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# THE PEER'S 'SMOOTH PIERS': WILLIAM KENT AND THOMAS COKE AT WORK DESIGNING HOLKHAM HALL IN 1733–34

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The history of the design of Holkham Hall in Norfolk has both captivated and baffled commentators and architectural historians ever since the death of the house's great creator Thomas Coke, 1st Earl of Leicester, in 1759. In more recent times Professor Leo Schmidt has advanced the suggestion that the origins of the design did not lie, as had been commonly thought, in the period immediately before construction is known to have begun in 1734, but rather in 1726 – when Coke made a payment to his executant architect, Matthew Brettingham

the Elder, 'for drawing a Plan of a New House'.<sup>1</sup> Schmidt believes that 'Plan' should be identified with a set of drawings in the British Library, which he has denominated 'Holkham 1' (Fig. 1). They show the central block of the house much as built, though without its four wings and with an attic floor externally expressed on all fronts except the north. Schmidt subsequently credited the origination of this design to Colen Campbell who, he discovered, had also been employed by Coke in 1725–26.<sup>2</sup> The lapse of time between 1726 and 1734 may not seem

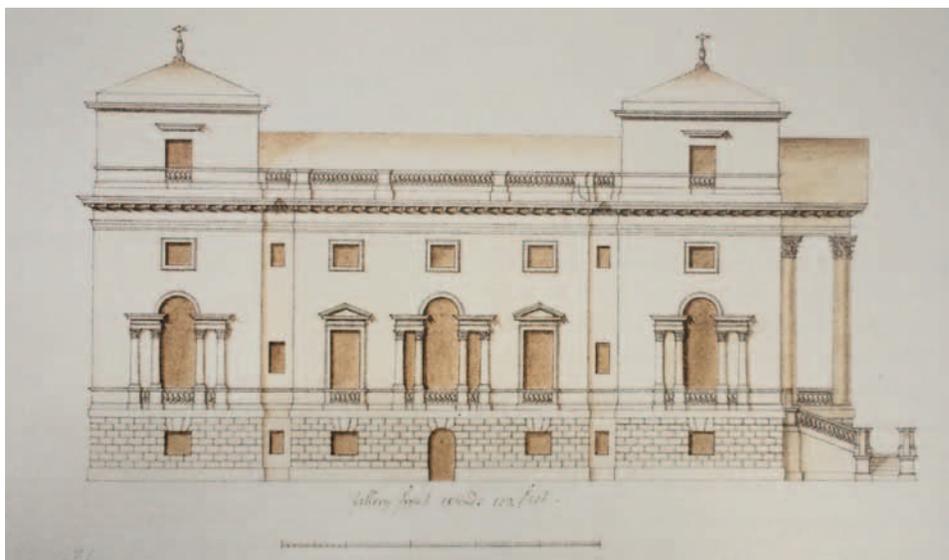


Fig. 1. Matthew Brettingham the Elder: The west front of Holkham Hall in a version shown without the wings, date unknown. (*The British Library Board, Maps K. Top.31.42h*)

very great but, as is well known, this was a key period for the formulation and development of Palladianism in Britain so that the issue of date here is of considerably more than local significance. Indeed, as John Harris has written of Schmidt's intervention on the question of Holkham's date, 'it is absolutely critical for the history of neo-Palladianism to get this right.'<sup>3</sup> Holkham shares many features in common with Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington's indubitably innovative Chiswick House, and, were 'Holkham 1' really to date from 1726, that would make the Norfolk building the fraternal (indeed perhaps first-out) twin of Chiswick rather than its part progeny, and consequently a building of seminal importance for the history of British architecture rather than a stellar and much developed example of an idiom already initiated elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

In 2013, however, I published an article which argued that 'Holkham 1' did not date from 1726 and could not show a design made at any time by Colen Campbell, since his design vocabulary never included the distinctive feature of Venetian windows under relieving arches that appear so prominently in the designs of the north fronts of both Holkham and Chiswick – the latter designed well after the only time that Campbell is known to have worked for Burlington.<sup>5</sup> I observed that the watermark evidence of the paper on which 'Holkham 1' was drawn suggests a date later in the century for the drawings (if not necessarily for the design shown in them), and – as earlier scholars had already noted – that one of the drawings missing from the British Library 'set' is today to be found in the archives of the Cumbria Record Office relating to Lowther Hall, Westmorland.<sup>6</sup> It is there because, after Coke's death in 1759, Brettingham assiduously courted Sir James Lowther's patronage, in part by presenting him with drawings of Holkham as built and also as remodelled to serve as a potential new Lowther Hall. I also pointed to contemporary written evidence that suggested widespread recognition in the eighteenth century, including by Thomas Coke

himself, that Holkham as it stands was in essence designed by William Kent. That Coke wanted Kent publicly named and acknowledged as the architect of Holkham at its inception is clear from the fact he gave the imprimatur of his arms to an engraving of the house by Paul Fourdrinier produced in or around 1734, which states that Kent was the 'architect' who had both 'invented' and 'drawn' it.<sup>7</sup> I showed that key aspects of the house's plan and elevational forms are in keeping with Kent's independent architectural design work elsewhere in the 1730s, notably with the designs he made from 1733 for a new Parliament House, but also with the plan and west front of Horse Guards on Whitehall that he designed just before his death in 1748.

After that, it was incumbent on me to offer an alternative narrative for the history of the Park and Hall at Holkham prior to 1734, accounting, amongst other things, for Campbell's involvement. That account duly appeared, first in Italian in 2014 and then in expanded form in the 2015 volume of this journal.<sup>8</sup> Unbeknown to me, however, Professor Schmidt was at work at the same time on counter-arguments seeking to re-establish his belief in a mid-1720s 'Holkham 1', and his article appeared in print a few months later.<sup>9</sup> Thus we still have two contending narratives for the early history of Holkham, and some response to Professor Schmidt is required here in defence of what was argued in my article in the 2015 volume of *The Georgian Group Journal*. It should be noted immediately, however, that in his latest article Schmidt has removed all reference to his own earlier discovery of Campbell's involvement at Holkham. As has now been established, this extended right up to the year of Campbell's death in 1729, when that architect made what Christine Hiskey, in her own recent book on Holkham, shows was either a two-week visit to Norfolk or two visits in very quick succession – something unlikely to have been social in either scenario.<sup>10</sup> Campbell's involvement surely must be accounted for in some way.

