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JOHN ERSKINE, EARL OF MAR: A GENTLEMAN AMATEUR IN TWICKENHAM

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The Earl of Mar, a Scot, politician and amateur architect, made a momentous decision following the death of Queen Anne: to back the Jacobite cause in defiance of the accession of the new Hanoverian monarchy. This article focuses on the time that Mar spent in Twickenham amongst compatriots of the same political class, who were to make different choices, and on the drawings and designs that the place inspired him to produce.

The village of Twickenham, on the banks of the River Thames, was renowned in the early eighteenth century for its wonderful prospects and elegant houses and gardens. Among those attracted to the place were a number of notable Scots for whom a precedent, perhaps, was provided in Ham House, on the south side of the river, where the Murray family, later Earls of Dysart, had been in residence since 1626.

Having settled in Twickenham in 1702, James Johnston (1655–1737) built a new house (later known as Orleans House) directly opposite Ham House, and laid out impressive gardens around it. The politician and gentleman architect John Erskine, Earl of Mar (bap. 1675, d.1732), married in Twickenham in 1703 and subsequently lived there for a period of some four years. In 1708 David Wemyss, fourth Earl of Wemyss (bap. 1678, d.1720), one of the sixteen representative Scottish peers, bought a house in nearby Isleworth. In 1722 Archibald Campbell, Earl of Ilay and later third Duke of Argyll (1682–1761),

who had been born at Ham House, bought the Whitton estate.¹ Finally, in 1746, John Hay, fourth Marquess of Tweeddale and Earl of Gifford – Secretary of State for Scotland between 1742 and 1746 – acquired Twickenham House and set within its garden a fence made of Scottish broadswords that had been taken as trophies from the field of Culloden following the defeat of the Jacobite army.² All the members of this politically diverse Scottish contingent improved their houses and gardens, but it is on the Earl of Mar's relationship with Twickenham that the present article focuses. While in residence there, Mar took a particular interest in the houses and gardens of his neighbours, and made a detailed study of the land along each bank. Though he fled the country in 1716, never to return, he sustained himself during his continental exile with memories of Scotland and England and occupied himself in devising numerous fanciful architectural designs for buildings and gardens old and new. His survey of, and unexecuted designs for, Twickenham provide information about the area and give us his view of what might have been.

JAMES JOHNSTON

Let us begin with James Johnston. Though born in Scotland, Johnston was brought up in Holland because his father's support for Cromwell caused him to flee to the Continent at the Restoration.

The younger Johnston was destined to lead a life no less complicated by political intrigue and its dangers. In the months before the Glorious Revolution, he assisted in the Orangist conspiracy, relaying intelligence about the political situation in England to the Dutch Stadtholder William III of Orange-Nassau and advocating and propagandizing on his behalf. Returning to England with William's invasion fleet, Johnston was rewarded with political office, initially as the king's envoy extraordinary to Prussia (1690–92), and subsequently, with Sir John Dalrymple of Stair, as one of two Secretaries of State in Scotland (1692–95).³ It was in this latter capacity that in April 1692 Johnston took possession of 'ye new Building at ye Lower end of ye Privy Garden . . . [at Whitehall] which was built particular for ye Sec^y. of State for ye kingdome of Scotland.'⁴ Though he fell from the King's favour, his fortunes recovered somewhat during the early years of Queen Anne's reign and he served briefly as Lord Clerk Register in Scotland (1704–5), and acted as an intermediary in the dealings of the *squadrone volante* or flying squad of John Hay, second Marquess of Tweeddale, which helped to secure the ratification in the Scottish Parliament in 1706–7 of the treaty of union. Spells as a relatively inactive MP for Ilchester (1708–10) and Calne (1710–13) followed.

THE EARL OF MAR

John Erskine, twenty-second or sixth Earl of Mar (Fig. 1), also served as a Secretary of State for Scotland (1705–7), sharing the role with Hugh Campbell, third Earl of Loudoun (c.1673–1731), and he too played a part in the negotiations that culminated in the passing of the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707.⁵ Johnston and Mar had different political and religious allegiances, though both were capable of blowing expediently with the wind; Mar won the soubriquet 'Bobbing John' for the apparent ease with which he changed tack. Johnston's father,



Fig. 1. John Erskine, 22nd or 6th Earl of Mar (bap. 1675, d. 1732), mezzotint and engraving by John Smith (1652–1743), after Sir Godfrey Kneller, Bt. (1646–1723), 1703. (© National Portrait Gallery NPG D11580)

Lord Warriston, had been executed for his Cromwellian sympathies, while Mar's ancestors were closely tied to the Stuart monarchy; Johnston was a Presbyterian, Mar apparently an Episcopalian.

Mar's principal family estate was at Alloa in Clackmannanshire and his early career was in Scotland, but in April 1703, only a year after Johnston had moved there, he married Lady Margaret Hay (1686–1707), daughter of Thomas, Earl of Kinnoull, in Twickenham. He was in Scotland frequently during the negotiations in 1705 and again in 1706, but returned to Court in May

1707. Margaret died in Scotland just after his return to London, leaving him with a young son. In 1707, as a reward for the part that he had played in the process of union, he was appointed to the Privy Council in England. In his capacity as joint Secretary of State for Scotland, he shared with Loudon the same house – later Richmond House – in the Privy Garden at Whitehall that had been Johnston’s residence. Despite the abolition of their office in 1707 Mar and Loudon continued to live in the house, which they commissioned the young Scottish architect James Gibbs (1682–1754) to divide and enlarge ‘for the better accommodation of two familys [*sic*]’; in the autumn of 1713 Mar was appointed to the re-established secretaryship for Scotland, and in 1714 he petitioned for a lease of the building.⁶ His sister, Lady Jane Erskine (d. 1763), married Sir Hugh Paterson, Bt. (c.1685–1777) of Bannockburn, in Twickenham in 1712.⁷ In July 1714 Mar took a second wife, Frances Pierrepont, daughter of the Duke of Kingston and sister of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.⁸

