

**How far does the classicism in Harewood House reinforce and establish the personal wealth of the Lascelles family gained from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade?**

**Name**

George Knight

**Case Study**

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**Comparisons**

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## Introduction

Built between 1758-1771 (Finch, 2020, p.76), Harewood House in Yorkshire can be considered a prime example of Palladian and Neoclassical British architecture built from the profits of the slave trade (Finch, 2020, p.75). Henry Lascelles, father of Edwin Lascelles, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Harewood, gained his fortune through sugar plantations in the West Indies (Wragg and Worsley, 2000, p.17), allowing him buy estates in Yorkshire with the intention to design a new country house (Finch, 2020, p.75). It was his son however who began the construction of the new house in the 1750s (Finch, 2020, p.76) with the classical principles being used to a great extent to reinforce and establish their newfound wealth into British History. John Carr of York was commissioned to design the Palladian structure (Wragg and Worsley, 2000, p.21) and the similarities between Harewood's facade and Constantine's Arch in Rome, allow Harewood to be presented as a monument of power. Furthermore, Robert Adam, a young Scottish architect, presented Harewood as a well-established and durable British estate by making idiosyncratic Neoclassical interiors that emulate the peristyle of the Palace of Diocletian in Split, Croatia. The landscaping, completed by the infamous Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, continues this legacy of classical references to longevity. By harnessing the new ideas of the Enlightenment, Brown creates an idealised nature built on inherently classical principles to last the ages. With all three architects' input, the classicism of Harewood's architecture ultimately reinforced the personal wealth of the Lascelles family to a considerable extent.

## Section One

### John Carr's Palladianism



Figure 1 – John Carr's Palladian North Facade (Harewood, n.d.). Note the 'three unequal parts' (Summerson, 2023, p.36).



Figure 2 – Arch of Constantine in Rome (EB, 2019).

Henry Lascelles 'made his considerable fortune' (Finch, 2020, p.75) during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century from ownership of sugar plantations in the West-Indies, a fortune he used to buy the Gawthorpe and Harewood estates in Yorkshire in 1739 (Finch, 2020, p.75). With every intention to develop the site, it wasn't until Henry died in 1753 that his son Edwin Lascelles, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Harewood, decided to demolish the existing medieval Gawthorpe Hall (Finch, 2020, p.76) and build a new Palladian manor house (Mauchline, 1974). Following Inigo Jones' return to England in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century (EB, 2023, para.2), Palladianism was known in

England to be a marker of ‘inherited commercial success, cultivated leisure and economic security’ (Mauchline, 1974, p.12) but one has to question the extent to which this classical style was used to establish the Lascelles’ ‘economic security’. John Carr of York was commissioned as the architect of the masterplan in c.1755 (Mauchline, 1974, p.37) and he created this longevity by making poignant antiquarian references. Wragg and Worsley (2000, p.18) explain in *John Carr of York* how Carr was initially used at Harewood for ‘general advice, designs for gateways, a barn’ etc, before his designs for the new house were chosen: a large central building adorned with composite half columns flanked by two smaller wings, observable through the north elevation as displayed in Figure 1 (Harewood, n.d.). The three-part structure with one larger central building could perhaps make reference to the legacy of a triumphal arch, which John Summerson (2023, p.36) defines in *The Classical Language of Architecture* as ‘a division of space by columns into three unequal parts: narrow, wide, narrow’, clearly evidenced in the ‘three unequal parts’ of Harewood. An appropriate comparison, Constantine’s Arch in Rome, illustrated in Figure 2 (EB, 2019), is a monument of power displaying Constantine’s success following the defeat of Maxentius for the emperorship of Rome at the Battle of Milvian Bridge 312AD (Jones, 2000, p.51), success displayed through architectural features that can also be found in Harewood. Constantine’s Arch comprises of Corinthian columns, with Corinthian pilasters behind them (Jones, 2000), a mirror of Harewood’s 6 Corinthian half columns and 4 Corinthian pilasters that line the North Facade. Corinthian columns are recognisable through their decorative acanthus leaf capital and, as explained by Jones (2000, p.67) in *Genesis and Mimesis*, the ‘leaf range of Corinthian capitals tends to ‘grow’’, ultimately representing development and wealth. When looking at both Harewood and Constantine’s arch through contemporary lenses, the capitals represent wealth gained from a recent acquisition of power. Although Constantine gained this power through war, and Henry Lascelles through his role in the slave trade, wealth is displayed through the same language, thus supporting the idea that classicism, in its raw forms, displays the family’s ‘commercial success’. However, the reference to classical architectural forms does not always have to be for a political and economic statement. After a fire destroyed some of the existing Jacobean estate, Richard Boyle, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Burlington designed Chiswick House between 1726 and 1729 (EH, n.d., para.9) arguably for his creative expression. Boyle had recently returned from frequent trips to the continent, where he indulged in Palladian design (Echlin and Kelly, 2016). The Boyle family was an exceedingly wealthy aristocratic dynasty (EB, 2024a, para.2), so although there are evident classical features in the rusticated base, portico and rotunda at Chiswick, there is no need to re-establish their historic wealth and instead they could experiment with artistic expression; the architecture, although similar in language to Harewood, has a different meaning when applied in a differing context. Consequently, the Palladian reference to a triumphal arch in the context of Harewood, illustrates the family’s ‘commercial success’ and ‘economic security’, thus supporting the idea that classicism reinforced their personal wealth to a significant extent.

