



THE
GEORGIAN
GROUP

Peter Lindfield, 'Porden's Eaton: William Porden's role in the development of Eaton Hall, Cheshire, 1802–1825', *The Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. XXI, 2013, pp. 151–165

PORDEN'S EATON: WILLIAM PORDEN'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EATON HALL, CHESHIRE, 1802–1825

PETER LINDFIELD

This article explores William Porden's role in the development of Eaton Hall, Cheshire, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Eaton was one of the most important and lavish examples of Gothic Revival architecture of the period, but Porden's work at Eaton between c.1804 and 1814 was significantly altered by subsequent architects – it was added to by Benjamin Gummow (1823–25), reworked by William Burn (1846–51), rebuilt by Alfred Waterhouse (1870s), and demolished in 1963. A close examination of the manuscript records (correspondence, bills, and drawings) reveal that Porden intended Eaton's exterior and interior to be executed in a unified style – an archaeologically aware Gothic. They also shed new light on Gummow's additions (1823–25) and demonstrate that his modifications were a subtle reworking of Porden's proposals for Eaton's expansion.

‘We hastened to see the wonders of Eaton Hall, of which, however, my expectations were not very high. Moderate as they were, they were scarcely realized. [...] The house excited just the same feeling in me as Ashridge [Hertfordshire], only with the difference that it is still more overloaded, and internally far less beautiful, though furnished still more expensively, in patches. You find all imaginable splendour and ostentation which a man who has an income of a million of our money can display; but taste not perhaps in the same profusion. In the chaos of modern gothic excrescences, I remarked ill-painted modern glass windows, and shapeless tables and chairs, which most incongruously affected the imitate architectural ornaments. I did not find one single thing worth sketching. [...] Treasures of art I saw none; the best

was a middling picture by West. All the magnificence lay in the gorgeous materials, and the profuse display of money. The drawing-room or library would, for size, make a very good riding-school.’

(Prince Pückler-Muskau, 1827)¹

Recent criticism by John Morley, Megan Aldrich, Guy Acloque and John Cornforth has framed Eaton as one of the most important examples of early nineteenth-century domestic Gothic Revival architecture, yet very little sustained research into its design and evolution, especially of Benjamin Gummow's modifications (1823–25), has been undertaken.² The most extensive analysis of manuscript evidence for its exterior and interior was undertaken by Acloque and Cornforth and published in two *Country Life* articles in 1971. They reproduced extracts from the Eaton archives and built up a broad outline of the Hall's evolution. Subsequent studies, however, simply skirt over Eaton by reiterating its pre-eminence as a domestic example of Gothic Revival architecture. This article directly examines manuscript correspondence and designs from the Eaton archives and provides a detailed analysis of Eaton's development. It demonstrates that William Porden (1755–1822), the architect of Eaton's first Gothic phase (c.1804–14), had a discernible impact both upon Eaton's exterior and its interior. Drawings and plans indicate that the second Gothic phase (1823–25) was also highly dependant upon Porden, even though he had been dismissed from Lord Grosvenor's service in 1821.³

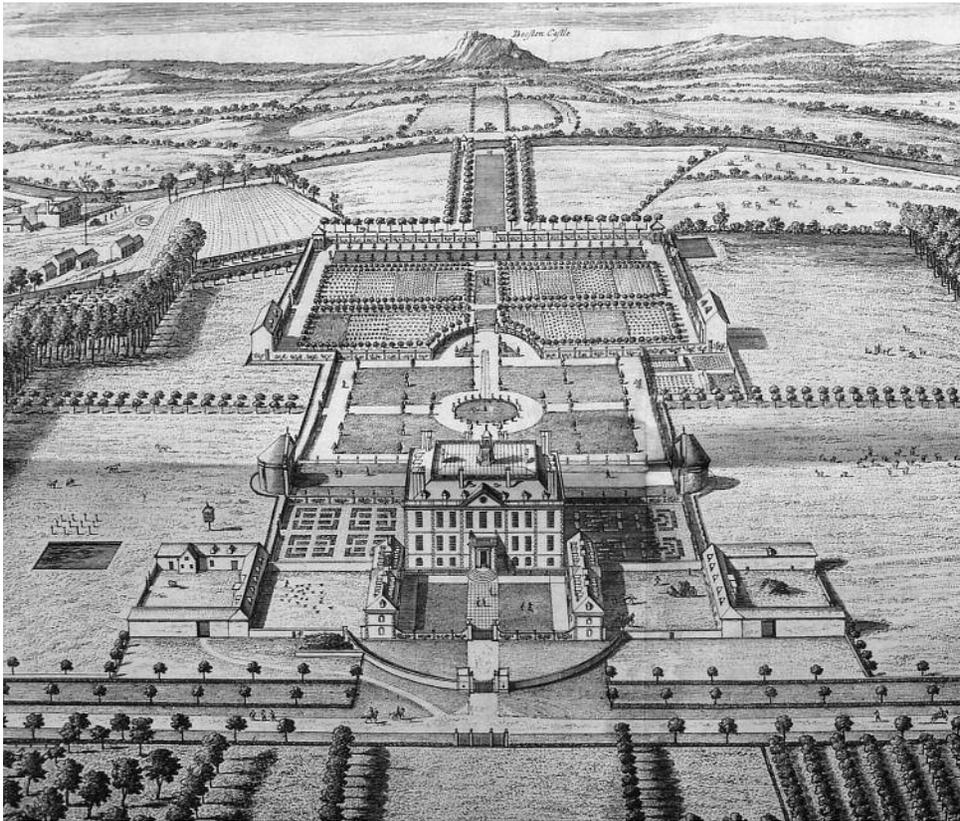


Fig. 1. 'Eaton Hall on the River Dee near the City of Chester', ZCR 63/2/720.
 (Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

At the end of the eighteenth century, Eaton Hall was a relatively modest house of 1675–82 located within formally laid-out gardens (Fig. 1).⁴ It was transformed, however, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century into one of the largest and best-known examples of domestic Gothic Revival architecture in Britain. This corresponded with Robert Grosvenor (1767–1845) succeeding his father to become second Earl Grosvenor in 1802; he became the first Marquess of Westminster in 1831. Robert was the third son and only surviving child of Richard Grosvenor, first Earl Grosvenor (1731–1802), and in 1803 he inherited not only Eaton Hall but also a vast fortune.⁵ It was Lord Grosvenor's wealth and

status that precipitated the redevelopment of the family seat outside Chester.

