

The Classical Rebirth of Oxford: A Reappraisal of Peckwater's Palladianism

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SUMMARY

The intention of this article is to study the architectural history of Peckwater Quad, Christ Church. Much of the existing historiography claims that the architect, Henry Aldrich (dean of the college), was a forerunner of later English Palladianism. The article contextualises this by looking at what was happening contemporaneously in the classical redesigns for other colleges, particularly those in which Aldrich had involvement, as well as his designs for All Saints church. In doing so it looks to bring Peckwater Quad back towards the architectural developments of the seventeenth century, not least to Wren, which go much further in illuminating the design for Peckwater than associating Aldrich posthumously with 'Burlingtonian' Palladianism. A reading of Aldrich's own architectural treatise, alongside other drawings, is important to noting the links between his theory and practice. This is a holistic appraisal of Peckwater and the reinvention of Oxford within the classical vein, all the more interesting for having its roots in a time when English architecture was still predominantly Baroque.

During the period that Britain experienced the tumults of civil war, restoration, political union and the Hanoverian ascendancy, the architectural history of Oxford proves equally fascinating for the transitional changes that occurred in style, theory and practice. The Gothic conservatism that hitherto characterized college design was replaced with an entirely new approach which, broadly termed, was based on classical architecture as interpreted by Renaissance scholars. This suited the academic taste of Oxford generally and allowed architecture to become a far more accepted occupation for educated men, whose knowledge of foreign trends inspired in them a new sense of arbitration in English design. Architecturally, this period can be framed by the careers of Christopher Wren in the seventeenth century and George Clarke in the eighteenth, a period in which comprehensive architectural change was closely linked to far broader developments in the university itself. For example, post-Restoration Oxford was subject to much flux in religious and political sentiment, compelling many of its more conservative members to reaffirm traditional authorities, principally Anglicanism, by seeking students from the gentry and aristocracy whose political influence would be invaluable in countering Nonconformist threats.

Christ Church became a microcosm of these oscillations. John Fell, as dean from 1660 to 1686, was proactive in seeking the matriculation of potentially influential students. He was succeeded by John Massey, part of a growing Roman Catholic faction within Oxford. Yet Massey's was a short term, the wider turmoil of James II's reign causing his departure from the university in 1688. Henry Aldrich (d. 1710) was installed as dean a year later, intent on reversing the perceived ills of the Catholic interlude.¹ A concomitant concern for the college architecture was quite natural. The men Aldrich wished to attract were of a social standing to which Oxford had only just started to become accustomed. Such men expected modern

¹ E.F.A. Suttle, 'Henry Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church', *Oxoniensia*, 5 (1940), p. 119.

accommodation suited to their habituated manner of living, far removed from the Oxford tradition of students sharing small cloistered rooms. Thus, in an exciting synthesis of changing intellectual attitudes towards architecture and a pragmatic need for general amelioration, the great majority of colleges then in existence underwent substantial alterations.² There was an intensity of innovative design that seeped into the university as a whole, inspiring a plethora of classical design, not least that most distinctive of structures, the Radcliffe Camera, which crowned an end to the building boom on its completion in 1748.³

Christ Church's Peckwater Quadrangle stands at the centre of these changes, its first foundation stones were ceremonially put in place on the 26 January 1706.⁴ Yet Peckwater's importance has not been fully realised: no attempt has hitherto been made at a focussed study of its context, design, construction and influence. As a result, any mention it has received in the historiography of Oxford architecture is misaligned. Its Palladian nature is assumed, not critically examined. Thus, it has been labelled the pioneer of the later Palladian revival in England, symptomatic of which is Steven Parissien's statement that Peckwater was the first 'truly Palladian' building in Britain.⁵ Since much of the eighteenth century Palladian revival impacted on country houses and city façades, this has led to the quadrangle often being mentioned in relation to architectural developments far outside of the university.

This is not altogether wrong, but for Peckwater to be appropriately appraised it must be placed back into the Oxford context from whence it emerged, not least because the architect, Dean Aldrich, was far more of Wren's generation than any Palladian architects active in the next. This will also reaffirm Aldrich as a member of the architectural canon of Oxford, responsible for the overall transformation of the city. There can be said to have been two broad Palladian revivals in England: that of Inigo Jones in the early seventeenth-century courts and that led by Lord Burlington in an alleged politically Whig vein after 1715. Aldrich's design and construction of Peckwater certainly acts as a bridge between the two, since without Peckwater and the classical reinvention of so many Oxford colleges, the historical narrative of English architecture is incomplete. But aligning the quadrangle too closely with the latter by forgetting the influence of the former would be misguided.

Aldrich was just one of many inventive architects, both amateur and professional, who worked collaboratively in Oxford on all of the most significant designs of the period. They included Nicholas Hawksmoor, Christopher Wren, George Clarke and the most sought after of Oxford masons William Townsend. Whilst Wren and Hawksmoor were two of the first *bona fide* professional architects in England, Clarke and Aldrich were keen amateurs whose principal responsibility lay with various positions within the university. Yet their collective efforts created some of the most innovative classical designs of the period, from a complete redesign of The Queen's College and All Souls to All Saint's Church and Trinity College chapel.⁶ These works have been treated in depth by Howard Colvin, whose efforts to advance a traditional historical methodology to the architecture of Oxford, instead of fleeting stylistic overtures, need to be applied to Peckwater.

James Weeks began this process by studying Christ Church library, which forms the south block to Peckwater, designed and built by Clarke and Townsend after Aldrich's death in 1710. However, the quadrangle as a whole is in need of a 'Colvinist' treatment, whereby a study of the primary evidence, such as plans, building accounts and treatises is made alongside an engagement with the structure as it remains. Engravings of Aldrich's designs, articles of agreement between the college and contractors, general building documentation and Aldrich's

² H.M. Colvin, 'Architecture,' in L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell (eds.), *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume V: The Eighteenth Century* (1992), p. 835.

³ *Ibid.* p. 847.

⁴ C.E. Doble et al. (eds.), *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, 14 vols., OHS (1885–1921), vol. 1, p. 168.

⁵ S. Parissien, *Palladian Style* (1994), p. 60.

⁶ M. Kemp, *The Chapel of Trinity College* (2014).

own architectural treatise, *The Elements of Civil Architecture*, are all available to the historian who seeks to effect such a study. It is most notable that his treatise has not received due attention, mainly because it remained incomplete on his death and is overall rather more theoretical than practical. Yet a comparison of *The Elements* with Palladio's enduringly famous Renaissance treatise on architecture, *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, first published in 1570, is strikingly illustrative of the influences and methodology that concerned Neoclassical architects who sought blueprints for working in their chosen style.

In avoiding too isolationist a study of Peckwater, an appropriate context must be made that is fitting to the actuality of its birth amidst these general activities, but a comprehensive study of primary evidence directly pertaining to Peckwater will also be used to re-evaluate much of what has been said of the quadrangle. Overall, the study will highlight the theoretical concerns causing Aldrich to design in such a way, as well as the particulars of its construction. The intention is to illustrate how Peckwater should be most effectively understood, historically and architecturally, by saying far more of it than that it is simply the work of an amateur architect enamoured with Palladio.

Indeed, Palladianism as an architectural style is a victim of its own notoriety. It has become merely a synonym for classical architecture, reduced to meaning a design of columns, proportion and overall harmony of elements.⁷ Not only does this forget many of Andrea Palladio's own nuances in sixteenth-century Vicenza, but it forgets all of the different transmutations of Palladio into English architecture as his work was imported by English architects who placed their own stamp on the Italian's style. Palladianism in England, in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, should be viewed as a synthesis of Palladio, Colen Campbell, Inigo Jones, James Gibbs and many more besides. A range of critics in the nineteenth century found Neoclassicism lifeless, impersonal and merely imitative. But the style needs to be understood through the aims of the architects themselves, who sought to not merely 'revive,' but to create the embodiment of sometimes radically new ideas, not least amongst the conservatism of academic milieus such as Oxford. Therefore, it remains to show how central a part Peckwater had to play in this synthesis.

THE OXFORD CONTEXT

Oxford, during much of the seventeenth century, was not exceptional in holding to a conception of architecture as the travail of a craftsman. It was the accepted English notion that architecture did not allow for invention or the sense of creativity that academic men expected of their liberal pursuits. The university remained essentially Gothic because there was no interest in it becoming anything else. In 1640 work was undertaken in Christ Church to complete a staircase up to the hall. A fan-vaulted passage was built through to the Cathedral's cloisters, in a manner completely in-keeping with the perpendicular Gothic of the college's environs. The wish to blend the new addition with the older surrounding is understandable, but such quotidian adherence to collegiate building tradition can be placed in contrast to revolutionising efforts in architectural practice elsewhere.

The pioneer of these efforts was Inigo Jones, surveyor-general of the King's Works in the same period as the staircase construction at Christ Church. His primary contribution to English architecture was to engage with it in a distinctly cosmopolitan, certainly Italianate, vein. His approach was to associate architecture with professionalism, intellectualism and invention, an approach hitherto lacking in England. He had a deep interest in the architecture of antiquity and used the opportunity to travel in Italy with patrons to affect first-hand examinations of Roman remains, which he then combined in his designs with knowledge of those Renaissance architects, such as Palladio, Scamozzi and Serlio, who had taken their

⁷ J. Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture* (1980), p. 8.

essence from the very same monuments. Thus, Jones formulated an architectural style that was derived from Europe yet distinctly English.

For example, his famed Banqueting House in Whitehall (Fig. 1), begun in 1619, is essentially classical. The ornamentation of the façade derives from a Renaissance understanding of ancient design, predominantly in the use of superimposed columns and pilasters of varying Orders arranged in a manner that emphasises the centre. But all of this is done in a manner suited to the urban, English location and so reduced from the Roman basilicas and grand porticos from where Jones had taken the elements. The design is a simple arrangement of bays, the slight projection of the central three all that was deemed necessary for emphasising the overall mass of the building.⁸ The Jonesian style was the writing of an English manner with a classical vocabulary and his student John Webb should not be forgotten for further appropriating Renaissance styles to typically English buildings, not least the country house.⁹ Together, they can be said to have had a profound effect on English tastes, by introducing the classical to both court and aristocracy as well as conceiving of the architect in a very different light to before. It was this theoretical, intellectual approach to architecture that would come to inspire Oxford men such as Aldrich. But Oxford, in 1619, was a ‘Gothic backwater.’¹⁰ Many actors contributed to the change in taste and style that occurred in the latter part of the century and it is hard to identify the principal catalyst.

Distinguishing between the actions of individuals such as Christopher Wren and the greater socio-political currents directing Oxford towards a change in architecture is symptomatic of the historian’s perennial dilemma in charting such marked shifts. It may be a coincidence

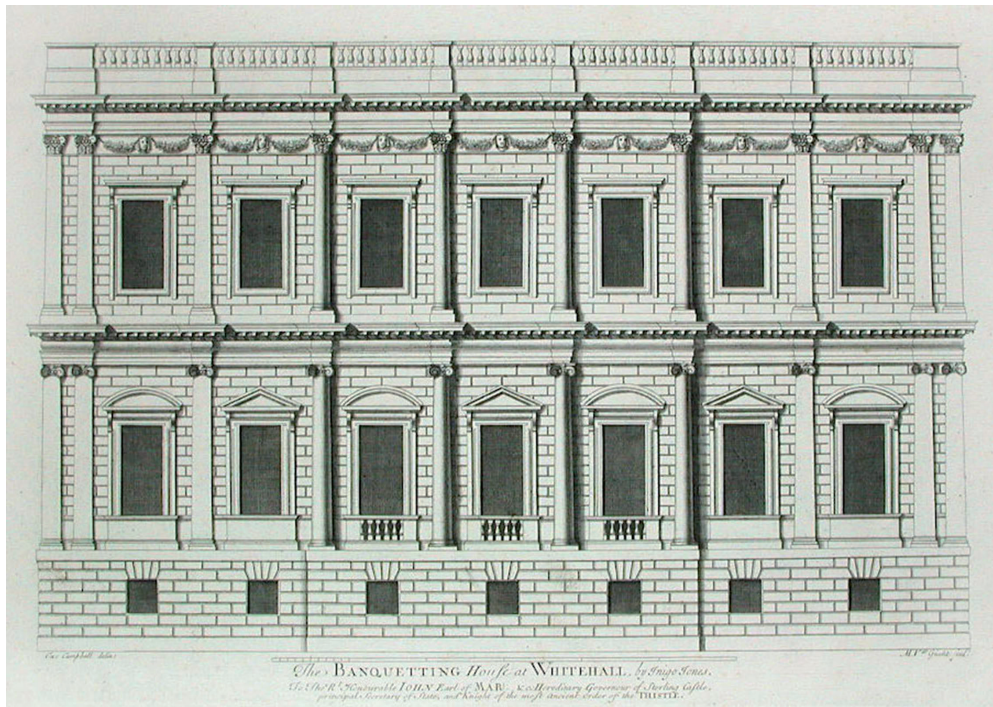


Fig. 1. Inigo Jones, ‘Elevation for Banqueting House’ (engraving in C. Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*).

