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TAKING THE ANCIENTS LITERALLY: ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEOCLASSICISM IN MID EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BRITAIN

Giles Worsley

To the best of my knowledge, Hovingham Hall in Yorkshire (Fig. 1) is the only house in the world entered through a riding house. It may also be the only house built with the state rooms over the stables. Hovingham was built by Thomas Worsley, described by Horace Walpole as ‘a rider of the great horse and architect’¹, for himself between 1751 and about 1776. Is its eccentric design the ultimately unsuccessful result of Worsley’s attempt to combine his two great loves, or is there some logic behind it?

I believe there is. I believe that Thomas Worsley designed his house in a deliberate attempt to recreate the sort of house that had been lived in by the Ancient Romans, and that he was not alone in this. There are at least four other major English eighteenth century houses that can best be explained as attempts to recreate a Roman house. The paucity of sources made such a reconstruction difficult. It was even more difficult to adapt that reconstruction to the demands of eighteenth century living, and in doing so architects inevitably had to make compromises, but their intention remains clear. These houses illustrate an underappreciated aspect of eighteenth century architectural history: the degree to which certain neo-Palladian architects, specifically amateurs, were inspired by their love of the Antique to design buildings that were not merely influenced by Classical architecture but could have been mistaken (or so they believed) for buildings erected by the Romans.

Renaissance architects must have felt frustrated by the fact that while most of the buildings they were trying to design, except churches, were domestic, most classical remains were of public buildings. Very little survived of Roman domestic architecture, certainly not enough to try to recreate a Roman house. The only substantial remain was Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli, but its scale and sprawling nature made it of little value to Renaissance architects.

So Renaissance theorists were forced to rely on literary sources. Vitruvius had descriptions of the Roman house and villa and of the Greek house, but as Palladio admitted, this section of Vitruvius is more than usually obscure.² As a result every theorist who tried to reconstruct his descriptions made a different design. Because the villa played such an important part in the life of the Roman upper classes there are also frequent references to it in the theoretical works of agriculture writers such as Cato, Varro, Columella and Palladius, and in the letters of men such as Cicero. But the theoretical writers concentrate mainly on the situation of the villa, and letters only make passing references – although these sometimes give a glimpse of a house’s decoration. The same is true of such writers as Petronius with his description of Trimalchio’s house in the *Satyricon*, with its four dining rooms, twenty bedrooms, two marble colonnades and a guest apartment that slept one hundred, or Tacitus whose life of Nero includes a description of the Golden House with its vestibule large enough to contain a statue of the emperor 120 feet high and so extensive that it had a triple colonnade a mile long, dining rooms with fretted ceilings of ivory, whose panels could open up to shower flowers or sprinkle perfume, and a circular dining room with a roof that revolved with the

heavens.³ The exceptions are Pliny's two letters describing his two villas, the Laurentinum villa on the coast near Rome and the Tusculum villa in the Apennines.⁴ It was these descriptions, together with Vitruvius's accounts, that provided the basis for architectural theorists to try to reconstruct the Roman house.

It might be thought that the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii gave eighteenth century theorists an advantage over their predecessors. In fact this can have been of little value, despite the publication of various accounts in the 1750s, in particular Bellicard's *Observations upon the Antiquities of the town of Herculaneum*, published in London in 1753 and the Neapolitan Academy's *Le Pitture Antiche d'Ercolano e Contorni*, published in six volumes between 1757 and 1771. As Bellicard observed: 'Scarce any thing is to be seen of the private houses, the greatest part of which have been buried again by the earth which was thrown into them, to make room for digging in other places. [Herculaneum was tunnelled, not excavated in the conventional modern fashion.] I could examine but a very small number of them, and the few columns I saw, were overthrown, and very much defaced.'⁵ Even the wall paintings, published at length in *Le Pitture Antiche d'Ercolano*, were found to be of doubtful value. They seemed to confirm Vitruvius's complaint about the wall paintings of his day that 'those subjects which were copied from actual realities are scorned in these days of bad taste. We now have fresco paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things'.⁶ Vitruvius's reference undoubtedly inspired Bellicard to write that: 'There is a very considerable number of these paintings of architecture or ruins; but they scarce deserve notice: for, they are altogether out of the proportion of Grecian architecture . . . the profil of the mouldings of the cornishes, chapiters and bases, is of a wretched Gothic taste; and most of the Arabic mixture in the architecture, is as ridiculous as any of the Chinese designs'.⁷ A few paintings were found that met eighteenth century standards of what classical painting should have been like, but in the main eighteenth century theorists had little more to go on than their Renaissance forebears.

The two most influential editions of Vitruvius in England were Barbaro's Italian edition illustrated by Palladio, published in Venice in the 1560s, and Perrault's French edition of 1684. Barbaro's edition, perhaps because of Palladio's involvement, is the one that seems to have been most influential among the architects we will be discussing. Palladio discusses Vitruvius's account in greater detail and with more illustrations in his *Four Books*. His conclusions follow those of Barbaro in general but differ in detail. He also gave his interpretation of the Roman villa and the Greek house, and tried to put his interpretation of the Roman house into practice in his design for the Convent of the Carita in Venice.⁸

Although aware of Pliny's descriptions, Palladio's text was deliberately restricted to an analysis of Vitruvius.⁹ His follower Scamozzi devoted several rather longer chapters to the subject. As well as publishing reconstructions of the Roman house and villa and the Greek house, he also made a reconstruction of Pliny's Laurentinum villa.¹⁰ John Webb was much influenced by Scamozzi's designs in his theoretical attempts to reconstruct the Roman house, but these were never published.¹¹ The next serious attempt was Felibien des Avaux's reconstruction of Pliny's two villas, *Les Plans et les Descriptions de deux des plus belles Maisons de Campagne de Pline le Consul*, published in 1699. In its cheap duodecimo edition this seems to have been quite common in England, whether on its own or bound in with his *Entretiens sur les Vies et sur les Ouvrages des plus excellents peintres* or his *Vie des Architects*. Finally there was Robert Castell's *Villas of the Ancients*, published in 1729, which recreated Pliny's two villas and discussed other classical literary sources for Roman domestic architecture.

Palladio's *Four Books*, the English neo-Palladian Bible, can be divided into three

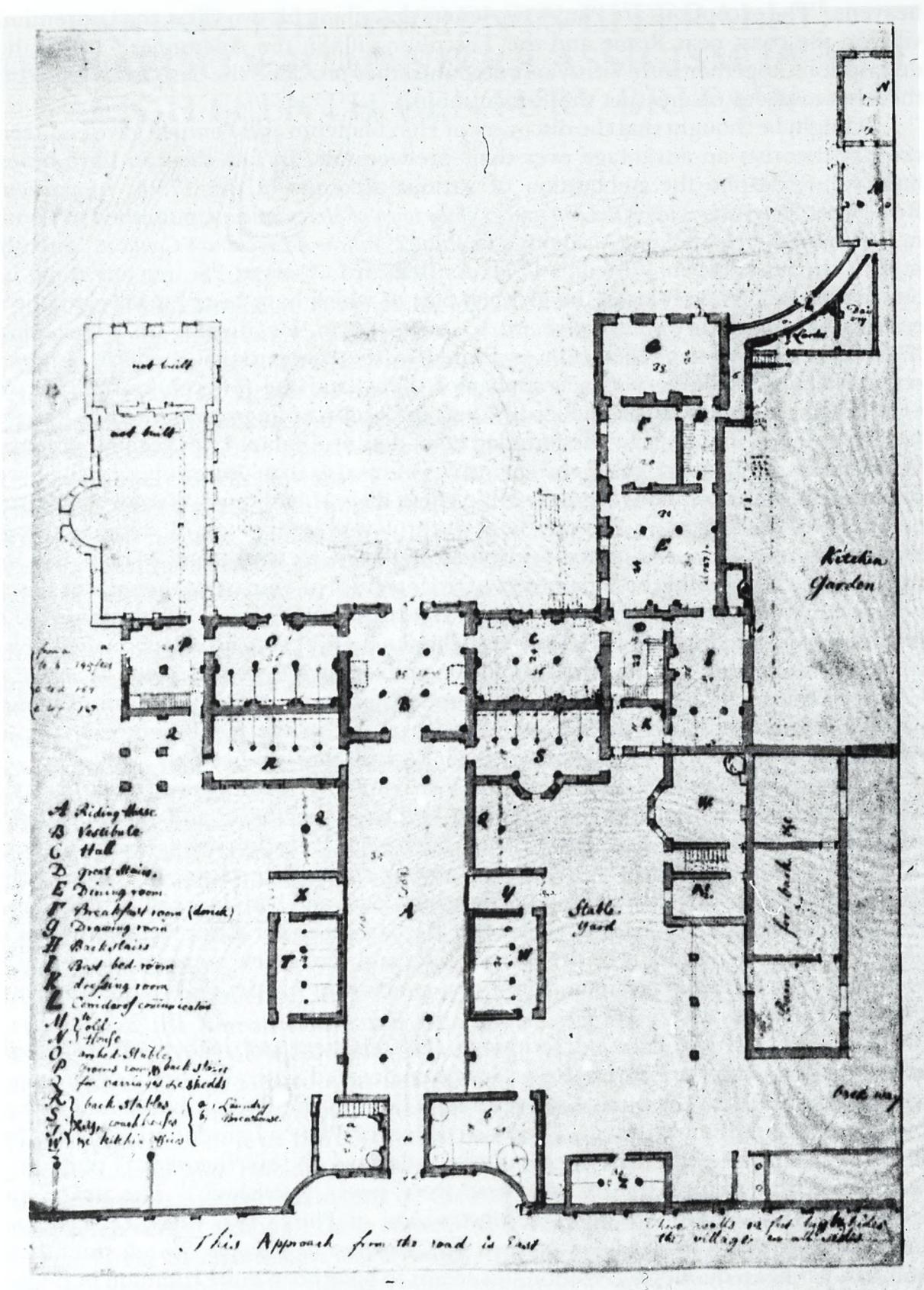


FIG. 1. Thomas Worsley, ground plan of Hovingham Hall, Yorkshire, c1776 (Hovingham Hall collection).

