still in the middle of his last great building project, Nottingham Castle. His main seat was Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire, a converted monastery, and he also owned Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire (Fig. 1). Bolsover, largely his creation, is well-known as a seventeenth-century cavalier's pleasure house for retirement and entertaining, and as an intriguing example of a quirkily romantic kind of architecture. It was begun in 1612 by Duke William's father Sir Charles Cavendish, son of Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury and builder of Hardwick Hall, and completed by Duke William after his father's death. He decorated the small keep, known as the Little Castle, then added a grandiose range of state rooms and finally the extraordinary Riding House and stables, a palace for horses. Bolsover Castle is often described as curiously unaltered from the seventeenth century period, when it was used for entertainment and art, but in fact, as this article will demonstrate, the supposedly dead years of the eighteenth century have been surprisingly fertile in information about the use and influence of an old-fashioned house.

William's son Henry, second Duke of Newcastle, succeeded in 1676 and used Bolsover as an occasional residence. His wife's account book for the last week of March 1681, for example, is annotated with 'this account taken at Bolsover Castle.'<sup>1</sup> During Duke Henry's time, or perhaps the very end of his father's, the great stable at Bolsover was also converted into formal rooms with the insertion of tall windows and a chunky plaster cornice. Small-scale work continued

at the Castle, with payments in 1682 for 'wainscote at Bolsover,'<sup>2</sup> and 'repairs.'<sup>3</sup> More followed in the next year, with the building of a terrace walk by Joseph Jackson, the troublesome local building contractor who had worked under the architect Samuel Marsh on the 1660s state rooms.<sup>4</sup>

In 1691 Duke Henry left his estate to his daughter Margaret, wife of John Holles, fourth Earl of Clare, for whom the title of Duke of Newcastle was recreated in 1694. The Castle passed through the female line twice more in the eighteenth-century: on John Holles's death in 1716 it was left to his daughter Henrietta, who married Edward, Lord Harley, who became second Earl of Oxford in 1724. Countess Henrietta died in 1755, leaving it to her daughter, another Margaret, married to the second Duke of Portland. After these confusing 'short trips and flittings' from Cavendish to Holles to Harley to Bentinck, the antiquary Samuel Pegge hoped in 1785 that the Castle would remain with its new owners 'as long as the sun and moon endure.'<sup>5</sup> The Dukes of Portland did at least remain the Castle's guardians until 1945 when it was given to the nation.

After the death of Duke John, an inventory of his houses was made in 1717. It shows that Bolsover had become relatively sparsely furnished compared with Welbeck.<sup>6</sup> In Duke William's lifetime, Bolsover had contained many rich pieces: there were twelve cloth-of-silver chairs from the lower dining room,<sup>7</sup> known today as the Pillar Parlour, several 'Cases off Crimson velvett for the Cheares In the Parler,' and 'Imbroidereye on the purple Velvtt bedd . . . worth att leaste £300.'<sup>8</sup> But in 1717 typical items are 'old ragged Curtains,' 'rotten feather Beds' and 'moth eaten

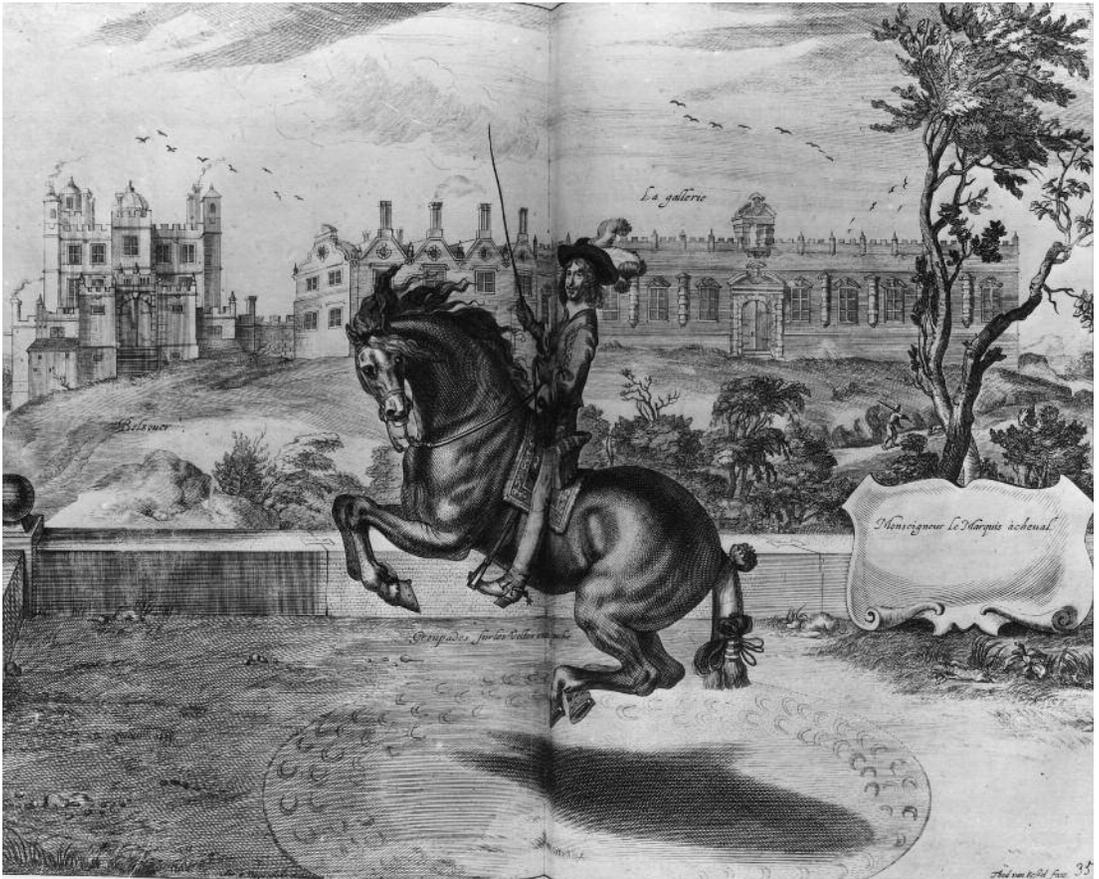


Fig. 1. William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle, in front of Bolsover Castle's west front. This plate after Abraham Diepenbeke is from the Duke's book on horsemanship published in 1657.

