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THE BUILDING WORKS OF LORD VISCOUNT BRUCE

by John Harris

This story begins on 2nd February 1720, in Chiswick church, when Charles Viscount Bruce married Lady Juliana Boyle, the sister of Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington. They celebrated in Burlington's old Jacobean house, and no doubt Burlington took Bruce into his confidence about building plans for Chiswick. Since 1715 Burlington had employed first Gibbs, then Campbell, and from 1717 began to intervene on his own account. In November 1719 he had returned from studying Palladio's buildings in the Veneto, and even this early was becoming disenchanted with Campbell's derivative brand of Neo-Palladianism. A tame draughtsman, Samuel Savile, was now in Burlington's employ, and there is a record among the Bruce papers of Henry Flitcroft first visiting Tottenham Park in July 1720 - proof that Lord Bruce was taking advantage of his brother-in-law's passion for architecture in employing him to rebuild the old family seat in the Savernake Forest.

Tottenham, known previously as Topenham or Topenhays, had been well known to Henry VIII, for it was then part of the domaine of Wolf Hall, Jane Seymour's home. In 1672 John Aubrey noted that William Seymour, 3rd Duke of Somerset, had been pulling down Wolf Hall in order to rebuild Tottenham. This Duke, however, died, leaving Tottenham to John, 4th Duke who lived in Amesbury, the celebrated Palladian mansion designed by John Webb, but in Bruce's day venerated as work by Jones. I am not concerned with Tottenham in the late 17th century when Aubrey described it as a 'most parkly ground and romancy place', observing that the Duke's seat was 'now to be made a compleat new pile of good architecture'. All I want to observe is that this estate passed into the family of Bruce, Earls of Ailesbury, and was encumbered with debts. Our Lord Bruce was living first at Ampthill Park, Bedfordshire, than at Henley Park, Surrey, where at the latter place in 1712 he heard the news that Tottenham had completely burnt down to the ground. Bruce's marriage in 1719 marked, in fact, the end of a period of estate and financial improvement, and as Warden of the Savernake Forest he was ready to make Tottenham the stage for his building operations.

Two buildings are pre-eminent in Lord Burlington's career: Tottenham and Chiswick. They represent a beginning and an end; two polarities in the grammar and assemblage of architecture. It is surely significant that more designs survive for these two buildings than for any other. Like Chiswick Tottenham can offer an extra bonus, for it is both representative of Burlington's beginning and his end in architectural matters. This apparent contradiction will soon be explained.

If we examine the Westminster Dormitory begun in 1721 and seek to discover the sources of Burlington's authority for the facade, it is not in esoteric Italian buildings as some would believe, but where we might expect it at this period in Burlington's career: in the work of Jones and Webb. Westminster is a conflation of the Covent Garden facades rendered astylar, Webb's Somerset House Gallery, and the Chevening entablature with its pulvinated frieze. Indeed, it cannot be a coincidence that Chevening's height of 48 feet is that of Westminster. Should you doubt this relationship to Covent Garden, my companion slide is not the Dormitory today, but the wings of Schloss Bensberg between Cologne and Dusseldorf. There in 1707 Mattei d'Alberti aided by the young Giacomo Leoni created a version of the later Dormitory, because d'Alberti was interested in Jones and had visited Covent Garden in the 1680s. This method of adaptation or assemblage of parts was by 1721 a recognized Neo-Palladian one, as can be demonstrated by the following examples: Campbell's house in the temple style dated 1724 is based upon Palladio's woodcut of the Rialto Bridge design; or Burlington's Campbellian design for the Bagnio at Chiswick is an assemblage of parts from one of the so-called Jonesian Whitehall designs published by Campbell in 1717, the very year the Bagnio was built. As I am now going to show, before about 1722 Burlington was not yet endowed to be, in Scipio Maffei's words, 'il Palladio e il Jones de nostri tempi'. This could only occur after May 1721, by which time Burlington had purchased all the designs by Jones, Webb and Palladio. At Tottenham, therefore, Burlington must needs refine upon Campbell's method, by borrowing from the existing physical remains of Jones and Webb (and others) and from Palladio via the Quattro Libri. It is very enlightening to study Tottenham from this point of view.

By using dividers it is possible to deduce that two elevations represent Burlington's first proposals, and it is just possible that they could have been made before the marriage in February 1720. One (1) has towers, a portico, and is 88 feet to the front; the other (2) is astylar and has a front of 60 feet. Both are blotchy in rendering and are definitely early examples in his lordship's career as an architectural delineator. Paradoxically, although these are the first designs, and thus their sources ought to be obvious, precedents are difficult to locate. The astylar one possesses a Vanbrughian flavour, but I see the arrangement of square unframed windows as perhaps taken from Palladio's Villa Zenò. In the handling of the roof with the projecting wings there is a strong hint of the back front of Webb's Gunnersbury - a front that was never published, but known to Burlington. As for the tower elevation, that idiosyncratic porch ought to exist somewhere; the towers could be revisions of Palladio's Villa Pisani at Montagnana, acknowledging at the same time the Jonesian Wilton. So already Tottenham has assumed the character of a Palladian tower house.

Remembering the front of 88 feet, this ties in nicely with a plan (3) for an unidentified house, and as can be demonstrated, it is taken right out of Gunnersbury (4) a house little more than a mile from Chiswick. Burlington must have been very impressed with Gunnersbury's basilical hall, although in the Tottenham plan he has made his hall six bays long, closer to the Vitruvian source, and so anticipating events at York in 1730. Burlington has even copied Gunnersbury's majestic Imperial stair.

These proposals may have been considered too ambitious. They are followed by the first plan (5) in a sequence leading up to (with a plan) the house as built. This plan is drawn on the back of an elevation (8) for the kitchen wings to the court, and we know from topographical evidence that these wings were built. Dividers again can reconstruct in this case a front of 82 feet, and for the plan Burlington has turned to Palladio's villa for Annibale Sarego with its stairs set in narrow corridor-like cases. Burlington's plan has on the entrance front a hall flanked by square rooms in the corners, these rooms lit by Venetian windows. This plan fits exactly the elevation signed and dated by Burlington 1721 (9), and with its 63 feet depth fits too the outline plan (7). Note the narrow projection on the garden front, narrower than the side bays. The kitchen elevation, and there is also a plan of this, is a simplification of Palladio's Villa Pogliana, which, incidentally, was a Palladio design re-drawn specially for Burlington by Flitcroft.

Unfortunately, there is only one plan (6) of Tottenham at the moment of adding wings in 1738, but none before, that is, after 1721. In other words the state of Tottenham between 1721 and 1738 is unknown. A study of the two plans, early and late, will reveal an identity from the entrance back moving back to the garden front less one range of rooms. It seems to indicate that Tottenham started out as a house with two towers on the entrance front, but none or only a central one to the garden. This can be better understood by looking once again at the 1721 elevation. I realise this is taxing you, and I am going to tax you even more!

A comparison with Amesbury (10) is proof that like Gunnersbury it exercised a magnetic appeal on Burlington. Amesbury, incidentally, was not only a Bruce family seat, but through Burlington's uncle Lord Carelton, whose mother was a Seymour, featured also in the Burlington family tree. The Amesbury tower lit a stair, and it is significant that the width of the tower on the 1721 elevation is exactly the width of the projection on both the early plan and the outline plan. It is therefore reasonable to assume that it too lit a stair, and I believe this plan and section (11) to be that stair as first proposed. Here is something extraordinary: flights branching off to right and left immediately upon entering the hall, rising to a mid-way landing with exits right and left, then taking off as a central flyer to the upper encircling gallery. The lower parts and the gallery are clearly

based upon Coleshill, but I have been unable to find any precedents in the renaissance for the single flyer used in this manner. The design may have been abandoned because of technical and structural difficulties.

I now want to refer to the other surviving elevation (12). It has always been associated with the entrance front, but although signed and inscribed, is not dated. Its drawing is more precise and its scale is different. It possesses, as you can see, a loggia-portico with access from the house to the balustrated flat by means of an odd arrangement of openings. It is lifted almost line by line from Jones's Queen's House: the south front loggia pulled out as a full portico. Now how does this fit in with the plans of 1721? It does not, for the projection behind the portico is now wider than the flanking bays. It is possible to suggest that such a portico would never have been designed after Burlington's experiences at Chiswick from 1726. On this point there can be no dispute. It must therefore be assumed that in 1721 such a portico was made on the garden front, and probably at the same time the central tower idea was abandoned when the stair design was also given up.

Nothing has so far been said as to when the second phase of additions were made, but they can probably be pin-pointed to a letter from Bruce to Burlington on 11th May 1730, referring to the 'intended additions'. The garden front must have been brought out by one range of rooms in depth and two towers added, making Tottenham into a proper four tower house. At the same time the portico was retained, for it would have made a fine viewing platform for the hunting. There is a later similar type of portico at Kent's Wakefield Lodge, Northamptonshire, c. 1748, which also acted as a view-point for the hunting, in the Whittlesbury Forest rather than the Savernake Forest.

These explanations may appear complex, but they at least explain the complex sequence of plans, and they are partly confirmed by the excellent surveys (13) of the house made before it was rebuilt c. 1824 by Thomas Cundy, and by John Buckler's attractive watercolour view (14).

Buckler shows the house exactly as completed after the additions of 1738. These additions can be dated by the dated elevation for the ends of the wings (15). By such additions Tottenham was converted into a version of Holkham, whose design by both Burlington and Kent was being worked out from 1733. There are numerous plans and elevations for these additions, but they do not elucidate the story of Tottenham any more, only add to our knowledge of the internal arrangements in the wings. They provide elevations that have been described in the Holkham context as concatenated and staccato, a matter of the recess and advancing of planes in an additive manner, as if capable of being extended indefinitely. Such a style appears first in Kent's preliminary designs for the Royal Mews of 1731, and by Burlington in his 1733 additions to Chiswick in the guise of the Link Building.

The style is, I believe, derived from certain internal elevations to be found in the drawings by Palladio of the Roman Baths, a selection from which Burlington published in 1730 as the Fabbriche Antiche.

I am not going to discuss Tottenham today. It is still an unknown house, but I would like to point out that Quinlan Terry has been able to demonstrate the only surviving room, one from 1721, is measured entirely in Italian piedi, for example, the doors are 3 feet 6 inches wide, equivalent to three Venetian feet.

Had Bruce delayed his 1738 additions by a year, they may never have been carried out, for in 1739 Lady Juliana died leaving him without an heir. In 1741 he became the 3rd Earl of Ailesbury by inheritance. He continued to attend to the estate. In 1743 Burlington designed and built the existing octagonal temple (16), and perhaps around the same time the Banqueting House in the woods (17) demolished, alas, in 1824.

