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# THE HOUSE WITH A VIEW IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND: A PRELIMINARY INQUIRY

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The famous circular house of Belle Isle (Fig. 1), begun in 1774 on an island in the middle of Windermere, was described by William Wordsworth as ‘the first house that was built in the Lake District for the sake of the beauty of the country’:<sup>1</sup> that is, the first deliberately sited to enjoy a view of the scenic, mountainous landscape. The idea of a house sited to take advantage of an existing view was of course in principle by no means new – its history stretches back through the Renaissance to Antiquity:<sup>2</sup> the novelty, as far as there was one, lay in the type of landscape being viewed in this way, and indeed the locations of such houses can almost be taken as an index of the evolution of taste in scenery generally. So Robert Morris, the first British architectural theorist to consider in detail the issue of architectural character in relation to situation, writing in the 1730s, drew all his examples of different types of situation from the environs of London:<sup>3</sup> landscape of the type to be found in the Lake District was simply far beyond his frame of reference. The building of houses in situations like Belle Isle’s can therefore be seen as a reflection of that taste for wild and dramatic scenery, and for ‘picturesque tourism’ in scenic locations, which is a central feature of Western European culture in the second half of the eighteenth century;<sup>4</sup> and the idea has a parallel in the way that the picturesque tourists were conditioned to look at the landscape as a series of static set-piece compositions viewed from a number of specified ‘stations’.<sup>5</sup> The Belle Isle itself had been the site of

several such viewpoints identified by Arthur Young in 1768;<sup>6</sup> and the parallel is emphasised by the subsequent history of another of the Windermere stations, Claife Heights, where in 1799 a belvedere or shelter was constructed for the benefit of sightseers.<sup>7</sup> The principal purpose of the present paper, as a preliminary inquiry into a topic which has received only intermittent coverage hitherto,<sup>8</sup> is to consider some issues relating to the study of these houses in



Fig. 1. Belle Isle, Windermere. *Peter Leach.*

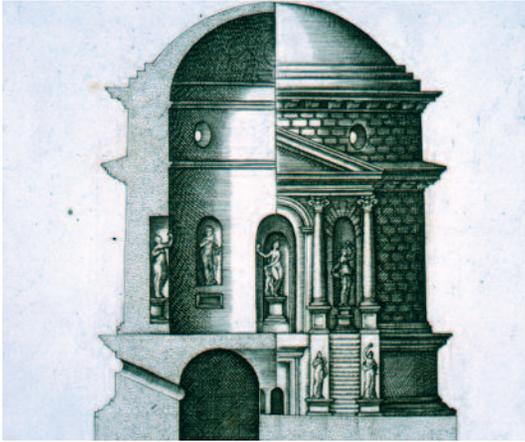


Fig. 2. Tor de' Schiavi. *Montano, Architettura con Diversi Ornamenti.*

general – issues of definition, and of architectural style and character – but this discussion is framed, by way of preface and postscript, first by some further reflections on Belle Isle itself and then by brief accounts of a small number of other early examples, the significance of which has not previously been explored, or not explored fully. These are located either also in the Lake District or in the not-far-distant Craven area of the Central Pennines.

Belle Isle was begun by Thomas English to the design of the London architect John Plaw, sold unfinished in 1781 to the Trustees of Miss Isabella Curwen of Workington Hall, and completed by her and her husband John Christian Curwen during the 1780s as a summer residence.<sup>9</sup> But its singularity encompasses more than just its chronological primacy in the district, for the shape of the building was evidently not a whimsical or arbitrary choice. A Pantheon-like figure of a domed cylinder fronted by a pedimented tetrastyle Ionic portico, its specific architectural antecedent appears to have been the Tor de' Schiavi (Fig. 2), a late Roman mausoleum beside the Via Praenestina<sup>10</sup> which had evidently been Lord Burlington's model for the Ionic Temple at Chiswick;<sup>11</sup> but a more generalised affinity with the circular classical temples frequently found in the

landscapes of Claude Lorraine has also been noted in passing,<sup>12</sup> and it seems unlikely that this was not intentional. The point is underlined by a view of the house of c.1790 by John 'Warwick' Smith (Fig. 3), apparently commissioned by the Curwens, in which both it and the landscape are depicted in a decidedly Claudean manner;<sup>13</sup> but the broader significance of the connection lies of course in the seminal influence of Claude's landscapes, together with those of the Poussins and Salvator Rosa, on the development of British tastes in scenery generally.<sup>14</sup> In this sense therefore, Belle Isle symbolises most effectively both the way that the type of landscape in which it is set was viewed and appreciated in the eighteenth century, and the types of association that facilitated that enjoyment.

The pictorial theme can be pursued a little further, to an example which preceded Belle Isle. This was Gledstone Hall (Fig. 4) in the Aire Gap area of Craven, seat of the Roundell family, which was begun c.1770 and has been persuasively attributed to John Carr.<sup>15</sup> It occupied an elevated site on the saddle of a ridge, with extensive views from front and back which were described in 1805 precisely in terms of the components – foreground, middle distance and background – of a classic Claudean landscape:

‘... a splendid house ... which, with its rising woods, crowns the summit of a bold elevation, and commands the most extended and at the same time the most characteristic view in Craven. Gledstone has a beautiful and most irregular foreground of soft elevations and gentle depressions, spotted with aged hawthorns, beyond which stretches a variegated extent of rich pasture, interspersed with villages, while the whole is encircled by a wild horizon of brown and rugged fells. It is, indeed, an epitome of the whole country.’<sup>16</sup>

The description serves as a reminder of the specifically Claudean nature of the view from Belle Isle also, which is situated at some remove from the actual mountains of the Lake District, the latter likewise appearing as a backdrop. It was only a little later that more dramatic locations in closer proximity

