The Landmark Trust

COBHAM DAIRY

History Album

Anonymous sketch, c. 1830

Caroline Stanford

Last updated June 2020

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BASIC DETAILS

Built	1795- *c.*1798
Architect	James Wyatt
Listing	Grade II*
Landmark tenure	99 year lease from Cobham Hall Trust
Opened as a Landmark	December 2019
Restoration architect	Alex Marlow of Purcells of Canterbury
Quantity Surveyor	Karl Reichers of Huntley Cartwright
Contractors	Colman Building Contractors of Canterbury (Ginio Gonzalez-Bello, site manager; James Wood, contract manager)
Paint analysis	Catherine Hassall
Plasterwork	Philip Gaches of Peterborough
Stained & painted glass	John Corley Studio of Deal
Metalwork	Alan Coller of Canterbury

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We are enormously grateful to Ecclesiastical Insurance, a key sponsor for Cobham Dairy. Ecclesiastical was founded in 1887 to protect Anglican churches and church buildings against the risk of fire, and from the start, ploughed profits back into charitable work. Today, Ecclesiastical's continuing charitable purpose sets them apart in their sector. They still insure churches, and today mosques, synagogues and Sikh and Hindu temples but around three-quarters of their insurance business is now outside the faith sector. They have insured Landmark's portfolio for decades and are market leader for insuring Grade I listed buildings, as well as over 47,000 charities and, with other insurers, 8 of the UK's World Heritage sites. They have supported independent schools for over 55 years. A significant proportion of profits are still given to the owner, Allchurches Trust, which also donates independently to deserving causes.

Group Chief Executive Officer Mark Hews writes:

Since 1887, leading heritage specialists Ecclesiastical Insurance, have been trusted to protect much of the UK's irreplaceable historic environment and art collections. We directly employ a team of experts whose knowledge and passion give us a real appreciation of the unique nature of national treasures such as Cobham Dairy.

Ecclesiastical and the Landmark Trust share an understanding of the profoundly enriching effect historic gems like Cobham Dairy have on our lives. And enriching lives is something both organisations care about deeply. In fact, Ecclesiastical is owned by a charity and that means our core purpose is enriching lives by giving our profits back to good causes such as this.

The Dairy is an illustration of the Trust's passion for detail and respect for historic buildings, a sentiment echoed by Ecclesiastical. It demonstrates the importance of traditional techniques and materials, and a commitment to meticulous research and elegant planning and design. A team including some from The Prince's Foundation craft apprentices, also supported by Ecclesiastical, worked tirelessly to help bring Cobham Dairy back to the gleaming example of James Wyatt's original masterpiece.

From everyone at Ecclesiastical Insurance, thank you to the Landmark Trust for a remarkable restoration. To those who visit the Dairy, we hope you and future generations, enjoy the rare glimpse into 18th-century life that this Landmark now provides.

With our best wishes

Mark Hews,

Group Chief Executive Officer

Supporters of Cobham Dairy

We are also hugely grateful to the 1,526 supporters who gave so generously to make the restoration of Cobham Dairy possible.

Guardians of Cobham Dairy and other lead supporters

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Mrs S Preston, Mr J Senior, and Mrs P Smith.

Other corporate supporters:

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Dr R & Mrs E Jurd made a donation towards the cost of the Landmark books.

We thank all who have supported the appeal, including players of the Landmark Raffle, other Guardians, Patrons and trusts, and those have chosen to remain anonymous.

Thank you!

Research acknowledgements

Research for the restoration of the Dairy and this album benefitted from the Historical Account of Cobham Hall Estate written by Roger Bowdler for CAMS and English Heritage in 2002 (Reports & Papers 73).

Thanks too to the staff at Medway Archives for help on the Darnley Papers, and the Yale Center for British Art for free access to, and use of, the digitized plans of the Dairy by James Wyatt.

Cobham Dairy soon after completion in December 2019, and the restored vaulting in the central chamber.

Summary

Grade II* Cobham Dairy was designed in 1794-5 for the 4th Earl of Darnley by James Wyatt, one of the most prolific and renowned 18th-century architects. Not only is it an outstanding example of a late-Georgian pleasure Dairy, it is also an exceptionally well-documented building since Wyatt's annotated plans and elevations survive at Yale, as do the estate accounts at Medway Archives.

Masquerading as a diminutive chapel, the Dairy provides a Gothick eye-catcher in the pleasure grounds south of Cobham Hall, an Elizabethan great house updated by Wyatt for the 3rd and 4th Earls in the same years that Humphry Repton was refashioning its surrounding landscape. Wyatt also designed the spectacular pyramidal mausoleum for the 3rd Earl in the woods nearby (never finally used, and now in the care of the National Trust).

Model dairies such as this were a distinctively feminine space in a largely male world. Mary II had such a Dairy at Hampton Court as early as 1689; Marie Antoinette also played at milkmaids in a Dairy at Le Hameau in Versailles in the 1780s. It was a place where the ladies of the house could repair to enjoy the simple pleasures of butter churning, making cheese and skimming cream, in cool dark spaces that were typically both functional and highly decorative, using specially made china vessels and altogether more refined than a typical working farm Dairy. Conversation and the tasting of the Dairy's produce might follow.

The Cobham example is no exception. In mimicking a little chapel: it has a central double height chamber with clerestory windows that held coloured glass and the Darnley arms, much like the Wyatt screen in the entrance hall to the Hall. This is surrounded on three sides by arcaded 'cloisters,' originally all open loggias although we have enclosed that on the south side to gain the space necessary for the Dairy's new use.

Dairies were designed to be kept cool. Here, the exterior was entirely clad in slates, butt-jointed, beautifully shaped around the Gothick arches of the arcades and then painted in sanded paint in imitation of stone. These slates were mostly removed in the 1980s; those that remain are a rare and very important survival of this short-lived innovation, a product of the explosion in building techniques in late Georgian years. Slate cladding was favoured by Wyatt for the evenness of texture it lent otherwise humble brick structures (not least because he had a family interest in the Penrhyn quarries from where the slate originated).

The Dairy's open entrance loggia faces north towards the Hall. A glazed door led off the loggia into a main chamber with a sunken floor. In the centre of this was a large circular feature, rather like a font, in which cold water or even ice might be put to keep a bowl of Dairy produce cool. On one side wall there are three pointed alcoves, the middle ones deeper and perhaps once used for display or the storage of the dishes.

Cobham Dairy before restoration.

A shelf of cool Carrara marble ran around the walls of the chamber, with a quadripartite vaulted ceiling of plastered lathes above, springing from corbels of clustered oak leaves. The south and west cloisters were also vaulted.

The south and east cloisters were the (real life) Dairymaid's quarters: she slept in the east cloister, warmed by a small fireplace in her scullery, with a copper for warming and cleaning the pans. The small hearth fed into a flue that emerges disguised as a tiny bell tower, complete with a bell whose tolling, perhaps, called the cows to be milked. A few years after the Dairy was built, a fine rustic wooden Cowhouse was built nearby, since lost. This was probably designed by Humphry Repton, since his son George left careful record drawings of it. Behind the Dairy is a ruined sunken feature, that was a cold store, or even an ice house, although there is another ice-house elsewhere in the grounds.

The Dairy has been on Landmark's radar since the mid-1990s. By the time Cobham Hall became a girls' boarding school in 1962, the Dairy had deteriorated, descending into near ruination, its fine plaster ceilings falling to the ground. In the 1980s, an SPAB working party cleared the walls of ivy and the structure was repaired and re-roofed into a weathertight shell. Despite the importance of the building, during these years the school authorities were reluctant to allow third party use in their grounds, and after the restoration of the Darnley Mausoleum under the Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme in 2013, the Dairy became the last piece of unfinished business on the estate.

Thanks to the surviving evidence, documentary as well as physical, Landmark has been able to carry out a particularly thorough restoration. Wyatt's slate cladding technique has been revived for the exterior, and, painted with sanded paint, the building again gleams against the trees as if made of fine white stone. A master plasterer and his team have recreated the vaulted ceilings in the main chamber and cloisters alike, reinstating work attributed to *stuccadero* Francis Bernasconi, who was working at Cobham Hall 1800-1809 on very similar ceilings. Decorative bosses and corbels were remodelled in situ by hand. New leaded windows have been made, with slips of coloured glass and the 4th Earl and Countess's coats of arms painted onto the entrance door. A new shelf of Carrara marble was installed around the central chamber, standing on specially made cast iron supports. The decorative floor, of Portland and red Cumbrian stone, was pieced back together after the installation of underfloor heating beneath.

Frustratingly, no evidence has yet come to light in letters or family papers of examples of use of the Dairy, but we do know the name of its first Dairymaids, Sarah Hemmings and then Ann Parsons. Cobham Dairy was a happy combination of genuinely working Dairy (with resident Dairymaid and Cowhouse) and pleasure Dairy, where the Countess might divert her friends and her children. Its exquisite form certainly proves that it was built to please the most polite of company.

William Brooke, 10th Baron Cobham (1527-1597) was a powerful statesman under Elizabeth I and Warden of the Cinque Ports. He made Cobham Hall his main seat and added the wings to the house that still give it a 16th-century character.

In the family portrait below, Brooke is shown with his deceased and second wives and his six surviving children

Cobham Hall and the Earls of Darnley

Cobham Hall, the magnificent mansion in full sight of the Dairy, is now a girls' school, so public access is mostly restricted during term time and by special arrangement only at other times. Its history is bound to intrigue and forms the backdrop to that of Cobham Dairy, and so a brief account follows. Three articles about the hall written for *Country Life* by architectural historian John Cornforth in 1983, and one by Roger Bowdler in 2013, are also appended.

Cobham Hall is an ancient manor, first granted to William de Cobham in 1208. Henryy de Cobham (*c.*1260-1339) was created Baron Cobham of the first creation in 1313. After 1408, the manor descended by marriage to the Brooke family. In the mid-16th century, William Brooke, 10th Lord Cobham and a powerful Elizabethan courtier, made the manor his principal seat.

Brooke's career took him to the heart of successive regimes, first as part of Edward VI's retinue; next weathering the vagaries of Mary I's reign and then inheriting his title and father's position as Warden of the Cinque Ports just as Elizabeth came to the throne, a role in which she confirmed him.[1] The wardenship also gave him important patronage over the Ports' parliamentary seats. Lord Cobham was an ally and close friend of William Cecil, Elizabeth I's most trusted servant, and became a Knight of the Garter and member of the Privy Council in 1586. In 1559, the very first year of her reign, Lord Cobham was given the priceless and expensive privilege of entertaining Elizabeth I herself. The main house was not yet improved and in an astute piece of improvisation, Lord Cobham built her a treehouse in compensation.

[1] The Cinque – pronounced Sink – Ports are the ancient ports along the south and east coasts that were granted relief from various taxes and customs in return for the provision of ships in defence of the realm.

In *Holinshed's Chronicle,* Sir John Thynne described this folly as 'A banqueting house made for her Majesty in Cobham Park, with a goodly gallery thereto composed each side with a fair row of hawthorn trees, which nature seemed to have planted of purpose in summer to welcome her Majesty and to know her lord and master.'[2]

Lord Cobham played an active part at the heart of the Elizabethan regime, treading a careful path through religious contentions, and his status was reflected in his development of Cobham Hall. During a period of apparent withdrawal from public affairs, in 1584, he added the wings to the house and laid out a garden.

William Brooke's son Henry, 11th Lord Cobham, succeeded his father in 1597 including as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, but was much less astute as a political operator. Henry was implicated in the Main Plot, a conspiracy with Lord Grey that sought to depose James I from the English throne in favour of his cousin Lady Arbella Stuart, great-great-granddaughter of Henry VII through Margaret Tudor, sister of Henry VIII. A regiment of soldiers was to be raised to force the coup d'etat with money raised from the Spanish, with whom Lord Cobham was to negotiate. Henry Brooke also allegedly drew Sir Walter Ralegh into the plot (something Ralegh always contested).

Henry's brother George was still more inept as a conspirator. He became involved in the Bye Plot with two Catholic priests, planning to abduct the king and the Privy Council to force them to stop the persecution of English Catholics. The Bye Plot was discovered, and, perhaps in the vain hope of escaping the death penalty for treason, George informed on his brother's plot. George was executed in 1603. In 1604, Lords Cobham and Grey, and Sir Walter Ralegh, were all stripped of their honours and lands and imprisoned in the Tower of London for high treason. Ralegh's imprisonment rested largely upon the 'hearsay' testimony of his erstwhile friend, Lord Cobham, whom James I refused to allow to testify.

[2] Cit. Wingfield-Stratford (1959), p. 64.

Cobham Hall was confiscated by the Crown along with the rest of Lord Cobham's estates, and the first creation of the title came to an end.

In 1612, James I granted the manor of Cobham and Cobham Hall and its gardens and estate to Ludovic Stuart, 2nd Duke of Lennox and from 1623 Earl of Richmond (2nd creation), later merged with the Dukedom of Richmond. The 4th Duke enlarged the Cobham estate in 1636-8. After the turmoil of the Civil War and Cromwell's Protectorate, the 6th Duke set about a partial remodelling of the house in 1661-3. Peter Mills of London was brought in to create the classical central block, the 'Cross Wing.' The park was also developed in the 1660s and it is likely that the formal avenues date from this period. The 6th Duke overreached himself and in 1722 died heavily in debt. The following year, Lord Harley wrote that Cobham Hall had 'the face of great ruin approaching.'[3]

The Cobham estate then descended through a complicated pattern of inheritance and marriage to John Bligh (1687-1728), who was created 1st Earl of Darnley in the Irish Peerage in 1725, as George I revived the ancient earldom for its third creation. The Blighs had done well out of the redistribution of Irish lands under Cromwell: their Irish seat was at Athboy in Co. Meath. The family retained strong Irish links throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and it was the wealth from their Irish lands, connections and marriages that underpinned renewed development of the estate during the late-Georgian period.

[3] Cornforth (1983) Pt I, p450.

John Bligh, 3rd earl of Darnley, served as MP for Athboy 1739-1748, and at Westminster for Maidstone 1741-1747.
He succeeded to the title in 1747 and in 1765 entered the House of Lords. In Sept 1766, the 'ageing nobleman'— he was almost 48-years-old — suddenly married eighteen-year-old Mary Stoyte, a wealthy heiress. This unexpected union, between a sworn bachelor and such a young woman, rather shocked Dublin society. The family biographer writes of Mary as 'Prim, plain, beady-eyed, and rather pleasantly old-maidish'. She had attracted an army of young suitors wanting to get their hands on her money, but finally gravitated 'to the safekeeping of a middle-aged partner… substantial in every sense of the word'.

Mary Stoyte, 3rd Countess of Darnley, with her eldest son Lord Clifton, the future 4th Earl, and his sister Mary
(details unknown)

The 1st Earl was succeeded by his eldest son, who died unmarried in 1747 aged just 31. His younger brother, also John Bligh (1719-1781), then inherited as the 3rd Earl. In 1766, he married Mary Stoyte, a rich heiress and daughter of a Dublin lawyer, and immediately set about altering and refurbishing Cobham Hall. A third storey was added to the central block and interior decoration was undertaken by George Shakespear (although architectural historians have been thrown by the evidence of some payment to architect Sir William Chambers). A kitchen court was added to the east in 1771-2.

When the 3rd Earl died in 1781, his son, also John Bligh, inherited as the 4th Earl Darnley (1767-1831). Hugh Howard, who went to the 3rd Earl's funeral, described the atmosphere of the place evocatively in a letter to his brother:

> 'As this place is ye full as retired as Shelton is and is neither enlivened by a River or the distant roaring of the sea and is hidden in the wilds of Kent, you cannot expect any news from it. The house might as a well serve as a college of 300 monks..it has the air of centuries. You see the swiftness of squirrels running up the trees and springing from Tree to Tree along a whole Stately Row, the flight of woodpeckers that are a sort of winged Squirrel and at night you hear the solemn hooting of owls, which as well as Batts are innumerable. The Park in many places has the appearance of a Park worn out with age. There are hundreds of Trees of immense girth; seemingly worn with years, hollow and rotten within and without, and covered with huge warts and excresences.'

There was clearly work to be done, and for all the 3rd Earl's contributions, his son would far overshadow him as an improver of house and estate, and as a collector. It is this 4th Earl that concerns us for Cobham Dairy.

This John Bligh was just 14 when he inherited, still a schoolboy at Eton.[4] He was already a keen cricketer, and became a highly regarded amateur, playing in many first-class matches alongside his brother, the Honourable Edward Bligh.

[4] Many of the letters that passed between John and his parents while he was at Eton are reproduced in *The Lords of Cobham Hall*, a copy of which is on the Dairy shelves.

John Bligh, 4th Earl of Darnley (1767-1831), was a great improver of the Hall and estate and builder of the Dairy.
(Attr. Thomas Philips)

Their Irish origins earned them the distinction of being known as ‘the first Irish first-class cricketers’ (and future Darnleys were also known for their cricketing prowess). One of the 4th Earl’s first actions as a teenager was to establish a menagerie in the grounds, containing a leopard, cassowaries, wallabies and other exotic animals.

From 1787- 88, on reaching 21, he went on a Grand Tour, travelling as far as St Petersburg, although little is known of his exact itinerary. What seems sure is that it fuelled a passion for collecting. He became an indefatigable collector over four decades, filling the house with art and sculpture at a time when treasures could be easily snapped up by those with the resources, as war and revolution swept Europe. Great collections were broken up and sold on, often at knock down prices, such as the Duc d’Orléans collection, sold in London in 1792. The Duc, later King Louis Philippe, later visited Cobham Hall and must have viewed the examples he had once owned with mixed feelings. As well (of course) as many original pieces, the Cobham collection included two Coade stone replicas of the Borghese and Medici Vases displayed outside the west front and probably ordered by Repton. They are now kept in the house after attempted theft in 2002.

The 4th Earl, who was on familiar terms with the Prince Regent, later became a well-regarded Parliamentarian and generally fulfilled all the duties expected of a nobleman. On August 26th 1791, he married Elizabeth Brownlow, youngest daughter of William Brownlow, the MP for Co. Armagh. Elizabeth thus became his Countess. It was a happy marriage and they had seven children together, four sons and three daughters, at least six of whom arrived during the 1790s. Their son and heir was born in 1795 (a previous son died a few days after birth). It is possible that it was this event that prompted the construction of the Dairy, as such buildings were often gifts from husbands to their wives. We can therefore imagine the Dairy as a destination for a gaggle of little siblings and their nursemaids, as well as for the adults and their guests.

A rare surviving portrait of Elizabeth née Brownlow, 4th Countess of Darnley. Her daughter Elizabeth was born in 1792, so this must have been painted 1794-5, around the time the Dairy was being planned.

(*By John Hoppner. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.)*

Below: aerial view of Cobham Hall. Lord Brooke's Elizabethan wings extend to the south, beyond which (off right) lies the Dairy.

The 4th Earl made significant alterations to the house (or 'the Hab' – habitation – as he christened it while still at Eton), its surrounding landscape and the wider agricultural estate. The estate accounts reveal a little kingdom of buildings designed for both pleasure and utility, in the intertwining of self-indulgence and practicality that characterised the Georgian aristocracy. In undertaking his improvements, the 4th Earl retained James Wyatt's services and soon brought in the equally renowned landscape designer, Humphry Repton.

James Wyatt had already been employed to execute the 3rd Earl's vision for a family mausoleum on the estate (see later chapter) and he worked on the estate for the next twenty years for the 4th Earl, first rebuilding the stables and service court at the house, to heighten the distinction between the polite and the agricultural around the house. The Earl also relocated numerous farm buildings from east of the house to Lodge Farm (see later chapter) and elsewhere. Wyatt was commissioned to undertake extensive internal remodelling to the house during the last decade of the century, creating a Gothick 'cloister' as an entrance vestibule along the west front, with vaulted ceiling and a screen of coloured and painted glass that acted as a reference for the restoration of the Dairy. The magnificent Gilt Hall was further embellished by an abundance of gilding, 'for a music room of such excessive richness and profusion of gilding, by the varied genious [sic] of James Wyatt, as to appear to be unrivalled', recorded *The Kent Register* in 1793. The 4th Earl used the Gilt Hall to display his extensive collection of sculptures and portraits, as he turned Cobham Hall into one of the treasure houses of Regency England. The estate also offered excellent shooting: one of the many guests was the fellow Anglo-Irishman, the Duke of Wellington, who, it is said, narrowly escaped mortal injury from a stray round on a shooting party in the 1820s.

The famous Gilt Hall at Cobham Hall, designed and created by master carpenter and architect George Shakespear in the 1770s for the 3rd Earl, and later gilded under James Wyatt's guidance.

Humphry Repton was perhaps even more significant a mentor for the young Earl; when Repton died in 1818, the 4th Earl erected an alcove called Repton's Seat in his pleasure gardens, a tribute to a partnership lasting more than a quarter of a century. Repton's proposals to integrate the house and grounds were followed through with care. There seems a hint of professional rivalry in Repton's observations about his young patron in 1790 that 'His ideas are very magnificent and they have already been realised by costly specimens of architecture from the designs of James Wyatt. But while such great works are nearly completed, little or nothing seems to be done for the comfort of the place, and there is much to do. The large rooms and galleries are filled with valuable pictures, yet from want of proper communications, the house is hardly habitable.'[5]

Repton created one of his famous Red Books for the estate in 1790 and much of the mature tree planting on the estate dates back to his gentle alterations. The beds and shrubberies owe more to mid-Victorian and later revisions to the garden. Looking back at his work at Cobham, Repton later wrote:

> 'Whether we consider its extent, its magnificence or its comfort, there are few places which can vie with Cobham…and none…where so much has been done, both to house and grounds under my direction, for so long a series of years; yet…the general improvements originated in the good taste of its noble proprietor…On the whole, Cobham furnishes a striking example of artificial arrangement, for convenience, in the ground immediately adjoining the house, contributing to the natural advantage of its situation, and scenery, and enriched by luxuriant foliage, and verdure. The home views give a perfect idea of what a park ought to be, without affecting to be a forest; for, although the extent of its domain might warrant such a character, there is a natural beauty in the face of the country that is more beautiful than romantic, more habitable than wild.'[6]

[5] Cit. Bowdler (2005)

[6] Loudon, ed. (1840, p. 421.

Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795) made cream ware for dairies as early as 1769, spotting and intensifying the market opportunity presented by the fashion for pleasure dairies. His Staffordshire factory supplied tiles and Dairy wares to a number of grand estates during the 1780s and 1790s. Buyers could examine samples of Wedgwood's Dairy wares at his London showrooms from 1769, when he wrote to his sales manager telling him to show and take orders for the 'Cream Vases for dairies of a new pattern'.

Left: A Wedgwood Dairy pail (V & A). Other Wedgwood cream vases are made in four pieces, with an interior lining (which helped keep the cream cool) and a two-part cover. A notch in the cover of this piece was used for a stirring spoon.

Left: a monogrammed Wedgwood cream vase, destined for an aristocratic pleasure Dairy.
Right: Lady Spencer's Dairy at Althorp (1786), with Wedgwood's cream Queen's Ware tiles and cream vases hand-painted with trailing ivy. Wedgwood cannily named the innovatory cream-coloured earthenware Queen's Ware after the successful completion of his first commission for Queen Charlotte secured in the summer of 1765. Such vessels might have been used in Cobham Dairy, although there is no evidence it was ever tiled.

Repton also wrote of Cobham Hall:

> 'The house is no longer a huge pile standing naked in a vast grazing ground... Its walls are enriched with roses and jasmines, its apartments are perfumed with odours from flowers surrounding it on every side and the animals which enliven the landscape are not admitted as an annoyance, while the views of the park are improved by the rich foreground, over which they are seen from the terraces in the garden. ... all around is neatness, elegance and comfort.'[7]

Alongside Wyatt's work on the house, Repton and his son John Adey Repton also carried out significant external alterations in the Tudor style between 1800 and 1820.

It is not known whose idea the Dairy was – Repton's, Wyatt's, Lord or Lady Darnley's – but it was no doubt chiefly for the use of Lady Darnley, dairies being safe spaces of feminine virtue, while also signalling the domain of an effective estate chatelaine. Its design fell to James Wyatt, to act as a home for a Dairymaid, a boundary marker for the home park and an eyecatcher in the view south from the mansion. However, it was Repton who designed the Cowhouse for three or four cows that stood alongside the Dairy and provided its raw materials (see below).

By the 1790s, as well as offering diversion in playing at Dairy making and the display of china, such pleasure dairies had become associated with human as well as bovine nurture and fecundity. In the late-18th century, the fashion spread for elite women to breastfeed their own children rather than sending them to a wet-nurse in the country. Milk too was becoming popular for healthful consumption by the elite. In earlier centuries, the aristocracy saw milk as just for the sick or convalescent, and otherwise as simply the raw material to be converted into cheese, cream and butter. Elizabeth's own childbearing capacity was amply demonstrated in the first decade of her marriage, and it is quite possible that the idea of building a pleasure Dairy at Cobham Hall also reflected these general shifts in social mores. So far, however, no evidence has emerged of exactly how the Cobham Dairy was used, although the Darnley archive is a very large one and contains many family letters, so references may one day emerge.

[7] Cit. Kent Gardens Trust, *Humphry Repton in Kent* (2018).

The Cobham estate did not escape the trials of the agricultural depression in the post-Waterloo years, and when the 4th Earl died in 1831, his son inherited debts as well as the house and estate. The greatest days of the house were over. While the estate continued to be well run up to Second World War, by the 1890s, the Darnleys began to sell the 4th Earl's collection, and this process of divestment continued until the 1950s.

