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THE WREN WING AT EASTON NESTON: A TENACIOUS SURVIVOR

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As huge flames ripped through the roof of the so-called 'Wren Wing' at Easton Neston in 2002, with firemen left struggling to extinguish them with whatever water they could gather from a distant garden lake, few would have imagined that anything positive could possibly arise from such a tragedy (Fig. 1). Within three years, the present descendent of the ancestral owners of Easton Neston, Lord Hesketh, had put the whole of the estate on the market. The Wren Wing, shrouded in corrugated iron scaffolding and torn plastic sheeting, lay silent and unrepaired, offering a pathetic backdrop to a great three day long sale of the contents that took place in 2005.

Easton Neston House, constructed to the designs of Nicholas Hawksmoor and completed in 1702, is arguably one of England's most perfect country houses. Its sale by the Hesketh family attracted much publicity, but little interest in the whole of the estate. The core section of house, outbuildings and surrounding parklands was eventually purchased by Leon Max, a fashion designer of Russian origin who has now completed the restoration of both the main house and adjacent outbuildings. The process of repair, particularly to the Wren Wing, has revealed that the original function and location of the building were changed over the course of its construction, shedding valuable light on



Fig. 1. The Wren wing ablaze.



Fig. 2. The Wren wing from the roof of the main house.

the development of designs of the main house itself. The capacity of the building to adapt to changing circumstances and fashions also make it one of the great architectural survivors of Northamptonshire.

An earlier and now entirely lost Easton Neston house had once existed closer to the parish church. Sir Richard Fermor (d.1661), a merchant, had bought Easton Neston in 1527 from Thomas Empson, the son of Henry VII's treasurer. Sir Richard's son Sir William Fermor (d.1711), who was made Lord Lempster in 1692, undertook the great process of rebuilding Easton Neston. Sir William was MP for Northampton 1670–1679 and was evidently a man of culture and taste, purchasing the Duke of Norfolk's celebrated 'Arundel Marbles', now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. A new site for the proposed house was found to the north of the parish church.

The so called 'Wren' Wing' was one of the pair of

original flanking service wings that was constructed as a first stage, built, we now know, from 1686 onwards.¹ The two ranges were constructed in advance of the main house, and it is apparent that the empty space left between the new services ranges, while doubtless appearing sufficiently large when initially pegged out on the ground, would subsequently prove not to be wide enough, and consequently came to impact significantly on the design of the main house itself.

The present Wren Wing is only one of the pair of buildings to survive. It is a three-storey red-brick range with stone dressings, located to the north west of Easton Neston House. It consists of an east-west range with short returns to the north at each end (Fig. 2). At the eastern end the setting of the building, and particularly the north yard, were considerably changed by the addition of the substantial brick

structure with a steel truss roof containing a Real Tennis Court in 1887, and a further library addition which dates from the 1920s. Historic maps show that this area had been built over since at least the end of the eighteenth century with service accommodation. At the western end of the Wren Wing, a sequence of smaller additions survives, many of which comprise original seventeenth-century building. These include the present boiler house and boundary wall. Built around this, and abutting the Wren Wing, are further early-twentieth century additions which presently provide staff flats. The main building is Listed Grade I, and the attached buildings are similarly listed by means of their curtilage to the Wren Wing. The Real Tennis Court is separately listed as Grade II.

The 2002 fire destroyed a substantial part of the roof structure as well as the majority of the internal finishes throughout the building at all levels. Although a temporary roof was erected over the building fairly soon after the fire, the scaffold roof was not of sufficient height to extend over the chimneys and was poorly detailed, directing excessive amounts of rainwater into the fabric of the chimneys themselves. The brickwork of these became so saturated throughout the height of the building that ferns were able to grow from the ground floor hearths, joined by the large fruiting bodies of dry rot fungus. Consequently much time was required to allow the brickwork to dry out. Elsewhere, fire and smoke damage which had already destroyed the finishes had been significantly worsened by the sheer volume of fire brigade water and the long period of post-fire abandonment.

But the loss of so much of the roof and second floor structure allowed the building and its noble brick chimney stacks to be seen and appreciated internally in a way that would never previously have been known (Fig. 3). Rather as Sir John Soane evidently marvelled at sight of the gutted shell of Wotton, a near contemporary house in date in Buckinghamshire that had burned out in the 1820's, so too it was possible to admire the verticality



Fig. 3. Chimneystacks of the Wren wing after the fire.

inherent in the Wren Wing. Soane incorporated some of that verticality in his celebrated rebuilding of Wotton, and it was hoped that some aspect of this dramatic and semi-deconstructed quality could also be retained in the rebuilding at Easton Neston.² The extent of the damage was such that only a handful of the original timbers could be saved at roof level, and only eight out of twelve of the principal second-floor tie beams were retained, although three complete bays of floor structure, including the earliest bay to the north-east with complex dragon ties, have been saved. Consequently, the building is an all-but-new construction from the first floor upwards, albeit made to historic patterns and enclosed by historic walls. The rebuilding was undertaken by Bennie Historic Conservation,³ and is illustrated on the two timber layout plans produced by their timber subcontractor, the Green Oak Company.

