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‘A MAN OF SENSE’: THOMAS GIBSON’S PORTRAIT OF ANTONIO NICCOLINI (1701–1769)

MILES BARTON

Often born out of the desire by the family to emphasise political connections or filial relationships, portraits have always played an important role in the English country house. For hundreds of years the aristocratic landed families of England wanted images of themselves, and their powerful or famous friends, rendered for posterity, underlining and giving credence to their status and dynastic influence. Due to this, large collections have been amassed, resulting in spectacular displays that see them hang high and long around the walls of corridors, stairways and halls. Such accumulations can be a burden to later generations, where recognition and identity can represent a problem: a fact that did not go unobserved by Horace Walpole who noted of one family, careless in their record keeping, that ‘they are only sure that they have so many pounds of ancestors in the lump’.¹

At what point in time this unfortunate obscurity fell upon the portrait presented here (Fig. 1) is a matter of conjecture, but we know for certain that at least a century had passed – and probably more – during which time the identity of the dashing young nobleman was unknown. The clues found in the painting itself, crucially the armorial decorated plinth on which he leans, have enabled not only the identity of the individual to once more emerge from the past, revealing the figure of Italian nobleman Antonio Niccolini (1701–1769), but finally the curious tale of the portrait’s history.

Niccolini was a member of an immensely powerful Florentine family, descended from the Sirigatti landowners of Tuscany, who were valuable



Fig. 1. Thomas Gibson, ‘Antonio Niccolini’, signed and dated ‘T. Gibson fecit 1725’, oil on canvas, 66 by 48 inches. (Private Collection)

power brokers for the Medicis and highly influential at court. The youngest child of Filippo, third Marquess of Ponsacco and Camugliano, Niccolini was a man of broad cultural interests, who combined a passion for literature, philosophy and the physical sciences with a growing curiosity towards countries

at the forefront of intellectual debate in these fields, particularly England. In turn he was a lawyer, a clergyman and an intellectual free thinker who kept vast correspondence with similar enlightened minds of the eighteenth century. Inevitably this brought him into conflict with certain members of the ruling élite who, despite his background, had him expelled from Tuscany in 1748.²

Count Cosmas Migliorucci, (d.1726), was from another influential Florentine family and was a member, along with Niccolini, of the Order of St Stephen.³ An Anglophile and later a naturalised Englishman, he was a wealthy and successful merchant who married into the staunchly Catholic Nevill family of Nevill Holt Hall, Leicestershire.⁴ Niccolini no doubt stayed with the Count and Countess at their house in Queen Square on excursions to London, when this portrait would have been painted; that these urbane Italian noblemen were undoubtedly firm friends would explain why the painting came to be in the collection at Nevill Holt Hall, where it was to remain for almost two hundred years. Count Migliorucci died suddenly in 1726, but his more than able wife Mary continued his lucrative silver bullion business, keeping in touch with her husband’s friends and colleagues, particularly influential ones in close contact with the Pope’s family.⁵ Niccolini’s portrait therefore would be understood by Catholic visitors, and, even though a widow, her importance, and that of the Nevill family, would be maintained and possibly enhanced by the association.

The artist Thomas Gibson (1680–1751) worked in London as a portrait painter and attracted prestigious sitters such as the archbishops William Wake and John Potter as well as Sir Robert Walpole. His patrons included John, first Earl Poulett, and Augusta, Princess of Wales. Gibson’s practice earned him the appointment in 1711 as a founding director of Godfrey Kneller’s St Martin’s Lane Academy, the forerunner of the Royal Academy schools. Engraver and antiquary George Vertue spoke of Gibson as a

man ‘universally beloved for his affability & good nature’ and praised him for his ‘correct & firm manner of drawing’.⁶ Gibson’s work closely resembles, and is often confused with, that of fellow portraitist Jonathan Richardson (c.1665–1745), who could have almost have had this portrait in mind when he wrote at the time that ‘A Portrait Painter must understand Mankind, and enter into their characters, and express their Minds as well as their faces: And as his Business is chiefly with People of Condition, he must Think as a Gentleman, and a Man of Sense, or twill be impossible to give Such their True and Proper Resemblances’.⁷

Finished in 1725, the year of Richardson’s theory, this painting is one of Gibson’s most colourful and ornate male portraits, representing an invaluable study in style and fashion of the period. From the sumptuous blue velvet court coat with heavily embroidered stiffened cuffs and fabulously decorated waistcoat, to the elegant buckled shoes and silver trimmed hat, grandeur and luxury are clearly evident, but in a distinctly English understated manner. The opulent surroundings and accoutrement that might accompany Continental portraits of the same period do not figure here; rather, Gibson has contrasted the figure of Niccolini with a classical architectural background of cool stonework. Here we can detect a change of mind in the artist to his composition, as *pentimenti* of a fountain exist to the right and of the family armorial on the plinth to the left. A taste of Italy is indicated in the view beyond the elegant nobleman, with military trophies adorning the high balustrade and a backdrop of swaying Cypress trees set against a blue Tuscan sky. The much-admired antique military trophies of Octavianus Augustus on the Campidoglio in Rome were probably the inspiration, and perhaps allude to Niccolini’s ancestor Arrigo who, according to legend, earned the family name ‘Sirigatti’ after his courage in the Battle of Benevento in 1266. They could also reflect the earlier martial character of the Order of St Stephen, the red-ribboned cross of which Niccolini nobly wears.

The portrait was presumably commissioned by Count Cosmas Migliorucci direct from the artist, and remained at Nevill Holt Hall until inherited by Lavinia, daughter of Charles Nevill, (d.1848), who married Reverend John Dawson Peake. It appears that by this time the identity of the sitter had become completely unknown, and after the death of the Peake sons the painting was purchased by Mr Butteriss, a friend of the family and offered to the National Portrait Gallery in 1926.⁸ It was later sold at auction in London in 1928, where it was bought by Mr Blakeland.⁹ Obscurity followed, until the portrait surfaced once more in 1967 when it was in the possession of Allan Carr (1937–1999), American film and stage producer;¹⁰ after his death, an American auctioneer made further enquiries to the National Portrait Gallery concerning the painting’s history.¹¹ In 2003 it appeared at auction in England¹² where the yellowed varnish and dirt resulted in even the signature of the artist being overlooked and it was purchased by the London art trade.¹³ Some time later the portrait was cleaned and, based on the armorial and date of the painting, the identity of the sitter finally re-discovered.¹⁴ However, despite this, still only the sketchiest details of twentieth-century ownership were often repeated and passed on. This fuller account of the picture’s past has finally led to re-discovering the earlier history which had for so long remained elusive.¹⁵

It is possible that further details regarding the portrait might be held in the Niccolini archive in Florence, where substantial correspondence exists between both the Migliorucci and Niccolini families. It is hoped that such research might be undertaken in the future, since this portrait highlights not only the facility of Gibson as a painter, but also the importance of Italian involvement in English society and commerce in the early eighteenth century.

NOTES

- 1 Gervase Jackson-Stops (ed.), *The Treasure Houses of Britain* (exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, New Haven and London, 1985), p. 32.
- 2 The greatest source of information concerning Niccolini and his family is held by the Niccolini da Camugliano family archive in Florence (www.archivistorici.com). Other good references can be found in Antonio Zobi, *Storia civile della Toscana dal MDCCXXXVII al MDCCCXLVIII*, 1 (Florence, 1850) and Marcello Verga, *Da ‘cittadini’ a ‘nobili’, lotta politica e riforma delle istituzioni nella Toscana di Francesco Stefano* (Milan, 1990).
- 3 The Order of St Stephen was a Tuscan military order founded, with Papal approval, by Cosimo I de’ Medici, first Grand Duke of Tuscany, in 1561. Though initially martial in character, by the early eighteenth century young noblemen joined more to learn the knightly virtues of a chivalric order than to engage in warfare. Its membership consisted of many sons of the most powerful and élite families in Italy.
- 4 Bernard Elliot, ‘An Eighteenth Century Leicestershire Business Woman: The Countess Mary Migliorucci of Nevill Holt Hall’, *Leicestershire Archaeological & Historical Society Transactions* 61 (1987), pp. 77–81. Count Cosmas Migliorucci, later taking the names Peter Joseph when he became a naturalised Englishman in 1709, married Mary Nevill in 1713. He was one of the most important London dealers in the importing of silver bullion from Spain which was vital for the English economy and particularly trade in East India.
- 5 A nephew of Pope Benedict XIII was a powerful and helpful friend to Niccolini: Luca Corsi, Tommaso Crudeli, *Il calamaio del padre inquisitore: istoria della carcerazione del dottor Tommaso Crudeli di Poppi e della processura formata contro di lui nel tribunale del S. Offizio di Firenze*, (Institute of Historical Studies, Florence, 2003), p. 52.
- 6 Elizabeth Einberg, *Manners & Morals: Hogarth and British Painting 1700–1760* (Tate Gallery, London, 1987), p. 57.
- 7 Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the theory of Painting* (2nd ed., London, 1725), pp. 21–2.
- 8 Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery: NoA (Gibson) correspondence – letter dated 14th December 1925 from Mr Butteriss to the National Portrait Gallery.

- 9 Christies, London, 2nd August 1928, lot 94.
- 10 Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery: Notes attached to photograph sent by Butteriss in 1926, contained in Thomas Gibson artist box files.
- 11 Heinz Archive, National Portrait Gallery: NoA (Gibson) correspondence – letter dated 17th September 2002, from Butterfields Auctioneers of San Francisco, USA to the National Portrait Gallery; email enquiry 10th July 2012 to Bonhams (Butterfields) confirms no record of the portrait having been to auction in 2002.
- 12 Sothebys, London, 27th November 2003, lot 133.
- 13 Historical Portraits, London, 2004.
- 14 Fr. Ronald Creighton-Jobe, Chaplain of the Tuscan Order of St Stephen, identified the sitter whilst the portrait was with the dealers Historical Portraits.
- 15 Recently purchased, the full provenance was pieced together in the present form for a private collector.

