



THE  
GEORGIAN  
GROUP

---

Philip Heath, 'Sealwood Cottage, Derbyshire:  
An Early Cottage Orné by "Dr. Syntax"',  
*The Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. XVIII,  
2010, pp. 105–114

# SEALWOOD COTTAGE, DERBYSHIRE: AN EARLY COTTAGE ORNÉ BY ‘DR SYNTAX’

PHILIP HEATH

*Sealwood Cottage, at Linton in Derbyshire, is a Picturesque cottage of c.1774, one of the earliest of its kind. It has been newly identified as a design by Georgian hack-writer and satirist William Combe (1742–1823) for the Revd Thomas Gresley of Netherseal (1734–1785). Combe described his proposals for the cottage in a letter to Gresley written in October 1773. Despite alteration, its original form remains clearly legible today. The building has recently been repaired and brought back into residential use following long neglect.*

The workaday south Derbyshire village of Linton seems an unlikely place to be associated with the flamboyant figure of William Combe, most remembered for his humorous poem *The Tour of*

*Doctor Syntax, in search of the Picturesque* (1812), illustrated with thirty plates by Thomas Rowlandson. This is lowland Derbyshire, far more like the adjacent parts of Leicestershire than the Peak District. Linton’s ordinary main street offers nothing remarkable, and the pitted and unadopted road named ‘Colliery Lane’ leading off the south east end raises no hopes. After a couple of sharp turns, however, the reason for a visit becomes apparent when Sealwood Cottage is reached via a short, private drive.

Much extended now, the original part of the building sports a pyramidal roof, with lean-to roofs of approximate semi-pyramidal form to each flank (Fig. 1). The walls are built of re-used timber framing, with brick infill panels. A couple of pointed

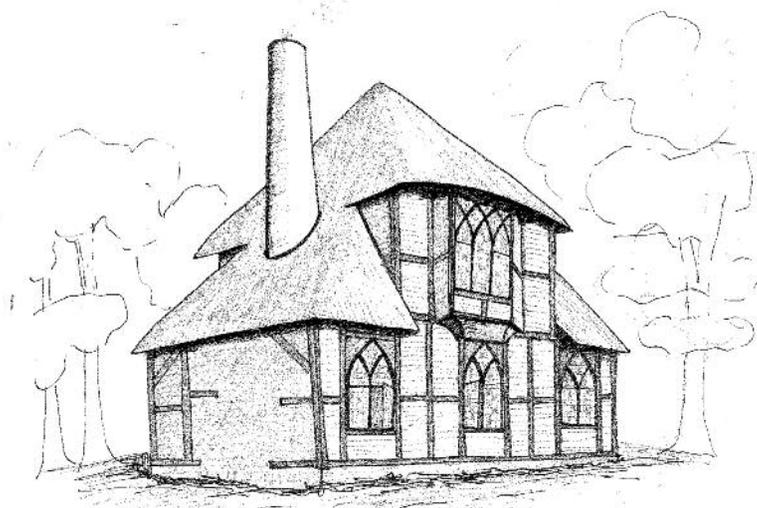


Fig. 1. Sealwood Cottage as first built, reconstruction drawing. *Author.*



Fig. 2. Sealwood Cottage before restoration. *Author.*

windows, with original sliding shutters, remain to indicate the original style of fenestration, mostly renewed and altered. The entrance door is pointed too, giving, when open, a tantalising view of the winding staircase within. The original woodland setting is gone, but the prospect from the building is still rural, facing downhill towards the neighbouring village of Overseal.

Until 2004 this remarkable cottage had completely escaped the notice of listing inspectors, architectural historians and District Council conservation staff alike. For several decades it had been left to moulder away quietly. The original and most important part of the building had been unoccupied since at least the 1940s, and was fast approaching the point where advanced dereliction crosses the bridge to ruin (Fig. 2). It was only a change of ownership, accompanied by extension proposals, that brought it under the spotlight and resulted in the District Council seeking a spot-listing. After much deliberation about its future, including serious but

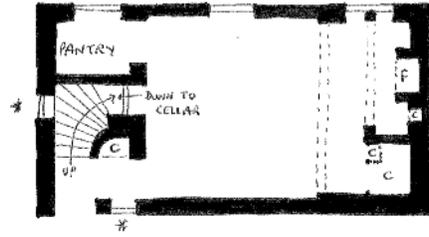
abortive interest from the Landmark Trust, the newly-listed building was repaired and extended in 2008–9 by Richard Kirkland of Alrewas for the current owner-occupiers, Mr J. and Mrs E. Goodall.

