

**THE FISHERS OF YORK: A PROVINCIAL CARVER'S
WORKSHOP IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES**

VOLUME 1 OF FOUR VOLUMES

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**Thesis being presented for the award
of the Degree of Doctor Philosophy
The University of York
The History Department**

September 1996

THE FISHERS OF YORK: A PROVINCIAL CARVER'S WORKSHOP IN THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES.

Abstract

The first reference to work by Richard Fisher appears in 1729, and three generations followed in his footsteps as carvers. Until 1886 the Fishers' sculpture practice played an important part in providing the aristocracy and gentry of Yorkshire (and beyond) with items carved in wood and marble. Their specialities were chimneypieces and church memorials, and the history of the workshop has been traced through recording, photographing and analyzing its known works.

Little or nothing has been written about the workshop since the 1950s, and even then the Fishers rated little more than a mention, possibly because there seems to be no archival material surviving from the practice. The aim of the thesis has been to consider the place of the workshop in York against a background of patronage and workshop and sculptural practice. Finance and competition, both local and metropolitan, have also been investigated. The thesis is supported by a catalogue contained in three volumes, complete with photographic records. One provides a detailed analysis of decorative carving undertaken by or attributed to the practice, two contain similar data on funeral monuments, signed or attributed to the Fishers, executed during the course of the hundred and fifty years the workshop was in existence.

The result is that for the first time substantial evidence has been brought together about the practice of sculpture in an eighteenth and nineteenth century English provincial town.

Acknowledgements

To mention by name all the people who have helped to make the writing of this thesis possible would involve compiling an inordinately long list.

My thanks, therefore, must be expressed in 'blanket' form - firstly, to the many vicars, churchwardens, property owners and administrators who have been so generous with their time and so helpful by allowing me to record and take photographs. Then I must thank the friends who have accompanied me on many of these visits - their company has been invaluable, as has their support.

Next, I must record my gratitude to my three supervisors for their guidance - Mr. Malcolm Baker, Professor Richard Marks and Dr. Mark Hallett, with whose help the work has reached fruition. The contributions made by Dr. Jim Sharp and Dr. Jim Binns must also be acknowledged. Not to be forgotten are other members of the History Department at the University of York, and the many staff members of the various Libraries I have used. These include the J.B. Morrell Library, the Library at the King's Manor, the Local History Section of York Central Library, the Minster Library and the Library of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

To this summary should be added the many Archive Departments which have given me help. I am particularly grateful to the City Archives in York, York City Art Gallery, the Borthwick Institute, the West, North and East Ridings County Records Offices, and the Guildhall Library in London. I am also indebted to the Trustees of the Countess Fitzwilliam's Wentworth Settlement for allowing me to quote from the Wentworth Archives, and to the Yorkshire Museum for permitting me to photograph the Jupiter.

Over the course of the years invaluable assistance has been afforded me by Mr. David Alexander, Dr. Terry Friedman, the late Dr. Eric Gee, Mr. Dick Read, the York carver, and Dr. Ingrid Roscoe. I am most grateful to them all. I must also acknowledge the generosity of Mr. David Pool of York in allowing me to include his listing of the graves in York Cemetery carved by the Fisher workshop.

All the photographs have been taken by the author with the exception of the Buller memorial in Exeter (1772), and the monuments in London (1798), Bolton (1810) and Rochdale (1813); for these I must thank Miss Pamela Jones, Mr. Ralph Copnall, Mr. Robert Findlay and Miss Sybil Whitworth. The photograph of the tomb of Antoine Triest, Bishop of Ghent, in the Cathedral of St. Bavo in Ghent was reproduced from a slide kindly supplied by the Cathedral authorities.

I am also indebted to North Yorkshire County Council for providing financial assistance, without which this project would not have been possible.

Finally, I must thank the family for their interest and belief in the whole project, and particularly my sister, Rosita Whittall, for her meticulous proof reading of the text, which has been of immense value.

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VOLUME 2

Key to the Format Used in the Catalogue
Chronological List of Decorative Carvings
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**THE FISHERS OF YORK: A PROVINCIAL CARVER'S
WORKSHOP IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES.**

VOLUME 3

Key to the Format Used in the Catalogue

Chronological List of 18th Century Monuments, indicating whether or not signed, and type of memorial.

Chronological Catalogue of 18th Century Monumental Sculpture

Abbreviations

VOLUME 4

Key to the Format Used in the Catalogue

Chronological List of 19th Century Monuments, indicating whether or not signed, and type of memorial

Chronological Catalogue of 19th Century Monumental Sculpture

Examples of Graves from the Fisher Workshop in York Cemetery

Chronological List of Graves in York Cemetery (by courtesy of Mr. David Pool of York).

Geographical Distribution List.

Alphabetical Index, including those whose monuments still have to be recorded.

Abbreviations

THE FISHERS OF YORK - A PROVINCIAL CARVER'S WORKSHOP IN THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES

INTRODUCTION

1

My maternal great-grandmother was Anne Beale, née Fisher. When her sister, Mary Ann, died in 1911, her obituary notice in the *Yorkshire Gazette*¹ read:

The death of Miss Mary Ann Fisher, of 35 St. Saviourgte, York, which has occurred at the ripe old age of 90, removes a member of an old York family whose name has figured largely in the history of the City. She was one of the daughters of Mr. Charles Fisher, a well-known sculptor ... whose ancestors were also prominent sculptors of their day ... It is also interesting to recall that Mr. John Fisher, a brother of the deceased, carried on the sculptor's art until his death ...'

John died on 10th September 1884; so too did the family business, after functioning for one hundred and fifty-five years.

In *Sculpture in Britain, 1530-1830*² Margaret Whinney writes that 'A large amount of work of all kinds in the north of England was produced by three generations of this family [the Fishers], some of it being of high quality.' Little if anything, other than footnotes, has been written about the workshop, apart from my essay, "The Fishers of York: A Family of Sculptors" published in the *York Historian* in 1986.^{2a} Four generations were involved in its output and its life spanned five reigns - from George II (1720-60) to Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Such a family business clearly offers a unique opportunity to study the running of a provincial sculptor's practice. This, therefore, is the aim of the thesis.

2

One facet of sculpture in eighteenth century England was 'the growth of good provincial workshops' and again the Fishers' workshop has been cited as an example.³ The founder of the York workshop was Richard Fisher. The first reference I found describing him as 'carver' dates from 1729 and was in the account books of Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven Hall, near Knaresborough,⁴ and between 1730 and 1745 similar entries appeared in the ledgers of other members of the aristocracy and landed gentry in the north of England. Then in 1746 a 'puff' in the *York Journal*⁵ indicated that Richard Fisher, 'carver and statuary', had moved from Ripon to York and set up there in the Minster Yard (Illustration 1).

— THE WEST-END OF THE CATHEDRAL-CHURCH OF ST. PETER IN YORK. —



The Grand and noble Structure of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter in York, as it is at present, and as it was in the 14th Century, by Francis Place, Esq. and Jan Kip & Pierce Tempest, 1730.

Illustration 1 - 'The West-End of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter in York', 1730, etching by Jan Kip & Pierce Tempest after Francis Place, (Evelyn Collection, York City Art Gallery)

His two sons, John and Samuel, followed their father's profession, as did John's six sons. Charles, the youngest, outlived his brothers and one of his sons, another John, became the last of the line to run the workshop, dying, as stated earlier, in 1884.

3

York was an ideal city in which to set up a workshop (Illustration 2). Here I feel it will be helpful to sketch in some of the city's social and economic characteristics in this period, before going on to discuss the sources I have used for my study. Daniel Defoe, writing at the end of the first quarter of the century recorded that there was 'no trade indeed, except such as depends upon the confluence of the gentry ... York is full of gentry and persons of distinction, so they live at large, and have houses proportioned to their quality, ... nowhere in England was better furnished with provisions of every kind, nor any so cheap, in proportion to the goodness of things ...' He also recorded that 'the river being so navigable, and so near the sea, the merchants here trade directly to what part of the world they will: for ships of any burthen come up within thirty mile of the city, and small craft from sixty to eighty ton, and under, come up to the very city' (Illustration 3). Among the imports so transported via Hull were French and Portuguese wines and timber from Norway. Coal was brought in from Northumberland and Durham but was also ferried in down the Aire and Calder rivers from Wakefield and Leeds.⁶

Ten years later, in 1736, Drake confirmed Defoe's findings:

The chief support of the city, at present, is the resort to and residence of several country gentlemen with their families in it. These have found, by experience, that living in York is so much cheaper than London, that it is even less expensive than living in their own houses in the country. The great variety of provisions, with which our markets abound, make it very easy to furnish out an elegant table at a moderate rate.⁷

As will be shown, it was York's unique relationship with the gentry of the county that facilitated the Fishers' success. The account books of William Danby of Swinton Castle, which date from the second half of the century, support the fact that he certainly made use of all that the City offered. Here he bought his hats from Hotham, visited Dr. Dealtry, paying a guinea for each consultation, and paid the Fishers for gilding his picture frames, for 'carved Work'.⁸

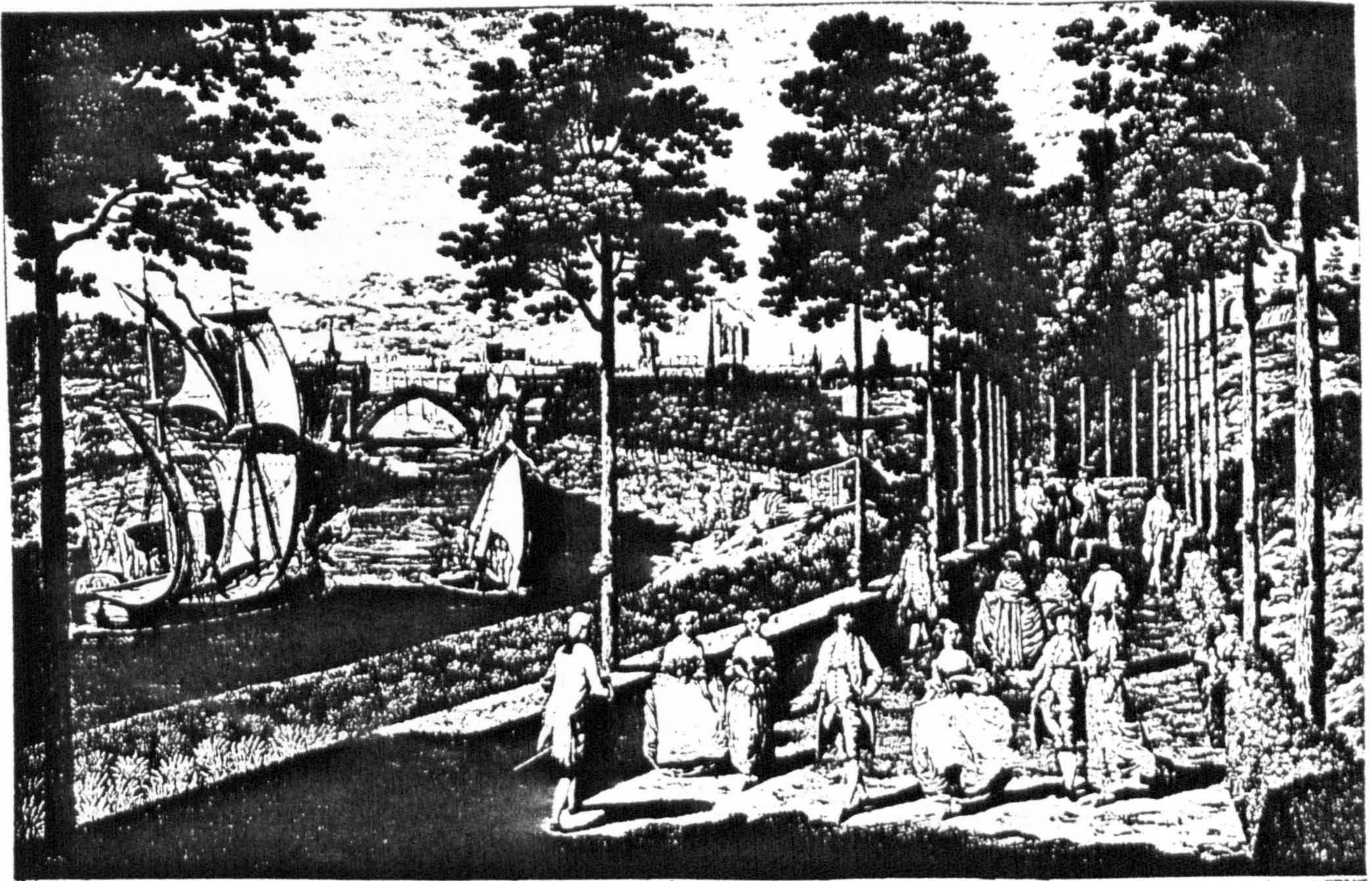
To encourage the gentry to live in York the City Corporation kept the streets clean and well lit at night, and in 1730 constructed the New Walk (Illustration 4), a river-side path beside St. George's Field, tree-lined and stretching for 480 yards to the mouth of the Foss from the City Walls. Such was its popularity that it was lengthened by three-quarters of a mile towards Fulford, beyond the mouth of the Foss which could be crossed by a wooden bridge.⁹ In 1752, when York took its only step to becoming a spa, the Pikeing Well was built on the second stretch.

Twice a year the assize courts were held and in the preceeding weeks the *York Courant* was full of information about the special events to be held. Drake described the summer sessions in the *Eboracum* - 'the grand meeting of the nobility and gentry of the north and other parts of England' was in August, when they were 'drawn thither by the hope of being agreeably entertained, for a week, in horseracing, balls, assemblies, etc.'¹⁰

Although Francis Drake frowned on horse racing, which he regarded as a 'barbarous diversion', its importance to York cannot be underestimated. It brought into the city not only 'the country people in vast crowds, but the gentry, nay even the clergy and prime nobility are mixed amongst them.'¹¹ The *York-Courant* carried racing information all through the year, giving the results of race meetings throughout the country and details of cock fights (and sometimes mains of stags) arranged to take place at the same time as the race meetings.

Two men who played an important part in the success of the Fisher workshop were equally influential within York's genteel society: John Carr, the York architect, and The Marquis of Rockingham. In 1734, because of summer floodings of the River Ouse at Clifton Ings, racing was transferred to the Knavesmire, and in 1753 a competition for the design of a new grandstand. It was won by John Carr, who had been the man responsible for the building of the Pikeing Well on New Walk the previous year. The Marquis of Rockingham was the instigator of the scheme to build this stand and it was paid for by the opening of a subscription list.¹² (Illustration 5).

Subscription lists, both public and private, appear to have been the preferred method of advance payment in York in the eighteenth century when ventures were mooted, ensuring that the commission only went ahead when the cost was covered. Two hundred and nine people bought £25 shares



To the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen and Corporation of the City of YORK:
 this Prospect of a Noble TERRAS WALK
 laid out at their Expense, is most Humbly Dedicated by their
 most Obedient Servant
 Nathan Drake.

And this pleasant Walk is near a Mile in length but for the Advantage of seeing the fine
 Bridge and Cathedral &c. this View was taken from near the Water

Illustration 4 - 'Prospect of a Noble Terras Walk', 1756
 Etching and Engraving by Charles Grignion after Nathan Drake
 (York City Art Gallery)

when the Assembly Rooms were built to the design of Lord Burlington in 1731/1732, the list reading like Burke's *Peerage*³ (Illustration 6), and including many names of members of families for whom the Fishers worked.

In 1784 the public was invited to subscribe to Sir George Savile's monument, and the contract was awarded to John Fisher. According to the *York Courant* of 9th March of that year, 'Subscriptions for defraying the Expence' would be received immediately. Unfortunately the list of contributors' names has not so far been traced.

Drake's *Eboracum*, which was privately printed, was paid for by subscription, and it was possible to make advance payments for the weekly 'musick assembly', for the twice-weekly appearance of the 'stage-players' (a new theatre was built in 1734), and for the Monday evening assembly when people gathered 'to dance, play at cards, and amuse themselves with other innocent diversions.'⁴

Writing in his autobiography c. 1766-1771, Tate Wilkinson, the York actor-manager and writer, confirmed that the normal pattern of life existing in the first fifty years of the century continued into the second half. The city '... is chiefly supported by the genteel private families that reside there in a continuance; York is thinned as to resort of company, (public weeks excepted) unless the latter part of the winter season, near the Lent assizes ...'⁵

While there was little manufacturing carried on in York, members of the building trade were kept occupied during the eighteenth century. At the beginning of the century a number of private houses were built, particularly in Micklegate. In 1705 the Debtors' Prison was erected, the Mansion House was begun in 1725, and the Assembly Rooms in 1731/2 (Illustration 7). Between 1760 and 1762 Fairfax House and Castlegate House were built by John Carr, and the Assize Courts and the Female Prison followed between 1773-1780. (Illustration 8), as did Bootham Park Asylum (Illustration 9). All these buildings (and many others) provided work for York men. It is possible to trace the passage of individual workers from building to building, like William and John Etty, father and son, who were both joiners, or Thomas Perritt, the plasterer.'⁶ The Retreat, the Quaker asylum, was built in 1796, with public building continuing on into the next century, the Yorkshire Museum being erected by William Wilkins for the Yorkshire Philosophical Society between 1828 and 1830.

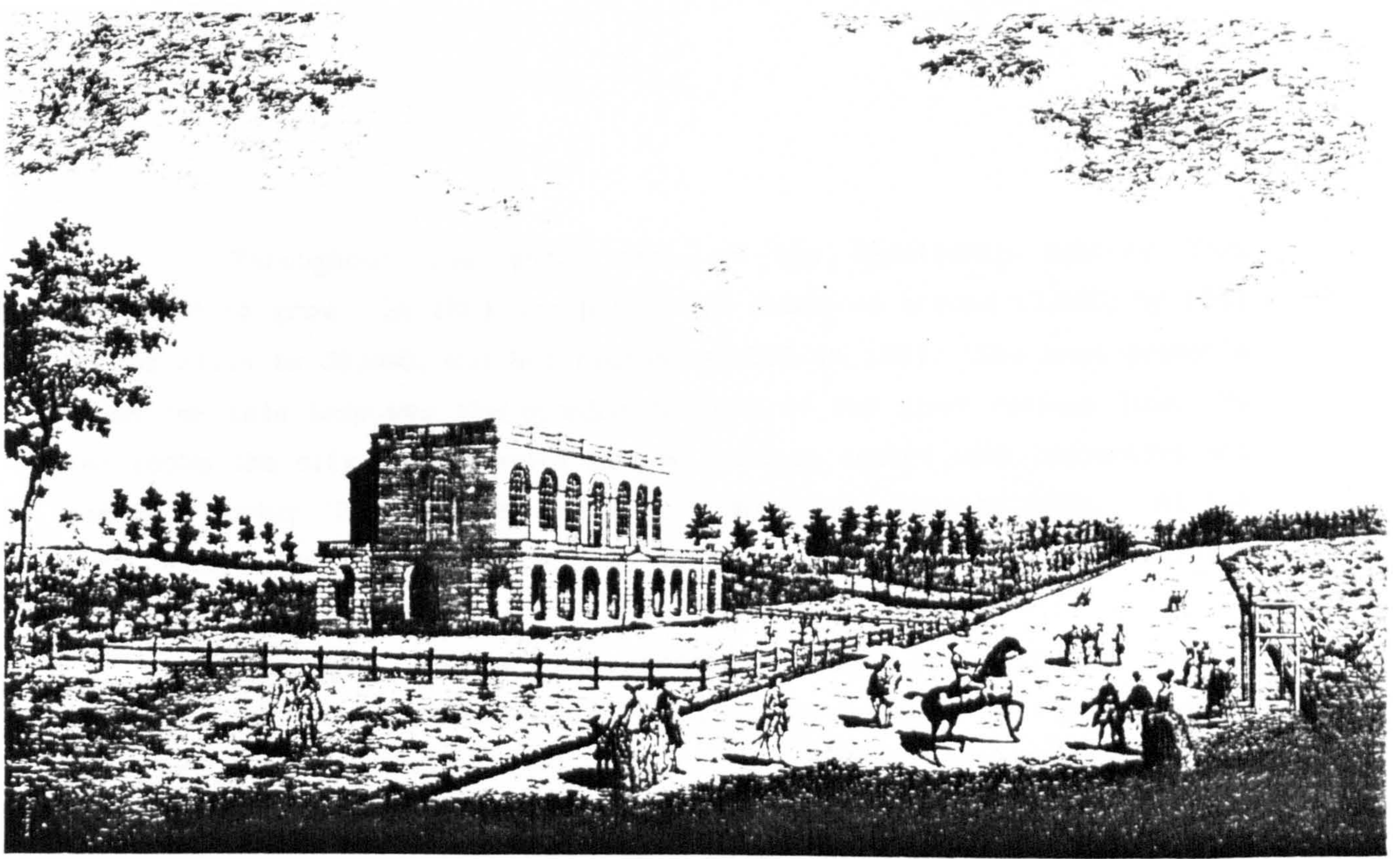
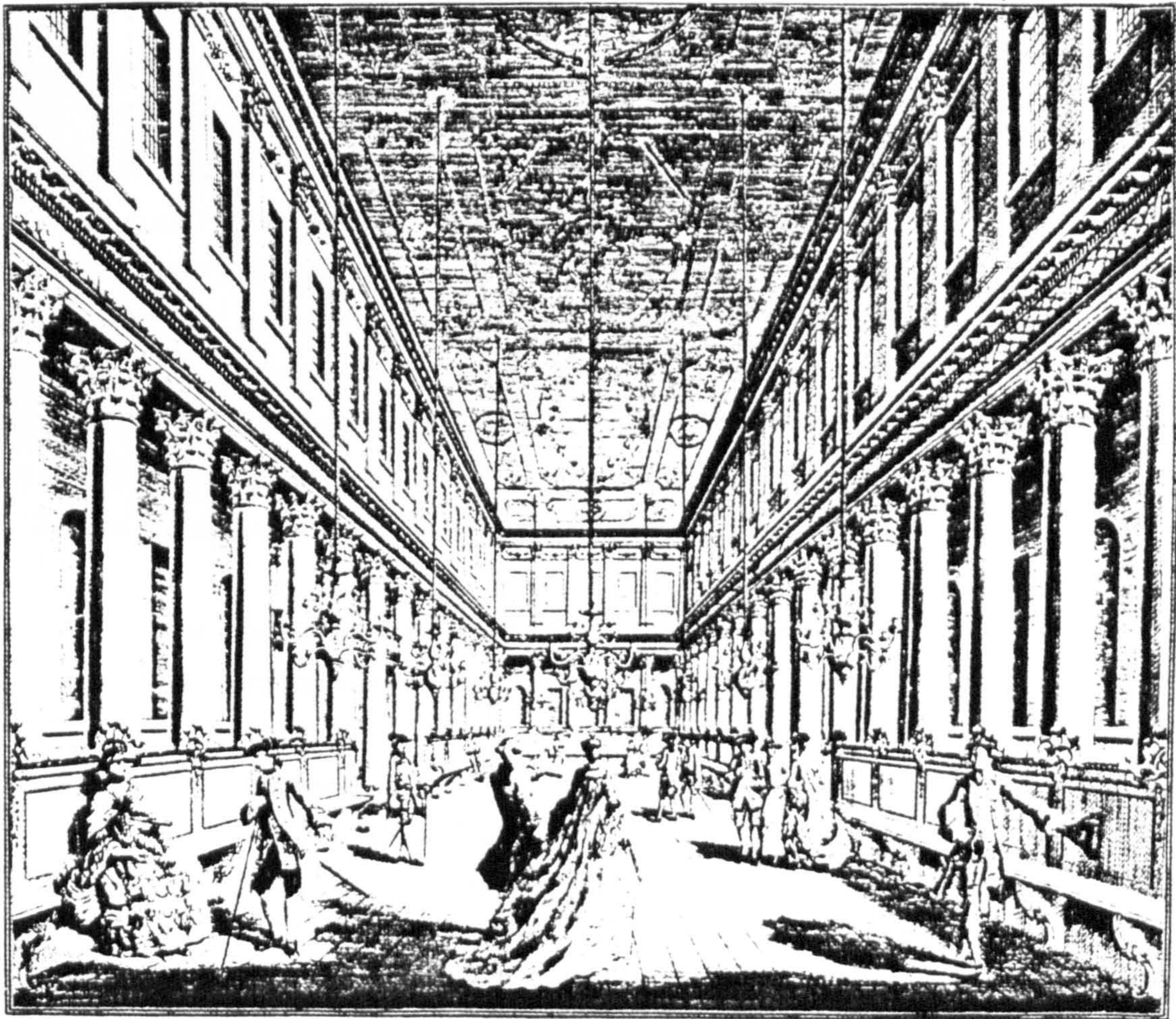


Illustration 5 - 'A View of the Grand Stand and Part of the Horse Course on Knavesmire near York', c. 1760 - Etching by William Lindley (York City Art Gallery)



A Perspective View of the inside of the Grand Assembly Room, in Blake Street, YORK.

Illustration 6 - 'A Perspective View of the inside of the Grand Assembly Room in Blake Street', 1759 - Etching and wash by William Lindley (Evelyn Collection, York City Art Gallery)

Throughout the early part of the nineteenth century York continued to grow. In 1801 the population numbered around 17,000; by 1841 it had risen to 30,000, and had reached 40,359 in 1851. The most probable cause for this leap was the opening in 1839 of the first railway line. By the 1850s the city had expanded into a railway centre with locomotive and carriage works; 76 trains a day were running into York by 1854. At the same time, other trades were now sited in York besides those already operating.¹⁷

Although York does not appear to have been affected by the changes experienced in other towns and cities because of the quickening pace of the Industrial Revolution, the growth of consumerism was nationwide. Advertisements in the local newspapers show that, alongside Fisher, jewellers and other purveyors of luxury items saw the advantage of moving to York to sell their wares.¹⁸

Taking into consideration the advantages enjoyed by the gentry living in or within easy access of the City, York was an ideal place in which to establish a sculpture parlour. Here the gentry, a ready-made clientele, could satisfy their needs for funeral monuments, carved ornaments and chimneypieces, at the same time as they spent their money on other luxury goods and enjoyed the numerous social diversions on offer. To be able to examine the Fishers' sculptural output over a long period has presented a chance to at least partially remedy the problems caused by the limited amount of information available on provincial workshops, and the York practice in particular. What, however, were the sources I could call upon to proceed with this project?

4

The sources used throughout my research have been two-fold - physical and documentary. Initially two lists were compiled from the secondary literature on English eighteenth century sculpture. One was of the funerary monuments, the other of ornamental carvings from the workshop. These were then used on follow-up visits to the churches and houses where the carvings were to be found and the individual items photographed, described and the epitaphs recorded because of their importance. (In the preface to Volume 1 of *Monumenta Anglicana* John Le Neve quotes Sir Henry Chauncey's views on the preserving of inscriptions on monuments and gravestones: 'these being Memorials of our once

flourishing Ancestors, designed to perpetuate their Remembrance to future Ages ..."¹⁹) Both lists were added to as new material was found.

Primary documentary evidence was sought and consulted. So far nothing emanating from the workshop itself has been found. Presumably there would have been a pattern book for the monumental work, with any designs for chimneypieces remaining in the possession of the patrons. I do have photographs of designs for two chimneypieces at Wentworth Woodhouse, one of which was endorsed on the reverse by John Fisher, but the whereabouts of the original drawings is not known. The collections of drawings held by the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Courtauld Institute still need to be searched, but the Drawings Collection at the Royal Society of British Architects has nothing to offer, either of the Fishers or of any of the architects with whom they were known to work. In the archives at Wolterton Hall there are three drawings, presumably by Thomas Ripley, which refer to chimneypieces on the *piano nobile*. Although a number of Carr's original drawings exist in various archives, I have had difficulty in locating some of the papers and drawings from his architectural practice in York in the eighteenth century.

Manuscript sources quoted in the thesis have so far, with the exception of one, all related to monies paid for chimneypieces and decorative carvings. The exception was the sum of £3. 3. Od. paid to John Fisher by William Danby of Swinton Castle on 19th July 1792 for the addition of a 'border of black marble' to his father's monument in Masham.²⁰ Apart from the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments at Sheffield to which I was unable to have access because of industrial action, I have had sight of all manuscript sources quoted.

The York City Archives were searched for apprentice records, for Freedoms, for bankruptcy proceedings, and for rates returns. Maps were consulted in the Minster Library and the Borthwick Institute, where wills, assessments for properties in Minster Yard and parish registers were also searched. The omission of church faculties from this list may seem strange, but the North and West Riding County Archives failed to yield evidence of any and literature in the Minster Library²¹ suggested that faculties were not essential to the setting up of monuments until the mid-nineteenth century. This line of research was shelved.

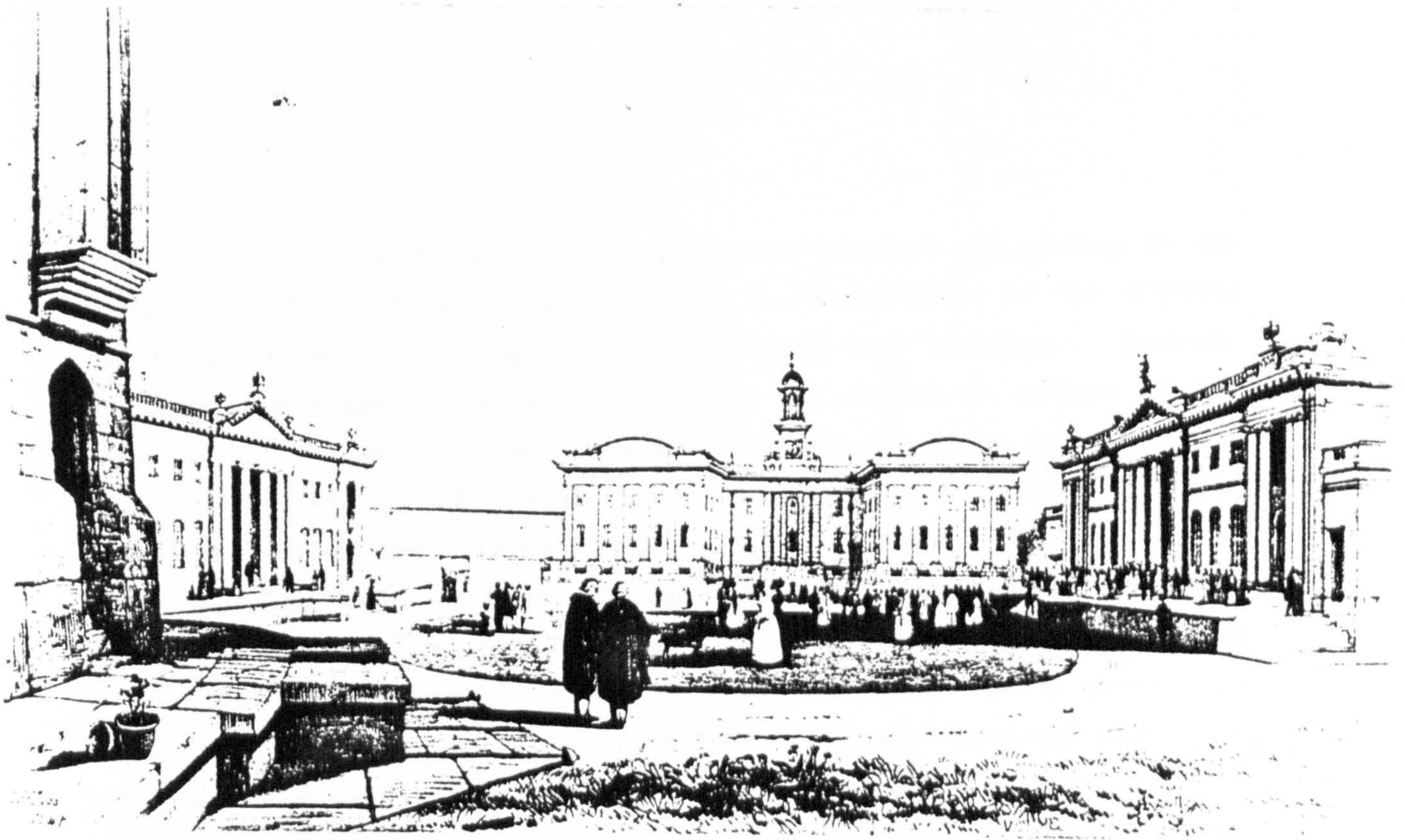


Illustration 8 - 'View in the Castle Yard', 1841
Two-toned Lithograph by J.H. Lee (York City Art Gallery)



Illustration 9 - Bootham Asylum, c. 1840
Lithograph, attributed to William Monkhouse (York City Art Gallery),

The time factor and the distances involved in getting to the various archives offices have precluded the examination of the archival material of some of the many patrons of the workshop. However, contemporary literature on late seventeenth and eighteenth century carvers was studied, for example the *Notebooks* of George Vertue,²² which span the years 1713-1746, and J.T. Smith's book, *Nollekens and His Times*,²³ published five years after the artist's death in 1823. Diaries and local guides were consulted, where available, as were the then current pattern books.

The local newspapers were scanned for announcements of births, deaths and marriages relating not only to the family but to patrons as well; 'puffs', advertisement and notices about the workshop were also recorded, with the eighteenth century papers receiving closer attention than those of the following decades. This was because of the sheer weight of extraneous information to be covered as the size of the papers grew and the numbers preserved increased.

5

The publication in 1964 of a seminal book by Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain, 1530-1830*,²⁴ acted as a spur to researchers.²⁵ Since then their findings have been published both in hard-back form, in art journals and in the catalogues of exhibitions. However, these findings, and those in another important book, also by Margaret Whinney, *English Sculpture 1720-1830*,²⁶ tend to deal in depth with artists who mainly worked in London. For Nicholas Penny 'The profession tended to divide into a few great sculptors ...'²⁷ and these major craftsmen almost invariably had premises in the capital. This approach applies equally to articles and books and to unpublished theses. The London-based sculptor Roubiliac is a case in point; he has been the subject of numerous papers written by Malcolm Baker and David Bindman, who are the co-authors of a book recently published about this sculptor, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth Century Monument*.²⁸ Two important and to date unpublished theses relating to eighteenth century metropolitan carvers are Ingrid Roscoe's "Peter Scheemakers and Classical Sculpture in Early Georgian England"²⁹ and Matthew Craske's "The London Trade in Monumental Sculpture".³⁰

Two books by Geoffrey Beard, *Georgian Craftsmen and their Work*³¹ and *Interior Decoration in England, 1660-1820*³² are foremost among the many 'coffee-table books' on architecture and interiors which have

appeared during the past twenty years, which complement the numerous articles by different authors which have been published by *Country Life*. These sources often provide information on 'minor sculptors ... or superior stone-masons'³³ and the part played by local workshops in construction and decoration.

Although the monuments in York Minster have received a good deal of attention over the last quarter century,³⁴ for specific information on monumental sculpture and sculptors in Yorkshire, one has to turn first to Katherine Esdaile.³⁵ Her work was published in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* between 1940 and 1947, and provides an alphabetical list of carvers whose work can be found in the Ridings. The period covered is from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century when, as she writes, 'the *coup de grace* [was] given by the Oxford Movement, which disapproved of monuments on principle.' Mrs. Esdaile admits that her essay represented the sum of her 'knowledge only, which is necessarily limited'. The fifth chapter in J.B. Morrell's *York Monuments*,³⁶ meanwhile, deals specifically with Georgian monuments and supplies some information about York workshops, apprentices and freemen.

'The chief fields in which English eighteenth-century sculptors worked were statues and busts, both of the living and the dead, busts being far more numerous than whole figures; funerary monuments, which may indicate a burial or may be purely commemorative; reliefs, often but not always for chimney-pieces; and garden ornaments.'³⁷

This statement may be confirmed by referring to the pages of *A Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851* by Rupert Gunnis, first published in 1954; in it the author provides potted biographies of the carvers and also lists *all* their then known works in considerable detail.³⁸ The working lists used to verify and record the works from the Fishers' practice were compiled from information culled from these three sources, combined with data taken from a search made of all the volumes comprising Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's series, *Buildings of England*.³⁹

Initially much general reading was undertaken on consumerism, urbanization, the Industrial Revolution and on sales of luxury wares, which afforded a valuable overview when deciding how to structure the thesis.⁴⁰

When the content of the thesis was originally outlined the emphasis lay on the running of the workshop in the eighteenth century. Special attention was to be paid to the changes in social and economic conditions, to the tastes of the emergent 'middling' classes, and to the relationship between sculpture workshops and the luxury goods trade, not only in York but in other urban centres and London. At this time the format was decided upon for the recording of data for the catalogues, and this form has been used throughout. A chart was also devised on which to manually record details for future analysis, for example, the use of coloured marbles, signatures, sex and status of patrons, etc. When advice was sought on the possibility of setting up a data base for this purpose it transpired that numerically it was not really feasible.

In time I also began to investigate the workshop in the nineteenth century, thus providing a much fuller picture of the life of the practice and highlighting the changes experienced. This alteration led to the discovery of an aspect of the workshop hitherto unrecorded: the carving of gravestones. However, because of the sheer scale of the Fishers' output, based on the number of stones found in York cemetery, this side of the business has not been explored.

In the latter stages of the thesis I decided that, although of great interest, the inclusion of information about consumerism and urbanization and other luxury trades in York detracted from its real aim - to consider in depth the work of a provincial sculptor's workshop in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The changes have led to a more complete study of the workshop, and the thesis is complemented by three catalogues containing detailed information on the carvers' output. There are still some monuments to be listed, either because it has not been possible to gain access to the churches or because new information is only just coming to light. A full examination of the patrons' archives relating to John Carr's architectural work is needed to confirm the attributions made for the provision, by the workshop, of chimneypieces and decorative carving.

However, the thesis provides, for the first time, an analysis of the scope of a provincial carver's workshop over a hundred and fifty years, and the photographs provide a valuable illustration of the different styles

of design used during this time. It is, as far as I am aware, the only major work completed on the Fisher workshop which shows both the scale of its production and the countrywide spread of its work, from Exeter in the southwest to Newcastle in the northeast.

Introduction

References and Footnotes

- 1 *Yorkshire Gazette*, 21 October 1911.
- 2 Whinney, M., *Sculpture in Britain, 1530-1830* (London, 1964), p. 173.
- 2a Myerscough, P.C., "The Fishers of York: A Family of Sculptors", *York Historian* (York, 1986), vol. 7, pp. 46-59.
- 3 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p. 131.
- 4 Slingsby Papers, DD56; DD148, p. 12, Yorkshire Archaeological Society,
- 5 *York Journal*, 15 July 1746.
- 6 Defoe, Daniel, *A Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain, (1724-1726)*, P. Rogers, (ed.) (London, 1986), p. 521.
- 7 Drake, Francis, *Eboracum* (London, 1736) (republished Wakefield, 1978) pp. 238-240.
- 8 Swinton Archives, Household accounts, Ref. 2S, Mic. 2290-91, NYCRO.
- 9 Murray, H., S. Riddick & R. Green, *York Through the Eyes of the Artist* (York 1990), p. 136.
- 10 Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 241. Note: In 1754 subscription to the Assembly was 506, and among the company present were two dukes, a marquis, 7 earls, 4 viscounts and their ladies, besides two or three dozens of honourables, baronets and knights.' On 31st August 1768 the King of Denmark and his entourage visited York and stayed at Bluitt's Inn, while in 1789 the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York attended the Races on Monday, 24th August, holding a levée in the Wednesday morning at Bluitt's Hotel where they lodged. In: C.B. Knight, *A History of the City of York* (York, 1944), p. 542 & p. 546.
- 11 Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 241. According to Drake the racing was judged to be the best in England; it brought great benefit to the city and citizens 'by being the occasion that some thousands of pounds are annually spent in it in a week's time. Lodgings for that week are usually let at a guinea room.'
- 12 Grimston Archives, York Racecourse Papers, EYCRO.
- 13 Proposals to finance the building first published in a broadsheet in March 1730. 12 Directors were selected from the subscribers. Eventually subscriptions amounted to £5,500, but probably didn't cover the building costs which were possibly paid off out of profits. The first dividend was paid in 1736 on £5,275. Apparently the financial arrangements were very suspect, with dividends being declared but not paid. By 1747 the assemblies were not so well attended; directorship was in the hands of two or three local people and the day to day management was by a steward, Reuben Terry, from the 1730s to 1760. From the 1760s only used twice a week, principally by dancing masters and for occasional concerts. A revival in 1770, 1775-5, but otherwise a gradual downwards swing until the 1820s and 30s. The County Hospital acquired most of Burlington's shares from the Duke of Devonshire in the 18th century and was the largest shareholder in 1924. Notes compiled from *The Victoria County History of Yorkshire*, pp. 531-532; Wittkower, R., *History of York Assembly Rooms* (York, 1951). Pamphlet prepared for York Corporation.
- 14 Drake, *Eboracum*, p. 240. 'About twenty years ago a weekly assembly was begun here, where gentlemen and ladies met every *Monday* night to dance, play at cards, and amuse themselves with the other innocent diversions of the place. It was first set up at the *Manor*, was several years kept in the Lord Irwin's house in the *Minster* yard, and is now continued in the room built on purpose for it in the new building'.
- 15 Tate Wilkinson, *Memorials of his own Life*, (4 volumes, 1709), vol. 4, in J. Crowther (ed.), *Descriptions of East Yorkshire: De La Pryme to Head* (Beverley, 1992), p. 18.
- 16 Myerscough, P.C., "York Craftsmen between 1700 and 1750". Lecture Notes for Seminar 'From Revolution to Rococo - The Decorative Arts in the Early 18th Century', held from 15-19 April 1991 by York Art Studies.

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Chapter 1 Position and Patronage

1

In 1714 Bernard Mandeville' in *The Fable of the Bees* likened the hive to England with 'the entire population addicted to luxury' while 'its prosperity stemmed directly from its self-indulgence', the moral being 'gather ye rosebuds while ye may' and enjoy the opportunities presented. Sculpture must surely be regarded as a luxury rather than a necessity, so this chapter is designed to look at trade in York in general, and to consider the patrons who spent their money in the city.

2

It would seem that Richard Fisher was probably fortunate in being able to set up his workshop in York, and suggests that he might have had the backing of someone with status in the hierarchy of the city. The charters for the city of York set out in Francis Drake's *Eboracum*, published in 1736,² confirm the suggestion made by R.B. Wragg that 'Corporation policy was against the introduction of new industry and crafts.'³ Twelve years earlier, in 1724, Defoe had pointed out that the only trade in York depended 'upon the confluence of the gentry.'⁴ As has already been shown in the Introduction, the presence of the gentry continued to pertain throughout the century and provided a valid reason for the establishment and continuing existence of a sculpture workshop in the city. There was some small scale industrial development: comb-making, toy-making, glass painting, flour milling, iron founding and the manufacture of printing inks.⁵ Pigot's *General Directory for 1816-17* confirms that there was still an absence of industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁶

Although there is a lack of information about the earlier part of the century, in 1785 York was one of the towns selected for inclusion in a survey into the distribution of shops in the English city. Out of 486 establishments 57 were run by bakers or provision dealers. Shop rents were assessed for tax purposes and 69.6% fell into the £5-15 band; this compared with 62.9% of all provincial shops and 25.6% of those in London. 25.9% paid between £15-25, but only four shops came in the

highest group of '£25 and over', being assessed as paying between £30-£35.⁷ The implication is that the majority of shops in York were small enterprises.

Figures available in the Public Records Office have enabled a calculation to be made of the income and expenditure of the principal York shop keepers in 1797⁸. Table 1 contains information extracted from these findings for tea dealers, jewellers, and perfumers and hairdressers. There is no information about the financial returns from any of these businesses, but the jewellers average annual income of £150 was slightly higher than that of the tea dealers, and 30% more than the perfumers and hairdressers in the City in 1797. The intention was to see how the Fishers' workshop fitted into this general pattern.

In tracing church faculties for the installation of monuments carved by the Fishers, it had been hoped to find out what the workshop was charging for the memorials. By averaging the number of monuments carved in a year and multiplying it by one such figure it should have been possible to gain some idea of their income. Nothing has come to light, however; the only two faculties found so far have not provided the information sought. In general, until the 1830s when the Anglican church went through a period of reform, the erection of monuments in churches was very much a matter for the owner of the benefice, the vicar and the parishioners.

Again, if the workshop had been covered against fire its value might have appeared in the Indexes of the Fire Insurance Policies of the Sun Fire Office and the Royal Exchange Assurance.⁹ A search of the records has revealed that it was not insured. Banking archives, similarly, have proved disappointing.

3

Besides perfumers, jewellers, gold and silversmiths and tea and coffee dealers, the advertisements in the York newspapers cover a miscellany of luxury items such as clocks, keyboard instruments, and wallpaper supplies. Other 'luxury trades' operating in the city were coaching, and a service closely allied to the monumental side of the sculptor's practice, undertaking. This service seems to have been offered by cabinet-makers.¹⁰ Besides the City's place in the social life of Yorkshire it had always been an army town, and in 1795 York became one

Principal Shopkeepers of York -
Income, Expenditure and Assessed Taxes, 1797

	Number	Income		Expenditure		Assessed Taxes		
		Average £	Range £	Average £	Range £	Average £ : s	Range £ : s £ : s	
Jewellers	3	150	150	107	100-200	4 : 10	3 : 3-	5 : 9
Tea Dealers	8	149	60-300	123	60-250	4 : 18	2 : 0-	11 : 2
Perfumers & Hairdressers	7	94	60-200	87	60-150	3 : 9	2 : 4-	6 : 3

Extracted from Table 24, p. 129 of *Shops & Shopkeeping in Eighteenth Century England* by Mui, H-C. & L.H. Mui, Routledge, 1989. Figures taken from PRO 30/8/281, fols. 72-82b.

Table 1

of the country's established military stations.''. It was also an ecclesiastical centre, both professions warranting the presence of specialized outfitters'².

The businesses of the jewellers and gold and silversmiths were perhaps more akin to the running of a sculptor's practice because they were almost owned by craftsmen or employed craftsmen in their workshops. Mourning rings, for example, were part of their stock in trade, as were brooches with twists of the deceased's hair trapped behind glass on the underside, Whitby jet earrings, necklaces, and all manner of mourning jewellery. In 1748 Ambrose Beckwith went into partnership as a jeweller, advertising periodically in the *York Courant* that 'His constant Demand enables him to give utmost Value.'³ That there was a 'constant demand' in York is reinforced by the fact that in 1756 a jeweller from London, P. Goulet, staying at the 'Golden Crown' in Petergate, 'makes and sells in the newest and neatest taste ... plain gold and Mourning Rings, very neat, all on the most reasonable terms.' Trade was so good that by 1760 he had moved from Leicester-Fields in London, established himself in Blake Street in York, and taken 'a Shop in the Long-Room Street, Scarborough, for the season.'^{3A} One of the advantages of jewellery as a luxury item was, of course, that it could be pawned readily in time of trouble.

While it is not possible to calculate the number of mourning rings sold in York, a clue as to their popularity lies in the fact that when Samuel Pepys died he willed 128 rings; falling into three price bands they cost over £100. In his will Sir James Sanderson (see Catalogue entry under 1798) not only gave instructions for his monument but for 'good substantial mourning Rings to the Court of the Common Council of the ward of Bridge and to sutch of our ffriends whose Names shall be inserted by me in a paper marked A.'⁴

4

The role the aristocracy and gentry played in the life of the City has already been touched upon in the Introduction - they came in their greatest numbers for Race Week when the 'Yorkies' let their houses to incomers. Numerous advertisements offering houses to let appear in the editions of the *York Courant* prior to Race Week, and the properties range from those in Castlegate and Petergate to Middlethorpe Hall. Why this is particularly relevant to the Fishers' workshop is because some little time

ago the discovery was made of a hitherto unknown Bath carver's trade card; research has revealed that carvers would call on the nobility when they were staying in various towns and cities, hence 'the calling card'.¹⁵

Besides the 'luxury trades' already touched upon, purveyors of other luxury wares advertised in order to benefit from Race Weeks, for example:

To the Nobility, Gentry and others. Wright from London will exhibit his elegant Collection of Paintings for sale during this week, at the East End of the Minster Yard. To be viewed from Eight in the morning till Sunset. Admittance One Shilling.¹⁶

Other artists associated with York include Philip Mercier (1689-1760), a small-group portrait painter of Huguenot extraction who, according to the *York Courant* of 16th July 1751 lived in a rented house in Minster Yard, while Louis Vaslet (1742-1808) was born in the City and returned here from time to time; after a first career in the army he became a fashionable miniaturist and portrait painter. George Stubbs (1724-1806) spent six months here, learning anatomy and painting portraits in order to support himself. A visit to any minor stately home in Yorkshire will reveal that there was no lack of artistic patronage. And although William Etty, born and brought up in the City, migrated to London, he spent part of each year in York.^{16A} Meantime, the Yorkshire gentry kept abreast of London. In 1765 a Miss Lister was sitting for Joshua Reynolds; her mother's address appears in Reynold's pocket-book as 'Blake Street, York.'¹⁷

5

So how can a provincial sculptor's practice be equated with the running of other luxury businesses? From the point of view of status in the community, Royal acknowledgement, no matter how minor, could only confer prestige. John Fisher received royal patronage when he sold the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York copies of the Bartolozzi engraving of the Savile monument in the Minster. Barber, Cattle & North were appointed Goldsmiths & Jewellers to T.R.H. Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria in September 1835.

The sculptor's workshop differed from the other luxury trades in that the majority of the Fishers' output would be to order, either from examples on view in the workshop, from pattern books or designed to meet the individual customer's requirement. The purveyors of transport services, for example, must have suffered tremendously with the coming of

the railways; the Fishers, on the other hand, were able to adapt their workshop to handle the different type of trade required with the coming of the public Cemetery. But whatever the trade or profession, without patronage they would have been nothing.

6

Scrutiny of the Catalogue has revealed that patronage of the Fisher workshop falls into three categories, private, public, and artistic. In this Chapter each category will be dealt with in turn. 'Private' discusses the patrons for whom the many monuments and gravestones were executed, suggests reasons for their patronage and looks at traceable links between families. 'Public' patronage will cover the ten known items which were paid for either by public subscription or by private collections, while the workshop's involvement with architects and London sculptors will be looked at under 'artistic' patronage.

It has been suggested that 'of all forms of art, the memorial to the dead, is by intention, the most lasting'.¹⁸ In an article on 'Patronage and Church Monuments' John Lord quotes Le Neve's preface to *Monumenta Anglicana* which states that there are two reasons for erecting monuments, 'first to record the Virtues or eminent Qualifications of the past Age, or secondly, the filial piety or friendly gratitude of the present.'¹⁹ Le Neve also includes the following synopsis of Chapter 2 from John Weaver's earlier work which refers to the first reason: 'A superscription (either in prose and verse) or an astrict pithie Diagram, write, carved, or engraven upon the Tomb, Grave, or Sepulchre of the Defunct, briefly declaring (and that some times with a kind of Commiseration), the Name, the Age, the Deserts, the Dignities, the State, the Praises both of Body and Mind, the good and bad Fortunes in the Life, and the Manner and Time of the Death of the Person therein interred ...' Referring to the second point, Le Neve also includes Mr. Camden's 'Account or Notion of Epitaphs', taken again from Weaver's earlier volume: 'Of all Funeral Honours, Epitaphs have always been most respective, for in them Love was shew'd to the deceased ...'²⁰ These sentiments are endorsed by the inscription on the tablet to Marmaduke Constable in Beverley Minster: 'This memorial is erected, not as a Tribute to Custom or to Vanity but in Testimony of filial respect & gratitude.'

The choice of carver, design and placing of the monument in the church reflected the financial commitment of the patron but also his or her 'taste', a trait of supreme importance in the eighteenth century.²⁰ There is yet another reason - a monument was a visible source of consolation to the bereaved.²¹

7

Most of the workshop's monumental sculpture comes under the heading of private patronage. In the introduction to his volume on the West Riding, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner writes of his inability to mention all the monuments carved by the Fishers²². This must have been so where previous recorders have been concerned as during this study additional monuments have been traced across the county. Thus the figures given may need to be revised in the future; to date, however, during the one hundred and fifty years the workshop was in operation, the geographical distribution of funeral monuments in the Yorkshire Ridings²³ and York, including ten monuments located but not yet recorded, stands at:

West Riding	East Riding	North Riding	York
57	31	44	56

A further twenty-two monuments have been recorded outside Yorkshire:

Co. Durham	1	Northumberland	2
Derbyshire	3	Nottinghamshire	1
Devon	1	Staffordshire	1
Lancashire	4	Rutland	1
Lincolnshire	4	Westmorland	3
London	1		

Maps showing the distribution spread have been included at the end of this Chapter.

Tables 2 and 3 have been compiled to show the confirmed or presumed status of the deceased, and the sexes of the known patrons. While Table 2 plainly shows the changes in the pattern of patronage, it must be remembered that while the eighteenth century figure covers over sixty years, the figures for the nineteenth century represent a shorter period because from c. 1850 the workshop was producing more gravestones than monuments (see Table 5, Chapter 3). The cause, the advent of York Cemetery at the end of the 1830s. Although it has not been possible to compile exact figures from the material available, both tables show that the majority of the Fishers' patrons came from titled and county families

Known or Presumed Status of Deceased

Family's Status or Profession	18th Century		19th Century	
	Men ¹	Women ²	Men ¹	Women ²
Titled family	7	4	7	1
Crested ³	17	5	10	2
Gentry ⁴	16	5	11	15
Clerical ⁵	5	6	17	4
Doctor	4	0	1	0
Military	2	3	5	2
Naval	0	1	0	1
Lawyer	5	0	3	2
Lord Mayor of York	3	1	2	1
Lord Mayor of London	1	0	0	0
Sheriff	1	0	1	0
Merchant	3	0	3	2
Not known	2	2	8	6
	66	27	68	36
	93		104	

¹ Fathers and sons.

² Wives, widows and daughters.

³ Where the monument has a family crest

⁴ The yardstick for Gentry has been if the inscription has included the title 'Esquire' after the name.

⁵ Many of the monuments to clerics are also crested but have not been listed twice.

Table 2

and 'the gentry'. Many of the families had London addresses and country estates as well as addresses in York and, as will be shown in later chapters, had also patronized metropolitan carvers.

Studying the Catalogue to prepare the tables provided me with several examples of the way the epitaphs were used to transmit particular information about a family - as Le Neve suggested: 'the noble Chain of Connection and Dependence to illustrate and strengthen one another.' The family tree of three generations is set out on two monuments in Otley Parish Church. Walter Hawkswell of Hawksworth was the patron of the monument erected in memory of Francis Fawkes of Farnley Hall, who died in 1786, leaving the bulk of his fortune to Walter. When Walter died in 1792, having adopted the name Fawkes in the interim, his family was detailed in his inscription, his heirs, the full names of their partners and their addresses, establishing his and their place among the county's gentry, besides providing a valuable source of reference.

When William Lowther, 5th Viscount Lonsdale, inherited the title in 1802 one of the first things he did was to commission the Fishers to supply a monument in memory of Henry, 3rd Viscount Lonsdale, who had died in 1751 (the monument also commemorates Henry's brother, Richard, who died in 1715). On 29th February 1803, William, in a letter to his uncle and former tutor, the Rev. Thomas Zouche, asked if he had time to spare, could he supply 'an Inscription as you may think proper for a Monument to be erected in Lowther Church ... I think it is a duty incumbent on me, to transmit to Posterity the Virtues of an illustrious Connection - and a Character more deserving of such distinction, I believe, scarce ever existed.' Eighteen months later Sir William acknowledged from his uncle the receipt of two epitaphs; the first, for Richard and Henry, he regarded was 'an elegant & impressive encomium on two distinguished Characters.' The second was for the late Sir James, the 4th Viscount, whose tomb he had also commissioned the Fisher workshop to design and supply. What is so interesting about this inscription is that Sir William intended to leave for posterity a rather different picture of the deceased to the one presented locally where he was known as 'Wicked Jimmy', the 'Bad Earl', 'Tyrant of the North', 'Jimmy Graspall', and 'Earl of Toadstool' because of his manner of gaining control of Parliamentary seats.²⁴

Sexes of Named Patrons

Family's Status or Profession	18th Century				19th Century			
	Widower	Widow	Offspring	Other	Widower	Widow	Offspring	Other
Titled	1	2	2	5	0	0	1	2
Crested ¹	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	0
Gentry ²	0	2	4	3	0	3	2	1
Clerical ³	1	1	2	2	1	1	4	4
Doctor	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Military	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
Naval	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lawyer	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Lord Mayor of York	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lord Mayor of London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheriff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Merchant	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Not known	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1
	7	11	16	16	3	6	10	13

Note: There were many monuments which gave no clue as to whom the patron might have been.

One memorial was erected by subscription in the eighteenth century, eight in the nineteenth.

¹ Where the monument has a family crest.

² The yardstick for Gentry has been if the inscription has included the title 'Esquire' after the name.

³ Many of the monuments to clerics are also crested but have not been listed twice.

Table 3

These are two of the several inscriptions recorded in Latin, serving to remind us not only that for the gentry a classical education was the norm until the middle of the nineteenth century, so to be able to read the inscription the reader would need to have the same scholastic background as the patron. Thus the message was inaccessible to the *hoi polloi*, but also underlined the social differences.

Trying to establish a link between the Fishers' workshop and the out-of-county patrons has not proved easy. Of the twenty-two monuments carved, as will be seen from the Catalogue, it has only been possible to suggest likely associations for a few.²⁵ In some cases the patrons have been named on the monuments; in others background research has provided sufficient information for a guess to be made.

Take as an example the Prosser tablet in Durham (1809); this was possibly commissioned because the Rev. Prosser, father of the deceased, had almost certainly been connected with York Minster before going to Durham Cathedral as Prebendary. The Wilson monument in Lancaster (1773) possibly came about because Sybille's father had lately been a Lieutenant-Colonel in the 3rd Battalion of the First Regiment of Foot Guards²⁶ and may have served in York.²⁷ The Sanderson monument in London (1798) had a Fisher family connection as Sir James was Samuel Fisher's brother-in-law. The two Westmorland memorials, both executed for the Lowther family, almost certainly came about because of a previous Yorkshire commission from the same patron; there was also a marriage alliance between the Lowthers and the Cholmleys of Howsham, about whom more will be said later. The daughter of the Hon. Mrs. Mary Fortescue of Ketton, Rutland (1814) was Lady Goodricke of Ribston Hall, a house where John Carr was involved (and through him probably the Fishers),²⁸ while the family also had a house in York in Micklegate.

The search for clues as to the patron of one of the West Riding commissions, the monument to John Royds, a clothier and merchant banker of Halifax and London (1781), proved interesting but unsuccessful; it threw up some unexpected relationships and revealed that John Carr, the York architect, built for him Somerset House in Halifax (also known as Royds, Rawsons or Page Nest) in 1766; in its entirety it was a 17-bay house which served as home, bank and warehouse,²⁹ which gives some indication of the size of his fortune.

The contract to carve the portrait medallion memorial to Dr. Simpson in the Cathedral at Lichfield (1786) obviously pleased John Fisher greatly, since it was 'puffed' in a newspaper report.³⁰ As the Doctor came from Wentworth it is highly likely that the commission was awarded on account of the workshop's association with Wentworth Woodhouse and the Marquis of Rockingham for whom, at that time, chimneypieces were being carved. The standard of the Fishers' work must have been extremely high because not only did Rockingham have a London house, he was sufficiently wealthy to be able to afford the best of metropolitan carvers. The fact that the workshop was chosen by the Marquis must have weighed very heavily in the Fishers' favour when possible patrons were selecting craftsmen. As Rockingham was present at all the York Race Meetings he would have met there with many of the county families and a word of recommendation from him could have contributed to what might be termed 'social' patronage - recommendations made on the basis of friendship and family relationships.

The Marquis also attended meetings of the Rockingham Club, which sustained a powerful Whig interest in local politics, and John Fisher's membership of the Club could also have put him in touch with would-be patrons. One hundred and thirty-three attended the Club's meeting in June 1754, six months after its inception at the George Inn in York; while the membership seems to have consisted mainly of '... doctors, aldermen and parsons, followed by tradesmen', the 'gentry' included, besides The Marquis of Rockingham, Sir William Milner, Sir Rowland Wynne and Sir George Savile.³¹

Since York was 'the Masonic City of England' it is possible that Richard and/or John might have been members of 'The Time Immemorial Lodge'; although the Roll of the Minutes date from 1705, this 'old' Lodge became the Grand Lodge of All England in 1725 and it was dormant from c. 1745 to 1761, when it re-appeared and met at The Apollo Inn, so becoming known as The Apollo Lodge. Patronage did not come by this route, however, since there is no record of either father or son being initiated. A membership list was published in 1889 of those belonging in the period between 1773 and 1789; out of a membership of 120 there were twelve gentlemen listed, the rest being a mix of clergy, merchants and tradesmen,

but no carvers. In 1806 John's son, Samuel, was accepted for initiation although this did not take place, and in 1812 William, was blackballed²²

As far as the workshop's 'private' patrons were concerned it is often possible to posit a linkage between one commission and another. Richard Fisher's first known patron was Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven Hall, c. 1729; in the same year Sir Henry married Mary, daughter of John Aislable, owner of Studley Royal, where the carver was next employed for a number of years. William, John Aislable's son, then recommended Richard to Horatio Walpole at Wolterton, because on April 5, 1737 Fisher wrote to William Aislable at his London address in Brook Street:

Honoured Sir,

After my Duty to you these are to Let you know that I Recieved your letter with the inclosed and shall be very glad to embrace such an opportunity as soon as I have made a finish of your Honour's work ... But if the Gentleman be in haste of having his work begune on I will get a man to help me hear that I may the sooner be att Liberty and Begg the favour That your Honour will please to express me to him till such times as I have Done hear. I should be verey sorry to loos Such a job which is all from your Honour's Most Dutiful and humble Servant to Command.²³

It has recently come to light that in 1752, the year Katherine, the second daughter of Sir Rowland Winn, the 4th Baronet, was to become the first wife of Nathaniel Cholmley of Whitby and Howsham, Richard was working at Nostell Priory for Sir Rowland. Katherine died, aged 24, giving birth to her second child in 1755. Hugh, Nathaniel's father died in 1755, and the Fisher workshop was commissioned to provide monuments for Katherine and for Hugh and his wife who predeceased him. Nathaniel's second wife, Henrietta Catherina, daughter of Stephen Croft of Stillington, died in 1772, and again the Fishers provided the monument. As will be seen from the Catalogue, it was in 1772 that Howsham underwent alterations, and these contracts help to support the suggestion that the chimneypieces at Howsham came from the workshop. When Nathaniel died in 1791, the commission for his monument was also awarded to the Fishers. Three members of the Earl of Musgrave's family at Lythe were also commemorated by the Fishers' work, and here too there was a link through marriage - Anne Elizabeth, daughter of Nathaniel Cholmley of Howsham and Whitby, was the bride of Constantine John Phipps, who was created a Baron in 1790.

