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# THE FAMILY CORRIDOR AT KEDLESTON HALL

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When Nathaniel Curzon inherited Kedleston Hall in 1758 he was already making plans to demolish the existing house and build a new one in the fashionable Palladian style. The design of the house, originally by Matthew Brettingham and James Paine, comprised a central block to be used for entertainment and to display art, sculpture and furniture, flanked by four pavilions. The northeast, or Family Pavilion was the first part of the house to be built, to Brettingham's design, but by 1760 the young Robert Adam, eager to put into practice his ideas on neo-classicism, had replaced both him and Paine. The family corridor was the link between the Family Pavilion and the main block, joining the latter at the northeast corner of the Music Room<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1), and giving access to the principal floor of the pavilion. From the basement storey, which would have been the normal entry to the house under the portico, the route was via a spiral staircase, to the corridor adjacent to the music room. Although not of equal status to the state rooms, the corridor was certainly regarded as more than just a passageway, and its importance should not be underestimated.

In the agreement between Lord Scarsdale and Robert Adam of April 1761, it was expressly stated that Adam was to have no concern with the corridors.<sup>2</sup> In reality he had already been involved and in July 1760 he was answering a question from Samuel Wyatt, Clerk of Works, about the corridor chimney.<sup>3</sup> In the same letter he stated that he had already instructed Abraham Swan, the previous Clerk of Works, about the external Ionic entablature of the corridor. However, Adam's only known direct

contribution seems to have been an inscribed sketch for the entablature, base and surbase (Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> It would seem that the rest of the decoration – doors and frames, and Venetian window – was left to the carvers and it shows no influence from Adam.

Initially, in 1762, carpenter Thomas Rawson hung pictures in the corridor, but in February 1763 they were removed by Edward Hatter, and Rawson was marking places for prints and putting up borders round them on blue wallpaper.<sup>5</sup> In 1766 the Duchess of Northumberland commented "... the music room opens to a semi circular corridor which has a very cheerful agreeable aspect it is furnished as a print room on Blue Paper this brings you to the NE Pavilion".<sup>6</sup> The reference to aspect seems to be important and can be taken to refer to the outward view, which, although not yet landscaped, would have been expansive. The wide and lofty flat-topped Venetian window at the end of the corridor seems to have been planned with this in mind.

Descriptions of rooms at Kedleston were recorded from the beginning, and the 1769 *Catalogue of the Pictures, Statues &c. at Kedleston*, to which the housekeeper referred when escorting visitors around the house, describes the corridor as being "Hung with blue paper and Prints".<sup>7</sup> This was still evident in 1771, but in the 1778 and 1796 catalogues the paper was described as green, although still with prints. In 1778 William Bray, antiquarian writer and traveller, reported that the corridor was "hung with elegant prints".<sup>8</sup> A few small late seventeenth-century portrait prints have survived with the blue wallpaper adhering. The green paper probably lasted until

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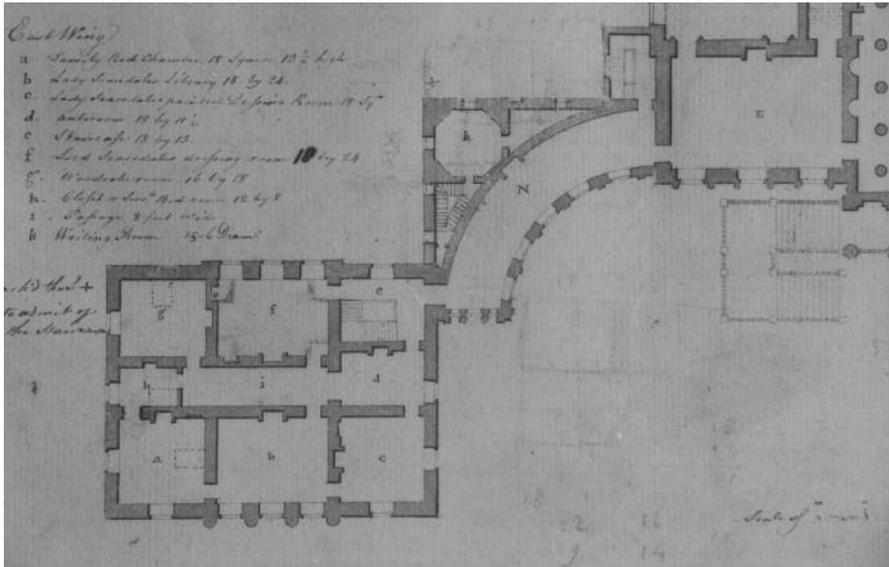