Research was carried out by Mathew Hill (formerly of David Lewis and Associates, Architects) and the writer to understand the Grade II listed building and inform the repair process. It resulted in the satisfying and completely unforeseeable discovery that the designer of this eccentric structure was none other than William Combe, famed hack writer and satirist. Combe’s interest in the Picturesque is well-known, but his comprehensive biography by the American Professor Harlan Hamilton<sup>1</sup> gives no hint of any direct involvement with Picturesque architecture, and it seems that Sealwood Cottage is the only building known to have been designed by him. Moreover, a copy of a letter by Combe explaining the design still survives, offering a detailed insight into the ideas that shaped it.

DESCRIPTION

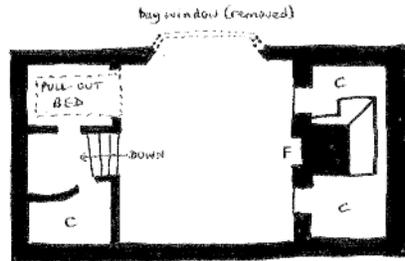
Sealwood Cottage was originally a retreat built for occasional use by the Revd Thomas Gresley of Netherseal (1734–85). It stood on the southern edge of a 160-acre woodland on his estate, felled by degrees within a few decades after 1880,<sup>2</sup> known as the Great Wood or Seal Wood. A deep recess was cut into the edge of the wood to frame views to and from the new cottage, which commanded a pleasing view over fields towards Overseal.

Originally the cottage was very small. Downstairs there was a large living kitchen with three pointed doorways at one end serving the entrance lobby, a small pantry and a small cellar under the pantry. Upstairs was a handsome prospect room or parlour, which still has a genuine 1770s pull-out bed frame (Fig. 3). A deliberate contrast was made between the character of the two main rooms. The lower room is limewashed over the fair-face pointed brickwork, with exposed ceiling beams and joists and a rustic inglenook fireplace. The three pointed doorways at the opposite end of the room (Fig. 4) seem to echo the arrangement of buttery/kitchen/pantry doorways as found in important mediaeval houses, but perhaps this was accident rather than design.



GROUND FLOOR

\* original windows & shutters.  
C cupboards  
F fireplaces



FIRST FLOOR

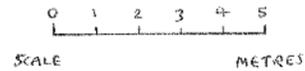


Fig. 3. Ground and first floor plans. *Author.*



Fig. 4. Doorways in the lower room. *Author.*

The upper room is refined, with plastered walls, a narrow plaster frieze, dado, slate chimneypiece and pyramidal ceiling. The large window originally projected slightly in a bay. Part of the dado doubles up as the head of the pull-out bed. The floor was laid in a careful manner occasionally seen by the writer in other Georgian buildings, consisting of softwood boards tightly joined edge to edge with iron dowels, and with thin metal tongues joining the lengths of boarding end to end. The approach to the upper room is dramatic, via a steep winding stair from the entrance lobby, emphasised by a curved wall on one side.

The building has been extended three times. The first addition, probably within a few decades of the initial construction, was of a single storey kitchen or scullery under a lean-to roof on the elevation that formerly faced the wood. Then, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the rear extension was subsumed into a larger, two storey extension. By this time, the house was clearly intended for full-time occupation by a tenant, though it is possible that the owning family still reserved the original section for their own use.

About a hundred years ago, the original part of the building was shorn of some of its distinctive detailing by replacement of the thatch with tiles, removal of the first floor bay window and replacement of all the front windows to a new and simple design. Apart from the impact of window replacement, the interior was unaltered. In the middle of the twentieth century the circular chimney was removed and further windows were replaced in the nineteenth-century part. The building was not altered again until its recent repair and extension by the current owners.

In its original form, with thatched roof, pointed leaded windows and massive circular chimney, set in the edge of a large wood, Sealwood Cottage must have been a dramatic spectacle. Even today, with some of its magic dispelled, it stands out immediately as something out of the ordinary.

