A DESIGN FOR A PAIR OF GATE LODGES
BY JOSEPH GANDY

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Whilst researching an article on Trewithen, near Truro in Cornwall, for last year’s Journal, I found amongst the Hawkins papers in the Cornwall Record Office, a drawing entitled ‘Plan and Elevation of a Design for Cottage Lodges and Gate for Labourers and their Families’ (Fig.1) Signed in the bottom right-hand corner ‘J.Gandy 1807’, the finished pen and watercolour drawing shows a pair of modest, Greek Revival-style, single-storeyed gate lodges, each incorporating a heavy plinth from which rise two short parallel columns (without bases) surmounted with an abacus supporting a polychromatic unornamented entablature and shallow slate pitched roof. Between the columns, and central to the façade, is an elegant window with leaded panes and a hint of decorative detail in the surround. The plan beneath outlines the symmetrical arrangement of the lodges and drafts each uniform interior as having a single chimney stack serving the kitchen and sitting room and two-light windows looking out to the front and rear of the sitting room with single-light windows serving the kitchen and bedroom. Although the title tells us that the lodges are suitable for ‘Labourers and their Families’ each building features only one ten-feet square bedroom although the architect does indicate that the kitchen size could be reduced by two feet to create additional bedroom space.

Joseph Gandy (1771–1843) was a ‘visionary’ architect, brilliant perspectivist and key figure in the romantic depiction of architecture. In 1805 he published two books of rural building designs which were outstanding for their innovative approach to cost-effective design and their progressive shift towards redefining the rural working-class abode based on an agenda of social awareness. Regarding the cultural shift towards radical architectural design, Gandy wrote:

‘The towns and villages of England, with a few exceptions, exhibit meanness and filth, with a variety of clumsy and rude forms, which are exceedingly odious to the eye of refined taste, and must give strangers and travellers an unfavourable impression, with respect to the state of the Arts in this country. Our consequence and pride as a nation, call aloud for a redress of the public grievance.’

Throughout both design books Gandy’s fertile mind attempted to escape the rigidity of the rectangular form, thereby promoting a spatial freedom that was so lacking during the golden age of lodge building. The Trewithen drawing, though handsome and a deviation from the more commonly found rustic lodge design, is surprisingly modest and in no way reflective of Gandy’s architectural inventiveness. Consequently the traditional rectilinear styled buildings appear solemn and uniform, something Gandy himself had previously referred to as ‘dull monoton[y] [and] not suitable for many architectural purposes’. To this effect it is fair to say that the lodges befit the plainness and regularity of the Hawkins family seat but do not in any way draw on specific features of its astylar façades. Perhaps unsurprisingly, despite being found in the Hawkins archives, there is no evidence to suggest that any such building was executed on the Trewithen estate nor are there any references to Gandy in the estate ledgers or accounts books.
We can speculate that the Trewithen plan may have been an unpublished drawing for one of Gandy’s rural design guides or a bespoke design for a specific project. The date of 1807 would suggest the latter, though it cannot be ruled out that he just put his signature to an earlier piece of work that met a certain specification. If not Trewithen, then an alternative suggestion would be that the drawing was an early design for a gate lodge built at Storrs Hall on the eastern shore of Lake Windermere in Cumbria. Gandy was at Storrs Hall in 1806, formulating designs for estate structures and garden features. An 1814 illustration by John Buckler showing a pair of lodges reinforces the similarities in the treatment of the gates, gate piers and design of the lodge itself, in particular the indication that the wings of each cottage were to be obscured by plantings or walls and were therefore not part of the overall aesthetic.
In his two books Gandy illustrated single, paired and conjoined lodges, a reflection perhaps of the shift in social consciousness expressed by, amongst others, Humphry Repton who wrote in 1803:

‘The custom of placing a gate between two square boxes, or as it is called ‘a pair of lodges’, has always appeared to me absurd, because it is an attempt to give consequence to that which in itself is mean; the habitation of a single labourer, or perhaps a solitary old woman, to open the gate, is split into two houses for the sake of childish symmetry; and very often the most squalid misery is found in the person thus banished from society, who inhabits a dirty room of a few square feet’.  

Influenced by such philosophy, a single lodge, now called Lower Lodge, was built at the north entrance of the Storrs estate, of which Ian Goodall and Margaret Richardson wrote: ‘It has Gandy’s characteristically reductivist form with shallow pyramidal roof, and its sunk corner pilasters are a stylistic link with the wings which he added to Storrs Hall’.  

If nothing else, the Trewethen drawing adds weight to the argument that the lodge on the Storrs Hall estate was designed by Gandy. It could also be argued that the architect’s use of the Doric order with plain entablature, as shown on the drawing, originally mimicked similar details envisaged for the entrance front loggia of Storrs Hall and that, for whatever reason, he changed some of the lodge details when built to reflect the idiosyncratic treatment of classical forms in Storrs Hall itself.  

It cannot be fully ruled out that the lodges were commissioned by Sir Christopher Hawkins of Trewethen, and that the similarity to what was later built at Storrs Hall remains solely because both works are contemporary and by the same hand. Unfortunately there is nothing to substantiate such a claim, since, despite the Trewethen accounts showing a significant amount of landscape works and building activity during the first decade of the nineteenth century, there are no specific references to any proposed lodges. Furthermore, written in pencil on the back of the drawing is the sentence ‘Plans for lodges worth framing architect Gandy’ which may suggest that it was bought purely for its aesthetic display potential.  

It is no great surprise that none of Gandy’s designs illustrated in his two published works were ever built; indeed, as Tim Mowl and Brian Earnshaw wrote, ‘it is hard to understand why Gandy thought that there was any mood among the landed proprietors of these war years for such outrageously revolutionary designs’. The Trewethen drawing is proof that most fashionable country house patrons favoured more economical and palatable designs for their gate lodges.

Readers of my above article will have noticed that the conclusion on page 71 was repeated to head up the section entitled ‘The 1760s Scheme’ on page 70. The author would like to point out that this mistake occurred after the final proofs were approved. Although the meaning of the 1760s scheme of Trewethen remains unaltered, the original introductory paragraph read:

‘THE 1760S SCHEME
This essay has suggested that some time between 1761 and 1766 Matthew Brettingham and Sir Robert Taylor collaborated on building works at Trewethen as they had done previously in 1756 on The Grove, near Watford, Hertfordshire, for Thomas Villiers, first Earl of Clarendon. This claim can be supported by grouping a small selection of plans together that are inscribed, all in the same hand, in the top corners in a numbered sequence suggesting that together they form a single proposal. These plans are . . . .’

The sequence of plans that formed the neo-Palladian reworking of the Gibbsian north front then followed.
NOTES

2. Cornwall Record Office (hereafter CRO), J/2/14
3. It was commonly thought that a child playing around the front entrance of a landed estate was inappropriate.
6. Ibid (Designs), p.v
7. Idem, p.vii
9. CRO J/489
11. The John Buckler watercolour is illustrated in Ian Goodall, ‘Storrs Hall’, Georgian Group Journal 15 (2006), Fig.51, p.201.
13. Goodall and Richardson, op.cit. pp. 47, 50 (Fig.7)
14. Tim Mowl and Brian Earnshaw, Trumpet at a Distant Gate: the Lodge as a Prelude to the County House (London, 1985), p.71