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CHEVENING: THE BIG ISSUES

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Chevening House, Kent, is one of the most remarkable and important buildings in the history of English domestic architecture. At one go it established an entirely new, classically balanced formula for elevational design which, initially slow to catch on, came to define the pattern of house-building for 200 years from the mid-seventeenth century, across an exceptional range of social position and corresponding scale of needs or desires. Perhaps even more important, but intimately bound up with the façade design, is its plan – radically new to England, but structurally as well as socially rational in that the transverse load-bearing walls, which economically house all the stacks, contain and define a state centre: a box of all the principal entertainment rooms which leaves the side ranges free for variable layouts of family and subsidiary apartments. It thus helped to fix as well as to match new habits of society and settled what became by the end of the century, and remained for 150 years thereafter, the standard layout of all but the very largest country houses, and thereby permanently affected those of much more modest ambition. The aims of this paper are twofold: first, to present the case for Inigo Jones as the architect of Chevening; second, to establish the whereabouts in the house of the room for which John Webb is known to have made ‘ornaments of wainscot’.

Chevening was so drastically altered between 1786 and 1796 that its precise original form is not easy to establish. There are three sources for our knowledge of what the exterior of the house looked like before Thomas Fort attended to it in 1717 and James Wyatt in the 1780s:¹ the two more important

are Campbell’s engraving in volume II of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, published in 1717 (Fig. 1), and an estate map of 1679 which includes a perspective and basement and ground-floor plans of the house (Fig. 2).² There are significant differences of detail between these two, which are best revealed by superimposing information from the estate map on to Campbell’s elevation (Fig. 3), though with one important caution: close examination of the perspective shows, rather surprisingly, that it must be from the south-east and therefore shows not the entrance but the garden front of the house. This is proved by the differing shapes of the perrons on the two fronts (as shown in plan) and by the presence in the perspective of a mysterious, and unexplained, cuboid of brickwork standing against the side of the perron and just proud of the house wall: this and its twin (hidden in the perspective) are plainly visible on the ground-floor plan – at the back. There is, however, no reason to believe that in 1679³ the two elevations were not, except in details of doorcase and perron, identical. Campbell, we find, has removed the cross-windows and changed the proportions of those in the upper storeys and the roof, has removed voussoirs from the basement and string-courses from below the first- and second-floor windows, one of which is explicitly commented on by Roger North,⁴ and added one below those of the ground floor as well as a basement plinth; he has changed the cornice completely to a conventional Ionic with a pulvinated frieze, has added urns to the belvedere balustrade and redesigned the doorcase and the perron of approach steps. The effect of these

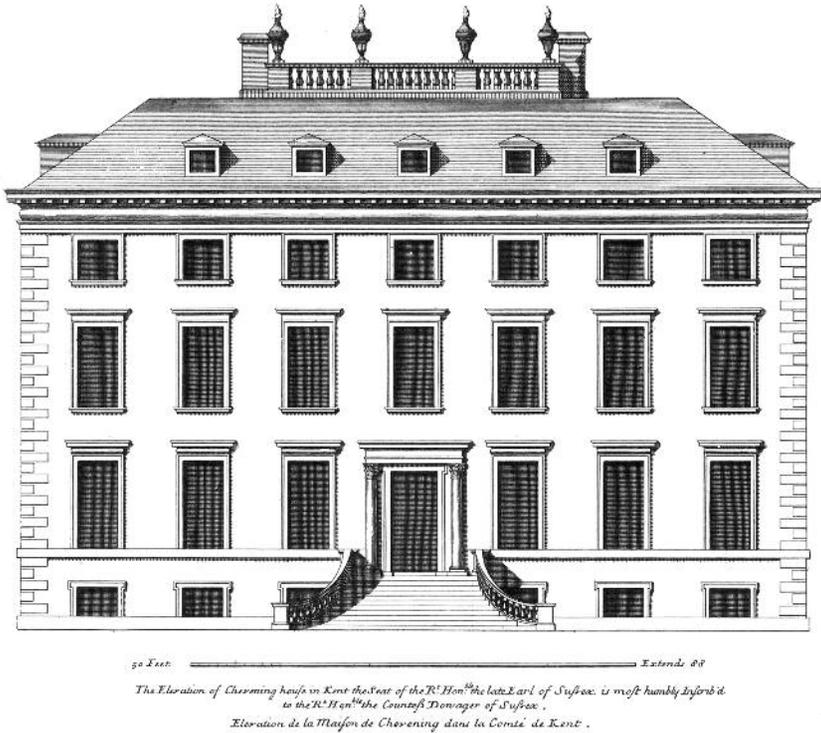


Fig. 1. Chevening, north front: engraving by Colen Campbell, in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, II, 1717.



Fig. 2. Chevening: perspective from south-east, 1679. *Chevening Estate*.

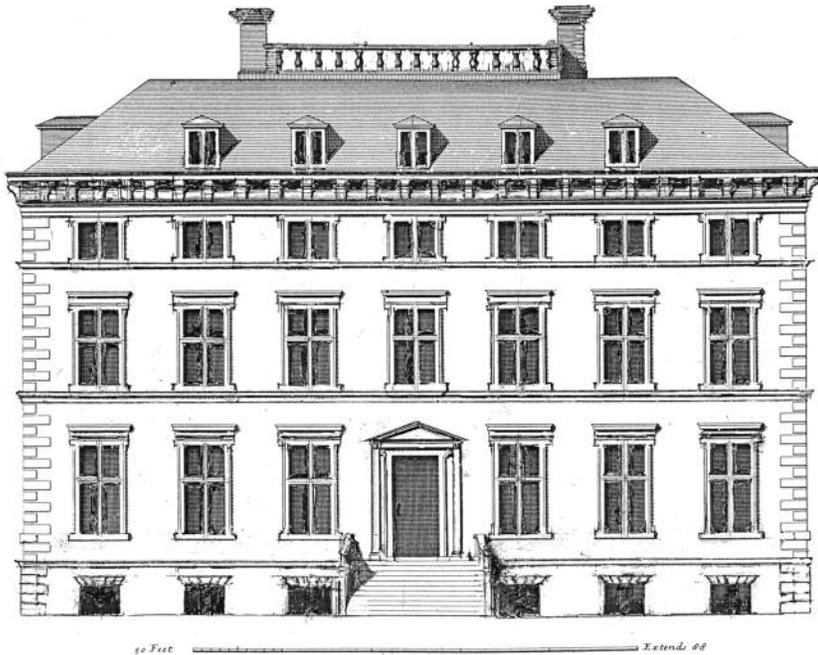


Fig. 3. Chevening, north front: Campbell's elevation adapted to show details from the 1679 estate map.
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changes is certainly to make the house appear more in line with early eighteenth-century Palladian taste, as interpreted by Campbell himself, and they may simply represent a device to assimilate to Campbell's own practice a house which he attributed to Inigo Jones, since he was anxious to be recognized as an apostle of that master. If so, it would not be the only house which Campbell looked at through somewhat distorting Palladian lenses.

