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ATHENIAN STUART'S DORIC PORTICOES

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The Temple of Theseus at Hagley Hall in Worcestershire (Fig. 1), is normally accorded the status of the first Greek Doric Revival building in Britain.¹ It was designed by James 'Athenian' Stuart, who had measured and drawn the original at Athens (variously called the Theseum, Theseion or Hephaesteion), and until recently it was believed to have been built in 1758.²

However, it is not an accurate copy of the original. Its setting on Wychbury Hill to the north of the house gives an impression of depth when seen from a distance, thereby foregoing the need for the thirteen side columns of the original; it is really no more than a hexastyle portico. Nor do its columns conform to the proportions of the then newly-recorded Greek prototype (1:6), but to the previously well-known Vitruvian 1:7.³ It is no longer possible to claim that their lack of bases was innovatory, as baseless Roman Doric columns are now known from 1733 onwards.⁴ The real status of the Temple is thus no more than that of a number (admittedly a small number) of porticoes with baseless Doric columns.

This article sets out the Temple's full chronology, and, although confirming Stuart's design responsibility, its only remaining claim to fame, shows that even this was rather limited. It also reveals that even its reduced status can be challenged by an earlier example, also designed by Stuart.

The earliest record of a proposal for the Temple of Theseus occurs in a letter from George, Lord Lyttelton, the owner of Hagley, to Mrs Elizabeth Montagu, another of Stuart's patrons, on 21 October 1758:

M.^r Anson and M.^r Steward who were with me last Week are true Lovers of Hagley, but their Delight in it was disturbd by a blustering Wind, which gave them colds and a little chilld their Imagination itself. Yet Steward seems almost as fond of my Vale, as of the Thessela Tempe, which I believe you heard him describe when I brought him to see you. Nor could the East Wind deter him from mounting the Hills. He is going to embellish one of them with a true Attick Building, a Portico of six Pillars, which will make a fine Object to my new House, and command a most beautifull View of the Country.⁵

'Steward', evidently familiar to both Lyttelton and Mrs Montagu, and apparently familiar with the topography of Greece, must surely be 'Athenian' Stuart, and Lyttelton's letter makes it clear that he either suggested or was given the initial responsibility for the design. Furthermore Stuart went on to put his ideas on paper in saleable form; on 19 January 1759 Lyttelton's son, Thomas, wrote to Mrs Montagu:

As for the Building which you say all your Friends object to, my Papa is resolved to build he says that many People of good Taste like it very much & as he has paid Mr Steward 25 Pounds for the Plan, & has got all the Materials ready, he will not change the design.⁶

Stuart was therefore unquestionably the author of the design, which was evidently made some time between late October 1758 and mid January 1759. But only two payments to him are recorded in Lyttelton's bank account, of which the first, £35 on 3 November 1758, may be the '25 pund' which Thomas Lyttelton thought his father had paid for 'the plan'.⁷ Some time after October 1758 he also



Fig. 1. The Temple of Theseus, Hagley Hall, Worcestershire. *Michael Cousins.*



Fig. 2. Elizabeth Phipson, *The Temple of Theseus, Hagley Hall*, dated 'July 11. 1848'.
Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.

painted 'a Flora and four pretty little zephyrs' on the ceiling of the then drawing room in the new house, and the second payment (£20 on 30 July 1759) may relate to this.⁸ There is no evidence that he had any further responsibility for the Temple after selling his drawings to Lord Lyttelton, although some of these were still awaited in March. Lyttelton's architect on site was Sanderson Miller, and the Temple was intended as a counterpart to Miller's ruined Gothic castle of 1747–8.⁹ The mason was the son of William Hitchcox, who had lived near Radway, where Miller lived, and whom Miller had regularly engaged elsewhere as a builder.¹⁰ On

17 March 1759 Lyttelton had to inquire of Miller how his mason was doing:

Hitchcox, I hope, had your Orders at Hagley about the Cottage, which should be built as soon as ever they can get the Materials from the old House, and so should the Walls of M.^r Stuart's Dorick Portico. A Plan for that as I understand, was left with Hitchcox by M.^r Stuart... I don't know whether M.^r Stuart has yet sent the drawings for the Capitals, Freize, &c, of the Dorick Building; but I believe Hitchcox has one for all the plain and solid parts. The brick which it is to be lined with should be carried from the old house at such times as the cart can be conveniently spared.¹¹



Fig. 3. Thomas Baskerfield, *The Temple of Pan at The Grove, Hertfordshire*.
British Library.