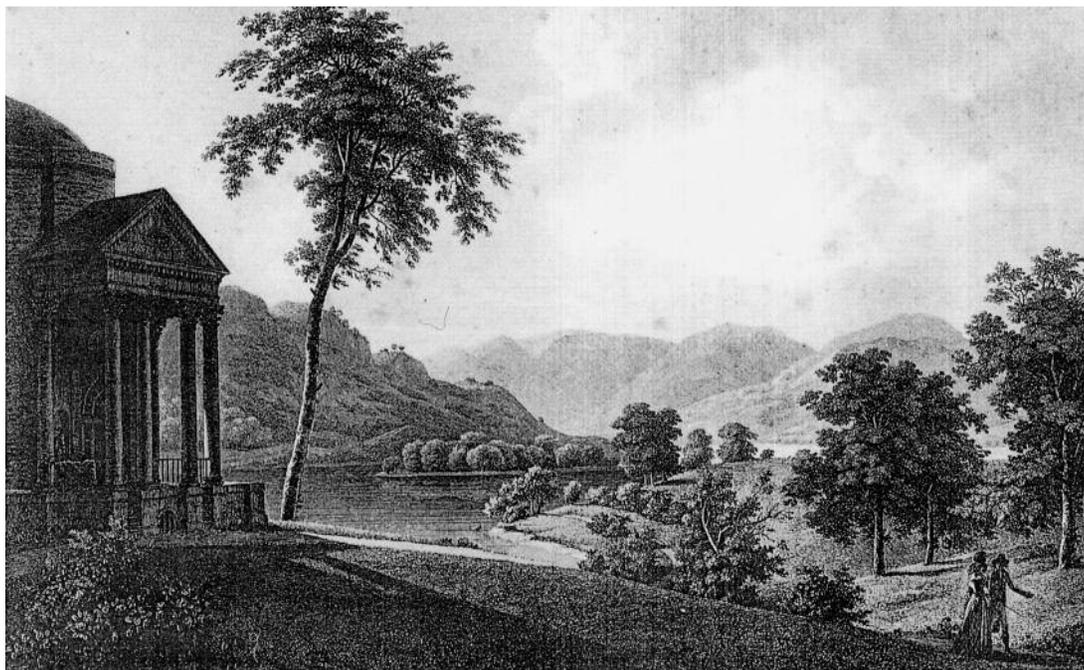


Fig. 3. Belle Isle. *John 'Warwick' Smith, Views of the Lakes in Cumberland, London, 1791-5.*

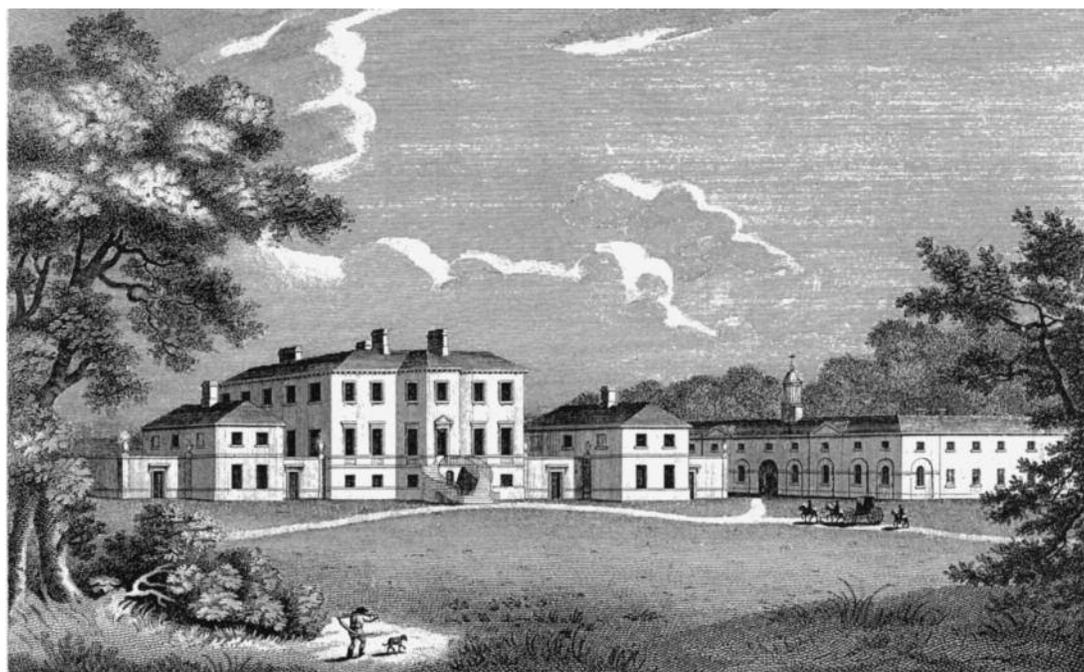


Fig. 4. Gledstone Hall. *Whitaker, Craven.*

to the mountains – Salvatorean rather than Claudean perhaps – were exploited for building.

So to the more general issues; and when attempting to identify the house with a view a little more precisely, along the lines indicated by Wordsworth, there are two which arise. One is the obvious need to distinguish it from those houses of the period which happened to have the benefit of an extensive view but the siting and orientation of which were evidently determined by other factors. An example – unless Wordsworth’s assessment of Belle Isle was mistaken – was Armathwaite Hall at the north end of Bassenthwaite Lake, which was described as ‘modern’ in 1769,<sup>17</sup> the view from which, south along the length of the lake, was frequently admired.<sup>18</sup> Secondly and more important, it becomes apparent that the distinction between the house sited to take advantage of an existing view of the countryside, and the house enjoying the amenities of an ‘improved’ outlook, over ornamental grounds, is not quite as clear-cut as Wordsworth’s formula might be taken to imply. That was certainly the case at Belle Isle, where English cut down old trees on the island and created a formal garden with a high garden wall:<sup>19</sup> these features were to be removed by the Curwens, but even so their approach to the locality – shared by a number of their neighbours – was to treat it as a large communal landscaped park, the different landowners carrying out improvements for their mutual benefit as part of what has been called an ‘interlocking social and aesthetic system’.<sup>20</sup> In 1786 J. C. Curwen commissioned a simple Brownian layout for the island, with belts and clumps of trees and a winding perimeter walk, from the landscape gardener Thomas White;<sup>21</sup> and in 1798 he recorded that he had planted thirty thousand larches on the western shore of Windermere, ‘by the desire of my respected friend Dr Watson’,<sup>22</sup> to enhance the prospect across the lake from Watson’s house, Calgarth Hall – which was another of the early houses with a view in the area, built in 1789–90.<sup>23</sup>

None of this however is at all surprising, given the close relationship between ornamental and non-ornamental grounds which was the essence of the ‘natural’ style of gardening, encapsulated both in William Kent’s leaping of the fence to see that ‘all nature was a garden’<sup>24</sup> and in Joseph Addison’s famous rhetorical question:

‘why may not a whole estate be thrown into a kind of garden by frequent plantations? ... if the natural embroidery of the meadows were helped and improved by some small additions of art ... a man might make a pretty landskip of his own possessions.’<sup>25</sup>

So the Claudean reference in the form of Belle Isle has a further dimension, reflecting his influence on garden design also;<sup>26</sup> but the aspect of the matter which is of particular relevance here is the sense which developed of the improved and the unimproved landscape being complementary. The position was articulated at a theoretical level in Thomas Whately’s *Observations on Modern Gardening* of 1770.