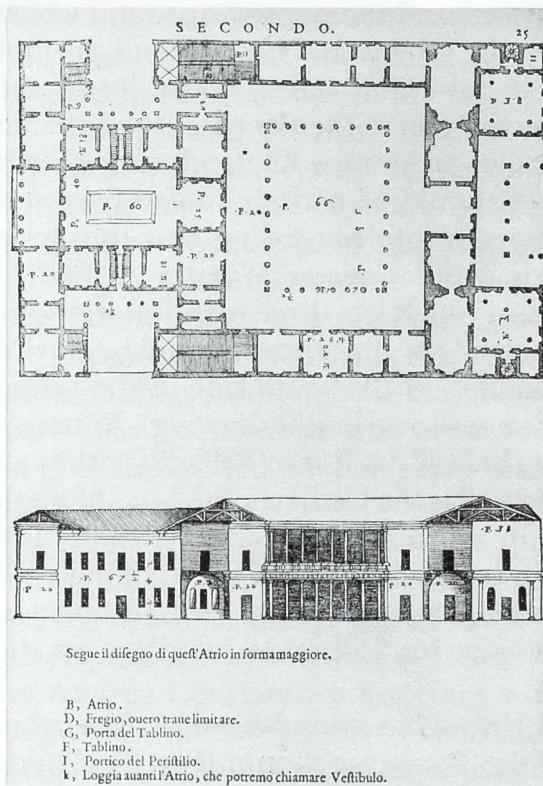
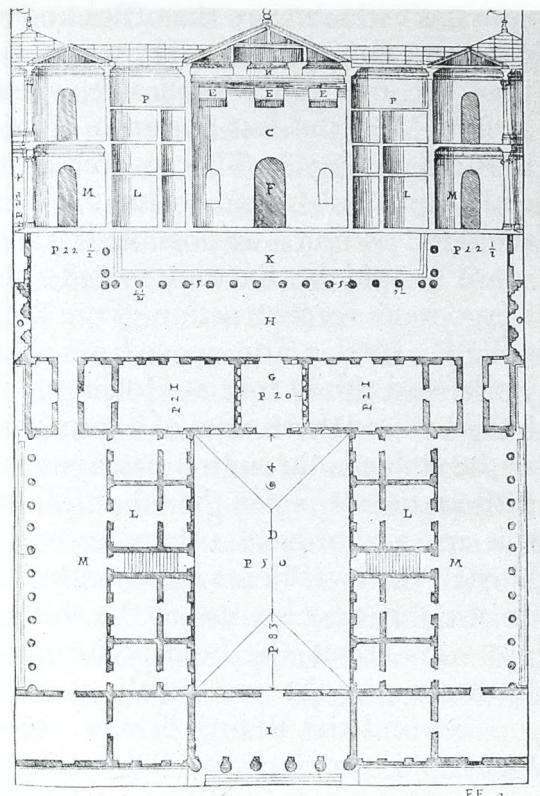


FIG. 2. Andrea Palladio, plan of a Roman house from *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* (1570).



court, off which were the office and servants' quarters, and the peristyle, around which were the family rooms. These two were linked by the tablinum. Hovingham's ground plan becomes more explicable when compared to this. The riding house forms the atrium. Vitruvius lists five atria, all of them with roofs open to the sky except the atrium testudinate (Fig. 3). This covered atrium is the obvious atrium for England, and accords with Vitruvius's statement that in the north houses should be entirely roofed over and sheltered as much as possible.¹² Palladio's drawing gives no suggestion how this great space should be lit, and for the three large tripartite windows Worsley turned to Desgodetz's reconstruction of the Baths of Diocletian which has three identical windows to light a similar large space from above.¹³ On either side of the atrium should be service yards, and this is true at Hovingham which has stables on the south side of the riding house, round three sides of a court (although this is not shown in this drawing). Entrance to the stable is through a passage in the centre of the wall, as it is in Palladio, although without the stairs. On the other side of the riding school is the kitchen yard, but although this appears to have a door leading to it, this is in fact a dummy, and a symmetrical kitchen yard was never built – either by design (Vitruvius approved of false symmetry¹⁴) or else this may be one of the things Worsley never managed to do: 'pro viribus non pro votis erexit' (he built according to his means not his wishes) is inscribed on the keystone over the arch on the garden front.

Beyond the Riding School, suitably entered through a round-headed door as in Palladio, is the Samson Hall, taking the place of the Roman tablinum (Fig. 3). This is a square stone-vaulted room with the vaults supported by Doric columns. Like the Doric columns in the riding house, these have no bases, another sign of Worsley's archaeological intentions.¹⁵ They should not be confused with baseless Greek Doric columns which have a very different profile. All architectural theorists admitted that the Roman Doric column was originally baseless, but found this unattractive in practice, and suggested that the column should be given an Ionic base. This is what virtually all classical architects since the Renaissance have done. By using the baseless Roman Doric column Worsley was demonstrating his determination to ignore the traditions of classical architecture that had built up since the Renaissance and go back to the original classical sources for his model; true neo-classicism.

Vitruvius writes, 'let the busts of ancestors with their ornaments be set up' in the tablinum.¹⁶ Worsley had no family busts, but we know from an inventory he made the year he died that instead he filled the room with classical statuary – mostly casts – and this is how the room is still furnished.

On either side of the Samson Hall were two further vaulted rooms, the Hunting and Tapestry Halls, rectangular as in Palladio's design. Originally these were intended as stables, but even before he died Worsley had converted the Tapestry Hall into a vestibule; he must have discovered the impracticality of having the state bedroom ten paces from the stable. The vaults in this room were supported by two Tuscan columns, appropriate for a stable. These had circular bases, something which Vitruvius recommends,¹⁷ but which was against conventional Renaissance theory; Isaac Ware, for instance, wrote that 'this, however, authorised, is a singularity that has a very bad effect . . . it is against nature and propriety'.¹⁸ Beyond the Tapestry and Samson Halls, in the corners of the house were (or would have been as one was not built) the staircases – where Palladio placed them.

Hovingham varies from Palladio's Roman house in one major way, in that the 'peristyle' is not closed. Practicality dictated this. There was no need for the further range and Worsley wanted the view of his park from the great room above the Samson Hall. His design was also somewhat spoilt because the south wing, which would have

made this court seem much more enclosed, was never built. As it was, Worsley followed Vitruvius by putting the family rooms around this court. He even followed Vitruvius by placing the entrance to the family rooms in the middle of the wing.

Palladio and Vitruvius made it relatively easy – if rather curious – to recreate the layout of a Roman house. It was more difficult to know how to decorate it. However, Vitruvius does speak of rooms having cornices,¹⁹ and Worsley, and others, took this to mean that rooms should be decorated with full classical cornices. Every room at Hovingham has a complete cornice which can be related to a classical source. Other decoration is kept to a minimum, with no dados and no decorative plasterwork.

