

Performing the Country House: The  
Architectural, Spatial and Social Evolution  
of the Theatre in Chatsworth House,  
1823-1907

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# Abstract

The historic private theatre in Chatsworth House is little understood by visitors and scholars alike. Despite their presence in a number of country houses across the country, country house scholarship makes scant reference to theatres or theatricals in the 19th century, while the room's location in a tower at the end of the North Wing makes it only sporadically accessible to visitors. Yet, the ubiquity and diversity of private performance entertainment through the 19th century is a burgeoning topic in Theatre History and historic houses across the country are unearthing histories of the practices at their sites. This thesis, a result of a Collaborative Doctoral Award with the Chatsworth House Trust, offers a bridge between these parallel research areas through an exploration of the architectural, spatial and social evolution of the Theatre at Chatsworth from 1823 to 1907. It aims to understand how the room speaks both to the rest of the house and estate, and to key concerns in country house scholarship.

The thesis employs a buildings archaeology methodology with deep archival research to establish the architectural and socio-cultural origins of the Theatre building and understand the reflexive relationship between historical people, the spaces of the building, and the routes navigated by way of access. This approach unveils the presence of a broader diversity of people in these spaces than previously acknowledged, and characterises the Theatre building as having a strong relationship with the wider estate. In so doing, the findings challenge established paradigms in country house studies and offer new ways for thinking about communities - historic and contemporary - and the country house.

# COVID-19 Impact Statement

Research for this PhD project began on 1st January 2020. On 23rd March 2020, the United Kingdom entered its first national 'lockdown' in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This event, subsequent restrictions and the variable responses of cultural institutions impacted the planned scope and direction of this project. Two concrete examples are given here, followed by the adaptations made to accommodate them.

Firstly, the original project plan involved scoping other extant private theatres in the UK, and any archive collections associated with them, to assess the utility of a comparative study or to contextualise Chatsworth's theatre nationally. With the national restrictions in place, all cultural sites were forced to close their doors to the public. Moreover, the extent to which private theatres and theatricals can be researched through publicly-accessible digital data is limited: relevant, original material is most often found in collections of ephemera, such as scrapbooks, or captured in lines of account books (Coates 2020). Rarely do cataloguing practices identify these items as containing theatrical material; even more rarely are these kinds of material digitised. Neither private theatres, nor the archival collections that hold traces of associated theatrical activity were feasibly available to visit until May 2021 at the earliest.

Secondly, an early consideration for the project was how the presence of Chatsworth's Theatre might be used as a lens through which to explore theatrical practices - historical or contemporary - in historic houses more broadly. The intention was to experience current theatrical, or performed, interpretive interventions at a range of historic house sites while seeking to contextualise any analysis in relevant critical frameworks. As with visiting other private theatres, this became impossible following the national restrictions.

However, access to the spaces and archives at Chatsworth was made possible from September 2020 onwards, albeit in ways that were controlled and limited. Consequently, the project adapted to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic by leaning into this availability and taking a deep and detailed dive into the site of Chatsworth: the space of the Theatre and those spaces leading to and around it; the surrounding geography of the area; the relationship between some of Chatsworth's staff and the spaces they inhabit as part of their working lives; and, the extent to which the archives speak to the history of the Theatre. Familiarity with other extant theatres or collections of material relating to private theatricals was gained through subsequent research trips - one of which was delivered digitally via Zoom - or informal interviews with curators. While an academic line of enquiry into performed interpretation at historic houses was relinquished, the possibility of the country house as a site of performance, in a looser sense of the word, remained alive in my intellectual imagination; the idea lingers in this study as scent lingers in a room even after the body has left.

The result is a close reading of Chatsworth's Theatre, its associated spaces and the archive material that best speaks to the stories I sought to draw out.

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## Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. Some of the research for Chapter 2, 'A 'Room to Make a Row In': The Theatre and the 6th Duke of Devonshire, 1823-1858', was presented as an article in *Theatre Notebook*, the journal for the Society of Theatre Research in 2022 (Calf 2022). All sources are acknowledged as references. All images are the author's own unless stated otherwise. Images of archive material from the DCA are reproduced with permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

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# Preface

When I visited the Theatre in Chatsworth House for the first time in November 2018, I had an instinctive response to the space that was a product of everything that had brought me to that point. There are two experiences in particular, however, that are worth detailing here to account for some of the values, curiosity and questions that have carried me through this project and informed my approach.

The first is my background as an actor, from a family of actors. Sporadic months of my childhood were spent in theatres, doing homework in dressing rooms or watching performances from a stool by the Deputy Stage Manager's desk in the wings. I am more familiar with and intrigued by backstage spaces and behind-the-scenes communities than front-of-house ones. Family gatherings were - and still are - dominated by conversations about other actors, the job of acting, and the challenges and joys of working with new people in new places and in new ways. I then trained as an actor and practised professionally - when given the opportunity - on stage and sometimes on television. I am accustomed to engaging with the spatial and technological idiosyncrasies of a stage in order to be seen and heard, so that a performance seems as effortless as possible (where 'effortless' is desirable storytelling). It is a well-worn truism that an actor should know how to find their light. My training taught me that they should also learn how to use their voice to adapt to the changing acoustics of different stage spaces, and Peter James, the theatre director and former Principal of LAMDA, further advised us actors-in-training always to test any onstage doors we had to use. We should, he said, know how to open them, how to close them, and the effect that these actions had on the storytelling (for example, how hard could you slam a door before it would make the rest of the set shake?). These are all embodied forms of seeking to understand a stage, its attendant scenographic elements - ie. the set, lighting, costume, etc - and its relationship to the audience and auditorium. Practising them has implicitly informed my own urge to understand Chatsworth's Theatre.

Then there is the actor's curiosity to understand what it feels like to be someone else, to imagine scenarios or personal histories that account for why they say certain things or behave in certain ways. We are taught to create subtext, to conjure an idea of what a character is not saying when they do say other things, to imagine the life they lead beyond the world of the story we are telling. When we enter or exit a scene, we are encouraged to consider our character's embodied response to the space in the world of a play, to imagine where we have come from and the conditions of the space we are stepping into or out of. I do not believe actors are the only people to practise this - anyone with empathy and

imagination may see themselves as characters from their favourite books, for example, or vividly imagine themselves as anonymous people from the past as they climb the well-worn steps of a historic building. But my training and practice as an actor in these ways have consciously informed my approach to identifying individuals in archive material and considering the sensory impact of certain spaces on mood and storytelling.

The second experience to influence my engagement with this PhD project was as a campaigner for the ongoing theatrical use of a historic scene-painting studio in south London, and against its conversion to flats. The studio was built by Joseph Harker in c.1904. Harker was a prominent and successful scene painter in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He worked for some of the major theatrical managers of the period, producing work for London theatres and touring productions. Several of his children and extended family continued the business in the same studio after Joseph's death in 1927. The business underwent major changes through the 20th century but, by the time my co-campaigners and I set up the campaign, the building was still being used for theatrical ends and hosted set builders and scene painters who needed a large-scale, messy workplace with plenty of even light. We discovered that Harkers Studio, as it was known, was the longest-serving studio of its kind in London, if not the country. When we established the campaign, permission had already been granted for the studio to be converted into residential property; we knew we would be fighting a losing battle, but we felt the rewards of the effort would be worth it.

One of our key aims became to raise awareness of the work of backstage labour and the role of backstage workers in the theatrical ecology. As well as being a historical concern, this was a pressing issue for present-day theatre practitioners. Freelance performance designers, prop and costume makers, set builders and scene painters were feeling the squeeze of living in a high-cost city with little to no affordable space in which to undertake their work. Amenity societies, tasked with the care of significant historic buildings, including theatres, saw backstage activity, the buildings it had generated and the spaces it had historically employed, as outside of their remit. Harkers Studio fell between the gaps. The crux of the matter is this: when backstage work is done well, it is not noticed. Unfortunately, the demise of Harkers Studio testified that a function of this statement is that it is also frequently underappreciated and undervalued. The labour and spaces of backstage work are squeezed and undermined.

As a result of my experience with the Harkers Studio campaign, I am primed to look for evidence of backstage work and artistry and, to some extent, to argue for its value. One of the striking elements

of Chatsworth's Theatre is its surviving scenic stock, including the prominent proscenium arch. This scenery was made in 1896 - it is a direct contemporary of Harker's work, created in the same world and painted not far away from where Harkers Studio would come to be built in 1905. When I first visited Chatsworth's Theatre, I confronted my understanding of the historic business of scene painting which, until that point, had revolved around Harker and high-end commercial theatre, and I began to wonder about the bigger picture that brought high-quality scenery to a private house in the Derbyshire Dales. This thesis responds in part to the material in the archive at Chatsworth that speaks to the Theatre there, little of which covers the creation of the room's scenery. However, some awareness of the professional theatrical world of the 1890s forms the backdrop to my efforts here and an appreciation of both the skills and embodied knowledge of backstage work has informed the way I interpret the data.

# Abbreviations

CDA - Collaborative Doctoral Award

DCA - Devonshire Collections Archive, Chatsworth

DRO - Derbyshire Records Office

HV - Household Voucher

OED - Oxford English Dictionary

RA - Royal Archives

UNM - University of Nottingham Manuscripts & Special Collections

Unless otherwise stated, all archive references are from the DCA.

# 1. Introduction



Figure 1.1 A view of the Theatre at Chatsworth House. 2011. © Image taken by Paul Barker. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

## 1.1 Introduction

Chatsworth House, in north east Derbyshire, has been in the ownership of the Cavendish family, Earls then Dukes of Devonshire, since 1549. Also known as ‘the Palace of the Peak’, because of its location in the Peak District National Park, the house has long held closer comparisons to the palaces of royalty than to other country houses belonging to British nobility. The focus of this thesis is the Theatre in Chatsworth House (fig. 1.1), a space that has been somewhat sidelined in the house’s current presentation, but which for successive periods in the house’s occupation has played an important, and socially complex role in the lives of both the family and communities of the wider estate. The thesis is concerned with the architectural, spatial and social evolution of the room from its inception in the 1820s, during the tenure of the 6th Duke of Devonshire, to its final use in the lifetime of the 8th Duke in 1907. The thesis will demonstrate that the main phases of the Theatre’s use reflected the priorities of the incumbent Duke and their family. Yet, far from being the preserve of the aristocratic elite, the Theatre and its activities brought together a diversity of communities, from estate staff to tenants, and from professional theatre practitioners to local gentry.

The route taken around the house by visitors to Chatsworth is a recurrent thread throughout this thesis, as is the sequence of rooms through which they progress and the relationship of those spaces to each other. By way of an introduction to Chatsworth’s Theatre, I would like to take you on the journey of a visitor to Chatsworth today, to establish some of the geography of the house, immerse you in its splendour, and illustrate, by contrast, the surprising presence and appearance of its ‘bijou’ Theatre. In doing so, I honour and echo - albeit thinly - the efforts of William Spencer Cavendish, 6th Duke of Devonshire (1790-1858), who recorded with humour and affection the changes he made to the house in his *Handbook of Chatsworth and Hardwick* (Cavendish 1844), written in the form of a letter to his sister, Harriet. I can only aspire to the Duke’s wit and levity of tone, so I do not attempt to mimic it but rather rely on my own descriptive style.

*The stately impression begins as you approach along the curving drive: the pedimented west front of the house revealing itself from behind verdant trees, a river and sheep-studded field in the foreground and a densely-wooded hill hugging close behind. The long, low arm of the north wing extends to the left (to the north), its northernmost extremity marked by a tower and crowned with an open, temple-like attic. Once within the shadow of the house, visitor access is made via the central and largest of three grand arches, each containing filigree gates, gilded and glinting in any weather. Smiling, uniformed staff greet you here, and again following your walk down the drive, in the north sub-hall. If you are here in the colder months, a fire is lit in the grand*

*fireplace, above which hangs a large and affectionate painting of dogs or another homely scene, only adjacently related to a field sport of some kind. The atmosphere is welcoming and cosy: the ceiling is relatively low, velvet curtains in a rich red soften the edges of the sandstone doorway at the top of a shallow flight of stairs. It is a relatively modest and warm introduction to what will show itself to be a building of treasures and magnificence.*

*The visitor route is one of the longest in any British country house open to the public and, throughout, is carefully and expertly presented to speak to the artistic values of the current Duke and Duchess. From the north sub-hall, a bold, polychromatic marble floor leads your eye and sends your body down a corridor lined with smaller-scale oil paintings to emerge into a soaring hall - thus begins the magnificence of the house proper. The ceiling and walls of the hall are covered in 17th-century paintings, revealing veiled narratives to a classically-trained eye, or showing off the skill of their executors with deceiving trompe l'oeil effects; the chequered floor is polished to a high shine, testifying to the care and expertise of the house's staff; enormous windows and glazed doors open to a large internal courtyard which filters the sunlight to ensure a softer atmosphere within. Contemporary ceramics group and nestle in the stately fireplace, in chromatic dialogue with the bodies and drapery on the ceiling and in dignified contrast with the ornate, marble-topped tables that flank them. Then the route takes you along another corridor, filled with statuary ancient and new, to the dramatic, Baroque private chapel, where a contemporary, gold-plated, life-sized sculpture of a flayed saint, positioned in the curved apse of the altar, reminds us of the beauty in our base corporeality.*

*The stately drama continues from room to room, up flights of carpeted stairs, along the progressively private enfilade of the 17th-century state apartments, in which hard-soled shoes can ring out authoritatively. Then through the softly furnished, comfortable corridors bedecked with 18th-century art and furniture, in which jewel-like curtain tassels demand as much attention as the contemporary, wall-mounted pedestals crafted into ribbons from pale ash timber. Eventually, you reach the landing above the heavy, oak stairs, crowned with a glazed cupola, and are met with a triple-height wall of portraits: of individuals and groups, of family and of friends. Yet this family bought and owns all that you have seen today, and these friends are monarchs of empires. On the landing wall is a larger-than-lifesize triple portrait of three, fashionable young women almost casually arranged around a monumental urn containing an orange tree. Their relaxed demeanour, rendered with a loose application of oil paint, successfully offsets the grandeur of the other paintings. From here, you emerge outside the library, in the ante library,*

*at the 'top' of the north wing. A low, gated barrier prevents you from entering the long, sumptuous library; the rich carpet in floral pinks and blues, plump sofas and warm light from the many oversize table lamps invite only your imagination to select one of the hundreds of leather-bound books and settle down to read. Instead, the library at your back, you are permitted a view down the length of the north wing, through a series of magnificent spaces - of rooms and ante rooms - and it is now through these spaces that you walk.*

*From the ante library, into the diminutive, contained dome room, in which an installation of contemporary ceramic cylinders converses with a kneeling and veiled vestal virgin across the space in which you stand. Then, by spatial contrast, into the capacious, barrel-vaulted great dining room: the ceiling is cream and gilt and the walls are lined with red silk, the colour echoed in the cranberry glassware at each setting along the enormous dining table. Towering silverware along the centre of the table reaches up and almost touches the crystal chandelier descending from the ceiling. More portraits - rendered in oil, with dark backgrounds and gleaming gilt frames - dominate three of the four walls, while the fourth is commanded by tall windows, each theatrically swagged in sumptuous fabric of reds and golds. Polished marble columns support a Grecian-inspired entablature to frame the continuation of your route. You pass through a short but tall corridor, a door on either side and, above, a gallery, hinting at the practical, muscular nature of this space as both a former musicians' gallery and a key access route for staff. The tertiary function of the space as a respite from artistic opulence becomes clear as you move into the Sculpture Gallery.*

*Lit principally from above by large skylights, their full potential carefully controlled by shutters and blinds, the atmosphere is subdued and contemplative. The walls have been left as bare, matt gritstone, detracting nothing from the luminous, pale, figurative sculptures arranged around and through the long gallery. Lifelike, these range from reclining, mythical youths to portrait busts; all are upheld by polychromatic marble pedestals and columns in yellows, deep purples, browns and pale greens, that serve only to underpin the cool restraint of the total arrangement. Two enormous, watchful lions, draped heavily on tall plinths flank another Grecian portico at the far end of the room. You pass under their roaming eye and into the brilliance of the orangery, floodlit by daylight, as though granted leave from the underworld to enter elysium. Perhaps appropriately for the 21st century, the elysian orangery holds the happy souls of shoppers; inspirations that were ignited by the odyssey through the house are distilled into trinkets, books and edible treats, and available to take home for a price. The orangery is the gift shop. You watch*

*your fellow travellers exit this glazed hall to regather their sense of place in the presence of the expansive pleasure gardens. But you linger by the tills and the Chatsworth-branded jams at the far end of the room, waiting for your guide; you have a special ticket and your journey continues beyond the public route.*

*Your guide arrives and greets you with a smile and a large bunch of keys. She leads you to the side of the till to an enormous set of double doors that you had not previously registered. From the impressive bunch of keys, she selects something closer to a cylindrical job, uncovers the keyhole and inserts it. A small green light indicates success, the burnished handle is turned and you are led into a dim hallway with a wide staircase leading up to the left. Your guide locates a light switch and, as the harsh electric bulbs flick into glaring life, you register a number of seemingly incongruous items: a clothes rail abutting a boxed-in radiator; a thin sofa cushion sagging against a pair of enormous doors; a wooden crate covered in thick plastic, the roll of packing tape left on top. Unconcerned by these, your guide begins the ascent of the stairs, her shoes scuffing on each bare stone step as she leans on the polished wooden banister rail to motivate her movement. You notice the quality of the banister, the marble newel post recalling the columns in the Sculpture Gallery, the elegant iron spindles. As you reach the first half-landing and the staircase turns, you clock the square window, made up of smaller squares - not of glass, but of thin Blue John marble, each pane unique in its pattern and colouration.*

*Now you are through an arch, on a landing stretching the width of the staircase. Another staircase continues the ascent but you pause here, taking in yet more incongruous objects: a leggy piece of historic cinematic machinery; a theatrical model box containing perspectival shutters consistent with Baroque set design; some library steps; mobility equipment. You notice a patch of peeling paint on the wall, then, looking up the next flight of stairs, an enormous oil painting, expertly and classically rendered but now lacklustre and slightly sagging on its stretcher. These stairs turn and deliver you to the top landing, beneath a gently barrel-vaulted ceiling. With no more stairs to climb, you catch your breath. You drift over to a floor-length window to your right and look down over the gardens and your former travellers from the house: there they are, slouched in chairs and leaning over tables, sipping hot coffees from the outdoor cafe. Your breath restored, you turn from the window to yet another set of grand double doors, rattling in their surround as your guide wobbles the key in the lock. She opens one without ceremony, simultaneously remembering to flick the lightswitch which is inconveniently located some feet away. Through the swinging aperture you sense another cavernous space and doubt*

*your eyes: in the gloom, at the far end of the room, appears to be a raised stage framed by a moulded plaster and swagged fabric proscenium arch. The lights go on and the mirage is revealed to be faithful. Almost.*

*In fact, the proscenium and swagged curtain consist entirely of paint on canvas, stretched by battens. Reaching to the ceiling and dissecting the room in two, it is another trompe l'oeil effect, recalling the masterful wall paintings in the soaring painted hall. Opposite the stage, surmounting and surrounding the doors through which you have just come, is a gallery structure, with two theatre boxes beneath, each extending in curves beyond the edge of the gallery above. The timber, painted a bright white with architraves picked out in gold, is chipped in places and at odds with the sumptuous red of the walls. Large windows - two on either side of the room, with modern blue blinds drawn to keep the harsher sunlight at bay - have curtains and swagged pelmets in red with gold braiding to emulate the painted curtain of the stage. Between these, on the right hand wall, is a large fireplace, surrounded in veined, white marble and fitted with a decorated iron grate and low, wide fender. On the ceiling, a patchwork of plain, blank rectangles, separated by sumptuous decorative panels, speak of the large paintings which once occupied their spaces. Two circular, foliated light fixtures occupy the central line between these gaps, surrounded by painted roundels in which the serpentine emblem of the Cavendish family can be identified. The second of these roundels is abruptly segmented by the line of the proscenium, and closer inspection reveals the ceiling to continue only a short way beyond the proscenium, from which point it has been removed, revealing the floor joists of the temple attic above. Attached to these, and to the walls of the stage space, are various pulleys and cleats, from which hemp ropes sometimes dangle or strain. It is difficult to discern these older theatrical objects from the more contemporary interventions that have been made - black curtains of varying synthetic quality, modern stage lights clamped to metal scaffolding poles - but what is clear is that this is, or was, a fully-functioning stage. This is, or was, a theatre. Was it?*

The incongruity of this room and the stark contrast of its appearance to the careful, artistic presentation of the rest of the house raise a host of questions. To begin with, how should we make sense of this space? It is not on the visitor route, not readily-presented to the public today. There are clues that it may once have been as opulent as some of the other spaces in the house - the marble newel post, the Blue John window, the highly decorated ceiling - but it has been left to fade; it is no longer a priority. It is difficult to reconcile this room with the rest of the building. However you navigate the mansion, this room is located at its very end and almost at its very top; it does not seem to belong

to the suite of magnificent rooms seen in the rest of the north wing. It is theatre-like, yet there are elements of it that do not conform to general theatre design: the proscenium interrupts the ceiling, there is a fireplace on one side, windows line the auditorium. What was the room created for? How does it fit within the house? How has it changed over time? Who is responsible for changing it, and why? Is it an anomaly in country house design? Do other houses have theatres? If so, and also if not, what can this theatre in this house offer to wider narratives of country house histories and country house life? What does it tell us?

This thesis is the product of a collaborative project initiated by a series of people asking these same, or similar questions. The project was drawn up by the Collections department at Chatsworth with partners at the Universities of York and Sheffield, and builds on the success of supporting a previous cohort of three PhD projects which sought to understand more about servants and staff in the house and on the estate from the 18th to the 20th centuries. As with the previous cohort, it was conceived as one of two interconnected research projects, both exploring the development of Chatsworth's north wing, from its genesis in the 1820s through to today: one project concerned with the Theatre, and one the archive (referred to henceforth as the Devonshire Collections Archive, or DCA), which is predominantly stored onsite in the north wing. This context indicates a desire for Chatsworth to uncover hidden histories across the site, to understand how building and collecting at Chatsworth have contributed to the estate's identity, and to learn how both the Theatre and the DCA speak to the development of the north wing specifically. There is an implicit and mutually agreed understanding that research for this project should support Chatsworth in these endeavours, and a collaborative approach lies at the heart of how this project has unfolded. Thus, the following research questions act as my project guide:

1. How do we account for the construction and appearance of Chatsworth's theatre?
2. What role does the Devonshire Collections Archive play in uncovering narratives and voices relating to Chatsworth's theatre?
3. How does the development and use of Chatsworth's theatre complement or disrupt established architectural and social narratives, both of Chatsworth's north wing, and of country houses more broadly?
4. Finally, how might the findings from this project support or inform Chatsworth's curatorial, engagement and collaborative strategies in the future?

## 1.2 Context

### 1.2.1 Background to Chatsworth

Chatsworth is located in north east Derbyshire, in the Derbyshire Dales area of the Peak District National Park. The estate comprises the house, former stable block, 105-acre garden, and a 1,822-acre park. Within this park are the estate villages of Edensor, Pilsley and Beeley and the estate hamlet of Calton Lees. At the northern edge of the estate, abutting but outside of its border, is the small town of Baslow, and to the west lies the market town of Bakewell (fig. 1.2). Today, the house, many of its collections, and the estate are variously managed and promoted by a trust, The Chatsworth Settlement, established in 1946 in response to the challenges faced by the Devonshires in light of an economically-stretched post-war climate and high death duty taxation, and a charity, the Chatsworth House Trust, established in 1981 for public benefit (The Chatsworth Settlement 2023).



Figure 1.2 A plan of the Chatsworth Core Estate, clearly showing the relationship between the estate boundary - marked in red - and the local towns and villages. Image from the *Chatsworth Whole Estate Plan* (The Chatsworth Settlement 2023, 9).

The historic relationship between Chatsworth House and the wider estate forms one of the threads through this thesis. However, while figure 1.2 illustrates the core Chatsworth estate as it stands today, the Devonshires variously own and have historically owned, built or developed significant land holdings, businesses and property beyond this boundary, both locally within Derbyshire and further afield. Therefore, they have and have historically had vested interests in places and communities beyond the Chatsworth border that have intersected with Chatsworth's own communities and interests. These wider interests have ranged from private, personal arrangements to significant business and urban planning ventures, and have fluctuated over time according to social, economic and political circumstances and the individual concerns of the incumbent Duke and his family. The following overview of the development of Chatsworth and the key people and properties associated with it adopts a traditional, chronological, patrilineal and broadly art historical perspective on one site and, predominantly, one branch of one family. It is a whistle-stop tour through the headlines to furnish a reader with the scantest history of the estate and an idea of where else, apart from Chatsworth, the contemporary landowner might be spending their time when in Britain. However, it would be inauthentic to the detailed approach of the rest of this thesis and its interest in the porousness of the house and estate boundaries not to alert a reader to the existence of an idiosyncratic relationship between Chatsworth's historic development and the wider interests of its landowners.

As with so many stately homes, the story of Chatsworth is traditionally told through its wealthy landowners and their relationship with art and architectural design (a lens discussed further in 1.3.2 Architecture, etc). Unlike so many other stately homes, Chatsworth's story begins with a woman and remains, by virtue of patrilineal primogeniture, with her direct descendants. The origins of Chatsworth House are closely linked to Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (c. 1521/22-1608) - more commonly known as Bess of Hardwick - who, with her second husband, Sir William Cavendish, bought the manor of Chatsworth, built the first known house on the site and established the Cavendish family line, descendants of which still own (within the terms of the trust named above) and live in the house today. Bess was also responsible for the construction of Hardwick Hall, located 13 miles southeast of Chatsworth, and today widely considered one of the finest extant examples of an Elizabethan prodigy house. Hardwick remained in the ownership of the Devonshires until 1957, when it was donated to the government in lieu of death duties and two years later transferred to the care of the National Trust who continue to manage it today. Nonetheless, Chatsworth was the family's principal country seat and, while Hardwick remained for the most part unaltered, it was Chatsworth that was comprehensively remodelled in the last decades of the 17th century by Bess's great-great-grandson, William Cavendish, 4th Earl and 1st Duke of Devonshire (1641-1707), both in response to a fashion of

the time for country house building and because the original house was deemed structurally unsound (Hardwick-Kulpa 2025). Though much of the ground floor plan of the original house - organised around an internal courtyard - was retained, almost every other part of the house is understood to have been rebuilt, to the extent that the main block of the house seen today is deemed to originate from the period of the 1st Duke (fig. 1.3). During the 1st Duke's rebuilding of Chatsworth, he also purchased a property on what was to become Picadilly in London, renaming it Devonshire House. Though Devonshire House was rebuilt in 1733 following a fire, it became the family's principal London residence until its sale in 1919, following which it was demolished and the site redeveloped (Haley 2020, 13).



Figure 1.3 'A View of Chatsworth from the East' by Jan Siberechts, c. 1703. This painting shows Chatsworth House as it was some five years prior to the completion of the 1st Duke's rebuilding. (Image from <https://www.chatsworth.org/visit-chatsworth/chatsworth-estate/art-archives/devonshire-collections/paintings/view-of-chatsworth/>).

The next significant phase of development at Chatsworth was instigated by the 4th Duke of Devonshire, William Cavendish (1720-1764), who predominantly undertook changes to the park and gardens, and commissioned the construction of the extant stable block and the old north wing, later remodelled out of recognition, as discussed in Chapter 2. The 4th Duke fundamentally altered the relationship between the house and its surroundings by changing the approach to the house to come from the west, razing the historic arrangement of Edensor (visible in the upper left quadrant of fig. 1.3) to accommodate the new approach, and enclosing the land west of the river to become parkland.

The 4th Duke further commissioned the landscape designer, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-1783), to redesign this newly-established park following fashions of the time for "natural" landscapes. Beyond the bounds of the Chatsworth estate, the 4th Duke's marriage to Lady Charlotte Boyle (1731-1754) brought both significant art and architectural collections to the Cavendish family and a number of new properties and estates. Collectively known today as 'the Burlington inheritance', with this union came Lismore Castle in County Waterford, Ireland, Londesborough Hall and Bolton Abbey in Yorkshire, and Burlington and Chiswick Houses in and outside London, respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Spending more time at their other properties, William Cavendish, 5th Duke of Devonshire (1748-1811), undertook only internal redecorations to the house at Chatsworth. However, he made changes to the wider Devonshire holdings by selling Burlington House to a Cavendish relation and expanding the villa at Chiswick. Nonetheless, by 1811, when William Spencer Cavendish came to inherit the dukedom as the 6th Duke of Devonshire, he took on the estate of Chatsworth much as the 4th Duke had left it, and a clutch of other important estates, many of which would have been considered notable financial and high-status assets on their own. Chatsworth House, gardens and parkland were beloved and altered significantly by the 6th Duke in the first half of the 19th century. As will be explored in detail in Chapter 2, he commissioned the architect, Jeffry Wyatt (renamed Wyatville in 1824, and knighted in 1828 (Linstrum 2004)) (1766-1840), to remodel significant parts of the 1st Duke's house and to completely rebuild the 4th Duke's north wing. With Joseph Paxton (knighted in 1851) (1803-1865), the 6th Duke continued to rebuild the village of Edensor, begun by the 4th Duke, and remodelled the pleasure gardens. Over the course of his life, he demolished Londesborough Hall, subsequently selling the estate, made significant alterations to Lismore Castle, and purchased a newly-built Regency house in Kemp Town, Brighton.

Remaining unmarried, and consequently colloquially known as the 'Bachelor Duke', the 6th Duke of Devonshire instead cultivated a marital union between his heir - first cousin once removed, William Cavendish (1808-1891) - and one of his nieces, Lady Blanche Howard (1812-1840). Hailing from a different branch of the Cavendish family, the 7th Duke brought into the Devonshire holdings the properties of Holker Hall in Cumbria and Compton Place in Eastbourne, East Sussex. With little attachment to Chatsworth, the 7th Duke spent minimal time there, instead developing the coastal town of Eastbourne and investing in business ventures at Barrow-in-Furness, near his preferred country residence of Holker Hall. Following one of the most significant phases of development in its

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<sup>1</sup> However, due to legalities around the inheritance and the premature death of Lady Charlotte, these properties were never in the possession of the 4th Duke, but passed automatically to their first-born son, the 5th Duke of Devonshire (Haley 2020, 21).

history, then, between the death of the 6th Duke in 1858 and the death of his successor in 1891, Chatsworth remained relatively unused and undeveloped by the Devonshires. The 7th Duke's son and heir, Spencer Compton Cavendish (1833-1908), inherited Chatsworth and the dukedom at the age of 58, and eight months later married his contemporary Louisa Montagu (née von Alten), Dowager Duchess of Manchester (1832-1911), a union that resulted in her becoming known colloquially as the 'Double Duchess'. Together, the 8th Duke and Duchess reinvigorated Chatsworth, installing electricity throughout the house and hosting high-profile seasonal entertainments on a grand scale that prompted the installation of the stage in the Theatre - the room with which this thesis is primarily concerned. Though only in ownership of the estate for around 15 years, their social investments in Chatsworth have had a legacy that has withstood the hardship endured by subsequent generations of Devonshires in the face of two world wars.

Without children of his own, the 8th Duke's successor was his nephew, Victor Cavendish (1868-1938) (see Appendix A). On the 8th Duke's death, Holker Hall was bequeathed to Victor's younger brother, and remains in the ownership of a separate branch of the Cavendish family today. The 20th-century history of Chatsworth is punctuated by two world wars, inherited financial debt and national changes to the taxation system around death duties. Thus, while the 9th Duke and Duchess (Lady Evelyn Fitzmaurice (1870-1960)) undertook necessary refurbishments at Chatsworth when they took over in 1908, following the First World War Paxton's Great Conservatory was deemed too expensive to run and destroyed, and significant rare book collections, Devonshire House and Chiswick House were all sold. After a period of five years living in Ottawa, following the 9th Duke's appointment as Governor-General of Canada, the Duke and Duchess lived at Chatsworth from 1921 until the 9th Duke's death in 1938. The Dowager Duchess Evelyn relocated to Hardwick Hall to allow her son and daughter-in-law, Edward Cavendish (1895-1950) and Lady Mary Gascoyne-Cecil (1895-1988), to take over as 10th Duke and Duchess. With war breaking out in 1939, however, Chatsworth was given over to housing a girls' school from Wales, Penrhos College, who relocated to Chatsworth when their buildings were taken over by the government for the war effort. The school used almost all the rooms in the house and many spaces across the estate to undertake their regular educational activities (Park 1994; Calf 2020a). The 10th Duke's son and heir was killed in action in May 1944, and the 10th Duke died suddenly and unexpectedly in 1950. When the 10th Duke's second son, Andrew Cavendish (1920-2004), and his wife, the Hon. Deborah Mitford (1920-2014), inherited the Devonshire lands and titles, they also shouldered an unprecedented rate of death duty taxation on the 10th Duke's estates at 80%. In a bid to consolidate the estates and pay off the debt now owed to the government, the 11th Duke and Duchess gave Hardwick Hall and some of the most significant pieces of fine art and rare books to

the Treasury in lieu of cash. They also sold a number of other assets and thousands of acres of land, leaving the remainder in the ownership of the Chatsworth Settlement.

However, with this consolidation came a rejuvenation of Chatsworth. Duchess Deborah, in particular, is credited for turning the tide of fortunes for the Chatsworth estate in this period, principally by establishing a number of businesses and leaning into a view of Chatsworth as a destination for the visiting public.<sup>2</sup> Over time, Duchess Deborah converted the Orangery into a gift shop, established the Chatsworth farmyard to educate visitors on the topics of farming and food production, and opened the farm shop in Pilsley to sell produce from the estate. The gift shop used a range of furniture to display its wares which was made by the estate carpenters. Spotting an opportunity, the Duchess offered copies of this furniture for public sale, and its popularity resulted in the establishment of a furniture workshop which supported the estate carpenters and contributed financially to the wider estate. Though they have evolved to meet ongoing challenges and respond to a shifting culture of country house visiting, all of these businesses thrive today. On the suggestion of and overseen by John Oliver (1947-2024), the former Comptroller of Chatsworth, the 11th Duke and Duchess were also responsible for reinvigorating the Theatre in anticipation of screening the film adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice* (Wright 2005), part of which was filmed at the house. Until that point, they had used the Theatre as a discrete exhibition space for the display of social history objects or one-off exhibitions. It is likely that much of the appearance of the Theatre today - the white and gold boxes, the curtains, and the modern technical interventions, in particular - are the result of this 2004-'05 update.

The 11th Duke and Duchess also invested in the fabric of Chatsworth House, installing central heating and modernising some of the private apartments, including the installation of new bathrooms and the necessary attendant plumbing. However, when the 12th Duke and Duchess, Peregrine Cavendish (b. 1944) and Amanda Heywood-Lonsdale (b. 1944), took on the title and responsibilities of the peerage in 2004, a survey and first-hand experience of living in the house revealed significant necessary repairs to the main services. Further consultation also identified substantial barriers to the visitor experience and recommendations for conserving and sustaining the house's external fabric. Thus, in 2005, a major improvement project was begun. At a cost of over £32 million and spanning some 13 years, 'The Masterplan', as the project was dubbed, has been compared in its scale to the work undertaken on the house by the 6th Duke in the 1820s. The Masterplan saw, among other significant changes, a complete replacement of the house's pipework, cabling and lighting; the installation of a visitor lift,

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<sup>2</sup> See Tinniswood 2021 for further information on how other country houses responded to the post-war tourism climate.

such that the main visitor route is now wheelchair-accessible; the conservation of the stonework in the internal courtyard, any replacement for which came from the original quarry which was reopened for the purpose; and, major repairs to the roof, including the replacement of over 3,000 square meters of lead. It was in anticipation of the repairs to the lead floor of the open Belvedere that prompted the removal of the paintings from the ceiling of the Theatre beneath. During their removal, it was discovered that the paintings' fixtures were unsound, with the result that their replacement is likely to be far more costly and complex than their removal.

In an unprecedented move, at the time of writing, the 12th Duke and Duchess are in the process of relocating to a house in Edensor in order to hand over strategic governance of Chatsworth - and their living quarters - to their son, William Cavendish (b. 1969), and daughter-in-law, Laura Roundell (b. 1972), within the lifetime of the 12th Duke. Lord and Lady Burlington, as the future Duke and Duchess are titled, have already overseen the establishment of a not-for-profit arts organisation at the Devonshire property of Lismore Castle, and it is likely that they will wish to make their own mark on Chatsworth. Having already shown support for the public-facing outcomes of this PhD project, and with a desire to open up more spaces of the house to visitors, there is a foundation to hope that this thesis will inform a renewal of Chatsworth's Theatre.

### 1.2.2 Literature on the Theatre at Chatsworth

Within the narrative of the evolution of Chatsworth, as outlined above, the Theatre has occupied an outlying position that reflects its location in the House at the end of a wing and beneath the more eye-catching Belvedere. Accounts or mentions of the room appear in a range of both published and unpublished sources to varying degrees of detail, but the authority with which certain, inaccurate accounts have held over later, more accurate ones have conspired to conjure something of an enduring mystery around its evolution and historical use, which I hope this thesis in its entirety will thoroughly redress. Here, I aim to map out where and how these inaccuracies have arisen through the principal sources of information on Chatsworth's Theatre. The most recent, scholarly work on Chatsworth's Theatre has been a significant touchstone for this thesis, and I will therefore explore it in more depth, drawing out contextual information pertinent to the rest of this work.

The text to which so much scholarship on Chatsworth's history refers is Francis Thompson's definitive *History of Chatsworth* (1949), shortened and republished as a handheld guide to the house under the title, *Chatsworth A Short History*, in 1951. Thompson was Keeper of the Devonshire Collections for over 30 years until his retirement in 1953 and the subtitle of his earlier publication reveals the authoritative source from which he drew, 'being a supplement to the sixth Duke of Devonshire's handbook' - the

same handbook to which I referred in 1.1 Introduction. In both histories of Chatsworth, Thompson describes the room which now houses the Theatre thus: 'This figures in the *Handbook* as 'the Banqueting or Ball-room'; but it was fitted as a Theatre, with stage, boxes and a gallery, from the first. Only its name has been changed' (Thompson 1951, 106). While the boxes and gallery *are* consistent with the early phase of construction of the room in the 1830s (a topic I explore in detail in Chapter 2), the stage was not installed until the 1890s (see Chapter 3) - an evolution of use that this thesis examines and which is central both to understanding Chatsworth's own history of entertainment and to validating the ongoing wider practice of private theatricals through the 19th century, a central issue discussed in the Literature Review (1.3.3 Entertainment).

It took over 50 years for Thompson's mistake to be redressed in print: in a 2002, expanded edition of Duchess Deborah's own response to the *Handbook*, originally published in 1982, she recalled, 'the permanent stage, proscenium and complicated pulleys to manage the backdrops are thought to be of the 1890s' (Cavendish 2002, 228). However, by this time, both a seminal text on private theatricals by Sybil Rosenfeld (1978) (covered in 1.3.3 Entertainment) and a definitive biography of Jeffrey Wyattville, architect of Chatsworth's north wing, had been published, both reinforcing Thompson's assertion that the stage was contemporary to the original fit up of the room (Linstrum 1972, 158). Such was the confidence with which Wyattville's biographer placed in Thompson's account, he even hypothesised the painter of the proscenium arch and front cloth to be John Crace, the artist responsible for the infill decoration on the Theatre's ceiling (*ibid.*). Frustratingly, despite being well aware of the later installation of the stage, in the earlier editions of her account, Duchess Deborah fails to mention it (Cavendish 1987, 196), leaving Thompson's mistake to endure.

Yet, even a casual examination of the proscenium in Chatsworth's Theatre shows the removal of the ceiling behind it to be of a later date than the ceiling itself: Crace's decorative ceiling panels have been crudely interrupted by the cut-away. So, why did Thompson - immersed in the spaces and collections of Chatsworth for decades - make such a misstep in his assertion? The principal cause likely lies in the playful ambiguity of his source material. In his *Handbook*, the 6th Duke describes the room that now houses the Theatre, thus: 'Now for the Ball-room, by some called Banqueting-Room—or better, the room to make a row in. It is especially the theatre of Charades' (Cavendish 1844, 116). He goes on to state that, '[t]he private boxes look very well when inhabited, and full of people and whist-tables,' and to explain that, '[a]t the Queen's ball, a platform was raised for her at the West side, and the window was suppressed, the recess being filled with drapery of white tissu de verre' (Cavendish 1844, 116-117). It is possible that, taken with the presence of the stage at the time of writing his *History*,

Thompson interpreted the Duke's ebullient description of the space as 'the theatre of Charades' quite literally. Certainly, he could accurately infer that the boxes were a creation of the 6th Duke, and he may have conflated all the uses of the room to which the Duke alludes into one fixed space. There is also a possibility that Thompson interpreted the raised platform, erected on the occasion of a visit by Queen Victoria to Chatsworth in December 1843 (DF4/3/2/6), as the stage which stands today, since both occupy the west end of the room and require the 'suppression' - or, covering - of the large window at that end. I elaborate in detail on the 6th Duke's construction and use of the room in Chapter 2 but, above all, what is clear from Thompson's misapprehension is that any interpretation of a built space ought to consider the space itself alongside any historical documents pertaining to it.

It was through an examination of both the extant historic scenery stored on the Theatre's stage and the archival documents that related to it, that theatre historian, David Wilmore, came to recognise in 2005 the basic chronology of the stage's development and the significance of the scenic stock. Though published three years after Duchess Deborah's later reminiscences, Wilmore's article in *Country Life* magazine has arguably had more bearing on valuing the room's historical significance than the Duchess's testimony (Wilmore 2005). With a background in Victorian stage machinery and historical stage functionality (Wilmore 1989, 2025), Wilmore was able to contextualise both the historic scenery and painted proscenium arch as rare survivors from the studio of William Hemsley (1850-1918) and the existence of the stage itself as compared to contemporaries at Capesthorpe Hall, Cheshire, and Craig-y-nos in Powys, Wales. In so doing, Wilmore categorically refuted Thompson's misdating of the stage, any lingering confusion due only to the authority Thompson's texts still hold over Chatsworth's history.

#### An Important Piece of Research

Wilmore's article focuses on the late-19th-century context of the Theatre and, as such, testifies to the common practice of private theatricals through that century and the frequent adaptation of existing buildings to house them. It is this same phase of activity with which the most comprehensive work on Chatsworth's Theatre to date deals: a Masters by Research dissertation, *Private and Amateur Theatricals at Chatsworth House, 1880-1914*, submitted by David Coates in 2010. Coates included a sample of this research in his subsequent PhD thesis, completed in 2017, which expanded both the temporal scope and subject of his earlier work, covering various arenas of amateur theatre through the 'long' 19th century, from 1789 to 1914 (Coates 2017). His ongoing research in this field at the University of Warwick makes a significant contribution to the study of historical amateur theatrical practices and, as such, is considered more broadly within the Literature Review (1.3.3 Entertainment

and 1.3.5 Archives). This section is concerned only with his findings as presented in his 2010 dissertation.

In some ways, Coates's dissertation addresses many of the questions raised in the Introduction here. However, due to a turnover of staff at Chatsworth, the existence of his work was overlooked when the outline for this project was initially drawn up. Having rediscovered his dissertation, my research project partly evolved in response to what he had covered to avoid duplicating his findings. Therefore, this thesis complements Coates's research, but it also develops some of his points of exploration and, in the main, draws on different source material to contribute an entirely original perspective on the Theatre at Chatsworth by virtue of its methodology and epistemological point of view. Furthermore, this project has had the advantage of time and a collaborative relationship with Chatsworth, permitting deeper explorations of both the Theatre itself and the archive that tells some of its story.

However, as a result of this thesis speaking to Coates's 2010 work, there is some key information that Coates outlines that is useful to be aware of when reading Chapters 3 to 5. I would like to draw a reader's attention to two particular aspects: the first is the wider culture of amateur performance in which Chatsworth's 1890s stage was installed, and the second is one of the key people involved in the productions produced thereon.

Addressing the first point, Coates locates the high-status Chatsworth theatricals in a wider, but local context of visual and entertainment culture and amateur performance (2010, 31-47). This culture included educational exhibitions that employed theatrical tropes to entertain visitors, penny lectures and penny readings, the latter constituting miniature concerts with varied programmes, including the performance of entire, one-act plays. Penny readings brought together a variety of performers from across the local middle classes, including tenants and staff from the Chatsworth estates, and Coates characterises these events as entertaining ways to spend time with friends and acquaintances for the pleasure of a similar audience. Coates further identified a significant history of dramatic activity taking place in the Carriage House in the Chatsworth stable block in the 1880s and '90s, including plays staged by nieces and nephews of the 8th Duke, as well as local and estate residents. The instances of amateur dramatic activity identified by Coates testify to a rich and sustained culture of performance, enjoyed by a broad range of local society, in which the theatricals in Chatsworth's Theatre can arguably be seen to belong.

The second aspect of Coates research I wish to highlight here is the role of Leo Trevor in the management and performance of Chatsworth's theatricals from 1896 to 1907. In Chapter 3, I discuss Trevor in relation to the nuanced network of Chatsworth's theatrical management in this period which complicates the ways in which country house and estate life are so often presented. However, since my research is more concerned with voices from Chatsworth's own staff and estate - and since Coates has already written about Trevor's role in some depth - I do not discuss him in detail. Therefore, here I summarise Coates's findings on Trevor, by way of an introduction to him.

In many ways, Trevor can be seen as a semi-professional playwright of the period, as well as the chief organiser of the performers of Chatsworth's theatricals - and private theatricals in other venues. His play, *Doctor Johnson*, premiered at Chatsworth before going on to be performed in the public theatre by the company of Arthur Bouchier, and he wrote further plays both for Chatsworth and for the commercial stage (Coates 2010, 90-91). It is in no small part thanks to Trevor's own published recollections of Chatsworth's theatricals that Coates was able to provide an outline of their undertaking, and the anecdotes included therein remain potent for the detail and colour they provide (Trevor 1898, 1903). For his role in organising Chatsworth's theatricals, Coates credits Trevor as akin to an actor-manager, overseeing the selection, casting and rehearsal of the programme, and Trevor's published writings support this view. He was also a regular performer in the same programme, and newspaper accounts testify to his role providing a comic counterpoint to the more traditionally dramatic performances of his female co-stars. By tracing their points of professional intersection, Coates proposes that Trevor was responsible for bringing in the stage manager, Alexander Stuart, to oversee the more practical aspects of Chatsworth's theatricals, and it is on this relationship that part of Chapter 3 of this thesis expounds.

Coates's Masters dissertation covers significant ground on the topic of Chatsworth's theatricals in the 1890s and 1900s, and is recommended as a useful resource on the subject alongside Wilmore's 2005 article. However, this focus on the Theatre's Victorian/Edwardian context overshadows the room's previous life, from the circumstances of its inception to the contexts in which it functioned. An ongoing lack of scrutiny of this earlier period risks perpetuating the myths and misunderstandings put forward by Thompson and reinforced by subsequent texts, as outlined above. To understand the Theatre's place in the house more broadly, we need to attend to its origins. Furthermore, with a principal focus on the perspective of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, their family and aristocratic guests, there remain significant gaps in the late-19th-century research presented by both scholars, not least a

meaningful representation of those that worked backstage and a consideration of how the theatricals intersected with broader themes in country house scholarship.

A key distinction between Coates's approach and the one taken here is perhaps best articulated by reference to our respective disciplines, albeit acknowledging the porousness of both. While Coates's work is rooted in Theatre History, with an historiography broadly drawn from studies of texts and performance, this thesis is born from Buildings Archaeology and is more concerned with understanding the Theatre in its architectural and spatial contexts of the country house, and how these speak to country house histories and narratives. As such, and influenced by the availability of material in the archive at Chatsworth as well as the content of Coates's research, this thesis does not in the main consider any onstage action - ie. the repertoire, the players, or the processes connected therein, such as choosing, writing or casting the plays, or the ways in which they were rehearsed.

However, there are some terms and practices relating to onstage action that this thesis does mention - and has mentioned - that bear elaborating on. Charades, *tableaux vivants* and private theatricals, as they were undertaken through the 19th century, are forms of performance entertainment that have broadly fallen out of common theatrical or parlour practice - or evolved beyond recognition. It would be useful here to explore their practice so the reader can picture the extent of involvement, both on and offstage.

### 1.2.3 Charades, Tableaux Vivants and Private Theatricals

As mentioned at the end of the previous subsection, charades, *tableaux vivants* and private theatricals were all variously employed as forms of performance entertainment in country houses throughout the 19th century, including at Chatsworth - both in the Theatre and elsewhere in the House. The main body of this thesis is not concerned with onstage activity, and the study finds that the use of the Theatre at Chatsworth changed through the course of the 19th century, with performance entertainment constituting only part of that use. However, the discussions and arguments put forth are predicated on a general understanding of charades, *tableaux vivants* and private theatricals that has been gleaned, in the main, through immersion in the archive at Chatsworth and contextualised through some secondary and primary printed sources. Some of the findings in this thesis therefore sit on a bedrock of - and draw from - basic knowledge of these performance forms and their possible scope of demands on human, spatial and material resources within the country house context.

The process of learning more about these forms of performance entertainment identified a gap in their explanation between basic dictionary definitions and a scattering of in-depth academic articles

that problematise individual case studies.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, as I touch on in the Literature Review, rarely do articles springing from the field of Theatre Studies attend to the practical or technical circumstances of historic private performance forms. Such a gap risks being filled with assumptions of the demands of each form in the country house context. Therefore, I venture that it is helpful for a reader to be equipped with a similar level of understanding as I am to know what knowledge-base I am drawing from. However, with only the scantest scholarly resources to explain the practical circumstances demanded by each performance form, it is necessary to draw on primary material from the Chatsworth archive to establish this. The following subsections therefore discuss each form individually with reference to original research, as well as the available secondary source material, and they are presented in the order in which they come into the story of the development of the Theatre at Chatsworth.

### Charades

The charades we know today, wherein a player must silently act out each syllable of a word or phrase and have each guessed in turn - and in completion - by the remaining party, are a shadow of their 19th-century forebear. From the 1830s, or thereabouts, 'acted charades' became increasingly popular in British domestic contexts, forging a form of private performance that was new to the 19th century and distinct from its French counterpart, which remained a purely literary or verbal form of riddling wordplay (Bryan 2002, 32). As with the game today, British acted charades required the performers to act out the composite syllables of a word and have their audience deduce the word as a whole. However, each syllable was performed as a spoken, scripted scene, with a number of players taking on the various characters required. Each scene need not be related to each other in tone, period or style, but the final scene represented the word in its entirety. Emily Bryan describes acted charades as, 'a hybrid form that incorporated elements of drama and game' (2002, 32) and this is exemplified through the process to stage them: charades in this period might be devised and written by the group of participants, as a means to demonstrate playful wit and exercise authorial abilities, or consist of a rehearsed staging of a pre-scripted performance. Publications of charade dramas to aid with the latter approach became available from the middle of the 19th century, and these often included tips on how to stage them. An 1860 publication concedes that the convenience of a raised stage and its attendant fittings may not be available to all its readers, in which case,

[t]he best alternative will be in an arrangement of moreen or woollen curtains for the proscenium, with two large ones, running upon a rod, for an act drop, meeting in the centre of the stage, and to be drawn to and fro by a person on each side. The back scene

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<sup>3</sup> See Bryan 2002, Campbell 2019 and Jordan 2019, all of which are referenced in the following sections.

may be formed by other curtains, to open in the centre and at each side, or more simply by two large screens, the last folds of which will make capital centre doors.' (Pickering 1860, 4)

The writer of this advice also suggests that a sign may be suspended from one of the curtain rails, detailing the setting of the scene, avoiding the need for elaborate scenery. The specificity that this writer gives in the best materials for the curtains is explained by the cautionary relaying of an incident in which a gauze curtain caught fire during charades at the Austrian Ambassador's entertainment. Though the writer states that this was caused by a draught blowing the curtain against 'an adjacent chandelier' (ibid.), it begs the question as to the sort of lighting that was used in charades and the extent to which the performance of charades borrowed conventions of the public stage. Certainly, the advice given above alludes to a preference for a formal theatrical set-up with a raised stage, a 'proscenium' and curtains available to reveal each scene and hide scene changes.

At Chatsworth, charades formed a common part of the entertainment on offer to guests of the 6th Duke of Devonshire, and snippets of accounts from the archive and primary published sources shed a little more light on what the staging of such activities involved. In his privately-published *Handbook of Chatsworth and Hardwick*, for example, in reference to the Drawing-Room, the Duke states that, '[h]ere were acted numerous charades: sometimes their theatrical curtain remained suspended over the table at which we dined' (Cavendish 1844, 53). This account not only suggests that a curtain was deemed a necessary part of the set-up and a raised stage was not, but that a room in which dining took place was regularly turned over to the performance of charades. The construction of the Theatre through the 1830s, however - explored in depth in Chapter 2 - offered a more dedicated space in which to perform and can be seen to represent something of an evolution towards theatrical formality. At this point, a dais was also constructed on the occasion of charades, conforming to the above writer's recommendation that a raised stage be employed.

The use of costume and stage properties appears to have struck a similar balance of improvised contrivance and formal theatricality. Princess Victoria, the future Queen of England, recorded in her diaries watching the charade of 'Kenilworth' at Chatsworth in 1832, and included a watercolour sketch of the event (fig. 1.4). What she describes as 'regular costumes' (RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ/2; 20th October 1832) appear from her illustration to include a number of features of historical dress (for example, the men are wearing doublets and slashed hose) alongside contemporary clothing (the woman on the far right of the image wears a dress consistent with those typical of the 1830s (Edwards 2019, 80)).

Meanwhile, with regard to stage properties, the Duke recalled the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the damage to one of his sculptures from a rehearsal of the same charade: ‘Certain actors of charades, classically desirous of illustrating the syllable Nile in Kenilworth, knocked off a horn, and damaged some other part; and in vain, the Gods being found too heavy to go in procession’ (Cavendish 1844, 99). At another charade in September 1839, organic elements featured heavily to create adornments specific to each of the characters portrayed: a wreath of dahlias and a basket of flowers was carried by the actress playing the goddess Flora, rushes formed the robe and moss the headdress of Neptune, while peacock feathers featured in the costume of Juno (CS6/4152).



Figure 1.4 Watercolour sketch of ‘Last scene of the charade at Chatsworth, Kenilworth’ by Princess Victoria, October 1832. The illustration shows the performers wearing costumes variously indicating historical dress, loosely from the 16th century, and contemporary 19th-century clothing. Image: Royal Collection Trust RCIN 980015.ap.

Taken together, these accounts suggest that costumes and properties were improvised on an *ad hoc* basis from existing collections within - and without - the House. Yet, it is also a possibility that the historical costumes, at least, were hired in or sourced from elsewhere. While the upper-class guests

may have believed the staging of charades to be a light-hearted, last-minute decision (CS6/4152 'this charade having only been thought of the day before'), records reflect the considered efforts and anticipations of behind-the-scenes actors: the stage for the 1839 charade is recorded to have been erected at least a week earlier (Building Accounts, 7th September 1839) and the hands of gardeners, at least, are evident in the elaborate costumes and adornments of the 1839 gods and goddesses. At the 1832 Kenilworth charade, the lights illuminating the waterworks in the gardens - visible from the room in which the charade took place - changed colour between each scene (DF4/2/1/12; 20th October), indicating forethought and meticulous planning, and implicating the strong hand of a manager in the lead up to and execution of the event.

Given the more relaxed set-ups offered by the published book of charades, it is highly likely that the production values of Chatsworth's charades took place at the far end of a spectrum of possibility. At Chatsworth, financial, human and spatial (especially from the point at which the Theatre became available in the first half of the 1830s) resources were leveraged to produce an entertainment commensurate with the status of the occasion. Thus, the presence of Princess Victoria warranted a complementary and complicated light display to accompany the 1832 charade - an arrangement in contrast to the levity more commonly associated with 19th century 'acted charades'.

### Tableaux Vivants

Translated from the French as 'living pictures', *tableaux vivants* (singular *tableau vivant*) involved the arrangement of bodies and stage properties to imitate or embody artistic, literary, biblical, historical or mythological scenes (Campbell 2019, 135; Jordan 2019). As with charades, the production values which such a performance could adopt varied widely depending on the resources available, from the number of people participating to the quality of the costumes worn. The concept of *tableaux* remains in contemporary cultural imagination in part due to the apparent ease with which the activity could be afforded something of an afterlife through the fixed-image capture of studio photography (Weiss 2008). Arguably, this has resulted in an unfortunate emphasis on the 'picture' element of *tableaux* and overridden the 'living' aspect - or, as Hannah Jordan has articulated, the 'durational dynamic between performer and spectator' (2019, 93). Understanding the practical demands of *tableaux* can go some way to redressing this imbalance.

According to a how-to guide from 1882, *tableaux* should take place on a raised stage - at a height specifically, 'as nearly as possible level with the eye of the spectator' (Harrison 1882, 113). They employed many of the same costuming, set-dressing and make-up techniques as putting on a scripted

play, and an audience could be arranged, likewise, in the same way - the guide suggests rows of seats parallel to the stage. Relying on the communication of a 'shared cultural repertoire' (Campbell 2019, 135), the posing of the bodies and the arrangement of the scene through stage furniture and properties was singularly important, 'and should be rehearsed a few times before the evening of production' (Harrison 1882, 114). A band or orchestra would accompany the scene with music that accorded with the mood of the piece and which emphasised the durational quality of the performance (ibid. 116; DF33/18). Sometimes a frame was employed around the scene - quite separate to a proscenium arch which typically framed a theatre stage - in order to convey the pictorial impact of a *tableau* and to guide the audience's eye. However, a feature that truly set 19th-century *tableaux* apart from a scripted performance, was the particular use of light, and a frame had the secondary function of hiding the light sources behind it. The 1882 guide is insistent on the power of coloured light to dictate the ambience of a scene, and the importance of ensuring that the choice of costume and application of make-up worked in tandem with the use of the light (Harrison 1882, 116). In a programme of entertainment, *tableaux* were often performed as a series and central to the endeavour was the ability to efficiently reveal each scene and hide the scene changes. The 1882 guide suggests the use of a front cloth that rolled up from the bottom - a device which keeps an image on the cloth static until it is rolled away and which, presumably, does not lead an audience's eye away from the scene behind it (see Southern 1937, 108 for technicalities). Tellingly, however, the guide also suggests the use of a gauze stretched tightly across the front of the stage (or the frame). Though the author does not explain how such a gauze would function, it is likely that it worked in tandem with the lighting: light cast on the front of a gauze would cause it to become opaque, obscuring whatever is behind it, while light cast behind a gauze would reveal the scene.

At Chatsworth, *tableaux* featured in performances in the Theatre in the 1890s and 1900s. The central role of light took on further significance in this context, since Chatsworth used new, electric light to illuminate both the stage and the auditorium from January 1896 - a feature that had only very recently been adopted even by commercial theatres (Stoker 1911, 908; see Appendix B). While tried-and-true limelight was used for children's *tableaux* on 31st December 1896 (DE/CH/3/3/79) - a medium not reliant on electricity - the staging of a series of *tableaux* in May 1897, performed by friends and tenants of the Chatsworth estate, prompted the purchase of specialist, *tableaux* lights. On this occasion, advice was provided to Chatsworth's trusted lighting suppliers by the chief electrician at the Palace Theatre in London - a venue known for its commercially-successful *tableaux* (DE/CH/2/1/18 'Drake'). The same source of advice recommended a frame for the performance, behind which the operators could sit to manipulate the lights. Though nothing matching that description appears in the archived

accounts, the scenic artist, William Hemsley, who provided the stock scenery and front cloth for the original fit up of the Theatre in 1896 (see Chapter 3 for more context on this), did supply a further painted 'proscenium border' and a canvas 'wall' in time for the *tableaux* in May 1897 (DE/CH/3/3/79). It is likely, therefore, that these were purchased to satisfy the technical requirements of lighting this performance and framing it appropriately for the assembled audience.

The reliance of *tableaux* on a 'shared cultural repertoire' (Campbell 2019, 135) takes on a particularly self-referential tone in one example from Chatsworth's years of productions from 1896 to 1907 (Appendix C). During the programme of entertainment in January 1904, the three Acheson sisters - granddaughters of Duchess Louise from her previous marriage (Appendix A) - took to the stage to recreate in *tableau* a group portrait of them that had been executed by John Singer Sargent two years prior. The painting had achieved a more public recognition by being displayed at the Royal Academy before returning to hang on the walls of Chatsworth. The original painting, undertaken onsite at Chatsworth, shows the three young women dressed in white and arranged around a large urn containing an orange tree; the figure on the left of the image is depicted reaching up into the branches of the tree to take an orange. Rather than seeking fidelity in the recreation of this painting, the success of the *tableau* relied on the audience's knowledge of the image by recasting the central urn to comic effect. Faithfully reproducing their poses from the original painting, the sisters instead organised themselves around an easel on which stood a picture of a jar of marmalade, made readily identifiable by its label alluding to a well-known firm. The *tableau* was accompanied by its humorous title: 'Sargent's Preserves'.

Campbell asserts that, '[a]s a genre, the *tableau* is conducive to the creation of a sense of community because it relies on the spontaneous affirmation of consensus, recognition, and belonging in a given context' (2019, 137). In Chapter 5, I explore the audience of Chatsworth's theatricals in this period in more depth and include a table that shows how the 1904 theatricals had two performances: the first with an invited audience, the second with a paying one. While an invited audience may well have been *au fait* with the artistic patronage of the extended Cavendish family, the extent to which a paying audience engaged with the same cultural sphere is open to question. The Acheson sisters' *tableau* was not included in the printed programme (UNM Wr D 49/6; DE/CH/7/3/2/1) and there is a possibility that they only undertook the display for the benefit of the first, invited audience. Regardless, this example serves to problematise Campbell's assertion and illustrate that reliance on a 'shared cultural repertoire' to create 'a sense of community' also risked reinforcing exclusivity and splintering the

community of an audience. Principally, it reminds us to be alert to the complexities that attend much of the primary source material we use to untangle and interpret performances in the past.

### Private Theatricals

While *charades* and *tableaux vivants* describe specific modes of performance, the 19th century witnessed the evolution of the term ‘private theatricals’ in the country house context from describing solely the performance of a scripted play to a diverse programme of different modes of performance, as I discuss further in the Literature Review (1.3.3 Entertainment).<sup>4</sup> By the end of the 19th century, an evening of private theatricals could encompass *tableaux*, musical recitals, monologues, dance performances, or even, as at Chatsworth in 1903 and 1907, cinematograph displays. However, scripted plays remained a key component and their inclusion in a programme set private theatricals apart from concerts or other forms of private performance entertainment, which similarly encompassed multiple modes of performance (Coates, D. pers. comm. December 2024). Despite the diversification of the programme of country house private theatricals, the scripted play broadly maintained a higher public profile through the 19th century than other forms of private performance, regularly commanding many more column inches in local - and sometimes national - newspapers. This enduring public record is partly why ‘private theatricals’ remains almost synonymous with the domestically-performed scripted play in academic historiography and which commands an entire field of scholarly attention. I discuss this historiography in the Literature Review, so the inclusion of private theatricals here is rather to draw attention briefly to some of the practical aspects and issues of staging scripted plays in the country house context.

Scripted plays staged in private contexts through the 19th century varied in their length, genre and settings, from three-act melodramas set in multiple locations to one-act comedies taking place in a single room. Plays written specifically for private performance became increasingly popular and accessible in the last quarter of the 19th century, often catering to smaller cast sizes, limited playing spaces and domestic technological capability. Writing in 1898, the regular performer in Chatsworth’s theatricals, Leo Trevor, opined the improvements made in country house plays over the previous 30 years by virtue of their shortening and consequent “suitability” for performance on small stages in drawing room settings (Trevor 1898, 280). Shorter plays also allowed for greater flexibility in a programme of private theatricals, and granted performers the opportunity to play to their strengths by accommodating a range of genres and styles. At Chatsworth in the 1890s, Trevor recalled the Prince

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<sup>4</sup> Private theatrical performances were also staged in private, urban theatres in the 19th century (Coates 2017), so I am specifically referring only to the country house context.

of Wales requesting a programme of private theatricals be extended, and the consequent, short-notice inclusion of an extra duologue that had previously brought one of the performers particular praise in private theatrical circles (*ibid.*, 276). In this instance, the performer reprised her role to acclaim. The opportunity to play to one's strengths and be noticed - and noted - by members of the high-profile audience therefore had the potential to impact one's social standing.

On a practical front, published guides for staging amateur plays outside of commercial theatres proliferated from the late 19th century into the 20th, their contents covering the entire process of putting on a play, from selecting the text, undertaking rehearsals and managing undesirable *longueurs* in the action, to building and painting scenery and arranging it appropriately (An Old Stager [Anon.] 1875; Pollock and Pollock 1879; Harrison 1882; Neil 1904; Southern 1937). Such was the broad intended readership of these volumes, and wide-ranging contexts of application, that it is impossible to use them to accurately summarise a standard approach to staging plays in the country house. Suffice to say that a distinct playing area of some kind - whether a raised stage or a flat area of floor made distinct by the construction of a proscenium arch - was desirable; a raised stage was usually a temporary construction, perhaps modest in scale at eight feet by six (Trevor 1898). A curtain or doors to reveal the action and hide scene changes were also widely recommended, and spaces for the performers to prepare or retire to were advised to be taken into consideration. As well as giving instructions on how to deploy such theatrical tools to best effect, the guides often include directories of suppliers for requisites such as costumes, lighting and stage makeup, revealing the networks that underpinned this prolific activity and which frequently intersected with the professional sphere. Neither is the labour required to mount a play short-changed, the highly-practical nature of these guides both implicitly crediting behind-the-scenes work and explicitly foregrounding the importance of skilled stage management for the success of the whole endeavour. In short, those wishing to put on a play had a plethora of advice and guidance, and a range of readily-accessible resources at their disposal (Meeuwis 2012).

As with charades and *tableaux vivants*, the scope of production values for scripted plays varied widely according to available resources. As with the examples given in the previous sections, the plays staged in the Theatre at Chatsworth in the 1890s and 1900s occupied the far end of a spectrum of possibility: costumes, props and stage furniture were hired for the occasions, and a professional stage manager was employed to oversee several of the productions (see Chapter 3 for more details). Indeed, despite a variety of performance entertainment being held therein, the entire stage and scenery were

installed - and the room transformed - to better display the performance of scripted plays. Reflecting on his experience of performing in a range of country houses, Leo Trevor noted,

‘Of course in very large houses such as Chatsworth, Craig-y-Nos, West Dean, or Tranby Croft, where you have perfect bijoux theatres fitted with electric light, with scenery painted by excellent artists, where you can get night and morning effects, and where properties and furniture are of the best, the amateur is in clover, and really gets a fair chance of showing what he can do’ (1898, 280-281)

By virtue of the investment made in the installation of Chatsworth’s Theatre, its productions, then, were of the highest standard a country house could produce.

## Conclusion

This chapter section has broadly and briefly introduced the practical aspects of three performance terms that are variously referred to throughout this thesis: charades, *tableaux vivants* and private theatricals, in the form of a scripted play. The descriptions of each are provided in the absence of any other comprehensive source, but this absence necessitates the use of original research and primary sources to fill it. The section is presented as context for the thesis, rather than as a distinct chapter in its own right, due to these performance forms constituting only part of the use and meaning of the Theatre at Chatsworth over the course of the 19th century. Yet, a general understanding of these terms in the country house context underpins any references made to them. Therefore, the intention has been to furnish a reader with a similar contextual knowledge-base to this author.

While these particular modes of performance are evident in the activity of the Theatre at Chatsworth through the 19th century, it should be noted that selecting even these risks sidelining the various other forms of private performance entertainment that became increasingly popular through the century. Seeking to define the scope of any one form of performance practice presents problematic issues for uncovering broader histories and cultures of performance and entertainment in country houses. As chapters 2 to 5 of this thesis will demonstrate, the development of the Theatre at Chatsworth speaks to this culture in its broadest terms, both as a product and as an actor in shaping social relations. It is within this wider context of performance entertainment in country houses that this thesis sits, and it is from the perspective of the country house that the following Literature Review begins.