Porden's modifications to Eaton demonstrate a preoccupation with creating an intellectually and archaeologically informed Gothic edifice – both on the interior and exterior – appropriate to Lord Grosvenor's station.⁶ Unfortunately Porden's work and these intentions were obscured by modifications made between 1823 and 1825; this phase transformed Eaton into a sprawling edifice covered with a profusion of ornament. The most complete record of the house was undertaken by J. and J.C. Buckler and published as *Views of Eaton Hall in Cheshire, the Seat of the Right Honourable Earl Grosvenor* (1826).⁷

Their plates offer some help in interpreting Porden's work, but they also show Gummow's additions. To understand Porden's contribution to Eaton fully it is necessary to examine Eaton's rich archives which are split between the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office and the Grosvenor Estate.

WILLIAM PORDEN: ARCHITECT OF THE FIRST GOTHIC EATON

In 1803 Lord Grosvenor's long-standing surveyor, Porden, supplied designs for the remodelling and expansion of Eaton Hall in both the classical and Gothic styles (Figs. 2–4).⁸ In January 1803 Porden presented the choice of style as a matter of 'informed' taste:

'As to the time required for altering your House in the Grecian or the in Gothic Stile, I really do not think there will be much difference, whatever stile you adopt. [...] But we will if you please my Lord, put this in the strongest point of view. We will suppose that in *Grecian* Architecture, your House would be completed in *two* years, at an expense of £10,000; and in the Gothic that it would take up to 3 years, and cost £15000. Is the time or the money to be put in competition with gratification of having a mansion in that Stile which you like the best? Presuming that Lady Grosvenor and your Lordship prefer the Gothic to the Grecian, I think the other considerations are only as dust on the Balance.'⁹

The letter continues by setting out the case for Gothic, and outlines its benefits and connotations. Porden declares:

'... of the Gothic Architecture, though it is now better understood than it was a few years ago, the majority are comparatively ignored, yet every one is delighted with its richness, and sensible of its improving character. Its expensiveness, or the opinion of its being so, has prevented it from becoming common as well as the difficulty there has been of getting workmen to execute it. It therefore is preferable on the score of preserving that distinction to Rank and Fortune, which it is the habit of the age to diminish. As to convenience and comfort it may be made equally excellent with the

Grecian. With regard to splendour it is far superior, and its variety is infinite. Were I to be asked, in what Stile I would construct a Building if my Commission was unlimited in magnitude and expense, I should answer in the Gothic. [...] Add to all this, it appears as the work of our Ancestors and not of yesterday.'¹⁰

The complexity of mouldings and profusion of ornament associated with Gothic architecture meant that it was accessible only to wealthy patrons, and its associations could be used to create, sustain and reinforce an impression of dynastic heritage. In this spirit Porden recommended that Eaton should be enriched with heraldic devices throughout to emphasise Lord Grosvenor's pedigree.¹¹ Gothic rather than classical architecture, therefore, was the most appropriate to convey the Earl's descent from Hugh Lupus and Gilbert le Grosvenor, who both came to England in the Norman Conquest.¹²

Porden's preference for Gothic reflected his previous experience as a pupil of James Wyatt.¹³ Ever since the building of the Pantheon in Oxford Street, London, in 1772, Wyatt had been recognised as a highly accomplished classical architect, but Porden appears to have been tasked with producing Gothic details for Wyatt's Sheffield Park, Sussex (c.1775–1787),¹⁴ and Wyatt later embraced the Gothic mode wholeheartedly, initially at Lee Priory, Kent (c.1785–90) and Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire (1794–1812).¹⁵ In a letter to Lord Grosvenor, Porden credited himself with having turned Wyatt to Gothic in 1777, 'who till then was little sensible of the beauties of gothic Architecture'. Wyatt, he wrote, 'employed me for two months in drawing from [York Minster] and since then I at intervals measured and studied many parts of the fabrick with an intention of publishing the whole on a more magnificent Scale.'¹⁶ Porden was a Yorkshireman whose 'Cradle was rocked in Yorkminster and ... I can tell the place where every [Gothic] ornament you have looked at may be found and many more not represented by Mr Halfpenny'.¹⁷ Porden also mentioned his acquaintance with King's College Chapel, Cambridge,

and St George's Chapel, Windsor, the latter of which he preferred.¹⁸ His experience in Wyatt's office seems to have given Porden the confidence to promote Gothic at Eaton, reassuring Lord Grosvenor that the work would truly be in the style 'of our ancestors'.

Acloque's and Cornforth's article 'The Eternal Gothic of Eaton - I' (1971) identifies Porden's connection with York Minster, but it does not explore how this enabled Porden's Gothic to convey 'that distinction of Rank and fortune'.¹⁹ Indeed, all subsequent studies have overlooked Porden's desire to execute an informed style of Gothic.²⁰ This is primarily due to the paucity of evidence; detailed drawings recording Eaton before Benjamin Gummow's rich modifications in the 1820s have not survived, or are unknown. The only way to gain access to Porden's supposedly informed style is through a detailed reading of his correspondence and proposals for Eaton. A good example is seen in his response to the Earl's dissatisfaction over the attic chimneypieces, in which Porden displays a grasp of medieval architecture and its recent imitation in the eighteenth century. The chimney-pieces

'were intended for Servant's Rooms chiefly, and it is usually considered of little consequence what they are in point of form. [...] The sketch which Gummow has sent me will do very well. I have only to object that it has been executed in every Gothicised Cottage these 50 years and was originally designed by Batty Langley. In short, it was only what was called a modern Chimney piece before the present french fashion became prevalent with the usual gothic ornament instead of the Grecian patera.'²¹

Porden's contempt for Batty Langley's 'bastard Gothic', as Horace Walpole termed it, sprang from its relative popularity, and from the fact that it was not based upon a sound understanding of medieval sources.²² Both of these implications clearly stand in contrast to Porden's styling of Eaton as a refined and archaeologically informed Gothic structure.²³

A number of new technologies were proposed by Porden to expedite and reduce the cost of Eaton's

construction and embellishment. In January 1803 he claimed that 'I have hit on a method of making the Ornamental parts, which I think will be cheaper, and certainly more expeditious, than the working of large and handsome columns, such as you ought to have for such a Mansion'.²⁴ Discussing Eaton's elevations a month later, this method was revealed: '... the principal ornaments may be cast in such a manner as to be executed with exactness & expedition and, comparatively at a much lighter expense than will be imagined'.²⁵ New technology was also used for Eaton's windows: rather than being made from carved stone, Porden advocated cast iron. He was keen to protect their exact form, at least until Eaton was completed. In 1805 he wrote to Lord Grosvenor:

'I have this morning received a Letter from Gummow informing me that Lord Radnor has been at Eaton, and having made many memorandums, appeared to be desirous of having some of the Cast Iron Windows. As Gummow told his Lordship, he supposed the Founder would not dare to cast any thing from your Lordship's Moulds, I think it probable Lord Radnor may write to your Lordship on the subject. If he should do so I hope your Lordship will think it right to refer him to me under the idea that the design and invention is mine. It would not be pleasant to make the beauties of Eaton common before it is finished, nor to permit another to reap the benefit of your Lordship's experiments, which have cost so much expence and Study. These reasons however your Lordship may not think it proper to give and the other will lay the refusal on me. I have written to Gummow and the Founders to forbid their casting from our Moulds; but I have not made use of your Ladyships Authority for that purpose. I could wish, however, that you would give Gummow a general order to the same effect.'²⁶

The cast-iron windows and structure of Kew Palace, London, undertaken by James Wyatt from the early 1790s, probably influenced Porden's cast-iron window tracery.²⁷ Wyatt used his brother's 'incombustible' system for the structure, which, as John Martin Robinson notes, 'was symptomatic of the Wyatts' interest in industrial techniques and advanced technology'.²⁸ Porden, as Wyatt's first and

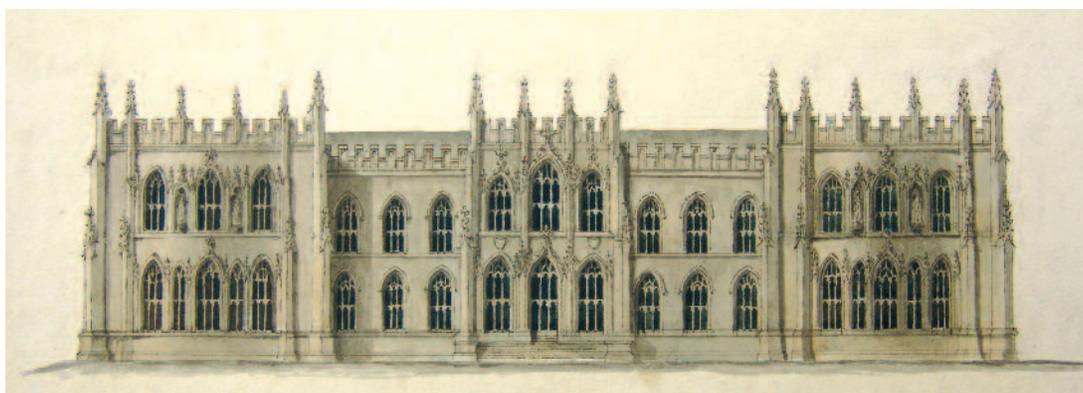
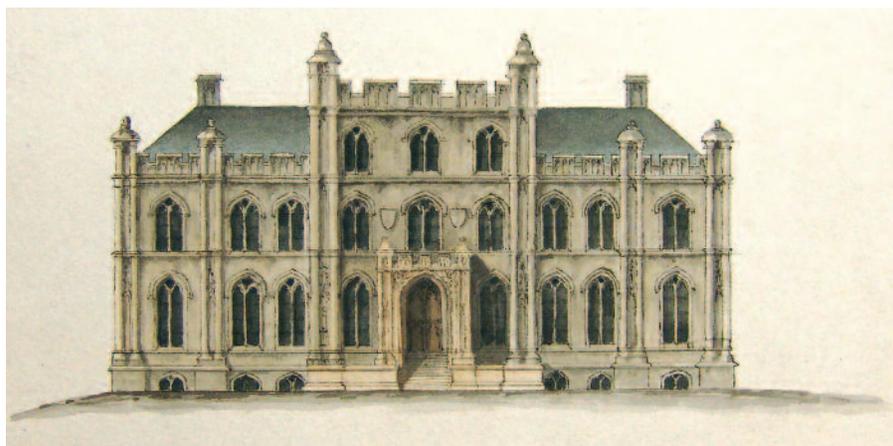
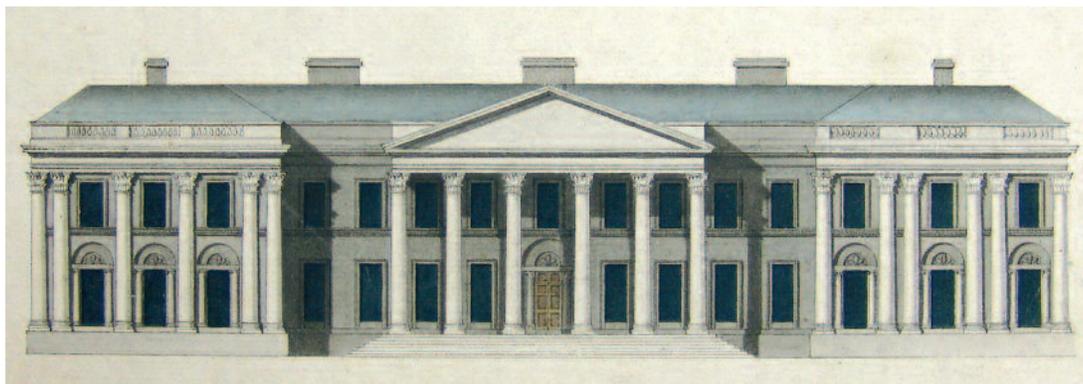


Fig. 2 (top). William Porden, classical design for Eaton Hall, ZCR 63/2/723.
Fig. 3 (centre). William Porden, second Gothic design for Eaton Hall, ZCR 63/2/724.
Fig. 4 (above). William Porden, 'Eaton Hall, [enlarged] idea in the Gothic Style'.
(Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

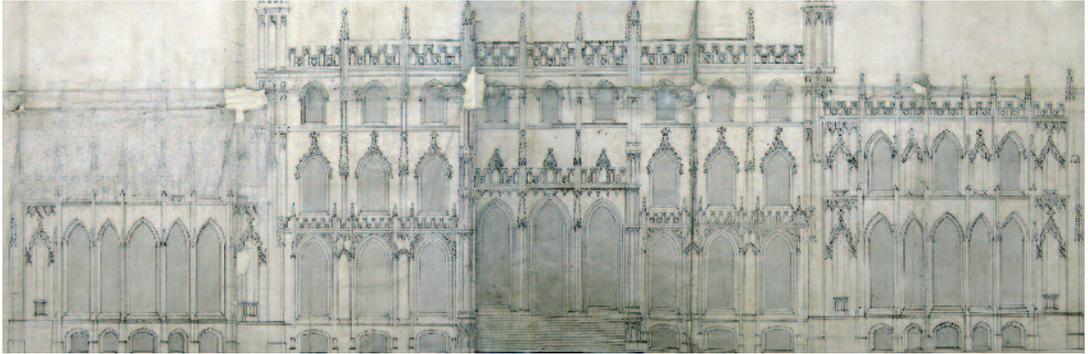


Fig. 5. William Porden, Gothic Design for Eaton Hall, ZCR 63/2/734.
(Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

most talented pupil, clearly adopted his employer's passion for new materials.²⁹ The emphasis placed on casting and its theoretical economy, however, seems to challenge Porden's argument that Gothic 'preserv[es] that distinction to Rank and Fortune, which it is the habit of the age to diminish'.³⁰

