



THE
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GROUP

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ISAAC WARE AND
CHESTERFIELD HOUSE*Roger White*

In an assembly of such erudition and expertise as this Symposium, I confess that I feel somewhat fraudulent in giving a paper on Chesterfield House. The principal problem with Chesterfield House is that it was pulled down in 1934,¹ and, although the fabric was inevitably cannibalized for re-use elsewhere, this re-use was so fragmentary and so geographically scattered as to make it impossible to conduct a meaningful study of the building on the basis of original visual evidence.² Such a study has to be based therefore on the photographs taken of the interior by Bedford Lemere in 1894 and then again by *Country Life* magazine for the two articles by Avray Tipping in 1922.³ Tipping's articles date from the early days of true architectural scholarship in this country but they are nevertheless admirable, taking as their texts the letters of Lord Chesterfield,⁴ the writings of Isaac Ware, and the evidence of the building itself. Tipping knew of no surviving building accounts and neither do I, so there is nothing new to add on that score. What is perhaps principally lacking from his coverage is any discussion of the possible sources for this most authentically *French* interior of the English rococo; and in this respect I am indebted to Michael Snodin for his acute observations.

Chesterfield House was at once both highly typical and highly atypical of the great London town house of the mid-18th century. It was typical in its combination of a restrained astylar exterior (of brick with stone dressings) with an interior of considerable sumptuousness and elaboration. This was the English Palladian norm, sanctioned by Inigo Jones and followed by Kent at Devonshire House and Brettingham at Norfolk House, among others.

1. Not 1937 as stated in Howard Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects* and elsewhere. The *Morning Post* recorded the commencement of demolition on 13 August 1934. The sale of the contents had taken place in 1932, and I am grateful to the Earl of Harewood for showing me the Sothebys catalogue of the event.

2. The Great Room chimney-piece, for instance, is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, while the library was reconstituted by Prince Paul of Yugoslavia in his palace of Beli Dvor, Belgrade. The doorcase from the main front went to Trent Park, Middlesex and ten of the forecourt columns to Anglesey Abbey, Cambs; and so on.

3. *Country Life* 25 February and 4 March 1922. The house had previously been written up at length by E. Beresford Chancellor in *The Private Palaces of London* (1908).

4. *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (6 vols, 1932).

What of course was atypical at Chesterfield House was the form that these sumptuous and elaborate interiors took; for although perhaps half were in the post-Kentian vein that one would expect from a member of the Burlingtonian Office of Works, the remainder exhibited white and gold *boiseries* of a Parisian splendour that dazzled some and scandalized others at the great house-warming party in 1752. These constituted the finest and most authentic evocation of French Rococo models that England produced in this period – considerably more authentic, I would suggest, than the rather heavily Italianate interior at Norfolk House completed in 1756 – and as such they have very little to do with the more characteristic manifestations of the English rococo in interior design.

Isaac Ware was a curious and unexpected choice as architect. When work on Chesterfield House began in 1747 he had produced nothing (so far as we know) which betrayed a special sympathy with the rococo or which might have recommended him to such a client as Lord Chesterfield, nor is there any evidence that he went on to produce work in a similar vein between the completion of this commission and his death in 1766.⁵ He had been trained up under the stolid Thomas Ripley before making his career in the Office of Works, which in the mid-18th century was the heart of the architectural Establishment. Though he grew prosperous on private commissions outside the Office, Ware was essentially an architectural civil servant, with all that that implies in terms of caution and adherence to the rules. In 1738 he produced what is still generally regarded as the best (i.e. most faithful) version of Palladio's *Quattro Libri*. He dedicated it to Lord Burlington, whose assistance is acknowledged in the Preface, and indeed he had already demonstrated his devotion to the Earl's Palladian crusade with his 1733 volume of designs by Jones, Kent and Burlington. We have to remember, however, that in 1739 he had rather subversively joined forces with Hogarth, arch-enemy of Burlington, to run the St Martin's Lane Academy, and in 1741 he sat to Roubiliac for his bust for the first time. This artistic milieu,

5. For fuller details of Ware's career see the entry in Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary*.

which carried over into the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks of which Ware, Hogarth, Hayman and Hudson were all members, may have been the means whereby he came to the notice of Chesterfield. Although Chesterfield House was to remain the most conspicuous evidence of his abilities, Ware himself probably rated Wrotham Park – begun for Admiral Byng in 1754 – more highly, since it is to the plan of this mansion that he proudly gestures in his portrait by Andrea Soldi.

What appears to be Ware's preferred style of interior decoration was found in a number of the ground floor rooms at Chesterfield House. Ware published the plan of this floor in his massive *Complete Body of Architecture* (Fig. 1), which came out in weekly instalments from 1756. Considerable confusion arises in trying to reconcile Ware's own labelling of the rooms with Lord Chesterfield's contemporary references and with the names that were

FIG. 1 Ground floor plan of Chesterfield House, from *The Complete Body of Architecture*.

