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HAREWOOD HOUSE: TWO FOOTNOTES

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Edwin Lascelles's 'princely palace'¹ in Yorkshire is relatively well-trodden territory as a subject for historical research,² but there remain some avenues of inquiry which have not been fully explored. Two which are related to some extent are discussed below. One concerns the comments on the house by certain early visitors to it; the other the sources and what one might call the pre-history of John Carr's design, and their implications for the character of the completed building.

1. A number of visitors' accounts are extant, but their value to the historian varies. Three which include an evaluative element can be identified. The most significant, combining shrewd assessment and some detailed description, is that of Elizabeth Percy, first Duchess of Northumberland, who visited Harewood twice, first in 1766, when the building work was still in progress – the carcass completed but the internal decoration only just begun – then again in 1771,



Fig. 1. Harewood House, view of the north front by Thomas Malton, 1788.

which was the year that the house was first occupied. The others are those of the Staffordshire historian Stebbing Shaw, who visited in 1787, and Sir Richard Colt Hoare of Stourhead, another man of serious antiquarian interests, who came as part of a tour of northern England in 1800. In addition, information about how some of the rooms were used was recorded by the artist Joseph Farington in 1801.³

Two themes emerge. One is the situation of the house, towards the top of a south-facing slope. The effect on the south side, with the house standing up impressively and overlooking the new lake, was widely admired; but regarding the north (entrance) front, facing towards the rising land, the Duchess of Northumberland commented in 1771:

‘The House tho entirely built from the Ground by M^r Lascelles might I criticise I would say it was placed in a very bad situation as he is forced to take away at immense Labour & expence a large Hill w^{ch} rises immediately in the front of it . . .’⁴

On this side indeed, with the basement storey hidden in a deep area, the house does appear a little to be sinking into the ground; and although this effect was exacerbated in the changes made by Charles Barry in 1842–50, when the ground-level in front of the house was raised again and the flight of steps to the front door shortened,⁵ it is evident from Thomas Malton’s view (Fig. 1) that it was present to some extent from the outset. Ironically, an effective response to the challenge of a sloping site was exemplified in the design of a house just a few miles away which was under construction at the same time, James Paine’s Stockeld Park near Wetherby.⁶ On the entrance front and the flanks it is the principal floor which is treated as the ‘rustic’, but at the back, where the ground-level is lower, rustication is confined instead to the basement below, which is only exposed on this elevation. Carr, however, never developed that degree of creative flexibility, and at a later house of his, Denton Hall near Ilkley,⁷ which is also built on a slope, something of the same sinking feeling is again present on the uphill-facing side.

The other theme relates mainly to the impact of Robert Adam’s state rooms; and the reaction to these was mixed. The Duchess of Northumberland’s description of the interior is largely neutral in tone apart from the occasional sally,⁸ but then she concludes:

‘The Architect seems rather to have contrived this house for Strangers to see than the Inhabitants to dwell in for it is by no means convenient not a closet to put by a Close Stool or a bottle & Bason in any of the Lodging Rooms.’⁹

Sir Richard Colt Hoare was even more forthright:

‘The house has a handsome elevation; built of stone; architects Carr and Adams. The interior may be described in a few words: a mass of ill-judged expence, a fine suite of rooms fitted up in the most gaudy and expensive style imaginable . . .’¹⁰

That he was not motivated by a general dislike of Adam’s work is demonstrated by his comments on two of the latter’s other schemes. Of Newby Hall near Ripon he wrote: ‘The interior of this house has been fitted up with great elegance and taste united – not like Harewood, gaudy, expensive and tasteless.’¹¹ And of Kedleston Hall:

‘The house both within and without is magnificent, as to its architecture and ornaments. The architect was Adams who has varied the different shapes of the rooms with much taste and good judgement . . . The grates, chairs etc are all done from antique models and correspond with the general taste of the apartment . . . This house in point of architecture and ornament exceeds any I have yet seen.’¹²

Presumably therefore the reason for Hoare’s condemnation of Harewood was its uncoordinated juxtaposition of two different types of finery, Adam’s and Chippendale’s.