## THE CLIENT

The Revd Thomas Gresley of Netherseal would have been about forty years old when Sealwood Cottage was built, probably in 1774. His life was 'that of a country rector in easy circumstances'.<sup>3</sup> Born in Wirksworth, he was sent to Oxford in 1751 when just under seventeen and went to live at Netherseal Hall after failing to graduate in 1755. He became the Rector of Seal, i.e. the neighbouring townships of Netherseal and Overseal, in 1759 and lived the typical life of a country squarson, indulging his tastes for riding, boating and shooting.<sup>4</sup> Netherseal Hall, demolished in 1933, was a seventeenth century house, remodelled several times. The Gresleys had bought it around 1620 and it was probably the Revd Thomas who was responsible for alterations and additions to the house in the late-eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> A pleasant rural drive via quiet lanes linked it to Sealwood Cottage, about a mile and a half away to the north. Today the cottage is approached from the opposite direction, via a track made when the wood was felled.

Thomas Gresley married Elizabeth Vincent in 1757 and at last graduated from Oxford the year after. After bearing eight children, Elizabeth died in 1769. Thomas Gresley remained a widower until his second marriage in 1777 to Elizabeth Pycroft, widowed sister of Joseph Wilkes (1732/3–1805), the famous cheese-factor, agricultural improver, banker, and founder of the Smithfield Club.<sup>6</sup> In 1778, Gresley went to live at Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, where he stayed for the rest of his life. He died at Bath in April 1785, following a fit of apoplexy. His association with Sealwood Cottage was therefore a short one, though the relatives who succeeded him at Netherseal Hall may have continued to make use of it.

A couple of sketches in the Gresley archive at the Derbyshire Record Office seem to show prototype ideas for Sealwood Cottage, one in a plain classical style, and the other in a picturesque style.<sup>7</sup> But, as we shall see, the cottage as built was far more original and idiosyncratic than either of these.

## COMBE'S DESIGN

William Combe's authorship of Sealwood Cottage is established by a nineteenth century copy of a letter written by him to Thomas Gresley in October 1773, signed 'Wm. Combes'.<sup>8</sup> With the letter, Combe encloses a 'rough miniature sketch of a Plan & Elevations of a Cottage', sadly not known to survive. The picturesque principles of the design are explained and Combe refers to the cottage as a proposed ornament on the edge of a wood, for Gresley's own occasional use.

How can we be sure that this William Combes is the same person as the elusive author of 'Dr Syntax'? The date, the language, and the shared, moderate views on principles of the Picturesque seem evidence enough. Fortunately, for the doubtful, more conclusive proof may be offered. Combes' letter is addressed from 'Evesham', and he refers to a promise made to Gresley at Worcester some time previously. The letter also suggests that Combes had inspected the site personally at some point.

Professor Hamilton's biography confirms that Combe spelt his name Combes until middle life, and that he was indeed living in Evesham in 1773. In fact this was apparently the only period of his life when he lived in that vicinity. The reference to Worcester in the letter is significant also, as Combe was given his first editorial assignment there in the summer of 1773, in the employment of Robert Berkeley of Spetchley Park.<sup>9</sup> Sir Nigel Gresley, sixth Baronet (1725/6 – 1787) of Drakelow Hall, about seven miles from Netherseal, moved to Worcester in 1765, which would easily explain how Thomas Gresley came to meet Combe there.<sup>10</sup> Drakelow Hall, demolished in 1934, was the principal seat of the Gresley family, of which the Netherseal Gresleys were a cadet branch.

Combe makes suggestions about the different treatments of the two main elevations in tune with the setting of the building:

'On the Wood Front there cannot be too much Ivy; if it is entirely covered with it the better. – This ornament is highly natural, and by encreasing the

gloom of the Entrance will heighten the pleasure of the surprise which is to succeed from the opposite Windows. – If a Passion flower also were suffered to creep up the Wall on the side of the Door, the Variety wo<sup>d</sup> be encreased; without violating the character of the Building. – The Front which is toward the open Country, sho<sup>d</sup> I think be quite free from Ivy & well whiten'd. This you will do from a Principal of Gratitude; for as the Country affords you so charming a Prospect, you are bound to make some returns for the Favour by adding to the Objects which adorn it.

