

**National
Trust**

Croome Redefined

**Conservation Management
& Maintenance Plan**

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Second Round Application**

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Front cover illustrations:		
South front: mid-20 th century, NT	South front: Cody Woodman, aged 9 Stanley Road Primary School	South front: c.1939, Lady Maria Coventry/Oral history project
South front: Mimi Tavares, aged 9 Stanley Road Primary School	South front: 1771 <i>Vitruvius Britannicus</i> Vol V	South front: 2008, NTPL
South front: 1909, CET	North front: C19th engraving, CET	North front: Late C19th, WRO

Sarah Kay asserts her right to be acknowledged as author of this document.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this Plan:

AA	Antony Archive (held at Cornwall Record Office)
BA	Beaufort Archive, Badminton (held at Gloucestershire Record Office)
BM	Badminton Muniments
CET	Croome Estate Trust
CEA	Croome Estate Trust Archive – post 1921 papers (held at the Croome Estate Office)
CHT	Croome Heritage Trust
CMMP	Conservation Management & Maintenance Plan
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
NT	National Trust
NTPL	National Trust photographic Library
PBP	Property Business Plan
WRO	Worcestershire Record Office

Unless otherwise stated, all archive document references relate to the Coventry family papers accepted in lieu of inheritance tax and allocated to the Worcestershire Record Office.

(N.B. at the time of writing, the Coventry papers are being re-catalogued by the WRO reference numbers quoted in this document (e.g. F62/15) should be searchable within the new system).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Croome Redefined: Sharing a Country House

This document is a product of the progressive and inclusive approach that the Croome Redefined project has already and will continue to take to the conservation and presentation of Croome Court: genuinely and systematically involving, engaging and listening to our visitors, volunteers and supporters at every step of the way, ensuring that the Court personifies heritage that has value and meaning to as wide a range of people's lives as possible.

More than just a source of information and reference, what shines through above all in this document is Croome's *spirit and personality*. Its story is essentially a paradoxical one of continuity of purpose and radical change. It is also a story of survival. The Court is a house whose fabric reflects how it has responded to and been shaped by changing human needs and priorities. It is battle-worn but still beautiful and it has a warmth of character that reaches out to us. Almost everyone who is involved with this great country house, be they staff, volunteer or visitor, has an emotional reaction to it. It is a place that has endured for some 500 years and it encapsulates many and various layers of human occupation. It speaks to us on many levels: architectural, emotional, spiritual, historical, aesthetic and personal. It has been home to many different people, cultures and institutions. Its walls have witnessed the whole gamut of human experience: pride, ambition, grief, family break-ups, continuity, despair, faith, benevolence, generosity, anger, alienation, exploitation, optimism...

This human dimension is woven into the Court's fabric and history. For about 350 years of its life it was a family home at the heart of a great estate, evolving architecturally and rising from the ashes of two fires in the 17th century. As the family developed and improved their country estate, it became not just a chief source of their wealth and influence and an emblem of their success, but a bold, ambitious and seminal work of art. Croome's peak and source of principal significance was under the 6th Earl of Coventry in the mid-18th century, when it was a crucible of creativity and visionary design, providing a platform for the developing skills of some of the biggest names in architectural and landscape design, most notably 'Capability' Brown and Robert Adam. For them, this was where it all began and it launched their spectacular careers. It matured gracefully during the Victorian period under the 9th Earl, the grand old man of Worcestershire, who respected his inheritance and did not modernise or alter it. In the mid-20th century, in line with the tragedies that befell so many other country houses, it faltered and nearly fell, its original function having become defunct.

With remarkable tenacity, resourcefulness and a good deal of luck, Croome found new use and purpose. For some forty years, it was a Catholic school for disadvantaged boys, a poignant period of mixed emotions and still very much within living memory. More unusual and colourful was its function as the International Headquarters of the Society for Krishna Consciousness, with the devotees' open-house approach of spiritual education and enlightenment. The Court resonated with their appreciation of its beauty and spirituality. Thereafter, the low point of Croome's fortunes was the succession of property developers whose attempts to find alternative uses for the Court and its surroundings showed little or no sensitivity to its integrity. It is incredible that the house came through so relatively unscathed.

Not only has Croome survived into the 21st century but a new optimism has pervaded the depressing story of disintegration during the previous century. What seemed impossible only a decade ago is now happening: the pieces of the jigsaw are all being put back together. The Court's landscape setting, 'Capability' Brown's 'first and favourite child', was rescued from arable production and its restoration process is well underway. The Court has miraculously been re-united with its designed landscape, they being two essential halves of the same whole. Croome's Outer Eye-catchers have been acquired and restored. The Court is to be re-serviced, its fabric repaired and the important Coventry collection of heirloom furniture and works of art will finally be able to return home. The Court's service wing, The Red Wing standing cheek-by-jowl with the house, has been saved from the threat of total dereliction and will be brought back into use.

Now, Croome Court's historic significances and layers need to be understood, expressed and shared in all their fascinating detail, and that most definitely includes the latter part of the 20th century, right up to it being rescued from the brink by the Croome Heritage Trust and opened to the public by the National Trust in September 2009 for the benefit of the nation. History begins yesterday. But as well as looking backwards, even at the more recent past, we need to consider Croome's present and *future* significances if we are to ensure that the place lives on with continued sense and purpose. We need to be as inclusive as possible in understanding what Croome means to people today. Our visitors have told us that they are interested in exploring all the building's layers, including those of the 20th century. The variety of uses and attitudes towards the house over time are of interest and relevance to people today and they illustrate emerging attitudes to conservation and the meaning and value of heritage, which stimulate fascinating debate.

In order to explore Croome's potential *future* significances and creative opportunities, we need first to understand its *past*. Few would deny that the highest-ranking period of Croome Court's significance was its re-modelling by the 6th Earl of Coventry in the mid-18th century. He was effectively Croome's 'Creative Director/Producer'. He was the living embodiment of a vision and Croome was the creative crucible where exciting, ground-breaking ideas were discussed, experimented with and made real. He put his trust in young, new talent, nurtured it and gave it a platform and a voice so that their creativity, guided and inspired by him, found expression. The relationships that he fostered sprung up out of Croome and the young creatives who had had the opportunity to work out their professional identity went forth into the wider world and made great names for themselves. But their links with their roots at Croome did not die - they returned and maintained their relationship with their patron throughout their long and fruitful careers. He also employed more established designers and played them off against each other, thereby stimulating competition and creativity. We want to build on the 6th Earl's approach and offer opportunities to new talent from varied artistic backgrounds who will draw inspiration from Croome and his original vision.

For various reasons, the lead-in time to this project has been quite long. There has been massive organisational change in the background, staff structures have altered, maintaining capacity and managing change has been challenging. The uncertain situation with the structurally-threatened Red Wing sitting right next to the Court has been a tremendous concern and has hampered decisions relating to the Court because the two buildings are so inter-dependent. But with both these scenarios now having successfully been resolved, this development period has, with hindsight, proved

enormously beneficial. It has meant that not only have we been able to spend time getting to know the building and beginning to plough through the vast amount of archival information available, but our plans for how we want to share the Court have evolved. The thinking behind our proposed approach to its restoration, presentation and interpretation has crystallised. We have had time to canvass opinion from other people from different backgrounds, time to consult, not least, with our visitors, volunteers and stakeholders. We have had time to trial our approach and learn from the outcomes.

What has emerged, quite clearly, is that people want the freedom to explore Croome Court. This is in both the physical and the metaphorical sense. The various waves of evaluation and consultation have shown that people love the sense of freedom and opportunity that the currently empty Court provides: freedom to wander, roam and enjoy the light and the breath-taking views out into the landscape. Since we first opened the Court to visitors in September 2009 in its unrestored state, warts and all, we have had no prescribed visitor route, no barriers (apart from those dictated by structural instability) and no collection that we need to protect from light-damage. This instantly presents a challenge for the future: how do we maintain the all-important sightlines envisaged by 'Capability Brown', 80% of which emanate to and from the Court, whilst carrying out our duty of care to the internationally important Coventry collection once it returns to its re-serviced and structurally sound home? And how do we encourage everyone involved to regard this as a creative opportunity for enriching the visitor experience (which we are determined to do) rather than a potential mill-stone around our necks?

Evaluation has also been very clear in that what people are interested in is being able to intellectually (and physically) explore all the historical layers of the Court's history, not just the core of its significance, the 6th Earl's creation in the mid-18th century. Whilst this period is undoubtedly the cause of the house's primary significance, people are fascinated by all the other incarnations and levels of human occupation. A small minority would like to see a full-blown restoration of the mid-18th century, but, even if we had all the necessary furniture, fixtures and fittings to carry this out (which we do not), the overwhelming majority would like to see a mix, a variety, a range of perspectives. It is precisely the richness and variety of what Croome has meant to different people in the different periods of its long lifespan that is, for many, so fascinating. And this presents us with another challenge: how do we achieve this mix, this variety, without appearing confused, bitty and looking as though we are unsure of which period we are trying to present?

Our response to these challenges is the key to the present Croome Redefined project within the Court. It is in contrast to our philosophy of approach to the restoration of Croome's landscape. The restoration programme of 'Capability' Brown's designed landscape, all but lost to the plough, the motorway, the Second World War, tree-felling, silting-up of water and the encroachment of brambles and undergrowth, was and is, to take it back to its core significance of Brown's landmark creation in the 18th century. Our touchstone is the survey by Snape in 1796, an extremely detailed, accurate map of the parkland, its buildings and watercourses, showing it as a maturing landscape. It is a purist approach, pinned down to a very precise date.

We *could* take this approach with regard to the Court. We could say that we are aiming to restore it to, say, the late 1760s, when its re-modelling under Brown had taken place and the house had taken on its Palladian façade as the centrepiece of Brown's new landscape and by which time Robert Adam had carried out his fantastically important

decoration and furnishing of three of the principal rooms in the emerging Neo-classical style, the Long Gallery being the first room in the world that he tackled in its entirety. We could choose to focus on this period because it demonstrates the watershed of decorative styles that the Court's interiors embody: the late Rococo plasterwork of Vassalli to the first Neo-classical decoration by the young Robert Adam and Joseph Rose, all destined to become major, almost household names in the history of interior design and architecture.

Alternatively, we *could* take 1809 as our precise dateline, the death of the 6th Earl, when he lay in state in the Saloon, its walls hung with black, in a coffin lined with crimson velvet, by which time he had finally completed his ambitious creative vision. By then, James Wyatt had taken over from both Brown and Adam as architect/designer, these two men having died before their patron, and had installed the pair of sphinxes guarding the South Portico steps and Broadway Tower, the 6th Earl's final grand gesture, had been erected at the extremity of his land-holdings to the south-east.

We are capable of researching and re-creating the historic decorative schemes associated with this period. We have done it before, in many other NT properties. Other organisations have done it too, such as Historic Royal Palaces at Kew. And this is partly the point. It is what we would normally do, and be expected to do. What makes this project different, what makes it stand out from the rest, and what attracts the HLF, is that we want to do something different. We do not want to 'revert to type' and 'just' carry out an 18th century restoration. We want to have changing, rolling presentational themes and portray different periods of the Court's occupancies, potentially concurrently. We may decide, for example, in due course, to fully restore a particular room to its 18th century description where we have a significant number of elements that could be re-united, but we may also wish to show another room as a 1950s Catholic boys' classroom, and yet another as occupied and decorated by the Hare Krishnas. We may choose, with our creative partners, to reflect a story relating to the 9th Earl of Coventry's local importance as the Grand Old Man of Worcestershire, the loss of the 6th Earl's important Gobelin tapestries in 1902 and the Tapestry Room's parallel universe in New York, the ethical question of whether to retain the 1980s taste of a property developer, or the fascinating discovery of a leaded-light window relating to the Jacobean house sandwiched in the basement between modern breezeblocks.

But we are not taking this approach to be perversely different, or on a whim: it is a real opportunity and one that has taken, quite rightly, time to think through. Our aim is to explore all Croome's past significances, including the 17th century earlier house(s) on the site and the more recent 20th century ones, *plus* what it means to people now and what it could mean to them in the *future*. Rather than imposing our internal opinions, we want to be open to other perspectives and voices. We want to be inclusive and transparent and ensure that it is a participative experience, in terms of its planning and execution. In essence, at Croome, we want to explore and re-define what it means to visit an historic country house in the 21st century, and we want to share this process with our supporters, hence: *Croome Redefined: Sharing a Country House*.

By taking this approach, it is important to stress that we are in no way intending to deny the significance of the 6th Earl, Brown, Adam, Wyatt and what they and the roll-call of eminent craftsman in the 18th century achieved. Their collective creation will always be, in the hierarchy of the Court's significances, the primary one, the reason why the Court has international significance in terms of its design and decorative history, its setting

within the designed landscape and the sightlines radiating to and from it. This is expressed in the section on Significance in this Plan. In fact, the innovative, bold approach of the 6th Earl and his willingness to take a chance on new talent and combine it with more established talent, is our inspiration and is at the heart of what we want Croome to be once again: a crucible of creativity and craftsmanship.

The 6th Earl did not simply choose established designers, he recognised and respected the spark of potential. He discussed, debated and worked alongside them, probably with quite a firm hand on the tiller. He changed his mind, he tried new things and kept those for which he had a fond attachment or a thrifty need. Similarly, rather than working with the usual tried and tested suspects, we want to invite people from different creative backgrounds and disciplines to respond and react to Croome. Whether from the fine or decorative arts, from music, dance or theatre, from fashion design to poetry, we want to offer a platform to new talent. This has been described as seeing Croome through a different lens, or holding up a mirror to Croome's significances and stories. It will be fresh, challenging and stimulating, just as Croome was in the mid 18th century. But it also needs to have quality, integrity and a coherent vision, just as Croome had under the 6th Earl.

This approach does not mean relinquishing responsibility, nor being vague and woolly. On the contrary, it means we need to be even more sure of what we are trying to achieve and how we going to do it. This is because it is uncharted territory, it is a new and different approach to presenting an historic house and the risks are therefore greater. We have a huge responsibility and duty of care to ensure that everyone who is involved with Croome is aware of its range of significances and Spirit of Place. We must remain vigilant that we do nothing that is irreversible or detrimental to the Court's fabric and soul. Having survived so many ups and downs, it must not be on our watch that its integrity, dignity, quality and character are lost.

We must also be careful not to impose an artificial future significance on Croome, or what has sometimes been described as 'the dead hand of the National Trust'. The Court and the golden thread of the Coventrys (their motto was Constant & True), whether generations of the family themselves or the Coventry family Trust, must be allowed to speak, shine through and be reflected if future responses to it are to be meaningful and relevant. We, and our creative partners, should not make it up, invent out of thin air. The Court is not, as so many people like to describe it, a blank canvas. We are not starting from scratch - it has its own, remarkable, rich, layered stories that need to be told and drawn out. On the other hand we cannot, and should not, necessarily anticipate how people might respond to the place in the future, and what future meanings and values the Court may take on for them.

This is going to be a tricky balancing act. There are risks attached to any project. Taking a more conventional approach and pinning ourselves down to a specific period in history would, whilst always challenging, be less fraught with unknowns. But for a project that is aspirational in its aims, that wants to push the boundaries of the 'normal' approach and break new ground, not just for Croome, not just for the National Trust, but perhaps for heritage as a whole, the risks are far greater. In addition to the normal potential risks of lack of sufficient funding, lack of buy-in from staff and volunteers, lack of capacity, lack of communication and so on, there are the added and greater risks of being capable of changing our normal ways of working, moving outside our comfort zones, working with external creative partners, managing public expectations, failure to deliver something

truly ground-breaking, and even reputational risk for the organisation. In our efforts to appeal to new audiences we do not want to lose our core, traditional segments. We also need to anticipate that we may alienate some who assume, or would prefer us, to take a more conventional approach. One of the greatest challenges in our development phase has been trying to articulate our evolving philosophy to the presentation of the interiors and keeping everyone on board.

There are new questions we are grappling with, many of which will only be resolved once we get going, but which we must carefully consider: How do we offer new talent a chance and still ensure quality? How do we let go enough control to truly encourage creativity and innovation and yet maintain integrity and coherence? How do we convey Croome Court's Spirit of Place and significances without being prescriptive and subjective? And how do we maintain, or adapt, this new way of working into the future, beyond the life of the present project? These are all challenges that we are alive to, and for which this Plan aims to provide a guiding framework. The pilot Withdrawing Room project in 2011, partly funded by the HLF as part of the development phase, has taught us a lot about the pros and cons of working with a creative partner, right through from the brief, shortlisting and interview stage to the communication and legacy of the deliverable. But we will need to do more in order to remain flexible, positive and creative in our team-work and clear and transparent in the communication of our aims and processes in order to bring people with us on the journey.

Before we can really fully explore the creative opportunities of this approach and, critically, before the Coventry collection of furniture, paintings, architectural drawings, porcelain, books and decorative objects can safely return to its home in the Court, we need to make sure the building is fit for purpose. The present water ingress, rot and on-going damage to the structure and the decorative plasterwork and timber needs to be halted. Emergency repair work has already been carried out, but there is much more to do. The forthcoming HLF project is therefore a repair and re-servicing programme, with capital works to the value of £3.8M (excluding fees) involving internal and external fabric repairs, the renewal of the mechanical and electrical systems, including heating, lighting, plumbing, security and fire detection. This will take place during an intense phase of about 18 months - 2 years, where the Court will effectively be a building site, a place buzzing with activity, disruption and noise. We want to make the most of this phase and emphatically will not be closing the Court, but encouraging our visitors to witness, understand and even participate in the processes. We will start offering opportunities to creative partners in order to make the most of the changing scenarios and think of ways in which people can join in – it has been likened to not only watching the theatre scenery change but actually being able to help change it.

Part of the re-servicing work involves creating a range of accessible stores in existing spaces on both the first and second floor where visitors will be able to engage with the collection, draw out the human stories and make links between the documents in the archive and the objects themselves. Actual structural work is fairly limited, given that the more invasive requirements of accommodation, visitor facilities and plant rooms can now be incorporated into the Red Wing, whose fabric is in an advanced stage of disintegration anyway, thus relieving the pressure on the fabric of the Court and not having to give up some rooms for practical functions. This in turn gives us much more freedom and scope in being able to open up every floor of the building to share with our visitors.

It is important to realise that this work will not result in a fully re-decorated and re-furnished suite of interiors. This is just the beginning: thereafter we will have a 5-year life span of the HLF-funded project in order to explore the creative possibilities, and during that time, we will continue our investigations and research into the building, both archivally and physically. We will continue to develop our understanding, and that of our volunteers and visitors, of the Court and its interiors, by involving them every step of the way. Processes such as paint analysis, dating timbers and brickwork, opening-up, investigating layers of fabric, will all be actively shared, explained and discussed, through tours, trails, talks, film and hands-on opportunities.

It is too soon to be making decisions about decorative schemes: whether to re-instate the 18th century paintwork in the Dining Room or not, whether to rip out the property developer's striped wallpaper and huge bath and re-create the Adam state bed with its green silk damask hangings, or whether to make replica scroll-end benches for the gaps in the Long Gallery. We do not yet have the paint analysis findings or sufficient details of the structural evolution, nor the full picture from the archive and, in any case, there is no rush. It is always important not to rush into such decisions, particularly irreversible ones, but, more than that, the discussion and the debate surrounding such decisions are fascinating. These are things that get people going, encourage them to express a view on their heritage, often with great emotion. It is not a vote, nor a foregone conclusion. What matters is encouraging people to have these discussions in an open, constructive way about the relative meaning and value of heritage.

A key aspect of our approach in tackling these challenges is our conservation philosophy. We know that one of the best ways of engaging people in their heritage is through conservation-in-action. Gaining insight into conservation is extremely effective in awakening and sustaining public understanding and enjoyment of cultural heritage. *Involvement* in the processes also gives them ownership of what is, after all, their heritage. Thus, the processes of conservation and people's engagement with it need to go hand-in-hand. In recognition of this, this project has developed a *Joint Philosophy of Approach* or 'mission statement' for the Activity Plan and this CMMP (see ii.8 in the Introduction section).

Our participative and boundary-pushing approach to this project and everything that we do at Croome provides a huge opportunity to fulfill the Heritage Lottery Fund's aims of Learning, Participation and Conservation, as well as fulfilling the National Trust's strategy of Bringing Places to Life. As expressed in the *Joint Philosophy of Approach*, our changing presentational themes, our interactive conservation-in-action, our open-arm attitude to creative talent from different backgrounds and disciplines and our determination to be inclusive in all our processes, will help us, and the HLF, achieve this.

However, this is only the start of the process and our relationship with this building: Croome Court deserves to be fully understood and it richly rewards investigation – it has much to tell us and we are only beginning to gain insight into its many structural layers, clues and stories. In addition, it is important not to view the Court in isolation from the Red Wing, the Court's service wing. Recent developments to secure the long term future of the Red Wing means that, at last, the two buildings can be studied and considered together, which is vital as the two structures were fundamentally inter-dependent and are physically linked. As access improves and repair works progress to both Court and service wing, further exploration and investigation of the fabric can take place and

provide continual exciting opportunities for research, interpretation and visitor engagement.

We are determined that Croome shall be a place that takes this inclusive approach forwards and breaks new ground by redefining the role of the historic country house in the 21st century. Our project is called ***Croome Redefined: Sharing a Country House***. It opens the door to Croome Court's future and, building on its historic significances, will allow its future values to emerge and evolve. We hope that it will be a place that, once again, will intrigue, inspire, instruct and delight.

INTRODUCTION

Aim & Authorship

This Conservation, Maintenance & Management Plan (CMMP) has been researched, compiled and written by Sarah Kay, Consultant Project Curator for Croome Court and member of the project team, on behalf of the National Trust.

It has been developed over three years as an integrated process in conjunction with all stakeholders and taking their various views into account. It draws together documentary and archival research, initial physical research into the fabric, statutory designations, primary sources, secondary and published sources, and expert and lay opinion. It also takes into account a large body of evaluation gathered through questionnaires and interviews with different user-groups: existing visitors, key stakeholders such as the Croome Estate Trust and Croome Heritage Trust, staff, volunteers, local communities, neighbours, schools, Black & Minority Ethnic groups, young people, special interest groups, as well as those who currently do not visit in order to understand why not.

It accompanies the second round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Croome Court (National Trust Midlands Region) in Worcestershire. The first round of the application was successfully submitted in April 2010.



Croome Court from the NW in the early 1900s (WRO)

This application follows on from the £4.9m HLF grant in 1996 for the restoration of 670 acres of the registered landscape of Croome Park, the 'Capability' Brown landscape within which Croome Court sits and which has since been restored and declared inalienable. A stipulation of the 1996 HLF grant for the Park was that the National Trust

should use all reasonable endeavours to secure agreement for the public to have access to Croome Court and its grounds, and to safeguard its appearance.

Since beginning their stewardship of Croome in the mid 1990s, the National Trust has sought to reassemble, restore and share one of Britain's most significant country estates. Croome once stood on the brink of eternal ruin: its original buildings, statues, farmland, woodlands and water under splintered ownership, in serious disrepair and under management that was as sympathetic as it could be given the huge financial requirements. Over the course of the last 15 years the Trust has applied skill, determination, courage and funding to bring this magnificent place back to life, piece by piece. The 'Croome Redefined' project now gives the opportunity to secure the long-term future of Croome's principal architectural asset – Croome Court, family home and grandstand from which the true beauty of the designed landscape is intended to be seen.

The Plan will guide and inform our approach to the restoration and interpretation of Croome Court. It expresses why and how we are going to safeguard and enhance what is important about the place. It will act as a resource and reference for staff, volunteers, the Design Team, contractors, consultants, stakeholders and the general public to aid and increase understanding of the Court's significance, history and future potential. It will feed into the Activity Plan to provide inspiration, themes and historically accurate detail for all our interpretation, engagement, conservation and activities within and around the Court. It will act as a way of sharing and championing Croome's importance to the community in the past, today and in the future.

Essentially, this Plan has the following aims:

- To set out our understanding of the evolution and significances of Croome Court *to date*, and
- To express how we are going to protect and enhance those significances into the future
- To act as a source of information, inspiration and guidance to everyone involved in the Court's care, presentation and interpretation, be they staff, volunteer or creative producer
- To champion the spirit of Croome.

Background

Croome Court in Worcestershire, the historic seat of the Coventry family, is a Grade 1 registered Palladian mansion set within a Grade 1 landscaped park of Special Historic Interest. It was re-modelled from an earlier house in the mid 18th century by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown with advice from Sanderson Miller for the 6th Earl of Coventry.



Croome Court from the south, 2008 (NTPL)

Croome Park is of international importance as arguably the fountainhead of the English landscape movement. It was the result of the first independent commission carried out by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the mid-18th century, and the park contains buildings by Brown, Robert Adam and James Wyatt. Six of the park buildings are listed as Grade I and two as Grade II*. Croome was to prove immensely influential, transforming the designed landscape of Britain.

The Court is the principal building within the park, situated in glorious Worcestershire countryside, six miles south of Worcester with, to the west, the Malvern Hills forming a spectacular backdrop to its setting. It is the focal point for the inner and outer-eye-catchers in and around the park, with 80% of the sightlines radiating to and from it. As a complete work of art, Croome's landscape, parkland and buildings are of international importance, standing at the very beginning of the careers of Lancelot Brown and Robert Adam. Croome's early contribution to the momentum of the 'English landscape' style of garden design proved immensely influential and reflects the 6th Earl of Coventry's willingness to take a chance on and develop the genius of Britain's greatest design talent of the 18th century. The Court is the key element of the whole, forming the centrepiece of Brown's new landscape design.

Croome was Brown's first major and independent commission and a work of seminal importance and, more than that, it was where Brown focused on the re-modelling of the *house* first, before the landscape. Under the 6th Earl, with Brown as Clerk of Works, the interior of the house was transformed by a lavish scheme of Rococo and Neo-classical decoration, which included three important early interiors by Robert Adam and also combined the skills of many other distinguished designers and craftsmen. Both Brown and Adam owed much to the Earl's vision, patronage and ambition. Croome became a landmark in their careers, and its elegance and picturesque beauty placed it at the fountainhead of possibly the greatest period of English cultural endeavour.



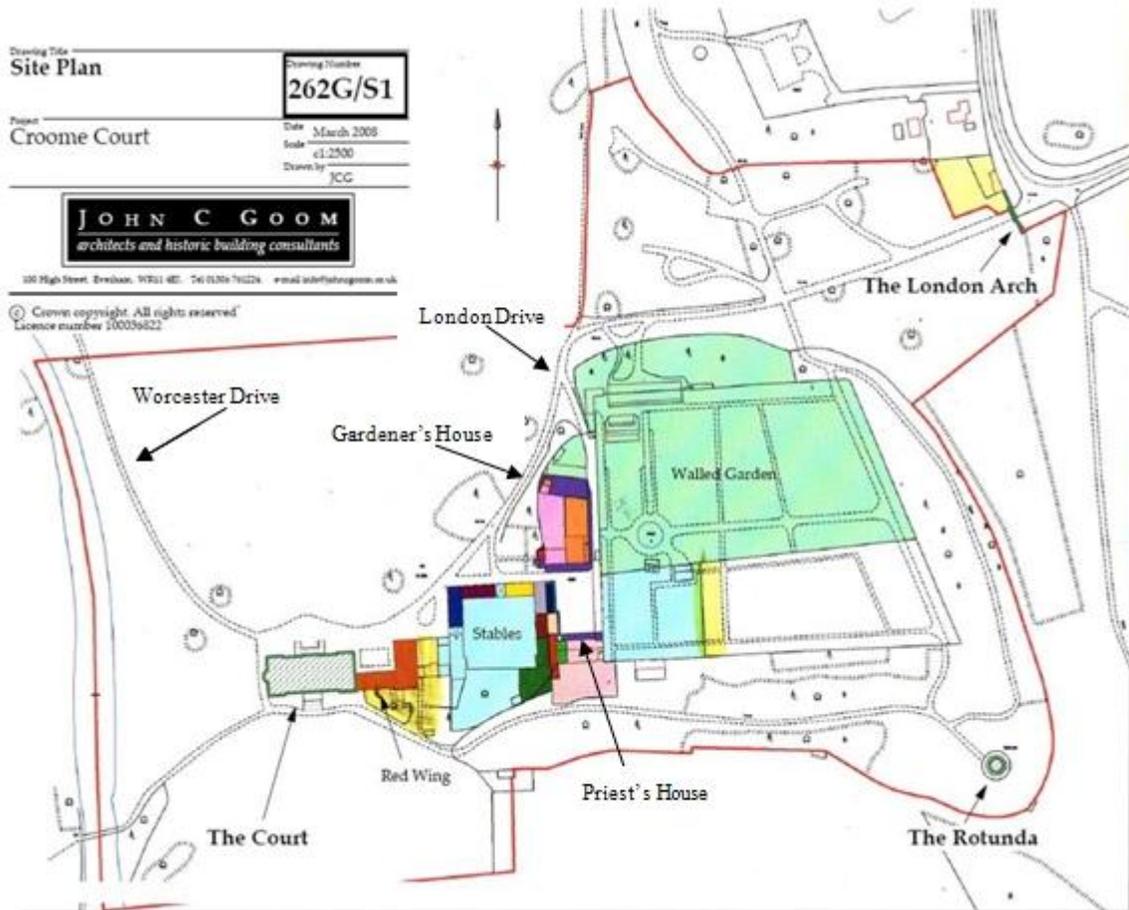
The Red Wing to the east of the Court, in 2011 (*Author*)

Croome Court's red brick service wing (derelict and only recently secured under the ownership of the Croome Heritage Trust in partnership with the National Trust), known as The Red Wing, is listed as a Grade I building, being part of the same listed structure as the Court itself. It is physically connected to the east side of the Court and is contemporary with it, although it encapsulates five stages of construction within its fabric, being on the site of earlier service buildings. The massive stableblock (designed by Brown with later modifications by Adam), enclosed on three sides, lies further east beyond the Red Wing and was previously converted by its former owner, a property developer, into fourteen separate residences, along with the ancillary buildings of the former barn/riding-school/chapel and the Priest's House.

Beyond the service yards to the east lies the seven-acre Walled Garden, two thirds of which are in private ownership, including the Gardener's House, while the other third, separated by a heated wall, is owned by the Croome Heritage Trust and leased to the National Trust. The former is being restored by the owner, whilst the latter is still derelict. A range of modern garages were erected in the lower, western end of the third of the

Walled Garden to provide parking for the residents of the converted stableblock and service buildings.

The Court, with its modified service ranges to the east, sits at the heart of the designed landscape, which in turn is surrounded by its now much-reduced estate: nearly 8000 acres as opposed to its historic extent of over 15,000 acres. (See plan and aerial view photograph below for location and relationship of these buildings to the Court).



Site plan of Croome Court's immediate surroundings, 2008 (John Goom)



Aerial view of Croome Court with its service ranges and Walled Garden to the east, c.2001-2

The Coventry family's involvement at Croome goes back to the late 16th century, when Sir Thomas Coventry bought the Manor of Croome including the manor house and its associated medieval church, in 1592. Providing a strong thread of tradition, identity and continuity for the local communities and the wider estate which encompassed several counties, and personified by the patriarchal figure of the 9th Earl of Coventry, the family continued to live at Croome until 1948, when circumstances common to many great houses and estates conspired to break that continuity. Their long association with the place and its spirit means that Croome cannot be separated from the Coventrys, nor they from Croome. They are the foundation, and underpin everything else.

Nevertheless, Croome is not just about the past, and not just about the 6th Earl who, in the mid-18th century, created the Croome we see today. It has had fascinating and diverse 20th century uses, significances and values for very different groups of people from very different backgrounds. It holds strong associations for many local people who care deeply about its preservation and future value. Croome is as much about the recent past and the future as it is about the historic past.

Ownership context

Croome was owned by the Coventrys, a great Worcestershire family renowned as lawyers, politicians, holders of royal office, statesmen and pillars of the community, for some 500 years from 1592 until the middle of the 20th century. 1948 marked the demise of Croome as an entity, when, like so many other great country houses and estates,

forced by social upheaval and death duties, the house and bulk of its contents were sold by the family.

The Court had actually already been put on the market in 1946 and desperation was setting in as a buyer could not be found. Even correspondence with the National Trust had come to nothing. Demolition was being considered as the Croome Estate Trustees knew they could not afford to keep the place going much longer. The sale in 1948 was the point that Croome Court's integral unity with the surrounding landscape was severed...until now.



Croome Court from the church, 1967. Note the schoolboys' football pitches on the north lawn and the Park in the foreground under arable cultivation (*Leonard Edwards*)

From 1948, the Court passed through the hands of various owners, some of whom respected it less than others: The Birmingham Catholic Archdiocese, who used it as a school for boys (1950-1979), the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (1979-1984) and several property developers who speculated with Croome as a country house hotel, restaurant and conference centre.

By the mid 1990s Croome's Park stood on the brink of ruin, its 18th century buildings in disrepair and under fragmented ownership, its pasture, woodlands and waters under harmful management. In the early 1990s proposals were put forward to the Local Planning Authority to convert Croome Court into a 122-room hotel and conference centre, to re-design its once stately parkland as a 27-hole golf course, and to develop its historic walled garden for housing. Croome was all but lost to the nation.

The advent of the National Lottery Fund provided the National Trust with the opportunity to save Croome's heritage. In 1996 the NT first acquired 670 acres of registered parkland at Croome, with the aid of a £4.9 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and an additional £2.8m from bequests and donations. This enabled the NT to acquire, endow and restore 670 acres of Croome's historic landscape and built structures. They embarked upon a 10 year approved programme of project work to restore this great masterpiece of landscape design. Croome was the very first of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown's grand projects, the original estate once stretching out over 15,000 acres. Whilst the 1996 NT acquisition covered much of the central ring of Brown's parkland design, several key components fell outside their initial stewardship: the estate's centre-piece Croome Court and its red brick service wing, the Rotunda, London Arch, Home Shrubbery and the three 'Outer Eye-catcher' follies, Dunstall Castle, Pirton Castle and the Panorama Tower.

In 2006 the NT completed this 10 year HLF-funded landscape restoration project, having carefully executed a series of complex and interlinked conservation tasks to re-instate Brown's original idyllic parkland vision. The NT then secured over £1 million of funding from Natural England to enable the restoration of Croome's surrounding ring of 18th century parkland structures, acquiring the Outer Eye-catchers in 2009, three of Croome's original parkland buildings, then rated at the highest level of risk on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register.

In 2007 the NT's direct involvement with Croome Court began, entering into a leasehold of the building in partnership with its new owners, the Croome Heritage Trust (CHT), who acquired the Court for £2.5m in 2007 when it came onto the open market. They were motivated by a desire to re-unite the Coventry family collection (which they still own and which is on temporary display at Kelmars Hall, Northamptonshire) and the Court with the wider landscape park. The arrangement was initially a 10-year leasehold, which was due to expire in October 2017, but this has now been extended to a 30-year lease in reflection of the NT's commitment to the long term future of the Court and Croome in general. The aim has always been to transform this into a 999-year lease as soon as the fundraising target is achieved (and HLF funding secured). The CHT is an offshoot of the Croome Estate Trust (CET), the Coventry family Trust which was founded in 1887 by the 9th Earl of Coventry in order to safeguard the inheritance of his nine children and their progeny. The CHT's aims and objectives, as set out in their charitable constitution, are essentially to conserve and preserve Croome's heritage for the public benefit and to provide educational benefit for young people.

Thus today, Croome Court is owned by the Croome Heritage Trust (CHT) and has been managed, administered and opened to the public by the National Trust as part of the overall site, Croome Park, since September 2009. In the first year of opening the Court, visitor numbers to the property as a whole increased from 60,000 to 90,000 per annum and reached 116,001 visitors in 2010. Of these, approx. 75% visited the Court.¹ For the 2011-12 season, visitor numbers rose to 134,065.

A further, major step in securing the immediate setting of the Court and another piece in the overall jigsaw was the acquisition of the Red Wing, the Court's service wing, by the

¹ In March-December 2011 this percentage had dropped to 46% but is still very high. C.f. Attingham Park, a comparable large mansion and park property in Shropshire, where only 21% of visitors currently visit the mansion (72,000 out of 330,000).

Croome Heritage Trust in October 2011 and then leased to the National Trust. The immediate priority is to safeguard the structure from further deterioration, until it can once again be put to the service of the main house.



Celebration with staff, volunteers and Friends of Croome Court opening to the public in September 2009 (NT)

Scope

This CMMP relates to Croome Court, the urgent conservation requirements of its fabric, its re-servicing so that it is fit for purpose and the engagement of the public with that process. It is central to the National Trust's aim to raise the £4.8m required to restore Croome Court and secure its long term financial future.

This CMMP and the application to the HLF concerns Croome Court itself and its immediate curtilage, including its setting in and relationship with its designed landscape and its proximity to the first section of the Pleasure Grounds, the Home Shrubbery. It does not include the Red Wing, the stableblock, the service yards, ancillary buildings, the Pleasure Grounds, Walled Garden, Park or wider estate. (These aspects of Croome are dealt with in separate but associated conservation management plans – see *Links* section below).

Links and Context

This CMMP should be seen within the context of the 2009 application for planning permission and Listed Building Consent (LBC) which included change of use for the Court to allow public access to the building, access routes to the Court and extended visitor facilities. It also included a Design & Access Statement and Travel Plan. Regular

meetings are held with English Heritage and the Malvern Hills District Council Conservation Officer.

Planning permission and LBC have thus already been granted for:

- Change of use of the Court from private residence to a property open to the general public
- Access route for the general public from the existing visitor facilities to the Court
- Extended visitor facilities.

This CMMP is part of a suite of conservation planning documents that cover the various aspects of Croome:

Volume 1 – Introduction & Overview of the whole site

Volume 2 – The Mansion, comprising:

A) The Court (present document)

B) Offices & Policies

C) Walled Garden

Volume 3 – The Pleasure Grounds

Volume 4 – The Park (updated version of existing plan)

Volume 5 – The Estate & Wider Setting

Other documents submitted with this application that should be read in conjunction with this CMMP are:

- The Application Form
- The Activity Plan (See Joint Philosophy of Approach on p.30)
- Project Management Structure
- Design Specification
- Timetable
- Detailed Project Costs
- Cash Flow
- Income & Spending Forecast
- Condition Survey 2008 (incl. 2009 costed repair recommendations) See Appendices 14, 17, 18 & 19.
- Gazetteer of spaces within the Court (Appendix 1)
- Other Appendices (bound separately) relating to this CMMP, including the Property Business Plan.

Gaps & Limitations

This CMMP sets out our understanding of the history and evolution of the Court to the best of our knowledge *to date*. Much archival and documentary research has already been undertaken and is on-going, but given the vast nature of Croome's archive, both in terms of size and scope, there is much more to be done.

Similarly, physical research has so far been limited to initial surveys and investigations in order to draw up priorities for conservation and to gain a clear understanding of the scope of the project. Whilst a substantial amount has been learnt from the excellent architectural/archaeological history report produced by Catherine Gordon (see Appendix 5), more in-depth surveys and further analysis will need to be undertaken in order to

tease out the detail of the historical evolution of the Court and to establish what physical remains of the earlier fabric lies buried within the present structure.

These twin processes of documentary and physical research will allow our understanding of the building, its history, its significances and its stories to develop throughout the duration of this project and beyond.

There are very good reasons for holding back on these research processes and not going too far too soon. One is, of course, having the necessary funding to carry them out, but, most importantly, it will allow us to bring our visitors on the journey of discovery with us. Wherever possible, the survey work and research will be used as a tool for visitor engagement, so that the processes of understanding are shared and transparent. This in turn will deepen people's interest in the place, building stronger and closer relationships with their heritage.

Surveys that have not yet been carried out are:

- Full historical analysis of the decorative schemes
- Quinquennial architectural survey
- Archaeological survey to the north, south and west of the Court

Brief description of the Croome Redefined Project

In practical terms, the *Croome Redefined* Project aims to repair and re-service Croome Court as a hugely significant building finally re-united with its internationally significant landscape, to prepare the Court for the repatriation of elements of the Coventry's nationally and internationally significant collections, to continue to care for and maintain the Court's fabric and those collections for future generations to enjoy, and to provide as much access to the building as possible. The project will address the urgent need to restore the Grade I listed Court to ensure that it is not only wind and water-tight, but that it will be able to, once again, be part of the local economy and community. This includes vital and urgent restoration work to the roof, high-level stonework, rainwater goods, external masonry and windows (all of which are structurally unsound and will cause further damage to the building if not repaired) to ensure the ongoing survival of the structure. However, it is important to understand that the Croome Redefined project will not result in a finally-finished and fully re-decorated series of interiors – this will form later phases of work and will be informed by the increased understanding of the Court that the present project will afford.

These are important aims, but they are what the National Trust would normally do. *At Croome, we want to do far more than this:* more than ever before we are challenging ourselves to do things differently, to listen and to involve our supporters. We want to break new ground for the National Trust and achieve a transformational change in the visitor experience. We want to make use of the opportunities and possibilities that Croome Court offers in order to *explore and redefine, with our visitors and volunteers, what it is to visit an historic country house in the 21st century.*

The Heritage Lottery Fund aims to sustain and *transform* heritage through projects that have lasting impact on people and places. Its current strategy has three aims: learning, participation, and conservation. The overall aim of the National Trust's "Going Local"

strategy is that by 2020 everyone feels like a member of the National Trust and the offer at each of its properties is more compelling, inspiring and relevant to local circumstances. In line with the aims of both these organisations, the *Croome Redefined* project aims not only to engage more deeply with our existing visitors, but also to reach out to new audiences and local people to give them a sense of “ownership” and sense of belonging. At Croome we aim to achieve this by “handing over” a degree of control to partner organisations and local people and enable their views to be heard and acted upon all the way through the project.

This is a very different and innovative project in terms of how we will engage with people and the kind of activities that will form part of not just the *conservation*, but also the *presentational* themes of Croome Court, as these two parallel aims will be woven together. Our challenge is to not revert to National Trust ‘type’: Croome will not be just another historic country house. It will not be one where people come and stare passively in an atmosphere of hushed reverence or even shuffling boredom. We will be open to new ways of working, new ways of presenting and interpreting an historic property and new ways of involving and engaging people in our important conservation work. We will work with Creative Producers, Guest Curators, artists, sculptors and craftspeople, including young, new and unproven talent, from different backgrounds and disciplines, to ‘hold up a mirror to Croome’ and give different and fresh perspectives.

At the same time however, and very importantly, we will remain true to Croome’s Spirit of Place and its significances, ensuring that everything we do is rooted in Croome’s stories and reflects its quality, integrity and pioneering character.

The way we present Croome will constantly change and evolve. People will have reasons to return to Croome again and again and we want to involve our visitors in its future to ensure that this happens: in particular, debating the options for the role, use and presentation of Croome Court. We want to develop deeper relationships with our supporters. From the very start, we have already involved them, and our volunteers, and encouraged them to help decide *how* the Court’s interiors should be presented. We want to stimulate debate about the varying significances of the Court’s historic layers and its occupants and which of these should be reflected in which spaces. This will be a house where we open up every nook and cranny for potential exploration and discovery. We want to reach out to wider and more diverse groups and ages of people and encourage them, via the opportunities that Croome offers, to find their own ways into heritage and what it means to them.

The unfolding project to re-unite all the dimensions of Croome offers a real opportunity of a much wider and more evocative range of intellectual, sensory and emotional experiences. We want to encourage people to *actively* enjoy the Court, become engaged, involved in its development and not just be passive visitors. We want to broaden the appeal of Croome’s interiors and make sure we offer something for everyone, draw in those who may never have dreamed of visiting an historic house, and keep them coming back for more. This will mean that Croome develops into a place that has meaning and relevance for a wide range of people, and those people will have a greater sense of ownership of, and participation in, their heritage.

These aspirational aims mean that the Croome Redefined Project will be an exemplar for the National Trust in delivering its 2020 vision and strategy of ‘everyone feels like a member and 5 million people are’.

Joint Philosophy of Approach for the Conservation Management Plan & the Activity Plan

Our approach to developing the Conservation Management Plan and the Activity Plan for Croome Court has, from the start, been an inclusive and inter-dependent one. We recognize that the understanding of Significance and Spirit of the Place, and the ways in which people are encouraged to engage with and become immersed in it, go hand-in-hand. Each depends on the other if it is to be successful. Greater understanding of a place and its history leads to greater interest and support and a desire to be involved more closely with it in the future.

Both Plans have been developed with the aim of remaining true and loyal to Croome's rich past, but also to explore and stimulate its future potential for people. Croome has survived with remarkable tenacity (the Coventry family motto was *Constant and True*) but we want to ensure that it remains meaningful for people today and into the future. Within the context of understanding Croome's *historic* significances is the importance of the place's current and *future* significances, and the latter can only happen when one has grasped the former.

One of the key points to understand about this project is that it aims to push the boundaries and pre-conceptions of what it means to visit an historic house in the 21st century. Embracing the Heritage Lottery Fund's ambition of sustaining and transforming heritage through learning, participation and conservation and the National Trust's strategy of 'Bringing Places to Life', this project aspires to redefine the role of the historic country house. We want visiting Croome to feel like stepping into a different world – a place where the 'normal' world feels like a thousand miles away and yet also a place that feels like home, is meaningful, relevant and inspirational. We want to provide experiences that make a powerful emotional connection – and that people will want to return to again and again.

In order to achieve these aspirations we need to challenge ourselves about our normal ways of working:

- Rather than locking ourselves into a selected historical period in which to represent the Court's interiors, we want to explore *all* of them. In the hierarchy of Significances, the mid 18th century under the 6th Earl of Coventry is undisputedly Croome's hey-day and *raison d'être*, but there are also lots of other stories to tell.
- Rather than sticking with a traditional presentational style with tried-and-tested methods, we want to have rolling, changing themes and unexpected ways of illustrating and responding to them. Key pieces from the collections will star as iconic pieces of design and will reinforce the decorative schemes and architectural details of the original concept, acting as creative, inspirational triggers.
- Rather than reverting to type and attempting to furnish every room in a traditional, historical way, we want to make a virtue out of the inevitable gaps that we will have and find creative, unexpected ways of displaying items in the collection, rotating items in and out of store to constantly refresh the visitor

experience. There will be rich opportunities for craftsmanship and traditional skills for filling some of those gaps, sometimes with a twist.

- Rather than shutting up quantities of the collection in storerooms, we want to create a series of accessible stores in which visitors can interact with objects in a variety of ways, unlocking the stories and triggering emotional, memorable reactions. At the same time, they will gain understanding of our core conservation work and, through our setting out of a hierarchy of fragility versus robustness, they will understand the sensitivities of collections.
- And, most importantly, rather than just working with the 'usual suspects', we want to provide opportunities for *new creative talent* from different backgrounds and disciplines to 'hold up a mirror' to Croome. We will champion Croome's significances to enthuse and inspire creative responses in others, with the aim of then handing over creative control, encouraging them to express the Court's stories through *their* eyes and hands. We want to allow ourselves, our visitors and our creative guests the freedom and opportunity to explore the richness and surprises of Croome's historic layers and help define how it should be presented in the future.

For our visitors, we want to be transparent and inclusive about all these aims and processes, especially throughout the physical work to re-service the Court and the development of the changing presentations thereafter, offering participative opportunities wherever possible. We are developing new volunteering roles to help make this happen. We also want to achieve a shift in our ways of working, not just with regard to our visitor-facing activities, but in our approach to managing and involving staff and volunteers.

Our Activity Plan aims and activities are guided by the significances and historical detail set out in this Conservation Management Plan, and this will also feed into all future presentations of the Court.

Central to this joint approach, as a guiding constant thread and touchstone, is Croome's Spirit of Place, to which we must remain true. Just as Croome was a place of ground-breaking vision, creativity and ambition in the mid-18th century, a platform for new talent and craftsmanship of the highest quality, we are determined that Croome shall be a place that takes this approach further in the 21st century as a living, breathing place of inspiration for this and future generations.

SECTION 1 - UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE

N.B. This section expresses our understanding of the evolution of Croome Court *to date*. There is a vast amount of information in Croome's archive, as well as published and unpublished documents which have informed this Plan and the description of the evolution of the structure and the interiors. However, there is still much work to be done, particularly physical investigations into the historic fabric and the decorative schemes. It needs to be stressed that this document marks the initial stages of the research process and that, as our relationship with the building develops, our understanding of it will grow.

Introduction to the Heritage

Croome Court is a distinguished mid-18th century Palladian stone-clad brick mansion which was adapted from the earlier house on the site by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown between 1752 and 1758 for the 6th Earl of Coventry (1722 -1809) with the advice of Sanderson Miller. Its interiors were largely decorated and embellished in the late Rococo style under Brown and Francesco Vassalli, but three of its key rooms were decorated and furnished by Robert Adam in the 1760s in the emerging Neo-classical taste.



Croome Court, south elevation (NTPL)

However, the present house is by no means the first on the site and Croome's history goes back much further than the mid-18th century. Croome was the seat of the Coventry family for around 350 years (from the late 16th century to 1948). Many physical elements of the present Court, including much of the layout, internal divisions and spine chimney wall, were retained from an earlier house of 1640-2, itself re-built after a fire to the Jacobean house.

Croome Manor was known as *Crombe Dabetot* by the 13th century and *Croom Dabitot* by the 15th century. The name was derived from the DAbitot family, who held part of the manor of Croome from the 12th century to the beginning of the 16th century. From the DAbitot family, this part of Croome manor passed to the Clare family and in c1592, Francis Clare sold their part of the manor to Thomas Coventry.

It is believed that the Coventry dynasty is descended from John of Coventry, a mercer, who was executor to the legendary Richard (Dick) Whittington (1393-1423) and became Lord Mayor of London in 1425. The family then disappears from the historical record until the mid-1500s when they emerge in Bewdley (Worcestershire). Still a family of high status, the 2nd son, Thomas became a lawyer and a Justice in the Court of the Common Pleas during the reign of King James. He was knighted in 1606. In the late 16th century it had become fashionable to own land in the country in order to escape the overcrowding and pestilence of London and, for the Bewdley man, Worcestershire seemed the obvious place. He purchased Croome d'Abitot in 1592, having married Margaret Jeffery in c.1576, whose family owned neighbouring Earl's Croome.²

But the history of Croome really begins with Thomas, 1st Baron Coventry (1578-1640), eldest son of Sir Thomas Coventry of Croome d'Abitôt, Worcestershire, and who became Recorder of London, Solicitor-General to the King and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England. He and his son were distinguished lawyers and statesmen who married well and were able to expand the family's estate and land-holdings into several counties³. There is known to have been a building on the site since at least the 16th century. This was the manor house of the medieval village of Croome d'Abitôt and structural evidence suggests that it is mainly the house that was re-built after the second fire in the 1640s, associated with the Lord Keeper's son, Thomas 2nd Baron Coventry, that forms the core of the existing structure.

A major re-modelling of the existing house was planned in the early 18th century, which included the addition of wings flanking the south front and a new formal south garden and layout for the grounds, but these plans were brought to an abrupt end by the death of the 4th Earl in 1719. Around thirty years later, the last and most important phase of works began under the direction of the 6th Earl of Coventry (1722-1809), which resulted in a total transformation of the building and its setting. Tentatively at first and then with a confidence and passion bordering upon obsession, he embarked upon a grand plan to remodel the house and surrounding landscape into a classical idyll.

This re-modelling of Croome Court for the 6th Earl of Coventry in 1751 was Lancelot Brown's first major architectural commission: he altered and re-faced the earlier house in the Palladian style, building on the old foundations, retaining some of the walls and the massive central chimneystacks down the central spine of the house, adding new wings onto the east and west ends of the existing house, one to realise a 'long gallery', the other to provide for a grand staircase. These four corner 'towers' had shallow pyramidal roofs and Venetian windows, and a grand portico was added to the south front. The house became the focus of the re-designed landscape and its picturesque potential was perfectly captured in Richard Wilson's idealised painting of 1758.

² Jill Tovey, *Croome - The Treasures Revealed*.

³ Not only Worcestershire, but Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Middlesex.



Richard Wilson's 1758 painting of Croome Court from the south, still in the Coventry collection.
(CET)

At the same time as re-modelling the house, Brown made alterations and improvements to the service wing of the Court, known as The Red Wing, again based on existing buildings, modifying what already existed rather than starting from scratch. The Red Wing is attached to the east elevation of the Court, connecting with it on the basement level and is part of the Grade I listed structure. Brown also built the massive and imposing stableblock to the east of the house, approached via various service yards, with beyond that, the enormous seven-acre, south-west aspect, sloping walled garden, sub-divided into a third and two-thirds by a 'hot' wall.

Having tackled the house, Brown's commission then focused on improving the Park. As part of his major landscaping work at Croome he also designed and built several of the significant garden buildings at Croome: the new Gothick church (1758-1763) on the ridge to the north east of the Court, whose interior was completed by Adam, the Rotunda (1754-7) at the eastern end of the Home Shrubbery, the Dry Arch Bridge on the Worcester approach, and the Grotto at the north western end of the lake or Croome 'river'. These all survive and, along with other park buildings and outer eye-catchers later designed by Adam and then by James Wyatt, have been restored. The 6th Earl employed these three architect-designers to carry out his vision for Croome, which he tenaciously pursued right up until his death in 1809: Adam designed the Temple Greenhouse in 1760, the mock-medieval Dunstall Castle in 1765, the Park Seat or Owl's

nest in 1766 and the Menagerie in 1768. The Chinese Bridge (no longer extant) across the lake directly to the west of the Court was designed in 1748 by William Halfpenny (who died in 1755). James Wyatt's involvement was between 1792 and 1805, after the deaths of both Brown and Adam, and included the Panorama Tower to the west, Pirton Castle, a sham ruin, on the ridge to the north and a Gothick Keeper's Baughton Tower beyond Dunstall Castle to the south.

After the mid-18th century re-modelling under the 6th Earl, the Coventry family nurtured and cared for Croome for a further 200 years. During the 19th century and early 20th century, the building changed remarkably little and the 6th Earl's vision was allowed to mature with grace and dignity, even escaping Victorian additions and changes in fashion. 19th and 20th century alterations were relatively minor and primarily concerned with the introduction of services and improving living accommodation, but in structural terms the house that we see today is much as it was envisaged in the mid-18th century.

This is

thanks largely to the 9th Earl's continuity of care and recognition of its significance, and also probably because his interests lay in the estate and in hunting, horse-racing and fishing. He guided Croome through the years of Britain's agricultural depression, as the landed gentry re-evaluated and adjusted to their changing social role in the community with the onset of the industrial age.



The Court in the late 19th century seen from the Dry Arch & Worcester Drive (WRO)

Like so many great country houses, Croome struggled to survive from the mid-20th century onwards. The 9th Earl had died in 1930 and the 10th Earl was killed in the retreat to Dunkirk in 1940. This effectively brought to an end the association of the Coventry family with Croome Court, and the family Trust sold the house in 1948. Robert Adam's Tapestry Room was gutted, crated and shipped to America (where it is now on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; a replica interior was created for Croome in exchange for the real thing), and many of the Court's important furnishings were sold at auction. Croome's future stood precariously in the balance. On the brink of potential demolition, the Court was purchased by the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham, becoming St Joseph's Convent School for disadvantaged boys, run by the Little Sisters of Mercy of St Paul nuns.

From the end of 1979 until mid-1984 the Court became the UK headquarters of the Society for Krishna Consciousness, who left a legacy of their creativity in their redecoration of the Dining Room. The house then underwent a brief spell as a conference centre and restaurant in 1986. In 1993 an unsuccessful application was put in for conversion to a country house hotel complete with golf course, and thereafter it was the private residence of a property developer, who converted and sold off the stable block and who, until Autumn 2011, also owned the derelict Red Wing. This lack of continuity of ownership and differing priorities and perspectives resulted in some changes to the interior fittings and decoration. By the late 20th century it became clear that the structural and decorative condition of the building was at risk and demanded a structured programme of care and maintenance.

The National Trust acquired Croome Park in 1996 and the HLF-funded restoration of Brown's important landscape got underway, but it was only in 2007 that the newly-formed Croome Heritage Trust bought back the Court and negotiated a lease with the National Trust for its restoration and opening to the public.

Now, the re-unification of the Court with the Park, the ability to share that unity with the general public and the prospect of exploring this historic house's heritage and future potential for the benefit of everyone is nothing short of a miracle and something truly worth celebrating.

Succession of ownership

Croome Court was the seat of the Coventry family for around 350 years. That continuous ownership and involvement ended in 1948, when Croome was on the brink of either becoming a borstal or being demolished, but was sold at the eleventh hour to the Birmingham Catholic Archdiocese and became a junior school for disadvantaged boys. This institutional use continued until 1979, when the Court was again sold, and bought by the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, becoming a commune and teaching establishment to promote the Hare Krishna faith for four and a half years. When finances meant that Croome became too expensive to run, it was put on the market in 1984 and successively acquired by a series of four different property developers, who attempted and failed to run it as a hotel, country club, restaurant, wine bar and nightclub.

The last developer used the Court as his private residence and converted the stableblock, Priest's House and former riding school into separate residential units, allowing the adjoining Red Wing to fall into dereliction but with planning permission for six apartments. When the Court was offered for sale in 2007, the Croome Heritage Trust was formed from the existing Croome Estate Trust in order to buy back the Court and reunite it with the Park, owned by the National Trust since 1997. They leased the Court to the National Trust for an initial period of ten years,⁴ who opened it to the public in September 2009, with the aim of extending the arrangement to a 999-year lease the moment that sufficient funding, including that from the HLF, was secured.

⁴ Extended to 30 years in 2012.

For ease of reference and for historical context, a chronological list of the Coventry succession and ownership of Croome Court is set out in the table below. For a summary of the key facts about each member of the Coventry family, see Appendix 21.

(N.B. 'Coventry' was not only the family's surname but also their title, first of the barony, which lasted from 1628 to 1697, and their earldom, which was awarded for a gift of £8000 from Thomas 5th Baron to William III as a reminder of the family's enduring support of the monarchy).

Name & dates	Date of Incumbency / Ownership
Sir Thomas Coventry (1547-1606)	c.1592-1606
Thomas, 1 st Baron Coventry (1578-1640)	1606-1640
Thomas, 2 nd Baron Coventry (1606-61)	1640-1661
George, 3 rd Baron Coventry (1628-80)	1661-80
John, 4 th Baron Coventry (1654-87)	1680-87
Thomas, 5 th Baron & 1 st Earl of Coventry (1629-99)	1687-99
Thomas, 2 nd Earl of Coventry (1663-1710) (Married Anne Somerset, daughter of Duke of Beaufort, hence Croome references in Badminton archive)	1699-1710
Thomas, 3 rd Earl of Coventry (1702-1711/12)	1710-11/12
Gilbert, 4 th Earl of Coventry (1668-1719) (His daughter Anne married Sir William Carew of Antony, hence Croome references in Antony archive)	1712-19
George William, 5 th Earl of Coventry (1678-1751)	1719-1751
George William, 6 th Earl of Coventry (1722-1809) m. 1 Maria Gunning; 2. Barbara St. John	1751-1809
George William, 7 th Earl of Coventry (1758-1831)	1809-31
George William, 8 th Earl of Coventry (1774-1843)	1831-43
George William, 9 th Earl of Coventry (1838-1930) m. Blanche Craven	1843-1930
George William, 10 th Earl of Coventry (1900-1940)	1930-40
Ownership since 1948	
The Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham	1948-1979
The International Society for Krishna Consciousness	1980-1984
Martin Sowbey (youth training centre/hotel)	1984-
Christopher Buxton (hotel/conference centre)	
John Rudge (property developer)	
Laurence Bilton (property developer/private home)	-2007
Croome Heritage Trust	2007-present

Location & site observation

Croome Court is in the parish of Croome d’Abitôt, Malvern Hills District, in the county of Hereford & Worcester. Its National Grid reference is SO 88494 44596.



Location of Croome, eight miles south of Worcester (Google)

It is situated at the distance of about eight miles from Worcester, eight from Tewkesbury, sixteen from Cheltenham, ten from Malvern Wells, five from Pershore and two from Severn-Stoke⁵. Its postcode is WR8 9DW and it lies just east of the M5 between junctions 7 and 8, although one of its outer eye-catchers, The Panorama Tower, is marooned on the west side of the motorway.

Croome Court stands as the centrepiece of a relatively flat and open area of parkland, within the gently rolling countryside and neatly-enclosed arable land of south Worcestershire. This lower part of the county is located on the Worcestershire Plain, underlain by soft mudstones and shaped by the nearby Severn and Avon rivers. Worcestershire has been described as ‘an inland county obsessed with water’, a place of soft red soils and mud, littered with ponds and divided by three rivers – the Severn,

⁵ William Dean’s description of Croome’s location, taken from *“An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D’Abitôt - Hortus Croomensis”*, 1824, where he was Head Gardener (see footnote on p.456)

the Teme and the Avon – all inclined to flood incontinently⁶. The element of water and low-lying ground is important in the context of Croome, where the problem of water-logged land was not only overcome but turned to advantage in the form of the Croome serpentine lake, or ‘river’.

Croome Park extends for around 760 acres, now once more a lush and serene landscape, well-wooded and studded with clumps of trees and swathes of shrubberies that define its contours and frame each vista. Much of this planting is mature and dates from the 18th and 19th centuries, but since 1996, a significant proportion of the parkland has been restored and replanted by the National Trust, serving to reinstate the form, drama and meaning of the original conception.

Despite its low-lying aspect, the house commands distant views to the north, west and south, and, to the west, the Malvern hills are cleverly incorporated within the overall landscape design. In the middle distance the views are bounded by the wooded ridge of Pirton Park to the north, Cubsmoor to the west (now separated from the main part of the park by the M5 motorway), and by the long north/south ridge that defines the eastern boundary of the park beside the former airfield at Defford. The topography is punctuated with considerable artistry, the park buildings creating a network of sightlines from and to the mansion house in a complex geometry that appears entirely fortuitous. These include Pirton Castle to the north, the Panorama Tower to the east, the Alcove/Park Seat to the south-east, and the parish church on a promontory to the north-east.

For some, however, the house’s position within this landscape is less than ideal. Timothy Mowl bemoans the fact that Brown was “*obliged by his strong-willed patron, the 6th Earl, to engineer an Arcadia on an unsuitable site. The old house, which the Earl refused to abandon, lay too low for fine views of the Malverns, Bredon or the Forest of Dean; it did not even command the River Severn.*”⁷ However, the reasons for the 6th Earl not abandoning the site of the old house were quite complex, combining, as we shall see, elements of nostalgia, filial loss, family duty, stubbornness and thrift, as well as aesthetics and fashion. Jill Tovey, Croome’s long-standing archivist, feels that the Earl’s intention all along was to create a sort of secret verdant valley⁸.

In 1915, *Country Life* described the idyllic topography of Croome’s location, and the fact that it lies in a ‘bowl’ within the landscape: “*The long ridge of the Malvern Hills shelters the level plain in which Croome lies on the west, and towering Bredon protects it on the east. The Avon, winding its way between Worcester and the eastern hills forms, with the Severn, the two sides of a triangle, whose apex is at Tewkesbury, and Croome is contained in the centre.*”⁹

Overview of the origins and layout of the site

The reference to the winding rivers Avon and Severn is linked to the origins of Croome’s name. It is thought to come from the early Welsh/Brythonic *crwm*, meaning a bend in the river. The ‘bend in the river’ could refer to the confluence of the Rivers Severn and Avon, only about six miles to the south. In any event, by Domesday, ‘*Crumbe*’ seems to have

⁶ Timothy Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, p.9

⁷ Timothy Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, p.53

⁸ Jill Tovey, email, 18th September 2011

⁹ Arthur T. Bolton, *Country Life*, April 10th, 1915, p.482

been settled upon. After that survey, when William I shared out his new realm among his Barons, the area was given to Urse d'Abitôt, and so *Croome d'Abitôt* was created¹⁰.

The soil is heavy clay marl and the ground is boggy, as evidenced by the area in the Park to the west of the Court called Seggy Mere. The site was always historically described as a morass, a shallow bowl of marshland marooned among the lowland plains of the Severn and Avon valleys.¹¹ The 6th Earl himself described it as '*as hopeless a spot as any on this island*'. And his monument to 'Capability' Brown, erected in 1797 in commemoration of the latter's achievement at Croome and the friendship between the two men, is inscribed: "*To the memory of Lancelot Brown who, by the powers of his inimitable and creative genius, formed this garden scene out of a morass*". Brown's achievement was nothing short of miraculous. He managed to create what has been described as "*a silk purse out of a sow's ear by fashioning a handsome, trend-setting garden and park out of Croome's limp topography*".¹² This comparison, although apparently harsh, concurs with the 6th Earl's own description above and the head gardener William Dean's in his 1824 Guide Book of "*a vast extent of land, formerly a mere bog*".

An understanding of Croome's geology is useful here: geological maps show that the junction between the Jurassic and the Triassic sequences runs North-South just along the bottom of Church Hill and this is the probable reason behind Croome's morass. However, the geology also provided useful building materials: the red marls make good bricks and the blue lias stone can be (and was) burnt for lime. (Blue lias was used for foundation plinths for buildings, including, in part, Croome Court). The top of Bredon Hill, where the 6th Earl had a quarry, is the nearest Oolitic Limestone for building - so everything was on hand.¹³

It was Lancelot Brown's drainage and engineering skills that were to effect the transformation of the waterlogged bowl into a lush pastureland with ingenious 'lakes', realise the promise of the location and provide the setting for what was to become the 6th Earl of Coventry's masterpiece. Since the 18th century, this land has been subjected to an impressive and complex drainage system that feeds the lake and sinuous artificial river sited to the south and west of the house.

Croome Court lies within this bowl of reclaimed marsh, surrounded by its park on the north, west and south sides, with its service buildings and yards to the east. The house is approached from the north-east via the London Arch and Lodge (London Drive) and, formerly, from the west through the Punchbowl Gates (Worcester Drive). This approach originally ran from the Worcester Lodge and Gates, to the west of the Punchbowl Gates, but the M5 cut off this extension of the drive. Immediately to the east of the Court the Home Shrubbery and a hot house (now ruined) screens the Red Wing and ancillary service buildings, and forms the first section of the Pleasure Grounds leading to the Rotunda, on a promontory surrounded by cedars.

¹⁰ Jill Tovey, *The Treasures Revealed*

¹¹ William Dean, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome d'Abitôt – Hortus Croomensis*, 1824, p.11

¹² Timothy Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, p.45

¹³ I am grateful to Jill Tovey for this information.



Watercolour of Croome Court from the north after Brown's re-modelling, by E.F. & T.F. Burney, c.1784 (WRO)

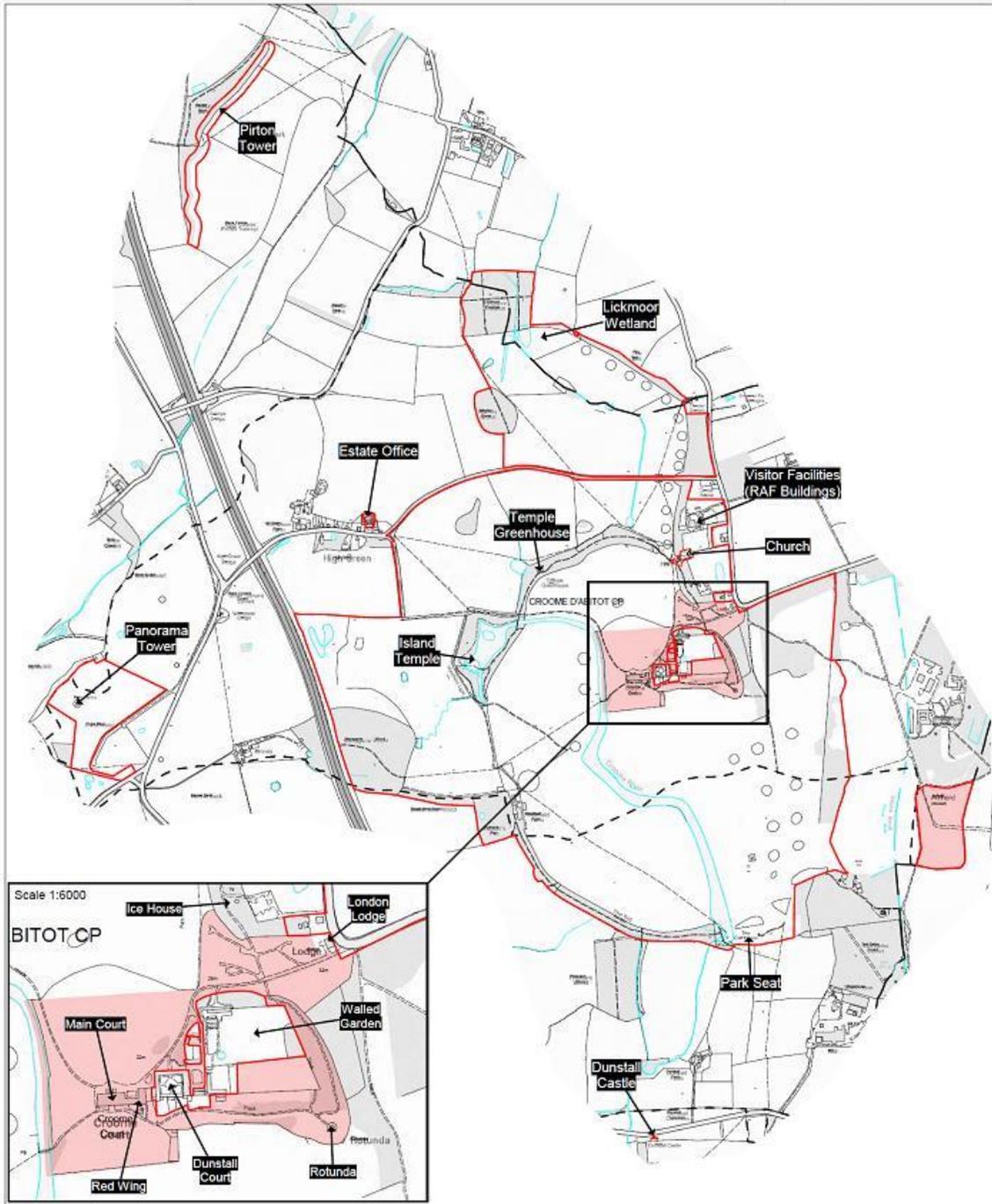
To the north of the house, the Church is reached through the Church Shrubbery, which runs further north as the Wilderness Walk (which led to the now overgrown and demolished Arboretum and Flower Garden), and to the west as the Evergreen and Greenhouse Shrubberies, with the statues of the Four Seasons and the Temple Greenhouse. A serpentine 'river' divides the pasture to the east from the park, running north-west to south-east. It terminates at its northern end in a lake, with three islands; one crossed by two bridges and with a Pavilion. The Lake Pleasure Grounds are reached from the Greenhouse Shrubbery to the north through the Dry Arch. The southern end of the serpentine river terminates in an island. Nearby to the south, on raised ground, is the Park Seat, or Owl's Nest.

The landscape extends westward as Knight's Hill and Cubsmoor, where the Panorama Tower is situated, and northwards as Pirton Park, with Pirton Pool and Pirton Castle. To the south of the park is Dunstall Castle on the northern edge of the former Red Deer Park - part of Red Park Farm since the eighteenth century.

Beyond the park, as a 'borrowed' landscape, are higher ranges of hills: the Malvern Hills on the sky-line to the west, and Bredon Hill and the Cotswold escarpment on the eastern horizon. This topography was cleverly utilised in the design of the landscape and particularly in the siting of the buildings, not least the Court itself. As a result most of the views out from the Court incorporate general parkland and ornamental farmland in the foreground, one of more of the garden buildings or eye-catchers in the middle distance, and distant views of the higher ranges of hills.¹⁴

¹⁴ Camilla Beresford, *Historic Landscape Survey for The National Trust*, p. 81

APPENDIX 1	CROOME PARK	Scale 1:13,000 @ A3 Map Ref: CM51 Date: Nov 2011 v2	
 NATIONAL TRUST Midlands Region	 National Trust Boundary  Land leased from Croome Heritage Trust	© Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey 100023914 National Trust Midlands, Attingham Consultancy Hub Attingham Park, Shrewsbury Shropshire, SY4 4TP Tel: 01743 708134	



Site map showing location and relation of the Court, the Park buildings, estate village and outer eye-catchers, 2011 (NT)

Description of current exterior of Croome Court

Croome Court is constructed of local handmade brick and faced with Bath stone, a golden oolitic limestone finished as dressed ashlar. The 17th century brickwork is dark reddish-orange in colour and laid in English bond with a lime mortar, while the 18th century and later brickwork is laid in Flemish and various garden wall bonds, with stretcher bond used in some 20th century partitions. The main roof is set behind a balustraded parapet and is covered with Westmoreland slate in diminishing courses with some lead sheeting. However much of the three main ridges are now protected by a modern timber flat-roofed structure finished with bituminous felt. There are three pairs of rendered brick ridge stacks linked by arches along the central roof ridge and also ashlar-faced chimneystacks at the junction of the central block and the end wings. All the chimneys have moulded stone cappings.



The arcade of chimneys along the spine wall which survive from the 17th century house (NTPL)

The building forms a roughly rectangular plan, comprised of a central block subdivided by a spine wall aligned east/west with wings to the east and west that terminate in corner pavilions. These single-bay pavilions have shallow pyramidal roofs covered with slates and with lead-covered hips surmounted by iron finials and weathervanes. The building is aligned east/west to create two principal fronts. The north entrance front is of eleven bays and the south garden front is of nine bays. There is a brick service wing attached to the south-eastern corner, known as the Red Wing.

The building has two main storeys raised upon a semi-basement. This has a plain plinth that rises just above the window sills, a band at ground-floor level and also a modillion eaves cornice. The ground-floor or *piano nobile* is of greater height than the first-floor. The second storey is partly set within the roof space in the central block and has dormer windows through which the roof area is accessible where it is set behind a stone balustrade. The corner pavilions have a moulded cornice at eaves level.

The building has chamfered stone quoins to the end pavilions and centre projections. The windows have moulded architraves enriched with moulded cornices on the ground floor of the main range and are timber, double-hung sashes with narrow glazing bars; there are 12-pane sashes with moulded cornices on the ground and first floors, 9-pane

sashes on the second floor of the pavilions, and the basement windows are mainly of either 6, 8 or 12 panes. The windows in the basement of the north-west pavilion and also the window at the eastern end of the main range of the north front once had iron bars. A few second-floor windows have been replaced by side-hung casements.

Rainwater goods are altered, replaced and repaired and are in various materials including cast iron, lead and plastic.

The south garden front is of 1:2:3:2:1 bays. The central three bays are compressed slightly and set behind a tetrastyle portico with unfluted Ionic columns and a panelled plaster ceiling decorated by Vassalli¹⁵. This is approached by a single broad flight of stone steps flanked by Coade sphinxes and leads to a central entrance with a partly-glazed secondary modern door set beneath a moulded cornice on consoles. There is a pair of Chinoiserie-style timber doors on the west side of the portico that may relate to the former Chinese bridge. On the ground-floor of the pavilions are Venetian windows on moulded consoles and with Ionic pilasters. The basement windows of the pavilions are tripartite.



South elevation of Croome Court (NTPL)

¹⁵ Initial paint analysis has shown that traces of 'copperas' a type of pigmented limewash, survive in sheltered areas of the Court's exterior (as they also do on the Park buildings). Copperas is ferrous sulphate, which dissolved in water and applied to stonework, will react with any lime present and turn a magnificent glowing tan colour. Multiple applications would have given a uniformity and depth of colour to the warm Bath stone and would also have made any plaster surfaces look like stone.

The north entrance front is of 1:3:3:3:1 bays with the central three bays breaking forward and set beneath a pediment containing the Coventry arms. The windows on the ground floor of the pavilions are surmounted by pediments on consoles. The central entrance is approached via a double flight of balustraded stairs, most of which are cast replacements, and is set beneath a segmental pediment and has flanking engaged Doric columns and a pair of panelled mahogany entrance doors. Beneath the steps an arched passageway with a flagged floor and stone side benches leads down two sets of stone steps to the basement.



North elevation of Croome Court (*Author*)

The west elevation has a full height canted bay window with a stone balustrade set between the corner pavilions. The ground floor windows of the pavilions have pediments similar to those on the north front. The east elevation is asymmetric due to the presence of the Red Wing. The central bay has a basement window converted to a fire exit, a Diocletian window on the ground floor, a Venetian window on the first-floor and a pair of sashes on the second floor, all of which light the main staircase and are slightly offset.

Much of the ground to the north and west in the immediate vicinity of the building was cobbled. This has since been covered with turf, gravel and tarmac but some areas have now been exposed.¹⁶

¹⁶ Description of exterior taken from Catherine Gordon's Historical & Architectural Survey, pp. 93-4



West elevation of Croome Court showing canted bay of Long Gallery (NTPL)

History & evolution of Croome Court

Croome Court remained the seat of the Coventry family for around 350 years, from the late 16th century to 1948, during which time it is known to have been rebuilt twice in the 17th century as a result of fire damage. An early 18th century plan to alter and extend the house was only executed in part, but the major scheme of re-modelling in the mid-18th century effected a total transformation of the building and its setting. Subsequent structural alterations of the 19th and 20th centuries were relatively minor and primarily concerned with service accommodation and facilities, and, in structural terms, the house that survives today is much as it was envisaged in the mid-18th century.

There is known to have been a building on the site at least since the 16th century. This was the manor house of the medieval village of Croome D'Abitot. Structural evidence suggests it is mainly the house that was rebuilt after the second fire in the 1640s that now forms the core of the existing structure. This is supported by a reference in an early 18th century report in the Antony archive that states that the 2nd Baron '*new built the present house*' following the second fire.¹⁷ It may be assumed from this that the house was among the select few country houses built in England during this time of civil unrest. Equally significant is that it was rebuilt to a fairly progressive design, with a double pile plan, two main storeys raised on a basement, a hipped roof, and symmetrical facades with a central entrance.

The archival and structural evidence suggests that a major re-modelling was planned in the early 18th century, which included the addition of wings flanking the south front and a new formal south garden and layout for the grounds. These plans were brought to an abrupt end by the death of the 4th Earl in 1719. Around thirty years later, the last major

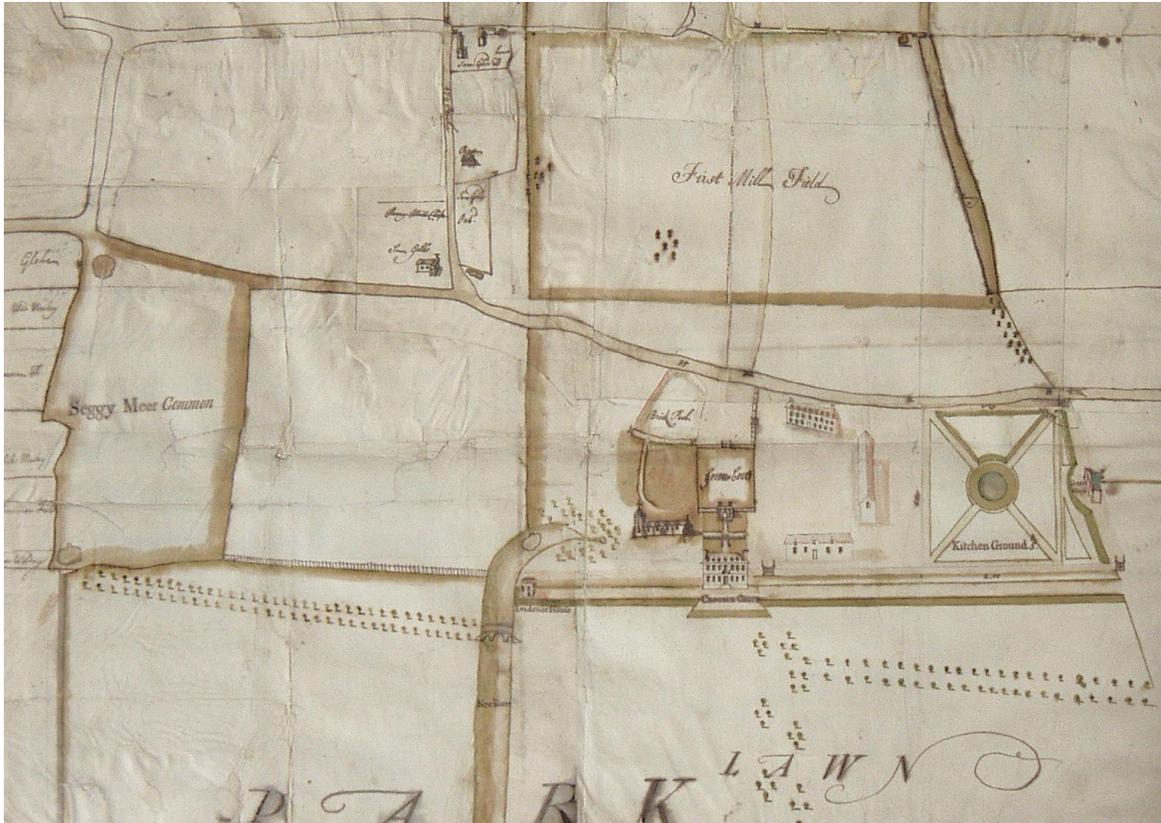
¹⁷ AA: CVA/Y/34

phase of works took place under the direction of the 6th Earl of Coventry, (1722-1809). These were carried out by Lancelot Brown with advice from Sanderson Miller, and embellished by Robert Adam. The house was refaced in the Palladian style with Venetian windows and a grand south portico, and wings with corner pavilions were grafted onto each end. It became the focus of the redesigned landscape and its picturesque potential was captured perfectly in Richard Wilson's idealised painting of 1758. Within, however, the earlier house asserts itself with little provocation. Materials and fittings are recycled with admirable thrift, and this gives a pleasing sense of continuity and character, which any lack of coherence in the layout and decoration only serves to enhance. The house is not so much the expression of a personal ideal as the development of an idea.

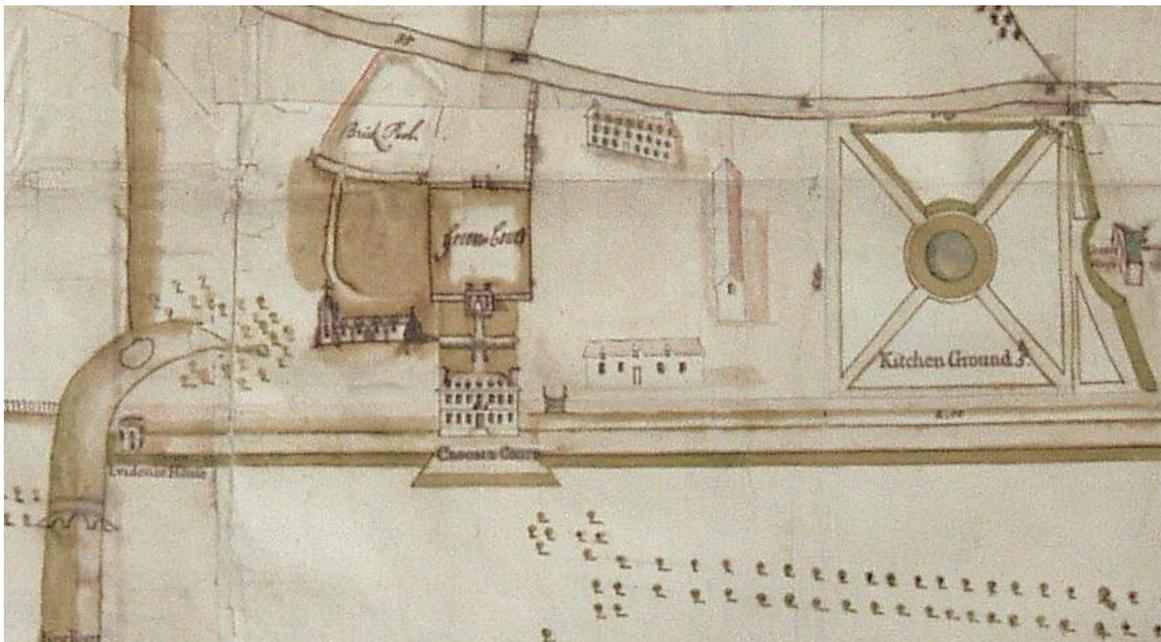
Fortunately the 6th Earl's successors felt little inclination or obligation to alter the structure in any way. Only the 9th Earl revealed any deep sentimental attachment to the place. Like many Victorians, his concerns were mainly for matters of comfort, efficiency and convenience. The conversion of Croome Court to a school in the mid-20th century and the building's brief but vibrant existence as a religious centre were also undertaken with respect for the structure. The changes in ownership in the late 20th century had a more serious impact on the fabric and the decorative schemes, and of particular concern is the current separate ownership and derelict condition of the service wing. Fortunately the main structure itself has shown a greater resilience and it now presents an important opportunity, perhaps an unprecedented one, to develop new approaches to the appreciation and interpretation of a country house of key historic and architectural importance.

Site plan evolution

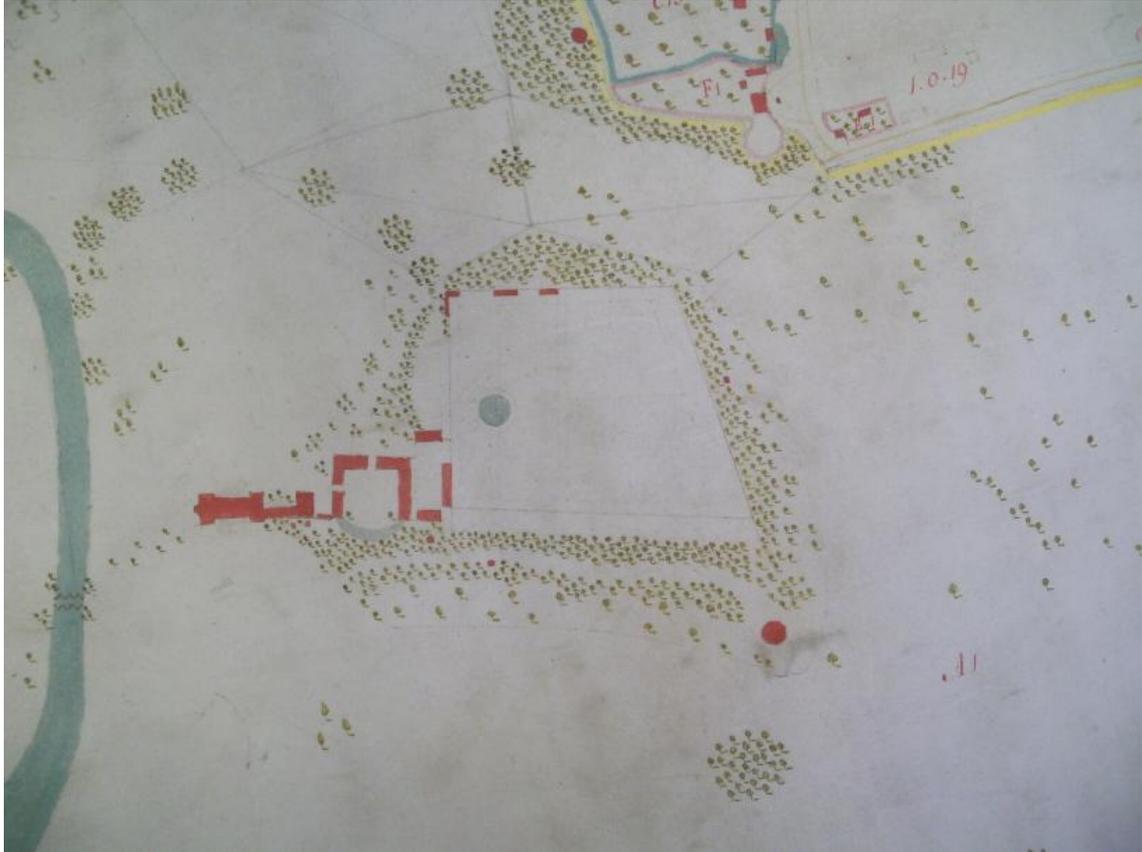
The following site plans shown in chronological order show how the site of Croome Court has evolved: c.1751 Doherty; 1768 (surveyed 1763) Broome; 1796 Snape; 1810 Hopcraft; 1884 OS map; 1886 OS map; 1905 OS map.



Detail of c.1751 survey by Doherty, before Brown's arrival. Note the beginnings of the 'river' already in place to the west of the house, the formal avenue running east to west crossing the Chinese Bridge, the medieval church still to the immediate NW of the house and the kitchen garden already in situ. (WRO)



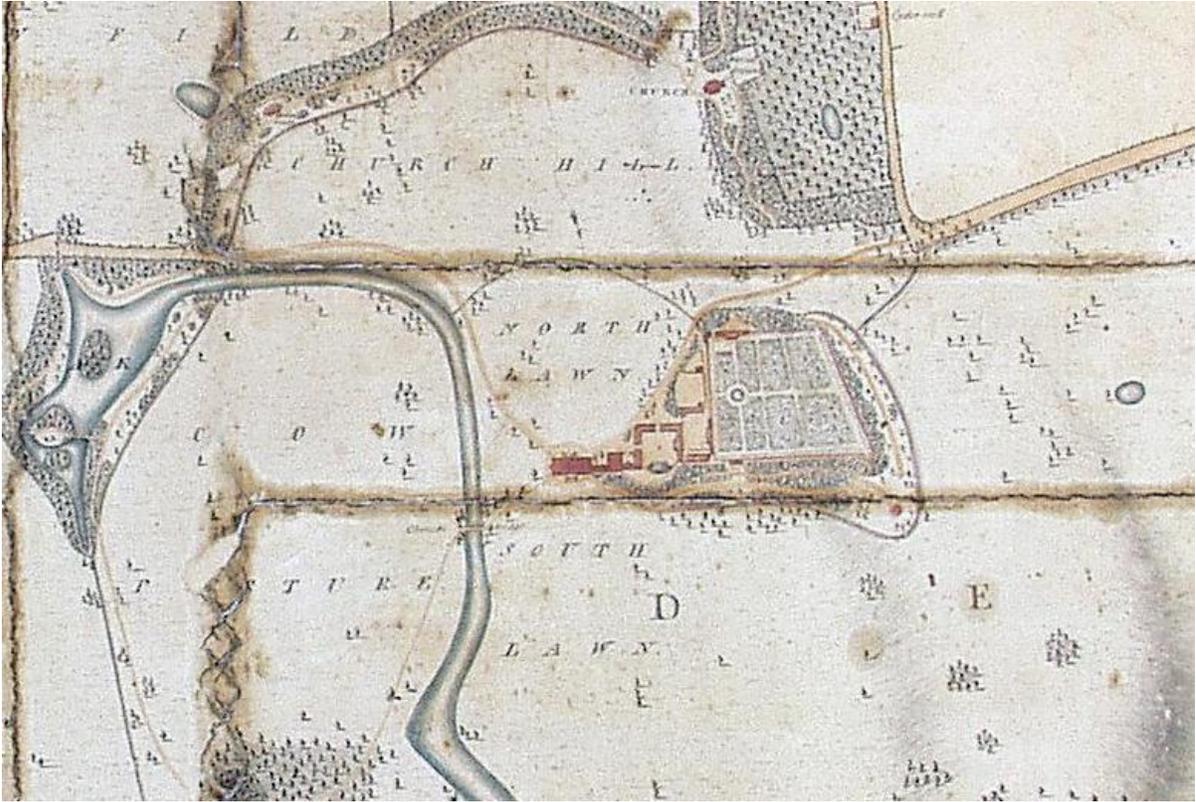
Enlarged detail of above (WRO)



Detail of 1768 survey (surveyed 1763) by Broome, after Brown's re-modelling. Note appearance of Rotunda lower right, disappearance of formal avenue to south and formal court & gatehouse to north, changed course/continuation of 'river' (a bridge is still indicated), removal of medieval church and scattered buildings, creation of Red Wing, stableblock and formal service yards to the east of the Court. (WRO)



Detail of the above (WRO)



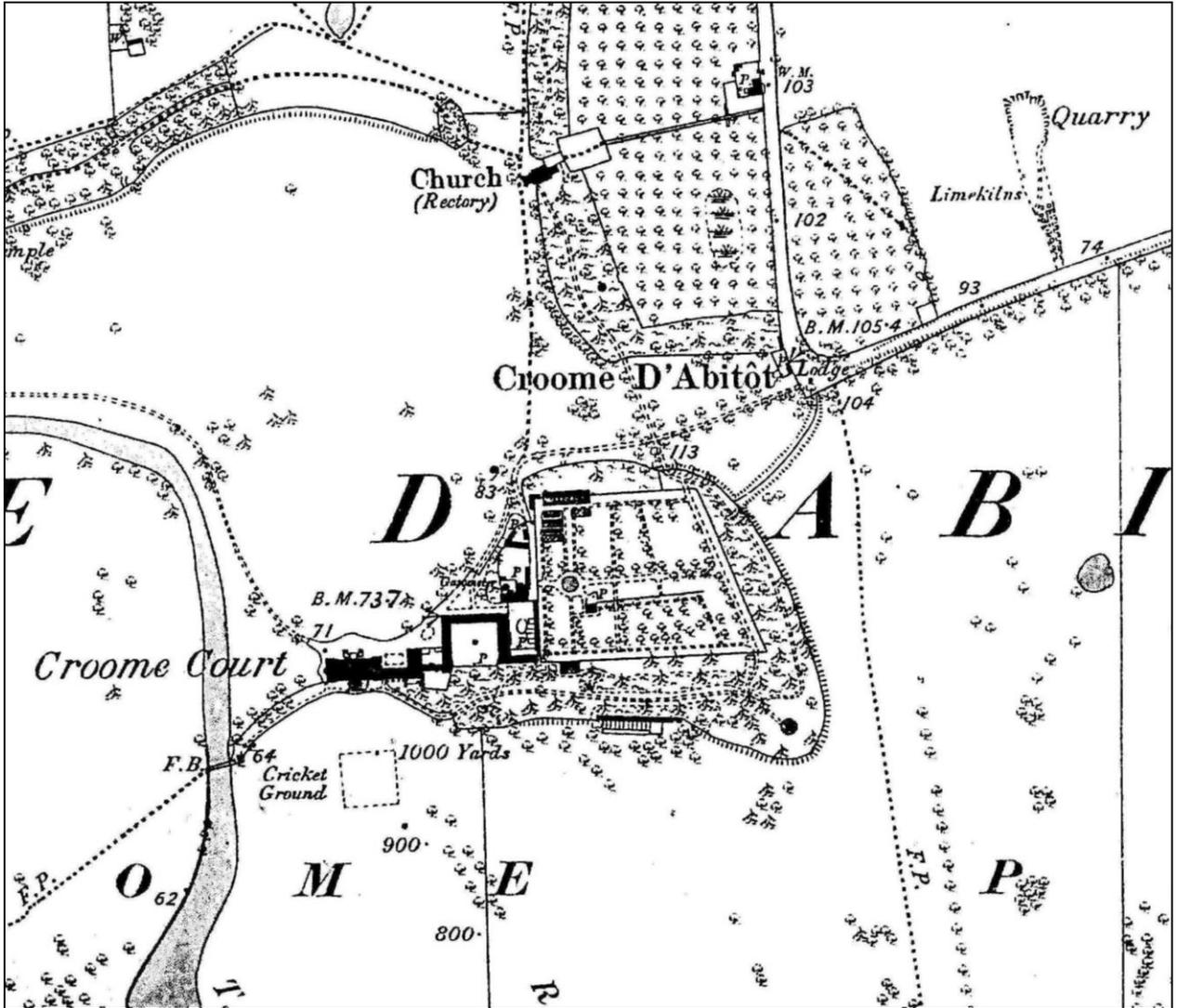
Detail of 1796 survey by Snape. (WRO)



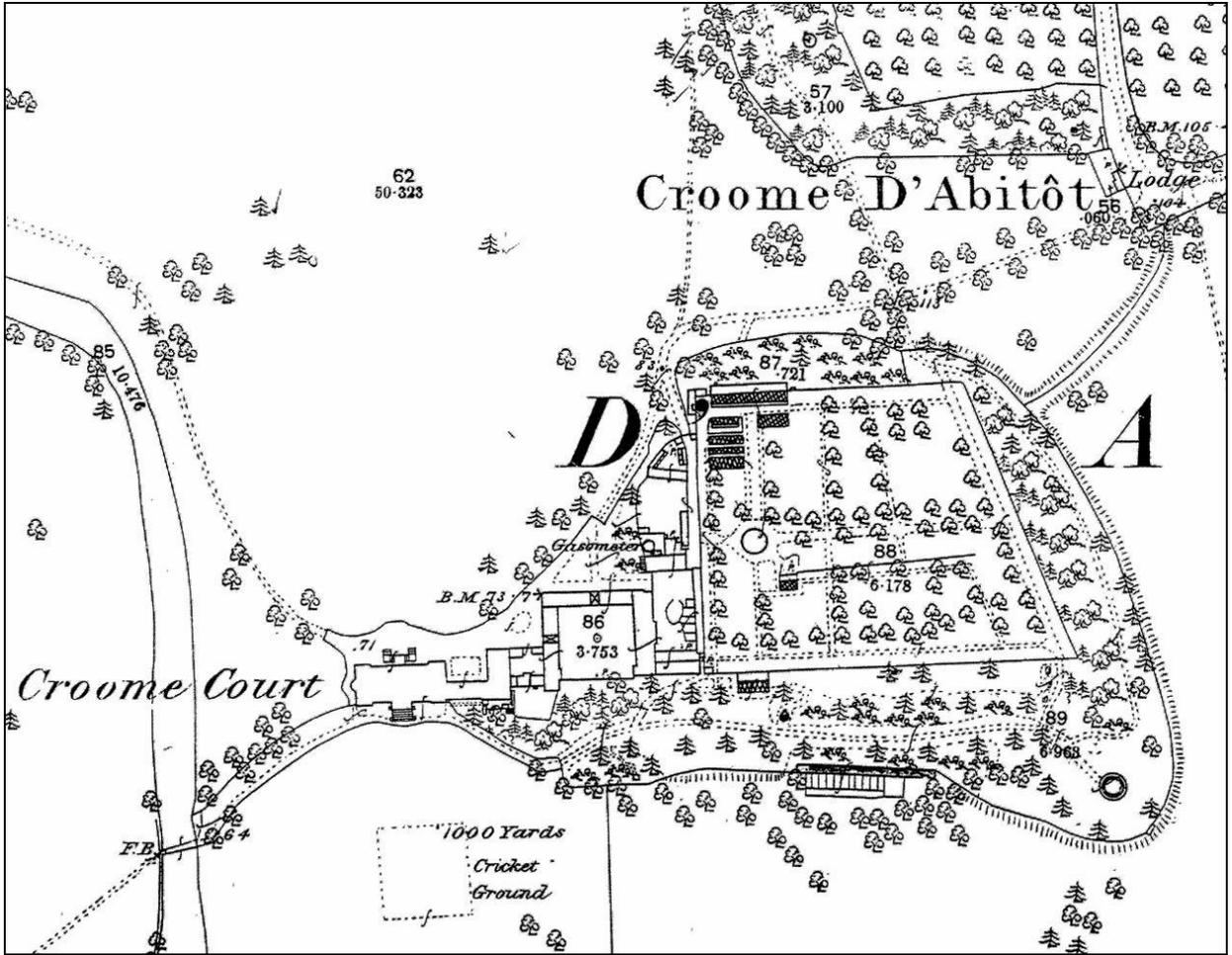
Enlarged detail of above. (WRO)



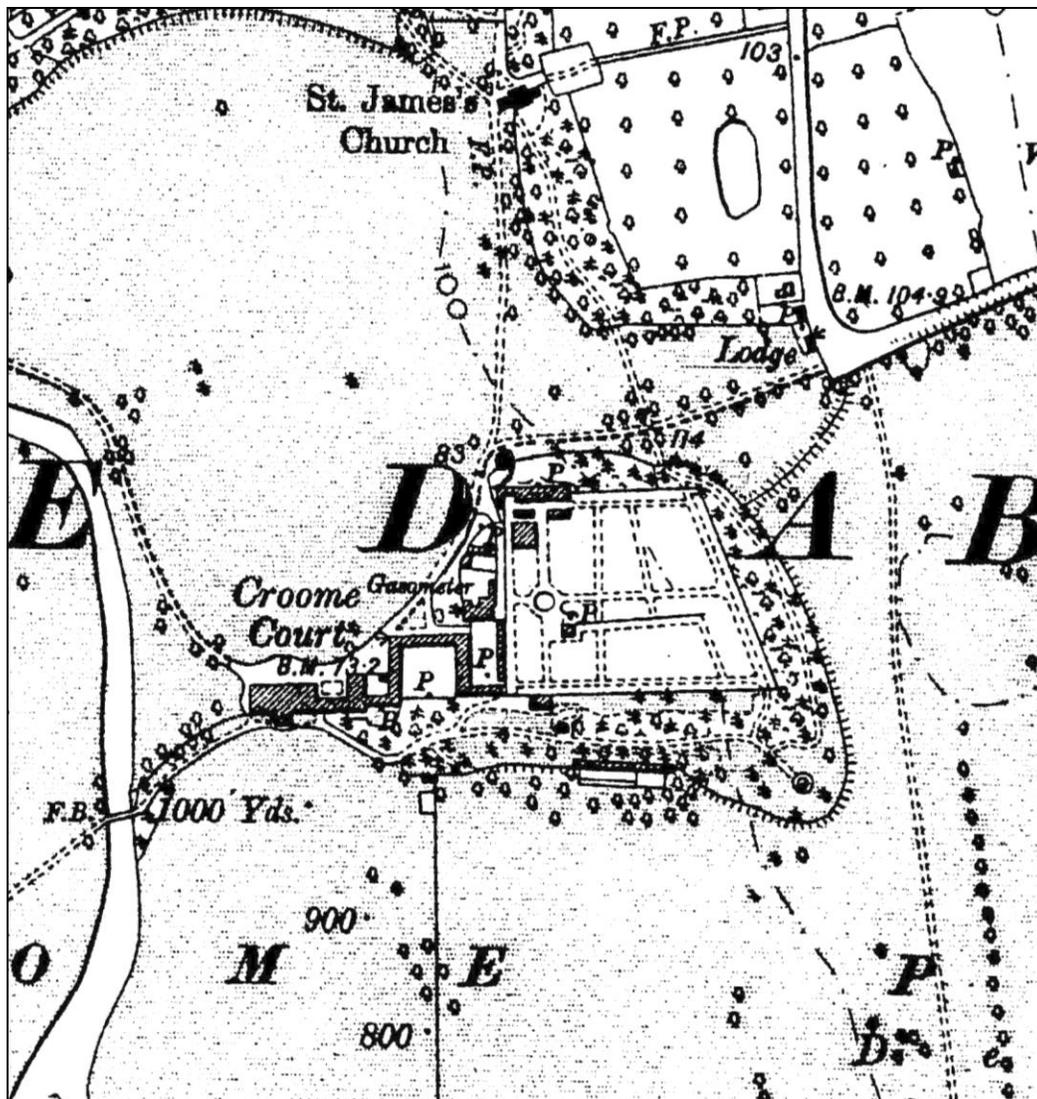
Detail of 1810 survey by Hopcraft. Note paths through Home Shrubbery to Rotunda (WRO)



Detail from 1884 OS 6 Inch Map. Note 9th Earl's Gasometer to north of Red Wing & cricket ground south of Court.



Detail from 1886 OS map. Gasometer & cricket ground still in place.

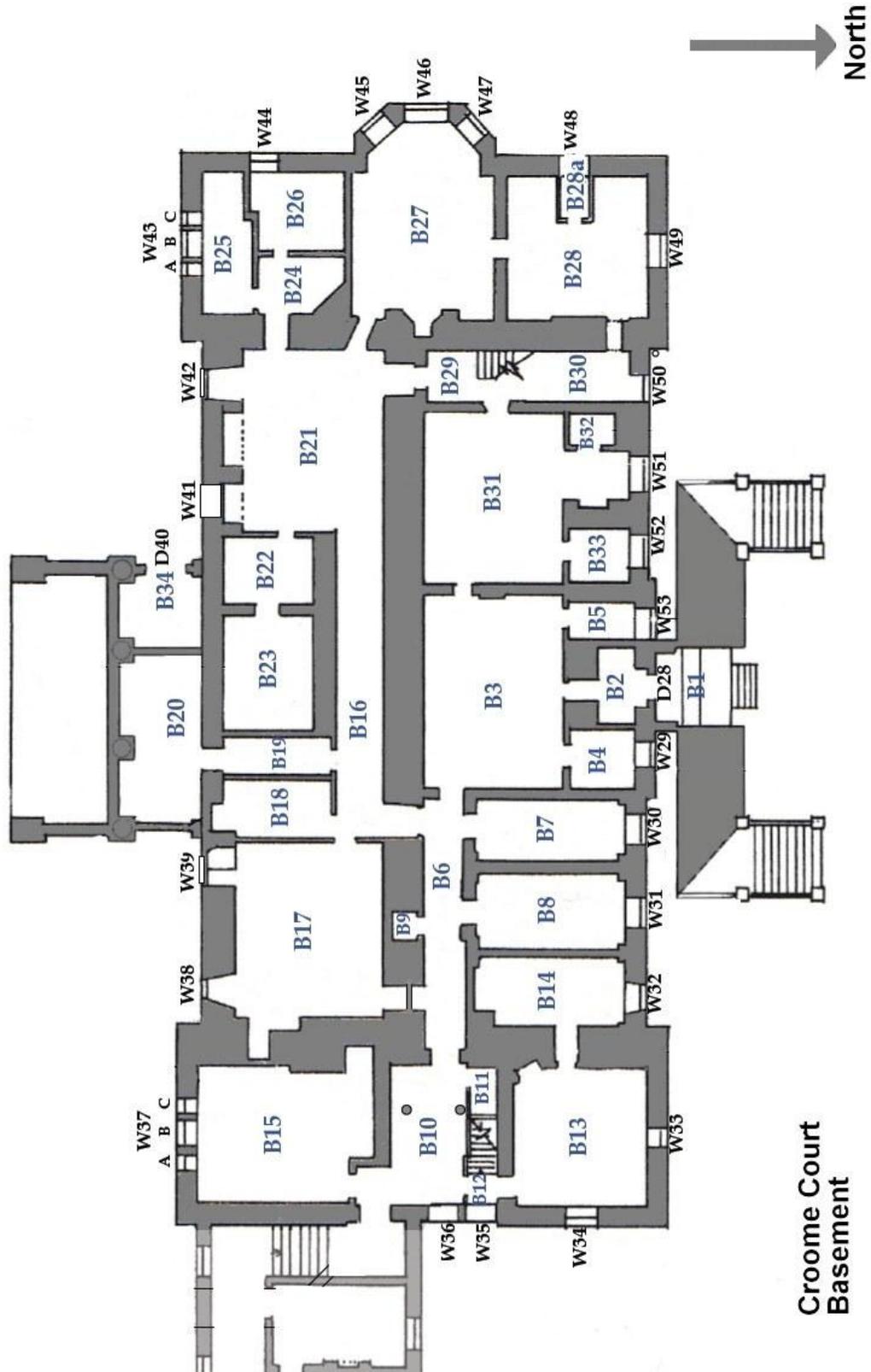


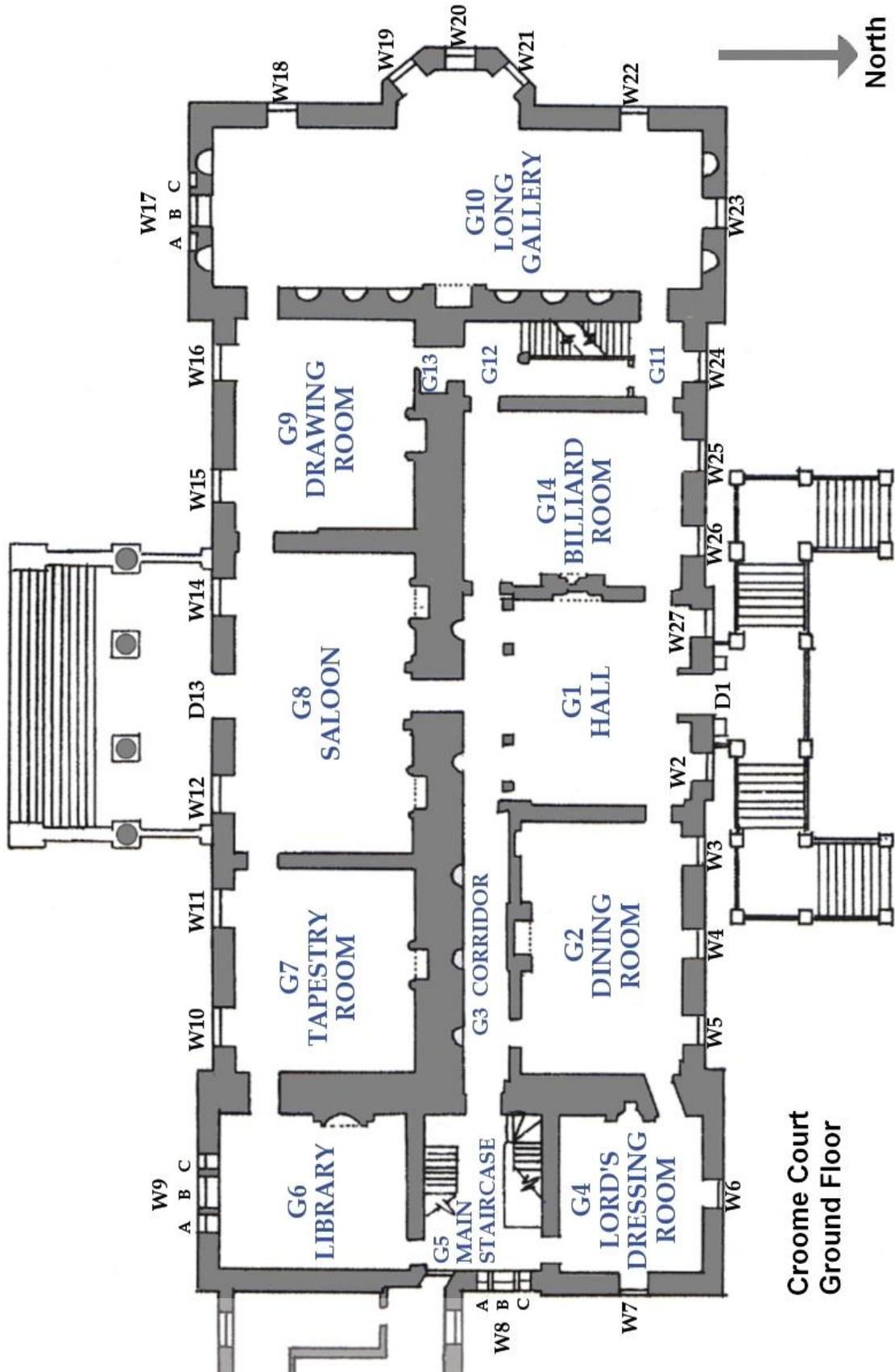
Detail from 1905 OS map. Gasometer still marked but cricket ground no longer extant.

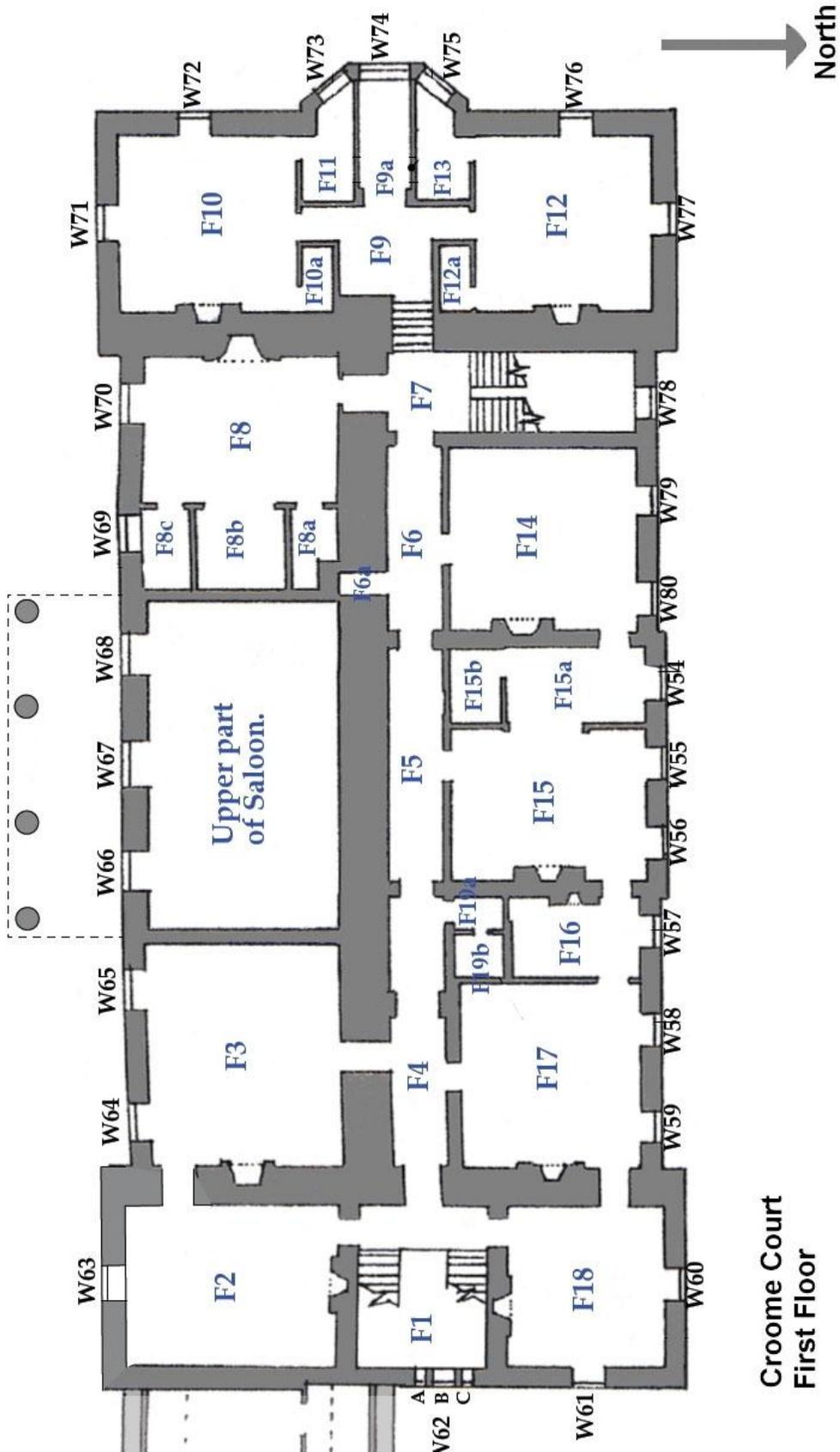
Floorplans

The next pages show the current floor plans for all four storeys of the Court annotated with the room numbers that are used throughout this CMMP, plus cross-sections showing the Court's structure.¹⁸

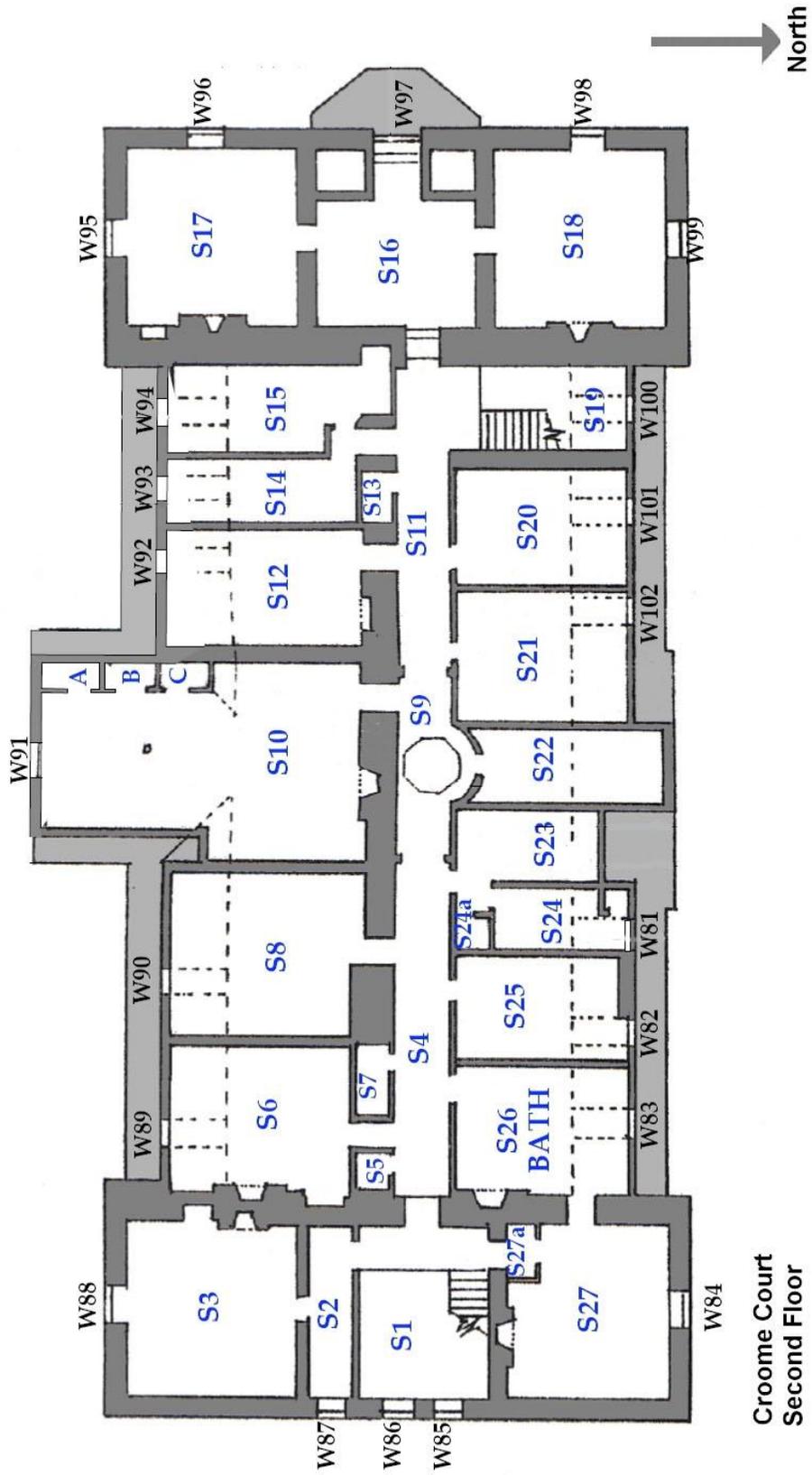
¹⁸ The floorplans were produced by John Goom, Architect, and the cross-sections by Andy Foster.







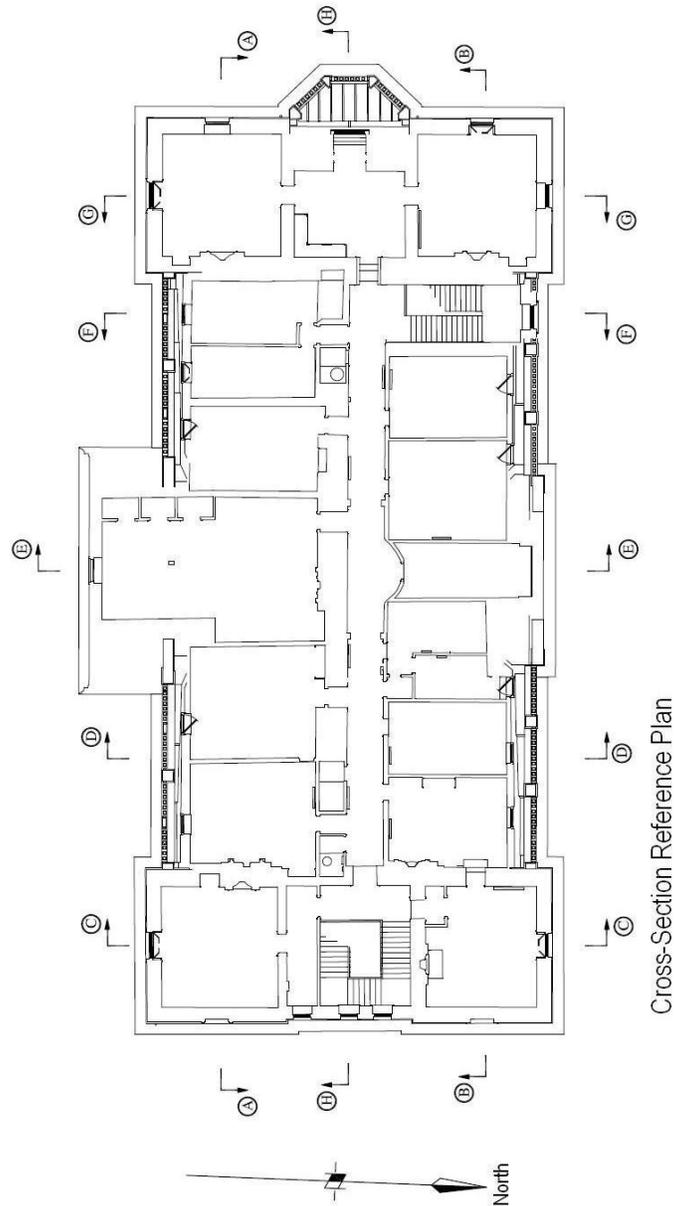
Croome Court
First Floor



Croome Court
Second Floor

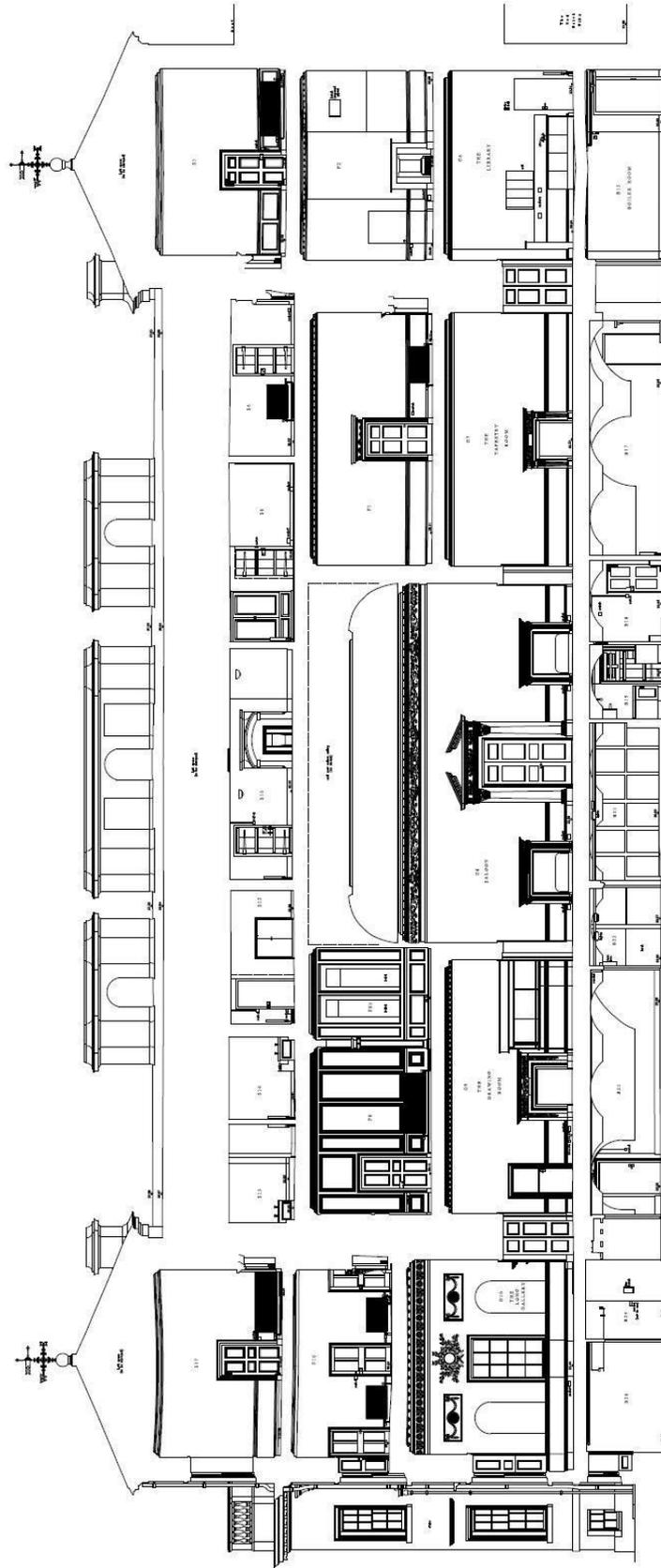
Cross-sections

The following eight cross-sections of the Court's structure were produced by Andy Foster of Foster Surveys in 2010.¹⁹ Below is a reference plan indicating the position of each one. Section E-E was enhanced by John Goom Architects and shows the route of the Entrance Hall flue.

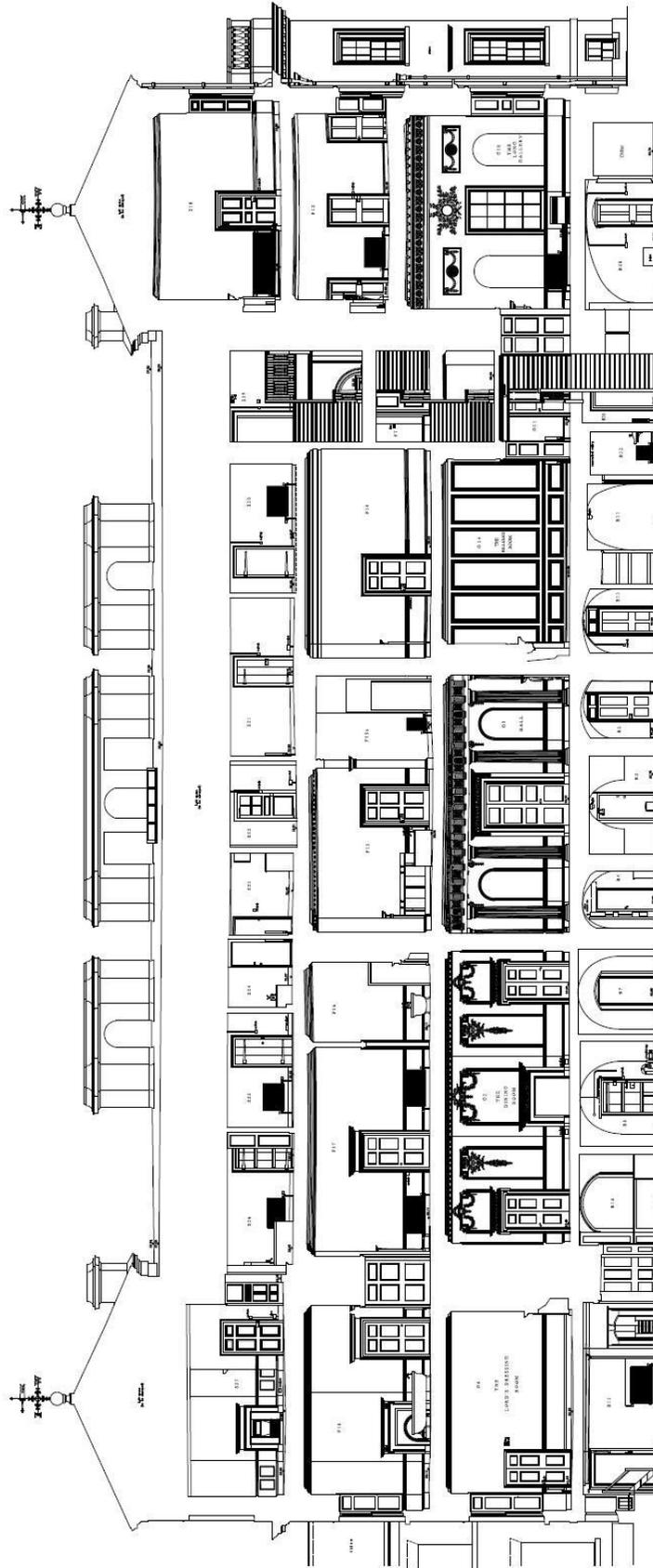


Cross-Section Reference Plan

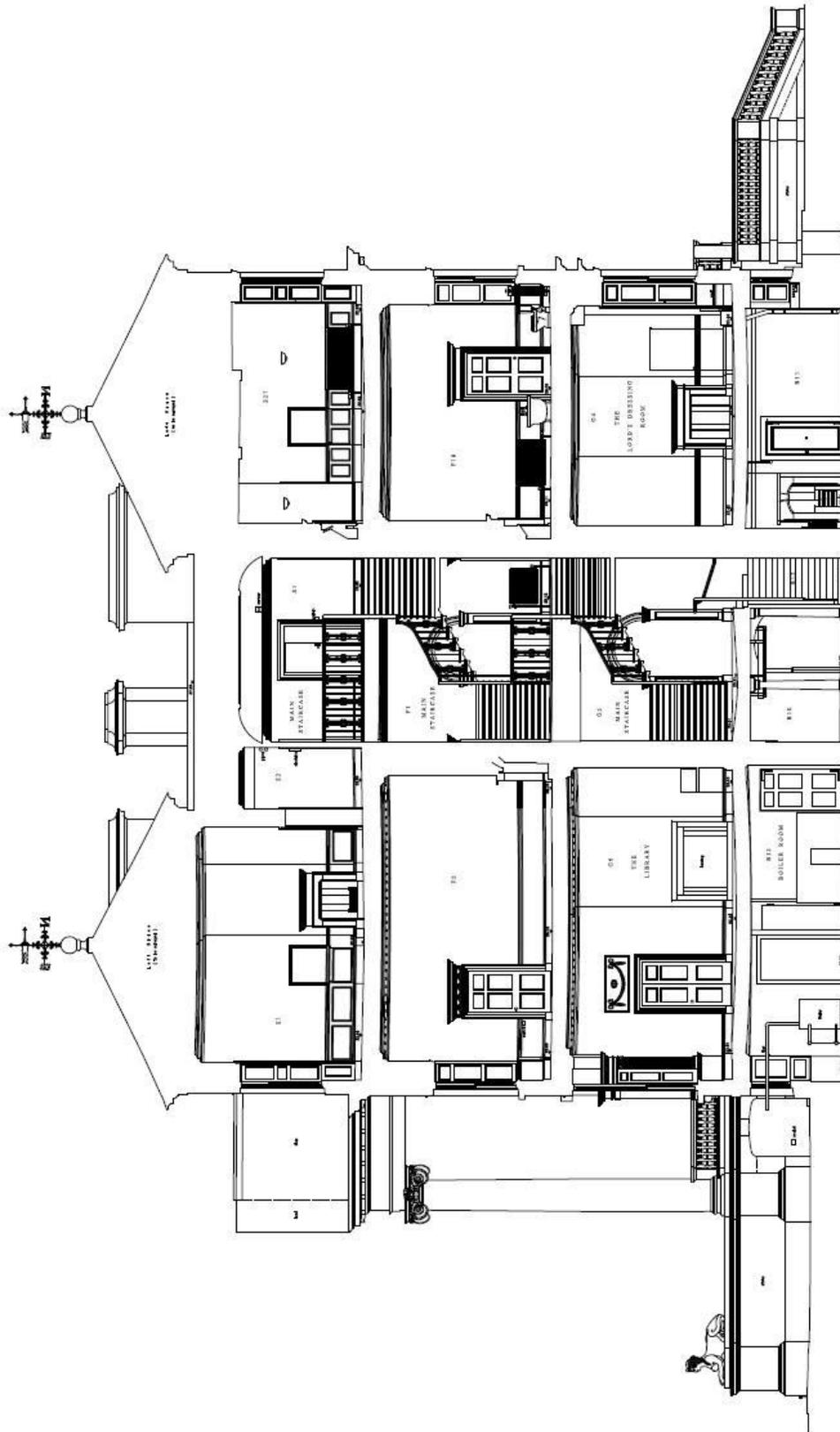
¹⁹ These cross-sections are intended here as a means of reference only – for a clearer view of the detail, refer to the original electronic files.