Stebbing Shaw’s account is a slightly different proposition because he was writing for publication, and he appears to have chosen his words with care. His description of the rooms proceeds in a conventionally hyperbolic style but with a slight edge to it, and then when he reaches the final room

in his circuit, the second of the two drawing rooms, his tone changes:

‘The apartments are very numerous and large, and finished in the highest taste of elegance and fashion . . . All the rooms are equally elegant and costly, particularly the state apartments; but the large gallery and great drawing room present such a shew of magnificence and art, as eye hath scarce seen, and words cannot describe . . . We lastly went into the adjoining lesser drawing-room, hung and ornamented in a most singular manner: here, as if fancy and art had exhausted all their choice treasures, are exhibited colours and mixtures most odd and disagreeable.’¹³

It is as if he also had found it all too much, and not just the intensity of the magnificence but the extent of it: why, after all, were there two state drawing

rooms, one after the other? So the verdicts of the duchess and Shaw taken together suggest a twofold criticism: an over-supply of state accommodation and a deficiency in the private. The reasons for that state of affairs are considered in the second footnote.

2. Over fifty years ago Sir John Summerson characterised Harewood as a compressed version of Colen Campbell’s third design for Wanstead House (Fig. 2),¹⁴ but this analysis is incomplete in two respects. The first is that the end features of Wanstead III take the form of two pairs of corner towers, whereas at Harewood they are continuous ranges running from front to back. It might therefore be more accurate to describe the latter as a compressed version of Wanstead II, with the

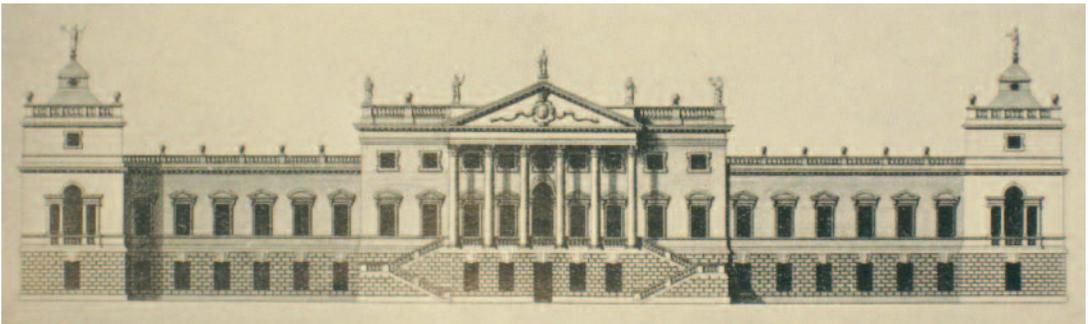
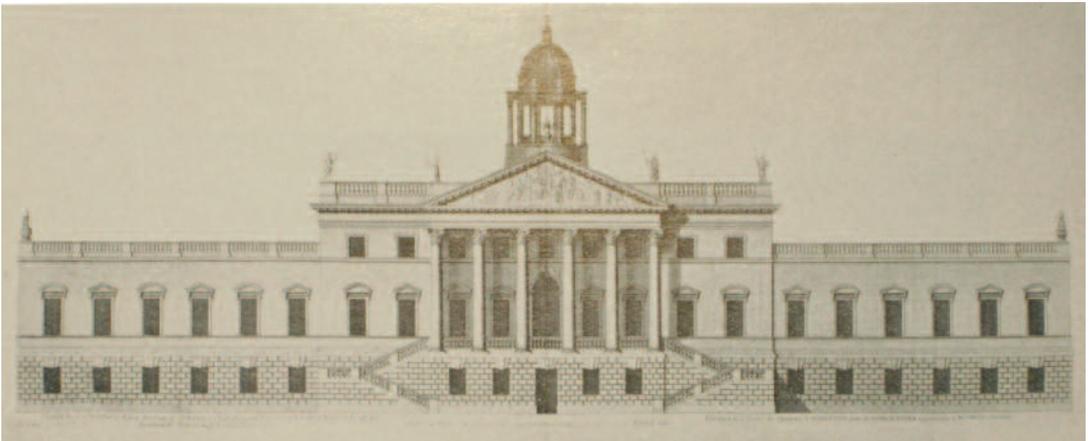


Fig. 2. Wanstead House, second and third designs from *Vitruvius Britannicus* i (1715) and iii (1725).