Although Stuart was still supplying drawings, Miller was clearly superintending the work on site.

This letter also makes it clear that the walls had not begun to rise before March 1759. ‘Young Hitchcox’,¹² as Lyttelton referred to him, could have been excused any delay on account of a shortage of materials, but in August 1760, eighteen months later, Lyttelton chided Miller for the lack of progress: ‘the building on the Hill is so backward... the front will not be near finished.’¹³ It was still incomplete in February 1761, and Lyttelton contemplated finding someone else: ‘His [Hitchcox’s] Work remains unfinished, and as he has got the plan I don’t know how to set it to anybody else.’¹⁴ The Temple was to be paid for by Admiral Smith, Lord Lyttelton’s illegitimate half brother, but in March 1761 Lyttelton had reason to express concern for his brother’s health *and* his building: ‘I wish the poor Admiral may not die before he has finished my Building on the Hill, and then all the Expence of it will fall on

me, tho’ he intended to take it on himself. This I get by Hitchcox’s delays.’¹⁵ In fact the Admiral lingered on until 28 August 1762. Shortly after this, Sir George wrote to Mrs Montagu: ‘He died without a Will, but by a Paper he left took care to secure to me the 300 £ for the Grecian Building, which I was afraid I should have lost...’¹⁶ Richard Pococke described the completed building in 1764: ‘the front of the Temple of Theseus at Athens, with a window in each side of the portico. About two inches below the top of the flute a channel is practic’d half an inch broad & deep, which I do not remember in the original; it is built of hewn stone, and painted white...’¹⁷ The temple was thus not begun before March 1759, and not complete before March 1761, possibly not before September 1762; it is only certain that it was complete in 1764. The white paint is confirmed in a water colour by Elizabeth Phipson of 1848 (Fig. 2).

Long before this, however, Stuart may have both

designed and had completed a Greek Doric portico at The Grove, near Watford, Hertfordshire, the seat since 1753 of Thomas Villiers, 1st Lord Hyde. The evidence is in Sanderson Miller's diary, where, on 21 September 1756, he wrote:

Up before 6. Writing account of expences etc. Wrote to Dr Leigh. Rode after breakfast with Mr Bucknall to Lord Hyde's. His lordship, Lady Hyde and Lady Mary Capel showed me the house at the Grove. Two very good rooms etc. Lord Hyde walked with us round the park, and to the garden, where we met Lady Hyde. Seeing Mr Stewart's 6 column Grecian Doric Portico.¹⁸

Lord Hyde was a friend of Viscount Royston, who, as 2nd. Earl of Hardwicke, was a subsequent patron of Stewart's,¹⁹ and Thomas Anson, Lord Royston's brother-in-law, was also Stuart's patron²⁰ and accompanied him to Hagley on several occasions. It seems highly probable that the 'Mr Stewart' of Miller's diary was Athenian Stuart, and even more so as Hyde wrote to Hardwicke in September 1765 that he proposed to build a cold bath with 'Pillars of Stuart's Ionic'.²¹

Of the known features at the Grove, only two potentially fit the bill. One, called the Temple of Pan, was illustrated by Thomas Baskerfield at an unknown date some time after Lord Hyde was created Earl of Clarendon in 1776 (Fig. 3),²² and is described in an anonymous poem of 1779, *The Scotch Hut*.²³ Baskerfield shows a peripteral Doric temple with six columns, as Miller had noted, on at least the front elevation. But it would be surprising if Sanderson Miller had described a peripteral temple as a 'portico', and surprising that his terse description recorded the Doric order of the columns in priority to their conspicuous rusticity.²⁴ Furthermore it was described by Lady Amabel Yorke as 'a pretty new building' in June 1776, by which time the Grecian Doric portico noted by Miller was twenty years old.²⁵

But the 1766 *Topographical Map of Hartfordshire* by Andrew Dury and John Andrews shows at least two buildings in situ at that time.²⁶ Webb's *Excursions*,

published in 1812, records 'a portico and some large vases of Bath stone, made by Mr Parsons', as well as the Temple of Pan and a walk terminated by 'a seat, built in the Tuscan order'.²⁷ It may be that this was the portico seen by Miller, and it is unfortunate that no visual record of it has been found. It is thus impossible to determine whether it was more Greek or more innovatory than the Temple of Theseus at Hagley, but it is clear that it was designed at least two years earlier and built at least five years earlier, possibly more.

