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CHANTRELL IN HALIFAX: CLASSICISM AND THE SOANE LEGACY

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This article examines four significant late-Georgian buildings in and around Halifax for which there is no documentary evidence of authorship, seeking to establish them as early works by R.D. Chantrell, one of Soane's most accomplished pupils. It sheds valuable new light on Chantrell's early career and, perhaps most significantly, explores the issue of Soane's educational philosophy for those who passed through his office as pupils, a subject identified in a number of earlier publications, but never before examined in the context of specific examples.

'In Regency London, the most exacting article of training an architect could receive was in the office of Sir John Soane . . . yet surprisingly little is known about [the pupils] after they left his office [as] relatively few went on to develop illustrious . . . practices of their own',¹ concluded Michael Forsyth in 1998. Arguably, the two most successful were George Basevi (1794–1845) and Robert Dennis Chantrell (1793–1872),² yet studies of neither career has so far provided much in the way of useful examples of the master's influence. Basevi consciously turned his back on Soane's ideas – in Colvin's words '[he] gradually emancipated himself from the influence of Soane and returned [from his Grand Tour] well equipped to serve the increasingly eclectic taste of George IV's England'³ – while Chantrell secured considerable fame as a designer of Gothic churches, the style 'which Soane so much despised'.⁴ This was a skill that must have owed little

to what he had learned while in Soane's office, other than a general facility to understand proportions and felicitously apply ornament. Chantrell's handful of documented Classical buildings does not form a sufficiently coherent group to provide any meaningful conclusions about his pupilage.

The fourteen-year-old Chantrell arrived in Soane's office on 15 June 1807 to begin a six and a half year long architectural training. The master's carefully planned education programme focused on the principles of the classical tradition, to be understood from a combination of drawing board exercises and an acquaintance with the great works of architectural theory, but arguing that these should subsequently be complemented by foreign travel⁵ and practical experience of the world of building.⁶ Chantrell shunned travel and the final part of his career preparation seems to have involved a year or two with an unknown surveyor in London,⁷ followed by three years as an assistant to an architect in the unlikely location of Halifax, West Yorkshire, before he opened his own office in nearby Leeds in 1819.

While much is now known about Chantrell's independent career in Leeds, the details of his Halifax period have hitherto been elusive. However, a series of recent discoveries has revealed a small corpus of Classical buildings that can reasonably be linked to him in this period. This material is certainly of value to anyone studying not only Chantrell, but also Soane. The four buildings – Sion Chapel, Halifax; Eastwood House, Keighley;

Nether Croft, Huddersfield and Forest House, Bacup, Lancashire – are thus of paramount importance, coming as they did so soon after Chantrell had left his teacher. We can now establish a link between Soane’s sophisticated educational policy for those who passed through his office, and their early years of independent designing: Soane’s philosophy synthesised by one of his most accomplished pupils.

Though the stylistic evidence is compelling, there is no documentary evidence to link these buildings to Chantrell – or indeed, any other architect – but it is my belief that the four commissions were secured by Chantrell’s principal, the little-known and unremarkable William Bradley, who immediately passed them to his talented assistant, enthusiastic to dazzle a backwater Pennine region with the very latest metropolitan ideas. Hitherto our knowledge of Chantrell’s Halifax sojourn was largely confined to a brief reference in a letter which he wrote to Soane in 1821: ‘20 months [ago I] removed from Halifax where . . . I have resided as assistant to an architect . . .’.⁸ However, he gave no details of how long he had been there, or whom he had assisted. The recent discovery of an 1816 newspaper advertisement now puts valuable flesh on those bones:

‘WILLIAM BRADLEY, ARCHITECT, acknowledges, with sincere Gratitude to his Friends, the liberal Encouragement he has experienced during a Term of nearly Eighteen Years’ Practice, and begs Leave to inform them, that in Consequence of the flattering Prospect he has of future Patronage, he has engaged as ASSISTANT, Mr Chantrell, of London, a Gentleman of considerable Ability in his Profession, and who was articed to the present justly celebrated and highly esteemed Architect, John Soane Esq. This, he trusts, will evince his ardent Desire, through additional Assiduity and Facility, to merit Support.’⁹

How did Bradley and Chantrell become acquainted? There is no evidence that Chantrell advertised nationally for a position; far more likely that the ambitious Bradley somehow made it known to the London architectural fraternity that he had a

vacancy. Three years later, early in 1819 and just after his twenty-sixth birthday, Chantrell entered and won two important competitions in Leeds – for the Public Baths and for the hall for the Philosophical and Literary Society – marking the start of his independent career; on 15 March 1819 he left Bradley and opened the door of his office in The Saddle Yard, Leeds, remaining in the town until 1846. We thus have a precisely defined, three-year period for Chantrell’s work with Bradley. We know little about Bradley, but the few facts are not flattering. Chantrell told Soane in 1821 that ‘[his] principles and ideas differed so widely from mine that I found I could never expect to reap any benefit from the connection’. The diary of Ann Lister – who, as chatelaine of Shibden Hall, Halifax, employed Bradley – recorded that he was ‘not a man to depend on – very idle – never right with his estimates – not fit to be an architect.’¹⁰ There are few recorded architectural commissions by him. In 1816 he rebuilt the church at Coley, near Halifax, for Pevsner a ‘remarkably serious design for its date’,¹¹ but in fact, blatantly plagiarised from a recent local church by Thomas Taylor (1777/8–1826),¹² who really did produce some ‘serious’ and innovative Gothic designs. Shortly after Chantrell’s departure, Bradley was appointed to build the new grammar school in Bradford with a design of unmitigated ineptitude, but had to be replaced by the experienced York architect Peter Atkinson after ‘neglecting to attend to the building’.¹³ He left Halifax in 1821, having, it seems, run up considerable debts.¹⁴ The question of whether Bradley was the sort of man to exploit the talents of his young assistant while claiming the credit himself need hardly detain us for long. Indeed, had Dickens known of him, he could well have been the inspiration for Pecksniff a generation later.¹⁵