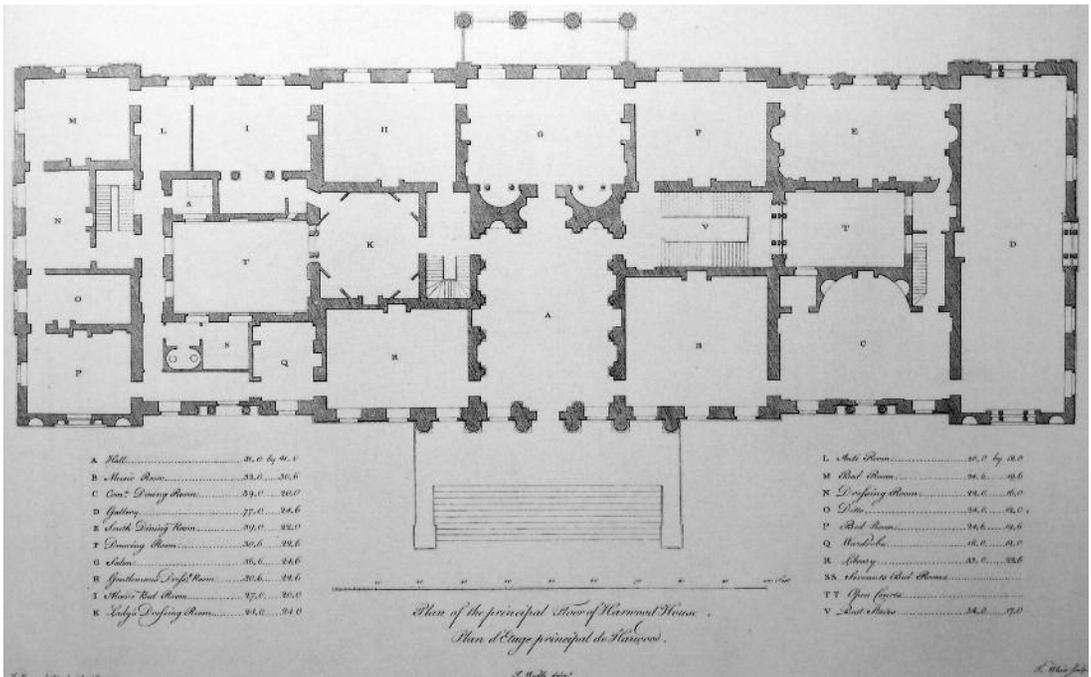


Fig. 3 . Harewood House, plan from *Vitruvius Britannicus* v (1771).

extremities of each front articulated in a manner reminiscent of Wanstead III.

The second, and more important point is that it is only the external form of the house which was derived from Wanstead: the interior arrangement was not. Wanstead was an example of the type of formal early eighteenth-century great house in which hierarchically conceived apartments, each consisting of several rooms, extended symmetrically to each side of the central entrance hall and saloon;¹⁵ but that type of plan would have been very old-fashioned by the 1760s, and that adopted at Harewood is quite different (Fig. 3). The entrance hall and saloon remain, but now as the meeting point of two sequences of rooms which encircle the back courtyards to left and right – the west a circuit of state reception rooms, the east consisting of some further state rooms including a state bedchamber, and beyond them two smaller family

apartments.¹⁶ The evident source for this arrangement was another of the great Palladian exemplars of earlier in the century, the Earl of Leicester's *Holkham Hall* (Fig. 4)¹⁷ – which is unsurprising since Leicester had advised Lascelles on the design of his house,¹⁸ and at one point during its gestation Carr had planned to visit *Holkham* himself.¹⁹

The similarities between Harewood and *Holkham's* central block are visible in specific details as well as the general conception, notably in the positions of the gallery, occupying the whole of the west range in both, and the dining room, next to it on the north side; and in the shape of the latter, with a semicircular recess in the back wall. So Harewood is a hybrid, the product as it were of fitting the flesh of one beast into the carapace of another; and the problems regarding the accommodation referred to above can be traced back to this characteristic. On the one hand,