According to Vitruvius the ancients decorated their rooms with ‘realistic paintings of real things’, although he considered contemporary wall paintings monstrosities.⁶ In particular he mentions that some rooms were decorated in a grand style with figures of gods or detailed mythological episodes. It was in this manner that Worsley decorated his hall (now the drawing room), which also served as the dining room. We know from his 1778 inventory that this was hung with a series of great grisaille paintings (most of which are now in the Ballroom) which Worsley probably bought in 1770 (their original source is unknown). Chief of these was the ‘Sacrifice to Apollo’ by Sebastiano Ricci. There was also a ‘Sacrifice to Diana’ which had been painted as a pendant to the Ricci by Andrea Courlandaio, together with a smaller painting of ‘Time clipping the wings of Cupid’ and two panels of arms all by Courlandaio. To complete a set with which to decorate the hall Worsley commissioned a further painting of ‘Fortune’ from Cipriani, which he paid for in 1772. This was a pendant to hang on the other side of the fireplace from ‘Time clipping the wings of Cupid’. It is starker than the earlier works, and seems to be inspired by the more austere of the paintings found at Herculaneum, particularly those illustrated in the second volume of *Le Pitture Antiche d'Erculano* which show single allegorical figures against a blank background. The most direct comparison is with the figure of Calliope. Over the doors of the hall were four small paintings of putti disporting themselves; it is unclear whether Worsley bought or commissioned these, but they can also be paralleled in *Le Pitture Antiche d'Erculano*.²⁰ Interestingly, none of the houses I will discuss have grotesque ceilings of the sort designed by Kent. These might have been thought to have had good Antique precedent, but were presumably condemned by Vitruvius’s words in the eyes of neo-Palladian purists. Finally, in place of honour, in a niche over the fireplace was a bust of Oliver Cromwell, Worsley’s maternal great-great-grandfather of whom he was extremely proud – an act of ancestor worship that must have had deliberate classical overtones. The total effect of this room must have been very austere and classical – in fact just what the eighteenth century must have thought a Roman room to have been like.

Hovingham was never published and had no influence on contemporary architecture, but with our understanding of Hovingham we can turn to a much more influential house, Holkham Hall in Norfolk, begun in 1734, and show how that too can best be explained as an attempt to recreate a Roman house.

Holkham epitomises the great neo-Palladian country house, but there has always remained a slight mystery around it. The exact authorship of the design is still a matter of some debate, but it was probably the two amateurs Coke and Burlington who decided to model Holkham on a Roman house, with the two professionals Kent and Brettingham being primarily executants and responsible for fitting up rooms.

I do not think that it has ever been sufficiently noted how unusual the ground plan of Holkham is (Fig. 4), with its columned hall, internal, unused courts and circuit of rooms. The source for the ground plan certainly does not lie in earlier conventional country house groundplans, even of neo-Palladian houses. It is the hall that has attracted

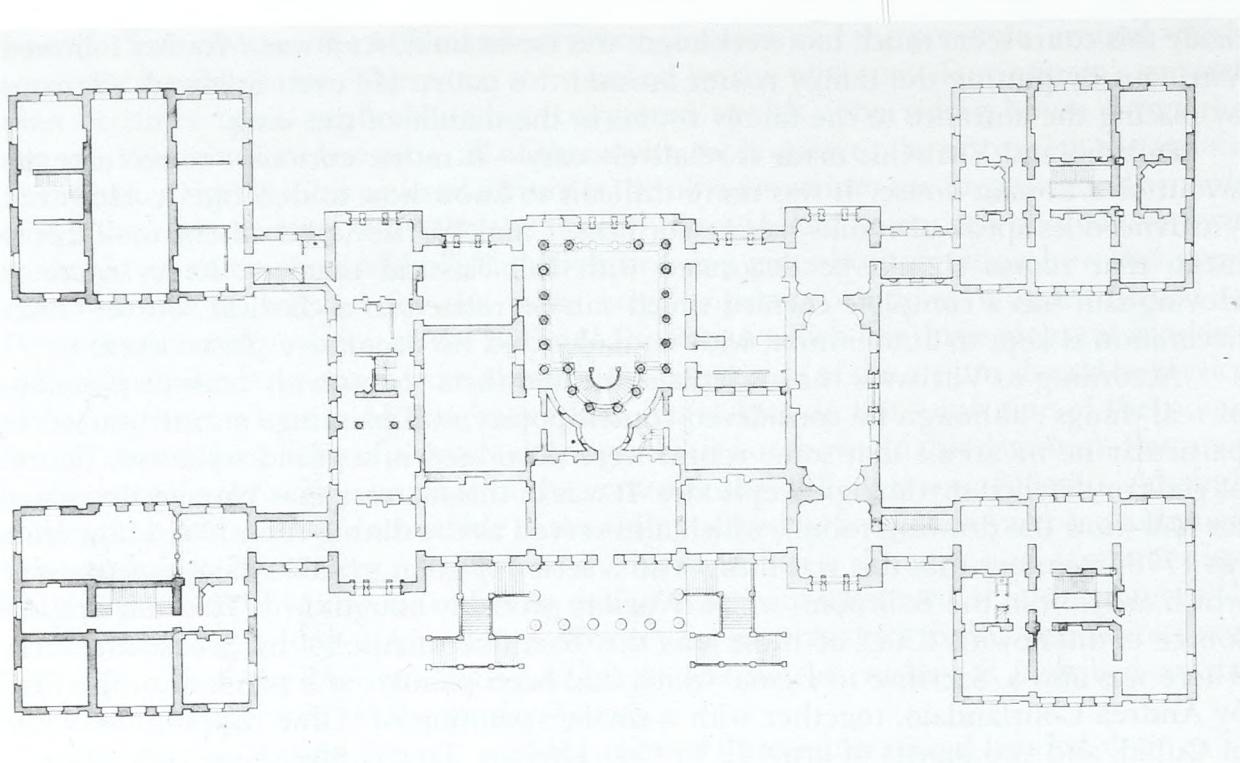


FIG. 4. Anon, groundplan of Holkham Hall, Norfolk (British Library).

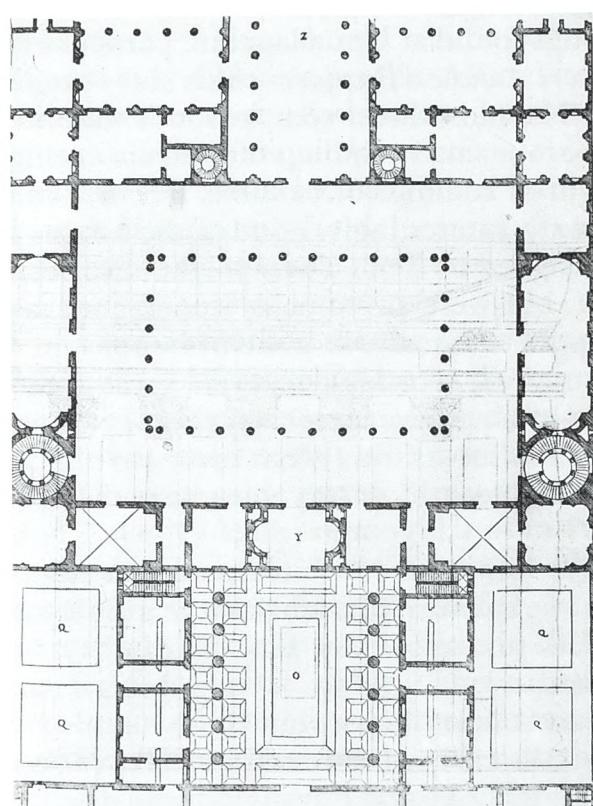


FIG. 5. Groundplan of a Roman house from Barbaro's edition of Vitruvius's *De Architectura* (1567).

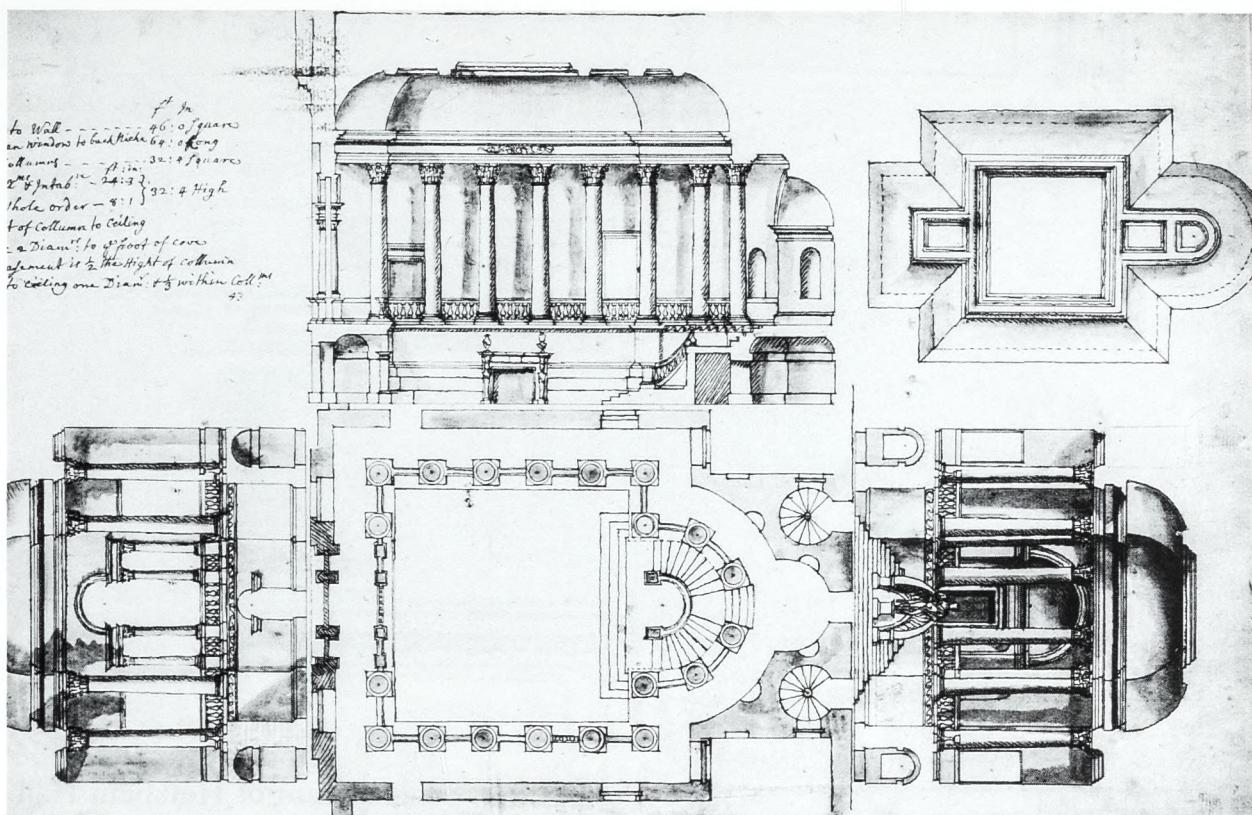


FIG. 6. William Kent, design for the hall at Holkham (Holkham Hall).