Spanning the years between 1773 and 1822 are five monuments executed for various members of the Legard family, owners of much land in the North Riding. A marriage linked the Legards with the Langleys of Wykeham Abbey, the Grimstons of Grimston Garth, and also with the Boyntons of Boynton Hall, another three families from whom the workshop received patronage.

There are close family ties connecting the Fishers and the Maude monument in Christ Church in Harrogate (1831) with the Roxby memorial in Beverley Minster (1795) and the Sanderson memorial in St. Magnus-the-Martyr at London Bridge (1798). Although there are Fisher family gravestones in the churchyard at Holy Trinity, Goodramgate and in York cemetery, it is strange that monuments commemorating Richard, John or Samuel have not been traced.³⁴

In some cases the 'private' patrons sought to remember the deceased by selecting something other than the ubiquitous urn to decorate the monument. While these are dealt with at length in the Chapter on Design and in the Catalogue, their design and craftsmanship are such that one forgets that they are the work of a provincial workshop. Three figure sculptures date from the period when John and Samuel were working together, and reflect the great interest being shown in this country in Classical antiquity. Here in York the Fishers' patrons were able to commission monuments the design of which was equal to anything available from a metropolitan workshop. Thus Canon William Mason, man of letters, who regarded York as 'the dullest place on earth', was required by Mrs. Dealtry, widow of the city's famous doctor, to ask the Fishers to carve her husband's monument for the Minster (1772). Besides advising on the design Mason consulted Horace Walpole on the suitability of the epitaph to accompany the almost life-size figure of *Hygiea*, the goddess of Health, grieving over an urn. Elegant mourning female figures decorated both the Sheffield (1774) and Osbaldeston (1770) monuments; all three were dressed after the Greek fashion. In Lancaster (1773) Sybilla Wilson's parents chose a bas relief panel depicting a Roman family lamenting their daughter's death. Later, when John was working alone, among other decorative monuments he carved two very elaborate sarcophagi in memory of members of the Lowther family, complete with *memento mori* appropriate to their much earlier dates of death. In St. Mary's, Castlegate, Mercury's

caduseus decorates the casket on the tablet in memory of Dr. Mushett (1792). At Lythe the tablet to Constantine John Phipps (1792) stands on a furled sail and anchor, commemorating the fact that he sought to discover the North-West Passage and tried to establish how far one could sail towards the North Pole. There are also several later military monuments which carry the accoutrements of battle.

Some interesting facts have been revealed while researching private patrons and those commemorated; William Hutchinson (1772) actually had two memorials; he made a bequest of £300 to the 'Rector and Poor' of the Parish of St. Michael's Spurriergate, where the first is to be found. The second is in Osbaldwick Church; besides leaving £300 to the church in charities, in 1747 he was a patron himself when he placed a tablet outside the west door of the church in memory of Mr. Richard Wright, with whom he 'lived as Partner... in great union for 35 years'. The largest bequest mentioned in an inscription is the £31,000 left by Mrs. Jane Mathewman (1819) of Christ Church, Harrogate, 'For the promotion of Divine worship / According to the Liturgy and usages of the / Established Church.'

The patron of the Osbaldeston monument at Hunmanby (1770) was actually one of the deceased commemorated - Fountayne Wentworth Osbaldeston, who succeeded his brother as Member of Parliament for Scarborough. His will also required that a monument be erected in Brayton Church in memory of Robinson and Thomas Morley who died in 1756 and 1766 respectively, while his nephews Humphrey Brookes and George Wickens were to use the name and arms of Osbaldeston.³⁵

It has been noted elsewhere that the practice benefited from private patronage from the same families on more than one occasion, for example, the Legards, the Cholmleys, and the Phipps. To this list should be added the Fawkes, the Hothams, the Bingleys of Harrogate, the Cowlings and the Hunters of York. This continuing patronage also appears to apply to the graves and headstones recorded in York cemetery where several generations of the same family engaged the services of the Fishers: the Nicholsons, the Robinsons, the Warnefords and the Wilsons. This information should be treated with care, however. Since recording of the inscriptions and following up the families of the people buried in the cemetery has not been part of this research, it is possible that it is simply a matter of the name being the same and not the family.

Table 3 records that one monument in the 18th century was paid for by subscription and eight in the nineteenth. These then fall into the category of public patronage. A notice in the *York Courant* of 13th April 1773 reads: 'As the death of the late Dr. Dealtry was a Public Loss, it is proposed to the Nobility, Gentry, and others, that a magnificent Monument shall be erected to his Memory at the public Expense, and that it shall be designed and executed by the most eminent Artist in London. Donations on this noble occasion, will be received by Mr. Tireman, in Coney Street, York.' Presumably this scheme did not succeed, since the words of the inscription seem to give the lie to this idea: 'Elizabeth his afflicted widow, dedicated this monument'. The choice of the Fisher workshop instead of a London artist and the involvement of Canon William Mason and Horace Walpole in discussions on the design and epitaph must surely have helped to endorse the standing of the practice both locally and nationally.

The Sir George Savile monument in York Minster, the Hopwood monument in Rochdale (1813) and the War Memorial at Sowerby in the West Riding fit comfortably into the category of public patronage, as do the monuments to late clerical incumbents paid for by their parishioners, and those in memory of comrades in arms.

On 6th January 1784 a notice appeared in the *York Courant* indicating that at a public meeting of the Freeholders of the County of York a committee had been appointed to coordinate a plan to erect a statue in marble in recognition of 'the able and disinterested Services of their late Representative Sir George Savile, Bart.' Savile was a close friend of the Marquis of Rockingham, a representative for the county of Yorkshire in five parliaments and, according to his epitaph, charitable and benevolent in his private life, incorruptible in his public. The plan was for the statue to stand on a pedestal in the courtyard of York Castle, and interested statuaries were requested to submit designs and estimates to Robert Sinclair, Esq. of York. Three days later Sir George died and a further notice appeared in the *Courant* of 6th February postponing action until 2nd March. On 9th March another entry in the *York Courant* informed that 'a proper Plan or Design' had been determined and that subscriptions, 'however small'³⁶ to defray the cost of the work would be received at various

specified places in York, whilst agents would be appointed in 'considerable' county towns for the same period'.³⁷

A contemporary guide book recorded that 'Mr. Fisher, Statuary in St. Helen's Square, York' had 'on the 16th of December 1788' completed the statue (Illustration 10).³⁸ Volume 69 of the *Gentleman's Magazine* appeared on 11th November 1789, and on page 1,000 it was reported that the 'public statue' of the late Sir George Savile had been erected in the Minster. So far there is no sign of the subscription list, but it would seem sensible to assume that the names appearing would be similar to those found on the lists for the Assembly Rooms, Drake's *Eboracum* and Carr's new stand on the Knavesmire Race Course, to which 140 people subscribed.³⁹

John Fisher took further advantage of this prestigious commission; on 27th March of the following year he announced in the *York Courant* that he was going to approach the London engraver, Francis Bartolozzi, to execute prints of the monument. Fisher's efforts to seek patrons for the proposed engraving and the arrangements he must have had to make can only be guessed at; the price, to subscribers only, was to be one guinea each, and 'such subscriptions' would be received by both the York banks, and by:

... Messrs. Wilson and Spence, Todd, Sotheran, Frobisher, and Tesseyman, Booksellers in this city; in London, by Mr. Debrett, Piccadilly - at The Crown and Anchor Tavern, in the Strand - the Shakspeare Tavern, Covent Garden - the St. Alban's Tavern, St. Alban's Street, &c &c.; by Mr. Wardell, Beverley; Messrs. Middleton and Parker, and Mr. Foster, Bookseller, Hull; Mr. Schofield, Scarborough; Mr. Harker, Malton; Mr. Binns, Bookseller, and Mr. Hicks, the Old King's Arms, Leeds; Messrs. Wilson and Tupman, Nottingham; and by Messrs. Gales, Peirson, and Ridgard, Sheffield.'

On 13th November 1790 Fisher inserted a notice in the *York Herald* to inform those who had already subscribed to the engraving that the prints were at his house awaiting collection - he goes on to declare that his subscribers included 'His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, His Royal Highness the Duke of York, the Dukes of Devonshire and Portland, Earls Fitzwilliam and Scarbrough, Lords George Cavendish, Downe, etc. etc.' Bartolozzi received £210 for the engraving but the number of copies printed is not known (Illustration 11).⁴⁰

S T A T U A R Y.

IT having been unanimously resolved, at a public Meeting of the **FREEMEN** of the County of **YORK**, that some public Testimony should be given of the high Approbation in which they hold the able and distinguished Services of their late Representative

Sir GEORGE SAVILE, Bart.

and having appointed a Committee to carry such Resolution into Effect—*Notice is hereby given*, That it is determined by the said Committee, that a **STATUE** in Marble of **Sir GEORGE SAVILE** shall be erected upon a Pedestal in the **Arch** of the Court-House at the Castle of York.

Any Statuary therefore, willing to undertake such Statue, is hereby desired to send an accurate Drawing or Design, together with an Estimate of the Expence thereof, directed to **Robert Sinclair, Esq;** in York, on or before the 6th Day of February next. And any such Artist, wanting farther Information or Instructions, may apply by Letter to the said **Robert Sinclair**.

YORK, Jan. 1, 1784.

York Courant, 6th January 1784

S T A T U A R Y.

YORK, Feb. 6, 1784.

IN Pursuance of the Resolutions of the 1st of January last, and of the Advertisements then agreed to be published, a Meeting of the Committee appointed for carrying into Effect the Plan for making a **STATUE** in Honour of

Sir GEORGE SAVILE, Bart.

was this Day held, at which it was resolved that the farther Consideration and final Determination of the said Plan should be postponed until the 2d Day of March next; and that in the mean-time any farther and additional **DESIGNS** will be received, directed, according to the former Advertisement, to **Robert Sinclair, Esq;** York.

York Courant, 6th February 1784

YORK, March 4, 1784.

THE COMMITTEE appointed by the **GENERAL MEETING** of the County of York, to carry into Execution the Resolution of that Meeting relative to the raising some public and lasting Monument in Honour of the late **Sir GEORGE SAVILE, Bart.** having resolved upon erecting a **STATUE** in **MARBLE**, to be placed upon a Pedestal in the Castle of York, and having determined upon a proper Plan or Design thereof,

Notice is hereby given, That Subscriptions for defraying the Expence of the above Work will be received immediately at both the York Banks, at **Mr. Blunt's Inn**, the York-Tavern, and at the **Black-Swan** in **Coney-Street**, York. It is also intended that proper Persons shall, in a short Time, be appointed in all the considerable Towns in the County, to receive Subscriptions for the above Purpose, of which public Notice shall be given; and that every Freeholder, of whatever Rank or Condition in Life, may have it in his Power to shew his Respect for, and Approbation of, the Character of our late excellent Representative. It is ordered, That every Subscription, however small, should be received.

York Courant, 9th March 1784

Monument to Sir George Savile
in York Minster, executed
by John Fisher between 1784 and 1789,



Illustration 10

In 1806 John's son, William Fisher, entered a major sculptural contest, albeit unsuccessfully. On February 28 of that year the Court of Common Council of the City of London resolved that a monument should be erected in memory of the late Rt.Hon. William Pitt, and announcements appeared in the Sunday and daily papers requesting submission of models and designs by 23rd April. William's model sketch is missing but a letter accompanying it, dated 23 April, details the design which was based on Pitt speaking on his Prevention of Seditious and Treasonable Meetings Bill.⁴¹

There are five instances of parishioners subscribing to memorials in memory of their late vicars - the Rev. R. Davies (1822), the Rev. J. Dallin (1838), the Rev. John Graham (1844), the Rev. Joseph Crosby (1868) and the Rev. John Thompson (1873). This seems to be a nineteenth century trend, and all are simple tablets. Interestingly, the friends of Maria Stevens (1840) paid for her monument - she was Samuel Fisher's daughter, sister-in-law to the Rev. Andrew Cheap of Knaresborough Parish Church and, according to her epitaph, had spent her life helping others; it is believed she also wrote a number of religious pamphlets but none has been found.

The epitaphs to many of the clergymen show that they had held their livings for very long periods. Some also revealed that they were the second son of a 'good' family, and it has been cynically suggested that it was '... a want of talents [that] had early designated him, willing or unwilling, to spend the tithes of a considerable living.'⁴²

Because York was a military town, on a number of occasions the workshop was commissioned to carve monuments in memory of serving officers - Captain Pelsant Reeves of the 1st (or Royal) Regiment was killed at the battle of Toulon on 30th November 1793, and his brother had a monument erected in York Minster. In 1809 Ensign Henry Whittam was accidentally drowned in the River Ouse and a memorial to perpetuate his memory was placed in the Minster by Lord Ribblesdale and the officers of the Craven Regiment of Local Militia.⁴³ In the church of St. Michael-le-Belfrey his brother officers erected a monument commemorating Lieutenant and Adjutant John Crossland, of the York City Regiment of Local Militia (formerly of the 31st Regiment of Foot), who died in 1813. Possibly the most interesting of all is the monument in Rochdale erected by 'His townsmen' (1813); this commemorates Rifleman John Hopwood who was only 22

YORK, Dec. 30, 1789.

To the PUBLIC.
MANY Gentlemen having expressed a Desire that an ENGRAVING of the PUBLIC STATUE Of Sir GEORGE SAVILE, Bart. together with the Pedestal, Inscription, &c. as it now stands in the Cathedral here, might be published by Subscription, Mr. FISHER begs Permission to inform the Nobility, Gentry, and Public at large, that he intends a Plate shall be engraved by one of the first Artists in the Kingdom, to be upon a large Scale, Price One Guinea each. SUBSCRIPTIONS will be received at both the York Banks, by Mess. Wilson and Spence, Todd, Sotheran, Frobisher, and Telfeyman, Booksellers in this City, and in different Parts of the Country, of which proper public Notice will be given immediately, as it is wished that the Business may be forwarded with the utmost Expedition.

It is humbly requested that those Noblemen and Gentlemen who are desirous of promoting this Undertaking, will be so obliging as to send their Names to any of the above-mentioned Places. They may rest assured that every Endeavour shall be used to make it as complete as possible.

York Courant, 8th January 1790

PRINT of Sir GEORGE SAVILE

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO

The Right Hon. EARL FITZWILLIAM.
Mr. FISHER

“ I S happy to inform the Subscribers to his proposed engraving of the PUBLIC STATUE of GEORGE SAVILE, and the Public in general, that he has received assurances from Mr. BARTOLOZZI that the PLATE is in such forwardness, as will enable him to deliver it to the Subscribers in the York August meeting, 1790. He also begs leave to inform the Nobility, Gentry, &c. (who have not yet subscribed) that the Books will be closed on the 14th of August next, after which no names can be received.—The dimensions of the Plate will be 25 inches by 17.—Price to Subscribers 11s. to Non-Subscribers 11s 6d.—Subscriptions continue to be received by Mr. Alderman Boydell, Cheap-side—Mr. Debrett, Piccadilly—at the Crown and Anchor Tavern; in the Strand—the Shakspeare Tavern, Covent-Garden—and at the St. Alban's Tavern, St. Alban's street, London; at both the York Banks; by Messrs. Wilson, Spence, and Mawman, Mr. Todd, Mr. Sotheran, Mr. Frobisher, and Mr. Telfeyman, York; Mr. Wardell, Beyerley; Messrs Middleton and Parker, and Mr. Foster, Hull; Mr. Schofield, Scarborough; Mr. Harker, Malton; Mr. Binns, and Mr. Hick, the Old King's Arms, Leeds; Mr. Wilson and Mr. Tuptman, Nottingham; Mr. Giles, Mr. Piercson, and Mr. Ridgards, Sheffield; Messrs. Boys and Sheardown, Doncaster; and Mr. Hunter, Whitby.—N. B. Subscribers may be assured of receiving the best impressions.”

York Herald of 31st July 1790.
A similar notice appeared in the York Courant

Engraving of the Sir George Savile Monument by Francis Bartolozzi (in the author's possession).

YORK, March 10, 1790.

DEDICATED (BY PERMISSION) To the Rt. Hon. EARL FITZWILLIAM.

Several Noblemen and Gentlemen having expressed a Desire that an ENGRAVING of the PUBLIC STATUE of Sir GEORGE SAVILE, Bart. together with the PEDESTAL, INSCRIPTION, &c. as it now stands in the Cathedral here, might be published by Subscription, Mr. FISHER begs Permission to inform the Nobility, Gentry, and Public at large, that he has agreed for a Plate to be engraved by BARTOLOZZI, on a large Scale, Dimensions 25 Inches by 17—Price to Subscribers only ONE GUINEA each.

SUBSCRIPTIONS will be received at both the York Banks, by Mess. Wilson and Spence, Todd, Sothieran, Frobisher, and Telfeyman, Booksellers in this City; in London, by Mr. Debrett, Piccadilly, at the Crown and Anker Tavern in the Strand, the Shakspear Tavern, Covent-Garden, &c. &c. by Mr. Binns, Leeds; by Mr. Wardell, Beyerley; and by Mess. Middleton and Parker, and Mr. Foster, Bookseller, Hull.

As it is wished that the Business may be forwarded with the utmost Expedition, Books will be left for the Entry of Subscribers' Names; and in order to prevent any Mistake, it is requested each Gentleman will insert his Place of Abode.

It is humbly requested that those Noblemen and Gentlemen who are desirous of promoting this Undertaking, will be so obliging as to send their Names to any of the above-mentioned Places.

York Courant, 16th March 1790, The same advertisement appeared in the Courant on 23rd March and in the York Herald on 27th March 1790



Illustration 11

years old when he died 'commanding a company of the Regiment' at Arcangues during the Peninsula War; he was wounded at Badajos and saw action at the battles of Besaco, Salamanca and Vittoria and the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo. The decoration above the inscription tablet is a very elaborate display of military emblems and draped colours. Unfortunately contemporary documentation has not so far been traced.

The War Memorial in St. Peter's Church, Sowerby, in the West Riding, was executed by Charles Fisher in 1856 in memory of ten 'brave men from the Township' who had fallen in the Crimean War. It too was paid for by public subscription, but again it has so far proved impossible to trace any documentation apart from an article about the memorial which appeared in the *Yorkshire Gazette* of 6th September 1856; this, however, does not reveal how much the memorial cost or the number of subscribers, and simply reprints the inscription. Two Grenadier Guards were named, two from the 19th Regiment, one each from the 1st Royals, the 7th Royal Fusiliers, the 20th. 47th. 95th Regiments and the Royal Marines.

9

Throughout the eighteen and nineteenth centuries artistic patronage meant that all the best London sculptors benefited from their associations with the leading architects of the time⁴⁴ - Guelfi and Michael Rysbrack both carved to designs by James Gibbs, Peter Scheemakers interpreted 'Athenian' Stuart's drawings, Rysbrack executed Adam's *oeuvres*, while Wilton worked in association with Sir William Chambers. Also, already established carvers enabled their employees to gain a foothold on the ladder - Richard Westmacott helped his assistant Carew, while Chantrey aided Henry Weeks to get started; he not only passed on commissions for portrait busts but left him a legacy of £1,000.⁴⁵

Over the first seventy-five years of the Fisher workshop's activities, various members of the family had associations with a series of architects and designers and their patrons. Richard possibly worked with Colen Campbell at Studley Royal, where the patrons were John and William Aislable; certainly with Thomas Ripley at Wolterton under the patronage of Horatio Walpole (Illustration 12) and Daniel Garratt at Temple Newsam for Viscount Irwin; in the 1750s he was working at Nostell Priory when James Paine was the responsible architect. While John and Samuel's work was known to Horace Walpole, John collaborated with Joseph Nollekens in the



Illustration 12 - Horatio Walpole and his Family
by Jacopo Amigoni (1682-1752), (Wolterton Hall,
Norfolk, by courtesy of Lord Walpole)



Illustration 13 - The 2nd
Marquis of Rockingham by
Pierre Subleyras (1699-1749)
(Temple Newsam House, Leeds)

1780s when he carved the lettering on the pedestals for the statue of the Marquis of Rockingham in the Mausoleum and for the busts which decorate the niches round the inner wall (Illustration 13). In 1806 William Fisher used Nollekens' studio address when submitting his proposed designs for the Guildhall statue of William Pitt. It is possible that John Fisher also worked to drawings by Robert Adam when he provided marble table tops for Harewood House in 1797, or alternatively from Chippendale's designs.

But by far the greatest architectural influence on the workshop was that exerted by John Carr, the York architect, during the second half of the eighteenth century. There is documentary proof that John was working with Carr at Wentworth Woodhouse between 1792-1794⁴⁶. Apart from Farnley Hall near Otley, where John Fisher carved the dining room chimneypiece and subsequently wrote asking for settlement of his account⁴⁷, written evidence is almost always lacking. Chimneypieces similar to those known to have been carved by the Fishers can be found in houses where Carr was involved with either the building or refurbishing. This is particularly so at Howsham Hall and Escrick Hall, both no more than eight miles from York; the supposition that the Fisher workshop was involved is strengthened by the fact that funeral monuments were provided for both families. Carr's association with the building of Abbot Hall in Kendal in 1759 is tenuous, but again, two of the chimneypieces could be attributed to the Fishers; this idea is reinforced in view of the large monument executed by the workshop in 1772 for Sybille, the twelve-year old daughter of George and Sybille Wilson, but it must be borne in mind that by then the family was living in York (Illustration 14). The architect's involvement with Ormesby Hall is equally unfounded, but again, the chimneypieces could have come from the York workshop (Illustration 15).

Carr may even have suggested to his patrons that they select their own chimneypieces from the Fisher workshop in York - in 1769 he wrote to George Dunston in Worksop suggesting a visit to Walsh of South Street, Berkeley Square, for this purpose since 'they are sometimes to be met with cheaper than having one made on purpose.' Almost twenty years later the architect omitted sending designs for chimneypieces to the 3rd Duke of Portland suggesting that '... Your Grace may see a variety of patterns for Chimney pieces at Mr. Devalls, or Mr. Maits at the end of great Portland Street.'⁴⁸



Illustration 14 - Example of a Chimneypiece and a Doorcase at Abbot Hall, Westmoreland

On the other hand, studies of available accounts and correspondence show that Carr also bought in chimneypieces - one example is the account he submitted to Ralph Bell of Thirsk Hall; the work carried out on the fireplace surrounds by the mason, Robert Blakesley, is shown as a separate item.⁴⁹ Further, between 1760 and 1772 payments were made to Carr for the supply of 'marble chimneypieces and stone' for Harewood. Side-lines of this sort were common practice in the eighteenth century and a full study of Carr's building accounts shows that Thirsk Hall was not a one-off event⁵⁰ and would account for the attribution to the Fishers of the chimneypieces at Tabley Hall (Illustration 16) and Cannon Hall.⁵¹ Either case could apply when the doorcases, cornices and chimneypieces are not decorated in a matching style, for example at Norton Place and Leventhorpe Hall.

The figure of Justice, the accompanying lion and unicorn and the urns which decorate the pediment of the Assize Court building in York (the old County Gaol) have been attributed to the Fisher workshop. It has proved impossible to prove this conclusively, in spite of an exhaustive check of the sources for written confirmation. As will be seen from the photographs in the Catalogue, when the figures were recently removed for restoration the quality of the carving is comparable with work being turned out by the workshop (Illustration 17). John Carr began discussions regarding the proposed rebuilding of part of the County Goal in 1765, and although the Articles of Agreement between the County and the architect, dated 7th May 1772, have been traced neither the plans nor the vouchers have been found.⁵² Earlier research suggests that Carr received all the money and paid the workmen himself⁵³; newspaper reports of the opening of the building mention neither the architect nor the craftsmen employed, and subsequent references to the building have been equally unrevealing.

10

Finally, to turn to a form of patronage not yet discussed - the production of non-commissioned goods by the workshop, for which a market was sought. Although living in an age when the tops of the library shelves of the gentry and nobility were decorated with copies or casts of busts of Roman and Greek philosophers and eminent British playwrights, poets and politicians, John Fisher is known only to have carved two marble busts. These were of Shakespeare and Newton, and they remained in the



Illustration 15 - Examples of a Chimneypiece and Carving
at Ormesby Hall, Co, Durham (now Cleveland)

family. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when John's sons returned from honing their skills in London, (William working in the studio of Joseph Nollekens), the workshop began to produce a series of busts of local worthies; one example was a bust of the late Peregrine Wentworth. In the *York Courant* of 18 September 1809, William Fisher advertised that it would 'be published by Subscription, at Four Guineas each'. Among those who had already placed orders were Earl Fitzwilliam, Lord Milton, Sir George Armytage, and Sir Thomas Vavasour. Not only were these busts advertised for sale, William exhibited them, together with some ornamental bas reliefs, at the Royal Academy exhibitions in London. Here he was following in his grandfather's wake, and another aspect of self-promotion already used by John when issuing the 'puff' about Dr. Simpson's monument in Lichfield (1785), and the Bartolozzi engraving of the Savile memorial.

11

When this project was first begun it was assumed that because the Fishers' workshop was provincial rather than metropolitan the patrons would be drawn from the growing 'middling classes', and that the distribution of funeral monuments in particular would be within easy reach of York. As with decorative carving and the provision of chimneypieces, this assumption has proved to be incorrect on two counts; Table 1 shows that in the eighteenth century their patrons were largely drawn from among the titled and landed gentry of the three Ridings and beyond, although their patrons were not of the same calibre as, for instance, the Duke of Chandos who had 93 household servants at Cannons and his own 27-piece orchestra under Kapellmeister Pepusch.⁵⁴ However, the Marquis of Rockingham spent £83,000 on building Wentworth Woodhouse and Sir James Sanderson became Lord Mayor of London in 1793-4, in a decade when the cost of being elected to the position was estimated at £20,000⁵⁵.

Table 3 also reveals the change in patronage between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the supply of clerical monuments exceeding those carved for the aristocracy in the second period; it must be borne in mind that at this time it was customary for the younger sons of the nobility and gentry to take holy orders, so the deceased could have belonged in both categories.

Many of the patrons had residences in London as well as in York and in the country; competition, especially in the metropolis, was fierce,



Illustration 16 - Examples of Chimneypieces
at Tabley House, Cheshire

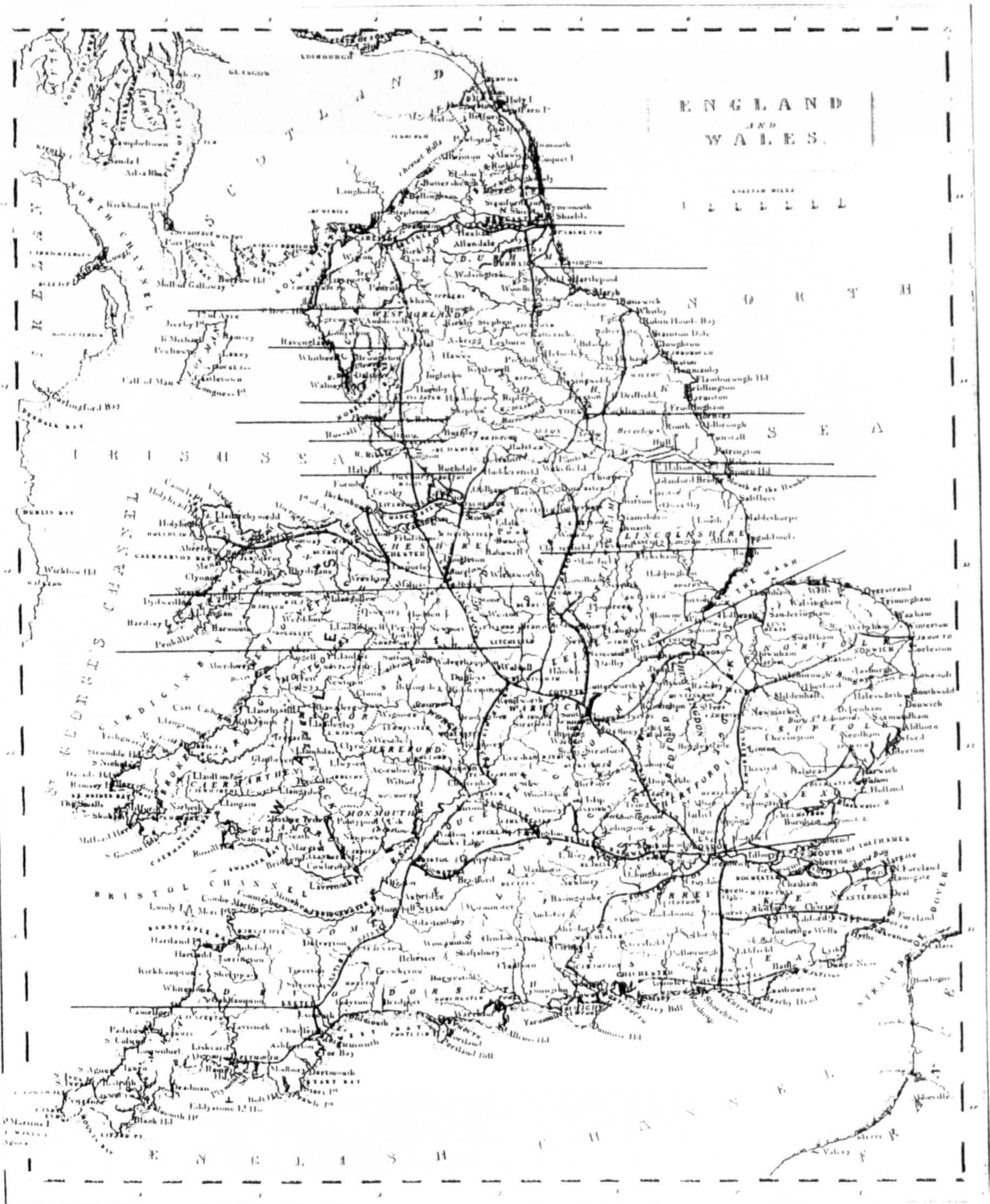
so great diplomacy would have been required to ensure that the workshop first, obtained the contract, and then gave sufficient satisfaction to lay the way clear for additional work. Just the right degree of civility and servility without familiarity had to be employed.⁵⁶ This is well illustrated in a letter which Richard Fisher wrote to Horatio Walpole on 6th May 1737:

Your Honour desires that when I have once begun yours I must finish with out interruption which I Design to Do, for I would not be guilty of such unmannerly action as to begin a piece of work and leave it before I finish.⁵⁷

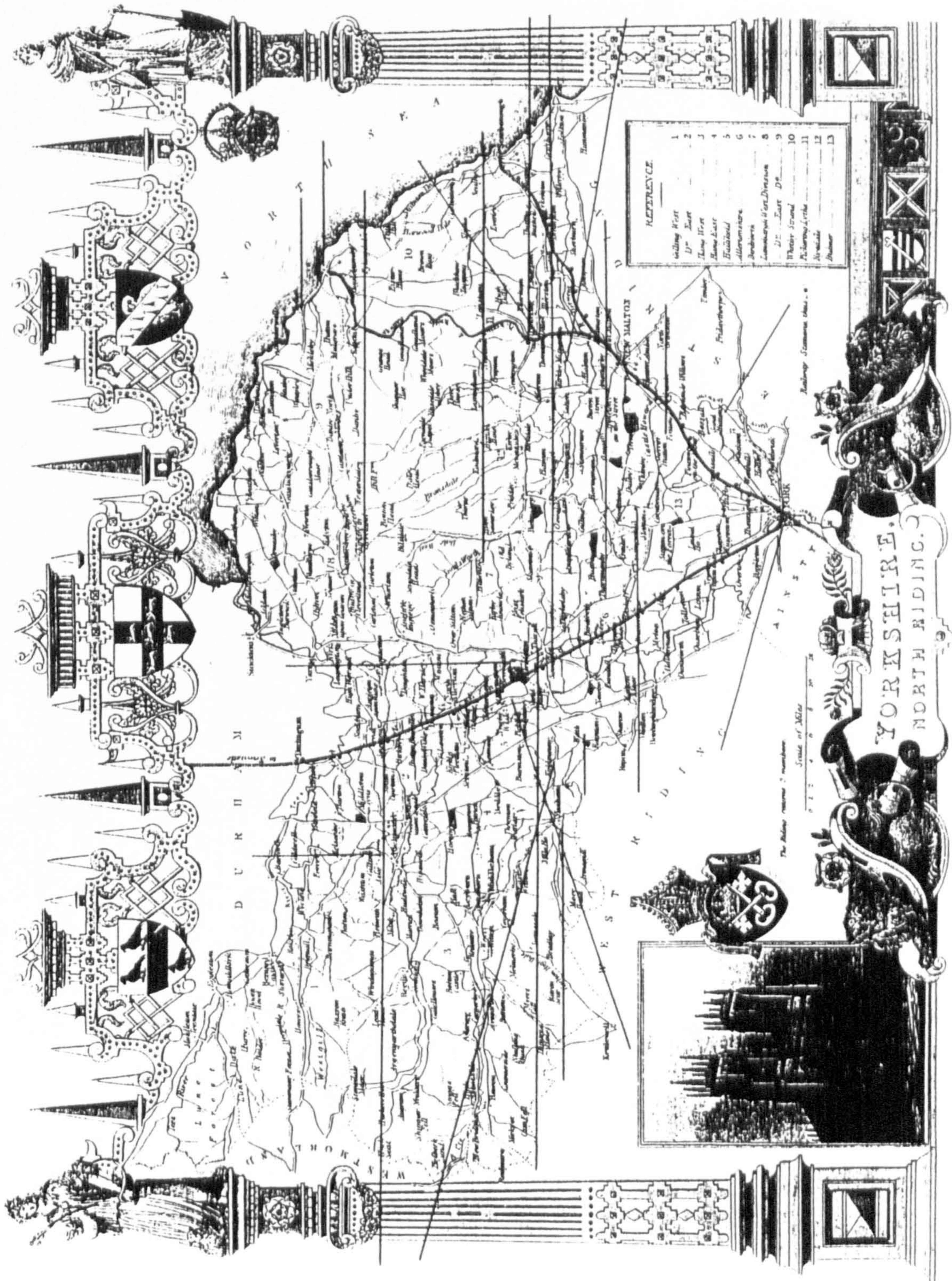
The importance of the power of the patron is only too succinctly expressed in a letter from Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory to Thomas Chippendale complaining about the non-delivery of goods. He warns him to remember that 'you may expect to find me as great an enemy as I ever was your friend ... [I] shall take care to acquaint those gentlemen that I have recommended you to & desire that they will oblige me in employing some other person.'⁵⁸



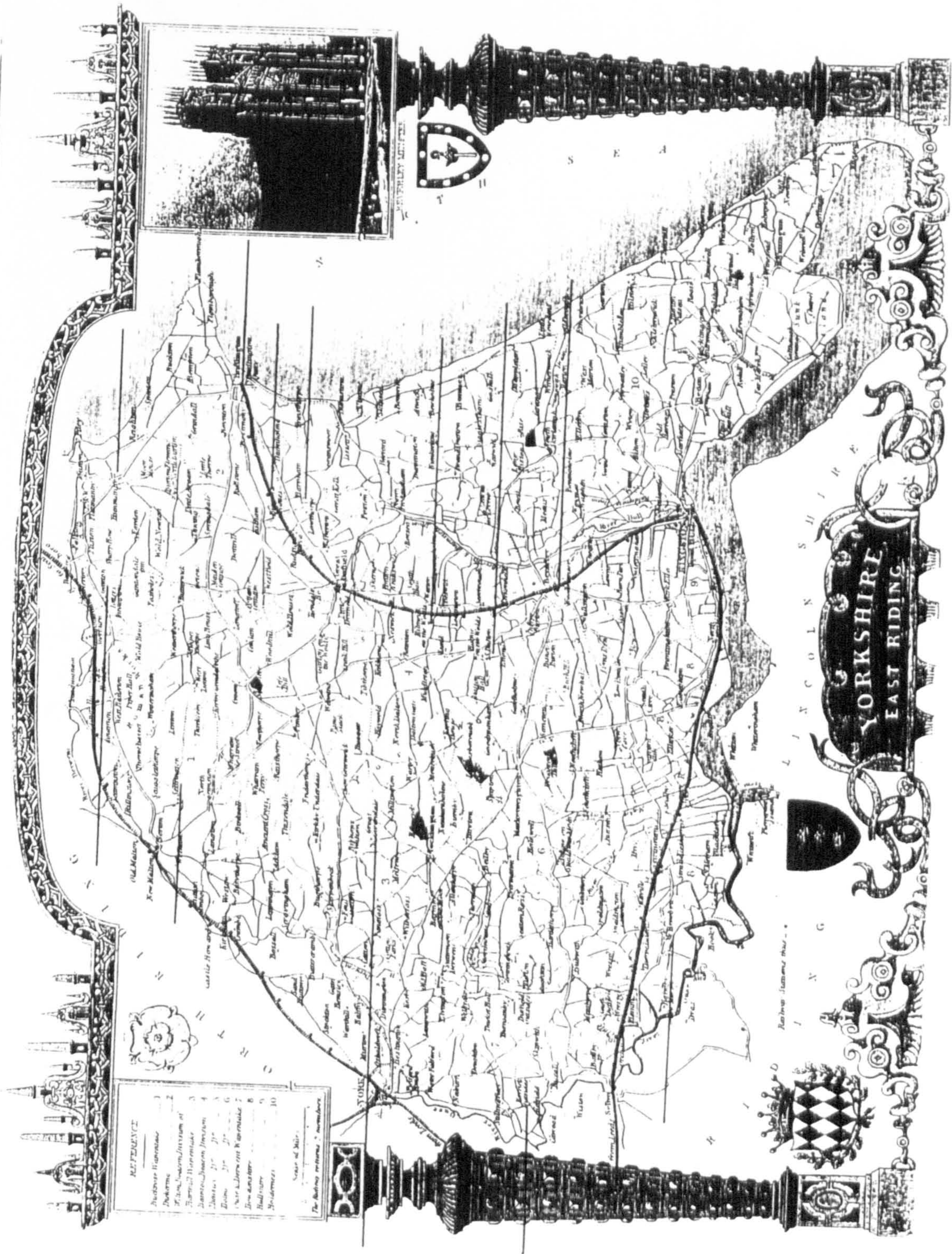
Illustration 17 - Figures from the Assize
Courts, York



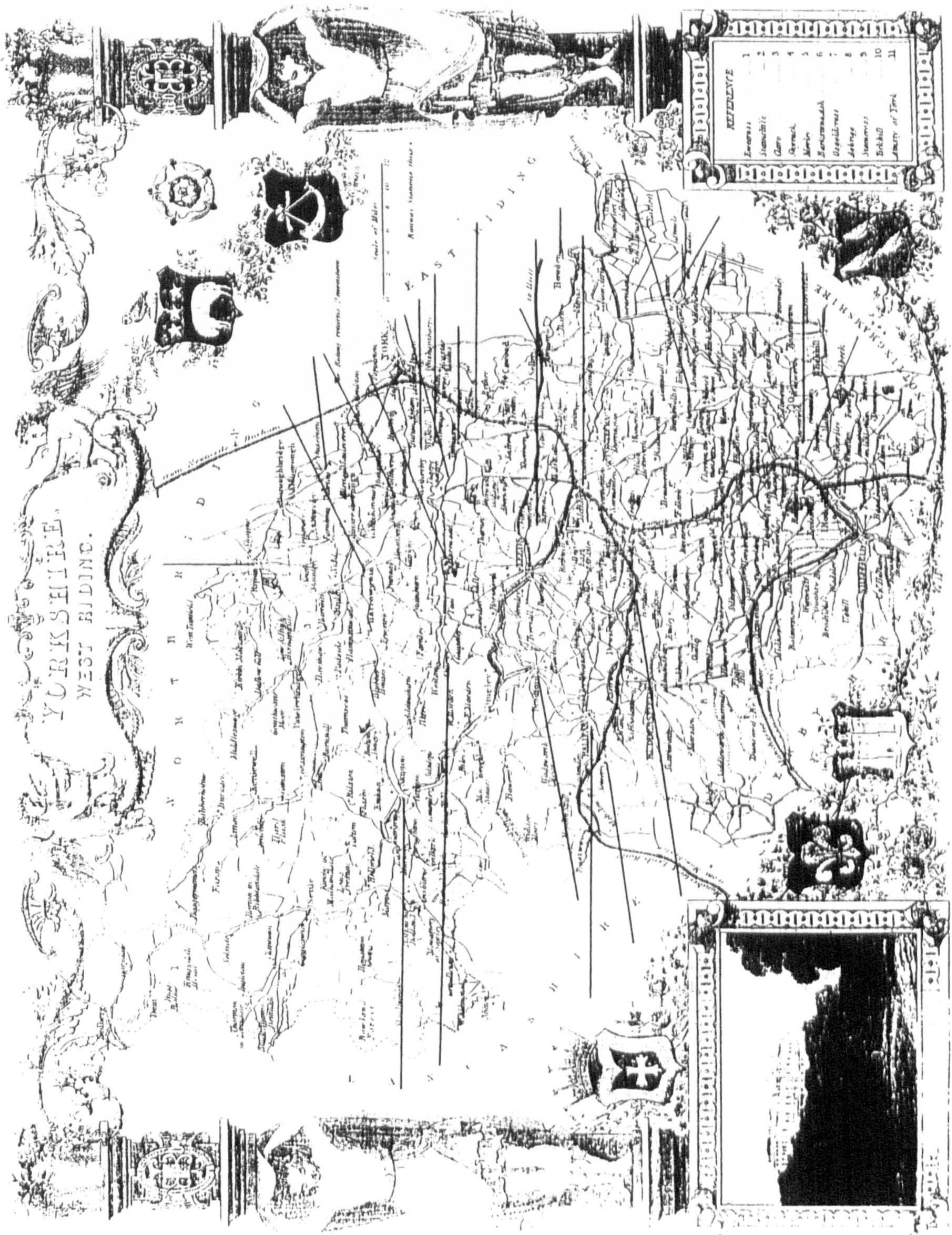
Map 1 - England and Wales



Map 2 - The North Riding



Map 3 - The East Riding



Map 4 - The West Riding

Chapter 1

References and Footnotes

- 1 Manderville, B., "The Fable of the Bees" (1714) in: P. Harth (ed.), *The Fable of the Bees*, (London, 1970) pp. 15-16. See also; McKendrick, N., J., Brewer & J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of the Consumer Society - the Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (London, 1982),
- 2 'And that *no foreign merchant, not being free of the city shall sell any merchandise to any other merchant not being free in the said city; neither shall any foreign merchant buy any merchandise within the liberty of the said city of any foreigner merchant* -' Drake, F., *Eboracum* (London, 1736) (Republished by EP Publishing, Wakefield 1978) p. 206,
- 3 Wragg, R.B., "The Life and Works of John Carr of York, Palladian Architect", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1975, Chapter II.
- 4 '... there is an abundance of good families live here, for the sake of the good company and cheap living - York is full of gentry and persons of distinction -' Defoe, Daniel, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Britain* P. Rogers (ed.) (London, 1986) Letter 9, pp. 519-521,
- 5 Stacpoole, A. *et al.*, *The Noble City of York* (York 1972) p. 313. According to this author York missed out on the industrialization which brought prosperity to Leeds and the West Riding in the 18th century because of the lack of either water power or cheap coal.
- 6 'York is not a commercial city, and it would be difficult to say that what is the staple manufacture of the place. The making of boots and shoes is extensively carried on; and here is a manufactory of white lead and glass.' Pigot's *General Directory for 1816-17*,
- 7 Mui, H-C., & L.H. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in 18th Century England* (London, 1989) p. 129,
- 8 Mui & Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping*, p. 129.
- 9 Indexes of the Fire Insurance Policies of the Sun Fire Office and the Royal Exchange Assurance, 1775-1787, Ref. Bib DA 8,942, Sun/J, York University Library.
- 10 'Harry Abbey, Cabinet Maker, Joiner, Appraiser and Undertaker Begs Leave to acquaint his Friends and the Public that he has opened a Warehouse at his Dwelling House in North Street, York, where is to be sold a Variety of CABINET GOODS and MAHOGANY, Double Chests, Single Chests, Dressing Chests, Mahogany Dining Tables with four feet, ditto with six feet, Dressing Tables, Teatables, Escritoir, Looking Glasses, Chairs, Handboards, and many other Articles in the Cabinet Way. Also Two Stacks of Old Hay to be sold'. *York Courant*, July 20, 1779,
- 11 Knight, C.B., *A History of the City of York* (York and London, 1944) p. 548,
- 12 The 'Clergyman's Outfitters' was run by Charles Pearson. In: Heape, R.G., *Georgian York*, (London, 1937), p. 74,
- 13 Beckwith advertised as 'Jeweller and Goldsmith - with the greatest Variety of Jewels of all Kinds - and the greatest Choice of Plate in the most elegant Taste'. The advertisement continues by listing various household goods and ends; 'His constant Demand enables him to give utmost Value, in ready Money, for any Quantity of Plate, Watches, Jewels, &c. Mourning Rings and all Sorts of Jeweller's Work made, also Coats of Arms, engraved on Stone, Steel, or Silver -' Quoted in Gill, M.A.V., *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* (1977), vol. 49, pp. 115-125,
- 13A *York Courant* issues of 20 January 1756 and 3 June 1760,
- 14 Will of Sir James Sanderson, PRO Prob. 11/1311, C/9378,
- 15 Friedman, T., "A Decorative Sculptor's Trade Card" *Leeds Art Calender* (Leeds, 1974) vol. 75 pp. 29-33,
- 16 *York Courant*, 18 and 25 August 1772,
- 16A Harvey, J., *York*, (London, 1975) for information on all the artists, with the exception of Vaslet; his abridged biography was supplied by York City Art Gallery.

- 17 In the previous year a 'Master Lister' sat for the artist on four occasions; only one payment of 30 guineas was made at the first appointment and it is suggested that they were brother and sister being portrayed head and shoulders in companion pictures. Was this 'Master Lister' the boy immortalized in Reynolds' 'Brown Boy', the eldest son of Thomas Lister of Gisburne Park, who later became Baron Ribblesdale, and whose wife, Rebecca Fielding, sat for a portrait bust to John Bacon the Younger, now in York City Art Gallery.
- 18 Batsford, H., *English Mural Monuments and Tombstones* (London 1916) p. 1.
- 19 In: Lord, J., "Patronage and Church Monuments 1660-1794", *Church Monuments*, (1986) vol. 1, pp. 95-105.
- 19A Le Neve, J. *Monumenta Anglicana*, (5 volumes, London, 1717-1719), vol. 1, Preface, The author quotes from both William Caaden (*Remains concerning Britain* - (London, 1674), p. 474) and John Weaver, (*Ancient funerall monuments within the united monarchie of Great Britain Ireland - with the dissolved monasteries therein contained* (London, 1631), Chapter 2).
- 20 A paragraph appeared in the *Connoisseur*, (1756) vol. 4, p. 121: 'Taste is at present the darling Idol of the polite world. The fine ladies and gentlemen dress with Taste; the architects, whether *Gothic* or *Chinese*, build with Taste,.. Yet in this amazing super-abundancy of Taste, few can say what it really is, or what the word itself signifies -' In *A Key to Civil Architectura*, p. 46 (1776) Thomas Skaife suggested that Beauty was 'the elder sister of Taste, begot of Elegance by Propriety'. In: Jenkins, Frank, *Architect and Patron* (Oxford, 1961) pp. 78-79.
- 21 Archbishop Sandys paraphrased these words of St. Augustine's in a sermon preached at St. Paul's on the death of Charles II of France in 1574: 'All these things, furniture of funerals, order of burying and the pomp of exequies, are rather comforts to the living than help to the dead.' In: Gittings, C., *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London, 1984) p. 39.
- 22 Pevsner, N., *Buildings of England Series, Yorkshire, West Riding* (London 1989) 2nd edition, pp. 53-54.
- 23 The boundaries of the three Ridings as used by Pevsner, wherever possible, have been followed for recording the monuments. In all but a few cases this works satisfactorily.
- 24 Lowther Archives, Clwyd Record Office, reference DD/L/140, letters of 29th February 1803 and 27 and 29 November 1804. Owen, H., *The Lowther Family* (Chichester, 1990), pp.280-305
- 25 There is nothing so far to suggest why James Buller's son should commission a monument from a York workshop for erection in Exeter (1772), other than that his aunt was Elizabeth, Countess of Strafford of Wentworth Castle in the West Riding. The faculty for this monument was issued after the monument was already in place. And in Yorkshire, who was the patron who paid for the monument in memory of the Hon. Amelia Frederica Wilhelmine Melesina Sparre, daughter of Elizabeth, Countess of Gyllenborg Sparre and Baron Sparre, Aide de Camp to Charles XII, King of Sweden? Research shows that in all possibility her mother was English and that they remained in England when the Baron went back to Sweden, but this is another unsolved patronage mystery.
- 26 *York Courant*, October 29, 1751.
- 27 This monument and the presence of a monument to William Richardson (1809) in Kendall Parish Church in the grounds of Abbot Hall, built by Lt. Col. George Wilson in 1759, does tend to strengthen the belief that the Fisher workshop could have been involved with the interior carving in the house.
- 28 The chimneypieces in the Drawing Room at Ribston Hall have centre blocks carved with reclining female figures, but otherwise are larger editions of the green and white marble chimneypiece at Howsham Hall.
- 29 John Royd had two children, John Jr. and Ann, and a brother Robert who also had interests in London as well as Halifax; Robert had a son, Robert Jr., and a daughter Naomi. In due time John Jr. married Naomi. She died in York, as did Ann, his unmarried sister, and both

- were buried in York Minster; John Jr., knighted in 1801 on his appointment as a judge of the Bengal Supreme Court, died in India in 1817. Robert Jr. married Mary, daughter of Boynton Langley of Wykeham Abbey, her aunt being the wife of Dr. John Dealtry (1772), née Elizabeth Langley.
- 30 'John Fisher, of this City, is preparing an elegant Monument, by Order of the Widow of the late Dr. Simpson of Wentworth, to be erected in Lichfield Cathedral, to the Memory of that excellent Physician and truly amiable Man, whose Loss will long be felt by his numerous and real Friends' *York Courant* 22 February 1785. What is especially interesting is that this is the first promotional 'puff' John ever published, the implication being that the workshop had sufficient work without needing to advertise.
- 31 Wragg, R.B., "The Life and Works of John Carr of York, Palladian Architect", unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Sheffield, 1975, Chapter I.
- 32 Hughan, W.J., *The History of the Apollo Lodge* (York 1889). Much additional information on freemasonry in the city was kindly supplied by the Rev. N. Barker Cryer and Mr. D. Hughes, co-Librarians of the Union Lodge in York.
- 33 Wolterton Hall Archives, Wolterton Hall, Norfolk, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21, letter dated April 5, 1737.
- 34 It seems possible that a Fisher family connection might have played a part in the patronage of the workshop by the families of visitors dying while taking the waters at Harrogate Spa. Christ Church on the Stray has a total of sixteen monuments carved by the workshop between 1808 and 1848; six at least of the deceased appear to have been visiting the spa, so who better to recommend a local workshop than the vicar - Samuel Fisher's son-in-law, the Rev. Andrew Cheap, vicar of Knaresborough for 47 years from 1804, was also patron of St. John's Chapel of Rest (now Christ Church). Since there is only one Fisher monument at Knaresborough (to a member of the family) this idea is probably completely unfounded; the patrons could have been resident in Harrogate, as were the families of the other ten commemorated; the York workshop could have been the nearest and could have been mounting an extremely effective publicity campaign. Since no church faculties have been found which might offer help, the question has to remain unanswered, at least for the time being.
- 35 *York Courant*, August 7, 1770. George 'Osbaldeston' of Hutton-Bushell, was son of John Wickens, rector of Petworth in Sussex, and his wife, Philadelphia, succeeded in 1770 to half of the estate of Fountayne. *Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 1885) p. 1168.
- 36 Presumably the City had learnt from their experience with the Hawke statue not to set any upper or lower limit to the subscription. WYCRO, NH2888, letters Nos. 183-185, August 1765.
- 37 *York Courant*, 9 March 1784.
- 38 Morrell, J.M., *Biography of the Common Man* (London, 1947) pp.42-43.
- 39 Several members of the nobility subscribed to all three - Lord Falconberg, Lord Scarbrough, Sir Thomas Robinson, Sir George Savile and Walter Hawksworth; Lords Strafford, Irwin, and Downe subscribed to the *Eboracum* and the stand; Sir Rowland Wynne and Sir Conyers D'Arcy each paid their £25 towards the Assembly Rooms and an undisclosed sum for the racecourse stand.
- 40 Bartolozzi was born in 1727 in Florence, son of Gaetano Bartolozzi, a goldsmith and worker in filigree. He came to England in 1762, persuaded so to do by Dalton, the King's Librarian. His former colleague, Cipriani, was already here. Bartolozzi's output was phenomenal; the collection of M. von der Null in Vienna contained a total of 4,614 engravings by him. Tuer, A.W., *F. Bartolozzi and his Works* (2 volumes, London and New York, 1881) vol. 1, p. 51. Fisher's advertisement of 31 July 1790 lists even more people who would receive subscriptions for the plate, among them Mr. Alderman Boydall in Cheapside. He was also an engraver and print publisher, who had made his fortune in the 1740s; he became Lord Mayor of London in 1790. In 1802 he opened his famous, but loss-making Shakespeare Gallery in Pall Mall.

- 41 Monument to William Pitt, Corporation of London Records Office, Misc, MSS 207,6,
 42 Cunningham, J.W., *The Velvet Cushion* (London, 1814), p. 135, Quoted in; Langford, P., *A*
Polite and Commercial People - England 1727-1783 (Oxford, 1992) p. 262,
 43 *York Courant*, 18 June 1810,
 44 Penny, N., *Church Monuments in Romantic England* (New Haven and London, 1977) Note 32, p.
 206,
 45 Esdaile, K.A., *English Monumental Sculpture* (London, 1927) p. 96,
 46 Fitzwilliam Archives, Sheffield City Libraries, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, Stewards'
 Papers, Letters from John Carr to the Steward dated 12 February 1792, 26 January 1794, 6
 February and 20 April 1795,
 47 Letter of 3 December 1789 from John Fisher either to Mr. Walter Fawkes or his agent, Mr. W.
 Wilson, in the possession of the Horton-Fawkes family at Farnley,
 48 Wragg, R.B., "The Life and Works of John Carr", Chapter II and Appendix D,
 49 John Carr's bill, dated 6 October 1774, amounted to £289, 7s, 8d, and covered drawings,
 supply of marble, chimneypieces, etc. NYCRO, Thirsk Hall Archives, Mic, 2202, Frames
 005242-59,
 50 Wragg, "The Life and Works of John Carr", Chapter III and Appendix D,
 51 Beard, G., *Georgian Craftsmen and their Work* (London, 1966), p. 94,
 52 The York Assize Court building records, NRCRO Mic, 106, p. 290/291,
 53 Wragg, "The Life and Works of John Carr, Chapter IV,
 54 Porter, R., *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London 1982) pp. 74-75
 55 Corfield, P.J., *The Impact of English Towns* (Oxford, 1982) p. 154,
 56 On 6 March 1738 Richard Fisher ended his letter to Sir Horatio Walpole with the following
 sentence: 'Honourable Sir, I return your Hon^r a great many Thanks and I shall be always Rede
 [sic] to work for any Gentleman that your Hon^r is pleased to prefer me to After I have
 finished your Honour's Work at Wolterton', Wolterton Hall Archives, Fisher Letters,
 Reference 8/21,
 57 Wolterton Hall Archives, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21,
 58 *Nostell Priory*, National Trust Guidebook, 1992 edition, p. 46.

CHAPTER 2

Four Generations of Fishers

In the last Chapter the patronage of the workshop was looked at. Now the intention is to turn to the family history of the Fishers themselves.

1

In 1958 John Betjeman in his Introduction to *Collins' Guide to English Parish Churches* wrote:

Some of our finest sculpture is to be found in the monuments erected in all parish churches new or old during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. A whole illustrated literature of this has been developed by the late Mrs. Esdaile and Mr. Rupert Gunnis.

This literature, which included information about the Fisher family at odds with the Family Tree, initially precipitated the work on which this thesis is based.

Several theories have been advanced concerning the antecedents of Richard Fisher, who was probably born at the turn of the seventeenth century and died *circa* 1773.

One is that he was the illegitimate son of a member of the Rockingham family, his father possibly being Lewis, the first Lord, who died in 1723.¹ I have wondered if he might have been the son of the Camberwell-based London carver James Fisher (1682-1722). In 1718 James entered into an article of agreement with the Rt. Honourable John, Lord Milton, heir apparent of William, Earl Fitzwilliam, for a monument to be executed for Marholm, a commission which, if my hypothesis is correct, established the link with the Fitzwilliams which spanned three generations. Whether the link was one of family, friendship or simply hero-worship, a large oil painting of Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquis of Rockingham (1730-1782) in the robes of the Garter (Illustration 18), was latterly on display in the Fisher family home in York.²

Another idea put forward was that Richard Fisher was the son of William Fisher, the 'Gardener in Chief to the Right Honourable JOHN AISLABIE, Esq at Studley' whose work there rated a poetic tribute in an *Antient and Modern History of the Loyal Town of Rippon*, published by Thomas Gent of York in 1733 (Illustration 19). It is suggested that since William had provided for Richard's training he omitted him from his



Illustration 18:
Charles, second Marquis of Rockingham,
Studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds, painted 1781-2,
canvas, 230 x 148,6cm, (Mansion House, York)

will as he had benefited from the estate during his father's life.³

The family tradition that Richard had been involved in the 1745 Jacobite uprising is based on a note I have in my possession written, presumably, by my great-grandmother. It is contained in a tiny envelope (the flap of which is embossed with a small indecipherable crest) bearing the legend 'Regarding the Statue and short account of the Romantic history of the Sculptor.'

About the time of the great Rebellion there appeared at Ripon a young man, a perfect stranger, who settling himself there, began diligently to study the art of Sculpture and at length made it his profession. He was highly accomplished, skilful in a remarkable degree in all athletic and many exercises, spoke French fluently, was an elegant Classic, and skilful both as a musician and a painter.

It is supposed the name of Fisher was taken, as being a common one in Yorkshire, and was not his own. He bought with him a beautiful blood mare, of which he was very fond and called 'Jenny Cameron'. It is supposed he came from Prince Charles' army, but he was of a very stern reserved nature and never revealed his history. He married at Ripon. His wife made an attempt which she never dared to repeat to discover his secret by showing him an advertisement in a paper to the effect that if a runaway son would return to his unhappy parents and friends everything in future should be done to ensure his happiness. With fierce anger he trampled on the paper, declaring that as she valued her own happiness and his, the subject was never again to be attended to. On his deathbed he made unavailing efforts to say something which it was evident was painfully weighing on his mind, but he was speechless, and his secret died with him.

He wrought two works expressly to leave to his two sons. A figure of Christ bearing the cross, and a figure of Jupiter and the Eagle. The former is of pure white marble about 3 feet high, extremely beautiful, and perfect in the expression of the countenance, attitude and form, etc. When nearly finished the artist was disappointed at finding some black streaks appear in the otherwise spotless white marble. When the work was finished however he found that they came out only like the marks of the stripes on the back. He became a famous Sculptor to which his works in York Minster and elsewhere testify.⁴

This document raises a whole host of imponderables; if Richard was involved in any uprising it was presumably the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion when James Stuart, the Old Pretender, son of the banished catholic James II, sought to re-establish the Stuart monarchy on the English throne. The timing of this would have allowed Richard to learn his trade and to become established as a carver by 1729. This was the year in which he was employed at Scriven Hall and the date of the earliest bill so far found for work completed. Again, if Richard was involved in the 1715 uprising



T O
Mr. William Fisher,
GARDENER in Chief

To the Right Honourable
JOHN AISLABIE, Esq.
 At **STUDLEY.**

NO meaner ART, and no inferior Toil,
 Could give such Rules, or so adorn the Soil.
 'Tis just that He, who did these Scenes contrive,
 Should have his Memory preserv'd alive ;
 That future Ages by these Lines may know,
 What to ingenious FISHER's Name they owe ;
 (If such as these can Names immortal make,
 And of ETERNITY a Share partake :)
 Whose happy Genius has in Planting shown
 ARTS more polite, than to our Fathers known ;
 Adept in all the GARDEN Mysteries,
 Of Herbs and Flow'rs, in Legumes, and in Trees ;
B Their

These various Qualities and Habits show,
 How best to plant, and when the Time to sow =
 For each its proper Soil, and Aspect, give ;
 Tell, where it will, and where it will not thrive =
 Learn'd in Design, of quick inventive Thought,
 That has this PARK to such Perfection brought =
 Each Spot, being emulous to please us most,
 May some peculiar Grace and Beauty boast.
 The whole Composur's of so fine a Frame,
 That Art can add no more, nor Envy blame.

Ye Pow'rs ! who over Flow'rs and Trees preside,
 For Him a Wreath compos'd of each provide,
 Of nicest Texture, and delightful Hue,
 Place on his Head, an Ornamental Shew :
 There in full Lustre glitter on his Brow,
 Those Plants and Flow'rs, which by his Hand did grow.