One of Gothic's main advantages over classical architecture, according to Porden, was its 'picturesque variation'. In 1803 he argued that when a Gothic building is

'externally considered its picturesque beauties are supereminent, and enrich the appearance of a Country far beyond the Grecian. What a difference would be made if our Village Churches with their spires and pinnacles were changed for Grecian Temples with Porticoes and Pediments, all of one figure and not higher than a good Barn. Internally considered the excellence of Gothic Architecture is not less. No Architecture can exceed it in the picturesque effect of its scenery – Its Arcades and vaulted Ceilings, its tracery Windows and various embellishments which might be rendered more various by colour and gilding.'³¹

His initial designs for Eaton (Figs. 3–4) were but tentative forays into the Gothic style, lacking the variation and picturesque beauty characteristic of medieval architecture. Both proposals were symmetrical in the Georgian fashion, and the second Gothic design (Fig. 3) was simply a refacing of the existing seventeenth-century building with engaged

shafts, crenellations and Y-tracery windows. One noteworthy modification was the central bays' extension to the roofline: it replaced the pediment and was both practical and beneficial to the elevation:

'You will find the drawing that I have designed at Attic Story over the body of the House at Eaton. After much consideration I found it impossible to get your Lordship a number of good Bed Rooms without it, as the new Garrets would have been only better than they are at present, by being newly fitted up and with new windows. But by remaining the walls square, the Attic Rooms are not only handsomer; but by gaining all the Space lost by the slope of the Roof I can make them more numerous. With regard to the appearance I think the Attic Story adds considerably to the dignity of the House by giving consequently to the Centre.'³²

The scale of the undertaking, however, soon shifted to reflect Porden's ambition for transforming Eaton into a grand expression of Lord Grosvenor's pedigree and status. His '[enlarged] idea in the Gothic style' (Fig. 4) is much more sophisticated than the '2nd Gothic design' (Fig. 3) in its arrangement and architectural detailing. There are different floor levels and the outer bays are bowed, adding variety to the garden elevation. Elements from this design were executed, including the bowed bays, but this was only an intermediary step, and the plan grew in scope and complexity. An elevation of the east front, c.1806 (Fig. 5), indicates a significant

development in the size of the house and the sophistication of its architectural details. Although still symmetrical, with the original house at the centre, the façade is decorated with a succession of lancet windows, ogee-flip crestings, pinnacles and niches. Unlike the previous designs there is a clear hierarchy of floors – those on the ground floor, containing the state rooms, are the tallest and the most elaborate with a band of crenellations running above their arch-heads. The different wings suggest that Porden was deciding between double- and triple-storeyed additions, and how to resolve their rooflines. Even though Eaton's exact form was not resolved at this stage, the design forms the basis of the first Gothic phase and, in comparison with the previous designs, is expansive and ornate enough to suggest Lord Grosvenor's wealth and status.

**PORDEN: ARCHITECT OF
EATON'S INTERIOR**

Porden's well-informed Gothic principles were also applied to Eaton's interiors. The extant proposals for elevations and plans, including designs for carpets, indicate Porden's possessive attitude towards the whole of the house.³³ He felt that it was his prerogative, but also his responsibility as long-term surveyor to Lord Grosvenor, to ensure that every aspect was executed in a refined taste. We can see, for example, that he exercised every effort in deciding between a gable and transom cresting for the richly encrusted saloon organ (Figs. 6–7).³⁴ Fig. 7 also incorporates a 'flippable panel' so a decision could be arrived at. Extra effort was expended over the organ's design because Porden felt it was essential (along with the painted glass)



Fig. 6 (left). William Porden, Design for the Organ in the Saloon, ZCR 63/2/754.
 Fig. 7 (right). William Porden, another design for the Organ in the Saloon, ZCR 63/2/753.
 (Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

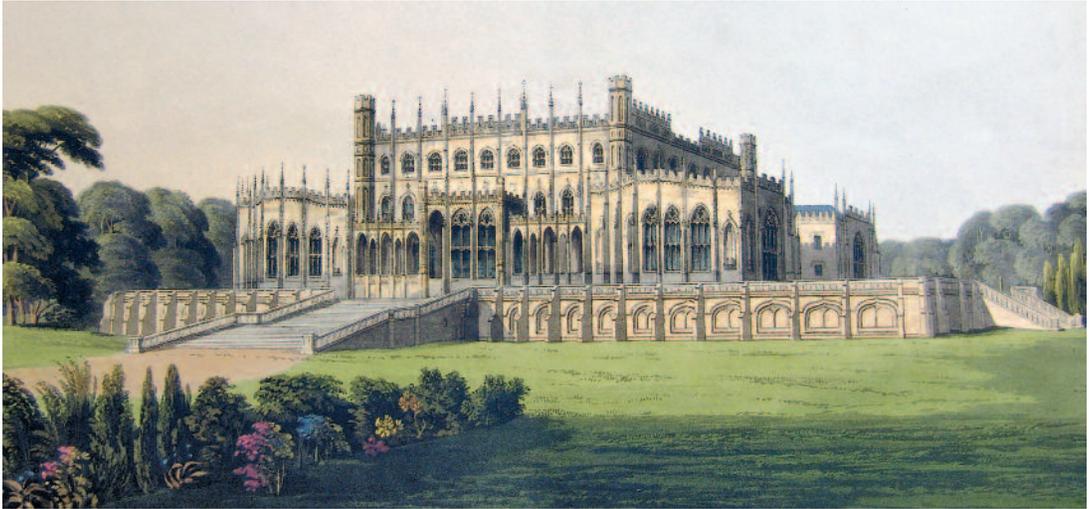


Fig. 8. 'N.E. View of Eaton Hall near Chester, the Seat of Earl Grosvenor', 1814, ZCR 63/2/725.
(Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

to produce a suitably theatrical environment in the saloon:

'...the Saloon I would recommend to be made as brilliant with stained glass as it could be made, because it would be most appropriate to the Organ and its Accompaniments and because its effect there would be peculiarly Striking when contrasted with the Hall on throwing open the doors to the Saloon.'³⁵

His influence extended to Eaton's mouldings, niches, painted glass, heraldry, ceilings, carpets, room colours, and even furniture. Writing in November 1807, his zeal for securing high-quality furniture is clear in his criticism of Gillows of Lancaster's proposals:

'... having met him [Mr Gillow] at Grosvenor House I have taken the liberty of looking at all his Drawings and the specimens of the furniture chosen by your Lordship, on which [...] I give my Opinion with that frankness which becomes an Architect in the Confidence of your Lordship. I do not like every thing that your Lordship has chosen, not because they are unhandsome; but because they are less so than others that I have seen, which probably your Lordship has not seen.'³⁶

Porden's 'superior understanding' of medieval architecture was transferable to furniture, and his expertise and understanding of fashions is clearly demonstrated with regard to Gillows's furniture:

'I have this day seen the leg which was intended for it [a sideboard], and have something to object to its form, but more to the want of originality in the design. [...] The Chairs are very good; but they want some improvement in their form and embellishment and after all they are any-bodies Chair — they were made for the Marquis of Abercorn and Sir Thomas Somebody — I would have them made for Lord Grosvenor. I have seen all the drawings for the Rooms and they are capable of improvement. In saying this I do not mean to say that they are not good; but that they may be better.'³⁷

Porden also wished for the state bed to be unique and a statement of Lord Grosvenor's status. Discussing his design for it in 1811, Porden states that it

'...will have an appropriate effect and be rich and picturesque. If you approve of it I would recommend the Woodwork to be made at Eaton or at Chester, not only because You will have it better done, and save packing cases and carriage; but because it will

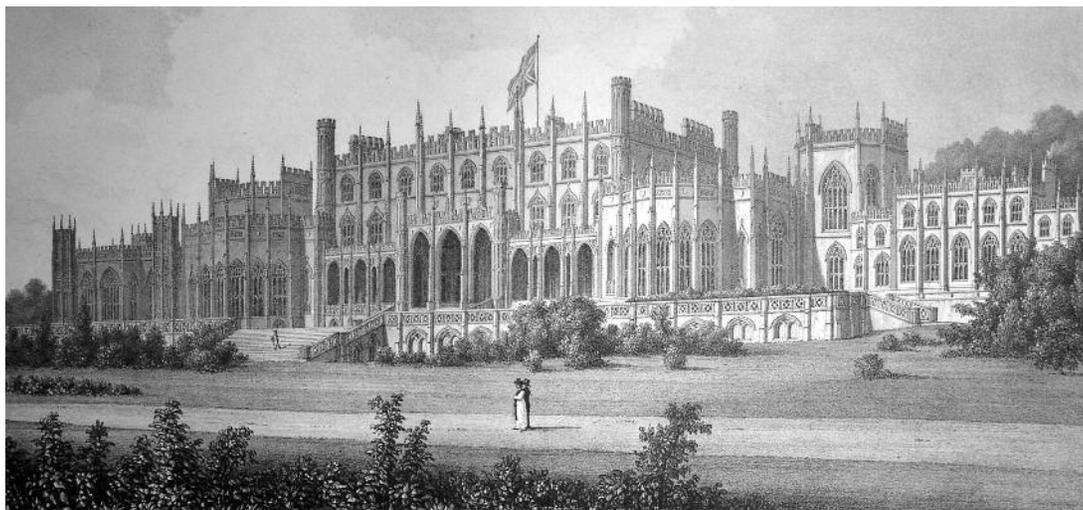


Fig. 9. J.C. Buckler, 'Eaton Hall: South East View', from *Views of Eaton Hall, the Seat of the Right Honourable Earl Grosvenor* (London, 1826).

continue your own, for if made in London it will perhaps be seen in every house that pretends to gothisism. The Draperies may be made in London or at Chester without danger of being spoiled as the form of wood work will direct the Upholsterer. If your Lordship and Lady Grosvenor do not approve of this design we will chearful prepare some others.³⁸

This design has not been traced, but a bed supplied to Eaton by John Davis of No. 20 Lower Brook Street, London, might have been based upon it.³⁹ Either way, Porden was adamant that the most prestigious piece of furniture at Eaton should be made locally to avoid its design becoming fashionable and copied for houses across Britain. This corresponds with Porden's notion that every aspect of Eaton from its exterior elevations and cast iron windows through to the internal furnishings was, where possible, to be unique. He wanted Eaton to be an individual representation of Lord Grosvenor's status, and his opposition to Gillows's furniture should, therefore, be read in this context.

A RENEWED EATON: THE SECOND GOTHIC PHASE

Eaton was substantially modified between 1823 and 1825. This phase turned Porden's Eaton from a substantial seat (Fig. 8), into a sprawling and highly embellished edifice under Benjamin Gummow, and it was this enlarged structure that J. and J.C. Buckler published in 1826 (Fig. 9). Whilst it is commonly known that Gummow superintended this work, scholars have overlooked Porden's proposals for this phase, and any modifications or enhancements made to the interior have received insufficient attention.⁴⁰

Despite Gummow's name being attached with this second phase, Porden was actively involved in designing the extensions. Indeed, he supplied Lord Grosvenor with numerous designs for the expansion, and this can be traced in his correspondence from as early as 1814, but primarily from 1819 to 1821. The first mention comes on 12 February 1814:

'I will consider your Lordships suggestions respecting the projected adding to Eaton Hall in the course of next week, though I shall be much occupied by the

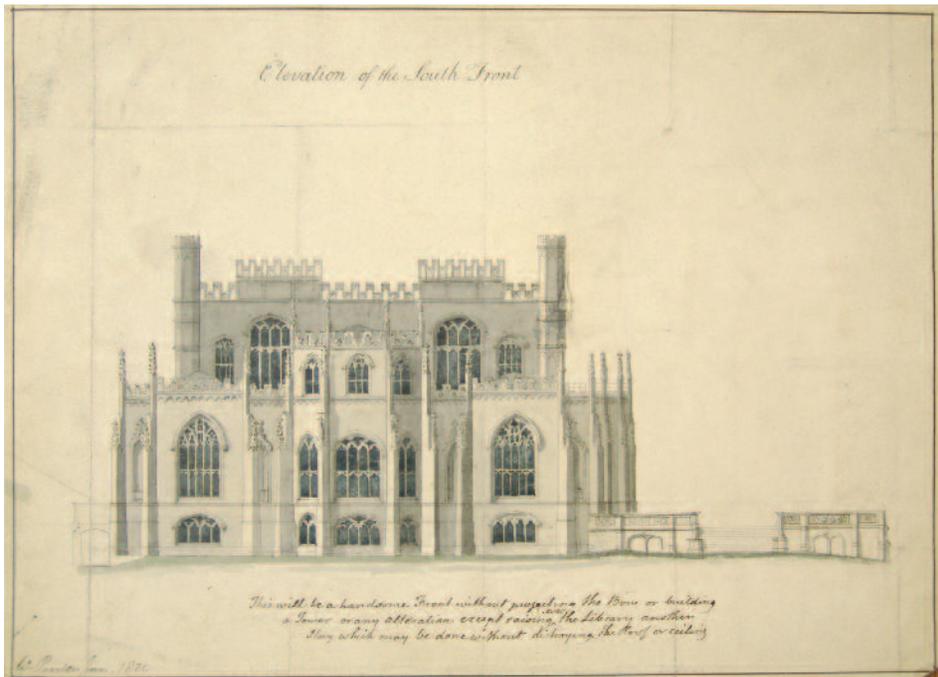


Fig. 10. William Porden, Elevation of the South Front, 1820, ZCR 63/2/725.
(Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