## 1.3 Literature Review

### 1.3.1 Introduction

This thesis is necessarily interdisciplinary. Viewing the country house through the lens of a theatre brings themes and voices into the narrative that straddle academic disciplines. In this thesis, I bring into the historic account individuals from a variety of backgrounds and locations, from theatre practitioners with a base in London to professionals occupying accommodation tied to the Chatsworth estate. Literature on the social contexts of the country house broadly draws a line around the house itself, rarely incorporating the perspectives of those who lived and worked nearby - either on the estate or beyond the demesne - let alone those individuals who brought skills and services to the house from further afield (Finch and Giles (Eds) 2007). As scholarship on the country house evolves, this conceptual boundary is being stretched, and this thesis is produced at a time when social perspectives on the house/estate divide are being challenged or blended. This thesis sits on that permeable boundary and, in seeking to contextualise the voices that it foregrounds, necessarily draws on literature from both country house studies and estate landscape scholarship.

Neither has the literature on country houses expanded to explore substantially the role of performance entertainment within either the architectural context or the rich social fabric of country houses and estate life. This academic lacuna is particularly acute in histories of the country house in the 19th century. Conversely, through a reappraisal of the role of the amateur contribution to theatrical arts, over the last 15 years more attention has been given to researching private theatricals in the field of Theatre and Performance Studies. As this literature review will elucidate, amateur performance was rife and ubiquitous through the 19th century, traversing boundaries of class and gender, and challenging dichotomies of amateur/professional and private/public, to form a broad cultural practice within which networks of people moved and operated. Yet, studies of private theatricals have broadly maintained a text-based or performance focus, scrutinising repertoire or performers, and rarely considering the spaces in which such activity took place, the broader social meaning of that activity or the reflexive relationship between the two. By placing the literature on private theatricals in dialogue with that on country houses, this thesis seeks to engender a richer, deeper conversation between and across both scholarly fields.

There are real-world implications to working interdisciplinarily in this way, not least for curatorial decision-making at historic houses that are open to the public. As I have already discussed, Chatsworth's Theatre is presented as an outlier, both in its physical appearance and approach - at the

time of writing - and in its primary sources of information. The same pattern of presentation can be seen at other historic houses. As I will elaborate on, here, at a number of properties open to the public, evidence of private performance practices has been turned up by curatorial staff and developed into exhibitions with which to engage a diverse audience. Yet, as at Chatsworth, each example of this practice is presented as unusual or singular, unconnected either to a wider cultural practice, as evidenced by Theatre and Performance History, or even to each other. Anecdotal evidence points to a frustration among some curators of historic houses that research on private theatres and theatricals is not as readily available to them as, say, that on the decorative arts (Wood, P. pers. comm. July 2024).

If private performance practices are to be brought into the purview of country house scholarship, if the ubiquity and relevance of the practice through the 19th century is to be embedded in public country house narratives, and if evidence of such practices - from theatres to costumes and playscripts - is to be understood for what it offers these arenas, then an integrated, interdisciplinary outlook is required.

This Literature Review aims towards this interdisciplinarity through a thematic structure. It begins by discussing spatial considerations of the country house - a perspective that is central to the foundation of a buildings archaeological approach that this thesis adopts - before outlining the literature on country house entertainment. The subsequent sections on Gender and Class, Archives, and Embodiment and Materiality develop and problematise some of the issues and perspectives raised in the first two sections. The final section on Collaboration draws attention to the agency the country house has developed to direct its own research agenda and the relationships it has generated with the academy in doing so. Somewhat reflecting the interdisciplinary ambitions of this thesis, it argues that collaboration is necessary both for uncovering more marginal histories within private performance practices and for embedding those histories in wider narratives of the country house.

### 1.3.2 Architecture, Space and Buildings

The study of country houses has evolved out of art and architectural history. Broadly speaking, this has resulted in a field dominated by scholarly accounts of patrons, artists and architects, and the stylistic and typological development of country houses since the 16th century. Given the wider social and political context of this historiography, in real terms this has meant a focus on wealthy men and named male architects (eg. Saumarez Smith 1997; Durant 2011), notably obscuring (to name only two of the groups involved with the development of buildings) the roles of women and those who laboured in the construction of buildings. It also established a logical cannon of architectural style (eg. Cook 1974; Wilson 1977; Harris 1985) - a lens through and against which many scholars have come to

interrogate the buildings under their investigation, and which leaves very little room for the role of experimentation or evolution in the development of polite architecture (Arnold 2006, xv).<sup>5</sup>

In the 1970s, following wider changes in the culture of country house studies,<sup>6</sup> the work of the architectural historian, Mark Girouard, provided a pivotal shift in this historiography towards a more social reading of English country houses. Beyond the stylistic choices made by patron and architect, Girouard was concerned with 'how they [country houses] operated' and 'how families used the houses which architects and craftsmen built for them' (Girouard 1980, v). As well as broadening the social scope of country house studies, by emphasising the use of these sites, Girouard also widened the architectural historiography to consider spatial readings - that is, 'think[ing] about the built environment as space rather than focusing on the architecture that surrounds space' (Arnold 2002, 134). *Life in the English Country House* (1980) remains a touchstone text for both social and architectural approaches to the study of country houses from the 16th to the 20th centuries, and *The Victorian Country House* (1979) can be seen to complement and develop the 19th-century context of this fulcral book. Such is Girouard's enduring influence in this field that, forty years after *Life in the English Country House* was published, he was dubbed the 'founder of modern country house studies' (Musson and Canadine (Eds) 2018, 4).

Since entering the historiography of country house studies, however, Girouard's work has been critiqued and developed on a number of fronts. In 2002, art and architectural historian, Dana Arnold, problematised Girouard's contribution to the 'social' readings of country houses by drawing out his own emphasis on the houses' families - ie the people who owned them - and the consequent lack of attention given to the many other people and communities that lived in, used or contributed to them. Since country houses stood as architecturally symbolising 'patriarchal values and the hegemony of this ruling élite' (Arnold 2002, 141), and since the historiography of country house studies was already dominated by the perspective of this ruling class, Arnold questioned the extent to which Girouard's 'social history' contributed to a 'broader cultural meaning' (ibid.) of the country house at all. I shall

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<sup>5</sup> Often used as a descriptor to contrast 'vernacular' architecture, 'polite' architecture is generally understood to conform to three key criteria. 'Polite' buildings are: (i) designed by a professional architect; (ii) follow a national or international style; and (iii), hold aesthetic considerations above functional ones (Brunskill 1987, 25; cf. Green 2010).

<sup>6</sup> These shifts came about in large part due to an exhibition staged at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1974, called *The Destruction of the Country House*. Organised by a number of prominent architectural scholars, the exhibition reified and leveraged a prominent narrative in country house studies as a call-to-arms for the preservation of country houses and their collections in the face of post-war 'destruction' (Strong, Binney and Harris (Eds) 1974; see also Cornforth 1974). The exhibition sparked a generative avenue in country house literature which has since reinforced, critiqued or problematised the straightforward 'decline' narrative (eg. Mandler 1997; Littlejohn 1997; Musson 2018; Tinniswood 2021).

discuss these social issues in the subsequent section on Gender and Class, but Arnold's critique illustrates the extent to which spatial interpretations of the country house are entangled with social ones. Investigations of how built spaces are negotiated, arranged, traversed or experienced all beg the question: *by or for whom?* Therefore, despite the differentiation identified by the thematic structure of this review, the themes presented herein should be understood as porous (certainly) and interdependent (mostly).

A spatial critique of Girouard's work has been put forward by Aimee Keithan, who shrewdly observed his reliance on floor plans and historic design guides (eg. Kerr 1865) to determine the intended use of the country house spaces under his investigation (2020). Both floor plans and design guides are products of the architect's office, either capturing and simplifying a moment in time in the life of an active house, or conjuring and projecting an idea of a house from scratch. Girouard's reliance on these documents, therefore, implicitly reinforced the role of the architect in the narrative of country houses, risked oversimplifying the interactions between a house's communities and its spaces, and, as Keithan argued, obscured any nuance in the development of the fabric of a building. Furthermore, such an approach necessarily championed those newly-built or comprehensively-altered houses that conformed to contemporary design guides, and sidelined those with more complex, evolving architectural histories, arguably developing an alternative, socio-spatial cannon to that evolved from architectural history.<sup>7</sup>

Another problematic byproduct of reading floor plans and design guides to ascertain spatial function, is the attendant association of certain social groups with those spaces. In the 19th century, country house design principles advocated the segregation of spaces along multiple and various lines, from social status to domestic activity (Kerr 1865); above all, this was the period in which 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' spaces of family and staff, respectively, became divided by the 'green baize door' (Stone 1991, 234) - a material manifestation of the separation of two communities in the country house that had, until that point, existed side-by-side to greater or lesser extents. The floor plans of service wings in this period show a separate room for almost every task deemed necessary for the successful functioning of a large country house. Interpretations of both servants' work and their presence in the house are most often made through these plans, presenting an overly simplistic view that conflates servants' job titles - and, therefore, their presence in the house - with the room in which such work

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<sup>7</sup> The mantle for Girouard's approach to reading country houses has been carried forward by Clive Aslet in *The Last Country Houses* (1985) (republished in 2012 as *The Edwardian Country House*) and Michael Hall in *The Victorian Country House* (2009).

took place, obscuring professional or social nuance in the interactions between servants and spaces (Keithan 2020, 12).

Indeed, the dominant discourse in spatial analyses of both 18th- and 19th-century country houses rests on the same oppositional binaries that can be seen in the 'upstairs/downstairs' dialogue, and the attendant categorisation of social or professional groups. Thus, spaces of the country house have been read or publicly-presented along gendered lines (Arnold 2002, 129-133; National Trust 2007), according to the shifting concepts of public and private (Stone 1991), and following hierarchical ordering of social groups, such as, 'the family', children of 'the family', visitors and servants (Girouard 1979) (whereby 'the family' is the landowning family of the estate). Such approaches offer useful conceptual frameworks for, for example, interrogating the ways in which built space structures social relations. However, as with the issue concerning 'servant spaces' outlined in the previous paragraph, they also risk oversimplifying social and professional interaction within and between the identified spaces, and perpetuating without challenge the hierarchies of power identified by Arnold, as cited above (2002).

Remarkably, the only robustly alternative approach to reading the spaces of the country house that has cut through the volume of scholarship described above is an influential and oft-cited chapter by Susie West (1999). West - also an archaeologist - applies 'access analysis' (see Hillier and Hanson 1984) - a methodology for 'exploring the conceptual relations of space' (West 1999, 108) to uncover the level of control or ease of access, and what West describes as the 'permeability' (ibid.) of a house - to three early-modern country houses, in a bid to establish the function of these houses away from the purely art historical terms in which they had thus far been considered. West's methodology is broadly structuralist and subject to the epistemological context of archaeology in the late 1990s; subsequent scholarship in the field has evolved to acknowledge that the interplay between people and spaces is more complex than a purely structuralist approach allows.

The truly inspiring impact of West's work, however, is the way in which she deftly shifts the lens of country house analysis from an art historical approach to an archaeological one, bringing to bear on the subject an entire field of scholarship more traditionally applied to the study of vernacular buildings. Through West's work, the symbolic power of the country house that shapes so much of the literature outlined here becomes secondary to its more basic functions: philosophically, 'as a container for human thoughts' (1999, 106) and prosaically, as 'a container of successive human bodies' (ibid.). Yet, despite the inroads made by West into scholarly citations, there remain few to no alternative

approaches to analysing space in the country house that either adopt a structuralist approach, as West does, or embrace the complexities of post-structuralist thinking; the existing perspective introduced by Girouard continues to dominate the discourse.

West herself discussed why, at her point of writing, no other archaeologist had considered the country house as a site of generative data (1999, 104). She suggests that some might consider ‘that this class of housing is adequately explored by other disciplines [ie. art and architectural history]’, or ‘that country houses inspire less emotive reactions in archaeologically minded people’ (ibid.) and therefore remain an undesirable subject of research.<sup>8</sup> Yet, it seems unlikely that these suggestions alone would go unchallenged for over 25 years. More compelling as a compounding reason is West’s observation that, ‘as repositories of massive demonstrations of inequalities, [these sites appear to have] [...] a cultural relevance to a tiny social minority’ (ibid.). Yet, as she goes on to state, ‘these houses embody relations *between* differing groups: they housed both the elite [...] and the disenfranchised employees’, and relied for their construction, operation and ongoing social position on a rich and complex network of intersecting social groups (ibid.). The implication in West’s writing here, is that country houses have ‘cultural relevance’ to a wide range of social groups; and that, if archaeological scholars - or, indeed, those working in disciplines beyond art and architectural history - were more aware of the diversity of human experience tied up in country houses, they would be more inclined to research them.

West’s point reinforces the complex entanglement between spatial and social perspectives in studies of the country house. As I shall evidence in subsequent sections, scholarship *has* progressed the social issue to which West speaks - that is, the broader cultural relevance of the country house is in the process of being excavated by scholars from a range of backgrounds. Why, then, have spatial interpretations not evolved at pace? One possible explanation is around access. If floor plans are used only as a secondary source, the primary materials are the fabric and spaces of houses themselves. Issues of ownership, and concerns around privacy and security limit the spaces an archaeologist can access. Even in those buildings under the management of charitable organisations, such as the National Trust, stretched resources limit the availability of accompanying staff members. Moreover, arranging access to houses - even those open to the public - requires considerable time and careful negotiation; institutional challenges for researchers, such as funding and precarious or overloaded working contracts can place further limits on the time available. To surmount this challenge,

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, this latter supposition explicitly acknowledges the role of subjective emotional response in research enquiry, foreshadowing a body of thinking on the subject, widely referred to as the ‘affective’ turn in historical research (Robinson 2010).

collaborative opportunities such as the CDA from which this project is born, are invaluable. I discuss the opportunities offered by collaboration further on in this Review (see 1.3.7 Collaboration).

Another explanation may well be found in West's original proposal: awareness. Broadly, to what extent are archaeologists - particularly those with an interest in buildings - aware of the limited conceptions of country house space and the contrastingly broad 'cultural relevance' of country houses themselves? Certainly, the presentation of houses does little to unsettle inherited spatial narratives. For example, at Lanhydrock, a house in Cornwall in the care of the National Trust, the guidebook includes a fold-out floorplan which is colour-coded along gendered lines, arguably leading visitors to project a highly subjective understanding of gender on their expectations or interpretations of each of the spaces they encounter (National Trust 2007). Moreover, as Keithan noted, where the perspectives of servants are included in country house interpretation, they are frequently confined to 'below stairs' spaces (2020, 12), reinforcing an overly simplistic conflation of space and job title and, by inference, erasing the presence of servants - and, therefore, their influence or experience - across the rest of the house. Most commonly, the breadth of cultural relevance to which West refers is consistently reduced to an 'upstairs downstairs' paradigm, with the stories and lives of the landowners privileged above all others.

Nonetheless, buildings archaeologists *have* turned their attention to spaces and sites beyond the walls of the country house itself. There exists a similar oppositional binary to that outlined above between 'indoor' and 'outdoor' spaces of the country house, wherein those whose working lives mainly took place in either the pleasure gardens or the wider estate are rarely considered in interpretations of the interior spaces of the house (cf. Butler 2019). Indeed, a historiographical bias towards art historical approaches to the country house has resulted in something of a conceptual line traditionally being drawn around the house itself, precluding considerations of the wider estate (cf. Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates 2024). This is despite a long-held acknowledgement that the size and successful management of an estate - its tenants, land and productivity - most often upheld both a house's operational ability and the social status of the landowner more widely (Mingay 1963; Thompson 1963; Williams 1973; Finch 2019).

Rather, studies of estate spaces - both built and landscape spaces - have often fallen under the purview of archaeologists and rural historians, who have predominantly explored this field in terms of both productivity and design. Thus, a significant tranche of literature on estates is situated in relation to the grand narrative of agrarian improvement through and beyond the long 18th century - including

the impact of the agricultural depression towards the end of the 19th century - or aesthetic changes to landscapes - in turn dominated, as with country houses themselves, by named, male designers, such as Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (Williamson 1995; Wade Martins 2010). Within and across these parallel discourses is important and valuable research that charts the material impacts to, and changes required of those that lived and worked in rural estate environments. The destruction and reconstruction of estate villages, for example, has been seen both in terms of landscape 'improvement' - ie. part of a movement towards investing in the estate and its farming tenants - and as a means to remove unsightly structures from the purview of the Big House. However, while the lives and experiences of individuals are often implicated within these accounts, rarely are they centred, with the result that there remains a relative dearth of scholarship on how historic estate communities evolved, identified, interacted or intersected, spatially, professionally and socially.

Nonetheless, the attention given to historic estate spaces by buildings archaeologists has generated some important pieces of research which buck this trend. Moreover, when brought into dialogue with the architectural and spatial historiography of the country house that I've already outlined, they offer an alternative approach to interpreting buildings with the potential to disrupt the hegemonic art historical and top-down narratives. Through his PhD thesis and an accompanying article, Timur Tatlioglu foregrounded the working lives of masons and carpenters on the Harewood Estate in West Yorkshire through the 18th century (Tatlioglu 2010a, 2010b). By analysing material changes made by the estate carpenters (or 'joiners') to their workshop, and tracing the work undertaken by this same group on local properties, Tatlioglu was able to map the material agency exercised by the carpenters across the estate. Detailed estate accounts allowed him to illustrate the moments at which the carpenters' work intersected with the lives of other estate tenants, augmenting much of the literature that either considers the estate in terms of productivity, or solely locates estate staff in the spaces with which their work is associated, with a human-centred perspective.

Kate and Melanie Giles undertook a similar approach in their account of the evolution of a community of 'horselads' on the Birdsall estate in the East Yorkshire Wolds at the end of the 19th and the early 20th centuries (2007).<sup>9</sup> Beginning with a stratigraphic analysis of graffiti in a range of working buildings associated with this community, oral histories and locally-set biographies allowed the writers to embed the working lives of the horselads within their wider social and familial contexts, including details that vividly bring to life the reality of graft and labour on the exposed and chalky land. Notably, the focus of their paper evades much mention of Birdsall, its landowner or, indeed, its geographic

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<sup>9</sup> 'Horselads' were 'responsible for ploughing and cultivating the land' (Giles and Giles 2007, 337).

boundary, reflecting the sources of evidence drawn upon. The result is a narrative that immerses the reader in the community it promotes, with the estate landscape only implicitly viewed through the prism of one working group. When read as a biographical study of built space in an estate landscape, however, we are afforded a rare window into the complex, varied and rich society that made up the patchwork farms and villages of a country house estate.

Both of these studies owe much to a *biographical* approach to the interpretation of buildings - a distinct methodology in the field of buildings archaeology which attends to the prevailing issues arising from more traditional, typological approaches to (Fox and Raglan 1951), and overarching, 'grand' narratives of (Hoskins 1953; Johnson 1992), historic buildings (Lucas and Roderick 2003). A biographical interpretation of buildings recognises the nuances and diversity of human and material agency, in line with theories around material culture that objects, and hence buildings, carry agency of their own (Clements 1997; Joyce 2000; Hicks and Horning 2006; Deltou 2009). While one approach to a biographical interpretation centres the 'life' span of the building itself and considers the ways in which its meaning may have changed over a large temporal unit (Mytum 2010; Shapland 2020), the studies outlined here pay particular attention to the reflexive agency between a building and a group of people within the temporal unit of the people themselves.

Though both studies highlighted here begin with questions around a specific building, by acknowledging the ways in which the building impacts and affects the group under scrutiny - and vice versa - this biographical approach reconceptualises the geographic boundaries of that building as members of the group come and go from it (Gell 1998; as cited in Hicks and Horning 2006, 288). Thus, Tatlioglu's study of the joiners' workshop incorporates considerations of tenanted domestic properties on the Harewood estate as the joiners moved between sites; and Giles and Giles's work on the range of farm buildings brings into view the topography of the wider Birdsall estate landscape as the horselads interacted with it.

Applying a similar approach to the study of country houses offers a striking counterpoint to the historiography and methodologies discussed above, potentially bridging the chronological gap since Susie West's study. Not only does an archaeological approach broadly prioritise the fabric of the building itself as the principal source of evidence for analysis over, for example, architectural floor plans, but a biographical interpretation of this evidence offers a means to overcome both the paradigmatic spatial narratives within country houses and the conceptual boundaries thus far drawn around them.

### 1.3.3 Entertainment

In the socio-spatial canon of country houses introduced by Girouard, the 18th-century house has broadly become characterised by its tendency towards sociability, and the 19th-century one by, first, morality and then, towards the end of the century, entertainment (Girouard 1980). In Girouard's characterisation, 'sociability' might be understood to mean social negotiations in activities of leisure that took place in elite and gentry houses. Gillian Russell links the growth of leisure activities with the economic boom following the end of the Seven Years' War (1756-63), and observes the rise in household entertainment in this period, as opposed to activities taking place in the public realm (2007a, 192). Given women's 'authority [that] they traditionally exercised as managers of households', they became 'prominent in such entertaining' (ibid.), closely linking domestic sociability with gendered associations of 'soft' power. Yet, adhering to Girouard's chronological framework, social negotiation did not end when entertainment began. Emily Bryan discusses the ways in which charades incorporated the popular and established Victorian domestic past-time of amateur music to better participate in 'the social negotiations of the drawing room' (2002, 37), and Nancy Ellenberger discusses the tensions implicit in country house parties at the turn of the 20th century 'that lacked the protections of institutional roles or the anonymity of the modern-day resort' (2015, 183). Sociability, then, endured through the 19th century, though its contexts changed.

Girouard's grand narrative sees the late-19th-century shift to entertainment in relation both to the landowner's relative loss of rural political power and the parallel development of transport and its infrastructure which made traveling into the countryside quicker and easier. According to this account, by the 1890s, the country house was no longer a site of symbolic local power, but of bountiful opportunities for upper-class sports, leisure and entertainment (Aslet 1985; Tinniswood 2016). In the highest social circles, the craze for country house entertainment is said to have been driven by the passions and pastimes of the Prince of Wales, who influenced and encouraged his hosts to increasingly ambitious leisurely ends (Barstow 1989).

While the urban social scene in this period has received rigorous academic scrutiny (Davidoff 1973; Ellenberger 1990), country house entertainment, by contrast, is broadly positioned as unproblematic and relaxed; books dedicated to the subject tend to be written in anecdotal and humorous ways, and focused on the exploits of the landed classes (Barstow 1989; Tinniswood 2019). However, scholarship often contextualises country house entertainment alongside narratives concerning the development and adoption of new technologies and a broad decline in servant numbers (Franklin 1975) - a correlation sometimes offered as causation, since labour-saving devices could theoretically breach the

gap created by a loss of staff. Yet, despite these historical observations, rarely are country house entertainments interrogated either from the perspective of the work and workers that underpinned their success or the technological advancements that facilitated their delivery (see 1.3.6 Embodiment and Material Culture for further discussion).

Within this particular vein in country house scholarship, what is meant by 'entertainment' and where does performance entertainment sit within this? When the topic is covered, the scope of entertainment on offer in country houses in the 19th century is split along daytime and post-dinner activities. Daytime entertainment would often centre around sport, including golf, hunting, shooting and billiards. Following dinner, activities are recorded as including card games, dancing and music (performed either by a hired band or by members of the house party in an intimate setting) (Barstow 1989, 9). Outside of these regular activities, a proliferation of other events have been identified and included in the concept of 'entertainment', from fancy dress balls to pageants, fetes, and even political rallies (Tinniswood 2019, 79).

While many of these forms of entertainment exist on a spectrum of performance and performativity that is worth closer attention in a future study, entertainment that was explicitly performance-based in this period - outside of musical presentations - is rarely, if ever mentioned; a researcher looking for the subject of private theatricals, charades or *tableaux* in country house literature of the 19th century will unearth only piecemeal references. Girouard concedes the observation that large halls in the late-19th century country house offered a useful space to accommodate theatricals (1980, 290-292), tantalisingly pointing to a practice that was presumably common enough to mention only in passing, but not developed any further in his work. Meanwhile, in his book explicitly picking up chronologically where Girouard left off, Clive Aslet evokes the entertainment capabilities of one late-19th century hostess, Mrs Willie James, and includes a full colour plate illustrating her visitors book with a programme of private theatricals from 1894 (1985, 9-19), yet gives only a short, single sentence to her dedication to the activity.<sup>10</sup> Even in books devoted to the subject of late 19th-century country house entertainment, performance is overlooked: Phyllida Barstow's, *The English Country House Party* (1989), makes only a passing reference to charades and private theatricals, while Adrian Tinniswood's trade book with the National Trust, *The House Party* (2019), makes no mention of performance entertainment at all. Rather than convey the ubiquity and opportunity for social and political influence of performance entertainment in this period - evidenced in subsequent paragraphs and in chapters 4

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<sup>10</sup> Evelyn James (1867-1929) was a regular and acclaimed performer in Chatsworth's annual theatricals in the 1890s and 1900s.

and 5 of this thesis - these meagre concessions to the practice conspire to frame it as whimsical or unusual.

A greater acknowledgement of performance entertainment can loosely be found in histories of the 18th-century country house in the context of its aforementioned characterisation of sociability. Yet, even these position the practice either as outside the norm, or in relation to specific examples of elite literary practices with little wider context (Watson 2011; Hubberstey 2024). In *Life in the French Country House* (2000), Girouard inaccurately asserts that only four private theatres existed in Britain in the 18th century, suggesting that the staging of private theatricals was insufficiently popular to warrant the construction of more. This assertion is reinforced by Jeremy Musson in a 2002 article from *Country Life*, in which he glancingly ties the contemporary presence of the country house dressing-up box in a handful of houses to an inherited tradition of theatricals and *tableaux* in country houses more broadly. Drawing on the provenance of dressing-up boxes and their contents offers an intriguing avenue for future research on country house performance entertainment, rooted in material culture and dress and costume history. Yet, Musson's references to the history of private performance practice were restricted by the limited scholarship available in his field twenty years ago, and the light-hearted tone of the article reinforces the playful, unproblematic perspective adopted by the majority of country house scholars when mentioning theatricals.

Maintaining a broader temporal lens than the late 19th century, a recent publication, *Sport and Leisure in the Irish and British Country House*, makes a significant contribution to a consideration of the country house as an important locus of entertainment (Dooley and Ridgway (Eds) 2019). This edited volume of papers, drawn from an established annual conference at Maynooth University, adopts an overdue critical lens on leisurely pursuits in the country house context through the long 18th and 19th centuries, with topics ranging from hunting to astronomy. Despite this, none of the 18 varied essays included therein touch on performance - musical, or otherwise - despite including boundary-pushing activities such as scrapbook-making (O'Riordan 2019) and the fashion for keeping exotic pets (Bristol 2019). The notable absence of performance entertainment in this volume points to two concerning possibilities: the first is that scholarship on entertainment in the country house, as explored thus far herein, has sidelined and diminished performance practices to such an extent that they have become dismissed as unworthy of study; the other is that the distinct lack of existing scholarship in the field of country house studies has led to an impression that performance entertainment at these sites did not take place.

This overarching historical omission from country house studies is in stark contrast to wider historical research. Pertinent both to the period I examine in chapters 3 to 5, and the elite personages present at Chatsworth's house parties therein, a scholarly book on the political and cultural world of Arthur Balfour - Conservative politician and Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905 - in part details his involvement in private theatricals in the late 19th century (Ellenberger 2015). The chapter in question inverts the issues with country house historiography that I have presented here both through its title, 'Country House Party', and its contents: in Ellenberger's work, the country house party in Balfour's social circle is almost synonymous with performance entertainment and, by drawing on the historiography of elite urban socialising, Ellenberger reads the activity as presenting both opportunities for complex social interaction and a lens through which to interpret wider aristocratic culture of the period. Though limiting her study to the social interactions and emotional weather of her elite protagonists, Ellenberger paints a vivid picture of the work that private theatricals undertook in country house culture at the end of the 19th century, rejecting the treatment of performance entertainment in country house literature as frivolous or unusual.

Indeed, in marked contrast to the field of country house studies, the topic of private theatricals is present and alive in the field of theatre and performance studies. The subject has received more scrutiny in recent years in great part due to a wider push to acknowledge and value amateur contributions to theatrical practice (Holdsworth, Milling and Nicholson 2017; Gilbert et al. 2020). One of the impacts of this 'amateur turn' has been a greater awareness of the myriad forms amateur theatre can take and the wide variety of communities and social groups that participate in it, from schools to the military. The application of this lens to a study of the past must also acknowledge the historiography of private theatricals as a specific branch of amateur performance - a historiography that has broadly characterised private theatricals as predominantly elite, and taking place in the rural and urban houses of the upper classes (Haugen 2014).

Studies of private theatricals in the field of theatre history have arguably been shaped by two, interconnected factors. The first is the touchstone text, *Temples of Thespis*, by Sybil Rosenfeld (1978) which was - and remains - a seminal book recording the practice and spaces of private theatricals in 18th-century England. The second is the ready availability of rich source material - drawn on by Rosenfeld - in both the Burney and Sarah Sophia Banks collections, held at the British Library and British Museum, respectively. The scrapbooks included therein contain a wealth of ephemera relating to private theatricals, from playbills to tickets, that identify, among other things, locations, repertoire, performers and modes of ticketing. Taken together, these factors have shaped a bias in the

subsequent literature towards the period of the long 18th century. From her research in the 1970s, Rosenfeld observed and noted a trend that the popularity of private theatricals dwindled from the 1820s (1978, 11 and 15) - a statement partly evidenced by the misdating of Chatsworth's stage, as outlined in 1.2.2 Literature on the Theatre at Chatsworth, above. Since then, but particularly since the late 1990s, scholarship has diverged to, on the one hand, explore and develop the 18th-century themes that Rosenfeld introduced (Russell 2007a; McGirr 2011; Watson 2011; Haugen 2014; Hawley 2020) and, on the other, refute Rosenfeld's claim and evidence the continued popularity of private theatricals through the 19th century and beyond.

This divergence is not without its overlap or problematic separation. A major contribution to the study of 19th-century private theatricals was a special edition in 2011 of the journal, *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, on the theme of 'Amateur Theatre in the Long Nineteenth Century'. An output from two, connected conference series, 'What signifies a theatre?', the journal edition offered case study articles that spanned much of the temporal, topical and international breadth of amateur theatrical activity over 150 years. However, this breadth, coupled with the constraints of the journal format, perpetuated two distinct issues for understanding private theatricals, specifically, in this period. The first is that, lost in the wider theme of amateur theatre and discrete case studies, the ubiquity and interconnectedness of private theatricals through the 19th century could only be hinted at, and the second is that those articles that did draw on private theatricals remained rooted in examples from the long 18th century (Brooks 2011; McGirr 2011; Watson 2011).

Nonetheless, the journal editorial offered one observation that is particularly useful for contextualising the development of private theatricals in the country house context into and beyond the 19th century. Namely, 'the craze for the kind of domestic performances staged by the social elite and memorably satirised by Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park* (1814) not only survived beyond the end of the nineteenth century but also metamorphosed into a much more widespread taste for amateur theatre' (Hawley and Isbell 2011, xvii). This metamorphosis saw the adoption of new forms of amateur performance beyond the scripted play, from charades to *tableaux vivants*, and the participation in these activities by a wealth of clubs, organisations and institutions across all strata of society, including university groups and sporting associations. Subsequent scholarship has identified the cross participation in a number of these groups by many of the same elite networks: for example, members of university amateur dramatics societies would go on to organise theatricals among their cricket clubs - or at home in grand, stately houses (Coates 2020). Neither were these networks necessarily limited to upper-class groups, purely amateur players or exclusively private settings. Rather, the

historiographical acknowledgement of the widespread uptake and diversification of amateur performance through the 19th century has led to an appreciation that private theatricals formed part of the wider fabric of performance culture as a whole (Coates 2017). In short, underpinning private theatricals in country houses was a rich and diverse culture of amateur theatricals outside them.

However, the body of scholarship on 19th-century private theatricals has yet to take up some of the themes put forward by its 18th-century counterpart. For example, Gillian Russell's chapter on Georgian private theatricals directly addresses what she terms the 'paratheatrical' output of this activity, which included tickets and column inches (2007). Russell argues that these outputs speak substantially to wider concerns of Georgian society. While we cannot transpose issues of 18th-century material and print culture into the 19th century, we can still consider the role of tickets and journalism in 19th-century private performance practices. Indeed, both tickets and newspaper articles evidence many of the findings in this thesis, illustrating the continued use of both through the 19th century (see, in particular, Chapter 4). David Coates has written about the function of journalists - and newspaper illustrations in particular - for marshalling the publicity of Chatsworth's theatricals (2024), demonstrating the potential of this perspective. Yet, wider considerations at the intersections of material culture, private performance practices and the 19th-century country house remain somewhat overlooked.

Russell also highlights the significance of the process to stage a private play in the 18th century for the light that it shines on historic social concerns. She evidences this with reference to the distillation and satirisation of the process to stage *Lovers' Vows* in Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). Indeed, it is rare to read scholarship on 18th-, and even 19th-century private theatricals that does not reference the same novel (see, for example, the quote from Hawley and Isbell above). To an extent, the application of Russell's lens to the 19th century is taken up by Ellenberger in her chapter on private theatricals and the elite social world of Arthur Balfour (2015), as described above. Yet, neither Russell nor Ellenberger credit the individuals and communities that underpinned and supported this process. The next section addresses some of this omission through an integrated consideration of gender and class.

#### 1.3.4 Gender and Class

The previous two sections have repeatedly highlighted the historiographical privileging of certain groups of people over others in both the contexts of the country house, more generally, and country house entertainment, specifically. Indeed, one hardly needs to consult an academic literature review to determine the elite male triumphalism of the country house; the hegemony of patrilineal

primogeniture has rendered the country house 'the strongest visual signifier of the structures of wealth and inequality that secured enormous amounts of power and privilege in the hands of a minority of men who dominated British politics and the British empire into the twentieth century' (Cox 2020). Two of the largest and most significant groups obscured by this elite male perspective are the working classes and women. In large part as a direct response to the dominance of the elite male narrative in the country house context, both of these identifiers command distinct historiographies of their own - a fact which arguably warrants their separate discussion.<sup>11</sup> Yet, in considering private theatricals - broadly (and for the purposes of this study), the staging of amateur performance in the country house - it is not only gender and class, but other social distinctions, structures, perspectives and intersections as well, with which this study is concerned.

Indeed, country house scholarship and curation is undergoing something of a reckoning with regard to this issue. Arguably linked to and prompted by wider movements in the contemporary cultural landscape, such as Black Lives Matter, paradigm-shifting research is being undertaken on topics including slavery, colonial connections (Kaufmann 2007; Dresser and Hann (Eds) 2013; Huxtable et al. (Eds) 2020) and LGBTQ+ stories (Oram 2012; Sandell, Lennon and Smith (Eds) 2018). The topic of childhood is beginning to permeate country house scholarship (Lamb and Pooley (Eds) 2023), with a recent exhibition on this theme at Chatsworth (Chatsworth House Trust 2024), while senior scholars at the University of Oxford recently undertook a Knowledge Exchange project with the National Trust and English Heritage on the topic of 'The Jewish Country House', subsequently producing a book on the subject (Carey and Green (Eds) 2024). Social perspectives on the country house, then, are increasingly cutting across the themes of gender and class.

Nonetheless, a consideration of both gender and class are helpful ways in to unpicking and detailing those who are and are not present in historiographies of private theatricals, and for questioning why. Given a country house context that is otherwise dominated by the perspective of 'great men', as discussed previously, it is notable that women occupy a prominent position in accounts of private theatricals, whether in the role of writer, performer or host (Bryan 2002; Cobrin 2006; McGirr 2011; Hubberstey 2025). Underscoring the increasingly wide uptake of private theatricals through the 19th century, Katherine Newey discusses the involvement of middle class women in 'home' theatricals in

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<sup>11</sup> Lucy Brownson and Amy Solomon's introduction to their co-edited edition of *Women's History Review* (2024) is a particularly fruitful starting point to researching women in the country house, citing as they do a number of highly influential publications in this field, such as work by Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh (1990), Ruth Larsen (2004), and a volume edited by Terence Dooley et. al. (2017). Likewise, Brownson's PhD thesis (2023a, ch.4) offers a thoughtful consideration of literature on working class lives in the country house - a topic that is less well covered than women's history more generally.

relation to the concept of 'separate spheres' - as Newey herself summarises, 'the strong ideological division between the private and public domains, and the gendered nature of this differentiation between the domestic sphere and the world outside the home' (1998, 93). Indeed, across the majority of literature on private theatricals is the strong association between the activity and domestic sociability (whether explicitly stated or not) (Russell 2007b; Watson 2011; Ellenberger 2015), with which comes an attendant - though by no means ubiquitous - association with women and a woman's responsibility to provide such a format of entertainment in her home (see 1.3.3 Entertainment for an outline of sociability). That such a theatrical product of sociability could have meaning beyond the frivolity which characterises so much of the literature on country house entertainment, as discussed above, was evidenced recently by Jemima Hubberstey in a conference paper on Elizabeth Yorke, Countess of Hardwicke's, 1797 juvenile production of *The Woodcutter* (2025). By casting her children as actors in her specially-adapted play, Hubberstey and her co-author, Christine Gerrard, deftly argued, Yorke 'sought to instill models of governance and responsibility into a new generation of aristocratic politicians', evidencing both the educational potential of private theatricals and the political influence of aristocratic women in this realm (ibid.).

There is significantly more to be traced and understood with regard to women's influence through the mode of private theatricals, following the model of Hubberstey and Gerrard. Yet, what is already apparent is the weight given to the *aristocratic* woman's voice in her position as writer, player or host of private theatricals. If, as Susie West states, country houses 'embody relations *between* differing groups,' housing 'both the elite [...] and the disenfranchised employees' (1999, 104), where are the perspectives of everyone else - the audience, or those working to manage the productions - and what role do private theatricals play in negotiating the country house's social relations? Despite the recognition of the increasing uptake of amateur theatricals through the 19th century (Hawley and Isbell 2011; Coates 2017), thereby implicating the involvement and private theatrical literacy of an increasingly wide range of people, very rarely do studies of country house theatricals from the period - or before - acknowledge the presence of anyone other than the aristocrats in their roles as organisers or performers. Backstage work and workers are rarely, if ever, mentioned (cf. Coates 2017, 243-251), and the composition of audiences is most often only referred to in passing or for the high-profile (aristocratic) people therein. Despite its frequent usage as a source for the insights it provides on both social interactions between the elite protagonists and Austen's own familiarity with private theatricals, the process to stage *Lovers' Vows* in *Mansfield Park* is rarely interrogated for the corresponding light it may shed on those who laboured to, for example, make the stage curtain or install the temporary stage in a room of the house (Russell 2007a). Moreover, while modern re-

stagings of historic private theatricals have been undertaken, rarely are these more technical or community aspects of the process explored beyond the ways in which they relate directly to the performance itself (see McGirr 2011; Hubberstey 2024).

This oversight is surprising when compared to the attention given to backstage work by contemporary guides of the period, as introduced in 1.2.3 Charades, Tableaux Vivants and Private Theatricals. One important exception is the work of Viv Gardner whose research on the theatricals of Henry Paget, 5th Marquess of Angelsey, at Plas Newydd at the turn of the 20th century has acknowledged the entanglement of the theatrical events with the lives and economies of the local communities (2016, 2022, 2025). Gardner's work is ongoing, but her published outputs consider, in particular, the sale by auction, locally, of the 5th Marquess's theatrical costumes following his bankruptcy. Gardner shines a light on the meaning that these costumes held for a cross-section of people who lived and worked in and around the Marquess's Welsh estate. However, Gardner's examination of the materiality of private theatricals and the relationship between these performances and the local communities remains an exception. Moreover, little attention has thus far been given in Gardner's work to those who laboured backstage for the Marquess's theatrical endeavours and the nature of the work they undertook.

The extent to which this field-wide omission is a class issue is subject to further research. Gardner's attention to the wider community of the 5th Marquess's theatricals is explicitly a product of her own socialist background (Gardner 2025) and, therefore, intimately tied to issues of class. However, without further research, there is little foundation to, for example, conflate backstage work on private theatricals with working class communities or audiences with upper class ones, but it is likely that this will be revealed to be highly nuanced. Bolstered by the findings of this thesis, which locates a range of working people at Chatsworth both backstage and in the audience at the theatricals at the end of the 19th century (see chapters 3-5), however, there is a suggestive correlation between the lack of scholarship on backstage work at private theatricals and the relative dearth of research on the service community of a country house.

Despite the paradigm shifts in broader social histories of country houses outlined above, histories of working people in the country house are relatively poorly-served by academic literature. Broadly speaking, literature on country house servants has most often considered this group only in homogenised terms and in relation to their employers or their named roles, establishing, for example, narratives of growth and decline in servant numbers that speak to the economic history of the country

house (eg. Franklin 1975; Horn 2004) or identifying the many and errant moments of employer/servant interactions in which servants' behaviours are seen to deviate from an expected norm (eg. Gerard 1994; Aslet 2021). While many of these accounts establish important grand narratives against which alternative approaches can be interpreted, they steadfastly underpin the social history of the country house presented by Girouard and critiqued by Arnold, discussed previously. That is, they position servants so as to support the narrative of the 'hegemony of th[e] ruling elite' (Arnold 2002, 141) without questioning the agency of the servants themselves as exercised in their own lives or in the wider culture of the estate and its locale. Lauren Butler summarises the situation thus, '[t]he problem at the heart of the top-down landowner-centric narrative [...] is that it over-emphasizes the bearing of the landowner's symbolic power on daily experiences of life on the estate' (Butler 2019, 17).

Indeed, the lens of the estate, as opposed to solely the house itself, is arguably more appropriate when considering both country house servants and the many other lives entangled with a country house. Employing this lens complicates a binary upstairs/downstairs - or even, upper class/working class - narrative. Indeed, this reframing is closely connected to the historiographical boundary drawn around the country house, as discussed above in relation to space (1.3.2 Architecture, etc). Beyond grand, stately mansions, residential properties owned by a landowner may also have included tenanted houses across tracts of estate land. These houses ranged from small, worker's cottages to "modest" mansions, and from vernacular buildings to polite architecture. Their historic tenants are similarly wide-ranging in their wealth, backgrounds and contributions made to life on the estate. Yet, this diversity of tenantry across a country house estate - and the reflexive, often interdependent, relationship between tenant and estate - has broadly remained the domain of social historians and gone overlooked by more mainstream country house studies. The work of Carol Beardmore has been particularly useful for this thesis, both due to her article on Dr. Wrench, which has served to contextualise some of the archive material drawn on here (2019), and her collaboration with her co-editors on a volume exploring the role of the land agent through the 19th and 20th centuries (Beardmore, King and Monks (Eds) 2016). The position of the land agent on an estate is significant to this study and, in the agent's professional role as chief mediator within and between networks of country house affiliation, frequently testifies to the diversity of social position within an otherwise homogenised 'servant' group defined by their position of deference to the landowner.

Yet, the lack of attention given to backstage work at private theatricals cannot solely be attributed to the relatively scarce scholarship on servants or wider estate tenantry; it is also a result of the

development of the field of theatre history, with its roots in literature. This background has broadly led to a historic prioritisation of text over practice, of on-stage action over backstage activity. Studies of historic stage technology - particularly in Britain - have developed in an almost siloed fashion, away from considerations of text or performance, and remain rooted in professional practice or couched in wider terms of scenography (Rees 1978; Rees and Wilmore (Eds) 1996; Baugh 2007, 2013; Van Goethem and Hunt 2025). Moreover, they broadly prioritise the mechanics and technicalities of the technology itself, overlooking the human, operational experience. This approach has resonances with the study of country house technology, which is likewise broadly considered in terms of functionality (Palmer and West 2016; cf. Clark 2023). From the basis of their overarching study of technology in the country house, Marilyn Palmer and Ian West argue that this is an area particularly ripe for unpicking the varied and complex ways in which servants' roles were adapted to changing circumstances and to mastering the management of technologies that they were highly unlikely to have at home (2016). Indeed, it is a topic that I pick up in chapter 3 of this thesis, which looks at the backstage management of Chatsworth's Theatre. One of the reasons for the scarcity of human perspectives on backstage practices is their inherently embodied nature; I discuss this aspect of theatrical practice in 1.3.6 Embodiment and Material Culture.

With this section I have tried to demonstrate that, while private theatricals are bound up with issues of gender and class, they also have the potential to extend, intercut and challenge them. In her critique of Girouard's work, Dana Arnold writes, in respect to '[...] the architectural historical archive and its interrogation and explanation through the biographical subject/object [...] we impose our expectations of gender performance on the social readings of architecture' (2002, 131). Appropriated and extrapolated for my own ends, we might also say that any approach wherein space is interrogated or explained through a particular group or social identity will always be subject to our expectations of how those groups perform the identity we grant them (see also West 1999, 107). Indeed, this goes some way to explain the paradox at the heart of the simplification of servants' stories in country houses: if we interrogate the spaces of country houses for "servants", we will find the most evidence of their presence in the spaces wherein they performed what we expect of their service. The same might be extended to a private theatre; in our minds we must hold an awareness of who is and is not present in existing historiographies of private theatres and theatricals, but we must also attempt not to impose our social expectations *of* the space *on* the space.

### 1.3.5 Archives

Central to asking who is and is not present in historiographies of private theatricals - and country house entertainment, more broadly - is to question who is and is not present in the archive material

relating to them, where we find the archive material, how we read it, and the extent to which it can provide meaningful answers. While country house and estate archive collections are by no means the sole likely locations of relevant material, they provide the single most generative source of primary research outside the Banks and Burney collections. Moreover, a country house archive forms the basis of documentary research for this thesis, so a critical engagement with this form of collection is foundational context.

There exists a dearth of scholarship on the country house archive as a distinct type of archive collection. Thus, the summary which follows is drawn, in the main, from the unpublished thesis of Lucy Brownson, whose PhD research on the Devonshire Collections Archive (DCA) included its contextualisation in country house and estate archives more broadly (2023a).<sup>12</sup> The material in a country house or estate archive - as conceived from the perspective of an organising archivist - generally comprises 'estate papers, which document the running of the estate and those who have worked and lived there, and family papers, which document the personal and professional business of the landowning family' (Brownson 2023a, 32; see also White et al. 1992; Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts 1996; Perry 2019). Beyond their coverage of the same overarching themes, the key characteristic of country house and estate archives is their idiosyncrasy. As Brownson summarises, 'a general definition of estate archives always contains the important caveat that every archive is specific to the location, history and purview of the estate with which it originated. [...] [E]ach archive is a unique record of the unique ecology of its people, its past, and its present' (2023a, 27).

Within these idiosyncrasies, there is an increasing acknowledgement among researchers that country house and estate archives contain material pertaining to local, national and global themes and a vast spectrum of people. Yet, for those either outside the academy or without the particular understanding of the conditions of managing country house and estate archives, there remains an outdated association therein with 'antiquarianism and the false perception that they represent the interest and views of the landed elite' (North West Museums, Libraries and Archives Council 2004, 21; (Brownson 2023a, 51)). To some extent, this may be explained by the weight of country house historiography, as discussed previously, which has possibly skewed intentions to engage with related archival material towards the perspective of the elite. Certainly, the inherent disciplinary legacies that have separated spatially and socially the edifice of the country house from its wider estate context are reflected in the foundational organising principles of country house and estate archives: family papers become

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<sup>12</sup> Brownson's literature review is recommended reading for its depth and coverage of the development of country house and estate archives. While it is currently unpublished, at the time of writing Brownson can be contacted via her institutional affiliation at University College London.

associated with the house, while estate papers - and the myriad voices and activities to which they testify - become associated without the house. If archives are progenitors of knowledge production, as they are widely argued to be, then clear lines of separation are built into the DNA of country house knowledge. Reading across the organisational grain of country house and estate archives is essential to countering or challenging country house paradigms.

Following successive historical shifts, including two world wars and the legacy of a nationwide agricultural depression, country house and estate archives underwent a significant degree of dispersal from the mid-20th century; that is, many such archive collections left the properties to which they related and became accessioned into other types of repositories (for example, county record offices, university repositories, etc) (Brownson 2023a, 24-26). Vicki Perry has estimated that, as of 2019, while 300 properties that could be described as country houses or country house estates were in the care of the National Trust, and over 1,600 privately-owned houses were members of the Historic Houses association, only 80 country house archive collections remained in situ (2019, 22).

The location of the country house and estate archive is significant for how it has, and continues to evolve, and for how we engage with it. Indeed, it is a distinction that Brownson is keen to highlight within the literature and that has implications for my own engagement with the primary material drawn on herein. For example, while those collections that entered a public sector institution have broadly stopped accruing related records, those that remain with their originating properties continue to grow (Perry 2019, 22). Ongoing archival collecting will reflect the priorities of both the current landowner and modern archiving cultures and attitudes; it is organic with the potential to be responsive. Moreover, as deftly argued by Achille Mbembe, the spatial and material characteristics of an archive building and the ways it manages a researcher's encounter with the archive material can have a profound effect on the ways in which that material is experienced, authorised and then sublimated into knowledge (Mbembe 2002; Robinson 2010). Thus, for Brownson, while their contents broadly cover many of the same themes, as described above, a *country house* archive remains in situ, while an *estate* archive has been divorced from its originating location (2023a, 26). I employ Brownson's distinction going forward.

The management and organisation of a country house archive may be as individual as its content. Despite becoming increasingly professionalised since the 1980s, the role of a country house archivist has to remain flexible to the specific conditions of the collection, and work within specific circumstances and constraints (Brownson 2023a, 33-50). Brownson notes the resources published by

the Historic Houses Archivists Group as indicative of the range of challenges an archivist in this context might face, from the conservation and management of a plurality of materials held in the archive, to working on a shoestring budget (*ibid.*, 46). Budgetary constraints can lead to a lack of staff to catalogue material or oversee its access, or dictate the oversight of multiple objects and collections by one person (Carney 2011; (Brownson 2023a, 52)). Given these challenges (and more), there is an acknowledged backlog of uncatalogued material held in country house archives.

To an extent, we can read the result of these archival challenges in the historiography on private theatricals. It is possible to identify a trend in the historiography whereby overarching studies draw on the same primary sources - namely, the Banks and Burney collections, mentioned previously (Entertainment and Sociability) (Rosenfeld 1978; Brooks 2011; cf. Isbell 2013). Whereas individual studies often respond to a discrete cache of papers, uncovered in a newly-catalogued archive collection, or newly-appreciated by a researcher for their theatrical perspective (McGirr 2011; Watson 2011; Jordan 2019; Hubberstey 2024). All the studies cited here are incisive, scholarly, and - in a relatively nascent field within both theatre and country house history - vital. Yet, often the individual case-studies remain somewhat siloed, rooted in biographical and geographical specificity, and failing to draw substantial connections between or across communities or places. To a great extent, this narrower perspective is a product of the youth of the field, the silence of country house literature on the subject of private theatricals, and the inherent biases of the country house archive. To wit, as I have outlined above, the existence and significance of historic private performance entertainment is overlooked by country house literature. Processes of cataloguing country house archive material - whether governed by overarching guidelines, or subject to the knowledge and availability of an individual archivist - can subsequently fail to include search terms that are pertinent to this activity; archive material that is relevant to a researcher of private performance entertainment can become buried.

There are some notable exceptions: Hubberstey and Gerard's paper, as discussed above, linked Elizabeth Yorke's theatricals to much broader political and social histories (2025), while Gardner's research on Plas Newydd has extended the conceptual boundary of the house to the surrounding communities (2022, 2025). However, it is the work and perspective of David Coates that really bucks this trend, identifying narrative threads that connect multiple sites and link otherwise disparate groups of people to reframe the ways we think about private theatricals in the 19th century, how and where they were staged, and who was involved (2017, 2024). In order to do this, Coates has combed a significant number of archival collections across the country, in both public and private settings

(Coates, D. pers. comm. 2025).<sup>13</sup> In responding to these different archival settings, his approach has had to be flexible, encompassing a range of search terms for catalogued material and relying on instinct, experience and - to some degree - luck, for un- or partly-catalogued material. Though Coates's scope encompasses British amateur theatricals of all kind, evident in much of his work is the richness of scrapbooks for their theatrical testimony (see particularly Coates 2020): bound volumes dedicated either to social engagement more broadly or, even, to amateur theatrical activity specifically, including newspaper and magazine cuttings, programmes for performances and, sometimes, photographs of the performers. Indeed, as I have already mentioned, it is scrapbooks in the Burney and Banks collections that underpin a number of other publications.

In both an article on Chatsworth's Grafton Papers (Brownson 2023b) - a collection of multiple volumes of scrapbooks (see below for more on this discrete collection) - and a chapter of her PhD thesis (2023a, 261-332), Lucy Brownson, outlines the issues facing the cataloguing of scrapbooks in institutional archives - and the opportunities brought by overcoming them. Including scrapbooks under the umbrella term of 'ephemera', she explains, '[o]ften already marginal in institutional archives, wherein long-held professional principles of originality and uniqueness are still overwhelmingly prioritized and valued, ephemeral materials are further marginalized by the organizing principles and dominant practices of such repositories' (2023b, 308). The archive material that has best served research on private theatricals, then, has the potential to be doubly obscured: first, by the omission of private performance entertainment in country house literature and a consequent lack of awareness in cataloguing practices pertaining to country house archive collections; and second, by the overarching foundations and principles of institutional archives more broadly. A further issue with material commonly found in scrapbooks, as described above, is the perspective they foreground. Programmes, newspaper clippings and cast photographs all, in the main, record on-stage activity. Some concession might be granted in programmes to those leading backstage efforts, such as wig and costume makers or stage managers, and some account of an audience's reaction may be recorded in newspaper column inches, but frequently, this view panders to high-profile individuals. In mostly recording the cast and repertoire, these materials perpetuate the obscurity of both backstage activity and audience composition, as discussed above.

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<sup>13</sup> From September 2024 to October 2025, I worked as a research assistant for David Coates. In part, the role involved rationalising his many thousands of digital photographs of archival material pertaining to his research topic, taken over the course of years of research. Through observation and informal discussion during catch-up meetings, I noted the broad application of his methodology.

Should a scale of ephemerality exist, historic performance practices surely lie even beyond scrapbooks. Recording performance is an enduring issue for scholars of theatre and performance, calling us to question how, why and to what extent we even *can* preserve an activity most often defined by its liveness (Schneider 2001; Sant (Ed) 2014, 2017). In an age of digital media, video recording offers one option. While this is a relatively recent development - and not without its own critical issues (for examples relating to the recording, relaying and reception of productions through NT Live, see Read 2014; Zhou 2020; Byrne 2021) - it invites us to question the extent to which historic performance practices are paper-bound, where else we might find evidence of past performance and how we go about interpreting that evidence. Indeed, in broadening the scope and definition of 'performance' to include cultural performances, performance scholars have noted the exclusionary role writing and documentary archives have played in making and shaping history, privileging the written account over 'oral or expressive traditions' (Burton (Ed) 2006, 7; see Taylor 2003). Though undoubtedly upholding the structures of power that have dominated western history, even more traditional country house archives are not limited to the care and cataloguing of documentary materials alone, as evidenced by the plurality of materials held therein. Oral histories offer one example.

Writing in 2006, Antoinette Burton commented on the 'respectability' gained by oral history over the previous 25 years, noting their role in 'help[ing] to prize open canonical notions of what counts as an archive' (2006, 3). Led by Deborah, Duchess of Devonshire, and arguably testifying to her more progressive attitudes, oral histories of some of the workers on the Chatsworth estate began to be collected for the DCA in the 1990s. The result of this project is an extraordinary insight into the day-to-day existence of key workers on the estate that cuts across professional and social boundaries to reveal networks of community forged through place and circumstance. These accounts complement and enrich Duchess Deborah's published work on the estate which, by the nature of her perspective, broadly adheres to a narrative of productivity - a narrative that implicitly underpins the financial security of the landowner (Cavendish 1992). Despite being collected only from the 1990s onwards, there is a strong sense of tradition and inheritance in many of the accounts that connects generations of workers across both centuries and class, with the potential to disrupt and rebuild established modes of interpreting estate landscapes and their people.

Moreover, it was as a result of one of the oral histories produced for the DCA project that Lucy Brownson was able to consolidate the full provenance of the Grafton Papers (CH11) - a discrete collection of archive material spanning 15 boxes in the DCA that was bequeathed to Chatsworth in the

1990s by Tom Grafton, an estate tenant (2023b). Both the contents and the provenance of the Grafton Papers contribute significantly to this thesis, and so it is worth elaborating on Brownson's findings.<sup>14</sup> Brownson's research identified a pattern of inheritance that saw scrapbooks and albums of newspaper clippings, postcards and other ephemera handed down and expanded upon by male members of three different families on the estate. The men involved crossed generational and hierarchical lines: Frederick Martin was the son of Gilson Martin, the Land Agent from 1881-1908; Walter Longden, the son of George Longden - gardener to, among others, the Martins; while Tom Grafton, depositor and namesake of the final collection, and 56 years Walter's junior, worked in the forestry team. By meticulously examining the contents of the albums to discern senders and recipients of picture postcards, Brownson established kinship and connections between estate families otherwise only circumstantially tied by their respective professional roles on the estate. It was Grafton's 1994 oral history testimony that confirmed many of the connections otherwise discerned only through glimmers in the papers themselves.

Yet, the cataloguing and care of oral histories remain the responsibility of the country house archive, in its role as a formalised part of the institution, and will be subject to the same idiosyncrasies, as outlined above. As Burton explores, no archive can contain 'total' knowledge (2006, 4) - it is always partial - and if, as Diana Taylor has outlined, performance activity in its broadest terms resists a written legacy (2003), should we even position the institutional archive as the 'progenitor of knowledge production' (see above) for performance histories? The next section responds to this question by considering the role of embodiment and material culture in the historiography of private performance practices. The question is further explored in my Methodology.

### 1.3.6 Embodiment and Material Culture

Arenas of knowledge production (arguably) free from the institutional archive, embodied knowledge and material culture are central both to understanding backstage activity and to locating histories of private performance practices in country house collections. Yet, while the role of material culture has been credited as important to the practice of private theatricals in the 18th century (Russell 2007a), its backstage function and 19th century context have been overlooked, while embodied knowledge

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<sup>14</sup> Brownson's article is in dialogue with this thesis in a number of ways: her findings draw on some of the original research contained herein - specifically that from 3.5.2 Behind-the-scenes: George Longden - while the Grafton Papers have provided the way in to understanding Chatsworth's theatricals in the late 19th century. Learning more about their position within the social fabric of estate life feeds a critical engagement with them that is sympathetic to my research. Her article then, beyond its scholarly value in terms of estate literature, is also testament to the CDA PhD model, where collaboration can take place not only between the researcher and the partner institution, as explored in 1.3.8 Collaboration, but between researchers themselves.

has been broadly excluded from historiographical consideration altogether. This omission is consistent with literature on country house entertainment more broadly which, though linked with the rise of labour-saving devices (as outlined in 1.3.3 Entertainment above), is rarely critiqued in relation to material culture (Clark 2022), leaving a lacuna in connections between the adoption of new technologies on the one hand, and the culture of country house entertainment on the other. In this section, I consider the two arenas of embodied knowledge and material culture as intertwined, an understanding of private theatrical material culture - as it pertains to the more technical aspects of performance - mostly contingent on a historically embodied knowledge of it.

Backstage work is an inherently embodied form of knowledge and learning. Skills in the creation and operation of lighting, stage machinery and scenery, for example, are frequently and most effectively passed on through practice rather than writing, with the results that an understanding of these practices is inaccessible to those who do not learn them and, if they are not passed on, they are easily lost. The publications of Richard Southern in the first half of the 20th century made in-roads to widen access into backstage crafts (Southern 1937, 1952). His work bridges 19th- and 20th-century practices in both the amateur and professional realms and, given the period in which he was writing, can be seen to speak directly to the practical guides from the late 19th century, as mentioned in 1.2.3 Charades, Tableaux Vivants and Private Theatricals. Southern's texts remain a valuable source for understanding the evolution of technical theatrical practices through this period. Southern was himself a practitioner, and the research of practitioners remains central to understanding historic technical theatre practices. By virtue of their own practices as well as research, Wendy Waszut-Barrett and Grit Eckert have made - and continue to make - valuable contributions to the study of 19th-century scene-painting techniques, and of the communities and ecologies in which scene-painters operated in both Britain and the US, providing a much-overlooked human perspective to the discourse that complements and extends the more technical approach outlined above in Gender and Class (Waszut-Barrett 2018, 2024; Eckert 2025).

Indeed, the study and existence of historic scenery has proven to be a generative avenue into both valuing backstage labour and skill and prompting research into 19th-century theatres. For example, it was the rediscovery of scenic cloths that prompted the curator at Burton Constable in East Yorkshire to look further into evidence for the historic theatre at that site (Wood, P. pers. comm. July 2024); among their collection are several pieces of theatrical scenery dating to the 1840s and ranging in execution from skilled perspectival painting on canvas to the homemade decoration of hinged panels that reach a height of over four metres (Guerreiro 2021). On another occasion, a discovery of a large

cache of painted scenic flats instigated a project to conserve the private, 19th-century theatre at Normansfield Hospital in south-west London (Rowe 1999; Earl 2010; Thompson and Lennard 2013; Langdon Down Museum of Learning Disability 2025). Furthermore, arguably it is the prominence of the painted proscenium arch, and the existence of a stock of historic scenery that has prompted research on Chatsworth's theatre, including this thesis.

This relationship between extant 19th-century theatrical material and research into the practical or technical aspects of 19th-century private performance has contributed to scholarly oversight of this area. It is widely understood that there is a dearth of material evidence of 19th-century British private theatricals. Yet, at the heart of this understanding is a logical fallacy: we will not be able to recognise historic theatrical material in private houses if we do not, in the first instance, acknowledge the ubiquity of private performance practices through the 19th century and, in the second, seek out the material. Through extensive archival research, David Coates identified for the first time a number of historic houses in Britain that, at some point in the 19th century, built private theatres or converted existing spaces to accommodate them (2017). Where the theatres themselves no longer wholly exist, given Jeremy Musson's exploration of the country house dressing-up box (2002), described in Entertainment above, it seems highly likely that material traces of 19th-century private theatres and theatricals have made their way into other areas of the country house. Further evidence of this is the re-identification of a historic theatrical light dimmer at Chatsworth, long thought to be related to the Dairy there (Appendix B).

The potential fruitfulness of research undertaken on the backstage material culture of private theatricals is evidenced in European examples. Relative to the number still extant in Britain that researchers are aware of, there are a plethora of historic private theatres across Europe.<sup>15</sup> The work undertaken on the 18th-century court theatre at Drottningholm, Sweden, offers a particularly exciting template for how future research might be carried out at Chatsworth (Sauter and Wiles 2014). Although there are significant differences in scale, period and architectural development, both theatres are remarkably intact, with a stock of historic scenery and original backstage fittings. Researchers from the Universities of Stockholm and Exeter have engaged with the heritage site of Drottningholm to interrogate the building's history and both its historic and contemporary practice of staging operatic performances. Since the modern performances embrace the Baroque constraints of the theatre, employing historic scenic methods and reanimating much of the original stage

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<sup>15</sup> Many of these can be identified via a website dedicated to historic theatres across the continent (Jung 2025), while still others are coming to light as research progresses (see findings coming from Wagner and Coates 2025).

technology, the scholars acknowledge many of the tensions that accompany performance reconstruction, especially in a space that has, since its construction, adopted a variety of uses and which, today, functions primarily as a museum. Nonetheless, the presentation and research of Drottningholm speak in a large part to its 18th-century identity. How should we understand the backstage culture of a 19th-century private theatre in Britain?

There are three sources that have proved particularly useful for exploring this question in the context of this thesis by drawing out and articulating knowledge that is otherwise located in the body through practised experience - though they are all rooted in professional practice, as opposed to amateur or private. The first is Tracy Cattell's PhD thesis which explores, in part, the role of a stage manager in the 19th century (2015). Cattell identifies the title being employed for a number of individuals with a range of distinct skills and responsibilities, highlighting the diversity of people to whom such a title could apply. Furthermore, in her study of prompt books from the period, she evocatively presents the particular dramaturgical awareness that someone overseeing behind-the-scenes activity would require. This is reflected in Christopher Baugh's translation of J.-P. Moynet's 1873 text that elucidates life backstage in a professional theatre, and which often humorously details the exasperating job of backstage managers and prompts in working with actors. Such a human-centred approach is the central thesis of Christin Essin's work (Essin 2016, 2021) which, perhaps more than any other scholarship, seeks to highlight and value the labour and communities that underpin onstage activity. Essin's work chimes closely with the perspective taken by those country house scholars engaged with overturning the upstairs/downstairs paradigm and giving primacy to the voices of those who perhaps knew the ins and outs of their places of work better than anyone.

The scholars highlighted here - Eckert, Waszot-Barrett, Cattell, Moynet (and Baugh), Essin - are practitioners in their respective fields. Their contribution to understanding backstage labour, and the interrelatedness of that labour with the objects it employs, is a direct result of their own experience, and testifies to the importance of attending to those that do the work. Archival traces are limited in their ability to reveal the histories of private performance practices; they must be interwoven with those material and spatial traces that survive - traces that are best appreciated by working in collaboration with those that know them best. I explore this interweaving in my Methodology, but it is the theme of collaboration that I explore in the next and final section of this Review.

### 1.3.7 Collaboration

Collaboration between the British country house and the academy has an established record of producing important work. In recent years much of this work has been initiated by houses themselves,

or those institutions with the responsibility of care for country houses - such as the National Trust and English Heritage - working in collaboration with each other and the academy. Regionally, for example, the Yorkshire Country House Partnership, consisting of 12 houses across Yorkshire working with the University of York, has developed a network of relationships that has supported individual research projects and produced coordinated exhibitions on topics that broaden the historic social contexts of country houses (Ridgway 2018). Over the years, the partnership has contributed to a developing discourse on, for example, elite women and their agency in the country house context (Larsen 2003; Larsen (Ed) 2004), and the reinterpretation of country house estates, from the point of view of those working on them (Tatlioglu 2010), while the ramifications of the relationships developed through the partnership can be detected in the most current scholarship (eg. Graham 2025). The paradigm-shifting research identified in 1.3.4 Gender and Class above, such as the radical reassessment of properties and collections with connections to slavery and colonialism, was a result of the National Trust and English Heritage partnering with external scholars, and partnerships between heritage organisations and the academy continue to advance the research agenda around the country house. While some outputs from these projects have included exhibitions and scholarly tomes, others have reached beyond the academy with specifically-curatorial impact - for example, practical, open-access and accessibly-written 'toolkits' have been developed collaboratively by practitioners and academics to support researchers and collection management teams across the spectrum of properties owned by the Trust (Lamb and Pooley (Eds) 2023). These tools lay the groundwork for future research and model true knowledge exchange between heritage organisations and the academy.

Within this culture of industry-academy collaboration, the Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) and Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) models - UK Research and Innovation initiatives wherein non-academic organisations partner with higher education institutions to support PhD projects with mutually beneficial outcomes - have been particularly impactful in offering opportunities for deep and detailed research work that might otherwise be stymied by industry pressures. Projects have ranged from elite women's literary agency and habits (Hubberstey 2021; Crowther 2023) to the role of graffiti in placemaking (Bryning 2025). This doctoral project is itself the result of a CDA and has been undertaken alongside that of Lucy Brownson at the University of Sheffield, whose thesis addressed an intersectional feminist gap in the production and management of Chatsworth's archive, the value of which is already evident through this literature review (see particularly 1.3.5 Archives) (Brownson 2023a). In a complementary article, Brownson elucidated the power of the CDA model, specifically drawing attention to the opportunities for 'slow' archiving - a term coined by archive scholars working towards the decolonisation of archives 'that insists on slowing down, re-examining and then disrupting

the ‘seemingly benign practices and processes of the profession’ (Brownson 2023b, 323; Christen and Anderson 2019, 90) - and the radical potential of this approach for drawing out the voices of those otherwise silenced by the biases and practical constraints of the country house archive.

The successful support of our work by the Chatsworth House Trust is in part predicated on the experience of supporting a previous cohort of CDA students (2015-2019) based at the University of Sheffield, whose research unearthed valuable accounts of the rich lives and varied work of servants across the Cavendish estates from the 18th to the 20th centuries (Butler 2019; Clapperton 2019; Wallace 2020). One of the major outputs from this collaboration was the publicly-accessible Servants and Staff Database - a compilation of archive records and published sources relating to historic Cavendish staff identified by the researchers during their time in the Devonshire Collections Archive (Chatsworth House Trust 2019). While this database built on an existing body of work by Chatsworth’s archivists and volunteers, it exemplifies the detailed work made possible by the CDA model, and is comparable in its scope to a similar database produced by Harewood House in 2015 (Harewood House Trust 2015). As well as testifying to the power of individual houses to redirect their own research agendas, the production of both databases is a pragmatic, time-saving solution to fielding countless enquiries from members of the public wishing to learn more about their genealogical connections to historic staff on the estates. This surge of enquiry reflects a public desire to learn about working people in the histories of country houses and their estates, yet it also stretches beyond the lives of those on the Cavendish payroll to include historic tenantry in a range of properties in the Cavendish portfolio. As such, it speaks to the relative dearth of literature on this topic, as discussed in *Gender and Class*, and calls us to pursue scholarship in this area. Given the time needed to read across the grain of country houses archives (see 1.3.5 Archives), and the relative success of CDA projects in doing so, collaboration looks to be a productive way forward.