Since our respective arguments about the



Fig. 2. Holkham Hall: the west front and court. (Neil Morrell)

subjective interpretation of contemporary statements and surviving drawings have now been aired in print on more than one occasion, readers can decide for themselves whose reading of this evidence, if either, they wish to follow. The present article therefore concentrates on the one new element Professor Schmidt has introduced to the discussion that, to my mind, demands a substantive new explanation.<sup>11</sup> This concerns the evidence of the pair of small blind recesses set into vertical channels to which he has drawn attention, flanking the windows of the Gallery on the *piano nobile* of the west front of Holkham's main body (Fig. 2). Such material information in the building itself cannot, of course, be ignored. For Schmidt, these recesses are 'ghosts' of windows shown in that position on the relevant 'Holkham 1' elevation (Fig. 1), where they were required to light spiral staircases shown in plan as giving access to attic-storey bedrooms intended above the Gallery. His explanation for their appearance in the building as executed is that the bricklayers were working from the 'Holkham 1' drawings (or derivatives of them) and made a construction error, forgetting that windows

were no longer needed in that position because the addition of the wings meant there was now to be no attic floor over the Gallery, and thus no spiral stairs up to it. Realising their mistake, Schmidt argues, the bricklayers then desisted from inserting matching recesses to the attic level above. In support of this hypothesis, he points out that Brettingham removed the 'unwanted' recesses both from the elevation of the west front that he published in his *Plans, Elevations and Sections, of Holkham* in 1761 (Fig. 3) and in the record drawing of Holkham's west front that he gave to Sir James Lowther at around the same time.<sup>12</sup>

For the little blind recesses to be accepted as residual evidence for the pre-1734 existence of 'Holkham 1', however, we would have to overcome three serious reservations about this supposed train of events. First, given that the west wing of the main body of the house was not built until the early 1750s (the date of completion given inside the south Tribune of the Gallery is 1753), it seems most unlikely that such redundant and small-scale drawings of the mid-1720s for 'Holkham 1' (or versions of them) would still have been in

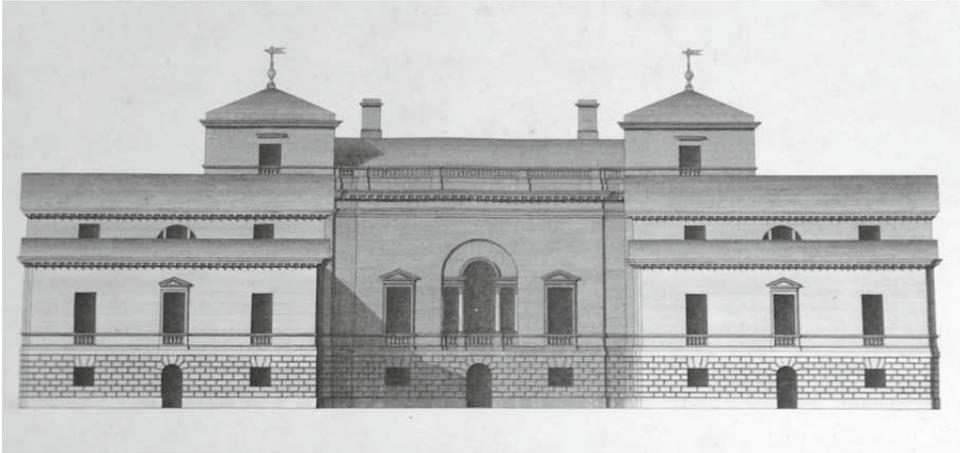


Fig. 3. Matthew Brettingham the Elder: *The Plans, Elevations, and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk*, 1761, plate [8] (detail of the 'End [west] Front next the Lake').  
(Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, University of Cambridge)

circulation with the workmen almost thirty years on into construction. Moreover, if they were, Matthew Brettingham Junior (who returned to Norfolk at just this moment from an expedition to Italy made partly under Thomas Coke's sponsorship) would surely have known of such supposedly still current 'Holkham 1' drawings and would have reported so important an aspect of the house's genesis in the 1773 second edition of the *Plans*, in which he carefully tried to account for his father's responsibility for the design. In the later 1750s Brettingham Junior was supervising much of the construction in Norfolk, and his father demonstrably had at least one of the 'Holkham 1' drawings in his possession at that time – if they already existed, that is.<sup>13</sup> It is evident, then, that there was no 'Holkham 1' for Brettingham Junior, nor, if Professor Schmidt's latest argument that the 1773 second edition of the *Plans* was prepared under the 'controlling influence' of Coke's widow is followed, for Lady Leicester either.<sup>14</sup>

Second, we know from his correspondence with Brettingham Senior from the very start of building in the 1730s that Thomas Coke's superbly well-informed architectural eye fell on every detail

of his house's design (on 15 May 1736, for example, he wrote to Brettingham in detail about Kent's design of the 'pedestal' on which the *piano nobile* sits, comparing it with Palladio's *Quattro libri* and enclosing drawings by Kent with his own annotations on them). Furthermore, Professor Schmidt himself has established that during the 1750s Coke was in almost daily attendance on the house's construction – and was, indeed, making substantive changes to the design.<sup>15</sup> It does not seem possible, therefore, that the error of constructing blind recesses in the brickwork, if such it was, could have occurred in the first place or, if it had, that it would have been permitted to survive rather than being corrected. (The plane of the tiny recesses, only one header deep, could easily have been advanced to make it flush with the wall and the voussoir bricks cut out and replaced without any structural risk.)