⁸ J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830*, 6th edn (1977), p. 77.

⁹ J. Bold, *John Webb: Architectural Theory and Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (1989), p. 55.

¹⁰ H.M. Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983), p. 9.

that Oxford enjoyed the proactive efforts to revive the university of numerous virtuosi at the same time (Wren, Aldrich and Clarke), or it may be that far broader causal directives made their emergence rather predictable. However, it is clear that a combination of factors resulted in Jonesian architecture having a transformative effect on Oxford colleges. This is not to say that they became exclusively classical, as will be seen, but it is to stress that the acceptance of architecture as a genuinely respectful occupation, which so drew Aldrich towards it, is rooted firmly in the Jonesian era.

Throughout this period, Oxford saw a decline in the number of members overall. But the increasing number of gentleman-commoners provoked the setting of a far higher standard of college services towards these members who, in exchange for the premium rates they paid, expected suites of rooms alongside the many other privileges they enjoyed. This certainly explains the need for new building work in Oxford,¹¹ but it does not explain the form of the work undertaken, nor the interest displayed by such men as Aldrich, both dean of Christ Church and from 1692 to 1695 vice-chancellor of the university, which cannot be understood without reference to changing attitudes more generally. Moreover, adoption of the classical style meant that the challenge in Oxford was very similar to the challenge Jones had in adapting grand Italianate structures to the English setting.

The influence of ancient temples, palaces and monuments had to be appropriated to college residence buildings with very different functions, not least because they had to be organised in the traditional university manner which had rooms either side of a staircase. This allowed for the Jonesian sense of architecture to find an outlet in Oxford, a sense which dictated that architecture was something more than mere structure.¹² The new buildings had to serve a function yet appeal to particular aesthetic tastes. From the pragmatic need for new buildings emerged a deep interest among the Oxford architects to achieve architectural effect through a study of relevant theory. Without such fervour the far larger monumental projects such as the Radcliffe Camera and the Clarendon Building would not have helped rescue Oxford from the backwaters.¹³

It is important to note that one such monumental project, the Sheldonian Theatre, was the first such design to reject the traditional Oxonian style. It was designed by Christopher Wren and constructed between 1664 and 1669. It is reminiscent of the Roman Marcellus theatre, which was well known to Renaissance architects such as Serlio and Palladio. Wren's design combined knowledge of antiquity with contemporary Baroque trends to create something very different from the Oxford norm.¹⁴ Aldrich was well placed to develop this pioneering move, and embed it within collegiate design. He and George Clarke were at the fore of designing for noble matriculates. Contemporaneous to the actual construction of Peckwater, Clarke was making a collection of designs for a new north quadrangle in All Souls, at which he was a fellow. Many of these were made before 1710, when Codrington's bequest was made to the college of £10,000 for a new library. Since they were drawn speculatively, without any guarantee of implementation, they can be taken as examples of the increasing academic interest in the architecture of Oxford. The essential classicism of Peckwater would have been well known to Clarke, whose friendship with Aldrich is evident from the former's monument to the dean placed in Christ Church Cathedral upon his death, claiming him to be immortal for his learning, and great for his fame, 'doctrinae ac ingenii fama immortalis.'

A design by Clarke for a new residential block at All Souls (Fig. 2) clearly illustrates an interest in adapting classical architecture to college design. The central portico echoes an

¹¹ Colvin, 'Architecture', p. 843.

¹² W. Whyte, 'How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), p. 154.

¹³ Colvin, 'Architecture', p. 842.

¹⁴ K. Downes, *Christopher Wren* (1971), p. 51.

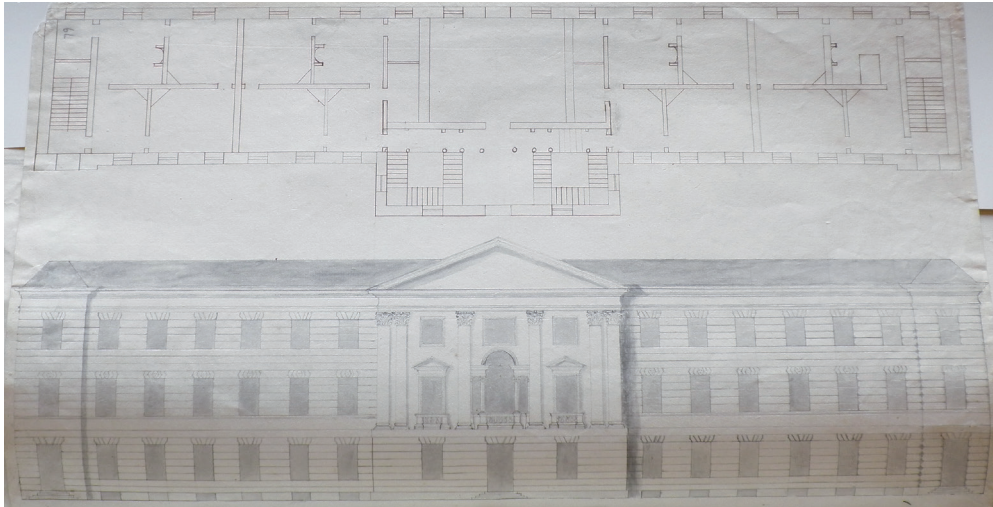


Fig. 2. George Clarke, 'Design for new building at All Souls' (Worcester College Library, Oxford).

archetypal townhouse elevation in Palladio's *Quattro Libri* (Fig. 3) for Italian noblemen and closely resembles the slightly less projected central bays of Peckwater. Even though Clarke's design is grander for its use of the Corinthian Order and a distinctive sequence of windows in the central bays, the rusticated base underneath a centrality of giant Orders is, generally conceived, a derivative of the Renaissance town façades that Clarke then appropriated to a building designed for a very different function.

A study of treatises such as *Quattro Libri* was central to understanding the Renaissance approach to ancient elements but, as Clarke's design indicates, interest in these approaches lay more in how to decorate the exterior walls of a building and not in imitating critical functionality because the plans were still laid in the collegiate fashion. For example, Clarke's use of the Venetian window in isolation is clearly for aesthetic value, to bring attention to the centre and is illustrative of Rudolf Wittkower's assertion that many elements associated with Palladio were used by Englishmen in distinctly non-Palladian manners; English architects were naturally influenced by their native architectural traditions and experiences, not least a close knowledge of Inigo Jones, just as much as their study of Italian theory.¹⁵

That Aldrich was heavily involved in such projects and designs throughout the university is hard to doubt and important to emphasise. He was known contemporaneously as an able judge in architecture and he was consulted, at the very least, in the construction of a new chapel for Trinity College in 1691.¹⁶ Certainly, designs for such large-scale building projects were engraved and circulated throughout interested parties so as to receive important funding and cannot have escaped the attention of so interested an architect as Aldrich. Colvin has also attributed one design (Fig. 4) for a residential block at All Souls to the dean, a design with a far larger hexastyle Corinthian portico, far nearer to the typical Roman temple in scale.¹⁷ It is impossible to be sure that he submitted a design and the one attributed to him is not quite as in-keeping with strict classical theory as Peckwater. Nevertheless, it would not be too speculative to say that Aldrich could not have failed to be inspired by, and influential in, a notable

¹⁵ R. Wittkower, 'Pseudo-Palladian Elements in English Neoclassicism', in R. Wittkower (ed.), *Palladio and English Palladianism* (1974), p. 155.

¹⁶ Suttle, 'Henry Aldrich', p. 131.

¹⁷ H.M. Colvin and J.S.G. Simmons, *All Souls: An Oxford College and its Buildings* (1989), p. 24.

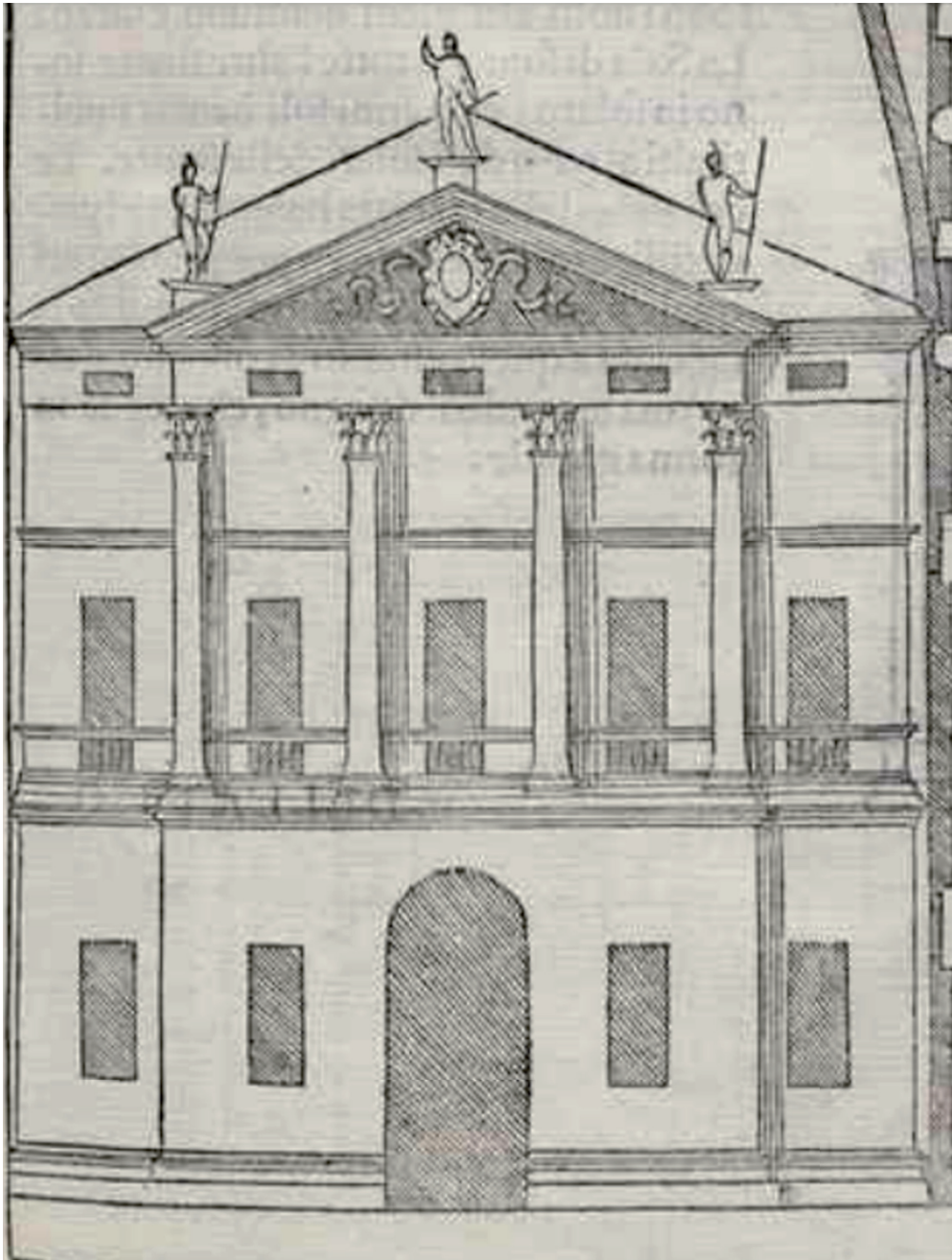


Fig. 3. *Andrea Palladio, 'Design for a town house' (Quattro Libri, Book II).*

milieu within Oxford at this time, one which encouraged a deep sense of experimentation in architectural design.