The status of Campbell's engraving, however (for which no preliminary drawing is known), also needs to be examined. Volume II of *Vitruvius Britannicus* appeared in 1717, shortly after Chevening had, as Campbell's own introductory note records, passed into the ownership of General Stanhope.⁵ Soon afterwards, the house underwent a substantial transformation at the hands of Thomas Fort, working for its new owner, ennobled in 1717 as Viscount

Mahon and a year later as the first Earl Stanhope. A forecourt was created with independent office wings and, more importantly for our understanding of the original, a projection was added to each of the side elevations. In 1719, during Stanhope's rebuilding operations, John Harris's *History of Kent* was published; it included a bird's-eye view of Chevening (Fig. 4) drawn by Thomas Badeslade, which shows the new additions and the front of the house looking more like the Campbell version than that of 1679: the engraving is certainly not altogether reliable in detail, but, probably significantly, it shows no cross-windows and all the string-courses have gone, as has the rooftop balustrade, though the original cornice seems to have survived and to have been repeated on the newly built projections.⁶ The plate in *Vitruvius Britannicus* is dedicated to the previous owner, the dowager Countess of Sussex

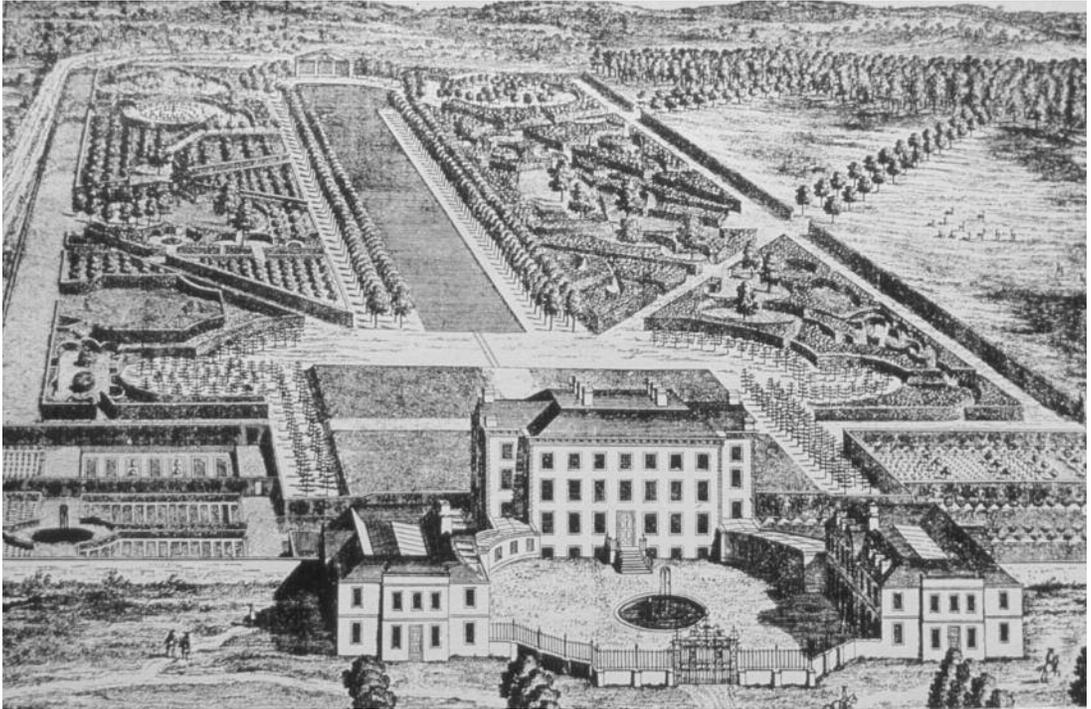


Fig. 4. Chevening from north-west: engraving by Thomas Badeslade, from John Harris, *History of Kent*, 1719.

(widow of the fifteenth Lord Dacre, later first Earl of Sussex) and, despite the amendments to the façade, is evidently intended to represent her house; the plan of the ground floor closely follows that on the 1679 map, including of course none of Fort's additions.⁷ The possibility therefore suggests itself that Campbell's 'improvements', together with his mention of the new owner, were a piece of self-advertisement designed to attract Stanhope, who did indeed subscribe to the volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus* in which Chevening appeared. There is no reason to suppose that Campbell himself was in any way involved in Stanhope's alterations to his house; but Fort will certainly have known this volume, not only through Stanhope, but because Campbell had also included Roger Hudson's house at Sunbury, Middlesex, 'designed and conducted by Mr Fort, Anno 1712' (Fig. 5).⁸ If Badeslade's drawing may be

taken as giving a rough idea of what Chevening looked like directly after Fort's work there, it seems reasonable to suppose that he and Stanhope together were influenced by Campbell's 'Palladianized' version of a house whose overall form the latter wanted, for reasons of architectural politics, to record in his book.

THE CASE FOR JONES

This preamble has been necessary because claims of the great importance and influence of Chevening depend as much on its formal appearance and plan as upon whether the broadly accepted date for its building can be sustained. As for the latter, I believe that we now have good reason to hold that it can. The fundamental point was set out long ago by Tipping,

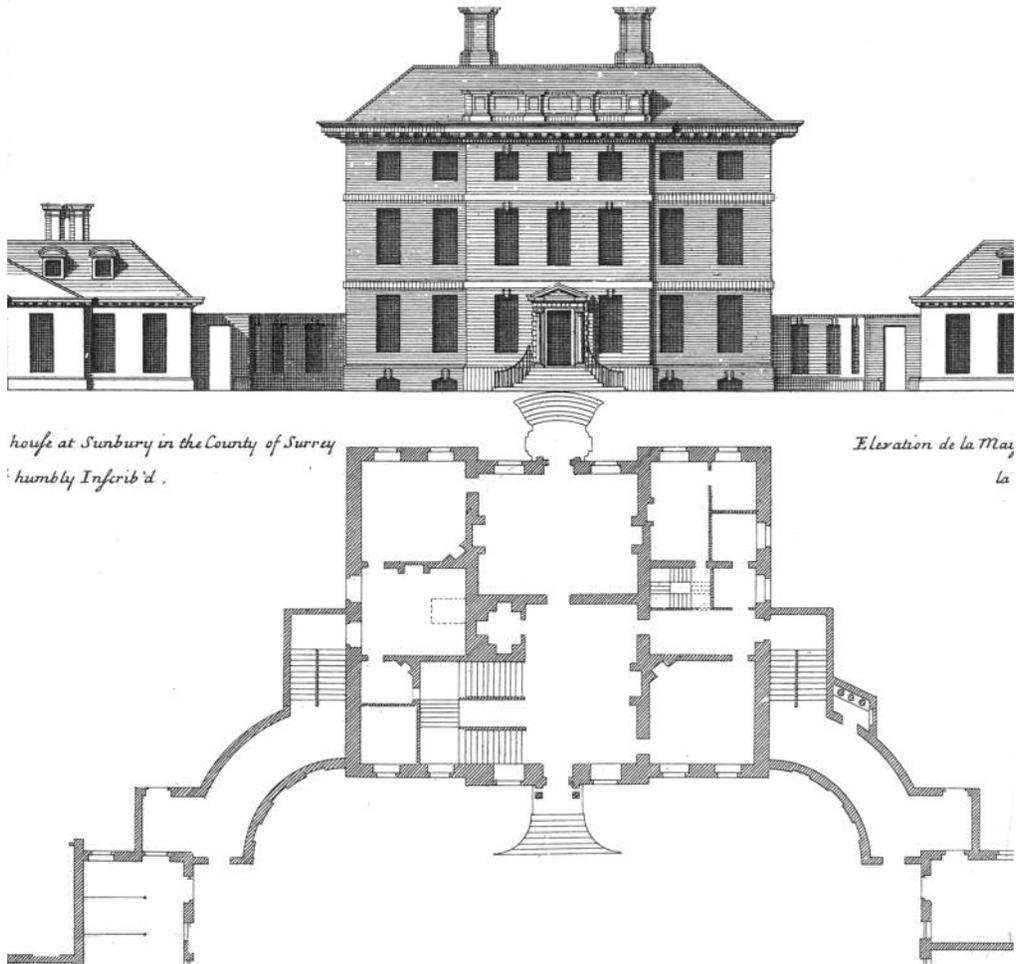


Fig. 5. Sunbury, Roger Hudson's house; engraving in Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, II, 1717.

who, thinking that stylistically the house looked as if it should have dated from after the Restoration, nevertheless accepted that Hasted's statement in his *History of the County of Kent* that it was built for the thirteenth Lord Dacre was to be relied on:

It was direct from the seventeenth Lord Dacre that Hasted got his information . . . the rebuilding by the thirteenth baron is positively asserted. About this, surely, his descendant is not likely to have been mistaken. The only alternative builder is the Earl of Sussex [grandson of the thirteenth baron], and that

would have been known by his daughter, who was still alive when her son [the seventeenth] was compiling his family history.⁹

This family history survives and confirms Hasted's statement:

Richard [13th] Lord Dacre . . . rebuilt his House at Chevening Upon a plan of Inigo Jones, as 'tis said; and it really seems to be so, being Built in a good Taste; see a View of it in Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* [sic]; It has since been much altered by the 1st Earl of Stanhope and in regard to the Architecture, not for the better.¹⁰

The thirteenth baron succeeded to the title and estates in 1616 and died in 1630; this implies a date for Chevening of some time in the 1620s, which has become fairly widely agreed. Yet, so innovative is the design that some historians are reluctant to accept it. John Newman is cautious – ‘if the tradition is to be trusted, . . . , if Chevening was really built before 1630²¹¹ – and Oliver Hill and John Cornforth would clearly prefer it to date from the 1650s, though they go on to quote John Summerson’s then recently stated reason for sticking to the traditional date.¹²

This reason, bound up with the long-maintained argument about the house’s authorship, is that the estate-plan drawing shows a block cornice, which Summerson explained as one

which consists of a series of curved corbels supporting an upper layer of mouldings [and] is strongly associated with Inigo Jones: he used it at the Queen’s Chapel, St. James’s (1623–25), the Somerset House Chapel (1630–35) and St. Paul’s (1634–42).