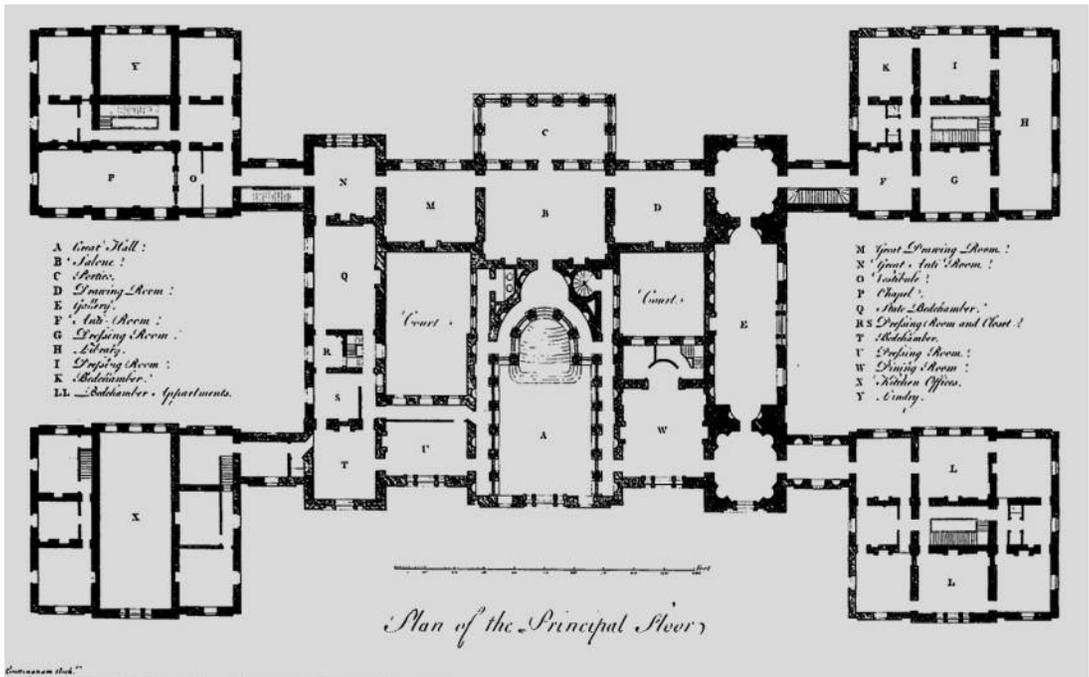


Fig. 4. Holkham Hall, plan from M. Brettingham, *The Plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham* (1761).

whereas at Holkham the family and guest lodgings are mainly housed in separate wings, at Harewood they are all fitted into the east range and the attic.²⁰ On the other, the principal elevations of Harewood are over fifty feet longer than those of the main block at Holkham, which translates into at least two additional rooms along each front. In the east part of the house this was doubtless an advantage, but in the west it was less so. On the north side the extra room is the music room, which in effect is not unlike yet another drawing room, while on the south the eventual outcome was the succession of two drawing rooms, but there had been some uncertainty as to what function the second room should serve: the Duchess of Northumberland in 1766 referred to it as a second dining room and it was still described as the 'south dining room' as late as 1771 on the plate in *Vitruvius Britannicus*.²¹

Before it reached that stage however the design

had passed through a quite tortuous process of evolution. The first reference to a design by Carr comes in a letter of his to Lascelles's steward Samuel Popplewell, datable to 1755, in which he also alludes to a plan by one of his potential rivals for the commission, the East India Company's surveyor William Jones:²²

'... You will be pleased to represent mine [to Mr Lascelles] as a rough sketch I made about a month ago not intending to show it till I had made my improvements upon it the Dimensions of the rooms are all figured & an easy access to every Room, the Area of my Plan is not greater than Mr Jones Dimension you gave me nor so big I think & I am pretty sure I have as little waste Room consequently must have as Good Rooms, I get into the Gallery Bedchamber & Dressing Room without going through any other Room which seldom can be in such a large house & have two spacious Back Stairs of 10 feet Diam^r.²³

