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BURLINGTONIAN PUBLICATIONS

by Timothy Connor

It is difficult to go far among early 18th century books on architecture without coming across the name of Burlington. This is true in a literal sense for his name is frequently to be found on the second leaf as a dedication, or else soon after among the list of subscribers. But as Francis Drake said in his Eboracum, dedicated to Burlington in 1736,

'Dedications my Lord are in our days so commonly prostituted to venal purposes that they look more like petitions for charity than proper addresses . . .'

and he added that in this sort of application 'the patron's genius or taste was rarely consulted'. Subscriptions too, can be an inaccurate indication of a person's interests especially among the aristocracy, to many of whom appearance on these lists was a necessary part of the maintenance of social position. Even if one perseveres beyond the preliminaries however, many architectural authors find occasion to mention Burlington's name, or, as in the case of James Leoni, to dedicate drawings of their own invention to him.

Leoni referred to Burlington as one who had

'. . . revived and set into its true light, the glory of that illustrious architect, the follower of our Andrea Palladio who . . . has shewn himself a compleat Master of Magnificence and fine Taste'.

Burlington's unassailable reputation as a patron was established by the unanimous tribute of a multitude of writers, reaching its clearest statement, from one who was not personally indebted to him, in Horace Walpole's assertion that:

'Never was protection and great wealth more generously and judiciously diffused than by this great person, who had every quality of a genius and artist, except envy.'

Historians would nowadays point out that Burlington's wealth was certainly not limitless, and that even Burlington would have agreed that some of his swans were geese but that neither of these cavils seriously impaired his reputation.

As a patron of poets, Burlington was a subject of praise as early as 1716, when he was twenty-two. Among architects he was to wait for Campbell's few words in 1725, followed by Robert Morris in 1728, Leoni in 1729 and James Ralph in 1734. Thereafter praise was almost obligatory, and when it gave Burlington the credit for the revival of true architecture. It lasted half a century to the age of John Gwynn in 1766. Robert Adam, whose Works published during the 1770s contain many penetrating observations on his predecessors, made no reference to Burlington at all.

My purpose this morning is to assess the role of Burlington's activity as a publisher in the establishment of this impressive reputation. It is I think, worth trying to reconstruct, even from the scanty evidence as survives, what Burlington intended to publish for, because of the seminal role his work had in the neo-Palladian revival during the reign of George II. It is of course impossible to separate the impact of his books clearly from the fame of his own buildings, from the glamour of his status, or from the effect of his efficient use of patronage in appointments to office. It may be that the effect of his books was less than has been asserted, and that the reason for this may lie in the uncertain lead and inadequate advice which they presented.

Books clearly interested Burlington: he was an avid collector of rare books from an early age, and he went on buying long after his first years of enthusiasm. Five of his copies of Palladio were bought after 1735, and three in the 1740s. As a subscriber to current publications his activity was enormous. A recent computation reveals that his name appeared on 154 lists, a figure surpassed only by such omnivores as Edward Harley or Sir Hans Sloane. Dedications to him, however ambiguous their intention, include eight works of architecture. Others, such as John Areron's Treatise, published in Dublin in the year following Burlington's death mention him respectfully in the preface. Among these it is necessary to distinguish between those books where Burlington's interest was active, as most clearly in Ware's translation of Palladio, and those where he was the more or less passive recipient of praise.

Leaving aside the few books in which Burlington's interest is obvious and well known, we must look to see how far he concerned himself with publishing projects outside his own strictly Palladian interests. Writing from the Artificial Stone Warehouse in Lambeth in 1730, Richard Holt expressed his gratitude to one whom he called 'the nursing father of all the Arts and Sciences' for the encouragement which he had received in the manufacture of his patented Artificial Stone - a precursor of Coade's Stone - and possibly also for protection against a 'certain pretending architect' (perhaps Batty Langley) who had tried to find out his secret. Beyond this however there is nothing to show Burlington's interest in building materials, in a period which was in any case little given to constructional innovation.