AN ASHLEY PARK DISCOVERY

JOHN HARRIS

Since the publication of Eileen Harris's article¹ on Nuthall Temple, Nottinghamshire, begun to the designs of Thomas Wright of Durham in 1754, I am able to offer one relevant observation apropos the most distinctive feature, a central open-based pediment framing a two storey semi-circular bow, in the case of Nuthall with a Venetian window above. As she observes, such bows were to be found at Russell Farm on the Cassiobury estate, Hertfordshire, built by Stiff Leadbetter to Wright's designs in 1753, and also, with semi-domes, at his Horton Hall, Northants, in 1754. An association was made with a plan by Sir Edward Lovett Pearce similar to that of Nuthall, although it cannot be proven that the two semi-circular bays shown on one front were combined with an open-based pediment. In 1992 I wrote an article on Ashley Park, Surrey,² an early seventeenth century house rebuilt and re-fenestrated c.1726 in an arcuated brick style by Pearce for Richard Boyle, second Viscount Shannon. To my

surprise, when I recently opened my Ashley file, I discovered a photograph of the east entrance front (Fig. 1), showing that the projecting gabled wings had similar two-storey semi-circular bows set against open-pediments. We know from photographs that one bow terminated a grand Palladian long gallery. It is very difficult to over-emphasise the fascination of Ashley's rich interiors, including one room in a most sophisticated Burlingtonian style. Alas, Ashley belongs to the shocking statistics that in 1955 one country house was demolished every two days.

NOTES

- 1 Eileen Harris, 'Jacobites and Horses at Nuthall Temple', *Georgian Group Journal* 20 (2012), pp. 77-86.
- 2 John Harris, 'Ashley Park, Surrey: A Matter of Sir John Vanbrugh and Sir Edward Lovett Pearce', in Agnes Bernelle (ed.), *Decantations: A Tribute to Maurice Craig* (Dublin, 1992).

Fig. 1. Ashley Park, entrance front with wings and semi-circular bays. (*Unknown provenance*)



WALPOLE RIGHT OR WRONG? MORE ON NO.18 ARLINGTON STREET

WILL HAWKES

Sarah Freeman's recent article on Pomfret Castle in the Georgian Group Journal brought together most of what is known of this delightful and eccentric building. She rejected Horace Walpole's assertion that the gentleman amateur, Sanderson Miller, was responsible for the design, in favour of Richard Biggs. This follow-up article substantiates the known additional evidence and demonstrates that Walpole was not altogether wrong: the involvement of two amateur architects, Sanderson Miller and Sir Roger Newdigate, in the early design stages is positively confirmed.

The case for Richard Biggs being the executant architect of Pomfret Castle for Lady Pomfret seems at first sight to be wholly persuasive: entries in Lady Pomfret's diaries make it clear Biggs was consulted by her about the project from 1757 onwards, but the clincher in this case appears to be three drawings by Richard Biggs in the Soane Museum, discovered by John Harris, whose quick eye earlier recognised them as being for Pomfret Castle.¹ However, his reliance on Lady Pomfret's diaries for evidence led him to conclude that Miller was not providing advice on the design of Pomfret Castle: a view that Sarah Freeman has left unchallenged.

Sanderson Miller (1716–1780) was an amateur gentleman architect, who lived at Radway in south Warwickshire. Although he confessed later that he started to practise architecture in case his estate ceased to support him adequately, he deliberately did not charge for his services. He began by experimenting with building projects in his own grounds, and was swiftly drawn into much wider architectural activity.

However this remained but a part of his wider social life and the need for him to manage his own estate. Apart from his own Edgehill Castle at Radway, he is best remembered today for the Gothic Sham Ruins at Hagley and Wimpole, the Great Hall at Lacock, and for his classical schemes at Warwick Shire Hall and Hagley Hall.²

The contribution of such amateur architects to building schemes is often hard to identify and quantify, for their names do not appear neatly in account books and there is perhaps too great a tendency to dismiss them entirely if the presence of other professional architects is already documented. Also the problem of multi-authorship is at its most acute in the eighteenth-century when committees of taste abounded and it was often simply a matter of good manners to consult those of your friends with aesthetic aspirations, when contemplating a building scheme. In the case of Sanderson Miller, he was used to these sort of portmanteau design projects and to tailoring his services in order to work with or alongside others, whether professional or amateur.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SANDERSON MILLER AND SIR ROGER NEWDIGATE

Turning back to Pomfret Castle, the documentary evidence for the involvement of both Sanderson Miller and Sir Roger Newdigate in the design has been known for some time. First, as mentioned, there is Horace Walpole's statement in his *Anecdotes of Painting* that 'the Gothic House of the Countess of

Pomfret in Arlington Street was designed by Mr Miller of Radway.³ Yes, Walpole could be unreliable at times, but that alone should not allow his opinion to be cast aside too readily. For he lived in the street and knew Miller and his architectural work well, which he was prepared to admire guardedly and even on occasion to cast all criticism aside as at Hagley, in declaring that the success of Miller's Sham Ruin there had earned him the unqualified freedom of Strawberry Hill.⁴ Secondly, there are the diaries of Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Hall in Warwickshire. Sir Roger had in 1743 married Sophia Conyers, a niece of Lady Pomfret.

Whilst in London in 1757, Roger Newdigate wrote in his diary:

- Jan 16 Visd . . . Lady Pomfret
 Jan 18 Walk'd to Ld Dacre's & breakfasted, Mr Miller was so ill he cd. not get to Ly Pomfret. I went to make his excuse.
 Jan 22 Mr Miller with Hichcox to breakfast, went to Ly Pomfret.
 Jan 25 Mr Miller drawg a plan for Ly P. H[ouse of Commons] till 4 1/4 dined at Ld Dacre's with Mr Gray & Dean of Exeter
 Jan 28 Walk'd to Ly Pomfret about her House.
 March 3 Drawing Ly Pomfrets House.⁵

The critical role of Roger Newdigate as intermediary and joint architectural adviser with Miller is apparent. Lady Pomfret had been able to see and admire Miller's pioneering Gothic schemes for the Arbury Library bay window and Lady Newdigate's Dressing Room on the floor above, during her fortnight's stay in the summer of 1755.⁶ (Fig. 1) By the end of that year, Newdigate noted he was working on a project for a London site: 'Drawing Lady Pomfret's h. [house] for Arl[ington] Str.' and three days later 'Lady P's h. drawn out'.⁷ As he and Miller remained in touch through late 1755 and in 1756, they would have had ample opportunity to discuss the upcoming Arlington Street project.⁸ Newdigate was a skilled draughtsman and had

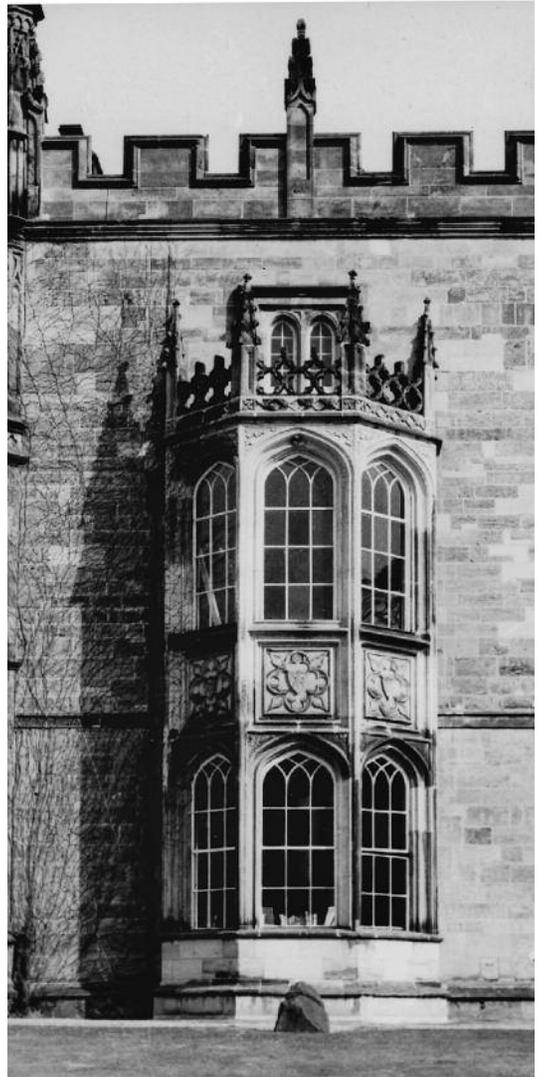


Fig. 1. Arbury Hall, Warwickshire: Library bay-window, exterior, 1749. (Photo © Will Hawkes, 1964)

studied Gothic on his European tours. Miller's rough pencil sketches for the Arbury Dressing Room survive, together with Newdigate's meticulous redrawing of the scheme in ink, preserving the originality of Miller's composition and details.⁹ It seems that a similar procedure was intended at Arlington Street with Newdigate happy to defer to

Miller's taste. However pressure of work elsewhere at that time and a steady decline in his health may have persuaded Miller to limit the extent of his fuller involvement and leave matters more to Newdigate, who remained in contact with Lady Pomfret throughout most of the building period. Newdigate usually aimed to spend January – May of each year in London and again in November – December and it was then that he tended to see her most. However, by March 1757 – at a critical period in the project – he was forced unexpectedly to leave London owing to his wife's serious illness, and lengthy recuperation. From that point on, Newdigate's contact with the scheme became less regular, effectively leaving Biggs to his own devices with Stiff Leadbetter in support. Lady Pomfret felt his absence from the project keenly but kept him informed of the building's progress.¹⁰ However, by 1761 Newdigate's diary entries become more informative: '13 March – Walk'd over Lady Pomfret's house – half fitted up' and by 16 November 'lookd over Lady Pomfret's new house', which suggests that the interior had at long last been finished.