In addition to his official residence at Whitehall, Mar lived in Twickenham for a short time; he is recorded as having paid rates there from 1709 to 1712.⁹ In the first edition of his volume of letters, *A Journey Through England* (1714), John Macky (d. 1726), the writer and spy, noted that the Earl of Mar had a pretty villa in Twickenham; he enlarged the description in the second edition of 1722: ‘A little House, which belong’d formerly to Sir Thomas Skipwith or Skipworth [1652–1710], and was improv’d and inhabited by that great Architect the late Earl of Marr, with its hanging Gardens to the River, is well worth the Curiosity of a Traveller.’¹⁰ R.S. Cobbett, quoting Edward Ironside, identified the house as Copt Hall, but it seems he was in error.¹¹ Copt Hall was not on the Thames, and there is no record of Sir Thomas Skipwith having lived there. Skipwith did, however, acquire an extensive site upstream from Twickenham on the north bank of the river in 1701. He built a new house here, and paid rates on it until 1708. When he drew up his will in 1705 (later amended) one of the witnesses was



Fig. 2. ‘The Thames at Twickenham’ by Peter Tillemans (c.1684–1734), c.1724, oil on canvas (65.5 × 135cm). (Courtesy of the Richmond-upon-Thames Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery LDORL: 00886)



Fig. 3. Sketch for ‘The Thames at Twickenham’ by Peter Tillemans (c.1684–1734), oil on paper laid on board (15.8 x 730cm). Detail of Denbigh House and gardens. (Private Collection)

Edward Reeves, carpenter, a leading builder of Twickenham, who may have been involved in the building of the house.¹² After 1712 the rates were paid successively by: Sir Thomas’s son, George Skipwith; Baron Sparre, the Swedish Ambassador to the Court of George I; and William Feilding [*sic*], fifth Earl of Denbigh, from whom Denbigh House took its name.¹³ The house burned down in 1734, and was replaced by Poulett Lodge; the present mansion block on the site is known as ‘Thames Eyot’.

It seems, therefore, that Denbigh House was the one occupied by the Earl of Mar and ‘improved’ by him. Peter Tillemans’s view of the Thames at Twickenham of c.1725 shows it very prominently, with terraced gardens descending to the river, just as Macky describes (Fig. 2). It had a front of seven bays, with the central three-bay section raised into an attic storey. In another painting – apparently Tillemans’s preparatory oil sketch for the right hand side of the canvas – the details of the central section of the house are depicted differently and in more detail (Fig. 3). The round-headed entrance door is shown with an elaborate architrave linking it to the square window above, while the pair of windows to each side have stone surrounds with what appear to be decorative keystones. In the upper storey, flanking

the central window, are square panels of relief sculpture. Outside them are *œil de bœuf* windows, while the innermost of the three windows to the flanking pavilions is shown blocked with another panel of relief sculpture. Similarly detailed oval and round-headed windows recur frequently in Mar’s drawings. Was he responsible for enriching the façade of his rented house in this way, and, having recorded them, did Tillemans decide that these details would be unreadable in his final canvas and so elide them?

Mar evidently developed the extensive gardens as well. They overlooked the river on two levels and boasted several small garden buildings, statuary, and a watergate and stairs of the kind he later included in his designs. On the western boundary stood a two-storey garden pavilion which straddled the wall. This would have given a prospect of the river, and could have been built over a grotto or ice-house.¹⁴ He was advised on the planting by James Johnston, whose own garden was nearby. In a letter of January 1707/8 Johnston sent a message to Mar, saying that he did not like ‘all standards of different sortes in his great walk and particularly variegated Hollyes’ because they were ‘either tender or bad growers or both’.¹⁵ Instead, he recommended pyramid yews,

which would be beautiful in both summer and winter. It seems that Mar followed his advice, for Tillemans shows cone-shaped evergreen shrubs planted along the upper terrace.

MAR'S SURVEY OF TWICKENHAM AND HAM, 1711

While living in Twickenham, Mar made a detailed sketch survey of the land to either side of the Thames between Twickenham and Richmond, labelled: 'Scatch of the Grounds at Twitinhame from the Earle of Straffords to Richmond ferry & also The Grounds of Ham. Octob: 1711' (Fig. 4). He drew the roads, lanes, hedgerows and houses, and noted the names of the various landowners.

On the Surrey bank, the position of Ham House, with its gardens and avenues, and the lines of trees that marched across Petersham Meadows, is recorded in some detail. Ham House was built for Sir Thomas Vavasour (d. 1620), who served James I as Knight Marshal, but in 1626 it became the home of William Murray, later made first Earl of Dysart by a grateful Charles I. His daughter Elizabeth and her second husband, John Maitland, Earl of Lauderdale, another Scot, enlarged and modernised the house and replanned the garden. Elizabeth lived at Ham until her death. Macky called the house 'an ancient noble Seat, formerly belonging to the Duke of Lauderdale, but now to the Dutchess's Son, the Earl of Dysert, a Scotch Title'. The gardens were still well kept when he saw them in 1722, and he praised the plantation of trees, the terrace on the south front, and the avenues.¹⁶

These features can be seen in Mar's map. The footprint of the house, with its enclosed rectangular forecourt and William Samwell's addition on the south side, is clearly shown, together with its associated terrace, and the parterre and Wilderness. The Countess's closet at the south-east corner led directly into her private garden, an area not detailed by Mar. He identified the kitchen garden to the west,



Fig. 4. Sketch plan of the land to either side of the Thames between Twickenham and Richmond, inscribed: 'Scatch of the Grounds at Twitinhame from the Earle of Straffords to Richmond ferry & also The Grounds of Ham. Octob: 1711', by John Erskine, Earl of Mar (bap. 1675, d. 1732), pen & ink with coloured washes (745 x 533mm).
(National Archives of Scotland RHP13256/67B)

but does not show the greenhouse, or orangery, which certainly existed at that date. But he showed the avenue beyond the east garden wall, known as the Melancholy Walk, flanked by a long plantation of trees regularly set out, and the two long rectangular viewing platforms at each end; on the northern one is marked a small building, probably a summer house. Another avenue provides a long vista southwards from the centre of the house, through the Wilderness and beyond.