During the War, the house was requisitioned by the RAF, the 9th Earl of Darnley by now living in just one small part of it. By 1943, its declining state was sufficient for it to be on the radar of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. In August 1947, the 9th Earl wrote explain his difficulties:

> 'mischievous boys in the neighbourhood are always breaking in and damaging fences, doors etc. One cannot blame them, as they are only following the world's example of trying to settle problems by force and violence, but all the same, it makes one hesitate about spending considerable sums in restoring the building, whose only value is decoration.'[8]

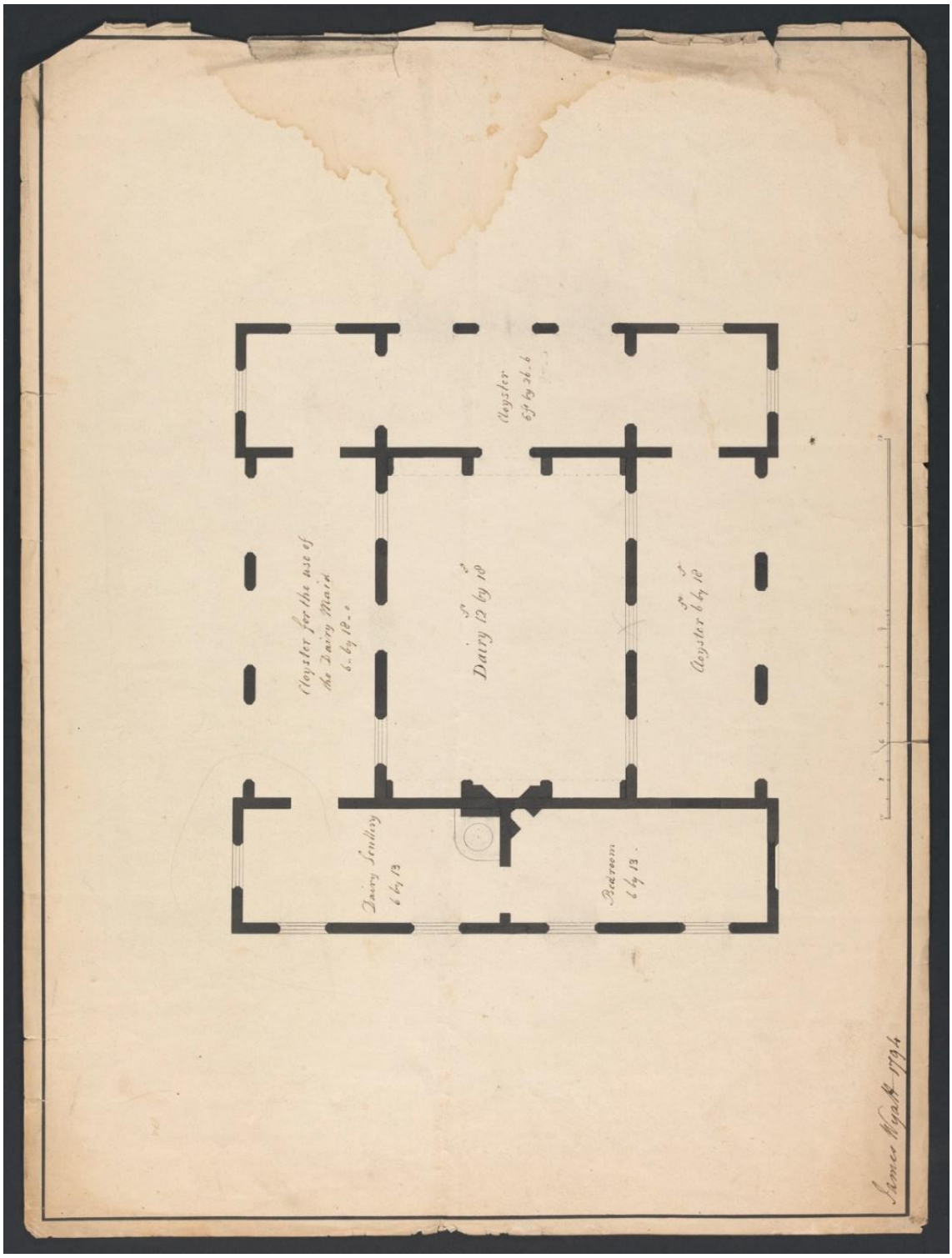
The Earl died in 1955, and the hall was immediately put up for sale, advertised in *Country Life* on 12th Jan 1956 for £30,000. 18 months later it was still on the market. Finally, in July 1958, the Ministry of Works bought the house with about 140 acres of land, including the gardens, two lodges, and two other cottages, for £29,149. The intention was to transfer the house to the National Trust to be opened to the public, but first the Ministry undertook extensive renovation works for the then huge sum of £105,635 funded by the National Land Fund.[9]

Sadly, this plan for public access did not come to pass. Instead, Cobham Hall was sold to the Weston Educational Trust for use as a school. As reported by The Telegraph on 8th February 1962, it became 'the first new independent public school for girls in Britain since 1946'. The first headmistress, Miss D. B. Hancock, was just 30

[8] SPAB archives

[9] The National Land Fund was created by the post-war Labour government in 1946 to secure culturally significant property for the nation as a memorial to the dead of World War II, as a means through which land and property could be accepted on behalf of the nation in lieu of Estate Duty. Initially set up with funds of £50 million, this was reduced to £10 million in 1957.

years old. The solution turned out to be a sustainable one, and today Cobham Hall is one of the leading independent girls' boarding schools in the country.



Wyatt's floorplan for the Dairy, dated 1794, specifies the dimensions of each space and its function.
Yale Center for British Art,

Description of Cobham Dairy

Although the 4th Earl relocated various buildings of agricultural purposes from the service courts around the house to elsewhere on the estate beyond its parkland, this pleasure Dairy was a different case. The fashion for such buildings was at its height at the end of the 18th century. This Dairy's proximity to, and visibility from, the main house in itself indicates that this was far from being a utilitarian outbuilding for the mere processing of Dairy products. Instead, it was built as a recreational garden building, a spot for tea parties at which the lady of the house could perhaps display her fine china and porcelain. Here too the ladies and daughters of the house could try their hand at cheese and butter making, in this instance alongside a professional Dairy maid who was lodged in the same building, in a variation on the 18th-century whim for male hermits to be encountered in follies (as for example at another Landmark folly, Robin Hood's Hut, built at Halswell Park in Somerset in the 1760s).

As originally built, this model establishment at Cobham also included an icehouse immediately to the rear (whose remnants can still be seen in the undergrowth) and a byre for a few cows, built in a suitably rustic style with gnarled wooden tree trunks in lieu of columns and a thatched roof. While there was probably a larger working cow barn elsewhere on the estate – possibly at Lodge Farm - we can imagine a few prized or especially pretty cows being selected to service the pleasure Dairy. There was thus everything needed for butter and cream and other perishable delicacies that needed to be made on a daily basis in these days before refrigeration.

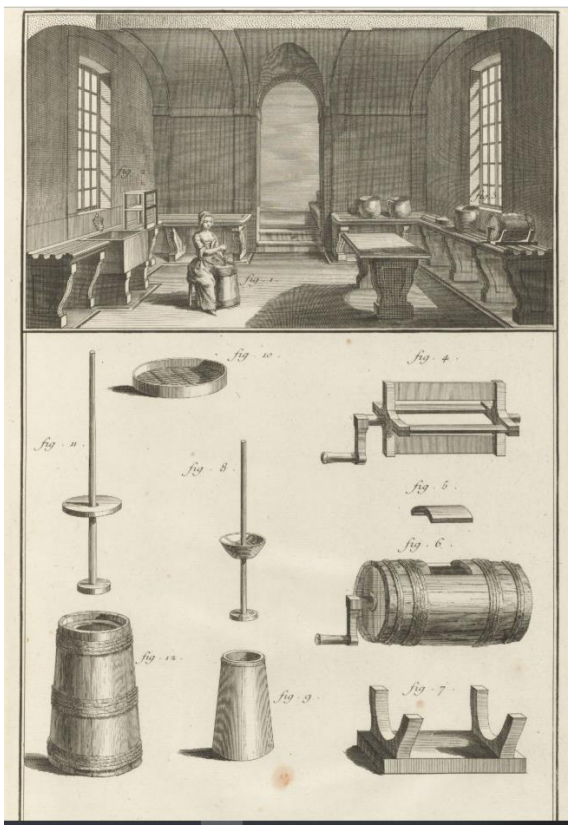
The Dairy was also planned to act as a Gothick eye-catcher in the middle distance from the house, defining the southern boundary of the home estate. Its Gothick style is in marked contrast to the predominant Classical style of the day as exemplified by the 3rd Earl's wishes for his Mausoleum. James Wyatt was ever helpfully eclectic in his design styles.

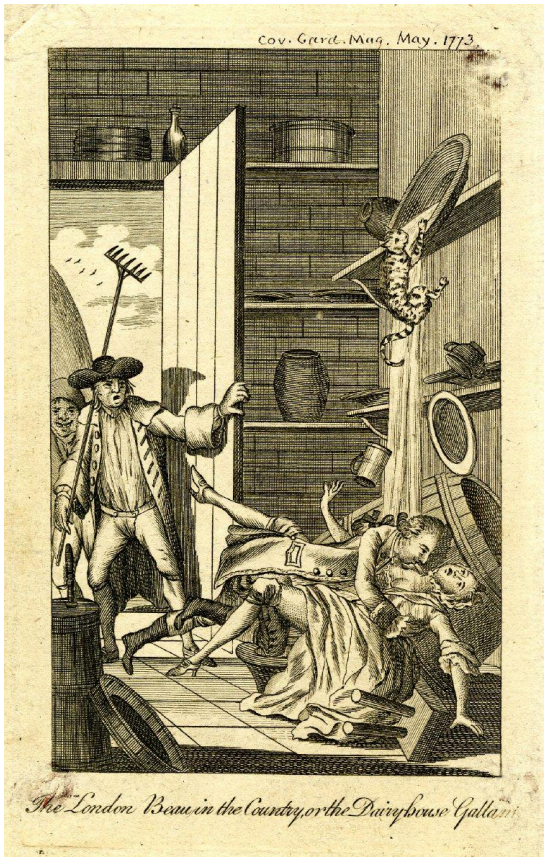
One of Wyatt's elevation drawings for the Dairy. None of them are quite as built; here, the bell tower looks more like a castellated chimney. Nor is there certain evidence that the cross finials were ever added to the pyramidal roofs. The entrance is not made explicit here; but the Gothick style and overall blocking seem to have been fixed from the start.

By the 1790s, people were beginning to seek comfort in the familiarity of the Picturesque at a time when the industrial revolution was gathering pace and the French Revolution generating anxiety. The 4th Earl was about to undertake a campaign of gothicisation in the main house too, and the Dairy marks the beginning of that process. While it seeks to channel the Arcadian idioms of rustic simplicity and timeless pastoralism, the Dairy is in fact a highly sophisticated building. With great good fortune, a dozen of Wyatt's designs for the Dairy survive at Yale Centre for British Art in Connecticut: plans, elevations, sections and details. These have been invaluable during the restoration process (and are freely accessible online). Where dated, they show a date of 1794 or 1795, and in them, we can see Wyatt trying out different versions of the overall concept for the Earl's approval.

There are a few other surviving dairies that have more highly finished internal decorative treatments than at Cobham,[10] but perhaps none that demonstrate more clearly the on-site dexterity of the late Georgian craftsmen. Wyatt's conceit was that the Dairy should present as a diminutive chapel, with a tiny bell tower, whose bell was perhaps used to summon the cows for milking, or the ladies for tea, or the servants as a sign that a select tea party had finished. The building is north-facing and shaded on three side by arcades or mini cloisters. These surround a central double height chamber with a high vaulted ceiling lit by clerestory windows. We have enclosed the south arcade to form today's kitchen, although what might have been an east arcade was always enclosed, in order to provide a bedroom and scullery for the Dairymaid.

[10]A fine example is Landmark's Dairy at Endsleigh (*c.*1814), designed by Jeffry Wyatville for Georgina, Duchess of Bedford together with Pond Cottage, here providing more substantial accommodation and stabling for six cows in a rustic byre alongside. The Endsleigh Dairy walls are still covered with glazed tiles with an ivy motif very similar to Wedgwood's Queen's Ware design; the stained glass survives in the leaded windows, and so too the original central feature and marble shelf running round the walls.





The varied guises of 18th-century dairies (and Dairymaids).

This being a room that needed at least some heat (in contrast to the rest of the building), the bedroom was placed next to the tiny scullery or scalding room which had a little hearth with a copper, perhaps used to help the cream rise as well as for boiling water to disinfect the Dairy vessels and the Dairymaid's own domestic needs.

An early pattern book, *The Country Gentleman's Architect* (1807) describes the functioning of a working dairy in some detail. While Cobham Dairy is really a pleasure and working dairy combined into one, and did not have the ventilation louvres or steam heating recommended by the author, other aspects of his instructions do help us imagine how Cobham Dairy might have been used:

> 'The Scalding Room….to be on the south side of the Dairy...the sides and ceiling of the Dairy should be carefully plastered , filling up every crack; the floor may be paved with stone or with ten-inch tiles, neatly jointed, and having a proper slope with a quick current…
>
> 'The Churning-Room requires a thorough draft of air in summer, but in winter the churning may be done in the scalding-room for the sake of warmth. The side and ceiling of this room should be carefully plastered…The floor should be paved with stone or ten-inch tiles.
>
> 'The Scalding Room should be on the south side of the Dairy, and should have an outer door, by which the coolers may be carried out for the purpose of being set in the sun as soon as scalded, which dries and sweetens them; but in the case of wet or cold weather, a fire must be lighted to dry them before they can be returned to the Dairy. In this room is a large copper, nearly over which is placed a ventilator, that steam may not hover about, but instantly ascend…
>
> 'A pump to furnish water for filling the copper and washing the Dairy, must be fixed as convenient, and water must be conveyed by pipes to the churning-room.
>
> 'The Store-Room is on a level with the Dairy, if used for butter; if for cheese it should be sunk sufficiently low to admit a cheese room over it.
> The lower room should be paved, and the walls and ceilings plastered; it should have no window, and the door should be made to fit close.

> When the cheese has lain in the upper room, and heated, in due season, it should be brought down and laid on the floor of the lower room to mellow.'[11]

In the Cobham example, the hearth's flue was disguised by the bell tower. A brick-vaulted space was also discovered beneath the Dairymaid's bedroom floor during the restoration works, perhaps another concession to her comfort in not laying the floor directly onto cold beaten earth as happened elsewhere in the building. All four corners of the building were capped by square pyramidal roofs with iron finials, and the juncture between roof slopes and arcades was unified by a wooden castellated parapet.

The building is constructed out of rough brickwork on a Portland stone plinth, but was meant by Wyatt to present a much more refined appearance: the external brickwork was covered by slate cladding, painted to imitate finely dressed stone. Such slate cladding was one of the Georgian period's many innovations in building material and techniques, and short-lived like so many of them (and is described in more detail below). The slate cladding also helped keep the building cool, the paint reflecting back the heat of any sunlight. The evidence for both sanded paint and slate cladding at Cobham Dairy were extremely rare survivals.

As originally built, the Dairy's roof apparently employed what was known as patented tiling, in which the slates were butt-jointed at the sides rather than the usual overlapping courses side and bottom, the joints covered in additional slate slips. This meant less slate was needed to cover the roof, and was another short-lived innovation (also described in more detail below). The technique can clearly be seen in the little sketch of the Dairy dating from the 1830s.

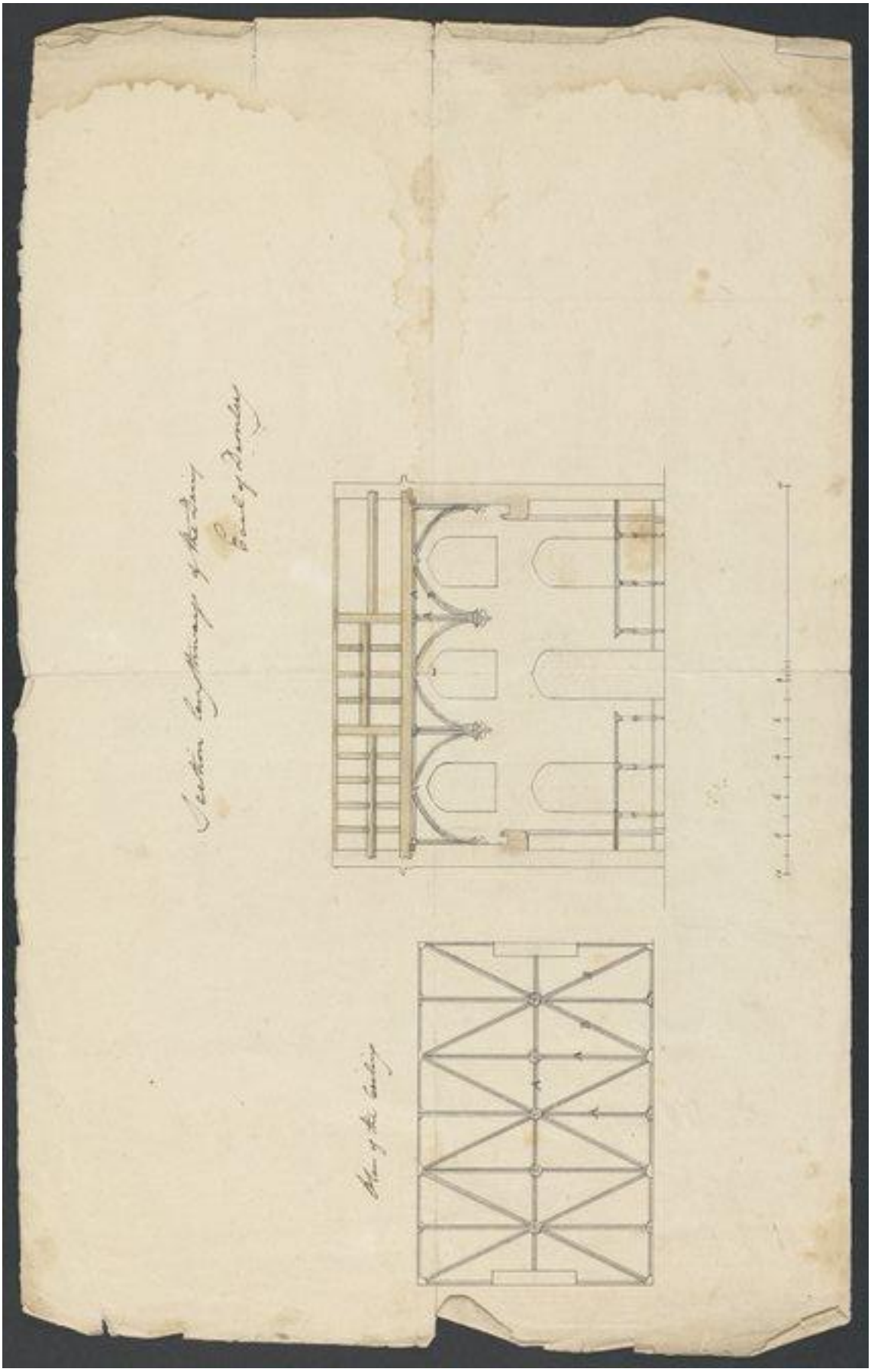
Inside, the design followed the form recommended for dairies by the building manuals of the day for a high vaulted ceiling, and small or few windows and doors to prevent over heating from sunlight or contamination by dust. Wyatt's ecclesiastical theme was of course perfectly suited to such constraints, and the inclusion of upper clerestory

[11] Lugar, Robert. 1807. *The country gentleman's architect; containing a variety of designs for farm houses and farm yards*, pp. 14-15.

windows into the design admits light without direct sunlight, further filtered by the use of coloured glass slips around the edges. A castellated string course ran around the chamber at high level, mirroring that of the external parapet. The pretence of stonework was continued inside the central chamber and the arcades, but this time by calling on the skills of the *stuccadori* or master plasterers. The arcades and the interior, walls as well as ceilings, were entirely plastered out, using wooden formers as the base for the groin-vaulted ceilings whose ribs sprang from corbels disguised as clusters of oak leaves and met in similarly ornate ceiling bosses.

Once complete, the plasterwork on the walls was lined out and painted in imitation of blocks of stone, as was the joinery of window and door frames to complete the illusion of a Gothic building completely made of stone. The lower parts of the walls in such pleasure dairies (and sometimes to full height) were typically covered in glazed tiles for ease of cleaning, hygiene being essential in a Dairy both in terms of food production but also to retain the illusion of it as a polite space suitable for feminine discourse. We found no surviving evidence of such tiling in this Cobham example.

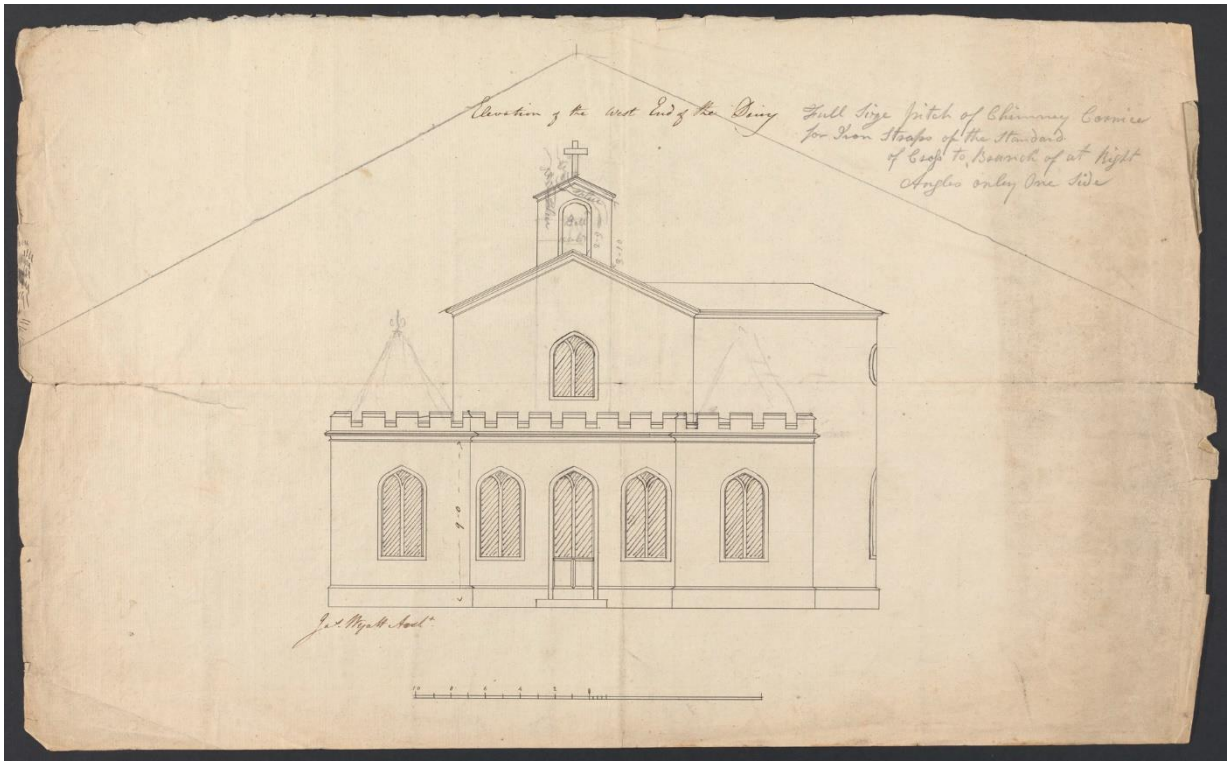
It seems the floor of the central chamber was originally laid in brick but we found it laid in pale stone lozenges interlaced with a lattice of narrower tiles in a contrasting dark red sandstone. A plinth ran around the edge of the room, above which was set on cast iron legs a shelf of Carrara marble for settling pans, jugs and other vessels needed for Dairy making. This was fixed directly into the wall. The three alcoves on each side perhaps doubled as further storage or display space. In the centre of the room there was evidence of the base of a pan stand, which were usually octagonal.

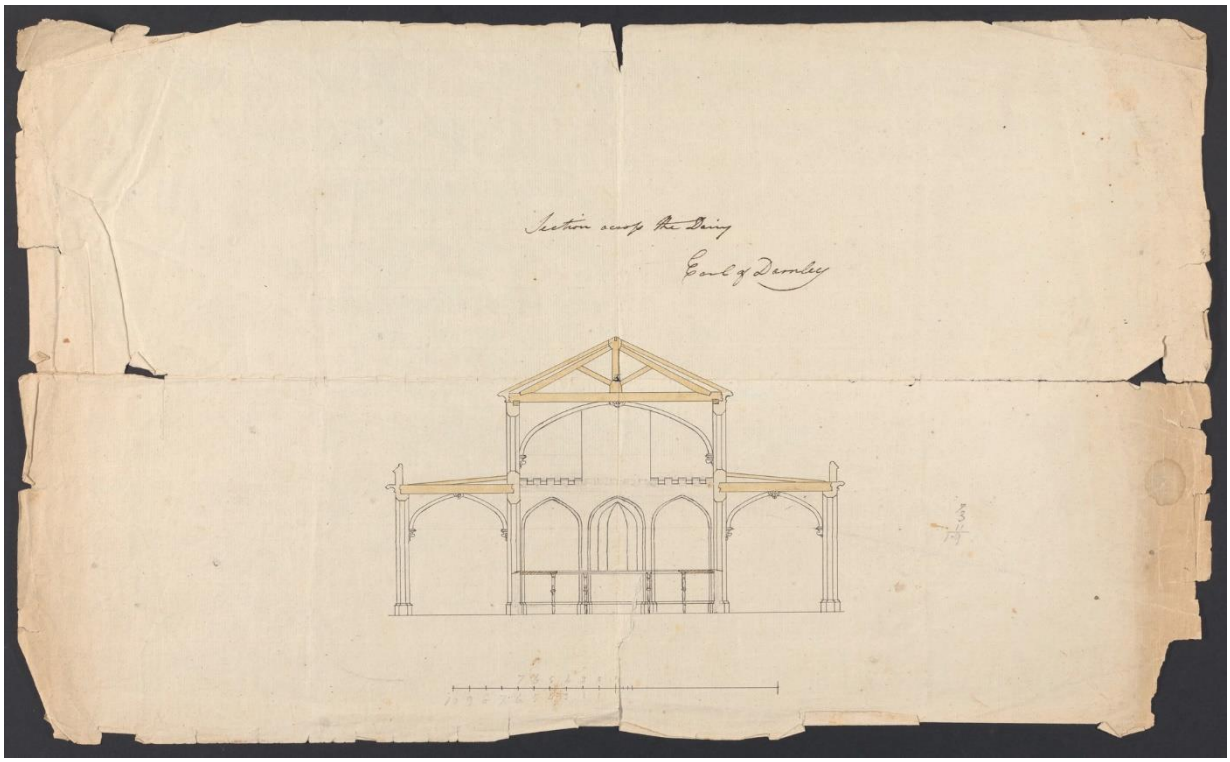


Wyatt's cross section of the Dairy, with the plan of the vaulted ceiling shown alongside. Note too the marble shelf and its supports, the corbels and the castellated cornice.
Yale Center for British Art

A drain beneath the floor allowed the water to drain away. It must almost have been like a font: while this also played to the artifice of chapel-as-Dairy, it was a common feature in such dairies, often holding a trough of cold water and ice from an estate ice house when available, as a cooling stand. At Endsleigh (where a dairy is an ancillary building to Landmark's Pond Cottage), the central table is similarly set above a drain, even if there the perimeter wall shelves are functional shallow slate sinks rather than a marble shelf.

The original water supply is an unsolved question at the Cobham Dairy. Best practice unsurprisingly recommended a plentiful water supply for a Dairy, whether for pleasure or function. Endsleigh Dairy is well provided for by the natural streams that flow through the renowned Picturesque landscape there, also designed by Repton. However, a water source for Cobham Dairy is no longer readily apparent: we found no traces of a well. It is known that there was a pond or pool in the declivity in the grounds to the northwest that later became a swimming pool. This was presumably fed by a spring that once rose and flowed close to the Dairy.





Wyatt's working drawings allow us to see the development of the design through his discussions with his clients. Here we see the bellcote (though we found no evidence of the cross) and a cross section through the centre of the building.