An enterprise closer to Burlington's heart would have been Robert Castell's enquiry into the ideas of Pliny and others on the layout of the classical villa. This led to the Villas of the Ancients, grandly published in 1728. Very little is known of Castell, and he died in a debtors prison in 1729. His dedication of the Villas to Burlington is distant and formal in tone:

'I shall think myself happy, if while I am assisted by the pieces of Varro and Pliny (two Persons of eminent Rank in the Roman Senate), I may be thought worthy of the Patronage of my Lord Burlington, who is of no less Eminence in our own.'

This is, I suggest, not the sentence of a man already enjoying any of Burlington's assistance, but of someone who hoped that his book might win it. The Villas of the Ancients cannot itself be regarded as a Burlingtonian publication in the strict sense, but only as an application for support. The application was successful. Castell's main interest was the translation of Vitruvius, and although he died before this was ever published, there is evidence to show that he was to include in it the notes made by Inigo Jones in his Barbaro edition, a book which was then owned by Lord Burlington and to which the Villas of the Ancients may have won him access.

Other dedications reveal Burlington in the role of the orthodox aristocratic patron of the day, receiving the unsolicited praise from writers in works which might not interest him very greatly, or the hack efforts of publishers intent on utilising a fashionable name. A clear cut case of the former is that of Edward Malie, about whom even less is known than Castell, who presented Burlington with a beautiful handwritten manuscript of a translation of an obscure early 17th century Italian treatise on an instrument for architectural drawing. This was printed in 1737 as A new and Accurate Method of Delineating all the Parts of the different Orders, By means of a well contriv'd and most easily manag'd Instrument. Although Burlington accepted the manuscript and the dedication, this book can hardly have been central to his interests, for though ingenious it concerned merely the mechanics of drawing, as had Carwitham's Architectonick Sector a few years earlier. Burlington had expert assistants for that very purpose, and this book was in any case adapted to draw the orders according to Scamozzi rather than Palladio.

Malie's work was sufficiently inconspicuous to antagonise no one; where the translation of Palladio was concerned, it was clearly a different matter. It had long been recognised that Dubois's 1715 translation was less than perfect, if only because the Leoni plates which accompanied it were so inaccurate. Campbell's attempt of 1728 to provide a more careful version got no further than the first book. Had Burlington been anxious to spread accurate knowledge of Palladio widely, it is perhaps surprising that he appears to have done nothing about what might be called an authorised version until prodded into it by the practical efforts of Messrs. Cole and Hoppus, whose Andrea Palladio's Architecture appeared in 1735. The text had at least the merit of being based on Palladio's own, rather than (as was the case with Dubois), the 1650 French translation of Freart, but Hoppus's style was long-winded and the plates were copied either from Campbell, or from Leoni, including his most obvious sol-ecisms. Insult was added to injury by the inclusion of over a dozen of Ware's Designs of Inigo Jones, copied and added by Cole where there was room on the page. In circumstances such as these it is not surprising that the book's dedication to Burlington was as brief as it was obsequious.

I have taken some time to show that many of the books with which Burlington may be associated have in fact little connection with his own activities. All these works tried to exploit his reputation rather than to pay tribute to the man or to the architect. The case of what may justly be regarded as strictly Burlingtonian works is quite different. Here dedications provide little help: of the five books only one is dedicated to him, another to the king and three have no dedication at all. These works are almost all concerned with the publication of Burlington's collection of architectural drawings of Palladio and Jones, and it is on this sequence of books, from Kent's Designs of Inigo Jones of 1728 to Vardy's Designs of Inigo Jones and Mr. William Kent of 1744 that Burlington's intentions may be more truly assessed.

From as early as 1720 Burlington had many of his drawings copied, and in some cases completed by Flitcroft. Some were engraved, not necessarily with a view to eventual publication, but partly to protect the originals from the close scrutiny they received. Burlington's payments to Hulsberg are recorded but not those to Fourdrinier who replaced Hulsberg when the latter was unable to continue from illness. Burlington was clearly generous in allowing interested connoisseurs access to his collections, even to the extent of giving drawings away, as he did to Sir John Clerk of Penycuik in 1727 when he presented him with drawings from the now vanished set of Jonesian designs for a palace for the Earl of Strafford, presumably for Wentworth Woodhouse or Jugginstown.