The buildings in Halifax, Keighley, Huddersfield and Bacup discussed here have strong stylistic associations with each other. They display considerable metropolitan sophistication as well as much overt Soanian influence, especially in their



Fig. 1: R.D. Chantrell, Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society Hall (1819–21).
 Note the way in which the chimneys are emphasised to enliven the sky-line, and the highly idiosyncratic treatment of the entablature (*Leeds City Museum*)

internal decorations. And Halifax, with its commercial and marketing links with Keighley, Huddersfield and Bacup, provided the nearest architect's office to each. From the middle of the eighteenth century, the increasingly prosperous Halifax textile industry generated considerable wealth for its elite;¹⁶ a pattern quickly developed whereby the most prosperous built mansions of remarkable grandeur, almost aristocratic in their pretension, e.g. Hope Hall (1765), Somerset House (1766), Pye Nest (John Carr, c.1771) and Crownest House (1788) by Bradley's father Thomas.¹⁷ A visitor to the town in 1781 commented on 'the many magnificent houses lately built and now daily building.'¹⁸ The houses at Bacup and Huddersfield

certainly have that unusual degree of authority that fits easily with this middle-class Halifax tradition.

As far as possible authorship is concerned, it is important to point out that there is nothing in Bradley's *oeuvre* to suggest that, independently, he could have been the instigator of any of these remarkable designs. Bradley, it is true, was not the only architect in Halifax. John Oates (1793–1831) commenced practice in the town around 1818 and should not be entirely overlooked, although his three known Classical buildings have nothing in common with the four buildings being considered here.¹⁹ Chantrell's Literary and Philosophical Society Hall in Leeds (1819–21) (Fig. 1) – the only one of his documented Classical compositions to be adequately



Fig. 2: Halifax, Sion Chapel (1819-20). The doors and windows are modern, but broadly follow the pattern of the originals (*Oliver Bradbury*)

recorded, and a project designed on the eve of his departure from Bradley – has, on the other hand, much in common with them, especially in its treatment of the entablature and skyline.

SION CHAPEL, HALIFAX

The building with the strongest Bradley connection is the Sion Chapel, Wade Street, Halifax (1819–20), of which only the front façade survives, now incongruously incorporated into the town’s bus station (Fig. 2). The story of this once very

impressive building begins in 1816 when a group of the worshippers at nearby Square Chapel decided to purchase a small chapel in Wade Street, Halifax, from the Methodists.²⁰ Although both Square and Sion chapels were subsequently listed as ‘Congregationalist’, in the early nineteenth century they tended to be referred to as ‘Independent’, a point to which we will return shortly. The dynamic Rev. Edward Parsons began his ministry at Wade Street on 21 December 1817. This active preacher and educator ‘first intended to enlarge the old building to the necessary extent, but upon examination it was found necessary to erect an



Fig. 3: Halifax, Sion Chapel (1819–20), ceiling, now demolished, photographed c.1976. The segmental curves in the ceiling decoration echoed those in the end walls of the chapel’s interior (*Author*)

elevation has four baseless Doric columns *in antis*, with slightly projecting flanks and an attic storey. There is much delicate incised decoration in the manner of Soane, and the chapel’s now-lost ceiling (Fig. 3) made extensive use of the Greek key motif in the manner of Soane.

EASTWOOD HOUSE, KEIGHLEY

Eastwood House was said to have been ‘built in 1819 for William Sugden’, an eminent Keighley worsted spinner and leading citizen.²³ However, Christopher Greenwood’s map of the area, ‘published May 1st 1817 . . . surveyed in 1815–16–17’,²⁴ shows an Eastwood House already in that location. The answer, surely, is that this is a house erected in two phases: the central five bays came first, with the outer bays, porch and probably the pediment added later (Fig. 4). In this second phase came an impressive, top-lit, central staircase with offices behind. Sugden’s 1819 project must therefore have involved the substantial aggrandisement of an existing, fairly modest house, which belonged to a late-eighteenth century tradition of gentry houses in this part of West Yorkshire. The dimensions of the entrance hall would seem to confirm this: the imposing, impeccably-detailed Doric porch – which has no visual link to the rest of the central section of the façade, but with its principal horizontal lines repeated in the wings – leads to a mean corridor before opening into the stately staircase, a solecism no self-respecting architect would commit if the present house were the result of a single, comprehensive design. In these circumstances, the recording of 1819 probably indicated the date on which Sugden and his family moved to Eastwood House – ‘the best family residence in the neighbourhood’²⁵ – suggesting a development of the old house that had started a year or two earlier.

In its entirety, the façade is, arguably, not entirely successful, but the treatment of the outer bays

entirely new chapel . . . the foundation stone was laid on 10 May 1819 . . . it was opened on 7 June 1820 [and] cost £4,514’.²¹ No reference to an architect has been traced.