Blankets.' Bolsover Castle had clearly lost some status, and even in the seventeenth century, Duke William's household had complained of its chilliness. 'My householde hate to liue at Bolsore,' begins one of his poems entitled 'An Epigram on a Cold.'<sup>9</sup> A close parallel is provided by the other branch of the Cavendish family, the Dukes of Devonshire, at Hardwick Hall. After the rebuilding of

Chatsworth in the 1690s, Elizabethan Hardwick could not compete in style or convenience. Still, recent surveys of the archives show that in both cases, the earlier houses were maintained, extensively repaired, occasionally used, and then found a renewed purpose as tourist destinations, throughout the period when it was thought, until now, that they were simply abandoned.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
ABANDONMENT

The conventional story of Bolsover Castle is of gradual decay culminating in the demolition of the Terrace Range by Henrietta, Countess of Oxford. Her husband died in 1741, and during the fourteen years of her widowhood she became a compulsive builder. Her extensive work at Welbeck Abbey reproduced features from Bolsover Castle in an unmistakable and exuberant Jacobean revival style.<sup>10</sup> Her additions must have been inspired partly by sensitivity to the existing fabric: Welbeck, after all, still had its thirteenth-century undercroft, abutted by the more fanciful vaults typical of the Smythson family. But her work also went further than this. She had something in common with Lady Anne Clifford, a century earlier, who in widowhood retired to her patrimony in Westmorland and repaired her family's ancient castles of Appleby, Skipton and Brough, quoting Isaiah 15.12 on commemorative plaques mounted onto her work. They read that 'they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell therein.'<sup>11</sup> Lady Oxford, too, found her ancestral home of Welbeck 'in almost Ruines,' repaired it with the aim 'to incline my family to reside at the only Habitable Seat of my Ancestors,'<sup>12</sup> and kept them well-informed of her work as it progressed. Interestingly, she considered Welbeck to be her only habitable house, and once work to the main block was complete there, she turned her attention to the inhospitable Bolsover.

Like Lady Anne Clifford, Lady Oxford was particularly conscious that the whole weight of her family's history lay upon her shoulders. Her grandfather's settlement of his estate onto the middle of five daughters put an end to family unity, and her own lack of brothers meant that Henrietta was the heiress to the whole Cavendish history and a seventeenth-century building campaign which affected at least six extraordinary houses. She, too,

had faced disputes over her inheritance in 1741, but ended up with Welbeck and a good deal of freedom for a widow. As Horace Walpole noted in 1756, she had 'passed her whole widowhood, except in doing ten thousand right and just things, in collecting and monumenting the portraits and reliques of all the great families from which she descended, and which centred in her.'<sup>13</sup>

THE COUNTESS OF OXFORD:  
CONSERVATION WORK

In the light of her concern for the fabric of history, Lady Oxford's reputation as the despoiler of Bolsover Castle needs examination. The usual assumption is that wholesale abandonment took place after the roof was removed from the Terrace Range in the 1740s to provide material for the new work at Welbeck, particularly the so-called 'Oxford Wing' or remodelled south-west wing, which had previously been the abbot's lodgings of the abbey as remodelled by Robert Smythson. The source of the story is the Jackson family, builders and inhabitants of Bolsover for centuries, one of whom in 1894 had 'heard his grandfather say that, when a boy, he went to Welbeck Abbey along with the wagons which conveyed hither the lead roof from the range of buildings on the terrace.' Mr Jackson senior was born in 1730, so could have been able to remember the event,<sup>14</sup> and the accounts bear him out. The payments hint at nothing like the large volumes of building stone taken from Roche Abbey to Welbeck, but in 1742 Benjamin Biggs was paid £5 12s. for 'leading Stones from Bolsover'<sup>15</sup> to Welbeck, and in 1750 Reuben Lee was paid for the carriage of 'two loads of Lead.'<sup>16</sup> At the same time Henry Davey was paid for taking 'two loads of Scafels & Ledders' on the same journey, scaffold boards and ladders presumably having been necessary for getting the lead down from the roof.<sup>17</sup>

But Lady Oxford also carried out conservative repairs. These are chronicled in a set of vouchers

detailing a campaign of work from 1750–52 and recording expenditure of more than £400,<sup>18</sup> and in the main Welbeck building accounts, where over £800 had been directed to the ‘Repairs of Bolsover Castle’ by February 1752.<sup>19</sup> The programme of conservation work sounds surprisingly thorough. The battlements ‘on the Tower’ (or Little Castle itself) were taken down, cramped and set up again on three sides, for example, while those on the fourth were pointed. The ‘Cupola or Dome’ on the roof of the Little Castle was pointed and some of the chimneys were rebuilt in new stone. Payments were made for one ‘Other Chimney taking down & setting again all ould stone.’ The steps up into the Castle and their stone balustrades received careful treatment with the ‘Taking down the Rails on each Side the S.<sup>d</sup> Steps (Twice).’ The battlements around the lodges by the gate were similarly taken down, ‘New Sett & pointed.’<sup>20</sup> The dimensions of all this work were measured by William Birch, a senior mason, who also carried out a good deal of work at Welbeck, and who was probably a relative of the ‘Robt Birch’ who was paid ‘for working 3 marble Chimney Peices’ installed there in 1748.<sup>21</sup>