At the time of writing, the National Trust is developing a research project around the topic of Amateur Creativity (Conroy 2025). There is scant information publicly available yet, but the project’s development by Rachel Conroy suggests something of an overlap with the University of Oxford, where Conroy has affiliation (*ibid.*). The extent to which this project will include theatrical creativity is unknown; certainly, Conroy’s background as a scholar and curator of decorative arts may suggest any inclusion of theatrically-related material to be secondary to those collections more traditionally associated with country house creativity. Yet, individual properties within the National Trust have been unearthing traces of theatricals in their collections or histories for well over a decade, attempting to contextualise the stories they tell and discovering that interpretation along theatrical themes can

offer valuable opportunities for visitor engagement. Such presentation of these sites swims against the tide of the historical erasure of private performance practices otherwise represented in country house literature. In 2012, the National Trust property of Lyme Park, Cheshire, reinstated a temporary stage in the Long Gallery to recall the Legh family's enthusiasm for private theatricals at the turn of the 20th century (Anonymous 2012). The property used this as an opportunity to engage the public by staging a production of a one-act musical fairytale in which members of the public could participate. More recently, Plas Newydd in North Wales, home of the 5th Marquess of Anglesey at the end of the 19th century and now in the care of the National Trust, has engaged in a number of public-facing activities to reimagine the theatre that the Marquess updated in the former chapel. In 2017, the property supported performer Seiriol Davies's musical adaptation of the Marquess's theatrical history (Davies 2017), and in 2023 created artist-led installations to evoke the elaborate theatrical costumes sold by auction in 1905 to posthumously pay the Marquess's debts (Chandler 2023). Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumbria, another National Trust property, gutted by fire in 1822 and left as a shell, has embraced both the theatrical bent of its original architect, Sir John Vanbrugh, and its 18th-century history of lavish entertainment to characterise the house as explicitly theatrical. According to the Trust's website, the house both serves as a metaphorical stage set for the stories of the Delaval family - former owners of the site - and contains a 'Baroque-inspired traveling theatre', a miniature stage on which visitors are invited to tread (National Trust No Date).

Despite these examples all taking place in National Trust properties, and despite the period of time that they span, each property has treated the presence of private theatricals at their site as broadly siloed, isolated from each other and detached from a wider cultural practice. When consulted in 2022, the National Trust's Cultural Heritage Curator for North Wales was not aware of Lyme Park's theatrical endeavours ten years earlier, or that the Marquess of Anglesey's flamboyant theatricals took place within a rich and varied culture of private performance (Chennell, D. pers. comm. July 2022). When properties have required academic input, this has been sought from scholars working in the field of Theatre Studies: David Coates supported Amy Carney in her research to interpret Lyme Park in 2012, and Viv Gardner has worked closely with Plas Newydd in their understanding of the 5th Marquess's theatricals (Carney, A. pers. Comm. August 2024; Chennell, D. pers. Comm. July 2022). While cross-disciplinary collaboration is vital for bringing new perspectives to country house histories, the consultation of theatre historians by curators of historic houses reflects the erasure of 19th-century private performance practices by country house scholars.

Indeed, there is frustration among some curators of country houses open to the public that the research to contextualise, conserve and display material traces of their theatrical histories is so far removed from their usual sources of information. Burton Constable in East Yorkshire are desirous of reinstating a private theatre they know to have been present in one of their rooms in the mid-19th century (Wood, P. pers. comm. July 2024); I introduced their extant scenic stock in the previous section on Embodiment and Material Culture. These pieces are in poor condition due to their historic storage conditions, but the costs associated with conservation must be considered alongside future management and wider values: how should the property store such large objects? How can they create value from prioritising the care of these objects over others? In an informal meeting, the former curator of Burton Constable pointed out the wealth of research readily available to country house curators on fine art topics, such as furniture and paintings, but the dearth of support for understanding theatrical materials (Wood, P. pers. comm. July 2024). This challenge is evident in the conservation report for Burton Constable's scenery, undertaken by an eminent fine art conservator, in which language more commonly associated with fine art is used over theatrical terminology (Guerreiro 2021). For example, the conservator summarises the tall, hinged panels as 'diptychs' - a word far removed from the theatrical alternatives, such as 'wings', 'legs' or 'flats'. This use of language serves to emphasise aesthetic value over function, and pushes towards an approach of conservation-in-suspension rather than considering practical use.

Representing the historic culture of private performance entertainment in country houses open to the public offers opportunities to engage visitors in ongoing and meaningful ways that not only entertain but enrich our connections to these sites. However, if this culture is to resist tokenism and become embedded in country house narratives, curators need to understand the related objects, archives and spaces in their care and how they relate to broader country house themes. There is a need for a two-way bridge between country house studies and those working on the topic of private theatricals in theatre studies; there is a need to collaborate.

### 1.3.8 Conclusion

This Literature Review has broadly identified the historiography of private theatres and performance practices as siloed along disciplinary lines. However, throughout and by way of its structure, I have tried to highlight the porousness at the edges of each discipline and the potential for an interdisciplinary approach through collaboration and methodologies that deviate from a country house norm. Where country house scholarship privileges art and architectural history, an interdisciplinary approach contributes to the development of Girouard's socio-spatial perspective of the country house by claiming that, where private performance practices are concerned,

entertainment, built space, and the wider country house estate are inseparable. As such, the review argues for a reading of private performance practices not only as theatre or performance history but also as spatial and material practices within country houses, and as social and professional activity connected to estate communities.

The archive was identified as an important repository of primary source material for uncovering histories of private performance practices, but it is by no means the only source. The review drew particular attention to those voices and perspectives missing from or overlooked by existing historiography, in particular those working backstage and the composition of the audience. Given the correlation between scholarship (and the relative lack thereof) on backstage practices and the service community of the country house, in looking beyond on-stage activities, it is necessary to attend both to material and spatial cultures of performance and the embodied knowledge of those who interact with them. Yet, if this appears to suggest a route through the research that begins at the paper archive and ends with the material or spatial, the reverse is also true: attending to material and spatial traces of performance encourage us to interrogate the archive - in its paper, oral and embodied forms - in a different light. This latter approach has the potential to disrupt the 'top-down' country house narrative that is predicated on a deep engagement with traditional archive material and subject to its organising principles and biases. Indeed, by looking at material and spatial residues of private performance practices, researchers can reconstruct hidden layers of everyday life, labour and creativity in and around the country house that either evades the archive or exists in glimmers therein.

Partnerships between heritage organisations and the academy have opened up, and continue to develop new research agendas, with the potential not only to reshape scholarship but also public history and visitor engagement. Nonetheless, the challenge remains to embed performance narratives in country house paradigms, such that they resist tokenism and reflect the complex interactions of landowners, gentry and estate communities.

## 1.4 Methodology

This thesis takes as its starting point well-established methods of researching and analysing architecture in buildings history and archaeology, blending analyses of the fabric of buildings with deep archival research. However, it also draws on methods and methodologies from the intersection of ethnography, performance research and embodiment. As such, the methodological approach reaches towards interdisciplinarity. Wolfgang Krohn posits that ‘most interdisciplinary research projects are organized around real-world cases [and] that these cases have to be understood with all their contingent features and circumstantial conditions’ (2017, 41). As the product of a Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA), this PhD project is, to all intents and purposes, a real-world case: it broadly addresses the problem and specific organisational context identified in 1.1 Introduction. The vast majority of research for this thesis was undertaken on site at Chatsworth, alongside and in regular communication with the professional curatorial and collections team. Working in this environment - responding to colleagues’ enquiries, supporting internal projects, adapting daily to the tensions and circumstances of a privately-owned mansion that receives over 600,000 visitors a year (Chatsworth House Trust 2023, 7) - figures as one of the ‘circumstantial conditions’ that shaped both the process and progress of this project. The methods for collecting data and the methodological frameworks through which both the methods and the data have been understood have had to be flexible, pragmatic and responsive.

### 1.4.1 Buildings Archaeology

Despite its associations with temporally distant civilizations - be those prehistoric, Classical, etc - archaeology can be seen to be more broadly concerned with ‘the material remains of human societies from all periods’ (Hicks and Beaudry 2006, 1). Its broad and adaptable application, with a scope to explore material culture in relation to any society, is perhaps why Susie West found it remarkable that archaeologists had swerved the country house as a case study site for so long (1999 as discussed in 1.3.2 Architecture, etc above). The study of standing buildings within archaeology adopts a systematic stratigraphic and visual analysis of a building to determine its phases of change (Shapland 2020). For this study, I undertook a visual analysis and photographic record of the spaces of the Theatre - the gallery, the boxes and the stage - to gain an initial understanding of its phasing, learn about the materials used and identify any specific features that might be significant. The main sources of contextualisation for buildings archaeologists are not generally available for private theatres; Historic England’s listing guide for Culture and Entertainment notes country houses as a site for performance, pre-1700, but is henceforth concerned with public buildings (Historic England 2017, 13). In its specific

criteria for listing designation - ie. those aspects of a public theatre that make it particularly important - the guide states that the 'survival of stage equipment is always significant' (ibid. p. 21), yet furnishes no further information on how to identify, date or understand the functionality of such equipment; the select bibliography (all of which has been consulted for this thesis) is concerned only with architectural development. Following his visit to Chatsworth in 2005, Wilmore noted the rare existence of a range of technical items pertaining to the theatre - 'electrical lighting battens', 'small early electric follow-spots, and footlight pillars' (2005, 46) - alongside a stash of tickets and seating plans. The paper traces of Wilmore's findings survive today in the archive (DE/CH/7), but without technical knowledge of stage operation or illustrative images, the equipment is harder to identify. An examination of the sub-stage space revealed the pipes through which electric cables snaked to reach the footlights, and it is possible that the removal of the planks on the apron of the stage would reveal the pillars that Wilmore mentions. However, this removal was not possible. Between Wilmore's visit and my own record of the Theatre and its surrounding spaces, many objects and items were moved, and there is no record of the subsequent whereabouts of the moveable equipment. With the help of the Head of Collections, I searched the Granary - a large space in the attics of the Stable Block that is today used to store an assortment of objects - to no avail. These important material traces of the Theatre's life have been divorced from their context and, in the process, stripped of their significance; they may even, quite possibly, be lost. Moreover, the careful retention and cataloguing of the related documents point to a privileging of paper-based archive material over objects that accords both with the historiography of the country house and its obfuscation of functionality in favour of aesthetics, and that of the documentary archive as the primary site of knowledge production (a point I develop in 1.4.3 (Auto)ethnography, etc).

How a record is made of a site, and then how that record becomes meaningful, are key concerns in post-processual approaches to archaeology (Shanks 2007). History is made, not in the evidence itself, but in how that evidence is understood and interpreted. My engagement here with an archaeological methodology is a development from my Master's degree, through which I nurtured a particular interest in a biographical approach to the study of buildings. It is to this area of interpretation that I now turn, and it is on my earlier foundation of knowledge that the following overview is built.

As I outlined in the Literature Review (1.3.2 Architecture, etc), buildings archaeology has historically been concerned with the study of vernacular buildings - those buildings constructed without a named designer and often built from local materials (Brunskill 1987). An early desire, from the 1950s, to understand local, regional and national trends in vernacular building led to a strong typological

approach (Fox and Raglan 1951), which provided a framework for the field for the subsequent two and a half decades. While later (and parallel) scholarship moved away from concerns with typology, it likewise sought overarching narratives to explain shifts and patterns in long-term, regional or national building developments, such as W. G. Hoskins' 'Great Rebuilding' (1953) and Matthew Johnson's 'Georgian Order' (1992). Such approaches were criticised for obscuring the nuances and diversity of human and material agency (Hicks and Horning 2006, 280; Lucas 2006, 39) and, broadly, these grand narratives were rejected in favour of 'ways that acknowledge [...] the strangeness and otherness of the past' (Johnson 1999, 69). A biographical interpretation of buildings is one such way.

While there are a number of ways to interpret even the application of 'biography' to a building (Lucas 2006, 40; Mytum 2010), this thesis considers it via the biographies of individuals or groups who have interacted with the building, blending personal histories with material evidence to create a narrative of experience within and of that building.<sup>16</sup> As I summarised in the Literature Review (1.3.2 Architecture, etc), it is founded on the theoretical position that buildings carry agency; they exert influence over time by shaping human action, behaviour and feeling through interaction. In turn, likewise over varying lengths of time, people shape buildings; not only by constructing them, but by altering them in ways small and large - both physically and temporally - from engraving their names in windowpanes to wearing down the same stone steps through decades of use. Granular changes to the fabric of a building are as of much interest to an archaeologist as larger ones, concerned as we are with the 'small things forgotten' (Deetz 1977) - 'those commonplace material objects [or changes] that might lend us understanding of the practice of everyday life in the past' (Jones 2012, 16).

Such a reflexive relationship accords with the social perspective of sociologist, Anthony Giddens's, theory of structuration, whereby individual agency and overarching social structures are two sides of the same coin, individuals acting within and constrained by social structures, yet with the potential to alter it in small but meaningful ways (1986). Citing Giddens's theory is not only useful for the ideas it invokes regarding the reflexivity of *physical* structures and human agency, but also for the ways in which we might consider individual agency within the social structures of the country house estate - structures that have hitherto been presented as rigidly hierarchical (see 1.3.2 Architecture, etc and 1.3.4 Gender and Class). Given that a biographical study is concerned with the interplay between, on the one hand, histories of both individuals and groups and, on the other, buildings, it is also concerned with how buildings influence social structures and vice versa.

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<sup>16</sup> While a biographical approach to the interpretations of buildings has been widely taken up by archaeologists internationally, it is possible to identify a distinct branch of this approach through the work of scholars at the University of York (Gilchrist 1997; Giles 2000; Jenkins 2013).

Though discussing castles, Matthew Johnson's summary of the relationship between people and buildings is pertinent both to my own methodological thinking and the findings contained herein regarding the presentation of space at Chatsworth on the occasion of private performances:

'If we want to understand how they [castles] worked as elite structures, we have to understand them as backdrops in front of which and through which the identities of men and women were 'played out'. And those backdrops were manipulated with all the care and skill of a theatre production. As the identities of the protagonists changed, so did the meanings of the physical structures, even where their form remained the same' (2002, 3).

Johnson employs the word 'protagonists' to describe the individuals at the centre of his research, indicating a style of writing that is, perhaps, more akin to narrative than, say, report. Indeed, narrative is a fundamental component of a biographical interpretation of buildings, used to particular success in the United States (Dolkart 2012), the discourse around which has evolved into methods and modes of storytelling as a tool for public engagement (Praetzellis 1998). In the UK, Harold Mytum sees engagement with a wider audience as the responsibility of the archaeologist, regardless of their subject matter, and further observes that undertaking research with an 'engaging' output in mind can influence the ways in which that research is undertaken (2010; cf. Holmes 2022).

While Mytum also cites a large range of both modes and arenas of engagement, indicating a broad scale along which the process of research may be influenced, his observation chimes with the 'circumstantial conditions' (Krohn 2017, 41) of the production of this thesis. That is, the research was undertaken and a number of other outputs were produced in order to engage a range of audiences, including Chatsworth's collections team and visitors to its online blog (Calf 2020b, 2020a, 2021, 2025). Contributions to Chatsworth's social media platforms - its blog and the Instagram account of the collections department (@ChatsworthArt) - were a part of the agreement made between the CDA candidates (Lucy Brownson and me) and Chatsworth prior to the commencement of this project, as part of its collaborative nature. The methods of research for this thesis, then, across all methodological fields, were influenced by anticipated outputs.

#### 1.4.2 Archival Research

Given the role of personal histories within the approach to buildings archaeology that this thesis adopts, the consultation of documentary records was a fundamental (and enjoyable) part of the research process. Indeed, it was always anticipated to be so. In the early 2000s, a stash of documents relating to Chatsworth's Theatre was rediscovered under the stage, before being catalogued and stored amidst the rest of the archive (see the above reference to Wilmore's uncovering of theatrical

material). Yet, without sufficient time and appropriate expertise, the significance of the papers contained therein could not be fully appreciated (cf. Wilmore 2005). The existence of this collection is partly responsible for the creation of this project and was anticipated to be a major contributing source. From the outset, then, the design of this project has been rooted in the possibilities afforded by Chatsworth's archive.

The Devonshire Collections Archive (DCA) comprise some 6,500 archive boxes, the vast majority of which are stored across four large spaces between Chatsworth House itself, and the nearby Stable Block. While the survival of documents that pertain to country estates is often haphazard and serendipitous, the DCA is relatively comprehensive by comparison to similarly-sized estate archives. As Lucy Brownson notes in her 'counterfactual history', the DCA has 'largely avoided any catastrophic losses through natural or accidental disasters such as flood or fire' (2023a, 96), nor has it suffered significant losses through sale or deliberate censorship (cf. Bailey 2008). Where gaps and erasures in the papers can be identified, they correspond, in the main, to the sale of various properties over the centuries; broadly speaking, when a house was sold, the related paperwork went with it (Brownson 2023a, 95-104). What it therefore represents is an amalgamation of papers that relate to the historic portfolio of Devonshire properties and which were consolidated at Chatsworth at sporadic intervals through the first half of the 20th century (*ibid.*).

Given that this study spans the period 1823 to 1907 and takes as its starting point the conception and development of the Theatre across this period, a focus on archival sources here coalesces around these dates and this site. Relevant collections within the DCA, then, include family papers relating to the 6th, 7th and 8th Dukes of Devonshire (CS6, DF4; DF5; CS8, DF6), estate records from the Chatsworth Estate Office (DE/CH), architectural drawings (ARC), Wyattville's architectural plans (WY) and, from related collections, the Grafton Papers (CH11) - and many others, besides. Further collections were consulted to establish the scope of this study, such as the collection relating to Penrhos College (CH4), a girls' school that relocated to Chatsworth during the Second World War. While the results of this scoping exercise are not necessarily included herein, the process was invaluable for providing a richer grounding in Chatsworth's 20th-century history.

However, it is one thing to identify collections with the potential to be relevant, but it is quite another to consult them. For example, the 6th Duke of Devonshire (1790-1858), the progenitor of Chatsworth's north wing, was an avid and ardent collector, both of objects and of papers. He was a keen correspondent, diarist and scrapbooker. Of the papers relating to the 6th Duke, the correspondence

series alone (DF4/1) comprises 1,155 individual letters and a further 13 volumes of scrapbooked ones. Laura Engel has conceived of 'the performance of archival research' as 'related to the experience of tourism' (2019, 3). While Engel's concern is more with the ways in which the researcher uses their senses to position themselves in relation to archival material and their findings therein, her coining of the phrase 'archival tourist' chimes as much with the position of a researcher faced with a vast and, ultimately, unknowable terrain. The map of this terrain is offered in the form of a catalogue, and a tourist may have undertaken prior research to identify the types of places (materials) they would like to visit (consult), but conversations with locals (archivists and curators), as well as unplanned detours and an evolving knowledge of the site, have the potential to reveal beauty spots off the beaten track.

Navigating the DCA required all of the above. Having identified some specific collections, prior grounding in the research of buildings guided me towards searching for specific types of sources - namely, architectural plans, maps, building accounts and images of the north wing (Barson (Ed) 2019). The catalogue was then consulted, using search terms that evolved as new information came to light. For example, it became apparent that 'Theatre' may not have been used to describe the room under consideration, so the terms were expanded to include 'Ballroom', etc. Conversations over cups of tea led the archivists to suggest other avenues I might consider; for example, I spent a considerable amount of time chasing the provenance of seven Regency theatre lights, sold at auction as part of an attic sale in 2010. The assistant archivist had been working through the auction catalogue and thought I might be interested. While I could find no conclusive evidence for the origins of these lights, the process of researching them introduced me to a previously unconsidered exploration of historic theatre lighting more generally, from which an extant theatrical lighting dimmer was identified (Appendix B). The example also points to the fact that echoes of historic collection items are not found in the extant archive alone.

While the DCA is remarkably well catalogued, it is subject to some of the budgetary, staffing and circumstantial constraints seen across the sector (see 1.3.5 Archives). As such, historic papers turn up in unexpected places across the house - or elsewhere - and, to be subsumed into the organisational framework of the archive, are necessarily catalogued apart from their counterparts. There are also items which remain uncatalogued. For example, the cataloguing of the correspondence series of Blanche Cavendish (1812-1840) (DF13/1), niece of the 6th Duke, was being undertaken by a volunteer during the research phase of this project. Aware of my research, the volunteer drew my attention to three letters she believed would be of relevance mere days after she had read them; I would not have been able to identify these letters through the catalogue prior to her work and, due to the fact that

the volunteer's project was ongoing at the time my research ended, there may well be further letters of relevance of which I am not aware. This example is also revealing of how 'the gendered politics of power shape the very infrastructure of the Devonshire Collection Archives' (Brownson 2023a, 123; Daybell 2016). Had the cataloguing of Blanche's letters been prioritised earlier, her voice and perspective may have featured more heavily in the narrative of this research. While a logical and systematic scrutiny of the DCA was therefore attempted, the most useful data was often a result of my position as an embedded researcher and the relationships I was able to develop (see the next section).

Of particular use to the research of the Theatre in the period of the 8th Duke - 1895 to 1907 - were papers originating from the estate office: accounts books, correspondence, tickets to the theatricals, seating plans of the auditorium and 'box office' records (see chapters 3 to 5). In maintaining a foothold in buildings archaeology and attempting to understand and contextualise the materiality of the Theatre itself, these were primarily read for functionalist ends: what equipment was used in the construction of the stage, who supplied it, at what point was it installed, and so forth. However, the material increasingly spoke of the people who worked to organise, manage and undertake the installation of the theatre, and the subsequent running of the theatricals. Due to its originating location, it spoke of the estate office and the wider networks of paid labour and socialised support in which it operated. As such, throughout this thesis, there is a strong male presence that obscures the presence of women, who appeared in the archive material more marginally. However, not wishing to reinforce this obfuscation - and by reinforcing, worsen it - I have aimed to include the names of women where they come into the narrative. Unfortunately, the scope of the study has often meant that further research on these women was not possible.

Archive material in the DCA was augmented by the consultation of digitised civic and demographic records - in particular, census data, and birth, marriage and death records - newspaper records and the Servants and Staff Database (Chatsworth House Trust 2019). Following the lifting of restrictions in place from COVID-19, towards the end of my data-gathering phase, I consulted the papers of Dr. Edward Mason Wrench at the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections (GB 159 Wr), paying particular attention to mentions of Chatsworth's Theatre, theatricals and working community in his diaries and cyclostyled letters for the years 1895 to 1907. While part of the archival methodology for this thesis was a deep and detailed exploration of the affordances of the DCA for what it reveals about Chatsworth's own history, evidence from Wrench's papers underpins many of

the findings in chapter 4. The consultation of Wrench's archive, therefore, serves to highlight the opportunities for historical enrichment brought by expanding an archival scope.

However, an engagement with Chatsworth's archive extended beyond the paper traces it contained. Working collaboratively at and with Chatsworth granted me significantly more freedom to engage with the spatial qualities of the archive than that afforded to a regular researcher there. I was inducted into the processes for safely and securely retrieving my own archive material, and permitted to consult that material in the room in which it was stored (following conservation guidelines). Invoking Achille Mbembe's conception of the power of the archive as a spatial quality (Mbembe 2002), Antoinette Burton writes of the archive as 'a material presence which structures access [...] and watches over users both literally and figuratively. For if the official archive is a workplace, it is also a panopticon whose claim to total knowledge is matched by its capacity for total surveillance' (2006, 9). Burton's statements serve to highlight, by contrast, the atypical liberty I experienced in accessing, perusing and physically engaging with the DCA. Where Burton's imagined researcher is a 'stealth strategist' (ibid.), I had the relative freedoms of Engel's 'archival tourist' (Engel 2019).

Much of the consultation of the estate papers, which proved so fruitful, was undertaken in the former Laundry - a large room that today forms one of the four main archive storage areas, and which sits directly beneath the Theatre. To reach the Laundry from the offices occupied today by the collections team, you must walk down and along former servants' stairs and corridors; once you are outside it, you are also able to continue up the stairs of the Theatre tower to reach the small door that permits access onto the stage of the Theatre itself. The sources of data that underpin this thesis - built space and archive - became folded within themselves. The significance to the methodology of my immersion in the physical, relational and intellectual spaces of both the DCA and Chatsworth itself are discussed in the following section.

### 1.4.3 (Auto)ethnography and Embodiment

The purpose of this section is to make explicit what is implicit throughout the subsequent chapters of this thesis: namely, my own involvement with my subject matter. I invoke (auto)ethnography and embodiment not to describe a pre-considered method to gather data, but to acknowledge that data that was gathered less consciously and to explain the methodological frameworks through which I herein interpret and write about that data.

As mentioned at various points throughout this Methodology, the nature of my CDA partnership with Chatsworth involved sustained periods of onsite research; I worked onsite for two to three days per

week for a period of around 18 to 24 months (excluding 6 months of the COVID-19 lockdown, from March to September 2020), followed by further sporadic days over the subsequent 12 months. I was inducted into the processes for independently accessing both the house - which entailed a number of security measures and an increasing familiarity with the labyrinthine former service spaces - and the DCA - both procedurally and spatially, as described above, and also through training in using the archive catalogue to identify material myself. Once working days had been established, I was allotted a specific space to work in among the collections team and, through a series of informal meetings, came to know many of the individuals working across the curatorial, exhibitions and development teams. We regularly crossed paths in the small staff kitchen on tea breaks thereafter. As part of the collaboration, a number of outputs and contributions were pre-agreed to be made and delivered as my research unfolded. I named the agreed outputs above (1.4.1 Buildings Archaeology), but my contributions to the work of the collections and curatorial staff further involved: augmenting the archive catalogue with extra detail; writing and giving talks on and in the Theatre to external, interested groups; contributing to both a televised documentary on Chatsworth and the visitors' multimedia guide to the house on the topics of the Theatre and the north wing, respectively; and, supporting the production of a series of short films on the architectural development of Chatsworth and its collections, in collaboration with the Institute for Classical Architecture and Art (ICAA) in New York.

In her ethnographic study of a professional theatrical rehearsal process, performance scholar, Gay McAuley, notes how many directors will only permit observers into the rehearsal room 'on condition that that person takes on a role in the rehearsal, such as assistant to one of the functionaries in the process (director, dramaturg, stage manager) and thereby becomes a pseudo-insider' (2012, 7). While I was welcomed more readily than an observer of a rehearsal, I nonetheless became a 'pseudo-insider' at Chatsworth. Moreover, to my 'pseudo-insider' position I brought the embodied skill of my previous background as a performer along with an attendant sensibility for storytelling (Bush-Bailey 2002); speaking on camera, to an audience, into a microphone - as required for part of the contributions I made - was familiar to me, as was working with audio-visual media more broadly. That the skills and experience required for my 'pseudo-insider' role were authentic blur the prefix of 'pseudo' and further implicate my involvement.

McAuley's study is highly useful for reflecting on my own positionality within the culture of Chatsworth and, in part, is why I have included 'auto' in parentheses before 'ethnography'. In their survey introduction to *autoethnography*, Carolyn Ellis et. al. explain that 'when researchers do ethnography,

they study a culture's relational practices [...] and shared experiences for the purpose of helping insiders (cultural members) and outsiders (cultural strangers) better understand the culture' (2011, 275-276). Yet, this is never an exercise from which the ethnographer is divorced. As James Clifford described, for the ethnographic researcher, the exercise is 'a continuous tacking between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of events; on the one hand grasping the sense of specific occurrences [...] empathetically, on the other stepping back to situate meanings in wider contexts' (1988, 34; as cited in McAuley 2012, 6; see also Tedlock 1991; Ellis and Bochner 2000). The line between autoethnography and ethnography is blurred; without acknowledging this explicitly, it is this line that is explored in McAuley's introduction to her study.

I did not take observer field notes on the 'relational practices' between the 'cultural members' of Chatsworth's staff, as an (auto)ethnographer would do; the working culture of Chatsworth today was not my focus of study. So, why do I claim an ethnographic methodology? Arguably, in participating in (some of) the working culture of Chatsworth, I became complicit in the inherited legacy of previous generations of staff and developed a tacit knowledge of these ways of working. The inheritance of an entrenched culture is arguably more pronounced on a privately-owned country house estate than in any other heritage site; the provenance of the Grafton Papers offers one context in which this inheritance is evidenced (see 1.3.5 Archives), yet the personal ties across generations of staff become more apparent the more familiar one becomes with both the historic and modern working communities. In recovering some of the working modes, cultures and relationships of Chatsworth's historic staff, the results of which are told in chapters 3 to 5, I sensed I was making 'field notes' on the cultural practices of the current generation's predecessors. As such, I saw myself as adopting ethnographic practices; I became a 'participant observer in the culture' (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 276). Moreover, in the writing up of these 'field notes' in the form of this thesis, I adhered to ethnographer, Clifford Geertz's, idea of 'thick description' (1973, 3-30), attending as much to the minutiae of the archival and spatial material I worked with as the 'larger structures of the 'long story' of which it is a part' (McAuley 2012, 9).

At the boundaries of ethnography, however, '[a]utoethnographers recognise the innumerable ways personal experience influences the research process' (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 274). This has been demonstrated to powerful effect by archaeologists working on the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, for whom the political feminist drivers that had brought them to that point shaped and constructed the 'situated knowledge' (Haraway 1988) they produced from it (Marshall, Roseneil and Armstrong 2009). It is on the basis that '[k]nowledge produced from this ontology [...]

has the potential to be more robust than knowledge that lacks a critical reflexivity about the conditions on its own production' (ibid., 226) that I discuss my own interests in the CDA project in the Preface to this thesis and, by recalling, reiterate them again here. Moreover, autoethnography is as much about the anticipated and ongoing writing of the research, as it is about the doing of it, Ellis et. al. accounting for 'auto' as representing the 'autobiographical' element of the methodology (2011). As such, it resonates closely with a biographical buildings approach, as I outlined above. In claiming an autoethnographic methodology, then, if not an autoethnographic account, I am acknowledging my own personal history in the biography I construct of Chatsworth's Theatre.

Returning to my 'pseudo-insider' role in the collections team at Chatsworth, I wish to pick up the spatial implications of this as they pertain to the research process, the ways in which I write about space, and the historiographical implications. I have mentioned that a core component of being a 'pseudo-insider' was an increasing familiarity with the service spaces of the house - a familiarity that extended to my engagement with the spatial elements of the DCA. As I worked on other projects with the collections team, I also became familiar with the ways in which the service spaces of the house intersected with the public ones; I had not appreciated the extent to which the visitor's route around a historic house constructed my understanding of it until, as a 'pseudo-insider', I moved around, across, between and against private and public spaces freely. Moreover, as part of the research process, I specifically walked the various routes to the Theatre taken by historic ticket-holders to a night at Chatsworth's theatricals (see chapter 4). Engaging with the spaces of the mansion in this embodied way fundamentally altered and informed my understanding of it.

Drawing on the body as a legitimate site of knowledge and historical transmission is fundamental in theatre and performance studies, the schools of which were built on a rejection of '[t]he hegemonic appropriation of the dramatic text, created for performance, to literary study on the page' (Bush-Bailey 2002, 6). Diana Taylor's distinction between 'the archive' as a material source of information and 'the repertoire' as an embodied one is particularly helpful both for retrieving traces of past performance and for articulating my methodology, tied, as it has thus far been explored, to 'archive' material (Taylor 2003). For Taylor, '[t]he repertoire [...] enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement [...] - in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral' (ibid., 20). She writes, '[e]ven though the archive and the repertoire exist in a constant state of interaction, the tendency has been to banish the repertoire to the past' (ibid., 21).

Taylor's theory resonates with spatial readings of buildings, wherein 'the architecture that surrounds space' (Arnold 2002, 134) and the floorplans through which so many country houses have thus far been spatially analysed (1.3.2 Architecture, etc) function as 'the archive' and the embodied ways that people interact with the space function as 'the repertoire'. Walking the routes of staff, or of historic visitors to and around Chatsworth's Theatre, as I did, therefore re-enacted historical actors' repertoire and functioned as an embodied way to analyse space (cf. Schneider 2001; Engel 2019). Invoking McAuley's work on the rehearsal process and my own background as a performer, a common transition in the rehearsal of a play is one wherein actors move from reading the script to embodying it; from sitting and speaking, to standing, moving, interacting and speaking. It is widely referred to as 'putting it on its feet', whereby 'it' is the script (cf. Bush-Bailey 2002). We might transpose Taylor's distinctions of archive and repertoire here: the script can be read as the archive, the embodiment as the repertoire. Since floorplans are a part of the archive, in walking the various routes around Chatsworth, I was putting the archive on its feet. It is in these terms that I understand my method.

The discussion of embodiment here clearly also speaks to my emphasis in 1.3.6 Embodiment, etc on attending to backstage practitioners in order to learn about those historical practices that are not captured in the archive, and the significance of technical objects that are not explained nor illustrated by the literature that accords them significance (Historic England 2017). As part of my research, I facilitated an informal onsite tour of the Theatre with an experienced stage carpenter, Alasdair Flint, and an experienced scene painter, Grit Eckert, to identify any scenic and technical particularities of the stage and its fittings. I took notes as they walked, looked, touched and spoke. The information they provided me with evidences some of chapter 3.

#### 1.4.4 Conclusion

Through this methodology, I have articulated the key ways in which this thesis is both interdisciplinary and structured by my personal circumstances. At the heart of it are the particular circumstances of my CDA, the extended and sustained period of onsite research it afforded me and the multiple opportunities I gained through undertaking it. While buildings archaeology and documentary research offer well-established methods for interrogating the past lives of buildings, an embodied understanding of them has been less commonly articulated. Performance scholarship offers a fruitful and generative invitation to extend the boundaries of the archive and claim embodied repertoire as a vital source of knowledge, while the flexibility of (auto)ethnography offers myriad ways to writing about that knowledge. Frequently, with standing buildings, archaeologists are afforded rare degrees of access - from cellars to roof spaces, in condemned buildings to magnificent cathedrals - all with an intention to measure and record the archive. Yet, these also offer opportunities to attend to the

repertoire, to re-enact, to draw on embodied methods to retrieve past behaviours. Susie West questioned why more archaeologists had not engaged with the country house as a case study site (1999). In articulating the porousness of archaeology, archival research, (auto)ethnography, performance and embodiment, I have aimed to construct an original, post-processual approach to analysing, interpreting and *writing* about the country house that seeks to open a door for further archaeologists to walk through.

## 1.5 Conclusion

The CDA project from which this thesis springs speaks to a need of the Chatsworth House Trust to better understand the Theatre in the house and to learn how parts of the vast archive collection can be activated to underpin this understanding. As well as being a living home for the Duke of Devonshire and his family, Chatsworth is a heritage site with a house, gardens and parkland open to visitors. Research that is supported by the Chatsworth House Trust needs to speak to live concerns of the Trust, and work towards supporting the Trust into the future. This introductory chapter has centred around Chatsworth in its country house context, and drawn out key threads and concerns that connect the Theatre at Chatsworth to this context. This is a different perspective to that thus far adopted by scholars of private theatres and theatricals, whose work in the main speaks to issues arising from a theatrical historiography. At the same time, as I have demonstrated, country house scholarship has sidelined the historic practice of private performance to the extent that there is scant research available in this field to inform an understanding of Chatsworth's Theatre at all. It is, therefore, both necessary and valuable to expand the academic lens and blend country house concerns with those arising from studies of private theatre in Theatre History.

Bringing both an archaeological and performance background to this project places me in a strong position to bridge a number of gaps that I have identified through this chapter. The first is that between the theoretical uses of country house space, as explored in relation to the socio-spatial lens in country house historiography, and the historic lived experience of those spaces. The second is the more obvious gap between a country house and theatre. As I have illustrated in the Literature Review, there exist significant ideological overlaps between country house and theatre scholarship. Particularly resonant across both fields is the theme of behind-the-scenes labour, which this thesis will explore in Chapter 3. However, the aims of the thesis are not only to bridge gaps between fields but, in doing so, to contribute something new to the conversation.

## 1.6 Thesis Structure

The structure of this thesis is broadly chronological, charting the architectural, spatial and social evolution of the Theatre at Chatsworth from its inception in the 1820s to its final use during the lifetime of the 8th Duke of Devonshire in 1907. Following on from the historic and intellectual context furnished in this chapter, the following chapter charts the early architectural development of the room and the building in which it sits. It shows this to be complex, often pragmatic and frequently evolving, even before the room was first used as a social space. The chapter itself is structured around two key shifts in the building's development which, the chapter argues, reflect the changing desires of the patron. As such, the chapter contributes to a demonstration that the practice and uptake of private performance at Chatsworth reflected the priorities of the incumbent Duke and his family. The chapter asserts the importance of considering the room in the terms in which it was first conceived - as a Banqueting Room. In doing so, the chapter argues, we are better placed to understand the ways in which the Theatre building speaks to the rest of the north wing and the wider estate.

There is a temporal leap between the end of Chapter 2, which follows the lifecycle of the 6th Duke of Devonshire and therefore ends at his death in 1858, and Chapter 3, which begins with the construction of the stage in 1895. This hiatus is accounted for at the start of Chapter 3 and is explained by the same argument presented above. Namely, that the evolution of performance practice at Chatsworth was subject to the priorities of the Duke. The 7th Duke of Devonshire spent relatively little time entertaining guests at Chatsworth. Therefore, the room under consideration in this thesis witnessed little activity in his lifetime. The majority of Chapter 3 looks at the construction of the stage we see today, and the management of the theatricals in the period of the 8th Duke and Duchess, from 1895 to 1907. It centres a biographical perspective within this, and presents a range of voices from across the estate and further afield, most of whom have gone thus far unconsidered in histories of Chatsworth, while the roles they undertook have gone unconsidered in histories of private theatricals more broadly.

Chapter 4 looks at the same period in the history of the room as Chapter 3, but from the perspective of the auditorium and the audience that occupied it. Given the archaeological bent of this study, the starting point for this analysis are the spaces of the room itself and the routes to reach them by way of access. The extent to which these spaces structured the experience and composition of the audience is questioned and discussed. More personal insight into the structure of the audience and their experience on a night at the Chatsworth theatricals is given by virtue of the records of Dr. Edward

M. Wrench. Wrench was a resident of nearby Baslow and physician to the 7th and 8th Dukes of Devonshire when they were in residence at Chatsworth. He was regularly in attendance at the theatricals in the period covered in this chapter, and often included among the house party on the nights of the theatricals to make up numbers. Wrench's testimony of his experience in these contexts provides substantial colour to my analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 5 considers the way in which an audience member could come into possession of a ticket for the theatricals in the same period as chapters 3 and 4. It therefore follows on from Chapter 4 in considering the audience. However, the focus of the chapter centres around the existence of 'box office' records from 1901 and 1905. These records are used as a lens through which to understand the relationship between the Estate Office at Chatsworth and the surrounding villages and communities. One of the products of a study of these records is the identification of a number of individual audience members. The chapter is therefore also populated by voices and perspectives of specific individuals, as well as the Estate Office as a whole.

Conclusions are made throughout the four chapters described here, but are drawn together in Chapter 6 along with a consideration of further research that could be carried out on the back of that undertaken throughout this thesis.

## 2. A ‘room to make a row in’: the Theatre & the 6th Duke of Devonshire, 1823-1858

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses and explores the key question of how we understand the Theatre at Chatsworth in the context of the north wing more broadly. To do this, it examines the earliest iterations of the building which today houses the Theatre. The chapter will consider the building’s conception, earliest architectural developments and early uses, with reference to the architectural development of the rest of the north wing. As such, it is mainly concerned with the period from around 1823, when the first architectural drawings were completed for the building which houses the Theatre (see Table 2.1), to around 1858, the year of the death of the 6th Duke of Devonshire. However, the chapter will demonstrate that the building evolved out of its predecessor on the site, and in response to the rest of the large-scale building programme undertaken by the Duke. This means that archive material is considered that pre-dates 1823.

In 1818, the 6th Duke of Devonshire engaged the architect, Sir Jeffry Wyattville, to carry out ‘improvements’ at Chatsworth (Lees-Milne 1991, 42).<sup>17</sup> Broadly, the bulk of these ‘improvements’ were to the north wing of the house, to provide additional entertainment rooms and bedrooms, and to improve service provision, but the hand of the architect can be seen today in spaces across the main house and the wider estate. The architect’s work at Chatsworth unfolded over 20 years, and the construction of the building which houses the Theatre took place over at least half of that time. Following architectural historical conventions, as outlined in the Literature Review, scholarly considerations of the development of the north wing have hinged on studies of both patron (Lees-Milne 1991) and architect (Linstrum 1972), or explored the art historical motivations of the wing’s construction (Kenworthy-Browne 1972). These sources provide valuable biographical insight into, and professional context of the most significant minds behind the wing’s development. Yet, broadly, they are concerned with the building as a completed structure towards the end of the 6th Duke’s life. Moreover, they provide scant or glossed detail on the Theatre building, specifically. This chapter will evidence the singular importance of unpicking the design *evolution* of the north wing to understand how the Theatre building speaks to it, both architecturally and socially.

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<sup>17</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, when Wyattville commenced work on Chatsworth, he was named only Jeffry Wyatt. His name was aggrandised and he was subsequently knighted as a result of his work on Windsor Castle for King George IV, which overlapped with his work on Chatsworth. I will refer to him as Wyattville throughout.

The chapter identifies - and is structured around - three key phases in the Theatre building's development and use that hinge around two significant architectural changes (see Table 2.1). The first change was the installation of the Orangery in 1827, and the second, the redesign of the gallery structure in the room itself, in 1833. Both these changes are interpreted as representing significant shifts in intention for the Theatre building's function and, consequently, its identity and meaning in relation to both the rest of the north wing and the personal motivations of the 6th Duke. Thus, the first phase (I) spans the years 1823 to 1827; the second (II), 1827 to 1833; and the third (III), 1833 to 1858.

Throughout the period covered by this chapter, names for the Theatre - and the temple-like structure above it - changed, or were used interchangeably. The chapter aims to capture much of the evolution of this nomenclature. Indeed, phase III of the Theatre building's development hangs, in part, on a change to the room's name. However, it is useful to note from the outset that the room we today call the Theatre is variously referred to as the Banqueting (or, 'Banquetting') Room, Ballroom (or, 'Ball room') and Theatre, throughout both archive material and secondary sources. As I will cover in this chapter, the 6th Duke himself embraced this diversity and ambiguity, playfully coining a phrase that encompassed the room's many uses. He called it, 'the room to make a row in' (Cavendish 1844, 116)

**Table 2.1**

Key dates associated with the architectural and social evolution of the Banqueting Room/Theatre, 1823-1858. The phases correspond to those identified in the chapter.

Phase	Year	Month	
<i>Phase I  </i> 1823-1827	1823	October	First working architectural drawings for the Banqueting Room.
	1824	October	First working architectural drawings for the 'Temple' (Belvedere).
<i>Phase II  </i> 1827-1833	1827	March	First architectural drawings for the Orangery.
	1832	20th October	Princess Victoria visit to Chatsworth, and the charade of Kenilworth (NB not in the Banqueting Room).
	1832	1st November	6th Duke records in his diary: 'grand dinner in the banqueting room for masons, gardeners, etc. Charles Taylor the singer came and diverted them extremely' - marks the first social use of the room.
	1833	(first half)	Banqueting Room staircase completed as recorded in the Building Accounts.
<i>Phase III  </i> 1833-1858	1833	6th October	Wyatville's sketch of alternative Gallery rendered over original drawing.
		8th October	6th Duke records in his diary: 'Sir Jeffrey went, having most happily arranged everything'
		12th October	First time 'theatre' is given to describe this room (in Building Accounts).
	1834	March	First mention of 'theatre' in architectural drawings.
	1836	September	Blanche Cavendish records in a letter: 'Dancing in the Banqueting rooms'.
	1839	September	Building Accounts record 'Fitting up for temporary Theatre in the Banqueting Room'.
			Blanche Cavendish records charades in the Banqueting Room in a letter.

		October	Building Accounts record 'fitting up the Theatre'. Lady George Cavendish records charades in the Banqueting Room in a letter.
	1843	December	Ball in the Banqueting Room on the occasion of Queen Victoria's visit.

## 2.2 Phase I: the 'Banqueting Room', pre-Orangery (1823-1827)

### 2.2.1 Experimentation: Wyattville's 1818 Presentation Book

When William Cavendish, the 6th Duke of Devonshire, engaged Sir Jeffry Wyattville to transform Chatsworth House in the first quarter of the 19th century, the architect made a number of drawings of the building as he found it. Wyattville's elevation sketch of the existing north wing - dedicated to service infrastructure and designed by James Paine in the mid-18th century - is the only visual representation of it that exists today (fig. 2.1). The accompanying floorplan, detailing the uses to which the ground floor rooms were put, is reproduced in his 1818 Presentation Book, along with floorplans of the rest of the house and, crucially, a number of different proposals for 'gaining all the required advantages' that the 6th Duke desired of his new developments (WY/T/2, title page). Today held in the DCA, along with hundreds of working drawings for the building scheme, the Presentation Book is a valuable source of information for understanding both the house as it was used during Wyattville's renovations - which took well over a decade to complete - and the shifting priorities of the 6th Duke for the north wing at this earliest stage of conception and design. As I shall demonstrate in this section, a close reading of the volume also reveals a narrative of experimentation that underpins the subsequent evolution of the Banqueting Room, and which affords us an understanding of the Duke's agency in the development process.

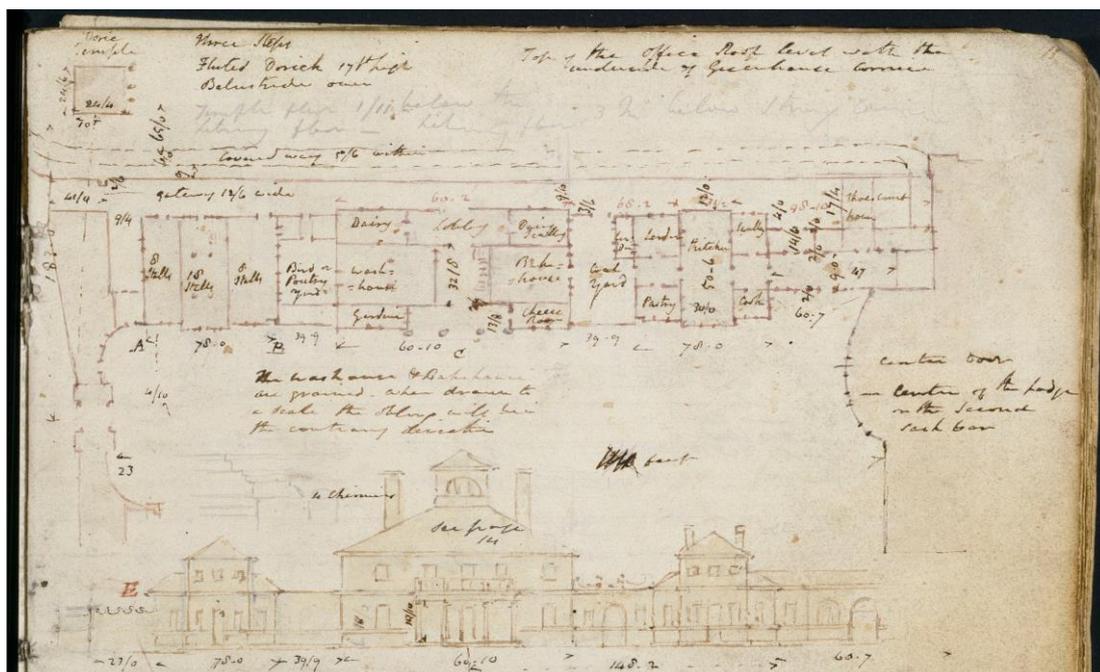


Figure 2.1 A detail of a page from Wyattville's sketchbook showing the floor plan (top) and west elevation (middle) of Paine's north wing (WY/T/1). © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Despite its name suggesting a certain finality to the design process, the Presentation Book remains something of a puzzle to researchers today. Historic England summarises a presentation design as being ‘a highly finished drawing made to impress a patron, client or competition judge, as well as to explain the scheme’ (Barson (Ed) 2019, 6). While the volume certainly contains drawings that adhere to this description, these are interspersed with working architectural drawings, a range of early proposed plans for accommodating the 6th Duke’s alterations to the north wing and alternative approaches to the house, and later perspectival pencil sketches and detailed drawings. Though the title page is clearly dated 1818, the contents of the book span some twenty years from this date, overlapping with the period of active construction on the House. So, design planning for the house - including the north wing - was still being negotiated, revised and resolved while the building work was going on. Not all the drawings are dated but those that are indicate that they are not in chronological order, and it is impossible to be confident in who was responsible for including all of them in the volume, since pencil marks attest to a later reorganisation of the book, likely undertaken in the early 20th century.<sup>18</sup> Rather than consider the volume as a complete and coherent summary of the early architectural designs prior to the beginning of their execution, as the title of the book might imply, it is more helpful to think of the book as a retrospective album, capturing moments of design thought across a spectrum of the design process and across the full span of the building project.

There is therefore no straightforward, chronological way to read the volume, and the extent to which design proposals were taken up must be understood through a range of primary source material, from subsequent working architectural drawings to the Building Accounts, and from paintings to the 6th Duke’s diaries, alongside careful observation of the built fabric as it exists today. Comparing these sources, it is possible to identify six drawings from the earliest phase of the design process for the new north wing, circa 1818-’20, from others that depict the wing in a near-completed state, circa 1831. Two of the six drawings appear to be explicit proposals for a new north wing; two address the issue of creating a new approach to the House, though include indications of changes to the north wing with descriptions of new rooms recorded; while the remaining two are a worked-up sketch, and a closely related presentation drawing that suggests these to be the culmination of this early design phase. Each of these drawings speaks closely to the building as Wyattville first encountered it, including or rebuilding parts of Paine’s service pavilions to greater and lesser extents.

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<sup>18</sup> Dr Lucy Brownson, whose unpublished PhD thesis dedicates a chapter to her (2023), has informally corroborated that the handwriting appears to match that of Eugénie Sellers Strong, Librarian at Chatsworth in the first decade of the 20th century.

Recurring consistently across all of these drawings are two new spatial elements: a Dining Room and a Gallery. A new Kitchen features in proposals that do away with Paine's old one, while a Conservatory is included in the two drawings that explicitly address the 6th Duke's wishes for the altered north wing. In the sketch that appears to correspond with the presentation drawing, and therefore likely representing the culmination of this design phase, a new Chapel is included (fig. 2.2). The consistent inclusion of some of these new spaces appear to reflect the 6th Duke's priorities in altering the north wing. That it should, in particular, establish: a new space for the formal dining experience; a dedicated room for displaying the Duke's recent acquisitions of contemporary European sculpture; and, whether within the walls of the new north wing or at a short distance away, a controlled environment for the cultivation of non-native plants.

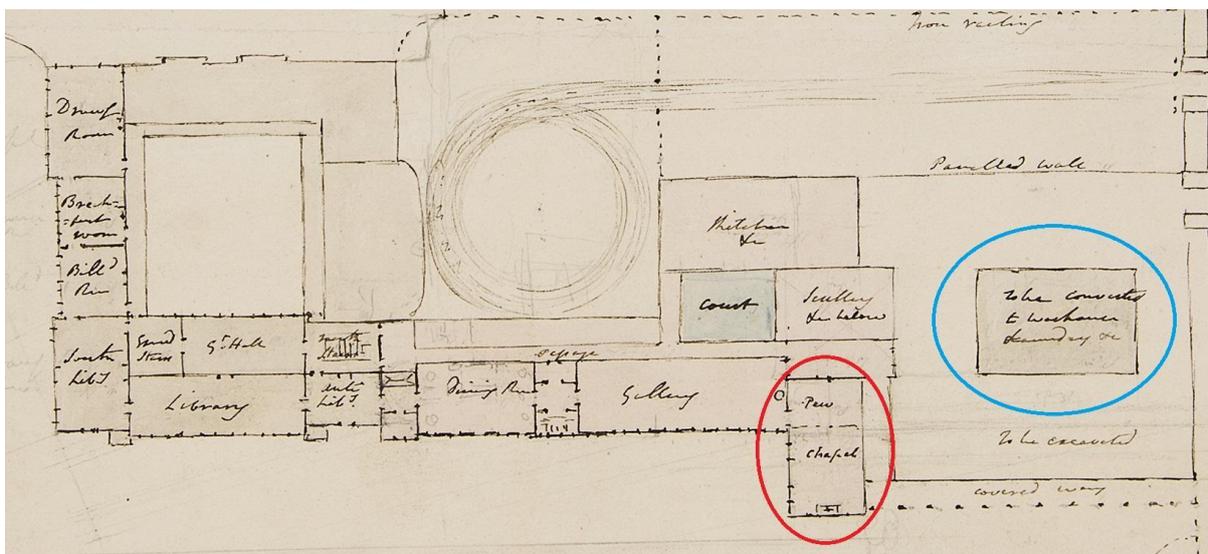


Figure 2.2 Detail from the sketch design proposal for the new north wing. Circled in red is the unrealised proposed chapel. Circled in blue is the northernmost block which is noted 'to be converted to Washhouse [sic] Laundry &c' (WY/T/2, 35).

As described in the Introduction to this thesis, the North Wing as we encounter it today includes all three of these elements - the Dining Room, Sculpture Gallery and Orangery - yet the design proposals evidence the uncertainty of their genesis. This uncertainty runs counter to established scholarship, which frequently frames the construction of polite buildings as somehow inevitable, as conforming to wider trends, or within a 'logical canon' of art and architectural style (see 1.3.2 Architecture, etc). For example, the conception of the 6th Duke's Sculpture Gallery has been seen to emerge from Italian architectural precedents and histories of elite collecting practices (Noble and Yarrington 2009; Kenworthy-Browne 1972), while the design of both the Sculpture Gallery and the Orangery have been read in terms of their architect's experience on previous projects (Robinson 1979; Linstrum 1972;

Lees-Milne 1991, 43). Such a view elides the development process, eliminating the element of experimentation and the personal agency of the 6th Duke.

Rather, it is equally important to centre the personal, biographical - and, sometimes, risky or uncertain - circumstances of their creation. In reference to the Sculpture Gallery, again, Kenworthy-Browne has powerfully illustrated the deeply personal motivations for the 6th Duke's acquisitions of predominantly-Italian sculpture (1972, 322). Reflecting on the Duke's own words from his *Handbook to Chatsworth and Hardwick* (1844) he writes, 'his remarks show that every piece of marble contained memories of a valued period in his life; that his collecting was motivated by human feelings; and that he liked to know each sculptor personally. [...] His sculptures were references to living personalities, or else were associated with his experiences, interests and friends' (1972, 322). While the design of the space to display these works may well have been influenced both by European architectural examples and Wyattville's experience at other British country houses, solely focusing on the architecture strips the design process of the risk that such a room may not have been considered had the patron not wished to preserve this phase of his life in marble.

In reference to the construction of the Orangery, the prevailing narrative of the 6th Duke's passion for horticulture and gardening is that it blossomed with his hiring of Joseph Paxton in 1826 (Lees-Milne 1991), and the installation of the Orangery in 1827 can be seen by some to conform to this view. However, the inclusion of a conservatory in the 1818-'21 phase of design, as presented above, speaks to an experimental step that predates the Duke's acquaintance with Paxton and arguably attests to his independent interest in horticulture at a time when gardening was capturing the imaginations of Britain's middle and upper classes (Butler 2019, 166-168). The conservatory proposed by Wyattville in this earliest phase of design evolution was not realised in built form, but its conception contributed as much to the eventual construction of the Orangery as the hiring of Paxton did. The proposal, rejection and ultimate readoption of a conservatory, then, reaffirms the experimental nature of the development of the North Wing and the role of the Duke's personal tastes in influencing that development. Without the Presentation Book, we would not be afforded this intimate perspective.

The experimentation at play in the evolution of these spaces is brought into greater relief by those rooms that were proposed but *not* taken up - for example, there is no further evidence in architectural drawings or built form of the proposed chapel seen in figure 2.2 - and those rooms that were not proposed in this early design phase, but that subsequently came to be built. It is in this final category

that we encounter the Banqueting Room, the architectural evolution of which will be examined in the following sub-section.

### 2.2.2 Evolution: Paine's Pavilion to Banqueting Room Tower

The elements of experimentation and gradual evolution evidenced in the previous section are arguably most clearly seen in the early development of the building which housed the Banqueting Room. This early development is significant for how we understand the building today. In his definitive biography of Wyattville, Linstrum describes the towering block, crowned by the Belvedere, as 'starkly and majestically ris[ing] out of the low surrounding buildings to exclude any other aspect of the house when approached from Baslow' (to the north) (1972, 142). Linstrum's description testifies to the powerful visual impact of the building, dominated by the Belvedere. Such is the dominance of the Belvedere over this northerly perspective of Chatsworth that 20th-century owners of the house sought to demolish it (Cavendish 1987, 44), and the building as a whole has become synonymous with the temple's name so that the block is widely known as 'the Belvedere tower'. This emphasis on the Belvedere's significance has overshadowed that of the Banqueting Room beneath, arguably contributing to the mystery surrounding the room's evolution, as outlined in Chapter 1 (1.2.2. Literature on the Theatre at Chatsworth).

In seeking to contextualise the Belvedere within architectural history, Linstrum makes some observations that are pertinent to this thesis. While he reluctantly acknowledges the 6th Duke's own claim of being inspired by part of the Bodleian in Oxford, he draws stronger comparisons with the position and architecture of Elizabethan prospect rooms (Linstrum 1972, 142-144). In particular, he summons the 'glazed superstructure at Wollaton' (Nottinghamshire) (ibid.) by virtue of Wyattville's professional familiarity with that house, and the towers on the roof of Hardwick Hall due to their intimate familiarity to the Duke. He further notes the popularity of open structures with far-reaching views on subsequent country houses, crediting Chatsworth's as a forerunner. Yet, neither Wollaton's superstructure or Hardwick's towers *are* open structures - all are enclosed, glazed rooms. Through this section and the next, I argue that Linstrum's comparators are accurate, but only when the Banqueting Room is centred as the principal elite space in the building. By the end of the following section, I will suggest that more meaningful comparators can be found when we further acknowledge the name of the room and its architectural conformity to Elizabethan predecessors.

In this section, I piece together the early development of the building in which the Banqueting Room came to be built to demonstrate the primacy of that room in determining the elite status of the block as a whole. However, this development resists an easy architectural narrative of polite buildings by

simultaneously accommodating the practical demands of a palatial country house and pragmatically responding to a site that already contained service buildings. As such, it reinforces the element of experimentation outlined in the previous section. In the following section, I will explore the architectural significance of the Banqueting Room in more detail.

It is uncertain in what year the Banqueting Room came to be conceived, and how closely its conception correlated with the first flush of enthusiasm for expanding the North Wing as a site for entertaining, as represented by the 1818-'21 proposals described above. The earliest concrete evidence we have for the Banqueting Room are three working architectural drawings from October 1823, some two to five years following the first design proposals. These drawings show the east, west and south elevations of the building that came to contain it (WY/N/1/1, 2 & 2a) (fig. 2.3), and it seems likely that they correspond to the earliest inception of the room. Longitudinal and transverse sections of the building came two months after the October 1823 elevations (WY/N/1/3 & 4) and clearly show the Banqueting Room to sit above three other floors of varying heights. From the basement level, these were: a Washhouse [sic] and Bakehouse; Bedrooms; and, a Laundry and Drying Room. We can trace most of these lower level spaces to the first phase of building design, as introduced in the previous section: in the sketched proposal as seen in figure 2.2, the independent block on the far right of the drawing is labelled, 'to be converted to washhouse [sic], laundry &c'. The 'conversion' indicates the intention to retain the structure of Paine's stable pavilion on this site, while converting it to utilities which had been lost when the Dining Room, Kitchen etc. were created.





Figure 2.4 Presentation drawing from Wyattville's Presentation Book (p. 21A), c. 1820, showing Chatsworth House set amongst its grounds and gardens, and including a proposed new north wing. Circled in red is the kitchen block as we recognise it today. Circled in blue is the Laundry block, on top of which the Banqueting Room came to be erected (WY/T/2). © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

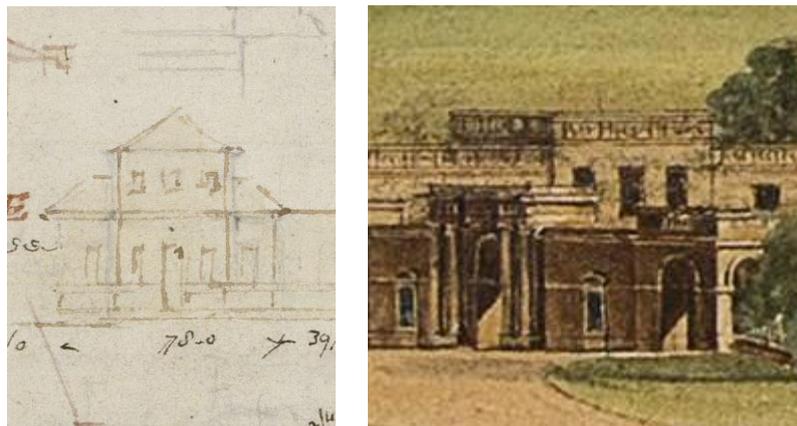


Figure 2.5 Left: detail of Paine's north wing, showing the stable pavilion (drawn by Wyattville). Right: detail of Wyattville's presentation drawing (seen in fig. 2.4), showing proposed alterations to Paine's stable pavilion.

Even as the architectural design evolved to accommodate the Banqueting Room from 1823, Paine's pavilion remained as the footprint on which the block was developed. This is most evident when we compare two large, basement-level floor plans included at the front of the Presentation Book, the first of Paine's north wing, as recorded by Wyattville, the second of Wyattville's. Since they were drawn to

the same scale, it is relatively straightforward to superimpose the former onto the latter (fig. 2.6). Despite being undated, architectural features point to Wyattville's floor plan post-dating the presentation drawing shown above and representing the north wing at a point at which it included the Banqueting Room: the thick walls around the 'vaults' at the top of the image support the east facade of the enlarged building (seen in fig. 2.3). The Banqueting Room building, then, evolved in direct response to the dimensions and original service function of Paine's pavilion.

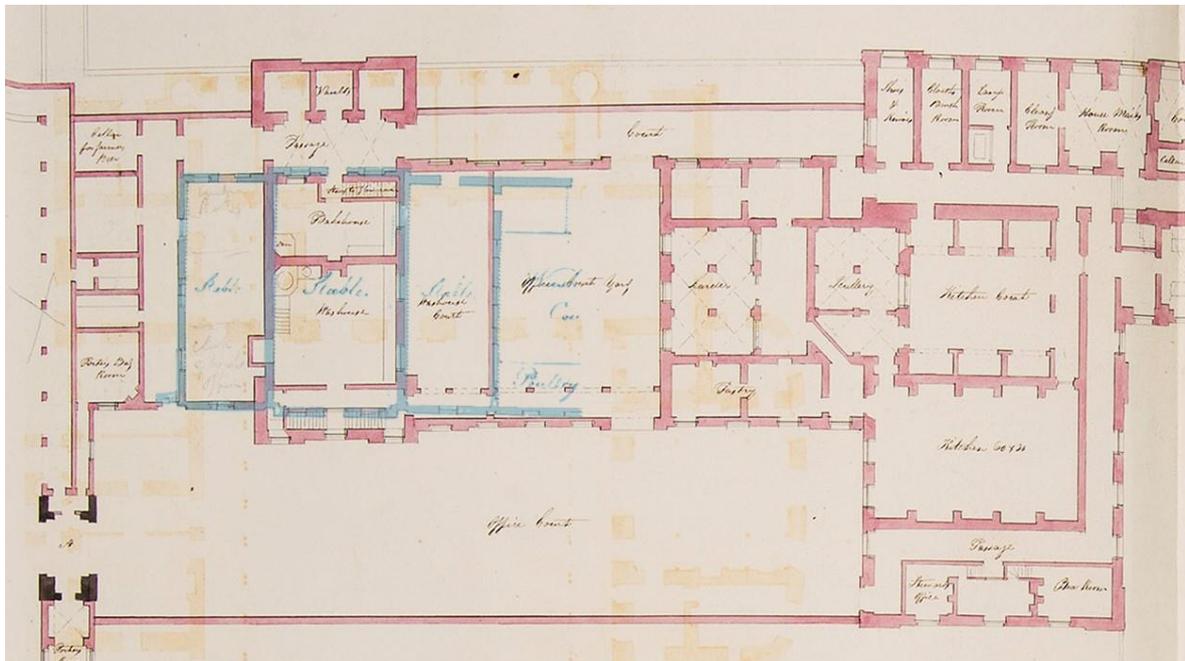


Figure 2.6 The basement-level floor plan of Paine's stable pavilion (in blue) superimposed onto the basement-level floor plan of Wyattville's north wing, showing the latter to be based on the footprint of the former.

We can read Wyattville's adaptation of Paine's pavilion as laying the metaphorical groundwork for understanding the subsequent significance of the block once the Banqueting Room was constructed above it. The early proposal, as seen in the presentation drawing (fig. 2.4), is one of relatively diminutive proportions. Situated at the far end of the north wing, the relative size of the building established the rhythm of the wing as one of diminishing scale. Arguably, the scale reflected the various functions operating within: the block containing the 'washhouse, laundry &c' was the smallest of the service blocks; the kitchen occupied part of a grander block; while both were in literal and aesthetic service to the main House. By altering this design and expanding this building upwards to accommodate the Banqueting Room from 1823, the scale of the building and, consequently, its status, dramatically changed.<sup>19</sup> The function of the room reinforced this shift: while the purpose of the

<sup>19</sup> The only images of the north wing building that this author can find which include the Banqueting Room, but exclude the subsequent Belvedere, are those cited above, WY/N/1/1, 2 & 2A. /2 gives the west elevation,

Banqueting Room will be considered in greater depth in the next section, its inclusion in the block introduced a high-status entertainment space to a previously low-status service building, heralding the intended presence of elite personages. Drawings for the 'Temple' (Belvedere) appeared a year later, in October 1824 (WY/N/1/10), establishing a chronology that foregrounds the Banqueting Room as the primary entertainment space in a building that has come to be visually, academically, and by name, dominated by the Belvedere above it.

This description of the evolution of Paine's pavilion centres the Banqueting Room as the prime entertainment space of what is, today, often called the Belvedere Tower. In the next section, I will explore the architectural significance of this building in more depth, and propose that it was intended to function in similar ways to Elizabethan banqueting rooms.

### 2.2.3 The Banqueting Room

As established in the introduction to this chapter, the insertion of the Orangery in 1827 marked a turning point in how we interpret much of the building today. Therefore, a closer examination of this pre-Orangery phase of the building is paramount for an exploration of how the building was intended to operate in its architectural and social contexts. This subsection will argue that, by virtue of its evolution from Paine's pavilion, the building maintained a strong sense of architectural independence from the main house. In this, it cultivated a relationship with outdoor spaces beyond the house that supports sensory interpretations of socio-architectural history, as I will touch on. Moreover, the establishment of a relationship with the outdoors in the form of the wider estate forms the first step in a thread connecting all four chapters of this thesis.

Both the architectural independence of the block containing the Banqueting Room, and the use of nomenclature for the space itself, adhere to a narrative established by historian, Peter Mandler (1997), of the late-Georgian, revisionist adoption of 'Tudorbethan' architectural approaches. Mandler noted the cultural trend in the early 19th century for artistic, literary and architectural evocations that romanticised a period in the British past loosely associated with the Tudor and Elizabethan eras. By interpreting the Banqueting Room through Mandler's lens, we can read this earliest phase of the room as an embodiment of the 6th Duke's political and social principles. This interpretation offers an indication of the Duke's intention for the space and underscores the room's relationship with spaces and communities beyond the walls of the house.

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making it the most comparable with the views seen in Wyatville's sketch of Paine's pavilion and the presentation drawing (both seen from the west).

### The state of the building by 1827

Immediately prior to the insertion of the Orangery in 1827, records tell us that the external masonry and internal, supporting structures of the Banqueting Room building had been completed. The Building Accounts record masons working on the Corinthian capitals for the Belvedere at the start of 1826, while a temporary floor was laid in the Banqueting Room towards the end of the same year (Building Accounts). Paintings undertaken by William Cowen in 1828 to record the Duke's new north wing show the successful execution of some of this work, with his painting of the Banqueting 'apartments' conjuring the vivid and impressive reality of the building at this time (fig. 2.7).