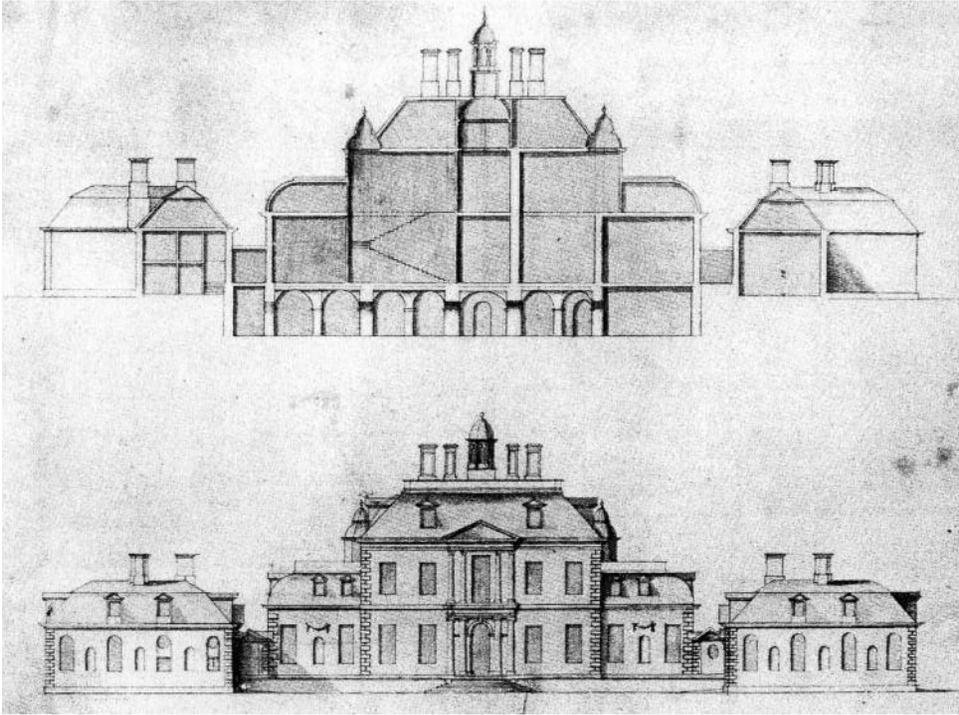


Fig. 4. A preliminary drawing by Wren for Easton Neston, c.1686, drawn by Hawksmoor.
All Souls College, Oxford.

The history and development of the Wren Wing building itself has been well described elsewhere. There remains no definitive archive evidence as to who the architect of these ranges was. There has been much debate as to whether the building was by Wren, by Talman,⁴ or even by Hooke⁵. Unattributed drawings by Sir Christopher Wren's office seem to relate to the form of the house and outbuildings (Fig. 4), while correspondence between Sir Richard Fermor and Sir Christopher Wren (who was related by marriage) also survives. The former service ranges were constructed in advance of the house and it is thought that parts of the Wren Wing may have been used as the principal residence while the house was being constructed up to 1702.

The internal plan of the building appears to have been subservient to its external elevations. The first-floor structure cuts across the main south elevation

windows, the windows presumably being sized to allow them to achieve a proportion worthy of the main front forecourt of the house. The long passageways that extend behind these windows and along the south elevation appear likely to have always been a feature of the plan. This was confirmed by the archaeological survey commissioned by Lord Hesketh from ASC Ltd in 2005.⁶ The passageway running behind the south front is shown at ground level on the *Vitruvius Britannicus* plan of the building,⁷ which is the earliest historic plan of the building found to date (Fig. 5). A consequence of this passageway has been to leave the main rooms within the building facing north, probably a deliberate arrangement to reduce overlooking of the principal forecourt in front of Easton Neston House. The *Vitruvius Britannicus* plan also shows the previous connecting arrangement to the main house which

had been taken away by 1807 but was replaced by the present quadrant passage at some time before 1844.

The uses of the building over its three storeys are not known for certain, but it now seems likely that it was initially designed to incorporate the principal kitchen for the proposed house and its supporting accommodation. This was the largest and only double-height room in the building, located on the ground floor nearest to the house and occupying most of the east range. Immediately prior to the fire, this room had served as a nursery, but it retained late-nineteenth century decorations from its period as a billiard room. Severe damage caused by dry and wet rot resulting from the failed roof finishes above, and saturation through the unprotected chimney stacks, had meant that significant opening-up works were required to expose the sodden masonry. The building works uncovered the very large chimney stacks in the eastern wall, complete with pulley mechanisms that all confirm an intended possible kitchen use (Fig. 6). These chimneys were however not much blackened internally, which appears to suggest that they were either never used or were