No one represented this milieu more obviously than Nicholas Hawksmoor. Before Codrington's Library was commissioned for All Souls, Hawksmoor participated in the designs

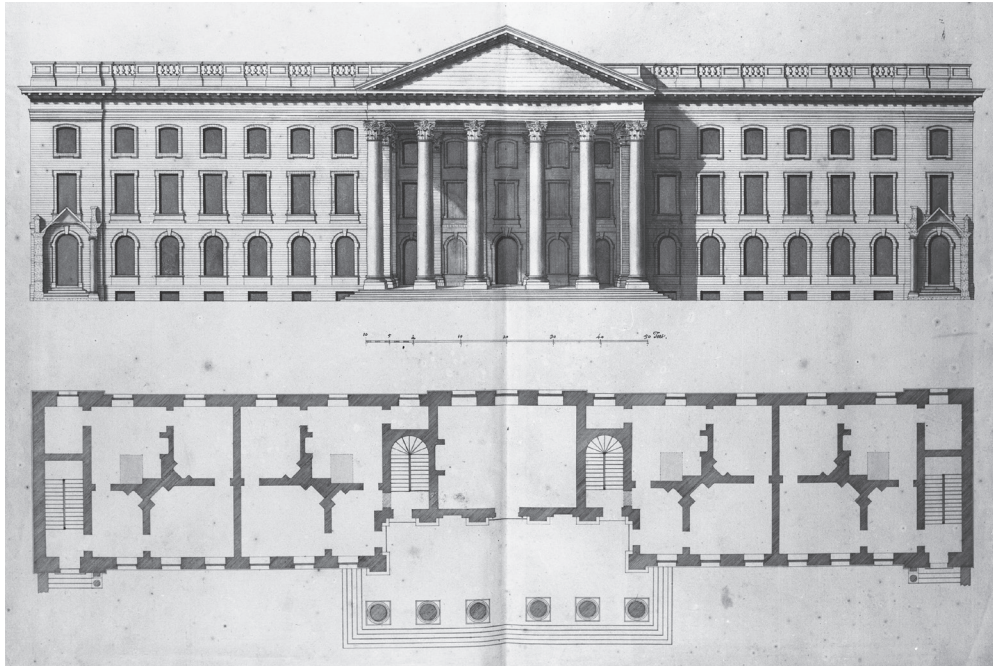


Fig. 4. Henry Aldrich, 'Design for a new building at All Souls' (Worcester College Library).

for a new Fellows' Building. Indeed, he drew many and the variety of his elevations is illustrative of the innumerable influences and interests contributing to Oxford's rebirth, ranging from a distinctly Palladian two-tier portico to far more multifaceted designs comparable to the contemporaneous Blenheim Palace.¹⁸ When such designs are studied side by side the innumerable influences is evident.¹⁹ After the Codrington bequest, Hawksmoor designed an elevation (Fig. 5) wherein the chapel, maintaining its Gothic, is flanked by two classical pavilion towers with broken pediments. In a letter to George Clarke of 17 February 1715 Hawksmoor emphasised his desire to preserve the fabrics of colleges such as All Souls against the 'new perishable Trash,' undertaken as he saw it by 'unskillful knavish Workmen.'²⁰ It would be hard to find a more explicit illustration of the developing interests in architecture, whereby the pursuit had entered the realm of the educated and the professional, no longer left for the craftsmen to partake in alone.

Hawksmoor's eclecticism is a useful warning against separating the architectural history of Oxford into Gothic and then Classical periods. It is the risk of a thematic study into architectural trends that movements are construed as autonomous.²¹ The stress must be on the increasing acceptance of architecture as a profession for the educated, which led to the introduction of far more European trends into English architecture. Classicism, Baroque, Gothic all coexisted in the mind of anyone with an interest in the pursuit. One need only

¹⁸ H. Colvin (ed.), *A Catalogue of Architectural Drawings of the 18th and 19th Centuries in the Library of Worcester College, Oxford* (1964), plates 60 and 63.

¹⁹ R. White, *Nicholas Hawksmoor and the Replanning of Oxford* (1997), p. 28.

²⁰ K. Downes, *Hawksmoor* (1980), p. 240.

²¹ M. Craske, *Art in Europe 1700-1830: A History of the Visual Arts in an Era of Unprecedented Urban Economic Growth* (1997), p. 9.

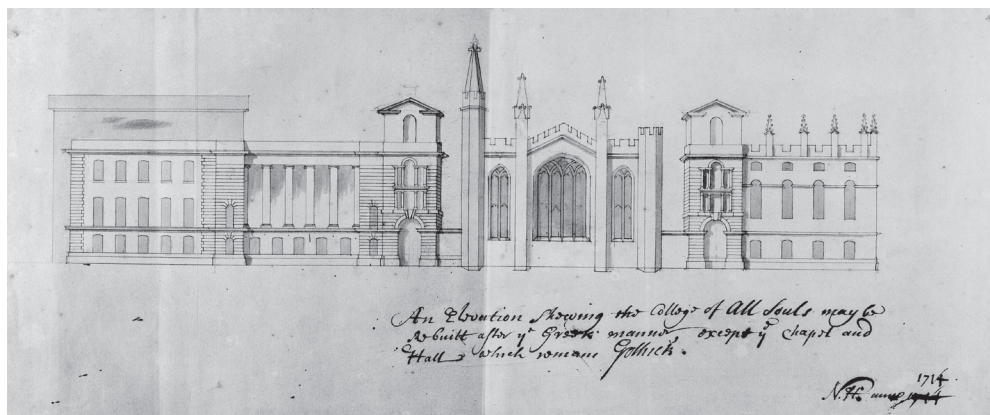


Fig. 5. Nicholas Hawksmoor, 'Elevation for All Souls College' (Worcester College Library).

look to Aldrich's ultimately unrealised design for Peckwater's south block to sense allusions not only to antiquity and the Renaissance but contemporary English designs also. Anything from the ancient Temple of Bacchus at Baalbek to Vanbrugh's Castle Howard could have influenced his monumental use of the giant order on the north side.²² It is far less that Classicism superseded Gothic in Oxford and far more that architecture became a premier occupation, leading to a passion for it in all its forms. Indeed, the 'open-handed' period to which J. Summerson refers, wherein an increasing intensity of bequests were made for all of these projects, can only be understood by appreciating the general attraction of architecture in this period within cultured society.²³

Aldrich would have well understood the challenge of finding sufficient funds, not just for his Peckwater project, but also in his capacity as trustee for the building of a new All Saints Church after the collapse of the previous spire. Again, Colvin has attributed an unnamed design for the church to Aldrich, rather pejoratively insofar as the design's rigid application of the Orders, duplicating the same elevations both inside and outside, is seen to reflect the amateur repetition of façades in Peckwater as evidence of an amateur architect falling short in practical application.²⁴ Nevertheless, the dean would have had a close interest in the designs and his reputation for being an able architect may well have induced interested parties to commission a design from him. But Aldrich was not the only architect to contribute to the new designs. Again, Hawksmoor contributed after Aldrich's death and the end construction was a synthesis of their respective designs as a spire with two openings in the drum and a firmly defined entablature.²⁵ This is further evidence of the collaborative efforts undertaken in so many of these restorative and transformative projects.

It is also important to consider projects for residential buildings undertaken before Aldrich came to the fore. New College's Garden Quad was built between 1682 and 1707, designed by the mason William Byrd to accommodate gentleman-commoners. Christopher Wren also designed a residential block for Trinity College which can be considered a nascent example of moving Oxford architecture beyond the medieval cloisters.²⁶ After 1720, much more comprehensive work was being undertaken across the city, at Christ Church, Queen's, All Souls and Worcester, to name only a few. That the construction of Peckwater falls in the

²² J. Weeks, 'The Architects of Christ Church Library', *Architectural History*, 48 (2005), pp. 110–11.

²³ Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, p. 191.

²⁴ H.M. Colvin, 'The Architects of All Saints Church, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 19 (1954), pp. 113–14.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 115.

²⁶ Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford*, p. 22.

middle is illustrative of how it not only proved influential after its conception, but that the conception itself was inspired by developments that had occurred before.

Only by placing Aldrich and his architectural career within this context can the origins of the quadrangle be understood as contemporaries would have done. For example, in studying the benefactions offered for the construction, it will be important to remember the evidently growing interest in architecture, not least in these strikingly new residential blocks, that induced so many to support comparable projects in Christ Church. Hawksmoor's letter may have been concerned with preserving, or at least respecting the essence of the founders' building at All Souls, but in Christ Church the location for Peckwater offered itself far more to an elevation in a style distinct from Tom Quad, from which it was enough removed for the question of blending to be negated and certainly, the opportunity to invent did not pass Aldrich by.

BUILDING PECKWATER QUADRANGLE

Peckwater may not have been the first quadrangle in Oxford to be designed in a manner removed from traditional collegiate architecture, but Aldrich was the first to take a severely theoretical approach to combining classical elements, as derived from particular conventions in Renaissance theories of ancient architecture. He would have been well aware of the nascent precedents in Trinity and New College yet these were less proactive efforts in classicist theory and more the avoidance of typically Gothic motifs. A critical difference exists between this and Aldrich's attempt to synthesise the overlapping theories of such architects as Serlio, Scamozzi and Palladio. However, the earlier residential constructions serve to show how colleges could be opened up to much innovative effect. This was something of an architectural epiphany within Oxford, in which Aldrich was well placed to develop a greater classical pretension. His study of the monumentality of much classical convention compelled him to incorporate those elements of ancient architecture, such as the temple pediment, into his design for a residential quadrangle. This was very much in the Renaissance tradition, whereby a lack of remains of Italian ancient houses caused architects to appropriate the motifs of far larger surviving structures to designs for private dwellings.²⁷ It is in this vein that an appraisal of Peckwater is so important, since it illustrates how and why such appropriation occurred within Oxford.

It is important, however, to say something of what stood before 1706, in order to understand the extent of Aldrich's transformation of the quadrangle. Whilst much of Christ Church stands on the site of the old priory dedicated to St Frideswide, patron saint of Oxford, Peckwater stands on much of the ancient parish of St Edward's. An overview can be found in John Peshall's 1773 *The Antient and Present State of the City of Oxford*, which accounts for the city's history, wards, parishes and buildings through use of the Oxford antiquary Anthony Wood's study of the city. Therein is an account of St Edward's, neighbouring St Frideswide and containing Peckwater's Inn in the north west corner of the current Quadrangle, the lane on its northern side (Blue Boar Lane), Canterbury College, some of the ground belonging to the dean's lodgings and the thoroughfare leading from the inn into Christ Church's 'Great quadrangle.' Using Wood's investigation of the college registers, Peshall mentioned several 'Memorables' who were said to have lived in the Inn's buildings after John Giffard, Baron of Brimsfield (1232–99) acquired it for conversion into a house for students of civil law. There is also said to have existed one of the old aularian houses, Vine Hall, which was united with the buildings of the inn upon incorporation into Henry VIII's new college, Christ Church, from

²⁷ V. Hart and P. Hicks, *Palladio's Rome: A Translation of Andrea Palladio's Two Guidebooks to Rome* (2006), p. xxx.

1546.²⁸ This shows that the environs of Peckwater were an established part of the college and university long before 1700.