Figure 2.7 'The Banqueting Apartments at Chatsworth' by William Cowen, 1828, showing the external walls of the entire Banqueting Room block to have been constructed by this date. Image reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees

Cowen's view of the Banqueting Room building is from the west. It hides the principal elevation on the east side of the block, which remains largely unchanged today (fig. 2.8). In 1827, this principal east elevation was unattached by way of enclosed public access to the rest of the north wing. Rather, a 'covered way' provided the public route from the main house, which was accessed by a door on the east side of the Sculpture Gallery's end wall, and which led to the lobby of the Banqueting Room building. Figures 2.9 and 2.10 illustrate this original colonnaded structure. In figure 2.9, when the house is viewed from the east, the entertainment rooms of the north wing can be seen effectively to end before the covered way begins (seen on the right hand side of the image). Figure 2.10 shows this clearly in plan form. Also evident in the floor plan is a courtyard directly behind the covered way, which is useful to note here due to its loss upon the installation of the Orangery (see the following section 2.3 Phase II). In all, figure 2.10 illustrates clearly the spatial distance between the principal story of the Banqueting Room building and the entertainment rooms of the rest of the north wing. It conjures a sense of separation that is central to understanding the earliest intention for the Banqueting Room, as I will continue to demonstrate through this subsection.



Figure 2.8 East (principal) elevation of the Banqueting Room building. Detail from a photograph taken by Myfanwy Eilertsen. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth House Trust.

However, the building maintained a closer link with the service culture of the house than is evident in figure 2.10. At basement level, beneath the covered way, the distance between the Banqueting Room building and the end of the north wing was not as marked. The footprint of the building maintained Paine's tripartite plan, described in the previous subsection; single-story spaces containing key services flanked the Banqueting Room building and were accessible from the main service courtyard, illustrated in Cowen's painting above (fig. 2.7). Cowen's work also testifies to an internal connection between the Banqueting Room building and the main house, by virtue of the long wall, studded with windows and an archway. The corridor behind the windows on the first floor of this wall is evident in the floor plan in figure 2.10.

Prior to the installation of the Orangery, then, the near-completed Banqueting Room building had two access routes from the main house. The principal route took visitors through the end of the Sculpture Gallery, along a colonnaded walkway and into the lobby of the building, from where they would climb a dedicated staircase to reach the Banqueting Room (fig. 2.11).<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, an enclosed corridor allowed access from the main house to the service spaces of the Banqueting Room building. The sense of separation between the Banqueting Room building and the rest of the house was therefore only conjured for those using the elite, entertainment spaces of the two.

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<sup>20</sup> This staircase was not completed until 1833 (Building Accounts).

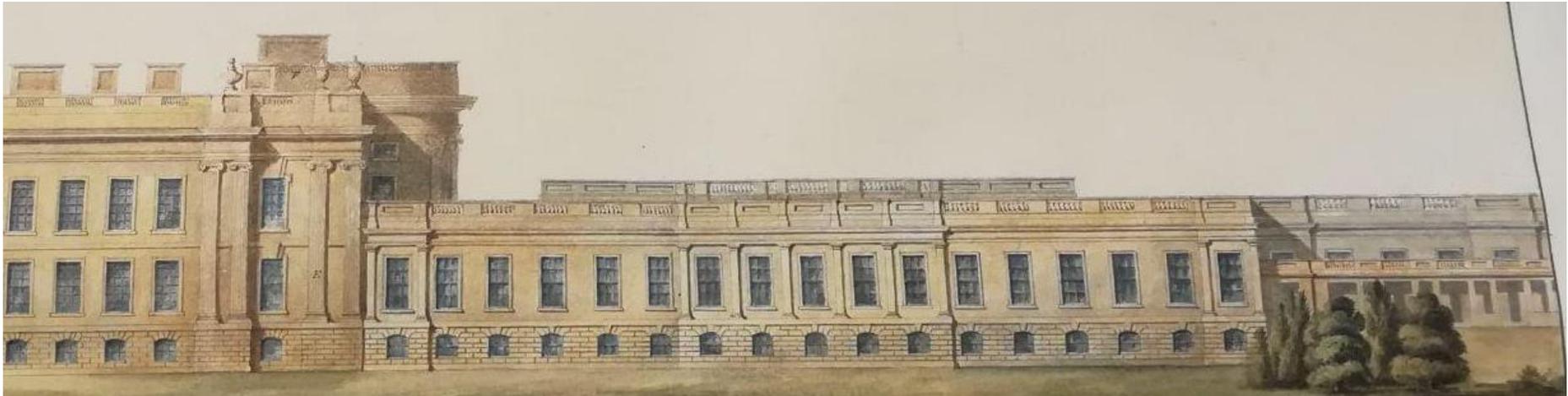


Figure 2.9 Detail from Wyattville's presentation drawing, titled 'Elevation of East Front'. The covered way leading from the Sculpture Gallery to the Banqueting Room building is likely to have looked very similar to the colonnaded structure on the right hand side of this image. (WY/T/2, 9).

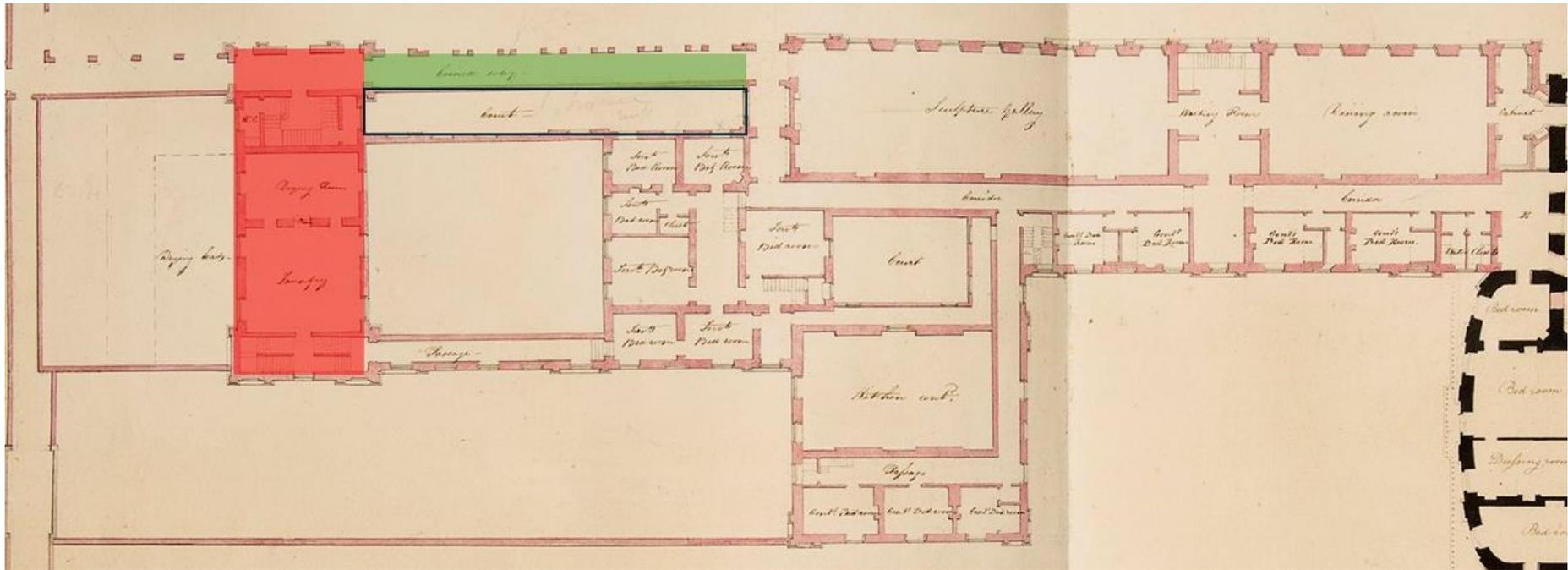


Figure 2.10 Detail from Wyatville's floor plan, titled 'Principal or Library Story'. The Banqueting Room building is highlighted in red; the covered way in green; the courtyard space is delineated in black. (WY/T/2, 5).

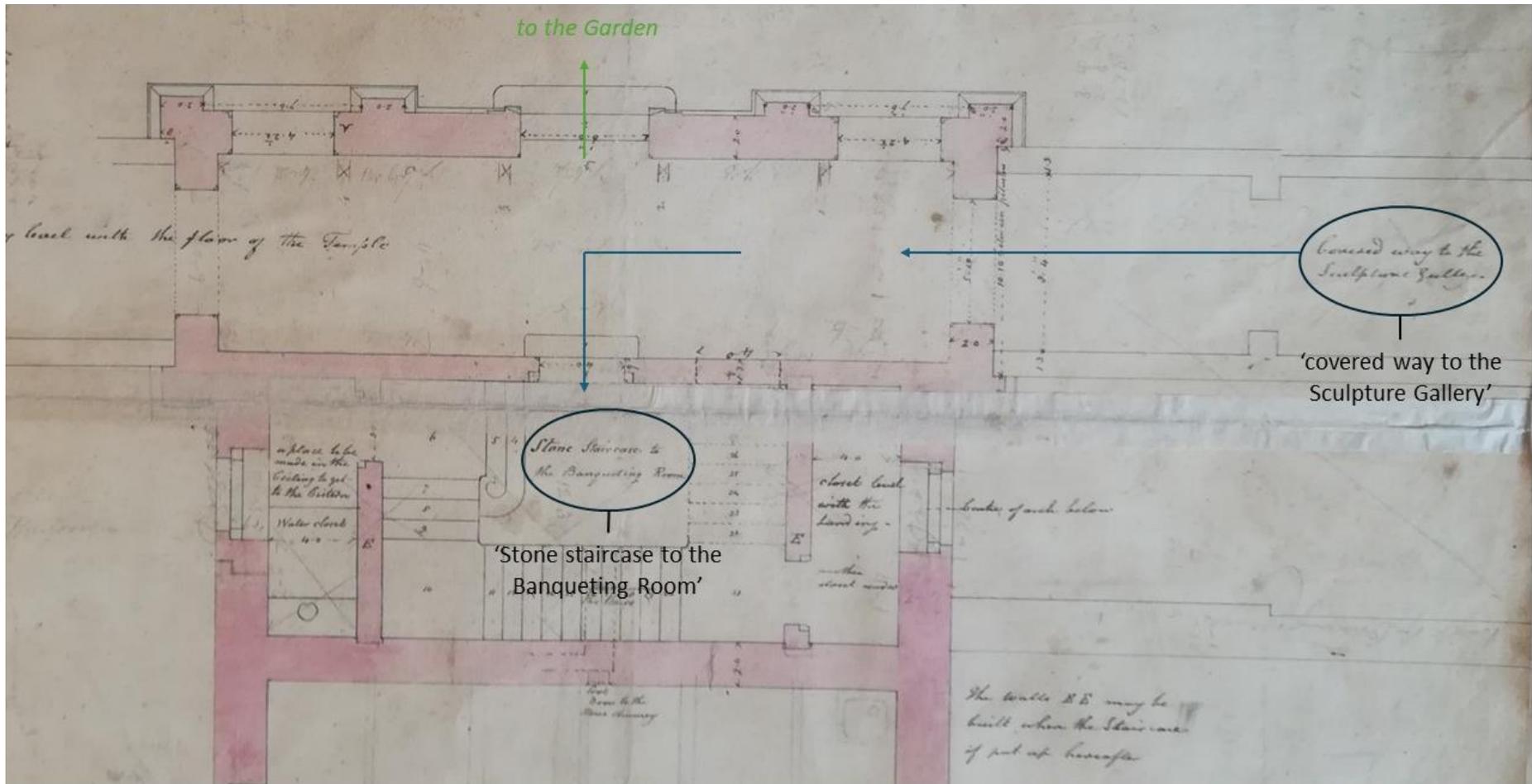


Figure 2.11 Architectural drawing showing the floor plan of the lobby and staircase to the Banqueting Room building at the 'Principal' level. The covered way connects to the lobby of the building from the right; arrows illustrate the route to the dedicated staircase; access to and from the Garden is at the top of the image (WY/N/ii/5).

### Establishing architectural independence

An analysis of the architectural style reinforces the quasi-independent design of the Banqueting Room building. In the first instance, aerial photography affords us to note an overall visual distinction between the Banqueting Room block and the rest of the house. Figure 2.12 illustrates the majestic dimensions of the building as standing out against both the wider landscape and the long, low north wing. Furthermore, in contrast to the regular rhythm of windows that punctuate the east elevation of the main house and the north wing, the principal elevation of the Banqueting Room building presents a comparatively closed front. This east elevation is instead dominated by the honey-coloured sandstone walls, punctured only by the entrance doorway and two, small flanking windows on the lower level, and one floor-length sash window directly above. Pairs of pilasters flank both the sash window and the eastern aperture to the Belvedere above it, but the space between these pilasters is notably blanked. The regular rhythm of fenestration resumes on the long north and south sides of the Banqueting Room storey (fig. 2.13), providing yet another contrast to the east front and marking it out as distinctively 'other'. This difference in style sets the block apart from the rest of the house, engendering a stylistic independence as well as the impression of a spatial one. Moreover, it works to assert the east elevation as the principal entrance to the building over the alternative approach along the covered way - a point I will return to shortly.



Figure 2.12 Aerial view of Chatsworth House from the east. The Banqueting Room building is at the end of the north wing (on the right of this image) © Image taken by Myfanwy Eilertsen. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth House Trust.

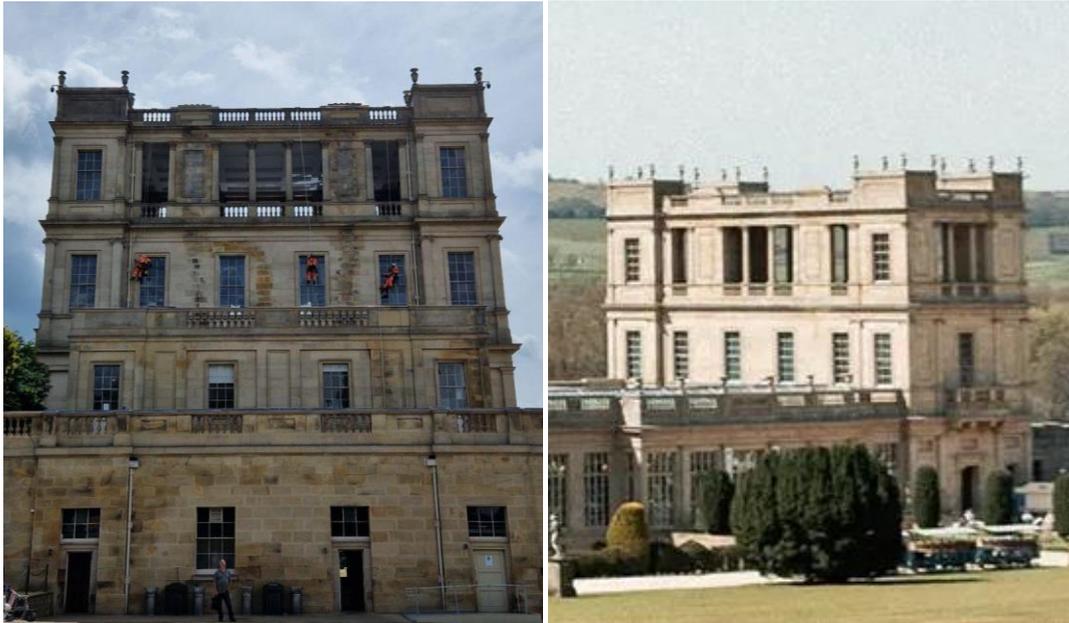


Figure 2.13 LHS: the Banqueting Room building from the north - the Banqueting Room itself is below the Belvedere; RHS: the Banqueting Room building from the south east. The images show both north and south elevations of the building to be lined with windows.

The windows that line the north and south sides of the Banqueting Room also attest to a variety of views for those within - views that were both afforded by and reinforced the room's architectural independence. The windows on the north wall, as well as a single window on the west, looked out over the estate landscape, while the view through the windows to the south looked over the roofscape of the north wing to the main house. Such views might neatly be summarised as 'rarefied'. The Oxford English Dictionary provides two definitions for this adjective, both of which map neatly onto how we might interpret these views: the first is the sense of describing thinner air (Oxford English Dictionary 2023a) - pointing to the elevated position of the room - and the second is its extended meaning as refined or select (Oxford English Dictionary 2023b). Certainly, being able to see the house from the room could remind a visitor of their metaphorically lofty status by association with it while simultaneously reinforcing their literal lofty separation from it. In this way, the height of the block and a visitor's impression that they were rising through it, was integral to its sense of independence.

This sense of elevation from a visitor's perspective can be further drawn out by analysing the features on the principal front of the building. A visitor entering by the main doorway on this east front would pass through the lobby and straight into the stairwell (fig. 2.11). At the top of the stairs, directly in front of the doors to the Banqueting Room, they would have the opportunity to pause by the floor-

length sash window that stands directly above the main entrance. The length of the window and the shallow balcony outside it suggest that, in clement weather, it may have been opened. Whether this was the case or not, by pausing here, a visual, aural or oral dialogue could be forged between those above and those arriving below that offered an opportunity to reflect actively on the height a visitor had gained: the tops of heads might be seen, conversations might be overheard, and spoken words may have been exchanged. Understanding the height of the Banqueting Room in this embodied way reinforced, yet again, the independence of this block from the rest of the house. It is this relationship between the large sash window and the entrance beneath it that confirms this to be the intended principal means of entry to the building, rather than via the covered way which would bypass the approach through the east door.

The ramifications of the sense of architectural independence of the Banqueting Room building from the main house are manifold. However, here I would like to draw out two particular consequences that have a thematic bearing on the rest of this thesis: the building's relationship with the outdoors; and, the potential for the building to act as socially independent, as well as architecturally so.

#### A relationship with the outdoors

The sense of independence cultivated by the spatial distance, stylistic difference and social use of the Banqueting Room building instead arguably forged a closer relationship between the building and the outdoors. Architecturally, the view through the windows of the Banqueting Room that reinforced a sense of separation from the main house also created a visual connection with the surrounding landscape. The centrality of this visual relationship between Banqueting Room building and wider estate was practically enshrined by the addition of the belvedere,<sup>21</sup> the construction of which prompts us to consider both the view *from* the building and the view *of* it. The name of 'the Poussin' was coined for this 'temple attic' by a contemporary of the 6th Duke (Cavendish 1844, 117), linking the appearance of this structure within its surroundings to the 17th-century artist, Nicolas Poussin, known for arcadian pastoral scenes set against dramatic landscapes dotted with Classical buildings. Such a reference, recorded and therefore perpetuated by the 6th Duke in his *Handbook*, highlights the aesthetic awareness of the Duke and his contemporaries of how the Banqueting Room building was viewed within its landscape. From his own account of the belvedere's development as inspired by a building he had seen at Oxford (*ibid.*), it seems unlikely that the Duke held fast to this idealised and romanticised perspective of the building. Nonetheless, his inclusion of his friend's appellation for the

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<sup>21</sup> The name 'temple attic' was used by the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke, so exploring the definition of 'belvedere' as a way to interpret this structure would be erroneous.

'temple attic' in his *Handbook* reveals his recognition that the sight *of* the structure was just as important as the sights *from* it. While there is more to be drawn out of the relationship between the historical, artistic and social function of the belvedere and its surroundings, I use it here to illustrate the central point that the Banqueting Room building harnessed architectural design to cultivate a strong visual connection with the outdoors.

The relationship between the Banqueting Room building and the outdoors was also forged through its use. Public approaches to the building, whether along the covered way or through the main entrance, necessitated walking outside before reaching its sanctuary. It is possible that a visitor may have been borne to the main entrance by carriage - a decade and a half later, in 1843, Queen Victoria was to tour the extensive Gardens by this means - but no evidence has yet come to light that suggests this. Rather, the architecture of the block appears to have encouraged the arrival of visitors on foot and through, or adjacent to, the Gardens. Such a journey would expose a visitor to all the sensory aspects of their surroundings: the sights, scents and sounds of the Garden would be accessible to those with the capacity to appreciate them, while visitors arriving through the main entrance would be exposed further to the vicissitudes and sensations of the weather (figure 2.14 conjures a sense of this by illustrating the spatial relationship between the Banqueting Room building and the Gardens). The architectural independence of the Banqueting Room building, then, co-opted the Gardens to the experience of the journey to the Banqueting Room itself, tying this outside space to the inside one through the bodies of the people passing through and into them.



Figure 2.14 View from the Gardens of the Banqueting Room building, showing the principal elevation of the block and broadly demonstrating the building's relationship to the Garden beyond. © Image taken by Myfanwy Eilertsen. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth House Trust.

The necessity of passing through outdoor spaces before arriving in the lobby to the Banqueting Room building also arguably cultivated in the block a sense of social independence and equality, underpinned by the architectural design of the building. By virtue of its being connected to the high-status rooms of the main house, we might read the covered way as being equally high-status and offering an access route for those with higher status than others. On the other hand, as illustrated above, the architectural design of the Banqueting Room building strongly suggests the principal entrance to be through the east elevation, arguably granting this access point with a higher status than its colonnaded alternative. There is, then, the potential to read differences of social status between those arriving at the Banqueting Room through the routes they took to get there.

However, regardless of route, all bodies had in some way to come into contact with the Gardens. The covered way may have provided more shelter from the weather, but the appeal of the Gardens to the other senses remained universally accessible to those bodies able to receive it. Furthermore, following this contact with the sensory affordances of the Gardens, all the visitors shared the public spaces of the Banqueting Room building, meeting in the lobby and walking up the stairs. The architecture of the

building, then, its sense of independence from the main house and the relationship it therefore forged with the Gardens can be read, in theory, to have a democratising effect on its visitors. This observation becomes notable when considering the political and social philosophies upheld by the 6th Duke - a point I will return to further on in this section.

### ‘Banqueting Room’

The sense of architectural independence from the main house that I have thus far illustrated takes on more resonance when paired with the nomenclature for the Banqueting Room in this historical phase, as I will demonstrate here. The title of ‘Banqueting Room’ is highly significant in its country house context, recalling as it does architectural precedents with roots in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Though later examples of banqueting houses exist, I contend that the earliest iteration of the Banqueting Room building drew on 16th- and 17th-century architectural templates to evoke and reify the political values and sensibilities of the 6th Duke.

Though warranting further study as an evolving building type, the distinct structure of the ‘banqueting room’ or ‘house’ in its 16th- and 17th-century context is introduced comprehensively by Girouard in *Life in the English Country House* (1980, 104-106). Of particular relevance to this study, Girouard notes the typical siting of the small-scale building either on top of the main house or within a short distance from the house through the gardens. Both positions required of their visitors a short walk outside - through the gardens or over the roof leads. When located in gardens, the structures would often consist of multiple levels, with the banqueting room itself occupying the upper level. Consequently, the importance of the views from such structures, often cited as representing the wealth and status of the host through the visibility of their landholdings, are a central point in subsequent studies of individual banqueting houses of the same period (Musson 1999). Examples of these sites include the banqueting room at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, constructed in the 1590s and situated in one of the building’s rectangular turrets (figs. 2.15 and 2.16), and the banqueting house at Weston Hall, North Yorkshire, a multi-level, independent garden structure constructed in the late 16th to early 17th century (fig. 2.17).



Figure 2.15 Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire. Image courtesy of Chris Heaton, CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=116182170>).



Figure 2.16 View of the banqueting room at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire. Image courtesy of John J Tackett (<https://tdclassicist.blogspot.com/2011/10/hardwick-hall-and-cavendish-dynasty.html>).



Figure 2.17 The banqueting house at Weston Hall, North Yorkshire. A structure independent of the main house, though located nearby. Image courtesy of <https://thefollyflaneuse.com/the-banqueting-house-weston-near-otley-north-yorkshire/>

The Banqueting Room at Chatsworth, in the phase under discussion here, bears a comparison with both of these variations of Elizabethan banqueting houses. As I have illustrated, the Banqueting Room building asserted a sense of independence from the main house and cultivated a closer relationship with the gardens; its location a short distance apart from the main house necessitated approaching visitors to pass through the gardens, as at Weston Hall. The elevated position of the Banqueting Room itself commanded views over the landscape, again recalling the multi-level Elizabethan structures. However, these views also included the roofscape of the main house, forging a relationship between house and banqueting room that is more reminiscent of the rooftop room at Hardwick.

Arguably, one of the ways Chatsworth's Banqueting Room deviated from Girouard's description of Elizabethan examples was in the importance placed on its position within the landscape and the value of the view *of* it. However, there is a strong argument to be made for a reappraisal of Elizabethan banqueting rooms that adopts this perspective. For example, Girouard tells us that, as sites for the consumption of delicacies, 'banqueting houses tended to be of fanciful architecture, like the food served in them' (1980, 140). Meanwhile, Jeremy Musson notes that the two banqueting houses at Campden House in Gloucestershire 'faced each other' (1999, 64). Such descriptions of the aesthetics

of the typical building and the affordances made by surrounding structures or landscaping raise the possibility that, as at Chatsworth, the sight of the building was just as important as the sight from it.

Megan Doole has come to a similar conclusion in her reappraisal of the glazed, 16th-century superstructure that crowns Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire - another construction which bears interrogating when considering architectural templates for Chatsworth's Banqueting Room (Doole 2025) (figs. 2.18 and 2.19). The function of the room within this superstructure at Wollaton remains a puzzle. Though occupying a rooftop position with views of the surrounding landscape, it fails to conform to Girouard's banqueting room typology by virtue, mostly, of its size. Where Elizabethan banqueting rooms are typically intimate in scale, Wollaton's elevated room 'is approximately 20 m long x 10 m wide with a high ceiling' (Morton 2011, 25). Apparently confounding any architectural typology, cramped access routes and almost no features to make its occupants comfortable, such as a fireplace, have led Girouard to describe the room as 'virtually useless' (1991, 64). The lack of evidence to attest to an original social function as well as a consideration of the building's situation in its landscape have led Doole to suggest that, rather than ask how the room operated for the internal occupants of the building, we should be seeking to understand the role the room played for the impression of the building on the external occupants of the landscape. She suggests that, not only was the room designed to be seen within its wider setting, but that this was the primary motivation for its construction (Doole 2025). Such an appraisal both reinforces the case for considering Elizabethan banqueting houses in similar ways and raises, therefore, Wollaton's structure as another possible template for Chatsworth's.

The relatively large scale of Chatsworth's Banqueting Room is also similarly the principal characteristic that precludes it from a closer comparison to Elizabethan predecessors of the same name. It is also, then, the architectural characteristic that draws a comparison with Wollaton. Linstrum has made a similar comparison on the basis that Wyattville had worked on Wollaton prior to beginning his designs for Chatsworth (1972, 144).<sup>22</sup> It is possible, then, that the architect drew on this 16th-century structure - somewhat analogous to contemporary banqueting houses - for inspiration to adequately accommodate the 6th Duke's needs for an early 19th-century Banqueting Room. Following this biographical vein, Linstrum also cites the Banqueting Room at Hardwick Hall as inspiration, given the Duke's ownership, feeling for and lived experience of the place. What is notable about both of these examples is that, on top of testifying to the significance of personal connections between patron,

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<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting that Linstrum's comparison is, in fact, with Chatsworth's Belvedere. Due to the research available at his time of writing, Linstrum was unaware of the Banqueting Room's identity prior to the installation of the stage.

architect and the sites that may have inspired the design of the Banqueting Room building, they also testify in particular to the inspiration of *Elizabethan* buildings in doing so.



Figure 2.18 Wollaton Hall, Nottingham, in 2010  
([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wollaton\\_Hall\\_Nov2010.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wollaton_Hall_Nov2010.jpg)).

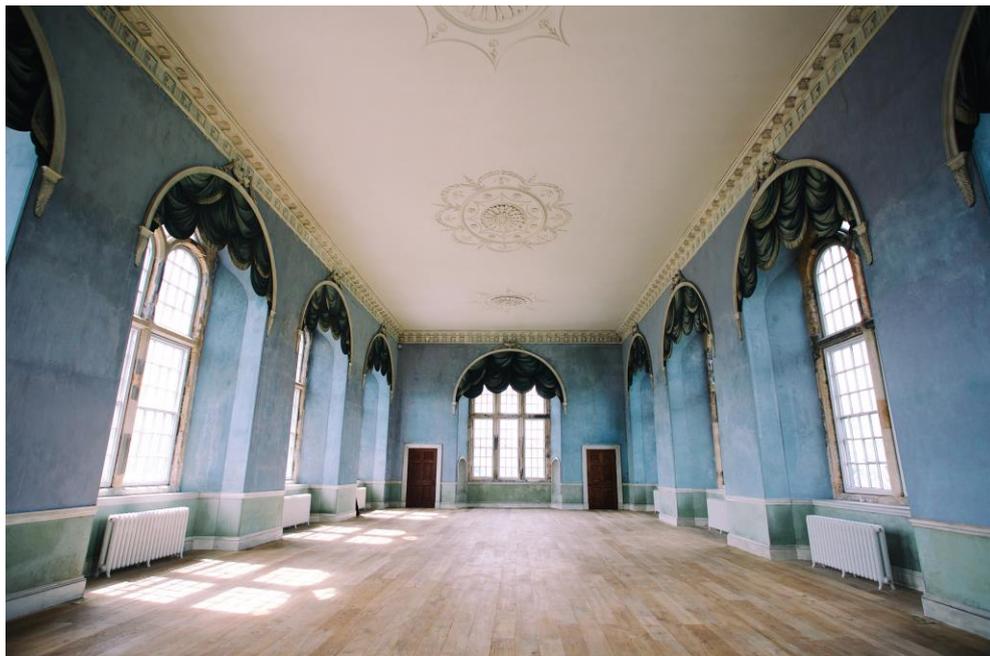


Figure 2.19 Prospect room, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham. Image courtesy of Thomas Griffiths  
(<https://www.behance.net/gallery/53402539/Wollaton-Hall-and-Deer-Park-Promotional-photography/modules/315136885>).

### ‘Olden Time vogue’

Why might the 6th Duke have sought to build a space modelled on Elizabethan predecessors? In *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, Peter Mandler posits a view that the 16th- and 17th-centuries were a particularly fashionable era for late-Georgian and early-Victorian elite society to draw on (1997). Acknowledging the generalising, revisionist approach of this early-19th century period to Tudor and Jacobean history, Mandler coins the term ‘Olden Time vogue’ to describe the fashion, defining the ‘Olden Time’ as ‘the period between medieval rudeness and aristocratic over-refinement, the time of the Tudors and early Stuarts’ (1997, 31). Accounting for the enthusiastic revival, Mandler argues that the ‘Olden Time’ appealed to elite early Victorians for the opportunity it offered to view ‘Tudor authoritarianism’ as,

‘nation-building, establishing [...] a genuinely national religion in the form of English Protestantism, and, by enforcing the peace, putting an end to baronial rule, allowing talent and merit to flourish’ (1997, 32).

To what extent might the 6th Duke have been motivated by these ideals?

Certainly, ‘Olden Time vogue’ was felt in the 6th Duke’s social world. Mandler cites the popularity in this period of the novels by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), whose historic romances were frequently set in reimagined, English, 16th-century stately homes. In 1832, a group of guests including the future Queen Victoria and her mother staged a charade of Scott’s *Kenilworth* in the Drawing Room (Cavendish 1844, 53 & 99) (see 1.2.3 Charades, Tableaux Vivants and Private Theatricals). There is evidence that the Duke’s political values also aligned with Mandler’s interpretation. The historian’s description of Tudor authoritarianism, as seen through the eyes of elite early Victorians, could be transposed almost word for word to the religious, political and patronal ambitions and actions of the 6th Duke. Though a religious disposition seemed antithetical to the diverting opportunities afforded to the Duke by virtue of his wealth and status, he developed an increasing closeness to the practices of Protestantism throughout his life, and the teachings of the Church of England provided the moral metric by which to measure his own virtues and perceived failings (Lees-Milne 1991).

Closely conforming to Mandler’s equivocation of baronial reform, the 6th Duke’s biographer tells us that,

‘the Duke of Devonshire [...] was in the very van of progressive English landlordism. He was a passionate champion of popular rights and equal opportunities, albeit hoping that the aristocratic supremacy would last out his lifetime because, he

would argue, sudden reversal of the established order would mean revolution and general chaos from which no one would benefit' (Lees-Milne 1991, 124).

Illustrating the Duke's adherence to this philosophy, he was an emphatic supporter of the 1832 Reform Act which, though acting only as a first step towards a kind of democratic equality, did away with the rotten borough voting system and enfranchised a new group of middle-class voters. The Duke's patronage and employment of Joseph Paxton - a relationship that developed into an unusual friendship that lasted until the Duke's death - is similarly the best evidence of this philosophy in direct social and patronal practice. Enabled by the Duke's support, Paxton developed a career that spanned horticulture, architecture, engineering, publishing, railways and politics. The 6th Duke's biographer concludes that Paxton's many achievements were a source of vicarious pride for the Duke (Lees-Milne 1991, 189).

#### 2.2.4 Conclusion

By identifying architectural precedents for the Banqueting Room building, we begin to question the apparent connectivity of the Banqueting Room with the rest of the north wing. In particular, by evoking Elizabethan predecessors the Banqueting Room building can be read as a quintessential cultural expression of 'Olden Time vogue', and reading the 6th Duke's religious, political and social activity through the same lens, leads us to interpreting the building as reifying the 6th Duke's values and principles. At the same time, maintaining an architectural connection with the main house for the facilitation of key services both testified to the building's evolution and served the needs of entertaining in the 19th century. The Banqueting Room building, then, was designed as quasi-independent, projecting an image of the ideals associated with the 'Olden Time' but maintaining the practical arrangements of a 19th-century mansion.

## 2.3 Phase II: the ‘Banqueting Room’, post-Orangery (1827-1833)

### 2.3.1 Introduction

The previous section established the earliest phase of the Banqueting Room building as adhering closely to the Elizabethan tradition of banqueting rooms and houses by virtue primarily of its architectural and aesthetic independence from the main house. The adoption of this tradition alongside the commodious scale of the Banqueting Room positioned the space as an entertainment room for large groups of people irrespective of their inclusion in the house party arrangements, in accordance with the Duke’s liberal political and social values. The approach to the Banqueting Room harnessed the sensory effects of the outdoors and cultivated a sense of social equality through an individual’s arrival via the lobby. However, the outdoor approach and sense of independence that underpin this interpretation were significantly disrupted by the insertion of the Orangery in 1827. This section will analyse the architectural changes brought about by this addition and describe the various impacts of the Orangery on the identity of the Banqueting Room building. As well as considering what was lost through the construction of the Orangery, the section will also discuss the affordances that the Orangery brought to bear on a visitor’s journey to the Banqueting Room.

### 2.3.2 Architectural alterations: the construction of the Orangery and the alterations to the Banqueting Room staircase

Architectural drawings for the new Orangery were drawn up from March to June 1827. Figure 2.20 is an architectural plan for the Orangery roof, but the black and red blocks encircling this structure are particularly illustrative of how this section of the building changed to accommodate the new Orangery. The black blocks denote existing masonry - ie. the stonework as it existed prior to the Orangery - while the red blocks denote new masonry for the construction of the Orangery. The alternate red and black blocks at the top of the image show the insertion of new decorative niches into the wall that had previously marked one side of the open court behind the covered way (see previous section). Thus, we can see that the new Orangery spanned both the covered way and the court behind it. Whereas, previously, plans of the north wing conveyed something of the independence of the Banqueting Room building through the open spaces of the court and covered way, this visual marker was lost upon the construction of the Orangery.

The solid walls were punctured by new doorways, transforming access arrangements from the Sculpture Gallery to the Banqueting Room building. The first door was inserted at the end of the Sculpture Gallery, on the left of the drawing in figure 2.20; the second punctured into the wall of the

stairwell to the Banqueting Room building, on the right. The position and scale of these doors extended the existing enfilade that ran through the entertainment rooms of the north wing, connecting these spaces to the Orangery and the stairs of the Banqueting Room building beyond. The original doorways to and from the covered way, though depicted as open or glazed in this earlier plan, were subsequently blocked (WY/N/5/3).

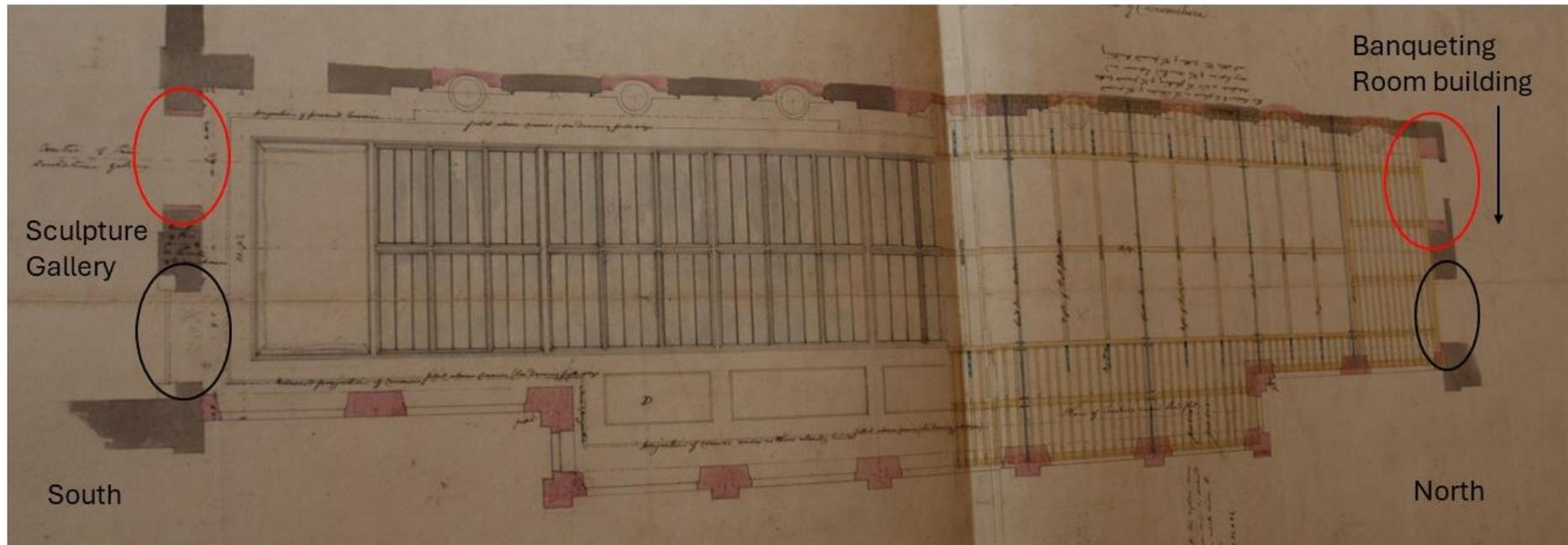


Figure 2.20 Architectural plan for the roof of the Orangery with author's annotations. The Sculpture Gallery is on the left of the image (to the south); the Banqueting Room building is on the right (to the north). Black blocks denote existing masonry, while red ones denote new masonry. Likewise, circled in black are the doorways to the old covered way; circled in red are the new doorways from the Sculpture Gallery and into the stairwell of the Banqueting Room building. (WY/M/2/9)

The new doorway into the stairwell of the Banqueting Room building was one of two elements that had a significant impact on the design of the staircase some two years later. The second was the 6th Duke's Baths. Architectural drawings and the building accounts attest to the Banqueting Room stairs and the Duke's new Baths both being constructed in the same phase of works in 1829. The Baths were located to the north of the Banqueting Room building on the story below that of the Banqueting Room itself. They were accessed by one of two routes: from service corridors and staircases beneath and to the north of them, or through the Orangery and Banqueting Room stairwell to the south. Thus, the stairwell of the Banqueting Room building now needed to accommodate a new north-south access route, from the Orangery to the Baths. Wyattville responded to these restrictions by designing the staircase we see today (WY/N/5/3-7). Approached from the Orangery, the staircase begins on the long west wall (to the left) and climbs to a half landing on the shorter north wall, where another, short flight leads to a second half landing that turns the staircase clockwise to the east before arriving on a longer landing (fig. 2.21 LHS). A second flight of stairs rises from the south end of this landing and turns anti-clockwise to reach the landing outside the doors to the Banqueting Room, opposite the floor-length sash window, described in the previous section (fig. 2.21 RHS).



Figure 2.21 LHS: the view looking north into the stairwell of the Banqueting Room building from the Orangery doors. The small door to the 6th Duke's Baths can be seen at the end of the passage; the large doors to the lobby and Garden can be seen on the right of the image. RHS: the stairs at the south end of the landing, leading to the landing outside the Banqueting Room.

Although this new staircase offered a pragmatic solution to the new function of the stairwell as an access route, it marked a notable shift in the identity of the Banqueting Room building. Prior to the installation of the Orangery, the staircase to the Banqueting Room was housed in a dedicated space and included amenities that considered the climb of a visitor - a water closet was designed to be accessed from one of the original half-landings, while planned circular openings in the ceiling permitted light - and perhaps sound - to enter the staircase through the floor of the Banqueting Room above. The journey up the staircase, then, was intended to play an active role in the identity of the Banqueting Room by building expectations in the sensory and embodied experiences of a visitor and focusing these expectations towards the room above.

With the insertion of the new doorways from the Orangery and to the Baths, and the retention of the large doors to the lobby and Garden, the once-dedicated stairwell became a node serving four spaces. The conversion of walls to include doorways left less space to accommodate the lower flights of a staircase, so the proposed water closet was sacrificed to create more overall width and allow a longer flight along the west wall. Four years later, in 1833, the planned circular ceiling openings were lost with changes to the interior of the Banqueting Room - changes discussed in detail in the following section, but the illuminatory impact of which is considered below. The loss of these amenities marked a shift in the function of the stairwell away from serving visitors and towards accessing spaces. In so doing, the unity of the publicly-accessible areas of the Banqueting Room building - the staircase, and the Banqueting Room and Belvedere above it - was lost.

The shift in focus of the stairwell can also be seen through contrast with the Orangery. The loss of the circular ceiling openings resulted in fewer light sources to illuminate the lower section of the staircase. Thus, the approach from the glazed Orangery - drenched in natural light during the day or sparkling in reflected gaslight at night - created a contrast with the relatively dim Banqueting Room stairs that resulted in their either being perceived as dull by comparison, or their not being worthy of mention at all. In a letter from the 6th Duke's niece, Blanche Cavendish, to her mother in 1836, Blanche makes particular note of the effect of light through the sequence of rooms along the length of the north wing prior to proceeding up to the Banqueting Room for dancing. She writes, 'yesterday all the rooms were lit up - it is such an uncommon suite, from the drawing room to the orangery & it looked beautiful. Then Dancing in the Banquetting [sic] rooms...' (CS6/3563). Despite the large double doors leading into the Banqueting Room staircase continuing the architectural effect of the enfilade, Blanche's observation of the illuminated 'uncommon suite' ended at the Orangery. Though we cannot know by

which route Blanche entered the Banqueting Room building on this occasion (a subject discussed further below), it is notable that the effect of the lighting on Blanche's appreciation of the 'suite' failed to extend to the stairwell. Reading against the grain of Blanche's letter, however, we may also surmise that the relative darkness of the stairwell contributed to a greater focus on the activities taking place within the Banqueting Room itself; Blanche omits mention of the climb, but the activity of dancing is recalled and recorded.

The insertion of the Orangery, then, precipitated necessary changes to the Banqueting Room stairs that had significant ramifications for the identity and status of the Banqueting Room itself. Through the fracturing of the stairwell's focus, the Banqueting Room arguably became untethered from the spaces below it. It is impossible to conclude what impact the modifications to the stairway made on the experience of walking to the Banqueting Room, since the room was not used prior to the installation of the Orangery. On one hand, the changes may have diminished the experience of moving through spaces to reach the Banqueting Room. On the other, they may have served to characterise the room as further rarefied, as if suspended above the more quotidian corridor space of the stairwell. The spaces traversed to reach the Banqueting Room are considered in the following sections.

### 2.3.3 Route(s) to the Banqueting Room

How did the public access the Banqueting Room after the creation of the Orangery? The evidence suggests that its addition heralded a new primary route to the Banqueting Room from the rest of the mansion. This route through the Orangery and directly into the stairwell is intimated in Blanche's 1836 letter, above, and confirmed by the same correspondent three years later: in 1839, she wrote, 'at 10 o[']clock we all went through the long passages & beautiful Conservatory lighted by coloured lamps; to the high building wh[ich] is called the Banquetting [sic] room' (CS6/4152). Corroborating this route, in 1843, when a ball was thrown for Queen Victoria in the Banqueting Room, the invited company were led from the principal guest entrance of the main house - the Sub-Hall - through the mansion and down a long bedroom corridor that bypassed the entertainment rooms of the new north wing, before emerging into the Orangery and passing directly up the Banqueting Room stairs (DF4/3/2/6). The Queen and the house party followed 15 minutes later, following the enfilade through the Sculpture Gallery, Orangery and thence again up the stairs (ibid.). Their progress through the mansion - and the Orangery - to reach the Banqueting Room was taken up again in the 1890s when the room was fitted with a stage, and formalised through the printed programmes that stated by which entrance ticket-holders were to arrive - a process and route discussed in detail in 4.3.2 Access points and routes. The later uptake of this route suggests its consistent use.

During this period, the Banqueting Room building could also have still been accessed by the large double doors from the Gardens. Although no evidence of this has been found, this may reflect the bias of the archive. As discussed in the Literature Review (see 1.3.5 Archives), each country house archive operates under both overarching and specific conditions. Professional guidance led to the overarching organisation of country house archives along two distinct lines: family papers and estate papers - a structure to which the DCA adheres. We might expect to find evidence for the use of the Garden doors in letters; certainly, it has predominantly been through the correspondence of Blanche Cavendish that other evidence of access has been identified. Such correspondence is catalogued in the archive among the family papers. Practical constraints of country house archives, such as time, money and the sheer volume of correspondence contained therein, mean that there are bundles of letters that have not yet been catalogued to item level - without consulting each letter individually, a researcher cannot know what information these letters contain. Nonetheless, we might safely assume that associates of the family would be included among the house party, and so access from the mansion to the Banqueting Room via the Orangery would be expedient. However, there is a possibility that the Garden doors were used by staff or visitors. Archive material pertaining to staff would fall under the purview of estate papers, the accrual of which has related in the main to the management of the estate and is less likely, therefore, to contain relevant correspondence or diaries.

With the possible loss of the approach through the Gardens came a transformation of the sensory experience for visitors. Passage through the Orangery precluded the risks and experiences attendant with walking outside - getting wet, dirtying one's clothes, etc. Moreover, the relationship between the entrance on the east facade and the long sash window above it, discussed in the previous section, disappeared. Nonetheless, actively choosing to route visitors through the Orangery when another point of entry was available cast the Orangery as a space of significance beyond mere expediency of access. In the temporarily-specific context of entertainment being provided in the Banqueting Room, the Orangery adopted a socially-related function that bears interrogating: what did it mean to pass through the Orangery on the way to an event in the Banqueting Room in the second quarter of the 19th century?<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3.4 The Orangery

Architecturally, the use of the Orangery as a passage to another elite entertainment space was something of a novelty. As such, it offers a slightly different perspective on assumptions about the

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<sup>23</sup> No evidence has yet come to light of a performance practice of any kind taking place in the Orangery – theatrical or musical.

conventions of country house entertainment. Although conservatories<sup>24</sup> attached to grand houses were gaining popularity by the late 1820s (Beale 2002, 74), generally speaking, they were added as appendages leading inhabitants and visitors from the house into the gardens (Woods and Warren 1990). Frequently, orangeries or conservatories were encountered as standalone buildings in high status private gardens. Doors in the rear walls of such spaces would therefore more likely lead to a boiler house or other working environments than further high status entertainment rooms (Green 2023, 126). The use of Chatsworth's Orangery as a corridor, entered from one high status room and leading to the staircase to another, may therefore have been perceived as unusual and intriguing.

Positioned as something of a transitional space between the indoors and the outdoors - accessed by both the mansion and the gardens and containing both statuary and plants - the Orangery may also have been perceived as socially ambiguous. Certainly, this was true among Chatsworth's staff who were organised along broadly 'indoor' and 'outdoor' lines. In her 2019 thesis, Lauren Butler describes a misunderstanding between the managers of both house and gardens over the appropriate use of the Orangery's flowers and foliage: when asked by the Housekeeper for orange blossoms cut from the Orangery, one gardener refused on the grounds that he did not have permission from the Head Gardener, while another complied on the basis that the Housekeeper was in charge of the indoor spaces (2019, 208). Butler argues that such an incident taking place around the axis of the Orangery represented a blurring of 'the physical and social boundary between indoor and outdoor' (ibid.). Though the leisure classes in country house historiography are rarely, if ever, described along such indoor/outdoor lines, what Butler's example makes clear is the impossibility of applying one set of social rules to an entire group based solely on their social or professional role. Therefore, it is entirely possible that stepping from the decidedly indoor spaces of the mansion into the ambiguously indoor-outdoor space of the Orangery disrupted social relationships to one degree or another.

The idea that the Orangery disrupted social relationships is compounded when we consider the organic contents of the space and what they may have represented. By the 1840s, certainly, the Orangery held both orange trees and a number of other trees and shrubs from across the world (Cavendish 1844, 108-110). Orange trees had been cultivated in northern European countries for some three hundred years by the 19th century (Woods and Warren 1990, 8), but many of the other plants

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<sup>24</sup> We should not dwell on the nomenclature for the Orangery to interpret its location, design or contents. Universally-held distinctions between the appropriate uses, design or location of greenhouses, glasshouses, conservatories and orangeries was not forthcoming until around the 1840s, and even then individual accounts might use the terms interchangeably (Woods and Warren 1990, 93; cf. Green 2023, 126). Chatsworth's Orangery was also referred to as a conservatory during the period under scrutiny here (Butler 2019, 209).

here were newcomers to Britain in the first decades of the century. These included the *Araucaria* (more commonly known as the monkey puzzle tree) from Chile (Gedye 2017), the *Rhododendron Arboreum* from the Himalayas (Cullen 2011), and the *Dammara Australis* (renamed *Agathis Australis* and known in its native context as kauri) from New Zealand's North Island (see Appendix D for illustrations of the plants held in the Orangery). Such diversity of species, as well as their novelty in this country, represented both the international connections of the Duke and his links to the highest echelons of the horticultural community. Beyond the thrill of the new, a recognition of such plants offered a chance to display knowledge of a kind distinct from that offered by the art on display in the house. This opportunity was highlighted by contrast with the rest of the route taken through the house, and would arguably be lost or at least muddled should a visitor arrive first through the gardens. Such an appreciation had the potential to reorganise intellectual and social capital among visitors to the Orangery.

The combination of these plants bought and brought from around the world together with the impressive sculptures held in the Orangery, and the materials used to construct it, afforded not only an intellectual effect but a sensory or perceptive one as well. Many of the trees held in the Orangery were capable of growing to great heights, and it is likely that they towered over visitors. Indeed, the Duke was forced to relocate some carved relief statuary that became hidden behind the growth of the trees (Cavendish 1844, 91). Embracing this sense of scale, at night the Duke placed 'powerful lamps' in a monumental sculpted marble urn that threw light onto hazy branches, and created such an unexpected and magical effect 'that people cry out Fairy land' (Cavendish 1844, 108) (figs. 2.22-2.24). There is the possibility, too, that light from the lamps bled through parts of the marble urn, causing it to glow and perhaps animating some of the adorning figures. If the lamps were powerful enough, their light may have penetrated the leafy canopy and reached the glazed roof above, reflecting into constellations through leaves and branches. It was only in the first decade of the 19th century that technological developments in the production of iron made the installation of a glazed roof possible, so such an interplay of light and glass overhead may have magnified the magical effect of 'fairy land'.

The trees themselves provided a variety of bold textures and delicate scents that may have surprised, challenged, delighted or comforted visitors to the Orangery (see Appendix D for illustrations). The branches of the *Altingia Excelsa* (known today as the Liquidambar Excelsa) are delicate and willowy, while the trunk and branches of the monkey puzzle tree are sheathed in confounding spikes, and the rounded needles and bumpy cones of the kauri are intriguingly tactile. Meanwhile, the orange trees seemed able to scent the air of the space year-round, the Duke noting that the orange trees 'remain

here [in the Orangery] almost always in good health and condition, perfuming the whole of Chatsworth with their blossoms' (Cavendish 1844, 109). Beyond the scent of the trees was the more prosaic smell of petrichor - the smell of wet earth - ubiquitous to conservatories, and working olfactorily to bring the outdoors in. Such a scent was likely to have contrasted starkly with the preceding spaces on the route, the artistic and furnished contents of which would likely have suffered if brought into contact with damp or dirt. The sensory stimulation of the Orangery, then, was distinct from the preceding rooms on the route to the Banqueting Room and provided an embodied shift from one type of space to another.



THE ORANGERY, CHATSWORTH

Figure 2.22 Engraving after a photograph by Richard Keene of the Orangery at Chatsworth in 1872. The monumental marble urn - a copy of the Medici Vase - can be seen in the centre of the image. (From *The Graphic*, 28 December 1872.)



Figure 2.23 A view of the Orangery, December 1946. The marble urn can be seen in the background, dwarfing the statues around it. Image source: <https://houseandheritage.org/2018/05/13/chatsworth-house/> (from 'The Sphere' 28th December 1946).



Figure 2.24 The marble urn remains in the Orangery in the 21st century, though now surrounded by merchandise rather than trees or sculpture. (Image: [https://artwondereveryday.blogspot.com/2014/09/chatsworth-house\\_5.html](https://artwondereveryday.blogspot.com/2014/09/chatsworth-house_5.html))

### 2.3.5 Conclusion

The insertion of the Orangery transformed the identity of the Banqueting Room. The once-dedicated stairwell to the Banqueting Room was converted into an access route to further spaces along the north wing, and the primary access route to reach the Banqueting Room shifted from the Gardens to the Orangery. However, co-opting the Orangery into the experience of traveling to the Banqueting Room introduced a new perspective. Encased in glass which reflected artificial light, and housing rare flora alongside monumental statuary, the Orangery provided novelty and sensory stimulation to visitors. With the insertion of the Orangery, we see writ large shifts in where importance was placed, from the 18th century focus on the relationship between landscape and architecture, towards 19th-century interests in exploration and discoveries in the natural world. It is likely, therefore, that an experience of the Banqueting Room was granted a sense of modernity and novelty by association with the Orangery.

## 2.4 Phase III: '...or Theatre' (1833-1858)

### 2.4.1 Wyatville's Gallery Sketches

The second significant shift in the identity of the Banqueting Room occurred in October 1833, and is evidenced through two unusual architectural plans for the room. Overlaid onto two formal drawings of a design for the Gallery structure inside the Banqueting Room, dated September 1833, are sketches of a different design - a design representing the shape and proportions of the structure we see today (WY/N/iii/1a & 2; figs 2.25 and 2.26). While the formal drawings are in black ink, with notes made in a hand distinct from Wyatville's own - indicating the work of an assistant in the architect's office - the sketches are brown and the corresponding notes clearly match correspondence from the architect. In the same brown ink is the date on which the sketches were made: 6th October 1833. Two days later, on 8th October 1833, the Duke recorded in his diary, 'Sir Jeffrey went [from Chatsworth], having most happily arranged everything' (DF4/2/1/13), and four days after this, the appellation 'Theatre' is given to denote the Banqueting Room space for the first time (Building Accounts). It is five months later, in March 1834, that the name is adopted more formally when architectural plans for the room begin to be titled, 'Banqueting Room or Theatre'. From this point on, the room is variously referred to in the archive material as 'Banqueting Room', 'Ball Room' or 'Theatre'.

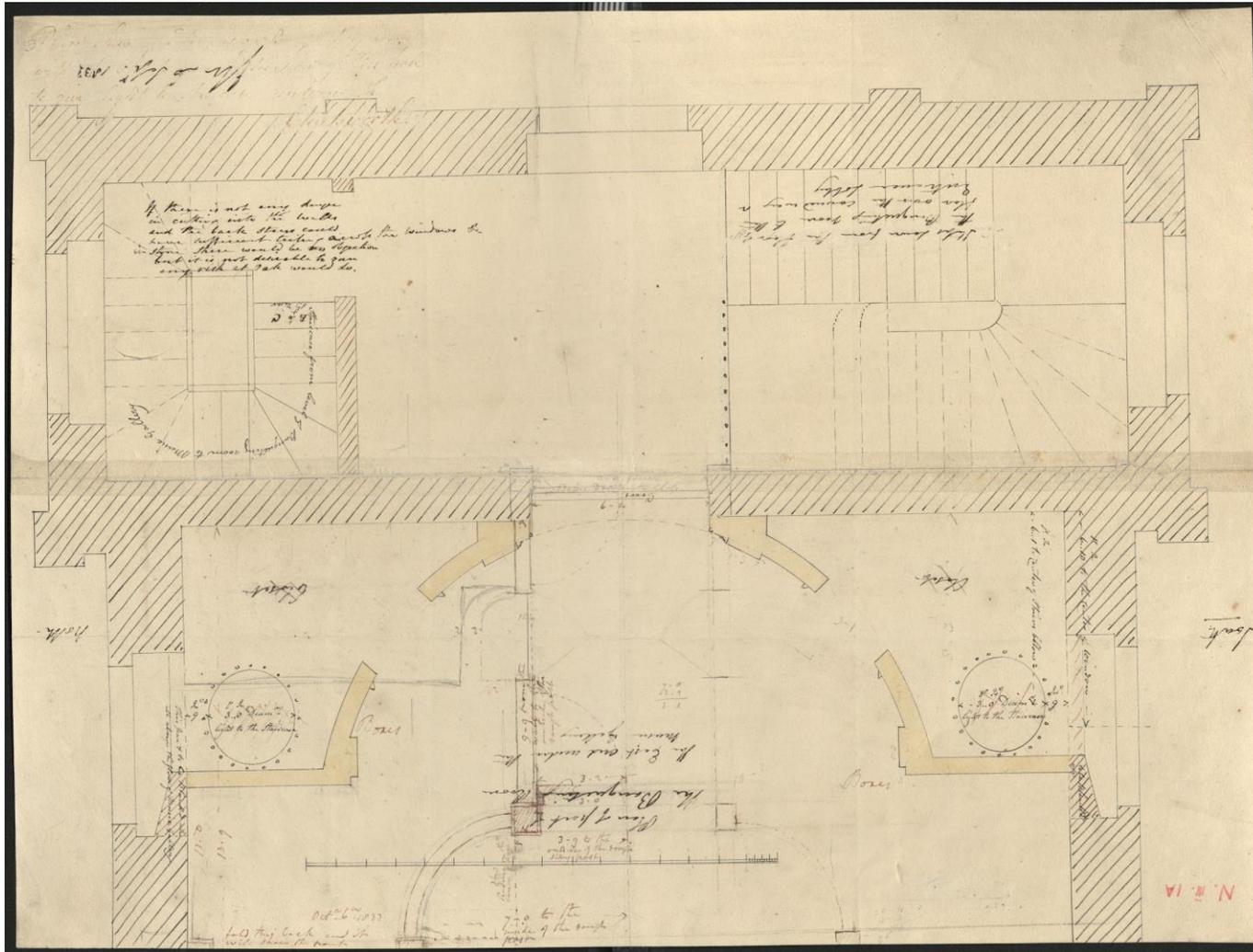


Figure 2.25 Architectural plan for the Gallery in the Banqueting Room from September 1833, overlaid with sketches for a different design dated October 1833 (WY/N/iii/1a). © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

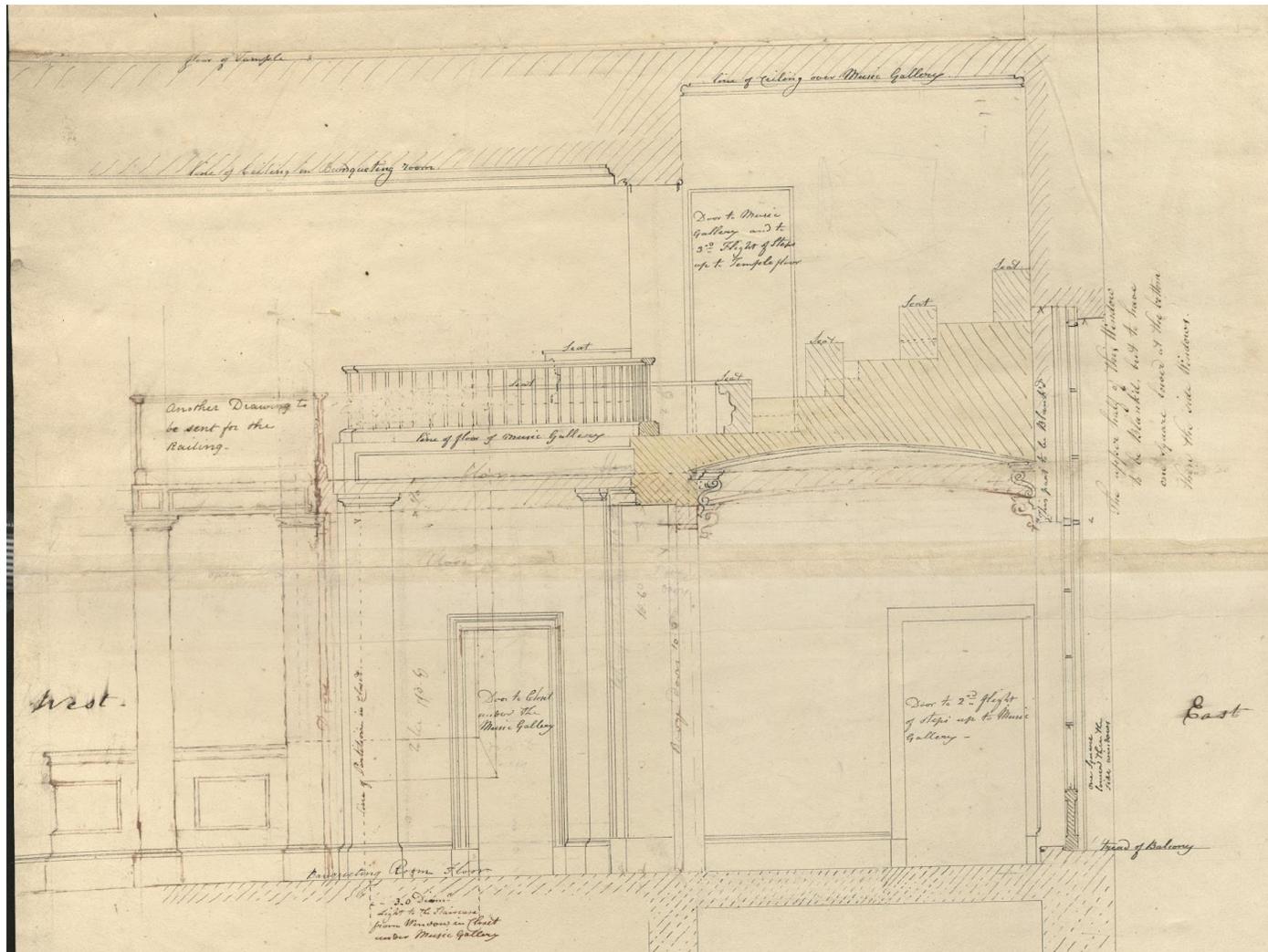


Figure 2.26 Detail from an architectural section for the Gallery in the Banqueting Room from September 1833, overlaid with sketches for a different design (WY/N/iii/2). © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Pulling these archival instances together point to a notable shift in intention for this room, a shift in which the Duke is personally implicated, his journalled words conveying distinct satisfaction with ‘Sir Jeffrey’'s arrangements. No formal drawing of the sketched designs exists in the archive today, so we are left with the impression that these sketches are the fruit of a familiar, informal, one-to-one conversation between patron and architect, without the machinery of country estate or architectural drawing office attached. Through these sketches, we are afforded a possible glimpse into an intimate and creative moment in time between two individuals that have since become symbols of their respective worlds: elite patronage and architecture. Seen in this way, the sketches erode the lens of traditional architectural history that frequently fixes polite architecture into a cannon, or logical and sequential development of its author’s output (Arnold 2006, xvi), and through which much of Chatsworth’s architectural history has been recorded (eg. Linstrum 1972). Rather, they show the patron to have individual and spontaneous desires, the architect to be nimble and adaptive, and the design process, even on a project as large as the new north wing, to have the capacity to be fluid, uncertain and informal.

Though absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, given the volume of architectural drawings that *have* survived in the archive, it seems probable that these sketches never progressed to formal architectural drawings. That they clearly form the basis for the Gallery structure we see today therefore may also testify to the trust placed in the knowledge and experience of the foreman interpreting them, and the skill and ability of the joiners and carpenters executing them. This relationship of trust between patron, architect and craftsmen further undermines the narrative, dominant in architectural history, of polite buildings being the result solely of an architect’s vision.

#### 2.4.2 The 6th Duke & (the) Theatre

The correlation of the archival traces shared here point to the new Gallery structure to be explicitly tied to the appellation of a ‘theatre’. Yet, what we understand of this name in the use-practice of this room is, perhaps, more nuanced than we might anticipate. A biographical study of the 6th Duke of Devonshire, contextualised by the common practice of elite private theatricals, may lead us to anticipate his likely participation in and active patronage of this activity within his own houses. In his diaries, the Duke recorded his frequent attendance at the theatre and opera, both in England and abroad, often attending at least one performance a night while in a city (DF4/2/1);<sup>25</sup> his surviving

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<sup>25</sup> Summarising the first two weeks of December 1832 in his diaries, the Duke noted, ‘All the same. Early dinners & plays. Happy life’ (DF4/2/1/12).

household accounts see him subscribing to, maintaining and altering boxes at a number of London theatres over decades, demonstrating his personal investment in their availability, comfort and convenience (C/165/A-C); and, he twice held the public office of Lord Chamberlain, whose responsibilities included approving or denying the staging of productions at the patent theatres. The Duke's diaries testify to some of the challenges he faced in this role, with a breach of his orders taking place just eight months before the sketches of the new gallery structure appeared (DF4/2/1/13; 25th February) - a timing that foregrounds the Duke's active leadership of public theatrical life at the moment the Banqueting Room saw an apparently theatrical shift in its intention.

Such was the Duke's authentic support of the dramatic arts, both public and private, that he was a chief funder of Fanny Kelly's 1840 acting school (Bush-Bailey 2011), benefactor of professional performers (DF4/1/14/9), and host, at Devonshire House in 1851, of Charles Dickens' amateur theatre company, staging Bulwer Lytton's new play, *Not So Bad as we Seem*, in the presence of Queen Victoria (DF4/3/2/12). Indeed, the Duke himself had organised and participated in private theatricals with his social circle at his villa in Chiswick in spring 1823 (DF4/2/1/3). However, his progressive deafness led him to forgo his acting role in *Town and Country*, choosing instead only to speak the prologue for the piece.<sup>26</sup> Even then, domestic circumstances necessitated he attend a funeral the morning of the performance. Such was his state of emotional turmoil by the evening, that he 'drunk a little too much, to put [him]self right after the morning', leading him to feel close to tripping over his words, and to conclude his diary entry for the performance date with the observation, 'actors ought I am convinced to be extremely temperate'. Despite this nerve-racking experience, there were newspaper reports of a second performance to take place the following year (*The Morning Chronicle*, 'The Mirror of Fashion'; 30th Jan 1824), an intention suspended by the death of the Duke's step-mother and apparently never again picked up.

Gillian Russell has observed that, 'for the Georgians, the play was never entirely the thing: they were equally fascinated with the sociable, spatial and material contexts in which play-making took place' (2007, 191). The truth of this is borne out in the collections of scrapbooks, watercolour albums, correspondence and related objects curated by the 6th Duke and held in the Devonshire Collections, which are riddled with theatrical memorabilia. There is enough material evidence in the DCA alone of the 6th Duke's involvement with both public and private theatrical life to support a separate thesis on the subject.

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<sup>26</sup> This was written specially for the occasion by George Lamb who had married the Duke's illegitimate half-sister, Caroline, in 1809.