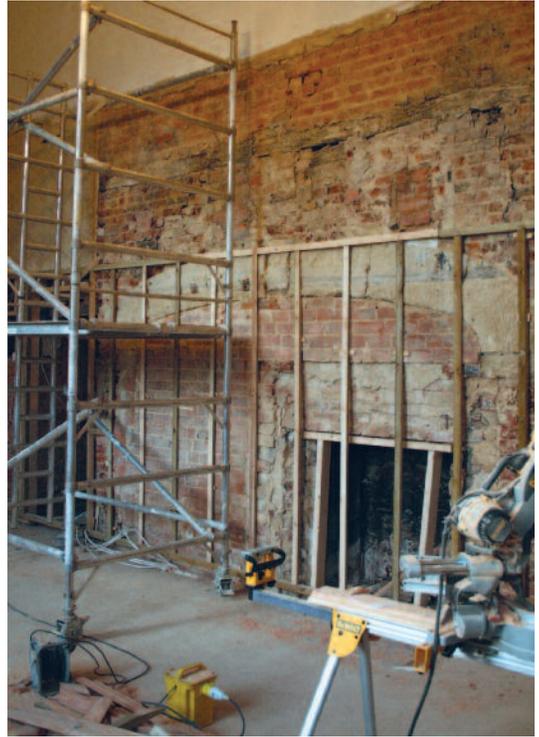


Fig. 6. The former kitchen range.

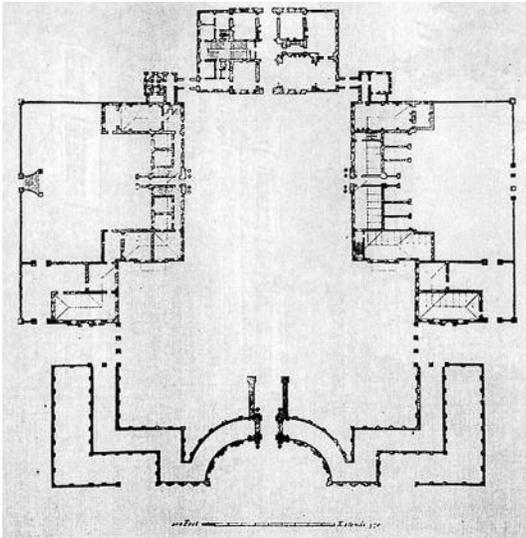


Fig. 5. Ground plan of Easton Neston, from *Vitruvius Britannicus*, I, pl. 98.

immediately superseded once Hawksmoor came to relocate the main kitchens in the basement of the house itself.

The recent building works have also revealed that there were concerns on the setting-out of the building as work progressed. It is apparent that the area left for the future house in the ‘gap’ between the present Wren Wing and its now lost opposite number must have been found to have been insufficient. Evidence of this mid-project change of mind is provided by the apparent and awkward truncation of the timber framing of the roof ridge, which appears to have occurred in order to ‘push-back’ the south facing main elevation. This ‘pushing back’ would have increased the available space in between the two outbuildings that had been set aside for the house. This is a curious arrangement of timber that is not repeated at the western end, where

a traditional and conventional corner roof structure is formed, suggesting that the eastern end of the building was constructed first. The pre-fire timber patterns have been faithfully reproduced in new oak and have been left exposed within the building itself (Fig. 7). That this design change took place within the structure of the present building implies that its opposite number – the stables range – may have already been constructed and could therefore not be so readily amended. A further symptom of this ‘on site’ change of heart is visible in the short section of east elevation that faces over the main gardens, where the spacing between the building’s corners and the fenestration lower down are quite clearly no longer symmetrical with the roof above them.

In order to confirm that this east section of the building was no earlier than the main east-west range

beyond, or a part of some other pre-existing building incorporated into it, a dendrochronological investigation was commissioned from Nottingham University. But this conclusively confirmed that the build period of the whole of the Wren Wing, including these return ranges, was more or less contemporaneous, starting in 1686.⁸ This change of form therefore confirms this to be an early design change, which is certain to have been made while the building was being constructed on site.

While the suggestion has been made that the Wren Wing may have been occupied as part of the main house as the current house was being constructed, no specific evidence to support this has yet been found. Evidence that the interior of the Wren Wing was fairly ‘polite’ from the outset is demonstrated by the fine quality of the two oak staircases, both of which largely



Fig. 7. The double-height gallery with exposed trusses.



Fig. 8. The dome reinstated.



Fig. 9. Arches in the cellar of the main house.

survived the fire. There is some question from the crispness of the structure that these may have been at least in part 'restored' in the widespread works that took place on the site in the 1920s. However, the shallow plaster dome over the west stair (Fig. 8), which was thought at one stage to have been a later addition, appeared from its integral construction with the roof trusses to have been original to the building. During the post-fire dismantling works, a handful of historic clay peg tiles were found on top of the dome structure. As this small void space was inaccessible and enclosed, these are likely to have been dislodged during the late-eighteenth or early nineteenth century re-roofing, when this range was re-roofed in Westmorland slate. Serious consideration was given to the reinstatement of clay peg tiles, but reinstatement of Westmorland slate, in keeping with the surrounding outbuildings, was ultimately preferred.