Yale Center for British Art

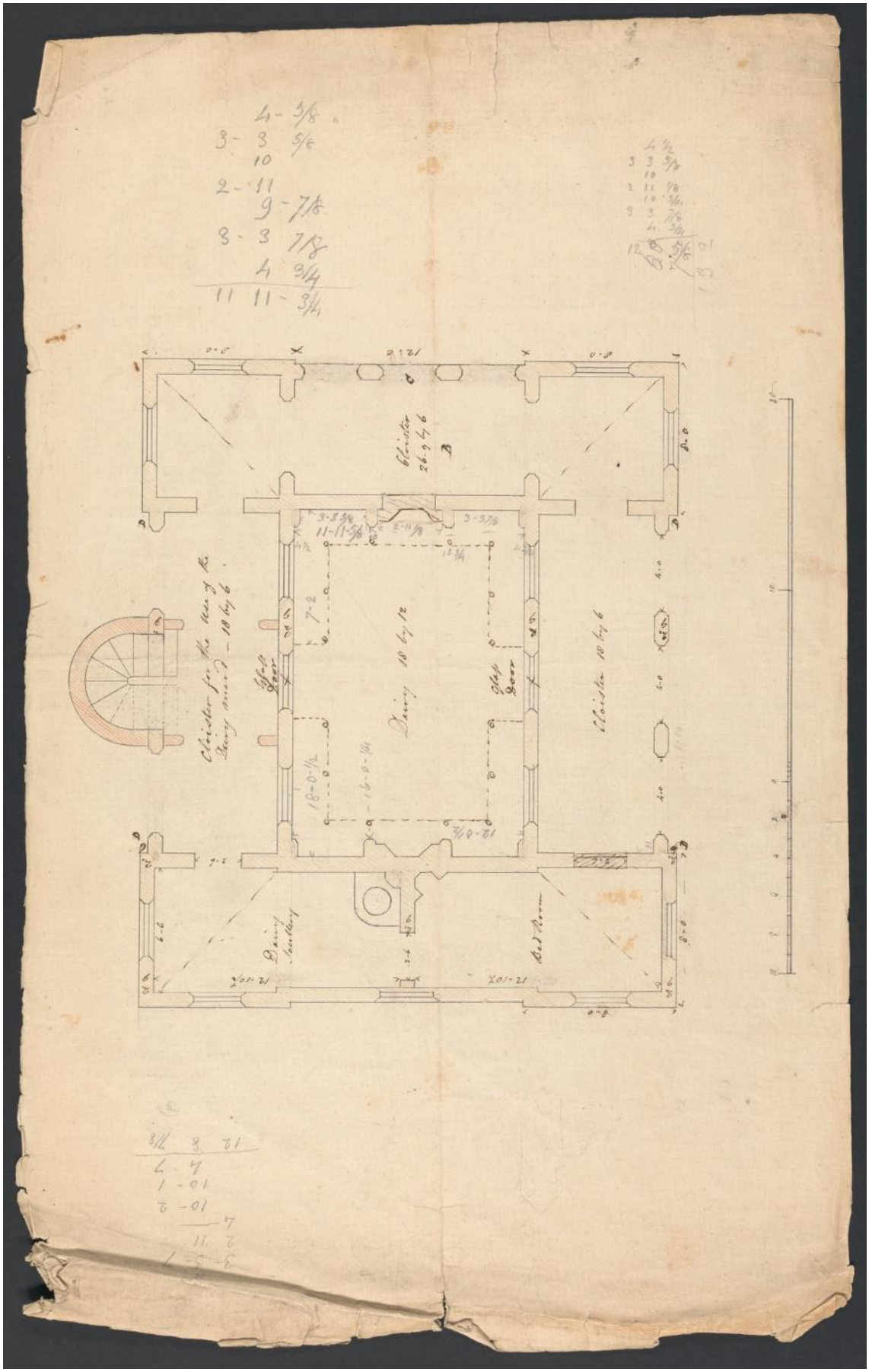
Evidence for the Building of Cobham Dairy

Wyatt's designs

Most of the Darnley Papers are now at Medway Archive Centre near Rochester, but a quantity of Wyatt's designs for the estate are at the Yale Center for British Art, and their digitisation proved a boon as we researched the building. The Dairy is perhaps the best documented building at Cobham: twelve of these drawings relate to it, the earliest of them dated 1794, suggesting that Wyatt received the commission from Lord Darnley in that year. Nine others are dated August 1795.

Wyatt's plans are explicit about the uses of the various spaces in the Dairy, although the Dairy underwent a few changes from these drawn designs in its construction. The biggest relates to the south elevation (today's kitchen side), which Wyatt proposed as a semi-circular, double height projection over a flight of stairs leading down to a lower chamber, presumably a cold-store or ice-house. This was a feature shared by other dairies: for example, Kenwood Dairy (1794-6, designed by George Saunders) has such a chamber. The idea was not acted upon in construction: there is (perhaps already was) a larger domed ice-house built of brick into the terrace of north terrace drive. Lord Darnley instead instructed a much simpler cold store immediately to the south of the Dairy. A flint-faced recess behind the Dairy is all that is left of this today.

The earliest documentary evidence for the built Dairy is also ambiguous as to the roof form. The well-finished little sketch, owned by the current Lord Darnley, is thought to date from c1830 and shows a hipped roof running along the length of the east and west ranges, instead of the pyramidal 'corner roofs' shown on Wyatt's drawings and early photographs. This is puzzling: while it can be attributed to artistic licence, the anonymous sketcher depicts patented roofing very accurately. Perhaps the sketcher simply did not have an architectural eye. Similarly, it is unclear whether the building ever had the iron cross finials sketched by Wyatt, though these may have disappeared in the 1980s work.



Opposite: detailed floor plan complete with pencil jottings and the circular store room or icehouse.
Yale Center for British Art

Finally, it is hard to make out the treatment of the little bell-cote, for which Wyatt drew one option for castellated trim with a cross. The restoration reflects the physical evidence as we found it in the 21st century, after the shell repairs carried out by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in the 1980s.

Carpenters & bricklayers

Lord Darnley retained an experienced team of carpenters and builders to build and maintain his estate buildings, bringing in specialist craftsmen only where needed. He also benefitted from a meticulous agent in these years, Mr. W. Stevenson (perhaps a personal friend, since he joins the estate soon after the 4th Earl achieved his majority). Stevenson's annual accounts are recorded in a beautiful copperplate hand in marbled hard-backed ledgers. These records allow the chronology of construction of the Dairy to be followed, as well as the names of some of those who worked on the Dairy. The Dairy was built at a time of considerable activity on the estate, as its service buildings were reorganised and Lodge Farm developed. Some of the brickwork for which John Patteson was paid from June 1795 to February 1798 seems likely to relate to work on the Dairy.[12] On 23rd September 1796 £22 11s 8d is paid to 'John Till and other carpenters for setting up and framing a round Stack Frame at the Lodge Farm, working at the new Dairy and making Doors Windows Shutters &c for the new Office' over the previous two months. A further £24 4s 8d follows to the same team in November 'for Work done at the new Dairy, the new Office &c.'[13] In 1797, thirty nine oak saplings were used for a new fence between 'the Stable Yard Gate and the New Dairy. At the end of December 1798 Charles Wyatt (Wyatt's brother-in-law and cousin) received the large amount of £55 12s 0d for 'Tinned Copper had in 1796 for covering the New Dairy.'[14]

[12] Medway Archives U565/417a, 49.
[13] U565/415a, 45..
[14] U565/A17a, 49.

This anonymous drawing, though to date to *c.*1830, is the earliest evidence for the Dairy as built. Note the patented slate roof treatment. However, the artist has not drawn the cloister roofs accurately, showing continuous hipped roofs, rather than the pyramidal corner roofs actually built.

Private Collection

Payments to the craftsmen are typically paid in arrears over the past quarter or even longer, as in this case, raising the question of their cashflow in the interim. John Patteson the carpenter did not receive payment until 1st November 1798 'for Bricklayers…for 18¾ of Lime to the new Dairy in 1795 & 1796 at 9s a Load'.[15]

This payment for copper roofing, which relates to the flat roofs of the cloisters, neatly marks the probable completion of the external envelope. There are no explicit references relating to payment of slaters who executed the patented roof or the slate cladding: these tasks were probably beyond the capabilities of the estate's in-house team. At Soho House, Samuel Wyatt sent William Jarrard from London to supervise the slate casing. Similarly, estate accounts for work done for Thomas Coke at Holkham in the 1780s show that both slaters and Bernasconi were employed and paid direct by Samuel, the likely arrangement at Cobham.

On 1st June 1798, John Till the Carpenter was paid for work since April for 'setting up a Slab Fence between Badgerbury Shaw [?] & the Hop Ground adjoining & at Work done at the new Cow House near the Dairy &c' from 7th April to this day last £27 12s 1½d. This perhaps relates to making the framing for the vaulted ceilings. [16] On 19th November 1798 Robert Hills was paid 'for the Carriage of 3 Loads of Stones from Gravesend in May last for paving the new Dairy at 12/6d a Load.'[17]

[15] U565/A17a, 45.
[16] U565/A17a, 48
[17] U565/A17a, 69.

Surviving example of patented roof slating on the Albany Lodges, Burlington Gardens, Piccadilly (1770s). Below: Charles Rawlinson's 1772 Patent.

Roofing

The Dairy's original roof covering, as apparent in the 1830 sketch, was what was known as patented tiling. In September 1772 Charles Rawlinson of Lostwithiel in Cornwall was granted a patent for 'a method of covering any kind or form of building with slate…that …cannot be rifled by wind, or hurt by frost, hail or This involved roofing with large slates that simply butted up against each other, bedded onto a putty and then nailed in place. The perpendicular joints were covered with slate slips. The latter often failed, and not surprisingly very few examples survive. One rare survival to see are two little lodges at the back of The Albany on Burlington Gardens, behind the Royal Academy. At the Dairy, any such application of the technique was later superseded, and we have only the little sketch 1830 as evidence that it once existed.

Slate cladding

James Wyatt was intent upon using the Dairy to pursue one of the many building innovations of the 18th century. It was a time of great building, as the population expanded and London re-built itself after the Great Fire, and innovation thrived. The Wyatt dynasty was a Staffordshire family; James was the youngest and most brilliant of five brothers, all active in the building trade to some degree. Slate was one of their favourite building materials, since another brother, Benjamin, was the Chief Agent for Lord Penryhn, whose estates at the northwest corner of Wales contained the enormous slate deposits that would transform the nation's roofs in the railway age. Quarried since at least the 16th century, from the 1770s Lord Penrhyn made a determined effort to exploit these resources, turning the mountainsides into dreamlike landscapes, gallery rising upon gallery. All the Wyatts were ever keen to promote each other's activities. Cobham Dairy possibly represents an initial prototype for the technique before it was used on bigger projects, although Samuel was more enthusiastic than James in using it on subsequent projects.

Samuel Wyatt used mathematical tiling to dress Belmont, Kent (1769), another imitative 18th-century technique to dress rough brickwork. Here, pale terracotta tiles nailed to wooden battens are used to mimic much finer faced, tightly jointed brickwork and could be executed by less skilled craftsmen.

Peregrine Bryant Architects.

At the Dairy, early photos show the brick core covered in a single layer of slate painted to look like finely dressed stone. There were functional as well as aesthetic advantages to the technique: as well as providing a weather shield against frost and rain, slate cladding also kept the Dairy cool. The original slates on the Dairy were about 15mm thick, and sawn rather than riven. They were then passed through a dressing machine, to ensure an absolutely flat finish.

At one level, this is typical 18th-century trickery. Georgian building manuals are full of such wheezes and ingenuity: how to use fewer bricks, or how to make one material look like another, more expensive one. So-called mathematical tiling was another, in which fired tiles were carefully hung from battens over rougher brickwork to imitate very finely jointed brickwork. A famous survival of mathematical tiling is at Belmont near Faversham, on whose estate stands Prospect Tower, another Landmark with cricketing connections. This Belmont was built in the early 1790s by Samuel Wyatt. The tiles were fixed to wooden battens with hefty wrought iron nails. Over time the nails rust and the battens tend to rot. Many examples of mathematical tiling survive, especially in the southeast, but it was not a perfect solution.

By contrast, in 1969, even though the Dairy had had little or no maintenance since the very early 20th century, its slate cladding seemed to be holding up pretty well. There are no signs of the bowing due to nail sickness or batten failure that often happened with mathematical tile cladding. In the event, it wasn’t so much damp and decay that almost did for the Dairy and its cladding, it was vandalism.

One other shining example of slate cladding survives, at Soho House, Handsworth, Birmingham. This was originally the home of the industrialist Matthew Boulton. This was where the Lunar Society used to meet by the full moon, to light their journeys home after dinner and scientific discussions. Both Samuel Wyatt and James Wyatt worked on the house for Boulton in the 1790s.

Soho House, Handsworth, Birmingham. Industrialist Matthew Boulton's former house, both James and Samuel Wyatt worked on adaptations here. This south elevation is still entirely faced in original slate cladding identical to that used at Cobham Dairy.

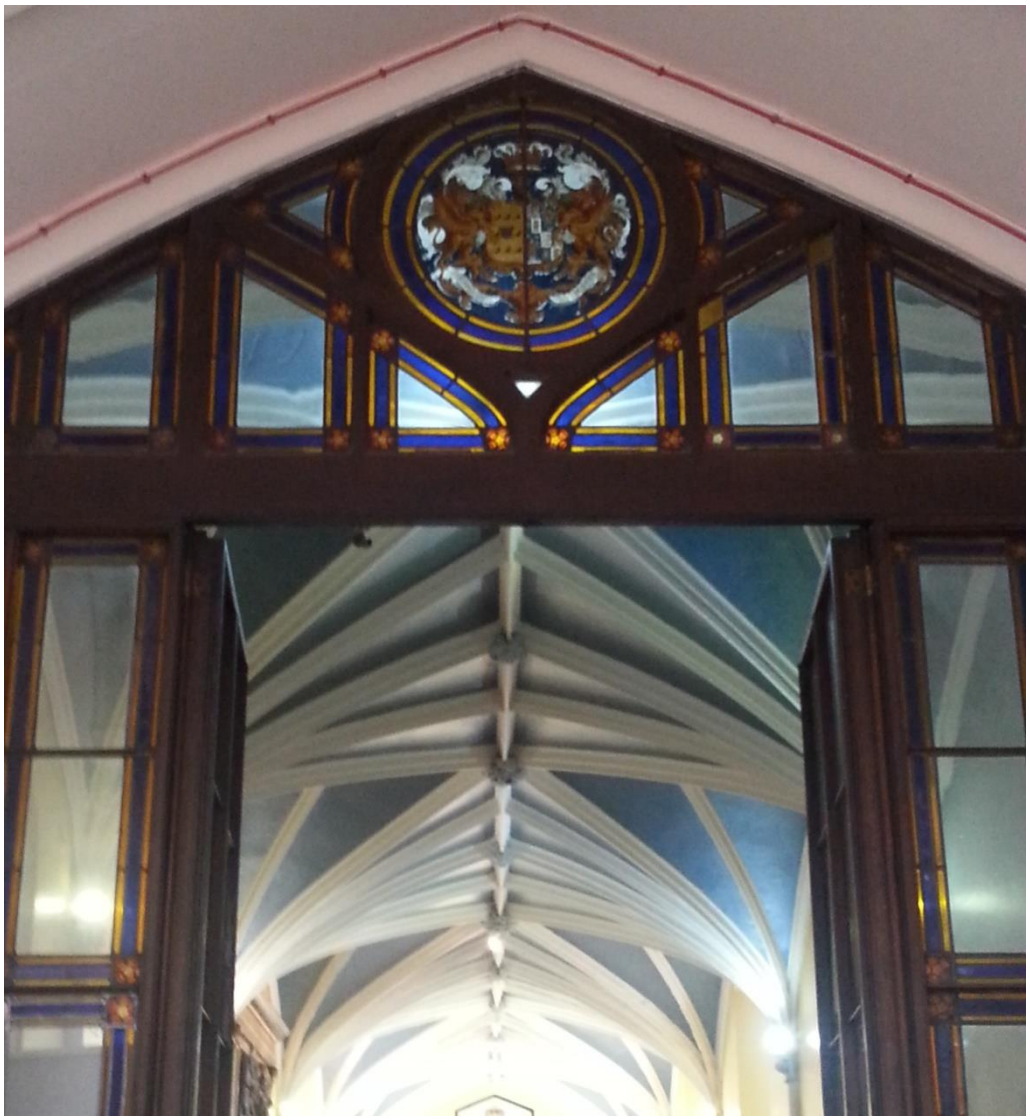
This design of this principal front is attributed to James Wyatt, although his involvement was not a success. The cement initially chosen for the façade failed, and in 1798 Boulton brought in Samuel Wyatt to complete the work, who elected to use slate cladding on the house. Soho House has been well-maintained and is still faced with painted slate in impeccable condition. Unless scrutinised very closely, it is impossible to tell that it isn't stone, or render lined out to look like ashlar. As at Cobham, slate slips had been used rather than wooden battens, and the slates then bedded in an oil mastic to arrive at a smooth external finish.

There was evidence in the Boulton archive of further small adjustments and improvements to the technique. Remarkably, Samuel Wyatt used slate cladding to cover the whole of Shugborough Hall in Staffordshire for Thomas Anson in the 1790s. Even the ten giant Doric columns that support its portico are simple tree trunks clad in slate, using carefully dressed slate slips. Samuel Wyatt's builder and clerk of works, William Hollins, went to inspect the finished work in July 1798 and wrote to Boulton with some sensible observations.

> 'When I was at Esquire Ansons I took perticuler notice of the slating, which looks very well, but there are blemishes in it, which may be prevented in yours, that is in topping the Nail holes. I observe the general mode is to fill the holes with Putty, which not only takes a considerable time in drying, but sinks from the surface, so that they may be seen when painted and sanded.'

Hollins's painstaking solution was to recommend that small slate plugs be made to exactly the same size as the fixing holes bored into each slate, to be fixed with stiff white lead and oil. On the surviving evidence, this method worked extremely well at Soho House, but the Dairy was already built by 1798 and here, James Wyatt used the original method of putty to fill the fixing holes.

Samuel Wyatt also built a slate-clad Poultry House for Lady Penrhyn at Winnington in Cheshire (c. 1782-5, now demolished). In 1800, Benjamin Wyatt built a slate-clad dairy at Penisarnant on the Penrhyn Estate in N Wales. This survives today in residential use.



Examples of Francis Bernasconi's work for Wyatt in Cobham Hall (entrance lobby). Note too the glass screen with coloured slips and painted bearings.

Paint finishes

Specialist paint analysis at the Dairy revealed that, after a primer of lead white oil paint, two coats of oil paint lightly coloured with ochre mixed with sand were applied. The first coat had very fine sand mixed into the paint. The second coat held slightly coarser sand that seemed to have been dredged or blown onto the wet paint, since particles protruded. Exactly the same treatment had been used at Soho House and Shugborough. At the Dairy as at the other two sites, this sanded finish was applied everywhere externally, even across timber window frames, and even on a surviving internal doorcase. Everything was intended to read as stone.

Plasterwork

Payments made between 1800 and 1809 totalling £1,556 for work at Cobham Hall to one Francis Bernasconi (1762-1841) raise an exciting and very plausible association with the plastering at the Dairy and one of the most sought after *stuccadori* of the day. Gothic vaulting was something of a lost craft skill in the mid-18th century, when the fashion for the earlier, freer Rococo had phased into the more compartmented and formalised designs popularised by the Adam brothers. Francis Bernasconi is the presumed son or relation of *stuccadori* Bernato Bernasconi (*fl.*1770-1820).[18] Italians had long been acknowledged as the best master plasterers, travelling the country to work on the great building projects of the day. The return to vaulting in the revival Gothic idiom required a greater discipline in plastering as well as in the laying out of the vaulting (which must equally have challenged the estate carpenters). Bernato Bernasconi, who settled in Buckinghamshire, was employed by James Wyatt to work on several such ceilings in cathedrals, where accurate casts of medieval bosses were taken and reproduced. Bernato also worked for James in Oxford: in New College Chapel (1788-94), Magdalen College Chapel (1791-2) and the Library at Balliol College (1794, this last being only one of these examples not later swept away by the zeal of the Victorian ecclesiologists).[19]

[18] See *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain, 1660-1851*, online resource: http://liberty.henry-moore.org/henrymoore/sculptor/browserecord.php?-action=browse&-recid=199
[19] John Frew, 'Gothic in Transition', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 126, No. 980 (Nov. 1984).

The ceilings in the dining room and entrance lobby of the main house that Wyatt designed for the Earl in these years are very similar in their vaulting to that of the Dairy, and share the same oak leaf bosses. Similar bosses similarly feature in the Balliol Library ceiling, which may have been reflected a family, or company, style. All in all, then, it seems very likely that Francis Bernasconi was also responsible for the decorative plastering at the Dairy. The payment to him in 1800 in the Cobham Hall accounts is the first time he surfaces in his own right, at the relatively mature age of 38.

In his own career, Francis specialised as much in scagliola work as decorative plasterwork, and he worked at the Royal Palaces and many of the cathedrals and great houses in London and across the country.[20] Francis Bernasconi's involvement at the Dairy further emphasises that this was conceived as a building of considerable distinction, to be decorated to the same standard as the Hall. The apparently rather late payment to Bernasconi (in arrears, as was usual) also fits with a last payment in Stevenson's accounts, on 12th April 1800 for 'sundry payments to Stone Masons & Bricklayers at the Dairy, the Lodge at Brewer's gate, the House at the Warren Gate &c 147:19:8 ½.'[21]

[20] Scagliola is imitation marble or other stone, made of plaster mixed with glue and dyes, which is then painted to imitate marble or other semi-precious stone and polished.
[21] U565/A19a, 48.

Window glass

Since the heat of direct sunlight was to be avoided, the windows in pleasure dairies were typically closely leaded and often coloured, and acid-etched or opaque. The Cobham example was no exception. We had oral evidence of memories of red, blue and yellow glass surviving in the windows at the Dairy in the mid-20th century, and this tallied well with Wyatt's treatment of the glass in the windows and screen of his entrance lobby in the Hall, under construction at the same time as the Dairy. The screen in the Hall also holds an elaborate, painted representation of the 4th Earl's armorial bearings.

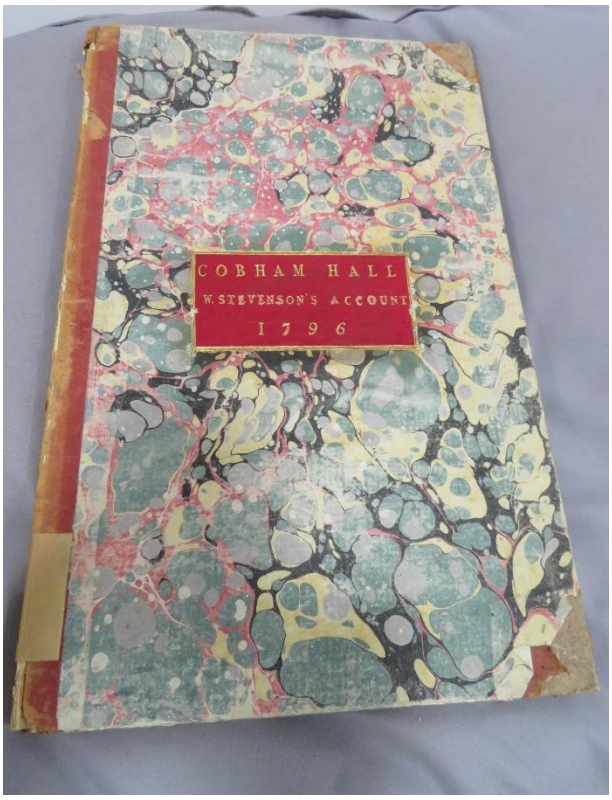
From a chance entry in Mr Stevenson's accounts for 1798, we also learn that that Dairy was given a similar treatment: the Housekeeper Isabella Rich was reimbursed £1 1s 18d 'for boarding Mr Warren when painting the Coats of Arms &c on the Windows at the new Dairy.'[22]

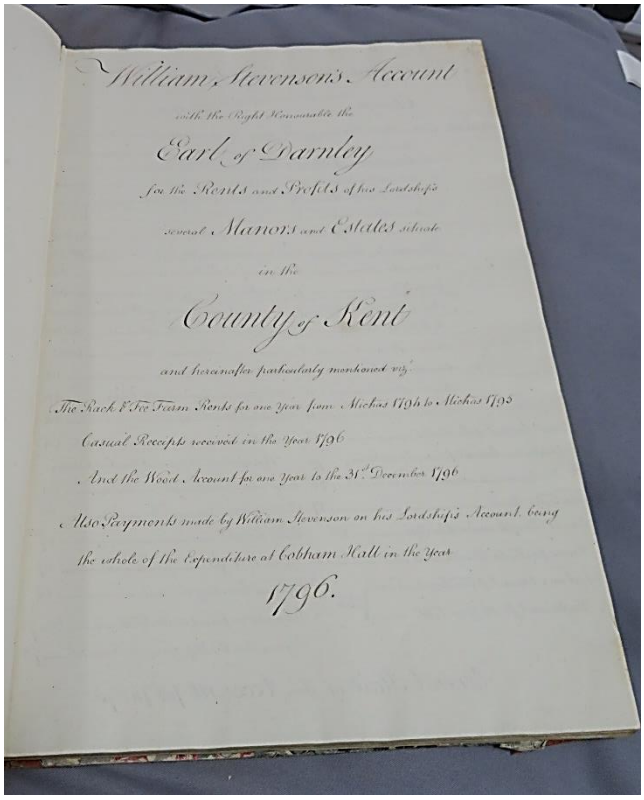
A small later alteration is recorded in mid-1812 for 'Wire Work for the Dairy Windows.' Some of this was still in situ in the mid-20th century, being visible in a photograph taken in 1969.[23]

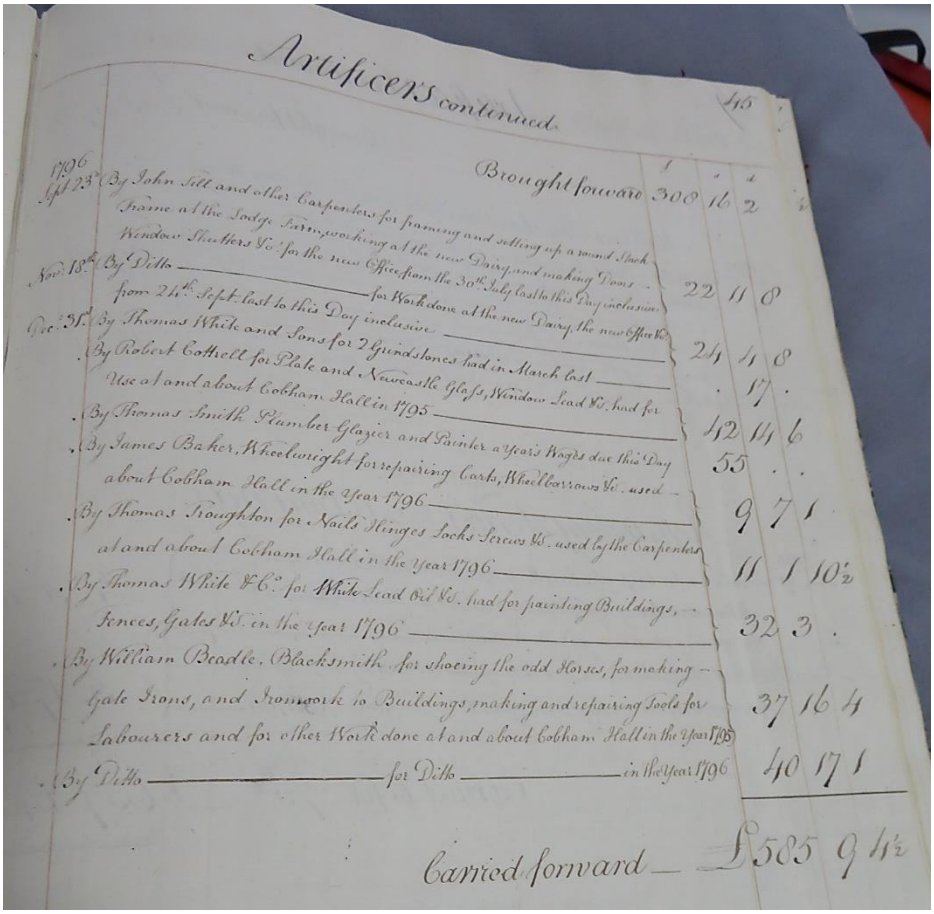
The Dairy Maid

Mr Stevenson's accounts of payments to employees at the Hall in these years also yield two further evocative snippets – the names of the first dairymaids. Only one name is recorded in a given year, suggesting that these women were indeed the resident dairymaid at The Dairy (the detailed accounts for Lodge Farm include cows and calves, but no dairy produce or dairymaids, suggesting that this was primarily a beef herd).

