



THE  
GEORGIAN  
GROUP

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Rosemary Yallop, “An ingenious and able architect”: the enigma of Robert Lugar’,  
*The Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. XXII,  
2014, pp. 149–166

# ‘AN INGENIOUS AND ABLE ARCHITECT’: THE ENIGMA OF ROBERT LUGAR

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Robert Lugar was a London-based architect practising in the first half of the nineteenth century. He is remembered today both for his country houses, built in a variety of Picturesque styles and reminiscent of the work of John Nash; and for his four architectural pattern books, published between 1805 and 1828, two of which depict and describe templates for the smaller country house and rustic buildings, and two record his executed commissions. His best known built works are

probably Cyfarthfa Castle, near Merthyr Tydfil, for the Crawshay family of ironfounders (Fig. 1), a bold monument to the new industrial oligarchy; and Dunstall Priory, at Shoreham, Kent, an early example of an Italianate villa (Fig. 2).

Yet Lugar seems destined to remain a phantasm of the footnote. He is relentlessly referenced, usually for his pattern books, and occasionally for his executed projects, but his life and works have not to date attracted systematic study, and both the man



Fig. 1: Cyfarthfa Castle (*Geoffrey Tyack*)



Fig. 2: Dunstall Priory in 1939 (©John Topham/TopFoto.co.uk)

and his career remain in the shadows. Howard Colvin offers a skeletal biography: this spare account deserves to be fleshed out, in order to understand how a man who risks dismissal as little more than a jobbing architect of derivative villas and sham castles for the gentry – albeit possessing an author’s keen eye for a bestseller – came to create houses of surprising originality. This article will examine the early years of his career, consider his swift emergence from obscurity and speculate about the nature and extent of his connection with John Nash.

To summarise what we know of his career, his identifiable executed works can be grouped for the sake of clarity into domestic castles on the one hand, and, on the other, villas of varying scale and grandeur, themselves subdivided into two main forms: Lugar’s own version of Italianate Vernacular, and a Tudor-Gothic style. There are also numerous examples of

*cottages ornés*, and of ancillary estate buildings such as lodges and outbuildings. While some of Lugar’s country houses are to be found in England, he also worked in Scotland, where he is credited with introducing the picturesque asymmetrical domestic castle form, and he developed a substantial practice in Wales in the latter half of his career: his last commission appears to have been a house in Brecon in 1841. He does not appear to have undertaken any town houses,<sup>1</sup> churches or institutional buildings, other than a village school attached to one of his villas which was built as a rectory;<sup>2</sup> even his work as County Surveyor for Essex, a position which he occupied in parallel with his private practice, seems to have consisted largely of civil engineering work such as bridges. The designs which he exhibited at the Royal Academy, which will be considered in more detail below, disclose a more ambitious repertoire and

include a collaborative entry for the 1835 Houses of Parliament competition. As a testament to the commercial success of his pattern books, many ran to second editions, *Villa Architecture* being reissued 27 years after its first publication in 1855, the year of Lugar's death.

Colvin's brief biography gives us some bald facts.<sup>3</sup> Born c.1774, the son of Edward Lugar, a carpenter of Colchester, Robert Lugar may have had some early association with Nash in Carmarthen. He practised independently in London from about 1799, exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy, and became County Surveyor for Essex in 1812, only to resign in 1816. He retired from practice some years before his death at home in Pembroke Square, Kensington, in 1855. The Scottish architect Archibald Simpson was his pupil. Colvin lists 41 works by Lugar, either executed or for which designs were exhibited at the Royal Academy, as well as his four pattern books.

Colvin's brevity arises as much from an absence of information as from any value judgment, for the primary sources are sparse: Lugar died childless,<sup>4</sup> and the whereabouts of any surviving personal papers are currently unknown; some of the fragmentary details of his personal life appear contradictory. We know that he was baptised in the Essex village of Ardleigh,<sup>5</sup> where the Lugar surname was associated with generations of yeoman farmers,<sup>6</sup> in April 1774. We know nothing of Robert's education, and his professional training remains a mystery: his father was a freeman of the nearby town of Colchester (a status accorded to Robert in 1812) and may have possessed greater means than the occupation of carpenter might imply, so it is possible that Robert could have been apprenticed to a local master builder. Colvin's belief that by 1799 he was in practice in London is based on the date of his first Royal Academy exhibition piece, for which a London address is given; but there is evidence that he had left Essex long before then, for premises at Featherstone Buildings, Holborn, which was to

remain his professional address for the first half of his working life, were insured in the name of his widowed mother as early as 1792.<sup>7</sup> But there is a surprising dearth of information about his life before 1799, when Lugar would have been 25.

The absence of reliable facts about Lugar's early life and formative years is more than a frustratingly blank page in his story: in terms of his professional life it presents a conundrum. Knowing nothing of the place or nature of his training renders all the more puzzling his apparently sudden appearance on the Picturesque stage from 1805 in the forms both of his confident first book, *Architectural Sketches*, and of his original and accomplished work in the particular shapes of Dunstall Priory in 1806, and Balloch and Tullichewan Castles in 1808–9, representing two distinct interpretations of the Picturesque – the Italianate villa and the domestic castle – which were to be the defining templates of his career. Lugar was hardly a precocious débutant – he was after all 31 in 1805 – but his command of the castle form and plan and the obvious resemblances between Dunstall Priory and Nash's contemporaneous Sandridge Park raise some interesting questions about Lugar's sources of inspiration, and his means of access to an appropriate clientèle, at a pivotal moment in his career.