Lord Hyde also emerges as one of Stuart's earliest patrons, and their relationship may still have been in existence nine years later, in 1765, when Lord Hyde wanted pillars of his Ionic order. Although it is likely that Thomas Anson proposed the employment of Stuart to George Lyttelton, Miller's association with the Ansons went back to at least 1752, when he visited Shugborough,²⁸ so he was doubtless an influential party. Certainly it is clear that both the '6 column Grecian Doric Portico' and its author had registered during Miller's visit to the Grove in 1756. If one also accepts the attribution to Stuart of the Doric Temple at Shugborough, whose design has been noted as close to that at Hagley,²⁹ the discovery of another hexastyle Doric portico reveals the type as a recurrent feature of his work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Dr. Kerry Bristol for the information recorded at notes 6 and 21, to Richard Hewlings for that recorded in note 4, to Karen Lynch for drawing my attention to Lady Amabel Yorke's diaries and for providing the transcript, to Will Hawkes for his extrapolation from Miller's diary entry, to Sir Howard Colvin for comments on the draft text, and to the Huntington Library for allowing permission to quote from the Montagu-Lyttelton correspondence.

NOTES

- 1 The proposition that it was the first Greek Doric temple since antiquity was put forward by Arthur T. Bolton, 'Hagley Park, Worcestershire', *Country Life*, XXXVIII, October 16th, 1915, 526–7, and was emphatically re-stated by Nikolaus Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, 1, London, 1968, 197–211.
- 2 The documents revising this date were first noted in William Hawkes, 'Sanderson Miller of Radway, 1716–1780, Architect' (unpublished thesis, Faculty of Fine Arts, Dept of Architecture, Cambridge University), 1964, 1, 46–47, and first published by Michael McCarthy, 'Documents on the Greek Revival in architecture', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXIV, November 1972, 760–69; the correct date is given in Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, New Haven and London, 1995, 941.
- 3 Michael Bevington, 'The development of the classical revival at Stowe', *Architectura*, 1991, XXI, part 2, 162.
- 4 Giles Worsley, 'The baseless Roman Doric column in mid-eighteenth-century English architecture:...', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXVIII, May 1986, 331–39; Howard Colvin, 'A Roman mausoleum in Gloucestershire: the Guise monument at Elmore', *Georgian Group Journal*, 1991, 41–4; Peter Leach, 'The Thompson Mausoleum and its architect', *The Georgian Group Journal*, VIII, 1998, 33, 37–8. Richard Hewlings drew my attention to these important articles.
- 5 San Marino (California), The Huntington Library, Montagu Papers (hereafter Montagu Papers), MO 1280.
- 6 Montagu Papers, MO 1495. I am grateful to Dr. Kerry Bristol for this previously unpublished information, which is, however, quoted in her Ph. D. dissertation, 'James "Athenian" Stuart (1713–1788) and the genesis of the Greek revival in British architecture', University of London, 1997, 304. Her transcription, however, has been corrected by me from the original at the Huntington Library, MO 1495.
- 7 London, Messrs Hoare & Co. Ltd., Ledger A16. The early account books at Hagley were destroyed in the fire there in 1925.
- 8 Montagu Papers, MO 1280.
- 9 Michael Cousins, 'The Sham Ruin, Hagley', *Follies*, XXXVII, Summer 1998, 3–4; A.C. Wood and William Hawkes, 'Sanderson Miller of Radway', *Cake and Cockhorse*, IV, Winter 1969, 79–97.