Illustration 19:

Poem tribute to William Fisher, gardener at Studley Royal 1716-43,
 from *Ancient and Modern History of the Loyal Town of Rippon*,
 published by Thomas Gent of York in 1733.

it confirms that he was probably born around 1695-1700, and would have been just the age to fight for a cause and to fall out with his parents .

The point made in the family history that Richard Fisher 'came from Prince Charles' army' probably stemmed from the fact he had a 'beautiful blood mare ... called *Jenny Cameron*', but the real Jenny Cameron belongs to the '45 Rebellion, and her life story was published in York in 1749.⁵ As is so often the case, disparate facts handed down are frequently put together to become one incorrect whole.

The implication in the note is that he undertook his sculptural training in or near Ripon, but in view of his classical background and fluent French, he could have learnt his art on the continent before returning to England to settle in Ripon. My view is that he either trained abroad or served his apprenticeship in London in the workshop of one of the Flemish carvers. This because his work suggests he had an intimate knowledge of works found in Ghent and Bruges.

It is interesting to speculate as to whether his various accomplishments helped or hindered him in his dealings with patrons; presumably he would have been able to meet them on the same educational footing which could have proved to his advantage. Equally, they could have acted against him if he was not sufficiently subservient, for it was not until later in the century that the status of the professional craftsman was accorded greater respect. The first option would appear to have been the case, since, as will be seen from the Catalogue, his known patrons included Sir Henry Slingsby, John and William Aislable, Horatio Walpole, Sir Rowland Winn and Lord Irwin.

2

On 3rd March 1729 Richard married Alice Bradley (or Broadley) at Ripon Minster.^{5A} In the Parish Register his place of residence was given as Scriven (where he was working for the Slingsby family); Alice came from Sharrow, a village about a mile from Ripon where the family is thought to have farmed. Their daughter, Hannah, was baptised on 26th February 1730; the next Fisher entry in the Parish Register was the baptism on 27th December 1731 of 'Richard, son of Richard Fisher of Clotherholme' (just outside Ripon), with his burial being recorded on 7th September 1735. 'John, son of Richard Fisher of Ripon' was baptised on 25th October 1735.

When Samuel was born Richard was working in Norfolk; on 6th March 1738 he wrote to Horatio Walpole at the Cockpit:

I humbly beg your Hon^r's pardon for my being Troubelsom in Desiring that your Hon^r would give me the Liberty to go to Rippon, the reason of my desiring to go is my wife is with Child and is Dangerously ill and things are in great Disorder ...

He assured Walpole he would make up the time when he got back, writing again from Ripon on 21 April to say he would set out for Norfolk 'on the 25th inst'.⁶ In 1740 their daughter, Alice, was baptised on 20th May but there is nothing further known about her. Hannah, their first born, died in York in 1754; her burial was recorded on 24th April in the Parish Register of St. Michael-le-Belfrey in York, the family having moved to the City in 1746.

The move to York established the Fishers in Minster Yard, within the Liberty of the Minster, which meant that Richard did not have to register as a Freeman, and he would have been able to accept his sons as apprentices without notifying the authorities. In 1755 the family left York, at least for a time, but if Richard returned it was not to Minster Yard; the Rating Assessments show that from 1755 the assessments were not collected:

'Mr. Fisher's personal assets, he not residing in Town	6d
His house, unch ^{al} rged	1d

The house remained empty through the next decade and was still unoccupied in 1774.⁷

Little is known of the family's movements during the six years from 1755 to 1761. Letters referring to a new agent for Sun Insurance, one signed by Richard, suggest that in April 1760 he was commuting between Harrogate and Knaresborough but in 1755 the family did leave York for London.⁸ Then in 1761 Richard exhibited the two figures mentioned in the *Romantic History* 'in the Great Room belonging to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commence, in the Strand'. Here Fisher, with a provincial background, was able to exhibit at the same time as three of the names on the London sculpture scene, Joseph Nollekens, John Bacon Sr., and Richard Chambers, who also specialized in staining marble. If public response to the Free Society's exhibition was as good as that experienced by the Society of Artists - almost 20,000 viewers over the two years - it was a golden publicity opportunity.⁹

If the suggestion can be substantiated that John Carr, the York architect, bought in chimneypieces from the Fisher workshop, the return of the family to York must date from c. 1763, the year Carr was designing additions to Escrick Hall, where the fireplaces certainly have all the hallmarks of their craftsmanship. It does seem possible that Richard collaborated with his sons at this time, one of the best methods of teaching being by example. The Burton Constable Michaelmas Account for 1766¹⁰ reads:

April 21 Messr^r Fisher's Note for Carving
 the Ornament in the Hall £42. 0. Od.

The first fireplaces for Wentworth Woodhouse date from c. 1768, and as will be seen from the Catalogue between 1766 and 1771 half a dozen memorials are signed *Fishers of York, Invt. et Sculpt.* The alternative is that Richard had either retired or died, and the brothers only were working in partnership.

There is no way of judging Richard Fisher's standing locally among his fellow craftsmen since there was not even a one-line notice of his death in the papers. However, his employment by Horatio Walpole at Wolterton in Norfolk caused much jealousy among the local carvers there and brought about his dismissal from the project. He sent two emotional, shakily written and phonetically spelt letters, rather different from his usual literate and legible missives:

... but it is certainly owing to to some spitfull peepel and throu
their Rong information. I am not unsocable but that I had a Great
many enemis all tho I never gave them any occasion. I have it in one
of his Hon^r Letters that some did envi my being implide by him,
which Gave me Reson To think he would not mind those envies persons
..

Furthermore, Fisher made it clear that he was not afraid to speak out in his own defence and had no qualms about expressing his sense of injustice over his dispatch and the way it was handled:

... my Suden departure from Wool^{tr} which was indeed very much
unexpected, and a great surprise to me, to be turned of in Such a
dishon^{bl} manner as I was. I have been at work for Several very
Honb^l Gentlemen 6 or 7 years together but Never met with such ill
useg before ...¹¹

Because York held such an important place in the hierachy of Freemasonry it seemed likely that as a carver Richard might have become a member of a lodge. As has already been stated, although the Roll of the

Minutes of York's Premier Lodge dates from 1705, between 1745 and 1761, for political reasons, the proceedings went unrecorded.¹²

Richard's death, like his birth, is something of a mystery. The Parish Records of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, York, detail the burial on 23rd August 1773 of 'Alice, widow of Richard Fisher, carver', but neither the place nor date of his death have been traced. No will has been found so it is not possible to judge how profitable (or otherwise) the workshop was. As will be seen from the Catalogues, in spite of the absence of signed monuments by Richard, the workshop went from strength to strength, both during his lifetime and when his sons took over the business.

The possibility that he changed his name was mooted in the 'Romantic history of the Sculptor'; it was not an uncommon occurrence in the eighteenth century for men to be 'also known as', as was the case with the architect William Halfpenny, whose alias was Michael Hoare (d. 1755).

3

John and his brother, Samuel, were in partnership until Samuel went to London with his family in 1780. Nothing is known of the education or apprenticeship of either boy; it has to be assumed that they served their time in their father's workshop, but as has already been pointed out, since this was situated within the Liberty of the Minster, Richard did not need to register as a Freeman and their apprenticeships are not listed in the City records. At a guess, John would have commenced his around 1749 in his fourteenth year, and Samuel two or three years later. It is possible, therefore, that if the family moved to London in 1755 it was to allow John at least to serve time in the workshop of a metropolitan carver. Here he would have gained both an insight into workshop practice in the Capital, and been able to study the trends in fashion and design in order to offer patrons in Yorkshire the same sort of service they could expect in the metropolis.

He was thirty-five years old when, on 2nd December 1770, his wedding took place at Holy Trinity (otherwise Christ Church), King's Square: 'John Fisher of All Saints' North Street, Carver, and Jane Featherstonhaugh.' Twenty years earlier Jane's father, William, had been admitted to the Freedom of the City on paying the sum of £25. 0. 0d. to the Common Chamber on 18th April 1750, and he was almost certainly the

son of Thomas Featherston, the brewer who represented Bootham Ward until, with Thomas Spooner, he was elected Sheriff 'for this City and County of the same City from the feast of St. Michael the Archangel next fore one whole year ...'¹³ An announcement appearing in the *York Courant* of 11 November 1755 suggests that the family was reasonably affluent; it detailed the sale of 'The Household Furniture and Brewing Utensils late Mr. Thomas Featherston's in Thursday Market.' The following day the linen was to be on offer, and on the Friday four horses, a waggon, cart, saddles, hay and 'other husbandry gear' were to be sold at his house in Clifton.¹⁴

The marriage of Samuel, 'Sculptor, of the parish of All Saints, North Street' to Ann Sanderson at the Church of St. Crux on 3rd September 1771, was a union which undoubtedly affected the lives of both families, as will be shown later. Ann was the daughter of James Sanderson, a merchant grocer, who married Elizabeth Marsden by licence on 26th May 1737 in St. Michael-le-Belfrey's Church. James Sanderson also held civic office in York; he served on the Committee of Leases and the Auditing Committee, represented the Walmgate ward for five years from 1743-1748, and was elected Chamberlain for a year in 1746.¹⁵ There were three other children of his marriage to Elizabeth - Elizabeth, Margaret, and James, who in 1792-3 became Lord Mayor of London.¹⁶

The All Saints' North Street Parish Register records either the birth or baptismal dates of all but three of John and Jane's children, with John's profession being given as that of 'carver'.¹⁷ The births and baptisms of three of Samuel's children are also shown in the same Parish Register, with Samuel too being referred to as 'carver'.¹⁸

In 1776 'John Fisher and Samuel Fisher, Carvers and Statuaries in North Street ... exercising that business in a Yard there' were twice threatened with prosecution if they did not take up their Freedoms. The City Records for 1777 show that a fee of £6. 0. 0d. was paid, thus complying with the City's statute that only freemen should engage in trade or open shops. Since John's name alone appears in the record books presumably the fee only covered him. In spite of this in the City of York House Book there are notices of Orders issued against him on 8th February and 17th July 1779 'for exercising Trades in this City not being freemen thereof'. The implication is of some administrative muddle.

which appeared in the *York Courant* of 5th September 1780 implied that the split was perfectly amicable (Illustration 20).

It was during this twelve or so years of partnership between Richard's sons that some of the practice's major works were executed - the Assize Court figures, the free-standing figure monuments at Hunmanby, Burton-upon-Stather, and the Dealtry memorial in York Minster. Their work received an accolade from the Rev. William Mason (whose correspondence with Horace Walpole ran into two volumes when it was published) who explained in a letter to him that he had been requested by Mrs. Dealtry, widow of the popular York physician, to 'direct the two Fishers ... (who are very good statuaries) in designing a monument to be put in our Cathedral,' and it was obvious from the reply that Walpole knew who the brothers were.²⁰ From this period also came the Wilson monument in Lancaster Priory, and the weeping putti which decorate the tablets commemorating Lady Graham and William Hutchinson; all show how the workshop could adapt to different styles. The general impression formed from scrutinizing the Catalogue is of a go-ahead, ambitious workshop, and the coverage of the workshop run by John alone does nothing to alter this opinion.

4

After Samuel left York John completed an inordinate amount of work, as well as taking on five apprentices between 1783 and 1789, two of whom were his sons, John Jr. and William. Chimneypieces were carved for Swinton Castle, Wentworth Woodhouse and Farnley Hall, the latter being mentioned in Paterson's *Roads* (1824) as 'of the finest Italian marble and superbly executed.'^{20A} Between 1780 and 1804 when he died, at least 55 monuments were carved in the workshop under John's management, the most important probably being that of Sir George Savile.

Judging by the quantity of work passing through the workshop it would seem that the practice should have been fairly secure financially. In spite of the fact that the workshop's clients were among the leading nobility and gentry of the county, it appears that as patrons they were dilatory in settling their accounts. In 1786 Walter Beaumont Hawksworth inherited from his cousin Francis Fawkes and under the terms of the will assumed the name and arms of Fawkes; he commissioned Fisher to carve a monument in memory of his benefactor for the Church at Otley. The bill for over £300 was paid in instalments, but apparently paid very slowly as

YORK, Sept. 1, 1780.
THE PARTNERSHIP between **JOHN**
 and **SAMUEL FISHER**, Sculptors, of this City,
 dissolved on the 19th Day of this Month; It is there-
 fore requested that all Persons who have any Demands on the
 Partnership, will apply at their House in St. Helen's
 Lane, that the same may be discharged.
FISHER (quitting York) begs Leave to return his most
 grateful Acknowledgments to the Nobility and Gentry for
 their Patronage whilst in Union with his Brother, to whose
 Commands he humbly solicits their future Commands.

YORK, Sept. 1, 1780.
J. FISHER, SCULPTOR,
 MOST respectfully returns Thanks to the
 Nobility and Gentry for the many Favours conferred
 on himself and Brother during their late Partnership. He
 humbly begs Leave to solicit a Continuance of them on his
 own Account, and so assure those who may honour him with
 their Commands, that he will exert his utmost Abilities in
 the Execution of their Orders.
**MONUMENTS; ETRICHED and FINISH MARBLE
 CHIMNEY-PIECES,** finished in the highest Taste.

York Courant, 5th September 1780

THE Commissioners in a Commission
 of Bankrupt awarded and issued forth
 against **JOHN FISHER**, of the city of York, mason,
 dealer, and chapman, intend to meet on the 30th of
 July inst. at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, at the
BLACK SWAN INN, in Coneystreet, in the city of
 York, in order to make a final dividend of the said
 Bankrupt's estate and effects; when and where the
 creditors who have not already proved their debts,
 are to come prepared to shew the same, or they will
 be excluded the benefit of the said dividend. And all
 claims not then proved will be disallowed.

York Herald, 19th July 1794

MEDALLION
 Of the late Most Noble
CHARLES WATSON WENTWORTH,
Marquis of ROCKINGHAM.

MANY Gentlemen having expressed
 a desire to have in their possession a
MEDALLION, full size, of that **ILLUSTRIOUS**
NOBLEMAN, J. FISHER, Statuary; York, begs
 permission to inform the Nobility, Gentry, and the
 Public at large, that he has finished one on an oval
 Dimensions 2 feet 4 inches, by 1 foot 8 inches, which
 he intends to have cast and bronzed, price to subscri-
 bers THREE GUINEAS each, one half to be paid at
 the time of subscribing, and the remainder on delivery
 of the Medallion. To non-subscribers FOUR GUINEAS.

Subscriptions will be received at his Shop in Len-
 dall, opposite Mr. Ringrose's Inn, where the Medal-
 lion may be seen.

He cannot omit this opportunity, of returning his
 most grateful acknowledgments to the Nobility and
 Gentry, for the numerous favours conferred on him
 in the **MONUMENTAL** and **CHIMNEY-PIECE**
 line, and at the same time to assure those who ho-
 nour him with their commands, that they shall be
 executed with the highest taste possible.

York Herald, 2nd August, 1794

John Fisher, Statuary, whose Integrity,
 position, and genuine hospitality of
 will long live in the affectionate remembrance
 of his friends, and be thought of with respect
 and with regret. His merit as a sculptor
 ranked him high in the annals of the art:
 so long as the works of genius remain the ob-
 jects of our admiration, the purity and
 the originality of his designs, as well as the
 spirit and elegant chastity of his executions
 prove the justice of his claim to eminence.
 His original determination had fixed him in
 London, till the patronage and friendship and
 encouragement of the late Marquis of Rocking-
 ham (the discerning and liberal Master
 of the age, and whom he honoured and respected
 with enthusiastic regard) induced him to settle
 in the above city, where, we understand his
 sons, brought up under his eye and instruction
 by his practical skill, purpose continuing
 their father's profession.

The Monthly Magazine,
 2nd July 1804

John had to go cap in hand for settlement.²¹ The delay is probably not surprising; carvers, along with other artists, were generally regarded as superior 'tradesmen' or craftsmen. It was largely due to the influence of Sir Joshua Reynolds that they gradually became awarded a higher status.

During this period finances in this country were 'tight', not only for the landed gentry but for everyone, on account of the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, both of which adversely affected trade. Thus it was possibly a bad time for John Fisher to employ Bartolozzi, the nation's most prestigious craftsman in his field, to engrave the Savile monument mentioned in Chapter 1. Having to foot a £210 bill for the engraving, non-payment of bills by his customers, and the price of marble from abroad rocketing, meant that John had a cash-flow problem. £210 was more than the average £150 annual income of a jeweller, who also traded in luxury goods (see Table 1, Chapter 1). It was also more than the glass painter, William Peckitt, earned in a year, working for many of the people who patronized the Fishers' workshop.²²

It comes as something of a surprise to find John Carr writing in July 1792: 'Mr. Fisher is still in Jail ... but I hear is upon a plan to cheat his Creditors of 13 shills in the pound, which will enable him to go on again ...'^{22a} From what Daniel Defoe wrote about bankruptcy in *The Complete English Tradesman* one wonders if Fisher caused 'it to be taken out in his favour', thus ridding himself of all his debts at once and saving the business.

How long John Fisher stayed in jail is not known, but it was two years before the final bankruptcy notice appeared in the *York Herald* on 19th July 1794 (Illustration 20). A similar one was published in the *York Courant* two days later.²³ John must have been exceedingly resilient because a fortnight afterwards he was 'floating' his idea for a large medallion of the Marquis of Rockingham. In view of another letter from Carr, dated February 1795, which highlights his apparent dislike of Fisher, further financial troubles seem to have beset him: 'all Fishers best men have left him, they cannot get their wages off him ... I wish you was quit of him ... there is no trusting what he says.'²⁴

There are a number of questions to be asked about John Fisher's finances; he could count a number of titled people among his patrons as well as members of the 'gentry', but as will be seen in the Chapters on the Workshop some bills were only settled on a yearly basis, and difficulties could arise if his workmen needed to be paid weekly. With the number of commissions handled by the workshop it is hard to understand why Fisher should have been financially embarrassed, but almost nothing is known of his personal life-style. York was a Tory stronghold but John was presumably a Whig as he was a member of the influential Rockingham Club during its existence, and he would undoubtedly have attended some of the ten to twelve meetings held a year at which dinners were served.²⁵ The family's name does not appear on the lists of those patronizing the balls and concerts held in the Assembly Rooms during Race Weeks, nor can John's name be found among those of the gentlemen of the racing fraternity or on the membership roll of the masonic lodge. This suggests that the status of a sculptor in York, however good, was still that of a craftsman rather than a gentleman.

He did not own the house, yard and garden in Mint Yard which the family occupied until they returned to North Street in 1802 when the lease ran out. As in the case of his father, no will has been found for John, so there is no help available from that quarter; if John's estate in any way resembled that of William Peckitt, the York glass-painter, then he would have been comfortably off; when Peckitt died he left eight properties which were estimated to be worth some £3,080.²⁶ John's granddaughter, Priscilla Robertson, left a clue in part of an incomplete and undated letter: 'I know dear Mother used to say if our Ancestors had done as they ought to have done we ought to have kept one carriage - fond of company and Champagne suppers'. In John's obituary panegyric 'his genuine hospitality' is mentioned, so perhaps he was living beyond his means.

John's death was recorded in the *York Courant* on 2nd July 1804: 'On Saturday last died, after a tedious illness, Mr. John Fisher, Statuary in this City, whose abilities ranked him amongst the most eminent of his profession'. A longer piece appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* (Illustration 20), probably inserted at the instigation of his sons, and was a fitting filial tribute. Not only does it draw attention to his skill as a carver but suggests that he was influenced by the patronage and friendly

but suggests that he was influenced by the patronage and friendly encouragement of the Marquis of Rockingham to remain in York rather than move to London.

The *York Courant* obituary mentions that John had suffered from 'a tedious illness', foreshadowing the death of three of his sons at an early age; Samuel died aged 32, William at 38, 'after a long illness' and George at 35 from 'a prolonged illness'. It seems very possible that their deaths could have been caused by chest complaints brought on by constant inhalation of marble dust. His wife, Jane, had died four years earlier and her obituary notice appeared in the *York Herald* on 12 April 1800.

5

John and Jane had eight children, two girls and six boys. The two daughters married well, one a clergyman, the other a land agent.²⁶ As stated in John's obituary, the boys all followed their father's trade as sculptors.

John Jr. remained a bachelor and when he died was interred at Acomb. He was apprenticed to his father for seven years on 7th July 1785 (Illustration 21), and was to receive sixpence on every Shrove Tuesday during his apprenticeship.²⁷ Nothing further has come to light about him and in spite of the fact that he was buried in Acomb, it is possible that he worked away.

William was also single and recorded as being of the Parish of All Saints when he claimed his Freedom 'by servitude' on 10 September 1811 (Illustration 21); he was only eleven when his father took him as an apprentice in 1787. The indentures of both John Jr. and William are signed by their father, but while John's was witnessed by Michael Cooper and William Harrison, William's was endorsed by Samuel Fisher and William Harrison. Was this John's brother, Samuel? He had left York for London in 1780; was he back in York, working, or merely visiting. Nothing further has yet come to light. Perhaps the injunction on the indenture that the apprentice - 'his said Master well and faithfully shall serve, his Secrets shall keep - ' has, over the years contributed to the general lack of information.

Of all the boys William was the most ambitious - it was he who exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1801 and 1811 and at the Northern

Indenture

Made the *seventh* Day of

July the *seventh* Year of the Reign of our Sovereign *King George*
 by the Grace of God of Great-Britain, France, and Ireland, KING, Defender of the Faith, &c.
 And in the Year of our LORD One Thousand Seven Hundred and *seventy seven* BETWEEN *John Fisher*
of the one Part and John Fisher of the other Part: WITNESSETH,
 That the said *John Fisher* hath of his own Free Will, and with the Consent of
 his Father *John Fisher* put and Bound himself Apprentice to and with the said *John Fisher*
 and with him after the Manner of an Apprentice to dwell, remain, and serve from the *seventh* Day of *July*
 for, during, and untill the Term of *seven* Years thence next following be fully Completed and Ended. During all
 which Term, the said Apprentice *John Fisher* shall well and faithfully shall serve, his Secrets shall keep, his lawful Commands shall do, Fornication or Adultery shall not commit, Hurt or Damage to his said Master shall not do, nor Consent to be done, but to his Power shall Let it, and forthwith his said Master thereof warn: Taverns or Ale-Houses he shall not haunt or frequent, unless it be about his Master's Business there to be one: At Dice, Cards, Tables, Jowls, or any other unlawful Games he shall not Play: The Goods of his said Master shall not Waste nor them Lend, or give to any Person without his Master's Licence: Merimony within the said Term shall not contract, nor from his Master's Service at any Time absent himself; but as a True and Faithful Apprentice shall owe and behave himself towards his said Master, and all, as well in Words as in Deeds during the said Ten: And a true and just Account of all his said Master's Goods, Chattels, and Money committed to his Charge, or which shall come to his Hands, faithfully he shall give at all Times when thereunto required by his said Master, Executors, Administrators, or Assigns. AND the said Master

Preferes, to and with the said *John Fisher* his said Apprentice, That he the said *John Fisher* his Executors, Administrators, or Assigns, shall and will Teach, Learn, and Inform him the said Apprentice, or cause him to be Taught, Learned, and Informed in the Trade *of a Carpenter* with the said Master now useth, after the best Manner of Knowledge that he or they may or can, with all Circumstances thereunto belonging: AND at shall find, and provide to and for the said Apprentice, sufficient and enough of Meat, Drink, and Lodging, and also shall allow him *reasonable* wages as may be due during the said Apprenticeship.

And for the true Performance of All and Singular the Covenants and Agreements aforesaid, each of the Parties aforesaid doth bind himself unto the other firmly by their Presents. In Witness whereof, the Parties above-named to this present Indenture, interchangeably have set their Hands and Seals the Day and Year above-written.

Sealed and Delivered (being first duly stamped)
 in the Presence of
Mich^l Cooper
Wm Harris

John Fisher
John Fisher

MEMORANDUM. This Indenture must bear Date the Day it is executed, and what Money or other Thing is given or contracted for with the Apprentice, may be inserted in Words of Length, and the Duty paid to the Stamp-Office, if in London, or within the weekly Bill of Mortality, within one Month after the Execution; and if in the Country, and out of the Bill of Mortality, within two Months, to a Distributor of the Stamps, or his Assigns, otherwise this Indenture shall be void, the Matter or Matters forfeit Fifty Pounds and another Penalty, and the Apprentice is obliged to follow his Trade, or be made free.

City of YORK } I *William Fisher* of the Parish
 (to wit.) } *Richard Fisher*
 of *St. Andrew's* in the said City, Seneschal
 do hereby CLAIM, and give NOTICE that I intend to apply for my
 FREEDOM of the said City by Servitude, under an Indenture dated the
19th Day of *October* *1707* whereby I was bound
 Apprentice to *John Fisher* of the Parish of
St. Andrew's in the said City, and by Virtue whereof
 I served *seven* the full Term of *seven*
 Years in the said City.

As Witness my Hand the *10th* Day of *September* *1711*
Wm Fisher

Illustration 21: John Fisher Jr.'s Apprenticeship Indenture (Henry Moore Institute, Leeds) and William Fisher's Application for Freedom (York City Archives)

Society Exhibitions in Leeds; as already mentioned, he entered the City of London's competition for a monument to commemorate the Younger Pitt. A number of London addresses are recorded for him, and in 1806 he wrote that he was 'engaged with Mr. Nollekens, Mortimer Street.' Between 1810 to 1814, the year before he died, the signature of a William Fisher appeared on an account book showing payments made to wives of militia men.²⁸ On 7th December 1812 William was proposed for membership of the Union York Lodge, but his application was rejected on 21st December of the same year. The reason for his blackballing is not known.

George, who was also interred at Acomb when he died in 1815, married c. 1805, his bride being Marie Walsh (whether from London or from York is not known), but they lived in Kentish Town at No. 5, Trafalgar Place. When he applied for his freedom of the City of York on 28th of April 1810 it was by 'Birth Right'. Although he does not seem to have been officially apprenticed to his father, George and William were working together when they advertised in the *York Courant* of 9th May 1807 that they were:

... impelled, by a necessary duty, to contradict a prejudicial report respecting their establishment in this City being declined, in favour of some proposals from London. W.F.'s residence there, and his engagement with one of the most celebrated Statuaries in that Metropolis, was accepted for the purpose of uniting the advantages of an exalted practice, to a completion of his studies from the Antique; they, therefore, hope to receive a continuance of that patronage, which, instead of relinquishing, it shall be their study and ambition to retain.'

The advertisement concluded by saying that designs for monuments and chimneypieces could be seen at their house in North Street; a footnote indicated that they were looking for two masons accustomed to working in marble (Illustration 22).

In the *York Courant* of 10th November 1806 Samuel announced that after spending five years studying sculpture under an eminent and most distinguished Artist in London he intended to reside in this City, to carry on the Profession of a STATUARY and MODELLER (Illustration 22). Although he does not mention his master he was possibly Joseph Nollekens.²⁹ In 1802 Ann Abbey of Marston, near York, became his wife, and they had two daughters. Early in 1806 Samuel showed an interest in becoming a Freemason; the records of the Union York Lodge indicate that

YORK, NOVEMBER 10.

York, Nov. 10, 1806.

SAMUEL FISHER

BECS leave to inform the NOBILITY, GENTRY, and PUBLIC in general, that he intends to reside in this City, to carry on the Profession of a STATUARY and MODELLER, and hopes, that after devoting the last Five Years in studying the Art under an eminent and most distinguished Artist in London, to be able to give satisfaction to those who may honour him with their Commands.

N. B. PORTRAITS, either as Busts or Medallions, taken.

York Courant, 10th November 1806

**Messrs. W. and G. FISHER,
STATUARIES, YORK,**

TAKE this public method of returning their grateful acknowledgments to the Nobility and Gentry, by whom they have been so liberally encouraged since the decease of their late Father, and are impelled, by a necessary duty, to contradict a prejudicial report respecting their establishment in this City being declined, in favour of some proposals from London; W. F.'s residence there, and his engagement with one of the most celebrated Statuaries in that Metropolis, was accepted for the purpose of uniting the advantages of an exalted practice, to a completion of his studies from the Antique; they, therefore, hope to receive a continuance of that patronage, which, instead of relinquishing, it shall be their study and ambition to retain.

Designs for Monuments and Chimney Pieces to be seen at their House in North Street.

N. B. Wanted, TWO MASONS who have been accustomed to work Marble.

North Street, March 6. 1807.

York Courant, 9th March 1807

YORK, July 10, 1813.

R. FISHER,

BECS leave to inform his Friends and the Public, that he has opened a STONE-YARD, behind his house in NORTH STREET, and assures those who favour him with their commands, that he can serve them with the best of FLAGGING, STEPPING, WINDOW SILLS, WALL-COPING, RIGGING, CISTERNS, TROUGHES, &c. on the most reasonable terms.

TOMBS and HEAD-STONES

Executed on the shortest notice.

N. B. An APPRENTICE Wanted.

York Courant, 12th July 1813

**R. & C. FISHER'S
PARTNERSHIP DISSOLVED.**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,

THAT the Co-Partnership lately carried on in the City of York, by RICHARD FISHER, and me, the undersigned CHARLES FISHER, under the Firm of Richard and Charles Fisher, Sculptors and Stone-Masons, was, pursuant to a proviso for that purpose contained in our Deed of Co-Partnership, Dissolved on the 18th of November last past:—And I further give Notice, That I will not be answerable for any Debts, Contracts, or Engagements which may hereafter be incurred or entered into by the said RICHARD FISHER. As Witness my Hand this 18th day of November, 1815.

CHARLES FISHER.

CHARLES FISHER returns Thanks to the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public in general, for the Patronage hitherto given to his Family, and informs them that he shall from the day of the date hereof, carry on the Art of a Sculptor in all its Branches, at his House in Micklegate; and having for some time been a Pupil of that eminent Artist Mr. Bacon, he hopes to merit a continuance of that patronage and support which he will be emulous to deserve.

November 18th, 1815.

York Courant, 11th December 1815

on 17th March he was accepted for initiation but he never entered the Lodge. In 1812 Samuel died in Bristol and it had been supposed that the family had moved from York, but this has proved not to be the case.²⁰

On 2 February 1812 Richard Fisher was married at All Saints', North Street, to Ann, third daughter of Mr. Roger Barker of Dunnington. They had four children, two dying in infancy; Richard was a councillor for Micklegate Ward in 1814, where he had a house, but when he died in 1819 he too was interred in Acomb. In 1811 Richard opened a stone yard in North Street, apparently operating this in tandem with the business he and William were running in Stonegate; this stone yard sold items required by builders, and rather than monuments and chimneypieces Richard advertised tombs and headstones. Then in 1814 Richard and Charles (John and Jane's youngest son) entered into a partnership which was terminated in 1815 by Charles who advertised in the *York Courant* of 11th December that he would not be responsible for his brother's debts, contracts or engagements (Illustration 22).

The advertisement severing any financial connection between Richard and Charles was followed by an announcement that Charles, after having trained under 'that eminent artist Mr. Bacon', intended to 'carry on the Art of a Sculptor in all its branches, at his house at Micklegate.' He was married to Mary Ann Cattle at St. Botolph's Church, London, on 10 February 1819. Mary Ann was the daughter of Ann Priscilla (née Dalby) and George Cattle of the York silversmiths, Barber & Cattle of Coney Street; they had eleven children, but only seven reached maturity.

Both Richard and Charles at some time must have gained their Freedoms because both placed advertisements for apprentices, but details are not available. The only other printed reference to Charles is to his bankruptcy in 1823; this was announced on page 284 of Part II of *The European Magazine*, but the news does not appear to have filtered down to reach the York newspapers.

6

Only one of Charles and Mary Ann's three sons became a carver; this was John, who carried on the family business with his mother after his father's death. He married a Miss Stephenson, the daughter of Ann and

Thomas Stephenson who farmed at Great Ouseburn³¹ and lived in Gillygate in York. John died in 1884 and with him, the workshop.

Charles Jr. remained a bachelor, and was articled to the York architect, J.C. Andrews. When Charles died his obituary notice listed the names of sixty-eight people from among the mourners attending his funeral.³² Through the 'good offices' of Robert Davies, York's Town Clerk, William, against his better judgement, was persuaded to join the railway which was then playing a major part in the life of the city.³³

Of Charles and Mary Ann Fisher's daughters, Mary Ann remained single³⁴, Elizabeth was listed on the census forms as a 'daily governess', while Jane, Priscilla and Ann married appropriate suitors.³⁵

It has not been possible to ascertain the standing in York of the various members of the family. The obituaries for Mary Ann Fisher and her nephew, Charles, are the only ones to give more than minimal details of the funerals. Ironically, it is Charles, the architect, who receives the plaudits of friends and colleagues in his obituary, this recognition underlining his status in the community. Mary Ann's notice says that 'her many acts of charity, which she performed unostentatiously, will live as a fragrant memory.'

7

Samuel's announcement in 1780 that he was quitting York is almost the last we hear of him. It has not been possible to find out how he was employed in London, nor where he and Ann lived. Possibly Ann's brother, James (Illustration 23A), accommodated them; *Boyle's Fashionable Court Guide* for 1796 gives his address as 32 Devonshire Place, and from c. 1790 he owned Wandsworth Manor House, East Hill (Illustration 23B).³⁶

It is James Sanderson's will of 18th April 1798 with its two codicils which sheds at least a little light on to the couple's life,³⁷ and possibly proved advantageous to the York workshop. Firstly, he left instructions for his funeral and burial, and specified that a marble monument should be erected costing at least £200 but no more than £300. Mrs. Esdaille attributes to the Fishers the carving of this 9' tall memorial in the Church of St. Magnus the Martyr at London Bridge³⁸ but whether it was Samuel or John or both is not yet known. Samuel Fisher, his brother-in-law, was willed an annuity of £40 during his lifetime, payable



Illustration 23A; Sir James Sanderson, by Gainsborough Dupont, c. 1793.
Originally hanging at the Bridewell Royal Hospital, now at
the King Edward School, Witley, Surrey



Illustration 23B; Wandsworth Manor House, East Hill, Wandsworth,
home of Sir James Sanderson from, c. 1790. Probably built c. 1670 for
Peter Pagen, a Protestant refugee from the Low Countries
(Battersea District Library, Wandsworth Borough Council)

quarterly, and his sister, Ann Fisher, an annuity of £100 for 'the term of her life ... computed and paid from six months anterior' to his death. A codicil which varied the amount of an annuity to be paid to his nephew Henry and the bequest to his other nephew, Samuel James, suggests that Samuel Fisher might have died in the summer of 1798. Henry was, perhaps, the potential black sheep of the family, since his legacy was not without strings;³⁹ its payment seems to have been dependent on him shaping up 'like a good parish priest'.

Samuel's daughters also made advantageous marriages, one to the son of an admiral, the other to the nephew of a Residentiary Canon of York Minster.⁴⁰ The legacies left to each member of Samuel's family, wisely invested, would have brought in an acceptable annual income, and possibly doors could have been opened to them socially which would otherwise have been shut, where a casual word of recommendation in the right place could prove valuable and perhaps lead to later patronage for the York cousins. Thus this brief summary of what little is known of Samuel and Ann and their family has been included because although the information has no direct relevance to the running of the workshop, John and Jane Fisher's boys spent some time in London, and were certainly in contact with their cousins.⁴¹

8

Through summarizing the biographical data of the four generations of the Fisher family, it has been possible to consider if there was any interplay between their private lives and the workshop.

Thorough investigation has shown that for the most part their marriages, intentionally or otherwise, must have been beneficial to the practice and added to the breadth of the patronage it enjoyed. The fact that the workshop was situated in York, an ecclesiastical centre, that three members of the family were married to clergymen, and that Samuel's son and grandson both took holy orders, is perhaps significant since over ten percent of the monuments carved during the existence of the workshop were in memory of clerics.

It is possible to trace minor benefits to the workshop from various other family liaisons - for instance, Samuel Fisher's marriage to Ann Sanderson. Her sister married Henry Roxby who was in partnership with

his banking brother-in-law, James Sanderson. Henry employed the Fishers to carve a monument for Beverley Minister on which he details his family history. His daughter's monument in High Harrogate was also executed by the Fishers. Probably the monument to the Rev. Andrew Cheap, Ann and Samuel's son-in-law, came from the workshop.⁴² The tablet in memory of Marie Stevens, Samuel's daughter, is signed 'Fisher'. Both are in Knaresborough Parish Church. The relationship with James Sanderson could also have led to the various commissions being received from his fellow Members of Parliament living in Yorkshire, for example the Hothams of South Dalton.

Even the gravestones in York Cemetery reflect these associations - there are Fisher family graves but the architect, J.C. Andrews, to whom Charles Jr. was apprenticed, lies under a Fisher slab, as does George Dalby Cattle in Scarborough Churchyard, and it is more than probable that if one investigated names on the periphery of the Family Tree more such examples would be brought to light.

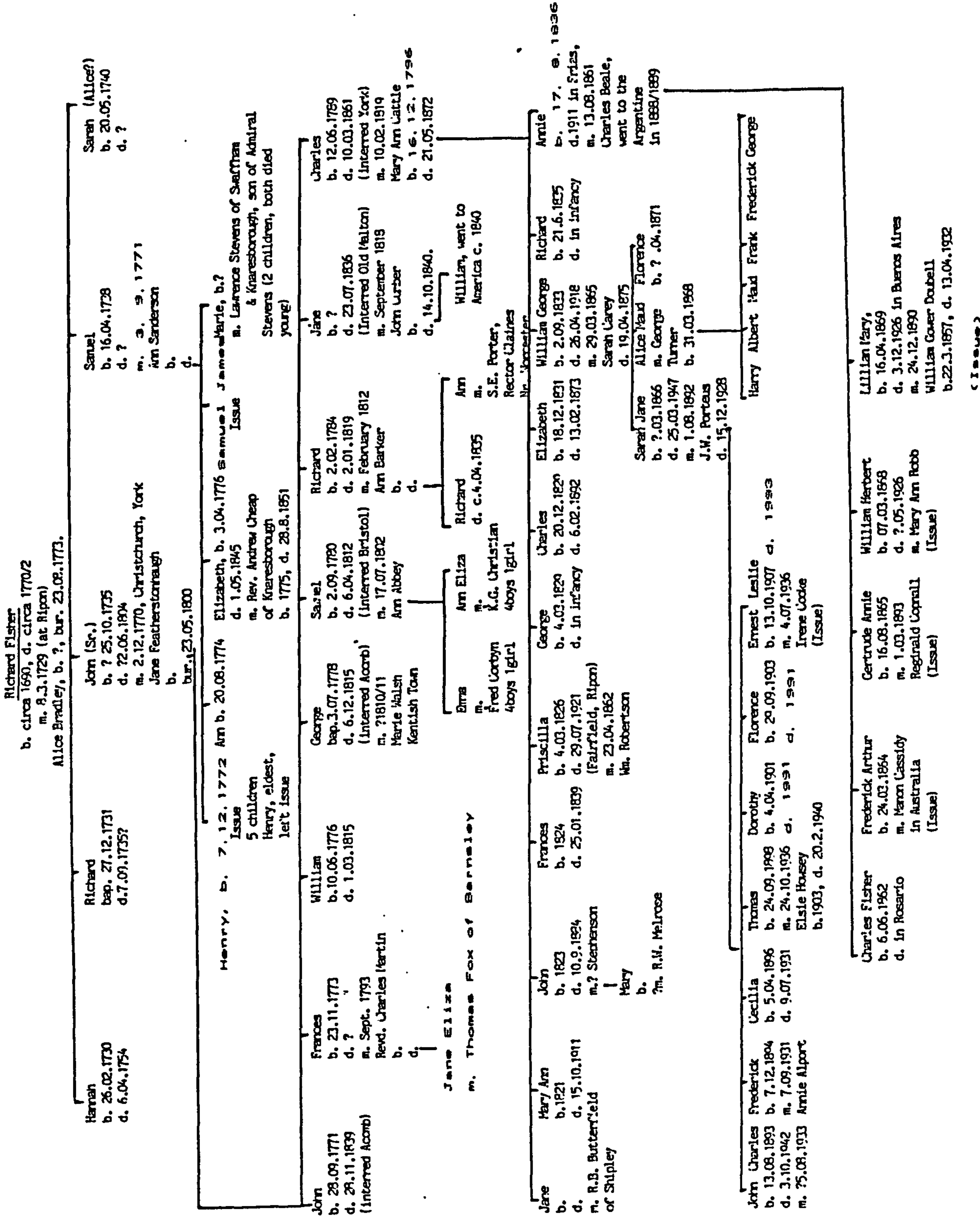
If family relationships were not of major significance to the workshop, two instances of friendships have been revealed by this research which can be linked, directly or indirectly, to commissions. The first was the association between John Fisher and John Tindal, the Langley family's agent at Wykham Abbey. In a letter acknowledging the receipt of £80 in bills drawn on Messrs. Garforth & Co. 'on act. for the Monument', John writes 'Mrs. Fisher joins in Comp^{ts} to you and Mrs. Tindal,'⁴³ The sad part about this find is that so far the monument in question has not been traced, but the salutation suggests that the Tindals and the Fishers were perhaps a little more than business acquaintances.

The second example is the friendship between both John and Samuel's sons and young Charles Fothergill (see Footnote 33). Other, and so far unpublished diaries, show that in 1804/5 they spent time together, at the 'hazard table near Leicester Square, and at a fight in Hampton between the *Game Chicken*, N. Pierse, and Cart, a Birmingham man. On another occasion 'C.F. bets G. Fisher 10/- that his cock will beat his cock; G. Fisher bets that he wins.' One or other of the Fishers seem to have baled him out financially on more than one occasion, particularly Samuel. It appears Fothergill also borrowed money from a man he calls 'Grogan'; if,

as I suspect, this is an anglicized form of the Irish name 'Grohagan', this could place John's son, Samuel, in Nollekens' workshop as well as his brother, William, since Sebastian Grohagan was the name of one of the sculptor's assistants.⁴⁴ The point of this digression lies in the fact that William Fisher exhibited a bust of 'the late Mr. Fothergill', entry No. 866, at the Royal Academy in 1808, while entry No. 892 was of 'Dr. F'. A bust of 'Mr. Fothergill', was item No. 6, at the Northern Society Exhibition in Leeds in 1810. Whether the same Fothergill was represented in all three is not known - Dr. Fothergill of Ackworth School was Charles' uncle, but Charles' brother, Samuel, was also a doctor. Their father, as far as is known, owned a tortoiseshell comb manufactory in York. A bust which looks rather as though it was carved from a death mask, which could be of 'the late Mr. Fothergill', was among the contents of Rudding Park, near Harrogate, and was auctioned by Christie's in 1972 where it sold for 620 guineas. Here is an example of a commission - at the very least the hope of a sale - resulting from a friendship.

These insights into the lives of the men running the workshop help to make it seem a less impersonal enterprise. In the next two chapters the intention is to show how the type of work executed by the Fishers in their practice gradually changed from a comprehensive range of ornamental and monumental pieces to comprise, by the second decade of the nineteenth century, almost entirely of memorial tablets, reflecting not only changes in taste but in patronage and public demand.

Pedigree of the Fisher Family



Chapter 2

References and Footnotes

- 1 Esdaile, K.A., "Sculptors and Sculpture in Yorkshire", *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 35, pp. 362-388; vol. 36, pp.78-108 and pp. 137-160.
- 2 Presumably this was a copy of the portrait by Reynolds at Wentworth Woodhouse. There were two sittings for the original, one in 1766 and the other in 1768. Between 1777 and 1786 four copies were ordered from Reynolds, for which he was paid £150 each. One copy is in the Mansion House at York, the gift of William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, nephew and heir of the Marquis of Rockingham (see Catalogue).
- 3 'all my real and personal estate to my Dear Wife trusting her at her decease to distribute the same to and amongst such my younger Child or Children as shall behave Him or Themselves in the most Dutyfull and observant manner - to my Eldest Son the sum of 5s. for that he has already had a competent portion'. William Fisher's children's names were not given in the will. Harvey, John H., Personal communication, 8 December 1972. A search of the Parish Records made in the last century suggests that if there was a relationship between William and Richard they were more likely to be cousins or brothers than father and son as the baptismal entries of their children occur concurrently.
- 4 The details of the first generation appearing on the Family Tree which accompanied this document are based on information obtained from a search made in 1887 and contained in a letter dated 26 July from Mr. George Benson of 18, Kirkgate, Ripon, which is in my possession. From his findings it appears that there was another Richard Fisher living in Ripon.
- 5 Rae, James, *Complete History of the Rebellion (York 1749)*. Maybe he did have a horse called *Jenny Cameron*. He could certainly have purchased a mare of that name since in the *York Courant* of 26 September 1752 there was an announcement that on the following day at Doncaster Races there would be a match between Captain Wentworth's roan gelding and Mr. Hort's bay mare *Jenny Cameron* for 200 guineas, play or pay. *Jenny Cameron* won! Eight years later, on 24 June 1760, the *York Courant* reported that on the previous Friday, at Ascot, 'Mr. Fisher's bay mare, *Creeping Jenny*, had run. Was this our 'Mr. Fisher'; is it possible that Richard bred from *Jenny Cameron*, a not unlikely possibility in York where throughout the year the *Courant* carried advertisements of horses available for stud. Unfortunately the Clerk to the Course at Ascot cannot find any reference to either owner or horse.
- 5A The family tree in my possession was initially drawn up at the end of the nineteenth century and was based on searches carried out by Mr. George Benson, a solicitor, of Ripon. All the entries contained therein have since been verified in the relevant parish registers held at the Borthwick Institute in York or published by the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.
- 6 Wolterton Hall Archives, Wolterton Hall, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21.
- 7 St. Michael-le-Belfrey's Rate Books, Ref. PRY/ME, pp.33-35, Borthwick Institute.
- 8 WYAS, Leeds, NH 2884/8/9/10/11/13 and 16. A series of letters about the retirement of the Sun Fire Office Agent 'in these parts'. See also; NH 2875, No. 65. An undated note from the Newby House agent, William Bowes, was delivered by hand to Sir William Robinson by one of Fisher's sons; they wished to sell a piece of marble as they were going to London. That they actually went is confirmed in a letter of 3-4 April 1755 from Doe to William Aislabie (WYAS, Leeds. VR 285, Parcel 301 and Roll 29/F/10): 'As to Mr. Fisher, I know nothing about him. No more than this - Mr. Beckwith was at York some time [illegible] and seeing his wife inquired after him - he had heard before he left this country that Y^e Chapell was talkt off being Don[ce]l'.
- 9 In 1760 a free exhibition was held by the Society of Artists, but as sixpence was charged for the catalogue (6,582 copies were sold) some of the members believed this was contrary to their aim of making art accessible to a wider market and raising their status. At their 1761 exhibition the Society offered a season ticket and a catalogue for one shilling, selling 13,000. A splinter-group was formed, under the auspices of the Free Society of Artists, '... a Society of Provident Care, supported by the revenue of exhibitions of their

- works, and on 27 April 1761 their catalogue was issued listing the items being exhibited. Entrance was free and there were unruly scenes, 8 constables being required to quell the disturbances. Fisher exhibited with this breakaway faction. In: W.R.M. Lamb, *The Royal Academy* (London 1951) Introduction; D. Solkin, *Painting for Money* (New Haven and London 1993) pp. 174-177
- 10 ERCRO, Constable Papers, Michaelmas Accounts 1766, Account Book No. 4, DDCC 140/5, 21 April April.
- 11 Wolterton Hall Archives, Wolterton Hall, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21, dated 19th and 20th October 1738.
- 12 In this he would have been following the example of London carvers and artists. See Bindman, D. & M. Baker, *Roubiliac and the 18th Century Monument* (New Haven and London 1995), Chapter 6, pp. 62-65.
- 13 York City Archives, Book 43, 21 September 1745.
- 14 This provides an interesting insight into the public face of one of the townfolk. The burial of William Featherstonhaugh, aged 71, 'late innholder at the White Swan, Petergate', was recorded in the Parish Register of Christ Church on 16 March 1784, and that of his widow, Jane, on 19 June 1797, at the age of 80.
- 15 He died in 1753 at the age of 39.
- 16 Although James Jr. commenced working in the family business in York, he went to London where he followed a varied and progressive career as hop merchant, merchant banker; after his knighthood he became a Member of Parliament, and in 1792-3 Lord Mayor of London.
- 17 John and Jane Fisher's family were: John, born 28 September 1771; Frances, born 23 November 1773; William, baptised 20 June 1776; George, third son born of John Fisher, North Street, Sculptor by his wife Jane, daughter of Wm. Featherstone, Petergate [The White Swan], ale draper, born July 3, baptised July 3; Samuel, born 2 December 1780; Richard, born 2 February 1784, was baptised in St. Helen's, Stonegate; presumably Jane, date unknown and Charles, born 12 June 1789 were also baptised there.
- 18 The children of Samuel and Ann were: Henry, born 7th December, baptised 13th December 1772; Ann, born 24th August, baptised 4th September 1774; Elizabeth, born 3rd April, baptised 14th April 1776. The birth dates of Samuel James and Marie have not yet been traced.
- 19 In view of the terms of his will, it seems possible that Samuel's brother-in-law, James Sanderson, was responsible for this move.
- 20 Horace Walpole replied on 29th July 1773: 'As the Fishers are at York; I wish they were inclined to take casts of the Kings in the screen before the chair, which struck me so much. I am persuaded they might sell them well.' In: J. Mitford (ed.), *The Correspondence of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford (Strawberry Hill) and the Rev. William Mason* (London, 1851)
- 20A Nares, G., "Farnley Hall", Part III *Country Life*, vol. 117, pp. 1808-1809, 3 June 1954.
- 21 Nares, G., "Farnley Hall", Part I *Country Life*, vol. 117, p. 1619, 20 May 1954.
- 22 Brighton, J.T., "Enamel Glass Painters of York, 1585-1795", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of York, 1979, BL DSC No. 29430/80, p. 242.
- 22A Fitzwilliam Archives, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, Stewards Papers, 6(iv), letter of 12th February 1792 from John Carr to the Steward, Mr. Hall.
- 23 I could find nothing in the City Archives about John Fisher being imprisoned. The Quarter Sessions Minute Book for 1792-1801 reads on p. 42/3, '11th October 1793; Recognisances to answer; Daniel Butterfield of the City of York Sculptor, John Fisher of the same City Sculptor, John Hourst of the same City Bricklayer, in 30 £ each,' and there is a marginal note: 'Respited'. The same entry appears on 20th January and 2nd May 1794 under 'Recognisances respited', but the last entry begins 'To remain'. There are no further entries. Below the details of the Recognisances is the following sentence: 'For the appearance of the said Daniel Butterfield and his abiding such & for begetting Sarah Norman with child and not &.' Daniel Butterfield served his apprenticeship in the Fisher workshop.

- 24 Fitzwilliam Archives, Stewards Papers, 6(iv), letter of 6th February 1795 from John Carr to the Steward.
- 25 Wragg, R.B., *The Life and Work of John Carr of York, Palladian Architect*, 4 vols, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1975.
- 26 Brighton, "Enamel Glass Painters of York", p. 242.
- 27 Frances, their eldest daughter married the Rev. Charles Martin, whose daughter, Jane Eliza, married Thomas Fox of Barnsley. Jane Fisher married John Cumber, a land agent from Malton; after their death their son, William, went to America and contact with him was lost.
- 27A Held in the Archives of the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds.
- 28 J.W. Knowles, *Notes for York Artists* (held in York City Library, 1927), pp.167-171. This source must be treated with care as the information is not always completely accurate.
- 29 The fact that Nollekens might have been Samuel's master is discussed on page 52.
- 30 Emma was baptised in Acomb in December 1806 and Ann Elizabeth. Emma was the bride of Fred Corbyn and produced four boys and a girl, while Ann Eliza married K.G. Christian and also had four boys and a girl. The death of 'dear Anne Christian' was recorded by Mary Ann Fisher (née Cattle) in a little notebook in which she jotted down snippets of information about the family. Mr. Christian died on 28th February 1861. Searching for Fisher monuments in Knaresborough Parish Church it was noticed that the east window was in memory of an H.G. Christian of Pysche Hall, York Place, formerly Governor of Bombay, who died in 1861, thus highlighting an error in his initials on the Family Tree. The stained glass window was designed by Edmundson. York Place in Knaresborough is at the north end of the High Street and according to Pevsner 'contains the stateliest houses'; Pysche Hall is a detached house with five bays, a pediment and a Tuscan porch. Pevsner, N., *Yorkshire, West Riding*, p. 297.
- 31 The Acomb Parish Records show the deaths of two children belonging to Richard and his wife, in 1815 a boy, Richard, and in 1816, a girl, Maria. They had another two children; Richard Jr. appeared in the *York Gazette* on 4 April 1836; he died in Liverpool in his 18th year after a short illness. Their daughter Ann, married the Rev. S.E. Porter, one-time Vicar of Settle who first became Rector of Claines and then Dean of Worcester. Again, friends in high places.
- 32 *York Herald* 6 February 1892. In partnership with Mr. William Hepper Charles was concerned with: 'Ganton Hall for Sir Charles Legard; Putto Hall; additions to the Assize Courts; the re-modelling of the York Lunatic Asylum; additions to and improvements in the York Grand Stand, the new premises of the York Gas Company, - the Yorkshire Banking Company at Scarborough, and the Old Bank at Malton, and the erection and restoration of St. Maurice's, Holy Trinity Micklegate - vicarages at Fulford, Huttons Ambo and Cavood - several schools - Tadcaster Tower Brewery, etc.'
- 33 Davies was married to Elizabeth, Mary Ann's sister, and was almost certainly a business partner as well as a bosom friend of George Hudson, 'The Railway King'. William was based in Newcastle and is reputed to have mixed in the wrong company, seeing little of the three girls born to him and his wife Sarah Scruton Carey, daughter of the owner of the St. Nicholas Brickyard off the Hull Road. Mr. Carey bred racehorses as a hobby, among them one named *Mother Carey's Chicken*, another *Gamcock*. His grand-daughters recalled how he sold a horse to an Indian prince, entertained him and had delivered to the Prince on the departing train a York ham.
- 34 Knowles, *York Artists*, p. 171, *York Herald* 19 October 1911. This was not by choice, having loved and lost Joseph Terry of chocolate fame, who married a Quaker heiress instead. A breach of promise case ensued and Mary Ann was awarded damages of £1,000; she must have remained on good terms with the family as when she died in 1911, at the age of 90, Mr. S. Savile Terry was listed among the chief mourners.
- 35 Priscilla married William Robinson in 1862, a man ten years her senior, whose relations were distillers at Stourbeck; he ran a hosiery business in Walgate, one of the roughest areas in York. They lived at "Fairfield" in Ripon where William was known as *The Ripon Poet*, being an enthusiastic writer of hymns. Jane became the second wife of R.B. Buttefield, a chemist from Shipley, and stepmother to three daughters. Ann married in

- St. Saviour's Church in 1861; her husband was an engineer and a lapsed Irish Quaker, Charles Beale. They had five children and in 1888/89 sailed to the Argentine where Mr. Beale was involved in the building of the Rosario waterworks.
- 36 Letter of 17 March 1987 from Wandsworth Borough Council to the author. The house was built c. 1670. The carved entrance hall screen could have been the work of Grinling Gibbons. Each side of the staircase were allegorical paintings which included the Royal family and the goddess Cybele, thought to be modelled on Sir James Thornhill's daughter. Thornhill is believed to have executed these paintings as well as a ceiling in the room known as 'Queen Anne's boudoir'. The house was demolished in 1891. Sanderson's will shows that he had freehold land in Essex where his first wife's father was High Sheriff for the county in 1787, so it is possible he also had property there.
- 37 Will of Sir James Sanderson, Public Record Office Document Prob, 11/1311, C/9378. He left a request that for the sake of medical science a postmortem should be carried out on his body to find out the nature of the condition which had been affecting him.
- 38 Esdaile, "Sculptors and Sculpture", vol. 36, p. 91.
- 39 In the first place some sort of bond was to be purchased to provide an annual income of at least £100 and no more than £200 (although the writing on the will is very faint at this point). Henry married and returned to York, his son, also Henry, taking Holy Orders and serving in India where he filled a number of posts, including Chaplain to the Governor General and to the Presidency, and serving in Cawnpore, Delhi, Meerut, and Calcutta (Ref: India Office Library, Cadet Papers, L/Mil/9/2391-100, 1856-7, Range 9, Shelf No. 4). His son, George Battye Fisher, joined the army and as a Lieutenant saw action in the Indian Mutiny of 1857; in 1888 he was promoted to the rank of Major General and put on the Unemployed Supernumerary List. (Ref: Personal correspondence with the India Office). It was on his death that the figure of Christ, carved by Richard, was presented to York Minster.
- 40 Elizabeth married the Rev. Andrew Cheap, whose uncle was one of the Residentiary Canons of York Minster; both were named Andrew, both graduated in Oxford, both became Vicar of Knaresborough. Andrew Jr. was vicar there for 47 years; when he died in 1851 his congregation paid for a new dispensary to be built in Castle Yard. During his tenure he was influential in getting two National Schools built, the Castle Boys' School in 1814 and the Girls' School in 1837. Marie married Lawrence, son of Admiral Stevens of Swaffham and Knaresborough; they had two children but both died young and it is possible that Lawrence did not see old age. Marie's memorial in Knaresborough Parish Church reads that she devoted 36 years of her life ministering to the spiritual needs of her friends. Apparently she wrote religious tracts and until quite recently Stevens Bibles were presented in her memory at the Castle Girls' School.
- 41 Romney, P. (Ed), *The Diary of Charles Fothergill* (YAS Record Series, 142, 1984). A footnote on p. 265 reads: 'Four men named Fisher (George, Samuel, Henry and William) haunt Charles Fothergill's diary for April 1804 to May 1805 as boon companions in Yorkshire and London.'
- 42 It is mounted within a Victorian crocketed surround so it is impossible to see a signature
- 43 NYCR0; Ref: Langleys, Mic. 1496, Frame 1771.
- 44 Fothergill Papers, Vol. 1 & Vol. 19., 1804, Unpublished Diaries. Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library, University of Toronto, Canada. The excuse for visiting the hazard table near Leicester Square was because Fothergill wanted 'to see the nature of the game.' On another occasion he and Fisher, with other friends, were involved in a fight. He and Fisher got away but one was caught and taken to Marlborough Street [police station]; Fothergill was convinced he would not mention their names. Samuel Fisher's generous behaviour was noted 'by relieving my account by a loan of £4.' It is difficult to know whether this was Samuel from York or Samuel from London. There is another note of money borrowed, of Henry and George accompanying Fothergill to the coach when he was quitting London, when he left some of his possessions with the Fishers for safe keeping. The other 18 volumes might make interesting reading.

CHAPTER 3

Workshop Practice

1

In 1746 Richard Fisher moved from Ripon to York. A notice in the *York Journal* of 15th July reads:

'We are assured, that Mr. Richard Fisher, late from Ripon, Carver and Statuary, is now fix'd in the Minster Yard, York, where all Sorts of Carved and Statuary Work, both in wood, Marble and Stone, either for Household Furniture, or Monumental, and Sepulchral Ornaments, are performed in the neatest Manner and at moderate Prices ...'

To place the Fisher workshop into its proper context it cannot be looked at in isolation; one must first take the broader view, particularly where monumental church sculpture is concerned; here England had a history of a brisk trade at home as well as a flourishing export market in "tables" and monuments'. In the thirteenth century 'one Yorkshire studio at least was ahead of any other in England in the beauty of its effigies of mailed knights', and there was, traditionally, a school of sculptors in York. It was customary to set up sculpture workshops in centres near to stone and alabaster quarries, for example in Chellaston in Nottinghamshire, at Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire. In York the alabaster seams at 'Fairborne, near Ledsham by Leeds' and at Sherburn were within easy reach, as was, for example, the freestone quarry on the Vavasour estate at Hazlewood. The existence of a 'school' at York is supported by the fact that between 1457 and 1524 eight York freemen gave their trade as 'alabasterer' (Table 4).'

Recent research on Yorkshire monumental sculpture during the sixteenth and seventeenth century² suggests that Thomas Browne, active between c. 1590 and 1620, is the only Yorkshire tomb maker of the period whose name is known; he signed the tomb of Sir Thomas Belasyse (1603) at Coxwold: 'Thomas Browne did carve this Tombe Himselfe Alone of Hesselwood Stone'.

This research has also shown that though they might have been synonymous, there could have been two York workshops in York, the first operating from c. 1620-1635 working mostly in alabaster as monuments in the Minster testify, where there is also an example executed in freestone. The range of patrons suggests the workshop had a high profile, but there

	Alabasterers	Masons	Carvers	Sculptors
1272-99	-	1	-	-
1300-24	-	8	-	-
1325-49	-	10	-	-
1350-74	-	22	2	-
1375-99	-	16	1	-
1400-24	-	26	13	-
1425-49	1	17	-	-
1450-74	6	16	5	-
1475-99	1	6	9	-
1500-24	1	4	4	4
1525-49	-	2	6	-
1550-74	-	1	-	-
1575-99	-	-	-	-
1600-24	-	-	2	-
1625-49	-	-	2	-
1650-74	-	2	-	-
1675-99	-	1	1	-
1700-24	-	7	4	-
1725-49	-	9	4	-
1750-74	-	12	7	-
1775-99	-	8	14	2
1800-24	-	14	12	5
1825-35	-	13	6	1

In the period 1425-1449 the 'Albasterer' was described as a Marbler,
From 1325-1424, 'Masons' include men described as Setters and Wallers,
Between 1700-24 the heading 'Masons' includes men described as Stone Cutters,
Stone Masons and Marble Masons,
Between 1750-1835 the heading 'Carvers' includes men described as Carvers and Gilders,
Under 'Sculptors' for the period from 1775-1799 is included one described as 'Statuary'.

Table 4 - List of Apprentices taking up their Freedom - taken
from the York Freeman's Roll

(Extracted from J.B. Morrell, *York Monuments*, p. 123., Batsford, (nd)

is no evidence of work outside York and the Minster. The second workshop, using freestone, was active in the 1630s, and incorporated current designs.