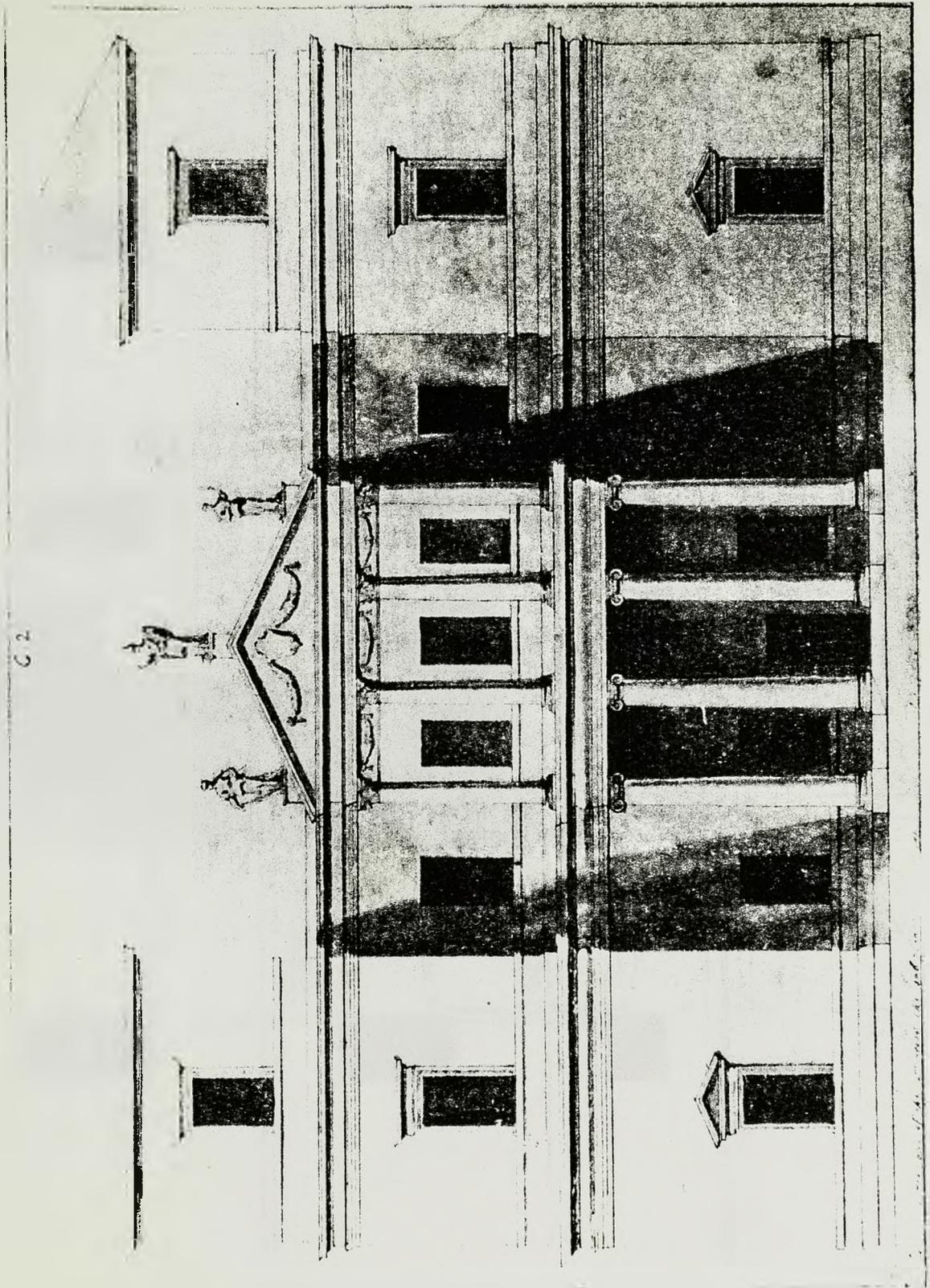
My taxing of you is at an end, but as this lecture is about Lord Bruce's building works, there remain the events of 1726 to discuss. The Bruce family house in London was Warwick House, St. James's, a tall red brick Williamite house. In November and December 1726 minor internal alterations were effected, including the insertion of a hall screen similar to the one that Burlington would design in 1730 for Northwick Park, Gloucestershire. In 1726 also Lord Bruce acquired the lease of a small estate from Lord Paget. It was called Round Coppice, and it provided Bruce with a convenient lodging on the coach trip from London to Marlborough. The Coppice is shown in Rocque's map (18), but no 18th century view has ever been discovered. It can, however, be reconstructed from Burlington's designs. An outline plan (19) shows a house flanked by offices set in a walled court with an exedra. The elevations to the house and offices are shown in some attractive designs by Burlington dated 1726/27, proposing a compelling petite lodging (20-21). Round Coppice was demolished in 1950, and the house at that time was late 18th century in character, although with severe elevations that looked Palladian. It may not be irrelevant that from a late drainage plan it is possible to reconstruct the length of front of this house as 106 feet, which is exactly the extent of Burlington three blocks. It looks, therefore, as if the Burlington house was rebuilt upon the foundations.

We may all prefer Round Coppice to Tottenham as a house to live in, but as architecture Tottenham is pre-eminent, showing that before 1721 or 1722 Burlington's precedents were the original works thought to be by Jones: Amesbury, Gunnersbury, The Queen's House, Wilton, the Somerset House Gallery, Chevening, and Covent Garden, spliced to models in Palladio's Four Books. He had learnt his method well from Campbell, but even this early was showing initiative and innovation, and within the space of a few years would discard all, thus the wings of Tottenham represent the late style of Burlington and Kent, a style that transcends Neo-Palladianism

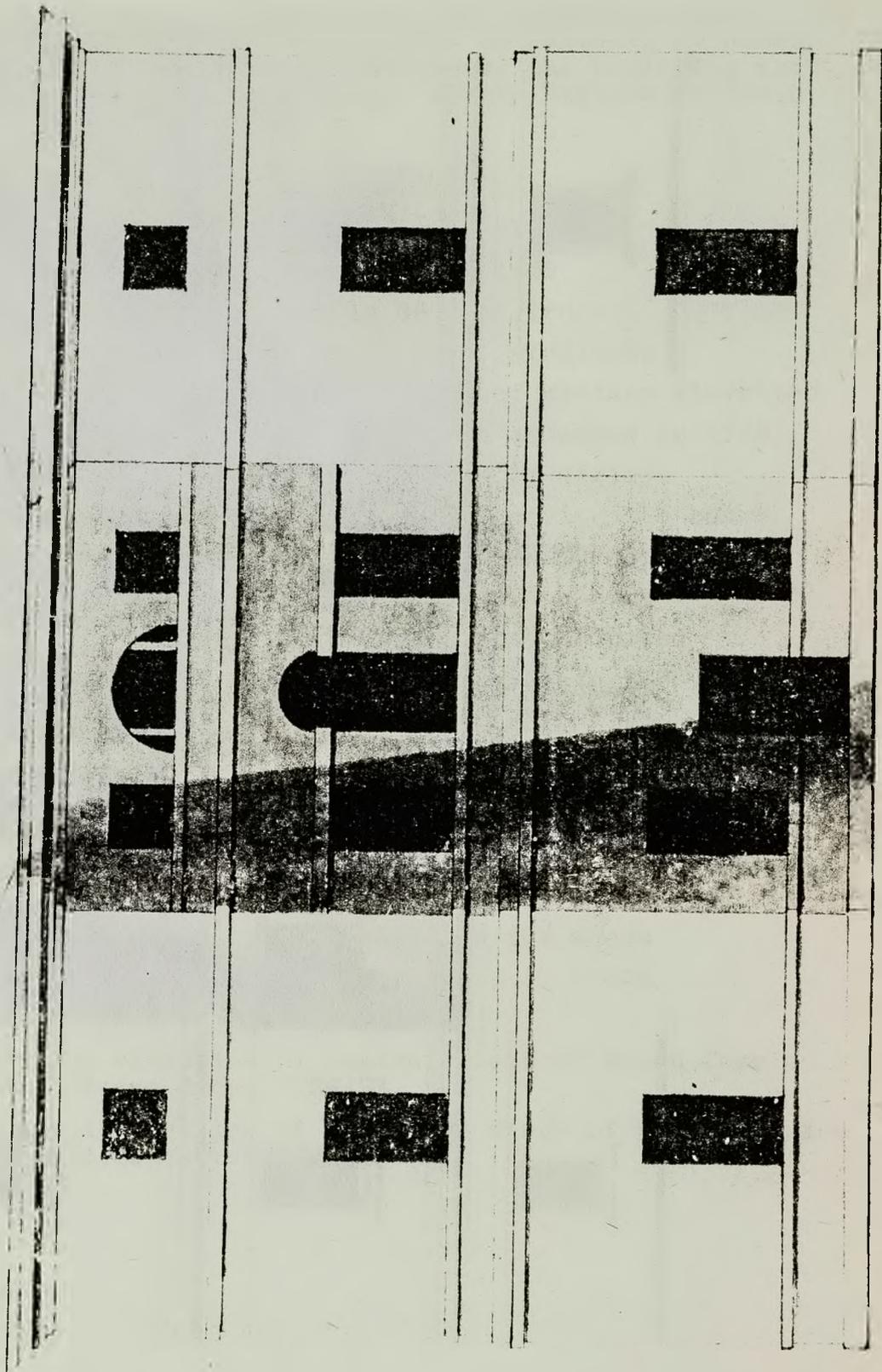
and is more properly Neo-classic, for antiquity is now evoked in the guise of the drawings by Palladio of Roman antiquity. Tottenham is in this sense the beginning and the end of his lordship's career as the British Palladio.