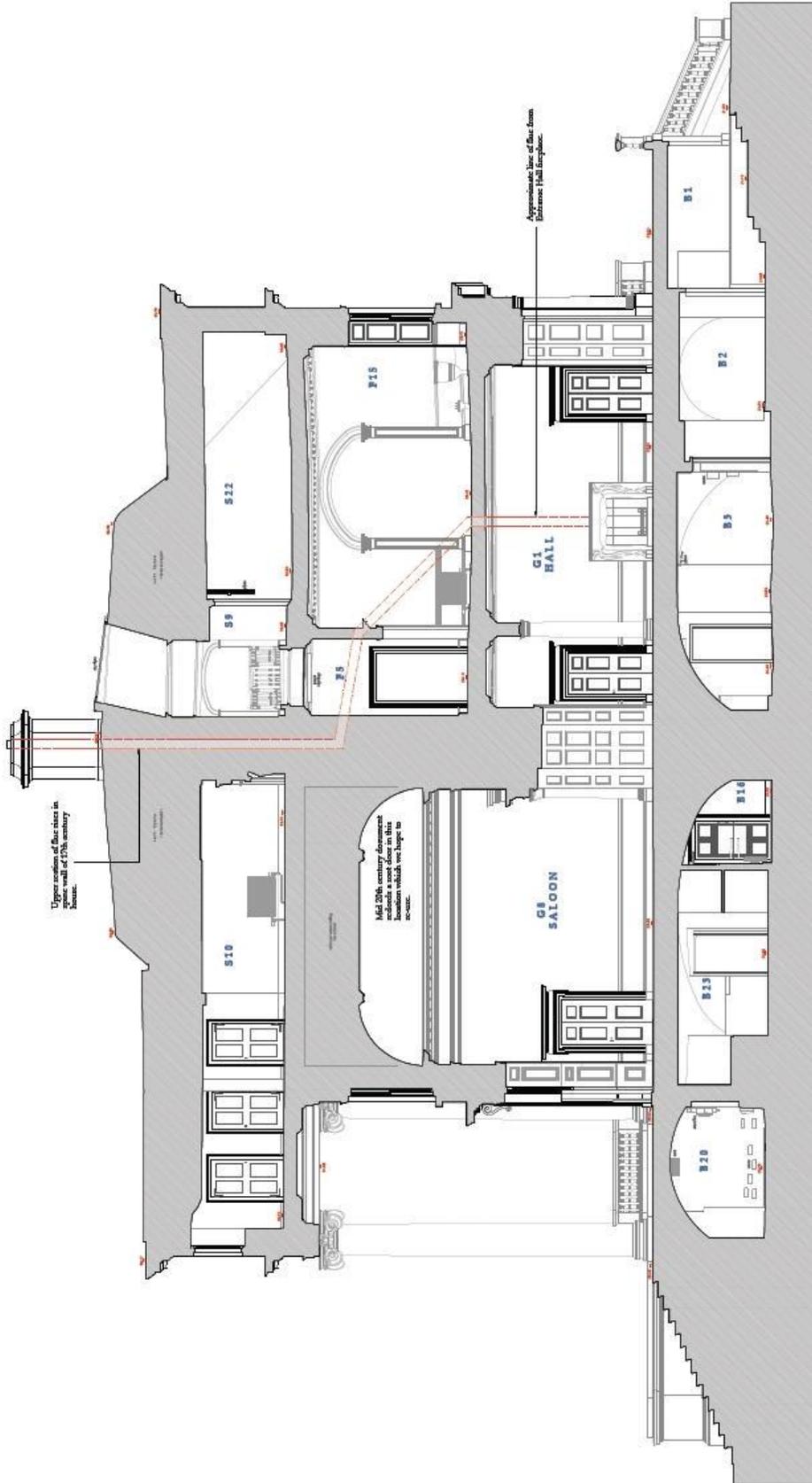
Croome Court - Section A-A
By Andy Foster, 2010



Croome Court - Section B-B
By Andy Foster, 2010

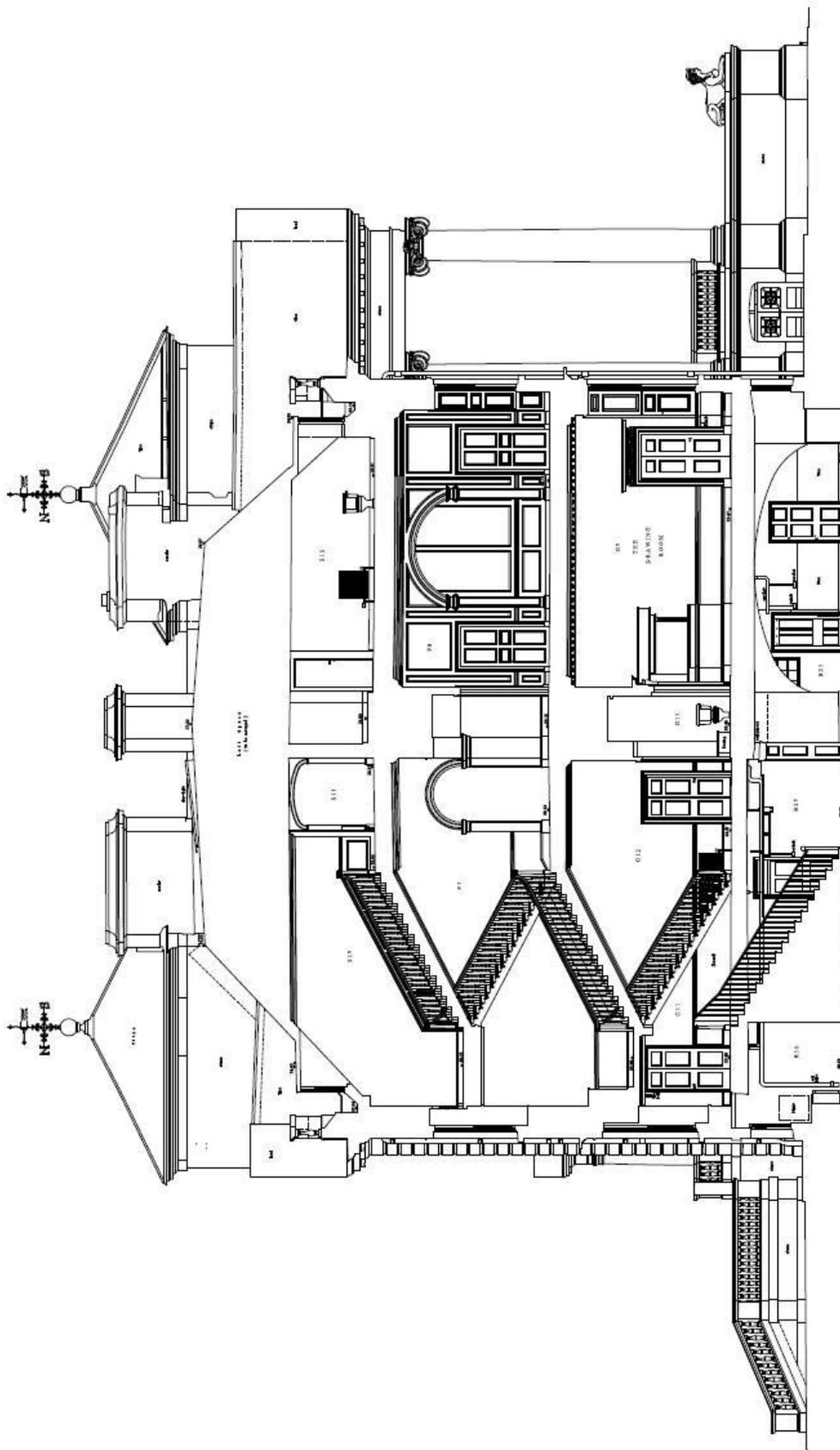


Croome Court - Section C-C
By Andy Foster, 2010

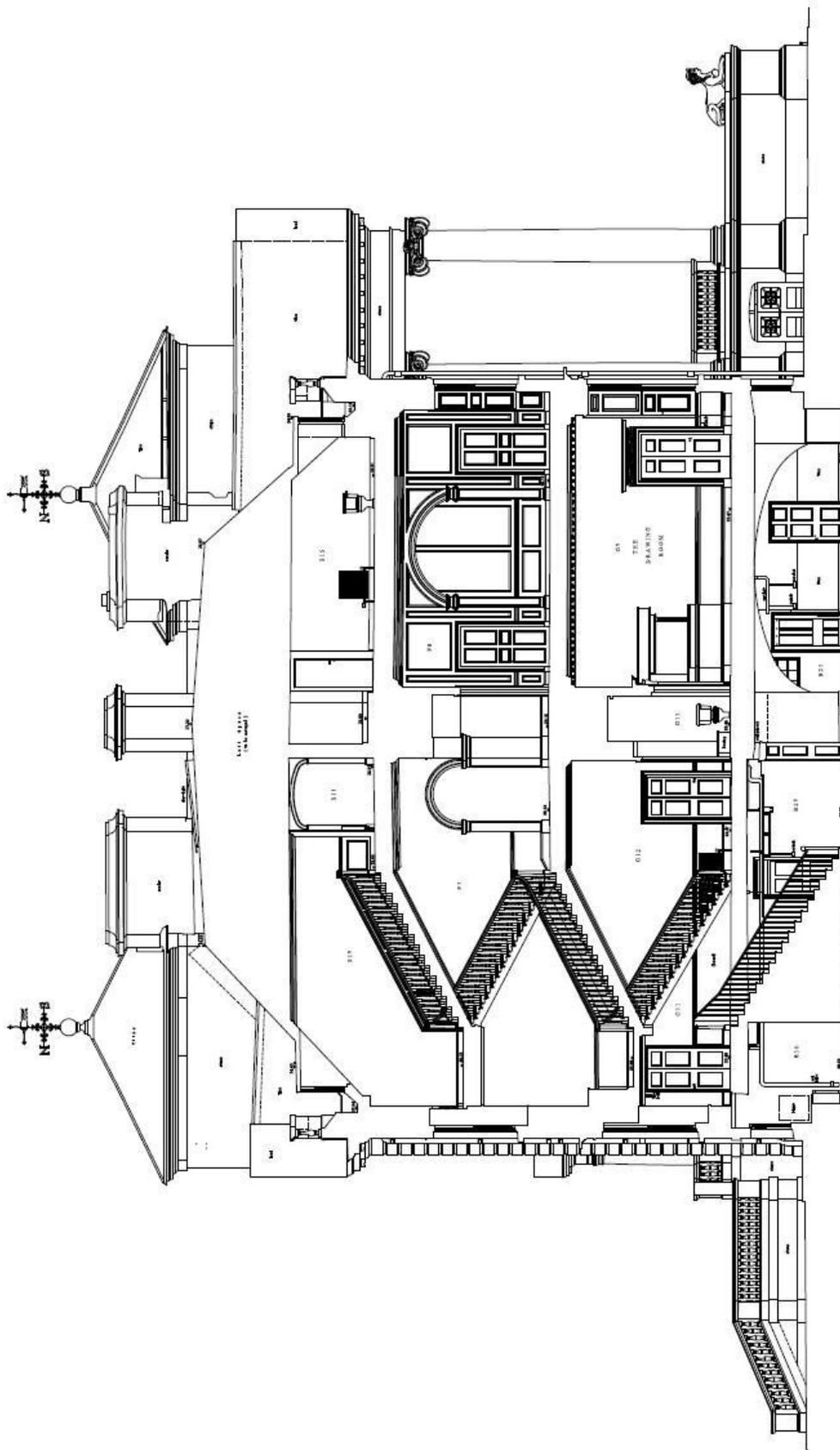


Croome Court - Enhanced Section E-E

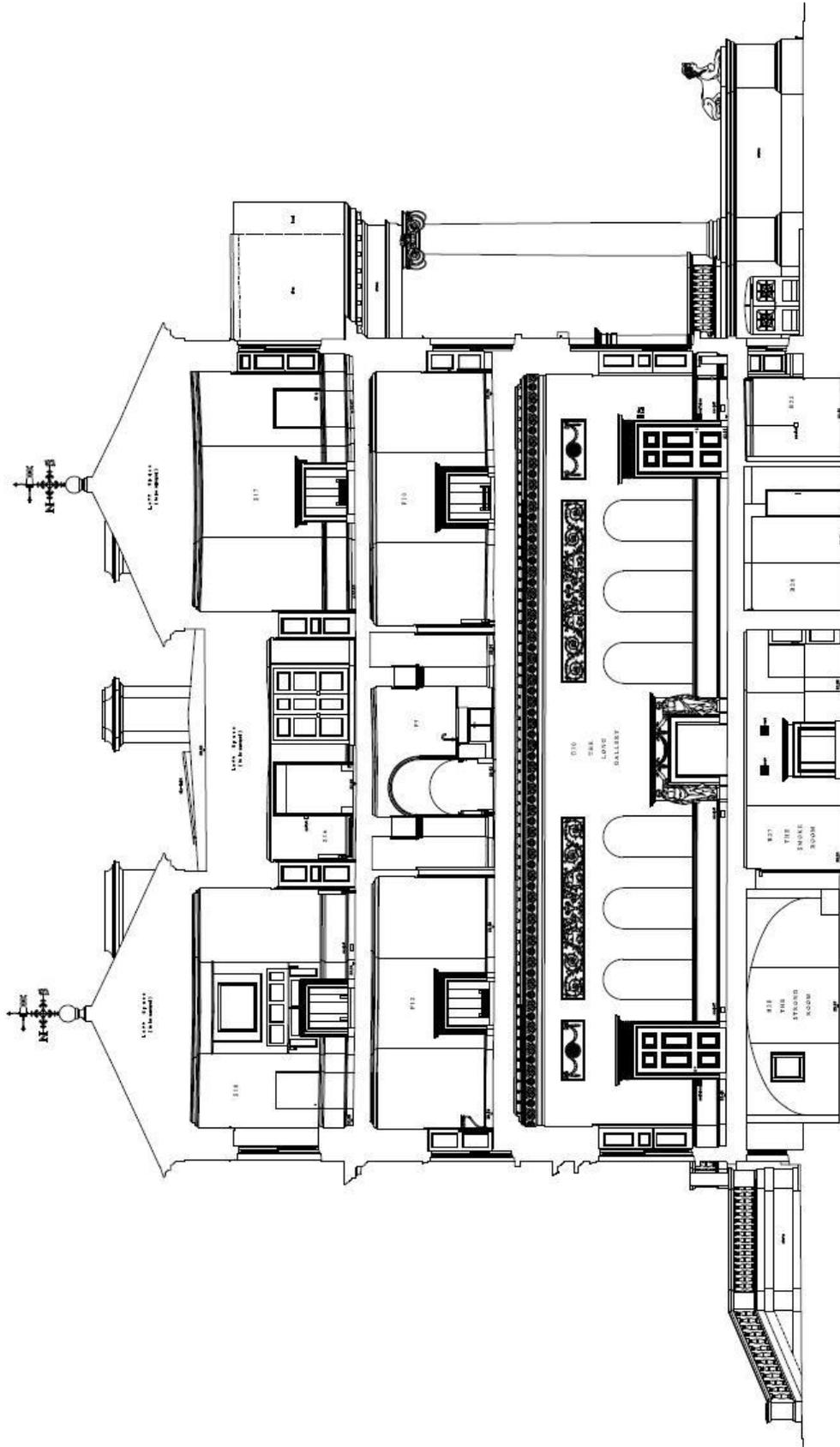
By Andy Foster/John Goom, 2010



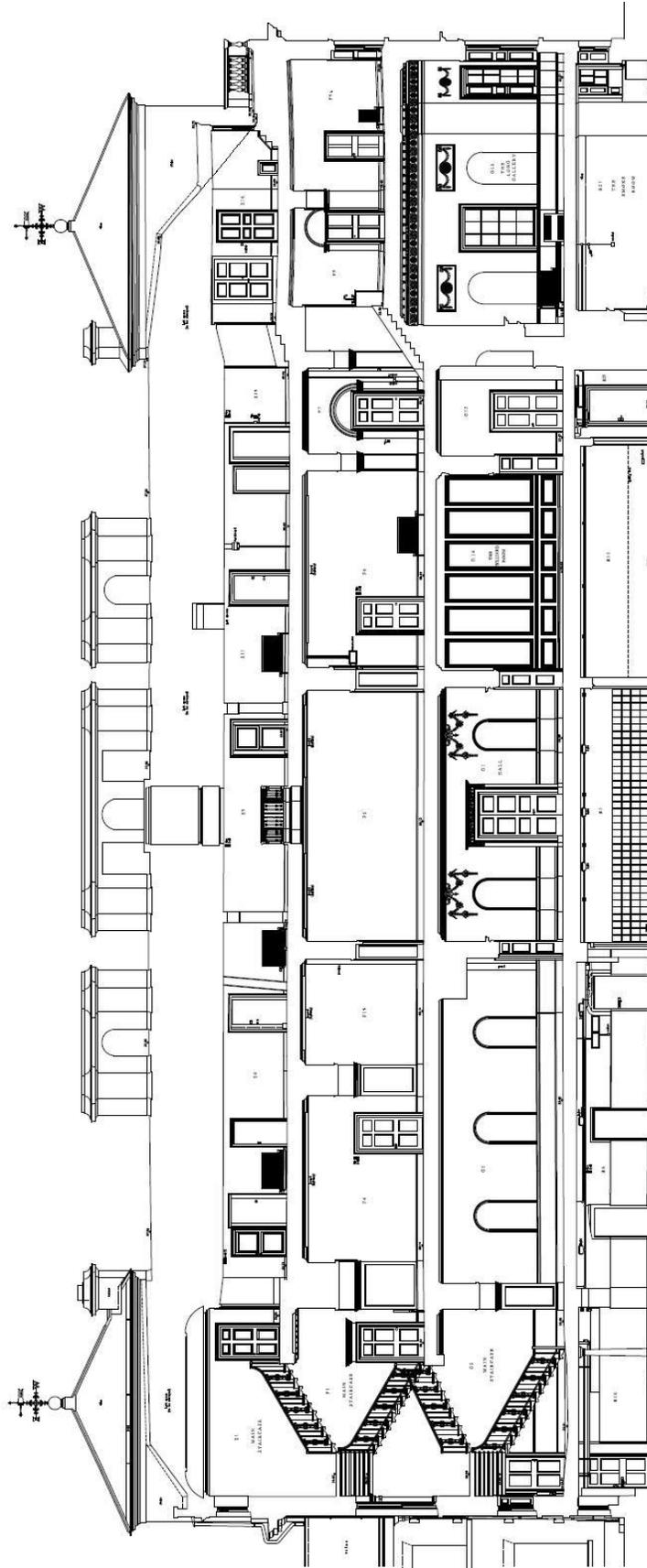
Croome Court - Section F-F
By Andy Foster, 2010



Croome Court - Section F-F
By Andy Foster, 2010



Croome Court - Section G-G
By Andy Foster, 2010



Croome Court - Section H-H
By Andy Foster, 2010

Structural evolution

This section draws heavily on the Historical & Archaeological Survey compiled in December 2010 by Catherine Gordon (see Appendix 5 for more detail), which describes the structural history and evolution of the house as an initial report pending further physical investigation and analysis which will be undertaken as part of the Croome Redefined project.

The phases of building and modification set out below are those defined and analysed in Gordon's report. Each period is associated with its respective generation(s) of the Coventry family and/or owner(s) of the Court (*period of incumbency shown in italics*):

Building / Alteration Phase	Date	Coventry Family / Owners of Croome Court
Pre-1640: The Tudor & Jacobean House	c1610-1625	Sir Thomas Coventry (1547-1606) <i>c.1592-1606</i> Thomas, 1st Baron Coventry (1578-1640) <i>1606-1640</i>
Mid 17th Century: The Caroline House	c1640-49	Thomas, 2nd Baron Coventry (1606-61) <i>1640-1661</i>
Early 18th Century: Proposals and Alterations	c1699-1719	George, 3rd Baron Coventry (1628-80) <i>1661-80</i> John 4th Baron Coventry (1654-87) <i>1680-87</i> Thomas, 1st Earl of Coventry (1629-99) <i>1687-99</i> Thomas, 2nd Earl of Coventry (1663-1710) <i>1699-1710</i> Thomas, 3rd Earl of Coventry (1702-1711/12) <i>1710-17</i> Gilbert 4th Earl of Coventry (1668-1719) <i>1712-1719</i>
Mid-18th Century: The Palladian Re-modelling	1751-58 (major structural works; interior layout 1751-1771)	William 5th Earl of Coventry (1678-1751) <i>1719-1751</i> George William, 6th Earl of Coventry (1722-1809) <i>1751-1809</i>
19th and 20th Century: Modifications and Modernisation	1809-1948	George William, 7th Earl of Coventry (1758-1831) <i>1809-1831</i> George William, 8th Earl of Coventry (1774-1843) <i>1831-1843</i>

		George William, 9th Earl of Coventry (1838-1930) <i>1843-1930</i> George William, 10th Earl of Coventry (1900-1940) <i>1930-1940</i>
Ownership since 1948	1948-1979	The Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham
	1979-1984	The Society for Krishna Consciousness
	1984 -2007	Martin Sowbey – youth training centre/hotel
		Christopher Buxton - hotel/conference centre
		John Rudge - property developer
		Laurence Bilton - property developer/private residence
	2007	Croome Heritage Trust

PRE-1640: THE TUDOR AND JACOBEAN HOUSE

Specific Areas of Interest relating to the pre-1640 Tudor & Jacobean House

- Spine wall: brickwork, openings (B9) and chimney flues (esp. Saloon and Drawing Room)
- Basement: cellar paving (esp.B3), grille and latticed glass in the south wall (B23), chamfered doorways and surviving pintles (hinges) of former doors through spine wall (B6 to B16).
- Second Floor: sections of reused panelling (e.g. S3), doors (e.g. S5, S7, S8, S10, S15, S21, S22), chimneypieces (e.g. S6, S10, S26).

Historical Context

The site of the house within the village of Croome D'Abitot and adjacent to the former parish church is of probable medieval origin. Thomas Coventry, a successful London lawyer, purchased part of the manor adjacent to his wife's home in Earl's Croome in the late 16th century. In 1606, Croome was inherited by Sir Thomas's son, Thomas, 1st Baron Coventry (1578-1640). A man of great ability and ambition, he became Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England in 1625. During the 1620s and 1630s, he invested part of his great wealth in land, enlarging his estate at Croome across southern Worcestershire into Gloucestershire and also eastern and southern England. He settled his estate at Croome on his eldest son, Thomas, in 1627 and, during the 1630s, he lived mainly in London, leasing the more desirable part of Durham House in the Strand, where he died in 1640.



Portrait of 1st Baron Coventry, Lord Keeper,
by Cornelius Jonson, c.1626. (CET)

Construction

Nothing is known about the manor house that stood on the site at this time. It is likely to have been of timber frame with brick chimneys, possibly on a base of the local blue lias, and with a roof of plain clay tiles, typical for a house of this date and status in this part of Worcestershire.

According to the early 18th century report at Antony, the existing manor house was burnt down once in 'the time' of Thomas, 1st Baron Coventry and once in 'the time' of his eldest son. This may refer to his lifetime or period of ownership (1606-1627), but the latter seems the most plausible explanation. Although no records have been found among the Lord Keeper's papers that refer to the rebuilding of the house at Croome, there is a surviving account for glazing and ironwork repairs in 1624 which could relate to this. By 1627 the house must have been in a good state as the accounts record improvements to the grounds and outbuildings between 1627 and 1632, including new courts and a gatehouse, planned to enhance the setting of the building.

As the house was rebuilt twice in the first half of the 17th century, it is not possible to be too specific about the extent and precise date of the surviving structural evidence from this period, especially as reused materials are found throughout the building. These include some substantial timbers located within the internal structure towards the western end of the building, which could date from the early or mid 17th century and show evidence of reuse in their redundant tenons and peg-holes. The 17th century brickwork that forms the shell of building also appears to incorporate some pre-1640 materials, and in the basement there are some early openings, re-used doors and a surviving window of latticed leaded glass preserved within the south wall²⁰. There are also several reused 17th century doors and some sections of reused Jacobean panelling on the second floor²¹.

Design and Layout

The 16th century house may have been of the hall and cross-wing type of plan with large external chimneys, a common vernacular type frequently found in the region. This early building may have established the upper and lower or service ends of the house which were perpetuated in later building phases. It also probably served to define the overall layout of the grounds with the outbuildings to the north-east and the church to the north-west.

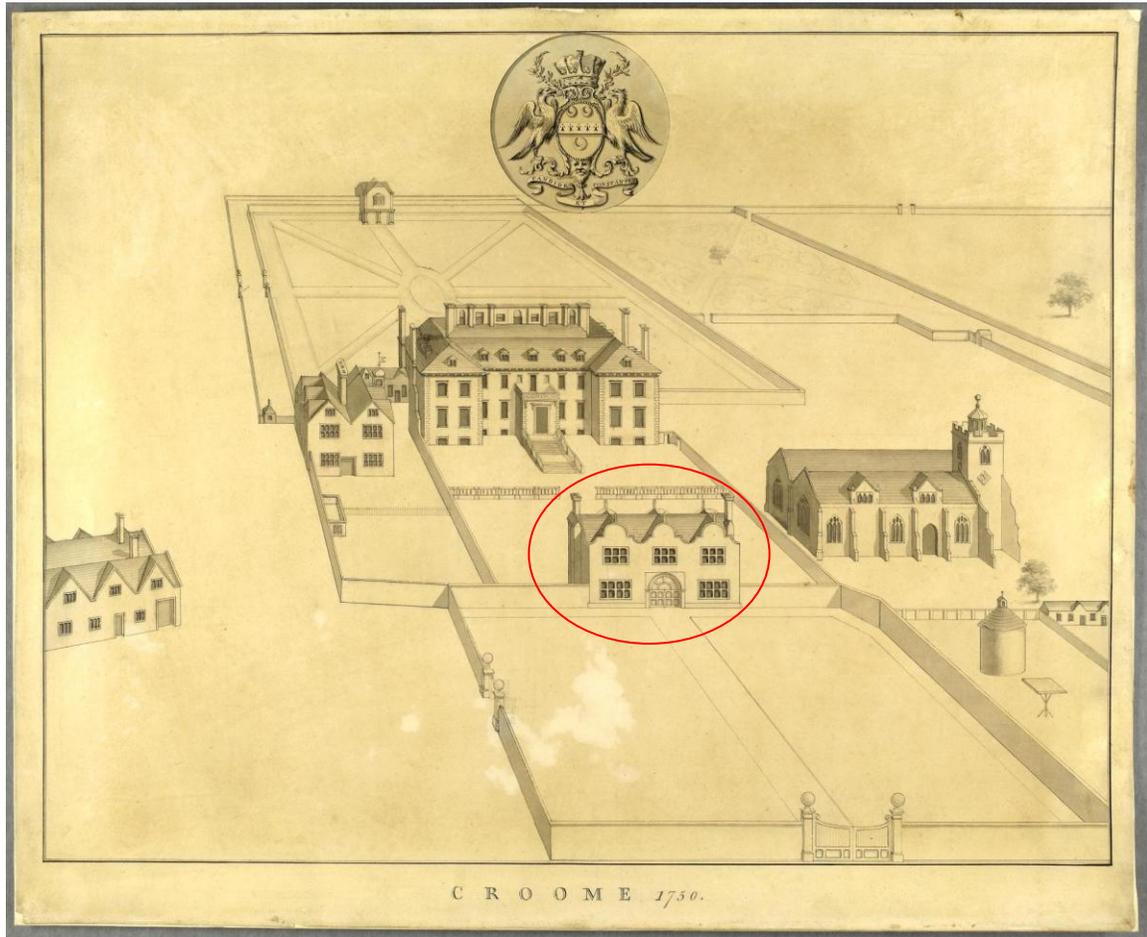
The general appearance and layout of the Jacobean house remains equally subject to speculation. One possible clue is the gatehouse which, with its prominent, fashionable shaped gables, end chimneys, stone dressings, symmetrical facade and arched entrance, may indicate the style of the main body of the Jacobean house. Thus, prior to the 1640 re-building, Croome House may have been broadly similar to the gatehouse in architectural character²². The adjacent double-pile gabled service block may also be of this date, and the scale and pretensions of both buildings could give some indication of

²⁰ B23

²¹ S3, S26-27

²² Nicholas Cooper, *Croome Court-The Seventeenth Century House*, December 2010, p.3

the design of the house itself. These two buildings are shown in a bird's eye view of the house from the north dated c.1750.²³



The c.1750 view from the north highlighting the Jacobean gatehouse which may indicate the style of the pre-1640s house, which preceded the main house shown here (WRO)

However, the drawing is incomplete and sketchy and the date questionable as it does not show the changes to the garden and grounds undertaken in the earlier half of the 18th century. If the house that was rebuilt in the time of the Lord Keeper was similarly detailed, it would have shown an awareness of current trends and have exhibited a refinement of detail that would reflect the family's new status and wealth. It is also quite possible that the brick spine wall and chimney flues existed at this point and were later incorporated within the design of the Caroline house. Further archaeological investigations may serve to confirm this.

²³ WRO.

MID-17TH CENTURY: THE CAROLINE HOUSE²⁴

Specific points of interest relating to the mid-17th century Caroline House

- Chimney profile along roof ridge
- Evidence of porch and return wall of north-west wing in basement (B31-B33)
- Date function and layout of south-east wing
- Location of former kitchen
- Blocked openings through spine wall in basement
- Evidence of possible blocked fireplace and early brickwork in B14
- Old brickwork visible on exterior of south-west basement window (W42) and probability of further evidence existing along south elevation
- Layered floor structure in F8 including shapes cut out of beams in NE corner
- Gap between Saloon and Drawing Room exposing earlier timber-framed partition
- Blocked opening visible behind panelling in F8
- Void above Saloon
- Possible blocked doorway into void over Saloon from first-floor corridor
- Timber-framed partition behind panelling in Billiard Room believed to incorporate blackened timbers
- Evidence of location of former main staircase and backstairs
- Early plasterwork visible in F8 (in gap between Saloon W wall & in F6a) , the backstairs, and S24
- Settlement of building along second-floor corridor
- Three early chimneypieces on the second floor (S6, S10, S26)
- Evidence of 17th century roof structure on second floor
- Space within western end of spine wall (G13)
- The possibility of a further passageway through the spine wall in F3

Historical Context

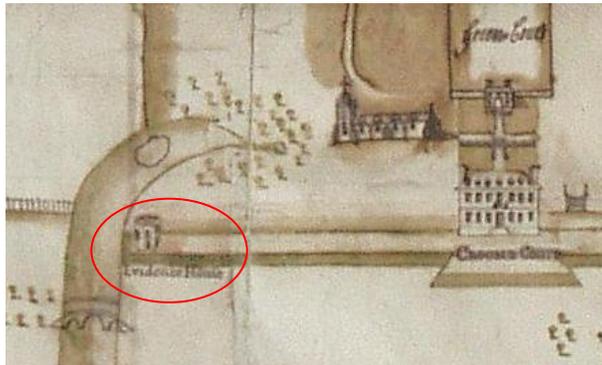
Thomas, later 2nd Baron Coventry, (1606-61) was 21 when he took over the family estate at Croome in 1627. He was an M.P. for Droitwich and had recently married and this may have contributed to the considerable interest he expressed in its improvement from the start. The 2nd Baron was also enthusiastic and knowledgeable about fashionable architecture: he was not only living at the heart of one of the most fashionable and architecturally progressive areas of London, but he was actively involved in the development of another²⁵.

The Croome accounts for 1627 contain details of the new gatehouse (£192.18s.2d) and of new front and rear courts that were laid out in the formal manner, and also of a new chapel in the adjacent parish church (£109.18s.2d) to which the 2nd Baron donated a fourth bell. The accounts for 1632 include entries for a new barn and bakehouse and

²⁴ The term 'Caroline' house relates to the reign of Charles I (crowned 1625), while 'Carolean' relates to Charles II (crowned 1660).

²⁵ See Appendix 5, Historical & Archaeological Survey, p.13 for more detail.

further improvements to the garden, which may have included the Evidence House (shown in Doherty's plan of c.1750)²⁶ and the development of the kitchen garden where the accounts suggest that vines and apricots were grown.



Detail from the c.1751 Doherty survey indicating the Evidence House (WRO)

According to the various Articles of Agreement with the builder and craftsmen which survive among the Badminton Muniments²⁷, the main building work was to be completed by Midsummer 1641, and the tiling was to be finished by 1st April 1642. However the Articles relating to Edmund Johnson, the painter, are dated 8th and 10th May 1649, so it may be assumed that completion was delayed for several years by the Civil War. The fact that the work began in the year of the death of the Lord Keeper (1640) can be no coincidence. The date and severity of the second fire is also unclear. The house may have remained badly or partially damaged for a short period, or it could have burnt down again shortly before or after the Lord Keeper's death: these were unsettled times.

Whatever the circumstances, the 2nd Baron had ample funds and seized the opportunity to make his mark on Croome, perhaps with greater enthusiasm than his father had done as his personal attachment to the place appears much stronger. The current political turmoil acted as little deterrent to his ambition, and the house was largely complete, if undecorated, when war broke out in 1642. Over the following period, his political sympathies appear suspiciously ambivalent and directed primarily towards the need to protect his new house. Transcripts of original papers that relate to his behaviour before and after the battle of Worcester in 1651 show that he chose to detach himself from the surrounding chaos as much as possible. He took to his bed while the King was in Worcester and, according to Richard Hodgkins, a Worcester tallow chandler, he arose, fully recovered, 'to walk in his garden and grounds' once the Parliamentary troops arrived.²⁸ It was a risky tactic but it spared his new house, which was one of only a few important large houses built in the region at this time.

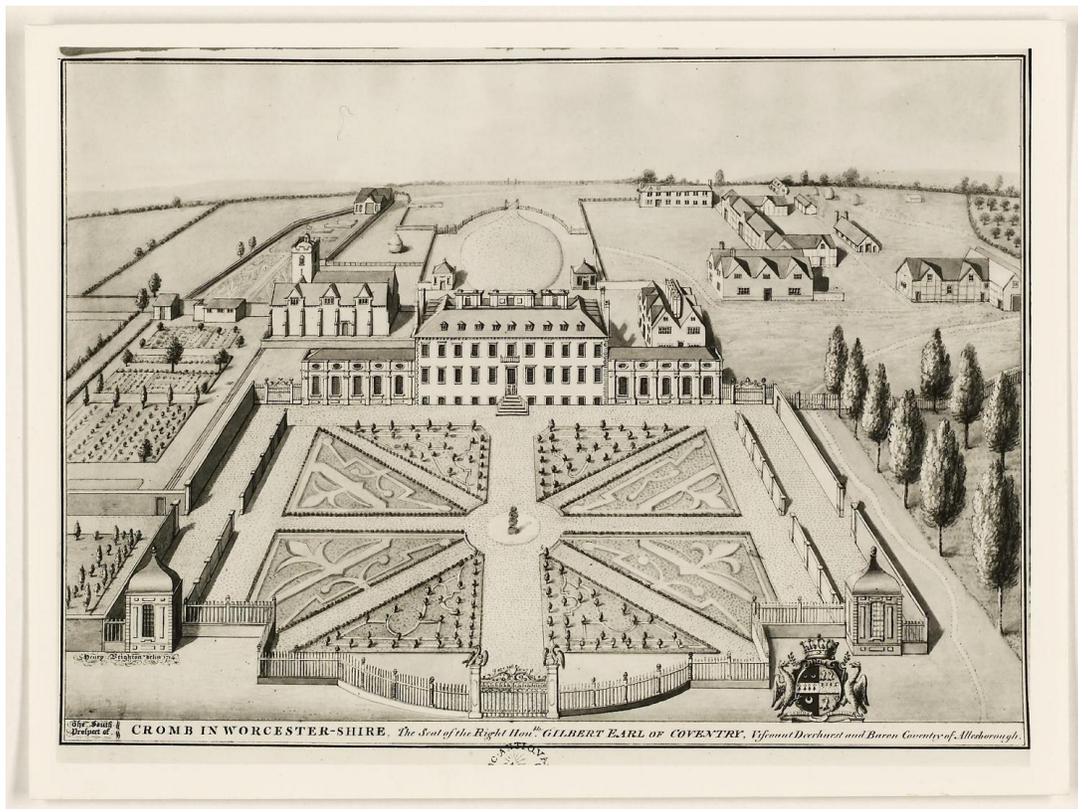
²⁶ Nicholas Cooper points out that evidence houses (where important documents such as deeds and leases were kept) were normally within the main building for purposes of security. Could the one at Croome have been separate from the main house due to fire risk?

²⁷ BM: QV1/1

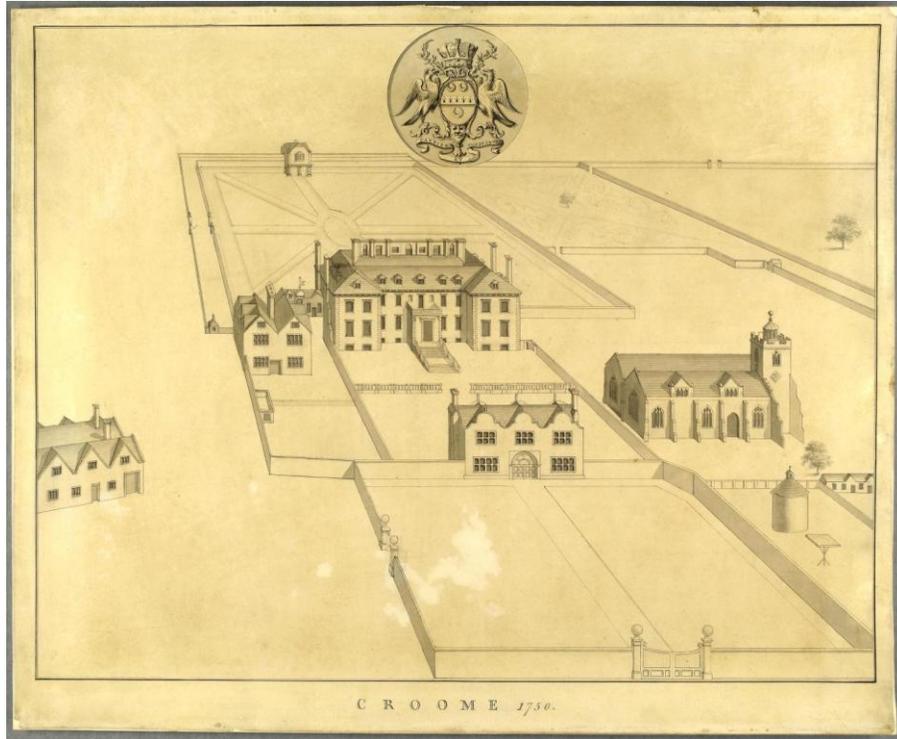
²⁸ WRO.CEA: Box 14, F59

Construction

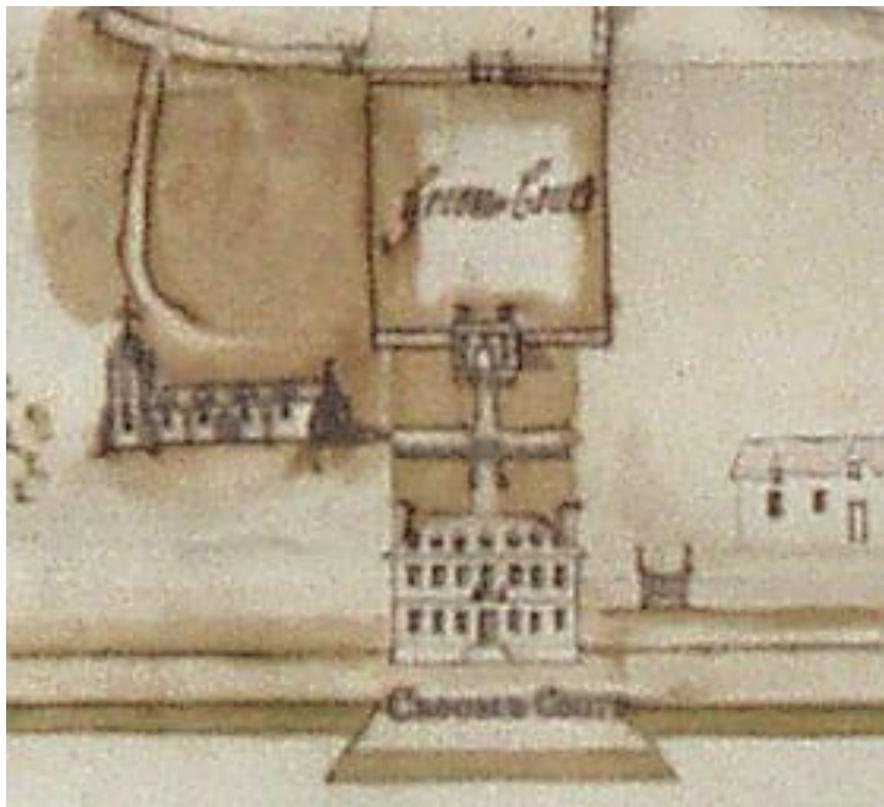
Begun in 1640, the house was notably progressive in its design. The images of the pre-1751 house that survive: the Beighton view from the south, the c.1750 view from the north and the Doherty plan, give an overall impression of its appearance but conflict in certain matters of scale and detail (see images below).



The 1714 view of Croome from the south by Henry Beighton.
N.B. This may portray a projected scheme that was never fully realised. (WRO)



The c.1750 view of Croome from the north.
N.B. this date is very uncertain and the drawing may be unfinished. (WRO)



Detail from the c.1751 Doherty survey.
N.B. Doherty was more concerned with land use than architectural detail. (WRO)

However these cannot be solely relied upon as the Beighton view is likely to portray a projected scheme, the c.1750 view is unfinished and the date is dubious, the Doherty plan is concerned principally with land use and the image of the house is merely a representational sketch. Fortunately, the Badminton Articles give a clear indication of the number and status of the rooms and this can be used to corroborate the structural evidence that has emerged to date.

Interestingly the Articles of Agreement with the stonemason Thomas Usher refer to 'Models' of the house. The word 'models' is found with reference to designs on paper, but the implication is that they were models in wood. The practice of using wooden models is known to have been used by several successful architects and builders at the time to help explain the design and layout of a house to its owner. The same Articles state that Croome was to be a house of brick and stone, and areas where the brickwork has been exposed would suggest that it was built from the local dark orange brick, laid in English bond with a lime mortar, as was usual at this time.

The question of how much brickwork was retained from the earlier structures on the site remains to be resolved, but may account for the notable width of some of the walling where 'back-to-back' reconstruction may have occurred. The stonework was to be '*Hansome and smootte*' with '*close and fyne jointes*', and be of sufficient length to make '*good bond with the brickwork*'. This could mean that the building was ashlar-faced or simply had stone dressings as seems more likely from the evidence to date. The chimneys appear to have been rendered, but elsewhere the stone detail appears to have been fairly ornate and included a modillion cornice, chamfered quoins, moulded architraves to the windows and doors, and *watertables* or cornices above the windows on the main floors. There are also references to carving and setting '*cartoses*' or cartouches on the elevations, although no cartouches appear on any of the early images.²⁹

The Caroline house is recorded to have had two main storeys raised upon a basement and an attic storey with 24 hipped dormer windows or 'lucarnes' set within the roof space. Although the levels were very similar to the present building, it is likely there were some modifications to accommodate the proportions of the Palladian remodelling. The roof was hipped and covered with plain clay tiles. According to the Condition Report undertaken by John Goom,³⁰ most of the 17th century oak roof structure survives within the roof space and can be readily distinguished from the deal used in the 18th century remodelling. Goom also notes (p.57) that there are sections of old oak framing in the main north/south roof space: from these surviving roof timbers it may prove possible to gather further information on the construction methods and on the form and profile of the earlier roof. Some exposed timbers on the second floor of the building, notably in S22, also give some idea of the early roof profile, as does the absence of masonry at each end of the spine wall on the second floor. The roof structure was actually triple pile, with the ridges running east/west and the central ridge aligned with the massive arcaded ridge stacks. These are set a little off-centre and to the south of the building, and may have taken advantage of the existing flues within the spine wall. In the 17th century they

²⁹ These may possibly have flanked the first floor window above the north entrance but this is not at all certain.

³⁰ John C. Goom, *Croome Court, Rotunda and London Arch: Condition Report*, March 2008. (See (Appendix 14)

formed a dramatic key element of the whole composition, much as they still do in the existing house.

The early images of the building also show there to have been two external chimneystacks at both its east and west ends, and these early flues continue to serve fireplaces within the house. The leadwork is recorded to have been recast by William Bromwell from lead salvaged from the ruins of the old house, presumably to save costs. West, the carpenter, refers to 130ft of guttering beneath the lead in the roof and this gives some idea of its extent. There are no details of the other rainwater goods, and it is not known at present whether these were incorporated within the fabric or exposed.

Both the Beighton and c.1750 drawings show the house to have been of 11 bays in width, with outer wings on the north front forming a U-plan. This is supported by the partial survival of the windows along the south side of the basement. From the c.1750 view of the former north front it appears that the shallow outer wings were of two bays and flanked a central porch that projected from the central three bays and which is shown with a balustraded balcony and a perron. There was also a central doorway on the ground floor of the south front which led down steps into the south garden, and Beighton's view shows a central first-floor balcony above it.³¹ There are references to balconies in the Badminton Articles of Agreement and in the inventories among the Antony archive which may relate to these. Structural evidence of the north wings survives on the north-west side of the basement, where the return of the western-most wing is retained in the internal walling of the existing house (opening off B31 into B33). This wall is notably thick and small areas of early brickwork and lias rubble are exposed beneath the plasterwork around an opening that now forms a cupboard within the depth of this wall. Within this cupboard is some early brick paving, similar to that in the main cellar, which suggests that there could have been a former side opening from the north court into the west wing.

The regular spacing and vertical proportions of the windows, shown on all the known images of the house, reflected the new interest in classical symmetry, with the narrower spacing of the three central bays on the north front giving a slight tension to the elevation that focused attention on the main entrance. Cooper³² suggests that there were also windows within the west wall and this seems likely given the splendid views in this direction, although they would have had to fit around the two large external chimneys.

Some indication of the size and proportions of the 1640 windows can be estimated from what appears to be the jamb of a blocked window uncovered beneath the panelling in F8³³. This confirms the view that the windows and width of the bay divisions were notably smaller and narrower than those of the present house. It is interesting to note that the window opening was blocked in the 18th century with early bricks and lias rubble found on site. In addition, there are several windows in the south wall of the basement³⁴ that were not blocked entirely in the 18th century, but were adapted to conform to the bay widths and spacing of the Palladian house. This means that some of the existing sash windows overlap the openings externally, and the window recesses themselves have

³¹ Catherine Gordon believes it is possible that there was a third balcony located on the west elevation.

³² Nicholas Cooper, *Croome Court – The Seventeenth Century House*, December 2010

³³ Between W69 and W70

³⁴ W38, W39, W41, W42

been hacked away within. The original size of these openings seems to have been a little over four foot, which again gives some indication of the proportions of the original fenestration. These 17th century windows would have been oak cross-casements originally, with wrought-iron frames and leaded lights. The window found to survive within the south basement wall of B23 may be of this date, or even of Jacobean origin. Leaded casements of this type were steadily abandoned in favour of sash windows towards the end of the century.

Within the building, much structural evidence of the 17th century house survives, not least in the massive spine wall which maintains a dominant presence within the interior. There are various original openings through this wall which survive and give some indication of the 17th century layout, which served to dictate the floor plan of the remodelled building in the 18th century. For example, in the basement there is a wide doorway that passes through the eastern section of the spine wall³⁵. This was clearly an important opening in the early house and the size of the original door is evident from the two huge iron pintles that survive on its western jamb. Opposite this door, across the corridor, is a similar wide chamfered doorway³⁶, probably of similar date, and towards the eastern end of the corridor are two blocked openings into B17. One of these was arched and very wide and the other was once wider and has an inserted door; it now opens into a cupboard created within the spine wall and within it an old pintle remains from the original door into B17. These openings are all likely to be of relevance to the function of B17 within the 17th century service layout.

On the ground floor, the existing central doorway between the Hall and Saloon is also of probable 17th century origin as it would have created an important central axis through the building that ran from the gatehouse through to the south garden. This raises the question whether a similar arrangement existed on the first floor. There is also a large tall opening (G13) at the western end of the spine wall on the ground floor off G12, which is believed to extend down to basement level, with the existing floor acting as a bridge. The date of this opening is uncertain. It is not shown on the 1771 plan in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, but this is probably an oversight.

On the first floor, there are three passageways off the central corridor that penetrate the spine wall: one leads into F3; one (F6a) forms a relatively narrow service access into F8 and has 17th century plaster exposed above the archway into F8; and the final one forms the main access into F8 from the adjacent stair landing and is located immediately above the tall opening at the western end of the spine wall referred to above (G13). In the north-west corner of F3 another potential passageway exists that was made into a cupboard and is now blocked. Both this opening and the curious tier of voids in the western end of the spine wall are likely to be significant to the early layout and may well reward further investigation.

On the second floor, five passageways pass through the spine wall, possibly all of 17th century origin, and several cupboards have been created in the wall space.

The chimney flues within the spine wall are also crucial to an understanding of the 17th century house. Within the flues of the existing fireplaces in the Saloon and Drawing Room the bricks are notably narrow, around 75mm (3 inches) thick including the lime

³⁵ From B6 to B16

³⁶ B7

mortar, and could even pre-date the 1640 rebuilding. The shape of the westernmost flue in the Saloon is of particular interest³⁷. It leans to the right towards the centre of the wall and tapers outwards from the top of the fireplace into a very large gather area, before reducing to a rectangular space of approximately 1520x406 mm (60x16 inches) and then to a final size of approximately 406mm (16 inches) square. The size of this gather area would suggest that this flue formerly served a very large earlier fireplace in the 17th century house, possibly on the north wall of the hall³⁸. The current Drawing Room chimney is smaller but similar, also veering to the right and having a large gather area that reduces to approx. 762x406mm (30x16 inches) then eventually to 406mm square. This would also have heated an important room within the early house and is another possible candidate for the flue that served the fireplace in the early hall.³⁹

Evidence relating to the early chimney flues also survives in the former east and west end walls of the 17th century structure. The chimneybreast in B17 was formerly quite large, and on either side of this are two blocked openings. From B15 it is possible to see a moulded edge on the corner of the chimneybreast and the outline of a possible early opening within it. Also, in the strong room (B14) adjoining the butler's pantry, there is a large blocked arched opening in the east wall, part of which now forms the passageway between B13 and B14 through the former end wall of the house. This is the width and height of a fireplace, which would have made use of the former north-east end chimney. Early brickwork is also visible beneath the 19th century shelving adjacent to this blocked opening.

Other equally intriguing evidence of the early house that survives in the basement includes a sturdy iron grille and latticed leaded glass, preserved within a section of 17th century walling sandwiched between the 18th century stonework and a section of modern blockwork in the south basement wall. This is located between the wine cellar and south portico, B20 and B23, and is just visible through a ventilation grille in B23. This discovery has interesting implications for further exploratory surveys along this wall.

On the ground floor, David Powell, the painter and decorator during the Hare Krishna period, recalls seeing blackened timbers and a gap behind the panelling in the south-west corner of the Billiard Room (G14).⁴⁰ As the room lies within an area of the house that was subject to much alteration in the 18th century, this could be significant. On the backstairs, on the half-landing between the ground and first floors, is a mechanism for a dumb waiter that was fitted in the mid-20th century. Within this it is possible to see some early lath and plaster on the wall east of the staircase, and also the jamb of what could be an early window. Removal of part of the housing should help confirm these findings.

F8 has always been an important room in the house and preliminary investigations suggest that it could contribute much to understanding the early structure. The exposure of a small section of brick walling and a blocked window, by the removal of an area of panelling, has been noted above. More intriguing still, is that some floorboards have been lifted to reveal a layered floor construction of considerable complexity, which suggests that the 18th century floorboards were laid upon an earlier bowed floor

³⁷ Findings of Keith Mitchell of the Volcanic Chimney Company, 2010.

³⁸ Nicholas Cooper, *Croome Court – The Seventeenth Century House*, p.4

³⁹ The recent discovery of what appears to be an early fireplace blocked up on the NE wall of B21 could also be related to this (see section on B21 in the History & Evolution of each interior space).

⁴⁰ This gap has been confirmed by recent opening-up work.

structure. Some huge principal and secondary floor beams are visible, one of which is just under half a metre deep (15 inches) and another almost as large, around a third of a metre (13 inches) in depth. Despite the limited access, it is apparent that some of these are inscribed with carpenters marks and are almost certainly of 17th century or earlier origin. Goom has noted⁴¹ that, although these joists are very deep, they do not support the ceiling beneath, which seems to be suspended from smaller secondary joists. Some of the joists are reused and there are areas of old plaster pugging visible.

In the north-east corner of the room, two substantial floor beams have been exposed that have deep diagonal cuts across them. One of the beams is known to have a curious housing hollowed out of it, evidently shaped to perform a specific function most probably in their present location. One possibility is that these are related to the former main staircase, or possibly they supported the base of a small newel stair used by servants to access the room from the floor above. That these distinctive shapes cut into the timbers are located adjacent to the narrow arched access passage through the wall may be significant.

There is also a remarkable gap of around one third of a metre that lies between two sturdy timber-framed partitions visible beneath the floorboards at the eastern end of F8, dividing the existing Saloon from the Drawing Room. Initial investigations show the timber-framed partition on the west side to be earlier in date and that it includes a large diagonal wall brace and also lath and plaster infill panels that are well-finished and intended to be exposed on their east side facing the Saloon. Only the upper section of this partition was plastered, and no satisfactory explanation for this has emerged so far. The eastern timber-framed partition is likely to be of 18th century date, and is constructed with some reused timbers and large protruding pegs. It is more crudely finished, as it was always hidden from view and was evidently positioned to support the 18th century vault. It may be assumed that the former partition belongs to the 17th century house and was left *in situ* during the 1750s remodelling. More extensive investigations would undoubtedly prove beneficial in helping to clarify the sequence of construction in this part of the house.

A cursory examination of the void above the existing Saloon has been made using an endoscope passed beyond a partition made largely of reused timber and sections of early panelling in the east wall of F8. This has revealed the plastered ceiling and walls of the former room in this location in the 1640 house. The ceiling plaster appears to be in relatively good condition, but the wall plaster has deteriorated and may be of a different date. No evidence has so far been found of early mouldings or openings, with the possible exception of one anomaly. Around a metre along the north wall from F8 is a strip of exposed brickwork. This may once have been covered by a timber beam that supported a partition, or it could identify the location of an original opening in the spine wall.

Elsewhere on the first floor, Goom notes that there is an unexplained floor joist, larger than usual, that runs beneath the partition wall between F15 and the corridor. This appears to be independent from the casing for the downstand beam for the column screen in the Hall (G1) below.⁴² Again this is an area where further investigations are required.

⁴¹ John Goom, *Condition report on fabric of Croome Court*, 2008 (see Appendix 14)

⁴² John Goom, *Croome Court: Floor/Ceiling Investigations*, 29 November 2008

On the second floor, evidence of the earlier house is apparent in exposed roof timbers (S22), exposed early plasterwork (S24) and in the sections of Jacobean panelling, possibly retained from the earlier house, which were reused in the 18th century to line doorways and cupboards (S3, S26). Many of the doors on this floor and a few in the basement also appear to be mid or early 17th century in date. Some of them retain their massive strap hinges, and many have been crudely adapted and repaired.

There are also three early painted stone chimneypieces in S6, S10 and S26, which would appear to belong to the 1640 house and may have been removed to their present location. The chimneypiece in S6 is notable for its carved volutes, a motif closely associated with the Artisan Mannerist style. That in S10 has an arched and chamfered surround, and the one in S26 is eared. All of these now have inserted Victorian grates.

Outside the building, Matthew Browne was instructed to build a large drain from the kitchen through the adjoining court, three foot in width and two foot in height. This is important as an indication of the drainage problems on the site that persist to the present day. After the 17th century rebuilding, there was considerable settlement of the internal walls. This is most evident along the second-floor corridor, looking at the ceiling, steps and doorways along the central corridor, where the north wall has sunk several centimetres lower than the south wall. (See also Cross-Section drawing E-E). Interestingly, this is not apparent externally, nor in any of the principal spaces within the building, and it appears that the joinery and mouldings on the second floor were designed to accommodate this distortion in the mid-18th century. These adaptations are interesting and significant as they underline the date of the settlement and suggest that, by then, it had appeared to stabilise. It also reveals the mid-18th century client, architect and craftsmen attitude to the problem.

Design and layout

The three most significant design features of 17th century Croome House were probably:

- The use of the double -pile plan, which may have been inherited from the earlier house on the site.
- The horizontal divisions of the house with two main storeys of equal height raised up onto a basement which had important implications for the layout and social organisation of the household.
- The hipped roof which became a key characteristic of post-Restoration (1660) country houses.

The double-pile plan, with rooms placed back to back each side of a central dividing wall, may have originated in the design of town houses where space was limited. It did not become widely adopted until the mid and late 17th century and soon became the accepted form for a country house of the post-Restoration period. Its practical advantages over an elongated plan of a single room in depth were considerable. It was compact and so cheaper to build and easier to heat. The layout also improved access within the house and provided better privacy, as the spine wall was often flanked by a spine passage. At the service end of the house, this spine passage could perform a similar function to the former servants' passage that ran between the kitchen and service rooms in a medieval layout. There were also aesthetic benefits, for it enabled houses to

be double-fronted, as at Croome, where the main elevations were of equal status, and this also became an important feature of the 18th century remodelling.

Like the double-pile plan, the hipped roof was a form common to source books from Italy and the Netherlands of the period. It was also a vernacular form often found in south-east England and widely adopted for town houses in fashionable areas of London, such as Covent Garden, and for influential house designs of the 1620s, such as Chevening, Kent and Forty Hall, Enfield. It was to become an essential element of the more formal and compact design of Restoration houses.

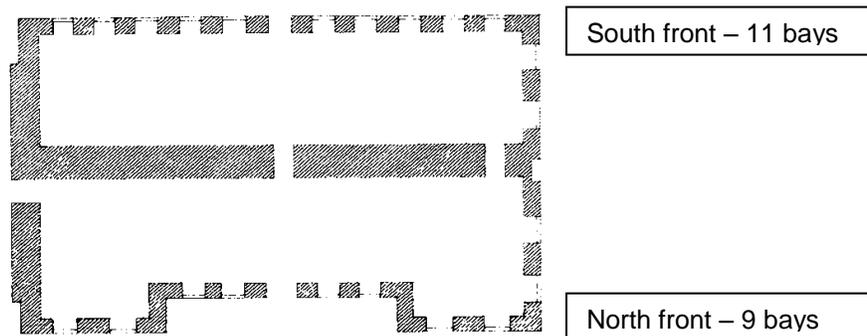
Raising the house upon a basement had considerable impact on how the interior was arranged, particularly on the way servants were accommodated. It was also an undoubted benefit in view of the damp site at Croome. The idea of separating the family from the servants, thereby redefining the social relationships within the household, had originated on the continent and, from the mid 17th century onwards, the status of servants was steadily downgraded, while the gentry were more inclined to assert their social superiority. Chevening in Kent (1629) set an important precedent for this type of arrangement. At Croome it is also possible to witness this re-definition of roles. The painter's Articles of Agreement imply that the two main floors were split into a series of private rooms for the family and public rooms for entertaining, and servants were banished to the basement with separate service staircases to keep them out of view. Although the hall became a formal reception space, rather than a place in which the entire household would gather and dine, it still seems to have retained its upper and lower ends, extending into the western half of the north range.⁴³

The carpenter, William West, lists the main areas of the house, including the Hall, Great Staircase, Great Parlour on the ground floor, and a Great Dining Room or Great Balcony Room on the floor above (north side). There was also a room on the first floor at the centre of the south elevation which is referred to as the Balcony Room towards the Great Garden. This may have been for a high-ranking guest or an additional reception room. It may have been subdivided, as implied by the painter's Articles and by the preliminary surveys of the void above the present Saloon, and there were probably flanking apartments within the rooms that now form F3 and F8.

The structural evidence implies that the Hall was laid out in the traditional manner, its upper end lying to the west of the ground floor, extending probably as far as the west wall of the existing Billiard Room. The recent chimney survey has shown that the fireplace in the Billiard Room dates from the 1750s and that the hall fireplace was inserted even later than this. This entire wall between the existing Entrance Hall and Billiard Room seems likely to have been part of the new 1750s layout with its symmetrical entrance hall. This means that the 1640s hall is likely to have retained its cross or through passage at its lower end creating the central axis running through the ground floor and into the south garden, as suggested by the early images. The external symmetry of the elevations seems, therefore, to have been adopted somewhat half-heartedly within, as was quite common at this time, and it may be that the retention of earlier fabric dictated much of the mid 17th century layout.

⁴³ Nicholas Cooper, *Croome Court – The Seventeenth Century House*, p.4.

Cooper suggests that the early hall may have been heated by a fireplace in the spine wall using the westernmost flue in the present Saloon⁴⁴. This would provide a very plausible explanation and it would fit well within the proposed layout, as the fireplace would be centrally positioned within the south wall of the hall. However, recent chimney investigations have shown that it is more likely it was the Drawing Room flue which served the 17th century Hall, as it is cranked sharply in that direction and then joins a tall, straight shaft that looks very early in date.⁴⁵ West also refers to three lower rooms on the south side of the house '*lying on the same floor with the Hall*'. This was a common arrangement at this time, with a hall and great parlour and a series of smaller parlours, or private drawing rooms and eating rooms on the ground floor, the Great Parlour entered centrally from the hall eventually evolving into the saloon. Johnson, the painter, states that the Great Parlour had four windows, which would make sense if it was located at the centre of the south front. The principal dining area, the Great Dining Room or Balcony Room, is likely to have been situated above the hall, a development of the hall and Great Chamber arrangement, with further withdrawing chambers to the east. The second floor would be where the children and some of the servants slept, a practice that continued into the 18th century.



General form of Croome as rebuilt in the mid-17th century.
Hall and staircase probably located to the right of the north range. (Cooper)

The location of the main or great staircase during this period remains subject to speculation. The existing backstairs probably date from the mid-18th century, despite their early 18th century appearance, and it is possible that the earlier staircase was in a roughly similar location at the western end of the house. However there was a large external chimney at the north-west end of the house so the layout must have differed. Cooper notes that in most houses of this type and date the main stair is usually located in the rear range, towards the upper or higher end of the hall, although to have the stair in the front range had been traditional. He believes there are three possible locations where the stair may have been at Croome:

- In the SW corner of the house- but in view of the historical importance of F8 this is unlikely

⁴⁴ Nicholas Cooper, *Croome Court – The Seventeenth Century House*, p.4

⁴⁵ Catherine Gordon feels that it will help establish the location of the early hall fireplace when we are certain where the east wall of the former hall was – either in its present location or set one bay to the west. The bulk of masonry between F15 & F16 may be a clue.

- At the western end of the present Saloon and approached through the existing opening at the centre of the spine wall. This could explain the decision to create a double-height Saloon in the 18th century
- At the upper or western end of the hall.

It seems unlikely that the stair would be positioned near the centre of the garden front or would be allowed to block the access to F8, so these suggestions would appear to underline the practical advantages of having the stair at the western end of the hall. In view of the spine wall and layout of the south range with its three main rooms, this does seem logical. Furthermore, it would provide access to the important rooms at the centre and west of the first floor, creating a formal route from the hall to the principal dining room and apartment on the first floor, perhaps via the “great door at the head of the stairs” noted in William West’s Articles. It might also explain the curious tier of voids at the western end of the spine wall⁴⁶.

Having said this, there are still a few anomalies that are less easily explained. The 2010 survey of the existing hall chimney⁴⁷ identified an inexplicable step in the brickwork of this wall which may be of significance. There are also the two diagonal notches cut out of the floor beams in the north-east corner of F8, referred to above, and also the redundant beam in F15 running alongside the corridor wall noted by Goom.

The mid-17th century house also had a backstairs that accessed every floor and was primarily for the servants’ use. This is recorded as being located at the eastern end of the house and accessed by the central corridor from the hall in the traditional manner. The existing floor plans and the wide chamfered doorways at the western end of B6 suggest that this may have been situated immediately east of the Hall and main cellar. A third stair that went from the ground floor to a pantry in the basement is included in the Badminton Articles. West notes there to have been 83 steps in the great stairs, 81 steps in the back stairs and 14 steps to the pantry, which gives some indication of their extent.

The Badminton Articles of Agreement with Edmond Johnson⁴⁸, the painter (1649), also provide a useful guide to the layout and uses of the house, although he may of course have omitted some rooms from his list.⁴⁹

C17th Room or Space	Notes from Articles of Agreement
Ground floor	
Little Parlour	Panelled with 3 windows
Closet	
Great Dining Room	Balcony, panelling, 4 windows. Listed here but was on first floor – why does it have a balcony? Did he mean steps into the garden?
Great Parlour	4 windows, architrave and cornice
Passage between Hall & Parlour	Painted in white marble
Hall & Porch	Wainscot, columns and cornice painted in white marble

⁴⁶ North of B29, G13, north of F7

⁴⁷ By Keith Mitchell of the Volcanic Chimney Company

⁴⁸ BM:QV 1/1

⁴⁹ The question of the number of balconies on the ground and first floors of the earlier house is very confusing and requires further research.

Backstairs	Painted in white marble
Pantry	Painted in white marble
Room within Pantry	Painted in white marble
Little Room at upper end of Hall	(painted as) Walnut
First floor	
Lesser Stairs at east end of house	(painted as) Walnut
Balconies	Painted in white marble
Floure Pott Chamber	2 windows
Room next to?	
Great Balcony Room	Painted walnut and colour?
Room next the Stair	Painted walnut and colour?
Lords Chamber	Architrave, frieze and cornice; 4 doors; painted light purple; with west & east closet painted walnut (F8?)
Lords Dressing Room	Painted light purple with Closet within room painted walnut
Passage at the Lesser Stairs	
Balcony Room towards the Great Garden	Colour? (south-facing)
Little Room on east side	Painted walnut & colour? Possibly one of the spaces either side of the present Saloon void on first floor.
Little Room on west side	Painted walnut & colour? Possibly one of the spaces either side of the present Saloon void on first floor.
Blew Chamber	Painted walnut & colour?
Room west of above	Painted walnut & colour?
B? Room	Painted walnut & colour?
Second floor	
No rooms referred to	Timber and standard colours
Basement	
Common Hall	Servants Hall? Timber
Pastry	Timber & stone colour
Entry Tower of Kitchen	Timber & stone colour
Spicery	Timber & stone colour
Larder	Timber & stone colour
Meal? Rooms	Timber & stone colour
Cooks Chamber	Timber & stone colour
Butlers Chamber	Timber & stone colour
Passage into the Cellar	Timber & stone colour
Cellar	Timber & stone colour
Scullery	Timber finish
Kitchen	
White Staircase	Rails, balusters, panelling, painted in white marble. This is confusing as there is no specific reference to the Great Stairs, unless it was known as the White Staircase, but then

why is it listed with the basement rooms?

West was instructed to make, frame and set up in the 3 lower rooms on the south side of the house, and lying on the same floor as the Hall a 'seeling floore' of timber with ornate mouldings and corbel works. According to the early 18th century inventories, there were gilt leather hangings in the Great Parlour and Johnson's articles also refer to coffering and mouldings in the Great Dining Room, to painting two large chimneys in the Dining Room and to painting nine stone chimneypieces to simulate white marble. The wainscot was to be painted to simulate walnut or white marble, as was the main staircase, and cream and blue were to be used as alternative colours. Clearly the house was fairly light and bright, with a wealth of fine joinery and an impressive scheme of decoration in the principal rooms on both main floors.

These Articles give a good idea of the service accommodation within the basement, although the layout remains uncertain, and the location of the kitchen is a particular puzzle. Matthew Browne was instructed to build a new drain across the kitchen court, which would have been immediately east of the house, and the kitchen was evidently close by. The 1649 documents refer to a 'Backstairs from Hall to Kitchen with a Pantry adjacent' and this suggests that either B17 or B14/B8 are likely candidates. The chimney in the east wall of B17 is probably of sufficient width and depth to serve a kitchen, but the opening of the former fireplace was concealed behind another wall with a much smaller grate in the 19th century. Although the height of the existing vaulted ceiling is too low to accommodate a kitchen fireplace, the entire room appears to have undergone considerable alteration over the years, as is evident from the irregularity of the vaulting, the blocked openings in the spine wall and either side of the chimney, and the blocked and altered window openings. It is possible that the earlier layout of the house would have allowed for a loftier area within the room but no evidence of this has come to light so far.

B14 and B8 would combine to present another possible location for the kitchen and as they are on the northern side of the house they would afford space with the practical advantage of being cooler, more accessible from the ancillary buildings to the north-east and not overlooking the formal south garden. The outline of a blocked arch is visible in the eastern wall of B14 that would be the right height and width for a large fireplace that made use of the north-west chimney.

Another possible candidate for the kitchen would be outside the main building, for example in the south-east wing shown on the c1750 drawing. This would adjoin the south-east chimney yet be sufficiently separate from the main house to reduce the fire risk, as the house had already suffered two major fires. The western range of the Jacobean outbuilding appears extended in the drawing where it adjoins this linking building. This could be an explanation for the reference to an 'Entry Tower to the Kitchen' that appears in the painter's articles of 1649. However, it should be stressed that the c1750 drawing is very sketchy and cannot be relied upon in any detail.

Smaller rooms such as the Larder, Pantry and Spicery were probably located in the south range, with the main cellars set within the western half of the building. It is notable that there were chambers for the butler and cook in the basement in 1649, but by the time of the 1719 Inventory these rooms were in the outbuilding. The later inventory also refers to the 'Butler's Room under the Stairs', possibly sleeping accommodation, and it is interesting to speculate whether this was at the west end of the house, near to the

cellars and maybe related to the void in the spine wall, (see West's reference to '14 steps to Pantry').

Outside, Johnson undertook various tasks, which included painting the Great Gate, the Gate into the Garden, two former court gates and one of the balconies. Previously the house would have been surrounded by a series of walled and cobbled courtyards where domestic and estate tasks were carried out. By the 1620s this was changing, as in 1627 the 2nd Baron is known to have begun work on the grounds and courtyards. When the 1640s house was built, the setting of the house with its south garden and Evidence House formed an integral part of its formal and symmetrical design.

Architectural Context and Analysis

This was a transitional period for house-building, and the first half of the 17th century was a time of rapid change in the form and layout of the country house. Striking classical proportions and detail often concealed awkward medieval planning, the old conventions lingering as they were better suited to the English temperament and climate. Two contemporary houses built on the Coventry estates were typical cases in point: Norgrove Court, near Feckenham, and Red House, Eldersfield, which both have remarkably innovative facades combined with conventional layouts. Croome House was no exception. Externally it appears to be relatively progressive with its symmetrical form, hipped roof, basement storey, classical mouldings and balconies and it seems very likely that the 2nd Baron was familiar with contemporary architectural developments taking place in London and elsewhere during the 1630s. However certain elements of the layout, in particular the probable arrangement of the hall and staircase, adhered to traditional practice, perhaps partly due to the surviving fabric of the earlier house.⁵⁰

A number of spine wall country houses which date between 1585 and 1670 are comparable to Croome House, being of seven or more bays and having similar layouts.⁵¹ These include Lilford Hall, Northants. (c.1635), West Woodhay, Berks. (1636), Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire (1650), Yotes Court (1655) and Highnam Court, Glos. (1658). All of these houses retain the hall fireplace in its traditional position on the longest wall in the room, and all, except Lilford, have hipped roofs, although Lilford had arcaded chimneys, as appeared at Croome. However, West Woodhay, Berks, and perhaps Croome were among the earliest to combine these features with the new hipped roof form.

During the 1650s there were a series of houses that developed this theme and continued to adhere to a traditional layout; for example, High Meadow, Glos., of c.1655, included a hipped roof, and a similar display of chimneys and had a centrally-entered hall with the staircase set to one side of it. Other important examples include Moyles Court, Hants, Tyttenhanger, Herts, Yotes Court, Kent, and Highnam Court, Glos. Of these four houses, Yotes Court probably resembles Croome most closely externally, with the exception of its chimney arrangement.

⁵⁰ For a full comparative analysis of contemporary developments in the design of the country house, see N. Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1680*, 1999

⁵¹ Nicholas Cooper, *Croome Court - The Seventeenth Century House*, December 2010



Yotes Court: similar architectural style to Croome in the mid-17th century. (Google)

Further research may shed more light upon the early design of Croome House and help further define its position within the relatively small number of country houses built during this period. The 2nd Baron's background and contacts would make its more advanced aspects seem plausible. At this initial stage of investigation it appears to have been a very early and significant example of a transitional type of country house design, from which emerged the classic country house of the Restoration period.

In conclusion, the 1640 house at Croome was remarkably advanced in its overall form – one of the earliest large country houses, away from the home counties, to have been built with the plain façades and hipped roof that first appear in the London area in the 1620s. In its plan it was more conservative, combining the principle of the double pile with a largely traditional arrangement of principal rooms. It is likely that Lord Coventry wanted his country house to externally express the same awareness of current fashion that he enjoyed in his new town house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, while as a major magnate and landowner he wished for the layout of the house to embody the traditional functions and relationships of his class⁵².

⁵² Nicholas Cooper, *Croome Court -The Seventeenth Century House*, December 2010, p.7

EARLY 18TH CENTURY: PROPOSALS AND ALTERATIONS

Specific Points of Interest relating to the early 18th century proposals & alterations

- Alterations to first-floor layout to include New Apartment.
- Panelling in F8 and Billiard Room. How much was re-used?
- Location of marble chimneypieces.
- The earlier phases of work on the Red Wing.
- Archaeological evidence of the formal garden to the south.
- The identity of the Chintz, Yellow Damask and Calamanco Rooms.
- The evolution of F8.
- The identity of the alcove rooms.

Historical Context

Following the 2nd Baron's death in 1661, archival evidence reveals little sign of further building activity after the Restoration and it may be assumed that, despite his father's enthusiasm, neither George, 3rd Baron Coventry (1628-80) nor his eldest son, John 4th Baron Coventry (1654-87), embarked upon further improvements to the house. Both were keen sportsmen, and the 3rd Baron is recorded to have "...kept a noble & plentiful house, great Hospitality, suitable Retinue, Hounds, Hawks, Running Horses..."⁵³ The Red Deer Park to the south of the house was probably laid out at this time. When the 4th Baron died in 1687, his personal estate, including the furniture at Croome, passed to his mother, the Dowager Countess Lady Margaret.

Thomas, brother of George the 3rd Baron, became 5th Baron Coventry (1629-99) and was created 1st Earl of Coventry and Viscount Deerhurst in 1692. The Antony⁵⁴ report notes that he let the estate at Croome become run down, although he is recorded to have spent money on the garden, as the Accounts for 1691 refer to "4 load of stone for repairing outwalls of ye house"⁵⁵ and also to the purchase of 200 plants and garden seeds. The cupolas that sit rather uncomfortably upon the church and double-pile outbuilding shown on the c.1750 drawing may date from this period, built perhaps in acknowledgement of the family's new status and in anticipation of a royal visit.

The 1st Earl's (5th Baron's) two sons, Thomas and Gilbert, shared the 2nd Baron's enthusiasm for building projects. Thomas (1663-1710) had married Anne Somerset, daughter of the Duke of Beaufort at Badminton, and spent the latter years of the 17th century altering the family home at Snitterfield in Warwickshire, including 'pulling down the top of the house' and altering the grounds⁵⁶. During the early 18th century, his brother, Gilbert, was also making various improvements to his house at Hidcote, which he had inherited from his first wife, Dorothy Keyte (d.1707). This is significant, not least

⁵³ AA: CVA/Y/34

⁵⁴ The 4th Earl's daughter married into the Carew family at Antony, Cornwall. Archives relating to Croome and the Coventrys are thus held in the Cornwall Record Office

⁵⁵ AA: CVA/H3/4

⁵⁶ BM: T/B1/4/7

because the architects and craftsmen who worked at Croome at this time were all from Warwickshire and are likely to have been employed by the family on previous projects. It is also important as it can be difficult to draw a clear distinction between the works at Hidcote and Croome among the Antony papers.

By 1700 the layout of Croome House had become slightly outdated and suited more to the needs of a baronet than an earl. It lacked a suite of state rooms in the favoured continental manner, and it is possible that the idea for the major alterations of this period originated with Anne Somerset. Badminton House had been remodelled during the second half of the 17th century by the addition of a new east block with adjoining wings and a suite of state rooms to reflect its ducal status, and this must have influenced her attitude to Croome. She was a highly intelligent and enterprising woman with wide-ranging interests, as is evident from her book collection catalogued among the Badminton Muniments, and it is very probable that she and her husband nurtured ambitions for Croome.

Whatever their plans, it is doubtful if they were realised, perhaps because the 2nd Earl appears to have been remarkably short of money. The Antony report records that he contracted "Great Debts", some from Snitterfield, and some of which he inherited from his father, who left much of his personal estate including the contents of Croome to his second wife. Yet in view of Lady Anne's background and interests, it would be surprising if no work was undertaken on the house and garden at this time, and there are a few minor items recorded. A new Banqueting House was certainly completed in 1707⁵⁷. This could have been for Gilbert at Hidcote, but it may be significant that tree planting and felling began south of the house in the early years of the 18th century, which may be an indication of the first phase of planned alterations to upgrade the south front and garden. The two bolection-moulded fireplaces, one of which survives in F8 and the other in the Red Wing, may also date from this period.

After the 2nd Earl's death in 1710, his widow, Anne Somerset, administered the estate for the following year on behalf of their young son, now 3rd Earl, and she attempted to pay off the debts by selling goods and chattels and large quantities of timber. Nevertheless the Antony history states that by c.1712 "*Crombe House, Gardens and Out Houses were neglected and gone to Decay*".

⁵⁷ AA: CVA/AA/3

Proposed and executed works 1712-19

The premature death of the 3rd Earl, aged ten, provided Gilbert, his uncle, and now 4th Earl of Coventry, with the opportunity to embark upon his own remodelling project, which may have developed his brother's plans or revised them entirely. The funding for his ambitious plans is unclear, but his intentions were chiefly to remodel the south front and garden, and improve the stables and offices.

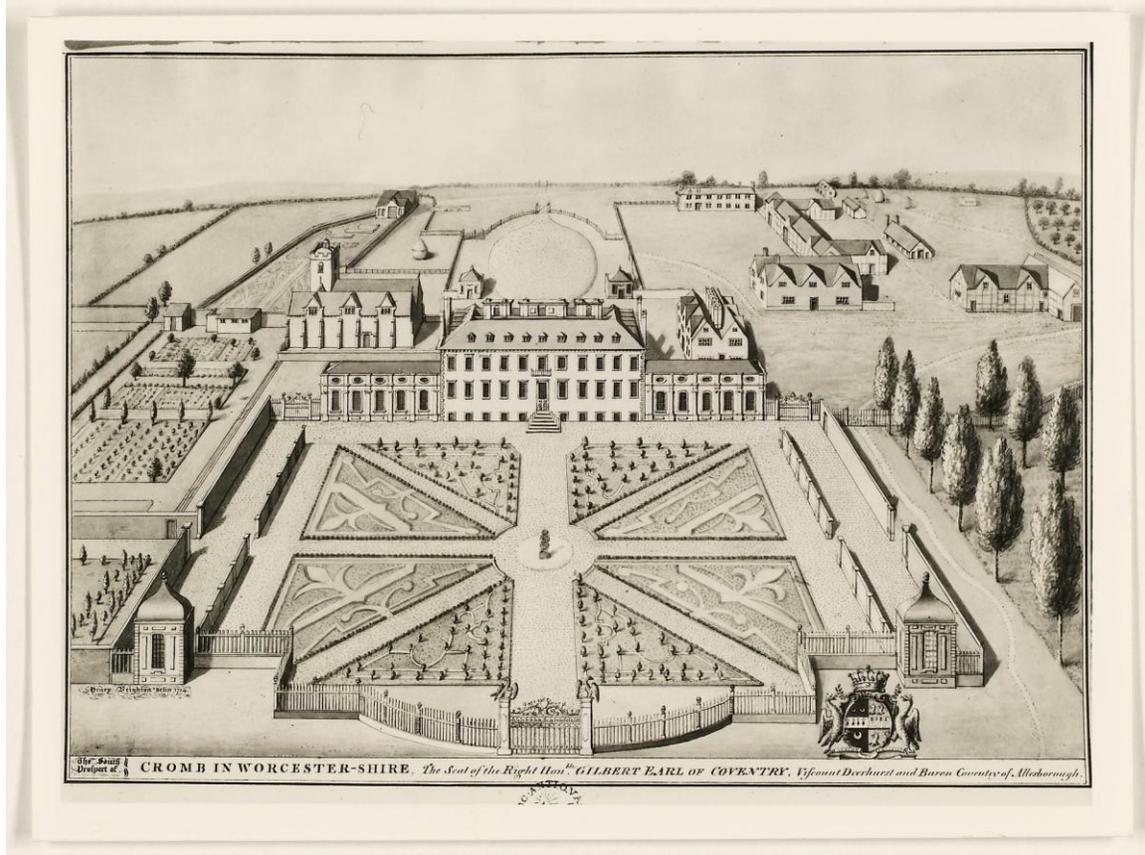


Gilbert, 4th Earl of Coventry (1668-1719) by Michael Dahl (NT/Jill Tovey)

Initially he began work on the garden. In 1712, all sorts of "*Plants boath Domestick and exotick*" were purchased⁵⁸. That winter a new orchard of cherry, crab apple and walnut trees were planted, possibly west of the house, and he took on a new gardener, Benjamin Cooper. There were some repairs made to the house in March of the following year and work on the garden, planting, new walls etc continued later that year.⁵⁹ Then, in 1714, his plans for the new south front were illustrated by his friend, Henry Beighton.

⁵⁸ AA: CVE/Z/10

⁵⁹ AA: CVA/H3/27



The 1714 view of Croome from the south (proposals) by Henry Beighton, friend of Gilbert 4th Earl of Coventry (WRO)

The drawing shows a facade of eleven bays with the arcade of chimneys, the adjacent parish church, the dovecote, double-pile outbuilding, the enclosures and formal gardens. A balcony also appears on the first floor. Beighton's view and the c.1750 drawing confirm each other in respect of the chimneys, church, dovecote, double-pile Jacobean outbuilding and the basic layout of the enclosures and formal south garden, although there are also confusing and intriguing discrepancies. The gatehouse is notably absent from the Beighton view, although it appears in the c.1750 view and a Porter's Lodge is mentioned in the 1719 Inventory. It seems that the Beighton view from the south shows *proposals*, not all of which were necessarily executed, and that the c.1750 view from the north is in fact of an earlier, indeterminable date⁶⁰.

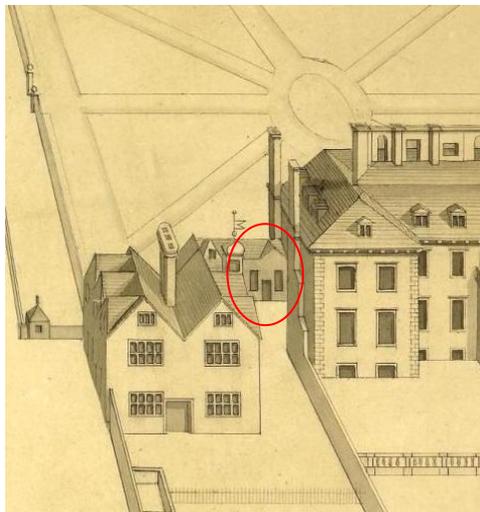
From Beighton's view, it may be assumed that the initial intention was to add five-bay wings at each end of the south elevation to elongate the facade and to create a grander and more fashionable south front, much as had been achieved on the east elevation at Badminton. These new wings were to adjoin the garden walls and overlooked a formal parterre with a central statue, flanked by grass walks and two south pavilions set each side of a grand pair of south gates with eagle finials. The formality of the scheme reflected the increasingly formal use of the interior of the house. Archival references to

⁶⁰ Timothy Mowl suggests that these discrepancies could be resolved if the c.1750 view from the north could be revised back to 1712. (*Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, p.43)

plants, (box, hollies, yews, flowers, etc) and to stone for garden walling suggest that most of this garden design was indeed executed. The statue of Hercules was supplied by Van Nost, and Benjamin Taylor of Warwick was commissioned to supply the gates and eagles in 1716; these are all listed in the Little Inventory of 1719.

The period from 1714-1716 marks the most active phase of the 4th Earl's plans. Jill Tovey notes a reference to 100,000 bricks made at Seggy Meer (the site of the present lake) in the contract book for 1714. The pit from which the clay was dug is still visible from the air and affects the growth of vegetation on the water surface. During the same year, Francis Smith of Warwick supplied designs for new stables.⁶¹ There then appears to have been a brief hiatus, when the 4th Earl reconsidered his plans for the wings and stables. In 1716 a revised scheme for the stables was submitted by Smith. This may have been executed and could be represented by the range of buildings shown to the right of the Court in the Doherty plan of c.1750. They were subsequently rebuilt by Lancelot Brown.

It was probably also at this time that the early phase (or phases) of work on the **Red Wing** was undertaken, quite possibly under Smith's supervision.⁶² The c.1750 drawing shows a small wing south-east of the house, which formed a link between the main house and the Jacobean outbuilding.



Detail from the c.1750 drawing from the north showing the link building between house and service building (WRO)

The date of its construction is subject to speculation at present. Although a wing may have existed in some form as early as 1640, the surviving structural evidence suggests that the existing wing was partially built and altered several times since the early 18th century. (See Catherine Gordon's Historical & Archaeological Report, Appendix 5, for the current understanding of this evolution).

While planning the external alterations and new south garden, Gilbert was also undertaking alterations within the house. The bills at Antony reveal that the joiner,

⁶¹ AA: CVA/H3/22

⁶² Kirsty Rodwell, *The Structural History of the Red Wing*, 2005

George Chine, was 'wainscoting' the Red Room and laying a new floor in this and an adjacent room.⁶³ This may refer to the bolection-moulded panelling in F8 that must have been designed as part of a new scheme for the room and which included one of the bolection-moulded chimneypieces referred to earlier.⁶⁴ The bills also show that tapestries were ordered for the Damask Room, very probably for F8, then known as the Red Damask Room. Chine also agreed to make new sashes in "*as many windows as His Lordship will be pleased to have.*" Possibly some of these were for the house as well as for the work on the south-east wing. The 1719 Little Inventory refers to timber, coping stone, limestone, freestone, scaffolding, and a '*quantity of bricks not before valued costing £14 10s*', as well as amounts of wainscoting and 37 sashes stacked in the wood house and yet more stored in the Evidence House⁶⁵ "*designed for the house but not put up*".

Quite why the 4th Earl never completed his scheme is unclear. It appears that he was still buying fittings just before he died, as there is a note in the Accounts⁶⁶ referring to the purchase of window shutters and a marble chimneypiece as late as 1719. The Little Inventory also refers to 14 pairs of window shutters in the Hall, Parlour and New Apartment upstairs (possibly the two main rooms on the central north-south axis of the first floor), to one double alcove glazed wainscot door, two other pairs of doors in the Great Parlour, and one in the "*old damask bedchamber with Glasses*".⁶⁷ This seems to support the view that there was an alcove in the New Apartment. It then lists two single glazed doors, one at the upper end of the Hall going into the garden and the other into the Little Parlour. This use of glazed doors provides an interesting insight into how the long dark spine corridor was lit as this was surely the logical place for the quantity of glazed doors that are mentioned.

The inventory that was taken upon Gilbert's death in 1719 is in the Cornwall Record Office, due to the fact that his daughter Anne married Sir William Carew of Antony, Cornwall and she took furniture, paintings and papers from Croome to her new marital home, Antony House⁶⁸. Part of the reason would have been to make her feel comfortable in her new home, but it was also because Gilbert's death brought about the end of his branch of the Coventry line⁶⁹ and there was a law suit over the division of the estate which lasted until 1724. The Little Inventory forms the last three pages of the 1719 Inventory, and the latter gives a tantalising glimpse into the various spaces and their functions and names within the early 18th century house, before its Palladian re-modelling.

These are, starting at the top of the house:

⁶³ AA: CVE/Z/10

⁶⁴ AA: CVE/Z/10

⁶⁵ The Evidence House was a separate building which probably housed important documents away from the main house in case of fire. It appears to have been located to the SW of the house, as shown on Doherty's c.1751 plan.

⁶⁶ Extraordinary Book AA: CVA/H3/29

⁶⁷ F8; the Red Room?

⁶⁸ The precise items are recorded in "*An Inventory of such Goods as Lady Dowager had from Cromb*" (CVW/Y/15) in the Cornwall Record Office. This inventory also gives a useful idea of the early 18th century decorative schemes (see Catherine Gordon's Historical & Archaeological Survey, Appendix 5, pp.86-87)

⁶⁹ The 5th Earl of Coventry was a descendant of Walter, brother of Thomas, 1st Baron, Lord Keeper.

- In the Garretts No.1
- No.2
- No.3 & Clossett
- No.4
- No.5
- No.6 & Clossett
- No.7 & Clossett
- No. 8 & 9 & Clossett
- No.10
- Wardrobe Room No.11 (where the Lord Keeper's robes were kept, possibly the room now known as the Lumber Garrett?)
- No.12 The Stair head & Stair Case
- No.13
- No.14
- No.15
- No.16 & Two Clossetts
- No.17 & Clossett
- No.18
- No.19
- At the Little Stair Case head or dark Passage
- In the Hall & Passage
- The Butler's Room under the Stairs
- In the New Parlour
- The Little Parlour
- In the Great Parlour
- In the Best Parlour
- In the Pantry & Beaufett
- The Inward Pantry
- In the Lobby & Drawing Room
- In the Chince Room
- In the Damask Room
- The Still Room
- The Spice Room
- The Kitchen
- In the Stewards Hall
- In the Waiters Hall
- The Porters Room
- In the Store Room near the Cellars
- The Bayliss Hall
- Small Beer Cellar
- In the Pastry
- In the New Cellar
- In the Inmost Beer Cellar
- The Ale Cellar
- Wine Cellar
- In the Out House by ye Clock the first Garrett on ye left hand
- The Gardiners Room
- The Cooks Room

- The Room over the Bakehouse
- Mr. Veal's Room (Steward/Butler?)
- In the Landry Chamber
- In the Landry
- In the Porters Lodge
- The Bakehouse
- In the Dairy
- Wash House
- In the Brewhouse
- In the Larder
- In the Stewards Appartments
- In the Office
- In the Smoaking Room
- The Baylies Room
- The Carters Room
- In the Old Saddle Room
- In the Common Stable
- The Coachmans Room
- In the Coach Horse Stable
(pages 17 & 18 are missing)
- In the Malt House
- Over the Mill House
- In the Slaughter House
- The Joyners Work Room
- The Smiths Tools
- In the Masons Custody
- The Garden Tools
- In the Bowling Green House
- In the Dog Kennel

The Little Inventory refers to the Hall, Parlour and New Apartments up Stairs; the Room known by the name of the Lobby; the Withdrawing Room next to the Lobby; the Calamanco Room; the Chince Room; my Lord's Dressing Room; the Yellow Damask Room; the new Parlour; the Best Parlour; and then lists pictures, plate and horses.

MID-18TH CENTURY: THE PALLADIAN RE-MODELLING

Specific Points of Interest relating to the Palladian re-modelling

- The importance of Croome to the later careers of Brown and Adam
- The combination of Rococo, Neo-classical and early 18th century decorative schemes
- What the idiosyncrasies of the architectural detail reveal about the 6th Earl's personality
- The question as to whether James "Athenian" Stuart worked at Croome
- The former location of the staircases
- The re-use of early 18th century panelling
- The structural evolution, changing layout and function of the basement rooms
- The technology incorporated, notably the Chapman pump, water closets, back boiler in the Butler's Pantry (B13)
- The evolution of F8
- The layout of the closets of F15
- Historical evidence within the void above the Saloon
- The changing location of the nurseries

Historical Context

When Gilbert died in 1719 the Coventry title reverted to a politician and privy councillor, who was a descendant of Walter, brother to Lord Keeper Coventry: William, 5th Earl (1678-1751). He spent considerable sums on the garden from 1721-22, but this was probably to complete the works begun by Gilbert rather than to make major alterations, as in 1745 the Hercules statue was still the centrepiece of the south garden⁷⁰. He was MP for Bridport from 1708 to 1719, following which he served as Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire until his death; he was also a Privy Councillor. He was a diligent custodian of the Coventry estate at Croome, although he does not appear to have carried out much work to the Court itself. For twenty years or so, the accounts show no significant entries for works to the house. This seems strange given that he inherited an unfinished house from Gilbert, 4th Earl, and he was in possession of it for thirty-two years. However, he had not expected to inherit, the state of the Coventry finances was not good and there is nothing to suggest that the house was uninhabitable, although he must have been tempted to make his mark upon it. In any event, it would appear that the 5th Earl concentrated his efforts on improving the estate (the substantial increase in rental income at this time is indicative of his success), compacting his estates by exchanges and purchasing, and was more interested in his broader responsibilities towards the county. More research is needed on this aspect.

⁷⁰ WRO: CEA: General Accounts 1744-45



Group portrait of 5th Earl of Coventry and his family by Charles Phillips.
The future 6th Earl is the far left-hand figure in red. (CET)



George William, later 6th Earl of Coventry (1722-1809),
by Allan Ramsay, 1742-4 (CET)

The 5th Earl had three sons, and, following the sudden death of the eldest in 1744, the second son, George William, began to develop ambitious plans to transform the house and park at Croome. He made exploratory visits to places such as Hagley and Wroxton with his friend, the gentleman-architect, Sanderson Miller, and, by the late 1740s, initial works on the grounds were under way to create a more appropriate setting for the new house he had in mind. When Doherty sketched his plan of the house and grounds around 1751, the river and the new Chinese bridge were already in place.

The image of the Court is very schematic, a simple 7-bay block with only the gatehouse, church, a few outbuildings and walled enclosures giving context to what is essentially an outline layout showing the different land uses. The south-east wing is not shown and only the kitchen garden and the Evidence House are labelled. Importantly though, the formality of the spaces around the house was breaking down. On the death of the 5th Earl in 1751, George William could embark on his plans in earnest.



Detail of the c.1751 Doherty survey, before Brown's arrival (WRO)

Construction

The re-modelling of Croome Court was not the product of a single mind or the realisation of a single formed idea. It was a collaborative effort and it was driven forward by the 6th Earl, to whom it was not so much a project, as a lifelong obsession, underpinned by a deep sense of responsibility towards what he had inherited so unexpectedly on the death of his elder brother.

What happened at Croome in the middle of the 18th century was essentially the serendipitous formation of what could be described as 'the ultimate design dream team': three ambitious young men coincided, soon afterwards joined by a fourth, in a fertile and heady atmosphere where almost anything was possible, where their vision and professional ambitions could become reality and where lasting creative relationships

were formed. These four men were George William, 6th Earl of Coventry, Sanderson Miller, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, and, later, Robert Adam.



Croome's 'dream team': (from left to right) 6th Earl of Coventry, Sanderson-Miller, 'Capability' Brown & Robert Adam (CET/Google/NPG/NPG)

Brown probably began work at Croome in 1751. He had just set up as an independent landscape architect and he had met Sanderson Miller at Stowe in 1748. Miller had invited him to Radway the following year. Evidently, he recognised Brown's potential and it is likely that it was Miller who introduced Brown to his Oxford friend, George William Coventry⁷¹. This meeting marked the start of a lifelong personal and professional relationship between Brown and the 6th Earl.

The initial influence of such an innovative talent as Miller on both Brown and the 6th Earl must have been considerable. His input at this formative stage was crucial and considerable. He provided the creative spark and the academic base for the project, and he was acknowledged by the 6th Earl as "*the primary author*".⁷² Clearly the three young men made an effective and highly creative team, and the versatility of Brown's talents were valued especially, as he had the essential engineering skills that could make possible the aesthetic whims of Lord Coventry. Although his architectural abilities were unproven, as it happened, Brown may have exceeded Miller's expectations, as his architectural skills were expertly nurtured during this important period to form the ideal complement to his engineering and landscaping capabilities. Adam's appearance on the scene just ten years later provided the cultural stimulus and aesthetic judgement to hone his ideas still further, to give the essential polish and sophistication to the whole.

If the project was driven by the 6th Earl's ambition and enthusiasm, it was also subject to interesting conflicts between his innate thrift and extravagant whims, his developing taste for the antique, and his fascination with new technology. That Brown was so tolerant and loyal a man was fortunate, and that he had the skill and confidence to make such a success of his first major architectural and landscape commission owes as much to his personality as his talent. It is interesting to speculate whether, had Adam been involved earlier in the scheme, Croome would have ended up as a very different building: one that was more brash-looking and not necessarily allowing for what seems to have been the 6th Earl's approach of embracing quirky examples of thrift and antiquarianism.

⁷¹ Miller's diaries are at Warwickshire Record Office

⁷² Warwickshire Record Office CR 125 (153)

Construction work was fraught with problems, constrained by the structural demands of the existing fabric of the earlier house and the need to integrate the building perfectly within an entirely new landscape that had yet to mature; there was a site to clear, and a church and a straggling village to remove and re-site too. Certain aspects of the building show signs of indecision and uncertainty. The 6th Earl was fortunate in having an expert team of craftsmen on site. William Donn was in charge of the quantity surveying, and Henry Holland, father of the well-known architect who later formed a partnership with Brown and married his daughter, was in charge of the roofing works. Newman, the master mason, started at Croome in 1753, Hobcraft, the master carpenter and joiner in 1754, and then in 1756 Vassalli and the plasterer William Davis appear on the scene. Hobcraft had met Brown at Stowe and worked with him on various projects elsewhere, including Corsham, Castle Ashby, Claremont and Broadlands. Brown's accounts at Drummonds show that Donn was employed by him directly, as was William Hiorn of Warwick, who with his brother, David, had taken over Francis Smith of Warwick's business from Smith's son, William.

The main structural works were undertaken between 1751-8, including the construction of the Red Wing and the stables. The old foundations, the spine wall and transverse corridor, most of the walls, much of the roof structure and the chimneys remained. The presence of the spine wall was beneficial: providing essential structural support and separation during the build. This was a highly complex engineering task for the Caroline house would have been reduced not so much to a shell, as a skeletal frame with a strong backbone.

Eileen Harris considers that the 6th Earl's structural re-modelling of Croome was "*not as extensive as is often supposed. Instead of demolishing the old house and building an entirely new one at great expense and inconvenience, Coventry decided to retain the existing structure except for two bays at each end, which were taken down and re-built with corner towers to give it a Palladian look*".⁷³ In fact, the two bays were not re-built but were entirely new additions and extended the length of the house to the east and west. The decision to gut the building, reduce it to its 17th century skeleton, push out the north wall to align it with the existing shallow projecting bays, move the staircases, re-configure the internal spaces, change the rhythm and proportions of the fenestration, add pediments to both fronts, an Ionic portico to the South and re-face the whole in Bath stone represented very fundamental structural changes and would have been hugely inconvenient.

The rebuilding work also had to be carefully phased to cause minimum disruption and probably the earliest phase of the work involved the partial demolition of the porch, work on the basement, the construction of the new north front, infilling the central five bays, and reorganising the layout of the north range. This may have been complete by 1752, with works to the south range continuing over the next year or so, and the end wings added last so that the house was not watertight till 1756. A pediment enclosing the Coventry coat of arms and a double flight of stairs were added onto the north entrance front and an impressive tetrastyle portico guarded by Coade stone sphinxes gave equal distinction to the south front. The detail of the portico was not completed till 1761, when Vassalli finished the plaster ceiling⁷⁴, and the sphinxes were not finally put in place till

⁷³ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.42

⁷⁴ F62/18

1795.⁷⁵ New staircases were inserted at each end of the house, and a new vault was built over the new Saloon with an *enfilade* of rooms running along the south front on the ground floor overlooking the new landscape and river. On the first floor, a new suite of rooms was created along the north front for Lord and Lady Coventry, and the basement was reorganised to meet contemporary needs, with the kitchen and servants' hall moved into the new Red Wing and a series of small rooms created to serve specific functions.

The remodelled house was of 11 bays on its north facade, but only 9 bays to the south, with both north and south fronts having equal importance within the design.



The north elevation of the Court, late 19th century (*WRO*)



The south elevation, 2008 (*NTPL*)

⁷⁵ F57/7

The bay widths of the early house were scaled up and the outer bays were set in the new corner pavilions. At each end of the building there is just a single bay width between the pavilions, with a canted bay window squeezed between the western pavilions and the main staircase set between the two eastern pavilions. Brown may have completed the remodelling of the Red Wing prior to the construction of the new east wing and its south-east pavilion. This is because the roof trusses of the south wing have been dated through dendrochronology to 1753 (although they could have been in store for some time as timber needed to be seasoned before use) and the apex of the roof has been truncated, probably to fit beneath the projecting cornice of the new south-east pavilion. Rodwell has also observed that the neatly-jointed brickwork in Flemish bond, with which the Red Wing was faced to unite the phases of construction, appears to pass beneath the ashlar facing of the south-east pavilion on the south elevation. This could mean that some early brickwork was retained within the south wall of this pavilion.

Regrettably no bills survive for building works from 1751-7, only Brown's monthly bills without detail. However the general progress of the build may be established from the account books for the period as follows:

- 1752** Scaffolding poles and cording. Hauling 53,456 bricks and 338,000 bricks. Payments to Eltonhead and Robert Newman. Also for boarding Mr Brown.
- 1753** Payments made for 12,800 bricks, for 4,000 rubbing bricks, for 6,600 Rubbing bricks, for a further 1,500 bricks and for three smaller loads of brick, for nine and a half tons and a further 21 tons of alabaster and also for hair (for the plaster). Also for deal and lath nails. Further payments to Newman and Eltonhead and also to Doharty for surveying.
- 1754** Payments for Bath stone, reeds for plasterers, more alabaster (27 and 14 tons and four further payments). Additional hair. Payments to ironmonger, glazier and plasterer. Payments for sawing and squaring boards. Also 2500 pantiles from Gloucester, 27 tons of pebbles and for carriage of slate. ***Basic alterations to original range complete around this time and interior works in progress.***
- 1755** Several payments for Bath stone, for Painswick and Bredon stone, for reeds, pantiles, for a freight of deal from Bristol, for discharging slate from a ship, and for brick, nails and pebbles. Further payments to Newman and Eltonhead. Payment to Henry Holland. Payment to Robert Chambers for 2 Ionic capitals and trusses. ***The main re-facing in progress and roofing work starts, undertaken between 1755 and 1758.***
- 1756** Further payments for large amounts of Bath stone and some Painswick stone. For brickmaking and for more deals, nails and hair. Payments to the plasterer, plumber, glazier, and painter. Large payments to Newman and Eltonhead. The first payments to Vassalli. Also items for boarding Vassalli, Brown, Hobcraft and Donn. ***More work on the facades, fittings and interior decoration.***

- 1757** For weathervanes (George Rawlinson) and for turning the balls on the towers.
Chambers for carving capitals and trusses.
For 1335 ft of boards and large quantity of deals. For additional Bath stone, Cleeve and Painswick stone, and Forrest stone. For 900 pantiles, alabaster, nails. For turning banisters. Individual payments to Newman, Vassalli, Eltonhead, Henry Holland's man, Hobcraft and others.
Structural work on the wings and pavilions nearing completion. Interior fittings and decoration is continuing.

After this date the surviving bills start and there is no need to rely entirely on what is recorded in the account books. However the bills for building materials, brick-making etc are not included in these and the entries in the Accounts up till 1760 show the following:

- 1758** More Painswick and Bibury stone, alabaster and oak boards. Payments to Newman and Robert Chambers. Final payment to Holland. Hobcraft's bills from 1756-8. Also payments to Lovell for carving, including 7 chimneypieces.
Roofing completed. Structural works finished.
- 1759** 3 tons alabaster. Payments to Vassalli, Newman, and Eltonhead. Big Hobcraft bill from 1758/9. Payment for statuary.

The reference to pebbles in 1755 is important as it indicates when the broad apron of graded cobbles was set around the north and west sides of the building to link with the hoggins of the main approach drives and of the paths from the Home Shrubbery and Chinese bridge to the south. These account entries would also support the view that the end wings were not finally completed till 1757, the date when the finials and weathervanes were made, although small works continued over the following years. The main bulk of the fitting and decoration probably began at this time, once the building was truly watertight. In 1762, the arms Adam had designed for the north pediment and carved by Alken were hoisted into place, but not till 1795 when the Coade sphinxes arrived could Lord Coventry consider the building truly complete.



Detail of one of the Coade stone sphinxes installed by James Wyatt on the South Portico (*NTPL*)

As early as 1752, Sir Edward Turner wrote to Miller to inform him that “Lord Coventry is furnishing his new house with elegance”.⁷⁶ He may have been commissioning furniture, and planning decorative schemes for the main part of the house, but as the roofing does not appear in the accounts till 1755 and was not complete till 1757/8, (although Holland was still supervising the slating of part of the offices in 1765), it is unlikely that many of the principal rooms were habitable let alone decorated. Possibly Turner was remarking in a more general sense on the quality and refinement of the work in progress in 1752, and the 6th Earl’s marriage to Maria Gunning that year must have instilled the project with a greater sense of urgency.

Brown was responsible for the fittings and decoration of much of the interior, including the Entrance Hall, the Saloon, the Billiard Room, Drawing Room and the Dining Room on the ground floor and the new suite of bedrooms and dressing rooms along the north front. After around 1756, it is possible to plot the progress of fitting and decoration with some accuracy. The earliest surviving Hobcraft bill dates from May 1756⁷⁷, but the pace of the fitting out quickened from 1757-9. In 1757, Hobcraft charged for taking the dimensions of the house and making a plan of the floors⁷⁸ and he was hard at work from at least 1756-9. The backstairs may have been completed in 1757, when the Accounts show a payment for turning balusters by Hobcraft, so there must have been an alternative access to the upper floors up to this point, possibly using the old backstairs. It appears that work started on Lord Coventry’s Bedchamber and the Blue/Yellow Drawing Room first,⁷⁹ with work being undertaken in most of the principal rooms on both floors by

⁷⁶ Warwickshire R.O. CR 125 (123)

⁷⁷ F62/5

⁷⁸ F62/15

⁷⁹ Presumably because one was above the other in a part of the house which was least disturbed and they would have been needed when Lord Coventry stayed at Croome to inspect the works.

the late 1750s apart from the main Adam rooms⁸⁰. Several bills for fabric, wallpaper, curtains, window blinds and bed covers are dated 1757. Payments were also made to James Lovell for fine carving in wood and marble from 1758⁸¹, to William Linnell from 1758⁸² and John Wildsmith in 1760⁸³, and there were payments to Thomas Blockley for steel grates and other metalwork in 1759 and 1760⁸⁴. Blockley also supplied the bell systems, which were fitted between 1766 and 1775⁸⁵.

Richard Wilson was commissioned to paint Croome Court in 1758, probably to mark the completion of most of the external work⁸⁶. It had to be an imaginary view, especially as the church in the distance had not been built and the landscape had not matured, but it was sufficiently idyllic to sustain Lord Coventry's enthusiasm and perhaps to offer some encouragement to his first wife, Maria Gunning. They must have spent a considerable amount of time in London at first, with Lord Coventry lodging elsewhere on his visits to Worcestershire.

Maria died in the house in 1760, when the west wing was still largely a shell and some rooms remained undecorated or incomplete. It must have been particularly uncomfortable as she lay dying in what was effectively a building site, in a first-floor bedroom on the north side, overlooking the new church on the hill which wasn't finished in time for her to be buried there. She had never liked the country and much preferred London. Her illness and death disrupted works for several months, but it also marked the beginning of the second phase of works and the start of Adam's involvement with the project. The timing was fortuitous, as Adam charged the unwieldy and time-consuming project with new energy and direction.



Portrait of Maria Gunning, 6th Earl of Coventry's first wife,
by Francis Cotes (CET)

⁸⁰ Long Gallery, Tapestry Room and Library.

⁸¹ F62/6, 6a,19

⁸² F60/8

⁸³ F62/16

⁸⁴ F62/20

⁸⁵ F62/20

⁸⁶ This iconic painting is still in the collection.

Most of Adam's work on the interior at Croome Court was carried out during his earlier phase at Croome from around 1759 to 1771, although he was still making designs for the interior as late as June 1781⁸⁷ and for the Park ten years later. (Interestingly, the only bill to have survived relating to Adam's expenses is one from October 1763, when he charged £12-12-0 for 'Journey to Croome, time & expenses', and one in November 1765 when he charged £20.0.0).

Adam quickly gained Lord Coventry's confidence for they shared a similar taste in French neo-classicism, and he was commissioned to design and plan the fittings and furnishings for the Long Gallery, the Library and the Tapestry Room. Adam also made important contributions to the fittings and decoration elsewhere in the house, designing new chimneypieces, a bedroom alcove, ceiling mouldings etc. He must have relished Lord Coventry's similar taste, his willingness to experiment and the opportunity to develop his ideas with a fellow enthusiast. Although the relationship was mutually rewarding, it appears to have remained on a wholly professional basis, unlike the more personal bond that grew up between Brown and Lord Coventry⁸⁸. Nevertheless it was equally important to the careers of both men, and the result of this valuable meeting of minds between Adam and the 6th Earl was three of the most significant and influential rooms of their type and date.

Adam's drawings and bills for Croome Court (not including those for the offices and park buildings, but including the furniture) are listed chronologically below. These are at the Sir John Soane Museum and their reference is given. Those owned by the Croome Estate Trust are marked (CEA).

DATE	Details of Adam drawing/bill <i>(As a rule of thumb, entries with a cost are bills, not drawings)</i>	COST
1759	Possible designs for chimneypieces in Tapestry Room & bill for the Library, as these were completed by John Wildsmith in 1760.	
?	Drawing 'Lord Coventry's Library' (50/10) (This exploded plan shows the Long Gallery as originally conceived as a library)	
?	Drawing 'Room for Lord Coventry' (50/9i & ii) (This shows the Long Gallery as a gallery, with a flap to give different options for treatment of the west wall).	
1760	Drawing 'Design of a Ceiling for the Library at Croome. The Seat of the Right Honble The Earl of Coventry. Robt Adam Architect 1760'. (11/34) (This was the unexecuted design for the Long Gallery when originally conceived as a library).	
Sept .1760	Drawing 'Ceiling for the Gallery at Croome not executed / A Duplicate Sepr 1760'. (11/35) (This was the unexecuted design for the Long Gallery when it	

⁸⁷ This related to the 6th Earl's apartment in his later life in the Red Wing, connected via a door off the ground floor landing of the main staircase.

⁸⁸ That said, the 6th Earl was one of Adam's pall-bearers.

	became the Long Gallery).	
Sept. 1760	Design for a ceiling for the Gallery (unexecuted)	£12-12-0
Mar. 1761	Drawing 'Ceiling of the Gallery at Croome / as executed March 1761'. (11/36)	
Mar. 1761	A new design for the ceiling of the Gallery (as executed) Croome Estate Archive (CEA)	£9-9-0
Nov. 1761	Section for finishing Gallery at Croome in the Manner of a Library (CEA)	£10-10-0
Nov. 1761	2 drawings of Tablets for Chimney	£1-1-0
Nov. 1761	To Mouldings for the Gallery – Entablature for the Room, with the Ornament for the Frieze at large; base & surbase with enrichments, Architrave, Frieze & Cornice for the Doors; Architraves for the windows; Ornamented panels for Doors at full size	£12-12-0
Nov. 1761	3 Drawings of Ornamented Arms for Pediment of the House	£6-6-0
Nov. 1761	Designs of Chimneys at Croome (bill) (unclear which ones)	£4-4-0
Jan 1762	Drawing for a chimneypiece, possibly for the Tapestry Room, although that executed has a different frieze design. The date may be a later incorrect annotation as Wildsmith supplied the chimneypiece in 1760. (22/59)	
1762	Design for a chimneypiece for the Eating Parlour for the Earl of Coventry (with wheatsheaves) (22/60)	
	Design for a Chimney Piece for the Eating Parlour at Croome for the Earl of Coventry Robt Adam Archit (with wheatsheaves) (22/61)	
Jan. 1763	Drawing 'Ceiling for the Library at Croome Janry 1763'. (Actually executed in the Tapestry Room). (11/37)	
Jan. 1763	Design of a ceiling for the Library	£10-10-0
	Design of a Ceiling for Tapestry room	£10-10-0
	Design for a chimneypiece for the Best Bedchamber	
	Design for a chimneypiece for the Mezzanine Room	
	Section of the 4 sides of the Library & the manner of the Bookcases	£10-10-0
	Rough preliminary designs for a ceiling & presentation drawing of a wall	
	Mouldings at large for ceilings of Library & Tapestry (bill) (CEA)	£3-3-0
1763	Drawing 'Design for finishing the Gallery in the Antique taste' signed Robt Adam Architect 1763 (CET) (This shows the Long Gallery with the plaster statues in the niches and plasterwork panels).	
June 1763	New section of the Gallery finished in the Antique Taste with Statues, Bas-reliefs etc.	£16-16-0
	The mouldings at large for Cobb & Vile, & the ornaments for Mr Alken for Bookcases	£5-5-0

?	Drawing of a moulding frieze annotated 'Tapestry Room at Croome'. (The frieze is only one of five friezes on the page – the other four were designed for the Earl of Thanet). (53/25)	
Nov. 1763	Section for Tapestry Room	£1-1-0
	Entablature for doors etc. with ornamented frieze	£2-2-0
	Section of Staircase at Croome & outside elevation (lost/unlocated)	£5-5-0
Dec. 1763	Design of a Bed given to Mr France (relating to the state bed upholstered by France & Bradburn)	£2-2-0
?	Drawing for 'Lord Coventry's Tapestry Room' (50/12)	
Jan. 1764	Design for finishing the sides of the Tapestry Room	£3-3-0
	Altering the French Designs of Tapestry Room in colours	£2-2-0
Mar. 1764	Design of an Alcove Bedroom at Croome (& mouldings at large)	£3-3-0
May 1764	Rough section of the Gallery for the execution	£1-1-0
June 1764	Mouldings at large for ditto	£4-8-6
	Design of a picture frame & part at large	£3-3-0
Oct 1764	Drawing 'Clothes Press for the Earl of Coventry 2d Octr 176[4] (17/212)	
?	Drawing 'Sopha for Sir Lawrence Dundass Bart' (17/73) (This is the design for the scoll benches for the Long Gallery – in this case the longest one with 4 legs)	
Oct. 1764	Design of a Sofa for the Gallery at Croome	£2-2-0
Feb. 1765	Another design of a Sofa or scroll chair	£2-2-0
?	Drawing of a chair (6/159)	
?	Drawing of a chair (6/161)	
	Design of a Chair for Gallery at Croome	£2-2-0
?	Drawing 'Design of a Grate & Fender for the Right Honble the Earl of Coventry' (Soane)	
June 1765?	Design of a grate & fender for the Gallery at Croome	£5-5-0
	Design of a Clothes Press for my Lady's bedchamber (probably for the London House?)	£7-7-0
	Drawings at large of the ornaments of ditto (probably for the London House?)	£2-2-0
July 1765	Design of a Glass frame for the Gallery at Croome	£5-5-0
	Drawings at full size of ditto for execution	£2-2-0
	Design of a Table frame for the Gallery at Croome	£3-3-0
	Drawing of ditto at large	£1-1-0
Jan. 1766	2 Ornamental paintings in Chiaroscuro for 2 large panels in the Gallery at Croome (bill)	£20-0-0
	4 dittos for smaller panels in the Gallery (bill)	£12-0-0
May 1767	Design for altering Great Clothes Press (probably for the London House?)	£1-1-0
	Drawing of a 'Water Stand' (6/177)	
	Tripod altered from a French design for a water stand	£1-1-0

Mar. 1781	Plan of an apartment at Croome (in Red Wing) (bill only – the only plan is a signed & dated one by Wyatt of 1799)	£2-2-0
June 1781	Section of the 4 sides of the upper part of the staircase at Croome with added Cove etc. (bill)	£3-3-0
	Cornice & cove frame for ditto at full size (bill)	15/-
	Sketch of part of front end of the House (bill)	£1-1-0
	Cornice at full size for front (bill)	7/6

In 1764 Lord Coventry married his second wife, Barbara St John, and this provided the incentive for another surge of activity on work inside the house. Of the interiors, the Library was completed first in 1764, the Gallery was completed by 1766, but the tapestries and furnishings for the Tapestry Room that had been commissioned in 1764 following Lord Coventry's shopping trip to Paris in 1763, were not installed till 1771.

Hobcraft's next big bill is dated 1764⁸⁹, and from this, and also from Joseph Rose's big bill of the same year⁹⁰, it is evident that work was still going on in many of the principal rooms. There was also an effort to complete the upper floors, including the re-fitting of F8 and the bedrooms on the second floor of the west tower, the main rooms in the basement and the main passageways.



Portrait of Barbara St John, 6th Earl of Coventry's second wife,
Circle of Mary Beale (CET)

⁸⁹ F30/30

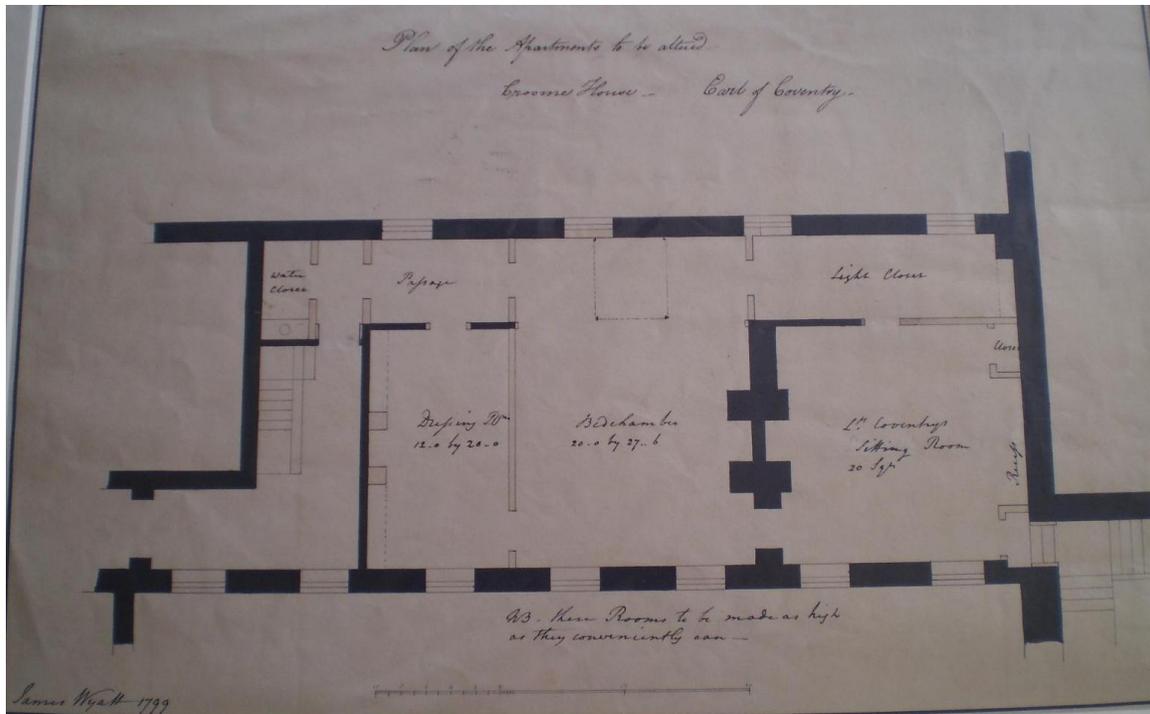
⁹⁰ F62/32

Decoration work and alterations continued until the very end of Lord Coventry's life. Chimneypieces were taken apart, altered and moved, new furnishings were acquired, and re-decoration works took place, particularly in the late 1780s. Some of this was essential maintenance but it was also to adapt the house to changing needs and improvements in technology.

During the 1770s and 1780s, Adam's attention was largely diverted towards the furnishing and decoration of Coventry House in Piccadilly, and work in the park at Croome. In 1763 and 1764 he had drawn up plans to remodel the Red Wing to give it a more distinguished appearance and conform better to the design of the house. These came to nothing, but in 1781, he seems to have been making some drawings for work on the main staircase as well as drawing up plans for the conversion of the first floor of the south wing of the Red Wing⁹¹. This had formerly been used as servants' bedrooms, but due to Lord Coventry's ailing health, and perhaps also his increasing desire for privacy, this area was to be converted into a small apartment for him. Adam's plans do not appear to have been executed and instead the conversion was carried out using salvaged materials. The main room over the Steward's Room was lined with Jacobean panelling and enhanced with a bolection-moulded chimneypiece the same as that in the first-floor alcove room (F8). This choice of fittings was significant, and may have been driven partly by sentiment for the earlier house and partly by his innate thrift, which was often in curious contrast with his extravagance and perfectionism. A jib door was punched through the wall from the ground-floor half-landing of the main staircase to enable him to access the apartment easily from the east wing of the Court⁹². Later, in 1799, James Wyatt was commissioned to refit the apartment, although these plans were not executed.

⁹¹ Neither of these drawings have come to light – Frances Sand who is cataloguing Adam's drawings at the Sir John Soane Museum thinks they exist but have been lost. Therefore it cannot be said with 100% certainty that Adam's apartment conversion plan was intended for the Red Wing, but is highly likely.

⁹² The ghost of this door is still easily discernible.



James Wyatt's 1799 plan for altering the 6th Earl's apartment in the Red Wing (CET)

It is ironic that the last major alterations the 6th Earl undertook in the house that he had strived throughout his life to complete were planned to enable him to withdraw altogether from the main building. At the very start of the project, in a letter to Sanderson Miller, he had described Croome Court as 'an inn'.⁹³ This, after all, was its main function: as a status symbol, a place to entertain, to experiment, to display his collections and as a centrepiece of his country seat, but it was never a place to relax. Croome Court's very public role and the demands it placed upon him forced him to seek refuge in the home Brown had designed and Adam re-modelled for him at Spring Hill, near Broadway.⁹⁴ Interestingly he wrote to Humphry Repton that what he enjoyed most about his Cotswold home was that it was "without any pretension to architecture, [and that it was] a model for every internal and domestic convenience..."⁹⁵

Towards the end of the 6th Earl's life (he died in 1809), the bills for work at Croome had risen to around £20,000 per year (the equivalent of around £15M today).⁹⁶

⁹³ Warwickshire Record Office CR 125 (153)

⁹⁴ The extent of this needs investigation.

⁹⁵ Dorothy Stroud, *Country Life*, 6 January 1940

⁹⁶ Based on the purchasing power of £1 sterling in 1800 being the equivalent of £798 today (from www.measuringworth.com using the 'Average Earnings' calculator).

The south front and ground and first-floor plans of Croome Court were illustrated in Volume V of *Vitruvius Britannicus* in 1771:

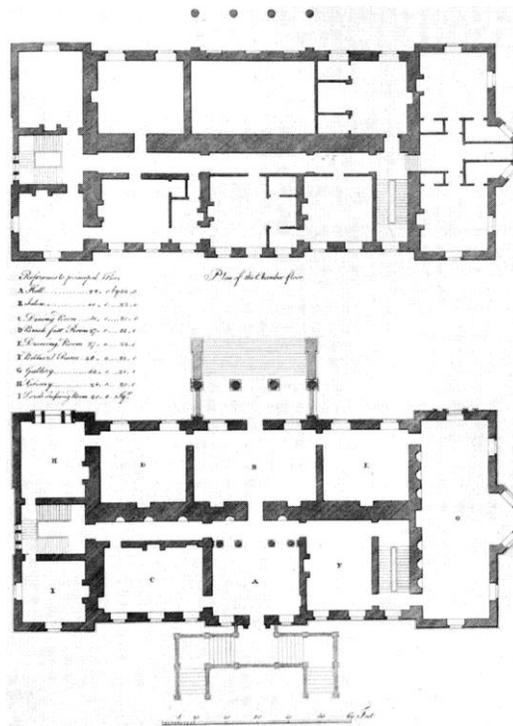


*South Front of Croome Court in Warwickshire the Seat of the W. W. W. Earl of Coventry
Elevation du Sud de Croome Court dans le Warwickshire Maison de M. le Comte de Coventry*

L. Smith del.

J. Goussier sculp.

W. Woodcut.



These are important as they are the earliest known plans of the re-modelled building. However, they show several differences from the house as it survives today, as follows:

Exterior

- All chimneys are omitted
- The weathervanes are omitted from the pavilion roofs
- The sphinxes are not yet flanking the south steps (billed by Coade & Sealy in 1795)

Ground Floor

- The door to the north-west of the Hall (G1) is shown with a false door
- There is no Hall fireplace
- There is no passageway between the Dining Room (G2) and Lord Coventry's Dressing Room (G4)
- There is no niche at the west end of the spine passage (G3)
- There is no opening at the western end of the spine wall (G13)

First Floor

- No passageway shown from the spine corridor into the Alcove Bedroom (F6a)
- No passageway between the Best/Chinese Bedroom (F3) and the south-east pavilion (F2)
- In F15, both closets show a door off the alcove which may have been the original layout. There is also no door shown from the south closet onto the corridor.
- The former passageway (F19a) off the spine corridor into the Lady's Dressing Room or Boudoir (F17) is now blocked, as is the entrance off this room into the cupboard (F19b)

The exterior omissions are simple matters of presentation and date, but it is interesting to speculate whether the interior omissions were deliberate or just oversights.⁹⁷ The discrepancies in the Hall are of particular interest. It is conceivable that the north door to the Billiard Room was formed in the 19th century, along with the insertion of the Hall chimneypiece which seems to have been a later addition (see Section 1, G1 on The Hall).

The other passageways, notably that from the Dining Room (G3) into Lord Coventry's Dressing Room (G4) may be a simple omission or part of the minor phase of changes that were made around 1789, once the family had lived in the house for some time and alterations and redecoration were required. This Dressing Room performed the function of a private study and a place where Lord Coventry could entertain male guests after dinner, and additional access from the Dining Room may have proved advantageous.⁹⁸ These various alterations also had a certain logic to them in that opening up this *enfilade* along the north front complemented and balanced the original *enfilade* within the south range.

Design and Layout

The design of Croome Court presented a challenge as it was necessary to convincingly mask the proportions and interior of the Caroline house beneath a Palladian or, more accurately, a Jonesian veneer. The 6th Earl's main objective initially appears to have been to create a building of fashionable appearance to form the focal point of the re-designed landscape. Only later, as his tastes and ideas matured, especially after Adam

⁹⁷ It has been pointed out that the engravings in *Vitruvius Britannicus* often showed an idealised interpretation of reality and cannot be relied upon for accuracy.

⁹⁸ However, the jib door in G4 looks original - could it have originally concealed a cupboard and the slanting link passage was formed later?

appeared on the scene, did the finer details and the possibilities of the interior appear to absorb his attention.

From the outside, the earlier house with its chimney arcade is still visible behind the pediments and portico, encased between the end wings with their sentinel towers. The bay divisions were spaced out more generously and the effect is dignified and imposing. Yet although it sits perfectly within the landscape, the proportions of the house appear slightly ungainly, particularly from the north. That the house looks best from a distance is because it was designed to do so. On close inspection, certain compromises are revealed that were made to achieve this effect. The basement windows, for example, overlap the window openings in many cases; also the Venetian windows in the pavilions are mis-aligned with the other ground-floor windows, a problem that is exacerbated by the dominant cornices above the windows on the ground floor. The combination of rendered and ashlar-faced chimneys seems strange when the spine chimneys are such an important feature of the main elevations. Also, blind windows are employed in the ends of the east pavilions, yet off-set Diocletian and Venetian windows are used in the central bay. These afford a full and possibly unwelcome view of the domestic offices from the main staircase. They had to be off-set because of the adjoining Red Wing and as a consequence they appear as an afterthought, which they might well have been. Finally the balustrade of the north steps adjoins the sills of the ground-floor windows rather than the wall, which seems unnecessarily quirky and was possibly unintentional.



Detail of south elevation showing mis-alignment of Venetian windows on ground floor (NTPL)

Such imperfections may be explained by Brown's inexperience, and perhaps by the 6th Earl's over-enthusiasm and tendency to change his mind. They do not detract from the overall excellence of the whole, and this was no mean feat when one considers how much of the earlier house, including the roof, survives.

The spirit of compromise and the idiosyncrasies of the 6th Earl pervade the interior more forcefully, but this gives the place a personal energy and unpredictability which adds to its charm⁹⁹. The whole was bound together by the consistency and quality of Hobcraft's

⁹⁹ It should be remembered that in the interiors' present empty and denuded state, it is both much more easy to be critical of their compromises *and* difficult to imagine their total design concept in terms of plasterwork, fixtures and furnishings.

carving work, the excellent plasterwork and the fine collection of furniture and paintings. The chimneypieces are also of a very high standard, although many have been moved or altered. Most retain their marble hearths but were subsequently fitted with Victorian grates and baskets. Above all, the contrasting character of the various principal rooms is striking; the earlier Rococo rooms, such as the Hall, Saloon and Dining Room, alongside the simplicity of the panelled Billiard Room and the sheer sophistication of the Adam Neo-classical rooms, especially the Long Gallery, a room of exceptional quality and impact even without many of its intended fittings and contents.

The most surprising elements of the interior are the staircases, which are not satisfactorily incorporated within a grand scheme of interior design. The main stair is tucked well away with inexplicable discretion and associated with the more private spaces of the 6th Earl's Dressing Room and Library at the east end of the house, while the back stair is immediately next to the main public room on the *piano nobile*, the Long Gallery. The main staircase's symmetry and effect is compromised by the off-set Diocletian and Venetian windows due to the adjoining Red Wing, and the back stair's internal levels do not correspond with the height of the windows on the north façade, the internal arrangement being sacrificed for external symmetry. That both staircases were compromised in this way remains a mystery and the reasoning behind their design and location may emerge when further investigative work is undertaken on the structure.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, Nicholas Cooper has offered some thoughts on the staircases' design and location: *'As you say, the location of the stairs is at first sight difficult to explain. But I believe it becomes less so when considered in relation to the rest of the work that was done in the 1750s. The first floor rooms at the western end of the house had probably been refurbished within the last two generations. I think that the 6th Earl decided to retain these, with minor alterations, for reasons of economy and to extend the smart areas of the house towards the east. The building of the Red Wing enabled him to do this, since this accommodated some of the services that had hitherto been within the main body of the house. The eastern part of the house now contained his new Library and smart new chambers on the first floor – much smarter and more up-to-date than the now old-fashioned panelled rooms at the west end. Seen against the eastern shift of the polite centre of gravity, the location of the grand stair is not so odd. There was on the other hand no need for a grand stair at the west end: the 1750s lesser stair was good enough to serve the old-fashioned first floor chambers at this end. The house is arranged for ground floor entertaining, and even the grand stair is not much more than a domestic amenity. Both ends could, of course, have been served by a grand stair at the centre of the house, but this would have been at the expense of the two-storyed Saloon and the sequence of great rooms'*.



East elevation showing unsatisfactory off-set nature of main staircase due to the abutting Red Wing (*Author*)

19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES: MODIFICATIONS AND MODERNISATION

Specific points of interest relating to the 19th & 20th century modifications and modernisation

- Victorian tiles on reduced openings to fireplaces
- Electrical switchgear, fuse boxes and conduits (B4 and throughout basement)
- Butler's Pantry storage cupboards (B14)
- Use of B27 as Smoke Room
- 'Draught-proofing'/addition of inner porch to Hall and creation of fireplace sharing flue with Billiard Room
- Lack of Victorian structural/fashionable alterations
- Use of home-produced gas for lighting/heating
- Modernisation of services in 1931/2 after the 10th Earl inherited, especially re-organisation of the Basement (e.g. when the Servants' Hall was probably moved into the Court from the Red Wing)
- The school boys' shoe-lockers in B31; the walk-in refrigerator in B28
- The Hare Krishna decorative scheme in the Dining Room
- The 'modern' interventions by the property developers and the question of their status in the overall hierarchy of significances and values (e.g. the bar in G9, the use of G6 as a modern kitchen, the bath in F15, the decorative scheme in F14 & F15, the steam room in F19).

After the 6th Earl died in 1809, both the house and the landscape remained little altered for the next hundred and fifty years. John Snape's plan of 1796 shows the impressive extent of the landscaping work that had been undertaken during his lifetime. Although essential repairs and redecorating took place during the time of the 7th and 8th Earls, the work was minimal by comparison as the house had been kept to such a high standard by the 6th Earl. However this may also be because neither had a deep attachment to Croome. The 7th Earl had been blinded in a hunting accident as a young man, and he did not inherit Croome till he was in his fifties. He was estranged from his father and never visited Croome, and as the house was so much part of his father, it must have been a source of painful memories to him. As he was blind, his second wife, Peggy Pitches, undertook much of the administrative work on his behalf.

The park and plant collection were cared for during this period by the head gardener, William Dean, who published the first historical and descriptive account of Croome in 1824, which included an engraving of the house by C. Turner and J. Pitman and the admirable *Hortus Croomensis*. In this book, Dean described the Court as '*occupying a situation of profound and delightful seclusion*', but commented on Brown's lack of architectural experience, and criticised the house as being '*rather too low for its extent, and plain in its style of architecture*', although he did concede that it was large and commodious and had two handsome fronts. As for the interior, he thought the Tapestry Room was the best room of all, but predictably it was the views and setting of the house that appealed most of all to Dean. Similar opinions were expressed about the Court in 1829 in Jones' *Views of the Seats, Mansions, Castles etc of Noblemen and Gentlemen*,

*in England, which stated: "the style of the architecture of the house is plain, and bespeaks comfort rather than magnificence".*¹⁰¹

There was little recorded maintenance activity in the house until the 1820s, when a leak in Lady Coventry's closet (F19b) caused problems in the dining room below. From 1824, there is a series of letters from the agent, John Jones, to Lord and Lady Coventry concerning the installation of a new chimneypiece and repairs following this leak, and from 1827 there followed further correspondence in connection with general decoration work within the house.¹⁰² By the summer of 1827, the house was still not ready, and in 1828 the plastering work was still going on in the Nursery and there were reports that plaster had fallen down in Mr Esse's (the Butler) room.¹⁰³ A letter of 15th June refers to the work in progress and to panelling in the Nursery¹⁰⁴ and a further letter of 6th July concerns the wallpapering in the Nursery.¹⁰⁵ This would be explained by the fact that there were formerly both Day and Night nurseries on the second floor.