Even among his books which incorporated Burlington's collection, most were not his books, and these reflect the interests of his acolytes rather than himself. Kent's Designs of Inigo Jones depended significantly on Burlington, not least in gaining access to the drawings of Whitehall palace in the collection of Dr. George Clarke at Oxford, which Kent was the first to publish. The job of editing these was skillfully executed, and it followed the contemporary belief that the Banqueting Hall was part of the palace project, whereas the modern authorities suggest that Jones's own scheme involved the demolition of the twenty-year old hall. It is difficult to believe that the selection and organisation of the 50 plates of the palace was not Burlington's responsibility. But the book was prominently also an advertisement for Kent who was then emerging as an architect. That this change of course was effected with Burlington's encouragement may be probable, but the book needs to be seen together with Ware's pattern book of 1733, and Vardy's of 1744. All were part of an 18th century custom by which young architects published in order to capture attention. As Robert Adam put it in 1755, the object of such books was to 'introduce (one) into England with an uncommon splendour'; in the case of Kent, Ware, and Vardy, the purpose was to demonstrate that they were all in touch with the fount of correct taste at Burlington House. The book was a commercial venture. Burlington certainly

subscribed for '12 setts', and his entire family, from the Dowager Countess to Lord Bruce and Burlington's unmarried sisters all gave their names for a copy. But 405 copies at perhaps three guineas each would easily have covered the costs of publication. And Kent's name was on the title page, and Kent's head on the vignette above the Advertisement.

While the skill displayed in the presentation of the Whitehall drawings was considerable, and it included the redrawing of details considered offensive to 18th century standards of correctness, much of the rest of the Designs of Inigo Jones appears to lack editorial control. The engraving of one of the plates of Chiswick is particularly careless. There seems little overall purpose in the collection; in the second volume the preponderant position of the Whitehall designs in the first is taken by some of John Webb's most grandiose theoretical drawings, and both contain a few designs by Burlington and Kent. The reaction of the books' potential users, certainly of the 32 per cent of subscribers who were artisans, may be seen in Langley's comment in 1740. He found the designs too small, a fault which:

'The Designs of Inigo Jones, and all other Masters of this Time are defective in and consequently are of no more use to Workmen, than so many pictures to gaze at, not so many Rules or Examples to work by or after, unless to such, who understand the architecture, as well as their Authors who designed them.'

Isaac Ware, who started off his long and varied career as an architectural publisher with The Designs of Inigo Jones and Others to establish his own credentials, later worked on the translation of Palladio which in its scholarly accuracy epitomises those of his patron. It was Burlington who owned the unrivalled collection of Palladio's works and who added the 1616 Venice edition of the Quattro Libri and Freart's important French translation of 1650 containing the extra plates to his collection in November 1735, when Ware may be supposed to be at work on the translation. He was openly grateful to Burlington for:

'Your giving me free access to Your study, where many of the original drawings of Palladio, besides those which compose this work, are preserved, and taking upon you the trouble of revising the translation and correcting it with your own hands.'

Ware's main task, apart from commercial management of the publication, was to re-engrave the plates, so that his own provide a very different, sharper and less richly textured effect from the original, echoing the way in which neo-Palladianism purified its sources. Burlington was closely involved in the work, and in April 1737 allowed Ware the authority to print a notice disassociating him entirely from the Hoppus translation of 1735. Kent, who provided a characteristically florid tail-piece, kept him informed of its progress by letter. The book finally appeared in June 1739.

In this impressive sequence of publications, only one work was issued under Burlington's own name, the Fabbriche Antiche, of which the title page is dated 1730, and it is here that one may find the most direct indication of Burlington's attitude to publication. Unfortunately the background to the book is poorly documented, so that one must rely almost entirely on the book itself.

The Fabbriche Antiche consists of 26 engraved plates. Apart from the title page and a brief preface, these scrupulously reproduce the Palladian drawings without their inscriptions, and bistre provides a convincing likeness to faded ink. The drawings are of Roman Baths, their elevations, plans, sections, a few details and two perspective views. Apart from the preface, written in Italian, there is no text, or even a list of contents. The choice of drawings is surprisingly arbitrary. There is no matching plan for the first of the Roman baths to be illustrated, the Bath of Agrippa, although Burlington possessed two possible versions. Later on in the book there appear two part plans of other baths which have nothing at all to do with the rest of the drawings illustrated, and the sequence is in any case interrupted by seven plates given over to Composite and Corinthian capitals and entablatures, some of which must have appeared remarkably similar to each other, even to the cognoscenti at Burlington House, while others were not from Roman Baths at all. Only the plates of elevations have any identifying title, otherwise there is no explanation.