BIGGS' S SKETCHES

Biggs's three sketches are the sort of drawings he could well have made in attempting to transfer the features of someone else's earlier rough sketch into a workable scheme: no easy matter when the street and park elevations were required to differ so much in character and floor levels.¹¹ (Fig. 2) Biggs' single street elevation sketch is marked 'Sketch of a Gothic Building February 1757' on the back and shows the side turrets, but the pepper-pot finials and other details, which were such a feature of the final building, are only ghosted on lightly in pencil, and may even be from the guiding hand of Newdigate. There are two elevational sketches for the park side, one of which is marked 'Copy' and endorsed on the back 'Copy Delivered ye 19th Mar 1757'; the original was selected for consideration by Lady Pomfret and

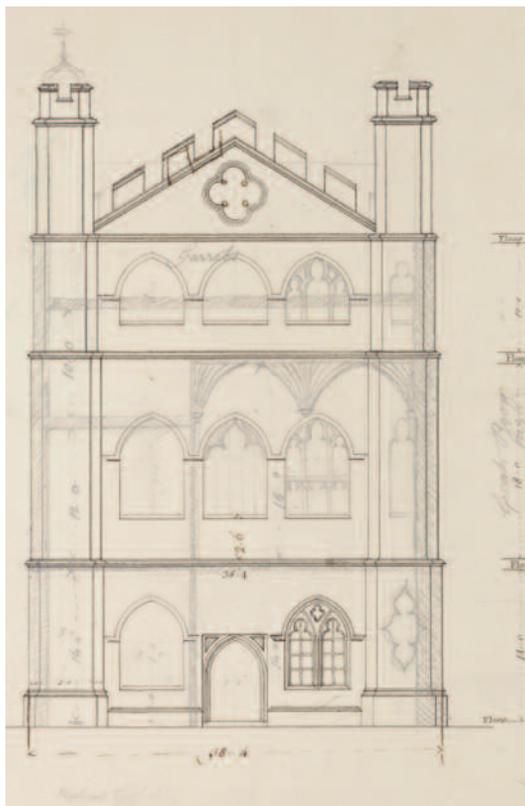


Fig. 2. Pomfret Castle, Arlington Street, London: sketch for street elevation of house, by Richard Biggs 1757.
(© By courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum)

her advisers. Unlike his front elevation, there are no signs of unresolved matters – suggesting that Biggs may have been working without an initial sketch but almost certainly still to Newdigate's direction. However the bays as shown by Biggs are heavy and crude in form, showing him struggling with an unfamiliar style.

The significance of the dates on Biggs' sketches will at once be appreciated. They slot neatly into place. The February sketch of the street elevation is sandwiched between Miller producing his 'plan' and Newdigate preparing his 'drawing'. These were then handed over to Biggs to work up a final scheme.

THE HOUSE AS BUILT

The aerial ink and wash sketch that survives in the Bodleian shows the street elevation with the gate lodge in the foreground and the house perched rather awkwardly at the back of the forecourt, rather like – to use John Cornforth’s delightful phrase – ‘a Staffordshire chimney ornament’.¹² (Fig. 3) This view remains a bit of an enigma: it is dated ‘21 October 1760’ on the back and, with its complement of well-dressed gentry and carriage arrivals, looks like a house already in use. Yet, as Newdigate’s diary

reveals, it was to be some time before the house was fully occupiable. Photographs survive showing the later state of the street elevation and gate lodge; the latter had been carefully recorded by J. C. Buckler in 1831 before it had a further two storeys added.¹³

The Whittock watercolour of the park elevation in 1848 reduces the true height of the building but shows that Biggs’ scheme was followed through, although the ground floor window sills are now lowered to ground level and – a nice touch – a blind oriel is added between the bays at first floor level.¹⁴

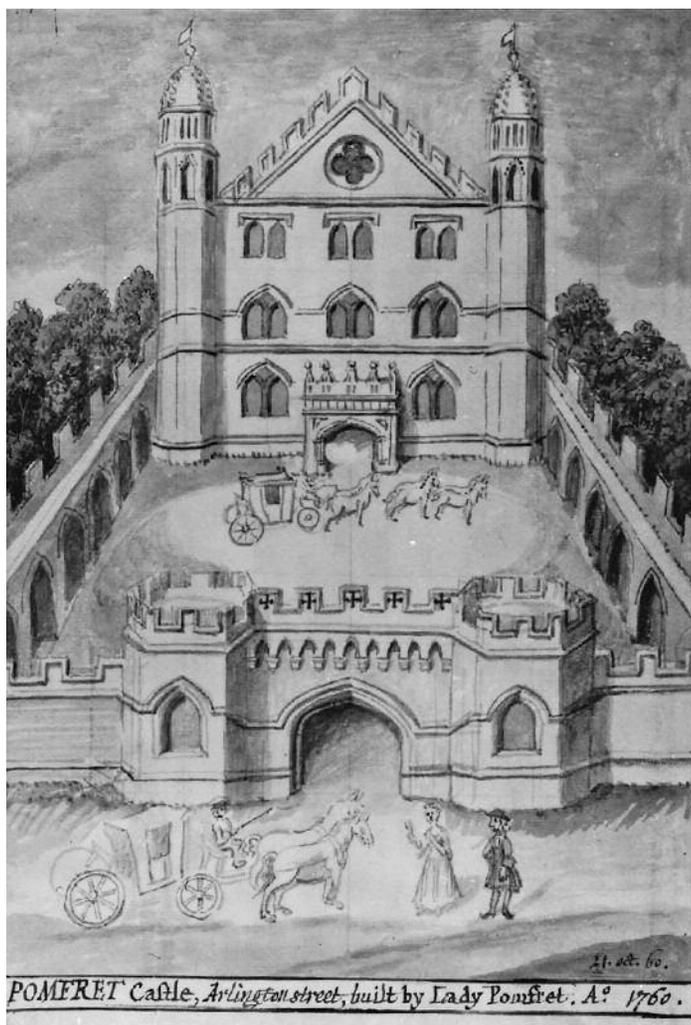


Fig. 3. Pomfret Castle: aerial view of house and gate-lodge from Arlington Street, anonymous, 1760. (© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

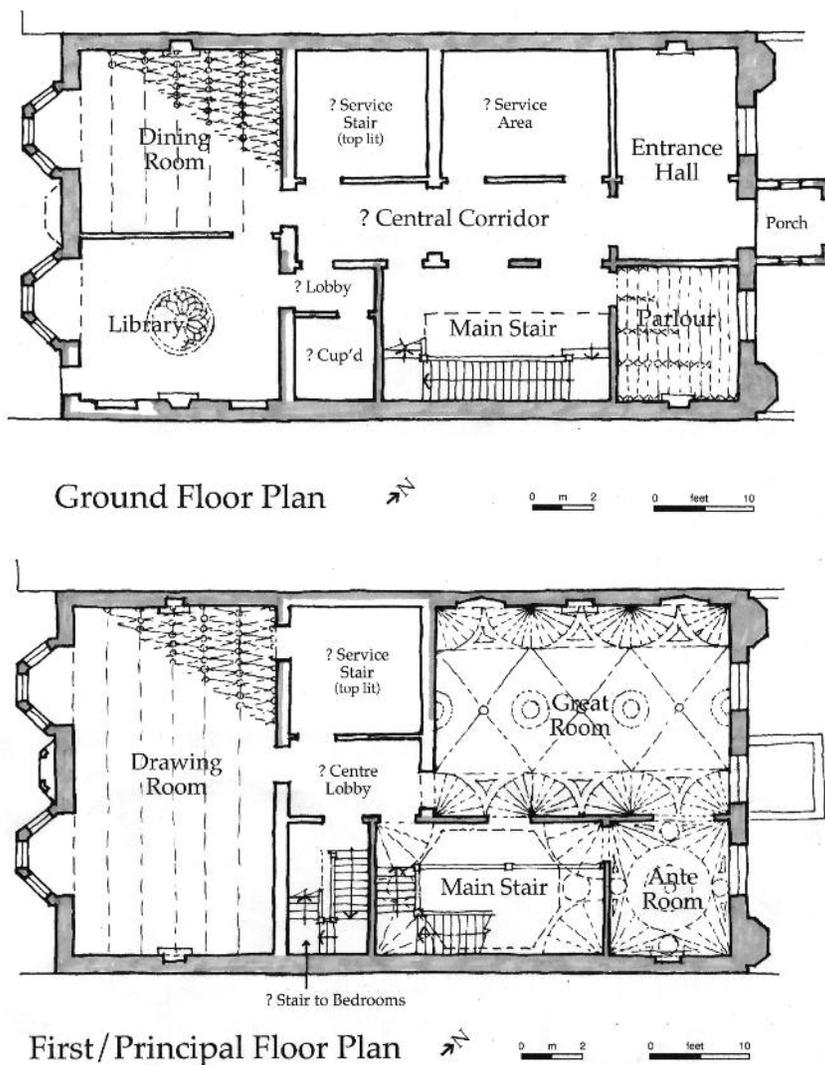


Fig. 4. Pomfret Castle: conjectural ground and first floor plans, as built. (© drawing by Will Hawkes, 2012)

The relative wealth of photographic evidence, taken with the various surviving views and additional information that can be gleaned from Biggs' sketch elevations, enables a layout to be worked out for the principal floors.¹⁵ (see Fig. 4) On the first floor, looking out over the forecourt, was the Great Room – the showpiece of the house, a soaring space with fan-vaulted ceiling. (Fig. 5) This was approached

from the Main Stair via an Ante-Room. (Fig. 6) As the Main Stair stopped short at first floor level and the Great Room was double-height, there must have been another stair on the south side to get up to the Bedroom level. The second floor above had the main Bedrooms at a lower level on the park side with the remainder of the second floor raised some 6ft higher.