This article will consider a period spanning just over a decade of Lugar's professional life, beginning with what we must for the moment regard as his first recorded appearance as an architect in 1799, and ending in 1811 when his third book, *Plans and Views of Buildings executed in England and Scotland in the Castellated and Other Styles*, appeared. Ahead of him lay another thirty years of active commissions, and not least the whole of his practice among the Welsh mercantile and industrial barons, which includes Cyfarthfa Castle, perhaps his *magnum opus*, and recorded among other works in his fourth and final book, *Villa Architecture* (1828). The year 1811 is inevitably an arbitrary, but nevertheless appropriate, point at which to conclude this preliminary re-

examination of the man and his work, for with the publication of *Plans and Views*, dedicated to the Marquess of Buckingham, Lugar shows himself to be confident enough to advertise his completed works (and the identities of his clients) rather than to offer a portfolio of speculative designs as his two previous volumes had done. His personal aesthetic seems to have crystallised, his reputation is by now established, and he is in demand.<sup>8</sup> But we are left pondering how he arrived at this point without any discoverable pedigree, why the journey had taken him so long, and who had helped him along the way.

#### EARLIEST WORKS

Given the scarcity of records for the initial period of Lugar’s career, it is not surprising that it is hard to establish with certainty which was his first completed major work. His two later pattern books record nearly forty commissions for 31 clients, the earliest of which can be dated to around 1808–9, when Lugar built two castles in Dunbartonshire: Tullichewan, closely followed by or contemporary with Balloch; as well as The Ryes, an Essex villa. On the other hand a variety of undated minor commissions also appear in these volumes, such as Holders Hill Cottage, near Hendon,<sup>9</sup> which may have been completed earlier. The only other source available to us to shed light on the obscure years of his career prior to 1808 is the record of his Royal Academy exhibition pieces. Graves lists 25 pieces exhibited under his name in total (excluding the Houses of Parliament competition which appeared under the name of his collaborator, John Burrell) between 1799 and 1841;<sup>10</sup> seven can be identified as representing completed commissions by comparing them with the two later pattern books, but it is the thirteen designs exhibited before 1808 which provide some indication of the scope of his work, or ambitions, prior to that date.

The first, in 1799, ‘Weir Hall, Edmonton, the seat

of Robert Jones, Esq.’, is something of a puzzle, for Jones seems to have been a tenant, and the house itself was a Jacobean manor house, shown apparently unaltered in early nineteenth-century engravings; we must conclude that this was either an unexecuted project or simply a presentation drawing.<sup>11</sup> Lugar’s 1800 entry is entitled simply ‘Carisbrook [sic] Castle’, again perhaps a display of draughtsmanship, possibly executed while engaged in work on the island, for although he is credited with only one documented house in the Isle of Wight, Puckaster Cottage of around 1814, it is possible that his connection with the Island was more extensive, from evidence which will be considered further below.<sup>12</sup> In 1801 he shows what appears at last to be a commission: a ‘Design for a villa for T. Lee, Esq.’, a tantalisingly brief description, from which is impossible to identify the house (if indeed built), but the client may have been Thomas Lee, of the Lee family of Totteridge Park, Middlesex, and Hartwell, Buckinghamshire. In the following year Lugar exhibited a ‘Cottage to be built at Eastwood, Tipperary’, one of his only three known projects in Ireland, on an estate near Templemore owned by the Bennet family.<sup>13</sup>

Another detail of Lugar’s career at this time has emerged. It appears that at an early stage he entered into a partnership, no doubt to help to consolidate his fledgling London practice, for notices in newspapers appear, some of them soliciting suitable properties or estates on behalf of clients, under the joint names of Messrs Lugar and Tapster, ‘Architects, Surveyors, and Agents’, from offices in Holborn.<sup>14</sup> His partner seems to have been a Robert Tapster of Barnet, north London, about whom little is known;<sup>15</sup> the partnership seems to have been dissolved by the end of 1808, when Tapster is advertising as a sole practitioner.

The next Royal Academy entry, in 1803, comprised ‘A Cottage to be built at Dedham, Essex’, in Lugar’s native territory; and more interestingly, because of its subject matter: ‘A design for an imperial house of parliament’, to which Lugar

returns in a similarly titled piece in 1804. While it is remotely possible that this might have referred to a building intended for a British overseas dominion, newspaper coverage of parliamentary business at this date often appeared under the headline of 'Imperial Parliament', and we can be fairly sure that this refers to Westminster. These may simply have been architectural *capricci* to catch the public eye, but they are worth noting in passing, in the light of his subsequent entry for the Houses of Parliament competition jointly with John Burrell, a Camberwell architect. This was a Gothic design described by its creators as 'a dignified and characteristic composition', and by a commentator in different terms: 'very showy, and groups pretty well, but is rather too much fretted away, and it wants repose. I think, in execution, the details would be deficient.'<sup>16</sup>

In 1804 Lugar also showed 'Four Cottages', and 'A house in the castle style, for a nobleman'. Either Lugar is being coy about the identity of his client for the latter, or this is a speculative, generic design, prefiguring his work on Tullichewan and Balloch castles which were both undertaken (but not for noblemen) within the next four years. Then in 1805, the year in which he published his first pattern book, he showed a 'Design for a museum for the antiquities of the late C. Townley, Esq.'. Townley, a wealthy Lancashire antiquarian, had amassed a vast collection of antiquities, which were to be bequeathed to family members on condition that they were displayed in a new gallery to be built for them either at Townley Hall, his Lancashire seat, or at his London house, or failing that, at the British Museum. However, following his death in 1805 his executors were deterred by the likely expense of building a new gallery, and in defiance of his wishes sold the collection to the British Museum. The gallery which was eventually built to house them there was designed by the Museum's architect, so Lugar's design was almost certainly for a gallery at Townley Hall,<sup>17</sup> possibly commissioned by the executors while they were still deliberating.