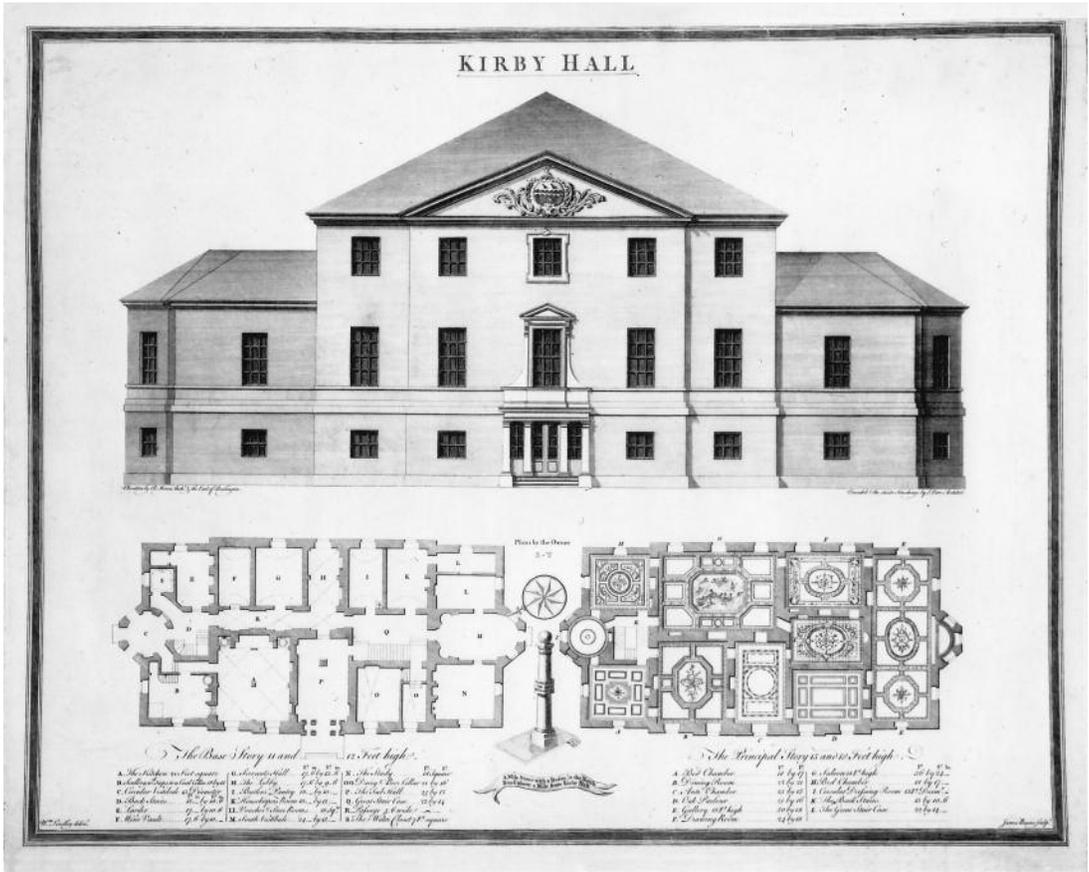


Fig. 5. Kirby Hall, Little Ouseburn, elevation and plan. (*British Library*)

The salient feature of this discussion is that the pattern of internal communication described by Carr is not compatible with a plan at all like Harewood's or those of either of its antecedents. If one assumes that his point of departure was one of the rooms of the central axis – the hall or the saloon – then to reach the gallery it would be necessary to pass through two intermediate rooms at Harewood and one at *Holkham*, and to reach any of the bedchambers at least one.

Is it then possible to reconstruct the plan referred to here? A starting point may be provided by two houses with which Carr was associated before 1755: Kirby Hall at Little Ouseburn (Fig. 5),

which was built by him c.1747–52 to the design of Roger Morris and Lord Burlington,²⁴ and Heath Hall near Wakefield (Fig. 6), which he remodelled and enlarged from c.1754 on.²⁵ What they have in common is a plan-form in which the body of the house is embraced by a pair of lateral ranges running from front to back and attached directly to its flanks – these are Carr's additions at Heath Hall – the right-hand one of which, when facing the entrance, is occupied by a gallery or gallery-like reception room. At Kirby Hall the left-hand range was occupied by two bedrooms and a dressing room, and at Heath Hall the interiors of both ranges can be reached

directly from the entrance hall or the staircase hall.

On this basis one might posit the following:

(i) A central block similar to that shown in the earliest surviving plan which relates to the house as built, Robert Adam's of 1758 (Fig. 7) showing his proposed modifications to a pre-existing one by Carr,²⁶ with central entrance hall and saloon, library and dining room flanking the hall, and parlour and drawing room the saloon, but with Carr's circular back stairs in the middle of each side, opening off the hall

(ii) Lateral ranges running front-to-back against each flank, the right-hand (west) occupied by a gallery, the left-hand by two bedrooms and two dressing rooms, and reached from the entrance hall through the staircase halls

(iii) The ends of the ranges articulated either by single plain bays as at Kirby Hall, or two, as in effect in Wanstead II, or by canted bays as at Heath Hall, or by Serlianas, as in Wanstead III and at Holkham and the executed house.