Fig. 5. Pomfret Castle: Great Room on first floor, view towards fireplace, 1894. (Photograph, Bedford Lemere & Co. © reproduced by permission of English Heritage)



DESIGN SOURCES

John Harris has suggested the composition of the street elevation of Pomfret Castle was derived from the west fronts of Eton College Chapel and St George's Chapel at Windsor.¹⁶ This remains a strong possibility, as Leadbetter and Biggs were professionally involved there at that time and Lady Pomfret had an apartment at Windsor Castle. However Miller had already worked nearby at Clewer and at St Leonard's Hill. In seeking for design sources, account needs to be taken of Miller's long-established partiality for corner turrets with pepper-pot finials, something of a trademark in his work, appearing residually at Radway Grange, and then at Arbury, Adlestrop Park and more substantially at Lacock Abbey (Great Hall). In reporting a minor disaster to one of the Pomfret turrets, Walpole likened them to 'those of

King's Chapel'; relevant as Miller is now known to have been brought in to provide authoritative advice on remodelling at King's in 1759 and evidently knew that building well too.¹⁷ Even Gibbs' Gothic Temple, cited by Sarah Freeman as a possible source of the street facade design, may have received these very features from Miller's hand.¹⁸

The design sources for the park elevation are easier to pin down. After her visit to Arbury in 1755, Lady Pomfret assured the Newdigates that if she had 'the wings of an Eagle, i wou'd perch on One of yr bow Winddows, & take a lesson'.¹⁹ This canted Gothic bay window model was evolved by Miller for his own house at Radway Grange, for which his original sketch of 1745 survives.²⁰ At Pomfret Castle the bays were raised to three storeys.

The stylistic treatment of the interior shows two



Fig. 6. Pomfret Castle: Ante-Room, view southwards, 1934. (*Photograph*, © *Country Life*)

quite distinct hands at work in the Gothic detailing: an earlier phase of free elemental Rococo Gothic is followed by a second heavier phase. The decorative schemes in the Great Hall, Ante Room and the reveal panels to the bay windows and to the dado panels in the Parlour are all typical of early Georgian Gothic and can be related directly to the designs of Miller and Newdigate; a style distinguished by Horace Walpole as being ‘more the work of fancy than of imitation’.²¹ By contrast, the remainder of the internal decoration is, as John Harris pointed out, mostly derived from patterns readily available to Biggs in St George’s Chapel. The Main Stair panelling is carefully contrived, but it is almost as if the rest had come on a roll, like the Strawberry Hill wall-paper, and been applied rather too liberally. Precocious perhaps, in being more archaeologically correct, but somehow the duller for it.

THE ARUNDEL MARBLES

Despite Miller’s being able to do little more than provide initial sketch designs for Lady Pomfret’s house, she clearly valued his advice. Newdigate had been closely involved in brokering Lady Pomfret’s intended gift of the classical statues from Easton

Neston to the University of Oxford, and was asked for a sketch plan to show their intended arrangement. Yet in March 1761 Newdigate: ‘Saw Mr Miler’s Dr.gs of Lady Pomfret’s statues in Maldin [Maiden] Lane’ and in November ‘Walked to Lady Pomfret. Met Mr Miller with ye Oxford statues drawings to be published’, so Miller had been brought back into the Pomfret fold.²²

CONCLUSION

The answer to the question posed in the title of this article is that Horace Walpole was correct in stating that Miller had a hand in the design of Pomfret Castle. What he failed to record, however, was the significant part played by Sir Roger Newdigate – in sharing and then taking over the design burden left by Miller’s withdrawal, and in supporting Lady Pomfret in varying degrees throughout the building period. Nonetheless Richard Biggs evidently took over control of the project from the spring of 1757.

Poor Lady Pomfret: after all the trouble she had taken and her patient endurance of a protracted four year building contract, she had only a short period to enjoy the results, as she died in December 1761 on her way to Bath.

NOTES

- 1 Sarah Freeman, 'An Englishwoman's Home . . .', *Georgian Group Journal* 20 (2012), p. 91. Her article draws on the pioneering work of John Cornforth, 'A Countess's London Castle' in *Country Life Annual* (London, 1970), pp. 138–9, which was followed by Simon Houfe's two articles in *Country Life*, 'Diaries of the Countess of Pomfret' (24 & 31 March 1977), pp. 728–30 and pp. 800–2; and finally John Harris, 'Lady Pomfret's House: the Case for Richard Biggs', *Georgian Group Journal* (1991), pp. 45–49.
- 2 For Miller see (ed.) W. Hawkes *The Diaries of Sanderson Miller of Radway* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2005) and its bibliography. For Newdigate see Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects* (2008) p. 742.
- 3 H. Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting* (eds. Hilles & Daghlia), V (London, 1937), p. 161.
- 4 H. Walpole, *Correspondence XXXV* (1973), p. 148, Walpole to Bentley, Arlington Street, Sept 1753.
- 5 Warwick County Record Office (WRO, Newdigate MSS, CR136/A 588. These entries were printed in the correspondence columns of *Country Life* (letter from A. C. Wood and W. Hawkes, 26 May 1977, p. 1380).
- 6 WRO, CR136/A 586: 21 May–8 June 1755.
- 7 WRO, CR136/A 586: 25 & 28 Dec 1755. A sketch in the RIBA by Miller may be for this site. The plot width is the same, but the accommodation is inadequate for the brief: M. McCarthy, *Origins of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1987), pp. 140–1.
- 8 Miller and Newdigate had met twice in 1755, and nine times in 1756: WRO, CR136/A 586: 3 & 18 Nov 1755; CR136/A 587: 4 Feb, 3 & 4 July, 29 Nov, 15 Dec 1756; CR1382/ 32: 25 June, 3, 4 July, 29 Nov 1756. In 1755 Newdigate's meetings with Lady Pomfret were mostly to do with the Arundel Marbles: CR136/A 586: 12, 18, 23, 24 Feb, 4, 5, 23 Mar, 25 Apr, 19 May, 21 May–8 June (Arbury), 11 Dec 1755; CR136/A 587: 4 Feb, 14 Mar, 11 Apr, 21–23 Apr (Windsor & Old Windsor), 6–8 July (Windsor). 24, 25 Nov, 5, 14, 19 Dec 1756. Their surviving correspondence is meagre.
- 9 Warwick CRO 764/ 214. Reproduced in McCarthy (1987), Plates 171 & 172; see also Hawkes (2005), p. 76.
- 10 Diary entries: WRO, CR 136/A 588: 16, 18, 22, 28 Jan, 10, 20, 26 Feb, 29 Mar 1757; CR136/A 589: 2 Feb, 2 Mar, 23 Apr, 28 Nov 1758; CR136/A 590: 3 & 25 Mar, 7 Apr, 3 May, 5 July 1759; CR136/591: 18 Jan, 11 Dec 1760; CR136/A 522: 13 Mar, 5, 8, 16, 18 Nov 1761; CR136/B 2227: Lady Pomfret to Sophia Newdigate, London, 29 Dec 1757.
- 11 The drawings are in Sir John Soane's Museum, 'Miscellaneous Drawings of Old Houses' Drawer 43/ set 5, ff. 5, 8, 9. The pencil annotations appear to be in Newdigate's hand.
- 12 Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford: MS Gough Maps 22, fol. 39v – inscribed 'Pomfret Castle, Arlington Street, built by Lady Pomfret A° 1760'; Cornforth (1970), pp. 138–39.
- 13 Buckler watercolour: British Library (BL), Crace collection, views of London, P. x f. 98 (1831).
- 14 Whittock watercolour: BL, Crace views of London, P. x f. 88. See Freeman (2012), Fig. 3.
- 15 The documents are listed by Freeman and include new material from the London Metropolitan Archive, and the 1860 watercolours by Sir J Spender: Freeman (2012), Figs. 2, 4 & 6
- 16 Harris (1991), p. 48. As Freeman demonstrates the Pomfret Stair panelling links neatly to the Chapel west window; there are other hints of the Chapel culled from the Ambulatory, Galilee Porch, North Quire and the Bray and Rutland chantries.
- 17 Walpole: *Correspondence*, (ed. W S Lewis, 1937), II, p. 135, Walpole to William Cole, 3 Jan 1779. For King's Chapel see T. Friedman, *The Eighteenth Century Church in Britain* (London, 2011), doc 50.
- 18 Hawkes (2005), p. 65 n. 4; Colvin (2008), p. 694.
- 19 WRO, CR136/B 2224: Lady Pomfret to Sophia Newdigate, London, 16 Aug 1756.
- 20 Warwick CRO 1382/ 41. The pattern had also been repeated at Adlestrop Park: Hawkes (2005), Plate 2.
- 21 Walpole: *Three Tours through London* (ed. W S Lewis, New Haven, 1941), pp. 112–16.
- 22 WRO, CR136/A 592 16 Mar (ex. inf. Michael Cousins), 13 Nov 1761; A.W.White (ed.), *The Correspondence of Sir Roger Newdigate* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1995), pp. 76–82.

THE CASTLE INN ASSEMBLY ROOM, BRIGHTON, AND JOHN CRUNDEN

SUE BERRY

Early studies of the development of Brighton as a resort town from around 1750 fetter Dr Russell as the founder, overlooking the role of other investors. Two inns, the new Castle and the well-established Old Ship, also played a significant role as key social centres (Fig. 1). Spotting the opportunities, two men from nearby Lewes, Samuel Shergold (a vintner) and Thomas Tilt (a watchmaker) developed the Castle specifically to benefit from the new visitors. They

bought Sir Timothy Shelley's new house, with its superb eastwards view across the Steine to the sea, and called it the Castle Inn. They soon bought adjacent plots to expand their business, quickly adding a coffee room and an assembly room (Fig. 2). John Hicks similarly improved the Old Ship from the early 1760s.¹ It had a suite of rooms on the first floor, including a dining room decorated with the story of Telemachus painted in bronze on a blue ground, a ballroom and next to it a large card room (30 by 50 feet) designed by Robert Golden (c.1738–1809) of Lambs Conduit Street, London.² That Shergold and Hicks agreed to open their assembly rooms for balls on different nights during the short season of around three months suggests that the market was not large enough to sustain both in direct competition.³

The Castle's public rooms, which included an assembly room or ballroom, were almost twenty years old when in 1776 Shergold decided to revamp them and rebuild the Assembly Room. John Crunden (1741–1835), a local man who had a practice in London, and still retained Sussex connections, was employed to do the work.⁴

