



THE
GEORGIAN
GROUP

Michael Cousins, 'The Column, Savernake Forest: an early case of architectural salvage', *The Georgian Group Journal*, Vol. XXVIII, 2020, pp. 105–122

THE COLUMN, SAVERNAKE FOREST: AN EARLY CASE OF ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGE

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The relocating of buildings is neither a new nor unique phenomenon – at Stowe the Fane of Pastoral Poetry (formerly Gibbs Building), Queen Caroline’s Statue and the Doric Arch are just three such early contenders. In 1751, on the death of his father, Sir George Lyttelton had the Prince’s Column at Hagley moved to its present position commanding a view of the house.¹ More recently, to ensure the survival of the colonnade that stood before William Reeve’s bathhouse at Arno’s Court, near Bristol, Cloughs Williams-Ellis had it rebuilt at Portmeirion in 1959. The rebuilding of eighteenth-century works was not governed by the listing strictures that we have today. The column in Savernake Forest presents an interesting story of architectural re-use, and, in pulling together its history, some lesser-known accounts emerge concerning its origin and subsequent owners. Today it stands majestically in the avenue that lies on the axis of Tottenham House, originally intended as a focal termination when viewed from thence. This shows that Lord Ailesbury was both considered and out-reaching when it came to choosing an appropriate inscription, and details the progress of its re-erection in Wiltshire, conveyed through numerous contemporary letters and documents.

HAMMERSMITH

For the column’s history, before Ailesbury’s acquisition, we need to go back several years, and to the outskirts of London. George Bubb was born in 1691 from humble stock – his father was supposedly an apothecary in Weymouth – but the young George clearly applied himself during his education at both Winchester and Oxford. That he was MP for Winchelsea and Special Envoy to Spain at the age of 24 speaks volumes for his ambitions, of which this was just the start. It was not until 1718, however, that Bubb took the name of Dodington, upon the wish of his maternal uncle, George Dodington,² and acquired Eastbury at Tarrant Gunville (Dorset) on the latter’s death in 1720, together with a considerable fortune and annual income.³ As Bubb Dodington had no male issue, under the terms of his uncle’s will Eastbury passed to Earl Temple.⁴

A house in Hammersmith, subsequently named ‘La Trappe’,⁵ was a later acquisition that Bubb Dodington – hereafter referred to as Dodington or Lord Melcombe – occupied from 1748, having purchased it from Leonora Lannoy.⁶ He evidently brought about several changes to the property, the full extent of which is not known with certainty, but he engaged many noted artisans of the time to embellish and decorate its interiors. The story of the column, however, has its origins with his wife. Dodington married Katherine Beaghan (or Behan) in 1725, a union that he initially kept secret, as Horace

Fig. 1. Caricature of George Bubb Dodington and Sir Thomas Robinson, Paul Sandby, c.1761. (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection)



Walpole gleefully expressed to Horace Mann in 1742: ‘Mr Doddington has at last owned his match with his old mistress—I suppose he wants a new one!’⁷ We know very little of her; eclipsed by her husband’s political career and social life, she predeceased him, dying in 1756.⁸

Strangely it was not until the antiquarian and topographer Daniel Lysons wrote *The Environs of London* that we learn of how Dodington commemorated her: ‘A stone obelisk was erected in

the gardens by Lord Melcombe in memory of his lady’. Lysons, however, continues: ‘It was removed by Mr. Wyndham, and stands now in the Earl of Ailesbury’s park at Tottenham, in Wiltshire, where it now commemorates his Majesty’s recovery.’⁹ The only known view that we have of the memorial in its Hammersmith setting is from a caricature by Paul Sandby (Fig. 1), which shows Sir Thomas Robinson towering over Dodington/Melcombe, and the upper part of the column, with the urn but less the

intermediate drum, in the background.¹⁰ Its exact location at Hammersmith is not recorded, but from various accounts it ‘faced the main approach to the house ... just north of Sussex House’, in a ‘field to the east of Brandenburg House (Fig. 2) from which it acquired the name of Monument Field’.¹¹ Yet clearly what stands in Savernake is a column and not an obelisk. Compared to our accepted usage today, it was not unheard of in the eighteenth century for the terms obelisk and column to be confused and used interchangeably: for example, the Column of Victory at Blenheim is noted in a number of period visitor accounts as an obelisk. Even when the column was in place in Savernake, one contemporary commentator still referred to it as an obelisk.¹²

But further twists in this story were to ensue. Dodington finally attained the political reward he was seeking, and was created Lord Melcombe, Baron of Melcombe-Regis, in the county of Dorset (6 April

1761). But the cachet was to be short-lived, as he died on 28 July 1762,¹³ and in his will he left direction to:

... Give and bequeath to the Right Honourable Sir Francis Dashwood Baronet the Sum of five hundred pounds which I Desire him to Employ all or such part of it only as he Shall think fit in Building an Arch Temple Column or Additional Room to Such of his Seats where it is likely to remain the longest as a Testimony to after times of my Affection and Gratitude for the Invaluable and very Endearing friendship he has honoured me with ...¹⁴

Today we recognise that Dashwood expended the bequest on the hexagonal, open-air mausoleum at West Wycombe, fitting both in terms of its quirky uniqueness and its proximity to the caves of the Hell-Fire Club, of which Dodington was a principal participant. However other monuments had been proposed. John Wilkes had ‘just returned from a tour into Buckinghamshire’ having taken in



Fig. 2. Rocque's map of 1746 showing the approximate location of the column at Hammersmith.

‘Cliefden-house [Cliveden, Buckinghamshire] and the many elegant beauties of Stowe’, and ‘passed a day in viewing the villa of lord Despencer’ at West Wycombe. His visit must have occurred in the second half of 1763 as he notes the ‘new built church’ which had reopened on 3 July;¹⁵ but clearly no work had commenced on the mausoleum, and Wilkes left England for France on 25 December that year.¹⁶ Wilkes’s account, which starts off as a fairly innocuous ‘Curious Description of West Wycombe church’ soon becomes typically outlandish and full of sexual innuendo:

‘... As to the temple I have mentioned, you find at first what is called an *error in limine*; for the entrance to it is the same entrance by which we all come into the world, and the door is what some idle wits have called the door of life. It is reported that, on a late visit to his chancellor, lord Bute particularly admired this building and advised the noble owner to lay out the £500 bequeathed him by lord Melcombe’s will, for an erection in a Paphian column to stand at the entrance, and it is said he advised it to be made of Scottish pebbles.’