The Riding House Range was also carefully maintained. In 1751 ‘Scruelys and Nutts and Washers for ye rooffe at ye Riding house’ were bought, and the old roofs were repaired ‘over the Welfare Landry and Riding House and the Offices Joining to them.’<sup>22</sup> The laundry and offices were in the original forge and shoeing house. At the same time, the Stables and Riding House were re-tiled, according to a bill for the carriage of the materials,<sup>23</sup> and the windows blocked up. In 1751, each truss of the Riding House roof was lifted onto the rough wooden corbels which survive, presumably owing to a century of settlement. John Stanley, the carpenter, spent four days in 1751 ‘puting Corbals Under the Beams.’<sup>24</sup> This care enabled Burke one hundred years later still to say that ‘the riding house is a very noble room, and the oak beams and rafters are even now, in as good order as on the day that they were put up.’<sup>25</sup> At the same time, minor

repairs were being made to the ‘watch-houses,’ or more correctly, the conduit-houses, which brought a supply of water into the castle from the south.<sup>26</sup>

The vouchers reveal that there was a clerk of works named Thomas Cooper who was responsible for making payments to the individual craftsmen. He was paid expenses for ‘Self and Horse at times in attending the Workpeople during the repairing the Castle.’<sup>27</sup> He also acted as a middleman for providing furniture, receiving payment for Lady Oxford’s new mahogany chairs for the Pillar Parlour in October 1751.<sup>28</sup> He had already been working in a similar capacity at Welbeck Abbey, for he appears in the accounts there as having been paid a year’s wages of £21 on 27th, November 1749, for ‘con = ducting the Repairs.’<sup>29</sup>

Who decided what needed to be done, and provided the designs for these works? It could not have been John James, architect of the Welbeck work, for he died in 1746, and the Welbeck accounts record a payment of £265 to ‘Mary James for Her deceased Husbd John James Surveyor’ in February, 1747.<sup>30</sup> But there were others on the Welbeck workforce who were capable of carrying out a surveyor’s role. The Welbeck accounts mention a ‘Thomas Plat surveyor’ in December 1741, and a certain ‘West: Webb’ who was paid ‘for his draughts for the great Room’ in February, 1747.<sup>31</sup> Plat was possibly a previously unrecognised member of the Platt family of mason/architects from Disley, Cheshire, and Rotherham.<sup>32</sup> Even James Ellins, the foreman of the works before Thomas Cooper, was paid ‘for Drawing Paper’ in December 1748,<sup>33</sup> and the joiner Ignatius Stanley was paid a bill ‘for Drawing Plans & overseeing all the Build = ing Work’ in February 1757.<sup>34</sup> It seems likely that one of these people, rather than an outsider, carried out the work at Bolsover, a hypothesis which is backed up by the local complexion of the workforce at Bolsover.

## CRAFTSMEN, 1750–2

Of the twenty craftsmen named in the surviving accounts for Bolsover Castle from 1750–2, no less than fourteen of the surnames can be traced in the estate archives back to the seventeenth century, and belong to local building families who had long worked for the Cavendish or Holles families. Among those with a century's worth of service were William 'Cassn:' or 'Casens,' a nail and spike supplier, whose forebear William 'Cozen' was described as 'of Boulsover, nailer' in a sale document of 2nd April, 1631.<sup>35</sup> John 'Cosen'<sup>36</sup> supplied the nails for Duke William's 1667–8 building programme, and Thomas 'Cousins' provided nails for new building at Welbeck in 1682.<sup>37</sup> In a similar manner, the Nickelas Slater who glazed the chancel in Bolsover church in 1738 was presumably related to the Thomas Slater who glazed windows at Bolsover in 1657,<sup>38</sup> and even possibly as far back as the 'Patri' and 'Cristo' Slaters who were paid as labourers in 1613 during the construction of the Little Castle. As a final example, the mason William Hallam who worked on the Little Castle in 1752 was perhaps a relative of the joiner John Hallam who constructed a new loft in Bolsover church and worked on the new building at Welbeck in 1683,<sup>39</sup> and even of the George Hallam mentioned at Bolsover in 1651,<sup>40</sup> or the 'Hallam' who brought stone from the quarries of Shuttlewood and Bolsover Moor to the site of the Little Castle during its construction in 1612–13.<sup>41</sup> The John Hallam mentioned in 1683 is probably the so-called 'poor mean Country Joyner' who became Master Carpenter in the Royal Works.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, fourteen of the twenty surnames also appear in the building accounts for Lady Oxford's work at Welbeck Abbey in the period shortly before the Bolsover campaign. Here, the well-known plasterer Joseph Rose (c.1723–90) stands out. He made his first documented appearance at Welbeck in 1749, subsequently producing the extravagant ceiling of the Gothic Hall.<sup>43</sup> At Bolsover, 'J. Rose' provided 'plain Ceiling,' repairs to 'Plaster Floor,' and

whitewashing to the 'Cove Celing in Capola,'<sup>44</sup> which is probably the octagonal lantern which rises from the top floor of the Little Castle through the roof. He also supplied the 'Glue and Whiting used at Bolsover Castle.' This was in July 1751, and in the same year he began working with James Paine on the Mansion House in Doncaster, Paine's most important early commission.<sup>45</sup>

