

The Landmark Trust

THE MUSIC ROOM

History Album



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Basic Details

Built	c1730
Listed	Grade II*
Acquired by the Landmark Trust	1973 (freehold)
Opened as a Landmark	1977
Restoration architect:	Edward Mason of Charles B Pearson, Son & Partners, Lancaster
Contractors:	Thompson & Jackson
Plaster restoration:	Allied Guilds, Sutton Coldfield
Accommodation reconfigured	2013
Contractors	Duckett Building Services

Contents

	Page
Summary	4
Maps of Lancaster	6
Owners of the Music Room:	
- the Marton Family	11
- the Seward Family	23
The Music Room: Plasterwork & Function	27
Restoration of The Music Room	43
Further works	48

Summary

Like so many Landmarks, plenty of questions remain unanswered about the Music Room. It was built in about 1730 as a garden pavilion, probably for Oliver Marton, a prosperous lawyer of the Middle Temple, London. He lived at 76 Church Street, Lancaster, an early 18th century house, which he had purchased in 1723. As well as a garden behind this house, he owned a much larger one behind the Sun Inn on the opposite side of the street.

We do not know who the architect was for the Music Room. Oliver Marton was on friendly terms with Edward Harley, the 2nd Earl of Oxford (whose will records that Lady Oxford gave him a present of a silver cup), and although there is no evidence for it, this aristocratic connection may account for the unexpected sophistication of the Music Room. Marton died in 1744 and the house and its gardens were inherited by his eldest son Edward, who remained a bachelor until his death in 1758 when the property passed to his youngest and only surviving brother, the Rev. Dr Oliver Marton, who was vicar of Lancaster and squire of Capernwray Hall.

The Music Room was almost certainly not built for listening to music - indeed its name is probably a corruption of 'Muses Room' as the nine Muses decorate the walls. Instead, it would have been used simply as an outdoor sitting room from which to view the garden, and also possibly to watch the playing of bowls (a bowling green is marked on a map dated 1776). Being on the first floor it would allow family and guests to look down onto a comparatively formal garden which was still the fashionable style in the early 18th century, before the arrival of 'natural' theories of landscaping when such formal gardens were swept away all over England, and with them very often such similar summerhouses.

We are also not sure who was responsible for executing such splendid plasterwork but a strong contender is the 'stuccadoro', Francesco Vassalli, who is known to have been working at other houses in Lancashire in the 1730s. The uncertainty remains because such Italian craftsmen often worked as partners in a team and it is equally possible that Vassalli's assistant, Quadri, or the Franchini brothers were responsible. Zeus and Mnemosyne's nine daughters grace the walls - the Muses: Calliope (eloquence), Clio (history), Euterpe (music), Urania (astronomy), Melpomene (tragedy), Polyhymnia (rhetoric), Terpsichore (dancing), Thalia (comedy) and Erato (amorous poetry). Apollo presides over the fireplace and Ceres commands the ceiling.

After Dr Marton's death, the garden overlooked by his Music Room was sold for development and by the end of the 18th century there were plots that went right up to its walls. During the 19th century the Music Room was owned by the Seward family, who ran a stained glass, leaded lights and ironworks business in Sun Street that had been established in 1778. Despite the first floor being used at one stage as the local Masonic lodge, the Music Room declined from 18th century elegance into 19th century industrial mire and it was used as a factory. When A Seward and Co. went into liquidation in 1934, the Misses Seward bought a parcel of land which included the Music Room. Eventually the site, including several buildings, was bought by the Willans in the 1950s and they were the owners when the Landmark Trust first heard of it in the early 1970s.

To say that we found the Music Room in an appalling condition is no exaggeration. Nikolaus Pevsner in his *Buildings of England* series fumed about the condition of what he considered the finest interior in the town: "The main room inside was on the first floor - was, because it is now so decayed that there can be no hope of saving it. It is a disgrace for a town like Lancaster. ... It is no good saying more. In a few years it will all have disappeared."

One reason it was so decayed is that the Music Room had other buildings hard up against it on all four sides. On our first visit we had to reach it by walking through the toy warehouse of which it formed a part. We had to buy all these, which took several years, and demolish them before the builders could gain access. The building had a temporary roof, many of the windows were broken and even the fine facade had a lean-to building half covering it. Working with Edward Mason of Charles B Pearson Son and Partners of Lancaster, our architect, and Thompson and Jackson, our builders, we set about a comprehensive repair programme.

The stone work on the front had to be extensively repaired and then cleaned. The roof was renewed and the side and back walls repointed. There was evidence for at least three different types of glazing bar for the windows, and we settled on the oldest, a thick one typical of the early 18th century style. There were three windows at attic level - we enlarged one, unblocked the second and moved the position of the third. The parapet was also rebuilt. We turned the ground floor loggia into a shop by glazing the central ionic arch, and removed an inserted floor, introducing a gallery instead.

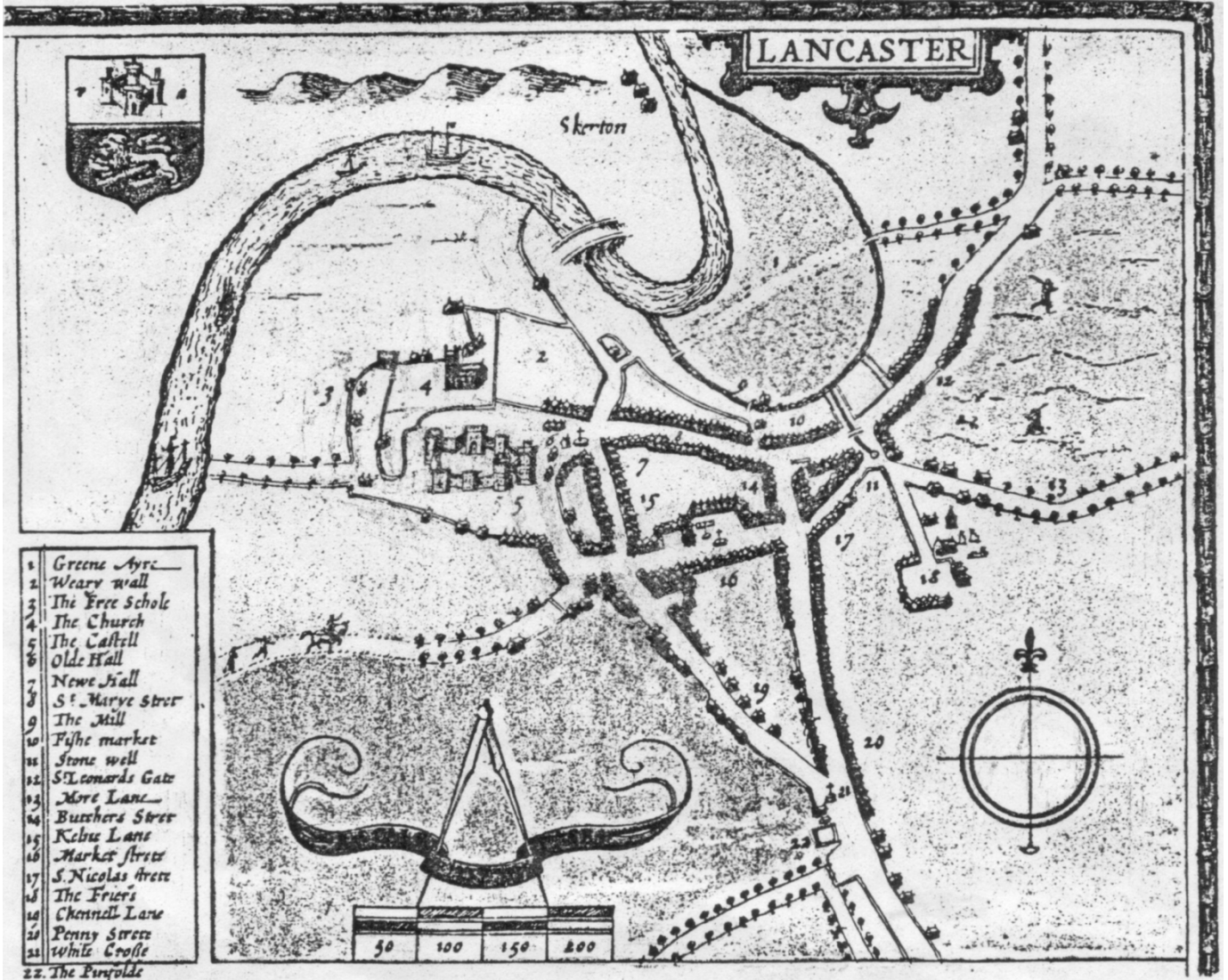
Inside, the stairs were renewed and in the attic a living room with small kitchen, two bedrooms and a bathroom were created, with new doors and partitions throughout. The Music Room itself became a rather grand salon: a new oak floor was laid, a marble hearth inserted, and the door and panelling all fireproofed. The plasterwork of the Music Room, an exceptional Baroque interior, took 6,000 hours of work to repair and for this we used a specialist firm, Allied Guilds of Sutton Coldfield. Wherever possible the fallen fragments were reused, with carefully matched new sections where it was not possible. One of the nine Muses, Terpsichore, had completely disappeared and so our plasterers recreated her from scratch. She was described by our late historian, Charlotte Haslam, as "a modern girl, big and busty, with a cheerful eye." With the City's help, Landmark then created a quiet pedestrian square in the opened area in front, from which to admire the Music Room's refinement.

With time, it became clear that such was the grandness of the Music Room that today's visitors sat there only rarely, so it was made into a bedroom – surely no finer place to enjoy breakfast in bed – and the bunkroom on the attic floor was decommissioned. In 2013, 35 years after the first restoration, it was time for a thorough refurbishment, including overhaul of the Baroque plasterwork, which needed hairline cracks repairing and a really good clean. The opportunity was taken to reconfigure the attic floor, since few visitors seemed to be occupying the by now rather second-class twin bedroom up there. Partitions were moved to create a larger bathroom and a larger area for a new kitchen at one end of the opened-up living room, with its fine views out across the roofs of Lancaster. They are even better from the roof terrace.

