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# THE INFLUENCE OF SIR JOHN SOANE

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In attempting to define the extent of Sir John Soane's influence in the context of Late Georgian Classicism,<sup>1</sup> the first point that needs to be made is that this influence was surprisingly limited. The word 'surprisingly' is used advisedly since, arguably, no one was better placed than Soane to be a major influence on the architecture of this period. He had a prolific output of completed buildings; he was, for thirty years, professor of architecture at the Royal Academy; he had twenty-nine pupils; he exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy for sixty-four years; for forty-one years he held positions within the Office of Works; and he disseminated his designs through a number of publications. Yet despite all these opportunities, his direct influence was not great.

This paper has two objectives. First, it will analyse some of these apparent 'opportunities' because on closer examination it can be discovered that they were not channels of influence in the way that might have been expected. In doing this one can to some extent account for Soane's limited influence. Now while his direct influence was less marked than might have been expected, it would of course be quite wrong to suggest he did not have an effect on the architecture of the late Georgian period, and well beyond. Thus the second part of this paper will examine some of the courses taken by this influence. Let us now look in more detail at the first three of those so-called 'opportunities for influence' listed above.

From Soane's prolific output of buildings it is now generally agreed that his finest achievements were the Bank of England, Dulwich Gallery and Mausoleum, and his own house and museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. One of the things that links these three very different buildings is that in terms of function they are almost unique in this period; the direct influence which they were capable of exerting was limited for the simple reason that almost nowhere else was an architect engaged on these types of buildings. So far as the Bank was concerned, and this was the most important of the three buildings, its function was unique in this period. Of course architects could borrow elements from these buildings, as will be seen in the second part of this paper, but in all three commissions a major justification for their design was one of function, and the forms Soane used in them did not readily lend themselves to other building types. Furthermore, many of the stylistic and spatial idioms used in these buildings, and to an even greater extent in the New Law Courts, were so idiosyncratic and in places bizarre that they tended to defy imitation rather than encourage it.

Let us move on to consider the influence which Soane exerted as a teacher at the Royal Academy, and on the pupils in his office. Here, it is instructive to see these two areas of his professional life as different means to a similar end.

It has been stated elsewhere that Soane cared deeply about architecture and took seriously his professional duties at the Royal Academy. He was similarly diligent in the superintendence of his pupils, but what did he teach these aspiring architects? In the context of seeking to define Soane's influence, the most significant point is that, emphatically, he did not urge them to follow his own idiosyncratic style, or indeed, any other particular style.

'Imitation of masters is not required in Architects . . . It may make (them) humble mannerists, but this method of study will never make a great artist,'<sup>2</sup>

he stated in Lecture 11. Furthermore, only rarely were Soane's own buildings used to illustrate the lectures and then often it was to point out their defects. For instance in Lecture 5 he compared his own design for a Triumphal Bridge with a design for a similar structure by Sandby in order to demonstrate the superiority of the latter.

The lack of emphasis on his own work may, of course, be accounted for as modesty on Soane's part. However, he could have encouraged his students to follow a similar path stylistically by referring them to the work of George Dance, his master and an architect whose work had much in common with his own. Yet with the exception of Dance's design for a Royal Academy, which Soane pointed out as being particularly praiseworthy, Dance does not appear in the lectures.

While Soane expounds relentlessly the greatness of Greek and early Roman architecture, he reminds his students that these buildings do not display a consistent use of detail or proportion. He attempts to console the bewildered student seeking an appropriate model to copy:

'(do not be) dismayed with (these) difficulties; rather . . . consider them as a means of calling forth all the energies of (your) mind, the powers of (your) imagination and the exercise of (your) judgement'.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed it is clear that Soane was not laying down a rigid programme for the scholars to follow in order to produce what could have been a 'Soane school of classicism'. Instead he wanted them to evolve original design solutions based on certain principles. Quite what these principles were probably eluded most of the listeners since in Lecture 2 Soane stresses the authority of 'nature, reason and truth',<sup>4</sup> and it would be hard to find a more ambiguous set of rules!

A similar lack of indoctrination can be detected in the programme followed by the pupils in Soane's office. The bulk of their time was spent in what was essentially a conservative course of study. They devoted months to Greek and Roman buildings and their details, before progressing to the Renaissance, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Interestingly, the programme appears to have gone no further chronologically than Chambers, and almost completely neglected the more advanced aspects of later eighteenth-century architecture. One week spent 'drawing urns from Piranesi'<sup>5</sup> was Chantrell's sole contact with European neoclassicism. R. D. Chantrell was a pupil from 1807-14; often in the later stages of his training he went out of the office to draw buildings, but while he sketched works by Wren and Chambers, the work of Holland and Dance was neglected, even the latter's Newgate Prison. Relatively little of the pupils' time was spent either doing drawings of, or visiting, Soane's own buildings. Although Bolton tells us that 'pupils seem to have visited works in hand',<sup>6</sup> the office Day Books suggest that this was only for an occasional day, interspersed with weeks or months of academic drawing exercises. While Soane might have hoped that his students would, independently, evolve a style sympathetic to his own, it is clear that he made no attempt to encourage either his Royal Academy audiences or his own pupils along such a path.

