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'THE MOST ELEGANT VILLA YET PLANNED': JOHN CARTER'S DESIGNS FOR BYWELL HALL, NORTHUMBERLAND

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John Carter's fervour as a recorder and polemicist for Gothic architecture has been debated since his lifetime, but his classical designs have attracted less interest. However, these give some insight into the influences upon aspiring young Georgian architects, as Carter was in the 1770s. His two sets of designs for Bywell Hall, Northumberland, the first published in the Builder's Magazine *in 1776, and a more detailed portfolio now in a private collection, are presented together for the first time. This is an opportunity to examine Carter's early ideas and his thoughts on the appropriate styles to be employed for public, domestic and ecclesiastical buildings. Analysis of Carter's designs demonstrates his desire to create impressive interior spaces, but poor consideration of the practicalities for family and servant life in country houses. Carter's preference for Gothic over classical architecture, combined with humble origins and personality traits, prevented his aspiration to be an architect, but his drawing skills secured fame as one of the foremost architectural draughtsmen.*

Keywords: architectural history; antiquarianism; country houses; Gothic revival; eighteenth century

INTRODUCTION

John Carter FSA (1748–1817) is known as an architectural draughtsman and as an advocate of Gothic-style architecture.[1] Previous assessments of Carter's career focused on his drawings of medieval buildings produced during study tours, and his opposition to the destruction of medieval work in the name of eighteenth-century 'restoration', most notably James Wyatt's alterations to English cathedrals in the 1790s. What is less remarked upon is Carter's early career and his aspirations to be an architect: he trained with the builder Henry Holland,[2] and he made designs for new Gothic-style buildings including Midford Castle, Somerset, and Lea Castle, Worcestershire.[3] Carter also published many designs for classical buildings in the *Builder's Magazine*.[4] He made two unrealised proposals for Bywell Hall in Northumberland for John Fenwick. Carter's first designs were published in the

1. Nurse 2011 gave a full account of Carter's origins and career, extending the work of Colvin 2008, 231–3, and Crook 2008.
2. Stroud 1966.
3. Hussey 1944; Mowl 1982.
4. The classical designs are not mentioned by Crook 2008.

Magazine, but he was persuaded to produce further designs for 'the most elegant villa yet planned'. This article will publish these privately-owned designs for the first time and analyse the influences upon Carter as an aspiring architect seeking employment from clients favouring classical-style villas rather than his beloved Gothic-style architecture.

JOHN CARTER

In his autobiographical *Occurrences*, penned in 1817, John Carter states that he was the son of Benjamin Carter, a marble-carver whose house and shop were in White Horse Street, Piccadilly.[5] John aspired to be an architect and he drew designs for monuments and buildings until he had the opportunity to construct 'a building of consequence'.[6] His aspiration was boosted in 1766 when he received an offer to study with Joseph Dixon, surveyor and mason of St Alban's Street, London.[7] With Dixon, the young Carter supervised masons' work at Blackfriars Bridge (designed by Robert Mylne) and a bridge in Exeter. From 1768 Carter produced drawings for the builder Henry Holland senior (1712–85) whilst continuing to work for Dixon.[8] Holland's son, also Henry Holland (1745–1806), designed several classical-style buildings in the 1770s, including Claremont House and Benham Park (in collaboration with Lancelot Brown) and Brooke's Club, and made alterations to Trentham Hall.[9] Despite these contacts with classical architecture, Carter preferred medieval buildings and devoted much of his time to viewing and drawing standing buildings, ruins, funerary monuments and architectural features. He made drawing tours of English counties most years from 1770 to 1809.[10]

Whilst working for Holland, Carter drew for the monthly *Builder's Magazine*, published by Mr Newberry, Bookseller, in 1774. As Harris noted, Carter 'drew and with few exceptions ... invented the 185 plans and elevations' of a very wide range of items from country houses to lamps and fireplaces.[11] Most of his designs were in Roman and Grecian styles, reflecting the popularity of classical architecture and the influence of leading architects including James Paine, Robert Adam, Sir William Chambers and James Wyatt; indeed, Harris thought Carter's designs 'comply with the neoclassical taste popularized by Adam'.[12] Carter was not alone in recycling ideas from established architects, and other aspiring architects, including John Crunden, William Pain and Abraham Swan, published books of designs as a means to attract clients.[13] However, Harris thought Carter's designs were 'of mediocre quality', and Colvin described them as 'a fanciful neo-classical style ... that does not suggest that Carter was an architectural designer of much ability'.[14]

The commission to design additions to Bywell Hall, to which James Paine had recently added a new front range, came through the *Builder's Magazine*. In 1776 'a Mr John Fenwick

5. KCL, Leathes, K/PP119/7/4, i, fol 2.
6. Ibid, 1, fol 9v.
7. Crook 1995, 4.
8. KCL, Leathes, K/PP119/7/4, 1, fol 11v.
9. Colvin 2008, 528.
10. KCL, Leathes, K/PP119/7/4, 1. The volumes of his drawings in the British Library are listed in Nurse 2011, 211–52.
11. Harris 1990, 131.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid, 131; Colvin 2008, 231.

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of Bywell near Newcastle upon Tyne, wrote to Mr Newberry to give in his Work – a design of the most elegant Villa yet planed [*sic*]'. Carter noted the unusual terms with apparent disgust, as Fenwick offered in return for the designs 'a Ham, or a bit of Salmon!'.[15] Carter's designs were published in the *Builder's Magazine* in 1776.[16] On 10 March 1777 John Fenwick wrote to Carter directly that he 'had hit on a method to recompense me for my former trouble, that of making privately for him a set of Drawings for a Villa'.[17] Carter replied that he would do so, but it was vital to agree 'pecuniary satisfaction'. Fenwick replied with further details for the building but made no mention of payment. Despite this evasiveness, Carter noted that he was keen to 'catch the opportunity of such employ' and 'by incessant labour' he produced sixteen drawings by August 1777 and sent them to Fenwick. Naïvely, Carter left the amount to pay to Fenwick's 'generosity and judgement'.[18] Other than an acknowledgement of receipt in 1777, Carter heard nothing from Fenwick, so wrote to him twice in early 1778. The first letter received no reply, whilst the second brought a reply from Fenwick in June 1778 that he was 'in perfect health' but no mention of money. Carter wrote again, and at this point the gulf in expectations between Carter and Fenwick revealed itself. Fenwick replied that the plans were 'of no use to him' and that 'the utmost I ever thought of giving for such a Plan was 5 guineas'.[19] Carter replied with a demand for 100 guineas. Clearly still indignant when the *Occurrences* were written forty years later, Carter noted that the matter of Fenwick's drawings went to the arbitration of 'Messrs Adam's and Pain Architects' (possibly Robert Adam and James Paine), who awarded Carter 25 guineas. Bitterly, Carter noted that after paying his attorney's fees, he was left with 'only £16 16s!'. What Paine thought of the proposals to eviscerate a building he had designed barely a decade earlier are unrecorded.

Carter's career never progressed to that of architect. He remained a skilled draughtsman and a critic of alterations to medieval buildings, in particular work on English medieval cathedrals by James Wyatt. The controversy is well-known, as is Carter's lifelong admiration for Gothic architecture.[20] Putting aside the critiques of Colvin and Harris, this article focuses upon Carter's artistic response to the challenge set by John Fenwick: to design 'the most elegant Villa yet planned', as illustrated in his two designs for Bywell Hall.

PROVENANCE OF THE DRAWINGS

During the arbitration, Fenwick must have returned the Bywell drawings to Carter, as they were listed as no. 176 in the sale catalogue of Carter's books and manuscripts after his death.[21] The bookplate on the cover of the album is for 'George Scott, Esq. of Woolston Hall in the County of Essex'.[22] This is a puzzle: Scott was an antiquarian with a considerable library, but he died in 1780, soon after the drawings were made, and if the plans were in Carter's library until 1817 it seems unlikely that Scott, the last of his line, ever

15. KCL, Leathes, K/PP119/7/4, 1, fol 15.
16. *Builder's Mag*, 1776, pls LXXX, LXXXIII and LXXXIV.
17. KCL, Leathes, K/PP119/7/4, 1, fol 15.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid, fol 15v.
20. Robinson 2011, 226–9.
21. KCL, Leathes K/PP119/7/8, Correspondence about John Carter and the sale of his possessions, 1817–18, Sotheby's sale catalogue, 7.
22. Carter 1777.