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2. Elevation, perhaps pre-February 1720
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4. Plan of Webb's Gunnersbury Park, Middlesex
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6. Plan of Tottenham with the wings as added in 1738
7. Outline plan of house with plans of offices
8. Elevation of kitchen and plan of offices to court
9. Elevation of entrance front signed and dated 1721
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12. Elevation of Tottenham, suggestively in 1730 with 1721 portico
13. Survey of Tottenham by Cundy in 1824
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15. Design for the ends of the 1738 wings
16. Design for the Octagonal Temple or deer house dated 1743
17. Design for a Banqueting House in the woods
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19. Outline plan of Round Coppice
20. Plan and elevation of central block of Round Coppice signed and dated 1726/27
21. Plan and elevation of fronts of wings of Round Coppice signed and dated 1726/27

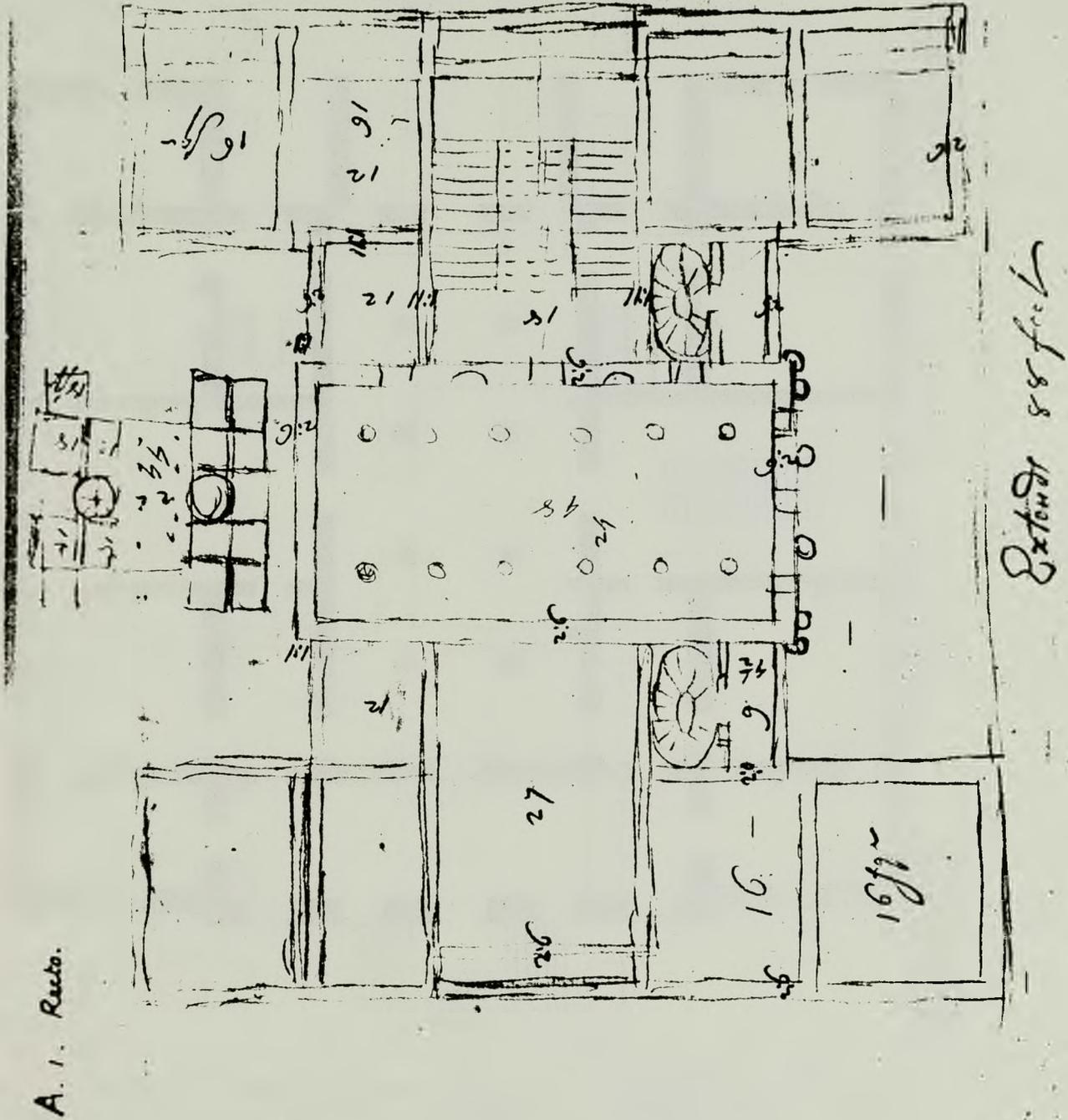


1. Elevation, perhaps pre-February 1720



View of North

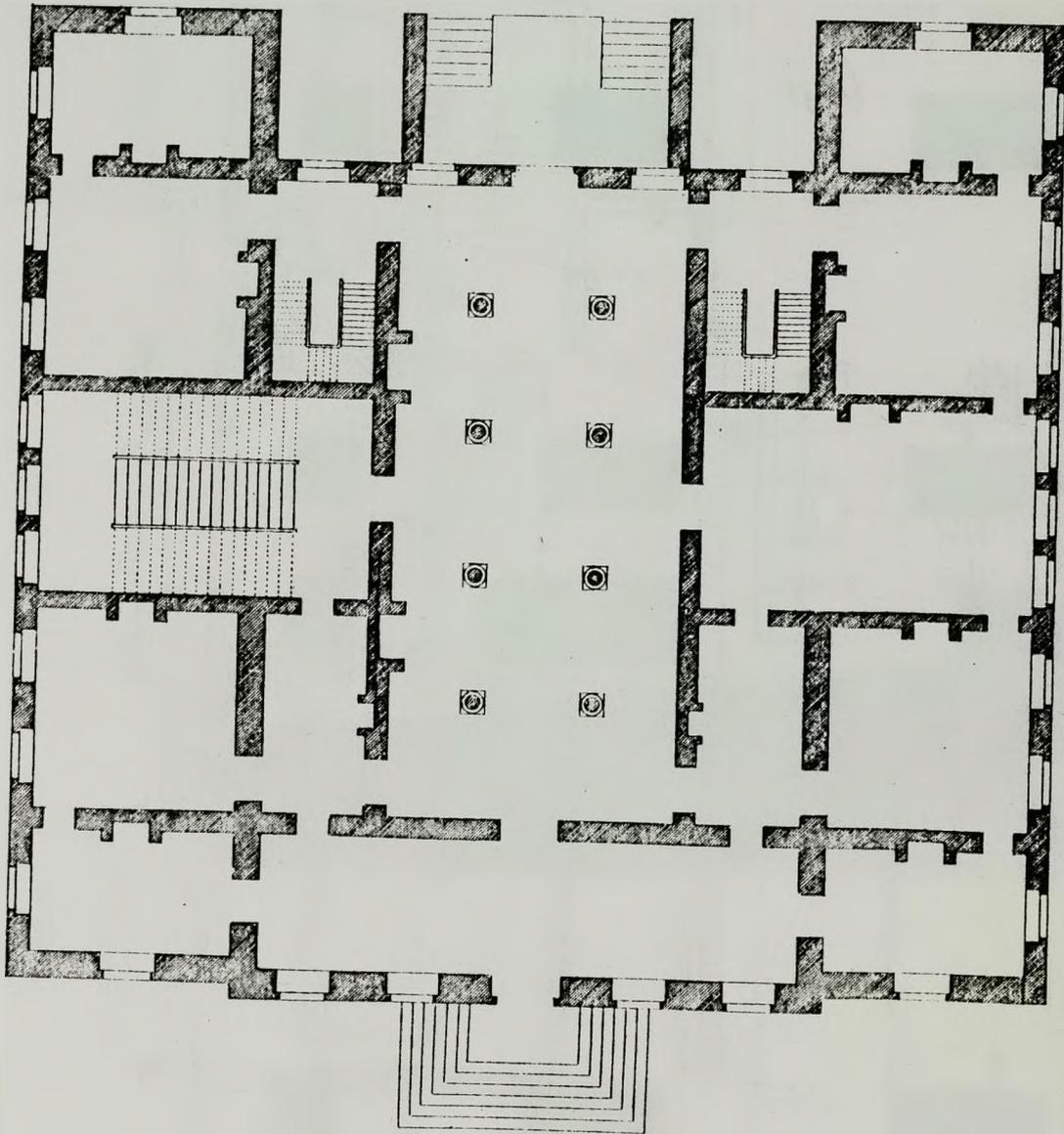
2. Elevation, perhaps pre-February 1720



A. 1. Recto.

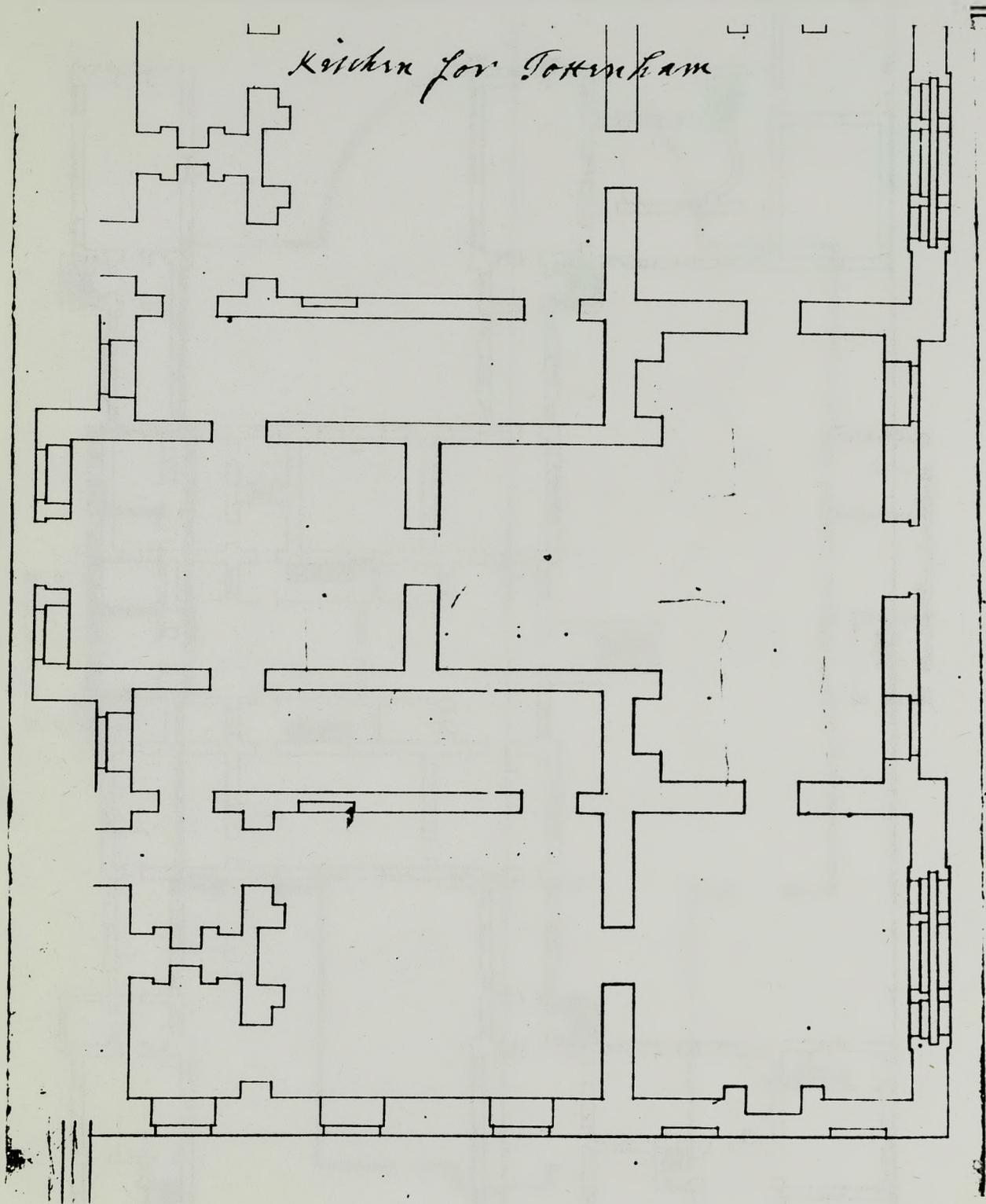
Prof. 88
E. 88 feet

3. The basilica plan with an 88 foot front

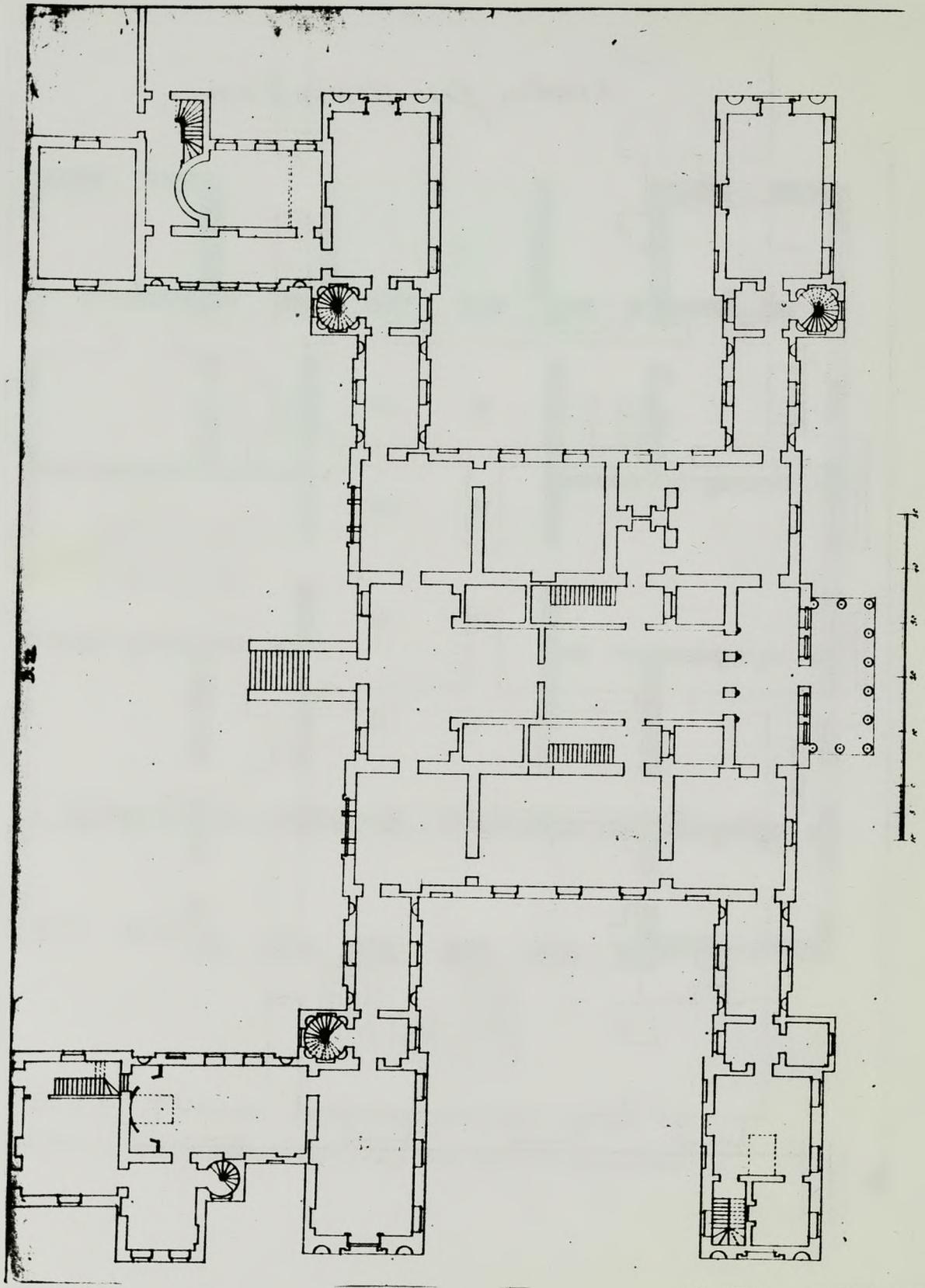


The plan of 1st story of Gunnersbury house
Plan du premier étage de la Maison De Gunnersbury

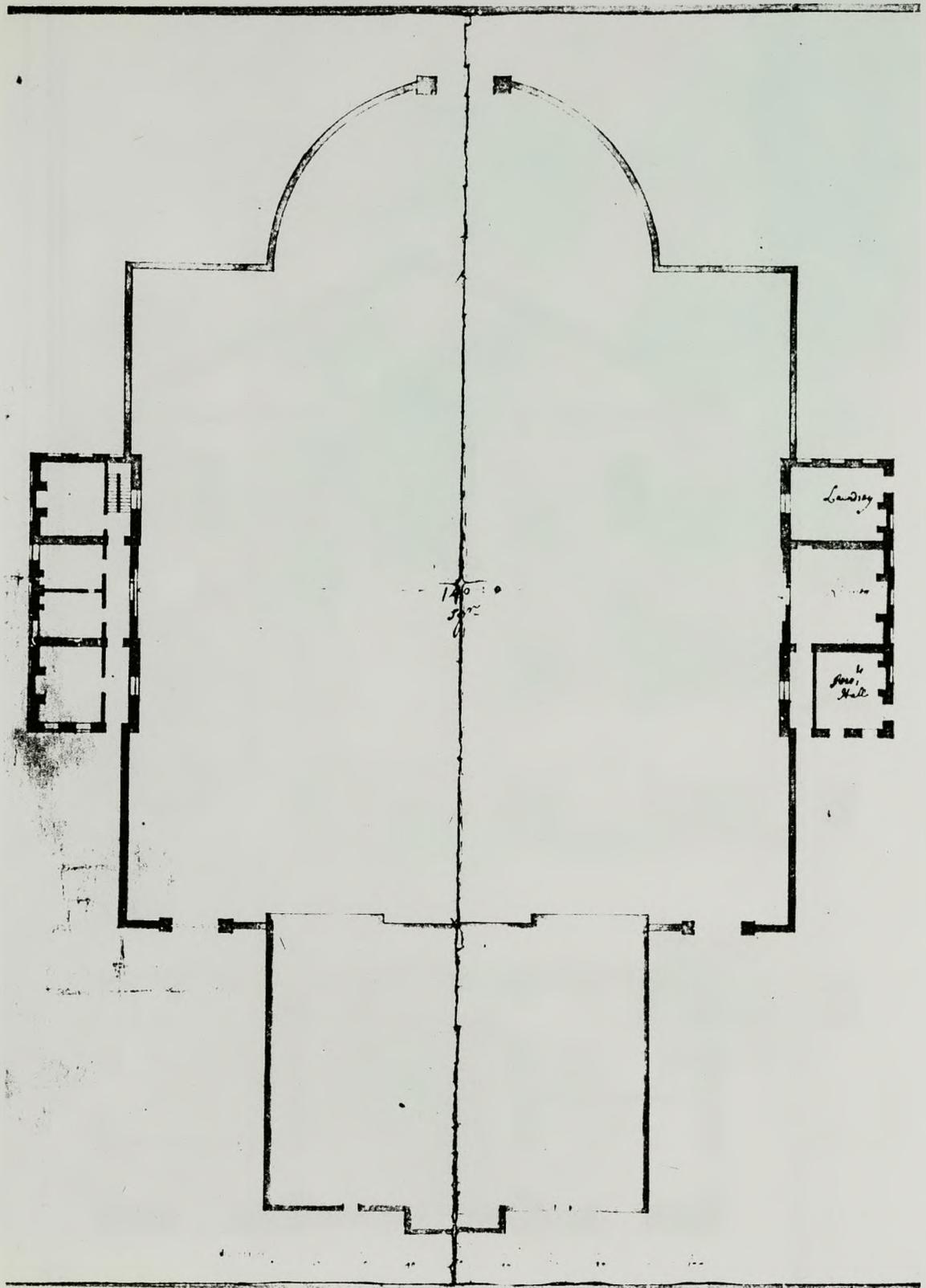
4. Plan of John Webb's Gunnersbury Park, Middlesex



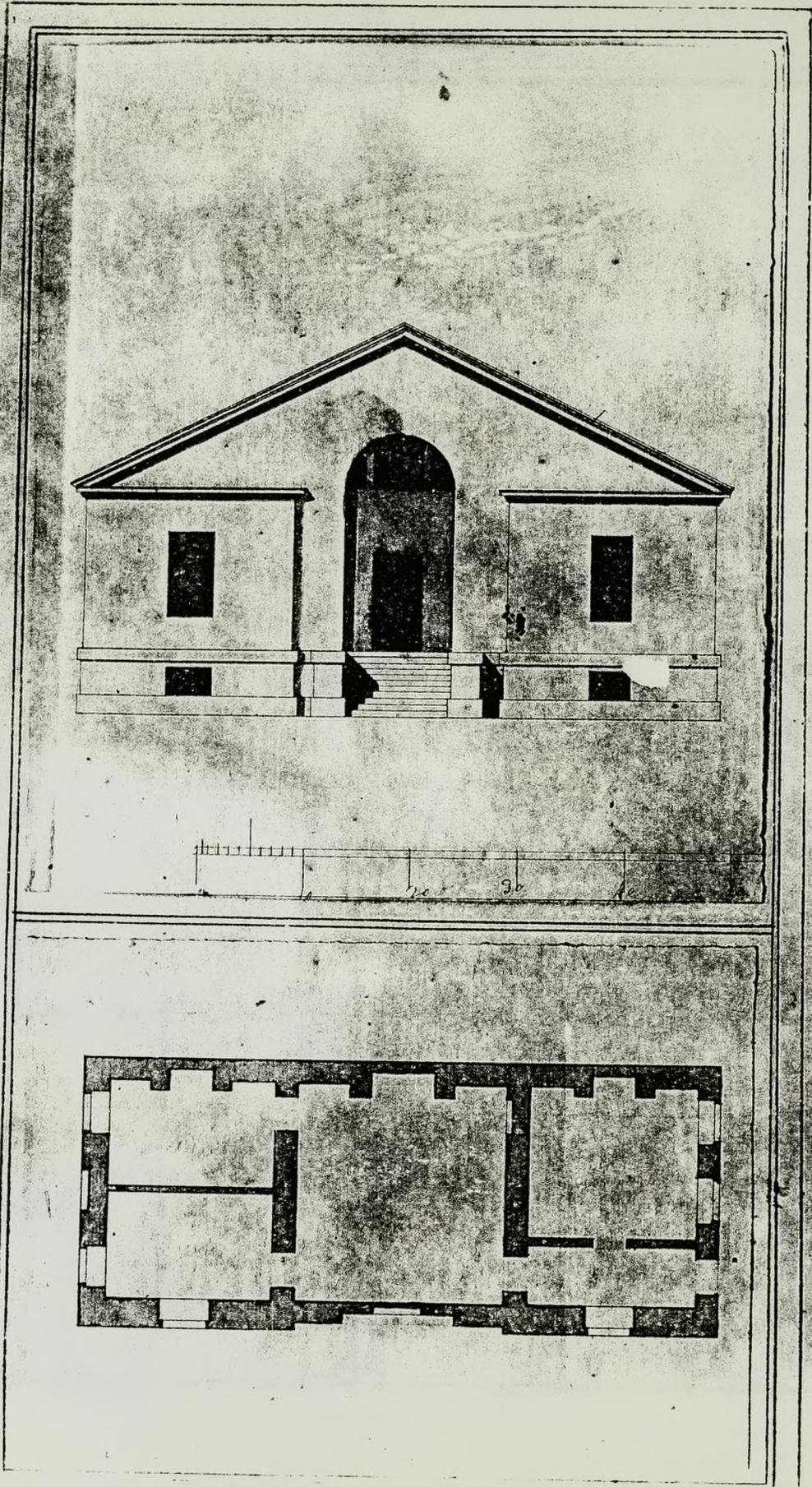
5. The first accepted plan on back of kitchen elevation