Fig. 1. Robert Adam, "Plan of the Principal Storey". *The National Trust, Kedleston Hall.*



Fig. 2. Robert Adam, "Entablature, Base & Surbase for the Corridore at Kedleston". *Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.*

1805 when J. & M. Gamble of Derby redecorated in grey and dead white paint, mouldings were gilded and a new set of prints pasted up.<sup>9</sup>

Repainting of walls, whitewashing the ceiling, and some gilding took place in 1812<sup>10</sup> and it is probable that ten pictures, several of which seem to have been in Lord Scarsdale's London house in Mansfield Street until it was closed in 1801, were hung at this time. They were listed in the 1849 and 1861 catalogues, and a number can be recognised in a photograph of c.1890.<sup>11</sup> Following redecoration in 1857<sup>12</sup> and again in 1870,<sup>13</sup> early in 1892 Ford of Derby decorated the corridor, apparently with Nuremburg paper bought from Frederick Arthur of Motcomb Street, London SW.<sup>14</sup>

George Nathaniel Curzon, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Scarsdale and later Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, made tours of Asia in 1887, 1890 and 1894 before becoming Viceroy of India, and some of his collections were displayed in the corridor, with textiles on the walls.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately a blocked rainwater spout caused torrential rain to enter the corridor in 1894, staining the paper and Lord Curzon's embroideries.<sup>16</sup> By 1907 much of this collection had been removed to the Bethnal Green Museum, London,<sup>17</sup> and there is no mention of the corridor at all in the 1916 inventory.<sup>18</sup>

In 1902 Lord Curzon had purchased a series of five seventeenth-century Flemish tapestries from L. Bernheimer of Munich, said to have come originally from a *château* near Bordeaux, and entitled the *Chasse de Diane*<sup>19</sup>. He hung them at Hackwood, Hampshire, which he leased from 1907 until his death in March 1925.<sup>20</sup> It was his intention to remove two of them to Kedleston and this was done around 1926.<sup>21</sup> However, by the late 1980s the condition of the tapestries was so poor that they were removed by the National Trust and the walls are now hung with portraits, mainly of Curzon and related families, and the walls have been returned to a pale green with the woodwork painted white.<sup>22</sup>

The most striking feature of the corridor lies beneath one's feet. Proceeding from the Music Room

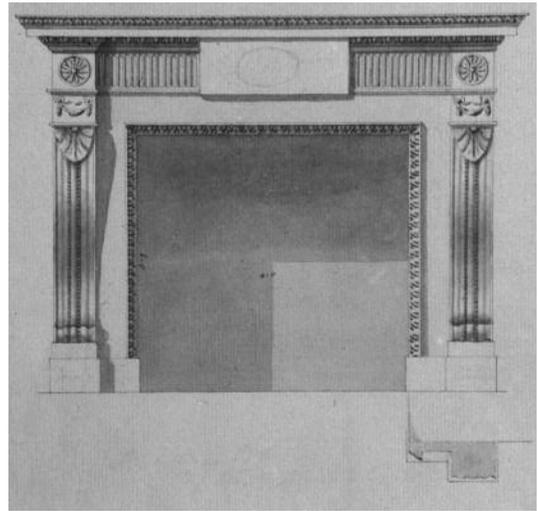


Fig. 3. Robert Adam, "Fireplace for Corridor", 1761.  
*The National Trust, Kedleston Hall.*

it can be seen that the floorboards are a direct continuation from that room and they continue in a curve following the line of the corridor itself. The carpenters' accounts submitted by Samuel Wyatt include "wainscot dowelled flooring circular on ye plan."<sup>23</sup> The carvers, under Joseph Hall, provided base and surbase to Adam's design,<sup>24</sup> but the responsibility for designing the remaining details to the door frames, architrave and mahogany doors is not known.