So although Lugar's Royal Academy entries between 1799 and 1805 add some detail to the story, they lack an executed project or client of any substance, and in as much as they are representative of his practice at the time – and we have little else to go on – the picture which emerges is still that of an obscure provincial working hard to establish himself in the metropolis, and resorting to speculative designs to catch the public eye. They offer no real clue as to the degree of his success, the milieu in which he operated, or the avenue by which he makes the Scottish connections which within three years were to become so important in launching his domestic castle style. Nor do they explain his subsequent links with Wales.

It is not until the following year, in 1806, that one of his exhibition pieces represents what we can now regard as a milestone in his career, and, indeed, his earliest identifiable house. In 1806 he shows two villa projects, one of which, a 'House on Stamford Hill for Mr. Bayley', not traced,<sup>18</sup> is of little interest by comparison with the second, a 'House at Gold hill, Shoreham, Kent'. Better known under its later name of Dunstall Priory, we cannot be certain of the identity of the original client;<sup>19</sup> curiously Gold Hill does not form part of Lugar's illustrated repertoire as a completed commission in the later pattern books, but it is clearly based on a generic pattern (as a 'villa in the Italian style') shown in his first book published in the previous year. Dunstall's Italianate detailing and asymmetrical plan are of great significance in the context of John Nash's introduction of the Italianate Vernacular idiom through his Claudian trio of villas of contemporary date: the similarity of style and the co-incidence of timing will be considered further below.

1807 brings a drawing of 'Stowe House, the seat of the Marquess of Buckingham', probably a presentation drawing. Soane had just completed the Gothic library there, and there is no reason to suppose that Lugar had had anything to do with it, but it is worth noting in the context of the dedication



Fig. 3: The Ryes, Little Henny, Essex (*Private collection*)

to the Marquess of Buckingham of Lugar’s third book in 1811. The same year also saw the publication of Lugar’s second pattern book, *The Country Gentleman’s Architect*, a detailed and often highly technical book describing the ideal construction and layout of farms and farm buildings, including farmhouses in the form of villas of some refinement. In his observations on aspects of husbandry which inform his designs, Lugar perhaps confirms his own family’s history as yeoman farmers, but at the same time, in his commentary on his farmhouse designs, he does not neglect considerations of the Picturesque.

If the public exhibition of Lugar’s design for Dunstall Priory in 1806 represents something of a watershed in his career as an architect, his Royal Academy designs over the next two years are further

public evidence of professional success: three identifiable, executed projects, also later documented in the pattern books, two of them being the commissions which launched his Scottish career. In 1808 he shows a ‘House for J. Stirling, Esq. of Coredale’, (which was to become Tullichewan Castle) and two views of ‘An abbey for J. Buchanan of Glasgow’. The following year he exhibits two views of ‘Mr Buchanan’s Castle’ (Balloch Castle), the amended commission and successor to the previous year’s design for Balloch Abbey, for as Lugar explains in *Plans and Views*, his client had decided to adapt the older house ‘so as to give it the effect of a castle’ rather than to build anew in the shape of Lugar’s proposed Gothic abbey, a decision which, it is clear from his comments in *Plans and Views*, the architect regretted. There are no clues, either in his previous exhibition



Fig. 4: ‘Design in the style of an Italian villa’ from *Architectural Sketches*  
(©RIBA Library Books and Periodicals Collection)

pieces or from his commentary in the subsequent pattern books, as to the roots of this sudden Scottish flowering. Stirling and Buchanan were both of the mercantile class, Stirling being a partner in the Glasgow family firm of calico bleachers and printers, and Buchanan a second generation proprietor of a Glasgow textile concern, and the source of these introductions is unclear; geographically there was no obvious connection, and these commissions predate, and in fact almost certainly account for, the later presence of the Scotsman Archibald Simpson in his office, which will be considered below. The other design shown in 1809 was ‘Mr. Barnardiston’s House’ (The Ryes, Little Henny) for an Essex gentry family, a commission no doubt obtained through Lugar’s local connections (Fig. 3). To have shown this alongside Balloch Castle is in retrospect serendipitous, for The

Ryes is an elegant asymmetrical villa in a characteristic Lugar Italianate idiom, and together they neatly represent the two major stylistic paths Lugar’s career was to take for the next forty years.<sup>20</sup>

#### LUGAR AND NASH: CORRELATION AND COINCIDENCE

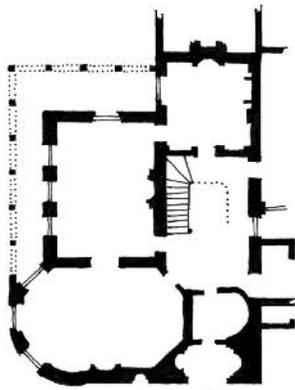
It is impossible to discuss Lugar without invoking the name of John Nash. Such are the similarities between aspects of their work that conventionally Lugar is seen as a follower or imitator: it has long been asserted that Lugar derived his Picturesque idiom from Nash,<sup>21</sup> and we will examine this received wisdom in more detail below; but what have gone hitherto unremarked are the resonances which

extend beyond the stylistic similarities. It is curious to observe the coincidences and connections which appear when the works of both men, and the names of their clients, are placed side by side, which must fuel speculation about a personal acquaintance or professional relationship between the two.