The chronology seems to be as follows: in 1818 the old chapel was examined with the intention of a modest extension, but the proposal was pronounced unviable; probably later that year, a new chapel was designed, an estimate was prepared and fundraising began. Early in 1819 the old chapel was demolished and ground-work was commenced for the foundation stone laying in May. Since initially ‘enlargement’ was proposed, it is unlikely that the congregation would look outside the locality for an architect, making Bradley, as the only established architect in Halifax at the time, the most likely candidate. Furthermore, he already had an important link to the Independents as he and his family worshipped at Square Chapel and in 1815, for the Halifax Mission Society’s festival ‘in Independent [Square] Chapel . . . the Chapel is to be put into a state of perfect security . . . under the direction of Mr William Bradley, Architect’.²²

The entrance front is of the finest ashlar. This



Fig. 4: Keighley, Eastwood House (c.1800, wings c.1818–19) (*Oliver Bradbury*)



Fig. 5: Keighley, Eastwood House, staircase (c.1818–19). The space was significantly sub-divided in the twentieth century but the shallow blank arches retain their obvious debt to those on the staircase of Soane's Pitzhanger Manor (*Author*)



Fig. 6: Keighley, Eastwood House, rear bedroom ceiling (c.1818–19). The linked ball motif can be found extensively in Soane's London house (*Oliver Bradbury*)

suggests someone acquainted with the most advanced metropolitan thinking. Furthermore, the incised Soanian detail around the inside of the semi-circular arches is almost identical to the arrangement at Sion Chapel. The once-impressive staircase (Fig. 5) has much in common with Soane's at Pitzhanger (1801–3) and several rooms incorporate Soanian motifs in their plaster decoration (Fig. 6).

NETHER CROFT, HUDDERSFIELD

Nether Croft (Fig. 7) has proved the most difficult of the four buildings to research. Indeed, even the most basic details of its name, when and for whom it was built, had not been recorded, a remarkable occurrence given that this must have been the grandest residence in the town centre. However, several crucial facts have been unearthed.²⁶ The

house, situated in Buxton Road (a continuation of New Street), was commissioned by the Lockwoods, a family of wool merchants and manufacturers who had built up a business empire on the east side of New Street from the 1770s. William Lockwood had, from 1807, the lease of the land on which the house was eventually built.²⁷ It was referred to then as ‘Nether Crofts’,²⁸ but it appears to have been merely a piece of vacant land. Thomas Lockwood was living in the house by 1825,²⁹ but it is unclear whether it was called Nether Crofts then.³⁰ The most useful evidence of date comes on the town’s 1818 map,³¹ which, although not naming the house, shows a building in precisely the right location.

Although in the early nineteenth century ‘New Street was inhabited by some of the first families of that time’,³² it was the other side of the town – the

north-west slopes of Highfield, Edgerton and Greenhead Park – that were destined to become the fashionable suburbs of the rapidly expanding town. Thus when, in the late-1820s, Thomas’s finances were overstretched – either from excessive expenditure on his mansion, or an imprudent business speculation – he struggled to realise his investment in Nether Croft. By 1830 it had been divided internally and let to two tenants. In 1832, Lockwood was declared bankrupt and ownership of Nether Croft passed to Abraham Hirst, another wool merchant. He lived in half the house and let the other. By the mid-century New Street and Buxton Road had become Huddersfield’s principal street for retailing and by 1870 it was converted to two shops with its front garden raised and paved over to bring it to the level of the street, thus obliterating the



Fig. 7: Huddersfield, Nether Croft (c.1816–18), demolished, photographed in c.1900.

The front garden was raised to the level of the pavement, burying the portico’s steps, and the shops which form the return walls are additions of 1879 (by Healey and Healey of Bradford). The roof is that of the 1879 hall, built in Nether Croft’s rear garden (*Kirklees Image Archive*)

portico's flight of steps. Then in 1879 it became the frontispiece to the new Victoria Temperance Hall, built on the former back garden: a function for which the majestic porticoed entrance must have appeared eminently suited. It was demolished in the early twentieth century for an extension to the Co-operative emporium.³³

The exterior had no obviously Soanian motifs, and no record of the interior decoration has survived. The only hint of its possible splendour was a later survey plan that reveals that in the principal room of the northern wing, the end walls were apsidal.

FOREST HOUSE, BACUP³⁴

Forest House (Figs. 8, 9) is the grandest of our three residences, although it suffered years of neglect in the mid twentieth century, followed by repeated vandalism and eventually a calamitous fire. It was subsequently restored as a care-home, but some pre-fire photographs exist as a record of its former appearance.³⁵

To a modern historian, the idea of a resident of Bacup in Lancashire venturing over the border to Halifax in Yorkshire in search of an architect might seem unlikely. However, two centuries ago, not only

Fig. 8: Bacup, Forest House (c.1815–21) in 1961 (NMR, Reproduced by permission of English Heritage)



Fig. 9: Bacup, Forest House (c.1815–21) in 1961 (NMR, Reproduced by permission of English Heritage)





Fig. 10: Bacup, Forest House, rear elevation, perhaps of 1815–16. (Author)

was this sort of county demarcation much less noticeable but many of the towns on Lancashire’s eastern fringes, like Bacup, were geographically, socially and commercially much closer to Halifax than they were to Manchester. Unlike the more western parts of Lancashire which relied on cotton for their industrial prosperity, Bacup and other east Lancashire towns exploited wool. It was thus natural that they should look to Yorkshire for their marketing,³⁶ especially as that county had well developed links to the Continent for woollen exports via Hull. In addition, the new road that passed through Bacup to link Halifax with Blackburn, opened at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, meant travel from Bacup to Halifax was actually much easier than the significantly undulating road south-west towards Manchester or Liverpool.