We can, with a fair degree of certainty, identify the architects who would have heard these lectures at the Royal Academy, and the list includes many of those who subsequently achieved professional success: H. L. Elmes, Decimus Burton, T. L. Donaldson, Sydney Smirke, Owen Jones, E. B. Lamb. Let us consider Soane's influence on the architects of this generation from another starting point: how far would his teaching have equipped them for the paths their careers were to follow? Nothing shows more clearly Soane's limited view of architectural history than his judgement of the buildings from the Tudor period, which were to become a major influence in the design of the post-1815 country house. In Lecture 5 he said that the reign of Queen Elizabeth saw classical buildings with 'the most extraordinary

absurdities . . . This licentious, whimsical and capricious mode continued unrestrained by scientific laws and unfettered by reason. . . .<sup>7</sup>

The help which he offered the students to come to terms with the increasingly popular Gothic Revival was equally limited. While he acknowledged that some Gothic cathedrals were 'truly sublime', the Gothic style was not afforded any of the detailed analysis devoted to classicism. He urged students to study Gothic 'not for its taste but for its effect in mass and detail'.<sup>8</sup> He made no attempt to explain Gothic principles of composition, nor did he acknowledge the period's sophisticated structural solutions. The office programme of study was similarly narrow; Chantrell appears not to have spent a single day on the architecture of the Middle Ages.

Perhaps even more significant is Soane's apparent opposition to the picturesque as a mode of architectural composition. When discussing the placing of offices in the design of a country house in Lecture 11 he said:

'(there is) one other method now much in use although fatal to composition, I mean that of placing the offices at one side of the mansion . . . it is but a paltry makeshift and one seldom resorted to by any great artist. . . .'<sup>9</sup>

One wonders how he reconciled this statement with his own design for Pellwall! Elsewhere he declares:

'an edifice, to be beautiful, must be perfect in its symmetry and uniformity.'<sup>10</sup>

Even within Soane's carefully selected view of the classical tradition, his advice was by no means consistent, as for example on the issue of pilasters. One would have expected a follower of Laugier to be unequivocal in his rejection of their use, and in Lecture 9 he made his rejection clear:

'The exterior of buildings decorated with Pilasters . . . can only be looked upon as architecture in bassorelievo — as Art in its dotage — a sort of bastard progeny, unconnected with the legitimate offspring of Antiquity.'<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, often in the Lectures one perceives that however much Soane might urge the adoption of principles, he was at heart motivated by subjective considerations. Earlier in the lecture programme he had to admit that

'in (certain) buildings although we may regret the absence of columns, yet the simple and pleasing effect of pilasters almost makes us advocates for them. At least there is more interest produced by them than by the cold monotony of plain unbroken surfaces.'<sup>12</sup>

What the lectures and the Office programme show is that Soane was not providing a lead for the new generation of architects; he was not equipping them with the comprehensive historical perspective which they would require. Rather he was summing up the old-fashioned eighteenth century tradition, and indeed Soane referred to himself as belonging to the 'old classical school'.<sup>13</sup> Soane's concept of history was really that of the mid-eighteenth century. Had he delivered his lectures in, say, 1760 they would have represented a major, though inconsistent, statement for the first wave of Neoclassicists. However, coming as they did fifty years later, their central theme was remarkably out of date. Their scope was limited, and from an architect whose own work was so exciting, their content was surprisingly conservative. That he failed to acknowledge the rising interest in Gothic, Tudor and the picturesque further impaired the usefulness of the lectures, and their author's influence.

Let us now briefly look at what Soane's pupils achieved after leaving his office. There was a total of twenty-nine pupils, and this group was more than large enough to have

dominated the next two generations of architects; it could, in theory, have carried Soane's style well into the second half of the nineteenth century. However, not one of them, with the possible exception of Basevi, went on to achieve real professional success. A surprisingly large number of them appear not to have practised as architects and several of them were content to take up surveyorships or government appointments and design few or no new buildings. By the law of averages, out of twenty-nine pupils one would expect to find a few who lacked either talent or ambition. However, when confronted by such a consistent lack of achievement one is tempted to question Soane's teaching programme. His dedication to his pupils' education is not in doubt, but (as has been seen with the Royal Academy lectures) had Soane misjudged the professional world in which his pupils would, subsequently, have to compete?

Of those pupils who went on to practise, most of them incorporated aspects of Soane's style into at least some of their own work. However, the more successful of them appear to have achieved that success, at least in part, as a result of their competence in areas of architectural design that they are likely to have acquired only after leaving Soane's office. For instance, Basevi's works included several in the Norman, Gothic and Tudor styles; Mocatta effectively adapted a variety of styles, including Tudor, for his railway stations; and Chantrell's success was almost exclusively as a designer of Gothic churches, a building type to which only a single day of his seven year pupillage was devoted.<sup>14</sup> Chantrell's unfamiliarity with Gothic is well illustrated by the following episode. Early in his career he decided to compete for the commission to build one of the new 'Parliamentary' churches in Leeds in 1821. Before submitting a design Chantrell wrote to Soane, asking for advice. He said:

'I should wish to present a Grecian or Roman design, but the objections to them, made by the local committee would be so great that I fear my labour would be entirely lost . . . (since they had) submitted to the county mania for plain Gothic works. . . .'<sup>15</sup>

but elsewhere in the letter it is clear that Chantrell was unsure of how even to begin designing a church of the sort he believed was wanted.