Emphasising always the importance of variety in garden designs, he concluded:

‘The whole range of nature is open to [the gardiner], from the parterre to the forest; and whatever is agreeable to the senses or the imagination, he may appropriate to the spot he is to improve: it is a part of his business to collect into one place, the delights which are generally dispersed through different species of country.’<sup>27</sup>

There is however a *caveat*, characteristic of the age:

‘... in this application, the genius of the place must always be particularly considered; to force it is hazardous; ... The beauties peculiar to one character, cannot be transferred to its opposite; ...’

but a solution to the problem lay in the *Prospect* of the countryside beyond:

‘A park is defective, if confined to its enclosure; a perpetual succession of home scenes, through so large an extent, wants variety; and fine prospects are circumstances of greatness; ... A riding has seldom much beauty of its own; it depends on objects without for its pleasantness; ... [a simple farm] With such

opportunities for improvement ... and with advantages of prospect into the country about it, ... may undoubtedly be delightful; ... The most perfect composition of a place that can be imagined, consists of a garden opening into a park, with a short walk through the latter to a farm, and ways along its glades to ridings in the country; ...<sup>28</sup>

The same idea is reflected in William Gilpin's strange fantasy description of the view from an imaginary house, in which a panorama of lake and river, settlements and mountains, was preceded by an extensive 'lawn';<sup>29</sup> but it was also expressed in more concrete terms in descriptions of actual views from real houses, and in these the ideal of a prospect as embracing both ornamental grounds as a foreground and the unornamented landscape beyond is all but universal. Amongst descriptions by architects for example – to take just one class of writing – Robert Adam in 1774 described the view from Kenwood House in characteristically hyperbolic style:

'A great body of water covers the bottom, and serves to go round a large natural wood of tall trees rising one above another upon the sides of a hill. Over the vale, through which the water flows, there is a noble view let into the house and terrace, of the city of London, Greenwich Hospital, the River Thames, the ships passing up and down, with an extensive prospect, but clear and distinct, on both sides of the river. To the north-east, and west of the house and terrace, the mountainous [!] villages of Highgate and Hampstead form delightful objects. The whole scene is amazingly gay, magnificent, beautiful, and picturesque. The hill and dale are finely diversified; nor is it easy to imagine a situation more striking without, or more agreeably retired and peaceful within.'<sup>30</sup>

And in 1783 James Paine enumerated more prosaically the amenities of Thorndon Hall in Essex:

'The south front faces a magnificent and extensive lawn, bounded on each side by lofty venerable oaks; and from this front you command a very extensive view of the country; and across the river Thames, terminating upon that ridge of hills whereon runs the great Dover road.'<sup>31</sup>

The extreme case however is that of John Woolfe and James Gandon in the continuation of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, where descriptions of this grounds-and-distance type have become a mere formula which borders on the absurd, applied to almost every building illustrated frequently without reference to topographical reality.<sup>32</sup>

So much for the appeal of such prospects in general: for the house with a view *per se* the consequence would be that it was only in the most absolute cases that an ornamental foreground of any kind was dispensed with entirely. Regarding the question of architectural style and character, there are again two related issues to be addressed. The first is whether these houses exist as a distinct *architectural* type, clearly differentiated in that respect from houses of similar size and status in different types of situation. The short answer appears to be that, initially at least, they did not; and it is indeed observable that, Belle Isle apart, none of the early houses built for a view of mountain scenery in the North of England seems to demonstrate any sort of linkage between its design and its location. Calgarth Hall is a case in point,<sup>33</sup> a formulaic sub-Palladian villa which might be in any rural or semi-rural situation. The other issue concerns the impact of such houses on the landscape itself; and in this context the reaction to them on the part of the picturesque tourists and other connoisseurs of landscape, which in the Lake District was frequently a hostile reaction, can also be considered briefly.<sup>34</sup> The most extended and coherently argued statement of this critical position is to be found in Wordsworth's *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes*, of 1810.<sup>35</sup> Taking his cue from Thomas Gray's description of the vale and village of Grasmere in his *Journal* of 1769 – 'not a single red tile, no flaring Gentleman's house, or garden-walls, break in upon the repose of this little unsuspected paradise'<sup>36</sup> – he commented that 'It was as well for the undisturbed pleasure of the Poet that he had no forebodings of the change which was soon to take place', discussed a number of

examples of ‘The disfigurement which this country has undergone’, and then proceeded to a damning exposition of its causes:

‘... a warping of the natural mind occasioned by a consciousness that, this country being an object of general admiration, every new house would be looked at and commented upon either for approbation or censure. ... The craving for prospect, also ... has rendered it impossible that buildings ... should in most instances be ornamental to the landscape; rising as they do from the summits of naked hills ...’<sup>37</sup>

The changes also had their defenders however, including the anonymous contributor of additional material to the later editions of Thomas West’s influential *Guide to the Lakes* – presumably the Kendal schoolmaster William Cockin, who had been responsible for the second edition, of 1780<sup>38</sup> – who observed in 1796 that,

‘On the banks of Windermere-water, have been lately built, or are now building, a number of elegant villas ... These works of art, most of which are done in stiles suitable to their situations, give an air of great consequence to the country, and, with the surrounding natural beauties, have lately made this neighbourhood ... a place of the greatest resort.’<sup>39</sup>