Too recently constructed to be demolished, the Wren Wing and its opposite number the stables range would have presented a considerable architectural challenge to Hawksmoor when he was charged with the eventual design of the house. It is apparent that at least the basement of the house was begun before Hawksmoor's involvement. Its regular layout of brick and stone arches follows a conventional late-seventeenth century pattern of squared mini-vaults and piers. Where Hawksmoor changed the plan on the floor above in order to create the great cantilevered staircase, bold and deliberately alternating courses of banded harder ironstone and softer conventional limestone stonework were introduced. These archways have the same deeply recessed and monumental quality that is associated with his London churches (Fig. 9). The most remarkable basement insertion was to



Fig. 10. Hawksmoor's kitchen in the basement of the main house.

support the floor to the Great Hall above. The Great Hall was a magnificent double-height space at the heart of Easton Neston that was regrettably floored over to create additional bedrooms in the nineteenth century.⁹ It must have been a hybrid space anticipating the magnificence of Blenheim Palace (1705–24) and the taut enclosure of Hawksmoor's St Mary Woolnoth in the City of London (1716–24).

The broad and beautifully gauged stone arches that supported the floor of the Great Hall at basement level formed Hawksmoor's new kitchen, replacing the kitchen originally provided in the Wren Wing. Hawksmoor's stonework has been recently stripped of paint and grease and re-exposed in both of these areas as a part of the recent restoration (Fig. 10).

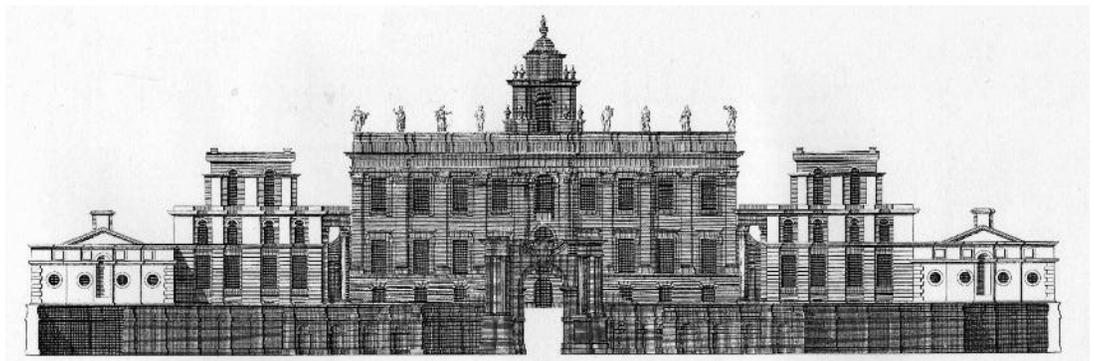


Fig. 11. Front elevation by Hawksmoor of Easton Neston, showing an unbuilt cupola, unbuilt wings and an unbuilt triumphal arch to the courtyard. *Vitruvius Britannicus*, I, pls. 99–100.

Externally the richly layered and compressed elevations of Easton Neston are undoubtedly a consequence of the enclosure offered by the inherited flanking service ranges. As so often with the very greatest architects, Hawksmoor seems at his best when challenged by a constricted site. The subtle but undeniably tangible tensions in the main elevations, particularly those facing east and west which are on several planes, remain as suppressed as if a mighty glacier were contained in a tight valley pass. While the site constriction caused by the Wren Wing and its opposite number have led to one of the most powerful country house elevations yet built, Hawksmoor must nevertheless have resented the constraints imposed by these existing buildings. Having failed in his bid to have them at least re-clad (Fig. 11), he famously described them to Lord Carlisle in 1731 as being ‘good for nothing’.¹⁰

It is clear from the sequence of historic maps held in the Northamptonshire County Records Office that the setting of the Wren Wing changed dramatically during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as fashions in landscape planning evolved. It is likely that the present building only narrowly escaped demolition a hundred years or so later, and has been dramatically recast on at least two separate occasions prior to this most recent campaign of works. The first known survey of 1765 (Fig. 12), from the Northamptonshire Record Office, shows the present Wren Wing (drawn diagrammatically) flanking the main block of the house, with its symmetrically placed stables block facing it across the front forecourt. It also shows the fine formal avenues of trees radiating from the house and the formal walled gardens which still survive. This plan no doubt records the arrangement that