Third, if it was indeed the case that Brettingham Senior deliberately removed these *piano nobile* recesses from his published elevations because they were unwanted constructional errors, then we would have to explain why he also omitted – from both his published elevation and ground-floor plan

– the corresponding small rectangular windows that exist in the rustic basement below (see Figs. 3 and 4). These are certainly not constructional errors that happen to have survived; the window on the south side plays an essential role in lighting the key southern access corridor linking the entry hall beneath the south portico to the rustic basement floor of the Family Wing – and leading to the Audit Room below the Gallery, intended for the transaction of estate business. The northern window meanwhile, present for the purpose of symmetry of course, lights a closet. A ground plan in Brettingham's own hand, probably dating from a relatively early stage in the design process, shows he certainly recognised that the windows had to be there.<sup>16</sup>

What Brettingham does show, on his published plan of the *piano nobile*, are the larger blind window recesses that feature on the link buildings to the wings – that on the north side of the Family Pavilion link set above the transverse staircase inside it, and that on the south side of the Strangers' Wing link

fronting niches for statues inside (see Fig. 2).<sup>17</sup> Here, surely, lies the actual reason for the small blind recesses on the west, Gallery front of the *piano nobile* of the main building. From a visual point of view, these corners of Holkham have to be taken as a three-dimensional totality, not just viewed as the elevation given in Brettingham's published version (Fig. 3), which perforce disregards the inner faces of the wings that, in reality, are seen together with the exterior of the Gallery. To have had three planes of what Rudolf Wittkower and John Summerson famously called this 'staccato' building side by side without any articulation at all would have created too brutal an effect even for Thomas Coke's evidently austere taste.<sup>18</sup> The blind windows of the *piano nobile* of the link buildings and the little blind recesses on the west front were doubtless both introduced, therefore, to counter an otherwise overwhelming, almost vernacular effect of blankness (as well as to add to the stone stringcourse that encircles the entire house at *piano nobile* window



Fig. 4. Matthew Brettingham the Elder: *The Plans, Elevations, and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk*, 1761, plate [2] (detail of the plan of the 'Rustick Basement'). The red circle indicates the position of the missing window lighting the southern access corridor. (*Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, University of Cambridge*)



Fig. 5. Holkham Hall: the east front and court. (Neil Morrell)

sill level) in alleviating any sense of disjointedness between the main body and the wings. These recesses also reflect a punctilious correctness in the grammar of the classical, specifically here Palladian language, in which openings or recessed articulations in basements below are invariably answered above – as happens, for example, on Lord Burlington's Link Building at Chiswick of c.1731–32, the design of the garden front of which, in particular, was doubtless not unconnected with that of Holkham. In this context, it should be observed that the west front *piano nobile* recesses were carefully designed so so as to be very slightly wider than the rustic basement windows beneath (see Fig. 2). This is because they are in due proportion to the slightly greater width of the walls of the vertical channels at the upper level than those below, where the rustication and Kent's 'pedestal' above it project a little to form a suitably robust-looking platform for the *piano nobile*.

These vertical channels have, in fact, significantly more to tell us about the evolution of the design of

Holkham Hall and its date. In addition to omitting the recesses, Brettingham's published elevation (Fig. 3) commits the further error of showing the rustication of the basement as continuous across the west front of the main block. In reality, the two vertical channels are the *only* places on the entire main body of the house where the basement rustication is removed. The effect of this evidently very specific design decision is made clear if one compares the west front (Fig. 2) with the corresponding east front of the house (Fig. 5). Lacking the unrusticated vertical channels to separate the corner towers and the flank, the east side of the main block physically and visually recedes – whereas on the west front the presence of the channels allows the flank containing the Gallery visually to advance back out to the plane of the corner towers. It was the west front, with the double-height Gallery and central Venetian window facing the western court (onto which Coke's Dressing Room and Library in the Family Wing also looked, as well as one of the Strangers' Wing suites), that



Fig. 6. Holkham Hall: the [south-west] Family Wing viewed from the south-east. (*Frank Salmon*)

received all this care and attention to design. The east side of the main body, although it contained the grand apartments for visitors, overlooked the service areas of the kitchen and laundry yards. Only the central window of the *piano nobile* on the east front was articulated at all; the cellar level was left exposed rather than buried underground, as on all other fronts of the house; and, in further confirmation of its secondary character, little attempt was made to line up the open and blind features of the (now unrusticated) north and south fronts of the link buildings to, respectively, the Kitchen and Chapel pavilions.<sup>19</sup>

The articulation of vertical channels without basement rustication may be unique to the western front of the main body of Holkham, then, but it is a key component of the public-facing fronts of all of the link buildings and wings, where it is deployed at every point of recess between the fenestrated and generally pedimented parts, helping them to read as distinct elements (Fig. 6). The effect, as on

the seemingly squeezed-forward Gallery front of the main body, is productive of a concertina-like tension, an important means by which Kent and Coke achieved what Summerson came to call the 'vivid articulation of parts' at Holkham.<sup>20</sup> However, neither Summerson nor Wittkower before him looked closely enough to note the role played by these unrusticated vertical channels in creating the effect they identified. Wittkower, in fact, believed that the Holkham wings were designed in emulation of those at Burlington's Tottenham, where 'every one of these parts forms a distinct unit of its own. Every unit has not only its individual roof ... but also individual forms in detail'.<sup>21</sup> He did not know that the wings at Tottenham were actually added after those at Holkham had been designed and thus, as Julius Bryant has recently commented of Holkham, that in respect of the 'staccato concatenation ... Kent went beyond Burlington'.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that use of the unrusticated vertical channels on the Gallery front of the main body was imported there

from the design of the wings (in other words that the design of the wings preceded this level of detail in that of the main block) for, whilst a plan of the *piano nobile* at Holkham drawn by Brettingham in the later 1750s when the west side of the main block was under construction shows them, an earlier plan drawn in his hand does not.<sup>23</sup> Be that as it may, the commonality of this unusual and carefully thought-through feature provides further evidence that there is little reason to suppose, as some have done, that the wings and main body at Holkham were designed by different people working in different idioms – or at significantly different times.<sup>24</sup>