The implications of this passage will be considered shortly, but first three other factors should be noted. The first is that the negative response could have derived support from the opinions of garden theorists. Thomas Whately expressed some scepticism about the value of views directly from the house, as opposed to from the grounds:

‘The best situation for a house is not that which has the greatest command; a cheerful look-out from the windows is all that the proprietor desires; he is more sensible to the charms of the greater prospects, if he sees them only occasionally, and they do not become insipid by being familiar;’<sup>40</sup>

And William Mason, in *The English Garden*, of 1772, was hostile to prospects of any kind:

‘Ev’n then, perchance, some vain fastidious eye  
Shall rove unmindful of surrounding charms

And ask for Prospect. Stranger! ‘tis not here.  
Go seek it on some garish turret’s height; ...  
Applaud alike, with fashion’d pomp of phrase,  
The good and bad, which, in profusion, there  
That gorgeous vale exhibits. ...’<sup>41</sup>

The second factor is that some at least of the criticism seems to have been fuelled as much by social prejudice as by aesthetic principle, for it was almost always directed at the houses – admittedly the majority – built by newcomers to the district who were not of traditional landowning stock and hardly at all at those of the local gentry: Wordsworth’s comments in particular were aimed explicitly at the activities of ‘settlers’ – ‘Persons, who in Leicestershire or Northamptonshire would probably have built a modest dwelling like those of their sensible neighbours’ – whose houses were contrasted unfavourably with those of the native inhabitants.<sup>42</sup> A pertinent example is once again Belle Isle, where the critical comments largely abated once the property had passed from the hands of the newcomer Thomas English to those of the gentry Curwens.<sup>43</sup> The third is that in any case it would be an oversimplification to assume that every newcomer to a scenic area like the Lake District who built a house there – which almost inevitably would have a view – was bound to be sensitive to Picturesque values. Some of the visitors to the countryside had quite different tastes and interests, and it has been pointed out that the ‘show’ caves of the Peak District were already the scene of a rather tawdry commercialisation by as early as the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>44</sup> This observation applies in particular to the house which according to Wordsworth was the next of its kind in the Lake District after Belle Isle, the notorious creation built on an island in Derwentwater by Joseph Pocklington of Newark in 1778–80 (Fig. 5).<sup>45</sup> A blunt square box situated on the highest point of the island and accompanied by a series of gimcrack follies, this was the example which attracted the most vigorous condemnation of all, Richard Warner for example referring to ‘miserable buildings ... utterly

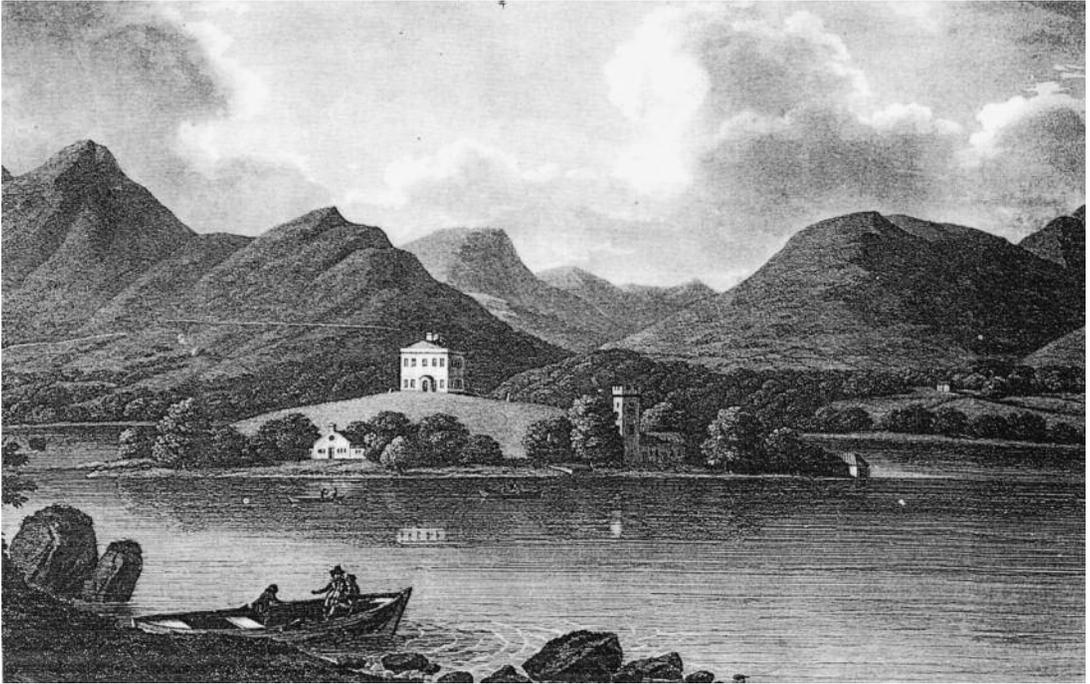


Fig. 5. Pocklington's Island, Derwentwater. *Smith, Views of the Lakes in Cumberland.*

at war with all rational architecture, convenience, and taste ... [destroying] the effect of those scenes of Nature ... which the general voice have pronounced to be beautiful ...',<sup>46</sup> and Wordsworth to 'puerilities' and 'strange pranks'.<sup>47</sup> Evidently Pocklington was not merely indifferent to Picturesque sensibilities but was actively challenging them – witness his habit of whitewashing everything in sight, including an oak tree which he had had divested of its branches and shaped into the form of an obelisk<sup>48</sup> – so the 'paradox'<sup>49</sup> presented by picturesque tourism and its effects is, in this respect at least, perhaps more apparent than real.