'As you propose to plant on each side of your Cottage by way of Façade, I wo<sup>d</sup> recommend as much Irregularity in the Outline, as the Situation, & the Objects of ye Prospect will admit.

'This Plantation sho<sup>d</sup> consist of Trees natural to the Wood, thickened with bushes without any intermixture of flowering shrubs, but the Honey Suckle & the Rose, which, notwithstanding they are admitted into the Gardens of the Great, are natural to the dwellings of the Shepherd and the Peasant. – In short, I cry out with Shakespeare, – Nature! – thou art my Goddess!

'And Pope has well expressed himself to the same purpose.

To build, to plant, whatever you intend,  
To rear the column or the Arch to bend;  
To swell the Terras, or to sink the Grot,  
In all, let Nature never be forgot.<sup>21</sup>

Combe writes with the language of an artist and writer rather than an architect. The setting and atmospheric qualities of the design are foremost and the tedious mechanics of its construction are not enlarged upon. Combe said that his sketch was intended only to give 'a general idea', 'without any particular scale, as its Dimensions must depend upon your Materials'. He did, however, offer to take account of any comments Gresley wished to make, prior to producing 'a compleat & scientific Design of the whole'.

Whether Gresley took up this offer or not is unknown, nor do we know whether Combe himself intended to produce the 'compleat and scientific

Design'; he is not known to have had any training or experience in such matters. The manner in which the main chimney rested its enormous weight on two overstressed timber beams, with nothing underneath them, was scarcely 'scientific' and ultimately led to its removal. Nevertheless, according to the Revd J. M. Gresley's nineteenth century notes, 'With a few alterations the cottage in Seale Wood was built according to the plan and elevation that accompanied Mr Combes letter. The vista in front of it was probably cut out of the wood at this time'.

The cottage as it now stands does indeed correspond with comments in Combe's letter. The front to the wood was blank except for the entrance door and a small window adjacent to it, no doubt to provide a blank canvas for the expected mantle of ivy. The door is irregularly placed, at one end of this elevation, explained by Combe as follows:

'I was oblig'd to place the door in the Wood-Front, as you see it, in order to get room for a Stair-case with<sup>l</sup> breaking in upon the Proportion of the Parlour: tho' in my opinion this Irregularity will have its Effect, in adding to the Grotesque appearance of the Building'.

Combe also mentions the prominent chimney. He observes that it may appear too high, but adds that 'this kind of Construction is necessary to all thatch'd Buildings, which are liable to fire where the Chimneys are not lofty.'

Combe's recommendation that ivy should be allowed to smother the wood front was probably acted upon. During the recent repairs, the plaster was stripped in the early nineteenth century extension on this side. The present author observed ancient ivy rootlets still adhered tightly to the original outside wall, even though a lean to roof had been built over the wall about 200 years ago, early in the life of the building.

#### WILLIAM COMBE AND THE PICTURESQUE

Combe's contribution to Sealwood Cottage adds yet another facet to Professor Hamilton's life story of this absorbing Georgian character and serves as a rare memorial to him.

Combe aspired to an aristocratic lifestyle.<sup>12</sup> He concealed the circumstances of his childhood and cultivated an aura of mystery for himself. He rarely put his name to his work; to acknowledge that writing was necessary to earn a living would harm his reputation as a free-spirited dilettante of independent means. Instead, he would insert his name as 'William Combe, Esq.' in the lists of illustrious subscribers to books he had written. He was a shameless fabricator of anecdotes, portraying himself as a society figure and 'making himself a party to every important action', whether in truth he was or not. Yet despite his vanity Combe was a popular man, and his company was much sought. He was sparkling company, amiable, polished, witty and intelligent, and for almost half a century was perhaps the most productive and best-paid hackwriter in the trade. Had vanity not prevented his name from being attached to his work, he would be remembered as a significant literary figure.

In reality his father Robert Combes was a London ironmonger of Wood Street, off Cheapside. Young William's background was prosperous enough, but he was middle class. He did, however, enjoy the privilege of being sent to Eton, which enabled him to give the impression of a wealthier background later in his life. It was more or less the only fact of his early life that he chose to broadcast. The illusion of wealth was particularly promoted by substantial legacies inherited from his father and godfather in the 1760s. Later in life it was generally believed that he continued his education at Oxford, but this was untrue.