The Stanley family of carpenters also had wider horizons. John Stanley, who had carried out a great deal of carpentry at Welbeck Abbey, completed work worth £98 10s. 7d. for the Countess of Oxford in 1751 on her Bolsover account. This included jobs such as repairing the roofs to the Castle, watch-houses and cupola, 'Mending the Rings in the Stable' and 'Repairing y<sup>e</sup> Wainscoat & puting up Shelves in the Lodg.'<sup>46</sup> An earlier John Stanley had been employed on the second Duke of Newcastle's work at Welbeck in 1682,<sup>47</sup> and they were both presumably related to Edmund and Richard Stanley, who worked with Paine at Worksop Manor from 1758,<sup>48</sup> and Henry Stanley of Lincoln who worked with Paine at Burton House, Lincolnshire, in 1767–71.<sup>49</sup>

## THE CONTENTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The next important, but poorly-documented, event in Bolsover's history was the sale of its contents. In 1852, 'a tradition among the oldest inhabitants of the village, handed down to them from their fathers,' was recorded, 'of a great sale at Bolsover, which lasted ten days, when crowds of purchasers came from all the neighbouring counties, as in later times to Fonthill and Strawberry Hill, to carry off some relics of the grand old mansion.'<sup>50</sup> Where are these relics now? Rather than being sold, many ended up at Welbeck, such as the pictures known to have hung in the Terrace Range. These can be traced in the 1936 catalogue of the pictures at Welbeck Abbey<sup>51</sup> from a list of 'y<sup>e</sup> pictures in y<sup>e</sup> 2<sup>d</sup> withdraw = ing room<sup>e</sup> at Bolsover'<sup>52</sup>

which was made in the later seventeenth century by Thomas Farr, steward to Henry, second Duke of Newcastle. It does seem true that the Terrace Range was stripped between the time of Henry and of Henrietta. But on the other hand, at some point between 1717 and the nineteenth century, pictures were taken *from Welbeck to Bolsover*. These included a set of paintings of Roman emperors and empresses, copies of the famous set by Titian for the Dukes of Mantua later acquired by Charles I. They hung in the Star Chamber in the Little Castle for at least 150 years.<sup>53</sup> Also, in the 1820s, the fourth Duke of Portland made a gift of the famous portrait of Bess of Hardwick to the Duke of Devonshire, announcing by letter his intention 'to remove Bess of Hardwick from Bolsover to Hardwick, where she will not only be much better off, but (begging pardon of my ancestors) in much better company. . .'<sup>54</sup> Given Lady Oxford's intense interest in her picture collection, which resulted in new inscriptions being applied to many works, it seems safe to hazard the guess that she was responsible for at least some of the movements to and from Bolsover.

As so many pictures found their way to Welbeck, it has often been speculated that panelling from the Little Castle made a similar seven-mile journey into the next county. The idea is repeated by Nikolaus Pevsner and Mark Girouard, referring specifically to the Star Chamber, where the highly decorative panelling of the external walls is countered by very plain work on the internal. Girouard claimed that Winifred, Duchess of Portland provided the information that it had been taken to the Horsemanship Room, an elaborate panelled room on what is now the entrance floor, (formerly the first floor) of the old (ie. monastic west wing) of the Abbey.<sup>55</sup> However, no sign of the Star Chamber panelling at Welbeck was found during a recent search. The Horsemanship Room panelling must have been specially made for the room with its Greek key design repeated in the stonework. But a first (formerly second) floor room does indeed have

panelling very similar in style to the Little Castle, with stencilled designs, which quite plausibly could have come from any of the Little Castle's second floor rooms. However, the panelling on the Star Chamber's inner walls was probably always plain, as the c.1676 inventory lists the room's tapestry hangings.<sup>56</sup> The earliest mention of panelling being taken to Welbeck (as opposed to being moved about *within* the Little Castle by the nineteenth-century tenants) is 1901, making it unlikely that Lady Oxford was responsible for any limited removals which did take place.<sup>57</sup>

The 1754 inventory of Welbeck reveals that at Bolsover 'a few articles were left in the Pillar Parlour, the Great Dining Room, and the Marble Room,'<sup>58</sup> including a 'Tea Aequipage with a Dutch tea kettle and lamp.' Evidently the Little Castle was still used by Lady Oxford for its original purpose, entertainment and retirement from Welbeck. She also thought it worth carrying out limited refurnishing because in 1750 the Pillar Parlour was kept up to date with '2 Mahogany Dumb Waiters' ordered specifically for the room. They were accompanied in the same bill on the Bolsover account by twenty-two mahogany back stool chairs in check cases, a mahogany close stool with a leather-covered seat, and two marble tables on frames.<sup>59</sup> Panelling in the Star Chamber was painted Prussian blue by 1789,<sup>60</sup> showing that the original grey scheme had been updated in the eighteenth century.