Both William Dean and the 7th Earl died in 1831. The 7th Earl was succeeded by his eldest son, George William, who became 8th Earl when he was nearly sixty. He was an unpopular figure, vilified by the press, plagued by neurosis and poor health, and the Countess Dowager seems to have acted on his behalf as head of the family. A certain apathy and mis-management, possibly prompted by Lord Coventry's sense of detachment from the place, continued during the 1830s.

However, from the 1840s, matters improved. There were signs of minor improvements to the house, and major works on the estate. In 1841, estimates for painting the Saloon appear in the archive and during the mid-19th century there followed a sequence of minor alterations to make the house more comfortable for the 9th Earl and his large family.

The 9th Earl spent much of his childhood at Sezincote with his grandmother, and when he reached his majority, he embarked on a lifelong commitment to Croome's care and to the improvement of the estate. As far as the Court was concerned, and indeed Croome in general, he represented continuity and tradition, certainly not radical architectural change or fashionable re-modelling. He was proud and protective of his inheritance, and took pride in the fact that he chose only to maintain, not alter or rebuild the house, but this may also have been because his interests lay elsewhere. The 'Grand Old Man of Worcestershire', as he came to be known, had a great love of animals and of country pursuits. The 9th Earl's real passion and priorities lay in equestrian sports and bloodstock: hunting and racing were central to how he and his family spent their time and lives at Croome.

¹⁰¹ According to William Dean the 6th Earl himself was accustomed to saying to his friends "*Go to Blenheim, for grandeur; but come to Croome, for comfort!*"

¹⁰² (F31/44/47/49)

¹⁰³ (F31/60).

¹⁰⁴ (F31/61)

¹⁰⁵ (F31/65)



The 9th Earl and two of his daughters on horseback outside the north entrance to the Court, late 19th century. Note the cobbled surface. (WRO)

He also took a keen and active interest in agriculture and breeding prize Hereford cattle. He made huge improvements to the estate, planting new orchards, building new farms and cottages, introducing new methods of production and commissioned a wonderful set of photographs in 1862 which record its mature appearance.



The Court from the south-west, 1862.
Note that this is the same view as the Richard Wilson painting. (WRO)



The Court from the south east, across the deer park, 1862 (WRO)

He was immensely popular with his tenants, as well as within the county and at court. In 1894 the Duke of York stayed at Croome as part of a visit to Worcester and in 1898 he returned for a second visit. Croome became an important social meeting place for the aristocracy, a place of grand parties and lavish entertainment. The Prince of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of York, Prince and Princess Christian of Schleswig Holstein, the Duke of Teck, the Comte de Paris and the Duc d'Orleans were amongst the 9th Earl's friends and regular visitors to Croome. There is little doubt that both house and grounds were well-maintained during this period.

However the interior decoration changed markedly during this time, not structurally, but the cool classicism was replaced by Victorian themes with darker colours, a wealth of new, eclectic furnishings, and homely personal clutter, pets, dirty boots and piles of agricultural journals. Much more significant was the sale of the tapestries and tapestry-covered chairs in 1902 to raise funds to pay for the bankruptcy of his eldest son, Lord Deerhurst, something that is still felt to be a shameful and deeply distressing episode in the family history.

The house had always been relatively comfortable to live in, due to its manageable scale and proportions. However, by the end of the 19th century, improvements in country house technology meant that Croome Court was becoming seriously outdated. Although the 9th Earl made some changes to improve the heating and even installed his own gas supply in the 1880s, there was no electricity until 1928, and the house functioned much as it had done in the 18th century.

The small changes that he did make to the Court's interiors were really only to improve domestic comfort, such as adding the inner 'porch' to the north entrance doors to exclude draughts and make the Entrance Hall a more comfortable 'living-hall', and reducing the openings of some of the ground floor and many of the first-floor fireplaces to improve their draw and in order to burn coal, adding decorative Victorian tiles in the process. It is possible that the fireplace was installed in the Entrance Hall at this time, with its ill-fitting chimneypiece and Victorian grate.



The Entrance Hall in 1874. Note the Adam scroll bench in front of the fireplace and the Adam lantern. (*Illustrated London News*)

A new sideboard beside the chimneypiece in the Dining Room was another Victorian addition, put in to improve efficiency in view of the distance to the kitchen in the Red Wing. The room was also painted dark green and became known as the Green Dining Room. There were other changes to the decorative schemes elsewhere in the house, but the sale of the tapestries and tapestry-covered seat covers in 1902 represented the most significant loss to the integrity and importance of the interiors.

There were also alterations to the service accommodation. New estate offices were built at High Green c.1865-70, together with additional estate cottages and a post office. The land agent's former office in the west wing of the basement that was also used as a smoking room by the family, was adapted as a male retreat by the 9th Earl's sons (B27). Elsewhere in the basement, the former still room (B17) was probably sub-divided and became used as an additional servants' hall, perhaps for the use of more senior members of the household and due also to the increase in the numbers of staff. The strong room adjacent to the butler's pantry (B14) was fitted out with new pine shelving and cupboards, grained to appear like mahogany, and a boarded floor was laid above the limestone flags. The rooms along the north range may also have been converted to accommodate different uses too, such as a Drying Room and an inside W.C. for the female staff.

Apart from these cosmetic changes, the Court escaped wholesale Victorianisation. As a result, the house that survived into the mid-20th century was largely that of the 6th Earl's vision.

The 1930 inventory¹⁰⁶, taken upon the death of the 9th Earl, is really the only full and complete record of the contents of the Court at any point throughout its long history¹⁰⁷. It is a valuable and detailed snapshot of the appearance of the interiors. However, it is important to remember that, as well as the 6th Earl's important and significant collections, albeit depleted as they had been by his son, the 'Blind' 7th Earl, it includes items from the Coventrys' London House in Piccadilly (which was relinquished in the mid-19th century), as well as the 9th Earl's eclectic Victorian clutter. Thus the 6th Earl's heirloom pieces were crowded in by lots of other items and, as recorded in the 1930 inventory, were by no means necessarily in their original 18th century positions.

"...during the second half of the 19th century any hint of formality gave way to a heap of homely clutter. The house became crammed full with furniture transferred there from Coventry House and Snitterfield, a new collection of paintings to replace those sold in 1810, and endless trophies, souvenirs and other paraphernalia linked with the family's favourite sports and pastimes...In Lord Coventry's study, Canalettos, Gainsboroughs and Hogarths jostled for space among the boot-pulls, seed catalogues, farm account books, cigar boxes and fruit manuals, and in one corner lay the crumpled remnants of the Lord Keeper's robes".¹⁰⁸

When the 9th Earl died in 1930, his grandson, now 10th Earl, deemed the house to be uninhabitable. The sewage discharged into the lake, the water supply and drainage were primitive, the kitchens and bathrooms were ill-equipped and no longer could he rely on a

¹⁰⁶ The 1930 inventory is in the Croome Estate Archive and amounts to some 375 pages.

¹⁰⁷ The other important inventory was taken in 1719 on the death of Gilbert, 4th Earl, and is held in the Cornwall Record Office (because the inventory and other papers were removed by Anne, daughter of Gilbert 4th Earl of Coventry, when she married Sir William Carew of Antony in Cornwall). However, the spaces it lists relate to the earlier house on the site.

¹⁰⁸ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, pp.175-6. N.B. Jill Tovey feels that very little could have come from Snitterfield (family house in Warwickshire that served as a dower house) in the 19th century as it had probably all gone in the early 18th century. However, it is possible that after the reconciliation of the 6th Earl and the Dowager Countess Anne Somerset (d.1763) some items returned to Croome. She may have been struggling financially but was proud and shrewd and may have wanted to re-establish her family ties with Croome.

vast and costly team of staff to make up for such shortcomings. He embarked on a major scheme of modernisation during the next few years, (see also section on Technical, Mechanical & Electrical Heritage) but sadly never lived long enough to reap the benefit of this investment as he was killed in action in 1940.

The main works in the house are listed as follows (unfortunately the accompanying plan which identifies the rooms is missing from the archive). Additionally, some rooms were re-decorated, most notably the Green Dining Room, which was painted a lighter mid-green colour.

Attic (Second Floor)

New Tank Room-SE pavilion	Old tanks removed, new partitions created
Bedroom No.2	Remove W.C.
Bedroom No.8	New opening from corridor. Form passage through bed recess. Form linen store. Remove W.C.s
Bedrooms Nos. 5 & 6	Two new bathrooms

First Floor

No.13	New partition to match panelling
No.14	New bathroom
No.10	New W.C.
New access from Bedroom No.2 to Bedroom No.3	

Basement

New Larder next to Kitchen No.8	
<i>[It is probable that the new larder was created from the former muniment room (B28), as the muniments had been removed to High Green by this time].</i>	
Kitchen No.8	New opening to Scullery No 9 and put in new range.
<i>[Possibly this was a new kitchen created within the former agent's office and smoking room (B27) which retained this use when the building became a school].</i>	
Scullery No.9	Remove old range and chimneypiece and tile with white tiles.
Butler's Pantry No 26	Remove length of drawer fully between bed enclosures and cupboard at right hand end and associated panelling.
New Servants Hall	Remove fittings
Bathroom No.23	Remove old stone sink etc
Large old Beer store No 19	Remove fittings
Old Tank Room No.19	Ditto
Large old Beer [cellar] No.19	Ditto
New Lavatory No.20	Remove old brick bins, new doorway [ref: to vaulted ceiling]
Basement lobby	Build up under window recesses.
No.22 remove wine bins.	New door to fit groined ceiling. Increase height of ceiling into old cellar.
Maid's Lavatory No.12	Next drying room. Remove fittings.
Drying Room No 13	Remove fittings. Fit coat rails.
Servants' Hall	Remove fittings, sink, cupboards and range. Fit new grate and chimneypiece.

[This probably refers to the Servants' Hall in the Red Wing]

There is some doubt as to the location of all these rooms, but some interesting facts emerge from this list, in particular, the reference to bed enclosures and panelling in the butler's pantry. There were also changes to the adjacent outbuildings. The laundry wing that ran across Laundry Green became a game larder for the big shooting parties held at Croome, with an adjacent butchery, and the laundry was moved into the former dairy and part of the stable block. The former beef larder and gun room were converted into an adjacent Ironing Room. Finally, it is possible that the house steward moved into the west wing to vacate the space in the Red Wing required for an additional kitchen. However the accommodation provided for the butler and the house steward in the west wing and the Red Wing needs further clarification.

The Croome Estate Trust and the 20th century

It is important to understand the 20th century history of Croome Court within the context of the Croome Estate Trust, which has ensured a continuous, if sometimes fragile, thread of Coventry family continuity and which has made possible the seemingly impossible re-unification of the Court with its landscape and its enjoyment and access by the general public.



A garden party outside the south of the Court in August 1909.
Note the figure on the extreme left: the 9th Earl? (CET)

It was the 9th Earl who took steps to protect the estate: a Trust was first set up in 1887 by the 9th Earl of Coventry, in order to safeguard the inheritance of his nine children and

their progeny. This Trust covered Croome Court and its surroundings, making the Earl tenant for life; it also included the substantial collection of Coventry heirlooms.

In 1921 the whole of the rest of the Croome Estate, amounting to over 15,000 acres, was put into trust to be administered by the Croome Estate Trustees.

The 9th Earl died in 1930 aged 92 and his grandson, the 10th Earl, was killed at Dunkirk in 1940. Because, after the war, great country houses were no longer viable as private residences, and the 11th Earl was only 14 years old, the Croome Trustees had no option but to put the house on the market in 1948, to save it from destruction, and it was eventually bought by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. At this difficult period, the Croome Estate Trust was obliged to manage the effects of the radical financial and social upheaval of the first half of the 20th century. These effectively dismantled aristocratic elitism and the ancestral home as instruments for the exercise of power and influence. The work of the Croome Estate Trust is what filled the void and ensured the preservation of Croome into the 21st century, when so many other historic properties were being totally destroyed.

In 1981 the central 8,000 acres of the Estate were sold to Sun Alliance & London Assurance Co Ltd and the Croome Estate Trust continued to run the remaining 7,000 acres. Then, in 1996, Sun Alliance sold the 670 acres of historic Parkland surrounding Croome Court to the National Trust, with sister company Royal Sun Alliance donating £300,000 towards its restoration; at the same time the rest of their portion of the Croome Estate was sold to a private charitable organisation. In 2009 the outer eye-catchers, i.e. Dunstall Castle, Pirton Castle and Panorama Tower, were legally gifted by their owner to the National Trust, together with some surrounding land. The rest of the Estate remains in private ownership.

The main line of male descent from the 9th Earl died out in early 2004 with the death of the 12th Earl. So when, later in 2004, Croome Court, after going through the hands of various private owners (see below), was once again on the market, the Croome Heritage Charitable Trust was formed by the Croome Estate Trustees in order to buy back the Court and re-unite it with its historic landscape parkland under the stewardship of the National Trust. The purchase and accompanying lease were completed in October 2007. The intention was, and is, that the historic chattels still owned by the Croome Estate Trust should be returned to Croome Court on loan, when the building has been restored.

The Aims & Objectives of the Croome Heritage Trust (CHT), to which they are bound by the Charity Commission, are:

1. *To conserve and preserve the landed estates, the Heritage, Chattels and historical property of the Earls of Coventry, Croome, in perpetuity for the public benefit.*
2. *To educate the public in the historical significance of the Earls of Coventry & Croome and to provide wider educational benefit to young people.*

These combined aims of conservation, access and public benefit correspond with those of the National Trust, “*To promote the permanent preservation...for the benefit of the nation, of land...and buildings...of historic interest or natural beauty*”,¹⁰⁹ making an ideal partnership.

¹⁰⁹ From the National Trust Act of 1907

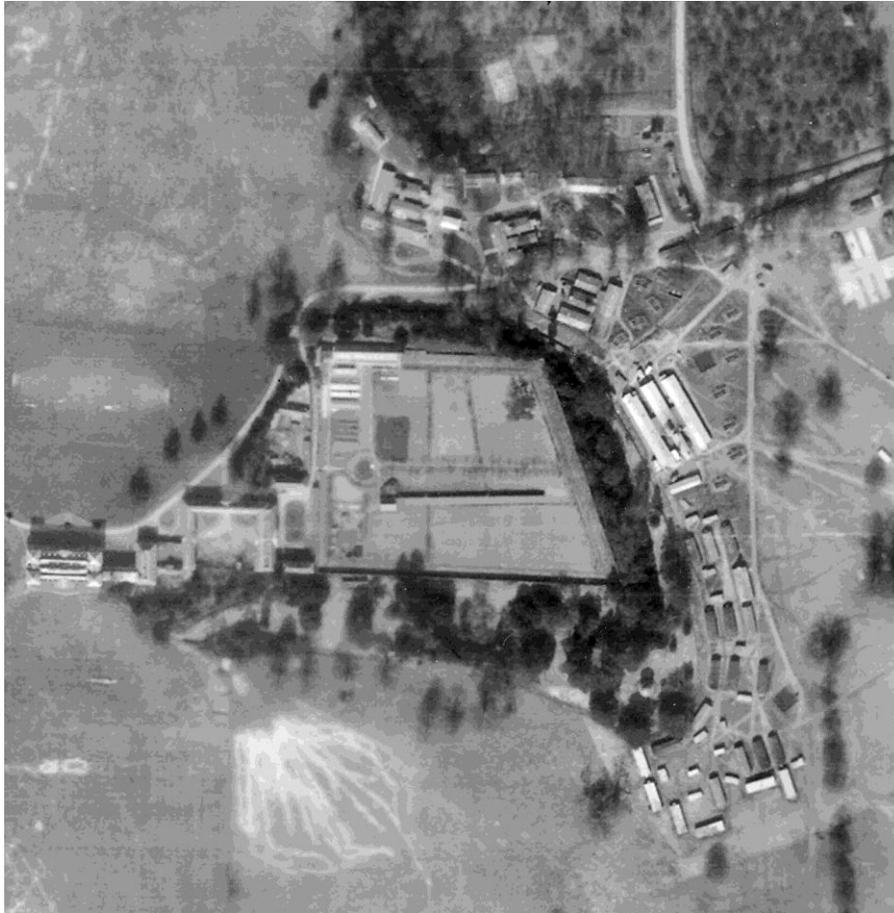
In coming to a legal arrangement for the lease of Croome Court to the National Trust, which in turn led to its opening to the public, the CHT, in essence, gave about £3 million to the nation for no other reason than to re-unite the house with its landscape park and to preserve for future generations the beautiful place that the Coventry family created and looked after for 450 years.

The role of Croome during WWII

In May 1940 the Court was requisitioned by the Government and was made ready to receive the British Royal Family if required, while the stableblock was allocated to the Ministry of Food. The Court's grounds, the surrounding parkland and Defford Common were commandeered by the RAF to house some 2,700 personnel to operate Defford Aerodrome with over 100 aircraft and 3 runways. The area a few hundred yards to the east of the London Arch and to the south of the road towards Pershore, historically part of the Croome Landscape Park, was requisitioned by the authorities, together with Defford Common for aircraft runways. Capability Brown's mature landscaped park may have provided a degree of cover from the prying cameras of Luftwaffe reconnaissance aircraft, for the top secret work of RAF Defford.

By 1941, RAF Defford was complete, serving as a satellite station for Wellington bombers based at nearby Pershore. In 1942 the Telecommunications Research Establishment housed its flying unit at RAF Defford. Croome's landscape became home to the RAF's large radar research establishment and was dotted with huts, hangars and aircraft hard-standing amongst the trees.

A contemporary aerial photograph shows the proximity of the RAF buildings to Croome Court, its domestic offices and the walled garden. The following images show a 1950s aerial view taken by the RAF compared with a recent aerial view:



1950s aerial view showing proximity of 2WW RAF structures to the immediate east of the Walled Garden (NMR)



Aerial view of Croome Court and immediate surroundings in 2001-2

The noise in the skies above the Court must have been incredible, with planes landing and taking off, as part of Croome Park in the mid-20th century played host to ground-breaking innovation in a very different way to that of the English landscape movement in the mid-18th century.

In spite of the extensive wartime building that went on within the Park, the RAF's involvement with the Court itself was very limited and there seems to be no evidence for the RAF taking over any part of the Court or its outbuildings. The Operations Record Book for Defford in the war years mentions a sports day in the grounds of the Court (see images), but there is nothing to suggest the house itself was used by the RAF. Nor does the Defford site plan produced by the Air Ministry include any entries in its accompanying key that would suggest any such use of the Court or its outbuildings.¹¹⁰

The closest RAF buildings to the Court were situated on either side of the drive leading from London Arch entrance, on Communal Site 'B'. These were all of single-storey 'temporary brick' construction and included the Station Commander's Quarters, Officers' and Sergeants' Messes to the north of the drive. The NAAFI lay to the south of the drive (near the north east corner of the Walled Garden), with the Airmen's Dining Room, Cinema and Theatre just east of the Walled Garden and Ha-ha. No sign remains now of any of these buildings, though the roadways to the Officers' and Sergeants' Messes survived until a couple of years ago. To the south of the airmen's dining room, theatre and cinema (the large building with three wings in the aerial photograph) was No.5 Site, which comprised accommodation huts - all that remains there is one concrete fence post.



RAF tug-of-war on the north lawn below the Church.
Note the Officer's Mess just visible top right. (NT)

¹¹⁰ I am grateful to Mr. Dennis J. Williams, Vice-Chairman & Archivist of the Defford Airfield Heritage Group and member of the Friends of Croome, for this information and the RAF aerial photograph (National Monument Record).

The Officers' Mess on the brow of the hill, looking down on the north face of the Court, was the last building used by the RAF at Croome. The Commanding Officer's House was also located here. An evocative memory of this time relates how, as the officers ate their breakfasts in the Officers' Mess, "*the two youngsters from the Big House used to ride past daily on their horses, waving to us through the Mess windows as they went past. They were a teenage girl (Lady Joan) and a younger boy (either then the young Earl, or to become so a bit later). I was told that they regularly rode along the track from their house past the Mess windows at breakfast-time. An unusual thing to happen at an RAF station [and] it all added to the rather unusual air of informality on the Air Force site*".¹¹¹ The buildings were demolished after RAF Defford closed in 1957, but the footings and access roads remain in the grass area between the London Arch and the Drive and the Church.

Although the airfield closed in 1957, when radar test flying operations were moved to Pershore, the mess remained open until 1960, by which time the mess at Pershore had been refurbished¹¹².

Croome's role in developing radar technology, so critical to securing the allied victory, should not be under-estimated. The base, 'RAF Defford', included an Offensive Section, which developed the equipment designed to increase the accuracy and effectiveness of bomber and anti-submarine attacks and navigational aids; a Defensive Section whose task was to improve allied Airborne Interception radar for fighter planes; and the ADC section providing 'target' flights for the RAF research establishment at nearby Malvern.

By the end of WWII there were well over 100 aircraft on station. The RAF continued their use of the site which then became part of the Royal Radar Establishment. In 1957 the base's activities were transferred to nearby Pershore airfield, drawing to an end fifteen years in which Croome, under the guise of RAF Defford, had played a foremost role in the development of British airborne radar.

Many traces of this significant period in Croome's history are apparent today, including the country's last remaining wartime RAF Sick-Quarters, or Isolation Hospital, in situ (now used as Croome's Visitor Facilities and Reception).

¹¹¹ I am grateful to Mr. Dennis J. Williams for supplying these written memories of the late Les Sidwell.

¹¹² Ditto.



RAF sports day on the lawn to the south of the Court (NT)

The role of Croome Court during WWII

It is intriguing to think about the degree to which Worcestershire was destined to become a seat of power in the event of government and the Royal Family being forced to evacuate London during WWII. Croome Court was referred to as one of five possible refuges for the King and his family in the event of an invasion: communications with Buckingham Palace exploring the possibilities of Croome Court being used as a refuge for the British Royal Family began in August 1939. Plans were drawn up allotting various rooms to various people, including the King, Queen and the King's Equerry, but unfortunately only the accompanying text survives.¹¹³ Not only this, but the Dutch government and Dutch Royal family were interested in Croome as a refuge too.

The British Government in the shape of the Ministry of Works took the requisitioned tenancy of Croome Court on 1st May 1940. At that time, the 10th Earl was in France and the Countess was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS)¹¹⁴. From August 1940 until August 1941 the Dutch government were sub-tenants with a Mr. Henry E. Rey acting as Manager. Various improvements were put in hand, such as the installation of a dishwasher and a fridge and there was much concern about setting up of a fire-fighting squad.¹¹⁵ In May 1941 Mr. Rey asked Mr. Latter, the Croome Estate Trust's Steward, to leave, much to the latter's dismay. The general sense from the archive correspondence is that the relationship between the CET and Mr. Rey was not an easy one. However, three months later, on 6th September 1941, Mr. Latter returned to Croome, presumably because the Dutch tenancy was at an end and Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands

¹¹³ These documents are now in Worcestershire Record Office.

¹¹⁴ Interestingly, and rather poignantly, in this same year Croome also featured prominently in a Country Life article by Dorothy Stroud on Brown's architectural talent. Her 1950 book on Capability Brown was to revive the appreciation of his work in post-war Britain and inspired desire for the restoration of the peace that they symbolised.

¹¹⁵ A list of men to be trained as fire-fighters was prepared but "*they will not accept service unless they can be protected against getting wet, which means oilcoats and rubber boots*". Letter to Mr Rey, Acting Manager at Croome Court, 25th October 1940. The equipment had arrived by January 1941. (CET archive)

had not taken up residency. The whole episode was, of course, top secret and there has been much speculation as to whether the Dutch Royal Family really did or did not live at Croome Court. It appears that, apart from a brief reconnaissance visit, they did not, and so the tenancy was handed back to the British.

From the archive correspondence it is not clear what precise use the Court was put to after the Dutch left in 1941¹¹⁶, although it was certainly in the hands of the Ministry of Works. It is unclear whether RAF Defford Officers used the Court at all: no specific reference has been found to an Officer's Mess in the archive file for the war period¹¹⁷. However, annual inspections were carried out by Hoare & Lea throughout this time and, in May 1942, they commented that the whole place was damp and had deteriorated since the last inspection "*because the main part of the house had been unoccupied for so long*". The heating was only being run once a week (possibly due to fuel shortages). They wrote to the Ministry to say that this was their responsibility. In August 1942 the Ministry allowed the groom to have an apartment in the eastern wing top floor. None of this of course precludes the possibility of the Officers using the rest of the house and apparently the Countess (wife of 10th Earl) was removing items of furniture at various times, that she claimed to be hers (but belonged to the Croome Trust) – perhaps she was afraid of their being damaged? Certainly in November 1945 the Ministry paid £200 compensation to the Trustees for damage to the Chinese wallpaper in (9th) Lady Coventry's bedroom (F3). In 1944 the Office of Works suggested that the Women's Land Army be billeted in the Red Wing, but the Croome Estate Trustees did not agree to this.

During this period, a rental agreement, which started on 1 May 1940, confirms that the Ministry was allowed occupancy of the mansion with the exception of the smoke and strong rooms, and part of the outbuildings and grounds. This may suggest that they had a specific use for the house in mind and were planning to use much of the building with the family permitted to store valuables in the basement. These excluded rooms remained in the private use of the family and, when they moved back into the house in 1945, the 10th Earl's daughters, Anne and Joan, had flats on the first floor.

By 1946 the Court and outbuildings had been handed back to the Croome Trustees, although the stableblock remained in the possession of the Ministry of Food for a few more years. However, in the same year, Sotheby's were instructed to sell the library furniture and it was evident that the future of the house was in question. A letter of 7th November 1946 implied that the Trustees were considering offering part of the building to the County Council and, in February 1946, the agent and managing trustee was looking into the sale of Croome Court as a private residence.

1948

By 1948, circumstances had conspired to bring about the end of Croome as an entity and the end of an era in social history. In 1940 the 10th Earl had died a tragic and heroic death on active service at Dunkirk with the Worcestershire Regiment (as a Private) during the retreat to Dunkirk. His wife was left a widow with 4 teenage children and the 11th Earl was only 14 years old. The Croome Estate Trust, on behalf of the Coventry

¹¹⁶ C.f. CET archive documents dating from 1938-1945 including correspondence from Col. Smith (Agent) to Worcester County Council.

¹¹⁷ I am grateful to Jill Tovey, Croome Archivist, for investigating this.

family, was forced to sell the house and the majority of its contents and the family moved into a smaller house at nearby Earls Croome Court.



The 10th Earl of Coventry and his family outside the Library, mid-1930s.
Note the iron bars to the basement windows. (CET)

These were difficult times and a purchaser did not step forwards immediately, but eventually Croome and many of its contents were sold to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham. From 1950-1979, the house was used as St. Joseph's Convent School for boys with learning difficulties, the Junior department of Besford Court School, Worcestershire. The best, or heirloom, objects and furniture were kept, but a lot of the contents were sold off. A few more fixed pieces of furniture, (such as the pier tables and pier glasses in the Long Gallery) and pictures (in the Saloon) stayed in the house and remained the property of the vendors. The most remarkable casualty was that the whole architectural shell of the Tapestry Room was gutted, crated and sold to the Metropolitan Museum in New York via the dealer Wildenstein's in Paris, who were keen to have it in order to combine it with the important tapestries themselves, which were already at the Met. This wholesale stripping out of an entire historic interior, part of the trade in transatlantic 'salvage' where many historic English interiors were bought up by rich American collectors, may seem an act of vandalism. But it is important to realise that, until the eleventh hour, when the Catholic Archdiocese stepped in with a firm offer, the Court was to be sold to the Home Office, to be used as an 'Approved School' (Young Offenders Institution). Faced with this future for Croome, the Trustees decided to sell it to save it, because, as a type of Borstal, it might have become wrecked anyway.

Important items from Croome's collections were included in the following sales at Sotheby's London in 1948:

- **11th June - Oriental Rugs & Carpets**
- **25th June – Highly Important French & English Furniture and Fine Continental Porcelain** (This was a major sale of Croome's important furniture, including 6 of Adam's scroll-ended benches from the Long Gallery, George III mahogany chairs, settees, sideboards, Adam gilt furniture and

mirrors, Regency mahogany, rosewood and painted furniture, two English parquetry and ormolu-mounted serpentine commodes by Adam/John Cobb – one from the Tapestry Room and now in the Metropolitan Museum – a Louis XVI *secrétaire à abbattant*, a Louis XVI mahogany & tulipwood parquetry commode signed R.V.L.C.,M.E.¹¹⁸, and an important marquetry *secrétaire à abbattant* signed B.V.R.B.,M.E. also from the Tapestry Room).

- **3^{0th} June – Old Master Drawings & Paintings** (including an English School painting which was possibly a portrait of the 6th Earl & his wife Maria, described in the 1902 Inventory of Heirlooms as by Hogarth)
- **6th July – Chinese Ceramics**
- **9th July – English & Continental Ceramics**
- **22nd October – Chinese Ceramics, Works of Art & Wallpaper** (This describes the Chinese panoramic wallpaper from the Chinese Bedroom (F3), which had become the 9th Countess of Coventry's bedroom).
- **25th October – Valuable printed Books**

The bulk of the less important items and household contents were sold at Croome Court by the local auctioneers Bentley, Hobbs & Mytton **on 7th December 1948**. In terms of Croome's library, once so grandly housed in Adam's bookcases, substantial sales in 1947 and 1948 resulted in the disposal of most of the older books. The grander books were sold at Sotheby's in London in 1947, while the more modest ones (as they may have seemed at the time) were disposed of in the 1948 house sale.

Ownership after 1948

After complex negotiations, the Court was bought by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham and became the junior school of nearby Besford Court School for disadvantaged boys, St Joseph's Special School for Boys, which opened in 1950. From 1979 to 1984, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness took on the Court and continued the regime of benign management. It was only when the Court became the subject of property speculation, after 1986, that the fabric really began to suffer and any repairs that were done were carried out insensitively and inappropriately.

A key figure in the continuity of care for the fabric and integrity of the Court in the earlier parts of its new 20th century role(s) was Albert Edwards. He was the Caretaker and resident Engineer at Croome from 1948 to 1998, responsible for the maintenance of the building. He looked after the Court with great dedication throughout the majority of its 20th century occupancies. He and his family lived in a 'tied house' in the stable-block and his son Leonard grew up there from age 2 to 18.¹¹⁹ Leonard has many clear memories of what life was like at Croome at that time and how he helped his father in and around the Court, from mowing the lawn to the north of the house, to locking up at night, to pumping out sewage.

¹¹⁸ This was the famous *à la grecque* commode by RVLC (Roger de Lacroix) acquired by Lord Coventry from Poirier in 1763, sold in 1948 and illustrated in Francis Watson, *Louis XVI furniture*, London 1960, fig.38, was offered at auction at Christie's NY on 23rd October 1998, Lot 125, where it failed to sell. It was offered again at Christie's NY on 2 November 2000, Lot 264, when it fetched \$644,000. (I am indebted to Dr. Reinier Baarsen, Senior Curator of Furniture at the Rijksmuseum, for this information).

¹¹⁹ I am extremely grateful to Leonard Edwards for sharing his memories of Croome and for access to and permission to reproduce his photographs relating to that period.

1950 - 1979 - The Roman Catholic School

The resolution of the sale of the Court in 1949 to the Birmingham Catholic Archdiocese must have been a welcome relief to the Croome Trustees, especially since other options had been a young offenders' institution or even demolition. Encouragingly, the Archdiocese had made it clear that they wanted the Court to be preserved intact and had no intention of breaking it up and selling off parts to raise funds, and this must have helped sway the Trustees in their favour. However, the Archdiocese was obliged to agree to certain conditions to enable the sale to proceed, including confirmation that the premises was not to be used for another use besides a school or private residence and that the character of the inside and outside was to be preserved as sold for 21 years after the purchase. Furthermore, they were to permit certain fixtures and fittings to remain in situ for this period, including the paintings and pier tables in the Saloon and the plaster statues in the Long Gallery niches.



The Roman Catholic Sisters of Mercy of St Paul on the South Portico steps (*Marie Passey*)

Although the Saloon's decoration was probably not changed and its paintings and fitted furniture remained in situ, many of the other rooms required minor alterations or redecoration to adapt them to their new use. However, the biggest and most remarkable change, due to the uncertainty at that time of the Court's future survival, was the Trustees' sale of the entire architectural interior of the Tapestry Room to the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Part of this deal was to create an exact replica of the room in situ in 1949, which is what we see today.

Several of the ground floor rooms were turned into classrooms (the Dining Room, Library and Billiard Room), Lord Coventry's Dressing Room became an office and the Long Gallery was the refectory, full of regimented rows of neatly-laid trestle tables.



The Dining Room used as a classroom, looking SW (*Leonard Edwards*)



The Long Gallery used as the school's refectory, looking south (*Leonard Edwards*)

The basement was filled with practical functions, and the kitchen and larder fitted with new equipment at the west end in B27 and B28. Food was taken up to the Long Gallery refectory via a dumb waiter, the remains of which are still in situ (in B30 and G11). On the first floor, almost all the rooms became dormitories for the boys and a corridor was partitioned off along the front of the north range to access the dormitories. Lord Coventry's Bedroom (F8) later became an Oratory for the Nuns. Their bedrooms, or 'cells', were on the top floor of the house, along with their common room in the south-east tower (S3). They also used the Red Wing for sleeping, washing and eating.

From 1964 to 1966, the Archdiocese archives record that repairs and repainting works were carried out, a new dormitory was created, and washing facilities were improved. There were also further alterations in May 1971, during which time the linen room was re-fitted, two sink units were provided in the Infirmary and further sanitary ware was provided in the bathrooms. Finally, the dormitories were repainted the following October.¹²⁰

The Red Wing was also heavily used for more dormitories and washing facilities and a lavatory block connected the space between the Red Wing and the stable-block (formerly the Laundry range). The former barn was converted into the main chapel. It is believed that most of the balustrading on the north steps was replaced with cast replicas at this time. Central heating was installed during the 1960s, which caused cracks to appear as the building dried out too quickly.

The school housed up to 150 boys at a time and spanned a 30 year period. Many of the boys who went to Croome Court moved on to Besford Court, the senior school in another local mansion, also run by nuns. The Besford Court school continued until 1996 before the building was developed into private dwellings.

¹²⁰ BSC/H10



Schoolboys outside the north of the Court & the Red Wing (*Leonard Edwards*)

This was also the period (in the 1960s) when the Croome Trustees agreed to sell additional items (the fixtures that remained in situ) to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, including the grisaille above the Long Gallery chimneypiece, and the John Cheere plaster figures, which were bought by the dealer Frank Partridge. Whilst this appears with hindsight to be extremely regrettable, circumstances were very different and there was a different attitude to heritage at the time. The majority of the objects are nevertheless now safely housed in various national and international museums so their fate was ironically far more secure than if they had been left at Croome in the increasingly risky environment of the Court's late 20th century existence.

The school's occupation of Croome is one that is regarded with very mixed emotions. The boys who came to Croome were 10 years old and usually left for Besford at the age of 13. The 'disadvantaged' boys were there for a variety of reasons, some of those being neglect in the family home, learning difficulties, disruptive behaviour or illness, orphaned, or having educational special needs, and for some, it was a very difficult time. There are accounts of boys running away. The Oral History Project has captured some testimonies of former pupils' experiences and memories, although it is a period that is hard to talk about in some cases. For others it seems that it was quite enjoyable, and certainly Croome must have been a memorable place to spend one's early schooldays.

Until recently therefore, this period of Croome's history had mainly been told from the perspective of the nuns. Several of the nuns who had taught at Croome have given oral accounts of their time there. However, in the past three years, since Croome Court has opened to the public, a sensitive and fascinating journey has begun to understand more

of the stories of the ex-pupils themselves and is beginning to build into a body of understanding of this period:¹²¹



Sister Paul and boys on the north steps (Marie Passey)

'From time to time an ex-pupil will re-visit Croome and wish to share his stories with staff and volunteers. Often the ex-pupil will not have re-visited Croome since they were a boy and they have some difficult memories to share. Many of the boys were subjected to physical punishment and discipline which they found to be harsh. Many of them remain angry with the nuns and still do not understand why they were punished as they were. Some of the ex-pupils are very grateful to the help and guidance that the nuns gave them and feel that Croome was a place of sanctuary.

Vincent Conlan was a pupil at Croome between 1964-66. He was sent to Croome by his foster parents who had neglected to notice that he had slowly been going blind due to a brain tumour. He had stopped communicating with adults and saw them only as figures who punished and abused him. Within a few days of being at Croome the nuns recognised that Vincent was losing his sight and admitted him to hospital. Vincent had the brain tumour removed and after a 6 month recovery period was sent back to Croome. Vincent was looking forward to dying when he returned to Croome, he saw no point to living and death was going to be his escape from life as he knew it so far. He was so fragile that when one of the male teachers (nicknamed "Knuckles Nugent" by the boys) rapped him over the head as he was walking past, it rendered Vincent unconscious.

¹²¹ I am grateful to Alice Padley for preparing this account of the boys' recollections.

He was given special care at Croome and the nuns gave him the confidence to learn to talk, see, read and write. As Vincent's sight came back he experienced things he had never seen before; seeing swallows flying on the south lawn of the Court was so beautiful to him that he changed his mind about death.

Vincent is now a regular visitor to Croome and recently brought his two adult daughters to visit. He has never told them of the things he went through as a boy and they remarked to him "What a beautiful house to grow up in Dad, you're so lucky". Vincent himself wrote: "*Don't misunderstand me, bad things did happen at Croome but there were good things too and no-one hears about those times. Croome is the only place where for once, the boys who lived there can say how they felt, good or bad. This is all we ask*".

Vincent has the most amazingly crystal clear memory of his time at Croome. Perhaps this comes from him regaining some of his key senses while he was there. He was able to hear and sense things that an ordinary 10-year-old would not and has retained the knowledge to this day as if he was an adult at the time. He recalled a boy who had been sent to Croome away from his twin brother and parents. This boy had a particularly hard time at Croome and longed to be reunited with his family. After his parents and his twin brother visited him at Croome, the boy begged them to take him home. They left, crying, and after they had gone the boy took his own life hanging himself from one of the trees which still stands in the park.

Patrick Kehoe, an ex-pupil from 1965-1967, has re-visited Croome many times in the past 2 years. Patrick looks back fondly at the time he spent at Croome and thanks the nuns for everything they did for him. He is an incredibly positive, generous and inspiring man. Each time he comes to Croome he worries about the condition it is in, remarking that "the nuns wouldn't be happy about this!" The boys all had assigned jobs in keeping Croome spotless and well-kept. One ex-pupil remembered polishing the floorboards, not with the equipment given to him by the nuns, but (when they had their backs turned) using his own bottom as a buffer. Patrick has donated generously to the Croome Court appeal and has offered the services of himself and his carpenter friend in helping with the task of restoring the Court, as has been so pleased to see the work that the National Trust have done so far. He has written and dedicated memoirs of his time at Croome to the National Trust.

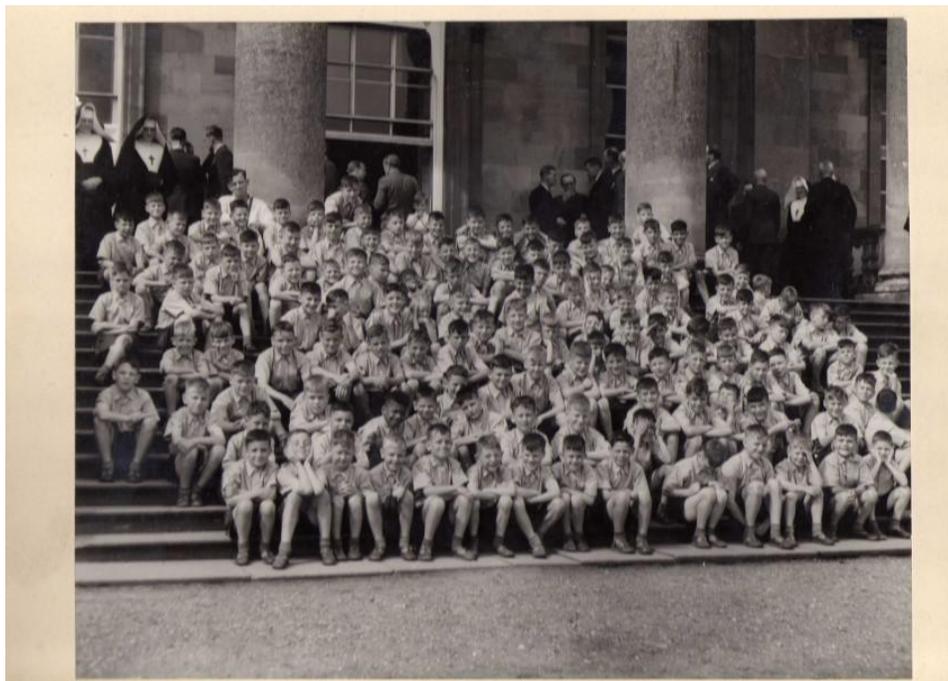
Patrick was the only sibling to be sent away from his family home. He used to struggle sometimes to fit back in with his brothers and sisters at home when he would visit in holiday time. He has chosen in life not to dwell on why he was sent away or why certain things happened to him at Croome but instead he declares that if he could go back in time he wouldn't change anything and was glad he was sent to Croome.

Patrick has been the main driving force behind a reunion for the ex-pupils of Croome Court and Besford Court which was held at Croome in June 2011. Not only has Patrick contacted every ex-pupil on record but also invited nuns and former teachers to the reunion. Some of the ex-pupils who attended the reunion found it a difficult event and were confused and angry at the concept of a reunion of a time which was obviously very difficult for them. However during the course

of the day the ex-pupils themselves found bonds and solace between each other and only one man left without being able to engage with the day or any of the ex-pupils. The day was conducted with sensitivity and care and was about sharing memories and exploring the spaces within the Court rather than a celebration of that era. Patrick has already done a lot of work in organising the next reunion at Croome and is helping to organise Caravan club events at the property as well as offering to help with the set up of the 1940's weekend at Croome.

The impact that Croome has had on many of the ex-pupils was enormous and life-changing. When exploring the Court today many of the ex-pupils are not comfortable going into spaces which they were not allowed to go into as children. They dismiss them, turning around and stating "No, we were never allowed to go in there". Sometime spaces and rooms bring back such powerful memories that the men cannot enter them at all.

Some of the ex-pupils would like their stories and experiences to be shared with our visitors today. For these men, seeing the few photos that we have on display at the Court is like finding gold dust, they scrutinise the small pictures, longing to recognise a familiar face or even themselves. The period that St Joseph's Special School for Boys spanned was thirty years long and the material shown at Croome is minimal. So much more material and knowledge could be researched and displayed for these ex-pupils who return to Croome and for our visitors to learn more about life for the boys who lived at Croome Court between 1948-1978.'

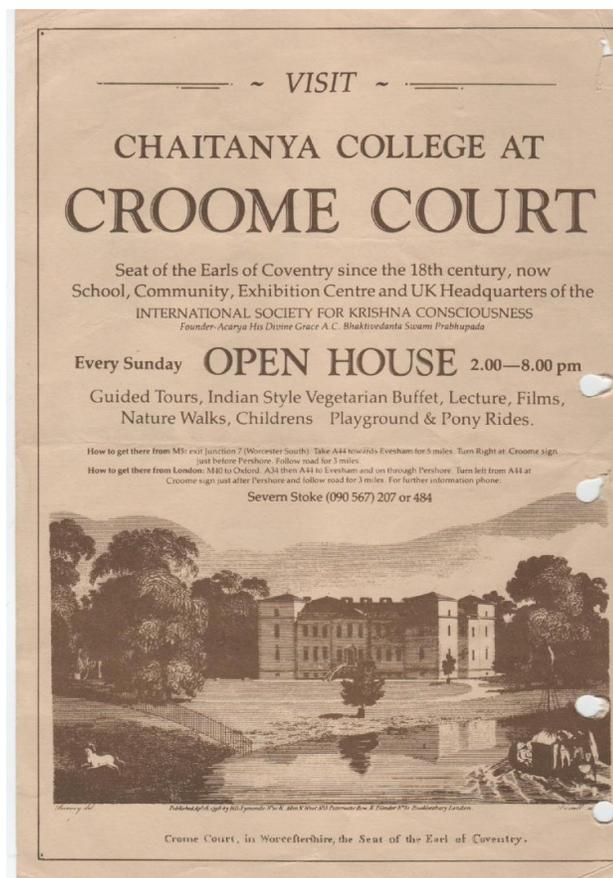


The official opening of St. Joseph's School, Sept 1950,
on the South Portico steps (*Leonard Edwards*)

1980 - 1984 - The Hare Krishnas

In the late 1970s, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) were looking for a larger building than their existing (and surviving) base, Bhaktivedanta Manor, near Watford in Hertfordshire. One of their devotees spotted an advert for Croome in *Country Life* in 1979, comprising the house, chapel, Red Wing, walled garden, stableblock, London Arch, and 40 acres of land at an asking price of £350,000.

The Court was still in the ownership of the Birmingham Catholic Archdiocese and the way that they had set it out as a school perfectly suited the requirements of the Hare Krishnas. A purchase price of £335,000 was negotiated and the Hare Krishnas moved in¹²². Thus, from 1980-1984, Croome Court became Chaitanya College (after the 16th century Hindu saint and precursor of the Krishna movement) and was a worldwide centre of education and training for students in Krishna consciousness.



Hare Krishna flyer for Croome Court (*Leonard Edwards*)

Croome, or Chaitanya College, was many things to the Hare Krishnas: a school for the young children of the devotees, a place to educate people into Krishna Consciousness, a home base for devotees who travelled the country and a quiet retreat. There were up to 400 people living in the house and the Red Wing. The principal offices of ISKCON were housed in the Court. The spectacular ground floor rooms were used for meetings, feasts and for entertaining visitors. The Long Gallery was, as during the boys school, a

¹²² Much of the surrounding parkland was acquired by Sun Alliance.

refectory. In the basement was the kitchen, a small dining room, shop and store rooms. On the top floor were dormitories for the male devotees and students on residential courses. The Red Wing provided living accommodation and bedrooms for the female devotees on the upper floors. It also contained a recording studio and a sewing room where the altar decorations and clothes for the deities were made and repaired. The Catholic school's chapel, housed in the 9th Earl's riding school and former barn in the yard beyond the stableblock, became the Krishnas' temple which became the focus for the daily routine at the Court.

The stableblock housed a mini-laundrette, a printing press (for their literature and holy texts distributed across the world) and classrooms for the children. Upstairs were dormitories and bathrooms for the children who were boarders.



Page from a Hare Krishna publication on Croome Court, or Chaitanya College, 1980, showing a classroom in the stableblock & dining room in the Long Gallery (*Sally Sutton*)

Much of the funding for the Krishnas' work and for renovations and improvements at Croome were paid for by the wider Hindu community in the UK. The Hare Krishnas were keen to show that they respected the house and were trying to improve its general condition. The park was maintained by Strutt & Parker and open to the public throughout the year, and a guidebook was produced for visitors. Both the house and the park were cared for with considerable pride during this period. The Hare Krishnas did a lot of the work themselves but also had a team of four or five maintenance men, recruited from the local area, who were on hand to look after the electricity, the boilers and to do other essential repair work. The chief maintenance man was Albert Edwards who stayed on from the time of the Catholic School and lived in an apartment in the south east corner of the stable block with his wife and two sons. His knowledge of the place and continuity of care throughout most of Croome's various occupancies in the mid- to late 20th century undoubtedly played a large part in Croome's relatively unscathed survival.

According to David Powell, who worked as a decorator at the Court during the Hare Krishna period of occupancy, there was much redecoration work undertaken particularly on the ground and first floors. Many of the sash windows were repainted and re-corded, the floorboards were cleaned and polished, and it also appears that the stone balustrading on the north steps was replaced again with more cast moulds, including the corner piers.

It was on the ground floor of the main house that the Hare Krishnas made the most impact, adding new carpets, murals and decorations. Three rooms (the Drawing Room, Saloon and Tapestry Room) were intended as a museum or exhibition space to explain Krishna consciousness to visitors. They included (in the Tapestry Room) a diorama of the cycle of birth, death and re-birth. This work was still on-going when Croome was sold in 1984. The only obvious surviving physical legacy of the Hare Krishnas' occupancy of the Court is their multi-coloured decoration of the 18th century plasterwork in the Dining Room, or Fruit Room as they called it, although it is not as they originally left it. The colour scheme was 'quietened down' by the last owner-occupier.



The Hare Krishnas decorative scheme in the Dining Room (*Leonard Edwards*)



The current decorative scheme in the Dining Room, with the Hare Krishna scheme 'quietened down'. (NTPL)

By 1982, ISKCON was facing a shortage of manpower, there were splits in the movement and the sheer cost of maintaining Croome, felt by all of its owners, was felt by the Hare Krishnas too. In June 1984 Croome Court was sold, ISKCON returned to Bhaktivedanta Manor near Watford and arguably the most exotic period in the history of Croome Court came to an end.

1984-2007 – The property developers

For some twenty-three years, Croome was subjected to the various speculative money-making schemes of four different property developers. From the mid 1980s the rapid change in ownership resulted in a series of different and unsustainable uses that caused the building to deteriorate. A succession of planning applications were made for change of use in order to convert the Court into a country house hotel, a restaurant, a night club and the Park into a golf course (for list of planning applications affecting the Court since 1980 see Appendix 5: Historical & Archaeological Survey, Appendix VI)



Newspaper articles on successive sales of Croome Court during the 1980s (Leonard Edwards)

In 1984 the Trustees gave the library bookcases to the V & A as a gift to the nation, as they were once more concerned about the house's future use. Again, with hindsight, this was a fortuitous move. Initially it was intended to convert the Court into a Youth Training Centre, but in 1986 permission was granted for conversion to a conference centre and restaurant. A reception desk was installed across the east wall of the Entrance Hall and the Drawing Room was used as a bar; the bar which survives today in the Drawing Room formerly ran along the entire north side of the room.

In 1993 the house was put up for sale again for conversion to a country house hotel and for housing. In 1996, the National Trust acquired 270 hectares of the park and embarked upon a major ten-year programme of landscape restoration. However this also marked the start of the unfortunate period when Croome ceased to exist as an entity. The house was separated from the Park and marooned at the centre of it. In 1998 the house was sold on to another property developer and conversion work on the stable block and former barn were completed and they were sold off as private dwellings.

This last property developer lived with his family in the Court as his private residence and used and adapted the spaces accordingly: the Long Gallery was used as his children's playroom, whilst the Billiard Room was reputedly used as a space for dismantling his motorbike engine. He painted out or 'quietened down' the brighter elements of the Hare Krishna scheme in the Dining Room, and installed what were then 'space-age' dark green kitchen units in Robert Adam's Library. On the first and second floors, several bedrooms were converted into new bathrooms, many with centrally-positioned baths. His 1990s taste is expressed in broad striped wallpaper lining the alcove bedroom (F14) and adjoining bathroom (F15) on the north front, complete with a huge central bath, twin washbasins set in a built-in vanity unit spanning the entire south wall with marble top and mirrors above.



F15 showing the last property developer's decorative scheme with central bath (*Author*)

The historic alcove arrangement was modified and modern built-in wardrobes inserted with much use of thin hardboard to line the walls. The bedroom (F14) currently retains its

1990s 'medieval-jousting-tent' bed canopy in black and tan striped fabric to match the wallpaper. Along the first floor corridor, a small closet that was once the lady's maid's entrance to Lady Coventry's Washing Room and very possibly the location where the back stair rose in the 1640s house, was converted to a steam room and shower (F19a&b). Piecemeal repairs were undertaken to the roof, and a new central heating system was (insensitively) installed, as was a new (inadequate) sewage system. Meanwhile, the redundant Red Wing, also in his ownership and with planning permission for conversion into six apartments, lapsed into a state of decay.

Interestingly, the physical legacies from this latter period of the Court's occupancy are proving a stimulating source of debate amongst visitors, volunteers and staff alike, as to their relative significance in the overall scheme of things and as provocative illustrations of one person's late 20th century taste imposed on a series of mid-18th century interiors. Although they rank lower in physical terms of design, integrity and quality of craftsmanship than Croome's 18th century fabric, they nevertheless have a philosophical significance in that they provide everyone, whatever their degree of prior knowledge, with a starting point for discussion and debate about the meaning and value of heritage and how we view and regard history in general and historic country houses in particular.

Like it or hate it, the property developer layer is now part of Croome's history, the last developer ironically using the Court as it was originally intended, as a place of residence. Thus, from family home, to school, to religious community, to country club, to hotel and conference centre and back to a private residence, Croome has many layers and has undergone several re-incarnations. Despite, or sometimes because of, these diverse alternative uses in the 20th century, some of them less dignified, sensitive and respectful than others, Croome has managed to survive, and has done so with remarkable serenity and integrity.

Current condition

Superficially, and from a distance, Croome Court's condition could be mistaken for being remarkably satisfactory. However, the moment one starts to look closely, the cracks, gaps and tell-tale signs of lack of care and bodged repair over the last few decades are obvious. More worrying are the clues that are precursors to major structural failure due to rot and water ingress.

An extensive condition survey of Croome Court was carried out in 2008.¹²³ The extracts below summarize the condition of the various elements of the building:

General condition

"Despite some rather unsympathetic repairs and modifications in the recent past the Court is generally in good condition. The elimination of internal valley gutters has removed one of the major potential sources of damage from which the building has greatly benefited. Although there is evidence of significant historic settlement in the interior of the house there does not appear to have been any recent movement. The condition of some concealed structures however is of concern and requires further investigation. Externally there are minor inherent problems particularly related to built-in ironwork and some evidence of recent,

¹²³ See Appendix 14, *Condition Report 2008, Croome Court, Rotunda & The London Arch*, John Goom

possibly active structural movement, particularly to the west. Roofs and rainwater disposal are functioning but are not of the highest quality”.

Structural stability

“There is clear evidence of quite significant settlement of the internal structure. This is particularly noticeable along the second floor corridor where the northern wall has dropped quite considerably... All the corner turrets show signs of movement cracks albeit minor. Open joints externally and distorted decorations internally around the bay window on the west elevation are of more concern... For the most part the internal floors are sturdy but there are significant distortions in the floors particularly on the ground floor at the east end”.

External Walls

“The ashlar stonework all around the Court is in relatively good condition. There are however isolated areas where rusting iron cramps have caused damage... For the most part, pointing is in good condition apart from where this is disturbed by movement and in exposed areas such as high level. There is evidence of previous damage to stonework often related to possible leaking rainwater goods...”

Chimneys

“The chimneys were in very poor condition in the 1990s but are now in much better condition. The standard of work undertaken at that time however is poor. All the stacks have stone cappings but in poor condition... Quite a number of flues have been blocked by simply laying concrete slabs over without any fixing...”

Roof coverings

“...Quite extensive work has taken place on the roofs but, as with the chimneys, not of the highest standards... the sloping roofs are covered with Westmorland slates which are in reasonably good condition. However, quite a number have cracked or slipped... The flat roofed area is covered in bituminous felt which has been renewed within the last 10 years. This is generally in good condition but when laid it appears that the old lead flashings were reused. In quite a number of places these are in small sections and poorly fixed. Where they are exposed on the south slope they have become displaced and there are signs of internal leaking. In addition flashings against abutments and chimneys have been relatively poorly made and in a number of specific places these have now failed...”

Rainwater disposal systems

“The entire roof drains to lead lined parapet gutters which have outlets via pipes through the parapet walls without any overflow pipes. These are inevitably prone to blocking... There are some signs of previous repairs and buckling of leadwork... There have clearly been regular problems of blockage of the rainwater pipes. In some areas the lead pipes have been replaced with cast iron and other materials. On the west wall however some pipes have been replaced in fibrous material which has very badly distorted... It is quite possible that leaks of rainwater pipes have saturated the walls and caused decay to both stonework and internal timberwork”.

Doors and windows

“Although quite a number of the windows and doors may be original 18th century, a significant proportion have been replaced or at the very least badly repaired during the 20th century. All the windows require extensive overhaul and some of the cruder 20th century work should be removed... A major concern however is the leakage occurring around the windows, particularly around the south elevation. Windows at second floor level are particularly poor and in some cases it may be necessary for these to be reconstructed.... Leakage around W69 at first floor level at F8C was quite extensive: here water was seen to be running out from behind the 17th century panelling...”

External Steps

“The two flights of steps up to the main entrance on the north are quite extensively disrupted and relaying of much of the paving will be necessary to ensure safety for the public. Of rather greater concern however is the condition of balustrading. This was originally in coade stone but metal reinforcement has now begun to rust and quite a number of balusters are damaged and the balustrade itself is becoming insecure...The stairs on the south elevation are also much disrupted and general relaying will be necessary if the public are allowed access.”

Interior

“The majority of the interior on the ground and first floor has been relatively recently redecorated. The corner pavilions and central corridor on the second floor has also been recently redecorated. This will inevitably mask any cracking and could conceal other problems....Windows throughout the property are in relatively poor condition...In general however, apart from the areas noted in the sections below, the floor structures and finishes appear to be in relatively good condition”.

The Basement

“The basement appears to be structurally sound but there is extensive evidence of damp penetration... this damp penetration has led to some timber decay and deterioration of the plasterwork....The floor structures of particularly the eastern turret rooms are suspect”

The Ground Floor

“... A number of stone slabs, particularly in G1 and G3, are either unevenly bedded, cracked or very badly worn...Timber floors are generally good but in G4, G5 and G6 there are significant signs of settlement and/or distortion...The ceilings have not been investigated at close quarters but through binoculars appear to be in good condition. It should be noted however that extensive cracking was noted in 1998. There are no records of strengthening work and their condition must be suspect.

In the hall the four columns support a presumably timber beam. The plasterwork around the central span has cracked. This requires monitoring and non invasive investigation would be beneficial.... Structural movement noted externally in the bay window at the west also shows up with cracks in the plaster internally...In at least one position there is evidence of damp penetration through the walls. This is more than likely connected with leaking rainwater goods. In view of the poor

condition of rainwater goods generally it is probable that decay has occurred in other similar locations but may well be concealed by recent decorations... The main staircase has had numerous repairs in the past some of which in very unsympathetic materials. There is however evidence of rusting of the ironwork in the handrails which in at least one position has cracked the stonework”.

First floor

“Damp penetration around the windows is of particular concern in all the south-facing rooms. In Lord Coventry’s bedroom (F8) running water was seen emanating from behind the skirting on the south wall.... There is evidence of structural movement in several of the rooms at the west end.... The landing of the main stair (F1) is finished in stone and supported by an inserted encased beam. There is evidence of movement of the floor slab... Structural movement in the corner of F12 has resulted in cracking of the skirting and fire surround...”

Second floor

“Evidence of leakage both through windows and the roof is noted in many rooms at this level... leaks could easily be occurring which have not yet discoloured the ceilings. In area S16 (at the west end above the window) access is available into the eaves void and beginnings of timber decay were noted... Distortion of floors as a result of old settlement has been noted”.

Roof spaces

“...There are several old heating pipes in the roof space which have a fibrous insulation. It is highly likely that this is asbestos based... Leaks are noted at the junction with the central chimney stacks particularly on the south side and in area A4 at the west end....In view of poor roof coverings noted previously leakages are likely.... The main roof structure appears to be mostly pre-18th century and in remarkably good condition. It was not possible to check the bearings of the structure which are the most vulnerable position but nothing suggests any major failings. The timber inspection undertaken by Ridout Associates in 1998 noted fungal decay at the abutment with some chimney stacks and separate damage elsewhere but no extensive failings.

Services

Electrics - “Several areas of the electrical installation appear to be very old particularly switchgear in the basement....certain circuits have been isolated because they were potentially dangerous”.

Water Supply and Plumbing – “The main water supply needs to be identified. It is presumed that some fittings are direct feed but any fed via the water tanks in the roof spaces (see roof spaces above) needs to be terminated and re-routed”.

Drainage – “There are numerous soil pipes around the building all of which are external and mostly in plastic. These are particularly unsightly and the plastic in some cases is beginning to degrade”.

Heating – “The present low pressure hot water system is presumably fed by the boilers in the basement. Judging by the intense diesel fumes in the basement it is presumed that these are not operating effectively. In some areas heating pipes are incomplete or inappropriate positions...”

Fire detection - "There is a rudimentary fire detection system in the building which has not been checked and it is not clear how it functions".

Further to the 2008 condition survey and its recommendations, some high level works were undertaken in 2010-11, which consisted of essential work to satisfy the Malvern Hills District Council repairs notice, plus emergency works carried out due to water ingress to the ceiling of the canted bay in the Long Gallery and the structural stability of the beam between the columns in the Entrance Hall. The essential works that were undertaken in early 2011 were as follows:

- Repairs to eleven dormer windows (Repairs Notice)
- Repairs to two roof lights (Repairs Notice)
- Repairs to nine sash windows (Repairs Notice)
- Additional External Repairs (slipped slates and patch repairs to lead flashing (Repairs Notice)
- Repairs to rainwater goods & drainage (repairs to hoppers and replacement of cast iron and plastic downpipes with lead)
- Additional Repairs (inspection of stability of modillions and high level masonry, pinning of loose stonework, re-pointing, checking and repairing rainwater sumps and overflow channels) (High Level).

(See Appendix 36 for the specification and schedule of these works).

The condition and stability of the decorative plasterwork to the ceiling and frieze of the Long Gallery bay and the beam in the Entrance Hall were investigated by Cliveden Conservation and condition reports and treatment recommendations were produced (See Appendices 29 & 24). Emergency stabilization of the plasterwork was undertaken in 2011 accordingly.

A Level 2 Asbestos survey was carried out in August 2008 (See Appendix 7). This was a 'Standard sampling, identification and assessment survey', and involved collecting and analysing representative samples from any suspected Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) and recording the type, condition, quantity and location of these materials throughout the building. This type of survey is essentially intrusive without being destructive. Further to this, an asbestos Refurbishment and Demolition survey was carried out in February 2011 (see Appendix 8). This is defined as a "destructive pre-refurbishment survey where every reasonable attempt is made to access all areas of the building with the aim of identifying, locating and recording all material containing or suspected to contain asbestos".

The north entrance steps, balustrade and flagstones were extensively repaired in 2011 using Bath stone and Forest of Dean stone, as per original, replacing the failed and inappropriate cast stone which had been used in two earlier 20th century campaigns.

Structural investigations and repair work was carried out in 2010 -11 to several chimney flues and stacks, including the Entrance Hall (G1), Dining Room (G2) and Butler's Pantry (B13). These three flues were lined so that the fireplaces can be used and indeed the Entrance Hall fireplace has been successfully in use since 2011.

History & evolution of each interior space:

N.B. This section sets out, to the best of our understanding *to date*, the historical evolution, appearance and contents of the interior spaces within Croome Court. It has been drawn together from documents in Croome's archive, the various primary and secondary sources listed in the Bibliography (Section 7) and initial physical investigations. It also draws heavily on Catherine Gordon's Historical & Archaeological Survey (Appendix 5). There is still much research and analysis to be carried out in order to answer the many tantalising questions that have presented themselves and to fill the gaps in our knowledge. However, as explained in Gaps & Limitations (Section 1, p.27), these processes are something that we are determined to share with our visitors as part of the process of re-servicing and stabilising Croome's fabric, in order to deepen their relationship with the building through a participative, shared journey of discovery and understanding.

(Refer to the Gazetteer – Appendix 1 - for a quick architectural and historical reference to each space and summary of significance and notable features).

GROUND FLOOR, OR PIANO NOBILE

This is Croome Court's principal floor, where the most significant rooms are located and where a grand circuit of rooms of state can be traced. The interior has been described as "*distinguished for the nobility of its conception and the quality of its craftsmanship in wood, plasterwork and stone. The rooms are large and handsome, but their decoration, though rich, is not overly profuse*".¹²⁴ The robust Rococo exuberance of Brown schemes with plasterwork by Vassalli is injected with Adam's more sophisticated Neo-classical references to the Antique. There is also a curious juxtaposition of not only these two styles but also retrospective re-creations of the early 18th century interior. Examined carefully, the architectural detail reveals the complex and contradictory nature of the 6th Earl's personality: sophisticated trend-setter and nostalgic spend-thrift.

The Court's currently unfurnished state has enabled fresh insight into the historic processes of re-modelling and redecoration. The splendour of the 6th Earl's original conception still lingers in the attention to detail, not least in the Long Gallery with its magnificent ceiling and chimneypiece and its views across the park.

The floors are all boarded apart from the limestone flags in the hall and passageways and some have been sanded and also varnished an inappropriate colour. The windows all have double-hung sashes, some of which are replacements, and all retain their original panelled shutters but most of the original box cornices have now gone. A few of the fireplaces were adapted in the 19th century to burn coal and have inserted Victorian tiled grates, but most have maintained their original marble hearths.

(For a summary of the key features of each of the ground floor spaces, refer to the Gazetteer, Appendix 1).

¹²⁴ Tim Knox, Former NT Architectural Historian, July 2004

G1 The Hall

*“The Entrance Hall, with its Rococo plasterwork and screen of columns, is an intentionally austere room that needs little furniture, apart from the set of crested hall chairs that are presently in the Estate Office. It communicates with the Saloon, forming a grand enfilade through the middle of the house”.*¹²⁵ In the mid-18th century, the hall was a much larger space within the north range of the 1640s house with its grand staircase at the upper (or west) end.¹²⁶ It was large enough to accommodate an enormous equestrian oil painting of ‘Jack-A-Dandy, or “The Great Horse’, painted to commemorate a horse-racing wager in the late 17th century and described in the 1719 inventory as hanging in the ‘Hall & Passage’.¹²⁷

This large Hall was swept away in the mid-18th century re-modelling and a new west wall built to create a relatively small symmetrical rectangular hall that occupied the three central bays of the north front, including part of the in-filled area between the north wings of the earlier house. Investigations into the chimney flues within this wall support the view that it is of this date, and that the neighbouring Billiard Room flue predates the Hall flue¹²⁸. What is curious is that there appears to have been no fireplace in the Hall in the mid-18th century: none is shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus*. However, closer inspection of the east wall could make a plausible case for there having been a fireplace on that elevation, especially when one considers the bulky and unsupported masonry on the floor above between F15 and F16.¹²⁹

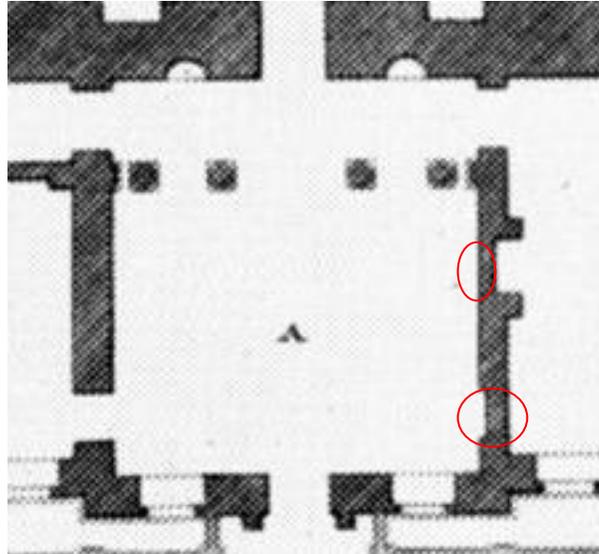
¹²⁵ Tim Knox, former NT Architectural Historian, July 2004

¹²⁶ Recent chimney flue investigations (Dec 2011) have shown that it seems probable that the Drawing Room flue (not the right-hand Saloon flue as previously thought) was the one that served this 17th century Hall. This is because not only is it cranked sharply in the direction of the Hall but it also meets a tall straight shaft that looks earlier in date.

¹²⁷ After the 18th century re-modelling which reduced the size of the Hall, the painting hung at the top of the main stair. It left the Court in 1948 and has now returned on loan to Croome and will once again be able to hang at the top of the stairs.

¹²⁸ This is because the Hall flue is smaller, remarkably small for an entrance hall, and it joins the Billiard Room flue at approximately 3m from hearth level. Such an arrangement is fraught with draught problems and some remaining brickwork in the Billiard Room fireplace was an attempt to overcome this.

¹²⁹ Catherine Gordon postulates that the room below the Hall, B3, could have been the former 17th century common hall and could have had a chimneypiece on its east wall, which would make sense in that there would thus have been fireplaces one above each other on the three floors.



Detail from the 1771 *Vitruvius Britannicus* floorplan showing the Entrance Hall with no fireplace on the west wall and no door leading to the Billiard Room.

The existing fireplace was probably added in the late 19th century by the 9th Earl of Coventry, when he appears to have been trying to make the room cosier. It is surprisingly modest in size with a Victorian brick grate, and the painted timber chimneypiece, which is rather feminine (one would expect a more impressive, masculine, stone chimneypiece in an Entrance Hall) appears to be a re-construction. Its Rococo carving, possibly by Linnell, includes a central eagle and oak-leaf trails that repeat the detail found elsewhere in the room and may have related to the original eagle in the ceiling plasterwork, but it lacks conviction in this location. It seems probable that the chimneypiece was re-located here, perhaps from a bedroom in the house.

There was an important reason for the reduction in the size of the 18th century Hall: its smaller size reflected both its reduced status as more of a vestibule than a reception room, intended primarily as a waiting and access area, and furnished with a row of crested chairs for visitors to await either dismissal or entry into the Saloon.¹³⁰ Also, as a comparatively confined space, it served to fuel anticipation and emphasise the drama of entering the adjoining Saloon with its lofty ceiling, south-facing windows and rich decoration.

¹³⁰ The hall chairs are still in the CET collection.



The Entrance Hall, looking south towards the Saloon, 2009 (NTPL)

The central axis through the house was thereby reinforced and, although the north corridor along the spine wall remained, it was accessed off doors at the southern end of the side walls, one to the main staircase and one, via the Billiard Room, to the back stairs. At the northern end of the side walls, there were also facing doors, one into the dining room and a matching, but apparently originally only false, door to the north-west.¹³¹

A screen of four fluted columns was placed along the line of the corridor to frame the grand central doorway into the Saloon; Hobcraft billed for the screen and some of the other joinery in 1758.¹³² Interestingly, he itemises the front doors leading into the Saloon as being in oak (whereas the other pair in this double set are mahogany). This doorway has an elaborate doorcase and is flanked by niches in which previously stood a pair of

¹³¹ See floor plan in *Vitruvius Britannicus* 1771. It is conceivable that the door to the Billiard Room was opened up at the same time that the fireplace was formed in the west wall. Jill Tovey has pointed out that there are worn areas on the stone flooring in front of this door that could have been made by a footman on duty, and it may have taken nearly a century of constant vigilance for such wear to occur.

¹³² F62/15

18th century draped plaster female figures, each holding a covered bowl, one holding a floral wreath, the other a trumpet.¹³³ The walls were enriched with plaster swags and festoons by Vassalli¹³⁴, and all the doorcases have rich mouldings and swelling friezes of oak leaves and acorns made by Lovell in 1758¹³⁵.



The pair of plaster female figures in the Entrance Hall niches on the south wall which were sold in 1960. (CET)

The *original* ceiling plasterwork was particularly fine and ‘richly stuccoed’. A bill from Joseph Rose in 1763 itemises ‘An Eagle Centre of Hall Ceiling’. This was set in an oval panel at the centre of the ceiling and from its claw hung a magnificent lantern designed by Robert Adam¹³⁶. (Thus, both Vassalli and Rose worked on the plasterwork in this room). The appearance of the ceiling was commented on in the 1824 Guide Book’s description of the Hall: “a room of good dimensions, elegantly supported by pillars, and richly ornamented by a stuccoed ceiling. Its general air, like most of the apartments, to which it leads, is that of handsome rather than splendid; formed for use, more than for shew; agreeably to the prevailing taste of our English Noblemen and Gentlemen”.

¹³³ The precise symbolism and supplier of these figures is still to be determined. They were not Vestal Virgins but may have been Muses and were not supplied by John Cheere, who supplied the Long Gallery figures. They were sold on 24th January 1984 at Aldridge’s in Bath (Lot 492).
¹³⁴ F62/18

¹³⁵ F62/19. This bill is for “*over the doors: one large and 4 small*”, so it implies that there was a door to the Billiard Room, although it could of course have been a false door.

¹³⁶ F62/24



Circa 1960 image showing the eagle at the centre of the Entrance Hall ceiling plasterwork and one of the plaster figures in the niches (*Leonard Edwards*)

The lantern was clearly a key component of the overall design, giving a central focus to the Hall that improved its proportions and added greatly to its overall impact. It was sold to the dealer Partridge in 1960, described as “*A brass electrolier with 6 lamps and large square lantern in ormolu frame*”. The plasterwork eagle survived until c.1984 and it is not yet clear why this central feature was changed.

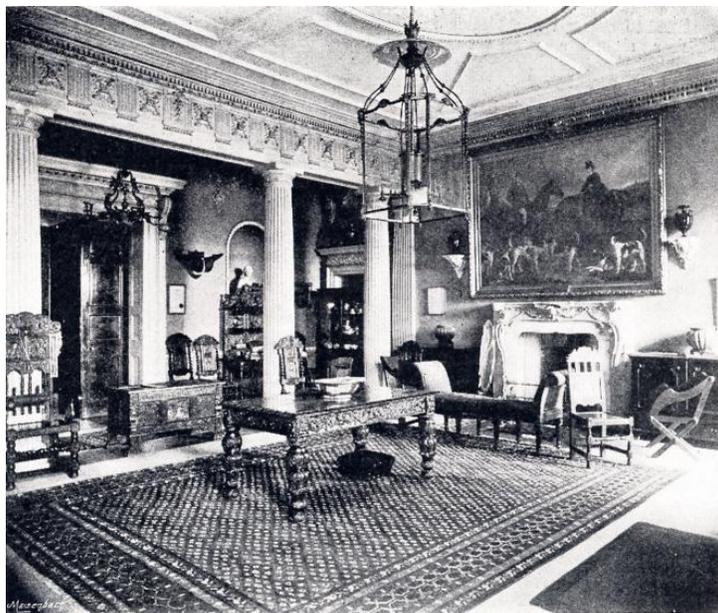


Current image showing the Entrance Hall ceiling space formerly occupied by the eagle, now with a modern chandelier (*Author*)

The 1809 inventory on the death of the 6th Earl lists the following expectedly sparse contents of the room, reflecting its function as a waiting space: “10 Hall Chairs, Pair of Mahogany Sideboards with Marble Slabs, Pair of Marble Urns, Pair of Hall Lamps, Frame Chair with cane seat and a fishing stool”.¹³⁷ The hall chairs with the Coventry crest are still in the collection.

In the late 19th century, the 9th Earl appears to have introduced a few cosmetic changes in order to make the room more of a living-hall and a warmer, less draughty space. It was probably he who opened up the fireplace which awkwardly shares its flue with the Billiard Room, introduced the present incongruous chimneypiece and probably also added the inner ‘porch’ to the north entrance door, which compromises the decorative plasterwork above it. He also filled the room with his eclectic furniture, in contrast to its sparse 18th century contents. The 1930 inventory taken upon his death lists the 6th Earl’s ten hall chairs, the pair of mahogany marble-topped side tables and the two plaster female figures in niches, but also itemises 2 mahogany rug chests, a pair of mahogany dwarf cupboards, a Sheraton display cabinet, 3 oak tables, 2 oak chests, 2 carved oak settles, 9 carved ‘antiquarian’ oak chairs, a revolving bookcase, a mahogany oblong seat, writing materials, a longcase clock, 2 barometer, 2 hearth screens, 6 busts, 2 fox masks, a mahogany wall mirror, 3 rugs, 2 marble tazzas, a tea urn, various ceramics, antlers, buffalo horns, a wild boar’s head, 3 bronze figurines, 4 oil paintings¹³⁸ and 18 framed photographs.

An 1894 image in *The Illustrated London News* shows just how cluttered the Entrance Hall became under the 9th Earl, mingling all kinds of styles and periods of furniture and decorative objects as was his wont.



The Entrance Hall as shown in *The Illustrated London News*, April 7th 1894, from an article on the visit of the Duke York to Croome and Worcester.

¹³⁷ It should be noted that the 1809 inventory is in a small notebook and appears to be incomplete and truncated, focusing largely on the stables and outbuildings.

¹³⁸ These included the double portrait of 9th Lord & Lady Coventry riding to hounds by Sir Frances Grant PRA which hung over the chimneypiece.

During the school's time in the 1950s-70s there used to be a log fire in the winter, a carpet runner lead towards the Saloon, rugs, sofas, easy chairs and a coffee table. Leonard Edwards, whose father was the Caretaker, also remembers the large glass Adam lantern suspended from the ceiling. The two plaster statues were still in the niches; he recalls that one got slightly damaged by the boys passing through.

In the period when the Court was being used as a youth training centre and hotel under Martin Sowbey (late 1980s), there was a large curved counter on the east wall (the marks of its position are still visible on the floor) with large glass cupboards attached to the wall behind.



The Entrance Hall's east wall showing the counter during the late 20th century property developer phase (*Diane Bentley*)

By 2004, a structural report¹³⁹ noted horizontal cracking in the decorative plasterwork towards the bottom of the beams spanning the support columns and recent spalling since the last re-decoration, probably in the 1990s (in pale blue), above the column capitals, indicates continued movement. This issue was investigated by Cliveden Conservation in 2011, who identified a link between the movement in the beam above the column screen and the drop in the floor and movement in the south wall of the room above (F15), all of which requires stabilisation.

In 2010 the flue to the Entrance Hall fireplace was investigated, repaired and re-targeted so that a fire could once again be lit.¹⁴⁰ This process gave great insight into the structural evolution of the Court as a whole, particularly the flues running to the 17th century chimneys in the spine wall, as well as the relation of the Entrance Hall and

¹³⁹ B.J. Pickering, Report on Structural Movement, December 2004

¹⁴⁰ This was carried out by Keith Mitchell of the Volcanic Chimney Company.

Billiard Room flues. It confirmed that the Entrance Hall fireplace was a later addition and that there was no evidence to suggest there was an earlier fireplace in that location.

Key sightlines:

North east	Church
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
North west	Temple Greenhouse

G2 The Dining Room

Along with the Saloon, the Dining Room contains what is probably the finest Rococo plasterwork in the house, executed by Vassalli in 1761. The exuberant stucco decoration comprises cartouches, cornucopias, and baskets of fruit and flowers, with trails of fruit within the wall panels and a deep gilded cornice studded with rosettes, all appropriate motifs for a dining room¹⁴¹.



View of the SW corner of the Dining Room - 2008 (NTPL)

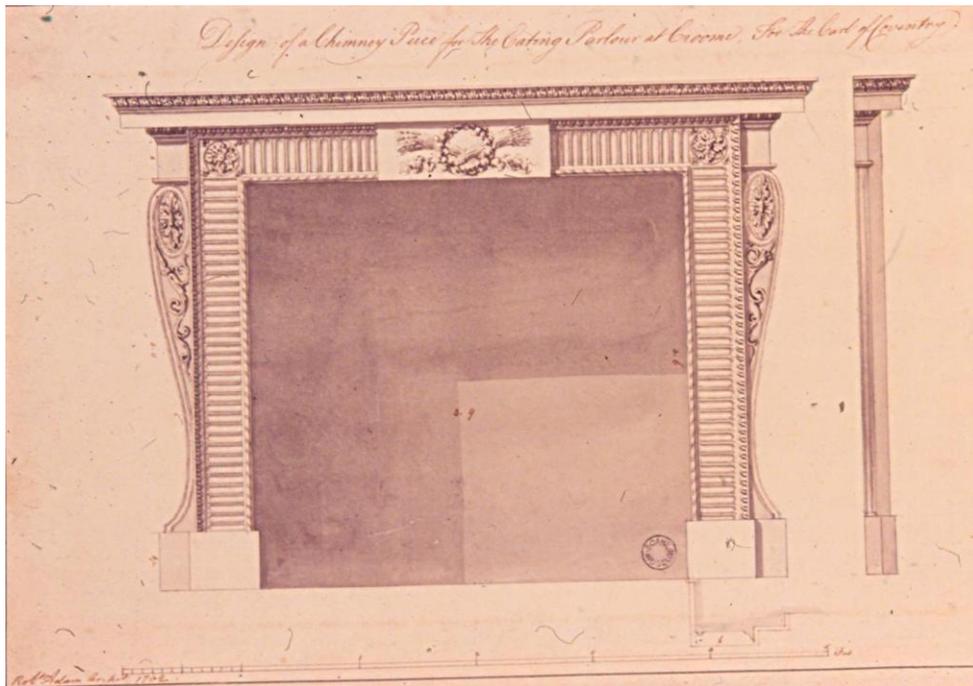
The room leads off the Hall to the east and occupies three bays of the north front created from the rooms that occupied the 17th century north-east wing and the infilled space east of the Hall. The south wall of the room was probably formed c.1751 and runs along the north side of the eastern end of the spine corridor. It includes a 'new' fireplace with a flue that arches over the first-floor corridor and then rises within the spine wall. Four doors lead off the room, one into the hall, one into the passageway to Lord Coventry's Dressing Room, and two flanking the chimneypiece; one of these provided service access from the corridor, and the other opens onto a cupboard fitted with shelves. The 1758 Hobcraft bill¹⁴² for this specifies the shelving as having "holes for ye pots"; possibly these were for chamber pots which gentlemen would have used once the ladies had withdrawn.

¹⁴¹ F62/18

¹⁴² F62/15

The 1771 *Vitruvius Britannicus* shows a discrepancy in the lack of a connecting door to Lord Coventry's Dressing Room; this begs the question of whether this was merely an oversight or whether this door, through the thickness of what was originally the external wall, was put in subsequently. It was probably the former.

Much of the lavish joinery decoration was undertaken around 1758, with Lovell carving the eared architraves and cornices of the doors, the crested and gilded box cornices over the windows, the skirtings and the dado rail, all with a broad floral ogee or acanthus detail. Linnell also worked on a chimneypiece for the room at this time which had a floral frieze and raffle flowers¹⁴³ and there is an Adam design for a chimneypiece for the Eating Room decorated with wheatsheaves at the Soane which may also have been intended for either this room or the Tapestry Room (which was an eating/breakfast room before the arrival of the tapestries in 1771).



Adam's design for a chimneypiece for the 'Eating Parlour', 1762
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

The existing chimneypiece is relatively plain by comparison and has a shell ornament which is repeated in the plasterwork above. This may have been installed in 1824, as a letter of 7th July refers to the delivery of a new chimneypiece and grate that was "carried and put in the Dining Parlour."¹⁴⁴ There is also a contemporary reference in the archive to a leak from Lady Coventry's closet above the room (probably F19b) which caused considerable damage and may have been the cause of this work.

Recent repair work has been carried out to the fireplace,¹⁴⁵ its flue and the top of the chimney in order that a fire can once again be lit in the Dining Room. This involved sweeping, re-pargeting, repairing the lintel of the fireplace, and rebuilding the top two

¹⁴³ F60/8

¹⁴⁴ WRO.CEA: Box 5/F31

¹⁴⁵ This was carried out by Keith Mitchell of the Volcanic Chimney Company in September 2011.

feet of the mid-feather brickwork between the Dining Room and Tapestry Room chimneys.

The Dining 'Parlour' was one of the few rooms in the Court covered by the truncated 1809 inventory taken upon the death of the 6th Earl. It lists: "*One pair of Mahogany Dining Tables, One Pair of Ditto, Large Mahogany Sideboard, Pair of Mahogany Dumb Waiters, Mahogany framed fire screen, Sopha with squab, 2 Cushions and Brown & Yellow Cotton Covers, Mahogany Pembroke Table, Mahogany Bottle tray, Mahogany Stool, 16 Mahogany Chairs with red Morrocco Seats, 3 Festoon Window Curtains, Turkey Floor Carpet, a Bust, 6 Flower Pots with Evergreens, a small Painting of a Horse, Pallet and Pallet Knife, Painters Easel, a Mace belonging to the Billiard Room*".

Subsequent generations continued to use it as a dining room, with the 9th Earl making what was for him a rare decorative change and painting it green so that it became known as the Green Dining Room. (There is also evidence on the floor to the left of the chimneypiece of something having been fitted against the wall: perhaps a small cupboard added in the late 19th century/early 20th century). It is interesting to compare the similarities of the 1930 Inventory taken upon his death with that taken on the death of the 6th Earl. It lists similar quantities and descriptions of mahogany furniture and a predominantly crimson scheme, including a red ground Turkey carpet, a set of nine Georgian mahogany dining chairs, a pair of Chippendale mahogany armchairs upholstered in crimson morocco leather (sold in 1948), a mahogany dining table, a bow-front side table, Adam mahogany sideboard, a mahogany reading table, a pair of three-tier dumb waiters, a cheval-frame hearth screen with three telescopic panels in crimson damask, a Georgian mahogany and brass hexagonal wine-cooler, an 4-foot iron hot plate closet enclosed by 2 doors (could this be what was fitted to the left of the chimneypiece as mentioned above?), a Chippendale 'white enamelled frame' chimney glass, a Dutch 18th century leather 6-fold screen (sold in 1948), a pair of 3-light gasoliers fitted for electricity, three carved and white 'enamelled' curtain cornices (probably those by Lovell), three pairs of crimson satin damask curtains, a Georgian Empire mantel clock, an Italian bronze of a bull, a Japanese figure of a rhinoceros, a mahogany 2-fold screen, a pair of Adam dining chairs upholstered in black leather, four butler's tray stands, an oak tray and a brass candlestick fitted for electricity.

Lovell's three carved window architraves were still *in situ* in the middle of the 20th century, when they were described as "*beautiful porticoes over each window*".¹⁴⁶ Two of them survive, but the middle one is missing.

The school used it as a classroom. The cupboard to the right of the fireplace was used for stationery. The door leading to Lord Coventry's Dressing Room was never used because the Reverend Mother had an office in there so that she could see any visitors coming down the drive.

¹⁴⁶ (Booklet '*History of Croome d'Abiotot*' by G. Bill, undated, printed by Ray Sheldon, Bargate St., Brewood; Nicole Thomassin's notes from Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham's archives BSC/H5

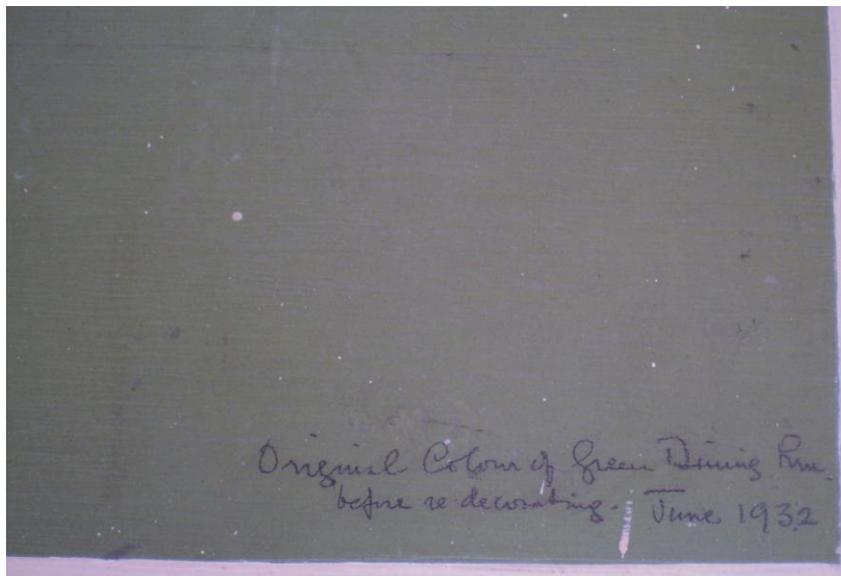


The SW corner of the Dining Room during the school's occupancy (*Leonard Edwards*)



The same corner showing a lesson in progress (*Leonard Edwards*)

The principal discussion point in the room centres on the current decorative scheme and its place within the hierarchy of significance. It has undergone radical change over the last two hundred years or so. A 1763 receipted bill from Charles Aylmer, painter, records the use of 'Dead White' in the 'Dining Parlour', a neutral treatment which would have emphasised the play of light and shadow created by the relief of the plasterwork. In 1767, a further bill from Aylmer details '*enriched cornice modillions in the Dining Room*'. The 9th Earl had the room painted green in the 19th century, and the 1930 Inventory taken upon his death lists it as The Green Dining Room. Its appearance is recorded in a friend's memoirs: "*the lovely dining room with its exquisite garlands and flowers on pale green walls*".¹⁴⁷ The 10th Earl controversially re-decorated the room in 1932, but only in a slightly different green. A panel showing the pre-1932 green colour survives in the Croome Estate Office archive. It is inscribed "*Original colour of Green Dining Room before re-decorating, June 1932*".



Panel in Croome Estate archive showing the green paint used in the Dining Room pre-1932 (Author)

During the school's occupancy, the whole of the walls, including the mouldings, remained a uniform pale green. A photograph taken in 1960 (albeit in black and white) shows how the monochromatic treatment of the plasterwork is very effective in allowing the detail and relief of the decoration to speak for itself. Although paint analysis has not yet been undertaken,¹⁴⁸ it would appear that the room was historically treated in a monochromatic way, whether in dead white or pale green, with no or little picking-out of the raised elements.

¹⁴⁷ *Seventy Years Young, Memories of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingall*, 1937, p. 340

¹⁴⁸ A small area of paint 'windows' were opened up to the left of the chimneypiece by Annabelle Monaghan in October 2010 as a taster of the various layers of paint in the room (see Appendix 23).



Dining Room plasterwork detail, 1960 (WRO)

This changed dramatically with the occupancy of the Hare Krishnas in 1979. They liked vibrant colours and wanted to use this room as their show-case reception room; it was where they received important guests. A team of them painstakingly decorated the room.¹⁴⁹ *“They were trying to make the place their own, not to its detriment but with sincerity and respect. They had thought a lot about it. It was part of a grander plan to decorate the whole house which never came to fruition”*.¹⁵⁰ David Powell was a painter and decorator who worked for the Hare Krishnas at the Court and was involved in this scheme. He remembers painting the fruit from life: *“The peaches had a real blush to them and the grapes looked as though you could pick them off the walls.”* Mrs Edwards, wife of the caretaker Albert Edwards who had lived at Croome since 1950, felt that the Hare Krishnas decorative scheme was a shock. *“Look what they’ve done to the green room!”* was her reaction¹⁵¹.

There has been a suggestion that the Hare Krishnas had a large brightly-coloured carpet¹⁵² in the room to complement the colours on the walls, although the only carpet shown in contemporary photographs is what has been described as a ‘bruised salmon’ colour.

¹⁴⁹ It was Kamsa Hanta and another French Hare Krishna devotee who conceived the scheme.

¹⁵⁰ Roma Kirke, Design Champion Wychavon District Council, conversation 21st May 2010.

¹⁵¹ Sound recording & walk-round with Leonard Edwards (son of the Caretaker Albert Edwards) who grew up in the Court, May-June 2009

¹⁵² Enquiries as to this carpet have so far proved inconclusive.



The Dining Room in 1986. By this time, the Hare Krishnas had left and the Court was owned by Martin Sowbey, but their decorative scheme was still in place. (*Julian Salter*)



Detail of the polychrome scheme introduced by the Hare Krishnas but since modified, 2008 (NTPL)

However, it is important to understand that the scheme that survives today is not as the Hare Krishnas created it. It has since been partially over-painted and 'quietened-down' by the last property developer who owned the Court. Comparison of photographs taken during the Hare Krishnas' occupation and the current appearance of the room shows this quite clearly and the initial investigations into the layers of paint confirm it. The most obvious changes are that the vibrant peppermint green on the walls outside the filleted panels and the perimeter of the ceiling have been changed to a soft pink and/or blue and the bright pink of the dado is now much paler.



Comparison of the Hare Krishna decorative scheme in 1993, left (© Crown copyright NMR), with the present 'quietened-down' scheme, right (NTPL).



Investigating the paint layers in the Dining Room,
October 2010 (Author)

Reactions to the present decorative scheme are many and varied: some people regard it as a travesty of the finest Rococo plasterwork in the house, others find it refreshing, amusing and fun. One very valid observation has been: *“Fascinating as the Hare Krishna psychadelic colour scheme might be on an initial encounter, it does no favours to the attractive and historic 1761 plasterwork by Vassalli which should eventually be restored to its 18th century state. This not only also provides an important contrast to the Adam plasterwork but represents an essential part of Coventry’s earlier taste.”* On the other hand, the same person conceded that the *“scheme documents the history of the room ...and is very successful in its own terms.”*

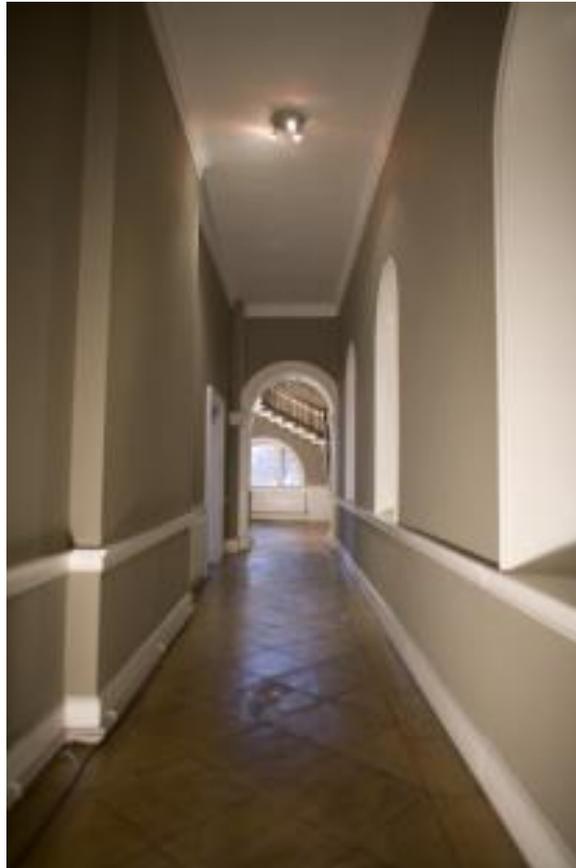
As ever with this kind of debate, there is no absolute right or wrong. It is part of the history of the Court and the story of its changing use in the 20th century and thus has a vailidity, even if it may rank lower in the ‘traditional’ hierarchy of significances. *What is important and valuable is that it triggers debate.* It stimulates discussion amongst visitors, volunteers and the ‘experts’ themselves, about the possible future presentation of this room and gets people thinking about the relative values and meanings of this and other historic interiors, their past, present and future significances. It becomes even more fascinating to debate whether the ‘lost’ Hare Krishna scheme should actually be re-instated, as what we are left with is a paler version of it. Any ultimate decision can only be made once there is a fuller understanding of the evolution of all the decorative schemes in the room. It is also worth pointing out that, unlike some of the Court’s other 20th century interventions, this has not caused any irreversible damage to the historic fabric and was carried out with sensitivity and respect.

Key sightlines:

North east	Church
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)

G3 The Ground Floor Corridor

The south wall of this corridor running from east to west through the house is part of the important structural spine wall which survives from the 17th century house and which contains so many of the chimney flues. It is like the backbone of the building.



The Ground Floor Corridor looking east, February 2008 (NTPL)

The space is relatively plain in architectural and decorative terms, with few embellishments save a dado rail, a simple cornice and three arched niches the same as those found in the Long Gallery. Vassalli lists plasterwork in 1758 to the ceilings in the '*vestibule and in the passage*' along with architraves, friezes and soffits.¹⁵³ It is not clear whether the reference relates to this corridor or the 'screen passage' in the Entrance Hall. Joseph Rose also itemises "*stucco work to the Nitches & cornice*" in 1764 and whitewashing the '*passage to best stairs*' in 1763.¹⁵⁴ Hobcraft was responsible for the joinery elements in 1759¹⁵⁵ and, later, that relating to the niches, which were inserted into the thickness of the south wall in 1764.¹⁵⁶ The niches possibly contained draped female plaster figures similar to those in the Entrance Hall, although F62/12 refers to a statue of 'Venus and a Forn' [Fawn] that are unaccounted for and might have been by Peter Vannini, and F60/33 refers to 12 busts that were located on the main staircase.

¹⁵³ F62/18

¹⁵⁴ F62/32

¹⁵⁵ F62/15

¹⁵⁶ F62/30

When the door lock with a c. 1840s Bridge-Ward mechanism on the door from the corridor to the Entrance Hall was removed for repair, it was found to have a label attached to it saying 'Red Corridor'.

During the 9th Earl's time, this space was listed in the 1930 Inventory together with the main staircase from ground to first floor. They collectively contained a huge quantity of paintings, prints and photographs, many of equestrian subject matter. Many of the larger paintings must have hung on the staircase walls, but the engravings, caricatures (including 'A View of Deerhurst') and twenty-two photographs would probably have hung in the corridor, protected from light and more modest in scale. Also listed are miscellaneous items perhaps relating to the access to the Dining Room and the fact that this, along with the base of the main stairs, would have been a space to keep things handy: a mahogany 2-flap dining table, a card table, an inlaid rectangular table, a rug chest, a copper coal scuttle, a wicker log basket, two fire extinguishers, three brass gongs, three glazed cases of taxidermy and a set of 4-tread deal steps. Lighting was provided by an electric hall lantern, an electric pendant and shade and electric wall lights. The floor had a '*drugget carpet on felt foundation*'. The most curious item listed is a Georgian mahogany pedometer.

Notwithstanding the niches with plaster figures, the corridor would probably originally have been intended as a practical circulation space rather than a 'show' space. There are no historic images recording its appearance, although Leonard Edwards remembers 'Greek' statues in the three niches during the school's time. The ceiling is currently obscured by a suspended ceiling containing modern lighting.

G4 Lord Coventry's Dressing Room

This modest room is within the 'new' east end tower added by Brown around 1751, but work was still going on in 1757, as evidenced by a bill from Hobcraft for cornices and friezes and a 1764 bill¹⁵⁷ for the carving of the urn and swags of the timber chimneypiece by Sefferin Alken: "*a antique pot & festoons of drapery, 2 ornaments at ends in brakes, 6ft 9ins of cornice 4 members enriched, 13 ft of ovolo round the marble enriched*".¹⁵⁸ The 1915 *Country Life* article notes this "*mantelpiece in wood with well-carved swags*".



The chimneypiece in Lord Coventry's Dressing Room, with the addition of Victorian tiles, 1915 (*Country Life*)

It is a smaller, architecturally less exciting space than the other rooms on this floor, because it had a more personal, private function for the 6th Earl of Coventry. This is reflected in the inventory description of the contents recorded on his death in 1809, which describes a study-cum-dressing room: "*Ink stand, Mahogany Writing Table, 2 large Mahogany Wardrobes with drawers, Mahogany Chest of Drawers, small Mahogany Writing Table, Mahogany Cabinet, a Telescope on a brass Pillar stand and mahogany box, small Weighing Machine with Inlaid Mahogany frame, small inlaid Caddie, Mahogany Pot Cupboard, Night Chair and Pan, Mahogany Wash hand Stand, Finger Glass Tumbler and flesh [?] brush, Mahogany Pillar Reading Stand, Pair of stools Leather Seats, Piece of floor cloth, Mahogany framed Couch covered with leather and 2*

¹⁵⁷ F62/35

¹⁵⁸ F62/35

cushions, 3 Portraits framed, 18 Prints framed and Glazed, Barometer framed and Glazed, Polished fender & hearth brush”.



Central detail of urn carved by Sefferin Alken on mantelpiece in Lord Coventry's Dressing Room (*Malcolm James*)

The room's name and his use of it may have been an out-dated throwback to the earlier formal convention of such rooms on the ground floor of a house¹⁵⁹ and yet another case of the 6th Earl hanging onto tradition. It seems possible that it was more of a study/male equivalent boudoir where he may have entertained his friends or done business with important people. It was also convenient for withdrawing from the Dining Room, connecting with the latter via the almost secret, slanting passage to the right of the chimneypiece, concealed by the jib door and passing through the thickness of the original external wall of the house. This passage is not shown on the 1771 *Vitruvius Britannicus* plan and it is not clear whether this just an omission (there are others elsewhere) or whether the passage was cut through at a later date. It may have been put in around the late 18th century for convenience in the same way that the 6th Earl had a connecting door punched through the half landing on the main staircase to provide access to his apartment in the Red Wing. Indeed, it is interesting how the eastern end of the house became more important to him later in life as a private and more compact space.

Certainly it was nearer and cosier than the basement for smoking and drinking (it is possible that B27 was used in this way in the 18th century, as it was in the 19th century) when the occasion demanded. The contents of the room as described in 1809 would certainly support this view and it was clearly used by the 9th Earl as a Study and it is most likely he would have maintained its former use. From a practical point of view, it was perfectly placed to see everything that went on, i.e. the London drive and all visitors'

¹⁵⁹ If so, this may fit with the suggestion by some that the Library, across the corridor, may originally have been conceived as Lord Coventry's bedroom, another out-dated convention on the ground floor, for the same short space of time that the Long Gallery was initially intended as the library. The symbolism of the pair of coo-ing turtle doves, or love-birds, on the chimneypiece in the Library might also suggest a bedroom. Perhaps, however, given the rather comfortable contents as described in the 1809 inventory, it was just a convenient, private space for him to use on the ground floor.

arrivals at Croome, all the comings & goings from the stables and who was entering or leaving the Red Wing.



Lord Coventry's Dressing Room showing the jib door
in the NW corner, 2008 (Malcolm James)

The 1902 Inventory of Heirlooms refers to a Red Room, which is probably this room, deduced from the order of the spaces listed. The contents included: "*Small full length portrait of George William 6th Earl of Coventry & his wife Maria in the grounds of Croome Court; the Earl is in blue laced coat & white waistcoat & short wig & points with the left hand; Lady Coventry is in a white satin dress & small hat & the right elbow is resting on a pedestal; small dog at their feet. The mansion & trees in the background. Abt 48 x 40. Hogarth*". This painting then appears in Sotheby's catalogue of Important Old Master Drawings & Fine Paintings on 30th June 1948 (lot 17), one of 22 lots being sold by the Trustees of the Croome estates and the Countess of Coventry, described merely as "*English School - A Gentleman, in a blue coat and white waistcoat, with his wife, in a white satin dress, standing on a bank, before a mansion, 38 1/2 in x 49in*". Its current whereabouts are not known but, if it could be traced, it would show us the appearance of the Court just before (or indeed at the beginning of) the mid-18th century re-modelling.

The 1930 Inventory refers to this room as a Study, and typical of the 9th Earl, it was crammed full of furniture, pictures and objects: six tables, a Sheraton dressing table, chests of drawers, bookcases, cabinets, a Louis XV commode, a settee, several chairs, a window seat, stools, nineteen oil paintings, (including the 'School of Hogarth' portrait of 6th Earl & Countess of Coventry, one of the Lord Keeper Coventry and one of a Hereford bull and cow), rugs, a folding screen, a folding invalid chair and a self-propelling invalid wheelchair, various ceramics and vases, a telescope, a tree pruner, a pair of ox horns, and so on. Several of these items are annotated as being sold in 1948, either at Sotheby's or at Croome.

Both the school and the Hare Krishnas used the room as an office.

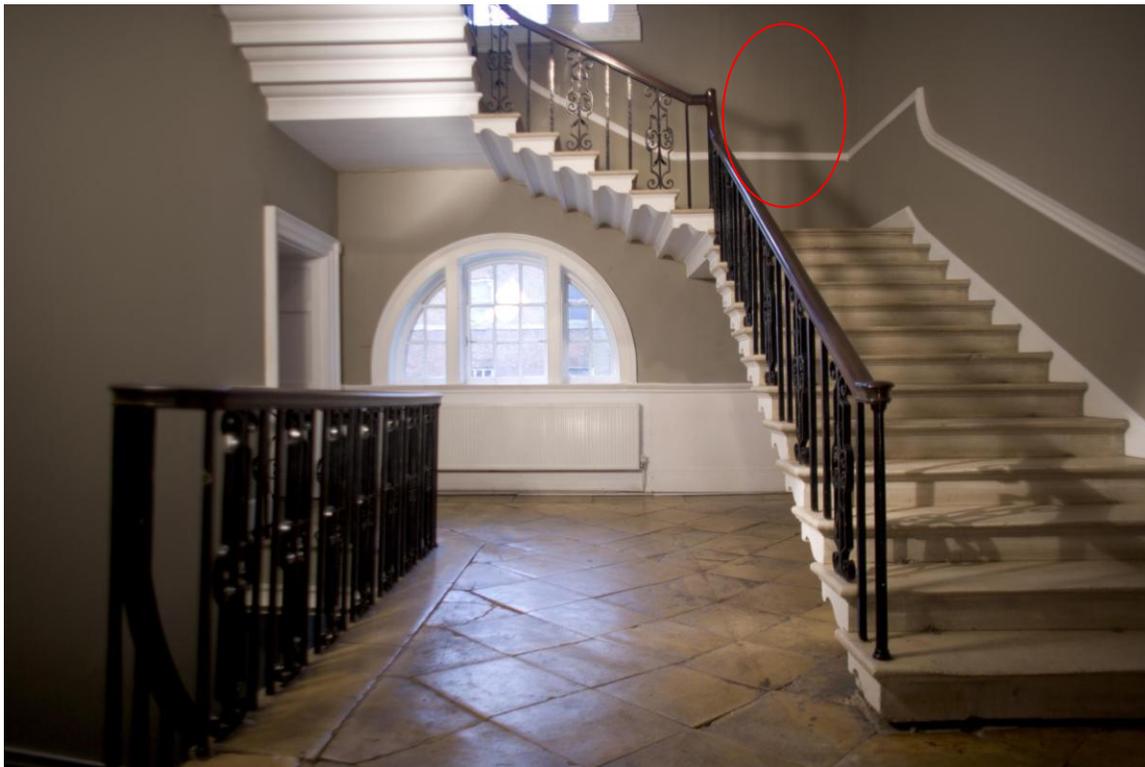
Key sightlines:

North east East	Church London Drive, Red Wing & Stableblock
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G5/F1/S1 The Main Staircase

Of the two staircases in the Court, the main staircase was built last, set within the east wing and lit somewhat uncomfortably by the offset Diocletian and Venetian windows on the ground and first floors respectively. These Palladian features normally encouraged symmetry in a building. However, given the fact that the Red Wing abutted the Court on its SE corner, this opportunity for symmetry was compromised. There seems to have been some physical link between the Red Wing service areas and the main house before Brown's re-modelling, which he then had to incorporate into the new east extension. In any event, the view from the main stairs across the domestic offices, service yards and stables cannot have been the preferred choice, but the options were limited as the Court was being modified and had to take certain constraints into account, rather than being designed from scratch. Constraints can sometimes lead to clever, creative solutions, but in this instance, one feels that the impact of the main staircase is flawed, both internally and externally, as a result. (See footnote in section on Design & Layout of the Palladian house on p.106).

It seems, therefore, never to have been conceived as a principal feature of the house, but it is nevertheless an elegant structure built of cantilevered stone with a wrought iron balustrade and mahogany handrail. The associated plaster decoration is minimal, the wall space reserved for innumerable family portraits which would have warmed the cold north-east light that filters through the windows.



The Main Staircase at ground floor level showing the off-set Diocletian window and the blocked door on the half-landing communicating with the 6th Earl's 'retirement' apartment in the Red Wing (NTPL)

It was probably not in use till 1758, when Hobcraft made the handrail, dado and risers to the wooden landings and invoiced £49 14s 6 1/2d for work on 'the best staircase' in 1759.¹⁶⁰ Vassalli billed for the plasterwork and stucco decoration in 1761¹⁶¹ and Joseph Rose finally whitewashed the ceiling two years later and did the '*stopping for painters and plasterers*'.¹⁶² For some reason, it had to be re-roofed in 1783, possibly because it was leaking. Robert Newman billed for '*Alterations of the Staircase between the Towers, taking off the roof and cutting out the walls for letting in the timbers of the new roof*'.¹⁶³

The Newman bill also includes '*altering the staircase and making a connection to the Red wing from it*'. On the half-landing between the ground floor and the first floor of this staircase is the ghost of a blocked-up door. This leads directly into the Red Wing, which abuts the Court on this, the East side. The door provided access to the 6th Earl's apartment in his later life, again reinforcing the importance of the east end of the Court for his privacy and in his 'retirement'. He probably wanted something more convenient, close to his Library and Dressing Room on the ground floor of the Court, and which meant he was more self-contained in his later years. This link door is not shown on the 1771 *Vitruvius* plan. We know that Adam provided a plan of an apartment in 1781, we know he was making drawings of the cornice, and it was in 1781 that the jib door was put in, but frustratingly, these drawings are either lost or unidentified so we cannot say for certain that the Adam's proposed apartment was located in the Red Wing. All we have are Adam's bills for this work.¹⁶⁴

What we *do* have is James Wyatt's 1799 drawing of alterations to the apartment (when the 6th Earl was 77). It comprised a Sitting Room with a recess, Light Closet, Bedchamber, Dressing Room, Passage and Water Closet. Wyatt's drawing is signed and inscribed '*N.B. these Rooms to be made as high as they conveniently can*'.

The door on the half landing of the stairs was still in operation in 1968, as it was itemised on a fire precaution floorplan as requiring a "*new self-closing overhead door spring to be fitted to existing door*".¹⁶⁵ The door survives behind the boarding-up and can be seen on the Red Wing side.

¹⁶⁰ F62/15

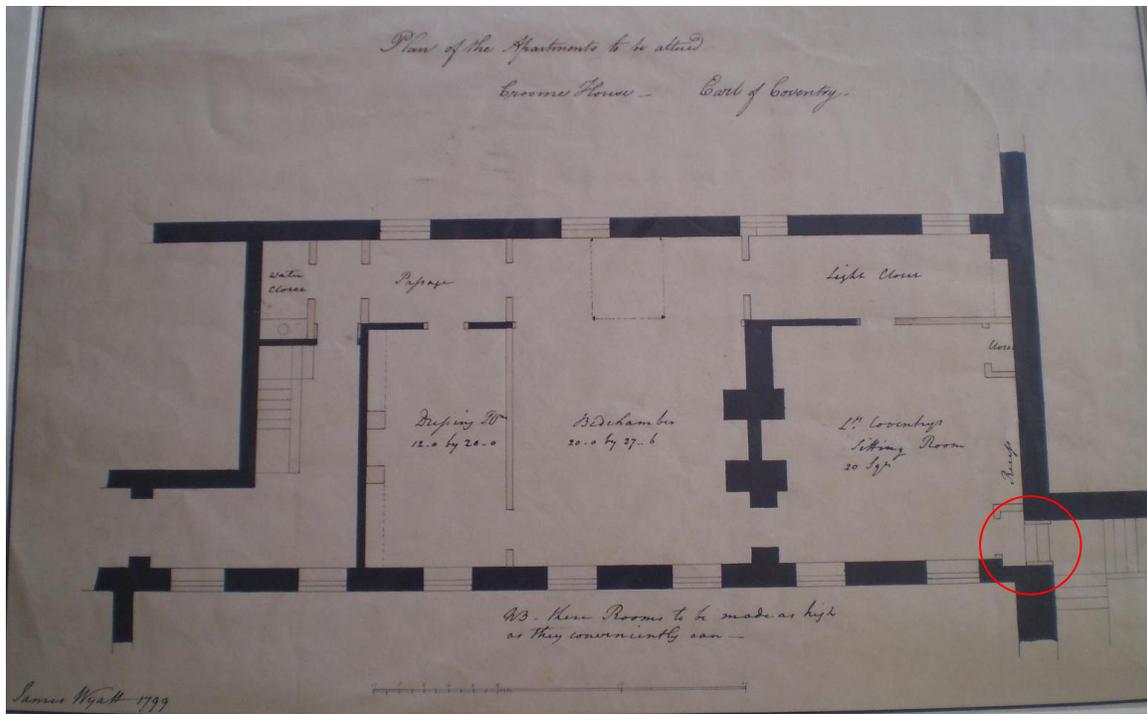
¹⁶¹ F62/18

¹⁶² F62/32

¹⁶³ F58/7

¹⁶⁴ F58/7

¹⁶⁵ 1968 fire precaution floorplans, CET



James Wyatt's 1799 drawing for altering the 6th Earl's apartment in the Red Wing, showing the link door from the Court to the Red Wing (CET)



The door connecting to the half-landing on the main stairs seen from the Red Wing side (NT)

The 1902 Inventory of Heirlooms gives the last item on the list of paintings on the main stairs (implying that it was at the top) as “*Large size of a racehorse with a jockey in white satin dress & black stockings, a racecourse & “Westwood”, Seat of Sir J. Packington, in background. Abt 150 x 84, English School. This horse won the celebrated match between Hon H. Coventry & Sir J. Packington, the conditions of which, so runs the legend, were that the loser should endow a charity at Droitwich in the name of the winner*”. This is precisely what happened and resulted in the Coventry Charity, or Almshouses, in Droitwich, which is still in existence today. Before the 18th century re-modelling of the Court, this painting is recorded in the 1719 inventory as hanging in the ‘Hall and Passage’. Once the Hall and passage were reduced in size, the painting hung in the only place that could then accommodate it: the top of the main stairs, as recorded in 1902 and 1930. A note on the 1930 inventory states: “*It was presented to Coventry Hospital Charity 10/6/1948 & re-hung in Coventry Charity Hospital at Droitwich*”.

The painting is so large that a slot in the moulding of the top landing on the Main Stairs had to be cut away to accommodate it. In 2011, the painting returned to the Court on loan from the Coventry Charity and, pending the re-servicing of the Court, will once again hang in its position at the top of these stairs.



Image of top of main stairs showing post-1750s location of The Great Horse painting and indicating where the top-landing moulding was cut away to accommodate it (*Author*)

Also listed in the 1930 Inventory are twenty-three paintings, including two portraits of the Lord Keeper, a Charles Phillips group portrait of the 5th Earl and family, with the 6th Earl as a boy, the 9th Earl and his sister Lady Maria with a piebald pony, all of which are still in the collection, plus a portrait of Emblem, the 9th Earl's prize-winning racehorse and various historic portraits and equestrian pictures. As in the ground floor corridor, the stairs were carpeted with a drugget runner on felt underlay, held in place by thirty-four brass stairs rods (the eyes for these are still in place).



Image taken during the school's occupation showing carpet runner and paintings still in place (*Leonard Edwards*)

G6 The Library

This is one of the three important Adam interiors at Croome and was one of the 'new' spaces in the east tower added by Brown in the 1750s re-modelling. Originally it was intended to locate the library in the west wing (in The Long Gallery), but this smaller space was deemed more conducive to study, more appropriately sized, and more conveniently located near Lord Coventry's Dressing Room, while the new gallery was better incorporated within the more public suite of rooms on the west side of the house. By contrast with the simplicity of the adjacent Dressing Room, this room was a small masterpiece designed by Adam and executed mainly between 1763-5.



The NW corner of The Library as photographed by *Country Life* in 1915. Note the portrait of the 6th Earl by Allan Ramsay (still in the collection). (*Country Life*)

It is lit by a splendid Venetian south-facing window with Ionic pilasters and ornate carving by Hobcraft and Alken.¹⁶⁶ The marble chimneypiece, one of the finest in the house, was carved as early as 1760 by John Wildsmith and is decorated with turtle doves with diminishing drops of husks at the sides.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ F62/30 & F62/35

¹⁶⁷ F62/16



Detail of the two turtle doves on The Library chimneypiece,
by John Wildsmith, 1760 (NTPL)

However, in terms of the plasterwork ceiling and cornice, some have doubts about their Adam authorship.¹⁶⁸ Adam's accounts for January 1763 include bills for designs for a 'Ceiling for the Library' and a 'Ceiling for the Tapestry Room' costing £10.0.0 each. Only one of the ceiling designs survives; it is an office copy correctly dated January 1763 but mistakenly inscribed for the Library.¹⁶⁹ Its dimensions according to the given scale are not those of the Library but of the Tapestry Room, which is where it was executed. The surviving library ceiling has what Eileen Harris refers to as "*an Adamesque border of alternating anthemias and double calyces (a simplification of the gallery frieze derived from the Temple of Concord in Rome) and corner medallions containing heads in high relief, encircled by laurel wreaths and placed on thyrsi, which are normally associated with Bacchus and would be more suitable for an eating room than a library. The central laurel wreath is uncharacteristic of Adam and indeed the whole composition is too weak to be his*".¹⁷⁰ Looking at the detail and condition, some have felt that the corner sections seem original but some of the centre detail and circles of leaves look rather weak - could the centre been replaced at some point, perhaps due to a partial ceiling collapse?

¹⁶⁸ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.45

¹⁶⁹ Drawing in The Sir John Soane Museum (ref 11:37)

¹⁷⁰ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.45



SW corner of The Library ceiling (*Malcolm James*)

It has also been observed that the cornice plasterwork is odd in that it ‘crashes’ into the chimneybreast rather than going around it, maybe so as not to emphasise the fact that the chimneybreast is off-centre within the room, probably to accommodate the flue of what was an external chimneystack on the outside wall of the earlier house.¹⁷¹ All that said, John Harris felt convinced of its authenticity when he visited in 2008, so it is not a clear-cut answer. There is a bill from Joseph Rose¹⁷² for “An ornamented ceiling as per estimate £38” and later “whiting” it, so could the design of the ceiling as well as its execution be by Rose himself, even though the Adam bill for it exists?

Having decided upon this space as the Library, the 6th Earl of Coventry commissioned Adam to design the interior along the lines of his rejected library proposal for the Long Gallery (see section on G10), with mahogany bookcases wrapped around all four walls of the room. A ‘*Section of the 4 Sides of the Library & the manner of the Bookcases*’ was made in January 1763; that being approved, working drawings of ‘*all the mouldings at Large for Messrs. Cobb & Vyle & the ornaments for Mr. [Sefferin] Alkin for the bookcases...*’ followed in June; and by the end of 1764 the ‘*Sett of Large Mahogany Book Cases*’ with their ‘*Pilasters*’ altered ‘*By order of the Surveyor*’ was complete.¹⁷³ The bookcases’ Ionic pediments were adapted from the library-gallery scheme and updated by the addition of anthemion cresting derived from the *Choragic Monument of Lysicrates* which had just been published (1763) in Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens*. Maria Coventry, the 6th Earl’s first wife, was a subscriber.¹⁷⁴ The Ionic order and anthemion motif of the bookcases supplied by Vile & Cobb also echoed the carved detail of the Venetian window, so that these decorative elements were en-suite. Indeed, Alken

¹⁷¹ Andrew Martindale, Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain.

¹⁷² F62/32

¹⁷³ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p45. Extract from Croome Archives: the bookcase designs listed in Adam’s account do not survive; Cobb acknowledged receipt of payment of £260 on 16th January 1765; Alken’s bill for £107.8.11 was paid on 4th February 1765.

¹⁷⁴ The Choragic Monument of Lysicrates was engraved in 1755 as a specimen for subscribers. Coventry’s copy was sold at Sotheby’s on 25th October 1948 (Lot 129) and had a red morocco, gilt-tooled binding probably designed by Stuart.

describes “A ornament in Deal over Arched Window in Library, carved as ye ornaments to top of Bookcases with honeysuckle, etc.”¹⁷⁵

On the north wall a jib door was incorporated into the bookcases, complete with fake spines to maintain the illusion. This would have given the 6th Earl discreet access to his Dressing Room across the ground floor corridor and in effect created a private, masculine suite of rooms. Hobcraft’s 1764 bill¹⁷⁶ for creating the fake books is very precise: “108 Blank Books, the wood & fixing; 108 ditto bound; 74 of ditto tooled & filleted”. (These survive, exactly as described, on the section of the bookcases on show in the British Galleries at the V&A).



The north-wall section of the Croome library bookcases in the Victoria & Albert Museum, indicating the fake spines by Hobcraft on the jib door (V&A)

There is an intriguing bill which begs the question as to the sequence of events in G6 and whether bookcases were initially installed in the Long Gallery and then moved into G6, or not (although probably not): ‘2 Men at Croome 226 Days taking down the old Book Cases & putting up the new ones, taking them down again and Cutting the old Dado & Brick work & Putting them up again’.¹⁷⁷ Either way, in May 1765, the walls left uncovered by the bookcases were lined with canvas and three layers of ‘crown Elephant & stout Imperial paper’ and painted with several coats of ‘Dead Stone’ colour ‘to appear as Stucco’,¹⁷⁸ and in June the Venetian windows were hung with crimson silk Genoa

¹⁷⁵ F62a/11

¹⁷⁶ F62/30

¹⁷⁷ Vile & Cobb’s bill (F62/33)

¹⁷⁸ “Wallpapers have always reflected the fashionable aspirations of their owners, imitating more expensive materials such as silk damask, **stucco**, epic wall paintings, wood and marbling.” (Allyson McDermott, *Wallpapers in The Historic Interior*, article in the Building Conservation Directory, 2004)

damask festoon curtains by France & Bradburn.¹⁷⁹ This bill is extremely detailed and also describes what sounds like a carved, arched panel covered in crimson damask ‘to fit the arch part of your Library window’ with the curtain drapery on either side¹⁸⁰.

The 6th Earl filled his bookcases with important and often expensive volumes on the subjects that interested him: principally architecture, horticulture, botany and natural history.¹⁸¹ His 2nd wife’s interests were also represented in the books on birds (she stocked the Menagerie with them) and music. There were also scientific books inherited from Thomas, 2nd Earl, a mathematician and astronomer, and his wife, Lady Anne Somerset, who had wide-ranging interests in natural history, poetry and religion. The general sense is of a grand eighteenth-century library, with a substantial inheritance of earlier books which may have been in the family since at least the 17th century.¹⁸² By June 1772 the 6th Earl’s continued book purchases required additional shelving in the Library when Ince & Mayhew supplied a ‘case to fit into the recess of window in Library of Fine Mahogany neatly carved’. Ramsey’s iconic portrait of the 6th Earl painted in 1764 was hung over the chimneypiece to complete the final effect, reinforcing the sense that this was the Earl’s private domain.

The 1930 inventory lists typical library furnishings, including eleven easy- and arm-chairs, a pair of globes, bronze figurines, despatch boxes, library steps, the Ramsay portrait, several small writing and gaming tables, crimson ‘draw-up’ curtains (presumably the France & Bradburn ones) and the fitted bookcases themselves.

In 1948 selected portions of the library’s contents were sold at Sotheby’s London in a sale of ‘Valuable printed books and Music’, and more books were sold in the 1990s. *“The pattern of dispersal is a common one, with substantial sales in 1947 and 1948 resulting in the disposal of most of the older books. The material remaining is clearly no more than a rump, and contains very few early publications; presumably these books escaped sale either because they were not thought to be worth all that much in 1947, or perhaps reflecting something of where they were once kept. The survivors are generally pretty modest”*.¹⁸³

Adam’s bookcases remained in the house until 1973 when they were sold for £6000 and then gifted to the V & A for the benefit of the nation.¹⁸⁴ In 1972 a fine art dealer had written to Croome’s Agent advising their removal due to heavy use by the school, who used them for storing stationery supplies and other equipment: *“The deterioration of their [Library bookcases] state within the last six years is most painful, and I am quite sure those responsible have no idea of the splendour of their surroundings; drawing pins by the dozen, loss of various gilded door handles and the general state is really rather more than worrying. I feel the bookcases should either be fully protected or removed, the latter, of course, is the best thing and should not be too difficult. It is not for me to interfere, but I think if you saw them yourself and were able to have a quiet word with the*

¹⁷⁹ A very detailed bill from France & Bradburn survives for the curtains: (F60/32)

¹⁸⁰ A 1767 bill from Morris & Young is for 475 yards of Crimson Genoa Damask, although that is a huge quantity and could have also been for other rooms and possibly the London house as well.

¹⁸¹ See the section on Significance of the Collections for a fuller account of the contents of the Library.

¹⁸² Mark Purcell’s (NT Libraries Curator) initial reaction to a reading of the Library’s contents.

¹⁸³ Mark Purcell, July 2011

¹⁸⁴ F62/33

*Mother Superior, you will be able to arrest any further damage. Meanwhile, I am again trying hard to find them a home.*¹⁸⁵



The east-wall of the bookcases as used by the school.
Note annotated dimensions for when they were going to be removed (CET)

The Hare Krishnas used the room as an office and the heavy smell of incense burned in here was memorable. During the property developer phase it was used as restaurant servery for dining in the adjacent Tapestry Room, and was latterly used as a family kitchen.



The Library used as a servery during the property developer phase
(Leonard Edwards)

¹⁸⁵ Letter from Gooden & Fox, Fine Art Dealers, London, to John Henderson, Croome Estate Office, 29th March 1972, CEA.

The NT's current use as a tea room kitchen is pending the re-servicing of the Court and the opportunity to house visitor facilities in the Red Wing. The structural stability of the floor is an issue that needs to be resolved, particularly if the original bookcases are ever to be returned.

Key sightlines:

South	Park Seat
South	River
South	Dunstall Castle

G7 The Tapestry Room

The Tapestry Room is another of the three important Adam rooms in Croome Court. Until 1763 this room was used as an Eating Parlour or Break Fast Room, and appears as such in the 1771 Volume V of *Vitruvius Britannicus*. It may have served this purpose in the 17th century house, as the fireplace in the north wall makes use of an early flue in the spine wall.

The name Tapestry Room was first used by Adam in connection with a ceiling design made in January 1763.¹⁸⁶ Lord Coventry must have decided to line the walls with tapestries in the previous autumn at the latest and was presumably encouraged by his friend Lord Lyttelton who had created a tapestry room at Hagley in 1758. He wished to create a spectacular room with what was still regarded as the most sumptuous and expensive of all wall coverings.



Croome's re-constructed Tapestry Room with the suite of seat furniture provided by Mayhew & Ince 1769-71 (*Metropolitan Museum, New York*)

His French taste dictated that he was keen to get to Paris to buy the best and latest of everything to furnish Croome, including tapestries. Once the Seven Years War came to an end in 1763, he set off *'determined to be as private as an upholsterer, and to pass his*

¹⁸⁶ F64

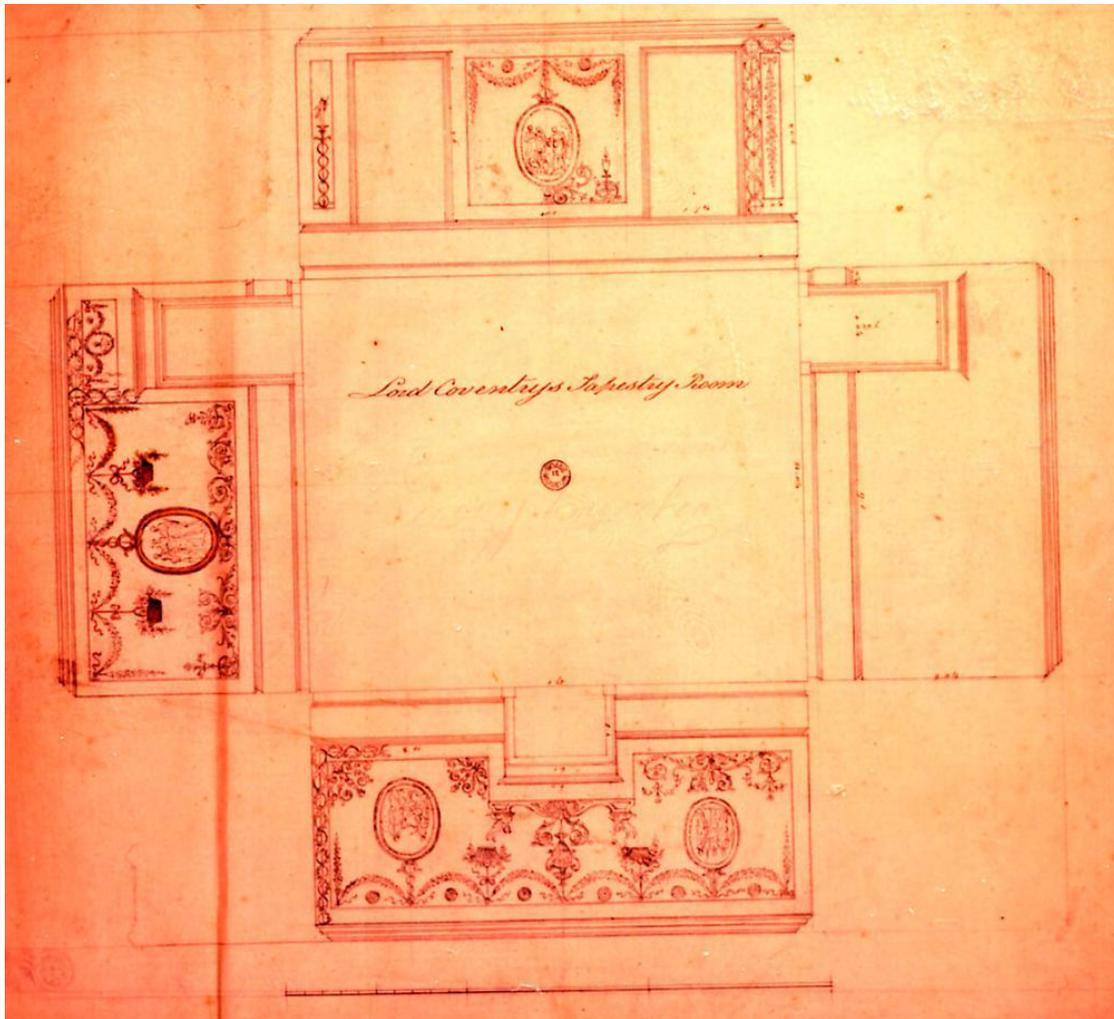
*time in buying glasses and tapestry*¹⁸⁷. The place that he went to purchase his tapestries was the Gobelins Manufactory, suppliers of tapestries to the French King. During the Seven Years War, they had undergone extensive technical improvements under Jean Germain Soufflot (Director) and Jacques Neilson (Master Weaver) in an effort to attract more private customers due to declining royal patronage and the impacts of war. Technically, they made improvements to the weaving process and the looms, making them faster but still maintaining quality. Stylistically, they introduced new designs of oval medallions containing smaller scenes on a decorative background, rather than the reproductions of large life-sized figures, which were more common at this time. The prominent French artist Boucher was asked to provide paintings as designs for the medallions, which became known as *Tentures de Boucher*.

Their great advantages were that the arrangement of the medallions could be varied and their subjects changed, the ground colour was open to choice and the whole composition could be enlarged or reduced to meet the requirements of the purchaser, which was especially suited to the English custom of covering all four walls with tapestries (essentially using them as a form of expensive wallpaper). In addition to this, Soufflot appears to have come up with the idea of having matching seat furniture, upholstered in the same designs as the tapestries. The idea of having oval-backed chairs to match the oval medallions of the tapestries was probably also Soufflot's. The covers were designed by Maurice Jacques and possibly Louis Tessier.

Measured or scaled elevations of the room at Croome must have been sent to Paris for the medallion composition to be adjusted to Lord Coventry's requirements. The Gobelins factory sent Lord Coventry a design of the room (which has not been traced) and a detail of the tapestry section above the chimneypiece which is in the Croome archives. This is close but not identical to the executed design. Adam had drawn up proposals for the room in November 1763, but the following January he produced an alternative design with a more Neo-classical feel, although this was later rejected in favour of the Gobelins design. In January 1764 Adam billed the Earl for '*Altering the French design for the Tapestry Room in Colour*'.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ 'Gilly' Williams to George Selwyn, 4th August 1763, John Heneage Jesse, *Memoirs of George Selwyn and his Contemporaries*

¹⁸⁸ CEA



Adam's rejected design for the Tapestry Room c.1763-4
 (Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

This partially completed drawing¹⁸⁹ shows how Adam's proposed design was more distinctly Neo-classical than that ultimately supplied by the Gobelins: instead of the large horizontal medallions, he proposed smaller vertical ones, and he preferred neat Neo-classical borders, rather than the elaborate profusion of flora and fauna that seem to cascade out of each panel. It highlights a fascinating meeting of two worlds of design: the French rococo designs for the tapestry panels have a solidity and substance, with their three-dimensional use of shadows cast by firmly-planted objects, whereas Adam was suggesting a two-dimensional, floating, almost bloodlessly elegant classicism.¹⁹⁰ It is interesting to speculate why the 6th Earl chose the Gobelins design over Adam's – being a Francophile, was he seduced by the more voluptuous French style?

¹⁸⁹ The Sir John Soane Museum (50/12)

¹⁹⁰ Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, November 1959, p.107



Section of the Croome tapestries depicting
Neptune & Amymone: Water (*Metropolitan Museum, New York*)

The subjects chosen by the 6th Earl for the oval medallions were the Four Elements, all taken from paintings by Boucher in 1763-4: Earth (Vetumnus & Pomona), Air (Aurora & Cephalus), Water (Neptune & Amymone), and Fire (Venus & Vulcan).

The tapestries consist of a wonderful illusion of oil on canvas, gilded wood and natural foliage: the clever use of shadow around the medallions tricks the eye into thinking that they are three-dimensional oil paintings in gilt-wood frames hanging against a wall covered in crimson damask surrounded by fluttering birds and drooping swags, whereas of course, the whole thing is a flat woven textile. Croome's 1824 Guide Book described the Tapestry Room as "*this most beautiful room hung with the finest tapestry now in England*".¹⁹¹

Meanwhile, John Wildsmith had carved the pilastered marble chimneypiece for the room in 1760 to a design by Adam,¹⁹² although Joseph Wilton is recorded to have provided the lapis lazuli plaque in the frieze,¹⁹³ which was probably fitted when Wildsmith took down the chimneypiece to polish and alter it in 1763. Catherine Gordon suggests that the fact that the chimneypieces in this room and the adjacent library were designed by Adam so early on may indicate that they were trial commissions which earned him the major interior designs that followed. Wildsmith's work in 1763 marks the start of the re-decoration of the room to designs by Adam in preparation for the 6th Earl's new French tapestries and seat covers to arrive.