most comment. Wittkower recognises the neo-classical inspiration behind it, but suggests that the source is Palladio's Egyptian Hall as interpreted by Burlington at York.²¹ A more direct source for the hall, and indeed for the whole house can be found in Barbaro's interpretation of Vitruvius's Roman House²² (Fig. 5). The hall should not be seen as an Egyptian Hall but as an atrium. This is even clearer in Kent's detailed drawing (Fig. 6). Like Barbaro's atrium, the hall is essentially a square with six columns along each side set out slightly from the wall (in a Roman house the spaces between the columns and the wall are known as the *alae*), and has a coffered ceiling. The blank area in the middle of Kent's roof is probably meant to represent the ceiling open to the sky in Barbaro's atrium. The one major difference arose from the practical need to use the hall to rise from ground to first floor level, achieved through the apsed end with semi-circular stairs. It is probably this that Brettingham is referring to when he says, in his commentary in the second edition of *The Plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk* (1773), that the idea of the great hall was suggested by the Earl himself from Palladio's example of a basilica exhibited in Barbaro's translation of Vitruvius.²³ Although Brettingham's detailed room-by-room description of the house in the second edition of 1773 is invaluable in revealing the specific classical or Jonesian source of the detail in most of the rooms (which had probably been executed by his father), what he has to say about the general layout is couched in terms of uncertainty.

Further comparison between Barbaro's plan and that of Holkham is revealing. If the range on the far side of Barbaro's peristyle is removed and the wings bent back on themselves, we have the ground plan of Holkham. The saloon is the tablinum, the two drawing rooms are the two rectangular rooms that flank it (the equivalent of the Tapestry and Hunting Halls at Hovingham). Even the gallery is modelled closely on the wing, with a rectangular apsed room, and square niched rooms at either end. It may be

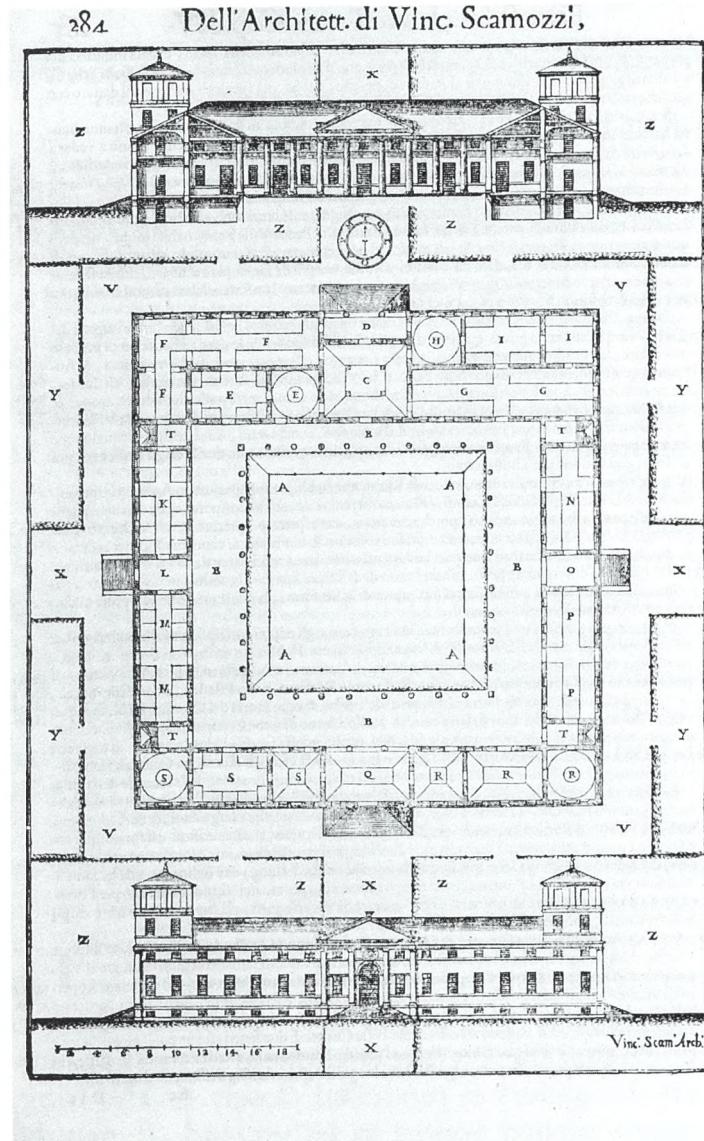
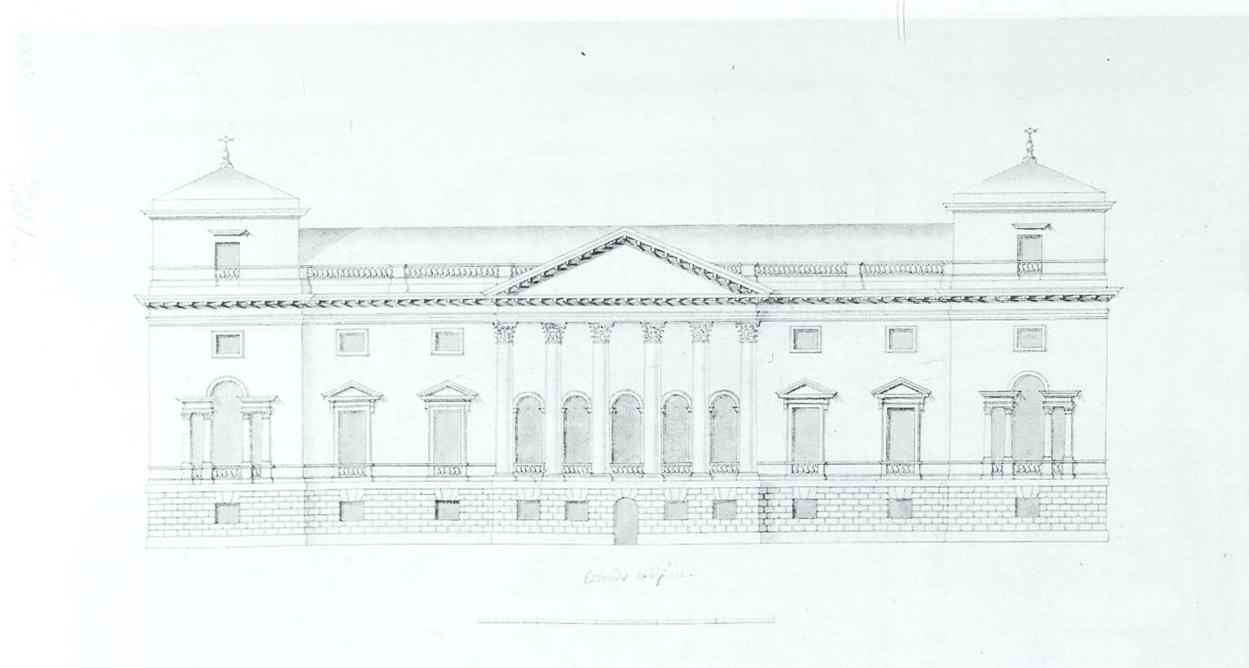


FIG. 7. Anon, elevation of the south front of Holkham Hall (British Library).

FIG. 8. Vincenzo Scamozzi's reconstruction of an antique villa from *dell'Idea dell'Architettura Universale* (1615).