Wilkes continues:

‘There are in these gardens no busts of Socrates, Epaminodas, or Hampden, but there is a most indecent statue of the unnatural satyr; and, at the entrance to the temple I have mentioned, are two urns sacred to the Ephesian matron [heroine of a mildly obscene ancient novel] and to Potiphar’s wife, with the inscriptions *Matronæ Ephesiæ Cineres, Dominae Potiphar Cineres*. [The ashes of the Ephesian matron, the ashes of Potiphar’s mistress]. Between these urns, containing the sacred ashes of the great and virtuous dead, which are, with a happy propriety, doubly gilt (though not quite so strongly as that at Hammersmith for the ashes of lord Melcombe’s—wife) you ascend to the top of the building, which is crowned with a particular column, designed, I suppose, to represent our former very upright state, when we could say *fuimus tories, fuit ingens gloria* [We were Tories, there was great glory]’. ...¹⁷

This appears to be the first reference to the urn at Hammersmith containing ashes. The urn, or vase as it was also termed, would seem to be that which still surmounts the column: a partially riveted construction of copper, or a copper alloy (the local historian Charles James Ferèrè stated that it was bronze) (Fig. 3). Shortly after Melcombe’s death, ‘The following Inscription to his memory was ... placed on an Ionic pillar at Hammersmith’:



Fig. 3. The Urn, in situ at Savernake Forest.

To the Memory

Of the Right Hon. GEORGE DODINGTON,
LORD MELCOMBE.

In his early years he was sent by K. George I.
Envoy Extraordinary to K. Philip V. of Spain, 1715 ;
Afterwards appointed, in commission with others,

One of the Lords of the Treasury :
Twice Treasurer of the Navy to K. George II.
And Privy Counsellor.

In 1761 created a Peer and of the Cabinet to
K. George III.

He was raised to these honours
(Himself an honour to them)

Rather by his exemplary merit and great abilities,
Often experienced both in the Senate and Council,

Than either by birth or fortune ;
And, if wit and true humour can delight ;
If eloquence can affect the heart,
Or literature improve the mind ;
If universal benevolence hath its charms ;

No wonder

He lived admired and beloved by all that
knew him,

And died by all lamented,
In the year 1762, aged 71.

THOMAS WYNDHAM, esq. his heir,
Ordered this inscription,
In grateful remembrance
Of his friend and relation.

This, the earliest-known version of the inscription, appeared in 1784.¹⁸ It is unlikely that two monuments were erected at Hammersmith, and the physical features of the Savernake column, plus other evidence that we shall come onto, indicate the dedication was added to the existing monument – the column – erected to his wife by Dodington, as he was at that time.

AFTER DODINGTON

Lord Melcombe's will held further directions, including the disposal of his Hammersmith property which he bequeathed to his heir and cousin, Thomas Wyndham (c.1692/3–1777).¹⁹

'... I Give and Devise All and every other my freehold Copyhold and Customary hold Manōrs Messuages Lands Tenements and Hereditts with their Appūrts Situate lying and being in the Several Countys of Somerset Dorset and Middlesex or elsewhere within the Kingdom of Great Britain [...] to my Worthy friend and Kinsman Thomas Wyndham his Heirs and Assigns for ever to and for his and their own use benefit'

The villa and grounds remained Thomas Wyndham's until he died in 1777, when he was still paying rates on the property. In his will he left his 'Manors Lands Tythes Messuages Tenements and Hereditaments in the County of Dorset and Devon and elsewhere ... unto Colonel Wadham Wyndham' (1737–1812), a relation – but not 'La Trappe', the terms of Thomas's will directing that '... all my Plate and Jewells to be sold and also my House and ffurniture at Hammersmith in the County of Middlesex together with the Gardens and the Lands and Estate thereunto belonging and adjoining'²⁰ These instructions were executed quite literally with three sequential auctions handled by Mess. Christie and Ansell. First, a sale of three days for the sideboard and service of plate and jewels etc., then the house, concluded by a seven-day sale of the household furniture and statues, busts, etc.²¹ The estates were to be sold in eight lots, lot 1 being the house itself plus the immediate grounds; the other seven lots of land surrounded the above premises, and from what we know, it is on one of these that the column stood.²² It is unfortunate that the 'Plan of the Grounds ... and printed Particulars' mentioned in newspaper advertisements have not come to light. The *London Chronicle* subsequently noted: 'The villa of Thomas Wyndham, Esq: was sold by Auction lately with its improvements for 14,000l'.²³

The buyer of the house has not been identified. We know, however, from the auction results that Colonel Wyndham purchased several lots of the personal items and household goods, including the piece of land with the column.²⁴

SAVERNAKE

Thomas Brudenell (1729–1814) succeeded to the Barony of Bruce of Tottenham on the death of his maternal uncle, Charles Bruce, Earl of Ailesbury, on 10 February 1747.²⁵ His inheritance included vast estates in Wiltshire, as well as Yorkshire, which made him an attractive proposition for any potential match. On 17 February 1761, he married Susanna ('Sukey', 1732–1783), daughter of Henry Hoare of Stourhead, then widow of Charles Boyle, Viscount Dungarvan (d. 1759). At the end of 1767, Brudenell took the name Bruce,²⁶ and on 10 June 1776, created Earl of Ailesbury. It was this event that he wished to commemorate. But doing so with a column (or obelisk to use the contemporary synonym) may date back to a seed planted many years earlier. In 'An Account of Savernake Forest' that appeared in 1763, the writer observed that: 'The avenue, planted in clumps, fronting *Tottenham* house, his lordship's seat, is noble and magnificent, and might be reckoned complete, if a stately obelisk was erected on its summit.'²⁷

Ailesbury, it seems, may have been contemplating more than just purchase of the column:

'The Gardiner has been at Hammersmith to inquire about the late Lord Melcombe house ... the person who bought the house Desired it might be kept a Secret but the Land is sold to Sr Charles Frederick that did belong to the old Estate. There is one small portion of Land to be Disposed of yet it is the part where the Obelisk stands which Colonel Windham purchas'd and would be very glad to dispose of His land.'²⁸

Ailesbury used the assistance of Henry Hoare to assess the structure – Hoare, having first-hand

experience of the construction his own buildings at Stourhead, would have provided sensible advice:

'The Column Your Lordships mentions I have approach'd close up to with Admiracion & think it will answer Your Lordships Good purpose very well, if taken down with care not to break_ the Joynts & properly defended in Carriage I dare say M^r W will be glad of £150 _ for it. even if The Ashes of Lord Melcomb or His Relation were in it or He is not a True Windham'.²⁹

A figure must have been eventually reached, for on 22 August 1780, Ailesbury paid Wyndham £178 10s (170 guineas) for it;³⁰ further, it transpires that the Earl had to purchase the spot of land too, for which, from 1778, he was initially paying a rate of £1 5s 16d.³¹ Plans for the inscription started immediately (and it seems that his Lordship also made enquiries as to the column's original erection, and who may have undertaken that task): '... I presume Your Lordship intend's The Inscription on the Column to be on A Slab or Table of Statuary Marble & let into the Dado part of the Portland Stone pedestal & the Letters should be large & undercut to hold fast in the black cement of the Letters, or the Cement will in a short time drop out if not undercut'.³² But news of the sale soon provoked anger: an anonymous response appeared in the *St James's Chronicle*,³³ cleverly citing from the Classics and directed at Wyndham for his mercenary nature rather than respect for his ancestry. (Fig. 4) The reference to Lady Melcombe's heart rather than her ashes was probably deliberate, to play on Wyndham's emotions and sensibility, and equally to gain the sympathy and support of others. Ultimately, this appeal was to no effect.

Ailesbury took great pains over the wording of the intended inscription, but others also offered their own proposals around a central content. The first of these was Thomas Lipyeatt (1712–1781) who, from 1751 to 1753, had accompanied Lord Bruce in Italy as his tutor, and from 1758, was Rector of Great Hallingbury in Essex.³⁴ Of the many variants produced over the next nine months, of the first

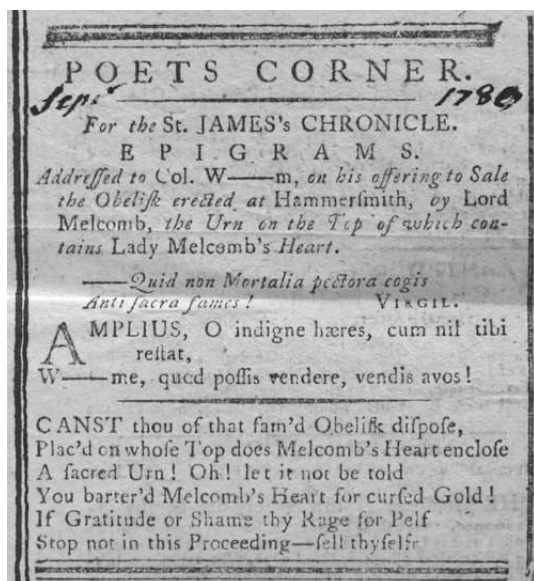


Fig. 4. Cutting from the *St James's Chronicle*, 21–23 September 1780. (Courtesy of Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)

two offerings from Lipyeatt, Ailesbury seems to have had a preference for the second form, and derived two versions of his own from this (these are given in Appendix 1 for comparison with the final inscription). The Earl then distributed copies of one or more of these to James Harris (1709–1780), the literary theorist and philosopher of language, amongst his many talents; he replied suggesting, or supporting, a number of amendments, which he explained sequentially to his lordship, together with his own full manuscript version of the inscription.³⁵ Ailesbury took this and made copies, it would appear with the intention of circulating this revision to others, and seeking their opinions.³⁶ To Harris's original copy, he made further subtle changes to his own liking.³⁷ One of those to whom Ailesbury then wrote was the Bishop of London, Robert Lowth, who replied with minor recommendations, first commenting:

'I am much obliged to Your Lordship for the Sight of Your intended Inscription for y.^e Column which I think has the three principal requisites in that sort of Composition; namely, y.^t it is proper, elegant, & short. I have exercised all my Criticisms upon it; & y.^e result amounts to very little: w^{ch} however I shall here give You'³⁸

The closing lines of the testimonial seemed to give Ailesbury, and others, most concern; and again Lipyeatt was consulted after Harris's changes were received, and even though respecting these, Lipyeatt again preferred to promote his own proposals.³⁹

REBUILDING

The following accounts and descriptions indicate that – inscription aside – no additional or new stonework was required, and that the column was intrinsically that which stood at Hammersmith. Amongst those involved were Charles Bill, Ailesbury's steward and agent (from 1760), and John Brounton, who also seems to have acted in a capacity to that of an agent until 1784.⁴⁰ At the close of winter, work proper on re-erection of the column commenced, starting with preparatory consideration of the dismantled stone work, as noted by Henry Hoare:

'I by no means think it necessary to Tool The Column all over, it may be right to scrape it a little in those parts where the Weather has changed or Darkened the Colour much so as to unite it tolerably well together at first, but the Weather will soon act upon it, & change it if it was worked by Your Lordships Mason all White, which is not so desirable a Colour or Complexion as Old Father Time will put upon it.'⁴¹

At the same time, the foundation for the column was being dug, and though no solid bedrock was found, it seemed the practice to lay the base surface with wood, if deemed necessary, that decision being the responsibility of the principal mason, probably the man named Brewer,⁴² who appears in much of the

correspondence, and who also engraved the stone. Brounton reported:

‘...they have dug the foundation for the Column, ab^t, 6 foot deep. is in a good firm earth. I don’t find there is any probability of finding Chalk – but, the Brick^{hrs}. & I think this A good foundation. tho when the Mason comes, if he has any doubt. I think if it is cover’d with Plank. cut the lenght of the foundation. there cannot be the least danger, I expect every day to hear of him ...⁴³