¹⁹¹ Dean, William, "*An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D'Abitot*" - *Hortus Croomensis*, Section IV, Croome House, 1824, pp.54-55

¹⁹² F62/26

¹⁹³ F62/13

John Hobcraft and Sefferin Alken began work on the new joinery and mouldings in 1763/4,¹⁹⁴ which have a predominant acanthus and egg and tongue motif, and the plaster ceiling with its wheel moulding and garlanded trophies was executed by Joseph Rose.¹⁹⁵ The design of the ceiling was intended originally for the Library and is an excellent example of Adam's more vigorous early style with strong lines and clear relief, while the rich cornice with its modillions and rosettes resembles that in the Library, the Dining Room and the Best Bedroom on the floor above.

Not until June 1771 were the tapestries finally hung on the walls. Mayhew & Ince came to Croome to put them up and to fix the tapestry covers to the suite of six armchairs and two settees which they had made in London to their own design. Their bill of October 1769 states: "*6 Large Antique Elbow Chairs with oval Backs carv'd with Double husks and ribbon knot on top, Gilt in the Best Burnish'd Gold, Stuffed with Besthair, in Linen – Backt with Crimson Tammy- proper for covering with Tapistry in the Country...£77 8s 0d 2 Settees for Each Side the Chimney, richly carv'd and Gilt Stuff'd and Cover'd to match the Chairs £56 10s 0d.*" The oval backs of the chairs are clearly related to the oval medallions of the Boucher-Nielson tapestries and this element may have been designed by Soufflot, who was a major French Neo-classical designer. This important seat furniture had calico dust covers and covers of fine crimson half inch check, together with chamois stockings to protect the gilt legs supplied by Chippendale.¹⁹⁶

Mayhew & Ince also supplied a carved and gilt pier-glass, described in the same bill: '*Oct. 5, 1769. To Mayhew & Ince. A large Architect Pier Frame, fluted, richly carv'd with shell on top, festoons and drops of double husks down the sides, goates head at bottom gilt in the very best Double Burnish'd Gold £35.*'¹⁹⁷

The pier table with its fabulous inlaid black marble top inset with 176 squares of 'curious' semi-precious stones and minerals was supplied by John Wildsmith in 1759. The squares included lapis lazuli, heliotrope, porphyry, onyx, jasper, granite and '*Plumb pudding stone*'. The guilloche moulding around the apron of this table resembles that on the window frames and the table may have been executed between 1763 and 1765 when the carving was done on the room.

¹⁹⁴ F62/30 and F62/35

¹⁹⁵ F62/32

¹⁹⁶ John Fowler & John Cornforth, *English Decoration in the 18th Century*, p109

¹⁹⁷ '*Double Burnish'd Gold*' meant that two coats of water gilding were applied over gesso and that parts of the gold were heightened by burnishing.



The Tapestry Room pier-glass supplied by Mayhew & Ince in 1769
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Mayhew & Ince also supplied two curtain cornices and a pair of festoon curtains of 'Superfine Crimson Tammy' (glazed wool) trimmed with rich crimson silk lace and deep silk fringe.

As well as the six armchairs that Mayhew & Ince invoiced in 1769 was a 'Tripod Basin Stand' made by them to support an important Sèvres porcelain basin and ewer bought by Lord Coventry in Paris in 1767, the year of its manufacture. In September 1767, Mayhew & Ince presented an account for £14 17s for 'A very neat carved Stand for basin and ewer, of Redwood and Varnished'. This tripod stand is still in the collection and is made of Padoukwood which is bright red when cut, hence 'redwood'. It may have been executed from the 'french design for a Water Stand' which was altered by Adam on 6th May 1767, itself based on an *athénienne*, or classical tripod,¹⁹⁸ and it is almost certain that it stood in the Tapestry Room. Adam's alteration can be seen in a rough sketch at

¹⁹⁸ This was first shown in a painting by Joseph Vien entitled *La Vertueuse Athénienne*, which was exhibited in the Paris Salon in 1763 and engraved by P. Filipart in 1765.

the Soane, inscribed 'Lord Coventry's [?] for' with the words 'Water Stand' boldly written over this.¹⁹⁹



Robert Adam's drawing of a 'french design for a Water Stand' (*Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum*) and the tripod stand with Sèvres jug and basin still in the Croome Estate Collection (CET)

A pair of English gilded wood pedestals stood against the window wall on either side of the pier table. These are in the possession of the Philadelphia Museum of Art but are on loan to the Metropolitan Museum so that they occupy their original position, albeit within the re-constructed room.

There were also two fine commodes in the room, the more spectacular of the two by Pierre Langlois, a French cabinet-maker who served a wide clientele from his London shop on the Tottenham Court Road. It was thus an English piece in the French taste, rather like the 6th Earl himself. This commode is described in the bill dated 20th July 1764 as being in floral marquetry with gilt-bronze mounts. It was sold along with so many of the house's contents in 1948, but was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum so that it too, could join the other elements of the room.

Taken as a whole, this room was an extremely important and influential showpiece within the house, and the first Boucher-Neilson tapestry room of its type in England that influenced similar rooms at Weston Park, Staffordshire, at Newby Hall, Yorkshire, at Moor Park, Hertfordshire and at Osterley, Middlesex. Its spectacular effect upon the viewer, as if being engulfed in a crimson sea yet surrounded by a wealth of flowers, and

¹⁹⁹ In a recent lecture (April 2012) on the importance of the 6th Earl as an 18th century patron of porcelain, Dame Rosalind Savill pointed out the interconnected nature of the Sèvres jug and basin and the tapestries themselves: the raspberry red colour of the tapestries' ground is echoed on the porcelain and would have been picked up in the original red of the padoukwood stand; the shell motif of the jug's spout appears on the tapestry panels and at the top of Mayhew & Ince's pier glass; the blue of the vase in the tapestry panel above the chimneypiece is repeated in the blue of the Sèvres porcelain as well as in the lapis tablet at the centre of the chimneypiece.

the detail of the tapestries' subject matters, is described at length in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin of November 1959.

In 1902, the tapestries and tapestry-covered seat furniture were sold by the 9th Earl of Coventry to the dealer Wildenstein in Paris,²⁰⁰ in order to cover gambling debts incurred by his eldest son Lord Deerhurst. The process of selling them had already begun in 1880 and it caused something of a scandal, as the tapestries were designated heirlooms within the family trust. They were purchased by Samuel H. Kress, who then gifted them to the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Bereft of its original contents, the room became the Green Drawing Room and the walls were re-covered with green damask.



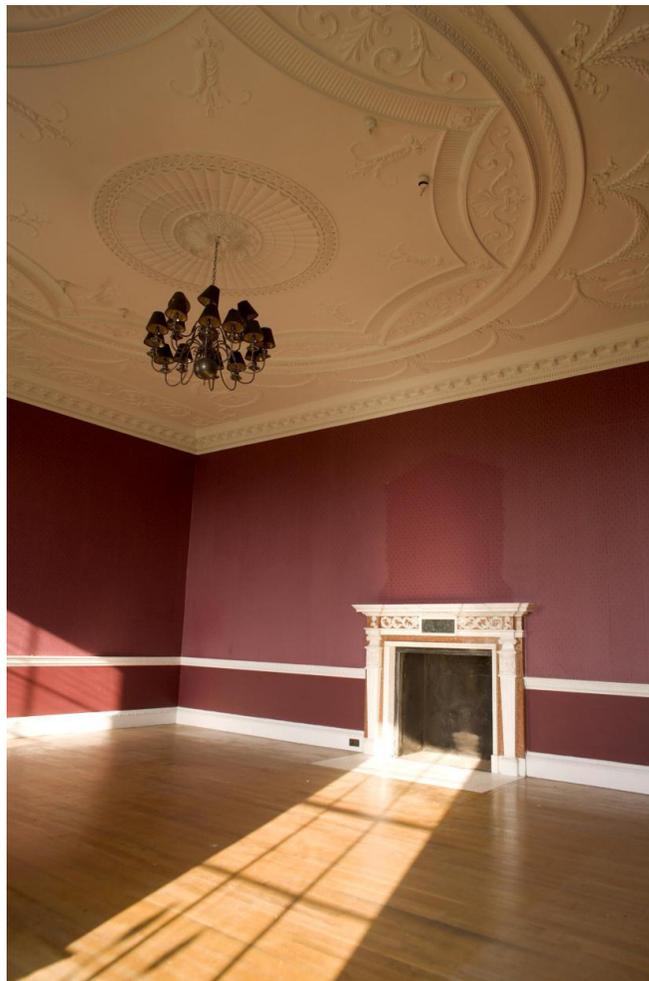
The chimneypiece in the Tapestry Room in 1915, after the tapestries had been sold and the walls covered with a green watered fabric, but before the structure of the room had been removed (*Country Life*)

The 1930 inventory lists the important pieces of French and English furniture that were still in the room: the pier table and mirror, the pair of square tapered pedestals, two inlaid serpentine commodes, Louis XVI writing table, the window cornices, as well as one of the Adam scroll-end benches that had strayed from the Long Gallery, various tables and

²⁰⁰ The sale was conducted via M. Fenaille, the great authority on tapestries, who was acting for Wildenstein's.

armchairs, portraits (now that the walls no longer had tapestries on them), plus large quantities of Oriental and English porcelain in cabinets and miniatures in a display case. Again, many of the important pieces were sold in 1948 at Sotheby's.

The most surprising and, for some people, shocking realisation about the room that they see at Croome today is not that so much that the tapestries are no longer there but that the actual structure of the space is a complete replica. Before the Catholic School had confirmed its intention to buy the Court in 1949, the Trustees were faced with the threat of potential demolition of the Court or institutional use as a borstal. The 6th Earl's hugely important tapestries and associated seat furniture were already in the Metropolitan Museum in New York and, within the context of the 20th century trade in transatlantic architectural salvage, the Trustees were asked for the original room in which to display the contents. The positive aspects of this were that it safeguarded the room and allowed it to be re-united with its original contents of furniture and tapestries. A condition of the sale was for an exact copy of the room to be re-instated at Croome, including the floorboards, plaster ceiling, Adam grate and fender, window sashes, shutters, joinery and chimneypiece. This work was executed by Brown & Muntzer of London in 1949. The whole room was reassembled in New York in 1958, and the process is described in some detailed notes from the Metropolitan Museum.



The replica Tapestry Room at Croome in 2008 (NTPL)

One of the fascinating dilemmas now facing Croome Court is how to display and interpret what is essentially a replica historic interior, when the original room and its contents are on the other side of the world. The obvious answer would be to attempt to negotiate the return of the tapestries and the furniture on long term loan from the Metropolitan Museum, from one museum to another, in a spirit of transatlantic co-operation. However, rather than the pressure and implications of re-patriating the original tapestries and ensuring that they are in the correct environmental conditions and safe from light-damage, there is a real creative opportunity to tell the fascinating story of what happened to this room in a very memorable and different way. There is the story of the early 20th century trade in architectural salvage, with rich American collectors buying up sections of English country houses to re-display as part of their collections or sometimes leaving them in crates that were never opened. There could be a play on the *trompe l'oeil* nature of the originals by evoking the tapestries using projection onto the walls or re-creating them in another medium; commissioning replica furniture would showcase craftsmanship and skills; explaining the tricky process of removing the original plaster ceiling and re-instating it in New York. The story of the loss, transfer and reconstruction of this entire room is very compelling.

Key sightlines:

South east South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
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G8 The Saloon

The grand, central Saloon is an impressive room and, stylistically, it encapsulates the contrasts and idiosyncracies of the Court, as it combines late Rococo and early Neo-classical elements. It was created from the former Great Parlour in the 17th century house in a complicated sequence of alterations. The ceiling and the floor of the room above would have had to have been removed to create this vast, double-height space and a new timber-framed partition had to be constructed at the west end of the room to support the new lath and plaster vault and ensure it was symmetrically placed within the room. The scale and opulence of the room was well-suited to its purpose as a grand formal reception room where the 6th Earl entertained King George III in 1788.



The NE corner of the Saloon in 1915. Note the family portraits in their magnificent Linnell frames; the Adam armchairs and scroll-end bench have crept in from the Long Gallery (*Country Life*)

The grand entrance door from the Hall was flanked by Corinthian columns, and surmounted by a bust of Apollo set within a broken pediment. The two doors along the south *enfilade*, had similar ornate pedimented doorcases with swelling friezes carved with palm branches, with eared and scrolled architraves to the south windows and central doorway onto the portico. These, as well as the window shutters and Corinthian capitals to the doorcase columns, were invoiced in 1758 by James Lovell.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ F62/19

The paired fireplaces along the north wall took advantage of the existing flues in the spine wall and had new chimneypieces made by Lovell in 1758: he billed for ‘2 *marble Chimney Pieces Black Marble Coves Setting up all included £95 each*’ in ‘*the Salon Room*’, although these are something of a mystery. The existing chimneypieces could be the Lovell ones or may be replacements, as they include a curious mix of motifs with a combination of Ionic columns, petalled paterae, and a bold Greek wave frieze that has a distinct Neo-classical feel. In 1760 Wildsmith had a mason spend ‘8 days repairing & piecing & polishing over the slabs & chimneypieces in the Saloon room’²⁰² suggesting that they were being replaced only two years after installation, although this work may have just been alterations.²⁰³



Detail of the Saloon chimneypieces (Author)

The new deeply-coved ceiling was enriched with an elaborate cornice and mouldings by Vassalli.²⁰⁴ This, however, is another intriguing item, as Vassalli’s bill states ‘*Ceiling in the saloon according to my designe, that done before according to Mr. Stuard [?] design. For drawing the designs at first for the ceiling & cove in the Saloon not put in execution*’. An unattributed design in the archive shows a drawing for the pediment over the grand

²⁰² F62/16

²⁰³ Prof. Wilton-Ely commented: “*The two chimneypieces are strange in here – they have Neo-classical additions but have nothing remotely to do with Adam and are certainly not good enough for him. They are more Greek Revival: the ionic volutes are flat rather than sticking out an angle towards you [so that they could be seen around a corner from two sides of a Greek temple]. The Vitruvian scroll motif normally runs in one direction only [rather than going backwards from the middle]. The flowers on the top of the jambs are also very odd and look almost Edwardian. They are nothing to do with Athenian Stuart either. They are very odd in juxtaposition with the Ionic scrolls.*”

²⁰⁴ F62/18

doorway.²⁰⁵ It is possible that both of these references hint at the involvement of 'Athenian' Stuart at Croome, who was working for Lord Coventry's friend Lord Lyttelton at Hagley only a few miles north. Certainly there were links via Sanderson Miller and Vassalli, so it is not impossible.

In 1760 William Linnell provided a set of eight magnificent picture frames in three sizes which contained the family and royal portraits which, amazingly, hung in this room throughout the Court's various occupancies until 2007.²⁰⁶ They were described in 1930 as "*gilt and white enameled frames with open acanthus scrolls and shells, six surmounted by a coronet*". The portraits are still in the collection, whilst the frames were sold to the Metropolitan Museum in 1960 for £7000. The portraits were of Sir William Coventry, Sir Henry Coventry, King George II, the Lord Keeper, Thomas 2nd Lord Coventry (Lord Keeper's son), William III and Maria & Elizabeth Gunning (Lady Coventry and Lady Hamilton)²⁰⁷. It has been postulated that these portraits constituted the indoor equivalent of a Temple of Worthies, as there wasn't one in the Park.²⁰⁸



The SW corner of the Saloon in the early 1900s, looking towards the Drawing Room, showing three of the set of eight frames by Linnell (WRO)

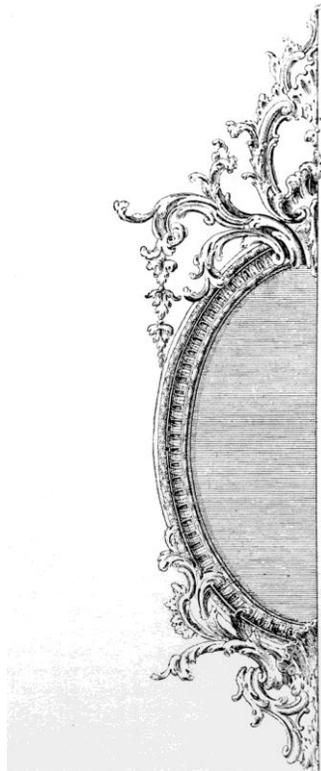
²⁰⁵ F58/7/2

²⁰⁶ When the Roman Catholic Archdiocese purchased the Court, part of the deal was that they were to permit the oil paintings in the Saloon to remain there for 21 years or until the property was sold. This arrangement continued with subsequent owners of the Court, including the school and the property developers.

²⁰⁷ Before the arrival on the scene of the Gunning sisters, the portrait of the 5th Earl & Countess hung in the Saloon.

²⁰⁸ Richard Wheeler, National Garden History Specialist, National Trust.

Originally there were carved white enamelled and gilt bow cornices with shell centres over the three windows (the central window being a sash-door onto the South Portico), and, as in the Dining Room, the floral ogee moulding was employed as the dominant motif throughout. These were provided by Vile & Cobb, and were en suite with a superb pair of heavily carved gilt and white console tables with central shell, festoons of roses and acanthus scrolls, and large matching oval wall mirrors also decorated with a shell, acanthus scroll and swags of grapes.²⁰⁹ The mirrors relate interestingly to a design for 'Glass Frames' dated 1760 in the 3rd edition of Chippendale's Director. It is possible that he was commissioned to supply the design for the Croome mirrors, as he had supplied a plate for a looking-glass by Adam for Lord Coventry's London house.²¹⁰



Design for a wall mirror, 1760, in the 3rd edition of Chippendale's Director, pl.clxxii

²⁰⁹ F60/9. The pier tables and mirrors are now at Lotherton Hall, Yorkshire, while the three window cornices are with the National Trust for Scotland at 7, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh. The cornices were sold in September 1973 via Frank Partridge.

²¹⁰ *Furniture at Temple Newsam House and Lotherton Hall* (Vol II), Christopher Gilbert, pp.361-2



The Saloon in 1959, looking south, showing the pair of Vile & Cobb pier tables and mirrors now at Lotherton Hall, Yorkshire (WRO)

The pier tables and mirrors were still in place in 1968, when they were included in a list of contents for fire insurance.²¹¹ However, they seem to have been sold by 1974, when the Croome Estate Agent wrote to The National Trust for Scotland who were installing the 3 window cornices in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh.²¹² Two small fixing holes and a break in the dado moulding on the window wall shows exactly where the pier tables were formerly attached. The plaster bust remained in place until at least July 1979, when it was included in a *'schedule of pictures and effects at Croome Court which remain the property of the Trustees.'*

Lighting was provided by two superb pairs of ormolu wall candelabra with flame tops and branching arms carved and chased with foliage. These were probably the *'deux paires de bras à deux branches à l'antique, premier grandeur'*, for which the 6th Earl paid 26 louis to Poirier in 1763.

Archival references to painted decoration are scarce: in 1767 Charles Aylmer itemises *'enriched entablature in the Great Hall'*²¹³ and in 1789 the skirting was painted 'dead white'. In May 1841 Anderson & Son of Worcester estimated for painting & gilding the Saloon: *"All painted 3 times in oil & finished dead white with whole of enrichments in oil gold and Ground of frieze picked in light azure tint, walls painted 4 times in oil and*

²¹¹ Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham's archives BSC/H9

²¹² Letter from John Henderson to D. Learmont, Curator NTS, 11th November 1974

²¹³ Family Box 14

'flatted' in light azure tint".²¹⁴ However, this may only have been partially carried out, or even not at all, as the 9th Earl is recorded as saying that "*The decorations of the ceiling have never been touched since 1760*".²¹⁵ The 1915 Country Life article noted "*the silvery lacquer of the old gilding on the ceiling*".

The Saloon was used when George III visited Croome and Worcester in July 1788: "...*Dinner was served in the Saloon... The King at first wished to have dined in the Tapestry Room but altered his choice. Lord & Lady Coventry (his Lordship in his boots) had the honour of dining at the same table with the K., Queen & three Princesses...*"²¹⁶

When the 6th Earl died on 3rd September 1809 at the age of 87, his body was brought back to Croome from London to lie in state in this grand room. The Saloon "*was hung with black. The coffin was of crimson velvet with gilt nails, handles etc., and is placed on a kind of throne to which there are steps up covered with black velvet. The pall is of silk and the coronet is placed upon it. The room is lighted with several most superb silver candlesticks and additional wax lights fixed in various parts*".²¹⁷ The amateurish 1809 inventory records a strange assortment of contents, although the eight paintings in the Linnell frames are noted at the end: "*6 Mahogany Arm Chairs leather Seats, 2 Sopha's [sic] to match, Pair of Mahogany Card Tables, Pair of fire Screens, 4 fishing Stools, folding Screen, Pair of Hearth brushes, 2 lead Weights for the Doors, Mahogany Pillar Table, Pair of polished fenders & 2 sets of fire irons, pair of Bronze figures & 2 Pairs of Marble Urns, 8 Pieces of Painting*".

Seventeen pages of the 1930 Inventory are devoted to the contents of the Saloon, demonstrating once again how the 9th Earl's eclectic collections jostled for position with those of the 6th Earl. The key items listed are a pair of Adam scroll-end benches that had crept in from the Long Gallery, the pair of gilt & white pier tables with Sienna marble tops, the pair of oval pier glasses, the white & gilt box curtain cornices, the eight oil paintings in carved white & gilt frames, the Adam '*hardwood oval rosewater basin and ewer stand*' (which was probably originally intended for the Tapestry Room) and crimson curtains. Also listed are huge quantities of Chinese, Japanese and Worcester porcelain, various mahogany tables, garden furniture (presumably pulled in from the South Portico), cabinets, bookcases, settees, about seventeen armchairs (some by Adam) and easy chairs, folding screens, bronze figures, writing implements and bronze and ormolu candelabra.

²¹⁴ F62/71

²¹⁵ F75/9

²¹⁶ Letter from Richard Cooksey to Lord Deerhurst

²¹⁷ Berrows Worcester Journal, early September 1809



The Saloon in the early 1900s showing the 9th Earl's eclectic Victorian furnishings.
Note the Adam armchair and scroll-end bench (WRO)

During the school's occupation this room wasn't really used by them at all, the boys just passed through it. Leonard Edwards remembers that "*All the paintings were on the walls, plus the bust above the door. The pair of marble-topped pier tables with mirrors above were on the window wall. One table-top was cracked. Otherwise, the furniture was dark oak, with a sideboard on the west wall, standard lamps and red carpet runner. I remember the strip lighting above the cornice, and the 'clunk' noise of the brass light switch. The right hand fireplace was used. The door onto the south portico was not really used*".²¹⁸

²¹⁸ Sound recording & walk-round with Leonard Edwards (son of Caretaker) who grew up in the Court. May-June 2009



St Joseph's School Dedication Service in the Saloon: The Roman Catholic Bishop of Birmingham, Father Warner and Father Edwards, September 1950 (*Leonard Edwards*)

In 1960 the Linnell frames (but not the pictures) were sold by the Croome Trustees to the Metropolitan Museum and the portraits were re-framed much more simply. Given that they had hung for so long in the Saloon, the walls were marked where dust and soot had built up around them. Colonel Smith, then Agent for the Trustees, wrote to the Catholic Archdiocese stating that, although the conditions of sale of the picture frames did not include any touching up or re-decoration of the Saloon walls, he agreed that they were marked and offered £50 as a contribution to re-decoration, saying "*it should be stipulated that the builder matches up the present paint and does not touch the gilding*".²¹⁹ The following year, the Metropolitan Museum reported that the Linnell picture frames and 2 mirrors (probably those from the Long Gallery) were hung with their "*best English portraits...they look very splendid indeed in our galleries*".²²⁰

The Hare Krishnas' painter and decorator David Powell remembers this as one of the rooms that was in the best condition. However, all the walls were badly cracked and he filled lots of hairline cracks with fine plaster – he got the feeling that the walls were not brick, perhaps a clue to the room's 17th century origins. He cleaned (but did not overpaint or re-gild) all the gilding in the room with vinegar and remembers it feeling rich

²¹⁹ Letter from Col. O.D. Smith to Mr Meyrick, 30th April 1960, CEA

²²⁰ Letter from Claus Virch, Dept of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum, May 1961

and original on the ceiling.²²¹ He painted all the flat areas on the walls and ceiling, using the darker green that we see today on the ceiling panels, door architraves and fluted pillars and thinks he also did the pale green on the walls and ceiling. He took all the shutters off and cleaned the paint off the hinges and brass work (these have since been painted over). He remembers no decoration in the ceiling cartouches/roundels.



The Saloon ceiling in 2008 (Author)

The view out into the Park is particularly fine from this room with its three large, south-facing windows. After having described the characters in the portraits, the 1824 Guide Book remarks: "*Among the attractions of this room, not the least is the delightful prospect which its windows command...The Stranger, gaining admittance to the house by its north entrance...usually takes his departure by the opposite entrance; which leads through the magnificent Portico, so grandly adorning its southern and principal front. And here, he will pause with delight, especially if a lover of picturesque beauty*"²²²

Key sightlines:

South east South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
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²²¹ Some have felt that there is far too much gilding throughout the room for it to be from the 18th century and that the present gilding could well have been carried out in the 1840s, in keeping with the 1841 estimate for painting and gilding. Paint analysis will reveal the decorative history in due course.

²²² William Dean, "*An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D'Abitot*" - *Hortus Croomensis*, Section IV, Croome House, 1824, pp.52-53 & 55

G9 The Drawing Room

To the west of the Saloon is the (Yellow) Drawing Room, one of the first rooms to be completed in the 18th century re-modelling. It provides a suitable pause after leaving the Saloon, in mental preparation for the shift in scale and style as one enters the Long Gallery. Like the Tapestry Room, this room probably existed within the earlier house as the early timber-framed partition visible from F8 on the floor above forms its east elevation²²³. Similarly, there is a fireplace in the north wall that makes use of an existing flue in the spine wall. Following a second phase of chimney inspection in the Saloon and Drawing Room, it seems most probable that the Drawing Room chimney was the one which heated the 17th century hall, rather than the left-hand Saloon one, although both are of probable early 17th century origin.²²⁴

Despite its delicate plasterwork and attractive chimneypiece, it appears to be one of the ground floor rooms that were not recorded in historic photographs.



SE corner of the Drawing Room ceiling (*Malcom James*)

The decoration is in a Rococo manner and largely executed by Hobcraft²²⁵ and Lovell²²⁶ between 1756-8. Hobcraft itemised the window mouldings, shutters, door architraves, cornices over doors friezes and '*stuff for ye ornaments*', possibly referring to general furniture and cabinets for displaying ornaments. He also refers to '*My Lord's own stuff*', perhaps an indication of the 6th Earl's re-use of some materials. Vassalli undertook the

²²³ Initial investigations by John Goom in November 2008 reported that the structure of the floor above this room is very difficult to understand and further work will need to be done to unravel its evolution.

²²⁴ Findings of Keith Mitchell of the Volcanic Chimney Company in December 2012. Not only is the flue in the Drawing Room cranked particularly sharply to the east for no reason but we now know it is so shaped to meet a tall straight shaft that looks earlier in date. The most likely explanation for this arrangement is that the Drawing Room chimney was adapted to meet an existing straight flue. The flue is almost exactly central in the 17th century Hall.

²²⁵ F62/5

²²⁶ F62/6

ceiling plasterwork which has an oval central panel in notably shallow relief, with fruit, flowers and foliage detail, charging £40 for ‘ornaments by hand for ceiling’ in 1761.²²⁷ The skirtings, dado rail and architraves are ornately-detailed, with egg and tongue, reeded and acanthus mouldings and the doorcases have swelling friezes decorated with laurel leaves and berries and have prominent cornices. Lovell also itemises the egg and tongue detail on the two mahogany doors.

The large marble chimneypiece is particularly striking and also intriguing. It is probably by Lovell, who is recorded to have dismantled it, altered it and then set it up again in 1758,²²⁸ and it is enriched with fruit and flowers to match the ceiling decoration with floral drops at each side. The central tablet with draped urn and flutes, which looks more Neo-classical than the rest of the decoration, is believed to have been carved by Alken²²⁹ and was probably included when Lovell carried out his alterations, as was the reeded detail around the opening which may have been added to match the moulding on the window embrasures, architraves and doors.²³⁰



The Drawing Room chimneypiece (Author)

In 1763 Joseph Rose listed whitewashing in the Drawing Room,²³¹ amongst other rooms, and also ‘repairing’, although it is not clear what.²³²

²²⁷ F62/18. There have been some queries as to the vintage/authorship of the ceiling plasterwork as it is so shallow in relief.

²²⁸ F62/19 – although the bill for this chimneypiece may not have survived.

²²⁹ F62/35

²³⁰ “The chimneypiece is very odd and uneasy and difficult to date. The urn, which is fully-fledged Neo-classical, looks as though it is falling off its ledge and looks very clumsy and out of scale. It as though the chimneypiece needed to be updated but it was crudely done”. (Notes from Prof. John Wilton-Ely’s visit to Croome Court, 18th June 2010)

²³¹ F62/32

²³² F62/24

Until the late 18th century, the room was sometimes referred to as the Blue Drawing Room. Charles Aylmer's 1767 bill for painting totalling £90. 0s 2d was divided between outside and inside work, and included 'dead stone colour in Blue Damask Room'²³³ and a further bill from him in 1789 is for '8 2/3 yrds of dead stone colour in 'Blue Drawing Room'.²³⁴ Presumably it was furnished and upholstered with much of the blue silk damask purchased in 1759 from Vile and Cobb, specified for use in the Drawing Room and part of a massive order for fabric, wallpaper, curtains, window blinds and bed covers of this date. This order also included a set of blue silk damask festoon curtains, probably also intended for this room.²³⁵

In around 1793 a lot of work was done when the 6th Earl refurbished the room using Gillows.²³⁶ Their detailed bill lists a set of eight 'very elegant' satinwood chairs and two 'large and elegant' sofas to match, all 'japaned in imitation of inlaid work', stuffed in the 'french stile' and with 'large thick french squabs for the seats', all covered with rich yellow damask and with cotton covers for the chairs. On the same bill, Gillows also provided a pair of 'large & elegant french Window Curtains' with 'rich yellow Tammy' (glazed wool lining), silk lace, fringe and tassels. This was when the name of the room was changed to the Yellow Drawing Room.

Some of the 6th Earl's finest paintings, including the royal portraits by Gainsborough, were hung in this room. The 1824 Guide Book describes the hang at great length: "This room is adorned with numerous pictures – some of high excellence and value. Among these are full-length portraits of their late Majesties – George III and – His Consort – presented by themselves, in the year 1788 – when Croome received the rare and distinguished honour of a royal visit. Other pictures are – A Glowing Landscape – said to be from the pencil of Claude Lorraine – another Italian Landscape; composed, according to the usual style of that school, of rocks, castles, ruins and sheep. – A fine Madonna. – Two pictures of Cleopatra; in the one, she appears enjoying all the bliss of health and gay spirits: in the other, suffering under the agonies of despair and the bite of the asp. – Two Pictures of Venus, by Philippi Lauri. In the one, she appears in retirement, attended by Cupids, but watched by a peeping Satyr; in the other, she is seen, looking at the Satyr, bound by Cupids - A Sporting Piece, by A. Cuypp – Another Sporting Piece by Wouwermans. – A Horse Fair, by Wouwermans. – Jupiter and Europa, by Zuccherelli. - Over the doors, Two Views in Venice." Despite the 7th 'Blind' Earl selling many of his father's important paintings in 1810, the pair by Lauri and the Zucharelli are still in the collection.

The presence of the paintings of Cleopatra and Venus with satyrs has led to the suggestion that this room provided a 'Vicious Love' counterpart to the 'Virtuous Love' subject matter depicted in the tapestry medallions on the opposite side of the Saloon. However this might be reading too much into their symbolism and it is unlikely that the 6th Earl would have wished to draw attention to any personal indiscretions.

The 1930 contents of the room were even more densely packed than those of the Saloon, with seven pages of the inventory filled with what was described as the 9th Earl & Countess' 'Bric-a-Brac' displayed in a Show Table. This included numerous snuff

²³³ Family Box 14

²³⁴ F62/45

²³⁵ F60/6

²³⁶ Bill 116

boxes, silver, gold and shell boxes, miniatures, medallions, seals, tokens, brooches and cameos. The principal pieces of furniture were a French kingwood, tulipwood and inlaid commode, a Louis XVI tulipwood inlaid escritoire with ormolu mounts and an early 18th century oblong pier glass, all sold at Sotheby's on 25th June 1948, plus an old Italian ebony and tortoise-shell cabinet with inlaid marble panels (sold at Croome in 1948), several mahogany, rosewood and walnut tables, a set of 6 ebonised and gilt cane-back chairs, a set of 4 Sheraton satinwood and inlaid elbow chairs decorated with flowers (still in the collection), various armchairs including one of Adam's mahogany elbow chairs with a honeysuckle open splat (sold at Croome in 1948). The decorative objects were largely Dresden ceramics. No less than nineteen paintings hung in here, including, importantly, the Richard Wilson view of Croome from the south-west. There was also the pair of portraits of George III and Queen Charlotte, presented to the 6th Earl on their royal visit in 1788 - these went on loan in 1948 to Worcester City Council and hung in the Guildhall. Also, two Jan Wynants landscapes, two Salvator Rosa stormy landscapes, the school of Titian Cleopatra, and three Wouvermans (or school of). The Francis Cotes portrait of Maria Gunning, the pair of mythological scenes by Filippo Lauri and the Rape of Europa by Zuccarell are all still in the collection.

Also listed in 1930 is a satin birchwood suite of 2 settees and 8 elbow chairs upholstered in 'old gold satin', and 'two pairs of tapestry long curtains with old gold borders'. It is highly likely that, certainly the seat furniture, if not the curtains, were survivors of the 6th Earl's yellow refurbishment by Gillows 130 years earlier.

The Hare Krishnas called this the Sewing Room. It was also used as a servery where people collected their food and then took it into the Long Gallery to eat. David Powell recalls stripping off old, shredded canvas that was lining the walls. Behind this there was a different type of wooden panelling on each wall, onto which he put plaster board. He does not remember touching the ceiling.



The remaining section of the 1980s oak bar in the NE corner of the Drawing Room (*Author*)

The room today is dominated by the 'monstrous' oak bar, which was put in during the 1980s by Martin Sowbey when the Court was being used as a hotel/country club. It originally extended across the full width of the room, which would have completely obscured the chimneypiece. The modern door on the north wall (into G13) was put in to access it from behind. Scars from its fixing on the west wall dado and skirting board remain. This bar, whose only saving grace is that its carving mimics the original detailing of the dado rail and skirting, is one of the 20th century interventions that provokes debate about traditional notions of significance and heritage values. However, its prime location on the *piano nobile* is generally deemed to be more intrusive and jarring than those of the 20th century elements on the first floor of the Court.

Key sightlines:

South east	Park Seat
South	River
South	Dunstall Castle

G10 The Long Gallery

This breath-taking space was the climax of the public circuit, stretching along the entire length of the new west wing,²³⁷ and it was the first and last room in the house to occupy Adam's full attention. Indeed, the principal purpose of Adam's employment at Croome (apart from designing the interior of Brown's new Gothic church to the north east) was to finish the interior of the newly-constructed Long Gallery, the largest room in the house, in the latest Neo-classical fashion. It has been described as '*one of Adam's most sustained flights of Antique grandeur*'.²³⁸



The Long Gallery looking north, 2008 (NTPL)

With windows at each end and a vast pool of light flooding in from the canted bay window, it was full of potential, offering extensive views across the Park. It is in this room more than any other that the skill with which Brown shaped the landscape and planned the setting of the park buildings and the inter-play of sightlines can be best appreciated. Catherine Gordon makes the interesting point that it may be no coincidence that the 6th Earl's first wife died just when the decorative scheme for the room was taking shape (1760), and the room represented an important change in style away from Rococo

²³⁷ The 1824 Guide Book states that it is '*large, and well-proportioned; measuring seventy feet in length and twenty-five in breadth*'.

²³⁸ Tim Knox, Former NT Architectural Historian, 2004

profusion towards the cool severity of neo-classicism. This watershed of styles is one of the curious idiosyncrasies of the Court, something which may have felt like a natural evolution at the time but is more easily identifiable with hindsight²³⁹.

Adam began work on the Long Gallery in September 1760 with a ceiling design composed of three large octagonal compartments aligned on the projecting half-octagon bow-window in the centre of the west wall, which was rejected.²⁴⁰ Six months later, he prepared a new design²⁴¹ for a coffered ceiling of elongated octagons and diamonds modelled closely on Palladio's illustration²⁴² of the vaulted ceiling of the Temple of Peace in Rome.



Engraving of Palladio's illustration of the vaulted ceiling of the Temple of Peace in Rome (Google Images)

This design, which was approved by the 6th Earl, had a determining effect on the entire room – not only did it enhance the apparent length of the gallery but it also gave it a Roman architectural character that called for monochromatic stone colours rather than gay tints.²⁴³ Adam is often associated with highly coloured decorative schemes and there is a mistaken belief that he never designed a ceiling or a room in white. On the contrary there are several monochromatic white and 'dead stone' (off-white) Adam interiors. Croome's Long Gallery is one, in which the wall furniture was also painted 'dead stone' colour and which he described as being in the 'Antique Taste'.²⁴⁴ Charles Aylmer, the decorator billed in 1767 for '*large glass frames in the Great Room painted in dead stone*

²³⁹ The stylistic idiosyncrasies are also more visible while the Court is empty of contents.

²⁴⁰ Drawing in the Sir John Soane Museum (ref 11:34)

²⁴¹ Drawing in the Sir John Soane Museum (ref 11:36)

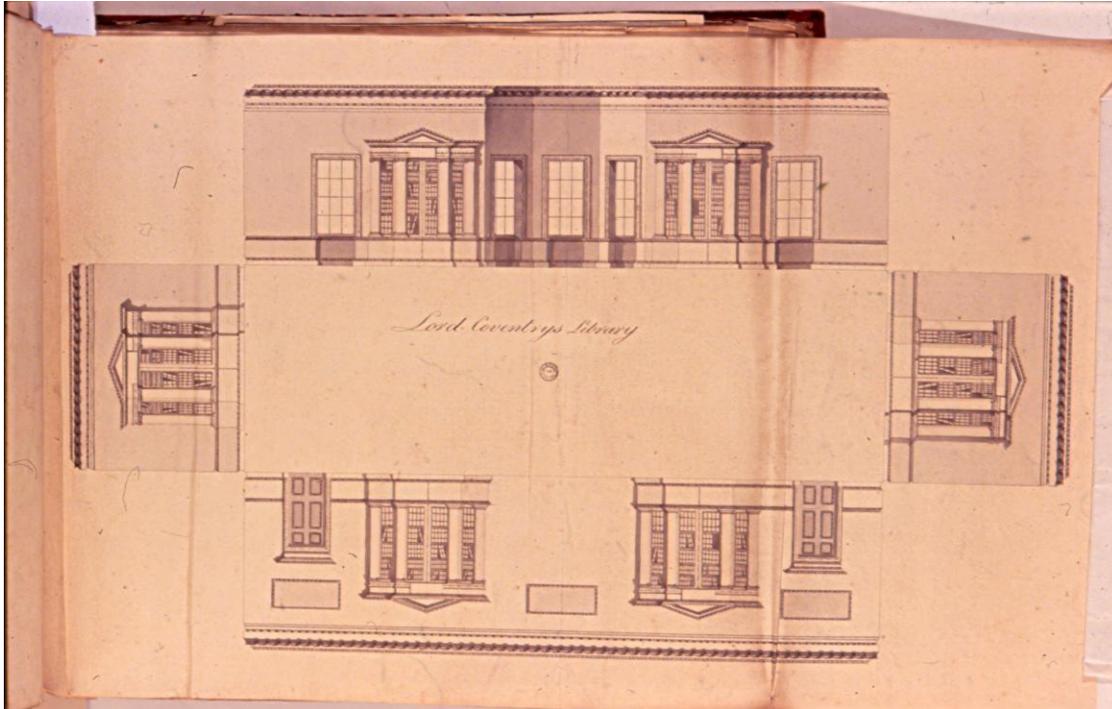
²⁴² Andrea Palladio, *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, first published in Venice in 1570 and the first complete version published in English by Leoni in 1716-20.

²⁴³ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.44

²⁴⁴ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.12

*colour.*²⁴⁵ That notwithstanding, Adam's scroll benches were originally upholstered in blue morocco leather and by 1824 the walls of the Long Gallery are described in the Guide Book as being bright blue. The blue paint scheme could have been introduced by the 7th 'Blind' Earl because he could probably have just about seen the colour and got an impression of the room.²⁴⁶

Eileen Harris suggests that it was the sobriety of this scheme which may have helped change the function of the room from the initially intended library to that of a sculpture gallery. His exploded-plan drawing showing the room fixed up as a library survives.²⁴⁷



Adam's exploded plan for the Long Gallery as a library, 1761 (rejected)
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

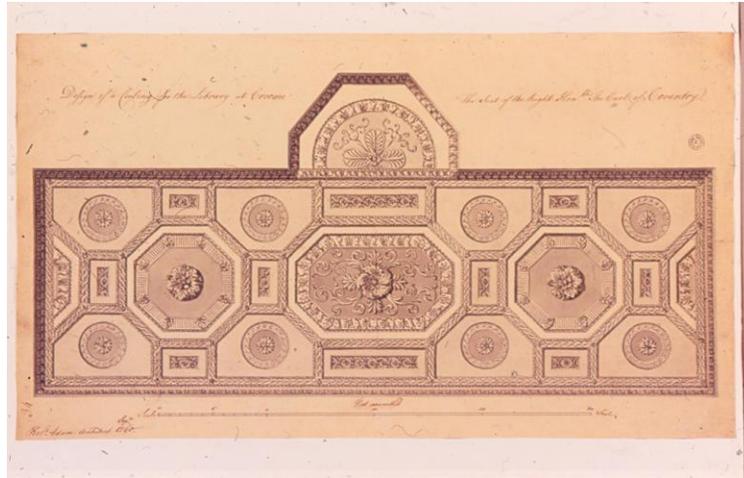
The idea of finishing a gallery in the manner of a library evidently appealed to Adam for he proposed it in 1761 not only for Croome Court but also for Osterley and Syon, although only that at Syon was executed. Adam's final decorative scheme for the Croome gallery was integral to its identity as a sculpture gallery in the Antique style, with niches along the north, east and south walls to accommodate classical statues.

Adam's first (rejected) ceiling design was inscribed as being for the Library, and the second, identical drawing was inscribed for the Gallery. The final and accepted design was annotated as being for the Gallery, thus charting the change of mind about the function and furnishing of this space.

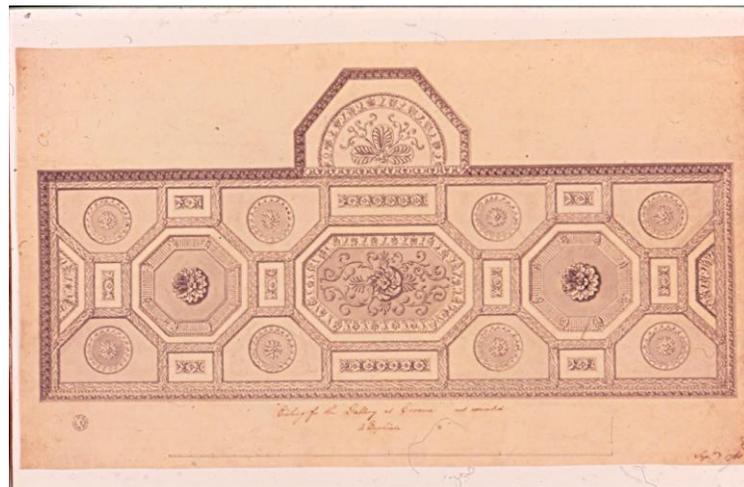
²⁴⁵ Family Box 14

²⁴⁶ Paint analysis will help unravel this evolution. Initial investigations show that the paint schemes have not been stripped and all the layers survive, with the result that many of the room's carved and plasterwork surfaces, including the ceiling, are clogged with paint and no longer as crisp as they should be.

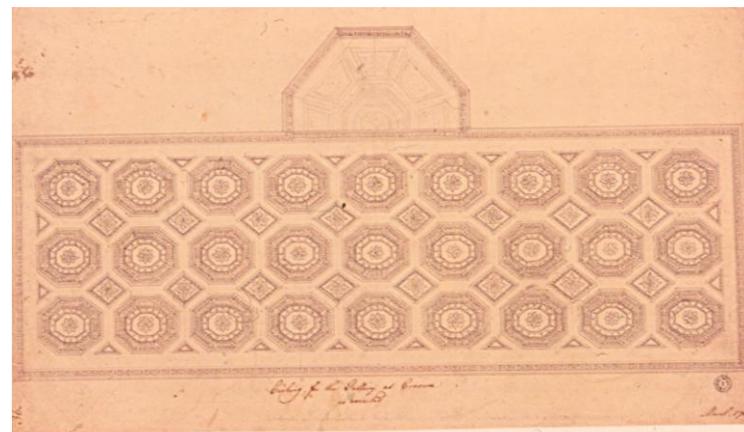
²⁴⁷ Drawing in The Sir John Soane Museum (ref 50:10)



'Design of a Ceiling for the Library at Croome, Not executed, Robt Adam Architect 1760'
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)



'Ceiling for the Gallery at Croome not executed, A Duplicate Sepr 1760', Robert Adam
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)



'Ceiling of the Gallery at Croome as executed March 1761', Robert Adam
(Note how the treatment of the bay's ceiling is hesitant and not incorporated into the main design)
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

Despite the importance of the sightlines, it is interesting that the views from the south end of the room were actually compromised for the sake of the decorative scheme, as the Venetian window side lights on the south are not expressed internally and, instead, there are niches to match those at the north end of the room. (However, this was much less constraining than the original library scheme, whereby bookcases would have completely blocked the view to the north and south). This contrasts with the magnificent bay window on the west wall from which the 180° views contribute much to the overall success of the scheme.

There was also a concerted effort to give breadth to the room to counter its length. The bay window and vast central chimneypiece on the east wall played an important role in this, as did the floor boards which are wider towards the centre. Adam's magnificent coffered plaster ceiling was also devised to enhance the room's proportions. His first drawing for the ceiling may have achieved this more successfully as it included just three central octagonal panels that would have given emphasis to the centre of the room. The way in which he ultimately treated the junction of the main ceiling with that of the bay appears a little awkward, but this may be explained by the heavy beam needed to support the structure above. It is fascinating to examine the original drawing in the Sir John Soane Museum, where the main bed of the ceiling design is confidently inked in, but the bay is a mass of indecisive pencil lines (see illustration above).

Once the design for the ceiling and the room's function had finally been decided, Adam presented a '*New Section of the Gallery finished in the Antique Taste with Statues Bas Reliefs &c*', which Eileen Harris describes as conforming to the *Horreum*²⁴⁸ mentioned by Pliny '*as a repository for statues, bas reliefs, and other curious productions of art*' and resembling the sculpture gallery at Holkham and his own contemporary design for the dining-room at Syon.²⁴⁹ Ten plaster statues by John Cheere were set within the niches along the north, south and east walls. These were: Camillus, Flora, Ganymede, Priestess of Isis, Vestal Virgin, Urania, The Medici Apollo, Mercury, Dancing Faun and The Medici Venus²⁵⁰. Cheere's bill itemises them as costing between 6 and 10 guineas each, plus the iron cramps, strong cases and hay for packing during transport.²⁵¹

The 'Antique Taste' of this room was thus achieved and expressed via several elements: the plaster replica antique statues, the coffered ceiling based on the Temple of Peace, the palmette frieze and other ornaments from the Temple of Concord and other Roman buildings and the monochrome 'dead stone' colour of the ceiling, walls and wall-furniture.

²⁴⁸ A *Horreum* was a type of public warehouse for storing goods (often food) in ancient Rome.

²⁴⁹ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.48

²⁵⁰ On the north wall was the Medici Apollo and Camillus/Urania.

On the East wall to the left of the chimneypiece were: Camillus/Urania, Priestess of Isis and Ganymede. On the East wall to the right of the chimneypiece were: Medici Venus, Capitoline Flora and Medici Mercury. On the south wall were Dancing Faun and Vestal Virgin (?)

²⁵¹ F60/33



Details of Joseph Wilton's marble chimneypiece in the Long Gallery (NTPL)

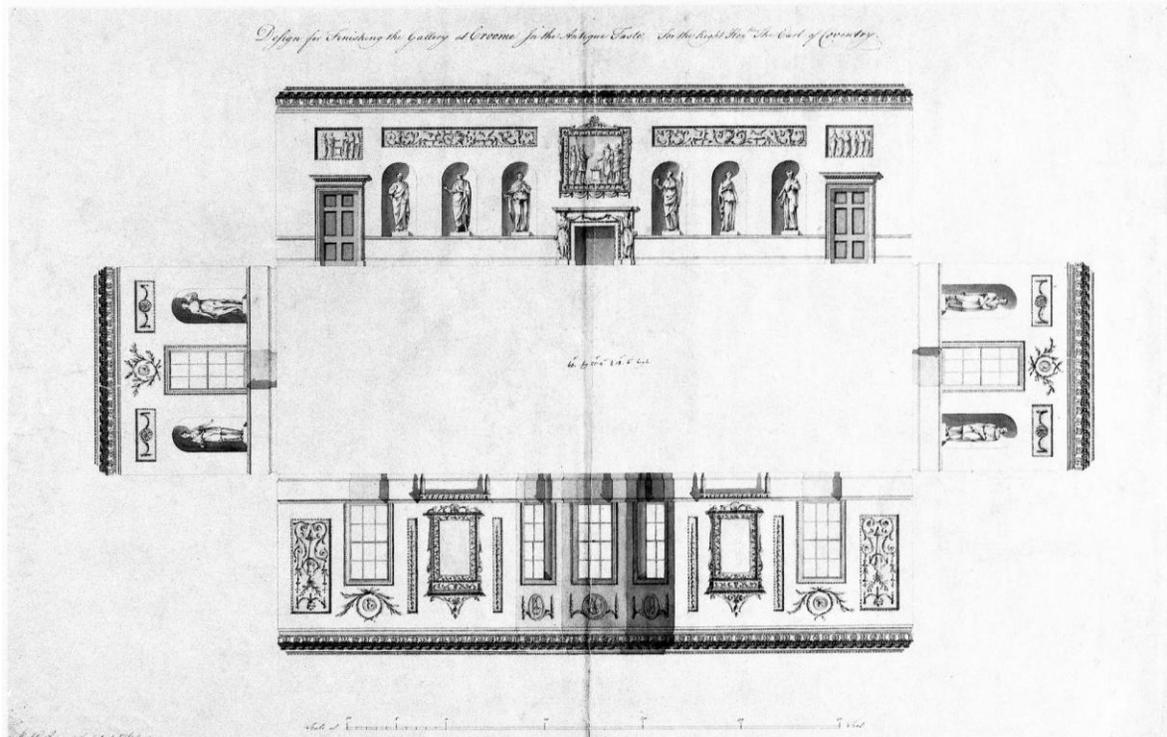
Joseph Rose began the stuccowork in 1763,²⁵² which included the ceiling and the plasterwork decoration along the east wall and above the niches, doors and windows. Hobcraft started on the room's joinery the following year.²⁵³ Alken began the woodcarving on the furnishings and details in 1765²⁵⁴ and the magnificent chimneypiece was completed by Joseph Wilton in 1766, for which he charged £300.²⁵⁵ It provides the highly effective focal point of the room, located opposite the bay window, and chiefly memorable for its life-size caryatids: Nymphs of Flora holding a floral wreath, for which he charged £300 in December 1766. It is shown in Adam's 1763 exploded drawing of the gallery and is closely related to the caryatid chimneypieces he designed in 1759 for the great dining room at Hatchlands in Surrey, for the drawing room at Kedleston in 1760 and for the gallery at Harewood in 1777.

²⁵² F62/32

²⁵³ F62/30

²⁵⁴ F62/52

²⁵⁵ F62/51



'Design for finishing the Gallery at Croome in the Antique Taste', Robert Adam, (CET)

The west wall was decorated with grisaille panels and vast pier glasses and console tables, another means of giving breadth to the room. These panels were the last of Adam's designs for the Gallery completed in January 1766. He provided (or at least invoiced) drawings for '*Two Ornamental paintings in Chiroscuro for two large pannels in the Gallery at Croome at £10 each*' and '*Four dittos for smaller pannels in ditto Gallery at £4 each*'. Judging from this description of them and his 1763 exploded drawing (see above) they must have been intended for the west wall: the two large panels at the ends and the four narrower ones flanking the pier tables and glasses. Only the two larger panels still survive but have been damaged and over-painted.²⁵⁶ (See Appendix 30 for condition report).

²⁵⁶ There is some doubt as to whether these were designs to be worked up as low-relief plaster panels, or whether they were always intended as grisaille paintings on canvas. In 1915, Country Life assumed the former and referred to the panels as 'sketches'. However, on balance it is felt that they were intended as painted canvas panels, rather than being only temporary sketches, awaiting relief plaster replacements.



One of the two surviving grisaille panels in the Long Gallery (on the west wall) (Author)

Another grisaille was set above the chimneypiece, showing a Roman sacrifice in an Adam-designed frame carved by Sefferin Alken²⁵⁷ to match the pair of pier-glasses flanking the bow window on the opposite wall. The grisaille painting and its stone-coloured frame were acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1960 and replaced by replicas.²⁵⁸ The replicas were subsequently also removed in the 1980s by one of the property developers. One of the pair of pier-glasses and tables is also at the Metropolitan and the other is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. They all share the same design elements of recessed panels of classical ornament, capitals bearing female masks, anthemion palmettes, husk swags and female terms in profile.

²⁵⁷ F62a/11

²⁵⁸ The original painting is shown as part of the Metropolitan's installation of the Lansdowne Room, although the frame is in storage. The Met describes the grisaille thus: "*While the subject is in the antique taste, only Abundance, crowned with a wreath and supporting a cornucopia, and the piping Pan behind her can be identified.*" Alastair Laing, NT Curator of Pictures & Sculpture, commented: "*The grisaille above the chimneypiece seems to show one of those generalised scenes of sacrifice taken from the Arch of Constantine and popularised by the prints in Bellori & Santo Bartoli's Admiranda Romanarum.....Monumenta and Montfaucon's L'Antiquité expliquée. But I don't think that it is actually directly copied from any of those; rather does it seem to be a compilation of figures from them and from elsewhere. That would also explain the discrepancy between it and the relief shown in Adam's drawing - though it should also be said that the paintings and reliefs actually incorporated in Adam's schemes often diverge from what he had drawn.*"

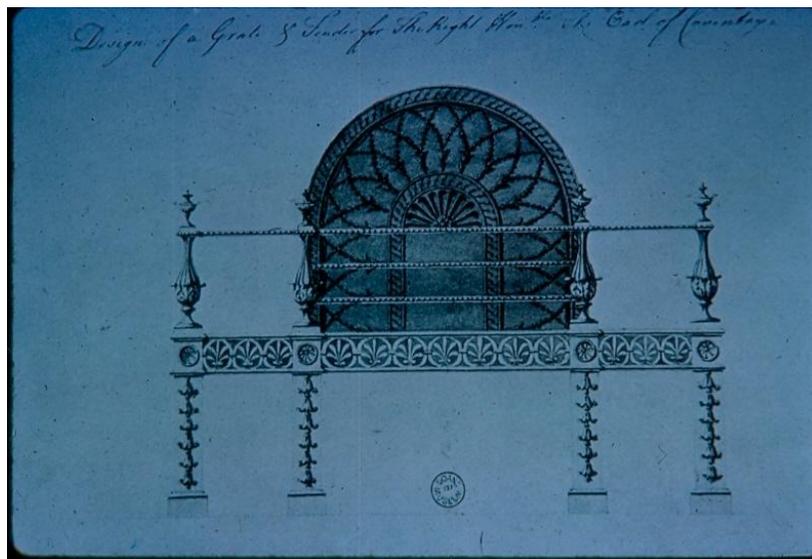


The Long Gallery in 1915, showing the chimneypiece, fire-grate, overmantel grisaille panel and frame, part of the ceiling, chair and scroll-end bench, all designed by Robert Adam (*Country Life*)



The frame for the overmantel grisaille, designed by Robert Adam and carved by Sefferin Alken (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

In June 1765, Adam designed a fire-grate and fender enriched with a variety of classical ornaments including the enclosed palmettes used elsewhere in the room. It was made the following year by Hartley & Cooper and is said to be the earliest securely dated example of fireplace furniture by Adam.²⁵⁹ It is visible in the 1915 *Country Life* photographs of the room, but sadly no longer survives²⁶⁰.



'Design of a Grate & Fender for the Right Honble the Earl of Coventry', Robert Adam
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

²⁵⁹ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.50

²⁶⁰ The present whereabouts of the fire-grate are unknown.



The Long Gallery, looking north, 1915 (*Country Life*)

The room was a magnificent and cleverly-crafted composition, among Adam's earliest and best. He designed every detail, the chairs, the scroll-ended benches, the tables, the mirrors, the wealth of mouldings, the light fittings, the fire-grate and the door furniture, as a complete work of art.

Four of the set of ten scroll-end benches, one of the most significant elements of the designed furniture for this room, are still in the Coventry collection. They were designed by Adam in three different sizes, supplied by France & Bradburn and carved by Sefferin Alken. The Croome archive contains France & Bradburn's bill for the stools with details of how they were constructed, as follows:

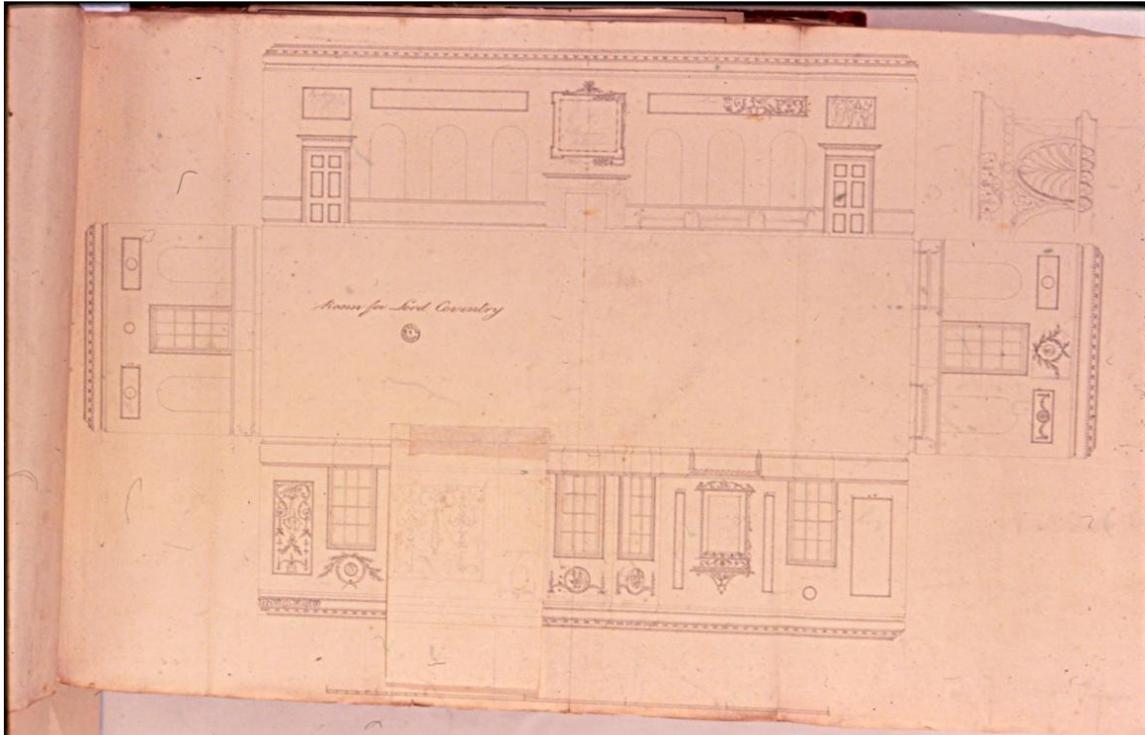
"January 1766 - For 2 Mahog. Scrole Sofas 8ft 2in from out to out Feet neatly fluted Seat and Heads stuf and cover'd with fine Morocco Leather and the other carved work for Scroles, and Rails, and Ornaments got out of the same Plank with the feet for the certainty of matching in colour after Mr Alkin had carved them and putting on all the ornaments after, carved, and varnishing very carefully the whole after it was put up @ £14 - 15s. each.

... 4 more only not so long by 21ins;

... 4 more in the same manner only not so long as the last by 27ins.

... 57 1/2 yards of blue Padua serge. For the making of the Serge cases to the 10 Scrole Sofas to hang below the carved rail, blue sewing silk, tape and all small materials”.

Eileen Harris²⁶¹ explains the likely positioning of the benches: “In the office copy of Adam’s 1763 wall elevations [of the Long Gallery] at the Soane, the stools are indicated in pencil under the niches, the four on the end walls being slightly larger than those on the chimney piece wall.

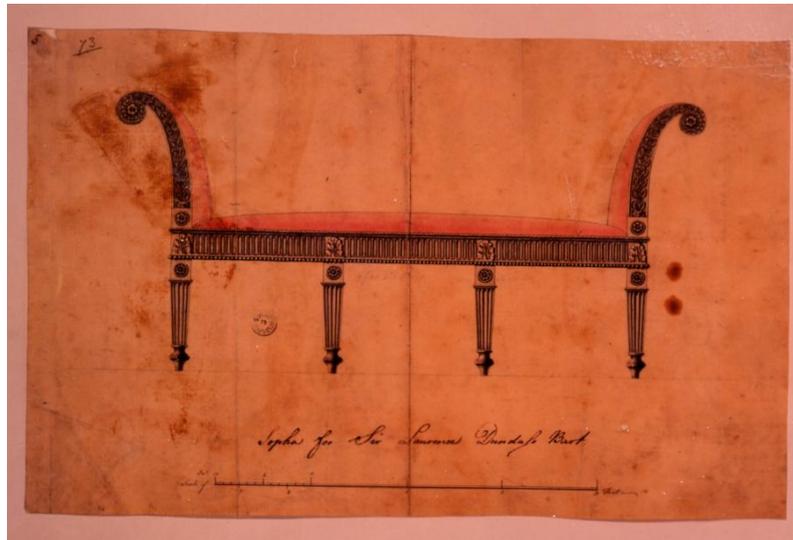


Adam’s 1763 exploded plan for the Long Gallery, showing the suggested positions of the scroll-end benches. (Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

In the event, stools of three different sizes were supplied in January 1766 by John Bradburn in collaboration with Sefferin Alken: two large ones (‘8ft 2ins from out to out’), four 6ft 5ins and four at 4ft 2ins. The two largest were probably placed against the west wall, either under the windows or the *chiaroscuro* (grisaille) panels; the four middle-sized ones may have stood between the niches on the chimney piece wall, and the smaller ones under the niches on the end walls. Four armchairs could then have been placed on either side of the middle-sized stools and the other four flanking the pier tables.

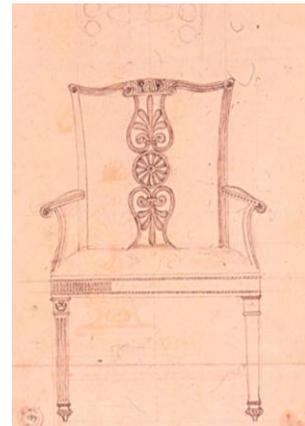
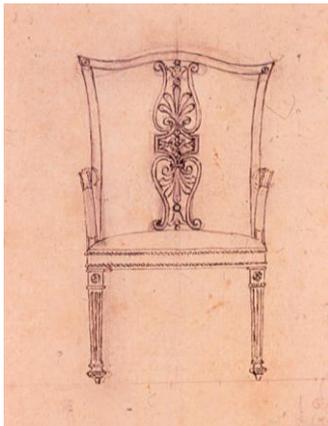
A ‘Design for a Sopha (i.e. stool) for the Gallery’ was made in October 1764, but this evidently was not acceptable and in February 1765 Adam made ‘another Design of a Sopha or Scrole Chair’ as well as a ‘Design of a Chair for the Gallery’. The only surviving drawing that corresponds to the Croome stools is an undated one in the Soane which is inscribed ‘Sopha for Sir Lawrence Dundas Bart’ and is included in Adam’s bill of 1766 for drawings made for Moor Park. Dundas seems not to have shared Coventry’s taste for the *goût grec*.”

²⁶¹ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, pp.52-3



Adam's design for the large scroll-end bench for the Long Gallery
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

Unlike the stools, the *en suite* armchairs with palmette splats were not made by France & Bradburn, but by their rival John Cobb in 1765 (William Vile had retired from the partnership in 1764) and they were designed by Adam. However, the specialist carving of the splats and other enrichments was again done by Sefferin Alken. John Cobb presented an invoice of £30 for '8 Mahogany Arm'd chairs the seats stuff'd & cover'd with blue Morrocco Leather and finish'd with burnish'd nails, and Carving all the Arms and 2 front feet, all the rest Carv'd by Mr Alkin'. There are two differing Adam designs for these chairs in the Soane museum – it appears that Adam presented them to the Earl and that he gave the approved design to John Cobb with the stipulation that Alken should carve the important ornament. Both Adam and the Earl were aware of Alken's very considerable talents as a carver.²⁶² There is a striking similarity between the ornament on the seat-rails and legs of these chairs and the scroll-end benches as, even though they were commissioned from two different cabinet-makers, both were designed by Adam for the same room and both had the specialist carving executed by Alken.



Two designs for armchairs by Robert Adam associated with the Long Gallery
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

²⁶² Anthony Coleridge, *English furniture supplied to Croome Court*, p.15

There are intriguing references relating to a carpet in the Long Gallery: in 1767 Thomas Moore billed for “*A fine Persia Carpet to your own plan containing 83 Ells, £112*”.²⁶³ It is possible that this relates to the carpet shown in a late 19th century/early 20th century photograph that reflects the geometry of the ceiling design (see below). There is also an undated plan of a carpet, annotated: “*These dimensions are the exact for the Matt in the Gallery*”.²⁶⁴ The dimensions indicate that the carpet was close-fitted into the bay but fell short of both ends of the Gallery by several feet.



Long Gallery c.1870 (?) showing carpet resembling ceiling design.
Note square format of overdoor panel, since replaced as a rectangle. (WRO)

By 1824, under the 7th ‘Blind’ Earl, the room had lost some of its antique sobriety: although it is referred to as ‘The Statuary Room’, the guide book describes it as being “*now generally used, as a morning family-room: and is, for that purpose, appropriately furnished*”.

²⁶³ F60/49. [An ell, when used as an English unit of length, is usually 45 inches. It was mainly used in the tailoring business but is now obsolete. It was derived from the length of the arm from the shoulder (or the elbow) to the wrist].

²⁶⁴ F58/7/2

The 9th Earl & Countess gave Christmas tea parties for the combined Sunday schools and choirs of Croome and Pirton. Tea was held in the Servants' Hall and then the children were led upstairs to the Long Dining Room (as it was known) to the Christmas tree, "*one mass of glittering, scintillating beauty, stretching up towards the great Adam ceiling*".²⁶⁵

The 1930 inventory lists the pair of Adam pier tables and mirrors, a set of three (Adam) mahogany elbow chairs with honeysuckle back splats, four of the set of ten scroll-end benches (two are listed in the Saloon and one in the Tapestry Room), the seven box window cornices and the ten plaster figures by John Cheere. Also listed are fifteen mahogany dining chairs with fiddle back splats, nine mahogany dining chairs with a wheel back splat, twelve dining chairs with stuffed seats, further cane armchairs, two pairs of Adam torchères, an extending dining table, sixteen various other tables, a Dutch leather folding screen, an upright piano, a bureau bookcase, quantities of decorative glassware and bronze figures, and so on.



The Long Gallery looking south, c.1938, showing the profusion of dining furniture.
(Reproduced by permission of English Heritage NMR)

When the Court was on the market in 1947, a portion of the woodwork in the south-east corner of the 'Long Dining Room' showed bad signs of rot as a result of damp. The grisaille panel above the door in that corner fell off. Colonel Smith, the CET's agent, wrote to the solicitors: "*... it is one of the series of Adams painted decorations and appears to be painted on very thin plaster which is in turn backed on canvas...unless*

²⁶⁵ *Christmas at Croome Court, Life and Times of Mrs Dorothy Ball at Croome*, Scrapbook loaned by Diana Stanley, Tea Room, Hanbury Hall

*this placque is restored it might easily affect the sale price of the House...I am having the placque carefully stored pending a decision as to what action should be taken.*²⁶⁶

This would explain the fact that the original square format grisaille overdoors have been replaced by rectangular panels, presumably more easily replicated from the adjacent stucco panels. The north-east panel was probably done to match.



The Long Gallery in 2008 showing the rectangular SE overdoor panel (NTPL)

When the Court was purchased by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese and became a school, part of the deal was that they were obliged to allow certain fixtures to remain in place. An inventory of September 1949 states that the Long Gallery statues were to remain at the Court and were to be stored on behalf of the vendors. If the property was sold on, these statues were to be returned to the Trustees who had the '*powers of a tenant for life*'.²⁶⁷ In the event, the statues were removed from the Gallery niches and put into storage, to be sold by the Croome Trustees in 1960²⁶⁸ with other items from the house. The seven 'Adam' painted box window cornices were still listed as being in situ in the 1979 'Schedule of pictures and effects at Croome Court which remain the property of the Trustees'.

The school used the room as their refectory, and filled it with rows of long tables for the school boys to eat at. There were lots of parties and dances in the room: Leonard Edwards, son of Albert Edwards the Caretaker, used it to celebrate his 18th birthday, and his mother her 60th.

²⁶⁶ Letter from Col. Smith to E.H.L Rowcliffe & Col. Davies-Evans (Solicitors), CET

²⁶⁷ Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham archive (BSC/H5).

²⁶⁸ The plaster figures were sold to the dealer Frank Partridge. Two are now at Los Angeles County Museum and some are at Kenwood House, (English Heritage).



The Long Gallery as the Catholic school refectory (*Leonard Edwards*)



The Long Gallery as the Catholic school refectory (*Leonard Edwards*)

Before the Hare Krishnas' temple was completed in the stableyard, they used the Long Gallery as their temporary temple. Subsequently, they used the room for special events, feasts and for concerts at Christmas. In the evenings it was often the place for classes and lectures, especially when senior members of the movement visited. While the Hare Krishnas were in residence, the figures on either side of Joseph Wilton's marble chimneypiece had marks (known as Tiluk) painted on their forehead. David Powell remembers that the room was in a pretty bad state: "*You got the feeling that ball games had been played in here. The Hare Krishnas had asked some Italians to work out a paint scheme for the room, which I executed (I can't remember exactly what it was) but the Hare Krishnas didn't like it and asked me to re-paint the room as I felt appropriate, although they didn't want anything garish*".

The Long Gallery was used as the playroom of the last property developer's children, complete with trampoline, ironically perhaps, not a million miles away from the historical use of Long Galleries for exercising in inclement weather.

Of all the rooms in the Court, this is the greatest vantage point, or 'grandstand', where the sightlines and connections into the landscape are the most important. The 1824 Guide Book states: "*From the window, delightful views are seen – on the one side, of the lake and its grand wood-scenery; and on the other, of the temple, deeply ambushed in its verdant shade. Several vistas are formed; through which, open more distant prospects. The fore-ground is occupied by oaks, and elms, and other tenants of the forest; of large size, and luxuriant growth pleasingly disposed – and, all about, appear sheep and cattle, feeding or reposing*".²⁶⁹

In 2011 investigations and emergency repair work was carried out in response to water ingress above the canted bay, resulting in a small section of plasterwork falling off. Lifting of floorboards in the rooms above found long-standing issues of rot, insect damage and historic movement of the structure. (See report in Appendix 29).

Key sightlines:

South east	Park Seat
South	River
South	Dunstall Castle
South west	Chinese Bridge (site of)
West	Malvern Hills
West	great Cedar
West	Panorama Tower
North west	Urn
North west	Temple Greenhouse
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
North east	Church

²⁶⁹ William Dean, "An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D'Abitot", Section IV, Croome House, 1824, p.51

G11-12 The Backstairs Lobby

This space is one of those instances where the Court falls surprisingly short of architectural and decorative expectations.

Catherine Gordon makes the point that the exit through the north-east door of the Long Gallery should have completed the impressive western circuit of the house through the Billiard Room to the Hall. Instead a plain, confined space beneath the half-landing of the backstairs produces an instant anti-climax and sense of confusion. The few plaster mouldings on the half-landing are poorly-finished, and the entrance into the Billiard Room is markedly low in height: another instance perhaps where the 6th Earl's indecision and thrift appears to have collided with Adam's genius to regrettable effect. It is also odd that one of the entrances to and exits from the most impressive room in the house connects with the Back Stairs, rather than the Main Stairs, and makes one wonder why the 6th Earl was content with this arrangement, even though he seems to have made consciously old-fashioned design choices in the case of the Back Stairs.

The 1809 inventory lists the space as the 'Passage adjoining [the Billiard Room]' containing a 'Large Mahogany Bookcase' and a 'Folding Screen'. As one might expect, the inventory taken upon the 9th Earl's death lists a miscellaneous selection of objects crammed into this handy space: a Chippendale mahogany triangular table, a Louis XV ebony and brass work table, a tall mahogany wall cupboard, a mahogany wall cabinet, an 'Adam' gilt-frame wall mirror, a large sea gull in a case, three 'Galvo' fire extinguishers, carriage mats, an enamelled iron washstand, a stepladder, a floor polisher and a housemaid's box and contents.

The lower section of housing for a dumb waiter remains in the window 'seat' on the north wall. This brought food up from the school's kitchen in B27 to the Refectory in the Long Gallery. It appears that during the school's occupation, the window was boarded up to allow the dumb waiter to rise at this point. The mechanism is still in place directly below in the basement. The school also enclosed the staircase shaft in order to comply with fire regulations in the 1960s. This was removed in 2009.



The Backstairs lobby outside the Long Gallery showing the dumb waiter still in place on the right with boarded-up window and staircase shaft (*Leonard Edwards*)

G12/B29/F7/S19 The Back Stairs

Until the main staircase was introduced in the mid-18th century re-modelling, it seems that this was the location of the principal stair in the 17th century house, rising within one of the projecting north bays; its west wall would have been an external wall. Despite its early 18th century appearance, it seems unlikely that this staircase was moved from elsewhere to its present location. This is because, like the Billiard Room and the Alcove Bedroom (F8) that leads off the first landing, it is designed, confusingly, in an early 18th century style.

The most obvious conclusion is that the 6th Earl chose to have the staircase designed in an earlier style because he liked it and because he wanted to create an appropriate link between the rooms on the ground and first floors in which he was using and adapting the panelling stockpiled by the 4th Earl. This created an appealing progression through the house that was fitted out all in one specific period. It is all the more surprising therefore, that the cornice, dado rail and panelling are quite ill-matched and crudely finished. Furthermore, the staircase itself is of splendid quality, yet in order to function in this confined location it does not correspond with the window levels. So it seems that internal effect was again compromised in order to maintain the symmetry of the external elevation.



The backstairs rising to first floor level, showing the original balusters in place during the school's occupation. Note the dado paint treatment. (*Leonard Edwards*)

In 1757 Hobcraft was paid for turning balusters and in 1764 he was paid for filling in a niche on these stairs (*'dado where the Nitch was...quartering up the front of the nitch*),²⁷⁰ although the location of this is uncertain, and there is confusingly an existing niche on the ground floor level of the stairs that is not shown in the 1771 *Vitruvius* plan.

²⁷⁰ F62/30

This route down to the Basement was not completed by Hobcraft till 1764 and appears to have been in sequence with the completion of the Long Gallery. The lower flight of stairs was built in Forest stone (now heavily repaired), the same as the lower flight of the main stairs.



The lower reaches of the Backstairs being covered with plywood in 2009 for H&S reasons, showing the heavily repaired stone treads (*Author*)

The stairs to the upper three floors are of timber open-well construction and of superior quality, with columnar posts, an elegant moulded handrail and broad shallow treads with carved ends, but only a few of the original slender carved balusters remain *in situ*. Most of them (apart from two on the ground floor) were removed in the 1980s²⁷¹ and replaced with modern timber spiral balusters. The 1930 inventory lists three seascape paintings on the Back Staircase but it is not clear on which level. During the school's occupation the boys used this back staircase to go up to the dormitories.

²⁷¹ These have since been retrieved.



Current side view of the backstairs, showing the modern balusters and missing string detail (*Author*)

G13

This might seem at first glance to be a completely unimportant and insignificant small space, now containing a modern toilet and hand-basin. However, it can potentially tell us a lot about the earlier house and the positions of the earlier staircases.



The 'cloakroom' in G13, 2010 (*Ellie Collier*)

This tiny bridging space between the Drawing Room and the back stairs is formed within a tier of voids towards the western end of the ground floor, a position that would have been right at the west end of the 1640s house. It is effectively hollowed out of the thickness of the spine wall. The 1771 Vitruvius Britannicus plan shows no opening in this position. However, we know that the main stairs in the 1640s house was at the western end of the building and this may account for the arched openings through the spine wall at this end (see also F7). As this ground floor opening within the spine wall is believed to extend right down to the basement with its floor forming a 'bridge' across it, this could have been to make way for a short additional backstairs to the basement. An additional service stair at this end of the house would have made sense as it would have been practical to have access to the basement from both ends of the building.

Leonard Edwards remembers that this space between the thickness of the chimney wall used to be open downwards into the basement level and that there was a kind of wooden bridge over the gap in the 1970s. His father used to say that this gap showed evidence of the 'Elizabethan' house.²⁷²

²⁷² Sound recording & walk-round with Leonard Edwards (son of Caretaker) who grew up in the Court, May-June 2009

G14 The Billiard Room

This room is a fascinating conundrum. There is little mention of it in the historic bills, and one would be forgiven for thinking it had been 'left behind' in the 6th Earl's re-modelling of the house and that it is not particularly interesting. Yet it underwent a lot of structural changes: the room was created by Brown from a bay of the 17th century projecting north-west wing and a bay of the in-filled north front. It also occupied the most probable location of the former grand staircase in the upper part of the Hall in the 17th century house. Part of the north elevation is an entirely new wall, as is the east elevation with its odd chimneypiece (as found when the shared chimney-flue between this and the Entrance Hall were investigated). Joseph Rose records whitewashing in the Billiard Room in 1763.²⁷³

There were originally only three doors as shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus* and this is confirmed by Hobcraft's bill for the room²⁷⁴. The north-east door opening from the Hall was probably inserted after 1771 (although prior to that there may well have been a false door there for symmetry).

Everywhere in this room there are attempts to deceive the eye into believing this is a symmetrical space. The windows are not equally spaced within the room, as one is set nearer to the side wall than the other. The chimneypiece is not central, and the spine corridor actually crosses the south end of the room in an attempt to gain additional space.



The incongruous chimneypiece in the Billiard Room (Author)

²⁷³ F62/32

²⁷⁴ F62/15. Hobcraft's brief reference to this room in this bill from 1759 is one of the few mentions of this room in the archive.

Also of interest is the wooden bolection panelling all around the walls. This is early 18th century in style but cannot be in its original location as the room is an entirely c.1751 creation. It is almost certainly re-used, as is implied by Hobcraft's bill of 1759 which refers only to making doors and architraves for the room. The assumption must be that this was part of the wainscoting that was stockpiled by the 4th Earl and this theory is supported by the distinct difference in the size of the panels. The intention is that they should all appear equal but in fact they all vary up to several centimetres in width from each other in order to fit the dimensions of the room satisfactorily. It is done with great ingenuity, and here the 6th Earl's recycling of materials creates a room of considerable character, well-suited to its masculine function. This use of earlier panelling in a mid-18th century room also provides an interesting insight into the 6th Earl's philosophy of approach, perhaps a combination of thrift and nostalgia. It was an approach he also seems to have used in the Back Stairs and, importantly, in his bedroom (F8), thus creating a decorative link between these spaces.

The only incongruous feature in the room is the ornate, rather feminine, Rococo chimneypiece of c.1759, which sits uncomfortably next to the panelling and is an obvious introduction. No bill survives for this. It is possible that the matching pair to the bolection-moulded fossil chimneypiece in the 6th Earl's bedroom (F8), which is now in his 'retirement' apartment in the Red Wing, was originally in here, making the decorative links between the spaces even stronger.²⁷⁵

Croome appears to have had a billiard table from quite early on in the history of the game. One is mentioned in the 1719 inventory and the 1809 Inventory lists: "*a Billiard Table, 3 Pair of Balls, 2 Pair of Inlaid Maces, 5 Mahogany Cues, 14 other Cues, 18 Maces, Pair of Battledoses²⁷⁶, 4 Elbow Chairs Leather seats, Plated Dogs Collar, 8 Portraits, 3 Drawings of Croome, Corner Table, Oval Mahogany Table, Set of fire Irons and fender, Dial, Barometer and Thermometer, Inlaid Cabinet.*"

The 1824 Guide Book describes the room as "*sufficiently spacious; and properly fitted up. Its massive table is of a large size. Its ceiling is ornamented: and its walls are adorned with portraits – one of Henry Bulkley Coventry, Esq. – another of the late Lord Deerhurst – a third of Lord William Craven, in armour*". The latter was sold in 1948.

In 1930, the room had a full size billiard table by Burroughs & Watts with an Axminster carpet surround, but it must have been difficult to actually play, as there was also a 'parlour' billiards table, three settees, seven mahogany elbow chairs, fringed festoon curtains, an oak refectory table, a Welsh dresser, two birch and cane seats in the window recesses, two weighing machines (for jockeys?), four card/reading tables, two screens, a 'Chinese Chippendale' wall mirror, an invalid carrying chair, three easy chairs, three more of the Adam honeysuckle-back splat chairs (from the Long Gallery), a dressing table, a bureau bookcase, a dumb-waiter, a small quantity of archery, croquet

²⁷⁵ The function of the room, billiards, could also be a way that the 6th Earl remembered and acknowledged his ancestors: we know that Gilbert, 4th Earl had an early example of a billiard table, possibly stored in the Evidence House in the south garden, because one is listed in the 1719 inventory taken upon his death. Could the 6th Earl have played on this as he grew up at Croome? If so, this gives the Billiard Room greater significance. (Billiards was a way of bringing the outdoor game of bowls inside, hence the green baize on the table).

²⁷⁶ Possibly a mis-spelling of 'battledores', which seem to have been rackets for the game battledore, which is like modern badminton.

and tennis equipment in deal boxes and three cases of taxidermy. In addition to this were quantities of Oriental and Worcester porcelain and thirty-seven pieces of Japanese lacquer. The panelling was hung with no less than forty-eight paintings, watercolours, prints and engravings, including the c.1750 plan of Croome, one of our key documents for understanding the earlier house and setting. The oil paintings included portraits of the 5th Earl & Countess of Coventry by Kneller, the full length portraits of the Hon. John Bulkley Coventry (the 6th Earl's favourite son) and George William (later 6th Earl of Coventry) as a young man, by Ramsay. These are still in the collection. A portrait of the Lord Keeper and one of Thomas Coventry jostled for position with shepherdesses, foxhounds, landscapes and field sports. There were also examples of the 9th Earl's acquisitions of prints of his ancestors, particularly Lady Maria Coventry.

During the school's occupation it was used as a classroom for the youngest children, with small tables and chairs. There was a blackboard on the south wall, and a Punch & Judy theatre. Leonard Edwards remembers the panelled walls as being painted a pale colour.



The SW corner of the Billiard Room used as a classroom,
with Punch & Judy theatre in the background (*Leonard Edwards*)



The NW corner of the Billiard Room
used as a classroom (*Leonard Edwards*)

Initial opening-up works in 2012 have revealed tantalising glimpses of timber construction, as well as a significant gap between the inner and outer walls of the west elevation, both of which almost undoubtedly relate to the structure of the earlier house and the way in which it was modified in the mid-18th century.

Key sightlines:

North west	Temple Greenhouse
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
North east	Church

THE FIRST FLOOR

(For a summary of the key features of each of the first floor spaces, refer to the Gazetteer, Appendix 1).

The general layout of the first floor repeats that of the ground floor with the rooms ranged along each side of the spine wall with a long lateral corridor. The 17th century room(s) above the Saloon was taken away to make space for the double-height Saloon, and this reduced the amount of accommodation on the first floor. However, as all the public rooms were situated on the ground floor of the re-modelled house (as opposed to the earlier convention of these being on the first floor), this loss was insignificant.

In general, the architectural decoration is much simpler and less sophisticated, not least because Adam designed only part of one room (F8) and a few of the chimneypieces (F3 and a pair in F10 & F12). The spine corridor created a clear division between the new suite of rooms for Lord and Lady Coventry that ran along the north front, and the south range, which consisted of just two rooms in the central block separated by the great void over the Saloon. The Best Bedroom (F3) lay to the east of the void and Lord Coventry's dressing room, known as the Alcove Room (F8) after 1764, lay to the west of it. These rooms retained much of their former proportions, as on the ground floor. The east and west wings were divided into additional bedrooms and dressing rooms; the west wing was approached up a short flight of steps because of the extra height occupied by the Long Gallery ceiling.

The suite of rooms created along the new north front (F14-F18) is likely to have been the first to be completed as they formed the private suite for Lord & Lady Coventry. This important suite of marital rooms relates essentially to the 6th Earl and his second wife Barbara. His first wife, Maria, died in 1760, when the house was effectively still a building site. It is known that she died in a room overlooking the church, so it would have been within this suite, but she would not have had chance to occupy these rooms for very long as they were only just being completed by the time of her death.

The joinery work is largely of a similar style and finish throughout this suite of rooms, with moulded skirtings, dado rails, moulded architraves to the windows and doors and deep cornices, some of this in oak and some in painted softwood, including the chimneypieces. In 1781 the bedroom, dressing room and closet are recorded to have been redecorated in white on brown ground wallpaper combined with white on brown cartouche paper laid over new linen, and the adjoining dressing room in the pavilion (F18) was also redecorated with a blue striped wallpaper.²⁷⁷

The bills from Thomas Bromwich from 1759 and 1762²⁷⁸ and from Compton & Spinnage of 1763 show that most of the main bedrooms were wallpapered in red or blue sprig or embossed yellow and blue silk, and they were painted in dead white or dead stone colour with some mahogany graining.

²⁷⁷ F62/59

²⁷⁸ F52/69/69a

F2 9th Countess's Boudoir

This room is en-suite to the adjacent 'best' bedroom (F3) and there is a sense of it being subservient to it, probably as a dressing room. One of the anomalies of the 1771 Vitruvius plan is that it shows no link door to F3 through the thickness of what was the east external wall of the 17th century house. This is probably an oversight given that the other access to the room is via a jib door leading to the main staircase.

There is some doubt as to whether it was historically referred to as 'The Blew [Blue] Bedroom' due to a reference in John Hobcraft's large 1759 bill²⁷⁹ apparently for this space. However, this is unlikely as the name is also used in an earlier inventory (i.e. for the earlier house) and this room was 'new' in the mid-18th century, being within the East pavilion that Brown added. There is a 1763 reference in a Joseph Rose bill to 'whitewashing' in the '*best bedchamber and dressing room*' which could relate to this room.

In the late 19th century it was known as Lady Coventry's Dressing Room and during the 9th Countess's time it became her Boudoir, as listed in the 1930 inventory. As with the other rooms in the house during the Victorian period, it was crammed with furniture: easy chairs, sofas, a piano, writing desk, tables, pictures, screens, photographs, books and 'bibelots'. Even one of Adam's scroll-end benches has crept up onto the first floor - it can just be seen in an early 1900s photograph of the room. The contents are listed in the 1930 inventory and include an Adam ebonised and gilt torchere, the oil painting of 9th Earl seated in an easy chair by Sir Percy Bigland and the companion piece of the 9th Countess by Leon Sprinck (both still in the collection). Interestingly, it also includes a chimneyglass described as "*A Chippendale carved and gilt chimney glass, with oblong centre plate surrounded by smaller plates, in serpentine moulding and acanthus foliated frame, surmounted by a basket of flowers and with festoons and swags of fruit and flowers - 5ft 9 in wide, 7ft 6in high.*" (See image below). This is very likely to be the one supplied in 1759 by Linnell and described in his bill as '*a large Chimney frame very handsome by drawing & gilt in burnished gold for Lady Coventry's Dressing Room at Croome. A large glass 49ins by 30ins & glass borders to ditto*'. It was probably moved into this room from F17 when this became the 9th Countess' Boudoir (See also section on F17).

²⁷⁹ F62/15



A very late 19th / early 20th century photograph of the 9th Countess of Coventry's Boudoir.
 Note the chimneyglass by Linnell, and the arm of the Adam scroll-end bench
 just visible on the extreme right (from the Long Gallery) (WRO)

At some point after this early photograph was taken the chimneypiece was changed. There is clear physical evidence around the existing plain marble chimneypiece, which lacks the curved upper section of the earlier one seen in this image, which also appears to have had its jambs set on the diagonal.



The replacement chimneypiece on the north wall of F2, showing where it has been 'let-in' (Author)

The school used the room as dormitory: in 1968 it is recorded as having 9 beds in it.²⁸⁰ Modern pipework and risers for services have resulted in some unsightly boxing-in to the right of the chimneypiece in the NE corner.



F2 as it appears today with boxed-in services to right of chimneypiece (Author)

Key sightlines:

South	Park Seat
South	River
South	Dunstall Castle

²⁸⁰ Fire precautions floorplans, CET

F3 The Chinese Bedroom

This is the 'Best' Bedroom and would essentially have acted as the 'state' bedroom. Convention would have required a state bedroom and F3 is the only real candidate, as it is at the head of the main staircase. The fact that it has such fine joinery and chimneypiece and was later 9th Lady Coventry's Bedroom would also support this arrangement. It is linked to the adjacent room in the south-east pavilion (F2), which served as a dressing room.

It is often referred to as The Chinese Room as, in the 18th century, the walls were covered with Chinese landscape wallpaper, supplied by Compton & Spinnage in 1763. This survived until it was sold at Sotheby's in 1948.²⁸¹ The catalogue described it as "A fine and rare set of 18th century Chinese wallpaper hangings, painted in polychrome with imaginative scenes set in a landscape of mountains, rivers and islands; on the islands are numerous houses and pavilions, and the figures include ladies at various pursuits, mandarins, scholars and sages, children at school and at play, fishermen, gardeners and labourers". It is listed in the 1930 inventory as extending to about 70 square yards.

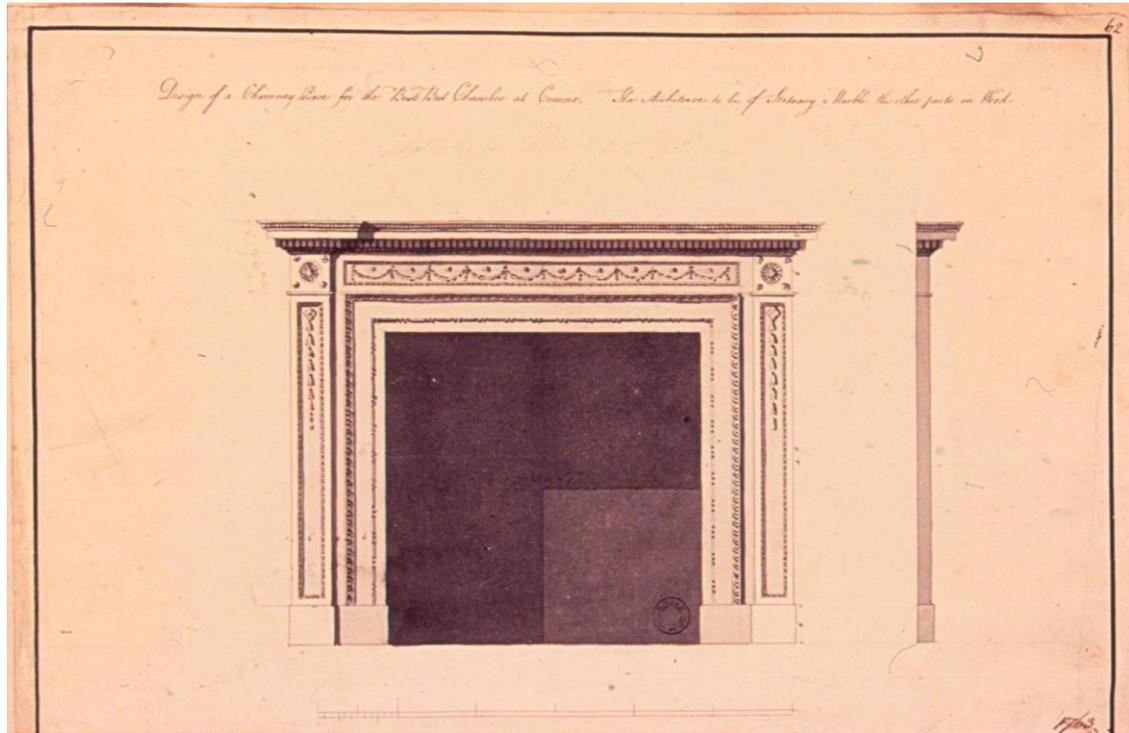


The Chinese Room as the 9th Countess of Coventry's bedroom, early 1900s (WRO)
Note the Chinese wallpaper, the two front posts of the Adam state bed and the reflection of the Adam chimneypiece in the mirror-cupboard door (top left).

The room has a fine Adam chimneypiece in timber and statuary marble, designed in 1763 with a frieze enriched with swags, husks, rosettes and dentil mouldings and with

²⁸¹ F62/28. Sotheby's sale, 22nd October 1948, Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art & Wallpaper, Lot 152.

diminishing drops at each side.²⁸² The bills state that Lovell made a chimneypiece for this room in 1759²⁸³ but, if that is the case, it must have been replaced very quickly by the Adam design. The joinery must also date from 1763, as the details of the doorcases and dado rail match those on the chimneypiece. Indeed, the mouldings generally in the room are of superior quality and the modillion and rosette cornice is very similar to those in the principal rooms on the ground floor.



*“Design of a chimneypiece for the Best Bed Chamber at Croome. The Architrave to be of statuary marble the other parts in wood”, Adam, 1763
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)*

²⁸² During an SAHGB study day there was some suggestion that the quality of this chimneypiece was unconvincing and it was postulated, therefore, that the original Adam chimneypiece might have been sold during the 20th century, and that the chimneypiece in situ is a replica.

²⁸³ F60/8

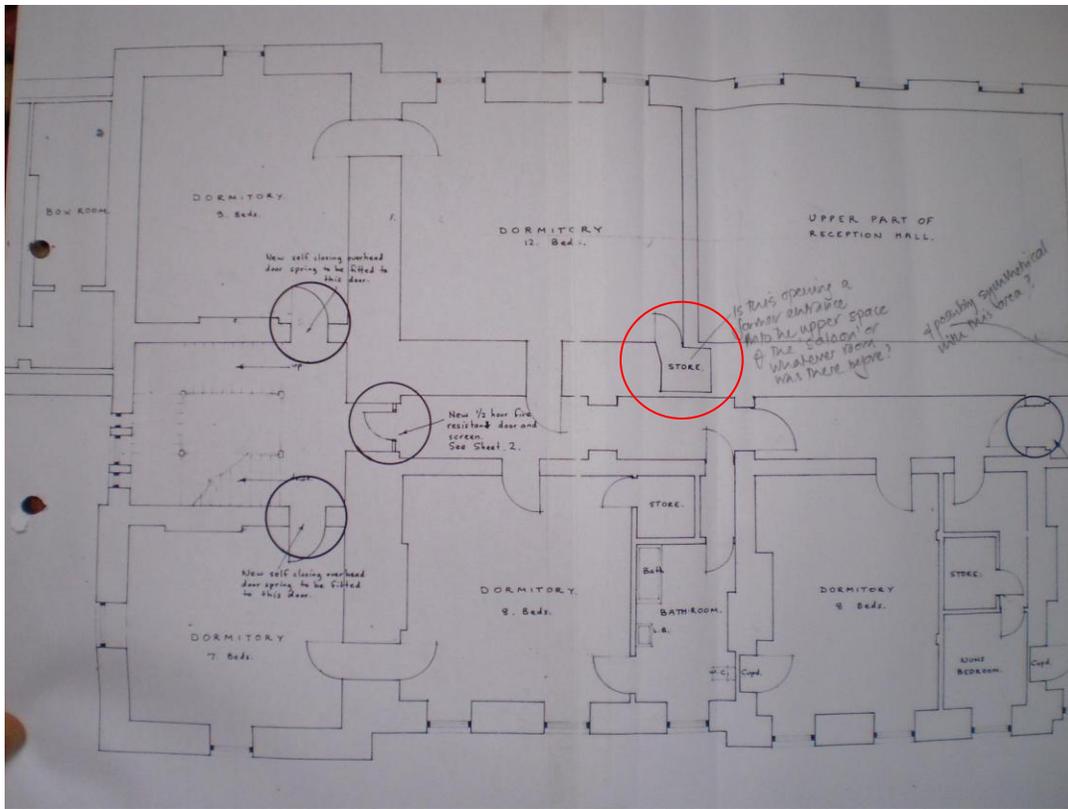


Detail of Adam chimneypiece in F3 (*Malcom James*)

A bill from Joseph Rose records whitewashing in the '*best bedchamber and dressing room*'. A bill for bed covers submitted by Vile & Cobb in 1759²⁸⁴ includes a cover of blue damask, possibly for this room.

An intriguing detail is a former jib door (now blocked and disguised) which led into a store cupboard created within an opening in the spine wall in the north-west corner of the room. This is deduced from the physical scars on the dado and skirting and a 1968 fire precaution plan. The space within the wall almost certainly relates to an opening (doorway?) in the 17th house's layout. This room would have previously been part of, or linked to, a 'balcony' room which looked out over the formal 'Great Garden' to the south. It may mirror a similar historic opening (F6a) which survives as part of the closet arrangement to F6.

²⁸⁴ F60/6



1968 plan for fire precautions, showing opening off F3 in thickness of spine wall, now blocked (CET) (Author)



Close-up of break in dado rail giving clue to former opening in NW corner of room. Note modern Chinese wallpaper (Author)

When Lady Coventry occupied the room as her bedroom during the 19th century it was furnished with the Adam state bed designed in 1763 for the 6th Earl's second wife Barbara. Its pair of spiral-fluted front posts are visible in an early 1900s photograph of the room (see above). The 1930 inventory lists this as 'Chippendale'. It also lists the pair of important 1765 Mayhew & Ince Grecian satinwood commodes inlaid with bands of holly-wood and a classical urn on the panelled doors. As well as the Adam bed, these were made for Barbara.

In November 1945 the Ministry of Works paid £200 compensation to the Croome Trustees for damage to the Chinese wallpaper in Lady Coventry's bedroom. By 1948, when the Court and most of the contents were to be sold, the wallpaper was not felt to be one of those fixtures that could survive being left in situ. The Croome Trust's solicitor advised Col. Smith, the Agent: "*With regard to the Chinese wallpaper my view is that if it is left in Croome it will deteriorate or if Croome is let as a school it is likely to be damaged, it should be sold without reserve so that the Trust may receive something for it instead of possibly, in a few years' time, nothing. I therefore entirely agree with you that no reserve should be placed on the wallpaper...*"²⁸⁵

In the school's time it was used as a dormitory and contained twelve beds.

Whether by coincidence or design, the room is currently papered with a (modern) Chinese wallpaper.



F3 used as a children's bedroom in 2010 – same view as early 1900s image above, and indicating location of blocked jib door (Author)

²⁸⁵ Letter from Hugh Rowcliffe, Solicitor, to Col. Osbert D. Smith, Croome Estate Office, 14th October 1948 (CEA).

Key sightlines:

South east South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
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F4/F5/F6

This first floor spine corridor provides a wonderful vista down the centre of the house. It is a rich source of archaeological information relating to the structure and layout of the earlier house. Simply on a visual level, there is evidence of anomalies in the surface indicating blocked openings on the south wall, which is 6 feet thick in some places. The closet opening F6a survives and it is known that there was a similar opening, now blocked, in the NW corner of F3. The real area for investigation is the central section of the void above the Saloon: in the 17th century there must have been a grand doorway into the Great Dining Room with a balcony over-looking the formal gardens.

The arches at each end of the central part of the corridor have both a structural and aesthetic function, for they provide a route by which the 'new' 18th century flues from the Dining Room and Billiard Room fireplaces cross the corridor to reach the main flues within the spine wall.



The first floor corridor looking east, 2008 (*Malcom James*)



Soot door above archway in first floor corridor (F4)
opened-up during flue works in 2010 (*Author*)

The 1930 Inventory, usually so full of eclectic contents, only lists an old English oak dresser and one oil painting, a study of fruit and flowers.

During the school's occupation the light-well above the central section was not glazed-in: the boys dropped things down from above onto people in the corridor below.

The Hare Krishnas instructed their decorator David Powell to paint the corridor in a colour that gave off warmth, as the house was terribly cold in the winter. David painted it in orange with white woodwork. A small split in the lining paper of the present modern scheme reveals a glimpse of this.²⁸⁶



Split in wallpaper on first floor corridor revealing
Hare Krishnas' orange scheme beneath (*Author*)

²⁸⁶ This was spotted by my son William Kay.

F8 The Red Room, Lord Coventry's Bedroom or The Alcove Bedroom

This room has given rise to much discussion and debate and our understanding of its evolution is not yet complete. It contains much structural evidence of the earlier house, and it always seems to have been a room of considerable importance throughout the building's history due to its location at the upper (west) end of the building, even though it is now the back stairs, rather than the 17th century main stairs, that rise towards it. It was obviously important to the 6th Earl, both before and after his re-modelling, and is a tantalising example of his apparently contradictory, or at least complex, motives and priorities: was he at the cutting-edge of new, sophisticated design, or was he holding on to old-fashioned, traditional family values? Stylistically, this room, the backstairs and the Billiard Room created an historic sequence at the west end of the house, a link with the house in which the 6th Earl grew up, and the inheritance that was thrust upon him so tragically and unexpectedly.

Even before one enters the room, its importance is signalled by the arch set around the landing at the head of the backstairs, and another one giving prominence to its actual threshold. Once inside, the (by 1750s old-fashioned) bolection panelling is of a similar date to that in the Billiard Room and is likely to be more of that stockpiled by the 4th Earl, which was then adapted by Hobcraft to conform to the proportions and new openings within the room. Hobcraft's bill of 1759²⁸⁷ would support this hypothesis as he distinguishes between old and new rails and stiles, old and new window shutters, and old and new cornice etc., the implication being that he was adapting the older joinery to fit and making new joinery as required.



The alcove in F8 with its paint scheme during the Hare Krishna period (*David Powell*)

²⁸⁷ F62/15

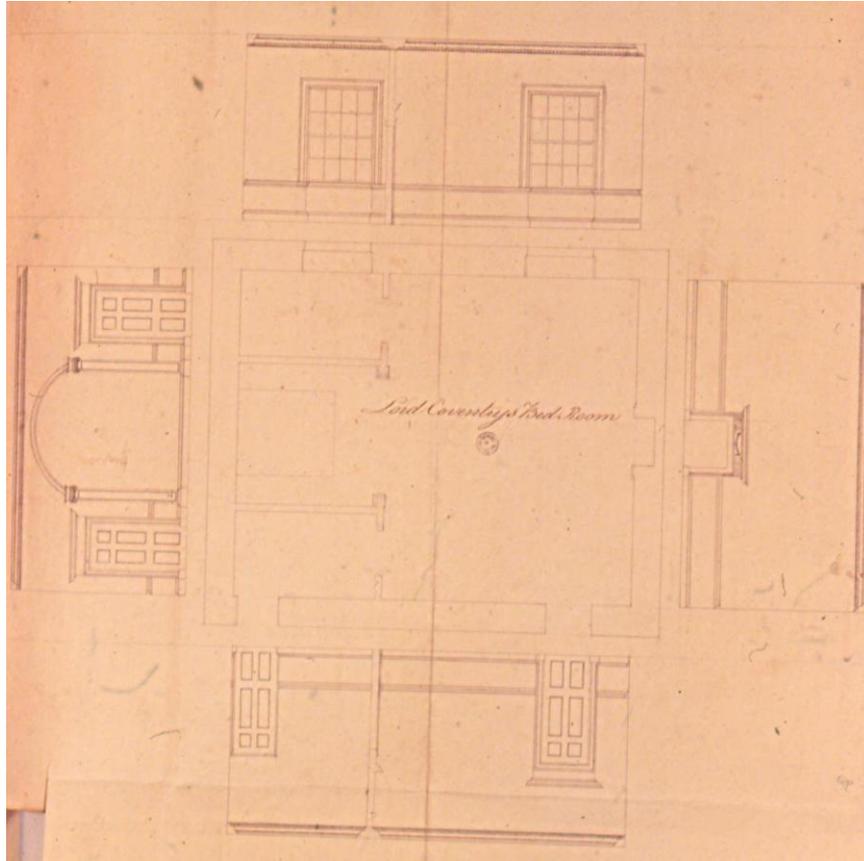
The date of the introduction of the alcove within the room is less clear. The room is referred to as the Red Room in the inventory of 1719,²⁸⁸ and possibly as the Red Damask Room with Closet in Hobcraft's large bill of 1757-9.²⁸⁹ Vile & Cobb's bill in 1759²⁹⁰ for bed covers includes one of crimson damask, which may have been for this room as the colour associated with the room may have 'hung on'. It is also referred to as Lord Coventry Bedroom, possibly due to its former historic use as the 6th Earl may have used it more as a dressing room once the suite along the north range was created. Hobcraft's earlier bill for the room confirms its high status, as it refers to pilasters around the closet window.

Not until 1764, when it was re-fitted with an alcove, does it acquire its alternative title of the Alcove Bedroom or Alcove Room & Water Closet, and this is supported by structural as well as archival evidence, as the mid-18th century floor joists run beneath the alcove. However some doubt is cast on this evolution by the Little Inventory of 1719 which refers to an alcove in the New Apartment which had a "*double alcove glazed wainscot door*". The same entry also refers also to a door "*with glasses*" (a glazed door?) in the old damask bedchamber. It can only be assumed that the New Apartment was elsewhere on the first floor, possibly a predecessor of the alcove in F15, and F8 is more likely to have been the old damask bedchamber. The glazed door may have lit the access route through the passageway.

²⁸⁸ George Chine's 1716 bill refers to wainscoting the Red Room.

²⁸⁹ F62/15

²⁹⁰ F60/6



Adam's design for Lord Coventry's Bed Room
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

What is certain is that in 1764 Adam was commissioned to re-fit the room with two closets flanking a central alcove as exists today. No panelling is shown in his design, but it does show a new chimneypiece and new designs for the doors. The alcove with its archway of Ionic pilasters and the 6-panelled doors were executed according to this design, but his suggestion for the chimneypiece was not taken up and the old 'fossil' limestone one was kept, as was the existing bolection panelling. This panelling and the existing closet were simply altered by Hobcraft and this work is carefully detailed in his bill of 1764.²⁹¹ Essentially, it appears that the room was lined with the bolection-moulded panelling prior to the mid-18th century re-modelling and it was then chopped about and supplemented with stored panels and some new joinery to fit the space. The fossil chimneypiece may have been in this room already²⁹² or it could have been moved here from elsewhere to make a contemporary match with the panelling in the 1750s. (Its pair is in the 6th Earl's apartment that he created in the Red Wing in his later life).

²⁹¹ F62/30

²⁹² In 1763 John Wildsmith bills for 'Taking down, polishing, repairing & re-erecting chimneypiece'. F62/26



The fossil limestone chimneypiece in F8 (its pair is in the 6th Earl's 'retirement' apartment in the Red Wing (Author)

The probable sequence of events is complicated to understand but Catherine Gordon summarises the current thinking thus: *'New fielded panelling was made to line the alcove and use along the entire west elevation of the new partition which matched the design of the new doors. The section of surplus panelling on the outer wall of the former closet facing into the room may then have been re-used along the inner wall of the new closet formed by the insertion of the central alcove. The flanking closets repeated the layout in F15 and are a classic example of how the 6th Earl adapted Adam's ideas with considerable ingenuity and thrift.'*

In 1763 Alken billed for making *'Antique Capitals'*²⁹³ and in 1764 Hobcraft also bills for *'Ionic caps.'*²⁹⁴ It is likely that the latter refers to the F8 alcove capitals, which are clearly Ionic and conform to the Adam drawing. This may imply that the Alken work was for elsewhere, perhaps in the lobby outside. Either way, the resulting alcove itself is rather unsatisfactory. It does not sit centrally on its 18th century pilastered piers and is a somewhat shallow arch with a 17th century appearance.

William Chapman's 1764 bill for plumbing (see section on Wells & Water) refers to a *"Statory Marble Bason for ye water Closett"* and it is highly likely that this 'posh' basin was intended for one of the closets in this room as it was an important space to the 6th Earl. It is possible that, post 1764, it became a functional dressing room with closets (as opposed to the ground floor Dressing Room-cum-study) rather than his bedroom (which was probably F14), at least during the later 18th century before he moved into his Red Wing apartment.

The room is referred to as The Pink Bedroom in the 1930 inventory and was possibly the 9th Earl's bedroom (see also F17). The items listed are a set of three Adam carved mahogany open arm chairs, a Georgian mahogany settee covered in brocade, a

²⁹³ F62/35

²⁹⁴ F62/30

Georgian mahogany 4-post bedstead with chintz head panel, two mahogany wardrobes, an old English black lacquered tallboy, a side table and a cheval-frame mirror.

During the school's occupation, this was used initially as a dormitory but was later converted into an Oratory for the nuns, with a sacristy in the bathroom and an altar in the alcove.²⁹⁵ This is likely to be when the hardboard panels were fitted to the existing panelling and it is believed that there were also polystyrene panels fitted to the ceiling.



F8 when used as a dormitory by the school (*Leonard Edwards*)

During the Hare Krishna period the room was re-decorated by David Powell in terracotta on the fields of the panels with cream on the stiles and rails. There was also some green on the dado rails (but this was not yet applied in the image supplied by him on p.242). He remembers that he polished the floorboards until he could see his face in them.

²⁹⁵ The altar is shown on a 1968 floorplan for fire precautions (CEA)



The SW corner of F8 in 1984 (*Diane Bentley*)

Some recent opening-up on the south wall has revealed brickwork behind the dado panelling which looks like 1640s walling to the left of a vertical division and a blocked opening to the right of it. This opening is blocked with bits of lias and re-used bricks that are very narrow and may be Tudor. This is tantalising evidence of the 1640s fenestration. The west wall, previously an external wall before the 18th century re-modelling, may also contain blocked windows.

The massive floor beams may be timbers from the 1640s house, or old timbers re-used from elsewhere, and a diagonal notch in a massive beam in the NE corner of the floor could give a clue to the location of the earlier staircase. There is a substantial gap between the east wall at the back of the alcove and that of the Saloon. This gap extends down to ground floor level and contains two timber-framed walls: the east one is likely to be 1750s and the west one from the 1640s or earlier.



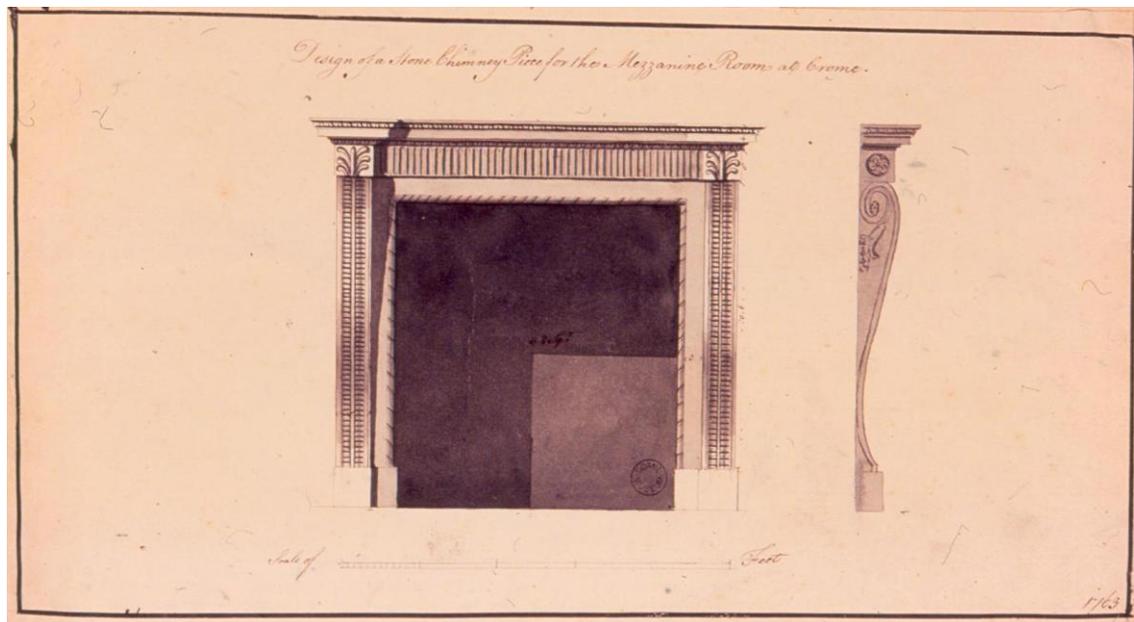
The gap between the wall at the back of the alcove in F8 and that of the Saloon descending to ground floor level. Note the large oak pegs in the timber-framed construction (*Author*)

Key sightlines:

South east	Park Seat
South	River
South	Dunstall Castle

F10 & F12

Due to the height of the Long Gallery ceiling below, F10 and its pair F12 are approached via F9, a small lobby up a short flight of steps. They are bedrooms, with adjoining closets above the canted bay, in the 'new' west wing, and were created several years after the main north suite was fitted up due to the work on the Long Gallery. Both rooms were fitted out to a high standard of detail although their proportions are compromised by the extra height needed for the Long Gallery directly below, hence Adam referring to the 'Mezzanine Room' in his 1763 chimneypiece design for them. The level of the windows in relation to the floor is particularly unsatisfactory, and their internal proportions are compromised by the over-riding importance of the external symmetry of the building. Nevertheless, they are graced with a pair of Adam-designed stone chimneypieces with long fluted and scrolled consoles and fluted friezes that were carved by Alken in 1765: "*Two Chimneypieces carved alike in stone, to both 4 Term trusses, the sides carved raised scrolles & flowers on the Eye.*"²⁹⁶



Adam's 1763 design for a stone chimneypiece for the Mezzanine Rooms
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

The rooms are recorded as being whitewashed in 1763 by Joseph Rose ('two mezzanine rooms'). Their historic use is unclear – given their proportions it is unlikely that they were guest bedrooms (the corresponding rooms on the floor above are much more commodious), but may have been used by ladies' maids or governesses.

During the 9th Earl's occupancy they were simply known as the North Bedroom and the South Bedroom. In the 1930 inventory, the North Bedroom (F12) contained four 'Sheraton' chairs grained as 'harewood' with oval wheel backs upholstered in needlework, a mahogany 4-post bedstead with reeded and fluted pillars and old red silk damask cornice, head panel canopy, curtains and valances and a burr walnut bureau chest of drawers. F10's contents are listed as three further 'Sheraton' grained

²⁹⁶ F62/35

'harewood' chairs, two 'Chippendale' mahogany chairs upholstered in linen, a Queen Anne settee, a Georgian Mahogany 4-post bedstead with silk damask curtains (no colour is given), a mahogany cheval-frame mirror, an oak tallboy and a set of ten coloured drawings of sporting subjects.

The school used the rooms as dormitories with eight beds in each.

The Hare Krishnas referred to F10, the south-west facing room, as The Chinese Room (confusingly nothing to do with F3) because they decorated it in a colour scheme of red, white, black and gold and furnished it with 'Chinese', bamboo-effect furniture.



F10 decorated as a 'Chinese Room' during the Hare Krishna period. Note the compromised position of the window due to the height of the Long Gallery ceiling below and the moulding of the Adam chimneypiece picked out in colours. (*Diane Bentley*)

The last property developer's children used F10 and F12 as their bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms in the closets (F11 and F13).

Structurally these rooms have been the focus of much recent attention, the closets in particular, as they are directly above the bay of the Long Gallery where there has been long-term water ingress. Investigations and emergency repair work found that it was not so much the fact that the closets were modern bathrooms but that the rainwater goods and flashing on the roof of the bay above were inadequate. This was addressed in 2010. Inspection beneath the floorboards in F11 and F13 revealed decayed joists and rot. An interesting historic detail is evidence of plaster 'pugging' secured on timber laths used as a method of sound-proofing between floors.

In addition, the floor in the NE corner of F12 has decayed timber bearers which have resulted in dropped floor joists and skirting boards extending to the left hand jamb of the chimneypiece. Where the bearer has decayed away from the wall a brick surface is revealed, presumably of 1750s construction, as this was the former external west wall of the 17th century house. This wall is extremely thick (c 1.45m) and therefore probably incorporates both the pre-1750 external wall and the internal wall of the post-1750 tower, all built in brick.²⁹⁷

F10 Key sightlines:

South east	Park Seat
South	River
South	Dunstall Castle
South west	Chinese Bridge (site of)
West	Malvern Hills
West	great Cedar
West	Panorama Tower

F12 Key sightlines:

West	Malvern Hills
West	great Cedar
West	Panorama Tower
North west	Urn
North west	Temple Greenhouse
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
North east	Church

²⁹⁷ John Goom, Historical Analysis of floors, November 2008

F14

F14 was 6th Lord Coventry's Bedroom as part of his marital suite (whereas F8 was probably his pre-marriage bedroom and later dressing room). It was conveniently adjacent to the secondary staircase and there was a linking door created into Lady Coventry's Bedroom (F15).

It was fitted out between 1758-9 by Hobcraft and Lovell, the latter referring to it as the Room over the Billiard Room.²⁹⁸ Lovell billed £7 for a '*new veined slab to chimneypiece*', presumably the marble hearth. The wooden chimneypiece itself was carved with laurel leaves and berries much as the swelling friezes in the Drawing Room which occur on the same bill.²⁹⁹ However, structural investigations in 2008 found that the floorboards are 20th century square-edged softwood boards laid onto oak joists of various sizes, which are in turn on secondary beams and large oak primary beams running east west.

Decoratively, initial investigations reinforce the sense that the bedrooms and main bathroom on this north front (F14-F17) were all treated as a set, with an unusual scheme of varnished hardwood (oak?) door architraves and skirtings, but painted softwood doors and windows. Some fireplaces were oak, some were painted softwood.³⁰⁰



The chimneypiece in F14 and link door to F15, with the current decorative scheme relating to the last property developer (*Author*)

²⁹⁸ F62/15, F62/19

²⁹⁹ F62/35

³⁰⁰ Catherine Hassall, initial paint investigations, July 2008

The 1930 Inventory refers to it as The Patchwork Bedroom, due to the patchwork head panel, canopy, curtains and valances to the mahogany 4-post bedstead. It also lists two 'Chippendale' easy chairs, one upholstered in striped brocade, a Chinese black lacquered chest on dwarf stand, a 'Chippendale' mahogany dwarf chest of drawers, an oblong mirror in carved and gilt frame, a 'Sheraton' mahogany inlaid secretaire bookcase, a serpentine-back mahogany settee upholstered in linen, three paintings of coaching and agricultural scenes and '*a pair of Georgian mahogany oblong tray top bedside cabinets enclosed by tambour shutter fronts with commode under in the form of two drawers*'. This is almost certainly the pair still in the collection supplied by Mayhew & Ince which they invoiced on 18th March 1777 as '*2 Mahogany Commodes shap'd Night tables with stool part to draw out Tambour Doors Legs fluted 2 deceptional Drawers in each & Stone pans £10 10s*'.

By 1968 the communicating door to F15 had been blocked and the recess used as a cupboard. The room was used by the school not as a dormitory but as the only first floor classroom.³⁰¹

In the early 1980s, the Hare Krishnas asked David Powell to decorate the whole room for a visiting dignitary. He papered the walls (ironically with a vertical striped paper) and painted the ceiling and joinery in white.



F14 looking west with the current decorative scheme and bed head canopy relating to the last property developer (*Author*)

The current decorative scheme has been described as 1980's bling or, en-suite with F15, something out of *Hello!* magazine. Its walls are papered with a bold, vertical black and tan stripe and the room retains its bed head canopy with a modern take on a

³⁰¹ Fire precautions floorplans, CET archive

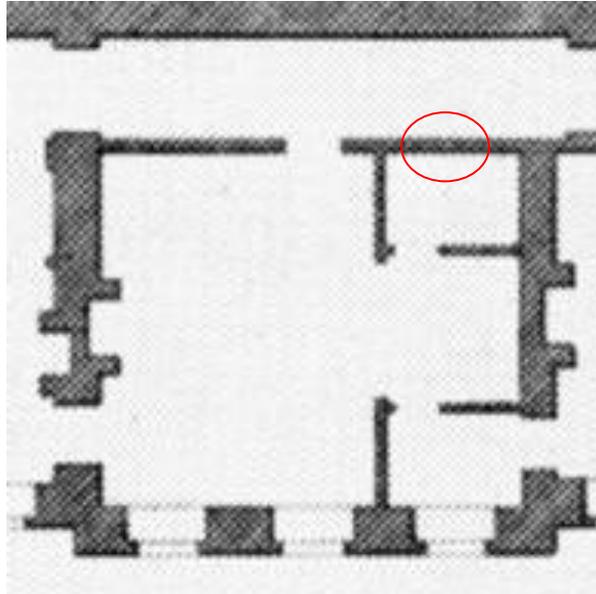
jousting tent. As with so many of the Court's late 20th century interventions it provokes a range of reactions, from surprised amusement to outraged horror. Either way, it serves a useful purpose in stimulating debate about the future presentation of the heritage and relative values of the historic layers in a very harmless way.

Key sightlines:

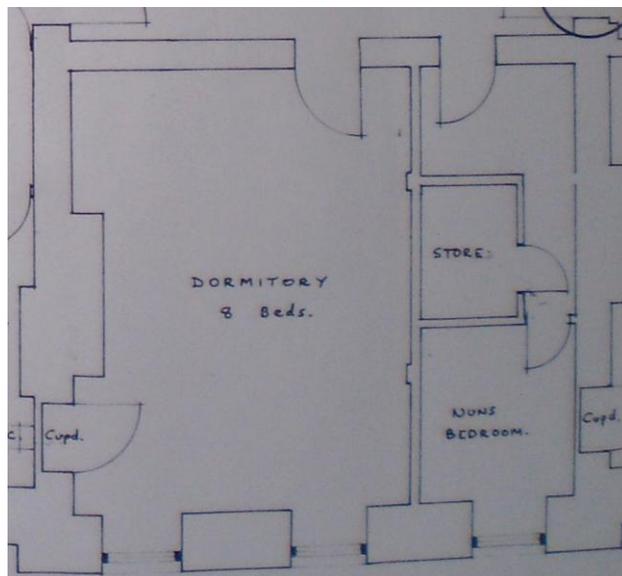
North west	Temple Greenhouse
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
North east	Church

F15

As one of Croome Court's two alcove bedrooms, and as part of 6th Earl of Coventry's marital suite, this was an important space. It was Lady Coventry's Bedroom, linked to Lord Coventry's Bedroom (F14) to the west and, as with F8, included a bed alcove and a pair of closets (F15a&b), one of which could be accessed from the spine corridor (now blocked). The closeted alcove probably had doors leading off it into the flanking closets as shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus*. The configuration of these closets has been much altered throughout the room's life according to the requirements of the various occupants.



The arrangement of the closets in F15 as shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, 1771, although this does not show an access opening onto the corridor.



The school's arrangement of the closets in 1968: access is obtained onto the spine corridor, the central bed alcove is enclosed to form a store and the north alcove enclosed to form a nun's bedroom. Both east and west link doors are blocked to form cupboards. (CET)

The remainder of the suite comprised a further closet, or Washing Room (F16) and Dressing Room (also known as the Boudoir (F17). These were accessed to the east of this bedroom, and the adjoining room in the north-east pavilion (F18) is likely to have served as the main dressing room.

This room and F14 were fitted out between 1758-9 by Hobcraft and Lovell.³⁰² The chimneypiece is by Lovell³⁰³ and has plain pilasters and a scroll frieze, but curiously, the mouldings in here and on the door cornices appear remarkably crisp and unclogged by layers of paint: they may be late 20th century copies although why is not known.³⁰⁴

This could be the room in which Maria Gunning, the 6th Earl's first wife, lay dying in 1760 from a combination of consumption and poisoning from toxic lead-white make-up. Famed for her beauty, she did not want her damaged face to be seen but lay in the darkened room in what was effectively still a building site all around her. "*She had watched the building of the church from the bedroom but did not live to see its completion and had to be temporarily interred at Pirton until the vault was ready and the church consecrated.*"³⁰⁵ The finished church was consecrated on 29th June 1763 to St Mary Magdalene, perhaps in Maria's memory, when she was re-buried there. There was a slight pause in the Court's building progress but then, judging from the dates of the bills, work appears to have continued.

In December 1763, Lord Coventry approached Robert Adam to design a state bed for Barbara, his new second wife, whom he married in 1764. The bed was placed in the 'best bedroom', in an architectural alcove, almost certainly this room. A design was made by Adam in 1763³⁰⁶ and given to the firm of William France & John Bradburn, who supplied a '*large Wainscott double screw'd bedsd, very stout...Foot Posts out of fine Mahogy 6 inches Square worked very correctly in a waving flute with the wave terminating with Corinthian Capitol Very well Carv'd and neatly finish'd*'. It also had a coved and fluted cornice and a large dome embellished inside and out with carved ornaments and topped by a central vase. Their bill, dated 26th July 1764, was for £16-4. This domed architectural structure was Adam's first executed bed, and elements of it survive in the collection. It was upholstered in green silk damask by France & Bradburn who billed for '*altering the drawing up of the Green Damask Bed and window curtains*'.³⁰⁷ 254 yards of green silk damask were supplied to William France '*for furniture*', which presumably relates to this bed, and possibly the window curtains.

The walls had a green decorative scheme in the 1760s which would have linked to the Adam state bed hung with green silk damask. This colour seems to have been perpetuated as the room is listed as The Green Bedroom in the 1930 Inventory.

³⁰² F62/15, F62/19

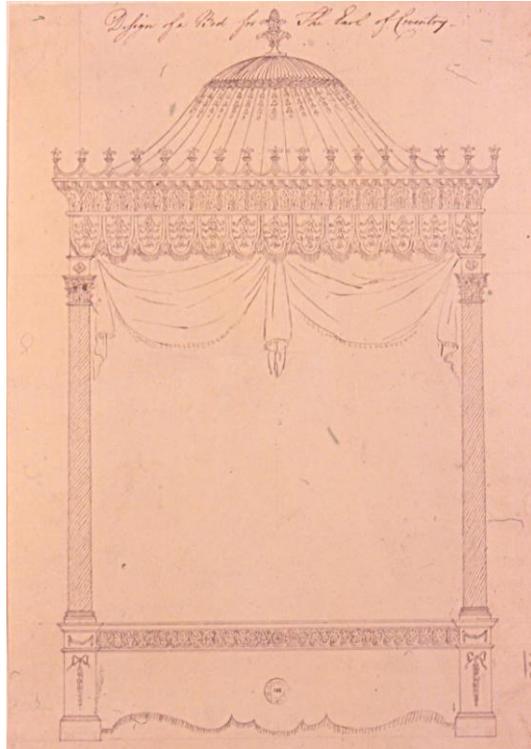
³⁰³ F62/6

³⁰⁴ Catherine Gordon wonders whether the act of getting the large bath into the room could have damaged the doorway and required it to be replaced.

³⁰⁵ *Sad times at Croome Court, Life and Times of Mrs Dorothy Ball at Croome*, Scrapbook loaned by Diana Stanley, Tea Room, Hanbury Hall

³⁰⁶ The Sir John Soane Museum (17:152)

³⁰⁷ F60/32



'Design of a Bed for the Earl of Coventry' by Robert Adam
 (Reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

An image of the room from 1894 on the occasion of the visit of the Duke of York to Worcester, when he was the guest of the 9th Earl, can be seen in *The Illustrated London News*. It shows a four-poster bed in the alcove that is difficult to identify but looks suspiciously like the Adam bed with its spiral-fluted front posts, albeit with a different canopy treatment.



The bed alcove in 1894 possibly containing the Adam state bed
 (*The Illustrated London News*, 7th April, 1894)

The Adam bed, with a different canopy arrangement, is also to be seen in a late 19th century-early 20th century photograph in F3 (see section on F3), which was used by the 9th Countess of Coventry as her bedroom.³⁰⁸ In this image its spiral-fluted columns can clearly be seen, and these are still in the collection. The 1930 Inventory lists a mahogany settee upholstered in green taffeta, an early Georgian settee in blue linen, a burr walnut Arabian bedstead with cornice to the half canopy and chintz curtains, a Dutch tulipwood commode, a late 18th century Dutch mahogany wardrobe, an 'Adam' mahogany serpentine-fronted side table and an 'Adam' mahogany cheval-frame mirror.

The re-configuration of the closets and bed alcove during the school's occupation were confirmed by Leonard Edwards' memories: he does not remember the alcove arch at all (it was enclosed) and commented that, as the room was a dormitory with eight beds, the nuns did not want little nooks and crannies in the boys' rooms.



SE corner of F15 with current decorative scheme and large central bath (*Author*)

A serious structural concern in this room relates to movement in the SE corner and the sagging of the beam in the Entrance Hall (G1) below between the column screen on the spine passage. Initial structural investigations were undertaken³⁰⁹ to ascertain the degree to which this has been exacerbated by the large central bath in this room. Whilst not necessarily being the primary cause, when filled with water it certainly would not have helped the situation. This issue is still to be resolved.

³⁰⁸ Given the 1894 image, if this does indeed show the Adam bed, it cannot have been moved into F3 until the very late 19th century or early 20th century.

³⁰⁹ Floor/Ceiling Structure Investigations by John Goom in November 2008. See also 2008 Condition Report by John Goom, Appendix 14.

Underneath the modern carpet the floorboards are polished oak but probably 19th or early 20th century. They seem to be polished over the whole of the surface with no margin around a carpet.



Various views of F15 with its late 20th century decorative scheme and large central bath (*Author*)

The room is currently completely dominated by its late 20th century decorative scheme and fittings: the striped wallpaper (a narrower version of that in F14), the central bath, the fitted wardrobes in the alcove and closets and the double vanity unit and mirrors. In this instance, the 20th century interventions are physically intrusive and have resulted in structural changes to the historic fabric (although one could justifiably argue that the

arrangement of the closets had already been compromised). The relative significance of this scheme and its place in future plans for the presentation of the Court causes huge debate amongst staff, volunteers, experts and visitors. An informal questionnaire³¹⁰ on the degree to which it should be respected and retained prompted a wide range of reactions: *'Abomination'*; *'Singularly uninteresting'*; *'a waste of a good room'*; *'bad taste'*; *'it makes people think'*; *'can act as a foil to the 18th century'*; *'there needs to be something in the house of this period'*. As with other such instances in the Court, it triggers stimulating discussion about the meaning and value of heritage and what actually constitutes 'history', 'heritage' and 'taste'. A further dimension is added when people realize that this room contained the first state bed designed by Robert Adam, elements of which are still in the collection and which will return to the Court.

Key sightlines:

North east	Church
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
North west	Temple Greenhouse

³¹⁰ Carried out by the Author in June 2011 with 68 of Croome's volunteers.

F16 (see also F19a&b)

This small room has a potentially significant earlier history as the possible location of the back stairs in the 17th century house. In the mid-18th century it was part of Lady Coventry's suite and would have served as a dressing or washing room. The green decorative theme was extended from her bedroom - in 1781 Bromwich, Isherwood & Bradley supplied '51yds plain green paper, 88ft wood moulding in burnished gold put up' (for the small dressing room).³¹¹ Again, this colour scheme appears to have been perpetuated as it was known as the Green Dressing Room in the 1930 Inventory, when only an 'Adam' mahogany and inlaid display cabinet is listed.

It has a charming Rococo chimneypiece carved with a lion's head by Linnell: '*Wood & joiners work to get out a chimneypiece & carving the same very neat by Drawing in the French taste with Lion's Face in the Frieze, £4-16-0; a very neat Oval Glass frame to go over ditto with glasses in compartments, £12-14-6.*'³¹²



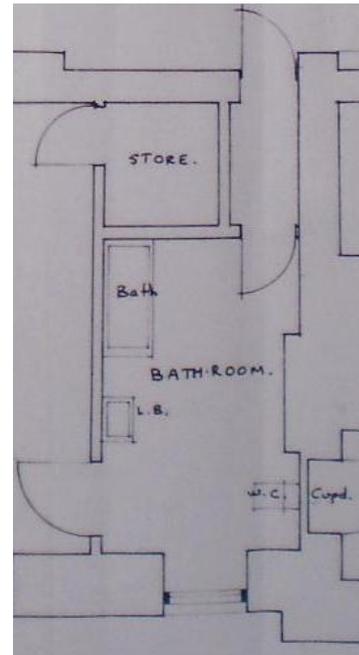
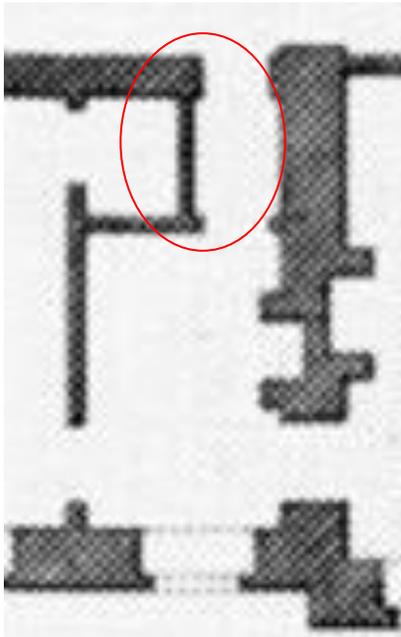
The charming chimneypiece in F16 by William Linnell in 1758
(Malcolm James)

The room could originally be accessed off the corridor via a short passageway as shown in Vitruvius Britannicus in 1771. The school maintained this configuration and the room's use as a bathroom. However, the arrangement of closets and door openings has been

³¹¹ F62/59

³¹² F60/8

much altered latterly to form a steam and shower room for the last property developer (see 19a&b).