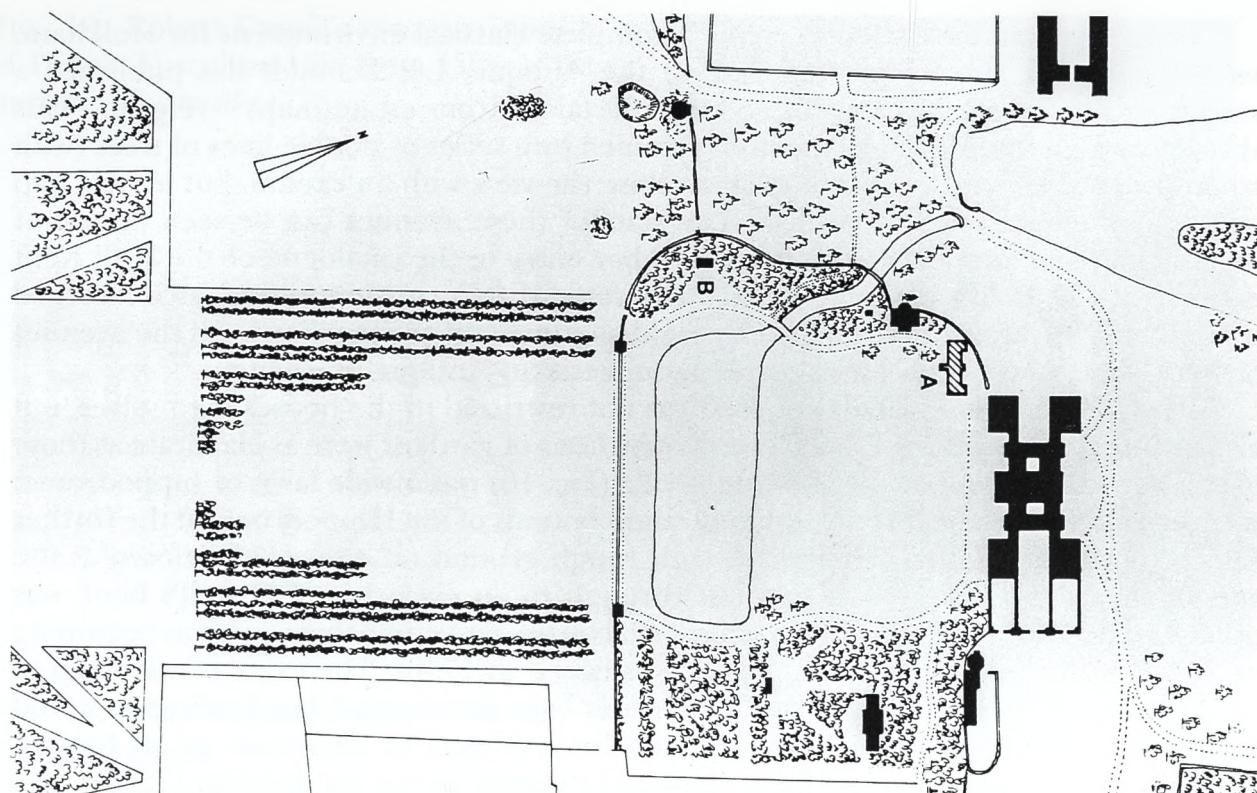


FIG. 9. Reconstruction of the garden at Holkham Hall, Norfolk, about 1760 (British Architectural Library).

significant, in view of Vitruvius's comments about life-size decorative painting, that the saloon was hung with paintings of mythological scenes. Like Hovingham, all the rooms have full classical cornices and very little other ornament, and antique sculpture also plays an important part in the decoration. It was originally intended to heat the hall with fireplaces, but a more classical solution was reached and the hall was given underfloor heating, an idea that must have been taken from the Roman hypocaust. Even the brick with which the house was built was seen to support the Antique link. Brettingham writes how Vitruvius said the Romans preferred brick even to marble for durability, and he considered the Holkham brick a very good comparison with Roman brick – a specimen Roman brick having arrived in a packing crate.²⁴

Barbaro's reconstruction provided a workable groundplan but no elevation. I think that the early designs for Holkham in the British Library are particularly significant in showing how Coke arrived at the present elevations²⁵ (Fig 7). He originally considered compressing the whole house into one block, with a chamber floor along the south front. The source for his design, with its basement, piano nobile and chamber floor, its four corner towers and its central portico, is clearly Scamozzi's *Antique Villa* which also has a basement, piano nobile, chamber floor, four corner towers and central portico²⁶ (Fig. 8). The towers at Holkham have always been compared to the towers traditionally ascribed to Inigo Jones at Wilton, but if these are the source for Holkham then it is hard to explain why the Holkham towers are pyramidal, not pedimented. The Scamozzi illustration would appear to be the immediate source, Wilton only serving to confirm the architectural respectability of pavilion towers. It must subsequently have been decided that the difficulty of actually living in a 'Roman' house was too great, and as built all the domestic parts of the house, the family's living rooms, the guest rooms and the kitchen, were placed in wings.

Coke seems to have tried to create a complete classical environment for Holkham, with the garden also being modelled on the Antique. Leo Schmidt has published a reconstruction of the gardens in about 1760 taken from estate maps²⁷ (Fig. 9). This shows a large lawn in front of the house framed by a series of double lines of trees (with rough ground beyond), which appear to close the view with an exedra, but leave a gap open to an eyecatcher, the obelisk. The start of these avenues can be seen in one of Kent's landscape designs for Holkham. In her entry in the catalogue of the Hull Kent exhibition, Cinzia Sicca comments that 'it is somewhat surprising to find such a formal treatment of the water as well as such a rigid alignment of the pavilions and the avenues of trees', but John Dixon Hunt correctly suggests an Antique precedent.²⁸

Pliny's description of his two villas was not restricted to the houses themselves, but also included their setting. Castell's reconstructions of gardens were as elaborate as those of the houses. In front of the Tusculum villa (Fig. 10) was a wide lawn or hippodrome: 'surrounded with Plane-Trees . . . The straight bounds of the Hippodrome at the further End being broken into a Semicircle', with rough ground on either side, closed at the end by an exedra, but with a gap left through to an eyecatcher.²⁹ Castell's book was published posthumously in 1729 at almost exactly the same time that work was beginning on the gardens at Holkham (the obelisk was raised in 1730). The exact relationship of Burlington to Castell's reconstructions has never been determined, but Burlington would not have let his Palladio drawings be used for a project as important as an English translation of Vitruvius (as had been planned by Castell before his death in 1728) unless he had a certain experience of his abilities. Whether Coke was influenced by Castell, whether Castell was party to the discussions of Burlington's circle, or whether they merely represent a common movement, the Holkham and Castell's visions of antique gardens are very similar, and the Holkham garden would seem to be derived from Pliny's Tusculum garden.

Holkham's four towers, and indeed its garden, raise comparison with another of Lord Burlington's houses (although one where Burlington worked alone), Tottenham Park, Wiltshire, which he designed for his brother-in-law Lord Bruce in 1721.³⁰ If it seems difficult to prove that the Wilton towers were the source for those at Holkham, it seems even more difficult to claim that those at Tottenham are modelled on those of Wilton, despite their proximity. The effect of the pedimented towers flanking a long facade at Wilton is quite different from the pyramidal towers punctuating the compact block of Tottenham. Again the source for the four towers would appear to be Scamozzi. Tottenham Park was too small to attempt to recreate a Roman house, but in this his first house, probably designed before he purchased the Palladio and Jones drawings, Burlington seems to have distilled the essence of the Roman villa into the four towers. Like Holkham, the central feature of the gardens at Tottenham could be described as a 'hippodrome'.³¹

Rokeby Park in Yorkshire would appear to be another house where the Roman ideal was symbolised in a small villa by certain motifs and by its setting. The park and its villa were created by Sir Thomas Robinson between 1725 and the early 1730s, and the plan of the park was recorded in an engraving of 1741 (Fig. 11). A series of paintings at Rokeby prove that the park was laid out as shown in this engraving.³² Again as at Holkham and as in Castell's Tusculum villa, the house is set in a wide lawn flanked by double rows of trees with rough ground beyond, the trees coming in to form an exedra but leaving space through to an eyecatcher. Robinson would also undoubtedly have been aware of the similarities between the situation of his villa and that described by Pliny, far from the sea, under the 'most healthful mountains' the Apennines (or at Rokeby Pennines), with even the River Tees lying in the same relation to Rokeby as the

FIG. 10. Robert Castell's reconstruction of Pliny's Tusculum villa from *Villas of the Ancients Illustrated* (1728).