At the far left of Mar's 1711 map is marked 'Earl of

Strafford's Grounds'. Thomas Wentworth, third Baron Raby (1672–1739) had been created Earl of Strafford earlier that year.¹⁷ The house that he rebuilt there was known as Mount Lebanon, and it was from this vantage point that his mother Isabella observed the beginning of Johnston's improvements in 1707: 'aboandenc of men at work in the Ground before his hous, I see six or seven digin; it will be a sweet place when he has done, for I thought it very fyne before'.¹⁸

MAR'S DESIGN FOR A HOUSE IN TWICKENHAM, 1719

The focus of Mar's survey (Fig. 4) was the ground that lay between James Johnston's house to the west and the estate of Sir James Ashe (1674–1734) to the east, and he shows the fields, meadows and kitchen gardens which occupied the land between the road to their north and the river. On a flap or slide attached over this section (Fig. 5: here inverted, with south at the top) is set out a plan for a large new house within a formal landscape. The annotations on the flap read: 'Postoia Aprile 1719' and 'what is surrounded wt yellow is proposed to be purchest'. We do not know by whom the land was to have been bought, if not by Mar, nor who the 'client', if there was one, might have been. This, however, is the very land which was acquired in stages from 1724 for Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk (1689–1767), when Marble Hill House was being planned for her.¹⁹ Archibald Campbell, Earl of Ilay, was one of the trustees of the settlement made to her by the Prince of Wales and acted for her in assembling the land.²⁰ Ilay and Mar worked together on Scottish ministerial business at about the time that Mar made his initial survey; they may have discussed the land and the possibility of the owners being willing to sell.²¹

That Mar should have designed this house when on the Continent – the Pistoia drawing was later altered in Geneva – eight years after making the base survey demands a brief explanation. Following

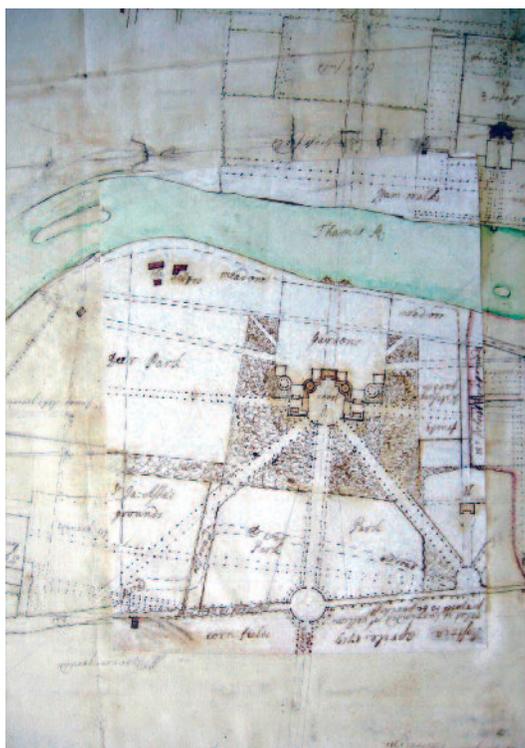


Fig. 5. A flap or slide pasted onto the sketch plan illustrated in Fig. 4, inscribed: 'Postoia Aprile 1719' and 'what is surrounded wt yellow is proposed to be purchest', by John Erskine, Earl of Mar (bap. 1675, d. 1732), pen & ink with coloured washes (745 x 533mm). Detail of proposed house and garden.
(National Archives of Scotland RHP13256/67)

Queen Anne's death in August 1714, and faced with the prospect of a Hanoverian king, Mar, having played the part of both Whig and Tory, performed a characteristic *volte-face* and committed himself wholeheartedly to the Jacobite cause that had been his family's tradition. He devised an invasion plan and sent it to the exiled court, before raising James III's standard, on the Erskine family estate at Braemar, and mustering the Highland chiefs. The Jacobite rising of 1715 effectively ended in defeat with the battle of Sheriffmuir in November, and in February 1716 Mar fled to France with James III.²²

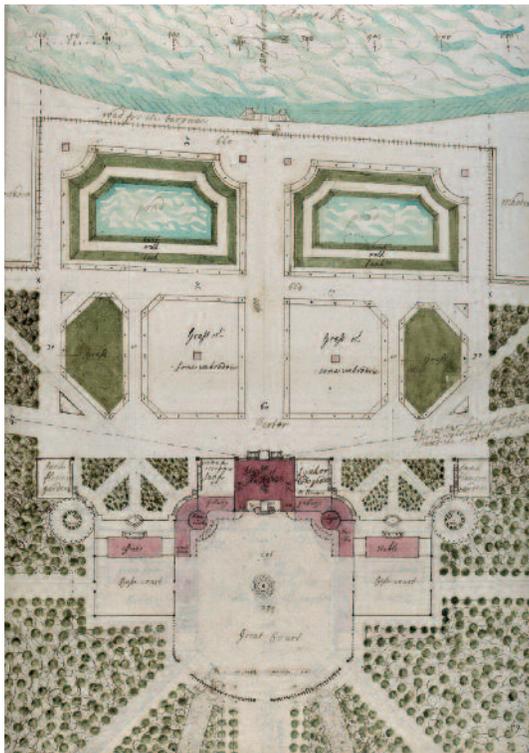


Fig. 6. Plan for a house and garden in Twickenham (south at the top), by John Erskine, Earl of Mar (bap. 1675, d. 1732), pen & ink with coloured washes (490 x 355 mm). (*National Archives of Scotland RHP13256/68*)

He was attainted, his title and estates forfeited and, despite successive appeals for a pardon, died in exile sixteen years later, alienated from both the Hanoverian and Jacobite courts. In those homesick years he travelled constantly and, ‘infected with the disease of building and gardening’, took solace in designing and redesigning imaginary possibilities for a paper world.²³ Writing from Urbino in his first year of exile he declared that he would ‘die of the spleen were it not for building castles in the air of several kinds.’²⁴ He produced such designs in prodigious number, none of which was ever built.²⁵

The house that he proposed for the site between Johnston’s and Ashe’s property was on a much larger scale even than Ham House, with more extensive gardens and grounds, and a more impressive approach. An old road wound through the intended park, so Mar proposed laying out a new, straight road along the northern boundary. However, as can be seen from John Rocque’s plan of London and its environs in 1742–5, this new road was never formed.²⁶ The sketch plan flap shows that the house was to be approached via a main avenue flanked by double rows of trees, leading from a *round-point* on the new road. Two other avenues were to join the central one in a *patte d’oie*, or goose-foot, at the triple gateways to the entrance court. The grounds immediately around the house were to be closely and regularly planted with trees. On the west side, next to James Johnston’s property, there were to be fruit and kitchen gardens and a meadow by the river; on the east side a deer park, with another meadow beyond. Immediately in front of the house, leading down to the river, Mar proposed formal gardens. The house is shown as a central block with quadrant wings to either side, addressing the court to the north; at the centre of each wing are circular pavilions.