Again, Blenheim’s column can be used as a comparator; recorded in ‘1727 ... The Obelisk [column] began, the foundation seven feet deep.’ This depth may seem insubstantial given the size and mass of the structure, and gives possible cause for Thomas de Grey’s observation when he saw the completed structure in 1769: ‘I question much more whether y^e Base of y^e great Pillar will not in y^e course of 20 years give way to, for it begins to bear to decay’.⁴⁴ Back at Savernake, the sequence of building during 1781 can be broken down as follows, after the arrival of the stonemasons on Sunday night, 8 April:

‘9 April [Monday]

Yesterday being the 9.th of April 1781 The Mayor & Town Clerk of Marlborough had the Honour of laying the first Stone of the intended Column _ There was also present on the occasion, M.^r Peck, Old M^r Westmacott, Your Tenant M^r White, and Young M^r Warner: We were afterwards very handsomely regaled at Tottenham Park.⁴⁵

Six bottles of port and two of mountain wine were drunk in the still room at Tottenham House on this occasion.⁴⁶ It is clear from the following communication that even the slab that carried the testimonial to Lord Melcombe was to be reused. Nothing went to waste:

‘15 April [Sunday]

I have inclosed. A drawing (made by Brewer) of the Size of the Tablet for the Inscription, at the Column

– he says it will be wanted About 3 Weeks. to be put up. the Present Slab would do for it. by polishing out the Inscription. at present on it. it will do for no other purpose. they are coming on prity fast with the Foundation it will be nearly up in another Week⁴⁷

In the scaled drawing of the tablet Brewer gives the size of that part of the slab that will be available for the inscription, noting ‘The out-side dotted line is one Inch Larger on each side of the Marble Table which is to go in a groove to fasten the same in the Wall’. The full size was 4ft 11in. high by 4ft 4in. wide.⁴⁸ Ailesbury, it would appear, ordered for a copy of the original inscription to be made, as noted in Brounton’s next report, which also confirms the completion of the foundation, and that it was always intended for there to be a fence or palisade about the monument (Fig. 5):

‘22 April [Sunday]

an Exact Copy of the Inscription at present on the Marble is taken, & Brewer will begin polishing it imediately as they get on apace and will want to put it up sooner than expected. if the weather continues so favourable. the foundation is finished will begin on the Base tomorrow morning they have raised the foundation between 2 & 3 feet [...] I saw M^r Bill yesterday and told him your Lordship has rec^d the Letter I will take what care I can about the fence round the Column: the Palisades, cannot be put up untill the Scaffolding is taken down. but will take care to Secure the Inscription when up from danger⁴⁹

Clearly there was still some dissatisfaction in the inscription, and the pace of work by the masons, etc., gave Ailesbury cause for alarm with respect to finalising this. A copy of the latest intent was sent to the Bishop of Lichfield, Dr Richard Hurd, to which Mr Arnald, presumably his grace’s secretary, wrote the reply.⁵⁰ Again Thomas Lipyeatt co-joined the Bishop’s ‘hints’ in another of his proposed inscriptions.⁵¹ By now Ailesbury had also changed the line of Godly praise to its more Miltonic form.⁵²

The person charged with laying out the inscription was Thomas Ward, a nephew of Charles



Fig. 5. The Column at Savernake Forest.

Bill, who worked in Marlborough. Various letters then passed between Ward, Ailesbury and Bill, regarding character size and spacing of letters, for which various samples were exchanged, both scaled and full-size. Brewer, based on his experience, still provided recommendations to Ward.⁵³ Ailesbury was now getting letters from several quarters, including the Bishop of London again, who as a recipient of the latest inscription, gave his final advice on 4 May.⁵⁴ A few days later, Thomas Ward was ready for Brewer to cut the letters in the tablet, to which end he wrote to Ailesbury:

‘7 May [Monday]

The Inclosed is a Sketch of the Inscription, which I have altered according to the directions I received from your Lordship ___ I have made a large Dra.^t exactly conformable to it, for Brewer to copy upon the Marble Tablet _He will pencil it out to morrow, and begin to engrave on Wednesday Morning __In the mean time, if your Lordship should be pleased to make any further Alteration, I hope to receive your Lordships directions for that purpose by the first opportunity, as no alteration can be made in the Characters after they are engraved...⁵⁵

This sketch may be that in the Tottenham House archive, which was still to benefit from the latest suggestions from the Bishop of London, but these were added to the paper by Ailesbury.⁵⁶ He evidently also gave Ward clear direction not to use the long-s, to which Ward felt the need to tactfully explain to his Lordship its appropriateness with the double-s, and also the rationale for using ligatures.⁵⁷ Ailesbury evidently gave the amended sketch his blessing, but Ward was still cautious about one or two aspects, and hence he sent Ailesbury the large draught of the inscription used by Brewer, no longer extant:

‘10 May [Thursday]

I received the Packet from your Lordship on Sunday night and on Monday, I sent by a Diligence, which, drives to the Cross Keys in Woodstreet a Packet directed for your Lordship, containing a fresh Sketch,

according to the alterations I reced on Sunday, which Packet I hope your Lordship received safe on ~~Mon~~ Tuesday. I have this morning been with Brewer who has drawn the Inscription upon the Marble, which I think he has done very exactly, according to the small sketch, and according to the large one which I gave him to copy from _ I shall send your Lordship the large Draught (by the same Conveyance I sent the Packet) to night, & hope it will get safe to your Lordships hands to morrow Morning, as I think your Ldship will be better able to form a Judgm.^t as to the Characters &c. from a Copy of the exact size of the Marble _ The bottom of the inscript.ⁿ will be ab.^t 8 feet from the Ground, the top about 12 or something more ____

I mentioned in — my Letter to your Lordship that the words “unsolicited” and “whose” are both wrote with Small long S’s which your Lordship objected to in some other words __ The engraving of these words will therefore be put off till I hear further about them _ I have also received your Lordships note of Monday, & am extremely happy that your Lordship is pleased to approve of the Rough Sketch I sent _ I am, my Lord in great haste (which I hope your Lordship will excuse) Your Lordships most obedient & most dutiful Serv.^t