Combe's work for Thomas Gresley in 1773 came at the end of several years of obscurity when his whereabouts was unknown even to his closest

friends. With his inheritance and financial resources quickly exhausted, Combe had been to France, apparently followed by a spell in the British Army. He hoped to improve his financial situation by his marriage in 1776 to Maria Foster, the discarded mistress of Viscount Beauchamp, son of the Earl of Hertford. Combe had considered the Hertfords as friends, but the marriage arrangement was highly ambiguous and the expected annuity from the Hertfords never materialised. Combe, in his fury, wrote his first successful work ‘The Diaboliad’ (1777), satirising London society and the Hertfords. The marriage was unsuccessful and the insane Maria Combe was locked away for decades in Stephen Casey’s madhouse at Plaistow, eventually dying in 1813 or ‘14. In 1788 Combe became a pamphleteer for the Pitt government in response to the Regency crisis, with a £200 salary.

Despite his ability to attract a good income as a writer, Combe’s outgoings exceeded his resources. He was to spend much of his adult life in the King’s Bench prison for debt, but this proved no check to his productivity. He was able to afford accommodation there where he could work ‘in literary ease’<sup>33</sup>, and for part of his imprisonment he was able to live ‘within the Rules’, i.e. within a prescribed area outside the prison walls. During a period of living within the Rules, Combe was editor of *The Times*, but this came to an end in 1808 when his regular violation of the Rules led to his confinement back inside the walls.

Sealwood Cottage and Combe’s explanation of it give us an insight into William Combe’s personal views on the Picturesque, hitherto known only through his satire of other proponents of the style (notably Revd William Gilpin), or though the medium of Dr Syntax, whose views could have been coloured by the author to make them more entertaining.

Combe was well versed in landscape gardening and the picturesque style. He had visited Uvedale Price at Foxley, Herefordshire, and left following an insulting insinuation by Price that he was responsible for a theft there. In 1794–5 he edited Humphry

Repton’s *Letter to Uvedale Price and Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*<sup>34</sup>. Above all he is still most remembered for his *Tour of Dr Syntax, in Search of the Picturesque* (1812), in which the downtrodden Dr Syntax temporarily leaves his life as a poorly paid curate, scolded husband and schoolteacher to seek out picturesque scenery. He sets out on an adventure with his horse, Grizzle, the ultimate object being then to write about the tour and profit from its publication, as ‘Dr Pompous’ (i.e. Gilpin) has done. All ends well when, after his return, he is offered a living with £400 a year.

Dr Syntax’s attack on the absurdities of Picturesque theory was directed at the body of people who considered that the visible partnership of mankind and nature, seen at work in the countryside everywhere, could never be rough or stylised enough to satisfy the picturesque yearning; they believed that a substantial amount of self-conscious intervention was necessary to bring out and exaggerate its picturesque qualities. Dr Syntax, by contrast, dislikes art that is too neat and trim, but considers that gentle management and ornament of an unaffected natural scene is picturesque enough:

‘For, to say truth, I don’t inherit  
This self-same *picturesquish* spirit  
That looks to nought but what is rough,  
And ne’er thinks Nature coarse enough’

For a man whose reputation in life relied heavily on exaggeration and fabricated tales or, at best, obfuscation of the truth, Combe’s views on the Picturesque were far less artificial and more moderate than those of Gilpin and his followers. The views of Dr Syntax can now be shown to reflect Combe’s own views, as one would expect, because they are enlarged upon in the letter he wrote to Gresley in 1773, many years before Dr Syntax was invented:

‘... among the variety of Dresses which Art, Luxury & Taste have us’d to adorn Nature, I infinitely prefer the ornamented Farm. It is superior either to the Park or

Garden. – It possesses a simplicity & variety of character superior to both; It has more to do with nature than either – I am now considering a Farm merely as it produces a great Variety of Embellishments natural to the rural scene. – Among these a Cottage has always been a Favourite, & where it is built & dispos'd in character, is more pleasing, because it is more natural that (sic) the most costly Temples of Greece, when they are erected to grace the Verdure of an English Lawn. – Nay, an Oxstall, an Haystack, a Dove-cote, an Hovel, a Gate, or even a Stile in particular Situations, produce a most agreeable Variety in the Picture or Landscape.'