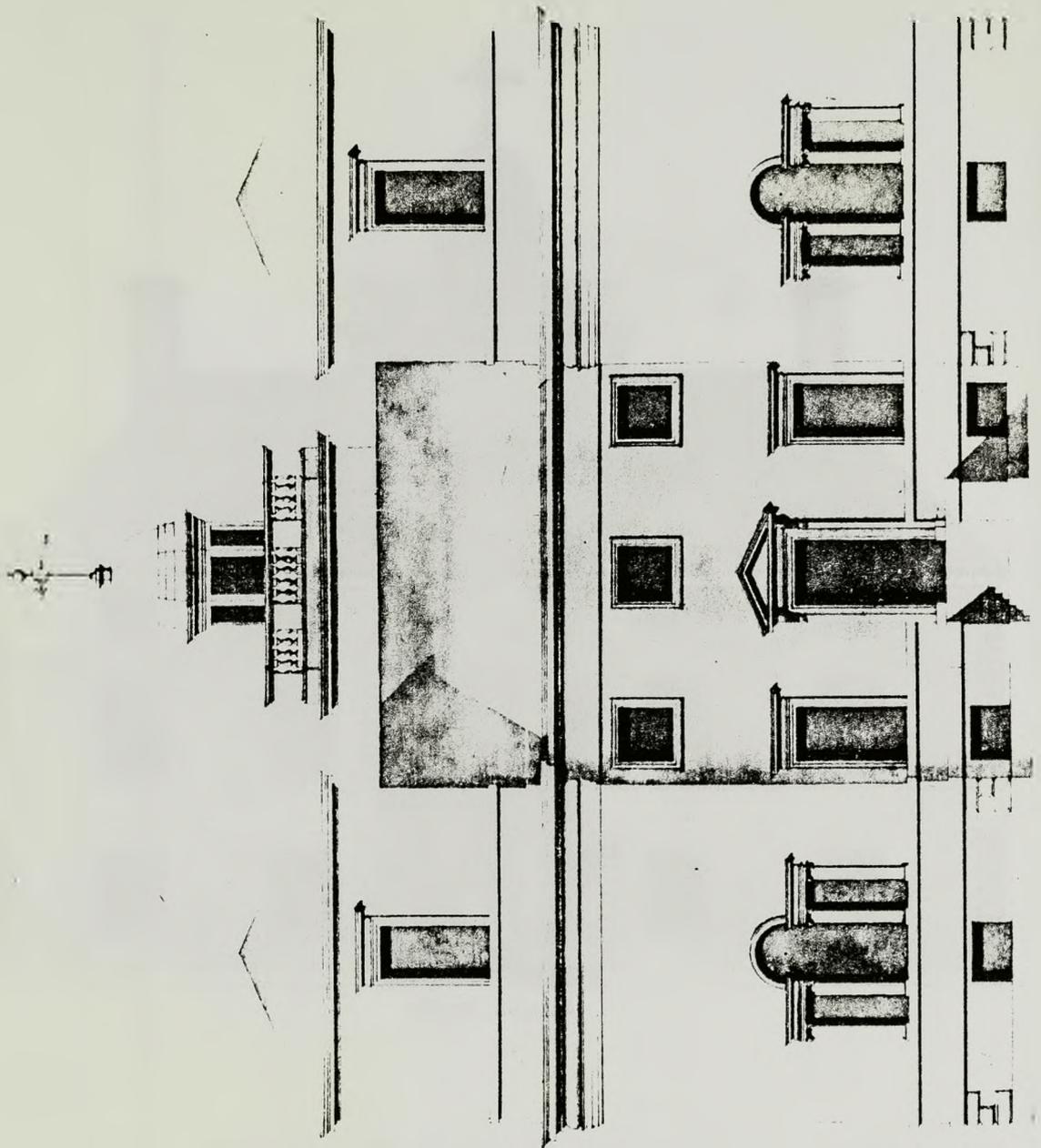
6. Plan of Tottenham with the wings as added in 1738