Crunden published several successful pattern books, the most successful of which was *Convenient and Ornamental Architecture consisting of Original Designs for Plans, Elevations and Sections* (London 1767), which ran to several editions. This was dedicated to the Duke of Newcastle, Thomas Pelham-Holles, who was a politically active major landowner in Sussex, and Crunden's Sussex roots are indicated by at least sixteen subscribers who worked in, or owned estates, in the county, mainly around Lewes.¹

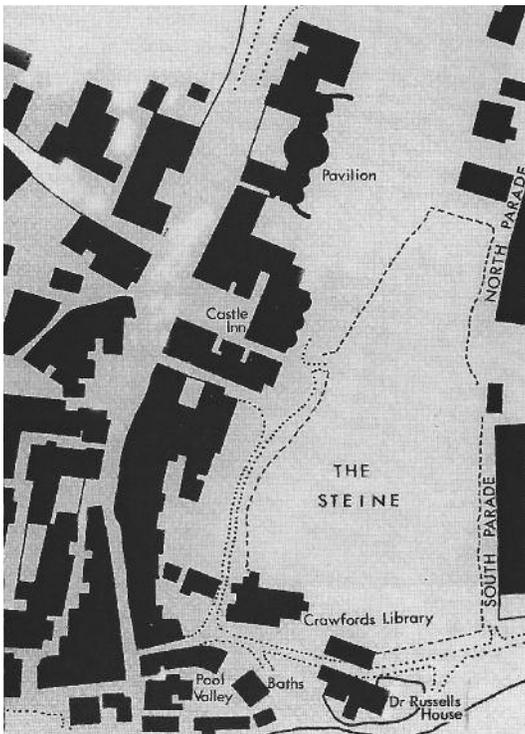


Fig. 1. Map of Brighton in 1788 by Budgen showing the Castle Inn, the Royal Pavilion and Grove House.

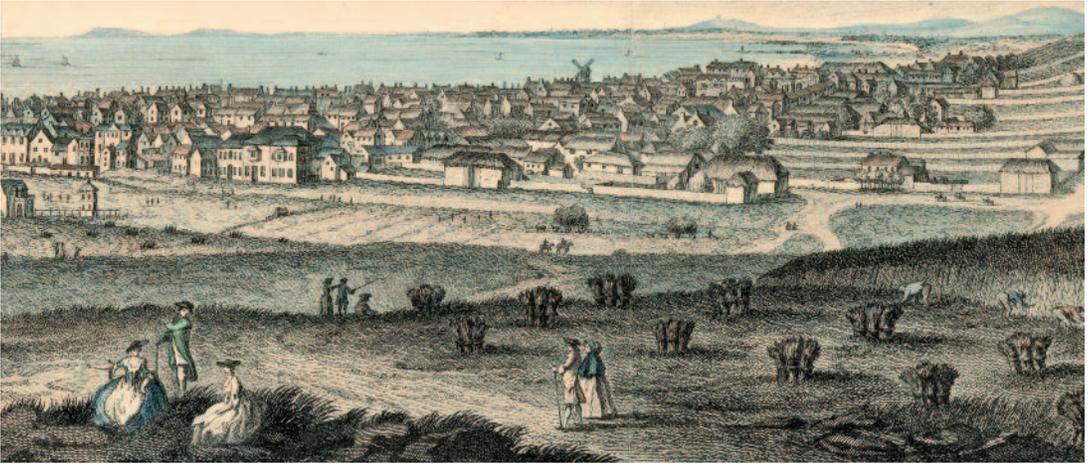


Fig. 2. 'Perspective View of Brighthelmstone' by James Lambert, engraved by Canot 1765, showing the Castle Inn in before the new ballroom was added to the back. (Private collection)

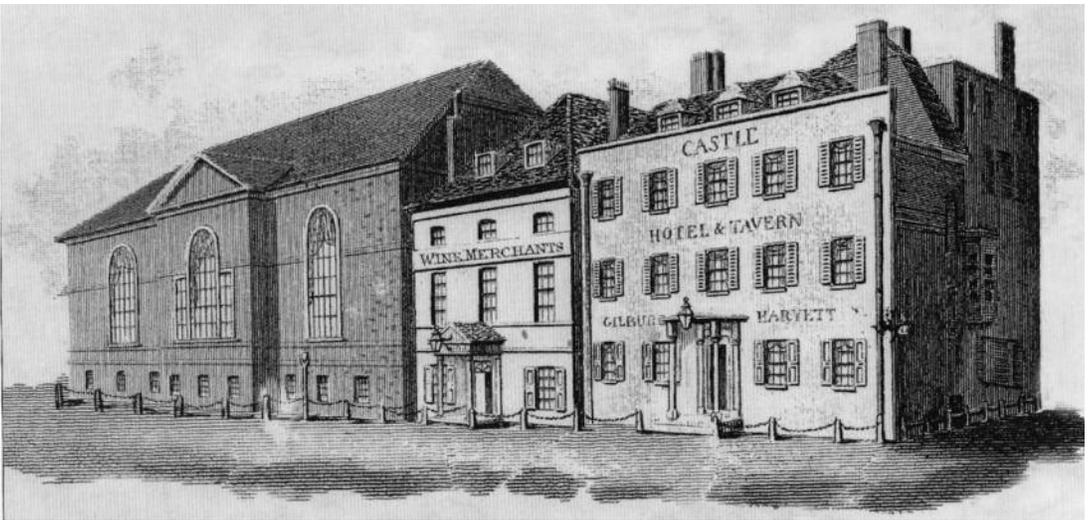


Fig. 3. The Castle Inn, showing Cruden's remodelled Ball Room, from C. Wright, *Brighton Ambulator* (1818). (Private collection, copyright: Sussex Archaeological Society)

Cruden also designed buildings elsewhere, especially in London, of which Boodles, designed by him for the Savoir Vivre Club in 1775–6 and sold to Boodles in 1782–3, is the nearest in purpose to the Castle Assembly Rooms, and of about the same date. Boodles has been altered, but the upper part of Cruden's façade survives, as does his Saloon, with

his recently restored original colour scheme. This is the only place which gives any impression of what the Assembly Room's decor may have looked like.²

Some of Cruden's copy letters have survived, giving a good impression of his scheme for the decoration of ball or assembly room, of which only one interior image (a print), has been found. They



Fig. 4. The Castle and Grove House with Henry Holland's Royal Pavilion between them, from Humphry Repton's 'Designs for the Pavilion at Brighton,' 1808. (Copyright: Sussex Archaeological Society)

also prove that he designed the problematic roof over which Shergold sued him and won, being awarded £200 for defective workmanship in 1785 (Fig. 3).⁷ The completed project resulted in four public rooms, representing a big investment. Cruden's revamping resulted in an ante-room (30 by 20 feet) leading to a tea room (56 by 30 feet), a card room (40 by 25 feet) and finally the new assembly or ball room (80 by 40 feet) with four recesses, one at each end and one in each side. It stood on the north side of the Castle, dominating the Royal Pavilion (Fig. 4), and was the only room which was lavishly decorated.⁸

To expand the Pavilion Estate and to enlarge the Pavilion, the Prince of Wales (latterly the Prince Regent) had to buy land around the existing building. He bought the Castle in stages between 1815 and 1822 and sold everything except some land close to the Royal Pavilion and the Assembly Room in 1823. The Assembly Room was later condemned by A.W.N. Pugin as a pagan place of worship after it had become the Royal Chapel – sometimes confused with the nearby chapel of ease called the Chapel Royal in North Street – early in 1822 (Fig. 5).⁹ As part of the process of expanding the estate the Prince also bought Grove House, the building which

dominated the Pavilion on its northern side (Fig. 4). When the Pavilion Estate was sold to the Brighton Commissioners in 1852 the Bishop of Chichester claimed the Chapel, which was rebuilt as St Stephens, Upper North Street, by George Cheeseman, complete with the assembly room inside, without its bright colour scheme.¹⁰ It is now First Base Day Centre for the homeless and has recently had a facelift aided by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The first three of Cruden's revamped public rooms in the Castle Inn were plain, but the ballroom was richly decorated (Fig. 6). His surviving letters begin in January 1777, when the work on the Assembly Room began, the builder being Stephen Pounce. Cruden was concerned about the contract which he thought very stringent, with a strict timetable and staged payments and penalties. Shergold wanted the rooms ready to open on 14 July 1777, but Cruden suggested that he wait until they were sure it was ready before advertising a date. Progress on the new building was rapid, but not without problems. By April the roof was sinking and remedial measures were necessary, and in 1784 it failed, Cruden blaming Pounce for not attending to it and tightening bolts as needed. In May, Cruden insisted that the sash windows remained open so



Fig. 5. The Royal Chapel behind the redeveloped site of the Castle Inn. The inn is the pedimented building on the left of the Royal Pavilion. Print of the late 1840s, engraver and artist unknown. (*Private collection*)

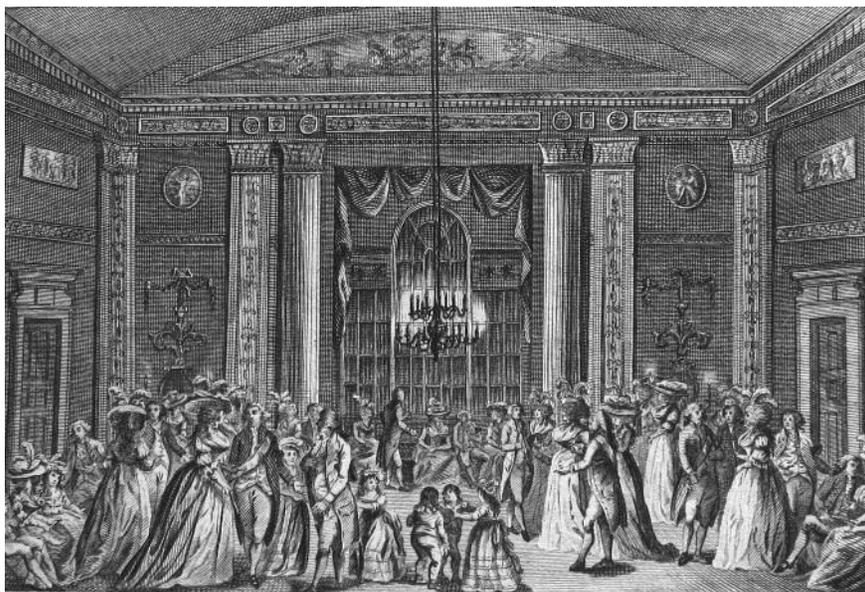


Fig. 6. 'Representation of the Grand Saloon at Brighthelmstone' (sometimes wrongly identified as the Royal Pavilion), c.1780, engraver and artist unknown. (*Copyright: Sussex Archaeological Society*)

that the cornices could dry in time for the colouring to be done to fit the tight schedule.