One feature which calls for particular comment is the persistence of the gallery, in the west range, given that the principal purpose of the gallery at Holkham was the display of Leicester's collection of sculpture whereas Lascelles possessed no such collection.²⁷ But there was a well-established alternative use for such spaces. Joseph Farington in 1801 described the Harewood gallery as 'for breakfast and balls';²⁸ and not only was the holding of dances a subsidiary

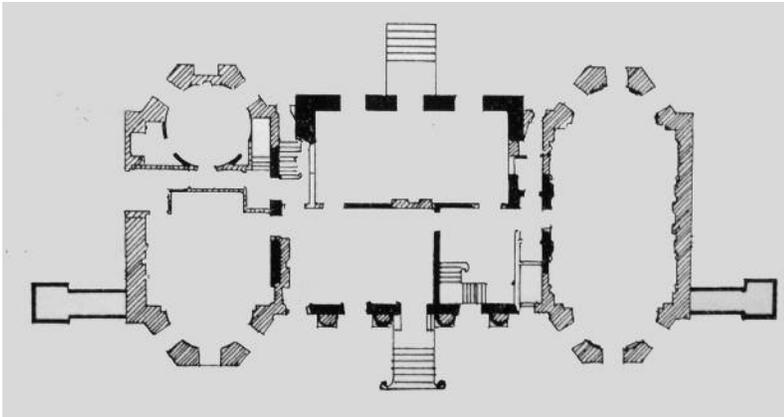


Fig. 6. Heath House near Wakefield, plan

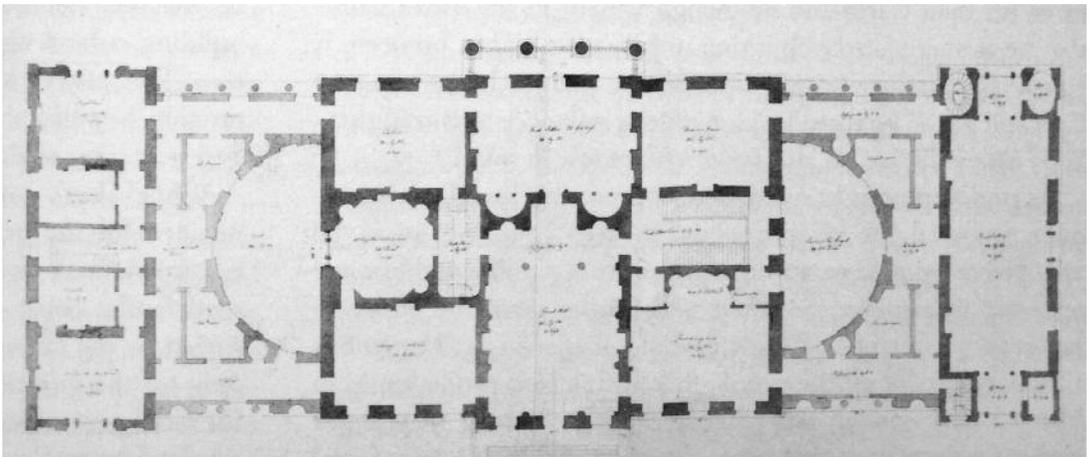


Fig. 7. Harewood House, plan by Robert Adam, 1758. (Sir John Soane's Museum)

function of Holkham's,²⁹ but at Wanstead also at an early date a gallery-like ballroom had been created in the same respective position in the house, out of the end rooms of two of the principal apartments.³⁰