The origin of the unrusticated vertical channel thus takes on a high significance for our understanding of the genesis of Holkham, and there is evidence that it, too, was connected with the increasing independence from Burlington's design vocabulary that Kent was developing in the early 1730s. In a preliminary design for the Royal Mews at Charing Cross, a building complex commissioned

in 1731 and completed by Kent to 'my Designe' in 1733,<sup>25</sup> the pavilions flanking the grand entrance were to be articulated with three pedimented elements and, set further back, a rusticated gateway topped by an open octagonal cupola with weathervane (Fig. 7). The pediments of the pavilion are designed so as almost to touch at their corners. Below come the dividing vertical channels, their width at the various stages dependent on entablature, stringcourse and podium articulations (at the base they are barely more than a foot wide). Then, in May 1733 Kent took over Burlington's initial scheme for a new Parliament building after the latter's departure from Court. In developing Burlington's scheme over the coming months, Kent introduced the narrow vertical channels as a means of more decisively jointing key elements of the enormous elevation (Fig. 8).<sup>26</sup> The blind niches within the vertical channels here were transferred from the end bay walls of an earlier design by Kent for the Parliament House in the 1733 'Pantheon' scheme, where they were all intended to



Fig. 7. William Kent: detail of a design for the Royal Mews, London, c.1731–33.  
(Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Photo: Ardon Bar Hama)

house statues, a not inappropriate rhetorical gesture on the outside of so major a public building. In Figure 8, however, only one of the niches has a statue indicated in it, so it would appear that the niches were now being conceived as purely architectural articulations in the otherwise blank wall space of the vertical channels – and also as answers to the window openings that had been introduced into the rusticated podium below, exactly as is the case with the rectangular blind recesses on the *piano nobile* of the west, Gallery front at Holkham.

Another problem Kent encountered with his Parliament House design and also that of Holkham was how to handle the articulating vertical channels when, unlike the Royal Mews design, they cut through a base intended to be rusticated. No one has previously noted that we can actually see Kent wrestling with this very dilemma in his sketched elevations for the south and north fronts of Holkham probably produced, like the drawings for the 'Pantheon' Parliament House scheme, in the summer

of 1733.<sup>27</sup> For the south front, the rustication in the channels is reduced to ruled horizontal lines, without any vertical divisions to the blocks, thus already distinguishing it from the rustication of the projecting, fenestrated elements (Fig. 9). Although Kent's elevation of the north front is drawn on the same paper as the south front, it was presumably not executed at exactly the same moment (the ink being a different colour and the graphic style being looser) and it reveals a significantly different approach to the basement rustication. At the left side of the drawing (showing the east, Kitchen wing), the corner turning to the east elevation itself is fully rusticated, but the (horizontal) rustication of the vertical channels as the eye moves westward (right) is only vestigially pencilled in (Fig. 10). By the time one reaches the right side of the drawing (the west or Strangers' Wing) some wash under-drawing remains, but ruled in ink are now just two stringcourses, aligned with the tops and bottoms of the basement windows and continuing at the corner turning to the west

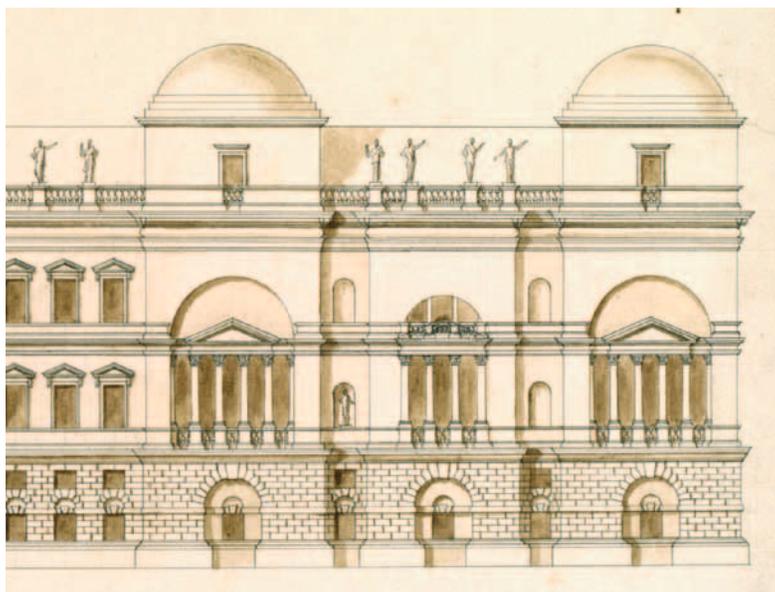


Fig. 8. William Kent: detail of an elevation of the 'Pantheon' Parliament design, 1733.  
(©Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 3518–10)

Fig. 9. William Kent: detail of the left [south-west or Family] Wing in the south elevation of Holkham Hall, c.1733. (*Holkham Hall, Archives PM/7, by kind permission of the Earl of Leicester*)

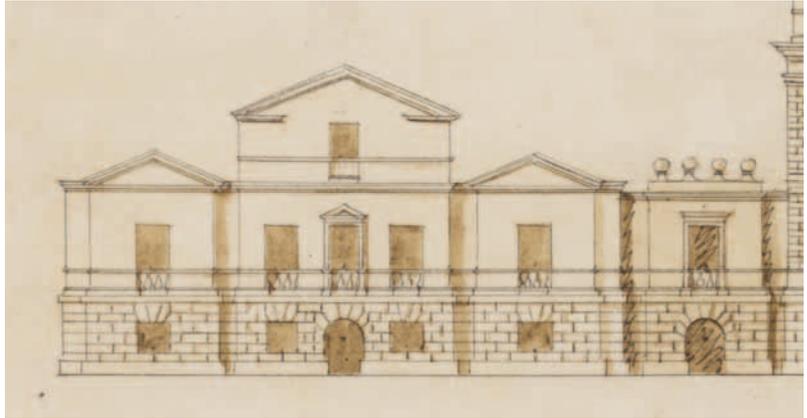
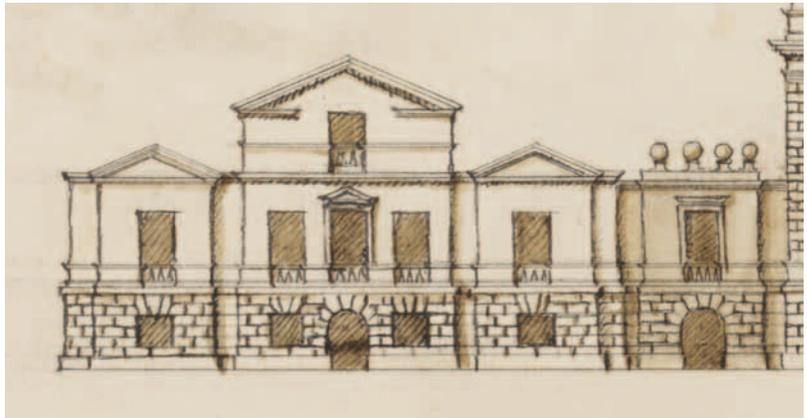