7. Outline plan of house with plans of offices

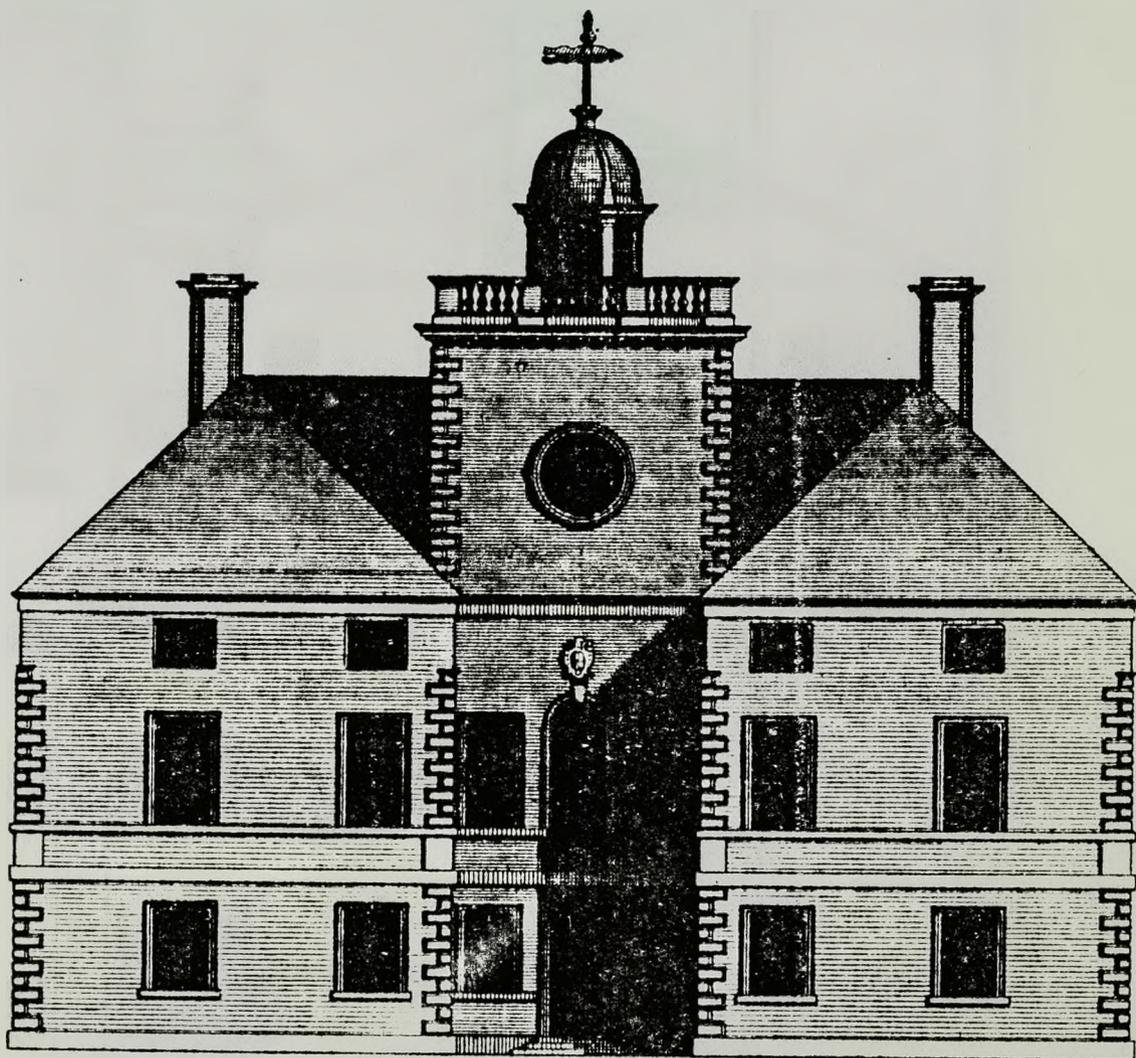


8. Elevation of kitchen and plan of offices to court



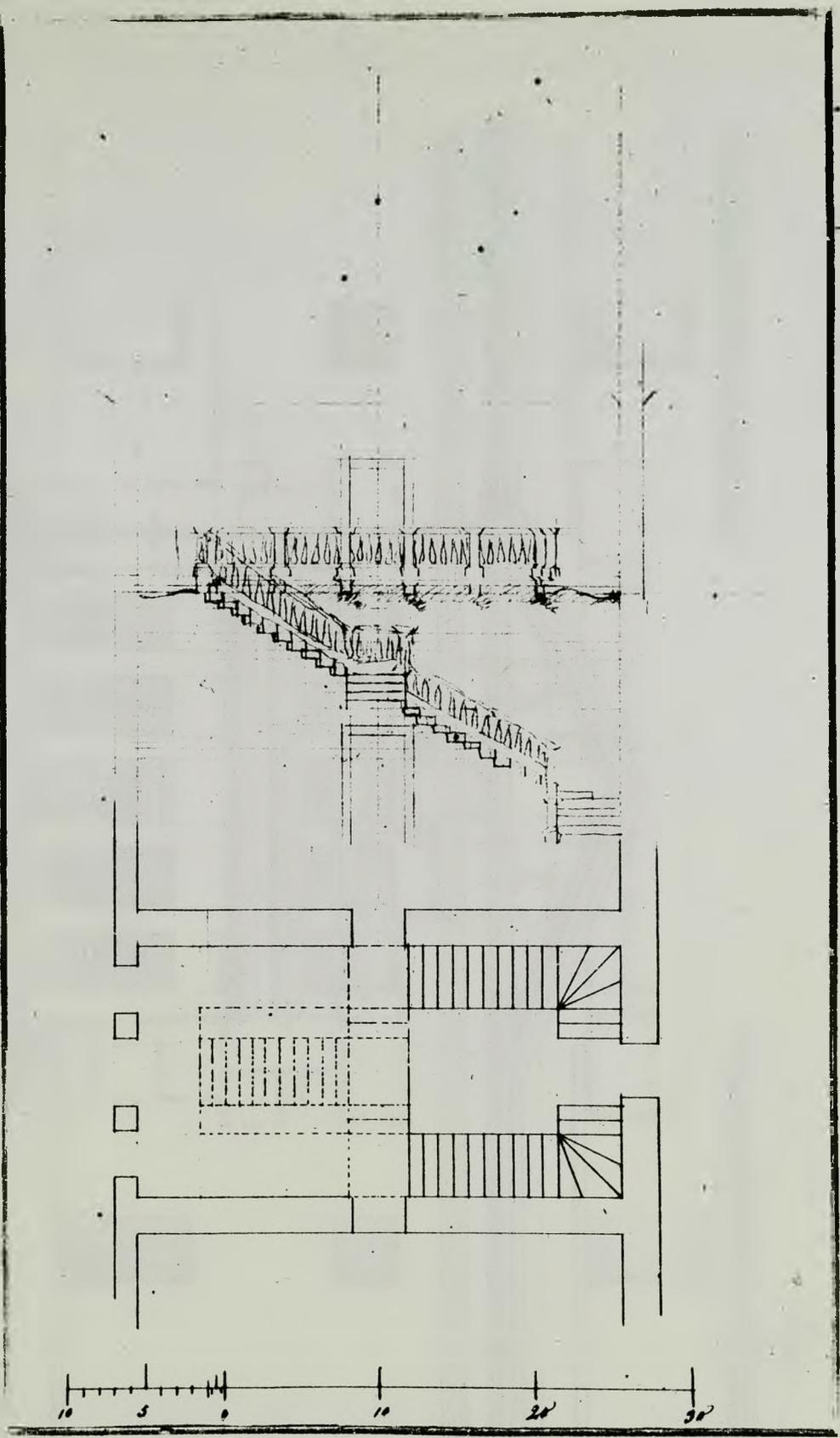
B.1

9. Elevation of entrance front signed and dated 1721

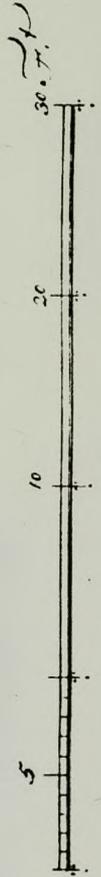
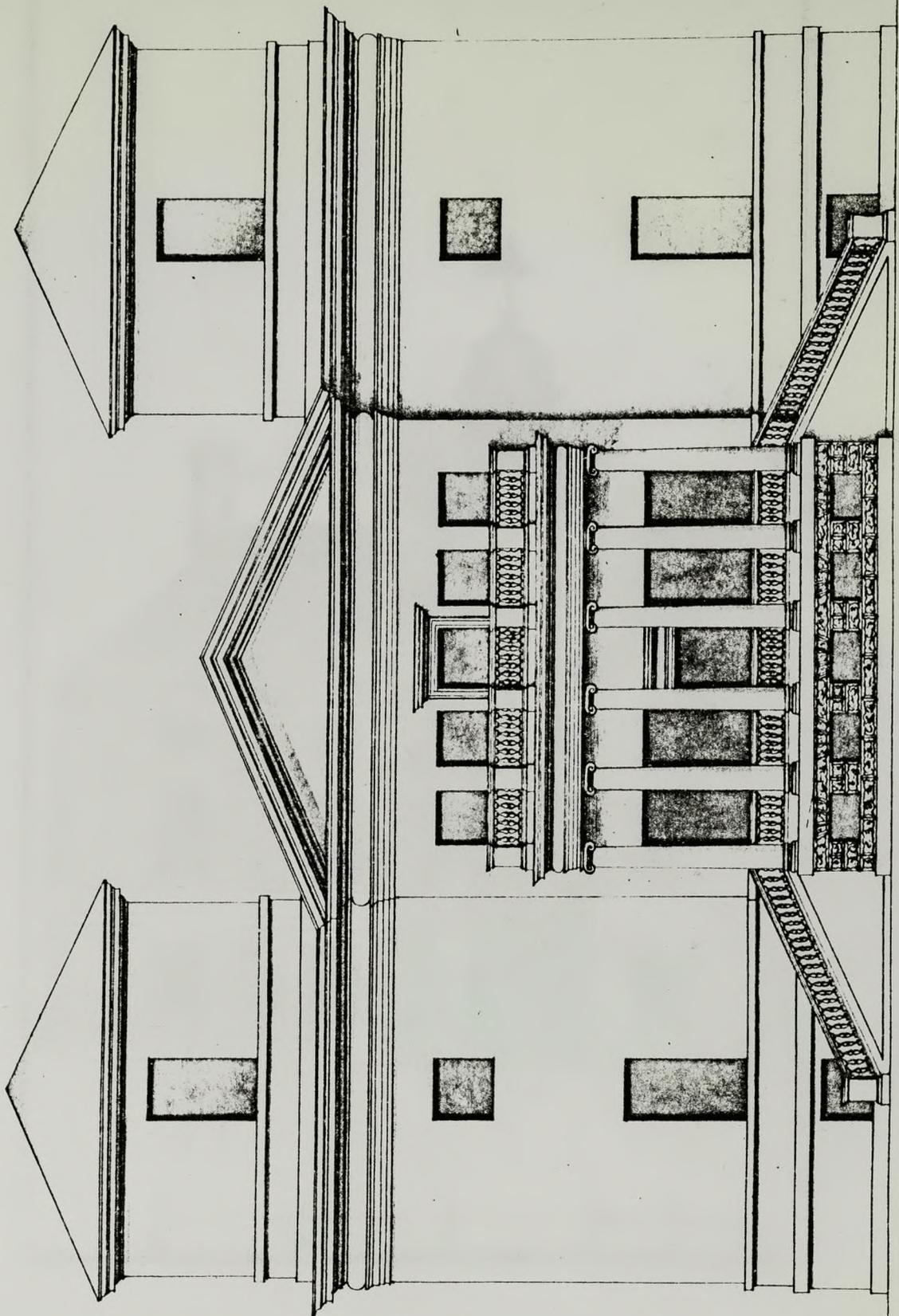


Extends 80 feet.

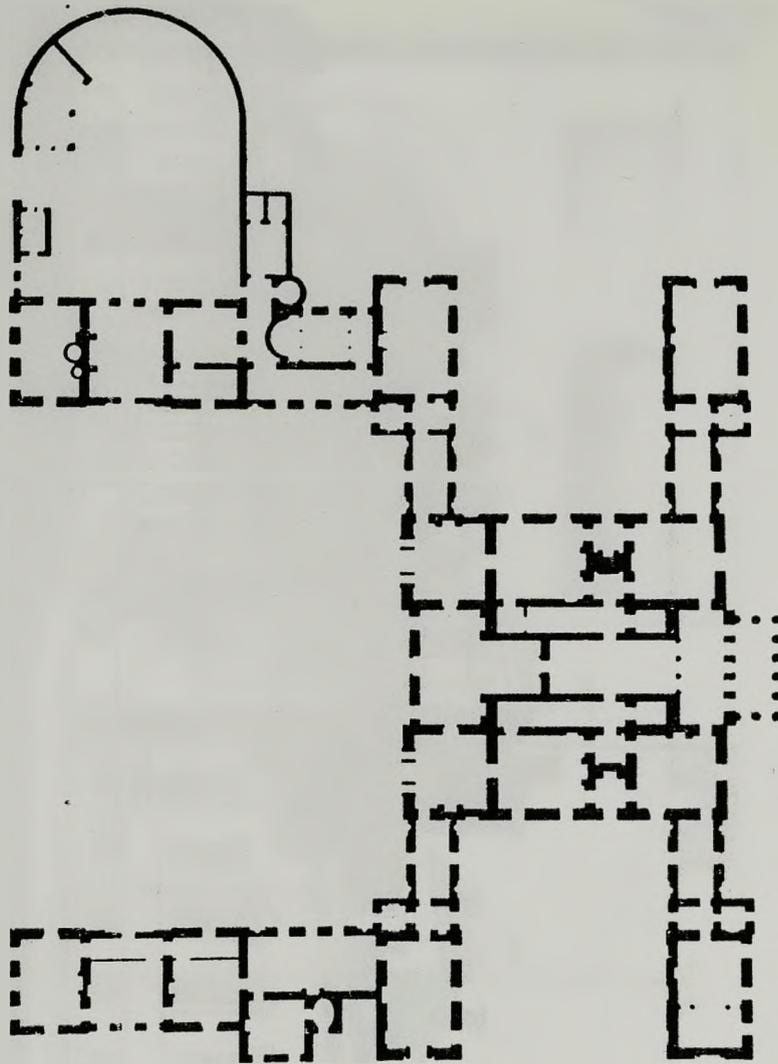
10. Elevation of back front of Webb's Amesbury



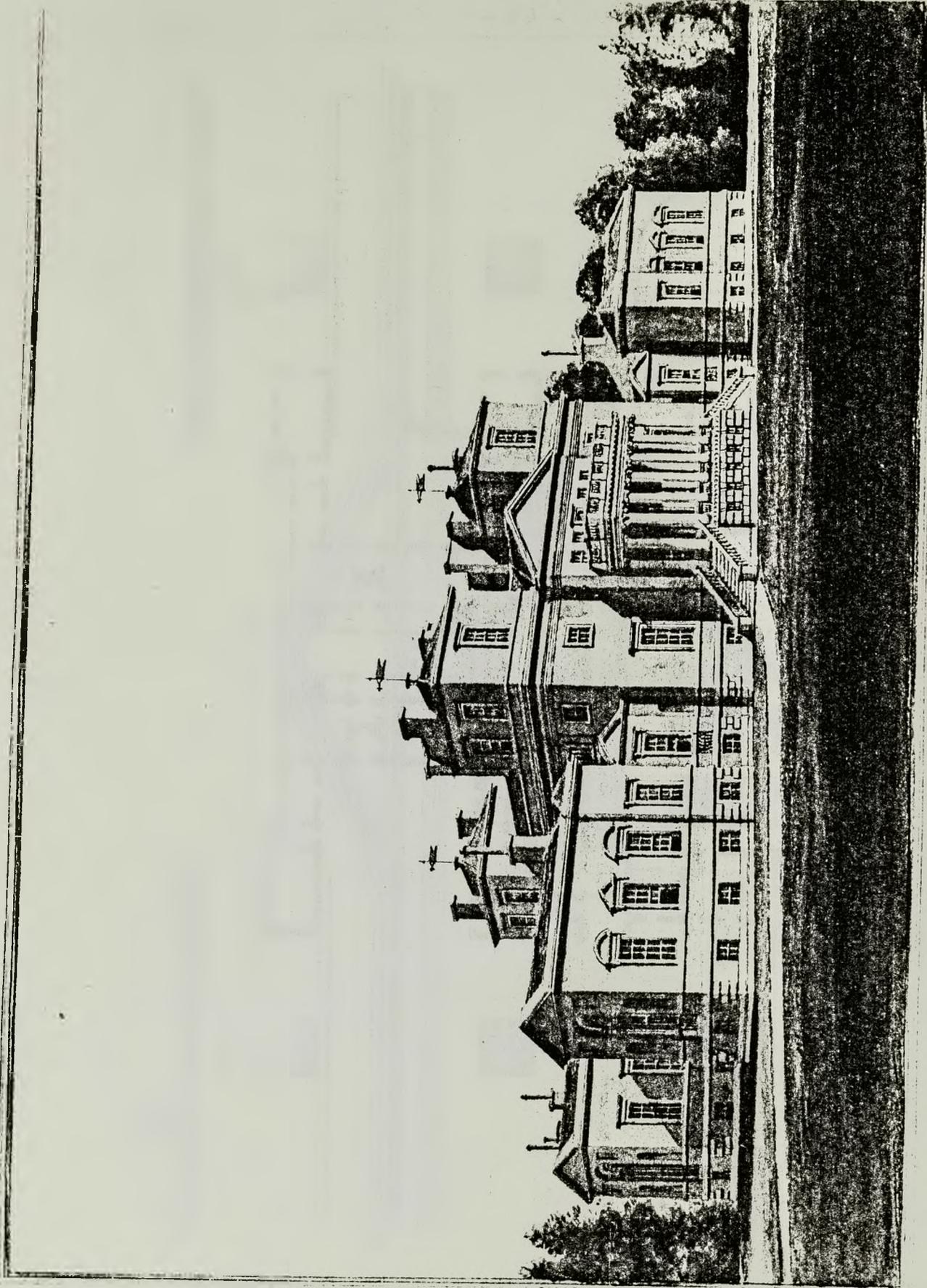
11. Plan and section of stairs as first proposed