The move from the form of plan suggested here to the footprint of the executed house would nevertheless represent a substantial enhancement in the ambition of the project, and the revision did not take place immediately. In February 1756 Popplewell reported to Lascelles that 'Old Mr Carr' – that is, Carr's father – 'seems to hint that what is to be answered will require a good deal of time & y^t everything will be to draw out at large', but two years later, in January 1758, Carr senior told Popplewell that 'My Son has a mind to make another plan';³¹ and it was presumably this latter that Robert Adam 'tickled up' in the summer of that year. Something of its character can be deduced from Adam's version and his comments on it;³² and it appears that both the Wanstead-style outline and the Holkham form of interior plan had now made their appearance but that only the former was regarded as fixed. The evolution of the design thereafter is relatively familiar: Adam's proposal that the 'back courts' should be semicircular – which subverted the Holkham concept entirely, the end ranges being linked to the body of the house only by corridors instead of through the intermediate rooms of the circuits; the compromise design drawn out by Carr c.1759, in which this scheme was adopted for the state room (west) side but the Holkham form

retained on the east; and the change made as late as 1762 in which the semicircular courtyard shape was wholly abandoned and the two additional state rooms introduced – or rather, it appears, reintroduced – as a consequence.³³ So while the Holkham formula was probably first conceived of as being all of a piece, it was actually realised only incrementally, not to say rather chaotically, and in its complete form very much at the last minute, well after the building of the house had been begun.

What, if any, more general conclusions can be drawn from this discussion? One might be that, by Alexander Pope's rigorous standards at any rate,³⁴ as a patron of the arts Edwin Lascelles fell a little short – more of a Timon than a Bathurst or a Burlington perhaps. James Adam's extraordinarily contemptuous remark about his brother having 'tickled up' Carr's design 'so as to dazzle the Eyes of the Squire'³⁵ suggests that he anyway was of that opinion; and the apparent absence of direct communication between Lascelles and Carr throughout the course of the work, everything being done via Samuel Popplewell,³⁶ was hardly a recipe for success. As to Carr himself, any perceived shortcomings in his design evidently did his subsequent career no harm at all – which in turn may tell us something about the creative and intellectual levels at which the designing of country houses in general was conducted in England during the mid and late eighteenth century. But that is another story.

ENDNOTES

1. S. Shaw, *A Tour, in 1787, from London, to the Western Highlands of Scotland, including excursions to the lakes of Westmorland and Cumberland* (London 1788), p. 248.
2. See in particular C. Hussey, *English Country Houses, Mid Georgian 1760–1800* (London 1955), pp. 61–9; M. Mauchline, *Harewood House* (Newton Abbot 1974); B. Wragg, *The Life and Work of John Carr of York* (York 2000), pp. 17–24, 154–5; E. Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam, his Interiors* (New Haven & London, 2001), pp. 133–55.
3. The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, DNP: MSS 121/16 pp. 1–3, 121/27 pp. 57–60, 121/37 p. 22; Shaw, *Tour from London*, pp. 248–51; *The Journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare through Wales and England 1793–1810*, ed. M. W. Thompson (Gloucester, 1983), p. 124; *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. K. Garlick & A. Macintyre (New Haven & London, 1979) V, pp. 1599–1600. The house was also visited by the antiquary William Bray in 1777 (W. Bray, *Sketches of a Tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire* (2nd edition, London, 1783), p. 266); John Wesley in 1779 (*The Journal and Diaries of John Wesley VI*, ed. W. R. Ward & R. P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, 1995), p. 159); the poet Anna Seward c.1800 (see W. Wheeler, *Some Historic Mansions of Yorkshire and their Associations I* (Leeds, 1888), p. 105); and William Gilpin's disciple Richard Warner in 1801 (R. Warner, *A Tour through the Northern Counties of England and the Borders of Scotland* (Bath, 1802) I, pp. 241–2; but Bray provides no insights and the essentially negative reactions of the other three were evidently the result of a lack of affinity for monumental domestic architecture in general rather than a dislike of Harewood House in particular. It is unfortunate that one of the sharpest-eyed of late eighteenth-century tourists, the Hon. John Byng, missed the house: writing in York in 1792, he observed that 'Coming here, I have gain'd a city and a Cathedral; but have miss'd a large manufacturing town, a play; Kirkstal Abbey, Harewood House and Castle; so that, I believe, the balance is weighty against me.' (J. Byng, *The Torrington Diaries*, ed. C. B. Andrews (London, 1936) III, p. 35).
4. Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 121/27 p. 57.
5. Mauchline, *Harewood House*, p. 127.
6. Built 1758–63. See J. Paine, *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Houses I* (London, 1767), pp. 10–11, plates 41–6; P. Leach, *James Paine* (London 1988), pp. 68–72, 210.
7. See Wragg, Carr, pp. 135–7; P. Leach & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Yorkshire West Riding: Leeds, Bradford and the North* (New Haven & London, 2009), pp. 240–1.
8. Eg., of the east side, 'here also is a Back Stairs, passages innumerable & a water closet w^{ch} stinks all over the house' (Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 121/27 p. 58).
9. Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 121/27 p. 59.
10. *The Journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare*, p. 124.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 149.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
13. Shaw, *Tour from London*, pp. 249–51.
14. J. Summerson, 'The Classical Country House in 18th-century England', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 107 (1959), p. 556. For Wanstead House see also C. Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus I* (London, 1715), plates 21–6, and III (London, 1725), plates 39–41; H. E. Stutchbury, *The Architecture of Colen Campbell* (Manchester, 1967), pp. 27–30 and passim.
15. See M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven & London, 1978), pp. 120–62. The apartments at Wanstead are described in J. Macky, *A Journey through England* (5th edition, London, 1732) I, pp. 26–8.
16. J. Woolfe & J. Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus V* (London, 1771), plate 24.
17. For Holkham Hall see *inter alia* M. Brettingham, *The Plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk* (London, 1761, 2nd edition 1773).
18. Mauchline, *Harewood House*, pp. 35, 38, 43; Harris, *Adam*, pp. 134–5. Leicester died in 1759, but the Holkham-like elements of the plan had probably been proposed by then.
19. Wragg, Carr, p. 21. Whether the visit actually took place is not known.
20. Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 121/27 p. 59; Woolfe & Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus V*, plate 24.
21. Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 121/16 p. 3; Woolfe & Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus V*, plate 24. Once again there was a parallel with Holkham Hall although there the second dining room is in the south-east quarter of the block, not the south-west. The inscriptions identifying two of Adam's ceiling designs, of 1765 and 1767, as for the 'second drawing room' were evidently added some years after the