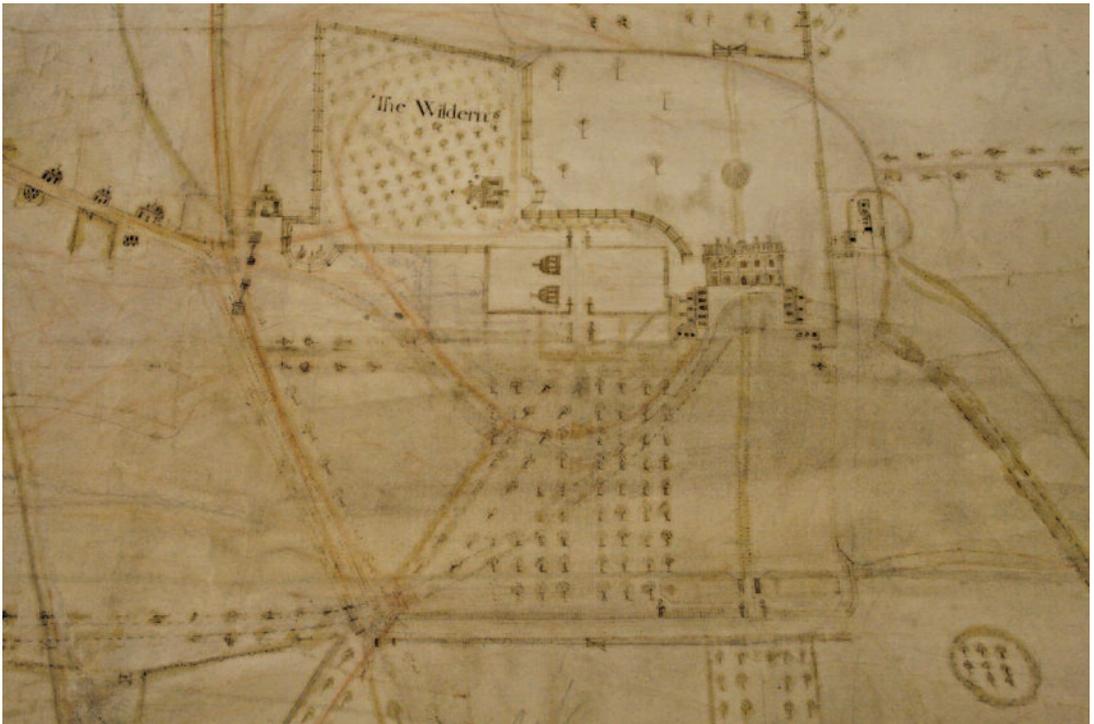


Fig. 12. The house and grounds from an estate survey of 1765. *Northamptonshire Record Office.*

was drawn by Tillemans in 1719, which remains our best visual record of Easton Neston soon after completion¹¹ (Fig. 13). The catalyst for the first significant change after completion appears to have been the creation of a new turnpike road in 1795, replacing the old Northampton to Towcester road which had previously run through Hulcote Village and Easton Neston. The 1795 road – which survives in part as the present A43 route into Towcester – was located significantly west of the house, and allowed its whole setting to be reconsidered and re-landscaped. Clearly pencilled in red over the 1765 plan are the new alignments of the Turnpike Road and some suggested driveway changes, all following more informal and picturesque alignments. A survey plan of 1806 (Fig. 14) illustrates how dramatic the remodelling would prove to be. The old stable block, the twin of the present Wren Wing, was completely removed and its site cleared. It was replaced by the present stable courtyard located well to the north of the Wren Wing and west of the walled garden, one of whose entrances had been carefully placed on the central axis of the Wren Wing itself, perhaps by Hawksmoor. The listing description gives the name of the architect for the new stables as John Raffield, a relatively little known early-nineteenth century architect.¹² No specific date of construction is offered. A discrepancy between the

estate maps of 1806 and 1849 in the placing of the new stable courtyard possibly holds a clue to this. The 1806 plans show the building placed on axis with a drive to the west and not on axis with the walled garden. This may have been as the building was planned at that time, rather than as built. Comparison with an 1849 plan confirms that the final and present placing of the new stables building was changed to address the central axis of the walled garden, rather than the existing estate driveway, which was adjusted to suit the new location.

In common with evolving ideas about de-formalising the landscape settings of great houses that were abundant in the later eighteenth century, the removal of the old stable block allowed the parkland around Easton Neston to be extended right up to the south and west sides of the house, opening up new and oblique picturesque views of the house and the nearby parish church. Planting around the house was de-formalised, old avenues of trees were cut, or were turned into picturesque ‘clumps’ in the then fashionable manner of Lancelot Capability Brown. With such close proximity to the main house, it seems more than possible that the Wren Wing may have narrowly escaped demolition at this time, but, as before, expediency prevailed. The building was evidently too useful to sacrifice, and