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owned them. Although it was suggested that Scott's library was sold after his death in 1782, many of his books were still with his descendants in 1848.[23]

One possibility is that after Scott's death, Carter used a folder he had produced for Scott to bind the now useless Bywell drawings. There are some further clues to the provenance of the drawings after Carter's death. Below the Scott bookplate is a handwritten note 'C. O. P. Gibson Bywell Castle Stocksfield Northumberland Bought at Matthew Mackey's sale Lot 501 (part)'. Matthew Mackey (1853–1913) ran a successful boot-making company in Pudding Chare, Newcastle upon Tyne. He was a respected member of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, and after his death his library was sold in three lots in March, July and December 1920.[24] It is possible that Lot 501 also included Carter's correspondence with John Fenwick that was noted in Lot 176 of the posthumous sale of Carter's manuscripts. If so, its whereabouts is unknown. The purchaser of the Bywell drawings, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Osborne Provis Gibson MC (1876–1931), was a solicitor by profession, decorated for his service in the Northumberland Fusiliers during the Great War, and was commanding officer 1922–7.[25] He was one of the deputy lieutenants of Northumberland in September 1927 and the agent for the Allendale Estates at Bywell, where he was buried in 1931.[26] The drawings have been in Bywell Hall since Gibson's death.

THE FENWICKS OF BYWELL HALL

Bywell is a place of great antiquity, standing on the north bank of the River Tyne, 16 miles (26km) west of Newcastle upon Tyne. There are two churches, St Andrew and St Peter, of Anglo-Saxon origin, and the substantial remains of Bywell Castle, a large gatehouse-keep built in 1472 for Ralph Neville (1406–84), second earl of Westmorland.[27] Charles Neville (1542–1601), sixth earl of Westmorland, co-led the 1569 Rising of the North against Queen Elizabeth I, and after his attainder his lands in Durham and Northumberland were seized by the Crown. The Fenwicks acquired the former Neville lands in Bywell from the Crown in 1630, and they probably built the manor house, as no house was noted in a Crown survey of 1608.[28] No illustrations survive of this house, but much of its masonry remains, on the north side of the eighteenth-century hall that William Fenwick commissioned from James Paine. William Fenwick (1721–82) married Margaret Bacon in 1747 and he served as High Sheriff of Northumberland in 1752. The new house designed by Paine was completed in 1766.[29]

John Fenwick, William's eldest son, completed an MA at University of Oxford in 1771. When John obtained the designs for Bywell Hall from Carter he was the heir but not the owner, as his father was living. John may have sought the designs with the intention of creating a magnificent house of his choosing after he inherited, one that would impress his peers, and which would replace the older house masked by Paine's building. More

23. Ray 1848, App A.
24. Newcastle upon Tyne City Library Local Studies section, L018.2.
25. Storey 2017.
26. *The Times* 1927.
27. Grundy *et al* 1992, 204–7.
28. Hodgson 1902, 85; Simpson and Brown 2021, 25.
29. Leach 1988, 74.

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Fig 1. Bywell Hall from the south-west. l–r: the west range of 1890; Paine's triple pedimented 1767 house; and the eleventh-century tower of St Andrew's Church. *Photograph*: author.

urgently, thoughts of expanding the existing Hall may have come after the damage caused by the catastrophic flood of the River Tyne in 1771, when the water reached a height of eight feet in the ground floor rooms of Bywell Hall and the gardens were destroyed.[30] The plans came to nothing, however, for John Fenwick 'having had some unnatural connection was obliged to leave the kingdom'.[31] With debts of £2,000, he relinquished his inheritance at Bywell on 11 November 1780 and went to live in Montpellier, France, where he died.[32] John's brother, William Jnr, inherited the Hall and estate on their father's death in 1782, but he died without issue in 1802. There was some additional work to the Hall and gardens in 1786–93. This focused on remodelling, and probably raising by an additional storey, the old Hall adjoining Paine's building and rebuilding the kitchen and services in the north-east range.[33] William Fenwick left the Hall to his widow. Shortly after her remarriage in 1809, the Bywell estate was sold for £132,000 to Thomas Wentworth Beaumont.[34] His descendants are the current owners, ennobled as Viscounts Allendale in 1911. They paid for alterations to Paine's building by the architect John Dobson in *c* 1827, including the removal of the main stairs and a new entrance on the east side. A new west range was added *c* 1890 (fig 1).

BYWELL HALL BY JAMES PAINE

By 1760, William Fenwick's house at Bywell comprised a two-storey building of which an east–west block approximately 65ft × 25ft remains on the north. There was a stable block

30. Hodgson 1902, 249.
31. Anon 1902, 210.
32. Hodgson, 1902, 97.
33. Northumberland Record Office, 11603 Box 8. These include payments to John Richardson for carpentry, and Stephen Leader for masonry, fixing joists and 'slating the old Hall', as well as building a new laundry, ice house, swan house, pheasant house, green house and garden walls.
34. Hodgson 1902, 97.

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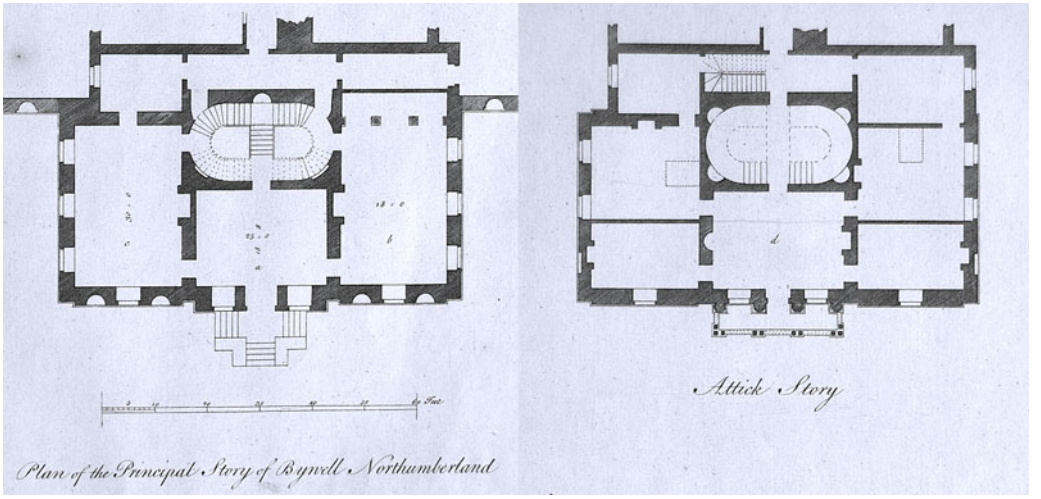

Fig 2. James Paine, ground- and first-floor plans of Bywell Hall from *Plans, Elevations and Sections, of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Houses, etc* (1767). *Photograph*: author.

north of this house (visible far left in fig 1). William Fenwick employed the architect James Paine (1716–89) to design a new front range on the south side of the earlier house. Paine published his designs for Bywell in 1767.[35] The building accounts of 1786–95 mention a library and two bedrooms in this north range, indicating that whatever rooms it had before, it was repurposed as part of Paine's work. For the extension, Paine employed the villa form he had used in his other Northumbrian designs, including Axwell Hall, Belford Hall and Gosforth Park. As Ackerman noted, in ancient Rome and sixteenth-century Italy a villa was a place of entertainment and relaxation, located in the countryside, to which patricians and urban merchants could escape from the business of the town.[36] It was intended for short stays, as these families had houses in towns, but in eighteenth-century England the villa form was adopted for houses as large as Holkham and Houghton Halls in Norfolk, which were the principal dynastic seats of their aristocratic owners, as Bywell Hall was for the Fenwicks. There was a tension in employing the villa form, intended as a place of entertainment, for the principal accommodation of the family as there was relatively little private space, but the artifice of living in the style of classical landowners was pervasive.[37]

At Bywell Hall crisp, honey-coloured sandstone was used for the south, east and west elevations, attached to the earlier house on the north (omitted in Paine's plans, fig 2). Paine's addition was 73ft × 52ft, of three storeys: a tall ground floor and first floor, with a lower second floor below the roof. The exterior had rusticated stone up to the horizontal band marking the first-floor level, with smooth stone above. At Bywell, Paine placed three pediments of equal height and breadth over the south elevation, a feature derived from Palladio's design for Roman baths and used by William Kent at Stanwick Park, Yorkshire, *c* 1730–40.[38] To create the central focus, Paine incorporated four attached Ionic columns at first and second floor level, supporting an entablature below the central pediment. This