Maps

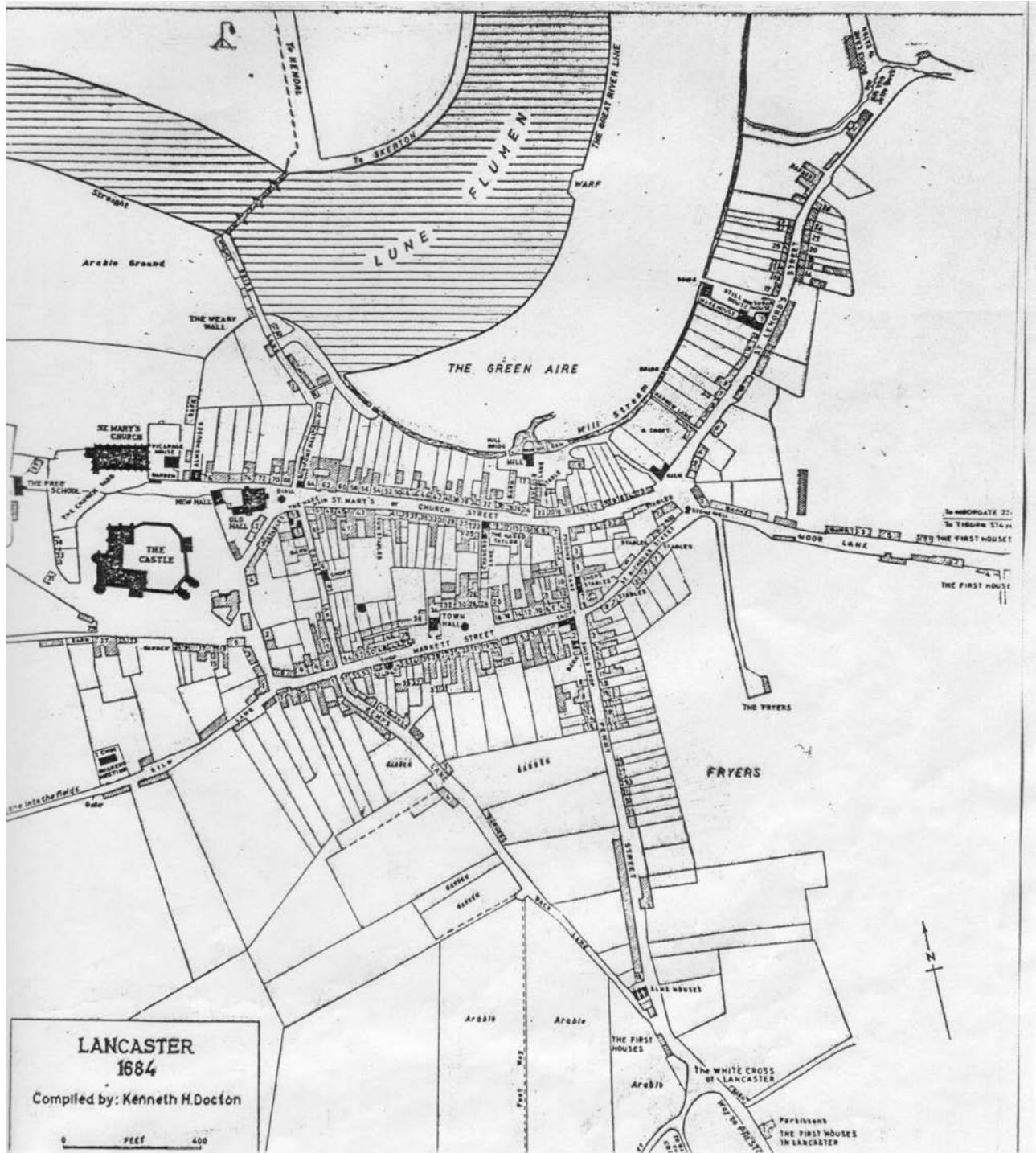
The four maps that follow show the development of Lancaster and Sun Square.

1. John Speed (1610)



2. Kenneth H. Docton (1684)

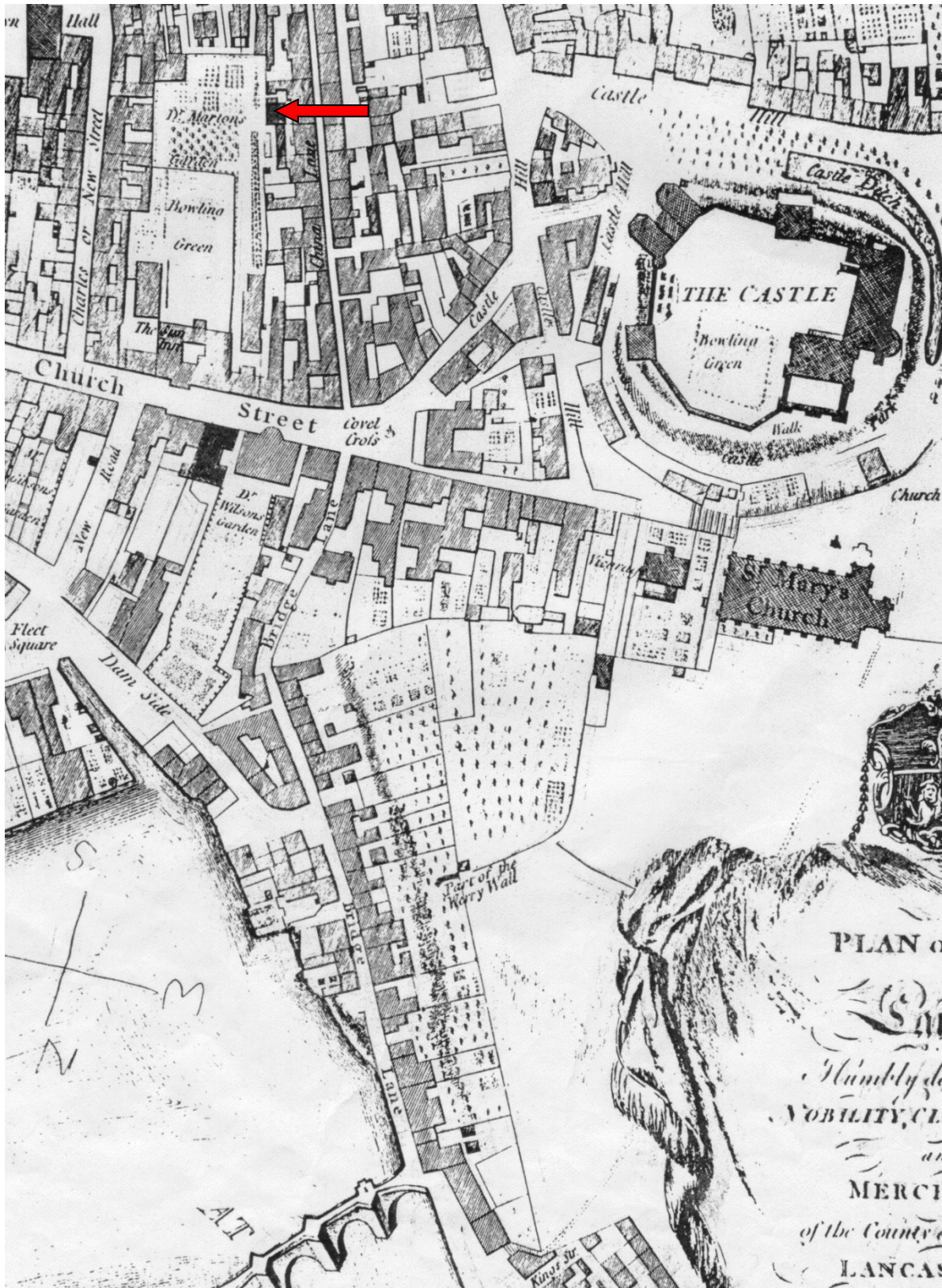
This map was made up from information derived from a MS gazetteer of Lancaster in 1684, described in Kenneth H. Docton, 'Lancaster 1684' Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancaster and Cheshire CIX (1958) 125-42. The future plot of the Music Room is marked with the red arrow.



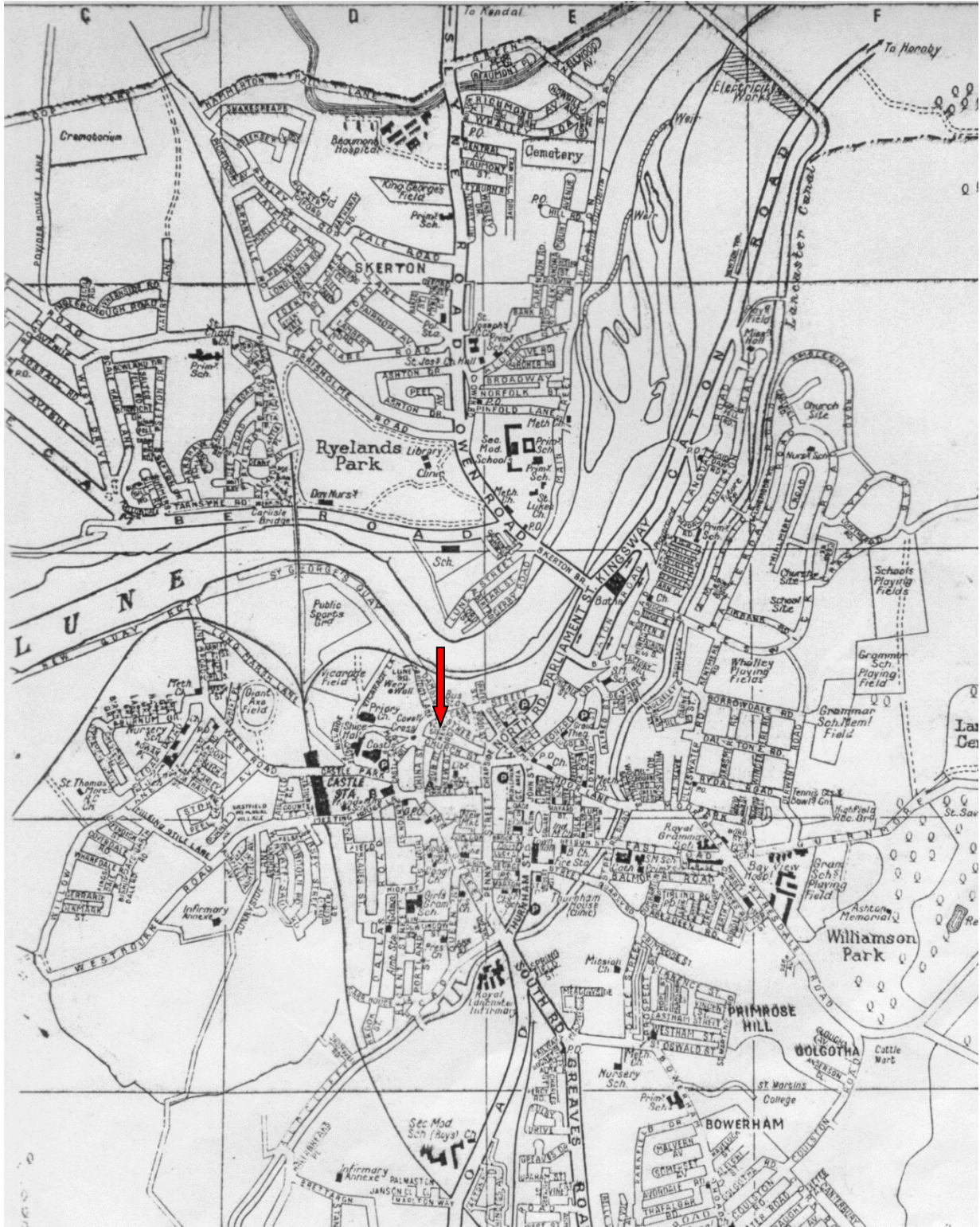
3. Mackreth's map of Lancaster in 1778.

The Music Room, by now some 50 years old, still overlooks 'Dr Marton's garden' and a bowling green.

(The compass is reversed on this map, so north is at the bottom.)



5. Lancaster Today



Owners of the Music Room

The Marton Family

It is not known with certainty for whom the Music Room was built, though it probably dates to around 1730. In the late eighteenth century it was definitely the property of the Rev. Dr. Oliver Marton, vicar of Lancaster and squire of Capernwray. He lived in the early eighteenth-century house, No.76 Church Street, which was the Conservative Club at the time of writing but has subsequently been made into flats, and, as well as a garden behind his house, had a larger garden behind the houses opposite his own, which contained the Music Room (see Map 3). In the survey of his property in 1767 (Lancaster City Library MS 201) there is mention of 'A Capital Mansion House with Stable & Garden on the North side of Church Street (1 rod)' and 'Coach houses Stables and garden on the South side of Church Street; (2 rods 5 perches).' Who lived in the No. 76 Church Street before him? The committee of the Conservative Club kindly permitted the examination of their deeds, which reveal that by a Lease and Release dated respectively 23 and 24 March 1723 Edmund Cole of Lancaster esquire sold to 'Oliver Marton of the Middle Temple, London, Gent.' For £1,150:

'All that messuage of tenement & mansion house of him the said Edmond Cole Situate standing & being on the north side of the Street commonly called St Mary's street alias Church Street....between a house (illegible word) belonging to Ralph Livesay Esquire now or late in the possession of James Hornby & a Messuage or tenement in the ownershippe & possession of Mr Robert Sablethwait together with the (illegible) - house and two houses of office situate on the north side of the said messuage or Mansion house towards the river.'