Even after Lady Oxford's time, and before the Reverend Gray, the Castle's nineteenth-century tenant refurnished the Little Castle, it was evidently reasonably comfortable. A round table around the central pillar of the Pillar Parlour was shown by Gough in his view of 1779 (Fig.2).<sup>61</sup> It was also described by Bray in 1783, Pilkington in 1789,<sup>62</sup> and it was still there in 1827,<sup>63</sup> after which time it was joined by the clutter of the Grays (Fig.3).<sup>64</sup> Another inventory was made in 1770 which listed other items still in the Little Castle,<sup>65</sup> including 'fourteen mahogany chairs in the Pillar Parlour, twelve in the Star Chamber, and ten in the Marble Room.'<sup>66</sup> The

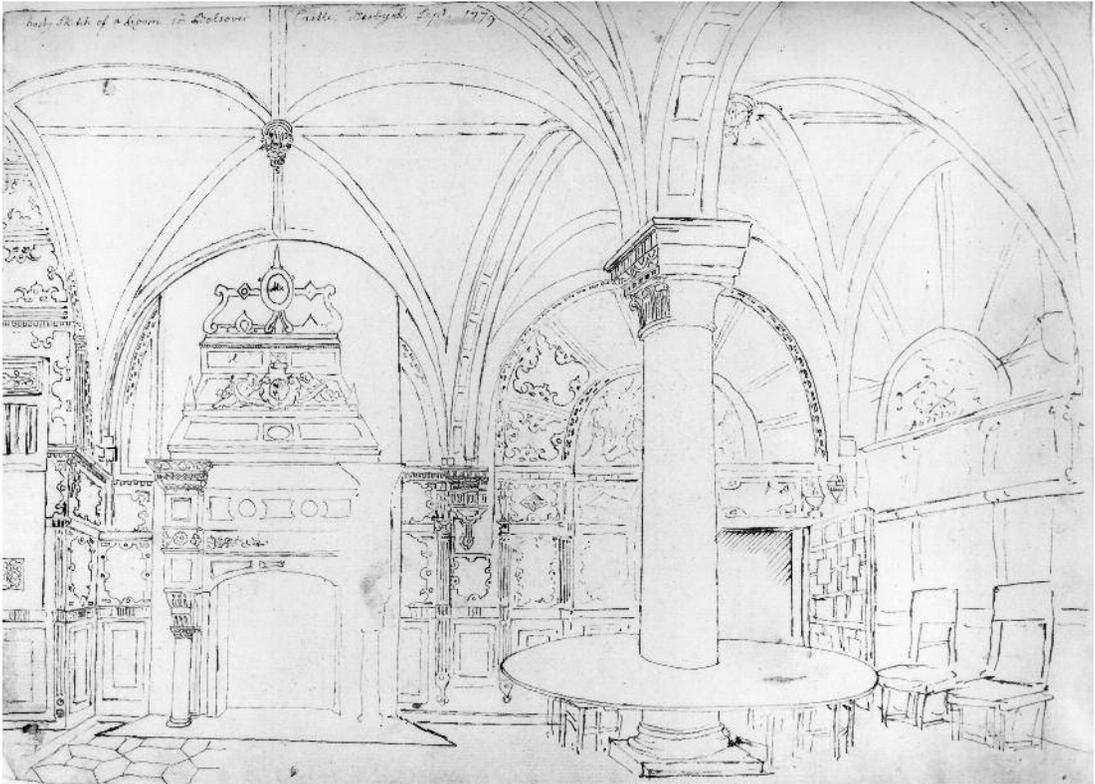


Fig. 2. A 'hasty sketch of a room in Bolsover,' made in September 1779.  
 The Pillar Parlour fireplace is shown complete with obelisks.  
*Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Gough Maps.*

Marble Closet was still furnished in 1783 with 'an old tea table, and a set of old china'<sup>67</sup> and 'seems to have been used as a drawing-room.'<sup>68</sup>

**BOLSOVER FIREPLACES FOR WELBECK**

These repairs and improvements show that Lady Oxford certainly still valued Bolsover Castle in the manner that houses such as St Michael's Mount and Cotehele were kept as historical curiosities, and she even went so far as to make plans for elements of its Jacobean style to be reproduced at Welbeck Abbey.

Marble fireplaces had long been a feature of the Cavendish family residences. Marble chimney pieces had been provided in 1677 for Henry, second Duke of Newcastle, at Nottingham Castle, by 'Mr Hall',<sup>69</sup> a carver who had also worked at Welbeck during the lifetime of William, first Duke of Newcastle.<sup>70</sup> He too had an ancestor involved in the construction of the Little Castle: the mason who worked the re-used 'window stuff that came from Kirkebye' in February, 1614 was called Halle.<sup>71</sup> As the surviving accounts break off before the interiors are fitted out, it is tempting to speculate that Halle himself was involved in the construction of the original fantastical designs



Fig. 3. H. W. Todd, *The Pillar Parlour at Bolsover Castle*, 1846.  
*English Heritage.*

of John Smithson which have graced the Little Castle since 1616.

Horace Walpole, after visiting Welbeck in August, 1756, described the many noble families whose blood combined in the Countess of Oxford. He found ‘all their histories inscribed; all their arms, crests, devices, sculptures on chimneys of various English marbles in ancient forms (and, to say truth, most of them ugly).’<sup>72</sup> This theme of marble chimney pieces survives into Lady Oxford’s new work and there is a series of interesting drawings of fireplaces proposed for Welbeck, of which one has exuberant strapwork and Jacobean detail very closely based on the fireplace in the Pillar Parlour at Bolsover, and

showing the obelisks that have since been lost.<sup>73</sup> Richard Hewlings deduces from the scale-bar at the bottom that it is in the hand of John James (c.1673–1746), Lady Oxford’s surveyor at Welbeck, and Peter Smith’s article in this volume reaches a similar conclusion.<sup>74</sup> In 1744 she wrote of her intention to install in the dining room ‘a more Gothick Chimney Peice designed partly from a fine one at Bolsover, but composed of great Variety of English Scotch & Irish marbles & Alabaster & not one bit of Foreigne in it.’<sup>75</sup> The London carver Thomas Carter’s (?–1785) bill for ‘The Expence of Three Gothick Chimney pieces of Several Sorts of English Marble’ made for Welbeck, presumably to

these drawings, includes extra time 'For Derbysh Marble for the Grounds behind the Columns in the Dining Room Chimney-peice, instead of Wainscot.'<sup>76</sup> An important feature of the Little Castle originals, too, was the use of jewels of *local* black touchstone, which was mined and marketed in Derbyshire by William Cavendish's step-uncle, Gilbert, the seventh Earl of Shrewsbury.