35. Paine 1767.
36. Ackerman 1990, 9.
37. Ibid, 151.
38. Leach 1988, 73

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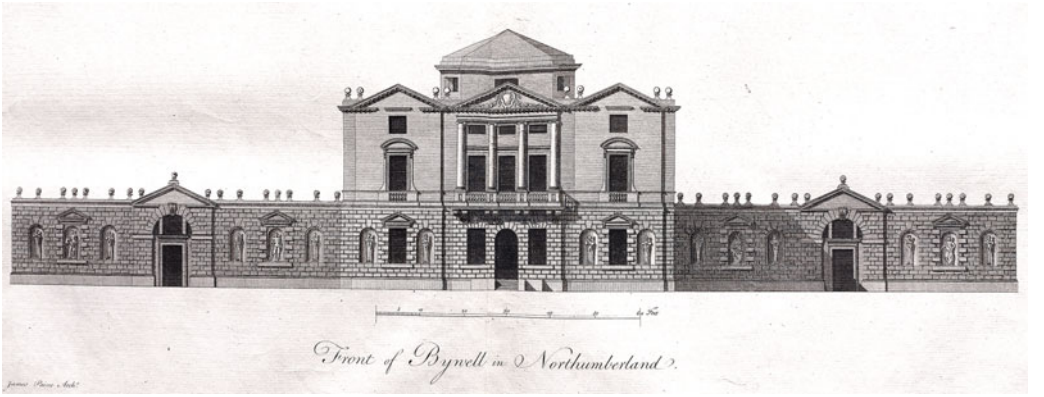

Fig 3. James Paine, south elevation of Bywell Hall from *Plans, Elevations and Sections, of Noblemen and Gentlemen's Houses, etc* (1767). *Photograph*: author.

feature was also of Palladian derivation, from a design for a palazzo for Giulio Capra in Vicenza.[39] The pediment held a cartouche of the arms of Fenwick and Bacon, flanked by overflowing cornucopia. In Paine's elevation and plan, there was a balcony projecting in front of the Ionic columns, accessed from the central room at first-floor level, but this was omitted in execution. The central section was given further emphasis by a large octagonal dome with windows in each side that brought light to the main staircase in the centre of the Hall (fig 3). In Paine's published designs for Bywell this dome was rather overbearing, though the central pediment may have hidden it from a viewer at ground level. Screen walls to the east and west hid the earlier buildings to the north of the new hall.

Inside Bywell Hall, the reception rooms were on the ground floor, as at Paine's earlier Axwell Hall, Durham, not on a raised *piano nobile*, as at Belford Hall, Northumberland. The central, ground-floor door led into an unheated entrance hall, with a dining room on the east, a drawing room on the west, and a china closet in the north-west angle of the block. The location of the china closet beside the drawing room, rather than the dining room, suggests that it was intended to display fine porcelain and other treasures. The closet had an external door in its west wall and a door in the east wall into a corridor between Paine's building and the old hall and straight ahead into the oval staircase hall. Paine had used a circular staircase in his design for Serlby Hall, Nottinghamshire, in 1759, and an oval-plan staircase (for servants) at Belford Hall, Northumberland, in 1755.[40] The first flight of the stairs faced the entrance but divided at a landing to rise in two flights around the sides of the oval. The two arms of the staircase met at a first-floor landing. A gallery bridged the staircase well to give access to a corridor in the space between Paine's building and the older house on the north. This corridor contained a dogleg stair up to the second floor bedrooms. On the south side of the first-floor landing was a door into the central room on the south side of the Hall, which Paine identified as the antechamber, because it was the means to access the two apartments (comprising a bedroom and flanking dressing rooms) on the east and west sides of the Hall. In his published plans and elevation, a central door in the south wall of this room led out onto the balcony behind the portico, but, as

39. Palladio 1570, II, 21.
40. Paine 1767.

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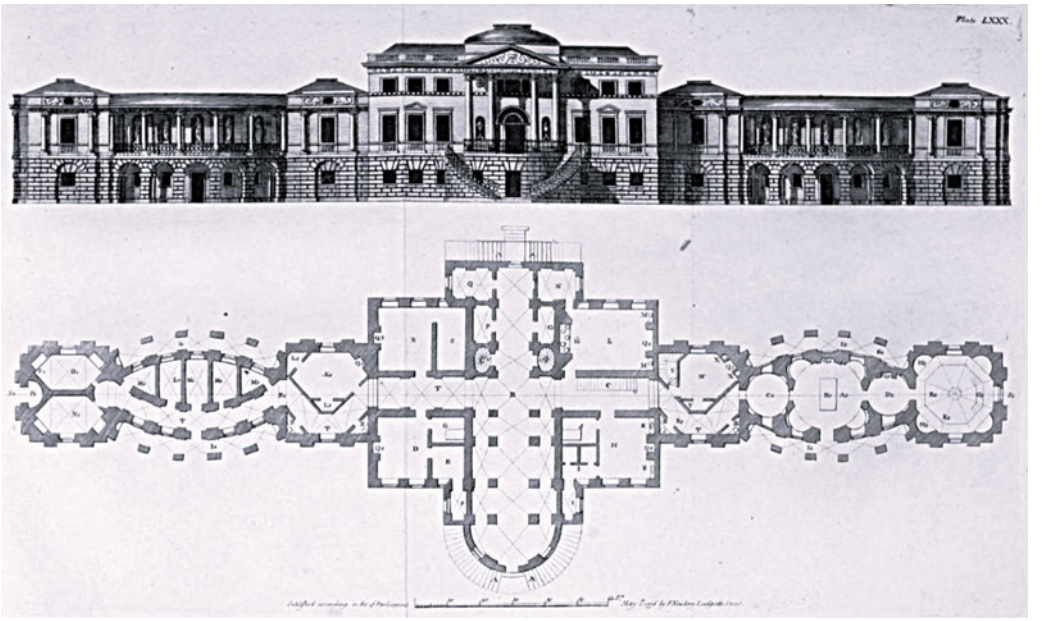

Fig 4. John Carter, plan of the ground floor of Bywell Hall, from *Builder's Magazine* 1776, pl LXXX. *Source*: Internet Archive.

built, the south wall contained three windows. The antechamber could serve as a reception room, accessed from the beautiful staircase and giving a fine view of the lawn, the public road and the River Tyne south of the Hall.

CARTER'S FIRST DESIGN

Carter made two designs for Bywell Hall: those for 'John Fennick [*sic*]' published in the *Builder's Magazine* in 1776, and the album of drawings from 1777 now at Bywell Hall. Both designs are instructive for what Carter, as a capable draughtsman and aspiring architect, considered to be required for a villa in the 1770s. The designs also indicate sources in publications and completed buildings that he considered to be influential at this time. The 1776 designs were for a house of prodigious size, a veritable palace on the scale of Wanstead, London (by Colen Campbell, completed 1722), with principal elevations over 250ft wide (figs 4 and 5).[41] This was clearly designed without any knowledge of John Fenwick's finances, nor of Paine's house finished only ten years earlier. In Carter's first design, the central house would be 90ft by 60ft. The ground floor of the principal elevation extended outwards into a semi-circular apse (fig 4). External stairs to the first floor ascended the sides of the apse, the projection creating a raised terrace in front of the main entrance to the house on the first floor (fig 5). Architectural features signified that the first floor was the *piano nobile*, containing the principal reception rooms. A pedimented portico of four columns stood before the central three bays of this elevation. Behind the portico, the

41. *Builder's Mag* 1776, pls LXXX, LXXXIII.

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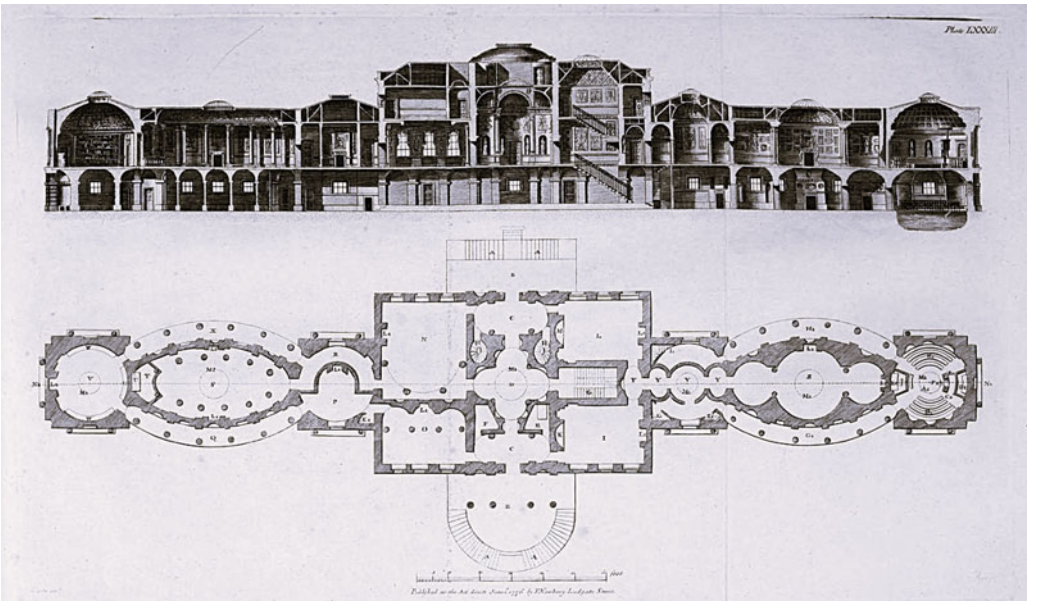

Fig 5. John Carter, plan of the first floor of Bywell Hall, from *Builder's Magazine* 1776, pl LXXXIII. *Source*: Internet Archive.

main entrance had a broad semi-circular fanlight and was flanked by niches for statues rather than windows. The central windows in the left and right three bays had triangular pediments between flat-headed windows. Carter followed Palladian principles and made the windows on the upper floor square and half the height of those on the *piano nobile*. The whole of the exterior was of rusticated stone up to first-floor level. The wings extending from the main block had square-plan pavilions joining the main block and at the ends, with oval-plan structures between. The oval sections had walkways behind open round-head arches on the ground floor and behind screens of Ionic columns on the first floor. The columns continued across the first floor of the pavilions, framing large terminal windows and carrying raised entablatures to give further emphasis to the ends. The exterior walls of the oval sections had niches for more statues but no windows, so these interiors were to be lit by skylights.