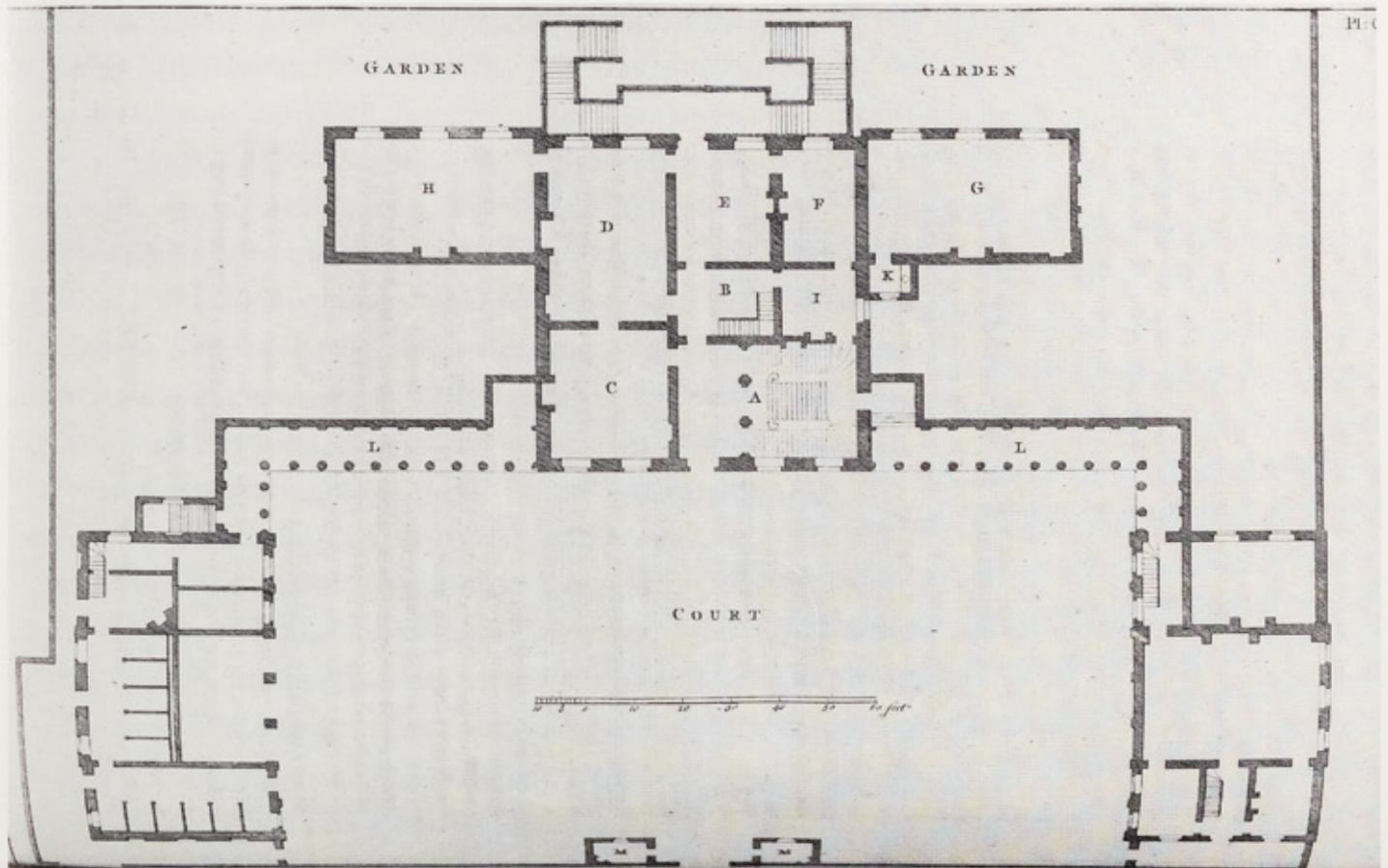


FIG. 2 Chesterfield House: the dining parlour (*Country Life*).



applied by Bedford Lemere in 1894 and Tipping in 1922, especially as we can no longer check these against the house itself. Some of the identifications are straightforward. The front door, obviously, led into the entrance hall (A on Ware's plan), decorated with a typical mid-Palladian mixture of rectangular panels and more luxuriant stuccowork. Opening out of this to the left was the dining parlour (C) (Fig. 2), equally characteristic with its ceiling design of stucco trails and arabesques laced into a corset of strict geometry. Projecting at each end of the garden elevation (north at left on Ware's plan, south at right) were two of the most important apartments, both originally single-storied: on the left the Saloon or Great Room (H), which subsequently became the principal dining room, and on the right Chesterfield's celebrated Library (G). Both rooms had very similar ceilings arranged on the same theme as that of the dining parlour, with lively stuccowork contained within deeply beamed compartments of Jonesian derivation. Chesterfield called the Library 'the best room in England', and it perhaps represented Ware's own *beau idéal*. In these rooms he put into practice the approach which he preached and which a

majority of contemporary English architects adopted. Inigo Jones is the exemplar to whom he returns time and again in his writings; but in his chapter 'On decorating a ceiling in a fanciful manner' he says: 'The French have furnished us with abundance of fanciful decorations for these purposes, little less barbarous than the Gothic; and they were, like that species of building (for we will not descend to call it architecture), received with great readiness: the art [of good design] seemed upon the point of being lost in England: but a better taste has now prevailed. We should, in that danger, have declared for banishing whatever came under the denomination of *French* ornament; but, now we see [the danger] over, the art will be to receive these ornaments with discretion, to adapt them to the few uses for which they are proper; and to soften the luxuriant use, and blend them with better figures, till we have reduced them into a more decent appearance'. The job of the English architect, in other words, should be to tame and neutralize, though not necessarily to reject out of hand, the more wayward and frivolous aspects of the French decorative vocabulary.