The drawings in the past have been attributed to the Thomas Carter, whose bill records that he had been paid £1,109 1s. 9½d. for four chimney-pieces by 2nd June 1748.<sup>77</sup> Several other Carters working in carving and design are known in London in the eighteenth century, including the famous draughtsman John Carter, and interestingly enough a John Carter was employed at Bolsover in the period 1769–71. He was responsible for payments made in the capacity of supervising minor repairs to the Castle's system of lead pipes, to casements, locks, doors and windows.<sup>78</sup> In this period, the well-known John Carter was employed in the offices of Henry Holland and possibly James Wyatt, and was beginning to be known as a draughtsman.<sup>79</sup> As a fervent admirer and protector of the gothic, perhaps Bolsover would have been an attractive place to work? The Bolsover John Carter took an interest in the history of the Castle, for he was recorded in 1785 as the possessor of an ancient almanack which gives the only documentary reference, apart from the building accounts, to the date of its building.<sup>80</sup> However, the foreman at Bolsover also owned a horse and draught which was used for mundane tasks such as bringing coal and a horse-trough from the quarry, which perhaps suggests a local man of the same name.<sup>81</sup>

In addition, Lady Oxford added incongruous pointed 'gothick' features to Bolsover Castle, such as the windows, formerly sashes but now converted to double glazing, in the Pillar Parlour (Fig.4). The usual explanation is that they were installed by the nineteenth century tenants of the Castle, the Grays. They were almost definitely altered by the Grays,

who 'added double windows on the windy side.'<sup>82</sup> However, the delicate design of the original glazing bars and the similarity in design to her 'Gothic Room' at Welbeck, now an office, suggests Lady Oxford. Further evidence is given by a voucher from 1767, which refer to the re-glazing of two separate 'sash' windows,<sup>83</sup> and these are two of the only three candidates on the site. Another hint of the gothick taste comes in a blacksmith's bill for 'Gothick Grayles With Turned Knot And Bright Ends.'<sup>84</sup> So Lady Oxford installed pointed 'gothick' windows in a Jacobean castle, and Jacobean decoration into a genuine, if heavily-altered, monastery. The difference between the two styles did not seem to matter to her. Both signified antiquity.

The Bolsover fireplace drawings are by no means the earliest, but are certainly an early, example of an eighteenth-century urge to recreate Bolsover's Jacobean, as opposed to the pointed gothic, style. There are many other examples of interior decoration from the earlier eighteenth century in the Tudor or Jacobean style. Baggrave Hall, Leicestershire, contains an eighteenth-century Jacobean scheme, probably the work of John Edwyn, the owner who remodelled the house in the 1750s.<sup>85</sup> Marks Hall in Essex has a combination of early Gothic revival windows with a 'Jacobean' frontispiece, and an 'oak parlour' re-fitted with genuine panelling, all the work of General Honeywood about 1760.<sup>86</sup> The tendency also appeared in painting; Horace Walpole had himself depicted in 'Van Dyck' dress, and at Aston Hall, a life-size portrait of the builder, Sir Thomas Holte, was made in the early eighteenth century for the hall by his great-grandson the fourth Baronet. Wearing appropriate early seventeenth-century dress, he stands in an eighteenth-century landscape, with Aston Hall in the background.<sup>87</sup> These scattered examples of a Jacobean revival are possibly only the tip of an iceberg of other small-scale pieces of sympathetic fitting-out of seventeenth-century houses by their eighteenth-century owners, many of



Fig. 4. The Pillar Parlour at Bolsover Castle, showing the gothick windows.  
*English Heritage.*

which would have been lost during nineteenth-century antiquarian refurbishments. It seems likely that in all of these cases that the patrons, rather than trying to make a positive statement through the use of the style, treasured their existing houses.

But could there be a more positive interpretation of this new appreciation of the Jacobean style and the revival of interest in old-fashioned houses like Bolsover Castle? It has often been pointed out that the gothic is a usefully flexible vehicle for meaning. The High Tory and probable Jacobite sympathiser Sir Roger Newdigate's Gothick Arbury Hall, for example, can be contrasted with the gothic additions made by his descendants to the house of that Parliamentary martyr, John Hampden, in Buckinghamshire. A centenary monument in Great Hampden church was made in 1743, and the remodelling of the house commemorated 'the whole cause of gothic liberty.'<sup>88</sup> The unusual thing about the Bolsover Pillar Parlour chimney design is that it provided a much higher level of archaeological accuracy than could be expected in revivalist features at the time. The well-known Lightholer ceiling of the hall at Burton Constable,<sup>89</sup> for example, is a bizarre combination of Renaissance and classical, as is the staircase at Baggrave Hall. Neither could be – nor were intended to be – mistaken for real Jacobean work.