In other words, Dr. Marton was living in the house of his father, a prosperous lawyer who bought Capernwray and other lands in Lancaster in the early eighteenth century. It should be pointed out that this does not amount to proof that the Music Room garden also belonged to Oliver Marton senior, although this seems quite likely. It reveals only that in 1723, the Music Room garden apparently formed no part yet of No. 76. The will of Oliver Marton senior, who died in January 1744-5, tends to suggest that he did in fact own the Music Room garden, although it does not put the matter beyond doubt. He leaves rural properties to his wife Jane, nee Wildon:

'Also I give and bequeath all that my messuage and Dwelling house

in the Town of Lancaster with the Coach houses Stables Brewhouse Buildings Yards Gardens and Appurtenances thereto belonging now in my own Occupation together with the use But not the Property of all my Plate Pictures household Goods furniture Coppers Cisterns and other utensils for Brewing and other things which shall be therein at the time of my Decease unto my said Wife Jane Marton for and during the term of her Natural Life Except my Law Books which I give to my Eldest Son Edward Marton Also I give and bequeath unto my said Wife Jane Marton all my Estate....and Interest in the house I now live in the Warwick Court in Holborn London with all the Goods and furniture that shall be therein at the time of my Decease (Except my Law Books, which I also give to my said son Edward Marton) also I give and bequeath unto my said Wife Jane Marton all my Plate Jewells and Rings which I shall have or leave at my said house in Warwick Court aforesid Or at any place where I shall leave the same for Safe Custody in or near the City of London at the time of my Decease Except the Silver Cup given by my Lady Oxford which said Silver Cup together with all my said plate pictures household Goods furniture Coppers Cisterns and other utensils for Brewing and all other things in and belonging to my said Dwelling house at Lancaster and Buildings thereto belonging now in my own Occupation which shall be therein at the time of my Decease I give and bequeath after the Decease of my said Wife unto my said Son Edward Marton and do will and direct the same to go along with my said Dwelling house at Lancaster aforesaid as an Heir Loom and to be Enjoyed by him and Such Persons who shall be Entitled to my said Dwelling house at Lancaster aforesaid by Virtue of this my Will (and he leaves the rest of his property in the same way to his wife and after her death to his eldest son, entailing it on his heir male).'

The fact that the word 'gardens' is plural suggests that there were two and that one of them was probably the Music Room garden on the other side of the street. We know that as his son Oliver had it arranged in 1767, the Coach Houses were on the music room side. The reference to Lady Oxford's present is interesting: there are legal papers in the GLC Record Office in which this Oliver Marton is joint party with the Hon. Edward Harley, later 2nd Earl of Oxford.¹ Although the HMC indexes to the Portland MSS shed no light on this connection, such contact with the aristocracy might account for the unexpected sophistication of the Music Room. In this will we also see the successful lawyer seeking to aggrandise his descendants, to set up a dynasty. In fact Edward Marton inherited the property, but died a bachelor and intestate in 1758, whereupon his estates were inherited by his youngest and only surviving brother, the

¹ GLC R.O. MS A/CSC/1519 – they sell land at Stow to the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy, a Tory organisation.

Rev. Dr. Oliver Marton. More evidence is offered by the Marton papers in Lancashire County Record Office (DDMa and uncatalogued at the time of the 1970s research). In Box 8 there is a deed executed by Edward Marton, elder brother of Dr. Oliver Marton, and his mother, Jane, widow of Oliver Marton senior, in bar of Jointure and entails, dated 1744, which refers to:

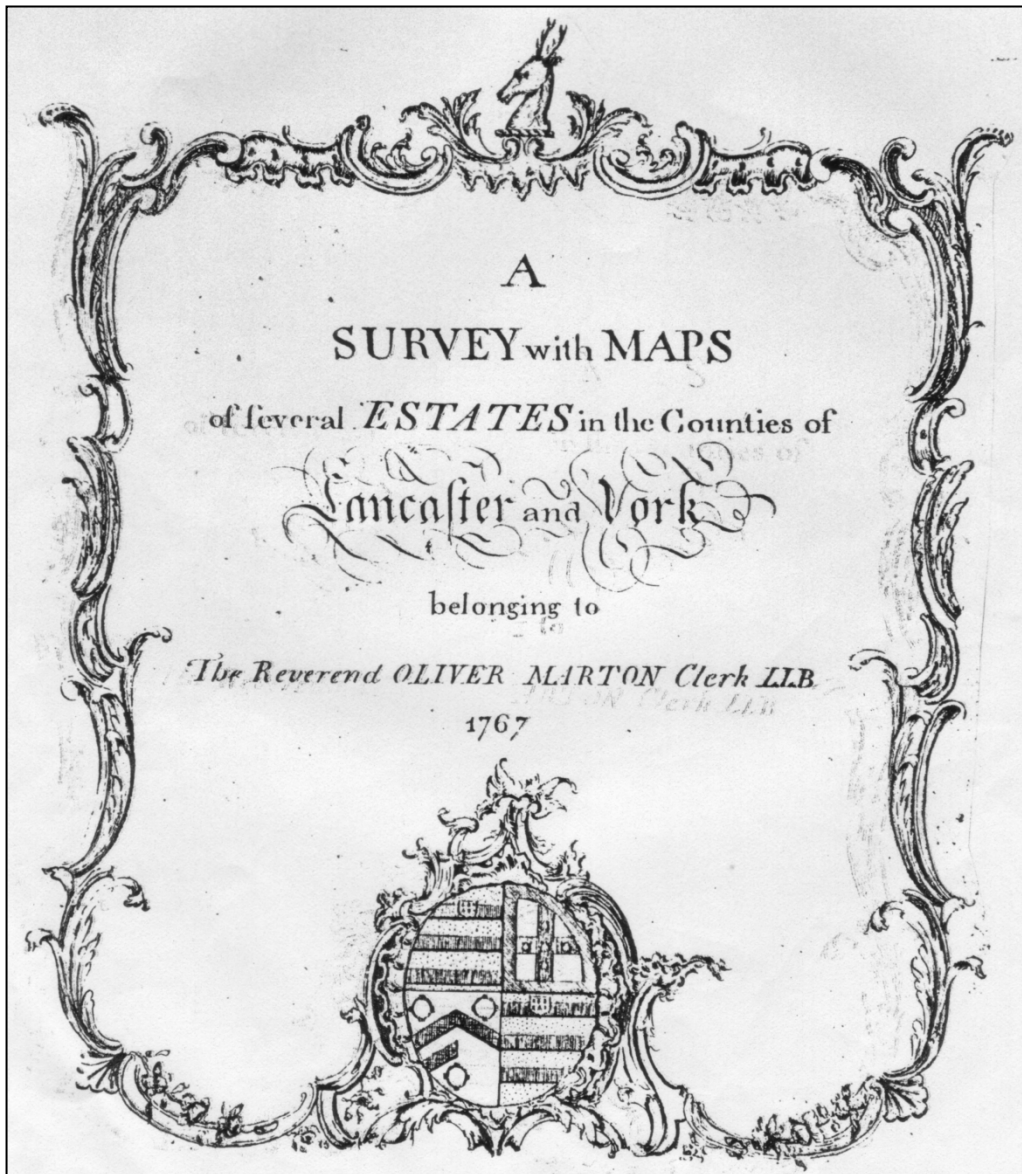
‘all that Capital Messuage or Mansion House in the Town of Lancaster wherein she the said Jane Marton and Edward Marton do now Inhabit together with one Coach House one Brewhouse one (there is a gap here in the text) two Gardens three Baths and all the every the closes Inclosures and parcels of arable Meadow and pasture Ground...’

The reference to two gardens suggests that the Music Room garden had been definitely acquired by now; the gap might even refer to the Music Room - but this is conjecture. There are other deeds relating to Lancaster property, but none that obviously refers to the Music Room site. It seems more than likely from all this that the Music Room was built by Oliver Marton senior sometime after his purchase of the house in Church Street in 1723, and before his death in 1744. This theory is at odds at several points with the Lancaster tradition that Bonnie Prince Charlie, who spent the night of Monday 25th November 1745 in Lancaster, on his way south towards Preston slept in the Conservative Club.² But there are also other reasons to doubt the accuracy of that story.

² See, for example, Martin Savage, *An Illustrated Guide to the City of Lancaster* and John Champness, *A New Walk Around Historic Lancaster*. The authority on this subject is W B Blaikie, *Itinerary of Prince Charles Edward Stuart...compiled from The Lyon in Mourning supplemented and corrected from other contemporary sources* (Edinburgh 1897) (Publications of the Scottish History Society XXIII). Blaikie says (P28n) ‘The Prince lodged in Mrs. Livesey’s house, Church Street, now the Conservative Club.’ However, he offers no evidence for this statement. This legend is repeated, again without evidence and in a very fishy form, in W O Roper, *Materials for the History of Lancaster*, 2 Vols (Manchester 1907) (Cheltham Society Publications LXV, LXVI), I, 87, ‘The headquarters of the Prince are fixed [he is using the historic present tense] *where the generals of the “Fifteen” had lodged* – at the house in Church Street then occupied by Mrs. Livesey, and now used as the Conservative Club.’ My italics. Really? So occupied in *both* uprisings? These legends being unsubstantiated, investigation must begin with Mrs Livesey. The most prominent family of that name in eighteenth-century Lancashire were the Liveseys of Livesey near Blackburn. Though their estate was so far away, three successive heads of family were freemen of the city (see T Cann Hughes ed., *The Rolls of the Freemen of the Borough of Lancaster 1688-40* 2 vols, 2 parts (1935) [Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire LXXVII I, 193, 194, 196.] Moreover in the gazetteer of Lancaster in 1684, one Ralph Lavesay is living in New Hall, Church Street. This is marked on the map next to Old Hall, near the site of the Judges’ Lodgings and nowhere near the Conservative Club. However it suggests the Liveseys of Livesey kept up a town house, since the owner of such a large dwelling was probably Ralph Livesey who died aged eighty four in 1695, or his son Ralph (d. 1725). Presumably the latter is the ‘Ralph Livesay Esquire’ who owned but did not occupy a house in

The survey of Dr. Marton's property in 1767

Lancaster City Library MS 201



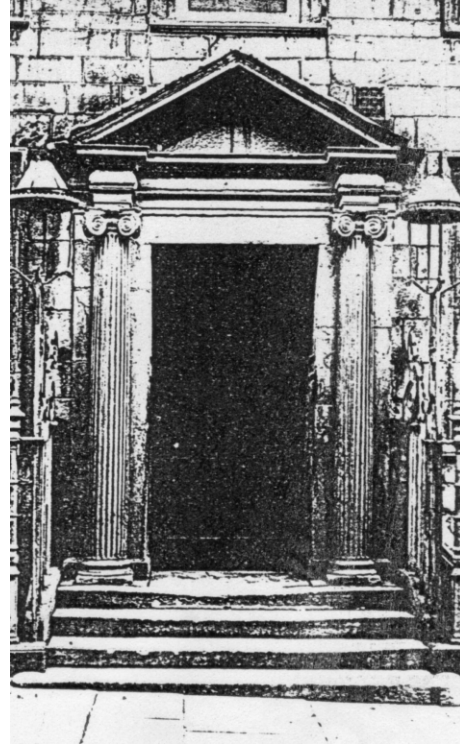
Church Street next door to the present Conservative Club at the time that Oliver Marton senior bought the latter in 1723. The younger Ralph left his property to his 'eldest daughter Elizabeth' (his will, Lancs R.O. DDSc 42/18) and she was perhaps the Mrs Livesey (spinsters were known as 'Mrs' then) who was paying tax on 24 windows in Church Street in 1766, while Dr Marton was paying it 70 (Lancs R.O. 1766 window tax). Difficult as it is to determine which house Mrs Livesey inhabited, she clearly did not live in the Conservative Club, and that she entertained Bonnie Prince Charlie is not proven. It seems likely that two houses in the same street have become confused in legend.