The chimneypiece could almost be thought to have come from the later years of the old house, but Adam's drawing is signed and dated 1761<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 3). The accounts show that Hall's team of masons executed the basic moulding and carving work on statuary marble and alabaster.<sup>26</sup> It was installed by July 1762 as the carpenter William Johnson then made good the wainscot to the chimney.<sup>27</sup>

The Wedgwood tablet in the centre of the mantelpiece depicts *Cupid and Psyche*, and is based on the Marlborough Gem, a roundel carved in relief showing Cupid, Psyche and two *amorini*. It was first



Fig. 4. Scagliola table designed by Robert Adam.  
*Leslie Harris*

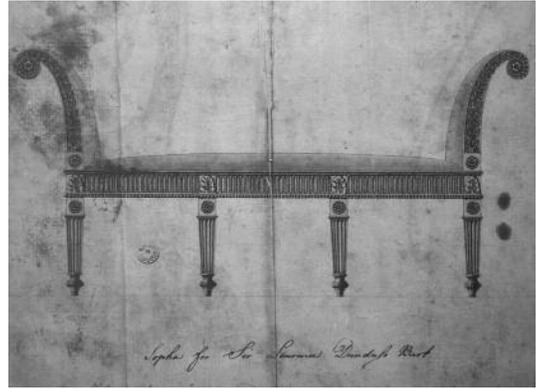


Fig. 5. Robert Adam, "Sopha for Sir Lawrence Dundas Bart." *Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum.*

recorded in the 1796 catalogue,<sup>28</sup> and appears to be the only piece of Wedgwood in the state apartments. The original gem is now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts, and has been dated to about the first century AD.<sup>29</sup> Wedgwood produced several versions of the Marlborough Gem,<sup>30</sup> and that at Kedleston seems to have been modelled by Flaxman, who worked for Wedgwood for a number of years from 1775.<sup>31</sup>

In December 1765 Samuel Wyatt reported "I have made a Drawing at full Size of the Grate for the Family Corridor."<sup>32</sup> In the following February he wrote that "[Thomas] Blockley [of Birmingham] ... would supply the grate very soon,"<sup>33</sup> and in March 1766 mason Eneas Evans provided black marble for fixing the grate.<sup>34</sup> Although the 1804 inventory shows a "Register Stove Grate Fire Irons and fender complete",<sup>35</sup> it is not clear how long this grate survived; a photograph of c.1890 shows an enclosed stove within the chimneypiece.<sup>36</sup> In another photograph published in 1913 the opening is empty.<sup>37</sup> The existing mid eighteenth-century grate was perhaps installed c.1925, when Lord Curzon had intended that "a good deal of rearranging of fire grates was to be done."<sup>38</sup>

The stucco of the ceiling is plain and was

entrusted to Abraham Denston, the mason, whose work is recorded for many years in all areas of the house.<sup>39</sup> The cornice was to the Adam design already referred to, and Denston's accounts give details of cornice mouldings and 53 lion heads and 53 pateras six inches in diameter.<sup>40</sup> The cornice most probably remained white until 1857 when it was coloured "drab in shades" by William Cubley's firm of decorators from Derby,<sup>41</sup> and in 1870 it was decorated "in tints" by Thomas Charlton of London.<sup>42</sup>

There were three marble medallions in the corridor, first recorded in the 1778 catalogue,<sup>43</sup> sunk into the wall above each of the doors to the music room, staircase and pavilion. Records show that the frames were gilded (or possibly re-gilded) in 1805,<sup>44</sup> and again in 1857.<sup>45</sup> They remained in the corridor until 1921, when Lord Curzon removed them to the Orangery with those from the kitchen corridor.<sup>46</sup> There is no clear evidence to show the identity of the subjects of these medallions, but Lord Curzon believed them to be Horace, Quintillus and Augustus or a Roman emperor.<sup>47</sup> The 1778 Catalogue listed "Volterra Vases",<sup>48</sup> which in 1804 appeared as "Two Marble Vass's upon chimneypiece", the word "upon" apparently used instead of "by".<sup>49</sup> The two vases, with sea battles carved in relief, mounted on

pedestals, stood on each side of the chimneypiece in the photograph of c.1890.