The Bolsover designs were based on a real family history and a long tradition of marble fireplaces, and Lady Oxford's programme, as far as it went, was about family piety. Horace Walpole usefully summarises the atmosphere at Welbeck in August, 1756, months after her death, and gives a key explanation. 'Oh! portraits!' he exclaims. 'I went to Welbeck. It is impossible to describe the bales of Cavendishes, Harleys, Holleses, Veres, and Ogles: every chamber is tapestried with them; nay, and with ten thousand other fat morsels; all their histories inscribed . . .'<sup>90</sup> 'Indeed is it a sort of duty,' wrote Lady Oxford's friend, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 'to support a place which has been so long dignify'd and distinguish'd by your ancestors.'<sup>91</sup>

#### THE DUKES OF PORTLAND

After Lady Oxford's death in 1755, Bolsover passed to her daughter Margaret (1715–85), who had married William Bentinck, second Duke of Portland in 1734. In the first flush of their inheritance, the second Duke and his wife still used Bolsover Castle as the traditional destination for a day's trip out from Welbeck in 1756. Mary Granville, Mrs Delany, accompanied the Castle's new owners. The roads to Bolsover were excessively bad, but the visitors were not disappointed. 'It is a most delightful spot,' wrote Mrs Delany, 'there is a singularity and prettiness in the castle I don't know how to do justice to.' But she did qualify her picturesque praise with the comment that the Castle possessed 'one of the most pleasing views without water I ever saw.'<sup>92</sup>

In 1852, Bolsover Castle was described as having been 'a frequent residence of the second duke, but since his death, it has been deserted.'<sup>93</sup> However, documentary evidence reveals that this is not accurate. The second Duke of Portland died in 1762, but the third Duke, despite being Prime Minister, visited regularly. The Castle was used as a stud and several of his horses were kept in the Castle Yard, or Outer Court as it is now known. In 1779, folklore has it, the Castle was considered as a prison for French prisoners,<sup>94</sup> but earlier in the decade, fires were still being lit to air the rooms for the Duke's coming. The steward had to provide two guineas for the Duke graciously to dispense to the poor, for example, on 14 August, 1771, 'the day His Grace dined at Bolsover Castle,' and another guinea went to the bell ringers who had presumably contributed to the sense of occasion. Other, less important, visitors also arrived from the main house and their horses were fed, resulting in the purchase of 'one Strike of Oats for Doctor Hayes horses, and some Gentlemen with him from Welbeck the day they dined at Bolsover Castle.' Some repair works in 1771–2 were administered by the steward Joseph Fletcher, John Carter's successor. These included further plumbing work to the lead pipes, 'nailing the fruit

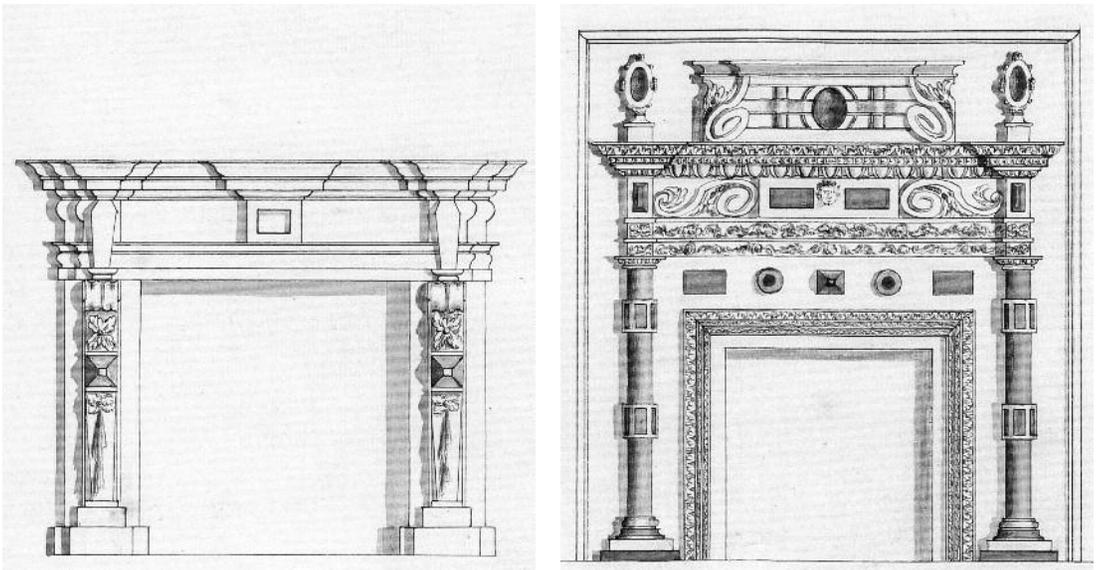
trees' in the garden, and the purchase of white paint.<sup>95</sup>

One of the more striking features of the neglect of Bolsover Castle was the demolition of the battlements which lined the 'Stone Walk' along the top of the fountain garden wall (now partially reconstructed by English Heritage). Were the original battlements dismantled by Lady Oxford at the same time as the unroofing of the Terrace Range? Knyff and Kip's very detailed view from 1697 seems to show that some of the inner battlements of the walkway were missing, or else, like the obelisks from the original 1630s wall, were never restored after the Civil War. However, generalised battlements clearly appear in Samuel and Nathaniel Buck's view of 1727 and the 1759 view from *England Displayed*,<sup>96</sup> but there are no battlements at all on the walkway in Rooke's view of 1785. A date of between 1759 and

1785 would put the demolition well after Lady Oxford's time, and make the second or third Duke of Portland responsible.

When were the outer westward-facing battlements along the south drive terrace demolished? (These were recreated by English Heritage in 1997–8.) An engraving of Rooke's view of 1785 of the west face of the Castle shows battlements still edging the terrace.<sup>97</sup> A view by Hooper, from 1787, does not show the terrace battlements, but it is inaccurate in missing out the battlements along the top of the building which still survive today, so cannot be relied upon. The illustrations in Dewar's book<sup>98</sup> of 1846 *appear* to show an absence of battlements along the terrace, which would give a date for their removal of between 1783 and 1846. So the Countess of Oxford cannot be given responsibility for all the demolition work at the Castle.