Fig. 10. William Kent: detail of the left [north-east or Kitchen] Wing in the north elevation of Holkham Hall, c.1733. (*Holkham Hall, Archives PM/1, by kind permission of the Earl of Leicester*)



elevation (Fig. 11). When Fourdrinier's engraved view of Holkham's south front was issued, based on Kent's south elevation drawing and surely intended by Coke to announce to the public the settled design, the rustication and stringcourses had been removed in their entirety from the vertical channels, and also at the corners (Fig. 12).<sup>28</sup>

As has been seen, the engraving was likely produced by Fourdrinier in or shortly before 1734. However, as finally built, the Family Wing was given rustication clasping the corners turning to both its west and east elevations (Fig. 6) – a design feature subsequently deployed on the other three wings, of course. Fortuitously, we know precisely when this development took place and who was responsible

for it. On 21 September 1734, with construction of the Family Wing cellars already in progress, Coke wrote to Brettingham: 'Kent has the plans & will draw the elevations of the 2 sides of the wing east & west. he approves of the rusticks on the corners of the smooth piers.'<sup>29</sup> The statement is revealing in four ways. First, we learn that the unrusted vertical channels had been given the specific name of 'smooth piers', so that we are indeed justified in reading them as a recognized, distinct and carefully deployed design element at Holkham. Second we learn that it was almost certainly Coke himself who had suggested the placement of rustication on the corners of the Wing, doubtless feeling on reflection (and it may be judged rightly) that, with the piers

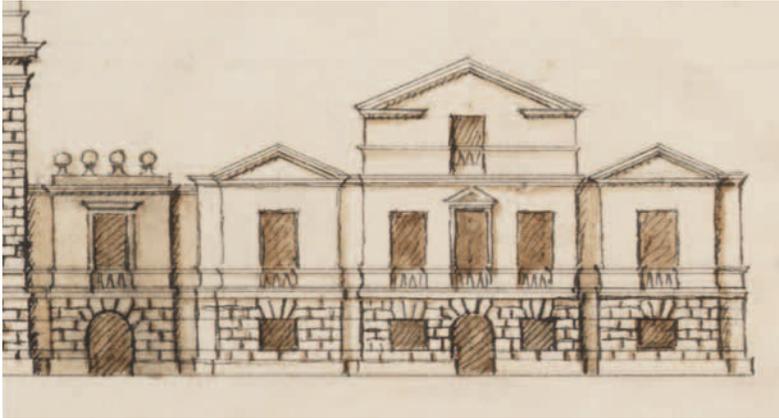


Fig. 11. William Kent: detail of the [north-west or Strangers'] Wing in the north elevation of Holkham Hall, c.1733. (*Holkham Hall, Archives PM/1, by kind permission of the Earl of Leicester*)

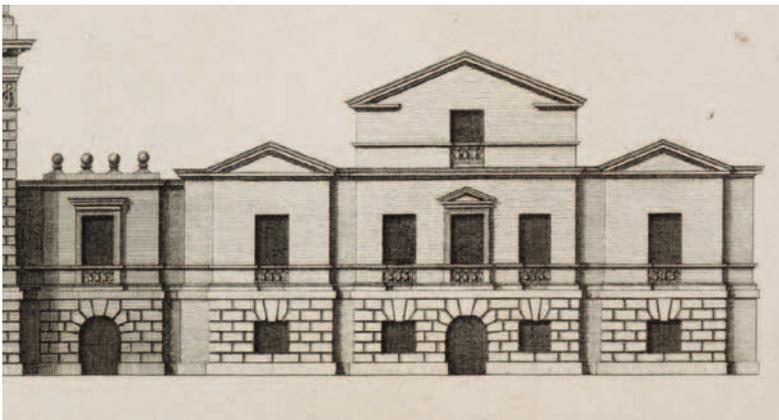


Fig. 12. Paul Fourdrinier, after William Kent: detail of [south-east or Chapel] Wing of 'The Seat of the Right Hon.ble Lord Lovell at Holkham in Norfolk', c.1733-34. (*Provost, Fellows and Scholars of The Queen's College, Oxford, 52.B.17. Cat.151*)

having been smoothed right down, the corners needed to be re-strengthened visually and properly linked to the (rusticated) west and east elevations. This case may, then, be seen as a good example of Christine Hiskey's recently advanced argument that Holkham gave Kent 'the opportunity to absorb [from Coke] as well as to contribute', and also reiterates the undeniable fact that Coke was intimately involved with all the key decisions taken regarding the design of his house at this early stage, as well as later.<sup>30</sup> Third, however, we learn that even if this change to the smooth piers had been Coke's idea, he was not prepared to make it without Kent's explicit approval. Fourth, we learn that it was Kent (not Brettingham, still less Coke himself) who was charged with

drawing the proposed change to the elevation up. In other words, Kent had a veto over the design to this small level of detail, and the production of the crucial design drawings was still in his hands in the autumn of 1734 even as the walls were beginning to go up – as evidently remained the case, indeed, well on into the later 1730s.<sup>31</sup>

This development of the smooth piers of Holkham which took place in 1733-34 provides further compelling reason why the design shown on the so-called 'Holkham 1' drawings cannot date from the mid-1720s, because on the west elevation of the main body of the house in those drawings the smooth piers are *already present and fully developed* (Fig. 1).<sup>32</sup> Of course it cannot be proved that Thomas