### 2.4.3 Using the Banqueting Room/Theatre

Given this body of biographical evidence, the apparent shift in intention for the Banqueting Room with the redesign of the Gallery structure, and the rich presence of theatrical material in the 6th Duke's papers, we would expect to see archival evidence of private theatricals taking place in the room from 1834 onwards. Yet these events do not materialise in the primary sources as consistently as we might expect. Indeed, despite my own research efforts and the input of Chatsworth's curators and volunteers, I have been able to identify in the primary material only five instances in which the room was used at all between 1832 and 1858, when the Duke died. The first, a 'grand dinner in the banqueting room for masons, gardeners, etc' on 1st November 1832 during which 'Charles Taylor the singer came & diverted them extremely' (DF4/2/1/12), pre-dates the sketches of the new gallery structure, and beautifully illustrates the potential function of a banqueting room in entertaining a spectrum of estate communities with food and music. The second occasion, and the first following the renaming of the room, was in September 1836 when dancing was hosted in the 'Banqueting rooms', and Blanche Cavendish comments especially on the view down the enfilade of rooms leading to the Banqueting Room stairs (CS6/3563). The third and fourth occasions were on consecutive months three years later, when charades were staged in the 'temporary Theatre in the Banqueting Room' (Building Accounts). Unusually, there are a number of sources that testify to the first of these, including an illustration, a highly descriptive letter from Blanche Cavendish to her sister (CS6/4152) and a comment from the Duke in his diaries. For the charades the following month, the Building Accounts testify to 'Fitting up the Theatre' and 'Taking down Theatre fittings from the Banqueting Room' - a scant record complemented only by a letter from Lady George Cavendish to Blanche, her sister-in-law, listing the participants in various scenes of a charade taking place at Chatsworth (CS6/4173). Finally, in 1843, Queen Victoria visited Chatsworth, during which a ball was held in her honour in the Banqueting Room (DF4/3/2/6).

The scarcity of these instances over a 26 year period does not necessarily point to the Banqueting Room/Theatre's lack of use. The letters I have referenced here were only catalogued at item level in 2023, so there were no clues as to their contents on the archive catalogue prior to this. Moreover, the Duke's handwriting in his diaries becomes increasingly illegible from 1839 onwards, proving the diaries to be almost inaccessible from this date. Evolving organising principles of the Devonshire collections since the early 20th century have resulted in the separation of some small paintings from their archival context, dissociating at least one illustration of charades at Chatsworth from its descriptive information. Piecing together these sources has relied on the item-level cataloguing outlined here, as well as informal conversations with curatorial staff and volunteers whose knowledge of the collections

exceeds the information held in the catalogue. In undertaking archival research for this project, the vastness of the archive at Chatsworth had to be balanced with the likelihood of turning over relevant evidence. There is therefore likely to be more evidence that comes to light as detailed cataloguing progresses. Russell has noted that, despite the important role of newspapers in publicising the amateur performances of the Georgian elite, private theatricals among the *gentry* have only come to light because of the later fame of the writers of letters recording them (2007, 192). The staging of charades, though undertaken by the social elite at Chatsworth, may well be compared with the private theatricals of Georgian gentry. Often claimed to have been organised at the last minute, and apparently without the attendant paratheatrical materials of playbills, tickets etc., they would likely have avoided the attention or interest of newspapers, leaving these potential sources of information on the use of the Banqueting Room/Theatre practically redundant. The information we *do* have has mostly come to us through the letters described above. This is all to say that there are likely many more personal accounts of events held in the Banqueting Room/Theatre yet to come to light, both within the DCA and in archive collections elsewhere.

Nonetheless, what these five instances demonstrate is the range of social uses to which the Banqueting Room was put even after its shift towards the theatrical. The Duke best summarises this variety in his *Handbook of Chatsworth and Hardwick*, privately published in 1845 (Cavendish 1845). The *Handbook* is written in the form of a letter to the Duke's sister, Harriet Leveson-Gower, the Countess Granville. Its tone is intimate and often playful, the text peppered with anecdotes and shared familial memories of the Houses and those who have populated them. Through the section of the *Handbook* dedicated to Chatsworth, the Duke leads Harriet on a tour of his recently completed renovations to the House and Gardens. Upon reaching the Banqueting Room/Theatre, he writes, 'Now for the Ball-room, by some called Banqueting-Room - or better, the room to make a row in. It is especially the theatre of Charades', before going on to explain, 'The private boxes look very well when inhabited, and full of people and whist-tables' (pp. 116-117). The Duke then also includes a description of the room on the occasion of the 1843 ball.

As well as introducing the activity of cards, for which we so far have no other supporting primary material, it is highly possible that the Duke's playful writing style extended to his description of the space as a 'room to make a row in'. When spoken, the word 'row' can be pronounced in two ways: rhyming either with 'cow' or with 'sew'. The latter pronunciation would imply the activity of dancing - consistent with a ball room - while the former would evoke a generalised noise - consistent with the

merriment associated with a banqueting room. Thus, in one punning phrase, the Duke elides the shifting nomenclature of the room while simultaneously characterising it as a place in which to play.<sup>27</sup>

#### 2.4.4 Analysing the Gallery Structure

In light of this historical information, how might we read and interpret the change in design for the new gallery structure? The designs on which the sketch changes are overlaid show a shallow curve centred around the entrance door, two small, enclosed closets either side, and a stepped 'music gallery' above including built-in benches. Circular floor lights in the closets transmit daylight from the large windows in the Banqueting Room to the staircase below. Wyattville's sketches from October 1833 make four key changes to the shallow curve design. The first and most significant is one of scale and shape, narrowing the ends of the gentle curve and bringing it forward, thereby dramatically enlarging the closets and altering the overall shape of the structure to a boxy, more rectangular design (fig. 2.27). Notably, the closets are renamed 'boxes', language tellingly ascribed to parts of theatrical auditoria that further link this structure to the room's subsequent renaming. The enclosing closet walls are mostly removed and replaced by a low, panelled barrier, opening up the new boxes to the wider room, while the edge of the boxes extends beyond that of the gallery above, curving into the space almost like the prow of a ship (fig. 2.28). Meanwhile, pencil lines indicate new steps into the boxes, raising them above the floor of the main room (fig. 2.27).

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<sup>27</sup> Included among the 6th Duke's papers in the DCA is a handwritten collection of jokes that frequently play on the punning potential of written words, such as, 'When is murder like mirth? When it is manslaughter' (DF4/6/2/13).

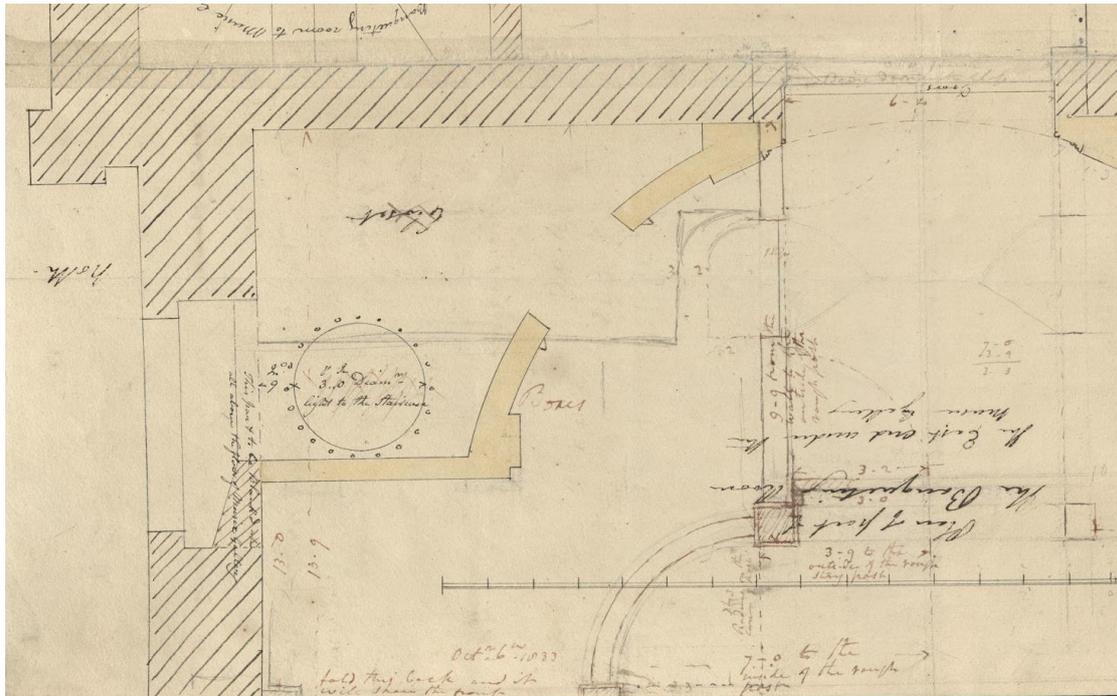


Figure 2.27 Detail of architectural plan showing the sketched changes including the enlargement of the northernmost box, the renaming of the closets as 'boxes', the pencilled steps into the boxes, the removal of the circular floor light, and the creation of the lobby (WY/N/3/1a).

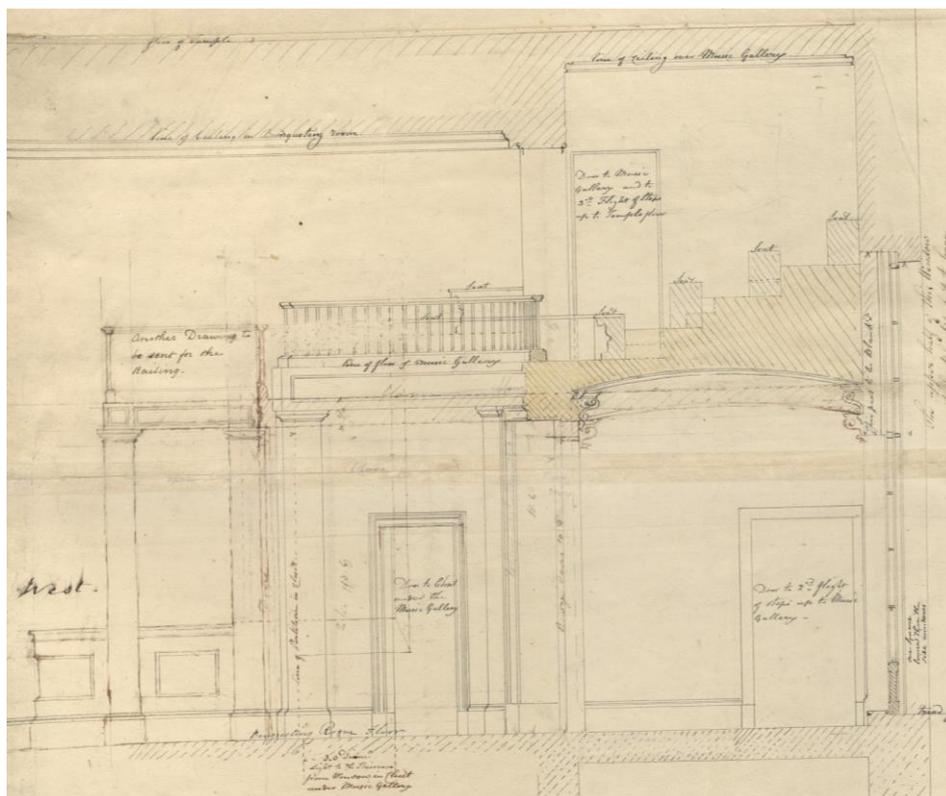


Figure 2.28 Detail of architectural section showing the sketched changes including the replacement of the closet walls with a low, panelled barrier, the extension of the edge of the box beyond the edge of the gallery above, the reduced barrel arch to the ceiling of the landing and the levelling of the gallery floor (WY/N/3/2).

The second key change is one of light: the large sash windows, enclosed by the new boxes are hatched out, indicating them to be blanked or filled (fig. 2.29), and the circular floor lights removed (fig. 2.27). Natural light could then only enter the new boxes from the front openings during daylight hours, while the stairwell would remain dim unless lit by artificial light. Thirdly, the extended depth of the structure allowed for a second set of doors into the room which created a small lobby that would permit entry to the boxes without entering the room itself (fig. 2.27). Finally, the gallery is subtly altered: the barrel arch of the ceiling to the landing outside the Banqueting Room/Theatre is reduced, thereby lowering the floor of the gallery above. This floor is then levelled and the original stepped benches removed, creating an open, flat floor to the gallery (fig. 2.28).

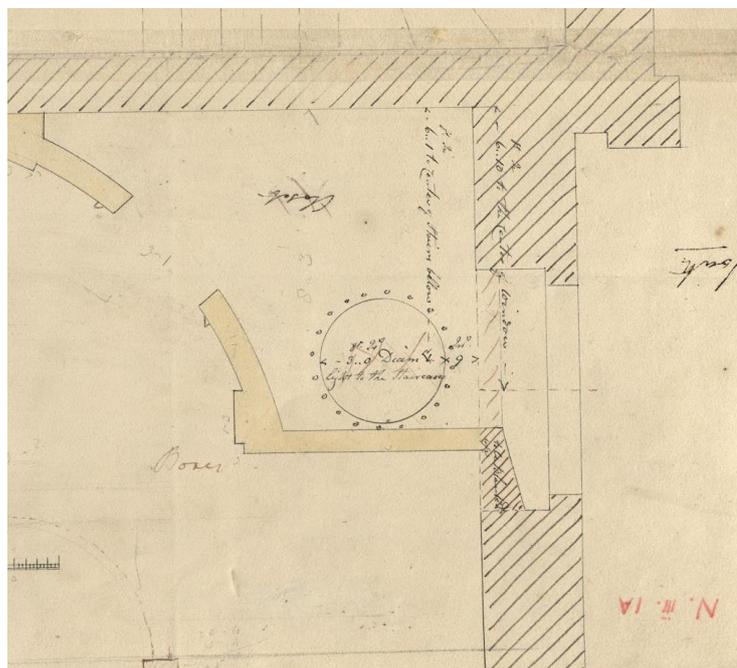


Figure 2.29 Detail of architectural plan showing the window in the southernmost box to be blanked or filled (WY/N/3/1a).

The new, sketched design allows for the lingering accommodation of large groups of people in both of the boxes and in the gallery above - all with views of the main activity of the room, and the possible reciprocal opportunity to be viewed. More than this, the steps into each box elevate their occupants' views *over* the room, with a particularly good vantage point from the 'prow' including sightlines to the 'prow' of the opposite box; had Wyattville's section sketch included small figures, we might imagine a well-dressed figure standing here surveying the room, or a small group of seated figures taking in the wealth of visual stimuli on display, akin to those in figure 2.30. As well as enforcing more controlled

interior lighting states, the blocking of the windows removes possible views from the boxes to the outdoors, focusing the attention of the boxes' occupants to the activities in the room and/or in the boxes themselves. Contrasted by the openness of the landing outside, the relatively diminutive scale of the new lobby further encouraged this focus towards the interior activities of the Banqueting Room. Meanwhile, the variety of doors leading from and to it - large and double to the main room or smaller and single to the boxes - suggested different forms of social engagement, either public or much more intimate.



Figure 2.30 Pencil and watercolour illustration of a group of gentlemen taking in various views from a theatre box (DF4/3/2/4).

The new boxes, then, were able to function as sites of sociability independent from the main floor of the room. The second set of doors into the room enabled access to the boxes without entering the main body of the room itself. Given the evidence for the use of the room in this period as a site for social gathering, we might compare the boxes to the subsidiary spaces found in public Assembly Rooms (fig. 2.31). There is more research to be done on the use of such spaces in the context of Assembly Rooms (see Further Research in Chapter 6), but their inclusion in the design of these buildings points to their integral importance. How might we think about these smaller regions of

space, both in Assembly Rooms and in Chatsworth's Banqueting Room? Catherine Clarke has made a compelling case for the role of what she coins 'micro places' in her work researching place-making and the Medieval history of Swansea (Clarke 2022). Focusing on a smaller region affords a detailed perspective on the wider area, with considerations of the experience of that region - sights, sounds, smells, etc. - central to understanding its significance. I have already indicated the active role of the Duke in the alterations to the boxes in the Banqueting Room, and it is possible that his own sensory experience of the world influenced his decision-making. The creation of a smaller space in which to converse may have been a response to the Duke's increasing deafness - the affliction of which, in part, contributed to his reluctance to participate in private theatricals, as outlined above. Lauren Butler has made a similar case for a reconsideration of some of the spaces at Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire, in light of the 5th Duke of Portland's own physical impairments (Butler 2022). The 5th Duke of Portland (1800-1879) became infamous for constructing a network of underground tunnels at Welbeck, installing baths in every room and behaving in socially unconventional ways. As well as recontextualising the Duke's efforts in light of 19th-century experimental engineering, Butler also suggests that the Duke's outwardly eccentric behaviour may have been a result of a persistent skin condition. Such a condition would account for needing to bathe frequently and for dressing in unconventional ways. The intimately personal aspects of a patron's experience of the world, then, can be seen to have significant impacts on the ways in which they designed and developed their houses. Such a perspective disrupts the more entrenched architectural paradigms in country house historiography.

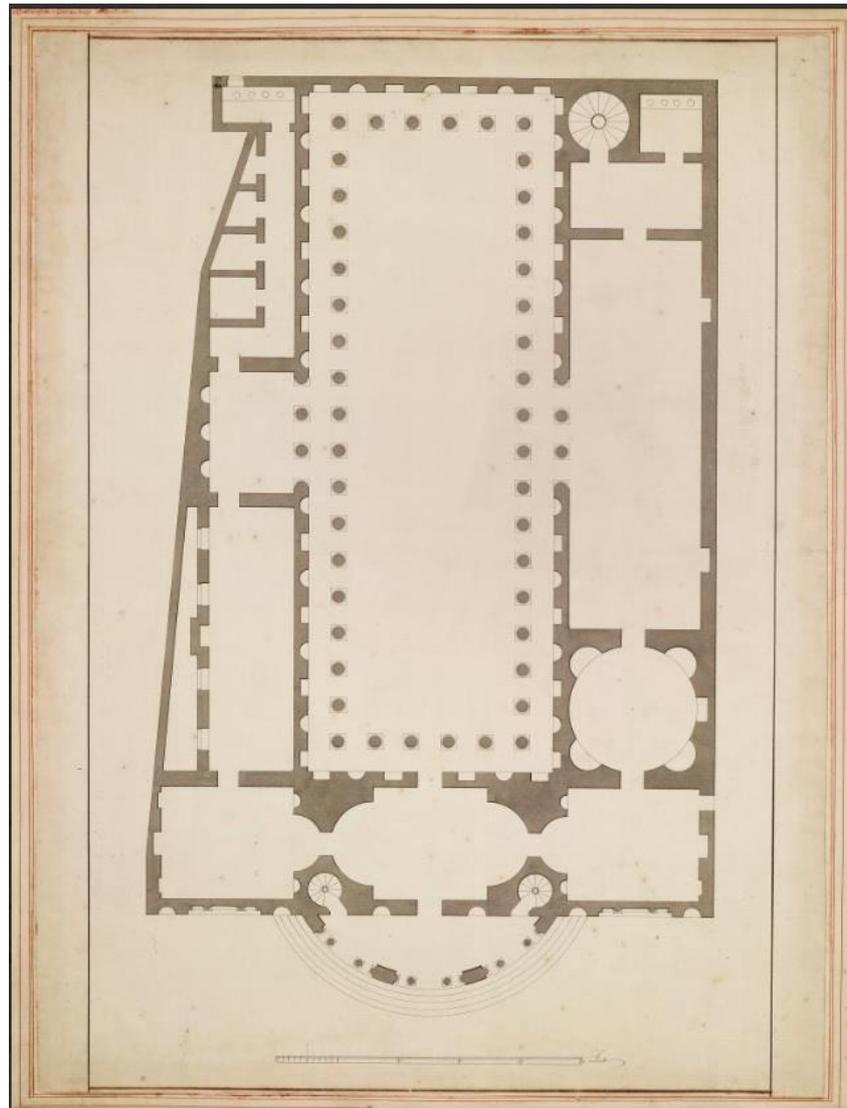


Figure 2.31 Floor plan of The Assembly Rooms, York: copy of Lord Burlington's plan design, 1730. Image courtesy of RIBA Collections, ref. no. RIBA29053.

Finally, it is important to consider the impact of the construction of the Orangery on the redesign of the boxes. As discussed in the previous section, the Orangery fundamentally changed the identity of the Banqueting Room. The extended route to reach the Banqueting Room, through the house and the Orangery, may have impacted front-of-house service provisions for activity in the Banqueting Room itself. The new boxes, therefore, may have offered necessary space for refreshment and retirement that was lost with the alterations to the stairwell. The renaming of the boxes from 'closets' should not be overlooked, pointing as it does to overtly theatrical references. However, the continuing function of the Banqueting Room as a multi-purpose entertainment room, points more to ways in which the use of the boxes, as explored here, may inform our reading of similar spaces in public theatres than the other way round.

## 2.5 Conclusion

The chapter has found that the room now commonly known as the 'Theatre' underwent several key ideological and architectural transformations before its earliest recorded use in 1832 that shed significant light both on the central role of the 6th Duke's shifting passions and priorities in the building process and on how the room is perceived today. In the first instance, the room's dimensions relied on the footprint of the previous building on the site, revealing pragmatic decision-making that challenges grand narratives of sweeping architectural change in Country House Studies (as discussed in 1.3.2 Architecture, etc). During this period of development, the room's spatial relationship with, on the one hand, the gardens and, on the other, the rest of the house, shifted as what was originally designed to appear to visitors as an independent block, accessed through open spaces, forged a key internal access route to and from the main house through the installation of the Orangery in 1827. The Orangery was found to have formed a significant part of the new access route, evoking modernity and novelty for those passing through it to reach the Banqueting Room. 1833 witnessed a significant alteration to the design of the closets in the room, which correlated with a name change of these formerly-modest spaces to 'boxes' and a name extension of the room as a whole from 'Banqueting Room' to include '... or Theatre'. These changes began both to link this space explicitly with performance activity and to introduce social micro places into what was, broadly speaking, a single, large room. Despite these name changes, the available evidence for this period testified to the room's ongoing use as a multi-purpose entertainment space, hosting dances, card games and performances of charades.

## 3. Behind the Scenes at Chatsworth's Theatre, 1895-1907

### 3.1 Introduction

This thesis is broadly structured chronologically and follows the thread of architectural and built changes to the fabric of the Banqueting Room/Theatre, and the building in which it is situated. The previous chapter established the architectural evolution of the building which housed the Banqueting Room/Theatre, and the variety of the room's earliest uses, from 1823 until the death of the 6th Duke of Devonshire in 1858. Under the 7th Duke of Devonshire, from 1858 until 1892, the fabric of the Theatre building witnessed no discernible change. This chapter, then, is primarily concerned with the next phase of development in the room, from 1895 to 1907 - a period of activity at Chatsworth under the oversight of the 8th Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, which witnessed the installation of the stage and the successful management of annual theatricals in the room. However, despite the lack of physical change to the Banqueting Room/Theatre, the intervening years under the 7th Duke are worth considering in questioning why the Theatre came to be adapted at all. For this reason, the chapter begins with an exploration of theatrical activity at Chatsworth under the 7th Duke, the 7th Duke's relationship to this activity, and an overview of the appearance of the Theatre itself immediately prior to its adaptation.

The key material change to the Theatre in the period 1895 to 1907 was the installation of the stage and its attendant fixtures and fittings. The chapter draws on Journals of Labour submitted to the Estate Office by the Clerk of Works, James Francis Woodhead, to consider who was responsible for this installation and the significance of undertaking it. It identifies a range of workers from across the estate, extensively developing existing knowledge of the construction of Chatsworth's stage (Coates 2010) and populating the room with a range of previously-unacknowledged voices. The chapter then explores the role of the Land Agent, Gilson Martin, in administering the theatricals that took place on the stage from 1896 to 1907. It suggests that Martin leveraged his existing position, skills and network as a Land Agent to successfully undertake a role that, in a theatrical context, might otherwise be described as a theatrical manager. At the same time, the activities of the Theatre offered a new context in which to apply his expertise, broadening his networks and developing his knowledge. Finally, the chapter develops the examination of the remit of a theatrical manager at Chatsworth and considers who else took on this role. It discusses the evidence relating to the responsibilities of a professional stage manager at Chatsworth, Alexander Stuart, and introduces a previously-

unacknowledged amateur stage manager, George Longden. Longden is identified as Gilson Martin's gardener, a fact which adds significant complexity to understanding relationships on the country house estate and which challenges a paradigm in country house historiography that presents servants only in relation to their professional roles.

That a functioning theatre should be installed at this point in country house history conforms to Girouard's (and others') characterisation of the late-Victorian/Edwardian period as one of leisure (as discussed in 1.3.3 Entertainment). At the same time, as discussed in the Literature Review, country house historians have long noted a broad correlation between a fall in the availability of servants from the late 19th century and a rise in the adoption of new technologies (Franklin 1975) - technologies not called 'labour saving devices' for nothing. That this same period should witness both a new pressure on country houses to supply an array of leisure activities for their guests as well as a likely drop in the number of people able to support such activities begs us to interrogate both the role of technology in filling this gap and the role of servants in adapting to using the technology. This sentiment is one echoed more generally by Palmer & West (2016), who situate their review of country house technology in a call to embed technological narratives in broader country house contexts by theorising and complicating the impacts of such changes. By presenting the development of Chatsworth's Theatre in this period as one leisure context in which technological change took place, this chapter links the role of individual staff members with pivotal moments in the room's technological development. In forging these links, the skill and adaptability of those working backstage, both in the context of the country house and the theatre, is discussed, and the value of such labour acknowledged, contributing to critical backstage discourse in both Theatre History and Country House Studies.

## 3.2 The intervening years, 1858-1892

### 3.2.1 Amateur theatrical culture in the 7th Duke's family and at the Coach House

Chatsworth has been characterised as 'a quiet place during the 7th Duke's tenure', while the Duke focused his attention on 'the development of Eastbourne and Barrow-in-Furness' (Chatsworth House Trust 2025). As outlined in 1.2.1 Background to Chatsworth, it is widely held that the 7th Duke preferred his country seat of Holker Hall in Cumbria to the grandeur of Chatsworth (see also Lees-Milne 1991). Despite this, evidence suggests that the practice of private theatricals was flourishing both on the Chatsworth estate in this period and within the Duke's own family. In his MRes dissertation, David Coates identified the Coach House in the stable block as a site of private theatricals in 1895 (2010). Preceding the installation of the stage in the Banqueting Room/Theatre by a year, Coates proposed the success of this event as, in part, influencing the conversion. Yet, subsequent evidence has come to light to support a richer account of private theatricals in the 10 years leading up to this that implicates the 7th Duke's family in the wider culture of amateur performance and suggests a longer history of theatrical use for the Coach House.

Prior to Spencer Cavendish taking over the ducal title from his father in 1892, theatrical activity was in full swing at Holker: a programme from January 1885 (DE/CH/7/3/2/4) advertises two theatrical pieces to be performed, *Sir Thomas' Heir* and *Slasher and Crasher* (fig. 3.1). The performers are either siblings or cousins to one another (see Appendix A for the 8th Duke's family tree): Louisa Egerton's children, Dorothy, Blanche, Christian and William; Edward Cavendish's children, Victor, Richard and John; and their maternal cousins, William and Gerald Lascelles. Written and illustrated in a naïve hand, this programme is a far cry from one printed professionally four years later (fig. 3.2) (DE/CH/7/3/2/6). While this latter programme from 1889 includes many of the same performers, the content and the function of the performance are different: the 'entertainment' of *Twice Killed* and *The Mouse Trap* is 'at Holker Schools' and there is a fee for the tickets, with 'proceeds to be given to local objects'. The contrast in programme design, from a childish, handmade one of 1885 to the professionally printed example in 1889, and the relocation from the private 'Holker' to the public 'Holker Schools' suggest an evolution in the theatrical practices of the family. Or, if it is too much of a stretch to infer a chronological evolution from just two pieces of source material, then an ecology of practice that takes in private, children's theatricals in the family home as well as outward-looking and community-serving theatricals rooted in broader local culture.

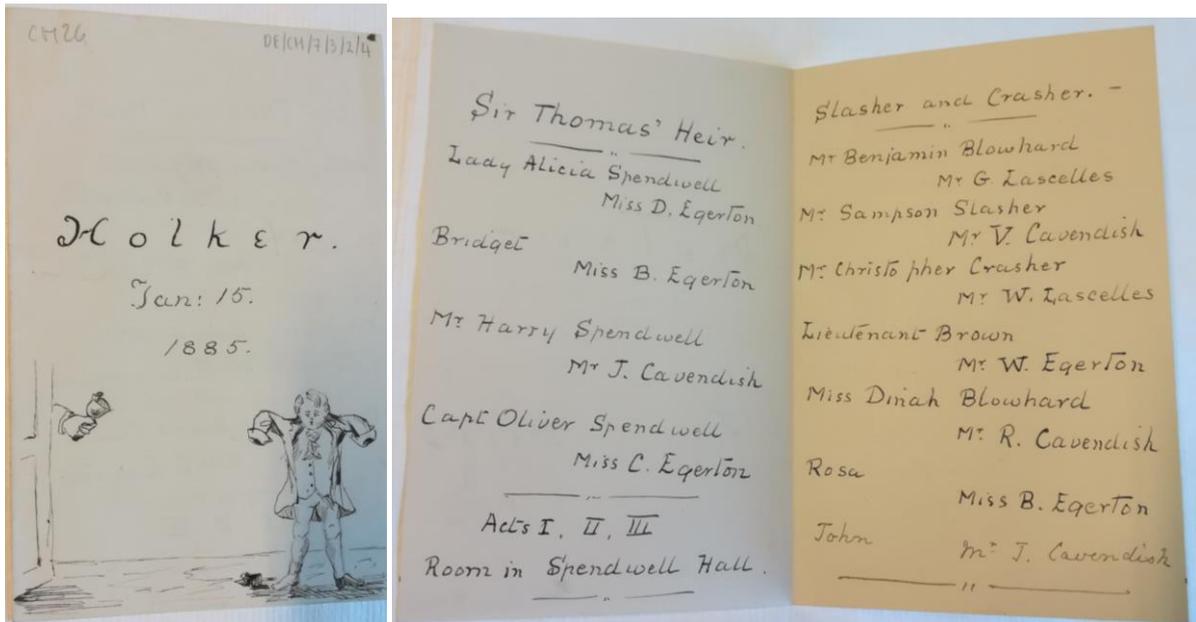


Figure 3.1 Programme for amateur theatricals taking place at Holker Hall in 1885. The performers are all related (DE/CH/7/3/2/4).

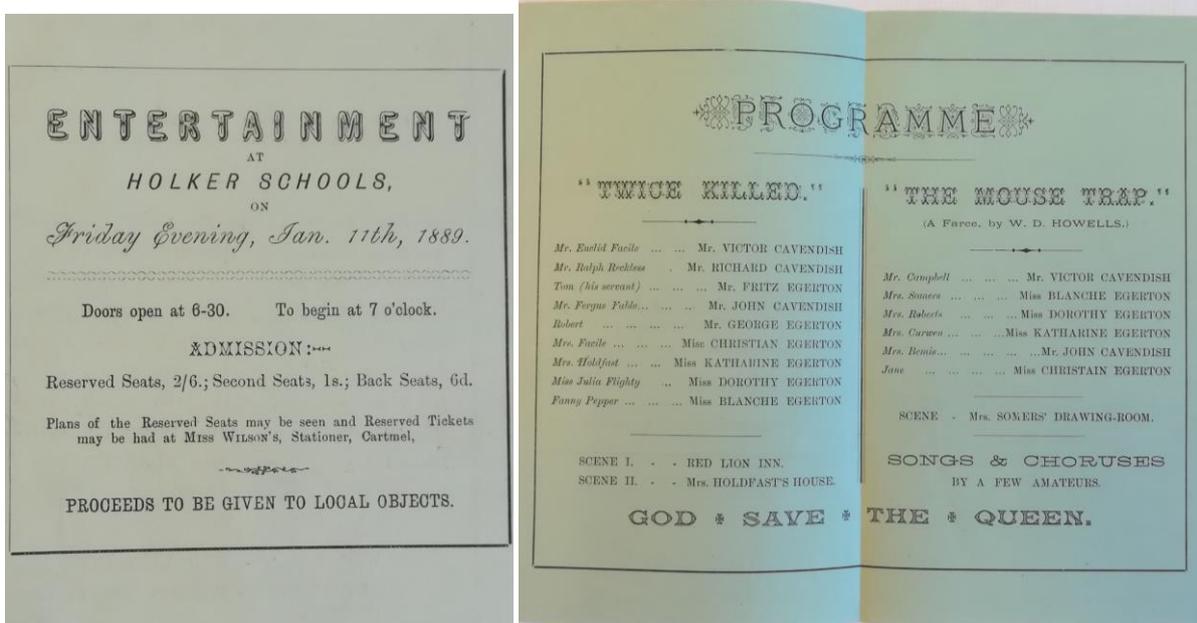


Figure 3.2 Programme for amateur theatricals taking place at Holker Schools in 1889. The performers are the same as those performing in 1885 (DE/CH/7/3/2/6).

This familial practice extended beyond the locality of Holker. Just one month prior to the performance in Holker Schools, in December 1888, a re-formation of this same familial group of amateur performers staged a production of *The Coming Woman* at Chatsworth. Though the playbill in the DCA is professionally printed (DE/CH/7/3/2/5), suggesting the production was advertised beyond the immediate household, no location at the property is specified. However, a year later, on the 23th

December 1889, the group re-staged their Holker Schools production in the 'Coach-House Chatsworth' (DE/CH/7/3/2/3), confirming Coates's supposition that this was the location of private theatricals prior to the conversion to the Theatre we see today. That these performances took place some six and seven years before the production on which Coates based his assertion suggests the Coach House to be a regular and reliable site for the staging of such private performances. Indeed, in the inventory of Chatsworth made in 1892 following the death of the 7th Duke, the only items listed in the Coach House are:

'Painted cupboard

5 tread steps

A portable stage, with crimson baize drop curtain, scenery, pair trestles, & the Brussels carpet as laid - about 20 yards

2 wood pedestals' (CH36/5/8).

In other words, there is very little in this list that suggests this room as storage for a coach or carriage, and a lot that implicates its use as a semi-formalised performance venue. It is worth examining this list with a little more scrutiny. Despite the fact the stage is described as 'portable', the items that follow it suggest that the stage was fully set up as though ready for a performance. Not only are the stage accoutrements of 'drop curtain' and 'scenery' presented on the same written line as the stage, unless the person compiling the list had been present for previous theatricals and understood the significance of this expanse of woollen fabric, arguably it would be difficult to recognise a 'crimson baize drop curtain' as such if it were not hung in its theatrical context. We might presume, then, that these items were not identified as individual objects dotted about the room but as objects that together formed a single playing space with theatrical conventions.

The 7th Duke of Devonshire died on 21st December 1891 following a long illness. From the programmes and playbills described above, we know that theatricals at Chatsworth typically took place in the month of December and that the children of Lady Louisa Egerton, daughter of the 7th Duke, were frequently involved. Given that Lady Louisa 'devotedly ministered to her aged father when dying slowly at his great northern seat [of Holker]' (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 28th December 1891), it seems unlikely that any theatricals took place at Chatsworth that year. How, then, can we account for the presence of a fully made-up stage, albeit 'portable', in the Coach House at Chatsworth when the probate inventory was conducted in 1892, if not to presume an almost formalised use of this space as a performance venue?

More than simply identifying family theatricals prior to the installation of the theatre in the Banqueting Room/Theatre, this deduction illustrates the regular and entrenched practice of private theatricals at Chatsworth in the lead up to the decision-making process that saw a permanent stage and professional theatre equipment being constructed and installed into the main house. The analysis confirms and reinforces Coates's discovery of the Coach House hosting theatricals before the Theatre was installed, but it also goes further by establishing a longer tradition of this activity in this space as well as implicating the family itself into these practices.

### 3.2.2 The Banqueting Room/Theatre (Ball Room) in 1892

If the 1892 inventory characterises the Coach House as a venue for the performing of theatricals in that year, then the items listed as appearing in the Ball Room suggest its use solely for storage.<sup>28</sup> Though the Ball Room is listed among the 'State Apartments - Galleries etc', thereby implying a more public-facing use, the list of its effects suggest an air of neglect. Alongside the accoutrements of dancing and music-making one might expect for a former ball room, as well as those necessary for the rest and light such night-time sociability would require, also listed are items that have been left to fade or that do not belong there at all: around 20 music stands, four settees, 18 decorated lamp brackets and a 'large ormolu centre chandelier, for 28 lights' share a room with '3 rolls of lined India matting (old)' and 'crimson cotton velvet curtains & valances, covering walls - very old', along with '2 deal standards for lawn tennis' and '2 rocking horses (broken)'. The '28 wicker seat chairs, various' that are listed may have belonged in the room, or they may more frequently have been used in the Orangery, as illustrated in *The Graphic* magazine in December 1872 (fig. 3.3). At the time of the 1892 inventory, we may deduce that the Ball Room had been neglected and unused for the purposes of entertaining for a sustained period of time.

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<sup>28</sup> The room is called the 'Ball Room' in the 1892 inventory.



THE ORANGERY, CHATSWORTH

Figure 3.3 Engraving after a photograph by Richard Keene showing wicker chairs being used in the Orangery at Chatsworth. From *The Graphic*, 28 December 1872.

Indeed, there is little available evidence to suggest that, beyond one event in 1872, the house was ever used for entertaining on a scale comparable to social occasions given by the 6th Duke. The event in 1872 was a ball hosted by the 7th Duke in honour of a visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales. For this, newspapers reported that the Dining Room was converted into the ball room, with supper offered in the Sculpture Gallery, refreshments in the Library and space to cool off in the Orangery. Amidst the many reports of this event, only one mention has been identified of a *second* evening of dancing taking place on this occasion: the *Sheffield Independent* recorded that, following dinner at eight o'clock, held 'in the large dining-room which was used this morning for dancing', 'a private ball was held, and was attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales, as well as most of the ladies and gentlemen staying at Chatsworth' (20th December 1872). Such was the reporter's level of confidence in this event taking place, they even included details: 'Coote and Tiney's band again played for dancing, which was to be kept up until two o'clock in the morning or thereabouts.' Though the reporter did not specify this detail, it seems plausible - if not probable - that this second evening of dancing took place in the Ball Room. The reporter marveled at the House's ability to accomplish a logistical feat: 'There are few houses belonging even to the nobility of England in which two balls on successive nights would be

possible; Chatsworth, however, has resources which may be almost termed illimitable.' If, indeed, this secondary event did take place in the Ball Room, it opens up the possibility that, while unused for functions on a large scale, the room may well have been used for more private, family-oriented occasions.

When Spencer Compton Cavendish took on the ducal title in 1892 and the attendant responsibility of running the Chatsworth estate, then, he inherited a site with a vibrant culture of amateur theatricals - including his own familial practices - and a Ball Room that was overlooked, tired and turned to storage.

### 3.3 Construction

Although Spencer Compton Cavendish became the 8th Duke of Devonshire in 1892, the stage was not installed into the Banqueting Room/Theatre until the end of 1895, and there is no evidence to suggest that the room was used for social purposes in the intervening years. The room's conversion in 1895 was a large undertaking and represented a significant investment of both financial and labour resources. In this section, I will outline some of the key material changes to the room before exploring the identities of those estate workers responsible for undertaking the changes. I will argue that, by working on the stage, the estate workers were afforded the acquisition of new, theatrically-specific skills which offers a new insight into the varied roles estate workers played in the country house story.

#### 3.3.1 Alterations

Arguably one of the most significant investments in the conversion of the Banqueting Room/Ball Room into a Theatre was the extension of electricity from the rest of the House. Chatsworth had installed a turbine for supplying electricity in 1893, and the same suppliers, Drake and Gorham, were charged with extending the supply to the new Theatre (DE/CH/3/3/78). Electric light was used both to illuminate the auditorium and to light the stage, where Drake and Gorham's fittings were supplemented by long electric battens with lamps (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 3). The use of electric lighting was novel in both the country house and the theatrical context in this period, and its application in Chatsworth's new Theatre can be seen to represent cutting-edge technology in both areas (Appendix B).

The raised stage was constructed at the west end of the room. Its permanency has been in question: newspapers of the period often cited it as a temporary structure, while Leo Trevor - characterised as the stage manager of Chatsworth's regular performing troupe, and therefore highly familiar with the stage (see 1.2.2 Literature on the Theatre at Chatsworth) - asserted its permanency (1903, 338). An examination of the stage and substage area in 2022 was not able to conclude either way. The examination revealed both the solidity and apparent permanence of the stage as well as the use of collapsible, moveable rostra for supporting it (Flint, A. pers. comm. February 2022). However, as described in 1.1 Introduction, ceiling panels were removed above the stage to expose the floor joists of the Belvedere above. To these, fixtures were attached for the operation of stage equipment. It is therefore highly unlikely that the stage was ever intended to be dismantled in any haste. Rather, newspaper reports likely made assumptions based on the popularity of temporary stages for the purpose of amateur performance in the period. Indeed, as described above, the stage in Chatsworth's Coach House was an example of a temporary stage, even if it was rarely dismantled.

The final alteration to the room that is significant for this thesis was the installation of the painted proscenium arch and scenery. The proscenium consists of two vertical and one horizontal panels, which together reach from the stage to the ceiling, and from the south to the north wall, to effectively dissect the room in two. The panels consist of painted canvas stretched on timber battens and bear the hallmarks not only of professional scene painters but of experienced stage carpenters as well: square pegs squeeze into round holes in the mortice and tenon joints, and the battens vary in thickness, so that, while they are all flush at the back, only a very few touch the canvas front (Flint, A. pers. comm. February 2022). Painted in the studio of William Hemsley, it is likely that these panels were constructed there, too, and transported to Chatsworth by train and cart. Likely to have been on the same train were stock sets of scenic flats and a specially-painted front cloth, all also undertaken in Hemsley's studio.<sup>29</sup> Without a void above the stage to remove scenery by lifting it up, the front cloth was designed to roll away from the base up, such that the image in its centre would remain static. A winching drum today remains in situ behind the proscenium on the south wall of the room (stage right), which was likely used for this purpose. Guides from the period suggest this was a popular method in spaces without a void above the stage (Harrison 1882), but experience working with such devices reveals that they are fiddly, and the ropes are frequently liable to catch, resulting in one side of the cloth becoming hitched above the other (Flint, A. pers. comm. February 2022). This trouble may account for the two short horizontal planks, or 'catwalks', suspended from the ceiling behind the proscenium, either side of the front cloth. Though precarious, these catwalks are accessible by rudimentary ladders fixed to the walls directly behind the proscenium and would have allowed a stagehand to attend to the ropes mid-performance.

Evidence for the alterations to the Theatre can be found both in the fabric of the room - particularly on and around the stage - and in countless invoices in the Estate Accounts. While the stage attests to some of the physical changes - many of which relied on theatrically-specific knowledge - the accounts speak to those who laboured to undertake them and the detailed management required to organise the project. The name on the vast majority of invoices pertaining to theatrical expenses in this period is J. F. Woodhead. The following section will use the Estate Accounts to consider Woodhead's role in the conversion of the Theatre and the men he employed to construct the stage.

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<sup>29</sup> An invoice from the Midland Railway Company records the transportation in January 1896 of '5 packages of scenery (from Somers Town)' (DE/CH/3/3/78).

### 3.3.2 James Francis Woodhead and his Journals of Labour

The Accounts books for the Chatsworth Estate in the 1890s and 1900s are large and leather-bound. They are detailed records of expenses, neatly organised by month, followed by department (Gardens, Household, etc) and type of expense (Labour & Wages, Repairs of House, etc). Each entry in the Accounts books corresponds to a numbered voucher, bundled with its typological counterparts into long, thin boxes. Often the vouchers contain far more detail than the Accounts books allow for. Where the expense is an item bought from an external supplier, the voucher is frequently stapled to an invoice for a product or service, the headed paper or incidental marginalia often providing as much information to a researcher as the itemisation, if not more. On other occasions, where the service has come from Chatsworth's own staff or supplies, the information contained in the voucher can be deceptively scant and uninspiring, frequently following a printed template with space for dates and other minor particulars. The Journals of Labour from Chatsworth's clerk of works in the 1890s, Mr. J. F. Woodhead, follow these templates: 'Household Sundries' is written across the top of each one, denoting the type of expense; the dates are given for the period the Journal covers; a simple line or two explains the type of work undertaken; and, finally, provided below is a list of names of the men who undertook the work, their rates, days worked within the given period, and total owed (or perhaps already paid) to each. Following the formulaic template of many similar vouchers and Journals of Labour from other staff members across the Estate, at first glance there is very little that is intriguing about these records. Perhaps it is for this reason that Woodhead's Journals from January and February 1896 have gone so long overlooked for the insight they provide on the construction of Chatsworth's stage. In this section I will argue that not only was Woodhead central to the conversion of Chatsworth's Ball Room to a Theatre, but that his Journals of Labour attest to the collaborative labours of skilled and unskilled workers from across the estate.

In his dissertation on Chatsworth's Theatre in this period, Coates gives only a passing mention to Woodhead, quoting a newspaper at the time to account for the construction of the stage. He follows the newspaper's lead in asserting that '[t]he conversion was supervised by 'Mr. Skinner, a stage carpenter, late of the Grand Theatre, Islington, London ... while Mr J. F. Woodhead, clerk of the works, has superintended the whole arrangements'' (Coates 2010, 54) before going on to furnish us with a little more information on Charles Skinner. Coates gleaned some of his insight into Skinner from the same Accounts books and vouchers that house Woodhead's Journals of Labour, namely, three vouchers with varying levels of detail. The first two are short, detailing two payments made on account 'for work done in the Ball Room at Chatsworth' on the 3rd and 10th of January 1896 respectively (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 1 & 2). The third, paid on 3rd February, is more specific and includes travelling and

out of pocket expenses for items such as, 'screw eyes, borers, lines & pulleys'. Furthermore, it includes Skinner's address, '46 Barnsbury Street, Islington' (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 9). It is without question, then, that Charles Skinner was at Chatsworth in January 1896, and that he brought with him technical expertise and knowledge, manifested in the ropes and ironmongery for which he was reimbursed. Yet, the foregrounding of Skinner's work at Chatsworth overshadows that of Woodhead and his team.

While Skinner's first claim for expenses was made on 3rd January 1896, Woodhead's Journal of Labour for the same period records work starting on the Ball Room on 16th December 1895 - at least two weeks before Skinner arrived onsite - and lasting until 25th of January - 2 days before the first performance on the stage (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 7). In this Journal, Woodhead lists the names of 33 other men employed in 'Fitting up Ball Room for Theatre', the amount of time each of them spent on the job over the five and a half week period and their rate of pay, either hourly or daily. Of these 33 men, 21 logged working hours at both a daily and an hourly rate, with one man on two daily rates as well as an hourly one. It is difficult to infer the implications of these separate rates with any degree of certainty. However, it seems likely that, while the daily rates covered full days worked, the hourly rates applied to overtime - labour undertaken outside of the set working hours. Writing some eight years later in May 1904, Woodhead's successor, F. G. Barnes, described the working hours of 'the men in the Building Department' to the Land Agent, Gilson Martin. Between October and March, a typical working day began at around 6.30am and continued until dark, with 'one hour for dinner from 12 to 1o'clock' (DE/CH/2/1/34 'Barnes'). Saturdays were half days, with work ending at 1 o'clock. In case we might doubt that the men constructing the Theatre in 1896 were not, in fact, from the Building Department, Barnes explains that, '[t]hese are the general rules applying to all departments'. It is possible, then, that the hourly rate was for work undertaken after dark, or on Saturday afternoons.

That there was the need to work such intensive hours also seems likely. In a letter resolving a dispute of payment for the orchestra rail commissioned for the Theatre in January 1896 from a specialist supplier of 'theatrical requisites', the supplier states, 'please understand that this was specially constructed for you & that my men had to work under high pressure to complete in time for the opening of your Theatre' (DE/CH/2/1/17 'Lyons'). While there is no definite way to know when the order for the rail was placed, and therefore the specific time pressure the supplier was under, this same company provided a wide variety of materials and equipment for Chatsworth's Theatre throughout the month of January. All invoices are directed to Mr. Woodhead, with the earliest dating to the 2nd (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 24). The presence of Charles Skinner at this time and the technical specificity of the items ordered from this supplier, ranging from bolts of canvas to a hank of 'whipping

line' and yards of 'Brussels Carpet', suggest the stage carpenter's direction in the items purchased. Whether Skinner similarly advised Woodhead on the commission of the orchestra rail, or whether Woodhead's dealings with the supplier under Skinner's direction made them the obvious choice to approach, we are unable to deduce from the archival material available to us. However, Woodhead's central role in purchasing these, and many other technical theatrical items, cast him as a competent manager of this installation period. It is likely, then, that the time pressures the supplier found themselves under were also true for the 33 men engaged by Woodhead for 'Fitting up Ball Room for Theatre', and support a view that the hourly pay rates were for time worked beyond the set working day.

### 3.3.3 The Individuals

So, who were these men working such intensive hours to fit up a highly professionalised stage into the Ball Room? Three sources prove particularly useful for painting a clearer picture of the individuals involved, their professional skills and development, and their relationship with Chatsworth. Census records for 1891 and 1901 provide a window into the domestic circumstances of the men, their recorded professions and, complemented by the data drawn from the Journal of Labour itself, their likely working hierarchies in January 1896. Meanwhile, the Servants to Staff Database furnishes us with other instances where the names of the men are recorded as working at, or engaging with the daily culture of Chatsworth, either prior to the installation of the stage, or following it. Drawn together, these sources enrich our understanding of what and who was involved in constructing the stage in such a short period of time. Moreover, they offer new insights into the varied roles estate workers played both in the country house story and in histories of private theatricals and amateur performance.

Information from these three sources has been combined to create Table 3.1 at the end of this section. The availability of data to draw out information on the men is inconsistent, and the presentation of the table reflects this. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify at least seven joiners - with another likely to be an apprentice - at least one plasterer, one plumber, two blacksmiths, two sawyers and at least three general labourers. There is also a carter and a bus driver. The professional identities of the remaining 14 men are less conclusive but their rates of pay suggest they were mostly general labourers. The variety of skills employed by these men invite us to consider the specificity of work undertaken in the conversion of the Theatre, and the exposure the men were afforded to new, theatrically-specific knowledge. For example, to what extent did those that screwed the pulleys onto the ceiling joists and the corresponding cleats onto the walls understand their application for the hoisting of scenery and equipment? Did they also thread the pulleys with the hemp ropes and attach

them to scenic borders or lighting battens? To what extent did the joiners notice the specific construction of the large proscenium panels when they came to be fitted? Did they question why a variety of timber thicknesses was required? While these sorts of questions may not have conclusive answers, asking them enables us to link in detail the construction of the stage with the specific people that undertook it, to value their skill and labour, and to consider how their acquisition of theatrically-specific knowledge may have impacted their subsequent work and lives on the estate.

All of the 19 identifiable men resided across the Chatsworth estate, in the villages of Edensor, Pilsley, Beeley and Baslow (fig. 3.4), and it is possible that the responsibilities of the bus driver, J. Elliott, included transporting some of these men to and from their villages. Information from the Servants to Staff Database testifies to their ongoing work and intersecting lives on the estate. For example, a number of the men's names appear on records relating to the funeral of the 7th Duke of Devonshire in 1891 at St. Peter's Church in Edensor. Joiners, Arthur Alsop and Henry Morton, one of the blacksmiths, Jacob Toundrow, one of the sawyers, Ben Booth, and a labourer, Benjamin Sheldon, were all pallbearers for the 7th Duke's coffin; the carter, Samuel Downs, helped to prepare the grave, and the bus driver, J. Elliott, and labourer, Joseph Froggatt, carried hats. Many of the same men, and others, are noted as being paid for work across the house and gardens both before and after the installation of the Theatre's stage. In 1891, Arthur Alsop and Joseph Walmsley made repairs to the Camellia House in the gardens, while in 1909, T. Hutchinson and Benjamin Sheldon - both labourers on the Theatre - were paid for attending to plumbing work in the house.



Figure 3.4 1899 OS Map showing the proximity of nearby villages to Chatsworth House. Image an amalgamation of scanned maps, six inch:one mile, courtesy of National Library of Scotland.

One of the names on Woodhead’s Journal of Labour is particularly useful for evoking the intersection of work and life on the Chatsworth estate at the turn of the 20th century, and for illustrating the ongoing and evolving relationship between estate workers and their built environment - with specific reference to the Theatre. The Servants to Staff Database records George Yeomans as working as a labourer in the Stables in 1893. Two years later, aged around 21, Yeomans spent 12 and a half days working as a general labourer on the conversion of the Theatre. Over these years, he is listed as living in Edensor with his parents and older sister. By 1901, while still living with his family, Yeomans’ had become a clerk in the Estate Office. In Chapter 5, I discuss the box office records for the theatricals in 1901, which listed many of the ticket holders, and the central role of the Estate Office in administering those tickets. It is possible not only to link Yeomans to this function of the Estate Office but also to identify him as holding two tickets for the Gallery for the first night of performances that year (Appendix E). Newspaper reports suggest that both Arthur Alsop and A. Eyre, two of the joiners who

worked on the construction of the stage - and with whom, therefore, Yeomans is likely to have crossed paths - were also ticket holders for the first night of the 1901 theatricals. Over the subsequent ten years, Yeomans married, moved to Pilsley, had two children and became widowed. Through these significant life events, he appears to have maintained his profession as a clerk in the Estate Office.

Attending to the ongoing intersections between the construction of the stage and wider estate life further prompts us to consider the role of the performance space in the Carriage House in the subsequent design of the new stage and the behaviours or knowledge of those staff working within it. For example, we know that George Yeomans was working in the Stables in 1893 and would, therefore, likely have been only feet away from the theatrical set-up in the Carriage House, as recorded in the 1892 inventory. Was Yeomans - or were any of those staff thus far mentioned - present at, or involved in the 1895 Carriage House theatricals? I have suggested that the construction of the new stage in the Theatre newly exposed the craftsmen and labourers to theatrically-specific techniques and skills, but it is equally possible that these men already had at least some awareness of the nuances of theatrical carpentry and rigging - either through involvement with the temporary stage in the Carriage House, or elsewhere (see reference to John Thorpe in Watkins 2026).

Given its rare survival through to today, it is tempting to see Chatsworth's Theatre as an unusual and surprising addition to the built and cultural landscape of 1890s Derbyshire. However, the widespread practice of amateur theatricals, as discussed in the Literature Review, mean that it is far more likely that Chatsworth's was one amateur performance space among a number locally (Coates 2017) - a likelihood brought to the fore by the existence of its predecessor in the Carriage House. Nonetheless, though wider in-depth scholarship on the subject is yet to be published (Wagner and Coates 2025), it is also likely that Chatsworth's Theatre occupied the far end of a spectrum of possibility, a topic I discuss in 1.2.3 Charades, Tableaux Vivants and Private Theatricals. The presence of a professional stage carpenter, Charles Skinner, to oversee the build of the stage, the commissioning of a Chatsworth-specific front cloth alongside the purchase of specially-made scenery, and the extension of electric light to the room all point to an ambition for Chatsworth's Theatre to outclass any local comparators. Even if Yeomans and his colleagues had extensive experience in amateur theatre prior to the winter of 1895-'96, it seems probable that this was, at the very least, augmented and developed through exposure to Skinner and the process to construct Chatsworth's stage.

Drawing out the details of those that laboured to construct Chatsworth's stage implicates the involvement of a swathe of estate staff in the shaping of a space that is otherwise dominated by

narratives of the elite. The findings in this chapter section contribute valuable insight to the variety of work undertaken by estate staff and, by virtue of the work taking place in the house itself, locate this in country house historiography. Moreover, the findings illustrate the extent to which the work of country house staff contributed to the staging of private theatricals, offering a significant original consideration to the field of Theatre History and its concern with historic amateur performance practices.

**Table 3.1**

Information from J. F. Woodhead’s Journal of Labour (28th January 1896) augmented by research from three key sources. The first four columns record the key data from the Journal of Labour: names, pay rates and time worked. The following two columns record the men’s residential locations in 1891 and recorded professions as suggested by both the 1891 census and the Servants to Staff Database. More information from these sources, along with relevant data from the 1901 census, is given in the final two columns, which provide further individual detail, but can also be read to infer ongoing relationships with the Chatsworth estate and its culture. Where both the 1891 census and the Database conclusively corroborate each other, the locations and professions of the individuals have been highlighted in green; where there is some doubt, orange; and, where scant conclusive evidence is available, red.

<i>Information taken from J. F. Woodhead's Journal of Labour.</i>					<b>Location (Source: 1891 Census)</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Source</b>		<b>Extra information</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Day Rate</b>	<b>No. of Days</b>	<b>Hourly Rate</b>	<b>No. of Hours</b>			<i>1891 Census</i>	<i>S to S Database</i>	<i>Census Records</i>	<i>S to S Database</i>
J. Wallace	4/4	24	6d	38	Edensor	Joiner	Y	Y	53 in 1891 census.	Skilled Labourer / Carpenter in the Building yard. Received a pension from 1906.
G. Bland	4/4	35	6d	44.5	Edensor	Joiner	Y	Y	51 in 1891 Census.	Skilled Labourer / Joiner in the Building Yard. Received pension from December 1901.

A. Alsop	4/4	33.75	6d	34	Baslow	Joiner	Y	Y	Arthur 'Allsop'. Aged 46 in 1891 census. Arthur Alsop on 1901 census as living in Baslow and recorded as a Joiner still - a profession in which two of his sons have now joined him.	Arthur Alsop. In the Building Yard. Acted as pallbearer at the 7th Duke's funeral in December 1891. Paid in 1891 for Taking off, cleaning and refixing locks, rehangng windows, painting etc in house, Unfurnishing, recovering chairs, repairing furniture, cleaning iron and brasswork, cleaning windows, sweeping chimneys, repairing woodwork for new roof to Camellia house in garden.
J. Alsop	2/-	24.75	3d	40	?	-			Cannot find on 1891 or 1901 census.	No record on S to S Database
F. James	1/6	27.25	2d	37	Edensor	Joiner / apprentice?	Y	Y	Frank James is 14 in 1891 census. In the 1901 census, Frank T. James is living with his widowed mother in Edensor, is 23 years old and is recorded as a joiner.	Likely to be Frank James, a Joiner & Carpenter in the Building Yard, certainly from 1909. 'Fitting up rooms, & sundry House Carpenters' Jobs'
S. Newton Jun	4/4 &	19 & 11.5	3.75d	8.5	Pilsley	Plasterer	Y	Y	40 in 1891 census. Another Sampson Newton also lives in	Sampson Newton Jun also appears in S to S Database as a Plasterer in the

	3/-								Pilsley, is also a Plasterer and is 71 in 1891 census. This older Newton was born in Edensor.	Building Yard in 1912.
G. Frost	4/4	13	-	-	Pilsley	Plumber	Y	Y	28 in 1891 census.	Likely to be George Frost from S to S Database, listed as a Plumber in the Building yard in 1912. In 1891 a G Frost was paid for taking out old beer pipe in cellar.
C. Watson Jun	2/8	28	3.25d	6	?	Labourer		Y	Cannot find on 1891 or 1901 census.	A C. Watson Junior is listed in the S to S Database as being a garden Labourer in 1891. He undertook tasks such as taking out old pipes from the cascade pond, repairing & painting lights in the pleasure ground. There is also a Clem Watson who, in 1916, was in the Building Department. He fought in WWI.
J. Blackwell	2/8	21	3.25d	9	?	Labourer		Y	(Joseph Blackwell? General Labourer? in Eyam. 61 in 1891 census. Cannot find	A Household Labourer, certainly in 1909. 'Attending to Heating & Domestic Hot Water Boilers, cleaning

									convincing evidence on 1891 or 1901 census)	out drains, septic tanks, attending to Electric Bells, sweeping chimneys, carrying coal etc.'
E. Howard	4/4	14	6d	3	?	Mason / Craftsman / Apprentice?		Y	Edward Howard, a mason, appears on the 1901 census as living in Edensor aged 45. His 7 year old daughter was born in Bakewell (so, 7 years previous, he is likely to have been residing in Bakewell).	Edward Howard listed as working in the Building Yard in 1912-13.
A. Eyre	4/-	24	6d	42.5	Pilsley	Joiner	Y	Y	41 in 1891 census.	S to S Database lists him as a Labourer in 1891, paid for repairing woodwork in the house. So, likely to be a carpenter/joiner by this stage.
J. Dale	3/6	17.75	6d	40	Pilsley	Joiner	Y	Y	John Dale. 39 in 1891 census and recorded as joiner.	S to S Database lists him as a Labourer, paid in 1891 for repairing furniture, cleaning windows, sweeping chimneys etc.
H. Morton	4/4	18	6d	43.5	Edensor	Joiner	Y	Y	Henry Morton. 34 in 1891 census.	Listed in S to S Database as a Skilled Labourer / Joiner in 1891. Pallbearer for 7th Duke at his funeral in December

										1891.
J. Hawksworth	4/4	21	6d	38	?	General Labourer		Y	There are a lot of Hawksworths in Beeley, but none explicitly recorded as John.	John Hawksworth. Pallbearer for 7th Duke at his funeral in 1891. Paid in 1891 for repairing leadwork on roof, repairing WCs, repairing pipes etc.
J. Walmsley	4/4	20.5	6d	39.5	Baslow	Carpenter & Joiner	Y	Y	Joseph Walmsley. 52 in 1891 census.	Paid in 1891 for Repairing woodwork to Camellia House.
J. Marples	5/-	17.5	6d	37.5	?	Carpenter? / Labourer?		Y	Joseph Marples from Baslow is an Agricultural Labourer in 1891, aged 35. He is still an 'Ordinary Agricultural Labourer' in the 1901 census.	There are a number of Joseph Marples listed. In 1871, one is listed as a Gardener's Labourer in the Census. But in an undated list of men and foremen, two are given as Carpenters. The Database suggests these were likely in the 1840s-50s, but other names that appear on this list also appear in 1891 payments.
G. Wall	4/10	11.5	-	-	Pilsley	Blacksmith	Y	Y	George Wall. 34 in 1891 census.	Paid in 1891 for putting washers to carriage wheels, making shoes and shoeing, repairing ironwork in house, repairing locks, rehangng windows.

										Also working in 1912-22 as a Smith.
J. Toundrow	4/10	9	-	-	Pilsley	Blacksmith	Y	Y	In census named as Toundrow, a Blacksmith. 26 in 1891 census.	Jacob Toundrow. Pallbearer for 7th Duke at his funeral in Dec 1891. Paid in 1891 for same as G. Wall.
G. Yeomans	2/10	12.5	-	-	Edensor	General Labourer	Y	Y	George H. Yeomans. 16 in 1891 census. In the 1901 census he is 26 years old and listed as an Estate Office Clerk. In the 1911 census he is living in Pilsley as a Widower with two young children, 4 and 2. He is listed as an Estate Clerk.	Labourer working in the Stables in 1893.
A. Everall	1/2	22.5	-	-	Hassop?	Son of Painter & Grainer?	Y		Vincent A. Everall? 13 in 1891 census. Cannot find him on 1901 census.	An E. Everall is listed on the S to S Database as a Labourer, paid in 1891 for cleaning and painting in house, cleaning locks, rehangng windows, painting etc in house.
S. Downs Carter	2/10	5	-	-	Beeley	Carter	Y	Y	Aged 30 in 1891 census.	A Samuel Downs is listed on the S to S Database as a Carter who prepared the

										grave for the 7th Duke in Dec. 1891. Also paid in 1891 for polishing furniture, recovering chairs. BUT it also says that his widow received a pension from 1893. An S. Carter is listed on the S to S Database as fighting in WWI.
B. Booth	3/4	16.75	4d	9	Pilsley	Sawyer	Y	Y	Ben Booth. 34 in 1891 census.	Acted as pallbearer for 7th Duke's funeral in Dec 1891.
J. Froggatt	2/8	15	-	-	Bubnell/ Baslow	General Labourer / Sawyer	Y	Y	Joseph Froggatt. 48 in 1891 census.	Carried hats at the 7th Duke's funeral. Skilled labourer. Received pension from Sept. 1902.
T. Hutchinson	2/8	14	3.25d	7.5	Beeley	General Labourer	Y	Y	Aged 24 in 1891 census.	Thomas Hutchinson is paid in 1909 for attending to heating and domestic hot water boilers, cleaning out drains etc. But Thomas Hutchinsons worked in the Building Yard throughout the C19th. There is a Robert Hutchinson in Pilsley who is a Blacksmith and 48 in the 1891 census.
B. Sheldon	2/8	22	3.25d	23	Pilsley	General Labourer	Y	Y	Benjamin Sheldon. 32 in 1891 census.	Pallbearer at 7th Duke's funeral in Dec. 1891. Paid in 1891 for sweeping

											chimneys, scouring pavements. In 1909 he is attending to heating and domestic hot water boilers, cleaning out drains etc.
S. Bond	2/8	17.25	3.25d	3	Pilsley	Gardener / Labourer?	Y	Y	Domestic Gardener and 33 in the 1891 census. Cannot find him on 1901 census.	On the S to S Database, Samuel Bond is also listed in the pleasure ground vouchers. His name also appears on the undated list of men and foremen which the database believes is from c.1840.	
J. Hawksworth	2/8	5.25	-	-	?	General Labourer		Y	See above.	There is only one J. Hawksworth from the Database that worked at Chatsworth at this time. He is the same as listed above.	
B. Evans	2/8	22	3.25d	23	?	Labourer		Y	There is a Benjamen Evans in Pilsley who is a Farm Servant for the Oxspring family, and is 21 in the 1891 census. At this time, John Oxspring is a retired cattle dealer and farmer. In the 1901 census, a Benjamin Evans, aged 31, lives	A domain labourer, listed in the 1898 Beer List, enlisted for WWI 15th August 1918. Paid in 1909 for attending to heating and domestic hot water boilers, cleaning out drains etc.	

										with his parents in Beeley and is recorded as a General Labourer.	
J. Duffy	2/8	16	3.25d	14	?	Labourer		Y		There are two Duffys working as farm labourers for the Chatsworth Hotel in Edensor in the 1891 census. Cannot find him on 1901 census.	James Duffy Listed as a Labourer in the Building Yard in 1912.
W Barnes Jun	1/6	3	-	-	?	General Labourer		Y		The 1901 census records a William Barnes, aged 59, living in Edensor and working as a Bailiff.	Prepared grave for 7th Duke in Dec. 1891. In 1891 paid for draining in park, taking out old pipes from cascade pond etc
J. Elliott	-	-	3.75d	48	Edensor	Bus Driver	Y	Y		Joseph Elliott. 48 in 1891 census.	James Elliott in S to S Database, also listed as a bus driver / wheelwright and farmer who carried hats at the 7th Duke's funeral.
J. Sheldon	-	-	4.5d	65	?	Labourer?		Y		John Sheldon is in Baslow and aged 16, registered as a Gardener and Domestic Servant in 1891 census. His	Joseph Sheldon named on the undated list of men and foremen which the Database guesses is c.1840. A J Sheldon appears on the 1898 Beer List and as

									brother, James, is a stone mason aged 24. By the 1901 census, James is 34 and living in Baslow, working as a stone mason. John lives with his widowed mother and is a gas stoker.	enlisting in the RAF 22nd June 1918. A John Sheldon is a Gardener in 1891.
R. Baker	6/-	23	8d	56	?				Not on 1891 or 1901 census for districts in Derbyshire.	Does not appear on the S to S Database. No Bakers named as servants or staff on the Database around the 1890s. Perhaps this Baker came from beyond Chatsworth?

### 3.4 Gilson Martin: Land Agent & Theatrical Mediator

The involvement of estate staff in the newly-converted Theatre extended significantly beyond the construction of the stage and the room's initial material changes. While J. F. Woodhead is frequently named as the recipient of parcels and packages arriving at Chatsworth for the new Theatre, and consequently the addressee of the majority of corresponding invoices, every outgoing payment that is recorded in the Accounts includes the initials, 'GM', as a signature of approval. 'GM' stands for Gilson Martin, the Land Agent at Chatsworth under both the 7th and 8th Dukes. It is simultaneously surprising and not at all that the land agent should make an appearance in a discussion of the backstage workings of Chatsworth's Theatre. According to Beardmore, King and Monks, 'almost the entire power and control of the estate rested with the agent' (2016, p. 4), so why would the Theatre be any different? Summarising the necessary breadth of a modern land agent's knowledge, Duchess Deborah noted, 'anyone who chooses land agency as a profession has to know everything from drains to fine arts' (Cavendish 2009, p. 12). Despite the fact that Duchess Deborah was writing over a century later, a knowledge of almost these exact areas is traceable in the Estate Correspondence from the 1890s - a correspondence series compiled in the first instance by the land agent to the 8th Duke of Devonshire and recipient of the vast majority of letters held therein, Gilson Martin.