LANCASTER							
No	The Premises	Acreage of Land			Value		
		R	R	P	£	£	D
	A Capital Mansion House with Stable & Garden on the North side of Church Street	1					
	Coach Houses Stables and Garden on the South side of Church Street	2		5			
	A Barn and Garden on the West side of Penny Street			1			
	A House and Yard on the North side of Market Street in possession of Mr. Roberts			7			
	Another in possession of Mr. Sutherland			7			
	Another in possession of Mr. Harwood			7			
	Another in possession of Mr. Preston			7			
	Another in possession of Mr. Bratton			7			
	A House and Barn on the East side of Chin Lane in possession of Mr. Borrows			3			
	Carried Forward	1		7			

Dr. Marton's House

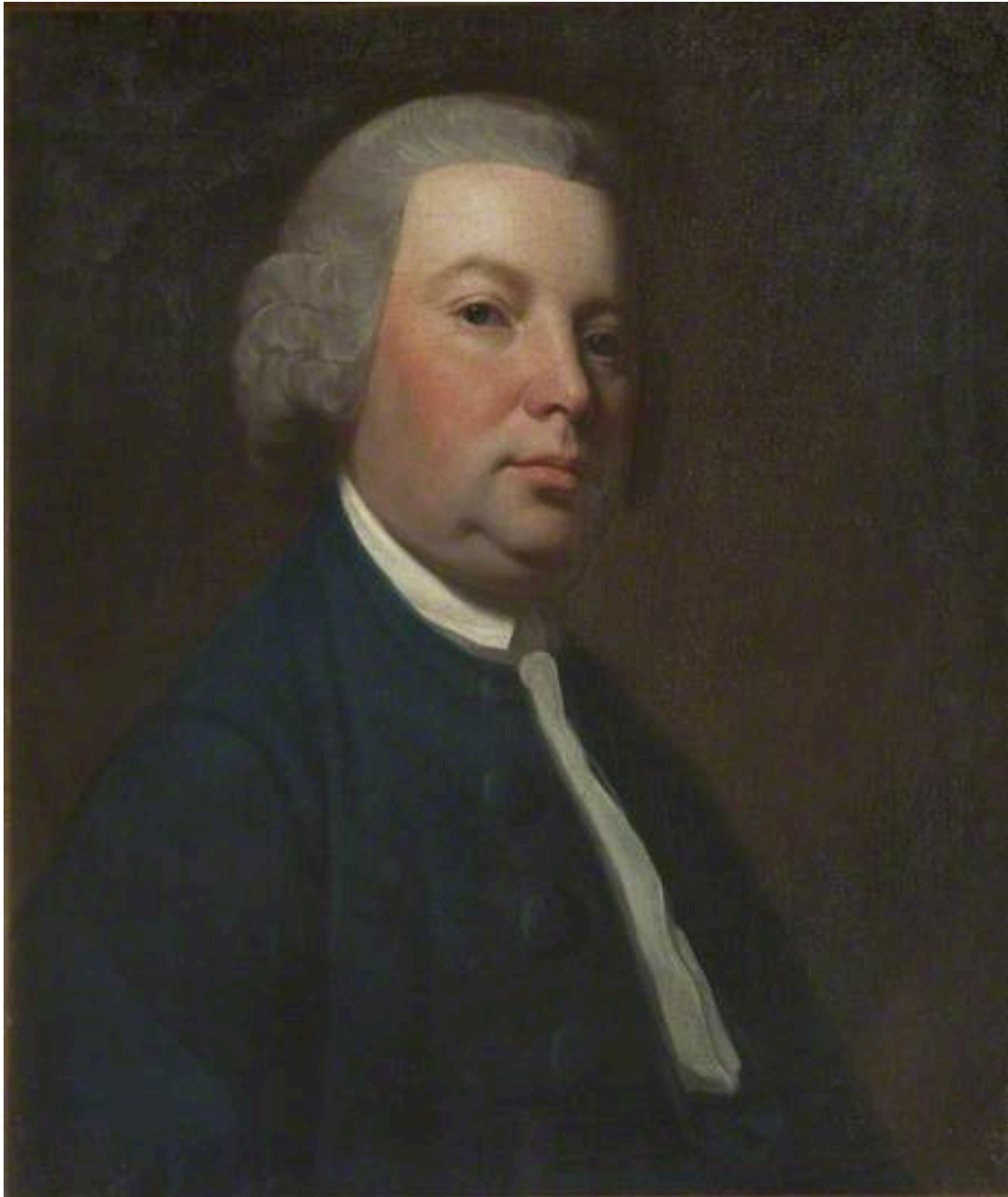
No. 76 Church Street

The house dates from no later than 1740.



**The Rev. Dr. Oliver Marton
(1721-1794)**

from the portrait by George Romney in Lancaster Museum



After Dr. Marton's death the garden was sold up for development, and divided into lots. Lancaster City Library has a feoffment of 1797 (MS 4479) which has a plan on it on which the Music Room is marked Sumr. House. One plot goes right up to the facade.

It used to be assumed that Dr. Marton, whose name is chiefly associated with the Music Room, also built it. However, this is unlikely. Like No. 76 Church Street, the Music Room is certainly no later than 1740. It was probably built by his father, Oliver Marton (1668-1774-5) of Capernwray, D.L. of Lancs., Recorder and Patron of the Vicarage of Lancaster and Steward of Lonsdale. He married twice, firstly to Grace Serle (St. Benet Paul's Wharf, 21 September 1698) and secondly, at St. Mary Aldermary, on 29 July 1707, Jane, daughter of Roger Wilson of Casterton, Westmorland, by whom he had four sons (Edward, George, William and Oliver) and three daughters. (Jane was also great great-aunt of the philanthropist the Rev. William Carus-Wilson of Casterton Hall, the founder of the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge attended by Charlotte and Emily Bronte. Rev. Carus-Wilson was immortalised as the horrible Mr Brocklehurst in *Jane Eyre*.) This elder Oliver purchased a good deal of property in Lancashire, including Capernwray, in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and died in January 1744/5. In his admission to Gray's Inn (5 May 1727) he is described as Oliver Marton of Warwick Court, parish of St. Andrew's Holborn, Esq. He was 59 when he joined Gray's Inn, and already in 1723 in the conveyance of 76 Church St. is described as 'of the Middle Temple', although his name does not occur as having been admitted there. In the following year (3 August 1728) Gray's Inn admitted Edward Marton, son and heir of Oliver M., of Gray's Inn, Esq.' The latter's brother George was admitted to the Middle Temple (20 May 1732) described as 'George Marton second son of Oliver M., of Gray's Inn, Mddx., esq.'

Again, in the elder Oliver's will, dating from 1735, he describes himself as 'of Gray's Inn' and speaks of 'the house I now live in in Warwick Court in Holborn'. He leaves his property to his wife Jane for her life and then to his eldest son Edward, or failing him his son George, or failing him his son Oliver, in tail male,³ or to the eldest surviving of his daughters Mary, Agnes and Jane for life, and entailed on the male heir of the eldest, provided he take the name of Marton. He directs that his son Oliver should be presented to the Vicarage of Lancaster, which he owned 'I have purchased the same

³ The limitation of the succession of property or title to the male descendants.

for that purpose'. He leaves his eldest son Edward his chambers in Gray's Inn and all his law books, and 'I give to my Son George Marton my Chambers in Pump Court in the Middle Temple'. He gives his wife one of his coaches and two of his coach horses, which she is to choose and a thousand pounds. Mary, Agnes and Jane get £3000 apiece, interest at 4% to be paid to them annually when they are twenty-one or married. If they marry without Mrs Marton's consent they only get £1500 and until they are twenty-one, they are to get £60 p.a. He leaves an extra £500 to his eldest daughter Mary, to Edward, and to his brother Edward Marton, and £3000 to George on his twenty first birthday, and £60 p.a. in the meantime. He leaves Oliver £2500 to be paid to him on his 24th birthday, 'and I do so Will and direct my Executors herein after named to pay for his Board and School in at Harrow on the hill in the County of Middlesex and to provide him with Clothes and other Necessaries as I have done during his Continuance there' and he is to be sent to university for a sum not exceeding £140 p.a. He gives his sisters Elizabeth Ball and Margaret Batty five pounds and £10 p.a. And he directs his son Edward or his heir

'by and out of the rents Issues and Profitts thereof...during the natural life of my Daughter Grace Stephens well and truly pay or cause to be paid the Clear Yearly sum of twenty pounds to such person and Persons and for such uses Intents and Purposes as She my said Daughter Grace Stephens shall from time to time notwithstanding her Coverture direct or appoint to the Intent the same may be for her Sole and... separate use and Benefit and not lyable to the Receipt...Controul Debts or Engagements of her Husband'.

In a codicil to this will, dated 1739 it appears that Mary Marton has in the meantime married Rigby Molyneux, and has had a dowry of £3500, with £500 to come. He has given George the chambers in Pump Court; and his sister Margaret Batty gets £100 because she 'now lives with me'. Edward Marton, (c.1714-1758), succeeded his father in 1744 and was returned as member for Lancaster in 1747 as a government supporter. In December 1748 it was reported that he and a friend at the Newton races were 'stoned at...and urged to drink the Pretender's health, but drew their swords and made their way through the Jacobite mob.' So it is not likely the family would have entertained Bonnie Prince Charlie.

The only other information about Edward Marton that survives is the evidence that he helped his nephew Oliver Stephens, child of that Grace Stephens who had all too clearly married a bad lot. In 1750 the *Gentleman's Magazine* reports that 'Wm. Marton

Esq., brother to Edw. Marton, member for Lancaster', died 10 Jan; and this was followed on 17 July by the death of 'Geo. Marton, esq., a noted conveyance'. So when Edward Marton died unmarried in 1758, his estates were inherited by his youngest and only surviving brother Oliver.

Oliver Marton had been christened on 7 August 1721 in St. Andrew Holborn and was educated, his father's will suggests, at Harrow. He matriculated as a scholar of Trinity Hall Cambridge in 1739, and was admitted LL.B. in 1743. He entered the Middle Temple 1 August 1759, (described as Oliver Marton, LL.B., only son of Oliver Marton, late of Lancaster, Lancs., est., decd.), and was Patron and Vicar of Lancaster 1767-1794. He is described as a 'kind liberal man, having firm integrity.' He may have been a rather careless one, for among his lawyers bills is an entry (26 December 1791):

'Attending you at your House on your having found in an Old Waistcoat Pocket some Bills one for one hundred pound and two for 10 each dated in 1776 which you cod. not make out an Account about and taking directions to make inquiries and making Copies of them and of all the Indowed Names but upon examining them they appeared all to have been paid.'

The lawyer charged nothing for this entry. Among the bills is one for oysters in 1791: the household consumed a barrel a week. Every second week they had Colchester oysters at 4s.9d. and every other, Pyfleet oysters, more expensive at 5s. 9d. The lawyer's accounts hold many references to debts and to raising and borrowing money, even though he was a rich man. They include an item for remonstrating with 'Mr Butler your fishmonger' to dissuade him from sending a writ about his unpaid bills. On 4th September 1766, Dr. Marton married Priscilla Anne, daughter and heiress of Admiral Edwards, in St. Marylebone parish church. They had two sons, Oliver, who was a lunatic, and George Richard, commissioned as an Ensign in the 22nd regiment in 1787. By 1780 Mrs Marton was dead, for Dr. Marton married Elizabeth White at St. Mary Lancaster on 10th October. He died 2 August 1794 and she died 1796. Her will is rather delightful, full of particulars about her lace and her clothes and who is to have them. Among such details she says:

'I leave to George Richard Marton Younger Son of my dear Husband Oliver Marton...the Diamonds which were all given to me by his dear Father contain'd in the Iron Casket. ...I leave to Mrs Wilson Widow of the late Reverend Daniel Wilson as a token of my remembrance of her a plain Mourning Ring which trifling as it is

I hope she will wear for my Sake. ...I have mentioned to my said Sister Jane Easter Saul some particulars which I cou'd wish to be sent to my [stepson]...Oliver Marton.'