Mar also made a separate, dimensioned plan for the house in which both it and the gardens are worked out in greater detail, and in which building (pink), planting (green), and water (blue) are differentiated by means of watercolour washes (Fig. 6). It is endorsed: ‘Designe for a House gardens & Park near by Twitinham, in the fields betwixt Mr Johnston’s & Sr James Ash’s grounds east & west the road from Twitinham to Richmond fferry & the River Thames south & north. The middle line of the Avenue & gardens to be paralel wt the Avenue of Ham. Drawen at Postoia Aprile 23d. 1719. C. & Some alterations made in it at Geneve Octob: 1719’. The plan shows the central block as before, its southern side facing the river, its northern one a ‘Great Court’ with a stepped, circular feature at its centre – possibly a sundial or fountain. The quadrant wings

are articulated on the court side by colonnades. Each wing was to comprise: a 'Gallery', attached to the central block; a rotunda (in one a 'Dining Room', and in the other a 'Chapel'); and a terminal block with a service function – one a 'stable', the other a 'wash house'. These latter elements faced towards the pair of 'Base-Courts' and another stable and set of offices, which are shown walled off from the central 'Great Court'. The house, which measured 79 by 90 feet, was to be entered between twin turrets and across a bridge, suggestive of a gatehouse and moat. On the river side of the house, Mar proposed a more conventional staircase with a balustraded landing and a central entrance door.

On each side of the house there was to be a sequence of symmetrically arranged private gardens. First was a pair of sunken gardens, one for orange trees and one for flowers; steps at the sides led up to geometric beds from which the river façades of the office building and stable could be viewed. Beyond these buildings Mar shows a pair of mounts to give views of the river, each encircled by a colonnade, and then another pair of sunken flower gardens. Between these and the house was the 'Parter', also symmetrically planned about a central path. It had two grass plats, and two of grass with 'some imbrodrie'. Nearer the river were two pools, with sculpted grass banks and walks. All of these features were bordered by what appear to be planted strips and regularly spaced, clipped evergreens, and the whole bounded by railings with a central pair of gates and steps leading to a watergate. Along the river ran a 'road for the bargemen'. Ever conscious of vistas, and of Johnston's house and garden nearby, Mar noted that the *allée* leading from the house to the west was to be aligned to 'Mr Johnston's walk of his parter next the river'. The design, with its *patte d'oie*, embroidered parterres, grass plats and pools, draws much of its inspiration from the French gardens which Mar would have seen during his travels. Although he did not subscribe to John James's translation of Dezallier d'Argenville's

The Theory and Practice of Gardening – published in 1712 and dedicated to James Johnston – he was certainly aware of it and doubtless used it. It codified the sequence of a house within a courtyard, flanked by offices and private gardens, with parterres, pools and groves of different kinds, symmetrically arranged. But Mar was also influenced by the English and Scottish taste for turf, for mounts and for small gardens to contain flowers and citrus plants. What appears to be missing is a green house or orangery, such as those at Ham and in Johnston's garden, in which tender plants could be protected in winter.

No elevations are known for Mar's Twickenham plan. The scheme is closely related, however, to a group of other drawings by Mar, culminating in designs for a palace for the Old Pretender, for which some elevations do survive. Elements of two of these designs, for a house in Piccadilly, marked 'A' and 'C', were, as Terry Friedman noted in 1986: 'reused for a house on the Thames at Twickenham in 1719, a house on the Seine near Paris in 1721 and a lodge at Alloa'.²⁷ Mar was working on the house schemes 'A' and 'C' in Urbino in 1718 and in Geneva in 1719, so they were almost exactly contemporary with the Twickenham drawings. The plan that he made in 1721 for 'a house Gardens & Park on the Bank twixt Bacon [Bécon-les-Bruyères] & Anier [Asnières-sur-Seine]' is also very similar to the Twickenham scheme, which he clearly recycled. The French house was intended for a similar riverside site by the Seine, and was to be aligned on another of Mar's fantasy projects, a palace for the King of France at the Etoile above Chaillot (now Place Charles de Gaulle). These schemes share colonnades which spring from the main block on each side and wrap around a rotunda. The elevations for the scheme marked 'A' in Piccadilly, dated 1718 and 1719, show open promenades at first-floor level and domed rotundas similar to those no doubt intended at Twickenham. The approach to the entrance in the principal façade is across a bridge, exactly as is

shown for Twickenham, while elements of the garden design are common to both.

Mar was familiar with a great range of architecture from Scotland, England and the rest of Europe, having travelled abroad both as a young man and during his exile, and having studied both built and published designs. Publications illustrating English and Scottish works must have been particularly important to him after 1715, when he could no longer visit buildings in person, but he no doubt owned a library of other source material that accompanied him on his travels. By his own account, he did not favour the ‘extravagancies [sic] of Boromini and other Modern Architects’ but rather looked to the work of Palladio, the French classicists, and the architecture of his native Scotland. Indeed the plans for the house in Twickenham seem to refer particularly to Scottish sources. The front towards the court features small turrets flanking the main entrance – a motif to be seen on a larger scale at a number of Scottish castles such as Tolquhon Castle, Aberdeenshire (1580s), and indeed the octagonal turrets at Mar’s Wark, Stirling (c.1570–72) part of the

town house of his ancestor the first Earl of Mar. The designs of Philibert de l’Orme and others published by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau in *Les plus excellents Bastiments de France* of 1576 and 1579, illustrate similar features. At the Château of Anet (1549–52), de l’Orme used domed turrets to flank a bridge across a moat leading to an entrance. An example of Scottish architecture particularly well known to Mar was Drumlanrig Castle, built c.1690 by James Smith, perhaps on the basis of designs by Robert Mylne, and the home of his early patron the first Duke of Queensbury. Not only did Mar own the first volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715), in which Drumlanrig’s elevation and plan are illustrated, but he also made a design for filling in its internal courtyard.²⁸ Its plan features four circular stair towers in the re-entrant angles of the enclosed courtyard. This familiar plan may have sown the seed of the plan of House ‘A’. For Twickenham he halved the plan, using two towers instead of four. The second volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1717), to which Mar also subscribed, contained engravings of Hopetoun House by Sir William Bruce (1698–1702)



Fig. 7. ‘View of the Thames from Richmond Hill’ by Peter Tillemans (c.1684–1734), oil on canvas (109 x 230cm).
(© UK Government Art Collection 3547)



Fig. 8. *Orleans House, Twickenham*, signed and falsely dated 'J. Nickolls. 1726', and probably painted c.1750, oil on canvas (438 x 813mm). (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection B1976.7.136)

which showed its domed lantern and convex colonnades – perhaps another source of inspiration for the Twickenham scheme.