Fig. 5. Designs for chimney-pieces found in the steward of Welbeck's account for 1771–2.  
From the Portland of Welbeck archives and reproduced by permission  
of the Principal Archivist, Nottinghamshire Archives.



## 1770S REPAIRS

The circulation pattern of the Little Castle was opened up considerably at some point in the eighteenth century. The changes, which were reversed by the Ministry of Works, disrupted the linear progression along a hierarchy of rooms which dominated the original design. The new doors allowed passage from the ante-room straight to the Pillar Parlour, for example, and gave secondary entrances to the most intimate rooms of all, the Marble and Elysian Closets. Old photographs show that the panelling surrounding the doors is eighteenth-century in character, and it is intriguing to note that John Carr did similar work at Hardwick Hall in opening up the circulation of the top floor.<sup>99</sup> As he was also so extensively employed by the family at Welbeck, perhaps he was asked to look at Bolsover too?

Examination of the names of the craftsmen involved may support this hypothesis. Of the forty-two craftsmen and labourers named in the surviving accounts for Bolsover from the 1770s, thirteen of them still have names recognisable from the seventeenth-century accounts, but more significantly, several had worked with Carr previously. John Carr makes his first appearance at Welbeck in 1764 when a payment was made 'To Mr John Carr Architect (by his Graces Ord<sup>r</sup>.) in full for his Attendance at Welbeck & Drawing Designs &c.'<sup>100</sup> The Francis Mellor of Chesterfield who performed the plumber's work at Bolsover was certainly known to Carr, for he appears in the Welbeck accounts as being paid in February 1765 for a 'Bill of work done in the New Kitchen, Offices below, & Rooms above &c. & Hall & portico &c. to 29th of Septem last as settled by Mr Carr.'<sup>101</sup> In 1774 Carr was working on the stables at Welbeck and in 1775 began the new east front. William Handley, the mason at Bolsover, was also within Carr's ambit, and it may be significant that between 1770 and 1782 he supplied the tiles at Ossington, in Nottinghamshire, where Carr worked on the church and his assistant Lindley on the house.<sup>102</sup>

The Hallam family also make another appearance. James Osborn and William Hallam had worked together as masons on the Little Castle in 1751. The John Hallam who had worked at Welbeck in the 1680s had a namesake who worked at Bolsover in 1750, and a Thomas Hallam was paid for 'helping the masons' at Bolsover in 1771. Meanwhile, James Osborn was acquainted with Carr through his work as mason and stone supplier at Ossington between 1770 and 1782.<sup>103</sup> The web of connections is such that although Carr's involvement is far from certain, it certainly seems possible.

The third Duke of Portland's accounts show that in general life at Bolsover was bucolic and casual. Two men, for example, spent a day going from Bolsover Castle to Welbeck 'with my Lord dukes Cow,' women are paid for 'goathering up the Dung in the Castleyard,' and catching moles in the Castle Walk is another regular occupation. The masons were given ale when they finished the new stone wall around the Castle Yard. By this time, the Terrace Range does seem to have been completely abandoned, for stone was taken from the 'Old Ruines' to re-use in the new wall, just as the seventeenth-century builders, in similarly cavalier fashion, had re-used the medieval fabric to construct the present house and walls.<sup>104</sup>

But does the building work go beyond maintenance? It is clear that a new stable was constructed,<sup>105</sup> possibly a conversion of the ground floor rooms at the eastern end of the Riding House Range. The 'Castle Wall account' shows expenditure of £65 17s. on the making of the wall which still encircles the outer court or Castle Yard. There is also another interesting fireplace design from this period which survives in the Nottinghamshire Archives (Fig.5).<sup>106</sup> It incorporates Bolsoverian features such as touchstones, little masks presumably to be carved in alabaster, and a similar frieze to Little Castle originals. It was discovered inside Joseph Fletcher's account book for 1774,<sup>107</sup> the year in which John Carr was remodelling the stables at Welbeck. In

a different hand to the 1740s drawings, it is more pompous and Baroque in character than pure Jacobean, and it sits on the same page as a more straightforward classical design as if to show that the designer could turn his hand to different styles on request. Bolsover's influence was still being felt.

#### TOURISTS BEGIN TO ARRIVE

By 1789, the Castle had gained a reputation as a tourist destination. Recent research into the continued importance of country house visiting as a pastime throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is mirrored at Bolsover. John Byng described it as 'the Windsor Castle of Derbyshire,' and was keen to see the Riding House for he had 'ever had the wish, and some little ability, in putting horses upon their haunches,' and thought the Terrace Range 'might easily be render'd habitable.' He was perhaps not the most desirable kind of tourist for he records pinching brasses from the church in the next parish before arriving at Bolsover. Perhaps surprisingly, he seemed less struck by the Castle's architecture than its excellent condition, and he praised the Duke of Portland for keeping it in such good repair that 'by additional furniture it might in a few hours be rendered habitable.' He went on to say that the Duke should offer it as a residence, perhaps to a school, 'which shou'd always be done with these old houses.'<sup>108</sup>

The Castle appeared in the second edition of Bray's tourist itinerary. He did the building a great disservice in describing it in an often-quoted passage as 'nothing more than a house, as ill-contrived and inconvenient as ever was formed,'<sup>109</sup> because the actions of Lady Oxford and subsequent owners already show an appreciation of its historical importance. With the dawning of a romantic age, Bolsover Castle was increasingly valued as a picturesque ruin, and its reputation would only rise.

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