12. Elevation of Tottenham, suggestively in 1730 with 1721 portico.

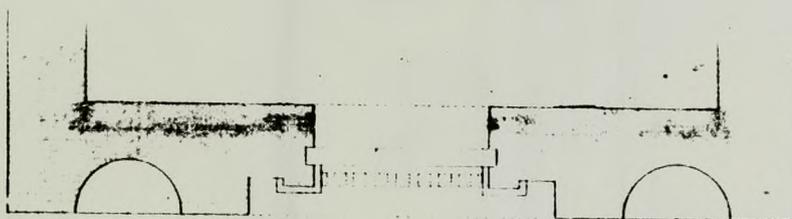
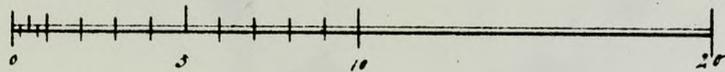
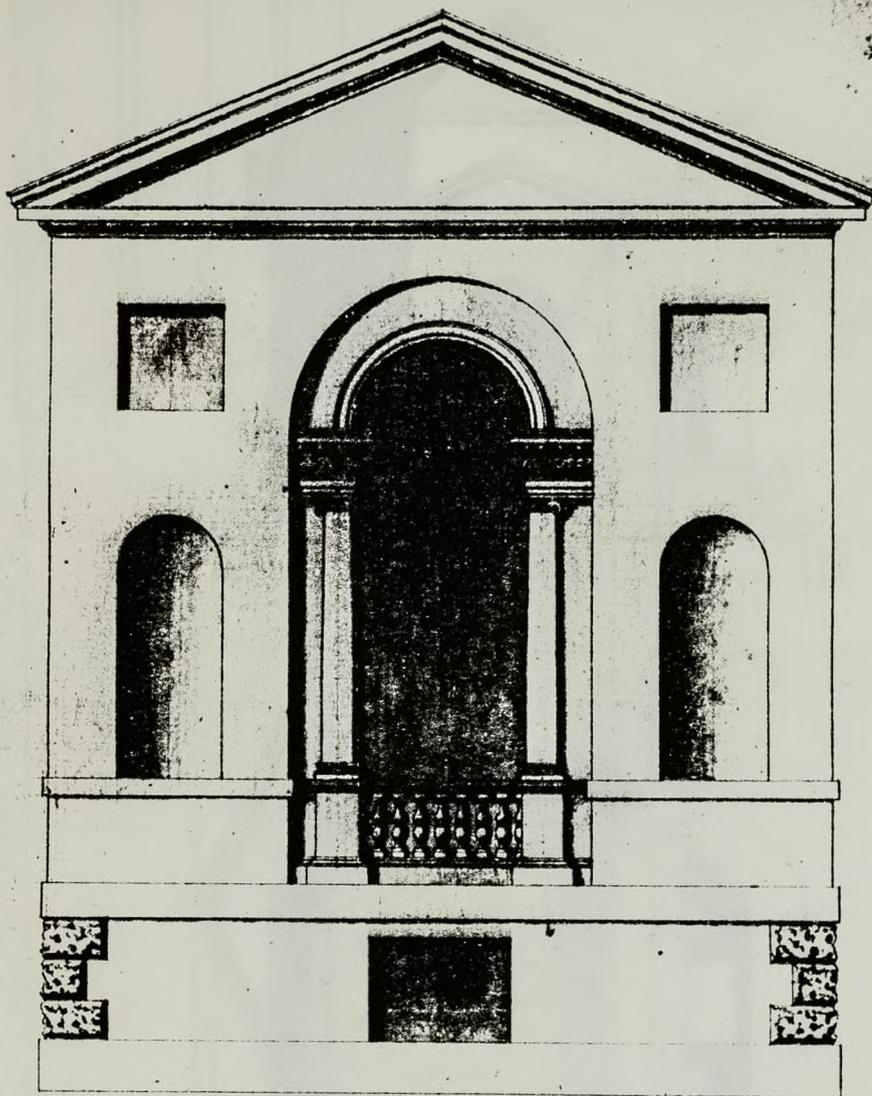


13. Survey of Tottenham by Cundy in 1824



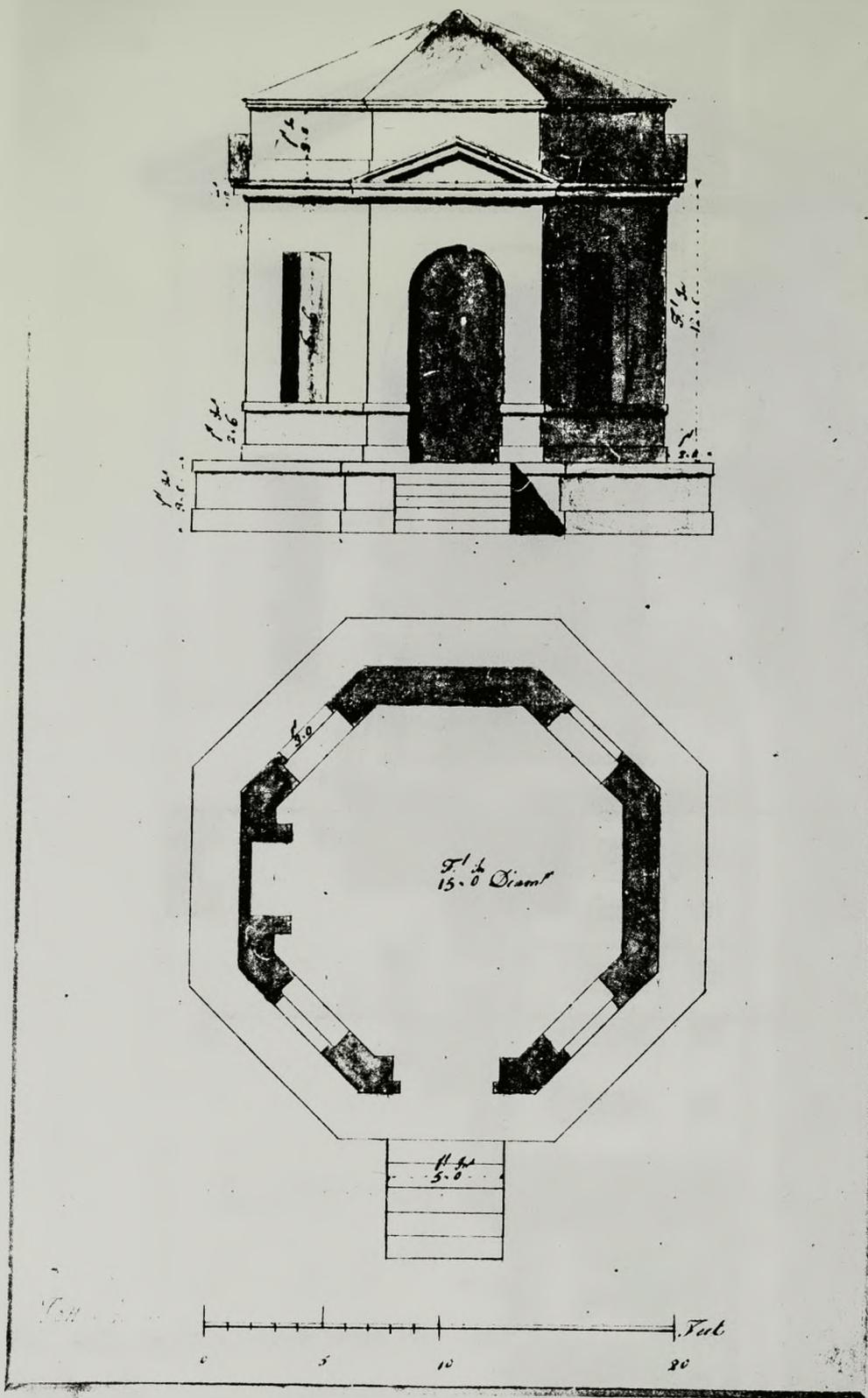
Tottenham Park Street. Wilkin.