After the death of Dr. Marton, the estates were administered by his second son George Richard Marton, even though they were entailed on the eldest, Oliver the lunatic. In 1805 George Marton enclosed land on the bank of the river Keer near Lancaster and began to build a country house at Capernwray. He predeceased his elder brother however, dying in 1834. After Oliver Marton's death in 1843 the estate was inherited by George's son George (1801-1867) and it was he who began soon afterwards to build the enormous Victorian Gothic pile which is Capernwray Hall today. The estate was sold on 11 September 1946 by Oliver Marton (1903-1954), who had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese in the Second World War. The purchasers were representatives of a Christian organisation originating in Germany, who set up a holiday conference centre for young people and 'the world headquarters of the Capernwray Missionary Fellowship of Torchbearers.' It remains a Christian school in 2013. As the writer of a pamphlet descriptive of the history of Capernwray comments:

'Little did the dignified aristocrats of Capernwray ever think their 19th-century mansion house on the banks of the River Keer would be the centre of a world-wide evangelistic outreach for God.'



Capernwray Old Hall

This house, on the Over Kellett Road, belonged to Oliver Marton and his sons Edward and Oliver. Its unpretentiousness indicates that they made the house in Church Street their main residence, though they had other properties outside Lancashire. In the early 1800s the family began to build a much bigger country house, Capernwray Hall.

The Seward family

During the nineteenth century the Music Room was owned by the Seward family, who ran a most interesting stained glass and ironworks business in Sun St., and used the building as a factory. The local masonic lodge at one stage met in the first floor room. A good deal of material from this period, with memorabilia, ephemera, photographs, catalogues, factory advertisements, press-cuttings, etc., is kept in the Lancaster City Library in Market Square.

The firm of A.Seward and Co. went into liquidation early in the twentieth century, and in 1934 the Misses Seward bought a parcel of property including the Music Room from the liquidators. During the late 1950's several buildings in this area were bought by Mr and Mrs C.E.Willan, who used the Music Room as a warehouse. By this stage it was extremely dilapidated, and a number of conservationists, led by Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, urged that it should be preserved. Nikolaus Pevsner fumed about it in the *Buildings of England*:

'In a back passage of Market Street to the N. between China and New Streets, is the Music Room. The MUSIC ROOM is said to have been built by Dr Marton, Vicar of Lancaster. He became vicar in 1767, and that is a date later than architecture and decoration could ever make one expect. They point to 1730-40. The building is of three storeys and only three bays- a glorified pavilion indeed- and has fluted pilasters on the ground floor and the first floor and sunk pilasters above the main cornice. The centre on the ground floor is a large arch, on the first floor a window with a bold open curly pediment. The main room inside was on the first floor- was, because it is now so decayed that there can be no hope of saving it. It is a disgrace for a town like Lancaster. Where were the successors of the Williamsons and Storeys when it came to preserving the finest interior in the town? The stucco of walls and ceilings, with medallions of the muses and Apollo in the overmantel, is of the kind which such Italians as Vassali practised. It is no good saying more. In a few years it will all have disappeared.'

The Georgian Group, who were closely involved, have described the local council as 'quite exceptionally obstructive'. However, Mr Edward Mason, the architect of the restoration, points out that:

'it should not be forgotten that the former City Architect, Allan Heppenstall, was instrumental in saving the plasterwork by insisting that it was propped and that a temporary room was constructed to prevent further damage. He did this shortly after his arrival in Lancaster in the early sixties and thereafter did all he could to bring

the building to the attention of those who were more sympathetic than his own council.'

By now, the plasterwork was mostly in pieces on the floor and the facade was half covered by a lean-to building. Then, in 1973, the Music Room and some of the surrounding buildings were sold by Mr and Mrs Willan to the Landmark Trust, then a charity just eight years old but already building momentum in saving historic buildings at risk just like this.

The Seward Family

In the nineteenth century the Music Room was used as a stained glass factory by the firm of C. Seward and Sons, of Market St. and Sun St. The following article is from *The Hardware Trades Journal* (14 September 1923), p. 666.

ANOTHER LINK WITH GEORGIAN DAYS.

How the Swards of Lancaster Built Up their Business—The King's Tinsplate Worker who Struck a Gold Medal.

"Time-honoured Lancaster" possesses many memorials of the past. In the centre of the town, for instance, is a horse-shoe fairly fixed in the middle of the roadway. It is renewed every seven years with civic ceremonial, but loyal Lancastrians still regard it as the same shoe that fell from the foot of the horse of John o' Gaunt as he rode through Lancaster way back in the 14th century.

The town furnishes still another relic of ancient hardware in an iron scone attached to the walls of a mansion now used as a Conservative club. It is a reminder of the old days when "the link boys" used to light our ancestors through the streets with torches; and at this self-same house did the Young Pretender, Prince Charles Edward, of gallant memory, stay during his ill-fated sortie in the 1745 Rebellion.

Lancaster also possesses one of the oldest hardware firms in England, which has been handed down from one generation to another since 1778—viz., that of C. Seward and Sons, in Market Street. During the long period of 145 years it has been carried on on the same site, gradually extending on all sides.

The firm was originally established by Mr. Abraham Seward, the great-grandfather of the present proprietor, Alderman C. F. Seward, and a prized possession of the firm, which hangs in the Alderman's office, is a Royal Warrant granted to the founder of the firm in the year 1797. It reads:—

I do hereby appoint Mr. Abraham Seward unto the place and quality of tinsplate worker in ordinary to His Majesty, to have, hold, exercise and enjoy the said place, together with all rights, profits, privileges and advantages thereunto belonging.

Given under my hand and seal this 30th day of March, 1797, in the 37th year of His Majesty's reign.

SALISBURY.

Written 126 years ago, the words are still as legible as on the day they were penned, and the document bears an imprint of the Royal Seal and the Inland Revenue stamp of that day.

This Abraham Seward, who may be classed as the father of the tinsplate trade, for many North Country businesses were established by his apprentices, was a most ingenious man and evidently one of artistic tendencies. He designed and manufactured many medals and tokens, including one of gold in commemoration of King George the Third's visit to Lancashire. On June 21st, 1796, he personally presented this to His Majesty King George at St. James's Palace, the medal being of delicate and exquisite workmanship. On one side it represented the Exchange at Liverpool and on the other the Infirmary at Manchester. It is said that the King was so delighted with this sample of his tinsplate worker's genius that he proffered him a knighthood, which was declined.

An ancient billhead of the firm, shown by Alderman Seward to the *HARDWARE TRADE JOURNAL'S* representative on the occasion of his visit, bears the Royal licence and authority, and the imprint "A. Seward, Lancaster, manufacturer to the Royal Family," while there are also woodcuts of various articles manufactured by the firm, including a lamp of a type which is still to be seen in the town. One of the workers is limned with a pig-tail hanging down his shoulder and with knee breeches!

In March, 1800, the firm received the Royal Letters Patent for a new invention in regard to carriage harness, and in the following July also a similar document for a new and improved lamp, lanthorn and street lamp.

A glance at the ledgers of the firm, which are still preserved from the year 1788, gives one an interesting peep into old-world conditions; but nevertheless one could not fail to admire the neat, regular calligraphy and figuring. The ledger was evidently the work of some clerk who had loved his task. Never a blot mars the fair pages, the contents of which are still clearly legible.

It comes like a gleam from a bygone age to read how Mrs. Bentham, of Castle Hill, bought two spoons, a saucepan and a saucepan bottom; and here they are entered in fair copper-plate

Abraham Seward, the second of that name, like his grandfather, the founder of the business, did a great deal to further its interests. In 1833 he was apprenticed to a Mr. Stevens, of 60, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, London, and he was only 23 years of age when he became practically manager of the business at Lancaster. Under him the firm made rapid strides and in heating engineering has done a great deal of work all over the country. It justly claims to be the oldest firm of heating engineers in the land, and has been employed by the Duke of Hamilton and Mr. J. P. C. Starkie at Ashton Hall, the Duke of Devonshire at Holker Hall, Lord Cross at Eggerslock, Earl Muncaster, Lord Derby at Knowsley, and Lord Harcourt at Newnham, while many public institutions throughout the length and breadth of England have been supplied with central heating apparatus.

The firm also held a contract from the Lancaster Corporation in the early days of last century for lighting the town with oil lamps prior to the invention of gas. A branch of the firm was opened in Preston, and, though it has now passed out of the hands of the family, it continues to trade in Isherwood Street in that town as "the oldest heating engineers" of England.

The present head of the firm, Alderman C. F. Seward, did not enter into association with it at the commencement of his business career. His father, Mr. John Bramwell Seward, considering that there was not enough room for three in the business, secured an appointment for him in H.M. Customs. The two brothers, Abraham and Charles, carried on in partnership, and then opened the Preston branch. Afterwards, however, they dissolved partnership, Charles carrying on the Preston branch and Abraham continuing to have charge of the Lancaster business. Subsequently the Preston branch passed into other hands, but retains the title of "C. Seward and Co."

The Lancaster business was established, as already stated, in 1778, and was formed into a private limited company in 1910. Besides the ordinary activities of the hardware and engineering trades, the firm has enriched many churches in the country with stained-glass windows, this branch of the business being carried on in a remarkable building dating back to the eighteenth century. It is supposed to have been built as a music-room by a Dr. Marton, Vicar of Lancaster, and originally stood in his garden. The interior is beautifully ornamented with a series of decorations in plaster, those on the walls depicting the Nine Muses, and those in the roof the Roman Emperors. Good judges say this is as fine an example of Italian art as may be seen in the North Country, and it is still quite intact. In the early days of last century it was also used as a lodge room for Freemasons, and the following extract from the minute-book of the Fortitude Lodge, 1825, is very interesting in this connection:—

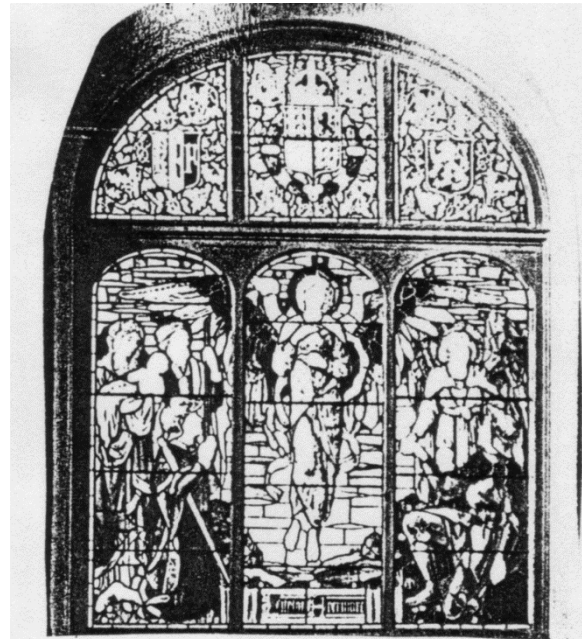
September 26th.

Lodge of Emergency held at the George and Dragon. Cause of Emergency a communication from Bro. Seward to the effect that the Brethren coming at untimely hours on Sunday evenings and on week-days, going through the workshop when the men were at work, that work being of a secret nature in Staining and Painting glass, was most inconvenient, and it would be better for both parties if they looked out for another room.

The Bro. Seward referred to was Charles Seward, the ancestor of the present directors of A. Seward and Co., Ltd.

In closing, it may be said that the Swards have played their part as citizens. The original Mr. Seward was elected a member of the Council in 1814, and held office as Chamberlain, Key Keeper, and Peck Sealer. Mr. Charles Seward also was a churchwarden, a Councillor, and a Peck Sealer; Mr. Abraham Seward was both a Councillor and a Mayor; and the present head of the business, Alderman C. F. Seward, has held the mayoral position—a family, therefore, that has left its mark on the town of Lancaster, and on a trade which it has enriched by many inventions.