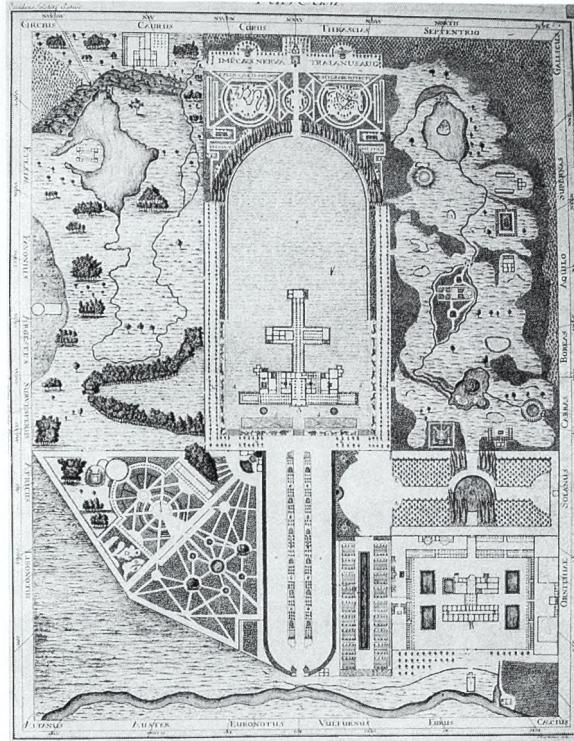
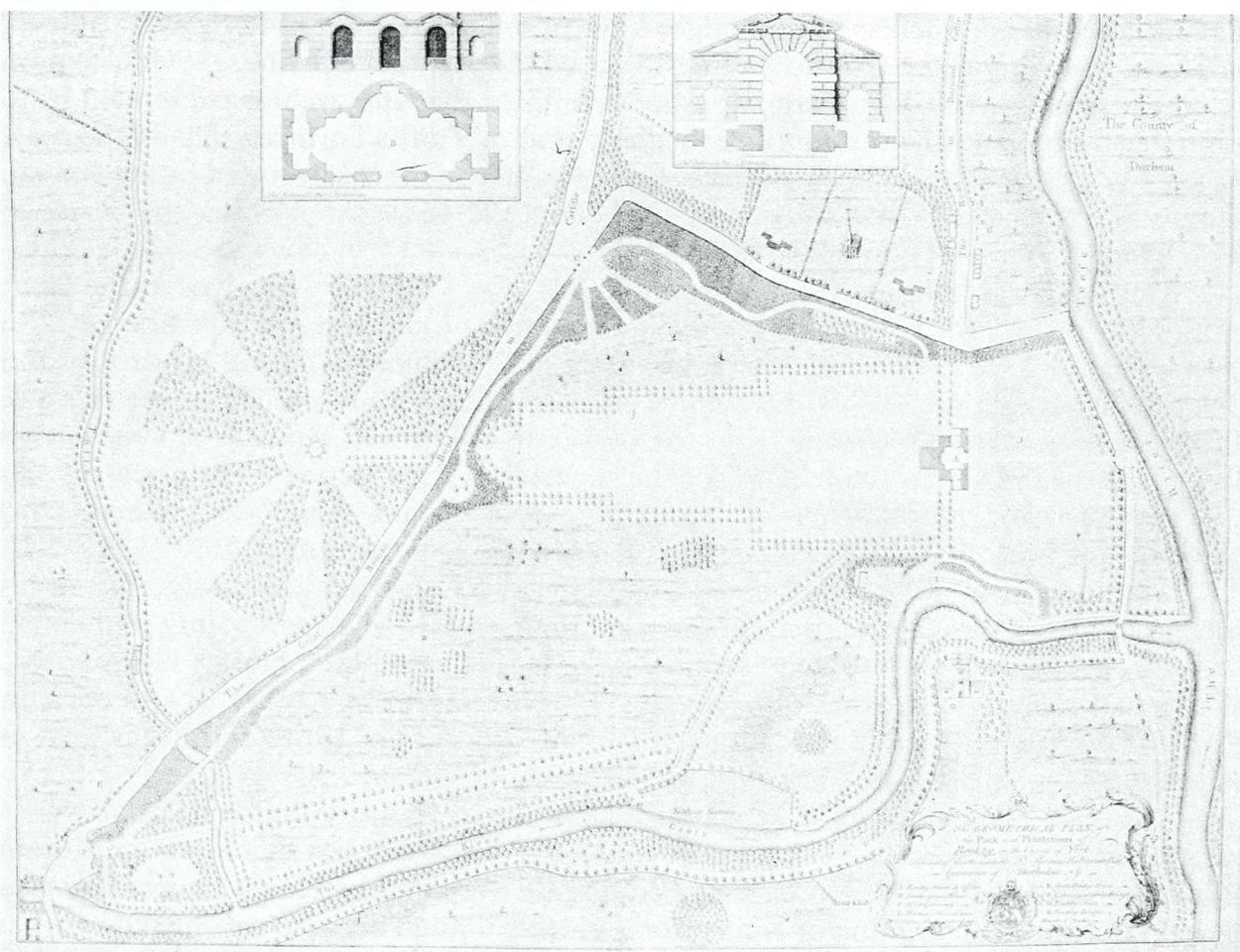


FIG. 11. 1741 engraved plan of Rokeby Park, Yorkshire.



river that appears in Castell's plate.

Three aspects of Rokeby's design make it unusual: it is not clear which was intended to be the entrance front; the north side of the house is set round an enclosed court with the stables and offices on either side; and its twin towers. These are all probably the result of Robinson's attempt to emulate a Roman villa. Palladio describes all the stables, kitchens and offices of a Roman villa as being on the entrance side: 'Backwards one sees the master's habitation, the principal front of which is opposite to the front of the house for the uses of the villa'.³³ This seems to explain Rokeby's ambivalent entrance front. It may be that Robinson saw his columned hall in the rustic as his atrium. The twin towers of the house are probably unique in neo-Palladian architecture, and were almost certainly a deliberate reference to Pliny's Tusculum villa, one of the key features of which was its twin towers. Although Palladio does not discuss Pliny's villas, several of his villas had twin towers, either on the house, as at the Villa Pisani, or on the office ranges. Both Palladio and his readers must have been aware of the Plinian overtones of such towers. Other possible Roman references at Rokeby include an intended bath in the basement, on the west side as Vitruvius recommended (such bathrooms were not common in English country houses at this date); the use of baseless Roman Doric columns on the porch which replaced the original outside stairs in the 1750s; and a mosaic floor also intended when the house was remodelled in the 1750s but never executed.

Pliny's Laurentine villa seems also to have been the model for one of the eighteenth century's more enigmatic lost houses, Holland House at Kingsgate on the Isle of Thanet in Kent. What survives is only a shadow of a house that Nathaniel Wraxall described as having 'a colonnade such as Ictinus might have raised by an order of Pericles'.³⁴ Indeed, it is hard to distinguish it from any other stuccoed Regency seaside house. Our attention is drawn to the house by a contemporary reference that the architect intended it 'to resemble an Italian villa; but more particularly that of Tully's Formian villa on the coast of the bay of Baiae, near the city of Pozzuolo, one of the most celebrated in the Roman state, upon the eve of the Augustan age, when all the polite arts were at the zenith of their glory'.³⁵ Tully of course is Marcus Tullius Cicero.

Kingsgate was built for Henry Fox (1705-74) who was closely involved at the heart of English politics for over twenty years before falling into disgrace. Fox first came to Thanet in 1760 for his health. The good effect of the sea air in curing his dropsy and making his asthma attacks less frequent persuaded him to buy a small house there in 1762. He soon started to rebuild this, something that he could afford to do because as Paymaster to the Forces from 1757-65 he amassed a vast fortune. His architect was another amateur, thirty years his junior, Thomas Wynn, who was created Lord Newborough in 1776. Work probably started in 1764 and continued until 1771.³⁶

Little is known of Cicero's villa at Baiae, except for the occasional reference in his letters to Atticus, and although a site was identified for it near Pozzuoli, little remained. The specific comparison with the Baiae villa must therefore be a literary comparison. Cicero had retired to the country having lost his office after the Civil War, and perhaps Fox, who was deeply disliked for his corruption and was forced to resign his post as Paymaster General, identified himself with Cicero.

However, contemporary descriptions which noted that the house was built 'on a very different plan from any other house in the country'³⁵ suggest that it was a different Roman coastal villa that Wynn intended Kingsgate to resemble, Pliny's Laurentine villa (Fig. 11). Our understanding of Kingsgate is gravely limited because we only know what the facade of the house looked like³⁷ (Fig. 12). We do not know its plan or any other elevations. However, that elevation and description seem strangely close to Pliny's villa.