All ornamental buildings, Combe continues, should have a real or apparent use:

'A Building which is plac'd at the end of an Avenue, or in any other situation, merely to be seen & without any other Intention, than that the eye may have something to rest upon, or as a Contrast to the objects around it, produces but half its effect. When Utility & Sentiment are not consider'd, the most expensive Objects of Ornament, are only seen, to be forgotten.

'A Column is beheld with pleasure by the Traveller, as it diversifies & enriches the scene; but when he knows that it was erected to perpetuate the Virtues of the Warrior or the Patriot, new & higher Satisfactions arise in his mind as he beholds it. –

'An Urn, in a bushy Dell, or in an open Grove, is an Object which gives an agreeable variety to the scene around it: and if it is of a sepulchral Form, will give a pleasing melancholy to the Mind at the recollection of those solemn Purposes to which Urns were applied in times of Antiquity. – But when we are told that it is sacred to departed Friendship, or that it is plac'd there as the memorial which weeping Affection has rais'd to Beauty now no more, we are doubly affected. – we approach it with a painful pleasure; – we are dispos'd to mourn beside it.'

The character of ornamental buildings must be derived from their situation as well as form:

'A Grecian Temple plac'd in the midst of a Wood is wholly improper, tho' dedicated to Pan himself. – But a Druids Fane properly constructed, may with very great Propriety be plac'd in the very depth of a Wood,

where Oaks alone grow. ... The Arch of Adrian in Mr Anson's Grounds in Staffordshire [Shugborough], is a proof how little Effect ye most beautiful buildings will have, when propriety of situation is not consider'd.'

Combe does not venture to describe the appearance of a 'Druids Fane'.

It is easy to understand why a man like Combe would be attracted to dabbling in building design. He would be well aware that the design of ornamental buildings was a popular pastime of the educated and leisured classes, and Combe desperately wanted to cultivate an image of belonging to such a class. It may have been beneficial to his self image of the moment to pose as a designer during a conversation, if only the once, to impress those in his company at the time. We should not suppose that he made a habit of designing buildings. Combe may never have seen the completed cottage at Sealwood; perhaps he never even learnt that his design was acted upon. But he succeeded in creating one of the first datable *cottages ornés* in England.<sup>15</sup>

#### NOTABLE FEATURES OF THE BUILDING

In the absence of Combe's original sketch design, we cannot know how much of the architectural detail of Sealwood Cottage was conceived by him, and how much was devised by the client or builder. Whatever the case, there are several unusual features which deserve attention.

**Cavity walls.** The inner skin of the building is of solid single leaf brickwork, while the outer skin is made of second-hand timber framing, probably at least a hundred years old when the cottage was built, with brick infill. Perhaps the framing was sourced from dismantled buildings in Netherseal, where there is evidence of new brick buildings replacing earlier timber ones during the later 1750s<sup>16</sup>. The inner and outer leaves of brickwork were tied

together by occasional headers bridging the cavity. The cavity housed diagonal braces to stabilise the frame, and provided a space for the horizontally sliding window shutters to be invisibly stowed away.

**Shutters.** The windows, with the probable exception of the first floor oriel, all appear to have had shutters which slid sideways into the cavity walls on metal runners. Only the two smallest survive today, to the windows lighting the entrance lobby and staircase. There is evidence, however, that the three ground floor front windows facing towards Overseal once had similar shutters; the internal brickwork reveals show signs of alteration in their upper parts, suggesting a change from pointed to square-headed form, and there are no headers bridging the cavity in the spaces where the shutters would have been. Moreover, there was formerly an open slot between the inner and outer leaves of walling, where the shutters would have been suspended as in the two surviving examples. When the shutters were removed, the open edges of the slot were crudely filled with re-used bricks, many of them with diagonal ends suggesting that they had been re-used from the simultaneous demolition of the first floor bay window, which had angled sides.

**Circular chimney.** A drawing published in 1946<sup>17</sup> shows a tapering circular chimney, the stub of which still survives in the roof void. It was inherently troublesome, as its enormous weight was borne on two timber beams. Not surprisingly, the longer of the two beams sagged, causing displacement of the brickwork above and deflection of the first floor. The beam is now supported by a steel beam underneath it, cased in timber. With its tapering sides and circular plan, the chimney must have been a work of art, and from an artistic point of view its disappearance is to be regretted.