Thos Ward

Your Lordship will be pleased to observe that there are in my Large Plan, Small marks in the middle of each line, these are only marks for Brewer to go by in order to place all his lines in the middle of the Marble, which I had not time to— adjust, as it would have hindred him too much, his Lines are all very properly placed in that respect, and in other respects they are in the exact form for the Rough Plan.^{:58}

At some point, enquiry must have been made about the method of engraving, which solicited the following response: ‘Brewers method of Writing, which is the Same Method Used by M^r Banks, when this Present Inscription was don’. Whether the last point is referring to the inscription cut for Lord Melcombe, or an inscription on another monument, possibly at Stourhead, is not known. That at Hammersmith would have been effected some eighteen years ago:

‘No sort of Engraving upon Marble will Endure so long & well when Exposed to all kind of Weather wether wett & frost as that sort which is Executed with Drying Oil Colours the way is as follows viz

first Polish the face of the Table as smooth as possible after which Engrave all the Letters as deep as the size of the Letter will admit of after which I paints the Table with the Best white paint so as to give it a good body of the same after that dry I write,^s all the Letters that is before Engrav,d with Coal-black drying oil Colours — & this way will Certainly Endure the Longer of any other⁷.⁵⁹

Brounton’s next letter marks an important stage in the column’s rebuilding, both in terms of readiness for the tablet, and by default the inscription, and a period of standing to ensure stability prior to erection of the main shaft: ‘20 May [Sunday] Column as high as the course above the table of Inscription; it will be ready to put up about the middle of the week when Brewer would wish.’ Following this, the work completed to that date was ‘to rest about a fortnight to Setle. to see if it gives any way.’⁶⁰ [i.e. 6 June].

One of Brounton’s progress reports indicates that the workforce ‘was absent from in [*sic*] from Saturday May. 21st To thursday June 8th’, i.e. the period for the pedestal and base to bed-in.⁶¹ The final version of the inscription as engraved – after all of Ailesbury’s diligence, exchanges, and last-minute concerns – is given in Appendix 1. Progress can be followed by the regular reports issued by Brounton (see Appendix 2).⁶² The weekly rise in height of the shaft is not consistent simply due to the fact that the layers of cut stone vary in height themselves, and the work noted in the reports of 18 and 25 August would correspond to fitting the capital and final ‘drum’. The urn at this time was yet to be installed, but the story of it containing the ashes of Mrs Dodington certainly came to the attention of Henry Hoare. His involvement from this time steps up a gear, and he could certainly speak from experience from the numerous buildings and features that he had erected

at Stourhead. Of the pieces of gilt-work at Stourhead that Henry refers to in the following communication, the first would appear to be that on the obelisk, noted by Hanway in 1755: 'it has a *mythra*, or sun, of six feet diameter, in gilded copper, at the top'.⁶³ The second ornament refers to that then surmounting the Bristol High Cross, which is clearly shown in Grimm's view of 1790,⁶⁴ but at some time was replaced by that of today.

'I never heard of The Funeral Pile from whence The Ashes of M^{rs} Dodington were extracted & as The Gold is wore off the Urn I beg leave to recommend its being new Gilt with double Gold Leaf made for that purpose & which My Mithras & the Globe & Cross on it on the Cross are both Gilt with it & as fresh in all appearances as at first lay'd on for common Gold Leaf is gone presently.'⁶⁵

A month later, and having just turned seventy-six, Henry had no qualms about climbing the scaffold to inspect the column, having fears about water accumulation. The urn had still to be gilt, but he offered very specific advice as to its fixing, which considering its size (by scaling, it measures about 5-feet high) and weight, is understandable:

'I went up The Scaffold of the Column to see what drip there was on the Top of The Corniche of the Pedestal where if not attended to The Wet Lodges. & perishes the Stone & therefore is often Leaded; but I found Sufficient & judicious Drip; I also examined the Urn in The Barn [...] I thought The Painter rather hurry'd the several Coats of paint too quick lay'd on on [*sic*] each other & advised more time to be given before the Gold Size & Gold was lay'd on as it cannot be wanted on the Column for some time & advised a Bar of Iron of 1 Inch & ½ to be let into the Stone on The Tip Top of The Column well painted over 4 or 5 times & that Iron Bar to go thro the whole Urn & a Nutt to be screw's on to the Top of it to keep the whole Urn steady, from any possibility of action or influence of Winds which would wear & tear it in time & this was not duely attended to, & the outer part that was not, & requires this attention.'⁶⁶



Fig. 6. Vignette of the column from the plan of Savernake Forest (see Fig. 7). (Courtesy of Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)

The finished column, complete with palisade, is depicted as a large vignette on 'A PLAN Of the FOREST of SAVERNAKE and of TOTTENHAM PARK' made in 1781 (Fig. 6).⁶⁷ This plan also shows that the original avenue, which is on a south-east-east axis aligned to the house, terminated at the column; the present continuation beyond is a later work (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. 'A PLAN of the FOREST of SAVERNAKE and of TOTTENHAM PARK', 1781.
 (Courtesy of Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre)

Whilst there are no accounts detailing the cost of the re-erection of the column and associated work at Savernake, by way of comparison the column at Gibside (Co. Durham), at 140 feet high and surmounted with a statue of Liberty just over twelve feet high, cost £1601 18s. 9³/₄d, of which the carving

of and work on the statue, which required some '66 books of Leaf Gold' for the gilding, amounted to some £49 19s 6d. This was built and erected over several years from 1750 to 1757.⁶⁸ Yet the Prince's Column at Stowe, in its original location by 9 August 1724, some '40 feet high, with a statue of the P of

Wales, wch cost £80, in Stone & is 7½ feet high at the Top'.⁶⁹ Michael Bevington notes that 'the high cost of £80 suggests that it may cover the whole column and statue, rather than just the statue.' In light of George Bowes's expenditure, time and scale differences, this would approximate.⁷⁰

Parallels, again, can be drawn with the Column of Victory at Blenheim, although the expense and time to execute are altogether of a different order of magnitude (Blenheim's column cost 'about £3,000. The Duke's statue cost £340' and took from 1727 to 1731 to construct).⁷¹ The matter of a suitable inscription was of concern to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, from the outset, particularly the inscription to her late husband. Here, as with Savernake's monument, the clergy were consulted, with, apparently, Bishop Hare providing the first draft; and similarly several further revisions were attempted and passed by before a worthy panegyric appeared, in this case from the pen of Lord Bolingbroke. The Duchess was equally concerned about the appearance of this inscription that she

had it 'put up writ upon Boards to try it and to prevent Mistakes.'