The fact that some of the pupils chose to develop skills in styles other than those encouraged by Soane can be interpreted in two ways. Either they found that Soane's classicism failed to satisfy the requirements of the patrons they sought to attract, which would suggest a shortcoming in their training; alternatively (and this interpretation reflects more creditably on Soane), did he educate his pupils to appreciate certain general principles of architectural composition which could be directed towards a variety of styles? Certainly one of the themes of the Royal Academy lectures, mentioned above, would seem to confirm this. Perhaps therefore it is necessary to look more widely for evidence of Soane's influence; was the real benefit which the pupils and Royal Academy students derived from his teaching a capacity to manage successfully their own professional development?

It can be seen that for a number of reasons Soane's direct influence was less extensive than might have been imagined. Nevertheless, it was by no means negligible, and the second part of this paper will consider some of those areas of architectural practice which it affected. Space will not allow any attempt at a comprehensive account and instead the paper will concentrate on four themes: decoration; vaulting and top-lighting; church planning; professionalism.

The first of these is the most obvious aspect of Soane's influence and concerns the borrowing of details from his range of decorative motifs. The following features from Soane's buildings usefully sum up this range: first, incised lines either on the inside or the outside of a building, as seen at the Soane Museum; secondly, the Greek fret motif, for example on the exterior of the Museum or the Consols Office of the Bank; third, acroteria, usually containing an anthemion and often forming part of a parapet, as on the Lothbury

façade of the Bank; fourth, the use of Greek scrolling as a centrally placed surmounting motif forming part of a larger decorative feature, as for example on the Bank exterior. However, any attempt to reduce Soane's decoration to a list of specific motifs is fairly meaningless since his work is not so much recognised by the motifs used as by the way in which they are combined into an overall composition. Thus we need to be cautious in claiming the influence of Soane *ipso facto* when we can identify the use of these motifs in the work of others. Our task is further complicated because these motifs do not always originate from Soane. For instance Greek fret decoration was used by many earlier architects, including Stuart, Adam, Kent and even Batty Langley.

Several of the other motifs listed above quickly became established within the mainstream of the Greek Revival. Only the incised line decoration appears to emanate from Soane. Thus our task in identifying Soane's influence on decoration is difficult; finding other architects who used Soaneian motifs does not prove his influence since these designers could have bypassed Soane and referred directly to the sources which Soane himself had used.

Suitably cautioned, let us proceed with our task. So far this paper has been almost entirely negative about Soane's influence. However, the following examples briefly illustrate the extent to which Soane's repertoire of ornament became a major factor in architectural decoration in the 1820s and 30s. Perhaps nothing shows more clearly how far Soaneian motifs found their way into the mainstream of English architecture than an examination of shop fronts. In the design of these the requirements of high fashion and extravagance, invariably combined with a lack of scholarship, were paramount and, surprisingly, Soane's style was most suitable. Books of designs for shop fronts by Young,<sup>16</sup> Faulkner<sup>17</sup> and King,<sup>18</sup> all of which were published around 1830, contain numerous Soaneian compositions (Fig. 1).