[22] U565/17a, 66.
[23] Laurie, 179 cit. Bowdler (2002).




William Stevenson's Account
with the Right Honourable the
Earl of Darnley
for the Rents and Profits of his Lordship's
several Manors and Estates situate
in the
County of Kent
and hereinafter particularly mentioned viz.
The Rack & Fee Farm Rents for one Year from Michas 1794 to Michas 1795
Casual Receipts received in the Year 1796
And the Wood Account for one Year to the 31st December 1796
Also Payments made by William Stevenson on his Lordship's Account, being
the whole of the Expenditure at Cobham Hall in the Year
1796.


Artificers continued. 115

		£	s	d
1796				
April 23d	By John Till and other Carpenters for framing and setting up a round Stack Frame at the Lodge Farm, working at the new Dairy and making Doors Window Shutters &c. for the new Office from the 30th July last to this Day inclusive	308	16	2
Nov. 18th	By Ditto ——— for Work done at the new Dairy, the new Office &c. from 24th Sept. last to this Day inclusive	22	11	8
Dec. 31st	By Thomas White and Sons for 2 Grindstones had in March last ———	24	1	8
	By Robert Cottrell for Plate and Newcastle Glass, Window Lead &c. had for Use at and about Cobham Hall in 1795 ———		17	.
	By Thomas Smith Plumber Glazier and Painter a Year's Wages due this Day ———	42	11	6
	By James Baker, Wheelwright for repairing Carts, Wheelbarrows &c. used about Cobham Hall in the Year 1796 ———	55	.	.
	By Thomas Troughton for Nails Hinges Locks Screws &c. used by the Carpenters at and about Cobham Hall in the Year 1796 ———	9	7	1
	By Thomas White & Co. for White Lead Oil &c. had for painting Buildings, Fences, Gates &c. in the Year 1796 ———	11	1	10½
	By William Beadle, Blacksmith for shoeing the odd Horses, for making Gate Irons, and Ironwork to Buildings, making and repairing Tools for Labourers and for other Work done at and about Cobham Hall in the Year 1795	32	3	.
	By Ditto ——— for Ditto ——— in the Year 1796	37	16	4
		40	17	1
	Carried forward ———	£585	9	4½

W. Stevenson's Accounts for 1796. Payments to 'Artificers' include the first entry on this extract page, to 'John Till and other Carpenters' for 'working at the new Dairy.'
Medway Archives U565/A15a

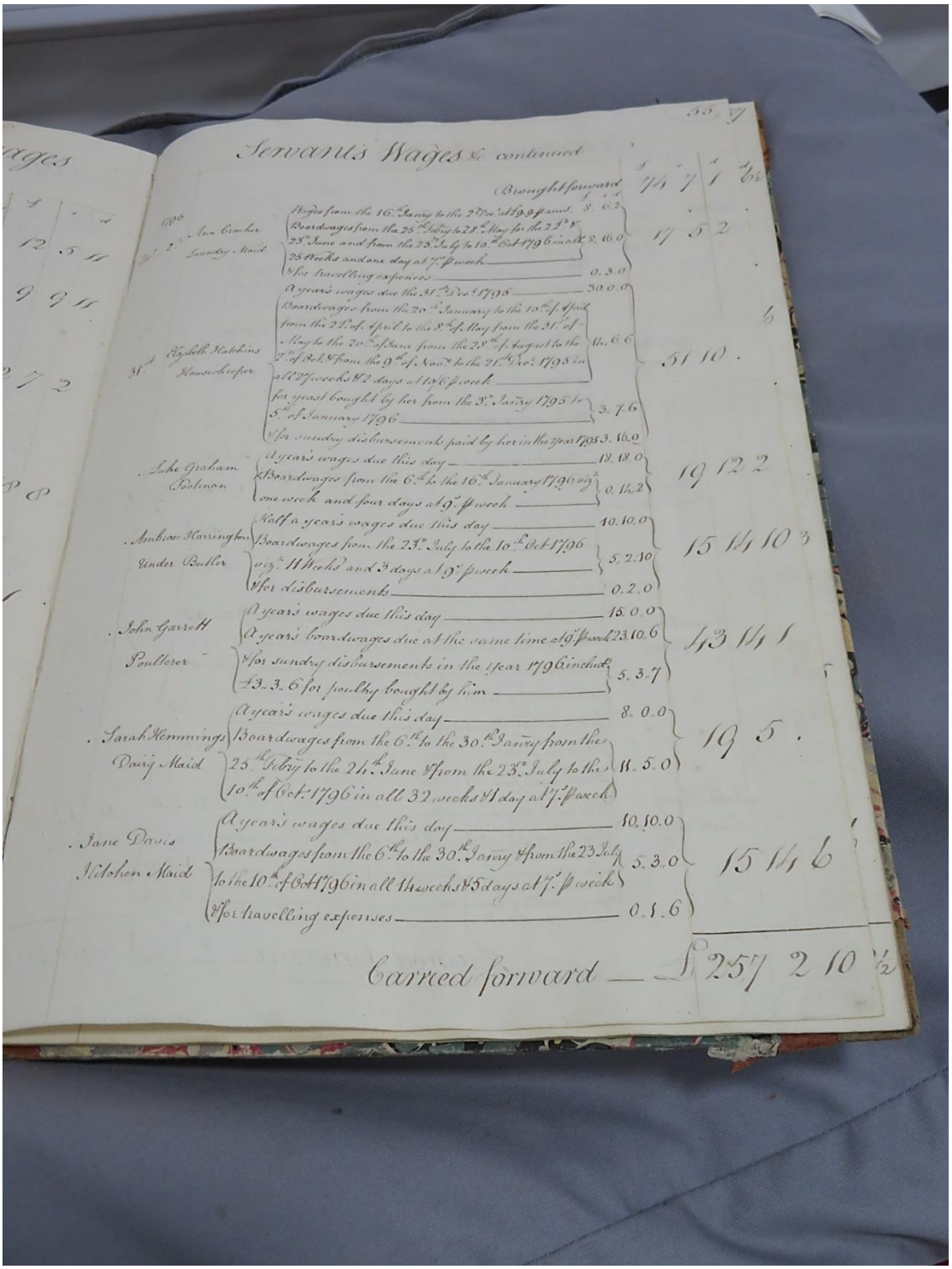
In 1796, Sarah Hemmings appears as Dairy Maid. She is paid ‘A Year’s wages’ of £8 plus board wages each quarter for £11 5s 0d, to a total of £19 5s 0d. (This is just a bit more than the kitchen maid Jane Davis at £15 14s 6d and laundry maids Ann Crocker at £17 5s 2d and Betty Box at £14 14s 0d, and a lot less than Elizabeth Hutchins the Housekeeper at £51 10s 0d. Sarah earned about the same as Luke Graham, the footman, one of several servants for whom Lord Darnley paid tax each year in order to be permitted to powder his wig.)[24]

Sarah is still there in 1798, but by now her year’s wages and board wages have risen to £24, perhaps reflecting a ‘promotion’ to residency at the Dairy – where additional heating and sustenance would have been required beyond the umbrella provision in the Hall.[25] However, by 1800 Sarah Heming [sic] has apparently been demoted to become a House Maid, paid just £16 2s 0d.[26] Ann Parsons has replaced Sarah as Dairy Maid, paid £12 guineas Wages plus £12 15s 0d board wages, to a total of £25 7s 0d.

The Dairy did make money for the estate too. In 1827, for example, milk and butter contributed nearly £27 for the year, thus neatly covering the cost of the dairy maid’s wages and board.[27]

So life at the Dairy unrolled, with the cows lowing in the nearby Cowhouse, and the daily routine of morning and evening milking, with the churning of butter, making of cheese and skimming of cream setting the rhythm in between, attended by ever-scrupulous attention to hygiene within the cool walls. Every so often, when the family were in residence at the Hall, the dairy maid’s daily round was no doubt enlivened with tea parties and ‘help’ from the Darnley offspring.

[24] U565/A15a, 59.
[25] U565/A17a, 59.
[26] U565/A19a, 60, 59.
[27] Bowdler, 86.



Servants Wages &c continued

Brought forward £ 257 2 10½

1796
Ann Crocker, Laundry Maid — Wages from the 16th Janry to the 3rd Dec. at £9 9s per annt. £8 6s; Boardwages from the 25th Feby to 28th May for the 23 Wks & 28 June and from the 25th July to 10th Oct. 1796 in all 28 Weeks and one day at 7s p week £8 16 0; & for travelling expences 0 3 0 — £17 5 2

31st Elizabeth Hutchins, Housekeeper — A years wages due the 31st Dec. 1795 £30 0 0; Boardwages from the 20th January to the 10th of April from the 21st of April to the 8th of May from the 31st of May to the 20th of June from the 28th of August to the 2nd of Oct. & from the 9th of Nov. to the 21st Dec. 1795 in all 27 weeks & 2 days at 19/6 p week £21 6 6; for yeast bought by her from the 3rd Janry 1795 to 5th of January 1796 £3 7 6; & for sundry disbursements paid by her in the year 1795 £3 16 0 — £51 10

Luke Graham Robinson — A years wages due this day £19 18 0; & Boardwages from the 6th to the 16th January 1796 one week and four days at 19s p week 0 14 2 — £19 12 2

Ambrose Harrington, Under Butler — Half a years wages due this day £10 10 0; Boardwages from the 23rd July to the 10th Oct. 1796 viz. 11 Weeks and 3 days at 19s p week £5 2 10; & for disbursements 0 2 0 — £15 14 10

John Garrett, Poulterer — A years wages due this day £15 0 0; A years boardwages due at the same time at 9s p week 23 10 6; & for sundry disbursements in the year 1796 (include £3 3 6 for poultry bought by him) £5 3 7 — £43 14 1

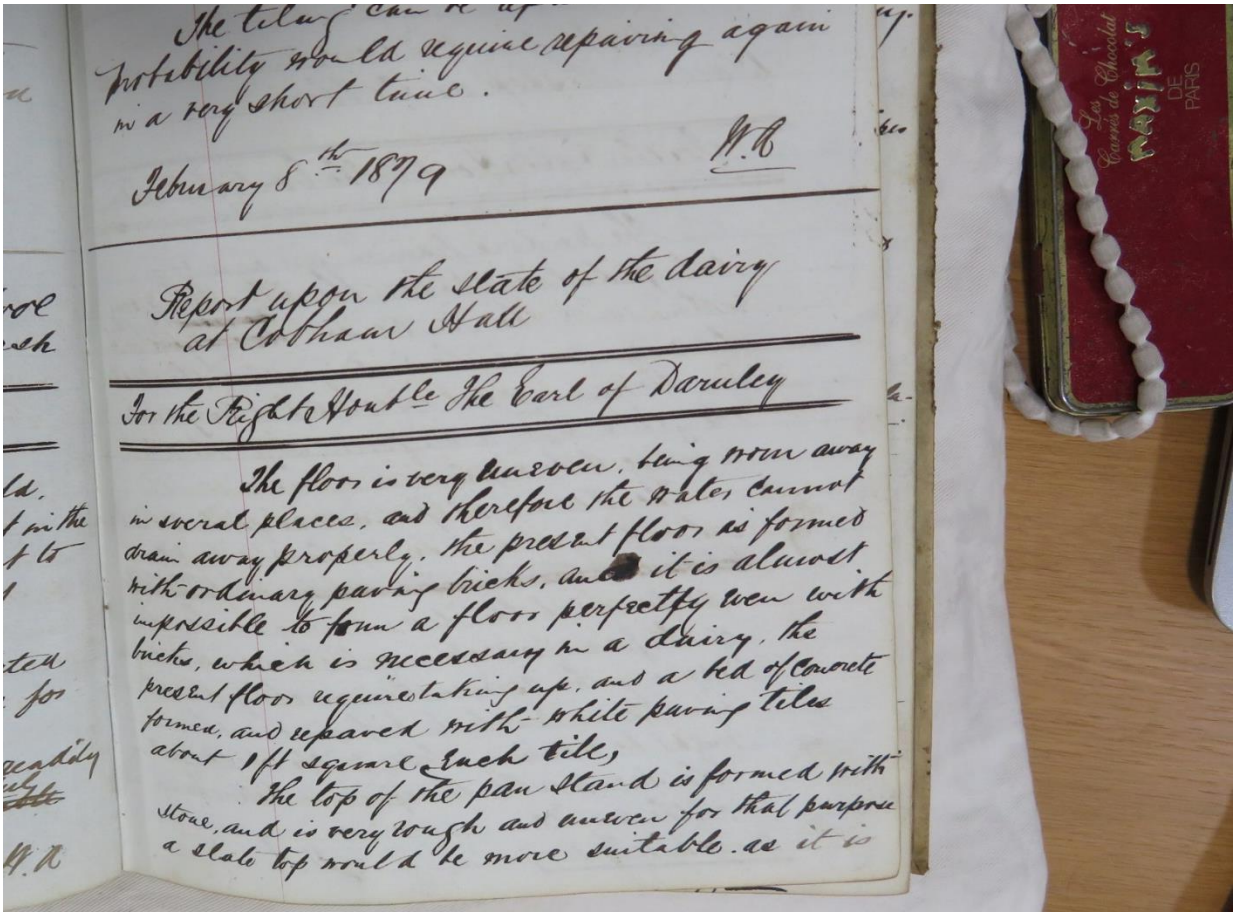
Sarah Hemmings, Dairy Maid — A years wages due this day £8 0 0; Boardwages from the 6th to the 30th Janry from the 25th Feby to the 24th June & from the 23rd July to the 10th of Oct. 1796 in all 32 weeks & 1 day at 7s p week £11 5 0 — £19 5

Jane Davis, Kitchen Maid — A years wages due this day £10 10 0; Boardwages from the 6th to the 30th Janry & from the 23 July to the 10th of Oct. 1796 in all 11 weeks & 5 days at 7s p week £5 3 0; & for travelling expenses 0 1 6 — £15 14 6

Carried forward £257 2 10½

Mr Stevenson's Accounts for 1796: Servants' Wages. Sarah Hemmings the Dairy Maid's entry is second from bottom.

Most frustratingly, no evidence has yet come to light for contents or specific activities in the Dairy. Its contents were not itemised in the inventory drawn up after the death of the 4th Earl in 1841, so we can only look to other known examples of pleasure dairies to inform this.



probability would require repairing again in a very short time.

W.A

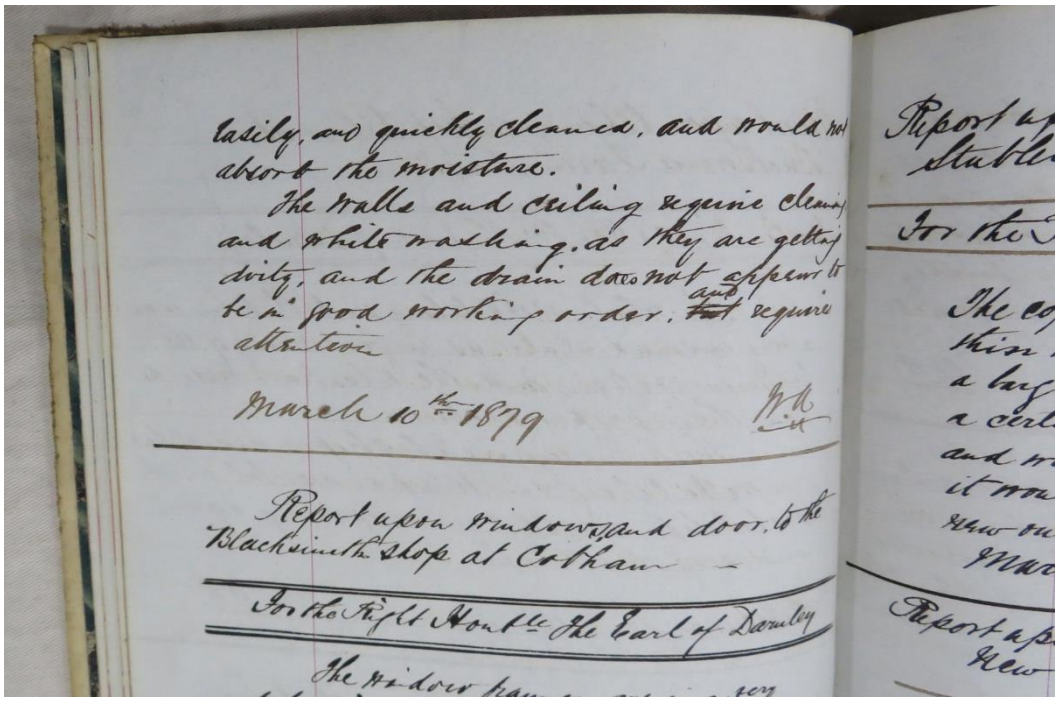
February 8th 1879

Report upon the state of the dairy at Cobham Hall

For the Right Honble The Earl of Darnley

The floor is very uneven, being worn away in several places, and therefore the water cannot drain away properly, the present floor is formed with ordinary paving bricks, and it is almost impossible to form a floor perfectly even with bricks, which is necessary in a dairy, the present floor requires taking up, and a bed of Concrete formed, and repaved with white paving tiles about 1ft square each tile,

The top of the pan stand is formed with stone, and is very rough and uneven for that purpose a slate top would be more suitable. as it is



easily, and quickly cleaned, and would not absorb the moisture.

The walls and ceiling require cleaning and white washing, as they are getting dirty, and the drain does not appear to be in good working order, and require attention

W.A

March 10th 1879

Report upon windows and door to the Blacksmiths shop at Cobham

For the Right Honble The Earl of Darnley

Mr W. Ansell's condition report on the Dairy in March 1879. 'The floor is very uneven, being worn away in several places….'
Medway Archives U565/A391

Later history of the Dairy

We now jump to 1879 and the tenure of the 8th Earl, Ivo Frances Walter Bligh, second son of the 6th Earl and another fine cricketer. There is a sense that the estate was by now perhaps a little neglected. This Lord Darley employed a Mr. W. Ansell as his estate surveyor, an experienced man who left a series of detailed and well-informed condition surveys and repair specifications in his Estate Surveyor's Book.

On March 10th, 1879, Ansell wrote a report 'on the state of the Dairy at Cobham Hall.'

> 'the floor is very uneven, being worn away in several places, and therefore the water cannot drain away properly. The present floor is formed with ordinary paving bricks, and it is almost impossible to form a floor perfectly even with bricks, which is necessary in a Dairy, the present floor requires taking up, and a bed of concrete formed, and repared [sic] with white paving tiles about 1ft each tile.
>
> The top of the pan stand is formed with stone, and is very rough and uneven for that purpose, a slate top would be more suitable as it is easily and quickly cleaned, and would not absorb the moisture.
>
> The walls and ceiling require cleaning and white washing, as they are getting dirty, and the drain does not appear to be in good working order and requires attention.'[28]

Whether the brick floor has worn away from repeated foot passage or vigorous scrubbing is unclear, but the wear does suggest that the Dairy had seen good use over the past 80 years. This report is also interesting because it seems the loads of stone brought from Medway in 1798 were not after all used to pave the Dairy floor, and that the beautiful banded lozenge stone floor that we found, albeit badly dilapidated, dated from the late-19th- rather than the late-18th century.

[28] U565/A391

Cobham Dairy's north elevation in the 1960s (top) and the north elevation before the 1980s consolidation.

The description of the central pan stand is also the only evidence we have for this feature, long since lost. In this case, Ansell makes no further repair specification, and nor does he sign off the work done at the Dairy (as often recorded for other works in the volume), so it appears nothing was done.

Ansell's next report 'upon the Old Dairy in the Pleasure Gardens at Cobham Hall' comes on November 21st, 1884. It suggests that decay was now setting in seriously in the apparently disused building:

> 'The south [?] side of the Old Dairy is getting into a very dilapidated state, the brickwork has given way in several places, and the roof timbers [are very rotten which support – crossed out] and the woodwork which support the ornamental plastering is very rotten, and has caused the plastering to give way in several places. The south side of the building being in a very bad state requires special repairs, and the structure generally requires repairs to the roof and doors etc.'[29]

It seems the Dairy fell into complete disuse around 1900. Maintenance was no longer carried out (if indeed it was in the 1880s). The next full survey was undertaken by the Ministry of Works in 1959 (as the government department responsible for works to public buildings and eventual precursor to English Heritage). This described the building as past repair.[30] The building was therefore abandoned by the time the school arrived in 1962, and they understandably had other priorities.

The next Ministry of Works report, on the garden buildings in June 1964, found the Dairy was 'the biggest problem as it is nearest to a ruin. Few people would have considered taking it on in its present condition but Commander White [the school's estate manager] has already cleaned it up and begin [sic] putting a new roof on it.' The report also stated that the castellated parapet was of solid wood, and the roofs slate with zinc flats.

[29] U565/A391
[30] PRO, WORK 14/2474, minute of 12 January 1959, cit. Bowdler.

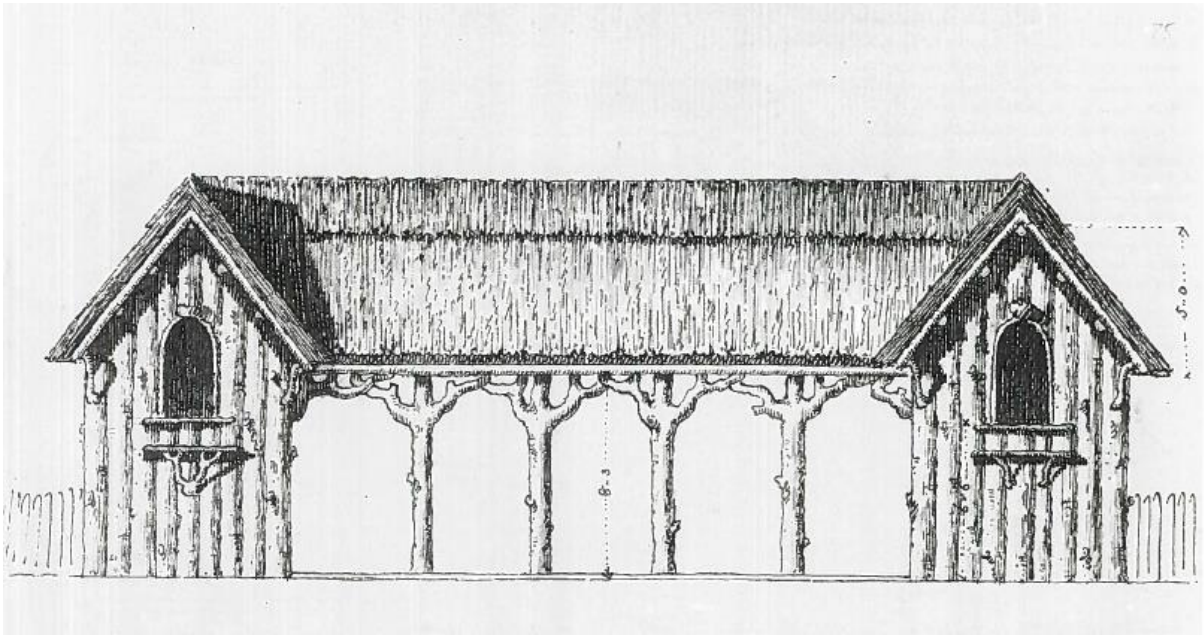
Cobham Dairy in 1983, stripped back ready for re-roofing and repair of its shell.