On the left, F16 as shown by *Vitruvius Britannicus*, 1771. Note access to corridor, now blocked.
 On the right, F16 as used by the school in 1968 (*CET*)

The room is still equipped as a bathroom although the space is now somewhat compromised by the central position of the bath.



F16 looking SW, 2008 (*Robert Thrift*)

Key sightlines:

North east	Church
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)

F17

The decorative scheme in the next room in the suite to the east, Lady Coventry's Boudoir,³¹³ is quite surprising. The mouldings are simpler and incorporate a Greek key design, but the dominant feature is the chimneypiece. It is very large and ornate in carved mahogany and is somewhat a mixture of both classical and Rococo references: Ionic pilasters flanking a large central Rococo shell and an enormous overmantel with a rectangular mirror and swan-neck pediment, carved with drops of flowers.



The massive chimneypiece in F17 (*Malcolm James*)

There was previously some doubt as to whether this was the 'large chimney frame' by William Linnell as described in his bill dated 1759³¹⁴ for '*a large Chimney frame very handsome by drawing & gilt in burnished gold for Lady Coventry's Dressing Room at Croome. A large glass 49ins by 30ins & glass borders to ditto. All complete £78-11-6*'. The present chimneyglass matches these dimensions and when one looks closely at the chimneypiece, traces of gilding can easily be seen.³¹⁵ However, it certainly does not have 'glass borders' and is not fine enough to be by Linnell. The 1902 Inventory of Heirlooms does not mention a chimneypiece in this room (then known as The Chocolate Bedroom). Then, in the 1930 inventory, one appears, described as '*An Irish Chippendale*

³¹³ 6th Lady Coventry, as opposed to the 9th Countess's Boudoir in F2

³¹⁴ F60/8

³¹⁵ Interestingly, the chimneypiece and overmantel are in mahogany, which would not normally have been gilded, or perhaps only parcel-gilded. John Harris has suggested that what we are seeing today may be traces of gilding copying what was there originally.

Mahogany chimneypiece and over mantle, carved with bold shell centre floral and foliated scrolls and swags, which the 9th Earl bought in 1906 from Brady & Son, Dublin for £80 and which certainly seems to match the appearance of the one currently in this room.³¹⁶ In the inventory it has a red star against it, indicating it was an heirloom and is the only chimneypiece to be mentioned, again pointing to the fact that it was an introduction. It was sold separately to the school, with the Court, in October 1949 for £105 and presumably remained in situ. However, what was in position *before* the 9th Earl's acquisition?

It seems likely that the Linnell chimneypiece was originally in here, but was removed to the 9th Countess' Boudoir (F2) at some point, perhaps when her husband purchased the Irish 'Chippendale' chimneypiece and overmantle for this room. He may have slept in this room with the Countess's bedroom just across the corridor in F3. This sequence of events needs further investigation. A photograph of her Boudoir in the very late 19th / early 20th century shows a chimneyglass which appears to be the one Linnell supplied in 1759 and which was sold on 25th June 1948 at Sotheby's London in their Highly Important French & English Furniture sale (Lot 143).³¹⁷ It was described as '*A George II Gilt Wall Mirror, of rococo form and surmounted by a basket of flowers, the plate divided by scroll mouldings and garlands and festoons of flowers and fruit, 6ft wide by 7ft 6in high*'. (See also section on F2).



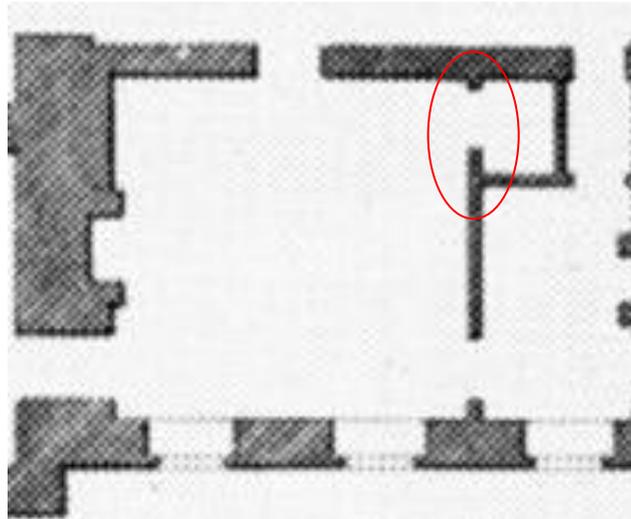
F2 in the very late 19th / early 20th century showing the Linnell mirror (WRO)

³¹⁶ Most of the 9th Earl's 'antique' purchases were from places with a racecourse – he probably bought things with his winnings.

³¹⁷ This same mirror was for sale at Christie's London on 23rd May 2012 with an estimate of £200-300,000. It sold for £313,250.

There is a 1765 bill from France & Bradburn³¹⁸ for ‘*India paper & colours to repair the paper over the dressing room chimney*’, although it is not clear whether the reference is to this room.

A small closet (F19b) led off this room, which is now only accessible from the corridor.



F17 as shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, 1771, with closet off the room, now blocked and accessible from the corridor.

The room was known as The Chocolate Bedroom in the 9th Earl's period – this could be a reference to the mahogany colour of the dominating Irish chimneypiece, if the gilding was no longer intact, or possibly the scheme of varnished hardwood that initial paint investigations seem to have found throughout this suite.³¹⁹ The (surprisingly few) contents listed in the 1930 Inventory do not give any clue as to the reason for the room's name: a Georgian mahogany 4-post bedstead with flowered chintz curtains and valances, 4 mahogany chairs, a mahogany wardrobe and dressing table and an oil painting of 'The Hay Makers' by John Ward R.A.

During the school's time the room was an eight-bed dormitory. The room is temporarily being used as the NT's office in the Court.

³¹⁸ F60/32

³¹⁹ Paint analysis, initial report, Catherine Hassall, July 2008.



The chimneypiece in F17 during the school's occupation.
Note the iron bedsteads (WRO)

Key sightlines:

North east	Church
North	Pirton Castle
North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)

F18

This is the final room in this sequence along the north front, in the north-east pavilion. It has a fairly plain but striking black and white marble chimneypiece with an eared surround. The room's simplicity of detail would support the suggestion that this was a private dressing room, rather than an additional bedroom, and that F17 was used more as a private retreat by Lady Coventry to entertain her female friends, much as Lord Coventry used his dressing room on the ground floor. The fact that this room's east window has less desirable views as it overlooks the Red Wing, stableblock and service yards would be another reason for it to be a private room rather than an 'entertaining' space in which to welcome lady friends.



F18 looking south, 2008 (*Malcolm James*)

A 1758 bill from James Lovell³²⁰ lists a '*Statuary marble chimneypiece with three mouldings carved and polished £32*' as being for the '*Room over Lord Coventry's Dressing Room*', so it could refer to the chimneypiece in this room, although the description of 'three mouldings' doesn't immediately seem to correspond to this design.

³²⁰ F62/19



Detail of the chimneypiece in F18 (*Malcolm James*)

The 1930 Inventory refers to it simply as 'The End Bedroom' and only a few contents are listed, which seem to correspond more to a dressing room than a bedroom: a Chippendale Honduras mahogany wardrobe, an oak gate-leg table, an English Chinese-style lacquered tall-boy chest on stand and an 'Adam' mahogany open armchair. A 1940s document detailing the directions of the Court's chimney flues appears to refer to this room as the White Bedroom, i.e. the bedroom over the Study.

During the school's occupation it was a dormitory with seven beds.

Once again the late 20th century intervention of installing a bath in the middle of the room has compromised the integrity of the space. It nevertheless provides another opportunity (though in this instance it is less hotly debated) to discuss the relative value of these more recent physical changes.

Key sightlines:

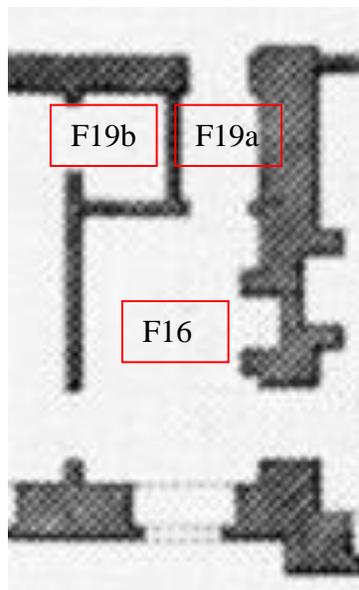
North east East	Church London Drive, Red Wing & Stableblock
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F19a&b The Steam Room

These small and apparently unimportant spaces are another of those instances within the Court where we have fascinating debates about the meaning and value of heritage in general and Croome Court in particular. Its layout and use has changed enormously.

They are easy to overlook, but they are potentially of huge historic significance in that they could occupy, together with F16, the location in which the 17th century back stairs rose. Further architectural and archaeological investigations will be needed to ascertain this. However, they are also two of the spaces most compromised by the last property owner and most adapted to modern use. They now contain a steam room and shower with a small lobby and, along with the huge bath, striped wallpaper and built-in vanity units in the suite of rooms along the north front, speak volumes about changing attitudes to heritage and historic buildings. Again, their current use has philosophical rather than physical significance, but they serve a very useful purpose in stimulating debate about the future presentation of the Court and the hierarchy of values that we want to explore.

In the mid-18th century, the two spaces comprised a small access passage from the spine corridor to F16, Lady Coventry's Washing Room, and a small closet accessed off F17, her Boudoir.



The arrangement of F19a&b as shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, 1771, with access from the corridor to F16

It should also be remembered that these spaces are above the Dining Room where the chimneypiece was changed in 1824 and the surrounding wall re-plastered, probably as a result of a leaking water closet above, which could therefore relate to this space. There is a reference in 1826 in a letter from Croome's Manager to Earl & Lady Coventry which reads: '*Mr Eaten's man has come to do the water closet. The reason why Lady*

*Coventry's room is smelling was from the large pipe that lets the soil down was decayed and there was several holes in it and that brought the smell up into the room...*³²¹

Catherine Gordon has suggested that if there was a WC in F19B early on, possibly F19b could be accessed from F16 as well as F17 for the benefit of Barbara's (6th Earl's 2nd wife) private use from F16 and to show off to her lady friends in F17. It would also be handy for servant access off the corridor too. However, Vitruvius Britannicus shows F19B as only accessible from F17, with a passageway through F19A from the corridor to F16.

Either way, the 18th century closet arrangement according to Vitruvius was the same as that during the school's occupation, as shown on their 1968 fire precautions plan.



Current view of the steam room in F19b (*Robert Thrift*)

³²¹ Letter from John Jones, Croome Manager (?)1811-1827, to Earl & Lady Coventry, WRO, Box 5, yellow, F31-36.

THE SECOND FLOOR

(For a summary of the key features of each of the second floor spaces, refer to the Gazetteer, Appendix 1).

On this floor, the spine corridor again sub-divides the accommodation north to south and provides the main access route. The centre of the corridor was widened to accommodate a balustraded light well to illuminate the corridor beneath; the balustrade is almost identical in detail to the one designed for the backstairs. A similar type of light well may have existed in the 17th century building.

As might be expected, the architectural detailing is notably more restrained on this floor and the ceiling heights are quite low within the main block as these rooms would have been servants' accommodation and were partially set within the roof space.

Another important characteristic of the rooms on this floor within the main block is that they have retained a distinct 17th century character, as many of the fittings were left in place or moved up here and re-used when they became unfashionable. Nearly every door is of this date, either panelled or boarded and usually with large strap hinges, and many were doubled up or patched together either in the 18th century or at a later date. All are now painted. Sections of Jacobean panelling were also re-used to line passageways or cupboards and there are three large high-quality stone chimneypieces that appear to be c.1640 in date (S6, S10 and S26). These may have been moved to their present location from a more prominent position within the earlier house as they appear rather well-finished and over-sized for their current positions.

As might be expected, the rooms within the 'new' corner towers are quite different in character (S3, S17, S18, S27). These are very well-proportioned with high ceilings and windows in each outer face that provide some of the best views across the designed landscape and beyond (although those facing east in S3 and S27 are understandably blind, looking out as they do over the service ranges). It is also notable that both the staircases retain exactly the same detail right up to the second floor, and the backstairs even have dado panelling on their upper flight. This effort to maintain the status of the staircases right to the top of the house and the finish of the rooms themselves all suggests that these spaces provided additional family and guest accommodation.

The rooms in the west wing are particularly well-finished and have moulded skirtings, dado rails and cornices and are fitted with marble chimneypieces, one eared and one bolection moulded, which may have been moved to these rooms from elsewhere in the house. The one in the north-west bedroom is set within a panelled surround which extends as an overmantel across the entire chimneybreast. Both these fireplaces probably use the former end flues from the old house.

The rooms in the east wing were originally both of similar proportions and detail but their marble chimneypieces are of much simpler design; the fireplace in the south-east pavilion appears to make use of the early end flue. Both of these east wing rooms (S3 and S27) connect with the adjoining bedrooms via jib doors concealing re-used Jacobean panelling (although that in S3 is now a cupboard). It may be no coincidence that both these connecting bedrooms have early chimneypieces in them, perhaps a deliberate plan to elevate their status within the layout.

During the school's occupation this floor was out of bounds to the boys because the nuns used it for their private quarters and sleeping, but a lot of the rooms were not used and were left empty. There were cast-iron beds, lino on the floors, and it was very primitive and spartan. Leonard Edwards remembers that it was very run-down when the nuns left and a lot of the floors were unsafe. The corridor, in his time, always sloped.

In the 1980s David Powell did no decorating work for the Hare Krishnas on the second floor - it was all used as living accommodation for the devotees and they only cared about the presentation of the public spaces.

S1 & S2 Main Staircase Top Landing & Lobby

(See also **G5/F1/S1**)

The cantilevered stone staircase rises up to terminate between the two 18th century east tower rooms at the east end of the spine corridor. At this height, with its two small windows over-looking the service range of the Red Wing, it appears more symmetrical than the lower reaches. Vassalli, Rose and Hobcraft are all recorded to have worked on the main stair during 1758-63.



Top of the main staircase (*Robert Thrift*)

The south wall at this level is the post-18th century re-modelling location of The Great Horse painting, which is recorded as hanging here in the 1930 Inventory and is, apart from the Saloon, the only area of wall in the Court capable of accommodating it. The underneath of the top landing moulding has been cut away to allow the painting to fit. There is currently a structural problem as the wall is bulging in this location, either as a result of settlement in the structure or perhaps relating to the modern pipework on the north wall of S2, a lobby-cum-passageway to S3 and referred to as the Lobby Approach in the 1930 inventory.

S3

This is a finely-proportioned bedroom in the SE tower providing some of the best southern views out over the landscape. It may have been the Day Nursery in the mid-18th century with the adjacent Nurse or Nanny's Room in S6. Access to the latter would have been through the jib door on the west wall, now blocked to form a cupboard³²² that is partially lined with re-used Jacobean panelling, probably salvaged from the earlier house. It would not have been an entirely satisfactory arrangement, as the door would have slightly encroached on the dormer window in S6.

³²² The cupboard in S3, the blocked opening in S15 and the passage between S26 and S27 may possibly be the former openings of dormer windows on the earlier house, but this is still unproven.

It was referred to as Bedroom No.13 in the 1930 Inventory and used as Lady Coventry's Lady's Maid's room and was used as the Nun's Sitting Room during the school's occupation.



S3 looking north, 2010 (*Robert Thrift*)



The jib door on the west wall in S3 originally leading to S6 but now forming a cupboard. (*Robert Thrift*)



Detail of the re-used Jacobean panelling on the lintel of the jib door/cupboard (*Author*)

S4/S9/S11

As on the first floor, this spine corridor provides a vista through the east-west axis of the house, in this case punctuated by the balustrade light well where the corridor widens to the north side to accommodate it. The detail of the balusters is almost exactly the same as on the backstairs. The light well was open until it had to be glazed according to the 1968 school fire precautions.

Although this is the second floor, there is still the architectural detail of archways with pilasters in the central section (S9). The south wall of the corridor is 5 feet 6 inches thick. Again, as on the first floor, the corridor contains evidence of the earlier house: in its settlement (which is quite pronounced in that it slopes downwards on the north side) and which the 18th century re-modelling appears to have accommodated. It also contains early doors: to S22 and several re-fronted 17th century doors along the S11 section.



The second floor corridor looking west during the late 20th century. Note the pronounced slope to the north. (*©Crown copyright NMR*)

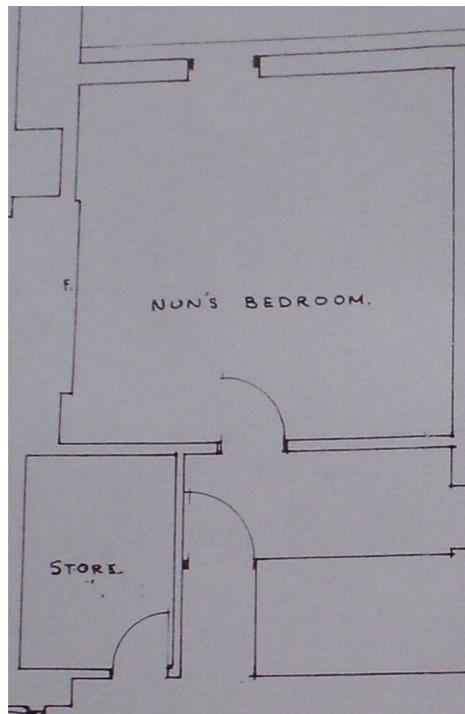
S6

This north-east bedroom has an important 17th century stone (now painted) chimneypiece in the Artisan Mannerist style on its eastern wall with a (slightly damaged) bolection moulded surround, which could date to around 1640. As with other chimneypieces on this floor, it could have been moved up here from lower down in the earlier house when it became unfashionable, as it appears somewhat over-sized for this location. To the right of it is where this room would have connected with S3 through the thickness of the previous external wall and via the latter's jib door.



S6 looking east, showing the c.1640 chimneypiece and the location of the former connection with S3. (*Robert Thrift*)

The 1930 inventory refers to it as Bedroom No.13 (probably a maid's bedroom) and during the school's time it was used as a Nun's bedroom. A stud partition wall to the north is shown on the 1968 fire precaution plan forming an entrance lobby from S4 and an enlarged store where S5 now is.



Detail from 1968 fire plan showing modified entrance lobby and store formed from S5 (*CET*)

S8

This room is one of those on this floor with a 17th century door. It was known as bedroom No. 11 in the 1930 inventory and was used as a nun's bedroom during the school period. A stud partition wall is shown to the north on the 1968 plan forming an entrance lobby from S4.



S8 looking north, showing the 17th century door onto the corridor (*Robert Thrift*)



S8 in 1968, showing the lobby entrance from the corridor which connected with that to S6 to the east (*CET*)

S10

This is the largest space on the second floor and was historically referred to as the Lumber Garret, or attic store. There is a reference in a Hobcraft bill³²³ to architectural elements being stored in the house, possibly in this space: '*In storage: Gibb door to State Apartment; 8 pare of sashes for West End; 6ft of swelling frieze in Drawing room; 18ft of cube plinth of Oak to Balls at top of House; 20ft of sash & frame for West End in the roof; circular part of ditto dabled; cornice round ditto*'. It is at the centre of the south range, directly above the South Portico with a fine central window as a feature, probably by Hobcraft – he billed for a 'circular window' which is on the same bill as the storage reference above.³²⁴ It has an important 17th century chimneypiece which could be the earliest in the house, with an arched head and plain pilasters. The door is also 17th century with strap hinges, doubled-up with a 17th century panelled door onto the corridor.

The 1930 inventory refers to it as Bedroom No. 10 and the school used it as a store, presumably making use of the three historic walk-in cupboards on the west wall (S10a,b & c).

Because it is a fairly large space with a variety of early features (chimneypiece, door, cupboards) it is a very useful space for talking to groups of visitors about the evolution of the building and re-use of architectural elements, from the 17th century house(s), the 18th century re-modelling and subsequent 20th century uses.



S10 looking south towards the circular window with the three storage cupboards on the right (*Robert Thrift*)

³²³ F62/15

³²⁴ F62/15



The early chimneypiece in S10 (*Robert Thrift*)

S12

This was listed as bedroom No.9 in the 1930 Inventory and was used as a nun's bedroom during the school's time.



S12 looking south (*Robert Thrift*)

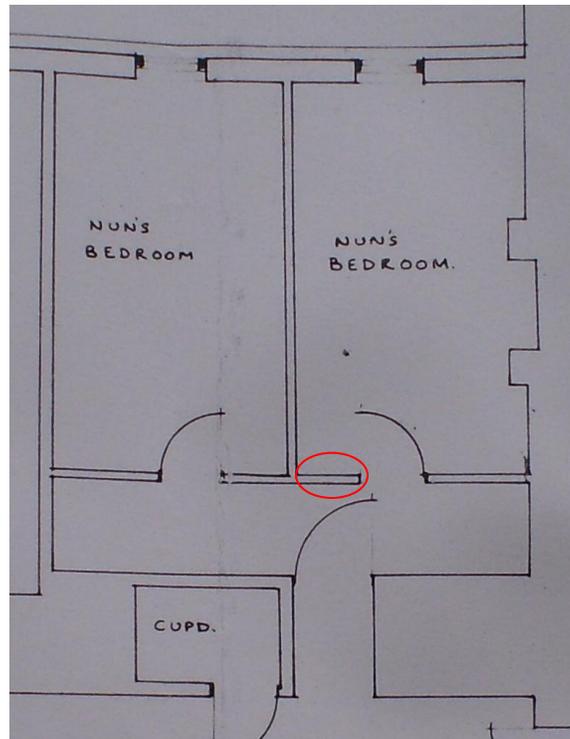
S14 & S15

These two modern bathrooms were formed in the second half of the 20th century out of one larger historic bedroom space (known as Bedroom No.8 in the 1930 inventory) by a modern stud partition. They were used as nuns' bedrooms during the school's occupation and also had a stud partition at their north end forming a lobby entrance. S15 has an area of raised floor at its NW end indicating that there was a possible former access to S16 that is now blocked. This has yet to be unravelled and understood.³²⁵

³²⁵ The cupboard in S3, the blocked opening in S15 and the passage between S26 and S27 may possibly be the former openings of dormer windows on the earlier house, but this is still unproven.



S14 looking south with 20th century stud partition on the right (*Robert Thrift*)



S14 & S15 as shown on the 1968 fire plan with joint lobby entrance.
The section indicated survives (CET)

S16

This is a large access lobby to the pair of bedrooms in the west tower, S17 & S18, again emphasising the superiority of these finely-proportioned spaces on the second floor which, unlike their counterparts F10 & F12 on the floor below, are not compromised by the height of the Long Gallery ceiling. It also provides access (albeit somewhat awkward) to the roof of the Gallery's canted bay, via a short flight of wooden steps and an opening light beneath a Diocletian window, a typical Palladian feature (the lower sash is damaged and is in store). The space was listed as the Central Lobby in the 1930 Inventory and as an Ante Room in 1968.



S16 looking west, showing the access to the roof of the canted bay (*Robert Thrift*)

S17 & S18

This fine room and its pair S18 were probably intended as guest or bachelor bedrooms in the 18th century, commanding some of the best views over the designed landscape and beyond. Nevertheless, it is possible that their west-facing windows (W96 & W98) are modern openings and that they would previously have been blind, articulated only for external symmetry. It would have been unusual to have windows on both sides of the room (the Georgians were worried about draughts) and, with the fireplace on the east wall and the door on the north there would have been nowhere to put the bed. This is further confirmed by the fact that the corresponding windows on the east end of the house are blind, although these of course overlook the service areas.



S17 looking east showing the chimneypiece and jib cupboard door (*Robert Thrift*)



S18 looking east showing chimneypiece with large overmantle & jib cupboard door (*Robert Thrift*)

It has been suggested that the chimneypieces in these rooms could be candidates for those by Lovell in 1758 that were removed from the Saloon, although they are not a matching pair: the one in S17 has an eared surround and that in S18 is bolection moulded. This requires further research. The chimneypiece in S18 has a dominating, early-looking painted timber overmantle incorporating a mantelshelf and space for hanging a picture. Both rooms have a jib door to a cupboard, S17 to the right of the chimneypiece and S18 to the left.

S17 is listed as the End Bedroom No.7 in the 1930 inventory and S18 as Large End Bedroom No.6 and they were also used as bedrooms during the school's time (although the 1968 fire plan does not state that they were for nuns).

S19 Back stairs (see also G12/B29/F7)

The higher reaches of the back staircase has a panelled dado and moulded dado rail, although not on the landing, presumably with the aim of retaining a certain status as this stair leads to a pair of the finest rooms on the second floor of the house. The moulded skirting and cornice, however, appear truncated on this landing, as though some modification has taken place and which needs further investigation.



The second floor landing of the back staircase, showing original newel posts but replacement balusters, and the dado panelling on this section (*Robert Thrift*)

S20

This room's 17th century door is currently stored within the room but the massive strap hinges remain in situ. This was listed as Bedroom No.5 in the 1930 Inventory and during the school's time was used as a nun's bedroom.



S20 looking south, showing 17th century strap hinges (*Robert Thrift*)

S21

This room also has an early 17th century strap-hinged door. It was listed as Bedroom No.4 in the 1930 Inventory and during the school's time was used as a nun's bedroom.



S21 looking north (*Robert Thrift*)

S22

This room is located at the centre of the north elevation behind the pediment bearing the Coventry coat of arms. It therefore has no window but was nevertheless used as a nun's 'cell' during the school's time, although by 1968 they were using it as a store. The 1930 Inventory listed it as Store Room No.2. It has a re-used and patched 17th century panelled door and its curved entrance accommodates the canted corridor around the lightwell.



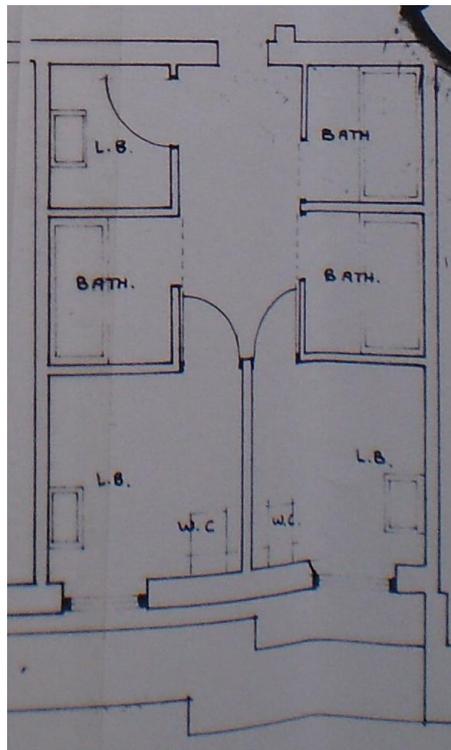
S22 looking south toward the lightwell in the corridor, showing the patched 17th century door (*Robert Thrift*)

S23 & S24

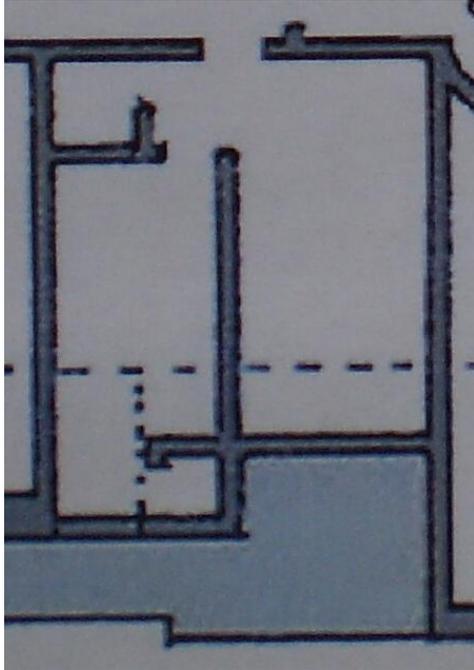
As with S14 & S15, these two spaces were created in the late 20th century out of one larger space and are divided by a stud partition wall. In the 1930 Inventory the space was known as The Tank Room & W.C. They were much altered during the school's time to provide six bath cubicles and in the late 20th century altered again to form a kitchen (in S 23) and bathroom (in S24) with toilet off it (S24a).



S23 looking north showing awkward window set in eaves (*Robert Thrift*)



Arrangement of S23 & S24 in 1968 (*CET*)



Current arrangement of S23 & S24 (*John Goom floorplan*)

There is a curious, hitherto un-explained depth of masonry at the north end of S23 which interferes with the space available for the window set within the eaves.



S24 looking north (*Robert Thrift*)

S25

This is another room with a large 17th century door and strap hinges. It was used as a nun's bedroom by the school.



S25 looking south showing the 17th century door (*Robert Thrift*)

S26

This south-east bedroom has a 17th century chimneypiece with eared surround and a contemporary door with strap hinges. In the 18th century it was probably the Nursemaid's Bedroom adjacent to the Night Nursery in S27. It links to the latter through the thickness of the original external east wall and this passageway is partially lined with a section of re-used Jacobean panelling.³²⁶ The 1930 Inventory lists it as Bedoom No.3 and it was used as a nun's bedroom. An early 20th century document detailing the directions of the Court's chimney flues appears to refer to this room as the Hon. T. Coventry's bedroom. It is currently a modern bathroom with another (almost) centrally-positioned bath.

³²⁶ The cupboard in S3, the blocked opening in S15 and the passage between S26 and S27 may possibly be the former openings of dormer windows on the earlier house, but this is still unproven.



S26 looking east showing 17th century chimneypiece and connecting door through thickness of original external wall to S27 (*Robert Thrift*)



Detail of re-used Jacobean panelling in doorway between S26 & S27 (*Robert Thrift*)

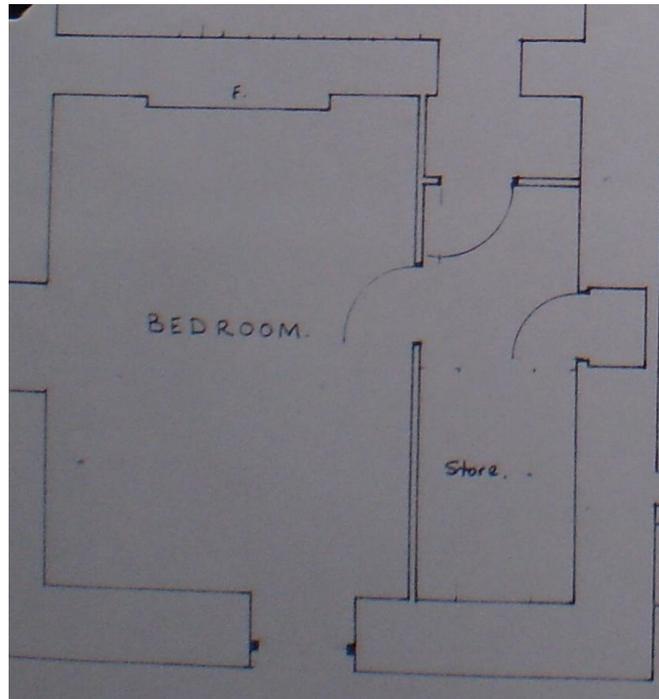
S27

A jib door on the west wall of this room in the north-east tower masks access into the adjoining bedroom (S26) and the connecting 'passage' through the thickness of the former external wall is lined with re-used early panelling.

The 1930 Inventory lists the room as bedroom No. 1 and by 1940 it is referred to as the Hon. T. Coventry's Room.³²⁷ The school used it as a bedroom with a sub-divided store

³²⁷ This is deduced from a c.1940s document giving a description of the various courses of the different chimney flues. Thomas Coventry was the youngest son of the 9th Earl. (CET)

along its west elevation. They also appear to have blocked the connecting door to S26 in order to form a cupboard in S27. The lobby of this arrangement in the SW corner survives and provides access via a ladder to the roof space.



1968 arrangement of S27 with sub-divided store (CET)

The ceiling of this room is compromised by having been lowered to accommodate water tanks above and has two encased (presumably iron) beams running east-west to support them.



S27 looking south showing surviving lobby on the right and one of the encased beams. (Robert Thrift)

THE BASEMENT

(For a summary of the key features of each of the basement spaces, refer to the Gazetteer, Appendix 1).

Despite the fact that the servants and the service domain tell the other half of the story of any great house and are an aspect that fascinates people today, being architecturally and decoratively unimportant spaces they were often never, or hardly, recorded. Inevitably we can often therefore only see the 'shadows' of how these spaces were used.³²⁸ Croome Court's basement suffered during the last few private ownerships through extremely insensitive introduction of services, modern, functional adaptation of the spaces and the use of cheap and inappropriate building materials. However, closer examination reveals a multitude of exciting clues as to the historic uses of the spaces, their surviving but often disguised original fabric and tantalizing historical evidence of the 1640s house buried just beneath the surface. The Court's semi-subterranean service areas are also very evocative and atmospheric and can speak to us in quite a powerful way of the various generations of people who have occupied them, from servants to school boys, owners and tenants. In 1961 the basement even contained a laboratory in the cellars for the contractors who were constructing the M5 motorway through the park.
³²⁹

In addition to the physical evidence, the room functions listed in the 1930 Inventory and those recorded on the 1940 H.M.O.W.³³⁰ floorplan are probably remarkably faithful to the room uses in the mid-18th century. This is because little changed during the 9th Earl's long tenure, his 'reign' being one of continuity and tradition rather than change and modernisation. The Bailiff, or Agent, in overall charge of the house and park at that time was John Hill - he had a similar life-span to that of the 9th Earl.³³¹ It has been suggested that, according to the apparent sequence of rooms as listed in the 1930 inventory, it was quite a progressive household under the 9th Earl as there appear to have been male and female domestic rooms quite close together.³³² However, caution is needed in making assumptions for two reasons: one is that there may well have been quite a lot of changes between the period after the 9th Earl's death under his grandson, the 10th Earl, who was modernising the Court and before the uses recorded on the 1940 plan. The other is because many of the domestic functions were housed in the Red Wing, the Court's service wing. Some of the domestic functions migrated between service wing and Court according to evolving conventions and convenience and at some points there were overlaps in the location of the Servants' Hall and the Steward's Room, it not being clear at what precise moment they moved. The 1940 plan does not show a Kitchen in the Court, but two in the Red Wing, one at the farthest, eastern end of the Red Wing

³²⁸ The amount of information relating to the servants in a household would often depend on the assiduity of the Steward who kept the accounts. In Croome's case it is interesting to note that there is more information relating to the Park servants than those in the Court, although the household accounts are rigorously signed off by the 6th Earl (Jill Tovey).

³²⁹ John E Acton, returning as a visitor after 49 years, 2010. This was probably in B25.

³³⁰ His Majesty's Office of Works.

³³¹ The 9th Earl was not as assiduous as the 6th at record-keeping. He kept diaries but they have pages torn out (!)

³³² Dr. Pam Sambrook, Basement of Croome Court: Report on historical use and layout, October 2010.

(when fire was an ever-present danger) and a later location in the western end of the Red Wing to bring it closer to the Dining Room in the Court. One of the on-going mysteries is the location of the Still Room. Although one is listed in the 1930 Inventory it is not yet been possible to identify which space it occupied. It was a female domestic space associated with the preparation of sweet foods for afternoon tea, preserving fruit and making lotions and perfumes. It would have needed a good fireplace.

The spine wall provides a natural subdivision within the basement layout and, in the 1750s re-modelling, the old access route through this wall off B6 was retained together with the opening between B29 and B21 at the western end of the wall. In her analysis of the evolution of the domestic offices, Dr. Pam Sambrook (see Appendices 9 & 10) has suggested that this subdivision of the layout may have provided some gender segregation, although during the 18th century the Court's basement appears to have had a predominantly male-orientated function. The 'new' layout included the boot room, knife room, beer and wine cellars, strong rooms, agent's office, and butler's pantry, while the female areas, such as the kitchen, appear to have been located within the Red Wing and the laundry was in a separate building at the south end of the Laundry Yard.

The mid-18th century adaptation of the basement from the earlier house is likely to have involved much re-building work. Many new small rooms were created, some of which were given groin vaults for additional strength and which could be readily adapted to fit the various spaces. These include the strong rooms, B14 and B28, both of which had iron bars fitted to their windows originally for additional security. A series of small rooms were formed within the in-filled north section on each side of the porch and three new long narrow rooms with groin vaults were constructed to the north-east end of the basement, each with a particular function, and in one of these (B8) is a well that provided the main source of water within the house. The main thoroughfares through the basement were re-laid with blue engineering brick³³³ to be hard wearing, but much of the early flags and brick paving survived these changes. Several 17th century doors appear to have been re-used.

As on the second floor, the 'new' end wings provided superior accommodation, here for the senior members of staff, with the butler's pantry and housekeeper's room in the east wing, while the west wing was probably reserved for the senior management as it was convenient for the muniment room (B28) where documents would be stored. There were staircases at each end of the basement; the east end staircase provided access to the Dining Room from the kitchens in the Red Wing, probably replacing the former route between the basement and main floors at the eastern end of the 17th century house. The west end staircase was not completed until 1764 and it may have been used by the senior staff and by the family for access to the west wing. Certainly the accommodation in the west wing is of notably superior quality.

The floors within the basement are laid mainly with a mix of stone flagstones, blue brick (on the main thoroughfares) and 20th century concrete screed, and some rooms have modern synthetic floor coverings laid over the flags. Most of the rooms have brick vaults, with barrel vaults running through the main cellars and groin vaulting in some individual rooms. The spaces beneath the north steps and the south portico are also vaulted.

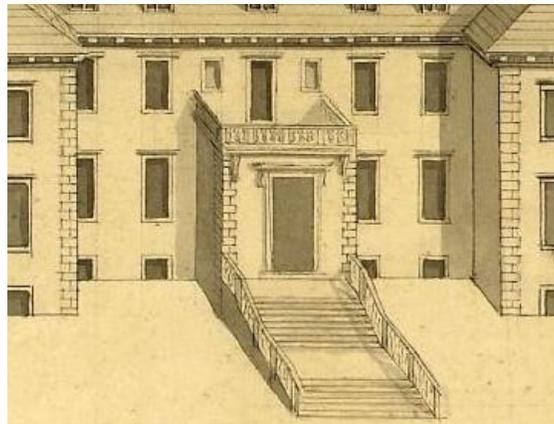
³³³ Blue engineering bricks were used from around the mid-19th century in this way for flooring where something hard-wearing and damp-proof was required.

However, interestingly, the only 'new' tower room to have a vaulted ceiling is B28, the muniment room. The others (B13, B15, B24-25-26) do not.

The walls are mainly plastered and have modern, carelessly applied paintwork, a few in startlingly dark colours (especially B17). These are unfortunate as they lend a very uncared-for appearance to the spaces and detract from the architectural and historical interest of the rooms. However, as on other floors, the existing decorative schemes are testimony to the Court's chequered fortunes and will remain until analysis has been carried out and understanding has developed in order to make informed decisions about the presentation of the spaces.

B1 & B2

These two small spaces are approached down a double flight of stone steps and, like all the basement spaces, are semi-below ground level. They form the basement entrance to the Court on the north side and have barrel-vaulted and groin-vaulted ceilings respectively. As an entrance, they are narrow, low and confined, but this is partially because they are physically constrained by the structure of the steps above them up to the main door on the *piano nobile* and also because, psychologically and visually, they should not detract from the latter. They probably retain historic material from the former porch and *perron* (steps) of the 17th century house, notably the narrow, deep chamfered stone surround with Tudor arch of B2 within the 17th century wall through to B3. However, they are slightly further forward than the location of the historic porch, as the north wall was brought forwards to align with the projecting bays in the mid-18th century re-modelling.



Detail from the c.1750 view showing the 17th century porch & steps on the north elevation (WRO)

Historically this would have served as the informal entrance for members of the family and from where footmen would have attended visitors' and family carriages. It was the main entrance into the Court for the school boys. B2 now contains an inappropriate modern door.



The basement entrance on the north front (B1) leading down to B2, in 1984 (*Diane Bentley*)



B1 looking south into B2 (*Robert Thrift*)

B3

This is a much altered space and its original layout and functioning is obscure. It may have served as a beer cellar here on the cooler north side of the basement, but it would have been unusual to have a door leading directly from the outside into a beer cellar, as well as impractical for people's comings and goings. A possibility is that the space was sub-divided to segregate beer cask storage from access although on the 1940 plan it is shown as a much larger space than now, combined with B31 with a central support. However, the outside door is not wide enough to accommodate casks, which begs the question of where else the cask access from outside could have been.

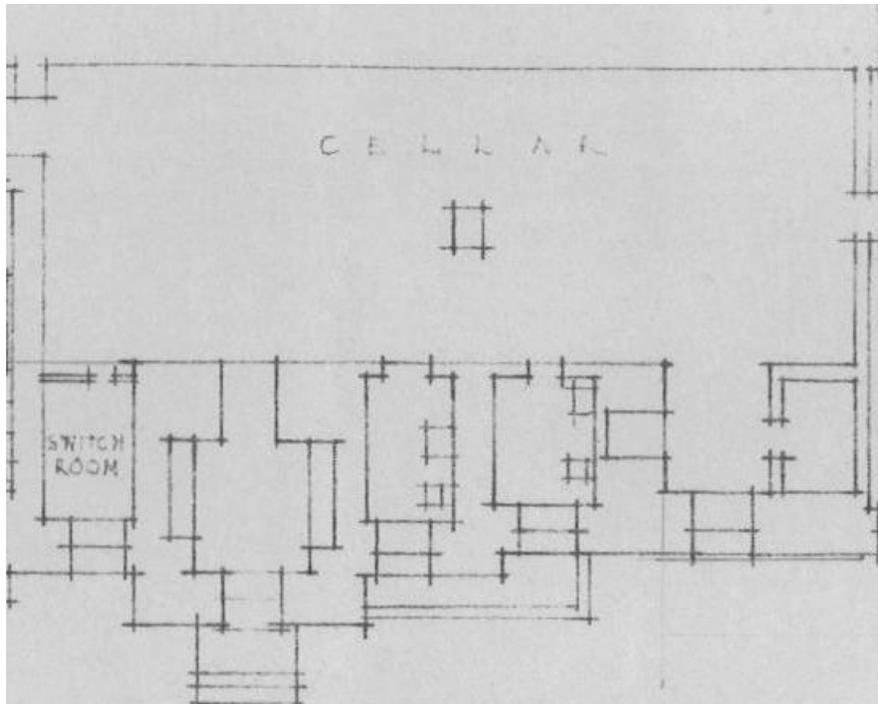


B3 looking east. Note schoolboys' shoe lockers on right. (*Robert Thrift*)

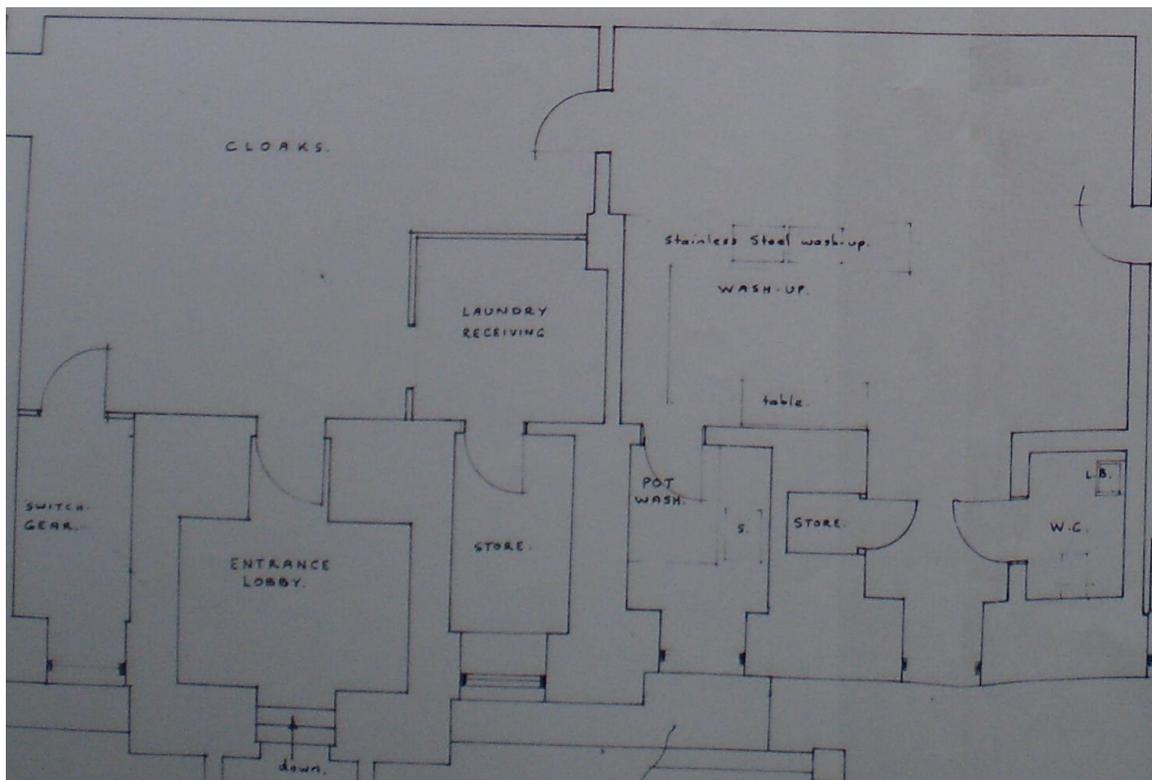
The paving comprises a combination of stone flags and various types of brick, including two distinct brick channels over a metre wide laid with early narrow bricks which probably remain from the 17th century house's courtyard before the north wall was moved forwards.

It is referred to as a Cellar on the 1940 floorplan (when it was combined with B31) and was known as The Crypt during the School's occupation. The numbered lockers along the south wall were used by the school boys for storing their outdoor shoes when they came inside,³³⁴ and they were also later used by the Hare Krishna devotees, who of course also remove their shoes when entering a building. By 1968 it was referred to as 'Cloaks' and the floorplan shows a 'Laundry receiving' portioned section in NW corner, connecting to B5.

³³⁴ Tim Hickson (volunteer) spoke to a former pupil who visited the Court and clarified that the lockers were used for short wellingtons for gardening, football boots, plimsolls, indoor shoes and 'best' shoes for chapel.



Detail from the 1940 floorplan showing B3 combined with B31 into one large cellar with a central supporting pillar (CET)



Detail from the 1968 floorplan showing B3 (left) & B31(right) as separate spaces, with a laundry corner in B3 (CET)

B4

This small, unassuming space is, from a country house technology point of view, extremely important. It contains the 1930s electrical switch gear that was put in after the 9th Earl's death³³⁵ when his son was trying to modernise the Court and make it fit for habitation. It is actually very evocative and atmospheric and, together with its associated fuse boxes and conduits throughout the basement, constitutes an important survival.



The 1930s switchgear in B4 (Malcom James)

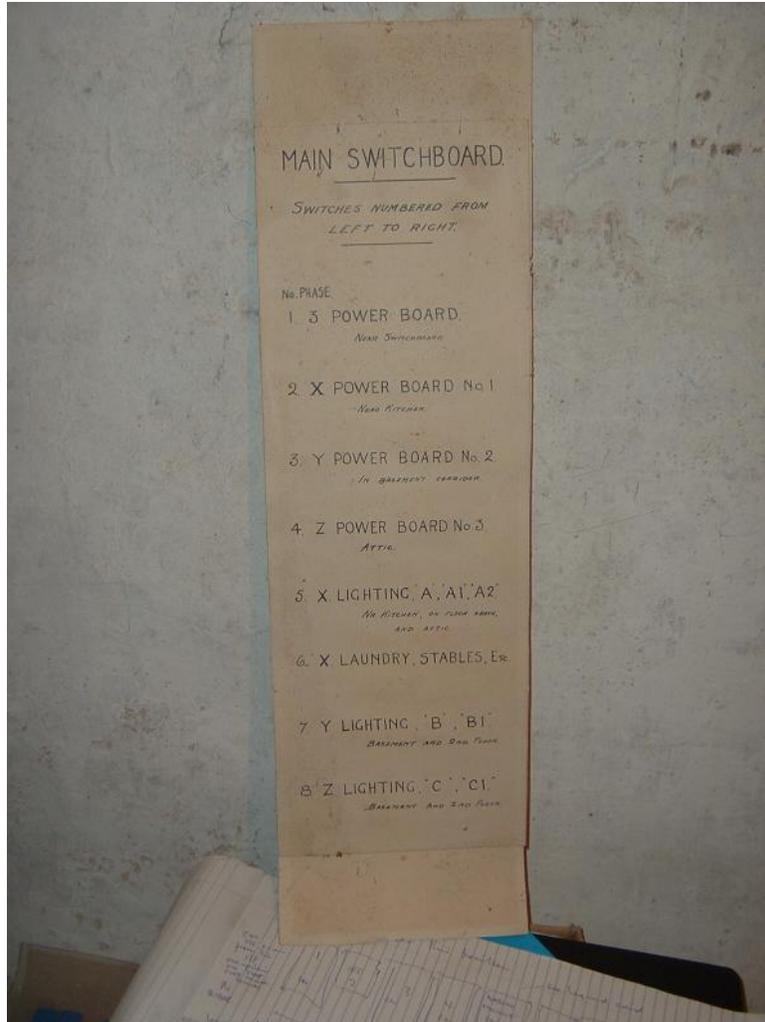
*“The existing and ancient electrical switchgear was made in Shrewsbury by Lea, Son & Co. (of Cragside fame). This switchgear is serious stuff, and of historic significance. The original, locally generated supply was subsequently replaced by an overhead mains supply – the original cables are still in place, with the old metering position still in the chamber beneath the South Portico [B20]. This original intake position was subsequently abandoned when a new, underground mains supply was brought to Croome from the east side. The original cabling between the old intake position and the switchgear is still in place, running along the vaulted ceiling of the basement, and is remarkable in terms of its physical size and craftsmanship”.*³³⁶

A list of the Court's original main electrical switchboard survives (see image).

New electrical circuit boards have been added on the opposite wall, with the aim of retaining the function of the space and respecting the integrity of the historic equipment, although it is now of course redundant.

³³⁵ Strictly speaking, *“the electricity system was put into the Court in 1928 by the CET under Sir Reginald as chairman at that time - the details are in the CET archive - after much discussion they decided to bring the power over (or under) the foot-bridge. It was probably carried on poles from the A38, I imagine. Then, in the 1930s it was updated again, possibly, as most of the services were overhauled then”.* Jill Tovey, July 2010.

³³⁶ David Fathers, Electrical Consultant, May 2008



The 1930s Main Switchboard list (Author)

B5

This small space with a barrel vaulted ceiling is currently used as a W.C. It was a 'new' space in the re-modelling, created when the north wall was pushed forwards and was possibly used as the Drying Room in the 18th century. In 1968 it was used as a store.



B5 looking north (Robert Thrift)

B6

This corridor is the eastern section of the east-west spine corridor or service passage, the other being B16, with an almost central dog-leg break through the thickness of the spine wall. As on the other floors of the Court, it provides a north-south division of the accommodation and, on this level, probably a degree of gender separation between the male and female servants. It has a barrel-vaulted ceiling, brick floor and several early openings off it: a wide, chamfered archway to B16 and a similar opposite to B7, a four-panelled door with moulded surround inserted in an older, wider opening to B9, a half-in-filled segmental archway with inserted doorway, now blocked, to B17 and a wide doorway to B8. All of these elements provide interesting and useful evidence about the earlier house, its uses and how it was modified in the 18th century. It is now somewhat compromised by insensitively introduced modern services.



B6 looking east (*Robert Thrift*)



A section of the north wall of B6 opened-up to inform the capital works (*Author*)

B7

This is one of a series of three modest rooms on the north-east side of the Court's basement. This, along with B8 and B14, seems to have belonged to the Butler's Pantry suite. Its wide arched doorway is an earlier doorway now made smaller. It aligns north-south with an identical arched opening through the spine wall from B6 to B16. These wide openings are potentially a clue to how the wine barrels would have entered the house and cellars and certainly evidence of the 17th century house, or may be more to do with the location of the earlier servants/back staircase.

In the mid-18th century, B7 could possibly have been the Brushing Room, forming a suite of male domestic rooms along the north-east section of the basement, before this function moved to the Red Wing probably in the late 19th century (certainly it is recorded there on the 1940 floorplan) .

During the School's occupation it was the surgery/medical room and where the dentist would come and work with a nurse; this is confirmed on the 1968 plan where it is shown as a Surgery.



B7 looking south towards the wide, early doorway onto B6 (*Robert Thrift*)

B8

Before the mid-18th century re-modelling, this room could, together with B14, have been a kitchen in the early house (see B14). Post re-modelling, it was probably part of the Butler's suite of rooms along the north range, along with B7 and B14. It has a groin-vaulted ceiling and an early strap-hinged door. B8 could have been the Knife Room mentioned in the 1930 inventory, possibly doubling as a Lamp Room, although its brick floor incorporates drainage channels. On the 1940 floorplan it is shown as the Boot Room and during the school's time it was used by the visiting barber, with two benches down the sides of the room, and clippers and scissors. However by 1968 it is shown as a Drying Room.

A 1930s pump, inscribed Seaborne Interceptor and installed by Thomas Broad Ltd Contractors Malvern, survives in this room, beneath which one of the 18th century cisterns or water storage tanks is believed to be housed and which may be the location of one of the original wells. This could relate to the 1764 plumbing bill from William Chapman, associated with the large underground water storage chamber and pumping system to the SE of the Red Wing. The 1930s pump was examined as part of the Country House Technology Survey (see Appendix 20). The large three-phase electric motor, still in situ, would have been used to drive an impeller (high-pressure pump) to pump water out of the well via a filter. Quite where this water was to be sent is not clear but an obvious destination was one of the tanks on the floors above.³³⁷

³³⁷ I am grateful to Tim Hickson for clarifying the thinking on this pump.



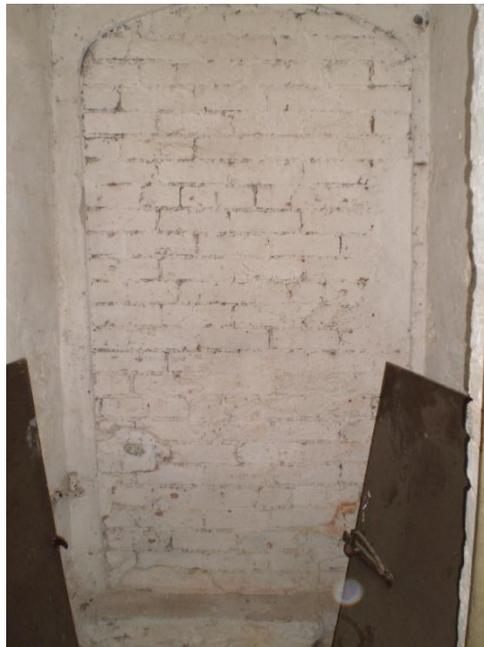
B8 looking south showing the pump in the SW corner (*Robert Thrift*)



The pump in B8 (*Author*)

B9

This is now a small walk-in cupboard formed out of an interesting earlier opening off B6 into B17. Its back wall is the bricked-up former arched opening. An early pintle also survives. This is another example of an apparently insignificant space providing insight into the earlier house.



B9 showing bricked-up early arched opening into B17 (Author)

B10

This area would have effectively been ‘mission control’ and a hub of activity in the 18th century house: it is the point where the Red Wing links with the Court, where servants would have been coming and going, it contained the bell system on the south wall, and had the Butler’s Pantry to the north and the Housekeeper’s Room to the south. The bottom of the main staircase leads down into this space, providing an important communication with the Dining Room for food being brought in from the kitchens in the Red Wing. The bell board and hinged brackets for the wires are still in place, although the bells themselves and the room name plates do not survive. The space also acts as a separation between the male and female servants’ dominions, being a lobby between the Butler’s Pantry and the Housekeeper’s Room on either side of the corridor axis. The staff may also have gathered in this hallway for meetings – it would originally have felt slightly larger as it is now compromised by a late 20th century partition wall which encloses the bottom of the staircase. The 1968 fire precaution plan is annotated at the bottom of the stairs: “*Take out existing door and screen and build ½ hour fire resistant screen and door with self-closing spring.*” Leonard Edwards remembers the connecting door into the Red Wing being leather-padded with a buttoned finish on the Red Wing side.



The bells in B10, late 20th century, already compromised by modern services (*Leonard Edwards*)



The bell board in B10 today, bereft of its bells and name plates but retaining the bell-wire hinges (Author)

The area is punctuated in the centre by two timber columns. These provide support for the main staircase above but also distinguish the entrance into the main part of the

house from the former service areas in the Red Wing. This is currently an area of structural concern: the ceiling above, the stone floor of the ground floor passage and the foot of the main staircase, is sagging and the base of the columns appear to be rotting away. Some recent opening-up work has been done in order to investigate.



Opened-up section of the ceiling to B10 (*Author*)



Rotting to base of column in B10 (*Author*)

B11 & B12 Service Stair & Cupboard

B11 is a small cupboard under the stair up to the ground floor. It is a modern space created by the 1968 partition that encloses the bottom of the stairs for fire precaution reasons and was formerly part of B10. It contains a small iron cistern for the back boiler in B13.

B12 is the service stair at the east end of the Court; it is essentially a continuation of the main staircase above but is of course much more simple in detail, albeit with a dado rail. It has its original plain iron stick balusters, stone treads with modern concrete repairs. The modern partition wall includes a partly-glazed door at the bottom of the stairs leading into B10. The window on the east elevation has a built-in 'window-seat', whose purpose is not known.



The service stair B12 from basement to ground floor (*Robert Thrift*)

B13 The Butler's Pantry

This room in the north-east pavilion was one of the newly-created spaces in the mid-18th century. Although referred to as the Butler's Pantry, this is a bit of a mis-nomer as it was probably the room where the footmen worked and therefore would have had a slightly lesser status than that of the Housekeeper's Room across the corridor (her's has a finer cornice detail). It has a worn flagged floor with drainage channels and distinctive marks that were caused by the former sinks, either in lead or wood or both, that used to line the

north wall and by the tables where the footmen would have cleaned the silver, best china and glass after each meal.

Joseph Rose lists whitewashing in the Butler's Pantry in 1763³³⁸ and an extract from William Chapman's 1764 plumbing bill itemises "... 2 Horezontall Cocks and bosses in 2 Sinks in buttlers and House Keepers Room...0-10-0".

The room has a fireplace diagonally-set in the south-west corner and this was fitted with a range and back boiler, made by Jones & Rowe of Worcester, to provide hot water for the various cleaning tasks of washing china, glass and silver. The range and its associated cistern survive *in situ* although the pipework feeding from the boiler has been removed. The range and its flue have recently been cleaned and re-serviced so that a fire can once again be lit.³³⁹



Range with back boiler by Jones & Rowe, Worcester, in B13 (Author)

There is an interesting reference to the 'Butler's Room' in the 1902 Inventory of Heirlooms, which lists an English School picture depicting 'Croome Court in the olden time, a shooting party including the Duke of Gloucester etc in front, 17 x 11'.

³³⁸ F62/32

³³⁹ This work was done by Keith Mitchell of the Volcanic Chimney Company in 2011.

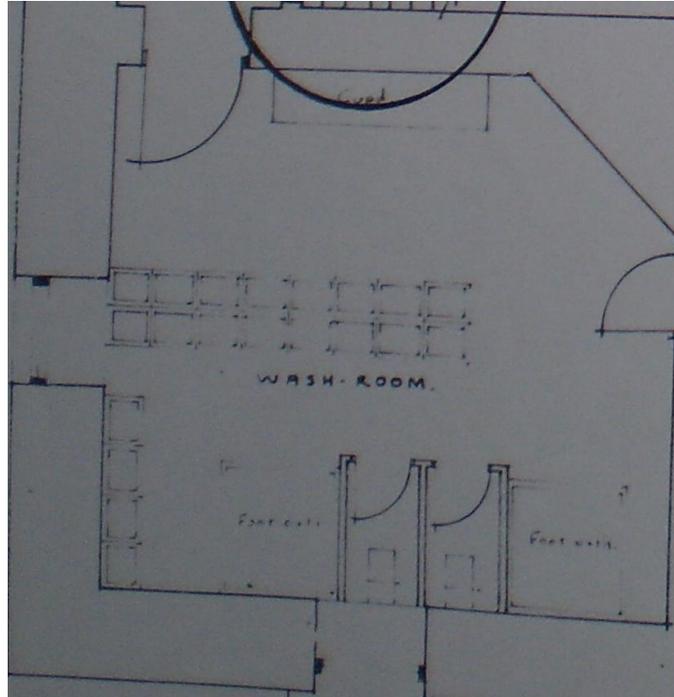
The 1940 floorplans show this as the Butler's Pantry – the Butler in the 1940s was Mr Latter.³⁴⁰

By 1968 the room is identified as a Wash-Room for the school boys to strip-wash and the plan shows a central block of sinks, more sinks on the east wall, plus two footbaths and two toilet cubicles on the north wall.



B13 looking west showing range in SW corner and strong-room door to B14 (*Robert Thrift*)

³⁴⁰ Memories of Geoff Sherwood.



Detail from 1968 floorplan showing B13 with schoolboys' sinks, footbaths and W.C.s (CET)

Access into the adjacent silver room (B14) is via an iron door and passageway through the thickness of the former east end wall of the old house.

B14 The Silver Store/Strong Room

The only access to this room, for security reasons, is off the Butler's domain in B13, via a massive metal strong-room door, through the thickness of the original external east wall. This opening was presumably put through in the 18th century re-modelling in order to link the two spaces, and it appears to have made use of a former large fireplace opening, and is in the location of one of the earlier external chimneys on the east elevation. If so, this would explain the arched nature of the doorway (taking the line of the original fireplace) and the curved soffit of the passage through the wall. The ghost of this fireplace opening can be seen in raking light on the east wall to the left of this doorway and early brickwork can also be seen under the shelving on the east wall. This also begs the question of the former use of this space in the earlier house – with such a large fireplace could it have been, together with B8, a former kitchen?

It was fitted-out in the Victorian period with baize-lined cupboards, grained to look like oak, for the storage of silver and a work bench under the window where the silver polishing would have been done. The cupboards were tailor-made to accommodate the curves of the vaulted ceiling. Remarkably, almost all of them survive in situ, and there are even traces of the green baize, although they are lacking their doors.³⁴¹ The upper section of the cupboard on the west wall is missing although its position can be traced on the ceiling. This has a magnificent breakfront base which is still in place.

³⁴¹ There is a possibility that these survive in storage in the Red Wing.



B14 looking south showing the remains of the built-in silver cupboards (*Robert Thrift*)



Detail of east wall of B14 and passage to B13 indicating where the ghost of a possible 17th century fireplace can be seen (*Author*)

Since the 18th century, the room appears to have been consistently used as a strong room until in 1968 it is shown as a Reserve Clothing Store, presumably making use of the cupboards' shelving.

The floor is of very good stone flags with fine joints. The integral boarded floor which would have covered the stone flags is now missing. This is clear for two reasons: there

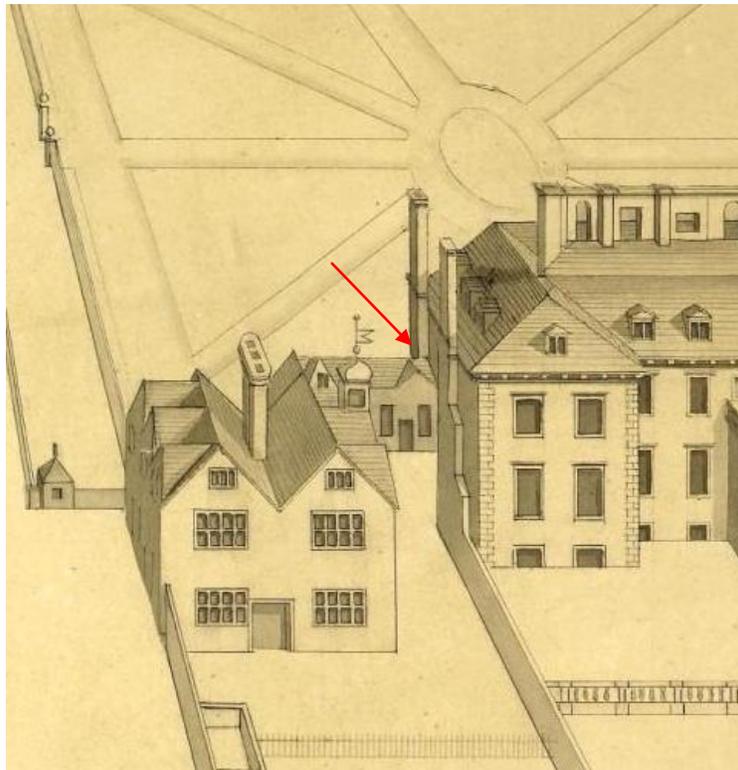
is a gap between the stone floor and the base of the cupboards, where the floorboards would have been fitted, and the pristine, un-worn condition of the stone flags which have obviously been protected from wear by the boards.

B15 The Housekeeper's Room

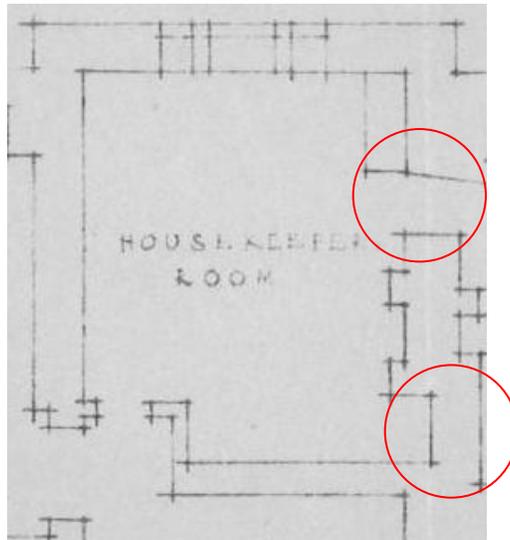
This is known as the Housekeeper's Room – it appears to be a good typical size for such a function as a comfortable sitting room (but not bedroom), is architecturally relatively well-finished and is well-lit by a tripartite window set beneath the Venetian window in the Library above. It would have been a pleasant space in which to discuss orders and deliveries with tradesmen and conduct other business concerned with the management of the household.

The room has a moulded cornice and a large arched fireplace set in the rear of the pre-1750s external chimneybreast, as shown on the c.1750 view of the Court. This is now blocked and a Victorian grate has been inserted into it. The chimneybreast is flanked by cupboards, and the one to the north conceals a blocked archway into the adjacent room (B17) through the thickness of the previously external wall. This could have been the 17th century service access into the house from the then separate but linked service range. If so, the blocked opening to the left of the chimneypiece, also into B17 and shown on the 1940 floorplan, is presumably later.

In April 1764 William Chapman billed for “... 2 Horezontall Cocks and bosses in 2 Sinks in buttlers and House Keepers Room...0-10-0”.



Detail from the c.1750 view from the north indicating the future location of B15, the external chimney used by B15's fireplace and the possible opening to B17, now blocked, to right of B15's chimneypiece, adapted from earlier link building's access (WRO)



B15 shown as the Housekeeper's Room on 1940 floorplan, showing blocked early opening to right of fireplace and later opening to B17 to the left. (CET)

During the school's occupation this was used as the Sewing Room, for mending and repairing clothing and the clothes were stored in the adjoining B17, accessed through the now-blocked doorway.

This room is completely compromised by its late 20th century use as a boiler room. The present project seeks to remove this function and re-instate the integrity of the room. The oil-fired boilers are at the end of their life and the National Trust's policy to come off oil as a fuel will mean a much-needed release for this historic space. There are also serious structural issues relating to the ceiling above, which is the underside of the Library's floor.



B15 looking south showing the boilers and the propped ceiling with the Library above.
Note blocked opening to B17 on the right. (*Robert Thrift*)

B16

This corridor with its barrel vault runs the entire length of the south range (although truncated by the entrance to B17). It was partitioned-off in the mid-18th century, possibly prior to this date, to create a series of smaller wine cellars on the south side to store different types of wine, and for bottling areas, etc. It is likely that these were separate cellars for different types of wine and were all accessed individually off B16. However, the corridor wall has been altered and, if this was the case, the former openings have been blocked. A recent area has been opened-up in preparation for the re-servicing works and this reveals evidence of the construction of the wall.

During the School's occupation it had coat pegs all along the south wall and Leonard Edwards remembers it as being very dark. A former pupil (who arrived at Croome in 1953) remembers that there were shoe-lockers along the north wall (those in B3 not having been sufficient for approximately 140 schoolboys's shoes).



B16 looking east (*Author*)



Opened-up section of south wall of B16 between B18 & B19, 2012 (*Author*)

B17 The Servants Hall

This room is a candidate for having been the Kitchen in the 17th century house, and it may have been the 18th century Still Room before subsequently being used as an additional Servants' Hall, the main one being located in the Red Wing. (See Pam Sambrook's report Appendix 9). Its use as a Servants' Hall would seem plausible, being near the centre of the house and Red Wing and proximity to the bells in B10, an essential requirement of a servants' hall. Alternatively, as a possible Still Room, it was near the Housekeeper's Room and under her supervision with nearby smaller rooms for storage (B18-19).



B17 looking north, indicating (middle & right) 2 blocked openings onto B6 corridor and (left) internal window on west wall (*Robert Thrift*)

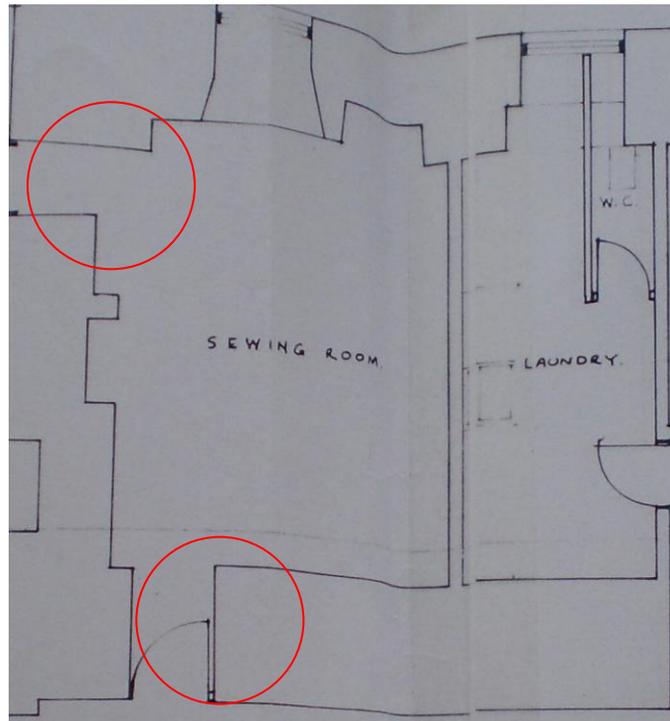
The room has undergone several phases of alteration and warrants a detailed survey to understand its structural and functional evolution. The vaulting is irregular, the former chimneybreast has had a new wall built against it with a Victorian grate set into it, the western window (W39) opening has been widened from the earlier house's fenestration, and a third window in the central recess has been blocked.³⁴² (The western window has a step of masonry in front of it, which could be the remains of the base of the earlier wall, before the window opening was widened). On the north wall, are two blocked former entrances onto the spine corridor (B6), the eastern-most is very wide and arched, and there are also the two blocked openings in the east wall into B15 referred to above. (On the 1940 and 1968 floorplans the eastern-most opening on the north wall is still functioning). Most curious of all, there is a small blocked internal window set in the west partition wall.³⁴³ This wall is insubstantial and may be a later alteration or it could have earlier origins as it lies adjacent to the original central opening through the spine wall. The vaulting has been cut away to accommodate the wall, although this may have been done if the vaulting was re-built, OR the vaulting could have been added subsequently, after the window (After all, the vaulting would have impeded the wide, eastern-most opening when this was in use and so would appear to have been added retrospectively).

The 1940 floorplan shows a partition wall to the west end of the room, incorporating the right hand window (W39) and compromising it with a further partition wall to form a

³⁴² The idea of a central window in the S wall of B17 and B21 seems plausible and it would confirm the 11-bays of the earlier house's south facade (as shown in the 1714 Beighton view).

³⁴³ Dr. Pam Sambrook has suggested that the small internal window could have been for passing supervision by the butler or housekeeper when/if the room was used as a servants' hall (see above).

separate closet for a toilet. This arrangement is still extant on the 1968 plan and the larger of the partitioned spaces was used as a laundry.



Arrangement of B17 as shown on 1968 floorplan with partition wall to form laundry & separate W.C. Note functioning openings onto B6 corridor and to B15. (CET)

During the property developer phase, this room was reputedly used as a 'night club', hence the startling paint scheme which distracts from the historic detail and vaulting.

B18 & B19

These two vaulted spaces appear to have been altered judging by the way they are divided from each other by a thin partition wall (which includes a three-light internal window), although they may be remnants of a series of separate wine cellars along the southern range of B16. It is possible that, in the earlier house, B19 was associated with access to the south and the opening through the thickness of the south elevation is still present. B19 may simply have been a passageway or access route in the 18th century down which beer casks were rolled into the wider passage and through to B3 (the grooves on the floor of B20 may be relevant). Alternatively, they may *possibly* have been storage rooms for the Still Room (if the latter was in B17, rather than being the Servants' Hall).

Old cellar doors were lockable, often with a sliding peephole, because wine was a valuable commodity and the servants were not allowed anywhere near it.³⁴⁴ Although it

³⁴⁴ The Butler decanted the wine from the barrels, in which it would have been delivered, into bottles, hence 'Butler', i.e. bottler.

has been interfered with, B19 has a typical wine cellar door incorporating ventilation in the top section and with wonderful strap hinges.



B18 looking south (*Robert Thrift*)



B19 looking south (*Robert Thrift*)

The 1940 floorplan appears to show B18 as a drying room, and the 1968 plan shows it as a store, with B19 left as an access route through to electrical gear in B20. B18 now contains a modern bathroom and B19 a modern kitchen. In the scheme of discussions

about 20th century interventions to the historic fabric and their relative importance, these instances (including yet another almost centrally positioned bath), do not really contribute to the discussions and are candidates for removal. However, as the spaces have already been compromised by the introduction of services, they may be used for this type of function in the future, although obviously retaining the surviving historic features.



Cellar door to B19 (*Robert Thrift*)

B20 & B34

These two spaces situated beneath the South Portico were formerly one long rectangle and are now subdivided by a modern breezeblock wall running north-south. The 1968 plan shows them as one space annotated 'Electrical Gear'. The original electrical intake position at Croome is in the north-west corner of what is now B20. The cables, which must have been the originals, are cut off beneath the switchgear, and the more recent MEB³⁴⁵ types are there but are now also disconnected. It would have been supplied from a dynamo (and probably later by an alternator) situated in an outbuilding, and probably powered by an oil-fuelled motor, or small steam turbine.

As is often the case with innocuous-looking spaces in the Court, these contain some interesting and important features: in the NE corner of B20 is a fine stone plinth which is the base of the eastern pilaster of the South Portico. Its pair is in the NW corner of B34. A blind arched window opening in B20's north wall is covered with a modern vent revealing an early iron grille (see B23). Grooves on the brick floor could relate to the

³⁴⁵ Midlands Electricity Board

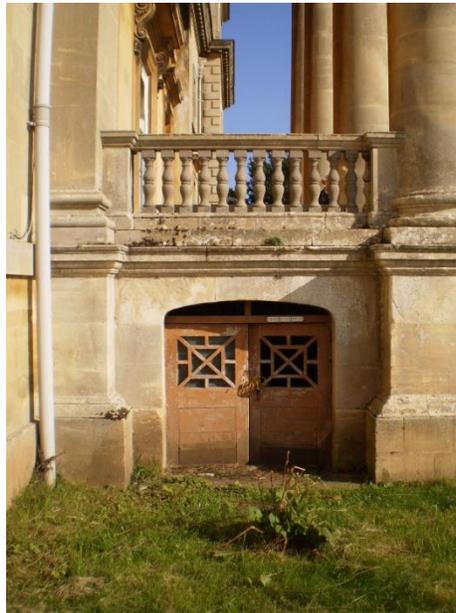
route that barrels and casks were brought into the cellars, and thence via B19. The timber Chinoiserie-style doors (D40) at the western end of B34 to the outside may be linked to the 18th century Chinese bridge by William Halfpenny over the 'river' to the west, which is no longer extant.



B20 looking west towards B34 beyond, showing the electrical intake position on the north wall
(Robert Thrift)



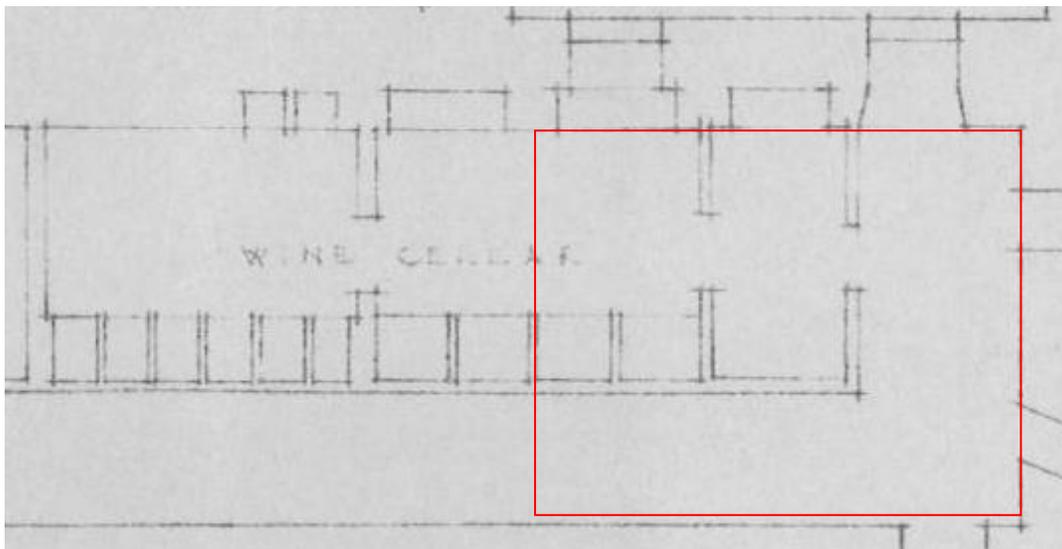
Base of South Portico pilaster in NE corner of B20 (Author)



The 'chinoiserie' timber doors to the exterior of B34 (*Author*)

B21

This very open space within the basement was formerly partially enclosed: the wine cellars have been substantially altered. The 1940 and 1968 floorplans show the eastern half of this space as another cellar or store in the sequence of B22 and 23 and which incorporated the eastern window (W41). The nuns during the school's occupation used it as a dry goods store. The marks of these removed divisions can be quite clearly seen on the vaulted ceiling.



Detail from 1940 floorplan indicating spaces now occupied by B21, formerly part of the sequence of wine cellars (*CET*)

The windows in the south wall here are very revealing: both window openings have quite clearly been (quite carelessly) altered and widened in the 18th century from the 17th century house and the change in width is very obvious: the sash of W42 overlaps the external bay division, where early external brickwork is visible. It is very likely that there was historically also a central window in the S wall of B21 which would confirm the 11-bay South façade as shown in the 1714 Beighton view (as in B17). During the school's time the western window (W42) was used as a fire escape: the 1968 plan is annotated: *'Remove metal grille from window, ease window as required to make it easily opened from the inside and provide a step. Provide and fix a printed notice "FIRE EXIT."* The concrete pad outside is still in situ.



B21 looking east: this section of the room was originally 2 further enclosed cellars
(Robert Thrift)

An area of spalling on the north wall appeared to indicate an historic blocked opening aligned with the vaulting of the 17th century house, or perhaps a fireplace. Recent opening-up works seem to confirm that there was a fireplace in this location, although there must also have been a change in floor level (it is covered with a modern concrete screed) as the top of the fireplace seems quite low.



Opened-up section on north wall of B21 revealing what appears to be a blocked historic fireplace (*Author*)

The door from B21 to B29 is revealing in what it tells us about the vintage of the vaulting. The architrave of the door on B21's side is compromised because of the vaulting, whilst on the B29 side it is not. This suggests that this opening in the thick spine wall was already present in the earlier house and that the vaulting throughout the basement was added later, i.e. in the 1750s re-modelling. In addition, the door in question (currently in store and replaced with a modern fire door) appears to be a finely-carved mahogany door with egg and dart detail, now painted white. This suggests it came from the ground floor of the Court at some point and its quality may also relate to this being the family's access to the Smoke Room in B27.



Door from B21 to B29 showing compromised architrave due to vaulting and fineness of the door (painted carved mahogany) (*Author*)

B22 & B23 The Wine Cellars

In the 18th century there may have been doors into this run of wine cellars from the corridor B16, and they perhaps formed a series of smaller cellars for different types of wine, each accessed individually. Several of the early windows on their south wall were blocked when the South Portico was built in the mid-18th century. In 1764 Eltonhead, the bricklayer, is recorded as having worked on the larder, *cellar* & dairy, also '*rendering in ye Cellars*'. One of the blocked windows in B23 contains a remarkable piece of physical evidence of the 17th century house. Sandwiched between the early brick, ashlar-faced outer south wall and inner modern blockwork is a section of early iron grille and leaded glass, a particularly interesting survival from an earlier house.



Looking down between the gap of the south wall of B23 where an early leaded light is concealed (Author)

In B23, and partially in B22, the wine bins are still in situ where the bottles were laid down on their sides. The floor is covered with a modern concrete screed. During the School's occupation these were Sister Peter's domain and used for storage of big bags of flour.³⁴⁶

The western-most sections of the run of wine cellars were removed in the late 20th century (See B21).

³⁴⁶ Leonard Edward's memories, 2009.



Surviving wine bins in B23 (*Robert Thrift*)

B24-25-26

These sub-divided spaces beneath the south-west pavilion originally formed a single large room, a mirror image of the Butler's Pantry (B13) complete with a diagonally-set fireplace in the NE corner, presumably making use of the old 17th century external chimney flue on the west elevation. It is lit by a tripartite window on the south wall.

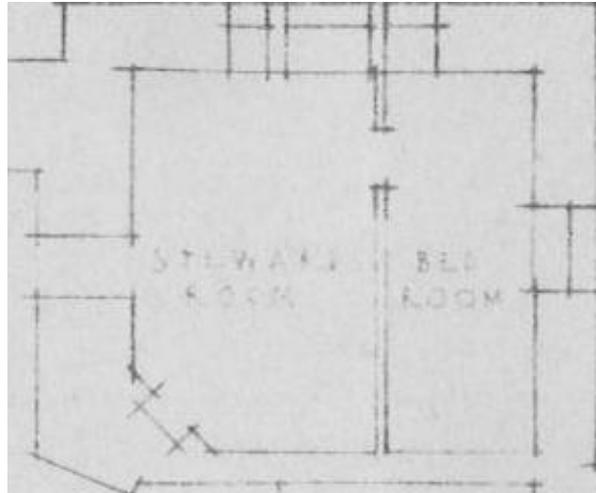
There are several possibilities as to its historic function: the Butler's private quarters, adjacent to the cellars and west staircase; the sleeping/private quarters of the Steward (when that function appears to have moved out of the ground floor of the Red Wing to make way for a kitchen); or the House/Land Steward's office, forming a line of business rooms with the House/Land Steward's/Agent's Room (B27) and his muniment room (B27). This is not yet clear and needs further investigation. An early 20th century document detailing the directions of the Court's chimney flues appears to refer to these spaces as the House Steward's Room, as it groups the flues together at this west end of the house on all four floors. In the 1960s, B25 was a workmen's mess and used as a laboratory for the M5 construction through the Park.

The room has been much altered and compromised by a series of sub-divisions in the late 19th and 20th centuries: the 1940 floorplan shows it as divided north-south into two-thirds and a third as the Steward's Room and Steward's Bedroom. The 1968 plan, showing the school's use, has it divided east-west with a staff room to the south and a brick curb defining the side of the room that contained a boiler, a Calorifier and a partitioned-off oil tank to the north. Leonard Edwards remembers it as the stoke hole, burning coke to supply the kitchen. (It was an oil burning boiler in the latter years). B25 was the workman's mess: George Scriven was the kitchen boy/odd-job man who was a

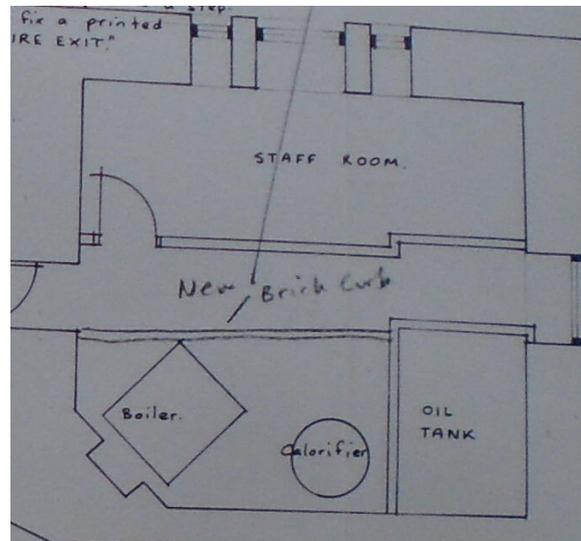
pupil of the school but stayed on to work. He used to sit in this room. Currently, it is divided into three, with the 1968 partition intact and the northern half partitioned into two spaces. (See the evolution of this below).



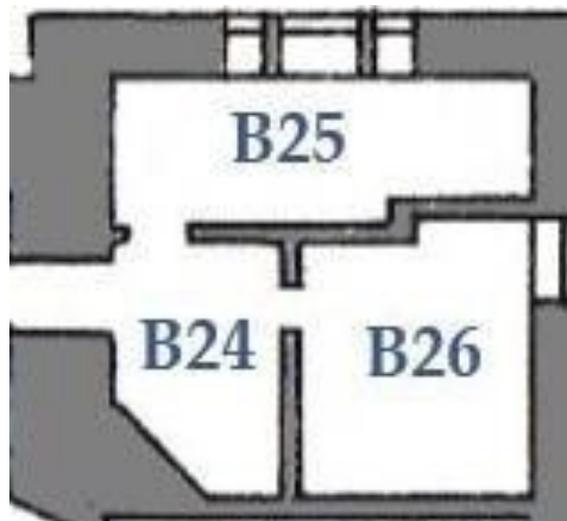
Current view of B25 looking SW with partition wall on right. (*Robert Thrift*)



Detail of 1940 plan showing sub-divisions of B24-25-26 (CET)



Detail of 1968 plan showing arrangement of B24-25-26 (CET)



Current arrangement of B24-25-26 (John Goom)

B27

This is one of the largest and most commodious spaces in the basement, making full use of the canted bay below the Long Gallery in the middle of the 'new' west wing. The room is thus much lighter than the other basement spaces and is well-fitted with a moulded cornice, panelled surrounds and shutters to the windows, and a simple painted timber [stone?] chimneypiece. There is also evidence of a former fitted cupboard to the left to the chimneypiece, probably of a similar date. The intriguing door into the room is another fine Jacobean example, much altered as a 'stable' door but of notably good quality: a re-used 17th century 5-panelled early door, with big strap hinges and a moulded architrave, leading through a diagonal passageway through what was the external west wall. This has to slant because neither entrance to or exit from the room can be moved to the right as one faces it.³⁴⁷



Current view of B27 looking west (*Robert Thrift*)

³⁴⁷ Observation by Tim Hickson, Volunteer.



Early 17th century modified door to B27 and diagonal passage through thickness of original external west wall (*Robert Thrift*)

This room was probably the land steward/agent's office and smoking room, although senior family members may have attended certain meetings concerning the management of the estate in the land agent's office. It would have been a suitable place to meet clients and would also have been a room where family members could be included in meetings without having to venture too far into the basement, as it is located at the bottom of the back stairs. This was perhaps why the room acquired a sort of overlap role between staff and family- it appears to have been used as a smoking room by male members of the family since the 18th century.³⁴⁸ Once the agent moved to a separate office in High Green in the mid-19th century, this room became exclusively an informal male retreat used by the 9th Earl's sons: "*Lord Coventry and his sons made themselves a smoking room in the basement, which they lined with old college prints and photographs, favourite items of furniture and stacks of parliamentary journals*".³⁴⁹ The room is shown as the Smoke Room on the 1940 plan, which also shows what appear to be fitted cupboards, perhaps for papers and office equipment, on the north and south walls. Further evidence of the former use of this as a smoking room is in a letter dated 26th Sept 1930 from J&R Kemp & Co, Solicitors, regarding the estate of the late 9th Earl, asking for crates of silver to be moved out of the strong room [B28] into the old smoking room [] for inspection.³⁵⁰

Originally, an iron door led into the adjacent muniment room (B28). There is correspondence between Father Warner at the school and Colonel Osbert Smith (Agent) in the CET Archive from July 1950 regarding the removal of the iron door between what was then the school's kitchen (B27) and the larder (B28) to the Estate Office (where they were building a muniment room and needed a fire- and burglar-proof door, presumably

³⁴⁸ The one reference to the 18th century 'Smoking Room' is from F62/32: John Rose doing the plasterwork. However, on the same bill he itemises Mr Lamb's Room too (the Steward), which could have been B24-25-26, thus implying that they were different spaces.

³⁴⁹ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.177

³⁵⁰ CET archive.

replacing it with the existing timber one). Amusingly, the iron door was referred to as 'the Iron Curtain'. In his letter of 27th July 1950, Col. Smith agrees to pay Father Warner £4.10.0 for 'the Iron Curtain complete and 10/- for the last remaining key!' The original iron door is still at the High Green Estate Office, but the door's original opening in B27 is notably tall and irregularly-shaped which suggests it may have been altered on several occasions.

During the School's occupation this was the school kitchen, installed in about 1950, including the terrazzo floor. There was an Aga range in front of the fireplace, steam ovens and a large boiling pan on the south wall, a huge sink and drainers in front of the bay and a cooker and fryer on the north wall to the left of the door to B27. Metal storage cupboards were in the centre of the room with a work surface on top.

B28

When the former Evidence House (shown on the 1714 Beighton view) to the south of the Court as part of the formal garden under Gilbert, 4th Earl was demolished, there would have been a need for a new dedicated and secure location for storing documents, deeds and 'evidence'. Adjacent to the agent's/steward's office in B27 and accessed from it, this would have been a sensible choice. It is notable for its large groin vault and, curiously, is the only room within the 'new' end wings that is vaulted. The 1940 floorplan shows it as the Strong Room and the fact that silver was kept in here is referred to in a 1930 letter from J&R Kemp & Co, Solicitors, regarding the estate of the late 9th Earl, asking for crates of silver to be moved out of the strong room into the old smoking room [B27] for inspection. (See also B27).

During the School's time this was the pantry, or larder, and Leonard Edwards remembers that the walk-in freezer (or Cold Room) on the west wall was already *in situ*, behind which is a blocked window. There was a food-mixer on a plinth, an ice-cream cabinet on the north wall and stainless steel units. There is also a serving hatch through the thickness of the original external west wall which was put in by the school in order to pass food and dishes through to the dumb waiter in B30 and thence up to the refectory in the Long Gallery.



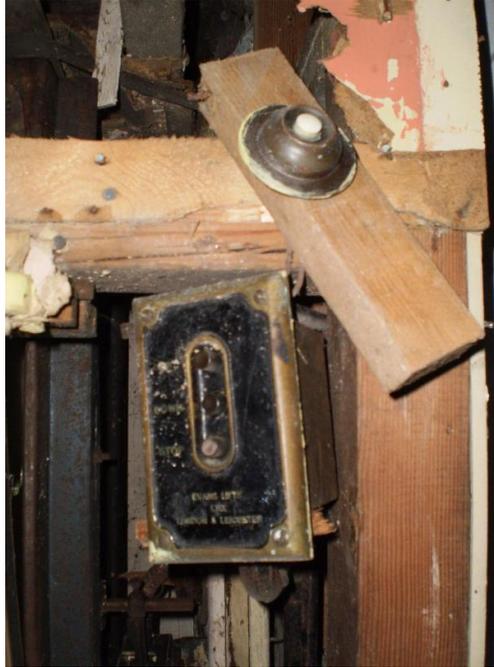
B28 looking west, showing the 1930s walk-in 'cold room' (Robert Thrift)

B29 & B30

These spaces form the foot of the back stairs and the area beneath them, where the remains of the school's dumb waiter (by Evans Lifts Ltd., London & Leicester) survive on the north wall, directly in front of a window (W50). This is shown as a Lift on the 1968 plan. Food prepared in the kitchen (B27) would have been taken into B28 and passed through the hatch to be loaded into the dumb waiter and then lifted up to G11, the lobby outside the refectory (the Long Gallery). The lift mechanism is an interesting and evocative survival of early such systems and how the Court was used by the school and fed all the school boys.



Northern end of B30 showing remains of dumb waiter and hatch on left into B28 (*Robert Thrift*)



Detail of the dumb waiter's operating controls (*Author*)

B29 is one of the areas in the basement where the insensitive installation of modern services is particularly noticeable: as elsewhere, the ceiling is festooned with pipework and cables, often punched indiscriminately through the fabric of the building.



Modern services in B29 (*Author*)

B31

This was previously a much larger space than it is now: the 1940 plan shows it as a large cellar combined with B3 with a central support (see B3). By 1968, B3 and B31 were sub-divided and B31 was used as the school's washing-up room, handy for the dumbwaiter in B30 which would have brought the dirty dishes down from the Long Gallery. It had a big washing-up machine standing in the middle of the floor (some marks are still visible) and the room was a hive of activity after meals.³⁵¹ This is recorded on the 1968 plan.

The area beneath the window on the north wall has a small groin vault, east of which is a 'cupboard' and is shown on the 1968 plan as a store. This is a tiny, ostensibly uninspiring space which, however, contains lots of exciting archeological clues to the earlier fabric. It has been created out of the thickness of the former return wall of the north-west wing of the 17th century house and has an early brick-paved floor. The back wall of this cupboard is of modern brick, which indicates that this is a blocked opening and may have been a side entrance to the 17th century house on the basement level.³⁵²



B31 looking NE and showing the cupboard in the thickness of the return wall of the NW bay of the 17th century house (*Robert Thrift*)

³⁵¹ Leonard Edwards' memories, 2009

³⁵² Such an opening is not indicated on the c.1750 drawing of the house, although this depiction is somewhat schematic.



The cupboard in B31 within the thickness of the earlier wall. Note the narrow early bricks on the floor and the blue lias stone to the right of the door frame (*Author*)

B32

This is a small space off B31 and has been used as a W.C. since the school's time, and was possibly a maid's W.C. in the late 19th/early 20th century.



B32 looking west (*Robert Thrift*)

B33

This is a small room formed by the 18th century re-modelling when the north wall was moved forwards. Catherine Gordon suggests that this may have been the Flower Room in the 19th century - there must have been one as the 9th Earl and Countess were so keen on fresh flowers and had them changed daily. It would seem likely that there would be a designated space conveniently located and there is a water supply in here. It was used as a Pot Wash by the school, off the main washing-up area in B31. It is currently used as a housekeeping store.



B33 looking north (*Robert Thrift*)

Architectural heritage

Architecturally, Croome Court follows the established formula of the Palladian style which became the principal style of English country houses in the 18th century. This had begun as a revival in 1715 of the Italian influence of Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), which had been brought to England by the work and drawings of Inigo Jones a whole century earlier. Jones was at least partly responsible for the classical Palladian south front of Wilton House in Wiltshire in 1630³⁵³, and this style became extremely influential. The publication of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, by Lord Burlington's architect Colen Campbell, also did much to propagate the Palladian style, as did Campbell's designs for Wanstead in Essex (1714-20, demolished 1824) with its great central portico.

Wilton's instantly recognisable motif of two end towers to the façade topped by pediments was repeated in many great 18th century houses - virtually all Palladian architects of this revival period made some reference to them in their work. This, in turn, further promoted the Palladian style. Houghton in particular, (built 1722-30 by Colen Cambell for Sir Robert Walpole), was much copied and is perhaps the grandest surviving house of the early Palladian period. Its heavy rustication, Venetian windows and pedimented corner towers³⁵⁴ derived from Palladio's designs and its plan became the standard one for houses in the 1740s and 1750s: e.g. Holkham, Norfolk (1734-64); Lydiard House, Wiltshire (1743-49); Hagley, North Worcestershire (1754-60) and Croome (1751-1760). Indeed all of these houses reflected Houghton's overall composition so much that Horace Walpole (youngest son of Sir Robert) accused George, Lord Lyttelton and his architect Sanderson Miller of having stolen the plan for Hagley Hall from Houghton. This is extremely interesting as Sanderson Miller was closely involved in advising on the architectural design of Croome at almost exactly the same period that he was working on Hagley. Thus Croome follows in this great architectural tradition, although by the time it was completed it would have been relatively old-fashioned stylistically and, together with Hagley, was among the final expressions of the Palladian style.³⁵⁵

Inspired and influenced by this architectural tradition, Croome Court is the result of the collaborative work of three young, visionary and ambitious men who effectively formed a creative triumvirate in the mid-18th century: Lancelot Brown, Sanderson Miller and their obsessive patron George William, 6th Earl of Coventry. Very quickly, another young visionary was brought into the mix who was also to become one of the biggest names in architectural design: Robert Adam, who embellished and furnished three of the Court's interiors. It didn't stop there, as the next generation of architectural designers was also involved at Croome in the form of James Wyatt, who made later, minor contributions to the Court but worked primarily on the buildings in the Park.

³⁵³ Catherine Gordon has pointed out that Wilton has a controversial structural history and authorship.

³⁵⁴ Houghton's pyramids were changed to domes in the 1730s.

³⁵⁵ I am grateful to Martin Drury for pointing out that there are two types of Palladian corner tower in England: those at Wilton and Houghton (as shown in *Vitruvius Britannicus*) have pediments. The towers at all the other buildings of this type (Croome, Holkham, Lydiard, Kimberley (Norfolk) and Kent's Horse Guards have shallow pyramids, the model for which is Palladio's Villa Pisani at Bagnolo.

Croome in the mid-18th century was a place where these young designers could develop their architectural talents: it was a crucible of creativity, a hot-bed of visionary ambition, an inspirational expression of sophisticated taste and style.³⁵⁶ And yet, it is not perfect. Perhaps because its re-modelling was overseen by a young man who was more gardener than architect, perhaps because the client's amateur architect-friend was also involved and perhaps because the client himself had his own, strong ideas. In addition, is it not perfect because they were not starting from scratch. Croome Court is incredibly interesting for all the compromises that had to be made in the 18th century when accommodating the existing building on the site. The closer one looks, the more one can see the difficulties that Brown had and, rather than a perfect Palladian mansion, the resulting architectural imperfections, both inside and out, have a certain amateur-ish charm. Other Palladian mansions are coldly classical, calculated to be far more intimidating, such as Kedleston, where Robert Adam had far greater input, described in its interpretation to visitors today as a '*forbidding show-palace*'. There is nothing forbidding about Croome, with its modest scale, its warm Bath stone exterior and quirky idiosyncrasies. The house has a personality and warmth to it. There is also the inevitable layering and stylistic differences due to the combination of the Palladian architectural skin covering the skeleton of the 1640s house and which encloses late Rococo decorative interiors executed under Brown, as well as early Neo-classical interiors by Adam.

The Court also harbours much earlier architectural heritage just below its external and interior veneers. The Caroline house remains still very much apparent beneath the Palladian surface, dictating much of its general layout and overall proportions and contributing much to the house's special character and architectural interest.

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-1783)

Brown was multi-talented and versatile: his enduring fame is of course as a landscape gardener, yet at Croome he was also, if not strictly-speaking, Architect of the house, then Clerk of Works, and creator of the harmonious setting and symbiosis of house and park, and tamer of the boggy morass in which Croome lay, able to conjure 'a garden scene'. This latter was due to his engineering skills, particularly in the area of hydraulics. It was not just his clients' landscapes that had capabilities, but he himself was incredibly capable. Little wonder that the latest biography to be published on Brown is entitled *The Omnipotent Magician*³⁵⁷ (even though that description was originally used satirically).³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Nicholas Cooper argues that it is '*more realistic to regard the 6th Earl as slowly feeling his way and, though he had aspirations as to where he was going, at the outset (and before he settled down as a patron of Robert Adam) he was a little unsure of how he was going to get there or what the final result was going to be. At first he relied for advice on a local amateur (Miller) and on a landscape gardener with little experience of architecture (Brown) whom Miller happened to know. I don't deny that by the time that he had finished, the Earl had developed a fine taste and a fine patronage, but I don't think there was quite the pre-programmed, visionary enterprise and collaboration that you seem to imply. He was learning taste on the job, and to begin with there were plenty of better architects to be had if Coventry had the clarity of vision to seek them out*'.

³⁵⁷ Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, 2011

³⁵⁸ By William Cowper in *The Task*, 1785

Brown had been the Head Gardener to Lord Cobham at Stowe in Buckinghamshire, the most famous garden of the previous generation. Two key people influenced Brown to move on from gardening and to move on from Stowe and set himself up independently. These were Sanderson Miller, the gentleman-architect and Oxford friend of the 6th Earl of Coventry and Henry Holland, the successful builder and family friend of the Browns.

It was probably Henry Holland (Senior, 1712-85, whose son became the architect and married Brown's daughter) who first encouraged Lancelot Brown to turn architect as well as landscape gardener. Holland probably assured his friend Brown that architecture would not be beyond his powers³⁵⁹ although Brown may have seen it as something of a side-line. It would also have been important to Brown, when designing landscapes, that the house was appropriate in terms of appearance and relation to the Park, just as any other key focal point in the overall design. His early designs for houses and related buildings were stolidly Palladian in style, as at Croome and, for example, the chapel at Compton Verney, while his garden buildings were often Gothick.

It was on the strength of Henry Holland's arguments that Brown decided he could fulfil all of the Earl of Coventry's dreams and schemes for Croome³⁶⁰. However, the lynch-pin was Sanderson Miller, as it was he who encouraged Brown to visit Croome and he who introduced Brown to the 6th Earl of Coventry. It was also important that the Earl had the ability to recognise the young, exceptional talent in Brown, as this was to become crucial to the development not only of his personal enterprise at Croome, but to the evolution of landscape design in general: "*The introduction, by Sanderson Miller, of Brown to Lord Coventry was momentous. At Croome, Brown rose to the notice of men whose power and means could ensure that his new landscape style flourished, changing forever the scale and extent of landscape design*".³⁶¹

When Brown first visited Croome he would have seen a brick house of squarish proportions, of five bays and two shallow projecting wings on the north front; the medieval church lay north-west of the house and, north and south of the house, were the remains of the extensive formal garden courts of 17th century Croome. The Earl of Coventry's new but rather short 'river' lay in its north-south position. Brown probably very quickly assessed the lie of the land and appreciated the possibilities of extending the 'river' and forming a lake, even though the underlying geology was complicated, by achieving a complex system of drainage and underground culverts. Jane Brown suggests that the materials for this system almost undoubtedly came from the courtyard walls that had been cleared and the demolition of the old church in order to effect the green landscape flowing around the house that the 6th Earl desired³⁶². However, as Jill Tovey points out, this is probably unlikely as diocesan permission to demolish the medieval church was only granted in 1758 and one assumes that the drainage would have been one of the first things to have been tackled when re-building the house.

³⁵⁹ Edward Hyams, *Capability Brown & Humphry Repton*, p.24

³⁶⁰ Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, p.82

³⁶¹ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.100

³⁶² Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, p. 83

Under Brown, the old Croome Court was partially dismantled, leaving the centrally horizontal chimney-range intact, and then built up again on an extended plan, with the addition of four corner pedimented towers. There is no set of drawings or plans for these alterations by Brown, nor even by Sanderson Miller with whom it seems (see below) the design was discussed and monitored, but that is not necessarily surprising. Certainly Holland, and probably Brown, worked in the traditions passed down from the medieval guilds, relying on the competences of the masons and carpenters and much of the 'designing' would have remained empirical with details worked out as the building work progressed.³⁶³ Brown's experience as Clerk of Works at Stowe had equipped him well to manage both men and supplies. His visually retentive memory was clear and accurate and, with measurements and perhaps a tracing from a drawing, he would have provided enough information for the builders' estimates, which often depended upon near-guesses based on experience. Master craftsmen were often only supplied with a draft of the 'look' of a building and made their own measured drawings for details such as a string course or cornice moulding, and possibly for the Venetian windows that are a feature of Croome (and this may explain why these windows are not entirely successful in that their height does not align with that of the other windows).

The archive bills are missing for the crucial 1750-57 period of Brown's work (all that survives are the accounts books), but of the accounts relating to him, the earliest for fees is in 1753 and the earliest record of Brown visiting Croome is in 1752. However, it is likely that Brown was awarded the commission around the time that he set up his own practice, in autumn 1751. The payments span a thirty year period and suggest two intensive phases of work: c.1751 to 1756 and 1762 to 1766. Between 1756 and 1762 Brown was still paid but the payments were smaller and less frequent. Brown's second phase of work also coincides with Adam's first phase. From c.1770, Brown probably acted in an advisory capacity, reflected by the £50 retainers paid in most years during this period.

Brown's team appears to have comprised William Eltonhead, bricklayer, from 1752; Robert Newman, mason, from 1753; John Hobcraft (who Brown met at Stowe and who worked on other sites with Brown), master carpenter, from 1754; Francesco Vassalli, decorative plasterer, from 1756; William Davis, plasterer, from 1756; William Hiron (also spelt Hiam or Hiorns), mason, from 1756; William Donn (also spelt Dunn and Denn), who did some land surveying and all the quantity surveying³⁶⁴; Benjamin Read (who worked for Brown on Blenheim), the foreman for the landscape works who worked on the lake and river; and David Walker - it is not certain what his role was. Hobcraft, Vassalli, Newman and Davis were paid directly but Hiorns, Read, Donn and Walker were all paid by Brown.

³⁶³ This is how Andor Gomme, in his biography of Francis Smith of Warwick, describes the working methods of the Smiths of Warwick: Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, p. 85

³⁶⁴ 'Quantity Surveying' is a fairly modern term – the role may have been more of a Clerk of Works on behalf of Brown, involving checking accounts and approving payment if satisfied the work was done. The bills are mainly signed by Brown, but Donn might have done it in his absence and then, later, Hobcraft seems to fulfil the same role.

Lord Coventry entrusted Brown with the landscape and with the external treatment of the buildings but, whilst Brown oversaw his team constructing the house and signed off their bills, the detail of the interiors were probably left to the experts, such as Vassalli, in designing and executing the decorative plasterwork in the majority of the ground floor rooms. Even Brown's work on the exteriors of the house and church are likely to have been a joint effort. Brown had no proven architectural record before this date and the designs were probably the result of a Committee of Taste, consisting of Sanderson Miller, Lord Coventry and his circle of friends. Brown may have worked up their ideas, and he employed experienced craftsmen, with enough skill to execute fairly raw designs. Brown's architecture, however, was well regarded by William Mason, Humphry Repton and, understandably, Henry Holland, who (both Senior and Junior) executed much of Brown's architectural work. Holland Junior commented in 1788 on his deceased father-in-law's practical, sensible and affable approach, "*No man that I ever met with understood so well what was necessary for all ranks and degrees of society; no one disposed his office so well, set his buildings on such good levels, designed such good rooms, or so well provided for the approach, for the drainage, and for the comfort and convenience of every part he was concerned in. This he did without ever having had one single difference or dispute with any of his employers. He left them pleased, and they remained so as long as he lived*".

Brown possessed the personality to foster a lasting relationship with his client – this was certainly the case at Croome, where his involvement spanned more than thirty years. Proof that Brown was competent and likeable to work for is seen in the fact that three of the master craftsmen who worked at Croome – William Eltonhead the bricklayer, Robert Newman the mason and John Hobcraft the carpenter – all worked with him on many later commissions. In fact, Brown was to work on many of his other major projects, such as Broadlands, Corsham and Newnham Paddox, with the craftsmen he used at Croome. Henry Holland, a master-builder from Fulham, whom he had met soon after leaving Stowe, also proved a loyal colleague and Brown formed an informal partnership with his son, the architect, Henry Holland (1745-1806). Benjamin Read, who worked as his landscape foreman at Croome, was to work on Lancelot's largest and most important landscapes for the next twenty years.

Although his team's work on the house seems to have progressed smoothly and quite rapidly, Brown was probably much happier out in the park than on the building site. At Croome, it was the re-building of the house that kept him there for long visits, but this gave him the opportunity to examine the falls of the ground around the house and work out his drainage lines, which was so important to making the 6th Earl's home a success.

Sanderson Miller (1716-1780)

It was Sanderson Miller, a young gentleman-architect and landscape designer and Oxford friend of George William, later to become 6th Earl of Coventry, who introduced Lancelot Brown to Croome. Miller had inherited Radway Grange, spectacularly positioned at the foot of Edge Hill in south Warwickshire, in 1737 aged just twenty-one. Enthused by Oxford friends he soon became a passionate improver with a talent for designing buildings, mostly in the Gothic style. He also

created a distinctive informal landscape style that was surprisingly innovative for the period and designed the landscape for his own estate at Radway complete with a mock ruined castle. Similarities between his work and that of Capability Brown are striking and it has become clear that Miller not only influenced Brown's designs but also assisted him in acquiring his first commissions. He is now chiefly remembered for his sham castles, Gothic summer houses and his outstanding hall at Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire.

Sanderson Miller was already helping his friend George William, later the 6th Earl of Coventry, to make changes to Croome Park in 1746, before the latter had inherited and was still Lord Deerhurst. In 1747, the Earl wrote to Miller of "*Various Projects in my head to embellish this untoward place which I wou'd not execute without your taste*". After the unexpected death of George William's older brother, Miller encouraged him to find solace in planting and improving the 'river', which he did and on 20th August 1748, Sir Edward Turner wrote to Sanderson Miller '*Lord Deerhurst has conducted his river well*'. But Miller knew that George William wanted to make alterations to Croome Court itself, plus a new church and ornamental buildings, as well as a new, naturalistic landscape.

In November 1749 Sanderson Miller visited Stowe and was shown round the gardens by Brown, then Head Gardener. This was a monumentally fortuitous meeting for the future of Croome, for it was Miller who was to introduce Brown to the 6th Earl of Coventry. The Stowe visit was followed in August 1750 by a visit by Brown to see Miller's improvements at Radway, where he had perfected Gothic buildings and drainage schemes, both of which he advised the 6th Earl on at Croome. On the 26th August 1750 Miller made a note in his diary that he had written to Lord Cobham and Brown³⁶⁵. It is possible that Miller was helping Brown to set up in private practice; Brown left Stowe in Autumn 1751, two years after the death of Lord Cobham. It seems almost certain to have been Miller who recommended Brown to Lord Coventry around 1750 or 1751, probably seeing Lancelot as a useful person at a place where the landscape challenges were great.

Croome Court was to be re-built on the foundations of the existing house, which, as built in the 17th century would have been regarded as well-proportioned, by now was felt to lack length and presence. What the 6th Earl was after was essentially an update. The new house for Lord Lyttelton at Hagley, about 15 miles to the north of Croome, was being discussed and designed by Miller, with detailed plans and drawings by John Chute. It was much admired by George William Coventry: it was a distinctive house with a tower at each corner rising higher than the main building, reminiscent of Inigo Jones's work at Wilton. With Miller working on Hagley and advising his friend George William on Croome, the basis of the Court's new design with the towers added on at each end of the existing house most probably emerged due to Miller's influence. However, at Croome the design was compromised by the existing fabric, whilst at Hagley, a completely new building, it had full expression.

³⁶⁵ References from Sanderson Miller's Diary 1749-1750, Warwickshire Record Office and quoted in Camilla Beresford's *Historic Landscape Survey for The National Trust*, 1996

Brown, having decided and been persuaded by Henry Holland and Sanderson Miller that he was capable of creating houses as well as landscape gardens and garden buildings, made a start at once – at Croome, the house, offices and church which he built for the Earl of Coventry were all begun in 1751. The main structural works spanned 1751-8 and so were still going on when Hagley was begun in 1754.

Miller was still in close attendance, as no doubt both Brown and the 6th Earl wished. The Earl wrote to Miller saying '*Whatever merits it may in future time boast it will be ungrateful not to acknowledge you the primary Author*' of Croome. This in no way contradicts his frequent praise of Lancelot as the tamer of the 'morass', but it may go some way to explaining how the three of them came to decide upon the treatment for the house.

Robert Adam (1728-1792)

The most important contribution to Croome, albeit more decorative than architectural, was that made by Robert Adam between 1760 and 1765: he decorated three rooms in the then emerging Neo-Classical style – the Long Gallery, the Library, and the Tapestry Room – and designed the majority of their furniture and fittings.

The circumstances of Adam's introduction to George William, 6th Earl of Coventry and his engagement at Croome are obscure. He arrived back in England from his Grand Tour in January 1758 bringing with him a vast trunk full of the precious drawings he had made. His aim had been to enlarge his ideas of architecture and improve his draughtsmanship and taste in order to establish an architectural practice in London. He was to become unbelievably successful. On 24th July 1760 he wrote to his brother James, naming the Earl of Coventry as one of several patrons whose designs might be included in a future publication of his works. His earliest finished drawings for Croome, an '*Elevation & Plan of a [Temple] Greenhouse*' and a '*Design of a Ceiling for the [Long] Gallery*', were made the following August and September respectively. His last was in 1791 for a gateway; Adam's connection with Croome thus extended over the thirty years of his career. Between 1760 and 1779, the 6th Earl of Coventry spent £757.4.7 on his designs for Croome Court and Coventry House, Piccadilly³⁶⁶.

In contrast to Brown, Adam was cut-throat and ruthlessly driven to achieve success. Perhaps this contrast in character had something to do with how the three ambitious young men managed to remain a working partnership for so long. Possibly also because of their long retention at Croome, Brown and Adam had manoeuvred around each other for long enough to know each other's sensibilities.³⁶⁷ They appear to have worked comfortably alongside each other, sharing common interests in classical architecture and landscape gardening and similar contacts and they were to collaborate on other major projects such as Compton Verney, Warwickshire and Bowood, Wiltshire.

³⁶⁶ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*

³⁶⁷ Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, p.292

Adam's relationship with Lord Coventry was no less mutually beneficial than Brown's. However, in Adam, it seems that Coventry found a true ally, one who not only understood and shared his ideas on the virtues of classicism, but who also had the art and skill to transform those ideas into reality.³⁶⁸ Adam's introduction to Croome came at a valuable point at the launch of his career and he gave new zest and direction to the project at a distressing point in the 6th Earl's life following the death of his first wife (in 1760). Both shared a similar interest in neo-classicism, which enabled Adam to develop his ideas with the 6th Earl's encouragement, and together they were able to give the interior of Croome the polish and sophistication that was formerly lacking. The resulting Neo-classical interiors were distinctive and influential, and among the best of Adam's early period.

Adam's design for the Long Gallery was the most splendid of all his work at Croome. It incorporated several themes which recur in others of his designs of this period; for example, the niches with statuary recurred at Syon, Middlesex (1762-3), and Lansdowne House, London (now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York – and using as its overmantle the grisaille designed by Adam for Croome's Long Gallery), while the superb antique chimneypiece is comparable with the one he designed at Shardeloes (1759-63). The *grisailles* panels on the walls had also appeared previously in the scheme for the dining room at Shardeloes. The similarities with Shardeloes and Syon at this formative period of his career are not surprising, particularly as Joseph Rose worked for him at all three houses. However, at Croome, the composition is particularly pleasing as the well-lit room with its fine proportions and splendid views heighten the overall effect to perfection.

After 1770, Adam tended to concentrate on London town houses rather than country houses, apart from Saltram, Mellerstain (Scotland) and Culzean Castle (1776-90).

James Wyatt (1746-1813)

Adam's prestige as the most fashionable architect in England faded in the 1780s and James Wyatt took the limelight. Wyatt's architectural and decorative contribution to Croome is to be seen in the Park and the outer eye-catchers rather than in the Court itself. He took over from Adam in the design and execution of these buildings only once the latter had died, in 1792, demonstrating the 6th Earl's loyalty, and friendship, to Adam and the successful creative relationship they had shared. Indeed, the 6th Earl was one of Adam's pall-bearers.

The 6th Earl was in his seventies when Adam died and might have been expected to have called a halt to his ambitions for Croome. But, such was his obsession, he still wanted to do more and turned to James Wyatt as the most successful architect of the post-Adam generation to achieve it. Wyatt was employed at Croome between about 1793 and 1805 and his first payment was in 1794, for

³⁶⁸ Guidebook – *Croome : The People, the Places, The Treasures Revealed*

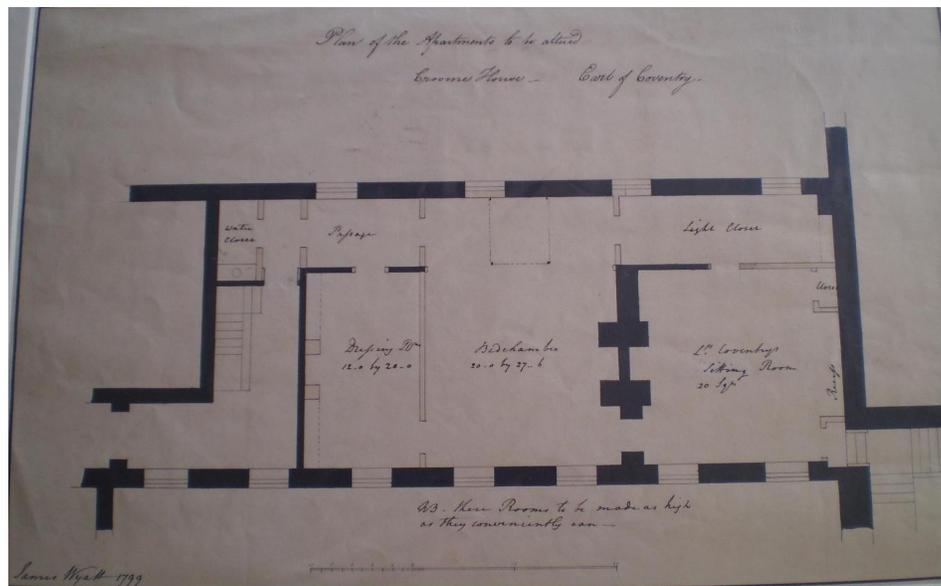
'Journeys and Drawings' on account March 21 1794. He worked in a refined Neo-classical style, re-modelling some of Brown and Adam's garden buildings.

His work at Croome can be divided into three types:

- Lodges and Gates: including London Lodge added to the London gate; Worcester Lodges; and the Punchbowl Gates (vases in Coade), altered from Adam's design.
- Eyecatchers: Pirton Tower, Broadway Tower; and Panorama Tower.
- Work in the Lake Gardens: Home Shrubbery and Greenhouse Shrubbery, replacing the wooden bridges in the lake with Iron Bridges; the Druid statue (Coade); the inscription at the grotto (Coade); Brown's Monument (Coade); terms in Home Shrubbery (Coade); and remodelling the Dry Arch (Coade).

However, his legacy in relation to the Court is only in two areas, one very visible and the other more discreet. The former is the majestic pair of Coade stone sphinxes standing, or lying, guard over the south elevation of the Court, which were introduced in 1795. The Ornamental Stone Manufactory invoiced in August 1795 for the two sphinxes and other Coade pieces. The latter was the adaptation of some first floor rooms within the Red Wing, accessible from the half-landing of the Court's main staircase, which had been altered to form a self-contained apartment for the 6th Earl in his later life.

Wyatt also designed garden buildings at Shardeloes, Gidea Park, Syon House and Fawley Court.



James Wyatt's 1799 plan for altering the 6th Earl's apartment in the Red Wing (CET)

Design heritage

The design for the re-modelling of Croome Court as a severe block with four corner towers may have been inspired by Colen Campbell's design for Houghton Hall (published in *Vitruvius Britannicus* 1722), of which Tottenham Park (Lord Burlington 1730), Langley Park (Brettingham c1744) and Hagley (Miller and a Committee of Taste 1754-1760) were all variants.



Hagley Hall (Google Images)

Whilst its slightly younger sister Hagley was built from scratch, the re-incarnation of Croome in the mid-18th century had to take into account the earlier and existing structures on the site. This means that, *beneath the façade of symmetry*, inconsistencies and compromises reveal themselves under close scrutiny.

The constraints of the historic building must have made themselves felt to both Brown and particularly Adam (although the latter was to become used to working within pre-existing spaces constructed by other architects that he then usurped). Croome's undeniable overall harmonious design and Palladian symmetry is smattered with flaws and imperfections in the details: cornices on the back stairs do not quite meet, the main staircase is not quite central to the space, traces of the earlier house are barely disguised in the basement, internal arrangement of windows is sacrificed for external symmetry, the Venetian windows are not vertically aligned with the sash windows. It's actually all a bit of a compromise.



Croome Court's mis-aligned Venetian window on the south elevation (NTPL)

Yet it is Croome's imperfections that lend it its infectious and endearing charm. It has a personality, and what comes through from becoming familiar with the physical structure and the archive is that there was no grand masterplan for the house (certainly the

archive contains no evidence of an architectural drawing by Brown or indeed Sanderson Miller), but that it was an organic approach, almost developed on the hoof, with creative input from the three, if not four, key visionary young men: Sanderson Miller, Brown, Adam and the 6th Earl.

Decorative heritage

The interior of the house, which, despite the Court's chequered history, retains many if not most of its original features, and is "*distinguished for its nobility of conception and quality of craftsmanship in terms of plaster, stone and woodwork. The rooms are large and handsome and their decoration, though rich, is not overly profuse*".³⁶⁹ They have been described as an architectural journey from the late Rococo to the Neo-classical: the decoration of the Court was executed in the 1750s in the late Rococo style (under Brown) and in the 1760s in the emerging Neo-Classical style (under Adam) by a roll-call of the most eminent craftsmen of the 18th century. Decoratively, Croome Court thus straddles a stylistic watershed, resulting in, with hindsight, a curious mixture of styles and motifs, sometimes even within the same room,³⁷⁰ but which at the time would probably have felt a natural evolution.

The 6th Earl was not content to leave the decoration and furnishing of his house entirely in the hands of his architect, his Clerk of Works or the skilled craftsmen – he had ideas of his own as well. Adam may have just returned from Rome and Spalatro but his patron had long-lain plans to visit mainland Europe, and his goal was Paris not Rome. The 6th Earl was among the first to cross the Channel to France after the Seven Years War and he rapidly became a Francophile, which led to a craving for furniture and objects to furnish his decorative interiors in the new mode *à la grecque*. He must have returned from his trip to Paris imbued with the first flush of French neo-classicism and a determination to graft this onto Adam's own interpretation of the new style with its roots in Rome and Spalatro. Thus, even without its key pieces of the collection, Croome's decorative heritage has this curious combination and mingling of styles.

In addition to this, there are examples of curious throwbacks to earlier decorative periods which the 6th Earl appears to have respected and even added to, possibly through a combination of nostalgia and thrift. For example, circa 1700 bolection-moulded wooden panelling survives in Lord Coventry's Bedroom (F8) and the Billiard Room (G14), and the former room also retains its circa 1700 fossil limestone chimneypiece. These two spaces, which were at the western extremity of the house before its re-modelling, are connected by the equally curious old-fashioned wooden secondary staircase. In the midst of his extensive re-modelling and re-furbishing of the Court, including his trend-setting taste terms of tapestries and furniture, the 6th Earl thus clung onto earlier decorative arrangements in some spaces.

Historic *paint schemes* have not fared well in the Court and there are no historic schemes visible today, having been successively painted over during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Whilst paint analysis has yet to be carried out³⁷¹, it is hoped that the

³⁶⁹ Tim Knox, July 2004

³⁷⁰ E.g. The Saloon, with its Rococo plasterwork and pair of Neo-classical chimneypieces.

³⁷¹ A small 'window' has been opened up on the dado wall of the Dining Room as an example of the kind of evidence that paint analysis can reveal, and this does indeed show the successive historic schemes back to the plaster substrate.

historic schemes still lie buried beneath these modern layers, rather than having been stripped, so that an understanding of the decorative evolution of the interiors will in due course emerge, providing physical evidence crucial to any potential re-creation of decorative schemes.

The paint scheme that currently attracts most attention is one from the late 20th century, executed by the Hare Krishnas in the Dining Room between 1979 -1984. This involved the multi-coloured picking-out of Vassalli's fine Rococo plasterwork detail on swags of fruit and flowers on the walls and ceiling in a palette that the Hare Krishnas believed was a faithful re-creation of an English 18th century scheme.

The principal craftsmen responsible for the execution of the eighteenth century decorative work within the Court were as follows³⁷² (in alphabetical order):

<p>Sefferin Alken (1717-1782)</p>	<p>Wood and stone carver. Worked under Adam. Died in 1782 at which time he was living at St. James's, Westminster. He worked for some of the leading architects of the time, including Robert Adam and William Chambers. He worked not only at Croome, but also at Shardeloes, Blenheim Palace, Charlemont House, The Hoo, Kew Gardens, 45 Berkeley Square, Peper Harrow, Stanmore Park, Stourhead and Walcot House.³⁷³</p>
<p>John Cheere (1709-1787)</p>	<p>Sculptor. Known as 'the Man at Hyde Park Corner', he was born in London and was originally apprenticed as a haberdasher. In 1737 he took over the sculptor's yard of John van Nost along with his and Andrew Carpenter's moulds for making lead statues. He supplied the 'stock' classical plaster figures for the Long Gallery, but he is probably best known for his lead statues for gardens. These were sometimes painted white to resemble marble.</p>
<p>John Hobcraft (1720-1803)</p>	<p>Master Woodcarver, carpenter/joiner and builder. Lived in Titchfield Street, London. He was a protégé of Lancelot Brown. Some of his Croome bills are countersigned by Brown. His bills document his work on: the Temple [Rotunda] in 1758, the interior of Croome 1757, 1760, signed by Brown and 1764 for Adam; the interior of the Church 1762, signed Adam; the Greenhouse 1763; and the front of the Menagerie 1781.</p> <p>In the 1760s he worked on Brown buildings elsewhere, including those at Corsham, Newnham Paddox, Castle Ashby, Claremont, Redgrave and Broadlands. He also designed the Gothic chapel at Audley End in 1768 and two country seats. As well as his work at Croome Court, Hobcraft also worked with Adam on Coventry House in London.³⁷⁴</p>

³⁷² I am indebted to Susan Leech and her report on the Tapestry Room for information for this section.

³⁷³ Geoffrey Beard (1981) p.242

³⁷⁴ Geoffrey Beard (1981) p.265

<p>William Linnell (1702-63)</p>	<p>Cabinet-maker and Woodcarver. Carved 13 chimneypieces for Croome. He was also responsible for upholstery and some furniture. It is almost certain that he provided the rococo gilded George II chimneyglass for Lady Coventry's Dressing Room (F17) in 1759, which was transferred to 9th Countess' Boudoir (F2) but sold in 1948. He also carved the set of 8 magnificent picture frames for the Saloon (now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York).</p> <p>His son John Linnell (1729-96) was in business with him and their work took on the Neo-classical style. They were commissioned to supply 'the Badminton bed' for the 4th Duke of Beaufort at Badminton House, and supplied furniture for Dyrham Park, Glos. (NT) and Crichel House, Dorset.</p>
<p>James Lovell (Active 1746-77; d.1778)</p>	<p>Sculptor and Interior decorator. Not very well-known but was associated with Sanderson Miller and worked at Stowe and Hagley, where he carved the Rococo chimneypiece in the Saloon. He was also involved with Miller in the renovations at Wroxton Abbey and gothic decorations and chimneypieces at Belhus, Essex for Lord Dacre.</p>
<p>Joseph Rose & Co (Senior 1723-1780) (Junior 1745-1799)</p>	<p><i>Stuccatore</i> or Master Plasterers to Adam. Joseph Rose & Co was a family firm of plasterers which dominated the most important plasterwork commissions throughout the 2nd half of the 18th century. The firm comprised Joseph Rose Senior and his brother Jonathon, and Jonathon's two sons, Joseph Junior and Jonathon Junior. Joseph Snr. was a skilled plasterer being appointed Master of the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers in 1775. The architect Sir Thomas Robinson in 1768 described Joseph Rose Senior as "<i>the first man in the Kingdom as a plasterer</i>". He worked principally for the architect James Paine and his commissions included Temple Newsam, Cuswall Hall, Felbrigg Hall, Ormsley Hall and Glentworth House.</p> <p>However, the most skilled and famous member of the firm was Joseph Rose Junior who lived from 1745-1799. He inherited the firm on the death of his uncle and was probably present at all of the firm's commissions from his early teens. He was admitted to the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers in 1765. He gained a classical education during his travels to Rome in 1768 and other parts of Italy in 1769 and carried out much Neo-classical work for Robert Adam. "<i>He was probably the guiding influence in turning the firm's attention to the Adam style and they jointly set up a series of classical moulds to the plasterwork at Croome Court</i>".³⁷⁵</p>

³⁷⁵ Geoffrey Beard (1967), p.267

	<p>The list of Joseph Rose Junior's other commissions is very long indeed, the majority for Robert Adam and William Chambers. These include Alnwick Castle, Audley End, Bowood, Harewood House, Kedleston, Nostell Priory and Shardeloes.³⁷⁶</p> <p>Joseph Rose & Co were employed at Croome under Adam from 1760, working on the Church in 1762 and the Court's interior plasterwork in 1763 (The Library, Tapestry Room & Long Gallery).</p>
<p>John Wildsmith (active 1757-1769)</p>	<p>Sculptor and stonemason. Supplied the marble chimneypiece for the Tapestry Room in 1759, the Tapestry Room pier table inlaid with squares of 'curious' stones, and the Library chimneypiece in 1760. Little is known of him, other than that he became bankrupt in 1769. He also worked at Egremont House, London in 1763.</p>
<p>Joseph Wilton (1722-1803)</p>	<p>Sculptor and stonemason. He learned the rudiments of sculpture as a pupil of Laurent Delvaux in the Low Countries, then spent 11 years studying in Paris, Rome and Florence. He worked extensively for George III, being given the title of Sculptor to His Majesty in 1764. Wilton was "<i>also for many years extensively employed in producing richly ornamented chimneypieces</i>" and "<i>had considerable dealings with the Carrara marble merchants, which enabled him frequently to accommodate his brother artists with marble</i>".³⁷⁷ This is supported by his provision of the lapis lazuli tablet to John Wildsmith for the chimneypiece for the Tapestry Room. However, his pièce de résistance at Croome is the chimneypieces with Nymphs of Flora in the Long Gallery, designed by Adam.</p> <p>Wilton met Robert Adam in Italy in 1755 during Adam's Grand Tour and it was Wilton (who was travelling with William Chambers) who introduced Adam to Clérisseau, the artist and antiquarian who would have a profound effect on Adam's future style.</p> <p>As well as Croome, Wilton also worked for Adam at Osterley and Syon.</p>
<p>Francesco Vassalli (fl.1724-1763)</p>	<p><i>Stuccatore</i> or Master Plasterer working under Brown from 1755. Responsible for the Rococo stucco or plasterwork decoration of Croome's interiors on the <i>piano nobile</i>: the Entrance Hall, Dining Room, Saloon and Drawing Room. Contemporary, more exuberant examples of his work are to</p>

³⁷⁶ Geoffrey Beard (1981), pp.280-283

³⁷⁷ Dautermann, Parker & Standen, p.30

be seen at Hagley.

Unity with the landscape

The Court's unity with the designed landscape is much more flawless than its stylistically varied interiors. Whilst again, there is no Brownian drawing or design for the Park, the relationship between house and landscape was obviously extremely carefully thought through. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown designed the Court, the pleasure gardens, follies, eye-catchers and parkland that surrounds it, as a single harmonious entity. Court and Park are two halves of this same whole, both equally integral to the original mid-18th century design concept.

Brown's concept of the position of a house in the landscape began at Stowe where he was learning. Stowe presents two of its elevations to the landscape. At Croome, where he was just setting out on his career, the Court has three sides open to the landscape with the fourth, east side 'compromised' by access to and proximity of the pre-existing and modified service ranges. Then Claremont, a new house entirely by him, has four sides open to the landscape, with tunnels to provide unseen access from house to service buildings. So Croome can be seen as part of this trajectory of Brown's architectural and landscape work, placing the house in the landscape and increasingly making the two a seamless whole.

The Court lies surprisingly low in the landscape. The obvious position might have been where the church now is, atop the hill to the north-east, but the 6th Earl decided to re-build on the foundations of the previous, early 1640s house. This decision not to re-locate the new house was a conscious one, probably partly financial, partly for comfort and partly out of respect for his ancestry, and there was probably an element of sentimentality too. Croome Court is sheltered within a bowl of the landscape, unlike other houses such as Stowe which was moved to the top of a hill to maximise the views with the result that it was uninhabitable in the winter. And as Dean remarks in his Guide Book, "*a more elevated situation might have been desired - and would, if sought, easily have been found*".