This cornice appears to be a reworking of that at the Colosseum, which Jones always regarded as the prime classical exemplar, and to which he refers in a note about the value of such cornices when ‘far from the eye’.¹³ Its identified use in England before 1630 is unique to Jones himself. Roger North has a curious and interesting comment on Chevening’s upper storeys, which evidently bears on the use of the block cornice for a ‘far off’ entablature:

the whole is an Italian designe, as may be seen by the upper story 2 pair stairs, the lights of which not being so high as wide, the jaums of them are set blunt upon a fascia, without a sole [i.e., sill] conformable to the jaums, where they are so done. And this is that the story might seem to rise within a batlement, and so the bottom part of the windoes, forshortned away from the view by the batlement, and then your imagination must supply height to the windoes, which they realy had not in any due proportion.¹⁴

It should be said that the perspective is quite small, only about four inches wide, but it was clearly

carefully drawn, its accompanying plans can be verified in the present building, and the crucial cornice is confirmed in the Badeslade/Kip engraving.¹⁵ A further distinguishing mark is the use of lugged window architraves throughout the elevations, features which at this date appear likewise to be unique to Jones;¹⁶ two lugged doorway lintels of considerable refinement do in fact survive at the east and west basement entrances, though the jambs have later been cut away, evidently to allow access for large barrels; and Dr. Higgott has drawn my attention also to the door surround which appears to show what Jones called *pilastrelli*, fillets duplicating the verticals of the architrave, as in the penultimate design for the Banqueting House and the elevation for the west front of St. Paul’s.¹⁷ One further point of note is that Chevening’s original great stair (replaced c.1721 by the ‘geometrical’ stair designed by Nicholas Dubois) was of stone, which would have been in line with Jones’s practice elsewhere, but otherwise unusual in the 1620s.¹⁸

These details do not amount to a conclusive proof of authorship; but corroborative evidence comes from Jones’s own design for a hipped-roof house for Sir Peter Killigrew, dating probably from the late 1620s,¹⁹ and secondarily from the notably precocious building of Forty Hall, Enfield in 1629,²⁰ and of St. Clere at Kensing in 1633.²¹ The latter, built for the royalist Sir John Sedley, is less than five miles from Chevening, so close that it seems almost certain to have been a conscious imitation, though it is smaller and its plan significantly different.²² The genesis of Forty Hall (Fig. 6), a slightly cramped but still very stylish version of the Chevening theme, built for Sir Nicholas Raynton, Haberdasher and later Lord Mayor of London, is harder to understand: though again the structural, and here the social, layout is quite different, and the interior decoration is conservative, it is hard not to see a close connexion with the overall appearance of Chevening, however this may have come about.²³ The existence and secure dating of both Forty and St. Clere in any case



Fig. 6. Forty Hall, Enfield (1629): north front.

confirm that compact rectangular hipped-roof houses were being built during the later years of the thirteenth Lord Dacre's life and shortly after he died, though it should be added that the two closest parallels to Chevening's original exterior come later. One is by Jones himself, the design for a thirteen-bay terrace in Lothbury, London for Lord Maltravers (Fig. 7), dated in Jones's hand 1638.²⁴ The terrace has only two doorcases, in the fourth and tenth bays: if one separated off the seven bays at either end, one would have a simplified replica of the main front of Chevening. Closer overall is Oliver St. John's Thorpe Hall, Peterborough, designed and built by Peter Mills in 1654–6.²⁵ At that time it is known that John Webb was 'making ornaments' at Chevening; the house had clearly been in existence for some time, even if the interior decoration was not finished; and surely there

is no good reason for continuing to doubt the truth of the seventeenth Lord Dacre's statement.

If Chevening was really built before 1630, its classical character is so marked, and its form so novel in England, that it can be explained only as a design by or strongly influenced by Inigo Jones.

Thus John Newman, summing up his discussion of the house.²⁶ Not everyone agrees, and even Newman calls its character 'un-Palladian', though he insists that this need not be used as an argument against Jones's authorship. Campbell was the first to ascribe Chevening to Jones, and, though his plate is inscribed 'Inigo Jones Inv.', in the index, it is only 'said to be designed' by him.²⁷ As remarked above, it was in Campbell's interest to include as much of Jones as possible in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, in order

to endorse his own claim to the architectural inheritance. John Summerson bluntly refers to 'the house that Jones built for Lord Dacre',²⁸ and James Lees-Milne, admitting that the style of the house was entirely different from Jones's more famous buildings, concludes slightly ambiguously that 'for that reason we need not hesitate to associate his name with it.'²⁹ On the other hand Howard Colvin holds that Chevening 'fail[s] the stylistic test',³⁰ without specifying what the criteria are: would the designs for Killigrew and Maltravers (not referred to in his *Dictionary*) have failed the test if one of them had not been inscribed in Jones's hand? Colvin goes on to observe that

apart from John Webb there were other architects such as Edward Carter, Isaac de Caux, Sir Balthasar Gerbier and Nicholas Stone whose style, though not measuring up to the exacting standards which Jones set himself, would probably have satisfied many patrons who wanted something fashionable, but could not command the services of the King's Surveyor.

But in the 1620s there was no such fashion as Chevening's: our difficulties in settling its date arise because it was so new. Jones himself had no circle, and both in its elevations and its plan Chevening does set exacting standards, even if they do not coincide with those of the Queen's House, as a comparison with the those of Forty Hall shows. Of Colvin's proffered names Webb must be ruled out since he was only nineteen when Lord Dacre died; the known works and designs of Gerbier and de Caux do not suggest that either had the ability or the taste to produce a design with the sophisticated proportions of Chevening, at once so poised and so restrained. Stone's range at Cornbury House, built in the early 1630s, is, so far as we can trust its present appearance, architecturally quiet and refined, Jonesian in detail, not very well proportioned and in plan quite unadventurous; of his later known or attributed domestic work, none of those listed in Colvin's *Dictionary* show any close resemblance to Chevening.