A comparable fusion of the two national schools can be observed in the stair hall at Chesterfield House, where a magnificent imperial staircase opened out from beyond a marble arcade (Fig. 3). Although the architectural bones were straightforward enough, the lavishness of the spatial effect and of the materials involved made this arguably the most grandiose town house staircase in Georgian London. Gervase Jackson-Stops⁶ has demonstrated the indebtedness of the balustrade design to plates in Charles d'Aviler's *Cours d'Architecture* of 1710, while John Harris⁷ has proved beyond reasonable doubt that it did not, as previously supposed, come from the Duke of Chandos's mansion at Cannons, demolished in 1747 as work was beginning at Chesterfield House, but was made specifically for this location. Nevertheless, a plan of the ground floor of the house now in the Soane Museum, which is otherwise precisely drawn and labelled, shows no columned screen in the entrance hall and the staircase itself is sketched

6. Gervase Jackson-Stops, 'English Baroque Ironwork', *Country Life*, 4 February 1971.

7. John Harris, 'The staircase that never was', *Architectural Review* March 1980, pp. 131-2. The balustrade was exported to the Metropolitan Museum in 1965.



FIG. 3 Chesterfield House: the principal staircase (*Country Life*).

in only tentatively; so that it does indeed seem probable that the marble pillars, treads and wall facings were acquired at the Cannons sale and incorporated into Chesterfield House as something of an after-thought.

The room at the opposite, or north-east, corner of the ground floor, called on Ware's published plan 'large room or ante-room' (D), is labelled on the same Soane plan as 'French Room'. If, as the matter of the staircase seems to suggest, the Soane plan is an early version by Ware himself made while work was still in progress, then it may be that this label implies that Ware imagined the French Room would be a one-off extravagance and an exception to his Palladian norms. Against this we have to set Chesterfield's letter to Mme. Monconseil of 31 July 1747, his first mention of the house in his voluminous correspondence, in which he says 'je me ruine actuellement à bâtir une assez belle maison, qui sera finie à la Française, avec force sculpture et dorures'. It is tempting and appealing to deduce from the comments of the two men a tug of wills, the client determined to have the interior decked out 'entièrement à la Française' and the architect fighting a rear-guard action to ensure that the necessary architectural

proprieties were observed. Certainly in his *Complete Body of Architecture*, written safely after his fees had been paid, Ware contrived to give the impression that he had complied with the client's dictates under protest. Chesterfield's letters reveal a close interest in the construction of the interiors and an affectionate pride in the finished articles, and his reference to 'l'engagement tendre . . . de ma nouvelle maison' is in marked contrast to Ware's contemptuous put-down of the 'childish' and 'contemptible' French taste, 'mean and frivolous, . . . unworthy of a place where the science is observed and a disgrace to the taste of the proprietor'. But, Ware concedes, 'the fancy of the proprietor . . . must be satisfied at the expence of . . . rigid propriety'. Chapter 43 of *The Complete Body* has a distinctly autobiographical ring to it: 'let us suppose [the architect] engaged with some person of fortune and taste in building and decorating a house of the most magnificent kind. One room must have the highest finishing, because one will be intended for superior elegance: this will be large from the nature of the edifice, and on this every decoration is to be bestowed, in the most profuse manner. The proprietor is to direct the operation, though the architect is to form the figures . . . We suppose the proprietor . . . has corrupted his taste in *France* so as to dislike the *Grecian* science. He desires to have a ceiling as rich as that proposed to him but more airy; and he will have some of the *French* crooked figures introduced into it. In this case let the architect weigh everything with care, and very attentively consider the whole, before he reduces anything to paper'. It is true that in the *Complete Body* Ware has very little that is complimentary to say about anything French, with the exception of the French horn (which he thought made an admirable component for a carved drop or trophy). We have to remember however that the book's publication date was 1756, the year which saw the outbreak of war with France, and it is likely that to some extent Ware's comments represent, rather like the Anti-Gallican dedication of Thomas Johnson's book of designs two years later, the striking of a patriotic pose.

Even his strictures against France and things French, affected or otherwise, cannot obscure the fact that in reality Ware largely shared his patron's pride in the building. It was, he claimed (without notable modesty), a house 'of the greatest elegance, built for a nobleman of the most distinguished taste and adorned at the greatest expence'. Chesterfield considered the expense to be the 'one disagreeable circumstance' attending its construction, but as far as Ware was concerned it was money well spent. 'The curious observer', he supposed, 'will not be startled when he hears that the expence was five-and-twenty thousand pounds: perhaps there is not in all *Europe* so much richness and elegance for the same expence'. One can only speculate on how Chesterfield came to employ such an architect as Ware, but it may be precisely this – that he had heard from previous clients that he would get value for money, together with the services of someone who, whatever his reservations about the style to be adopted, would work with the reliability and professionalism that came of an Office of Works training.