The subsequent history of the Savernake Column involved the addition of a further inscription in around 1789. It would seem strange if the recess for this second stone already existed when Ailesbury purchased the monument from Colonel Wyndham, in which case why did he not use that and simply reverse the piece of marble used for Lord Melcombe's epitaph? It does appear from closer examination of photographs that the tablet is just set in place, possibly a new recess was cut specifically for it. Unfortunately nothing has come to light regarding its putting in place to confirm this; only the words survive (see Appendix 1).

Undisturbed by any subsequent developments in the park, the column has slumbered over the years, acquiring a natural red hue to its surface.⁷² Any gilding to the urn has long gone, and whether it ever contained Mrs Dodington's ashes, or heart, remains a mystery.

APPENDIX 1

Thomas Lipyeatt's first two proposals

1st

In testimony of duty and Unfeigned love
 This Column was erected by
 Thomas Bruce Earl of Ailesbury
 To Charles Earl of Ailesbury and Elgin
 His ever honored Uncle who gave him his estates:

—To George III his most gracious Sovereign who
 unsolicited confer'ed on him this title : and
 —To GOD, BEST and GREATEST
 Without whose blessing no gift is good & perfect
 MDCCLXXX

2.^d

In Memory
 Of his ever honored Uncle
 Charles Earl of Ailesbury and Elgin
 who gave him these, and other ample estates
 Thomas Bruce Earl of Ailesbury
 Erected this Column
 His ever honored Uncle who gave him his estates:
 Dedicating it, as a work of piety[†] to
 His gracious Sovereign
 George III
 who, unrequested, confer'ed upon him this title
 And revering GOD, BEST and GREATEST
 without whose blessing no gift is good & perfect
 MD —
 + gratitude⁷³

Lord Ailesbury's versions:

In Memory
 Of his ever honoured Uncle
 Charles Earl of Ailesbury and Elgin
 Who gave him these and other ample Estates
 Thomas Bruce Brudenell Earl of Ailesbury
 Erected this Column.
 Dedicating it, as a Work of Gratitude to
 His Gracious Sovereign
 King George III

Who, unsolicited, conferred upon him this Title
 And revering God, Best and Greatest
 Without whose Blessing no Gift is good and perfect.

This Column was erected
 By Thomas Bruce Earl of Ailesbury;
 To the Memory
 Of Charles Earl of Ailesbury and Elgin:

In testimony
 Of Gratitude
 To his ever honoured Uncle who gave him these Estates:
 Of Loyalty
 To his most gracious Sovereign
 George III

Who unrequested conferred upon him this Title;
 And of Devotion
 To God, Best and Greatest
 Without whose Blessing no Gift is good and perfect
 M. DCC. L. XXX⁷⁴

The inscription, as finally engraved:

This Column was erected
 By Thomas Bruce, Earl of Ailesbury,
 As a Testimony
 Of *Gratitude*
 To his ever honoured Uncle,
 Charles, Earl of Ailesbury, and Elgin,
 Who left to him these Estates,
 And procured for him the *Barony* of *Tottenham*,
 And of *Loyalty*
 To his most Gracious Sovereign
 GEORGE III,
 Who, unsolicited, conferred upon him
 The honour of an *Earldom*;
 But above all,
 Of *Piety*
 To GOD, FIRST, HIGHEST, BEST.
 Whose Blessing consecrateth every gift
 And fixeth its true Value.
 MDCCLXXXI

The second inscription, added c.1789.

In Commemoration
of
a signal Instance of Heaven's protecting Providence
OVER THESE KINGDOMS
in the year 1789
by restoring to perfect Health,
from a long and afflicting Disorder,
their excellent and beloved Sovereign
GEORGE THE THIRD,
This Tablet was Inscribed
by
THOMAS BRUCE, EARL OF AILESBUURY.

APPENDIX 2

Weekly progress reports of reconstruction of the column:

Date	Height above foundation	Increase in height	Comments
			8' 2" depth of foundation
9 June	13' 8½"		7 masons, 1 bricklayer, 3 labourers
16 June	[16' 1"]		No progress report
23 June	20' 6"	4' 5"	?
30 June	24' 7"	4' 1"	7 masons, 1 bricklayer, 3 labourers 'grand Scaffold' built 28 June to 2 July
7 July	31' 4"	6' 9"	7 masons, 1 bricklayer, 3 labourers
14 July	38' 1½"	6' 9½"	7 masons, 1 bricklayer, 3 labourers
21 July	?	[Approx. 7' 3½"]	No progress report
28 July	?	[Approx. 7' 3½"]	No progress report
4 Aug	[52' 8½"]		No progress report
11 Aug	59' 11½"	7' 3"	7 masons, 1 bricklayer, 3 labourers
18 Aug	64' 3½"	4' 4" (capital)	8 masons, 1 bricklayer, 3 labourers
25 Aug	69' 7½"	5' 4" (drum)	8 masons, 1 bricklayer, 3 labourers
Undated		Urn/Vase	'6 dozen of Gold Books for Gilding the Vase – of Column'
Plinth	2' 10"	}	15' 2½"
Base of pedestal	1' 6"		
Dado	9' 4½"		
Cove of cornish	1' 6"		
Plinth of column	1' 0"	}	3' 7"
Base	2' 7"		
Shaft	50' 10"		