Edward Carter's name has also, on two occasions, been preferred for Chevening by John Harris:

[Carter's] unexecuted design for William Trumbull at East Hampstead Lodge, Berkshire, was made after 1626. It stands alone, outside of Jones's office, for its classical purity and is singular in being derived from Rubens's *Palazzi di Genova*, published in 1622. It is tempting to attribute [Chevening] to Carter. . . Chevening is also Genoese in feeling, with its tall silhouette, balustraded platform, and massive architectonic chimney-shafts. Now that Carter has been identified as the London 'surveyor' for building the famous screen front at Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire, in 1636, another myth has been exploded. Thus Carter emerges as an architect who demands respect.³¹

If anything is Genoese in the East Hampstead design, it is the old-fashioned plan – a near-square of eight rooms about a central courtyard, relating for example to the plans of the Villa Grimaldi and the Palazzo Doria.³² Apart from the large outward-facing entrance hall in the middle of the front, it could hardly be called innovative in the late 1620s. The long, low elevation, which is not unlike that of Stone's range at Cornbury, has nothing Genoese about it at all, though its purity may be admitted to be classical. If, on the other hand, knowing of Jones's knowledge and use of Rubens's book,³³ one were looking for Genoese influence on the design of Chevening, one might go for the façade of the very upright Palazzo Franzoni (though its proportions are by contrast excitably unEnglish), and for its plan to the Palazzo Gambaro, the only example in Rubens's book of a house with the hall/saloon layout so important at Chevening.³⁴ But was there any need for Chevening's architect to go to Genoa, especially if he knew his Palladio? Though the frequent Genoese use of block cornices may well have confirmed the architect's own preference, there was no shortage of Palladian and earlier *palazzi* to suggest the general form of the elevations, and the particular layout can be interpreted as a development from those of the small group of late Elizabethan and Jacobean houses with transverse axial halls. Structurally these depend essentially on

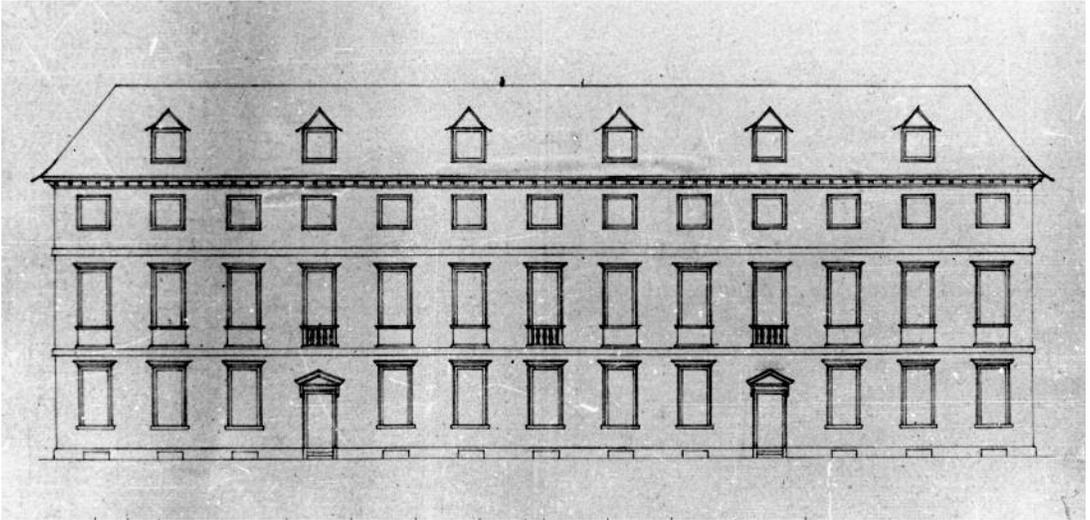


Fig. 7. London, Lothbury, buildings for Lord Maltravers: drawing by Inigo Jones, 1638. *Worcester College, Oxford.*

cross-walls framing the hall, and, unless the house is very large and the flanking rooms numerous, no other internal bearing walls are needed. The only (and important) distinction of the Chevening plan, clearly reflecting a changed social habit, is that the original hall has been cut in two by a lateral masonry wall, which both acts as a stiffening brace and divides the entrance hall from the saloon behind, thus creating the novelty of a formal ‘state centre’.³⁵ The absence of constraining walls in the flanking ranges means that floors could be laid out differently, as is indeed shown on the ground- and upper-floor plans of Chevening in *Vitruvius Britannicus*.

John Harris observed that the Chevening plan ‘was not Jonesian’.³⁶ But was there such a thing as a Jonesian house-plan? One of Webb’s pages of miniature sketches includes a plan labelled ‘M^r Survey’ showing an axial hall;³⁷ and if Chevening’s is not Jonesian, it is certainly Palladian. But in the 1620s and for some time afterward it wasn’t *anyone’s* standard plan: in England at least it was quite new and showed a remarkable alertness to changing social *mores*, adaptability to English conditions (all the rooms are

heated from stacks within the cross-walls) and a highly skilled craftsman’s awareness of structural necessity and economy; significantly those houses built during the following few decades whose external appearance implies evidence of the influence of Chevening show none that the relations between structure and use within its plan were properly understood.³⁸ What should this tell us? Tipping came roundly to the conclusion (given that the house was built before 1630) that ‘there cannot be the smallest doubt that Inigo Jones was the designer, as there was certainly no one else in England at that time who could have done it.’³⁹ Today, doubtless, we should tread more hesitantly and say that it ‘can be explained only as a design by or strongly influenced by Inigo Jones’. Need we be so cautious? Stone and Carter were certainly competent architects and something more. But were they capable of producing on their own a totally new type of house fully worked out, stylistically perfectly composed and with a Palladio-inspired plan combining structural logic and economy with a flexibility of use, that proved marvellously adaptable to styles of living which at the time were hardly more than nascent?⁴⁰

WHERE WAS LORD DACRE'S
NOBLE ROOM?

On 6 April 1655 John Webb wrote to Sir Justinian Isham of Lamport Hall, Northants, telling him that Isham 'need not much feare' for the proportion of the room which Webb was then designing for his house,

for I am now making ornaments of wainscott for a roome in Kent for my Lo: Dacres wh is 31: fo: long 22: broad & 24: fo: high wh height If I forgett not yo^{rs} is to bee, because ye Cornice wh makes ye Ceeling I have reduced to yat height, wh room is very noble & hee bestows much cost upon it, but I am confident yo^{rs} wilbe more proportionable.⁴¹

There has been much debate about where in Lord Dacre's house this room was. A point which should be made immediately is that no room in Chevening is 22 feet broad. The dimensions shown in Campbell's plans (Fig. 8), which correspond with those shown in the estate plan of 1679 (Fig. 9), have been checked and confirmed: the rooms in the centre of the house are 28 feet broad (from north to south) by 31 feet

long; those on either side, transversely laid out, are 21 feet (from east to west). Either, therefore, Webb, writing perhaps from London, had misremembered the size of his room, or '22' is a slip of the pen for some other figure. It should also be noted that the curious near-coincidence of the figures given by Webb with the dimensions of the music hall at Lamport (which is 31 feet long, 21 broad and just under 24 high) was at least in part noted by Webb himself.

The survival of a scheme of seventeenth-century stylar and arcuated wainscot in the dining room behind the hall (Fig. 10) prompted John Newman to argue that, despite its not fitting Webb's measurements exactly, this was the room and that the wainscot is that designed by Webb.⁴² This room is 31 feet long, 28 wide and approximately 12 high: so it cannot represent Webb's room as he designed it. John Martin Robinson, therefore, has recently asserted that the dining room was 'originally a two-storeyed hall . . . into which a floor was introduced by the 1st Earl Stanhope circa 1718. The panelling must have

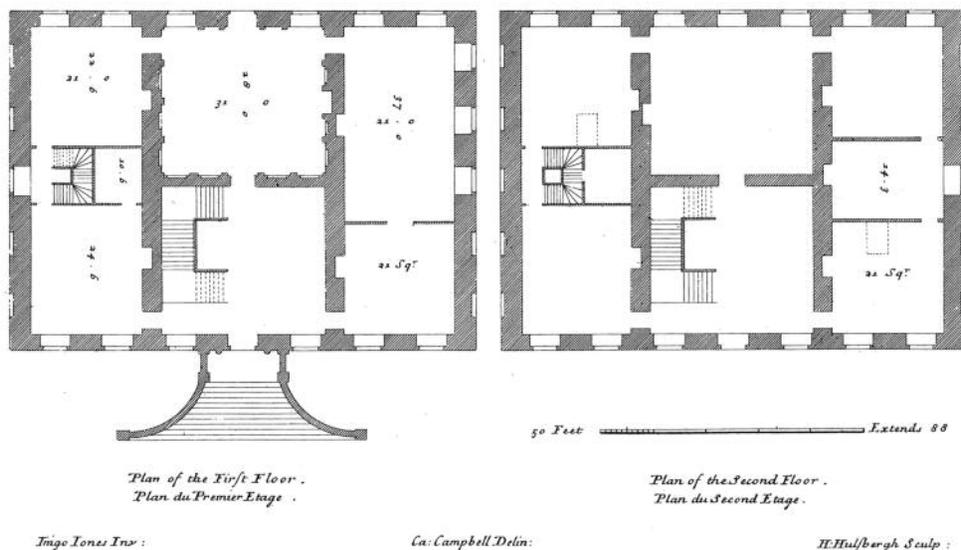


Fig. 8. Chevening, ground- and first-floor plans: engravings in Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, II, 1717.

been adapted then.²⁴³ I believe that this position can no longer be sustained.