Since this study is concerned with the room that houses the Theatre, and this chapter the period of the 8th Duke, consultation of this correspondence series for this chapter has been limited to the years 1895 to 1907. Despite this restriction, the letters consulted still chronicle hundreds of the smallest decisions that chart the minute workings across the breadth of an estate, from business interests in quarries and mills to the management of tenants and their houses and farmsteads. The letters from tenantry alone span a considerable swathe of society, from enquiries after Gilson Martin's health and family, written to the agent as a social equal, to pleading epistles for rent extensions. To underscore Duchess Deborah's point above, there are letters relating to the water supply to tenanted houses ('drains') and expressing desires to be shown the rooms and collections of Chatsworth and Hardwick Hall ('fine arts'). These letters not only evidence the theoretical breadth of knowledge a land agent required to manage a large estate in an ideal and generalised sense, but the specific understanding that Martin had of those individuals and communities that lived and laboured on the land and in the properties for which he was responsible.

Martin's role in the management of the Theatre, then, takes on a more symbolic significance in light of these responsibilities beyond the merely nominal. For example, it is Gilson Martin's name that we

see on the month-long licence obtained ‘for the public performance of Stage Plays’ at Chatsworth in January 1896, and it is therefore also his responsibility to ‘observe and keep the Rules for ensuring order and decency at and in the said Theatre’ (DE/CH/2/1/17). These rules included programming and administrative restrictions, such as the Theatre’s closure on Sundays and religious holidays, as well as social restrictions prohibiting the sale or disposal of alcohol or tobacco. Rule number five explicitly states, ‘The Manager shall to the best of his ability maintain and keep good order and decent behaviour in the Theatre during the hours of public performance’. The licence for the theatre, then, determines another context in which Martin is responsible both for the management of a specialised activity and for the behaviour of the communities that participate in that activity, whether as performers or spectators. Unlike the managers of most public theatres, as the estate correspondence suggests, Martin was deeply familiar with many of these groups of participants, and they with him, from the construction team under the guidance of Woodhead, as described above, to the various communities represented in the audience, as touched on in the subsequent chapters. From this angle, the Theatre essentially becomes the Estate in miniature.

Due to the relative dearth of scholarship on private theatricals broadly, and the almost non-existent research undertaken on the management of these activities specifically, it is impossible to know whether Martin’s role in the theatricals at Chatsworth was unusual or consistent with the expectations of his profession. However, new evidence is beginning to come to light to suggest that, when coupled with Beardmore et. al.’s description of the typical land agent in this period, the latter may be true. Academic colleagues have shared informally some early findings that the land agent, or steward, often supported many of the managerial demands of producing private theatricals to differing and various extents (Coates, D. pers. comm. July 2025; Gardner, V. pers. comm. September 2025): we may hope to see this more fulsomely explored by Viv Gardner through her work on the 5th Marquis of Anglesey at Plas Newydd, and David Coates in a forthcoming survey volume on British amateur theatricals.

This section of the chapter seeks to explore both Martin’s role across the management of the parallel contexts of Theatre and Estate, and their potential for a reflexive relationship. Given the research coming elsewhere from the academy, this examination may hope to be a generative first step in uncovering the entangled relationship between the management of private theatricals and that of the estate more broadly.

### 3.4.1 Mediating Theatrical Operations, 1896

That Gilson Martin’s management of the Theatre is arguably more symbolic than practical is evidenced by the instances in which he becomes involved. On the vast majority of financial transactions

undertaken to install and equip the Theatre in 1896-7, it is Woodhead's name that is given as the client. It is Woodhead that orders 300 chairs to create an auditorium (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 12), and it is to Woodhead that William Hemsley addresses his invoices for the creation of the scenery (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 14, 23 & .../79 HV 36). It is Woodhead that takes receipt of bales, boxes, paperhangings, hardware and five packages of said scenery (.../78 HV 17) - all listed in the Accounts as 'materials for Theatre' (.../78 February Household Sundries). It is only when an invoice has missed the Accounts and we find it in the Correspondence that it has a different intended recipient. For the most part, these erroneous records are addressed to the Duke or Duchess of Devonshire, with only a few accounts from the Chatsworth Hotel made out to G. Martin. Thus, it is Woodhead that looms large in the practical arrangements of the Theatre in its early years.

However, as well as being nominally and symbolically responsible, as suggested above, two anomalies in the Accounts from 1896 bring Martin into the frame of theatre management more directly. Where the vast majority of payments for the installation of the Theatre were made promptly in January to March of that year, three were made in May: the first 'To I. N. Lyons' for 'brass standards, Curtains &c complete for Orchestral Rail in Ball Room, for Theatre'; the second 'To Gillow & Co.' for 'making valuation of ditto'; and, the third to 'L. & H. Nathan' for the 'hire of dresses &c for Money Spinner &c' (DE/CH/3/3/78). By cross-checking the vouchers for these payments with the Correspondence, we see two distinct issues arise that demonstrate Gilson Martin's skill and experience as a land agent applied to the context of theatrical management.

#### Leveraging the country house network

The first is a financial issue, touched upon in the section above, disputing the cost of an orchestra rail, 'specially constructed for [Chatsworth] [...] in time for the opening of [the] Theatre' (DE/CH/2/1/17 'Lyons'). With the initial invoice requesting £50, the equivalent of around £5,000 today<sup>30</sup>, challenging this price was no trivial matter. The incoming letters record a delicate correspondence spanning some two and a half months and negotiating the overseas absence of Lyons as well as a series of missed opportunities to meet face to face. In the meantime, Martin drew on the services of Herbert Currey, the Cavendish family solicitor, based in London, for a quote to provide the same item. An estimate of £14 and 15 shillings was returned by cabinet makers, Gillow & Co. (DE/CH/2/1/17 'Gillow & Co. '), accounting for the second payment detailed above. With this quote, Lyons settled on receiving just £20 for the rail though he acknowledged that he was 'a heavy loser on the transaction'.

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<sup>30</sup> The National Archives Currency Converter converts £50 to £4,102, or the equivalent of 151 days of labour of a skilled tradesman, while the Bank of England Inflation Calculator converts it to £7,077.

This example sees Martin flexing his power as overseer of a country house estate to resolve a financial issue that saves the Estate a considerable sum of money. The protracted nature of the negotiations relies on a rigorously organised administrative system while the intention to meet face to face in London demonstrates Martin's confidence in his own negotiating position and ability. That the two men consistently missed each other is indicative of Martin's position on the Cavendish staff that he was sufficiently financially supported to make regular trips to the capital. In drawing on Currey's help, as well as, less directly, the expert advice of well-known country house furniture suppliers, Gillow & Co., Martin leveraged part of the network that underpinned the successful day-to-day functioning of the Estate to bolster his negotiating position in this new, theatrical context, arguably creating new networks between these contexts in the process.

#### Coordinating across boundaries

The second issue arising from these late payments illustrates the translation of Martin's diplomatic skill - necessary for his position among estate staff, external suppliers and household guests - to the theatrical context. The payment made in May 1896 to L. & H. Nathan (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 43) is the resolution of attempts to locate missing pieces of costume hired for the theatrical productions in January of that year. Tracing the negotiation of this payment through the Estate Correspondence details a series of misunderstandings that links disparate individuals across social divides, but connects all of them to the office of the Land Agent. In the first instance, an invoice and letter from Nathan request the return of '2 costumes for 'Baron Croodle' and 3 for Dr Johnston' provided for the productions 'as per instructions from CP Colnaghi Esqr' (DE/CH/2/1/17 'Nathan'). Charles Colnaghi was a performer that year and, as such, affiliated with aristocratic circles. A note is scribbled on this letter, presumably by an assistant in the Agent's office, stating 'ansd [sic] 28th Feb. Said I had forwarded them by rail this day'. The next letter from Nathan acknowledges receipt of this package but notes the omission of a watch and chain and 'a pair of worsted stockings', and the unexpected inclusion of a harpsichord which does not belong to them. Again, notes are scribbled on this letter, chronicling an internal discussion between Chatsworth staff. The notes claim that Mrs Wilson - Chatsworth's Housekeeper - was consulted, as was Woodhead who, in his own hand, records, 'My men put everything in the box that was left in the dressing room, they know nothing about the watch & chain, nor the stockings. The "harpsichord" had better be sent to Devonshire House - JFW'. This harpsichord in fact belonged to Evelyn James, chatelaine of West Dean and a regular and lauded performer at the Chatsworth theatricals, as evidenced in another, earlier letter from her to Martin, held in the same bundle of correspondence, requesting the return of the instrument (DE/CH/2/1/17 'James'). In the meantime, Nathan responds to an unrecorded suggestion from Martin that the

costumier contact Mr Colnaghi directly for the return of the missing items stating that they do not have his address, and two weeks later they follow this up with a prompt question of what they ought to do with the rogue harpsichord. This rather farcical series of events to track down various pieces of theatrical paraphernalia finally resolves into the safe return of the instrument to Devonshire House, from where Mrs. James will organise collection, and an agreement to pay for the missing costume articles - hence the appearance of the late payment in the Accounts in May 1896. Amusingly, only after this agreement has been made, Martin receives a letter from Mr. Colnaghi, the original instruction from whom instigated these events, apologising for his tardy reply but belatedly claiming neither he nor Mr Trevor, with whom he is staying, can think what might have happened to the missing accoutrements beyond them being left with the other articles of costume (DE/CH/2/1/16 'Colnaghi').

Through these exchanges can be read the careful mediation undertaken by the Land Agent's office. Martin's role as intermediary across social boundaries - a position discussed at the start of this section - is again enshrined in the paperwork itself which sees letters from the aristocracy pressed against those from the costume supplier, both of which are annotated by a range of Chatsworth's staff, from Martin's assistant, Fieldsend, to Woodhead, the clerk of works. These staff members, in turn, report and represent the input of other employees, from Mrs Wilson, the Housekeeper, to Woodhead's 'men', to collectively resolve the ongoing theatrical issue. The staff members therefore become complicit in what is, on one level, the sort of mishap that might happen after any large-scale social event, but on another, one that is specifically related to theatrical endeavours and that employs theatrical backstage language. In coordinating this and providing the nexus that links socially disparate individuals and communities, Martin's position and skill as Land Agent is again drawn on in his temporary role as Theatre Manager.

### 3.4.2 Approving Technological Investment, 1897

#### Setting the Scene

Though the rarity of these two instances of Martin's more practical involvement in the management of Chatsworth's theatre underscore his responsibility in that role as one that is more usually symbolic or nominal, there is one further anomaly that challenges this position much more directly. As a rule, the pattern of payments for the Theatre recorded in the Accounts reflect the pattern of theatrical productions staged in Chatsworth's Theatre. That is, with a couple of notable exceptions, from 1896 to 1907, the productions took place in January (Appendix C) and, for the most part, we can read the

settlement of invoices for these productions in the January and February of each year.<sup>31</sup> However, as well as those two 1896 anomalies outlined above, an intensive number of payments are made in May and June of 1897.

The items being purchased and the suppliers they are purchased from are reminiscent of the payments made in January and February 1896 when the stage was being constructed and significant investment made to suitably equip the room. Thus, we see payments go to printers in Bakewell for the supply of chair numbers and seating plans; to the Midland Railway Company for the transportation of crates and boxes relating to the Theatre; and, to a furnishing company for the supply of a significant amount of cloth. The original scenic artist, William Hemsley, is paid again for 'painting proscenium border as per instructions',<sup>32</sup> and we also begin to see the patronage of a more local scenic artist, H. Skinner, from the Grand Theatre in Leeds. As well as providing eight new profile boards,<sup>33</sup> Skinner appears to replace Lyons in supplying 'theatrical requisites': pulleys, lines, gauze, hinges etc. As with those submitted in 1896, the invoices are predominantly addressed to Woodhead who submits a Journal of Labour in May 1897 to account for his role in the preparation of the room.

Altogether, the payments represent another significant investment in the production capabilities of the Theatre. Yet, there are no catalogued references within the Devonshire Collections Archive to a performance taking place at this time. It is only through a search of contemporary local newspapers that any clue can be found. On Saturday 8th May 1897, the *Derbyshire Times* reports on a fundraising concert and tableaux vivants taking place in Chatsworth's Ball Room the previous Monday. The performers bear names that, though not researched here, appear regularly in the Estate Correspondence, such as Luxmoore, Hiscock and Dixon, as well as some that are much more prominent in the DCA: Miss Wrench, for example, is the daughter of Dr. Edward Wrench, resident of Baslow and local physician to the Cavendish family when they are staying at Chatsworth. Most notably, though her name is tucked away as representing a character in the final tableau, is Miss [Mary Kathleen] Martin - daughter of Gilson Martin, aged 34 in 1897 and recorded in the 1901 census as living with her parents in Edensor.

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<sup>31</sup> There was no production in 1900, while 1903 witnessed two in anticipation of the King's February visit.

<sup>32</sup> A border is a horizontal section of suspended scenery that masks the ceiling or, in a larger theatre, the flies.

<sup>33</sup> Profile boards are vertical sections of scenery that stand along the wings to mask sightlines from the audience and to create a sense of onstage depth. They are often shaped in 'profile' to evoke particular settings.

### Instituting specialised equipment

Miss Martin's involvement in this under-recorded production gains significance in light of her father's role in managing it. Though the payments outlined above appear to be managed by Woodhead, the anomalous examples discussed in the previous chapter section (3.3.1), as well as the regular appearance of the initials 'GM' on invoices, show most, if not all, payments to be finally approved by Martin. Furthermore, there is one particular payment which, when complemented by the letters in the Estate Correspondence, arguably bears more weight on the development of the Theatre than the others combined. On the 6th July, Woodhead approves a payment to Drake & Gorham for a number of electrical items for lighting the 'Ball Room' - items that include fuses, switches, cord and, accounting for almost half the total bill, '3 Stage Arc Lamps and Boxes' (DE/CH/3/3/79 HV 50). Where we might assume that the professional stage carpenter, Charles Skinner, was responsible for recommending much of the specialised fit-up in the first iteration of the Theatre's construction, with this lighting expense in the summer of 1897, we can begin to see how Chatsworth's own staff and existing network were instrumental in the room's ongoing technological advancement.

Tracing the implementation of these arc lamps through the Estate Correspondence, we are treated to an in-depth understanding of the reasoning behind their use. Three letters from Drake & Gorham detail the lighting company's learning process in the application of arc lighting, otherwise commonly used for illuminating large areas, for the stage - specifically for tableaux vivants. The first letter makes a recommendation and quote for using these lights 'for Tableaux', based on their expert knowledge of how two such lights are used in series. However, the following letter available to us outlines Mr Drake's doubts as to the efficacy of his original suggestion, itself apparently based on the advice of 'Messrs Gwynne'. His letter-writer (for Drake is written about in the third person) explains that the head of the Goods Department undertook a trip to the Palace Theatre in London, renowned for its staging of tableaux vivants, to seek further advice from the 'engineer there'. This 'engineer':

'told our representative that Messrs Gwynne's had no right to make such statements as their lamps were a failure and the former engineer who tried to use them went with them. He stated that he had to work out some lamps specially himself, and that three lamps were necessary to give a thoroughly good effect, all these being placed behind the top of the frame, one in the centre, and one on each side. Side lights he said were no good, and two lights would give too dark a shadow in the middle' (DE/CH/2/1/18 'Drake').

The letter goes on to advise that a scaffold ought to be supplied around the tableau frame for three men to manipulate these lights, and that coloured light can be provided through the use of tinting glasses. If Mr. Martin approves this recommendation, the engineer at the Palace Theatre will be employed in preparing the necessary set-up, and a date is given for when Martin can expect this to be ready.

Referring back to the final invoice confirms the use of three arc lamps while the inclusion of '3 Sets of Colored [sic] Mediums' suggests Martin also followed the advice on creating coloured light. The invoice also includes a claim for 'instructing' a man *and* 'attending to lamps during concert'. Whether or not a frame was set up around the tableau is harder to ascertain: given Chatsworth's adoption of all the other recommendations, we might assume that they would follow this one too, but the existence of two catwalks above the stage - noted in the interview with Alasdair Flint as being useful for resolving any issues with rolling the front cloth - may well have satisfied this need.

#### Investing to enshrine and represent the landowners' interests

A surviving programme reveals that a similar troupe of performers and musicians drawn from the families of Chatsworth's staff and tenantry, including Kathleen Martin, staged a comparable production in the Carriage House in January 1895 (CH/11/1/2) - indeed, it was the success of this event, Coates argues, that prompted the Duchess to install a Theatre in the House itself (2010, p. 48). Yet, the 1895 event failed to make the records in the Accounts books, leaving an open question as to who funded, at the very least, the printing of the handsome programme. By comparison, the 1897 concert and tableaux vivants has been somewhat formalised through a significant investment in its technical and scenic specifications, the appearance of these investments in the official Accounts books and the oversight of Martin in securing, approving and organising the new production capabilities. Why did this shift take place?

There are two key differences between the two productions that are worth considering when addressing this question. The first is the notable absence of any of the Cavendish family in the 1897 audience. While half of the 1895 programme was 'by desire of Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire' and the audience for the first night peppered with Cavendish family members, there is no mention in the 1897 newspaper review of any of these people. Indeed, in stark contrast to newspaper accounts of the annual January theatricals, there is no mention of *any* audience members despite the journalist acknowledging the lure of the venue: 'it is not often that the public have an opportunity of witnessing performances in the magnificent Ball Room, at Chatsworth, and when the privilege is afforded there is generally a large audience'. In fact, the journalist goes on to hint at the turnout being somewhat

underwhelming: 'the room was not so well filled as we have seen it on previous occasions.' It seems plausible that the Duke and Duchess, at least, were away from Chatsworth in this period, given the imminent, era-defining Jubilee Ball thrown by the Duchess at Devonshire House in honour of Queen Victoria at the start of July (Murphy 1984; Vane 2004, 213). Invitations for this event were issued at the end of May, so it is possible that the Duchess was overseeing the organisation from the family's London house.<sup>34</sup> Regardless of their reasons for being away or their location, it is highly unlikely that the Duke and Duchess' presence would have gone unnoted in the newspaper account of the 1897 production.

The second and most obvious difference between the two events is the change of location. It would be tempting to create parallel distinctions between the Carriage House, located in the Stable Block, and the Theatre, located within the walls of the House itself as performance venues on the one hand, and estate staff and family or aristocratic performers on the other. It might appear to be more appropriate for staff to perform in one venue, and the family and their friends to perform in the other. Certainly, such a reading would conform to grand narratives of country house theory and design for the Victorian period that are founded on principles of separation across gender and class (as discussed in the Literature Review). In this context, the 1897 performance, where tenantry, family of staff members and their musical guests stage a concert and tableaux in the House, might represent an elevation of status of such an event. However, creating distinctions between locations and performing groups would be misleading. The Carriage House was a regular performance venue at Chatsworth for both staff and family alike prior to the installation of the stage in the House in 1896. Adult children of the Cavendish family frequently put on plays in the Carriage House (DE/CH/7/3/2/5 & DE/CH/7/3/2/3), and its use as an established performance venue can be read in the 1892 inventory where it is the only room to record the presence of a stage and scenery (CH36/5/8). Furthermore, the list of performers in the first half of the 1895 production includes both the family of estate staff (eg. Kathleen Martin) and a member of the Cavendish family (Miss Egerton, daughter of Louisa Egerton, and consequently the 8th Duke's niece), complicating any distinctions between landowners and landlivers. Meanwhile, no performances are recorded as taking place in the Carriage House following the installation of the new stage that formalised the Theatre in the main House, all of which indicates that the change of venue for the 1897 concert was a decision based on chronological developments and investment in the theatrical capabilities of Chatsworth.

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<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, there is evidence from January 1902 that the Duchess was present at the Chatsworth theatricals on the 9th (DCA CH11/2/1 'House Party') and at a party thrown at Devonshire House on the 14th or 15th (DCA DF7/1/7 13th & 15th January), demonstrating the organisational capabilities of her household staff and the ease with which she could travel.

Yet, if the change of venue were simply a pragmatic arrangement based on availability, how do we account for the 1897 production's formalisation as enshrined in the Accounts and Estate Correspondence, presented above? The differences that set this production apart from its 1895 comparator may help us in assessing this. Beyond the practical necessity, locating the concert within the new Theatre could not fail to elevate its status. Rather than being staged in a temporary set up, the concert would be presented in a room consistent with the other public spaces of a country house - that is, consciously curated to inspire wonder and remind a visitor that they are in the presence of wealth and power. The ceiling was studded with paintings from the early 18th century, surrounded by decoration created to honour the visit of a young Queen Victoria in the mid-19th century, while the stage's new front cloth showed Chatsworth as it was in the 16th century. Regardless of a visitor's awareness of these layers of artistic history representative of familial power, the room - and the journey to reach it - could not fail to impress.

Rather than simply allowing the event's organisers to stage their concert here, it became important that the production upheld the standards set by the heads of the landowning family themselves. Further, the granting of permission *itself* can be read as a standard to be upheld. Despite her physical absence and apparent lack of public patronage, in permitting the concert the Duchess demonstrated her support of endeavours undertaken by her staff and tenantry. As opposed to being publicised on printed programmes or in publicity for the event (though absence of evidence is not evidence of absence), this support is reified in the material impact on the Theatre, evident in the investment made in the room's scenic and technological capabilities. In both its artistic presentation and technological investment, then, the Theatre can be seen to represent the Cavendish family in their absence.

Moreover, there is a possibility that the correlation between this event taking place and the subsequent Jubilee Ball at Devonshire House in London is not coincidental. Though no mention of the Queen's Jubilee is made by the newspaper article, given the proximity of the two events, support of the Chatsworth tenantry as represented by the concert could be read as another act of national celebration, encouraging Victorian values of charity and entrepreneurial spirit.

As Land Agent, resident on the Chatsworth estate all year round, Gilson Martin similarly stood in for the landowning family and their managerial decisions in their absence on a symbolic basis. Yet, his knowledge and understanding of the Chatsworth estates and its people placed him in a uniquely influential and powerful position, straddling the stratified world of the country house across both

landowners and landlivers. This becomes particularly concrete when we consider that his daughter was in the production for which Martin both organised highly specialised theatrical technological support and approved significant expenses to ensure the appropriate representation of his employer. In this theatrical context, Martin's mediation between the landowning family and Chatsworth's estate communities results in real and material benefit to both.

### 3.4.3 Conclusion

To summarise, in his role as Land Agent, Gilson Martin had oversight across the parallel and connected contexts of both the wider Chatsworth estate and the Theatre. In the Theatre, he was responsible for the behaviour of the audience, many of whom were estate residents (as will be touched on in the subsequent chapters), and for approving technical investment that best represented the landowners' status and presence, even in their absence. Martin drew on his diplomatic and negotiating skills to resolve disputes, as well as his existing country house network to make informed decisions on behalf of his employers, and applied these to the theatrical context. In the process of this, he developed his own theatrical knowledge and his network of suppliers and temporary employees. Such an understanding builds nuance into the interpretations of Land Agents as explored by recent country house estate scholars, who are increasingly recognising and crediting the versatility and adaptability of their subjects (Matthews 2007; Beardmore, King and Monks (Eds) 2016). Martin's pivotal role across both the estate and the theatricals demonstrates the extent to which the latter was enmeshed with the former - relying on an agent's professional network and skills base - and the many and various ways in which one may have influenced the other.

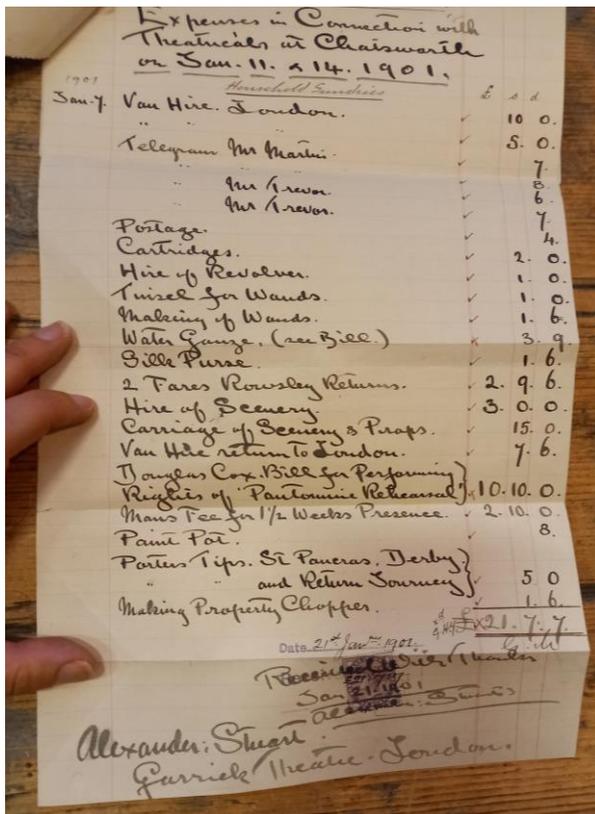
As well as understanding these responsibilities as within the broad remit of a Land Agent, we can also read them as similar to many of the tasks undertaken by a stage manager of the period. The instances of Martin's theatrical management outlined in this section hint at further labour being undertaken backstage. For example, who was to operate the new arc lamps? In the next section, the role and responsibilities of a stage manager in the late 19th century will be explored and unpacked through an examination of the work undertaken backstage at Chatsworth's theatricals. Exploring this practical angle through the available archive material not only brings new voices to light, but it enriches and contextualises Martin's role within a broader network of stage management that crosses professional, social and hierarchical boundaries.

## 3.5 Alexander Stuart & George H. Longden: Backstage Management

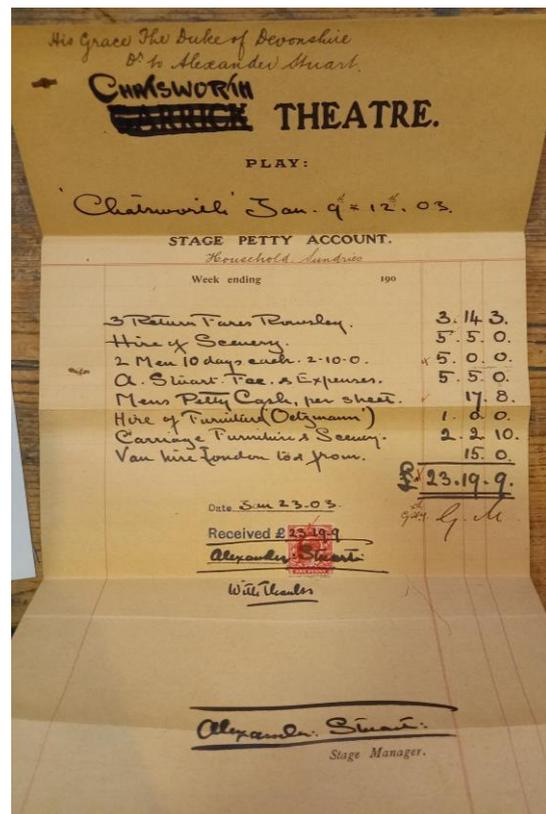
### 3.5.1 'Stage Manager': Alexander Stuart

#### Setting the Scene

A significant shift happens in the Accounts for the Theatre from 1901. Riffing through the long boxes of vouchers for this year, where slim slips of paper match their corresponding entries in the Summary Accounts books, what begin to appear are thick folded bundles of collated receipts and invoices pertaining to theatrical expenses. On 21st January 1901, the name on the standardised cover sheet for one of these bundles is given as 'A. Stuart' and the enclosures include an itemised list of expenses, written in a distinctive hand (DE/CH/3/3/83 HV 3) (fig. 3.5). The list is signed at the bottom, 'Alexander Stuart . Garrick Theatre . London'. There are only two receipts to accompany his expenses claim: one for some blue netting, purchased from a shop on Garrick Street, and another for the rights to perform 'A Pantomime Rehearsal' at Chatsworth House on the 11th and 14th of January. The expenses list itself, however, is far more detailed and includes the purchase of materials to make certain stage props, the cost of hiring and transporting scenery, a man's fee for '1 ½ weeks presence' and the cost of telegrams to Mr Martin and Mr Trevor. A similar bundle appears two years later, in January 1903, and now the expenses list is on headed paper for the Garrick Theatre, except 'Garrick' has been crossed out and 'Chatsworth' written in capitals above it (DE/CH/3/3/85 HV 5) (fig. 3.6). At the bottom, under Stuart's signature, is his role: 'Stage Manager'.



LHS: Figure 3.5 Stuart's 1901 expenses list, with his name signed at the bottom (DE/CH/3/3/83 HV 3).



RHS: Figure 3.6 Stuart's 1903 expenses list, stating 'Stage Manager' beneath his signature (DE/CH/3/3/85 HV 5).

Who is Alexander Stuart and what are the reach and extent of his Stage Managerial responsibilities at Chatsworth? In his 2010 dissertation, Coates goes into some depth on the role of Stuart in the management of Chatsworth's theatricals, ultimately ascribing all stage managerial responsibility to him. Coates interprets Stuart's presence in the Accounts to mean that he 'essentially took on a role which we may understand more as the Chatsworth Theatre manager, as he dealt with all theatrical issues that arose, being ultimately responsible for the smooth running of everything in front of and behind the scenes' (Coates 2010). Yet, we have already seen the responsibility that Martin took for the administrative aspects of running the theatre, including, in resolving disputes and organising the purchase of a licence, its 'smooth running'. In her thesis researching the role of professional stage managers in the late 19th century, Tracy Cattell identifies a host of varied responsibilities that were broadly ascribed to someone in this position and the difficulty in attributing them all to any one individual (2015). There is room, then, for a critical reassessment of Stuart's role in the management of Chatsworth's theatre.

As well as there being room for a critical reassessment, there is also reason. A search for Stuart in contemporary newspaper accounts complicates his responsibilities at, or for, Chatsworth. While Stuart appears in the Devonshire Collections archival record only from 1901, several newspaper reports record his Stage Managerial role for Chatsworth's theatricals as early as January 1899.<sup>35</sup> Yet, one of these articles also gives credit for the 'admirable' theatrical arrangements to Gilson Martin, 'carried out by Messrs Lawrence [sic] and Weatherill' - all members of Chatsworth's staff (*Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*, 11th Jan 1899, p. 2).<sup>36</sup> With Stuart also credited in this article as the Stage Manager, and his affiliation to the public Garrick Theatre being included, backstage labour is acknowledged as being undertaken by both a theatre professional and Chatsworth's existing estate staff. Without archival evidence to support them, these attributions of backstage work are vague and it is impossible to attribute specific tasks to specific people, let alone understand the role of Stuart, Lawrence or Weatherill in the make-up of this staffing. Nonetheless, we can confirm the input to the organisation and management of the theatricals of both Stuart and Chatsworth's staff. Even with little supporting evidence to extrapolate from, this observation supports an investigation into the specificity of the roles each employee took on: if Chatsworth were able to draw on their own servants' expertise, what was the extent of their involvement and how did Stuart's work complement this? Indeed, is it possible to be more specific about the scope of Stuart's role at Chatsworth, where this ended and where it was taken up by Chatsworth's staff?

#### Establishing the scope of the 'Stage Manager'

A close reading of the available archival material reveals that Stuart was barely onsite at Chatsworth during the performance period. The bundle of invoices and receipts that he submitted in 1901 are not the only archival occasion on which he appears in this year. An invoice from the Chatsworth Hotel in Edensor records the guests staying there in relation to the theatricals, the dates they stayed and the services the hotel provided them with, from transportation to food and fires (DE/CH/3/3/83 HV 10). It records the bed and board provided for the 14 gentlemen of the band, the same for the dancing mistress, Mrs. Garrett, and the same again for a 'Mr Longden'.<sup>37</sup> Chatsworth's accompanying

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<sup>35</sup> There were no theatricals in 1900, which accounts for the gap in Stuart's involvement. The *Sheffield Independent* reported on 5th January 1900, 'The usual amateur theatricals are not to be held this year.'

<sup>36</sup> The Servants to Staff Database tells us that Lawrence was the House Steward and Weatherill a clerk in Martin's office.

<sup>37</sup> The inclusion here of Mrs. Garrett is one example of women being more marginally present in the archive material consulted for this thesis than the men – an issue I touch on in my Methodology (1.4.2 Archival Research). While the scope of this study has not permitted further research into Mrs. Garrett, her presence here – both as a professional for the benefit of the rehearsing performers, and in the Chatsworth Hotel – is an example of the ways in which women may have participated in the theatricals, beyond performing on stage, and how they were supported in doing so – ie. Mrs. Garrett's hotel bill was paid by the Estate Office. Nonetheless, questions concerning her identity, background and involvement with Chatsworth remain.

paperwork describes Mr. Longden as the 'Stage Manager', but it is on *his* hotel account that 'Mr Stewart' appears. While Longden is put up from the 7th January to the 16th, 'Stewart' only stays for one night, though the date of this stay is not given. On a similar invoice from the following year, 1902, the same thing occurs: Mr. Longden, noted as a Stage Manager and now given the first initial 'G.', stays for 11 nights, but 'Stewart' only one (DE/CH/3/3/83 HV 2). Again, the date of Stuart's stay is not supplied. However, the Hotel invoice in January 1903 is more specific (DE/CH/3/3/85 HV 2). Though it is important to note that the pattern of staffing has changed, with Longden replaced by two other men, 'Stewart' again stays only one night: the 4th January. In this year, 1903, the productions took place on the 9th and 12th of January, with the other Stage Managers put up from the 2nd to the 14th. This shows that the other Stage Managers arrived at Chatsworth first, remained on site throughout the production period - through rehearsals and performances - and left two days after the final performance. Stuart, meanwhile, was on site for one day, arriving after his Stage Managerial colleagues, but still with five days to go until the first performance. A similar arrangement took place again in 1904. So, it is not a reach to propose that this was the same pattern of Stage Managerial presence in 1901 and 1902 when Mr. G. Longden was named as Stage Manager. It is fair to say, then, that Stuart's role as a 'Stage Manager' does not include responsibility for the backstage management of the performances.

Stuart's role, rather, seems to chime more closely with the level of theatrical responsibility of both Martin and Trevor, where Martin assumed responsibility for the administrative and box office management and Trevor for the choosing and rehearsing of the performance repertoire and performers. As with Martin, Stuart delegated his responsibilities. Estate Correspondence relating to the theatre and its management includes the names of Martin's deputies. For example, when Martin was away travelling in March 1896, it was Charles J. Fieldsend that took up correspondence with the costumiers, L. and H. Nathan, to resolve the return of the missing articles of costume (DE/CH/2/1/17) (see 'Mediating Theatrical Operations, 1896' above). In the naming of G. Longden as Stage Manager on the Hotel accounts in 1901 and 1902, and the presence of two other stage managers in 1903 and 1904, it seems likely that Stuart was likewise delegating some of his stage managerial responsibilities. This is reinforced by his expenses claims for 'Mans fee for 1 ½ weeks presence' (1901; DE/CH/3/3/83), '2 Men 10 days each' (1903; DE/CH/3/3/85) and the '2 weeks salary' for two men on the petty cash list in 1904 (DE/CH/3/3/86).

Further supporting the idea that Stuart shared a similar level of responsibility as Martin or Trevor is Stuart's claim for the cost of telegrams to both these men, and to no other member of the Chatsworth

or theatrical organisers (DE/CH/3/3/82 HV 3) - a claim that not only illustrates the communication between these three, but their likely collaboration. Again, this is reinforced by Stuart's detailed petty cash expenses which, in 1904, list specific scenic and property items that can only have been inferred through close contact with Trevor, the author of that year's pantomime (DE/CH/3/3/86 HV 9). These items included maps of Russia and Japan and a specially-hired property motor vehicle that was so central to the plot of the pantomime, and operated so successfully within it, that it was mentioned in reviews of the performance, while Stuart himself was photographed in it for *The Sketch* magazine (fig. 3.7).<sup>38</sup> Scripted jokes referring to certain members of Chatsworth's audience imply that Trevor wrote the pantomime specifically for the 1904 performance. Stuart would either have been in direct communication with Trevor to execute the necessary design elements for this pantomime, or he would have been in possession of a copy of Trevor's script, including a detailed property list. Given the high-profile nature of this particular performance, being the first given for the newly crowned King in Chatsworth's theatre, and the specificity of property items necessary to carry off the in-jokes, such as the motor car, it seems likely that Trevor would have had a strong hand in the design decision-making process.

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<sup>38</sup> 'The wish of Cinderella to possess a motor car found speedy fulfilment. Mr. Leo Trevor was the chauffeur of this wonderful property machine' from the *Sheffield Independent*, 8th January 1904;



Figure 3.7 Alexander 'Stewart' [Stuart] photographed in the property motor car he was responsible for sourcing and transporting to Chatsworth. From *The Sketch*, 27 January 1904, as scrapbooked in CH11/1/4.

### From 'Stage Manager' to creative collaborator

It could be argued that Stuart's lack of onsite presence and his appearance as a payee in the Accounts at Chatsworth qualifies his work more as a product or service than as co-manager of Chatsworth's stage. Yet this would be to minimise the creative input necessary of his role and which is evident in the bespoke detail with which he engaged with each theatrical production. Furthermore, there remains a question as to why Stuart is absent in the Accounts for 1899, the exploration of an answer to which may reinforce his role as closer than a service provider: if his payment was not coming out

of the household accounts, where was it coming from? There is evidence elsewhere in the DCA of bills being settled directly through the Duchess' account, the paperwork then ending up in the Estate Correspondence, the record being the responsibility of the Land Agent's office. There is perhaps more telling evidence of theatrical expenses being run up by the aristocratic performers and then charged back to Chatsworth. We saw this above in a letter from the costumier in 1896, which reads in part, 'We beg to inform you that over a month ago we forwarded to Chatsworth as per instructions from CP Colnaghi Esqr, 2 costumes for 'Baron Croodle' and 3 for Dr Johnston and up to now have not received them back' (DE/CH/2/1/17 'Nathan'). Colnaghi was one of the performers that year, and the letter corresponds to an invoice made out to the Duchess of Devonshire and held in the Estate Correspondence, for 'Hire, Dresses for Money Spinner [ditto] Dr Johnson'. It is possible, then, that payment for Stuart's work was being similarly resolved without the paperwork reaching the Agent's office. Given Trevor's oversight and organisation of the repertoire, it seems likely that he would be the one responsible for securing the services of a Stage Manager and that it would be Trevor employing Stuart in 1899. Indeed, the two are implicated in their joint organisational involvement in a newspaper report for that year which stated, 'thanks to the excellent organisation of Mr. Trevor, without whom it might be said no Chatsworth theatricals would be complete, and to the admirable stage management of Mr. Alexander Stuart (from the Garrick Theatre) the performance went its way with commendable smoothness' ('Amateur Theatricals at Chatsworth' *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 14th January 1899, p.7). The same report also noted that the production at Chatsworth in 1899, *A Fool's Paradise*, had been staged some years previously at the Garrick, the theatre with which Stuart was affiliated. Though it is yet to be corroborated, it is likely that Stuart's prior involvement with the theatrical company at the Garrick provided him with knowledge and potential experience of this particular play. It is also worth noting that, by January 1899, Stuart had been advertising his Stage Managerial services, as executed at the Garrick Theatre, in *The Era*, a newspaper noted for its theatrical appeal (fig. 3.8). Stuart was well situated, then, to be employed by Trevor to support the private theatricals at Chatsworth and, in so doing, to be brought on as something of a London-based creative collaborator. His success in this role can be read in the formalisation of his occasional employment through his appearance in the Accounts from 1901 and the longevity with which he was involved in the private theatre, from 1899 to 1906.

**M**R. **ALEXANDER STUART,**  
 Stage-Manager,  
 "Teresa," for Albert Mayer, Esq.  
 GARRICK THEATRE,  
 LONDON.

Figure 3.8 Alexander Stuart's advertisement for his stage managerial services in *The Era*, 10th September 1898, p. 2.

Stuart's work, then, was integral to the effective staging of theatrical productions at Chatsworth for the years that he was involved. His evident collaboration with Martin and Trevor, and the oversight he had of sourcing and transporting scenic items, as well as employing assistants, granted Stuart a level of responsibility for the productions that is comparable to his Chatsworth managerial colleagues. Seen this way, Coates' assessment of Stuart as responsible for the 'smooth running' of the theatricals has some merit, even if that merit is better represented as shared across three individuals. Indeed, this collaboration and shared responsibility illustrate a successful network of theatre management undertaken across apparent professional and amateur divides, as well as geographic ones: far from the management of Chatsworth's theatricals being confined to those present on the Estate, Stuart undertook the bulk of his work from London.

### 3.5.2 Behind-the-scenes: George Longden

In response to the question posed near the start of this chapter section, it is possible to ascertain, then, some of the extent to which Stuart was involved in Chatsworth's theatricals. Though his creative collaboration can only be surmised with the available evidence, the same data is fairly conclusive regarding his physical presence onsite during the performances - or, rather, his lack thereof. That someone other than the performers themselves *did* manage backstage activity during performances is evident from a number of sources, not least those pertaining to Stuart as introduced above. Chief of these is the newspaper coverage of Chatsworth's theatricals where backstage labour is mostly suggested rather than stated. In 1899, we read of the curtain not going up 'until ten o'clock' - the raising of which was a physical act of pulling on hemp ropes to roll the painted front cloth; in 1902, the *Sheffield Telegraph* noted the effective use of limelight to enhance a dream-like moment on stage - lighting which required specialist operation; and, in January 1903, the *Daily Mail* noted that 'the crowing of a cock behind the scenes ended the little play' - an offstage, man-made sound effect that clearly spoke enough to the affective impact of the piece to be mentioned publicly. Those responsible for these actions seem more likely to be called out if something went wrong. This was particularly notable in January 1903 when the *Sheffield Telegraph* recorded a stagehand's unfortunate run-in with one of the aristocratic performers: 'At one time the prompter did not come to her [Princess Henry of Pless] rescue when her memory failed. Looking aside, she peremptorily exclaimed, "Do give me my words." The audience laughed loudly...'. Beyond newspaper accounts is that which can be inferred from the performance programmes which frequently included two or more short plays, the scenic change between which would be undertaken by at least one stage hand and behind the curtain - dropped by someone else.

That backstage labourers are only drawn attention to when they fail is indicative of their ability to blend in; unless a stage effect was novel - such as the contrasting use of limelight in Chatsworth's 1902 production - it was designed and handled so as not to be noticed. However, this lack of attention risks devaluing the skill involved, much of which required technical, diplomatic and organisational experience and ability. Though recording the backstage management of public theatres - and thus dealing with a much larger scale than that seen at Chatsworth - the French architect and scene designer, John-Pierre Moynet wrote:

'[A stage manager] must always be alert to prevent actors from missing entrances, to ensuring that properties are there when required, to seeing that walk-ons do not walk off-stage when their duty is boring or not to their liking, and especially, to seeing that silence is observed during a scene [...] The stage-manager also superintends off-stage drumming, pistol shots in the wings, back-stage thunder and all other meteorological effects' (Moynet 1873, 138).

Cattell would likely also add the central role of the prompt book in orchestrating all of these moving parts. She writes, '... the stage manager, being in possession of the prompt copy of the play, was the only person who could correctly regulate all of the elements of each evening's performance...' (Cattell 2015, p. 218). Far from being only a technical role, then, a successful backstage manager required dramaturgical sensitivity to the onstage activity. Both these accounts shine a light on the nuanced and skilled work of the person or people working backstage during a performance. But, at Chatsworth, if this person was not the professional Stage Manager, Alexander Stuart, then who was it?

As mentioned above, the invoices from the Chatsworth Hotel in the years 1901 to 1904 are revealing on this topic. They explicitly refer to 'stage managers' staying anywhere up to 12 nights, yet establish Stuart only as a guest, staying for a single night. In 1901 and 1902, the stage manager was named as Mr G. Longden, while 1903 and 1904 saw the appearance of two other men - unnamed on these invoices, but whose identity it is possible to infer from Stuart's own petty cash expenses. Looking into the biographical detail of these men reveals two particularly interesting points. The first is the difference in their professional status: Longden appears to be a gardener employed on the Chatsworth estate, while the others can be seen to be professional stage hands; the second is the year in which this shift of personnel takes place: February 1903 was due to be the first occasion that the King was

scheduled to visit in his new royal role.<sup>39</sup> Taken together, it would be easy to assume that these two points correlate, that a possible shift in status of the theatricals demanded an 'improvement' to the management of them. Yet, the professional difference between these backstage managers may be more complicated than is at first apparent.

### Discovering George Longden

Longden could easily be overlooked as a footnote in the archival data presented here, as nothing more than one context in which to understand Stuart's own role managing the theatricals. However, pursuing his identity has the potential to reveal a rich seam of insight into country house staffing relations and their involvement with Chatsworth's theatre, building on the interdisciplinary framework argued for in the Literature Review. Such a framework seeks to bring theatrical histories through to the country house context, and vice versa. Scant mention of local contexts is given in histories of private theatricals, beyond those relating to the aristocratic players, while even less mention is given to backstage work. Meanwhile, in country house historiography, servants' lives are repeatedly conflated with their job title, obscuring any individuality beyond the hours in which they worked. Piecing together Longden's role in the theatricals has the potential to bridge this divide, shining a light on backstage workers while simultaneously crediting a country house gardener with experience beyond the remit of his professional role. Investigating Longden's biographical detail requires a similar approach to that used for Woodhead's men in section 3.3.3, relying in the first instance on the Servants to Staff Database and, in the next, census data. Without further archival evidence, it is therefore similarly problematic in terms of reliability. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that there is a small chance that the Longden identified in this section is not the Longden that worked backstage on Chatsworth's theatricals. However, here I aim to provide sufficient evidence to build a case to the contrary.

As mentioned above, the stage manager Longden is given the initial 'G' in the 1902 invoice from the Chatsworth Hotel, while the Servants to Staff Database first records a George Henry Longden as working as a gardener in the Chatsworth pleasure grounds in 1891, with another entry for a George Longden being 'gardener to the agent' in 1912. From publicly available records, it is possible to establish that this George Longden was born in January 1857 in Darley, Derbyshire (1857 Baptism Record). In 1881, he is recorded as working as a general servant for a 'nurseryman' (1881 Census), and the following year he marries Elizabeth Roose in Beeley, giving his profession as a gardener (1882

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<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, illness prevented the King from travelling to Chatsworth that year (though his luggage turned up), which resulted in January 1904 witnessing this grand state occasion.

Marriage Record). A letter in the Estate Correspondence from 1919 confirms 1882 to be the year in which Longden began his employ at Chatsworth. Crucially, this letter of recommendation, written by the 9th Duke of Devonshire's agent at Chatsworth, states, 'G. H. Longden has been in the employ of the Duke of Devonshire since 1882 having had charge of the Garden attached to the Agent's House, during the whole of that time' (DE/CH/2/1/99). This attachment is confirmed by an oral history account given in 1994 by Tom Grafton, a descendant of a long-running family of tenants and workers on the Chatsworth estate. Grafton recalls, 'Mr Roose's aunt, Aunt Lizzy, [...] she - her husband - was, the gardener for four estate agents, at Edensor House' (oral history interview with Tom Grafton, 30th October 1994). In the census records from 1891, 1901 and 1911, George and Elizabeth Longden (nee Roose) are listed as residing in Edensor village. In 1901 and 1902, then - the years in which a 'Mr. G. Longden' was stage manager for Chatsworth's theatricals - we can confidently say that George Longden was Gilson Martin's gardener and resided in the same estate village. Given Martin's involvement with Chatsworth's Theatre, as described in 3.4, Longden was well placed to assist him in a theatrical capacity as well as a gardening one.

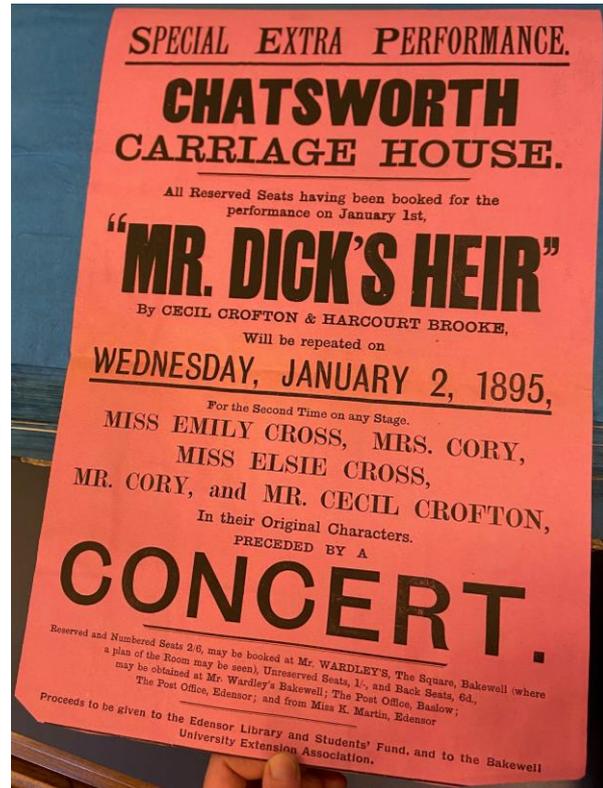
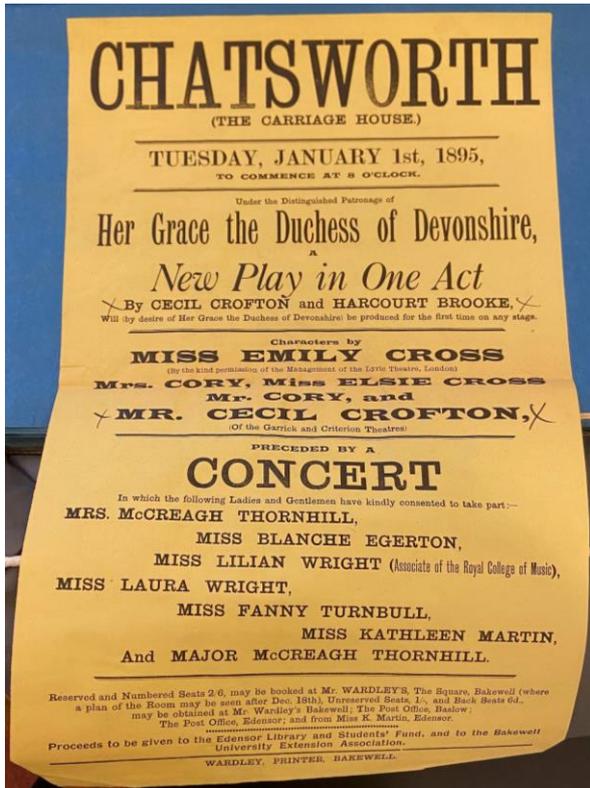
Beyond geographic and professional proximity, there are two further suggestions linking George Longden and his family with that of Gilson Martin and a broader theatrical culture. Longden and his wife had two sons: Walter, born in 1885, and Ernest, born in 1890 (1901 census). The newspaper account covering the concert in May 1897, described in section 3.4.2 above, lists 'Ernest Longdon [sic]' as appearing in the same *tableau* as Kathleen Martin, Gilson Martin's daughter. Ernest would have been 6 or 7 years old at this point, requiring someone in the *tableau* to look after him and give him direction. There being only seven individuals in this *tableau*, we can be certain that Miss Martin worked closely with a young Ernest Longden, while there is a further possibility that it was Miss Martin herself who took care of him.

The second important connection is one traced by Lucy Brownson in her research into the provenance of the Grafton Papers (2023). This collection of albums and scrapbooks is not only a hugely valuable resource for tracing the lives of the Cavendish family through the 19th and early 20th centuries, it is also the first recommended port of call for research on Chatsworth's theatre, housing most of the available theatre programmes and house party guest lists, as well as the only available photographs of the Theatre from c. 1907. Brownson's work further establishes the collection to be one of particular value since, unlike the bulk of the DCA, it was generated and donated by tenants of the Chatsworth estate and, unlike academic paradigms surrounding the practice of scrapbooking, it was compiled entirely by men. Using Tom Grafton's oral history, Lucy has traced the origin of the scrapbooks to Cecil

Crofton - the stage name of Gilson Martin's son, christened as Frederick Martin. Indeed, Crofton's 'ex libris' bookplate can be found in one of the albums. Grafton recalls that the collection then 'passed to Mr Walter Longden [...] and then I started them in 1947', eight years before Walter's death in 1955 (Grafton 1994).

Though Crofton, unlike his sister Kathleen, is never listed in the census records as residing with his parents at home in Edensor during their long phase working for Chatsworth, he is frequently listed as an audience member at the annual Chatsworth theatricals. Indeed, he wrote and performed in the 1895 performance that took place in the Carriage House. Such was the significance of this event for Crofton that he included posters advertising the performance in another of his scrapbooks held today at the Senate House Library in London (MS 1009) (figs. 3.9 and 3.10). Crofton's association with Chatsworth, its theatrical culture and his family in Edensor, then, remained strong and present throughout his father's tenure as Land Agent. That he passed on at least one scrapbook to Walter Longden implicates Walter and his family with Crofton and his in a decidedly theatrical context. Moreover, Crofton's theatrical background and sustained relationship with Chatsworth, raises the possibility that Gilson Martin's involvement with Chatsworth's theatricals, as outlined in the previous section, was predicated on an ongoing involvement with amateur theatricals more broadly.

It would be a very big coincidence, then, if the G. Longden named as Stage Manager on the Chatsworth Hotel invoices were not the same G. Longden that worked as a gardener for Gilson Martin.



LHS: Figure 3.9 Poster for 1895 production held in the Carriage House at Chatsworth, from Cecil Crofton's scrapbook. Senate House Library. MS1009. Image courtesy of Lucy Brownson.

RHS: Figure 3.10 Poster for 1895 production held in the Carriage House at Chatsworth, from Cecil Crofton's scrapbook. Senate House Library. MS1009. Image courtesy of Lucy Brownson.

### The Chatsworth Hotel as theatrical nexus

The evidence against this case, however, is the fact that Longden appears on invoices for the Chatsworth Hotel at all. The hotel is directly across the road from Edensor. Why would he need to be put up at the Hotel, with all its added expense, if he already lived so close? If we assume that G. Longden is Longden the gardener, this expense may in fact shed light on the role and significance of the backstage manager.

Being put up at the Hotel would afford Longden a number of advantages in his theatrical position. The first is that he would be in easy contact with others involved in the production (excluding the aristocratic performers who were put up in the House) outside the potentially constricting environment of rehearsals, such as the dancing mistress, the band and, for the one night he came to stay, Alexander Stuart. Such contact could take place at hours that might otherwise clash with domestic expectations, such as very late at night, and in a focused environment that could build camaraderie. This potential for ongoing knowledge exchange and socialising across perceived

professional boundaries could forge interpersonal connections that underpinned the country house/theatre network that we can read in the involvement of Woodhead and Martin, as described in 3.2 and 3.3.

Expanding on this advantage, by staying at the Hotel, Longden's theatrical services might be called upon at any time - an occurrence that was unlikely to happen in his role as a gardener. Writing in 1904, the then Clerk of Works, Mr. Barnes, reported on the working hours undertaken by men from the building department, implying a working culture that respected the professional boundaries of the staff (DE/CH/2/1/34 'Barnes'). Stationed at the Hotel, Longden's working day in the Theatre could be flexible and subject to the oversight of Leo Trevor and his company, responsible for rehearsing the performances that Longden would have to support. Furthermore, the Hotel could easily provide amenities for its guests, including meals and transport, saving Longden the labour of organising and expensing this himself and Martin any issues that might arise from this added piece of administration. That Longden took this latter opportunity is evident in the Hotel invoices where it is recorded that he travelled to and from Rowsley, in 1901, and Rowsley and Bakewell in 1902. While these are all highly practical arrangements, as with Stuart, there is also the argument that being organised to appear in the Accounts alongside other theatrical expenses formalised and legitimised Longden's role as backstage manager.

#### From gardener to 'Stage Manager'

We have seen at the top of this section (3.5.2) the skill involved in the role of a backstage manager. Being on-hand to rehearse the performances staged in Chatsworth's Theatre would require Longden's diplomacy with a range of people including those in the cast, whose social status varied from semi-professional theatre writer and performer, Leo Trevor, to Princess Henry of Pless. Based on Moynet and Cattell's accounts, Longden would likely have been responsible for ensuring property items were located where the cast could find them and, as Stuart's assistant, that the scenery and set dressing were suitable and suitably fitted on the stage. Furthermore, though Drake & Gorham's letters outlined in 3.3.2 imply that men were brought in to handle any specialist lighting, Longden would be responsible for coordinating its use during rehearsals, potentially cueing its application during a performance and likely undertaking any other on-stage lighting cues himself.

Given his employment as backstage manager for two years in a row, we may assume that Longden was not only successful in executing these responsibilities, but that he was sufficiently experienced enough to undertake them in the first place. Indeed, while we cannot know Longden's specific theatrical experience prior to his engagement in 1901, we can draw on the history of technological

development in country houses to infer that Longden will have been accustomed to technological adaptability and application. As Palmer and West illustrate, innovation on country house estates frequently began in gardens and grounds as means to provide magnificent settings, elaborate water features and the ability to support the growth of increasingly rarefied plants and foods (2016). Given that elaborate heating systems were seen in orangeries and vinehouses before pumped heating was even considered in the main House itself, it is reasonable to assume that Longden would have been familiar with complex mechanical systems and the resolution of issues arising from them. Building on this, Longden's 1919 letter of recommendation mentioned above also extolled the gardener's husbandry skills and general experience and professionalism, stating, 'I always found him strictly honourable in everything, punctual, and a highly trained and most capable gardener, both fruit, flowers and vegetables and the management of glass. No hours are too long for him, and he is very interested in his work. He also thoroughly understands the management of cows, pigs and poultry' (DE/CH/2/1/99). Taken together, this background potentially qualifies Longden well for the organisation and handling of backstage equipment.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that there may also have been non-professional motivations for Longden's close involvement with the Chatsworth theatricals that speak more closely to his personal interests instead. As noted in the Introduction to this chapter, the representation of servants' stories in both academic literature and at heritage sites is skewed towards their working lives in relation to their professional role or employer. Part of the value of such archival collections as the Grafton Papers is in the rarity of their provenance, research into which can draw out the lives of estate tenantry and embed them within the fabric of the archive itself. Otherwise, the nature of the accumulation of country house archives frequently obscures these voices in favour of recording the lives and lands of the estate owner. Such a dearth of personal data both asks us to consider alternative readings of the data that we *do* find and affords us the possibility to lean into narratives drawn from a researcher's imagination. Such an approach is advocated both in Butler's 2019 PhD thesis on Chatsworth's staff in the 19th century and broader circles of archive scholars (Hartman 2019, 2021). It does not require much imagination, however, to suppose that Longden had prior experience in the management of amateur theatricals. I have already discussed the possible theatrical exposure afforded to those staff that worked to construct Chatsworth's stage, either through the existence of the temporary stage in the Carriage House, or elsewhere, given the widespread practice of amateur performance in this period (see 3.3.3 The Individuals). The same possibility can be extended to Longden. There is, therefore, a strong case for proposing Longden's role in the Chatsworth theatricals as evidence of his life beyond the confines of his professional work.

As proposed at the start of this section (3.5.2), pursuing Longden's biography reveals both his and his family's intricate connections with what was arguably the most powerful family on the estate in the landowner's absence - that of the Martins. The inference from these ties is that Martin was responsible for installing Longden in his position as backstage manager for the Chatsworth theatricals, thereby entrusting him to mediate between the interests of Chatsworth and those of the performers in a highly practical way. The shift from 'gardener' to someone with this level of responsibility might be read as a surprising elevation of status that runs contra to models of staffing organisation for the period based on divisions across hierarchy and departments. Indeed, using the archival data to trace lines of communication between individuals and certain groups involved in the theatricals reveals a far more complex web of interaction than is often accommodated by such models. Figure 3.11 at the end of this section establishes Gilson Martin, Leo Trevor and Alexander Stuart as the triumvirate of stage managers, ultimately responsible for the staging of the annual theatricals. From his position at Chatsworth, Martin has the most lines of communication of these three, responsible as he is throughout the theatre's life as 'Chatsworth's Theatre Royal' for both the work of the estate staff under his supervision and the enabling of the performers and backstage management. The only other person to match Martin in this way, though his role and responsibilities are markedly different, is Longden. Admittedly, this is partly due to timing: the Clerk of Works changed in 1901 following Woodhead's death resulting in Longden collaborating both with Woodhead and then with his successor, Barnes. Nonetheless, the diagram illustrates Longden's position across and between multiple social and professional hierarchies and divisions.

Given Longden's likely qualifications for his stage managerial role, his position connecting the various parties illustrated in figure 3.11, and his relationship with Martin ensuring smooth communication between backstage and front-of-house, and between the interests of the performers and those of the House, it seems surprising that he appears to be replaced in 1903 and 1904. Without further evidence, as discussed at the start of this section (3.5.2), we could read this as a move towards the professionalisation of the theatricals ahead of the planned visit of the Prince of Wales in his new role as King. If this is the case, it ought to be acknowledged that such a move arguably would not have been possible without the groundwork laid by Longden and any of his predecessors in the role of backstage manager. However, it would be more productive to read the change in staffing as representing the evolution of Chatsworth's theatricals, reflecting both the likely demands of the social occasion in which the theatricals operated and improved systems of management and understanding as estate staff became better versed in theatrical processes.

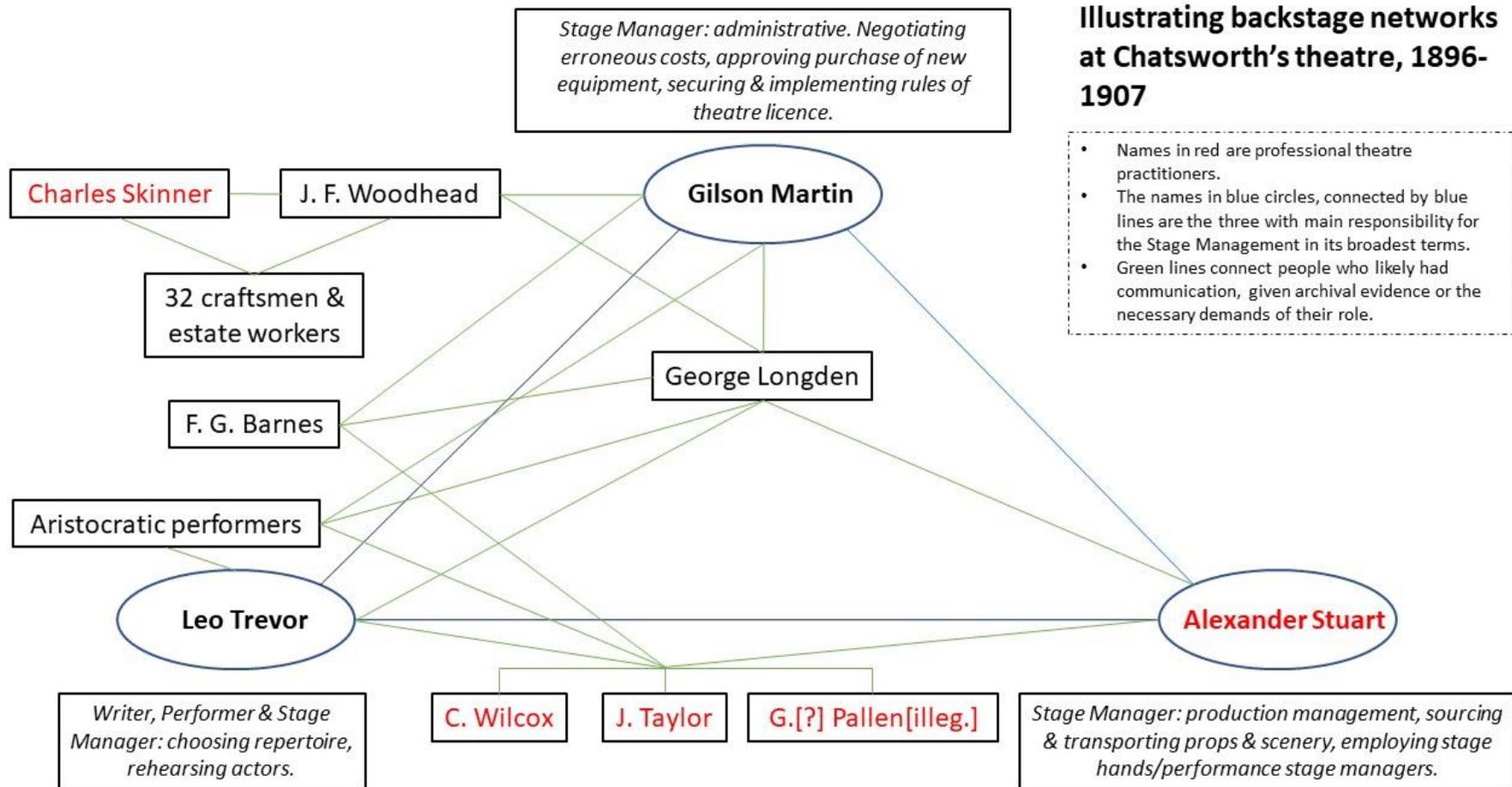


Figure 3.11 Diagram illustrating lines of communication between those directly involved in managing Chatsworth's theatre, thereby illustrating the Theatre's backstage networks, 1896-1907.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter revealed the identities and work of those that laboured to both construct the stage in 1895-'96 and undertake behind-the-scenes theatrical managerial roles over the following six years, from administrative tasks to practical, backstage ones. It uncovered the existence and efforts of 33 craftsmen and labourers, most of whom hailed from across the estate, who worked alongside one professional stage carpenter and under the overseeing eye of Chatsworth's Clerk of Works in the construction of the stage. Elements of the build of the stage, such as the construction of the scenic panels that make up the proscenium arch, were identified as being highly particular to the theatrical context, thereby revealing the theatrically-specific knowledge-base to which the estate workers were exposed and from which, I contend, they were able to expand their own skills and abilities.

The chapter then identified the hand of the Land Agent in a range of theatrical administrative tasks, from the arrangement of an annual theatre licence and an agreement to abide by its strictures, to the resolution of payment disputes and the approval of a fresh wave of theatrical investment in 1897. This revealed the application of the Agent's existing skills and network in the context of the Theatre, and his position as a representative of the landowner in their absence, such that the Agent's role in administering the Theatre can be seen to mirror his responsibilities for the wider estate. Despite its location in the House, this casts the use of the Theatre as being primarily the responsibility of the Estate Office as opposed to that of the House Steward. Not only does this challenge country house servant historiography that broadly ascribes the responsibility of household spaces to household staff (as discussed in 1.3.2 Architecture, etc. See Butler 2019 and Keithan 2020 for further discussion) but, in doing so, it implicates the Theatre as having a closer relationship with the wider estate in this period than it did with the House.

The involvement of wider estate staff in the running of the Theatre was revealed further in this chapter through the identification of the Land Agent's gardener, George Longden, as a stage manager. The role of a stage manager in the late-19th century was broken down into various responsibilities and Longden can be seen as undertaking the role of a backstage prompt; that is, responsible for stage props, for cueing or undertaking any offstage activity, such as lighting changes or sound effects, and for giving the performers their lines when they forgot them. Until this thesis, only the professional Stage Manager from the Garrick Theatre in London, Alexander Stuart, had been credited for his backstage work on Chatsworth's theatricals. Indeed, this chapter has reconsidered the extent of Stuart's managerial role and credited him with more creative agency than he has thus far been

granted. However, the identification of Longden and his working relationship with Stuart has revealed the interconnected nature of Chatsworth's private theatricals across both amateur/professional and rural/urban lines, and the involvement of estate staff in work beyond that described solely by their professional titles. I have surmised Longden's involvement as a result of three possible, connected factors, only one of which is tied to his professional capabilities. The first is his relationship with the Land Agent, for whom he gardened - a relationship whose broader familial bond is strengthened through understanding the provenance of the Grafton Papers, a collection now in the care of the DCA but begun by the Land Agent's son and inherited and expanded by Longden's (Brownson 2023 discussed in 1.3.5 Archives). The second is the possibility of his personal interest in or experience with amateur theatricals - a supposition rooted in an awareness of the rich, wider culture of amateur performance that crossed social and institutional divides (Coates 2017 discussed in 1.3.3 Entertainment) and motivated by the need for richer histories of servants' lives that defy the narrow parameters of their professional titles (Butler 2020 discussed in 1.3.4 Gender and Class). The third is the experience afforded him by virtue of his professional background, when gardens were often the breeding ground for new technologies and gardeners either responsible for developing them or charged with their maintenance and smooth-running (Palmer and West 2016) - an experience that would serve well the backstage manager of Chatsworth's technologically-advanced Theatre (see Appendix B).