Buildings in hand as your Lordship is aware that I have to look on both sides, that is to say both at the Agreements and the Plans.⁴¹

Nearly six years later, 25 September 1819, a letter to Lord Grosvenor reveals that Porden had been considering Eaton's modifications for some time, and that designs were ready:

'I hope to send by Coach this Evening two plans for the additions to Eaton Hall, adapting your Lordship's Idea of making the Vista through the State Bed Room. That Room of course can be no longer a State Bed Room; but I think one side of the New Plan will supply the want of it; with many suitable Appendages, and be more noble and princely by its being distinct, and remote from the Body of the House. I have written every thing upon the Plans that appears necessary to explain them; but your Lordship will please to consider them as only the first sketches of a Project and that they will be susceptible of many improvements when the details are made out. I have not had time to make a plan of the Upper Story; but it will be easily

understood as it will be nearly the same in distribution as that on the level of the Saloon floor. I have no doubt but the Elevations of the East and West fronts will be picturesque and grand in combination with the Main House and Stables. Your Lordship speaks of extending the Library and seems to think a similar projection will be necessary in the north side. I beg leave to observe that Symmetry were it practicable would not be observable, not unless particularly designed I attempt it; for in a design entirely new, and even of grecian Architecture I should be fearful of the effect. I will as soon as I probably can let your Lordship have my idea of lengthening the Library to which at present I see no objection.⁴²

Porden's initial proposal for an 1820 library addition was conservative (Fig. 10); he noted on a 1820 drawing for the south front that 'This will be a handsome Front without projecting the Bow or building a Tower or any alteration except raising over the Library another Story which may be done

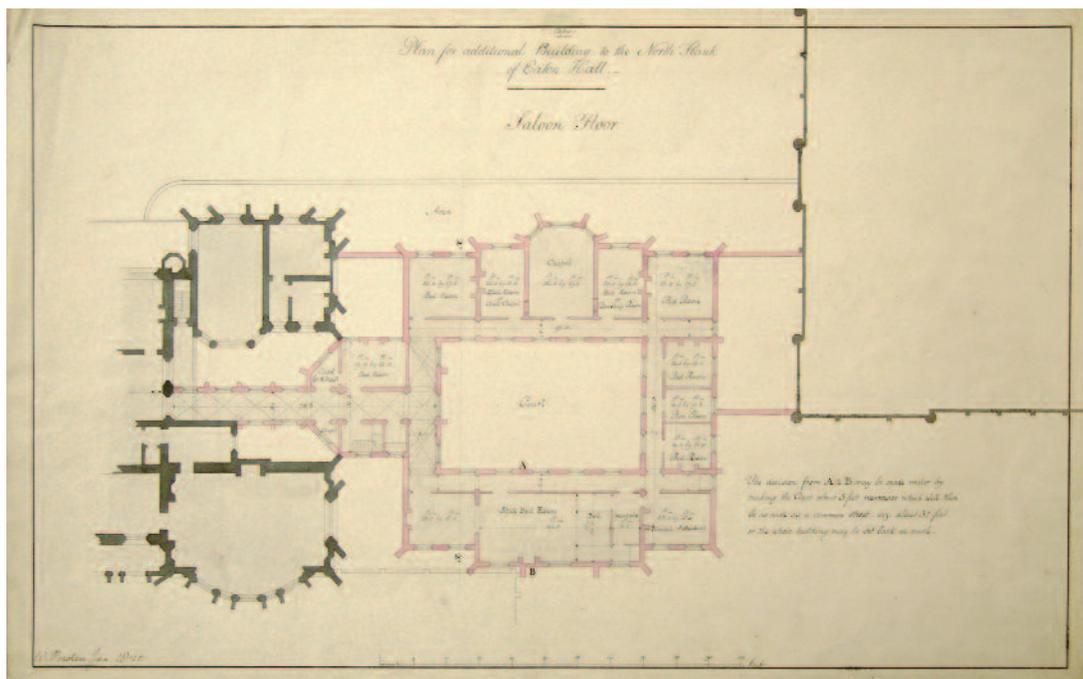


Fig. 11. William Porden, Plan for additional building to the North Flank of Eaton Hall, 1820, ZCR 63/2/795.



Fig. 12. William Porden, 'Elevation of the East Front with Proposed Additions', 1820, ZCR 63/2/793.
(Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

without destroying the Roof or ceiling'.⁴³ This addition is very restrained in comparison with the additional accommodation marked in pink on the 1820 Plan for additional building to the North Flank of Eaton Hall (Fig. 11).⁴⁴ The difference between these two wings would have most certainly created a picturesque variation in Eaton's profile.

The final letter in Porden's correspondence on Eaton to Lord Grosvenor, dated 19 February 1821,

indicates that his plans for Eaton's extensions were highly developed:

'I am glad to find the plan is likely to answer the purpose desired. The other Plans are in great forwardness, and I have made new ones of the same stories your Lordship took with you with such improvements as have since suggested themselves.'⁴⁵

His progress is conveyed by the highly detailed design for Eaton's enlargement (Fig. 12).⁴⁶ As with the

previous proposals, Porden's central block and wings are retained, but with a modest addition to the south (library) wing expanded beyond Elevation of the South Front (Fig. 10), and a substantial accommodation block to the north consistent with his Plan for additional building to the North Flank of Eaton Hall (Fig. 11). Subsequent to this design, however, the library was extended by 8oft in Elevation of the East Flank ... of the proposed ... Additions to the South Front (Fig. 13). This is consistent with Lord Grosvenor's 'idea of lengthening the library', and it has the benefit of maintaining Eaton's variation in profile.⁴⁷

These drawings reveal that Porden was actively involved in planning Eaton's enlargement up to the year of his dismissal (1821). Following his departure, the modifications were entrusted to Porden's clerk of works, Gummow, a man Porden considered 'very negligent'.⁴⁸ Comparing Porden's proposals (Figs. 10–13) with the work executed under Gummow (Fig. 9 & Fig. 14), it is clear that Porden's plans were

largely followed. The library wing, for example, is a mild elaboration of Porden's plan (Fig. 13) with the addition of buttressing and attenuated pinnacles on the bastions. The accommodation wing to the north is clearly related to Porden's proposal (Fig. 12), though on a smaller scale. Finally, Fig. 9 reveals that a grand octagonal linking tower with a large Gothic window replaced that on Porden's proposal for the north wing, and that the surfaces are generally covered with more attenuated Gothic detailing.⁴⁹ A notable difference between their proposals, however, is the plan of the north accommodation wing. Porden planned for the suite of rooms to be arranged around a central quadrangle (Fig. 11), but Gummow replaced the cloister with a much more prosaic central corridor running the wing's length (Fig. 14). Comparing Porden's designs with Gummow's executed work, it is clear that Porden retained an influence over Eaton, even after he had been dismissed from Lord Grosvenor's service.