The stylistic similarities are both more concrete and more readily documented. Nash’s Claudian series of three houses, which introduced Italianate Vernacular into Britain, began with Cronkhill, Shropshire, conventionally dated from 1802, and the

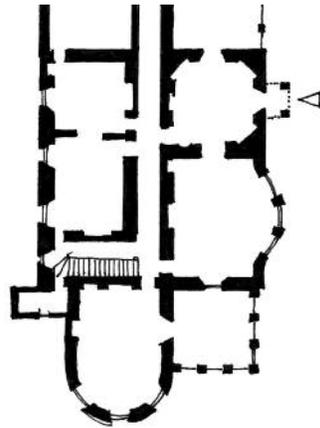
resemblance between his *villa rustica* series and Lugar’s slightly later Dunstall Priory at Shoreham in Kent, noted above, is frequently cited: as a result the latter is one of the handful of houses, as opposed to books, for which Lugar’s name is now remembered.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the chronology of events surrounding Dunstall Priory and Nash’s villa series. Nash showed a watercolour perspective for Cronkhill, a ‘House near Shrewsbury’, at the Royal Academy in 1802, and Lugar may well have seen it, although as eventually

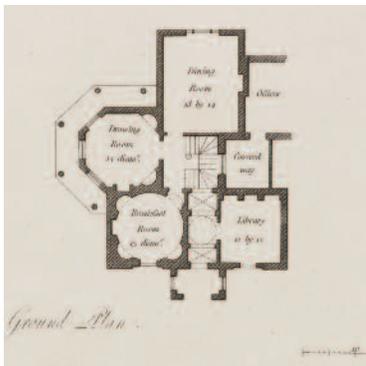


5a: Cronkhill

NASH

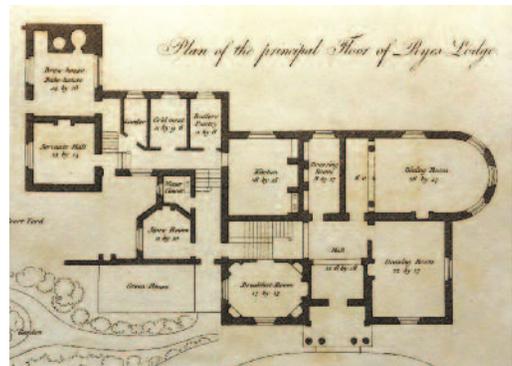


5b: Sanbridge Park



5c: Italian villa from *Architectural Sketches*

LUGAR



5c: The Ryes from *Plans and Views*

Fig. 5: Nash and Lugar plans compared.

Note particularly the device of chamfering the internal walls to create rooms with octagonal interiors, in all four houses. (5a, b, and d: author’s collection; 5c: ©RIBA Library Books and Periodicals Collection)

built it differed in some respects from the depiction. It appears not to have included a plan.<sup>22</sup> A view of Sandridge Park was exhibited by Nash in 1805 as a ‘house for Lady Ashburton’, almost certainly as a perspective watercolour, without a plan.<sup>23</sup> In this same year Lugar published his *Architectural Sketches*, in which we find both elevation and plan for a generic design ‘in the style of an Italian villa’ (Fig. 4),<sup>24</sup> which was clearly the template for Dunstall Priory, completed by the end of 1806,<sup>25</sup> while Sandridge Park, under way by 1804, was still unfinished.<sup>26</sup> Dunstall Priory was finished well before Lissan Rectory, the third in Nash’s trio, which was built in 1808–11. So although Cronkhill indisputably represents the boldly innovative introduction of Italianate vernacular to the Picturesque lexicon, the timing of Dunstall and Sandridge Park suggests that Lugar was not far behind: whether as unashamed imitator or more independent interpreter is a question which is open to discussion.

It is difficult to establish when the term ‘Italian’ was first used of Nash’s own trio of villas, but

interesting to note that Lugar applied it to his own design in his book, and its usage seems to have been widely enough accepted for the newspaper advertisement offering Dunstall Priory to let in February 1807 to describe ‘an elegant new built Italian Villa’. It is not just their outward appearance but their plans which display remarkable similarities; Lugar’s 1805 book shows a number of designs, whether clad in Gothic or Italianate form, which employ various combinations of room templates – D-shaped, square, polygonal and rectangular – to form loose and asymmetrical arrangements, a characteristic of Nash’s contemporary work at Cronkhill, Sandridge Park, and Luscombe, for example (Fig. 5). Lugar tells us that his Italian villa design ‘was made for a situation which afforded three most desirable views . . . embracing each separately, while from the prospect room above all may be enjoyed’. He notes the verandah, or ‘covered way’ which connects the house with the domestic offices, also seen at Cronkhill. So this is more than a mere borrowing of an external or internal shape from examples seen elsewhere; Lugar’s description shows



Fig. 6: Wood Hall, Patrinton, Yorkshire  
(*Georgian Society for East Yorkshire; Hull University Archives DX/99/262*)



Fig. 7: Yaxham Rectory, Suffolk, from *Villa Architecture* (©RIBA Library Books and Periodicals Collection)

a clear understanding of the functional elements of the design as well as the necessary connection between the house and its landscape and prospect.