Entering the ground floor (fig 4) through a door in the centre of the apse, a large, vaulted entrance hall led to suites of rooms for the steward and housekeeper, a servants' hall, the kitchen, larders, scullery and a door in the opposite elevation, all beneath the main block. Two spiral stairs for servants were contrived in the angles of the service rooms and these continued up to the second floor. The ground floor of the left-hand wing contained service rooms, in sequence: a butler's room, closets for plate and wine, cellars, and a dairy in the end pavilion. The ground floor of the right-hand wing was intended as a male enclave, as it contained a billiard room, smoking room, dressing room and an octagonal room for a bath in the end pavilion.

Despite the enormity of the house, there were major problems with the design, and these became apparent on the first-floor *piano nobile* and upper floor (fig 5). Carter planned a suite of ornate and spatially-complex rooms for the Fenwicks and their guests, but access

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and the availability of natural light were subordinated to rooms as individual showpieces.[42] Passing through the main entrance, the visitor entered a small oval entrance hall, lit only by the fanlight over the main door, with small windowless rooms for the porter and for firearms in the angles against Carter's main feature, a quatrefoil-plan saloon that rose through the centre of the house to a domed skylight. The saloon had Corinthian columns in the four central angles of the quatrefoil and niches with statues in the lobes. Doors in each lobe led back into the entrance hall, into a matching entrance hall on the opposite side to the main elevation, to the stairs to the ground floor on the right and to the drawing room on the left. The entry to this large room was through a semicircle of columns. The two small entrance halls provided internal communication between the drawing room and the two other reception rooms in the main block, the dining parlour and a breakfast parlour. The two spiral servants' stairs rose in the angles of the quatrefoil saloon and were accessed from the entrance hall in the rear elevation. The fourth room on the *piano nobile*, accessed from the main entrance hall, was a waiting room. This was divided by a screen of four columns. Behind the columns a door led to a gentleman's dressing room and water closet. These occupied part of the first pavilion of the left-hand wing. A door in the opposite side to the entry from the main block opened into the external colonnade in front of the oval part of the wing, which contained a column-lined music or dancing room. There was no access to the music room from the waiting room or the colonnade; access was through a passage from the drawing room. The colonnades on each side of this wing led to a circular room in the end pavilion, which Carter designated the library. There was no access to the library from the music room, as the orchestra pit and organ occupied the connecting wall. From the library, another door led into a colonnade on the opposite side of the music room. Again, there was no access to the music room from the colonnade, so people had to return to the pavilion against the main block, where a curving passage occupied the space left by the gentleman's dressing room, and from this passage, which also led to the drawing room, a door led into the music room.

The right-hand side of the main block contained the dining and breakfast parlours, but these lacked a direct connection, as the walls of the main staircase from the ground floor to the second floor rose between them. A small lobby, contrived in the space between the staircase and the parlours, provided the connection and entry to the sequence of oval and circular rooms in the right-hand wing. These were saloons serving as an anteroom to the picture gallery in the main oval structure in the right-hand wing. This was also a tripartite space, comprising a large circular room flanked by two smaller circular rooms. The end pavilion on the right-hand side contained a circular chapel. Its access also involved braving the Northumbrian weather, as there was no door from the picture gallery. Instead, worshipers had to return to the anteroom for the gallery, then out, past two water-closets, to the colonnade along the principal elevation. Suitably mortified, they entered the chapel. Circular in plan, walls lined with statues in niches, and with a coffered dome for a roof, this was clearly modelled on the Pantheon in Rome, with the oculus in the Roman building replaced by a domed skylight. Segregated access to the chapel for the servants was provided by a narrow staircase from the ground floor service rooms to the colonnade on the opposite side of the house. The entry doors for masters and servants were on opposite sides of the organ, which was set against the wall of the gallery, precluding an internal door between these major rooms. The provision of such a large chapel was a further indication that Carter

42. Echoing Mowl's comments (1982, 47) on Carter's designs for Lea Hall: 'They are innovatory and impractical, subjugating domestic convenience to fantasy.'

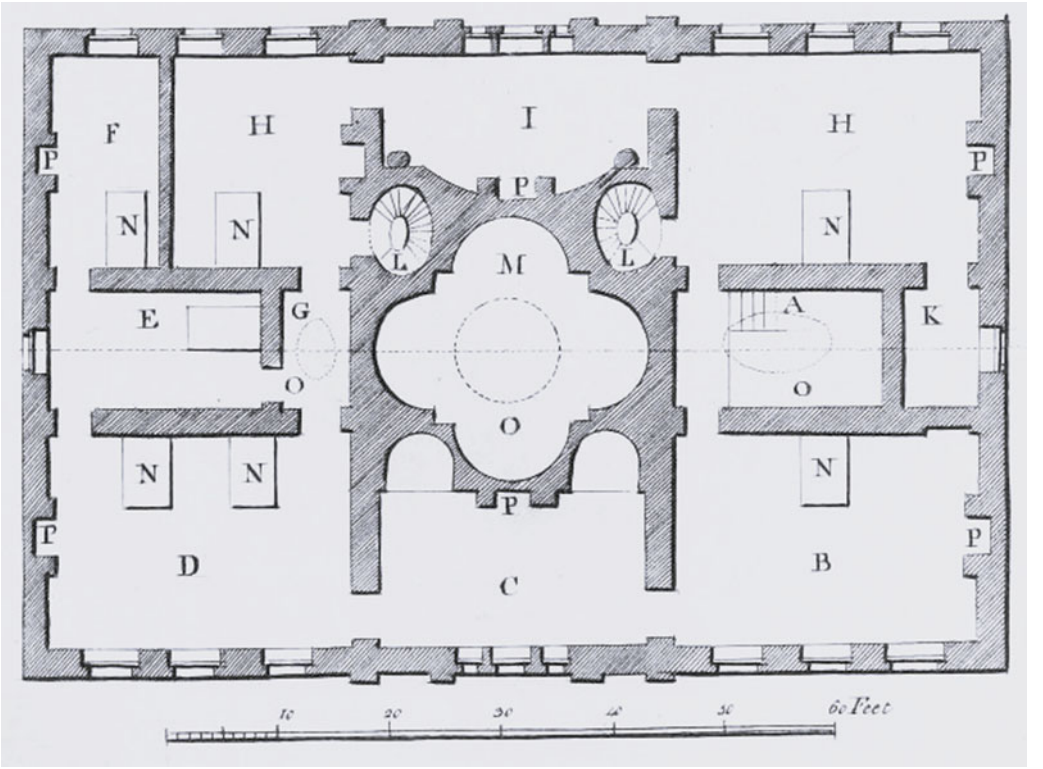

Fig 6. John Carter, plan of the second floor of Bywell Hall, from *Builder's Magazine* 1776, pl LXXXVI. *Source*: Internet Archive.

had not been to Bywell: had he done so he would have noted the two parish churches close to the Hall, and if a religious space was required within in the Hall it could have been significantly smaller. Curiously, Carter placed the chapel in the west pavilion, not the eastern one. This meant that the east end of the chapel was the entry, not the sanctuary, as in the Christian churches that Carter so admired. It is difficult to explain this anomaly, as the locations of the library and chapel could have been swapped whilst both remained accessible from the main house. Placing the chapel in the east pavilion would also have provided better access for the kitchen staff and female servants. Although it seems unlikely, it may be that Carter forgot that the south front was at the top of his drawings and assumed that north was at the top, which would have placed the chapel's sanctuary in the liturgically correct position.