The only indication on the plan of the appearance of the elevation towards the river lies in the two flights of steps leading up to the central door and the presence of what appear to be six large projecting bases, perhaps for pilaster strips in the plinth wall. If Mar was indeed recycling his designs for 'House A' in Piccadilly, he may have intended something like the elevation proposed there – a ground floor with rusticated pilasters, surmounted by a pedimented façade with a giant order, and twin staircases to a door at *piano nobile* level.

Though painted some twenty years later, it is instructive to compare the topographical information in Peter Tillemans's sweeping river landscape, *View of the Thames from Richmond Hill* (Fig. 7), with the planimetric information in Mar's drawing. Marble Hill House, built on the very site that Mar highlights, is shown, gleaming white, in the middle ground.

MAR'S PROPOSAL TO REMODEL JOHNSTON'S HOUSE, 1721

The celebrated octagonal pavilion designed by James Gibbs which now forms part of the Orleans House Gallery, Richmond-upon-Thames, is, effectively, all that remains of James Johnston's Thames-side house.²⁹ He and his second wife Catherine, daughter of John Poulett, second Baron Poulett, moved to Twickenham in 1702, acquired the former house and garden of Mrs. Jane Davies, sister to Lord Berkeley, and some time before 1710 commissioned the architect John James (c.1672–1746) to design a new villa for the site.³⁰ Work was in progress on the roof when Lady Wentworth's nephew and niece visited Johnston on 4 August 1710.³¹ Gibbs's octagon followed in 1720.³² By mid-century the two buildings had been linked, and it is this extended composition that is illustrated in a painting of c.1750 by Joseph Nickolls (active 1713–c.1755) (Fig. 8). Although altered in the late eighteenth century by the removal of the entrance on

the river front and the addition of a large canted bay,³³ the house survived into the twentieth century. Scandalously, it was demolished in 1926/7 in order to extract the river gravel that lay beneath it. Happily, however, the octagon was rescued from the wrecking ball by Mrs. Basil Ionides, while four acres of the gardens were secured for public benefit by Twickenham and Richmond Councils.

The restrained principal elevation of Johnston's house, as designed by James, is illustrated in

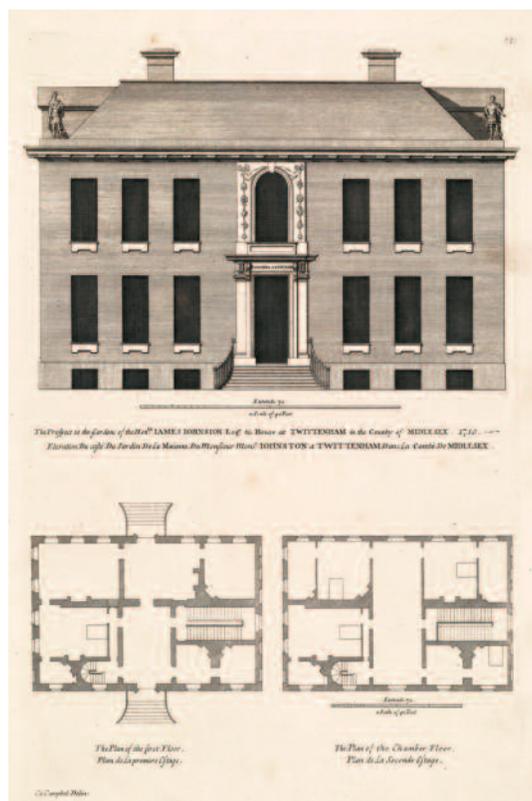


Fig. 9. Engraving of the principal elevation, ground and first floor plans of James Johnston's house at Twickenham, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, vol.1, 1715, vol. 1, plate 77. Colen Campbell's accompanying text describes the gardens as being 'extreme curious, the Plantations most artfully disposed and everything contributes to express the refined taste and great potential of the Master?' (RIBA Library Drawings and Archives Collection 32839)

Vitruvius Britannicus (Fig.9).³⁴ In 1721, only a year after the completion of Gibbs's octagon, Mar suggested how this same elevation might be enriched by: superimposing a giant order of fluted pilasters, supporting a Doric entablature – containing *bukrania* and military trophies in the metopes – and a segmental pediment; the addition of an attic storey and an open cupola above surmounted by a giant pine-cone finial. This reworking of James's elevation accords with Friedman's assessment of all that is characteristic about Mar's designs: 'the unexpected juxtaposing and stacking of features and . . . eclectic embellishment.'³⁵ His drawing (Fig. 10) is inscribed: 'Front towards the gardens. Designe for ornamenting M^r Johnston's house at Twitnhame & adding an atique storey to it. Drawen at Paris June 1721'.³⁶

The architecture of Paris, where he was then

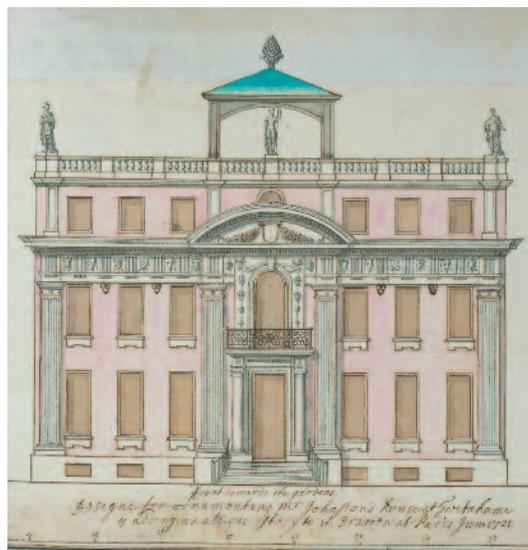


Fig. 10. Proposal for the garden elevation of James Johnston's house at Twickenham, by John Erskine, Earl of Mar (bap. 1675, d. 1732), inscribed: 'Front towards the gardens. Designe for ornamenting Mr Johnston's house at Twitnhame & adding an atique storey to it. Drawen at Paris June 1721', pen & ink with coloured washes (272 x 315mm). (National Archives of Scotland RHP 13256/84)

living, clearly impressed Mar, especially the work of Hardouin-Mansart at Marly-le-Roi, built from 1679. But he must also have been familiar with earlier French architecture, especially from published sources. His elevation, with its segmental pediment and lavish ornament, appears to owe something to generations of French architects such as Jacques Androuet du Cerceau at Charleval, Salomon de Brosse at the Luxembourg Palace and Pierre Lescot at the Louvre.