ENDNOTES

- 1 See Michael Cousins, 'Hagley Park, Worcestershire', *Garden History*, vol. 35, Suppl. 1 (2007), pp. 11, 56 &
- 2 See George Edward Cokayne, et al, *The Complete Peerage*, revised edn, vol. 8 (London: The St Catherine Press, 1932), pp. 640–41. A Private Act of Parliament – George I. c.1. – was passed, receiving Royal Assent on 3 February 1718.
- 3 According to the *DNB*, Dodington had an immediate legacy of £100,000 and an annual income of £4,000.
- 4 The National Archives (TNA), PROB 11/573/465, fols 6v–11.
- 5 *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, vol. 102 (London: W. Bent, [1799]), February 1798, p. 81: 'This house, although it adjoins to, and is generally esteemed part of Hammersmith, is actually in the Fulham division of the parish of Fulham'.
- 6 For a discussion of when Dodington purchased the house, and first took residence, see Clare Hornsby, 'Neo-classical Display in the Suburbs: Investigating George Bubb Dodington's Patronage and Taste', *The Georgian Group Journal*, 26 (2018), pp. 69–86, specifically pp. 72–73.
- 7 *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed W.S. Lewis, vol. 18 (1954), pp. 104–05. The year of marriage is established in a subsequent letter of 22 March 1744 (*ibid.*, p. 424), again to Mann, where Walpole writes: 'I wonder I forgot to tell you that Doddington had owned a match of seventeen years standing with Mrs Behan'. Katherine, or Catherine as is also spelt, was the second of four daughters, together with three sons, of Edmund and Catherine Beaghan of East Bradenham, born 18 July 1702.
- 8 Died 17, and buried 28 December in St James's, Westminster. The register entry reads: 'M.^{rs} Katherine Doddington W / buried in the Chancell'.
- 9 Daniel Lysons, *The Environs of London ...*, 4 vols (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1792–96), vol. 2 (1795), p. 403.
- 10 c.1761, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, Accession Number: B1975.4.1385.
- 11 Charles James Fèret, *Fulham Old and New...*, 3 vols (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1900), vol. 3, p. 73; Thomas Faulkner, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hammersmith* (London: Nichols & Son, etc., 1839), p. 282, 'a column in the field to the east of Brandenburg House, and from which it acquired the name of Monument Field'. Faulkner, in his earlier *An historical and topographical account of Fulham; including the Hamlet of Hammersmith* (London: T. Egerton, etc., 1813), p. 416, refers to the 'Ionic pillar, in the gardens of his house at Hammersmith'.
- 12 Wiltshire History Centre 35/60, undated, drawing of a gate 'Leading to the obelisk'.
- 13 He was buried at Fulham, 3 August.
- 14 TNA, PROB 11/879/11, fols 37–38v.
- 15 *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 33 (1763), p. 359.
- 16 *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 33 (1763), p. 617. Wilkes did in fact make a visit to Paris from end of July 1763 for about three months to visit his daughter.
- 17 *New Foundling Hospital For Wit*, 6 vols (London, 1768–1773), vol. 1, pp. 44–45.
- 18 *The European Magazine*, vol. 5 (1784), June, p. 406. Thomas Faulkner in his *An Historical and Topographical Account of Fulham; including the Hamlet of Hammersmith* (London: T. Egerton etc., 1813), pp. 416–17, gives slight variations on lines 17 and 22, viz: 'And if wit and true learning can delight,' and 'He lived admired and beloved by all who'... For his history *Fulham Old and New...*, 3 vols (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1900), vol. 3, pp. 71–81, Ferèt's MS adopted Faulkner's version, but it was omitted from the final publication (see Hammersmith & Fulham Local Studies and Archives Centre [hereafter HFLSAC], DD/1029/20, III 5–7, pp. 5534–35). It has not been able to establish which version reflected that as actually inscribed.
- 19 The date given in the *Gentlemen's Magazine's* obituaries is incorrect – Wyndham died 5 September and was buried in the Church of St Mary, Homington, 'in the 85th year of his age'. His will was proven six days later.
- 20 TNA, PROB 11/1035/49.
- 21 There sales were respectively on 4, 8 and 9 December 1777, no auctions being held on Sundays.
- 22 Christie's have no record of the sale of the house, not even its taking place, just marked-up sales catalogues for the other two auctions.

- 23 *London Chronicle*, December 9–11, 1777; Issue 3279, p. 563.
- 24 HFLSAC, Ferèr MS, *op. cit.*, p. 5528a. The field, where this memorial stood, was known in later years as Monument Field, a piece of debateable ground of 5a 2r. 22p. just north of Sussex House in the Fulham Palace Road. For confirmation that Colonel Wyndham purchased this piece of land, see note 28.
- 25 He succeeded under the special remainder in a patent of 1633, but on the death of Charles Bruce the Earldom became extinct.
- 26 By royal licence, 29 December.
- 27 *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 33 (1763), p. 314.
- 28 Wiltshire History Centre (WHC), 9/35/28, Samuel Cutts to Ailesbury, 14 July 1779. I am grateful to Dudley Dodd for this reference. From 1779, the rate books show that a Mr Wentworth was in occupation of the house and its grounds. See HFLSAC Rate Books, PAF/1/26 and PAF/1/25c–26.
- 29 WHC, 1300/4294, Henry Hoare to Lord Bruce, Stourhead, 23 Aug 1779. All further entries starting with 1300/ are from this source.
- 30 Hoare & Co. Ledger 7, fol. 369, Col. Wyndham's account; Ledger G, fol. 186, Earl of Ailesbury's account.
- 31 HFLSAC Rate Books *op. cit.*
- 32 WHC, 1300/4670, Henry Hoare to Ailesbury, Stourhead, 23 August 1780. There is also a postscript in a letter from Brounton to Ailesbury (1300/2508, Tottenham Park, 13 October 1780) that may refer to the column whilst still at Hammersmith (there is certainly no evidence that there was ever a column at Kensington): 'I asked Nanny about the person your Lordship met with at Kensington. she doeth not remember him, I asked Dowling. he remember'd him directly when I mentioned his name. says he was not Gardiner but the Person who had the Management of the Groundwork and that it was he that set out the Haha in the Column walk &c'. Who 'Nanny' was in this instance is unknown.
- 33 September 21–23, 1780; Issue 3050. A cutting is in bundle 1300/1872–1909.
- 34 John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701–1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 146–47.
- 35 WHC, 1300/1893, James Harris to Ailesbury, 35 Suffolk Street, 6 November 1780.
- 36 WHC, 1300/1894 & 1895, both written by Ailesbury.
- 37 WHC, 1300/1900, James Harris, modified by Ailesbury.
- 38 WHC, 1300/1887, Ailesbury to the Bishop of London, c. end of November 1780, and 1300/4681, Bishop of London to the Ailesbury, London House, 3 December 1780. Two further versions of the inscription would seem to date from around this time: see 1300/1891 and 1300/1899.
- 39 WHC, 1300/4615, Thomas Lipyeatt to Ailesbury, and 1300/1880, both undated.
- 40 For an undisclosed reason, Ailesbury dispensed with Brounton's services in late 1784. See 9/35/62, letters of 8 & 9 November.
- 41 WHC, 1300/4673, Henry Hoare to Ailesbury, Stourhead, 12 March 1781.
- 42 Possibly William Brewer of Box and Colerne.
- 43 WHC, 1300/2505, John Brounton to Ailesbury, Tottenham Park, 18 March 1781.
- 44 British Library, Add MS 61354, fol. 115. Norfolk Record Office, WLS XLVIII/1 425X9/3, Letter from Thomas de Grey to his parents, Burford [14 August 1769].
- 45 WHC, 1300/4616, letter from Charles Bill to Ailesbury, [10 April 1781]. A similar letter was sent the same day from John Brounton at Tottenham Park, see 1300/1872.
- 46 WHC, 1300/1540. 'Wine Used. 1780 & 1781'.
- 47 WHC, 1300/1873, John Brounton to Ailesbury, Tottenham Park, 15 April 1781.
- 48 WHC, 1300/1888 (undated and unsigned). The writer of the 'method' may have been Brewer; the handwriting does not correspond to that of any other involved parties.
- 49 WHC, 1300/2506, John Brounton to Ailesbury, Tottenham Park, 22 April 1781. The copy of the original inscription has not been located.
- 50 WHC, 1300/1892, Mr Arnald to Ailesbury, undated; 1300/1885, undated but titled: 'Inscription Bishop of Lichfield's Copy'. Richard Hurd was translated to the see of Worcester that July.
- 51 WHC, 1300/1897, undated, but written on the back: 'Another Inscription / The Chief Alterations in this inscription are occasion'd by hints from the B. of Litchfield communicated by your Lordship.'