Unlike Nether Croft, Forest House has been much written about,³⁷ but the results are often contradictory and of dubious integrity. The crucial details appear to be as follows. The house was built for Henry Lord Esq (c.1771–1819)³⁸ whose wealth was apparently derived from textiles, perhaps with mining interests too.³⁹ The cost has been given as £17,000,⁴⁰ which seems a high, although not entirely

implausible figure. It has also been claimed that ‘1818–21’ was inscribed in the roof’s lead;⁴¹ more reliably, an 1882 obituary of the contractor/stone mason James Hinchcliff records that he and several other tradesmen – interestingly, all from Yorkshire – came to Bacup to ‘work on Forest House then being erected by the late Henry Lord Esq. This was between the years 1815 and 1817.’⁴² The first printed record of the house’s existence comes in Baine’s *Lancashire* of 1825 when it was the residence of John Foster.⁴³ It has been wrongly claimed it was built for Foster and that he either was, or was related to, the eminent Liverpool architect of that name.⁴⁴ In fact Foster was a member of a prosperous woollen family from Hebden Bridge, near Halifax, who married Lord’s daughter Elizabeth in 1824, after which the pair made this their home.⁴⁵

The 1815–17 recorded by the stonemasons, and the 1818–21 claimed to have been seen on the roof, are not incompatible. Indeed, in a leisurely building process, and one interrupted by Lord’s 1819 demise, these dates are entirely compatible with a design produced by Chantrell while with Bradley. It seems likely that Bradley started the rear elevation in 1815 – the date at which the Yorkshire masons arrived –

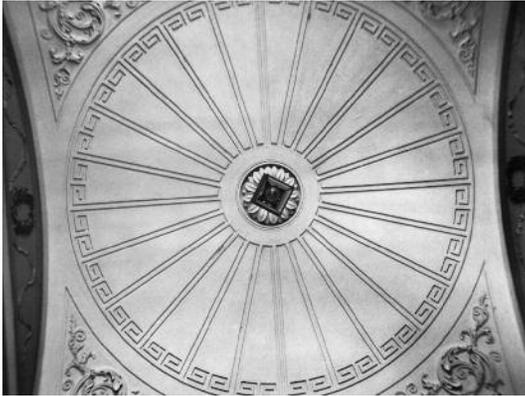


Fig. 11: Bacup, Forest House, entrance hall ceiling (c.1819) in 1961 (*NMR, Reproduced by permission of English Heritage*)



Fig. 12: Bacup, Forest House, the east drawing room ceiling. This was rather crudely rebuilt in the 1990s following the fire, but still reveals the Soanian influence (*Author*)

intending it to be the principal front, but following Chantrell's arrival in Bradley's office, Lord decided to embark on a much grander scheme in which the original front was relegated to the service side of the house. The orientation is unusual in that its principal façade and reception rooms face north-east. This secures for them the view over the valley far below, leaving the back of the house looking toward the main road and a slightly more southerly aspect. This rear elevation (Fig. 10), three storeys in height and with a central pediment, is entirely lacking the sophistication of the other side, though unusually dignified for a service wing. Might Lord's demands for something more palatial have even been the motive for Bradley seeking such a well-qualified, London-trained collaborator?

The finished interior was awash with Soanian decoration. The entrance hall had a ceiling very similar to Soane's own breakfast room's at No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields (Fig. 11); the principal left-hand room had a starfish ceiling akin to that in the breakfast parlour at No. 12 (Fig. 12); and the right hand room had a plain version of the ceiling in the front parlour at Pitzhanger.

THE BASIS FOR THE ATTRIBUTIONS

Of the four buildings discussed, Bradley's link to the Sion Chapel commission is the most compelling. The profusion of Soanian motifs – which do not appear in any of Bradley's compositions before Chantrell arrived in his office, or after he had left it – would seem to confirm the job was passed to Chantrell. Some of the unusual features of the façade re-occur in Huddersfield and Bacup, and convincingly point to the same architect designing all three. Finally, the treatment of Bacup's wings also suggests a common authorship with Keighley (Figs. 4, 8). This is true not only in the use of square, panelled pilasters, the unusual cresting and the sets of acroteria that punctuate the corners of the wings, but also that in both houses the wings appear to have lofty ground floor rooms, whereas in reality there are concealed first floor bedrooms lit by windows in the side elevations (Fig. 9).