**Thatched roof.** Combe’s letter shows that the building was intended to have a thatched roof and a description of the building in 1946<sup>18</sup> notes that the roof had formerly been thatched. There is no trace of it now, but the modern roof tiles and overall style of the building are still enough to hint at its existence. In particular, the geometry of the roof, clearly designed for display, suggests a thatch. Its removal was probably contemporary with the removal of the bay window and replacement of all the front windows around a hundred years ago. The front elevation of the building has similarities to the Queen’s Cottage at Kew, which is thatched and of a similar date.

**Cellar.** The cellar is only small, but well fitted with arched brick niches for a plentiful supply of wine.

**Staircase.** The staircase is beautifully constructed, with tapering treads accommodating a quarter turn between the ground and first floor levels. It wraps around the back of a display cupboard in the entrance lobby, with vertically sliding sash doors. Both of these were missing prior to the restoration, but the sash boxes remained and the well-finished interior of the upper half of the cupboard suggested that it may have had a glazed door on it.

**Pointed doors.** The doors are for the most part lightly constructed and simple, made of painted softwood. Their character relies on their shape and their attractive ironwork, some of which is original and some replaced.

**Pull-out bed.** One of the most endearing features of the cottage is the pull-out bedframe, which is concealed behind the dado in the upper room and housed in a void under a lean-to roof. It is only a single bed, suggesting that the cottage was intended as an occasional retreat or ‘hermitage’ for a single man. At the time of its construction Gresley was indeed single, as his first wife died in 1769 and he did not marry again until 1777.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to Mr and Mrs Goodall, Mathew Hill formerly of David Lewis and Associates (Eyam), Daniel Martin and the staff of the Derbyshire Record Office.

## NOTES

- 1 Harlan W. Hamilton, *Doctor Syntax: A Silhouette of William Combe, Esq.* (The Kent State University Press, 1969), passim. Hereafter Hamilton.
- 2 Ordnance Survey 25in series. Derbyshire Record Office (hereafter DRO) Plan and survey of Netherseal, 1785. D4996/6/11 (plan) and D77, Box 40 (written survey). Seal Wood contained 111 acres, and joined Short Wood on its east side to give a combined woodland area in excess of 160 acres.
- 3 C. Castledine, 'The Reverend Thomas Gresley, D.D., F. R. S. 1734–1785 His Life at Oxford and Netherseal 1759 – 1778', *Derbyshire Miscellany*, VII, Part 3 (1975), p. 124. Hereafter Castledine.
- 4 Castledine, pp. 124, 128, 131.
- 5 DRO D77 (Gresley estate papers, unlisted). A useful history of the Gresleys' holdings in Netherseal was written by Joan Sinar, former County Archivist, in 1978 to accompany the designation of the Netherseal Conservation Area. The typescript has never been published, but can be consulted at the Derbyshire Record Office.
- 6 D. Wright, 'A Survey of the Industrial and Commercial Activities of Joseph Wilkes in and around the parish of Measham in the late 18th century' (BA dissertation, University of Nottingham, 1968).
- 7 DRO D77, Box 39.
- 8 DRO D809, A/PI 431 f. 83 'Notes on the History of the Parish of Seale' made and collected by the Revd J. M. Gresley.
- 9 Hamilton, p. 5 (footnote) and pp. 30–31.
- 10 Falconer Madan, *The Gresleys of Drakelow: An Account of the Family and Notes of its Connections by Marriage and Descent from the Norman Conquest to the Present Day*. (Privately published, 1899), p. 110.
- 11 Combe has taken this from Alexander Pope's 'Epistle to Lord Burlington'.
- 12 This brief summary of Combe's life is from Hamilton.
- 13 Hamilton, p. 262.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33 and p. 183.
- 15 The Queen's Cottage in Kew Gardens, one of the first examples of the genre, is usually thought to be of c.1772: see Giles Worsley, 'Rustic Idylls', *Country Life*, 31 August 1989, p. 76.
- 16 Castledine, p. 131.
- 17 Anon. 'Seal Wood Cottage', *The Burton Chronicle*, 19 December 1946.
- 18 See previous note.