Dunstall was not the only Claudian villa by Lugar; Wood Hall, for example, at Ellerby, Yorkshire (1814) for the Maistre family, was originally attributed to Nash but now almost certainly identified as Lugar’s work (Fig. 6).<sup>27</sup> Here the crispness of the round tower, and its fenestration, exactly mimic the towers of Cronkhill and Sandridge Park; on the other hand the pediments on the other elevations, a heavy detail which Nash would have rejected, betray Lugar’s hand, for they became characteristic of other villas such as The Ryes and Yaxham Rectory (Fig. 7).

Lugar’s castle repertoire introduces yet another major point of stylistic similarity, although this was of

course an idiom which was much more widely used by many contemporaries and less *recherché*, in its early years at least, than the Claudian villa. With Luscombe, from 1799, Nash had shown that a pseudo-historical, allusive exterior could readily accommodate a freely-flowing interior plan; Lugar’s first domestic castle was not to follow for another nine years. So it is less easy to discern here the extent of Lugar’s originality, or, by contrast, the extent to which he might have been schooled by Nash. But while Nash may have been first to master the asymmetrical picturesque domestic castle, Lugar took it up with some energy: he is acknowledged to have introduced it to Scotland in succession to Adam’s more regular and symmetrical form. (Figs. 8, 9).

What then are we to draw from this collection of

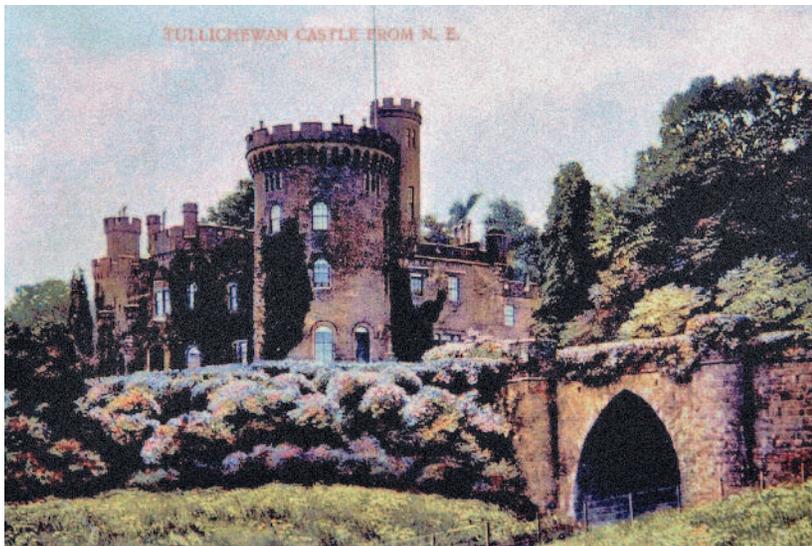


Fig. 8: Balloch Castle  
(*Christian Bickel and  
reproduced under  
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Fig. 9: Tullichewan  
Castle, demolished 1954  
(*West Dunbartonshire  
Libraries & Cultural  
Services*)



Fig.10: Puckaster Cottage, Isle of Wight, from *Villa Architecture* (©RIBA Library Books and Periodicals Collection)

evidence of near-concurrence, and stylistic resemblance? A range of conclusions is possible, and the conventional inference that Lugar saw Nash's Italianate and castellated designs either on public exhibition or as executed, and merely copied them, albeit with skill, is not to be discarded. At the other extreme, is it possible that Lugar had spent a period of apprenticeship in Nash's office, possibly back in the Carmarthen days, or following an introduction on the Isle of Wight when engaged on different projects? Or perhaps one should adopt a middle way and credit Lugar with a degree of independent skill and originality, rooted in his having seen and absorbed some of the same sources.

In the absence of firm evidence that they ever met, much less worked together, the case for a professional connection between the two men must not be over-

stated; but there are some further anecdotal points of coincidence. Colvin explains that the suggestion that they may have met in Carmarthen in the 1790s is posited on both their names ('John Nash, Esq., Carmarthen' and 'Mr. Lugar, Carmarthen') appearing in the list of subscribers to a volume of poetry published there on a Picturesque theme in 1796. Lugar's name has not been located in parish rate books or other documents for the town at that time,<sup>28</sup> and this apparent co-incidence remains for the moment unexplained.

The next point of connection is Lugar's dedication in 1805 of his first book, *Architectural Sketches*, to one George Ward, Esq., in which in fulsome terms Lugar acknowledges 'the honour of uniting your name with mine; I cannot forbear to embrace the opportunity of expressing my thanks

and gratitude for your many friendly attentions'. This must be the George Ward who had purchased an estate on the Isle of Wight in 1793, and who by this time was a neighbour of Nash there, Nash having bought the land at East Cowes with the intention of building his own house in 1798. Ward was to become a close friend of Nash. We have seen that Lugar had been sketching at Carisbrooke around 1800, and was later to build Puckaster Cottage in 1814 for James Vine, a marine villa in the shape of a *cottage orné*, illustrated in *Villa Architecture* (Fig. 10). But it seems that he may have undertaken other work there, for *Brannon's Guide* to the Isle of Wight in 1833 mentions a house close to Puckaster, originally intended as a lodging house, 'from a design by Lugar'. The Isle of Wight was a fashionable place to maintain a Regency retreat, and demand for villas and picturesque cottages occupied many mainland architects, so the presence of both Lugar and Nash on the island is hardly surprising in itself. But the specific Ward connection is interesting: did Lugar meet him through Nash, or could it have been the other way round?