Coke did not precociously add this distinctive feature, unknown in his friend Burlington's work, to the vocabulary of English Palladianism in the mid-1720s (or that he did not somehow manage to copy or even pre-empt Burlington's design for the north front and several other features of Chiswick at that time). We have plenty of actual evidence, however, to point to a much more probable conclusion. Kent was demonstrably experimenting with just this vertical division of units in his elevations for the Royal Mews and the Parliament House across the 1731–33 period (Figs. 7–8), and in his drawings for Holkham itself we are privileged to see removal of the basement rustication from the piers actually being worked out in his mind as our eye moves left to right across the sheet featuring the north elevation (Figs. 10–11). Coke clearly had, or developed, strong views on the nature and amount of rustication he wanted to see in the design of his house, but had he himself felt ownership of the smooth piers he would surely not have sought or needed Kent's authority to ameliorate them in autumn 1734. Nor can Matthew Brettingham the Elder have conceived this device himself for, as his erroneous addition of rustication right across the base of the smooth piers of the gallery front in the canonical image of Holkham he published in 1761 demonstrates (Fig. 3), he did not fully understand its role and significance for the design overall even though he had spent so much time working on the building. Similarly, Brettingham's 1761 omission of the existing small *piano nobile* recesses and basement windows within the west front piers should not be read as a conscious erasure of construction errors he knew had survived from an abortive mid-1720s scheme of his own, but rather as demonstrating his lack of sensitivity to the subtlety with which Kent and Coke had advanced the language of English Palladianism when generating Holkham in the early 1730s, following the death of Coke's previously retained architect, Colen Campbell, in 1729.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 Leo Schmidt, 'Holkham Hall, Norfolk – 1', *Country Life*, 167 (24 January 1980), p. 215, and Leo Schmidt, *Thomas Coke, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Leicester: An Eighteenth-Century Amateur Architect* (Freiburg, 1980), p. 5. Ground was broken for the foundation trenches in May 1734 and the cellar walls were started in September of that year: see Christine Hiskey, 'The Building of Holkham Hall: Newly Discovered Letters', *Architectural History*, 40 (1997), pp. 146 and 147.
- 2 Leo Schmidt et al, *Holkham* (Munich, Berlin, London and New York, 2005), pp. 88–92.
- 3 John Harris, 'Coke as Architect', *The Burlington Magazine*, 122 (September 1980), p. 635.
- 4 See R.T. Spence, 'Chiswick House and its Gardens, 1726–1732', *The Burlington Magazine*, 135 (August 1993), pp. 525–31. Given that the shell of Chiswick was only constructed between May 1726 and May 1727, Coke could not have seen the physical house and thus would have had to have been given access to, and to have had Brettingham copy, key aspects of Burlington's design drawings if 'Holkham 1' were indeed to date from 1725–26. We know from their correspondence, however, that it was only in 1734, and in connection with the detailing of the Holkham Temple,

- that Coke told Brettingham to wait until 'you have seen Chiswick', evidently confirming no prior acquaintance with Burlington's villa on Brettingham's part (see Christine Hiskey, 'The Building of Holkham Hall', p. 148).
- 5 Frank Salmon, "'Our Great Master Kent'" and the Design of Holkham Hall: A Reappraisal', *Architectural History*, 56 (2013), pp. 63–96.
  - 6 See Howard Colvin, Joseph Mordaunt Crook and Terry Friedman, *Architectural Drawings from Lowther Castle Westmorland* (Architectural Monographs: No. 2 – Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 1980), pp. 31–32, cat. 71; and Harris, 'Coke as Architect', p. 636.
  - 7 The inscription is almost identical to that on Fourdrinier's print, dated 1734, showing Kent's just completed Treasury Building in Whitehall (a copy of which in the London Metropolitan Archives can be viewed online on the 'Collage' database, item 29146). The best reproduction of the Holkham print (slightly cropped left and right) is in Schmidt et al, *Holkham*, p. 95, fig. 56. The bottom left inscription, 'Gulielmus Kent Archit. et Pict. Invenit et Delin.', is identical on both prints except that the abbreviation full stops on that of Holkham are rendered as colons on that of the Treasury. Fourdrinier's signature, bottom right, is also slightly more florid on the latter. A third Fourdrinier print, evidently from the same series, shows Kent's Royal Mews, completed in 1733 (a copy can be found in Sir John Soane's Museum, London, Vol. 147 [Fauntleroy Pennant, Vol. 2], fol. 245).
  - 8 Frank Salmon, 'Thomas Coke e Holkham', in P. Bruschetti et al (eds.), *Seduzione Etrusca: Dai segreti di Holkham Hall alle meraviglie del British Museum* (Milan, 2014), pp. 255–75; Frank Salmon, 'Thomas Coke and Holkham: The Early History from 1718 to 1734', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 23 (2015), pp. 29–46.
  - 9 Leo Schmidt, 'Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', *Architectural History*, 58 (2015), pp. 83–108. Professor Schmidt, of course, had no opportunity to read my article in the 2015 volume of this journal, and he evidently had not seen the version published in 2014 in the Italian exhibition catalogue about Thomas Coke and Holkham (see note 8 above), from which *The Georgian Group Journal* piece was derived.
  - 10 Christine Hiskey, *Holkham: The social, architectural and landscape history of a great English Country House* (Norwich, 2016), pp. 94–95. Hiskey has also concluded that the work for which Coke paid Brettingham what she identifies as a 'gratuity' in 1726 cannot be 'securely identified', so that she, too, has declined to link the payment definitively to the so-called 'Holkham 1' drawings.
  - 11 Note should be taken, however, of Schmidt's suggestion that a variation between the ceiling of the Marble Hall shown in the 'Holkham 1' attic storey plan and as shown in Kent's drawing for the same shows that Kent 'recognised' and 'corrected a flaw' in the former, thus proving its anterior date (Schmidt, 'Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', p. 101 and fig. 15 on p. 102). The argument depends on the misapprehension that the Hall's ceiling would need a regular grid of evenly spaced columns below to support its entablature and cove when, in fact, it was to be (and is) a timber and plaster ceiling suspended from the roof structure above. Even had the 'Holkham 1' ceiling needed all the columns, the north end intercolumniation (of some 18 feet) would have been easily within the capabilities of an Office of Works familiar with Christopher Wren's roof structures and those of the Queen Anne churches, as Kent, as Master Carpenter, would well have known.
  - 12 Schmidt, 'Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', pp. 103–04. The drawing is the probable source for the print.
  - 13 It is possible, in fact, that Brettingham Junior inherited the rest of the 'Holkham 1' set from his father, since the other seven drawings made their way into the Royal Library along with a copy of his second edition of the *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham* (London, 1773), and from thence to the British Library in the early nineteenth century.
  - 14 Schmidt, 'Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', p. 90. When John Woolfe surveyed Holkham afresh and largely accurately for the fifth volume of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, published in 1771, it can only have been with the express permission of the then owner 'the right honourable lady Leicester'. Woolfe's plans and elevations are all inscribed 'W. Kent Arch.' and the 'singular contrivance' of the Marble