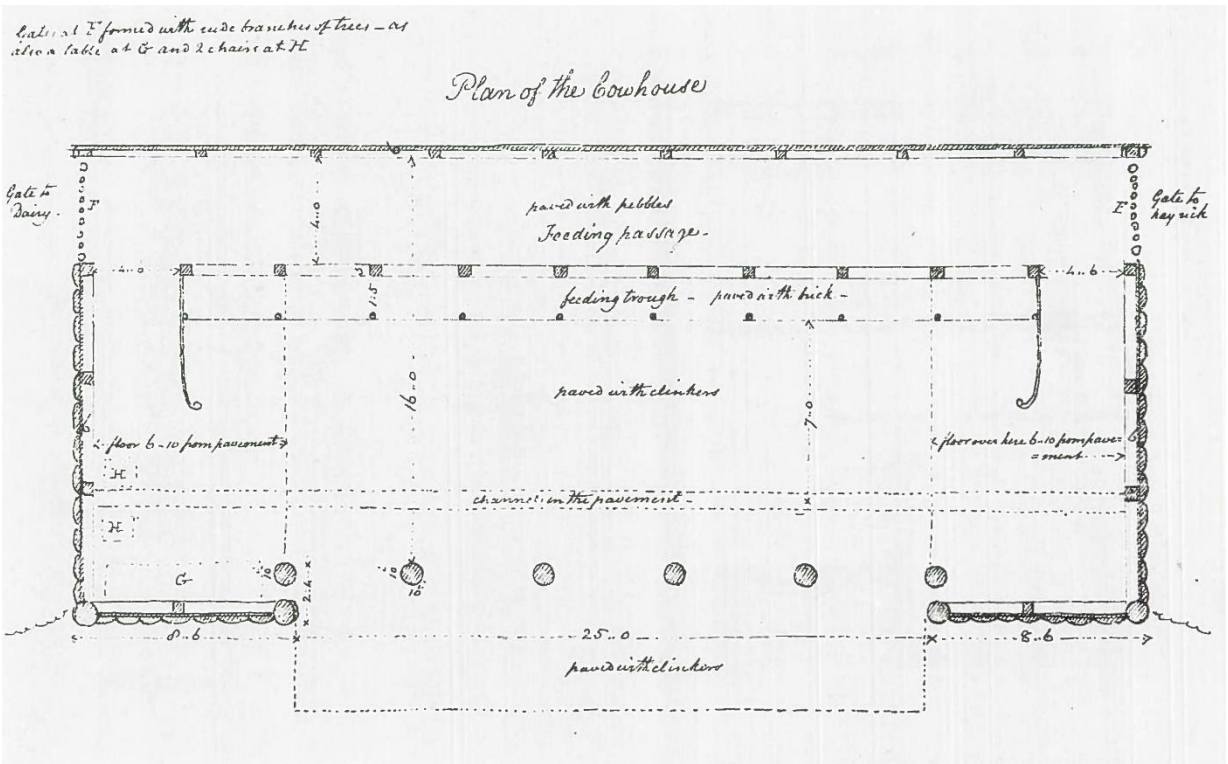
The walls were sodden and full of fungus; the glazing had all gone. The design of the building was praised and its restoration was recommended but in a manner that shows how far conservation has come since: the walls were to be allowed to dry out, but the missing cladding slates were to be rendered over; the floor re-laid on a damp proof course, and the roofs entirely replaced. The internal plasterwork would have to be sacrificed for the repairs to be carried out. It was estimated that the consolidation would cost £2,000, and the restoration £4,000.[31]

Once again, it nothing substantive was done. Then in 1983, architect John Sell organised a working party from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings to clear the ivy that was threatening to overwhelm the building. Architectural practice Sell Wade Postin took up the building's cause and with grants from English Heritage, the Monument Trust and Kent County Council, they succeeded in re-roofing the building, and stripping and storing the surviving slate cladding from all but the sheltered west gable where it remained intact. The window frames were removed for storage and new ones put in, before the windows were boarded up, with a dashing cut-out in each representing Kent's white horse, for ventilation.

The Dairy's envelope was now wind and weatherproof, and the careful conservationist approach meant that what did survive of the decaying vaulted ceilings was left in situ, against the day when a long term future might be determined for the building. Landmark looked at the building in 1999, and also the Darnley Mausoleum, but at that stage the school governors were very wary about having an outside presence within the school grounds and discussions came to nothing. Discussions re-opened in 2012, culminating in the completion of Landmark's restoration in autumn 2019.

[31] PRO, WORK 14/2751.





George Repton's record drawings of the Cobham Cowhouse, the floorplan giving details of the materials used. Note the gates to the Dairy and the hay rick. The example must have been admired for Repton to have returned to make such careful records as he made a name for himself as the designer of picturesque estate buildings.

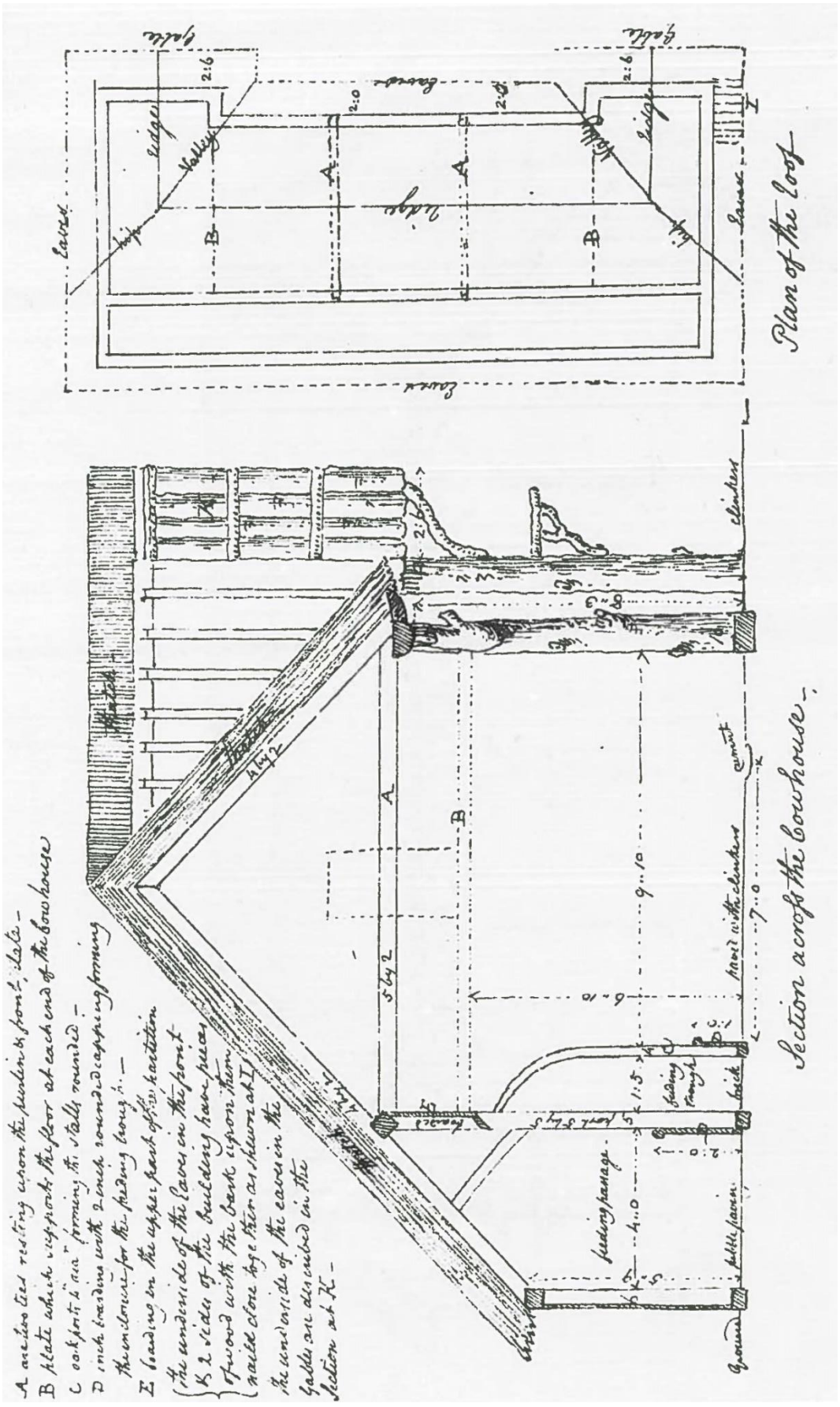
(*Pavilion Notebook*, 74 & 75)

The Cowhouse

It seems very likely that Humphry Repton's crucial role in the placing and form of the estate buildings extended as far as designing an otherwise very modest structure associated with the Dairy, the Cowhouse. A careful record of it survives, drawn by Repton's son George (1786-1858) who trained with architect John Nash and became the latter's chief assistant. Nash promoted the young George Repton as a specialist in cottages and estate buildings, and George created an album of careful pen and ink drawings known as his Pavilion Notebook, done on paper watermarked '1798.' Among these drawings are plan, elevation and section of the Cowhouse that allow a detailed picture of it to be built up.

This was built in 1798 just south-east of the Dairy, straddling the fence between the pleasure grounds and the surrounding deer park. This little milking parlour allowed up to nine choice cattle to be milked, and perhaps stalled, conveniently close to the Dairy, minimising the distance the Dairymaid had to carry her heavy milk pails. The improving 4th Earl had a keen eye for livestock and individual breeds are listed in the Accounts Books; more romantically, keeping cows so near the main house contributed to the fashionable pastoral idiom in the home park.

The Cowhouse had three bays. Four tree trunks supported an open colonnade, and at each end there was a shelter made of stave walls, with projecting gable ends that overlooked the deer park through suitably arched windows. The whole was thatched, and about 7.6 metres long, by 5.6 metres deep. The rough trunks that faced it would have merged with the paling that ran around the southern boundary of the pleasure garden, all contributing to the ancient air of the scene.



George Repton made a detailed record of the dimensions of the Cowhouse, which was probably designed by his father, Humphry.
(*Pavilion Notebook*, 76)

A pebble-paved feeding passage ran along the north side of the shed, that allowed the Dairymaid to hoist hay into a brick feeding trough running along the middle. Fodder came from a hay rick, placed north-west of the Cowhouse, so on the Hall side (the Cowhouse faced south). The Cowhouse's floor was made of clinkers, with a cement-lined gutter to drain the slurry along its length. This careful attention to the details of best (and indeed to long held, traditional) practice emphasises that for all their picturesque qualities, the Dairy and Cowhouse as an ensemble were model structures, of the kind that became increasingly fashionable through the patterns books of the 19th century.

There are several references to the building of the Cowhouse in the estate accounts. In 1798, sixty-eight oaks were felled for alterations to Cobham Hall and 'for building a new Cow House'.[32] Between April and June the same year, John Till the Carpenter was working at 'at the new Cow House near the Dairy'.[33] In November, Robert Hills was paid £12 11s 8d for '968 Bolts of Re[e]d' for thatching the new Cow House'. He was also paid for the actual thatching work, at 6s per square, to cover the roof of some fifteen square metres, with an additional sum for spun yarn and an allowance for beer.[34]

A photo of 1911 shows the byre transformed into a summerhouse, the pointed windows boarded up and doors cut into the stave walls beneath.[35] In the early 1960s, the western shelter and colonnade were still there, but only some of the eastern shelter. By 1984, only the south-eastern corner remained, and today, nothing is left of the Cowhouse, although the floor and foundations perhaps lie below the surface.

[32] U565/A17a, 25.
[33] U565/A17a, 48.
[34] U565/A17a, 49.
[35] *The Country Home,* May 1911, 65.

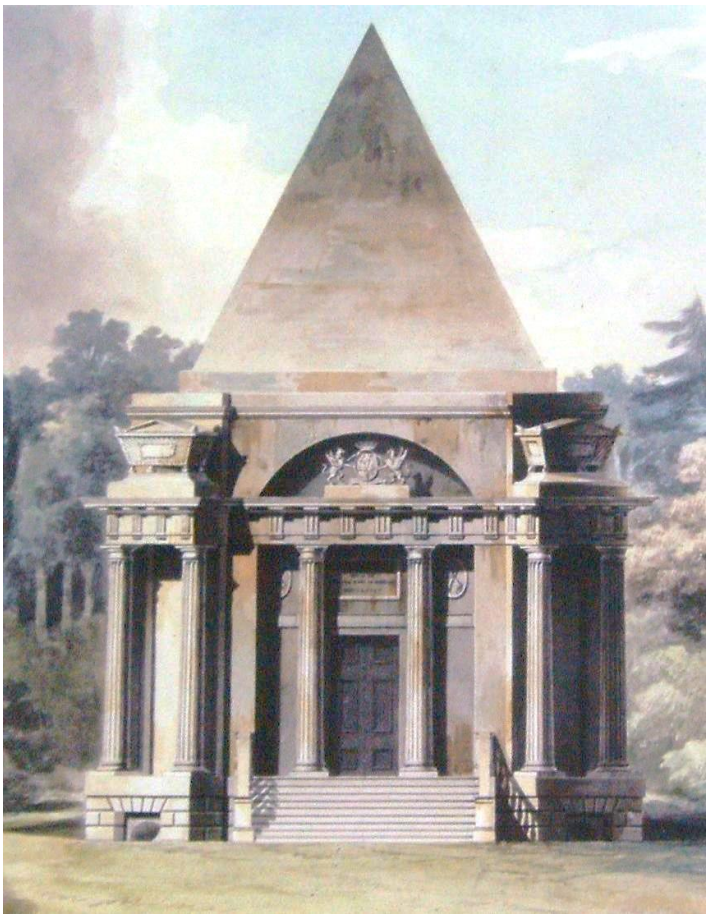
The Cowhouse in the 1960s (above) and all that was left in 1992. Nothing remains today.
(Pavilion Notebook, figs 99 & 100)

The Darnley, or Cobham, Mausoleum

Earls of Darnley were traditionally buried in Westminster Abbey, but by the late 18th century, their vault was full. When the 3rd Earl died in 1781, he left quite specific instructions in his will for a family mausoleum. Perhaps inspired by the mausoleum of Cestius that he saw on the Grand Tour, he stipulated that a square stone building with a 'prominent pyramid' and a dry moat be built on elevated ground within the estate. In 1783, James Wyatt, already a popular and prolific architect, was commissioned to fulfil this brief. The instruction must have come at least nominally from the widowed Lady Darnley since the 4th Earl had yet to enter his majority and was still at Eton. Wyatt's design was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783.

This monumental building lies in woodland a mile or so to the southeast of the Dairy. Constructed of Portland stone, it is indeed square, adorned by large fluted columns of the Roman Doric order on which are set elevated tomb chests at each corner. The whole is surmounted by a huge pyramid. A flight of steps leads to the entrance of a circular chapel inside the mausoleum, which has a coffered dome of plasterwork and columns of red Brocatello marble from Spain. The space was adorned with symbols of death – sarcophagi and upside-down torches - and the altar has the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. There was a black Purbeck 'marble' table (in fact a hard limestone that can be highly polished, much prized as a decorative stone). The basement was given over for interment, with 32 coffin shelves, or *loculi*. Eight of these are small, perhaps intended for children.

Wyatt had a heavy workload at the time (and was always a much better designer than he was a project manager), so in the event, the mausoleum's construction was overseen by George Dance the Younger. Wyatt's original design underwent slight modifications in the process. Completed in 1786, the mausoleum cost £9,000 (the equivalent of over £1 million today).



The Darnley Mausoleum, designed by James Wyatt (top) for the 3rd Earl but only completed after the Earl's death and never used for its intended purpose.

The building was subject to great damage by vandals and fire (left). The subject of a multi-million pound restoration in the 2000's by the Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme, today the building is in the care of the National Trust.

However, the mausoleum was never consecrated or used. The Darnleys fell out with the Bishop of Rochester; the 3rd Earl had treated the Cobham vicar poorly and the Bishop may not have liked what he saw as a non-Christian structure with what could be construed as Masonic symbolism. The 3rd Earl remains to this day in the grave in Cobham Church where he was interred, supposedly temporarily, in 1781.

Remarkable though it is architecturally, the mausoleum has therefore always stood empty. Once the hall was sold off in the 1950s and there was no longer an estate gamekeeper to keep an eye on it, the Grade I mausoleum became increasingly vulnerable to vandalism in its isolated setting. On 19th April 1972, a SPAB working party of 42 was assembled for 'the clean up of the Darnley mausoleum.' London members were advised by the then Secretary Monica Dance to catch the 9.49am down from Victoria (and the insurance for the task was supplied by none other than Ecclesiastical, who contributed so generously to Landmark's restoration of the Dairy). A second working party came the following month, in preparation of bricking up the mausoleum. But vandals burst through again, and it continued to deteriorate. There was talk of dismantling the mausoleum and re-erecting it elsewhere, even in the United States. On 5 November 1980 a huge bonfire of tyres and petrol canisters was lit in the crypt, and the chapel floor collapsed, its interior also ruined. The site continued to be the focus of mindless destruction and eventually became littered with some ninety car wrecks, burnt out after joy riding.

The mausoleum became a conservation *cause célèbre*. Landmark was aware of the building but judged that it would be hard to make it into a nice place to stay for a holiday without unduly compromising its rather melancholy original purpose. After a long legal tussle, permission was granted to developers to convert the mausoleum into a grand residence, but they then went bust.

The Darnley mausoleum today, after meticulous restoration. The domed central chamber is decorated as a funerary chapel. The vaulted basement holds numerous coffin shelves, never filled.

Finally, the Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme was set up in 2001 as a consortium between the National Trust, English Heritage, Cobham Hall, Natural England, the Woodland Trust, Kent County Council and Gravesham Council to develop a scheme to restore Cobham Park and its landscapes to Repton's orginal conception. Momentum gathered pace for the mausoleum's restoration as an extraordinary example of Georgian design, especially after it featured in the BBC TV's 'Restoration' series in 2003. Gravesham Borough Council found the £150,000 to buy the mausoleum and its surrounding woods from the liquidators of the developer, and eventually the National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded a massive grant of £5m to CAMS, with an additional £746,000 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, on condition that the building then passed to the National Trust. The restoration was completed in 2013, and it opened to the public April 2014. Today, the mausoleum itself is only occasionally open to the public from April to September, though its exterior can be viewed from Lodge Lane as it leads south-east through the woodland from the end of the Dairy's holloway. The ancient woodland has many 'veteran' trees (a tree considered of exceptional cultural, landscape or conservation value for its great age, size or condition).

Lodge Farm and the South Lodge

The lane across the fields that leads to Landmarkers' access to the Dairy is guarded by South Lodge, once part of Lodge Farm but now also owned by the National Trust. The farm itself is of ancient origin, once well set upon the old Cobham to Rochester road, and has taken various forms over the centuries. It probably monitored access onto the Cobham Hall estate in some way, until the 2nd Earl obtained a writ of closure for the road in the 1740s. Essentially a home farm where some of the estate workers were housed, all the usual activities of the time were carried on here in 1781 – a hop garden of 20,000 poles, an oasthouse and brewhouse, wheat and oat barns, granaries, a hog pound, as well as stabling for ten working oxen, and an octagonal dovecote probably dating to the 3rd Earl's time.

The 4th Earl of Darnley was a great improver of agriculture on the estate as well as reworking the hall and its grounds. He reorganised the agricultural activities on the site, absorbing some acreage into the Deer Park but making the rest more efficient, and building many more farm buildings for various functions. The main milking house was transferred from another estate farm to Lodge Farm, conveniently close to the Dairy whose couple of cows in its own byre would not have served the needs of the entire estate. Timber, very important for the estate finances, was now brought to Lodge Farm for finishing, and a saw-pit was created. The hop garden, however, moved to another farm and the oast house at Lodge Farm was converted into three cottages in 1802.

In improving his estate, the 4th Earl was also keen to define its boundaries, which he did by building a string of lodges and keepers' houses around its perimeter. Most of these have since been lost, but South Lodge (or more awkwardly originally Lodge Farm Lodge) survives. Unusually, there is little in the normally thorough estate accounts about this pretty *cottage orné.* It is roughly contemporary with the Dairy and probably built to a rough design by Wyatt, although no drawings exist. Its pointed arched windows, leaded lights, prominent chimney stack and gnarled timber porch became standard fare in the later pattern books for the picturesque cottage genre, but this is quite an early example. The cottage was ideally placed to monitor traffic, its

quaint appearance belying the need for organised and tightly patrolled surveillance of the vulnerable park and its lifestock from poachers and rustlers.

South Lodge survives, but otherwise most of the 4th Earl's farm buildings at the farm are long gone, burnt down as is the way of things or else cleared to make way for the more utilitarian concrete and steel barns and silos we erect today.

Cobham Dairy in 2013 before Landmark's restoration – a consolidated shell, but a scene of dereliction inside.

The Dairy before restoration by Landmark

The pragmatic 1983 stabilisation and weatherproofing led by John Sell had a least stabilised the Dairy as a weatherproof shell, as we began to plan its full restoration in 2014, and it had escaped the attentions of the vandals since then, being within the school grounds. The school authorities had kept vegetation back, and the building continued to play its role in the landscape, albeit looking very different from Wyatt's intention. The roof had been stripped and entirely renewed in modern slates; new window frames had been put in to take fixed boards. Any cladding slates that could be salvaged had been taken away and stored in the hope of an eventual solution. The cladding on the sheltered and less vandal-accessible west elevation, which was still sound despite the decades of neglect, was left in situ.

Inside, we found a scene of utter desolation behind the boarded-up windows. In the few places that plaster survived, scraps hung by whisker; where plaster had fallen, lathes peeled away as iron nails rusted away. The central, font-like pan stand and marble shelf had gone from the main chamber, whose floor was fragmented, with many pieces missing.

Despite the widespread decay, enough evidence survived for us to be confident of achieving a full restoration.

Restoration of Cobham Dairy

The planning of the Dairy's restoration took an unusually long time. As well as wayleaves to bring in electricity and water from the school and neighbouring farmland respectively, there was a lease to be negotiated with the National Trust for access along the Lodge Lane (this in itself took years). As no site traffic was permitted along this track, we were reliant on the school's goodwill for access down the side of the south lawn, and subject to safeguarding procedures for the pupils. Planning consents also took an unusually long time to come through, and as the estate was once the site of a Roman villa, any service trenches were subject to an archaeological watching brief. Tree works had to be planned outside the nesting season, and we were successively ambushed by the presence of bats and badgers, whose roosts in the building and wandering setts along the holloway respectively meant further, inevitable delays. Landmarker access down the ancient holloway and the creation of a turning circle was one of the last tasks undertaken right at the end of the project, the badgers by now having happily moved on.

After patiently enduring all these external delays, and with materials long since ordered and delivered, our contractors, Colman Building Contractors of Canterbury, finally moved on site in October 2018, where they would be for the next 12 months. Working in such a tiny building and in such a setting brings its own challenges, requiring careful scheduling of the various trades involved. A temporary track had to be rolled out along the lawn approach as it became clear that the approach became liquid mud in wet weather.

There was no reason to replace the 1980s slate roof, but the flat copper roofs above the cloisters did need replacing (now with mineral felt), as did much of the solid wood parapet that runs at eaves level. The Portland stone copings on the chimney also had to be replaced, to the form specified by Wyatt in his drawings. New wrought iron finials were made for each of the pyramidal corner roofs.

The orginal slate cladding on the west gable was still sound, and skilfully shaped fragments also remained in some of the cloister openings. There were enough usable salvaged slates for the upper, clerestory level.

The brickwork, left exposed for so many decades when it was built to be covered, was not in good condition. There was a lot of repointing to be done and the upper walls of the north and south elevations were found to be bulging and had to be taken down and rebuilt. A big decision at the outset was whether we could reinstate the slate cladding from scratch, replicating a long lost technique. Initially, reinstatement wasn't a given. We were worried about supply of suitable slate and about cost and maintenance: it was clearly going to demand time and skill to fix the slates, especially around the pointed openings. But we knew we really had to reinstate Wyatt's cladding. Heartened too by its success at Soho House, we set out to find out as much as we could about it from the evidence on site, commissioning specialist reports on the cladding.

It turned out that the slates came from both Penrhyn and Ffestiniog, the natural variation in colour between these sources not presenting Wyatt with a problem because they were painted. The slates were found to be bedded on slate slips with a mastic made of lead white and whiting bound with linseed oil. This bedding enabled the external surface to be made plumb true. The slates were carefully nailed into the joints of the underlying brickwork with large wrought iron nails, by now corroding.

Once we had gathered the slates in from the ruinous shed in the walled garden where they had been stored, and laid them all out to check what we had, we set about re-cladding the Dairy. We had enough salvaged tiles for the upper clerestory level; the slate on the main ground floor is all new, and all from Ffestiniog. The slates sit on slate slips just as at Soho House. We knew we would struggle to replicate the 18th-century putty recipe of white lead, lime and linseed oil, not least since white lead is no longer a permitted ingredient, so lime mortar was used rather than oil-bound putty to ensure levelling out.

Repairing the slate cladding. A lime mortar bedding allowed a flush surface to be achieved, before fixing the slates with stainless steel nails into the brickwork joints – an exacting task, especially around the openings.

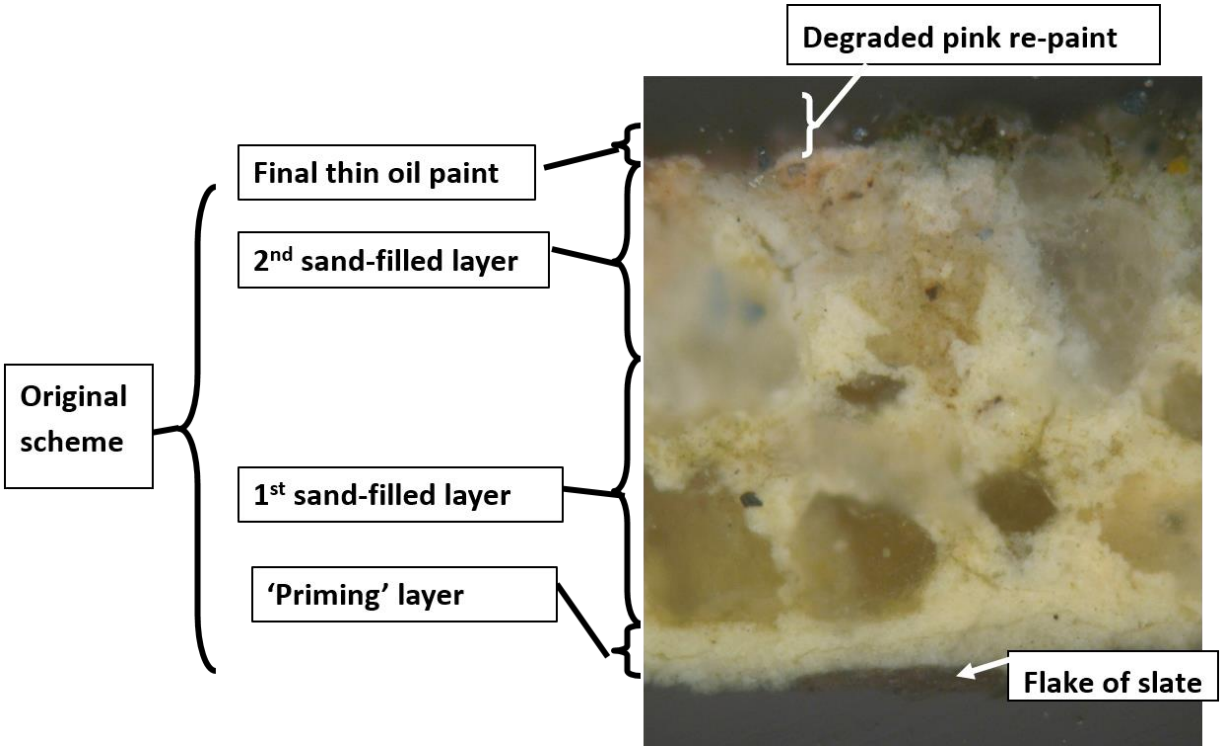
Stainless steel fixings were used in place of rust-prone wrought iron nails, and the fixing holes have been filled with polyester resin which we know will not shrink, but which is the modern equivalent of Wyatt's putty fillling. The joints between the slates, specified to be no more than 2mm wide, have all been pointed in lime putty.

A further problem to be resolved was an internal iron strap set right round the building during the 1980s for added stability. This had to be removed if the internal plaster was to be replaced. On the advice of the structural engineer, metal rods were instead bedded into the joints of the brickwork, for additional reinforcement.