Dean Fell made efforts to render the conglomerate buildings more uniform, insofar as the façades of the inn and halls, including those parts of the old Canterbury College which had also been incorporated into Christ Church, were ‘patched and mended,’ with, for example, new windows on the east, north and west faces of these dwellings.²⁹ Indeed, in the engraver David Loggan’s 1675 illustrated book of Oxford, *Oxonia Illustrata*, there is a bird’s-eye view of Christ Church (Fig. 6) as it then was wherein the east, north and west blocks stand in exactly the same position as Aldrich’s replacements. Therefore, the space, as a quadrangle, was well-conceived as large, open and already quite removed from the overcast medieval cloisters.

Thus, it can be reaffirmed that Aldrich was not concerned with a design of original blocks for the quadrangle, since the blueprint had already been created and efforts made towards creating a unified collegiate design to replace ramshackle aularian residencies. Rather, his contribution was to take the space and create a classical aesthetic that would transform it into a centre for a new generation of ‘Memorables,’ the gentleman-commoners, a focal point of nobility that was enough detached from the Great Quadrangle to convey a sense of exclusivity for those residents who would be able to look from their windows upon a general collegiate vista. Whilst Wren was the first to propose the liberation of the closed quadrangle, the general space of Peckwater, with the open path through into Canterbury, afforded Aldrich the perfect location for building something with a collegiate equivalent to the landscape surround of a country house.

There are two engravings of Aldrich’s design for Peckwater which show that his plan for these three façades was carried through without alteration. In one (Fig. 7) the plan for the north block illustrates an intention to keep to typical arrangements of rooms, whereby each side contains three entrances, each with a staircase around which sets of rooms could be organised symmetrically. Yet his concern for the typically Renaissance interest in town house room proportion is also evident, wherein his incorporation of a *piano nobile* on the first floor

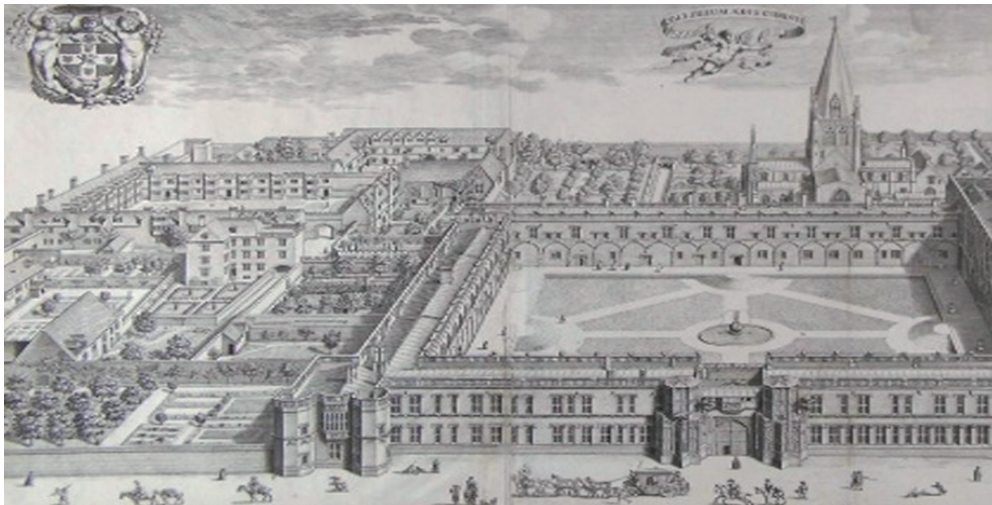


Fig. 6. David Loggan, ‘Engraving of Christ Church, Oxford’ (*Oxonia Illustrata*).

²⁸ Anthony à Wood, *The Antient and Present State of the City of Oxford*, with additions by J. Peshall (1773), pp. 125–6.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 126.

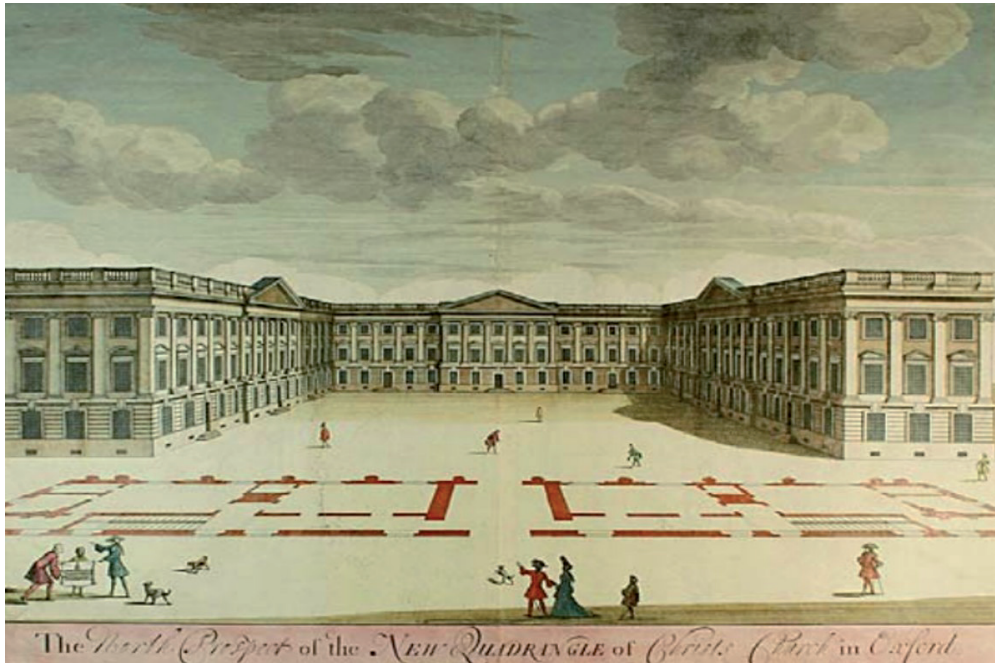


Fig. 7. Henry Aldrich, 'The North Prospect of the New Quadrangle of Christ Church in Oxford' (Christ Church Library, Oxford).

is evidently meant to give the façade an Italianate impression looking out into the quadrangle. On a more theoretical level, classical proportions of ratios such as those evident in Peckwater rarely gave two principal storeys equal importance in height. More striking in the Oxford context however, is that Peckwater is the first instance of such an elevation being treated with an Order to maximise the effects of these ratios. Ionic pilasters rise up in a giant form through the upper storeys across the east, north and west façades.

That Aldrich's design adheres to such theory is evident in a comparison of the engravings with that for an elevation (Fig. 8) for the Palazzo Iseppo Porto at Vicenza in the second book of Palladio's *Quattro Libri*, concerned with the design of private houses. Each uses a rusticated base to emphasise the central storey above, the windows of the former crowned with keystones and those of the latter with alternating triangular and segmental pediments. However, Aldrich's design lacks the flourishes of sculpture and ornament found at Iseppo Porto. This is symptomatic of Aldrich's distinguishing approach, one that views the theoretical treatment of proportion as the most effective avenue to classical beauty. He wrote in his own treatise that 'too much carved work is destructive of elegance.'³⁰ In fact, Aldrich can be said to not only be Palladian, but distinctly Scamozzian in these designs. Scamozzi's treatise, *L'Idée dell'Architettura Universale* was published in 1615 and as the title suggests, conceived of architecture through the eyes of a Renaissance polymath, combining philosophy with science, as it was understood in the sixteenth century, to effect solid manifestations of man's intelligence.

Aldrich's design is representative of how these architectural theories became synthesised. It is a technical, theoretical design that views the wall as a blank surface on which to place detail, such as the pilasters and central columns. Yet the more abstract sense that beauty is to be found in the natural aesthetics of perfect proportion is indicative of the Scamozzian

³⁰ H. Aldrich, *The Elements of Civil Architecture*, trans. P. Smyth, 3rd edn (1824), p. 106.

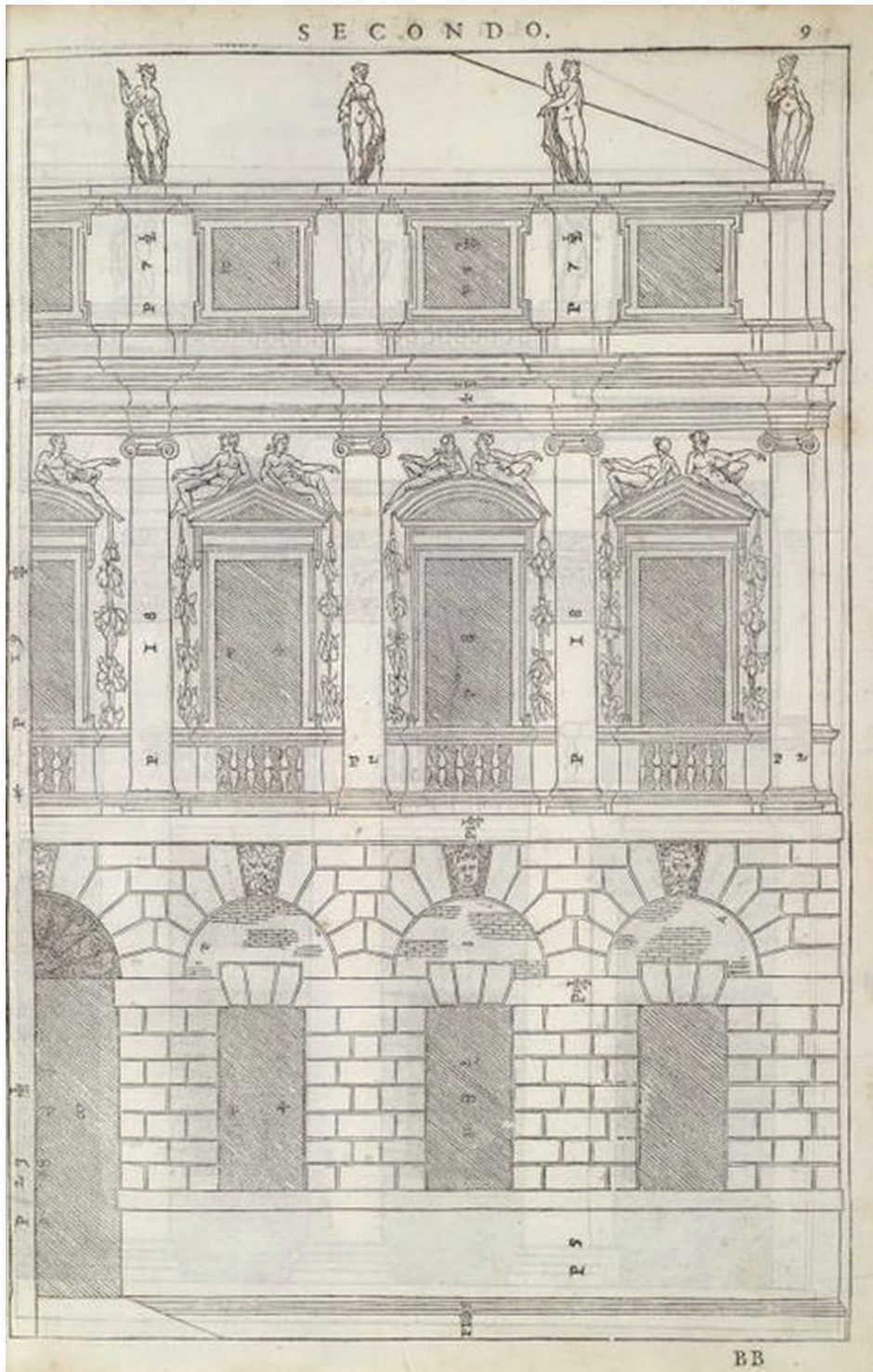


Fig. 8. Andrea Palladio, 'Design for Villa Iseppo Porto' (Quattro Libri, Book II).

attitude. Renaissance architects dissected ancient ruins to establish their original purpose and increase their understanding of Vitruvius' theories of scale.³¹ Aldrich, in his turn, was dissecting the work of the sixteenth century, understanding it so as to appropriate it to another time and place. He wrote in his treatise of Peristyliums, open interiors to Roman houses (Fig. 9), that they were quadrangular areas, 'analogous to the cloister in a convent or college.'³² Appropriation of elements to a particular setting was something of a theme to the pursuit of classical architecture and Inigo Jones' attempts in that vein would have been well known to Aldrich who furthered the synthesising style in Oxford.