- Hall is described as 'worthy of the remarkable abilities of the architect who designed it'. Thus, even though she must have been well aware of her late husband's activities, particularly in the 1750s redesign of the Marble Hall, there can have been no intention on Lady Leicester's part to get Kent's name replaced publicly as the 'architect' of Holkham in the early 1770s (John Woolfe and James Gandon, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Vol. V (London, 1771), p. 7 and plates 64–67).
- 15 Hiskey, 'The Building of Holkham Hall', pp. 151–52, and, for the 1750s phase, Schmidt et al 2005, *Holkham*, pp. 114–26. Hiskey (*Holkham*, p. 73 and Appendix 1 on p. 530, has established that Coke received seven to eight months of architectural tuition in Rome over the three-year period 1714–17 and also paid for guidance when visiting existing buildings over two months there in 1716. Thus, in his teenage years, he had acquired a good understanding of architectural issues connected with the Roman Baroque and, doubtless, with Antiquity – the latter proving much more useful when it came to the design of Holkham a decade and a half later. Hiskey has also established (p. 93) that Coke purchased architectural instruments at key moments in 1731, 1734 and 1739–42 (as well as pencils and a sharpening knife in 1730, p. 95), but it remains the case that we have no evidence he himself produced a single drawing in relation to the design of Holkham, as opposed to instructing others.
- 16 Holkham Archives, PM/16, reproduced in Schmidt et al, *Holkham*, fig. 60 on p. 98, though Schmidt has now said ('Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', p. 104) that the little windows are not 'featured in any other drawings of Holkham's west front' other than in the 'Holkham 1' set. PM/16 has an 'IV' watermark but this is too common in the eighteenth century to be of use in establishing a precise date. The plan includes the proposed steps to the south portico, which disappear from the later Brettingham plan PM/26 (for which, see Schmidt et al, *Holkham*, fig. 77 on p. 117).
- 17 Brettingham, *Plans* (1761) plate 3. The niches for statues inside the northern link building are pencilled in on the drawn plan PM/17 (see Schmidt et al, *Holkham*, fig. 61 on p. 99), but the external blind windows are not shown there or on the 1750s plan PM/26.
- 18 Rudolf Wittkower, 'Lord Burlington and William Kent', in *Palladio and English Palladianism* (London, 1974 [1946]), p. 122, wrote of the elevations of the wings that 'Burlington's staccato principle was clearly followed', whilst Summerson described Holkham's 'staccato sense of detachment' in *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830* (Harmondsworth, 1953), p. 204. Application of the adjective 'staccato' to Kent's work actually originated with Fiske Kimball in 1932 – though in relation to the spikey 'vertical accent' of Kent's later or 'Belvedere' scheme designs for the Parliament House: 'The whole aspect is more staccato as compared with the classical legato of the earlier designs': Fiske Kimball, 'William Kent's Designs for the Houses of Parliament, 1730–1740', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 3rd series, 39 (6 August 1932), p. 755.
- 19 The link buildings' *piano nobile* blind windows are centred, as they are on the western side of the house, but the rustic basement windows are tucked against the east wall of the main building. The reason for this on the south, Chapel side is that the (now unrusticated) rustic basement wall at this point masks the transverse stairs rising behind to the *piano nobile*, whilst the corner window lights the under-stairs running down to the cellars. On the north, Kitchen side there is a passageway and no stairs at rustic basement level – but the window is still cramped and out of alignment with the centred *piano nobile* recess above, presumably in order to ensure symmetry with the south side opposite and thus to minimise what was already an infelicity of appearance. At cellar level, however, the symmetry is disregarded, for there is a window beside the service door on the south side which does not appear on the north. Neither this south window nor the cellar doors on either side appear on Matthew Brettingham Junior's (1773) 'Plan of the Underground Story' (for which see Schmidt et al, *Holkham*, fig. 131 on p. 184). They are, perhaps, later insertions.
- 20 Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, 4th edn. (1963), p. 201. As this phrase did not appear in the three earlier editions of the book it seems that Summerson had, over the preceding decade, crystallised his views on the nature of the 'staccato' in Kent's architecture.