**Abraham Seward, Mayor of Lancaster
with some of his advertising material**



The Music Room: Function & Plasterwork

This building dates from c.1730, and was originally a garden building, probably not so much a room for listening to music in but rather, if the name is rather a corruption of 'Muses' Room', simply an outdoor sitting-room from which to view the garden.⁴ The ground floor room may have originally been an open loggia. The first floor room contains a fireplace and elaborate plasterwork of the kind done by Italian craftsmen in several early Georgian English and Irish houses. Geoffrey Beard in his *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain* (London 1975) suggests in his entry for the *stuccadoro* Francesco Vassalli (fl.1724-63):

In view of Vassalli's work in Lancashire it is possible that he was responsible for work at Knowlsey; Burrow Hall; Croxteth; the Music pavilion, Sun Street, Lancaster... and for the vanished Leoni houses, Bold Hall and Lathom, completed in about 1731.⁵

Vassalli is known to have worked at Towneley Hall, Burnley, with Martino Quadry in 1730-1 and the implication is that he may have worked on these other buildings at around this date. In articles on Burrow Hall, Mark Girouard mentions the Lancashire group of houses with Italian plasterwork, arguing:

'The figure modelling at Burrow and the modelling of the birds in the ceiling of the hall and staircase are rather coarse (a close resemblance to the Music Room at Lancaster), and certainly not up to the standard of the relief that Vassalli executed at Hagley in this prompts the reflection whether these reliefs, and indeed perhaps the plasterwork of the whole, are not the work of Vassalli's assistant Quadry rather than of Vassalli himself.'⁶

The correspondence between the plasterwork at Burrow and in the Music Room is very close, and it seems reasonable to conclude that they are by the same hand. It is however, far from certain that this hand was Vassalli's. Girouard in his article had no architect or date for Burrow Hall, though he points out it is in the style of Gibbs but not his work. However, in some notes of which there is a copy in the NMR photograph file

⁴ The Music Room is a summerhouse and not a music room: see G S Inglefield, 'Early English Music Rooms- Their Origins and History', *Architectural Association Journal* LIII (Sept 1937), pp. 137-55; and Michael I Wilson, 'Music Rooms of the 18th Century', *Country Life* (19 Dec 1963), pp.1672-4.

⁵ Bold Hall, Bold, built by Leoni in about 1732, had ceilings by Cipriani and was demolished by a colliery company in about 1899. Lathom House, near Ormskirk, was built 1725-30, and the main block was demolished about 1920.

⁶ *Country Life* (14 and 21 April 1960).

(under Burrow with Burrow, Lancs.) W.J.Smith states that work in the rebuilding of Burrow Hall began after 1740, referring to family papers.⁷ Smith declares the plasterwork to be part of the same project: 'This work would date from post 1741'. If this is indeed so, it surely complicates Geoffrey Beard's inference that they came over from Towneley in c.1731, However, since Smith states that the owner of Burrow 'was content simply to alter the old house into the style of his day', perhaps the works of 1740 were merely external, and the interior in fact dates from ten years earlier. These notes are dated 1969.

In a letter dated 22 September 1987 Dr. Beard observes:

'Ignoring the restoration work in fibrous plaster, there is no doubt the original work is of very good Vassal-type quality. You will note the 'Otho.Imp' medallion at Lancaster was used again at Lumley...attributed to the equally talented Franchini brothers. So in summary, I think the work *is* Swiss Italian and either by Vassalli or the Franchinis. We don't know enough of any separate work by Quadri, as it is impossible to separate him from Vassalli at the main documented house of Towneley Hall, Burnley. ' ...'C[ountry}.Life ' works...really 'by comparison' and it results in a vast amount of 'attribution' to which plasterwork is usually prone. I think Burrow and indeed much of what I said is all 'by analogy' and should be largely ignored! ...The one great problem is that the 'Italians' worked as partners, often in a 'team', as at Ditchley. In consequence it is not easy to separate their effort.

'Artari and Bagutti worked for Leoni at Clandon *et al* and it would be easy to construct theories about that in Lancashire, but instinctively I feel they would be wrong.'

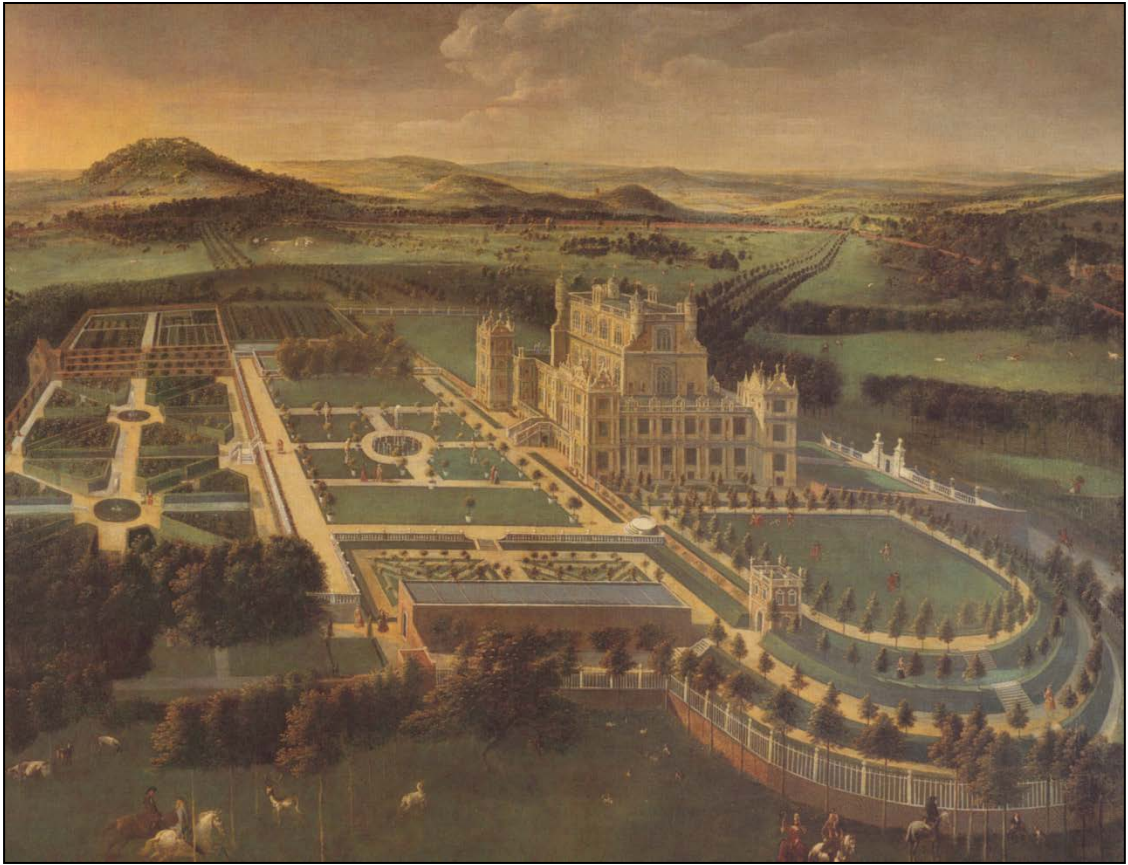
It can be seen from this any attribution of the plasterwork is entirely conjectural, based on stylistic evidence alone. As for the function of the Music Room, and its design, few surviving buildings in England are this shape. There is a reproduction in John Harris, *The Artist and the English Country House* (London 1979 Col. Pl.V) of a painting of Wollaton Hall by Siberechts (1695) showing a loggia with a room above it topped with a balustrade. It is interesting that the upstairs room appears to command a bowling green, for we know that there was a bowling green in front of the Music Room (see Mackreth's map of Lancaster, 1778). It is not clear whether this Wollaton building is the same as that 'pretty summer-house panell'd and ciel'd with looking-glass' which had beneath it a 'water house with grotesque work of shell.'⁸

⁷ In Pevsner's *Lancashire: the Rural North* and in Colvin's *Dictionary of British Architects* p.347 (citing W J Smith), Burrow is firmly attributed to the architect Westby Gill (1679-1746) who was also the architect of a circular Ionic temple in the grounds of Shirburn Castle.

⁸ A building at Wollaton described in John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove: the Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination 1600-1750* (1986), p. 103.

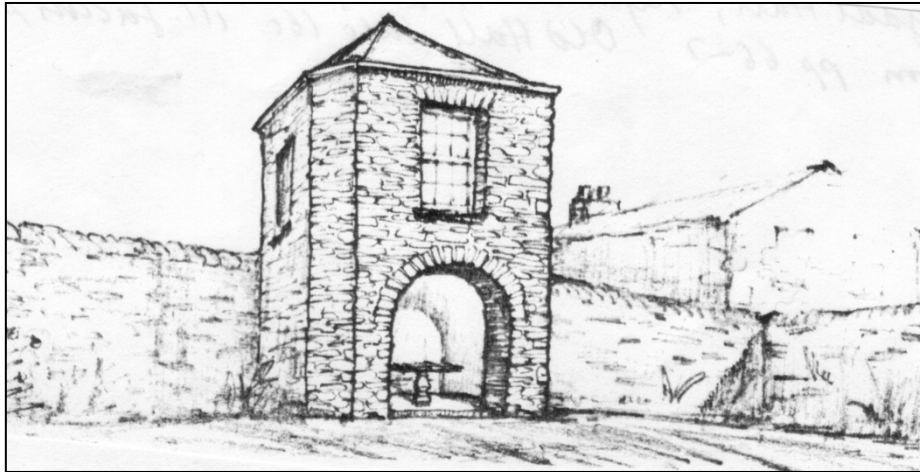
Garden building at Wollaton Hall, overlooking a bowling green.

From a painting by Jan Siberechts (1695)
in John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House* (London 1979)



**A summer house in Kendal built in the nineteenth century,
illustrated in David Butler's *Country Life* article.**

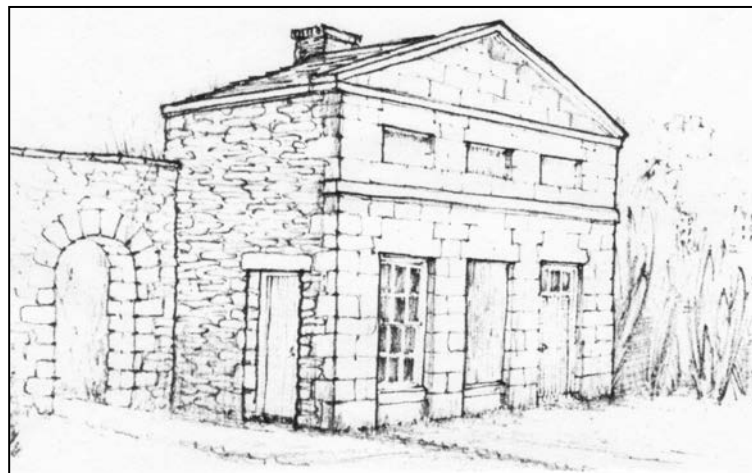
Kendal summerhouses, illustrated in the article by Butler



An early Kendal summer house, now demolished.



A Kendal Summer house designed by Francis Webster and now demolished.



A Kendal summer house once used as a bowling clubhouse and now demolished.

There is also the possibility of a more local and countrified influence. In an article in *Country Life*, David Butler describes the summerhouses of Kendal, Cumbria, a town about nineteen miles north of Lancaster and even closer to the home of Oliver Marton's second wife, Jane Wilson of Casterton near Kirkby Lonsdale.⁹ Kendal had a great profusion of these summerhouses: at one point there were more than 30.

'These buildings were well established in the life of Kendal by 1750 but the vogue for them had pretty well passed a century later. ...Their origin is to be sought in the circumstances of the town itself rather than in response to outside influences. The necessity which led to this fashion began with those people who lived in the closely built town centre where there could be no gardens. It was the practice of these Kendalians to own a garden on the edge of the town. With it, in this area of high rainfall, went some necessary protection from the weather as well as storage for the tools. There are several instances on record from about 1750 of the existence of gardens and summerhouses without any dwelling house.