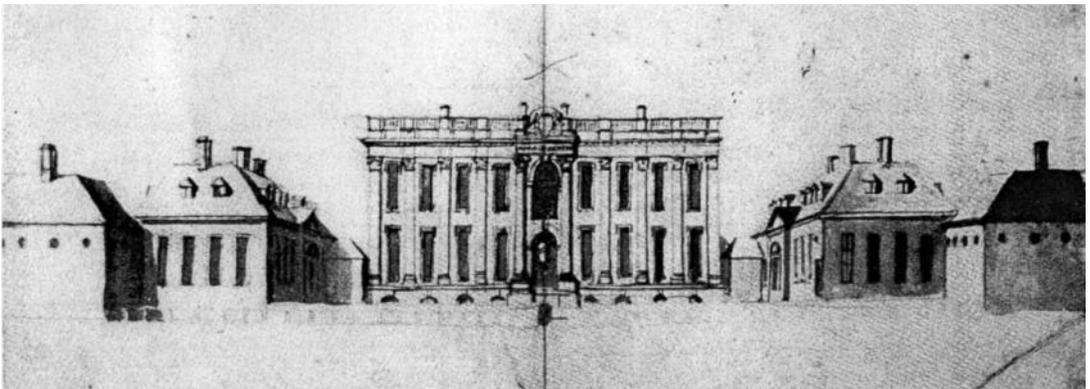


Fig. 13. ‘Prospect of the Lord Lempsters house at Easton taken to the West’, by Peter Tillemans, 1719. *British Library, Add MS 32467.*



Fig. 14. Plan of the house and grounds from an estate survey of 1806. *Northamptonshire Record Office*.

despite its proximity to the house was retained and refurbished. It was also no doubt valuable to screen the growing number of new outbuildings constructed immediately behind it. With apparently little use for its attics, the original dormer windows were entirely abolished on the south and east slopes and the building re-roofed using Westmorland slate, the material used on the replacement stables (and doubtless replacing the clay peg tiles discovered during the recent works). An early-nineteenth century engraved print of the house from the south (Fig. 15) captures the new setting of the house standing in an open landscape. The extent to which the Wren Wing was ‘suppressed’ in these views by dense planting is remarkable. This dense planting is also shown in one of the earliest photographs of the house taken in the mid nineteenth century. A photograph taken for a

Country Life article of 1908 illustrates that the Wren Wing did not have dormers to its front elevation even by this date and was still very much a subsidiary service range hidden behind undergrowth.



Fig. 15. Easton Neston in the early nineteenth century. Engraving by W.S. Williamson after J.C. Buckler.



Fig. 16. New entrance to the Wren wing.

It is now apparent that the concealing of the south front of the Wren Wing meant that the building needed a new entrance from the back. The building was therefore ‘turned around’ and remodelled so that its north side, facing the service yard, could become its main entrance, leaving the southern side facing the house undisturbed by comings and goings. This is supported by evidence of significant, but to date undocumented, early-nineteenth century works to the north side. With a regular placing of windows and cheerfully pronounced red and blue header brickwork, this façade is quite different from the mellow brickwork of the south side, and very similar

to the ornamental chequered brickwork character of the contemporary estate houses at nearby Hulcote village, built between 1800 and 1822. These are again thought to be by John Raffield, although once more there appears to be no clear archival evidence for this attribution. This early-nineteenth century remodelling would account for the changed proportions of the north doorway to the Wren Wing and its fanlight, with its fine glazing bars and ‘Regency’ character, which celebrated the axial route to the original walled garden. Some dreary 1970s doors here were replaced with a more sympathetic design in the recent works (Fig. 16). Internally, late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century joinery shutters and built-in safes were added to the large office room at the western end of the building, perhaps when this room took on the role as the main Estate Office.

There is again disappointingly little documentation on the next substantial wave of works from the early 1920s, perhaps by the Kettering architects Gotch & Saunders.¹³ John Alfred Gotch (1852–1942) was a well known Northamptonshire antiquarian and president of the RIBA. There is some surviving correspondence between the estate and Gotch in the estate papers in the Northamptonshire Record Office, suggesting that he may have been consulted on the significant changes to the main house and its forecourt.¹⁴ These works may have been precipitated by H. Avray Tipping’s 1908 *Country Life* article, lamenting the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century changes to the house and site.¹⁵ The works included a very widespread refurbishment of the main house, while also introducing the present formal enclosure on the main entrance west side. Flank walls were constructed opposite the Wren Wing, with ornamental gates to balance the symmetrical composition where weakened by the loss of the earlier stables. Planting was removed and the south elevation of the building restored and reinstated as the main entrance. In place of grassland and a



Fig. 17. The entrance to the Real Tennis Court, intruding on the seventeenth-century north-south axis.

sweeping driveway, a formal courtyard was formed, initially surfaced by gravel (later replaced by asphalt). The Wren Wing was ‘re-exposed’ and re-roofed partly in salvaged Westmorland slate, supplemented by Welsh slate in places. Four small leaded light steel framed casement dormer windows were introduced in the roof space of the main south elevation, and these survived up to the fire. Additional accommodation was added at the same time to the north west corner of the Wren Wing, where two rather dingy staff flats were provided.