Meanwhile, Crunden agreed on furnishings with Thomas Chippendale. He and Haig provided sofas which Crunden described as moriene or morune, adding that it was ‘one of the most beautiful colour I ever saw’, leaving the reader to ponder whether he was talking about the fabric called moireen, a common upholstery fabric used by Chippendale, or the newly fashionable colour maroon. If the latter, it is a very early reference.¹¹

The ceiling was barrel-vaulted (as shown clearly in the print of 1780, Fig. 6) and divided into three sections; from each hung a chandelier. Crunden recommended that four large elegant glasses placed opposite each other in addition to the ‘three lights’ would make the room very cheerful, but commented on the expense.¹² The glasses cost £42 each, and the ‘gerandolas’ £21. In May 1781 the cornices and other plasterwork was whitened with ‘water white’, the woodwork painted once in oil and dead white. The friezes and door cornices were repainted light red and the ‘laylook’ (lilac) pillars, yellow.

According to a guide book of 1790, the scheme also included paintings on the walls depicting Admirer and the Vatican, from the story of Cupid and Psyche, and the Aldobrandini Marriage. Air nymphs were depicted on the walls in the ‘antient grotesque style’. Neither the guide book nor Crunden’s letters mention who painted these.¹³ The design and decoration of Assembly Rooms on the scale of the Castle’s was clearly profitable for architects, builders and decorators, and should reward closer attention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pat Berry, Lavender Jones, Paul Jordan, Alexandra Loske, Chris Milburn, Emma O’Connor, David Packham, Colin Perkins, Treve Rosoman, Mark Sidney, Professor David Watkin.

NOTES

- 1 S. Berry *Georgian Brighton* (Chichester, 2005), pp. 27–28; S. Berry, ‘Myth and reality in the founding of resorts: Brighton and the emergence of the fishing village myth’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter *SAC*) 140 (2002), pp. 97–102. S. Farrant (née Berry), ‘The physical development of the Royal Pavilion Estate and its influence on Brighton 1785–1823’ *SAC* 120 (1982), pp. 171–184; East Sussex Record Office (hereafter *ESRO*), *SAS BRI* 56–58.
- 2 Crawford *A description of Brighthelmstone and the adjacent country* (Brighton, 1790), pp. 22–27; H.M. Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (New Haven and London, 2008), pp. 430–1.
- 3 I. Taylor *The Brighthelmstone Directory* (New Edition, Brighton, c.1778), p. 10.
- 4 British Library, Add MS 32984 f.225. Lord Gage wrote to the Duke of Newcastle to ask permission for Crunden to dedicate a book of designs to the Duke. For further information about Crunden see Colvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 287–9.
- 5 H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1680–1840* (London, 2008), pp. 287–289.
- 6 F.H.W. Sheppard, ‘St James’s Street, East Side’, *Survey of London: St James Westminster*, Part 1 (London, 1960), pp. 442–443. C. Hussey, ‘Boodles’, *Country Life*, 24 December 1932, pp. 716–20 drew attention to Crunden’s design. For the restoration, see J.M. Robertson, ‘Clubbable colours’, *Country Life*, 17 April 1997, pp. 58–60, and M. Binney, ‘The London Club that is far from tottering’, *Country Life*, 3 October 2012, 70–74.
- 7 *ESRO*, *AMS* 6816; *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* 17 July 1785.
- 8 Crawford, *op. cit.*, 22–27.
- 9 *ESRO*, *SAS BRI* 253. There is a copy of a print of the interior as ‘The Royal Chapel’, engraved by Geo Hunt c.1835, in Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.
- 10 Brighton History Centre, Smith’s Collection: Chapels, press cutting.
- 11 Treve Rosoman, English Heritage Curator, email 20 August 2012.
- 12 *ESRO*, *AMS* 6816/1–8.
- 13 Crawford, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–27.

A HOME IN THE BARLEY FIELDS – NOS. 14 AND 15 UPPER TEMPLE STREET DUBLIN BEFORE THE ACT OF UNION

BARRY KENNERK

In November 1772, Graves Chamney of Platten Hall, County Meath, purchased a vacant plot at the northern end of Upper Temple Street in Dublin from the property developer Sackville Gardiner.¹ At that time, the site was something of a rural idyll, perched to the north of the choking confines of the old city in an area known as the ‘Barley Fields’.² It was not considered to be part of Dublin, but belonged instead to the Barony of Coolock. Its vicinity to fashionable Rutland Square further recommended it as a prime location.³

Temple Street appeared for the first time on Bernard Scale’s 1773 re-engraving of John Rocque’s map, but it did not yet link up with Dorset Street to the north. Its slow development, which took over thirty years to complete (Fig. 1), came as a consequence of a brief hiatus in the local building trade, as well as a short-lived stagnation in exports.⁴ Gardiner Street, stretching south to the River Liffey, was not commenced until 1787, with Mountjoy Square following suit in 1792. North Frederick Street was started in 1795, and Hardwicke Street completed



Fig. 1. Upper Temple Street in 1835, showing Nos. 14–15 and St George’s Church.

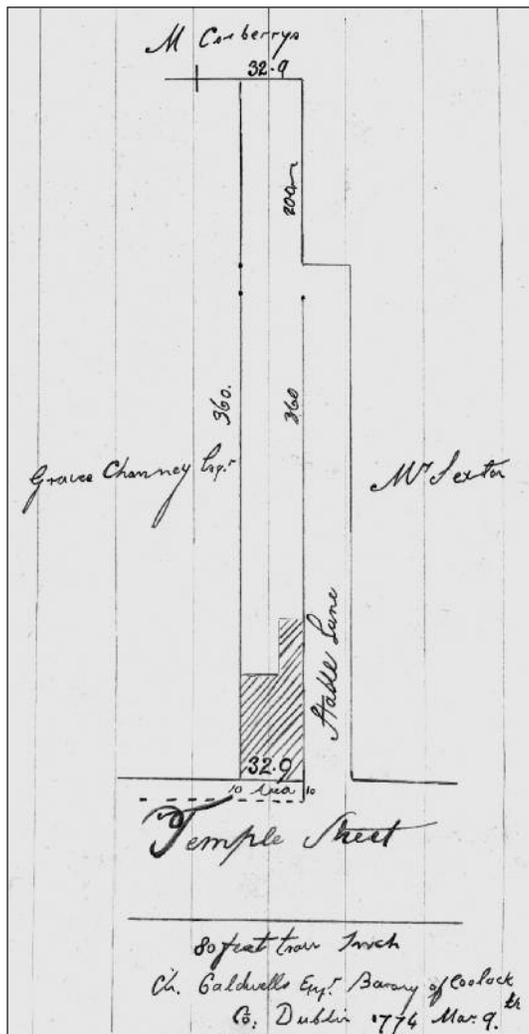


Fig. 2. This plan clearly shows No. 14 Temple Street as it existed as a separate property in 1774. The return to the rear was demolished in 1884 with a chapel built in its place. (Charles Caldwell Papers, National Library of Ireland MS. 21 F.53/121)

the street plan in 1805-7. By the eve of the Act of Union (1801), construction in Upper Temple Street was still continuing, albeit haltingly, with development under way on its west side. A large plot was divided among six speculators, most of whom had married women of the Gardiner family. In 1811,

one of these – Gustavus Brooke – built two houses which he insured against fire for £700.⁵ The adjacent St George’s Church – Francis Johnston’s masterpiece – was eventually finished in 1813.⁶

Work began on No. 15 Temple Street in 1774, with a nearby laneway laid out as a passage to stables and outhouses. Simply known as ‘Stable Lane’, this thoroughfare was later renamed Nerney’s Court. That same year, Graves Chamney sold an adjacent parcel of ground to Charles Caldwell, a 67-year-old solicitor and Commissioner of Revenue, and work got under way on No. 14 (Fig. 2).⁷ When the houses were finished, they stood as imposing red brick-fronted buildings with double-pitched roofs. No. 14, with its frontage measuring 33 feet, was a three-bay, four-storey building over a basement. No. 15 was slightly grander, extending 53 feet with four bays and the same number of storeys. The gardens to the rear extended over 300 feet, making the street quite narrow in proportion to the plot depth.