No evidence of the interior decoration of Nether Croft is known, but the designs for the other three commissions made extensive use of Soanian motifs in their plasterwork. They included much use of incised motifs which could be seen as having found their way into the mainstream of English architecture

by the late 1810s. But the use of ‘linked balls’ – a motif specified by Soane in several rooms in his own house – and which reappear in two of the bedroom ceilings at Eastwood House (Fig. 6), surely suggests an architect intimately acquainted not just with Soane’s practice, but with his own private residence.⁴⁶

There is a further interesting aspect to the Chantrell attribution and a link to Soane. Just three months after Chantrell entered Soane’s office he was joined there by the slightly older George Allen Underwood (1792–1829).⁴⁷ They studied together for the next six years, and, after leaving Soane, Underwood quickly established himself in Cheltenham, where his early commissions included the Masonic Hall (1820–3) (Fig. 13). The similarity between the unusual intercolumniation of its *in antis* portico and those at Halifax, Huddersfield and Bacup, and more compellingly, the similarity between the idiosyncratic finials, akin to shapes

found on some Roman altars, can hardly be a coincidence. The young architects must have been made aware of these features while studying together, and they may have remained in contact afterwards,⁴⁸ one communicating his latest designs to the other, just as Soane urged his students in Lecture XII to ‘communicate with each other, reciprocally, the knowledge they have attained, the discoveries they have made, and by every effort endeavour to make this first of the liberal arts as perfect as possible’.⁴⁹

SOANE AND ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

To what conclusions should we come in relating our four buildings to Soane’s own designs, lectures and architectural philosophy? For Howard Colvin, Soane was ‘a master of the established conventions of Classical architecture, which he expounded in his

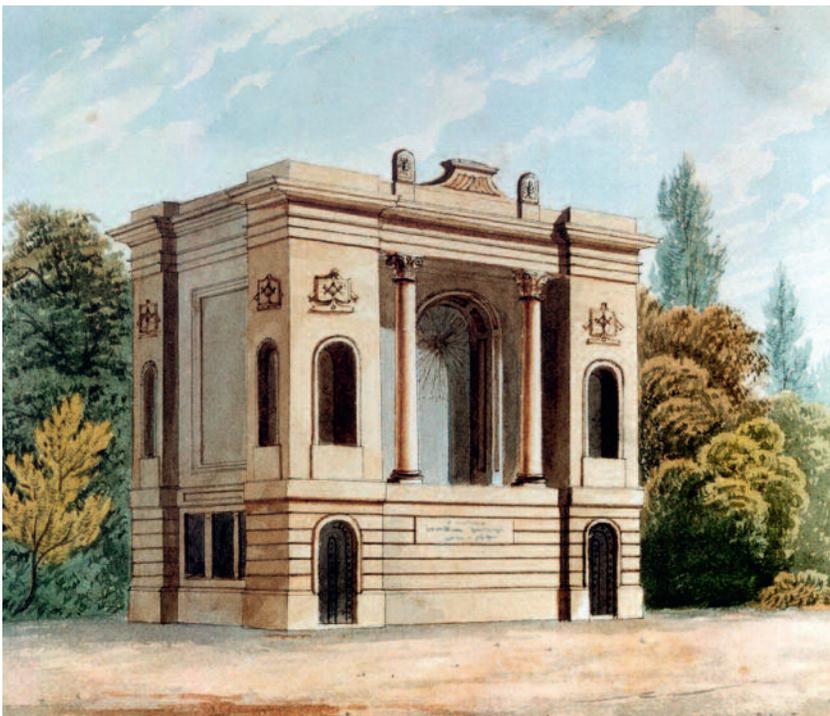


Fig. 13: George Allen Underwood, Cheltenham, Masonic Hall (1820–23)

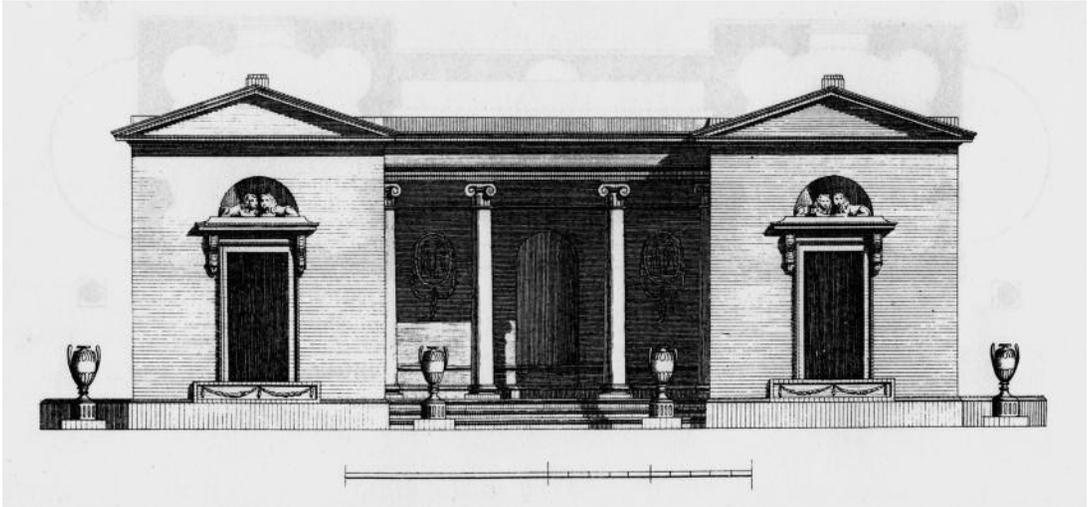


Fig. 14: John Soane, 'Pavilion', *Designs in Architecture*. (London: J. Taylor, 1778), plate XX

[Royal Academy] lectures and used himself in appropriate contexts'.⁵⁰ Yet a study of some of his private commissions reveals him often to have adopted a much less doctrinaire approach, suggesting that away from his public architectural statements intended to bolster London's position as one of the world's great capitals⁵¹ – a theme frequently rehearsed in the lectures⁵² – he was equally interested in *developing* the language of Classicism, in wringing new life from its principles.