Of identifiable furniture in the corridor described in the 1804 inventory only the bracket clock by Ellis Pugh remains.<sup>50</sup> The pair of scagliola tables now displayed in the family corridor may be regarded as the most important in the house (Fig. 4). While no documentary evidence has been found, it cannot be doubted that the frames were from an Adam design. The scagliola slabs were supplied by the sculptor Joseph Wilton early in 1759. The slabs have very similar but not identical decoration and both contain the arms of the first Lord Scarsdale (Curzon and Colyear). The arms must have been added to the first slab as the first account records “an inlaid Table of Scagliola £8 8s. *od.*” and the second account “an inlaid Table of Scagliola richly ornamented with Arms in ye Middle £31 10s. *od.*”<sup>51</sup> Whether the slabs were mounted on other table frames when supplied is not known. The carpenter Robert Robinson made the present frames of the tables, commencing work in December 1761,<sup>52</sup> and the destined location of the tables at that time is revealed from Joseph Hall’s accounts to be Lord Scarsdale’s dressing room in the family pavilion.<sup>53</sup> The tables did not appear in the 1804 inventory<sup>54</sup> and it seems just possible that they may have been in the London house until 1801 and perhaps stored somewhere at Kedleston and so missed being recorded. In 1916 they stood in the Hall,<sup>55</sup> and were moved to the Family Corridor c.1980.<sup>56</sup> The frames are earlier than those of the tables in the dining room niche, designed by Adam, and are most probably Adam’s first table design in the neo-classical style. It is of interest to compare the frieze of the tables with the rail of a “Sopha for Sir Lawrence Dundas Bart”<sup>57</sup> designed by Adam c.1764 (Figs. 4 and 5), where it can be seen that the ruffled leaf moulding and fluting are strikingly similar. This design has been regarded as Adam’s first fully neo-classical seat furniture,<sup>58</sup> and it is remarkable that it should in part follow his first table design in this style after an interval of about three years.

The Family Corridor at Kedleston Hall has an interesting and varied history, reflecting frequent changes in fashion and use, and contains some important examples of Robert Adam’s early work. It provides not only a physical link between two parts of the house, but serves to connect two very different functions. The pavilion, externally simple in design, contains the private family rooms, used for everyday living. The central block, more elaborate and ornate contains the public rooms, used for entertaining and displaying works of art. The house, like those who owned and lived in it, shows a private and a public face, the family corridor being the essential link from one to the other.

## NOTES

All references are to the Kedleston Archive unless otherwise stated.

- 1 KD1/6; Leslie Harris, *Robert Adam and Kedleston*, London, 1987, 24.
- 2 L1/2, 15 April 1761.
- 3 L1/2, 16 July 1760.
- 4 London, Sir John Soane’s Museum (hereafter SM), Adam vol.54/series 3/54.
- 5 KC15, pp. 37 and 39, May and June 1762; *ibid.*, p.46, February 1763; *ibid.*, p.48, 21 March 1763.
- 6 Alnwick, Alnwick Castle Archives, MS “Duchess of Northumberland’s Journal”, August 1766.
- 7 *Catalogue of Pictures Statues, &c. at Kedleston*, 1769 (hereafter 1769 Catalogue), 23.
- 8 William Bray, *Sketch of a Tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire*, n.p., 1778, 114.
- 9 L2/4, invoice from J & M Gamble, 15 August 1805.
- 10 L2/4, invoice from J & M Gamble, 19 September 1813.
- 11 “A Series of Photographic Views of Kedleston Hall &c. &c. taken by Richard Keene” (uncatalogued, but hereafter Keene).
- 12 L2/6, 4 November 1857.
- 13 L2/21, May 1870.
- 14 KB75, 179, 8 February 1892; L2/14 contains a receipt for “Nuremburg Wallpaper” dated 9 January. Extensive enquiries with specialist museums,