## Section Two

### Robert Adam's Neoclassical Interiors



Figure 3 – Adam's Neoclassical Entrance Hall emulating the peristyle of Diocletian's Palace (Daderot, 2016).



Figure 4 – Modern day image of the peristyle at the Palace of Diocletian in Split (Jarvis, 2013).

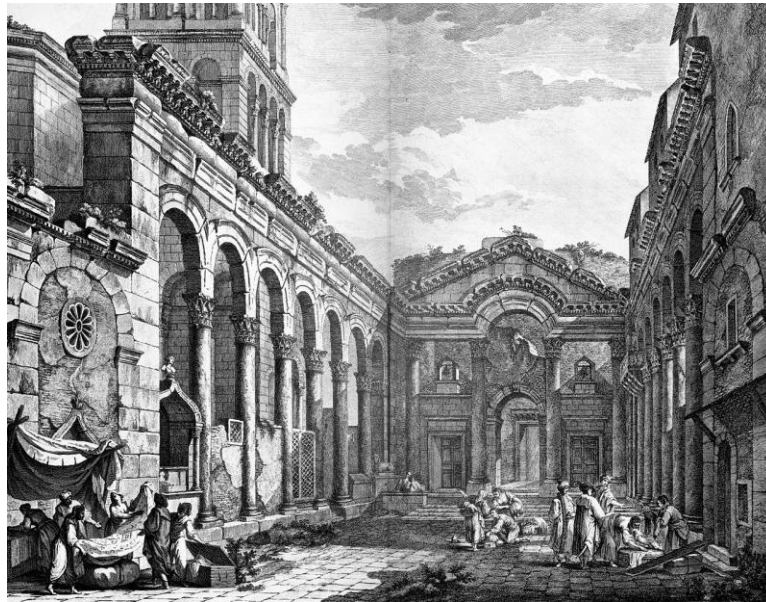


Figure 5 – Robert Adam's illustration of the Palace of Diocletian from 1764 (Adam, 1764).