If, as seems possible, the French Room on the ground floor was the first major interior in the style to be proposed for the house and the first to be completed, then it was also an interior without precise precedent in England (Fig. 4). The norm for the English rococo interior developed out of the Palladian interiors of architects such as Campbell and Kent, with wall surfaces divided up into rigidly geometrical panels and the wayward curves of the rococo restricted predominantly to stuccowork on the ceilings and to drops or festoons applied to the walls. One might take, as a random example of this, the saloon at Wallington in Northumberland, designed by the Burlingtonian Daniel Garrett and decorated by Pietro Francini in 1741. Stucco ceilings are in fact much the commonest manifestations of the rococo in English interiors, unlike France where ceilings are characteristically left plain and attention is concentrated on virtuosically-carved paneling. *Boiseries*, or anything approaching them, are extremely rare in England and, as Gervase Jackson-Stops points out in the



FIG. 4 Chesterfield House: the French Room, later drawing room (*Country Life*).

catalogue to the Rococo Exhibition,⁸ one of the very few instances of a specifically *English* engraved design for such a wall scheme is Thomas Johnson's plate of 1758,⁹ which I would suggest was the cue for the plasterwork in the staircase hall at The Beacon, Painswick (Gloucestershire). The arrangement favoured in France, of alternating narrow and wide panels with shaped tops, occurs hardly at all, and where it does, as in the Halnaby Hall room now incorporated into a roadhouse on the A1 (probably by the Perritts of York),¹⁰ it becomes significantly Anglicized and coarsened by comparison to French prototypes.

The Chesterfield House French Room therefore becomes doubly remarkable, because it is not only unprecedented but it also utilizes French engraved sources without either coarsening them or giving the impression of piecemeal composition. Ware's source book appears to have been Mariette's *L'Architecture Française*, first published in 1727 and therefore not absolutely up-to-date, at least by French standards, in 1747.¹¹ From plate 481 of the third volume (Fig. 5), representing a side wall in the vestibule

8. *Rococo: Art and Design in Hogarth's England*, cat. entry M18, p. 205.

9. Thomas Johnson, collection of designs (first published without title in 1758), pl. 25.

10. Halnaby Hall was demolished in 1952. The former dining room is now at the Bridge Inn, Walshford, North Yorkshire.

11. Schemes for the Queen's apartment and Dauphin's apartment at Versailles of 1749 and 1747 respectively (Archives Nationales, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris) nevertheless show the idiom virtually unchanged at the time of the construction of Chesterfield House.

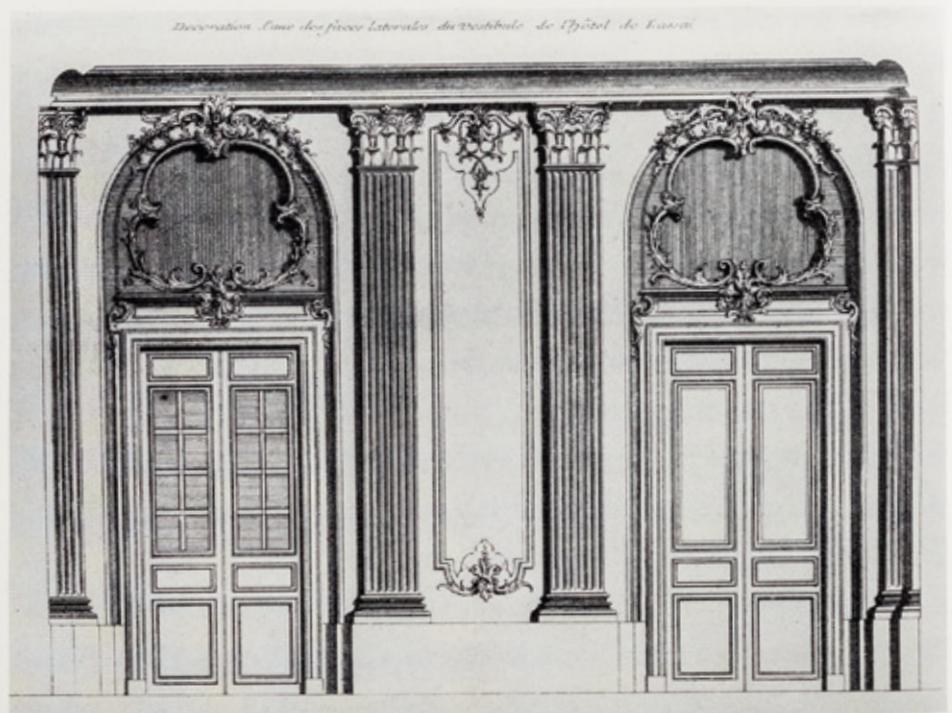
12. Destroyed by a 19th century remodelling.