The 1920s work also included significant alterations to the Real Tennis Court, which was

extended outwards into the Wren Wing courtyard, with a first floor library over lower floor ablutions and changing rooms. This addition was carried out in a sympathetic ‘Wren Wing Style’ but regrettably using the visually inferior Easton Neston Estate brick (which more resembles the anaemic washed-out colour of common Bedfordshire stocks than the warm red tones used on the original buildings). Even more unfortunate was the form of this addition, which intruded on the historic seventeenth-century axis from the north front of the Wren Wing to the walled garden (Fig. 17). With the setting of the north side of the Wren Wing compromised once more, there



Fig. 18. The flanking kitchen wing to Wotton House, Buckinghamshire.

followed an inevitable period of *ad hoc* infilling and downgrading of this area. Drawings held by South Northamptonshire Council dating from 1978 show the extent of additions and accretions to the north side of the Wren Wing that were removed at that time.

Once again, however, a new chapter of the building was about to open. The north front was to be 'remade' as a self contained and private entrance to accommodate the offices of the Towcester Racecourse Company which the Hesketh family had developed in the park of Easton Neston.¹⁶ The building façade was restored once more, although regrettably using cement mortar.

By 2005, the roofless Wren Wing was one of a group of disused derelict and semi-derelict outbuildings, with no obvious use. The Towcester Race Course was no longer a part of the estate and the Wren Wing and its associated structures were potentially terminally redundant. It had already been placed on the English Heritage 'Buildings at Risk Register'. A new use was urgently required for a group of buildings that had also served as a centre for Formula One racing and as the workshops of the failed Hesketh Motorcycle manufactory. With no significant area of agricultural estate left to manage, a business use was the only option. This has happily been provided by the present owner's fashion and

clothing design company, Max Studio. This use has proven to be entirely compatible with these buildings, which now serve as the company's European headquarters and distribution centre. Fortunately the 1970s planning consents for the various Hesketh business enterprises worked favourably, since they had established a use that breached current 'green' planning policies for restricting business operations in rural locations lacking in public transport. The working of Max Studio has enabled the Wren Wing to be fully restored and, it is hoped, enhanced from its pre-fire state.

In the most recent work the opportunity has been taken to use the fire as a catalyst to improve the building where possible. This is particularly the case with its dormer windows. Immediately prior to the fire, the existing dormers on the south side had been centred above alternate windows and appeared out of scale and keeping with the building. It had emerged that these dormers must have been re-introduced at some time after 1908 – a *Country Life* photograph of that year shows them entirely absent – and prior to 1927, when they appear in a new set of *Country Life* photos. The model for the 1920s dormer windows, if there was one, is not clear as there are no early surviving dormers on any of the other outbuildings.¹⁷ Although no original drawings survive to show the Wren Wing as designed, the perspective drawing made by Tillemans in 1719 was the best potential source of evidence, clearly showing eight dormer windows to the present Wren Wing and its opposite number.¹⁸ Looking carefully at this drawing, at the dormers of both ranges where they face into the front forecourt, it seems fairly clear that these dormers were pedimented, and not hipped. There is no sign of cupped caps.

The general character of these original dormer windows can be seen on contemporary windows to equivalent buildings elsewhere. The flanking stable ranges of Wotton House, Buckinghamshire, constructed c.1704, are thought also to be by Talman and may therefore relate quite closely to those



Fig. 19. New design studio.

provided at Easton Neston. These Wotton dormers survive with pediments and their leaded metal casement windows with small panes of glass (Fig. 18). A pattern of slightly smaller proportioned leaded lights appear to survive at Easton Neston at ground floor level on the north side of what is now the Boiler House.

Physical evidence for the earlier and larger dormer windows emerged on site, where the original lower cill was exposed in the fire-damaged construction of the remaining dormers. As stripping-out work progressed on the less fire damaged parts of the fabric, the rhythm, spacing and size of the earlier dormers emerged to confirm the original pattern



Fig. 20. The south elevation of the Wren wing in 2011.

and number showing on the Tillemans drawing, suggesting that a reasonably accurate replacement dormer could be designed. The justification for changing the present dormer pattern was that, in addition to reinstating the known early-eighteenth century appearance of the building, they would provide significantly improved natural light to the interiors. The height of the dormers followed the heights of the present dormers, while the cills were restored to the level found on site. On the north side of the building, where dormers were also reinstated, a slightly simplified version was constructed, without pediments, to reflect the slightly lower status of this side in the building's hierarchy. An external window repair and redecoration scheme was carried out across all the buildings to reinstate the original soft grey white colour Hawksmoor evidently used to decorate the windows of the main house. The earliest windows on the ground floor of the Wren

Wing building that had survived the fire were subject to paint analysis by Dr Catherine Hassall to confirm that the exact shade used on the house was also used here.¹⁹

Where changes internally were proposed, they sought, as far as possible or practical, to return the architectural layout of the Wren Wing to that originally constructed. The absence of drawings has made this difficult to verify, although the plan published in *Vitruvius Britannicus* was helpful, combined with the evidence found in the fabric on site. The celebrated wooden model of Easton Neston (now in the RIBA drawings collection) survives, but does not include the Wren Wing. The gutting of the eastern section of the building allowed for a section of the second floor to be left open, thereby allowing the light from the large south facing windows to flood over a new gallery to light what is now a design studio (Fig. 19). This new double-height space, with

the prominent undulations of its flanking chimney stacks, seeks to capture the sense of space and character of this building once its previously cellular structure was opened up by the fire. The gallery edge was reinstated in oak, but follow the original Wren pattern that had also been faithfully copied in the 1920s work.