The documentary evidence for monumental sculptors working in York in the last decades of the seventeenth century is limited (and in some cases the information suspect); Table 4 shows that between 1650 and 1674 no apprentice carvers took up their freedoms, with only one in the last quarter of the century; this was presumably Samuel Carpenter (1660-1713) who became free of the Masons' Company in 1684 and was made a Freeman in the following year. He was commissioned by Ralph Thoresby, the Yorkshire diarist and historian, to execute a bust of the elder Thoresby for Leeds Parish Church, and it was he who also carved and signed the delightful portrait monument in memory of Lady Elizabeth Stapylton at Snaith in the West Riding (Illustration 24A).³

Prior to the establishment of the Fisher workshop in York in 1746 there was another family carving business being run by John ETTY (c. 1634-1708), and his son William (c. 1675-1734). John ETTY's major oeuvre was the wooden reredos for St. Michael-le-Belfrey, and it was to John's workshop that Grinling Gibbons came, probably while he was working on the monument to Archbishop Lamplugh (1691) for the Minster.^{3a}

In the first half of the eighteenth century the names of several York carvers can be linked with ecclesiastical work - in 1741 Charles Mitley (1705-1758) carved the Gothic pulpit in York Minster designed by William Kent, and he and his partner Edward Raper (fl. 1724-1738) in 1734 signed a memorial tablet to Catherine and Christian North in St. Michael-le-Belfrey. On 26th August 1755 it was announced in the *York Courant* that 'A handsome monument for the late Mrs. Ramsden, done by Mr. Mitley of York and Mr. Havre, statuary from London, is now putting up in Adlingfleet Church' (Illustration 24B).⁴

Until now no examples of church sculpture executed by Richard Fisher have been identified, and it had been suggested that the claim to carve 'Monumental, and Sepulchral Ornaments' made in the newspaper when Fisher moved to York in 1746 could have been a ploy to stimulate trade. Recently, however, a reference has come to light: '... there will be the Monument which is to be set up in Derby Church to begin on which I shall be as expeditious with as posabel [possible] I can'.⁵ The Derby archives



Illustration 24A;
Lady Elizabeth Staplylton
by Samuel Carpenter
at Snaith,

Illustration 24B;
Mrs. Mary Ramsden
by Mitley and Havre, Adlingfleet



have so far failed to reveal the identity of this monument, but it could well be the memorial dedicated to the memory of the Rev. Michael Hutchinson (1730) who made possible the rebuilding of what is now Derby Cathedral. Signatures on early to mid-eighteenth century monuments were, it seems, the exception.

Burgess posited that if in the mid-sixteenth to seventeenth centuries an affluent Yorkshireman did not choose to employ a local craftsman to execute the work, he would go to London where he could engage the services of one of the major English carvers working within the City or north of the river. Maximillian Colt had a workshop in Smithfield, Francis Bird in Lincoln's Inn Fields, William Wright at Charing Cross and Nicholas Stone in Long Acre. The alternative was to go to the area adjacent to the Thames at Southwark where the continental sculptors had established themselves. They had first come to England at the behest of Henry VIII when he began building Nonsuch Palace in the 1530s and their patronage carried an undoubted cachét; following the religious persecution of the Protestants in the Low Countries, many more had sought sanctuary here.^{5A}

Throughout the eighteenth century both these options were still open to and accepted by the Yorkshire gentry; the name of Grinling Gibbons has already been mentioned, and simply by scanning the lists of artists appearing in the indices of the Yorkshire volumes of Pevsner's *The Buildings of England* it can be seen that church monuments by English and Continental carvers are to be found in churches in York and throughout Yorkshire, among them Cheere, Nollekens, Bacon, and Flaxman, Scheemakers, Rysbrack, and Roubilliac.

In spite of the lack of examples of church monuments signed by Richard Fisher, the Catalogue and Table 5 illustrate that this type of work played an important role in the workshop's output; perhaps having been started in a small way by Richard, it was growing rapidly by the late 1760s. From the number of monuments carved it would seem that this provincial workshop could have made substantial inroads into the commissions awarded to the London sculptors.

2

A lack of signature presents a similar problem where chimneypieces are concerned but for a different reason - if a chimneypiece

	Church Monuments*	Gravestones**
Before 1759	9	
1760-1769	7	
1770-1779	25	
1780-1789	32	
1790-1799	22	
1800-1809	21	
1810-1819	27	
1820-1829	16	
1830-1839	16	
1840-1849	11	6
1850-1859	4	20
1860-1869	3	61
1870-1879	4	33
1880-1884	0	6

* The date recorded refers to the year of death, not to the year of execution as this is almost never known.

** The gravestones recorded refer only to those in the York Cemetery

N.B. These figures are based on the monuments recorded.

Table 5 - Analysis of Recorded Monumental Output of the Fisher Workshop

was signed the signature was usually incised on the back and so hidden from sight once it had been installed.

Data on the craftsmen carving chimneypieces and ornamental sculptures in Yorkshire at the end of the seventeenth and during the eighteenth centuries are only slightly more plentiful than on church monuments; it is a help when the property has remained in the same family so that the archives have not been disseminated. Both York and the county were enjoying a period of intensive building and local carvers, masons and craftsmen were kept fully employed. At Castle Howard York carvers included Edward Raper, who completed most of the decorative stonework in the mausoleum, Samuel Carpenter, Charles Mitley and Daniel Hervé (1683-1733), a Huguenot who anglicized his name and settled in York; he also worked at Wentworth Castle. Another French Huguenot was Mr. Nadault (fl. 1699-1719) who had also worked at Chatsworth; one of his assistants was 'Robinson', presumably William Robinson (fl. 1729-1750), a Yorkshireman, and another Gideon du Chesne, previously employed at Boughton. William Thornton (1670-1721), the York joiner, also worked on the house. He, like William ETTY (John ETTY's son), eventually turned his hand to architecture. Joel and Henry Lobb had worked at Chatsworth and were 'Joiners and Carvers, with an extensive practice in London and the provinces', while John Thorpe from Bakewell (fl. 1706-1728) provided at least two chimneypieces for the house.

In 1699, the same year in which Charles Howard commenced building Castle Howard, Robert Benson embarked on the construction of Bramham. Less is known of the craftsmen who worked there, but the name of John Thorpe from Bakewell has been recorded again. The Beningbrough Hall archives are missing; however it is known that William Thornton was employed by John Bouchier, c. 1716, but whether as architect or clerk of works is not certain. Apart from Castle Howard he had previously worked on Sir Charles Hotham's house at Beverley. One craftsman linked with Beningbrough was Jonathan Godier. His name was anglicized to Goodyear (fl. early 18th C.-1732) and he had worked for Thornton at Wentworth Castle.

In 1716 John Aislable began the alterations at Studley Royal, the project being completed in the 1740s by his son, William. Richard Fisher, then working out of Ripon, and William ETTY and Charles Mitley

from York, were all associated with the work carried out there, as was Robert Doe, the London carver. He too was involved in building works at Temple Newsam during the first half of the century, the home of the Viscounts Ingram, as were Richard Fisher, John, and then William Ety.

Building in York included the Assembly Rooms which were commenced in 1731/2; Leonard Mason was the master mason, William Bateson and his partner, William Ellis, making the columns and the Corinthian capitals. The buildings which now comprise Gray's Court and the Treasurer's House were split in 1720 and stylistically suggest that both Richard Fisher, and later his son John, carved the internal woodwork and chimneypieces. During the period when the Fishers were away from York Fairfax House was built for Lord Fairfax, where Daniel Shillito (fl. 1755-72), who had a workshop in Wakefield, was the carver employed.

Throughout the century London carvers were called in by Yorkshire patrons to execute specific items - for example, Henry Cheere produced 'finely carved wooden chimneypieces' for John Grimston of Kilwick Hall on the Yorkshire Wolds⁶, and he also supplied John Carr, the York architect, with two busts for Fairfax House for display on the staircase, one of Shakespeare, the other of Newton. The work of Peter Scheemakers (1691-1781) was represented in Hull by his equestrian statue of William III, executed in competition with Rysbrack's in Bristol, and the Wharton monument in Beverley Minster. At Burton Constable John Bacon carved the chimneypiece in the Ballroom or Great Drawing Room, with Henry Cheere providing busts and statues for the Great Hall. But to balance this Richard Fisher was employed by Horatio Walpole to carve the chimneypieces at Wolterton in Norfolk.⁷

Thus Richard set the standard and the pattern for the workshop which, as has been shown in Chapter 1, over the next three generations, provided monumental sculpture not only for churches in Yorkshire but nationwide. The workshop fitted into the wider framework of building and sculpture evinced by the custom of using 'outsiders' as well as local craftsmen, and was obviously regarded as able to compete with London carvers.

Between 1729 and 1746 Richard Fisher was based in Ripon, but he did not necessarily have a workshop there; the fact that his bills were worked out according to the number of hours taken to complete a piece of work suggests that, in common with other local craftsmen, he was working on site. This was certainly true at Wolterton where all the craftsmen carrying out the internal decorations had accommodation provided on the top floor of the completed shell. As soon as he moved to York in 1746 and opened his workshop in Minster Yard Fisher's work was billed on the basis of measurements; presumably then he was able to work from home, at least for part of the time; this idea is supported by the fact that carriage was charged on one or two accounts.

A search of the Aislable Rent Books has revealed that Fisher did not live in a tied house; the 1731 entry in the Ripon Parish Register recording the birth of Richard and Alice's first son, Richard, who died in childhood, gives an address in Clotherholm. I have a letter from George Benson, the solicitor who compiled the Family Tree in 1887 which says that 'The house at Clotherholm is now used as a farm house ...' so presumably it had outbuildings which could have been used as a workshop. So too did the house in Ripon advertised for letting in the *York Courant* on 13th January 1747: 'A Convenient and fashionable sash'd Dwelling-house, pleasantly situated in the said Town and in the occupation of Mrs. Fisher, with a barn, stables and all other conveniences for a Family'. Since the advertisement followed close on the heels of Richard's move to York in 1746, it could have been his. But why did he come to York? Was it because he was aware of an opening in the city for a skilled carver? He had been working at Temple Newsam and Ingram (who had a 'palace' in York in Minster Yard) might have appraised him of the situation. Was it that a practice in York would be more lucrative than one in Ripon? Was it because other 'professionals' were working out of the Minster Yard? The answer to these questions is probably a mixture of all these elements.

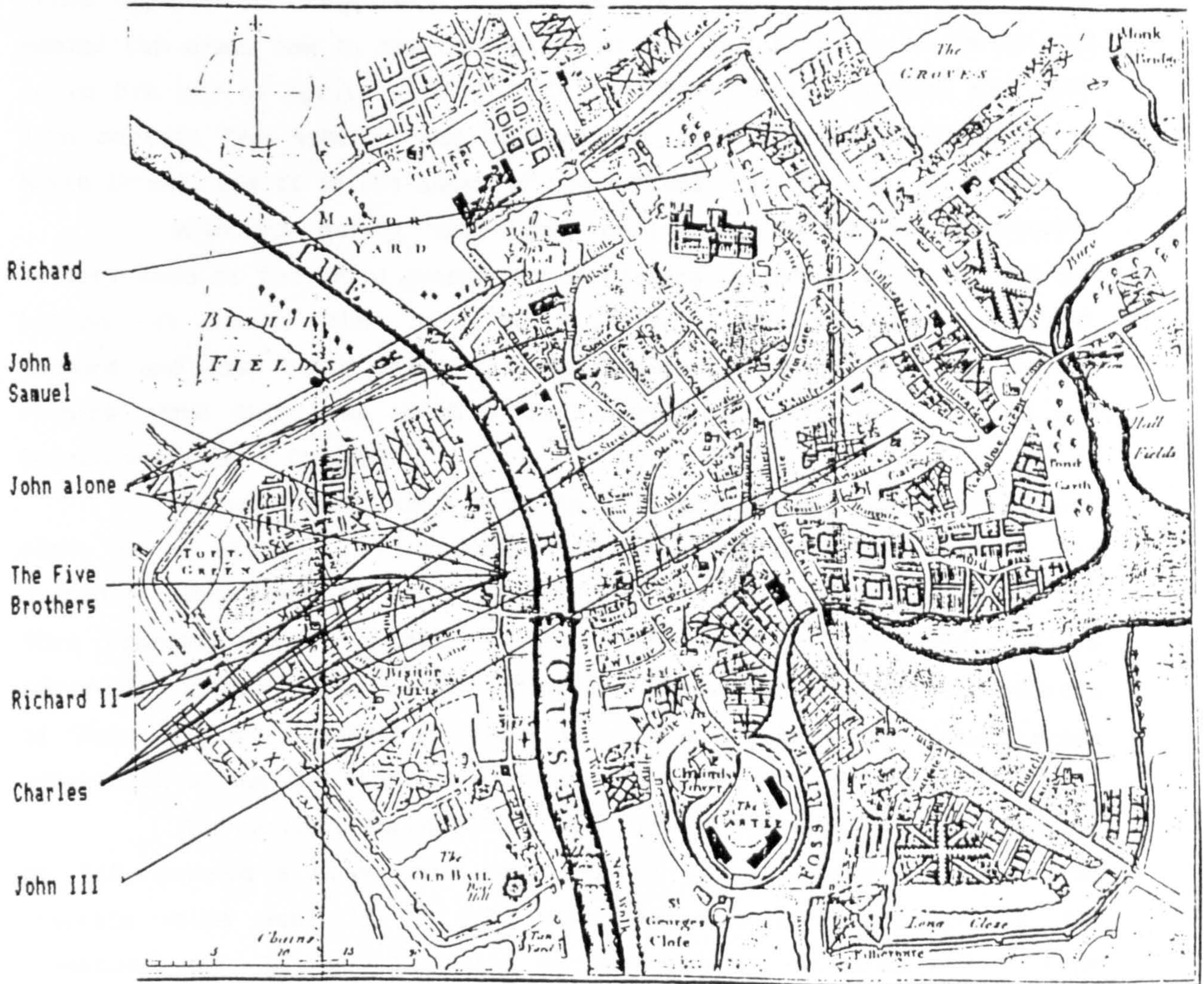
An advertisement in the *York Courant* of March 1741 offered 'two new-built houses with shops thereto'; such a house would have allowed Fisher to display samples of his work in the shop, and it is possible that it was just such a house as this that was advertised in the *York Courant* of 22nd April 1746: 'To be Lett or sold. To enter on at Pleasure in the

Minster Yard, York. A Large House, Gardens, Stables, and all other buildings for a great [? large] Family.' The house in Minster Yard is thought to have been located in the area now occupied by the Purey-Cust Hospital, and there was certainly a stone yard in the area close to Bootham Bar in the nineteenth century; the previous owner of Fisher's house was probably a Mrs. Rorrigan, with Mr. Lawson's cellars on one side and Sam Bonn's house on the other. In 1746 it was assessed at 2s 6d. 'for the defraying the expenses of the Churchwardens of the Parish of St. Michael le Belfrey'. In 1747 the listing was for 2s. 11p., but Mr. Lawson's cellars had become Mr. Southcote's. Between 1748 and 1755 the yearly assessments fluctuated, but from 1756 and into the 1760s the house was simply listed as 'lately' being his; finally it is listed as 'empty'.⁹

From the early 1770s onwards the Fishers moved to one set of premises after another and a contemporary map of the city in the eighteenth century has been included for reference purposes (Illustration 25). In 1771 John Fisher was living in North Street in the parish of All Saints, where the workshop would have been able to take advantage of its proximity to the river for the transportation of marbles via Hull, and it was on this site that the 'melancholy accident happened' which resulted in the death of 'Abraham Swords, a Labourer, who (with several others) was viewing the launch of *The Two Brothers*' (Illustration 26). This places the Fishers' premises on the riverside where there was a view of the Water Tower (now Lendal Tower) on the opposite bank.

By 1783-1784 the family had moved to St. Helen's Square, where the premises were in Breary's Court. The Court appears to have contained three houses 'most eligibly situate in St. Helen's Square' and were, according to an advertisement in the *York Courant* of 13th January 1778, 'either for a private Gentleman or any Person in Trade, with Stable, Outhouses, Garden etc'.¹⁰ On the 13th November 1790 John had announced in the *York Herald* that he was moving to 'opposite Bluit's Inn' - this was ideally placed as Bluit's Inn was where the nobility stayed (later Ringrose's).

In the *York Courant* of 1st February 1802 the Committee of Leases intimated that on the following day it would meet to consider offers from people wishing to lease properties from the Mayor and Commonalty of the City, including 'Lot 1: All that Messuage or Dwelling



A Plan of the CITY of YORK.

Illustration 25; The Different Sites of the Fishers' Workshop, superimposed on a Plan of York in the Eighteenth Century, Sold by T. Wilson & R. Spence, Booksellers, York.

House opposite to Ringrose's Inn in Lendall ... with the yard and garden behind the same, now in the occupation of Mr. John Fisher ... to be entered to on 5th day of April, 1803.''' In the *York Courant* of 16th May 1803 John advises 'the Nobility and Gentry' that he had moved from Lendal to North Street, but it is not known if the address was the same as before.

Although during the first decade or so of the nineteenth century some of the third generation of Fishers shuttled between York and London, it seems that the North Street premises were retained, Richard and John being based in York throughout. Certainly the 'Messrs. Fishers' were using the North Street address in 1805 and William and George were there in 1807.

As has already been seen, in 1811 Richard decided to branch out alone as he informed 'his Friends and the Public at large' that he had opened a Stone Yard in North Street, the announcement appearing in the *York Courant* of 15th April. The next year, on 6th April, George advertised in the *York Courant* giving his London address and the address of 'Messrs. W & R. Fisher of Stonegate', while a year later Richard again advertised, siting the stone yard behind his house in North Street.'²

The earliest North Street rate book dates from 1839; assessment no. 115, covered a stone yard belonging to the City Commissioners. The rateable value was £11. 5. 0d., with the rate in the pound 5s. 8d. Assessment nos. 121 and 122 were for a house and workshop and a stone yard and shed, the owner Mr. H.W. Dibb, the tenant Widow Exley; the rateable value of the house and workshop was £33. 12s. 6d., with the rate 16s. 10d. in the pound, and for the stone yard £1. 5s. 0d., with the rate 8d. in the pound.'³

For a short time Richard and Charles were in partnership but as was seen in the previous chapter this ended on a sour note when it was dissolved, with Charles announcing he would in future carry on the 'Art of a Sculptor... at his House in Micklegate';'⁴ on 3rd February 1821 Charles intimated in the newspaper that he had removed to Tanner Row,'⁵ which runs behind Micklegate, but was at that time also an extension of North Street. By 1828 he had moved again, this time to 40 Goodramgate; this was the address he gave in an advertisement in the *York Courant* of 26th April of that year for an apprentice - 'A youth who has been accustomed to Drawing will be preferred.' There was a rider to the advertisement: 'All

The following melancholy Accident happened here on the 23d Inst: A new Brigantine, called the Two Brothers, having just been launched, was towed through the Bridge to near the Water-Works. Swivels were occasionally fired as she went up the River, one of which, that was unfortunately rammed with a Piece of old Rope as Wadding, being discharged opposite the Wall of Mess. Fishers' Marble-Yard in North-Street, and one Abraham Swords, a Labourer, who (with several others) was viewing the Vessel as she passed, was struck by the Wadding on the Throat, and killed on the Spot. A Coroner's Jury went over the Body, and brought in their Verdict *Accidental Death*.—What renders this unhappy Affair still more shocking, is the truly pitiable Situation in which the unfortunate Deceased has left a distressed Widow and two young Children, one of which she was delivered of only a few Weeks ago.—It is hoped the Charitable and Humane will consider them as real Objects, worthy their Benevolence. The smallest Donations will be received at the following Places, and applied by a Committee (to be appointed) in such Manner as shall be judged most proper for alleviating the present Distress, and for the future Support of this helpless Family.

Mess. Garforth & Co. Bankers	Mess. Lunds
Mess. Crompton & Co. Bankers	Mr. L. Pickard
Mr. Joseph Butler's Office	Mr. Telfryman, Bookseller
Mr. Duffield, Haberdasher	Mr. Todd, Bookseller
Mr. William Potter	Mr. Matthew Coxen
Mess. Myrtes and Co.	Mr. M. Eastburn
Mess. Maudes	Mr. George Hughes
Mr. William Clarke	Mess. Gatland and Braint
Mr. Thackray	Mr. Lentwere
Mess. Hampton and Prince	Mr. John Wright
Mr. John Tasker	Mr. Samuel Wormald
Mr. S. Spivie, jun. Hull	Mr. J. Beckwith, Knarebro'
Mr. Atkin, Hull	Mr. H. Botland, Masham
Mr. Tho. Buckton, Hull	Mr. R. Scroton, B. Bidge
Mr. Simpson, Doncaster	Mr. John Foster, Tadcaster
Mr. Samuel Coates, Ripon	Mr. Crawford, Easingwold

Illustration 26; Newspaper report of death of Abraham Swords, one of the Fishers' workmen, and announcement of collection of donations for the support of his widow.
York Courant, 2nd September 1777

Letters to be Post paid! The workshop was situated 'up a passage, near to the house then occupied by Mr. Cooper, the Spirit Merchant, their residence being the house nearest the Studio'. The Census for 1841 suggests that 40 Goodramgate was a court since also listed at the same address were:

Thomas Bridgewater, shoemaker
Thomas Bridgewater, organist, music and singing master
Thomas Ellis, Chorister
John Gamble, attorney
Thomas Turner, tallow chandler

The exact date of the final move is not known, but the *York Directory* for 1846 gives the address as 21 St. Saviourgate (now No. 34) with the workshop situated round the corner in Spen Lane. The census returns for 1851 and 1861 confirm this address. It seems probable that the yard had been established there for some time. A notice in the *York Courant* of 6th May 1763 reads: 'The partnership betwixt John Robinson and Andrew Kilvington of York, Masons, being dissolved, John Robinson has removed from his stoneyard on Bishophill to a yard betwixt St. Saviourgate End and Peasehold Green.'

Apart from this possibility, the reasons behind all the other moves made by the family are obscure. Adequate working and storage space would have been essential; North Street would seem to have been an ideal location because of its proximity to the river for the unloading of shipments of marble and wood, and for the transportation of monuments and chimneypieces by water. It was thought that the trade directories for the period might offer an explanation as to why the shifts were so frequent but none has emerged; Bailey's *Northern Directory* for 1781 was the earliest available for consultation but this, like later editions of this and other directories, shows only a mix of trades and professions throughout the city, with none really concentrated in one area.

Perhaps the most feasible explanation is that the workshop was situated in North Street throughout, with the various moves being to premises which offered residential as well as a shop frontage where their work could be displayed in the city's commercial centre alongside the shops of other luxury traders. The fact that the window of the jewellers' and silversmiths', Barber & Cattle, in Coney Street was used to display the bust of the late William Pitt in 1810 adds support to this suggestion, since by then the brothers were working from the North Street address.

To enable a sculptor to run a satisfactory business operation the workshop requirements would have been the same whether in the provinces or in the metropolis - a large yard, a studio-cum-showroom, perhaps a shop as already suggested, access to road and river transport, stabling, and proximity to the residential/shopping areas. This would have been particularly important in London because of its size (Illustration 27).

Kitting out the yard would not be cheap; essential items included scaffolding, jacks, benches, drills and much other impedimenta⁶ and most importantly, tools. In 1703, in his book *Mechanick Exercises* Joseph Moxon illustrated a set of joiner's tools⁷. Seventeen items were shown, from planes and chisels to three different types of saw. The carver, particularly at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, was skilled at working in both wood and stone, so more specialised tools were required, including 'gouges, veiners, chisels, points and fine saws'.

Throughout the period spanned by the Fisher workshop innovations were being introduced; as early as 1718 Marshall Smith had invented a machine which could polish marble (or grind colour for paints) and by 1742 thin metal plates for mouldings had been introduced. By the second half of the century there was machinery for woodworking, including planing and fluting.⁸ There were steam-powered saws for cutting the marble and pantographs for enlarging or reducing the size of the model, as well as pointing machines for rough cutting from the model state.

Apart from the practical side of setting up a sculpture workshop there were other considerations to be taken into account. The financial risks of setting up a small business were described by Daniel Defoe. In 1726 he published a guide for anyone setting up in business explaining some of the pitfalls.⁹ He warned against over-trading (accepting more work than could be handled), in choosing the wrong place from whence to run the business, of innocent diversions, and 'extravagant and expensive living.' Leaving the business in the hands of one's servants was not recommended, but care in choosing a partner in business was. Defoe, apart from being involved in manufacturing as well as trading, was, in 1692, declared a bankrupt, the sum being quoted as £17,000, so he

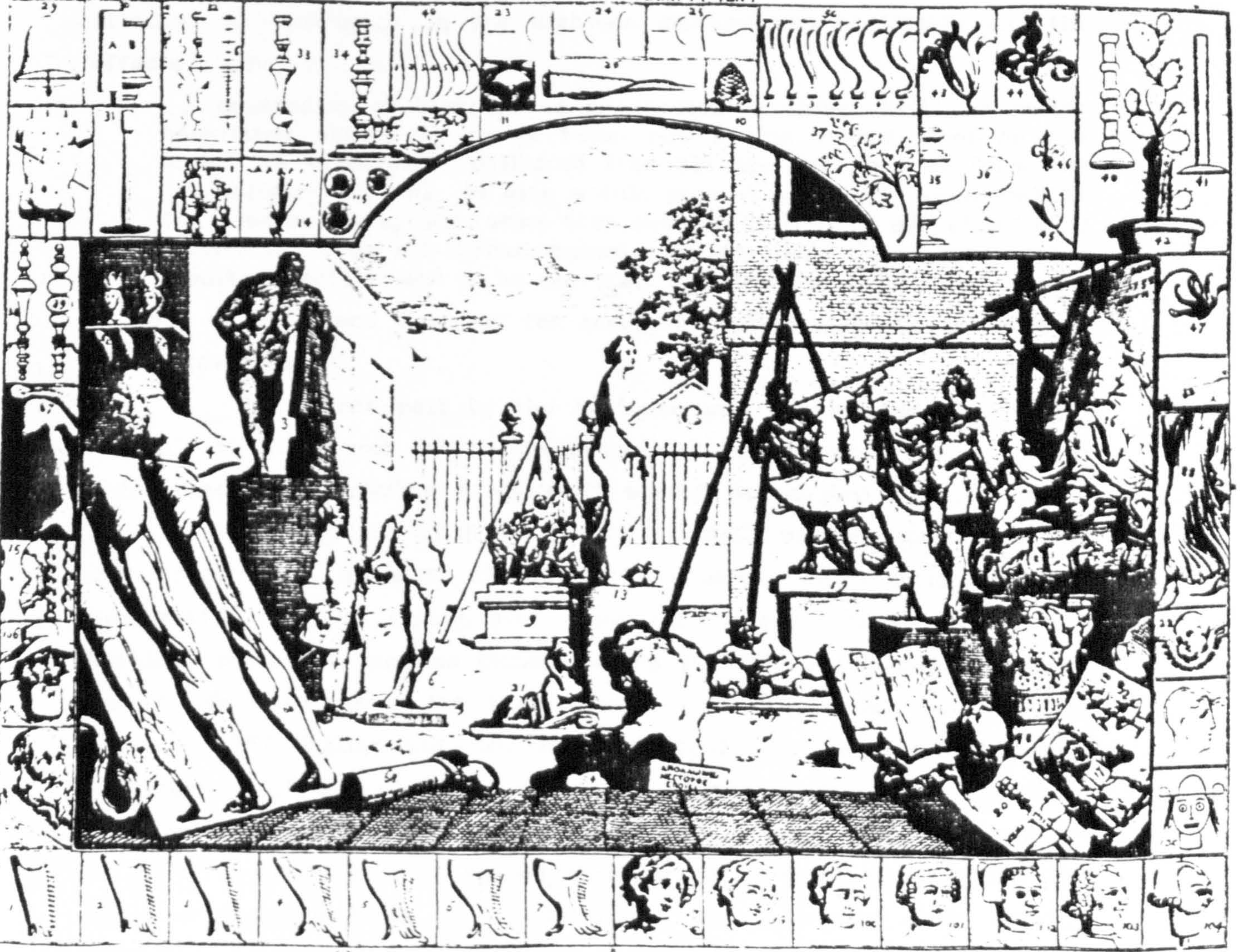


Illustration 27; Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty*, plate 1, showing Henry Cheere's statuary yard at Hyde Park Corner, (British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, March 1753, Etching and Engraving, third state).

was well able to give advice. Interestingly he suggested that the stigma attached to bankruptcy in the eighteenth century was negligible and the effects slight:

A commission of bankrupt is so familiar a thing, that the debtor oftentimes causes it to be taken out in his favour, that he may sooner be effectually delivered from all his creditors at once, the law obliging him only to give a full account of himself upon oath to the commissioners, who, when they see his integrity, may effectually deliver him from all further molestation, give him a part even of the creditors' estate; and so he may push into the world again.

He goes on to stress the need for accurate book-keeping and for keeping the customer happy.

The amount paid by the customer was of paramount importance not only to the patron but to the successful running of the business, so while discussing workshop practice it should be pointed out that there were yardsticks against which the workshops could measure their functions with regard to amounts of material required, construction details, mensuration, costings, timing, etc. These came in the form of contemporary builders' handbooks, such as Richard Neve's *The City and Country Purchaser and Builder's Directory* (or the *Compleat Builder's Guide*), published in 1703; in 1757 William and John Halfpenny published *The Modern Builder's Assistant*, which was subtitled 'a concise epitome of the whole system of architecture,' while the *Practical Builder, or Workman's General Assistant* of 1774, by William Pain, showed 'Methods for Drawing and Working the Whole or Separate Parts of Any Building'. Not only were these manuals available, but correct estimating would be part of the training received during apprenticeship.^{19A}

Only two estimates from the Fishers have been found so far - one for a chimneypiece at Studley Royal submitted by Richard Fisher, and another in John's hand on the back of a drawing for a chimneypiece destined for Wentworth Woodhouse; not only do these show that quotations were submitted prior to the work being commenced, but in the case of the latter, the time to be taken was also indicated.²⁰

As an example, a carver working in York at the present time has estimated the time scale likely to be required to cover various pieces of work at Beningbrough Hall:^{20A}

1 Consul bracket	2½ days for 1 man
Acanthus moulding (timed and costed per foot) - 50 feet	25 hours
Overdoor decoration	5 weeks for 1 man
Picture surround on chimneybreast	2 weeks
U-shaped part of the frieze	10 days

It is not possible to compare like with like, but in relation to a bill submitted by Richard Fisher for work at Studley Royal for similar work²¹ the hours he claims are surprisingly close. Richard finished the frieze and two festoons on a chimneypiece in two weeks five and a half days. A later bill submitted by Fisher which gives measurements rather than time taken to execute the work shows that he charged 6d per foot for a 'carved flower and duple Ribon' moulding; a plain ovulo moulding was only 3d a foot. (This aspect of the workshop is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5.)

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, came the staffing of the workshop. In addition to apprentices and master carvers, labourers to handle the large blocks of stone were also needed. As discussed earlier, presumably Richard was master to John and Samuel; having purchased his Freedom John Fisher took into apprenticeship two of his sons, John Jr. in 1785, and William two years later;^{21a} probably George, Samuel and Richard also worked in the practice in York but were apprenticed elsewhere.

Following his advertisement in the *York Courant* of 18th November 1783 indicating that 'A youth who has a taste for drawing will be most agreeable', John Fisher, on 25th September 1784, indentured Daniel Butterfield, son of Thomas Butterfield of Pickhill, for seven years for a premium of £21. The premium was the same a year later when, on 7th July 1785, he accepted Joseph Theakston as an apprentice; he was the son of Sarah, the widow of John Theakston of St. Michael's, Spurriergate, York. This was also the day John Jr. became an apprentice and his father as his Master had to provide for 'the said Apprentice, sufficient and enough of Meat, drink and Lodging and also shall allow his said apprentice Sixpence on every Shrove Tuesday during the said Apprenticeship'.

When two years later, on 19th October 1787, John's second son, William, became an apprentice, there must have been a rise in the cost of living; William was to receive annually 'Two Shillings and Sixpence upon Shrove Tuesday during the said term'. Apparently he only served six

of the seven years specified as the Apprenticeship Records note on 25th October 1793 that the apprenticeship was cleared. Then on 23rd June 1789, for 'no consideration', John Fisher took Thomas Benet of Christ Parish into the workshop for seven years, but his apprenticeship was also cleared on 25th October 1793; no reason was given.²² Finally, in May 1803, under the heading of 'Mr. Fisher, Statuary' John advertised for a Mason and for an apprentice 'as a Mason'.²³

In 1814 Richard, 'Sculptor and Mason', took as an apprentice Robert Fowler, son of William Fowler of Acomb; the Indenture was dated 18th January, the term was for seven years and the consideration, in all, five pounds in hand and five pounds on 6th April 1815.²⁴

To date very little information has come to light with regard to the staff employed in any of the York workshops apart from the master craftsmen and their apprentices. While Richard Fisher was engaged at Studley Royal in 1733 the work was completed with help from 'my man'; in 1740 the 'man' acquired a name - 'Lent In^o Bradley upon Mr Fishers Ac^t'.²⁵ Advancing money seems, incidentally, to have been common practice; other craftsmen's names are mentioned, including that of the London carver, Robert Doe, whose 'man' also received money on his master's account. This suggests that the words 'right-hand' should be prefixed to 'men'. They obviously played a vital part in the scheme of things. Most importantly, they had to be trustworthy. Not only did they handle financial matters for the carvers, the accounts show that sums of money were advanced for journeys taken on their behalf. Add to this the fact that they were able to help with the work, so their role was obviously more than that of a 'lifter and shifter'.

It is clear from letters from Richard Fisher to Horatio Walpole that not only did he have a man with him in Norfolk but an apprentice as well, besides seeking additional help on the project to look after the polishing of the chimneypieces.²⁶

The size of John and Samuel's workshop can only be guessed at; certainly they had a team working in the yard in 1777, as indicated in the newspaper article regarding the death of Mr. Swords (see Illustration 26). John certainly employed more than one man; this is confirmed by John Carr, who in February 1795 just after Fisher's bankruptcy, wrote 'all Fishers best men have left him, they cannot get their wages off him, and

they have set up here in York two of them very good workmen'.²⁷ So far it has not been possible to trace who these two men were.

5

With the workshop set up and staffed the next major concern would be the acquisition of materials. Woods suitable for carving used in the eighteenth century were pine, chestnut and limewood. As these are native woods it is assumed that they were obtained locally. Fruit woods such as pear were also employed as well as oak, box, and mahogany (imported into Bristol from the West Indies), but the favourite was limewood which was laminated with glue into two or three layers.²⁸ It was utilized extensively by Grinling Gibbons for its striking 'light against dark' effect when used in conjunction with oak panelling.²⁹

Listed each week in the *York Courant* were details of the cargoes of ships docking in Hull; there seemed to be an enormous number of shipments of wainscoting from Scandinavia, until it was realized that wainscoting was, in fact, another name for oak, used for ship and boatbuilding, floor boards, etc. as well as panelling. There were mixed cargoes from America, but few mentions of marble, for which there were two main sources, importations and home production. One of the few notices of shipments of marble appeared on 8th September 1741; the paper recorded that the "Mary Galley", belonging to Richard Hill, had arrived from Leghorn with 'Drugs, oyl, Marble Tables, etc'. Coastal traffic sailing into Hull was listed but not the cargo, so if marble was being brought up from London by ship it was not recorded in the newspapers. An advertisement in the *York Courant* of 16 April 1745 read:

'To be sold at Dalton, Near Rotherham, at a moderate price. Three large blocks of Italian marble. For further particulars, inquire of Mr. Tunncliffe, Attorney at Law in Rotherham'

and on 21st August 1770 a similar advertisement appeared in the *York Courant*:

'To be sold. A choice Assortment of the best Cologne or Grey German Mill-Stones and Black Marble Grave Stones, lately landed in the Woolhouse at Hull, by the Importer, Mr. Walter Brown, who intends to keep a proper assortment of each kind constantly on Hand which he shall continue to sell on Moderate Terms.'

John Fisher bought imported marble, and in view of the fact that it took up to ten months to reach London during the French Revolution, it is possible to understand his anxiety and the need to write the letter

in the Farnley archives³⁰ which contains the following paragraph:

'... there being a cargo of Marble just arriv'd at Hull, as I want to purchase some, in doing which by paying ready money can make a considerable saving, has induced me to request your kind assistance by remitting me a Bill at any convenient date to you.'

John then advertises in April 1803 that he has 'imported from Carrara a quantity of different marbles, the best the country can produce'.^{30A}

White Carrara or 'statuary' marble from Italy was the marble of choice for figure sculpture; next in importance were Sicilian (whitish-grey and slightly veined) and 'dove' (grey-blue) marbles; the Breccia marbles were coloured³¹ - 'the blues, greens, purples and deep amber gold' found on the inlaid marble tops supplied, it is believed by the Fishers, for Chippendale's gilt tables at Harewood House^{31A}. Yellow Siena marble which was flecked with dark grey was very popular; red marble also featured as did black and white. True black marble (also called 'touch'), frequently used for the pyramids backing church monuments, came from Italy but more commonly from Belgium and Amsterdam, from Ireland and England.

The Chellaston alabaster quarries were probably the most important in England and although in the eighteenth century alabaster was being replaced by marble, Glover's *History of Derby*, published in 1829, reports that blocks were still being sold by the ton; cheaper qualities retailed from 5-10 shillings a ton in the Potteries. There were marble quarries in Devon and Anglesey, while Bakewell in Derbyshire was probably the most important centre in Britain in the eighteenth century.³² Between 1739 and 1741 an advertisement frequently appeared in the *York Courant*, offering for sale 'in the Block, or ready Sawed and smooth sanded' any quantity of the finest Peak marbles from *Ashford in the water*'. Edward Cheney, the owner of the quarry offered easy terms.³³

As far as price was concerned, when Edward Bird's stock was sold at auction in London in 1771, a 4½ft x 2½ft. block of 'lumatella antica' (a 'densely fossilised marble') and a similar sized slab of porphyry each fetched 2 guineas, while slabs of dove and Siena of the same dimensions sold from 2s. 0d. to 4s. 0d.³⁴

The materials used by London and York carvers were standard, but it has been suggested that the use of coloured marbles in the north was introduced at a later date than in the metropolis.³⁵ There is documentary evidence that Horatio Walpole imported at least two shipments

of marble from Genoa, one costing £1,286. 18. 9d. and the other, with charges, £1,468. 3. 0d. sterling. The first shipment included blocks of Barciglio, statuary, yellow and white, and black and white. 'An account' was taken on 27th February 1735/6 of the 'Marble Blocks at Wolterton'. On that date '8 pieces veined marble' were listed, as well as 'Egyptian Marble, green (2 pieces), Black & gold marble (2 pieces) ... agged (4 pieces) ...'³⁶ In 1737-8 Richard Fisher was using veined grey marble for a chimneypiece at Wolterton, perhaps from this stock. This suggests that the patron was abreast of London fashion, and taking advantage of his travels abroad to satisfy his aesthetic taste, buying his own raw materials in case they were not available in this country.

In January 1752 Fisher was charging William Aislable at Studley Royal £6. 13s. 0d. for a 'purple marble slab' and 2 statuary plinths.³⁷ As will be seen from the Catalogue the Fishers also used coloured marbles extensively in their monuments. It is also possible that on occasions they used freestone (a fine-grained sandstone or limestone); for example, the two cherubs which decorate the monuments of Lady Graham at Wath (1767) and William Hutchinson in the Church of St. Michael, Spurriergate, in York (1774), do not possess the polished, very tactile surface of marble, nor do they catch the light in the same way.

Whether the Fisher workshop had always supplied gravestones and tombs for churchyards is not known, but with the advent of York Cemetery in the 1830s and when burials in city graveyards became a thing of the past, the practice was able to satisfy this new market. With the change in the market came a change in the materials required. There are very few hard stones available in the Vale of York, but sandstone was available in North and North-West Yorkshire, being mined near Huddersfield and at Eland Flags towards Leeds. Pink sandstone was available from Cumbria, from St. Bede's near Penrith, and from Scotland; greenish-grey Delabole slate came from Devon and Cornwall, with Borrodale green slate, as its name suggests, coming from the Lake District; granite from Aberdeenshire was used, and finally green streaked Connemara and Iona marbles.³⁸

With the practicalities dealt with, the finer points such as design, advertising and exhibiting could be dealt with, and the next sections will consider all three in relation to the Fisher workshop.

Creeping into the design of many church monuments at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the use of classical architectural forms and motifs. There was much antique Greek and Roman sculpture to be seen in England; the Duke of Richmond's Gallery contained 'excellent casts of many of the finest antique statues', and a special docket was issued to students to allow admittance to his Gallery:

'This is to certify that the bearer, EE, is above 12 years of age; that he is recommended by Mr. Wilton, as a sober, diligent person, who is desirous of drawing from the gesses, and has promised to observe the rules of the room. He is therefore to be admitted.

Jos. Wilton

To the Porter of the Statue Room at Richmond House'.³⁹

From the 1770s an apprentice carver in London would also have been able to view the collection Mr. Charles Townley kept at his home in Park Street; this comprised antique Roman terra-cottas as well as statuary, and it was his practice to allow students from the Royal Academy Schools to make drawings of his statues for their portfolios.⁴⁰ In the North there was Newby Hall where William Weddell kept his collection of sculpture in a gallery especially designed by Robert Adam, while Young writes of the Pomfret Statues in the Hall of Christ's Church, Oxford.⁴¹ There were engravings of a Roman sepulchral altar to be found in J.J. Boissard's *Romanae Urbis Topographiae* which was published in 1602,⁴² but no early pattern books appear to have survived, possibly since the design of church monuments had almost always been the preserve of the sculptor and master mason.

Although the title page of Robert Pricke's *The Ornaments of Architecture*, published in London in 1674, reads: 'The Ornaments of Architecture, containing Compartments, Shields, Mantlings, Foldige, Festones, Monuments for Tombs, Alphabets of large Letters Plain and Enriched, with the Order of making them', it was not until 1728 that James Gibbs, the architect, published his *Book of Architecture*. It contained designs for church monuments, and as a result many monuments in the second quarter of the century became increasingly architectonic, with the inclusion of columns and pediments, the small winged *putti* and *memento mori* disappearing.⁴³ Later in the century the influence of Robert Adam can be seen with the use of classical motifs and an increasingly uncluttered form.

As far as decorative carving was concerned, much was related to pattern books from Europe; taking Beningbrough Hall as an example, the triglyphs in the Smoking Room were probably copied from an engraving published in Amsterdam c. 1700 by Daniel Marot (1663-c.1752), the French architect used by William III. The elaborate carvings over the doorcases in the Drawing Room reflect the influence of Jean Berain (1638-1711) or of Daniel Marot, who was his pupil; the frieze in Lady Chesterfield's room is a direct crib from Marot's *Nouveau Livre d'Ornaments*.⁴⁴ Copies of these books would almost certainly have been brought over from the Continent by the craftsmen who found their way here to escape religious persecution in the seventeenth century and later. Then in 1721 Jonathan Richardson published his guide book *'An Account of the Statues, Bas-reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy, France, etc.'* which introduced even wider scope for the carver since its text provided a valuable source for new ideas.⁴⁵

As far as English pattern books were concerned, two of the early ones were *The Architect's Store-house* by Robert Pricke which dated from 1674, and *The Ornaments of Architecture*, which has already been mentioned. One of the many well-known names of the eighteenth century was that of Batty Langley; between 1740 and 1756 he published editions of *The City and Country Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs*; this too was subtitled: 'The Art of Drawing and Working the Ornamental Parts of Architecture'. Perhaps, though, the most famous of all the pattern books available was John Crunden's *The Chimneypiece Maker's Daily Assistant*.

The designs for door surrounds and chimneypieces in the eighteenth century almost invariably drew on models from classical architecture, although the original function of the elements used had long since been lost or forgotten. The importance of the doorcase as an entrance into a room or building was only matched by the part played by the chimneypiece as the focal point in the room. Comprising an integral part of their decoration was the use of various intricate mouldings. As will be seen from the Catalogue, although these highly ornamental finishes were part of the workshop's canon from its inception in 1729, it was not until 1759 that Sir William Chambers published his *Treatise* which included drawings of 'Regular Mouldings with their Proper Ornaments'.⁴⁶

Because of the diversity of designs employed by the Fisher workshop it is certain that they would have compiled their own pattern

book over the life of the practice. The Catalogue illustrates how they used different combinations of the same design elements on their monuments, and a pattern book would have enabled them to show their patrons the range of monuments and the various styles of ornamentation available. It could also have been used to tempt them to order something more elaborate than originally intended if they saw the work executed for another patron. Ideas for the designs could have been original, taken from classical antiquity, suggested by monuments by other sculptors, or based on the verbal requirements of the patron. Since drawings of a proposed design would almost certainly have been submitted to the patron to take an extra copy for the catalogue would have been an easy matter. For works like the Osbaldeston, Sheffield and Dealtry monuments models would have undoubtedly been prepared.

Archival research has not traced the Fishers' pattern book, but one belonging to a nineteenth century York workshop run by the Plows has been found.⁴⁷ A study of this shows that in common with the Fishers, and indeed every other provincial monument maker at this time, the Plows used variations of the same basic designs which are far more pedestrian than those of the previous century. One drawing illustrates a monument which was erected in Christ Church at Harrogate on which the Fishers and the Plows collaborated. The actual monument to John Hunter of Lisburn, dating from 1823, is signed on the left 'Fisher, Sculpt.' and on the right 'Plows, Fecit'. The monument could have come from either workshop, though the design is very like many of those coming from the Fishers' practice at that date - a draped urn with an open book, a snake holding its tail; however, the laurel chaplet at the base is missing from the drawing (Illustration 28). Since the title page is at the back of the pattern book and an engraving has been stuck in the front page it is possible that it did not originate in the Plows' workshop; the word 'fixed' accompanies some of the monuments illustrated on the earlier pages, indicating that the workshop was responsible for only installing the memorials. It was common practice for carvers executing monuments for churches at a distance from their workshops to employ a local mason to erect or 'fix' the memorial on their behalf.

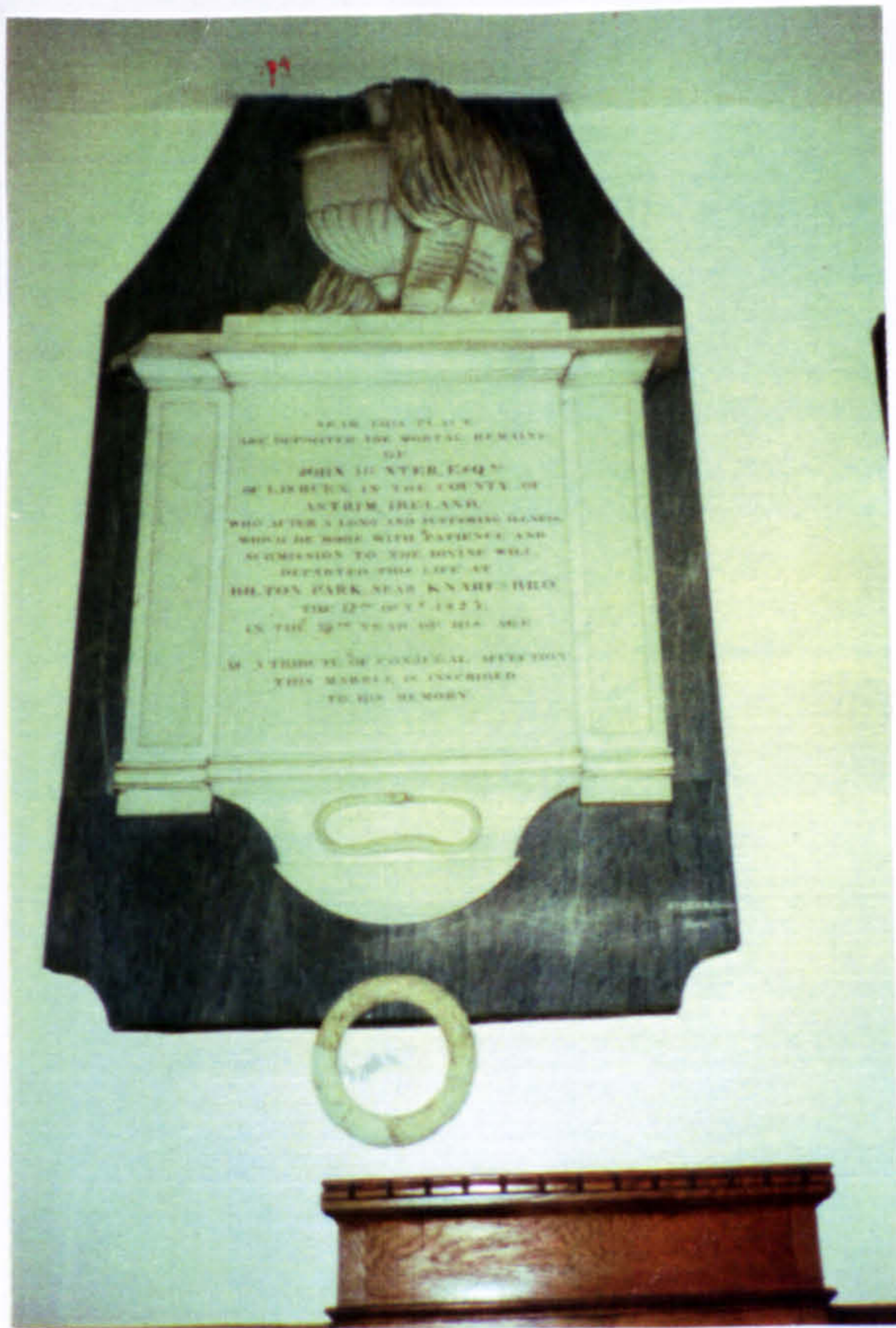
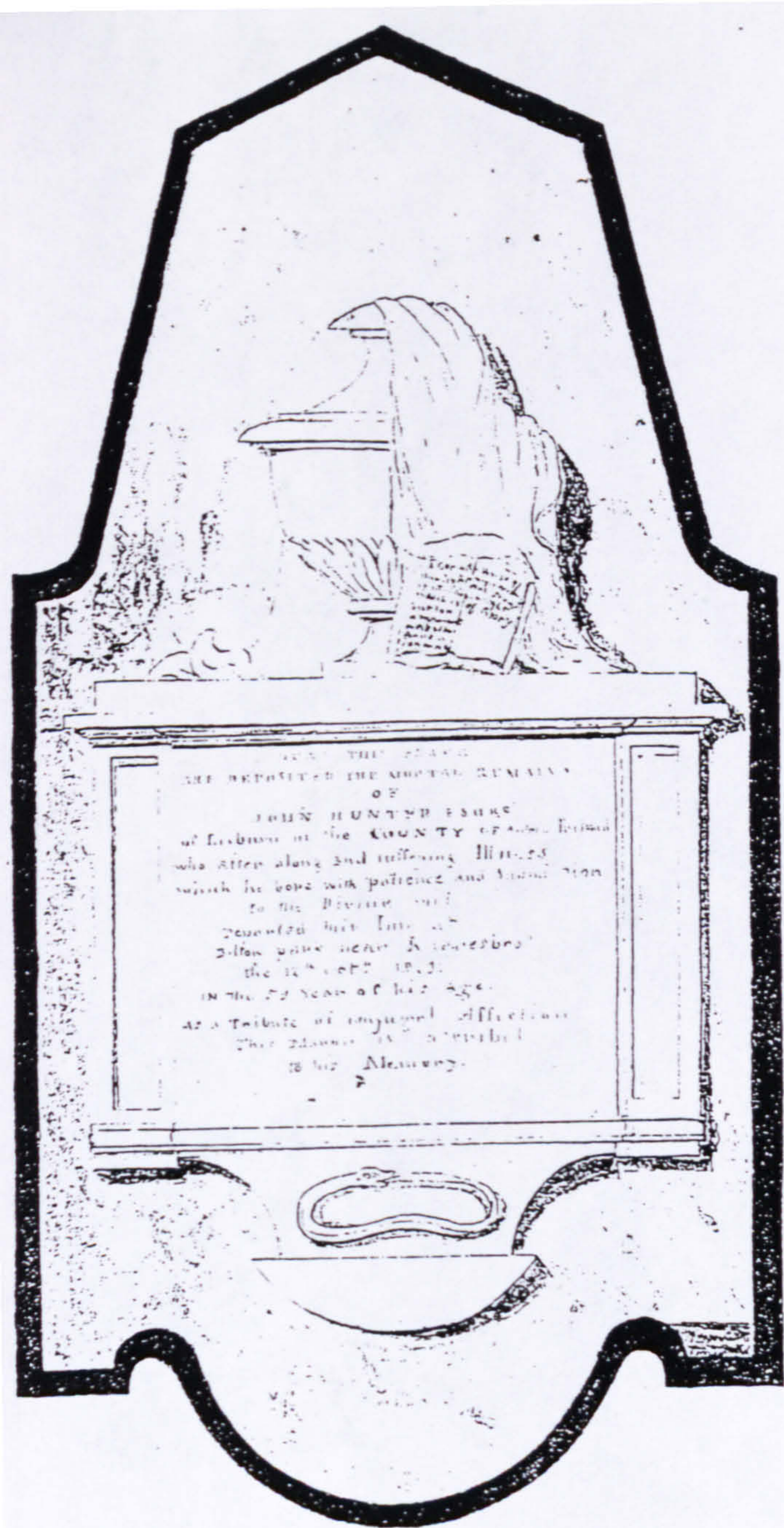


Illustration 28: A page from Plows' Pattern Book (York Section,
 York Central Library), and the actual memorial to
 John Hunter in Christ Church, Harrogate.

While the designs used by a workshop and the way in which they were going to be interpreted and executed were decisive in whether or not a commission was awarded, the first and most important step was to attract the patron's interest. Advertising was then, as now, one method. My research has shown that initially many of the Fishers' commissions must have come through recommendation. Apart from the notice in the paper announcing Richard Fisher's move from Ripon to York, he does not appear to have advertised the business. The importance of word of mouth recommendation, on the other hand, is borne out by a letter he penned to William Aislable on 5th April 1737:⁴⁸

After my Duty to you these are to Let you know that I Received your letter with the inclosed and shall be very glad to embrace such an opportunity as soon as I have made a finish of your Honour's work ...
 [I] Beg to favour That your Honour will pleas to express me to him till such times as I have Done here. I should be verey sorry to Loos such a job which is all from your Honour.

My impression is that Richard Fisher approached possible patrons by letter rather than by advertising; he solicited custom in this way when Vice-Admiral Medley of Kilwick Hall died in 1747, writing to Thomas Grimston, the beneficiary, to enquire whether he could carve the Vice-Admiral's monument for York Minster but the commission went to Cheere.⁴⁹

Apart from insertions in the newspaper indicating they were seeking apprentices or notifying their patrons of changes of address, the Fishers did not use the press to advertise until the last decade of the eighteenth century when John had pecuniary difficulties. This in spite of the fact that the distribution of York newspapers during the eighteenth century covered a much wider area than would be supposed. Advertisements could be placed for inclusion in the following week's paper in London, Selby, Hull, Malton, Leeds, Knaresborough, etc., while circulation via some 47 outlying points was the norm, special messengers being employed to travel with each weekly edition.

The first real advertisements drawing the public's attention to the workshop appeared in both the *York Courant* and the *York Herald* in 1790. The first insertions in both newspapers dealt with the engraving by Bartolozzi of the Savile memorial in the Minster; then the following notice appeared:

J. Fisher, Statuary,

Begs permission to return his most grateful acknowledgements to the Nobility and Gentry for the many distinguished favours already conferred on him, and begs to inform them, that he has removed from St. Helen's Square to opposite Bluitt's Inn, where he proposes executing Monuments, enriched and plain Marble Chimneypieces in the most elegant and fashionable taste. Those Noblemen and Gentlemen who are pleased to honour him with their commands, may depend on their being attended to with the greatest punctuality.

There followed a reminder about the Bartolozzi engraving, and the gentle self-congratulatory inclusion of the names of the elevated clientele who had already 'honoured' him with their custom - HRH the Prince of Wales, HRH the Duke of York, etc.^{49A} - obviously bypassing the local print-sellers by trading direct!

As the type of trade being pursued by the workshop changed during the first decade of the new century occasional advertisements appeared. Some called attention to various items for sale, others to say that members of the workshop were exhibiting their works, either on their own premises or in local shops. During Race Week in August 1810 Richard Fisher showed his marble bust of the late Rt. Hon. William Pitt at the premises of Messrs. Cattle and Barber, Jewellers, Coney-Street, York. In September 1809 William begged 'leave to acquaint the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public in general' that his bust of the late Peregrine Wentworth, Esq. would be on show in Doncaster during Race Week. He included a list of the notables who had already subscribed to its publication.⁵⁰ Apart from the 'puff' about Richard's move to York from Ripon in 1746, there is only one other example of a true 'puff' - this was when John was awarded the commission to carve the monument for the late Dr. Stephen Simpson of Lichfield.^{50A}

To date no examples of trade cards or bill heads have been found for any of the sculpture workshops in York but the literature suggests that the former, particularly, were both disposable and perishable. Illustration 29 shows an example of an American engraving for use either as a page in a trade directory or as a label (the name 'Fisher' in the name of the firm is pure coincidence - serendipity).⁵¹ As has already been noted, when trade and town directories became available, the names of most of the craftsmen appeared, and in one of the later editions the Plows' had a half-page advertisement (Illustration 30). These listings

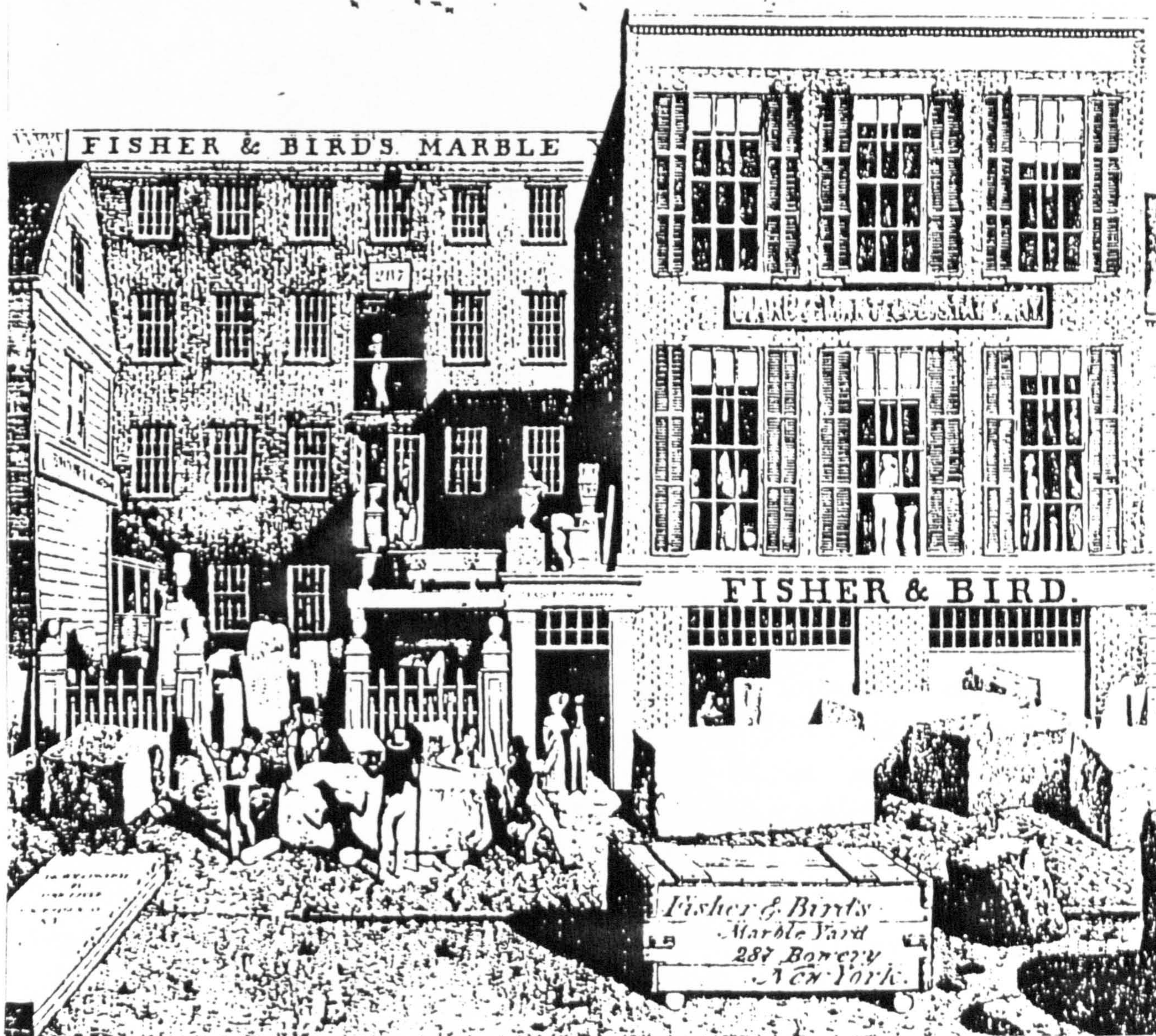


Illustration 29: An engraving by John Baker, c. 1837, of Fisher & Bird's Marble Yard in New York, intended for use as a Trade Card (in: *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 37, No. 4, (Spring 1950))

point to the way in which the craftsmen regarded themselves. As an example, in the *Universal British Directory* of 1798 John Fisher is listed as 'Sculptor', as is Charles in *Pigot's General Directory* of 1816-17; not so his brother Richard, who is listed under Stone Masons, along with Benjamin Plows of Foss Bridge and John King of Mint Yard. Charles appears under both the headings of 'Stone and Marble Masons' and 'Householders' in W.H. Smith's *Directory* of 1840.