13. The room came to the Museum via Whitburn Hall, near Sunderland.

14. This room is mis-called the Music Room by Avray Tipping. It was probably directly above the room marked E on Ware's plan, i.e. adjacent to the real Music Room.

at Aubert's Hôtel de Lassay,¹² comes the overdoor on the inner wall. The principal panels are expanded versions of that found in plate 503, being a design of Nicholas Pineau (Fig. 6). It is from this room that the so-called Chesterfield House room at the Bowes Museum was cannibalized.¹³ The splendid overdoor at the Bowes, with its carved trophy incorporating a French horn, came from above a door at the window end of the same room, seen in the middle distance in Bedford Lemere's view through the garden *frot enfilade*. The chimneypiece now at the Bowes Museum also came from this particular room; the type, which recurred a number of times at Chesterfield House, is clearly French and may be compared with, for instance, plate 58b of D'Aviler's *Cours d'Architecture* of 1738. Work on the ground floor proceeded slowly, and by the time Chesterfield moved into the house in March 1749 the only two rooms to be quite finished were the library and what he called his 'boudoir'. The latter, by contrast to the Palladian solemnity of the library, was to be 'the gayest and most cheerful room in England'. It is not absolutely clear which room is here referred to, although the most likely location would probably be

FIG. 5 Hotel de Lassay, Paris: vestibule
(*Mariette* Vol. III, pl. 481).



immediately adjacent to the library in the position labelled 'dressing room' (F) in *The Complete Body* and 'study' on the Soane plan; if so, no photographic record of it seems to survive, and we must content ourselves with Chesterfield's tantalizing description – 'the panelling and the ceiling of a beautiful blue, with much carving and gilding; the carpets and the chairs worked with flowers in petit-point, to a magnificent design on a white ground; over the chimney-piece, which is of Giallo de Siena, splendid mirrors, carving and gilding, and, in the centre, the portrait of a beautiful woman'. Bedford Lemere recorded a different boudoir which does not correspond with this description and which must, from the height of the room and its deep ceiling cove, have been on the first floor (Fig. 7).¹⁴

The Lemere boudoir apart, the principal French room on the first floor seems to have been the Music Room (Fig. 8), which occupied the north-west corner of the house directly above the dining parlour. Ware illustrates the ceiling design in *The Complete Body* (Fig. 9) and accompanies it with his most oft-quoted anti-Gallic strictures. 'A ceiling straggled over with arched lines, and

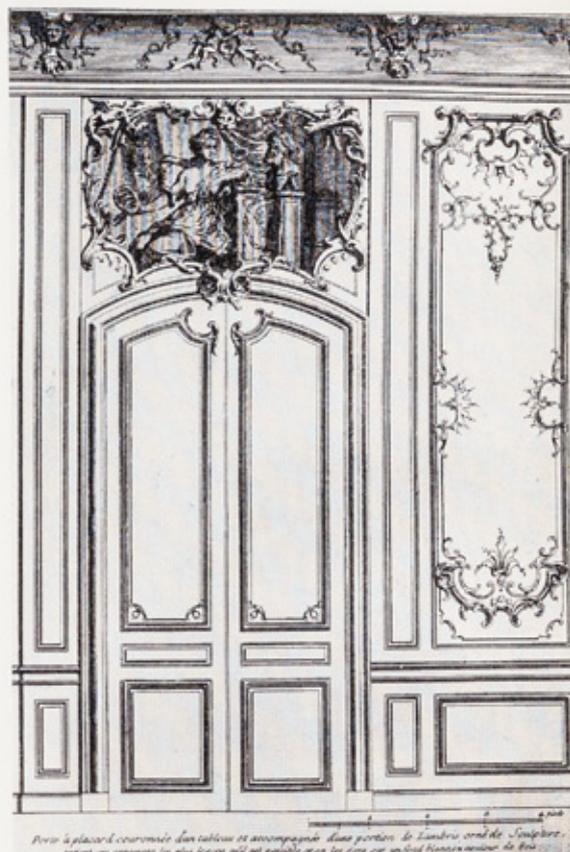


FIG. 6 Nicholas Pineau: design for panelling (*Mariette* Vol. III, pl. 503).



FIG. 7 Chesterfield House: 'boudoir' on first floor (*Country Life*).

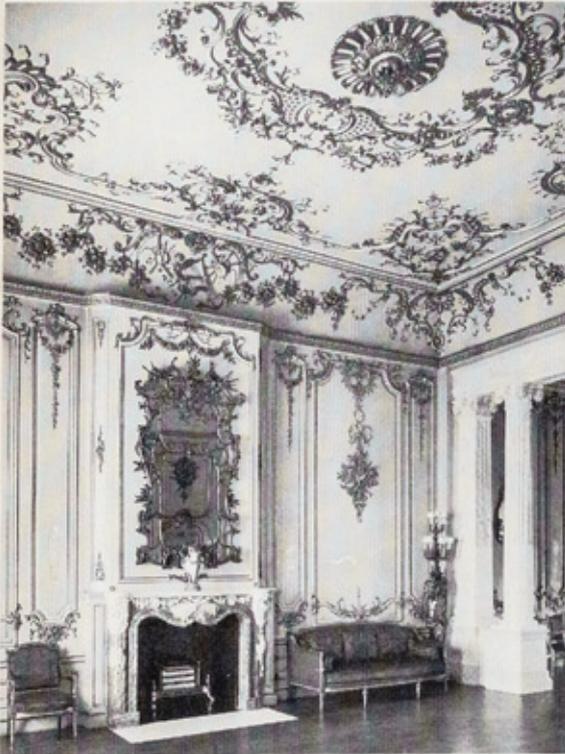


FIG. 8 Chesterfield House: the Music Room (*Country Life*).