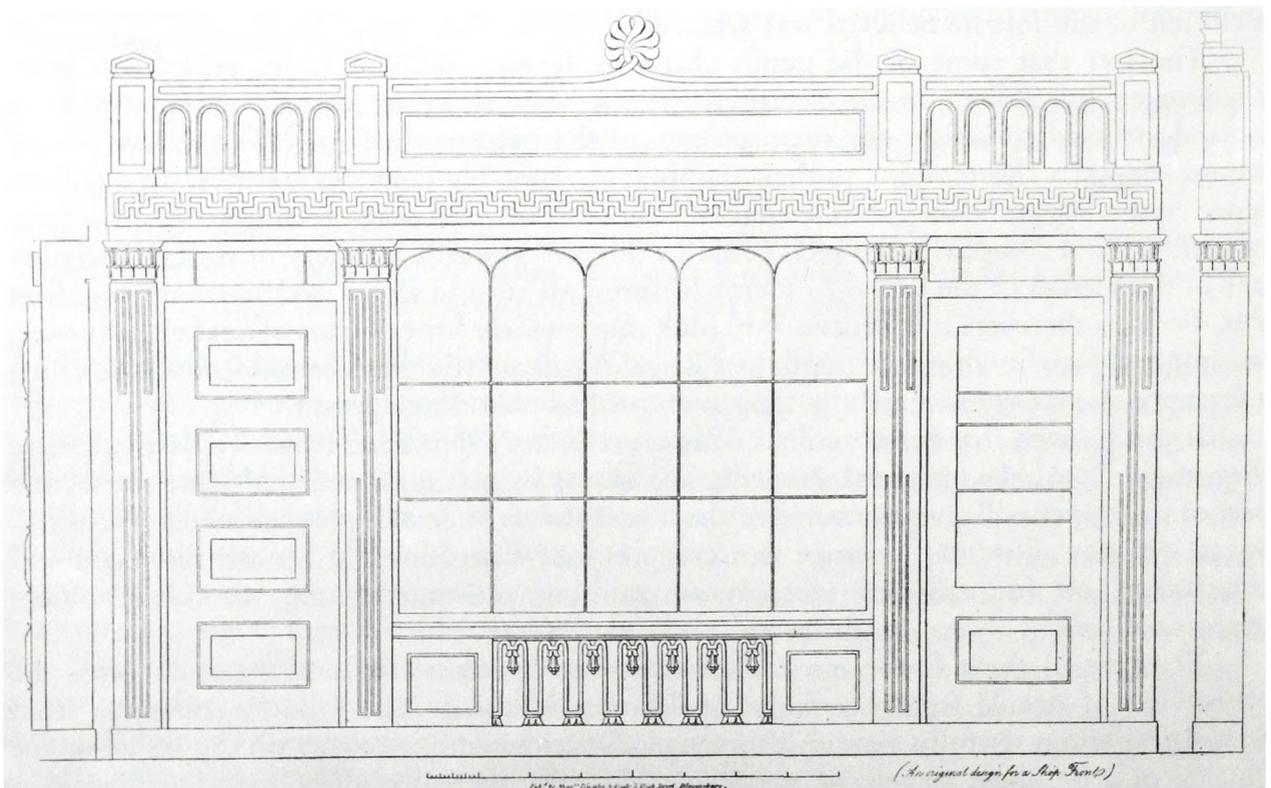


FIG. 1. Design for a shopfront, published in T. King, *Shopfronts and Exterior Doors* (undated), pl. 9

Figs. 2 to 7 give some idea of the range of buildings which came under the influence of Soane's repertoire of ornament.<sup>19</sup> They vary from modest sized provincial houses (Fig. 2) to major London buildings such as Nos. 224–240 Regent Street by Nash; and can be found as far apart as Plymouth, in the work of Foulston, and Newcastle, in the work of Dobson. More significantly, this range of motifs was adopted by architects representing every level of status within the profession, from Cockerell, Nash and Wyattville at the top, through the middle ranks of H. E. Goodridge (Fig. 3), Francis Goodwin (Fig. 4) and George Wightwick, down to the unknown author of the house built for William Sugden in Keighley (West Yorkshire) in 1819 (Fig. 5). The way in which the end bays fail to relate to the centre indicate the limited talent of its designer, yet even at this humble level of competence the influence of Soane is clear.



FIG. 2. House in Chapel Allerton, Leeds, West Yorkshire, c.1835

The second aspect of Soane's influence comes from his use of domed or vaulted ceilings, which was sometimes accompanied by top lighting. Soane's ceilings of this type could vary in size from those at the Bank to those at his house in Lincoln's Inn Fields. These spaces are amongst his most original and exciting interiors, but it is important to remember that often they were essentially a functional response to a particular set of constraints. Thus at the Bank the domed, vaulted and top-lit offices should be seen in part as a result of the need for



FIG. 3. Henry Goodridge: detail of Cleveland Place, Bath, c.1830 (Copyright M. Hope)



FIG. 4. Francis Goodwin: Central Market, Leeds, West Yorkshire, 1824–7



FIG. 5. Keighley, West Yorkshire: house for William Sugden, 1819



FIG. 6. Halifax, West Yorkshire: Zion Chapel, 1819



FIG. 7. Halifax, West Yorkshire: Zion Chapel, detail

security and fire-proofing. At Dulwich, the use of top-lighting for the picture galleries is self-explanatory. However, in Soane's domestic buildings one suspects that the use of these features is a more idiosyncratic urge for visual effect.

What might be termed the 'functional factor' is helpful when seeking to identify Soane's influence. Thus in buildings where domed, vaulted or top-lit interiors could be justified, and these were usually larger public buildings, one finds a relatively high number of examples that may have been influenced by Soane. But his contrived visual efforts, especially in his domestic work, found few imitators. Once again, however, we need to proceed cautiously because little of what Soane did in these interiors was absolutely novel. Many of these fit into a pattern of development which starts around the middle of the eighteenth century, when architects like Robert Adam, and later James Wyatt, began to introduce domes or vaults in place of the usually flat-ceilinged apartments of a Palladian house. In the development from the archaeologically-inspired ceilings of Adam and Wyatt to the more original compositions by Soane, the contribution of George Dance is generally acknowledged. Soane's drawing-room at Wimpole Hall, one of his earliest domed spaces, is heavily dependent on the example of Dance's Guildhall Common Council Chamber. Thus in trying to identify examples of Soane's influence we have to be certain that the later architects had not used an alternative source, for instance Dance. And at the Bank, Sir Robert Taylor, Soane's predecessor, had designed a number of top-lit spaces<sup>20</sup> from which we can conclude that Soane's work at the Bank belonged to an established tradition rather than representing a bold development. Do we, therefore, see a room like Sir John Leicester's gallery in his London house<sup>21</sup> as influenced by Soane's Bank Stock Office or Taylor's Reduced Annuities Office?