Paint analysis told us that the Dairy had been painted inside and out, on cladding and joinery alike, in a stone-coloured, sanded paint. After various trials we concluded that there was little difference in appearance whether silver sand was mixed into, or blown onto, the paint, so we have mixed it in 3:1 paint:sand by volume, which will also make replication easier for maintenance. On the exterior, three coats of Keim Soldalit paint were applied across all elements. By scoring the slate joints after the second coat, the building once again reads as ashlar. Internally, a matching distemper has been used, to complete the illusion of an entirely stone building.

When the floors were taken up to install the underfloor heating, a brick culvert was discovered running north from the centre of the main chamber for carrying away the waste from the Dairy pot stand. Given the decorative nature of the floor, we felt that registering its footprint on the top surface would not be appropriate and that it had to be sacrificed for the underfloor heating installation, which has been laid on foamed glass insulation. The shallow brick vault discovered beneath the Dairymaid's bedroom was in danger of collapse, and so it was an easier decision simply to backfill it after seeking permission and recording. The original Portland stone floor was then carefully re-laid in the bedroom.

The north and south clerestory walls were found to be bulging and had to be taken down and rebuilt. Metal ties have been concealed between the brick courses for added strength.



Example of the paint analysis of the 18th-century sanded paint applied to the slate cladding

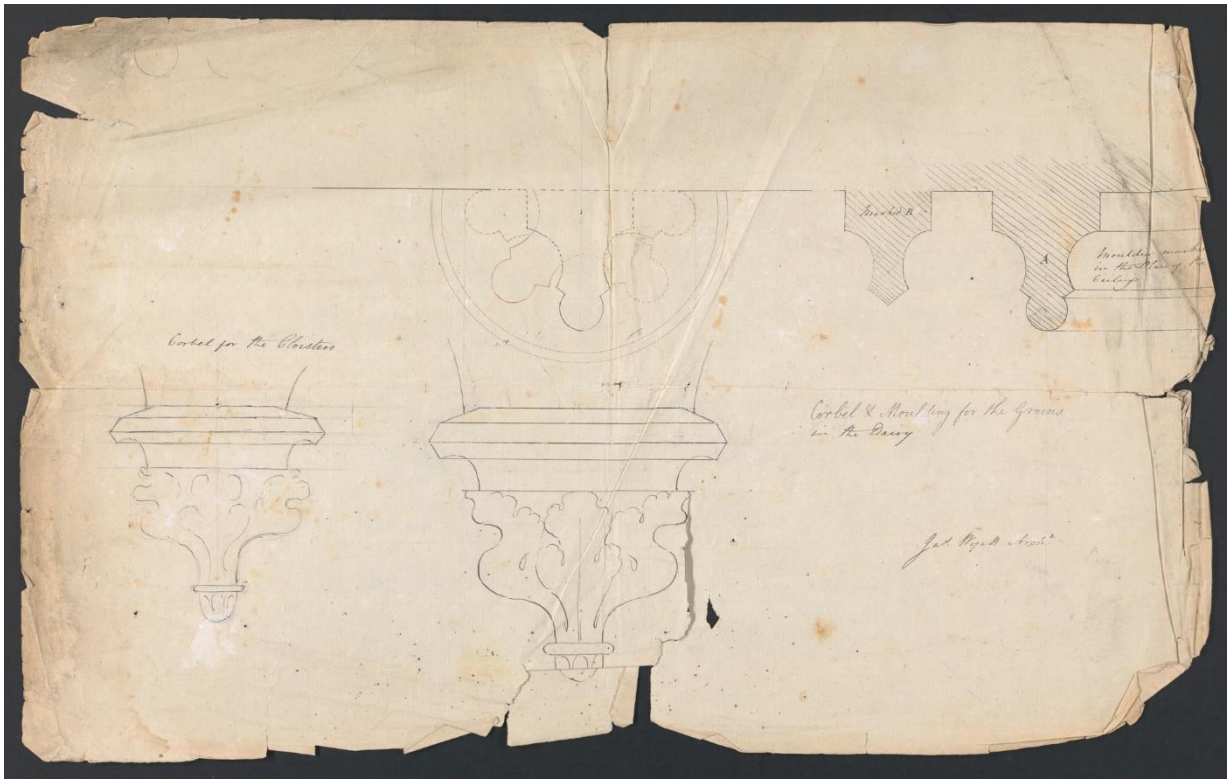
Laying out the salvaged floor in the main chamber, removed to install the underfloor heating. It's unclear whether this was laid in the late 18th- or 19th-century; either way, it is another fine feature of the building.

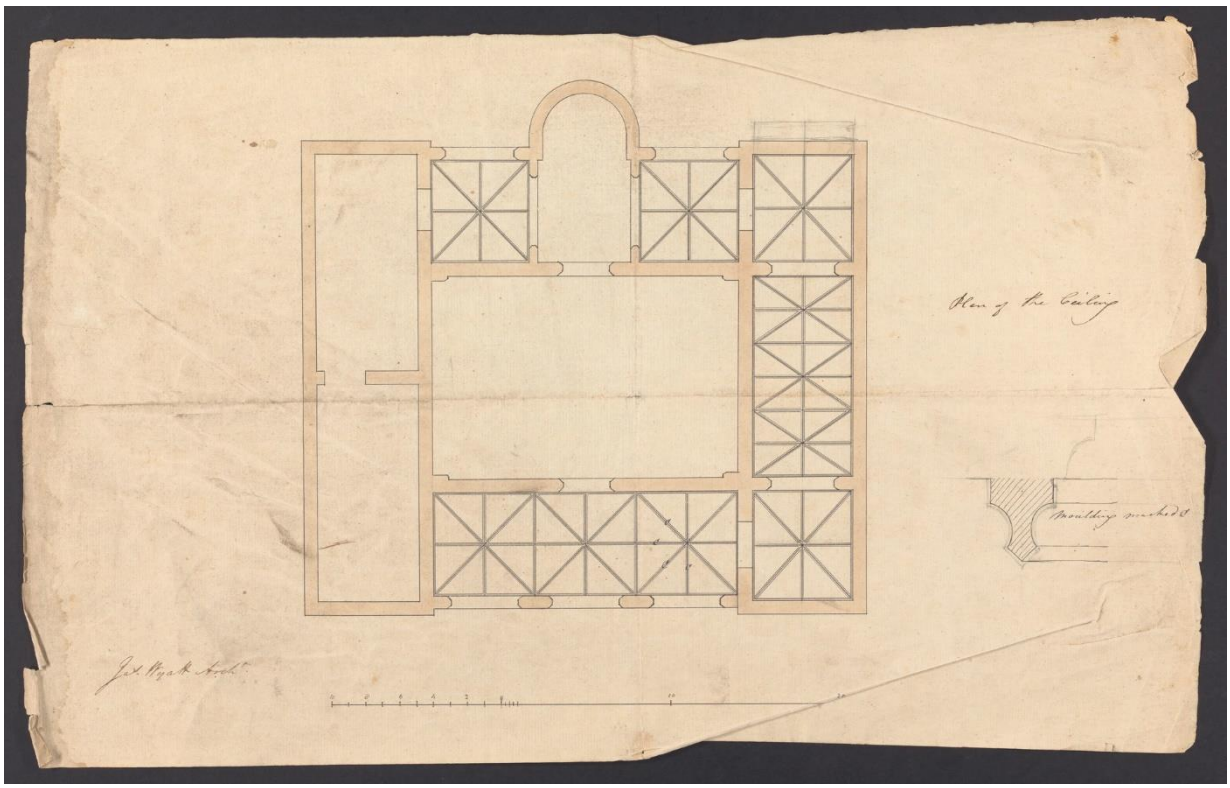
Stone analysis revealed that the existing floor we found in the central chamber (apparently dating to the late 19th century) was made of Portland stone paviours threaded with red Cumbrian sandstone slips. The original Cumbrian quarry had closed but we were able to find a good match to piece in the missing tiles.

Re-making the window frames was an exacting task that took much discussion, not least as some are opening and some fixed, but all needed to keep the same frame dimensions whether open or closed. The saddle bars too required careful placing.

In March 2019, master plasterer Philip Gaches and his two apprentices (and sons) Will and Jude moved on site, together with specialist moulder, Anna Castilla Vila, who hailed from Barcelona. Colman's joinery subcontractors had already made the complicated framing for the quadripartite vaulting in the main chamber according to Wyatt's plans (the main chamber ceiling was inevitably lost during the 1980s re-roofing, if indeed it had not already fallen in). This was a highly skilled task, with so many curved elements to be assembled at precisely the right angles. The framing in the cloisters was similarly repaired or recreated as necessary in the same way.

Philip would later say that it was an unusual 'treat' for him to be able to recreate an entire groined ceiling for the main chamber, his services being more typically sought for conservation and repair work. Philip's team's first task was to re-lathe throughout, in riven chestnut lathes for better key and strength. This done, they could turn to plastering the walls and vaults, in a mix of 2½ parts well-graded fine sand (<2mm) to one part non-hydraulic lime for the scratch and float coats, finished with 1:1 silversand and lime putty for the top coat.



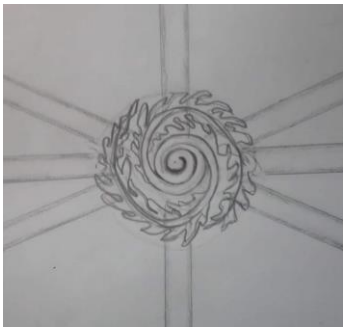


Wyatt's drawings set out detailed instructions for the plasterers, including the corbel design (top) and profiles for the ribs, including which profile was to be used where (bottom right, the moulding for the cloisters).
Yale Center for British Art

Preparing the framing for the plaster was an exacting task for the carpenters. The vaulted ceiling in the main chamber had to be completely recreated (below), In the cloisters (above), patching in around surviving fabric was a delicate task of a different order.

Creating the plaster ribs: the patterns for the profile; string is used to reinforce the line; all ceilings and walls had to be re-lathed, and Anna Castilla Vila working on the ribs in the south cloister (today's kitchen, the end doorway boarded up for protection during the works).

Master plasterer Philip Gaches and Anna Castilla Vila discussing their approach on site. Philip's sons and apprentices, Jude and Will Gaches, also worked on site (below). Gaches are now a three generation firm.



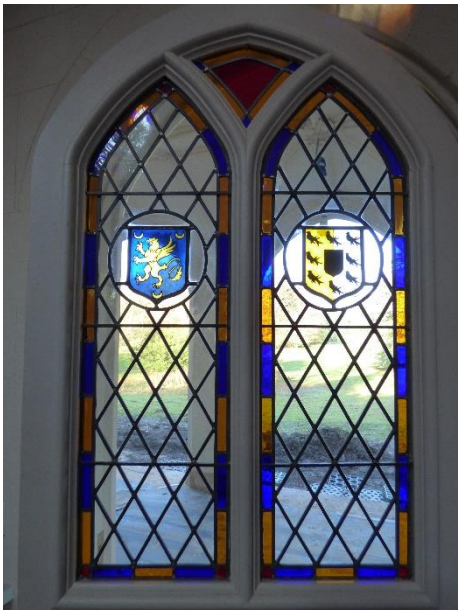
Anna based her designs for the ceiling bosses on a single survivor and also on Bernasconi's 18th-century work for Wyatt in Cobham Hall. Each element was hand modelled and then carefully fixed in place.

The moulding of the ribs was originally done in gypsum, lime putty and chalk but, as 18th-century gypsum was different from today's, 100% gypsum is now the recommended mix. Wyatt's designs helpfully provided not only two profiles for the ribs, but also specified which should be used in the various parts of the building. A wooden 'horse' is used to run the profile of the plaster ribs, along a guiding piece of twine at their core for added resilience in the running. Continual runs are made, with constant minor modest adjustments by hand until a perfect run is achieved. The wooden 'horse' used to profile the ribs cannot be run all the way to their convergence, so the 'star' where the ribs converge has to be modelled by hand.

For the modelling work, very well-haired lime plaster was used, for a 'very plastic plaster' in Anna's words. The few battered examples of corbels from which the ceiling ribs spring that survived in the cloisters were clearly skilled work, originally modelled in situ rather than cast. They seemed to represented small vine or oak leaves trailing around a twig and three stems. Wyatt's design drawings were not helpful here, since he drew acanthus leaves, and these are not. These battered corbels were carefully consolidated and retained, as were all fragments of original plaster that were salvageable.

Anna and Philip also thought hard about the design of the bosses to be reinstated, since only one survived and there was no documentary evidence for them. However, on visiting the dining room in Cobham Hall, also by Wyatt and attributed to Francis Bernasconi, similar entwined oak leaf clusters and roses were apparent. These and the lone survivor formed Anna's model, adding in a few of her own design too. A cast was taken of the surviving boss, and individual elements cast from the mould before being individually placed and moulded by hand, to keep the 'free form' feel apparent in the 18th-century craftsmen's work.

The marble for the shelf that runs around the main chamber is again Carrara as it was originally, the dimensions known from Wyatt's designs and its height confirmed by the mark left on the wall by the original.



John Corley working on the glass for the windows in his Deal studio: scoring and snapping the lozenges for the cames, and painting the coats of arms for the front door.

The cast iron supports also had to be carefully sourced, and today's foundry catalogues yielded nothing quite right in height or form to match either Wyatt's drawing or an early photo. In the end, Landmark's furnishing manager John Evetts briefed his in-house joiner Mark Smitten to create a mock-up of the clustered stems in wood, that were then cast. Mark also made the kitchen. We had just enough intact floor slabs salvaged from the cloisters to cover its floor. The kitchen windows, which of course are our insertion, are deliberately simpler than those in primary positions.

We knew from oral memories as well as the documentary evidence that the Dairy's leaded windows were originally edged by red, blue and yellow slips of glass. This was a common enough treatment in other Georgian follies and model buildings, and was used in the glass screen Wyatt was installing in the entrance hall to Cobham Hall, at the same time as he was building the Dairy.

However, we also needed painted armorial bearings for the glass entrance doors, to evoke those done by Mr Warren in 1798. The 4th Earl's Darnley arms were known – but there was confusion about the correct ones for his Countess, and we were keen to include these too, given that dairies were such feminine spaces. This proved trickier: no one could be sure which of the many Darnley arms in the Hall were the 4th Countess's. We were struggling with the clock ticking for the glass's creation – and finally consulted the College of Arms. Enter the dashingly named herald, Blue Poursuivant, who saved us from confusing the 1st and 4th Countess's arms. The Herald also told us that the arms the Brownlows were using in the 1790s were not in fact granted to them until 1840, 50 years after the Dairy was built. But such informal adoption was common at the time, so, he felt, it was legitimate for us to use them in the Dairy. The handmade coloured glass has been set into the carefully remade window frames and cames by the John Corley Studio in Deal, to wonderful effect when the sun shines upon them.

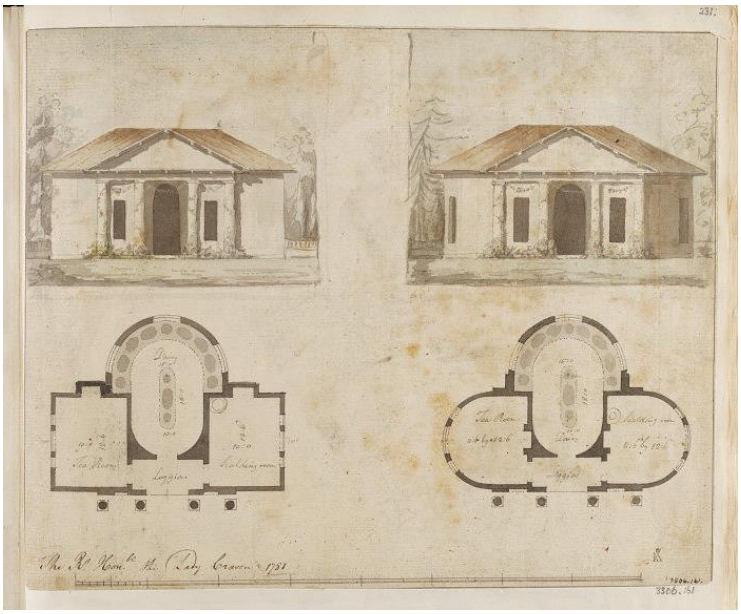
For the decorative coats of arms, John used 'flashed glass' which is glass dipped as it is blown and then flattened to produce a sheet of two colours. By scraping or burning off the top layer according to the design, the lower colour is revealed, before the final details are carefully painted on. According to convention, when viewed from the

inside, the Earl's arms are set on the left, and his Countess's on the right, completing the conceit of the model Dairy masquerading as a little medieval chapel.

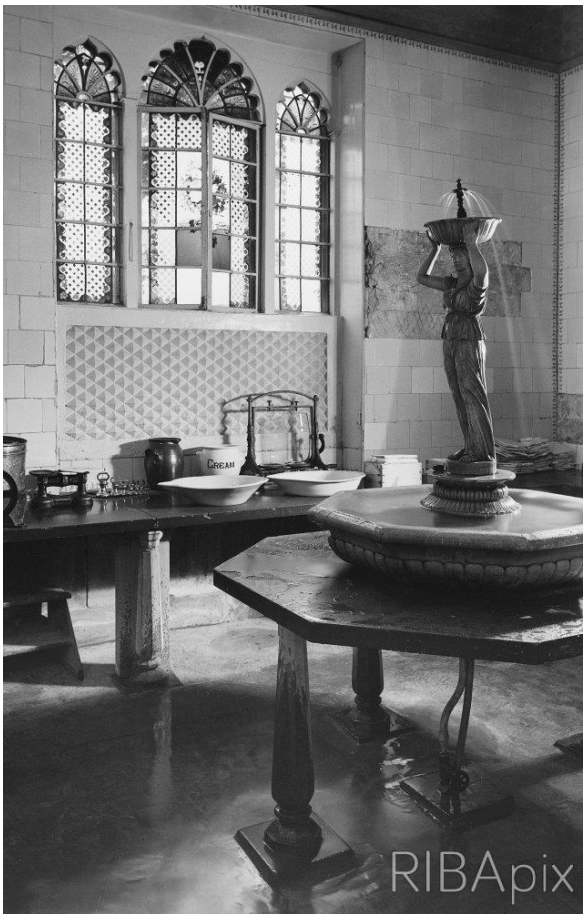
The rich colours of the stained glass breathes instant magic into the finished building, when the shadows of the leaded lights and filtered sunlight move across the plastered walls in a rich tapestry of light. Even if butter is no longer churned here, Elizabeth, 4th Countess of Darnley's enchanting pleasure Dairy is once more fit for polite company and the pleasure of good conversation.

Some examples of other pleasure dairies

The Milk Cellar at Paleis Het Loo, created for Mary II before she took the throne in England in 1689. She later created a dairy at Hampton Court (since lost).



John Soane's design for a dairy for Lady Craven in 1781 mimics an ancient temple. Lady Craven had a long-standing interest in dairies and later lived in France, where her bucolic pleasure Dairy possibly inspired Marie-Antoinette to build her own at Versailles.



The Dairy at Sezincote, Glos, designed by Samuel Cockerell c.1805, also presented like a chapel, perhaps even more convincingly than at Cobham. It was set in another Humphry Repton landscape.

The little thatched dairy at Endsleigh in Devon, also in Landmark's care there alongside Pond Cottage and Swiss Cottage, has an exceptionally well-preserved interior. It was built for Georgiana, Duchess of Bedford, by Jeffry Wyatville in 1805 in yet another collaboration with Repton.

Pond Cottage also incorporates a former cow byre alongside the accommodation for the Dairymaid.

Pleasure dairies came in every style. Clockwise from top: Belvoir Dairy, *c.*1810, probably designed by James Wyatt; the Tower of the Winds at Shugborough, 1803 by James Stuart, altered by Samuel Wyatt, and the Chinese Dairy at Woburn, by Henry Holland, 1787. The porch was added later by James Wyatt.

Charles Dickens' chalet

Dickens knew Cobham village well, although the story he circulated, that the long avenue of limes leading to the Hall from the village approach was only used to carry away dead lords of Cobham Hall, had no foundation. He owned a Swiss Chalet that he used as a retreat for writing at Gad's Hill Place, his last home. The chalet was a Christmas gift from a French actor friend, Charles Fechter, and arrived in 58 packing cases at Higham railway station on Christmas Eve 1864. With the eventual help of the stage carpenter of the Lyceum Theatre in London, the chalet was erected on land Dickens owned across the road from his house on Gad's Hill. The chalet was sited for views of the river Thames in the distance, and Dickens had a telescope to watch passing boats. Dickens was writing the final chapter of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in the chalet on 9 June 1870, the day he collapsed and died of a stroke on his way home. After Dickens' death, the chalet passed to his eldest son, then to his sister-in-law, and thereafter to the 9th Earl of Darnley, who had it erected in Cobham Park. Here it stayed until 1961, when the 10th Earl sold it for a nominal sum to the Rochester branch of the Dickens Fellowship. At the time of writing, the chalet is to be found is in the garden of Eastgate House in Rochester. It is in a fragile condition and awaits its own restoration.

COBHAM HALL, KENT—I

THE PROPERTY OF THE WESTWOOD EDUCATIONAL TRUST

By JOHN CORNFORTH

In 1747, the mainly Elizabethan and Restoration house passed to the 3rd Earl of Darnley, who carried out considerable alterations between 1766 and his death in 1781. They are the main theme of this series of articles, but that is prefaced by some account of the house that he inherited.

1—COBHAM HALL FROM THE WEST. The centre block of the Elizabethan house was completed in the 1660s, then heightened in the late 1760s and slightly altered in the early 19th century

WHAT is probably the most enthusiastic description of Cobham in its heyday was written by a Polish visitor, Prince Pückler-Muskau, who went to stay with the 4th Earl of Darnley, who had devoted a great part of his life to the embellishment of the great 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century house. Despite sleeping in a chintz bed "so enormously large that I lay like an icicle in it", the Prince found "the vie de château" "without any question, the most agreeable side of English life; for there is great freedom, and a banishment of most of the wearisome ceremonies which, with us, tire the host and guest". And he found his host and hostess "among the most enlightened, unpretending, and therefore most agreable, of the people of rank here".

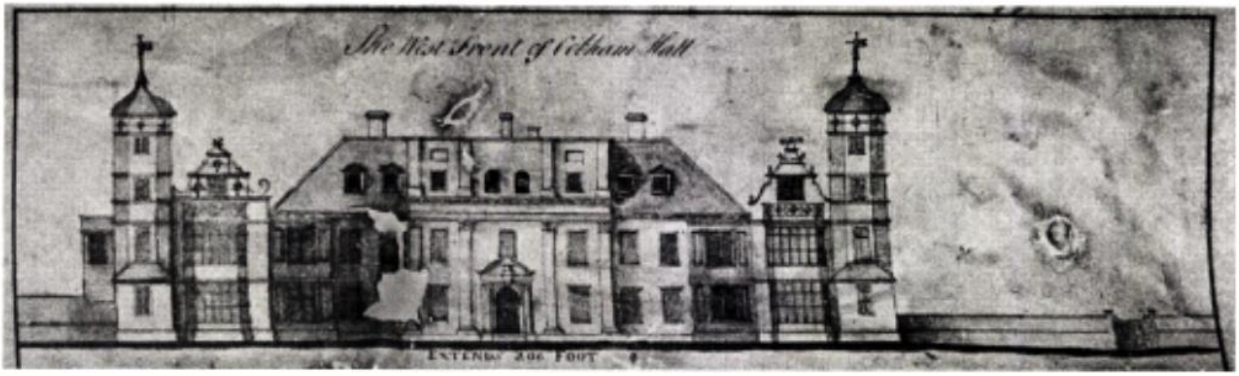
Lord Darnley had inherited at the age of 14 in 1781, and even as a schoolboy had taken an active interest in his father's schemes for the house. However, he so overshadowed his father as a collector and improver that the latter has never really had the credit for what he did, even though it forms one of the principal chapters in Cobham's building history. But, like everything there, it is a complicated story with a number of question marks; and it is necessary to go back to the earlier history of the house, particularly in the early days of the Restoration when it belonged to Charles Stuart, 6th and last Duke of Lennox.

It fell to the 6th Duke to try to complete the rebuilding of the house begun in 1584 by William Brooke, 10th Lord Cobham, whose de Cobham forbears had held the property since the reign of King John. Lord Cobham started with the south wing, some of whose rainwater hoppers are dated 1587, a logical three years later than the date on the south porch; 1595 appears on the hoppers of the north wing. The famous porch (Fig 4), which now provides the central feature of the south elevation of the north wing but was surely intended as the central feature of the main block, is dated 1594, and that suggests that Lord Cobham tackled the hall range after the south wing. Other early dates appear on the overmantel to the chimneypiece now in the entrance hall but brought from the south wing by the 4th Earl of Darnley (1587) and on the larger of the two chimneypieces in the gallery (1599). The leading of the cupolas followed in 1601, and the same year Giles de Witt, who probably did considerably more work on the house, contracted to make two chimneypieces; but when the 11th Lord Cobham's property was confiscated at the time of his attainder in 1603 the house was still not finished.

2—THE CENTRE OF THE WEST FRONT. Part of Peter Mills's work of the early 1660s

In 1612, James I granted it to his cousin, Ludovic Stuart, 2nd Duke of Lennox and also Duke of Richmond, but he did not get complete possession until a few months before he died in 1624; and he was succeeded first by his brother, Esmé, who died within the year, and then by Duke Esmé's eldest son, James. Duke James came of age in 1633 and in the following years spent considerable sums on extending the park, as can be seen on a survey of 1641 among the Darnley papers in the Kent Archives Office, as if preparing the way for some Jonesian scheme worthy of one of the King's confidants.

However, Cobham was occupied right at the beginning of the Civil War, and the Duke, given his close connection with the royal cause, cannot seriously have considered Webb's ambitious design of 1648. Then he died in 1655 at the age of 42, again to be succeeded by a minor,



3—THE WEST FRONT. The vignette from Sloane's survey of 1758 is a less flattering record than the plate in *Vitruvius Britannicus*

his son Esmé, who died in 1660. Three of Duke James's brothers had been killed in the Civil War and so the heir was his nephew, Charles, who became the 6th and, as it turned out, last Duke of Lennox.

It was Duke Charles who was responsible for the famous west front (Figs 2 and 3) of the centre block for so long attributed to Inigo Jones and now proved by Howard Colvin to have been designed by Peter Mills (see *The Country Seat*, edited by H.M. Colvin and John Harris). In fact, there is rather more work of the 6th Duke's period than is often realised, but again, because he died suddenly at the age of 33 in 1672 at a time when building was going on, it seems likely that his schemes were never finished. Nor, of course, do we know what the 10th Lord Cobham had done to the centre block. Its layout and the existence of what appear to be Elizabethan features in the original outside east wall to the south of the Gilt Hall and the elements of refacing apparent in the west wall suggest that the 6th Duke and Mills were bound by what they found.