On page 957 of the *Universal British Directory*, volume IV of 1798, in the York section there is a descriptive text on the Minster which picks out from among other monuments five of those carved by the Fishers, describing them in some detail although the workshop is not named. Whether or not this was 'engineered' in some way by the Fishers, it is a neat piece of covert advertising; all the monuments are signed and a few judicious enquiries would reveal the whereabouts of the workshop.

Exhibiting works might be considered a passive form of advertising, but in 1761 when the Society of Artists of Great Britain held an exhibition in Spring Gardens, Charing Cross, 13,000 copies of a combined catalogue/season ticket were sold for one shilling. The Free Society of Artists, a splinter group, held an exhibition at the Royal Society's premises at the same time when Richard Fisher showed his two statuettes of the *Christ* and *Jupiter*.⁵² There were apparently unruly scenes at the break-away group's exhibition, when eight constables were required to restore order, so the assumption is that a considerable number of people were able to see his work. William Fisher followed this practice, and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1801, 1806, 1808, and 1811, and at The Northern Society Exhibitions at Leeds in 1809, 1810 and 1811;⁵³ the York Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition in 1866 was the last time the workshop exhibited.⁵⁴

Such exhibitions were a valuable form of advertising in so far as they provided what could be looked upon as a dignified showcase which didn't smack of commercialism, and a valuable opportunity for displaying one's work to a much wider audience where it could be seen (and judged) in relation to the work of other carvers. Without doubt trade-cards would also be available which would inform of the scope of the workshop, as shown in Plows' half-page advertisement.

WOOLLEN CLOTHS, &c., &c.

10, PAVEMENT, YORK.

T. J. KNAPTON,

to call the attention of his Friends and the Public to his new and well
sorted Stock of WOOLLEN DRAPERY; also, combined, Gentlemen's
Wrists, Stocks, Handkerchiefs, &c., &c.

T. J. K's personal attention being devoted to the purchase and sale of Goods, he
trusts himself they will bear a just comparison for *cheapness* and *durability*, with the
most and *oldest Houses* in the trade.

Sincerely grateful for past favours, he assures his Friends and the Public, that it
will be his constant study to merit a continuance, by securing to them every advantage
which *attention, experience, and Capital* can command.

Notice, **KNAPTON'S Woollen House, 10, Pavement,**
Next to Mr. E. GIBSON, Ironmonger.



W. PLOWS,

SCULPTOR AND MASON,

Most respectfully invites the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public generally, to
inspect his Show Rooms at the above Works, where there are from 50 to 60
MARBLE CHIMNEYPICES manufactured of Foreign Marbles, of elegant designs,
and of superior workmanship, suited to every style of Building.

Monuments, Tablets, Urns, Vases; Mosaic, Inlaid, Granulated, and
variegated Slabs, for Furniture; and every description of such work is executed
with the most *patent machinery*, with accuracy, rapidity, durability of polish, and beauty,
and a reduction of cost which cannot be obtained elsewhere.

W. P. takes this opportunity of returning his most sincere thanks to his
Friends and the Public generally, for past favours, and trusts, from the superior
manner in which he is enabled to have every article manufactured, to insure a
continuance of their patronage.

*Great variety of Stone and Marble in Slab, and every description of rough Slab, &c.,
kept for the Trade, at his Stone Wharf, on the opposite side of the Street.*

N. B.—Roman Cement, Mastic, Plaster, and other Cements.

FINE BRICKS &c. &c. FOR SALE.

Illustration 30; Advertisement appearing in the
York Directory of 1843, published by W.H. Smith of Hull

- 'Tis said his Work may be seen at Leeds, Ripon, and the Seats of most of the neighbouring Nobility and Gentry, and meets with Approbation. - We hear he has always by him a good Stock of Choice Marble to supply Gentlemen with Materials, either in Carv'd or Plain Work, as Statues, Tables, Chimney-pieces, &.¹⁵⁵

This 'puff', which is the second part of the advertisement which appeared in the *York Courant* in July 1746 when Richard moved from Ripon to York, sets out the range of work covered by the workshop virtually throughout the century and a half it was in operation. A great deal more research is needed to identify all the work Richard was doing between 1729 and the 1760s but the Catalogue will illustrate the breadth of his output. The work of his sons, John and Samuel, and later of John alone, is more easy to chart through the church memorials executed by the practice, although their output of chimneypieces, thought often to have been related to houses being built or altered by John Carr, needs much fuller investigation. Table 5 illustrates the number of monuments completed by the workshop which have so far been recorded.

The *etcetera* in the 'puff' possibly best illustrates the work of the third and fourth generations, when portrait busts for gentlemen's libraries were in vogue, when small decorative pieces were being produced, and ultimately, in the final years of the workshop, gravestones.

In general, the Fishers, like the London sculptors, followed the same tradition, producing busts, monuments and ornamental carving, including chimneypieces. It was interesting to discover that the three grieving female figures carved by the Fisher workshop in the second half of the century (Dealtry, Osbaldeston, Sheffield) matched the number produced by the major London carvers, Roubiliac (3), Cheere (3), Scheemakers (4), with Rysbrack heading the list with seven. Looking at the lists of monuments produced by the London carvers in *The Dictionary of British Sculpture* by Rupert Gunnis, the output of their workshops, particularly in the nineteenth century, was legion, possibly more complex in design and often monumental in size compared with that being produced by the York practice. The workshops too were almost certainly much larger, employing more men, but the clientele were different.

As far as the geographical scope of the workshop was concerned, the four maps included at the end of Chapter 1 - of the three Ridings and

of England - indicate the spread of their work - from Cumberland in the North to Devon in the South.

9

In the Fisher family the craft was handed down from father to son through four generations; in the case of the third generation, three sons (possibly all five) left York to go to London to further their training and gain experience in prestigious metropolitan workshops. While York carvers went to the capital, London sculptors went to Rome to widen their field of knowledge.

In York, like the Fishers, the Atkinson brothers and the younger Plows followed the same trade as their fathers; in London the Scheemakers' and John Bacon the Younger had fathers who were carvers, while Flaxman's was a maker of plaster casts. Rysbrack's father was a painter and etcher, Joseph Nollekens was the son of 'Old Nollekens' the painter, while Francis Chantrey's father was a carpenter.

When Table 6, which shows carvers in York and London who were working at the same time as the Fishers, was compiled from the various sources available (Gunnis, Esdaile, Whinney, Beard), the data revealed that carvers working in York could have had, if they so wished, the opportunity of studying the work of the London sculptors, as almost all have examples in the Ridings. For instance, Rysbrack's memorial to Sir John Wentworth at North Kirkby (c. 1721), Scheemakers' monument to Sir Michael Wharton in Beverley (1730), Admiral Medley's tomb in York Minster by Henry Cheere (1747), Roubiliac's memorial to William Stratford (1752) just over the county border in Lancaster, John Bacon Senior's bust of the Duke of Portland in the Mausoleum at Wentworth Woodhouse (1793), his son's monument to Joseph Milner in Holy Trinity Church, Hull (1797), and Nollekens' rotunda in memory of William Weddell at Ripon Cathedral.

Further research has shown that the conditions for setting up a workshop and the materials used were universal, as were the pattern books. The acceptance of apprentices by a workshop was governed by the same rules, the one great difference being that the premiums set by London carvers were higher than those in York.

While the York carvers would seem to have made a reasonable living, at least for most of the time, the London sculptors - again with exceptions - made their fortunes. In the main there would appear to have

Fisher Workshop	Other York Carvers And Craftsmen	London Sculptors
Richard Fisher (c.1700-1770)	Samuel Carpenter (1660-1713)	Peter Scheemakers (1691-1781)
	Daniel Harvey (Hervé) (1683-1733)	Henry Scheemakers (c.1685-1748)
	Charles Mitley (1705-1758)	Michael Rysbrack (1694-1770)
	Edward Raper, (fl. 1724-1738)	L.F. Roubiliac (1702/5-1762)
	Wm. Bateson (fl. 1729-1750)	Henry Cheere (1703-1781)
	Daniel Shillito (fl. 1755-1772)	
John (1735-1804) and Samuel (1738-?)	John and Leonard Terry (fl. 1740-1776)	Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823)
John alone (fl.1780-1804)	Thomas Atkinson & Sons (fl. 1750-1798)	John Bacon Sr. (1740-1799)
	Robert Blakesley (fl. 1772-84)	Thomas Banks (1735-1805)
	William Stead (fl. 1773-1815)	John Flaxman (1755-1826)
John (1771-1739)	Matthew Skelton (1772-1844)	John Bacon Jr. (1777-1859)
William (1776-1815)	Benjamin (1775-1824)	Francis Chantrey (1781-1841)
George (1778-1815)	and Wm. A. Plows (1789-1865)	Joseph Theakston (1786-1842)
Samuel (1780-1812)	Michael Taylor (fl. 1795-1846)	Gahagan Brothers (fl. 1756-1835)
Richard (1784-1819)	J. King (fl. 1811-1840)	J.C.F. Rossi (1762-1839)
Charles (1789-1861)	John Flintoft (fl. 1813-1841)	J.G. Bubb (1782-1853)
	John Vaudby of Hull (fl. 1839-1850) & C.J. Vaudby of York	
John (1823-1884)	G.W. Milburn, 1843-1941	J.S. Westmacott (1823-1900)

**Table 6 - List of Principal York and London Craftsmen
working from the early 18th to the mid 19th century.**

been several reasons for this. The first was the size of their workshops which allowed for a greater throughput of work and the larger scale of the monuments. Secondly, the fact that in the mid- to late eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century the masters were simply making the models and their craftsmen were completing the works. Another reason was the importance of the carver; another the size of the area from whence the apprentices and craftsmen could be drawn was far greater in the capital and would have surely made a difference. The number of first-class sculpture workshops in the metropolis would have offered a much wider scope for encouraging skilled craftsmen to move from practice to practice, not only to improve their skills but in search of higher remuneration. Another consideration might be the eminence of the architects with whom the carver collaborated; if one takes Robert Adam as an example, houses with which he was associated near London included Kenwood, Lansdowne House, Chandos House, Northumberland House, No. 106 Piccadilly, No. 20 Portman Square, No. 20 St. James' Square, Osterley Park and Syon House. Accordingly, the sculptors who were working with him on these commissions found themselves working for patrons who were far more prestigious than many of those commissioning the Fishers.

One fact which has emerged from the research is that in the nineteenth century wall monuments were being replaced by graves and tombstones with the introduction of municipal cemeteries, a move reflected nationwide; in the North another reason for not only a fall-off in the number of wall monuments but for the dramatic change in style to less elaborate memorials, was the fight to counter Methodism and bring congregations back to the Church of England, outward show running counter to Wesleyan teaching. Also, memorial windows were taking their place, this as a result of the 'Victorianizing' of many early churches. Although the cemeteries in Bradford and Leeds particularly, followed the trend for large and imposing monuments found in the metropolitan cemeteries, those in York are modest in the extreme. This may reflect the fact that there was little or no trade in York and the monuments in its cemetery are those erected by 'old-style' middle-class families who had no need to make a social statement. In all probability the deceased would have been well-known in the city and the memorial was just that. However, in manufacturing towns the new middling-class had much to be proud of - the

'rags to riches in three generations' syndrome - and they were not ashamed to broadcast their successes.

An unexpected spin-off of great interest has been an opportunity to look behind the scenes of the workshop; two monuments were discovered in a state of disrepair. The first is the monument to Nathaniel Cholmley (1791) in the organ loft in the Parish Church in Whitby. The urn and pyramid have become detached from the wall, and whereas from a distance the urn would look substantial, in fact it is a very finely carved thin slice of marble (Illustration No. 31A). This finding leads me to suggest that for monuments there was probably a very complicated workshop pricing policy in operation, costs ranging to cover from *appliqué* to more solid decorative items, the use of coloured marbles, the inclusion of an armorial; prices almost certainly differed for the number and type of bands of moulding at top and bottom of the memorial tablet, the number of words in the epitaph, and so on.

The second monument was found in Clarbrough Church in Nottinghamshire and dates from c. 1809-12. Here, damp has penetrated behind the marble; the inscription tablet is missing altogether and so is the left jamb, allowing one to see how the monument was constructed - a vertical sandstone block lay behind the fluted jamb, which was carved in marble about 1 inch thick; the backing pyramid was joined at each side on a level with the cornice and again at the lower edge, and it did not cover the space behind which the inscription panel would have been since the stonework is visible (Illustration 31B). The tricks of the trade!

The next chapter will discuss changes in design and sculptural fashions in York and touch upon trends in the metropolis. The Catalogue will be analysed to provide a preliminary breakdown of the use of different styles, coloured marbles, horizontal or vertical format, and so on, to illustrate the versatility of the workshop and show that there was a time lapse before ideas in vogue in the metropolis reached Yorkshire. This meant that styles went out of fashion in London long before they were discarded in the North.

Illustration 31A - Nathaniel
Cholmley's Monument in the Organ
Loft, St. Mary's Parish Church,
Whitby



Illustration 31B - Thomas
Outybridge's Monument in
Clarborough Parish Church

Chapter 3

References and Footnotes

- 1 Esdaile, K.A., "Sculptors and Sculpture in Yorkshire", *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 35, p. 364.
- 2 Burgess, R., The Patronage and Production of Church Monuments in Yorkshire 1560-1640, MA Thesis, Department of History, University of York, September 1993.
- 3 Carpenter was also responsible for carving the obelisk at Ripon in 1702. For this work he was paid £72, 3, 3d.
- 3A Harvey, J., *York* (London 1975) p. 140.
- 4 'Mr. Havre, Statuary from London' advertised in the *York Courant* of 15 July 1755, that he could be found c/o Mr. John Jackson, Printer, Petergate. He was offering for sale 'carved fraaes for tables and looking glasses of different sizes and kinds, all of the genteelest Taste - lately brought from London'. His relationship, if any, to Daniel Hervé who died in 1733 is not known.
- 5 Wolterton Archives, Wolterton Hall, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21, letter of April 5 1737 to the Hon^{ble} William Aislabie.
- 5A Burgess, "The Patronage and Production of Church Monuments", pp. 7-13
- 6 Neave, D. & E. Waterson, *Lost Houses of East Yorkshire* (EY6S 1988) pp. 36-37. When the Hall was demolished in the 1950s these went to Hall Garth, Goodmanham and Reighton Hall.
- 7 This summary of work in Yorkshire is based on data from three sources: G. Beard, *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration* (London, 1986) ; Gee, Eric A., *The Architecture of York* (York 1979) and Gunnis, R., *Dictionary of British Sculptors*, (London 1969).
- 8 Peter Chassereau, an architect and land surveyor was advertising in the *York Courant* of 23 August 1743, that he continued 'to take in Subscriptions for a Plan of the City of York.' See Illustration 7.
- 9 St. Michael le Belfrey, PRY/MB, pp. 233-35, Borthwick Institute, York.
- 10 'nearly opposite the York Tavern' explained Botterill, Clark and Parker, wallpaper manufacturers, advertising that they had rebuilt and extended the Fisher workshop; *York Courant*, 31 May 1791.
- 11 An entry in the Committee of Leases Minute Book required that the house of John Fisher in Mint Yard *be put into repair by the lessee* (The Committee of Leases Minute Book 1794-1663 & 1799-1813, E101/367, York City Archives). A subsequent Minute (February 1803) shows that the Corporation allowed the next tenant, the Minster carver, Michael Taylor, to move from Minster Yard to take over the lot at a yearly rent of £42, 0s, 0d., on a repairing lease. The Committee of Leases Minute Book 1704-1773, E101/409 records that as far as the Mint Yard property was concerned, in January 1809 John King, stonemason, became 'tenant from year to year' at an annual rent of £25; he had to lay out the sum of £70 to make 'lasting improvements to the satisfaction of the city stewards.'
- 12 *York Courant*, 12 July 1813.
- 13 All Saints' North Street Rate Books, 1839, York City Archives. It would have been useful to link this information to an advertisement which appeared in the *York Courant* on 7th June 1763 for a property in North Street. This offered for sale 'a large dwelling house divided into several Tenements with a very good Yard on the Backside thereof extending down to the River Ouse, the whole standing commodiously for Trade or Business.
- 14 *York Courant*, 11 December 1815
- 15 Where the house in Micklegate was situated is not known, but the Ordnance Survey Map of 1850 shows a stone and marble yard running between Micklegate and Tanner Row, eight plots down from Barker Lane.
- 16 Penny, N., *Church Monuments in Romantic England* (New Haven and London 1977) footnote 15, p. 205.

- 17 Cited in Beard, G., *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration in England - 1660-1820* (London 1986) pp.65-66.
- 18 Beard, *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration*, p. 22.
- 19 Defoe, Daniel, *The Complete English Tradesman* (Gloucester 1987)
- 19A See; Archer, J., *The Literature of British Domestic Architecture, 1715-1842* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1985) Appendix A; Harris, E., *British Architectural Books and Writers, 1556-1785* (Cambridge, 1990) pp. 32-37.
- 20 Vyner MSS, VR 286, Bundle B (part 2) No. 12, WYAS. The Wentworth Woodhouse estimate appears on the back of a drawing for a chimneypiece, a photograph of which is in my possession, although the whereabouts of the original drawing is not known.
- 20A Lecture given for NT Volunteers at Beningbrough in 1991 by Richard Reid, the York carver.
- 21 Vyner MSS, Bundle 286, 31 October 1732, WYAS.
- 21A York Apprentice Registers, D14 (Appr. 1756-1786) and D15 (Appr. 1787-1816), YCA.
- 22 York Apprentice Registers, D14 and D15, YCA.
- 23 *York Courant*, 16 May 1803.
- 24 York Apprentice Records, D15, p. 283, YCA.
- 25 Temple Newsam Building Accounts TN/ES 13/68, folios 40 and 40f, WYCA.
- 26 Wolterton Archives, Wolterton Hall, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21; '6 March 1738: - As your Honour is willing that I should take another hand I thought it proper first to acquaint your Honour of the wages he Requires which is 20 shillings per weeks,'
21 April 1738: '- I have made all the Inquir I possibly can in Yorkshire for polishers but cannot Light of any. I had got one before I came from Woolerton That is a very good Hand att 13 Shillings p" week. I writ To London for 2 or 3 more but can get none att that price That is capable of Doing that work. Thear best wage is 14 Shillings a week; thear charges bere up and Down,'
20 October 1738: '- I let my apprentice to do them and he was capable to Begin and End these mouldings without me Taking my time up with them to show him,'
- 27 Fitzwilliam Archives, Sheffield City Libraries, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments Stewards Papers, Letter from John Carr to Mr. Hall, Steward to William, 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, dated Feb. 6 1795.
- 28 Beard, *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration*, p. 66. The author refers to David Green, *Grinling Gibbons* (London, 1964) pp. 178-179.
- 29 Esterley, D., 'Out of the Ashes', in *The Independent Magazina*, 4 July 1992.
- 30 Private collection; cited in Nares, G., "Farnley Hall", Part III, *Country Life*, vol. 117, p. 1809, 3 June 1954.
- 30A *York Courant*, 16 May 1803.
- 31 Penny, *Church Monuments*, pp. 2-10.
- 31A Harewood House Guide Book (1991) p. 35; J. Jewell, *The Tourist's Companion*, p. 32, 1822, cited by M. Mauchline, *Harewood House* (Ashbourne, 1992) p. 119.
- 32 Penny, *Church Monuments*, p.3.
- 33 For exaample, 3 April 1739 edition of the *York Courant*.
- 34 Penny, *Church Monuments*, Note 4, page 204.
- 35 Whinney, M., *Sculpture in Britain, 1530-1830* (London 1964) p. 173.
- 36 Wolterton Archives, Wolterton Hall, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 8/21.
- 37 Vyner MSS VR 286, Bundle C, No. 38, WYAS.
- 38 Summer 1995 - Talk at York Cemetery by Peter Enson, a geologist from the York Museum.
- 39 Edwards, Edward, *Anecdotes of Painters*, (London, 1808) Vol. 1, pp. ii & xvi.
- 40 Smith, J.R., *Nollekens and his Times* 2 volumes (London, 1828) (reprinted London 1949) vol. 1, p. 127.
- 41 Young, A., *A Six Month Tour through the North of England* (London 1771, 2nd Edition), Volume 3, p.

- 42 White, A., "Classical Learning and the Early Stuart Renaissance". *Church Monuments*, I, part (Leeds, 1985), vol. 1, p. 43.
- 43 Whinney, M., *Sculpture in Britain, 1530-1830*, (Revised edition, 1988), p. 138; Friedman, T., *James Gibbs* (New Haven and London, 1984) p.87.
- 44 *Beningbrough*, National Trust Guide Book, 1980 edition.
- 45 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain, 1530-1830*, (revised edition, 1988), p. 145.
- 46 Chambers, Sir William, *A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*, facing p. 3, In: Beard, *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration*, p. 30.
- 47 The Plows' pattern book was sold to York City Library in 1932. The title page at the back reads: 'Some of the latest monuments, Designed, Executed and Fixed by W. Plows, Sculptor, York'. There are some 200 pages; most of the drawings are colour washed, illustrating the use of coloured marble back panels, and, curiously, in many the carver's name on the monument has been inked out; was the artist presuming that Plows was the carver when in fact the workshop had only done the fixing? The word 'fixed' is written alongside some of the memorials on the earlier pages.
- 48 Wolterton Archives, Wolterton Hall, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21.
- 49 Ingram, M. E., *Leaves from a Family Tree* (Hull 1951), p.20
- 49A Intimations of the forthcoming Bartolozzi engraving appeared in the *York Courant* of 8 January, 16 March and 23 March 1790 and in the *York Herald* of 27 March and 31 July. The move was advertised on 13 November in the *York Herald*.
- 50 Richard advertised his 'Pitt' in the *York Courant* of 13 August 1810 and William his 'Peregrine Wentworth' in the *York Courant* of 18 September 1810.
- 50A *York Courant*, 22 February 1785. The Fishers do not seem to have used the puff to advertise the workshop in the amusing way that John Cheere did when his name, and those of his staff, appeared in relation to an advertisement for a 'cure-all'. By drinking the Iron Pear Tree Water he was cured of serious inflammation of his sore leg! *York Courant*, 16 June 1752.
- 51 Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, Vol. 37, No. 4, Spring 1950. I am most grateful to Dr. Terry Friedman, formerly of Leeds City Art Gallery, for this information and the copy of the engraving.
- 52 Catalogue of the Paintings, Sculptures, Models, Drawings, Engravings, etc. Now exhibiting in the Great Room belonging to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers, & Commerce in the Strand (London 1761), p. 22.
- 53 Graves, A., *The Royal Academy of Arts; A Complete Dictionary of Contributors, Vol. III* (London, 1905-6) p. 118; T. Friedman, "Nineteenth Century Sculpture in Leeds - The Northern Society Exhibitions", *Leeds Art Calendar*, vol. 69, pp. 22-28.
- 54 Catalogue of York Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition (York, July 1866)
- 55 *York Journal*, 15 July 1746.

CHAPTER 4

Sculptural Practice

Whereas Chapter 3 dealt with an analysis of workshop practice based on the practical aspects of running the business, the Catalogue, in association with primary documentary evidence and secondary data, has made it possible to look more closely at the scope of the work and the design processes undertaken by a provincial sculptor's workshop in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Catalogue shows that the work of the practice falls roughly into three production and stylistic periods.

The first period covers the working life of Richard Fisher, from 1729 to c. 1770 and his work illustrates that he was well able to justify the claims made in the notice in the *York Journal* of 15th July 1746, when he set up in Minster Yard. The second period, when the work largely consisted of church monuments and chimneypieces, matches the years when Richard's sons John and Samuel Fisher (and then John on his own) were running the workshop. The final period covers the carving executed throughout the nineteenth century; in the early years of the century the workshop provided commemorative busts and ornamental sculpture, but the tenor of the work changed, the practice was split, and for one brother at least, the funeral monuments included headstones, while more mundane items for the home, such as window sills, flagging and stepping, were the stock-in-trade.

In this Chapter these different periods will be dealt with in succession. It should be said, however, that the wealth of information available on the various metropolitan practices has not so far been found to exist for the Fishers' workshop, nor, for that matter, for any other contemporary York undertaking.

1

With regard to the scope of Richard Fisher's work, when he married in Ripon in December 1729 he gave his place of residence as Scriven and I found the first, and hitherto apparently unrecorded evidence of his work as a carver in Yorkshire, in the account books of Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven Hall, near Knaresborough:

'June 19	Lent Rich ^d Ffisher	17. 0. 0	
	Morrow [?]		3. 0. 0.
June 19	Lent R. Ffisher more		3. 0. 0.
Nov. 29	Pd. Ffisher the Carver in full		
	all demand		3. 0. 0.
Dec. 26	Lent ffisher the carver		8. 0. 0.

There are two more entries for 5th September and 17th October which could read 'Pd. carver' but they are barely legible. The account is opened again in April 1731 with the last payment being made on 24th September: 'Pd Ffisher carver in full of all demand.' It is not even possible to speculate what work was executed since the house was demolished in 1965 and no photographic record of the interior has yet been located.

Another 'missing' house was Studley Royal. In 1945 fire swept through the mansion and the ruins were later pulled down. Between 1717 and 1721 an earlier Tudor house on the site was altered and extended by John Aislable, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His disgrace when the South Sea Bubble burst is believed to have halted the construction programme² but by 1732 work was under way again, and there are bills from Richard Fisher for work he and his 'man' carried out on the estate between 1732 and 1739. Further bills exist for carving completed for Aislable's son, William, from 1749 to 1753. The word 'estate' is used advisedly since there were many buildings in the Pleasure Garden³. The accounts show that Fisher completed work for the main house and for the Banqueting House, and they illustrate the diversity of the work which he was able to handle.

A bill submitted by Fisher, dated 31st October 1732⁴ is itemized and is reproduced as Table 7A; the thirteen and a half weeks taken to carve the 'midal part' of the chimneypiece for the South Tower suggest that the work was extremely intricate and that this was perhaps where the Apollo Sunburst in carved wood was originally sited (illustrated in the Catalogue). It is posited that the South Tower was not a separate building; the question is, was it the two-storeyed Hall entered through the portico on the south front, or was it actually a tower at the south end of the building? The woodcut which decorates the page above the poem about William Fisher, the Gardener at Studley (see Illustration 19, Chapter 2), actually shows, on the right-hand side, a house with an integral tower.

Carving work Done for the R ^t Honble Jn; Aselbe Esq., Oct, ^{br} ye 31 st 1732 then Begun of ye midal part in y ^e Chimlay pes in y ^e South Tour y ^e time I was in finishing of it; 13 weeks 4 Days and a half	£13.	15s.	0d.
the time I was in finishing y ^e fris and y ^e Tow festowns in y ^e Chimlay pass up Stars Tow week and 5 Days and a half	2.	18.	4.
The time I was in Carving y ^e tow festowns for y ^e new Belding; 6 weeks tow Days and half	6.	8.	4.
The time I was in Carving y ^e tow paer of Arketrives for y ^e new Belding; 5 Days and half	0.	18.	4.
The time my man was in helping me with y ^e tow Chimlay pess; tow weeks and tow Days	0.	18.	8.
The time he was in helping me to finish y ^e festowns and y ^e Arketrives; tow weeks 4 Days	1.	1.	4.
Totall	£26.	0.	0.

Table 7A - Richard Fisher's Bill to John Aislable dated
31st October, 1732 - (WYAS, Leeds, VR 286, Bundle A, Part 1, No. 25)

A Bill of work Done for the R ^t Hon ^{ble} John Aislable Esqr, By me Rich ^d fisher nov ^{ber} the 24 1733 Then Begun of The Impost for the new Building the time I was in Doing	£.	s.	d.
the Uper Member; 1 week & 4 Days	1.	13.	4.
The time my man was in Helping me with y ^e Same pces of work; 1 week & 4 Days	0.	13.	4.
The time I was in Doing the Roses, & Husks; 5 weeks & 5 days	5.	16.	8.
The time my man was in Helping me with The same pces of work; 10 weeks 3 days and a half	4.	4.	8.
The time I was in Doing the other 2 festowens; 5 weeks 5 Days and a half	5.	18.	4.
The Time my man was in Helping me With them; 1 week 4 Days and a half	0.	14.	0.
The time I was in Doing ye 4 Baskits; 5 weeks & 3 Days	5.	10.	0.
The time my man was in Helping me with them; 2 weeks 5 Days and a half	1.	3.	4.
The time I was in Doing the frame for the old pickter; 3 Days and a half	0.	11.	8.
The time my man was in helping me; 3 Days and a half	0.	4.	8.
The time I was in Doing the Large frame & the Cornice undr it; 1 week and 1 Day	1.	3.	4.
The time my man was in Helping Me 5 Days & a half	0.	7.	4.
The time I was in Doing ye ovolo for The Bed Chamber; 1 Day	0.	3.	4.
The time my man was in Helping; 1 Day	0.	1.	4.
Totall	£28.	5.	4.

Table 7B - Richard Fisher's Bill to John Aislable dated
24th November, 1733 (WYAS, Leeds, VR 286, Bundle A, Part 1, No. 37)

This bill also mentions 'ye new Belding'; an entry in the Steward's Ledger reads: 'To Mr. Fisher (Carver) work at the Green House last October,⁵ so it seems safe to assume that 'ye new Belding' and the Green House were the same. Built between 1728 and 1741, it is now known as the Banqueting House, but elsewhere it has also been referred to as the Orangery and also 'Venus's Temple' because it once housed a bronze statue of the Medici Venus.⁶

The facade consists of three bays divided by pilasters decorated with horizontal bands of very 'rough' rustication, described as 'frosting'. Over the central doors and the adjacent windows are keystone masks representing Hatred, Malice and Envy (Illustration 32)⁷ The first entry on another bill from the carver for work on this building, dated 24th November 1733, is for 'the impost' and for the time he and his man were working on 'the upper member';⁸ the Steward's Ledger on 5th August 1735⁹ specifies 'for making the Figure stone' and 'for carving at ye new Building in the Garden.' Whether Fisher executed some of the rustication and the masks is speculative, but these entries do provide evidence to support his advertised claim that he worked in different media.

The bill of 24th November 1733 (Table 7B) surely relates to the inside of the Banqueting House where the alcove pilasters are decorated with the heads of putti representing the Four Seasons. 'Doing the frame for the old pickter' and the 'Large frame and the Cornice under it' presumably refer to the equestrian portrait of the Sultan of Surat which is above the chimneypiece. The time lag between the carving being finished and its installation is surprisingly lengthy if this interpretation of the bills is correct. It was not until March/April 1736 that the Agent, Mr. Hallet, wrote to John Aislable at Bath to say that Mr. Doe, the clerk-of-works, had finished his work in the Green House (the marble chimneypiece is attributed to him) and that they would 'shortly begin to put up the carved work': was it to be painted? A second problem arose when 'they got up all the Chimney but the shield in the pediment Mr. Fisher says he had no possative order given what should be done. if y^r Hon^r Please to give Directions he will get it done as soon as possible.'¹⁰

In a letter to William Aislable dated 5th April 1737¹¹ Richard writes that he was 'in hand with ye marble Chimneypiece', which he intended to finish before going to work, at William's recommendation, for Horatio

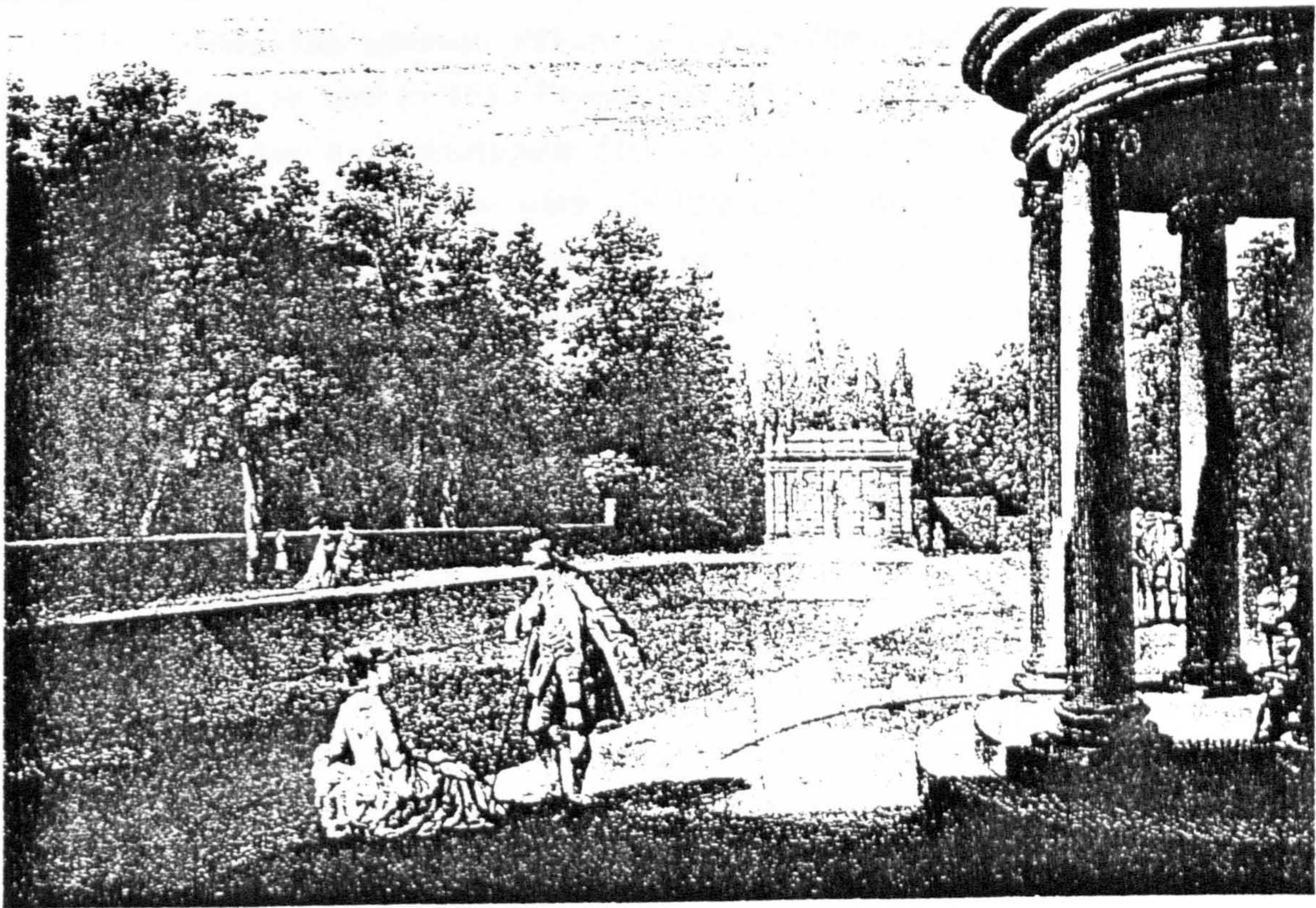


Illustration 32:
Studley Royal, Yorkshire, Engraving by Anthony Walker,
1758, of the Banqueting House, Coffin Lawn and 'round temple'
(The Minster Library, York)

Walpole at Wolterton Hall in Norfolk. When this contract came to an abrupt end in 1738 Fisher was able to again return to Studley Royal.¹²

When the widowed William Aislable remarried changes were put in hand at Studley and in 1749 Fisher was once more engaged. An estimate was submitted for a chimneypiece for the Lower Room of the Tower - 'a white and veined marble slab with plinths and jambs the same, with wood mouldings, scrolls and festoons as high as the first cornice'.¹³ Later, a flower pot was invoiced, a chimneypiece for Lady Aislable's Dressing Room with 'marble work and carving as high as the first cornice', a carved and gilded plinth and a carved, painted and gilded picture frame, two scrolled overdoor friezes. Also charged was William Aislable's Dressing Room chimneypiece, of marble work and carving; there were four more 'scrolls in the friezes over doors', foliage, and over 1,000 ft. of mouldings.¹⁴

In December 1750 further work was billed, including five chimneypieces, what was probably restoration work in the Banqueting House (which Fisher calls 'y^e Green Tower', innumerable door and window architraves, bed moulding, scrolls for the ends of friezes, an oval frame with ornaments at the corners, statuary plinths, and a purple marble slab.¹⁵ Also mentioned were 'patterns for mouldings' for the new Library, which suggests the stuccoist was about to start work on the ceiling and coving. The specific design details mentioned will be discussed in the following section. Fisher's final bill dates from April 1753, and covers moulding for the Library, friezes in 'the Chinese taste' and 'ovilo round the doors in the Hall'.¹⁶ His work at Studley Royal undoubtedly illustrates that as a carver Richard Fisher was able to turn his hand to every conceivable type of sculptural work. Not only was he called back to the estate over a period of almost twenty years, but the Aislables were so satisfied with his carving that they had no fear of recommending him to their associates.

In May 1737 Richard Fisher was in Norfolk in the employ of Horatio Walpole at Wolterton. It will be recalled that he was summarily dismissed from Wolterton before he had finished his work there. How many chimneypieces he actually executed is not known, but there are eight in carved marble in the suite of rooms on the *piano nobile*.

The short return spell at Studley Royal in 1739 was followed by a contract to work for Henry, 7th Viscount Irwin at Temple Newsam, near

Leeds, which lasted for at least two years. The building accounts include an entry for 1st February 1740: 'Paid Richard Fisher Carving Capitals in ye Chapel and a Keystone for ye b^d chamber',¹⁷ and later in the month he was paid on account for the chimneypiece in the new dressing room. The following year both the carver and his 'man' were paid sums on account for unspecified work, and a separate summary of payments made on account covers October 1740 to 6th October 1742.¹⁸ In view of the time span it would seem safe to accept the theory advanced that the carver was also responsible for the chimneypiece and overmantel in what is now called the Blue Striped Dressing Room, the chimneypiece in the Blue Damask Room¹⁹ and the doorcases in the Saloon.²⁰

The 'Capitals in ye Chapel' are not so easily explained; between 1622 and 1636 Sir Arthur Ingram, the 3rd Viscount, refurbished the house and made a chapel in the basement of the north wing; in 1796 the chapel was converted into a kitchen and the original contents were dispersed but it has always been accepted that the furnishings were seventeenth century.

Richard Fisher's move from Ripon to York in 1746 coincided with a break in sequence of his known work; the suggestion is that he may have been simply working in the City of York itself. 1746 would roughly correspond with the date when Gray's Court was occupied by Canon Jaques Sterne - uncle of Lawrence Sterne - when he added the 'fireplaces, with oval overmantels, and doorcases ... the beautiful Dining Room [the Sterne Room], Rococco ceiling, and fireplace with exquisite portrait medallion of Augusta, Princess of Wales.'²¹ Because of the similarity between the carving here and at Temple Newsam, it seems reasonable to suggest that Fisher was the carver. The inclusion of the bust of the Princess of Wales suggests both flattery and a covert political motive on the part of Jaques Sterne; York was Tory, Sterne was a Whig, a cause so strongly supported by the Prince that it eventually led to a break between him and the King. Other similarities may be seen between designs used to decorate doorcases and chimneypieces at the Treasurer's House and at No. 9 Precentor's Court, although the carving is not so detailed.

A building in Colliergate (Nos. 18 and 19) has 'Corinthian framed centrepieces at each end' of the front room on the first floor,²² with carving echoing that in the Banqueting House at Studley Royal. Further, there are staircase ornaments at York College (No. 62 Low

Petergate) and at a house in Aldwark (now known as Oliver Sheldon House) which could well be enlarged motifs taken from chimneypiece decorations (Illustration 33); both families living in these properties employed the Fishers to execute monuments later in the century.

Richard Fisher's work at Studley Royal between 1748 and 1753 has already been mentioned. Now it has come to light that he was also employed at Nostell Priory by Sir Rowland Winn. An account dated 11th May 1752 refers to the balance of a bill outstanding, although the work is unspecified, and goes on to detail various mouldings carved for 'the further Bedchamber ... the Anty Chamber ... the two little Closits.'²³ Yet another example of Richard's versatility exists in two intricately carved pine pedestals, dating from the 1760s, thought to have come 'from one of the Dundas family houses in Yorkshire.'²⁴ Still to be investigated is a new claim that Fisher carved the doorcases and chimneypiece in The Great Hall at Broughton Hall, near Skipton, the seat of the Tempest family who also had a house in York.

As far back as 1743 Robert Doe had been in correspondence with the Aislabies about turning the Old Stables at Studley Royal into a Chapel; when this project was about to be realised, presumably sometime around April 1755, Fisher was missing.²⁵ In 1755 the York workshop was closed for a period, and as suggested earlier, the Fishers were almost certainly in London, but where is not known.²⁶ Then in 1761 a 'Mr. Fisher' showed two carved figures at the Society of Artists; Exhibit No. 96 was a figure of *Christ carrying the Cross*, the second, Exhibit No. 97, *Jupiter with the Eagle*.²⁷ 'Mr. Fisher' was Richard Fisher of York. Both figures were handed down through the family; the *Christ* is to be seen in York Minster, the shattered pieces of the *Jupiter* are in the Yorkshire Museum. Both were in white statuary marble, carved in contrasting styles. The figure of *Christ* is particularly interesting 'as the subject was remarkable in an age when the absence of religious subjects in English sculpture is notorious',²⁸ a view echoed by Sir Joshua Reynolds:

... When we separated from the Church of Rome, many customs indifferent in themselves were considered as wrong, ... Among the excuses which this sentiment produced may be reckoned the impolitic exclusion of all images from our churches ... Sculpture languishes for the same reason ... Almost the only demand for considerable works of sculpture arises from monuments erected to eminent men ...²⁹

Staircase Detail,
York College,
62, Petergate, York



Staircase Detail,
Oliver Sheldon House,
Aldwark, York

The truth of Sir Joshua's remarks is borne out when one considers Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey - William Congreve's monument was carved by Francis Bird. Rysbrack celebrated John Milton and Matthew Prior, Scheemakers carved the statue of William Shakespeare and Roubiliac represented George Frederick Handel. Elsewhere in the Abbey, the military heroes commemorated in the eighteenth century are many.

2

While the foregoing covers many aspects of the carver's work, there is one glaring omission - there is no mention of funeral monuments. To date it is believed no signed examples of Richard Fisher's monumental sculpture have been recorded. The appearance of a sculptor's signature was restricted 'to a minority of the monuments produced' in the seventeenth century, though by the eighteenth 'they were now commonly signed, reflecting the much increased status of their creators';³⁰ it had been common practice to paint the signature on the monument and the name would in all probability disappear with the passage of time, church renovations and cleaning. Also, there were patrons who did not wish the sculptor's name to appear as it detracted from the 'spirituality' of the monument.

Richard Fisher did seek monumental work; when Admiral Medley died in 1747 Fisher wrote to Thomas Grimston, his heir, 'to desire the making the Admiral's Monument'.³¹ Fisher did not get the contract in spite of the suggestion to Thomas Grimston by the Admiral's agent: 'When you go to York prithee make the Fellow Easy'. Instead it went to Henry Cheere and the very large and elaborate monument stands on the north aisle in York Minster.

Among the many unsigned monuments in parish churches, there may be memorials carved by Fisher which allowed him to claim 'Monumental, and Sepulchral Ornaments' among the workshop's *oeuvres*. The question is, in spite of the fact that he mentioned 'a monument to be set up in Derby' (see Chapter 2), if this aspect of the business was not very brisk, was he kite-flying, hoping someone would engage him? The answer may lie in the fact that the York architect, John Carr, was contracting out to Fisher orders he received for monuments. In 1753/54 correspondence passed between Sir William Robinson and his agent, William Bowes, about a monument in St. Crux in memory of Sir Tancred Robinson. The initial

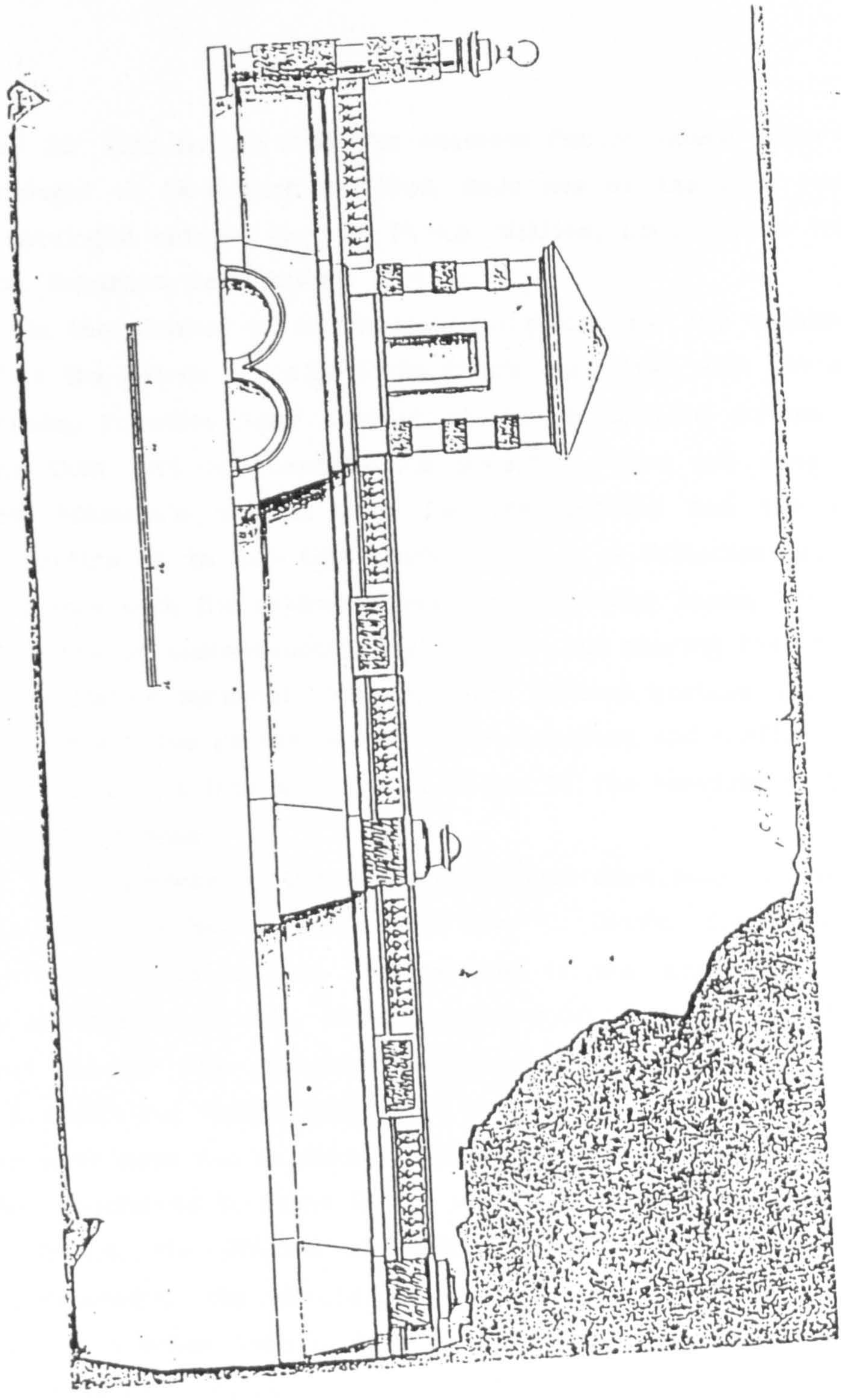
contact Bowes had appears to have been with Overy [Avery, also known as Harvey], a Flemish carver working in York. After three letters Carr is suddenly mentioned as being 'joined in business' with Avery³². Ten years later there is another example of Carr's involvement. In the Church of St. Martin-cum-Gregory in York there is a monument and floor slab to Robert Benson who died in 1765. After Benson's death there was a lawsuit in the Court of Exchequer and the records detail a transaction on 26th September 1768: 'Paid Mr Carr for a Marble Stone laid over the Testator's Grave ... and for the Inscription cutting ... and for laying down ...'³³ Unfortunately, since the Carr archives cannot be traced, one can only speculate that Carr could have been using York carvers, for example the Fishers, to either supplement his own staff or to complete work on his behalf.

It seems hard to believe that Richard did not pass on to his sons a workshop which executed not only exterior and interior decorative carving but also handled a thriving monumental trade; the future success of the practice was surely built on its past record.

3

The wealth of pattern books available to carvers in the eighteenth century was discussed in Chapter 2, as was the known or possible relationships with the architects involved in the design of the buildings where the Fishers were employed as carvers. In this section the intention is to look at the various designs of the work executed by Richard Fisher.

Chronologically, and in the absence of information on Scriven Hall, Studley Royal is first; using the very detailed bills and the photographs taken for the Catalogue, it has been possible to tentatively identify his carving. As for the designs used - plans and elevations confirm that the architect, Colen Campbell (1676-1729), possibly in association with Roger Morris, was involved with the Stable Block on the Estate, as well as with the cascade, the fishing lodges (Illustration No. 34A)³⁴ and almost certainly the Banqueting House. The similarity between the Banqueting House and the Pavilion at Ebbeston, near Scarborough, designed by Campbell for William Thompson, a friend of John Aislable, is sufficiently strong to support this attribution.³⁵ Further, from the engraving by John Rocque, dated c.1737-1738 (Illustration No. 34B) it will be seen that the Pavilion at South Dalton, the estate bought by



[30] 4

Campbell - Illustration elevation of Cascade & fishing tabernacles
 [R 13]

Illustration 34A; Much reduced copy of Colen Campbell's
 Elevation of Cascade and Fishing Tabernacles at Studley Royal
 (by courtesy of the Yorkshire Regional Office of the National Trust)

'Revolution' Sir John Hotham from the Aislable family, where Colen Campbell is also thought to have been involved, made use of the same rustication (see the Catalogue entries for the Rt.Hon. William, Lord Hotham (1813) and the Rt. Hon. Beaumont, Lord Hotham (1814)).

In the absence of architectural drawings for the building, it is posited that the patron visualised the theme, consulted with the architect and craftsman, together they arrived at an appropriate scheme and the carver was then left to complete the work.³⁶ There are many theories about John Aislable's overall plan for the gardens and the buildings therein. Suffice it to say that there there is a Palladian arch at the eastern entrance with the external keystone portraying Janus, 'the reasoned face of *'Civitas'* or statesmanship, the interior one bearing the face of Pan - *'Amor Carnalis'* or personal pleasure. The various statues and buildings he scattered about the garden support this dichotomy and confirm the ideas advanced by Joseph Addison and William Gilpin of the benefits to be gained from 'delightful scenes'.

The keystones of the Banqueting House were said by John Bigland in 1812 to represent Hatred, Malice and Envy³⁷. Ovid's description of the Goddess of Envy equates with the carving of one keystone, albeit the keystones are all male: 'pale, skinny, squint-eyed, mean, her teeth are red with rust.' Chaucer also provides appropriate descriptions for Envy and Hate.^{37a} A source for Malice has proved elusive, but both architect, patron and carver must have had an intimate knowledge of these sources to enable them to be transferred to stone in the way they have (Illustration 35).

Inside, the Italian stuccoist Giuseppe Cortese executed the elegant plasterwork, the decoration of the apses being based on an illustration of a Roman tomb in the Corsini vineyard published in 1727 in a book by Bartoli.³⁸ Apart from their literal representations, according to Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* the Four Seasons can represent both the ages of man and the ages of the world: the golden age of primal innocence, the age of silver when the golden age was over and man had to fend for himself; the intermediate age of bronze and the iron age of the present with its tribulations. Jean Baudouin's translation of Ripa's *Iconologie*, published in Paris in 1644 has small reproductions of them but they are three-quarter length figures³⁹. Fisher's Seasons are carved in wood and each of the four is different; the only similarity with Baudouin's woodcuts is that

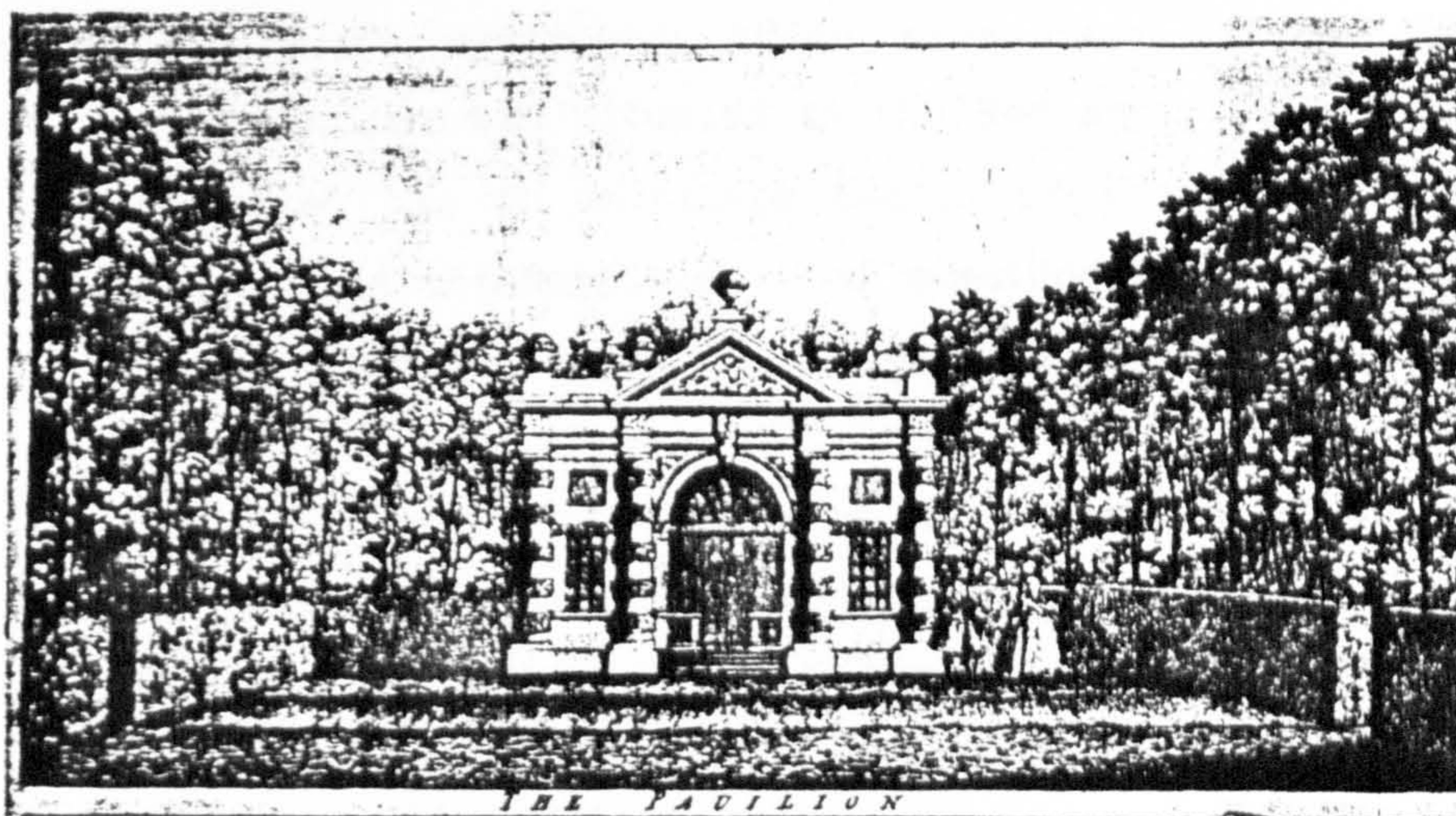


Illustration 34B; Engraving of the Pavilion at South Dalton,
by John Rocque, c. 1737-1738, (The Minster Library, York)

Spring has flowers for hair, Autumn vine leaves. None of Fisher's *putti* has the eyeballs incised, a feature copied from late Roman Republican busts,⁴⁰ and a characteristic of the carver's work.

Although various elements of the overmantel - the broken pediment, the garlands and festoons - echo William Kent, it is not a direct copy. The shield on the pediment has representations of musical instruments and the garlands reflect the theme of the pleasure garden in which the house is situated. The decorative surround to the picture is more formal. There is an elaborate border with *bucrania*, *paterae* and other classical allusions, and below that a deep band of Greek key decoration.

Fortunately when fire swept through the house in 1945 not all the chimneypieces were destroyed; three have been resited in another property. Originally, one was situated in the Red Room. The short, broken pedimented overmantel has an intricate design of grapes and vine leaves while the frieze of the chimneypiece is of acanthus leaves enclosed within bands representing twisted rope, an adaptation of the design of the friezes at Colliergate and Treasurer's House. The design of extended acanthus leaves which decorates the jambs is one used by the workshop in the same or modified form on other occasions, for example at Wentworth Woodhouse and on the Sir George Savile monument in York Minster.

What was once the Library at some time assumed a dual role as Library and Dining Room. This chimneypiece has a central frieze decorated with garlands of fruit and flowers, with the face of *Ceres* in the centre (the frieze is presently under repair). The jambs are topped with busts of young maidens above a tapering column in herm form. Garlands of flowers drape the tops of each column above ribboned pendants of fruit and flowers very reminiscent of those in the Banqueting Hall. This description echoes Michael Rysbrack's bill for two chimneypieces supplied in 1756 for Woburn Abbey (See Chapter 5, section 2). Again, the eyeballs of the three busts are not incised, and a close inspection has revealed that the two faces above the jambs are quite different from one another. The one to the left is much chubbier than the one on the right, with heavier eyelids and more than a suspicion of a double chin, as though carved from life. Pendant 'trophies' were set above and to each side of the chimneypiece. These too were rescued after the fire; from bows and tasselled ribbons were



The East Gate, Studley Royal, with
Head of Pan, representing *Amor Carnalis*



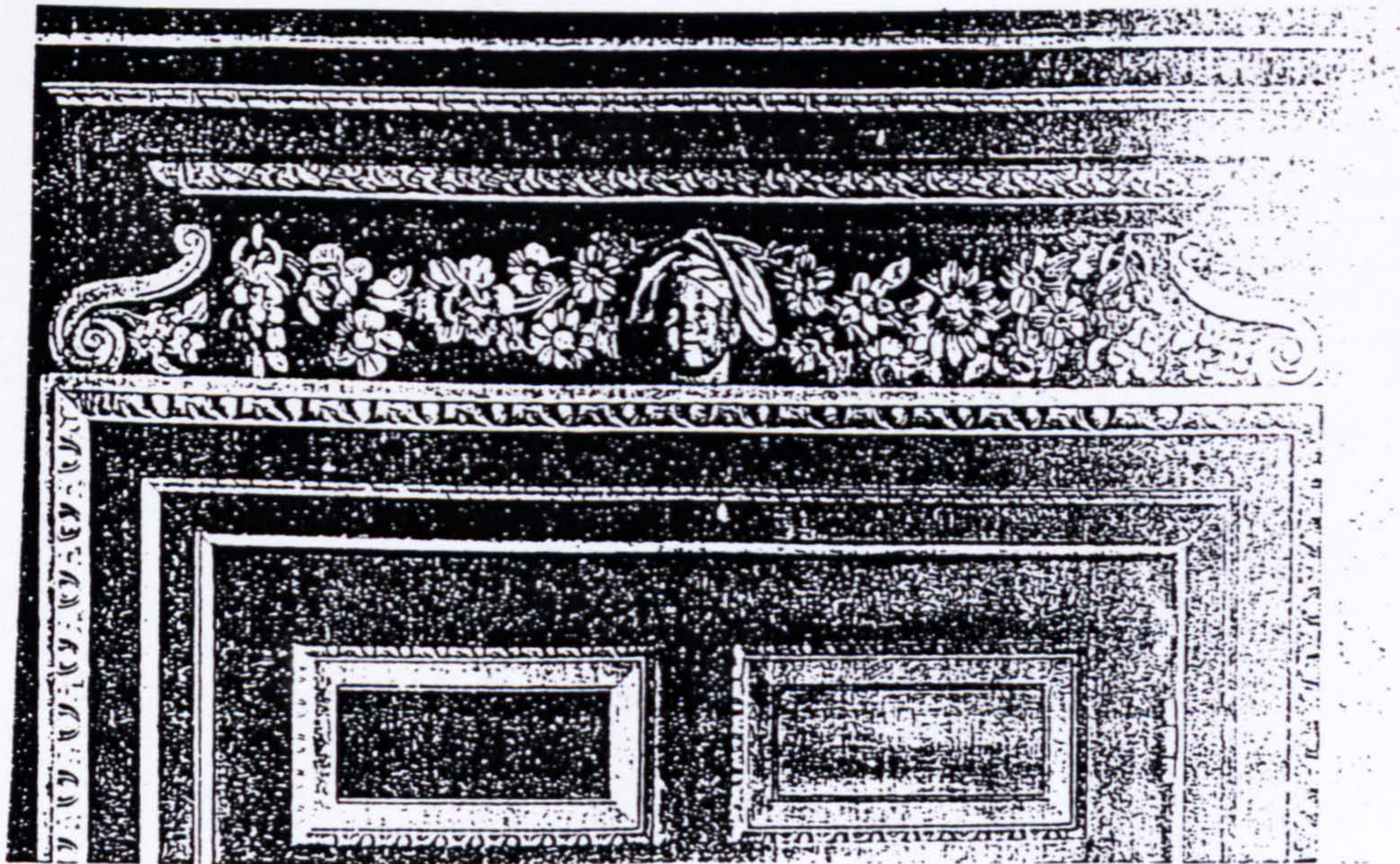
The Banqueting House with the keystone masks
representing Hatred, Malice and Envy

suspended, to the right, roses, the scales of Justice, a palm frond and the fasces, representing the Roman symbol of judicial authority; to the left, more roses, a mace, the Royal coat-of-arms, tassels, and a key, all almost certainly carved in wood.