First, the ceiling of a room 24 feet high, that is to say 10 feet above the level of the first-floor landing, would be at a level approximately two thirds of the height of the middle storey: either therefore it would run across the central three windows of the first floor, or these would be blanks, or reduced to about half their present height. It is unlikely that any of these schemes would have satisfied an architect of Webb's standing and principles. Furthermore the scale of the order in the existing wainscot is too small to allow of a superimposed one of a similar height.

Secondly, the first-floor plan in *Vitruvius Britannicus* shows a room directly above the saloon with three doors (as at present), one in its north wall from the landing, and one each near the south ends of its east and west walls. As pointed out above, the second volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus* was published in 1717, the year in which Chevening was sold to General Stanhope, and in his note on the

house Campbell points out that it now belonged to 'the Right Honourable James Stanhope, Esq.' His elevation and plans are, however, of the house before any of Stanhope's changes had been made, and they are dedicated to 'the Countess Dowager of Sussex'. Drawings for the engravings must therefore have been made while she was its owner, and the evidence which they give is that the present first-floor room over the saloon existed at that time in its present dimensions. Even if it were argued that Campbell had perhaps not visited the upstairs rooms and had guessed their layout, his assumption in that case that there was a first-floor room over the saloon (i.e., the dining room) must have been made on his knowledge that the latter had a ceiling and hence that there was a floor above. In addition, it would have been unlikely that what appears to have been a grand three-room apartment above the withdrawing room and great parlour could only have been entered via the bedroom at its north end: the middle room on the south side must have been needed to act as an ante-room to it.

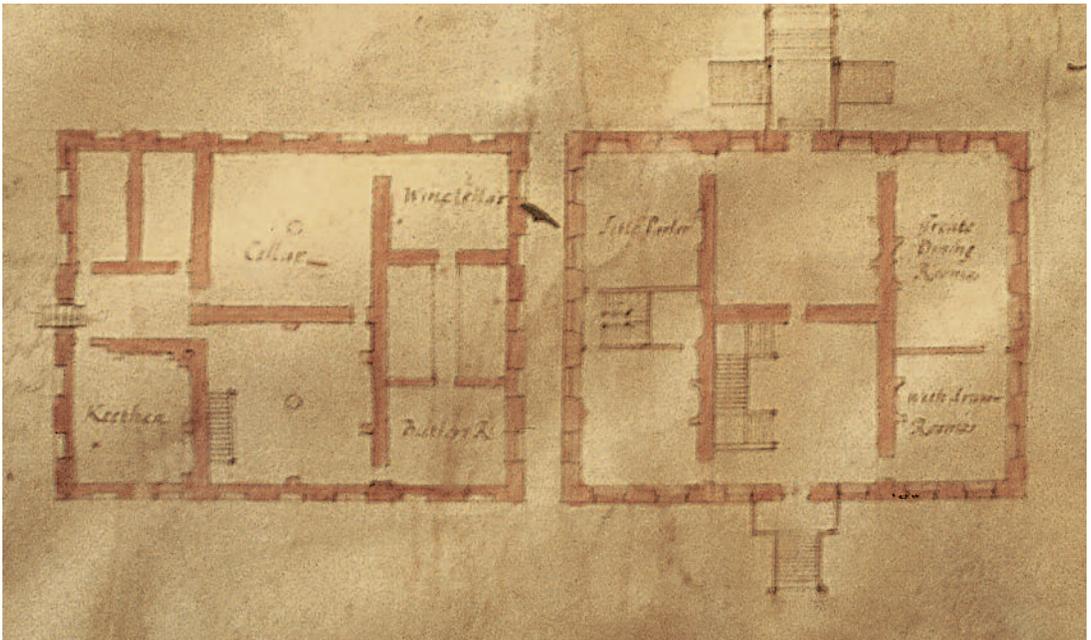


Fig. 9. Chevening, basement and ground-floor plans, 1679. *Chevening Estate*.

Thirdly, the Beauvais tapestries which give the upper room its present name were presented to Stanhope by Frederick I of Prussia in 1708, though they were not installed at Chevening until 1736, when William Bradshaw hung them for the second Earl.⁴⁴ In order to accommodate the tapestries to the room, some had to be cut and one extended. Had the room been a blank area newly created by the insertion of a floor, its walls could naturally have been designed to accommodate the tapestries without mutilation.

Finally, Roger North visited Chevening at some point while it was still in the possession of his aunt, the 13th Lord Dacre's second wife, who died in 1698, aged 93. His description is not entirely clear, but it should leave us in no doubt about the dining room:

There is somewhat of Gothick in the finishing of the rooms, being carved with a sort of grotesque upon the wainscote in the best room below. The cheif room above is not finished, and was intended to be done with lunetts and small lights *all' Italiana*. . . . The design is a room of *entrata*, where the great staires rise to the summit of the house, and so open to the middle room above also. On each side a room, the right hand is the withdrawing room, and the left, passing a stair downe to the kitchen, for servants. And from that by the end wall passing a litle back stair, to the comon parlor. The middle backward is a large dining room sett off with pilaster and arcuated wainscote, on the right the great, and on the left the comon parlor. The staires are too steep and height is wanting in the greater rooms below.⁴⁵

Plainly the dining room (the 'middle backward', with its pilasters and arcuated wainscot) was then essentially as we see it today⁴⁶ – and in North's view not high enough. This seems to lay to rest the notion that it was the first Earl who inserted the tapestry room floor.

Since North makes the point that (as now) the great stair rose in his time to the 'summit of the house', the 'middle room above' was presumably that occupying the three central bays of the south front on the *second* floor, which in 1718 became the first Earl's library. This space is now divided into two rooms, but the 'massive moulded beams' pointed out by Newman are common to both.⁴⁷ What is curious

about the original three-bay room here is that there is nevertheless an asymmetry in the framing of the ceiling (which of course supports the garret floor): the marked sag, presumably resulting from the use of green timber, in the two *lateral* beams over the room now occupying the two easternmore bays shows that they are primary, the central transverse beam being complex and jointed to bridge the greater dimension. The lateral beams rest at their east ends on one of the main cross-walls of the house and must be supported at their west on a continuous transverse beam above the inserted partition, since at this point there is no bearing wall beneath. The main bridging beams over the dining and tapestry rooms must be assumed to be transverse at equal centres, that is from the mid-points of the piers between the windows; and that above the second-floor partition will correspond to one of these. Presumably when the room was created, timber sufficient to frame a straightforward ceiling structure was not available: the compromise is ingenious but does not suggest that it was a part of the original planning of the house.

Clearly the unfinished 'cheif room above' was on the first floor, and, as a chief room, must have been on either the south or west fronts. The whole centralized design of the house points in fact to the middle of the south front, i.e., the tapestry room.⁴⁸ Exactly what North means by 'lunetts' is unclear. The *O.E.D.*⁴⁹ defines 'lunette' as 'an arched aperture in a concave ceiling for the admission of light' and cites Inigo Jones in Leoni's *Palladio*; but the reference here is in fact to a drawing (one of seven alternative *volti*), in which Palladio shows a groin-vaulted cove.⁵⁰ Since North refers to 'lunetts and small lights', it seems likely that he had been shown (or had had described to him) a drawing in which lunettes in the dictionary sense were inserted within the spaces between groins. Such lunettes must have been planned for the topmost level of the façade: they would scarcely be possible at first-floor level but could have been a central feature on the south front at the much shallower upper level, where their



Fig. 10. Chevening, dining room. *Country Life*.

smaller vertical dimension would have, like Webb's upper row of windows in the Lamport music hall, a suitably 'proportionable', though surely novel, appearance. So the room alluded to by North must have been planned to rise through the first and second storeys. Confirmation of this comes from North's phrase '*all' Italiana*', which he re-uses (in English) in his account of Raynham Hall, Norfolk:

On the back side, towards the gardens, are a file of rooms, and one after the Italian way, of great and small windoes, with a beam-and-frett ceiling, but lumpish.⁵¹

This room is unquestionably that now called the Belisarius Room (but previously the great dining room), which remains essentially in its original state, rising from the first floor into the second with small windows set above tall ones:⁵² by *all' Italiana*, therefore, North means a room with two rows of

superimposed lights. The 'cheif room above' thus surely has the best claim to have been the one that Webb designed. By 1679 the intention referred to by North had clearly been abandoned, for the perspective of that year shows the fenestration of the south façade essentially as it has remained ever since: it seems almost certain that the 'noble room' never was.