'Substantial, two-storey summerhouses were the rule, neat and regular in form and small in scale. Their walls were of the local limestone, as was the whole town, their roofs of pale green slate brought in from quarries near Windermere, and terminated with a decorative lead or wrought-iron finial... The lower room was given over to gardening and storage, the upper reserved for domestic comfort. It usually had a fireplace with a small cast-iron grate and simple stone mantel, and a wall-cupboard with panelled door and brass knob. Some had alcoves in the thickness of the wall, a few went so far as a plaster cornice and a coved ceiling. The most important feature, however, was at least one good window giving onto a view of the fells across the town.....

'To the customary summerhouse must be added another group of buildings which were similar in appearance but different in their purpose and setting. These were clubhouses to the bowling greens provided by several of the town's inns. One such, the Woolpack, had not only its clubhouse and bowling green (whose enclosing walls still stand) to the south, but offered as well 'a garden and summer house on the north side' to quote a deed of 1786. Only one clubhouse survived until recently. Its lower room was lined with wooden compartments for the storage of bowls, the window of its upper room commanded the green.'

The features of these houses which connect them with the Music Room are their early 18c origins; the combination of open ground floor and upstairs viewing room with fireplace; the separation of house and garden; and the association with bowling-greens. Oliver Marton senior, coping with a rainfall no less high than that of Kendal, and a house and garden not contiguous, built himself a summerhouse grander but on the

⁹ David Butler, 'Refuge from all Intrusions: the Summerhouses of Kendal, Cumbria', *Country Life* (21 August 1986).

same plan as some he could have seen in Westmorland. But the existence of summerhouses of this pattern elsewhere in the country makes it more likely that the Kendal summerhouses were remarkable more for the fact that the tradition persisted there, than for the design. The survival to the nineteenth century of the summerhouse custom in Kendal was almost certainly the result of the small size and pretensions of the town gardens there. Mr Butler's comment about the importance of the window with its view of the fells might be qualified slightly. When the earliest of these summerhouses were built, it was before the beauty of the wild landscape had been discovered, and, important as the fells would have been to later Kendalians, early eighteenth-century owners were probably intent on their own gardens, or on the game of bowls.

It should be emphasised that such buildings are distinct from the *tempietti*, the ruins, the picturesque follies that embellished the landscaped parks of a later generation of Georgian gardeners. They were to be seen from a distance; a building such as the Music Room, would have been designed for its owner to survey *from it* a comparatively small formal garden.

Mackreth's map shows the remains of such a planting in Dr. Marton's garden, but the gardens of the early eighteenth century, with their straight walks and enclosing walls, are to be seen more clearly in paintings. With the arrival of 'natural' theories of landscape during the 1740's such gardens were swept away all over England, and with them must have gone hundreds of such little summerhouses, sometimes raised above the ground so that the pattern of the garden layout might be appreciated, sometimes built into the enclosing wall, sometimes simple, sometimes grand. Of such as these, the Music Room is a rare survival.

Some of the Landmark Trust's other properties also come into this category. The Library at Stevenstone, Devon belongs clearly to the same type as the Music Room. It survives next to the shell of a huge Victorian house, an open loggia with a fine sitting room above, dating from c.1710-20. It is raised slightly above a little terrace, and almost certainly originally overlooked a formal garden. Another Landmark, much earlier in date, shows the kind of building from which such summerhouses must have evolved. The bowling green pavilion at Swarkestone near Derby, which was built in the 1630's, has the same pattern of an open loggia with a glazed room above it for entertaining or

retreating from the weather. Moreover, in one of the very few early eighteenth-century gardens to survive in the British Isles, Westbury Court, Gloucestershire, (1698-1705) now the property of the National Trust, such a summerhouse can still be seen in its original formal setting, among canals in the Dutch manner which was popularised by William III. We must imagine The Music Room looking out over similarly verdant surroundings when it was originally built.



The Library at Stevenstone in Devon (top), another Landmark, is a similar garden building to The Music Room, built in the early 18th century. It looks out over a formal lawn to an Orangery.



Swarkestone Pavilion, another Landmark in Derbyshire, is a much earlier example of a garden pavilion dating from the 1630s. It served the same function as, and presents a similar form to, The Music Room: a fine viewing chamber above an open loggia. It was described as a 'bowle alley house' so also overlooked a bowling green.



The Summerhouse at Westbury Court

This Dutch garden in Gloucestershire is a rare survival, which was restored by the National Trust with the help of contemporary engravings.

Of the same period is William Talman's design for a hunting lodge at Hampton Court, which was drawn in 1699 but never executed. The topiary and the straight lines give an idea of the idiom in which Oliver Marton's much less grand garden in Lancaster was probably carried out. It can be seen that the important rooms in the hunting lodge are on a raised ground floor, so that the garden can be surveyed from above, and in the top right hand corner there is a small pavilion with an open loggia.

The restoration of the facade of the Music Room was helped by the existence of a drawing in the Lancaster City Library. This shows the fenestration much as it is now, with short arched windows in the side arches of the ground floor triumphal arch. But Professor J.M. Crook has pointed out that this is not an early eighteenth-century arrangement, and that the glazing bars in this drawing, imitated in the modern windows, and visible in the photographs of the first floor glazing of 1957, are too slender to be contemporary with the plasterwork or the stonework. In other words they point to some work having been done on the building during Dr. Marton's ownership. From the photographs of the building in a state of dilapidation it does not appear that there were any doors, and it seems possible that the short arched windows were cut, to allow entry from a neighbouring building, rather than having been designed to come down halfway as they do now. There may not originally have been any glazing on the ground floor at all, and whatever the windows on the first floor looked like, they were not as they are now. Mr Edward Mason, who restored the building, comments on this:

'We did use the drawing...but [it]...shows all the glazing bars to be of the slender pattern, both on the upper floors and on the arched windows above the ground floor doors. In fact what we found on site was two types of glazing bar, or at least the remains of two types: one a fairly thick section in the arched window on the north side and the other a more slender section which had been used in one of the upper floor sash windows. (There were also several windows glazed with a rather nasty type of sash which was obviously quite modern and therefore disregarded). It seemed probable that the thicker one was the original pattern which had remained untouched in a fixed sash while the opening sashes had been replaced at some time. Our design for all the new windows was therefore based on the former and I can only assume that the draughtsman who reconstructed the elevation in question took a little licence when he showed all the bars the same.

'Another small point is that this drawing shows all the upper floors as having equal sashes whereas we found that the only way to obtain a reasonably similar proportion in all the panes was by using unequal sashes. It would seem therefore that the ground floor arched windows may well be original...although it certainly does seem to be an unusual arrangement as the windows themselves are set fairly well forward of the rebate in which we have inserted the door frame. Probably there was never any intention that there should be a side door (the reconstructed elevation does not show one) and we did not find any doors or frames either. However the existence of a well formed rebate in the stonework as well as some massive iron hinges let into the stone indicated that at some time both these side openings had been fitted with frameless doors: a common feature of earlier vernacular buildings but surely rather alien to the Music Room! The central arch showed no signs of ever having had doors, glazing or being walled up, so why anyone should want to fit doors to the side openings is beyond me.'

So until further evidence turns up, the question of the original appearance of the Music Room, like so many in its history, must remain unanswered.

Charlotte Lennox-Boyd

January 1988

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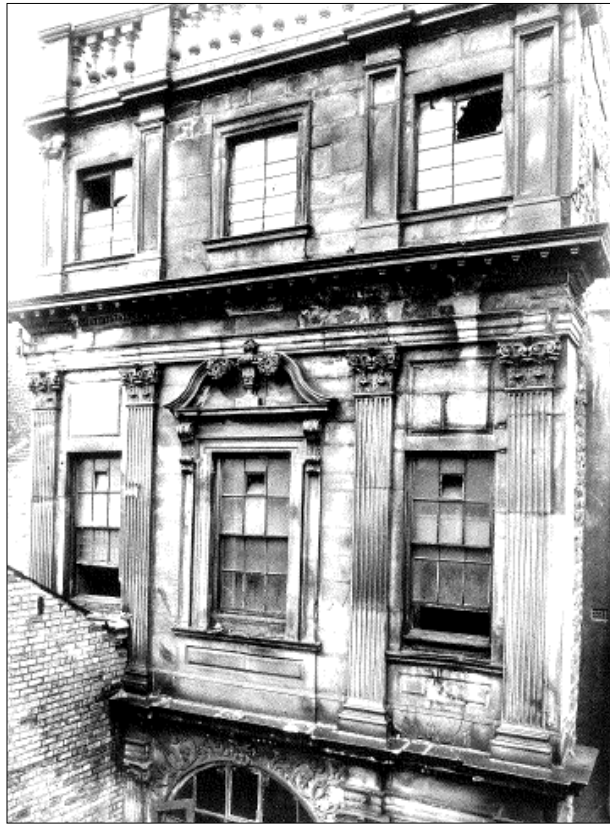
The work of Francisco Vassal, described in Geoffrey Beard, *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain* (1975), pp. 248-9. For the information that he also worked at Duncombe Park, Yorkshire, in 1715 and at the now destroyed Parlington Hall, Yorkshire, in 1732-3, see the same author's *Stucco and Decorative Plasterwork in Europe* (1983), p. 217.

The Music Room before Restoration



'The main room inside was on the first floor- was, because it is now so decayed that there can be no hope of saving it. It is a disgrace.... The stucco of walls and ceilings, with medallions of the muses and Apollo in the overmantel, is of the kind which such Italians as Vassali practised. It is no good saying more. In a few years it will all have disappeared.' – Nikolaus Pevsner









Restoration of The Music Room

1970s

The Music Room was restored from a state of extreme dilapidation by the Landmark Trust between 1974 and 1977 to the designs of Edward Mason, ARIBA of Charles B Pearson Son and Partners of Lancaster. The builders were Thompson and Jackson Ltd., and the repair of the plasterwork was carried out by the specialist firm Allied Guilds of Sutton Coldfield, whose head plasterer was Mr R.Evans.

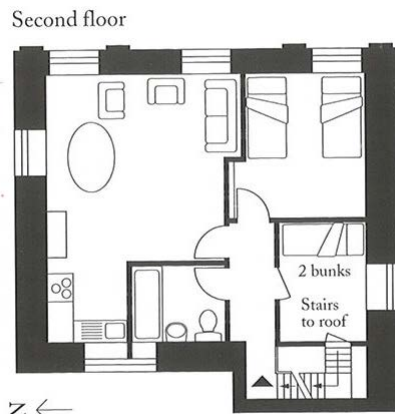
Four neighbouring buildings had to be bought and demolished before work on the Music Room could begin. Landmark's first action was to demolish the buildings masking the front. The rest were sold to the council for £4,000, less than they had cost to buy, and now form the square. The loggia at the bottom of the building was glazed and turned into a shop with a mezzanine¹⁰, with its own separate entrance on the left of the former loggia frontage. Another entrance on the right hand side was formed to lead to the Landmark accommodation.

The stonework on the front had to be extensively repaired and replaced, and what was intact was cleaned by brushing. The side and back walls were repointed; the roof renewed in asbestos tiles¹¹; the glazing replaced to the pattern of the fanlights on the ground floor side arches. One of the three attic windows was enlarged, another unblocked and a third moved. The parapet was rebuilt at back and sides and the roofline lowered. Inside, grand new oak stairs were installed to the first floor. On the attic floor, new partitions and doors were used to create a small living room with kitchenette, two bedrooms (one of them with bunks) and a bathroom.

¹⁰ For some years, this was a wedding dress shop, the large glazed windows a perfect showcase for the couture confections that, in a sense, echoed the billowing plasterwork above. In 2013, it has been in use for some years as a coffee shop.

¹¹ [Since removed!]