- 21 Wittkower, 'Lord Burlington and William Kent', p. 120.
- 22 Julius Bryant, 'From "Gusto" to "Kentissime": Kent's Designs for Country Houses, Villas, and Lodges', in Susan Weber (ed.), *William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain* (New Haven and London, 2013), p. 214. Bryant, however, does not comment on the unrusted vertical channels either. For the date of the addition of the wings at Tottenham in or after 1738 see Salmon, 'Thomas Coke and Holkham', p. 40 and p. 46, n. 38.
- 23 Holkham Archives, PM/26 and PM/17 (see Schmidt et al, *Holkham*, fig. 77 on p. 117 and fig. 61 on p. 99 respectively). Since, however, the ground plan PM/16 (Schmidt et al, *Holkham*, fig. 60 on p. 98) which corresponds with PM/17 does show the recesses, it is most likely that their omission from the *piano nobile* above was another error by Brettingham and that they were part of the design of the main block as well as the wings from the start.
- 24 Timothy Mowl thinks Kent only designed the wings and did so 'in a different style that neither accords with nor dramatically clashes with the solemn centrepiece': *William Kent: Architect, Designer, Opportunist* (London, 2007), p. 223. Schmidt, meanwhile, has taken the opposite view, suggesting that the external architecture of the wings is 'the product of a completely different kind of mind' than Kent's ('Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', p. 94). One need only look, however, at Kent's Temple of Venus at Stowe of 1729–31, with its split pediments (as well as a number of his other building designs of the early 1730s), to see that the wings of Holkham fit perfectly well within his independent design portfolio, as well as Burlington's. Schmidt now believes Kent only designed the interiors of the Family Wing. To support this idea, he cites Coke's letter to Brettingham of 1734 reporting Burlington's opinion that 'Kents outside is also vastly in favour & the going up steps from the Hall also', arguing that the 'Hall' mentioned here refers to the Family Wing rather than to the main body of the house with its Marble Hall. It was only at the end of the long sentence, however, that Coke turned to the Wing (the foundations of which were about to be started). The opening part of the sentence, quoted above, is about the main body of the house, for, even in the unlikely event that the staircase void in the core of the Family Wing could be referred to as a capitalised 'Hall', there is nothing about the actual stairs there that could have caused Burlington to find them remarkable – by complete contrast with the arrangement for the stairs around the colossal statue of Jupiter in the Marble Hall intended to take visitors up into the Saloon of the *piano nobile*. It was surely also the well thought-through arrangement of rooms in the main body of the house, not those of the simple Family Wing, to which Burlington was referring in the same letter when he said the plan of Holkham was 'the best he ever saw' (see Hiskey, 'The Building of Holkham Hall', pp. 147–48). Hiskey has also made it clear in her 2016 book that 'the going up steps from the Hall' must refer to the Marble Hall, not to the Family Wing, though she fairly points out that we cannot say with certainty that Coke was describing the design of 'the going up steps from the Hall' as Kent's, since the ampersand separating that phrase from 'Kents outside' renders it ambiguous (Hiskey, *Holkham*, p. 99). Whilst Brettingham Junior stated that the concept of the Hall as a 'tribunal of justice' was Coke's suggestion (Brettingham, *Plans* (1773), p. vi), Hiskey has reiterated her understanding that 'the spectacular Marble Hall' was one of Kent's 'great contributions ... with significant alterations by Coke' (Hiskey, *Holkham*, p. 91).
- 25 Howard Colvin (ed.), *The History of the King's Works*, Vol. 5 (London, 1976), p. 213.
- 26 See Frank Salmon, 'Public Commissions', in Weber (ed.). *William Kent*, fig. 13.19 on p. 332. It is worth noting here that the sliver hood moulds over the attic windows on Fig. 8 and, indeed, on all of Kent's 'Pantheon' scheme designs for the Parliament House are another feature held in common with the design of Holkham.
- 27 See Hiskey, *Holkham*, pp. 95–96, for Coke's movements in 1733, one reading of which suggests that he could have brought Kent's drawings to Norfolk from London at the end of June to work on with Brettingham, prior to taking them back to London towards the end of the year to show Burlington (whose approbation was finally reported back to Brettingham in March 1734). Kent's elevations, which Schmidt has suggested are not 'proper architectural designs' ('Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', p. 84),

are typical examples of his architectural design work. At the Office of Works he had a team of draughtsmen to render his ideas in technical architectural drawings for him – as, at Holkham, he and Coke had Matthew Brettingham. It has also not previously been noticed that Kent's elevation of the north front is annotated in now very faint pencil with numerous figures giving key dimensions and proportions to be used for the building (the windows in particular), another indication that this was an architect who was in the process of generating an overall design and its details, not reworking someone else's.

- 28 Since the print states that Kent was the architect who invented and drew this south elevation of Holkham, there is no reason to doubt that (the reduction of the mezzanine windows from three to two on each side of the portico notwithstanding) it was based on Kent's surviving drawing of the south front, nor to doubt the veracity of the younger Brettingham's statement that the south front of Holkham was 'in the first sketches intirely rusticated, and an Attic or bed-chamber story proposed for the central building, with elliptical windows in the freeze of the entablature' (Brettingham, *Plans*, 1773, p. vi). In attempting to overcome the difficulty for his arguments presented by Brettingham's statement, Schmidt has now introduced a hypothetical lost (and unnecessary) 'missing link' 'design without wings by Kent' ('Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', p. 92).
- 29 Hiskey, 'The Building of Holkham Hall', pp. 150–51. Since in the same letter Coke mentioned travelling to Bath in what he thought would be a vain attempt to source stone, his thoughts about the detailing of the family Wing may be related to the likely change in building material to brick.
- 30 Hiskey, *Holkham*, p. 97. In relation to this it is worth noting that in one design for the first 'Belvedere' scheme for the Parliament House, dating from 1739, Kent deployed similar vertical channels with blind recesses to produce a tripartite division at the centre of the elevation, but retained the ground-level rustication within the channels (see Salmon, 'Public Commissions', fig. 13.14 on p. 346). This might suggest that removal of channel rustication at Holkham had indeed emerged as a result of Coke's urging.
- 31 See Hiskey, 'The Building of Holkham Hall', pp. 152–53 (Coke's discussion in 1736 of Kent's clever 'expedient' design for the 'pedestal' between basement and *piano nobile*, as well as of window balustrades, it seems; and Coke's discussion in February 1738 of Kent's plan of the Marble Hall, to be sent to London 'that I may make Kent finish it'). Perhaps the one payment made by Coke to Kent 'carried to the building account', £50 in 1737, marks the point at which his work on the exterior design was considered sufficiently complete for him to receive this gift from his friend (see Hiskey, *Holkham*, p. 92).
- 32 Professor Schmidt ('Holkham Hall: An Architectural "Whodunnit"', pp. 99 and 102–03) has fairly criticised my speculation that the 'Holkham 1' design 'most likely' represents a 'reduction' of Holkham made 'later in life' by Brettingham, on the grounds that Brettingham could have had no particular reason to make such a reduction in the late 1750s or early 1760s. Frustrating though it may be, we simply do not know for what purpose, or when, the design shown in the 'Holkham 1' drawings was made. Given, however, the single fact we know for certain about the history of these drawings – which is that at least one of them was in Brettingham Senior's possession around 1760 – and that Brettingham Junior (who had every opportunity to know this and may even have owned the rest of the set – see note 13 above) never mentions it as connected to the early history of the house, I find it hard to conceive that 'Holkham 1' could date from the time of the house's genesis. Even if it did, it is most unlikely that, as been shown in this article, it could have pre-dated the documented developments of 1733–34.