It should be pointed out that the present ceiling of the tapestry room (inserted by Sidney Smirke in 1855⁵³) is only 11 feet above the floor and that it does in fact cut across the windows on the south front, leaving a void three or four feet deep beneath the floor of the top storey. It could of course be argued that this space would allow lunettes above rectangular windows, as in Nicholas Stone's Goldsmiths' Hall or in Robert Hooke's unexecuted design for Ragley⁵⁴. The source for these was certainly plate 143 in Book VII of Serlio's *Tutte l'Opere*, which Webb would

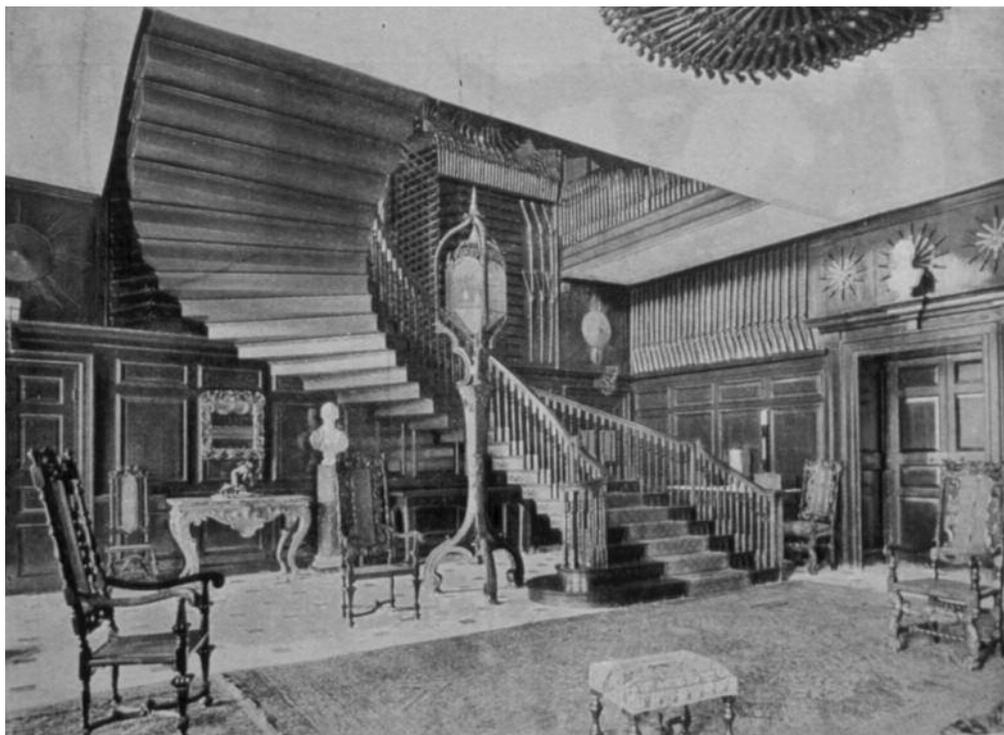


Fig. 11. Chevening, hall. *Country Life*.

doubtless also have known.⁵⁵ But in both Serlio's and Stone's designs the lunettes are immediately beneath the top cornice. It is plain now that lunettes never were installed at Chevening; if they had been, a two-storey room rising from the ground floor to the ceiling of the first would have been 28, not 24, feet high. Webb's figure would, however, fit fairly closely the height from the first-floor landing to the second-floor ceiling.⁵⁶

There remains one further possibility. Might the noble room have been the great staircase hall (Fig. 11)?⁵⁷ Both the hall and the landing above, up to picture-rail level, have paneled wainscot of seventeenth-, rather than eighteenth-, century character, though not of any particular distinction, and certainly not of a kind to which one would have expected Webb to draw attention. It has not been

continuous since about 1740, when the second Earl Stanhope installed his great array of weapons on the walls of the stair hall, in the process stripping away all projecting mouldings; but the pattern of stiles and rails which underlay the mouldings is clearly visible behind the carbines and accords with that of the complete wainscot below and above. The height of such panelling would be altogether about 24 feet, though that of the hall and landing together is of course considerably greater; the floor dimensions are the same as those of the dining room. It seems, however, unlikely that Webb would have referred to the staircase hall as a 'noble room' or compared it to the quite dissimilar music room at Lamport. Moreover North's description seems clearly to distinguish the unfinished 'cheif room above', with its intended lunettes, from the 'room of *entrata*'. Finally,

it remains nevertheless possible that the wainscot, which, on North's visit, was in the dining room, had originally been made for the chief room above and was moved down when the great scheme was abandoned:⁵⁸ such a change might have marked the shift of the dining room from the position recorded in the 1679 plans to where it was in the 1690s, and where it has remained ever since. After all, therefore, we may still have a part of Lord Dacre's and Webb's noble room.⁵⁹

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I am most grateful to the Trustees of the Chevening Estate for allowing me to visit and take measurements in the house, and especially to their Secretary, Colonel R.P.D. Brook, for most courteous help over a long period. Also to my wife for her insight and sharp eyes.

NOTES

- 1 The first Earl Stanhope, who bought the house in 1717, got Thomas Fort to add substantial projecting blocks to each end elevation and a forecourt of two-storey offices and stables linked to the house by colonnaded quadrant hyphens. In 1788–96 James Wyatt, working for the third Earl, added pilasters to both main fronts and a blocked attic, replacing the hipped roof. It appears to have been the enthusiastically scientific Earl himself who covered the walls with sombre mathematical tiles. These and the attic were removed in 1970 when the exterior was returned by Donald Insall to something nearer its original form, though the pilasters remain, a pediment was added where there had not been one, and most of the detail has vanished; Fort's additions survive essentially unchanged. The general history of the house is described by H. Avray Tipping in *Country Life*, April 7th and May 1st, 1920, subsequently gathered together in *English Homes*, Period V, vol. I, London, 1921, 9–38. Incomplete building accounts for the work undertaken by the first and third Earls are among the Stanhope papers in Maidstone, Centre for Kentish Studies, U 1590.E26/1–7.
- 2 Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, II, London, 1717, pl.85. The estate plan is kept and on display at Chevening. The perspective is reproduced, e.g., in John Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent & the Weald*, Harmondsworth, 1969, pl.56, and in Oliver Hill and John Cornforth, *English Country Houses: Caroline*, London, 1966, 25, fig.19.
- 3 As we shall see, this reservation is important.
- 4 Howard Colvin and John Newman (eds.), *Of Building*, Oxford, 1981, 71.
- 5 The date of purchase was 15th June 1717 [Tipping, *op.cit.*, 19].
- 6 The engraving, by Kip, was included in his *Supplément du Nouveau Théâtre* of 1728, and appears again in Thomas Badeslade, *Thirty Six Different Views of Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Seats in the County of Kent*, London [n.d.]. A rather crude reproduction is in Tipping, *op.cit.*, 13.
- 7 Since much of the argument of this paper depends on being able to accept Campbell's plans (as opposed to his elevation) as accurately representing those of the original house, it should be stressed that the ground-floor plans in *Vitruvius Britannicus* and on the estate map (the only ones that can be directly compared) correspond exactly, except for