To return to the architecture itself: in the first half of the eighteenth century the classical style of these houses would have been justified in terms of the Vitruvian doctrine that a correctly detailed and proportioned classical architecture was itself an authentic embodiment of Nature, and their relative

simplicity would have been an added virtue in relation to the Enlightenment gloss on that tradition. Rudolf Wittkower articulated the proposition as follows:

'Enlightenment ideas centred around the concept of the simplicity and uniformity in Nature, and as a corollary of this one agreed that the laws in Nature are eternally valid and universally intelligible. The ancients had sublimated the essence of Nature in their art and poetry. By imitating them, one imitated the 'natural', objective standards of beauty. ... The stress now lies on simplicity, reasonableness and universal intelligibility. ... Robert Morris [in his *Essay in Defence of Ancient Architecture* of 1728] explained that simplicity brings architecture close to both Nature and the achievements of the ancients.'<sup>50</sup>

That, at one level, was presumably the ideology to which William Cockin subscribed; but in general by the later eighteenth century, under the impact of the empiricist aesthetics of the period,<sup>51</sup> such ideas had

come to be marginalised. But an alternative theory of the physical relationship between architecture and nature, between the house and its setting – what one might call a ‘Picturesque’ ideology – had by the 1770s and 1780s still to be formulated in any detail, and so these houses came into existence in something of an ideological vacuum. To the extent that there was an ideology however, it focused on precisely that visibility which Wordsworth was to condemn: the houses were not intended to be visually neutral and the concept of ‘improvement’ could apply not only to the grounds of houses but to the house itself. This is the essential burden of Cockin’s statement; and the same idea is vividly and amusingly expressed in the frontispiece to John Plaw’s *Rural Architecture* (Fig. 6), which is a distant view of Belle Isle. Plaw explained:

‘The Subject is Taste, accompanying Rural Simplicity, and pointing to one of the most beautiful Scenes this Count[r]y can boast of, viz. The Lake of Winandermere; on the largest Island in which, is built a circular Villa after a Design of the Author’s.’<sup>52</sup>

Or as Professor Malcolm Andrews has commented:

‘the elegantly dressed figure of Taste is introducing Rural Simplicity to the artificial embellishments of the natural landscape ... Rural Simplicity’s inscrutable expression is presumably meant to convey gratification.’<sup>53</sup>

So once again the appropriate definitions and categories are by no means neatly clear-cut, and the ideals and values of the view *from* the house and the view *of* the house are not mutually exclusive.

Movement from this position was to take two quite different forms. On the one hand, the next phase of the story in the Lake District, in the years round 1800, was to be the building of a group of houses which were much more discreet and self-effacing in their relationship with the landscape.<sup>54</sup> On the other, when the major theorists of the Picturesque did turn their attention to the issue of

the house and its setting, from the mid 1790s onwards, it was again the view *of* the house – the house as part of a larger Picturesque composition – rather than the view *from* it, with which they were principally concerned. The best-known image from the aesthetic controversies of the period, the two views of a country house set in contrasting types of parkland, from Richard Payne Knight’s *The Landscape*,<sup>55</sup> makes the point entirely. In his *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, Humphry Repton considered briefly the practicalities, rather than the principles, of views from the house in the context of a discussion of optics;<sup>56</sup> and in his discussion of a house with ‘an interesting view of Bristol, and the river Avon, with its busy scene of shipping’ he included an illuminating passage on the associative qualities of such views:

‘To take advantage of this view, from a house in the country, may appear objectionable to some; but I consider it among the most interesting circumstances belonging to [this] situation ... To the wealthy mechanic, or the more opulent merchant, perhaps the view of a great city may recall ideas of labour, of business, of difficulty, of dangers, which he would wish to forget in the serenity of the country; but the country gentleman, who never visits the city but to participate in its amusements, has very different sensations from the *distant* view of a place which, by its neighbourhood, increases the value and enjoyment of his estate.’<sup>57</sup>

But overall these are exceptions. Sir Uvedale Price, following Mason, showed a certain patronising contempt for prospects and what he called ‘prospect hunters’ – ‘a very numerous tribe’:

‘Let them see but clearly, and see enough, they are content; ... extensive prospects are the most popular of all views, and their respective superiority is generally decided by the number of churches and counties.’<sup>58</sup>

And Payne Knight, in the *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*, developing Whately’s theme, provided a definitive argument against the house

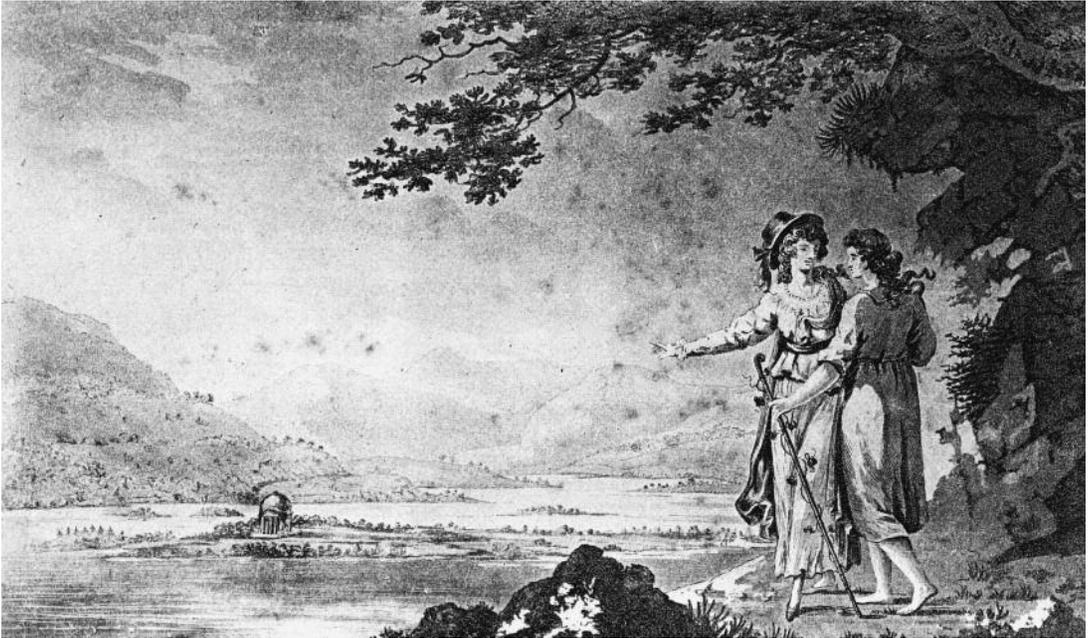


Fig. 6. Belle Isle. *Plaw, Rural Architecture*.

with a view on both practical and aesthetic grounds:

‘In choosing the situation for a house . . . , which is to be a principal feature in a place, more consideration ought to be had of the views towards it, than of those fromwards it: for, consistently with comfort, which ought to be the first object in every dwelling, it very rarely happens that a perfect composition of landscape scenery can be obtained from a door or window; nor does it appear to me particularly desirable that it should be; for few persons ever look for such compositions, or pay much attention to them, while within doors. It is in walks or rides through parks, gardens, or pleasure grounds, that they are attended to and examined, and become subjects of conversation; wherefore the seats, or places of rest, with which such walks and rides are accommodated, are the points of sight, to which the compositions of the scenery ought to be principally adapted. To them, picturesque foregrounds may always be made or preserved, without any loss of comfort or violation of propriety: for that sort of trim neatness, which both require in grounds immediately adjoining a house, is completely misplaced, when employed on the borders of a ride or

walk through a park or plantation. If the house be the principal object or feature of the scene from these points of view, the middle ground will be the properest situation for it; . . . this is also the situation, which considerations of domestic comfort will generally point out; as being the middle degree of elevation, between the too exposed ridges of the hills, and the too secluded recesses of the vallies.’<sup>59</sup>

Clearly, the house with a view in its subsequent history could not derive any ideological underpinnings from this body of theory.

Finally, the pattern of events up to the mid 1790s can be filled out a little by reference to two further examples.<sup>60</sup> The first is an exact contemporary of Pocklington’s residence, but in Craven: Malham Tarn House (Fig. 7), which was built in 1777–80 by Thomas Lister of Gisburn, later first Lord Ribblesdale, to his own design.<sup>61</sup> It is located in a part of that district which had an established place in the Picturesque tourists’ itinerary,<sup>62</sup> its attractions



Fig. 7. Malham Tarn and Malham Tarn House. *Peter Leach.*

including the upland tarn which the house overlooks: the best view of the tarn was considered to be from the opposite side but the house itself, framed by new plantations, was said to be ‘beautifully situated’.<sup>63</sup> In this case the functions of these houses when they were not the principal or only residences of their owners can be explored briefly. A summer residence ‘intended for ... the luxurious enjoyment of every species of rural Amusement and contemplative Recreation’,<sup>64</sup> it also served as a shooting and fishing lodge, the tarn being famed for its trout and its wildfowl as well as for its visual qualities;<sup>65</sup> and when in 1791–2 Lister raised the water level of the tarn by constructing a small dam his motive appears to have been to improve both the fishing and the view. His uncle Nathaniel remarked to the agent at Malham Tarn, the Rev. Thomas Collins, that

‘... the rising Lake too raised my Spirits, and the Expanse of water expanded my Ideas to a pleasurable Length. Its effect to the Site of the Mansion House must be charming ...’<sup>66</sup>

and to Lister himself that

‘... your Extension of the old, venerable Lake gives me real Pleasure ... let him be quiet and he will reward all Beholders with a noble Display of Beauty. I can conceive Mr Collins to be as happy in the rising of that grand & valuable Repository of the finny Race as if he was going to Episcopize.’<sup>67</sup>

The other example is Rydal Hall (Figs. 8 and 9), back in the Lake District a few miles up the Rothay valley from the head of Windermere. This was an existing house rather than a new one, the seat of the Fleming family, which was modernised by the provision of a new front range commanding the view down the valley towards the lake.<sup>68</sup> The architect, it seems, was again John Carr, as designs for the front broadly as built appear to be in his hand;<sup>69</sup> but the date of the work has been the source of some confusion which can however be rectified. It is stated in a footnote added to the 1796 edition of West’s *Guide to the Lakes* that the new front had then been executed ‘lately’,<sup>70</sup> and there appears to be no reason

Fig. 8. Rydal Hall.  
*Peter Leach.*



Fig. 9. Rydal Hall and Rydal Water. *T. Rose,*  
*Westmorland, Cumberland, Durham and*  
*Northumberland, Illustrated, London, 1832.*



to doubt the accuracy of that statement; but by then the scheme had evidently been under consideration for a number of years. A plan and ‘particulars’ of alterations to be made at Rydal Hall had been sent to Sir Michael le Fleming from Carlisle over a decade earlier, in 1783;<sup>71</sup> and according to Nicholson and Burn’s *History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland*, of 1777, the house was already by that date ‘intended by the present owner to be rebuilt’<sup>72</sup> – which would have made it one of the first of all the Lakeland houses with a view, preceded only by Belle Isle. This course of events also explains the existence of two designs in a different, cruder hand,<sup>73</sup> alongside those by Carr. Carr’s will date from the 1790s – when he also worked for the Curwens at Belle Isle<sup>74</sup> – while the others, a plan and elevation, are presumably what was sent in 1783.

But the real significance of Sir Michael le Fleming’s improvements, which remained conspicuously exempt from any criticism, lies in the matter of social status; for the Flemings were the leading local gentry family, resident in the area for many generations.<sup>75</sup> The project indeed was prefigured by that of a seventeenth-century forbear, Sir Daniel Fleming, who in 1668–9 had built a summer house in the grounds.<sup>76</sup> Very small and completely plain, it is nevertheless a remarkable monument on account of its siting, facing a waterfall the view of which is framed by its window; and this has led some writers to credit Sir Daniel with a precocious proto-Picturesque sensitivity to wild landscape a whole century before the arrival of the first tourists in the district, and to see the Flemings as providing the locality with a ‘continuous history of high aesthetic consciousness’.<sup>77</sup> With the remodelling of Rydal Hall, an ancient gentry house in an authentically Salvatorean location at the heart of the Lake District, the house with a view in a mountain landscape had indisputably arrived.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## NOTES