No doubt James would have been horrified had the Baroque enrichments, which perhaps Mar thought a complement to Gibbs's octagon, been applied to the façade he had designed. Though his early work, such as Herriard House, Hampshire (1696), betrays the influence of Hawksmoor, in 1711, at the time of his unsuccessful application to be one of the surveyors to the Commissioners of New Churches, James declared: 'I may once in my life have an opportunity of Shewing that the Beautys of Architecture may consist with the greatest plainness of the structure' which he considered 'has scarce ever been hit on . . . unless by our famous Mr. Inigo Jones'.³⁷

Inscribed above the entrance door of Johnston's villa, presumably because of his love of gardening and growing things, were the words PROXIMA SAPIENTIAE, a contraction of one of the maxims of the Roman philosopher-politician Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43BC), 'Agricultura Proxima Sapientiae', which the poet Alexander Pope was fond of quoting: 'Agricultura, says Tully, *proxima Sapientiae* [Agriculture is nearest to wisdom], which is more than can be said by most modern Nobility of Grace or Right Honourable, which are often *proxima Stultitia* [close to folly]'; and, 'I am as much a better Gardiner, as I am a worse Poet, than when you saw me: But gardening is near a-kin to Philosophy, for Tully says, *Agricultura proxima sapientiae*'.³⁸

It was not by chance that, having selected John James to design his house soon after he acquired the lease, Johnston later chose James Gibbs to design his octagonal garden building there. Mar had been an

energetic patron of Gibbs, both in his native Scotland and in England.³⁹ He helped to establish Gibbs in London, and promoted his successful candidacy for a surveyorship with the Church Commissioners in 1713. As noted earlier, Gibbs's earliest-dated commission in London was to divide the residence which Mar and Loudoun shared at Whitehall. Mar continued to support Gibbs in his career thereafter, possibly even learning some of his architectural skills from him.⁴⁰ Soon after he left for the Continent, Mar asked Gibbs to 'take all his drawings into your custody', and two years later to send him a case of drawing instruments.⁴¹ A design by Mar of 1728 for a house for the Marquis de Tessé, at Chatou, draws on one of Gibbs's own designs published in *A Book of Architecture* (plate 43).⁴² In his will a grateful Gibbs left £1,000, three houses and all his plate to Mar's son, Lord Erskine, 'for favours received from his father the late Earl of Marr'.⁴³ During the years when Mar was in contact with Johnston, he no doubt praised Gibbs and encouraged Johnston to think of employing him.

JOHNSTON'S GARDEN

Johnston had inherited an established garden with extensive orchards. It was particularly known for its cherry trees (which also flourished in the nearby garden at Ham House), vines and peaches, some of which he seems to have incorporated into his new gardens.⁴⁴ Although in the formal tradition, the gardens were not apparently indebted in detail to the ideas illustrated in James's translation of Dezallier d'Argenville. According to Macky they consisted of a parterre with a grotto, a kitchen garden, a fruit garden, a pleasure garden with a mount, and a wilderness, and, according to Defoe, there was also a 'green house', and a 'compleat vineyard . . . which would 'produce most excellent wines'.⁴⁵ Batty Langley included a plan of the garden – engraved by his brother Thomas – in *New Principles of*



Fig.11. 'Governor Pitt's House, Twickenham', by Augustin Heckel (1690–1770), probably *c.*1740, watercolour (11.2 x 35.5cm). Detail of house and gardens. (Courtesy of the Richmond-upon-Thames Borough Art Collection, Orleans House Gallery LDORL: 00153)

Gardening (London, 1728).⁴⁶ His explanation of the plate – printed in reverse so that east is west and vice-versa – usefully names some of the features, but it also indicates that this is 'an Improvement of a beautiful Garden at Twickenham, situated on the River Thames'. Some elements, therefore, are almost certainly suggestions and in typical pattern-book fashion, it offers alternative designs for the various compartments.

Johnston's gardens facing the river are seen in an early view by Augustin Heckel (1690–1770) (Fig.11). His gardens, and more particularly his horticultural expertise, were much admired by contemporaries. Macky considered that 'for the Elegancy and Largeness of his Gardens, his Terras on the River, and the situation of his House, [Johnston] makes much the brightest figure' in Twickenham, 'a village remarkable for [its] abundance of curious seats.'⁴⁷ One contemporary biographical account noted of Johnston: 'After he retired from public business, he amused himself with planting and gardening, in which he was reckoned to have a very good taste'.⁴⁸ Dr. Richard Bradley, a Fellow of the Royal Society, praised his 'fine Gardens' at Twickenham where the plants

were 'so many shining Proofs of the great Judgment and extraordinary Skill of their able Master',⁴⁹ while Defoe described him as 'a master of gardening, perhaps the greatest master now in England'.⁵⁰ As noted above, Johnston offered Mar advice on his planting, and Mar's extensive terraces fronting the river were not unlike those in Johnston's own garden.

Mar's 1711 survey provides us with what is probably a more accurate, though less detailed, representation than Langley's of what was on the ground before the addition of the octagon and later buildings (Fig.12). The house is shown in outline, with two ranges of outbuildings on its western side. The range facing the river is marked 'Green House' by Langley, and described as such by Defoe. The octagon would be built at the junction of these buildings. Johnston's walled, terraced gardens, sketched by Mar and illustrated by Heckel, flanked the house to east and west on at least two levels, and were planted with cypresses and clipped evergreens. Mar's sketch shows a walk running in front of the house and giving access to the greenhouse. Two grass plats separated by a central walk led to the riverside path. In the most easterly part of the