It was stated above that Palladian houses usually had flat ceilings. This is largely true for reception rooms and bedrooms but not, of course, for staircases where some exciting spaces and lighting effects were created, especially by Paine and Taylor. Since in early nineteenth-century houses it is still over staircases that the most arresting ceilings occur, we need to ask whether this represents Soane's influence or the continuation of an older tradition. Here it is important that a variety of factors are considered, but especially the total effect which is achieved. Thus I would argue that at Tatton Park, by Lewis Wyatt (Figs. 8 and 9) and at Bretton Hall, by Jeffry Wyattville, the manipulation of space and the contrast of light and shade which has been achieved would tend to confirm Soane's influence. Conversely, the staircase hall at S. P. Cockerell's Sezincote and the Picture Gallery at Belvoir Castle, by James and Benjamin Dean Wyatt, although they appear superficially Soaneian, probably owe more to the eighteenth century tradition.

Within several of the rectangular Bank offices Soane subtly divided the plan to create an interior which is most easily read as an aisled cruciform space with a domed crossing, for example within the Bank Stock Office and the Consols Office. It is an arrangement for which it can be claimed more confidently that there were no precedents in English architecture of the eighteenth century. It was adopted by a number of architects working in Edinburgh in the first half of the nineteenth century and it formed the basis of several of the city's most magnificent interiors of this period. They include the Upper Signet Library by William Stark (1812-15) and the Upper Museum Hall (now part of the Talbot Rice Arts Centre) in the Old College of the University of Edinburgh (c.1820) by William Playfair. In both these examples this spatial arrangement helps create considerable visual interest in what is basically an unpromisingly long rectangular room. However, while Soane's Bank offices were sparingly ornamented, both Stark and Playfair composed interiors which are richly decorated. In the 1840s several of the Scottish banks were building or extending their head offices and it is clear that the Bank of England was seen as an appropriate model. In 1843 David Rhind began new premises for the Commercial Bank of Scotland (now the Royal Bank of Scotland) in George Street and included an impressive banking hall where shallow arches support an elliptical



FIG. 8. Lewis Wyatt:  
Tatton Park, Cheshire,  
the Domed Anteroom,  
1808–13 (copyright  
Cheshire County  
Council)

dome. Six years later David Bryce designed a new head office for the British Linen Bank (now the Bank of Scotland) in St Andrew's Square. This incorporated a cruciform top-lit telling-room. Like Stark and Playfair, both Rhind and Bryce produced sumptuously decorated interiors quite different in this respect from those of Soane's Bank. In neither of the Edinburgh banks does the need for security appear to have influenced the architects' design as it did at the Bank of England; in both the Edinburgh banks the top-lighting is merely a supplement to conventional low-level windows in the side walls.

The 'star-fish' ceiling, first used by Soane in the Breakfast Room at 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, was less difficult to imitate than the complex spaces which Soane created at the Bank. Adaptations of it were used by a number of architects including Wyattville at Longleat (Fig. 12), and by Chantrell at Armitage Bridge House, near Huddersfield, in 1828. Other examples of domed, vaulted and top-lit interiors where Soane's influence is probable are to be found in Figs. 10–11.

A third area where the influence of Soane can be detected is in the church planning which followed Waterloo, and here are included both those churches which were built under the auspices of the 1818 Church Building Acts and those financed from other sources.

One does not normally associate Soane with ecclesiastical architecture. Nevertheless, through his position in the Office of Works he exercised a significant influence over the



FIG. 9. Tatton Park, Cheshire: upper landing above Domed Anteroom, with Samuel Wyatt's staircase hall (1780–91) beyond

pattern of church building in this period. Early in 1818 the three Attached Architects of the Office of Works, Soane, Nash and Smirke, were asked by the Commissioners responsible for administering the Church Building Act to submit specimen designs for new churches. Specifically, the architects were to consider the best way of providing

‘a proper accommodation for the largest number of persons for the least expense.’<sup>22</sup>

By the spring of 1818 Nash had submitted ten schemes, Smirke four and Soane two. Stylistically there are some fairly odd designs among these, especially those from Soane and Nash, but it is the plans that concerns us here.

Smirke, and especially Nash, experimented with a variety of layouts. For example, Nash included some with semi-circular west ends and others in the form of a Greek cross or an octagon. Smirke also experimented with a cruciform plan. However Soane consistently used a much simpler shape, the rectangle. Within this rectangle was fitted a shorter rectangle, which formed the ‘body’ of the church; a shallow recess for the altar with a vestry or entrance at each side of it was attached to the body at the east end, and a tower with staircases to the gallery at each side of it was placed at the west end.

Of course this plan did not represent a striking new development, but was rather the consolidation of the tradition of Anglican planning which goes back to Wren and Gibbs.