4—THE PORCH ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE NORTH WING. Dated 1594, it was probably re-erected in the early 1660s and altered in the late 1760s

It was impossible for them to make the centre block into a conventional Charles II double-pile plan, but there is some evidence to show that Duke Charles achieved, or at least intended to achieve, a great apartment in the north wing. The centre door in the west front led into a vestibule, subsequently remodelled for the 4th Earl by James Wyatt in the early 1790s, and to the north of that lies the Gilt Hall, presumably the successor to the Elizabethan or even earlier Great Hall. That retains the greater part of Duke Charles's ceiling but with embellishments of the 3rd Earl's time (Fig 8). North again lies the Stone Staircase, whose origin is disguised by the 4th Earl's Gothick screen and ceiling: the panelled dado (Fig 10) is ornamented with garlands suspended from ducal coronets, but instead of a carved and pierced balustrade of the kind found at Thorpe and in several Charles II houses it is of wrought iron. Although there has been a good deal of meddling with it—there is, for instance, a payment to a smith in 1772 for ironwork in raising the great staircase—the generous scale, the bold pattern of the

5—A PROPOSAL FOR THE TREATMENT OF THAT WING. One of the designs that are apparently by George Shakespear, about 1770

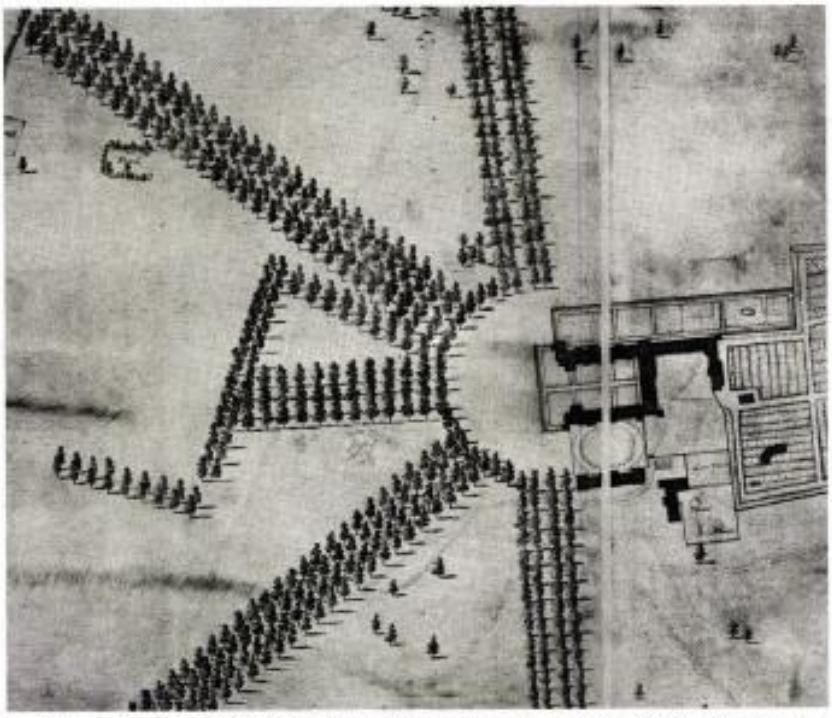
ironwork and the woodwork including the doorcases at the top of the stairs must be part of Duke Charles's grand approach to the great apartment in the north wing, with two or three rooms of that apartment now thrown into the Picture Gallery preceding the end room of the wing, called Queen Elizabeth's Room since the 4th Earl put up a spurious Elizabethan ceiling in 1817.

The Gallery was perfunctorily treated by the 4th Earl, and the two Elizabethan chimneypieces are uneasy together, but on the lower floor the first three bays of the north wing are occupied by the dining room (Fig 6). That is lined with wainscot of most unusual design enriched with borders of typical early-Restoration carved scrollwork again incorporating a ducal coronet; and the rainwater hopper outside is dated 1662. The chimneypiece purports to be entirely Elizabethan, but are the curious "vases" Restoration fantasy? It is possible, because it must have been Duke Charles and Mills who moved the porch from the west front to the north wing; and also the fireplace in the entrance hall has a bolection moulding beneath the 1587 overmantel and looks to me like a skilful Restoration-period piece of antiquarianism. The marble buffets must be late-17th- or early-18th-century and the ceiling is 19th-century, as is the graining, picking out and gilding of the wainscot.

6—THE DINING ROOM. This shows the wainscot enriched with borders of typical early Restoration carved scrollwork

The other interesting feature of Duke Charles's time is the balustrade of the Oak Staircase in the south wing (Fig 9). It has been altered and, indeed, it is probably not *in situ*, but there is a drawing showing that the 3rd Earl thought of using it where it is, and the ceiling is of his time. The balusters are of an unusual pattern that recall the individuality of the woodwork at Thorpe Hall, Mills's chef d'oeuvre.

The Restoration front is widely known through the *Vitruvius Britannicus* engraving, which turns out to be a careful essay in improvement by Campbell to make it more Jonesian. What is likely to be a much truer if less flattering record appears as a vignette on the huge survey of Cobham done by Sloane in 1758 (Fig 3). That shows a much less orthodox treatment of the raised attic and also projections from the wings and different treatments for the two end gables of the wings. The projections appear on Sloane's block plan (Fig 7) and were perhaps dressing rooms or closets for the principal apartments. They were taken down by the 3rd Earl, and one proposal for the treatment of the south elevation of the north wing (Fig 5), among the drawings now in the Yale Center for British Art, is different in several details from what exists today. On the other hand, it has to be remembered that the 3rd Earl rebuilt the bay windows at the ends of both wings and the gables over them in the Classical style, and the 4th Earl then rebuilt them again in the Elizabethan manner.



7—A DETAIL OF SLOANE'S PLAN. This shows the layout of the avenues, the additions of the wings seen in Figure 3 removed by the 3rd Earl, and the stables to the south of the house

It is curious the way Campbell shows only the centre block of the house with an incomplete and so inaccurate plan, and in conversation John Harris made the suggestion that it might have been an idea for reducing the house in the second decade of the 18th century. That is an interesting idea, because Cobham went through a chequered period between the 6th Duke's death in 1672 and the 2nd Earl of Darnley's achievement of control over the property about 1733.

The 6th Duke died heavily in debt, leaving his property to his sister, subject to the life interest of his third wife, Frances, La Belle Stuart. The Duchess soon sold her interest to her sister-in-law's husband, Lord O'Brien, but four years after his death in 1678, their son, a minor, was drowned; his widow then remarried, and again her husband, Sir Joseph Williamson, bought out her interest, probably to clear the debts, but when he died he did not leave all her property back to her.

Quite apart from his own rather dubious kin, his wife's were hardly a good bet. In 1688, the last surviving child had eloped with Lord Cornbury, and although, when she died in 1706, she left a son, he died in 1713. Thus Cobham went to the Cornbury's daughter, Theodosia, who the same year married John Bligh, an Anglo-Irish landowner who was subsequently created Earl of Darnley. However, some of Sir Joseph Williamson's kin were still at Cobham, and the widow was only dislodged by the 2nd Earl.

That is not the kind of history that suggests either the incentive or the means to improve, and in 1723 Lord Harley wrote of "the great house having the face of great ruin approaching". The 2nd Earl was a bachelor who died in 1747, and his brother, the 3rd Earl, did not marry until 1766. The traditional story is that the 3rd Earl did not start work on the house until after that. However, 1757 appears on one rainwater head on the south front, and the upper room behind it has a Rococo chimneypiece of that date.

Fifty years of debt and broken succession do not lead one to expect park planting, but surveys of 1719, 1749 and 1758 all show a formal layout of avenues leading away from the west front. Could they have been planted as early as Duke Charles's time? Another curious detail is a stables block facing the south wing, as if that rather than the west front became the entrance front in the early 18th century. Certainly, the gabled stables survived into the 3rd Earl's time, because they appear in a print recording alterations to the west front in 1770.

By mid-18th-century standards Cobham must have been an inconvenient house, very spread out and lacking in corridors. Consequently, when the 3rd Earl married Mary Stoyte, the daughter of a Dublin banker, there must have been both the means and the incentive to modernise the house. The family continued to live mostly in the south wing, and a corridor was contrived on its first floor, enabling all the bedrooms to face south. An extra storey was added to the centre block, but—even more important—a corridor was built out behind the Gilt Hall so that there was an alternative way through to the north wing. In addition, a great deal of refitting, redecoration and refurbishing was done.

8—THE CEILING OF THE GILT HALL. The plasterwork was ready for painting in 1672; and some additional ornament was added about 1770

In the past, there has been some confusion about the respective rôles of William Chambers, James Wyatt and George Shakespear in all this, and it is not easy to sort out now because the Darnley papers in the Kent Archives Office are not yet all catalogued, some things have got separated from them, and the 3rd Earl's bank account at Coutts Bank is not available at present. Among the papers that have got away are a group of architectural drawings that used to be at the Cambridge University School of Architecture and are now part of the Paul Mellon collection in the Yale Center for British Art. However, with the aid of an account book of the 3rd Earl, it is at least possible to attempt an analysis of what happened, and that provides the theme of the remaining pair of articles of this series.

Illustrations: 1,2,4,6,8-10, Jonathan M. Gibson; 3 and 7, Kent Archives Office; 5, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

9—A DETAIL OF THE STONE STAIRCASE. A section of the Restoration woodwork

(*Right*) 10—THE OAK STAIRCASE. The balustrade dates from the 6th Duke's time but it is not *in situ*

COBHAM HALL, KENT—II

THE PROPERTY OF THE WESTWOOD EDUCATIONAL TRUST

By JOHN CORNFORTH

This article is mainly devoted to the Gilt Hall and the stages by which it reached its present appearance, combining Caroline and neo-Classical elements.

IF a Pole, Prince Puckler-Muskau, wrote the most sympathetic account of Cobham in the early 19th century, one of the most interesting dating from the 18th century is in a letter from Hugh Howard to his brother Ralph, written when he had gone to Cobham for the 3rd Earl of Darnley's funeral in 1781: "As this place is to ye full as retired as Shelton is and is neither enlivened by a River or the distant roaring of the sea and is hidden in the wilds of Kent, you cannot expect any news from it. The house might well serve as a college of 300 monks . . . it has the air of centuries. You see the swiftness of squirrels running up the trees and springing from Tree to Tree along a whole Stately Row, the flight of woodpeckers that are a sort of winged Squirrel and at night you hear the solemn hooting of owls, which as well as Batts are innumerable. The Park in many places has the appearance of a Park worn out with age. There are hundreds of Trees of immense girth; seemingly worn with years, hollow and rotten within and without, covered with huge warts and excrescences."

Is it possible to detect an Anglo-Irish as opposed to a purely English note in that letter? I hope that it is, because even if the 3rd Earl and his wife remain shadowy, and so probably quite unfairly dull, personalities, the letters of his sisters (including the Lady Bangor whose views on architecture forced her husband to build Castle Ward, in Co. Down, Classical on one side and Gothick on the other) and of the circle of landowners in Ireland in which they moved have all the exuberance, exaggeration and laughter that is associated with it. Indeed, they give an impression of how strongly Anglo-Irish the Blighs remained despite spending most of their time in England: after all, it was their estates in Meath that underpinned Cobham. Perhaps Cobham still has a little of the character of an Irish country house: splendid for an enormous party but not very practical for daily life, although, much to one's surprise, the same Hugh Howard told Lady Darnley: "I do not know of so large a house, a warmer (with good fires) than Cobham Hall."

1—THE GILT HALL. The neo-Classical decoration was done for the 3rd Earl of Darnley and then gilded for the 4th Earl in the early 1790s

(*Left*) 2—A SECTION OF THE SOUTH WALL OF THE GILT HALL. "The closer one looks at the way the ornament is put together, the less truly Chambersian it becomes"

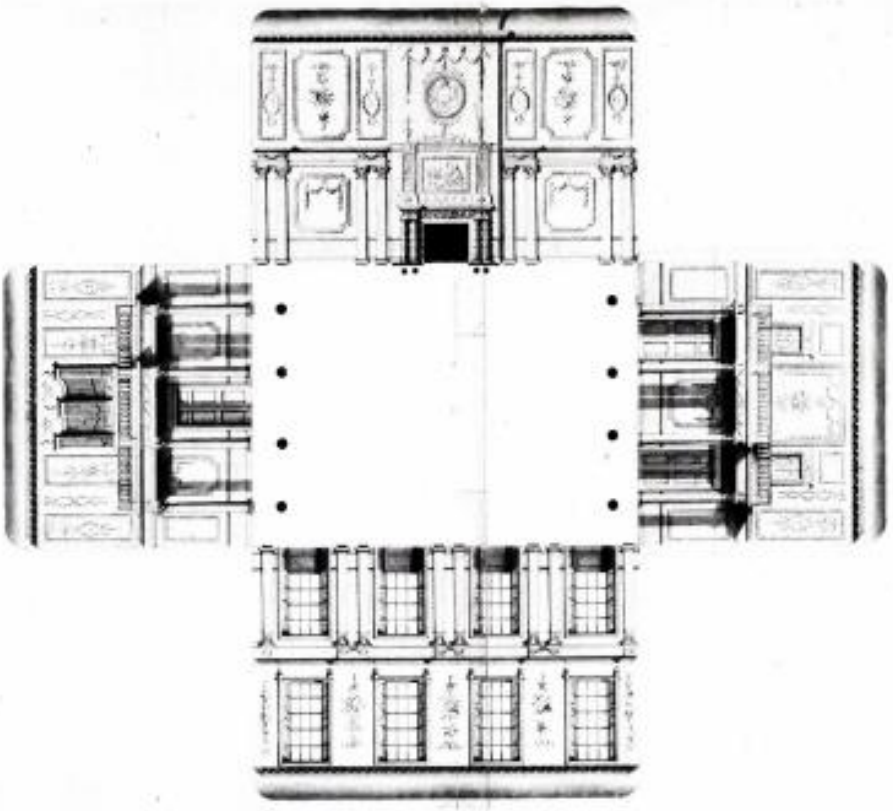
The 3rd Earl and his wife had done a great deal to bring the house up to date, but, as was explained last week, the process by which they did so is confusing to historians largely because of the problematic appearance of Sir William Chambers. Much of the detail is undoubtedly Chambersian, but the decoration does not have quite the control or consistency that is expected with him; and, as John Harris pointed out in his study of Chambers, the designs for the Gilt Hall are neither in his hand nor in that of any of his known assistants.

Yet there was a payment of £20 to him in 1770 "for a journey to Cobham and making some plans" (recorded in a photocopy made by the Northern Ireland Record Office of notes from an apparently now missing account book of the 3rd Earl). Also in August 1773, Lord Darnley's aunt, Sarah Gore, wrote that she "paid Chambers". Perhaps nothing came of the visit in 1770, but anyway by that time the alterations were well advanced, having been started before May 1767.

That work had been entrusted to George Shakespear, and he was still involved at Cobham at the time of the 3rd Earl's death in 1781. There are several payments to him and to subcontractors for Cobham and the London house in Berkeley Square in the 3rd Earl's surviving account book for 1771–74 (in the Kent Archives Office), and there are a few more references to him than are quoted by Esmé Wingfield Stratford in his delightful family history *The Lords of Cobham Hall*. For instance, there are letters of December 15, 1767, and September 6, 1770, from Shakespear to Lord Darnley that make it quite clear that he was architect as well as contractor.

In the first, in which he was critical of the mason, he wrote: "I shall bring down with me, the plan of your Lordships attick floor & a drawing of truss'd Roof, from which I shall be able to support the Beams over the Great Hall." In the second he wrote: "If your Lordship will have your Crest & Coronet and date of the year the heads of the pipes should be square, according to the drawing which I herewith send . . . I will get them done in four or five days & send them in a packing case by the Gravesend boat."

As yet not a great deal is known about Shakespear, but it is possible that he specialised in alterations and restorations. He was in partnership with John Phillips, and, as H. M. Colvin records, together they worked on the demolition of the east wing of Audley End in 1749 and rebuilt Alscot Park, Warwickshire;



3—ONE OF SHAKESPEAR'S DESIGNS FOR THE GILT HALL

4—DETAIL OF ANOTHER DESIGN FOR THE GILT HALL. "The three first-floor openings and balconies have a 17th-century character"

evidently Phillips had contacts with a number of leading designers. Also, it is possible that they may have had some kind of tie up with Ince and Mayhew, the furniture makers and upholsterers, who worked for James West at Alscot.

By the 1770s, Shakespear's manner was a synthesis of the styles of Chambers and Wyatt, as can be seen in some of the first-floor rooms at Cobham to be illustrated next week, but what is more fascinating is the part he played in the decoration of the Gilt Hall (Fig 1). That must be among the most splendid schoolrooms in England, possibly even the finest of all, and I wonder how many girls freewheel during their dancing lessons and ask themselves how the setting in which they find themselves came to be.

It is known from the 6th Duke of Lennox's accounts that in 1672 the plasterwork of the ceiling was ready for painting, but there is no evidence as to the treatment of the walls unless it lies in one of the drawings now at Yale (Fig 4). That shows a giant order of neo-Classical pilasters running round the walls, but the three openings and balconies at first-floor level have a 17th-century,

5—ONE OF THE SERIES OF GILDED PLASTER TROPHIES IN THE GILT HALL

almost Jonesian, character to them, as if they could have been survivors from, or restatements of, the Lennox scheme. There are very few early two-storey Classical rooms in England, and there is a sense of the Whitehall Banqueting House being a possible source of inspiration for the Restoration scheme rather than the central hall of the Queen's House, which was surely the model for the now lost hall at Lees Court, a few miles away near Faversham. Probably the closest parallel lies in the Music Hall at Lamport, in Northamptonshire, designed by John Webb in the 1650s, but the remodelling of the Great Hall at Longleat soon after the Restoration is also worth bearing in mind.

Shakespear's scheme of Figure 4 was abandoned in favour of a strong division into two storeys with screens of columns carrying balconies at each end, and with the organ on the north balcony (Fig 3); it is known from one of the 3rd Earl's letters to his eldest son at Eton that it was being erected there in 1779.

If it was to be a Music Hall, it was also intended to commemorate family history and in particular the Bligh connection with the Stuarts. Quite early on it was proposed to have a great blaze of Darnley heraldry above the chimneypiece, and in the end, while Richard Westmacott gave his superb chimneypiece (Fig 7) a musical character (Gunnis notes a payment for it in 1778 in the Darnley papers that I have not traced), Van Dyck's double portrait of two of the 4th Duke's younger brothers, and the finest of the inherited pictures, was placed over it with the Darnley arms above the picture. Very conveniently, the Dukes of Lennox had used as their motto *Avant Darnley*, and that appears on the ceiling beneath the arms of the 6th Duke, so becoming a piece of *double-entendre* that very neatly explains why the Blighs had taken their title from the Lennoxes' oldest honour. Both the original Van Dyck and Gainsborough's copy were sold, and the original is now at Broadlands, although at present on loan to the Van Dyck exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, where once more it is in company with Van Dyck's portraits of the 4th Duke and his other brother, the Seigneur D'Aubigny, who was also killed in the Civil War.

The plasterwork in the cove of the ceiling (Fig 8) and on the upper walls with the series of beautiful trophies (Fig 5) is all part of the 3rd Earl's scheme, as is the idea of the lower order with its entablature. The overall effect is neo-Classical, but the trophies are much closer in feeling to work of the late 1750s and '60s than the 1770s, when they tended to become much more Piranesian before becoming more French in inspiration in the 1780s; and the closer one looks at the way the ornament is put together, the less truly Chambersian it becomes. On the other hand, one other famous but still mysterious room comes to mind, the Saloon at Uppark.

6—THE CHANDELIER IN THE GILT HALL. At present it lacks its central hanging glass lamps

7—WESTMACOTT'S CHIMNEYPIECE IN THE GILT HALL. It was supplied in 1778. Another version was made for Powderham Castle in the 1790s

When the 3rd Earl died in 1781, his heir was only 14, and it was during his minority that the monumental mausoleum arranged for by his father in his will went ahead; it was that commission that brought James Wyatt onto the Cobham scene. The 4th Earl came of age in 1788, and immediately turned his attention to the house, there being Wyatt drawings at Yale dated 1789. He also decided to enrich the Gilt Hall, and photocopies of transcripts of notes show that scaffolding was put up in the hall in 1791 and 1792 in order that the unusual marble cladding of the lower walls could be put up; and they show that Bartoli was paid £300 for extra scagliola for the pilasters to match the columns supporting the balconies. *The Kent Register* for September 16, 1793, says: "the old hall in particular, has been lately repaired, for a music room, with such excessive richness, and profusion of gilding, by the varied genious of James Wyatt, as to appear to be unrivalled."

That is interesting, because it suggests that there was little or no gilding or colour on the ceiling, except probably in the heraldry, before the 4th Earl's time, nor on the walls either; and the 3rd Earl's plasterwork would have read as white on white or white on a colour. That would be in line with descriptions of decoration in the 1770s that stress the absence of gilding, such as Lady Mary Coke's of Luton Hoo and Horace Walpole's of Portman House, London, in 1782.

In the late 1780s and early '90s there was a revival of interest in elaborate finishes, lavish gilding and a generally richer style of decoration that is particularly associated with the circle of the Prince of Wales and the French decorators who came to work in England. James Wyatt quickly responded to it, as can be seen in the saloon at Castlecoole and slightly later in the 1790s in the Music Room at Powderham Castle, where he installed another version of Westmacott's Gilt Hall chimneypiece. And I

suspect that a similar revision was carried out a few years later in the Saloon at Uppark, where the delicate gilding and the grey-white of the walls was done to give the room a more French character.

The 4th Earl had a taste for marbles as well as marble, and it was he who introduced the statues and urns on fluted pedestals that appear in old photographs and also the antique tables at the north end of the room. It would be interesting to know what they really are, because they are in the spirit of the plates in C. H. Tatham's *Etchings of Ancient Ornamental Architecture* of 1799, but also chosen because of the wyverns, the Darnleys' crest. It may well have been their design that suggested the design of the window stools with scrolls, of which two remain at Cobham (Fig 9), and of the related settees (Fig 10). There are apparently no payments for them, and, as Mr Hugh Roberts pointed out to me, they do not fit into the conventional picture of furniture design at that time.

Their chunkiness harks back to the early days of neo-Classical furniture design, but the arms are up to date, rather French in feeling. Again, the wyvern is incorporated, and that has a look of the candlestick illustrated by Chambers in his *Decorative Part of Civil Architecture* (1791). The only order remotely like is the more delicate but equally high-quality furniture supplied by Marsh and Tatham for the Music Room at Powderham.

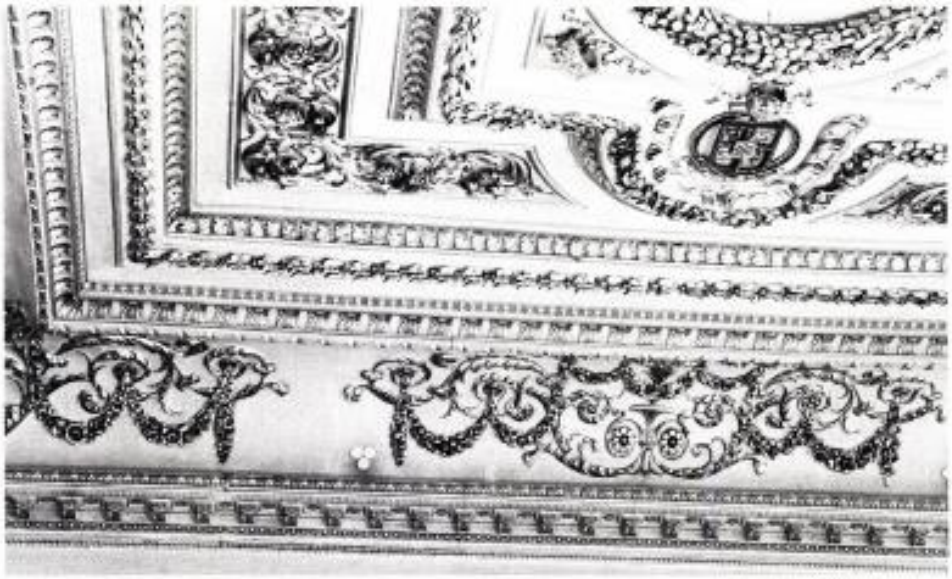
In quality they are matched by the chandelier (Fig 6) that must have been a special order for the house, because not only does it incorporate the wyvern yet again but the lower circle incorporates the monogram AD. As it exists today, the chandelier is not complete: the main light was in a pineapple-shaped glass (it still exists) that was suspended from the knot below the leaves.

Old photographs show the room confused with furniture, with more settees of the same set as that in Figure 10 but of a smaller size, some of the set of cane-backed chairs in the style of Jacob that are now on loan to the National Trust and pieces from other sets in the house as well as the marble urns and statues. The 4th Earl, however, seems to have intended the Gilt Hall as a noble architectural space, and that is how it appears in a watercolour illustrated in Lady Elizabeth Cust's book on the 5th Earl.

Even now the room is a wonderful synthesis, with its early form, its Caroline plasterwork with neo-Classical embellishments, its neo-Classical redecoration and slightly later enrichment, and its now fast-fading echo of Van Dyck. Quite rightly it has always been admired, even in High Victorian times, with Landseer suggesting the last addition—the red velvet cushions that lie along the tops of the balconies.

Illustrations: 1, 2 and 5–10, Jonathan M. Gibson; 3 and 4, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

(To be concluded)



8—A SECTION OF THE COVE OF THE GILT HALL CEILING. Neo-Classical additions to the basic late-17th-century design

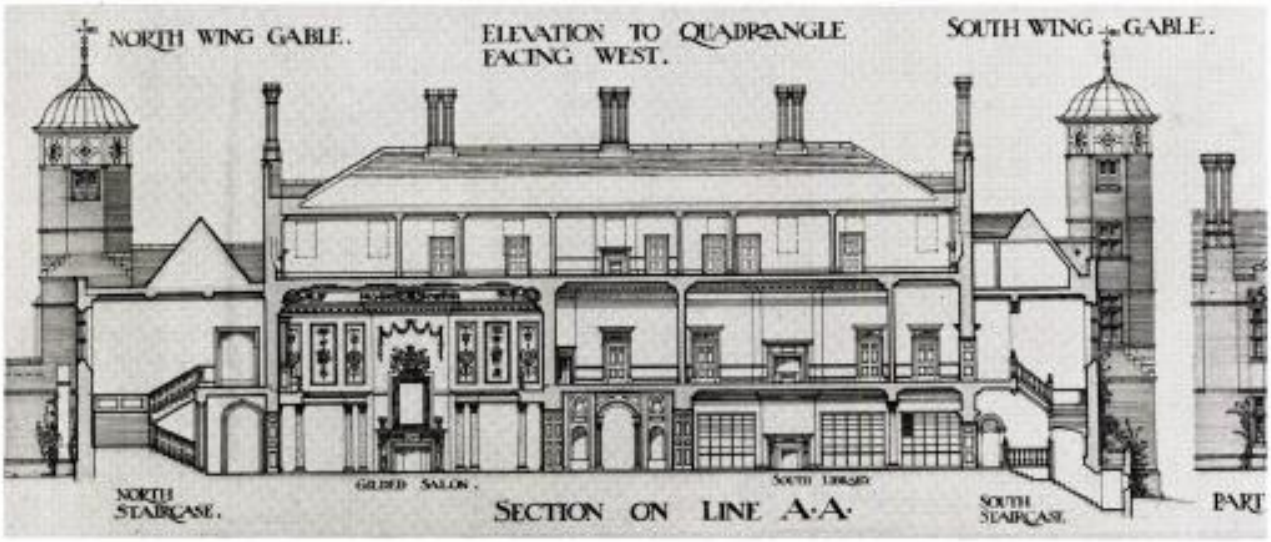
9—A WINDOW STOOL. One of a set of four. (*Below*) 10—ONE OF THE RELATED SETTEES IN THE GILT HALL

COBHAM HALL, KENT—III

THE PROPERTY OF THE WESTWOOD EDUCATIONAL TRUST

By JOHN CORNFORTH

The 3rd Earl of Darnley went to Ince and Mayhew for furniture and this article concentrates on the relationship between the furniture attributable to them and the neo-Classical decorations done by George Shakespear.