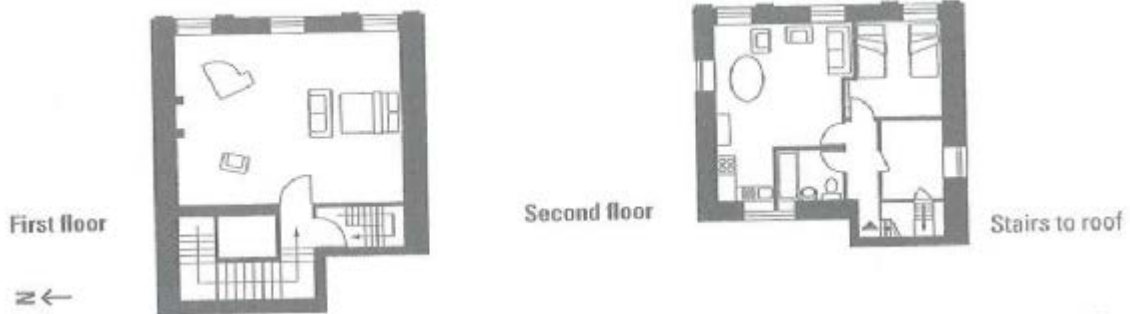
In the Music Room itself the floor was replaced in oak; the door and panelling were fireproofed; a new marble hearth was put in and lighting was concealed behind the cornice (subsequently removed). The plasterwork was restored, using the fallen fragments wherever possible, but imitating the style in fibrous plaster where it was not. One of the nine muses, Terpsichore, had completely disappeared and had to be designed from scratch. In some cases clay impressions were taken and casts were made; in others panels were taken bodily off the wall, crated and sent to Sutton Coldfield for remodelling.



The attic floor 1977-2007

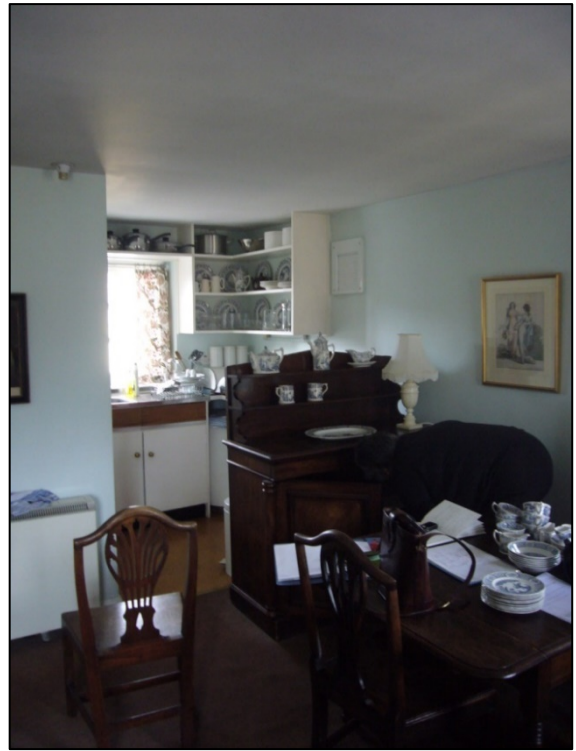
2007

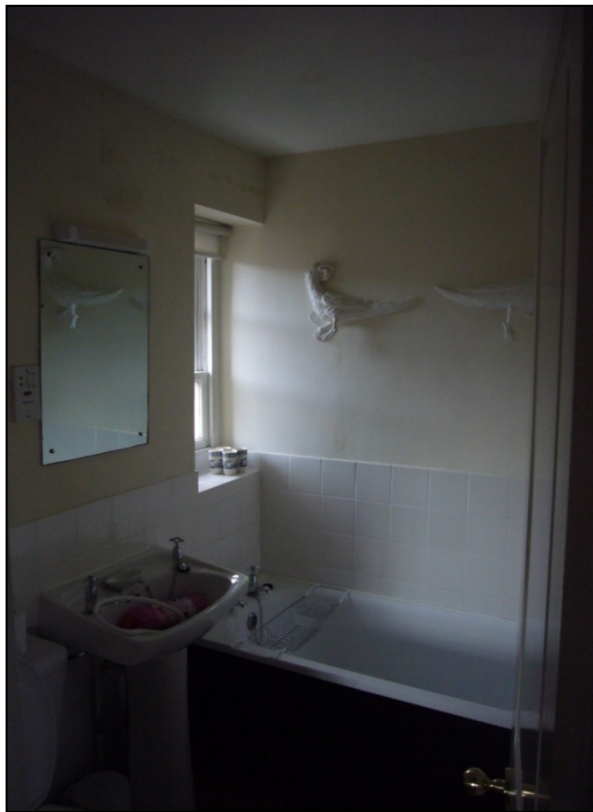
Thirty years later, perhaps due to changing expectations of comfort among Landmark’s visitors, it had become clear that the little bunkroom was hardly being used. From feedback, it also seemed that few were descending from the cosy sitting room to sit in the Music Room itself. In 2007, the decision was therefore taken to make the Music Room a truly magnificent bedroom and to decommission the bunkroom (which was anyway effectively in the lobby space at the foot of the stairs to the roof terrace).



The Music Room 2007-13

The Attic accommodation in 2007







Scaffolded for the 2013 works, the Music Room doubled as an outdoor gallery.

2013: a reconfiguration

Landmark is constantly striving to improve, as well as maintain, its buildings, and another five years on, we still felt that the attic configuration was not ideal, particularly the pokey kitchen. Feedback also suggested that the Music Room would function better as a Landmark for just two people, since few seemed to be using the twin attic bedroom, and those who did could not help but feel second class citizens with the splendour below. The plasterwork also needed a thorough clean and gentle overhaul, various cracks having opened up in the thirty five years since the original restoration. It was decided to take advantage of this closure to optimise the configuration once and for all.

The front of the building was to be scaffolded for redecoration, and with the added benefit of easier movement of materials and waste from the attic to the ground. We were particularly grateful through most of January and February 2013 for the cheerful tolerance of Ian Atkinson, proprietor of The Music Room coffee shop, and his staff, of several weeks of noise and scaffolding poles across their window. It was also Ian's idea that we might make further virtue of the scaffolding to display images of the interior to the townspeople. Such banners are inexpensive to produce and we felt the cost was worth it to give passers-by and coffee imbibers a taste of the splendid Baroque interior.

The modern partitions in the attic were reorganised again, this time to open up the kitchen area by moving the bathroom to replace the twin bedroom. This created a roomy living room and kitchen combined, making the most of the wonderful views across Lancaster's skyline. Landmark's own joiners made the new kitchen. The individual plaster motifs in the attic, salvaged from the first floor in the 1970s but not reinstated there then because of uncertainty about where they sat there, were either boxed off or cut out to prevent damage during the work, and then replaced.



By 2013, cracks had opened up in The Music Room, requiring specialist repair skills.



New partitions and framing going in on the attic floor; the reconfigured bathroom awaiting its new fittings, and door furniture carefully stored for reinstallation.



A site meeting between Landmark's surveyor Richard Burton, architect Linda Lockett and the contractor, Ducketts. The 1970's windows were taken out to improve insulation by introducing seals, and improved heating was installed.



This fine Roman profile was boxed in for protection during the works. On the roof, the joints between stone slabs that form its covering were repointed using lime mortar.

We very much hope that this will be The Music Room's last reconfiguration, and that those who stay in this exceptional building can, from now on, enjoy every part of it to its full potential.

Caroline Stanford

March 2013





Fan, from Bath and dated 1737, showing a *fête champêtre* much like those the Martons must have hosted at The Music Room, albeit not with water so close by.

*Private collection,
via the original author of this album, still a loyal Landmarker in 2023.*

2023: major external repairs

In 2023 a major maintenance campaign was undertaken on the exterior of the building. Unfortunately repairs and extensive re-pointing had previously been done in cementitious mortar, which does not breathe in the way lime mortar does. This means water becomes trapped in the inevitable cracks and junctions, resulting in deterioration of the original stonework.

The building was once again swathed in carefully designed and sheeted scaffolding, suspended/cantilevered at the sides and back in order not to load onto the neighbouring roofs. A detailed schedule of works identified previous cement repairs and these were all carefully removed. The whole building was carefully assessed to identify delaminating stone and areas requiring repair were marked up with chalk to indicate the level of intervention necessary:

1. To be dressed back to sound stone and left alone, if to a depth of 5mm or less.
2. To be dressed back and repaired with lime mortar (this is rather confusingly known as 'plastic repair').
3. The worst areas were dressed back and a new stone indent introduced.

All the cement pointing and render was removed and replaced with hot lime (applied when the mortar is still hot from the slaking with quicklime). The lime mix was carefully selected to ensure its aggregate would match the colour of the existing stonework as closely as possible. When the cement pointing was removed on the northwest corner, it was found the stone behind had deteriorated badly, requiring new stone walling across some 11 square metres. The scaffolding design had to be altered to support the walls for these repairs, a tricky task since the scaffold was hung from the building.

One stone capital had fractured due to the corrosion of the iron clamps used when the building was first built, and this had to be re-made and fitted. The

windows were all overhauled, carrying out splice repairs where necessary, and all were redecorated. The fire escape/access ladder from roof was upgraded to include a specially made ladder cage.

Inside, a new fire surround was fitted in the sitting room and the stove was replaced. The previous stove was unreliable and sat on a hearth with just a bare wall behind. Our workshop in Honeybourne made a timber bolection-moulded surround that fits over a cast iron reeded fire back, providing a much nicer finish and a focal point in the room. All the rooms were redecorated, except for the Music Room itself which is a more specialist job and did not yet need it.

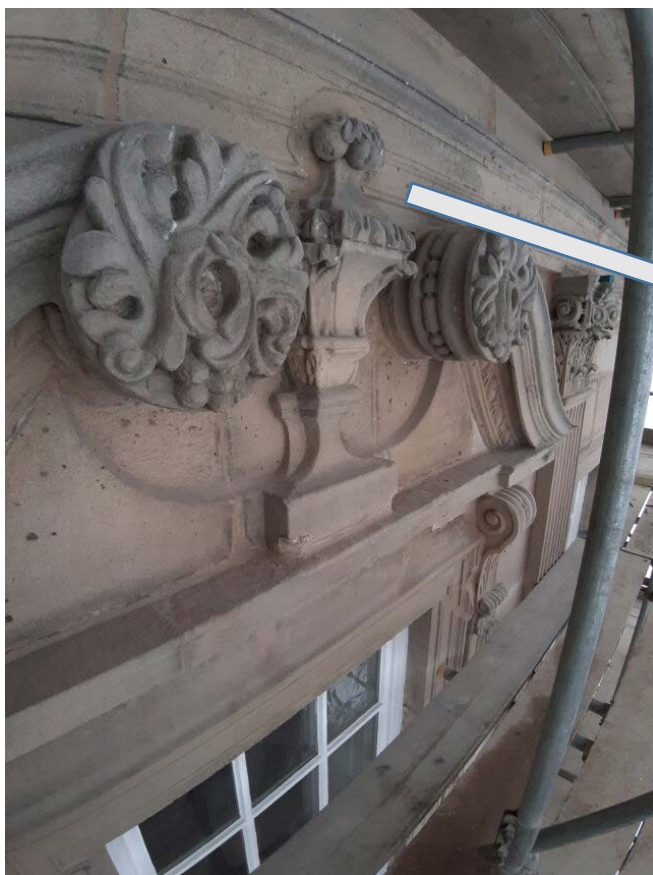
Such major works only happen occasionally to our buildings, and have to be carefully scheduled in well ahead on our long-term maintenance programmes. The work is self-evidently expensive, involving specialist craft skills. Every stay in a Landmark helps these careful campaigns of ongoing repair right across our portfolio.



Clockwise from top left: the NW corner masonry after removal of inappropriate cementitious repairs and after repair; the Music Room shrouded for repair; lime samples were carefully matched to the colour of the stonework.



The replacement of the capital, which had 'exploded' due to corroded (so expanded) iron clamps. The craftsmanship of the replacement is clear, as the mason fine-tuned it before it was fitted. Note too the careful repointing.



Example of plastic repair on high level stonework: before and after repair.