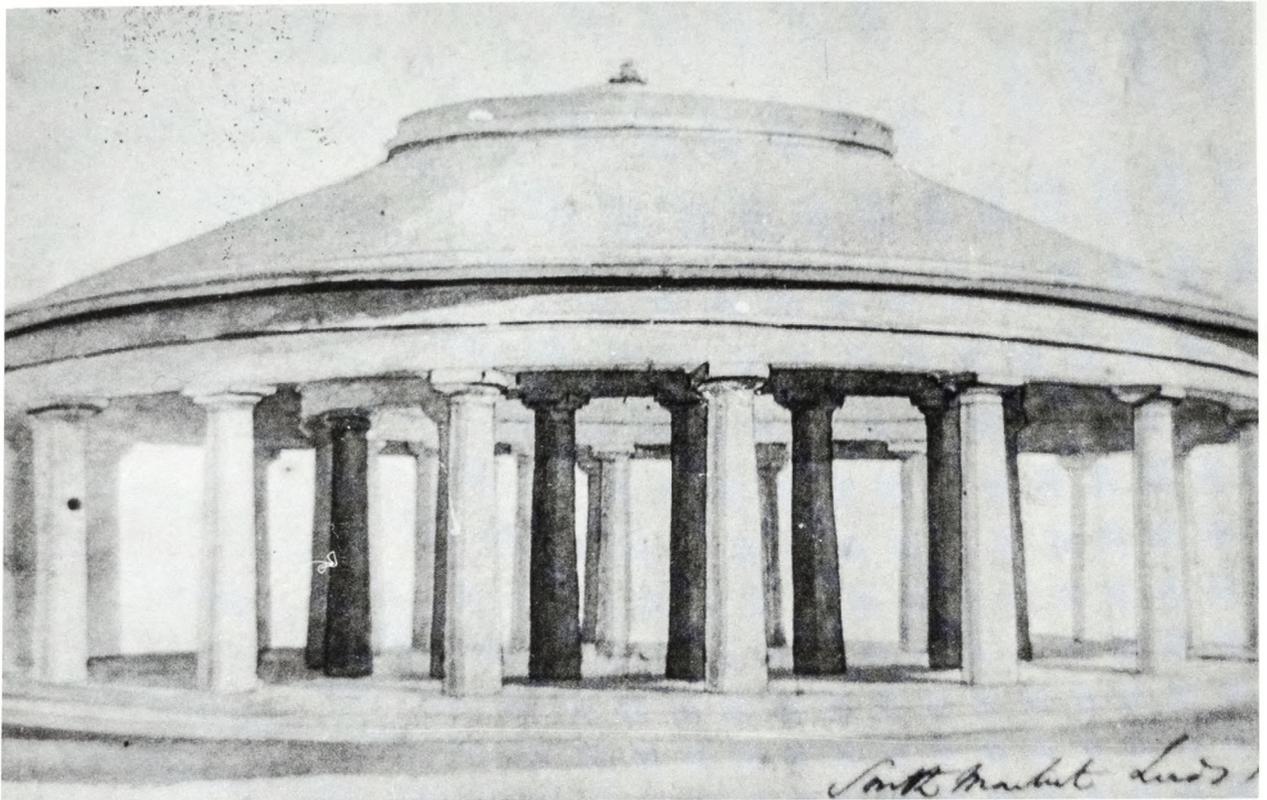


FIG. 10. R. D. Chantrell: initial design for the Cross of the South Market, Leeds, West Yorkshire, 1823