- the shape of the perron on the entrance front and for Campbell's omission of any perron on the garden front.
- 8 Campbell, *op.cit.*, pl.46. By one of those coincidences that surround this history (can it on this occasion be more?), Hudson's house appears to have been curiously similar to the original Chevening in size, overall appearance and layout, having a rather old-fashioned elevation for 1712, with high pitched roof, prominent block cornice and two string-courses, and the great staircase largely within the hall. Hudson's office wings were single-storey versions of those that Fort later built at Chevening. A further unexplained coincidence (?) is that another subscriber to this volume was a Mr Alexander Fort, described as 'Under Store-Keeper at Hampton-Court'. Thomas Fort's father was named Alexander, but he had died in 1706 [Howard Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, New Haven and London, 1995, 371]; Thomas was Clerk of the Works at Hampton Court from 1714 until his death in 1745 [*Idem.*]. But who is the lowly storekeeper who nevertheless bought a copy of *Vitruvius Britannicus*?
 - 9 Tipping, *loc.cit.*
 - 10 Chelmsford, Essex County Record Office, D/DL/Z22, 43-4. Insignificantly different wording is found in a second copy of the manuscript, written in a different hand [*Ibid.*, D/DL/Z23, 36].
 - 11 Newman, *op.cit.*, 203, 205.
 - 12 Hill and Cornforth, *op.cit.*, 25-6. In 1966, when they were writing, it was still difficult to accept dates in the 1620s for classical houses with hipped roofs; so they held, for example, that the roof of Forty Hall (for which see further below) was 'probably put on about 1700'. An examination which I carried out with Dr Alison Maguire in 1991 showed beyond doubt that the existing primitive roof structure is part of the original build of 1629; the survival of early seventeenth-century plasterwork in the south-east attic room confirms the eaves line. Summerson's letter [*Country Life*, CXXXVI, 24 September 1964, 776] drew attention to one by W. Grant Keith [*Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 22nd July, 1933, 732-3] which noted John Webb's engagement at Chevening in the 1650s (already in fact briefly revealed by J.A. Gotch [*ibid.*, 24th September 1921, 574]); Summerson nevertheless rejected Grant Keith's view that Webb was the architect of the house, on grounds which are a summary of the argument developed in the present paper.
 - 13 Written in the upper margin of his copy of Palladio's *Quattro Libri*, I, 50: 'noat the anciente when a cornish stood farr from the eye maad the members great and som times put modiglians in the freese wch mad Architrave freese and Cornish show affar of all on cornish, this secrat Scamozio being purblind understoode nott. See ye Colloseo ye upper order, Ser: fo.65.Li.3? - i.e., Serlio's *Tutte l'Opere d'Architettura* [Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks, *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture*, I, New Haven & London, 1996, 159; Gordon Higgott, 'Inigo Jones's Theory of Design', *Architectural History*, XXXV, 1992, 65 and n.60]. I am most grateful to Dr. Higgott for discussing this issue with me and fully explaining its significance.
 - 14 North, *op.cit.*, 71-2.
 - 15 The draughtsman shows the cornice stopping short once it has turned the corner on to the east front (was he saving himself trouble or was it never completed?); he has included six dormers on the south front - corresponding to all bays except that at the extreme left hand. Campbell's north elevation shows a symmetrical five, Badeslade's none at all. Campbell's cornice is of the smooth Ionic form which an eighteenth-century Palladian would have preferred.
 - 16 John Smythson occasionally designed windows whose lintels and sills projected on either side of the window frame [Mark Girouard, 'The Smythson Collection', *Architectural History*, V, 1962, 161], and his father had earlier included true lugs on the hall fireplace at Wollaton.
 - 17 John Harris and Gordon Higgott, *Inigo Jones: Complete Architectural Drawings*, London, 1989, 113 and 243. For a good surviving example of *pilastrelli*, see the central first-floor window on the front of Lindsey House, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.
 - 18 Cf. an unsigned memorandum attached to a copy of a letter from Dubois [Stanhope papers, *loc.cit.*, E26/4] which identifies the latter as 'the person directed about the Great (Geometrical) Staircase at Chevening, one of the same kind at his House in Brewer Street being liked. So the Old Stone Stair (probably bad) was taken down and the wooden one put up.'
 - 19 Dated to c.1630 by Harris and Higgott [*op.cit.*, 312] and itself, as they point out, a simplified version of the type represented by the design for Sir Fulke



Fig. 12. Chevening: cellar beneath dining room. *Country Life*.

Greville's house of c.1617. (The existing drawings for this house are copies by John Webb, inscribed in his hand, 'Sr Peter Killigrew in ye blackfryers / Mr Surveyors desygne'.) The distinctive and unusual vault with flat ribs about nine inches wide, which survives complete beneath the dining room at Chevening (Fig. 12) and partially elsewhere (a central column beneath the hall is shown in the estate-map basement plan), is of little help: though almost certainly of those at the Queen's House and the Banqueting House. The vault in the Dutch House at Kew (1631) is overall similar in form, though the rib profiles are quite different.

20 Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 4, North*, London, 1998, 442–5, and pls.19 & 25. The date appears on the house twice.

21 Begun probably a year or two earlier: 1633 is the date when the chapel (more specifically a 'prayer

landing') in the house was consecrated. See Newman, *op.cit.*, 336; an illustration is in Hill and Cornforth, *op.cit.*, 239.

- 22 As at Chevening, the hall at St Clere contains the great stair (rebuilt in the eighteenth century, but re-using the original carriage), with the (in this case narrower) saloon behind; but the layout is structurally quite different, with a continuous spine-wall containing all the principal stacks. The parapet, added in 1767, alters the overall profile, and it may be that, during Georgianization, string-courses were removed from the façades. The octagonal corner turrets are a reminder that Jacobean manners had not been left far behind. In view of the evident debt of the exteriors of these two houses to that of Chevening, it is significant that neither shows any inclination to follow its equally innovative plan.
- 23 Note the lugged architraves, top and bottom, though the broad window surrounds, which are