- 10 Warwick, Warwickshire County Record Office (hereafter WRO), CR 125B/372; Lilian Dickens and Mary Stanton (eds.), *An Eighteenth-Century Correspondence*, London, 1910, *passim*. 'Old Hitchcox', who had been responsible for the earlier works at Hagley, such as the rotunda, had died in December 1757 [WRO, DR47/4 Radway Register. The entry of his burial at Radway is dated 12 December 1757].
- 11 WRO, CR 125B/365; London, Society of Antiquaries, Prattinton Collection, includes drawings dated 1758 (taken from originals still at Hagley) which show the old house still standing.
- 12 WRO, CR 125B/372, 20 March 1761.
- 13 WRO, CR 125B/657, 18 August 1760.
- 14 WRO, CR 125B/371, 18 February 1761.
- 15 WRO, CR 125B/372, 20 March 1761.
- 16 London, British Library (hereafter BL), RP 2377(i), Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, letter 7, 6 September 1762.
- 17 BL, Add. MS 14260, fol. 177. Pococke also confirms that the obelisk was at that time being erected by Sir Richard Lyttelton and not Admiral Smith, as has been previously claimed [Gervase Jackson-Stops, *Hagley Hall* (Guide Book), Derby, 1979, 14; Roger White (ed.), *Georgian Arcadia: Architecture for the Park and Garden*, London, 1987, 53].
- 18 WRO, CR 1382/32, pp. 29–30, 'Up bef. 6. writ^{ts}. Acc^t. of Expences &c. w^r to D^r Leigh rode aft. bft w. M^r Buckn^l. to L^d Hide's. His L^p L^y H. & L^y Mary Capel shewed me the Hse at y^e Grove 2. Very good Rooms &c. L^d H. w. d^y w. us round the Park & to y^e Garden where we met Ly. H. seeing M^r Stewarts 6 Col^l. Grecⁿ. Doric Portico^s.
- 19 David Adshead, 'A modern Italian loggia at Wimpole', *Georgian Group Journal*, X, 2000, 150–63.
- 20 Kerry Bristol, 'The Society of Dilettanti, James "Athenian" Stuart and the Anson family', *Apollo*, CLII, August 2000, 46–54.
- 21 BL, Add. MS 35,607, fol. 195, 17 September 1765, 'I found & transmit my Ideas for the Cold Bath, drawn clearer, than Words could render them. If y^r L^p & L^{dy} Grey comprehend & approve them I shall be very happy: my Imagination was so much pleased with the Whole, that I think the Walk & every part should be thought of Importance in so beautiful a Retreat. I should rather the Building was

- of stone, than of Wood, & the Pillars of Stuart's Ionick. If it is of Brick & the Columns of Wood, w^h will undoubtedly be much cheaper, it must afterwards be stuccoded or roughcast'. I am grateful to Dr. Kerry Bristol for bringing this information to my attention.
- 22 BL, Add. MS 9,063, fol. 224, 'The Temple of Pan at Grove Herts / Lord Clarendens Grounds'.
- 23 Anon., *The Scotch Hut, A Poem, addressed to Euphorbus; or, the Earl of the Grove*, London, 1779, 8 and 10.
- 24 Photographs taken prior to 1925 confirm the rustic columns [*The Watford Observer*, 13 August 1999, 17].
- 25 Leeds, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Vyner MSS, Acc. 2299, MS Diaries of Amabel Yorke (1769–1827), vol. IV, 'We all visited L^d & L^{dy} Hyde at The Grove. Saw the Temple of Pan, a pretty new Building'.
- 26 There are problems of interpretation of this map, whose detail is limited. It shows two buildings at the south-west corner of the estate. On the earliest OS maps a structure labelled 'Alcove' is shown in the same position as the western of these buildings, and has been identified by John Phibbs in an unpublished landscape survey of 1996 as the Tuscan Seat, the other being the Pyramid.
- 27 Daniel Carless Webb, *Observations and Remarks, during Four Excursions, made to various parts of Great Britain, in the years 1810 and 1811*, London, 1812, 164–65.
- 28 CR 125B/391 and CR 136A/583, Sir Roger Newdigate's diary for 1752.
- 29 David Watkin, *Athenian Stuart: pioneer of the Greek revival*, London, 1982, 27.