Until this chapter, little to no attention had been given to those that laboured to install the current stage into the former Banqueting Room, and even less to those charged with the backstage responsibilities of mounting and running the theatrical productions. Crediting these people with the work they undertook straddles key concerns in both country house and theatre studies, wherein a handful of scholars are working to bring to the fore those working backstage - either literally in the context of the theatre, or metaphorically in the case of the country house. The findings complement and honour Christin Essin's research (2021) by extending the regard for technical and administrative theatre work and workers to the historic, private context; and they directly address the call Lauren Butler makes (2020) for the lives of servants to be considered in country house histories beyond the identity granted by their job titles.

More than these original contributions, however, the methodology of focusing on the use of space in one room over a number of years has worked to overturn the paradigm in Country House Studies that locates servants only in servant spaces, as discussed in the Literature Review. Servants, their lives and their work, rather, are seen in a much richer, nuanced context, wherein estate staff undertake work

in outwardly-household spaces; learn new skills or apply practised ones; rely on a network of support that crosses professional and hierarchical boundaries; and, even, practise skills that may relate in no way to their professional role elsewhere on the estate. This addresses the paradox raised in the Literature Review, originally put forward by Dana Arnold (2002, 131) and appropriated by me. Namely, 'if we interrogate the spaces of country houses for "servants", we will find the most evidence of their presence in the spaces wherein they performed what we expect of their service' (1.3.4 Gender and Class). Thus, the methodology models an original approach to country house research that is comparable to that put forward by Susie West (1999), whereby the practised (as opposed to the theoretical or intended) use of space is the primary concern, and locating particular social groups within the space only secondary.

## 4. Front of House at Chatsworth's Theatre, 1896-1907

### 4.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter examined the evolution and management of the stage in the hey-day of its use from a biographical perspective, this chapter will consider the auditorium in the same period and from a similar point of view. In the previous chapter, a focus on the work undertaken to build and manage the stage gave voice to roles and individuals often obscured in favour of a focus on the performers and performance. Likewise, this chapter will interrogate the archival data to bring to light theatre-goers and theatre-going often obscured by contemporary newspaper accounts which, when they did mention audience members, predominantly reported on the high-status house party. To do this, the chapter will analyse the arrangement and organisation of the auditorium and how it was physically accessed in the period 1896-1907; it will then expand on the notion of 'access' by examining the mechanisms by which tickets were distributed.

As with backstage work, there is little to no available scholarship on audiences at, auditoria for or architectural design of private theatres and theatricals - particularly those in the 19th century. Therefore, interpreting an analysis of these subjects necessarily asks us to integrate literature on public theatres with the paradigmatic social and spatial lenses that saturate literature on the architecture and use of 19th-century country houses (discussed in depth in the Literature Review). Public theatre-going and, therefore, a theatre-goer's experience of public theatre spaces, was (and is) not a distinct and parallel field to that of private theatre (Hawley 2020); the public and private theatrical realms were (and are) not mutually exclusive. The breadth of amateur theatrical activity through the 19th century that is discussed in the Literature Review both incorporated the spaces and stages of public theatres and included players that performed across any perceived public/private or professional/amateur divide (Coates 2024). Indeed, as introduced in the previous chapter, Gilson Martin's son, Cecil Crofton, was working as a professional actor when he performed in the 1895 Carriage House theatricals at Chatsworth. Public theatre-going and theatre spaces likewise intersect(ed) with the private realm. It is through scholarship from Theatre Studies that theatre architecture, auditoria and audiences are interpreted, problematised and theorised (eg. Leacroft 1988; Greig 2013; Davis and Emeljanow 2001 respectively).

These three areas of study are both distinct and interwoven through Theatre Studies historiography - the architectural and spatial layout of auditoria, for example, has been read in relation to the social composition of the audience to lesser (Mackintosh 2023) and greater extents (Davis 2022), depending

on the research agenda of the scholar. Broadly speaking, however, when bringing these areas into dialogue with Country House Studies, complementary and overlapping historiographical themes emerge. For example, the architecture of the 19th century public theatre is widely understood to have been designed along increasingly socially-stratified lines (Leacroft 1988; Booth 1995, 64), with attendant generalisations of the assumed demographic composition of the audience (Booth 1995, 2). This resonates closely with the class issues accorded to spatial interpretations of the country house - another type of building that witnessed increased stratification in design through the 19th century - which frequently ascribes servants' presence in a house to the spaces which best fit job titles (see Literature Review). Where challenges to this homogenisation of a social group (Butler 2019; Keithan 2020) have yet to satisfactorily cut through country house historiography, assumptions of audience demographics and experience have been powerfully contested, both with specific reference to 19th-century theatre-going (Davis and Emeljanow 2001) and more theoretically, with reference to an audience's reception of the production being performed (Bennett 2003). Research from Theatre Studies, then, not only provides necessary historical context for interpreting some of the spatial organisation of Chatsworth's front-of-house areas, it also has the potential to offer ways and means of disrupting inherited social paradigms of the country house.

However, the unique context of Chatsworth's theatre - its evolution from a 'room to make a row in', and its location in the house - mean that care must be taken not to bring theatrically-rooted assumptions to bear on its interpretation. Balancing the public and the private contexts of this theatre, then, is a line that the chapter seeks to tread. To this end, the chapter begins by questioning the fact of the auditorium itself.

## 4.2 Defining the auditorium

The insertion of the new, permanent stage and painted proscenium at the west end of the Ball Room in 1895-96 created an area at the east end that could then be interpreted as an auditorium: 'the part of a public building occupied by the audience' (OED 'auditorium'). At this point, the room already contained the structure comprising the gallery and boxes (discussed in Chapter 2) and no evidence has yet come to light to suggest that anything other than a flat floor, unimpeded by fixtures, lay between this structure and the new stage. To a certain extent, then, the architectural layout of the newly-defined 1890s auditorium was predetermined: a gallery with two boxes beneath at the far east end, flanking the entrance to the room, and a flat floor in front.

However, the room's prior use as a flexible entertainment space during the 6th Duke's tenure (discussed in 2.4.3 Using the Banqueting Room/Theatre), meant that the spaces of the boxes, in particular, had accrued meaning by serving various functions including those of more traditional theatre boxes, housing whist tables on cards nights and refreshments during a ball (Cavendish 1844, 116-117). The insertion of the stage and proscenium at the west end of the room, though not affecting the form of the gallery structure opposite, served to formalise it as explicit theatrical auditorium architecture, in the process shifting its use, meaning and significance in the context of a formalised theatrical auditorium. When we read the 6th Duke's use of these boxes as theatrical, their location at the rear of the auditorium is consistent with auditorium architecture in public theatres of the time. Yet, by the 1890s, in response to the role of theatrical entertainment in society, the architectural layout of public theatre auditoria had broadly changed: if boxes were included at all, they were reduced to those located next to the stage (see, for example, Glasstone 1975). This example serves to illustrate the fact that, though the newly-defined auditorium at Chatsworth presented a ready-made layout, we cannot assume how that layout served the purpose for which it was formalised.

Nor can we take for granted that the purpose born out of the newly-formalised auditorium was limited only to the room itself. Citing a paper given to the Architectural Association in 1903, theatre architect and historian Richard Leacock asserts that, by the end of the 19th century, auditoria in public theatres had become so stratified and sub-divided across social lines that architects faced real challenges in maintaining separate seating areas, separate access routes to reach them and separate foyers and retiring rooms (1988, 290). The challenge to organise space was not only in the auditorium, then, but extended to the publicly-accessible spaces beyond it - areas known collectively in the theatrical context as 'front of house'. Given the longueur in the Theatre's social use, as described in 3.2 The intervening years, 1858-1892, as the likely progenitor of the 1890s iteration of the room, Duchess Louise inherited an auditorium and front of house architecture that served a 60-year-old purpose. The extent to which the spaces of this architecture were negotiated to mirror those of public theatres, and the utility of applying such a comparison to a country house context, are explored in the following sections.

## 4.3 Accessing the Auditorium

### 4.3.1 Introduction

We can only piece together an understanding of the organisation of, and access to the auditorium by synthesising a number of sources. Following the journey of an audience member on a night at the theatricals, I begin by considering access to the Theatre before going on to examine the organisation of the auditorium itself. The former relies predominantly on key information from historic programmes and the embodied experience of walking the stairs and corridors of the House, afforded to me by my position as an embedded researcher. The routes that I understand physically are reinforced by contemporary newspaper accounts and illustrated here using floor plans and modern photographs. Supported by these newspaper accounts, as well as the papers of Dr. Edward M. Wrench, physician to the 8th Duke at Chatsworth, I make the argument that the routes to the Theatre are an integral part not only of understanding who made up the audience, but also of the experience of attending Chatsworth's theatricals at the end of the 19th century. Seeking to understand this perspective reframes spaces of the House as theatrical 'front of house' areas, generating a rich dialogue between Country House and Theatre Studies.

A wider range of sources are available to analyse the organisation of the auditorium once it was reached. Increasing levels of organisational detail are revealed when we examine programmes, seating plans and surviving tickets, while photographs likely taken in 1907 provide rich visual detail. Building on the work undertaken in Chapter 3, we can also scrutinise the Household Accounts to further interrogate what we see in, and understand from the photographs. Again, the information drawn from these sources is supplemented by newspaper articles and Wrench's papers that add personal, biographical information which often challenges the paradigms of social division prominent in the architectural history of both theatres and country houses. The resultant picture is one that broadens the focus on those in the audience from elite members of the house party to the wider community of theatre-goers and musical entertainers.

### 4.3.2 Access points and routes

The Devonshire Collections Archive contains the programmes for seven of the 13 adult productions staged in the newly-formalised theatre between 1896 and 1907 (Appendix F). Of these programmes, despite their handheld format, those that pre-date 1903 appear to act both as programme and playbill, advertising the performance particulars, such as date, time and how to obtain a ticket, as well as details of the performances themselves: plays, characters, cast, and so on. It is from these that we

quickly begin to ascertain key information: most pertinent for this section are the timings - 'Doors open at 7-15 / To commence at 8' - and the ticket particulars (fig. 4.1). We shall return to the relevance of the timings towards the end of this section, but first it is worth looking in some detail at the ticket options. As an illustrative example, the programme from 1896 states:

*'Reserved and Numbered Seats, 5/- and 2/6,  
(Entrance through Centre Lodge Gate),  
...Gallery, 1/-...  
(Entrance to the left of the Lodge.)'*  
(CH11/1/2. Fig. 4.1.)

We quickly understand, then, that: tickets must be purchased; there are three kinds of tickets available to buy - at three different rates; the cheapest seats are in the Gallery; and, the Gallery seats are accessed by a different entrance to the others. Let us take this final observation first: what is meant by these separate entrances and what is the implication of having them?

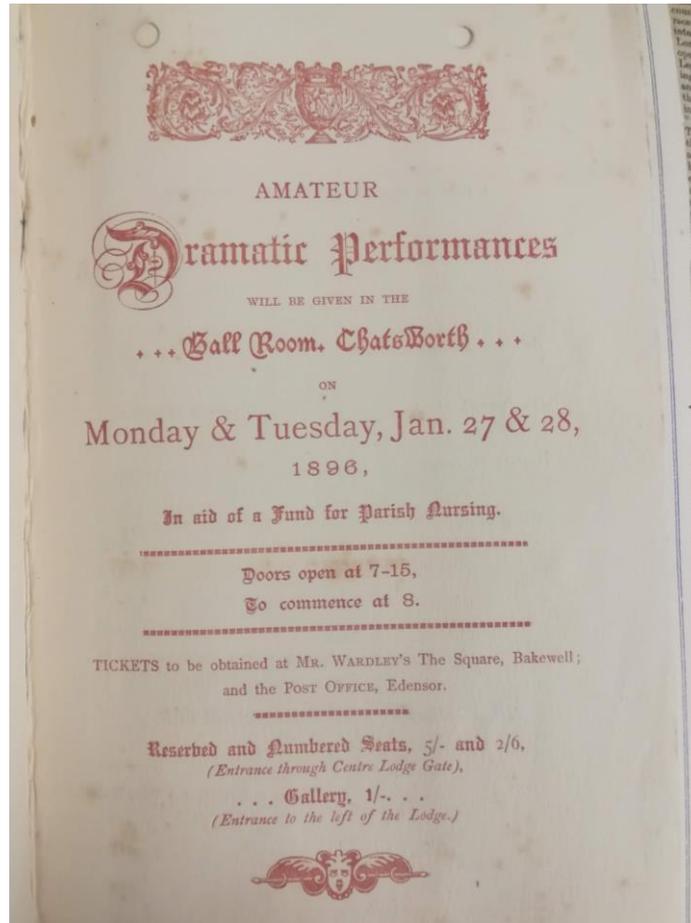


Figure 4.1 Programme for the inaugural performances in the 1890s iteration of the Theatre, January 1896. The programme doubles as a playbill, advertising key performance information (CH11/1/2).



Figure 4.2 Photograph showing the central and left arch in the north boundary wall of Chatsworth House in the 21st century. Image courtesy of peakdistrictkids.co.uk.

Rather than denoting doors into the auditorium, the identified entrances refer to points of access to the curtilage of the house itself. At the north end of Chatsworth House, controlling and filtering access to the building is a boundary wall with three arches (fig. 4.2). This structure was a product of Wyattville’s work on the house, and the layout, function and symbolism of the arches can be more clearly understood by referring to his 1819 proposal (fig. 4.3). Though it should be noted that the stylistic design of these arches changed in minor ways subsequent to the proposal, the drawing most clearly illustrates their intended function as a filter for access to the house. Each arch leads to a different point of entry to the house itself. The floor plan at the bottom of Wyattville’s drawing testifies to this: he describes the arches as, from left to right, ‘Gateway to the Offices’, ‘Grand Entrance’, ‘Private Entrance to the Terrace’. These still serve the same areas of the house today: the ‘Grand Entrance’ leads visitors to the north sub-hall, as described in 1.1 Introduction, while the ‘Gateway to the Offices’ leads to the courtyard of the north wing, from which staff gain entrance. There is no evidence to suggest that this has ever changed in the intervening years. Between these two gates is the Porter’s Lodge. The entrance for the ‘Reserved and Numbered Seats’ on the 1896 programme, then - the ‘Centre Lodge Gate’ - is the central arch; the ‘Entrance to the left of the Lodge’, for Gallery ticket holders, is the gateway on the left.



Figure 4.3 Wyattville’s ‘Design for the Entrance to the Court’, 1819, showing a proposal for the three arches in the north boundary wall of Chatsworth House that still closely resemble the structure today.

It is worth noting the way Wyattville has represented these entrances because it gives some indication as to their intended relative status. The imposing prominence of the central arch, flanked by pairs of columns supporting an entablature and surmounted by a balustraded parapet, indicates its grandeur and superior status. Meanwhile, the gateway on the left is rendered in shadow, artfully cast by the position of a tree and the direction of sunlight. The shadow obscures our view of the entrance, encouraging us not to dwell there. It is possible that Wyattville cast this archway in gloom because it already existed and he wished to draw attention to his new proposals - the black ink used in the floor plan indicates the arch as extant. However, it is equally possible that he wished to convey this entrance as lower status. Certainly, the realised structure, seen in figure 4.2, is surrounded by rusticated masonry, a technique that traditionally denotes lower-status areas of Classically-designed buildings. These stylistic choices, rendered in watercolour and masonry, communicated the relative statuses of both entrances and, by association, of those who used them.

The two archways provide very different routes of access into the House, through it and on to reach the Theatre. The distinction is an important one both in terms of how ticket holders would have experienced the journey on foot through the building, and of considering who the ticket holders might have been, and their relationships to each other and the spaces they walked through. One contemporary newspaper account noted that, '[the Theatre] is not easy of access from the main building' (Derbyshire Times, 14th January 1899) while Wrench recorded in 1896 that his party 'almost wanted a cab to take us to the theatre. One eighth of a mile through the long corridors and conservatories' (UNM Wr C 3079). That the distance was worth recording tells us that the routes taken have the potential to play a large role in shaping a ticket-holder's overall experience of their night at Chatsworth's Theatre. Through the sections of this chapter, I will propose that the act of attending a night at Chatsworth's theatricals held more meaning to those present than only bearing witness to the performances. Therefore, we can read the routes to the Theatre as corollaries of the room's function, with the potential to extend the influence of the Theatre beyond its walls. This conceptualisation is borne out in newspaper accounts of the theatricals, which frequently included descriptions of the rooms traversed before reaching the Theatre. Tracing the journey one group of ticket-holders made through the house can, in part, be established through these accounts. Other archival sources, as well as my own knowledge of the building and phenomenological experience of it, are used to trace the journeys of two other groups.

‘Reserved and Numbered Seats’

### Sub-Hall and Oak Stairs

For those with ‘Reserved and Numbered Seats’, Wyatville’s grand, central arch led a visitor in their carriage (*Derbyshire Times*, 16th Jan 1897) down a short drive and then by foot into the Sub-Hall on the north front of the main House. This Hall has served as the principal guest entrance to the House since the 1760s, and is referred to in multiple newspaper accounts from the 1890s as the ‘main entrance’. For the nights of theatricals in 1897, the Sub-Hall served as a cloak room (*ibid.*) and it seems likely that this, too, was the place in which ‘powdered flunkies relieved the guests of wraps’ in 1904 (*Derbyshire Times*, 8th Jan 1904). From the Sub-Hall, a visitor ascended a short flight of stairs, then bore left along a decorative, marble-paved corridor to reach the north end of the Painted Hall (fig. 4.4). Newspaper accounts give scarce mention to this otherwise visually impressive room, in contrast to the frequent mentions given to, for example, the Orangery. We cannot assume, then, that ticket-holders had occasion to fully enter this space on their way to the Theatre, but rather headed straight up the Oak Stairs, sometimes described as ‘the grand staircase’ in journalistic reports (*Derbyshire Times*, 11th Jan 1899), which was constructed in the first half of the 19th century to allow ready access to Wyatville’s north wing.

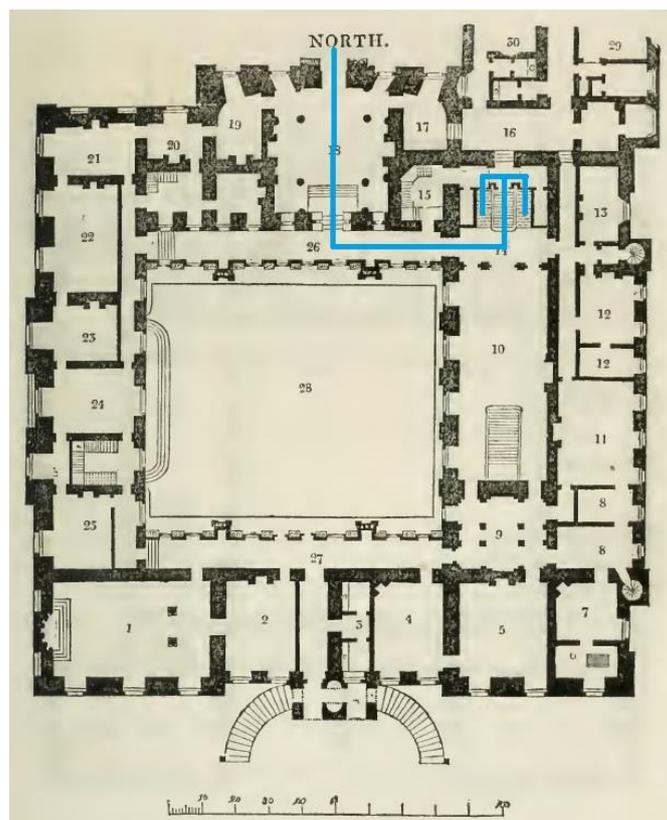


Figure 4.4 Ground floor plan of the main body of Chatsworth House, from Glover, S. (1830) *The Peak Guide*. In blue is the route taken by ‘Reserved and Numbered’ ticket holders to the Theatre in the 1890s-1900s.

### **Bachelors' Corridor**

While other newspaper accounts only allude to the next part of the route, writing in January 1902, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* was explicit: 'passing through the corridor running parallel to the magnificent dining-room' (fig. 4.5). If the Dining Room was to be avoided, this corridor was only accessible from a relatively narrow landing along the side of the Oak Stairs (fig. 4.6). Upon entering the corridor, however, ticket holders would be led into a much more private area of the wing (fig. 4.7). Known as the Bachelors' Corridor, the passage served male guest bedrooms, and the delineation between this west side of the wing and the more public, entertaining spaces on the east side is illustrated well by the thick line of wall separating the two in the floorplan on the right hand side of figure 4.8, at the end of the following section on the Orangery. From this corridor, the route of ticket holders diverged depending on the year. Using newspaper accounts, we can infer the next part of the route for seven out of the 11 years of performances. In four of the years, the next stage of the journey was through the Orangery, while the Sculpture Gallery was walked through for three. For those years when the Sculpture Gallery was bypassed, and exit was made from the corridor into the Orangery, we can see from figure 4.8 that this meant visitors would walk the full length of the Bachelors' Corridor, passing the doors to at least four bedroom suites. Such a journey brings into question any characterisation of the late-19th-century country house as being divided firmly into private and public spaces, as discussed in 1.3 Literature Review, rather suggesting gradations of public and private space according to the activity being undertaken.

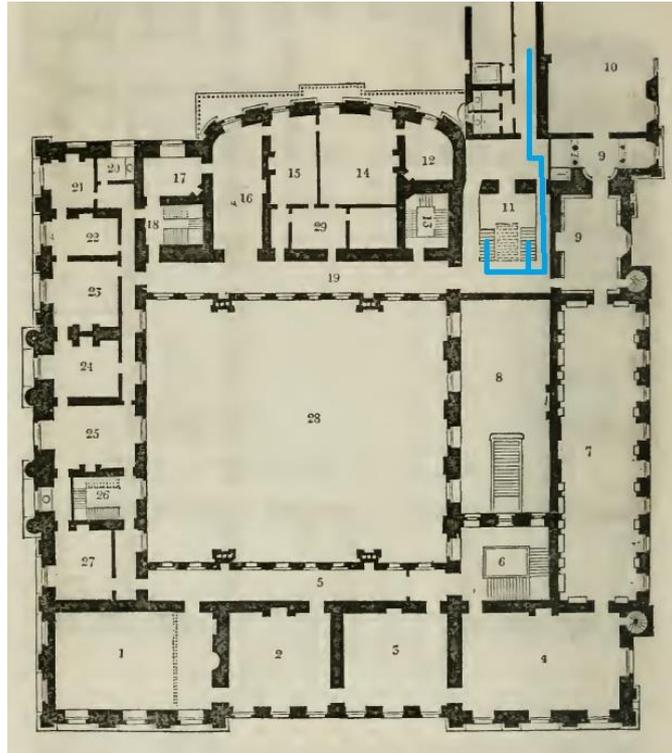


Figure 4.5 First floor plan of the main body of Chatsworth House, from Glover, S. (1830) *The Peak Guide*. In blue is the route taken by 'Reserved and Numbered' ticket holders to the Theatre in the 1890s-1900s.



Figure 4.6 The door from the Oak Stairs to the Bachelors' Corridor. Image courtesy of [chatsworth.org](http://chatsworth.org).

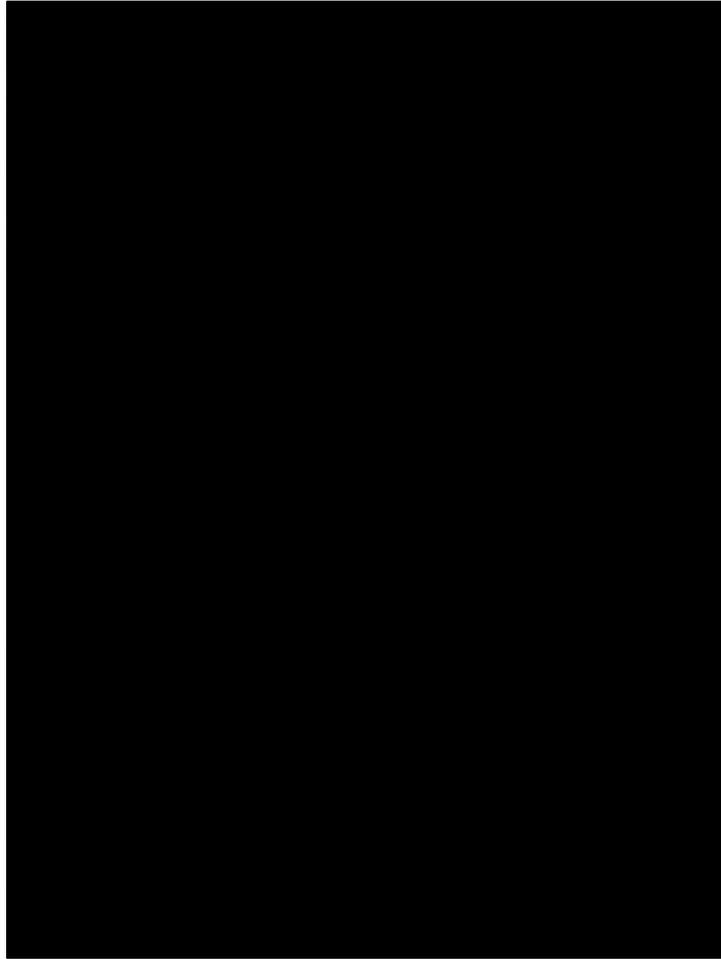


Figure 4.7 The south end of the Bachelors' Corridor. [Image redacted.]

### **Orangery**

It is notable that, even in the years when visitors passed first through the Sculpture Gallery before progressing into the Orangery, scarce mention is made in newspaper reports of the former room. Such scarcity of description is brought into greater relief when compared with the lush representations of the Orangery. This is illustrated well in reports from January 1903, in which the character of the Sculpture Gallery is almost pointedly overshadowed by that of the Orangery. Describing the route taken by the ticket holders, the journalist for *High Peak News* recorded the visitors as 'passing through the sculpture gallery into the orangery, where coloured lights filtering through the foliage from electric incandescent lamps produced charming effects' (17th Jan 1903). In the same year, the *Sheffield Telegraph* expanded on this description: '...passing through the sculpture gallery into the orangery. The shrieking cockatoos, the babbling parrot, and the warbling feathered choir who sing here by day were hushed in sleep' (10th Jan 1903). The *Derby Telegraph*, perhaps in its haste to describe the effects of the Orangery, failed to even mention passing through the Sculpture Gallery: 'To reach this Mecca [the Theatre] guests were conducted through the famous orangery, where canaries sing in golden

cages and parrots call to each other, and red and purple lights gleam amongst the foliage' (10th Jan 1903). The only description of the Sculpture Gallery as part of this route unearthed so far was in 1897 when the *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald* wrote, 'the guests were ushered by way of the sculpture gallery - its forms of cold marble shown up in admirable perfection by the countless incandescent electric lights' (16th Jan).

The mention in these accounts of the birds, electric lighting and 'plants from the tropics' (*Derbyshire Times*, 7th Jan 1905) are characteristic of descriptions of the Orangery throughout the whole of the period under scrutiny in this chapter. Their enduring, repeated mention testifies to the argument that the *approach* to the Theatre was an integral part of the theatre-going experience. What might have been conveyed in more prosaic, observational terms was richly and lushly described and often included sensory impressions. The caged birds were not simply identified, but the quality of their song was evoked - they 'chattered' and 'warbled'; the dynamic scale and texture of the plants was conveyed through their interplay with the electric lights which 'peep[ed] out here and there from amongst the green foliage' (*Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*, 11th Jan 1899) or 'filtered through leafy branches' (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 10th Jan 1902); while the delicate scent of the space was conjured as reporters commented on 'the air being fragrant with the perfume of fruit and flowers' (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 10th Jan 1903). In all, 'but a few moments spent in this part of the mansion produced a pleasant sensation' (*ibid.*), before ticket-holders would then proceed through to the Theatre stairs, ascend three flights and enter the auditorium through its central doors.

It cannot be overlooked that the coverage of this route in the newspapers was inconsistent, as illustrated here by comparing the necessity to *infer* the walk along the length of the Bachelors' Corridor with the rich descriptions of passing through the Orangery. Such uneven attention may suggest that not all areas along the route were equally curated or significant to the ticket holder. However, it is more likely to be a product of the journalist's role of advertising the novelty of the event and adhering to boundaries of propriety that shrouded locations of and access to more private areas of the house. Certainly, the eulogising of the Orangery likely had more to do with public attitudes towards the novelty of the rare flora and fauna seen in the space, and the playful application of new electric lighting - topics that contemporary readers of the newspapers may have found surprising and enthralling.

These considerations of which spaces are mentioned in newspaper accounts and which are not draws attention to the idea that the journey taken by these ticket holders formed a significant and important

part of their experience at Chatsworth's theatricals. For example, demonstrating that the experience of this route impressed not only readers of the newspapers but also those present, one report from 1903 stated, 'The few county people present moved across the [sub-]hall with the air of folks who are at home, but the farmers' wives and tenantry of the place were awed by the awful majesty of the ducal footmen' (*Daily Mail*, 10th Jan 1903). Despite its condescending tone, this comparison further reminds us that not only was the route an integral part of the theatre-going experience at Chatsworth but that it was experienced differently by different groups of people. Moreover, it highlights the distinct experience journalists had and invites us to question the experience of other groups and individuals.

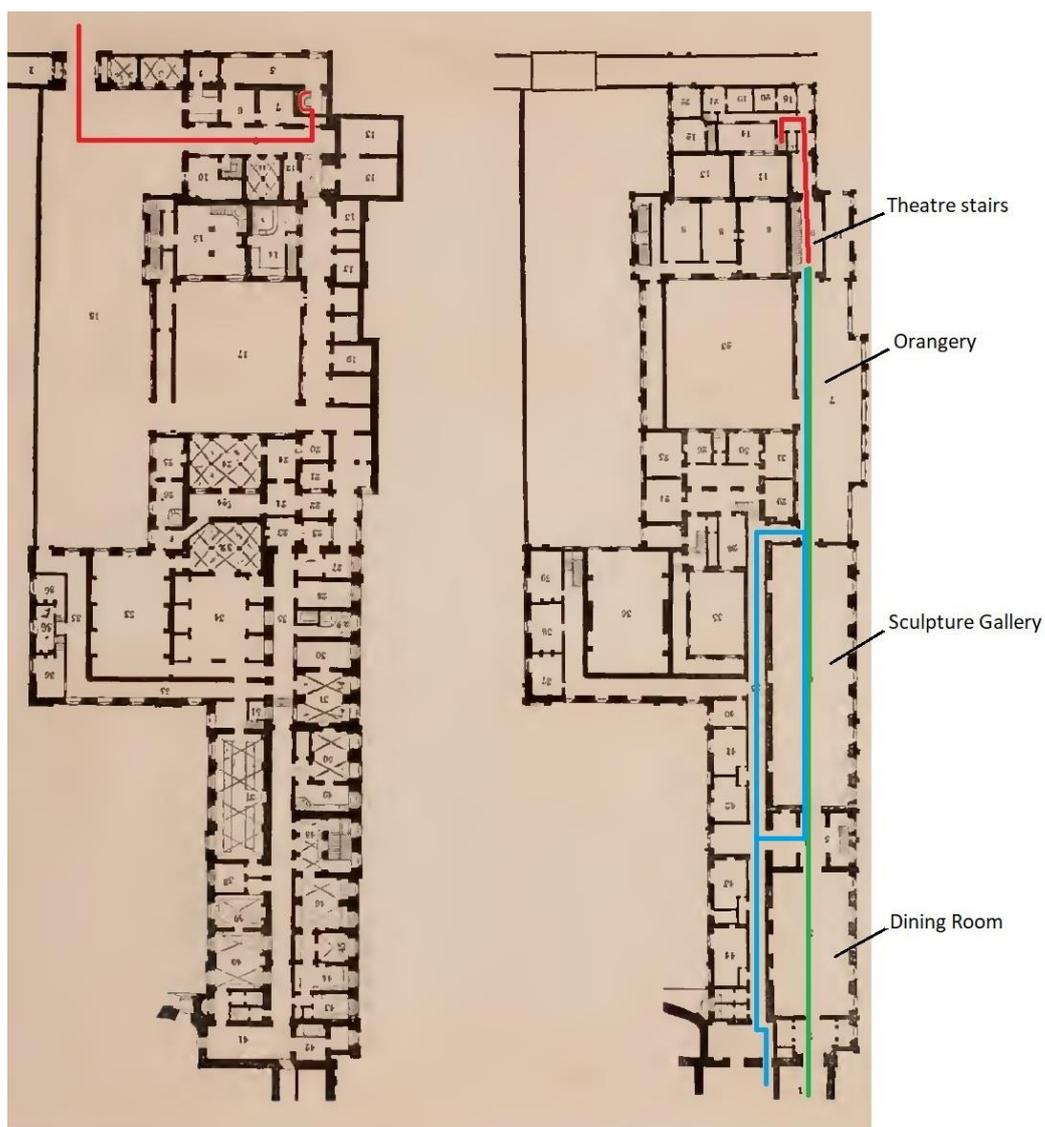


Figure 4.8 Ground (left) and first (right) floor plans of the north wing of Chatsworth House, from Glover, S. (1830) *The Peak Guide*. The coloured lines show the routes to the Theatre taken by ticket holders in the 1890s-1900s. Blue shows 'Reserved and Numbered' ticket holders; green shows the route of the house party; red shows 'Gallery' ticket holders.

## The House Party

As mentioned above, those with 'reserved and numbered seats' bypassed the Dining Room by way of the Bachelors' Corridor to reach the Orangery. The reason for avoiding the Dining Room can be gleaned from Wrench's papers: in a diary entry for 1901 he recorded, 'Dined as usual at Chatsworth & attended the clever theatricals afterwards. We sat so long over Cigarettes. The Prince smoking so much that we kept the ladies waiting in the Library & the audience in the theatre 20 minutes' (UNM Wr D 46; 11 Jan). We understand, then, that while the previous group of ticket holders were passing along the route described above, the house party - those elite members of society invited to stay overnight or entertained at events around the theatricals - were finishing dinner in the Dining Room, then retiring to the adjacent rooms to smoke and converse, before making their way to the Theatre.

Interestingly, despite there being far more archival traces of the house party in the DCA than any other member of Chatsworth's audience, it is difficult to say with any certainty the route that they took from the Dining Room, Library or Drawing Room to reach the lobby of the theatre stairs. We might assume that they passed along the enfilade through the public rooms, as illustrated in figure 4.8. Certainly, the reporter for the *High Peak News* in 1903 believed this to be the case, stating that 'the house party [...] entered the Theatre by way of the Sculpture Gallery and Orangery...' (14th Feb). Yet, as is apparent from many other newspaper accounts, the journalists were among the 'reserved and numbered seats' group and could not attest verifiably to the movements of the house party. Neither is Wrench explicit about the route taken by the house party when he is among their number.

The reason for doubt lies in the logistics of post-theatrical entertainment which frequently involved a supper provided for invited guests. This supper was a separate event to the dinner preceding the theatricals, and involved a much larger group of people, including the members of the house party. From Wrench's papers, it is apparent that the scale, timings and location of these suppers varied depending on the year. His recording of them becomes less fulsome as the years progress, as though he is becoming so accustomed to their happening that they become less worthy of mention. Nonetheless, they appear to have taken place after the theatricals every year except in 1899 - 'There was no supper for anyone this year on account of the Ball next week' (UNM Wr D 44; 6 Jan) - and possibly 1901 since there is no mention of them in Wrench's papers for that year.

Giving a more concrete idea of the scale and organisation of these suppers are records held in the DCA: a 'tabling plan for the amateur theatricals' in 1897 (fig. 4.9) and an accompanying letter indicating that this plan was re-purposed for a different event in 1905 (DE/CH/5/1/5/68). While Wrench tells us

that in 1898 supper was accommodated in both the Dining Room *and* the Sculpture Gallery (UNM Wr C 3084/1-2), he also confirms that in 1897 only 10 tables were used (UNM Wr C 3082) - consistent with the tabling plan. If the labelling on this tabling plan should cast any doubt on whether these tables were in the Dining Room or the Sculpture Gallery, the accompanying letter clarifies, 'I enclose a Plan of the Tables as we had them in the Dining Room on the occasion for supper'.



Figure 4.9 The tabling plan for the post-theatrical supper given in 1897. The plan shows the supper to have taken place in the Dining Room. (DE/CH/5/1/5/68)

The task of the household staff on a typical night of theatricals, then, was to prepare the Dining Room for dinner for the house party, serve at dinner, then clear everything away - including the large table - and reset the room with at least 10 individual tables made up for supper. In 1896, each table included 'jugs of champagne & bottles of wine and opened mineral waters' (UNM Wr C 3079). Neither was the supper necessarily a light affair, in 1896 including 'hot soup, game & cutlets. Fruit salad &c' (ibid.). This hive of behind-the-scenes activity would more than justify routing the 'reserved and numbered' ticket holders down the Bachelors' Corridor were the presence of the house party not enough. If the house party made their way through the Dining Room for the theatricals, the preparations for supper would have had to happen only in the window of time afforded by the length of the performance.

Rather than undermine the idea that the house party processed through the enfilade of rooms - including the Dining Room - to reach the Theatre, this evidence more likely testifies to the extraordinary capabilities of the household staff, under the direction of the house steward, Mr Lawrance, and goes some way to explaining why Lawrance was well credited in newspaper accounts alongside Gilson Martin for his role during the theatricals (touched on in 3.5 Alexander Stuart & George H. Longden: Backstage Management). Until any evidence surfaces to suggest otherwise, then, let us assume that the route illustrated in figure 4.8 was that taken by the house party to reach the Theatre stairs, where they, like the 'reserved and numbered' ticket holders, would climb three flights and enter the auditorium through the central doors.

The important distinction to be made between the illustration in figure 4.8 and the reality of the different groups of ticket holders moving through the rooms and corridors is one of timing. The programme illustrated at the top of this section was explicit as to the timings of the theatricals, allowing a 45 minute window for guests to arrive and find their way to the Theatre. Yet, as mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, the audience were kept waiting in the auditorium until the house party arrived. Therefore, the two groups marked as passing through the Orangery in figure 4.8, and that also climbed the same three flights of stairs to the auditorium, did not necessarily cross paths in that space on their way to the Theatre. This is significant for how spaces of the house were managed to reproduce the social and physical structures apparent in theatre architecture of the time. The significance of the late arrival of the house party into the auditorium is discussed in the next chapter section, 4.4 Organising the auditorium.

### 'Gallery'

Returning to the information from the theatrical programme, we come to those with tickets for the Gallery and the instruction, 'Entrance to the left of the lodge'. As already discussed, this denoted the archway on the left, Wyatville's 'Gateway to the Offices'. Only one mention of the route from this point forward has so far been identified across archival records and newspaper accounts. On the 25th January 1896, the *Derbyshire Times* informed its readers, 'those possessing the shilling tickets [will enter] by the top gate and the stair case which leads up to the baths'. This singular mention is in contrast to the rich coverage of the route for 'reserved and numbered tickets' described above. Why is this the case? The lack of record in newspapers likely points both to the absence of journalists in the Gallery and the ready familiarity with the route of those purchasing Gallery tickets. As I shall illustrate in this section, the route passes through service spaces. Indeed, I am only able to corroborate the newspaper's report by virtue of my own position as an embedded researcher in the service culture of

the house today, and a consequent familiarity with these spaces. The lack of coverage leaves a lacuna in understanding the spaces along this route and how they may have shaped the experience of Gallery ticket-holders - a lacuna that is consistent with the relative dearth of literature on servants and service spaces more broadly. As the following chapter will show, there is a close association between those with tickets to the Gallery and the working population of Chatsworth's estate. Underserved by both the archive and secondary literature, there is much to be gained by uncovering the perspectives of this group (in this case, quite literally) using different means. Therefore, in this section, I will explore these spaces in a little more depth than they have thus far been considered.

The route to the Gallery is marked in red on figure 4.8 above. I will use 20th-century architectural drawings to illustrate this in more detail, but it is worth dwelling on the initial outdoor space first for the tone that it sets. From the 'Entrance to the left of the lodge', ticket-holders would pass into the service courtyard of the north wing - an area separated from the driveway used by those with 'reserved and numbered' tickets by a tall wall. The atmosphere of this high wall and courtyard are illustrated well in a painting by William Cowen made to commemorate the construction of this new north wing in 1828 (fig. 4.10). The view here is from the south west corner of the courtyard. The painting captures the impressive architectural achievement of the 6th Duke of Devonshire by conveying the impression that we, the viewer, are inferior to the building towering over us: sunlight bounces off the bright stonework of the Belvedere while we occupy the area shrouded in shadow; the windows of the Belvedere look up and out to seemingly far-reaching horizons behind and beyond us while our view is hemmed in by the high wall to our left and the heavy stonework to our right. Mossy patches on the ground at our feet confirm the dampness of the air where we stand and the inaccessibility of light to this area. Just as with Wyattville's architectural drawing described above and seen in figure 4.3, the intention of this work is to elevate the status of the new entertainment rooms through contrast with the service areas. Despite being executed some 70 years prior to the period under scrutiny in this chapter, the symbolism conveyed by this painting of the service yard of the House remains to inform our interpretation of those that used, occupied and passed through it at the end of the 19th century.



Figure 4.10 *The Banqueting Apartments at Chatsworth* by William Cowen, 1828. Watercolour and pencil on paper. The painting shows the courtyard of the service area and the high wall separating this courtyard from the main drive to the House. Image reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Passing on foot through the gateway, a Gallery ticket-holder would turn immediately left before reaching the base of the Theatre tower - this is an entranceway seemingly masked by a tree in Cowen's painting but that forms the main staff entrance to the House today. Entering the house by a low service door, they would walk the short journey to the 'stair case' across a small enclosed service yard, bypassing doors to staff accommodation, workshops and the boiler room for the baths mentioned in the newspaper report. The 'stair case' taken by the ticket-holder is today referred to as the 'Dairy Stairs', and these were accessed by a door at the end of the passage and to the left (fig. 4.11). The confined, utilitarian nature of the Dairy Stairs is apparent in architectural plans of the Theatre Tower drawn up in 1982 (fig. 4.12), in which they snake up as one piece in a complex puzzle of connecting rooms and staircases. This complexity tells us that the Classical ideals of order, balance and symmetry, evident in Wyattville's scheme for the new, arched gateways nearby, did not need to be applied here, in the service spaces at the furthest reaches of the north wing. Once up these stairs, Gallery ticket-holders entered the lobby to a sequence of spaces thus far little explored by scholars in the context of Chatsworth's north wing: those of the 6th Duke's plunge bath (fig. 4.13). It is not known whether the

bath was in use at the end of the 19th century, though, given the relative disuse of the Theatre leading up to the 8th Duke's tenure (as described in 3.2 The intervening years, 1858-1892), it seems highly unlikely. Embedded in the wall in the niched lobby to the bath is a classical relief sculpture, installed here along with other pieces of sculpture by the 6th Duke (Cavendish 1844, 115) (fig. 4.14). This is perhaps the only point at which Gallery ticket-holders were exposed to the kind of artistic work on display along the entirety of the two other routes outlined here. From this lobby, the ticket-holder then approached the lobby of the Theatre stairs from the north - the opposite side to those with 'reserved and numbered' tickets (fig. 4.13).

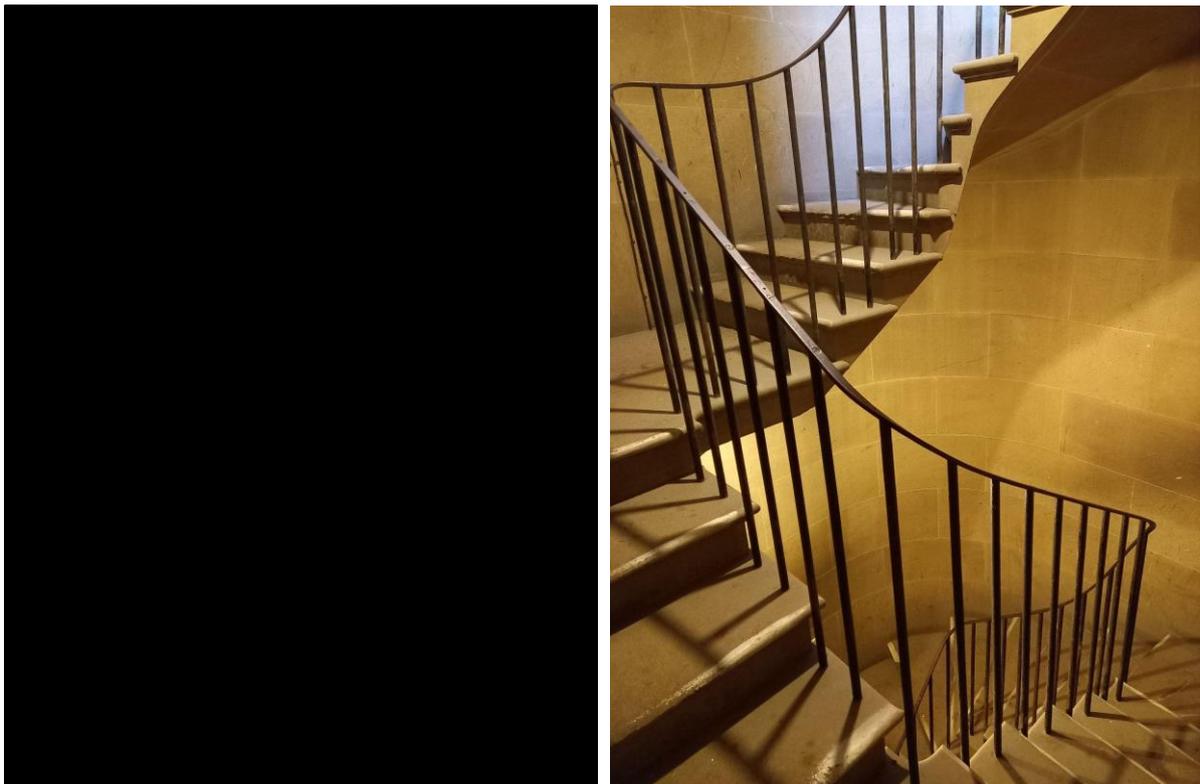


Figure 4.11 LHS: The door to the Dairy Stairs [image redacted]. RHS: The Dairy Stairs, March 2024.

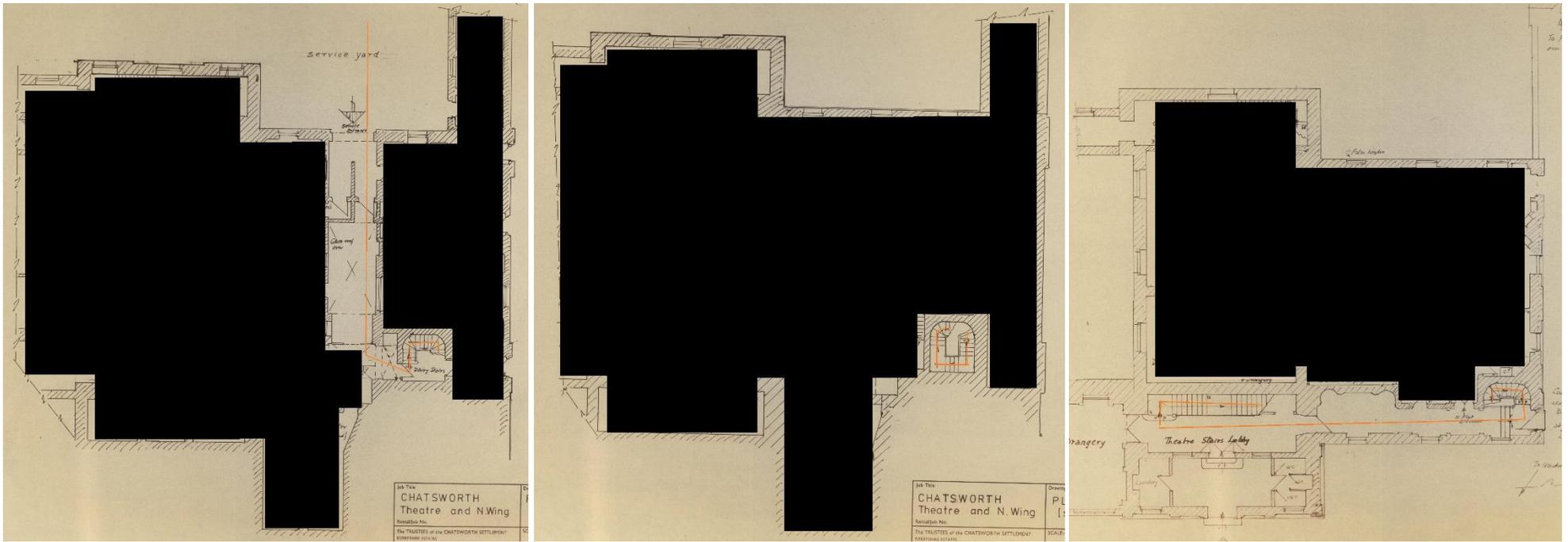


Figure 4.12 Floor plan of the ground floor (LHS), level between the ground and first floors (centre), and first floor of the Theatre Tower at Chatsworth House, 1982. (Uncatalogued). The orange line shows the route of Gallery ticket holders. [Image redacted.]



Figure 4.13 LHS: Top of the Dairy Stairs. RHS: Lobby of the 6th Duke's baths with the door opening to the lobby of the Theatre Building.



Figure 4.14 Classical relief sculpture on the wall outside the 6th Duke's baths.

It is worth drawing out a little further the difference between entering the lobby through this doorway and the one opposite. Where the south doorway from the Orangery has large double doors, the north one is smaller and single; the Theatre staircase leads up from the south doorway so anyone passing into the lobby from the Orangery need only to keep walking, while those entering from the north must cross the lobby and double back to ascend the stairs; the staircase also makes a turn with two half-landings against the north wall, meaning that the smaller doorway appears to lead under the stairs - an area overtly associated with low-status service quarters as enshrined by the phrase 'below stairs'. Despite the access it provides to the 6th Duke's baths, then, these observations serve to characterise the entrance into the Theatre lobby for those with Gallery tickets as low status.

Access to the Gallery was via narrow, winding, cantilevered service stairs that, in their entirety, ran from the landing halfway up the Theatre staircase all the way to the Belvedere above the Theatre. However, there are two access points to this staircase. The first is from the midpoint landing, while the second requires walking fully up the main Theatre stairs before passing the auditorium doors to take a more discreet door in the wall beyond them. There is no way to know through which door this service stairway was accessed. Yet the distinction between the two options is significant. Since there is as yet no evidence to suggest staggered use of the Theatre stairs, were the second, higher door used, we can assume that Gallery ticket-holders would share the whole journey up the Theatre stairs with those holding 'reserved and numbered' tickets. The groups of ticket-holders would only separate once they had reached the grand, double doors to the auditorium. If the first, lower door was used instead, Gallery ticket-holders would be segregated from the other ticket-holders sooner - a separation marked bodily by their turning to the left on the midway landing while those walking to the auditorium would continue in the direction from which they had just come. The dimensions of the landing make this turn more awkward than the gentle separation that would occur at the top of the Theatre stairs, where there is significantly more space. On one hand, this awkwardness could act as a useful marker that symbolically distinguished the Gallery ticket-holders in the same moment that the architecture of the space physically did the same. On the other, the awkwardness may have proved too much of a risk in terms of managing the safety of *all* the audience members, when ease of flow would presumably have been paramount. We know that safety was a concern during the theatricals thanks to newspaper mentions of firemen being present, 'on the staircase and along the corridors [...] ready to cope with any emergency' (*Derbyshire Times*, 8th Jan 1904). In both cases, we can see that for at least some of the journey up the Theatre stairs, both 'reserved and numbered' ticket holders and those with tickets for the Gallery would have merged and mingled.

### 4.3.3 Conclusion

This section has established that the routes taken to reach the Theatre on the occasion of theatricals were an integral part of the theatrical experience. In her seminal theorisation of audience reception, Susan Bennett divided the theatrical event into two 'frames', the inner and outer frames (2003). Where the inner frame constitutes the performance itself, the outer frame consists of all the external factors a theatre-goer brings with them when they watch it: cultural codes, social contexts, knowledge, prior experiences etc. Bennett argues that this outer frame is often more likely to influence a theatre-goer's interpretation of a performance than the content of the performance itself. While this thesis draws a line at considering on-stage action and, therefore, its possible reception(s) by Chatsworth's audience, Bennett's thesis emphasises the crucial role of prior experience for an audience - in this case, the embodied experience of taking one of three routes to reach Chatsworth's Theatre.

This experience began at the curtilage of the house and its significance is evidenced by the rich descriptions included in countless newspaper articles. While three distinct routes were identified, the analysis revealed a marked difference in experience between those beginning at the central gate in the curtilage, who travelled through the more 'public' spaces of the house, and those beginning at the 'entrance to the left', who moved broadly through service spaces. However, the distinction between these experiences cannot be neatly characterised by an upstairs/downstairs binary: those moving through 'public' spaces also traversed 'private' bedroom corridors, while the route through service spaces also passed through the lobby of the 6th Duke's baths which was populated by ancient statuary. Moreover, by necessity of a reliance on newspaper reports, we are provided with a biased account of the experience of travelling to the Theatre that obscures the perspective of those going to the Gallery.

The separation of routes according to the final destination within the Theatre is broadly consistent with the spatial organisation of public theatres of the time, and can likewise be seen to structure a social hierarchy. That the routes converge on the Theatre stairs evidences the steps taken to separate the routes from the outset; access to the Gallery would be equally possible following the route taken for 'reserved and numbered' ticket-holders. However, the section also identified the complex service choreography taking place behind the scenes that facilitated the non-theatrical events, such as dinner for the house party, and post-theatrical supper for invited guests. These non-theatrical events dictated the route taken by those with 'reserved and numbered' tickets. Likewise, the route to and from the

Gallery can be seen to offer a pragmatic solution to filter those guests who were not attending the post-theatrical supper.

Tracing the routes to the Theatre has afforded the opportunity to consider the theatricals as one event among a number on a given night. Seen this way, the separation of routes takes on nuance and social complexity. A similar exploration of the structure and organisation of the space within the Theatre itself is undertaken in the following section.

## 4.4 Organising the Auditorium

At the top of the previous section I established that there were three ticket prices for a night at the Chatsworth theatricals: 'Reserved and Numbered Seats' were available for either 5 shillings or 2 shillings and sixpence, while 'Gallery' seats could be purchased for a shilling (fig. 4.1). Yet, I also established that there was only one route to the Theatre for those with 'reserved and numbered' tickets, apparently regardless of the price point. So, how did the organisation of the auditorium further distinguish groups of ticket-holders? And, what might this information reveal about estate relations in the context of private theatre-going? In this section, I will argue that private theatre going was not only a reflection of existing estate relations but a means through which people could both structure and reflect changing status within the estate.

### 4.4.1 Key Archival Material

Organised together within the archive at Chatsworth are surviving seating plans and tickets from the 1890s-1900s. Two entries in the Household Accounts from two different makers in 1897 and 1903, respectively, attest to printing the plans (DE/CH/3/3/79 HV42; DE/CH/3/3/85 HV37). Indeed, on closer inspection, minor differences between surviving copies of the seating plans can be spotted, namely the delineation and the proportions of the seats, and the font size and type of the numbers contained within each seat (fig. 4.15). Yet, despite these discrepancies, the bare essentials of what the plans describe - the number and arrangement of seats - remain consistent. We might assume, then, that the seating arrangements in Chatsworth's Theatre stayed the same, or very similar, throughout the period under scrutiny in this chapter.

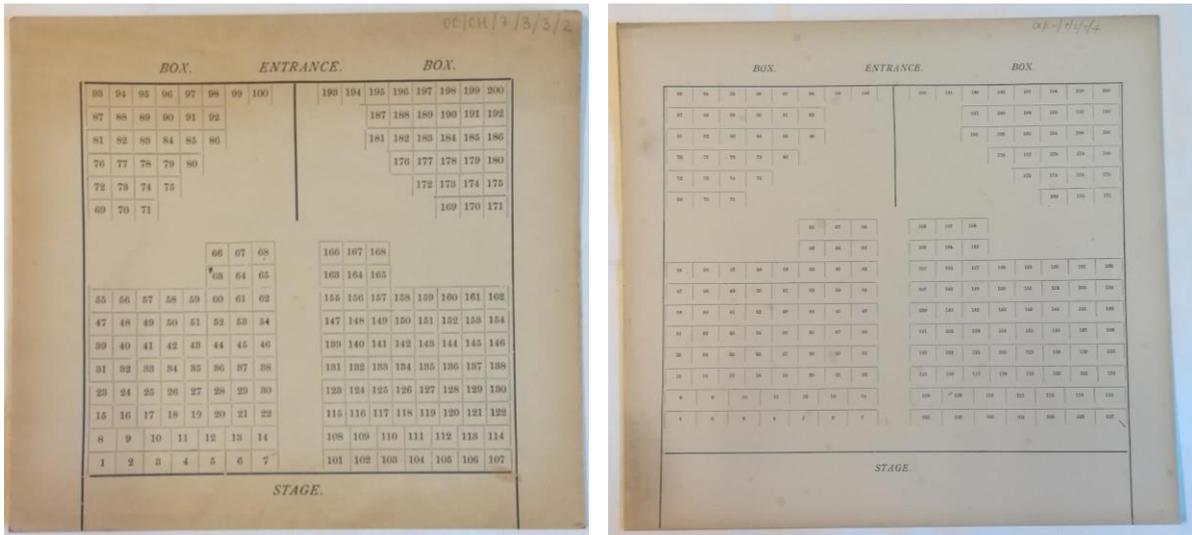


Figure 4.15 Seating plans for the main floor of the auditorium, likely to be from 1897 (left) and 1903 (right) (DE/CH/7/3/3/2 and .../4).

Regardless of the year they were produced, the plans, printed on thick paper or card, come in sets of two: one sheet represents the Gallery and the other the main floor of the auditorium. Since they are clearer to read, I shall use the plans likely to be from 1897 to illustrate this (fig. 4.16). From these we can discern five apparent seating blocks: one large one in the Gallery, splintered by a short access corridor from the entrance and along the front of the balcony; and, four on the main floor of the auditorium, where the seating block is first halved along a central vertical axis, leading from the entrance doors to the stage, then divided again horizontally by the architecture of the boxes. The curve of the boxes accounts for the stepped arrangement of seats within them and the protruding blocks of six seats attached to the main body of seating, which would have nestled in front of them (illustrated in fig. 4.17). We can see from the plans that, including the boxes, the main floor of the auditorium accommodated 200 seats, and the Gallery 115. Closer scrutiny of the front two rows of seats - those nearest the stage - shows them to be roomier than those behind, with 14 seats to a row, rather than 16. This discrepancy will be discussed in a wider context further on in this section.





Figure 4.17 A photograph taken from the front of one of the boxes showing the curve of the boxes and the space for chairs on the main floor of the auditorium to nestle into this curve.

Complementing these plans are the surviving tickets - 229 in total, spread across seven performances in the years 1902-1904 and 1906 (it is worth remembering that there were often two evenings of performances per year - see Appendix C). The distribution of the surviving archived tickets across these years and performances is uneven, and their patchy presence within the archive raises more questions than answers. For example, why do tickets exist from these years and not others? Why, when there are so few tickets remaining for five of the seven performances - fewer than 12 each - are there 103 tickets for the February 1903 performance and 96 for the second performance in 1904? Does the existence of these tickets in the archive, and their distribution across the years, tell us anything about how the tickets were used or exchanged for seats? There are enough circumstantial clues to hint that there is more to be unearthed by pursuing some of these questions. For example, no tickets survive in the archive for 1905, the year in which the programme of entertainment deviated from the norm by employing two solo, professional performers (Appendix C); or, the years 1903 and 1904, for which we have an unusual wealth of tickets, were significant in their hosting (or, in the case of 1903, *almost*

hosting) the newly-crowned King. However, for the purpose of understanding the organisation of the auditorium, we shall limit our interrogation to the information gleaned from the tickets that we have.



Figure 4.18 An example of the three ticket types extant in the DCA. NB. those for 'Front' and 'Second Seat' are from a different performance to that for the Gallery (no Gallery tickets remain for 8th January 1904; no Front or Second Seat tickets remain for 7th January 1904) (DE/CH/7/3/4/1).

For the most part, the tickets that we have can be grouped into three types: Front Seat, Second Seat and Gallery (fig. 4.18). This pattern is consistent with the three bands of tickets advertised to purchase on the programme but alone does not tell us which seats marked in the seating plan correspond to being a 'Front' or 'Second Seat'. However, all the tickets are numbered, which means we can compare the numbers on the tickets to the seating plan to infer this information. In figure 4.19, I have mapped the tickets that we have in the archive for the performance on 8th January 1904 onto the 1897 plan of the main auditorium - pink denotes a 'Front Seat' while green denotes a 'Second Seat'. Seen this way, it becomes immediately clear that a 'Second Seat' corresponds to a seat in, or in front of, a box, while a 'Front Seat' is located in the main block of auditorium seating.



for a paper ticket, we can assume that they existed, based on the survival of one ticket from this seating section. However, how these tickets changed hands, the Duchess's practical role in distributing them and who collected them, where, in exchange for entry to the Theatre, remain open questions. What we can say is likely by bringing all this evidence together is that 5 shillings bought a 'Front Seat', which means that the 'reserved and numbered' seat costing 2 shillings and 6 pence bought a 'Second Seat'. In other words, the more expensive the ticket, the closer a ticket-holder would be to both the stage and the most eminent members of the house party.



Figure 4.20 Illustration of the house party in the front rows of Chatsworth's Theatre, from *The Graphic*, 8th January 1904 (CH11/1/5).

However, proximity to the most elite members of the house party was not only achievable through purchasing a seat in one of the rows behind them. We have established that the house party arrived in the Theatre once the rest of the audience was congregated and present. Sitting at the front necessitated that they process down the aisle between the two blocks of seating on the main floor of the auditorium. In theory, the benefit of a 'reserved and numbered' ticket enabled a ticket-holder to choose a specific seat to purchase, and we might assume that the seating plan was produced, at least in part, to enable this choice. Purchasing a ticket for an aisle seat would result in the house party passing by within inches, bringing the ticket-holder within a close distance and, perhaps more importantly, providing an opportunity for eye-contact or personal acknowledgement. This is illustrated powerfully by a newspaper reproduction of an image from 1907, in which the proximity of those in the aisle seats to the arriving house party is vividly realised (fig. 4.21).



Figure 4.21 A newspaper reproduction of an image by Frank Dadd and D. Macpherson from 1907, showing the house party arriving into the Theatre and passing the assembled audience (*The Graphic*; London Vol. 75, Iss. 1,937, (Jan 12, 1907): 50-51).

Wrench unashamedly attests to the social power of this opportunity afforded by proximity - whether seated near the house party or elsewhere - frequently recording interactions in his diaries and family letters. For example, in January 1896, he wrote, 'We went early [to the Theatre] & were rewarded by hearing Johnson's band play for nearly half an hour, until the house party came in. We sat in the next row & they talked to us' (UNM Wr C 3079). By 1897, this interaction - or, at the very least, Wrench's description of it - had become more involved: 'Some of the aristocrats nudging me as they passed my seat, some nodding & some the Duke amongst them speaking to me' (UNM Wr D 42). Wrench's proximity to the house party in the Theatre enabled such exchanges to take place. Furthermore, that these interactions occurred in the Theatre and not elsewhere had particular potency for Wrench's social standing - a fact acknowledged with some self-awareness by Wrench in a round-robin-type letter to his family in January 1898: 'The Prince [of Wales] walked across the big dining room to shake me cordially by the hand, I did feel flattered by being recognised, though the nod & smile he gave me in the Theatre on Friday night was even more satisfactory from being in sight of so many of my neighbours' (UNM Wr C 3084/1-2). Thus, despite being known to the Prince and greeted by him in the context of the elite house party at dinner, the Theatre offered Wrench the chance for this acquaintance to be observed and, therefore, acknowledged by his social peers. If the instances that Wrench recorded are anything to go by, no other context offered quite the same opportunity.

#### 4.4.3 The Theatre as an Index of Social Mobility

The examples in the paragraph above have been chosen and included chronologically to reflect a social momentum apparent in Wrench's accounts of his involvement in the annual entertainments at Chatsworth that included the theatricals, culminating in his being awarded the Victorian Order 4th Class by King Edward VII in 1907 (UNM Wr D 52). This involvement exceeded his visits to the Theatre: for the winter weeks that the Duchess hosted guests at Chatsworth in this period, Wrench was frequently called upon to join the party for dinner, invited to participate in New Year celebrations, and gifted expensive Christmas presents. To a great extent, much of this involvement appears to have been the standard expectation of and by someone in Wrench's position on the estate: he had received gifts from the Duchess on Christmas Eve several times prior to the period under scrutiny here - and therefore before the Theatre had been installed; dinner invitations were often last-minute or clashed with his own familial duties at home; and, with his characteristic self-awareness, Wrench often acknowledged that he was only invited to make up gentlemen numbers. We cannot necessarily rely upon his inclusion in these events, then, to trace his increasingly valued role; the pattern of his attendance and his role as on-site doctor to the household remained consistent through the late 1890s and early 1900s. However, we *can* quite clearly map his upward social trajectory through his interactions in the Theatre and his position in the auditorium.

In 1898, Wrench had been pleased by a nod and smile from the Prince in the Theatre in view of his neighbours, but by 1901 this interaction had significantly improved: 'The Prince was particularly civil to me & enhanced his recognitions by performing them in a public manner. [...] In the theatre he spoke to me & when he was leaving Chatsworth [...] he caught sight of me, came across the Hall, shook my hand & thanked me for my attention to his Valet's injured rib' (UNM Wr C 3096/2/2). By 1904, arguably the apotheosis of the Theatre's reputation, Wrench's elevated social standing on the estate was cemented: 'I had dined in the house so came into the Theatre and sat with the house party and from 'Olympus' greeted my relations & neighbours with patronising nods' (UNM Wr C 3109/1-3). Wrench's characterisation of his seating in the auditorium as 'Olympus' speaks both to his inclusion among the members of the house party *and* his geographic location in the audience relative to his 'relations & neighbours'. In this way, the event of the theatricals and the concomitant organisation of the auditorium acted as an index by which to measure social mobility.

Wrench was not in service to the Cavendish household; he had bought his Baslow practice in 1862 and charged for his services (Beardmore 2019). As such, he can be seen to belong to the professional classes, and his deference to the social whims of the Duchess was likely as much motivated by his

professional ambitions as it was by implicit social factors of respect. Carol Beardmore tells us that the profession of a Victorian doctor could be financially perilous (ibid.). One way to ensure security was to cultivate a trusted relationship with a wealthy patient, through whom further introductions could be made and patients secured (ibid.). Sacrificing time with his family to take up last-minute dinner invitations at Chatsworth was beneficial to Wrench's professional relationships and reputation, and, therefore, his financial security. His 'rise' through the auditorium can be seen in the same light and speaks to the Theatre's role in shaping opportunities for mobility for the local professional class. Wrench's regular inclusion in house party events, however, set him apart from other local professionals and testifies to the nuances of social relations within and across his class and that of the rest of the house party - and, therefore, within and across those in the main body of the auditorium.

#### 4.4.4 Complicating a Hierarchical Organisation

Wrench's characterisation of 'Olympus' also reinforces an idea that the presence and location of the house party within the auditorium represented the peak of a hierarchy among the congregated audience. It is tempting to map this hierarchy directly onto the seating arrangements and their attendant ticket prices, as described above. Following this conceit, the front two rows, occupied by the house party, would represent the top of the hierarchy, the rest of the 'Front Seats' the next level - with those offering proximity to the house party set slightly above - the 'Second Seats' the next, and the Gallery the lowest. We might further read this hierarchy as relating directly to class distinctions. However, this was not necessarily always so neat. In 1896, Wrench tells us that, 'The house party of about 30 (including the actors) occupied the front row of stalls & one of the boxes' (UNM Wr C 3079). The location of part of the house party in a box - a 'Second Seat' - complicates the hierarchical model presented here and prompts us to consider that the use and organisation of the auditorium shifted and evolved over the years, just as much as the activity on- or backstage (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Exploring Wrench's account from 1896, there was certainly the logistical consideration of how to accommodate a large house party in the arrangement of seats as we see them in the seating plan. The more commodious front two rows accommodated 28, while the house party frequently numbered above 30. In splitting the house party, we might also come to acknowledge that the house party itself was subject to certain social, or class hierarchies: those that would sit with the Duke, Duchess and their royal visitors, and those that would not. By leaving the rows behind the Duke and Duchess available for other ticket-holders, as opposed to populating them with the lower echelons of the house party, it is possible to infer that the Duchess was permitting increased accessibility to herself and her most esteemed guests, or that she was loosening the boundaries of class distinctions. We have already discussed the potential for social capital afforded by proximity, as illustrated by Wrench. In actively

creating opportunities for proximity, of allowing a certain level of co-mingling, we can read the Duchess as seeking to elevate the status of a band of ticket-holders beyond those already included in house party activities, as Wrench was.