A final key change in planning was the creation of a new second-floor link from the Wren Wing into the nineteenth-century Real Tennis Court building which was immediately adjacent. This passed via a former dormer window, and deposits users into the Real Tennis Court itself, a large open building now used for clothing distribution and packing. A metal gallery structure has been introduced that is dismountable and reversible should real tennis ever be sought here again. For now, this installation, deemed as ‘furniture’ for consent purposes, allows this building and the adjacent Wren Wing to face a bright and sustainable future at the heart of a new owner’s ambitions for Easton Neston.²⁰ (Fig. 20)

NOTES

- 1 A.J. Arnold, R.E. Howard, and C.D. Litton, ‘Additional dendrochronology dates from Nottingham Tree-ring Dating Laboratory’, *Vernacular Architecture* 39 (2008), pp. 119–28 (List 197 no.15).
- 2 Ptolemy Dean, *Sir John Soane & the Country Estate* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 150–61. See also Howard Colvin, ‘Was John Fitch the architect of Wotton House?’, *Georgian Group Journal* 18 (2010), pp. 1–7; Pete Smith, ‘Wotton House, 1704–12’, *Georgian Group Journal* 19 (2011), pp. 20–35.
- 3 We were especially indebted to Fred Markland, Iain Milne and Paul Inskip of Bennie Historic Conservation Ltd.
- 4 See Giles Worsley, ‘The Puzzle of Easton Neston’, *Country Life*, 25 August 2005, pp. 53–5.
- 5 Giles Worsley, ‘Taking Hooke Seriously’, *Georgian Group Journal*, 14 (2004), pp. 18–19.
- 6 See ASC report on Easton Neston December 2003 by Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd.
- 7 Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, I (1715), pl. 98.
- 8 See Note 1 above.
- 9 Again serious consideration was given to reinstating this volume, but the loss of internal mouldings that was uncovered in the attic area above the nineteenth century bedrooms prevented this work from proceeding on this occasion.
- 10 G. Webb, ‘The letters and drawings of Nicholas Hawksmoor’, *Walpole Society* XIX (1931), p. 126.
- 11 B. Bailey (ed.), *Northamptonshire in the Early Eighteenth Century: The Drawings of Peter Tillemans and Others* (Northamptonshire Record Society XXXIX, Northampton 1996), pp. 50–52.
- 12 John Raffield’s best known building apart from the London Road lodge at Easton Neston is St John’s Lodge, The Regent’s Park, London 1818: H.M. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (2008), pp. 840–1.
- 13 Gotch & Saunders’s papers and records were damaged in floods during the 1960s, and despite the estate correspondence, there appears, according to the researcher Dr R. K. Hargrave, to be little reference in the summary of ledgers to much involvement in the major works.
- 14 I am grateful for assistance from Bruce Bailey, who is presently working on the revision of Pevsner’s *Buildings of England: Northamptonshire* and has also not found a known architect for these works.

- 15 Tipping noted that the Wren Wing was ‘One simple but well proportioned wing of red brick with stone dressings and of single storey height’ (*Country Life*, 7 November 1908, p. 636). His article went on to lament a number of late-eighteenth century changes to the main house, and may have provoked the 1920’s campaign of ‘restoration’.
- 16 The hard cement mortar and poor match of brickwork used at that time was a reflection of conservation values at that time.
- 17 They may have been formed to loosely match some earlier dormers that had survived on the north side, some of which may have survived prior to 1978 but were moved at that time. With no photographic evidence of the dormers prior to their removal in 1978, this would now be hard to prove.
- 18 Howard Colvin in his article ‘Easton Neston Reconsidered’ (*Country Life*, 15 October 1970, pp. 969–70) cites the account book of John Groves, a well known London Master Carpenter who recorded amongst other works at Easton Neston: ‘luthern windows with caps and pediments’. As the main house had not yet been started, Colvin argues that this description must predate 1692 and must therefore relate to the two service ranges. Whilst alternating cusps and dormers were typical of the period, Tillemans’s sketch of 1719 (Fig. 13) appears to show only pediments throughout.
- 19 Catherine Hassall, Paint Analysis Report No. D304, September 2006.
- 20 I am grateful to Mr Leon Max for his support and patronage of the project overall, and indebted to the assistance of Malcolm Simmonds and Stephen Miller, the project architects.