- drawings were made (Harris, *Adam*, pp. 143–4, 349 n. 40). The room in question was actually the first, or ‘great’ drawing room as described by Shaw.
22. See H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840* (4th edition, New Haven & London, 2008), pp. 564–5. Lascelles’s father had been a director of the East India Company (Harris, *Adam*, p. 133).
 23. West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds, Harewood Papers SC/1/3/141, Steward’s Correspondence, John Carr to Samuel Popplewell, 1755.
 24. British Library, King’s Topographical Collection xlv, 24/1, engraving of Kirby Hall, James Basire sculpt.; Wragg, *Carr*, pp. 7–8, 165–6.
 25. I. & E. Hall, *Heath, an Architectural Description* (Heath, 1976), pp. 9, 13–18; Wragg, *Carr*, pp. 157–8.
 26. Sir John Soane’s Museum, Adam drawings 35:8; Mauchline, *Harewood House*, pp. 38–40; Harris, *Adam*, pp. 133–5.
 27. Even so at one stage, c.1765, Adam proposed to finish it as a sculpture gallery (Sir John Soane’s Museum, Adam drawings 35:10. See Harris, *Adam*, pp. 144–6.
 28. *Diary of Joseph Farington* V, p. 1599.
 29. *The Diary of Syllas Neville*, ed. B. Cozens-Hardy (Oxford, 1950), pp. 329–31.
 30. Stutchbury, *Campbell*, pp. 29–30.
 31. West Yorkshire Archive Service, Harewood Papers SC/1/3/42, SC/2/2/8, Steward’s Correspondence, Samuel Popplewell to Edwin Lascelles, 16 February 1756 (copy), and Robert Carr to Samuel Popplewell, 9 January 1758. Carr’s visit to Holkham, if it took place, followed this resolution, in the spring of 1758 (Wragg, *Carr*, p. 21).
 32. Sir John Soane’s Museum, Adam drawings 35:8; Scottish Record Office, Adam Papers GD 18/4848, Robert Adam to James Adam, 17 June 1758; Mauchline, *Harewood House*, pp. 38–40; Harris, *Adam*, pp. 133–5.
 33. Mauchline, *Harewood House*, pp. 39–43; Harris, *Adam*, pp. 133–5.
 34. *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. F. W. Bateson (2nd edition, New Haven & London 1961) III, part 2, pp. 134–56.
 35. Scottish Record Office, Adam Papers GD 18/4849, James Adam to Robert Adam, 25 June 1758; Mauchline, *Harewood House*, pp. 39.
 36. West Yorkshire Archive Service, Harewood Papers SC, Steward’s Correspondence, *passim*.