- Lipyeatt at least won over Ailesbury with his dislike of the word ‘stability’ in the penultimate line of the earlier versions. See 1300/1896, undated.
- 52 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book 6: ‘O Father, O Supream of heav’nly Thrones, First, Highest, Holiest, Best ...’ See also WHC, 1300/1898, Ailesbury’s summary note of the Bishop of Lichfield’s changes and the revised line referencing Milton.
- 53 WHC, 1300/1876, Thomas Ward to Ailesbury, Marlborough, 3 May 1781; 1300/1877, Thomas Ward to Charles Bill, Marlborough, 3 May 1781. ‘An inscription Copied from One in your Lordships handwriting’ was also prepared by Thomas Lipyeatt, annotated ‘with directions’, such as letter size, capitalisation, italic. To this Ailesbury made his own corrections. See 1300/1886, undated, but *c.* 4 May 1781.
- 54 WHC, 1300/1884, Bishop of London to Ailesbury, Fulham, 4 May 1781, with accompanying page of amendments, 1300/1883.
- 55 WHC, 1300/1878, Thomas Ward to Ailesbury, Marlborough, 7 May 1781.
- 56 WHC, 1300/1901. The receipt and incorporation of changes was as much down to the postal system, and just how long it took for letters to arrive, especially as Ailesbury was probably in London at this time.
- 57 WHC, 1300/1890, Thomas Ward to Ailesbury, undated.
- 58 WHC, 1300/1879, Thomas Ward to Ailesbury, Marlborough. 10 May 1781. Ward’s letter makes reference to the Bishop of Lichfield’s [Mr Arnald’s] changes, sent the night of 5 May (see 1300/1892 & 1885), and Ward’s letter and sketch of 7 May (see 1878 and 1901). Ailesbury’s note of Monday, 7 May, is not in the archive.
- 59 WHC, 1300/1888, undated.
- 60 WHC, 1300/1874, John Brounton to Ailesbury, Tottenham Park, 20 May 1781.
- 61 WHC, 1300/1904.
- 62 These run as follows: 1300/1904, 1902, 1903, 1906, 1905, 1907 (two reports), 1908 & 1909.
- 63 Jonas Hanway, *A Journal of Eight Days Journey...*, 2nd end, 2 vols (London: H. Woodfall and C. Henderson, 1757), vol. 1, pp. 137–38. The year of the visit is given in letter 4 of this corrected and enlarged edition.
- 64 British Library, Add MS 15547, f. 211.
- 65 WHC, 1300/4671. Henry Hoare to Ailesbury, Stourhead, 16 June 1781.
- 66 WHC, 1300/4672, Henry Hoare to Ailesbury, Stourhead, 16 July 1781.
- 67 WHC, 1300/360.
- 68 Harry Beamish and Karen Lynch, ‘The Column, Gibside, County Durham’, *The Follies Journal*, 6 (2006), pp. 71–80.
- 69 Yorkshire Archaeological Society, MS 328, fols 5–6.
- 70 Michael Bevington, “‘The Watcher on the Column’: The Prince’s Column at Stowe, Buckinghamshire”, *The Follies Journal*, 6 (2006), pp. 35–70.
- 71 David Green, *Blenheim Palace* (London: Country Life, 1951), p. 277. The Column of Victory is considerably taller at 134 feet.
- 72 In 1795, when a ‘New Avenue to Bagden House’ was being discussed, John Ward (Charles Bill’s nephew and successor as steward and agent from 1781) suggested that ‘you might by cutting the Avenue more to the Right – Standing at Bagden house – thro Wolslade South Coppice & across the Marlbro’ Walks between Wolslade and Gammons Pits, get a View of the Column from the Door of Bagden Lodge.’ The plan was not carried into effect: WHC, 1300/363A, John Ward to Ailesbury, Marlborough, 27 April 1795. A route via the column was also under consideration as a shorter passage from Tottenham House to Marlborough than the ‘Straight Avenue’. With marginal benefit, the proposal was dropped. See WHC, 1300/2679, n.d.
- 73 WHC, 1300/1881 and 1882, *c.* Oct 1780. The writing of both drafts is Lipyeatt’s.
- 74 WHC, 1300/1889, *c.* Oct 1780, written by Ailesbury.