Accessible via a short flight of granite steps, the doorways were surmounted by triangular pedimented porticos flanked by engaged Doric columns.⁸ The houses shared at least one chimney along the party wall with their hearths back to back. The floorboards were made of pitch pine, a North American import much favoured due to the resinous, rot-resistant nature of the wood. Both mansions followed late eighteenth-century housing design norms. During this period, Dublin houses were constructed either singly or in pairs by private speculators. No. 15 (Figs. 3-5) with its four bays was a mansion, typically for seasonal use, whereas the adjacent No. 14 (Fig. 6) with its three-bays was more modest and, like other houses of its size, belonged for much of its history to middle class lawyers or merchants.⁹

Charles Caldwell died in 1776. In November 1788, both his properties passed into the hands of George Ponsonby, a British Lawyer and Whig politician most noted for his leadership of the opposition to the Act of Union, his Lord Chancellorship of Ireland (1806-7) and his participation in the ‘Ministry of All

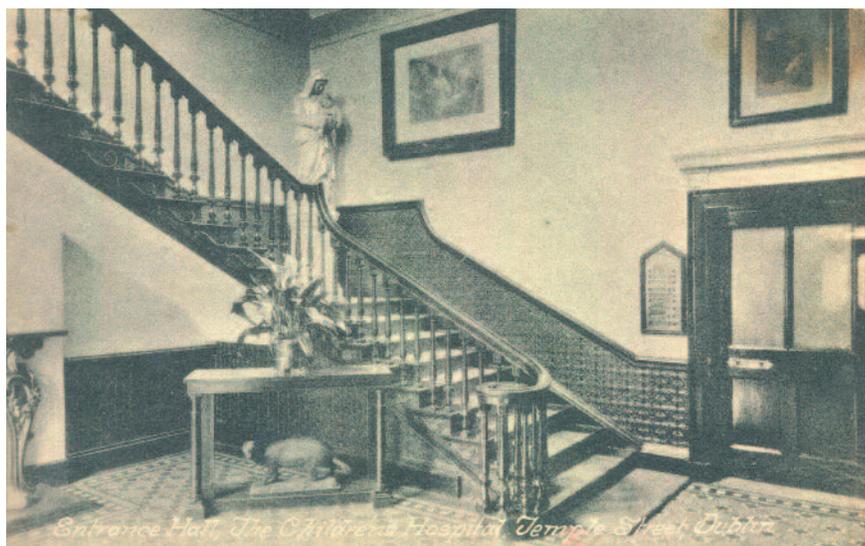


Fig. 3. Front hall and staircase of No. 15. (*Temple Street Hospital Collection*)



Fig. 4. A view of the *piano nobile* of No. 15 with its impressive screen of scagliola-coated Corinthian columns and pilasters. (*Temple Street Hospital Collection*)

the Talents'.¹⁰ Then, on 6 March 1789, George Ponsonby 'did grant, bargain, sell, release and confirm' to Cornelius O'Callaghan, better known as Baron Lismore, 'all that lot or piece of ground on which two new dwelling houses have been built'.¹¹ Almost immediately, Lismore took possession of No.14, ordering a number of extensive renovations

under the eye of Antrim-born architect, Whitmore Davis, formerly a surveyor for the Dublin Paving Board and architect to the Bank of Ireland at St Mary's Abbey, being employed on minor works there.¹²

The papers of measurer, Bryan Bolger, divided into a detailed set of carpentry, plastering, painting and masonry accounts, provide a fascinating insight



Fig. 5. The mahogany door to the Back Parlour at No. 15. Note the refined over-door entablature and corner blocks with acanthus leaf design. (Author)

into the work that was carried out between 1789 and 1790. We learn for instance that the garden, still identifiable on an Ordnance Survey map of 1824, was accessed by steps with recessed 'rough cast' dashed arches. Its northern wall roughly followed the line of the link corridor of the Dublin Children's Hospital which now occupies the house.

As part of the alterations, Lismore paid for 201 yards of ten-inch brickwork in 'the new-built part of garden walls . . . yard wall of cow house, walls of coach house, stoping [sic] old gate way and wall between stables' as well as 'breaking out . . . and putting a doorcase in a wall between stable and harness room'.¹³ The old stable roofs were re-pointed

with the cow sheds receiving a fresh plaster render and slating. The greenhouse was given a new lintel and quoins with a lead cistern installed, possibly for rainwater.¹⁴ A strong room was also installed in the garden to house an iron safe supported on strong stone piers (perhaps to avoid flood damage). Judging by the description given in the account book, a pair of coach house gates also led onto adjacent Nerney's Court.

Inside, a large amount of carpentry work was undertaken. This included the installation of 'mettal [sic] sash and best Bristol Crown glass in six windows in back drawing rooms and back parlour, striped, locked and double hung'.¹⁵ Elsewhere, a number of sashes were repaired with line, slips and stops with new panes of glass fitted. The second floor landing boasted a Palladian arched window and four windows in the front drawing room and staircase were splayed, with the window stools (a moulded wooden feature under the sill) reset. Both sides of the wall in the drawing rooms were recessed with a 'great arch' formed on both sides. The mahogany doors were thoroughly cleaned and the door to Lord Lismore's study was covered with green baize and brass nailing. Lady Lismore's dressing room received special attention. There, a wooden chimney piece was fitted, ornamented with a 'composition'. Her apartment was also painted with eleven feet of 'yeast blue distemper'. 'Below stairs' there was a footman's pantry in which an old press was repaired, as well as bell wires for summoning servants.

The plasterer was David McCullagh, probably a son of the famous stuccodore James McCullagh. (Fig. 7)¹⁶ His set of records is dated as ending 31 March 1790. They record that the entablature in each of the three drawing rooms was 'picked in fancy colours'. The scheme also extended to the main staircase, something that historian Conor Lucey attributes to its being 'an intrinsic part of the sequence of 'parade rooms': the section of the house in which visitors might stop to admire furnishings or décor.¹⁷

Fig. 6. Stairwell detail at No. 14.
(Author)



But it is the stone and bricklayers' accounts that reveal the true extent of the alterations carried out during Lismore's tenure of No. 14. 'Mountain stone' was fitted in three windows, with brickwork added to the parapet outside to take it up. In the basement, a new kitchen and other apartments were constructed and a new brick-bottomed sewer was laid from the scullery through a passage. 221 yards of flag-stones were re-laid and temporary 'stew holes' were built (i.e. small stoves in the kitchen hearths). The account also mentions a wine cellar with its '19 arched bins'.

Despite the upheaval, Lismore's tenure at No. 14 was brief. In 1801, after the Act of Union, he departed the house completely.¹⁸ In his stead, George Ponsonby, maintaining his long-standing connection with No. 14,

moved from No. 13 Henrietta Street to take up a brief period of residence. In due course, he sold it on to a fellow lawyer named Henry Joy.¹⁹

For almost two and a half centuries, Nos. 14 and 15 Upper Temple Street have stood the test of time. During that period, they have changed hands between numerous owners, speculators and leaseholders. After passage of the Act of Union their history reflects wider societal changes as the city adjusted to a new reality. Dublin no longer had its own Parliament, and the houses at Temple Street which started life as grand city mansions became in quick succession homes of the middle classes, a school, a quack medical establishment and eventually a children's hospital.

Fig. 7. Surviving remnant of cornice-work executed by David McCullagh at No. 14. (Author)



At the time of writing, the hospital continues to exist, but the future of its two landmark houses hangs in the balance. A new tertiary centre is badly needed. With the new National Paediatric Hospital scheduled for construction on a site near St James' Hospital across the River Liffey, it is possible that Nos. 14 and 15 may find some future use as an ancillary or 'overflow' centre for patients or as temporary accommodation for parents or carers. Any such plans are welcome. It would be a pity to see another old part of Dublin, which has thus far survived the wrecker's ball, crumble into the dust.

NOTES

- 1 Sackville Gardiner to Graves Chamney, Nov. 1772 (Registry of Deeds – thereafter ROD, Book 485, p. 439, No. 314625).
- 2 Evidently, much of this area still existed in 1798, since Robert Emmet's followers were said to have made plans to convene there. See Richard Robert Madden, *The Life and Times of Robert Emmet* (New York, 1857), p. 152.
- 3 See the Map of Upper Temple Street (Gilbert Library, Wide Streets Commission Maps/258). This shows the fall from Temple Street through Gardiner Place.
- 4 Christine Casey, *The Buildings of Ireland: Dublin* (New haven and London, 2005), p. 44.
- 5 Gustavus Brooke to Arabella Bomford, 17 March 1811 (ROD, Book 680, no. 168182). At that time, fire insurance was at the discretion of the householder.
- 6 'A plan of the city of Dublin surveyed for the use of the divisional justices to which have been added plans of the canal harbour and its junction', 1797 (Royal Irish Academy, engraving by S.J. Neele).
- 7 Graves Chamney to Charles Caldwell, 24 Mar. 1774 (ROD, Book 303, p. 62, No. 200,008).
- 8 The doorway to No. 14 has long-since been removed, replaced by a 'blind' window that masks the location of the hospital lift shaft).
- 9 Niall McCullough, *Dublin: An Urban History* (Dublin, 1989), p. 99.
- 10 Charles Caldwell to George Ponsonby, Nov. 1788 (ROD, Book 485, p. 439, no. 314625).
- 11 Ponsonby to Lord Lismore, 14 Mar. 1789 (ROD, Book 410, p. 89, no. 267525).
- 12 *Dictionary of Irish Architects – 1720–1940* (www.dia.ie), accessed Nov. 2011.
- 13 Bryan Bolger Papers, National Archives of Ireland.
- 14 Description of auction lot at No. 14 Upper Temple Street in *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1809.
- 15 It is curious that Lismore did not source his glass locally. At that time, Temple Street was part of the township of Ballybough which had a thriving glass industry alongside the River Tolka. The *Dublin Evening Packet* of 31 July 1788 describes a visit by a Spanish merchant to the Chubbs and Broughall glassworks there. So taken was he with the quality of the product that he stated his preference for it over English competitors. Eventually, a first excise duty of £12, 10s was imposed on every thousand pounds weight of glass made in Ireland. This had the effect of suppressing the industry but did not occur until 1825 (See M.S.D. Westropp, *Glass-making in Ireland*, Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, 29, 1911/12), pp. 34–58.
- 16 C.P. Curran, *Dublin Decorative Plasterwork of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1967), p. 75.
- 17 Conor Lucey, 'Rooms Neatly Coloured: Painting and Decorating the Dublin Town House, 1789–1810' in *Georgian Group Journal*, 18 (2010), pp. 137–147.
- 18 In 1806, O'Callaghan was elevated to the title of Viscount Lismore and soon afterwards plans for the construction of Shanbally Castle, County Tipperary, erected to the designs of architect John Nash.
- 19 William Drennan, Dublin, to Martha McTier, Cork, Undated 1806, in Jean Agnew and Maria Luddy (eds.), *Drennan McTier Letters: 1802–1819* (Dublin, 1999), p. 470.