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- wallpaper companies and heritage organisations have failed to provide an explanation of this type of paper.
- 15 R2/8, *Eastern Collection of G.N. Curzon, Kedleston*, 1986, 24.
  - 16 Letter, Lord Scarsdale to H Brailsford, agent, 16 August 1894 (uncatalogued).
  - 17 R2/8, annotated copy of Stanley Clarke, *Catalogue of The Curzon Museum at Kedleston*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, dated 25 August 1927.
  - 18 MS “Kedleston Settled Estates”, 1916 (uncatalogued).
  - 19 Album of prints of tapestries, with annotation in Lord Curzon’s hand (uncatalogued).
  - 20 MS “Inventory of Hackwood Heirlooms”, 1925 (uncatalogued).
  - 21 MS “Schedule of Pictures, Tapestreys & Furniture formerly at Hackwood”, July 1926 (uncatalogued).
  - 22 *Kedleston Hall Guidebook*, 1987, 6; *Kedleston Hall Guidebook*, The National Trust, 1988, 20.
  - 23 KC15, p.127, before end of 1764.
  - 24 KC3, pp. 177–179, 1762.
  - 25 KD, Dr3.
  - 26 KC3, p.110, October 1763.
  - 27 KC15, p.9, 5 July 1762.
  - 28 *Catalogue of the Pictures, Statues, &c. at Kedleston with some account of the Architecture*, 1796 (hereafter 1796 catalogue), 29.
  - 29 Lloyd E. Hawes, *The American Wedgwoodian*, January 1963, I, No. 2, 13.
  - 30 *Ibid.*, 12.
  - 31 *Ibid.*, 13.
  - 32 L1/2, 21 December 1765.
  - 33 L1/2, 20 February 1766.
  - 34 KC8, p.13, 1766.
  - 35 L2/1, “Inventory of the Household Goods and furniture in the Kedleston House belonging to the Right Honble Nathl. Lord Scarsdale deceased taken December 1804”, 17.
  - 36 Keene, *cit.* .
  - 37 [Margaret Jourdain], “Kedleston-I. Derbyshire”, *Country Life*, XXXIV, December 20th. 1913, 898.
  - 38 Agent’s correspondence, February 1926 (uncatalogued).
  - 39 KC5, plasterer’s accounts 1761–1765.
  - 40 KC5, p.5, October 1765.
  - 41 L2/6.
  - 42 L2/21.
  - 43 *Catalogue of the Pictures, Statues, &c. at Kedleston with some account of the Architecture*, 1778 (hereafter 1778 catalogue), 29.
  - 44 L2/4, 15 August 1805.
  - 45 L2/6.
  - 46 L3/1, invoice and schedule of work from Joseph Parker & Son, builder, Derby, April 1922.
  - 47 Notes (uncatalogued) made by Richard Curzon, 2nd Viscount Scarsdale, 1925, describe the medallions as “classical heads”. Leslie Harris’s source for the opinion of Lord Curzon has not been found.
  - 48 1778 Catalogue, 29.
  - 49 L2/1.
  - 50 *Idem.*
  - 51 L2/2, 25 January 1759 and 12 February 1759.
  - 52 KC15, pp.33–37, 14 December 1761 to 10 May 1762.
  - 53 KC3, pp.176–177 (entry undated).
  - 54 L2/1.
  - 55 MS “Kedleston Settled Estates”, 1916, 1.
  - 56 No documentary evidence has been found, but Leslie Harris worked at Kedleston at this time and witnessed the re-arrangement of furniture in the state rooms.
  - 57 SM, Adam vol. 17/74.
  - 58 *Eileen Harris*, *The Furniture of Robert Adam, London*, 1963, 104.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the National Trust for permission to cite the Kedleston archives and to reproduce the drawings in figs. 1 and 3, and to the Trustees of Sir John Soane’s Museum for permission to reproduce the drawings in figs. 2 and 5.