- 1 W. Wordsworth, 'Kendal and Windermere Railway', Letter to the Editor of the *Morning Post*, 9 December 1844, in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen & J. W. Smyser (Oxford, 1974), III, p.342. See also note 9 below.
- 2 J. S. Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (London, 1990), pp.26–8, 52–6, 77–8, 98, 106.
- 3 R. Morris, *An Essay upon Harmony* (London, 1739), pp.15–23, 33–5.
- 4 See e.g. C. Hussey, *The Picturesque* (London, 1967), pp.83–127; S. Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London, 2004), pp.477–90.
- 5 See e.g. M. Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (Aldershot, 1989), p.67; I. Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.152–9.
- 6 A. Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England* (second edn., London, 1771), III, pp.138–43.
- 7 J. Murdoch (ed.), *The Discovery of the Lake District: a Northern Arcadia and its Uses* (London, 1984), pp.31–2; H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (third edn., New Haven and London, 1995), p.225; B. Wrang, *The Life and Works of John Carr of York*, ed. G. Worsley (York, 2000), p.113.
- 8 Investigation has been largely confined to the Lake District, the principal account being in Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, pp.28–38, 83–4, 101–31. Others, e.g. Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, pp.161–4, 173–4, 182–4, and Ousby, *Englishman's England*, pp.159–67, have tended to focus on just one aspect of the topic, the contemporary reaction to the houses. The wider subject of the 'landscape' in general as a cultural construct has of course been extensively studied, see e.g. J. Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730–1840* (Cambridge 1972); A. Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740–1860* (London, 1987); D. Cosgrove & S. Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge, 1988); S. Copley & P. Garside (eds.), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge, 1994); Schama, *Landscape and Memory*.
- 9 W. Hutchinson, *An Excursion to the Lakes in Westmorland and Cumberland, with a Tour through Part of the Northern Counties, in the Years 1773 and 1774* (London, 1776), pp.187–8; T. West, *A Guide to the Lakes in Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire* (fourth edn., London 1789), p.62; R. Warner, *A Tour thro' the Northern Counties of England & the borders of Scotland* (Bath, 1802), p.115; Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, III, p.342. The designs were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1775 (A. Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: a Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work* (London, 1906), III, p.162) and published in J. Plaw, *Rural Architecture* (London, 1785), plates 25–30. See also E. W. Hodge, 'Belle Isle, Westmorland', *Country Life*, 88 (1940), pp.98–101, 120–24; G. Beard, *The Greater House in Cumbria* (Kendal, 1978), pp.25–7; Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, pp.28–9.
- 10 For the Tor de' Schiavi see J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1981), pp.424–6, figs. 287–8. According to Wordsworth, English had travelled in Italy (Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, III, p.342), but the actual source for the design was probably not so much the ruinous monument itself as a seventeenth-century notional reconstruction of it by Giovanni Battista Montano (G. B. Montano, *Architettura con Diversi Ornamenti* (Rome, 1684), II, pl. 13), in which the arrangement of the steps into the portico is similar to that adopted at Belle Isle but quite different from that proposed in modern reconstructions.
- 11 R. Hewlings, 'Chiswick House and Gardens: Appearance and Meaning', in T. Barnard and J. Clark (eds.), *Lord Burlington: Architecture, Art and Life* (London, 1995), pp.106–8.
- 12 Ousby, *Englishman's England*, pp.161–2. Strictly speaking, in Claudean terms the house would represent a cross between the miniature Pantheon featured in the *Landscape with Egeria Mourning over Numa* (1669) and the *Coast View of Delos with Aeneas* (1672), and a type of circular rustic building of which he made repeated use, e.g. in the *Landscape with a River* (1637) (M. Rothlisberger, *Claude Lorraine: the Paintings* (London, 1961), II, figs. 66, 284, 292).
- 13 Hodge, 'Belle Isle', p.101; Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, p.164.

- 14 See e.g. E. W. Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1965), especially pp.167–200; Hussey, *Picturesque*, pp.18–50; Barrell, *Idea of Landscape*, pp.1–63; Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, pp.24–66.
- 15 T. D. Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (third edn., Leeds and London 1878), I, pp.93–4 and pedigree opposite p.95; Colvin, *Dictionary*, p.224; Wragg, *John Carr*, p.150. The house was begun by Richard Roundell, who inherited in 1770 and died in 1772, and was completed by his brother and successor the Rev. William Roundell. It was demolished in 1928.
- 16 Whitaker, *Craven*, I, pp.93–4.
- 17 T. Gray, *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. P. Toynbee & L. Whibley (Oxford, 1935), III, p.1095.
- 18 See Gray, *Correspondence*, III, p.1095; West, *Guide* (third edn., London, 1784), pp.117–8; W. Hutchinson, *The History of the County of Cumberland* (Carlisle, 1794), II, p.234.
- 19 Hutchinson, *Excursion*, p.188; West, *Guide* (third edn., London, 1784), pp.59–60; Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, III, p.342. See also P. Bicknell & R. Woof, *The Discovery of the Lake District 1750–1810: a Context for Wordsworth* (Grasmere, 1982), pp.25–7.
- 20 Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, pp.28, 32.
- 21 Beard, *Greater House in Cumbria*, p.26; Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, p.29.
- 22 Cumbria Record Office, Whitehaven, Curwen Papers, D/Cu/Estate Plans 10, Map of ground on the west shore of Windermere, c.1802, with J. C. Curwen's comments added.
- 23 West, *Guide* (fourth edn., London, 1789), p.66; Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, p.32.
- 24 H. Walpole, 'Essay on Modern Gardening', in *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, ed. J. Dallaway (London, 1828), IV, p.264.
- 25 J. Addison, 'Essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination', in *The Spectator*, ed G. G. Smith (London, 1907), III part 2, pp.67–8 (No. 414, 25 June 1712).
- 26 See e.g. Manwaring, *Italian Landscape*, pp.121–66.
- 27 T. Whately, *Observations on Modern Gardening* (London, 1770), p 256.
- 28 T. Whately, *Observations*, pp.158–9, 176, 182.
- 29 Printed in C. P. Barbier, *William Gilpin: his Drawings, Teaching and Theory of the Picturesque* (Oxford, 1963), pp.175–6.
- 30 R. & J. Adam, *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam*, ed. R. Oresko (London, 1975), p.52.
- 31 J. Paine, *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Houses* (London, 1783), II, p.8.
- 32 J. Woolfe & J. Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, IV and V (London, 1767 and 1771), *passim*.
- 33 See note 23 above.
- 34 For further discussion of this topic see Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, pp.161–4, 173–4, 182–4, and Ousby, *Englishman's England*, pp.159–67.
- 35 See W. Wordsworth, *A Guide through the District of the Lakes* (fifth edn., Kendal, 1835), in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen & J. W. Smyser (Oxford, 1974), II, pp.151–259. Wordsworth's text first appeared, in 1810, as an anonymous introduction to the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views in Cumberland and Westmorland*. It was republished as a free-standing work – the *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes ... Third Edition* – in 1820, and then as the *Guide* – the 'fifth edition' – in 1835.
- 36 Gray, *Correspondence*, III, p.1099.
- 37 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, II, pp.208–11.
- 38 Bicknell & Woof, *Discovery of the Lake District*, p.23; Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, p.15.
- 39 West, *Guide* (sixth edn., London, 1796), p.70.
- 40 Whately, *Observations*, p.159.
- 41 W. Mason, *The English Garden: a Poem in Four Books* (second edn., York, 1783), I, p.7.
- 42 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, II, pp.208, 211. But he was prepared to criticize the tree-planting schemes of established landowners (*Prose Works*, II, p.210).
- 43 William Hutchinson's often-quoted condemnation of the house as a 'Dutch Burgomaster's palace' (Hutchinson, *Excursion*, p.188) was apparently written before it had been started. Later criticisms included those of William Gell in 1797 (*A Tour in the Lakes Made in 1797 by William Gell*, ed. W. Rollison (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1968), p.11) and of Dorothy Wordsworth in 1802 (*The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. M. Moorman (Oxford, 1971), p.133), but the latter in particular was hardly a representative tourist.
- 44 Ousby, *Englishman's England*, pp.131–7.
- 45 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, III, p.342. For Pocklington's buildings in the Lake District see A. Taylor, 'Compulsive Lakeland Builder: Joseph Pocklington', *Country Life*, 178 (1985), pp.614–7.