Certainly, the dean's architectural activity cannot be understood through his own perspective without reference to his acclaim as an established mathematician, logician and musician. Not only was he involved in the foundation of the Philosophical Society in 1693, later the Royal Society, but he also wrote *Artis Logicce Compendium*, a synthesising treatment of contributions to logic generally.³³ Aldrich was not an innovator, but a scholar whose talents lay in reaffirming or combining the efforts of other men. His design and construction of Peckwater is a physical representation of this interest in using precedents to affect original syntheses. In this case, Peckwater is a design that not only combines knowledge of ancient buildings, Renaissance interpretation and English imports, but also stands as a product of a mind versed in extensive scholarly intellect across many academic fields. Indeed, in recording Aldrich's death, the Oxford antiquary Thomas Hearne (whose diary between 1705 and 1714 provides much of interest pertaining to Peckwater) wrote that he was 'vers'd both in Ecclesiastical and humane Learning almost beyond Compare.'³⁴

There are obvious comparisons to be made here between Aldrich and Wren. Both were involved in the Society, both were mathematicians and logical thinkers aside from their architectural endeavours and both were Oxford scholars. But there are important differences. Aldrich remained true to the Renaissance engagement with architecture, as concerned with beauty, utility and strength. The design for Peckwater is a representation of this sentiment which is felt most strongly in his concomitant attempts at authoring a treatise himself. Wren on the other hand, was a scientist deeply influenced by scientific development in the seventeenth century,³⁵ who actually tested and reformulated accepted theories by becoming something of a problem-solving architect, as is illustrated by his Sheldonian roof and the seminal St Paul's. Nevertheless, both men are representative of radical changes in the English attitude to architecture more generally. Peckwater is important for showing Aldrich's undertaking of a comprehensive managerial role, as will be seen in the building contracts, and is indicative of the acceptance architecture was able to receive in the university milieu as more scholars thought to treat architecture far more theoretically, that is to say, intellectually insofar as it was realised that the architecture Jones had advocated required much learning, culture and a multi-disciplinary aptitude.

That such reference needs be made to Renaissance theorists and that they were so central to the work of the English architects in question, is because no English equivalent existed for theoretical treatises during Aldrich's lifetime, despite the changing attitudes. John Shute's *First and Chiefe Grounds of Architecture*, published in 1563, and Henry Wotton's *Elements of Architecture*, published in 1624, certainly introduced the theoretical discussion into England but the country was behind Italy and France in producing an architectural literature that could serve as a corpus for training. Even Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*, published in 1715 and something of a manifesto to the Palladian revival, was a design catalogue, not a theoretical discourse. Thus, there was a reliance on foreign imports. Palladio's *Quattro Libri*

³¹ Hart and Hicks, *Palladio's Rome*, p. xxix.

³² Aldrich, *The Elements*, p. 135.

³³ Suttle, 'Henry Aldrich', pp. 120–6.

³⁴ Doble et al. (eds.), *Remarks and Collections*, vol. 3, p. 89.

³⁵ L.M. Soo, *Wren's 'Tracts' on Architecture and Other Writings* (1998), p. 1.

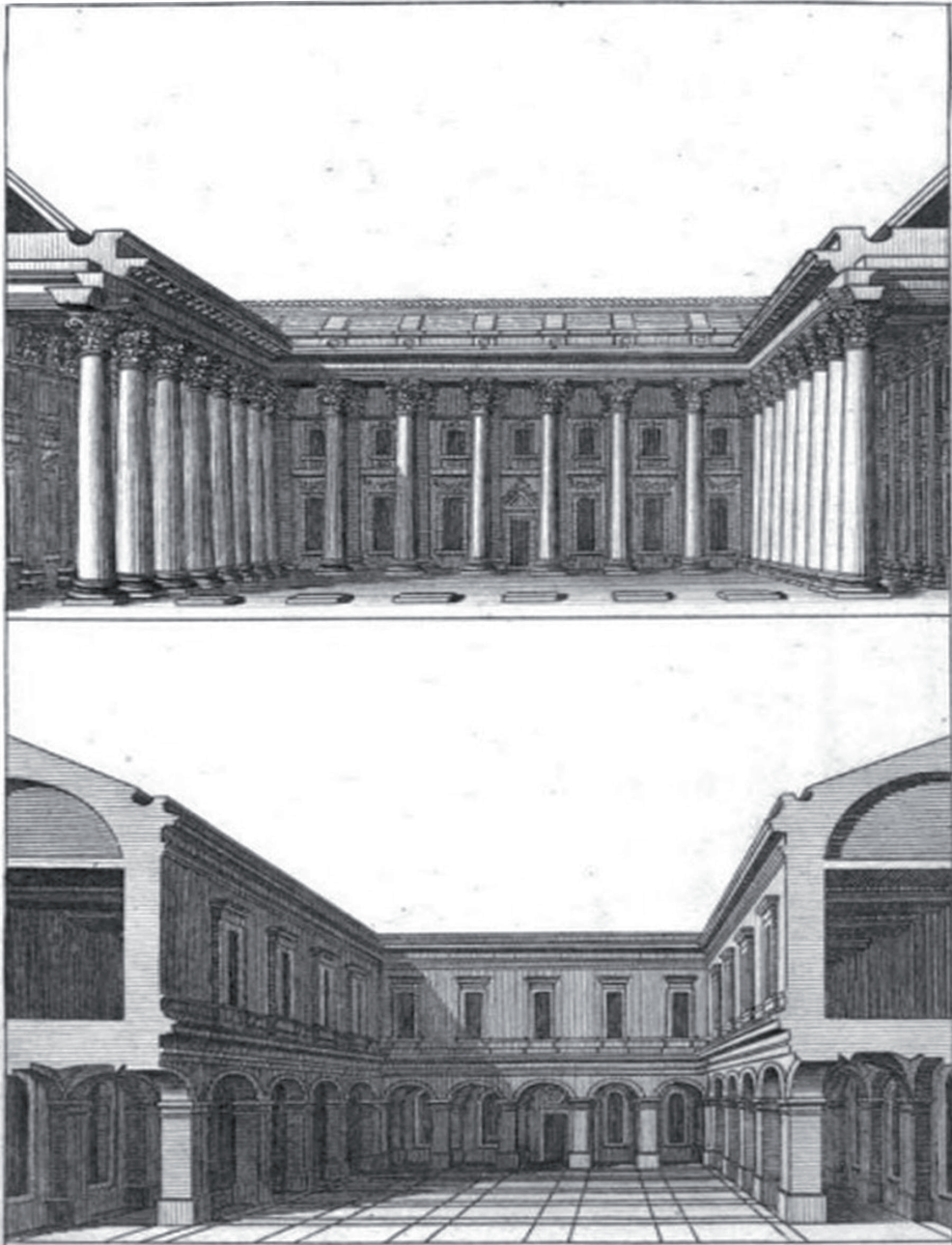


Fig. 9. Henry Aldrich, 'Engraving of Peristylum' (*The Elements of Civil Architecture*).

was particularly influential because it was the first to blend a theory with illustrated original designs. Indeed, Palladio wrote himself that he wished to avoid the superfluity of words and show visually how classical elements should be combined to form the ideal structure.³⁶ Both Inigo Jones and John Webb owned copies of it even though it was not fully translated into English until 1720 by Giacomo Leoni. It is not too much to suppose that Aldrich did so also, not least because his attempt at a theoretical treatise follows Palladio's format almost exactly, as will be seen. Therefore, a comparison of the Peckwater designs with the Italianate is entirely appropriate because contemporaneously it would have been the only literature available to Aldrich for providing direction in design and theory.

In returning to the actual construction of Peckwater, Hearne's *Remarks* records the pulling down of the old 'Building of Peckwater' on the 7 January 1706, a few weeks before the laying of foundation stones for the new blocks.³⁷ The year also saw the approval of Canon Anthony Radcliffe's will. A portion recorded as 'remains for buildings' stood at £2,833.³⁸ That this was intended for Peckwater Quadrangle is well known, owing to the inscription dedicated to Radcliffe on the northern frieze (see Fig. 12). Such a bequest would have ensured that work could progress on the north block, the first to be constructed, without complication. There is a receipt for labourers' work in pulling up the old foundations of the north side dated 16 January 1705.³⁹ By summer of the same year stone was being delivered, with one order for 168 feet of freestone from John Green dated 10 August 1705.⁴⁰ It is clear that Aldrich did not have to compromise in the grandiosity of his design since work was able to start in good measure whilst funds were raised elsewhere. Remembering the more pragmatic concerns of Aldrich to attract gentleman-commoners after Dean Massey's tenure, this would have been a pressing concern for the dean, whose grand pretensions were aimed at those enamoured with such exteriors.

As dean of Christ Church, Aldrich held near untrammelled authority in the running of the college.⁴¹ This included the commissioning of new builds and management of the college's funds, but his good reputation amongst peers and students would have been just as important in gaining support for the design. It is highly possible that Radcliffe was aware of these developments, as a canon of the cathedral between 1680 and 1681.⁴² Indeed, that Aldrich's work found general favour is shown by reference to Dr Stratford's account of the receipts and disbursements pertaining to the quadrangle. As college treasurer, Stratford was charged with raising sufficient funds. His account shows that many noblemen in residence contributed £100 towards the project to get it off to an effective start,⁴³ whereby the ceremony described by Hearne saw many nobles laying their contributory stones.⁴⁴ One such noble was Henry Herbert, ninth earl of Pembroke, whose experience of Aldrich's work at Christ Church represents an interesting link with the Palladian revivals in England. Work was undertaken at the Pembroke residence, Wilton House (Wilts.), by Inigo Jones and John Webb from 1630 on the south block which came to be held in the highest esteem nearly a century later by the self-proclaimed Neo-Palladians Lord Burlington and Colen Campbell. Moreover, the ninth earl designed a Palladian bridge over the River Nadder at the house in the 1730s.

³⁶ A. Palladio, *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* (1570, reprinted as *Four Books of Architecture*, New York, 1965), p. i.

³⁷ Doble et al. (eds.), *Remarks and Collections*, vol. 1, p. 160.

³⁸ CCA, MS Peckwater Building Accounts (3 vols.), vol. 1, f. 9(i).

³⁹ *Ibid.* MS Peckwater Building Accounts, vol. 1, f. 88.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 23.

⁴¹ Weeks, 'The Architects of Christ Church Library', p. 108.

⁴² J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714*, 4 vols. (1891-2), vol. 3, p. 1227.

⁴³ CCA, MS Peckwater Building Accounts, vol. 1, f. 8.

⁴⁴ Doble et al. (eds.), *Remarks and Collections*, vol. 1, p. 168.

This all serves to reiterate not only how important benefactions were, but to hint once more at the apparent enthusiasm of the interested parties in donating to the construction of large, classical blocks that were such a recent innovation within the Oxford context, completely in keeping with the emerging vogue for such aesthetic. Hearne recorded the bequests of some such gentlemen who showed their support for the Peckwater enterprise by leaving money towards it in their wills. James Narborough died in the Sicily naval disaster of 1707 leaving £500 towards the building.⁴⁵ The same amount was left by Charles Somerset in 1710, who is described as a 'Gentleman of a most affable, winning, good natur'd Temper, of great Probity and Integrity.'⁴⁶ This was precisely the manner of man for whom Aldrich was undertaking the work and the importance of the support he received must not be underestimated, such was the importance of patronage across the developments occurring in Oxford during this period. That a classical rebirth was able to take place in the university was not merely due to architects being present who worked in that vein. Rather, it was heavily reliant on there being a far wider interest in its genesis and the structures as they exist are evidence enough of this being the case.