Croome Court from the church to the north, showing its low position in the landscape (*Author*)

Croome's low position also emphasises its central position in the bowl of the Park - it is rooted in its setting and is inextricably linked with and enclosed by the landscape. The protective 'arms' of the rising ground on almost all sides, dotted with inner and outer eye-catchers, envelope the house in a nurturing way, and its semi-concealed position from the principal, or London approach, provides a breath-taking first impression of the Court as the focal point of a total work of art. William Dean, Head Gardener, described this impact in his 1824 Guide Book to Croome: "*...the Stranger will naturally pause to contemplate, from its high grounds, the grand prospect ... in full display, before him – offering a grand near view of the House, seated in the vale below – thence extending over the lawns, the woods, and the waters, of the park – shut in by the long waving line of the Malvern hills, melting into the wide horizon*".

Further research is required to investigate the question of to what extent axial expressionist references (moods, thoughts and allusions) tied the house's interiors together with the landscape. In other words, there could have been links between certain rooms' consciously positioned key contents and their subject matter with the views out into the landscape.³⁷⁸ Ideally, what is required to ascertain the extent of this is an inventory giving the position of the paintings and statuary in the house's interiors upon the death of the 6th Earl, which we unfortunately don't have. But some possible suggestions can be made based on Dean's 1824 Guide Book descriptions of the interiors which pick out the key items in the rooms (happily, some of these items are still

³⁷⁸ For example, at Stourhead, the visitor would have picked up the symbolic references and their related positions of an equestrian painting of Henry Hoare inside the house, emulating the equestrian statue of Louis XIV outside Versailles riding down the middle of his garden representing the straight and narrow path through this earthly life.

in the collection) whose allusions the visitor was meant to understand. That said, it would be wrong to attach too much importance to these.

For example, Dean makes much of the public rooms to be visited on the south side of the house (Tapestry Room, Saloon, Drawing Room) and far less of the north side (Billiard Room, Hall, Dining Room, and Library) which were more private rooms and which he effectively skims over. Lord Coventry's Dressing Room is understandably not mentioned at all.

In the Saloon hung imposing royal and historical family portraits, including King George II, King William III and the Lord Keeper Coventry, the latter emphasizing the Coventry's family's long political and legal status and holders of high office in the royal household. A portrait of King George II was a political reference of allegiance in the time of continuing Jacobite trouble. In the broken pediment of the double doors on the north wall was a bust of Apollo. Relating to the pre-Christian idea of the resurrection, Apollo rises every morning as the sun god, and his temple is the Temple of Fame. Thus the Saloon *could* be interpreted as a Temple of Fame, or Worthies, with its references to the heroes and worthies of the royal and Coventry families.³⁷⁹

In the Tapestry Room, Dean describes the subject matter of the set of Gobelins tapestries as “*emblematic representations of the four elements*”. These depict variations on the virtuous sides of love: fecundity (Vertumnus & Pomona: Earth), selfless love (Venus & Vulcan: Fire); divine love (Cephalus & Aurora: Air) and heroic love (Neptune & Anymone: Water).

In the Drawing Room, he draws attention to, amongst other paintings, “*Two Pictures of Cleopatra; in the one she appears enjoying all the bliss of health and gay spirits: in the other, suffering under the agonies of despair and the bite of the asp*” and “*Two Pictures of Venus, by Philippi Lauri. In one she appears in retirement, attended by Cupids, but watched by a peeping Satyr; in the other, she is seen, looking at the Satyr, bound by Cupids*”.³⁸⁰ This subject matter alludes to the ‘vicious’ as opposed to the virtuous side of love.

Taking Dean as our guide, there is a notion of using the rooms in the house as one would use temples in the garden – Croome did not have a Temple of Venus or of Fame in the Park, so were they evoked in this way within the house? The Tapestry Room is a Temple of Venus in her purer form and perhaps the Drawing Room is Venus in her rather less amiable mode, causing trouble. The two rooms could therefore be alluding to

³⁷⁹ On the other hand, the portrait of George II was probably no more than a conventional display of loyalty (such portraits were almost mass-produced) and those of distinguished forbears were probably hung without any intended political implication.

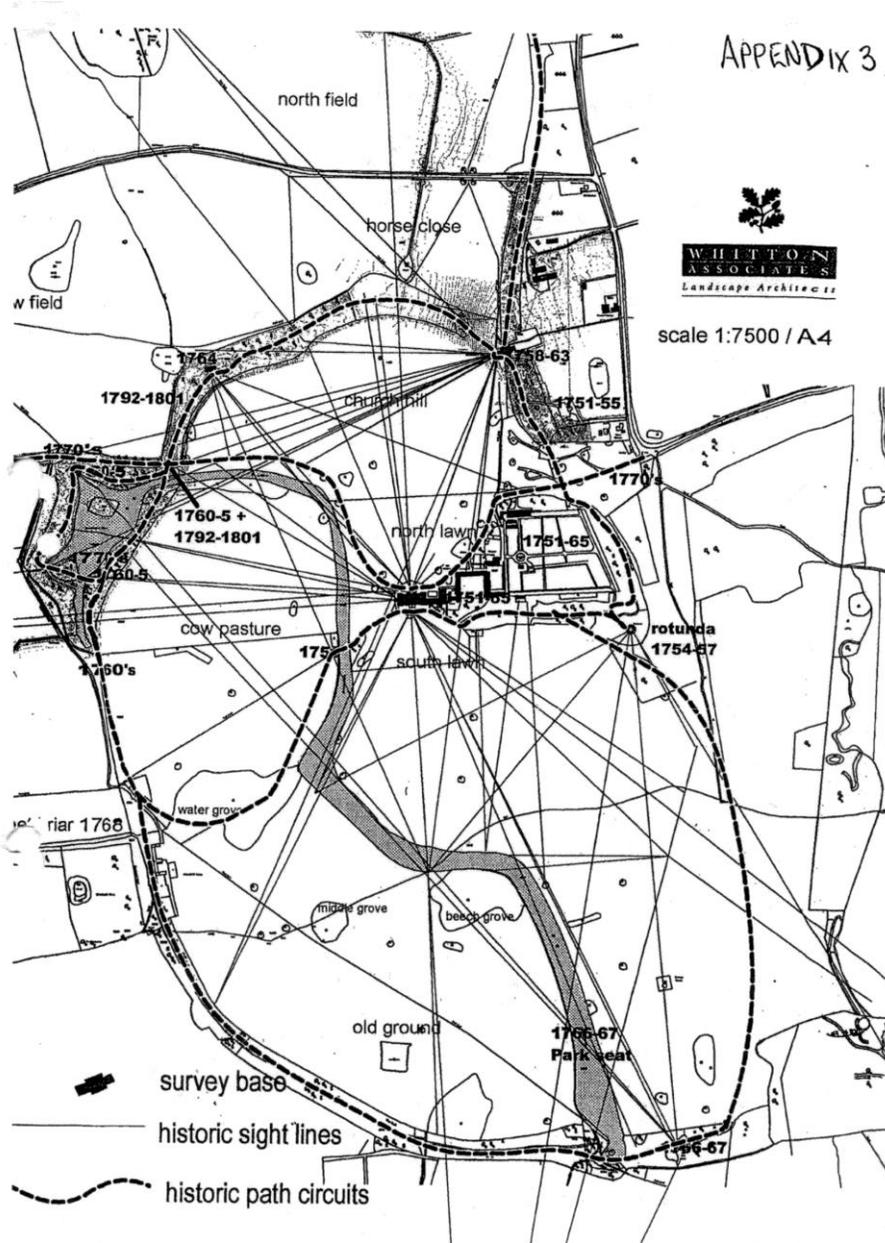
³⁸⁰ It has been suggested (by Richard Wheeler, National Specialist on Parks & Gardens, NT) that these paintings seem to hint at the 6th Earl's personal life. The portraits of Cleopatra could be an allusion to the 6th Earl's sexual misconduct with the courtesan Kitty Fisher, where he came unstuck. (Kitty Fisher was painted in the guise of Cleopatra by Reynolds). Certainly Cleopatra was a figure infamous for her sexual corruption of powerful men. Together with Venus surrounded by Satyrs, there are allusions in this room to ‘vicious’ types of love. However, again it is important not to read too much into this - it seems unlikely that the Coventrys would draw attention, even allegorically, to their own moral failings and unlikely that Barbara, the 6th Earl's second wife, would have tolerated this!

the difference between virtuous love and vicious love with the Saloon as a Temple of Fame symmetrically positioned between the two? Further research is needed to understand to what degree there was a rationale behind the positioning of the classical Cheere statues in the Long Gallery niches.

In the 1960s a great rent in the Court's unity with its landscape, its eye-catchers and borrowed landscape towards and including the Malvern Hills to the west, was introduced with the very physical division of the M5 motorway. This runs north-south to the west of the Court, truncating the Worcester approach beyond Wyatt's Punchbowl Gates, and cutting off the Panorama Tower from the rest of the park. Whilst the motorway is thankfully sunken, so that it is the noise that intrudes rather than the sight of it, this slices cruelly through the park and emphasizes just how precarious and vulnerable Croome's future was and in many respects still is. Despite this wound, Croome has survived with remarkable dignity and the Court still presides over the landscape with great serenity.

Designed views & sightlines

The sightlines to and from the Court are all strategically and meticulously positioned: 80% of them emanate from the Court. Indeed, in order to understand Brown's landscape at Croome, one has to experience it from the house.



Sightlines diagram showing how 80% of them radiate to and from the Court (*Whitton Associates*)

In the 1824 Guide Book to Croome, William Dean (or his co-writer) specifically describes the key views out from the various ground floor rooms of the house. The viewer, or visitor, is having their attention drawn to these strategically framed views of the Park, trees and landscape and their aesthetic and picturesque effect. Many lines of the descriptions of the Court's interiors are devoted to focusing on the views out. For example, in the Saloon, it is observed, *"Among the attractions of this room, not the least, is the delightful prospect which its windows command - over the fine verdant level of the park - diversified and adorned by its winding waters, its clustered trees, its spreading groves, its herds of noble deer; terminated on every side, by the grand sweep of woods, which bound the whole"*.

Dean does not, however, for some reason describe the views out to the North, although these are just as fine and significant, including sightlines to the Church, Temple Greenhouse and Pirton Castle in the distance. It may be that these rooms held less symbolic or emblematic significance in terms of their contents (see above section on Unity with the landscape) and in any event were more private rather than public spaces.

The Court's low setting in the landscape meant that it remained sheltered from the north-easterly winds, but retained striking views of the Malverns to the west. The corollary of this sheltered setting was that viewing places and eye-catchers had to be created to take advantage of the surrounding topography and to provide views out from and back to the Court, and a network of sightlines between the park buildings and the eye-catchers: the Rotunda to the south-east, the Church to the north-east, the Park Seat to the south, the Panorama Tower to the west, Dunstall Castle to the south and Pirton Castle to the north – the last two were intended to be climbed in order to look back at Croome. There are also of course the views to the west and south out over Croome's very own 'river', mimicking the River Severn whose floodplain was very much part of the Coventry estate, to complete the picture.

The key sightlines from the ground floor and first floor rooms of the Court are:

Room	Direction of sightline	Garden Building or Eye-catcher
Entrance Hall (G1) & F15	North east North North North west	Church Pirton Castle Statues of Four Seasons (site of) Temple Greenhouse
Dining Room (G2) F16 & F17	North east North North	Church Pirton Castle Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
Lord Coventry's Dressing Room (G4) & F18	North east East	Church London Drive, Red Wing & Stableblock
Library (G6) & F2	South South South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
Tapestry Room (G7) & F3	South east South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
Saloon (G8)	South east South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
Drawing Room (G9) & F8	South east South South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
Long Gallery (G10) & F10	South east South South	Park Seat River Dunstall Castle
Long Gallery & F10	South west	Chinese Bridge (site of)

Long Gallery & F10 & F12	West	Malvern Hills
Long Gallery & F12	West	great Cedar
	West	Panorama Tower
	North west	Urn
	North west	Temple Greenhouse
	North	Pirton Castle
Billiard Room (G14) & F14	North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
	North east	Church
	North west	Temple Greenhouse
Billiard Room (G14) & F14	North	Pirton Castle
	North	Statues of Four Seasons (site of)
	North east	Church

Heritage of associated collections

The 6th Earl of Coventry was a man of sophisticated taste with the wealth to indulge it. He was greatly influenced by the French styles and fashions of the time and started collecting avant-garde furniture and decorative arts in Paris in 1763. He also commissioned many pieces from important British designers and craftsmen, most of them suppliers to the Crown (George III).



A commode in the French taste made for 6th Earl of Coventry by Peter Langlois for the Tapestry Room, 1764 (*Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

Between the years of 1758 and 1801 he patronised amongst others, Mayhew & Ince, France & Bradburn, Vile & Cobb, Chippendale & Rannie, Pierre Langlois, William Linnell, Gordon & Taitt, Marsh & Tatham, George Seddon & Sons and Robert and George Gillow. This was a highly competitive time in the London cabinet-making trade. Spreading the load amongst different craftsmen was an effective way of hastening the completion of the work but it may also have been the 6th Earl's clever way of keeping his suppliers on their toes and playing the competition off against each other. Mayhew & Ince's accounts, twenty-three in all, presented between 1764 and 1794 totalled £1,359 15s 8d, which was a considerable sum. However, it was less than half the total for Vile &

Cobb, which exceeded £3000 for work carried out between 1757 and 1773.³⁸¹ They were the first of the leading firms of cabinet-makers to supply furniture for Croome Court. Chippendale supplied furniture to the Earl for Croome between 1764 and 1770, but only in a comparatively minor way. He must have looked on with some consternation at the patronage being lavished on a number of his rivals.³⁸²



Tapestry Room pier table with inlaid marble specimen top by John Wildsmith, 1759
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The 6th Earl commissioned pieces not just for Croome, but also for his London house in Piccadilly. After 1848, when the 9th Earl assigned the lease of the latter, these joined the items at the Court where they remained, largely intact, jostling for position with the 9th Earl's own collection of 'antiques' until a century later, when large quantities of the Court's contents were sold at auction in London and at Croome in 1948.

There were substantial sales of Croome's library in 1947 and 1948 resulting in the disposal of most of the older books. What survives is clearly no more than a 'rump', and contains very few early publications; presumably these books escaped sale because they were not thought to be worth all that much in 1947. The survivors are generally pretty modest and most date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries; they include a fair number of sporting books, sets of Voltaire, Kipling and Walter Scott, reference books, and 17th and 18th century chapel books³⁸³.

Although much was sold by the Coventry family in 1948, and the cream of the collection has found its way into national and international museums, many of the most important, indigenous heirloom pieces remain in the ownership of the Croome Estate Trust. This is because fortunately, the family and the Trustees retained many of the pieces to which they were particularly attached. These are principally composed of nationally and internationally important items of furniture, paintings, porcelain and *objets d'art* which

³⁸¹ Anthony Coleridge, *English furniture supplied for Croome Court*, p.12

³⁸² Anthony Coleridge, *English furniture supplied for Croome Court*, p.15

³⁸³ Mark Purcell's (NT Libraries Curator) interpretation of the Croome library sale catalogues and surviving books, email July 2011

were commissioned by the 6th Earl of Coventry in the mid-18th century. There are also items relating to later generations of the family.

Because of their significance they were conditionally exempted from inheritance tax. While the future of the Court was unsure, and until the structure and fabric of Croome Court is repaired, they are temporarily at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire, where many of them can be seen by the general public (not all are on display). They consist of:

CONDITIONALLY-EXEMPT ITEMS		
Type of item	Quantity	Notes / significant items
Oil paintings	47	Including: Richard Wilson's 1758 view of Croome; Ramsay's portrait of Barbara, 6 th Earl's 2 nd wife; Ramsay's 1764 portrait of 6 th Earl; Charles Phillip's group portrait of 5 th Earls' family; Ramsay's 3 full-length portraits of 6 th Earl, Lord Deerhurst & John Bulkeley; Portrait of 9 th Earl; Portrait of 9 th Countess; Filipo Lauri pair of cupids & satyrs; Cornelis Jonson portrait of Lord Keeper; Cornelis Jonson portrait of Lord Keeper; Attr. Gavin Hamilton portrait of Elizabeth Gunning; Attr. Gavin Hamilton portrait of Maria Gunning; Attr. Kneller portrait of Countess of Coventry; Attr. Kneller portrait of King Geo I (Saloon); Circle John Riley portrait King William III; Follower Cornelis Jonson portrait Thomas Coventry, 2 nd Baron; Kneller portrait of Elizabeth, wife of 5 th Earl; Reynolds portrait of Maria Countess of Coventry; Stephen Pearce portrait of 9 th Earl hunting; Sir Frances Grant portrait of 9 th Earl & Countess hunting (Entrance Hall);
Drawings & pastels	9	Including: Francis Cotes portrait of Maria Gunning, 6 th Earl's 1 st wife; Francis Cotes portrait of Elizabeth Gunning; Steel engraving plate of picture of 9 th Earl;
Architectural drawings	31	Including: Adam 1763 design for finishing the Long Gallery; Adam 1772 working drawing for Croome bridge; Adam 1772 working drawing for urn; Adam drawing for Menagerie; Adam elevation for Menagerie; Adam working drawings for moulding details around medallions & arches of Croome bridge; Adam 1772 working drawings for 'pattera for

		<p>bridge at Croome'; Adam 1772 working drawing for cornice frieze on bridge at Croome; Adam design for bridge in garden at Croome; Adam more ornate design for bridge in garden at Croome; Adam design for gothic window in Church at Croome; Wyatt 1796 design for Druid; Adam 1791 elevation & floorplan for gate at Croome; Wyatt 1799 plan of alterations to 6th Earl's apartments in Red Wing; Wyatt 1794 plan & elevation of Saxon [Broadway] Tower; Wyatt 1801 elevation for a rotunda at Croome; Wyatt 1794 & 1801 plans & elevations (5) of lodges & gates; Adam 1772 working drawing for frieze of bridge at Croome;</p>
Furniture	141	<p>Including: Geo III (?) enigmatic casket on stand; 8 Adam-designed mahogany chairs (Long Gallery); Pair 1765 Mayhew & Ince satinwood & holly commodes (made for 6th Earl's 2nd wife); Gilt overmantle mirror by Linnell; 'Envelope' top card table attr. Mayhew & Ince; 4 Adam-designed scroll benches (Long Gallery); Regency dining table (54in x 114in); 14 Geo III dining chairs; Set 6 mahogany library armchairs; Set 3 mahogany library armchairs; Adam-designed four-poster bed supplied by France & Bradburn (for 6th Earl's 2nd wife); Louis XV bureau plat from Poirier 1765; Pair Geo III serpentine bedside commodes by Mayhew & Ince; 2 Geo III four-poster beds; Adam (?) washbasin & ewer stand supplied by Mayhew & Ince; 10 hall chairs with Coventry crest;</p>
Ceramics & glass (Quantity includes pieces in services)	237	<p>Including: Pair Louis XV vases poss. from Poirier; Worcester Flight Barr & Barr dinner service; Worcester Chamberlain dessert service; Worcester Flight Barr & Barr dessert service; Worcester 'Blind' (7th Earl) part dessert service;</p>
Clocks	1	<p>Including: French mantel clock from Poirier (Library?);</p>

Silver	4	Including: Pair Geo II circular waiters by Edward Wakelin; Geo II oval soup tureen by David Willaume Jun.;
Books	9	Including: Genealogical tables of the Noble Family of Coventry;
NON-EXEMPT ITEMS		
Type of item	Quantity	Notes / significant items
Oil paintings	16	Including: Lely portrait of Sir William Coventry; Circle of Kneller, portrait of 5 th Earl of Coventry; Portrait of 'Emblem', 9 th Earl's prize racehorse; Chr. William Hunneman portrait of King Geo III & of Queen Charlotte (both at Worcester Guildhall);
Drawings & pastels & prints	25	Including: English school miniature of Maria Gunning; Album of loose leaf mezzotints; 2 aquatints;
Furniture	84	Including: 1 Geo III four-poster bed; Set of 8 Geo III mahogany dining chairs (style of Gillows); 3 single beds;
Sculpture	3	(Marble)
Carpets/rugs	1	
Ceramics & glass (Quantity includes pieces in services)	253	Including: Sevres dessert service; Vincennes part tea service; 3 Sevres coffee cans & saucers; Meissen figures, pair ice-pails & several bowls; Chinese bowls & vases; Pair Chinese celadon & Louis XV mounted vases; Royal Worcester dessert service with Coventry crest (extremely damaged); Worcester Chamberlain part tea service; Plus remaining part services and misc. glass (mostly damaged)
Needlework & textiles	3	Including: Coronation robes;
Silver & metalware	27	Including: Two Geo III plain oval sauceboats by J. Parker & E Wakelin 1772;
Books	353	

The Court is currently empty and bereft of its collection. Part of the present tenancy agreement with the National Trust is that the collection will be able to return to Croome. This will be an opportunity to re-instate the original grandeur, concept, taste and craftsmanship of the principal rooms. However, they will by no means be sufficient to furnish the whole house and there will be plenty of scope for other creative and varied uses of the Court's interiors. Indeed, this varied approach to the presentation of the interiors is part of the essence of the Croome Redefined project, allowing flexibility, temporary installations and zoning rather than a predictable re-furnishing of a series of static historic interiors.

In addition to the core Coventry collections described above, there is also a collection of personal chattels and ephemera belonging to the late Lady Maria Coventry which was purchased by the National Trust at her posthumous sale in February 2008. These represent her interests and everyday life, relating largely to hunting and horses: they are relatively modest pieces of furniture, objects and pictures and as such, are important in representing the 20th century life of the last member of the Worcester branch of the Coventry family.

Archival heritage

Croome's archival heritage falls essentially into two categories:

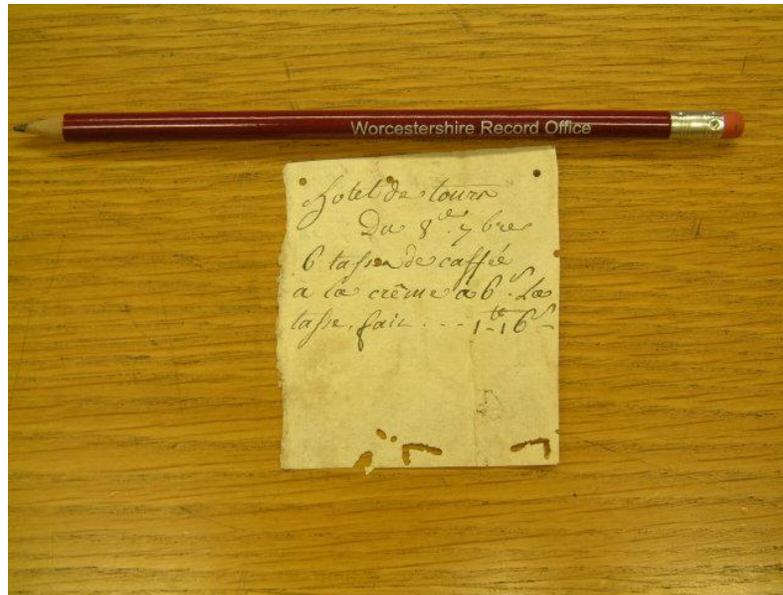
- The Coventry Family papers (from the 12th century to 1921), which were accepted in lieu of inheritance tax in 2005 and are held at the Worcestershire Record Office for the benefit of the nation.

- The post-1921 papers, which are a 'live' archive still owned and administered by the Croome Estate Trust.

In addition, there is an important archive of Robert Adam's drawings for Croome held at the Sir John Soane museum – although incomplete, these form the largest collection of his drawings for any country house – no complete set survives. A recent cataloguing project has been undertaken by the Soane museum and has identified further Adam drawings which relate to Croome.

The Croome Estate Trust also holds important architectural drawings for Croome by Robert Adam and James Wyatt.

The Croome archive, or Coventry family papers at the Worcestershire Record Office, includes an incredibly wide range of material: accounts, bills, inventories, deeds, sale particulars, parish records, maps, surveys, architectural drawings, official papers, diaries, journals, albums and a wealth of correspondence. It contains deed and muniments of title and manorial papers dating from the early 13th to 20th centuries, and estate accounts and rentals from the 18th to the 20th century. These relate principally to the Coventry estates in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire but also include some property in Oxfordshire, Middlesex and Surrey.



Tiny French receipt from one of the 6th Earl's shopping trips to Paris for '6 tasses de café à la crème' (WRO)

The archive is of pre-eminent importance and provides the historian with an extraordinarily complete picture of the life and undertakings of the Coventry family from the 17th to the mid-20th century, while its legal papers, dating from the 13th century, bear witness to its extensive estate holdings and the nationally and regionally important offices held by generations of Coventrys.

The papers of Thomas, 1st Baron Coventry (1578-1640) are particularly important. He was a lawyer of exceptional ability who rapidly progressed to the highest legal offices of the land. He was appointed Recorder of London in 1616, Solicitor-General in 1617, Attorney-General in 1621 and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal in 1625. His papers include over 18,000 original docketts of Letters Patent under the Great Seal and run to 40 folio boxes. Among the grants of knighthood is that to Sir Peter Paul Rubens conferred in 1630 by Charles I in recognition of the artist's role in establishing peace between England and Spain.

As well as the paper relating to the office of Lord Keeper, there are other items relating to Coventry's office as Treasurer of the Inner Temple, including accounts from 1617 to 1622. There are also family papers relating to property and estates at Croome and in London as well as household accounts³⁸⁴.

In addition, the archive includes extensive and invaluable information on the building and architectural evolution of the Court, although there is a frustrating gap in Brown's bills for Court at the key period when he was carrying out the re-modelling. However, much can be gleaned from the accounts.

In 1997 the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts acclaimed the Croome archive as '*most important and interesting*'. In August 2005, the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) on behalf of the Secretary of State, approved and accepted this vast

³⁸⁴ Museums, Libraries & Archive Council, Acceptance in Lieu Report 2005-06, pp. 28-9

archive in lieu of tax on behalf of the nation and allocated it to the Worcestershire Record Office. The catalogue for the Croome Collection is now available on-line.³⁸⁵

The post-1921 Croome archive is still owned, administered and added to by the Croome Estate Trust. It is thus a 'live' archive and contains valuable and complete information on the Court's 20th century history and use. Its content has been invaluable to the present CMMP, and the Archivist, Jill Tovey's, generous and unflagging sharing of that content and knowledge has been of inestimable value in writing this Plan and to our on-going understanding of the Court and the wider property.

Archaeological heritage

The archaeological layers of Croome Court and its environs contain the potential to supplement existing knowledge and provide further evidence for the continuous occupation of the site since medieval times. Several archaeological investigations have been carried out around the Court and the results from these coupled with documentary and map evidence help to build a picture of the evolution of the site and the building. However, there is still much more work to do to fully understand the development of this fascinating site. Archaeological investigations have already been used across the parkland in order to identify and locate features of this landscape, supplementing the map evidence, and aiding restoration. Similarly, in and around the Court, archaeological work has already and will continue to enable an accurate understanding of the evolution of the structure and its environs.

Little is known of the area immediately around Croome Court from early periods, although during a survey of the wider parkland a Bronze Age palstave was found at Knights Hill, suggesting that area was exploited to some degree during prehistoric times.

The discovery of a Roman pottery scatter some 500m from the Court and a single piece of Roman tile found during excavations within the walled garden both hint at the potential for settlement in the area dating to the Roman period, although no further evidence is currently available for this.

The first firm knowledge of settlement in the area dates to the medieval period, when the village of Croome is recorded in Domesday. The location of this original village is recorded in the Sites & Monument Record as being c.500m to the north east of the current house, although its exact position has not been determined and only further fieldwork could demonstrate this. Several scatters of medieval roof tiles have been found in this area, attesting to what was presumably an extensive settlement of the area during this date. Archaeological investigations in 2008 to the north of the walled garden revealed what was interpreted as the remains of medieval agricultural activity, probably ridge and furrow.

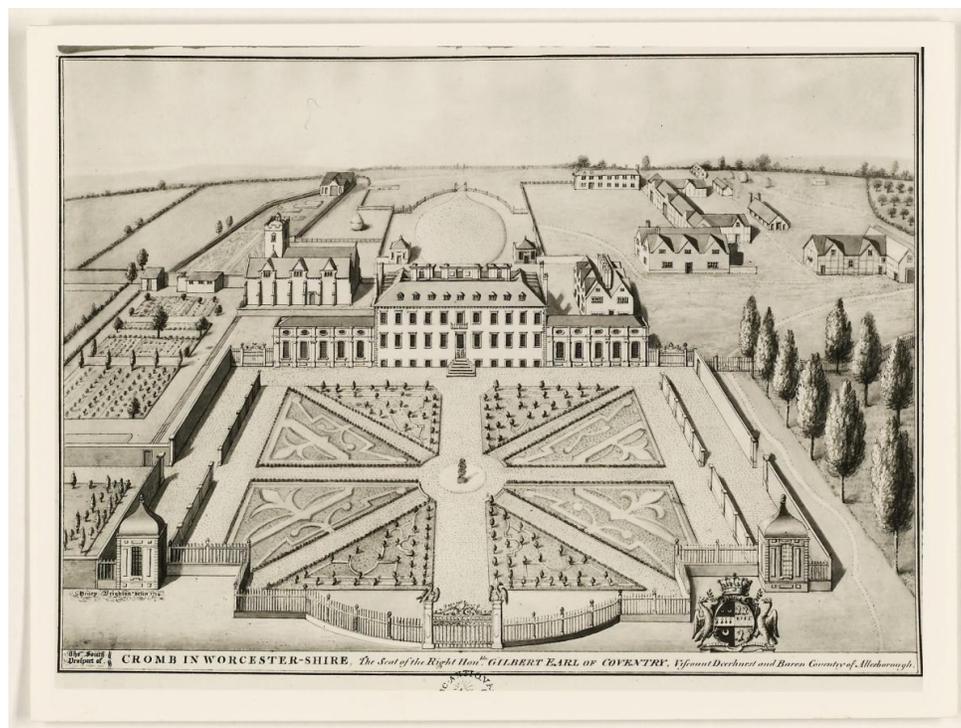
The church associated with this medieval village is documented from 1286, but its location is only known from drawings dating to 1714 and c. 1750, where it is clearly seen to the north west of the current Court. No archaeological evidence has yet been revealed

³⁸⁵ The Croome catalogue can be viewed at:
<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=350&pos=9>

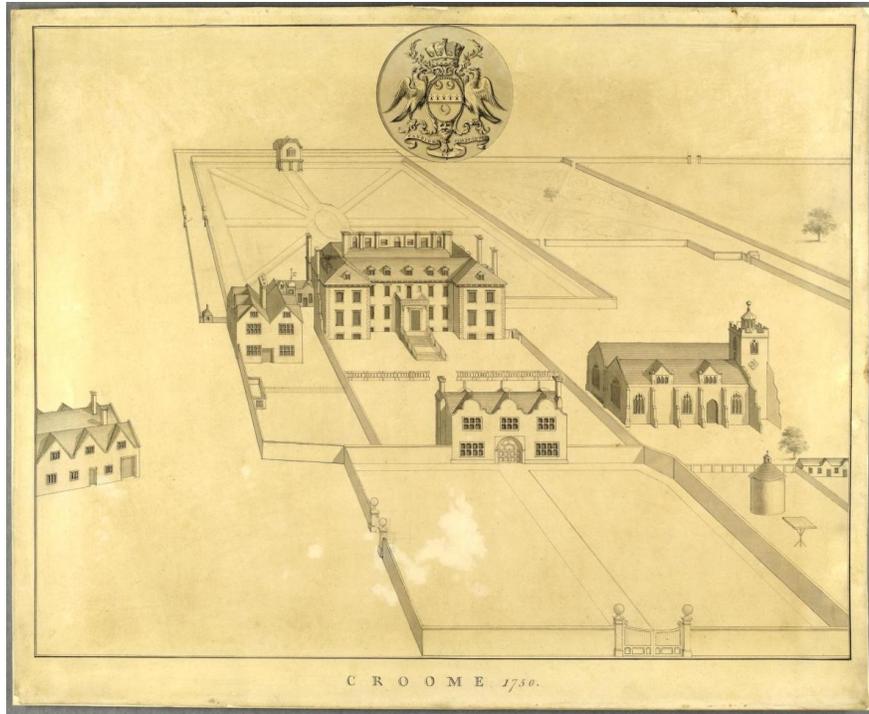
for the church but it seems likely that its remains will survive undisturbed, and that the position shown on the drawings is fairly accurate although not precise.

It seems likely that the original medieval manor house was located in the same position as the current house. Documentary evidence suggests that the manor house burnt down twice during 1606-1627, and was almost completely rebuilt by the mid-17th century. It is likely that the medieval house was timber-framed with a plain tiled roof. By the mid-17th century the house was remodelled under the 2nd Baron. Remains of this 17th century house are clearly visible in the roof structure and elsewhere, and it is highly likely that further investigation and opening-up of the current fabric may reveal more evidence of this earlier house. Indeed, the architectural harmony of the present Court is only skin deep for it conceals the archaeological evidence of the previous house(s) on the same site, buried within its core. The most obvious and visible evidence of this is the central arrangement of chimneystacks down the spine of the house. These appear on early views of the Court before its 18th century re-modelling and are still in place today.

The drawings of 1714 and c.1750 show a large house with the church to the north-west. A formal parterre garden lies to the south and to the north-east extensive subsidiary buildings are shown. The precise function of these buildings is not known although they could have been associated with the medieval village, which seems to have lain in close proximity to the original house, or they may be service buildings to the main house. The drawing dated c.1750 also shows, in substantial detail, a Jacobean gatehouse directly to the north of the house, separated by a formal enclosed court or lawn. Preliminary results from a geophysics survey on the south lawn indicate that the remains of the formal gardens are well preserved and lie just beneath the surface.



The 1714 Beighton view showing the formal gardens to the south and formal entrance court to the north, areas ripe for archaeology (WRO)



The c.1750 view from the north, showing the Jacobean gatehouse and medieval church (N.B. This drawing is sketchy and unreliable) (WRO)

When the house and landscape were completely re-modelled in the mid-18th century, all of these early Post-Medieval features (the church, formal gardens, buildings to the north, the dovecote, the gatehouse, balustraded and solid walls enclosing courtyards to the north and formal gardens to the south, and small pavilion buildings), were swept away to make way for the new designed landscape. It seems highly likely, based on the limited work already carried out, that archaeological evidence for all of these buildings and the 17th century formal gardens will be preserved beneath the surface of the north and south lawns specifically, thus making these areas very significant archaeologically.

Recent limited archaeological work in 2009 identified the nature and extent of the cobbled apron forecourt which formed an arc to the north of the Court, shown fairly clearly on plans of 1796, and a cobbled area to the west. These graded cobbled sections linked to the hoggin surface of the Worcester Drive, the path to the Chinese Bridge to the west and to the Home Shrubbery to the east. Bills in the archive refer to river pebbles from Bewdley.



Volunteer archaeologists uncovering the cobbled surface to the north-east of the Court, 2010
(Author)

The same archaeological work also revealed the remains of what appears to be an underground 19th century pump & hydrant point from a cistern. These are located at the centre of the apron in front of the Court's north façade under a stone slab in the grass, just beyond the cobbled surface of the present forecourt.



Archaeological investigations of the pump & hydrant point to the immediate north of the Court, 2010 (Author)

Immediately under the stone flags in front of the north steps running from west to east across the front of the Court is one of Brown's drainage culverts. This was temporarily exposed in 2011 during repair work to the flagstones.

Excavations in the Home Shrubbery identified detail on Brown's hoggin paths and seemed to suggest that only one path existed, rather than the two considered possible initially from the map evidence.

Archaeological work in 2009 revealed evidence that appears to relate to the Court's use as a school in the second half of the 20th century. To the west and south of the court, a concrete gate threshold was found with the stubs of two wooden posts set in concrete and a stone with a square hole cut in it, presumably a fence base, which formed a hardcore support for a cambered tarmac path.

To the south-west of the Court, excavations at the Chinese Bridge have served to reveal the foundations for the eastern abutments of the bridge, which is known to have been erected by 1751, to have survived until 1796, but was subsequently removed at some point. The excavations also revealed the foundations of a second bridge, which itself was removed by 1898.

Excavations in the walled garden in 1993 did not reveal any datable remains. However the investigations did reveal a complex and deep stratigraphy, which attests to the good preservation of archaeological remains close to the Court, and which probably represents the remains of the mid-18th century kitchen garden, which is shown on Doherty's plan of 1751.

More recent archaeology relates to nearby RAF Defford in the 2nd World War, when the RAF communal site 'B' and RAF site no 5 were located near the walled garden to the north, east and south. These sites contained recreation huts, airmen's dining rooms and cinema as well as officers' mess and bathhouse amongst others. Archaeological investigations in this area have revealed evidence for this war time occupation; in general this mostly survives as evidence of concrete roads and the significant landscaping that was carried out in this period. All the war time structures have been demolished in this area and due to their temporary nature extensive evidence of them no longer exists.³⁸⁶

Social heritage

Croome Court's social heritage resonates on many levels and over many centuries.

At a regional and local level, Croome and the Coventry family were for five centuries at the epicentre of local communities who had lived and worked on and around the estate, had connections with it or depended on it for their livelihood. The estate's reach and influence extended throughout the counties of Worcestershire and Warwickshire. It was a source of employment, identity, interconnection, local pride and shared experience. The Coventry Arms public house, now a private residence (see images below), still stands at the centre of High Green, the village created by the 6th Earl of Coventry when he displaced the estate workers' houses around the Court in the mid-18th century and added to by the 9th Earl.

³⁸⁶ I am grateful to Jeremy Milln and Janine Young for information in this section.



The Coventry Arms at High Green estate village in the late 19th century



The Coventry Arms, now a private residence, 2011 (*Author*)

Throughout their long history in Worcestershire the Coventry family played an integral part in almost every aspect of county life. They were closely involved with local politics, the militia and the law, and patrons of numerous local charities and public institutions. They also made a significant contribution to the development of agriculture, industry and transport within the county. They belonged to the locality as much as it belonged to them

and Croome Court was their home³⁸⁷. The Court was at the very centre of this lively, thriving and self-sufficient community.

Under the ownership of the 9th Earl, Croome assumed fresh importance as the hub of a large and close-knit community. No county function was complete without his presence, no hunting party nor race meeting seemed so successful in his absence. His popularity among his tenants was unprecedented and he seemed to be regarded with genuine affection wherever he went. The jam factory that he set up in order to purchase his tenant farmers' surplus fruit and put it to good use and to make money for him and them was symptomatic of his paternal approach to those who worked and gained their livelihood on the Croome estate. He was President or Patron of deserving local good causes, and the double funeral of him and his wife Blanche, who died only three days after her husband, was attended by both celebrities and villagers in enormous numbers.



Newspaper cutting marking the death of 9th Countess of Coventry in 1930, only 3 days after the 9th Earl's death

On a national scale, the Court's remarkable and long history, its survival and present revival chart the rise and fall of the fortunes of the English aristocracy and great country houses and estates, their alternative use in 20th century times of war and social change, their adaptation, their widespread destruction and ability to survive. The Court is a symbolic yet also tangible window into these social traditions and upheavals.

It is easy to think of Croome as a quintessentially English place at the heart of the English 'natural' landscape movement and the Court as an architectural expression of one English aristocrat's vision. Yet this vision had European and international links and Croome's almost cosmopolitan flavour continued into the 20th century. In his furnishing of Croome Court, his tapestries, his porcelain and his paintings, the 6th Earl expressed

³⁸⁷ *The Coventrys of Croome*, Catherine Gordon, pp.3-6.

his sophisticated French taste and his Neo-classical *goût-Grècque*. His collection of exotic species of plants and trees came from all over the world, and motifs drawn from these were depicted in the Court's plasterwork. Adam's architectural inspiration came from Italy, with the Long Gallery ceiling design inspired by the Temple of Peace in Rome.

In the late 20th century, the Hare Krishnas found peace and beauty at Croome and established their international headquarters here, their occupation of the Court bringing together people from all over the world to this corner of Worcestershire.

All this reminds us that Croome is actually international and has resonance for wide ranges of people from different social and cultural backgrounds.

Generations of the same families still live and work in and around the once vast estate and many of Croome's volunteers today are local people who have some form of personal connection with the place, either directly or through a family member. They are passionate about the Court being saved, protected and made accessible and are keen to be involved in this process. Croome now has the capacity to be once again what it was for so long: integral to the local landscape and economy in which it sits.



Croome gardeners, late 19th century (Geoff Sherwood)

Emotional & spiritual heritage

Croome has had, and still has, strong emotional and spiritual resonances for many people. Primarily, it was of course a home to generations of the Coventry family, who lived and died here. A house has stood on the site for over 500 years, providing shelter, security and sanctuary to its occupants. Theirs was a somewhat secular spirituality: the Coventrys were not a particularly religious, church-going family; certainly the church that the 6th Earl had removed and re-built was more aesthetic eye-catcher than place of worship.

George William, the 6th Earl, loved Croome, and, upon inheriting, even though he felt the Court was unfashionable, he chose not to raze it to the ground to make way for a new, enormous, 'flashy' building, but adapted, enlarged and improved it, retaining some of its interior historical features (such as the bolection moulded panelling in his bedroom F8 and the Billiard Room G14). This was perhaps due to his streak of thriftiness, but more significantly, due to a love of the place and its emotional connections with his elder brother, Lord Deerhurst, who had died unexpectedly in 1744. The two brothers were very close and grew up together at Croome, Winchester School and then Oxford. The 6th Earl's visionary and sophisticated approach to the re-modelling of Croome seems to have been tempered with some sentimentality, probably inspired by memories of his father's use of the Court, the place as his family home, and sharing plans and ideas for the development of Croome with his older brother who never lived to see them carried out.

The 9th Earl respected and nurtured his inheritance of Croome and chose not to remodel the Court in the 19th century by adding a Victorian wing or ballroom or conservatory. He lived in it for some seventy years as a comfortable family home with his nine children, surrounded by eclectic and homely clutter, the Court crammed full of a combination of furniture transferred from Coventry House in London and Croome's accumulated historic collections.

Many local people have poignant and personal memories of the Court during its late 20th century incarnations, as a Roman Catholic School run by nuns for disadvantaged boys (1950-79) and during its four and a half years (1979-84) as the UK Headquarters of the Hare Krishna Movement.

With regard to the disadvantaged boys of the Catholic School, Croome Court's emotional and spiritual heritage is perhaps more complex. Run by a religious institution and with nuns as teachers it had strong spiritual overtones but was not necessarily, for the pupils, a place of sanctuary, as their backgrounds and the reasons for them being at the school were often complicated and sensitive. Croome's Oral History Project has recorded stories of bids for escape

The Hare Krishnas responded, like so many people past and present, to the building's inspirational beauty, tranquility and design harmony with its landscape. They have described it as a '*spiritual haven*' and a place for '*simple living and high thinking*'. Many of the wider Hindu community in the UK came to Croome on Sundays to worship in the temple and share food in the Court.

There is an emotional sense of the passing of time here, generations of people and communities having passed through the building, the walls having witnessed and absorbed human hopes and fears, joy and pain. Croome Court, as great country houses go, is modest and human in scale. The idiosyncrasies of its internal architectural details, its honey-coloured Bath stone exterior, the patina of its oak floorboards and foot-worn, stone-flagged entrance hall, the varied 20th century uses that it has fostered or endured, give it charm and personality. People can relate to it more easily than the vast, impersonal 'piles' full of miles of corridor and cold marble that larger, more impersonal mansions often present. Croome embraces people and gets under their skin.

Finally, quite simply, Croome Court inspires emotion for so many people because of its sheer beauty as a harmonious building in a beautiful landscape setting, a beauty that

becomes more precious and poignant when people realise how close it came to destruction and being lost for ever.

Oral heritage

Croome has a rich and varied 20th century oral history which is being captured and shared thanks to an oral history project being undertaken by the Friends of Croome, a voluntary Supporter Group founded in 2004 which promotes Croome and assists in encouraging appreciation and understanding of its history and importance³⁸⁸.

The oral history project, called *Croome before the National Trust*, was supported in its launch in 2004 by The National Lottery and Heritage Lottery Fund. The main aim is to record Croome's relatively little-known history in the 20th century before the National Trust began the restoration of the Park in 1996 and the Court in 2008. Much is known about the 6th Earl of Coventry, 'Capability' Brown, Robert Adam and James Wyatt and their creation of Croome in the 18th and early 19th centuries, but, until now, those who worked in the Court and on the estate in the first half of the 20th century had not had their voices heard or their experiences recorded.

Similarly, RAF Defford, adjacent to Croome, was home to a large number of personnel from the three services during the Second World War who played a vital role in the development of RADAR; they, too, have a hitherto untold story to tell. These and other voices from the post-war history of Croome can now be heard as they tell how they lived, worked and played.

An audio-visual presentation and audio-posts in the visitor reception building at Croome and in the Court, as well as Powerpoint presentations to interested groups in the area and an illustrated booklet, all help to make Croome's more recent history before the National Trust better known. Memories, information and images continue to be gathered to expand this invaluable archive. To date, 66 recordings have been made, 13 written memories have been received and hundreds of people have been talked to. Many of the images reproduced in this document have been gathered together by these initiatives.

Technical, mechanical and electrical heritage

In the mid-18th century, the 6th Earl and Brown shared a keen interest in engineering and this ensured that the Court was as up to date as was practicable. There were water closets installed on the first floor, the latest ranges in the kitchen, and a range with a back boiler was also installed in the Butler's Pantry around 1800, which is still in situ.

However, in contrast, by the time that the 9th Earl & Countess died in March 1930, his grandson the 10th Earl, who then inherited, deemed the place uninhabitable. The sewage discharged into the lake, there was no central heating but lots of smoky fires, the drainage remained a serious issue and the water supply from the wells was unreliable and possibly of dubious quality. The 10th Earl did not move in straight away, but lived at his wife's home in Wales while the family Trust embarked upon a major programme of modernisation works that were listed as follows:

³⁸⁸ The project has to date made over 70 recordings of memories. It is masterminded by Eileen Clement, Volunteer and Friend of Croome.

1. Drainage Scheme: The Court
2. Drainage Scheme: The Farm
3. Sewage Disposal Plant
4. Internal/external plumbing works
5. New Hot and Cold water supply
6. Heating installation
7. Cold water supply
8. Water softening plant
9. Alterations concerned with the electric light and power supply

The main contractors were Henry Lea & Sons of Birmingham, with Sir E. Guy Dawber acting initially as consultant architect, and then the leading Birmingham firm of Peacock and Bewlay. The local building firm of Thomas Broad Ltd acted as the principal contractor and decorator. Small persistent problems were dealt with initially, wiring faults in the cellars and further repairs to the ceiling in the dining room. The possibility of installing new water tanks in the roof of the east wing was subject to prolonged discussions. The initial idea was to place the new tanks above the main staircase, but eventually it was agreed that the tanks be installed in the attic space within the north-east pavilion by reducing in height the ceiling in the bedroom beneath (S27). The main body of the work was complete by 1933, although further drainage and heating problems recurred in 1938, and the inadequacies of the private water supply remained an issue.

A 'Country House Technology Survey' has been carried out (in two parts) to assess the technical aspects of Croome's heritage (see Appendix 20). These confirmed that the engineering services within the building have undergone major changes and updates, carried out since the 1940's.

Wells & Water

There is a surviving subterranean area of interest to the SE of the Red Wing (south of what was known as Laundry Green) which relates to the Court's historic water supply. This appears to be the housing for a large, early underground water tank, lined with very fine stone-work, almost certainly relating to the 6th Earl's time and probably linked to a bill from William Chapman for Plumbers' work, dated 13 April 1764, including a 5 foot iron fly wheel, an *'Ingrine to Rise water out of a well fixt in the Old Servants Hall and serves 2 Cisterns, one in the Cellar the other in a Dark Closett in ye passage...'* and *114 feet of 2 inch cast pipe to ye forceing Main to ye Ingrine'*.



18th century underground water chamber to the SE of the Red Wing (*Jeremy Milln*)

The pumping engine was to be set in an Old Servants' Hall³⁸⁹ within a strong oak frame and work on iron friction wheels. The five foot iron flywheel would have been quite something. A reference to handle rods suggests that the engine was hand-cranked. The fact that the date of this bill coincides with a major phase of internal works within the house can be no coincidence, in particular the date when the Alcove Room and Water Closet are listed in Hobcraft's bill.³⁹⁰

The large underground structure with heavy beams within it recently discovered to the south-east of the Red Wing is almost certainly linked to this pumping engine. The housing seems to have been built in two phases, its long eastern wall being faced with high quality ashlar, while the other walls are built of blue lias, and the structure is roofed with a brick vault. The only possible explanation for an ashlar wall in this location is that it belongs to an earlier building of relatively high status, in which a well was located. The approximate dimensions of the underground chamber are 11 metres long by 2.5 metres wide by 7.25 metres average depth, providing a volumetric capacity of 124 cubic metres.

The reference in Chapman's bill to an old servant's hall may refer to a 17th century servants' hall in this location which was adapted to house the pump. This is an early and important example of a water supply system to sinks and

³⁸⁹ Probably one that functioned in the earlier half of the 18th century.

³⁹⁰ F62/30

washbasins within a country house. It is likely that the '*marble bason for ye water closett*' referred to in the bill was intended for Lord Coventry's Bedroom/Dressing Room (F8). Alternatively, it could have supplied the closet in F16, which would have been fitted up for the 6th Earl's new wife Barbara, whom he had married in 1763.

At the time of the 9th Earl's death, a survey of wells was undertaken, which found there to be a well in Laundry Green (to the east of the Red Wing) located within the tank linked to the Chapman pump installed in 1764. This supplied the wash-house sink, the sink in the Kitchen, the Brushing Room, the W.C.s in the Red Wing and garden and also the tank in the Scullery. There was also a well within the Boot Room (B8) in the basement, which may have been the main supply for the house by this time, and which supplied a tank in the attic, another well in the stable yard and others elsewhere. The well inside the house was reported to be 3ft x 3ft and 12'6" deep with 4' 6" standing water; the well in the stable yard was 17' 6" deep with 9' 6" standing water. There appear to have been 9 tanks in total that supplied water to the house and its ancillary buildings, and this can have been barely adequate.

Gas

In the late 19th century, Croome generated its own gas. The gasometer was situated in the service yard to the north of the 9th Earl's riding school and appears on the 1884 and 1905 OS maps.



Detail from the 1905 OS map showing the 9th Earl's gasometer

The approach drive to the rear of the service yards was called Gas Lane. In the 1930s the redundant gas yard was turned into a piggery. Nothing of the gasometer and related retort building has been found (the site is on developed land now privately-owned). No evidence of the gas supply or fixtures survive in the Court, although some of the fixtures can be seen in mid-20th century photographs of the Long Gallery.

An interesting comment made in a letter to the Consulting Engineers Henry Lea & Son of Birmingham (of Cragside electricity fame) dated the 25th April 1928 makes reference to the gas supply to Croome Court being cut off in May 1928, provided that Lady Coventry agreed to the use of oil lamps until the new electricity supply became operational, hopefully in July. This could indicate that the on-site gas works became redundant during 1928³⁹¹.

Electricity

The 9th Earl resisted the need for electricity in the Court up until 1928, and it was finally installed under the direction of his fourth son Sir Reginald by the Croome Estate Trust. The company involved was Henry Lea & Son of Shrewsbury, who had been responsible for the early supply at Cragside. Documents in the CET archive show that they were commissioned, firstly, to submit a report on the provision of a new heating & electrical system within the property, and secondly, to prepare a Specification and Bills of Quantities to enable estimates to be obtained from firms for the installation of these Works. The iron-clad switch gear by Henry Lea & Son and the electrical conduits, junction boxes and fuse boxes relating to this period survive in the basement (see B4).

The electrical services have had many upgrades since the original installation in 1928 and upgrade in 1930. The original supply was locally generated but this was subsequently replaced by an overhead mains supply. The old metering position is remembered by Leonard Edwards, son of the Caretaker, as being beneath the Long Gallery, but this was abandoned when a new mains supply was brought in underground from the east side of the park which entered the house beneath the south portico (B20). This wall-mounted intake position is still in place.

³⁹¹ Observation made by Frank Ferris when consulting the CET archive (see his full report in Appendix 20).



Redundant electricity intake in B20 (*Author*)



The surviving 1930s switchgear in B4 (*Malcom James*)

All of these items have historical interest. Of particular interest is the old pattern cabling, colour coded red & black wiring with circumferential earth stranding. This pre-dates the current regulations requiring separate earth wiring and cross bonding.

This 1930s installation, in galvanised, steel conduit, would probably have been principally for lighting, and for some domestic appliances concerned with food preparation and storage (larder, 'fridge etc.), laundry work and pumping water. There would be very few power sockets, though there are a few run in conduit,

now converted to modern, square pin sockets (from the original round pin 3A, 5A and 15A types). One example is sited on the west staircase.

Heating

Originally the house was heated by open fires, and the majority of the main rooms still retain their original open fireplaces. Some of the fireplace openings were reduced in size during the 9th Earl's time, in an effort to increase efficiency and warmth by burning coal instead of wood, as the introduced decorative tiled surrounds are indicative of the Victorian period.

The original 1930s heating system within the house has been removed and only the cut ends of pipework through walls remain to be seen.

To the SE of the Red Wing is a now-defunct and flooded underground boiler room reached by steps.



Underground mid-20th century boiler room SE of Red Wing (*David Fathers*)



Steps leading to underground boiler room (*David Fathers*)

When Croome Court was bought by the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham in 1948 for use as a boys' school it became necessary for the engineering services to be upgraded to suit this new standard and density of occupation. The plant room area needed to be enlarged and modified, to accommodate the increased number of boilers and its associated equipment, necessary to operate the much larger heating system. It is also most likely that at the same time the basement entry steps were re-built in their present position. Within this subterranean boiler room are three defunct oil boilers. Two would have been used for heating and domestic hot water. The third is fitted with a top mounted steam-raising vessel. Steam must have been required to operate the Laundry and possibly cooking equipment in the adjacent building.

The heating system now installed is of late 20th century design. It is a sealed pattern LPHW pumped system comprising fan assisted modular boilers, with steel panel radiators and fan convectors fitted in most rooms at all floor levels. The mixture of radiators and fan convectors requires particular thermostatic controls, which no longer exist. Some fan convectors have had their electrical supply physically cut for safety reasons. There is no zoning, other than by floor and the central control system is extremely basic. Of the four boilers only two are operative, none of the pipe-work in the boiler room (B15) is insulated and some of the safety devices are suspect.

Sewage and drains

Sewage problems have dogged Croome for most of its history. This is understandable given its topography: from the beginning, the site was described as a 'morass'. The waterlogged site of the house had meant that drains and their perpetual improvement and maintenance was a major concern for Brown and the 6th Earl, and why the former's skill with hydraulic engineering was so critical.

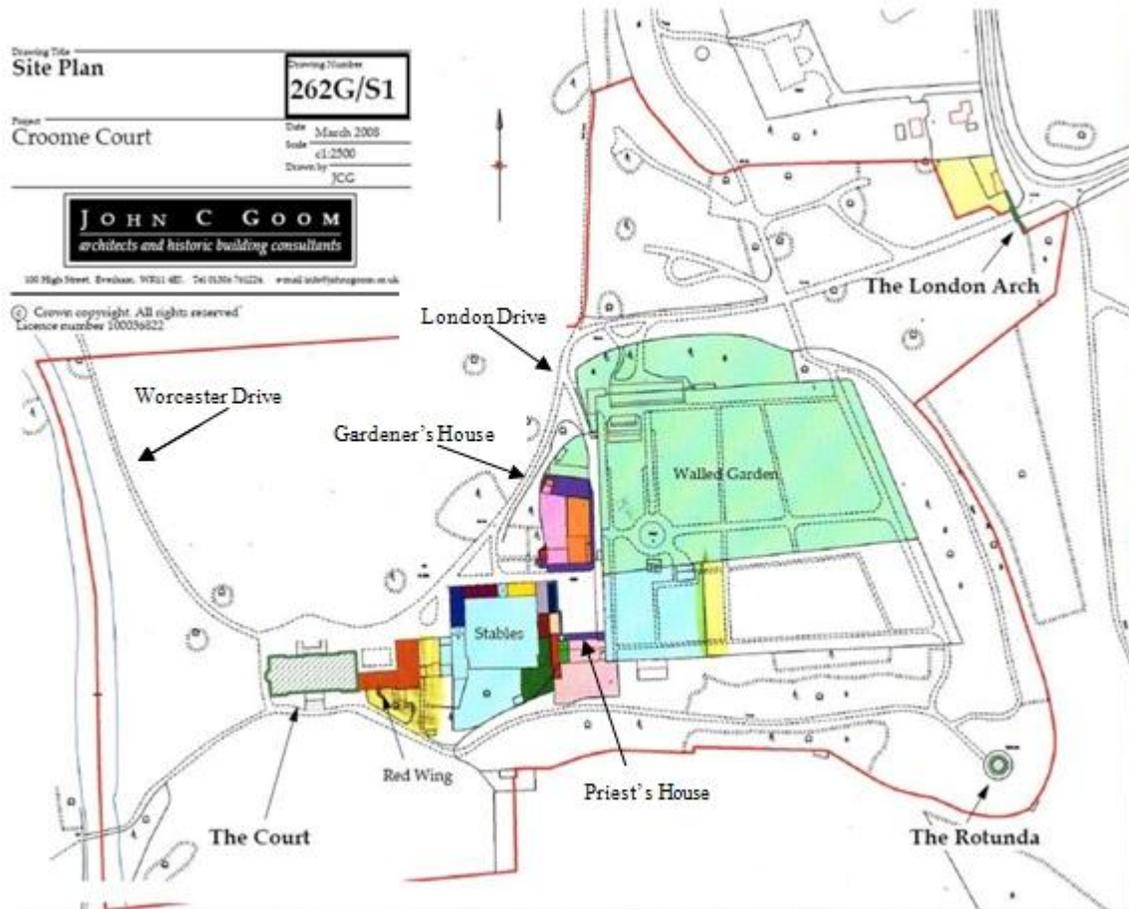
Much work was carried out in 1930-32 after the death of the 9th Earl, as the Court was deemed un-fit for habitation: all the Court's sewage drained into the artificial river. A Drainage Report was carried out in July 1930, which found the drainage system to be inadequate and described it as "primitive", with the sewage reaching the lake via two large brick culverts. New filter beds were created south-east of the house which reduced but never completely eliminated the problem.

Drains, water and sewage also dogged the occupancy of the Roman Catholic boys' school. The purchase of the Court by the Catholic Archdiocese was dependent on suitable water supply and sewage, and in February 1949 they wrote to the Croome Court Trustees that they "would need suitable water supply from a public water service and a way-leave agreement regarding sewage disposal".³⁹²

³⁹² *Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham's archives (BSC/H5)*

Local context

Croome Court's immediate setting and the proximity of and relationship with its various service and ancillary buildings are shown on the site map below³⁹³.



Site diagram of Croome Court and its ancillary buildings and service areas, 2008 (*John Goom*)

The Court is intentionally clearly visible from the park on three sides: north, west and south, with its service buildings grouped to the east. The L-shaped Red [service] Wing is attached to the east elevation of the Court and, although contemporary, is of brick construction to distinguish it from the stone façade of the Court, the most important building on the site.

To the east of the Red Wing is an open yard formerly occupied by the Laundry Green and which up until the late 20th century had a building at its southern end linking the Red Wing to the Stableblock. This can be seen on the 1905 OS map. The school adapted this as a toilet block. The yard is entered on the north side through rusticated pillars with

³⁹³ Croome's service buildings, Office & Policies and Pleasure Grounds are dealt with separately in related Conservation Management Plans which form a suite of documents with the present Plan.

stone ball finials.³⁹⁴ To the east of this is the stableblock, converted at the end of the 20th century into eleven separate apartments and now known as Dunstall Court. The stableyard is enclosed on three sides, the south side being open to the former deer park.

To the east of the Stableblock, its back wall forms another courtyard with the Priest's House on the southern side and a former barn, which was in turn the 9th Earl's riding school, the School's chapel and the Hare Krishnas' temple, all now converted into modern dwellings. The eastern wall of this yard had lean-to stables along its length – their outline and the remains of whitewash on the back walls can still be seen. This yard is approached from the north from the London Drive via Gas Lane, so named because it runs alongside the former location of the 9th Earl's gas-generating building and retort house, which no longer survive. Their location can be seen on the 1905 OS map.

Immediately to the east again, the ground starts to rise as one enters the enormous south-west sloping Walled Garden which is divided into a third (under NT control) and two-thirds (privately-owned) by a hot wall, now derelict. In the far NW corner of this is the Gardener's House, now in private ownership, and a number of glasshouses that have been restored and some converted into residential use. A range of back sheds and bothies line the western end of the north wall of the garden. The London Drive curves upwards behind this wall to Adam's London Arch with adjoining London Lodge, which has recently been acquired by the NT and is let.

In 1940 the site for RAF Defford was requisitioned from the Croome Estate Trust and the airfield was built on part of Croome Park to the east of the Walled Garden, with runways on Defford Common. RAF Defford became the main airfield in Britain for the development of airborne radar during and after World War II. The airfield closed in 1957 when it was decided that the runways were too short for modern jet bombers and the unit transferred to nearby RAF Pershore. However, a variety of ground-based radar experiments continued on part of the airfield site up to the present day. The work now involves not radar but radiotelescope and satellite communication experiments and activities.

To the west the Court is approached by the Worcester Drive via Adam & Wyatt's Punchbowl Gates, whose route is now truncated by the M5 motorway, which lies between the western parkland and the middle raised ground of the Panorama Tower with the Malvern Hills beyond. The Worcester Drive emerges onto the Upton-upon-Severn road at a lodge house designed by James Wyatt, now privately owned.

The Court is surrounded on three sides (north, west and south) by Capability Brown's Park with its follies and eye-catchers by Brown and Adam (Ice-House, Rotunda, Park Seat, Island Pavilion, Dry-Arch Bridge, Temple Greenhouse, Church) and extends to some 760 acres today. Every element was carefully considered and integrated: house and church, garden buildings and statues, river and lake, parkland and pleasure grounds, trees and shrubs, all set against the stunning backdrop of the Malverns and linked via a network of meandering paths and carriage drives where the eye was drawn to artfully positioned (or existing) features. The artificial river runs north-south immediately to the west of the Court and was crossed at this point by the Chinese Bridge

³⁹⁴ Catherine Gordon points out that the Laundry appears to have been quite a prominent and attractive little building, visible through the gates and built as such to complement and enhance the approach to the Dairy.

(no longer extant), terminating in a circular lake to the north west by Sabrina's Grotto. To the north of the Court, the Church is reached through the Church Shrubbery along a ridge which runs further north as the Wilderness. This in turn led to the now overgrown and demolished Arboretum and Flower Garden (the iron bridge providing access to these was destroyed in the 1960s by M5 construction traffic). Going south on the same ridge is Brown's Rotunda.

Beyond the parkland on elevated ground is the ring of outer eye-catchers by Adam and Wyatt (Pirton Castle, Dunstall Castle and the Panorama Tower) that seem to nurture the Court in a large shallow bowl. Thus the Court, with its modified service ranges to the east, sits at the heart of this designed landscape, which in turn is surrounded by its now much-reduced estate: nearly 8000 acres as opposed to its historic extent of over 15,000 acres. The surrounding Worcestershire landscape provides even further-flung eye-catchers, with Wyatt's Broadway Tower to the extreme east and the Malvern Hills on the western skyline.

Croome's estate village, High Green, is situated about half-a-mile to the north-west and was moved there in the mid-18th century by the 6th Earl when he removed the medieval church and scattered buildings around the earlier house. Additional houses were built there by the 9th Earl. As with so many other great, traditional country estates, Croome Court sits at the geographic and metaphoric centre of its rural locality, with connecting ties and links radiating in and out from it just like the sightlines. Some of these ties might be less obvious and keenly-felt today than historically, but among the many people who continue to live and work on the estate the sense of identity remains. Estate cottages and farmsteads throughout the outlying countryside still mark the extent of the family's former domain. To this day, the Coventry/Croome name recurs among village names, inscriptions in local churches, churchyards, inn signs and plaques in schools and almshouses of the locality.



Satellite view showing Croome Court's rural context but with the M5 motorway to the west. High Green estate village is top left. Note the encircling nature of the Park around the Court. (NT)

Wider heritage context

The heritage of England's historic houses was seriously depleted in the mid-20th century when, largely due to changing social structures and crippling death duties following two world wars, many were destroyed completely, adapted beyond recognition or compromised. In the 1950s, the peak period of destruction, great houses were disappearing at the rate of about two a week. Some were saved by organisations such as English Heritage and the National Trust,³⁹⁵ some were saved by far-seeing, altruistic individuals who gave them to the nation, some turned themselves into tourist attractions, but for many hundreds of country houses, there was no salvation. They were regarded as white elephants and monuments of obsolescence and their sad fate was decline and eventual demolition without compunction.

Exactly how many great houses went altogether is unknown. In 1974, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London staged a celebrated exhibition, "*The Destruction of the Country House*", in which it surveyed the enormous loss of stately homes in the previous century. This was a watershed moment in perceptions and changing values, as it raised the profile of this destruction of heritage and led to the formation of SAVE in 1975, an organisation which campaigns for threatened historic buildings. The exhibition estimated that 1,116 great houses had been lost, but further research raised that figure to 1,600 even before the exhibition was over, and the figure is now generally put at about 2,000,

³⁹⁵ The National Trust rescued some two hundred houses over the course of the 20th century.

a scale of destruction that is not replicated anywhere else in Europe, even in wartime. This means that those that survive take on a greater significance.

In his book *England's Lost Houses*, with poignant images from the archives of Country Life, Giles Worsley charts the inexorable march of country house destruction throughout the decades of the mid- 20th century. He summarises the decades thus:

<p>1900-1929 The Gathering Storm</p>	<p>Fire, the ancient enemy of the country house, cast a dark pall over the first three decades of the 20th century. But it was not just from natural forces that the country house was under threat. Ruthless rationalisation was at work. Great landowners with a clutch of country houses were putting supernumerary estates on the market and, as there were few buyers, all too many were being broken up and the houses demolished. The country house was not yet in crisis, but the steady toll of important houses was an ominous portent.</p>
<p>1930-1939 Crumbling Resolution</p>	<p>If the 1920s had seen a wave of ruthless rationalisation of excess houses, and of families retreating from houses whose settings had been compromised by industrialisation, the 1930s saw a more insidious challenge as long-established families sold up and abandoned their seats. Squeezed by falling rents, rising taxes and a collapsing stock market, landowners found that the ample cash that had supported houses in the 19th century was proving increasingly scarce. Some just cut and run, preferring the easy life of the Riviera to the responsibilities of landownership. But so far, the series of sales and demolitions, though a steady stream, could not be described as a flood.</p>
<p>1940-1949 The Wartime Years</p>	<p>The country house was transformed by the Second World War. Across Britain houses were requisitioned and turned into repositories for art (if they were lucky) and barracks for soldiers (if they were not), not to mention secret training depots. There was neither time nor resources to knock country houses down. Every one was needed. No doubt many houses demolished in the 1950s would have gone a decade earlier but for this delay. But numerous country houses were in a critical state and the floodgates were soon to open.</p>
<p>1950-1959 The Country House in Crisis</p>	<p>No one could deny that the 1950s were years of crisis for the country house. At least 48 houses, nearly one a week, were demolished in 1955 alone. The pent-up pressure of the wartime years, the dislocation and damage caused by requisitioning and the heavy taxation of the socialist Government meant that many owners despaired of a future in which country houses seemed irrelevant. Some owners sought an arrangement with the National Trust, others found an institutional use for their houses, but all too many were handed over to the housebreakers. It really did look as if the</p>

	country house had had its day.
1960-1969 The Storm Passes	The demolition of country houses continued steadily throughout the first half of the 1960s, although without the frenzy of the previous decade. In many cases, demolition was the long-drawn-out solution to deep-rooted problems which went back at least to the Second World War and often for decades before that. Many of the houses had been empty and decaying for years despite the best efforts to find new uses. But what is surprising today is how important houses in good repair could be demolished with little concern. All that changed, however, with the passing of the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act, which forced owners to seek permission to demolish houses, instead of simply notifying the authorities.
1970-2000 The End of the Crisis	The tragic history of the country house in the 20 th century was forced at last into the public consciousness by the influential <i>Destruction of the Country House</i> exhibition at the V&A Museum in 1974. But by then the crisis was effectively already over. Since then, the battle has focused on houses that have been abandoned for many years, particularly those where speculators were hoping to profit by letting houses they owned fall into decay so that they could be pulled down. Today the main risk to country houses is once again fire, for it is now legally impossible to demolish a country house of any significance.

Against this tragic national backdrop, Croome Court's survival becomes even more significant and precious and it is both sobering and heartening to contemplate its rocky road to survival and miraculous ability to buck the trends described above.

On a more local level, Worcestershire is a moderately-sized county, and it is not a county particularly rich in great historic houses – it does not have the density, nor the monumental scale of the mansions of other counties and certainly does not boast the almost ducal palaces of some. For example:

- **Yorkshire:** Castle Howard, Harewood, Wentworth Castle, Wentworth Woodhouse, Nostell, Temple Newsam, Bramham, Brodsworth, Duncombe, Newby, Scampston...;
- **Derbyshire:** Chatsworth, Kedleston, Calke, Elverstone, Haddon, Hardwick, Melbourne, Sudbury...;
- **Norfolk:** Blickling, Felbrigg, Houghton, Holkham, Hunstanton, Sandringham...;
- **Oxfordshire:** Kirtlington, Wootton, Blenheim, Ditchley, Heythrop, Eynsham, Cornbury...;

- **Buckinghamshire:** Stowe, Cliveden, Hartwell, Claydon...
(At one point Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire were competing with each other as to who could build the biggest house).

Worcestershire's quieter, more modest nature in terms of great houses is perhaps due to it not really having had a strongly entrenched landowning family of aristocrats and that it was historically really a bishop's county. The Bishop of Worcester was easily the biggest landowner in the county, certainly in Elizabethan times, ruling like a feudal lord from at least three palaces. It was not until the 17th and 18th centuries that the Earls of Coventry at Croome rose to foremost country ranking.³⁹⁶

John Betjeman and James Lees-Milne, the architectural historian who made a crucial contribution to the work of the National Trust, in particular its country house scheme, and who had close connections with Worcestershire, were rather unkind in their regard of Worcestershire's architectural heritage: "*John Betjeman called Worcestershire the dimmest of all the English counties. Dimness used to be its most endearing quality. Apart from the Malverns on the western and the Cotswolds on the eastern periphery (each properly belonging to Herefordshire and Gloucestershire respectively) it had little to offer the tripper.... Worcestershire was never rich in great country houses. To that category belong Croome Court (the Coventrys), Westwood Park (the Pakingtons), Hagley Hall (the Lytteltons) and Madresfield Court (the Lygons)*".³⁹⁷

Croome Court is indeed one of Worcestershire's few Grade I listed major houses and is one of even fewer that remain uncompromised. It is one that survived by the skin of its teeth, finding alternative use in the nick of time to avoid demolition and managing to re-invent itself, carving out a new significance for its 20th century occupants and uses. The only other really major player is Hagley, Croome's almost twin sister. These two houses form a special pair in terms of their architectural type, architect, county and craftsmen, and are two of the few houses in Worcestershire in general to have survived with minimal alteration. Both, too, are relatively rare examples of Sanderson Miller's work.

Other Worcestershire historic houses that do survive are not necessarily of Croome's key era, the mid-18th century, or scale, nor do they survive in such an unaltered, complete way. There were a few big, important houses that have not survived, or have been substantially altered: Witley Court is an obvious example. Harvington and Huddington are comparatively modest but important examples of their type and date as reflected in their Grade I status. Some of the 19th century houses, such as Chateau Impney, are also fairly unusual architecturally. It is interesting to ponder that the country houses in Worcestershire are notable not for their number, scale or ostentation but more because they were quite experimental and quirky.

The comparison below may appear disingenuous as Croome Court of course encapsulates earlier houses within its core, but it survives structurally and aesthetically unaltered from its key mid-18th century form:

³⁹⁶ Timothy Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, pp.10-12

³⁹⁷ James Lees-Milne, *People & Places*, 1992

Major Worcestershire historic houses	Date	Survives: unaltered or compromised
Harvington Hall, Grade I	C14th	Survives. Substantially re-modelled late C16/ early C17, partly demolished c1701 with some remodelling, restored 1930.
Kyre Park, Grade II	C14th & 1600	Remodelled mid C18th; restored and extended c1880 with further major alterations circa 1940. Compromised: care home/apartments.
Hartlebury Castle, Grade I	C15th	Survives but extended late C17th & late C18th & re-modelled in 1960s.
Huddington Court, Grade I	C16th	Survives.
Madresfield, Grade I	C16th	Survives. Extensively restored, re-built & extended in C19th.
Rous Lench, Grade II*	Late C16th	Survives. Extensively re-modelled mid-C19th.
Westwood House, Grade I	c.1600	Altered in C19th & C20th. Survives but compromised – now flats.
Hanbury Hall, Grade I	1701	Survives. Early & Mid C19th alterations.
Witley Court, Grade I	C17th core	Remodelled C19th. Now a ruin (fire)
Ombersley Court, Grade I	Early C18th	Survives, but altered C19th & C20th.
Croome Court, Grade I	Mid C18th	Survives unaltered
Hagley Hall, Grade I	Mid C18th	Survives unaltered
Overbury Court, Grade II*	Mid C18th	Minor alterations in 1887, major alterations 1897-1900, further alterations in 1909 and 1911 and in 1959.
Hindlip Hall, Grade II*	Early C19th	Late C19th and mid-C20th alterations and additions. Survives but compromised. Now police headquarters.
Hewell Grange, Grade II*	1880	Survives. Now Youth Custody Centre.
Chateau Impney, Grade II*	Late C19th	Late C20th alterations. Survives but compromised – now hotel.

This comparison highlights Croome Court's architectural and historical importance as a major mansion to Worcestershire's heritage, quite apart from its national significance as the first complete independent commission to be undertaken by Brown with his first English landscape design and with three of Adam's first decorative interiors. It also underlines the point that Worcestershire has some very interesting pre-18th century houses, but compared with other counties such as Yorkshire or Gloucestershire it has a paucity of fine, substantial Georgian houses³⁹⁸.

In July 1995, James Lees-Milne was asked to comment on the importance of Croome. His response was emphatic: *"I have always considered Croome one of the great Midlands country houses and it can be called No. 1 of Worcestershire's ancestral seats"*.

In terms of direct comparisons with Croome Court in date and style, the most similar houses are **Lydiard House** (1743-9) in Wiltshire and **Hagley Hall** (1754-60) in

³⁹⁸ Worcestershire towns such as Bewdley and Pershore do have fine Georgian town houses.

Worcestershire, both of which encapsulate the Palladian formula inherited from Wilton, Houghton and Holkham in a more compact form.



Lydiard House, Wiltshire (*Google images*)



Hagley Hall (*Google images*)

Lydiard, the earlier of the three, and Croome were both created from earlier houses, whereas Hagley was built from scratch. Lydiard House was the home of the Bolingbroke family who were, interestingly, distant relatives of the 6th Earl's second wife, Barbara St John. Its architect is uncertain but Richard Morris is a possible candidate. The elegant symmetry of its entrance front with its central pediment and corner pavilions recalls Croome's north front, but it lacks the imposing porticos of Croome and Hagley and the asymmetry of its early layout remains apparent within.

Croome and Hagley are more closely connected, not just geographically but in their links with Sanderson Miller. It was probably Miller who sketched out the basic scheme for Croome, grafting the Houghton model of wings and a portico onto the 17th century house in accordance with the Earl's aspirations. The similarity with Hagley may imply that Miller's initial contribution to the design of Croome helped him to develop and finalise the design of Hagley, or he may have just adapted a Palladian-type theme to suit both Lord Coventry and Lord Lyttelton.

There are other parallels between Croome and Hagley. George, 1st Lord Lyttelton (1709-73) was the older man, but both he and the 6th Earl of Coventry embarked on their plans to landscape the grounds of their country seats in the late 1740s. Both were in discussion with Miller at this time, when Miller was also designing his sham castle at Hagley. They both inherited their titles in 1751, the year when they both began work on their new country houses. However, Miller was involved at Croome very early on before Brown took full charge. At Hagley, Lyttelton was considering a Gothic design by Chute

before he turned to Miller to produce the final scheme, perhaps in view of what had been achieved at Croome. Hagley was eventually completed with assistance from Thomas Prowse and John Sanderson, a professional draughtsman. Both Vassalli and Lovell were working at Croome and Hagley around the same time, as perhaps was James "Athenian" Stuart, although his connections with Croome are more tenuous.

Externally the resemblance between Hagley and Croome is unmistakable, although Hagley appears the more substantial and confident design, almost as if Croome was an early sketch. At Houghton, and even more so at Holkham, the hall, staircase and saloon all form an important theatrical progression at the centre of the house. This is true of Croome and Hagley too, although the layout of Hagley with staircases flanking the central axis is more fully developed and unrestrained by earlier fabric. Also at Hagley, the hall is particularly impressive with a huge sculptural chimneypiece and the staircases play a prominent role in the overall composition forming the focus of the public and private circuits within the building. Croome is more modest in scale and the staircases are set further away from the central axis and make no important contribution to the internal layout. Both Hagley and Croome have west gallery wings as occurs at Holkham.

Current management of the heritage

The National Trust and heritage skills

The National Trust is a registered charity and is completely independent of Government. It relies for its income on membership fees, donations and legacies, and money raised from its commercial operations. The National Trust Act of 1907 spelled out very clearly what it stood for: '*To promote the permanent preservation...for the benefit of the nation, of land...and buildings...of historic interest or natural beauty*'. It is now supported by 4 million members and 61,642 volunteers³⁹⁹. As the largest museum body in the UK, the National Trust has extensive, long-standing experience in managing historic properties and balancing the organisation's twin and potentially conflicting aims of conservation and access. Many, indeed most, of its properties are designated as being of national significance, and amongst the wide-ranging types of heritage sites that it is responsible for, the Trust protects and opens to the public over 300 historic houses and gardens.

Like all properties managed by the National Trust, Croome is able to draw on and benefit from this body of knowledge and expertise at national, regional and local levels. Croome Court, as a house recently opened to the public, has the added advantage of being at the heart of Croome Landscape Park, which has been welcoming visitors since 1996 (its restoration made possible by a previous HLF grant) and the property team therefore already has much practical experience.

However, whilst some of the challenges relating to managing and opening an open-space property and those of a built property are similar, many are new and different, and the staff infrastructure has had to grow and adapt to the needs of administering and opening the Court since September 2009. This is an on-going process and will need to take into account the demands of the *Croome Redefined* project with its evolving

³⁹⁹ Membership figure as at October 2011. Volunteer figure from Volunteering Team March 2012, intranet Facts & Figures.

presentational themes and choreographing these with the Court's conservation and restoration work in a transparent, engaging way, as well as the Court's increasing visitor numbers.⁴⁰⁰

How the site is managed today and resources available

The **present staffing structure** for Croome is split into clear departments, all reporting to the **Property Manager**, who is assisted by the **Property Management Assistant**. *(Please see the organigramme on the following page)*. The staff's heritage skills are appropriate to their roles and areas of responsibility. Their levels of competence, areas for development and any extra training required are discussed and addressed throughout the year as part of the National Trust's Performance Leadership Process (PLPs) during which individual annual objectives are set.

Visitor Services are managed by the **House and Visitor Services Manager (HVSM)**. This key role is responsible for the visitor welcome, interpretation and overall visitor experience. Reporting to this role is the **Visitor Reception Team Leader** to whom the **Visitor Reception Assistants** report, (responsible for managing the visitor reception and providing an informed welcome), and the **Visitor Services Assistant** (responsible for the events and activities that bring the Court and parkland to life including the different trails, events, music programme and out-of-hours tours and talks). Also reporting to the HVSM are two Visitor Experience Trainees on year-long placements. A **Volunteering Co-ordinator** also reports to the HVSM and is responsible for the day-to-day management of Croome's 253 volunteers.

This team is collectively responsible for ensuring an enjoyable, memorable and engaging visitor experience, visitor consultation, community liaison and for recruiting and supporting the growing team of volunteers, enabling the property to engage and consult with a wide range of audiences and to push the boundaries of what the visitor experience might feel like.

The recently introduced post of **House Conservation & Engagement Officer** was created to ensure and maximize the visitor experience within the Court in relation to conservation, and to help choreograph visitor interpretation and interaction with conservation work.

The day-to-day maintenance of the Court and Visitor Centre is the responsibility of the **Premises Manager**, who has a general overview of the operations across the property, liaises with any contractors on site, is aware of health & safety, security and compliance issues and opens and closes the Court at the beginning and end of each day. There are two part time **Conservation Housekeeping Assistants** for the Court who report jointly to the **Premises Manager** and the **House Conservation & Engagement Officer**.

The second department that reports to the Property Manager is led by the **Parks and Gardens Manager**. This role has been responsible for the on-going restoration of the parkland in addition to taking on the management of the 30 acres that surround the Court and formed part of the 2007 acquisition by the

⁴⁰⁰ 60,000 visitors over the 2009-10 season, compared to 116,001 during 2010-11.

Croome Heritage Trust. A **Warden** reports to the **Parks and Gardens Manager** and they are supported by a large group of dedicated garden volunteers to maintain and restore the 700 acres of parkland open to the visitors, plus the wider estate.

Conservation and learning advisors are an integral part of the team, including the Project Curator (author of the present CMMP), Park & Garden Curator, Project Conservator, Building Surveyor, Archaeologist, Environmental Practices Advisor, Nature Conservation Advisor, Visitor Experience Officer (author of the Activity Plan), and Learning & Interpretation Officer.

Croome's property team is closely supported by the National Trust's local Consultancy 'hub' at Alcester, Worcestershire, as well as central finance, fundraising, volunteering, marketing and communications staff.

At the **central office** (in Swindon) this includes strategic leads/directors setting the organisation's direction for areas including Visitor Experience, Sustainability, Historic Environment, Museums & Collections and Volunteering & Community Involvement; national experts who provide specific support in areas such as Archaeology, Building Surveying, Conservation & Environmental Practices; and teams leading on the development of or with specific expertise in Fundraising (specialising in legacies, trusts & foundations and major donors), Insight (providing data analysis and research for regions and properties), Volunteering (providing resources and best practice guidance), Marketing & Communication (providing support with internal and external communication, press, media and digital communication) and Accessibility (providing support with access audits, guidance and information on equality and diversity).

The **local Consultancy 'hub'** at Alcester provides day to day support for core work and projects at properties in Birmingham and the Black Country, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. Croome's property team can draw on a range of Consultants covering all aspects of Conservation, Marketing and Supporter Development. Key roles supporting the Croome Redefined project are Building Surveyor, Lead Building Surveyor for the Midlands, Visitor Experience Consultant, Volunteering & Community Involvement Consultant, Curator and Conservator. While much of the support will come from the Midland's arm of the Consultancy the National Trust's new Consultancy is a national resource and properties are therefore able to tap into expertise across the country when needed.

A key component of the property team is the growing pool of some 250 **volunteers**, all of whom are from the local community and who provide visitor welcome, engagement, interpretation and sheer manpower in a variety of ways. Regular monthly updates, talks and Q&A sessions are held for volunteers to ensure that they have the latest information on the heritage of the Court and any developments in conservation and interpretation. Croome's public-facing volunteers were and are specifically recruited to engage with Croome's visitors in the visitors' consistently preferred method of interpretation: person to person. They have undergone the longest, most rigorous and most varied induction and training programme of any NT property as, right from the start, it was intended to make Croome 'different' and this includes the method in which we recruit, select and train our volunteers.

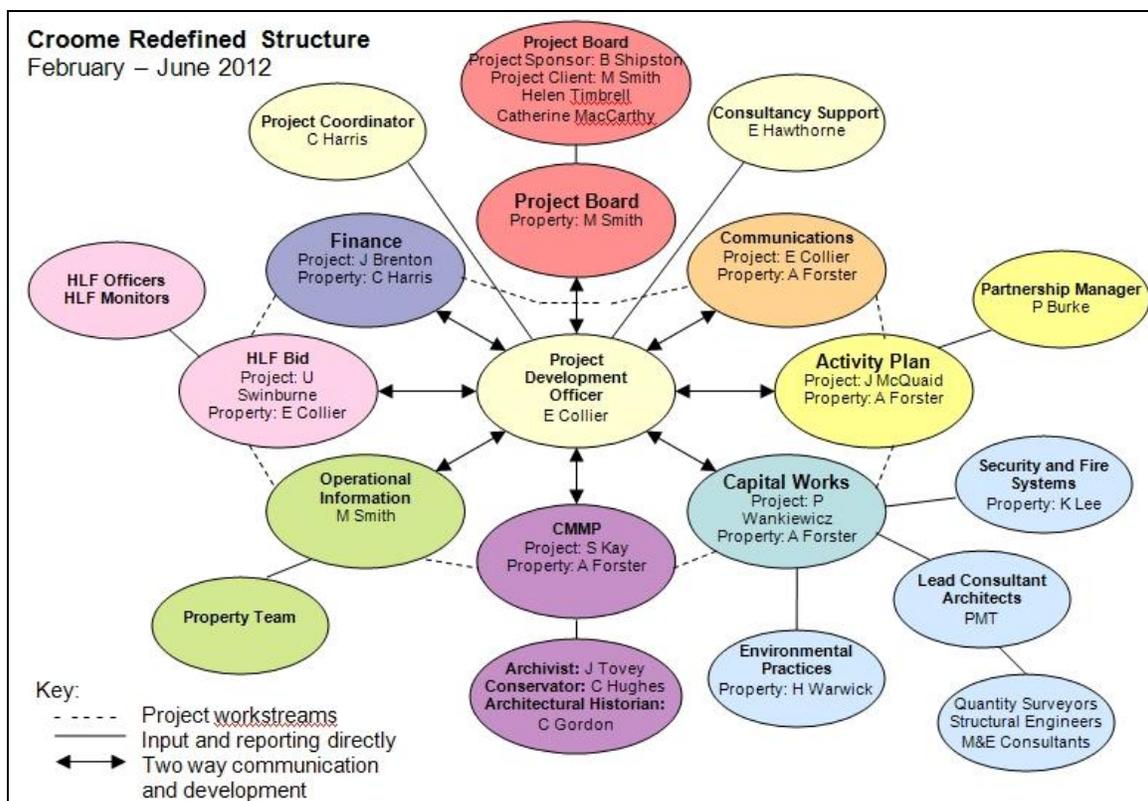
The Croome Heritage Trust and **The Friends of Croome** are regularly involved and updated, and are, or have been, represented on the Project Board as well as on brain-storming groups focusing on the vision for the Court. Croome is the first

National Trust property where volunteers have also formed part of the project team.

The property team also makes use of ‘critical friends’ as sounding boards – these consist of internal and external colleagues who may or may not be familiar with the National Trust or with Croome, professionals from other heritage organisations, outreach and educational bodies in order to test our ideas and our thinking, to bring other perspectives and ‘fresh eyes’ to the discussions and to challenge us that we are pushing the boundaries sufficiently. We have run workshops, brainstorming sessions and ‘Creative Thinking Days’ and the outcomes of these have all contributed to the refinement of our interpretational themes and our approach and to the present Conservation Management Plan and the Activity Plan.

The Croome Redefined Project management structure

A specific management structure was set up for the **development of the Croome Redefined project** and to over-see the preparation of the HLF 2nd round application up until June 2012. (See diagram below):



The **Project Board** deals with strategic decision-making and acts as a champion and sounding board for the project. It comprises:

- Project Sponsor & Chair – Ben Shipston (Assistant Director of Operations)
- Client - Michael Smith (Property Manager)

- Overview of Conservation - Catherine MacCarthy (Conservation Services Manager for the Midlands)
- Overview of volunteer & community involvement - Helen Timbrell (Volunteering and Community Involvement Director)
- Two Volunteer representatives

The **Project Team** comprises:

- Project Development Officer – Ellie Collier
- Project Ambassador - Michael Smith
- Senior Building Surveyor – Paul Wankiewicz
- Visitor Experience Officer – James McQuaid
- Project Curator - Sarah Kay
- Central Grants Officer – Ulrika Swinburne
- Partnership & Volunteering Development Manager - Patrick Burke
- Project Co-ordinator – Caroline Harris
- Finance Business Partner – Jacque Brenton

Members of the Project Team lead **4 clear work-streams**:

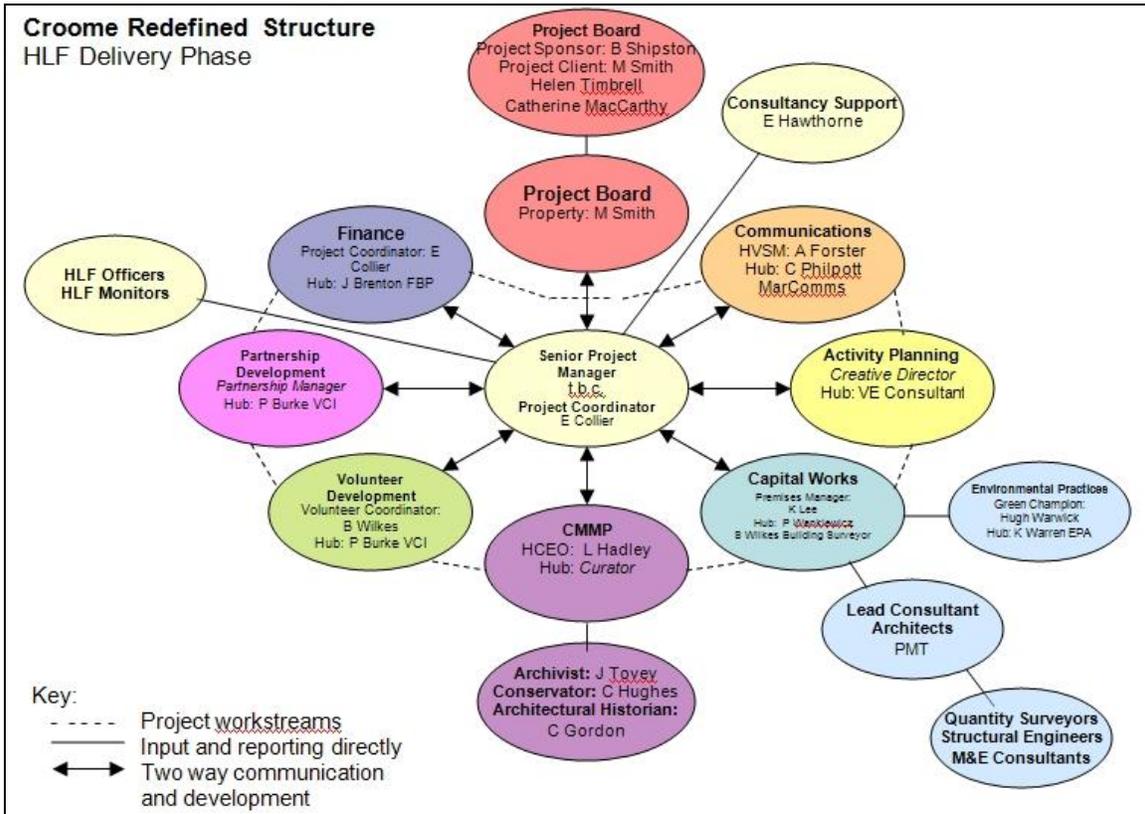
- **Capital Works**, led by the Senior Building Surveyor – Paul Wankiewicz
- **Conservation Management Plan**, led by the Project Curator - Sarah Kay
- **Activity Plan and Property focus beyond 2013**, led by the Visitor Experience Officer – James McQuaid
- **Financial Plan**, led by the Finance Business Partner - Jacque Brenton

The **Capital Works programme** will be carried out by the following external consultants who have been appointed via the OJEU tendering process, with a brief to include developing aspects of the project to RIBA stages C & D, submit Planning and Listed Building Applications, Heritage Impact Assessment, Assessment of Environmental Impacts and Site Waste Management Plan, etc.,

- Conservation Architect: **Purcell, Miller, Tritton**
- Structural Engineer: **Mann Williams**
- Mechanical & Electrical Engineer: **Martin Thomas Associates**
- Quantity Surveyor: **Cyril Sweett**
- CDM Co-Ordinator: **Robinson, Low, Francis**

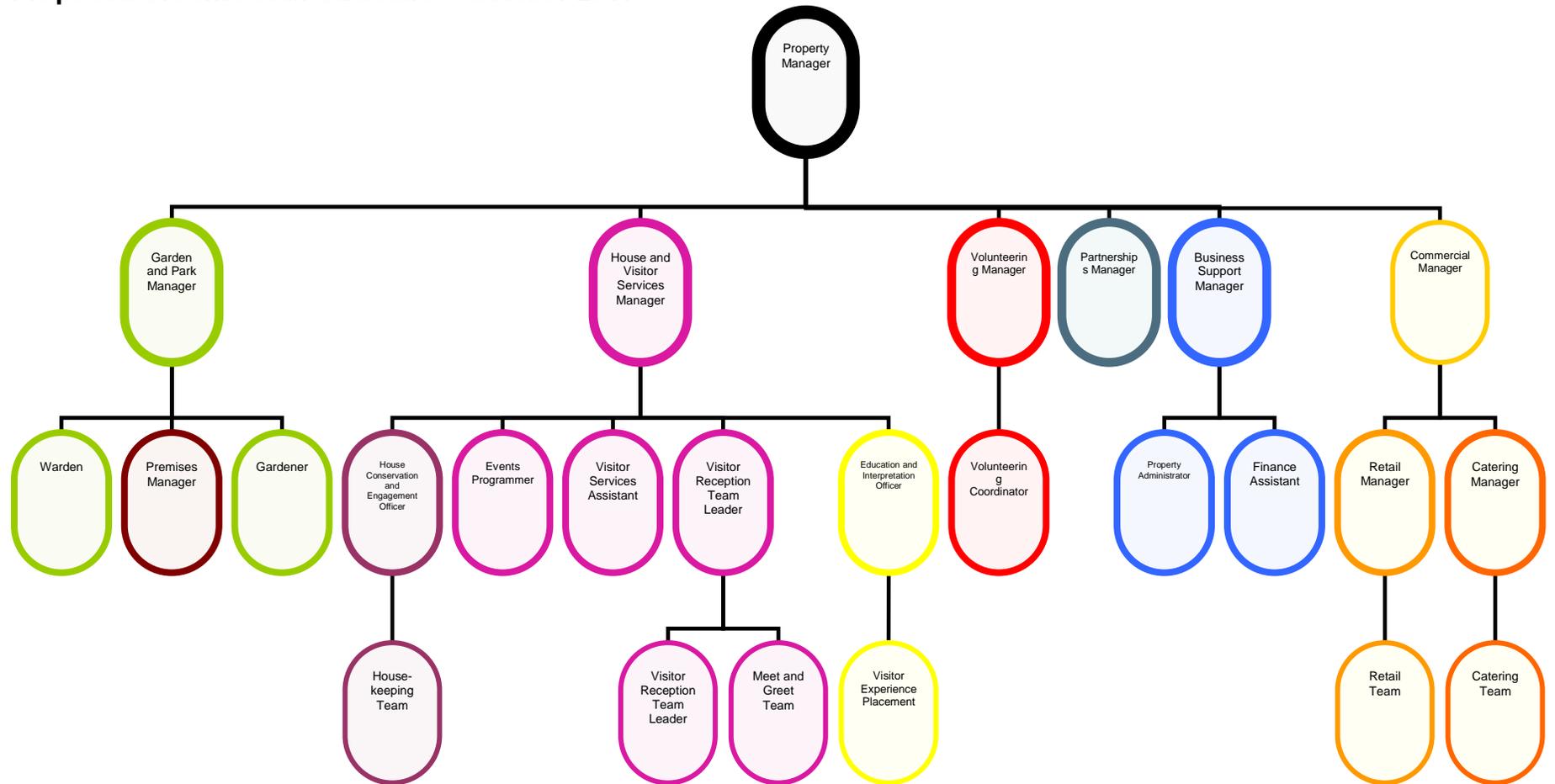
The above structure will be modified after submission in order to ensure the **delivery of the project**. (See diagram below). The work streams for the delivery phase are based on the work that has taken place during the development phase of the project. All will have volunteer representation. They will be reviewed on a regular basis but are planned to include:

- Activity Plan & Partnership Development
- Volunteer Development
- Capital Works & Environmental Practices
- Conservation & Curatorial
- Finance & Fundraising
- Communications & Marketing



Croome's **operational staff structure** will be modified for the delivery phase of the Croome Redefined project. Below is an organigramme showing the projected staff structure in 2017:

Proposed Croome Staff Structure – October 2017



Existing policies for management, access and conservation

Croome Court's existing policies, aims and objectives are set out in the **Property Business Plan** and are reviewed and updated by the property team and advisers every year. The current plan was written in 2011 and spans 2012-2015. (See Appendix 34).

In addition to this, **Conservation Performance Indicators** (CPIs) are set out to express the property's aims and objectives for measuring improvement in conservation – these are reviewed by the property team and advisers on an annual basis and progress is assessed and scored as a percentage. This is to ensure that a property is recognised for its conservation achievement rather than merely its financial achievement. There are separate CPIs for the Park as well as the Court.

Other parties on the site

The National Trust property and project team have to take into account the fact that there are private residents on the site within the curtilage of Croome Court. At the time of writing there are fourteen freehold Residential properties located within the stableblock and the former service buildings to the east of the Court, beyond the Red Wing. (Refer to the Registered Title Plan which identifies their exact location in relation to the Court).

These are:

- 1 Dunstall Court (Listed as Units 1-7 Stable Building) Owner of 1 Dunstall Court, the courtyard, communal gardens, garages and Residents' car park)
- 2 Dunstall Court
- 3 Dunstall Court
- 4 Dunstall Court
- 5 Dunstall Court
- 6 Dunstall Court
- 7 Dunstall Court
- 10 Dunstall Court
- 8 The Stables
- 9 The Stables
- Coventry House
- The Coach House
- The Priest House
- The Red Wing

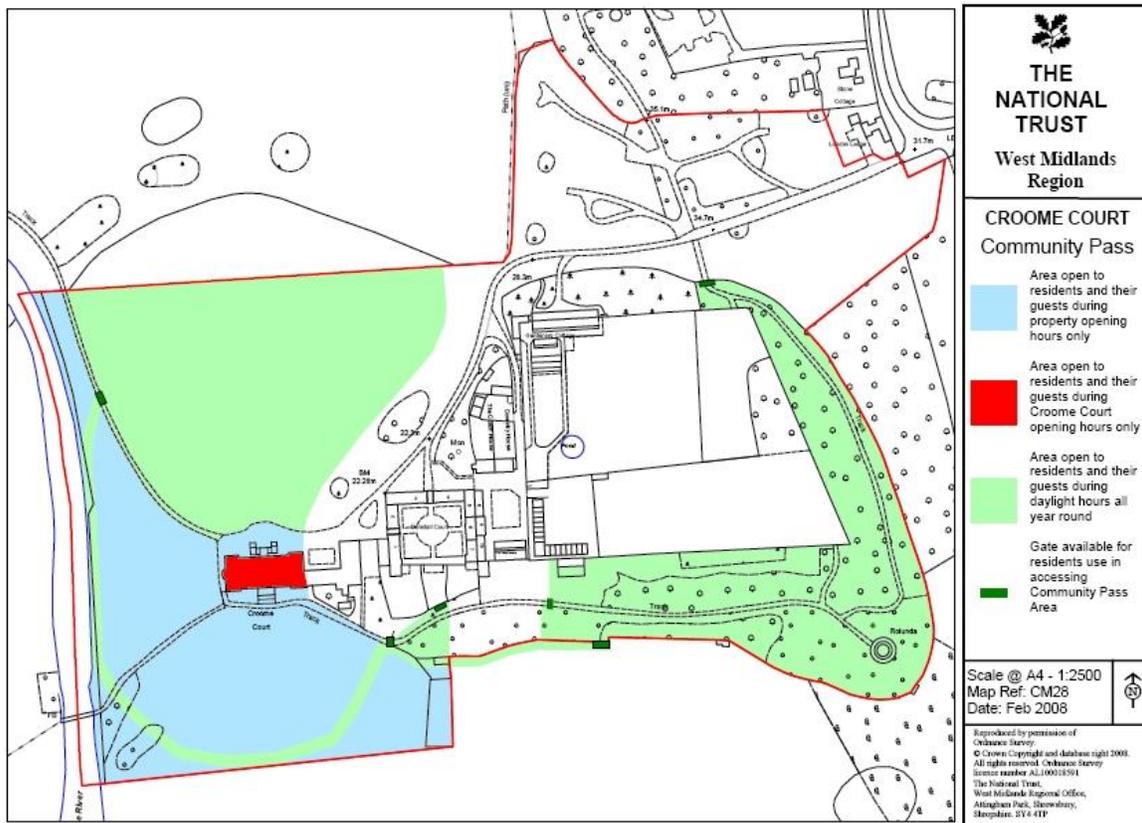
The stableblock and service buildings were converted into accommodation and sold freehold by various property developers during 2000-2004.

The London Lodge is now owned by the NT and tenanted. The Gardener's Cottage is considered a residential property, not Residential, as it does not form part of the amalgamated property covered under the Management Company.

It is extremely important that the quiet enjoyment of all these residents is taken into account, particularly when considering visitor access, parking, signage, events and good relationships with neighbours and stakeholders. Good two-way communication is also vital. In order to ensure this, much work has been done with the Residents over the last

2-3 years to put into place a new Residents' Management Company whose aims are set out in the Articles of Association adopted by special resolution in 2010. These aims are concerned with the management, administration, finance, insurance and maintenance aspects of the properties concerned. The Management Company has 5 Directors, comprising 2 Residential Directors, 2 Croome Heritage Trust Directors and the NT Property Manager, with a formal schedule of meetings and reporting. This represents a new system of communal working relations.

The close proximity between National Trust, private residents and the general public can be a cause of friction and tension but the aim is to find mutually satisfactory approaches to the issues. The effort that has been put into creating this new Management Company is a real strength in the management of this potential risk. In addition, the NT has issued community passes to all Residents providing them with free access to the property, within relevant opening hours and with certain conditions, (see associated Community Pass Plan). Furthermore, one of the residents is a volunteer in the Court and another has participated in workshops focusing on the future presentation of Croome Court to visitors.



Croome Court site map indicating areas of NT and residents' access (NT)

Relationships with Stakeholders

The National Trust continues to have a very positive relationship with the Trustees of the Croome Heritage Trust, their main stakeholder at Croome Court and The Red Wing, and who are, indeed, owners of the buildings, the NT being their tenant. We have been fortunate to have benefitted from tremendous on-going support throughout the long restoration and conservation process at Croome from other partners and stakeholders, including statutory bodies: English Heritage, Malvern Hills District Council, Natural England, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Friends of Croome and various other charitable Trusts, all of whom have contributed towards the common goal of Croome's revival, re-assembly and securing the long-term safety of the property.

It is important to realize that key amongst our stakeholders are our visitors and volunteers: our supporters. Since the initial acquisition of Croome Park in 1996 the NT has sought to share Croome with our supporters as a *complete heritage asset*. The Court is of course a major component in this, the other being the Park. Whether through our wholesale restoration of the landscape, securing leasehold or freehold stewardship, strong opposition to inappropriate private development, or our recent moves to safeguard the future of the Court and the Red Wing, the NT has been bold and innovative in its endeavours. With every passing year more and more supporters are joining us in this great venture. Since 2002-03 annual visitor numbers have grown from 11,000 to 134,065. The latest forecast is that the property as a whole will attract 130,000 visitors and this is projected to grow over the next three years to 160,000.

Since the outset of the NT's involvement with Croome, volunteer numbers have expanded from 23 to 253 and membership of the Friends of Croome group now stands at 423.

SECTION 2 - ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Background

This section has been compiled by drawing together documentary and archival research, physical research into the fabric, statutory designations, published sources and analyses, expert opinion, lay opinion, evaluation via questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups with different user groups, including visitors, stakeholders, staff, volunteers, the local community, neighbours, BME groups, young people, schools, special interest groups as well as those who do not yet visit to understand why not.

It is important to state that, whilst Croome's historic significance is established and largely undisputed, its more recent significances and values are still evolving. These are being explored and re-assessed via discussions, focus groups and feedback with our visitors, stakeholders and the general public. For example, one focus group member commented that they *"very much enjoyed taking part, and although I came to the session with my own ideas, it was good to hear the views of others, and it certainly helped move on my thinking about the issues"*⁴⁰¹. As a result, the way that we regard, value and will present Croome's later, 20th century stories has evolved.

At the same time, the fascination for many people with Croome's recent past, which is in many senses more easy to relate to because it is more immediate, coupled with the National Trust's strategy of 'Going Local', must not be at the expense of the national and international significance of the place, so these varying significances need to be carefully assessed and balanced. We are very conscious that assessing significance can be a subjective exercise: what is perceived to be of value now may not be of as much value in the future; what appears insignificant now may be of inestimable importance to future generations. We are also conscious that our determination in this project to involve people in decisions about their heritage brings with it huge responsibility to inform them about the *issues* surrounding Croome's various significances. As has been pointed out, consultation cannot be an abdication of responsibility to make our own assessment⁴⁰².

Introduction

English Heritage sets out several categories of how a heritage asset can be valued⁴⁰³ and what therefore makes it significant in various ways to various people for various reasons:

- **Evidential value** - the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- **Historical value** - ways in which past people, events and ways of life can be connected through a place to the present and which can be:
 - **Illustrative** (the perception of a place as a link between past and present people, making connections with and providing insights into past communities and their activities through shared experience of a place)

⁴⁰¹ Julian Pallett, Focus Group member & Croome resident, November 2010

⁴⁰² Caroline Wilson, HLF Conservation Mentor, January 2011

⁴⁰³ English Heritage: Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment, April 2008

- **Associative** (association of a place with a notable person, event, development of aspects of cultural heritage or design, etc)
- **Aesthetic value** – the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place
 - **Design value** – the aesthetic qualities generated by the conscious design of a building, structure or landscape as a whole. It embraces qualities of composition, materials, craftsmanship and innovation
- **Communal value** – the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it and for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory
 - **Social value** – perceived as a source of identity, distinctiveness, collective memory of stories and deep attachment
 - **Spiritual value** – can emanate from the beliefs and teachings of an organised religion, past or present perceptions of the spirit of place, and sense of inspiration and wonder.

The following assessment of Croome Court's various significances, past, present and future, will explore how the Court demonstrates degrees of all the above values. In order to rank these significances and allocate a weighting to them that is immediately understandable, they have been identified as having **international, national, local, or incidental significance**.

N.B. For an assessment of the significance of each of the **individual spaces** within the Court, see the Gazetteer (Appendix 1) where the ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) ranking has been adopted:

- A - Exceptional significance
- B - Considerable significance
- C - Some significance
- D - Little significance
- Intrusive

Statutory significance

Ranking: National

Croome Court was listed Grade I in 1952 (LBS number 152259).

Its Monument number is 115995⁴⁰⁴.

Its National Monument Record number is SO 84 SE 19.

The following is its full registered description⁴⁰⁵:

SO 84 SE CROOME D'ABITOT CROOME COURT

Country House 1751-2 by Lancelot (Capability) Brown with advice from Sanderson Miller. Interior work from 1760 by Robert Adam. Built for 6th Earl of Coventry. Limestone ashlar Palladian mansion with principal North and South fronts of 11 bays. Basement and 2 storeys with 3 storey end pavilions. Slate roofs, pyramidal over corner towers and 3 paired axial chimneys, pair linked by arches. 1-3-3-3-1 division with pedimented centre to North and fine projecting Ionic tetrastyle portico to South. Modillion cornice and balustrade to

⁴⁰⁴ www.pastscape.org.uk

⁴⁰⁵ www.heritagegateway.org.uk

flanking wings. Moulded window architraves enriched with flat cornices on ground floor main range, pediments to North front pavilions and Venetian windows to South front pavilions. Roman Doric curved pediment doorcase to North front, flat cornice on consoles over South door. Chamfered quoins to projecting centre and to end pavilions. Fine 2 armed balustraded stair to North door and broad straight flight up to South door flanked by cast stone sphinxes.

INTERIOR partly Brown with plasterwork by G Vassalli, partly Robert Adam with plaster by J Rose Jr. 2 Adam rooms removed to New York and London [V&A]. Spine corridor with stone stair at East end with moulded underside and iron balustrade.

NORTH SIDE: Entrance hall with 4 fluted Doric columns and Palladian moulded doorcases, to East, dining-room with plaster cornice and ceiling, original pelmets, to West, billiard-room with fielded panelling, plaster cornice and rococo fireplace. These rooms, probably decorated c.1758-9, probably by Brown.

SOUTH SIDE: Fine central Saloon with elaborate deep coved ceiling with 3 embellished panels and rich cornice, fine Palladian doorcases and 2 marble Ionic columned fireplaces. Room probably by Brown and Vassalli. To East former tapestry room now dismantled; ceiling a copy of original by R Adam and J Rose. Beyond, former library by R Adam, largely dismantled; marble fireplace. To West, drawing-room with shallow rococo-style plaster and marble fireplace.

At WEST END, Gallery by R Adam 1764, with half-hexagonal bay to garden, elaborate octagonal panelled ceiling by J Rose, plaster reliefs of griffins, painted grisaille panels and marble caryatid fireplace by J Wilton.

Attached at East end, SERVICE WING: L plan, red brick and stone with slate hipped roofs. 2 storey. Stone plinth, band, moulded eaves cornice and Chamfered quoins. Glazing bar sash windows with gauged brick heads. Red brick wall joins service wing to stable court beyond: 2 rusticated stone gate piers, one still with ball finial.

CL 10.4.1915. A T Bolton: The architecture of R and J Adam 1922. D Stroud: Capability Brown 1975. G Beard: Decorative Plasterwork 1975. R Adam and Croome Court Connoisseur October 1953.

Historic Significance

Ranking: International

Croome is associated with some of the biggest names in 18th and early 19th century architecture and design, and time and again, can claim 'firsts' in historical achievements. As well as many firsts, Croome Court was also, together with Hagley, the last real expression of the Palladian architectural style.

The Court is historically significant as it is not just a product of the mid-18th century - it incorporates elements of the earlier houses on the site, concealing surviving fabric at its core from the Tudor & Jacobean house and the mid-17th century Caroline house. It is thus significant as an encapsulation of historic building techniques and styles. Croome's historic importance is not in any way diminished by the fact that it was a re-modelled earlier structure: this does not compromise the essential significance of the house, only

elements of its architectural detail, proportion and layout, but not the overall concept. Indeed, this layering adds to its historical significance. From the historical and architectural analysis so far, it seems that the 1640s house was a very interesting and progressive structure in itself, quite probably worthy of Grade I listing had it survived as such.⁴⁰⁶

The re-modelling of the Court by Brown, who is normally associated with landscape gardening, was his first flight into the realms of architecture and is an important example of his relatively under-appreciated architectural work. The Court's setting was Brown's first major landscape design – Croome provided the springboard for one of the greatest names in landscape design history.

In terms of significant historic interior design, the Court's interiors include some of the most important early Neo-classical work by Robert Adam, including what is understood to be the first room that he designed in its entirety including plasterwork, fixtures and furniture. At Croome, both Brown and Adam employed the skills of some of the most eminent craftsmen of the day, many of whom were suppliers to the Crown. It was the house for which Adam designed his first state bed, in 1763, for the 6th Earl's second wife Barbara.

Just before the Coventry family put the Court on the market in 1946, it was visited by the National Trust's Historic Buildings Secretary James Lees-Milne⁴⁰⁷. Whilst the Trust did not at the time take it on, for reasons which are not clear⁴⁰⁸, Lees-Milne nevertheless recognized the building's historic significance: *"I must thank you for your real kindness in devoting so much of your busy time to showing me around Croome on Saturday. It was a great privilege to see it and I must just tell you that in my opinion Croome really is a house of the very first importance from a national monument point of view. I had always of course known its importance as an early work of Robert Adam but until I saw it for myself I had no idea how really good it was. I was sorry when you told me that the family were trying to dispose of it, and I do wish that before they do this they would let the National Trust know as it might just conceivably be possible for us to do something to save the house and park. It would be a real disaster if Croome Court were to be demolished."*⁴⁰⁹

To many people who remember and were involved in the Second World War, particularly those associated with RAF Defford, Croome's greatest historical significance is as the home of the development of radar and being a major factor in Britain winning the war. To these people, the memories and few structural remains of this era in part of Croome's landscape stand as testimony to *"the scientists and aircrews who played a brave and dedicated part in one glorious chapter in the history of Croome"*.⁴¹⁰ The Defford Airfield Heritage Group (DAHG) was established in 2010 in association with the Friends of Croome Park to research, record and preserve the history of RAF Defford and the role of

⁴⁰⁶ Catherine Gordon raises the interesting notion that perhaps the 6th Earl recognised the qualities of the earlier houses too.

⁴⁰⁷ On 6th March 1945.

⁴⁰⁸ Jill Tovey feels that there was not necessarily a formal offer to the National Trust and therefore no refusal – by visiting, James Lees-Milne was merely keeping things polite and avoiding embarrassment.

⁴⁰⁹ Letter from James Lees-Milne, 6th March 1945, to J. Eastman, Croome Estate Office, CEA.

⁴¹⁰ Robert Shaw, Secretary of the Defford Airfield Heritage Group, Spring 2010

the airfield, especially in the vital radar research during the Second World War and this very important chapter in the story of Croome. The DAHG has been formally recognized as a National Trust Supporter Group and members of the Group have enrolled as volunteers at Croome.

An RAF Defford Re-union was held on July 17th, 2010 during the National Trust's "RAF Defford at 70" weekend. This was attended by Michael MacDonald and Roger Knowles, Croome's youngest residents at that time, sons of Group Captain J.A. McDonald, Commanding Officer and Flight Lieutenant Eric Knowles and now both involved with the Defford Airfield Heritage Group. This thriving Group is evidence of the historical significance that Croome holds in relation to the period of the Second World War.

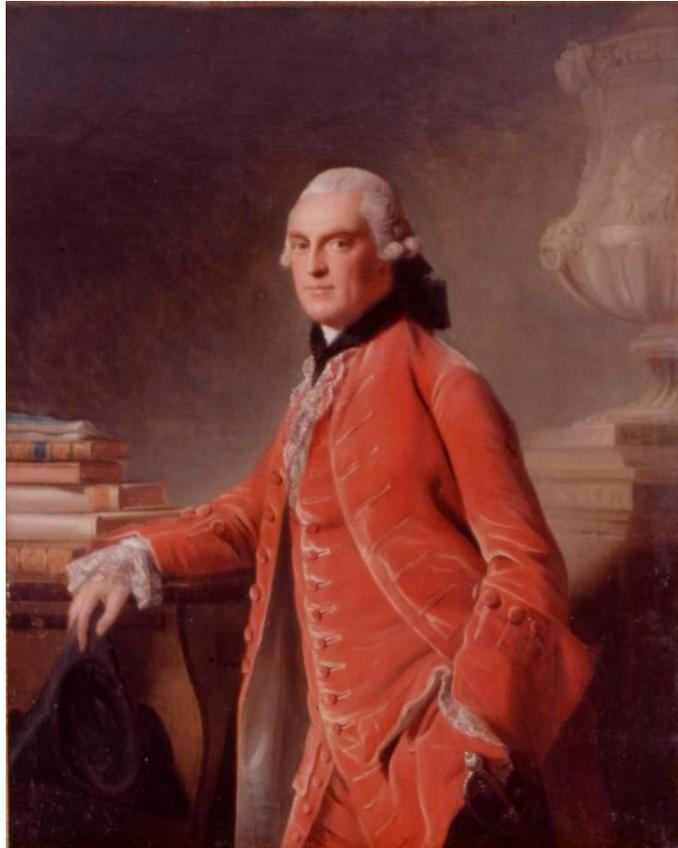
But perhaps one of the main reasons for Croome's historic significance today is that it stands as testimony to the changing fortunes of the great English country house at the heart of its estate, and personifies a resilience and an ability to adapt when so many others did not survive.

Significance of the 6th Earl of Coventry as the Creator of Croome

Ranking: International

Croome was a collective achievement of far-reaching historic and aesthetic significance. The driving force behind it was George William, 6th Earl of Coventry. He is intrinsically significant to Croome's story, as he was its visionary, ambitious creator, the man with the taste and the means to execute it and the driving force behind the mid-18th century transformation of both park and house. He was, in effect, Croome's 'creative director' and was not only a man of exceptional taste but a taste-maker. It seems his plans were tentative at first, but as his ambition and confidence grew, so did his achievement. Within the space of about twelve years he transformed the Coventry family's already attractive country home into one of the most admired houses in England and the revolutionary changes that he wrought between 1747 and his death in 1809 turned Croome into the crucible from which flowed the single greatest English contribution to western art.⁴¹¹

⁴¹¹ Tom Oliver, *Resurgam - The Coventrys of Croome*, p198.



Portrait of George William, 6th Earl of Coventry,
by Allan Ramsay, 1762, still in the collection (CET)

There can be no question over the will power of the 6th Earl. He was one of those rare people who, having an idea or an ambition, got things done. His legacy as the patron responsible for the creation of Croome has international significance⁴¹². After the sudden unexplained death of his older brother Thomas in 1744, he had the confidence (and probably a sense of duty to carry out plans that his brother had discussed with him) to start quite bold landscaping work on Croome's setting while he was still Lord Deerhurst. He was brave enough to sweep away Gilbert 4th Earl's old-fashioned formal garden and create a long serpentine canal near the west of the house, which Brown would improve and extend.

He had the foresight (and perhaps it was also a relief) to give both Brown and Adam the opportunity to exercise their talents at a early stage in their careers. The relationships he built and maintained with both men, both professional and as a friend, are also significant and testify to how he continued to drive and influence Croome's development and managed to hold the creative tension. He even apparently managed to deal with the unpleasant side of Adam's personality – Adam had a 'killer instinct' where winning commissions was concerned and a habit of carrying out character assassinations on other architects to get the jobs he wanted. Perhaps because the 6th Earl was himself so driven and determined, Adam realized he had met his match. In fact, the 6th Earl was the most faithful of Adam's patrons, employing him in 1760 and acting as his pallbearer in 1792.

⁴¹² Timothy Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, p.46

There is also a suggestion that Athenian Stuart was involved at Croome Court, in connection with the design for the Saloon ceiling in around 1759, and this may have come about via Coventry's close friend and arbiter of taste, Lord Lyttelton of Hagley, where Stuart was working and produced the first Greek revival building (temple) in the country. This possibility is important in the formation of the 6th Earl's taste as it is the first sign of his avant-garde interest in the rising Neo-classical style and prepared the way for his employment of Adam in 1760.

Coventry's highly developed French taste probably had an important formative influence on the young Robert Adam's taste and style: it would have acted as the architect's introduction to the precepts of French (rather than Roman-inspired) neo-classicism. This was a highly significant creative relationship between patron and architect, one that influenced the beginning of Adam's great career and which manifested itself at Croome, particularly in the Tapestry Room, where the 6th Earl's strength and vision as patron was personified and where he overrode Adam's initial designs for the room.

Unlike most other young English aristocrats, he did not go on the Italian Grand Tour. Paris was Coventry's mecca, not Rome⁴¹³. He was a sophisticated Francophile and a well-informed follower of French fashion – Rococo and Neo-classical - and astute buyer of the latest French furniture, ormolu, porcelain, tapestries, looking-glasses and clothing. He was such an avid and regular buyer, visiting Paris as soon as possible after the end of the Seven Years War, that by 1765 he was well-known to the Paris *marchands-merciers* Dulac, Simon-Philippe Poirier and others for his remarkable taste and elegance. The Anglo-French story is very much at the heart of what happened in decorative and furnishing terms at Croome.

In his commissioning of the set of innovative Gobelins tapestries for the Tapestry Room, direct from the French Royal manufactory in Paris immediately after the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, the 6th Earl was demonstrating how he was not only a man of taste, but a taste-maker⁴¹⁴. The moment travel between England and France was opened-up again, he was the first English aristocrat to head for Paris: he set off on a single-minded mission for enhancing his country seat, "*determined to be as private as an upholsterer, and pass his time in buying [looking] glasses and tapestry*".⁴¹⁵ His purchases there remained for over a hundred years among the glories of Croome Court. The new type of Gobelins tapestries he ordered with medallion pictures by the famous painter Boucher had not yet been made for any patron, even the French King. Such elegant and magnificent ornament on the grandest scale put them out of reach of all but the most wealthy and sophisticated: the Croome set of tapestries was the first of only six sets produced for great English country houses, all of them following in the wake of the 6th Earl, imitating his taste and Croome's Tapestry Room. These were Sir Henry Bridgeman at Weston Park, Robert Child at Osterley, 3rd Duke of Portland at Welbeck

⁴¹³ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.41

⁴¹⁴ Edith A. Standen, *The Tapestries*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 1959, p. 109

⁴¹⁵ It must be remembered that the term 'upholsterer' had different connotations in the 18th century: Johnson's definition is "*one who furnishes houses; one who fits up apartments with beds and furniture*".

Abbey, Sir Laurence Dundas at Moore Park and William Weddell at Newby Hall. The 6th Earl of Coventry was the trend-setter.⁴¹⁶



Croome Court's Tapestry Room in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

In commissioning so many of the leading English firms of cabinet-makers and by cleverly playing one off against the other, he bestowed his patronage far and wide. He doubtless also drove a hard bargain but this would have encouraged competition and rivalry and ensured top-class craftsmanship. Vile & Cobb alone supplied over thirteen hundred items to Croome between 1757 and 1773. Several of these pieces are now in major international museums and private collections.

His library was indicative of his wide-ranging interests, including architecture, horticulture and antiquities. He subscribed to *Vitruvius Britannicus* (the fifth volume of which featured Croome), Leoni's *Palladio*, and various works on Greek and Roman antiquities by authors such as Dalton, Hamilton, Desgodtz and Le Roy. Less predictable were the conspicuous number of horticultural items, such as Dodart's *Memoires pour server a L'Histoire du [sic] Plants* of 1676, and Baxter's *The Nature of the Soil* (1745). He was an early, immensely enthusiastic and assiduous plant collector, and gathered specimens from the most remote corners of the world, including Russia, South Africa and the South Pacific⁴¹⁷ and these books would have fuelled this passion. The international horticultural collection that he established at Croome came to be regarded as second only to that at Kew. John Claudius Loudon in his *Arboretum and Fruticetum* (1838) referred to over ninety trees of exceptional quality then existing at Croome. Loudon remarked that the

⁴¹⁶ It is easy to imagine that the 6th Earl was very taken with the idea of being the owner of a set of tapestries woven by the King of France's manufactory to a new design not yet made for anyone else, even the King. The fact that the tapestries could also be woven more quickly and cheaply on the new type of looms and that the 50% customs duty could be avoided by shipping the tapestries to the French ambassador in London must also have appealed [to his thrifty streak]. Susan Leech, p. 46

⁴¹⁷ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.101

6th Earl had "*planted it with all the useful and ornamental trees and shrubs at that time to be procured in the nurseries. The plants have grown with astonishing vigour, and there is now at Croome an extensive collection of species, containing some of the finest specimens of foreign trees and shrubs in the country*".⁴¹⁸ The 6th Earl's library also included first editions and a range of important but comparatively ordinary, though still quite grand, expensive books.⁴¹⁹ He also had several of astonishing grandeur and enormous colour plate books of the greatest possible magnificence (and expense), such as Catesby's *Natural History of the Carolinas* (1732) and Thornton's *Temple of Flora* (1812). These books, alongside the lesser, but still impressive, natural history books were something quite out of the ordinary.

The ground-breaking, aesthetic setting that the 6th Earl created for Croome Court, not just in commissioning Brown to create the first designed English landscaped Park, but also the stocking of the Park and pleasure grounds with rare and exotic species of flowers, shrubs and trees from every corner of the globe, is also hugely significant. This setting gives Croome an international dimension and lifts it out of merely being a great country estate in rural Worcestershire to being a place of real international importance and significance. Contemporary commentators were very aware of Croome's international horticultural importance: "*It would take up too much time to particularize the different botanical productions of Croom [sic]; suffice it to say, that no expence [sic] has been spared to render the collection complete: and it cannot fail to be a most capital object with every person who passes through the center [sic] of England, whether to admire the rural scenery which Brown has created, and which he styled his first, as well as his favourite child, or to feast the eye with a profusion of plants culled from every quarter of the vegetable world...the pleasure grounds, the plantations, and the flower gardens, the hot and the green houses are embellished with such a profusion of the choicest productions from the East and West Indies, from the Cape, and from Botany Bay, as well as the pleasure grounds intermixed with such a variety of the forest and other kings of trees from America and other parts of the world, as have long rendered Croom [sic] well known to the scientific inquirer after botanical knowledge, and inferior only to Kew in the number, variety, and magnitude of the productions which it affords; and that which cannot fail to be observed by every elegant observer of rural scenery, is the taste, judgment, and skills which perpetually appear in the disposition of the grounds.*"⁴²⁰

The 6th Earl led an active social life in London and held the honorific post of Gentleman of the Bedchamber to both George II and George III. Whilst not a politically significant figure, he was a man of principle and in 1770 resigned his place as Gentleman of the Bedchamber over the conduct of the American War of Independence. He made a speech in Parliament urging against the war. His obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1809 stated that he did this so that "*no private consideration should shackle his public conduct*". In the 1824 Guide book to Croome, he is described as having "*supported throughout the course of a long life the honours of his birth and rank with propriety and dignity...nor did [he] confine his attentions to his own private affairs: he devoted also, much of his time and his thoughts to the public service*". All in all, he was not merely a

⁴¹⁸ Camilla Beresford's, *Historic Landscape Survey for The National Trust*, pp.51-52

⁴¹⁹ See Section 2 pp.460-2 on the significance of the collections including 'lost ones'

⁴²⁰ Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, pp465-81

man of learning, taste and discernment, but also a family man of honour and political rectitude.⁴²¹

In Worcestershire he maintained the Coventrys' ancestral hospitality at Croome and carried out a dutiful, public life: he was Tory MP for Worcester until he succeeded to the Earldom in 1751 and Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of Worcestershire (following in his father's footsteps).

Even when he was an old man in his eighties, the 6th Earl was still driven and obsessive enough to continue to make improvements to Croome and, after Adam's death, he brought in the next generation of creative designers in the form of James Wyatt. It was implicit in George William's ambitious personality that he wanted to site prominent 'marker' buildings at the very limits of his estate. It was Wyatt who provided the design for the 6th Earl's last grand gesture, the Saxon Tower on Fish Hill behind Broadway, from where his estates in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire could be seen in a single glance.

He was an outstanding patron of architecture and the decorative arts and an early enthusiast for the Neo-classical taste. It is not an exaggeration to say that the 6th Earl was one of the most advanced and sophisticated patrons in England at the time. He had an insatiable passion not only for decorating and furnishing, but building, landscaping, horticulture and agriculture. And as if all that wasn't enough, he had film star good looks, excellent dress sense and the confidence that goes with a handsome face: the Allen Ramsay portrait proves all three.⁴²² And yet, there is a vulnerability to the man, who, just like all of us, had his human failings and difficulties in his relationships: his eldest son and heir was estranged and tragically blinded, five of his seven children died young or in sad circumstances, and he was probably consumed by his obsessive desire for perfection right to the end of his life.

Significance of Croome Court as a crucible of creativity

Ranking: International

There is a great philosophical history to Croome, a heritage and significance of ideas, innovation, experimentation and pioneering design. In the mid-18th century Croome Court was a fulcrum of creativity and a centre of excellence. It fostered, nurtured and gave expression to some of the greatest designers, artists and craftsmen of the time. It was the place where they found their creative voice and it was pioneering and innovative in its patronage of young talent.

Not only is the Court itself a stage for the best mid-18th century architectural and decorative creativity, but it was the place where the greatest figure of landscape design, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown first gave full expression to his creative genius, revolutionising the philosophy of garden design. The legacy of Brown's work at Croome, the first of over 200 parklands that he set out, runs deep in our collective consciousness: the very perception of 'English' landscape is based on Brown's work and its origin is at Croome.

⁴²¹ Anthony Coleridge, *English furniture supplied for Croome Court*.

⁴²² Timothy Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, p.46

Whilst the Court sits within Brown's ground-breaking designed landscape which came to be regarded as the quintessential English style, it was planted with specimens of plants and trees from right across the world, making Croome an international crucible of creativity in botanical and horticultural terms. Many of these rare and beautiful specimens of flowers and plants were reflected in the decorative plasterwork of the Court's Rococo interiors, bringing the outside world into the Court, reflecting the 6th Earl's obsessions and interests as well as the creative skills of the craftsmen who executed them.

The 18th century creation of brilliant new design at Croome took place against the backdrop of a world of political and cultural change, a context of renewed thought, ideas and idealism. The 6th Earl played a full part in the political part of the 18th century and was a great benefactor and force for good in his home county of Worcestershire. By the time of his death in 1809 he had played an important role in major local and national political changes, as well as influencing contemporary taste in design and aesthetics in his choices of patronising new talent and leading craftsmen and designers to re-model and furnish Croome Court.

Croome as an historic crucible of creativity has a future significance: this heritage of thought, philosophy and design and Croome and Lord Coventry's role in it, can now find expression in how we present and share the Court. It is not just about the conservation of the historic fabric of Croome Court, but also about how and why Croome was created, what made it such a hot-bed of design, why there was a desire to re-shape the world in the 18th century, whether locally or globally.

Croome's creative significance can now be revived: the Court and the whole property can once again be a centre of skills and craftsmanship in the 21st century, offering opportunities for engagement, training, apprenticeships and life-changing experiences.

Significance of the 7th & 8th Earls of Coventry

Ranking: Local

Whilst not major figures in the history of Croome Court, the significance of the 7th and 8th Earls of Coventry lies essentially in the fact that they did nothing to change or alter its architectural structure. Their human failings and inadequacies meant that they were pre-occupied with various problematic family and personal relationships, and the Court was passed on to the benign care of the 9th Earl in much the same form as it had been during the 6th Earl's tenure and remained as he had created it. However, in terms of their *human* stories, the 7th and 8th Earls' significance lies in their colourful, often scandalous lives.

The 7th Earl was the 6th Earl's third child by his first wife Maria. Being a boy, he was inevitably the focus of his father's hopes and ambitions and the strain appears to have proved too much. Perhaps the high-spirited viscount was too much like his mother for his own good⁴²³. He eloped at the age of 19, went to America to fight for his country in the American War of independence but then returned home only a few weeks later. He quarreled bitterly with his father as a young man and this scarred him psychologically for the rest of his life. He wrote to his stepmother Barbara that: '*Time appears to wear my Father of ever spark of*

⁴²³ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.140

paternal affection' and that he would '*willingly enter a dungeon*' to recover his father's favour. When still Lord Deerhurst, he was severely injured when he fell from his horse out hunting; this resulted in the loss of his eyesight and he was later known as the 'Blind Earl'. However, even this tragedy did not bring father and son closer together, nor the efforts of Barbara, the 6th Earl's second wife, who spent much of her marriage trying to re-unite her husband with his eldest son.

The way in which he *did* impact upon Croome was to the detriment of his father's significant and cherished collections. Being blind, he had no use for fine paintings and, upon inheriting at the age of 51, sold over two hundred works at Christie's in London in 1810, including works by Holbein, Rubens, Veronese, Tintoretto, Caravaggio and Canaletto. This was a regrettable loss to Croome. On the other hand he then placed a stream of orders for jewellery and plate with Rundell, Bridge & Rundell, the royal jewellers and goldsmiths, and also collected a porcelain dessert service from the Chelsea Porcelain Factory with a tactile pattern of rose leaves and buds, some pieces of which are still in the collection.

The 8th Earl, eldest child of the 7th Earl, was a complex and tormented individual. He was notoriously thrifty, which did little to benefit the estate, but he could also waste a small fortune when the mood seized him. His first wife having died two years after their marriage, he married the beautiful and wealthy Lady Mary Beauclerk, who, not long afterwards, had an affair with two of his younger brothers. He was so shocked that he suffered a severe mental breakdown. A further affair led to an illegitimate child and separation. Add to this his failed political career and the reputation of the Coventry family was ripped to shreds by the newspapers. Vilified by the press and betrayed by his wife and brothers, he sought solace in a string of dubious liaisons.

By tragic coincidence, and in sinister continuity with the ill fate of almost all the Lord Deerhursts, the title of the eldest sons of the Coventry family, the 8th Earl's eldest son and heir was partially blinded in a shooting accident. He then died a few years later from a sudden illness and his wife died shortly afterwards. Indeed the 8th Earl's life was so fraught with conflict, public insult and personal tragedy that it is difficult to ascertain the true nature of the man. The reputation of the Coventry family suffered severely during his lifetime.⁴²⁴ The title devolved upon his grandson who was only four years old and the continuity, stability and respect that he, the future 9th Earl, was to achieve during his long tenure, is all the more significant in the light of what had gone before.

Significance of the 9th Earl of Coventry

Ranking: Local

The significance of the 9th Earl lies in his personification of continuity, tradition and the socially and economically important function of the great country estate. From the age of four, when he succeeded to the title in 1842, to his death in 1930 at the grand old age of ninety-two, he was at the centre of a social and economic system that provided jobs, income, certainty and security to large numbers of people in and around the Croome

⁴²⁴ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.167

estate. It was a way of life that had endured but was coming to the end of its life, undermined by agricultural depression and sweeping social changes resulting from two world wars. He held the longest tenure of the Coventry earldom: for eighty-six years.