Carr was the key architect of Harewood, but it was during the construction that he 'assimilated... the style of Robert Adam' (Wragg and Worsley, 2000, p.17). Adam, a young Scottish architect hot foot from his Grand Tour, was asked to work on the building from 1758 (Mauchline, 1974, p.38), after Carr had already begun designs for the estate. Although Adam had proposed a series of Neoclassical features to be included within the masterplan, notably 'lunette-shaped court[s]' that were replaced in 1762 (Mauchline, 1974, p.73), none of these came to fruition and his legacy within Harewood is contained to his intricate interiors. One of the most poignant Neoclassical rooms is the Entrance Hall, as photographed in Figure 3 (Daderot, 2016), and due to its artistic relationship with the peristyle of Diocletian's Palace in Split, one can argue that Adam's classical designs are used to a significant extent to display the status of the Lascelles family. Between 1754-58 Adam embarked on a Grand Tour (Rodwell, 1992, p.708), observing and studying the great buildings around Europe, but Diocletian's Palace made a lasting impression, leading to him writing *Ruins of the Palace of Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (Rodwell, 1992, p.708), a book which was significant 'for the development of European neo-classical architecture' (Brothers, 1972, p.175). Neoclassical architecture takes direct reference from the archaeology of antiquarian structures (EB, 2024b, para.1), a practice becoming more popular since the discovery of Pompeii in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century and the archaeological digs that began there in the 1740s (EB, 2024b, para.2). Architects began making direct references to these ancient structures, for example Jacques-Germain Soufflot's Pantheon in Paris recreating the famous Roman Pantheon (EB, 2024c, para.1), a recreation of structure that is personified in Harewood House. The Entrance Hall, the first room visitors enter from the North Facade, is surrounded by a peristyle of maroon fluted Doric half columns. The fake porphyry of Harewood's columns (Buckle, 1979, p.4) strongly emulate the peristyle and the prothyron of Diocletian's Palace, with the cipollino marble and rose pink granite of the ancient columns (Brothers, 1972, p.182), as seen in Figure 4 (Jarvis, 2013) copied in the Adam Style pinks and reds. Moreover, the peristyle has arches bounding between columns (Brothers, 1972 p.182) and at the prothyron at the south end, as illustrated

by Adam himself in Figure 5 (Adam, 1764), there is an 'arching of the entablature supporting the pediment' (Brothers, 1972, p.182), arching that is also found in the south end of the Entrance Hall in Harewood over the door to the rest of the house. This emulation of the prothyron in Harewood ensures a connection is made between the Lascelles fortune and the longevity of a firmly founded structure. By making this historic reference, Harewood has become a monument to defy the ages. Across the Entrance Hall there are further classical markers in the Rose and Collins stucco work (Buckle, 1979, p.2) that support the idea of classicism establishing their slavery profits. Along the frieze, there is a pattern of meanders and ox skulls, seen in the background of Figure 3, common symbols in Adam interiors (Gerson, 1981). The ox skull, also referred to as the Bucranium, usually appears in the Doric order and is believed to have originated from the early Greek tradition of hanging the skulls of sacrificed oxen on temples (Gerson, 1981, p.64). The use of the Bucranium in Harewood would not only strengthen the connection between the house and classical monuments but could be thought to represent the Lascelles family's dedication and sacrifice to achieve wealth and status. The use of the meander therefore compliments this idea; the meander is an ornamentation that echoed the Meander River in Asia Minor, a motif thought to represent unity and infinity (Loth, 2016, para.1), perhaps assuring visitors of Harewood of the security of the family's fortune. The fact that the Entrance Hall is adorned with symbols of wealth, infinity and power is evidence that the classical language of Adam is used to a great extent to establish the Lascelles' slavery profits. The references to Greek mythology in the same room however could prove classical ornamentation is not always an illustration of power. There is an oblong relief on the East wall of the Chariot of Phaethon (Buckle, 1979, p.4) a myth that states Phaethon wanted Helios, the sun God, to prove his paternity to him, so he asked him if he could control his chariot. Phaethon, however, lost control of the horses and was struck down by Zeus (EB, 2022a, para.1). This myth could portray the Lascelles family as mortal and out of control, undermining any notion of longevity or security. Although one could argue that some mythological references are questionable in the support of their wealth, in the same room above the fireplace there is displayed the wedding of Neptune and Amphitrite (Buckle, 1979, p.4), God and Goddess of the sea (EB, 2022b, para.1). This relief could deify the Harewood's as masters of the ocean, especially when they can attribute their wealth to the shipment of slaves across the Atlantic. Ultimately, when antiquarian references are read in the right context, they can present a powerful persona.