The consequences of Carter's architectural showpieces had the harshest impact on the second floor (fig 6). This floor contained a bedroom for the gentleman (and presumably his wife), a lady's dressing room, a nursery-bedroom for the children, a room each for the waiting-maid and governess and two bedrooms and a shared dressing room for visitors. This was relatively little provision for a house of this size. The inaccessible quatrefoil well of the saloon occupied the centre of the house, but Carter failed to provide a corridor around it, nor any windows into the saloon at this level to use borrowed light from its skylight in the centre of the house. There were skylights above the main staircase and in the lobby between

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bedrooms, but it is unclear how these were to be emptied of rainwater. The section drawing showed that the main staircase to the bedroom floor was to be elaborately decorated, as befitting a room for the family and their peers, but the stairs arrived at a narrow corridor between the gentleman's bedroom and one of the visitors' bedrooms. Access to the second bedroom, on the opposite side of the saloon well, was through the first bedroom and the shared dressing room. Similarly, the gentleman's bedroom led to the lady's dressing room, then the nursery, the waiting-maid and governess's rooms, removing any privacy from the owner's bedroom. There were two spiral stairs for servants, contrived in the walls between the lobes of the quatrefoil saloon, but the doors for these servants' stairs opened directly into the visitors' bedrooms, hardly an ideal arrangement. The governess and waiting-maid had to use one of these spiral stairs and a visitor bedroom to reach their rooms if they were not to pass through the gentleman's bedroom.

Externally, the long façades were visually impressive but would be expensive to construct and to decorate, especially the large areas of rustication and finely cut ashlar stone of the sculpture and numerous columns. The lack of natural light through windows in the elevations would be offset by skylights in some rooms on the principal floor, but others would be dark. For example, the principal entrance hall was lit only by a fanlight above the door, and this was behind the portico; the music room had one central skylight, but no natural light near the orchestra and organ; and only one of the three parts of the picture gallery had a skylight, which would have made appreciation of paintings difficult without candlelight. Skylights and oculi were effective in sunny Italy, but unlikely to be sufficient in Northumberland. Whilst Carter provided extensive reception and entertaining rooms, these were strangely detached from each other; for example, the lack of internal doors between the dining and breakfast rooms due to the location of the staircase. More seriously, the chapel and library could only be reached from the outside via colonnades. Colonnades provide shelter from the Italian sun, but as the Delavals learnt at Seaton Delaval Hall, built to the designs of Sir John Vanbrugh 1718 to 1728, colonnades funnelled the unforgiving Northumbrian weather into the house. For a family home there were few bedrooms (a consequence of the villa form) and those included were connected to the exclusion of privacy. Perhaps the biggest problem was that his design made no reference to Paine's hall finished only a decade earlier: Carter may not have noted its inclusion in Paine's book, and John Fenwick may not have given clear instructions that the earlier hall had to be retained in Carter's proposals.

CARTER'S SECOND DESIGN

Despite the flaws in the published design, Carter had illustrated what could be built at Bywell, and what he considered to be 'a design of the most elegant Villa yet planned'. The first design led to Fenwick's offer of payment by 'a Ham, or a bit of Salmon!', which aggrieved Carter. Despite this, when Fenwick wrote again, with more information about what to retain from the existing building and what to include in the redesign, Carter was willing to make a set of drawings for a new villa at Bywell because he was 'eager to catch the opportunity of such employ'.[43] He thought that the Bywell commission could bring further work and fulfil his aspiration to be an architect. This pursuit led him to produce the set of

43. KCL, Leathes, K/PP119/7/4, 1, fol 15.

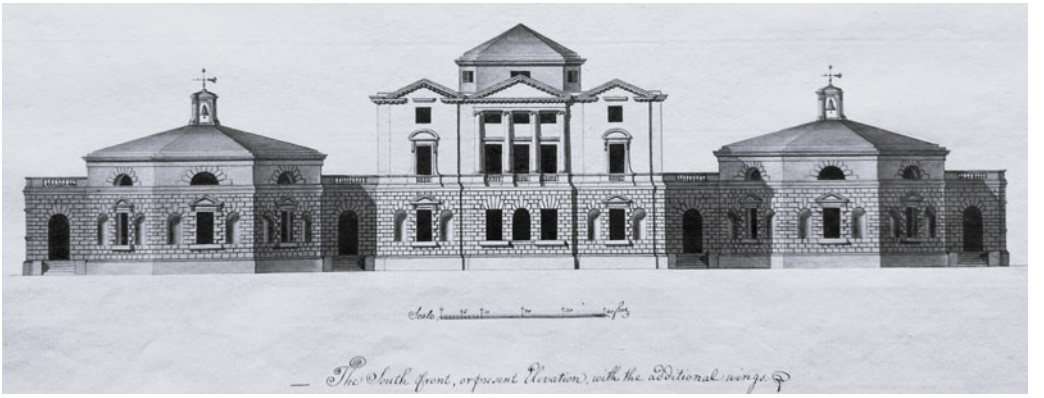

Fig 7. John Carter, south elevation of Bywell Hall. Paine's house in centre, pavilions by Carter. *Photograph*: author.

'Drawings of the Plans, Elevations and Sections of a Villa, For John Fenwick, Esq. of Bywell', despite Fenwick's refusal to take the hint in Carter's letters about paying for the work. Carter devoted many hours to the second design: his new work had sixteen drawings and twenty-four pages of description, 'all of them absolutely necessary for understanding of the whole'.[44] There were two pages of notes on each folio page, set within a blue-tinted rectangular border. The text confirmed that Carter had not seen Bywell Hall and was working from John Fenwick's descriptions and from Paine's published plans. For example, when describing materials, Carter wrote that 'The present Front, as design'd by Mr Paine, I imagine is stone'. Anyone who had seen Bywell Hall would know that it was built of finely cut sandstone, like many Northumbrian country houses and the Castle at Bywell. When drawing and describing the foundation level, Carter provided indicative lines for the cellars and wrote 'Cellars underneath the present building, which as not being informed of the particular parts, I have left unfinish'd'. He guessed correctly, or Fenwick informed him, that the oval walls of Paine's staircase hall continued down through the cellars to foundation level.

Fenwick may have given Carter the freedom to imagine 'the most elegant Villa', but must have stipulated that the elevations of Paine's house were to be retained, unsurprising given its relatively recent completion and the fame of that architect. The incorporation of Paine's building of five bays obliged Carter to produce a more compact central block for his second design, in contrast to the nine-bay elevation of his *Builder's Magazine* proposals. He compensated for this reduced breadth by increasing the depth to seven bays by extending northwards, over the site of the old house, thus doubling the depth of the main block. Externally, Paine's south elevation was retained but the former entrance door was to be converted into an arched window (fig 7). To make his new wings blend in with the Paine façade, Carter extended the rustication from the central block across the south walls of his new wings. He planned to remove the north wall and internal walls of the older house to give himself maximum space to impress with his own design (fig 8). He also relocated the fireplaces onto internal walls, so that windows could be retained or added in the east and

44. Carter 1777, 24.

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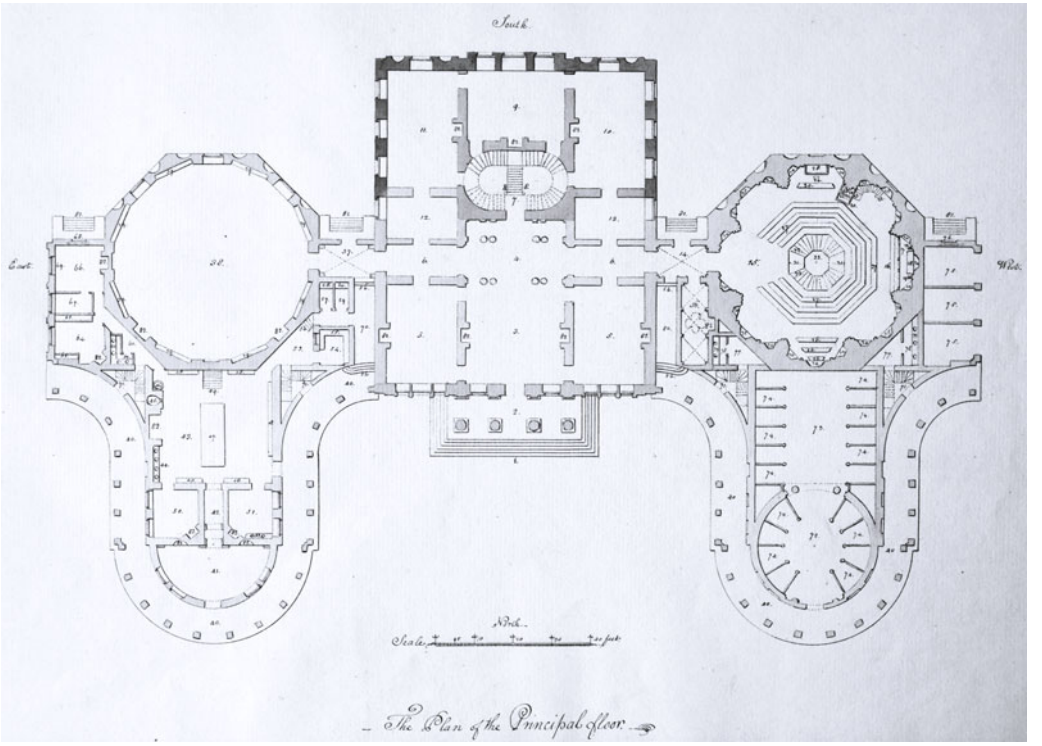

Fig 8. John Carter, plan of the ground floor of Bywell Hall. Walls of Paine's house in black. *Photograph*: author.

west walls of the main block. This would have enabled more light to enter the house than in the earlier design.