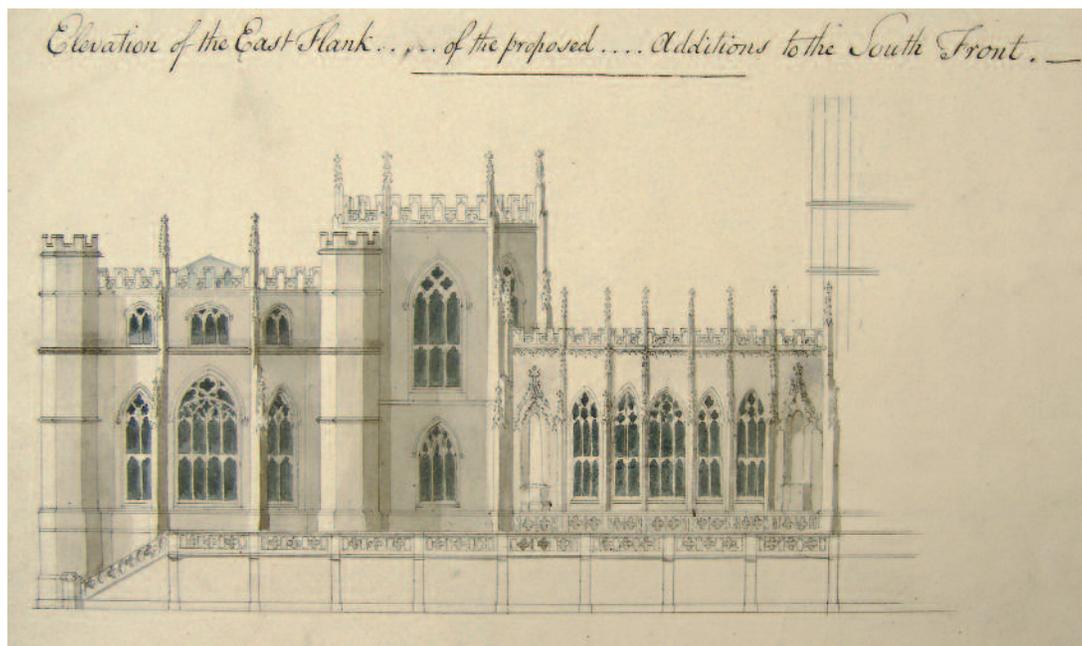


Fig. 13. William Porden, 'Elevation of the East Flank ... of the proposed ... Additions to the South Front', ZCR 63/2/811. (Reproduced by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester)

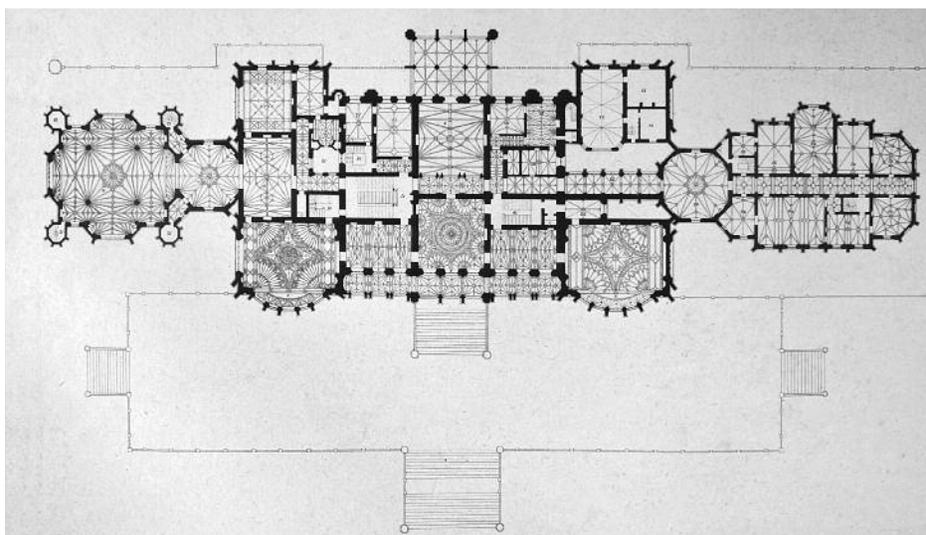


Fig. 14. J.C. Buckler, 'Plan of the Principal Story of Eaton Hall', detail, from *Views of Eaton Hall, the Seat of the Right Honourable Earl Grosvenor* (London, 1826).

CONCLUSION

Just after completion, the *Monthly Magazine* for September 1814 declared Eaton Hall to be a 'recently-erected and exquisitely beautiful mansion [...made in imitation of] the cathedral Gothic of the age of Edward III, as exhibited in York Minster'.⁵⁰ Likewise, the *Eaton Tourist* of 1824 proclaimed that 'the first view of this most excellent mansion [...] has amazed me! — could art and genius combine [...] to delineate in one picture Eaton Hall? Impossible!'⁵¹ Eaton's interior and exterior were unified under the control of Porden, Eaton's arbiter of taste. He wanted to create a tightly controlled statement of Lord Grosvenor's status by making the Gothic seat exclusive in form, style and furnishing. Even after he left Lord Grosvenor's employ in 1821, he was still influential as the extensions undertaken by Gummow in 1823–25 largely accord with his plans. Porden's role, especially in Eaton's second phase, is now clear, and he should receive full credit for his contribution to a building described by Charles Locke Eastlake as 'one of the most important attempts at Pointed architecture of [...its] date'.⁵²

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is drawn from research undertaken whilst preparing my doctoral thesis, 'Furnishing Britain: Gothic as a National Aesthetic 1740–1840', at the University of St Andrews under the supervision of Annette Carruthers and Dr Julian Luxford. I am indebted to their support and punctilious efforts in guiding me through the multifaceted project. The research was made possible by a number of very generous grants, particularly from the University of St Andrews, SIET (Scottish International Education Fund), and Burnwynd History and Art. I received continual help from the archivists at the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester, and Louise Martin, Archivist and Records Manager at the Grosvenor Family Archive, Eaton Hall, Chester, despite a seemingly endless barrage of manuscript requests and queries.