There are two articles of agreement for the building of Peckwater, both dated 1707, one contracting William Townsend for masonry, the other George Smith for carpentry. Both stipulate a nine month period in which to undertake work on the west block of Peckwater, with £1,670 and £1,000 agreed to be paid respectively. Both contracts demand precision, with the express command that Smith's work should be 'thought exquisite by the said Dean and Chapter.'⁴⁷ 'Exquisite' explicitly connotes the dean's concern for both aesthetic and execution. He made very clear in his treatise his belief that architecture is 'the art of building well.'⁴⁸ Such a statement is illustrative of his blended approach, since he saw that its nobility as a liberal art did not lie in superfluous ornament, but in the actual piecing of parts together in such a way as to achieve an aesthetic of proportion.

In Townsend's contract the walls of the first storey were to be of fitting stone, matching the north side. They were to be three feet thick, whereas those of the second and third storeys were to be two feet three inches.⁴⁹ There are also commands for the building of wine cellars for use by the undergraduates, wherein the walls were to be four feet three inches, and five feet nine inches under the columns.⁵⁰ The contract stipulates that the pilasters project by seven inches and the columns by one foot and nine inches.⁵¹ Such demanding detail resonates with the wider problems faced by master workmen as the increasing instruction of theoretical architects challenged their artistic license, a development which would become most notable under Lord Burlington's 'Palladian dictatorship'.⁵² The precision evident in these contracts is illustrative of this development in English architecture, whereby the will of the architect became far more dominant in the process of construction.

It is also clear that from the beginning Aldrich was concerned for the repetition of the façade on three sides. It is easy to take this as a flaw in his abilities as an architect, insofar as he did not provide a more nuanced three-sided design. But it could be said just as well that he was thinking of equality among gentleman-commoners, whose sense of hierarchy even amongst themselves would be curbed by allowing all three façades the privilege of a central projection with grand pediment. The west side, to which these contracts pertain, demands that it be 144 feet to match the north side already in construction and that all the walls facing into the quadrangle be adorned with pilasters projected in a sufficiently precise

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* vol. 2, p. 68.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 369.

⁴⁷ CCA, 'Article of Agreement with George Smith, 1707'.

⁴⁸ Aldrich, *The Elements*, p. 77.

⁴⁹ 'Article of Agreement with William Townsend, 1707'.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects, 1600–1840*, 3rd edn (1995), p. 23.

manner. This is not to say that Aldrich was completely introverted. James Weeks reminds us that in his design for the south block he created a Baroque foil to the other classical façades to create 'equilibrium between the two stylistic poles of his unified square.'⁵³ However Peckwater is judged, it is important to remain aware of the calculation, both theoretical and pragmatic, that directed Aldrich in the project just as in every other aspect of his scholarly career. Understanding Peckwater in this way reaffirms broader changes in English architectural history and stresses that the outlet for those developments in Oxford was closely linked to socio-political developments within the university, compelling an intake of new matriculates. If the structure of Peckwater as it stands is the practice, then Aldrich's *Elements* provides the theory of which it is representative. Thus, it is to this piece that attention must turn.

ALDRICH AS A CLASSICAL ARCHITECT

Henry Aldrich's *The Elements of Civil Architecture* was translated from the Latin by the Reverend Philip Smyth and published in 1789, seventy-nine years after the dean's passing. Such a delay was perhaps to be expected of the work of a man who ordered all personal papers to be burnt after his death, but there are various reasons for the work having not received much attention, historical or architectural. Aldrich's intention was to write a highly comprehensive treatise, covering in six parts general architectural principles, public and private edifices, ornaments, fortifications, naval architecture and instruments of war.⁵⁴ However, only the first three, under the heading of *Civil Elements*, were written or have survived. Characteristic of Aldrich's career as a classical scholar, nothing innovative is contained within the published sections. Just as his work on logic was something of a textbook, relying heavily on the work of others in the field, *Civil Elements* is a synthesising treatment of Renaissance architectural history. Moreover, Aldrich, for all his reputation within Oxford, is not remembered as an architect of substantial note, somewhat lost amongst such figures as Hawksmoor or Wren, as well as living between the zeniths of Jonesian classicism and Burlingtonian Palladianism.

Nevertheless, Peckwater, as the object of study, would only be half understood if its architect's attempts at a theoretical treatise were not also appreciated. It would be valuable to assess if there is a correlation between the principles he articulated and those evident in the designs and structure within the quadrangle, as this will show how effectively Aldrich's principles were represented in the construction, or how influential the more pragmatic concerns of implementation were in forming the design as it stands. It must be particularly emphasised that for all the synthesising of existing postulates, the end composition of such work will be original to the specific authorial tastes. Since there was such a dearth of English-written theory, it is interesting to examine one which was attempted and how it was affected by the need to import from elsewhere.

The first thing to stress of *Civil Elements* is that it follows the first two books of Palladio's *Quattro Libri*, in form, almost exactly. Palladio's four books are concerned with the preparation of materials in the first, designs for private houses in the second, bridges, piazzas and basilicas in the third and roman temples in the fourth. Aldrich not only used the first two as a framework for his own, but also used direct quotes. It is important to note, however, the different intentions of the latter sections. Aldrich intended to move from the civil into the military whilst Palladio moved into a reconstruction of the ancient temples which had inspired the designs of the second book. This is another illustration of the different states of architectural theory in the lives of the respective authors. Whilst Palladio was part of the

⁵³ Weeks, 'The Architects of Christ Church Library', p. 115.

⁵⁴ Aldrich, *The Elements*, p. 78.

attempt to use antiquity in creating new theories of classical architecture, these theories were mature by the dean's time, who was more concerned with implementing them within the English context, with both civil and military sub-contexts.

In returning to the similarities, the books that Smyth did translate are, quite explicitly, of a Palladian form. *Quattro Libri* is a written expression of Palladio's approach to architecture. There are two divisible rule sets that are combined within, those for design based on appearance and those for construction based on practical building method. Indeed, Palladio was a stonemason until middle age, when Gian Giorgio Trissino saw his potential as an architect and provided him with patronage and a humanist education. That Palladio was not narrowly classical in only wanting to study antiquity, but sought to extend that study in showing how elements could be practically appropriated elsewhere, was a structural and aesthetic endeavour which served to instruct Aldrich in his own appropriations. Both Palladio and Aldrich began with a discussion of a building's principal materials and foundational structure and Aldrich, describing the connection of stones, explicitly wrote that 'according to Palladio, a proper juncture is essential to the beauty and strength of the work.'⁵⁵ This is another echo of the central tenet evident in both treatises, that beauty is aligned to good skill in building and the surviving contracts for Peckwater show how this concern carried over into Aldrich's architectural projects.

It is striking how closely Aldrich came to copying his Palladian blueprint. In discussing walls, Aldrich wrote that as they rise their 'thickness should diminish proportionably in the manner of a graduated pyramid',⁵⁶ whilst the translation of Palladio's reference reads that walls 'should diminish in proportions as they rise' so as to give them a 'pyramidal form' as a whole.⁵⁷ Aldrich was well acquainted with Palladio's work, and followed through in his contract instructions, whereby the first storey of each side was to be nine inches thicker than those above.

That Aldrich held Palladio in particular esteem, enough to want his English contemporaries to embrace his work, is evident from his efforts to publicise the architect elsewhere. In 1554 Palladio published a guidebook to the monuments of ancient and medieval Rome, *L'antichita di Roma* and by 1700 it had run to nearly thirty editions in the Italian.⁵⁸ But Aldrich seems to have induced Charles Fairfax to translate it into Latin. Thus, it was republished in Oxford in 1709 with a preface containing Fairfax's statement that Aldrich held Palladio to be the preeminent architect with whom students of architecture should be necessarily acquainted.⁵⁹ That the translation was to the Latin is symptomatic of Aldrich's academic approach to architecture. Indeed, the radical move to introduce classical architecture to Oxford after centuries of unchanging, conservative Gothic was paradoxically undertaken in a very conservative vein, since Wren, Fell and Aldrich were archetypal Oxonians. This helps explain why there was support for the endeavour generally, since it was undertaken by Oxford scholars and Aldrich in particular held a high degree of authority throughout the university. His close management of Peckwater can be said to be an extension of this.

Such a concern with Aldrich's career as an academic begs the question of whether he actually travelled to Italy to consider ancient architecture first hand. This would help legitimate him as a classical architect in his own right, that he was not an armchair theorist and confirm that his treatise was based on his own empiricism, or at least written after proactive efforts to verify Renaissance observations. It is far too speculative to say that just because he owned Palladio's guidebook he actually took it to the peninsula and certainly, it is hard to say much of Aldrich's life without elements of doubt. Colvin refers to James

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Palladio, *The Four Books*, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Hart and Hicks, *Palladio's Rome*, p. xv.

⁵⁹ A. Palladio, *Antiquitates urbis Romae*, trans. C. Fairfax (Oxford, 1709).

Dallaway's 1827 edition of Horace Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting* wherein it is noted that Aldrich was 'of true and versatile genius assisted by learning, converse and travel.'⁶⁰ This is actually a direct quote from Smyth's introduction to *Elements*, the first edition of which was published before Dallaway's contributory comments to *Anecdotes*.⁶¹ Smyth implicitly stated that Aldrich must have been in Italy for a notable time, long enough for the 'warm suns' to 'exalt his inbred taste.'⁶² Dallaway's version is that 'his native taste was exalted,' but he was much more explicit in stating that Aldrich not only spent a 'considerable time' in Italy, but that he also associated with many 'eminent.' He also wrote that it was after this trip that Aldrich set about writing his treatise.⁶³ Moreover, Aldrich's 8,000-strong collection of music was mostly comprised of Italian composers and may well have been collected during a visit to the peninsula.⁶⁴

John Bold has asserted that there was a 'native English neglect of theory' in favour of empiricism,⁶⁵ and it is in this sense that one can expect of Aldrich a desire to blend his theoretical studies with actual experience of ancient monument. This is not to say that it is a requirement of classical architects to have travelled to the land of their muses (there is no evidence to suggest that John Webb trod a foot out of Britain)⁶⁶ but it is important when considering that Aldrich was attempting his own theoretical treatise, however indebted he was to the *Quattro Libri* form. That we do not know for sure is unfortunate, but there are enough grounds for the optimist to state that he did indeed travel to Italy and France, such was his professed cosmopolitan interest in music and architecture.

It should not, therefore, be concluded that Aldrich's architecture was simply an obsessive reliance on *Quattro Libri*. Both his treatise and Peckwater as it stands illustrate how it was not exclusively Palladio that influenced him and English architecture more generally. One such instance is with the Orders, whereby Aldrich's description of the Ionic in *The Elements* does not correspond to the Peckwater capitals. In the treatise Aldrich has illustrated the Ionic Order in the Palladian manner (Fig. 10). Palladio chose to illustrate the Ionic capital with flat volutes, the fillet of each spiral continuing along the face of the abacus (Fig. 11). He did recognise the existence of diagonal Ionic volutes in ancient architecture, with hollowed abacuses, in Book Four of *Quattro Libri*. He included a reconstruction of the Temple of Saturn (which he actually mistook for that of Concord),⁶⁷ but Palladio was not compelled to use it in his own designs, such as those for his most famous villa, Villa Almerico Capra (commonly known as Villa Rotunda) in which the former pattern is used for the hexastyle portico on all four sides, resting under pediment.⁶⁸ Yet Aldrich chose otherwise in designing Peckwater (Fig. 12), whereby the volutes project far more in the Scamozzian vein, who favoured this form of rendering the capital in his *L'idea* (Fig. 13).

Inigo Jones had introduced the Scamozzian Ionic capital to England, as is evident of the Banqueting House (see Fig. 1, above) and in the Loggia of the Queen's House at Greenwich (Kent). Just as inspirations for Aldrich's use of the grand scale order were various, those for the column capitals were also many. The only part of Scamozzi's *L'idea* to be published in English was Book Six in 1669, dedicated to a theory of the classical Orders, just as Richards only published the first book of Palladio, much dedicated to his own theory of the Orders. Freart de Chambray's *Parallele de L'architecture antique avec la moderne* was also translated

⁶⁰ Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 63; H. Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, ed. J. Dallaway, 5 vols. (1827), vol. 4, p. 75.