The third chimneypiece was from the East Room and once had a very ornate picture frame hanging above it. The frieze of the chimneypiece has at its centre a lidded urn. Foliage springs to left and right to become cornucopias from which fruit and flowers spilt over and down the space between the jambs and fireplace architrave. The similarity between this decoration and the carving around the central representation of Apollo within the sunburst (now in Fountains Hall) leads me to suspect that this chimneypiece was once sited on the ground floor of the two-storeyed Hall which was entered through the south front portico. What more appropriate place to display the family motto: NEC CESSO NEC ERRO (roughly translated: 'I neither pause nor err').⁴¹ The Apollo, whose face and hair may be based on the Apollo Belvedere, is carved in pine, chestnut and limewood.⁴² It is also possible that an engraving of swags of fruit, cornucopia, etc. by the Frenchman, Jean Bérain (1618-82),⁴³ was the source for some of the details. The carving of the motto on the ribbon decoration is the first known example of the lettering for which the Fishers gained an excellent reputation.

In all probability the chimneypiece and sunburst were separated around 1748/49 when it looks as though a new chimneypiece was being ordered for the Hall. In the Archives is a note on a slip of paper which reads: 'Fisher Carver. Estimate for the Chimney piece in the Lower Room of the Tower.' This quotes for a chimneypiece - 'a white & veined marble Slab, with plinths and jambs the same, with wood mouldings, Scrol^m and festoons as high as the first cornice.'^{43A}

In December 1750 Fisher's bill for work in the house gave specific design details,⁴⁴ most of which date from classical antiquity. One 'straight base' is done with 'Egg and Leaf'; 'bottom bases' are carved with 'flower and double ribbon'. The 'egg and leaf' or 'egg and dart' motif is associated with convex or 'ovolo' moulding, and indeed, the motif sometimes goes by the name 'ovolo' in the bills. There does not appear to be any classical equivalent for the 'flower and double ribbon' design unless one argues that it is an adaptation of the *guilloche*. This motif,



Detail of Bedroom Doorcase, Studley Royal
(Illustration No. 12, *Country Life*,
Vol. LXX, p. 133 (August 1931),



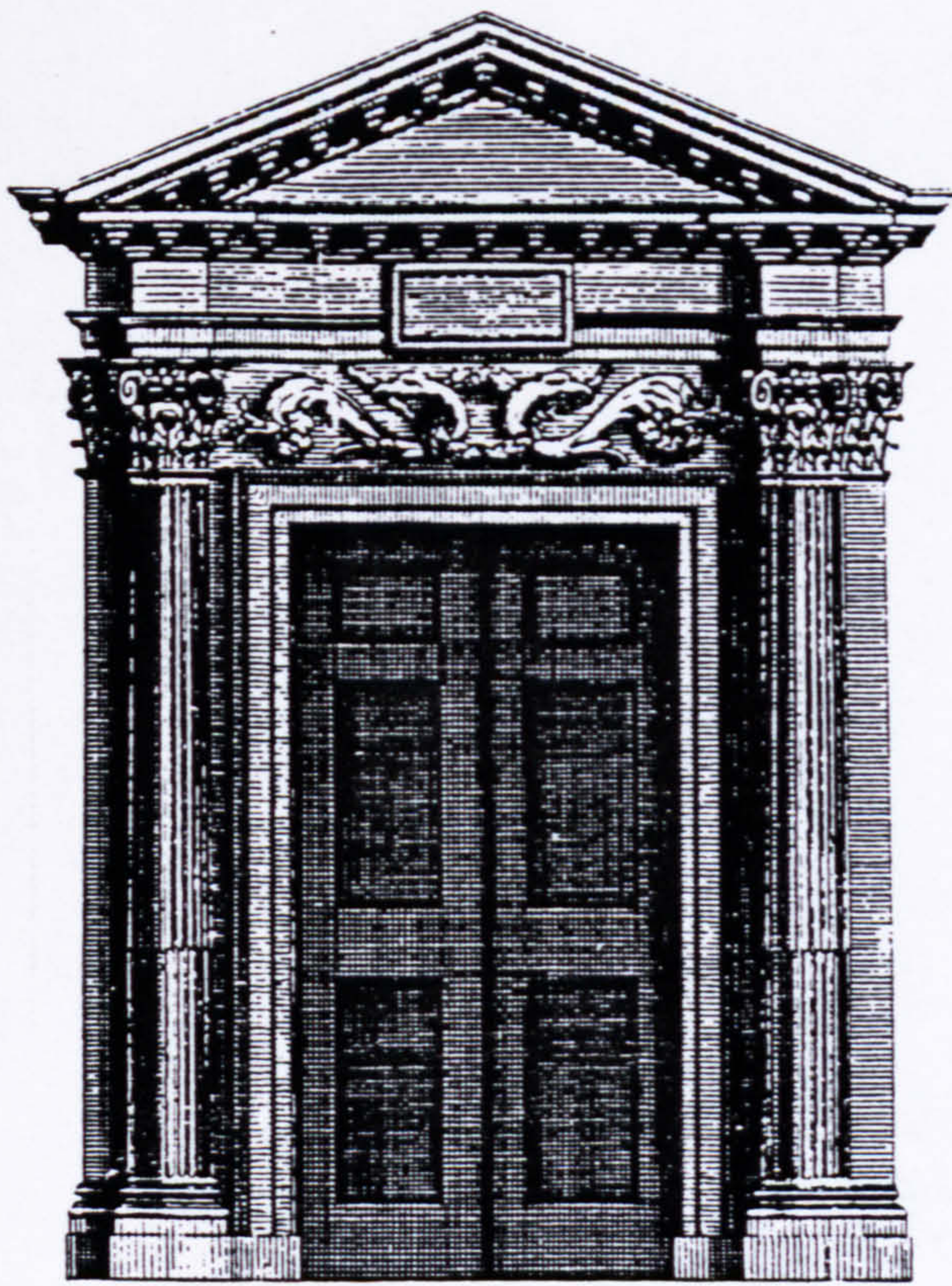
Detail of Chimneypiece in Blue Striped
Dressing Room, Temple Newsam

based on knot and interlacing patterns, is thought to be the uniting, during the Romanesque period, of traditional features common to classical, Islamic and North European cultures.⁴⁵

A *Country Life* article with photographs of the interior of the house, published in 1931, has been immensely valuable.^{45A} Besides affording the foregoing placements, one plate illustrates the detail of a bedroom door case which includes two motifs. It shows how Fisher takes the 'egg and leaf' moulding round the corners in the classic style by using a single 'special' leaf, and includes a frieze 'with head and festoons of flowers' mentioned in one of the bills; this shows very clearly the motif of the turbaned head which Richard Fisher also used at Temple Newsam (Illustration 36). There is no photograph of the two friezes 'done with Eagles heads, foliges, flowers', but the eagles' heads are used again and again in work attributed to Fisher. Several sources for this design are known; the motif was used at Beningbrough (built for John Bouchier in 1716) where it is believed Jean Bérain's engravings⁴⁶ were probably the basis for the decorative scheme.⁴⁷ Further, in 1727 Kent included it as an example of decoration on an Inigo Jones doorcase (Illustration 37).⁴⁸

Whether any of the chimneypieces discussed above were earlier than or among the five Richard Fisher supplied to William Aislable in 1750 is of course not known, but *Country Life* also photographed two bedroom chimneypieces. Although each of them has some elements of patterns which appear in Batty Langley's *Builder's Treasury*, neither is an exact copy. Indeed, one of them (Illustration 38) could perhaps be based on a design which Colen Campbell prepared for John Aislable to be built at Waverley.⁴⁹ William Aislable was in the van of provincial fashion. At some time a 'Chinese Temple' had been erected in the Pleasure Grounds and in 1748 Charles Mitley supplied 'a chimneypiece in the Chinese taste' for a bedroom, this in spite of growing criticism of this style in both literature and the press.⁵⁰ Notwithstanding, in 1753 Fisher was supplying friezes 'done in the Chinese taste' for the Library.⁵¹

It is interesting to study the work carried out at Studley Royal in isolation because it is possible to see just how 'various' was Richard Fisher's work; he carved in stone, wood and marble; he produced decorative fruit and flowers as well as using classical motifs, chimneypieces, picture frames, bedposts and doorcases, but was able to turn his hand to the more



Design for Doorcase
by Inigo Jones, p. 56,
William Kent's
*Designs of Inigo
Jones, 1727*

Inner Doorcase to the Sterne Room,
Gray's Court, York.



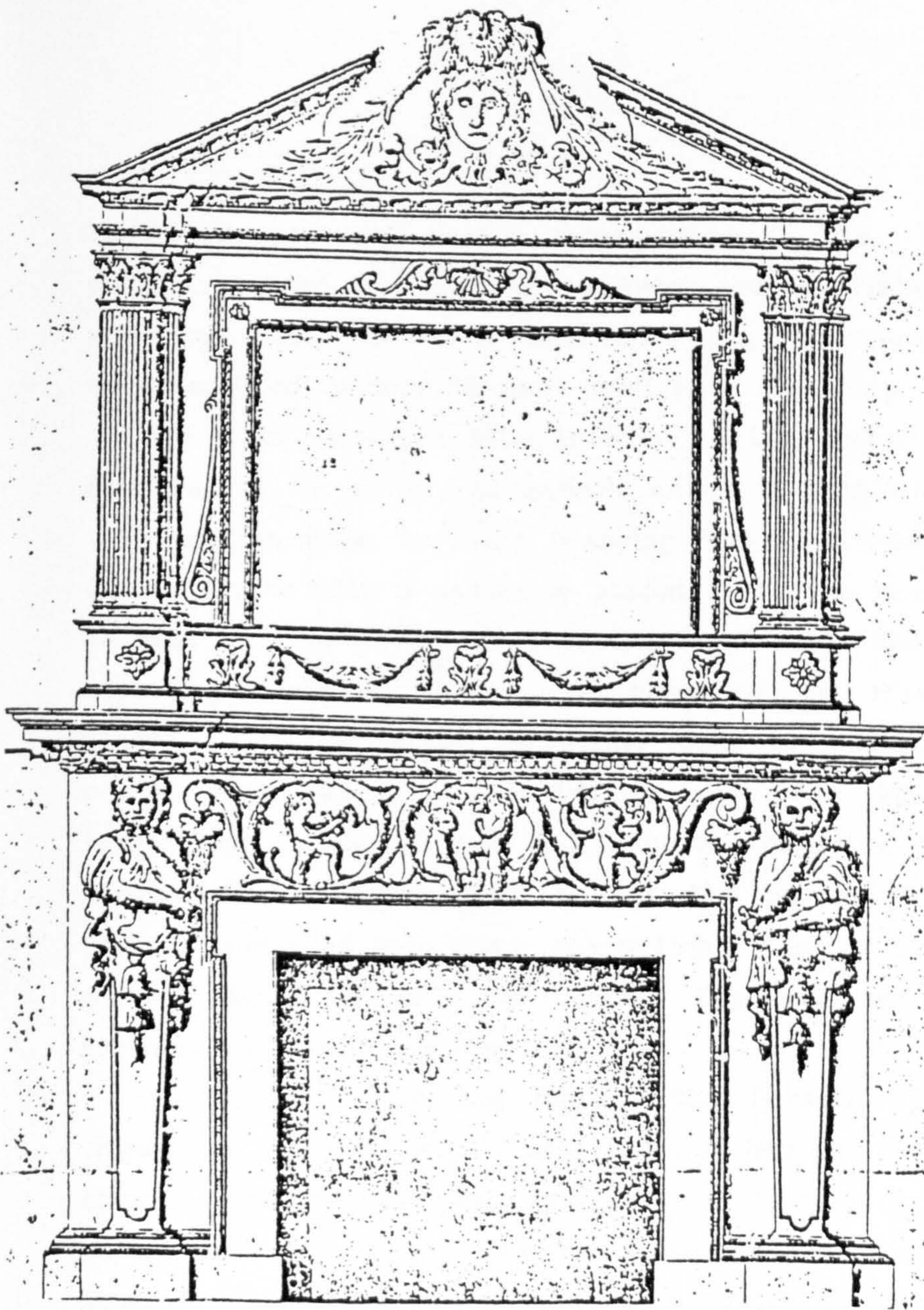
Illustration 37

mundane elements of interior decoration such as friezes and ovolo moulding. The 'puff' which appeared in the paper when he set up in York was more than justified.

In the case of Wolterton Hall in Norfolk, Horatio Walpole sent designs from Thomas Ripley, his architect, to Richard Fisher. Writing from Ripon in May 1737 the carver returned them to Walpole with the comment that in his opinion they were 'all very good ones', together with his promise that once he had started the work he would not quit until it was completed.^{51a} It will be seen from Illustration 39 that none of the chimneypieces on the *piano nobile* is exactly the same as the drawings still in existence. It looks as though Fisher followed his own designs once he had started work, selecting elements from each drawing. What work the carver actually undertook in the year he was employed by Walpole is not known. He must have almost completed at least three chimneypieces before he lost the contract, but all eight have the hall-marks of Fisher's work, using either separately or in combination all the classical motifs he employed at Studley Royal and at Temple Newsam.

The Boudoir fireplace of dark grey mottled marble, simply decorated with a long swag of oak leaves across the length of the frieze, seems to have been completed - at least there are no bills for finishing, polishing or setting up. Nor are there any bills relating to the chimneypiece in the Blue Damask Room, formerly the State Bedroom. The decoration in the frieze here is a central shell around which curl acanthus leaves. In each side panel is an eagle's head, holding a tiny flower in its beak, emerging from another acanthus leaf - a modification of a motif used at, for example, Studley Royal and Temple Newsam. Neither are there any bills for the State Dressing Room, which has an oak leaf and ribbon cornice, echoed in the motif of the frieze of the grey flecked marble chimneypiece. Tightly carved white statuary marble swags of oak leaves with tiny acanthus leaf supports again have a centre panel of eagles' heads, back to back.

The Archives show that Thomas Yeoman polished and set up the veined grey marble chimneypiece in the State Dining Room which has a Saracen's head in white marble in the centre of the frieze, so it seems safe to assume that this is one Fisher almost completed. The inclusion of the Saracen's head is a flattering reference to the Walpole family crest.



Colen Campbell's Design
for John Aislable of a
Chimneypiece for Waverley
(West Yorkshire County
Records Office, Leeds)

Bedroom Chimneypiece at Studley Royal
(Illustration 14, *Country Life*,
Vol. LXX, p. 133 (August 1931).

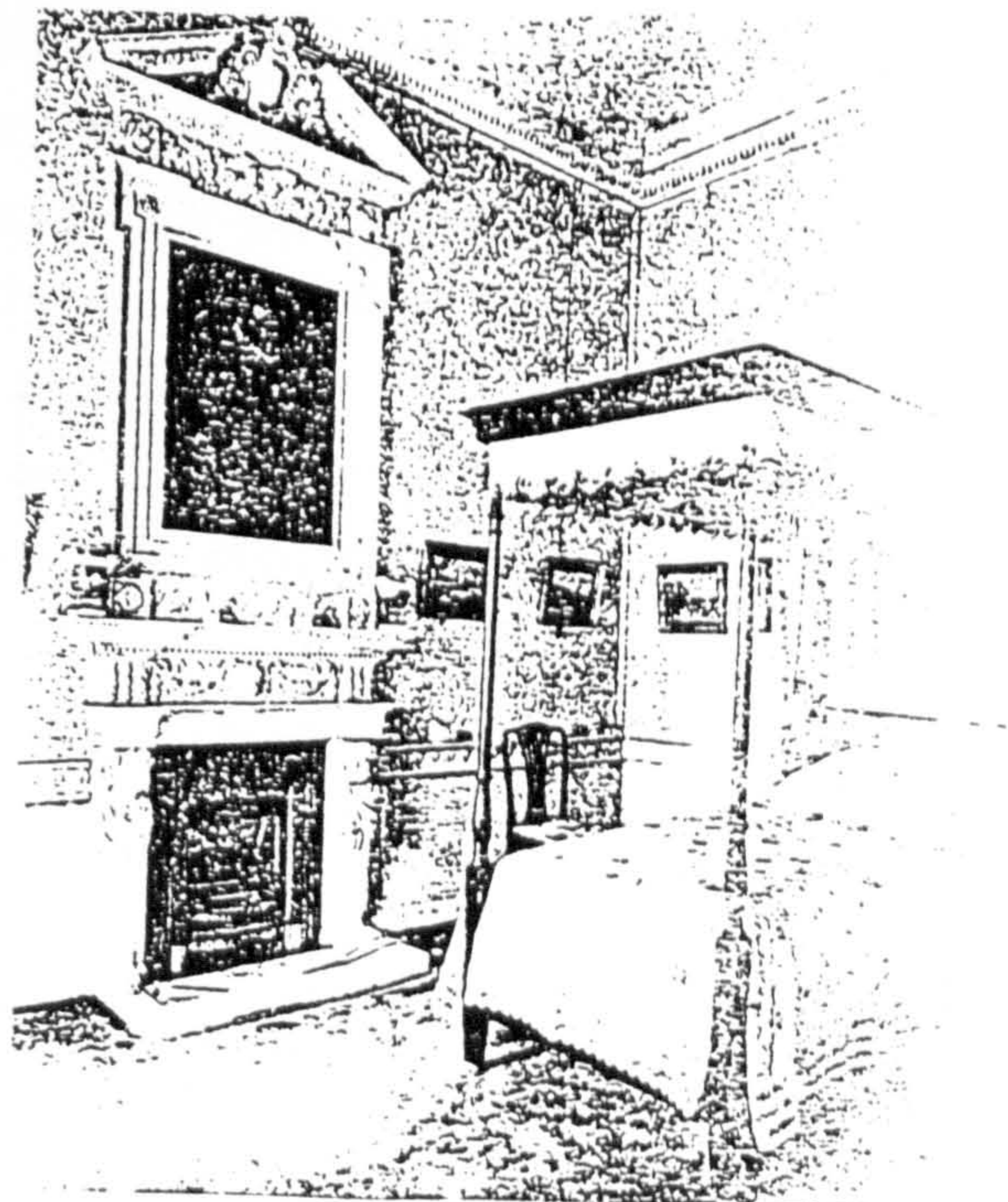


Illustration 38

The white statuary marble chimneypiece in the Marble Hall, with its double reversed scrolled and decorated bracket jambs typical of the Fisher workshop, was finished by Ambroise Paine, but since the quotation for the work amounted to only £8 there must have been very little left to do.

In September 1738 Ambroise Paine submitted an estimate for £19. 1s. 4d. to cover the mason's costs of finishing the chimneypiece in the Venetian Room (or West Dressing Room), of Siena marble with a white marble frieze with a centrally placed face of a woman. At the same time he sent Walpole 'ye Drawings of the Bed Chamber and Sallon Chimney piece,' reporting that the second side panel of the frieze of the former (a central shell supported on either side by sea-monsters whose teathed mouths spew small round fruits) was then being finished.⁵² The implication is that Fisher hadn't quite completed it when he left. The Account Book entries suggest that the Saloon chimneypiece, where the central frieze of pale Siena has a lion's mask at its centre, was probably carved almost entirely by Charles Trubshaw and William Roberts, his partner, and set up by Yeoman.^{52A}

Apart from the use of the Saracen's head to decorate the chimneypiece in the State Dining Room, it has not been possible to find any obvious links between Walpole's personal life or political career and the motifs used for the designs, so one assumes they refer back to Classical sources. Oak leaves were used in antiquity in the victor's wreath while the tree was associated with the god Jupiter. The lion was the emblem of Hercules, and denoted strength. Also associated with Jupiter was the eagle, and the double eagle or fabulous bird motif was universally used (see Illustration 37, Inigo Jones' doorcase). The sea-monsters were perhaps a flight of fancy on the part of the carver, to marry up with the theme of the sea provided by the shells. These were, in fact, a favoured device in Rococo designs, along with swirling acanthus leaves and reversed volutes.

As mentioned previously the work Fisher completed at Temple Newsam for the Chapel is something of a mystery. The Georgian Library, which dates from c. 1738-1745 when Sir Henry and his architect, Daniel Garrett, divided the old Long Gallery, is decorated with columns and pillars with Corinthian capitals. If the new Library was to serve a dual

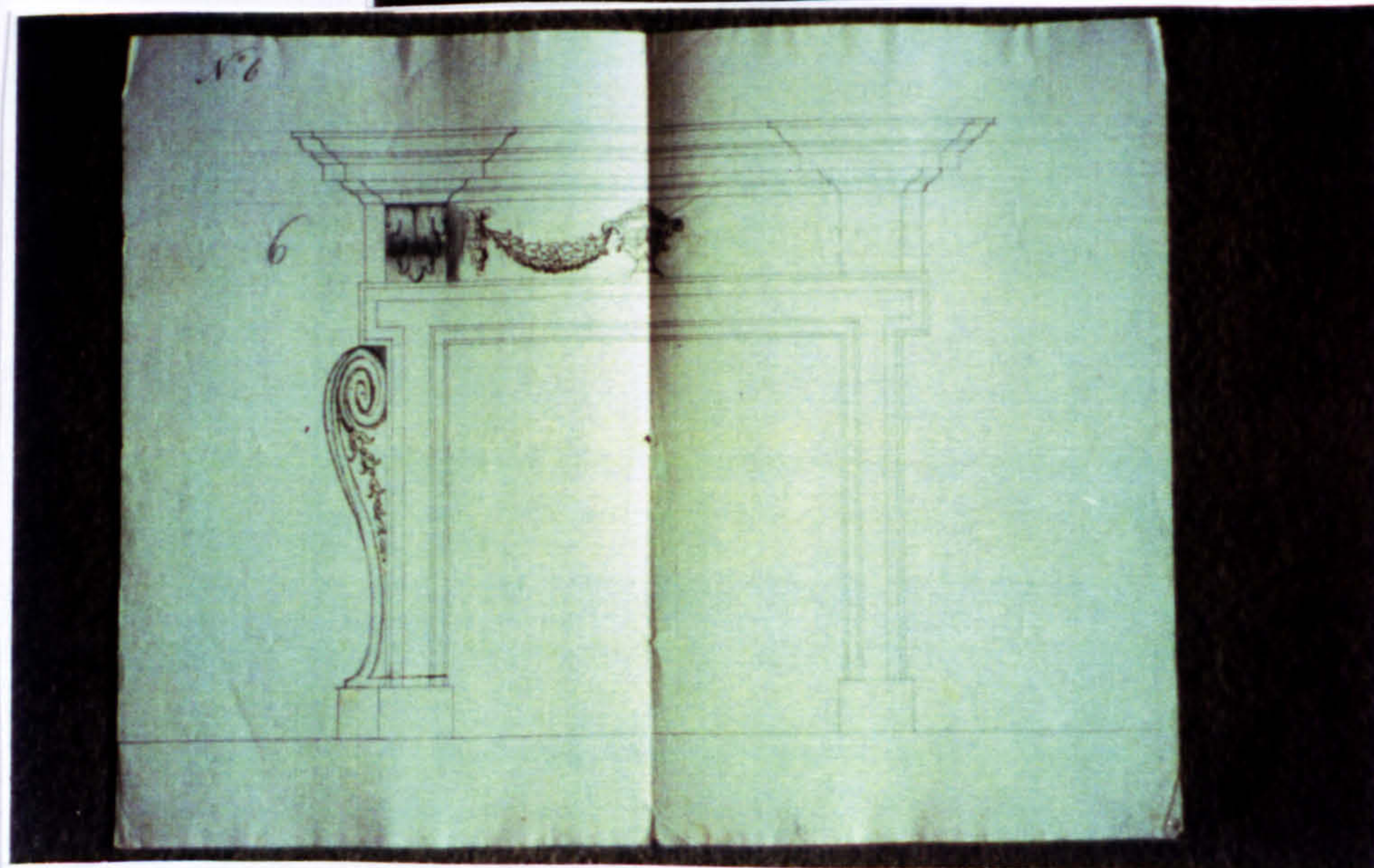
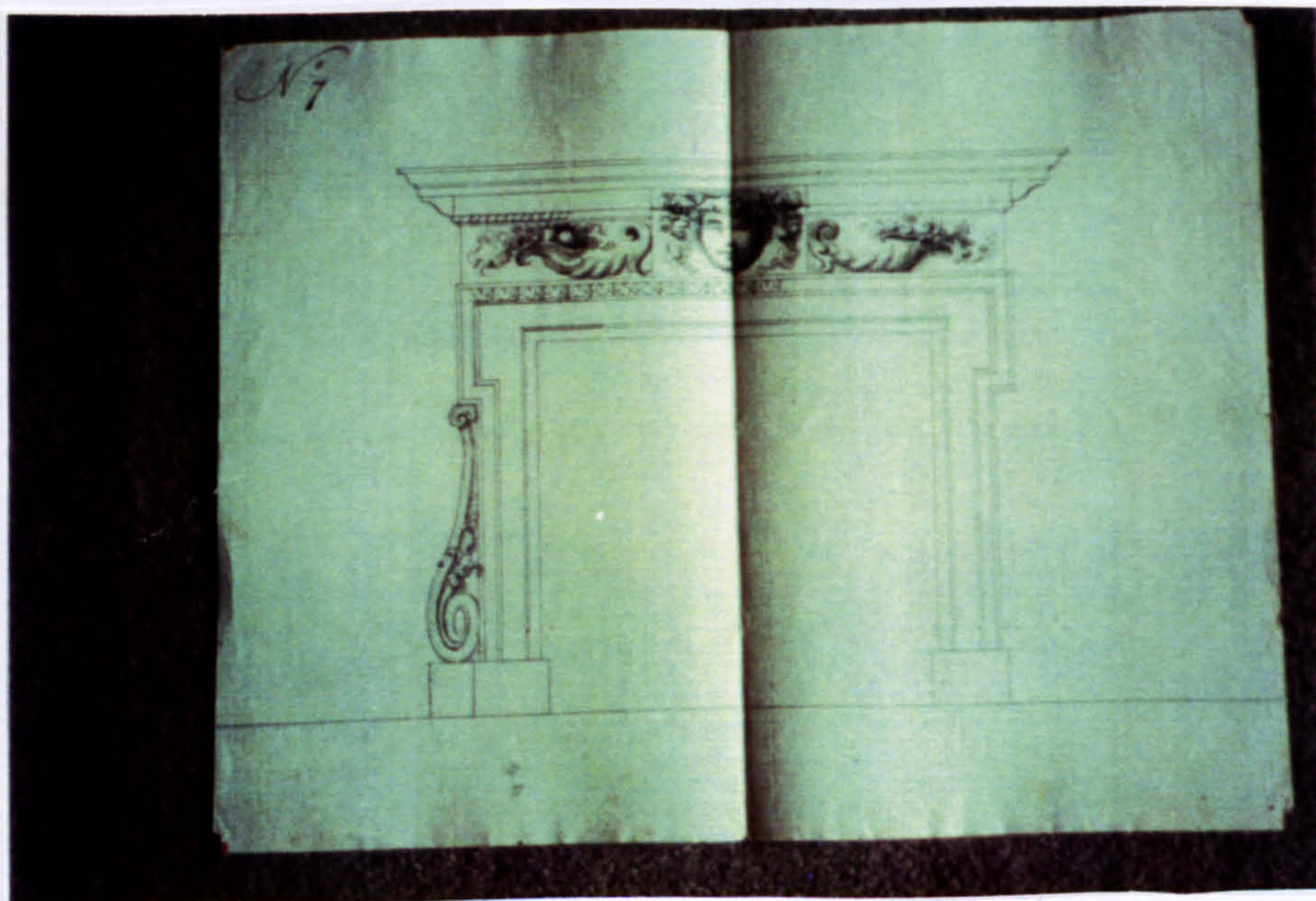
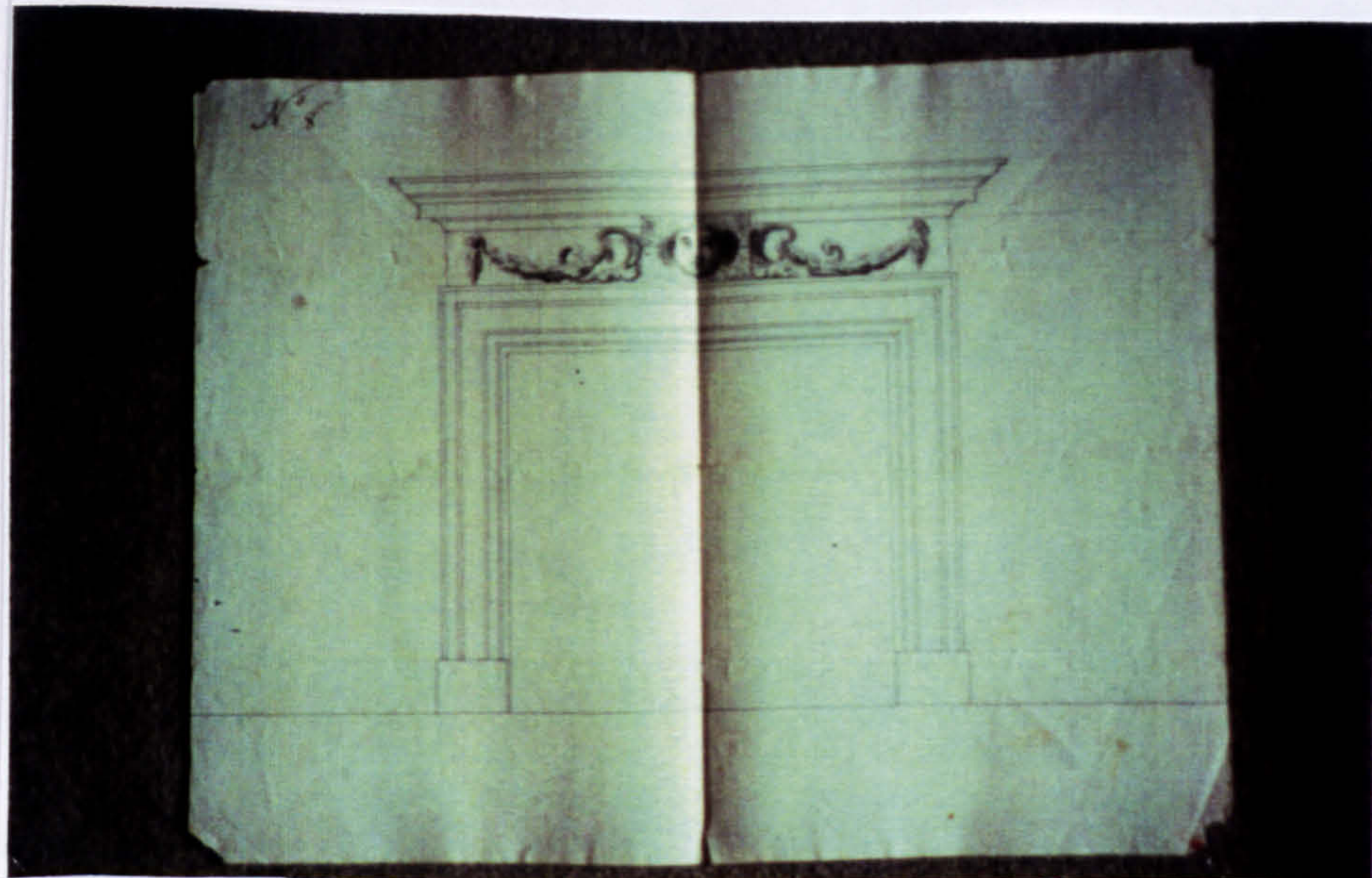


Illustration 39 - Drawings of Proposed Designs
Chimneypieces for Wolterton Hall, Norfolk
(Wolterton Archives at Wolterton Hall)

purpose as Library and Chapel (as it did in the 19th century), then Fisher was carving for 'the most Palladian of all rooms: the classical 'Order' of Corinthian columns ... derived from his *Four Books of Architecture*, first published in 1570'.⁵³

The chimneypiece in the Blue Striped Dressing Room has in the centre panel of the lintel the same turbaned *putto* head which appeared in the illustration of the doorcase at Studley Royal (see Illustration 36). The rest of the decorations are familiar - the shell, the moulded framework, on the insides of which, suspended from ribbon bows, are garlands of fruit and flowers, the winged *putti* anchoring further garlands, 'leaf and egg' and 'flower and ribbon' mouldings.

The Blue Damask Room chimneypiece is also maintained to be by Richard Fisher, partly on account of similarities in detail with the previous one - a central decorative head, garlands and pendants of flowers - but also on account of the quality of the carving. The 'flower and ribbon' motif used by Fisher at Studley Royal occurs on both chimneypiece and Rococo picture frame above, and in the writer's opinion, are carved with the same dexterity. Allied to this, there is proof that Fisher carved at least two picture frames for the Aislabies, which conflicts with the published statement that the frame 'was clearly the work of a professional frame maker rather than a house-carver like Fisher'.⁵⁴

The chimneypiece in the Ante-Room, once thought to be plaster, has now been found to be of carved limestone. Because of its decoration it is probably by Fisher, especially because of the use of the central mask motif, the pendant swags emerging from the acanthus buds and the Greek key design.

In 1749 Richard Fisher was paid for carving a keystone for a chimneypiece for 'ye bed chamber'; recently a chimneypiece has been reinstated in Mrs. Meynell Ingram's Boudoir. It is almost without decoration except for the keystone, which is the face of a winking faun, complete with warts. Although it is impossible to know whether it was by Fisher, it certainly suggests a link with the keystone for Envy at Studley Royal.

The doorcases in the Saloon have long been attributed to Richard Fisher, presumably because of his known association with the house.⁵⁵ Elements of their design are taken from illustrations of

doorcases by Inigo Jones published by William Kent.⁵⁶ Above the lintel in each are the heads of eagles or of fabulous birds, linked together by a garland (see again Illustration 37).

On the basis of his carving at Temple Newsam, it has been suggested that Fisher was also responsible for the inner and outer doorcases and the chimneypiece in the Sterne Room at Gray's Court in York.⁵⁷ The design of the doorcases can be referred again to Inigo Jones, and the eagle head motif is exactly the same as that used in Leeds. The chimneypiece is a smaller and simplified (and possibly less expensive) version of that in the Blue Damask Room there. It has Fisher's characteristic swags of flowers, a very crisp egg and leaf moulding surrounds the grate, but the centépiece is a profiled portrait bust in marble of Augusta, wife of Frederick Prince of Wales, mother of George III. The presence of the eagles' head decoration at the Treasurer's House has been mentioned, but close examination shows the workmanship is not of the same quality as seen at Temple Newsam or Gray's Court. Admittedly the scale is smaller, the carving is still crisp, but the eagles' heads no longer have fierce beaks, looking more like chicks than adult birds.

The chimneypiece and overmantel at Nos. 18 and 19 Colliergate is said to be based on elements taken from Batty Langley,⁵⁸ but in actuality it could relate to designs by Jones, Kent, or Gibbs with its broken pediment, floral swags, and 'eared' centre panel. It does serve as an example of the carver's ability to adapt and add his own touches; the fruit and floral swags are typical of Fisher and remain crisp, even covered with many layers of paint.

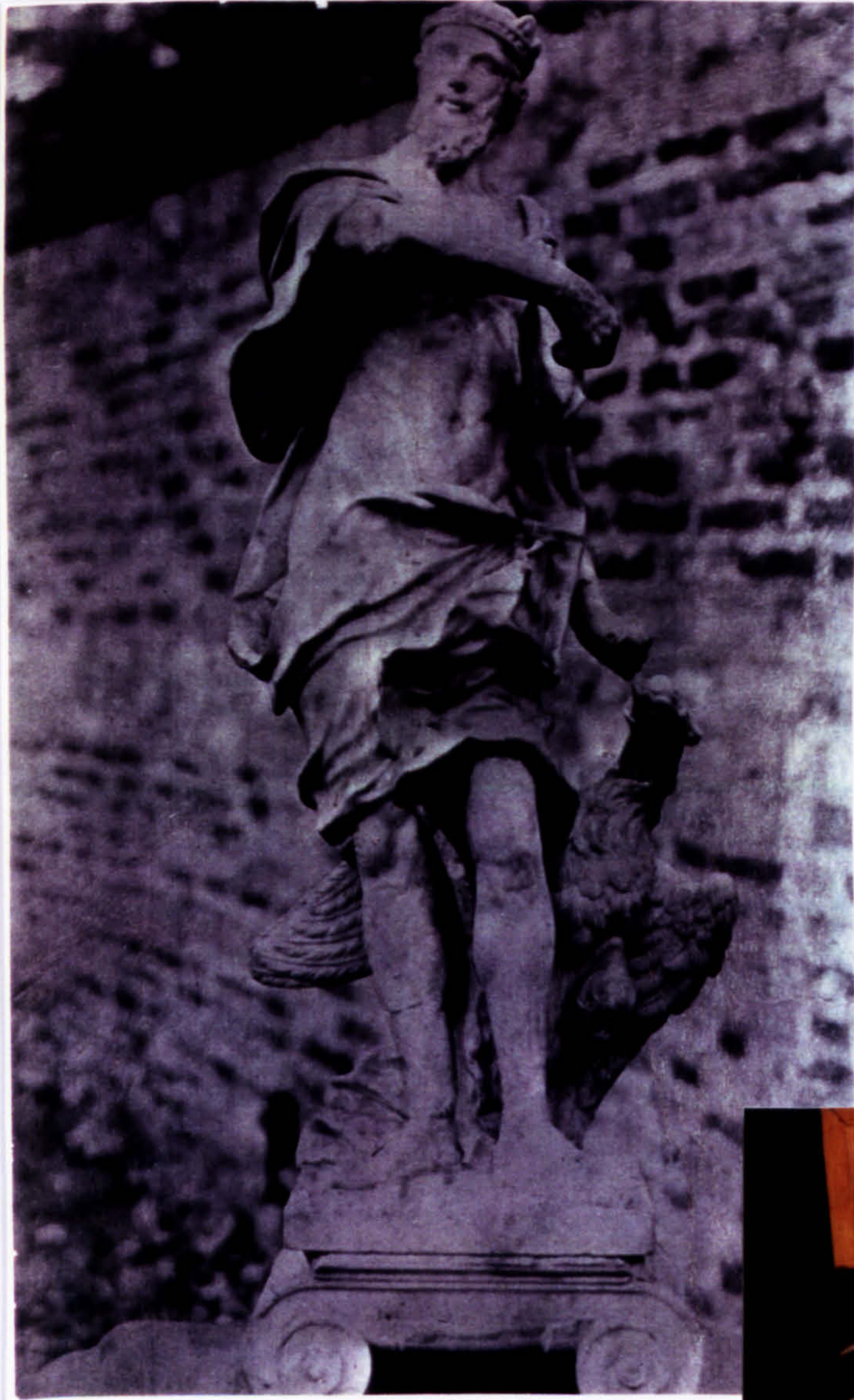
The two pine pedestals mentioned in the previous section are further examples of the clean, crisp work turned out by Richard Fisher. The top and bottom edges are perfect examples of 'Regular Mouldings with their Proper Ornaments' which appeared in Sir William Chambers' *Treatise* published in 1759.⁵⁹ The 'Proper Ornaments' illustrated by Chambers can be traced back to antiquity, and are still to be seen on fragments of Roman carving at Carthage (Illustration 40). The centre panels on all sides of the pedestals are decorated with garlands and pendants of oak leaves held in place by ribbon bows of the type seen first at Studley Royal and used continuously by the workshop over the next hundred years.

The two statuettes shown at the Free Society of Artists Exhibition in 1761 are so different in character that they could well have been carved to show the versatility of the artist. I have a rather poor Victorian photograph of *Jupiter with the Eagle*, which shows the figure, measuring about 2½ feet, standing on a base a fifth of its height. The pose is *contrapposto*, the crowned, bearded face slightly turned to the right. Kathleen Esdaile wrote: '... it is a very fine thing, the carving at once strong and delicate, the style the purest baroque ... the god's limbs and drapery are admirable, and but for the signature RD FISHER SCULPT, might be by a 17th century Italian sculptor' (Illustration 41).⁶⁰

The figure of *Christ* is considered by some authorities to be a mirror-image of Michelangelo's 'Christ carrying the cross' which is in the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome. This suggestion is possibly on account of the flood of copies carved by sculptors studying in Rome at the Académie de France. The most famous copy was by Michel-Ange Slodtz and destined for the King of France.⁶¹ I believe, however, that Fisher's carving is a copy of the figure carved by Jerome Duquesnoy Jr. between 1652 and 1654. This is on the right-hand side of the memorial to Bishop Antoine Triest, in the Cathedral at Ghent,⁶² and its inspiration surely stems from the figure in Rome. It is possible that Fisher could have carved his version from an engraving, or he could have possessed one of the small models of Duquesnoy's works which were in circulation.⁶³ Fisher's version is finely carved, and the statuette, though not a copy of the Michelangelo, still conveys the quality of the original which, as suggested by Souchal, shows a visionary rather than a Christ of the passion (Illustration 42).⁶⁴

The financial rewards received by Richard Fisher in the course of his working life and the work of carvers, both local and metropolitan, will be discussed in the next chapter. The next section of this chapter will deal with the sculptural practice of John and Samuel, Richard's two sons, who ran the workshop together until 1780 when Samuel went to London, and of John who continued on his own until his death in 1804.

The practice under Richard Fisher covered work in wood, stone and marble, complex jobs as well as simple (including cleaning, repairing and painting).⁶⁵ It ran through most aspects of decorative house carving, from mouldings to picture frames, portrait busts to free-standing



Jupiter with the Eagle as it once was (photograph in the author's possession),

Jupiter with the Eagle as it is today (The Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York)



Illustration 41

statuettes, plain marble slabs to chimneypieces and overmantels. Close scrutiny of his work has highlighted his penchant for including carvings of faces, but this was a very personal touch and one which the workshop did not continue to include.

4

As will be illustrated in this section, under the aegis of the two brothers the pattern of work changed to encompass a great number of church monuments, many chimneypieces, and one piece of public sculpture. John on his own continued to run the workshop along the same lines, executing a political monument paid for by public subscription and an army commission; he also added busts to his repertoire. Not only did John and Samuel continue to use the designs and motifs used by their father, they also introduced a whole new vocabulary of sculptural detail, largely following Neo-Classical trends.

While during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries master masons such as Henry Yevele and Stephen Lote, John Essex and Thomas Mapilton were 'London's leading designers of tomb architecture as well as full-scale buildings', up until the eighteenth century it was rare for an architect, as we understand the term today, to be involved in the design of tombs and monuments; this was usually left to the mason-sculptor in his yard. In the eighteenth century this began to change, largely on account of the influence of the architect James Gibbs.⁶⁶ In 1728 he published his *Book of Architecture*, following it in 1732 with *The Rules for Drawing the Several Parts of Architecture*.^{66A} Gibbs' designs show the close affinity between the design of wall monuments and chimneypieces, and as the century progressed this became particularly noticeable, being reflected too in the text books produced by Batty Langley. These then were among the influences at work when John and Samuel took over the workshop.

While recording and photographing the Fishers' monumental works the list originally compiled from information contained in Esdaile, Gunnis and Pevsner has increased from 148 monuments to 208, additional monuments being traced in all three Ridings. Their work spread beyond the boundaries of their home county, and most have now been recorded, photographed, and included in the Catalogue. Of these, over thirty were executed between 1760 and 1780. At least 66 date from the period when

Du Quesnoy's Figure of Christ
The Tomb of Antoine Triest,
Bishop of Ghent, St. Bavo
Cathedral, Ghent



Richard Fisher's Figure of
Christ, 1761 Free Society
of Artists' Exhibition
(North transept, York
Minster)

John was on his own, and the balance belong to the decades of the third generation.

Why the spate of work in the field of church monuments? The question of the growth of the middle classes in the eighteenth century and their desire to emulate the manners of the landed gentry has been discussed in the Introduction. At the beginning of the study it was posited that the Fishers, as provincial sculptors, would be working for the new 'middling class', but the Catalogue has shown that in the eighteenth century most were carved for the aristocracy and local landed gentry, with a sprinkling of professional men and the clergy.

The role played by funeral monuments was an important one. First and foremost, as already suggested, 'of all forms of art, the memorial to the dead is, by intention, the most lasting.'⁶⁷ From the carver's point of view, therefore, it served as a tangible advertisement for the present, but guaranteed his name, besides that of the deceased, was recorded for the future. There were also social, economic and philosophical ideas involved. Socially, in the eighteenth century, the church was still regarded as one of the focal points of village, town or city. You went there to worship (particularly if you owned the living as it kept the incumbent on his toes), but you also went to be 'seen' in the latest fashionable confection, to meet your friends and exchange gossip. In Westminster Abbey and in cathedral towns like York, you went to view the monuments, read the inscriptions and see the glories of the stained glass. As Le Neve commented in his preface to *Monumenta Anglicana*: '... the ardent Desire all or most Men have to visit the Sepulchres of Eminent Persons ... not forgetting the vast Concourse of People who come daily to see the Tombs in Westminster Abbey'.^{67A} Such social outings became the subject of contemporary engravings (Illustration 43).

The prime place for a monument to be erected was, of course, in the chancel; better still, in the sanctuary. In a country parish this site was usually reserved for the local landowner and his family; not only did it convey the idea that they were still at the helm, even in death, but it indicated that they could afford to be commemorated in the most expensive place in the building; probably the family also held the benefice. There was a sliding scale of charges levied for their erection - the nearer the altar the higher the cost, the clergy having the say for



Illustration 43 - Interior of York Minster looking east,
John Haynes, 1735, Pencil, grey wash, pen and black ink and
watercolour (York City Art Gallery)

the chancel and the sanctuary, the congregation for the body of the church. On one monument-seeking expedition a gentleman quoted to me an epitaph found in a Devon church, a variation of which is to be found in Nigel Llewellyn's *The Art of Death*⁶⁸:

Here I lie at the chancel door,
Here I lie becuse I'm poor.
The further in the more you pay.
Here I lie as warm as they.

Spiritually it could suggest that proximity to the altar conveyed a greater awareness of The presence, but might also be interpreted cynically as buying a place in heaven, in spite of the teachings of the New Testament.

Since the Reformation the use of Latin for monumental inscriptions had declined, with English taking its place. It has been suggested that this was because of the greater literacy of the masses which meant they could read the inscription and learn from the example set in life by the deceased. '... patriotic pride which Englishmen took in their native tongue' is another reason advanced.^{68A} Another, that a during and after the Commonwealth anything which the Puritans thought smacked of 'popery' was destroyed or jettisoned.⁶⁹ However, in the eighteenth century Latin was still used occasionally for inscriptions, conveying the notion of the erudition of the commemorated, the patron and their audience.

No matter how humble one's place in the 'hierarchy of church space',⁷⁰ it was more prestigious to be buried inside the building rather than in the churchyard outside. Inside the church the public could also be reminded of private grief; an instance of this occurred at Whitby in the placing of the monument erected by Nathaniel Cholmley to his second wife - on the wall of the west end gallery at the same height as and directly opposite the family pew.

Between 1767 and 1777 John and Samuel received commissions for the monuments which were among the largest and most important the workshop ever executed. Three were for memorials with standing female figures; another two had *putti* weeping over urns, there were two separate relief panels on another; one was 'gothic', and there was a portrait medallion. When he was working on his own John continued to turn out crisply carved monuments, several with portrait busts, in 1785 reaching

what was possibly the high point of his career with his free-standing figure of Sir George Savile in York Minster.⁷¹

5

Besides church monuments the workshop also specialized in chimneypieces. Several have a sound pedigree, many of the others are attributions based on comparisons between workmanship, design and links with the various families through monumental sculpture. During the writing of the thesis hitherto unattributed work in the form of a reference by Rupert Gunnis was found in a list at the Courtauld Institute. This suggests that the Fishers carved three Fisher chimneypieces for Castle Howard c. 1780. In 1764 John Carr is on record as having purchased four marble chimneypieces for Swinton Castle, which he was altering for William Danby Sr., 'John Fisher of York being responsible for carving'. The siting of two of these chimneypieces would seem to be in 'The First Earl's Study', and the original Library.⁷²

There are chimneypieces which have been tentatively attributed to the Fishers in other houses with which John Carr was associated, for example, at Tabley Hall in Cheshire, Cannon Hall in South Yorkshire,⁷³ and Ribston Hall in Yorkshire. Carr, too, was involved in building works at Hazlewood Castle, near Tadcaster, in the 1760s. Again on stylistic grounds, it seems probable that the Fishers supplied the chimneypieces for the Great Hall and the Dining Room; in the latter room the *bacchanalian* centrepiece is replicated in reverse in a later piece now on permanent display in Fairfax House. Two further houses within ten miles of York fall into the Carr:Fisher collaboration category: Escrick Hall and Howsham Hall. Apart from the fact that stylistically the chimneypieces in these houses relate very strongly to the workshop's monumental work, with a similar use of coloured marbles and decorative detail, both families commissioned monuments from the workshop. There is a further house, Normanby Hall in Lincolnshire, which was the country seat of the Sir Charles Sheffield whose memorial is one of those with a standing figure.

The Fishers were also involved with John Carr when in 1772 he was awarded the contract for, and commenced rebuilding, the Assize Courts in York. The costs were shared by the three Ridings and paid for over a period of four years, but the money went to Carr and he paid the craftsmen

on the project.⁷⁴ There do not seem to be any contemporary announcements of the Fishers' participation in the project, but since the 1940s it has been generally accepted that they carved the figure of Justice on the pediment.⁷⁵ No mention is made of the accompanying lion and unicorn or the large stone urns which complete the decoration; it was possible to examine all the items when they were taken down for restoration a few years ago, and they certainly appear to derive from the same source.⁷⁶

The Burton Constable Michaelmas accounts for 1766 record a payment against 'Messrs. Fisher's Note for Carving the Orment [sic] in the Hall'.⁷⁷ This was an overmantel in carved wood which supports the family escutcheon, and is possibly unique. Two years later John and Samuel carved for the Marquis of Rockingham at Wentworth Woodhouse two chimneypieces, both in marble, one for the State Dressing Room, the other for the State Bedroom.⁷⁸

John Fisher had been running the practice on his own for almost a year when he submitted to the Marquis of Rockingham two detailed drawings of chimneypieces; one was for the Great Drawing Room at Wentworth Woodhouse, to be finished in two years, and a sum paid on account on 13th September 1781. The design was executed as drawn, apart from the scene in the central panel which was changed (Illustration 44). The second drawing does not specify any room, but will be referred to again in relation to Swinton Castle.

In 1786 Walter Beaumont Hawksworth assumed the name and arms of Fawkes, under the terms of the will of his distant cousin, Francis Fawkes, from whom he inherited Farnley Hall. John Fisher executed his memorial and three years later Walter commissioned the workshop to carve for him a chimneypiece for the Dining Room at the Hall,⁷⁹ described in 1827 in Paterson's *Roads*^{79a} as being 'of the finest Italian marble.'

A commission of a rather different nature was undertaken by the workshop c. 1788-1789, when the Rockingham Mausoleum at Wentworth Woodhouse was under construction. Required were '281 Dozen Capital Letters in the Inscription' on the base of Rockingham's statue carved by Joseph Nollekens, and the pedestals for four busts which were also by his hand.⁸⁰

In 1793 John Fisher was again undertaking work for Swinton Castle, when two further chimneypieces were ordered,⁸¹ for what is now the

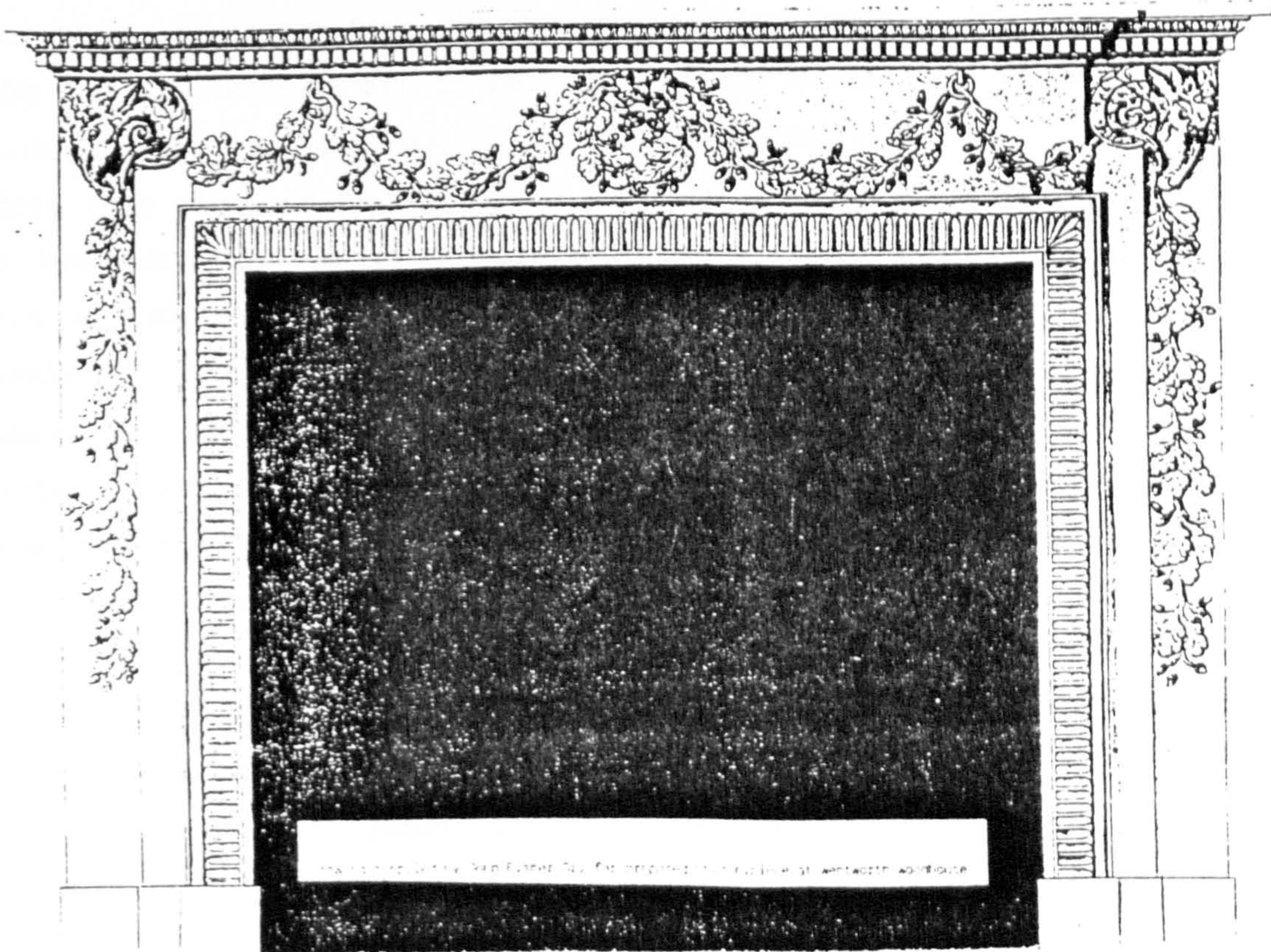
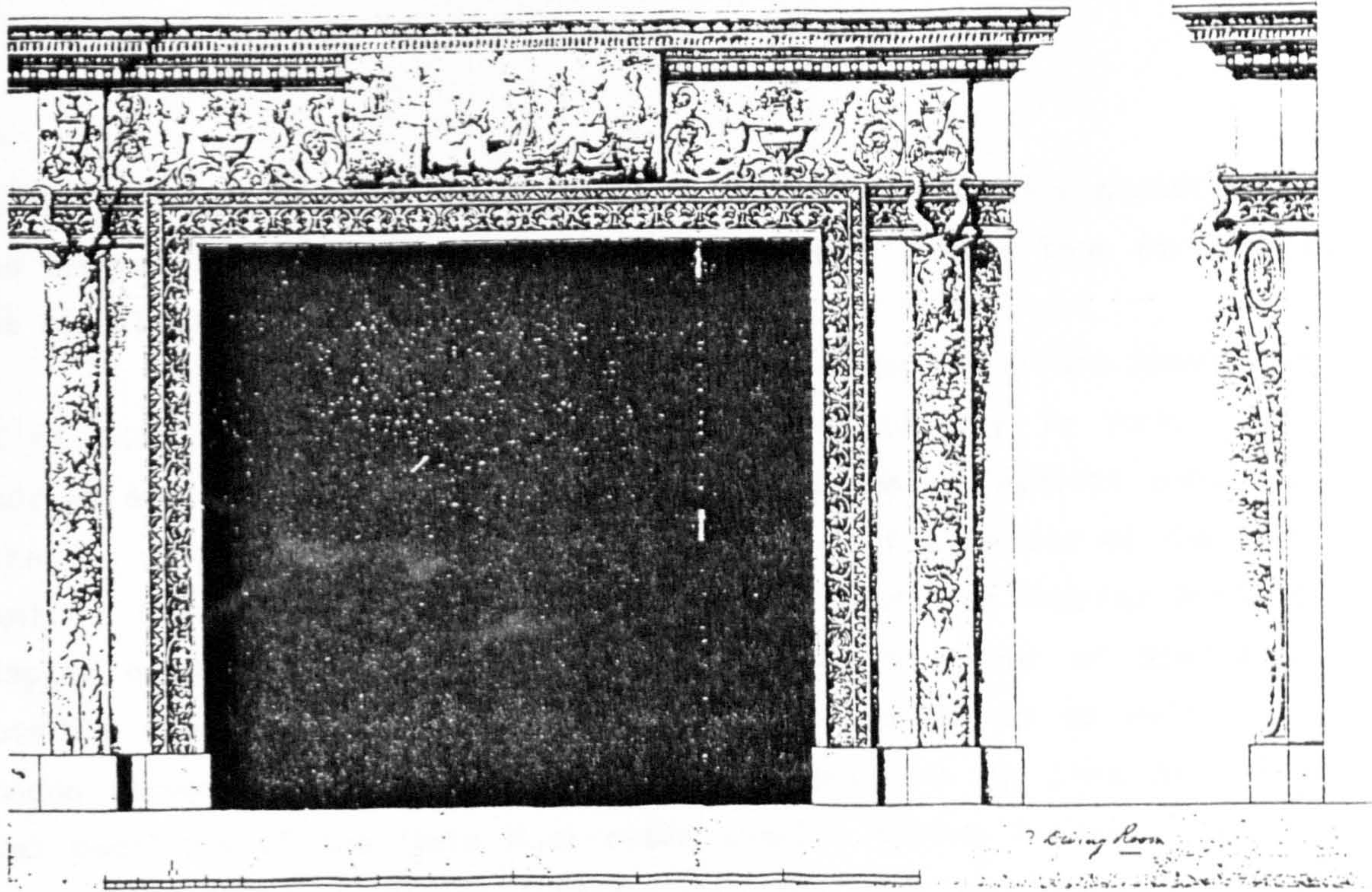


Illustration 44 - Designs of Chimneypieces
 for Wentworth Woodhouse (Photographs in the possession
 of the author; whereabouts of the original drawings unknown)

Dining Room and for the Drawing Room, while work of a more modest nature was ordered by the Lascelles for Harewood House - marble tops for some of the console tables in the Gallery there.⁸²

Only two ornamental busts carved by John Fisher are known - one is of William Shakespeare now in the Minster Library in York. It is undated and stands about eighteen inches high on a separate base. The other is of Sir Isaac Newton, in the possession of a member of the Fisher family. Cheere had supplied Carr with two 'bustos' for Fairfax House for display on the staircase, one of Shakespeare, the other of Newton, and possibly this was Fisher's way of proving he could do as well as any London carver. Another venture was the preparation in 1794 of a large oval medallion of the 'late Most Noble Charles Watson Wentworth, Marquis of Rockingham' which Fisher intended to have cast and bronzed. In his advertisement he offered a special reduced price to subscribers, half to be paid on placing the order, the rest on delivery.⁸³

6

The design and workmanship of two early church monuments suggest they could be from the Fisher workshop because the same motifs and the use of Siena marble in one and whorled marble on the other; they are both in memory of members of the Thompson family at Escrick, for whom I believe they supplied chimneypieces through Carr. They are among the 30 or so monuments carved in the twenty years from 1760-1780. Table 8 provides a breakdown of the various design features of the Fishers' church monuments, and the Catalogue shows that though the elements are the often the same, the ways in which they are combined are almost without exception dissimilar. Between 1760 and 1780 twenty-seven were decorated with urns, three with sarcophagi, two with a cherub mourning over an urn; there was one with two relief panels plus an urn, and three figure sculptures. Two were fitted into Gothic niches, one in memory of John Hill at Thornton Dale, and the Dealtry monument in York Minster. Although it is claimed that because of an increased demand for works of a small size which tended to be made on a commercial scale, the same designs being constantly repeated,⁸⁴ this was not a criticism which could be levelled at the Fishers' workshop; no design is repeated exactly on any of those monuments so far examined. Research has shown that Roubiliac's patterns were rarely repeated. Cheere used his designs again. For his smaller

Analysis of Monumental Design Features

	To 1759	1760- 1769	1770- 1779	1780- 1789	1790- 1799	1800- 1809	1810- 1819	1820- 1829	1830- 1839	1840- 1849	1850- 1859	1860- 1869	1870- 1879
Total No. of Monuments Carved	9	7	25	32	22	21	27	16	16	11	4	3	4
Horizontal	3	2	18	24	15	11	15	12	8	6	3	3	4
Vertical	4	5	7	6	6	10	10	4	8	5	1	1	-
Urn	4	5	22	23	14	11	7	5	2	1	1	1	-
Sarcophagus	2	-	3	2	4	5	5	3	1	-	-	-	-
Bust	-	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medallion	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Relief	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Crest	3	4	8	18	12	5	6	-	4	2	1	1	-
Putto	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Figure	-	-	3	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coloured Marble	4	2	11	16	11	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Signed	5	6	17	20	17	19	23	16	15	11	4	3	2

N.B. These figures are based on the monuments recorded.

Table 8

monuments, which he supplied outside London in quantity, Peter Scheemakers used stock designs, or variations of them.⁶⁵

For the most part the Fishers' monuments were displayed against a pyramid, 'the universal background to figures',⁶⁶ the commemorative panel usually surmounted by an ornamented urn or sarcophagus. Relating to what might be called 'the lure of the Antique', the shape came to Rome in the form of the Pyramid of Caius Cestius from the Pyramids of the Nile Valley. In Roman times it was a free-standing tomb, but Raphael re-introduced it as a decorative backdrop, rather like a stage setting against which the action was played out; it was adopted by Bernini, and by the end of the 17th century it was to be seen in France as well as in Rome. Bird and Gibbs are given the credit for introducing it into this country. At first it was used with the architectural elements which were characteristic of the monuments designed by Gibbs, but as they were discarded as the century advanced, the pyramid stood alone, often varying in shape at the top but commonly in black or grey marble or slate.⁶⁷ Thus it became the background for sarcophagi, urns, medallion portraits, and *putti*.