NOTES

- 1 Hermann Pückler-Muskau, *A Regency Visitor: The English Tour of Prince Pückler-Muskau Described in His Letters, 1826–1828*, ed. E. M. Butler (London, 1957), pp. 135–136. He wrote of Ashridge: ‘at five o’clock reached Ashridge Park, the seat of the Earl of Bridgewater. [...] The house which, like Cashiobury [*sic*. Hertfordshire], is modern Gothic, is almost endless, with all its walls, towers, and courts. I must, however, frankly confess, that this modern Gothic (‘castellated’) style, which looks so fairy-like on paper, in reality often strikes one not only as tasteless, but even somewhat absurd, from its overloaded and incongruous air’: *Ibid.*, pp. 117–18.
- 2 See John Cornforth and Guy Acoque, ‘The Eternal Gothic of Eaton’, *Country Life* 149 (1971), pp. 304–07, 360–64; John Morley, *Regency Design: 1790–1840* (London, 1993), p. 167; Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London, 2005), pp. 98–101.
- 3 For Porden’s dismissal see Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600–1840* (2008), p. 822, and Geoffrey Tyack, ‘Porden, William (Bap. 1755, D. 1822)’, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22548 (accessed 20/07/2009).
- 4 Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester, ZCR 63/2/720.
- 5 H.R. Tedder and H.C.G. Matthew, ‘Grosvenor, Robert, First Marquess of Westminster (1767–1845), Politician’, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4791 (accessed 05/11/12).
- 6 That Lord Grosvenor had an architect in control of both the building and its furnishing was not new – we need only look to Robert Adam’s work, for example at Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire: see Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors* (London, 2001), pp. 18–39. What sets Porden apart from his predecessors and contemporaries, however, is his determination to see Eaton executed in an archaeologically informed mode of Gothic rather than a quotidian or uninformed variant, commonly associated with Batty Langley and his famous treatise, *Ancient Architecture Restored, and Improved* (London, 1741–42), republished as *Gothic Architecture, Improved by Rules and Proportions* (London, 1747).
- 7 Buckler’s original drawings: British Library, Add. MS 36360.
- 8 Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester ZCR 63/2/723–24 and ‘Eaton Hall, [enlarged] idea in the Gothic style’.
- 9 Grosvenor Family Archive, Chester, 9/278, ff. 1r–1v.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 19 January 1803 ff. 1v–2v.
- 11 This is particularly evident Porden’s proposals for painted glass, and also his sketches of coats of arms, contained in the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, ZCR 63/2/822–23.
- 12 John Buckler and John Chessell Buckler, *Views of Eaton Hall in Cheshire, the Seat of the Right Honourable Earl Grosvenor* (London, 1826), p. 3.
- 13 See John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt, Architect to George III* (London, 2012), p. ix.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- 15 Horace Walpole described Lee Priory as ‘a child of Strawberry prettier than the parent, and so executed and so finished! There is a delicious closet too, so flattering to me! and a prior’s library so antique, and that does such honour to Mr Wyat’s taste!’. W.S. Lewis, et al. (eds.), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, XII (London, 1944), p. 111.
- 16 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 10 December 1803 f. 2r.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 10 December 1803 f. 2r. This refers to Joseph Halfpenny, *Gothic Ornaments in the Cathedral Church of York Drawn and Etched by Joseph Halfpenny* (York, 1795).
- 18 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 12 November 1803 f. 1v.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 19 January 1803 ff. 2r. See Cornforth and Acoque, *loc. cit.*, pp. 305–6.
- 20 See Aldrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 96–98, and Terence Davis, *The Gothick Taste* (London, 1974), pp. 134–44.
- 21 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 28 December 1804 f. 1r.
- 22 W.S. Lewis, et al. (eds.), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, XXXV (London, 1973), p. 233. Porden’s criticism corresponds with the general disregard for Langley’s Gothic later summed up by Charles Locke Eastlake in *A History of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1872), pp. 51–54.
- 23 Although Porden did not specifically identify the character of Eaton’s Gothic, the tracery was a mixture of the Decorated style as seen at York Minster, and Perpendicular. This inspiration was identified in Anon, ‘Eaton Hall, the Seat of Earl Grosvenor’, *The Monthly Magazine* 39, no. 2 (1814), p. 107. Recently it has been interpreted as purely Perpendicular, derived from Henry VII’s Chapel at

- Westminster Abbey: John Martin Robinson, *The Regency Country House: From the Archives of Country Life* (London, 2005), p. 88.
- 24 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 19 January 1803, f. 1r.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 11 February 1803, f. 2r.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 5 September 1805, ff. 1r–v.
- 27 See Robinson, *James Wyatt*, p. 271.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 See *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 312.
- 30 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 19 January 1803 f. 2v.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 19 January 1803, ff. 1v–2r.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 11 February 1803, f. 1r.
- 33 Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, Chester ZCR 63/2/758, 765 and 774.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 753–54.
- 35 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 7 December 1808 f. 1v.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 12 November 1807 f. 1r.
- 37 *Ibid.*, f. 1v. Author's emphasis.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 7 January 1811. f. 1r.
- 39 *Ibid.* f. 133. Further information on the bed and the furnishing of Eaton Hall can be found in the author's companion article 'The Furnishing of a Gothic Fantasy 1803–1825. Eaton Hall, Cheshire' in *Furniture History* 48 (2012), pp. 155–180.
- 40 This phase is barely mentioned, or separated from the earlier work in *The Eaton Tourists or, a 'Colloquial Description' of the Hall, Grounds, Gardens, &c. At Eaton* (Chester, 1824); Cornforth and Acloque, *loc. cit.*, pp. 304–7, 86–89, 360–4.
- 41 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 12 February 1814 f. 2v.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 25 September 1819, ff. 1r–1v.
- 43 Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, ZCR 63/2/806.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 795.
- 45 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 19 February 1821, f. 1r.
- 46 Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Office, ZCR 63/2/793.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 811.
- 48 Grosvenor Family Archive, 9/278, 17 June 1808, f. 1r.
- 49 These drawings confirm Acloque's and Cornforth's suspicion that Gummow took over Porden's proposals for enlarging Eaton in the 1820s: Cornforth and Acloque, *loc. cit.*, p. 307.
- 50 *The Monthly Magazine* 39, no. 2 (1814), p. 107.
- 51 Anon, *The Eaton Tourists* (Eaton Hall, 1824), p. 42.
- 52 Charles L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1872), p. 77.