⁶¹ Aldrich, *The Elements*, p. 73.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 73.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 75.

⁶⁴ Suttle, 'Henry Aldrich', p. 130.

⁶⁵ Bold, *John Webb*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 10.

⁶⁷ Palladio, *The Four Books*, Book 4, plate XCIII.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Book 2, plate XIII.

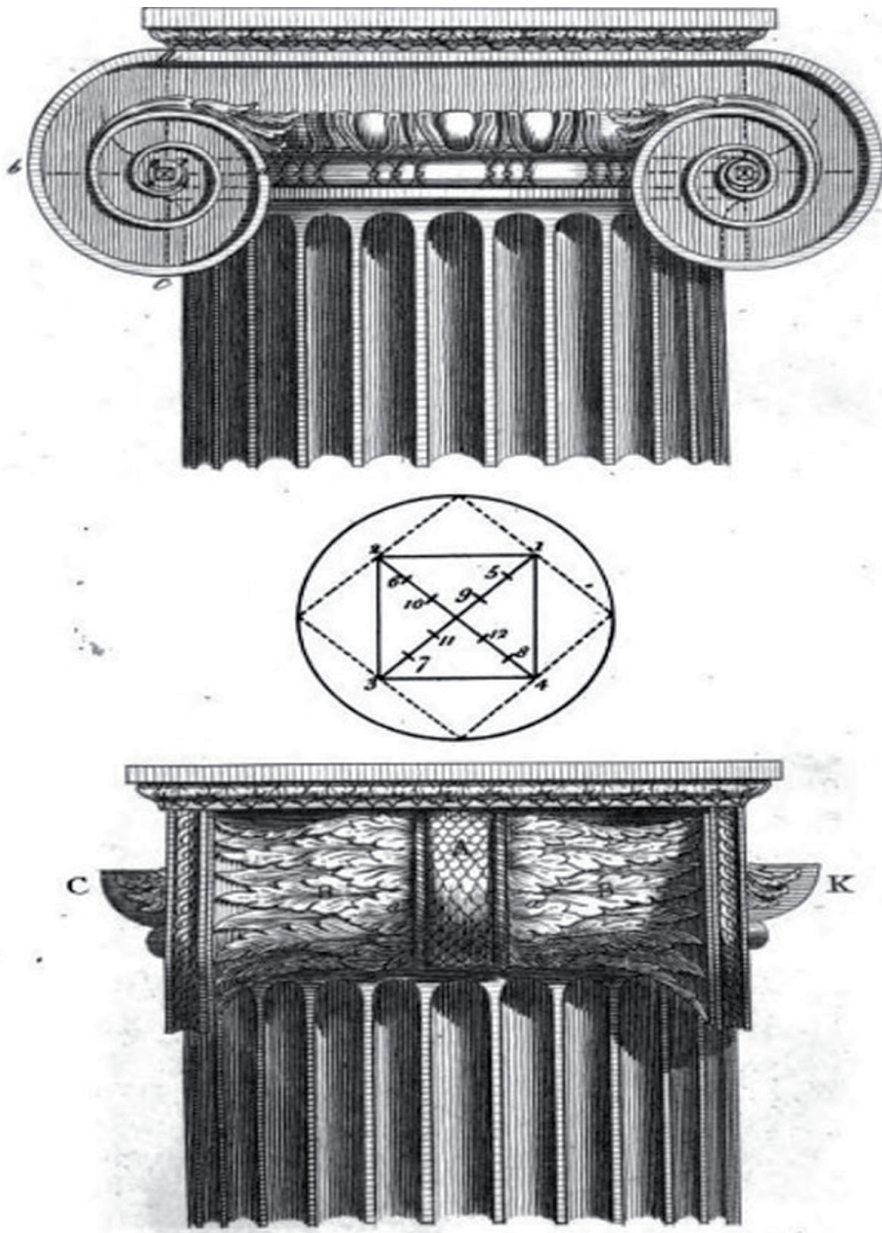


Fig. 10. Henry Aldrich, 'Engraving of a design for an Ionic Capital' (Elements of Civil Architecture).

in 1664. Thus, there existed a solid, yet narrow corpus for theories of the Orders in England. By 1705 Aldrich was well-placed to have been influenced by those elements of Jonesian and Scamozzian architecture which had successfully been imported, just as much as the Palladian. This is particularly relevant because Peckwater was the first to use attached Orders to articulate a whole façade, meaning that Aldrich had no alternative but to look further afield for a blueprint. Wren, in designing the Sheldonian did not use the articulation of an Order for the Broad Street façade and Geraghty asserts that there is no reason to suppose he intended

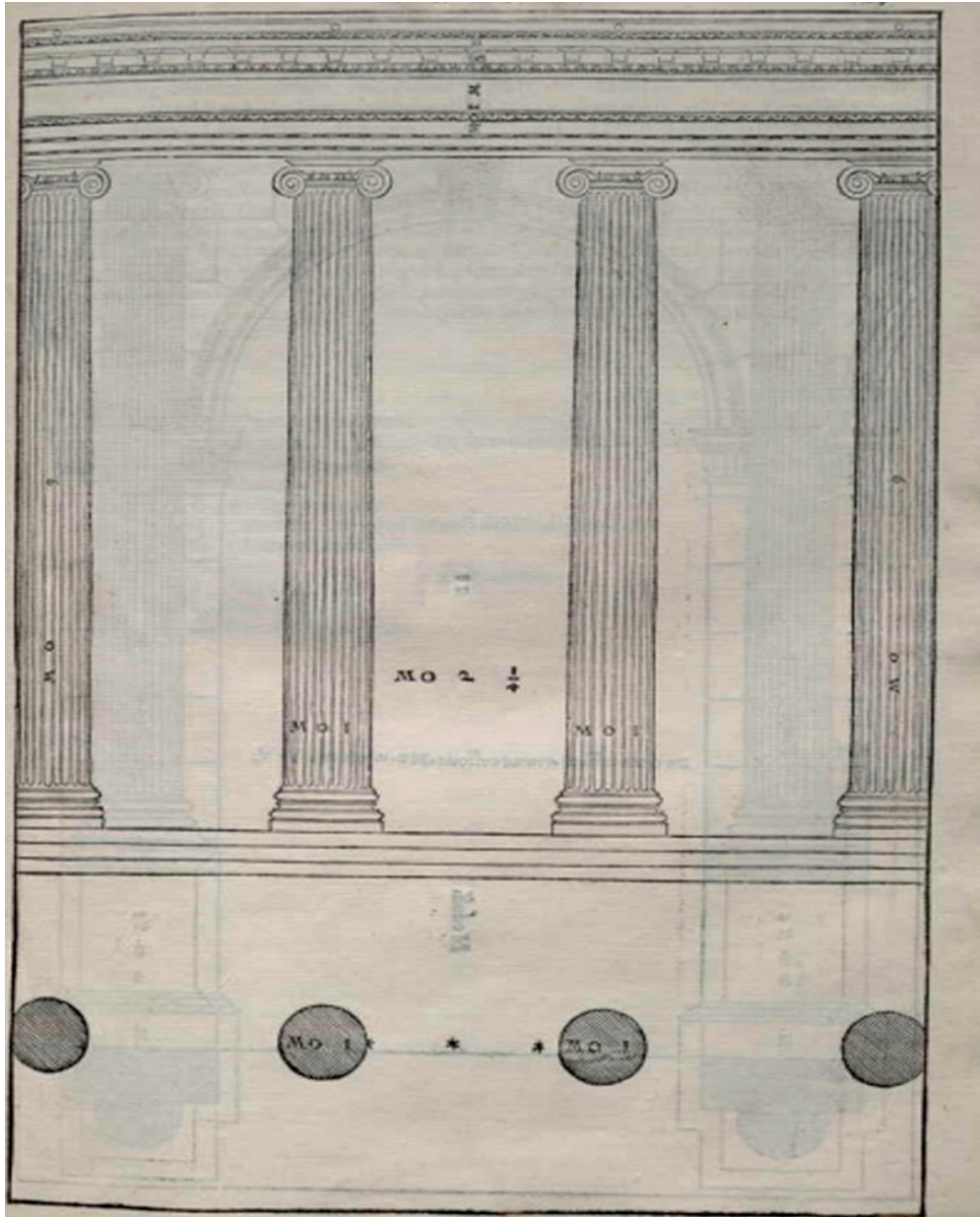


Fig. 11. Andrea Palladio, 'Engraving of a design for the Ionic Order,' (Quattro Libri, Book I).

to,⁶⁹ be it for reason of funding or a disinterest in designing to tight theoretical principles, as has been mentioned of his Trinity residential block.

⁶⁹ A. Geraghty, 'Wren's Preliminary Design for the Sheldonian Theatre,' *Architectural History*, 45 (2002), p. 288. See also idem, *The Sheldonian Theatre: Architecture and Learning in Seventeenth-Century Oxford* (2013).



Fig. 12. Detail of Peckwater Quadrangle, north block. Photograph by author.

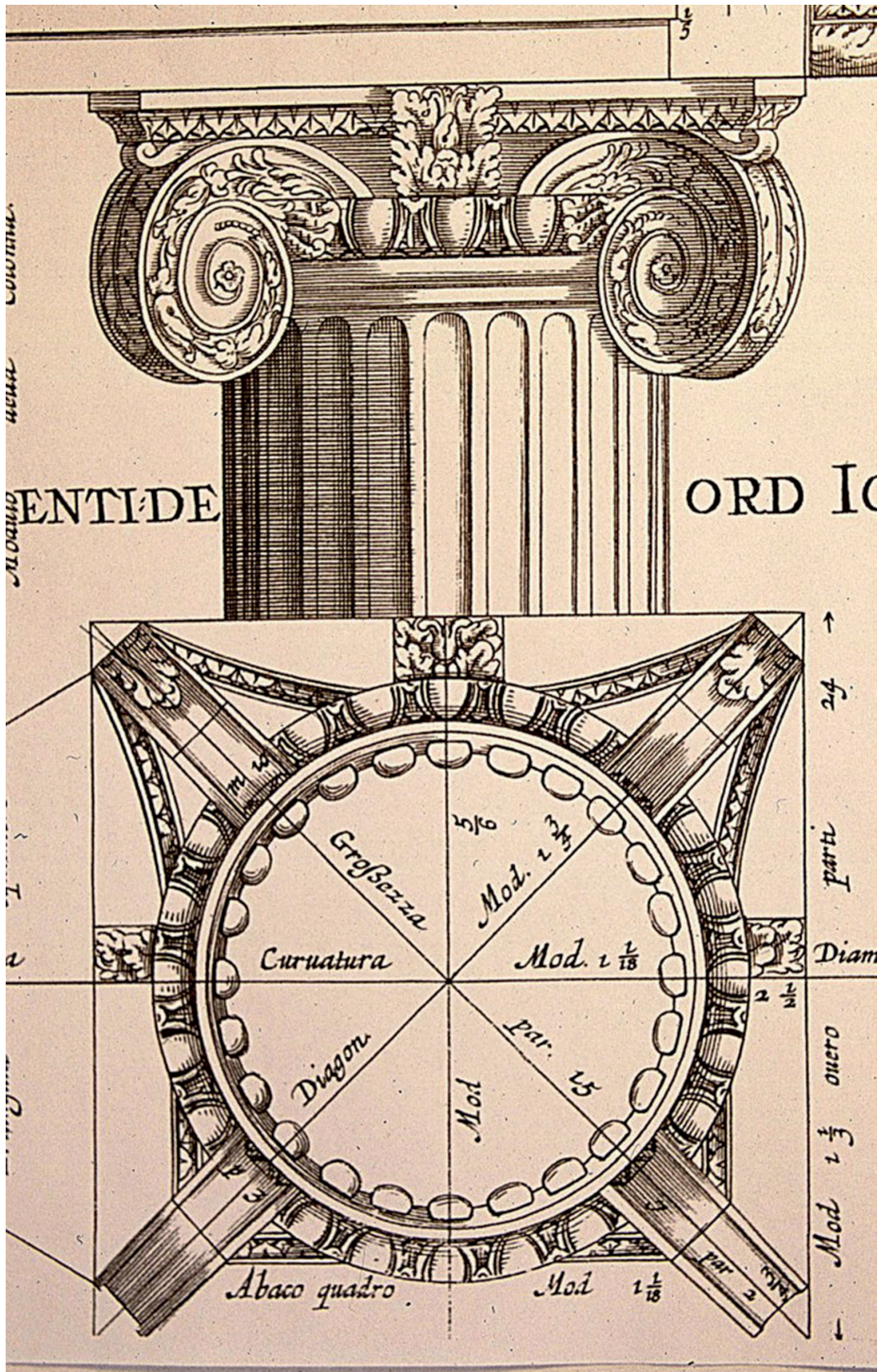


Fig. 13. Vincenzo Scamozzi, 'Engraving of a design for an Ionic Capital' (L'idea della architettura universale, Book VI).