The house faced the sea, which was only about fifty yards away. In the centre was

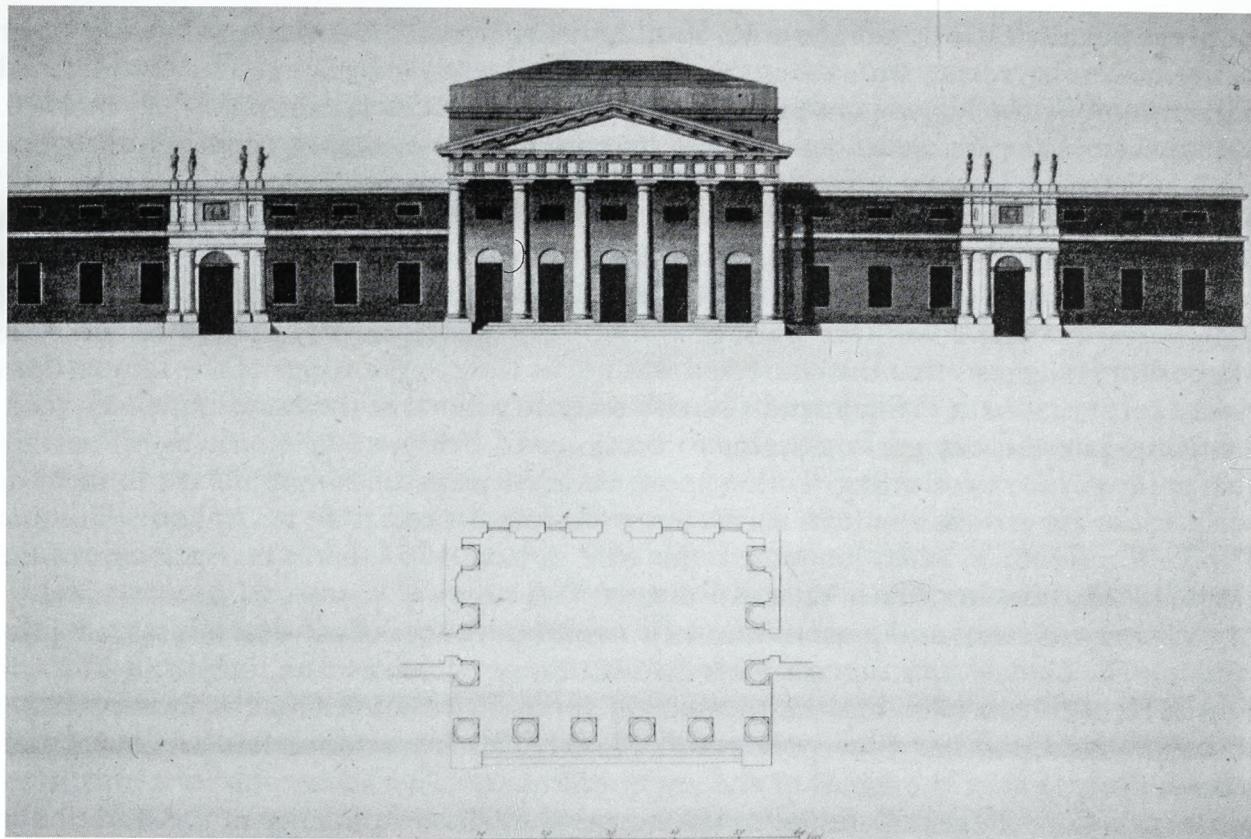


FIG. 12. Anon, south front of Kingsgate House, Kent (British Library).

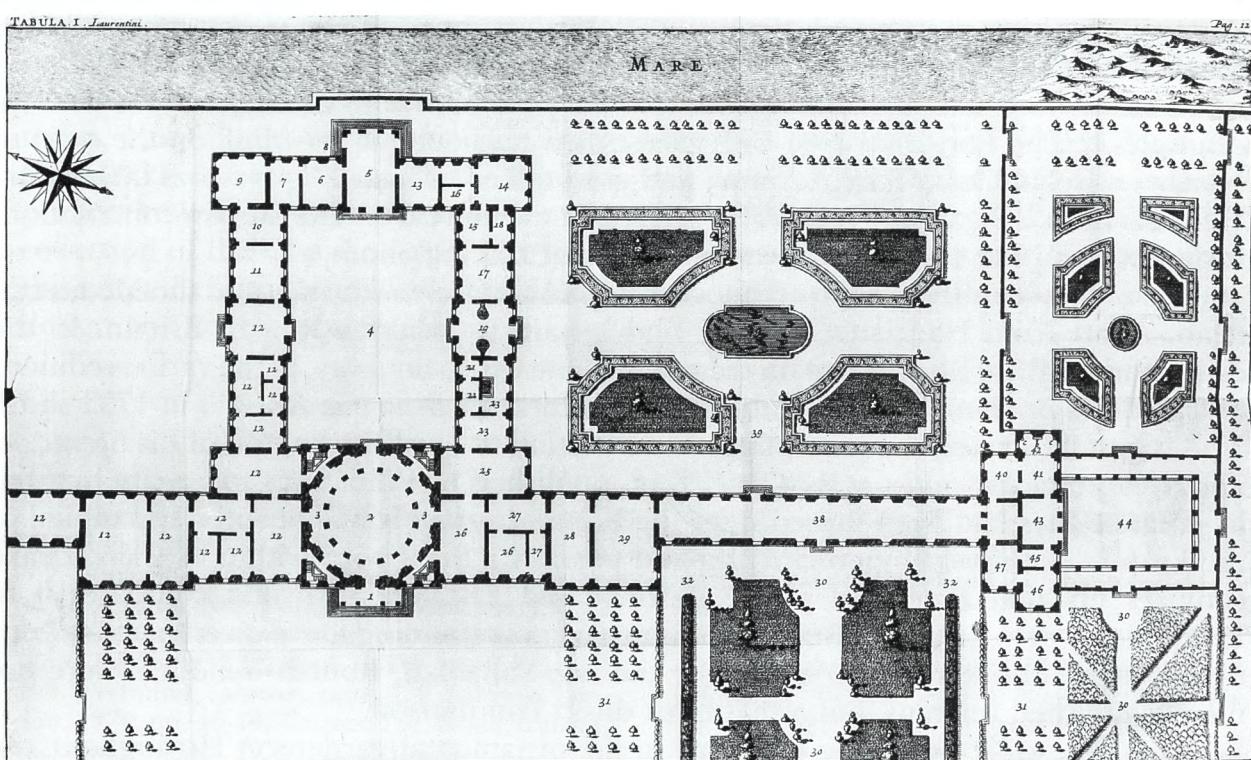


FIG. 13. Felibien des Avaux's reconstruction of Pliny's Laurentine villa from *Les Plans et les Descriptions de deux des plus belles Maisons de Campagne de Pline le Consul* (1699).

a great hexastyle Doric portico with an attic rising behind. On either side were lower wings seven bays wide with a central doorway, and a low first floor. The first detailed description of the house is in Fisher's *Kentish Traveller's Companion* published in 1776. He describes the facade and then goes on to say, 'The back front consists of several buildings which exactly answer to each other on the opposite sides of the garden'.³⁵ This strongly suggests that the rooms behind the facade were arranged round a courtyard. The number of rooms (only eight major rooms are mentioned in the two detailed descriptions, the Saloon of Neptune, the vestibule to the saloon, the drawing room, the circular room, the passage room, the library, the Charles Tower and the Repository) suggests that the courtyard was not as wide as the wings of the facade. This is the form that both Felibien and Castell's reconstructions of the Laurentine villa took. At Kingsgate the comparison seems to be closer to Felibien's version which does not have the portico protruding. Unless more detailed plans of Kingsgate are found it is difficult to be certain about its form, but it was almost certainly an Antique villa that Holland referred to when he wrote to his wife in June 1767 that 'The Back part of the House looks now just like a Villa as I meant'.³⁸

Other architects and patrons saw their houses as echoes of classical houses. Sir John Clerk's *The Country Seat* describes his Scottish house at Mavisbank, begun in 1723, in terms of a Roman villa, but the connection seems to be intellectual or literary rather than practical. As Ian Gow points out, Mavisbank's importance lies in Clerk's self-conscious revival of the ideals of the antique Roman villa, not because it is a practical reconstruction; the actual design of the house by William Adam lies in the tradition of Scottish architecture.³⁹ Even more self-consciously 'Roman' was the house the amateur architect and astronomer Thomas Wright built for himself from 1756 at Byer's Green in County Durham. This he described as a *villula*, and his account of the house is laced with Latin terms. Adjacent to the house were two courts or *suggestia*, with a small *praetorium* between them adjoining the house. Within the house he refers to the *triclinium*, the *sedes heatorum* and *cubicula*. It has been demolished and no view of it survives, but it was clearly tiny, and it does not seem that the plan was taken from any of the classical examples.⁴⁰ The Earl-Bishop of Derry described his house at Downhill on the coast of Northern Ireland as a 'Tusculanium', and even talked of installing frescoes taken from Herculaneum.⁴¹ Again the references seem to come more from the literary connotations for a house on the edge of the sea, than from actual imitation.

Today we identify Roman architecture almost entirely with Italy and the Mediterranean. Apart from Hadrian's Wall we find it hard to visualise Roman Britain. In the eighteenth century Roman Britain did not seem nearly so far away, as the various editions of Camden's *Britannia* and the publication of Horsley's *Britannia Romana* in 1732 show. This is best illustrated in Francis Drake's dedication to Lord Burlington of his *Eboracum, The History and Antiquities of the City of York*, published in 1736. This was a city that felt its greatest days had been those under the Romans, when it had been briefly capital of the Empire, with two emperors dying and possibly a third born within its walls. Drake conjures up 'that Praetorian palace, once in old EBORACUM' and compares it to Burlington's new Assembly Rooms: '[it] must, if now standing, have given place to your Egyptian hall in our present York'.⁴² For the neo-Palladian, Roman buildings were not merely vanished remains, but a matter of direct comparison.