14. View of Tottenham by John Buckler, shortly before 1824



*for Lord Bruce at Tottenham 1738
Burlinghame*

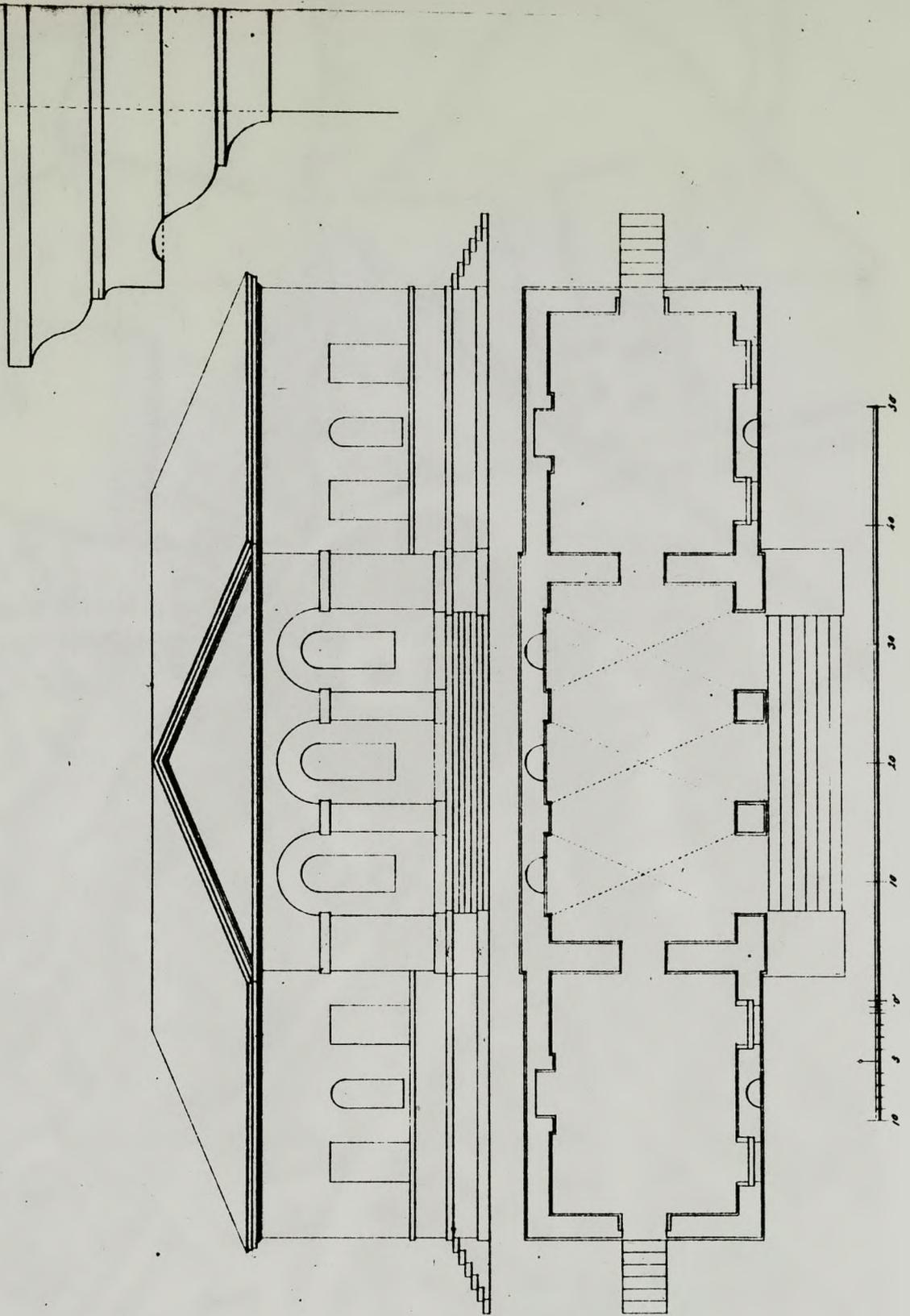
15. Design for the ends of the 1738 wings



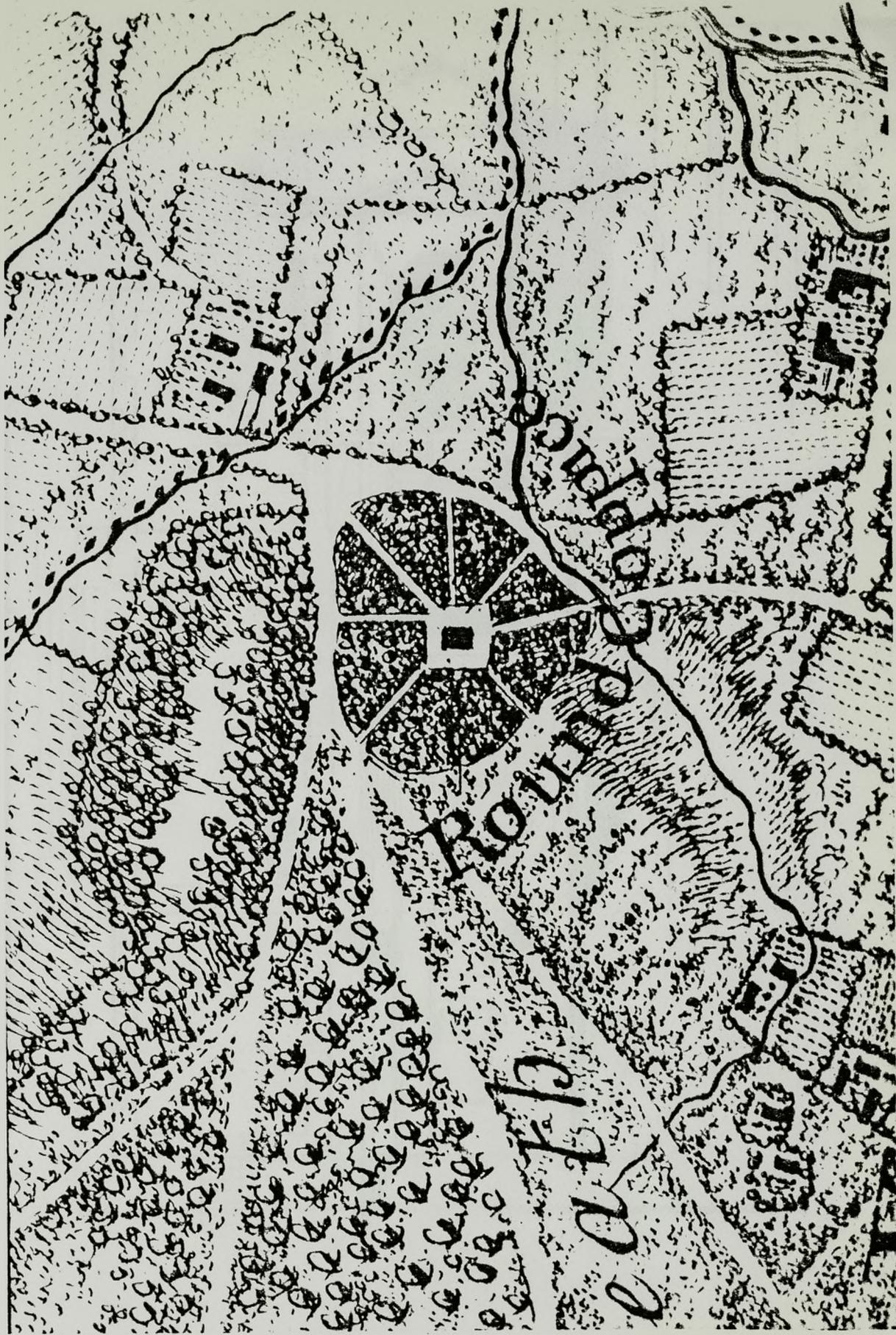
16. Design for the Octagonal Temple or Deer House, dated 1743

General view of the facade. Design

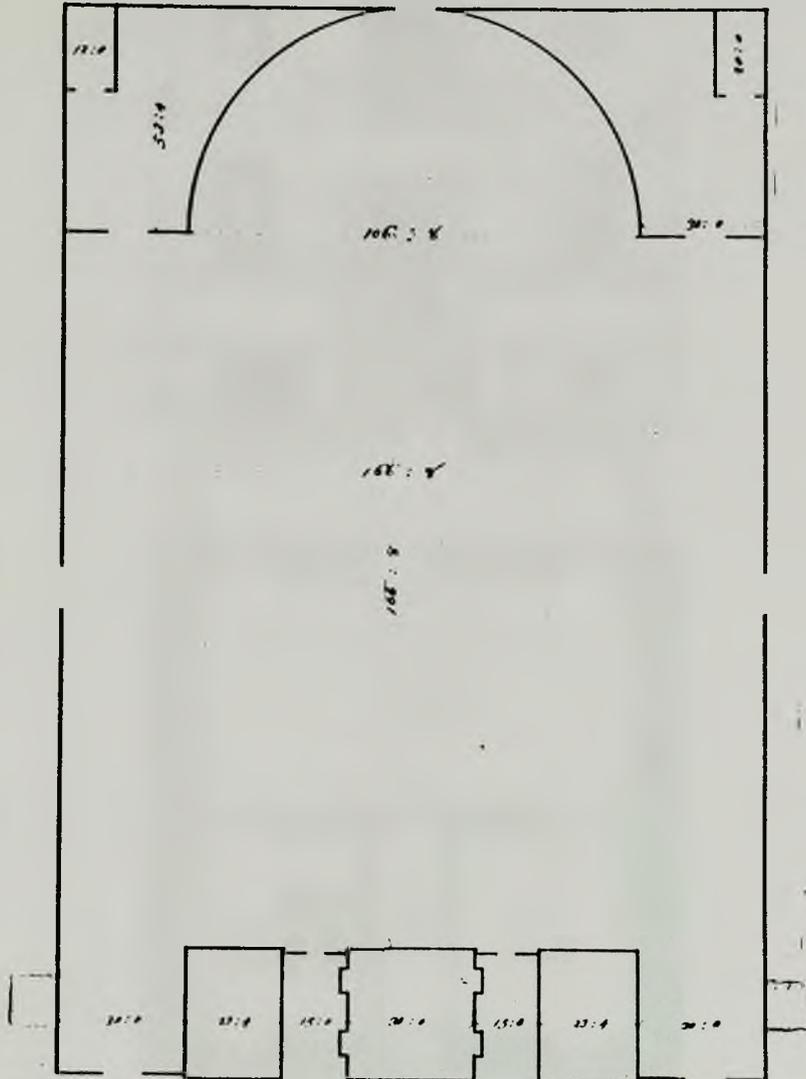
B. II



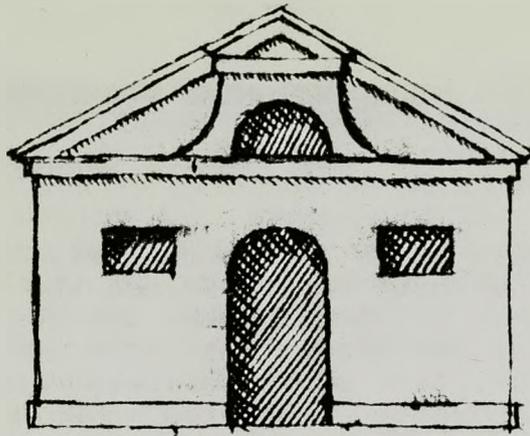
17. Design for a Banqueting House in the woods



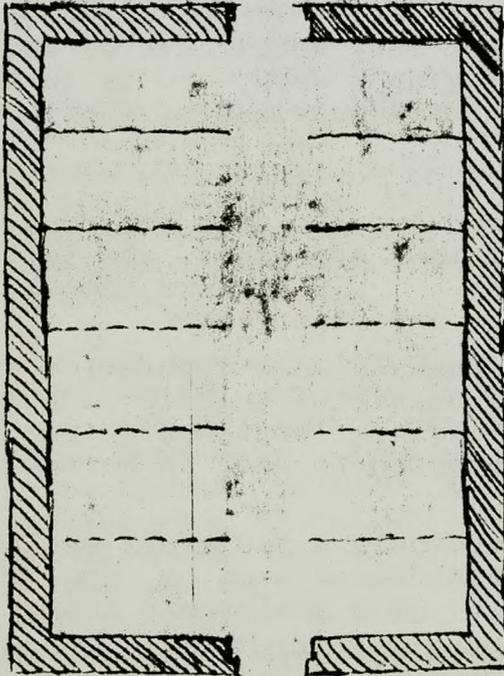
18. Round Coppice as mapped by Rocque in the 1740s



19. Outline plan of Round Coppice



Earl of Burlington
Janu 1726/7



21. Plan and elevation of fronts of wings of Round Coppice signed and dated 1726/7