1—A SECTIONAL DRAWING OF THE CENTRE BLOCK. It shows the present State dressing room over the Wyatt vestibule in the middle, with the State bedroom over the south library

IN 1776 Lady Clanwilliam wrote to her uncle, the 3rd Earl of Darnley: "I suppose your Lordship will soon remove to Cobham. I am told the House is so much improv'd I should hardly know it, it must now be all complete for the House only wanted a little modernizing." Lord and Lady Darnley would have thought the last remark an unsatisfactory piece of understatement, because they had done so much to increase the accommodation, make the house more convenient and bring it up to date as regards its decoration and furnishing. But now, as a result of alterations to it in the 19th century and sales of contents in the 20th, it is no longer possible to get a full picture of all they did. On the other hand, there are details that deserve publication, particularly about the furniture.

2—A PAINTED CHAIR. The sole survivor of a set once in Lady Darnley's bedroom

3—A DETAIL OF THE WALLPAPER IN THE STATE DRESSING ROOM. The paper was supplied by Bromwich in 1773

The picture that emerges from the admittedly not very full documentation is that, while Lord Darnley went to a definite second-ranker as architect, he employed leading furniture-makers and upholsterers, starting with John Cobb and moving on to William Ince and John Mayhew. Ince and Mayhew are well known, not only on account of their *Universal System* but because of plum jobs like the furniture for the Tapestry Room at Croome Court. However, as Hugh Roberts pointed out in his articles on the furniture at Broadlands (COUNTRY LIFE,

January 29 and February 5, 1981), "extraordinarily few pieces from their workshop have been identified, few accounts or bills and only one drawing have come to light"; and only recently have Hugh Roberts and Charles Cator started to collect together all the information on the firm.

The surviving pieces at or from Cobham suggest a certain lack of co-ordination between their design and the decoration of the house, as if there was lack of control when they were not under the eye of an architect as exacting as Chambers, as they were at Blenheim. We have become so used to the perfect balance and logic that, let us say, Chippendale achieved when working on one of Adam's big jobs that we now tend to expect it in all other contemporary schemes. But involved as Lord Darnley undoubtedly was, he does not appear to have been able to achieve that.

That is particularly apparent in the original State bedroom and Lady Darnley's bedroom, and here there is an immediate problem. Over Wyatt's vestibule on the west front of the centre block, as can be seen in the sectional drawing of Figure 1, there survives a bedroom with a Chinese blue-ground wallpaper and a painted four-post bed, and that is now called the State dressing room (Fig 5).

Next to it is a room with three windows that used to have a related wallpaper and is now usually called the State bedroom. But in the inventory taken on the 4th Earl's death in 1831, it is apparent that there were then two

4—THE PAINTED PELMET CORNICE IN THE STATE DRESSING ROOM. It does not match the cornice of the bed shown in Figure 5, but that does not invalidate the attribution of either to Ince and Mayhew

5—THE BED IN THE STATE DRESSING ROOM. It is impossible to decide which of the two principal beds that are listed in 1831 it is

apartments with blue as their dominant colour, a blue damask bedroom that was the State bedroom and a blue silk bedroom that had been the Dowager Lady Darnley's; and it seems to me that the blue damask State bedroom was part of the apartment at the head of the oak stairs in the south wing. The wife of the 3rd Earl had used the rooms in the centre block. Thus the existing State bedroom is not the original one, but was Lady Darnley's bedroom. Nor does the bed (Fig 5) in the State dressing room necessarily belong to that apartment, and the elaborately pierced painted pelmet cornice (Fig 4) does not match that of the bed, as would be expected. On the other hand, that does not invalidate the attribution of either the bed or the cornice to Ince and Mayhew.

Designs for the ceilings of the present State "dressing room" and the bedroom (Fig 7) survive among the drawings in the Center for British Art at Yale that appear to be by Shakespeur. The bedroom has a surprisingly massive entablature (Fig 6), which, incidentally, incorporates the Darnley crest in the roundels in the frieze, and has a Chambersian cast to it; but it does not fit very happily with the pattern of the ceiling, which has a Wyatt cast to it. The room beyond is an awkward shape with one corner cut off, and again there were difficulties in getting the design of the ornament to fit the space that were not overcome.

For help with the fitting up of some of the rooms, Lord Darnley occasionally turned to his Aunt Gore, his father's sister, Sarah, who had married William Gore. It was she, for instance, who told him "India paper" was in fashion, and also went to see Ince about furniture. On February 23, 1773, Lord Darnley paid Bromwich £26 for India paper "for my Lady's Dressing Room & paper for the two nurseries".

The wallpaper (Fig 3) is the only one that I have come across that was definitely supplied by Bromwich. There are a great many payments to that firm in country-house accounts and references to them, as in Mrs Lybbe Powys's description of Fawley Court in 1771, where there were several rooms with India papers put up by Bromwich. But the only other place where a payment can be linked up with surviving decoration is at Dunster Castle, where Dudley Dodd discovered that they supplied a papier mâché ceiling. The ground of the Cobham paper is still an intense blue, with large birds in the trees that grow up the walls; and the hanging, as would be expected after reading Mrs Lybbe Powys's description of Fawley, was carefully planned so

that above the door in the darkest part of the room there are branches of white magnolia. At the top, suspended from the paper bamboo fillet, is a garland of flowers that acts as a subtle stop to the design.

On September 30, 1773, Aunt Gore went to see Ince about damask and find out how much material would be needed for a large bed, 18 chairs, two settees and four "winde cortains". At first, four curtains suggest two pairs, but at that date it is more likely to mean four festoon curtains, and that would fit with the form of the pelmet cornice. But, as has been explained, we cannot be certain which apartment they were intended for. In the Dowager Lady Darnley's bedroom, according to the 1831 inventory, were four japanned chairs with cane backs and seats, eight japanned armchairs stuffed in blue damask, two japanned settees and a japanned sofa.

Of all this seat furniture the possible survivors are a single shieldback chair (Fig 2), five upholstered armchairs (Fig 9), a settee (Fig 8) and a day bed. While all fit in stylistically with Ince's known work, the chairs are rather oddly related in design. The hangings on the bed provide no clue, because they are not old, and indeed I find it impossible to decide which of the two principal beds that are listed in 1831 it is. Again, however, it is almost certainly by Ince, being like the bed at Broadlands, and it retains its original painting in blue and white, or rather blue on off-white or ivory.

As well as the seat furniture, the bed and the pelmet cornice, there exists a firescreen with an oval panel and two pole screens, one of which has lost its original decoration. Painted furniture was naturally fragile and so often had to be repainted or was later gilded. A group like that at Cobham, therefore, is likely to be difficult to sort out. But I hope that more papers will turn up, and then we may have a more definite picture of how it was disposed.

Ince and Mayhew must have supplied a great deal to Lord Darnley, both for Cobham and the London house, because on August 6, 1771, he paid them £210; on July 24, 1773, £109; on November 20, another £200 on account; and on June 27, 1774, £72. What this substantial total represented is now impossible to tell without the bills, but as well as painted furniture there survives at or from Cobham a pair of upholstered settees and six chairs with gilt frames and seats and backs. (Figs 11 and 12). Their design is a curious and not wholly successful fusion of Louis XV-Rococo and early neo-Classical ideas, and they have unusual gilt metal "ankles" and "feet". In addition, there survives one armchair (Fig 10) of a more Chambersian pattern, but the rest of its set, including a pair of settees that appear in old photographs, has disappeared.

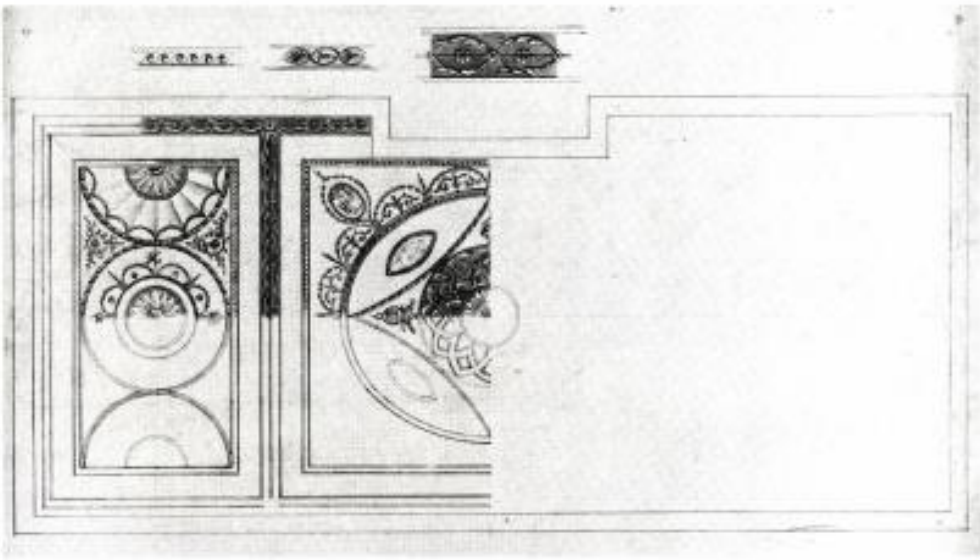
The combination of the 3rd Earl's account book, the 1831 inventory and old photographs is tantalising. The inventory, for instance, mentions a pair of satinwood commodes with silver edges, pieces that sound to be of great elegance. I could not believe they still existed, but fortunately they do and they turn out to be all that was promised. The account book records many payments of interest—to John Cobb, for instance, in 1771, closing an account dated September 1, 1768; to Thomas Vialls for frames, including one for Dance's portrait of Lady Darnley; and to Parker and Wakelin very large sums for silver.

Thomas Carter worked on the chimneypieces, and there is a payment to him "for taking down chimneypieces repairing Do & polishing of two capitals of columns of Alabaster": did he restore the Elizabethan chimneypieces? According to Rupert Gunnis, had worked at the Thomas Vardy, who, accordMansion House and at Hill Park under Holland, supplied chimneypieces including the one in the State bedroom in 1773.

Joseph Rose did four ceilings on the principal floor in the London house and was paid £231 for them, but he did not work at Cobham. Instead, the main plasterer was Heafford, as yet a comparatively obscure figure but recorded by Geoffrey Beard in earlier years at 14 St James's Square and Alnwick Castle. He was first paid by Shakespear in August 1771; in 1772 he was paid for work in the offices; in August 1773 he received £250 on account and another £48 10s in November.

The work at Cobham was not finished in 1775 when Lord Darnley sent his eight-year-old son to Eton, and the surviving parental letters from the following years refer to its progress, which clearly interested the precocious heir. Thus, when the 3rd Earl died in 1781, his son could write to

6—THE STATE BEDROOM CEILING



7—THE DESIGN FOR THE STATE BEDROOM CEILING. One of the Shakespear drawings now at the Center for British Art at Yale

8 and 9—A PAINTED SETTEE AND (*above, right*) AN ARMCHAIR. Possibly part of the suite for Lady Darnley's bedroom. (*Right*) 10—A GILT ARMCHAIR. A survivor from a complete set attributable to Ince and Mayhew

his mother very definitely about the conduct of George Shakespear. And as soon as he came of age in 1788, he began to make alterations to the house and garden. James Wyatt was already at work on the mausoleum that his father had arranged for in his will, and so it was natural that he should take over in the house. Lord Darnley also summoned Repton at the suggestion of the Duchess of Portland, and later two of Repton's sons worked on the house; the broad lines of what they did are still readily identifiable, so that many people now see the house and park mainly in Reptonian terms.

The 4th Earl's period was the high point in Cobham's history, and, although his grandson who succeeded as 6th Earl in 1835 held it until 1896, the pressures on the English and Irish estates after that were too great. Quite rapidly the 9,000 acres in Kent and 25,500 acres in Co. Meath, which had existed in 1875, evaporated, and with them the 4th Earl's collection of pictures. Without the Land Fund, the house might have followed too.

In recent years, the operation of the Land Fund has been so castigated that there is a reluctance to admit how much it achieved. In 1959, when grant aid for the repair of outstanding historic buildings that could be offered on the advice of the Historic Buildings Council was still very limited, Cobham, some of its surrounding land and some of its contents, including the early-18th-century State coach, were bought for £28,149 and repaired at a cost of £105,635 out of the Land Fund and then sold to the Westwood Educational Trust for use as a school. Since then, Cobham has received a number of repair grants.

That has not solved all the problems at Cobham, but the idea of the holding and repair operation and the retention by the Government of some contents is not one to be lost sight of. There may well be cases of other great houses where that would be the best way of holding the heart of a property together and giving the house a chance of a suitable kind of new life.

The house is open to the public in 1983 from March 31 to April 3 and from July 27 to Sept 1 on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Sundays, and on August 29.

Illustrations: 1–6 and 8–12, Jonathan M. Gibson; 7, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

(Concluded)

11 and 12—A GILT SETTEE, AND (*right*) AN ARMCHAIR

JOHN BLIGH, 4th Earl of Darnley (1767–1831), succeeded to the title as a schoolboy of 14. By the time of his death, 50 years later, he had transformed the centuries-old estate and house at Cobham, and turned a rambling Elizabethan pile into one of the treasure houses of Regency England. Few instances of ownership convey quite so clearly the shifts in taste and architectural attitudes of the time. Darnley deserves to be better known as a collector, just as Cobham Hall—now a private girls' school—deserves to be more celebrated as one of the great country houses of Kent.

A deer park was laid out here in the mid 14th century. The origins of the house are early-16th-century; it was considerably enlarged by William Brooke, 10th Lord Cobham, a leading courtier and lord warden of the Cinque Ports. Long ranges of red brick were built in the 1580s and 1590s (Fig 2). The house was unfinished when he died in 1597, and the Brookes forfeited the estate when the 11th (and last) Lord Cobham was imprisoned for treason by James I in 1603.

The house and park passed to the King's Stuart cousins, the Dukes of Lennox (soon also of Richmond). The last duke of the line was a celebrated Restoration courtier, renowned for his profligacy and successful wooing of Charles II's object of desire, Frances Stuart, 'La Belle Stuart'. Banished from court, he undertook a partial modernisation of the house and employed the City bricklayer Peter Mills to remodel the cross-range.

A modest row of pilasters replaced the Elizabethan frontispiece, the Tudor great hall became the imposing Gilt Hall, and new stairs and interiors were inserted. The last duke drowned in 1672, leaving a part-Tudor and part-Stuart house to his widow. After 1700, the estate was fought over by rival claimants to a will, and by the last duke's many creditors. The former ducal seat spent decades in limbo.

If the Brooke family were the original lords of Cobham Hall, the Anglo-Irish Blighs were its masters. Ennobled in 1725 as the Earls of Darnley, after John Bligh's marriage to a Stuart descendant, they took possession of the estate in the 1730s. Confronted by a Tudor-Caroline hybrid of a house—and perhaps egged on by the erroneous attribution in *Vitruvius Britannicus* of the 1660s work to Inigo Jones—the 3rd Earl elected to pursue a Classicising programme from the 1750s, directed by the builder and occasional architect George Shakespear (COUNTRY LIFE, February 24 and March 3 and 10, 1983).

The cross-range in particular received much attention, with the Gilt Hall (Fig 1) being remodelled as a music room (the Earl had spent several years in Italy with an opera singer as his inamorata). Tudor exuberance was tamed: shaped gables were replaced with pediments, mullioned windows were replaced with sashes, and a degree of regularity was inserted where possible. By the time of the Earl's death in 1781, the character of Cobham was again being reshaped.

The last years of the 4th Earl's minority in the mid-1780s saw the building of the awe-inspiring Darnley mausoleum, to the designs of James Wyatt, in the wooded parkland to the east of the house. The Bishop of Rochester declined to consecrate the building; consequently it was never used for burials. Wyatt's crisply detailed, Chambers-inspired essay in ➢

(*Facing page*) 1—The Gilt Hall was converted into a music room in the 1770s. (*Below*) 2—The west court

the Antique won the new earl's approval and, for the next 20 years, Wyatt would be engaged at Cobham on a variety of projects.

Initially, he was asked to continue the 3rd Earl's work of updating and Classicising the house. The Gilt Hall became sheeted in marble (Fig 5), with scagliola columns to the organ and singing galleries, offsetting the Roman consoles that the 4th Earl had acquired in Rome from the dealer Thomas Jenkins. The dining room, too, became lined with marble. A vestibule was created in the cross-range, with fittingly Classical motifs such as an apsidal plan, pierced walls and re-used antique columns. The contrast with the earlier fabric of Cobham Hall could hardly have been starker.

If Wyatt was one of the young Earl's mentors, the other (and perhaps the more influential of the two) was Humphry Repton. Lord Darnley was the perfect client for Repton. He commanded ample means, he was in possession of an ancient but awkward seat, and he was eager to bring it up to date through adaptation not replacement. Repton's connection with Cobham was close and constant: after the landscape designer's death in 1818, Lord Darnley erected a memorial alcove named Repton's Seat in his pleasure grounds as a tribute to a partnership of more than 25 years. Repton produced his *Red Book* for Cobham in 1790. Not all of the changes he proposed came to pass: for one, the brick exterior was mercifully not rendered.

In other matters, such as planning and the integration of house and grounds, Repton's suggestions were followed through with care. 'His ideas are very magnificent,' wrote Repton of his young patron in 1790, 'and they have already been realised by costly specimens of architecture from the designs of James Wyatt. But while such great works are nearly completed, little or nothing seems to be done for the comfort of the place, and there is much to do. The large rooms and galleries are filled with valuable pictures, yet from want of proper communications the house is hardly habitable.'

Lord Darnley promptly embarked on a programme of internal improvements. Communication routes were revised, and water closets installed in 1791; a Bramah pump was installed to operate them, close to the ponds in the north pleasure ground. The ruined pump-house still stands, just a few yards away from the high-speed Channel Tunnel rail link that now blasts along beside the old Dover Road, itself obliterated by the modern A2. Cobham Park is very much on the edge of modern Kent, and forms a precious bulwark against the onslaught of progress.

Wyatt operated in two modes of design: Classical and Gothic. Both are present at Cobham. Under Repton's direction, Lord Darnley began to renounce the pure neo-Classicism of his early years in favour of a medievalising manner that was felt to be more evocative of the Elizabethan origins of the house. This led to another stylistic layer joining the Tudor, Restoration, mid-Georgian and neo-Classical phases already present. Wyatt's castellated ornamental dairy, sited at the bottom of the south lawn, was his first essay in this manner. Early Gothic Revival Cobham is best seen internally in the new north 'cloister' entrance, finished in 1808, and in the ceiling of the stone stairs in the north wing, by the plasterer Bernasconi (Fig 9).

'The Napoleonic Wars encouraged the British tourist to turn inwards and take heed of insular antiquities'

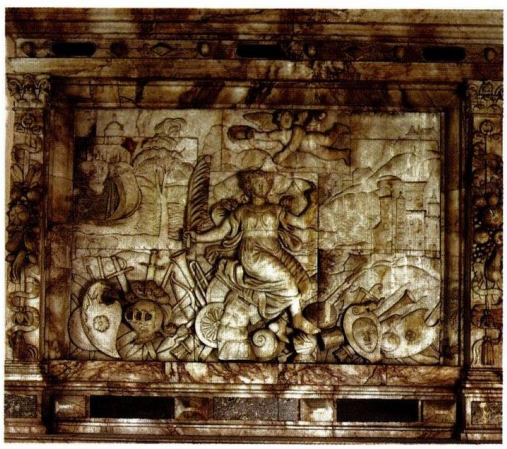
The Napoleonic Wars, combined with the novels of Sir Walter Scott and much else besides, encouraged the British tourist to turn homewards, and take heed of insular antiquities. From this period onwards, Cobham Hall was increasingly admired as a fine example of Elizabethan architecture. The stirring title of the Darnleys was resonant with Tudor associations: as the concept of 'Merrie England' advanced, so would Cobham's star rise.

One telling example of Regency antiquarianism is to be found in the north wing. A large chamber on the first floor was renamed 'Queen Elizabeth's Bedroom' round the time of Waterloo, when a bogus Jacobethan plaster ceiling (Fig 6) was installed to the designs of Repton's son, George, complete with the royal arms and a written memorandum of the Queen's stay at Cobham. Her single documented visit was in 1559, when she was entertained in a remarkable tree house in the grounds of the yet-to-be-enlarged ➢

3—A photograph showing the Gilt Hall, when the 4th Earl of Darnley's collection was still *in situ*

4—The picture gallery, in which a notable collection of Old Masters was hung

5—A marble-clad window in the Gilt Hall, looking out to the 1590s porch. (*Below left*) 6—The early-19th-century neo-Tudor ceiling. (*Below right*) 7—An Elizabethan overmantel carving by Gilles de Whitt



house, which rules out her having lodged in this room.

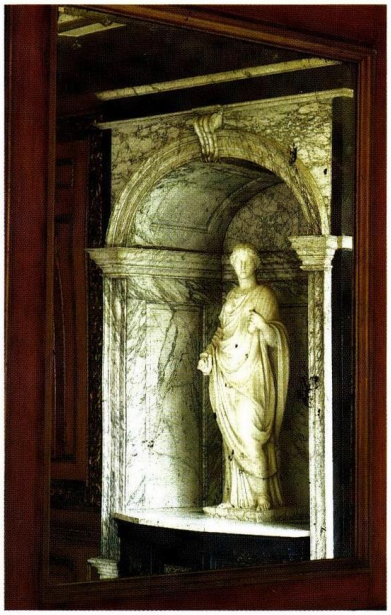
But the splendours of the Elizabethan house, such as its awe-inspiring chimneypieces by Gilles de Whitt (Fig 7), were real enough for the Regency sightseer, who sensed that the antiquated house, altered and awkward as it might be, had values all of its own. Cobham Hall began to be opened regularly to visitors from about 1819. There was plenty to see—the earlier Lords Darnley had built up collections, but the 4th Earl had made it a treasure house.

His acquisitive streak first manifested itself in the realm of animals: one of his first architectural undertakings as a teenager was to create a menagerie in the pleasure grounds, containing cassowaries, wallabies and other splendours. A keen traveller in his youth, he had spent freely in Paris, Rome and even St Petersburg, and had sent back case after case of Antique statuary and modern furniture (Fig 3).

It was as a picture collector that he best deserves to be remembered. He had a particular eye for the Venetian School, and was able to acquire remarkable paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese and others. On the walls of Cobham Hall hung works of world renown (Fig 4). These included Titian's *Rape of Europa* (now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston) and his portrait of *A Man with a Quilted Sleeve*; Tintoretto's *The Origin of the Milky Way*; and Veronese's *Allegories* (all of which now hang in the National Gallery).

Not all of his purchases's attributions have withstood the test of time, but other notable pictures by Annibale Carracci, Van Dyck and Salvator Rosa were once on display at Cobham. He was buying at a special time: political upheavals on the Continent were releasing notable collections for sale, such as that of the ducs d'Orléans, during the 1790s. Darnley bought with a passion, and deployed an open purse. In 1829, one of the legions of recorded visitors to Cobham was, ironically enough, the duc d'Orléans (later King Louis Philippe). He had the good grace to leave a hefty tip; whether he knew how many of his family's best pictures had found their way to Cobham is not recorded.

Sculpture, too, was acquired in quantity. The Ionic Temple in Lady Darnley's pleasure garden (itself an early instance of architectural salvage, comprising a temple by Sir William Chambers purchased from Ingress Abbey) contained an *Amorino* by Canova; placed within the first-floor picture gallery, beneath a specially top-lit alcove, was a *Reclining Venus* by the same master (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Classical statuary was plentiful (Fig 8). A huge basin of Egyptian granite, which was bought in Rome in 1818, formerly stood in the entrance corridor, beside one of the Elizabethan chimneypieces that was repositioned in this spot. The 4th Earl clearly had an exceptionally developed taste for stones—this extended to the creation of a trilithon of sarsens in Lady Darnley's garden in the 1820s.



8—A marble niche for statuary in the dining room

'The Regency sightseer sensed that the antiquated house, altered and awkward as it might be, had values all of its own'

Lord Darnley was an attentive landlord. His huge estates in Co Westmeath and in north Kent brought in impressive revenues, and he was interested in livestock, farm buildings and estate management. The Cobham estate afforded excellent shooting, and much of the woodland was evidently managed with this end in sight. One of his many guests was his fellow Anglo-Irish peer the Duke of Wellington, who, on a shoot in the 1820s, narrowly escaped death from a stray round.

The Cobham estate was hit by the agricultural depression of the post-Waterloo years, and the later years of the 4th Earl's lordship were characterised by reductions in building activity, collecting and estate enlargement. His son none the less inherited numerous debts on his death in 1831, and the greatest days of the house were over.

The Darnleys started to sell their remarkable collection in the 1890s; the final sale took place in 1957. In 1959, the house itself was sold. The Ministry of Works came to the rescue and bought it, with a view to opening it to the public. This did not come to pass, but the Government—through English Heritage—still owns some of the chattels at Cobham, such as a magnificent early-18th-century state coach.

The special combination of the 4th Earl of Darnley, James Wyatt and Humphry Repton, produced a 40-year-long process of embellishment. Having inherited an inconvenient house made up of jarring elements of various periods, Darnley oversaw the house's transformation, and the formation of a remarkable collection. A Latin inscription was subsequently placed on the house by his son, celebrating the transformation that had been wrought. It was a fitting epitaph to an intriguing and underexplored episode in the development of late-Georgian taste.

Cobham Hall, Cobham, Kent, is open to the public on certain days during the school holidays. For more information, telephone 01474 823371.

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Photographs: June Buck.

9—The north stairs. Early Gothic Revival Cobham is best seen internally in the new north 'cloister' entrance, finished in 1808, and in the ceiling of the stairs in the north wing

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