- now cemented but clearly follow the original form, have a provincial air.
- 24 Harris and Higgott, *op.cit.*, 256–7.
- 25 The entrance front of Thorpe Hall is indeed close enough to the redrawing of the Chevening elevation to suggest strongly that Mills must have known the earlier house. Does this strengthen his claim as a possible contender for the design of Forty Hall? At the time of its building he was still a young London bricklayer who had just taken his first apprentice. But a London merchant would have been likely to turn to a City craftsman.
- 26 Newman, *op.cit.*, 205.
- 27 The seventeenth Lord Dacre's cautious attribution to Jones is obviously taken from Campbell.
- 28 John Summerson, *Inigo Jones*, Harmondsworth, 1966, 120.
- 29 James Lees-Milne, *The Age of Inigo Jones*, London, 1953, 120.
- 30 Colvin, *op.cit.*, 556.
- 31 John Harris, Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *The King's Arcadia*, London, 1973, 190, Harris and Higgott, *op.cit.*, 302. According to Colvin the date for East Hampstead Lodge should be 'after 1628', which in view of the likely building date for Chevening may be significant. Carter's drawings are reproduced in Timothy Mowl and Brian Earnshaw, *Architecture without Kings*, Manchester, 1995, 61, fig. 22. Gervase Jackson-Stops (without documentary support) suggested Carter as the architect of another Berkshire house, West Woodhay, built probably in 1635 (*Country Life*, January 22 1987, 46); its plan, with a centrally entered hall, is fairly advanced for its date but does not show any appreciation of that of Chevening.
- 32 Peter Paul Rubens, *Palazzi di Genova*, Antwerp, 1652, figs. I, 21 & II, 2.
- 33 Harris and Higgott, *op.cit.*, 241.
- 34 For the Palazzo Franzoni, see Rubens, *op. cit.*, fig. II, 12, for the Gambaro, see *ibid.*, fig II, 4. In the latter the entrance hall is annotated 'Portico', but it is an entirely enclosed large room. For Rubens's influence on English planning and design in the seventeenth century, see John Newman, 'Criticizing *Palazzi di Genova*: the Evidence of John Webb and Roger Pratt', in Piet Lombaerde (ed.), *The Reception of P.P. Rubens's Palazzi di Genova During the 17th century in Europe: Questions and Problems*, Brepols, 2002, 121–30.
- 35 The inclusion of the staircase within the entrance hall at Chevening is probably not a matter of moment for the present argument, though it does imply intelligent opportunism. It may conceivably have been suggested by the curious layout of Sir John Danvers's house in Chelsea, which had a split-level axial hall with staircases to the first floor on either side: John Summerson, 'The Book of Architecture of John Thorpe', *Walpole Society*, 1966, T21–2, pl.8. The idea was followed almost immediately at St Clere and later in especially grand form at Coleshill, but did not catch on widely, even though, as observed above, Thomas Fort revived something like the original Chevening pattern at Sunbury. An advantage, nevertheless, is that, since the staircase hall is the one room which must rise through two storeys and thus fix part of the upper layout as well as the lower, it is economical to use the *necessary* bearing walls to contain it.
- 36 Harris, Orgel and Strong, *op.cit.*, 189. Nevertheless (in personal correspondence) he has written that he has 'always felt convinced . . . about Chevening as a candidate for the Master'.
- 37 John Harris & Allan Tait, *Catalogue of the Drawings . . . at Worcester College, Oxford*, Oxford, 1979, pl.117. The plan suggests an idea for recasting an Elizabethan house.
- 38 Coleshill, for example (with which Jones may or may not have been distantly involved), had an arrangement of a 'state centre' which was in principle similar, but was extraordinarily prodigal of internal masonry and extravagant in the placing of its stacks.
- 39 Tipping, *loc.cit.*
- 40 It is especially unfortunate for the historian that the original roof trusses were destroyed by Wyatt. (Donald Insall informed me that nothing of the roof remained from earlier than the late eighteenth century.) Had these been of the Palladian king-post form introduced by Jones at the Banqueting House and elsewhere, the case for his authorship would have been considerably boosted; negatively, older-type trusses would have suggested, as at Forty Hall, a craftsmen less aware than Jones of the significance of the introduction of the new forms. Mr Insall noted a change from Midlands oolite to local sandstone in the masonry of the quoins a few stones above first-floor level, which Dr. John Bold observed 'is suggestive, perhaps, of a desire to complete and secure the fabric of the building rapidly and cheaply, possibly leaving the interior unfinished' [John Bold, *John Webb*, Oxford,

- 1989,155]; but there seems no good reason to suppose any substantial change of design.
- 41 Northampton, Northamptonshire Record Office, IC 4772/6. The letter was first printed by J.A.Gotch in *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 24th Sept., 1921, 574–5.
- 42 Newman, *op.cit.*, 204: ‘the only snag is that the dining room . . . does not have quite these measurements.’ That the layout of this wainscot antedates changes made by successive generations of the Stanhopes is confirmed by its being indicated on the ground-floor plan in *Vitruvius Britannicus* and by Roger North’s account, for both of which see further below. The insertion of a mid eighteenth-century fireplace and of an additional door in the mid nineteenth century has distorted the design of the west wall of the room.
- 43 John Martin Robinson, unpublished report to the Chevening Trustees on the history of Chevening, 2000, 22.
- 44 Robinson, *op.cit.*, 34, citing dated bills among the Stanhope papers.
- 45 Colvin and Newman, *op.cit.*, 71–2. The ‘Treatise on Building’, from which this quotation comes, is dated by Colvin and Newman to early 1698; North’s visit to Chevening probably took place at most only a very few years earlier. On the ground-floor plan included on the 1679 estate map the rooms are annotated slightly differently. The present dining room (identified as such by North) is not named, the ‘Greate Dining Roome’ being that to its west, which North identifies as the great parlour. What North calls the ‘comon parlor’ and ‘withdrawing room’ are on the plan annotated respectively as ‘Litle Parlor’ and ‘With draw Roome’.
- 46 Apart from the changes noted in n.42 above.
- 47 Newman, *op.cit.*, 205. The partition between the two rooms was inserted in the early nineteenth century: the fourth Earl wrote in 1848 that ‘the two rooms over the Tapestry Room were originally one, and were in 1727 the Library . . . and were between 1801 and 1816 divided by my father who used the larger room for his sitting room and the smaller for his bedroom’ [Centre for Kentish Studies, Stanhope papers, U 1590/699/4]. There must be two transverse ceiling beams at equal centres over both the dining and tapestry rooms; presumably sufficiently long beams could not be found for the second-floor room, and so a compromise structure was devised across two thirds of the ceiling.
- 48 The only possible alternative place, on the west side above the great parlour, is where Campbell shows the three-room apartment. I am happy to note Dr. Bold’s emphatic confirmation of the south front: ‘The high room . . . was situated at first-floor level at the centre of the garden front, above the panelled saloon’ [Bold, *op.cit.*, 155]. Quoting from the *D.N.B.*, Bold plausibly suggests that ‘Webb’s work might have been stopped before getting properly under way since Francis, Lord Dacre went abroad in 1655 “on some discontent between him and his lady”?’
- 49 Probably following Ogilvy, *New Imperial Dictionary*, which includes an illustration of a coved ceiling with semicircular lights. A secondary definition is ‘a crescentiform or semicircular space in a ceiling, dome, etc., decorated with paintings or sculptures’.
- 50 Bruce Allsopp (ed.), *Inigo Jones on Palladio*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1970, II, 54.
- 51 North, *op.cit.*, 76.
- 52 For the Belisarius Room at Raynham, see Hill and Cornforth, *op.cit.*, 59–60; Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *The Buildings of England: Norfolk 2*, London, 1999, 605–6. The room lies behind the east frontispiece which clearly imitates that of Jones’s Prince’s Lodging at Newmarket [Harris and Higgott, *op.cit.*, 105], where the room must also have been *all’ Italiana*.
- 53 As Dr. Robinson has discovered.
- 54 Newman, ‘Nicholas Stone’s Goldsmiths’ Hall: Design and practice in the 1630s’, *Architectural History*, XIV, 1971, 30–39 & figs.26–28; Peter Leach, ‘Ragley Hall Reconsidered’, *Archaeological Journal*, CXXXVI, 1979, pl.LXVIII; Hill and Cornforth, *op.cit.*, fig.29.
- 55 Hart and Hicks, *op.cit.*, II, 297.
- 56 It would then have been in a similar position to the Belisarius Room (whose decoration is dated by Pevsner and Wilson, *loc.cit.*, to the 1660s, though its overall form must date from Sir Roger Townshend’s original designs). The only instances known to me in English architecture of lunettes or oculi at the *penultimate* storey level are in the external and court façades of Wren’s William III ranges at Hampton Court and in the centrepiece of Hawksmoor’s King William Building at the Royal Hospital, Greenwich: in both cases the elevations are four-storeyed.
- 57 This was suggested, *en passant*, by James Lees-Milne, *op.cit.*, 119. It is not to be confused with John Martin Robinson’s suggestion that the ‘chief room’ was the upper part of the stair hall, i.e., the first-

floor landing, which is indeed a fine open space, but hardly a 'room' in any expected seventeenth-century sense.

- 58 It may, or may not, be significant that on the 1679 ground-floor plan the (present) dining room is, along with the hall and the servants' room in the north-east corner, but unlike the great dining room, withdrawing room and little parlour, unidentified by name, possibly suggesting that in 1679 its future was undecided. At that time the great dining room was the southern two thirds of the present drawing room.
- 59 Drawings of composite capitals for Lord Dacre are in Webb's 'Book of Capitols' at Chatsworth [fols.28-9]. Otherwise the only drawing of his

which might seem to relate to this wainscot is one in the British Architectural Library collection showing several sections of arcading, one of which has an arch *alla romana* supported on a minor order between full-height pilasters [John Harris, *Catalogue of the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects: Jones and Webb*, Farnborough, 1972, no.173, fig.175]. Harris [*op.cit.*, 26] interprets the drawing as 'intended for some form of arcade, perhaps an external garden feature'; the small statues which stand above the entablature could obviously not find space in the Chevening dining room and would hardly make sense in a two-storeyed one.