15. Monsieur Bruno Pons, however, tells me that this particular ceiling is likely to be a 19th century rococo revival addition.

twisted curves, with Cs and DCs, and tangled semi-circles, may please the light eye of the *French*, who seldom carry their observation farther than a casual glance; but this alone is poor, fantastical and awkward: it is a strange phrase to use for anything from *France*, but those who have seen such ceilings as we here describe must acknowledge it as just.' 'It would be in vain,' he comments, 'to ransack all the writings, and all the remains, of *Grecian* and *Roman* architecture for such a ceiling.' It would almost, he might have added, be in vain to ransack Paris, for there too such ceilings would appear to be a considerable rarity. One such is that of the Salon Rose at the Hôtel de Matignon of circa 1725, but even here there is rather more plain surface than is found either in Ware's design or in the generality of English rococo ceilings.¹⁵

Chesterfield House was a residence exactly tailored to the client's requirements, from the rooms of parade which he initially envisaged as the focal point of his social life after retirement from active politics in 1748, to the library where he spent so many hours after deafness struck him prematurely 'out of living company' in 1752.

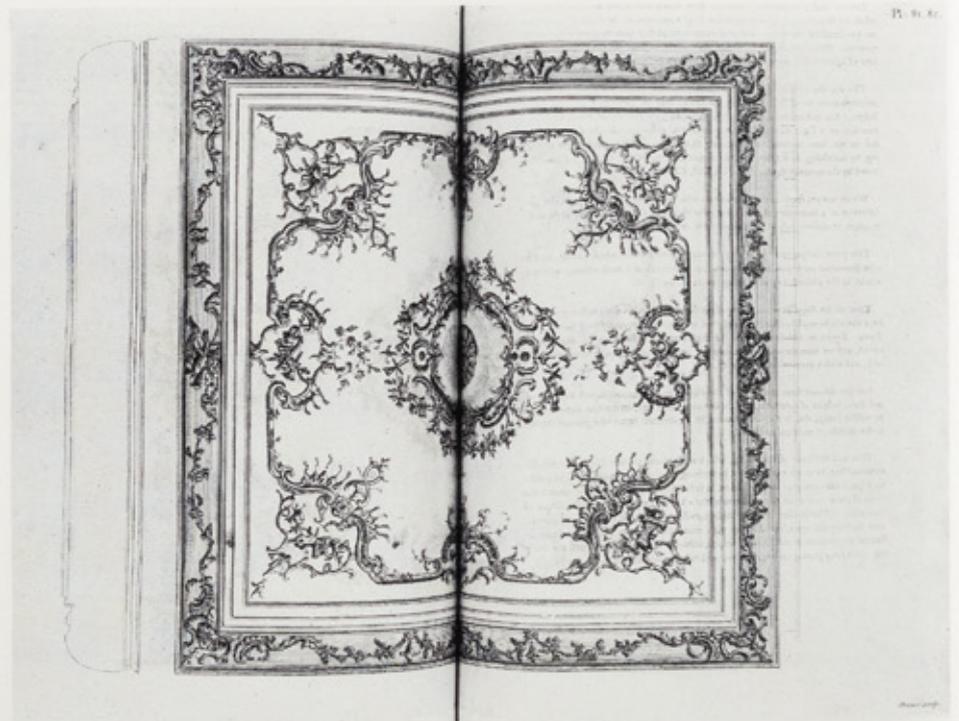


FIG. 9 Chesterfield House: Music Room ceiling, from *The Complete Body of Architecture*.

After the first brief tantalizing glimpses which followed its unveiling to public gaze in the same year, the interior effectively emptied of Society for the next two decades. Even so, it acquired something of a legendary lustre with Chesterfield's own lifetime, partly because of its associations with that extraordinary man and not least because of the very singular quality of Ware's achievement. For it *was* no mean achievement for a man of Ware's training and inclinations to have produced these interiors. The Norfolk House interiors which followed were as dazzling in their way, but they were achieved under the direction of an imported architect, Borra, and with the use of an imported carver of exceptional ability, Jean-Antoine Cuenot. We know nothing of the craftsmen employed at Chesterfield House, except that Ware states them to have been 'the first artists in their several professions', which may imply that they were English; on the other hand the technique of carving a boiserie, using a single solid panel of wood, was alien to English craftsmen. We are, I think, fairly safe in assuming that the synthesis of French sources which these rooms represent was achieved by Ware himself. The question arises here as to whether he himself had studied the sources and the style at first hand, and in the present state of our knowledge of Ware the question must remain unanswered. We can only surmise that, as his practical knowledge of the Italian language and of certain antique buildings appears to indicate an early visit to Italy, he may equally well have passed through Paris, possibly around 1730. We can also assume, however, that Chesterfield himself, as an ardent francophile, will have been sufficiently well versed in the essentials of French interior design to ensure that what he got was not only good value but also passably authentic.