Another coincidence is that both Nash and Lugar executed major commissions for members of the Ashburton family, although these were separated by almost two decades. Nash built Sandridge Park in Devon for Elizabeth, the Dowager Lady Ashburton in 1804–5; Lugar enlarged Glenlee in Kirkcudbright for Elizabeth's widowed daughter-in-law, Lady Ashburton (née Cunninghame), in 1823, and went on to build Hensol, nearby, for the latter's brother John Cunninghame in 1825. There may of course be a simple explanation for these apparently linked Ashburton commissions: by now Lugar had an established practice among the Scottish mercantile classes as his work for the Stirlings and Buchanans had already demonstrated, and John Cunninghame, from the second generation of a family of Glasgow tobacco merchants, was of that ilk; the second Lady Ashburton was a wealthy widow and society hostess in Edinburgh who might simply have chosen to use a

name heard amongst her connections, and then recommended him to her brother. But it remains possible that Nash had put forward the name of Lugar as an acquaintance or former pupil.

In summary, there is circumstantial evidence which may tempt us to speculate that the 'lost' early decade of Lugar's career was spent at least in part as a pupil or junior assistant in Nash's office. More prosaically, these apparent connections may be explained simply by the demographics of Regency villa-building, where clients and territory would inevitably overlap.

In terms of their stylistic similarities, are we dealing with Lugar's mere (and almost instantaneous) imitation of Nash, or may we credit Lugar with his own parallel understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the picturesque small house, however arrived at? It is true that communication of architectural ideas was gaining pace through the medium of the pattern book, although Nash of course never published one, but the year 1805 marked only the beginning of what was to become a flood of increasingly populist works over the next four decades, and Lugar can therefore be regarded as being in the vanguard.<sup>29</sup> A quick-witted, able provincial architect such as Lugar could discern the stylistic trend of the day, seize the opportunity to borrow from the work of the acknowledged master, and publish his own pattern book as the most effective method of self-advancement. But in his defence, his first book expounds some reasoned aesthetic theories which, if not exactly intellectual, and expressed in overblown language, display a grasp of Picturesque principles; his commendation of 'Taste and fancy combined with discrimination, and appropriateness to the locality or situation' could equally have represented Nash's approach, even if there was less flair in Lugar's execution.

## ARCHIBALD SIMPSON

There is no evidence that Lugar took on any pupils other than the Aberdeen-born Archibald Simpson (1790–1847), who spent about a year in his office in Holborn in 1810–11. The young Simpson, forced by his father's early death to give up formal education, had just completed a six year apprenticeship with a master mason and builder in Aberdeen when his uncle, himself a builder and architect, despatched him to London with letters of introduction. It has been suggested that Lugar was something of a last resort after rebuttals from Soane, Gwilt, Dance, Smirke and S.P. Cockerell, the last in particularly discouraging terms;<sup>30</sup> but it is equally possible that Lugar's rising reputation in Scotland at that time, bolstered by the success of Tullichewan and Balloch in 1808–9, would have rendered a connection with him very desirable for the 21-year-old Simpson. There is no record of the projects on which Simpson worked, but over that period Lugar was preparing his third pattern book, and the first to record his executed repertoire, *Plans and Views*, published in 1811; the drawings for this volume probably occupied some of Simpson's working hours, and he would certainly have been exposed to Lugar's principal characteristic styles during his period as pupil. Despite the sixteen years' difference in their age Simpson seems to have had an easy relationship with his pupil-master, for he writes home: 'he is a very affable sort of man and I generally dine with him'.<sup>31</sup>

It would be presumptuous to identify these sources in Simpson's mature work, particularly since, after he left Lugar's employ, he went on to spend a short time in the office of David Laing before, it is believed, briefly travelling abroad,<sup>32</sup> so he was open to other influences, both metropolitan and continental, before setting up in practice in 1813. Nevertheless, Simpson's first major commission at Castle Forbes in 1814 was in an asymmetrical style and plan which closely followed that of Tullichewan; Lugar's ogival tourelles which pique the roofline at Hensol, Kirkcudbright (1825) and Glanusk, Powys

(1826: demolished) are closely mirrored by those at Simpson's Castle Newe of 1831. Simpson's country villas include the overtly Italianate Glenferness House (1844), complete with a three-storey belvedere, grouped round-headed windows, and shallow-pitched roofs with deep eaves supported by brackets; while his attributed alterations to Haddo House at Forgue (1836) include a striking porte-cochère in the form of a massive square belvedere.<sup>33</sup> Whether these details are derived from the generic Italianate idiom which was by then well established, or whether they owe a more direct debt to Lugar's detailing as shown in the latter's Italian villa design (Plates 27 and 28 in his *Architectural Sketches* of 1805), or at The Ryes, which was broadly contemporaneous with Simpson's period of pupillage, must remain a moot point.