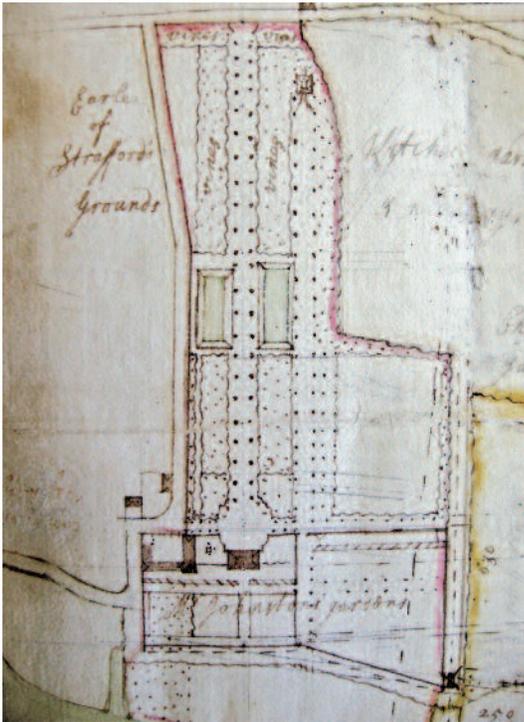


Fig. 12. Detail of fig. 4, the Earl of Mar's sketch plan of Twickenham, showing James Johnston's house and garden (north at the top). (*National Archives of Scotland RHP13256/67B*)

garden Heckel shows espalier trees growing on the wall, and orderly rows of low vegetation; Langley confirms that this was the 'Kitching Garden'. Behind the house was a long plot of land stretching north to the Richmond road, with a wide, central avenue lined with trees. It was bordered first by a pair of long beds with no planting indicated, then by a pair of oblong pools, and lastly by two more long beds containing vines. Another avenue to the east was terminated by a mount which Langley suggested had an icehouse beneath it. A large rectangular area further to the east is identified by Langley as the 'Fruit Garden'. The site of the grotto mentioned by Macky is not indicated.

Although the Earl of Mar was connected with Twickenham for a relatively short time, he took his memories of the area, and his survey, away with him into exile, and devised schemes for new and existing buildings inspired by his knowledge of European architecture, and by the published designs to which he had access. Had these visionary designs been executed, they would have brought a new interpretation of traditional plans and the bold and classical architecture of his Continental models to join the sober brick villas of his fellow Scots along the banks of the Thames.

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ENDNOTES

1. It had been earlier owned by one of Alexander Pope's friends, the Jacobite sympathiser Henry St John, first Viscount Bolingbroke.
2. The fence was still standing in 1887: see Twickenham Museum website. In this, Tweeddale may have followed the lead of the Duke of Cumberland who had a similar fence at Cumberland House: see Fitzroy Maclean, *Highlanders: A History of the Scottish Clans* (New York, 1995), p. 214.
3. For Johnston see Richard Harrison, 'Johnston, James (1655-1737), of Orleans House, Twickenham, Mdx.', *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1690-1715*, 5 vols., vol. IV (Members G-N), D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, & S. Handley (eds), (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 513-16; and John R. Young, 'Johnston, James (1655-1737)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), vol. XXX, pp. 368-70.
4. *Survey of London*, XIII ('The Parish of St Margaret, Westminster - Part II, vol. 2') (London, 1930), p. 241.

5. For Mar see: Christopher V. Ehrenstein, 'Erskine, John, styled twenty-second or sixth earl of mar and Jacobite duke of Mar (bap. 1675, d. 1732)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004, vol. 18, pp. 552–58; *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie Preserved at Alloa House*, Hist MSS Comm, vol. 60 (London, HMSO, 1904), p.227. Mar's support for the union was partly motivated by a desire to strengthen Scotland's economy: see Margaret Stewart, 'John Erskine, Earl of Mar: Architecture, Landscape & Industry', in 'Sir William Bruce and Architecture in Early Modern Scotland', *Architectural Heritage*, 23 (2012), pp. 97–116.
6. *Survey of London, op. cit.*, (1930), p. 241. When Mar declared for the Jacobite cause and his title was forfeited, his second wife Frances, described as the 'late' Countess of Mar, threw herself on the king's mercy and, claiming her innocence, wrote in December 1715: 'je suis reduite apresent a un etat deplorable n'ayant point de maison, ni rien pour subsister pour moy ni mon enfant'; she remained in the house before going insane – *ibid*, p. 242.
7. London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), St Mary the Virgin Parish Registers, DRO/174/B/01/005, gives the date as 21 February 1711/12; R.S. Cobbett, *Memorials of Twickenham*, (London, 1872), pp.56–7, who gives 2 March 1711/12, has taken the date of the following entry in error. Sir Hugh Paterson, a prominent Jacobite, also fled to the Continent in 1716, but unlike Mar was eventually able to return.
8. Donald H. Simpson, *Twickenham Society in Queen Anne's Reign*, (Borough of Twickenham Local History Society Paper no. 35, Twickenham, 1976, revised 2005), p. 33.
9. LMA, St Mary the Virgin Churchwardens' Accounts, DRO/174/B/01/005; Cobbett 1872, *op. cit.*, p. 357.
10. John Macky, *A Journey Through England. In Familiar Letters From A Gentleman Here, To His Friend Abroad. The second edition, considerably improv'd.*, (London 1722), 1, p. 64. 'Late' refers to the loss of Mar's title, not his death. For Macky, see: J. D. Alsop, 'Macky, John (d.1726), writer and spy', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), XXXV, p. 702. Macky fled from France in 1692 having heard news of a planned French and Jacobite invasion, and informed on several Scottish Jacobites.
11. Cobbett 1872, *op. cit.*, pp. 356–7. *The Victoria County History* commented on Cobbett's 'unlikely' identification: Susan Reynolds (ed.), *A History of the County of Middlesex* (Oxford, 1962), III, p.143.
12. The National Archives, PROB 11/516. For Skipwith, see: D. W. Hayton, 'Skipwith, Sir Thomas, 2nd Bt. (c.1652–1710), of Metheringham, Lincs and Twickenham, Mdx.' in *The History of Parliament: op. cit.*, vol. V, (Members O-Z), D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, & S. Handley (eds), 2002, pp. 489–90.
13. Information on the website of Twickenham Museum compiled by Anthony Beccles Wilson, 1998, and accessed 6 May 2014. Mar's second wife, Frances, was a grand-daughter of the third Earl of Denbigh.
14. The small grotto in this position, now belonging to Thames Eyot, could conceivably date from Mar's occupation. His riverside gardens were similar to Johnston's and he may have wished to emulate him further in possessing a grotto.
15. Letter from James Johnston to the Earl of Wemyss, containing advice for both Wemyss and Mar, January 1707/8: National Archives of Scotland, GD124 15/781. We are grateful to Margaret Stewart for this reference.
16. Macky, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
17. Having served both William III and Queen Anne, Strafford, criticised by the members of the Whig party for his part in the Utrecht peace congress, turned Jacobite and corresponded with the Pretender: see: Linda Frey and Marsh Frey, 'Wentworth, Thomas, first earl of Strafford (1672–1739), diplomatist and army officer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), LVIII, pp. 158–60.
18. British Library (hereafter BL), Add MS 22225, f.34v; James J. Cartwright (ed.), *The Wentworth Papers*, 1705–1739 (London, 1883), p. 61.
19. Marie P. G. Draper, *Marble Hill House and its owners* (Greater London Council, 1970), pp.13–14.
20. In 1724 he purchased 25 1/2 acres of land for the countess: See Michael Symes, Alison Hodges and John Harvey, 'The Plantings at Whitton', *Garden History*, 14(2) (Autumn 1986), pp. 138–172, p. 140.
21. On the subject of land tenure on the Marble Hill site, see a forthcoming booklet by David Jacques for the Borough of Twickenham Local History Society.
22. Mar's opponent at Sheriffmuir, the commander of the government forces, was his former near neighbour in Twickenham, John Campbell, second Duke of Argyll (1678–1743), later Duke of Greenwich. Attempts were subsequently made to convert Argyll to the Jacobite cause.