The sheer quality of Chesterfield House seems to have impressed itself on the subsequent owners of the building, at least until the arrival in about 1870 of the aptly named Mr Magniac,¹⁶ who sold off the gardens and narrowed the colonnaded forecourt to create blocks of mansion flats. Inevitably it has occasionally been suggested that the appearance of the French rooms as rec-

16. Apparently pronounced 'maniac'.

ordered in photographs may have owed something to 19th century titivation. In fact, although Lord Burton late in the century created the first floor Ballroom by uniting the Music Room with its neighbour and redecorating the latter in identical manner to match, the original work of the 1740s was treated with remarkable respect – perhaps because its opulence was in many ways more in tune with the taste of 19th-century England than of the 18th. In 1811–13 the 5th Earl of Chesterfield spent over £15,000 on a thorough overhaul of the fabric, yet there is no real evidence from the accounts that in the case of the interior this work, which was directed by Jeffrey Wyatt, amounted to much more than a careful and tactful programme of refurbishment, with much painstaking cleaning, patching, repainting and regilding.¹⁷

17. Guildhall Library MS 3070A.

Although Chesterfield House so much impressed contemporaries, its immediate progeny can be numbered on the fingers of one hand. Three of these – Woburn, Stratfield Saye and Petworth – have been linked with Giovanni Borra and I do not propose to comment on them. The remaining two, however, have been linked, in my view erroneously, with Isaac Ware. This connection is repeated in the Rococo Exhibition catalogue and this therefore seems an appropriate occasion on which to register a caveat. The two cases in question are those of Woodcote Park near Epsom and Belvedere near Erith in Kent. The striking characteristic of them both is, or was, the combination of a restrained Palladian exterior with interiors of an apparently full-blooded French rococo. More than this, they at one time shared a common owner in the 5th Lord Baltimore, who in the 1730s and 1740s was connected with the circle of Frederick Prince of Wales. The persuasiveness of this convergence of circumstances was seemingly clinched by the presence of designs for the exterior of Woodcote amongst the drawings which John Harris discovered in the Avery Library, New York, in 1961, and which he subsequently attributed to Ware.¹⁸

18. The attribution was made initially in 'English architectural drawings in some American collections' (*Connoisseur* April 1961, p. 219) and elaborated in 'Clues to the "Frenchness" of Woodcote Park' (*Connoisseur* May 1961, pp. 241–250).

The building histories of both houses are far from clear, and the likelihood of them ever being otherwise has been seriously

reduced by the destruction of vital visual evidence. In the case of Woodcote, Charles Calvert, 5th Baron Baltimore, had in 1725 pulled down most of the existing building but there is no evidence that anything had actually been erected in its place before his death in 1751. His successor Frederick, the 6th baron, was rebuilding in 1753, but the accounts which survive from that year make no mention of the principal front (for which Mr Harris found a drawing in the Avery collection) or of the French rooms which were such a remarkable feature of the interior. The accounts (amounting to only a little over £1,000) were in fact rendered by an obscure architect called Francis Brerewood, with much of the building work apparently entrusted to Andrews Jelfe of the Office of Works. A comment by Horace Walpole in 1764 that 'the present Lord has laid out about £35,000 on making it what he called French, that is, the most tawdry house in the universe and the most ridiculous',¹⁹ limits the insertion of the rooms to the time of the 6th baron and also suggests that they dated from a slightly later and more expensive campaign than that of 1753.

The main rooms at Woodcote were removed when the house was taken over as an RAC club in 1911 and one of them, the Double Drawing Room, was re-erected in truncated form in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, together with the delicious Morning Room chimneypiece attributed to Cheere. At first sight these rooms appear close in feeling to Chesterfield House; but in fact both the Library and Morning Room chimneypieces are works of the English rather than the French rococo, while a good deal of what is visible in photographs of the Library (Fig. 10) suggests to me the hand of the 19th century rococo revival – an intensification, perhaps, by the early 19th century owner Baron du Teissier of what he found already *in situ*. Moreover, Mr Harris has recently had an opportunity to study the panelling at Boston at first hand and he concludes that much of it is faked up. It has also become apparent in the years since the attribution of the Avery Library drawings was made that these are a mixed bag of designs by different Office of Works architects rather than a

19. *Visits to Country Seats*, p. 61 (*Walpole Society*, Vol. 17, 1928), cited by Harris.

20. The collection contains drawings for Fort Belvedere (Windsor Great Park) and Stivichall Hall (Warwicks), for instance, both certainly by Flitcroft, and others are probably by Vardy.

21. *London and its Environs described* (1761, p. 271) refers to Sampson's 'addition ... of a very noble room'. His son, Sir Sampson, had the rest of the house rebuilt to the neo-classical designs of Stuart and Revett but retained the Gold Room. This survived, tucked in at one side and somewhat dwarfed, until its demolition in 1960.