### Section Three

#### ‘Capability’ Brown’s Enlightened Landscaping



Figure 6 – J.M.W Turner’s ‘Harewood from the South West’ (Turner, 1797-8). Note the gradient of the new southern slope down to the lake.

Harewood is known for its ornate interiors, but its vast naturalistic landscape, as painted by Turner in the 1790s, with one example displayed in Figure 6 (Turner, 1797-8), was designed by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown and is highly praised. Wittkower (1974, p.195) believes that ‘it was a basic axiom of the classical doctrine that beauty is inherent in nature’. The fact that Harewood’s vast landscape maintains the contemporary classical naturalistic standards, and still survives today, supports the opinion that classicism helped reinforce the Lascelles wealth to a considerable extent. Brown began advising on Harewood from 1758 (Mauchline, 1974, p.38) and it was originally planned for there to be a classical house ‘integrated with a new ornamental landscape and parkland, all in the latest neo-classical taste’ (Finch, 2020, p.80). Once Brown began work however, he naturally leaned towards his idiosyncratic plan of a ‘man should make use of the natural features of the land’ (Buckle, 1979, p.2) in a way to manifest an ‘Arcadian wildness’ (Buckle, 1979, p.2), with arcadia being defined as the idealised natural paradise (CD, n.d.). Brown’s approach to landscaping at Harewood can be seen as a personified view of the Enlightenment that gripped Britain during the 18th Century. Michael Symes (2016, p.7) describes this as a period where ‘scientific enquiry was combined with increasing awareness and appreciation of nature’, an opinion that ultimately collaborates with Wittkower to create a new classical doctrine of nature in landscape. At Harewood, the original medieval landscape was swept away and Brown was tasked with flattening the slope in front of the new house, demolishing the Old Gawthorpe Hall to create a slope down from the south facade to the new lake (Finch, 2020, p.83). Brown’s work in creating this undulating estate opened up the Southern view and created the perfect landscape for his sweeping drive towards the North facade (Finch, 2020, p.87), a landscape which has stood the test of time. By aligning his design with the stability and longevity of nature and by extension ‘the basic axiom of the classical doctrine’, Brown has ensured classical architecture establishes the Lascelles fortune on the landscape. Although one can argue that by copying nature in a classical sense Brown is creating longevity, perhaps destroying nature to replace it with an unrealistic standard of it is doing the opposite. Symes explains how



Richard Payne Knight is of the opinion that Brown's landscapes 'destroyed long-established nature' (2016, p.12), which is easily supported by the fact that swaths of landscape, including slopes and trees, had to be removed in a laborious process from at least 1765 (Finch, 2020, p.83). By destroying existing landscape and replacing it with idealised nature, then he is opposing one of the strongest forces on earth, an opposition that is sure to fail in time. Perhaps this argument could be made, but the fact that Brown's landscape has lasted as long as it has is, a testament to its longevity, ultimately supporting the idea that the classicism of Harewood displays the permanence of the Lascelles' slavery profits to a significant extent.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, Carr, Adam and Brown, under the watchful eye of Edwin Lascelles, manifested a plethora of classical symbols and structures that display the house, and by extension, the family, as secure, long-lasting and powerful. The connection between Harewood and a Roman arch celebrating Constantine's victory in battle is a pertinent one, personifying the acquisition of wealth by the Lascelles as a victory over others. Adam, and his recognisable interior styling, presented an undeniable relationship with an antiquarian monument and made sure to display the family's long lasting economic security to visitors as soon as they stepped onto the threshold. Furthermore, Brown's landscaping, in which the house sits so effortlessly, creates the Enlightened and classical connection to nature, making sure classicism across the estate reinforces their personal wealth. In conclusion therefore, the classicism of Carr, Adam and Brown in Harewood House reinforced and established the personal wealth of the Lascelles family, gained from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, to a significant extent.

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