He also stood for traditional country pursuits associated with great country estates. Right from childhood the 9th Earl loved horses and country pursuits in equal measure. Being orphaned at the age of four in 1842, he was brought up by his maternal grandparents at Sezincote in Gloucestershire. His interest in horse racing began whilst he was still a minor, when he rode in races himself under the pseudonym 'Mr Morton'. After he reached his majority and moved to Croome his racing involvement began in earnest. He had great horse-racing success, particularly with Emblem (whom he bought when he was aged 27) and Emblematic, winning the Grand National at Aintree two successive years in 1863-4, a record. At about this time he became the youngest ever Steward of the Jockey Club. He had a training course built in Pirton Park, to the north of the Park.

He loved fox-hunting and, still harking back to his childhood, set up the North Cotswold Hunt (Lord Coventry's hounds) in 1867, possibly there because he knew 'the country' so well. However, he retired from there in 1873 and moved his hounds to Croome, on the site of the, probably defunct, 18th century Menagerie by Robert Adam and was Master of Foxhounds. On his retirement, the North Cotswold people commissioned an equestrian portrait of him from Sir Francis Grant, PRA, as a symbol of their gratitude; during his time this hung above the Entrance Hall chimneypiece and it is still in the CET collection. 'The Croome' was and still is an extremely well-known and respected hunt.



The Croome hunt near the London Arch, early 20th century (*Lady Maria Coventry*)

His other major interests were all traditional country estate pastimes: breeding Hereford cattle - in the 1880s he won many top national prizes for his bull 'Good Boy' - and there are many records and pictures of them in the archive; breeding prize-winning hounds - his best were Marksman & Rambler; cricket - he had his own 'Croome' team with whom he played throughout the 1780s and beyond; fishing - he joined the Leintwardine Fishing Club and rented a fishing lodge where he and his family spent many days and

holidays, liking it so much that he eventually bought the house; and he took a huge and active interest in agricultural politics. In 1886 he was offered the Mastership of the Queen's Buckhounds by Lord Salisbury. He even turned his hand to poetry, always rhyming and in a strict metre. Also, he wasn't averse to gambling, whether on horses or at cards.

The 9th Earl was also a collector, not in the same world-class category as the 6th Earl, but as an avid amateur collector, of paintings, prints, bits of furniture (often referring to them as 'Chippendale'), hunting paraphernalia, in fact anything that took his fancy. During the second half of the 19th century and on into the 20th century, wherever he was in the country (usually attending horse-racing meetings), he seems to have found time to browse antique shops and purchase items that took his eye. In the Croome archive are 108 bills for furniture bought from antique shops and auction houses by the 9th Earl: the earliest date is 1887 (though earlier bills may not have survived) and the latest is 1919, when he would have been 81. He built up an eclectic mix of objects, though the common link seems to have been that, to his eye, they fitted into the collection that the 6th Earl had created for Croome in the 18th century.

From a dealer in Dublin he bought a *Fine Chippendale mantelpiece, elaborately decorated, Spanish mahogany* for £80. He also purchased at least eight other mantelpieces in marble or wood (it would be fascinating to try and work out which rooms these were for). Other very expensive items were a set of 14 Chippendale chairs in red Morocco from Christie's for £63; a pair of *beautiful, genuine old Adam mirrors* for £120 (from Gill & Reigate, London); a pair of Black Buhl Cabinets and a pair of Louis XVI chairs for £120. 'Chippendale' was his favourite and he also bought what he called 'Sheraton' and 'Adam'. From the Wormington Grange sale in 1904 he acquired a *Spanish mahogany Chippendale Secretaire bookcase with shaped, glazed panes and a cupboard under* (£46) and *The Frightened Horse* by Ward (£5-5-0).

Three bills from 1906, at the height of his spending, show the variety of his purchases:

Bill No. 210	Bill no. 211	Bill no. 209
Chippendale washstand	Sheraton writing table	2 old blue dishes
Chippendale toilet mirror	Mahogany washstand	1 Wedgewood plate
Sheraton Dressing table	Plated Tray	Folding Screen
Plated Cruet	Teapot	Pair brass candlesticks
Mahogany Tea Caddy		Large Bowl
Wire plated baskets		6 plates

We know from late 19th century photographs of the Court's interiors that in the early 20th century the house was filled with eclectic, comfortable, untidy clutter, which could well have sprung from the Earl's obsession with collecting, as demonstrated by these records.

He also bought pictures, both prints and originals. Many had horse-related subjects, mostly by J. Fearnley and J. Ward. His infamous ancestor Maria Gunning was also a favourite subject: he paid £189 at Christie's for *Countess of Coventry as a Market Girl with a basket of eggs*, by A. Pond, from the collection of the Earl of Cork (9th December 1905, lot 67), and another *Maria Gunning*, by Finlayson Read (Christie's, 20th July, 1908). In 1920 he purchased seven pictures in one sale, including a Hogarth for £52-17-

6 and a Ward for £55-2-6. He seems to have been more particular in his picture buying, mostly restricting himself to subjects that were relevant to his life or to Croome.

In summary, the 9th Earl of Coventry seems to have been a man who had money to spend and could indulge his whims in whatever direction fancy took him. This was perhaps at the expense of 'modernizing' his country house, even proudly revelling in its history and that of his family⁴²⁵.

The 9th Earl's significance in Croome's long history, the continuity of the Coventry family and his perpetuation of Croome as one of the last bastions of the English country estates and its traditional way of life is huge. "[He] *had led an extraordinary life. He was the longest holder of any peerage in the history of the House of Lords. He had lived through the Victorian and the Edwardian periods and one World War, and he had known both Wellington and Stanley Baldwin. Throughout this time, he never wavered from his course. He was determined to excel in his role as landlord, agriculturalist, sportsman and patron, to be a true country gentleman, and he succeeded...Throughout his life, his enthusiasm and commitment to his role had constantly been curbed by change. He had tried to adapt, revealing admirable enterprise and resilience, but it was too much to expect him to abandon the old values, the old way of life that he seemed to epitomise, and that drew people to him. His un-worldliness was part of his appeal. By the time he died he had become a local and national institution*".⁴²⁶

Even his death and that of his wife Blanche, Countess of Coventry, was significant, typical of their solidarity, mutual support and recognition that their way of life had come to an end: he died on 13th March 1930 after an illness that lasted twelve days. He was nearly ninety-two. His wife died 3 days later at the age of eighty-seven. Within an hour of her husband's death, she is said to have retired to bed, not ill, but simply as she had no desire to go on living.⁴²⁷

Significance of the 20th century layer

Ranking: Local-National

Croome Court also has layers of significance from the more recent past: the Court's 20th century history was varied, colourful and uncertain. It was a place of transitions, reflecting wider, drastic changes in social structure and hierarchies, and where the hopes, joys and fears of different groups of people with different motivations were played out. These range from the sense of loss and ending of an era with the Coventry family selling and leaving it in 1948, symbolizing the plight of so many country houses across the country after the 1st and 2nd World Wars, the house reaching the brink of potential demolition, the family seat becoming an institution with the religious and educational aspirations of the Roman Catholic School for disadvantaged boys run by the Little Sisters of Mercy of St Paul in the 1950s and 60s, the spiritual and educational aims of the Society for Krishna Consciousness in the early 1980s, through to the profit-making and exploitative aims of the series of property developers in the 1980s and 1990s, the last occupying it once again as a private residence.

⁴²⁵ I am grateful to Jill Tovey for summarising the significance of the 9th Earl as a collector.

⁴²⁶ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, pp.196-7

⁴²⁷ *The Worcestershire Advertiser*, no date, March 1930

Some physical legacies of all these periods survive at Croome. Whilst they may rank lower in the 'traditional' hierarchy of significances, they provided the house with a function when it was in decline and had no obvious future.



Newspaper cutting of Croome Court advertised for sale by the Hare Krishnas, 1984

The significance of this period of Croome's history lies in the human stories with broad appeal and as an illustration of how some great country houses managed to survive the ravages and uncertainties of the 20th century. Croome's key period was the mid-18th century, the apogée of its creative genius achieved by the biggest names in architecture and design, and that will always be the reason that the National Trust took it on. But the Court's 20th century stories often have more immediate and identifiable resonances with many of our visitors today. Croome's earlier and more recent pasts combine to form a rich, varied and often surprising history with wide-ranging significances and values.⁴²⁸

The property developers' legacies relate to the period when Croome's fortunes had reached an all time low, and where changes, introductions and removals were made insensitively, without respect, knowledge or affection of the building and its past. Their impact is therefore more detrimental to the Spirit of the Place and their legacies can be regarded as philosophically significant rather than physically significant. They serve to illustrate the diminishment of values in relation to heritage and historic properties towards the end of the 20th century, further changes in social and economic patterns, and serve as a reminder of what this great country house very nearly permanently, and indeed temporarily, became.

⁴²⁸ I am grateful to Dr. David Leigh (NT Arts Panel) for pointing out that the British/European Standard on Conservation Terminology (BS EN 15898:2011) articulates a set of definitions which make a distinction between the **significance** and **value** of objects, including buildings: A **Value** is an aspect of importance that individuals or a society assign(s) to an object. **Values** can be of different types, for example: artistic, symbolic, historical, social, economic, scientific, technological, etc. The assigned **Value** can change according to circumstance, e.g. how the judgement is made, the context and the moment in time. **Value** should always be indicated by its qualifying type. **Significance** is the combination of all the **Values** assigned to an object.

Nevertheless, these modern, intrusive physical legacies are powerful and fascinating to visitors today. They have the ability to shock; they make people think about the meaning and value of heritage and are extremely memorable and provocative. They stimulate debate about their relative significance and spark discussions as to what a visit to an historic country house in the 21st century might encapsulate.

For example, in a recent informal debate⁴²⁹ with 68 of the Court's volunteers on the subject of the relative significance of the large central bath and striped wallpaper relating to the last owner-occupier (in F15), 22 people said they would get rid of the bath and 13 said they would keep it. It was a very stimulating debate and the comments ranged widely: "Abomination"; "Aesthetically vacuous"; "Bad taste"; "Remove it because it is cheaply done and lacking in quality and integrity"; "A waste of a good room"; "It's only a thin, transitory layer"; "It can act as a foil to the 18th century and as a way of stimulating debate"; "It makes people think"; "There needs to be something in the house that is of this period"; "Use another space to tell this story rather than continue to compromise this one"; "It would be tragic if every room was taken back to the 18th century"; "Greater significance should take precedence".

The 20th century layer is certainly important but it is not necessarily sufficiently important to keep it all. Decisions on precisely what to keep will be guided by our Philosophy of Approach, our Statement of Significance and the articulation of various significances and values expressed in this Plan, taking into account all the feedback we have gathered.

Architectural significance

Ranking: National-International

Architecturally, whilst Croome Court's significance is arguably international, it is also paradoxical and debatable. Although it is undeniably of the first rank in terms of its historical importance, its complex and collaborative character raises interesting issues of authorship and context. Its re-modelling by Brown with input from Sanderson Miller in the mid 18th century was not cutting-edge. It was an exercise in what was, at the time, an accepted, Palladian formula, and the current guide book to the Park describes the house's style as 'ponderous'. Its basic design has a long pedigree and great houses such as Houghton and Holkham and in Norfolk had been constructed in this style as early as 1722 and 1734 respectively. Hagley was the final expression of this style, built only a few years after Croome, almost in tandem, by Sanderson Miller in 1754-60. Although, the fact that Croome Court is almost the *last* expression of the Palladian style, is in itself significant.

Catherine Gordon feels that, although the architecture of the Court "*is a derivative design, lacking some coherence and sheer panache [it] is no discredit to Brown at all. It fulfilled a number of tasks quite admirably and it needed Brown's tact, ingenuity, engineering capabilities and innate understanding of form and composition to carry it off*".⁴³⁰

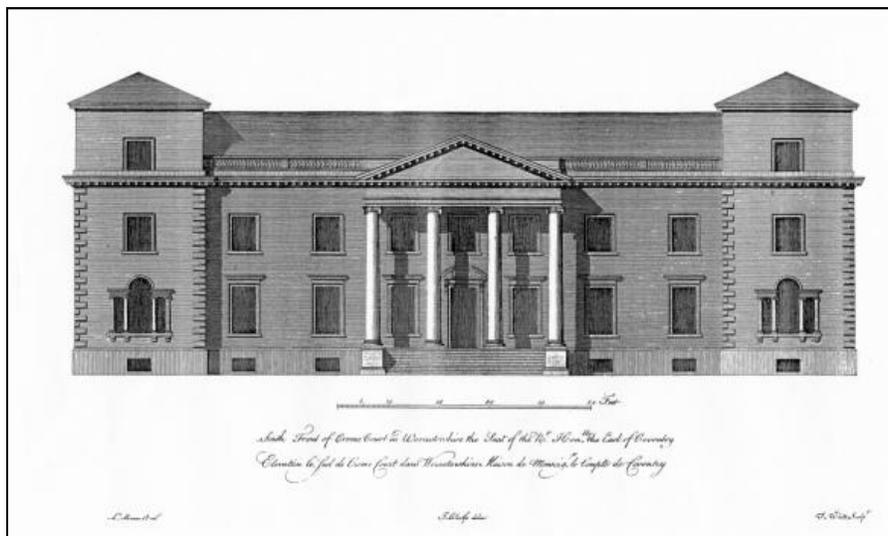
⁴²⁹ Conducted by the Author as an informal opportunity to gather a cross-section of volunteers' thoughts on the Court's significances, June 2011

⁴³⁰ Catherine Gordon, *Historical & Archaeological Survey*, 2010, Appendix 5

This was recognized by some even at the time: when Arthur Young visited in 1801, he described the house in the landscape in his *Annals of Agriculture* (although we have to remember that he was of course by definition more interested in the landscape): “*The mansion is 150 feet by 70, and, under Brown's management (who was upon this, as on all other occasions, very much assisted by his Lordship), has been rendered an excellent stone edifice, without being a magnificent one, for the house is not the great object at Croom [sic]: however, there are some things in it worthy of attention...*”⁴³¹

The house never elicited rhapsodies from the authors of guide books, and the short and disparaging allusion by J. Britton in *The Beauties of England and Wales* in 1814 was typical: “*The style of architecture of the house is very plain and bespeaks comfort rather than magnificence...*”⁴³²

When the 6th Earl of Coventry inherited the earlier house in 1751, with his undoubted sophisticated taste and vast wealth, it appeared unfashionable and provincial. He was free to “*sweep away the piecemeal porches, parterres and pavilions of his predecessors to make a serene and sylvan parkland, among the most admired of its time*”.⁴³³ He commissioned ‘Capability’ Brown and Robert Adam to fulfill his ambition on a scale that attracted the amazement and admiration of his contemporaries. It was Brown’s first major architectural and landscape project, a seminal work to which Robert Adam contributed some of his earliest and more unusual designs. Yet, architecturally, the Croome Court that he created is quietly handsome and fairly modest. Nevertheless, if Croome was comparatively modest in vision, it was also comfortable and practical. These were qualities that the 6th Earl much admired in Brown and is why he chose him to design his private retreat at Springhill near Broadway⁴³⁴.



Croome Court's south elevation in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Volume V, 1771

The architectural significance of Croome Court is partially that it gave expression to Brown’s first flight into the realm of architecture. Hitherto he had been solely a gardener, and it was probably his friendship with the architect and builder Henry Holland that gave

⁴³¹ Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, pp465-81

⁴³² Quoted by James Parker, *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, p.79

⁴³³ *The Coventrys of Croome*, Catherine Gordon, p.86

⁴³⁴ Catherine Gordon, *Historical & Archaeological Survey*, 2010 (Appendix 5)

him the confidence that he could turn his hand to architecture as well as landscape gardening. He was fortunate in his timing: no country and no social establishment in the world could have offered an artist like Brown such scope and opportunity as England in the mid -18th century. The nobility and gentry lived not in the capital but on their estates, and they had both the will and the means to improve them.

It is probably largely due to Brown's involvement and priorities that the Court is not a stand-alone piece of architecture, but one that sits very much within its landscape. Whilst no-one would deny that Croome Court is a hugely important and significant building, it is part of a much larger entity whose elements are all inter-related. The Court is of course a major component within the overall whole, and without it there would be a yawning gap literally at the heart of the 6th Earl of Coventry's creation. The Court is an integral and focal part of the historic landscape and the chief vantage point from which to view the park buildings, but it can also be regarded simply as the largest eye-catcher in the Park. The Court and the Park are two halves of the same whole.

The Court's architectural significance is thus not so much related to the architecture *per se* in an isolated, purist way; rather, it resides in its relationship to the whole design concept, linking the outside with the inside, the building forming a harmonious link with the park and providing an architectural platform for the expression of the 6th Earl's ambitious vision. In the mid-18th century, under his patronage, it was a crucible of creativity, a stage for the display of work by the finest designers, craftsmen and engineers of the time. It is a total work of art, a masterpiece, combining the highest design, artistic and horticultural achievements of the mid-18th century and acting as a fountainhead of inspiration for others.

It also has significance as an interesting example of evolving architectural styles and taste. The Court is a rich mine of architectural clues about the Tudor, Jacobean and Caroline houses on the site, elements of which are embedded in the core of the building. Catherine Gordon also makes the point that, whilst many complete and immaculate 18th century houses survive across the country, the architectural re-modelling process gleaned from the archive and the clues hidden just beneath the Court's surfaces, make a valuable contribution to our understanding of 18th century building practices. This is a significance which we have barely begun to unravel.

There is also a sense of standing on an architectural watershed, as the decorative details range, even in the same room (e.g. the Saloon), from the late Rococo to the early Neo-Classical, marking the moment when Brown left off the house, turned his full attention to the Park and made way for Adam in three of the ground floor rooms. The 6th Earl's penchant for the new Neo-classical style did not bring about an abrupt rejection of the rococo furniture and decoration already in place or on order for Croome; evidently the two styles were not considered to be as incompatible as generally, or later, supposed. At Croome, both within the architectural detail and the furniture that was commissioned for the interiors, this combination of styles sits harmoniously alongside each other and adds to the architectural and decorative significance of the Court as testimony to a particular point in time where styles were changing.

In addition to this evolution in style that we notice more readily with hindsight, there may also have been a degree of the 6th Earl exercising his thriftiness: re-using and salvaging elements such as panelling and chimneypieces (e.g. in the Billiard Room G14 and his bedroom F8) and also preserving previous decorative elements out of a sense of

nostalgia for his beloved elder brother and respect for his father. After all, he had grown up in the Court. The resulting idiosyncrasies and imperfections only serve to give Croome's architectural interiors more personality, individuality and human 'warmth', which is a significant element of the emotional feel of the Court's architecture. It is warm, human and welcoming, rather than cold, austere and overpowering. As William Dean states, "*Go to Blenheim, for grandeur; but to Croome for comfort!*"⁴³⁵

As well as the Court's *historic* architectural significance, its present significance is largely that it has survived into the 21st century essentially structurally unaltered from its conception under the 6th Earl. It underwent no Victorian re-modelling or additions, nothing has been added on or taken away and the only changes have been pretty reversible cosmetic ones. It is one of those rare places where a single vision is still clear.

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown

Ranking: International

Capability Brown's international reputation is as a landscape gardener and the inventor of the Natural English landscape style, not as an architect, but Croome is significant because he was responsible for executing the re-modelling of the house for the 6th Earl, not just the designing of the Park. As Brown's first major architectural commission, Croome was a highly promising demonstration of the sheer versatility of his talent.



It was Brown's first big commission and the first grand project where he had overall control of the works (notwithstanding the 6th Earl's firm hand on the tiller). However, as we have seen, he was probably acting not as a fully-fledged architect in today's sense, but more as a Clerk of Works. He undoubtedly had a lot of input, guidance and advice from the 6th Earl's friend and gentleman-architect, Sanderson Miller. Exactly what the extent of the input was and what the working relationship was like between Brown, 6th Earl and Miller, is not known, but the 6th Earl did write to Miller in 1752: "*Dear Miller, Whatever merits it [Croome] may in future boast it will be ungrateful not to acknowledge you as the primary author...*" although the context of the reference suggests that he was crediting Miller with the overall concept rather than the house itself.

In architectural terms, Brown's significance as an architect, designer, or clerk of works is comparatively modest. Designing and building houses and ornamental buildings (and the Court is in many senses just a very large ornamental building) was something that he could do and did do, very capably, but mainly because they were an integral element of a designed landscape. In 'Capability' Brown's landscapes the main house was a key part of his careful composition. In 1795, William Mason wrote in a letter to Humphry Repton: "*I am uniformly of the opinion, that where a place is to be formed, he who disposes the ground and arranges the plantation ought to fix the situation at least, if not determine the shape and size of the ornamental buildings. Brown, I know, was ridiculed for turning architect, but I always thought he did so from a kind of necessity having*

⁴³⁵ William Dean, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D'Abitôt - Hortus Croomensis*, 1824.

found the great difficulty which must frequently have occurred to him in forming a picturesque whole, where the previous building had been ill-placed, or of improper dimensions”.

In 1840, John Claudius Loudon wrote of Brown: *“The many good houses built under his direction, prove him to have been no mean proficient in an art, the practice of which he found, from experience, to be inseparable from landscape gardening”.*

In all, Brown successfully accomplished nineteen important architectural commissions, including Cadland, Claremont, Corsham Court, Fisherwick, Flambards, Newnham Paddox, Nuneham Courtenay, Redgrave, Springhill (also for Lord Coventry), Tong, Warwick Castle and of course Croome Court. Croome was an essential training ground for Brown. Newnham Paddox (Warwickshire), re-built by Brown in 1753 for Lord Denbigh, bears huge external architectural resemblance to Croome and, like Croome, owes much to the towered-Palladian house that Sanderson Miller designed at Hagley. The external double flight of entrance steps and portico recur on later designs like Claremont, Surrey, of 1771-4. The design for the Saloon at Croome prepared the way for Brown’s later grand interiors, such as the picture gallery at Corsham Court, Wiltshire, (1761-4). It is also interesting to note how Miller’s influence persisted in some of Brown’s later commissions, notably the smaller Gothic designs at Burton Constable, Yorkshire (1772-3) and at Burghley House, Northants (1756-78).

But of all these, Croome was the earliest, his first big commission following his departure from the security of Stowe, and Brown himself described Croome as his *‘first and favourite child’*. In Jane Brown’s chronological list of the most important places in Brown’s life, including where he was born, grew up, where he met his wife Bridget, and his career beginnings at Stowe, Croome features way up there at number eleven⁴³⁶.

Whether what Brown realised in the shape of Croome Court was architecturally accomplished is another matter. If not a great architect, he was an entirely competent, if workmanlike, one. Humphry Repton was convinced of his skills: *“Mr Brown’s fame as an architect seems to have been eclipsed by his celebrity as a landscape gardener...But when I consider the number of excellent works in architecture designed and executed by him, it becomes an act of injustice to his memory to record that, if he was superior to all in what related to his own particular profession, he was inferior to none in what related to the comfort, convenience, taste and propriety of design in the several mansions and other buildings which he planned.”* In his 1824 guide book to Croome, William Dean, Croome’s Head Gardener, described the Court as *‘finely picturesque and powerful’*. By 1903, Country Life described it as being in a *“solid, formal unimaginary style. It is low and plain...”* Later still, some commentators have been less kind: *“...[His] first experiment at architecture manifested versatility, if little originality in planning and design. Finish is not a quality easily achieved by an amateur...”*⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ Jane Brown, Map of Lancelot’s England, *The Omnipotent Magician*, xiv-xv

⁴³⁷ James Lees Milne, *The Age of Adam*, p.157-8

But as the place where he began his career in earnest it was certainly of huge significance to him personally and, along with the prospect of other commissions secured for him by Miller,⁴³⁸ it had given him enough security to set himself up in independent practice. The significance of Brown's achievement at Croome and his experience of tackling the re-modelling of the house is that Croome is the place where he worked out his future career path and identified where, amongst all his many skills, his real talent lay. *"So there he was, out in the soggy meadows at Croome, working out his professional identity. He had little wish to design houses or build them, but felt honour bound to have the buildings in the right places for the good of his effects, knowing that he had to deal with the buildings to win his park commissions."*⁴³⁹

Lancelot has been called the architect of Croome and, in the subsidiary meaning of a person who brings about a specified thing, then of course, he was. He was the visionary who saw the whole landscape and the *building in the landscape*, and he possessed the practical abilities to bring vision and ideas into existence⁴⁴⁰. As the place where this process was played out, Croome Court is arguably significant for showing Brown that his future did *not* lie in architecture per se.

He understood drainage better than perhaps any other architect of his time thanks to his landscaping work. He was a master of soil engineering long before such a discipline existed. His complex drainage systems, as at Croome, turned bogs into meadows and kept it that way for 250 years.

Brown was also significant to the 6th Earl of Coventry not only as a valued craftsman and the 'magician' who conjured house and garden out of the morass, and continued to contribute and advise on developments, but also as a life-long friend. He was 35 when he started at Croome, and he continued to work for Lord Coventry until his death over thirty years later in 1782. It was possibly because his relationship with Lord Coventry was on such friendly terms that he tolerated being paid up to two years in arrears⁴⁴¹. After 1766, Brown continued to visit Croome, more as a guest than as a paid retainer, and had an almost fatherly affection for the place.⁴⁴² It was after dinner with Lord Coventry at his London house in Piccadilly that Brown collapsed and died in February 1783, and the monument to Brown in Croome Park testifies to his patron's regard and respect for his *'inimitable and creative genius'*.

From Lord Coventry's few surviving letters to Brown (of 1766 and 1772) it is clear that he greatly depended on Brown: on 3rd November 1766 he wrote mysteriously to Brown: *"I shall not leave this place till tomorrow fortnight, which I do not mention from any hopes I entertain of seeing you here within that time, but I should be wanting to myself if I threw away any chance of such an event by neglecting to acquaint you with my motions. I don't know that Croome ever stood*

⁴³⁸ Charlecote, Warwick, Packington, Kirtlington, Wakefield Lawn, perhaps West Wycombe and Belhus (*The Omnipotent Magician* p.76)

⁴³⁹ Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, p.85.

⁴⁴⁰ Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, p.85.

⁴⁴¹ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.105

⁴⁴² Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician*, p.292

*more in need of your assistance, or that the master ever wished it more ardently. He is very truly your sincere friend...*⁴⁴³ He spoke openly of his considerable personal loss at Brown's death and the ideals and ambitions they had shared for more than twenty years in making his country home at Croome. In 1793 (ten years after Brown's death) he wrote to Humphry Repton that he '*certainly held him [Brown] very high as an artist and esteemed him as a most sincere friend*'.⁴⁴⁴ The monument he erected to Brown's achievement at Croome still stands in the Park today as a permanent testimony to their creative relationship.

Even contemporary writers were aware of the significance Brown had for Croome and it for him. Arthur Young wrote in 1801: "*Brown spent much of his time at Croome; it was his favourite residence: he never found himself so much at home as when there, nor at any time so happy. As he began, so he was desirous of ending his career there, as he frequently, in conversation with Lord Coventry, expressed a wish to be buried there: but some time after this, having purchased an estate in Huntingdon, and his family having thought that he had intimated a desire to be interred upon it, was considered by Lord C. as having revoked his original intentions; though his Lordship informed the family that he could not possibly have any objection to complying with his request.*"⁴⁴⁵

When Brown died, his son Lance wrote to Lord Coventry in November 1783 seeking his approval for the epitaph on Brown's tomb. He referred to the "*great Friendship your Lordship honoured [sic] my Father with*".

For all these reasons, Croome therefore assumes great significance in Brown's architectural oeuvre and in the path his professional, and personal, life was to take.

Out of all Brown's many and accomplished landscape creations, and he undertook some 170 commissions in his three decades of self-employment and a relentlessly demanding career spanning thirty years, *The Omnipotent Magician* chooses to show Croome Court in its park, his '*first and favourite child*', on its dust jacket. At his death, it is estimated that over 4000 landscape parks had been created by a new generation of landscapers inspired by him⁴⁴⁶.

Sanderson Miller

Significance: National-International

The Court is also architecturally significant for its association with the gentleman-architect, Oxford friend and neighbour of the 6th Earl, Sanderson Miller. In terms of the *landscape*, Croome is one of several, including Packington, Wimpole, Prior Park and Belhus, where Miller advised before or at the same time as Brown, Miller designing in the capacity of adviser or friend of the owner.



Miller (Google)

⁴⁴³ Pakenham correspondence, from Camilla Beresford's research, 1996

⁴⁴⁴ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.127

⁴⁴⁵ Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, pp465-81

⁴⁴⁶ Exhibition Guide to *Capability Brown & the Landscapes of Middle England*, Compton Verney, 2011

With regard to the Court, it is certain that Brown's architectural designs for Croome were strongly influenced, if not guided by Miller and, given that the 6th Earl himself had strong views and kept his hand firmly on the tiller, one can only assume that Brown would not have been left to his own devices in coming up with the approach to the re-modelling of Croome. Brown may even, given that this was his first major architectural commission, have been grateful for the advice.

Miller's input at Croome was crucially important and significant in several ways: he advised the 6th Earl on modifications to the river and park before the latter had even inherited. It was he to whom the young George William wrote in anguish and grief upon the death of his older brother. It was he who met and 'discovered' Brown at Stowe, he who invited Brown to see the improvements on his estate at Radway and he who orchestrated Brown's first visit to Croome. He helped the 6th Earl to crystallise his vision, understood the feasibility of the scheme and recognised in Brown the rare qualities that might satisfy his friends' ambition. He thus appears to have acted as an invaluable combination of artistic adviser and arbiter of taste, sounding board, trusted friend and confidant to the 6th Earl. The close resemblance of Croome Court to Miller's slightly later design for Hagley, and Miller's early involvement in the project have given rise to the suggestion that he was the architect of Croome. Indeed, there is Coventry's comment in his letter to Miller of 1752: *'Whatever merits it [Croome] may in future time boast, it will be ungrateful not to acknowledge you the primary Author'*.⁴⁴⁷

However, this quotation could be misleading in that it probably refers to the scheme at Croome as a whole, not just the house, and that Lord Coventry was expressing his gratitude to Miller for his vital inspiration and advice in the initial tentative stages of the project and encouraging him to realise his ambitions. In view of Miller's early friendship and discussions about Croome and the early landscaping works with the then Lord Deerhurst, this seems likely. Having said this, Miller's professional advice at the inception of the project was undeniably an important influence on the design of the Court. There is little doubt that Miller's input also included the inspiration for the outline scheme for the house as the focus of the designed landscape, although it seems from the accounts that Brown was responsible for the finished design.

Either way, Miller's involvement was crucial in providing invaluable advice and encouragement during the formative period of the ideas for Croome. In terms of Miller's architectural portfolio, Croome is one of the few actual houses he was involved with and one of the few buildings where he advised adopting a classical style. Perhaps it was actually George William who persuaded him towards a more pre-existing classical statement. Miller did produce some other classical buildings, the main one being Hagley in North Worcestershire, Croome's almost identical twin sister, built by him almost contemporaneously with Croome, and the Shire Hall in Warwick, but the majority of his architectural work was in the Gothic revival style, such as Arbury Hall, Oxfordshire and the Great Hall at Lacock Abbey. However, he is especially known for the evocative mock 'ruined' castles he created at Hagley, Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire and Ingestre Hall ,

⁴⁴⁷ L. Dickens & M. Stanton (eds), *An Eighteenth Century Correspondence*, London, 1910

Staffordshire, though this last has since been demolished. He had also, of course, altered his own house at Radway in the Gothick style and built a picturesque thatched cottage, a sham castle and massive octagonal tower with painted glass in the windows that Coventry had found for him in a farmhouse near Malvern.⁴⁴⁸

Other places which he contributed to are Wroxton Abbey in Oxfordshire (Gothick dovecote and follies), Upton House in Warwickshire (classical temple), Sham Castle in Somerset (folly) and Siston Court in South Gloucestershire ('pepper pot' gate houses and lodge). His skills at landscaping, water features, hydraulics and Gothic revival follies also survive at Enville, Staffordshire, close to Hagley and equidistant from Croome. These places and his experiments with building encouraged him to write to his friend Lord Deerhurst (later 6th Earl of Coventry) in 1747 in order to fire him with enthusiasm: "...Mr Talbot [John Ivory Talbot of Lacock Abbey] tells me your Lordship's spirit of improvement begins to exert itself. I have no idea how you can live within a day's ride of two such places as Wroxton Abbey and Hagley. Were you to see them but once you would return with Ideas as enlarged as a poets would be the first time he reads Homer and Virgil."⁴⁴⁹ Interestingly, Jill Tovey has pointed out that, in 1747, Hagley itself had not yet been built by Miller, but it is probable that Athenian Stuart was already involved there (he built the first Greek Revival temple in the country at Hagley) and Miller had designed a sham castle folly for Lord Lyttelton in the park in the 1740s.

Together with Hagley, Croome therefore takes on significance within Sanderson Miller's work as a surviving example of his lesser-used classical style, and as one of the few houses that he was involved with, as opposed to follies and landscapes, very early on in his life and architectural 'career'.

Sanderson Miller is now acknowledged to have played an influential role in the development of the English landscape style, one of England's greatest claims to artistic fame. Yet he has been somewhat eclipsed by Brown, his illustrious successor, who became, and has remained, a household name.

Robert Adam

Ranking: International

The fact that the name of one of the greatest British architects of the late 18th century, Robert Adam, is associated with Croome Court gives the place huge significance. One of four brothers who all became successful architects, it was Robert who was the undoubted genius of the family and the one who is remembered by history.



Adam (NPG)

Adam was a maniacal high achiever, a workaholic and an inventive genius, bubbling and fizzing with ideas. He had spent three years in Rome studying classical ruins, enlarging his ideas of architecture and improving his

⁴⁴⁸ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.104

⁴⁴⁹ Letter from Miller to Lord Deerhurst, 3rd August 1747, WRO (CET, Family box 5, F32/37).

draughtsmanship under his tutors Piranesi and Clérisseau, and it was the former who told him that he had *'more genius for the true noble architecture than any other Englishman ever was in Italy.'* He returned from this Grand Tour of Italy in 1758 heralding a new style of interior decoration, and this was when his genius emerged.

The 6th Earl of Coventry was one of his first English patrons, from at least 1760 onwards. It was Adam who made the most important architectural and decorative contribution to the Court, in the emerging Neo-Classical style. He designed the plasterwork decoration and furnishings for three of the principal rooms: The Library, The Tapestry Room and, most significantly, The Long Gallery. He also produced a proposal for Lord Coventry's Bedroom (F8).

If Adam's association with Croome is significant for Croome, Croome was also significant for Adam, as it played a key role in launching his career. Croome, even before Kedleston, is where his ideas started to be put into practice and the Court is thus an extremely important example of his early, almost tentative work and style. Osterley is perhaps the best example of Adam's interiors which preserves the integrity of his aesthetic. His later interior decorative work (such as at Harewood) became much more intense, complicated and even fussy – it was condemned by Horace Walpole in 1775 as *"all gingerbread, filigraine and fan-painting"*.

Croome was not only the place where he began his architectural career, but his involvement there spanned over thirty years of his career: the earliest date for a design by Adam for the house is 1760, (for the unexecuted Library, or Long Gallery, ceiling), and the latest was 1791 (for a gateway). It was also the place that hosted Adam's earliest known essay in Gothic interior decoration⁴⁵⁰ – in the new Church built by Brown.

A large quantity of Adam's drawings for Croome survive, in the Sir John Soane Museum, and in the possession of the Croome Estate Trust, which is in itself significant, given that no full set of drawings survives for any of his country house commissions. Not only do these drawings include plasterwork and architectural elevations, but associated fixtures and furniture designed specifically for Croome's interiors.

Taken as a whole, Adam's work at Croome was among the most significant country house interiors of English Neo-classicism, and the Long Gallery is believed to be the first room that he designed in its entirety, including the elevations, plasterwork, fixtures and furnishings. He would go on to design and create many masterpieces of interior and architectural design, such as Harewood (1758-71), Kedleston (1759), Syon (1760-69), Nostell (1760-70), Osterley (1761-80), Luton Hoo (1766-70), Newby (1767-85) and Kenwood (1767-79), where he designed everything meticulously from carpets to door furniture. No previous architect had attempted such comprehensive schemes and, as with 'Capability' Brown, his commission at Croome was early in his emerging career and is therefore of huge significance.

⁴⁵⁰ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.43

Robert Adam was a great British architect but was equally, if not more brilliant, as a decorator and furniture designer, for which his name is still a household word. It is the synthesis of architecture, design and planning that stands at the heart of Adam's achievement. His influence spread rapidly all over England and beyond, as far as Russia and America, and his output was prodigious. Most of this enormous body of work, as at Croome, was in pre-existing houses; the challenges of working within a given space stimulated his inventive imagination, and he became a master at turning awkward situations to advantage⁴⁵¹.

The period from 1755 to 1785 is sometimes called the Age of Adam and the 'Adam style' is a world phenomenon. It is exceptional in that no other architect, neither Jones, Wren, Chambers nor Pugin, had a style named after him. It does not apply to architecture in the normal sense of plans and elevations but rather to mainly interior embellishments: chimney-pieces, ceilings, wall decorations and furniture and the like. This is particularly relevant and significant in relation to Croome because this is precisely what he carried out in the Court's interiors.

In her important publication, *The Genius of Robert Adam, His Interiors*, Eileen Harris, Architectural Historian and authority on Adam, focuses on just nineteen of Adam's most complete and accomplished interior projects, which are but a fraction of his total oeuvre. Croome is one of them, putting it right up there with the giant names in great English country houses.

Significance of the main craftsmen involved

Ranking: National-International

The craftsmen who worked at Croome in the mid 18th century under Brown and Adam were the leading designers and skilled tradesmen of the day. Their names recur in countless other large and important country and London houses of the 18th century aristocracy. Testimony to their skill and reliability was the fact that many of them worked for Brown and Adam on so many other commissions, not just at Croome. They were competent craftsmen in frequent employment. Working for the exacting and visionary 6th Earl of Coventry would also have tested their capabilities. What they achieved at Croome Court is a collective masterpiece of craftsmanship, bridging a watershed of decorative styles, realised in timber, stone, marble and plaster. It is an achievement that is still marveled at, admired and emulated today.

Sefferin Alken is one of the principal master craftsmen whose name leaps out at Croome. He was an incredibly accomplished master carver, being able to work in both wood and stone. Between 1761 and 1770, he carried out much of the specialist carver's work at Croome. The 6th Earl (and Adam) must have been aware of his very considerable talents as a carver, for his craftsmanship is evident throughout the property as a whole, from the suited pier tables, pier glasses and grisaille panel frames in the most significant room in the house, the Long Gallery, as well as outside, in the carved stone basket of flowers adorning the pediment of the Temple Greenhouse in the Park. Alken worked not only for Robert Adam but another leading architect of the time, William Chambers. He worked not only at Croome, but also at well-known places such as Blenheim Palace, Kew Gardens, Shardeloes and Stourhead, to name but a few.

⁴⁵¹ *The Genius of Robert Adam – His Interiors*, Eileen Harris

John Hobcraft is another craftsman who was integral to what was achieved at Croome in the mid-18th century. A master carver and joiner, he worked on almost all the Court's interiors under both Brown and Adam. His bills for the work done are huge, filling several pages and spanning several years. As well as his work at Croome Court, Hobcraft also worked with Adam on Coventry House in Piccadilly, London, which must indicate that his work was of the highest quality. It seems that, for Adam, he did the rougher, initial carpentry work, leaving the finer detail to Sefferin Alken. Hobcraft was a protégé of Brown and in the 1760s he worked on Brown's buildings elsewhere, including Corsham Court, Newnham Paddox, Castle Ashby, Claremont, Redgrave and Broadlands. He also designed the Gothic chapel at Audley End in 1768. A tiny, charming insight into Hobcraft's input at Croome is revealed by a bill for 'a case for Lord Deerhurst's nine pins' in 1765 – the 6th Earl had this master craftsman make a toy for his eldest son.⁴⁵²

Joseph Rose Junior was the most skilled and famous member of the firm Joseph Rose & Co, originally belonging to his uncle. Fascinatingly, he was probably present at all of the firm's commissions from his early teens, a real example of young talent. He was admitted to the Worshipful Company of Plaisterers in 1765. He gained a classical education during his travels to Rome in 1768 and other parts of Italy in 1769 and carried out much Neo-classical work for Robert Adam. Not only that, but "*he was probably the guiding influence in turning the firm's attention to the Adam style and they jointly set up a series of classical moulds to the plasterwork at Croome Court*".⁴⁵³



Rose (NPG)

The list of Joseph Rose Junior's other commissions is very long and significant indeed, the majority for Robert Adam and William Chambers. He did the plasterwork for two of Adam's early commissions, Syon and Shardeloes, and also worked for him on Kedleston, Kenwood, Harewood, Luton, Nostell Priory, Landsdowne House, and 20 St James's Square. He also worked for Adam's rival James Wyatt on the Pantheon in London and at Wyatt's country house commissions of Beaudesert, Ridgely and Castle Coole. For his skill at Claydon House, Buckinghamshire he was called '*the first man in the Kingdom as a Plaisterer*'.⁴⁵⁴

The sculptor and stonemason **Joseph Wilton** was responsible for the major decorative marble elements of the interiors: the chimneypiece with Nymphs of Flora in the Long Gallery, designed by Adam, has been described as Wilton's *pièce de résistance*. He also provided the lapis lazuli tablet to John Wildsmith for the chimneypiece for the Tapestry Room, a stone that symbolizes wealth and prestige due to its rarity and therefore cost. Not only significant for the skilled work that he carried out, Wilton also seems to have had a hand in the direction of Adam's career path.



Wilton (NPG)

⁴⁵² F62/30. As Jill Tovey has commented, it is so sad that the father's pride should turn into such anger later, when he and his son were estranged.

⁴⁵³ Geoffrey Beard (1967), p.267

⁴⁵⁴ James Parker, Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, p.83

Wilton met Robert Adam in Italy in 1755 during Adam's Grand Tour and it was Wilton (who was travelling with William Chambers) who introduced Adam to Clérisseau, the artist and antiquarian who would have a profound effect on Adam's future style. As well as Croome, Wilton also worked for Adam at Osterley and Syon, two hugely significant Neo-classical houses. Wilton was principally known as a sculptor of chimneypieces, but he was given the post of State-coach carver and in 1764 the post of Sculptor to his Majesty.

Francesco Vassalli is yet another major figure in the roll-call of significant craftsmen responsible for creating Croome Court's decorative interior. He was a Stuccatore or Master Plasterer working under Brown from 1755. It is Vassalli's Rococo stucco or plasterwork which sets the tone in the majority of the rooms on the *piano nobile* (as opposed to Rose's work in Adam's three Neo-classical interiors). However, his contemporary work at Hagley is even more exuberant, with plasterwork seemingly dripping down the walls in the Entrance Hall and the Saloon. He also worked at Duncombe Park, Ditchley Park, Aske Hall, Townley Hall, Castle Howard (Temple of the Four Winds), Petworth and Shugborough.

Significance of specific interiors

(Refer to the Gazetteer in Appendix 1 for a complete listing of each space with the ICOMOS international rating of significance: A,B,C,D & intrusive)

The Long Gallery, The Tapestry Room and The Library

Ranking: International

Croome was re-built by Brown, to Palladianising designs provided by Sanderson Miller, but it is Adam's three early Neo-Classical interiors (the Long Gallery, the Library, and the 'lost' Tapestry Room) that elevate Croome.

The Long Gallery is the most important space within Croome Court, its *pièce de résistance*. Despite what must have been enormous expense, the time pressure of getting things done for the 6th Earl's second marriage in 1764, plus his acquisition of a new London house in need of refurbishment, the perfection of this room was not compromised. It was the principal purpose of Adam's employment at Croome: to finish the interior of the newly constructed and largest room in the house, and is the first instance of Adam being responsible for the totality – architectural treatment, decoration and furnishing - of a great interior. It was his most important work in the house and is Croome's most significant space: it features in all authoritative works on Adam's architectural achievements and consistently inspires awe from everyone, expert or lay visitor, who enters the room. Its inherent beauty, serenity and strong sightlines out into the designed landscape, visible through 180 degrees from its windows, lend it an almost tangible Spirit of Place. This has been recognized as a Conservation Performance Indicator objective for the Court, as a quality of paramount importance to be respected, preserved and enhanced.



The Long Gallery looking south in 2008 (NTPL)

In her book *The Genius of Robert Adam*, Eileen Harris comments that Adam managed to deal with the problem of long galleries (as at Croome, Syon, Osterley, Harewood) which were long, narrow, potentially dull spaces and render them interesting and entertaining and to give them some focus⁴⁵⁵. However, one could argue that at Croome, the Long Gallery, irrespective of its decoration and furnishing, was never going to be dull and didn't really lack a focus – it had the spectacular 180 degree views out over Brown's designed landscape with the inner and outer eye-catchers to enliven the scene. The canted bay acts as a grandstand in the landscape and the landscape carries the drama from the room. It is hard to think of another Adam house where the landscape is seen in quite such an 'opera-box' way.⁴⁵⁶ What Adam achieved in the interior adds another layer to its beauty and its significance.

He was rarely responsible for all the furniture in his interiors. However, not only was he responsible for all the furniture in the Long Gallery at Croome, but it was the first fully decorated and furnished Adam room anywhere, completed in 1765. There are only three others, and these are at Osterley: the dining room (1767), the state bedroom and Etruscan dressing room (both 1775). The fact that Croome was the first gives it groundbreaking, international significance.

Eileen Harris describes the significance of the seat furniture designed by Adam for this room.⁴⁵⁷ *"The Croome Court gallery is one of the earliest rooms, if not the very first, wholly decorated and furnished by Adam. Apart from the fixed pier glasses and tables, he provided a large suite of moveable seat furniture consisting of ten mahogany stools described as 'scrole chairs' or 'scrole sofas' covered with blue morocco and eight similarly upholstered armchairs with fluted seat rails and round fluted legs with block capitals. These are his first fully neo-classical pieces of seat furniture"*.

⁴⁵⁵ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.6

⁴⁵⁶ Prof. John Wilton-Ely, Visit to Croome Court, June 2010

⁴⁵⁷ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, pp.52-3

The fire-grate and fender for this room is said to be the earliest securely dated fireplace furniture by Adam, sadly no longer *in situ*.

Many of the Adam-designed fixtures and pieces of furniture for the Long Gallery are now in national and international museums: pieces of Croome have found their way from Worcestershire to New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, London, Edinburgh, witness to their huge significance and influence in terms of the history of design, patronage and taste. Adam's design for the Croome's Gallery was the most splendid of all the spaces at Croome; even in its current empty state without its statuary and furnishings it is still incredibly impressive. However, happily, elements of it are still in the Coventry collection and, in due course, the unity of the original design intention for this space will be able to be witnessed once again.

The Tapestry Room

The idea of a tapestry room was not new – there was a splendid example already at Hagley of 1758, but Croome was the first one of only five such rooms in England to be decorated with the cutting-edge Gobelins tapestries designed by Boucher-Neilson-Soufflot. The others were Moor Park (Hertfordshire), Weston Park (Staffordshire), Osterley (Middlesex) and Newby Hall (Yorkshire). The tapestry chairs at Croome were also the first oval-backed designs of their type, which became widely imitated during this period. The 6th Earl was quick off the mark after the Seven Years War, going shopping in Paris to indulge his sophisticated taste for the finest French furniture, mirrors and tapestries. He was the first English aristocrat to commission these new tapestries from the Royal manufactory. In their 1948 sale catalogue of the Tapestry Room's French and English furniture, Sotheby's described them as "*French tapestries with panels of figures designed by Boucher with swags and birds on a rose-coloured floral ground; French furniture of the highest quality and modest proportions; English commodes in the French taste designed by the outstanding British classical architect [Adam] – this marriage of French and English 18th century taste produced a decorative scheme which was, perhaps, unsurpassed*".⁴⁵⁸ As a man with an income of ten thousand a year, known for his taste and elegance, the chance of owning a set of tapestries never yet made for any patron, even the French King, with medallion pictures designed by the famous Boucher against the glorious crimson damask ground, all at the low cost of the basse lisse looms, must have been irresistible and also a huge trophy commission for the 6th Earl.

Of all the rooms at Croome, the Tapestry Room is the one most inextricably linked to the 6th Earl, indeed it is almost part of the essence of him and his French taste, the one on which he really stamped his own personal mark and taste. Unlike the Long Gallery, which is much more 'Adam style', the Tapestry Room is '6th Earl of Coventry-style', a bold mixture of Rococo and French neo-classicism.

Furthermore, whilst the Tapestry Room is one of the three important Adam interiors at Croome, it becomes apparent from an examination of developments at the Royal Gobelins manufactory in Paris that the style, design and subject matter of the tapestries and their en-suite association with the seat furniture were not conceived by Robert Adam. The *Tentures de Boucher* tapestries were being undertaken well before the 6th

⁴⁵⁸ Sotheby's London, Sale of Highly Important French and English Furniture, The property of the Countess of Coventry and the Trustees of the Croome Estate, 25th June 1948.

Earl's visit to the manufactory and Robert Adam, as is sometimes supposed, did not design either the tapestries, the tapestry covers for the furniture or the furniture itself. Lord Coventry was the first purchaser of these new tapestries; four Englishmen followed his example: William Weddell (Newby), Sir Henry Bridgeman (Weston), Sir Lawrence Dundas (Moor Park) and Robert Child (Osterley). Robert Adam worked for all these men and may have helped to spread the word but he did not initiate the idea. The Croome tapestry room was an exceptional example of Adam's early response to contemporary French taste and inevitably had an impact on the form taken by his other clients. Eileen Harris states that "*We can be quite certain that the idea was passed by the Gobelins in some form to their English customers and did not emanate from Adam. There are no Adam designs, or bills for designs for any of the tapestry furniture made for Croome, Newby, Moor Park or Osterley*".⁴⁵⁹ This is not, however, to diminish these items' significance; on the contrary they were cutting-edge pieces of decorative and artistic design and took the art of tapestry weaving to new heights. The en suite tapestry-covered chairs are the earliest known English seats with oval backs characteristic of the Neo-classical style, which is why their classicism may seem to us, with hindsight, somewhat hesitant and unconvincing.⁴⁶⁰



One of the Tapestry Room settees by Mayhew & Ince, 1769 (*Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

Apart from the room's 18th century significance, it also has a considerable and surprising 20th century importance. It is, in fact, not a surviving historic interior, but a complete replica of one, and as such, a prime example of the mid-twentieth century trade in architectural salvage and the American appetite for English historic interiors at a time when their value in this country was at an all time low and their fate was hanging in the balance. The first and second world wars exacerbated the landed classes' problems of falling incomes due to the Great Depression which had begun in the 1870s, and added

⁴⁵⁹ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.47-8

⁴⁶⁰ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, p.47

the burdens of death duties and lack of manpower to continue the effective management of great estates. The country house crisis that followed fuelled the antiques trade in the UK and the transatlantic trade in the European fine and decorative arts, in response to the seemingly unending thirst of the wealthy self-made American business men⁴⁶¹ and American museums to own such items, even entire historic European rooms.

In Croome's case, once the tapestries and matching furniture had been sold by the 9th Earl in the 1900s to resolve his son's bankruptcy, the rest of the room fell victim to this trade and in 1948 was dismantled, crated and shipped to America, via the dealer Wildenstein and gifted by the Kress foundation to the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The room was there miraculously re-united with its tapestries and furniture, where it remains safely to this day, testimony to its international significance in terms of historic decorative design and witness also to the poignant stripping-out of so many of England's finest treasure houses. The 1959 Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin described the Kress Foundation's gift as '*one of the most important donations of decorative art ever made to any museum at any time*⁴⁶² and went on to say that it was the only complete tapestry room that had left England and, more significantly, that it was the prototype of those remaining there. '*The tapestry room from Croome is a masterpiece of its kind, and no visitor can fail to be moved by the splendor of its "crimson sea" of tapestry*'.

Croome's replica room also has a curious and poignant significance, as a remarkably accomplished 1949 re-creation of a displaced internationally important historic interior, and as a physical reminder of the doom of so many English country houses.

In terms of key sightlines, the Tapestry Room looks south towards the Park Seat and across the length of the 'river' towards Dunstall Castle. Its link with the landscape may have been as an indoor Temple of Venus, as there was not one out in the Park, as referenced by the iconographic subject matter of the tapestries depicting The Four Seasons and aspects of virtuous love.

The Library

This is one of the three Adam rooms at Croome and would have been an important space to the 6th Earl both for himself personally and as a space where he could have shown off his taste, learning and interests via his impressive library books. Its en suite decorative concept underlines this: the mahogany bookcases married perfectly with the plasterwork detail, the carved detail of the imposing Venetian window and the proportions of the room. They were simpler than those at Nostell Priory of 1766-80, and more in keeping with Lord Coventry's taste and the character of Croome in general.

The 6th Earl's decision to have a three quarter-length portrait of himself with his books at hand painted by Allan Ramsay⁴⁶³ in 1764 and to hang it over the Library chimneypiece is a measure of the importance he attached to this room. It is also surely not insignificant that the Earl chose to have himself painted in a red velvet suit, his favourite colour, whilst the damask festoon curtains supplied by France & Bradburn for this room were also red:

⁴⁶¹ Such as J.P. Morgan, Samuel H. Kress, William Randolph Hearst, John D. Rockefeller, Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Mellon and John Paul Getty.

⁴⁶² The Croome Tapestry Room formed one part of the Kress Foundation gift; the other part included French 18th century furniture, Sèvres porcelain and other objects from the collections of the Lords Hillingdon.

⁴⁶³ This iconic painting is still in the collection.

crimson silk Genoa Damask. It would have been his preserve at Croome, and the jib door fitted into the bookcase on the north wall led underneath the main stairs to his dressing room on the north front, an even more secluded place for gentleman to retire to.



The Library in 1915 (*Country Life*)

The books that he amassed here also reflect the significance that the function of this space held for him and his obsessive interests: they included a copy of Adam's *Spalatro* in a red morocco binding, Brettingham's *Holkham*; Paine's *Plans*, Chambers *Treatise*, Leoni's edition of Palladio; Palladio's *Fabbriche Antiche* and several other architectural books. The Library also contained books on scientific, botanical and horticultural matters, such as Catesby's *Natural History of the Carolinas* (1732) and Thornton's *Temple of Flora* (1812); these were of the greatest possible magnificence and astonishing grandeur.

The Saloon

Ranking: National

This magnificent reception room was predictably recognized by William Dean, not for its interiors or contents, but as one of those with key links and sightlines with the landscape: "*Among the attractions of this room, not the least, is the delightful prospect which its windows command - over the fine verdant level of the park - diversified and adorned by its winding waters, its clustered trees, its spreading groves, its herds of noble deer; terminated on every side, by the grand sweep of woods, which bound the whole*".



The Saloon looking NE (*Country Life*)

Its double height and profusion of Rococo plasterwork has huge impact. It may well have represented, in the 6th Earl's time at least, a Temple of Fame or Temple of Worthies, hung as it was for most of its existence with important royal and family portraits as statements of political allegiance, family ancestry and key historical figures in the Coventry dynasty.

It contains one of the many as yet unresolved and intriguing questions about Croome's interiors, namely the authorship of the pair of classical marble chimneypieces on the north wall. Being classically inspired, with their Vitruvian scroll frieze and inlaid Greek key border in Siena marble to the hearth-stones, they are at odds with the Rococo Vassalli plasterwork in the rest of the room and decorative frames to the windows. This stylistic juxtaposition epitomizes the watershed nature of Croome's decorative styles and the development of the 6th Earl's personal taste.

The Dining Room

Ranking: National

This formal room is of course significant for its fine Rococo plasterwork by Francesco Vassalli and has been described as the finest example of it in the house. Not to deny or belittle this however, is another, later and literally over-lying significance that is keenly debated. This is the polychrome painted decorative scheme that was undertaken by the Hare Krishna in the early 1980s. It was carried out with care and reverence by a team of people in order to embellish it as their main reception room. Their brightly-coloured work has since been compromised as elements of the scheme were painted over and 'quietened down' by the last property developer. It is therefore technically inaccurate to refer to the room's present scheme as 'the Hare Krishna scheme'.

Nevertheless, like it or hate it (and we get both extremes), it never fails to elicit a response and trigger a debate. Whether people consider it to be a travesty of the finest plasterwork in the house, or a pleasingly colourful, playful approach, or just another

chapter of Croome's rich story that should be respected, it is extremely useful as a way of encouraging people to debate the meaning and value of heritage, historic country houses' layers and significances, the future of the Dining Room's present decorative scheme and by extension, the future presentation of the Court as a whole.



The Dining Room looking SW (NTPL)

It has been pointed out that, unlike some of the other late 20th century interventions to the Court, such as the large bath in the centre of F15 which has a detrimental impact on the *physical* structure of the Court not just arguably the *visual* perception, the Krishna decorative scheme is reversible at any time, now or in the future. It has resulted in no permanent damage to the fabric of the building.

Either way, even though this scheme has been modified, it represents what is probably the only surviving interior consciously conceived as an historic re-creation by the Hare Krishnas within an historic country house and, as such, is significant.

Aesthetic & design significance of landscape setting

Ranking: International

Croome has huge significance as a place that embodies design aesthetic and vision. The sheer indulgence, extravagance and imagination behind its creation are irrepressibly seductive. But it is the aesthetic and design of the landscape setting of the Court that is the cause of principle significance, rather than the Court itself. Indeed, in 1996, the National Trust took on the landscape *without* the house – it would not necessarily have done the reverse. However, the two are critical halves of the same whole and neither works properly without the other. The Court's synergy with the designed landscape is fundamental: house and park are inextricably inter-linked. It is the focal point of the Croome landscape, and also its principal ornament. The chief virtue of the house lies in its setting and as the focus of one of the great landscaped parks of England. It is hard for us to appreciate how revolutionary Brown's landscaping work must have seemed to an England accustomed to straight avenues and formal parterres⁴⁶⁴.

⁴⁶⁴ Simon Jenkins, *England's 1000 Best Houses*.

Because Croome was ‘Capability’ Brown’s first major independent commission, following his departure from service as Stowe’s Head Gardener, it has been described as the ‘fountainhead’ of the English Landscape Style. Certainly all the elements that characterise this style are to be found here in nascent form. The setting of the Court, whose mid-18th century re-modelling was overseen by Brown, within his first ‘natural’ landscaped Park, and their symbiotic relationship, thus give Croome huge aesthetic and design significance as a prime example of a Palladian house as the centrepiece of the landscape.



Croome Court from the south (WRO)

However, the intended meaning, emblemism or iconography at Croome must de facto be the work, imaginings and sensibilities of the 6th Earl of Coventry, through this long tenure of Croome, from the death of his father in 1751 (and his making a start even before then) to his own death in 1809. Croome Court was set in an ancient landscape where the Coventrys had been for centuries and their ancestry is reflected in the iconography of the outer eye-catchers and park buildings. The 6th Earl’s construct of house and park and landscape shows a unity of design over three-quarters of a century. Just as his vision of the landscape ran through Brown, Adam and Wyatt, his iconographic programme continued into his old age with the addition of the Coade stone sphinxes on the South Portico and the Druid and the Seasons in the garden. It was a single vision.⁴⁶⁵

Timothy Mowl is less convinced of the unity of vision, and regards Croome’s setting as an important rather than a beautiful landscape: “*Three well-known architect-designers, Lancelot Brown, Robert Adam and James Wyatt, all contributed to it, which suggests occasional bursts of interest rather than one united vision. The list of their works [in the landscape] covers a long chronological span from 1754, when Brown designed the Rotunda in the pleasure grounds before the new house was constructed...to when Broadway Tower was set up on Fish Hill to a bizarre ‘Saxon’ scheme by James Wyatt. Both the time span and the area covered by those 16 or more park buildings or features were too great for coherent beauty to result.*”⁴⁶⁶ This is a rather extreme view and does

⁴⁶⁵ Richard Wheeler, *Emblems & Expressionism at Croome*, 2011.

⁴⁶⁶ Timothy Mowl, *Historic Gardens of Worcestershire*, p.50

not appear to be one held by the majority of those who know Croome and the reading of the 6th Earl's tenacious, obsessive character that comes through from the archive.

Certainly, contemporary commentators admired Croome's beauty. In 1801, before the death of the 6th Earl, Arthur Young visited Croome and praised the Earl's creation in his *Annals of Agriculture*: "*Those only who have visited Croom [sic], are able to appreciate the beauties of this incomparable spot, for it is certainly the first in the number of those decorated seats of the nobility which have so justly contributed to render this country the garden of Europe; and that which serves to heighten our pleasure is, the circumstance that it is the creation of its present owner. The exertions which have been made in the course of a long life, almost entirely dedicated to a favourite pursuit, are at this time such exhibitions of rural scenery, of ornamental gardening, and of botanical curiosity, as are not, I question, to be altogether equalled in any other part of this island*".⁴⁶⁷

But no writer conjures up a better picture of the contemporary excitement and wonder provoked by the transformation of Croome's setting than William Dean, the last Head Gardener to the 6th Earl of Coventry. The 1824 guide book that he (probably with the help of a ghost writer) wrote for Croome captured the '*finely picturesque and powerful effect*' of Brown's design. He completes his account with a quote from a correspondent to the *Gentleman's Magazine* of August 1792. The writer has just returned from Croome and describes how he was charmed '*in the highest degree, as to the gratification of my eyes, for never did I see a more beautiful spot, nor any kept in such perfect order....a vast extent of ground, formerly a bog, is now adorned with islands and tufts of trees of every species, and watered round, in the most pleasing, and natural manner, possible...*' Such was Croome's contemporary impact. The reference to the 'natural manner' of the park is significant. For although Croome was a collective achievement (6th Earl, Sanderson Miller, Brown, Adam and Wyatt), it was a milestone in the career of its chief designer Capability Brown, the embodiment of English 18th century landscape gardening, the serene English landscape style. The Court was conceived at the heart of this landscape. Croome was Brown's first independent design of any scale, a work of vital importance that made his reputation, spawned a host of imitators and left an enduring impression on landscape design throughout the western world.⁴⁶⁸

The presence of the M5 motorway cutting through the park to the west of the Court⁴⁶⁹ serves as a reminder to people today of how important and precious this landscape is and increases its perceived significance. This sense has evolved relatively recently, because when the motorway was constructed in the 1960s, heritage values were different. Jill Tovey, Croome's long-standing archivist, has looked into how this aspect of Croome's recent past was regarded: "*At the time in 1960 the land was seen only as farmland, having been so for 20 years. With the sale of the house in 1948 Croome Park as an entity and a place of beauty had long since gone and there was no thought that the historic park would ever be restored, so the main concern was loss of productive land. It was certainly never seen as a 'brutal and undignified slicing through of the Park', perhaps particularly as it only sliced off the outer edge. If locals did object they would have had to complain to the Minister, but there's no record of that and in the late*

⁴⁶⁷ Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, pp465-81

⁴⁶⁸ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, pp.102-3

⁴⁶⁹ Tom Oliver described the snaking of the new M5 motorway through the western park as a "*perverse mockery of Hogarth's serpentine line of beauty*." *Resurgam – The Coventrys of Croome*, p.199

fifties people were more acquiescent so there were no marches and placard-waving, I think they saw it as inevitable progress. The main concern for the CET was the break-up of the farms so they asked for bridges of communication where that happened and they were satisfied that no houses had to be demolished”.

The lack of perceived significance of the designed landscape during the 1960s and 70s is further corroborated by John Henderson, who was appointed as the CET’s Land Agent in September 1969. He described the attitude at that time: *“To be honest the grounds were a mill stone. They produced no income but they required expenditure on clearance and re-planting and maintenance for access to the listed buildings and eye-catchers...the Brown Landscape wasn’t recognized as special, after all, the motorway had been driven straight through it. During my time at Croome the Department of Transport decided that the two-lane motorway, barely two years old, should be completely re-surfaced. This was wonderful as the old chibbled-up tarmac made excellent farm roads and forestry tracks. It was only a few years later that it was decreed that the motorway should have three lanes each way, which meant a complete re-build. This caused a massive upheaval as additional land on one side or the other had to be sold for the widening. There were five miles of it running through the Estate and four road and two farm bridges were affected. They could not be widened and had to be completely replaced. An evening for each bridge was designated. The motorway was closed, crowds gathered on the adjoining bridges and at the sound of a klaxon, the chosen bridge was blown up, to great cheers from the onlookers. Very exciting for us country folk – particularly seeing the big diggers move in to clear the debris with fantastic speed so that the motorway could be re-opened by the morning”.*⁴⁷⁰

Today, the notion of creating this physical gash through the designed landscape, right next to the estate village of High Green and isolating the Panorama Tower on the other side, would be regarded very differently, although the motorway’s presence is now tacitly accepted and, of course, it provides access for many visitors to Croome. Nevertheless, in people’s minds, particularly locally, it symbolizes how important it now is to protect and nurture Croome and shield the Court and its aesthetic setting from further assaults. It also illustrates the shift in people’s attitude and perceptions of the heritage value of landscape in general.

The recent siting of a large West Mercia Police storage building to the east of the park boundary is an example of where the significance of the Court’s setting within its landscape and the sightlines to and from the Court are now argued as being of the utmost importance. It was agreed that the views out from the park needed to be screened with planting to mitigate the potential impact on the aesthetic and design significance of the landscape setting. This galvanized staff, volunteers and local people⁴⁷¹ to combine in planting some 7000 trees over an area of about 10 acres to achieve the screening, a community effort that was captured on BBC’s Countryfile.

The on-going restoration of Brown’s landscape has also had an impact on the perceived significance of the Court. For so long, the Court stood marooned at the centre of the Park, unattainable and the apparently elusive major piece of the jigsaw. It acquired an almost ‘holy grail’ significance, with its setting being enhanced all the time and the

⁴⁷⁰ John Henderson, article in the Friends of Croome Newsletter, October 2011

⁴⁷¹ Others involved in planting came from Pershore College and staff from the National Trust’s Midlands (West) Regional Office.

obvious need to view that setting from the windows of the building. The restoration of the park raised the profile of the Court at its heart and increased local awareness of its plight and the need to re-unite with its restored landscape. This engendered greater support for the Court and a recognition of its significance as the other half of the whole.

Significance of the immediate setting & the Home Shrubbery

Ranking: National-International

The immediate setting of the Court is extremely significant to its aesthetic success as a Palladian mansion harmoniously situated within the landscape. The Court was consciously conceived and designed, as the main building in the Park, to be open to the landscape and visually unimpeded on three sides, with its functional service wings and ancillary buildings conveniently but discreetly positioned directly to the east. The Red [service] Wing, contemporary with the Court, is deliberately built of brick as opposed to the Bath stone facing of the Court in order to emphasize its lower hierarchical importance and was also carefully screened with trees and planting to the north and south so that the Court *appears* to be in splendid isolation. William Dean described this artifice in his 1824 Guide Book: “*Near the House, imperfectly appear, amid the greenwood shade, the domestic offices, which are very commodious and complete.*”⁴⁷² The approach from the north and west and the view from the south is thus controlled to display the Court within its immediate setting.

The Home Shrubbery to the south is a key element of the pleasure grounds and forms an important physical link and route between the Court and the Rotunda, the earliest of the Park buildings. Not only did it provide convenient and beautiful physical access between the two buildings, but its planting with rare shrubs and trees screened the service buildings, the stableblock and the Walled Garden, all of which lie immediately behind it to the north. The Home Shrubbery also acts as a screen to these elements for views towards the Court from the South Park, again allowing the Court to be read as a ‘pure’ Palladian structure, unencumbered by practical domestic offices and service yards.

⁴⁷² William Dean, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D’Abitôt – Hortus Croomensis*, 1824



The Rotunda at the upper (eastern) end of the Home Shrubbery (NTPL)

But far more than a mere screen for the service buildings, the Home Shrubbery was the first section of the circuit walk around Croome's Pleasure Grounds, which take the visitor through a series of mood evoking scenes; the dreamlike quality of the place bringing to mind ancient classical mythology, British folklore and history - and the beauty of nature, especially the beauty of England, more especially the valley of the River Severn, and most especially, the paradise of Croome⁴⁷³.

The Home Shrubbery was described by William Dean in *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D'Abitôt - Hortus Croomensis* (1824) as the Elysian Fields - the heaven of the ancient world. It was the home of many of the 6th Earl's exotic plant collection, forming a paradise on earth, rivalling that of classical times, and centering on the Earl's Hothouse (no longer extant) against the Walled Garden's south-facing wall containing '...a vast variety of ...plants, natives of the opposite extremities of the globe...' ⁴⁷⁴ After touring the Court, visitors who wanted to take the three mile circuit left the house by the south entrance, and turned left towards an iron gate, which led to the Pleasure Grounds: "*this delightful walk commences, in the first of the four principle divisions, called the home shrubbery. And here - proceeding only a few steps - the scene, so interesting to the botanist...begins to display itself*". The visitor passed two fine specimens of gold and silver variegated holly, with a fine *Laurus sassafras* nearby; and then passed a *Salisburia adiantifolia*, (maiden-hair tree) "*acknowledged to be unrivalled in the kingdom*"; an *Aesculus flava* (yellow flowering horse chestnut); an immense *Quercus ilex*; fixed on the wall (south side of the Kitchen garden wall) were "*some of the finest Magnolia grandifloras ever known*".

Richard Sullivan also included it in his description of his visit to Croome in August 1778: "*... The grounds are elegant, and kept in the nicest order. On leaving the house, you turn*

⁴⁷³ Richard Wheeler (National Specialist in Garden History, National Trust), *Emblems & Expressionism at Croome*, 2011

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid

*through a shrubbery, filled with a choice assemblage of plants to a small building on an eminence, called the Rotunda, whence you have a prospect of hill, wood, and dale, and of every beauty that can give richness to a scene. Nature has, in this view, poured a profusion of her bounties".*⁴⁷⁵ One hundred years later, an article was published in *The Gardening World* about Croome and stated: "...In the home shrubbery the variegated hollies, evergreen oaks, yews, laurels, and other plants and trees are exceedingly beautiful..."⁴⁷⁶

However, it is important to note that the visitor, leaving the house by way of the Saloon and the South Portico, is not immediately plunged into the Home Shrubbery. We are meant to look out, even before we have left the Saloon, and appreciate the achievement of the 6th Earl and Brown of "*Paradise opened in the wild*".⁴⁷⁷ The steps from the Portico therefore go firstly into paradise, before we turn eastwards into the Home Shrubbery.

As well as the delightful experience of walking through it, the Home Shrubbery also provided carefully framed views out into the south parkland. William Dean particularly described the important sightline from the Hot House in the Home Shrubbery, emphasising the important role of the Home Shrubbery as the immediate setting of the Court as a more 'manicured' area in contrast with the gradually increasing 'naturalness' of the landscape as one moved further away from the house: "...the prospect delightfully opens, over the fine lawns of the park - adorned with all its scenery of wood and water - and peopled by its natural inhabitants, the fallow deer... The stately animals, fearless of danger, approach sometimes so near the walks, as to give the appearance, at a distance of browsing among the flowers of the pleasure grounds, instead of feeding on the herbage of the park - the division between the two, formed by a sunk fence, being imperceptible. And here it may not be improper to remark that when the park is thus brought into close contact with the house and the pleasure grounds, and forms the connecting medium, between them and the surrounding country: it should, nearer home, partake of the neatness and elegance of one; and, at a greater distance, shew something of the natural wildness of the other".⁴⁷⁸

Out of all the varied character areas of the Pleasure Grounds, the Home Shrubbery's close position to the Court, its role as the first section of the historic perambulation and therefore the importance of its capacity to impress in terms of beauty and rarity of trees and plants, its practical role as a screen to the service buildings, make it very significant.

Significance of designed views & sightlines

Ranking: National-International

The significance of the conscious and intricate network of sightlines radiating to and from the Court across the Park and the wider landscape is huge. 80% of these sightlines emanate to and from the Court. The key sightlines from the ground and first floor of the Court are listed on pp.367-8.

⁴⁷⁵ *A Tour through parts of England, Scotland & Wales in 1778 in a Series of Letters* (2nd ed. corrected and enlarged in 2 vols. 1785 (BL 1509/1243) Vol.1 pp296-300)

⁴⁷⁶ *The Gardening World*, February 26th 1887, pp.409-410

⁴⁷⁷ The reference is from Alexander Pope's poems of letters from Eloisa to Abelard. The word 'paradise' comes originally from Old Iranian meaning a walled garden or enclosure.

⁴⁷⁸ William Dean, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome D'Abitôt - Hortus Croomensis*, 1824

The most important space within the Court in terms of sightlines is the Long Gallery, with carefully conceived views out into designed landscape and beyond through 180 degrees to the north, west and south. It makes full use of the borrowed landscape of the Malvern skyline to the west as an outer-outer eye-catcher, a fact which was not lost on contemporary visitors to Croome. In 1801 Arthur Young described this clever use of the natural topography from the Long Gallery: “*In the center a very large bow is thrown out, which commands some of the most delightful views of the park, and receives no inconsiderable addition from the magnificent boundary of the Malvern range of hills, which seem to be placed on the spot which they occupy for the design of contributing by their effect to the completion of the prospect...*”⁴⁷⁹ Either by chance or by intention, a giant solitary cedar, a survivor from the 17th century, stands central to the bay window between the Court and the ‘river’.

The Richard Wilson view across the ‘river’ towards the Court from the south west, which is still in the collection, demonstrates the significance of the views of and towards the Court from the park.



Richard Wilson's 1758 painting of Croome Court from the south (CET)

The sightlines work both ways. It is probably the first painted rendition of a Brown-designed landscape and therefore takes on increased significance as a painting and more than simply a beautiful work of art. (It may have been commissioned as a way of promoting the 6th Earl's and Brown's vision for Croome, and quite probably originally hung in the London house in Piccadilly, rather than Croome Court).⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, pp465-81

⁴⁸⁰ It is recorded in the 1930 inventory as hanging in the Drawing Room.

It also shows the significance of Croome as a whole, with the Court in its landscape presenting three unencumbered sides to the landscape (although the north is not visible from this angle).

Carefully included in the picture to the left and right of the Court in the distance are the Church and the Rotunda, even though Wilson painted this in 1758, when the Rotunda was only just completed and the Church not yet begun. These two buildings, positioned on the ridge of high ground to the east of the Court, represent the two heavens of the Christian world (the church) and the classical world (the Rotunda as a Mount Olympus). These buildings make a statement which would not have been lost on contemporary viewers about this being an ancient family home that runs from classical times to the modern day. The painting also shows both the deer and the cattle, representing both ancient beautiful landscape and farming function in one view. It is an animated landscape with people in the foreground, not deserted but intended to be peopled. People are an integral part of the Croome idyll.

The fact that in 1824 William Dean, the Head Gardener,⁴⁸¹ took the trouble to walk around the interior of the Court, look out into the landscape from most of the ground floor rooms and describe at great length in his guidebook to Croome the impressive views out into the landscape and the beautiful vistas that had been artfully opened up demonstrates the significance of the sightlines. Croome was meant to be visited, hence the 1824 Guide Book, and most of the rooms on the *piano nobile* were meant to be seen and appreciated by the visiting public. The iconography and symbolism of their principle contents, their views out into the landscape towards the park structures and the links between the inside and the outside of the Court were extremely significant and consciously thought through. More work needs to be done on understanding the inter-linked complexities of this aspect of the Court's interiors and original contents.

The conscious original design significance of the all-important views out from the Court's windows is something that will be very carefully considered when thinking about the presentation of the individual interiors and ensuring that these sightlines are maintained.

Archaeological significance

Ranking: Local-National

The Court itself is of huge archaeological significance in that it encapsulates evidence and fabric of the earlier houses on the same site. The unravelling of this has been the subject of an architectural-archaeological survey (see Appendix 5) in order to try and

⁴⁸¹ Was it really Dean who wrote the Croome guidebook "*An Historical and Descriptive Account of Croome d'Abitôt*", or a ghost writer? Jill Tovey suggests that, "*whilst the Hortus Croomensis is obviously his, it is 99% certain he didn't write the rest of the text about the family and the tours of house & park. The main evidence for this is that letters of his survive in the archive and, whilst he can of course write, they are written in a very colloquial English, with no punctuation or sentence breaks, so he was not an 'educated' man. Also, in the introduction, there is an oblique acknowledgement to 'a friend' who wrote it. So, if not Dean, who? What about John, the Earl's favourite son, by Barbara, his second wife? Little is known of him, but was he favourite because he was so like his father? He would have been in a position to know all the family history and so much about the house too, which Dean probably wouldn't. He had a father & a mother who both loved plants & gardens. Do we know so little of him because the 7th Earl wrote him out of the history - he must have been insanely jealous of him as favourite, so is this why he (John) chose to remain anonymous?*" (Jill Tovey, email, August 2011)

estimate just how much significant fabric survives. The survey sets out the understanding to date, but drawing out the full extent of the archaeological significance will be a process that we want to share with our visitors, as exciting clues and evidence emerge all the time.

The lawned area immediately around Croome Court to the north and south has immense archaeological significance in that it contains as yet unexplored clues and information relating to the siting of the earlier, 17th century service buildings on the site, the early 17th century formally laid-out gardens and the medieval church to the immediate north west of the house. This was taken down by the 6th Earl and replaced by the present church on the top of the hill to the north east. The 1714 view from the south and the c.1750 view from the north show the former positions of these buildings, as well as a Jacobean gatehouse, dovecote and balustraded and solid walls enclosing courtyards to the north and formal gardens to the south. These provide enticing and detailed starting points from which to begin to explore the archaeological significance of the areas immediately surrounding the Court. Early indications from initial investigations reveal good preservation of archaeological deposits just below the modern surface, making the area around the Court very archaeologically significant.

The archaeological potential is regarded as being of local, regional and potentially national significance. The potential exists for remains which would illuminate our understanding of the continuous occupation of this site since at least the 12th century right through to the more recent historical evidence of World War II.

In addition, the contribution that the archaeology could make to the interpretation of this multi-layered landscape, the building and its setting and the enhancement of the visitor experience, by enabling a deeper understanding and connection with the place, are very significant.

Ecological significance

Ranking: Incidental

A Protected Species and Ecological Survey was carried out in 2011 by Collins Environmental Consultancy Ltd (see Appendix 35). Evidence of bat roosting by at least four species was identified in the roof area of the Court and foraging by at least four other species of bat was identified around the building. Birds are using the Court for roosting and nesting, with a large number of house martins nesting under the eaves.

It is difficult to be definitive about the ecological significance of the Court, as it has not yet been possible to access all areas due to the presence of asbestos, but on the basis of the findings to date the assessment from the NT's Nature Conservation Advisor is that there do not appear to be any especially important bat roosts within the Court itself. The presence of Lesser Horseshoe bats in the vicinity of the Court could be 'overspill' from the Red Wing, where it is understood that there is a maternity roost – although the Court and the Red Wing should not be regarded in isolation from each other as far as bats are concerned.

Whilst bats tend to attract a lot of attention because of the protection afforded to them and their roost sites, leaving aside legal considerations, the NT's Nature Conservation Advisor suggests that the principal ecological significance of the Court is the large

colony of House Martins which nest on it. This results in some quite spectacular gatherings of birds around the Court on summer evenings.

Significance of the collections (including 'lost' ones)

Ranking: International-local

The 6th Earl's collection of furniture, tapestries, paintings and books was hugely significant and influential, even within its own time. His avant-garde aesthetic taste led the way and others copied and emulated him, as with the Gobelins set of tapestries. Even the French King wanted to have the same style of Sèvres porcelain bowl and ewer that he purchased from the Parisian *marchand-mercier* Bachelier⁴⁸². All the French decorative initiatives at Croome were to have wide-ranging consequences in many other English houses.

One of the 6th Earl's major French pieces was the secretaire à abattant, by Bernard II van Riesenburgh (c.1696-c.1766, leading cabinet-maker under Louis XV), purchased by 6th Earl of Coventry from Poirier in 1763 for the Tapestry Room. This was sold in 1948 and is now in the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco.

It is to Croome's detriment and the telling of the complete story that so much of the 6th Earl's collection has been 'lost', but fortunate that so much of it still survives. The iconographic and symbolic references in the paintings and objects and their positions within his 18th century house were important. An empty house bereft of its contents, or only with some, has been likened to trying to read a book with lots of its pages torn out.

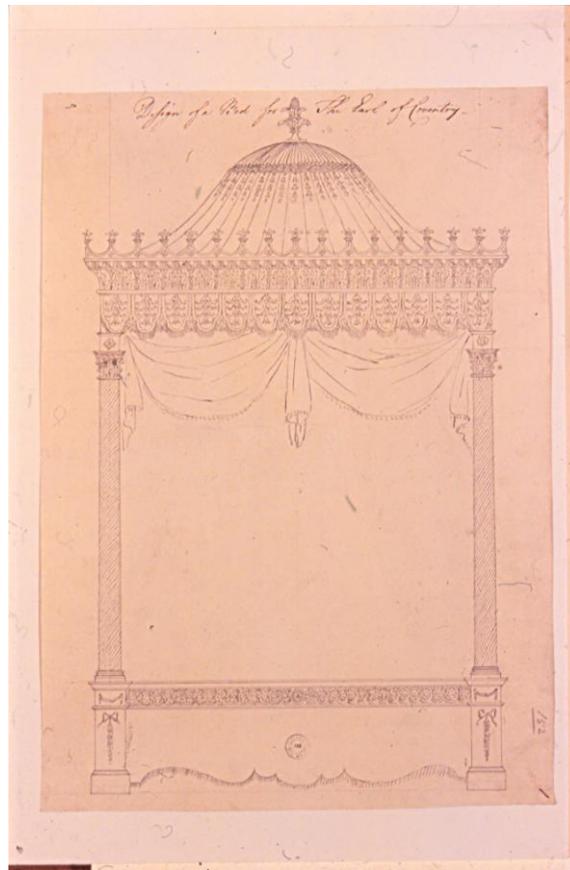
Many of the Adam-designed pieces of furniture which were dispersed in the 20th century are now, as testament to their significance, in national and international museums as examples of the finest craftsmanship of their time. These include the Victoria & Albert Museum, Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall (Leeds City Art Galleries), Kenwood House (English Heritage), the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Adam's original drawings for the furniture designed by Adam are held in The Sir John Soane Museum and the CET archive.

Miraculously, many of the important Coventry family (tax-exempt) heirlooms survive and part of the present arrangement between the National Trust and the Croome Heritage Trust is that they will return to Croome on loan, once practical issues have been resolved and sufficient conservation work has been carried out to receive them. They are of the highest quality and significance, and include some fifty paintings, thirty drawings, around one hundred and thirty pieces of furniture, twenty five pieces of decorative porcelain and four dinner or dessert services. There is also a large quantity of non-exempt items which are part of this arrangement.

Sufficient important items remain to give a real sense of the 6th Earl's taste, style and insistence on quality. The collection still contains key pieces which illustrate the sophistication and high quality of the original contents of the main rooms. For example:

⁴⁸² In a letter of 1767, Bachelier writes from Paris to Lord Coventry about the stir that his newly-designed Sèvres bowl and ewer (still in the collection) has caused at the French Court, that the King wants to have the same and that everybody is talking about it: "*Cette nouvelle décoration a fait une très grande fortune à la Cour. Le Roi en a demandé de pareille...tout le monde en veut avoir...*"

- The open mahogany armchairs designed by Adam and supplied by John Cobb and carved by Sefferin Alken for the Long Gallery, originally upholstered in blue morocco. These chairs are of a highly sophisticated and avant-garde Neo-classical design.
- The four scroll-end benches, part of an original set of ten in three different sizes, designed by Adam and supplied by France & Bradburn in 1765 and invoiced in 1766. Again the finer detail was carved by Alken.
- The pair of bedroom commodes supplied by Mayhew & Ince in satinwood and holly at the early date of 1765 which are totally Neo-classical in conception, from their rectangular shape to their engraved inlay. Their fronts are inlaid with a classical sacred urn, while the tops are inlaid with palm flowered medallions, a rosette and fretted guilloche around the cornice, black Etruscan mouldings and the sides display Grecian laurel wreaths. This decoration is completely *à la grecque*, which was the Earl's passion.
- The pair of elegant serpentine bedside commodes, or night tables supplied by Mayhew & Ince in 1777 with tambour shutters enclosing their original stone pans.
- An unusual envelope-folding card table on tripod support attributed to Mayhew & Ince. Its elegant fluted and case-shaped pillar and carved tripod base are of the highest quality and beautifully proportioned.
- The first Adam-designed state bed, executed by France & Bradburn in 1763, hung with fine green linen, for the Earl's second marriage to Barbara St John. The total cost, with the dome and cornices, was £50-1s in 1764. There is a long and detailed account for this bed with its '*Foot Posts out of fine Mahog[an]y, 6 inches square worked very Correctly in a waving flute and the Wave Terminating with a Corinthian Capitol...*' These foot posts survive in the collection, although they have become separated from the rest of the bed, whose whereabouts are unknown.



Design for a bed for the 6th Earl of Coventry by Robert Adam, 1763
(By courtesy of the Trustees of the Sir John Soane Museum)

In terms of Croome's **library**,⁴⁸³ much of its important content was sold in the series of sales in 1947, when the Coventrys sold Croome. The pattern of dispersal is a common one, with substantial sales in 1947 and 1948⁴⁸⁴ resulting in the disposal of most of the older books. The material remaining at Kelmarsch is sadly no more than a 'rump', and contains very few early publications; presumably these books escaped sale because they were not thought to be worth very much in 1947. The survivors are generally pretty modest and most date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They include a fair number of sporting books, sets of Voltaire, Kipling and Walter Scott, reference books, and possibly 17th and 18th century chapel books. The most notable survivors appear to be a Gibbs's *Architecture* (1728) and a possibly incomplete set of Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* (1785-87) with hand-coloured plates. There are a few books of local interest, including Tindal's *History and Antiquities of the Abbey and Borough of Evesham* (1794) and William Dean's 1824 Croome guide book, which is of course, significant.

However, sadly, the significance of the '**lost**' **library** is much greater. The general sense gained from the 1947 Sotheby's sale catalogue is of a grand 18th century library, with a

⁴⁸³ I am grateful to Mark Purcell, NT Libraries Curator, for his comments on Croome's library. He emphasises that these comments are speculative from his reading of the sale catalogues' contents pending further research.

⁴⁸⁴ Sotheby's New Bond Street, 25th October 1948, Lots 1-207

substantial inheritance of earlier books which may, perhaps, have been in the family since at least the 17th century. The subject matter reflects the known interests of the most prominent collectors within the family i.e. Thomas, 2nd Earl, a mathematician and astronomer, his wife, Lady Anne Somerset, who had wide-ranging interests in natural history, poetry, religion etc and, of course, George William, 6th Earl, who bought the best and the first of everything if it interested him. His library was indicative of his wide-ranging interests (principally architecture, antiquities and horticulture). He was a student of architecture with architectural works in his library and was a subscriber to volumes IV and V of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, in which Croome Court features. The books listed in the sale catalogues give the sense that these people had stamped their identity upon the collection and it was not simply just a case of filling shelves with worthy and predictable volumes.

Many of the books are contemporary (i.e. later 17th and 18th century publications), but in addition to these there is a fair sprinkling of earlier material which reinforces the feeling that some members of the family were self-consciously *collecting* (as opposed to simply accumulating). Examples include the 1587 Greek Bible in a fine French binding, bought at the Lomenie de Brienne sale (1724). There are good holdings of county histories, antiquarian studies, pamphlets, a large number of works by the Parliamentarian and antiquarian William Prynne, a set of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*, music (Handel's *Xerxes*, Corelli, J.C. Bach); and a set of Hamilton's *Greek Vases*. The illustrated books seem notable, including Sandford's *Coronation of James II*, and a lot of architectural books which, while impressive, do not seem to be anything out of the ordinary.

What is more striking than any of the above are the scientific and botanical works that were offered for sale. There are first editions of Linnaeus and, in addition, a range of important but comparatively ordinary, though still quite grand, expensive books – Sir Hans Sloane's book on Jamaica, *Hortus Elthamensis* (1732), Edwards's *Natural History of Uncommon Birds* (1743-64); among many others there are several books of astonishing grandeur. Catesby's *Natural History of the Carolinas* (1732) and Thornton's *Temple of Flora* (1812) are enormous colour plate books of the greatest possible magnificence (the Catesby was more important from a scientific point of view). They would have been expensive even when new, and today both are enormously valuable. These books, alongside the lesser, but still impressive natural history books are something quite out of the ordinary and relate to the 6th Earl's interests. It seems wholly fitting that the 6th Earl would want a copy of the Catesby - this would have fuelled his enthusiasm for American plants but would also have presumably been a bit of a showpiece out on display when he took friends and visitors on a tour of the library. Edward's *Natural History of Uncommon Birds* reflects the Countess's interest in birds (she stocked Adam's Menagerie in the Park with them). However, the purchase of Thornton's *Temple of Flora*, published after the death of the 6th Earl, is puzzling and can only suggest that William Dean, Head Gardener, may have been involved in keeping the collection up to date. Or again, was it the 6th Earl's favourite son John? Either way, this seems a lavish purchase at the time, especially as the 7th Earl was blind, but maybe it was intended for the Countess?

As mentioned above, significant figures in the history of Croome's library were Thomas 2nd Earl of Coventry (1663-1710) and his wife Anne Somerset, daughter of the Duke of Beaufort. Both were extraordinarily well-read and a remarkable couple: she was a prolific letter writer and receiver and had a huge collection of mathematical books, among

others, by the time she was in her early twenties. He was a mathematician and astronomer of some standing, interested in the new thinking about astronomy and was indirectly having questions answered by Robert Hooke on the passage of the sun⁴⁸⁵. The Badminton archive reveals that both the 2nd Earl & Lady Anne Somerset had a large collection of scientific and mathematical books and they were in correspondence with an associate of Robert Boyle and possibly the Royal Society. This would explain the former presence in the Library of the earlier important books⁴⁸⁶.

The 9th Earl also built up a collection, although much of this was dispersed in the series of sales after his death in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly in the sale at Croome in 1948 held on the premises by Bentley Hobbs & Mytton. His collection was varied in its contents and its quality and was not on the same international, avant-garde level as that of the 6th Earl. It nevertheless reflected his appreciation of his inheritance and his ancestors, as well as his landed country estate lifestyle and interests. During the second half of the 19th century and into the early 20th century he was an avid, albeit fairly amateur, collector of antique furniture, pictures, prints and all manner of decorative objects. Apart from London, they were acquired from all parts of the country (usually from places with a race-course) – Birmingham, Hereford, Worcester, Cheltenham, Monmouth, Gloucester, Salisbury and Dublin. It is worth speculating that he might have been using his ‘winnings’, either from horse-racing or betting, to fund his extravagance.

Lady Maria’s chattels

Ranking: Local

The Lady Maria collection of chattels is not of any great financial or art-historical significance, but it is a slice of life of the last member of the Worcestershire branch of the Coventry family and who grew up at Croome. She was the third daughter of the 10th Earl (who was killed in 1940 in the retreat to Dunkirk). Its value lies in the fact that it is extremely evocative of the mid-to late 20th century country house lifestyle and country pursuits of hunting and riding, horses and hounds. Lady Maria was Master of the Croome Foxhounds and this is reflected in her collection of sporting prints and other equestrian memorabilia.

⁴⁸⁵ I am grateful to Catherine Gordon, Architectural Historian, for pointing out that the 2nd Earl also corresponded with Hooke about the improvements he had made to Gunter’s quadrant. He also corresponded with Patrick Gordon, an eminent geographer and mathematician and author of a Geographical Grammar which was dedicated to the 2nd Earl. She has made a fascinating suggestion that the curious cupola seen on the tower of the medieval church as depicted in the c.1750 anonymous drawing could possibly have been an observatory built for the 2nd Earl and his wife to study the heavens and where they set up a ‘sky-optick’ which they had brought with them from Snitterfield. Architecturally and stylistically, it certainly looks rather incongruous. Interestingly, soon after Croome’s medieval church was demolished and rebuilt by Brown and Adam in its new location, a similar cupola was added by Antony Keck, an accomplished local architect, to the old tower of the church in nearby Upton-upon-Severn in 1769-70. It is known as the ‘Pepper-Pot’ as a result.

⁴⁸⁶ “It seems probable that these books went with Lady Anne to the family house in Snitterfield after the death of the 2nd Earl in 1710 and of her young son who became 3rd Earl (d.1712). They may have found their way back to Croome as the relationship between the two branches of the family improved in the mid 18th century. She did not die till 1767 and she is likely to have added to her collection throughout her life”. (Catherine Gordon, email 5th August 2011)

Moving away from the fact that these were her personal possessions, some of them raise interesting topics for more general debate around evolving attitudes to taxidermy and what today might be called animal rights. Having a favourite hunter's hoof mounted with silver and adapted to form an inkwell for one's desk, engraved with its name (there are five of these in the collection) may seem very unfeeling and unethical to many people today, but at the time, it was considered a way of treasuring a much-loved animal after its death.

Significance of the archive

Ranking: National

Croome is a house with an extraordinarily complete archival record. When, in 2003, the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council was considering the merits of Croome's archive, the expert advisers considered that⁴⁸⁷:

- the estate papers were of particular importance for the study of the history of Worcestershire and were undoubtedly of great value for local social and economic history
- the important set of papers relating to the re-building and re-design of the Court and the re-fashioning of the parkland were virtually unique in the degree of detail that they provide for the development of a major country house in the 18th century
- the papers of the Lord Keeper Coventry were regarded as important for the study of early 17th century government and Royal patronage.

Amongst Croome's vast quantity of archival documents, it is clear that of greatest significance are the papers, maps, plans and architectural drawings that describe the mid-18th century re-casting of Croome – building, interiors and landscape – and the 6th Earl of Coventry's patronage of designers and craftsmen of national and international significance. These documents also reveal Coventry's influence on Robert Adam, and the architect's introduction to the precepts of French (rather than Roman-inspired) neo-classicism.

Not only do the Croome papers chart Brown's creation of the national archetype of the English landscaped park, but they are of considerable *scientific* significance too, for they contain an uninterrupted sequence of records (from when George William began improvements when still Lord Deerhurst in 1747 until his death in 1809) that detail the collection and importation of plant material from sources as far flung as Russia and South America. In its heyday, the richness and diversity of Croome's plant material was second only to that found at Kew. This documentary evidence, combined with the fruits of survey and physical investigation, has already lent considerable authority to the National Trust's restoration of Croome's designed landscape. That said, there are no certified drawings of the layout of the park by Brown, although there is one for Pirton Park, one of Croome's deer parks that lies to the north.⁴⁸⁸

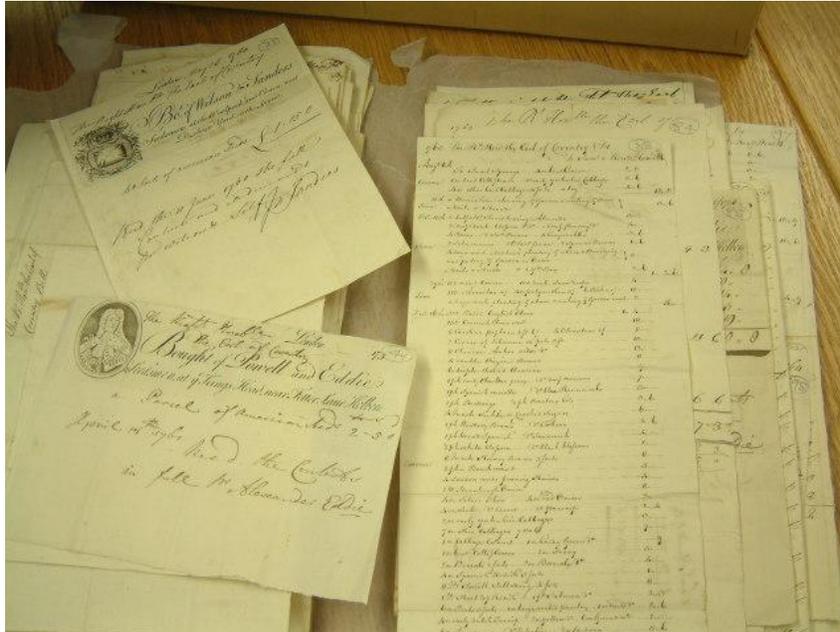
No less important is the wealth of documentary material relating to the decoration and furnishing of Croome Court. Amongst those of many other decorators and furniture

⁴⁸⁷ Museums, Libraries & Archive Council, Acceptance in Lieu Report 2005-06, pp. 28-9

⁴⁸⁸ Jill Tovey has pointed out that the surveyor Broome was a contemporary of Brown's, so perhaps they could have been working together?

makers, the archive contains invoices from Vile and Cobb, Linnell, Chippendale and Ince and Mayhew. This documentation has long been recognised by furniture scholars to be of immense importance in the understanding of these quintessentially English workshops and their productions.

This paper world of ideas and intentions balances the realised realm of garden, landscape, bricks and mortar, house and home. The present opportunity, in the form of the Court, to draw these two parts of the story together and share the significance of the Croome archive, will greatly enhance the visitor's experience to Croome, making the property very much more comprehensible and enjoyable.



Some of Croome's vast archive at the Worcestershire Record Office (Author)

Significance of the mechanical & electrical services

Ranking: Local

In the Court's basement are many examples remaining of the original 1930s electrical services, comprising iron-clad switchgear, junction boxes, conduits and wiring/cabling, the Switchgear Room (B4) being the historic heart of the electrical services. All of these items have historical interest, having been installed just before the death of the 9th Earl when he finally agreed to having the Court installed with such modern conveniences. Those electrical items that are no longer functioning should be preserved as they portray the type of equipment and cabling that was in vogue at that time. It is rare to find such examples still remaining in situ in buildings, as compliance with progressive upgrading of electrical services to meet safety rules and regulations decrees that old equipment and wiring are invariably stripped out and removed. Croome's 1930s electrical services therefore take on increased significance.

The remarkable underground chamber to the SE corner of the Red Wing lined with fine stone work could be a surviving example of Brown's innovative engineering ideas. In 1764, the date of William Chapman's bill for plumbing involving a huge fly wheel, an 'ingine' to raise the water and over a hundred feet of pipe to carry it, Brown was still very

much involved at Croome and water management and drainage were his forte. This, along with the many brick-lined culverts at Croome, is a significant example of mid 18th century water engineering. Alternatively, it seems that Chapman came to Croome from Kedleston (his bill includes carriage & travelling from 'Keddleston' for himself and two men) and the date of his bill is in the middle of Adam's huge involvement there, so the pump could possibly be Adam's idea rather than Brown's. Either way, it is a significant survival of early services.

Significance of associations with figures in history

Ranking: National

The great family of the Coventrys of Croome were legal celebrities, the most important one being Thomas Coventry, 1st Baron, (1578-1640) who was a descendant of Dick Whittington, Lord Mayor of London. He was a lawyer of immense standing and became Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England, a post that he held for fourteen years until his death. He signed the Knighthood of Sir Peter Paul Rubens. He was an ardent Royalist in the dangerous times of the early Stuarts. He opened two Parliaments and delivered the King's rebuke to the rebellious Commons when they would not grant him supplies. He must have been a man of great tact and personality, for he tried to bring the King and the Commons together, strove gallantly and eloquently for peace and was made Baron Coventry for his services to James I and his son.

The Lord Keeper is a significant figure in the early history of the Coventry family and also historically significant not just in legal and political terms because of the high offices that he held, but also significant in the history of taxation. The Inland Revenue was first formed as a result of the judgment of the Lord Keeper presiding in the House of Lords in the case against John Hampden (of Grey's Elegy fame), who had refused to pay a revenue of 20 shillings for the support of fighting ships, that had previously only been levied on ports. Hampden lived in Oxfordshire, therefore 'inland', hence his objection. Reading between the lines of the Lord Keeper's final summing up says so much about the man and his sense of duty and every man (and woman's) responsibility:

"I have spoken so much hereof already, that I will not say more, but conclude that in cases of necessity, every subject must (even by rules of law) bestirre himself, must contribute his best abilities, must set to both his helping hands.

Rich men must expose their treasures.

Able men of body must put on arms.

Great Counsellors must give their best advice.

Women must not be idle.

Old men, and Clergy men if they have no other powers must attend their prayers.

And Judges must press and enforce the laws upon the subjects to compel them to contribute.

And it being high time for me to give over, I conclude upon all my reasons and authorities cited, that as this Case is upon the pleading of it; the charge of 20 shillings imposed on Mr Hampden, towards the provision of a Ship, commanded by the writ of August 1637, is consonant to Law. And consequently the judgement ought to be given against him".

And with that sentence the Inland Revenue was born.

Social significance

Ranking: National

Major country houses and estates were and often still are an integral part of their local context and surroundings, both physically and socially. Croome is no exception.

Historically, for about 350 years, the Coventry family played an integral role in almost every aspect of county life. They were closely involved with local politics, the militia and the law, and patrons of numerous local charities and public institutions. They also made a significant contribution to the development of agriculture, industry and transport within the county. They belonged to the locality as much as it belonged to them⁴⁸⁹.

Under the 5th Earl of Coventry (1678-1751) and the later Georgian regime, Croome established an increasingly dominant role as a symbol of achievement, a source of wealth and power and a statement of cultural erudition and agricultural improvement. His son, the 6th Earl's, outstanding achievement was the re-design of Croome, but this personal obsession should not be allowed to obscure his other interests and successes, many of which were of wider social benefit. He executed his duties to crown, country and county with great diligence: like his father he was appointed Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of Worcestershire, a position he held for over fifty years till his resignation in 1808, just one year before his death. He served as Gentleman of the Bedchamber to both George II and his grandson George III. He took a serious approach to his duties and was effectively a pillar of the establishment. He maintained a keen interest in foreign affairs and his patriotism did not blind him to common sense and prevent him from resigning his post as Lord of the Bedchamber in opposition to the continuing war against the colonies of America. He made a powerful speech in the House of Lords in 1782 which underlined the folly of the war, arguing convincingly that peace was more conducive to trade and commercial benefits and that war would only bring disgrace and disappointment to Great Britain. The speech served its purpose: these sentiments represented well the general shift of opinion in Britain and by the following year the war was at an end and Britain had to acknowledge the independence of the United States of America.

At home, he excelled in his role as local benefactor and was said to have brought millions of pounds into Worcestershire by his exertions in the improvement of public roads and buildings and by his encouragement of public institutions.

His interest in county affairs was genuine, most notably the development and administration of the Worcester Infirmary, of which he was appointed the first co-president while still Lord Deerhurst. He also maintained the Coventry family's involvement with the Almshouses in Droitwich, known as the Coventry Charity, which had been set up, so the story goes, as the result of a horse-racing wager between Sir Henry Coventry and Sir John Pakington in the late 17th century.⁴⁹⁰

He recognised the commercial and economic advantages of contemporary developments in transport; several turnpike roads passed through the Coventry estates

⁴⁸⁹ *The Coventrys of Croome*, Catherine Gordon, p.3

⁴⁹⁰ The enormous painting of the winning horse, Jack-a-Dandy, which is almost undoubtedly an unknown painting by the young equestrian artist John Wootton, painted to commemorate the event, now hangs once more (on loan), at Croome Court, having been given to the Coventry Charity by the Croome Estate Trustees in 1948.

in Worcestershire and elsewhere and there is considerable evidence of sustained investment in road improvement throughout the 6th Earl's lifetime. He also invested in new roads in Powick and Upton Snodsbury, for example, and he paid various fees and expenses of over £277 towards the passing of an Act of Parliament for the repair of several roads in the Evesham area between 1756-7.

He not only improved road networks but he also took interest in the river and canal networks; the River Severn remained the main highway to the industrial midlands and he actively supported efforts to improve its navigation. In 1771 he laid the first stone of the new bridge across the Severn in Worcester, which was opened to the public ten years later.⁴⁹¹ He became involved with the construction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire, the Birmingham and Worcester and the Droitwich canal companies.⁴⁹²

From the mid-19th to the early 20th century, Croome under the tenure of the 9th Earl was the hub of a large and close-knit community. The popularity and influence of the family during the Victorian period was quite exceptional, for they excelled in their role as patrons, benefactors and society hosts. The 9th Earl took immense pride in his seat, his popularity among his tenants was unprecedented and he seemed to be regarded with genuine affection wherever he went. He built large numbers of estate cottages all with their own land (a list of 1912 included ninety new estate cottages built by him)⁴⁹³, and looked after his tenants and employees well, introducing sick pay and pensions. Every year, on Christmas Eve Lord & Lady Coventry gave out gifts of beef and bread to the Croome tenants and their children.

⁴⁹¹ F32/27A

⁴⁹² Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, pp.88-92

⁴⁹³ Croome Estate Archives: Parish Box 4 CP3, quoted by Camilla Beresford.



The 9th Earl & Countess of Coventry handing out beef and bread to the estate tenants' children at Christmas, late 19th century (WRO)

The tradition went back well over one hundred years to the time of the 6th Earl, but under the 9th Earl it became not simply a charitable hand-out but an informal and enjoyable occasion which marked the beginning of the Christmas festivities. In 1915 it is recorded that food was distributed amongst 637 people of the Croome Estate. There is every reason to believe that this paternalistic attitude towards his tenantry was entirely genuine: Lord Coventry made himself very accessible and, as an informed and enthusiastic landlord, he was very sympathetic to their needs⁴⁹⁴.

He set up the North Cotswold Hunt ('Lord Coventry's hounds') in 1867, which he then moved to Croome in 1873, where it became 'The Croome', a well-respected hunt, defining a sense of local pride and identity.⁴⁹⁵ A 1949 guide to Worcestershire describes the famous 'country' of the Croome Hunt as covering most of South Worcestershire, with its heart and centre at Croome d'Abitôt, the location of Croome Court, and describes the locality as "*not only beautiful and interesting but still full of the essence of more spacious and noble times*".⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, pp. 175-183

⁴⁹⁵ In the 1960s the Croome hunt amalgamated to become the 'Croome & West Warwickshire'.

⁴⁹⁶ Valentine Noake, *Worcestershire*, p.50.



The Croome hunt with the Court in the background, early 20th century (*Lady Maria Coventry*)

It was probably due to his love of all aspects of agriculture and his genuine concern and patriarchal attitude towards his tenant farmers that the 9th Earl set up a jam factory in Pershore in 1889. He was all too aware of the devastating effects of rural unemployment on the countryside. He was concerned that farmers on his estate, and others in the area, were having to throw away soft fruit in bumper years and so were losing income. His venture worked by his buying their produce, so giving them income, and turning it into jam on which he too was able to make a profit, selling a dozen pots of strawberry jam for six shillings, for example. As with his race horses and Hereford cattle, he was a prize-winner in this field, being awarded First Prize at The Royal Show at Plymouth in 1890.

He was the epitome of the Old English Gentleman, beloved and honoured by everyone who knew him. He entertained lavishly and yet with the homeliness of a family man, had a large family and lived surrounded by his (nine) children and grand-children. When in 1921 the estate was placed in the hands of the Croome Estate Trust, Lord Coventry wrote to his tenants to thank them for their support over the years: *“More than 62 years have passed since I succeeded to the possession of Croome, and during all this long period of time I have been very proud of the friendship, and - may I say - the confidence of the tenants on the Estate. We have indeed been a united Clan, and I gratefully recall the many occasions on which you have evinced your attachment to Lady Coventry and myself, and the other members of my family, and which will always live in our remembrance”*.⁴⁹⁷

However, during the lifetime of the 9th Earl it became clear that even his commitment could not withstand the forces of social and economic change. When, after the tragic and heroic death of the 10th Earl in 1940 at Dunkirk, Croome Court and the majority of its contents were sold, the sense of loss within the local community was immense.⁴⁹⁸ Slowly and insidiously, the lifeblood was drained out of Croome and its dependent communities. But Croome was more fortunate than many similar estates. The mansion house survived intact surrounded by its parkland when many houses fell victim to brutal conversion, decay or wanton demolition.

⁴⁹⁷ (F75/12)

⁴⁹⁸ *The Coventrys of Croome*, Catherine Gordon, pp. 5-6

In the locality around Croome, evidence of the Coventry family's former influence and patronage is everywhere. It continues to give form and context to this patch of south Worcestershire, so integral a part did the family play in such a widespread community for several centuries⁴⁹⁹. Estate cottages and farmsteads throughout the outlying countryside still mark the extent of the family's former domain. The Coventry name recurs among the inscriptions in the parish churches and churchyards, the inn signs, and the plaques on schools and almshouses throughout the locality. This is all somehow reassuring, but it is not only the physical evidence that is important. Among the many people who continue to live and work on the estate, some of whom still recall the time when the Earls of Coventry lived at Croome, the sense of identity remains. The sense of loyalty and security, the simple certainty of a clearly-defined role within a close-knit community has proved hard to replace⁵⁰⁰. The Court, as the personification of that era and that sense of community, has great social significance.



RAF rugby team during the war, with Croome's church in the background (Harold Evans)

For many, Croome's social significance is linked to its important role in the Second World War: the development of radar and its key contribution to allied victory. The social structure of the airbase and the associated camaraderie in times of hardship is very powerful and enduring. Veterans of the airbase regularly visit, as Croome remains a very special place for them.

And what of Croome's future social significance? According to English Heritage research, 93% of people agree that their local heritage creates a distinct sense of place and 95% feel that the historic environment makes their area a good place to spend time

⁴⁹⁹ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p. 6

⁵⁰⁰ Catherine Gordon, *Epilogue – The Coventrys of Croome*, p.203

in and meet friends.⁵⁰¹ Our evaluation of the views of those who visit Croome backs this up: in 2010/11 more than 50% of our visitors came from within 24 miles of Croome. Its multi-layered significance for the local community today is reflected in their views on the property's importance in their lives and its future potential as a place that they value:⁵⁰²

- *Having watched the development of Croome over the past 2 years it has real importance to our community – what an opportunity to be part of this wonderful project – I love it!*
- *It's part of our heritage – a way of life and a history book in the making*
- *We feel proud to have such a beautiful historic property so close*

A number of areas of significance have emerged through consultation with local people; the most frequently raised points include:

- A sense of pride in living so close to an important building with such a rich history and multiple stories to tell
- The opportunity to watch as Croome's history continues to unfold
- A significant landmark, of considerable importance to the area and the local history. It is regarded as a focal point for some members of the community
- The impact of Croome on the local geography and community development
- A fantastic space to be enjoyed by all the family giving children the freedom to roam; an integral part of the lives of children growing up in the local area
- Love of the grounds - being able to walk; take the dog for a walk; interest in watching the progress as the park continues to develop
- A special place to relax and unwind
- Personal family memories of visiting Croome in the past; childhood memories of playing there; celebrating special occasions; or personal stories of family members who worked or visited Croome in the past
- Personal connections with the property: the Coventry family, the school, the Hare Krishnas or through living in an estate property
- The potential to develop as an attraction for the area
- A welcoming accessible place to visit and enjoy activities and events.

Our research also shows that there is potential for Croome's local social significance to grow and we can demonstrate that significance to a wider cross section of the local community so that it once again plays a role in their lives.

Croome's social significance is, however, not merely local. It also illustrates and personifies the great social changes and upheavals that took place *nationally* over several centuries: the rise of the aristocracy and the great land-owning families, the building of great seats of power and prestige bristling with architectural and artistic achievement, the almost feudal but stable social structure of Lord, servant and tenant farmer, the great social leveller of two world wars, post-war austerity, agricultural

⁵⁰¹ English Heritage 2010 (Quoted by Dame Fiona Reynolds in *History for the Taking? Perspectives on Material Heritage*, a report prepared for the British Academy, May 2011).

⁵⁰² Quotations and comments taken from interim feedback from Audience Consultation at Croome Court, Nicky Boden, December 2010

depression, the breaking down of social structures and hierarchies and the rise of the middle classes.

The use of the Court as a Roman Catholic school in the mid-20th century gives it important social significance as an example of an institution that took a particular approach to the education of and attitudes towards disadvantaged boys at that time. They were separated rather than integrated with other children and marked out as different. Croome Court also illustrates an example of the changing role of religious institutions in education.

Both the school's and the Hare Krishnas' occupation give Croome national significance as a place that took on religious importance and reflected varying and sometimes entrenched social attitudes to those religions. These are also international religions and remind us that there are resonances here for people from all over the world. The National Trust's *Whose Story?* Project⁵⁰³ aimed to encourage people from local Black & Minority Ethnic groups to visit to discover the often unexpected resonances that Croome has for them. A multi-national group of mothers and grandmothers visited in Summer 2010; among their comments were that the Robert Adam carved door and frame to the church reminded several ladies of going to worship in their mosque, and that a ceiling plaster design reminded one lady of her mother's home in Pakistan⁵⁰⁴.

And behind all of these resonances is the fascination that the English country house continues to have for people, and the way that it can, for better or worse, strike deep chords within the British psyche. Its architecture, decoration and collections can act as rich sources of inspiration, manifested in novels, films, paintings, food, flowers, clothes, fabrics and the way people build, decorate and relate to their own homes. The social conditions that gave birth to the country house as a focus of patronage and employment at the centre of a landed estate may have changed irrevocably, but the symbolism of these varied buildings – a uniquely British contribution to international aesthetics – is continually re-invented, and needs to be re-invented, for successive generations. Part of Croome Court's social significance is that it has already adapted itself several times over to changing circumstances, and can continue to do so.

The Friends of Croome's Oral History Project plays a significant part in helping to peel back the many layers of Croome's more recent history, revealing details of all kinds that might otherwise have remained hidden or have been forgotten. It demonstrates the richness of Croome's 20th century history and the recordings reflect its multi-faceted past and present significances to all kinds of local people for all kinds of reasons. Croome is valued by people who remember it as a place of work and 'home' in the wider sense (farm and estate tenants), of education (the Catholic boys), of sanctuary and spiritualism (the Hare Krishnas), of beauty and tranquility (walkers and visitors), of war-time camaraderie and spirit of survival (RAF Defford veterans).

⁵⁰³ *Whose Story?* was a Heritage Lottery Fund funded project covering four National Trust properties in the West Midlands.

⁵⁰⁴ Sue Waugh, Community Ambassador for Croome and the *Whose Story?* project.



Newspaper cutting showing Eileen Clement of Croome's HLF-funded Oral History project with Geoff Sherwood, volunteer, with Croome's church in the background, 2007

Emotional & spiritual significance

Ranking: Local-National

Croome Court has enormous emotional and spiritual significance, both in historical terms and in people's lives and memories today. The spirituality is not necessarily of a religious nature, although this of course applies to the Roman Catholic school and the Hare Krishnas occupation, but rather a 'secular' spirituality. Croome invariably has a strong emotional impact on all those who become involved with it - it somehow reaches out to our hearts and hooks us all and is "*a great house that inspires everyone who comes into contact with it*".⁵⁰⁵

Having hardly changed at all for 200 years (1750-1950) Croome Court became a home to many different people, cultures and organisations, one of them a religious educational establishment and the other a spiritual community. The Court has been an important part of their lives and reverberates with their presence. It continues to inspire all who come into contact with it as a place of peace, beauty and serenity. The actress Ellen Terry, who often attended house parties at Croome Court in the later 19th century, described it as "*Manna in the wilderness*".⁵⁰⁶

For the 6th Earl of Coventry, Croome Court had tremendous emotional significance. It was the place he was born and grew up, it was his ancestral family home, it was where he lived with his first and second wives and brought up his children, and it was

⁵⁰⁵ Jnanagamyia das [John Partin] of the Hare Krishna movement, February 2010.

⁵⁰⁶ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.179 / CEA F32a

inextricably associated with his beloved older brother, Lord Deerhurst, who died in 1744 leaving him bereft. Three quotations from this period are very telling: the first is from a letter that Lord Deerhurst had written in 1739 to an old school friend on the subject of Taste: "...when a man has a taste to make a proper choice and money enough to answer the demands, that design may be soon put into execution." When Lord Deerhurst unexpectedly died, his grief-stricken younger brother, George William wrote to Sanderson Miller, "*My dear Miller, I am so shocked that I know not what I say or do. If I could be severed into two and one part left alive and the other part taken away, the separation could not be the greater. He was indeed the better half and therefore God thought fit the worthiest should be removed....*" This was followed by a further letter to Miller, describing how George William could not bear to sign his name as the new Lord Deerhurst: "*Never can I sign the name without a fresh torrent of grief for the late possessor of it and a bitter remorse that the present one falls so short of his perfections*".⁵⁰⁷ (Nor should it be forgotten that this tragedy came after the family had already suffered the death in 1738 of the Countess of Coventry, George William's mother, when he was only sixteen).

The expression of grief and inadequacy in these letters to Miller is important because it may help explain the 6th Earl's extraordinary commitment to Croome, and its emotional significance to him. This commitment was motivated in part by an overwhelming sense of duty, a passionate desire to posthumously fulfil the plans that he had discussed with his brother and compensate for his own sense of unworthiness and insecurity. Croome was a place of huge emotional significance for this young man where life-changing human tragedies had been played out. And later, it was the place where his first wife, Maria Gunning, died, in a bedroom on the north front overlooking the church in 1760, on what was effectively a building site. Again he was grief-stricken, even committing his feelings to verse: "...*Her noble Partner 'midst his Mansion Mourns...*", and one imagines him pacing through what was a partially re-created house, not knowing which way to turn, but at least temporarily calling a halt to the building work.

Later still, it may have been that the 6th Earl's notorious arrogance was but a mask for his insecurities, which in turn made him intolerant of his own son's failings and led to their estrangement. This was despite the tragedy which befell his son, later the 7th Earl, of being blinded in a hunting accident: the emotional resonances in the Court in this regard are tragically dark and sad.

For the 9th Earl, Croome Court's emotional significance was as his comfortable family home, a place of security and certainty, and a place that was the hub of a large and close-knit community. He took immense pride in the Court and the whole of his country seat, and it was where he pursued his passion for all things equestrian. "*The Court was no longer just a showpiece, it was a much-loved home*".⁵⁰⁸

It was no coincidence that the Hare Krishnas found Croome the ideal base for their spiritual worship and teaching. They responded to the Court's "*highly developed spiritual character*", its beauty and aesthetic qualities, its natural energy and harmony. There were also religious and educational resonances in the fact that the building had been home to the nuns who had run the Roman Catholic school for young boys. One of the

⁵⁰⁷ L. Dickens & M. Stanton (eds), *An Eighteenth Century Correspondence*, (London 1910), pp103-4, quoted in *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.84

⁵⁰⁸ Catherine Gordon, *The Coventrys of Croome*, p.177

Hare Krishnas who lived here as a child said, *"It felt like I was being brought up in heaven. It is the most gorgeous building and setting...our hearts have been left here"*.⁵⁰⁹ Another said *"I loved it. I am thankful even now for that privileged opportunity of a spiritual haven that was a palace within the undulating low hills of Evesham Vale"*.⁵¹⁰

These sentiments are not, however, exclusive to the Hare Krishnas who experienced Croome Court. They could equally well have been uttered by Leonard Edwards who grew up at the Court in the mid-20th century when his father, Albert Edwards, was the long-standing caretaker. They are applicable to almost all those who come into contact with Croome and develop a relationship with it.

Today, it has an almost cult following, as evidenced by the enormous membership of The Friends of Croome (currently 423), a large and hugely successful local fund-raising group, which actively works and campaigns to support the bid to ensure Croome's survival; three of its key members are on the present project team and are volunteer guides at the property.

For our Friends, volunteers, supporters and regular visitors Croome is a very special place. The elegance of the landscape, the beauty of the trees, water, and buildings which adorn it, the wonder of the vast central bowl of land which stretches out to distant hills as far as the eye can see, and the spirit of community which has bound this place together over the centuries, together form Croome's unique character. The Court is physically and metaphorically at the heart of that character.

Such is its strength, that Croome Court's spiritual significance is recognised in our list of Conservation Performance Objectives, where we have included an Objective with regard to the Court's 'Spirit of Place', which is to 'Heal its wounds and recover its beauty'. This is probably the first time that a Spirit of Place objective has been included for a National Trust property's list of Conservation Performance Indicators (which are normally to do with *physical* improvements).

Historic sites and buildings can meet our 21st century hunger for distinctiveness and our thirst for contact with the authentic, the real and the beautiful. Croome does this in spades. Its emotional power is summed up in the following testimony from Jill Tovey, Croome's Archivist for more than twenty-five years:

"I came to Croome twenty five years ago to look after the huge Coventry family and estate archive, a collection of records dating from the 12th century up to the present day. As I worked through the deeds, accounts, plans, bills and letters, boxing and cataloguing them, I became aware of what a remarkably complete archive it was. It felt that there in my hands I held the lives of all those, probably thousands of people who, over four hundred years, had been responsible for the creation, care and continuation of Croome and that through their commitment and devotion the place lives on. It seems that their spirit and purpose is linked through each generation by a golden thread that is still picked up and felt by the people who are closely involved today – estate workers, NT employees,

⁵⁰⁹ Jamuna Zakheim, Hare Krishna devotee, November 2010

⁵¹⁰ Hari Rama, Hare Krishna devotee, *Hare Krishnas & Chaitanya College at Croome Court*, Dr. Chris Upton, 2010

volunteers and regular visitors all speak of feeling an intangible, emotional connection.

Just as when you walk into an ancient cathedral you somehow feel the very essence and spirit of the people who've walked those cloisters over nearly a thousand years, so when you walk through Croome (both the Park and the House because they are inextricably linked) you seem to get hooked into its golden thread and feel the essence of the place – probably slightly different for each one of us, but always based on the beauty and unchanging, dependable certainty in an uncertain world, that is spread before you.

This certainty must continue or the work and devotion of both the Coventry family and, very importantly, that of thousands of ordinary people in South Worcestershire over the past four hundred years will be as nothing and will be lost forever.

Above all 'Croome' is a human story."

Almost to prove this point, something very intimate and emotional recently happened at Croome: one of the stable-block residents had, of his own accord, identified the Rotunda, situated in the Home Shrubbery, as epitomising Croome's emotional and spiritual significance. He sought the Property Manager's permission to propose to his girlfriend in this exquisite building created by Brown for the 6th Earl of Coventry for the pursuit of pleasure. She accepted.

Future significance

Ranking: Local-National

Croome's significance is as much about the future as it is about the past. It offers real and significant opportunity to build on its varied and multi-cultural history to provide a place of beauty, tranquility, inspiration, challenge, stimulation for all. Just as it was historically a crucible of creativity, so can it be again, in the shape of apprenticeships, learning, enjoyment and artistic endeavour.

The Court's future significance also resides in it being an on-going example of the rise, fall and rise of great country houses at the heart of once great country estates. It is an illustration of how the meaning and value of heritage changes with time and how people's perceptions of these iconic buildings can alter. Croome Court stands as testimony to how:

- In the 18th century, these places were conceived as power-houses and statements of wealth, taste and power, the privilege of a few;
- In the 19th century, they also provided stability and community identity;
- In the mid-20th century, they became unwieldy and redundant through changing social structures and two world wars;
- In the late 20th century, they limped on, re-invented themselves or were destroyed; and how,
- In the 21st century, in some cases, they can take on new, revived value and opportunity for an even wider range of people than ever before.

Croome Court, as an opportunity to assess the meaning and value of the heritage of historic country houses in the 21st century, is brimming with cultural, social, creative,

artistic, spiritual, educational and enjoyment opportunities for the future. With its 18th century European design inspiration, its 19th century iconic English country house and estate centre-of-the-community function, its surprising multi-cultural, international and checkered 20th century history, Croome makes us think and re-assess the significances of this place in the past and therefore what its significance could be in the future.

Its late 20th century layers offer particularly valuable and colourful insight and a starting point for debates into emerging modern attitudes to country house conservation and how they could be treated in the future. This includes notions such as adaptation and use of historic houses, new technology, changes in social and economic structures, accessibility, contents dispersal, methods of repair and conservation principles, shared ownership, hierarchy of significances, and so on. All these issues seem to be encapsulated at Croome and provide an immediate richness and relevance to draw upon.

There is also something undeniably alluring about its picturesque charm, its imperfections and anomalies which make it seem both accessible and mysterious. These qualities seize the imagination, excite curiosity and inspire a remarkable loyalty and commitment. Croome gets under people's skin and they *want* to be involved with it.

Croome's future significance lies also in the fact that it is increasingly becoming a focus for volunteers and their relationship with the heritage on their doorstep, and a fulcrum for local community involvement. The passion, thirst for knowledge and commitment towards the property as a whole, with the Court at its centre, is growing and spreading throughout staff, volunteers, visitors, the Friends Group, partners such as the Worcestershire Record Office, local schools, BME groups, RAF Defford veterans and so on. It is as though the Court is reaching out and drawing people in, in a kind of social expansion but also providing a focal point.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Taking into account the above exploration and assessment of Croome's various significances, the following Statement of Significance has been drawn up:

Croome Court, Worcestershire is a nationally important Grade 1 Palladian house where, in the 18th century, two internationally-known designers began their careers. It was created by 'Capability' Brown, with advice from Sanderson Miller, for a sophisticated patron, the 6th Earl of Coventry, between 1751 and 1758 and set within Brown's first landscaped park, also listed Grade I. It incorporates elements of the 17th century house on the site and its early history is linked to major political and legal figures in the Coventry family, such as the Lord Keeper (to Charles I) of the Great Seal of England. The mid-17th century house was an important and advanced example of its type and of historic merit in its own right.

The Court's re-modelling by Brown, normally known for his significance in the history of landscape design, was his first flight into the realms of architecture. Croome Court is an important example of his relatively under-appreciated architectural work. Not only that, but it was Brown's first major commission and the first grand project where he had overall control of the works.

Although the architectural qualities of the 18th century house may not be on a par with major houses such as Houghton, Holkham, Osterley or Kedleston, Croome Court's significance is more subtle, layered and wide-ranging. This enhances its significance at a local, regional and national level.

The Court's synergy with the designed landscape is fundamental: house and park are inextricably inter-linked. It is the focal point of the landscape, and is also its principal ornament. The sightlines to and from the Court are magnificent and have a carefully considered geometry that appears effortless and incidental. In order to fully understand the genius of Brown's landscape at Croome, one has to experience it from the house. His approach of conceiving the house together with its gardens, follies, eye-catchers and parkland as a single harmonious entity led the way in forming the new 'natural' philosophy of landscape design in the mid-18th century. Croome is the iconic template and fountainhead for the English landscape style.

The interior of the house is distinguished for its nobility of conception and quality of craftsmanship. The rooms are large and handsome and their decoration, though rich, is not overly profuse. They have been described as an architectural journey from the late Rococo to the Neo-classical: under Brown, the decoration of the Court was executed in the late Rococo style by a roll-call of the most eminent craftsmen of the day, including Francesco Vassalli, John Hobcraft, Sefferin Alken, James Lovell and William Linnell.

The most important contribution, however, was made from the 1760s onwards by Robert Adam in the emerging Neo-Classical style. He designed the plasterwork decoration and furnishings for three of the principal rooms: The Library, Tapestry Room and, most significant of all, the Long Gallery. These rooms are an extremely important example of Adam's early work. He returned from Italy in 1758 heralding a new style of interior decoration, and the 6th Earl of Coventry

was one of his first patrons, from at least 1760 onwards. A large quantity of Adam's drawings for Croome survive, in the Sir John Soane Museum, and in the possession of the Croome Estate Trust, which is in itself significant, given that no full set of drawings survives for any of his country house commissions. Not only do these drawings include plasterwork and architectural elevations, but also associated fixtures and furniture designed specifically for Croome's interiors. Many of these pieces of furniture, as testament to their significance and quality, are now in national and international museums as examples of the finest craftsmanship of their time, executed by royal suppliers such as Vile & Cobb and Mayhew & Ince. The collection still contains sufficient pieces to appreciate the sophistication and high quality of the contents of the state rooms. Taken as a whole, Adam's work at Croome was among the most significant country house interiors of English Neo-classicism, and the Long Gallery is believed to be the first room that he designed in its entirety, including the elevations, plasterwork, fixtures and furnishings.

George William, 6th Earl of Coventry, was a wealthy patron and exceptional arbiter of taste in the mid-18th century, a man with vision who gave both Brown and Adam the opportunity to exercise their talents at a formative stage in their careers. He was an outstanding patron of architecture and the decorative arts and an early enthusiast for the Neo-classical style. It is not an exaggeration to say that he was one of the most advanced and sophisticated patrons in England at the time.

He was also an early, immensely enthusiastic and assiduous plant collector, whose collection at its height was second only to Kew. He was an agricultural improver who vigilantly oversaw and revitalised his estate, which was described as a '*seat of prudence and order*', and his wide-ranging interests were reflected in his library. The iconic, confident image of him in the Allan Ramsay portrait still in the collection perfectly encapsulates the impression one gains of him as "*...surely one of the most civilised ornaments of that most civilised age.*"

What stands out so obviously about the sophistication of the 6th Earl's patronage is the sheer quality, importance and in some cases, avant-garde nature of the furniture that he commissioned and acquired. He was not only a man of taste, but a taste-maker. Croome is a unified work of art that was driven by his vision, ambition and sophisticated taste. It reflects a commitment to quality – a stage for the display of work by the finest craftspeople, designers and engineers of the time – and to innovation, particularly in the 6th Earl's willingness to take a chance on new talent. He employed no less than 41 furniture makers, including those patronized by the crown. The more architectural items were designed by Robert Adam and the cabinet-making was carried out by established London firms. The superb quality owes much to the discrimination and taste of Coventry himself and the high standards set by his architects.

The main family portraits and paintings relating to the house are still in the possession of the Coventry Trustees and are highly significant both in terms of their relationship to the house and its historical occupants and in their own right as works of art. The artistic quality resides above all in the superb group of Ramsays, among which there are no less than six family portraits, including the portrait of the 6th Earl himself. The iconic 'vision' of Croome set in its English

landscape by Richard Wilson in 1758 was painted at a key moment in the creation of the park when the Rotunda had just been completed but the Gothic church not yet begun. This picture may well therefore be the first painted depiction of a Brown-designed landscape and the English Landscape style. It takes on increased significance as a painting and is more than simply a beautiful work of art.

Croome's vast archive is of pre-eminent importance and provides the historian with an extraordinarily complete picture of the life and undertakings of the Coventry family from the 17th to the mid-20th century. The bulk of the archive (up until 1921) was accepted in lieu of capital gains tax in recognition of its significance and is in the public domain at the Worcestershire Record Office. The sheer quantity of bills, letters, drawings, maps, legal papers and accounts is staggering and not only is it very complete, but the 18th century papers also bear witness to the 6th Earl's sustained patronage of craftsmen of national and international significance. This is an incredibly rich and valuable resource in terms of understanding and illustrating the property's historical evolution and local social and economic history. It also gives the added dimension of insights into the human stories of the characters involved.

Croome's survival owes much to the long-standing patronage and stewardship of the Coventry family, not least the 9th Earl and Countess, who were conscious of the significance of their inheritance and were pivotal figures in Worcestershire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They personify the era of the great country estate being at the heart of its community, involved in agricultural improvements, providing stability and employment, engaging with country pursuits and, in the Coventrys' case, all things equestrian, hence the nationally-known local hunting country, '*The Croome*'. The 9th Earl and Countess straddle the era of social upheaval that took place in England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and their tenure of Croome personifies the aristocracy's position faced with the need to adapt to the twin devastations of world war and agricultural depression. Nevertheless, due to a combination of their refusal to change and stoic loyalty to their family seat of generations, the 6th Earl's basic eighteenth century pattern and ideas survived relatively unscathed.

The Court also has an important and intriguing post-Coventry history which epitomises the fortunes of the English country house in the late 20th century: in the 1950s-60s it housed a Roman Catholic School and in the 1970s and 80s was the UK Headquarters of the Society for Krishna Consciousness. It then lurched from one property developer to another, surviving several attempts at commercial ventures and came through with remarkable dignity and a sense that, though battle-worn, its spirit was not broken. More than that, the building gives a sense of having embraced these diverse occupants, often making a lasting and profound impression on them. Some physical legacies of these various periods survive, as in any historic house with a long life and several incarnations. Whilst they may rank lower in the *traditional* hierarchy of significances, they provided the house with a function when it was in decline and had no obvious future. Their significance lies in the fact that these uses are within living memory of the local population and form a compelling link for people's reminiscences of the building. They also illustrate the changing roles that great country houses have had in people's lives over the centuries. They are philosophically rather than

physically significant. Croome's remarkable history thus charts the changing fortunes of the English country house over four centuries. These are emotive and stimulating areas for debate and the Court offers exceptional opportunities for exploring these issues.

Since it was sold by the Coventry family in 1948 it has been perceived as a kind of 'lost' house, marooned within a landscape from which it had become divorced. People who know it, whether local families on the former estate or intellectual experts and authorities on Robert Adam and the English landscape movement, have watched anxiously, never daring to believe that it would survive the ravages of the 20th century, let alone be one day accessible for public benefit. Subjected to the indignities of the M5 motorway slicing through the park in the 1960s and various property developers' failing attempts to run it as a country club, restaurant, hotel or conference centre, Croome has clung on.

Today, Croome has an almost cult following, ranging from local people who grew up on the estate, to published architectural historians. It is one of Worcestershire's few great surviving houses - it has been described as 'No.1, Worcestershire'. Architecturally and artistically, it is of huge significance, yet it also acts on a human, emotional, inspirational level that people find hard to put into words. It speaks of quality, beauty and quirky personality. It has vulnerability yet it has survived and endured.