The subject matter of the Roman Baths was erudite, and Burlington made no concessions to render it accessible. Scholars and archaeologists like Scipione Maffei were delighted, but there can have been few like him. Indeed, according to Vertue, who saw the material at Chiswick before it was published, Burlington never intended to part with more than 20 copies (the copy from which these slides were taken was presented by the Earl to the Topham library in 1740). Like the sumptuous set of eight plates of Chiswick which were made at this time, the circulation of the Fabbriche Antiche was intentionally limited. No effort was made to publish it with the help of booksellers or the usual advertisement in the press, and the lack of a subscription list suggests that the costs were borne by Burlington himself.

The books I have so far discussed are heterogeneous in subject matter as much as they are in size or author. They may present an ideal, but they do not present a programme, and not all make any attempt to reach an audience. For any statement of the theory upon which neo-Palladianism was based, one must look outside the clique which Hawksmoor referred to merely as 'Chiswick', to writers like Robert Morris, or one must wait for the summing up offered by Ware in the late 1750s in the Complete Body of Architecture, a book which was decisively conditioned by influences, English and European, to which the author responded in the 20 years after the period I am considering. In these circumstances

it is perhaps not surprising that readers then as much as now have taken their ideas of Burlington's Palladianism, not from an architect, but from a poet.

No architectural reform in English History has been so fortunate in its spokesman as that presided over by Lord Burlington. If Kent's Designs of Inigo Jones says little, and the Fabbriche Antiche says nothing at all, Pope's Epistle to the Earl of Burlington, published in December 1731, spread his ideas widely, and it conditions powerfully posterity's view of Burlington's activity. Intended to accompany the projected second volume of the Fabbriche Antiche, for which only one plate seems to have survived, the poem comes at the end of the main phase of Burlingtonian publication, from 1727 to 1731, leaving only Ware's Palladio a few years later. Why this activity ended so comparatively early is not clear, but the prolonged financial difficulty of Burlington's estate, and his preoccupation with the projects for the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament may suggest an answer.

For all the genuine affection between the two men, Pope's Epistle, also entitled On the Use of Riches, is a classic example of the sophisticated flattery of a noble patron, called by others the Apollo of the Arts. Although this accolade was certainly deserved, it is perhaps natural to assume that this patronage extended further, and was more consciously directed than was the case, and this assumption may be tested by reference to 'his' architectural books. Too often Burlington has been credited with control where he exercised only interest, as in the case of Leoni's translations, or Castell's Villas. But even where his involvement was close, the Burlingtonian books reveal an absence of editorial control, due partly to their heterogeneous nature, which suggests that there was no clear plan to make Burlington's collection accessible intellectually. When Pope said therefore of Lord Burlington that his just and noble rules would

Fill half the world with imitating Fools
Who random drawings from your sheets shall take,
And of one beauty many blunders make,

it has been reasonably assumed that this was entirely the fault of the Langleys and the Coles and the Sayers who most obviously plagiarised. It seems however that in his books, Burlington who as an architect was a fastidious connoisseur was less than thorough.

The publications of Lord Burlington and his circle appealed to a small group of connoisseurs, who could already appreciate Palladian architecture, or who wished to appear to do so. But to make contact with the multitude, with the many creators of Georgian architecture, was in most cases no part of their purpose. The major exception to this is perhaps Ware's Palladio, for no fewer than 52 per cent of the subscribers to that work were artisans. But as far as the publications of Burlington's collection are concerned, although the

plagiarists, whom Pope referred to as the 'Common Enemy, the Bad Imitators and Pretenders', may justly be censured, but they were given little help. Some sort of a Rule of Taste there may perhaps have been in this period, but the role of this group of books in its creation and implementation was, at most, indirect.