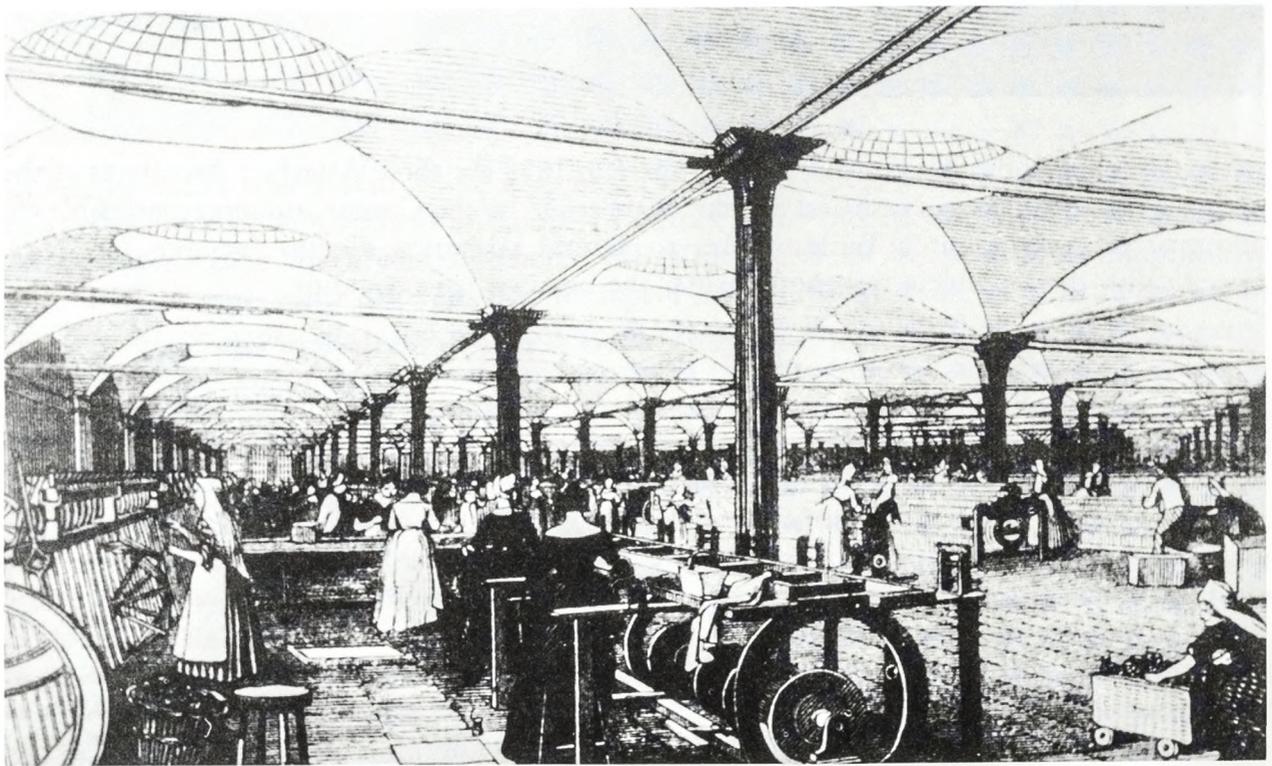


FIG. 11. Temple Mill, Leeds, West Yorkshire: interior, probably by the engineer James Combe, 1838–40



FIG. 12. Sir Jeffrey Wyatville: Longleat House, Wiltshire, the Grand Staircase, 1806–13

Indeed the source for Soane's scheme is indisputable since we know that in evolving his proposals for the specimen church designs he visited Wren's St James's, Piccadilly, 'and prepared an Estimate of the expense of creating a similar Building. . . .'<sup>23</sup>

However, Soane's influence on the course of church planning was not primarily through the specimen designs, or even the three churches which he built for the Commissioners in the mid 1820s, which also used the rectangular plan. Rather it was as a result of his association with them, which formed part of his duties for the Office of Works; it was the three Attached Architects who advised the Commissioners on the designs submitted to them by Local Committees who were desirous of erecting churches in their areas.

We have seen that the initial preference of Nash and Smirke was for non-rectangular plans, and in the churches which they erected subsequently we can see these two continuing to explore non-rectangular compositions. Only Soane was consistent in the use of the rectangle. From about 1820 these three architects were charged with passing judgement on a huge number of submitted schemes. That the churches which they approved by Rickman, Goodwin, Chantrell and many lesser architects followed so consistently the rectangular plan, which was the preference only of Soane from this triumvirate, would seem to confirm the supremacy of Soane's views about planning. Thus he emerges as a dominant influence on the course of church planning in the 1820s and '30s. Once the advantages of the rectangular arrangement was established by the mid '20s the conservative Commissioners, and their

subsequent advisers, rarely approved alternatives until the rise of ecclesiology in the late '30s. Indeed, the Commissioners produced printed Instructions to Architects<sup>24</sup> which further helped to discourage innovations in planning in the '20s and '30s. Although many of the churches built in this period were not financed by the Commissioners, those financed independently invariably followed the pattern approved by the Commissioners.

The final category of Soane's influence — the encouragement of professional attitudes amongst architects — is the one where, arguably, his influence was most profound and long-lasting. Indeed, the opinions which he put forward remain valid today. It was in 1788, in the Introduction to *Plans, Elevations and Sections* . . . that he first made public his view that the architect should be the intermediary between the patron and contractor and thus needed to be independent from the building trades. In 1788 this was a radical proposal and one which struck at the very heart of the profession. The careers of the Adam brothers, Chambers, the Wyatt family and many others involved an almost inseparable link between designing and contracting. It was a theme to which Soane returned in the first of his R.A. Lectures: by contracting to execute their own designs, architects 'would degrade themselves and the professions'.<sup>25</sup>

However Soane was not concerned merely to divorce the practice of architecture from that of building. He saw architecture not simply as a profession but as a vocation; as a branch of the fine arts equal to painting and sculpture in the scope which it offered for the exercise of genius. Thus he believed that to protect the status of architecture, which was then under threat from a number of directions, it was necessary not only to separate it from the building trades but also from the more mechanical areas of architectural activity, for instance surveying. In Lecture 6 he stated:

'From the increasing energies of the Students and their finer feelings for the Art it may be fairly expected that ere long the respective and distinct duties of the Architect, the Surveyor, the Measurer, the Builder, and Contractor will be properly distinguished from each other. If these young students pay a due regard and consideration to the moral Character of the Architect in the just discharge of his numerous and very important Duties, particularly as respects correctness in the estimated Expense of Works, we may reasonably expect that all the mischievous tendencies, and sometimes fatal consequences, of the present ruinous system of building will be effectively checked, and the profession restored to its purity and former importance.'<sup>26</sup>

Soane's public utterances about the need for professional integrity, as well as his own career which served as a model for others, have led to him being seen as the 'father of the architectural profession'. However, once again there is a paradox. Just as Soane's education programme in some ways represents the end of an era rather than the beginning of a new one, so too does his concept of the professional architect. In the first part of the nineteenth century the practice of architecture was undergoing fundamental re-evaluation. But rather than seeing Soane as the model for the new professional, might we not with equal validity see him as representing the end of the old order? Admittedly he was an architect who was unusually scrupulous in his professional conduct, but nevertheless he was one cast in the eighteenth-century mould. Even at the end of his career Soane continued, through the lectures, to promote the practice of architecture involving a grand tour; the production of grandiose schemes for vast and imaginary royal palaces or triumphal bridges; the designing and building of great public or private buildings for enlightened and educated patrons; all of which was underpinned by the belief that the 'young artist (was) anxious to attain to superiority and (was) truly emulous of Fame.'<sup>27</sup> One of his responses to the threats which the profession faced was thus:

'Oh Architecture! Once mightiest among the mighty. Architecture, thou lovely Queen of the Fine Arts, how art thou fallen since the days of Pericles and Augustus!'<sup>28</sup>

How different were the realities of life for the average architect after 1815: corrupt or incompetently handled competitions; the patronage of ignorant or ill-informed committees, and the need for drastic pruning of budgets for such buildings as workhouses or churches — this was far removed from Soane's ideal of architectural practice.