Carter's new central block would be entered from the north through an imposing portico of four, two-storey high columns carrying a pediment. Extensions on the east and west of the central block comprised huge, octagonal-plan pavilions, clearly recalling the Pantheon in Rome, with round-ended ranges extending north from each octagon. Open colonnades embraced the ground floor of the pavilions, creating additional space for the rooms on the upper floor (fig 9). The northern ranges formed a spacious courtyard 100ft wide in front of the new north entrance to the main block (fig 8). The western pavilion contained a chapel with mausoleum below, with stables in the wing extending to the north. The eastern pavilion contained a library with the kitchen and service rooms to the north (fig 10).

The new main entrance was to be a central door with a window on each side, leading into a large axial entrance hall. Although the entrance hall had classical columns, Carter was keen to push his own views on how it should be decorated. He noted that Fenwick intended the hall to be hung with paintings, but Carter disagreed. He suggested that suits of armour and weapons should hang there, to recall 'the glory of our renown'd forefathers ... Trophies of their warlike actions, which told each wandering beholder the gallant deeds that eterniz'd their names'.[45] The rooms on each side of the entrance hall (described as

45. Ibid, 18.

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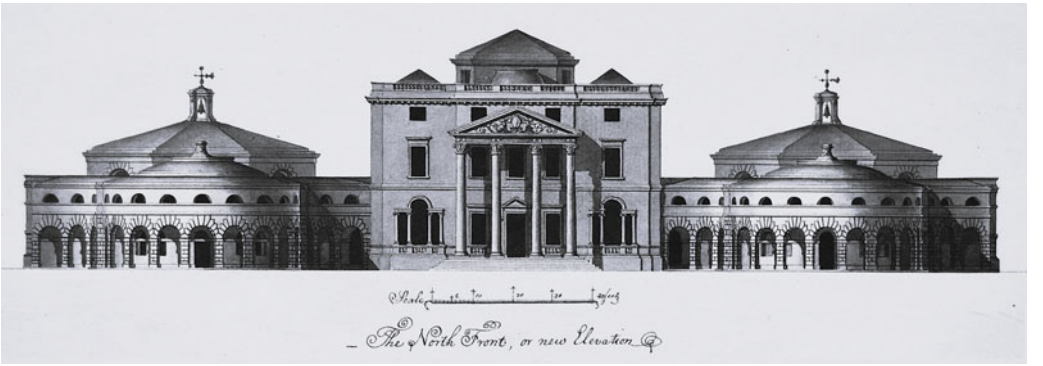

Fig 9. John Carter, north elevation of Bywell Hall. *Photograph*: author.

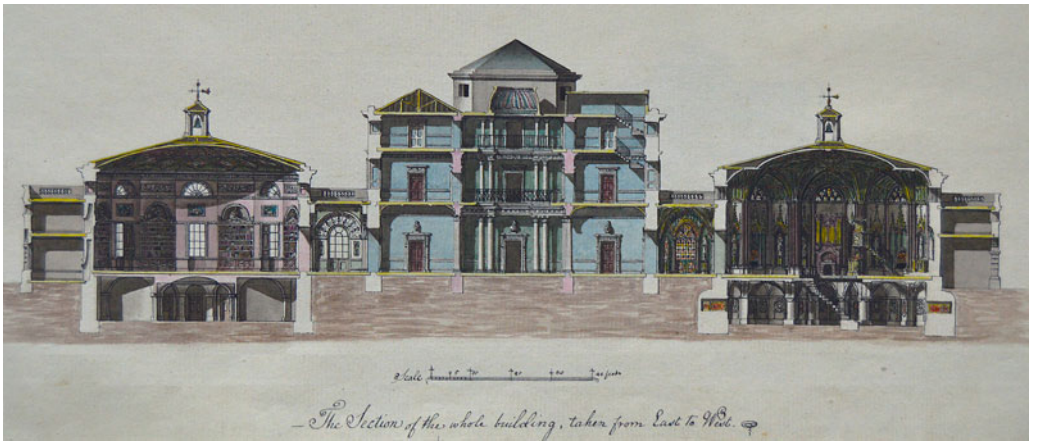

Fig 10. John Carter, east–west cross-section of Bywell Hall. *Photograph*: author.

parlours) were lit by Venetian windows in the north wall. The portico and Venetian windows on Carter's planned north elevation at Bywell may have been inspired by Holkham Hall, Norfolk, designed by William Kent and completed in 1764.[46] Inside Bywell, Carter may have been inspired by the much larger marble halls at Holkham Hall and at Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire (designed by Robert Adam in 1765).[47] The marble halls at Holkham and Kedleston were double-height, with richly decorated ceilings, and were lined by detached columns to create corridors on either side of the central space. Although impressive, they consumed a significant proportion of the internal space. At Kedleston, the hall was 67ft × 42ft and 25ft high. Carter's hall was 25ft × 25ft and 15ft high, occupying the three central bays of Paine's villa, but, by incorporating the cross passage to the pavilions of the hall with the screens of paired columns, Carter made it look like the entrance hall was 40ft long. Carter's central hall at Bywell (fig 11) was one storey high from the north end (due to the bedroom on the first floor), but he compensated for the lack of height on entry

46. Schmidt 1980a, 1980b.
47. Hardy 1978.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000358152510022X Published online by Cambridge University Press

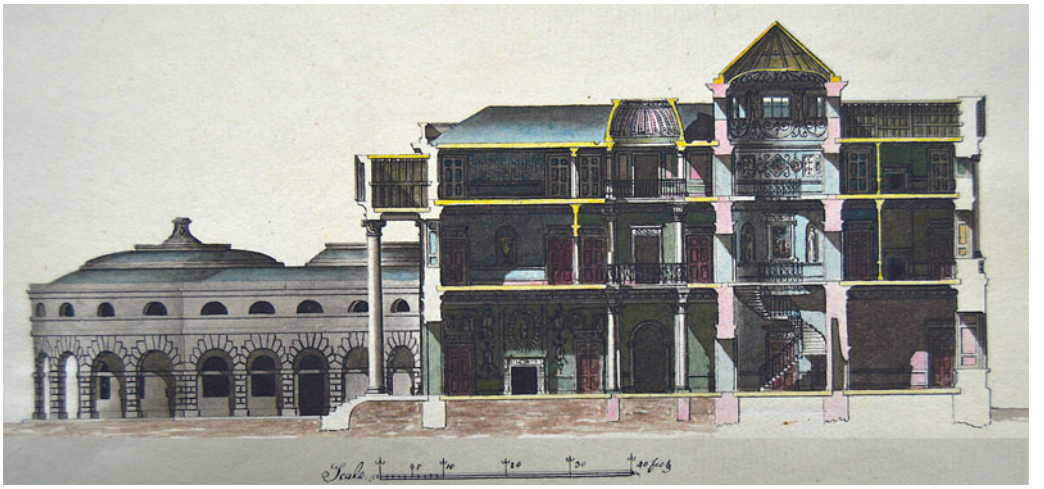

Fig 11. John Carter, north–south section of Bywell Hall. *Photograph*: author.

by envisioning an atrium reaching up through the full height of the house to a skylight at the south end of the hall, supported by four pairs of columns. As Carter's hall was lit on the ground floor by a single window on each side of the north-facing door (and behind the columns of the portico), the effect would have been to enter the dimly-lit hall but reach a light well in the centre of the house formed by the atrium, a clever interplay of light and shade, a technique much associated with Robert Adam and later Sir John Soane.

The entrance hall led into the oval staircase hall, retained from Paine's building, but with the stairs reversed from Paine's plan so that the straight flight from ground to first floor now faced the north door (fig 12). The door from Paine's south entrance hall was to be blocked by a new fireplace for this room, which in Carter's plans became a breakfast room. Paine's rooms on the east and west would become the drawing room and dining room. Abreast his axial hall, Carter planned new parlours at the north-east and north-west corners of the main block. These were separated from Paine's rooms by passages into the wings and by a butlers' room and a china closet. Rather surprisingly, the main staircase was the only connection between the ground and first floors. Carter (and Paine before him) did not include a service staircase to ensure that servants could move unobtrusively through the house. Paine found ingenious ways to include service stairs (at Belford Hall in Northumberland the service stair was hidden in the enclosed well of the broad main stairs) and may have omitted a second staircase at Bywell because there was an existing staircase in the old house that he retained as service rooms. Carter planned to sweep away the old house and its stairs, so omitting a discrete route for servants was an error. To ensure that people could reach the first-floor rooms to the north and south of the staircase, Carter intended a bridge over the stairwell launching from the point where the two arms of the curving stairs reached the first floor. Paine may have used a similar device. Although effective, this bridge was a clumsy expedient, since it obscured some of the light from the dome down into the staircase hall, and, worse, it marred the view from the ground floor up to the interior of the dome – one of the most impressive features of domed buildings such as Castle Howard and St Paul's Cathedral.