Soane's ambivalence to the sanctity of the Orders is central to an understanding of the four buildings discussed here, as well as being an ongoing, but largely unresolved theme of his lectures.⁵³ Soane was mindful of the 'frightful responsibility'⁵⁴ that his appointment as Professor of Architecture carried. Not surprisingly, he was at pains to instil in his young audience a set of rules: the 'laws . . . of composition'.⁵⁵ These included: 'the entablature [is] essential . . . [consisting of] an architrave . . . its frieze . . . and its cornice',⁵⁶ 'the application of [mouldings] is not arbitrary',⁵⁷ 'these Orders finally attained the perfection; [so] that it is now dangerous to deviate

from them'.⁵⁸ 'Others . . . having observed in many ancient buildings prodigious differences, even in the essential parts of all the orders, they therefore concluded that everything in architecture was only a matter of whim, caprice and fancy, unrestrained by rules and unregulated by any fixed principles. Nothing, however, can be less founded than this doctrine, nor more fatal to art.'⁵⁹

Yet this is only a partial assessment of the lectures' core. Soane could not help contradicting himself by hinting at the legitimacy of originality: 'The ancients allowed themselves great latitude with the orders'.⁶⁰ He differentiated between 'real artists [and] humble copyists',⁶¹ and cautioned against 'imitation of masters . . . it may make them humble mannerists, but . . . will never make a great artist'.⁶² Perhaps most significantly, he hinted that having 'persue[d] his studies . . . on sure and rational principles',⁶³ a great architect should be able to understand what the ancients 'would have done in [his] situation',⁶⁴ and, putting aside mere 'imitation', 'that latent seed of genius will be called into action'.⁶⁵

There are several examples of such creative

reinterpretation of the Classical rules in the buildings discussed in this article. Reference to porticos *in antis* appear several times in the lectures. They should, Soane wrote, have ‘two or more columns in front and an *anta* at each of the angles of the wall of the cella, with the entire entablature continued the whole extent of the walls of the temple’.⁶⁶ He also mentioned the importance of consistent intercolumniation, only grudgingly accepting a slightly wider spacing between the centre pair of columns ‘for convenience’.⁶⁷ The intercolumniation at Forest House, Bacup, is indeed precisely areostyle (four diameters) as described by Vitruvius and confirmed by Soane,⁶⁸ but at Sion Chapel, Halifax, and Nether Croft, Huddersfield, the central columns are more widely spaced than the outer ones. Soane says nothing about the distance between the outer columns of an *in antis* portico and their return walls, the narrowness of which in all three of the ‘Chantrell’ porticos is an unusual and significant feature. And the lectures contain nothing to sanction an *in antis* portico with an entablature reduced to the cornice on its flanks, as in these buildings. The lectures also discourage the use of blocking courses,⁶⁹ which appear in all four ‘Chantrell’ compositions.

Soane thought that a building should ‘be conformable to the uses it is intended for, and that it should express clearly its destination and its character’,⁷⁰ differentiating between ‘magnificent mansions, elegant villas [and] private houses’.⁷¹ Arguably, the grandeur of Forest House, Bacup, and Nether Croft, Huddersfield, is somewhat beyond what might be deemed suitable for the private house of a mere merchant. Yet with so much emphasis in the lectures on the perfection of the classical Orders, Chantrell’s backward glance at the colonnades of the Louvre or the Place de la Concorde in his early designs might be forgiven as the ‘delightful visions of early youth’,⁷² to quote Soane. Equally interesting is the extent to which Chantrell was adapting interior forms from Soane’s own two houses, as if he interpreted them as entirely appropriate models for



Fig. 15: John Nash, Chichester, Market House (1807).
The upper storey is a later addition (*Mike Hope*)

the house of an unremarkable middle-class merchant, rather than recognising the subtle meaning Soane had invested in them so that they became the complex ‘self-portraits’ noted by some commentators.⁷³

Precedents for the unusual arrangement of entablature and intercolumniation in the three porticoed buildings discussed here can be found in a design for a Pavilion in Soane’s own *Designs in Architecture* of 1778 (Fig. 14) and in recent buildings by other architects: Henry Holland’s portico at Broadlands, Hampshire (1788–92); the east side of Fitzroy Square, London, by Robert Adam (1793–8), which was singled out for praise by Soane and drawn by Chantrell for a lecture diagram;⁷⁴ and John Nash’s Market House in Chichester (1807) (Fig. 15). The panelled rectangular pilasters found at Eastwood House, Keighley, and at Forest House, Bacup, appear in Dance’s Theatre Royal, Bath (c.1805),⁷⁵ and in several Soane buildings, including Pitzhanger Manor (1800–3), and the Dulwich Picture Gallery (1811–14), which we know Chantrell was sent to record. Finally there are the highly idiosyncratic

crestings – a variation on what Eva Schumann-Bacia refers to as the ‘volute pediment’⁷⁶ – which appear at Keighley and Bacup, and which can only have been derived from Soane’s designs for Praed’s Bank, London (1801), for Brasenose College, Oxford (1807: unexecuted), from the Bank of England – especially its perimeter wall – and from his general fondness for crowning a centrepiece with a coat of arms, sculpture group or decorative chimney stack.