In 1745, while extending the canal in the ornamental gardens at Hovingham, the remains of a Roman villa were discovered. It is not fanciful to suggest that it was this discovery that inspired Worsley to try to recreate a Roman house. The remains were engraved by George Vertue and paid for by Lord Burlington. Further proof of Burlington's archaeological interests come in the engravings of the remains of the Roman

road found on his estate at Londesbrough in the East Riding.

Thomas Wright's description of Byer's Green drew particular attention to the proximity of a Roman circus two miles in compass and the former Roman fort of Vinovium, and he suggested that the annual village games were relics of Roman games. At Rokeby Sir Thomas Robinson must have been equally aware of links with Rome. Gretabridge, on the edge of his park, was the site of a much-noted Roman fort, and some commentators had even suggested that the bridge was Roman. Several inscriptions and altars had been dug up in the area and were collected by Robinson, whose love of such remains brought him the Earl of Carlisle's collection of Roman remains from Naworth.

Perhaps the most interesting fact is that all these houses are amateurs' houses, generally built for themselves. They were not designed by professional architects. Amateur architects were particularly favoured by Vitruvius, who wrote that 'I can find nothing but praise for those householders who, in the confidence of learning, are emboldened to build for themselves. Their judgement is that, if they must trust to inexperienced persons, it is more becoming to them to use up a good round sum at their own pleasure than that of a stranger'.⁴³ The difference in education between the professional and the amateur is not perhaps sufficiently emphasised. Professional architects nearly always rose through apprenticeship, whether as a craftsman or as an architect's assistant. Their approach was therefore essentially practical – it had to be or else they would have got no more clients – and their architectural style tended to reflect that of other architects. Amateurs, however, were gentlemen. They stayed at school until their late teens, might go to university and would almost certainly go on a Grand Tour. In all this, Classical Antiquity was constantly forced upon them. At school they had an almost unadulterated diet of the Classics. University was unlikely to be very different. On the Grand Tour it was above all the Classical remains that they studied. Thus classical Rome (and to a lesser extent Greece, but education largely concentrated on Rome and only a handful of gentlemen had the chance to visit Greece) dominated the intellectual consciousness of the amateur architect in a way that is hard to envisage today. Nor should we assume that, because to our eyes Latin was forced down their throats, their acceptance of the Classics was in some way grudging. Classical texts predominated in most gentlemen's libraries – Worsley had an exceptionally good collection of the Classics – and many writers expressed a genuine love for them. It was this empathy with Rome that led them to ignore the conventions of contemporary house design and try to recreate Rome in England.

NOTES

1. Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*, London, 1845, I, p. 38.
2. Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. M. H. Morgan, New York, 1960, Book VI; Andrea Palladio, *The Four Books of Architecture*, trans. Isaac Ware, London, 1738, Book II, chapter 7.
3. Petronius, *Satyricon*, trans. J. P. Sullivan, London, 1974, pp. 46-48; Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. J. Jackson, London, 1951, pp. 135, 279.
4. Pliny, *Letters*, trans. W. Melmoth, London, 1915, II, letter 17, V, letter 6.
5. M. Bellicard, *Observations upon the Antiquities of the Town of Herculaneum*, London, 1753, pp. 37-38.
6. Vitruvius, *op. cit.*, 1960, VII, 5, iii.
7. Bellicard, 1753, p. 84.
8. Palladio, 1738, Book II, chapters 4-11, and 16..
9. *Ibid*, Book II, chapter 16.
10. Vincenzo Scamozzi, *L'Idea della Architettura Universale*, Venice, 1615, I, Book III, Chapters 3-5, 12, 15, 21, and 23.
11. E. Eisenthal, 'John Webb's Reconstruction of the Ancient House', *Architectural History*, 28, 1985, pp. 7-31.
12. Vitruvius, 1960, VI, pp. 1, 2.
13. Antoine Desgodetz, *Les Edifices Antiques de Rome*, Paris, 1682, pp. 306-07.

14. Vitruvius, 1960, Book VI, chapter 2.
15. Giles Worsley, 'The baseless Roman Doric Column in mid-eighteenth-century English Architecture: a study in neo-classicism', *The Burlington Magazine*, May 1986, pp. 331-339.
16. Vitruvius, 1960, VI, 3, vi.
17. *Ibid.*, IV, 7, iii.
18. Isaac Ware, *A Complete Body of Architecture*, London, 1756, p. 214.
19. Vitruvius, 1960, VII, 4, iv.
20. *Le Pitture Antiche d'Ercolano e Contorni*, Naples, 1757-71; Worsley did not have a copy of this, but he would have been able to examine the copy in George III's library, as, presumably, would Cipriani who executed ceilings after the antique at the Queen's House.
21. R. Wittkower, 'Lord Burlington and William Kent', *Palladio and English Palladianism*, London, 1983, p. 127.
22. Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, trans. M. Barbaro, Venice, 1567, p. 216.
23. M. Brettingham, *The Plans, Elevations and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk*, London, 1773, p. vi.
24. *Ibid.*, 1, pp. ix-x.
25. British Library, King's Maps XXXI, 42b.
26. Scamozzi, 1615, I, p. 284.
27. L. Schmidt, 'Holkham Hall, Norfolk - II', *Country Life*, 31st January, 1980, fig. 1.
28. A Tercentenary Tribute to William Kent, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, 1985, p. 69; J. Dixon Hunt, *William Kent: Landscape garden designer*, London, 1987, p. 137.
29. Robert Castell, *Villas of the Ancients Illustrated*, London, 1728, p. 25.
30. In his lecture 'The building works of Lord Viscount Bruce' given to the 1982 Georgian Group symposium *Lord Burlington and his Circle*, John Harris set out the building chronology of Tottenham Park, but left unresolved the question whether Tottenham as left by Burlington in 1721 had four towers or only two, with the remaining two being added in 1730. Further study suggests that the house was built with four towers, and this is the assumption of the Royal Commission in *Wilton House and English Palladianism*, London, 1988, p. 141.

One of the two first, but undated, designs for Tottenham shows the entrance front with a pediment between two towers (Harris, fig. 1). On the sketch ground plan which Harris shows relates to this design (fig. 3), these towers project sharply forward. The garden front of the house has identical projecting corner pavilions. The demands of symmetry would imply that these must also have had towers.

In the plan (fig. 5) which Harris relates to the elevation dated 1721 (fig. 9), the corner towers on the entrance facade project only slightly. The ground plan (with its twin closets in what appear to be in the corners of the garden front) would seem to suggest that there were no towers on the

garden front. But at this point the drawing is unfinished. There are no lines indicating an outside wall and two openings imply doorways through to another room. Furthermore the side elevation is five bays wide with three windows on the left and two blank windows on the right. Although the space between all the windows is equal, symmetry would suggest that two more blank windows might have been intended on the left. This suggests that further rooms, identical in size to the corner rooms of the front elevation were considered for the garden front. fig. 7 shows that the possibility that these wings would not be built was considered, but there is no proof that the house was built to this ground plan, indeed fig. 12 suggests that it was not.

Harris says that there can be no doubt that the portico in fig. 12 must predate Chiswick and therefore cannot be part of the 1730 addition. In that case fig. 12, which Buckler's drawing fig. 14 shows to have been the garden front in its final form, must date from c.1721. The portico, even if moved in the 1730 rebuilding, would have been too wide for the central projection in figs. 5 and 7.

I would suggest that the first designs (figs. 1 and 3) intended the house to have four towers; that these first designs were considered impractical (the relationship between the two stories, in particular which was to be more important, is unresolved) and too large; that a second design was drawn up (figs. 5, 7 and 9) in which the question whether to have towers on the garden front was unresolved and a central tower staircase was considered; that this was decided against, that the towers were built, and that the space between them was filled with a five-bay pedimented range (fig. 12). If so all that was added in 1730 were the wings.

31. John Harris, 'Serendipity and the Architect Earl', *Country Life*, 28th May, 1987.
32. Giles Worsley, 'Rokeby Park, Yorkshire', *Country Life*, 19-26th March, 1987.
33. Palladio, 1738, Book II, chapter 16.
34. Nathaniel Wraxall, *Historical and Posthumous Memoirs*, London 1884, II, p. 8.
35. *The Kentish Traveller's Companion*, Canterbury, 1776, p. 124.
36. British Library, Holland House Papers, Add. Ms. 51409, 51444.
37. British Library, King's Maps, XVIII 30a-1; All Souls College, Oxford, architectural drawings III, 24.
38. British Library, Holland House Papers, Add. Ms. 51416 f179.
39. Ian Gow, 'Mavisbank', *Country Life*, 20th August, 1987.
40. 'A sketch of the character of Mr Thomas Wright', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1793, I, p. 213,
41. W. S. Childe-Pemberton, *The Earl-Bishop*, London, 1925.
42. Francis Drake, *Eboracum*, London, 1736, dedication.
43. Vitruvius, 1960, Book VI, introduction.