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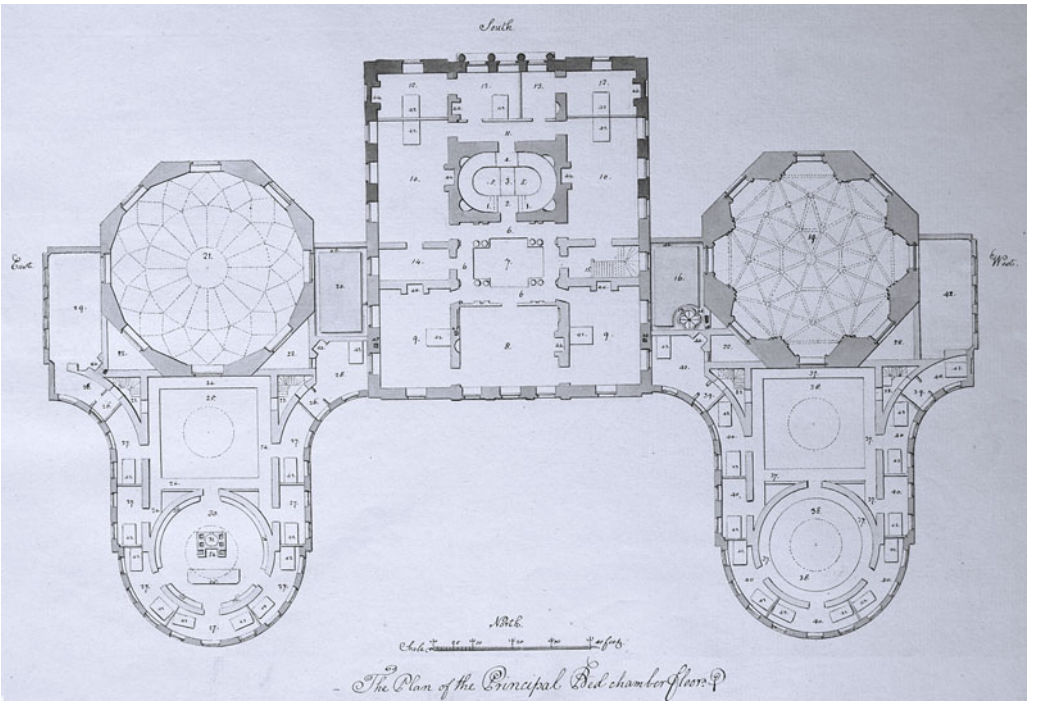

Fig 12. John Carter, plan of the first floor of Bywell Hall. Walls of Paine's house in black. *Photograph*: author.

On the first floor, Paine had designed a large room in the centre of the south side on the bedchamber floors, with smaller rooms leading off it on each side. Although these rooms enjoyed south-facing light and views over the lawn to the River Tyne, Carter planned to subdivide the large room and have a lobby and three smaller rooms along the south side, possibly for children, as the outer rooms could only be reached from the ones in the centre. This may be another instance of Carter working to inadequate instructions and not seeing the potential of this south-facing area. He also wished to provide the best rooms in his new northern extension, where there were to be bedrooms on the east and west sides of Paine's house and in the north-east and north-west corners, accessed from the gallery around the columned atrium. In the centre of the north front, between the bedrooms, was Carter's 'grand drawing room', with three windows, a fireplace in the west wall and a niche facing it in the east wall. Whether by accident or design, Carter did not include the columns of the pediment on the plan of this floor.

As the main staircase ended at first-floor level, Carter planned another staircase up to the second floor, located in the space between the west central and north-west bedrooms. The second floor had additional bedrooms replicating those on the first floor. The north central room was to be a rather oversized dressing room between the bedrooms either side, but it may have been intended to function as a private drawing room for the Fenwicks. The staircase continued from the second floor to the roof, with a door opening onto a 'flatt' lead roof 'for taking the view of the Country',[48] between the pitched sections of the roof over the

48. Carter 1777, 10.

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east and west sides. These viewing platforms were a feature of seventeenth and early eighteenth-century country house designs, but were something of an anachronism by the 1770s. At Bywell, the view would have been over the new entrance courtyard and beyond that to the park, sited to the north of the Hall. It may have been possible to see Bywell Castle and St Andrew's Church, located to the north-east of the Hall, but not St Peter's Church and the bend in the River Tyne to the south-east and south respectively. It is unlikely that Carter knew of the viewshed from the Hall, and the location of the viewing platform was governed by the available roof space over his northern additions to Paine's house.

The most striking difference between the designs was the rethinking of the wings. The long, narrow, two-storey wings of the first design, with their sequence of rooms and exterior colonnades, were replaced by pavilions connected to the main block by short passages, but the pavilions were extended northwards to create a courtyard in front of the new north entrance and portico. The new courtyard may have been intended to shelter the main entrance. The ground floors of the wings retained open colonnades, which gave greater internal space on the first floor. This colonnaded north-facing entrance and courtyard recalled Seaton Delaval Hall, an impression strengthened by the heavy rustication around the arches of the colonnades.

The principal floor of the east pavilion contained a single open space, the octagonal exterior refined into a sixteen-sided interior, 50ft across (fig 10). This had three windows in the south-facing walls 'looking towards the River Tyne' and two fireplaces in the north-east and north-west walls, with bookcases recessed into the walls between these. Carter suggested the placing of that 'Bustos of Poets, Historians &' atop the bookcases. There was to be a domed ceiling, with semi-circular windows to provide additional light. Carter gave more information about his own tastes when he noted that he was 'a great admirer of Music' and although Fenwick had not specified a music room, a 'metamorphus' could transform the library into such by placing panels decorated with musical instruments over the book recesses and replacing the bustos of poets with those of eminent musicians. Thus, the room could be 'a seat of the Muses'. The cellar below the east pavilion contained extensive vaulted storage for wine, beer and 'cyder', accessed by a staircase from the kitchen, a double-height space in the northern extension of the east pavilion. Other service rooms, including a semi-circular servants' hall in the rounded front of the extension, were reached from the kitchen. The upper floor of the east pavilion extension was reached by narrow staircases up to a gallery around the kitchen. Female servants' bedrooms were located against the external walls. Most were unheated, but Carter may have thought that the heat from the kitchen would protect the occupants from the Northumbrian winter. More remarkably, the first floor of the extension contained a circular laundry 'extremely handy from the Kitchen' and 'surrounded by all the Women's rooms, who upon all occasions can have so easy an entrance to it'.[49] Carter gave no explanation for how the required water and fuel would be brought up to and removed from this first-floor apartment other than the narrow staircases, but the servants were unlikely to find this 'handy'.

The west pavilion contained a chapel, with a northern extension that contained stables on the ground floor and accommodation for the grooms and male servants on the upper floor. There was no access to the chapel from the stables and grooms' accommodation. The exterior details of the chapel pavilion were classical, and in the *Builder's Magazine*

49. Ibid, 8.

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Fig 13. John Carter, interior of the chapel, Bywell Hall. *Photograph*: author.

design the chapel interior was also classical, with a coffered dome recalling the Pantheon, but in the second design Carter's zeal for Gothic burst through. From the central columned hall of the main house a passage led to a vaulted 'Gothick porch'. Doors on the north and south provided external access and on the north a vaulted Gothic vestry for the minister had a quatrefoil-shaped rooflight. These were preludes to the focus of Carter's attention, the spectacular Gothic interior of the chapel (fig 13). In his notes Carter compared the 'Grecian' of St Paul's Cathedral, London, with the Gothic of St Peter's (Westminster Abbey) and stated his belief that 'Gothick is the propper taste for Churches',[50] hence this style for the Bywell chapel.

The large chapel was intended for the family and their servants and estate workers. As with the first design, Carter ignored the two nearby churches in favour of this private chapel. Nor did his Gothic details have any connection to the Bywell churches, the former abbey church at Hexham or the most important church in the region, Durham Cathedral. Carter's Gothic design for the Bywell chapel was inspired by his visits to Exeter, Salisbury, Gloucester, Bath and Ely Cathedrals in the years 1770–7.[51] The octagonal plan of the chapel was clearly modelled on medieval chapter houses such as that at Salisbury Cathedral, but Bywell's elaborate roof vaulting would spring from clustered wall shafts

50. Ibid, 16.
51. Nurse 2011, 248.

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rather than a central column. The wall spaces between the shafts had crocketed niches that contained statues of 'emblematical figures of the English Martyrs and Heroes'. Above the niches were traceried windows containing coloured glass, but externally these were Diocletian windows below the dome, as at Chiswick House. A communion table stood against the west wall and a three-decker pulpit rose against the south-west wall. Fireplaces were planned in the north-east, south-east, south-west and north-west walls.