It seems clear that Chantrell set out to tread his own path in the profession, fully versed in the principles of the Classical tradition – one of the ‘legitimate offspring of Vitruvius’⁷⁷ – but at the same time, well aware that, with judicious selectivity, these principles were merely a starting point, not the final destination, for a successful architect. Soane had pointed him towards some of the most *avant garde* buildings available for study in and around London, and in the North of England he found the confidence to exploit their possibilities further afield.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 M. Forsyth, ‘Edward Davies: nineteenth century Bath architect and pupil of Sir John Soane’, *Bath History*, 7 (1998), p. 107. A.E. Richardson had earlier made a related observation: ‘It is surprising that a man with Sir John Soane’s reputation should not have had a great number of imitators, instead of the few who flattered him’: A.E. Richardson, *Monumental Classical Architecture in Great Britain and Ireland*. (London, 1914), p. 42.
- 2 For Chantrell, see C. Webster, *R.D. Chantrell (1793–1872) and the architecture of a lost generation*. (Reading, 2010).

- 3 H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*. (New Haven and London, 2008), p. 103. Basevi himself, writing from Rome to his sister Emma on 22 March 1817, observed further that: ‘Each succeeding day tells me I have done the right thing in quitting Soane. I still continue to think him very clever, but in a particular style. I am of opinion I can form for myself a better. Had I stayed much longer with him I might have become so prejudiced as to see objects with his eyes instead of my own.’ Quoted in M.L.A. Jordan, ‘The Life and Work of George Basevi (1794–2845)’ (unpublished MA thesis, Courtauld Institute, London, 1979), p. 6.
- 4 D. Watkin, *Sir John Soane and Enlightenment Thought*. (London: Sir John Soane’s Museum, 1996), p. 24.
- 5 John Soane, ed. David Watkin, *The Royal Academy Lectures*. (Cambridge, 2000), p. 274.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 261.
- 7 Webster, *op. cit.* (see note 2), pp. 67–8.
- 8 Sir John Soane’s Museum, Private Correspondence, xv, A, 32.
- 9 *Leeds Mercury*, 23 March 1816.
- 10 Quoted in Webster (note 2), p. 68.
- 11 N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire West Riding*. (Harmondsworth, 1959), p. 165.
- 12 For Taylor’s churches, see C. Webster, ‘“Foremost among those who successfully promoted the ancient style of architecture”: the churches of Thomas Taylor’, in C. Webster (ed), *Episodes in the Gothic Revival six church architects*. (Reading, 2011), pp. 99–132.
- 13 Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 152.
- 14 An advertisement in the *Leeds Mercury*, 24 March 1821, requested all those ‘persons having Demands upon Mr William Bradley . . . to send Particulars thereof to Mr Stead, Attorney-at-Law, Halifax . . . as Mr Bradley is leaving Halifax.’
- 15 In Dickens’ novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, first edition 1844, two of the key characters are the unscrupulous Seth Pecksniff, a man whose income is derived largely from rent collecting, but who calls himself an architect, and young Martin Chuzzlewit who is articulated to Pecksniff. Part of the narrative involves Pecksniff passing off as his own work a design for a substantial grammar school actually produced by his talented pupil.
- 16 See J. Smail, *The Origins of Middle-Class Culture Halifax, Yorkshire, 1660–1780*. (Ithica and London, 1994), pp. 164–187.