Now, the once-in-a-lifetime chance of re-uniting the house and park for perpetuity, ensuring the survival and preservation of such a significant total work of art and reviving it as the heart of the community is at last within our grasp. The future participative restoration of the Court will ensure that it has resonance and meaning and significance for people in this new century and beyond.

The following annotated floorplans set out the key significances attached to the various spaces of the Court and its fabric, in historical, architectural, and decorative terms. N.B. These are intended as a quick visual reference tool and are not intended to be exhaustive.

Key:

Surviving/significant Tudor/Jacobean house fabric (pre 1640)

Surviving/significant Caroline house fabric (mid C17th)

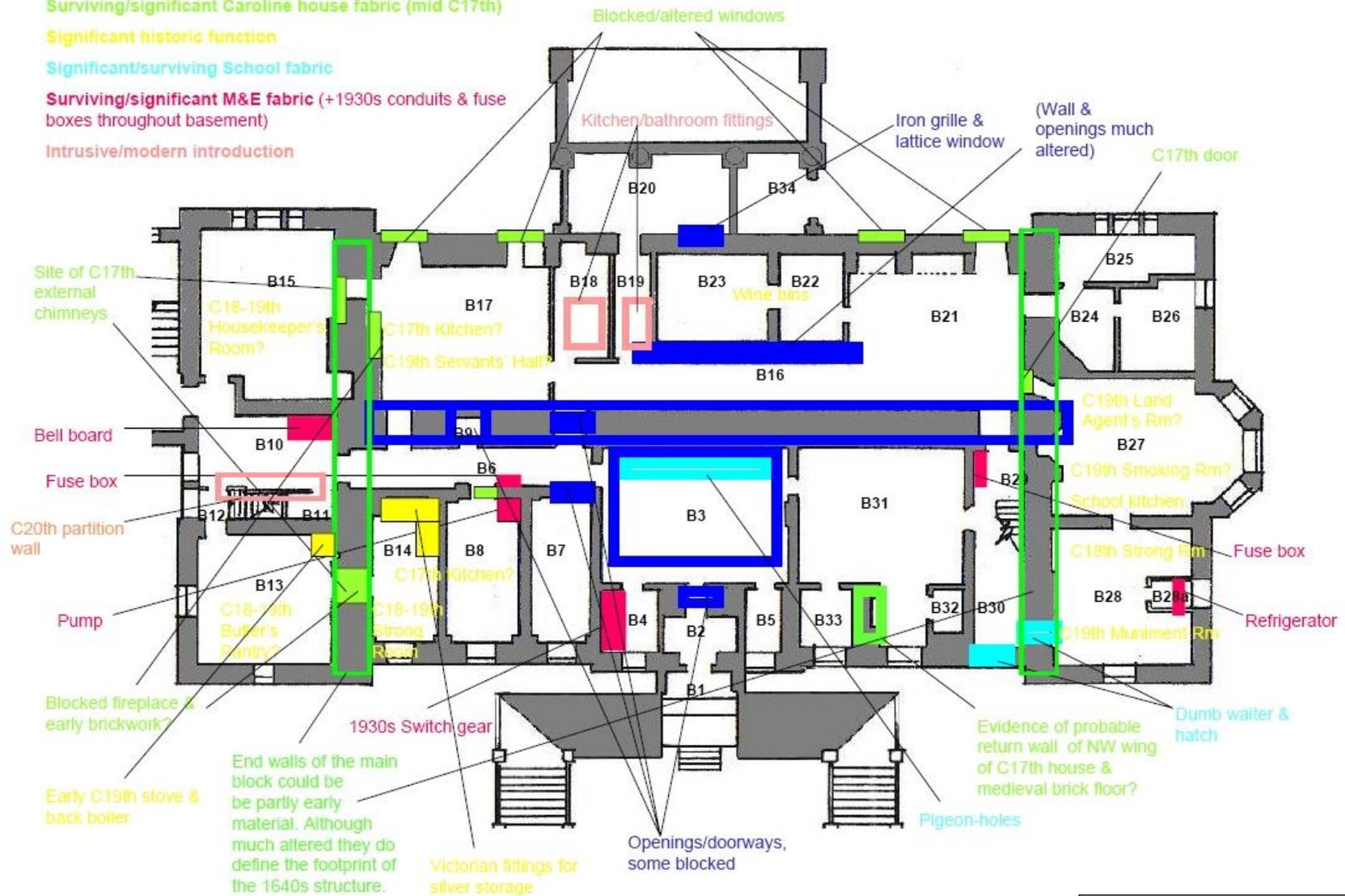
Significant historic function

Significant/surviving School fabric

Surviving/significant M&E fabric (+1930s conduits & fuse boxes throughout basement)

Intrusive/modern introduction

Croome Court - Basement



Sarah Kay - 1 September 2011

Croome Court – Ground Floor

Key:

Surviving/significant Tudor/Jacobean fabric (pre 1640)

Surviving/significant Caroline fabric (mid C17th)

Significant 6th Earl spaces (mid C18th)

Significant Adam spaces

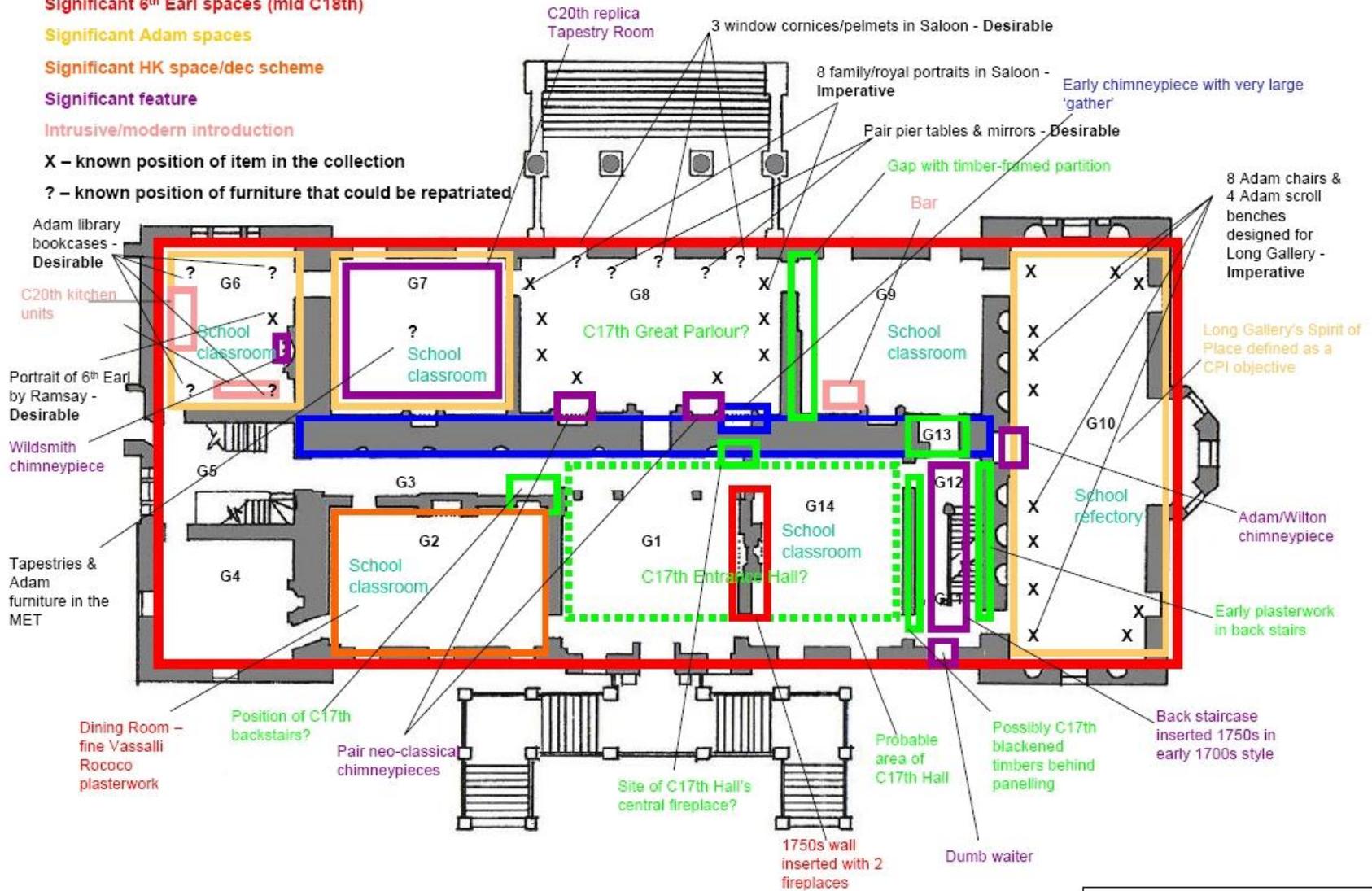
Significant HK space/dec scheme

Significant feature

Intrusive/modern introduction

X – known position of item in the collection

? – known position of furniture that could be repatriated



Sarah Kay – 1 September 2011

Key:

Surviving/significant Tudor/Jacobean fabric (pre 1640)

Surviving/significant Caroline fabric (mid C17th)

Significant 6th Earl space

Significant historic function

Significant School space

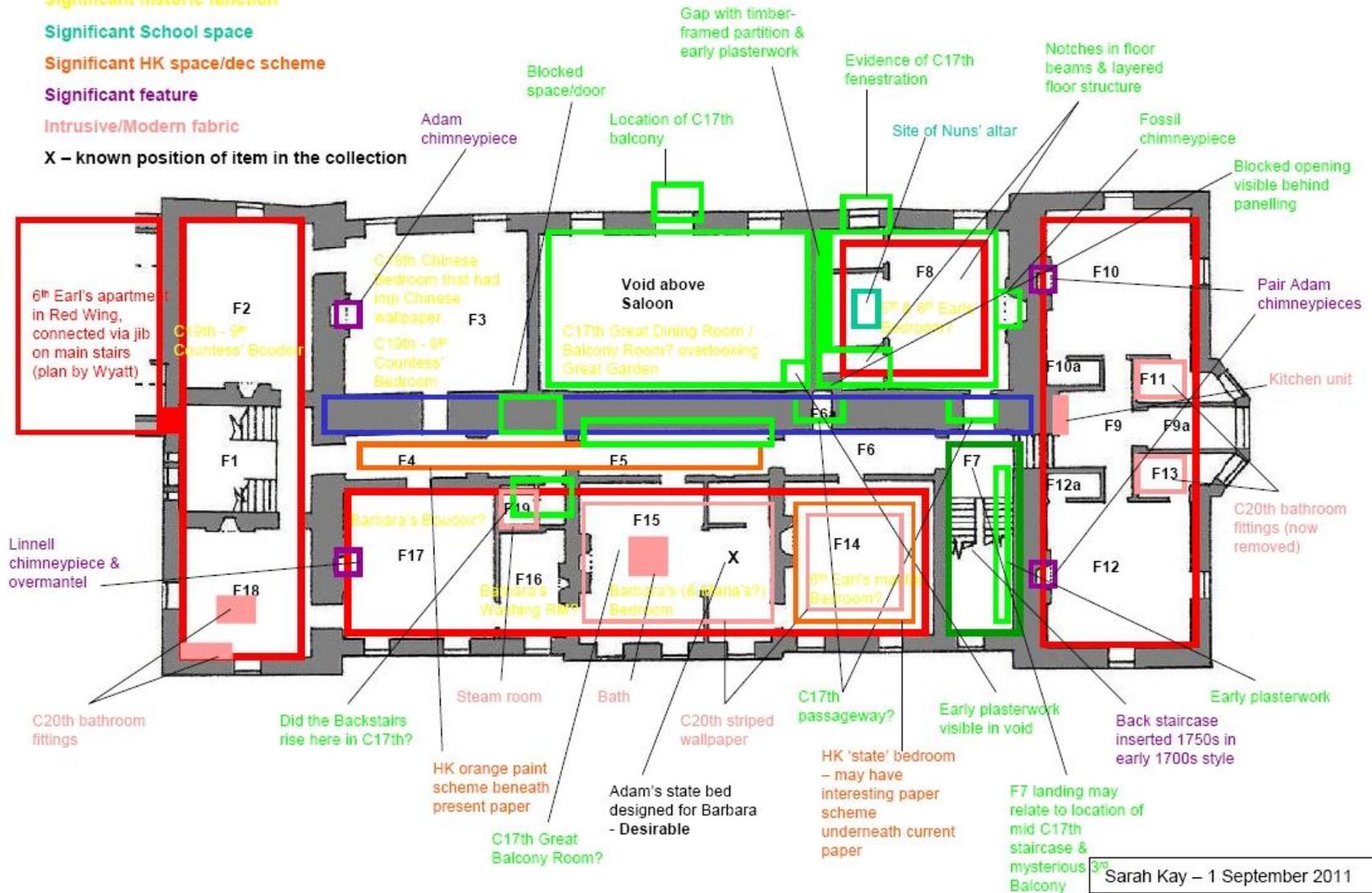
Significant HK space/dec scheme

Significant feature

Intrusive/Modern fabric

X – known position of item in the collection

Croome Court – First Floor



Key:

Surviving/significant Tudor/Jacobean fabric (pre 1640)

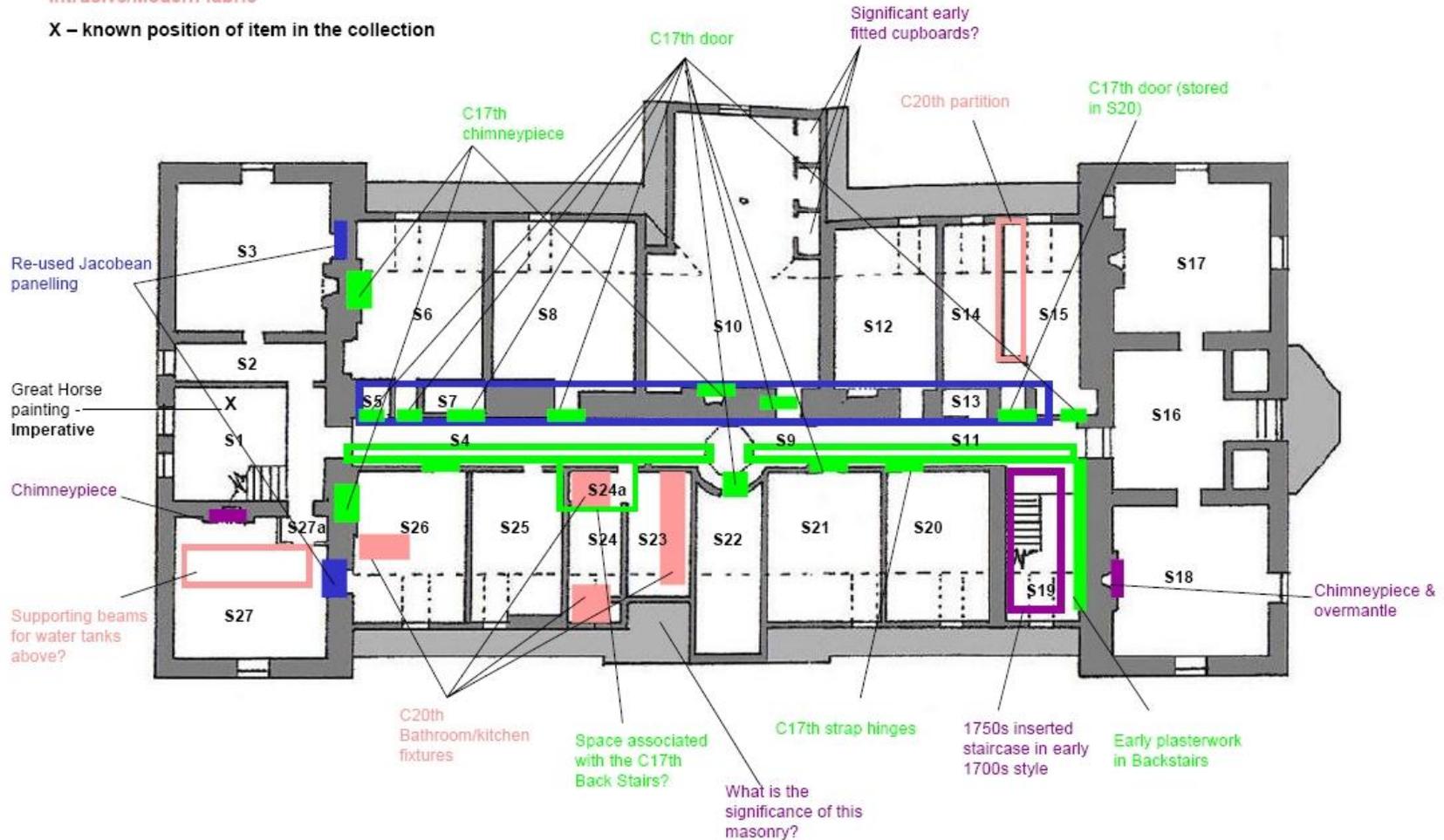
Surviving/significant Caroline fabric (mid C17th) + evidence above of C17th roof structure & chimney profile

Significant feature

Intrusive/Modern fabric

X – known position of item in the collection

Croome Court – Second Floor



Sarah Kay – 1 September 2011

SECTION 3 - RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES

RISKS

Croome Court's future is arguably now much more secure than it has been since the Coventry family sold it in 1948. After half a century of uncertainty and fluctuating degrees of threat, the Court is finally re-united with its park and most of its immediate surroundings. The major pieces of the jigsaw have been or are being put back together and a plan has been formed in the shape of a partnership of the key stakeholders for ensuring that the Court's long term security is protected.

This CMMP aims to guide and inform the management of the Court's heritage into the future, both in the immediate, medium and longer term, beyond the life of the present project. One of its key aims is to identify, articulate and rank the various significances of the building and its heritage so that they are not overlooked or compromised. There are a variety of short, medium and longer term risks which face the property and the present project, both pre-, during- and post-delivery. These must be recognised, evaluated and mitigated against in order to ensure that the significance of Croome Court is not endangered but enhanced.

In order to examine these issues, staff, advisors, partners and volunteers were involved in workshops which examined, categorised and ranked the risks. This was done in order to ensure that risks were included from as many perspectives as possible and to gain a consensus on their probability, impact and likely timing. These risks and their consequences are grouped and described below, along with their likelihood and potential impact, as well as measures and responsibilities for mitigating them. Their colour coding allows the higher risks (in red) to be identified at a glance.

Two of the outcomes from the Risk workshop were:

- a large degree of consensus in the group on the nature of the risks;
- the realisation that many, if not most, of the risks overlap and are inter-dependent.

N.B. Those risks that are not related specifically to the heritage but to the activities of the Croome Redefined Project can be found in Section 5c (Risks relating to the delivery of the project) and 7b (Longer term risks) of the Application Form.

The Risk scoring system adopted is that of the NT's Project Management Framework:

Likelihood: Rare, Unlikely, Possible, Likely, Almost certain, with a score of 1-5.

Impact: Very Low, Low, Medium, High, Very High, with a score of 1-5.

Each risk's total score is then flagged with a traffic-light system: Low: (1-5) = **Green**; Medium: (6-12) = **Yellow**; High: (13-25) = **Red**.

The Croome Redefined Project						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. In handing-over a degree of control to others in the interpretation and presentation of the Court's interiors, we might not sufficiently 'let go', or might 'let go' too much.	Stifling full creative potential of our partners, vs physical and/or intellectual damage or compromise to the heritage and Spirit of Place.	3	4	12	We will constantly challenge ourselves, each other and our ways of working to ensure that we strike the right balance in our degrees of 'letting go' and handing over control. 'Non-neogtiables' will be written into contracts with Creative Partners.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
2. Badly or insensitively managed physical processes and outcomes of the Croome Redefined Project.	Damage or compromise of the fabric and Spirit of Place.	2	5	10	We will ensure that those responsible for the delivery and implementation of the project have sufficient heritage management skills (and/or access to them) to ensure that the Spirit of Place is enhanced not damaged. This aim will be written into relevant Role Profiles. This CMMP will be used as a guiding framework and touchstone for Spirit of Place & Significances. We will work with our Curator to champion Spirit of Place. We will work with our Conservator to ensure the fabric is protected and to raise awareness of the importance of this. 'Non-neogtiables' will be written into contracts with Creative Partners.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM
3. Irreversible damage and/or physical intervention to the fabric as a result of our aim to conceive and deliver a ground-breaking project that will transform the	Damage to or compromise of the heritage and Spirit of Place. Reputational damage.	2	5	10	We will ensure that everyone involved is familiar with the Court's Statement of Significance and uses it as a touchstone against which to road-test ideas and innovations. We will work	House Team. Led by HVSM

visitor experience of visiting an historic country house.					with our Curator to champion Spirit of Place. We will work with our Conservator to ensure the fabric is protected and to raise awareness of the importance of this. 'Non-neogtiables' will be written into contracts with Creative Partners.	
4. Putting the fabric of the Court at risk by giving young, new and unproven talent a chance, a voice and a platform.	Physical and/or intellectual damage or compromise of the heritage and Spirit of Place. If the outcomes lack quality and integrity, we put the organisation's reputation at risk.	2	4	8	We will put roles and responsibilities in place (E.g. Partnerships Manager, Mentors) to ensure that quality, integrity & coherence are achieved, monitored and maintained. We will work with our Curator to ensure Spirit of Place is respected. We will work with our Conservator to ensure the fabric is protected and to raise awareness of the importance of this. 'Non-neogtiables' will be written into contracts with Creative Partners.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
5. In trying to be innovative and different, we overlook or compromise the inherent significances of the indigenous collection and do not sufficiently focus on it for our inspiration and include it in our creative presentations.	Betrayal of Croome's Spirit of Place. Vacuous, meaningless presentations and installations.	2	3	6	We will ensure that everyone involved is familiar with the Court's various significances and those of its indigenous (and 'lost') collections. This CMMP will be used as a guiding framework and touchstone for Spirit of Place & Significances.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
6. Insensitive, ill-informed, irreversible capital works.	Physical and/or intellectual damage or compromise of the heritage and Spirit of Place.	1	5	5	The capital works will be informed by this CMMP and our understanding of the physical & documentary evidence to date. We are working closely with our Architects, Building Surveyors, Architectural Historian (who has a	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM

					watching brief), Conservator & Curator to guard against making irreversible and badly-informed changes. Care and respect of the fabric will be written into all 3 rd party contracts.	
7. At the end of the Croome Redefined project, the property 'reverts to type' and does not sustain its innovative presentational and engaging approach.	Future maintenance of the heritage is jeopardized by lack of income/interest as a result of falling visitor numbers.	1	3	3	New ways of working and new roles will be embedded during the lifetime of the project to ensure that this does not happen. New skills will have been learnt so that the property can build on the increased knowledge and capabilities of the staff and volunteers.	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager
Inappropriate development/adaptation/repair/use						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Insensitive adaptation of spaces within the Court for practical purposes (workshops/hand-washing/toilets/offices).	Irreversible damage to historic fabric and loss of Spirit of Place.	2	5	10	We are working with our internal and external advisers and architects to ensure that any adaptation is done as sensitively and reversibly as possible with due regard for the historic fabric and Spirit of Place.	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager.
2. Inappropriate presentation and/or interpretation of the historic interiors.	Loss of Spirit of Place.	3	3	9	We and our creative partners will be informed and guided by the Statement of Significance and agree a framework of principles.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
3. Introduction of inappropriate alterations and materials in our aims to be as energy efficient and environmentally sustainable as	Irreversible damage to the historic fabric and/or its integrity.	2	3	6	We will work with our Building Surveyor, Environmental Practices Advisor, Green Champion, Conservator & Curator to ensure that any	House Team and Project Team.

possible.					modification for energy efficiency is done as sensitively and reversibly as possible with due regard for the historic fabric.	Led by Property Manager
4. Trying to squeeze too many uses into the Court, (show rooms, storage, offices, workshops, meetings rooms, etc) which is a relatively modest-sized building.	Irreversible damage to historic fabric and loss of Spirit of Place.	1	5	5	We have greatly reduced this risk by the fact that the Red Wing, as historically, will act as the service wing to the Court and so many of the practical functions will no longer need to be located in the Court.	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager.
5. Insensitive and/or irreversible changes, repairs or additions to the built fabric that show lack of care, attention to detail, integrity and quality.	Irreversible damage to historic fabric and loss of Spirit of Place.	1	5	5	We will work closely with our internal and external advisers and ensure that any potential changes, repairs or additions are carefully thought through and discussed before taking action. We will insist on the best quality and attention to detail and will work closely with our Architect, Building Surveyors & Curator & Conservator to achieve this. These points will be written into all contracts with 3 rd parties.	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager.
6. Use of inappropriate materials in any structural repair or adaptation work.	Loss of Spirit of Place. Compromise of historic fabric.	1	5	5	We will work with our Architect, Building Surveyors & Curator to ensure that this does not happen. We will be guided by our philosophy of approach to the repair of the Court (see Section 4): we will use where possible existing historic fabric, or the same generic material of an equal quality.	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager.

Changes that affect the Court's landscape setting						
Risk	Consequence	Likeli-hood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Undesirable developments by 3 rd parties on adjacent land.	The Court's setting in the wider landscape being threatened or compromised.	3	4	12	Working with our Planning Advisers and Rural Surveyors, we are and will continue to remain alert to any potential planning applications for undesirable developments and will respond to these as appropriate.	Led by Property Manager.
2. Insensitive signage, seating, clutter and mis-management of the immediate vicinity and approach to the Court.	Loss of Spirit of Place.	2	5	10	We will work closely with our curatorial advisors to maintain the aesthetic significance of the site.	House Team. Led by HVSM.
3. Introduction of inappropriate external lighting and security systems.	Loss of Spirit of Place.	2	5	10	We will work closely with our Curator to maintain the aesthetic significance of the site.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
4. Vehicular access to the Court and Red Wing by staff and contractors could result in too many cars being parked close to the Court.	Loss of Spirit of Place and detraction from the Court's appearance in the landscape.	2	5	10	We already mitigate against this by encouraging staff and contractors to park away from the Court unless there are practical imperatives. We will continue to enforce this. We will also explain the short term visual impact of vehicles necessitated by the work on the Red Wing.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
5. Any physical or intellectual division between the Court and the Park, or lack of understanding of the context of the whole, in terms of approaches to its presentation	Destruction of the essential harmony and unity of the place.	2	5	10	We will constantly remind all those involved (visitors, staff, volunteers, advisers) that it is essential to see the Court & Park as two integral halves of the same whole. The CMMP, setting	Led by Property Manager.

and interpretation.					out the significance of the landscape setting, will be available to all.	
6. Use of inappropriate surfaces to the Court's approach paths and access routes.	Loss of Spirit of Place.	1	5	5	We will work closely with our curatorial, landscape and access advisors to maintain the aesthetic significance of the site.	Led by Property Manager.
7. Inappropriate development or activities in the Park, both temporary and permanent.	Loss of Spirit of Place and detracting from the Court's external appearance in the landscape.	1	5	5	We are and will remain extremely vigilant to maintaining the all-important sightlines and vistas across the Park, and to and from the Court and ensure that they are un-impeded by anything extraneous and inappropriate. The Park's significance is managed by its own CMMP.	Led by Property Manager.
Gaps in knowledge, understanding & communication						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Making irreversible decisions and changes to the fabric before we have carried out all the research, both physical and documentary.	Irreversible damage to the fabric and loss of historic evidence.	2	5	10	We will continue our physical and documentary research and develop our understanding. We will continue to work closely with our Building Surveyor, Architectural Historian (who has a watching brief), Curator, Conservator and the Croome Archivist to guard against making irreversible and badly-informed changes. This CMMP is a live document and will be up-dated as understanding develops.	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager
2. There is a risk of our Creative Partnerships not understanding the significances, values, stories and sensitivities of Croome sufficiently	Spirit of Place is compromised not championed.	2	5	10	This CMMP and its Statement of Significance will be available to all and will be required reading for all those wishing to become involved. Relevance	House Team and Project Team.

in order to make meaningful and relevant responses to it.					to Croome will be written into all Creative Partnership contracts. We will use the 'live' Archive Room as a focus for this.	Led by HVSM.
3. Failure to communicate effectively and maintain good relationships with the CHT, the owner of Crome Court and our key stakeholder.	Break down of relationship with key stakeholder, jeopardizing future of the heritage asset.	1	5	5	We are putting a communications plan in place in order to communicate effectively and regularly with all our stakeholders and to provide mechanisms for feedback. We have a good relationship with the CHT and will maintain regular dialogue with them and continue to discuss plans for the Court with them. They will be tangibly represented in the 'live' Archive Room in the Court.	Led by Property Manager
4. Mis-judgment or lack of understanding of the Court's historic and present significances at the outset of the project.	Future significance and Spirit of Place of the Court jeopardized, compromised or misrepresented.	1	4	4	We will remain vigilant and open to re-assessing the hierarchy of the Court's significances. The Statement of Significance in this CMMP will be updated accordingly.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
Conflicting priorities						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Failure to balance the financial imperative of encouraging more visitors with the risk of wear and tear and damage caused by increased numbers.	Damage to historic fabric.	4	4	16	We will work with our Conservator and Engagement & Conservation Officer to ensure adequate preventive conservation measures and high standards of housekeeping are in place. We will use our Conservation Performance Indicators to ensure that we balance conservation achievement	House Team. Led by HVSM.

					with income generation.	
2. As a result of wanting to explore all of Croome Court's historic layers of occupancy, there may be conflicts in terms of perceived hierarchies of significance and differing opinions as to their validity.	Compromise of Spirit of Place	4	3	12	We will relish and encourage the debates that these dilemmas will stimulate, and share them with our volunteers and visitors in order to enrich and explore everyone's understanding of Croome's various significances. Balanced decisions will be made taking these discussions into account. This CMMP will be updated to record and reflect emerging values.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
3. With the constant and increasing need to generate income, there is a risk that inappropriate income-generating activities and events take precedence over conservation considerations and Spirit of Place.	Damage to historic fabric and loss of Spirit of Place.	2	4	8	We will use an 'Events Guidelines' checklist to ensure appropriateness of activities and to put preventive conservation measures in place. We will take the NT's 'Triple Bottom Line' approach, which judges performance not simply in financial terms but also in terms of conservation achievement. We have Conservation Performance Indicators which encourage gains in conservation activities, not just in visitor numbers and revenue. We will have clearly set-out and agreed frameworks for any events and activities, particularly those involving 3 rd parties.	House Team. Led by HVSM.
4. Failure to strike a balance between generating income with expenditure on adequate resources for the care of the fabric & conservation cleaning/housekeeping.	Damage to historic fabric through lack of care and loss of Spirit of Place.	2	4	8	We already use mechanisms such as the Conservation Performance Indicators to assess our performance against these requirements and put the necessary checks and balances in place. We also use the Conservation for Access Toolkit to calculate	House Team. Led by HVSM.

					resources for housekeeping and preventive conservation.	
Lack of resources and skills						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Failure to be sufficiently and appropriately resourced in order to maintain adequate levels of housekeeping and conservation cleaning when faced with an ambitious programme of changing themes, conservation-in action, building restoration work, visitor engagement and large numbers of visitors attracted by a 'new' approach to presenting an historic house.	Damage to the fabric and Loss of Spirit of Place.	4	5	20	Staff structures will be reviewed at least every year as part of the Property Business Plan (PBP) and more often as required. New roles have been and are being introduced specifically to cope with the demands of the innovative plans for the presentation and interpretation of the Court. We will work closely with our Conservator to monitor, maintain and improve standards. Opportunities for training, improving skills and personal development are identified as objectives in the Performance Leadership Process (PLPs).	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager.
2. As the property grows, visitor numbers increase and the project in the Court gathers momentum there is a risk that it will outgrow the capacity and skills of the team of staff and volunteers that administers, opens and cares for it.	Damage to/neglect of the fabric.	4	4	16	Staff & volunteer structures will be reviewed at least every year as part of the PBP and more often as required. We will ensure that training, shadowing and mentoring opportunities are available for our staff and volunteers. Opportunities for training, improving skills and personal development will be identified as objectives in PLPs. The Volunteer Skills Register provides a way of reviewing available skills – it currently lists c.30 existing roles and	Led by Property Manager and through Volunteer Co-ordinator.

					c.110 specific skills available from volunteers.	
3. Lack of adequate staff and volunteers' skills/understanding/awareness of preventive conservation and the importance of caring for the fabric of the Court.	Damage to/neglect of the fabric.	2	4	8	A House Engagement & Conservation Officer has been appointed. We will ensure that training, shadowing and mentoring opportunities are available for our staff and volunteers. Skills development will be identified as an objective in staff PLPs.	Led by HVSM and through HCEO.
4. There is a risk that the on-going restoration of Croome <i>Park</i> and increased visitor numbers to it could result in an increased draw on resources and staff, pulling people's capacity away from the Court .	Care of the Court is neglected through lack of capacity.	1	4	4	Additional staff and volunteers have been recruited for the Court in order to cope with the extra demands put on the property's resources. We will continue to review the staff structure and volunteer numbers and roles in order to ensure adequate resources across the whole property.	Led by Property Manager
5. The <i>updating</i> of the Park Conservation Management Plan (written in 1996) may mean a greater draw on staff resources and time as a result of its revision, which in turn may mean a change to how the whole site is managed and impact upon the resourcing of the Court.	Care of the Court is neglected through lack of capacity.	1	4	4	Additional staff and volunteers have been recruited for the Court in order to cope with the extra demands put on the property's resources. We will continue to review the staff structure and volunteer numbers and roles in order to ensure adequate resources across the whole property.	Led by Property Manager
Access vs Conservation						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Failure to balance the inherent	Damage to the fabric	3	5	15	We will draw on the NT's vast	Led by

conflict and tension between the competing aims of conservation and access.	and loss of Spirit of Place.				experience of balancing our twin core aims of conservation and access. We will work with our Conservator, Curator & Visitor Services Manager to reduce the risks associated with this balancing act.	Property Manager through HVSM.
2. Large increases in visitor numbers to the Court and its immediate setting as a result of the success of the Croome Redefined Project and lack of appropriate management of them in terms of preventive conservation. (Total visitors to Croome: in 2009 = 79,385 in 2011 = 134,065 In Mar-Dec 2011, 46% of visitors who visited Croome came into the Court, which equated to 63,602 people).	Increased wear & tear on the fabric and surfaces of the building through footfall, vibration, cumulative touching/rubbing, greater fluctuations in relative humidity and risk of accidental or intentional damage. Increased wear to external surfaces (paths, stone flags, north & south steps)	3	5	15	Realistic targets for visitor numbers will be set in the PBP and will be reviewed annually. We will work with our Conservator and Conservation & Engagement Officer to ensure adequate preventive conservation measures and high standards of housekeeping are in place to cope with periods of high visitor traffic and/or increases in numbers. We will work with our Conservator, CEO and Park staff to ensure that the condition and immediate setting of the Court is maintained in terms of condition & appearance. We will engage our volunteers and visitors in the importance of preventive conservation to raise their awareness of these issues.	Led by Property Manager through HVSM.
3. Opening-up areas of the house for conservation-in-action and engagement opportunities before the structure is sufficiently stable.	Collapse or damage to the historic fabric.	2	5	10	We will work closely with our Architect, Building Surveyor and Conservator to ensure that any risks to areas of weak fabric from visitor traffic are avoided and/or kept to a minimum and explain to our visitors why this needs to be done. We will Consult with our H&S Officer to put appropriate safety	Led by Property Manager through HVSM.

					measures in place and restrict public access where necessary.	
Collection and risks to its display						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Failure to find creative and satisfactory ways of presenting items from the collection that achieve our innovative presentation proposals but which do not compromise the care and condition of the historic objects.	Conservation priorities are compromised for the sake of innovation and items in the historic collection are damaged.	4	4	16	We will work closely with our Conservator, Curator, Engagement & Conservation Officer and our Creative Partners to discuss how best to achieve this important balance. We will ensure that the vulnerabilities of the collection are understood and written into contracts with 3 rd parties.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM
2. There is a risk that in protecting the collection from light damage we compromise the all-important sightlines out into the landscape.	Compromised Spirit of Place.	3	4	12	We will draw on the NT's vast experience in balancing access and conservation and the display of vulnerable objects on open display. We will learn from best practice and other examples of creative solutions. We will work closely with our Conservator, Curator, Engagement & Conservation Officer and our Creative Partners to discuss how best to achieve this crucial balance.	House Team and Project Team. Led by HVSM.
3. By maintaining the sightlines out into the landscape we cause irreversible light-damage to the collection .	Damage to the historic collection.	2	4	8	Ditto	House Team and Project Team. Led by

Public expectations & reputational risk						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Lack of success of the Croome Redefined project for a variety of reasons (funding, capacity, visitor perception, inability to sustain innovative approach, etc.	Risk to the future prospects of the heritage asset.	2	4	8	We will mitigate against this happening within our Project Management framework. A Senior Project Manager will be in post and quarterly internal risk reports & meetings are held to monitor and identify any potential problems early on.	House Team and Project Team. Led by Property Manager.
Management & ownership						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Failure to convert the short term of the Court from the CHT into a 999-year lease.	The future prospect and long term management of the heritage is jeopardised.	2	5	10	The NT is already well on the way to raising sufficient capital, with the help of the HLF and other sources, in order to turn the present short term lease into a 999-year lease. This aim, and its funding pre-requisite, is enshrined in the PBP.	Led by Property Manager
2. Deterioration of the relationship and therefore risk to the lease arrangement with the CET, our key partner and stakeholder.	The future prospect and long term management of the heritage is jeopardised.	1	5	5	The NT maintains very good and close relationships with the CHT and has been working closely with them for several years in order to ensure the long term future for the Court and has already made enormous progress. The NT Property Manager regularly updates the CHT on progress at Trustee meetings. The CHT's Archivist is closely involved	Led by Property Manager

					with the property as an NT volunteer, tour guide and research adviser.	
3. If the Court fails to become a viable long-term option, the important Coventry collection will not be able to return to Croome.	This important aspect of Croome's heritage will not be able to be re-instated within its original setting for the benefit of the nation.	1	5	5	The NT is doing everything it can (capital works, fund-raising and 999-year lease) to ensure the long-term future and condition of the Court so that the Coventry collection can return to its rightful home.	Led by Property Manager
4. Failure to negotiate the long-term loan or transfer of the Coventry collection to the NT before the cessation of the CET in 2024.	This important aspect of Croome's heritage will not be able to be re-instated within its original setting for the benefit of the nation.	1	5	5	The NT will do everything within its power to successfully negotiate the loan and eventual transfer of the Coventry collection. Negotiations have already begun.	Led by Property Manager
Funding						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Insufficient operational funds for the on-going conservation, restoration and maintenance of the building.	The future maintenance of the fabric of the building is jeopardised.	3	5	15	Our fund-raising efforts will continue in order to safeguard the future of the Court and to endow it.	Led by Property Manager
2. Money and resources are focused on the presentation and interpretation of the Court and insufficient funds are allocated to conservation training of staff and volunteers.	Care and conservation of the fabric and contents are neglected.	2	4	8	Our fund-raising efforts will continue in order to mitigate against this happening. Training is inherent to the project's Activity Plan. We will use our Conservation Performance Indicators to gauge and monitor conservation achievement levels or shortcomings. Appropriate training, shadowing & mentoring opportunities for staff & volunteers will be provided in order to ensure standards of conservation and	Led by Property Manager

Climate change						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
					care of the fabric and contents.	
1. Heavy snow falls add weight to roof areas and causes water ingress as it sits and gradually thaws.	Historic fabric and decorative plasterwork of interiors is jeopardized.	4	5	20	We are repairing those areas of the roof which are not wind and water-tight. We will remain vigilant to tell-tale signs of water ingress. We will monitor high-risk areas by regular visual inspection at high-risk periods.	Led by Property Manager through HVSM.
2. Prolonged drought could parch the parkland and reduce water levels in the 'river' and lake.	Compromise of the Court's landscape setting.	4	4	16	We have restored areas of wetland on the periphery of the Park which feed into Croome's 'river'. The 'river' has been de-silted and monitoring of these elements are part of the on-going restoration & maintenance of the Park and are also identified in our annually-reviewed CPI's.	Led by Property Manager through GPM
3. Increasingly harsh winters put pipework at risk of freezing, cracking and leaking.	Historic fabric and decorative plasterwork of interiors is jeopardized.	3	5	15	We are renewing the Mechanical & Electrical services of the building which will make them fit for purpose. Increased opening and use of the Court will reduce risk of pipework freezing. We will monitor high-risk areas by regular visual inspection at high-risk periods.	Led by Property Manager through HVSM
4. Failure of historic rainwater goods to cope with increased rain-fall and volumes of water.	Historic fabric damaged by water ingress.	2	5	10	Steps have already been taken and will continue to ensure rainwater goods have greater capacity. We will continue to take advice from NT advisors on climate change trends and anticipate provision of mitigating measures. We	Led by Property Manager through HVSM

					will remain vigilant to tell-tale signs of water ingress. We will monitor high-risk areas by regular visual inspection. Our Architect will carry out quinquennial building inspections.	
5. Insensitive/inappropriate adaptation of rainwater goods and roof structure in order to mitigate against impact of increased rainfall.	Damage/disfiguration/ loss of historic fabric. Compromise of external appearance.	2	4	8	We have already modified the capacity of some rainwater goods with minimal impact on the historic fabric. We will be open to other appropriate opportunities in discussion with our Building Surveyors and Curator.	Led by Property Manager.

The Red Wing - Background

There have been many risks associated with the Red Wing, the Court's main service wing attached to the east end of the building and which is in an increasingly derelict state. The two buildings are considered by English Heritage as two parts of one single Grade I listed building. The risk of further, even irreparable deterioration of the Red Wing was highlighted as a major threat in our first round submission to the HLF for financial aid with our conservation and engagement plans for the Court. Since then, the risks associated with the Red Wing have been markedly reduced.



The derelict Red Wing in 2010 (*Author*)

It was owned by the last property developer who owned the Court and, until recently, the Red Wing was for sale with planning permission for conversion to six residential units. The building is in an extreme state of dereliction, falling within the highest priority category of English Heritage's Buildings at Risk Register. A repairs notice was served by Malvern Hills District Council on Croome Court and the Red Wing (they being part of the same listed structure) which enforced a backlog of repairs to the fabric of the buildings. As the owner of the latter did not comply, a Compulsory Purchase Order was due to be served. The National Trust was extremely anxious to find an acceptable and viable solution which, at the very least, would involve restrictive covenants to control its inappropriate development. By working closely with the CHT, English Heritage and Malvern Hills District Council, The National Trust

has recently managed to achieve a positive solution which involves their becoming tenants of the CHT, as is the case with the Court. This means that work can begin to protect and stabilise the structure before it falls into further disrepair.

This process has been difficult to choreograph alongside our work to plan the Court's future, as the two buildings impact upon each other and their uses and functions need to be considered in tandem. The long-standing element of uncertainty over the Red Wing made certain decisions about the Court very difficult. The dynamic has now changed for the better with the successful resolution of the situation. In October 2011 the CHT finally acquired the Red Wing and immediately granted a fifteen-year lease to the National Trust. By acquiring, protecting and starting to repair the Red Wing, the National Trust and the Croome Heritage Trust have successfully removed some of the principal risks to the Croome Court project and have also established even stronger working relationships with the CET, English Heritage and Malvern Hills District Council.

Against this much more positive background, and whilst the present project only involves the Court, it is of course still important to take the potential usage of both buildings into account in our proposals and plans for the Court.

The Red Wing						
Risk	Consequence	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Mitigation	Responsibility
1. Potentially invasive impact of putting the service and commercial functions for the Court (plant rooms, toilets, catering, staff accommodation, etc) into the Red Wing.	Loss of /damage to historic fabric and evidence of the Court's historic service wing which is part of the overall story.	3	3	9	The historic fabric of the Red Wing is in such a deteriorated state that physical intervention will be a positive step, but, as ever, we will work with our team of internal & external specialists & advisors in order to ensure that any adverse impact on the historic fabric is kept to a minimum, that the historic significances of the building are understood, respected and recorded and enhanced wherever possible. Feasibility options will be drawn	Project Team led by Property Manager.

					up by our Architects. We will also work closely with statutory bodies and our partners & stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcome for the building's future.	
2. The Red Wing will require huge amounts of input in terms of time, resources and money simply to stabilise the structure.	Drain on financial and physical resources that would otherwise be allocated to caring for the fabric of the Court.	1	4	4	The funding for the Red Wing is already separately identified and secured, so again, this potential risk should be fully mitigated.	Project Team led by Property Manager.
3. Staff & advisors' energies & attention are diverted away from the present project to re-service the Court	Lack of focus on the re-servicing and conservation of the fabric of the Court.	1	4	4	The Red Wing is being treated as a separately treated and resourced project. We will continue to communicate our plans for both buildings so that the priorities are clear.	Project Team led by Property Manager.
4. Even though sympathetic ownership of the Red Wing has now been secured, there is still a potential risk associated with the fact that the derelict building stands cheek by jowel with the Court.	Public perception of its derelict state could present reputational issues for the NT by association and be detrimental to visitors' enjoyment and perception of the Court.	1	2	2	This is unlikely as the positive resolution of the Red Wing issue is yet another aspect of Croome's overall success story in re-uniting the various components of the whole. We are communicating our plans for the Red Wing to visitors and volunteers so that they are kept informed of developments and process. Before we start our re-servicing and conservation work on the Court, works to make the Red Wing wind and	Project Team led by Property Manager.

					watertight should be largely completed or at least well underway, so this potential risk should be fully mitigated.	
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OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities for the National Trust, the HLF and heritage in general

In considering the opportunities that the Croome Redefined project presents we need to think more widely than just the opportunities for the Court itself, or even the property as an entity. There are also opportunities for the National Trust as a heritage organization, as a conservation organization and opportunities relating to the heritage sector as a whole. We also need to think about the critical opportunities that we cannot afford to miss.

The Croome Redefined project will provide a major opportunity to achieve the aims of the National Trust's ambition for 2020, where everyone feels like a member and 5 million people actually are members. We know that much of our existing audience is happy with the experience we provide at our properties at the moment, but we need to go way beyond this if we're to keep their interest and to reach beyond them to new audiences. The Trust's '*Bringing Places to Life*' programme is an initiative to achieve this ambition. This programme has Significance at its heart, and the way we express the distinctive Spirit of Place to our visitors through stories that are relevant, appealing and memorable is key to the visitor experience. The ability to do this depends on a deep understanding of our audiences, and the Significance of the place.

Against this backdrop, and drawing on the drive and focus of this programme within the Trust, we have the opportunity at Croome to transform the visitor experience, to bring it to life and to redefine what it means to visit a historic country house in the 21st century.

In addition, our participative and boundary-pushing approach to this project and everything that we do at Croome provides a huge opportunity to fulfil the Heritage Lottery Fund's aims of Learning, Participation and Conservation. Our changing presentational themes, our interactive conservation-in-action, our open-arm attitude to creative talent from different backgrounds and disciplines and our determination to be inclusive in all our processes, will all help us, and the HLF, achieve this.

In order to group the various opportunities we can categorise them into the four segments of the National Trust's 'strategy wheel', which are:

- Improving our conservation and environmental performance
- Engaging our supporters
- Investing in our people
- Financing our future.

Improving our conservation and environmental performance

- The fundamental and most important conservation opportunity we have is to secure Croome Court's future and to preserve and protect its significance.

- We now have the real opportunity, with our partners, to ensure the long-term protection and conservation of the Red Wing, Croome's historic service wing abutting the Court, which was one of the final pieces in the jigsaw and will mean safeguarding the future of a historic building at grave risk.
- Achieving this also opens up opportunities for the Court, in terms of freeing-up the use of many of the Court's spaces for potentially invasive practicalities and commercial elements (such as storage, staff, CHT and holiday accommodation, additional catering, toilets, Mechanical & Electrical plant rooms and universal access provisions) and transferring these, still sensitively, to the Red Wing. This will reflect the Red Wing's original function of serving the Court.
- Through on-going research, surveys and analysis we have the opportunity to increase understanding of Croome's heritage and significances. This will also provide opportunities for visitor interpretation that will promote a greater sense of personal discovery and involvement with the building. As access improves and repair works progress, further exploration and investigation of the fabric can take place that should ensure the continual development of these exciting opportunities for research and interpretation.
- We have the opportunity to continue to add to Croome's oral history recordings and build on the valuable social history that it encapsulates.
- Through stimulating and creative conservation-in-action we have the opportunity to celebrate conservation, craftsmanship and traditional skills and to trigger debates about the meaning and value of heritage on a much wider scale (not just Croome).
- Conservation Performance Indicators (CPIs) have been set for Croome Court as a mechanism for measuring its conservation progress and achievement on an annual basis. The Croome Redefined Project, with its focus on the stabilisation and conservation of the Court's fabric with HLF investment, provides huge opportunity to realise significant conservation benefits and positive impact on CPI scores.
- There is potential at the Court to improve our environmental performance and set a benchmark in terms of reduction of resources and energy in heritage properties: reduce the environmental impact of a mansion.
- There is potential to examine how the Court could once again be self-sufficient in terms of energy, by looking at traditional country house technologies combined with new renewable energy alternatives.
- There are opportunities for promoting ecology at roof level (bird and owl boxes).

Engaging our supporters

- With Croome Redefined, we have the opportunity of doing something very different to other HLF-funded projects.
- In line with the Trust's '*Bringing Places to Life*' strategy, the Croome Redefined project gives us the opportunity to experiment with innovative ways of opening and presenting an historic country house to the public and to challenge perceptions and expectations of what visiting a historic country house could feel like in the 21st century.
- In line with the HLF's aims of Learning, Participation & Conservation, it also gives us the opportunity to push creative boundaries and take conservation-in-action and public engagement further than before, offering memorable and potentially life-changing hands-on experiences.
- The Croome Redefined project gives us opportunities to explore how we can provide wider access, in all its forms, to an historic country house, its meaning and significance and, by extension, to heritage in general.
- We have the opportunity to share our understanding of Croome with a wider range of people than ever before and to provide access to that heritage in physical, intellectual and virtual ways.
- We have the opportunity to challenge and change the public's perceptions of the meaning and value of heritage in general, to make it more relevant and important to them.
- By developing innovative approaches to the presentation of historic interiors, collections and stores, we have the opportunity to stimulate and challenge *existing* audiences, and also to broaden the appeal of the NT and other heritage organisations by appealing to *new* and harder to reach audiences, such as young people and BME groups.
- Our desire (and that of our visitors) to manage the collections but also maintain the sightlines from the Court gives opportunity for finding creative solutions to presenting historic collections in new, surprising and memorable ways whilst still fulfilling our responsibility of care.
- Recent developments to secure the long-term future of the Red Wing, which enables us to remove all invasive functional and commercial elements from the Court, will allow a far more extensive and richer visitor experience for our supporters in the Court as it opens up the opportunity of visitor access to all floors and areas of the Court.
- We have the opportunity to use all our conservation, surveys and research work as ways of providing not only a memorable and stimulating visitor experience, but

also as opportunities for training, shadowing, and mentoring in the fields of craftsmanship and heritage skills.

- The Croome Redefined Project gives us the opportunity to put the Court once again at the centre of the local community and be a focus for a strengthened sense of belonging, connection, identity, shared pride and ownership. In line with the National Trust's '*Going Local*' strategy⁵¹¹, we will nurture Croome's distinctive spirit of place and the web of human links of those who have loved it in the past, those who love it now and those who will do in the future.

Investing in our people

- Our conservation-in-action and engagement work will give us the opportunity of finding new and creative ways of working with and involving our volunteers, conservators and contractors, mirroring Croome's historical role as a crucible of creativity and patronage of young talent.
- Exposure to and involvement with conservation and skilled craftsmanship will provide opportunities for learning, sharing and developing our volunteers' and staff's skills and understanding of the work involved.
- The Croome Redefined project give us opportunities for creating new roles for volunteers and providing greater involvement, training, satisfaction and sense of ownership.
- Art, architecture, craftsmanship and beauty have the power to transform people's lives. At Croome Court, we have the opportunity to find creative and innovative ways of involving younger volunteers, students, apprentices and school children in our conservation work and traditional skills. We can push the boundaries of offering them hands-on and potentially life-changing experiences.
- We have the opportunity of sharing our experiences, lessons learnt and best practice with other properties across the NT and with other heritage organisations.
- We have the opportunity of developing and strengthening relationships with existing and new partners who have an attachment to Croome: the Hare Krishnas, the former school boys, the RAF Defford Heritage Group and groups with whom we have not worked with before.

Financing our future

- We will take advantage of the NT's '*Going Local*' strategy by finding ways of making the Court feature regularly in people's lives. There may be a commercial

⁵¹¹ National Trust, *Going Local Strategy for the next decade*, 2010

opportunity of involving the local community with the Court but not to the detriment of its Spirit of Place: entrepreneurial activities with integrity.

- Exciting examples of conservation-in-action and skilled craftsmanship carried out to high standards on time and to budget could attract offers of funding, as funding bodies will see that we can carry out and deliver innovative and creative conservation work that they will want to be associated with.

Heritage Impact Assessment

This is included as Appendix 22, incorporated in the **Design & Access Statement**.

SECTION 4 - AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Introduction

Our aims and objectives are consistent with international, national and regional policies. They also flow from the significances and risks and opportunities identified in the previous sections.

Organisational Conservation principles

The current strategy of the **Heritage Lottery Fund** has three aims, of which Conservation is a key strand:

- **Learning** – help people learn about their own and other people’s heritage
- **Participation** – help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about their heritage
- **Conservation** – conserve the UK’s diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy.

The National Trust’s definition of Conservation reflects the organisation’s core responsibilities, and also echoes the HLF’s core aims: *‘Conservation is the careful management of change. It is about revealing and sharing the significance of places and ensuring that their special qualities are protected, enhanced, understood and enjoyed by present and future generations’*.

The National Trust’s Conservation principles are summarized in six key points⁵¹²:

1. **Significance:** We will ensure that all decisions are informed by an appropriate level of understanding of the significance and ‘spirit of place’ of each of our properties, and why we and others value them.
2. **Integration:** We will take an integrated approach to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, reconciling the full spectrum of interests involved.
3. **Change:** We will anticipate and work with change that affects our conservation interests, embracing, accommodating or adapting where appropriate, and mitigating, preventing or opposing where there is a potential adverse impact.
4. **Access & Engagement:** We will conserve natural and cultural heritage to enable sustainable access and engagement for the benefit of society, gaining the support of the widest range of people by promoting understanding, enjoyment and participation in our work.
5. **Skills & Partnership:** We will develop skills and experience in partnership with others to promote and improve the conservation of natural and cultural heritage now and for the future.

⁵¹² National Trust, Conservation Principles, 2008

6. **Accountability:** We will be transparent and accountable by recording our decisions and sharing knowledge to enable the best conservation decisions to be taken both today and by future generations.

These chime with **English Heritage's six Conservation Principles** which provide a comprehensive framework for the sustainable management of the historic environment⁵¹³:

1. The historic environment is a shared resource.
2. Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.
3. Understanding the significance of the place is vital.
4. Significant places should be managed to sustain their values.
5. Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent.
6. Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.

In the context of the above general principles, the National Trust is committed to the long term maintenance and management of the site, to ensuring that the fabric of Croome Court is maintained in good condition and to sharing the heritage asset of Croome Court with as many people as possible.

However, going further than this, one of the Trust's recently stated strategic aims is *"offering inspiring, enjoyable and memorable experiences of our places....and constantly striving to improve those through listening to what our supporters want. We will bring our places to life and keep them alive through conservation that involves and inspires people. We will start viewing our places as an integral part of the landscape and communities in which they sit. This is about blurring the dividing lines between engagement and conservation and between us, our supporters and our neighbours"*.

Croome Court will be a focus for this deepening of relationships where the whole notion and tradition of the role of the country house and what that means in the 21st century will be explored, challenged and re-assessed. Because Croome Court is a 'new' property to the Trust and because it currently stands empty with its heirloom collection waiting in the wings, it represents a rare opportunity for an historic property to develop ground-breaking plans for its conservation, presentation and interpretation in a transparent, engaging way, involving visitors, the community and different audience groups right from the beginning of the process. We want to make the most of the open spaces and their flexibility, as an opportunity to experiment with new ideas and changing presentations in a way that would be much more difficult in traditionally furnished houses. As and when the important Coventry collections return to Croome, we want to continue this progressive approach by exploring how the visitor experience can be enriched through creative and innovative approaches to the collection, its presentation and conservation.

⁵¹³ English Heritage: *Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment*, April 2008

The **Croome Redefined Project Brief** sets out the following key objectives:

- **Put the physical fabric of Croome Court into a fit state of repair**, making the envelope of the building wind and water tight and structurally sound. We will make all rooms, corridors and staircases safe and accessible and fit for the purposes defined on our allocation of spaces plan, and upgrade all services in accordance with these functions.
- **Share every element of this conservation work with our supporters**, whether through direct hands-on involvement with the work, hard-hat tours, opportunities to talk with consultants and contractors or by visual and written media.
- **Give our local visitors a meaningful and profound insight into Croome's complex and layered history** as a home to so many different people over the centuries. Our presentation of the house will not remain static throughout the project, but will be dynamic and tell a changing yet coherent story of Croome in its varying roles and incarnations – family seat of the Coventrys, St. Josephs Special School for boys, Wartime airbase and Chaithanya College.
- **Ensure that Croome Court is in a fit condition to accommodate the Croome Estate Trust owned Coventry family chattels**, currently on display at Kelmars Hall. Although we are not planning any comprehensive return of the house's contents during the project's lifetime, we will develop a plan for the presentation of the chattels and put in place sufficient physical, environmental, security and fire safety measures to be able to display and store the collection.
- **Re-unite the Court with the designed landscape and setting**: they are two inextricable halves of the same whole.
- **Work extensively in collaboration with creative partners, new audience groups and young people**, drawing heavily on expertise and knowledge from outside the Trust. We will bring new people into our work at every level, challenging and stretching our understanding of the meaning of a Country House well beyond our traditional imaginative boundaries.
- **Successfully manage the expansion of our volunteer base** from its current level of 253 volunteers to approximately 500, or the number required to sustain our projects aims in the long-term. We will be inventive in creating new roles to make full use of our volunteers' skills. Croome will be a rewarding and stimulating place to be a part of.
- **Implement measures to significantly improve Croome Court's operational environmental performance** renewing our ailing and inefficient heating, plumbing and lighting systems with new technology designed to lower our reliance on non-renewable energy sources.

- **Provide a Family apartment, associated storage space and research room for the Croome Heritage Trust**, owners of Croome Court. These spaces will be in line with our tenancy agreement, and approved by the CHT's Trustees.
- **Implement a Staff Structure and underlying material infrastructure to enable the Property team to successfully manage Croome Court.** The legacy of the Croome Redefined project will need to be sustained following the project's conclusion. During the project we will develop our staff's skills, experience, confidence and facilities so that we are able to continue to care for the Court and fulfil our supporters' requirements in the long-term.

In delivering all these objectives we will respect the harmony between the Court and its surrounding landscape, and will not compromise Croome's unique spirit of place.

Our on-going aims and objectives which form our management policies at Croome will be reviewed in conjunction with our stakeholders via the mechanism of the Project Board and use of 'critical friends' groups to act as sounding boards. They will also be reviewed when this CMMP is updated.

A **Property Business Plan (PBP)** is in place and will be reviewed every 3 years. (See Appendix 34). This covers the management, vision and aims not just for the Court but also the Park and wider estate in order to ensure the site is coherently addressed as a whole. This CMMP draws on and reflects the current PBP to ensure consistency of the aims and objectives across the property. The PBP for 2011-14 lists the following objectives:

- We will secure the long-term future of Croome Court, the Home Shrubbery, the Rotunda and the Red Wing
- We will make Croome's Lancelot Brown-designed parkland a shining example of excellence in landscape restoration, enjoyed by all
- We will restore the fabric and spirit of Croome Court
- We will place people at the heart of everything we do
- We will lead Croome to a position of operational financial strength
- We will reduce Croome's non-renewable energy consumption by at least 12% by 2014, compared with our 2009 baseline
- We will develop the operational property infrastructure enabling our objectives to be met.

The National Trust uses **Conservation Performance Indicators (CPIs)** to identify conservation priorities and objectives and to gauge and monitor conservation progress

(Appendix 16). These will be reviewed on an annual basis. At the outset, in April 2010, the Court registered a CPI score of **27.24%**. At the first review meeting in August 2011, this had risen to **31.77%** and in 2012 to **35.96%**. These small increases are not surprising given the quantity of remedial and repair work required to the fabric of the Court within the context of the Croome Redefined project. Through executing our programme of conservation work we aim to deliver a CPI benefit of at least **+ 25%** over the next 3 years. This is also expressed in the PBP (Appendix 34). Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund will help us to achieve these improvements and targets. The specific CPI objectives relating to the Court and the collections are:

- **Court exterior:** The appearance and condition of the extant features are as they were in 1809 (death of the 6th Earl). The actions as agreed following the quinquennial survey are implemented within the recommended timescale.
- **Court interiors:** Stabilise and ensure that the structural integrity of the historic fabric and services of the house, and their significance, are not compromised. The interiors will conform to recommendations in the Conservation Plan & Gazetteer. All damaging additions are addressed.
- **Decorative schemes:** Understand the evolution and significance of the decorative schemes. Conserve, re-create or renew the decorative schemes as informed by the Conservation Management Plan.
- **The collections:** Provide suitable conditions for the return of Croome Estate Trust objects. All preventive and remedial actions identified in contents conservation surveys are carried out. All agreed recommendations of the Acquisition & Disposal Policy are implemented.
- **Spirit of Place:** To respect the Spirit of Place, to heal its wounds and recover its beauty as a total work of art. Croome is perceived and enjoyed as a place that is delightful, atmospheric, busy yet contemplative.
- **Views:** All views from the house, including those described by William Dean in 1824, are open and suitably framed.

The aims and objectives set out for Croome Court in the sections below expand upon the above headings expressed in the Project Brief, the PBP, the CPIs and also reflect the policies and priorities expressed in multi-disciplinary workshops which involved the property team, project team, advisers and consultants. We also considered how to rank and prioritise these aims and objectives: those in **red** have been identified as the **most important** ones for us to achieve; those in **green** as the **hardest** for us to achieve. It was felt that very often the most important aims were also the hardest to achieve.

Conservation Aims & Objectives

The National Trust is the UK's largest Accredited Museum and as such is aware of conservation procedures and current best practice and has enormous experience in

managing, conserving and protecting heritage assets. The project at Croome will avail itself of this body of expertise and experience.

Research & understanding of Croome

- The present CMMP brings together our understanding of the documentary and physical evidence of the Court, its evolution and its significance *to date*. It will be built on as a working document and updated to take new information and understanding into account.
- Research, physical investigation, archival and documentary analysis and surveys into the historical evolution and use of the spaces within the Court will be on-going in order to deepen and refine our understanding of the heritage and its significance and to guide our conservation work.
- These processes will be shared with and involve our staff, volunteers and visitors at every step of the way. We will adopt a collaborative, inclusive approach to our research and conservation work.

Conservation & Engagement, or Participation

*“Conservation is not an end in itself, but a passport to wider access, and deeper knowledge and enjoyment of our heritage.”*⁵¹⁴ In order to build greater support for its work and deeper relationships with its visitors, the National Trust now systematically includes public engagement as part of the conservation work that it commissions, whether on landscapes, buildings, interiors or collections. This will certainly be the case at Croome Court in the context of the Croome Redefined project.

The National Trust recognises conservation performance and engagement alongside financial benefit. The Director General’s annual Award for Engagement through Conservation has been introduced to acknowledge that the degree to which people are engaged in the Trust’s conservation work is an essential measure of success.

However, at Croome, we want to take the opportunities that conservation provides of connecting with our visitors *and* our volunteers and developing their enjoyment and understanding of their heritage *even further*. It is not just about engagement but about **participation**. It is about the amazing experiences and sense of achievement and involvement that we can offer people from all types of audiences and background through a *participative* approach to our conservation work, ranging from simply very enjoyable and memorable afternoons to

⁵¹⁴ Alison Richmond, Chief Executive of Icon (Institute of Conservation), speaking at the Conservation Awards, supported by Icon and sponsored by The Pilgrim Trust, the Digital Preservation Coalition & the Anna Plowden Trust, December 2010.

potentially life-changing experiences⁵¹⁵. We know that participation should be built in from the start of the project and should be considered as part of all our activities. It should run through our planning, delivery and evaluation, in order to broaden the level and degree of participation in the heritage.

The HLF defines five levels of participation:

1. **Informing:** telling people about the project. This should be viewed as preparation for more active involvement.
2. **Consulting:** giving people choices about what happens in our project and a chance to shape it.
3. **Deciding together:** creating opportunities for people to make decisions about and influence the direction of our project.
4. **Acting together (collaboration/co-creation):** creating opportunities for people to develop and deliver our project in a more hands-on way, taking a role in heritage conservation and/or learning activities.
5. **Supporting others to take the lead:** empowering people to have ownership of the project, make final decisions and deliver activities with some independence.

The first two of these levels are passive and do not meet the criteria of participation. **At Croome, we aim to meet all five of the levels.**

Our work will reflect the historic importance of the Croome estate as the hub of the local community - a source of employment, identity, interconnection, local pride and shared experience. Our project aims to create a deep feeling of ownership and involvement among the people who live around Croome, and we want them to feel that it is a significant element in the quality of life they derive from where they live.

Croome must be a living and relevant part of the communities around it. Through our programme of engagement, changing themes and conservation-in-action, a significant number of the people who live within five miles of Croome Court will come to see it as an essential and integral element in their quality of life. They will feel a sense of local pride and ownership, and it will become likely that they, or a family member will have some form of direct, personal connection with the place – either as a regular visitor, or through direct involvement in volunteering, training, events and activities.

⁵¹⁵ For example, at a hands-on stone-working session for visitors during the restoration of the Court's North Steps in Spring 2011, an elderly man became very emotional as we had enabled him to fulfil his life-long desire to try his hand at stone-carving.

How will we achieve Conservation, Engagement & Participation at Croome Court?

- The project has been developed in a transparent way, genuinely involving users, visitors and volunteers in shaping the nature and scope of the programme and engaging with them in on-going dialogue about our processes and progress⁵¹⁶.
- Through our conservation work, we will help as wide a range of people as possible take an active part in and help make decisions about their heritage.
- In all our conservation work and our ways of working, we will learn, share and challenge, both ourselves and our visitors.
- This project is one where, as far as practically possible, the conservation programme will be driven by visitor engagement and interpretation, rather than it being merely a bolt-on.
- Our interpretation themes will dovetail with and reflect our practical conservation work.
- All conservation and survey work will be undertaken in full view of the visiting public, in order to share the conservation processes and skills involved with our supporters in a transparent and engaging way.
- We will provide 'hands-on' opportunities for visitors alongside the work of conservators, surveyors and craftsmen, so that the conservation work becomes more meaningful, inspirational and memorable.
- We want to offer not only hands-on experiences, but also opportunities for conservation apprenticeships, shadowing, volunteering and training, thus involving more people in conservation in deeper, more long-lasting and potentially life-changing ways.
- Not only will we share the constantly emerging information, insights and human stories with our visitors, but our visitors will be part of the discovery process, witnessing the surveys, seeking out the physical clues and entering into a dialogue about our dilemmas.
- We will use our conservation work to provide a transformational visitor experience and to challenge perceptions of visiting an historic property in the 21st century.
- We will use our conservation and engagement vision at Croome to help change the perception of the National Trust.

⁵¹⁶ During 2008-2011, a cross-section of visitors, volunteers and stakeholders have been involved in project team meetings, workshops and creative thinking sessions during the development of the project, the vision and the interpretation/presentation themes.

How will we conserve & enhance each of the different types of heritage of Croome Court?

As well as conserving and enhancing Croome Court's *physical* heritage we also want to address its *spiritual* heritage. This is expressed in our list of Conservation Performance Objectives for the Court, where we have included an Objective with regard to Croome's 'Spirit of Place', which is to 'Heal its wounds and recover its beauty'. This is probably the first time that a Spirit of Place objective has been included in a National Trust property's list of Conservation Performance Indicators.

When planning and carrying out any *physical* conservation work, we will refer to the following **Philosophy of Approach**, which has been discussed and drawn up by the project team to guide the restoration and conservation of the fabric of Croome Court. Its principles will apply to our conservation work, restoration work, re-creation of missing elements and the repatriation of indigenous elements:

1. *Ideally*: Repair when possible using existing historic fabric.
2. *If not*: Repair when possible with the same generic material of an equal quality.
3. Items/elements which have gone but are considered of *visual* importance over and above the intrinsic value of the original should be replaced using modern materials of an equivalent visual quality and structural integrity and in such a way that does not prevent or compromise the execution of Option 1.
4. Assessment of significance is key. Each space will be assessed on its individual significance in the context of the significance of the whole. The opportunity for creative freedom is to be allowed, given the overarching theme of Croome as a home of creativity, but always taking into account previous and historic significances. (Decisions on the greatest significance and ranking of various or potentially conflicting significances will be guided by this Conservation Management & Maintenance Plan and the section on Assessment of Significance).
5. If the conservation principles are not being followed then be clear and honest about this. If an approach is decided which goes against the greatest historic significance of a space, this must be clearly expressed and justified.

How will we conserve & enhance the fabric of the building (exterior & interiors)?

- All work will be informed by the CMMP, and take the historical significances of the fabric into account.
- A cyclical programme of inspection, maintenance and repair will be put into place (see Costed Action Plan, Section 5)

- We will adopt the Principle of Reversibility in all our new work and in our conservation repairs.
- We will use appropriate materials (see Philosophy of Approach above).
- We will ensure that all conservation work respects the quality and integrity of the original fabric and will be carried out or overseen by suitably trained, qualified and/or accredited conservators.
- We will work in close collaboration with property advisors and specialists (Curator, Conservator, Architectural Historian, Archaeologist, Architect, Building Surveyor) to ensure sensitivity to significance and Spirit of Place. We will also involve external specialists, such as Mechanical & Electrical and Energy Engineers where applicable.
- We will involve, take advice from and collaborate with English Heritage and the local Conservation & Planning Officer in our restoration and repair work.
- We will bring in appropriate advisors, specialists and experts as required and where we have gaps in skills or expertise.

How will we conserve & enhance the collection?

- N.B.** We will think very carefully and creatively about how we can achieve our responsibility to conserving and enhancing the collection but also our desire to maintain the refreshing openness of the Court's interiors and the all-important sightlines out into the Park. This is a key balancing act between Conservation and Access. We need to care for the collection and we also want to use it as a way of enriching the visitor experience. We need to unlock the human stories wrapped up in each iconic object to help people find ways into Croome's emotional past and present.
- Preventive conservation measures will be put into place before the collection is introduced in order to establish the environmental conditions of the interiors, i.e. light levels, relative humidity, fluctuating temperatures, presence of pests. This will be done by using the Preventive Conservation Audit (PCA) in conjunction with the Property Conservator, in addition to the Conservation 4 Access Toolkit (See Appendix 15)
 - Preventive conservation measures will be put into place where appropriate in order to protect and preserve the collection in the rooms to be used to display the collection as well as the stores. However, the position of light-sensitive objects will be carefully thought through in order not to compromise the key sightlines from the Court's windows out into the designed landscape by having to keep blinds down or shutters closed.

- Condition surveys will be carried out on the collection in order to establish priorities for any remedial work, using Core Data Codes (rankings in terms of condition, stability and priority) and costings.
- We will use specialist advisers and accredited conservators to carry out/oversee all conservation work, but will also involve students, apprentices, trainees, work experience students and volunteers wherever possible to provide opportunities for people to have hands-on contact with their heritage.
- We will explore creative alternatives to ubiquitous ropes and stanchions that positively enhance the items that require protection rather than negatively blocking them off.
- The NT Manual of Housekeeping will be used as a key reference to housekeeping techniques and regimes, drawing on the organisation's huge body of expertise and experience in this area.
- We will work in close collaboration with the Property Conservator to ensure that preventive conservation measures and appropriate regimes of housekeeping are in place.
- We will adopt the NT's Conservation Management System (inventory database) to catalogue the collection and track its condition. This is an on-line resource via the world-wide web, and provides greater access to the collection, allowing it to be consulted and enjoyed by a wider range of people.
- A Disaster Plan will be put into place. Relevant staff will participate in drawing this up and be familiar with its implementation.
- An Emergency Salvage Plan will be put into place. Relevant staff will participate in drawing this up and be familiar with its implementation.
- An Acquisition & Disposal Policy (see Appendix 3) will be used to guide any potential acquisitions and help make judgments on their significance and desirability, thereby ensuring that resources for the existing collection are not compromised if and when the collection grows in size.
- We will consider the need for Croome Court to apply for Museum Accreditation status, which sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK, demonstrating their commitment to managing collections effectively for the enjoyment of our communities. The National Trust is the largest accredited museum in the UK.

How will we resolve any conflicts between the different types of heritage?

N.B. This question is particularly important at Croome Court where there are so many instances of recent interventions to the historic fabric which would *traditionally* be

deemed 'intrusive'. As articulated in the section on the Significance of the 20th century layer (in Section 2) and as expressed at the beginning of the Gazetteer (Appendix 1), the 'intrusive' elements provide useful triggers of debate about the relative significance of Croome Court's more recent physical layers and the meaning and value of heritage in general. Whilst we are not necessarily intending to respect these elements in perpetuity, and whilst they rank lower in the overall hierarchy of significance, they serve a useful purpose for the time being and so will not be removed in the immediate future. This will allow for re-assessment of values in due course, as the future significance of the Court develops. We will remain very open and transparent about discussing these elements with our visitors, volunteers, stakeholders and partners.

- This Conservation Management plan identifies and ranks the various facets of Croome Court's significance (see Section 2). These will be used to inform and guide discussions on the hierarchy of significances throughout our work on stabilising and conserving the fabric of the Court and the introduction of any new work.
- Conservation Performance Indicators (CPIs) are set for the different aspects of the Court's heritage by the property's conservation advisors and consultants (See Appendix 16). The aims and objectives are weighted and ranked according to significance. Performance and achievement is reviewed and scored on an annual basis and the objectives and targets adjusted accordingly. This system helps us to prioritise and rank the heritage aspects.
- The Philosophy of Approach template (above) will be applied to each element of the work as a rigorous process to ensure consistency of approach and the double-checking of any potentially conflicting significances.
- The principle of reversibility will also be used to ensure that work is not done that causes irreversible damage to the fabric or the Spirit of Place.
- Communication, team-work and inter-disciplinary discussions will be key to arriving at the 'right' decision in each case.

How will we meet conservation standards for each type of the heritage?

- The NT's 'Triple-Bottom-Line' analysis will be adopted in order to judge the Court's performance in terms of financial, conservation and visitor enjoyment performance. The aim is to see improvement in all of these areas.
- The Acquisition & Disposal Policy (Appendix 3) will guide acquisition and disposal priorities relating to the collections.
- Specialist advisers will carry out condition surveys and provide treatment recommendations for all aspects of the building and collections.

- Quinquennial surveys will be commissioned from architects specialising in historic buildings to identify, prioritise and carry out essential repairs to the fabric of the building and to monitor condition and any deterioration.
- We will ensure that anyone involved in the conservation, care and maintenance of the fabric of the Court has sufficient training and/or opportunity to gain training.

How will we ensure that the conservation aspects of our interpretation themes are sufficiently resourced?

- The NT's Conservation for Access (C4A) Toolkit will be used to assess and allocate adequate housekeeping resources for the Court. (Appendix 15).
- We will work closely with our internal and external advisors and consultants on conservation, making use of the wide-ranging skills that the NT has at its disposal.
- We will assess and ensure that adequate skills and resources are in place to manage the conservation aspects of our interpretation themes, and that training and development opportunities are in place where skills are lacking.
- We will learn from other historic properties, both inside and outside the NT, in order to share best practice, innovative ideas and fresh perspectives.

How will we respond to threats to the conservation of the heritage?

- The National Trust, as the most appropriate body for ensuring the Court's long term protection and presentation, will ensure that effective management structures are in place for careful husbanding of resources.
- The National Trust is fully committed to ensuring that a comprehensive fund-raising and donor development plan is in place.
- The present short-term lease of the Court will be extended as soon as possible (once funding is secured) into a 999-year lease.
- Working with our partners, we will continue to ensure a positive and secure long-term future for the Red Wing.
- Our work on the Court will not jeopardize our progress in the Park: we will continue with the development and restoration programme of the 18th century landscape in the Park.
- As part of the Property Business Plan (PBP) and the updating of this CMMP, we will conduct on-going reviews of the short and long term risks.

New work

The present project to re-service and stabilise the structure of Croome Court does not involve large amounts of new work or the construction of new buildings to accommodate, for example, visitor services and facilities. Nevertheless, it is important that our aims and objectives are set out as a framework for any pieces of 'new' work that will or might be carried out in the context of the project. The following principles have been drawn up together with our Design Team:

- Any new work will be done as sensitively as possible and will be guided and informed by understanding of the significance of Croome Court as set out in this CMMP and its future revisions
- Any new work will also be guided by the Philosophy of Approach principles for conservation work set out on p.520.
- Any new work and affected fabric will be carefully recorded and documented
- Any new work will be of appropriate materials and detailing in terms of quality and integrity commensurate with the existing structure
- Any new work will be done honestly and transparently
- There should be a clear and long-lasting need for any intervention
- The designer should approach the project with as full an understanding of the building, its history and context as possible
- All new work must start with a thorough appraisal of options
- Loss of important fabric should be avoided if possible, and fully justified if it is necessary
- New work should respect the existing structure; not imitate it, but work in overall harmony as a balanced aesthetic composition
- New work should be clearly identifiable and true to its time, and be of the highest design quality
- New work should respect or enhance the 'dignity' of the existing building
- New work should be as environmentally conscious and responsible as possible.

Access

General NT aims & objectives for Access

As set out in its new Equality & Diversity Instruction (see Appendix 26), the Trust is committed to developing and promoting equality of opportunity and inclusion in all that it does as one of the UK's leading conservation charities. To achieve this, the Trust aims to:

- Promote access for everyone by working to ensure that our properties, services and workplaces are accessible to all sections of society.
- Promote inclusion and equality of opportunity in the workplace and across all our activities.
- Provide opportunities for individuals and community groups from diverse backgrounds to engage and participate in key aspects of what we do.
- Engage in activities that support and promote the diversity of local communities and reflect our shared multicultural heritage.
- Break down barriers that prevent engagement by sections of society, whether physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, social or economic, especially for under-represented, excluded, or disadvantaged groups.
- Work with external organisations to develop standards, deliver sustainable public benefits, and to implement appropriate monitoring and evaluation measures.

Croome-specific aims & objectives for Access:

We recognise that providing access to a historic property is a multi-faceted and critical issue that has many different aspects, degrees, meanings, challenges and opportunities. We also know that we need to consider the potential barriers to access and understanding for our existing and potential audiences. We know that we are expected to consider the needs of people with disabilities and make reasonable adjustments wherever possible to enable this to be integrated into the delivery of the project. In the long term, we are aiming to improve physical access to as much of the Court as possible and are therefore investigating options for a potential lift in the Red Wing.

In order to identify what 'Access' could mean in the context of Croome Court, one of our multi-disciplinary workshops looked at several different aspects of Access and how we would deal with them. We did this by examining some imaginary but commonplace scenarios, as set out below, and discussed how we would address them at Croome. Many of the resulting aims and objectives will provide access to more than one type of audience and address more than one access issue. They will thus provide multiple appeal to multiple groups, rather than catering for different groups in isolation and risk making people feel segregated.

Scenario 1

Elsie is 82 years old and uses a wheelchair. She can't access the basement or the first and second floors.

- We will provide solutions or alternatives to the **physical** barriers identified in the Access Audit and be guided by its recommendations (Appendix 2).
- We will consult with less-able groups in order to identify their needs, rather than assuming that we know.
- A stair-climber is already in place on the North Steps so that wheelchair-users and less-able people can access the ground floor of the Court.
- We will consider how we can provide virtual and alternative means of accessing all floors of the house: virtual tours, models, plans, photograph albums, films, digital photo-frames, DVDs, 360° projection of interiors, interactive installations, oral interpretation to bring the stories of the Court and its occupants to life, images of the conservation/restoration work in progress elsewhere in the building, etc. This approach will also appeal to lots of other audiences, not just the less-able, and thus be inclusive rather than in danger of appearing discriminatory. It will also overlap with activities identified in the Activity Plan.

Scenario 2

Steven is a visually impaired man. He can't see the architectural splendour or the views out into the Park.

- We will consult with visually-impaired groups in order to identify their needs, rather than assuming that we know.
- We will ensure that our interpretation of the Court does not over-rely on visual methods and the written word. We will endeavour to devise interpretation and presentation that appeals to all five senses, not just vision, which will result in a more emotional and memorable experience for all visitors. For example, sensory trails, handling items, talks, smells, tastes, 3D maps of the house's layout.
- We will continue to recruit and train volunteers to help interpret and talk about Croome in inspirational ways.

Scenario 3

Chesney could be described as a disaffected youth. He's just plain bored and thinks old country houses are completely uninspiring.

- We will consult with young audiences, existing and potential, in order to identify their needs, rather than assuming that we know.
- We will develop off-site and virtual access to Croome, using technologies that appeal to younger age-groups, such as YouTube, website, podcasts, social networking, etc., that will encourage new and younger audiences to get involved and/or visit the property.

- We will develop aspects of our interpretation and on-site activities that appeal to the 'in-between' and difficult-to-engage age groups, such as the 18-24 year-olds.
- We will endeavour to make the Court once again an 'inn' of hospitality and a place of social exchange.
- We will offer opportunities to young people for heritage skills development, apprenticeships, youth projects and work experience.

Scenario 4

The Rahman family love to visit country homes. English is their second language.

- We will consult with BME audiences in order to identify their needs, rather than assuming that we know.
- The NT has already worked hard at Croome to develop sustainable relationships with local BME groups as part of the HLF-funded *Whose Story?* initiative and the Community & Outreach Officer is a member of the property and project teams.
- We will develop a core offer for BME audiences building on the understanding and experience gained in the *Whose Story?* project.
- Our interpretation will break down barriers to language issues by avoiding an over-reliance on the written word and incorporate all types of sensory interpretation.
- We will endeavour to ensure that BME communities are represented in our staff and volunteer teams.
- We will consider how we can provide translations of key interpretation documents into languages that cater for local BME groups.

Scenario 5

A group of children with learning difficulties – they aren't able to read panels or listen to oral explanations.

- We will provide solutions or alternatives to the **intellectual** barriers identified in the Access Audit and be guided by its recommendations (Appendix 2).
(For example, a group of youths (all teenagers) called Malvern Special Families, all with various disabilities, mainly behavioural problems and learning difficulties, visited the Court in June 2011. They enjoyed the freedom to simply explore, run and shout in the Court.)
- Our interpretation and presentation of the Court will include physical, interactive opportunities that are multi-sensory and appeal to the

imagination and emotions, such as tactile activities, sensory trails, games, dressing-up, hide-and-seek and handling collections.

- We will develop interpretation that will appeal to children, not just those with learning difficulties, drawing out the children stories of the Court and the spaces they occupied (e.g. the schoolboys' classrooms, their shoe-lockers in the basement, their dormitories, the young members of the Coventry family, the dispossessed 11th Earl at the age of 14)
- We will build on our existing relationships with local schools and offer of opportunities for children and young people to come and explore Croome and respond imaginatively to its qualities in drawings and photography. These artworks then form temporary exhibitions in the Court.

Scenario 6

The Borchester Historical & Architectural Association want detailed information. They're frustrated by the current lack of guide book and low level of archival information available in the Court.

- We will build on our existing links with local historical and special interest groups and identify ways in which they can be involved in developing and feeding into our interpretation and ideas for activities and engagement.
- We will liaise with them to assess what type of information they require.
- We will maintain our collaborative relationship with the Worcestershire Record Office in order to provide as much access to Croome's important archive as possible and to devise imaginative ways of displaying and interpreting aspects of it at the Court.
- Members of staff, consultants and volunteers will continue to give talks and presentations to local historical and special interest groups to keep them up to date with research developments.
- We will continue to maintain close links and relationships with the supportive Friends of Croome group.
- We will continue to include representatives from these groups in our focus groups and workshops to brainstorm ideas for the future interpretation and presentation of the Court.

Scenario 7

Gordon & Emily are 'traditional' NT visitors wanting access to the historical collections. They're bemused by the empty interiors.

- We will manage the expectations of our 'traditional' audiences and maintain an open dialogue with them about their needs and our aims and progress with the project in order to provide a stimulating rather than potentially frustrating or alienating experience.

- We will endeavour to provide virtual access to Croome's collections, both surviving and 'lost'. Much work is being done across the NT on its Collections Management System database to make this possible.
- It has been reassuring for our 'traditional' audiences to know that approximately one-fifth of the Court's collection still exists and is waiting in the wings to return to the Court. Sharing information on the collection and how the the property is being prepared for its return will build anticipation and interest in the objects and how they might be displayed.

Scenario 8

Several of the volunteers are embarrassed by the fact that we can't allow visitor access at the moment to the first and second floors due to structural issues.

- This will be a key issue as the conservation work progresses as we will want to provide as much physical access as possible to areas where work is taking place. We will continue to keep our volunteers informed about the progress of the project, the access issues and the reasons why we cannot necessarily open up every area of the Court all of the time.
- At the same time, physical access restrictions due to structural issues provide fantastic opportunities for engaging visitors in our conservation work and doing conservation-in-action. We will ensure that contractors, staff and volunteers are involved in communicating and engaging with visitors about the conservation work (e.g. the emergency stabilisation of decorative plasterwork and investigation of the ceiling structure above restricted access to the bay window in the Long Gallery, so this was explained and interpreted to visitors using photographs, simple panels and talks).
- We will continue to train and develop our volunteers' skills and knowledge of relevant issues so that they can share and explain physical access constraints with visitors in positive ways.
- We will turn physical access constraints into positives; for example, the property's raffle ticket sales could be targeted at resolving specific access issues: *'Help us raise money to repair the cantilevered staircase so that visitors can use it to reach the first floor'* and provide a focus for explaining how cantilevered staircases are constructed and what we need to do to stabilise it.
- We will aim to provide alternative, virtual access to those areas that are physically off-limits. (e.g. endoscope footage is currently shown in the Court on a digital photo frame of the investigation of the chimney flues, a completely inaccessible area)

Scenario 9***Pressure is coming from the NT Board of Trustees to increase opening hours as much as possible***

- We will look at what 'access' and 'open' actually means and define whether we can have different degrees, times and zones of opening in order to mitigate the impact on the fabric of the Court and its approach and pressure on resources.
- We will listen to our visitors to understand their requirements and preferences in terms of opening hours and try to be flexible and creative, e.g. evening opening would give those that work during the day opportunities to visit and provide a different atmosphere to the visit experience.
- We will strive to balance the pressure of providing increased access and opening times with preventive conservation measures and recommendations.

Scenario 10***The Croome Appreciation Society is a local supporter group with some elderly members. They are clamouring for an access ramp into the Court.***

- We will provide solutions or alternatives to the **physical** barriers identified in the Access Audit and be guided by its recommendations (Appendix 2).
- We will work with groups who have special access requirements in order to better understand their needs and expectations and to explore the options and alternatives.
- We will develop virtual and alternative methods of access where physical access is not possible.
- We will seek creative and innovative ways of increasing physical access rather than making irreversible alterations to the historic fabric and detracting from the visual appearance of the Court in its designed landscape setting.
- Guided by the significances articulated in the CMMP, we will share and discuss with volunteers, staff, advisors and visitors the significances of the heritage and Spirit of Place in order to arrive at the least worst compromise should any material changes need to be made to the fabric in order to improve physical access.

In addition, throughout our approach to providing access for all:

- We will take an integrated approach to equality and diversity in all areas: staff recruitment, volunteer recruitment, provision of facilities, forms of interpretation, visitor welcome, etc.
- We will strive to bring in new audiences, including young people, BME groups and local communities.
- Our activities and access policies will be developed to provide multiple appeal to multiple groups, rather than looking at different groups in isolation and making people feel segregated.
- We will continue to work with external partners and neighbours in order to build and strengthen relationships and to encourage as much local and community support and access as possible.
- We will draw on the advice, guidance and expertise of the NT's Advisor on Access and the organisation's breadth of experience in this area.
- We will appeal to volunteers who can identify with people's special needs and train existing volunteers to be aware of access issues.
- We will aim to make our approach personal rather than generic and inclusive rather than exclusive.
- Our interpretation tools and methods will not just be standard ones but will be conceived to provide access to the heritage for as many different audiences as possible.
- We will strive to shift the perception of Croome's spaces into the public rather than the private realm, making it feel like a place that is owned and valued by all our visitors.

Access restrictions relating to the site

All the above notwithstanding, there are certain physical access constraints relating to the exterior of the Court and its approach. These are governed by legal agreements and restrictive covenants with the private residents and neighbours on the site who have freehold occupancy of the converted stableblock, Priest's House, former riding school/chapel and Gardener's house. These agreements were negotiated in order to open the Court to the public in September 2009. It is important that the resulting arrangements are understood and respected in order to ensure the quiet enjoyment of the residents and the maintenance of good neighbourly relations between the NT, stakeholders, residents and all interested parties.

- The current arrangements essentially comprise:
- restricted staff and contractor car-parking at the Court
 - ensuring that the sightline westward from the stableblock archway is not blocked by activity on the 'apron' to the immediate north of the Court
 - no visitor or public access to the Court along the main (London) drive
 - no public or visitor access to the east of the Court towards the stableblock
 - partial deviation of the historical footpath route from the Court to the Rotunda via the Home Shrubbery.

Since opening the Court to the public in September 2009, the National Trust has managed to comply with these arrangements and find alternative, creative ways of ensuring visitor access and enjoyment so that the visitor experience has not suffered as a result (e.g. a new footpath and mobility vehicle route was sensitively introduced as an alternative approach to the Court, avoiding the use of the main approach drive).

Climate change

A few years ago, the National Trust issued a publication called 'Forecast Changeable' summarising expected impacts on the NT's buildings and land from climate change. It has also formed a cross-disciplinary Climate Change Impacts Group (CCIG) in order to raise awareness internally and externally of climate change issues, provide guidance to its properties, establish policies and identify priorities for preventive measures.

One of the increasing trends of climate change is very heavy rainstorms, and the Trust's historic buildings struggle to cope with the volume and power of heavy downpours. An increased number of torrential downpours are overwhelming the capacity of rain water goods and drainage, and water is increasingly entering our historic interiors through roofs, walls and from basement flooding. This can damage vulnerable decorative paint surfaces and wallpaper, and creates damp conditions resulting in mould growth and increased levels of insect infestations. Much evidence of this is to be seen within Croome Court's interiors, not least in the area of the Long Gallery bay ceiling and on the second floor. Adapting roofs and rainwater goods can be costly, as well as very difficult to achieve on Listed Buildings where the historic integrity of the building needs to be maintained.

NT General principles

The National Trust's Council has agreed a Statement of Intent and some Guiding Principles. These can be summarised as:

- The Trust accepts that climate change is real and its causes need urgent action.
- We are committed to reducing our own emissions from all our activities; like energy use, land management etc.
- The impacts of climate change need to be understood and integrated into decision-making.

- We recognise that we have to adapt to climate change and will seek to optimise the opportunities and minimise the risks arising.
- It will not always be possible to preserve our properties and contents entirely unchanged. Unless critical interests require intervention we should seek to work with the grain of natural processes.
- We should be innovative in our approach to adaptation, but should also be opportunistic and economical with resources.
- Climate change cannot be accurately predicted so we need to be both vigilant and adaptable.
- We will be proactive in raising awareness of causes and effects of climate change with members, visitors and the public; and inform people of Trust responses to it.

Croome-specific principles:

Environmental Practices Advisers (EPAs) are employed by the NT to advise on climate change and work with properties to introduce measures to pre-empt and cope with the effects of climate change. An EPA is part of Croome's advisory team. They have fed into these aims and objectives and will continue to be involved as the project develops. Croome will also draw on the expertise and guidance of the NT's Preventive Conservation Advisor for the Environment.

Working with our Design Team, we are planning the following measures at Croome Court as part of the HLF project which relate to climate change:

- New rainwater downpipes will be sized to cope with greater predicted rainfall patterns (but still be appropriate and take aesthetics into account)
- External masonry and lead window dressings will be repaired to reduce water penetration into the building
- Lightning conductors will be installed to mitigate against damage caused by increase in severe storms due to climate change.

Longer term aims will also be considered for future phases of work in relation to climate change, as follows:

- Renewal of leadwork at roof level to increase rainwater run-off capacity (e.g. greater falls, more outlets, increased longevity of covering)

- Re-roofing to accommodate changes in weather (e.g. improve slate details: greater headlaps, correctly detailed underlay, increased ventilation to roofspaces).

Effects on the Environment & Sustainability

Croome has not met its Property Business Plan targets for Energy Reduction, largely due to the inefficient and out-moded heating and electrical systems at Croome Court. The Croome Redefined project will address these issues and deliver significant environmental benefit to the property as a whole by reducing our reliance on non-renewable energy sources. As above, we are working with our Environmental Practices Adviser on the responsible and sustainable use of energy and to introduce energy efficient and energy-saving measures. We will also draw on the expertise and guidance of the NT's Preventive Conservation Advisor for the Environment. In addition, Croome has a Green Champion, a member of the property team whose role is to investigate ways in which the property as a whole can become more energy efficient and who has been involved in drawing up these aims and objectives.

NT General principles

The National Trust currently has two Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets for energy reduction across all its sites, both concerning fossil fuel use:

- **Headline KPI – to 2013**

The current strategy target is to reduce our fossil fuel energy consumption by 12%. This will be achieved through efficiencies in existing systems, staff awareness and improved monitoring.

Year	Reporting period	KPI
0 - Baseline	Calendar year 2009	Baseline
1	April 2010 - March 2011	4% reduction
2	April 2011 – March 2012	8% reduction
3	April 2012 – March 2013	12% reduction
Note: fuel types included are electricity, mains gas, LPG and heating oil.		

The annual levels are the minimum – it is possible to achieve the 12% KPI earlier than the 2013 target. Early efficiencies yield additional benefits, such as greater reduction in fuel bills.

The targets are **regional** and it is decided with properties how best to achieve them. The KPI is not fuel-specific. It is for total energy including electricity, mains gas, LPG and heating oil. Therefore, properties have the flexibility to decide which improvement is right for them and will provide greater returns. Coal, vehicle fuels, and diesel/oil for generators or machinery and are not included within the current KPI.

- **KPI – to 2020**

The NT's longer term KPI is to reduce fossil fuel usage by 50% by 2020. This will be achieved through replacement of fossil fuel systems with renewable technologies.

Delivery of efficiencies is encouraged as a pre-requisite to the installation of a renewable technology, to ensure that the system can be sized for the correct demand, and capital costs of the project are lower.

Energy use at Croome

The baseline, against which all the energy KPI targets are measured, was calculated using Croome's fossil fuel usage data for 2009. In 2009, Croome's energy usage in the Court was very low as it was not fully established as part of the property:

Property Component	2009 electricity baseline	2010-11 electricity total to date	2011-12 electricity total to date	2009 oil baseline	2010-11 oil total to date	2011-12 oil total to date
Croome Court Mansion	7927	45408	25523	266073	248424	19156
Offices	31358	173977	2394			
Visitor Centre/Tea Room	46064	87693	57121			

However, Croome's energy usage in 2010/11 exceeded the 2009 baseline: energy consumption data highlighted Croome as being the third highest consumer of electricity and the fourth highest consumer of oil, when compared to all 28 National Trust properties in the West Midlands region. Its energy usage in 2011/12 is likely to exceed the 8% reduction target.

Our Environmental Practices Adviser has established that the following energy efficiency measures could achieve a 41.3% reduction in energy usage of the Court. *(N.B. This list is an advised selection and it is up to the property to choose and decide which ones to undertake. The other percentages indicated would then change depending on which measures were implemented):*

Smart metering	10% saving on electricity
Review of heating controls	10% saving on oil
Roof insulation	8% saving on oil (assuming that 80% of heat is lost through the roof)
Voltage optimization	8% saving on electricity
Boiler insulation	5% saving on oil
Secondary glazing	10% saving on oil
Draught proofing	10% saving on oil

The Croome Redefined project to re-service and conserve the Court will provide the opportunity to address these recommendations. At present, the process of installing a smart meter has already begun.

Croome's Property Business Plan includes the following targets for reductions in non-renewable energy consumption by 2014:

- Reduction of non-renewable energy from 396,901 kWh to 340,000 kWh per annum
- 50% of our energy usage will come from renewable sources
- 25% of our wood fuel will be produced sustainably at Croome
- Our estate water usage will have been reduced by 12%
- At least 5% of our visitors will arrive by cycle or public transport

Croome-specific principles:

- Overhauled shutters will improve insulation at night, reducing heat loss and associated carbon footprint
- Overhauled windows will prevent draughts and heat loss during winter and allow better ventilation to reduce overheating in summer
- Thermal insulation in the roof space will improve the thermal performance of the building
- Increased airtight-ness of the building following door, window and plaster repairs will reduce heat loss and carbon footprint
- New biomass (wood pellet) boiler for the building will reduce carbon footprint (biomass heating is classified as carbon neutral as timber removes carbon from the atmosphere as it grows)
- Electrical re-wiring will be done in MICC (mineral insulated copper-clad cables) for extended longevity
- Energy efficient (LED) lighting will be used wherever possible to reduce carbon footprint
- New radiators will be installed and pipework will be insulated to improve energy efficiency
- All electric heaters will be removed to improve energy efficiency
- Some new sanitary fittings with lower water consumption will be installed
- A Building Management System (BMS) will be installed with better radiator controls and zoning to reduce heat load and inefficiencies, and to better utilise the thermal mass of the structure on the south side, to reduce carbon footprint

- Air balloons will be installed in un-used fireplace flues to reduce heat loss through open fireplaces and chimneys
- Construction work will be managed to minimise waste and energy consumption, through a site waste management plan and transport strategy
- We will use construction materials appropriate to traditional repair, which often have an inherently lower ecological impact than modern equivalents (e.g. lime vs. cement, local stone vs. imported, timber joinery which can be indefinitely repaired rather than replaced)
- We already welcome many visitors who arrive at Croome by bicycle, and we will encourage more environmentally-responsible travel to and from the site (by increasing incentives to arrive by bike or on foot, investigating better public transport links, shuttle service from local train stations, etc.)

Longer term aims will also be considered for future phases of work in relation to effects on the environment and energy consumption, as follows:

- Incorporation of solar PV and thermal panels, potentially on the south facing slope of a re-instated double-pile roof form, to further reduce carbon footprint (ideally to equal or exceed the building's energy use, and to re-charge the site mobility vehicles' batteries)
- Renewal of all sanitary fitting to low water consumption fittings
- Improved thermal insulation wherever possible (this may be difficult at present to achieve without unacceptable alteration to the listed structure, but products which may be introduced in future, such as vacuum insulation panels and slim-line vacuum double glazing, may change this)
- Reduction in room temperatures in future as the public and staff become more accustomed to cooler environments and dress appropriately (from 20 degrees to 18 degrees for instance)
- Possible on-site sewage treatment to reduce reliance on septic tanks (e.g. reed bed, although the location of this would need to be very carefully considered)
- Waste management, particularly from kitchens and the shop, need to be carefully considered (composting, piggeries, packaging supply-chain, management, etc.)
- Staff and volunteer travel practices and staff location (accommodation on site, say in the Red Wing may assist this by allowing staff to stay

overnight as part of flexible working, and local employment will reduce commuting time)

- Possibility of supplying biomass boilers on site from forestry management of the estate

Maintenance

What's already in place?	What else is needed?
Some funding in place for emergency stabilisation work.	Sufficient financial endowment for the Court going forward.
	Funding allocated to STC work, not just the project.
Baseline surveys of condition of fabric (stone, plaster, timber, marble, etc)	Annual surveying, checking, monitoring and recording of any changes in condition of the fabric.
	Short Term Cyclical (STC) and LTC (Long Term Cyclical) programmes of work to feed into the 10-year costed Action Plan (SECTION 5).
	Specialist condition surveys and detailed treatment recommendations of the fabric of the Court in order to inform, prioritise and cost our conservation work.
	Exhaustive paint analysis to understand evolution of decorative schemes.
	Quinquennial building inspections to identify, prioritise and plan building repair work.
Basic housekeeping, conservation cleaning and environmental monitoring.	Thorough programme of daily, weekly and annual housekeeping tasks, detailed environmental monitoring and preventive conservation measures.
Conservation 4 Access toolkit identification of requirements, skills and resources (Appendix 15)	Putting recommendations into place in terms of skills, resources and equipment, reviewing and refining them.
	Increase in house staff.
Performance Development Reviews	Training and development programme for house staff to improve and increase skills and offer opportunities for shadowing and sharing best practice.
NT Building Surveyors provide operational advice.	Dedicated Design Team to focus on project, providing more capacity and freeing-up other advisors for operational issues.
Property Business Plan with a 3-year	On-going revision of Property Business

programme and priorities (Appendix 34)	Plan, aims and priorities.
NT general operational guidelines.	Croome-specific operational manual.
1 Duty Manager in place to ensure day-to-day basic maintenance tasks	House Steward or equivalent role
Ad hoc volunteer help with maintenance tasks (e.g. cleaning windows, basic repairs)	Trained group of volunteers to regularly assist with range of appropriate maintenance, housekeeping and preventive conservation tasks.
Smoke detection system	Revision and upgrading of smoke detection system?
Basic fire prevention measures	Revision and improvement of fire prevention measures?
Use of historic maps to maintain sightlines from the Court.	We will continue to refer to and be guided by these.
Reference to primary sources in the archive to inform restoration.	We will continue to refer to and be guided by these.

What do we need to do to maintain any new work (including interpretation material) & what resources are needed?

What's already in place?	What else is needed?
Small property team of staff and volunteers	Revised staff structure to ensure effective management of the Court, communication with volunteers, and dove-tailing of the project with the property as a whole.
	Staff roles designed to cope with the changing nature of the planned presentation of the Court, hand-in-hand with the on-going conservation work. There will be a need for flexibility and quick responses to changing requirements.
	Revised staff structure to provide greater capacity.
Performance Development Reviews	Specific mechanisms to assess and review staff and volunteer skills and resources required for maintaining the conservation work and interpretation funded by the HLF.
A pool of 253 volunteers.	On-going recruitment and training programme for volunteers to ensure sufficient skills and capacity for interpretation as more and more spaces are opened up.

Management

(N.B. Aims in red have been identified as the most important ones for us to achieve; those in green as the hardest for us to achieve).

How will we manage visitors in a way that does not damage the heritage?

- We will ensure that all staff and volunteers have sufficient awareness, understanding and buy-in to why it is important to manage visitor access to heritage sites and how it can be potentially damaging if such management is not achieved. This appreciation needs to be embedded in the property culture.
- We will ensure that the mechanisms in place for setting property targets are robust and realistic, e.g., the Property Business Plan will set feasible targets for visitor numbers that do not represent a potential adverse impact on the historic fabric; the collective exercise of reviewing the Conservation Performance Indicators offers an opportunity to assess and mitigate against any adverse impact on the heritage.
- Balancing conservation with access is the core work of the National Trust, so we will draw on the organisation's vast experience in managing heritage sites and consult other NT properties and learn from best practice and shared experience.
- We will take advice from a range of internal and external specialist advisers and consultants.
- We will carry out a Heritage Impact Assessment.
- The timing and scope of the Court's opening regime will take the conservation needs of the building into account.
- We will use the NT's Conservation 4 Access Toolkit to ensure adequate preventive conservation measures are in place.
- We will monitor wear and tear and adjust preventive measures accordingly.
- We will design the visitor experience and activities in a way that spreads the impact across the Court and the whole property, rather than causing maximum impact in any one area.
- We will make use of the independent expertise of the NT's Arts, Architectural and Learning Panels for guidance and advice.

What impact will visitor services have on the heritage & how will we minimise it?

- The main visitor facilities are/will be located in separate buildings and not in the Court itself.
- We will monitor visitor numbers and ensure that the appropriate level of visitor facilities are in place.
- If any visitor services are required within the Court itself they will be designed so that they are reversible in case any other alternatives present themselves at a later date (e.g. the Red Wing).

- Visitor services or transactional spaces will be carefully zoned so that they do not adversely impact upon the visitor's experience of the heritage or 'break the spell'.
- Visitor services in the form of public events and activities will be rooted in Croome's stories and appropriate to its significances in order to respect and enhance Croome Court's Spirit of Place.
- We will carry out a Heritage Impact Assessment.
- We will use the NT's Conservation 4 Access Toolkit to ensure adequate preventive conservation measures are in place.
- We will make use of the independent expertise of the NT's Arts, Architectural and Learning Panels for guidance and advice.

How will we ensure that staff, volunteers & contractors have heritage skills?

- We will involve all property and project staff and volunteers in owning and delivering the outcomes of the project.
- We will make use of the internal and external advice and skills available via the NT Consultancy to support and guide the property team and volunteers.
- We will offer shadowing and mentoring opportunities at other NT properties for Croome's house and property staff, sharing best practice across the organisation.
- Relevant training courses will be offered to members of staff in order to increase their heritage skills, e.g. Housekeeping Study Days, handling and packing courses, etc.
- The NT's internal Performance Leadership programme (formerly Personal Development Review) will be used as a way of ensuring that appropriate, adequate heritage skills and training are made available to all individuals.
- Everyone at Croome will have access to and be aware of the significances articulated and evaluated in the CMMP.

How will we deal with any potential heritage conflicts?

- We will be guided by the Assessment of Significance and Spirit of Place expressed in the CMMP.
- In order to ensure adequate and balanced consideration of any potential heritage conflicts, our approach to all conservation, restoration and any new work will be guided by the principles set out in the Philosophy of Approach (see p.520) and the ranking of significances expressed in the CMMP.
- We will involve all property and project staff and volunteers in owning and delivering the outcomes of the project.
- We will carry out a Heritage Impact Assessment.
- We will take advice from a range of internal and external specialist advisers.

- All public events and activities will be rooted in Croome's stories and appropriate to its significances in order to respect and enhance Croome Court's Spirit of Place.
- We will always ask ourselves: 'Is this *right* for Croome?'
- The author of this CMMP is the property's Curator whose role is to champion the property's Spirit of Place and Significance and advise on how it can be protected and enhanced.
- Our Project Board will continue to be an active sounding-board and challenge our proposals.
- Balancing conservation with access is the core work of the National Trust, so we will draw on the organisation's vast experience in managing heritage sites and learn from best practice.
- We will make use of the independent expertise of the NT's Arts, Architectural and Learning Panels for guidance and advice.

What management standards do we need to comply with & how will we do that?

- We will use the NT's Conservation Performance Indicator system to set, monitor and review our standards in managing the heritage.
- We will continue to carry out consultation and evaluation of the project to ensure the quality of what we do.
- Everyone at Croome will have access to and be aware of the significances articulated and evaluated in the CMMP and support its aims.
- We will challenge ourselves and our ways of working and not 'revert to type'.
- Our Project Board will continue to be an active sounding-board and challenge our proposals.
- The NT's internal Performance Leadership programme (formerly Personal Development Review) will be used as a way of ensuring that appropriate, adequate management skills and training are made available to all individuals.

How will we manage Significance & Spirit of Place?

- In order to ensure that the significance of individual elements and spaces and the Spirit of Place of the whole is protected, preserved and enhanced now and into the future, our approach to all conservation, restoration and any new work will be guided by the principles set out in the Philosophy of Approach (see p.520).
- This CMMP has been prepared and written by the Project Curator, part of whose role is to champion the property's Spirit of Place and Significance and advise on how they can be protected and enhanced. The aim has been to clearly express and articulate Croome's significances in order to encourage their understanding and perpetuation.

- Everyone at Croome will have access to and be aware of the significances articulated and evaluated in the CMMP and support its aims.
- Public events, interpretation and activities will be rooted in Croome's stories and appropriate to its significances in order to respect and enhance Croome Court's Spirit of Place.
- We will always ask ourselves: 'Is this *right* for Croome?'

Managing information about the heritage

How will we ensure decisions are based on enough information about the heritage?

- This CMMP will be adopted as a guide to inform any decisions about the heritage. The Gazetteer provides a quick reference tool.
- The CMMP will be updated at intervals by the Curator and reviewed by relevant advisers and property staff.
- This CMMP has been researched and written by the Project Curator, a member of the project team.
- Research and analysis will be on-going in order to increase our understanding of the Court's structure and history.
- The Curator, Conservator, Archaeologist, Architectural Historian, Architect, Building Surveyor, Environmental Practices Advisor and other relevant advisers will be involved in any decisions on changes and/or repairs to the fabric of the building.
- We will maintain our collaborative partnership with the Worcestershire Record Office to ensure that we continue to be informed by the evidence and information contained in Croome's vast archive.

Who will provide the information, when & how?

- The CMMP will act as a ready source of information about the heritage and will be updated at intervals by the Curator and reviewed by relevant advisers and property staff.
- Research and analysis will be on-going in order to increase our understanding of the Court's structure and history.
- The project and the property will continue to draw on the expertise and support of the NT Consultancy in the form of curatorial, conservation, and architectural advisers, as well as external consultants such as Historians, Architectural Historians, the project's Architect, Croome's Archivist, and other specialists as required.
- We will encourage everyone at Croome to contribute to our collective understanding of the heritage, i.e. not just to have passive access to it, but to share, debate and input into it.
- The Clerk and Archivist to the CET has a long-standing association with Croome and has assisted greatly with the preparation of this document and our understanding of Croome, both Court and Park, providing regular

tours, talks, written information and a vital link with both the CET archive and that deposited at the WRO. This relationship will continue as part of the on-going partnership between the CET and the NT.

- The Project Curator gives regular talks to update the understanding of the Court's heritage to staff, volunteers, the Friends Group and local special interest groups.
- The Architectural Historian has a watching brief to advise on the significance of the fabric that is revealed when any opening-up work is required.

How will we store heritage information, update it & make it accessible?

- This CMMP will be made available to all those who are working at Croome Court, including contractors where necessary, and a copy will be placed in the Volunteers' Library for consultation (See also Section 6 on Adoption & Review) .
- Paper and electronic copies of this CMMP and relevant reports and appendices will be kept at the property office, the NT central and regional offices and will be made available and easily accessible to all who need to consult it.
- It will also be deposited with the Worcestershire Record Office for consultation.
- We will maintain our collaborative partnership with the Worcestershire Record Office to ensure that we continue to be informed by the evidence and information contained in Croome's vast archive.
- The CMMP will be updated at intervals by the Project Curator and reviewed by relevant advisers and property staff.
- We will consider how the present paid archivist role can be maintained into the future to ensure that the heritage information continues to be gathered and made accessible and that the necessary knowledge and skills are in place to easily retrieve archive information at the WRO and at the Croome Estate Office.
- Conservation information about treatment and repairs to the historic fabric will be recorded and documented by the property team and relevant advisors (specifically the Building Surveyor, Conservator/Curator and the Conservation & Engagement Officer).
- Conservation information about remedial treatment to objects in the collections will be recorded on the Collections Management System database (CMS).

How will we ensure volunteers, staff & contractors have access to information about the heritage?

- This CMMP will be made available to all those who are working at Croome Court, including contractors where necessary, and a copy will be placed in the Volunteers' Library and the 'Live' Archive Room for consultation (See also Section 6 on Adoption & Review) .

- Our Volunteering Plan will identify ways in which we can ensure that volunteers are kept up-to-date and have access to information about the Court's heritage. This is of course vital, as it is they who play the key role in conveying that information to our visitors.
- We will continue to hold regular update sessions with our volunteers to inform them of developments and new insights into the Court's history and heritage. The Project Curator and Archivist attend these sessions to answer questions and explain physical and documentary discoveries.
- Croome's Volunteering Plan will include ways of ensuring that all volunteers across the property are aware of and have access to the information included in this CMMP and its subsequent versions.
- A *pro*-active, not simply *re*-active, approach will be taken in providing heritage information during volunteer induction, selection and development.
- We will create new ways of pro-actively investing time and effort in sharing information about the heritage and the project with our volunteers and contractors.
- We will encourage everyone at Croome to contribute to our collective understanding of the heritage, i.e. not just to have passive access to it, but to share, debate and input into it.
- The regular property newsletter, the 'Croome Chronicle' will continue to publish interesting 'nuggets' of information about the Court as they come to light.
- A full programme of talks, lectures and guided tours will continue to be organised by the Friends of Croome to increase and share understanding across the property of the Court's heritage.
- We will continue to work with one of our key stakeholders, the Worcestershire Record Office to promote access to the Croome Archive which was deposited there for the benefit of the nation. The Croome catalogue can be viewed at:
<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=350&pos=9>
- We will collaborate with the WRO to provide copies and facsimiles of the archival documents at Croome as appropriate to our interpretation of the Court, as well as working together to explore joint opportunities for displaying and interpreting the original documents in order to bring the latent stories within the archive to life.

How will we inform the public & visitors about the heritage & how we are looking after it?

- Our interpretation will unlock the emotional stories about Croome's past, present and future heritage. We will develop and share with visitors our understanding of the Court's history and the people who lived and worked in it via our interpretation and presentation of the Court. We will do this in diverse and innovative ways, and build on the great strength of our oral interpretation and opportunities for dialogue with our volunteers.

- Through conservation-in-action, we will show visitors how we are caring for the heritage by engaging them with our excellent conservation work and the skills involved by carrying it out in a transparent way, and by providing hands-on opportunities for them to actually have a go in a controlled and safe manner.
- We will develop new and innovative ways of sharing information about the heritage – at Croome itself or virtually, via websites and social networking.
- We will look at the very traditional NT mechanism of the handbook entry and investigate ways of making the entry for Croome different, memorable and ‘must-see’.
- We will put in place a mechanism to record a narrative of the heritage conservation progress at Croome in order to be able to share it with a wider audience.
- A full programme of talks, lectures and guided tours will continue to be organised by the Friends of Croome to increase and share understanding across the property of the Court’s heritage.
- A copy of this CMMP will be deposited with the Worcestershire Record Office for consultation.
- A guidebook will be produced to cover the property as a whole.

Do we need to develop any new expertise?

- We will evaluate what new skills we need and how to adapt our ways of working in order to work with Creative Producers and people from different artistic backgrounds in order to deliver the Croome Redefined project.
- We will assess what new expertise and skills we need in order to develop new methods of visitor interpretation, such as social networking sites and digital media.
- We will ensure that we have adequate resources, skills and knowledge in order to continue to access and make use of the historical information in Croome’s archives.

Public expectations, communication & evaluation

- Croome is a high-profile property. It will be important to maintain two-way communications, consultation and evaluation throughout this ambitious, long-term project.
- We will make every effort to manage expectations and ensure on-going community and stakeholder support by finding appropriate ways of communicating, listening and maintaining dialogue.
- We have introduced a Stakeholder Management Plan to ensure that we communicate effectively and regularly, as appropriate, with all our stakeholders and partners.

- We have introduced a Communications Plan to ensure that we communicate effectively and regularly, as appropriate, with our visitors, property staff, central National Trust staff, consultants, volunteers, Friends, local communities and wider National Trust audiences.
- We have developed a Marketing & Communications strategy for the project to ensure that its profile remains visible and that our activities are effectively promoted. We want Croome to be talked about.
- We will continue to carry out evaluation and peer reviews to gain external and internal feedback and in order to learn from it.

SECTION 5 – 10-YEAR COSTED ACTION PLAN

Maintenance Item	Action to be Taken	When/Frequency	Who	Initial Purchase cost (£)	Cost/Resources (£) PA	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Cost/Resources (£) TOTAL 10 YEAR PLAN
Security system	Maintenance test and inspection.	Weekly tests. Annually for major inspection.	Property Manager (PM) to set up and manage contract with maintenance co. Initial contract to be set up by the Consultancy. Negotiated cost for the maintenance based on the contract installation. Tests by Duty Manager.		£700	£700	£721	£743	£765	£788	£811	£836	£861	£887	£913	£8,025
Fire Detection System	Maintenance test and inspection.	Weekly tests. Annually for major inspection.	PM to manage contract with maintenance co. Initial contact to be set up by the Consultancy. Negotiated cost for maintenance based on the contract installation. Tests by Duty Manager.		£985	£985	£1,015	£1,045	£1,076	£1,109	£1,142	£1,176	£1,211	£1,248	£1,285	£11,292
Emergency lighting	Test and service emergency lighting.	Weekly tests undertaken by Duty Manager, 6 monthly tests on emergency lighting	Duty Manager		£100	£100	£103	£106	£109	£113	£116	£119	£123	£127	£130	£1,146
Property Fire strategy & procedure	Undertake emergency evacuations of property to test procedures undertaken when open to the public.	Annually in May/October	Duty Manager/HVSM & Volunteers		£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Rainwater Goods	Check and clear leaf debris. Inspect eaves gutters, hopper heads and down pipes. Sweep out debris from eaves gutters and clear hopper heads and check that down pipes are clear and working properly. Funding STC budget for minor repairs	Annually	Building Surveyor (BS) to let and manage contract in conjunction with the Duty Manager		£1,500	£1,500	£1,545	£1,591	£1,639	£1,688	£1,739	£1,791	£1,845	£1,900	£1,957	£17,196
Chimney Stacks	Inspection to check condition, flaunching pots, etc.	Bi-annually	BS/Duty Manager		£500		£515		£546		£580		£615		£652	£2,908
Rain water goods and drains	Walk around property exterior to check for blockages to rainwater outlets and drains.	During times of heavy rain.	Duty Manager/CEO/Volunteers		£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Gulleys and Drains	External/Internal Drainage. Check inspection chambers, covers and frames. Lift gully gratings and covers. Check that drainage works properly by pouring water down gully. Clear and rod drain if necessary.	Annually	Building Surveyor (BS) to lead in conjunction with Duty Manager. Allow for builder's attendance.		£500	£500	£515	£530	£546	£563	£580	£597	£615	£633	£652	£5,732
Electrical Systems	Undertake electrical test to comply with BS 7671 every five years for systems under five years old and 2.5 years thereafter.	Cyclical: every five years; thereafter every 2.5 years.	Building survey to organise and instruct remedial works		£6,000		£6,180		£6,556					£7,601		£20,337
Electrical Appliances	Electrical PAT Testing	Annually	Duty Manager		£500	£500	£515	£530	£546	£563	£580	£597	£615	£633	£652	£5,732
Quinquennial Building Survey	Undertake full QQ inspection of the building fabric. Commission reports on M&E services property in accordance with the National Trust Rule Book.	Cyclical: every five years.	Building surveyor to commission tenders and instruct.		£15,000						£17,389					£17,389
External Decoration	External decorations and pre-painting repairs.	Cyclical: every five years.	Building Surveyor in consultation with Curator. Works to be phased undertaking an elevation each year.		£40,000				£43,709					£50,671		£94,380
Fireplaces & Flues	Chimney Flues in use: inspect and clean.	Bi-annually	Building Surveyor to set up and manage contract		£1,500		£1,545		£1,639		£1,739		£1,845		£1,957	£8,725
Tiled Roofs	Inspect roofs and check for slipped, missing or broken slates. Replace slates as necessary. Inspect slate roof abutments and check for loose or missing lead flashings and for cracked mortar fillet. Inspect roof eaves and check for birds nesting.	Bi-Annually	Building Surveyor to set up and manage contract		£500	£500		£530		£563		£597		£633		£2,824
Valley Gutters and Flat Roofs	Sweep out valley gutters and flat roofs. Inspect lead work for cracks or for dips in the lead (indicating decayed boarding). Pay particular attention to the mineral felt roof areas around joints and flashing abutments.	Twice yearly - November/April	Duty Manager/Property Staff		£500	£500	£515	£530	£546	£563	£580	£597	£615	£633	£652	£5,732
External Walls: Brick and Stonework	Inspect brickwork, stonework and joints. Allow for small scale repairs: re-pointing etc.	Annually	Building Surveyor		£500	£500	£515	£530	£546	£563	£580	£597	£615	£633	£652	£5,732
Compliance - Water: Legionella Survey	Initial survey carried out. Carry out regular testing to comply with recommendations.	Weekly	Building Surveyor to organise the initial survey. Duty Manager to update register. Maintained by property monitoring. Weekly checks to be undertaken by the Duty Manager.		£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Compliance - Asbestos Survey	Carry out Asbestos Survey	Annually	Building Surveyor to commission survey. Duty Manager to update register; maintained by the property.		£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Compliance - Drainage & Sewage (1)	Service/empty Drainage & Sewage system.	Bi-annually or as required.	Initial contact set up by BS and then taken forward by the Duty Manager.		£1,600		£1,648		£1,748		£1,855		£1,968		£2,088	£9,307
Compliance - Drainage & Sewage (2)	Test Drainage & Sewage effluent (Environment Agency).	Annually	Initial contact set up by BS and then taken forward by the Duty Manager.		£2,100	£2,100	£2,163	£2,228	£2,295	£2,364	£2,434	£2,508	£2,583	£2,660	£2,740	£24,074

SECTION 5 – 10-YEAR COSTED ACTION PLAN

Maintenance Item	Action to be Taken	When/Frequency	Who	Initial Purchase cost (£)	Cost/Resources (£) PA	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Cost/Resources (£) TOTAL 10 YEAR PLAN
Doors and Windows	Check glazing, clean windows/externally and internally. Check doors for closing and locking.	Quarterly	Duty Manager & Conservation & Engagement Officer (CEO). Property to set up and manage contract/organise conservation volunteers (for ground floor & basement windows).		£300	£300	£309	£318	£328	£338	£348	£358	£369	£380	£391	£3,439
Boiler and heating system	Boiler service, flue cleaning, adjust controls, adjust manifolds, etc.	Annually in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. May need two major services per year plus weekly checks.	Initial contract to be set up after the construction works. Contract to be set up initially by the BS; Duty Manager to manage contract and carry out checks		£1,000	£1,000	£1,030	£1,061	£1,093	£1,126	£1,159	£1,194	£1,230	£1,267	£1,305	£11,464
Compliance - Lightning conductor	Test Lightning conductor	Annually	BS to implement and instruct any remedial works		£200			£212	£219	£225	£232	£239	£246	£253	£261	£1,887
Compliance - Safe Access Systems	Test Safe Access Systems	Annually	Led by BS?, undertaken by Bureau Veritas		£500	£500	£515	£530	£546	£563	£580	£597	£615	£633	£652	£5,732
Internal Decorations	Internal decoration as and when required. Funding from STC budget for minor repairs.	As required.	BS to set up and manage contract in consultation with Curator.		£1,000			£1,061	£1,093	£1,126	£1,159	£1,194	£1,230	£1,267	£1,305	£9,434
Maintenance - lighting	Replace lamps for internal/external lights.	As required (but likely all will require replacement within a 5 year cycle)	Duty Manager		£200	£200	£206	£212	£219	£225	£232	£239	£246	£253	£261	£2,293
Paths and surfaces to immediate exterior	Maintain/re-surface.	As required.	BS, Head Gardener, Curator		£1,000	£1,000	£1,030	£1,061	£1,093	£1,126	£1,159	£1,194	£1,230	£1,267	£1,305	£11,464
Boundary Walls and Fences	Maintain and repair walls and fences	BS to inspect and repair annually	BS and Head Gardener		£300	£300	£309	£318	£328	£338	£348	£358	£369	£380	£391	£3,439
Reactive Maintenance	E.g. repairing door locks, easing windows	As required	BS & Duty Manager		£300	£300	£309	£318	£328	£338	£348	£358	£369	£380	£391	£3,439
Environmental monitoring	Maintenance/Testing of Building Management System (BMS)	Annually	CEO	£67,844	£1,500				£1,545	£1,591	£1,639	£1,688	£1,739	£1,791	£1,845	£11,839
Conservation protection materials	Replenishing protective materials (e.g. Antinox, bubble wrap, acid free tissue, etc)	As required	CEO	Initial full costs from 2016	£2,050	£500	£500	£500	£500	£14,726	£2,448	£2,521	£2,597	£2,675	£2,755	£29,722
Emergency salvage equipment	Servicing & replenishing emergency salvage equipment (e.g. Hard hats, steel-capped boots, torches, hi-vis vests, polythene, plastic crates, etc).	Every 3 Years	CEO	Initial full costs from 2012	£350	£2,935			£382			£418			£457	£4,192
Conservation cleaning equipment	Servicing conservation cleaning equipment (tower scaffold, vacuums, step-ladders, floor polishers, etc).	As required	CEO	Initial costs spread over 2012-2014	£500	£2,500	£515	£4,230	£546	£563	£580	£597	£615	£633	£652	£11,431
Conservation cleaning consumables	Replenish cleaning consumables (e.g. polish, brushes, vacuum bags, etc)	As required	CEO		£310	£310	£319	£329	£339	£349	£359	£370	£381	£393	£404	£3,554
Volunteer conservation team	Training, shadowing, mentoring, expenses of those volunteers who help clean and maintain the Court (based on team of 5 volunteers once a week)	As required	CEO		£1,500	£1,500	£1,545	£1,591	£1,639	£1,688	£1,739	£1,791	£1,845	£1,900	£1,957	£17,196
Total						£19,230	£24,082	£20,108	£72,466	£33,194	£42,453	£22,532	£26,590	£81,733	£28,666	£371,054

SECTION 6 - ADOPTION & REVIEW

This plan will be adopted and used as a tool for managing the conservation and restoration of Croome Court from the moment it is issued. Ideally it will of course be adopted within the context of a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund in order to guide the delivery of the project, but is intended to be a useful reference document whatever the outcome. It will be the responsibility of Croome's Property Manager to ensure that it is adopted by all those working on the project.

This plan is a live document and will be reviewed and updated periodically as new information becomes available and new values emerge and as the project progresses. It will be formally reviewed at the end of the project by the project team and will be adopted by the property as an on-going management tool. The property team will review it on a 5-yearly basis. This will include evaluation of any new research or information that may affect the significance; policies, objectives and actions will be reviewed and amended accordingly.

The National Trust's regular processes of monitoring condition (e.g. Quinquennial Surveys, condition reports and Short Term Cyclical maintenance) will be fed back into the plan and fresh management actions will be identified as necessary.

The protection and enhancement of the Spirit of Place and various significances of Croome Court as set out in this document will be monitored and assessed by using the Conservation Performance Indicator (CPI) process which is carried out annually by the property and project team.

Copies of this CMMP, the Gazetteer and supporting surveys and reports included as appendices will be deposited at:

- Croome Court (Staff Office, Volunteers' Library, Archive/Research Room)
- National Trust's Property Office at Croome, High Green
- National Trust's Regional Hub at Alcester, Worcestershire
- National Trust's Head Office at Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon
- National Trust Croome Volunteers' Library (in Croome Court)
- Worcestershire Record Office
- Croome Estate Trust, High Green
- National Monuments Record of English Heritage

Copies of archival and research documents, digital images and photographic prints that have been compiled or commissioned during the process of writing this CMMP will be stored and accessible at:

- Croome Court (Staff Office, Volunteers' Library, Archive/Research Room)
- National Trust's Property Office at Croome, High Green
- National Trust's Regional Hub at Alcester, Worcestershire
- The Project Curator's office at Duken House, Wootton, Bridgnorth WV15 6EA

SECTION 7 - BIBLIOGRAPHY

Other plans that relate to the site

The following conservation management plans are either already in existence or are being prepared in tandem with the present CMMP for the Court. They form a suite of planning documents that cover the whole property:

Volume 1 – Introduction & Overview of the whole site

Volume 2 – The Mansion, comprising:

A) The Court (present document)

B) Offices & Policies

C) Walled Garden

Volume 3 – The Pleasure Grounds

Volume 4 – The Park (updated version of existing plan)

Volume 5 – The Estate & Wider Setting

Organisational policies relating to management of site

(Other conservation organisations' policy documents, NT policy documents & Croome policy documents)

- English Heritage: *Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment*, April 2008
- Heritage Lottery Fund: *Conservation management planning guidance*, April 2008
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- Croome Property Business Plan (Michael Smith, Property Manager, November 2010)

Reports

The various reports relating to the condition and understanding of Croome Court, its fabric and its history and which have been consulted in the writing of this CMMP are provided as Appendices in a separately bound document (see list under 'Appendices').

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Discussions

- Stephen Astley (Archivist, The Sir John Soane Museum)
- Peter Beresford (Trustee of the Croome Estate Trust)
- Lord & Lady Cobham, Hagley Hall
- Nicholas Cooper (Architectural Historian and member of the National Trust's Architectural Panel)
- George William Coventry, 13th Earl of Coventry
- Leonard Edwards (son of Albert Edwards, Caretaker from 1948-1998)
- James Finlay (NT Advisor on Interior Decoration)
- The Georgian Group (Shropshire & Marches branch)
- Catherine Gordon (Architectural Historian and Author of *The Coventrys of Croome*)
- Eileen Harris (Architectural historian, author and authority on Robert Adam)
- John Harris (Architectural historian and author)
- Jeffrey Haworth (Former National Trust Curator)
- John Henderson (Former Agent, Croome Estate Trust)
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- David Powell (Painter & decorator for the Hare Krishnas)
- Dr. John Martin Robinson (NT Advisor on Heraldry, Vice Chairman of The Georgian Group and authority on James Wyatt)
- Frances Sands (Project Archivist of the Adam drawings, The Sir John Soane Museum)
- Dame Rosalind Savill (Former Director of The Wallace Collection and authority on Sèvres porcelain)
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- Richard Wheeler (National Specialist in Garden History, National Trust)
- Lisa White (Chair of the National Trust's Arts Panel)

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APPENDICES

Gazetteer – This has been produced as a separate document as a quick reference guide to each space within the Court to accompany this CMMP. The relevant CMMP page numbers relating to each space are cross-referenced.

Other Appendices

In order to keep the size of this CMMP manageable, specific reports used and referred to in this Plan are grouped as Appendices in a separate document. They are:

1. **Gazetteer**, 2012 (Sarah Kay & Catherine Gordon)
2. **Access Audit & Recommendations**, 2010 (Access Matters UK)
3. **Acquisition & Disposal Policy**, 2011 (Sarah Kay)
4. **Architectural Report on C17th Croome Court**, December 2010 (Nicholas Cooper)
5. **Architectural Historical/Archaeological Survey of Croome Court**, December 2010 (Catherine Gordon)
6. **Architectural historical significance of Croome Court and Robert Adam, Report**, June 2010 (Prof. John Wilton-Ely, FSA, FRSA)
7. **Asbestos Sampling Survey (Level 2)**, August 2008 (Maylarch Environmental Surveying)
8. **Asbestos Demolition & Refurbishment Survey (Level 3)**, February 2011 (J. Cullen Thermals Ltd.)
9. **Basement of Croome Court, Report on historical use and layout**, October 2010 (Dr. Pamela Sambrook)
10. **Basement Plan (relating to above Report)**, October 2010 (Dr. Pamela Sambrook)
11. **Chimney flues Condition Report (Long Gallery, Saloon, Drawing Room Dining Room, Hall)** July 2010 (Keith Mitchell, Volcanic Chimney Company)
12. **Chimney flues Condition Report (Dining Room & Butler's Pantry)**, September 2011 (Keith Mitchell, Volcanic Chimney Company)
13. **Chimneypieces functional assessment**, June 2010 (Cliveden Conservation)
14. **Condition Survey of Croome Court & London Arch 2008** (John Goom Architects),
15. **Conservation 4 Access Toolkit worksheets: Preventive Conservation Costs Croome Court v1; Croome Court 7 days/week cleaning rota**, March 2012 (Catriona Hughes)
16. **Conservation Performance Indicators Review (CPIs) 2012**
17. **Costed Repair Recommendations Croome Court 2009** (John Goom Architects)
18. **Costed Repair Recommendations Summary 2009** (John Goom Architects)
19. **Costed Repair Recommendations Specification & Schedule 2009** (John Goom Architects)
20. **Country House Technology Survey Reports 1 & 2**, September 2010 (Frank Ferris)
21. **Coventry family of Croome**, summary of key facts on main characters, compiled 1996 (Camilla Beresford)

22. **Design & Access Statement incorporating Heritage Impact Assessment**, (Purcell Miller Tritton)
23. **Dining Room Paint 'Windows' Report**, October 2010 (Annabelle Monaghan)
24. **Entrance Hall Plasterwork Survey**, May 2011 (Cliveden Conservation)
25. **Environmental Sustainability Review** (National Trust)
26. **Equality & Diversity Instruction**, 2011 (National Trust)
27. **High Level Masonry Report**, December 2008 (John Goom)
28. **Legionella survey**, March 2010 (RSK Group plc)
29. **Long Gallery Ceiling Plasterwork Supplementary Report**, May 2011 (Cliveden Conservation)
30. **Long Gallery Grisailles Condition Report**, September 2008 (Annabelle Monaghan)
31. **Mechanical & Electrical Services Draft Stage C Report**, October 2011 (Martin Thomas Associates)
32. **Mechanical & Electrical Sustainable Energy Option Report**, October 2011 (Martin Thomas Associates)
33. **Paint analysis of Croome Court, initial report**, July 2008 (Catherine Hassall)
34. **Property Business Plan 2011-14**, October 2010 (Michael Smith)
35. **Protected Species Report (Ecological Survey)**, October 2011 (Collins Environmental Consultancy Ltd.)
36. **Repairs Notice Works Specification & Schedule**, 2010-11 (John Goom Architects)
37. **Stone & Plasterwork Advisory Report**, September 2008 (Cliveden Conservation)
38. **Sustainable Energy Feasibility Study**, November 2010 (Clean Energy Consultancy)
39. **Woodwork Condition Survey**, July 2008 (Tankerdale/John Hartley)