Carter planned a mausoleum for the Fenwicks below the chapel. This was of octagonal plan, with apses in each face for access to coffin recesses in the walls. Carter described these as 'Catacombs' and there are 'Niches to contain Urns with inscriptions of the deceased'. There is a 'Crypta, or Cloister to walk in, and to contemplate upon the memory of those whose remains are here deposited' between the apses and the ring of eight pillars that carried the pointed vaulting of the ceiling. The act of entering the mausoleum from the chapel was designed by Carter to evoke strong Gothic feelings. Ingeniously, to enable the 'regular use' of the chapel, the octagonal stairwell to the mausoleum would be covered by a false wooden floor that divided in two and could be pushed into recesses in the thickness of the chapel floor. The mystery and drama of opening the vault, descending the open-sided stairs cantilevered from the pillars, lit only by the diffused coloured light from the stained glass of the chapel windows and by flickering candle flame, would create a terrifying entry into the gloomy subterranean world of the dead beloved of Gothic literature.

INFLUENCES IN CARTER'S DESIGNS

Although unbuilt, the Bywell designs are intriguing for the insight they provide into Carter's thoughts on classical architecture, and for his imaginative incorporation of a Gothic interior to a major part of the second design. The inclusion of both styles echoed his belief that:

> The Grecian taste certainly best suits those public buildings; such as palaces, courts of justice, exchanges, hospitals, music rooms, banqueting rooms, mansions &c. but for religious structures, Gothic, undoubtedly must be preferred.[52]

The elevation of the main block shown in the *Builder's Magazine* designs was similar to the north front of Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, constructed 1759 to 1765 to the designs of James Paine and Robert Adam. The main block in both buildings was three storeys high and nine bays wide. The north elevation would have included an attached portico of six columns breadth, reached by external stairs on the east and west, as Carter showed in his Bywell design, though he reduced the portico to four columns breadth. The ground floor was rusticated, as Carter showed in his design for Bywell, and, tellingly, Carter interpreted the bowed north front of Kedleston (Adam's design) as the bowed protrusion forming the terrace in front of his main entrance and portico at Bywell. The two-storey saloon of the *Builder's Magazine* design may also have borrowed from the tribune at Benham Park, designed by Carter's employer Henry Holland and completed in 1775.[53]

52. *Builder's Mag* 1 Mar 1777, text with pl CXVI.
53. Stroud 1966, 37.

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Fig 14. Heaton Hall, Manchester. View from south-east. *Photograph*: author.

Carter's second Bywell design included a columned hall leading to full-height columned atrium, and into another full-height domed area. This resembled Paine's rejected plans for Kedleston. However, Paine's designs were not published until 1783 in the second volume of his *Plans* (pls XLII–LII), so it is unclear how this might have influenced Carter, unless he saw Paine's designs in London. This may have occurred, as the designs for Heaton Hall, Lancashire, by James Wyatt (1746–1813) were also influenced by Paine's Kedleston proposals.[54] Carter's second designs for Bywell also borrowed elements from Kedleston and Holkham Halls, notably the portico, Serliana windows and columned entrance hall. Rather ironically, given their later conflict (when Carter tried to block Wyatt's election to the Society of Antiquaries), it appears that these second designs were influenced by Wyatt's designs for Heaton Hall, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1772, and the Pantheon, Oxford Street, London, which opened in the same year – Carter had the opportunity to see both.[55] He seems to have been particularly drawn to the Pantheon theme, as several other designs in the *Builder's Magazine* are derived from this model.[56] The London Pantheon, recalling the Roman original, featured a large open area covered by a coffered dome. This can be seen in Wyatt's design for Heaton Hall, with Pantheon-like pavilions containing the kitchen and the library (fig 14). These were linked to the main house externally by open colonnades, and this combination of colonnades and pantheons is a key feature of Carter's designs for Bywell Hall.

With his attention drawn to Paine's plans, Carter placed the principal rooms on the ground floor to match the existing building, another feature of Heaton Hall.[57] Carter provided four doors on the south side to connect the reception rooms with the gardens. He provided more privacy for the family and guests by locating the servants' areas on the north side, out of sight of the southern rooms and gardens, a positive aspect of his second design. This privacy was enhanced in the 1850s, when the village of Bywell was demolished and the population moved out of sight of the Hall across the river. The other influences upon Carter, seen in the decoration of the chapel, were the medieval buildings he visited and, given the dedication of his 1780 book *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture and Painting* to Horace Walpole, the latter's pioneering Gothic work at Strawberry Hill House.[58] This must have given Carter the confidence to indulge his preference for Gothic detailing in the Bywell chapel.

54. Robinson 2011, 78.
55. Colvin 2008, 1,179 and 1,182.
56. *Builder's Mag* 1776, pls XIX and XXI.
57. Cornforth 1992.
58. Carter 1786.

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CONCLUSIONS

In publishing and reviewing John Carter's designs for Bywell Hall, it is difficult not to concur with the verdicts of Colvin, Harris and Mowl that Carter's classical work was largely derivative. This paper has shown that he took inspiration from other architects' works to create impressive interior spaces, such as the three-storey columned atrium and the Pantheon-like pavilions. He lacked, however, the means to combine these theatrical features with the convenience that clients expected in a country house. His designs for Bywell Hall showed poor consideration of the practicalities for family life and the work of servants required to manage country house functions. Carter was not alone in this – the drama of Vanburgh's works often overwhelmed practicality, but Carter was not in the same league as an architect.

In Carter's defence, Fenwick's brief was for a work of imagination,[59] seemingly with few conditions, even the retention of the Paine building in the first brief. Fenwick's erratic behaviour and flippancy (payment with ham or salmon) suggests that he wanted designs to impress his peers but without any means or intention of realising them. Unfortunately, Carter interpreted this loose brief as artistic freedom to create a career-making building, as Vanbrugh had at Castle Howard. Unlike Vanbrugh, Adam and Wyatt, Carter lacked the social connections to carry this off; indeed, he compared himself as a 'plain Mister ... 'gainst a Squire' in his dispute with Wyatt.[60] Carter also lacked the advantages of craft backgrounds and networks of patronage in their local areas that sustained provincial architects.[61] Although he had the advantage of a London base (to see the completed works and exhibited proposals of leading architects) and work experience with an established builder (Henry Holland), Carter was unable to succeed as an architect. This required connections, and the patience and persistence to charm clients whilst promoting one's own abilities. His correspondence with Fenwick was an early display of the servility that Nurse noted in Carter's relationships with clients throughout his career.[62] There is also a sense in his notes for the second Bywell designs and his visits to medieval buildings that Carter's heart was not in classical architecture.[63] He favoured Gothic architecture and the inspiration of medieval buildings. Although Walpole had signalled at Strawberry Hill House that Gothic could be applied to a country house, many clients favoured the classical styles that Carter dogmatically disliked. Had he developed the means to put his expert knowledge of medieval styles into coherent designs for buildings, Carter might have carved out a career as a Gothic architect, riding on the interest inspired by Strawberry Hill, though it is likely that he could only have done so before 1800 in areas of the country such as north-east and north-west England, the Welsh Marches and Scotland, where many landowners lived in adapted medieval buildings. Lacking connections in these areas, and overtaken by architects, in particular James Wyatt, who could superbly create functioning buildings in Gothic and classical styles, Carter's architectural aspirations went unrealised. He was unfortunate that his best efforts were wasted on the ungrateful John Fenwick; a better client

59. Ackerman 1990, 9, noted that 'the villa accommodates a fantasy which is impervious to reality'.
60. Nurse 2011, 212.
61. This difficulty in gaining patronage as an architect occurred in the career of Christopher Ebdon, another of Henry Holland's draughtsmen, see Pears, 2013, 92.
62. Nurse 2011, 212.
63. For example, Carter did not specify the forms of capitals in his external and internal 'columnades'.

might have given a more realistic brief and encouraged his architect to develop ideas further to achieve the best balance of showpiece and family home. Perhaps if Carter had visited the real medieval buildings of Bywell he could have imagined a new castle to replace the medieval one. It is only in Carter's designs for the chapel at Bywell Hall that we see what might have been if his knowledge and convictions had been given free rein. Fortunately, his expertise was noted by patrons who could support him as a draughtsman, recording the medieval architecture that he loved.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

KCL King's College, London

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