23. *Calendar of the Stuart Papers belonging to his majesty the king, preserved at Windsor Castle*, 7 vols, Hist MSS Comm, 56 (1902–23), V, p. 21.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
25. See Margaret C. H. Stewart, 'Lord Mar's Gardens at Alloa: 1700–1732', in *Aspects of Scottish Classicism: The house and its formal setting 1690–1750* (St Andrews Studies in the History of Scottish Architecture and Design, St Andrews, 1988), pp. 33–40.
26. John Rocque, *An Exact Survey of the City of London, Westminster ye Borough of Southwark, and the Country near Ten Miles round*, London, 1746.
27. Terry Friedman, 'A "Palace worthy of the Grandeur of the King": Lord Mar's designs for the Old Pretender, 1718–30', *Architectural History*, 29 (1986), pp. 102–33. Scheme A is also discussed by Margaret C.H. Stewart in 'Lord Mar's House A (1718–1725)', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 113 (January 1989), pp. 9–18.
28. Friedman, *loc. cit.*, Fig. 21.
29. The name Orleans House derives from the residency there, between 1813 and 1815 of Louis Philippe, 6th duc d'Orleans (1773–1850), later King Louis Philippe of France.
30. See Sally Jeffery, 'John James: an early disciple of Inigo Jones', in Dana Arnold (ed.), *The Georgian Villa* (Stroud, 1996), pp. 32–40. For a history of the house and gardens, see Patricia Astley Cooper, *The History of Orleans House, Twickenham* (London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, 1984); Ray Desmond, 'Orleans House Gardens, Twickenham, *Garden History*, 24(1) (Summer, 1996), pp. 14–18. A slight variant on the published design of the house, probably in James's hand, is in Sir John Soane's Museum, drawer 43, set 5, f. 33 upper, amongst drawings collected by Sir William Chambers.
31. BL, Add MS 31143, f.530; Cartwright, *op. cit.*, p.129.
32. Christopher Hussey, 'Twickenham – II: Orleans House; The Octagon', *Country Life*, September 15, 1944, p.464, fig.1; and Astley Cooper, *op. cit.*, fig. 8.
33. Edward Ironside, *The History and Antiquities of Twickenham* (London, 1797), pp.79–80.
34. Colen Campbell, vol.1, 1715, plate 77.
35. Friedman, *loc. cit.*, p. 105.
36. Scottish Record Office, RHP 13256/84, illustrated in *A Passion for Building: The Amateur Architect in England 1650–1850* (exhibition catalogue, Sir John Soane's Museum: London, 2007), p. 41, cat. and fig. 39.
37. Letter from John James to John Sheffield, 1st Duke of Buckingham, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. B376, ff. 8–9, 20 October 1711, cited in Jeffery, *loc. cit.*, p. 33.
38. Letters to the Earl of Peterborow, 24 August, 1728 and Dean Swift, 25 March 1736, printed in George Sherburn (ed.), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope* (Oxford, 1956), III, p. 307, and IV, p. 6. Sherburn believes that the letter to the Earl of Peterborow was in fact written in 1732.
39. James Gibbs was a quiet Catholic, and though courted by Jacobites, amongst them Mar, held back from getting drawn into their affairs.
40. Amongst the works in and around Twickenham that Gibbs undertook, several for Scottish patrons, were: the rebuilding of Sudbrook Park (1715–19) for John Campbell, second Duke of Argyll and Duke of Greenwich; the remodelled of Alexander Pope's villa (1719–20); the design of the Octagon for James Johnston (1720); and offices and a greenhouse at Whitton Place (1725–6) for the Earl of Ilay, later third Earl of Argyll.
41. Friedman, *loc. cit.*, p.103; Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (4th ed., New Haven and London, 2008), p. 360.
42. Scottish Record Office, RHP13257/25. Both designs are illustrated in Terry Friedman, *James Gibbs* (New Haven and London, 1984), pp. 267–8.
43. Colvin, *op. cit.*
44. Parliamentary Survey of Twickenham, 1649–50, quoted in Astley Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
45. Macky 1722, *op. cit.*, p.63; Daniel Defoe, *A Tour thro' the whole Island of Great Britain, divided into circuits or journies*, London, vol. 2, 1725, p. 12.
46. See plate IX and pp. xii–xiii.
47. Macky 1722, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 63–4.
48. *State-Papers and Letters, addressed to William Carstares ... relating to public affairs in Great-Britain, but more particularly in Scotland, during the reigns of K. William and Q. Anne. To which is prefixed the Life of Mr. Carstares*, Edinburgh, 1774, p. 93. These brief biographical notes were abstracted from a MS of c.1704/5 in the library of the Earl of Hynford.
49. Macky, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 63–4. In his *General Treatise of Husbandry and Gardening* (London, 1724), Bradley wrote a long dedication for the month of July to Johnston.
50. Defoe, *op. cit.*, p.12.