## CONCLUSION

This article has concentrated on Lugar's early years, but our picture of his later career is still incomplete, for *Villa Architecture* was published in 1828 and, though re-printed in 1855, it was not revised. So, although we can place much confidence in his pattern books as a record of his portfolio up to 1828, there is much to be done to piece together a comprehensive view of his work in the last two decades of his life, where, particularly in Wales, tentative attributions continue to emerge. For the moment his pattern books constitute his better known legacy, but even this is one which extended far beyond his provincial clientele. Perceived as encapsulating the Picturesque spirit of the age, they reached a new and receptive audience on another continent; Andrew Jackson Downing, for example, in transferring the picturesque vernacular to the fertile pasture of America, recommended *Villa Architecture* to his own readers.<sup>34</sup>

The present-day assessment of Lugar is, in the main, respectful rather than enthusiastic. While there is due recognition of his broad scope within the



Fig. 11: Wylands, Monmouthshire (*The Wylands Estate*)

Picturesque field, the consensus seems to be that his work lacked the exhilarating vision and fine judgement displayed by Nash. Nevertheless the originality and accomplishment of his Scottish castellated houses is widely acknowledged: ‘conceived in a looser, more picturesque spirit than [the castles of] Adam or Hamilton, Lugar’s is a castellated Gothic romantically attuned to dreams of a monastic mediaevalism . . . elements of plan and section group freely below ragged skylines that rise and fall around battlemented towers. At Balloch and Tullichewan, for the first time in Scotland, Gothic affords that more general release from the constraints

of classical composition,<sup>35</sup> though a dissenting voice finds Tullichewan ‘confused and unscholarly’ in its styling.<sup>36</sup>

Lugar’s villas attract a mixed press. The ‘exquisite’ Wylands, near Chepstow (Fig. 11), is praised for its sophistication,<sup>37</sup> but Dunstall Priory is felt to lack ‘Nash’s feeling for picturesque grouping’<sup>38</sup>; Hitchcock found his Italianate villa design ‘proto-Victorian in its heavy though simple detailing’<sup>39</sup>. A different, but not mutually exclusive, view is that Lugar was ‘an eccentric planner, devising contorted routes through his villas probably to enhance their picturesque potential’.<sup>40</sup> His successful handling of

the *cottage orné* form, at Puckaster Cottage, or Denham Mount, bears comparison with Jeffrey Wyattville, whose masterly design for Endsleigh, Devon, executed some years before Lugar’s examples, succeeded in employing the cottage idiom on a grand scale while retaining its picturesque delicacy; indeed Wyattville’s work as a whole may have influenced Lugar’s approach. It is unfortunate and undeserved that Lugar’s entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* offers the most uncompromising assessment of all: ‘He was a designer of only limited ability, who frequently reduced the process of picturesque composition to a meagrely detailed routine formula of only marginal asymmetry.’<sup>41</sup> It has been the purpose of this article to go behind this damning verdict and encourage a re-appraisal of both the originality of his picturesque aesthetic and his skill in its execution.

Here is a man who seems to have leaped from obscurity fully-fledged onto the Picturesque stage in 1805. This ‘affable man’ was indeed ‘ingenious and able’,<sup>42</sup> and the undoubted success of his career, even if played out on a more provincial stage than Nash commanded, renders the mystery of his early life and formative years even more tantalising. More research remains to be done to complete this re-appraisal with the degree of detail which it merits, but the picture which is emerging is that of an architect who was not only a true heir to Nash’s triumphant Picturesque experiments, but a contemporary innovator in his own right. As an architect he is under-rated; as a man he is unknown. He deserves better.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Professor David Watkin for having read and commented upon this article in draft form, and to Dr. Geoffrey Tyack for his continuing guidance.

#### NOTES

- 1 The Turrets, a small Gothic villa of c.1818 in Colchester, for Francis Smythies, a Mayor of the town, is attributed to him.
- 2 The school seems not to have been built.
- 3 Howard Colvin, *A Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, 4th Edition (New Haven and London, 2008), pp. 661–3
- 4 It appears from census returns, parish records and his will (National Archives (TNA), PROB/11/2233) that he may have had children who died in infancy, but there are inconsistencies between the documents.
- 5 Ardleigh Parish register. A village census of 1796 reveals 21 inhabitants bearing the Lugar surname, although Robert himself is not listed.
- 6 According to his will, Robert had at least one brother, Edward, who farmed in Essex.
- 7 London Metropolitan Archives, MS11936/389/604840
- 8 A letter dated 13th September 1814 written by Lugar from Swinton Hall, Yorkshire to the Clerk to the Essex Justices lists his travelling plans for the following five weeks: Manchester, Liverpool, Shropshire, Yorkshire again and Warwickshire; he apologises that he will not return to Chelmsford before late October: Essex Record Office: Q/Abp 9
- 9 Demolished 1870
- 10 Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: a complete dictionary of contributors and their work from its first foundation in 1769 to 1904*, Vol. 5, (London, 1906), pp. 112–3
- 11 By 1818 it had become so dilapidated that the house was demolished.
- 12 Lugar could not have been involved with the alterations and repairs to the official apartments at Carisbrooke in the 1790s, by James Wyatt for Thomas Orde-Powlett, who was at that time Constable of Carisbrooke Castle and Governor of the Isle of Wight. But Orde-Powlett also built Fernhill, an extravagantly-styled Gothic retreat on the island, the authorship and precise dating of which are still unconfirmed, although it was certainly finished by 1794. Lugar would have been a young man, but is it possible that he had assisted at Fernhill?
- 13 His other Irish work consists of one executed project: a farmhouse and offices ‘built for Mr Thompson, near Belfast’, shown in *Villa*