It is also important to stress that however influential the Renaissance architects, they were not considered infallible by their Neoclassical successors. For example, Antoine Desgodetz's *Les Edifices antiques de Rome* was first published in 1682, supported by Colbert, as an updated collection of engravings and measurements for the monuments and antiquities of Rome, wherein the intention of the author is said to be a critical comparison of his own measurements to those of the preceding century. There are many examples of his countering Palladio, not least regarding the Temple of Jupiter. Palladio is accused of being an inch and a quarter short in measuring the columns as well as over a foot out for the capitals.⁷⁰ In relation to Aldrich, it would not be wildly speculative to suppose he owned a copy of Desgodetz and at the least, such was his interest, he would have been aware of such contemporary currents, particularly if he had travelled to investigate for himself. Overall, it must not be assumed that Aldrich, or any serious student of the classical, would have adhered to Palladio exclusively.

This is further illustrated by the order in which he wrote of the columns. He starts his overview with the Ionic and not the Tuscan, the one chosen by Palladio as that which most retains 'something of the former antiquity'.⁷¹ Here, Palladio has clearly been influenced by Serlio's exaltation of the Tuscan earlier in the sixteenth century. But Aldrich chose to treat the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian Orders first, identified as the Grecian orders, superior to the Roman Tuscan and Composite which he terms 'Kinds'. He did recognise that Palladio treated the Tuscan favourably but himself stated that Vitruvius spoke of 'it as rustic even to deformity'.⁷² This contrasts sharply with Inigo Jones' interpretation of the Tuscan from the Italians. His Tuscan portico for St. Paul's at Covent Garden is as stripped a piece of solid, rustic, unornamented classical design as is possible.⁷³ Jones's conception of classical architecture contained an interest in its primitivism, whereby such a portico can be said to resemble the beginnings of architecture as shelter for humans, tree trunks evolving into entablatures. Such a sentiment served to legitimate the classical as the most dignified, immemorial of architectural styling.

Conversely, Aldrich's *Elements* aligns this sense of dignity with Greece, as opposed to the imitative Roman contributions.⁷⁴ His theory for building well was not concerned with primitivism but for nobility, as expressed with the expectation of the 'exquisite' in the contract with Smith. Peckwater Quadrangle was designed with an express purpose and Aldrich's treatise is certainly supportive of those interests in appropriating the classical to Oxford in such a way as to appeal to a certain class of taste. Palladio's treatment of the Orders is far more detailed than Aldrich's more abridged version, which in repeating much of Palladio's column measurements actually echoes a more Scamozzian module terminology.

It is by reference to the dean's intention that this can be justified, or at least explained. Palladio was creating a theory, whilst Aldrich was adapting it. He introduced columns as 'ornaments of walls,'⁷⁵ whereas Palladio used them to give edifices a 'more firm foundation'.⁷⁶ This is symptomatic of Wittkower's argument that English classicism replaced Italian functional elements with flat surface patterns.⁷⁷ This suited Aldrich's purpose because patterns could be more malleable and allow him to synthesise solid classical nobility with something a little more nuanced. This can be said of his design for the south block, which was aimed at creating a well contained representation of the 'grand' within the quadrangle. Aldrich was concerned with building well, but the nuances that are evident point to an architecture that is not quite as restricted as is often supposed.

⁷⁰ A. Desgodetz, *Les Edifices antiques de Rome* (1682; reprinted Portland, 1972), p. 126.

⁷¹ Palladio, *The Four Books*, p. 14; Aldrich, *The Elements*, p. 98.

⁷² Aldrich, *The Elements*, p. 99.

⁷³ Summerson, *Classical Language*, p. 93.

⁷⁴ Aldrich, *The Elements*, p. 98.

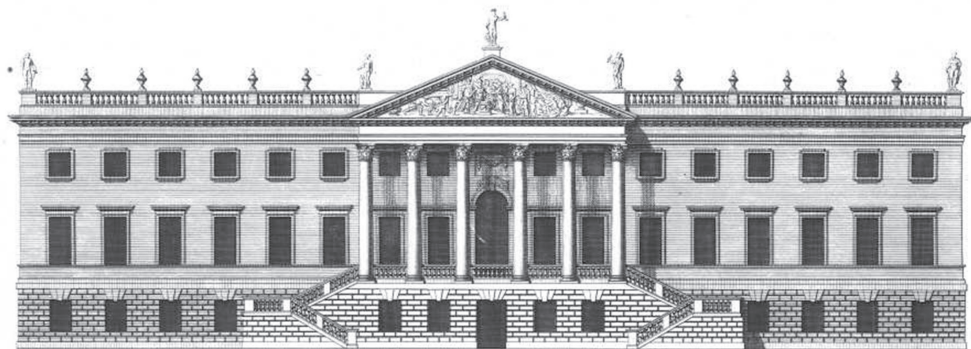
⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 87.

⁷⁶ Palladio, *The Four Books*, p. 11.

⁷⁷ Wittkower, 'Pseudo-Palladian Elements', p. 174.

Thus, Aldrich was influenced multifariously in his architectural theory. It is important to remember the context in Oxford at this time, whereby Aldrich was used to being part of collaborative efforts, such as All Saints Church. Regarding Peckwater, the theory expressed in *Civil Elements* was not wholly translated into the actual construction and it has been the focus to chart those processes between theory and practice. To this effect, reference to the seventeenth-century influences at play in English classicism is critical before any concern can be had for aligning Peckwater forwards to what it inspired. *Civil Elements* was a self-professed exercise in classical architecture as dictated by Vitruvius and Palladio, mostly in the form of the work which attempted systematic theory alongside illustrated examples. But however much Aldrich thought he was exclusively importing Palladio for his English students, a study of how his theory was used in practical application, how differences emerged which highlight influences existing elsewhere, illustrates that Aldrich's overall formula was more specifically a synthesis of Palladian, English Jonesian and Scamozzian theories.

Such a conclusion alludes to the danger of similar assumptions emerging with the later Neo-Palladians. Aldrich's Peckwater does bear a striking resemblance to Colen Campbell's design for Wanstead House in Essex (Fig. 14) which was featured in *Vitruvius Britannicus*. The latter was ambitious, comparable in monumentality to Vanbrugh's Castle Howard (Yorks.) but contemporaneously conceived of as pioneering a distinctly Palladian manner for its rustication, central temple style with grand portico and pitched roof, framed by unrelieved elevations either side. Knowledge of Peckwater's architectural history warns against such simplicity. Not only must it be stressed that such a manner was being pioneered before Campbell and Burlington, albeit on a smaller scale, but that the formula itself, however ostensibly Palladian, was actually founded on multifarious experiences of over a century of English architecture.⁷⁸ Palladian elements were indeed imported into England, but those elements were picked, separated and rearranged according to English needs and tastes over a century, which eventually transformed what was thought of as Palladianism into something quite removed from Palladio's own manner.



Extends 200
a Scale of 100 Feet.

The first Design of the West Front of Wanstead as intended by Sr Richard Child Bart.
Is most humbly Dedicated to my Lady Child.
Elevation de la Maison de Wanstead, comme elle la Première pensée de L'Architecte.

Ca. Campbell Inv. 1710.

Fig. 14. Colen Campbell, 'Elevation for Wanstead House (Vitruvius Britannicus).

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 155.

This is particularly true of the Venetian window, widely assumed to be a central Palladian motif, and so used in isolation, such as with the side elevations of Christ Church library.⁷⁹ But this is not how Palladio used it.⁸⁰ It is not the purpose of this study to chart the general importation of Palladianism and it has certainly been studied effectively by many historians who have been concerned with how the classical was appropriated to England. By studying the construction of Peckwater the manner of this appropriation can be reaffirmed and Aldrich can be given an important place within the period's architectural developments, all of which is made possible by the comparison that is available between theory and practice pertaining to the quadrangle, regardless of Aldrich's attempts to allude with the destruction of his papers.

CONCLUSION

It has been the intention of this article to stress the value of Peckwater Quadrangle as a case study in architectural history. Its history highlights the interwoven developments at play during the periods before, during and after its construction, such as how architecture came to be conceived as a respectable profession and how new classical elements came to be used in England. The central purpose has been to argue how to treat Peckwater most effectively so as to heighten the understanding of these developments, which has primarily meant an avoidance of strict tautology. For example, Peckwater is not exclusively Palladian in design, it was not built in isolation but as part of a far wider building boom in Oxford, and is the manifestation of a distinctly cosmopolitan conception of architecture, despite functioning as a typical English collegiate residency. The same can be said of English architecture in this time more generally, before the ascendancy of a far more dogmatic conception of English classicism in the Palladian manner.

The way in which classicism was appropriated to Oxford can be contrasted to the practice of the Burlington circle after 1715. Their academic interpretation of Palladio was to conceive of his rules as eternal and essentially unchanging.⁸¹ William Kent's design for Holkham Hall (Norf.) is almost a complete architectural synonym for Colen Campbell's Houghton Hall (Norf.) design. Peckwater Quadrangle certainly shares a sense of this interpretation; or rather, Aldrich was very theoretical in his architectural principle. It is this lens through which Peckwater is so often viewed. It is clear, however, that a treatment of Peckwater taken from a far less assumptive angle proves it to be a far more synthesising, more adventurous piece of architectural design than is often noted.

Oxford had been introduced to a different architecture by Wren and the university soon became a centre of architectural experiment. Aldrich was a pioneering part of this process. Whereas the Burlington school could be accused of imposing Palladianism, Aldrich extended the Jonesian practice of adaption, followed Wren's example and appropriated a design in a manner that would become typical of architects in Oxford, such as Clarke and Hawksmoor.

James Gibbs' Radcliffe Camera is a crowning manifestation of this eclectic Oxonian approach. It is almost Mannerist in its treatment of coupled Corinthian columns separating alternately wide and narrow bays. It is striking for its individuality in a period of extremely dogmatic architectural ideology.⁸² Indeed, Oxford architecture from Wren to Gibbs is striking for its ability to combine a conservative academic approach with increasingly various stylistic interests so as to serve an entirely different class of students. Just as John Radcliffe's donation funded the implementation of a uniquely Italian structure in the city's centre, Canon Anthony Radcliffe's bequest allowed for the construction of a then pioneering set of buildings within Christ Church, which opened the way for increasingly adventurous designs thereafter.

⁷⁹ Weeks, 'Christ Church Architects', p. 117.

⁸⁰ Wittkower, 'Pseudo-Palladian Elements', p. 155.

⁸¹ Weeks, 'Christ Church Architects', p. 117.

⁸² Summerson, *Architecture in Britain*, pp. 214–15.

Looking at the particular practice of Aldrich as an architect has highlighted the importance of English 'Jonesianism' in rendering the Italian sense of architecture palatable to Oxford. Placing Peckwater in the midst of such architectural activity has then emphasised its importance in terms of how this manifested itself within the university. Both cause and effect have thus been combined to give the quadrangle the historical attention it so evidently deserves.

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