THE GEORGIAN MEWS

ANDREW BYRNE

The chance purchase of an early 19th century drawing of a London mews got its new owner thinking that the mews is perhaps the last missing piece in the jigsaw of our appreciation of Georgian architecture. It gives us a rare glimpse of a vitally important yet largely ignored aspect of the era. Here, Andrew Byrne discusses both the drawing and the Georgian mews in the hope that it will act as a spur to a full study of the role the mews played in Georgian London and some of the other large towns across the British Isles.

On Tuesday 30 July 1811, John Claude Nattes (c.1765–1839) made his way from No. 23 Welbeck Street, Marylebone to nearby Queen Anne Mews to make a sketch, perhaps one of many that day, of Foley House, built for the second Lord Foley in the late 1750s, and now about to be demolished. (Fig. 1) We can assume that Nattes would have been only too aware of this looming demolition as, from 1798, he had been living in the locality at No. 92 New Bond Street and Welbeck Street.¹

Nattes's pen and ink drawing (28 × 18cm) is inscribed 'Foley House etc from the Stable Yard, Chandos Street, July 30th 1811', a somewhat misleading description as Foley House plays only a minor role in proceedings. Fortunately, Nattes chose to stand in Queen Anne Mews to sketch the view, allowing us to appreciate the great contrast between its vernacular architecture and the very fashionable terrace houses of the surrounding streets on both the Portland and Harley Estates, many of which we are familiar with today.

The fine architecture clearly stops with the stone

piers at the entrance to the mews. Within the stable yard we have the simple vernacular of a leaded casement window, wooden balustrading to the stone steps up to the groom's or coachman's quarters with its hooded doorway, and planked doors to the carriage-house complete with a 'cat-hole'. The most interesting aspect is the external steps, available to this building because it is at the end of the terrace. To our left, what appears to be the rear entrance to the garden of the corner house of Queen Anne Street West and Chandos Street, punctuates a very tall wall. The two stone steps, of unequal height, might indicate a mounting block. Foley House, the building that dictated the great width of Portland Place, came down within the next year or so to be replaced by John Nash's Langham House. (Fig. 2)

As London expanded and its wealth and population increased, so too did the demand for horses and carriages. Writing in 1617, the travel writer Fynes Moryson noted that 'Sixtie or seventy yeeres agoe, Coaches were rare in England, but at this day pride is so farre increased, as there be few Gentlemen of any account who have not their Coaches'. It seems likely that the first properly planned mews in London were developed in the early 1630s on the Duke of Bedford's land at Covent Garden, in the small lanes laid out around Inigo Jones' formal Piazza – Hart Street (now Floral Street) to the north and Maiden Lane to the south.² As London fashion moved west, many estates were developed with mews lanes, such as the Foundling and Bedford estates in Bloomsbury, the Grosvenor estate in Mayfair and various estates in Marylebone. In the

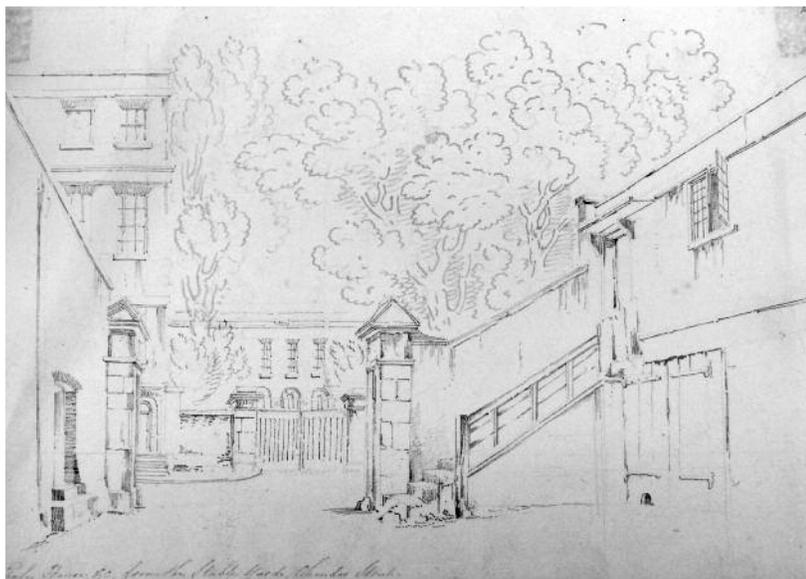


Fig. 1. John Claude Nattes' view of Foley House from Queen Anne Mews, dated 30 July 1811. (*Author's Collection*)

nineteenth century, in spite of increasing concern about their insanitary conditions, the coming of the railway and improving public transport, mews continued to be provided in the better, newly built parts of London such as Pimlico, South Kensington, Holland Park and Notting Hill, often set off with fine entrance arches.

The need to house both coach and horses, a harness room, perhaps a loose box, the hayloft and the groom's and coachman's quarters led to a standard two-storeyed mews building, invariably terraced, and connected to the plot of the householder by means of the rear garden or courtyard, but usually accessed only by the mews lane. The character of the mews was architecturally very simple, exposed timber beams to the wide ground floor openings and the most basic of brick arches to the ground floor entrance and upper windows and loading bay, with no money wasted by the speculative builders or even required by the estate landlords. This became the model for urban stabling across the British Isles.

Because of its size, population and sheer economic power, London is the most fertile area for any study of the mews, followed by Dublin, the

second largest city in the British Isles throughout the Georgian era. Also of note are the 'New Towns' of Edinburgh where there are many fine survivals, and smaller towns such as Limerick.

Henrietta Street in Dublin, laid out in 1729/30 and slowly built up over the following 25 years, provides us with a fascinating insight into the layout of the 'backlands' of that Georgian city. The houses on the south side of the street were built on very long plots of some 250 feet, which were bisected by the back lane. On the north side of the lane, and fronting onto it, a terrace of outbuildings was built, presumably housing the 'useful offices' that served as an adjunct for the requirements of the household, almost certainly with a facade of some architectural pretension facing the rear of the house. On the opposite side the stables were built, set back from the lane and approached via a courtyard.³ This generous arrangement, certainly untypical, is explained by the fact that Henrietta Street was built up with the finest early eighteenth-century houses in Dublin and was laid out on the very edge of town.

This less intensive use of space was repeated at the two most prestigious developments on the south

side of the city. At Merrion Square South, many of the coach houses were set back behind arched entrances on Fitzwilliam Lane, and again approached via a paved courtyard. No. 63, built in the early 1790s, is one of the best surviving examples in the British Isles, retaining its original stalls. And at Nos. 14/15 St Stephen's Green, built between 1776/9, is the same arrangement with the mews yet again set back from the lane. No. 14 has Gothick window openings.

A balance was always in play between the unhealthy nature of the mews and the convenient role it played for the house it served. In Bedford Square, London, for example, built between 1775 and 1783, the estate required mews to be built on all four sides. On the east side, however, just four of the ten houses were to be provided for because the remainder backed onto the gardens of the British Museum. Plans for this short mews were quickly abandoned but not before one of the mews was built and immediately demolished 'at the request of the Duchess of Bedford . . . and of the occupiers of the adjoining houses', doubtless a reference to Alexander Wedderburn, Lord Loughborough, the first owner of No. 6 Bedford Square, who around the same time leased over two acres of pasture at the rear of the abandoned mews.⁴ Unprovided for, Wedderburn, like his fellow neighbours on the east side of the square, would have looked to livery stablemen and carriage repositories for their needs.

Within thirty years of the start of development on the Foundling Hospital estate, the clerk and surveyor of its paving commission were reporting that 'the mews are more generally occupied by poor families carrying on little trades, and by profligate and destitute persons, than as stables.' They found that 'in many instances the buildings are in a neglected and ruinous state. . .⁵ Several estates found that the problem of decline was only solved by demolition and redevelopment.

Georgian mews buildings, vulnerable in so many ways, have suffered so much that today they are a rare building type, one nonetheless that is well worth a full study.

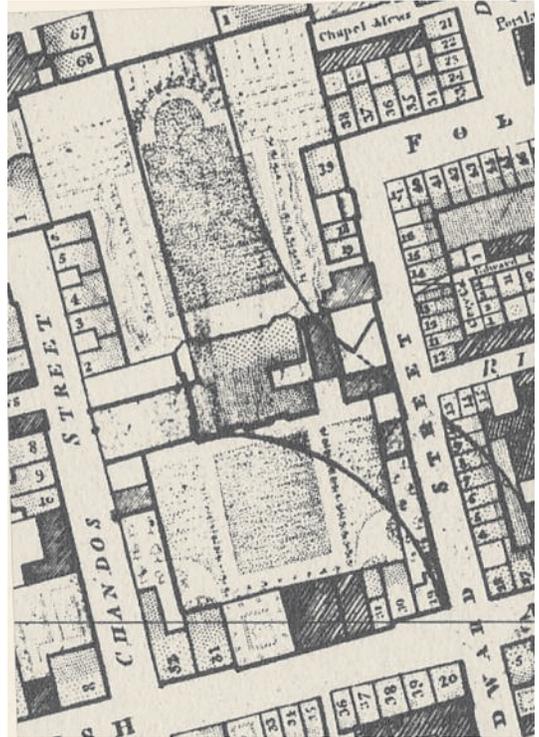


Fig. 2. Foley House and grounds, from Horwood's *Map of London* (1813 edition). The curved line of Langham Place, soon to be constructed as part of John Nash's Regent Street development, is indicated.

NOTES

1. See entry for Nattes in A. Graves FSA, *The Royal Academy of Arts, A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904*. (London, 1905).
2. G. Worsley, 'Inigo Jones and the Origins of the London Mews', *Architectural History*, 44. (2001), pp. 88–95. For a general discussion on the urban mews, see also Worsley, *The British Stable*. (New Haven and London, 2004), pp. 102–123.
3. See John Rocque's *Map of Dublin*, 1756. Also, information from Ian Lumley.
4. A. Byrne, *Bedford Square: An Architectural Study*. (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1990), p. 41.
5. Quoted by D. J. Olsen, *Town Planning in London: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. (New Haven and London), p. 89.