But to return to the more positive aspects of Soane's achievements. While the first six lectures were concerned primarily with his narrow view of architectural history and classical composition, the second series of lectures, numbers 7–12 which he delivered from 1815, are rather different in character and lay greater stress on the practical aspects of the architect's duties. For instance they contain much sound advice about fire protection in building, the avoidance of dry rot, and the construction of solid foundations. All of this would prove invaluable to the new breed of professional architect who needed a much wider range of skills than his eighteenth-century counterpart. Basevi was 'said to have been scrupulously just in his professional activities',<sup>29</sup> and in Leeds Chantrell set new standards of skill, dependability and honesty.

Soane's model of the professional architect was perhaps his most important legacy to the course of English architecture. It is a mark of Soane's far-sightedness, and indeed the opposition which he aroused, that it was more than 100 years after his death before his wishes were fully realised. Only with the passing of the Architects' Registration Act in 1938 was the practice of architecture finally separated from that of contracting.

In fairness to Soane it must be acknowledged that, if time allowed, it would be possible to argue plausibly that his influence was more far-reaching than the four categories examined above. For instance one might claim that the stripped classicism of buildings like the Chelsea Hospital stables looked forward to a number of nineteenth century industrial buildings such as Telford's St Catherine's Docks. In addition, Dorothy Stroud has suggested that Soane's New State Paper Office was influential in the early course of the Italian Renaissance Revival.<sup>30</sup> More importantly, if this paper were not confining itself to the period before c.1840, a rather different picture of Soane's influence would be apparent. While many of the leading architects of the period immediately after Soane's death appear either to have disregarded his ideas or reacted against them (for instance Blore, Pugin and Salvin), he did acquire many admirers, and a number of disciples, from among the architects of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>31</sup>

#### NOTES

1. The paper is concerned only with the period c.1800–40.

2. A. T. Bolton (ed.), *Lectures on Architecture by Sir John Soane R.A.*, Sir John Soane's Museum, 1929, p. 173.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

4. *Ibid.*

5. J. Soane, *Day Book*, 1–7 July 1813.

6. A. T. Bolton, *Architectural Education a Century Ago*, Sir John Soane's Museum, n.d., p. 3.

7. A. T. Bolton (ed.), *Lectures*, op. cit., p. 88.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 148–9.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

14. On 6 February 1813 the entire office staff spent the day on drawings of Stockport Church which had been rebuilt in the Gothic style in 1813–17, to the designs of Lewis Wyatt. (J. Soane, *Day Book*.)

Chantrell's only other contact with the Gothic style had been in 1807 when he spent a week 'about Ramsay Abbey', a house which Soane had Gothicised in 1804. (J. Soane, *Day Book*, 12–16 October 1807.)

15. Chantrell to Soane, 6 January 1821. Soane Museum, Private Correspondence, xv, A, 32.

16. J. Young, *A Series of Designs for Shop Fronts*, London, 1828.

17. T. Faulkner, *Designs for Shop Fronts*, London, 1831.

18. T. King, *Shop Fronts and Exterior Doors*, London, n.d.

19. I have deliberately avoided illustrating the better-known examples of buildings influenced by Soane, for example Foulston's St Andrew's Chapel, Plymouth. However, those seeking additional examples are referred to D. Watkin 'Soane and his Contemporaries' in J. Summerson, D. Watkin and G.-T. Mellinghoff, *John Soane*, Academy Editions, 1983. This contains both a thorough analysis and illustrations of a number of buildings influenced by Soane.

20. Some of these were illustrated in *The Architectural Designs of Sir Robert Taylor drawn and executed by Thomas Malton*, 1792.
21. This is illustrated in Summerson, Watkin and Mellinghoff, op. cit., p. 51.
22. Church Building Act, 1818, Section 62. 58 Geo III, c. 45.
23. R. Liscombe 'Economy, character and durability: specimen designs for the Church Commissioners, 1818', in *Architectural History*, 13, 1970, p. 43. Also G. Carr 'Soane's specimen church designs of 1818: a reconsideration', in *Architectural History*, 16, 1973, p. 38.
24. Although there are numerous references to these Instructions among the muniments of the Church Commissioners, no copy of them was found. However, part of them is included in a pamphlet written by C. A. Busby, *Intended Churches at Leeds and Oldham*. A copy of this is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Library Box I, 35J.
25. A. T. Bolton (ed.), *Lectures*, op. cit., p. 24.
26. Ibid., p. 105.
27. Ibid., p. 192.
28. Ibid., p. 122.
29. H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 1978, p. 93.
30. D. Stroud, *Sir John Soane, Architect*, 1984, p. 111.
31. Examples of contemporary architecture influenced by Soane are included in A. Powers (ed.), *Real Architecture*, The Building Centre Trust, 1987.