- 17 For Thomas Bradley, see Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 152–3.
- 18 T. Twining, *Recreations and Studies*, pp. 98–9, quoted in J.A. Hargreaves, *Halifax*. (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 79.
- 19 These are: Rishworth Grammar School (1827–8); the Assembly Rooms, Halifax (1828); The Infirmary, Huddersfield (1829–31). All are exceedingly plain although the last has an orthodox tetrastyle Grecian portico.
- 20 G.P. Wadsworth, *The History of Square Road Congregational Church, Halifax* (Halifax, 1889), p. 20.
- 21 Bryan Dale, *Jubilee Memorial of Sion Chapel and Sunday Schools*. (Halifax, 1867), pp. 28–31.
- 22 *Leeds Mercury*, 8 July 1815.
- 23 R. Holmes, *Keighley Past and Present*. (London, 1858), p. 103. The author is grateful to Susan Wrathmell for this information. It was repeated in J. Hodgson, *Textile Manufacture and Other Industries in Keighley* (Keighley, 1879), p. 78. Of more recent writers, ‘1819’ appears in: I. Dewhirst, *A History of Keighley* (Keighley, 1974), p. 89; G. Sheeran, *Brass Castles*. (Halifax, 1993), p. 146; A. Taylor, *The Websters of Kendal*. (Kendal, 2004), p. 114; P. Leach and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire West Riding Leeds, Bradford and the North*. (New Haven and London, 2009), p. 357.
- 24 Christopher Greenwood, Cartographer, ‘Map of the County of York made on the basis of triangles in the county . . .’. (Leeds: Robinson and Co, 1817).
- 25 Hodgson, *op. cit.* (see note 23), p. 78.
- 26 I am most grateful to the Huddersfield historian David Griffiths for extensive assistance in securing information about this building. See also D. Griffiths and C. Webster, ‘History “detectives” solve mansion mystery’, in *Huddersfield Examiner*, 24 October 2012.
- 27 This detail, and information about subsequent residents in the house, came from the town’s Rate Books and accounts of leases granted by the Ramsden estate, the principal landowners in the town. These are all now in the Kirklees office of the West Yorkshire Joint Archives Service where much valuable assistance was provided by Lynn McLean and Barbary Hinchcliff.
- 28 This is the name by which it is designated in the Ramsden Estate ledger of ground rents; often it was written as ‘N. Crofts’. West Yorkshire Archives Service, Kirklees Office, DD/RE/R.
- 29 *Ibid.* See also E.J. Law, *Huddersfield in the 1820s*. (Huddersfield, 2009), p. 23, which quotes a Mr D. Schofield who remembered the town in 1825/6, noting that the house existed then.
- 30 For instance, in the 1832 notice of the auction at which the property was to be sold, there is no reference to it being called ‘Nether Croft’: *Leeds Mercury*, 28 July 1832.
- 31 The original is now lost, but a 1911 tracing exists. West Yorkshire Joint Archives Service, Kirklees Office, KC592/4/2.
- 32 Law, *op. cit.* (see note 29), p. 23.
- 33 Nether Crofts was demolished then and replaced with a glazed arcade, although the hall itself continued in use for several years, principally as an early cinema. See S. Chadwick, *The Mighty Screen: The Rise of the Cinema in Huddersfield*. (Huddersfield, 1953), pp. 28–30. Chadwick was one of the few who came close to recognising the actual sequence of construction.
- 34 I am most grateful to Oliver Bradbury for alerting me to this building. I am pleased to acknowledge extensive assistance from Bacup historian Kathy Fishwick.
- 35 In National Monuments Record, Swindon.
- 36 For the trade between Halifax and Lancashire, see J. Smail, *op. cit.* (see note 16), esp. pp. 51–3, 79. For Bacup history, see Bacup Natural History Society, *Bacup in Times Past*. (Chorley, 1987); K. Bowden, *The Book of Bacup*. (Whittlebury, 1994).
- 37 It has featured in a number of local newspaper articles, e.g. *Bacup Times*, 28 October 1961; *Rosendale Free Press*, 31 October 1970, 17 April 1976; 19 March 1977; 13 October 1979. There is a paper published by the Bacup Natural History Society, undated and with no author’s name (although apparently by Gordon Taylor, written c.1995) entitled *Forest House*.
- 38 His death, in June 1819, was recorded in *Liverpool Mercury*, 25 June 1819.
- 39 Lord was a fairly common name in the area and Lords are recorded as being involved with Dog Pits Mill, Broadclough, a carding mills, as well as with South Graine Colliery. See M. Rothwell, *Industrial Heritage: A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of Bacup and Stacksteads*. (Hebden Bridge, 2011).
- 40 Taylor, *op. cit.* (see note 37).
- 41 This was provided by Bacup Natural History Society member John Crawshaw in a 1994 letter concerning Forest House sent to Sir John Soane’s

- Museum (*ex inf.* Susan Palmer). In a telephone conversation with me, Mr Crawshaw confirmed he had not personally seen the inscription, but had been told of it by another society member many years earlier.
- 42 *Bacup and Rossendale News*, 27 May 1882. I am grateful to Kathy Fishwick for alerting me to this item.
- 43 E. Baines, History, *Directory and Gazetteer of... Lancashire*, vol II, (Liverpool, 1825), p. 639.
- 44 'Forest House', *Rossendale Free Press*, 31 October 1970.
- 45 R. Cross, 'Forest House, Bacup, a Regency Mansion', *Bacup Times*, 28 October 1961.
- 46 'Balls' or 'linked balls' is the term used to describe this motif in the unpublished 'Soane Glossary' currently being compiled for cataloguers at the Soane Museum.
- 47 For Underwood, see Colvin, *Dictionary*, pp. 1064–5. Underwood was listed as an 'assistant' whereas Chantrell was a 'pupil', although both groups worked together in the office (*ex inf.* Susan Palmer).
- 48 Chantrell's first independent commission was the Public Baths in Leeds (1819–21). Its façade has a striking similarity to that on the Montpellier Baths in Cheltenham (1806), a building with which Underwood must have been familiar. Might Chantrell have written in one of his letters to Underwood that he planned to enter the Leeds baths competition, but struggled to resolve the design, and in response Underwood sent him a sketch of the one in Cheltenham?
- 49 Soane, *op. cit.* (see note 6), p. 281.
- 50 Colvin, *Dictionary*, p. 963.
- 51 D. Watkin, 'Soane: The Royal Academy and the Public Realm' in M. Richardson and M. Stevens (eds.), *John Soane Architect*. (London: Royal Academy, 1999), p. 38.
- 52 See also, D. Watkin, *Sir John Soane: Enlightenment Thought and the Royal Academy Lectures*. (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 424–5.
- 53 In Watkin's assessment, the lectures lacked consistency: *Ibid.*, p. 410.
- 54 Soane, *op. cit.*, (see note 6), p. 27.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 249.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 199.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 29. Interestingly, this is a theme Soane had explored twenty years earlier. In his *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Buildings* of 1788 he included: 'let us therefore not blindly and servilely copy the ancient buildings, but cautiously examine them, and if possible catch the spirit of them . . . [and] discover the causes of their various combinations and proportions.' (pp. 3–4).
- 66 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 67 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- 73 The theme seems first to have been identified by John Britton in 1834 and developed by Watkin, *op. cit.*, (see note 52), p. 419.
- 74 Soane, *op. cit.*, (see note 6), p. 257.
- 75 Soane's admiration for Dance's work is well known, although the Dance drawings of the theatre, now in the Soane Museum, arrived in Soane's collection only in 1836.
- 76 Eva Schumann-Bacia, *John Soane and The Bank of England*. (New York, 1991), p. 151.
- 77 Soane, *op. cit.* (see note 6), p. 273.