- 46 Warner, *Tour*, pp.98–9.
- 47 Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, II, p.209; III, p.342.
- 48 Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, pp.190–91.
- 49 Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, p.3.
- 50 R. Wittkower, *Palladio and English Palladianism* (London, 1974), p.181.
- 51 See e.g. M. C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present* (Alabama, 1975), pp.166–205.
- 52 Plaw, *Rural Architecture*, p.3.
- 53 Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, p.4.
- 54 See Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, pp.36–8.
- 55 R. Payne Knight, *The Landscape: a Didactic Poem* (second edition, London, 1975), plates 1 and 2.
- 56 H. Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (London, 1803), in *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the late Humphry Repton, Esq.*, ed. J. C. Loudon (London, 1840), pp.149–51.
- 57 *Landscape Gardening of Humphry Repton*, p.299.
- 58 U. Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* (London, 1810), I, p.166.
- 59 R. Payne Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (fourth edn., London, 1808), pp.225–7.
- 60 Other examples of the period in the Lake District include two more in the Derwentwater area built by Joseph Pocklington, Finkle Street House at Portinscale (1785–8) and Barrow Cascade House (begun 1787) (Taylor, ‘Compulsive Lakeland Builder’); and two on Windermere, Brathay Hall (1794–6) and Storrs Hall (c.1795–7) (Beard, *Greater House in Cumbria*, pp.31–3; Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, pp.30–37; I. Goodall, ‘Storrs Hall, Windermere’, *The Georgian Group Journal*, 15 (2006), pp.159–214).
- 61 Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds, Ribblesdale MSS., MD335/51/5–8, Estate Accounts 1776–81, MD335/80 and MD335/95, Correspondence 1777–80; T. Hurtley, *A Concise Account of some Natural Curiosities in the Environs of Malham* (London, 1786), pp.50–51. Hurtley recorded that the house was ‘said’ to have been designed by Lister, and the attribution is confirmed by rough designs for it drawn on the back of two items of his private correspondence, of January and March 1777 (MD335/80/ii, MD335/95/ii). See also National Trust Vernacular Buildings Survey, Report on Malham Tarn House, 1988.
- 62 Gray, *Correspondence*, III, pp.1104–10; Ousby, *Englishman’s England*, pp.138–43.
- 63 Hurtley, *Malham*, pp.43–7, 50.
- 64 Hurtley, *Malham*, p.50.
- 65 Hurtley, *Malham*, pp.51–6; J. Byng, *The Torrington Diaries*, ed. C. B. Andrews, III (London, 1936), pp.99–100.
- 66 Ribblesdale MSS. MD335/82. Nathaniel Lister to the Rev. Thomas Collins, 16 January 1792. See also A. Raistrick, *Old Yorkshire Dales* (Newton Abbot, 1967), pp.125–38.
- 67 Ribblesdale MSS. MD335/82. Nathaniel Lister to Thomas Lister, 11 October 1791.
- 68 Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, pp.83–4. There is a tenuous connection between this house and the previous one, in that Thomas Lister’s brother-in-law, John Parker of Browsholme Hall near Clitheroe, was Sir Michael le Fleming’s cousin (S. S. Jervis, *Browsholme Hall* (Derby, 1992), p.21).
- 69 Cumbria Record Office, Kendal, Rydal Hall MSS., Designs for the South Front of Rydal Hall; Wragg, *John Carr*, p.236.
- 70 West, *Guide* (sixth edn., London, 1796), p.79.
- 71 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of S. H. le Fleming Esq., of Rydal Hall* (London, 1890), p.361, covering letter, Joseph Senhouse to Sir Michael le Fleming, 26 April 1783. The letter is not amongst the Rydal Hall MSS. at the Cumbria Record Office. In Wragg, *John Carr*, it is assumed that the drawings sent in 1783 were those attributed to Carr, and the work is dated to that year, the evidence of West’s *Guide* being overlooked. It is also suggested that the Joseph Senhouse who sent the drawings was Joseph Senhouse of Calder Abbey near Egremont who was to employ Carr in 1785, but that is unlikely as the drawings were sent from the other end of the county.
- 72 J. Nicholson & R. Burn, *The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland* (London, 1777), I, p.174.
- 73 Rydal Hall MSS., Designs for Rydal Hall.
- 74 Wragg, *John Carr*, p.113.
- 75 B. Burke, *Peerage Baronetage and Knightage* (89th edn., London, 1931), pp.979–80.
- 76 B. Tyson, ‘The Rydal Grotto, Westmorland, 1668–9’, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, New Series 24 (1980), pp.49–56.
- 77 Tyson, ‘Rydal Grotto’, p.55; Murdoch, *Discovery of the Lake District*, p.83.