- Architecture*, and an unexecuted design for a ‘House for Earl O’Neill, Co. Antrim’ shown at the Royal Academy in 1840, which must refer to a plan for the re-instatement of Shane’s Castle, on which Nash had worked c.1815, and which had been destroyed by fire in 1816. There is a suggestion that Lugar’s design considerably pre-dates its exhibition in 1840: we know that by 1833 plans for a new castle were being considered. (Irish Architectural Archive entry for Lugar; Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, building reference HB20/04/042/C).
- 14 The earliest found so far date from 1803, but others may come to light.
  - 15 A will exists for a Mr Robert Tapster of north London, described as a plumber and glazier but also a minor builder-developer, proved in 1835. (TNA: PROB/11/1842)
  - 16 J.C.Loudon, *Architectural Magazine*, 3, (1836), p. 202. The *Gentleman’s Magazine*, however, found it ‘a plan of considerable merit’: June 1836, p. 637.
  - 17 John Nash had designed two lodges for Townley Hall in 1796.
  - 18 At this time Stamford Hill saw a considerable amount of villa development and in 1806 a new tranche of building leases had been granted from the Tyssen estate to John Hindle, a local builder-developer (*Victoria County History of Middlesex*, Vol. 10)
  - 19 By the 1820s it was owned by Admiral James Ryder Burton, who married into the Anglo-Irish Plunkett family, and the house thence descended through the Lords Dunsany until its sale in the mid-twentieth century. The land was owned at the time of building by Sir Walter Stirling, Bt., but it is not clear that he commissioned the house. By February 1807 the newly-built house was being offered to let: *Morning Chronicle*, 9 February 1807.
  - 20 Lugar did not exhibit again until 1816.
  - 21 Professor David Watkin’s assessment of him as but one of many ‘imitators’, whose Dunstall is ‘a not very successful version of Cronkhill’ is a not untypical reaction: Watkin, *The English Vision* (New York, 1982) p. 118
  - 22 Believed to be the watercolour now in the Soane Museum, and possibly executed by Repton in Nash’s office.
  - 23 It now appears likely that one of the two watercolours sold in October 2012 at Bonham’s, Edinburgh (sale no. 20510, lot 551) may well have been the piece exhibited; interestingly they formed part of the Hensol contents sale, no doubt having come into John Cunningham’s ownership when his sister died childless.
  - 24 Plates 27 and 28.
  - 25 It was advertised to let in the *Morning Chronicle* of 9 February, 1807 as an ‘elegant new built Italian Villa’.
  - 26 For further discussion of the chronology of the Claudian villas, see Rosemary Yallop, ‘Nash and the Villa Rustica’ in Geoffrey Tyack (ed.), *John Nash: Architect of the Picturesque* (Swindon, 2013), pp. 57–74
  - 27 See Colvin, *Dictionary*, p.663 (fn); and the discussion by John Cornforth in *Country Life*, 11 September, 1990, p. 847. The advertisement to which he and Colvin refer which mentions the ‘eminent London architect’ may also be found in the *Yorkshire Gazette* for 27 May, 1820.
  - 28 The author is indebted to Thomas Lloyd, Richard Suggett and Edna Dale-Jones for their continuing assistance in attempting to confirm Lugar’s presence in Wales at that time.
  - 29 The beginning of the new century ushered in a new genre of pattern books, notably the cottage books of Plaw, Laing, Malton and Elsam in the first three years. Lugar was in the forefront of this first, innovative wave: 1805 also saw the publication of pattern books by Joseph Gandy and William Atkinson which dealt with rural themes, although Gandy’s designs for cottages were rather more visionary than practical.
  - 30 Malcolm Higgs, ‘Archibald Simpson’, in *Scottish Pioneers of the Greek Revival* (Scottish Georgian Society, 1984), p. 57. S P Cockerell advised him that without ‘connections of consequence’, ‘nothing could be made of the profession in any shape in London’.
  - 31 Ibid.
  - 32 David Miller, *Archibald Simpson, Architect: his life and times* (Kinloss, 2006), pp. 24–5. Laing co-incidentally later designed the Town Exchange at Colchester; Simpson apparently joined Laing’s office on a trial basis and seems to have spent under a year there before apparently leaving for Italy, although Higgs, *op.cit.*, p. 58, is unconvinced.
  - 33 As distinct from the Adam house of the same name for the Gordons.

- 34 Along with books by, *inter alia*, Loudon, Papworth and Hunt. Andrew Jackson Downing, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, (1841), p.417
- 35 John Gifford and Frank Arneil Walker, *The Buildings of Scotland: Stirling and Central Scotland* (New Haven and London, 2002) p. 56
- 36 Timothy Mowl, ‘Designs by John Carter for Lea Castle’, in *Architectural History*, 25 (1982), p. 51
- 37 John Newman, *The Buildings of Wales: Gwent and Monmouthshire* (London, 2000) pp. 46, 388–9
- 38 John Newman, *The Buildings of England, Kent: West and Weald* (New Haven and London, 2012) p. 54<sup>1</sup>
- 39 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Early Victorian Architecture in Britain* (New Haven, 1954), p. 29. He is referring to Plate 27 of *Architectural Sketches*.
- 40 Timothy Brittain-Catlin, *The English Parsonage in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Reading, 2008), p. 44
- 41 Peter Leach, ‘Robert Lugar’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (online ed.) [www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com), ref. odnb37697.
- 42 This was the judgement of Peter Coxe (c.1753–1844), fine art auctioneer, friend of John Soane, and amateur poet, who in 1823 published an illustrated poem entitled *The Social Day*, for which Lugar, whom Coxe also describes as a friend, had produced an engraving. In doing so Lugar found himself in the company of distinguished contemporary artists including Constable.