John and Samuel's practice seems to have been run along the same lines as the old mason-sculptor workshops, using their own designs for the work they executed. Several of the earlier monuments were decorated with the more traditional signifiers of death: the hour-glass, the scythe, broken arrows and an inverted burning torch, but in association with Classical motifs: *paterae*, *bucrania*, rams' heads, acanthus leaves, urns with or without flaming tops and sarcophagi. They also included bands of finely carved moulding and ornamentation, the convex and concave planes providing variations in tones of light and shade, and often incorporated the decorative patterns their father had employed in his work. Remembering that the Fishers were carving principally for the gentry, this use of the antique had more than one advantage - it not only showed that they were abreast of the metropolitan carvers as far as design was concerned, but it was a subtle form of flattery. It showed that they were aware of their clients' classical background: that the men had probably been on the Grand Tour, that they would have known of the developing interest in Roman and Greek antiquities, and would recognise the symbolism of the motifs - their sacramental/sacrificial origins. It would also

enhance the Fishers' standing as 'gentlemen artists' rather than simple craftsmen. If they employed the same motifs for their other clients, that in turn boosted their standing in the eyes of family, friends and neighbours.

To look briefly at some of the variations in the monuments - among the memorials undertaken were several with portrait busts - probably ordered because they were indicators of rank, the idea copied from antique coins and medals. And, of course, like the painted portrait, they were a permanent reminder of the deceased. As the urns, tablets and sarcophagi all differed, so too did the busts, ranging from the classic to the contemporary. There appears to have been only one portrait bust in memory of a woman, that to Sarah Caley dated 1765. The white marble head and shoulders portrait of the deceased is placed on the upper edge of the tapering black pyramid on which the inscription is carved. The earliest use of the portrait medallion was on the memorial to Ayscough Fawkes (1771). The deceased is represented in profile in postage stamp style, cut off diagonally just below the neck. He wears no wig. Curiously the oval escutcheon is contained within a lozenge, the shape normally reserved for a woman; the frame of the medallion seems to be decorated with two circles which make the whole look rather as though it has grown lop-sided ears. Henry Waite (1781), again in profile and also facing to the left, is wearing a full wig and his lawyer's gown. Two further portrait medallions show the deceased facing to the left, both attired in professional gowns but wearing only half wigs (Simpson, 1784 and Lister, 1788).

Both 'putto with urn' monuments are large and imposing, but the stance of the weepers convey the sense of loss. The first is in memory of Lady Graham (1767). Standing against a large grey pyramid, the cherub has his hands raised to stem the tears. Grey marble has been used to provide not one but two shaped panels on which the white marble inscription tablet has been placed. The second monument, some years later, is to William Hutchinson (1775). The cherub stands with one hand on a decorated urn, the other holding a mirror. The sides of the monument are canted and decorated with lion masks, and the shaped apron to the pyramid is decorated with a winged hourglass.

The two relief panels are on the same monument in Lancaster Priory Church dating from 1773. The memorial is in memory of a seven year old, Sibyll Wilson, whose grandfather was Recorder of Lancaster. It is tremendously ornate - a garlanded urn on a shaped pedestal with a dove in relief, carrying a spray of flowers. The pedestal rests on an oval decorated with a lion mask above a collar of rays, between two griffins with outstretched wings. The decorative cornice has flaming lamps at each end, a symbol of filial piety. The centre panel is of Roman parents grieving over the body of their dying child; descending from clouds above their heads is a small angel with flying draperies and rather large feet. Although in high relief and very detailed, the actual carving does not quite match the excellence of the rest of the decoration. The classical source for the relief, for surely there must be one, is still being sought.

Each of the three standing female figures is treated in a different manner - hair, dress, girdle, sandals, pose. The earliest decorates the Osbaldeston monument (1771). The horizontal inscription tablet is supported to each side by canted jambs. An elaborate cornice is topped with a band of moulding supporting a plinth decorated with a central lion mask with garlands of oak leaves. On the plinth is the figure of a Virtue (Religion was suggested by Gunnis, Hope by Pevsner). She stands leaning her left elbow on a broken column, besides a large decorated urn with a flame finial, a palm frond in her right hand. Her weight is on her right leg, her left leg is bent at the knee, which is bared, and her foot is on a skull. Her head is half covered, which usually denotes the grieving widow, but here all three wives of the head of the family are mentioned in the inscription, the column representing the end of the male line. The figure wears a looped *chiton* and her feet are bare, as is her right breast. The whole effect is bordering on the erotic and not quite what one would expect to find decorating the monument in memory of such an high-ranking church dignitary.

Dr. John Dealtry's death in 1773 was 'an unspeakable loss to the public'.⁹⁹ The Rev. William Mason's letter to Horace Walpole explains how a pagan image came to be found in York Minster:

... You must know that Mrs. Dealtry ... has requested me direct the Fishers here (who are very good statuaries) in designing a monument to be put in our cathedral. My idea is, a figure of Health with her old insignia of the serpent and staff in one hand, and a wreath

falling out of the other, leaning in a pensive posture over an urn on which is inscribed his name and age, and upon the pedestal, which supports the whole, I think of writing ... six lines ... I suspect they will be thought rather heathenish.'⁸⁹

Walpole wrote back: 'your design for the tomb, dear Sir, is as classic as I like those things should be, and the epitaph as Greek.' He changed only one word and the Fishers carved the monument as requested. There are a number of interesting touches. The pedestal on which the urn stands is held by two small upward-looking dogs. The inscription panel rests on the back of two winged lions supporting a garlanded oval plinth. This time the goddess has her head uncovered, the left breast is bared. She wears sandals and the *chiton* is belted and very finely pleated. The niche into which the monument fits is not particularly deep but the shallowness is countered by the way the figure is standing. The stance is slightly *contrapposto*, with the right knee facing towards the viewer, making the most of the space available. Since the figure is half-turned towards the urn, it is unlike the Hygieia Scheemakers carved for the monument to Dr. Hugo Chamberlain in Westminster Abbey. Charles Avery regards this as 'frontal and static and based directly on the antique'.⁹⁰ There is nothing static about the Fishers' Hygeia, and as with the Osbaldeston monument, the form is rounded and more than a little sensuous. Presumably, since this was a representation of the Goddess of Health, the presence of a subject from Greek mythology in the Minster was not thought of as being untoward. Her dress, however, does contrast very markedly with the more formal gown worn by Lady Rockingham on a nearby monument.

The following year the Fishers were commissioned by Sir John Sheffield to carve a monument in memory of his parents, Sir Charles and Lady Sheffield at Burton Stather in Lincolnshire. The base of the monument is curved, the oval central panel bearing the inscription flanked by decorated volutes. On this base stands a female figure with her head covered, but the inscription again gives the lie to this being the grieving widow. She has sandals on her feet, a *chiton* caught in at the waist, and stands with the weight on her right leg with her left leg slightly bent and crossed over the right. Her right arm is folded across her chest, and she rests her left on the top of the urn, in what Reynolds might have regarded as the Historical Style: 'the simplicity of the antique air and attitude ...'⁹¹ The veiling on this figure falls in heavy folds, and face

and head covering could refer to Michelangelo's Bruges Madonna (Illustration 45)⁹² - maybe a mirror image of an engraving of the original? Sir Kenneth Clark suggests the Madonna has 'an expression of contemplative melancholy', and this is certainly echoed in the Sheffield carving. The symbolism of death is not so strong here as in the Hunmanby monument; the nesting pelican with her young signifies piety, the crane watchfulness, but also filial devotion.

It is the figure carvings which demonstrate particularly the Fishers' ability to handle their material; the carving conveys a sense of light and shade in the folds in the fabric. The simulated transparency of the drapery revealing the form beneath, and the roundness of the modelling of the arms, make them very tactile.

In 1784 John was commissioned to carve the monument in memory of Sir George Savile. Standing on an elaborate base with canted reversed volutes supporting the inscription panel, Sir George stands in contemporary dress holding the Petition of the People of Yorkshire in his hand. The neck of his shirt is open, some of the buttons on his waistcoat are undone, his hose is slightly wrinkled, and an air of casualness emanates from him. But he also has a toga thrown over his left shoulder, and this combination of realism and classicism calls attention to his dual role as man of the people and to his patrician background and senatorial role as Member of Parliament. The word 'senate' is actually used in the inscription. The decorated frieze under the cornice bears the classical symbols for wisdom, eternity and fortitude - the owl, the mirror with the snake and the wreath of oak leaves. Presumably these elements were included when it was decided that the monument would become a memorial to Sir George and stand in the Minster.

The fact that the monument was to have stood in a courtyard open to the public probably accounts for the accessibility of the sculpture. First, it is carved in the round, so the back is as detailed as the front and sides as it was intended to be viewed from any angle. The height of the base is relatively low in contrast to that of many public statues. The overall effect, therefore, is that the statesman is simply standing on a dais addressing his followers - that if he bent down he could hear their questions with ease. Again, it is interesting to compare and contrast it with the much stiffer representations of, say, the 1st



Michelangelo Buonorotti - detail
from the Bruges Madonna (1501)
(reproduced in Kenneth Clark's
Feminine Beauty,
(London 1980), plate 73.



Monument to Sir
Charles Sheffield
(1744) - detail,
Burton-on-Stather

Marquis of Rockingham and his wife posed together, or the bewigged figures of bishops who recline languidly on their monuments.

There were also several monuments representing professions - the sarcophagus on the memorial to Dr. William Mushet (1792) carries the serpent-entwined *caduceus* of Hermes; the apron of the 1st Lord Mulgrave's monument (1792) shows a ship's anchor half concealed by a sail wrapped round a spar, held with a knotted rope, commemorating his attempt to find the North-West Passage; the military accoutrements of Captain Pelsant Reeves decorate the pyramid which bears his epitaph in the Minster (1793).

The two ornamental busts carved by John were undated but in the way that Richard had carved the sacred and profane with the statuettes of Christ and Jupiter, here was his son carving representatives of the arts and science. Again you have the contrast - between the lace-collared Bard and the Roman Newton. At this time there was a strong Shakespearean cult - Scheemakers took a number of casts from the model he made prior to executing the Shakespeare monument designed by William Kent, using the 'Chandos' portrait for the head; Rysbrack '... used a cast of the Gerard Johnson bust on the Stratford-upon-Avon monument' and Roubiliac also carved him.⁹³

Of the Rockingham Mausoleum contract little can be said. The statue of the 2nd Earl was carved by Nollekens and dates from 1774. He also provided several of the busts of the various worthies which occupy the niches inside the building. But it was the Fisher workshop the master selected to take care of the inscription and it is clear that the carver had mastered the technicalities of lettering, based on sectioning off the available space into equal squares or circles and dividing them into tenths.

The large oval medallion of the Marquis which John Fisher advertised in 1794 seems never to have come to fruition; there are no references to examples in existence. As for the table tops for Harewood House, one can only guess that they were for table frames carved by Chippendale.⁹⁴

The one monument of the Fishers which is on continuous public display is their figure of Justice on the Assize Courts (1772). Did Carr design it or did he leave the Fishers to provide drawings and models?

The source for the figure might be that of the avenging virtue, with sword upraised, as depicted in Baudouin's 1644 translation of Ripa's *Iconologie*, alternatively, it could relate to Jean Delcourt's Justice on the tomb of Bishop d'Allamont (c. 1673) in St. Bavo's Cathedral in Bruges;⁹⁵ certainly there are similarities between them, and neither has the eyes bound, the more customary form of representation (Illustration 46).⁹⁶ In this country Thomas Green's monument at Redgrave in Suffolk, in memory of Lord Justice Holt, who died in 1709, shows Justice standing without a blindfold.⁹⁷ An even earlier representation can be found in York. Justice is seated within the left-hand archivolt of one of the outer doorways at the King's Manor, a sword in her right hand, the scales in her left, and again has her eyes shut but uncovered. The Justice carved by Christopher Theakeston of Doncaster for Newark Town Hall in 1774 wears a blindfold - this is another Carr building.⁹⁸ The fact that on two Carr buildings the Justice is different suggests that the design was possibly left to the carvers. Referring back to Thomas Green's figure of Justice, it has been suggested that his knowledge of female anatomy and physiology was wanting as he bent both her knees. As the Fishers' Justice has only one knee slightly bent the implication is they had benefited from an improved artistic training.⁹⁹

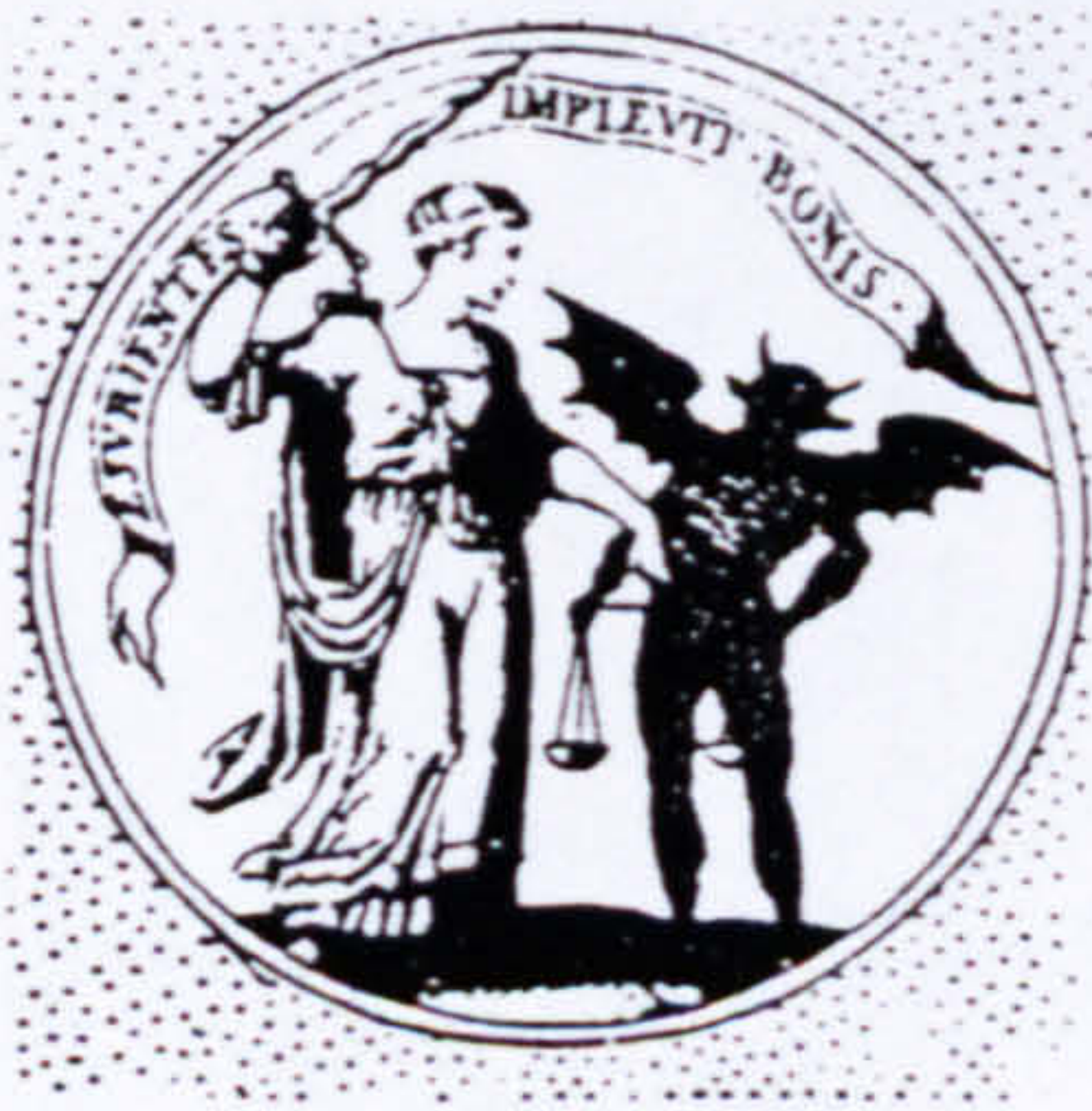
At Burton Constable Lightowler's original design for the carved overmantel in The Hall which holds the family escutcheon was based on a stylised palm tree supporting two heraldic devices, the legend '*Honi soit qui mal y pense*, a clutch of militaria, including arrows, a quiver, and standards, topped by palm leaves. The drawing is annotated as follows:

Allusions to the houses of Yorks and Lancaster on the right, on the Left, half moon turkish Cap and horsetail, with spreading Palm for the holy wars - Garter and Motto, below an oak Crown Emblem of Strength, Antiquity and Armour as used at ye conquest.

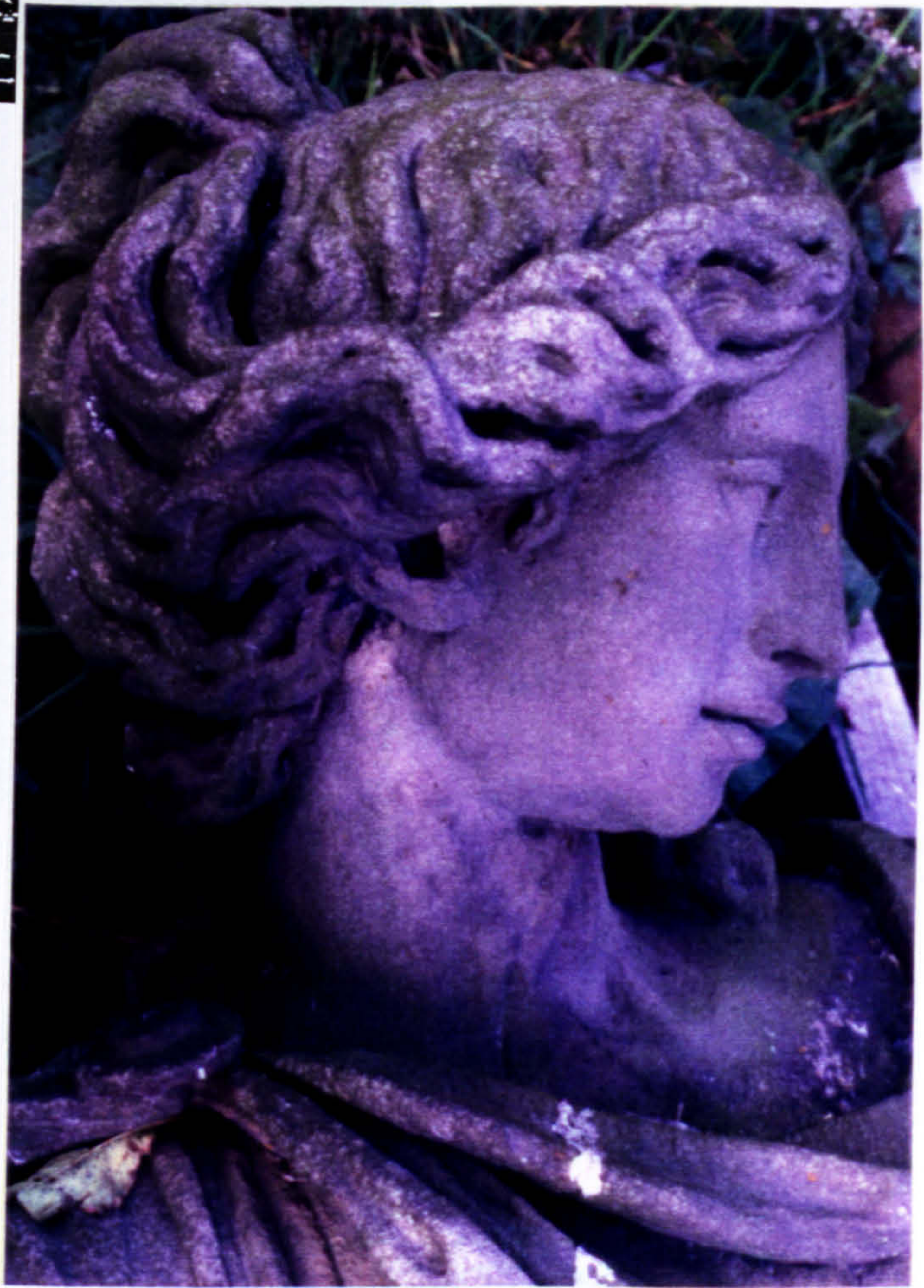
Besides carving the Doric chimneypiece, Thomas Atkinson redesigned the overmantel, and it was this that the Fishers carved - leafed oak tree boughs with Neo-classical laurel garlands supporting the family escutcheon surmounted by the Star and Garter. Although Atkinson's drawings have not come to light, an accomplished sketch by John Raines, the Steward, dated 1769, shows the finished overmantel *in situ*;¹⁰⁰ its precise carving is a hall-mark of the Fishers' work (Illustration 47).



Jean Delcourt, Tomb of
Bishop d'Allamont, c. 1673,
St. Bavo Cathedral, Ghent,



'Justice' - Baudouin's 1644
translation of Ripa's
Iconologie



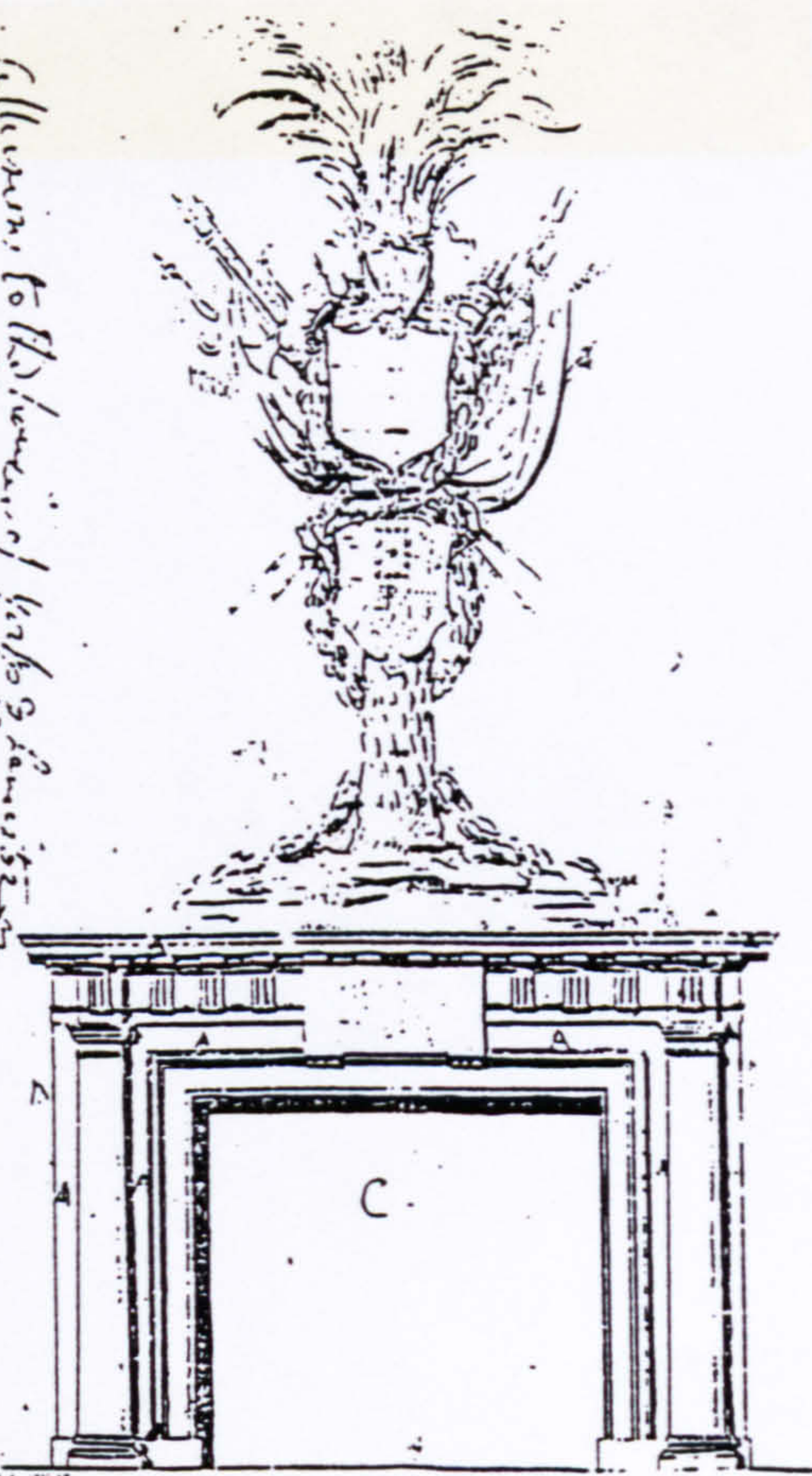
Profile of the Fishers'
'Justice' on the Assize
Court Building, York

Finally, to consider the designs for the various carved chimneypieces. Those which have been examined make it clear that the Fishers were using the same motifs for monuments and chimneypieces, as well as coloured marbles, and probably using patterns already in the workshop.

In the early carbon copy design which features in both the State Dressing Room and State Bedroom at Wentworth Woodhouse c. 1768, where the fall of acanthus leaves matches the design of the coved ceiling, the frieze is embellished with swags of fruit and flowers which recall Richard Fisher's work at Studley Royal. The later chimneypieces for the house are the only two for which drawings exist. The design for the Great Drawing Room is dated 1781, and it runs through the canon of decorative bands and mouldings previously used by the workshop. The tops of the jambs are decorated with rams' heads, vine leaves and bunches of grapes, the frieze has Rococo leaves, cherubs and urns, while the central panel is of the young *Bacchus*, accompanied by *Silenus*, being pulled along in a carriage drawn by centaurs, the procession headed by a faun. The ram's head decoration on the jambs is seen again at Farnley Hall, c. 1786-9 and at Swinton. It is also used on some of the monuments, for example that to John Grimston (1780), where, as noted previously, it is sited next to an earlier monument by Henry Cheere.

The second design for Wentworth Woodhouse uses rams' heads too, this time in profile; the whole of the frieze and the jambs are decorated with garlands of oak leaves and acorns suspended from eyelets similar to those used at Studley Royal. Whether the design was ever used at Wentworth Woodhouse is not clear, but it seems to be an amended version of one of the two chimneypieces supplied for Swinton in 1765. As for the chimneypieces provided by Fisher in 1793-94 for the Dining Room and Drawing Room at Swinton, the centre panel of the frieze is decorated with two griffins facing one another, each with one paw raised to hold the handles of a decorated urn; this mythical beast was frequently used decoratively for coving,¹⁰¹ but here it represents the Wentworth/Danby family connection.¹⁰² Paterae, Roman lamps and beaded garlands complete the decoration, and all the elements would be equally at home on a funeral monument. The Drawing Room chimneypiece is very feminine and full of curves, befitting the room to which the female members of the party

Callipers to the lower of the 3 drawers
to sit on the top of the drawers
the drawers to be 18 inches high
the drawers to be 18 inches wide
the drawers to be 18 inches deep
the drawers to be 18 inches high
the drawers to be 18 inches wide
the drawers to be 18 inches deep
the drawers to be 18 inches high
the drawers to be 18 inches wide
the drawers to be 18 inches deep



Lightoler's original design for the Overmantel at Burton Constable (at Burton Constable, East Riding)

Overmantel executed by the Fishers' Workshop from the amended design by Atkinson



Illustration 47

withdrew while the men continued to sit at table with the port. Under an edge of carved roundels the frieze is decorated with a series of knots holding swags of material (which could refer back to the Saloon at Wolterton); the architrave to the grate is unusual in that it too is curved and dips towards the centre; rams' heads top the canted, extended volutes which end in reversed acanthus leaves.

There are illustrations in the Catalogue for all the attributions as well as the chimneypieces where there is documentary evidence as to their origins. To take but three, as already suggested, it could be argued that the chimneypieces in houses not far from York might have come from the Fisher workshop: the Halls at Escrick, Howsham and Normanby. The first reason to support this thesis is that the owners of all the houses employed the Fishers to carve funeral monuments in the eighteenth century. The second is that John Carr was involved in building works at Escrick and Howsham,¹⁰³ and thirdly, there are strong stylistic links between the chimneypieces in all three houses. Also, the craftsmanship, use of designs and materials refer back to work carried out by the Fishers elsewhere. At Escrick Hall, where it has been suggested Carr was influenced by Robert Adam's work at Harewood, the use of inlay is similar to that seen at the other two properties. At Normanby Hall the urns which decorate the ends of the frieze of the chimneypiece in the Study are similar to those used at Swinton and at Farnley. Again at Normanby, the chimneypiece in the Dining Room has a garland and bow decoration which occurs again, albeit amended, at Howsham. At Escrick in the Drawing Room the falls of fruit and flowers are decorated with the curling ribbon bows seen at Studley Royal, and the Ionic capitals which support the frieze of the chimneypiece in one of the rooms echo those which carry the pediment of Beilby Thompson's monument in the nearby church. At Howsham Hall¹⁰⁴ the Upper Saloon has a frieze, the centre panel of which is adorned with a very elegant white marble urn, the left and right edges of the top decorated by tiny sphinx and hanging swags of material. The Fishers use the sphinx in the centre panel at Farnley Hall.

Of course it is appreciated that these motifs were commonly used by carvers all over the country, but, as will be seen in the following chapter, in the second half of the eighteenth century the Fisher workshop, on the basis of the evidence available, does not seem to have had a great

deal of competition from other York craftsmen.

It appears that the standard of craftsmanship, the range of designs and diversity of commissions executed by John and Samuel, and by John alone, followed the pattern set by Richard Fisher. Where chimneypieces were concerned, those by the second generation often incorporated design features introduced by the founder of the workshop. Where monuments were involved, the literature suggests¹⁰⁵ that in the eighteenth century fashion dictated certain styles:

1. panels within a simple carved or moulded frame, perhaps with architectural features;
2. projecting panels with the framework receding towards the wall;
- 3 'more elaborate architectural compositions, flanked by columns or pilaster and forming delightful exercises in a constructional art used decoratively', and
4. various forms of the cartouche.

The Catalogue illustrates, I believe, that both father (if he did carve the Hutchinson monument in Derby) and sons were well able to satisfy any stylistic requirements. Neither did the sons, and especially John, have any difficulty in providing the classical ornamentation, low relief and coloured marble which became increasingly popular when the work of Robert Adam became the vogue, since the decorative motifs were already part of their stock-in-trade.

8

The third and fourth generations, working between c. 1800-1886 had to introduce changes in the workshop. The building boom of the eighteenth century was over; 'modernisations' were still taking place but not on the same scale, and the fashion for carved dados and architraves had waned. Pine chimneypieces had become a simple framework, the decorative motifs being 'executed in composition' and glued on. Another York craftsman, Thomas Wolstenholme, was one of the local makers, and he used designs 'derived from engravings by F. Bartolozzi.'¹⁰⁶

With the advent of public cemeteries in the 1830s fewer church memorials were required but more gravestones and monuments thus leading to a change in the nature of the trade on this side of the business, and the numbers of church monuments carved after 1840 would appear to support this hypothesis. Recent, unpublished research into the York cemetery archives has revealed that there are tombstones with the Fisher signature

and, elsewhere, two further examples of gravestones from the workshop have been identified. The involvement of the practice in the supply of gravestones is beyond the scope of the present research, and is therefore only touched upon.

In spite of the change of direction the output from the workshop appears to have been fairly healthy, at least initially. It will be seen from the following table that as the number of church monuments diminished the number of gravestones increased:

	Church Monuments	Gravestones
1800-1804	9	
1805-1809	12	
1810-1819	27	
1820-1829	16	
1830-1839	16	2
1840-1849	11	6
1850-1859	4	20
1860-1869	3	61
1870-1879	4	33
1880-1884	0	6

Table 9

Various combinations of signature show that the six brothers worked together or separately throughout the first decade of the century specializing in monumental sculpture, and they advertised to this effect in the *York Herald* of 31st July 1805. However, they had sidelines - busts and ornamental sculpture - with William taking the lead, exhibiting at the Royal Academy four times, and at the Northern Society Exhibitions in Leeds twice.

Richard appears to have been content to exhibit his work in the window of the local silversmiths during Race Week in August 1810¹⁰⁷, and in the following year broke away from the partnership to set up on his own, supplying tombs and headstones.¹⁰⁸ While Richard's advertisement also sought two apprentices as stone and marble masons, the *York Courant* of 6th April 1812 carried George's advertisement. He was selling casts from his bust of the late Sir William Milner, Bart, M.P. Nothing is known of Samuel's output in spite of his advertisement in 1806 announcing that he intended to set up in the City as a statuary and modeller, adding as a postscript: 'N.B. PORTRAITS, either as Busto or Medallion taken'.¹⁰⁹ He died

in Bristol in 1812 but the family possibly lived in Knaresborough. None of the advertisements mention John's name.

Charles seems to have concentrated on monuments throughout, and almost at the end of his life he was engaged to carve the marble war memorial to ten West Riding men from Sowerby lost in the Crimean War¹¹⁰. After Charles died in 1861, his wife, Mary Ann, carried on the practice with their son John trading as M.A. Fisher & Son, until she died in 1872. They exhibited at the York Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition in 1866¹¹¹ under Catalogue No. 671:

FISHER, M.A., and SON, York, sculp. and contr. - Marble statue of Jupiter, and busts of Shakespeare, Sir Isaac Newton and Wellington; "Infant Bacchus and Goat" (in relief); "Boy and Broken Drum," in marble; inlaid cribbage board; "Time cutting Cupid's wings."

Two further tombstones carved by the workshop have been located, one in the churchyard of St. Stephen, Acomb, dating from 1830, the other in the Cholera Burial Ground, in memory of one of the first victims of the epidemic which began in June 1832, resulting in 185 deaths. In 1837 the York Cemetery came into being. An examination of the records from inception until 1914 has revealed the names of 280 carvers and stonemasons, the Fishers supplying 126 gravestones between 1843 and 188; most are signed high up on the edge nearest the path.¹¹²

9

When they advertised in the *York Herald* on 3rd August 1805 the brothers were at pains to spell out that the monumental sculpture to be seen at their house in the ensuing week was 'designed and executed' by them. The designs of the monuments became simpler as the century progressed and as the type of clientele changed; more clergymen were commemorated, there were more monuments in remembrance of women, and more professional people.

The use of coloured marbles continued in a very minor way. Presumably they had stock in the workshop as during the War their importation had virtually ceased; the sarcophagus and urn were still used but the latter lost its elegance and became coarser and dumpy, and was often draped. The Neo-classical details like the *gilloche* and *bucrania* gradually disappeared, and the intricately carved cornices were replaced by plain ones. In the main the monuments became less items of

sophistication, delicacy and lightness and, where decorated, give a hint of the rather more solid monuments of the Victorians.

There were exceptions: there were three figure sculptures, one signed by Charles in memory of Robert Welborn Hotham (1806), another to Mary Lister (1809) by William and Richard, and a third, to the Hedges family (1810). Very unusually the figure on the Joseph Thompson monument (1809) and simply signed 'Fisher', which at first sight might best be forgotten, turns out to be rather interesting since it shows, I believe, a shrouded *putta*. The Catalogue does reveal figure sculpture was not the sons' forte, but was the workshop at this time left in the hands of a foreman since it was when the boys were working in London and York?

The workshop does redeem itself in the same year, however, with the very striking monument in York Minster commemorating the death of Ensign Henry Whittam who was accidentally drowned in the Ouse. The design is extremely simple and elegant - a white marble urn resting on a shelf held by volutes. A sash is draped over the urn with a sword in its scabbard and a sword belt bearing a coloured enamel badge. Beneath the urn is an oval tablet with every alternate word of the inscription carved in italics. There has been a parting of top from bottom in the case of another military monument - the memorial to John Crossland, a Lieutenant and Adjutant of the York City Regiment of Militia, erected by his fellow officers in St. Michael-le-Belfrey (1813) - the top of the pyramid bears a large sarcophagus standing on lions' paws, backed by a draped flag, the barrel of a gun reversed, a sheathed sword, sprays of palm and willow to the right and three cannon balls to the left. The lower half, with the inscription, is some twelve feet away and the only clue that they belong together is their incompleteness!

A new vocabulary of decoration was introduced and included doves, the nesting pelican, crosses and holy books; family crests continued to be used, willow and palm proliferated. Every monument was different although the same motifs often recurred, suggesting that each was designed with a particular client in mind and that there was a workshop pattern book.

The model for William Fisher's proposed London Guildhall monument for the late William Pitt is missing but the letters he wrote accompanying it reveal that he was to be found at the studio of 'Mr.

Nollekens', where he would have had access to the sculptor's model of Pitt's bust. All the sketches were supposed to be anonymous, and Fisher's model sketch was given the code letters 'TZ'; he calculated that the monument would cost £5,700, including the 'fixing up, etc.' and the figures, all over seven feet high, were to be executed in the best statuary marble. William based the design on Pitt's Bill for the Prevention of Seditious and Treasonable Meetings; Pitt was to be portrayed speaking on the Bill, with Britannia to the right:

'fix'd in admiration', Fortitude to the left. Under the three figures 'the great exemplar of Virtue and Virtuous deeds, Hercules, is engaged in chaining the Hands and destroying [iniquitous] Seditious and Treason, both of whom struggle in vain against his unconquerable Power and integrity. The dado of the Pedestal and base on which they stand is meant for the Inscription to be engraved upon. It will be observed that the model has been made in a [situating] posture - the Artist therefore hopes that this consideration will be allowed when the equilibrium of the upper group of figures is put in question.'

There were two additional letters, one stating that the time allowed 'did not allow the fixing of the attribute of Treason', so the model had been incomplete when fired.'¹³.

From William's description of his design it seems likely that it was based on John Bacon's monument to William Pitt in Westminster Abbey, which dates from 1779-1783; writing in 1830 in volume 3 of his *Lives of British Painters and Sculptors*, Alan Cunningham mentions Bacon's inclusion of Fortitude and Britannia, Earth and the Ocean, which in Fisher's model are replaced by Seditious and Treason'¹⁴. From the details submitted the proposed monument would appear to have been more tightly composed than Bacon's which rises in four tiers above the base, Pitt standing alone at the apex. Would his design have used Ripa's personification of Treason, dressed in fantastic armour and hiding a dagger behind his back?'¹⁵

William's known works, including those exhibited at the Royal Academy'¹⁶ (indicated by 'RA' in the following list) were:

- 1801 Bas relief in marble - a greyhound course (RA)
- 1802 Bust of Bonaparte, First Consul of France
- 1806 A greyhound course; fox's head; a stag chase (RA)
- 1807 A head of Christ (RA)
- 1808 Busts of the late Mr. Fothergill; J. Wheatley, Esq., Dr. F.; Miss Smith of The Theatre Royal, Covent Garden (RA)
- 1810 Marble busts of the late P. Wentworth, Esq.; William Pitt
- 1811 Bust of the late Sir C. Turner (RA).

Joseph Nollekens is regarded as having an excellent reputation as a carver of busts and they appear to have been William's strength; it is posited that as he calls attention in his correspondence over the Pitt monument to the fact that he was to be found at 'Mr. Nollekens' address, he probably spent some time working in his studio and would have seen the master at work. Spread over seven or eight sittings, Nollekens' technique was to model the bust in clay from life, to make a cast and then pass it on to an assistant who worked up the marble; when it was almost completed the carver would then request another sitting and finish it himself.

The bust of Napoleon advertised in the *York Courant* of 4th January 1802 states that 'W. Fisher, Statuary, York, Having obtained a most exquisite Bust of BONAPARTE, First Consul of France, (a correct and well-finished Copy from an original one executed at Paris), purposes delivering Casts at One Guinea each, to those Gentlemen who may wish to become subscribers.' Many representations of Napoleon were carved during this period, but because of the date of the advertisement, it is suggested this copy was of the bust by Charles Louis Courbet (1753-1808), dated 1799.¹¹⁶ When in 1806 Fisher showed a greyhound course and a stag chase at the Royal Academy, he was possibly offering his interpretation of the growing fashion for sporting pictures being painted by artists such as George Stubbs and Benjamin Marshall. One would have thought the third exhibit, 'fox's head', would also be an animal. It has been suggested that this was, in view of his possible employment in Nollekens' workshop, William's interpretation (rather than a replica) of one of the master's two busts of Charles James Fox, which were almost as famous as his bust of Pitt the Younger. It certainly looks as though Richard and William were competing against each other on one occasion. In the 13 August 1810 edition of the *York Courant* Richard advertised his bust of the late William Pitt, and William exhibited and offered for sale a bust of Pitt at the Leeds Northern Society Exhibition in 1810.^{116A} The fact that both brothers carved the same subject - Nollekens' money-spinner - that Richard as well as William could have worked in the master's workshop.

Entry No. 452 in the catalogue for a sale held at Rudding Park in 1972 is accompanied by an illustration of 'A Marble Bust of An Elderly Nobleman' by William Fisher.¹¹⁷ Probably a posthumous portrait from a death mask, the face is cadaverous and the bust lacks any feeling of

animation because of the frontal presentation. Possibly it is of the 'late Mr. Fothergill' listed above. There is some foundation for this theory since the Fisher brothers were friendly with young Charles Fothergill from York when they were all living in London at the beginning of the century. As the title suggests, the subject is shown as a Roman patrician, and is carved in the manner of the Late Imperial busts with fairly elaborate drapery and the eyeballs incised. The photograph does not show whether Fisher has copied Nollekens by hollowing the pupil but leaving a small dot as a catch-light.'¹¹⁸

'Miss Smith of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden' was almost certainly Miss Sarah Smith (1782-1850), (née Williamson, adopted daughter of William Smith) who later became Mrs. George Batley.¹¹⁹ An engraving of her portrait by Slater was published on 1st May 1806 by Verner, Heed & Sharpe, Poultry. A popular sitter, since there are some seventeen portraits of her and several other engravings,¹²⁰ did she commission William or did he approach her? He could have met her in York; a 'Miss Smith' was billed to appear as Dianah Primrose in 'The Young Quaker' performed at the Theatre Royal on 17th May 1803 (Illustration 48).

Of the brothers' work in or for Yorkshire properties little is known. However, a diary entry by Charles Fothergill, made on 23rd December 1805, indicates that he and George Fisher visited Colonel Thornton at Thornville Royal, nr. Knaresborough (now Allerton Park):

The Fishers had done something or another contrary to his orders; the consequence was immediately on our entrance he mistook me for George and began a broadside from one of his tremendous passions ...¹²¹

This helps to substantiate my view that the chimneypiece in the Billiard Room at the house is a smaller, reworked version of those John Fisher made for the State Bedroom and Dressing Room at Wentworth Woodhouse; the fruit and flowers and other design elements support this attribution. The chimneypiece in the Breakfast Room, executed in white marble with Siena insets is similar in style to those at Howsham Hall where they are purported to be by John Fisher.

The design details of the 36 gravestones so far traced in the York Cemetery vary considerably. Among them there is one obelisk, two chest tombs with ridged tops, a headstone with a cross on top, and others have the tops decorated with falls of laurel. Of the two outside the



Painted by Peter Tognoni & by Freeman.

*Miss Smith
of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.*

Published by George Hood in St. Martin's Lane, May 1812.

Illustration 48
Miss Smith of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden
(National Portrait Gallery, London)

Cemetery, that in Acomb is a standing stone with a shaped top, but is otherwise plain except for the inscription; the one in the Cholera Burial Ground is embedded in the grass, and apart from a shaped top is otherwise undecorated.¹²² Because of weathering the inscriptions and signatures have all but disappeared.

On 16th September 1856 there was a news item in the *Yorkshire Gazette* which gave details of the war memorial Charles Fisher had just completed for the Church of St. Peter, Sowerby, near Halifax - 'The inscription is surmounted by a flag, a sword, a cannon, and three cannon balls, cut out in the marble ...' The design is a reworking of the John Crossland and John Hopwood monuments, both dating from 1813.

Of the work on show at the 1866 York Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition, this is the first and only mention made to a bust of Wellington; the Jupiter, Shakespeare and Newton have been discussed earlier. Nothing is known of the inlaid cribbage board or 'Time cutting Cupid's Wings'. It is possible that it was a pendant to the 'Boy and Broken Drum', a small ornamental sculpture of a semi-reclining putto, with his fist to his eye, crying over a broken drum. Which of the Fishers carved it is not known, but possibly John I, since during his lifetime another luxury item, the porcelain figurine, was in vogue, so why not match it in carving? The Chelsea and Bow manufactories of porcelain were producing *putti* after the style of the Meissen and Sèvres factories,¹²³ but cherubs had long been favoured in England.

The relief of the Infant Bacchus and goat, which is thought to have been carved by John III c. 1834, as a commission for the centre of a chimney-piece at Duncombe Park, a contract never completed as Lord Feversham died before it was finished, is almost certainly based on Duquesnoy's drawing and marble relief of children playing with a goat.¹²⁴ Duquesnoy was one of a number of artists working in Rome in the third decade of the seventeenth century who, like Donatello and Della Robbia earlier, fell under the influence of similar scenes carved on Roman sarcophagi. The Fisher relief is in reverse, and looks more compressed, the *putti* crowding the one sitting on the goat's back; his children all look extraordinarily bad tempered, the corners of their very definitely carved mouths downturned, portraying a feeling of discontent instead of

the sense of happiness conveyed in Duquesnoy's work - possibly because the contract did not materialize.

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To summarize - over its life it appears that the workshop tried to maintain the very high standards set by the founder, Richard Fisher. As fashion and demands altered each generation geared the workshop to meet these changes.

As far as craftsmanship was concerned it is clear that the skills of Richard, John and Samuel were not so highly developed in the third and fourth generations. It must be said in mitigation that the requirements were not the same. In the nineteenth century the patterns of patronage and public demand changed from a need to be able to execute exterior and interior decorative work for a clientele with a cosmopolitan background, and an ability to work in wood, stone and marble, to the provision of gravestones for a provincial, non-manufacturing city. It is possible that the supply of tombstones had probably gone on unrecorded throughout the life of the workshop, escalating with the opening of the York Cemetery in 1837.

Nonetheless, it would seem that all generations had a knowledge of and access to classical and continental sources of design, and the general impression gained is one of a competent workshop meeting with considerable skill the requirements of the county's gentry and professional classes. The dictates of fashion were satisfied but, apart from a few exceptional pieces of monumental sculpture in the second half of the eighteenth century, the workshop was not called upon to execute the large-scale memorials being produced by contemporary practices in London. This was possibly because, in the later years of the workshop in particular, they were not appropriate for the majority of country churches. While London workshops were turning out commemorative statues of, for example, national heroes, there are only three such carvings in York, all by G.W. Milburn - to Alderman Leman (1855), to William Etty (c. 1879), and his Jubilee statue of Queen Victoria, which has been banished to the Park in Acomb.

Chapter 4

References and Footnotes

- 1 Slingsby Papers, D056, Yorkshire Archaeological Society.
- 2 Hussay, C., "Studley Royal", Part II, *Country Life*, vol. 70, p. 130, 1 August 1931.
- 3 Anon., *The History of Rippon* (Ripon, 1806), 2nd Edition. The buildings included a menagerie '... also a small, but elegant building, which has sometimes been used as a breakfast-room', a lodge at Mackershaw Wood and How Hill, a house used specifically for gaming; there were small pavilions to each side of the cascade feeding the lake, and an Octagon Tower. A Banqueting House, a Belvedere, a Chinese Temple, a Temple of Fame or Rotunda and a Temple of Piety completed the list.
- 4 Vyner Records, VR 286, Bundle A, Part 1, No. 25, WYAS
- 5 *op.cit.*, VR 287, bill dated 27 April 1733, WYAS
- 6 *op.cit.*, C29/F7, 'A Catalogue of Goods delivered by John Nicholson, 3 Sept. 1768 to Rob^d Doe - Furniture for the Pleasure Gardens', WYAS
- 7 Bigland, John, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, (1812), vol. 16, pp. 689-694.
- 8 Vyner Records, VR 286, Bundle A, Part 1, No. 37, WYAS
- 9 *op.cit.*, VR 287, Steward's Ledger, WYAS
- 10 *op.cit.*, VR 288, letters of 28 March and 4 April, 1736, WYAS
- 11 Wolterton Archives, Wolterton Hall, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21, letter dated 5 April 1737 from Richard Fisher to William Aislable.
- 12 Vyner Records, VR 286, Bundle A, Part 1, No. 58, WYAS. Receipt dated 13 August 1739. About this time 7/8 Parkgate in Ripon was being built as a town house for the Aislabies so it is possible that the carver also worked there, but there is no documentary confirmation.
- 13 *op.cit.*, VR 286, Bundle B, part 2, No. 12, Estimate dated January 1748, WYAS
- 14 *op.cit.*, VR 286, bill dated 5 January 1749, WYAS
- 15 *op.cit.*, VR 286, Bundle C, No. 38, bill dated 10 December 1750, WYAS
- 16 *op.cit.*, VR 286, Bundle 2, Part 2, No. 44, bill dated 2 April 1753, WYAS
- 17 Temple Newsam Records, TN/ES 13 - TN/EA 13/68 p.4, WYAS
- 18 Pawson MSS Box 4, Parcel 7, Account Book pages 2 & 15, entries 1 July 1740 & 21 April 1744, WYAS
- 19 Wells-Cole, A., "Some Bedrooms and Dressing Rooms at Temple Newsam", *Leeds Arts Calendar*, No. 112, (Leeds, 1993) pp.7-28.
- 20 Gilbert C. & A. Wells-Cole, *The Fashionable Fire Place 1660-1840*, (Temple Newsam Country House Studies No. 2, 1985), pp.15-16.
- 21 Hutchinson, J. & D.M. Pallister, *York*, (Edinburgh 1980), p.135.
- 22 Pevsner, N., *York, Yorkshire & East Riding*, (London 1985), p 143.
- 23 Nostell Priory Archives, NP 1530/4, WYAS
- 24 Letter from the Bowes Museum; attribution by Christopher Gilbert of Temple Newsam, possibly on the basis of the similarity between the ribbon bows on one of the chimneypieces at the house.
- 25 Vyner Records, VR 285, Parcel 301 and Roll 29/F/10, WYAS. Letter of 3-4 April 1755. Doe replies to a question from William Aislable: 'As to Mr. Fisher, I know nothing about him. No more than this. Y^d is before we thoat of plaster capitals Mr. Beckwith was at York som time [illegible] and seeing his wife inquired after him hearing me talking about capitals without meaning of aney work to her. [illegible] he had heard before he left this country that Y^d Chapell was talkt off being Don'.
- 26 Newby Hall Records, NH 2875, No. 65, Undated, WYAS. This is confirmed by the Newby (now Baldersby) House agent, William Bowes, in a note delivered by hand to Sir William Robinson by one of Fisher's sons; they wished to sell a piece of marble as they were going to London.

- 27 Graves, A., *The Royal Academy of Arts - A Complete Dictionary of Contributors* (1905-6), vol. 3, p. 118.
- 28 Esdaile, K.A., "Sculptors and Sculpture in Yorkshire", *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. 36, p. 89. Mrs. Esdaile continues: 'the present Dean in 1942 placed it temporarily on the Lady Altar, its essential dignity and seriousness being thus for the first time fully recognised.'
- 29 Reynolds, Sir Joseph, *Journey to Holland 1781*; quoted in Denvir, B., *The Eighteenth Century - Art, Design & Society 1689-1789* (London 1983), pp. 157-158.
- 30 Kemp, B., *English Church Monuments*, (London, 1980), pp. 90-91; p.122.
- 31 Ingram M.E., *Leaves from a Family Tree*, (Hull, 1951), p. 20.
- 32 Newby Hall Records, NH 2875, letters 49, 51, 54, 56, and 60 dated December 1753 and January 1754. WYAS
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- 34 Map/39, Plans and Elevations; RIBA Drawings Collection, Colen Campbell; see also Harris, J., *Catalogue of Drawings in the RIBA, Colen Campbell* (London 1973) I am indebted to Mr. Roger Carr-Whitworth, Historic Buildings Representative of the Yorkshire Region of the National Trust for this information.
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- 43A Vyner Records, VR 286, Bundle B (part 2) No. 12. WYAS
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- 45 Adam, R., *Classical Architecture* (London, 1990) pp. 122-124 & p. 282.
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- 46 Strange, *French Interiors* plate 108, No. 5.
- 47 *Beningbrough National Trust Guide Book* (1980).
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- 49 Vyner Records, VR/254, Copy of Drawing, WYAS
- 50 Robert Morris, *The Architectural Remembrancers*, 1751. In Denvir, B., *The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design and Society* (London 1983) pp. 58-59. 'I beg to make an observation of the peculiar fondness for novelty which reigns at present. I mean the affectation of the (improperly called) Chinese taste. As it consists in mere whim and chimera, without rules

- and order, it requires no fertility of genius to put in execution'.
- 51 Vynar Records, VR 286, Bundle 2 (Part 2), No. 44, bill dated 2 April 1753, WYAS
- 51A Wolterton Archives, Wolterton Hall, Fisher Letters, 8/21, Letter from Richard Fisher to Horatio Walpole dated 6th May, 1737.
- 52 Wolterton Archives, Wolterton Hall, Letter from Ambroise Paine to ? Thomas Ripley, the architect, dated 'Houghton, Sept. ye 23 1738'.
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- 53 *Temple Newsam*, Guide Book (1989 edition) p.12.
- 54 Gilbert & Wells-Cole, *The Fashionable Fireplace*, p.16, William Danby of Swinton Castle's York account books are in the NYCR0, Reference ZS 2290, and they show that in 1764 and 1765 he was paying Fisher for 'gilding Picture Frames' and for 'carved work.' They also show that Carr was being paid for 'Marble Work', for 'Directions as an Architect' and for chimneypieces.
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- 59 Chambers, Sir William, *A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*, facing p. 3. In; Beard *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration*, p. 30.
- 60 Esdaile, "Sculptors and Sculpture in Yorkshire", vol. 36, p. 89.
- 61 Souchal, F., *Les Slodtz, sculpteurs et décorateurs du Roi* (Paris, 1957) p.280.
- 62 The attribution to Jerome Duquesnoy Jr. is suggested in the Cathedral literature; it seems that the contract was originally awarded to Il Fiammingo (François Duquesnoy) but was completed by Jerome. See also; Gerson, H. & Kuile, H., *Art & Architecture in Belgium, 1600-1800* (London 1960) p. 14.
- 63 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p. 233; the Christ was one of the terracottas by Duquesnoy included in one of the sales of Rysbrack's collections held before his death in 1770.
- 64 Souchal, *Les Slodtz* p. 228; 'C'est donc une apparition, un Christ surnaturel, glorieux, détaché des contingences et des tourments terrestres, une sorte de héros divin, se présentant avec les instruments de son supplice qui sont également ceux de sa victoire sur la mort, comme un athlète héroïque, cette apparence séduisante d'Apollon et ce visage aux lèvres dédaigneuses et au regard lointain. Non pas le Christ de la Passion - mais un Christ de vision, de rêve, assimilé à un beau dieu antique et représenté dans la grâce d'un corps bien heureux'.
- 65 Vynar Records, VR 286, Bundle B, Part 2, No. 12, January 1748, WYAS
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- 66A Friedman, T., *James Gibbs* (New Haven and London 1984) p. 87
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- 67A Le Neve, J., *Monumenta Anglicana*, (5 volumes, 1717-1719), vol. 1, Preface (pages unnumbered).
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- 68A Kemp, *English Church Monuments*, p. 83.
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- 72 Cornforth, J., "Swinton, Yorkshire", Parts I and II, *Country Life*, vol. 139, pp. 788-792, April 7 1966, and pp. 872-875, April 14, 1966.
- 73 Wragg, R.B., "The Life and Works of John Carr of York; Palladian Architect," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 4 vols., University of Sheffield 1975, Vol.I, Chapter I. '... when Carr was at

- the height of his fame, we find from building accounts that habitually he was supplying marble fireplaces of the less ornate kind to many of his jobs, also marble mortars, marble slabs - side lines were the accepted custom in the eighteenth century'. Also: Chapter III. In 1769 Carr wrote to George Dunston in Worksop suggesting he should buy a marble chimneypiece from Walsh (of South Street, Berkeley Square) 'as they are sometimes to be met with cheaper than having one made on purpose'.
- 74 Wragg, "The Life and Works of John Carr", Appendix D, List of Craftsmen.
- 75 Esdaile, "Sculptors and Sculpture", vol. 36, p.90.
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- 78 Davis, T., *Visitors' Guide to Wentworth Woodhouse* (Sheffield City Polytechnic, 1979). These rooms were designated First Library and Second Library when the building was used by the University.
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- 92 Clark, K., *Feminine Beauty* (London, 1980), Illustration No. 73.
- 93 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain* p. 190, and p. 452, f.29.
- 94 Mauchline, *Harewood* p. 120.
- 95 Knipping, J.B., *Iconography of the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands*, (2 volumes, Nieuwkoop, 1974), vol. 1, p. 83, plate 77.
- 96 In 1603 Ripa's *Iconologia* was published in Rome in an enlarged edition with woodcut illustrations; many further editions were published, not only in Italy but across the continent, the first English translation being sold in London in 1709, with George Richardson's two volumes appearing between 1777-1779 and 1785. The Hertel edition, produced in Augsburg in the 18th century had full page engraved illustrations by Gottfried Eichler the Younger, and in this edition Justice is blindfolded, seated and has the sword in her left hand, the scales in her right.
- 97 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, Illustration 95, p. 141.
- 98 Wragg, "The Life and Works of John Carr", Chapter II.
- 99 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain* p. 142.

- 100 Photocopies of these drawings were kindly supplied by Dr. David Connell, Curator at Burton Constable, to whom I am most grateful.
- 101 Adam, *Classical Architecture* p. 276. Greek legend was that they originated in India where they guarded the country's gold; as Christian symbols they came to be regarded as representing watchfulness and courage, which suggests the reason for their use on the Sibyll Wilson monument.
- 102 The griffins figure on the frieze of one of the chimneypieces at Wentworth Woodhouse.
- 103 Hall, Ivan, "Escrick Park and John Carr", York Georgian Society (York, 1971) pp. 29-33.
- 104 The archives for Normanby Hall are sketchy for this period; at Howsham Hall it is believed by the owners that the Fishers worked there.
- 105 Batsford, H., *English Mural Monuments and Tombstones*, (London, 1916) p. 4.
- 106 K.J. Allison, (ed.), *Victoria History of the Counties of England; A History of the Co. of York, East Riding*, (Oxford 1969) vol. 1, p. 446. An incomplete catalogue of Wolstenholme's stock is in the Henry Du Pont Museum in Delaware. Catalogue No. 379 shows that while a complete chimneypiece costs in the region of 3 guineas, the ornament, priced at £1. 10s. 0d., costs over a third of the total.
- 107 *York Courant*, 13 August 1810.
- 108 *York Courant*, 15 April 1811.
- 109 *York Courant*, 10 November 1806.
- 110 *York Gazette*, 6 September 1856.
- 111 York Fine Art & Industrial Exhibition Catalogue, (York, July 1866), p. 37.
- 112 I am grateful to Mr. David Poole for allowing me to include details of his unpublished research. The York Cemetery Company had its own stone-yard so made a charge of 5/- to outside workshops each time they supplied a stone.
- 113 Corporation of London Records Office, Monument to William Pitt, Misc. MSS 207.6, letter and enclosure addressed to the Committee, dated 23 April, and further letter of 6 May 1806.
- 114 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p.307, Illustration 220.
- 115 Maser, E.A. (Ed.), *Cesare Ripa, Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery (1758-60, Hertel Edition)*, (New York, 1971), Illustration No. 75.
- 115A Graves, A., *The Royal Academy of Arts* (London, 1905-6) vol. 3, p. 118.
- 116 Kalmein, V.G. & M. Levey, *Art & Architecture in the Eighteenth Century in France*, (London 1972), p. 172. Jean-Antoine Houdon's herm-like bust of the young Napoleon, with a ribbon round his head, dates from 1806 (plate p. 173).
- 116A Friedman, T., "Aspects of Nineteenth Century Sculpture in Leeds - The Northern Society Exhibitions", *Leeds Art Calendar*, vol. 69 (Leeds, 1971), pp. 22-28.
- 117 Christie's Sale Catalogue, Ridding Park, 16 and 17 October 1972.
- 118 Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p. 288.
- 119 The Raymond Mander & Joe Mitchenson Theatre Collection, London; personal communication, 10 October 1972.
- 120 The National Portrait Gallery has no record of a bust of Miss Smith. Personal communication, 23 February 1994.
- 121 Romney, P. (Ed.), *The Diary of Charles Fothergill*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Records Series, (Leeds, 1984) vol. 142, p. 238.
- 122 Both gravestones are recorded in the files of the Royal Commission; no signature is visible on the first; 'Fisher' can just be made out on the right-hand corner of the second stone.
- 123 Harris, N., *Porcelain Figurines*, (London, 1977), pp. 36-38.
- 124 Exhibit 42, Enfants jouant avec une chevre, in *La Sculpture au siècle du Rubens*, Musée d'Art, Bruxelles, 15 juillet-2 octobre 1977, p. 75. The *bas relief* of the same subject in Sir Peter Lely's (1618-1690) portrait of Charlotte Fitzroy, is recorded as 'after Duquesnoy' in the *York Art Gallery Catalogue*, pp. 58-59. See also; Smith, *Nollekens and His Times*, pp. 92-93. Engravings of Duquesnoy's *oeuvres* were certainly available in England; it is reported that when Paton Betav, a retired silversmith and art dealer, wanted to charge fifteen shillings for a print of 'Fiamingo's boy', Nollekens tried to beat him down.