22. John Harris, *The Parish of Eritb in ancient and modern times* (1885), notes that the room 'was built by Sampson Gideon, but the gilded decorations were added by Lord Saye and Sele'. Belvedere passed through the ownership of two successive Lords Saye and Sele, covering the period 1824-47. The most likely candidate for embellishing the Gold Room would perhaps be Gregory, Lord Saye and Sele, a particularly convivial bachelor who inherited in 1844 and died three years later at the age of 48.

collection exclusively attributable to Ware.²⁰

Belvedere House does not stand up well to close scrutiny either. A number of contemporary sources make it clear that the so-called Gold Room there was created, not by a member of the Baltimore family but by the financier Sampson Gideon some time between the death of the 5th Lord Baltimore in 1751 and his own death in 1762.²¹ And again there is evidence that by no means all of the rococo enrichments visible before its demolition were the work of the 1750s, for a 19th-century parish history refers to the addition



FIG. 10 Woodcote Park, Surrey: the Library, from an old photograph.

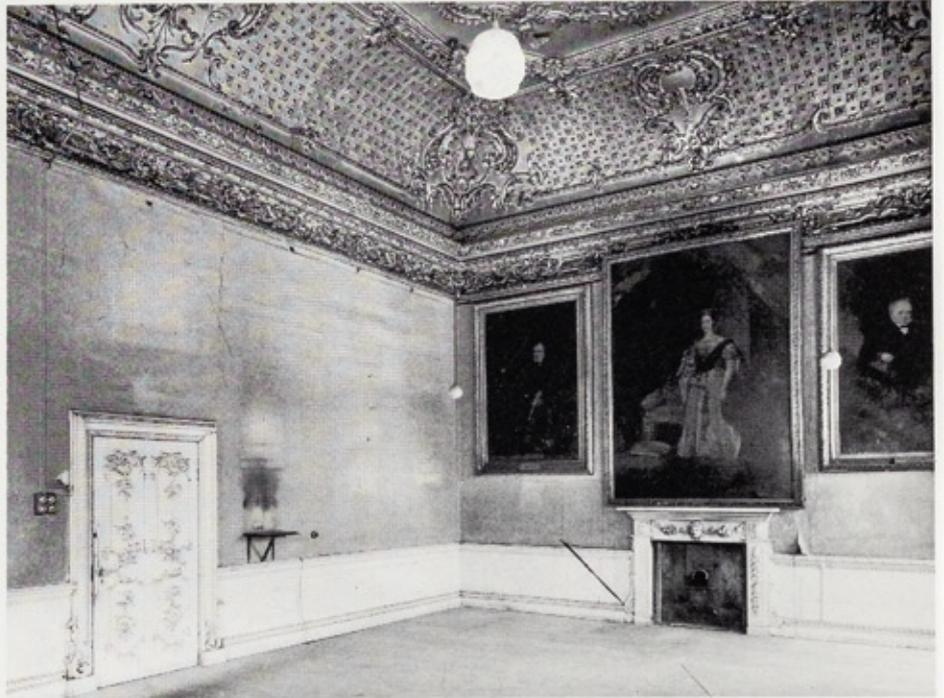
of such enrichments by a later owner, Lord Saye and Sele.²² There is therefore no architectural connection between the two houses, nor indeed anything to connect such French rococo work as may have existed with the circle of Frederick Prince of Wales; for although the 5th Lord Baltimore was an undoubted protégé of the Prince he had no hand in the building works at either place. His son, the 6th Baron, had the unhappy distinction of being prosecuted for the rape of a Quaker milliner, but seems not to have pursued an active rôle in the political field. This would not have prevented him from acquiring continental tastes in architecture, of course, any more than his father's politics make him necessarily responsible for the rococo work at either house. Having issued my caveat, let me nevertheless draw attention to two remarkable features, one from each house, which strike me as indubitably genuine mid-18th-century examples of French influence. One is the balcony on the south front at Woodcote, which survived the fire that gutted the house in 1934 and remains in place to this day. It has not, I think, been pointed out previously that this is an original feature or that the design for it exists in the Avery Library (Fig. 11).²³ Secondly there is the door of the Belvedere Gold Room, which relates self-evidently, if more

23. The design may derive from a printed source, but exactly which is not apparent.



FIG. 11 Woodcote Park, Surrey: design for balcony on south front (Avery Library, New York).

FIG. 12 Belvedere House, Kent: the Gold Room (National Monuments Record).



24. Rococo catalogue entries M13 (J-F Blondel, *De la distribution de maisons de plaisance* Vol II, 1738, pl. 72) and M14 (door to the French room, Woburn Abbey).

loosely, to the same plate from Blondel's *Maisons de plaisance* that provided the source for the Woburn Abbey door displayed in the present exhibition,²⁴ and which, like the Woburn door, is an example of the French double-leaf design utilized in ignorance for a single door by an English craftsman (Fig. 12).

It is plain that we have by no means yet got to the bottom of the complex subject of French influence on English rococo architecture and interior design, although this Symposium and this exhibition provide much fuel for further speculation. As more broadly defined than the exhibition permits, English rococo architecture is a home-grown product very readily distinguishable from its continental counterparts; and in this broader picture the Chesterfield House interiors stand out as singular and unrepresentative. They were a brilliant but alien importation, with strictly limited influence even on houses such as Woodcote and Belvedere. This need not detract however from their astonishing quality or from the importance of Isaac Ware's achievement, both of which will have been apparent without the assistance of my paper.