CHAPTER 5

Finance and Competition

The first aim of this final Chapter is to look at the monetary side of running a provincial sculptor's practice, since on the basis of information contained in bills, Stewards' ledgers and letters, it has been possible to gain a limited insight into the financial returns enjoyed by the Fishers. It is certainly not comprehensive but it gives an inkling of what the income of a practice in an important social centre like York might have been, and how much an employee might have been be paid.

The second part of the Chapter will consider the information gathered on carvers working at the same time as each generation of Fishers, both locally and in London. Where possible the different situations pertaining will be compared and contrasted in order to assess the competition the workshop faced.

1

Although neither the length of time nor the scope of the work completed by Richard Fisher while he was employed at Scriven is known, he received three payments in June 1729, totalling £23. 6. Od., with the balance of £31. 6. Od. on account in December. If the entries in the Account Books have been correctly deciphered, additional sums amounting to £10.3.0d. were paid in September, October and November. In 1731 he received £12.3.0d. between June and September, suggesting approximately twelve weeks' work if his rate was, as at Studley Royal, £1. 0. Od. a week.'

Payments at Studley Royal seem to have been made from two purses since the amounts of the bills submitted by Fisher do not correspond to the figures shown in the Steward's ledger. Accounts appear to have been submitted annually in arrears and paid twelve months later.

One of the bills, the largest one submitted, amounting to £201. 11.4d. was annotated - Fisher had overcharged and the sum was reduced accordingly by the Steward.'^ From the information available it has been calculated that the carver was paid the following amounts:

Date	Fisher's Bills	Steward's Ledger	Total
1732	£24. 0. 0d	£22. 19. 0d	£46. 19. 0d
1733	£20. 16. 8d	£24. 15. 0d	£45. 11. 0d
1735		£19. 0. 8d	£19. 0. 8d
1739		£10. 0. 0d	£10. 0. 0d
1749	£81. 16. 3d		£81. 16. 3d
1750	£201. 11. 4d		£201. 11. 4d
1753	£8. 5. 2d		£8. 5. 2d

The bills of 31st October 1732 and 24th November 1733 reveal that the carver worked six days a week for £1.00, his daily rate being 3s 4d (equivalent to just under 17p), while his man's daily rate was 1s 4d (about 6p); in 1749 when he carved the patterns for the mouldings in the new Library he still only charged 3s 6d a day.

A breakdown of the various Studley Royal accounts for 1749 and 1750 show that during this period the following prices were charged by Fisher for such items as:

architrave mouldings	3d a foot
egg and leaf	4½d a foot
flower and double ribbon	6d a foot
'large ovolo in architraves'	8d a foot
bed moulding	1s 0d a foot
scrolls	10s 0d for four
eagles' head friezes	£1 5s 0d each,
frieze with 'head and festoons of flowers'	£1 5s 0d
carved picture frame	£8 0s 0d
painting and gilding	£3 3s 0d
flower pot	£2 10s 0d
statuary plinths	7s 6d each.

The total cost for all the carving in Lady Aislable's Dressing Room was £48. 4. 10½, with £17. 2. 11d. the price of the chimneypiece. Sir William was charged £125 on the same account for five chimneypieces.²

On the basis of the Studley Royal figures, and supposing that he worked a maximum of 48 weeks in a year (allowing for short periods of unemployment), Richard Fisher's average annual earnings would have been in the region of £50. 0. 0d. If he was given food and accommodation when he was working on site, or was paid a sum for board as was the case at Wolterton, this payment in kind or in cash would have boosted his real income. Referring to the figures for 1749 and 1750 however, it looks as though there was a sharp rise in Fisher's income. This may have been because the bills submitted in the period before Fisher set up his

workshop in York in 1746 were calculated on a daily basis. Those covering the latter part of the 1740s and the beginning of the 1750s meticulously set out the specific details, lengths and numbers of items carved. This supports the earlier suggestion advanced that perhaps Richard Fisher did not have premises in Ripon but worked only on site. By moving to York he was able to open a workshop and take his two sons, John and Samuel (aged 15 and 12 respectively in 1750) into partnership. John by then would have been part way through his apprenticeship, and he would have been competent enough to work 'at home' under supervision. Certainly some of the items were made in York and were transported as packing cases and nails were billed in the 1750 Studley account.^{2A}

That Richard was not particularly business-like in his dealings is illustrated by a letter he wrote to Horatio Walpole when he was preparing to travel to Norfolk to work at Wolterton:

You desire to know what will satisfy me upon the account of my victuals, but as to that there shall be no dispute for I will Refer myself to your honour.'

He enclosed a note (now missing) of the terms that Robert Doe was willing to accept if he joined Fisher in Norfolk. Perhaps Richard had the same safeguard, but it seems a very haphazard way in which to negotiate one's contract of employment. For Fisher it was a gentleman's agreement which went badly wrong. The contract at Wolterton was terminated by Horatio Walpole before Richard's work there was finished, and the carver had to write to Thomas Ripley, the architect, and to Walpole about non-payment of board wages, travelling expenses and the wages of his 'man', though the inference is that Fisher was paid for the carving he completed.

In the Wolterton Archives an undated item in one of the Account Books (Reference 3/1/2) refers to the finishing of a fireplace:

Debtor to Thomas Yeoman -	
To polishing part, and setting up the Chimney-piece in Dining Room	£13. 7. Od.
Polishing, setting up and Finishing ye Statuary Chimney-piece	£16.12. Od.

Yeoman was also paid £28. 18. Od. for 'working part and setting up ye Saloon Chimney-piece.' While this throws no light on Fisher's remuneration it does give an idea of the costs involved in polishing and setting up. It also suggests that either Yeoman had quite a lot of work to finish or that he was both expensive and long-winded. According to Fisher the services

One from London would have cost fourteen shillings a week plus travelling expenses.³

Calculating the payments made to Fisher for his work at Temple Newsam is complicated because once again money was 'lent' and there are two account books. However, between 1739/40 it is calculated that he received £72. 4s 9d⁴ and in 1740/41 he was paid £20. 0. 0d on account for unspecified work. There is a separate summary of payments made 'on account' which records that from 16th October 1740 and 6th October 1742 Fisher and his man, Mr. Bradley, between them received £6. 3s 0d, which included two payments for trips to Ripon and another to Leeds.⁵

There is only one bill in the Nostell Priory archives for work carried out by Fisher - it is dated 1752 and shows that he was still charging 3d a foot for architraval mouldings. The account was for a total of £25. 13s 3d, of which £6. 12. 7d was a sum outstanding for earlier work executed in the house.⁶

2

Details of prices charged by some of the other York craftsmen working at the same time as Richard are not always relevant as the types of work were not comparable. For example, between 1735 and 1738 Edward Raper was employed at Castle Howard where he did most of the decorative stonework for the mausoleum.⁷ One exception, however, was Walter Mitley who in 1748 carved a chimneypiece for the Chinese bedroom at Studley Royal. Mitley's charges were as follows, although the descriptions of the motifs do not sound particularly oriental:

'6ft. 6 of Egg Mould in the high Cornice at 6d.,
13ft of twist rope in the pannell.
egg & tongue.
4 roses at 1/- ea.
Side scrowls.
2 flooroams down the side of the pannel.
To a Shield in the pediment.
3 Jan. 1748 in all £4. 4. 0d.'⁸

Mitley was thus billing 'Egg mould' at the same price as Fisher charged for 'flower and double ribbon.'

The differential between London and provincial prices is startling - in 1756 Michael Rysbrack, working in London, charged £195 for two chimneypieces for Woburn Abbey:

'drawing, modelling and carving two statuary chimney-pieces, with four whole therms, and four profile therms, with festoons of fruit and flowers ... and working the mouldings in front of the therms and two friezes with rams' heads and cornucopias of fruit and flowers.'

In the same year John Devall, the London chimneypiece supplier, charged £120. 0. 0d. for a 'therm' chimneypiece (again for Woburn Abbey), the price including:

'marble, mason's work, carving and polishing, with all the mouldings fully enriched ... with eagle's heads and foliage, and flowers in kneas of the architrave.'⁹

These two bills, besides giving an idea of London prices, do suggest that design in Yorkshire kept abreast of metropolitan fashion and that most carvers were using the same sources. Although there are no descriptions for the five chimneypieces Richard Fisher supplied to William Aislable in 1750 for £125, a comparison between this sum and London prices does indicate that using a provincial carver was more economical.

3

Tangible information is scanty about the monetary value of the work carried out during John and Samuel's partnership and when Samuel had gone to London, leaving John on his own. However, with the number of monuments the workshop turned out during the second half of the century the income should have been substantial. Regarding decorative carving, it is known that the charge for the Burton Constable overmantel for the Great Hall was £38. 0. 0d., plus an extra £4 for carriage.'¹⁰ As already noted, in 1765 John Carr supplied Swinton Castle with four marble chimneypieces carved by the Fishers. The price? Five chimneypieces cost Aislable £125 in 1750, so perhaps at a conservative guess, £50-£75 each. Twenty years on, and taking into account inflation as a result of the war, John Fisher charged £203. 3s. 10d. for two further marble chimneypieces for Swinton. He was paid in instalments between July 1793 and the following April, when the account was cleared with a final payment of £53 3s 10d. The archives also show that on 19th July 1791 John was paid £31.3s. 0d. for a border of black marble added to William Danby's monument (1773) in Masham Church.'¹¹

In 1768 'he [Fisher] carved for his patron, [the Marquis of Rockingham] at Wentworth Woodhouse, chimney pieces for a bedroom and dressing room which cost £164 and £88 respectively ...'¹² Then in 1781 the

carver produced designs for two chimneypieces; on the back of one of the drawings is written:

The Design of the Chimney piece for the Great Drawing Room at Wentworth is to be finished in Two Years from this 13th of September - It is to be executed in the best White Cararra marble - and the workmanship full equal to that of the Chimneypiece in the next room to the Great Drawing Room at Wentworth at the price of 300£. Jⁿ. Fisher

One hundred pounds was paid on signing the contract, a further one hundred pounds thirteen months and a day afterwards, but there is no record of the third payment.

For the Dining Room chimneypiece at Farnley Hall, Walter Fawkes paid £50. 10s. 0d. on account in 1789 while the receipts at the house show that instalments paid against John Fisher's bill amounted to £300. This bill probably covered not only the chimneypiece but the cost of the monument in memory of Francis Fawkes in Otley Parish Church (1786). An extra 16 guineas was added for 'a frame and enrichments done for the Medallion of the Late Francis Fawkes Esq. in Burnished Gold and put up in the House of W. Wilson of Otley Esq.'

As suggested in Chapter 3, Walter Fawkes may also have been dilatory about payment since Fisher had to write to him to ask for a remittance to enable him to pay cash for marble imported into Hull.¹³ As has already been seen the Studley Royal accounts were settled a year in arrears, and it appears this may have been common practice among the gentry as a letter addressed to Thomas Chippendale from Sir Edward Knatchbull, sent in 1771, indicates that he paid his tradesmen once a year as he only received his rent annually.¹⁴

The Rockingham Mausoleum at Wentworth Woodhouse took nine years to complete, Joseph Nollekens carving the statue of the 2nd Marquis. John Fisher's bill for his involvement, presented in November 1789, reads as follows:

For the four Pedestals in the Niches at the Mausoleum, Marble, Mason's work and polishing	
Nineteen pounds each	£76. 00. 00.
Pedestal for the Statue, marble and Working	£99. 8. 00
To 281 Dozen Capital Letters in the Inscription at 2s per Dozen	£28. 2. 00

He also charged £8 for expenses incurred on behalf of himself and two men making the journey from York to 'put up' the pedestals, plus the cost

of hiring the horse. Again, the bill seems to have been settled in stages because the total of the payments made appears as £140. 8. 8d.¹⁵

How much was collected by public subscription to cover the cost for the carving by John Fisher of the Sir George Savile monument c. 1784 is not known, but the carver obviously thought that the popularity of this Yorkshire politician would ensure a ready sale for an engraving of the monument. He approached the master engraver, Francis Bartolozzi; the cost was £210. but the quantity printed is not known. John's plan was to sell them at a guinea a time if ordered in advance, and to non-subscribers at £1. 11.6d, so he needed to clear a good many before he started to make a profit. An advertisement in the *York Herald* of 13th November 1790 indicates that copies were at his house, awaiting collection.

Two years after the *York Herald* announcement, in 1792, John Fisher was languishing in debtor's prison, and according to John Carr, planning 'to cheat his Creditors of 13 shills in the pound' which would allow him to continue his work,¹⁶ but he was not very successful on this score as two years later an advertisement in the *York Herald* of 19th July 1794 reported that he had been declared bankrupt. As will be seen in the next section, Fisher was not the only craftsman to have financial difficulties. The cause of the problem seems to have been that, in return for their patronage, wealthy and influential customers expected unlimited credit facilities. This is the reason given for Thomas Chippendale's need to advertised in his *The Gentleman & Cabinet Maker's Director*. By 1757 he had established a successful 'upholder's' business in St. Martin's Lane, London, but because of this system of extended credit he had to retain his old clients and attract new ones¹⁷ If Fisher was being forced to offer similar terms little wonder he had a cash-flow problem.

The only clue as to the cost of a church memorial comes from a letter written in 1784 by John to John Tindal, agent to the Wyckham Abbey estate in North Yorkshire, acknowledging the receipt of eight ten pound bills 'on act' drawn on Messrs. Garforth & Co. in York, leading to the conclusion that the cost was more than £80. Unfortunately the monument has not yet been tracked down.¹⁸

4

As for the financial returns of other carvers working in York at the same time as John and Samuel, there is little information available at

present. However, when Thomas Atkinson was acting as architect at Adwick Hall on the Duncombe Park estate a letter in the archives suggests he was not being paid.¹⁹ More is known about the earnings of carvers and sculptors outside the county. One bill presented by Robert Adam in 1766 for £118. 4. 3d. shows £92 was for the marble, with the mason's work making up the balance. Strangely, bills and accounts for the work of stuccoists appear to abound.

Among the metropolitan carvers, Rysbrack's lowest fee for a bust was 35 guineas, while Scheemakers charged 25 guineas.²⁰ John Carr had to pay Cheere £2. each for the busts of Shakespeare and Newton he ordered for Fairfax House, but these were almost certainly in plaster, not marble. Richard Westmacott provided chimneypieces for Mulgrave Castle, near Whitby, the Yorkshire seat of the Phipps family; when he presented his bill, dated 8th October 1794, it amounted to £160. 19. 10½d., carriage paid to the wharf. Letters in the archives suggest that the carver was being pressurized to reduce his price for one particular item; this he refused to do, feeling unable to lower it any further.²¹

Bankruptcy was a fate suffered by more than one London carver. There is a story that Roubiliac under-estimated the cost of his Argyl monument 'according to Farington, by hundred of pounds', dying suddenly, and in spite of marrying an heiress, a bankrupt, on 15th January 1762.²² John Wildsmith (fl. 1757-1769) was made bankrupt in 1769 and a two-day sale of his stock in trade took place at his yard 'near St. James's Church, Piccadilly' on 31st July and 1st August. Among the chimneypiece tablets sold were 'Diana', 'Shepherd and Wolf' and 'Boys and Sheep.'²³ Almost ten years later Emanuel Williams, 'mason and carver' of Tooley Street, Southwark, had a sale of his stock in trade for the same reason. From the list of his commissions, which included the west and centre wings of Guy's Hospital with a return of £2,900, he seems to have had a lucrative practice, but still he ran into trouble.²⁴

A year earlier than John Fisher, in June 1793, the sculptor Joseph Wilton was also declared bankrupt, an event announced on page 472 of volume I of the *Universal Magazine*, though he 'paid off his creditors very quickly.'²⁵

Little or nothing is known of the revenue received by the workshop in the nineteenth century, apart from the prices that the Fishers were charging for their busts. Even this information is sketchy - William was asking 1 guinea for a cast of the bust of Napoleon Bonaparte; the modelled bust of the late Peregrine Wentworth was 4 guineas 'by subscription', but £80 executed in marble. George Fisher's bust of the late Sir William Milner was 5 guineas. Richard's bust of William Pitt was unpriced, but presumably he had expectations, as Nollekens was reputed to have sold 74 marble replicas of the death mask he took in 1806 for at least £120 each and 'upwards of six hundred casts taken at six guineas each'; it is small wonder that Nollekens died leaving £200,000.²⁶

By way of comparison, the London sculptor, Sir Frances Chantrey charged from 80-100 guineas for a bust in 1811; five years later the price varied from 120-150 guineas, and in 1822 it was 200 guineas. He left £150,000 when he died.²⁷ Again in London, when in 1819 J.C.F. Rossi executed the terra-cotta *caryatids* which decorate St. Pancras Church the contract was worth £4,300.²⁸ In 1829, when Joseph Theakston, who was one of John Fisher's apprentices, carved the marble chimneypiece and clock frame for the Grand Hall of Buckingham Palace, he received £1,000.²⁹

The only other clue to York prices later in the century is found in the Catalogue of the York Fine Art Exhibition³¹ of 1866: G. Bradley, a York sculptor was selling a stone statue, 'Venus Reposing', for ten guineas, a medallion, 'Christ Crowned with Thorns', after Karl Caner, for five guineas, and a plaster model of 'Aurora' by M.N. Hessey was priced at £50.

Charles' bankruptcy in 1824 has been discussed in Chapter II, but James George Bubb suffered the same fate c.1827, and he became a designer and modeller in his own business when it was taken over.³²

The Superintendent of York Cemetery in the late 1840s-1850s had a pattern book of work which could be undertaken in the cemetery stoneyard, and one of the very ornate classical monuments illustrated therein cost £98.³⁰

Having considered the financial arrangements of the practice, we can now look to the question of the competition the workshop faced.

The working life of Richard Fisher spans the careers of five other craftsmen from Yorkshire: Daniel Harvey, Charles Mitley, Edward Raper, William Bateson and Daniel Shillito (see Table 6, Chapter 3). Samuel Carpenter was their forerunner; he worked at Castle Howard and carved the Obelisk at Ripon. Among his works were the bust of the elder Thoresby he was commissioned by Ralph Thoresby to execute for Leeds Parish Church and the monument to Lady Stapylton at Snaith.

Daniel Harvey (né Hervé) was a Huguenot who anglicized his name and settled in York. He worked intermittently at Castle Howard from 1709 to 1727 where much of his carving was in stone; in 1721 he produced 'frosted' pedestals for the avenue there, similar to the Studley Royal stonework, a decorative form later reproduced in Batty Langley's books. Harvey carved stone Corinthian capitals for the gallery at Wentworth Castle in 1720³³ and a further four, in wood, in 'the Ionick order.'³⁴

In 1720 Charles Mitley was apprenticed to Daniel Harvey. He worked at Castle Howard in 1736 after Harvey's death, and presumably carved his Baroque memorial in St. Olave's Church in York, which appears to be unsigned. Two years later 'he made a statue of George II for the Market House at York'. Though it was transferred to the Guildhall when the house was demolished, it has since disappeared.³⁵ In 1741 he carved the Gothic pulpit designed by William Kent for York Minster.

Mitley had a partner, Edward Raper. Hailing originally from Leyburn, northwest of the city, he was apprenticed to George White of York in 1724, and ten years later Raper's signature appears with that of Mitley on a tablet in St. Michael-le-Belfrey in memory of Catherine and Christina North. His major work appears to have been the decorative stonework he executed between 1736 and 1738 (the year of his death) in the Castle Howard Mausoleum.³⁶

It is for his work in the City of York that William Bateson rates a mention. Apart from carving a chimneypiece for the Guildhall in 1729, when Leonard Smith, the previous master-mason for the Assembly Rooms was dismissed, Bateson and his partner, a William Ellis (about whom little seems to have been written) took over. Working on an unroofed, empty building, within a year they had completed the forty Corinthian columns which are one of the most striking features of Lord Burlington's

plan, said to have been related by him to 'Palladio's interpretation of Roman architecture ... based on his reconstruction of an Egyptian Hall.'³⁷

The attribution to 'Harvey' and Mitley of the monument to Mrs. Mary Ramsden at Adlingfleet in the West Riding, dating from 1755 might seem curious³⁸ as Daniel Harvey died in 1733, but this was another carver with the same name and several different spellings - Avery, Avray, Overy, Harvey. He was the subject of a letter written by William Bowes to Sir William Robinson in 1754: 'there is now in York a very ingenious man in the Statuary way ... Overy, a Flemin ...' Bowes put forward the idea that this might be the man to carve the Tancred Robinson tomb in St. Crux, a suggestion which Sir William accepted.³⁹

Daniel Shillito, like the stuccoist Giuseppi Cortese, is thought to have had a workshop in Wakefield, where he completed the carving for Heath Hall while in the employ of John Carr. He also worked for him at Everingham in 1757 and in 1766 at Harewood. Between 1760 and 1762 (a period for which the papers are missing) he was collaborating with the architect at Fairfax House in York during the period when the Fishers were in London. He executed much fine carving; dados and skirting boards, window frames and shutters, are all intricately carved, as are the doorcases which again echo the designs of Inigo Jones and William Kent⁴⁰.

Cheere is only one of the metropolitan sculptors whose work of this period may be seen in Yorkshire. It has already been mentioned that in 1747 he was awarded the Medley contract instead of Fisher, for which he received £262. 10. Od. Sir Henry was also responsible for 'finely carved wooden chimneypieces' purchased by John Grimston for Kilnwick Hall on the Yorkshire Wolds.⁴¹ At Nunnington, in the North Riding, in All Saints and St. James, there is a huge memorial tablet to Lord Widdrington, dating from 1743, designed by James Gibbs (whose name is on the centre panel at the base). The carver's name is unrecorded; nor is there any evidence to support the suggestion that it was the work of Michael Rysbrack.^{41a}

The work of Peter Scheemakers may be seen both in the East and West Ridings. At Beverley Minster in the East Riding there is his very large monument in memory of Sir Michael Wharton dating from 1727, where there are seated allegorical figures to the left and right. In the West Riding at Ledsham there is his tomb carved in remembrance of the philanthropist Lady Elizabeth Hastings, friend of the Leeds diarist Ralph

Thoresby, dating from c. 1740-41. A grey sarcophagus bears the reclining body of Lady Betty, an open book in her hand; on each side of her stand statues of her two half-sisters, they in turn hold the 'emblems of Piety and Prudence.'⁴² Painted by Kneller in her lifetime, the sculptor has been able to catch her likeness.⁴³ Immediately apparent from looking at the monumental works of the metropolitan carvers in Yorkshire is their sheer scale.

As far as competition in York was concerned, Richard Fisher's move to the City in 1746 was a shrewd one - from the information available it would seem that competition was minimal. That carvers such as 'Overy, a Flemin' and John Rostcliffe, a cabinet and picture frame maker from Amsterdam (he advertised in the *York Courant* of 12th August 1740), should come north shows that there was room for skilled craftsmen. In fact, an advertisement appeared in June 1763, again in the *York Courant*, for a journeyman carver in Knaresborough, where, if appointed, he would 'meet with constant employment'.

With regard to competition from London carvers, there would have been a certain cachet associated with using Sir Henry Cheere, as John Grimston did. Since his brother, John Cheere, specialized in lead statuary for the garden, it would make financial sense to pay only once for carriage if garden and house were being dealt with as a whole. The triumvirate of Rysbrack, Scheemakers and Roubiliac carved monuments for Yorkshire families, but Fisher possibly had the edge of them as far as ornamental carving was concerned. Not only was he local, but his reputation was not likely to suffer because he was willing to execute anything from plain mouldings to elaborate items, such as the central motif of musical instruments for the pediment of the chimneypiece in the Banqueting House at Studley Royal.

7

From the sale notice in the *York Courant* of 26th February 1760 one gathers that the late Charles Mitley ran very much the same sort of business as the Fishers. On offer was a 'large collection of marble blocks, chimney pieces, slabs - several sorts of carv'd and gilt frames for glasses, festoons, Siana; plaster moulds for casting of plaster figures.' Perhaps Mitley's death provided the impetus for the Fishers to return to York because, although there is no clear indication of when they arrived

casts, terracotta models, pattern books or drawings from the Fishers' workshop have come to light, but they, like Mitley, would have produced them - 'plaster moulds' were in fact what brought about Richard's dismissal from Wolterton. In the nineteenth century phase of the workshop, William writes of not having fired part of his model for the Pitt memorial competition. It would have been unthinkable for the workshop not to provide some sort of design plan. No patron was going to pay for a memorial like the Sheffield monument without having an idea of what it was going to look like.

Advertisements appearing at this time illustrate that the Fishers were not alone in supplying the local luxury market. In 1751 Jeremiah Margrave, who had a shop in the High Street, 'nigh Church Lane, Hull' advertised that he was 'carving in Marble, Wood and Stones, according to the newest taste ... Also Ship-carving executed as well and cheap as in London'. Monuments, tombstone, arms, and 'busto's' were also on offer.⁴⁴ Exactly ten years later William Marshall, Carver and Gilder 'from London' was advertising his services as a cabinet maker in Colliergate, York, offering chimney frames made from walnut tree and mahogany and 'all manner of frames for maps.'⁴⁵ Both seemed to disappear without trace.

Not so Thomas Atkinson, however. He completed chimneypieces and the dining room and drawing room at Bishopthorpe Palace for Archbishop Drummond, and worked on the Gatehouse there. In 1788 he estimated for repaving work at Lincoln Cathedral, possibly benefiting from ecclesiastical patronage of the highest order, as did the York glasspainter, William Peckitt.⁴⁶

Atkinson and Stead seem to have been the most successful of the York carvers. William Stead's work in Yorkshire dates from 1792, and he has two monuments in Bradford Cathedral, and others at Sowerby, Aberford and Chesterfield. Robert Rhodes of Leeds (fl. 1757-1802) was apprenticed to Carr and in 1802 erected a monument to Thomas Close in Leeds Parish Church, in which he used coloured marbles. Robert Blakesley also worked under John Carr and in 1784 was gilding at Wentworth Woodhouse.⁴⁷ Michael Taylor's work, which is dealt with in the next section, spanned the end of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, but up until about 1810 was largely confined to York Minster.

As far as the London carvers were concerned, like the York architect, John Carr, Joseph Nollekens was ubiquitous. Not only was he was famed for the small clay figures he modelled, his sculptural output was extensive. In Yorkshire it included the bust in Ripon Minster of William Weddall of Newby Hall (1789), a chimneypiece for Harewood House, and he, like John Fisher, enjoyed the patronage of the Rockinghams. He carved the statue of the 2nd Marquis and the busts of his friends for the Mausoleum, and the statues now at Wentworth Woodhouse, originally carved for the family's London house.⁴⁹

The work of Henry Cheere spanned the first and second generations of the Fishers but he seems to have done almost nothing in Yorkshire during the second period, his latest monument being that in memory of Thomas Grimston at Kilnwick (1752). John Bacon Sr., it is suggested on stylistic grounds, probably carved the seated figure of Remembrance and the two portrait medallions on the monument to Savile Finch and his wife at Thrybergh in the West Riding (1788), but his signature is on an unnamed monument with a mourning putto, urn and medallion at Hornby, North Riding (1780),⁴⁹ a form which Mrs. Esdaile considered he popularized. John Bacon was, however, very closely associated with the Coade Stone Company. He became their designer in 1771 and Mrs. Coade advertised that the firm was 'under the inspection of Mr. Bacon of Wardour Street, Soho'.

Coade stone came into production in 1769, and by 1784 Mrs. Coade's catalogue listed over seven hundred items. The researcher posits that the Fishers could possibly have used *paterae* and *bucrania* decorations from this source since occasionally the decorative motifs on some of their monuments do not appear to have been carved in marble. There are large free-standing monuments in Beverley Minster in Coade stone, signed by the Company, but Mrs. Coade had several stock models which brought church monuments within the reach of many, although they were not cheap; a 5' model retailed at 10 guineas, a 9' wall monument cost 30 guineas, and 'an elegant Tomb for a churchyard' was 60 guineas.⁵⁰

From the same source comes information regarding the price being charged for lettering; in 1814 45 dozen letters cost 2s 6d, per dozen when they were carved on the Coade stone monument to Sir Jacob Ashley at Melton Constable, Dereham, Norfolk. This compares with John

Fisher's charge of 2 shillings a dozen for the lettering on the pedestals in the Rockingham Mausoleum thirty years earlier.

8

John Fisher died in 1804 and certainly during and beyond the first decade of the century all his sons were involved in the workshop at some time. As has already been shown in Chapter 2, numbers taken from the York Freeman's Roll from 1700-1835 reveal that between 1800-1824 there were 14 masons, 12 carvers and 5 sculptors in the City, and from 1825-1835 13 masons, 6 carvers, and 1 sculptor, so throughout this period competition was greater than at any time during the life of the workshop. It was Charles Fisher who carried on the workshop after the early deaths of his brothers.

Of the York carvers working concurrently with him, when the Royal Agricultural Show was held in York in 1848, Matthew Skelton advertised that he had 'Extensive Marble Works and Showrooms in Micklegate';⁵¹ his work can be seen throughout Yorkshire, but his Hellenic monuments have led to him being dismissed as 'the least distinguished of the York statuaries.'⁵² Skelton & Son then displayed at the 1866 York Fine Arts Exhibition, their entry, No. 658, being a Library chimneypiece designed by G.F. Jones of York.

Among the other exhibits were pieces by a York sculptor named M.N. Hessey: 'St. John the Evangelist, John the Baptist: model from the Apollo'. Exhibitors like Lord Londesborough and Sir William Worsley showed items from their collections, the former busts of the twelve Caesars, the latter, a marble bust of Oliver Cromwell. The exhibition must have been regarded as prestigious since some of the exhibitors came from outside of York, for example Elkington, Mason & Co., of Birmingham who showed a 'suit of armour, after the antique' and bronze busts and statuettes, while S. Ruddock of Pimlico displayed a 'figure designed and executed for the entrance to the Westminster Palace Hotel.'⁵³

Also working in York were the three Plows: father, Benjamin, who worked in the Minster, but possibly as a mason rather than a carver. His son, William, was a master mason and he exhibited at the Great Exhibition at Hyde Park in 1851; his nephew then joined the practice and like the Fishers, their monuments are not confined to Yorkshire.⁵⁴ Another York firm was that of Waudby, whose monuments have been described as Hellenic and

heavy in design. The workshop also advertised in the 1848 Agricultural Show guide, listing 'Monuments, Figures, Tombs, etc. Showrooms for Chimney Pieces at the Steam Marble Mills, Castle Mills Bridge.'⁵⁵ All of John King's recorded work is to be found in Ripon Minster rather than in York, and is described as 'Neo-Hellenic', while the signature of John Flintoft appears on many minor monuments in York and the county.⁵⁶

Michael Taylor who moved into John Fisher's premises in Lendal was the carver whose work was closest to that of the Fishers. He did most, if not all, of the carving in Skelton Church, he worked extensively in the Minster, carving figures for the organ screen. His monuments, like those of the Fishers, are to be found beyond the borders of Yorkshire. On page 49 of the Introduction to his volume on The North Riding Pevsner rates him as the 'author of a number of very crisp tablets.'^{56A}

Among the metropolitan carvers whose work spanning the nineteenth century can be seen in Yorkshire were John Flaxman, John Bacon Jr. and Sir Richard Westmacott and his son, also Richard. Something never attempted by this generation of Fishers was Flaxman's relief style of carving. One delightful example can be seen at Bradford Cathedral, showing a bearded man reading to a boy and girl (Abraham Balme, 1796). There are several more in the West Riding: one in St. Peter's, Leeds (1811), another in Rotherham, one in Wortley, and another in Wragby.⁵⁷

John Bacon Jr. signed the monument to Lady Milner at Bolton Percy, near Tadcaster (1807). It is much more ornate and bulkier than the earlier memorial to her husband by John Fisher on the opposite wall, and includes not only an urn with a medallion but two sprays of lilies. His work is in the churches at Kirk Ella (1809) and Beverley (St. Mary's) and just over the border into Lincolnshire at Burton-on-Stather where he carved the monument to Penelope Sheffield (1808).⁵⁸

His contemporary, Sir Frances Chantrey, though completing a tremendous amount of work elsewhere, does not appear to have any examples in Yorkshire. It has been mooted, though, that the bust of Lord Fitzwilliam in Sheffield Cathedral was 'his first attempt at chiselling'.⁵⁹ An interesting link with the Fisher practice is that in 1794, after Joseph Theakston had completed his apprenticeship with John Fisher he left Yorkshire and joined the workshop of John Bacon Sr. He then worked as an assistant to John Flaxman, finally ending as drapery carver to Sir Frances

Chantrey, but also free-lancing, and in 1829 carved a marble chimneypiece and clock-frame for the Grand Hall of Buckingham Palace. His list of monumental sculptures is impressive, and largely followed the pattern set by Flaxman.⁶⁰

In 1806, when William Fisher entered the Guildhall competition to design and carve the monument to the late William Pitt, a total of thirteen designs and models were submitted. Three other unsuccessful entrants were Lawrence Gahagan (both he and his brother worked for Nollekens) and J.C.F. Rossi, who had trained the winner, James John Bubb. Lawrence Gahagan's speciality was small bronze portrait busts, and he signed monuments in Gloucester and in Buckinghamshire. Like the Fisher brothers, he too sculpted busts of Pitt, Wellington and Nelson and exhibited at both the Royal Academy and the British Institution. His brother, Sebastian, is reputed to have carved Nollekens' Cambridge statue of William Pitt, and the statues of Isis and Osiris for the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly. He also exhibited busts at the Academy and carved monuments for both St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.⁶¹

J.C.F. Rossi was a Royal Academy Gold Medallist who won an Academy Travelling Studentship which allowed him to spend three years in Rome. When he submitted a relief for the Academy Exhibition in 1788 the Council indicated that they were 'of the opinion that his time would be more properly employed in modelling than working in marble.' Perhaps heeding their advice he worked at the Coade factory in Lambeth for a time, gaining great experience in terracotta modelling. Besides the St. Pancras Church caryatids, much of his work was executed in artificial stone.⁶²

When James George Bubb won the Pitt competition, Rossi refused to provide a reference for his former apprentice, but by 1818 he was in partnership with him for the manufacture of terracotta ornaments, providing life-size figures for the London Customs House. They did not meet with popular acclaim. When Browne, who took over Bubb's business when he went bankrupt, stopped trading at the end of the 1820s, Bubb again added carving in marble to his repertoire. Like the others of this generation he exhibited at the Academy, produced busts of current notables and signed monuments in London and elsewhere.⁶³

When Charles Fisher died his son, John, carried on the business with his mother; working in York at the same time, though somewhat

younger, was G.W. Milburn, the York carver whose statue of William Etty, the artist, stands outside the City Art Gallery. Although he does not rate a mentioned in two books of reference, he studied in the City and his work is to be found in some of the major cathedrals and churches.⁶⁴

The work of the London carvers, Sir Richard Westmacott and his son, cuts across the output of both generations of Fishers in the nineteenth century, and was on a far grander scale than the simple monuments then being offered by the York workshop. For example, Sir Richard's 1828 monument to William Rawson in Halifax Parish Church is composed of an almost life-size relief of the Good Samaritan, and includes a donkey (Illustration 49), while the list of the deceased for whom they carved memorials reads like a page from Debrett.⁶⁵

During the nineteenth century the whole tenor of the workshop changed. For the first fifteen years William appears to have been the moving force, competing nationally with other carvers, exhibiting at the Adademy and branching out into busts and small decorative pieces. From c.1815 on, when Charles Fisher was running the workshop on his own, some interesting peices of carving were executed, for example, the monument to the 2nd Earl of Mexborough at Methley and the War Memorial at Sowerby in West Yorkshire (Illustration 50), so it must be assumed that the demand rather than the ability was missing.

9

Over all, as far as finance and competition were concerned, Richard's prices, compared with those of the London carvers, appear to have been modest, but possibly because larger sums for carriage would have been paid on chimneypieces carved in London for distant country residences, for example, Woburn. In comparison with other York practices, Charles Mitley was charging similar prices to Richard. During Richard's tenure of the workshop, and particularly after he moved to York in 1746, competition appears to have been negligible.

It is regretable that the number of bills covering Richard Fisher's term of ownership of the workshop do not exist for the periods when it was run by his sons and grandsons. It is almost impossible to compare the prices charged by the second generation of Fishers and those of other York craftsmen as the information seems to be non-existent. As far as the London carvers are concerned, while John Fisher was charging



Memorial to William Burg,
lay theologian, by
R. Westmacott,
York Minster (d, 1808)



Memorial to William Rawson, also
by Richard Westmacott, Halifax
Parish Church (1828)

from between £100 and £300 for a chimneypiece (Swinton and Wentworth Woodhouse), Richard Westmacott priced one of his at £160. The only information to date on the cost of monuments is that in 1784 John received £80 in payment (or perhaps part-payment) for a memorial. The number of monuments executed by the Fishers in the second half of the eighteenth century and their spread over both the county and the countryside suggests that the practice was successful in spite of any competition. What is hard to understand is John Fisher's bankruptcy, but as has been demonstrated, this fate befell other carvers.

The second generation seems to have met competition, local and metropolitan, with equanimity. It is posited that besides accepting contracts for chimneypieces which came direct to the workshop, the Fishers manufactured chimneypieces on behalf of the York architect, John Carr. The possible result of this, however, is that unless the workshop is specifically named in Carr's accounts, there is no documentary evidence to confirm this supposition.

As discussed in section 5, the prices charged for monuments executed by the third generation are not known. More information is available about the prices set by the practice for busts, but the average price for a cast was between £4 and £5, and the chances were pretty slim of the workshop emulating Joseph Nollekens' figure of 'upwards of six hundred casts taken at six guineas each' for William Pitt's death mask - the difference between the patronage of a provincial as opposed to a metropolitan workshop.

A study of the local trade directories published in the middle of the nineteenth century show that with the coming of the cemetery Charles Fisher is the only sculptor listed in York, but the number of stone masons has increased ten-fold. So indeed a changing picture is presented.

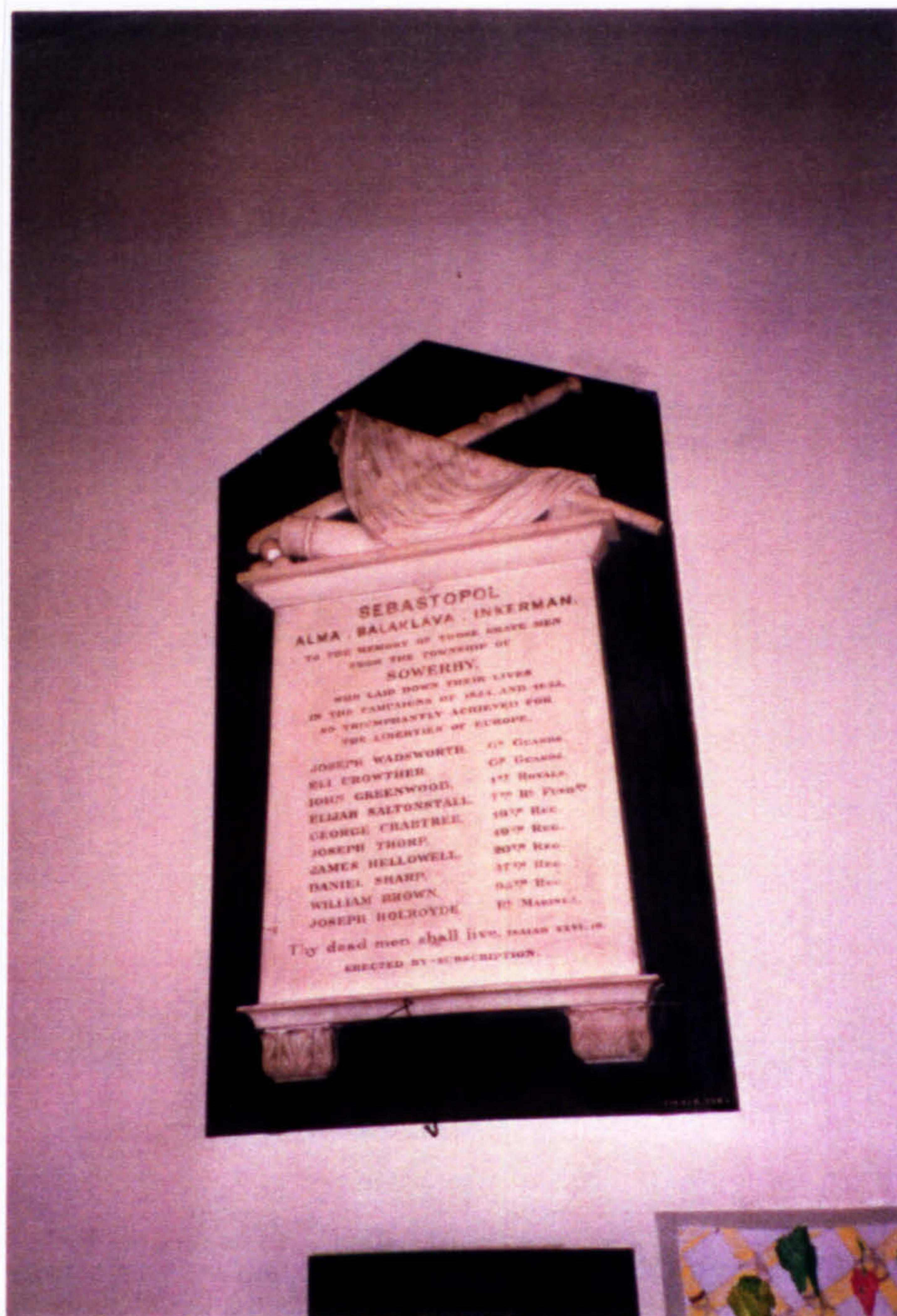


Illustration 50
 War Memorial by Charles Fisher at St, Peter's Church, Sowerby,
 West Riding, in memory of men lost in the Crimean War, dated 1856

Chapter 5

References and Footnotes

- 1 Slingsby papers, DD56, Account Book entries, 1729 and 1731. YAS Archives
1A Vyner MSS, VR286, Bundle C, No. 38. There are several slips attached to the account of
December 10th 1750, which amend the sums charged, WYAS,
2 Vyner Records, VR 286, Bundle A (part 1), No. 25, Bundle B (part 2) Nos. 12, 33 and 44,
Bundle C, No. 38. VR 287, Ledger entries 1732-1735. WYAS
2A Vyner MSS, VR 286, Bundle C, No. 38. Fisher's bill of 10th December 1750 shows he was paid
14s 9d, for 'nails and making 11 packing cases'. WYAS,
3 Wolterton Hall Archives, Fisher Letters, Reference 8/21. Letter from Richard Fisher to
Horatio Walpole, 21st April 1738,
4 Temple Newsam Archives, TN/CA/13/68, p. 4 Account Book, p. 15, parcel 7, box 4. WYAS
5 Temple Newsam Archives TN/CA/13/68, folios 40 and 40f, WYAS
6 Nostell Priory Papers, NP 1530/4. Bill dated 11th May 1752. WYAS,
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vol. 82, (Leeds, 1980), pp. 157-166. There were 28 pages of accounts covering the building
of the Mausoleum. In 1791 Thomas Waterworth was paid for gilding the inscription on the
statue's pedestal.
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pp. 56-65,
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22 Esdaile, K.A., *English Monumental Sculptors since the Renaissance*, (London, 1927), pp. 144-
145,
23 Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", p. 430,
24 *ibid.*,
25 Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", p. 436,
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27 *op.cit.*, pp. 91-96,
28 *op.cit.*, pp. 326-329,
29 *op.cit.*, pp. 384-385,
30 Murray, H., *This Garden of Death*, (York, 1982) p. 15,
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- 36 *op.cit.*, p. 314. His charges seem moderate since 16 cherubin heads cost only £11.
- 37 Royal Commission for Historical Monuments, *York, An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York; Central Area* (London, 1981) pp. 100-102
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- 55 Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", pp. 228-229 & p. 152.
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- 56A See; Committee of Leases Minute Book, February 1802 E101/367, York City Archives, Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", p. 381. Morrell, *York Monuments*, p. 122
- 57 Pevsner, N., *Yorkshire, West Riding*, pp. 123; 199; 311; 420; 559; Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors* p.147-152, & Esdaile, "Sculptors and Sculpture", vol. 35, pp. 92-93.
- 58 Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", pp. 28-31. See also; Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p. 313. After 1808 it is suggested that his workshop was under the management of the Mannings 'for the mass production of wall monuments'.
- 59 Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", pp. 91-96.
- 60 Esdaile, "Sculptors and Sculpture", vol. 36, pp. 79-82. See also; Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", p. 384-385
- 61 Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", pp. 161-162.
- 62 *op.cit.*, pp. 326-328.
- 63 *op.cit.*, pp. 66-68.
- 64 Morrell, *York Monuments* p. 122.
- 65 Gunnis, "Dictionary of British Sculptors", pp. 422-429.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis has been to provide a wider knowledge of the evidence available on how a provincial sculptor ran his workshop in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In 1746 Richard Fisher set up his practice in York and it functioned in the City until the death of the last working member, John III, in 1884. The thesis has considered the workshop from several different angles: patronage, its place in relation to other luxury businesses operating in the City, biographically, and how it functioned artistically and economically. It is supported by an illustrated Catalogue contained in three volumes.

1

The pattern of patronage changed markedly between 1729 and the last decades of the nineteenth century. As far as is known, Richard worked exclusively for the aristocracy and the landed gentry of the county. His first patron was Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven Hall. Among the carver's other patrons were John Aislable, the disgraced Chancellor of the Exchequer, who retreated to Studley Royal, and William, his son, both Members of Parliament for Ripon and deputy Lieutenants of the West and North Ridings. In spite of being dismissed from the service of Horatio Walpole at Wolterton, almost certainly because of rivalry on the part of local craftsmen in Norfolk, Sir Henry Ingram of Temple Newsam and Sir Rowland Winn of Nostell Priory continued to offer their patronage, while Richard returned to Studley Royal on many occasions.

While John Fisher was in control of the workshop in the second half of the eighteenth century he became a member of the Rockingham Club. This was formed in York in 1753 and supported the Whig ideas of its founders, the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham and his great friend, Sir George Savile. Whether John joined for political reasons or for the good of the workshop is not known, but it afforded him an *entrée* into a circle where he would meet not only the nobility, the gentry and members of parliament, aldermen and clerics, but professional and tradesmen of the growing 'middling class'. They were all sources of possible patronage, particularly since there is no evidence that Fisher mixed with the racing fraternity or the social set attending functions at the Assembly Rooms, nor that he joined a masonic Lodge.

During the period the workshop was being run by John and Samuel and then by John on his own, patronage for monumental sculpture was largely from members of the aristocracy and gentry. Since many of the Yorkshire families were linked by marriage and intermarriage, it is possible to see demonstrated through the Catalogue a pattern of patronage which suggests that the workshop benefited from families' recommendations. Neither did the practice work solely for members of the established church; the Fishers were also commissioned by William Constable of Burton Constable in the East Riding, who, on account of his Catholicism, was unable to hold public office.

Where interior decorative work was concerned, the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham was one of the workshop's clientele, but much of this work appears to have come either directly from or through recommendations by the York architect, John Carr.

In the nineteenth century the nobility and gentry still patronized the workshop, and at least one Member of Parliament, but also a growing number of clergymen's widows, their families and even their congregations. In the main monuments tended to become far less ornate, whoever the patron, though there were exceptions, for example the temple-like memorial to the Earl of Mexborough (1830).

However, visits I have made to Bradford Cathedral and Halifax Parish Church serve to emphasise the fact that the successful industrialist families like the Listers - the *nouveaux riches* of the Industrial Revolution, were turning to the metropolitan carvers for their monuments. In many cases these were similar to the large monuments popular in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, with seated or free-standing figures, or panels carved in high relief (see Illustration 49). The fact that many were executed by London carvers suggests that there was a certain 'social' value attached to them, and that by-passing 'local' workshops established the financial position of the deceased and his place in society.

By the time of the opening of the cemetery in York in 1837, the majority of monuments from the Fisher workshop were carved for a greater number of the general public, as were the gravestones. However, the old skills of the workshop were still called for when, for example, it was

commissioned to carve the war memorial for Sowerby Church in the West Riding, commemorating men lost in the Crimean War (see Illustration 50).

Country house patronage during the nineteenth century has been more difficult to establish. The decorative motifs on many chimneypieces in the last decade of the eighteenth century were mass-produced and applied to simple pine frames which the workshop would have supplied; this practise continued into the new century. Scant information is available about marble chimneypieces. It is possible that those at the new hall at Ganton, built for the Legard family in 1866-68, could have come from the York workshop since, according to his obituary notice, Charles Fisher Jr., the architect son of Charles, was involved. There is a certain similarity between the shape of that in the Drawing Room at Swinton and those in the Drawing Room at Ganton Hall.

2

In the eighteenth century particularly, York remained a City with little supporting industry, but as the 'Capital of the North' it was the social centre for a large area. During Assize and Race weeks particularly it was the mecca of entertainment, with assemblies, balls, concerts and, of course, racing on the Knavesmire, when cockfights and mains of stags added spice to the proceedings. It has been found that on these occasions in Bath (and there is no reason to suppose that it would have been any different in York) local carvers presented their trade cards to visitors staying at the local hosteleries. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century the Fishers workshop was in the centre of town. At first it was situated in Breary's Court. Here it was near the Assembly Rooms, close to the post-office, and to the York Tavern, the Black Swan and The George. The first two serviced the mail and post-coaches, with the latter monopolizing the post-chaise travellers.

Later the workshop moved to Lendal, opposite *Bluitt's Inn*, where the gentry, aristocracy and royalty stayed. The Judges' Lodgings were just round the corner. Thus the workshop was ideally situated to catch the passing trade but close to the shops supplying other luxury goods - the jewellers and goldsmiths, the tea and coffee merchants, perfumers, the clerical outfitters, upholsterers and wallpaper warehousemen. Feasegate was the home of William Ety, the York artist, from the age of 3-11, between 1790 and 1798. Alexander Gilchrist, his biographer, writes of the

'busts at a sculptor's window in Lendal, whereat he would, while on errands, stop and gaze'. It would seem, therefore, that the Fishers were sited at the hub of the city, accessible for the sale of their expensive goods in exactly the same way as the other luxury traders, but that they too had a window in which to display their wares.

3

Biographically it has been possible to chart the working lives of most of the members of the family, and thus at least some of the pattern of work in the practice. There are still blanks to be filled in but the picture is now substantially clearer than before. The interesting feature is that the sons of each generation provided continuity throughout the life of the workshop, both technical and managerial. A family-run provincial sculpture workshop of this sort is somewhat at odds with a metropolitan practice where, in the nineteenth century, the carver often only provided a sketch or model, the craftsmen producing the finished article. Some mechanical processes had been introduced in the previous century but now less and less was required of the master sculptor, particularly in London. This resulted in poor work being executed by the studio. Richard Westmacott, John Bacon Jr. and John Flaxman seem to have been the worst offenders. Not only did they accept an enormous amount of work, but duplicated designs and produced pedestrian conventional monuments, a criticism which could never be levelled at the Fishers in the eighteenth century, and infrequently in the nineteenth.

4

With regard to design, during the period covered by the functioning of the workshop there was a shift in styles from the Baroque to the Rococo to the Neo-Classical. These changes can be seen both in the ornamental and monumental work of the Fishers. First came the decorative carving of Richard Fisher, combining the late Baroque (with his use of pediments, architectural motifs and floral swags) and the gentler, curving, more feathery lines of the Rococo. Some of Richard's work could be said to encapsulate the ideas of Hogarth: 'Nature in shells, flowers, etc. affords an infinite choice of hints.'² This can be seen particularly in his chimneypieces at Temple Newsam.

The earliest examples of the monumental output of John and Samuel continued to display architectural motifs and floral decorations but

these gave way to neo-classical ornamentation and indicated that the workshop was quick to respond to the interest being shown in neo-classicism³ However, this change does not seem to have taken place so swiftly where chimneypieces and interior ornamentation of doorcases, etc. were concerned, and the use of the classical mouldings favoured by Richard, continued throughout the eighteenth century.

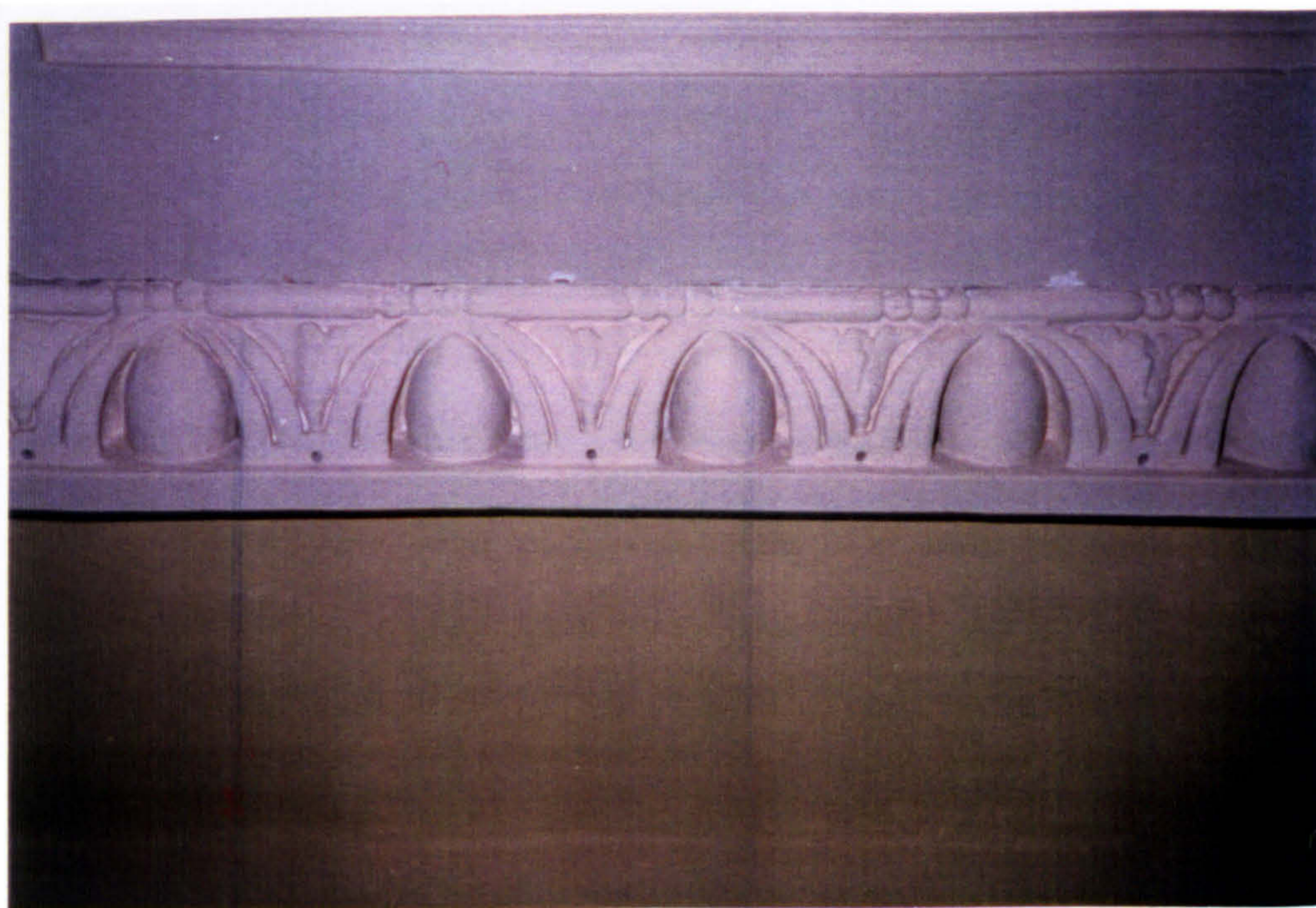
One of the major differences between the earlier Rococo monuments and the Neo-Classical can be seen in the type of lettering used - the Rococo was serif, with the long 's' and the italic form, while the classical tends towards sans-serif letters and great clarity in presentation. At the same time *memento mori* and floral decorations disappeared from the monuments, their place being taken by rams' heads and corn husks, while sarcophagi were supported on cloven feet instead of lions' pads. Further shifts in style and patronage meant that by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century many of the monuments were simple white marble inscription tablets on a black base. Even here the variations to be found in the earlier monuments still pertained. This was equally true of the designs used for the gravestones found in York cemetery - none is an exact copy.

5

As far as sculptural technique was concerned, the figure sculptures of the first and second periods of the workshop show that the carvers needed, and possessed, more than a rudimentary knowledge of human anatomy. They also used the appropriate techniques for handling different details - for instance, intricate, fine carving for draperies, flowers and beaded mouldings, with bolder, denser use of the chisel for architrave mouldings (Illustration 51). The workshop's lettering was almost invariably of the highest quality. Recently, when the figure of 'Justice' was on the ground for restoration, it was possible to subject it to close examination. Normally situated, with the lion and unicorn, on the pediment and cornice of the Assize Courts in York, it could be seen that the workshop appreciated that at that height simplicity of treatment and depth of carving were required.⁴ Compilation of the Catalogue has shown that, although used only infrequently in the nineteenth century, the carving skills possessed by the earlier generations had been inherited by the sons and grandsons.



Detail from the monument to George Morewood, Alfreton



Detail of wooden moulded dado rail in the Banqueting Hall at Studley Royal

Accounts for carving carried out by Richard Fisher show that it was customary for the work to be billed annually in arrears and for the account to have been settled a year after it was presented. The Studley Royal and Temple Newsam accounts suggest that it was normal practise for craftsmen and traders to be advanced monies on account, presumably to enable them to pay their staff on a monthly, if not on a weekly basis.

Copies of correspondence show that on occasions both Richard and John had difficulty in getting paid at all, but a lack of further information has made the task of assessing the viability of the workshop almost impossible. Two bankruptcies occurred - John, in 1794, and Charles in 1824; on neither occasion does it seem that the workshop was closed or the stock sold. The Fishers were certainly not alone in having financial difficulties, since there are many examples of members of the carving fraternity in London falling on hard times, while the contemporary local newspapers published long lists of other tradespeople suffering the same fate.

The amount of work completed by the workshop over the period of its existence looks to have been substantial, but it is not possible to calculate how costs of materials, rent, rates, carriage, transport and wages compared with income. Since none of the family appear to have left wills one cannot judge whether the practice was affluent or just keeping afloat.

The thesis and the Catalogue will, I believe, add something to the knowledge of how a provincial carver's workshop operated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The purpose, perhaps for the first time through the work of one family, has been to bring together substantial evidence about this aspect of the practice of sculpture. The dictates of fashion and taste were satisfied throughout, and if in the nineteenth century the workshop's output was more mundane, this was because patronage and style changed, both in interior design and in monumental sculpture, not, as is sometimes suggested, because the skills were lacking. The Catalogue proves this point. The swing in patronage from the old gentry and aristocracy to the rising, middling-classes in the newly industrializing north who regarded London as the centre of the universe, meant that in the later years of its existence the workshop was

not called upon to execute the large-scale memorials being produced by contemporary practices in London for churches in urban parishes. By metropolitan standards York Cemetery is also sadly lacking in outstanding examples of funerary monuments. Nor, until the end of the century, is there in York any evidence of statues commemorating national heroes or local dignitaries.

On balance then, the general impression gained of the Fisher practice has been one of a more than competent workshop meeting with considerable skill the requirements of the aristocracy, the county's gentry and the professional classes. Perhaps, most importantly, in the eighteenth century particularly, a number of exceptional pieces of monumental and decorative sculpture were produced which were equal in design and execution to those emanating from London. London's loss was certainly York's gain when, as suggested in John Fisher's obituary notice, he heeded the Marquis of Rockingham's advice to quit London in favour of York, the 'capital of the North'.

Conclusions

References and Footnotes

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- 2 Hogarth, W., 'Of Parts', in *Analysis of Beauty* (London, 1753). In: B. Denvir, *The Eighteenth Century, Art, Design and Society*, (London 1983), pp. 60-61.
- 3 Hawley, Henry, In: *Neo-Classicism - Style and Motif*, (Cleveland, Ohio, 1964).
- 4 Rich, J.C., *The Materials and Methods of Sculpture*, (Oxford, 1947), p. 9.

Abbreviations

EYRCO	East Yorkshire County Records Office
NYCRO	North Yorkshire County Records Office
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Service
YAS	Yorkshire Archaeological Society
YCA	York City Archives
Beard, G., <i>Craftsmen & Interior Decorators</i>	<i>Craftsmen & Interior Decorators in England 1660-1820</i> (London, 1986)
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Esdaile, E., Notebook 25	Second 1925-1928 Notebook, Unpublished work in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California
Pevsner, N., followed by the relevant county	<i>The Buildings of England</i> (London)
RCHM	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, Shelley House, Acomb Road, York
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York Georgian Society	Annual Reports of the York Georgian Society

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Burton Constable	Constable Papers Account Book No. 4 DDCC 140/S	East Yorkshire County Records Office
Colen Campbell, Carr, Lightowler, and other architects		RIBA Drawings Drawings Collection
Grimston Archives	York Racecourse Papers	East Yorkshire County Records Office

Langley Archives	Mic. 1496	North Yorkshire County Records Office
Lowther Archives	DD/L/140	Clwyd Record Office
Monument to Wm. Pitt	Misc. MSS 207.6	Corporation of London Records Office
Newby Hall	NH2860, NH2884 & V5567 (301/7)	West Yorkshire Archives Service
Nostell Priory	NP1530/4	" "
Sanderson's Will	Document Prob. 11/1311, C/9378	Public Record Office
Slingsby Papers	Ref: DD56/DD148	Yorkshire Archaeological Society
Studley Royal	VR286/VR287	West Yorkshire Archives Service
Swinton	ZS Mic. 2290	North Yorkshire County Records Office
Temple Newsam	TN/EA/13/68 & Pawson MSS	West Yorkshire Archives Service
Thirsk Hall	Bell Archives	North Yorkshire County Records Office
Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments	Steward's Letters 6(iv) & 6(v)	Sheffield Public Library
Wolterton Hall	Fisher Letters	Wolterton Hall
York Assize Court	Mic. 106, Quarter Sessions & Mic. 2198	North Yorkshire County Records Office