That Wrench includes mention of the actors as being in the audience raises a number of questions that require us to consider the logistics by which these actors could then appear on stage, costumed and made up. The spaces in the House that the actors occupied to prepare for their performances remain something of a mystery, not even touched on in Leo Trevor's thorough 'Recollections', despite his assurances that the actors were, indeed, very well made up (1903, p. 336). It is unlikely that anyone participating in the theatricals would reach the stage directly from the auditorium, despite that being an approach that we, as visitors and staff, use today: a plan of the scenery from 1897 shows just how little room there was to manoeuvre between the footlights and the proscenium border (fig. 4.22), while the musical band was stationed along the foot of the stage preventing easy access. Newspaper images that include the band also suggest the presence of large ferns either side of the orchestra at the foot of the stage (seen below in figs. 4.28 and 4.29). An actor sitting in the auditorium, then, would have to leave the auditorium and negotiate the service corridors of the house to reach the door providing access to the stage (visible in fig. 4.22 as stairs).

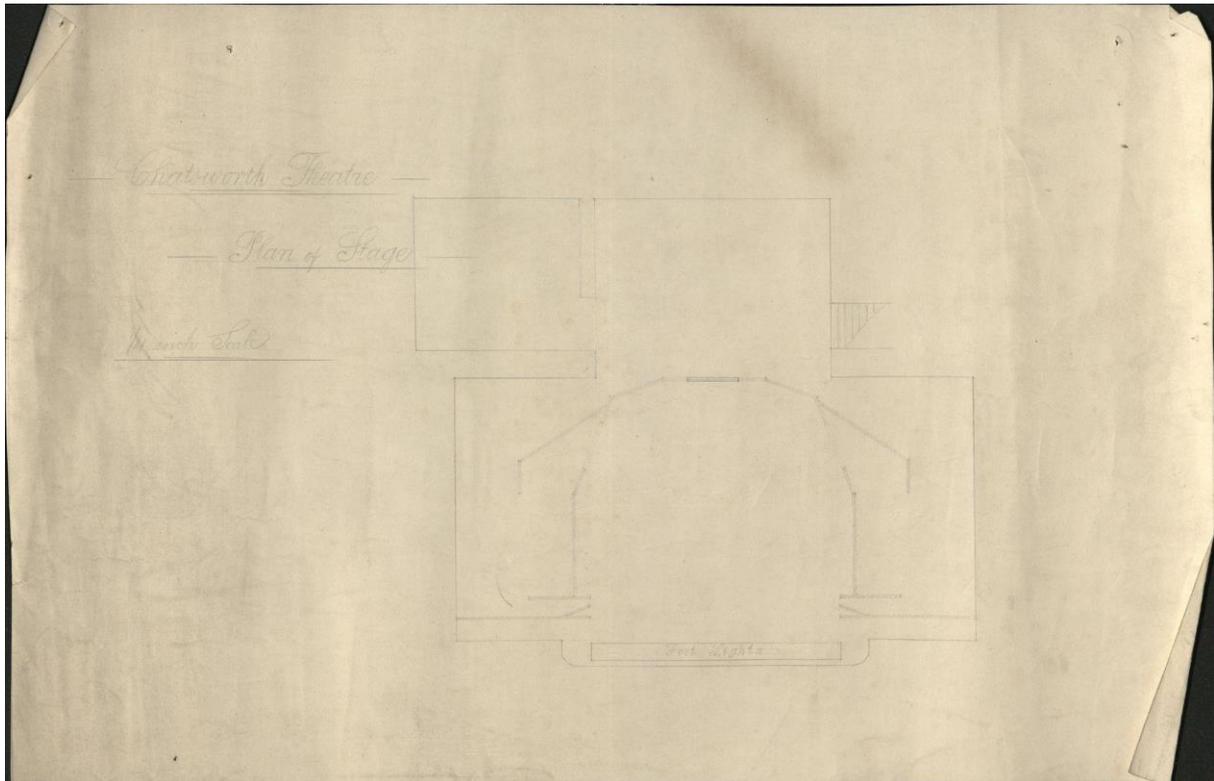


Figure 4.22 Plan of the stage with scenery arranged for a production in 1897. The front of the stage - where the foot lights are located - is at the bottom of the image. The stairs that provide access to the back of the stage are visible on the top right of the picture (DE/CH/5/1/5/82). © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth.

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The perspective of an actor in this scenario is intriguing. Which route would they take, and what spaces of the house would be co-opted to become backstage adjuncts of the Theatre? To what extent did the actors navigate this route unaccompanied? Unfortunately, no evidence has come to light to support an exploration of these questions. However, the location of the actors in a box in the auditorium is notable for how the box operated in this context. Though missing today, an internal set of doors at the front of the boxes is visible in historic photographs (fig. 4.23) and traces can still be found in the fabric of the room (fig. 4.24). These doors would have allowed the occupants of the boxes to come and go to and from the Theatre without entering the main body of the auditorium. The decision in 1896, then, to split the house party along these lines may have followed practical constraints concerning unobtrusive access for the actors. Further consideration of the boxes is given in the following sub-section.



Figure 4.23 Photograph reproduced on a postcard showing the auditorium of the Theatre in c. 1907 (CH11/2/5). © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.



Figure 4.24 Evidence of the original interior set of double doors. On the left, the curved door reveal and top post for hanging the door. On the right, the central fastening plate for securing one door shut.

It is possible that the arrangement of the house party within the auditorium as recorded by Wrench in 1896 did not conform to the structure and hierarchy presented by the 1897 seating plan. That no plan survives from 1896 may suggest a development in the formalisation of the arrangement of the auditorium over the ensuing years. We know from the Household Accounts that 200 chairs for the auditorium were purchased in time for the 1896 theatricals (DE/CH/3/3/78 HV 12), but the use to which these chairs were put in subsequent years may well have changed. Indeed, if the house party occupied only the front row of the main seating block in 1896, by 1902 newspapers were recording that ‘the first few rows of chairs were reserved for them’ (*Onlooker*; 18th Jan), ‘the first four rows’ in 1904 (*Derbyshire Times*; 8th Jan), and ‘the front three rows’ in 1906 and 1907 (*Derbyshire Times*; 6th Jan, and *Sheffield Telegraph*; 5th Jan). Maintaining a level of circumspection when interpreting the newspaper reports, we might still conclude that the house party began to spill over the front two, more commodious, rows into the one or two behind. Whether or not the house party was split further, as in 1896, this overspill still represented something of a hierarchy within the group, given the diminishing availability of space between the front two rows and those behind.

#### 4.4.5 The Boxes

The extent to which the organisation and the architecture of the auditorium complied with a hierarchical model more broadly can be considered in more detail with reference to the boxes. In scholarly literature on public theatres and histories of social life, theatre boxes carry powerful weight as frames of sociability (Hall-Witt 2007). Broadly speaking, the significance of boxes in this light derives from studies of 18th and early-19th century metropolitan opera houses, which had curved or horse-shoe shaped auditoria with boxes lining the walls (sometimes on two tiers), and rows of benches in the pit (the flat area of floor in the middle of the horse-shoe) and galleries (above the boxes). Demographic analyses of these auditoria can confidently assert that the boxes were occupied by nobility and gentry, and less confidently state that in the pit were to be found, ‘a mix of peers, gentry, merchants, artists, and others of the middling sort’, while ‘the most humble spectators, including, it is suggested, apprentices, servants, and prostitutes’ sat in the gallery (Greig 2013, 76). The efforts made by elite theatre-goers to secure the ‘right’ box encapsulate the motivation for going to the theatre as far more of a social event than a cultural one (Davis 2022). Indeed, the layout and occupation of theatre boxes have been powerfully shown to have both structured social life and displayed social hierarchy for the benefit of everyone present (Greig 2013). At a time when auditoria were lit during performances, being seen in the ‘right’ box had significant social - and political - power. The theatre box has thus become emblematic of these social manoeuvres.

However, the design of public theatrical auditoria changed significantly over the course of the 19th century and, generally speaking, full-height partitions were removed in favour of more open-plan aspects (Leacroft 1988; Booth 1995). This is not to say that the social exercises undertaken in earlier theatres went with the removal of boxes - the organisation of later 19th century auditoria and front of house spaces became increasingly stratified (Leacroft 1988, 291), potentially offering similar opportunities of being seen in the 'right' seating area. Only that we should exercise caution in bringing to bear on Chatsworth's boxes the symbolism ascribed to those in the public theatres.

The presence of the internal double doors in front of the boxes, mentioned above (figs. 4.23 and 4.24), may have offered a pragmatic arrangement for actors in 1896, but they also had the effect of preventing ticket-holders for the boxes from accessing the main floor of the auditorium. The inclusion of this second pair of doors created a vestibule from which ticket-holders could access the boxes through openings in a timber partition that ran the full height and depth of this vestibule space. Wyattville's original sketch for the boxes, discussed in Chapter 2, suggested the inclusion of doors to the openings (WY/N/3/1a), and there is visible physical evidence to support their creation (fig. 4.25). No doors survive today and their existence in the 1890s is currently unknown, but their presence would have some bearing on the experience and sightlines of some of the boxes' occupants. Had the doors to the openings been closed, the visibility of those seated here would be restricted to that offered by the opening at the front of the box - evoked vividly in figure 4.26. However, had the doors been open or nonexistent, those seated towards the rear of the box would be privy to the first moments of arrival of the house party. If we concede that the arrival of the house party was a significant aspect of the event of the theatricals, as much of the evidence suggests it was, then this early view into the more intimate confines of the entrance vestibule was something of a privileged preview.



Figure 4.25 A collection of four images showing evidence of a former door in the doorway to one of the boxes. Top-left, the door stop is present within the frame; top-right and bottom-left show evidence of the former hinges; bottom-right, evidence of the former strike plate, indicating the existence and position of the door handle.

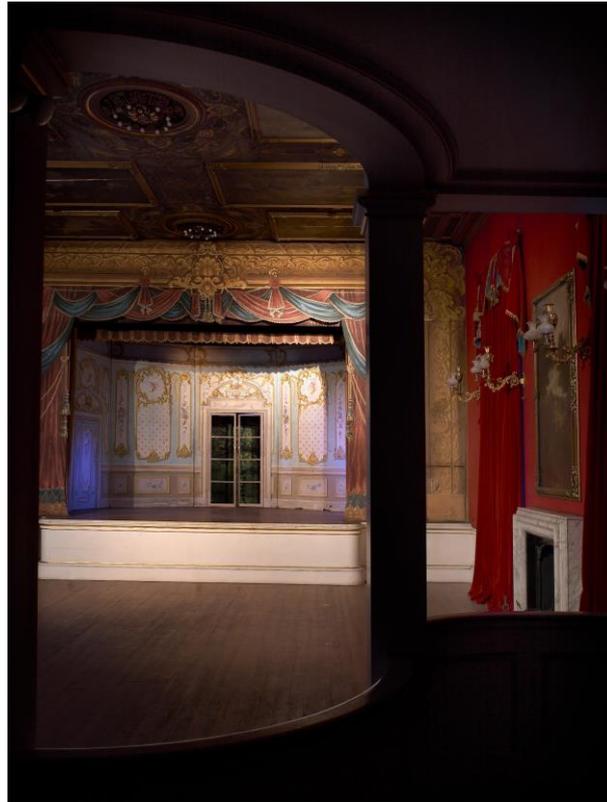


Figure 4.26 View of the stage and the main floor of the auditorium from the back of a box. 2011. © Image taken by Paul Barker. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Beyond the question of the doors to the boxes, the architecture of these areas indicates widely diverse experiences depending on one's position within them. The front-most edge of the curve in the structure extends beyond the edge of the Gallery above, creating the opportunity for those sitting at this point to enjoy an almost unimpeded view across the room and up to the ceiling. Since the boxes are elevated by two steps (evident in fig. 4.25), this view was above the heads of those occupying 'Front Seats'. Yet, only a little further back, and the view becomes compromised by a post supporting the corner of the Gallery above. Something of this range of experience can be understood from the newspaper illustration in figure 4.21 above, reproduced in detail in figure 4.27. Here, the artist has exercised some creative licence to depict guests peering around a second post on the left of the image - a post that in reality abuts the wall and precludes the possibility of it blocking the view. Nonetheless, at least four people in the front row of the box are pictured clearly and without the necessity to crane their heads, while those behind are forced to look around and between, their faces becoming increasingly shadowed the further back they are. Comparing this artist's impression to the seating plan (fig. 4.19) and the contemporary photograph (fig. 4.23), we can see that three people would have occupied the front row of the boxes and been afforded the unimpeded view across the room. The photograph also shows the seating in the boxes to be tiered, with those sitting at the back to be

notably higher than those at the front, suggesting a greater degree of visibility for these ticket-holders than the illustration depicts. Nonetheless, in occupying an elevated position above the main floor of the auditorium, yet free of the visual impediments of the Gallery above, its supporting post and any other audience members, it is evident that those in the *front* row of the boxes would have had a singularly clear view of both the stage and the arriving house party. Not only did this set their experience apart from other occupants of the boxes, it also appears to be a clearer view than that afforded to many occupying 'Front Seats', particularly during the arrival of the house party, blocked as their view was by those standing around and in front of them.

If those at the front of the boxes had full view of the rest of the main floor of the auditorium, then it stands to reason that the reverse was true: that they were fully *visible* to the main floor of the auditorium - evidenced by their faces depicted clearly in the newspaper illustration. Yet, with the seating firmly arranged to face towards the stage, and with the audience's attention focused in this direction for the majority of the performance, there may have been only fleeting moments in which this visibility was significant. Even before the performance had begun, Wrench's writings imply that the orchestra, situated at the foot of the stage, provided the main focal point for the awaiting audience. Identifying moments in which those at the front of the boxes may have been seen, we can infer from the newspaper illustration that the main body of the audience turned their bodies, at least partly, to acknowledge the arrival of the house party, and we may imagine - though it is mentioned far less in the source material - that the departure of the house party elicited much the same movement. Indeed, this latter event would potentially situate the boxes' inhabitants in the eyeline of the house party, creating an opportunity for those at the front of the boxes to be seen and acknowledged directly by the most powerful members of the audience. Beyond the arrival and departure of the house party it is difficult to ascertain other moments in which being seen at the front of the boxes would offer a social advantage.

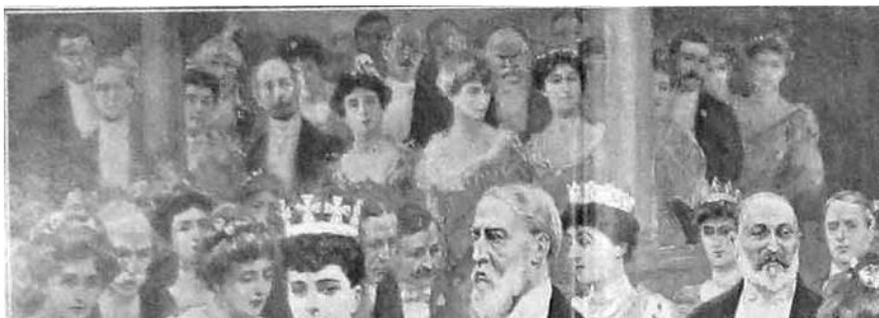


Figure 4.27 A detail from *The Graphic* in January 1907, showing the occupants of one of the boxes (London Vol. 75, Iss. 1,937, (Jan 12, 1907): 50-51).

Despite the elevated view for those at the front of the boxes, and the possibility of an exclusive glimpse at the house party for those at the back, the internal double doors to the Theatre, the timber partition creating the vestibule and the architectural curve to the front of the boxes created physical barriers that prevented those sitting here from mingling with anyone on the main floor of the auditorium. Furthermore, they made opportunities for interaction with the house party in the context of the Theatre far less likely. Given all these restrictions, those within the boxes were potentially at a social disadvantage to those occupying one of the 12 'Second Seats' in the main auditorium - otherwise comparable by their pricing.

Returning to understand these boxes in the broader context of public theatre architecture at the time, with their location at the rear of the auditorium, compromised sightlines and position underneath the gallery, they more closely resemble seats located in the pit - the area of seating underneath the first balcony, behind the stalls. Summarising a contemporary theatre architect of the early 20th century, Leacroft describes the social relationship between those in the pit and those in the stalls: 'while the folk [in the pit] sit on benches separated from the people in their armchairs only by a low partition across the area, they must keep to their segregated area, and on no account may they mix, at least until they have turned the corner outside the theatre' (1988, p. 291). Though we know that the occupants of Chatsworth's boxes sat on chairs rather than benches, the low partition that Leacroft mentions is clearly evident. So too is the apparent lack of opportunity for mixing with those seated in front, restricted as they were by the architecture of the boxes.

However, those at the front of the boxes *could* have conversed with those sitting beyond the partition - particularly those in the remaining 'Second Seats', nestled as these seats were into the curve of the boxes. It is interesting to consider to what extent public theatrical conventions might have constrained this localised interaction; whether those seated in the boxes, by virtue of the price of their ticket and the physical barriers identified here, felt themselves to be 'pitties', as ticket-holders for this area were commonly known (Glasstone 1975, 72), and therefore whether they felt bound by the unspoken rules dictating cross-partition communication. Indeed, should this be something we were able to explore with evidence, we may even come to question the convention in public theatres, since the argument hangs on an interpretation of the architecture and an assumed conformity of audience behaviour to fit this architecture.

Despite the physical characteristics of these boxes conforming to the descriptions of pit seating at this time, we know from the previous section that the occupants of the boxes and those of the main auditorium *did* mix, at the very least on the long route through the house, from the Sub-hall to the Theatre. This is in direct contrast to Leacroft's identification of separate front-of-house routes for all the various seating areas in public theatres of the time, described at the beginning of this chapter. It therefore brings into question both the strict audience segregation proposed by theatre architects of public theatres and, conversely, the extent to which Duchess Louise sought to recreate or reinforce this segregation in the organisation of Chatsworth's auditorium. We might assume that the two-tier 'reserved and numbered' ticket pricing for Chatsworth's Theatre reflected or constructed social hierarchies, with those occupying the seats in these tiers embodying the social and economic status that the prices represented. However, given the lack of segregation between these groups on the route to the Theatre, the difference in ticket prices may simply have been an acknowledgement of the physical and social constraints imposed by the architecture of the boxes.

It would be interesting to extend this consideration to the Gallery. The historic photograph seen in figure 4.23 shows banked seating extending to the rear wall of the space, while benches are provided at the front. Such a seating arrangement suggests a wide range of experiences within the single area denoted by ticket price and access route. The lack of regard newspaper reports gave for the route to the Gallery also extended to illustrations of it. Therefore, an analysis of the arrangement of the Gallery would be useful for drawing out the experiences of those who sat there. Unfortunately, the constraints of this project have prevented me from analysing this area in any depth. However, a reckoning with those areas of the auditorium and groups in the Theatre who go broadly unconsidered in newspaper accounts is undertaken in the following section, with an analysis of the presence of the orchestra.

#### 4.4.6 The Orchestra

Occupying something of a grey area conceptually, if we consider the definition of 'auditorium' as that given at the top of this Chapter - 'the part of a building occupied by the audience' - was the orchestra or band. Conceptualised thus, it would be easy to disregard this group in considerations of the architectural and social organisation of the auditorium, since they were paid to perform rather than paying to watch. Indeed, it is notable that the presence or location of the orchestra was omitted on the seating plans for the auditorium. Yet, as an object highlighted in the previous Chapter, the commissioning of a specialist orchestra rail in time for the 1896 performances precisely delineated the auditorium floor space into that occupied by the audience and that occupied by the band. The rail was therefore another feature of the organisation of the Theatre space. If our consideration of the

auditorium is the physical space of the Theatre not taken up by the stage, then we must bring the position and presence of the orchestra into account.

We can spot the specially-commissioned orchestra rail separating the front row of the audience from the shadowy back of the band leader in the newspaper illustration shown in figure 4.19, though the rail and band make more of a feature in other newspaper and magazine images from 1902 (fig. 4.28), 1904 (fig. 4.29) and 1907 (fig. 4.30). The vividness with which the band is depicted in these images contrasts starkly with the grey area this group occupies when we think of the auditorium only conceptually, and reinforces our responsibility to include this group in considerations of this space. Indeed, the band is arguably the focal point of figure 4.28, the house party in the front rows conceding its status to those on-stage through enraptured faces, with the band leader emanating a sense of authority over the entire scene. The orchestra's position here, along the foot of the stage, was consistent with the placement of the band in other contemporary elite private theatrical set-ups, such as those in the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor Castle (fig. 4.31) - a particularly resonant comparison, since that room was also designed by Sir Jeffrey Wyattville. However, the inclusion of lush ferns and dense foliage between the band and the audience, evident in the image of Windsor's theatricals, acts as a deep barrier between these groups, and definitively characterises the band as belonging more to the world of the stage than the auditorium.



Figure 4.28 Magazine illustration of the front rows of the audience, the orchestra and some of the performers in Chatsworth's Theatre, January 1902, from *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 21st June 1902.



Figure 4.29 Magazine illustration of one corner of Chatsworth's Theatre during a night of theatricals in January 1904, depicting the first row of the audience, the orchestra and Daisy, Princess of Pless, performing on stage.

From *The Sphere*, 16th January 1904.



Figure 4.30 Illustration of the front rows of the audience in Chatsworth's Theatre, from *The Graphic*, 7th January 1907 (found in CH11/1/5). Evident on the right hand side is the specially-commissioned orchestra rail and some members of the performing orchestra.



Figure 4.31 A screenshot of a short film on the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor Castle by the Royal Collection Trust. The image shows the staging of a performance of *Carmen* in 1892. It is possible to see music stands along the base of the stage and a harp on the left hand side. The ornate top of a chair can just be seen in the foreground, behind a rail. (Source: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/waterloo-at-windsor/windsor-castle/film-the-waterloo-chamber>)

At Chatsworth, the relationship between the band, the stage and the audience was somewhat porous - a characterisation arguably symbolised by the simpler, moveable orchestra rail, and captured effectively in figure 4.28, described above. In the previous Chapter we saw how the Chatsworth Hotel acted as a social nexus for those individuals employed in the staging of the theatricals - individuals that included the band, stage managers (who were also sometimes Chatsworth staff) and other

creatives, brought in on an ad hoc basis to support the performers and performances. Given that the performers were frequently included amongst the house party and accommodated in the main House, we can begin to identify networks that connect the orchestra to the elite social groups present at the theatricals, beyond their mere physical proximity within the space of the Theatre. This is reinforced by the band's employment as musical entertainment at the evening events surrounding the occasion of the theatricals, particularly during and following dinners.

Wrench's accounts are particularly key in connecting the band in this way, since he attests to often being the only person present to enjoy their music following dinner. On the 8th of January, 1901, Wrench recorded, 'I had the lovely Band Carl Heuberts Viennese all to myself for near an hour in the picture gallery. The young people in Theatre & the seniors playing Bridge Whist in the Drawing Room' (UNM Wr D 46). A week later, following the nights of theatricals, he was joined by the Duchess: 'the beautiful Viennese Band remains. Sadly neglected by the company - the elders absorbed in Bridge and the younger caring more for Waltzes than good music. In consequence the Duchess & I sat out alone to hear the Band play several beautiful operas after which the young people danced' (ibid.). Based on Wrench's accounts, then, while most of the house party behaved as though the band was simply a conduit to background musical entertainment, both he and Duchess Louise stopped to listen actively, in the process acknowledging the physical presence of the musicians. That Wrench actively engaged with both the music and the men in the band in this way is supported by a diary entry from January 1899, in which he recalled a conversation with the leader of the Blue Hungarian Band following their rendition of a piece of 'national music' after a dinner at Chatsworth: 'I remarked to [the] conductor that reminds me of a gale at sea. the wind whistling through rigging. accompanied by the roar of the sea. & then the booming of the gusts & the rattling of the reef hoists[? posts?]. He replied it is intended to represent a gale in a forest' (UNM Wr D 44). Though Wrench does not record any similar interaction with members of Carl Heubert's band, this example illustrates his readiness to do so and the consequent appreciative connection between at least one member of the house party in the Theatre with the members of the orchestra located only feet away.

As illustrated by the nexus of the Chatsworth Hotel, described above and in 3.5.2 Behind-the-scenes: George Longden, the connections between the band and those others present during the theatricals extended beyond the house party to include Chatsworth's own staff, specifically in their roles as Stage Managers. This latter social connection is entangled further when we consider the band negotiating the spaces of the House. We have already established that the same band that played during the house party dinner also played during the theatricals, arriving in the Theatre early to entertain the

congregating audience. It is beyond the remit of this study to interrogate the possible routes taken by the orchestra to reach the Theatre when there is so little evidence available from the data already gathered. Yet, a level of familiarity with the servants' staircases and passages can be inferred from an intriguing anecdote in Wrench's diaries from January 1901:

'When returning on foot [the shooting party] were followed through the Golden Gates by a man in a tall hat with a roll of paper under his arm. The Porter took alarm & sent police up to front door - the Party only just inside - but the stranger not to be seen. There arose a scare of a hiding anarchist & much seeking until it was discovered that the suspect was one of the Band, who got in at [the] wrong gate &, finding his mistake, slipped away by back stairs to join the Band in Picture Gallery' (UNM Wr D 46; 10th Jan).

In this account, the band member is sufficiently unfamiliar with the Chatsworth estate so as to enter by the 'wrong gate', yet familiar enough with the interior of the House once inside to navigate his way to the 'Picture Gallery' by the 'back stairs'. Given this balance of familiarity, we may assume either that the musician's sense of spatial orientation aided his successful arrival at his destination or that he was able to ask for directions from Chatsworth's staff once he had reached the relative sanctuary of the servants' areas. In either case, the musician demonstrated a closer affinity with those that occupied and used the servants' areas of the House - such as the Chatsworth staff engaged in managing the theatricals or working in some way on the Theatre - than those that did not. Such an affinity is carried into our reading of the auditorium when we learn more about the individuals occupying each area, and expands our interpretation of images such as those in figures 4.28 to 4.30 to connect the region at the foot of the stage with the rest of the auditorium space. Knowing that the musicians may have had a closer affinity with the working body of Chatsworth's household than anyone else therein brings this body of workers into view and recolours those images of the front rows of the auditorium accordingly.

The anecdote also reveals something of the tension implicit in high-status entertaining that, by association, would have permeated the arranging of the theatricals. Wrench's tale is amusing when we know that the mysterious man was only a member of the band - a relief founded on an assumption that such an individual was harmless - but it also illustrates that engaging outside entertainers with relative freedom of movement introduced a real security risk. Managing these risks, marshalling or monitoring the movement of external employees, alongside the social and creative opportunities they presented, added another layer of labour to the already arduous work undertaken by Chatsworth's

body of staff during these intense periods of entertainment - a time that led Wrench to observe, 'the Chatsworth staff very overworked. Many of them not in bed until 2 AM & up early' (UNM Wr D 44; 7th Jan).

Though arguably only tangentially related to the social manoeuvres evident in the rest of the auditorium, by tracing the presence and interactions of the band elsewhere in the House, we can begin to acknowledge more fully the significance of their presence in the Theatre beyond their marginal representation in written and visual records. Accounts such as those included here, recorded by Wrench, that took place beyond the walls of the Theatre, remind us of the personal connections carried into the space between and by groups of people all present during the theatricals that transgressed the physical boundaries dividing the auditorium space.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter considered the access to, and architecture and arrangement of the auditorium in the same period as Chapter 3, 1896-1907. It established the necessity and utility of drawing on literature concerning public theatres to contextualise and interpret the data found here, in a private theatrical context. Public theatres witnessed a boom in construction in this period, and the literature tells us that the buildings broadly manifested wider social stratification through their design (Glasstone 1975; Leacroft 1988). This extended to the front-of-house spaces, including different access routes from the street to the appropriate seating area. The chapter found that the organisation of Chatsworth's auditorium and routes to it manifested many of the same divisions in similar ways: two access routes were provided for ticket-holders to the main floor of the auditorium and the gallery, respectively, and three ticket prices represented three areas of seating, with certain structural divisions, spatial differences and seating comfort evident between each. Beyond this, further stratification between social groups was temporally-contingent, with the late arrival of the house party both reinforcing and identifying their superior social status, and granting some of the seats they occupied - otherwise left empty until the party's arrival - with a status beyond that which could necessarily be read through their physical arrangement. This distinction was rigorously confirmed through the testimony of one audience member who took pride in his elevation to the ranks of the house party as evidenced by the seat he occupied.

However, a detailed analysis of the seating arrangements in and around the architecture of the boxes revealed significant potential differences of experience across and between seating areas that transgress the boundaries dictated by both the hierarchical structure evident in broader considerations of the space, as discussed, and the architecture of the space itself. Occupants at the front of the boxes were afforded better views of both the stage and the arriving and departing house party than those with more expensive seats located just in front. Furthermore, there was little to prevent those occupying these two seating areas from conversing. Such findings add complexity and colour to an otherwise homogenised view of theatre space as defined by ticket price and architectural structure (Glasstone 1975; Leacroft 1988) that echoes the work of Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow in the field of Theatre Studies (2001) and reminds us to take care not to conflate space, however organised and outwardly hierarchical, with the assumed behaviour or make up of social groups.

Moreover, while reconceptualising existing spaces of the country house as access routes to the Theatre leads to similar conclusions of social division, the choice and presentation of those routes was found to be rooted in country house paradigms, resisting a more reductive evocation of the

auditorium as simply a public theatre transplanted. For example, the findings from this chapter showed one of the routes to the Theatre to bypass the main entertainment rooms of the north wing and, instead, to follow a bedroom corridor, in the process shifting the status of the corridor from private to public and problematising the historiographical characterisation of country house space along dichotomous lines (discussed in 1.3.2 Architecture, etc). Likewise, the route to the Gallery in the Theatre followed spaces understood to be more regularly used by household servants. Chapter 5 will propose that tickets for the Gallery were available only to those either with access to the Post Office in the main estate village of Edensor or the Estate Office. Therefore, it is possible to speculate that some of the servant areas of the House were also known both to wider estate staff and domestic servants from other households. As with the conclusions from Chapter 3, this adds significant nuance to a historiography that allocates certain spaces to specific groups and, moreover, disrupts the discussion of servants as a homogenised and self-contained whole.

Blending spatial analysis with social interpretations of space further permitted a consideration of the orchestra in the social arrangement of the auditorium - a group frequently overlooked in scholarship on both private theatricals and country house entertainment. As a result of their employment as an external troupe, the chapter found the orchestra to occupy a singular social position in the fabric of country house life during periods of entertainment, commanding respect and admiration from the house party, mixing more closely with those that worked in the House and backstage in the Theatre, and bringing with them an inherent risk that comes from engaging external performers. An inclusion of the orchestra in an analysis of the auditorium enriches the tapestry of communities that are discussed in scholarly literature on the country house and evidences the potential range of people present at any given event in this context, as well as the possibility of those people interacting and making lasting impacts on each other.

Considerations of both the routes taken to reach the Theatre and the organisation of the room itself sprang from information given on the front of one of the theatrical programmes. This detailed how much tickets cost and from which entrance access to the Theatre could be gained. The following chapter begins from the same place, examining the significance of where a ticket could be purchased. Information from the programmes is developed substantially by a close reading of surviving 'box office' records, which reveal a far more complex picture of both the audience and the system of ticket management than the programmes suggest.

## 5. The Box Office(s), 1896-1907

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the routes of ticket-holders to the Theatre and the significance of where they sat according to the ticket they held. Across the three ticket prices, the section identified clear distinctions both between and *within* groups of ticket-holders, in terms of their experience and their social opportunities. The ticket, then, had the potential to have a significant impact on the experience of an individual at a night of Chatsworth's theatricals, as well as, for some, on their social standing amongst their peers. So, how were these tickets obtained? And, what agency did an individual have over their choice of ticket?

An exploration of these questions pivots on an analysis of three handwritten documents, originating from the Chatsworth Estate Office and today catalogued together as 'Box Office Invite Lists & Sales' (L/93/34). In Chapter 3, the detail held in the Estate Accounts challenged, augmented and developed narratives in contemporary print media to bring to light the labour and labourers in the Theatre thus far uncredited. In this Chapter, the 'Box Office' records, augmented by a range of other archival sources, lift the lid on much of the administrative organisation of ticket sales and distribution, revealing nuanced modes of exchange that revolved as much around social networks as financial transactions.

The provenance of the 'Box Office' papers from the Estate Office is significant since we can conceptually group them with other archival material from the same source, such as the Estate Correspondence, augment our understanding of the work undertaken by this office and its workers and, to a great extent, establish who had authority over how the tickets were distributed - a subject I discuss in more depth in section 5.2.3 of this chapter. However, the papers document only three years in the period under scrutiny here: 1901, 1905 and 1906. Furthermore, each document records slightly different information, requiring us to treat each year according to the specificity of this information and the particularities of the annual theatrical arrangements. It is information on these theatrical arrangements that can be broadly gleaned from newspaper reports and the programmes held in the DCA - information such as the type of theatricals on offer, how many performances there were in a given year, etc. Here, again, the archival traces are uneven: newspaper reports do not always record the same types of data year on year and we do not have programmes to represent all the performances from 1896 to 1907 (see Appendix F). Nonetheless, the data held in the sources that *are* available are sufficiently rich to suggest overarching narratives that greatly expand our understanding

of the diversity of Chatsworth's audience, implicate the Estate Office as gatekeeper to the theatricals, and cast the theatricals as a mutually beneficial opportunity for both host and audience to enhance their social and political agency.

### 5.1.1 Two Audience Types: Paying and Invited

Underpinning these findings is the prosaic but central matter of how an individual obtained a ticket. Broadly speaking, across the full range of this period, a ticket could either be bought or was given *gratis* upon invitation. By interrogating a range of archive material, from the extant programmes to newspaper accounts and the papers of Dr. Wrench, we can begin to see a general pattern emerge that witnesses a shift in the nature of ticket procurement from the February performance in 1903 onwards. I have presented the information and evidence in Table 5.1, at the end of this section, making clear the dates and performances for which no available evidence has as yet been identified. There is, then, a small amount of informed conjecture herein. Nonetheless, of the 14 performances produced prior to February 1903, only three lack conclusive evidence, and for one of these the evidence is highly suggestive (see Table 5.1). I would argue, then, that this data is convincing enough to suggest a clear pattern: prior to the February performance in 1903, all tickets for every performance each year were sold; from February 1903 onwards, for some performances tickets were awarded by invitation, while for others they were still sold. This shift coincides with a number of changes and alterations relating to the Theatre and the theatricals, such as the installation of a new sprinkler system throughout the Theatre Tower (DE/CH/3/3/83; HV 57), the printing of new seating plans (mentioned in Chapter 4) and a change in the stage management (discussed in Chapter 3). It seems likely that these instances relate directly to the February 1903 performance, which was to be the first that the Prince of Wales would attend as King Edward VII - a shift in the status of the audience which represented a concurrent shift in the status of the theatricals and which warranted, apparently, a fresh investment in the Theatre.<sup>40</sup>

It is probable that there were practical reasons for hand-selecting audience members by invitation once Edward became King: being in control of who was in attendance in the 315-seat theatre would certainly mitigate any security concerns. However, I am more interested in how the introduction of an invited audience altered both its make up and the mechanisms by which tickets were distributed - and what this in turn can tell us about the social and political agency afforded to everyone involved. To this end, the 'Box Office' records speak to the two distinct types of audience: the 1901 and 1906 records correspond to a paying audience; the 1905 documents correspond to an invited one. The

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<sup>40</sup> It transpired that the King's visit to Chatsworth in February 1903 was cancelled at the last minute due to ill health: 'The King's luggage arrived on the Monday but [...] a telegram arrived to say that it was all off' (DF7/1/8; 1-6 Feb, 1903).

sections in this chapter are organised according to these audience types and rely on a detailed analysis of these records. However, the 1906 records appear only to be partial and to be inconsistent with a number of other sources in the information that they provide. Conflating an interpretation of the 1901 records with those of 1906 risks undermining the value of both. Rather, I consider a paying audience primarily through the 1901 records. The extent to which the nature of a paying audience changed following the 1903 shift must be considered in a separate study.

Table 5.1

A summary of the audience mode of attendance at the Chatsworth theatricals, 1896-1907. Information in blue italics is informed conjecture.

Year	First Performance			Second Performance			Official Vendors	Evidence
	Day / Month	Audience Type	Ticket Prices	Day / Month	Audience Type	Ticket Prices		
1896	Monday, 27th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	Tuesday, 28th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	Mr Wardley's, The Square, Bakewell; the Post Office, Edensor	CH11/1/2
1897	Friday, 8th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	Saturday, 9th January	Paying	3/-, 2/-, 1s.	Ditto	CH11/1/2
1898	Friday, 7th January	<i>Paying</i>	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	Monday, 10th January	Paying	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	<i>Ditto</i>	UNM Wr D 43; 10th Jan
1899	Friday, 6th January	<i>Paying*</i>	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	Saturday, 7th January	<i>Paying</i>	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	<i>Ditto</i>	-
1901	Friday, 11th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	Monday, 14th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	Ditto	CH11/1/2; L/93/34
1902	Thursday, 9th January	Paying	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	Friday, 10th January	Paying	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	<i>Ditto</i>	<i>Onlooker</i> , 18th Jan, in CH11/1/4
1903	Friday, 9th January	Paying	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	Monday, 12th January	Paying	<i>5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.</i>	<i>Mr Wardley's, The Square, Bakewell</i> ; the Post Office, Edensor	<i>Daily Mail</i> , 10th Jan, in CH11/1/5
1903	Thursday, 5th February	Invited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>Derbyshire Times</i> , 10th

								Feb, in CH11/1/2
1904	Thursday, 7th January	Invited	n/a	Friday, 8th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	Mr Wardley's, The Square, Bakewell; the Post Office, Edensor	Sheffield Telegraph, 4th Jan, in CH11/1/5
1905	Thursday, 5th January	Invited	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Sheffield Telegraph, 3rd Jan, in CH11/1/5; L/93/34
1906	Thursday, 4th January	Paying	10/-, 5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	Friday, 5th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d.	Mr Wardley's, The Square, Bakewell; the Post Office, Edensor	Sheffield Telegraph, 5th Jan, in CH11/1/5; L/93/34; DE/CH/7/3/1/1
1907	Friday, 4th January	Paying	5s., 2s. 6d., 1s.	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ditto	Sheffield Telegraph, 5th Jan, in CH11/1/5

\* Reporting on the production on the night of the 6th January 1899, the *Sheffield Telegraph* referred to 'ticket-holders' and supplied an in-person description of the event (CH11/1/2), strongly suggesting that this performance was for a paying audience. For those productions to which the audience was invited, newspaper reports both explicitly state this fact and do not provide a description of the event. While this evidence does not wholly corroborate this performance as a paid-for event, it strongly suggests it.

## 5.2 A Paying Audience: The 1901 'box office' records

The 'box office' records for 1901 consist of six folded pages, three of which detail tickets sold or distributed according to ticket price, and three summarising monies outstanding, the total possible value of tickets in the Theatre minus deductions, and final takings. The pages are all notable for their informal appearance: while black ink is predominantly used, this is augmented by notes in red ink and pencil; names are scribbled out; abbreviations are used inconsistently; supplementary notes are scrawled on an angle to the text they refer to; and, at least two hands are traceable in the style of writing. Such relatively scrappy paperwork is in stark contrast to the accounts and correspondence originating from the Estate Office in this period, and in the scrappiness is a suggestion that these documents may never have been intended for posterity, that they do not record the official business of the estate, and that they were not required to justify accounting. The presence of multiple hands rather implies their use as a co-organisational tool, reflecting the various individuals responsible for keeping tabs on the theatrical arrangements, and their existence today may point to more unofficial channels of communication and cooperation between estate staff that are also borne out in documents such as the tabling plan used for post-theatrical suppers, seen above in 4.3.2 The House Party.

Despite their informal appearance, the records are still suggestive of an organised mind: the three pages dedicated to the sale or distribution of tickets are arranged in a consistent way, with the price of the ticket in the top centre of the page and four columns beneath. From left to right, these represent: number of tickets for the first night of performances, the name of the person who bought or reserved these tickets, the number of tickets for the second night, and the total amount of money owing or paid according to the information in the previous columns. Added next to most of the numbers, in red or black ink, is the word 'paid' and, between the final two columns, a tick. For example, the first few lines of the page dedicated to Gallery tickets are arranged in the following way:

1/-

Gallery

Tickets			Tickets				
<u>First Night</u>			<u>Second Night</u>				
Paid	6	Fieldsend	5	Paid	✓	11	-
	2	Wrench				2	-
Paid	6	Woodhead	1	Paid	✓	7	"

Two of the most significant aspects of these papers are the names they record, and the tickets associated with these names. To give an example, from the transcription above, we can see that Wrench bought two tickets for the Gallery for the first night of performances in 1901 - a fact to which he does not allude in his diaries or round-robin letters, despite recording the names of his guests for that exact performance (UNM Wr D 46; 11th Jan). Given the range of other evidence pointing to the use of the Gallery by servants, including Wrench's own account from 1904 - 'the Gallery of servants did not think much of [the acting]' (UNM Wr C 3109/1-3) - we might presume that Wrench purchased these seats for his own domestic staff. The 1901 census tells us that these were Annie Beard, Wrench's cook, and Edith Lineker, working as Wrench's housemaid. Thus, a close study of the names on the 1901 'box office' records has the potential to reveal the identities of a number of individuals working as domestic or estate staff and locate them together in the Theatre - in the process challenging the country house paradigm that locates servants only in the spaces to which their work was attributed and identifies them only in terms of the work they undertook (see 1.3 Literature Review). Appendix E illustrates an initial exploration of these individuals and how their lives may have intersected beyond the context of their work. However, there is more to be gleaned across the spectrum of audience members by scrutinising the 'box office' records in this way. Therefore, rather than focus solely on the page of the document concerned with the Gallery, in the rest of this section I broaden the focus to consider what all three pages recording names and ticket numbers might tell us as a whole.

In Table 5.2 I have compiled the names, and numbers of tickets accorded to each, from the three relevant pages of the document, so that we might more readily compare how all the tickets were distributed across both performances and identify patterns in their distribution. Drawing from the

table, there are three main points I wish to discuss. The first is the potential light this document can cast on the Duchess' practice of selling tickets to her house party, as suggested by Wrench's papers and introduced in the previous chapter; the second is the way tickets were distributed to the public vendors and the implications therein; the third and final point is what these previous topics might reveal about the role of the Estate Office as the first point of contact for ticket distribution and its consequent position in the social hierarchy of the estate on the occasion of the theatricals.

## Table 5.2

A compilation of the data related to ticket distribution from the 1901 'box office' records (L/93/34) across all ticket prices and both nights of theatricals. Highlighted are the two 'official' ticket vendors.

Name	Gallery @ 1s.		2s. 6d.		5s.	
	First Night	Second Night	First Night	Second Night	First Night	Second Night
Fieldsend	6	5	0	0	6	6
Wrench	2	0	0	0	5	4
Woodhead	6	1	7	0	0	0
Chester	3	0	2	0	0	0
Coakes	4	0	0	0	0	0
Yeomans	2	0	0	0	0	0
Dickson	0	4	2	0	0	0
Hulley	1	3	1	0	0	0
Read	4	0	0	0	0	0
Martin	8	8	3	3	5	4
Chatsworth House	6	6	12	12	0	0
Miss Bacon	71	88	0	23	0	19
A. J. Tomlinson	0	0	0	3	0	0
Cheesman	0	0	2	1	0	0
Robertson	0	0	2	0	0	0
Wragg	0	0	2	0	0	0
Gasper	0	0	4	0	0	0
Wardley	0	0	25	25	32	48
J. Frith	0	0	2	0	2	0
Topliss	0	0	1	0	0	0
Fenton	0	0	2	0	0	0
Miss Frith	0	0	2	0	0	0
Deeley	0	0	0	5	0	0
Mrs. Wilson	0	0	2	2	0	0
Wardley(2)	0	0	1	0	1	0
Miss Frost	0	0	2	0	0	0
Hawes	0	0	0	2	0	0

Dr Knox	0	0	2	0	0	0
T. Gamsford	0	0	0	0	3	0
J. P. Jeffcock	0	0	0	0	5	0
Cross	0	0	0	0	0	2
Revd. Evans	0	0	0	0	2	0
C. E Jeffcock	0	0	0	0	0	5
Jagger	0	0	0	0	2	0
Cammell	0	0	0	0	3	0
Milners	0	0	0	0	3	0
Stockdale	0	0	0	0	4	0
Paget	0	0	0	0	0	4
Moore	0	0	0	0	1	0
Hall	0	0	0	0	3	0
Miss Barker	0	0	0	0	2	0
Harrison	0	0	0	0	3	0
Eades	0	0	0	0	0	4
Duchess of Devonshire	0	0	0	0	32	32
Reporters	0	0	0	0	8	0
Mrs. Hunt	0	0	0	0	4	0
Whitehead	0	0	0	0	2	0

Total Tickets: 113 115 76 76 128 128

Potential Takings: 5/13/- 5/15/- 9/10/- 9/10/- 32/-/- 32/-/-

### 5.2.1 The Duchess's Tickets

Towards the bottom of the table, the Duchess of Devonshire is listed as being provided with 32 5s. tickets for each performance. It would be safe to infer that these are the tickets which she then sold on to the house party, and therefore represent the front rows in the auditorium. Hers is one of the few names given that does not include the note of 'paid' next to it - an omission that would be consistent with a practice of selling tickets directly to her guests herself, or through a close member of her personal staff. Though the total value of these tickets is recorded as being £16, notes made on the subsequent pages of the document first record an outstanding payment of £13, and go on to deduct the price of just 11 of her tickets - at a value of £2/15/- - from the total value of seats in the Theatre. That the amount the Duchess appears to owe diminishes through these notes suggests that she is successfully directing her ticket takings back to the Estate Office - from reserving tickets with a total value of £16, she is left owing just £2 and 15 shillings. If the Duchess had her own mechanisms of returning ticket takings to the Estate Office, what happened to the final 11 tickets that are not financially accounted for?

Two other lines of information above that recording the Duchess' 11 erroneous tickets confirm that tickets sold to people who could not then attend the performance were not charged for. For example, a ticket costing 2s. 6d. reserved for 'Mrs James' Maid' includes a note next to it stating, 'Paid for one 1st night but could not go'. That this 2s. 6d. ticket was then *deducted* from the total value of seats in the Theatre suggests that Mrs James or her maid were reimbursed. A separate section on the same page also records tickets that were apparently given for free: eight tickets at 5s. each were notably gifted to 'Reporters', and the 'Graphic' - a contemporary illustrated newspaper - received one at 2s. 6d.. If the arrangement of the information on the page is significant, that the Duchess' tickets are recorded in the same section as the ticket for Mrs James' maid, we might infer that her 11 remaining tickets were not taken up by her guests. However, there is also the possibility that the separate sections simply represent the accruing ticket deductions, grouped over time and recalculated as information on the final arrangements came to be known. Therefore, it is possible that, not receiving money for these final tickets, their value was written off.

A separate pecuniary misunderstanding between the Duchess and the Estate Office, represented by Gilson Martin, was recorded by Wrench in his diaries. On the 9th of January, 1897, he wrote, 'Martin in a great stew after all [the performance] was over thinking he had lost the pay for the Band (possibly £70 for the week) out of an envelope the Duchess handed him in the Theatre. He found out from her shortly that she had put nothing in' (UNM Wr D 42). Wrench does not explain why the Duchess would

have given Martin what was presumably an empty envelope, but the anecdote does illustrate two things: first, a manner in which we might imagine the Duchess to hand over money she had taken from her guests in exchange for their tickets; and, second, the potential for misunderstanding or confusion if exchanges of cash were conducted in such off-hand ways with limited opportunity for communication or clarity. It is possible that the money for the 11 remaining tickets was subject to a similar misunderstanding and lost.

Another way of surmising the whereabouts of the Duchess' remaining 11 tickets is by looking at her house party. A surviving handwritten list of house party members for the theatricals in 1901 records 37 names (fig. 5.1) (CH11/2/1). Nine of these members were also performing in the theatricals, so we might safely assume they did not have to pay for tickets. This left 28 members - or 30, including the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. We can remove Wrench from our consideration since we know from his diaries and the 'box office' records that he did not purchase his tickets from the Duchess in 1901, but directly from the Estate Office. Therefore, at least two of the Duchess' allocation of 32 tickets were likely not to have been taken up by her or her house party. As for the remaining nine tickets unaccounted for, considering the house party members individually prompts us to further question who may or may not have been asked to pay for their ticket at all. For example, would the Prince of Wales have paid for his? Indeed, would the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire have paid for theirs? What about the Duchess' family members? Even without answers to these questions, we are left with the possibility that at least some of the house party may not have had to purchase their tickets - a notion that draws our attention away from the numbers of tickets themselves and towards a more flexible mode of ticket exchange. For example, rather than giving cash for a ticket, did those individuals receiving a free ticket bring a level of social, familial or political capital to the occasion?

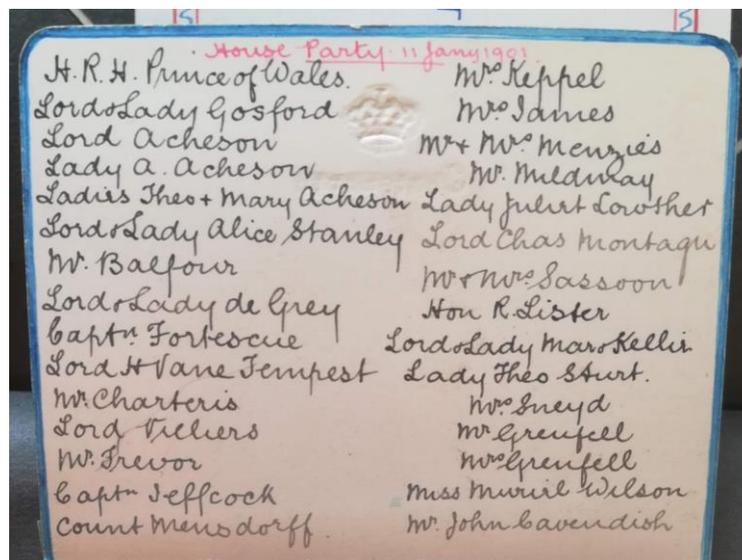


Figure 5.1 List of house party members for the theatricals on 11th January 1901 (CH11/2/1).

When considered alongside the anecdote provided by Wrench regarding the empty envelope, in which a literally empty gesture was made in a highly-public context, the flexibility of the Duchess's mode of ticketing points to a level of performativity on her part. Given the fundraising aims of the 1901 theatricals 'in aid of local institutions' (CH11/1/2), we can read the Duchess's private 'box office' as a performance of largesse in line with the expectations of her societal position. Catherine Hindson has written in depth about the role of actresses in charity fundraising in the same period (2016), and in the conclusion of her book on the subject quotes an article from the *Daily Mail*, in which the actress Lena Ashwell herself quotes the Duchess of Marlborough, 'I have found that the idea on all public committees is, get an actress first. If you can't get an actress then get a duchess' (ibid., 205).

Wider research on private theatricals in the late 19th century shows fundraising to be a key and consistent aspect of their outward function (Coates 2017, 260), but did the intersection of private theatrical culture and the institution of the country house party create friction that necessitated flexibility on this front? Nancy Ellenberger's contextualisation of the country house party in this period offers one way in to considering this. She writes that, while the country house party was becoming an increasingly relaxed affair by the end of the 19th century, those where the Prince of Wales were present remained 'highly formalised occasions' (2015, 183). Where other country house parties were becoming governed by the 'fiction of equality' which lay 'at the heart of genuine sociability', '[t]he presence of royalty precluded this fiction' (ibid., 184). However, even at parties where royalty was *not* present, this emphasis on relaxed sociability 'lacked the protections of institutional roles' (ibid., 183), engendering an atmosphere with the potential to be fraught with social tension. As hostess of both the Prince of Wales and the semi-public theatricals in a shifting landscape of house party sociability, Duchess Louise had to adhere to the social protocols and expectations of all three. Flexibility with her ticket sales would allow her both to play up to her fundraising role and adapt to subtle hierarchical changes in the dynamics of the house party, while public displays of largesse would show her to be participating fully - and on equal footing to the rest of the audience - in widespread private theatrical culture.

With Hindson's work as a possible starting point, there is more to be explored around the fundraising efforts of the British aristocracy in this period, and specifically the ways in which cultural charity events intersected with the life and rhythms of the country house estate. However, Hindson's quotation above evidences both the fundraising leverage afforded by the title of 'Duchess' and, conversely, the expectations of the role in the name of charity. The performative and potentially flexible nature of the

Duchess of Devonshire's 'box office' is further brought into relief when compared to the more formal arrangements undertaken by the 'official' ticket vendors, as explored in the next section.

### 5.2.2 The 'Public' Vendors

In Table 5.2 I have highlighted the names to whom the bulk of tickets was allocated: 'Miss Bacon' and 'Wardley'. Given the information from the pre-1903 programmes, it is possible to deduce that Wardley is one of the ticket vendors listed. The 1901 census records Charles F. Wardley as a 'Newspaper Proprietor' living in Buxton, but the Estate Accounts and Correspondence also record him as being responsible for printing programmes for the children's entertainment in December 1896 (DE/CH/2/1/20), the 1897 seating plans for the Theatre (DE/CH/3/3/79) and tickets, programmes, programme slips and 'window bills re postponement of fireworks' in 1903 (DE/CH/3/3/85). In 1896, at least, Wardley's responsibilities also included the distribution of bills advertising the inaugural performances - an activity he apparently delegated to Robert Turner, 'town crier, bill-poster, and distributor' (DE/CH/2/1/17). The Derbyshire Records Office holds papers relating to the purchase of Wardley's business c.1909 - an acquisition made by a company whose chief shareholder was the 9th Duke of Devonshire and whose primary aim was to use Wardley's newspapers for political purposes (DRO D504/53). The catalogue tells us that Wardley owned, ran and printed, among others, the *High Peak News* - one of the newspapers that regularly included reports on the theatricals at Chatsworth. Wardley's professional services in relation to the theatrical activities, then, extended beyond simply selling tickets to forming part of the network of professional support on which the theatricals depended.

From the 1901 census, we can also discover that Miss Ellen Bacon was the Post Office clerk in Edensor, confirming that both those names receiving the bulk of the tickets in Table 5.2 were the two vendors listed on the pre-1903 programmes. From the primary research undertaken for this project, the Bacons appear only on these 'box office' records from 1901 - not only as holders of a bulk of tickets, as evident in Table 5.2, but also as recipients of two free 1s. tickets alongside the 'Reporters' and the 'Graphic' mentioned above. Given that there is the note of 'Paid' recorded by each allocation of tickets to Miss Bacon, we might infer that these two Gallery seats acted as a payment-in-kind for the additional service she undertook at the Post Office of selling tickets to the general public. Despite the Bacons' absence in the records consulted for this theatrical research, Lucy Brownson has identified their presence in the postcard collection of Walter Longden, whose albums make up the bulk of the Grafton Papers (2023, 319-320). In her article, Brownson notes the receipt of a postcard by Ellen Bacon from Walter Longden, himself, and the subsequent inclusion in Longden's albums of various postcards addressed to the three Bacon sisters from other senders. While Brownson uses these postcards to evidence the

more conceptual 'corollaries of kinship' between the families, my research is able to locate this kinship in the historical space of the Theatre itself: during the theatricals in 1901, while the Bacons occupied seats in the Gallery, Walter Longden's father, George, was working backstage on the productions (see 3.5.2 Behind-the-scenes: George Longden). We might even read the Bacons' Gallery seats as confirmation of a more friendly relationship between their family and those working in the Estate Office. In contrast to the Bacons' free tickets, Wardley is listed as *purchasing* his - one at 2s. 6d. and one at 5-/, both for the first performance - suggesting his role as a vendor to be notably more professional or transactional than that of the Bacons.

The significance of these vendors to this thesis is not simply their connections, professional or personal, to those administering the theatricals, but their locations and the availability of tickets at each. For the first night of performances, the only tickets available for purchase from Edensor were for the Gallery, while Wardley only sold tickets for the main floor of the auditorium and the Boxes. Neither was a Gallery ticket available from Wardley for the second night, though the Post Office in Edensor did have tickets available for all the seated areas, albeit only 19 out of the maximum possible 124 for the main floor of the auditorium. The pre-1903 programmes appear to advertise the opportunity to purchase tickets as equal across ticket price and vendor, yet the data from these 1901 'box office' records show access to tickets at the two 'official' sites was highly uneven.

The location of each of the 'official' vendors is highly significant in regard to the availability of tickets at each. Located in the historically-touristic centre of Bakewell, only three miles from Chatsworth House, Wardley's office on The Square was particularly accessible from towns and villages across the Peak District and further afield. The Conservation Area Appraisal for Bakewell tells us that the fourth Duke of Rutland had invested in the town as a tourist destination from early in the 19th century, developing it as 'a coaching town and spa', taking advantage of local, improved turnpike roads and, from the 1860s, approving the construction of a train station for the town (2013, 13-16). Slightly prior to this, the construction of a new mill on the outskirts of Bakewell drove demand for new housing, while wealthy industrialists began to choose the town for their large, new properties. As a result of all this investment, the 19th century saw the local population of Bakewell double, from 1,412 in 1801 to 2,850 in 1901 (*ibid.*). By the time of the 1901 theatricals, then, Bakewell was an established hub of tourism and connectivity, supporting a thriving and diverse local population and catering to long- and short-term visitors.

It is worth highlighting the choice of Wardley, specifically, as one of the 'official' ticket vendors in a diverse town that was, presumably, well-served by public-facing shops and businesses. The 19th century provincial press witnessed a series of upheavals and changes in relation to national political and economic shifts (Walker 2006). Broadly speaking, where political opinion in newspapers was suppressed in the first two decades of the century, '[b]y the 1830s [...] a paper's political stance was one of its distinctive selling points' (Walker 2006, 380). A contemporary magazine of 1847 observed the direct impact of provincial newspapers on the political scene: 'How many a member of parliament has owed his seat to the exertions of the local journal...' (Cranfield 1978, 202-203; as quoted in Walker 2006, 381). Yet, by the end of the century, it is generally understood that commercial imperatives and changing tastes in readership led to less interest in local politics and a concurrent decline in the power of the provincial paper to influence them (Walker 2006, 384).

However, while in-depth scholarly work has been undertaken on the role of the provincial press in the early part of the century (eg. Gardner 2013, 2016), there is a dearth of studies charting the subject in the latter decades. This oversight has been attributed to the sheer volume of output from the period, while a solution to which has been put forward as territorially-constrained case studies (Walker 2006, 374). Such a localised approach leaves the generalisation of a decline in local political influence wide open to scrutiny. Indeed, the acquisition in 1909 of Wardley's newspaper businesses for the explicit purpose of political influence directly challenges this. Given the fact that the 8th Duke of Devonshire's successor was the majority shareholder in the purchasing company, we can assume that the politics of Wardley's readership was allied to that of Chatsworth's. By selling the tickets through Wardley's, then, we can read the Estate Office as directly targeting a particular politically-affiliated group. While further research would be required to corroborate this, we may even posit that Wardley's shop-front in Bakewell acted as a physical social filter, ensuring that only those with appropriate sympathies to Chatsworth were permitted - by socially-constructed or direct pressures - to purchase a ticket to the theatricals. In an accessible town with a diverse population, such control was likely necessary. The previous chapter highlighted the security risks in engaging external musicians, or other staff, for high-profile events (4.4.6 The Orchestra); permitting general sale of tickets to an occasion for which the Prince of Wales was present would necessitate careful control.

Far from simply leveraging the political affiliation of Wardley's newspapers to filter ticket-buyers, engaging Wardley as a gatekeeper potentially cemented an important and influential network of local relationships. A clipping in the Grafton Papers reveals that at Chatsworth, in 1910, the 9th Duke of Devonshire (the 8th Duke's nephew; see Appendix A) hosted a meeting for 'the leading Freemasons of

Derbyshire' in his role as Provincial Grand Master (CH11/1/4; *Derbyshire Times*, 24th September 1910).<sup>41</sup> The clipping attests to the 9th Duke's long affiliation as a Freemason, with his membership to the 'Dorothy Vernon Lodge' dating back to at least 1894. Further research shows Wardley's own membership of the same lodge at a lodge meeting in 1903, held in the Town Hall at Bakewell (*Derbyshire Times*, 5th September 1903). Of those present, a number of names stand out as also running through the narrative of this thesis: the meeting - a 'ceremony of installation' - was run by Dr. Edward Wrench, supported in this role by Wardley, while Charles Fieldsend, Gilson Martin's assistant, and A. W. J. Eyre, a joiner in the construction of Chatsworth's stage, were also in attendance. Further research seems highly likely to evince further crossover.

The significance of these masonic connections is not to be downplayed. There is a substantial body of scholarship on Freemasonry and the networking systems of fraternity and benevolent association that is beyond the scope of this study (eg. Jones 1985; Bogdan and Snoek (Eds) 2014; Rendall 2020; Calderwood 2021). However, as Roger Burt has summarised in his research on the role of Freemasonry in the business success of late-19th century Cornish mining, 'such associations have been regarded as providing some of the most powerful and influential networking systems' and 'to have been highly influential in the promotion of civic engagement and the formation of social capital' (2003, 658). Following their founding principles, Masons, in particular, 'were sworn to strict codes of moral conduct and were under an obligation to help other Masons' (Burt 2003, 659). Entangled with the political sympathies of his newspapers, then, was Wardley's personal loyalties to his brethren - and theirs with him. Moreover, Burt tells us, societies such as the Freemasons 'have been shown to be capable of bridging the filial, religious, political, and social structures on which other networks were commonly based' (2003, 658). Bringing Freemasonry into view complicates the entrenched structures of power and class which dominate narratives of the country house by implicating a wider-reaching network, both socially and geographically.

Engaging Wardley as a 'box office' for Chatsworth's theatricals, then, was more of a personal reinforcement of his existing involvement with structures of power and influence that cross-cut those of Chatsworth's, then it was a pragmatic choice to facilitate the sale of theatrical tickets to a broad audience. Advertising Wardley as the vendor of tickets endorsed him as Chatsworth's representative in Bakewell, conferring on him in an affluent environment the social status accorded to those affiliated with the upper echelons of country house power structures. In theory, Wardley was thus positioned to grant or deny access to Chatsworth and its guests, in turn, activating and privileging his own

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<sup>41</sup> An event for which the Theatre was converted into a Masonic Temple.

networks - both by virtue of his avowals of masonic loyalty and through the politically-selective reach of his newspapers.

By stark contrast to Bakewell, the estate village of Edensor that housed the Post Office had a population of just 246. Though the wider parish also contained another small estate village, the publicly-accessible transport links to and from these villages - even including the larger village of Baslow, nearby - bore little comparison with the town of Bakewell. Ostensibly, the Post Office in Edensor served those living and working on the Chatsworth estate. It is notable that it was the Edensor Post Office that was used for the distribution of tickets for the theatricals when similar amenities were available in the slightly larger and more connected village of Baslow nearby. Yet Baslow, in its entirety, did not belong to the Duke of Devonshire while Edensor did; it bears clarifying that all of the tenants in Edensor were tenants of the Chatsworth estate. So, it is likely that those tickets made available at the Post Office in Edensor were available, in the main, for this group of people. To reiterate an earlier statement, for the first night of the 1901 theatricals, the Edensor Post Office only sold tickets for the Gallery. We know that there was demand for other, more expensive tickets because the Post Office *did* sell these for the second night. This limited availability of tickets to those living and/or working on the Chatsworth estate demonstrates a level of control over who was able to attend, on which night and in which specific areas of the Theatre - a control exercised by the Estate Office, though possibly under the direction of Duchess Louise. If it was predominantly estate workers and tenants who could most easily access the Post Office in Edensor, then it was this group that was restricted to the Gallery for the first night of performances.

Possibly working against this model of ticket availability is a short anecdote in a newspaper report from January 1903, which reads:

'This year [...] the post-office just within the gates of Edensor [...] was requisitioned as a "box-office". [...] Before seven o'clock in the morning a group of ladies who had driven in from the country round besieged the doors, and when at eight o'clock they were opened the struggling exceeded that at "bargain" sales.' (10th Jan, *Daily Mail*; CH11/1/5)

This story erroneously implies that the use of the Edensor Post Office as a 'box office' in 1903 was novel for that year, somewhat undermining its credibility. Nonetheless, it also suggests that those wishing to purchase a ticket for the theatricals were willing to travel some distance to do so. If they travelled to Edensor 'from the country round', are we to suppose that Edensor was closer or easier to reach than Bakewell? Or, perhaps Wardley's office in Bakewell was either not engaged to sell tickets in 1903 or was exercising powers of social selectivity to which I have previously referred. Which

performance were those ladies mentioned hoping to purchase tickets for? If the distribution of tickets in January 1903 followed the same model as that in 1901, are we to presume that the ladies were satisfied with Gallery tickets? No evidence has yet been unearthed to clarify any of these questions or presumptions, but the anecdote does raise the possibility that Edensor was more accessible to people other than Chatsworth estate workers and tenants than I have thus far argued. However, what is clear from the story is the enthusiastic demand for tickets from people beyond the immediate reach of the Edensor Post Office, and I would argue that it was this demand that would have driven a wider demographic to this vendor rather than the vendor’s accessibility.

### 5.2.3 The Role of the Estate Office & a Different Social Hierarchy

Given the provenance of the 1901 ‘box office’ records and the fact that they include the two ‘official’ vendors as recipients of a bulk of the tickets, the document can be seen to illustrate how printed tickets arrived at the Chatsworth Estate Office and were then distributed. If tickets were not sent to Wardley or the Post Office in Edensor, the document records that they were sold directly from the Estate Office itself. This casts the Estate Office as an unofficial vendor of tickets. Conceptualised this way, by subtracting the allocation of tickets to the two ‘official’ vendors from the total amount of tickets available, we can summarise the sale of tickets across the three vendors thus:

	<u>First Night</u>				<u>Second Night</u>			
	<b>Gallery</b>	<b>2s. 6d.</b>	<b>5s.</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Gallery</b>	<b>2s. 6d.</b>	<b>5s.</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Estate Office</b>	44	51	92	187	27	28	57	112
<b>Wardley, Bakewell</b>	0	25	32	57	0	25	48	73
<b>Post Office, Edensor</b>	71	0	0	71	88	23	19	130
<b>Total tickets available</b>	115	76	124	315	115	76	124	315

Seen this way, it becomes clear that, not only was the Estate Office an unofficial vendor of tickets, but for ‘reserved and numbered’ seats, it was the *principal* vendor, selling more tickets at 5 shillings and 2s. 6d. than either of the others. For the first night, the Estate Office was responsible for selling a total of 187 tickets - almost 50 more tickets than the other vendors combined. Neither did this uneven source of tickets go unnoticed. On the 4th January 1901, Wrench recorded in his diary:

'There is much jealousy & headturning over the distribution of the tickets for the theatricals at Chatsworth in this day week [sic]. The sale of them is almost a farce for they are most of them distributed from the Chatsworth office. Things all are paid for even by the guests and the servants in the house. I have got five tickets for self Annie Nancy Branson & Daisy & I fear I shall be called very greedy.' (UNM Wr D 46)

Wrench's account is revealing on at least two fronts. The first is the date on which he recorded his ticket purchase, the 4th of January. On the 'box office' records, Wrench's name tops the list for 5-shilling tickets and comes second on that for Gallery tickets only after Fieldsend, Gilson Martin's assistant who, if not responsible for compiling these records in the first place, was likely witness to or complicit in their creation. We might safely assume, then, that Wrench was among the first to procure tickets from this unofficial vendor, possibly even kick-starting the necessity to have the 1901 'box office' record made. If we also assume that Wrench recorded this account close to the day on which he procured his tickets, then we know that around a week elapsed between tickets becoming available and the date of the first performance - in 1901, this was on 11th January.

In 1896, an invoice from the 'Town Crier, Bill-Poster, and Distributor', Robert Turner, mentioned above, details his services of 'posting for dramatic performance given at Chatsworth' (DE/CH/2/1/17). The invoice states that the work was carried out on the 13th of January for performances that took place on the 27th and 28th of that month, allowing two weeks for people to become aware of the event and purchase their tickets. Unfortunately, no record survives in the Estate Accounts or Correspondence that can attest either to when the 1901 tickets were printed or when bills were posted or programmes distributed, advertising their availability, current or future. Yet, if newspaper accounts are to be believed, 'every ticket for both evenings was appropriated within an hour of being offered' (*Derbyshire Times & Chesterfield Herald*, 16th Jan 1901). The successful ticket-holders must have been primed and ready to purchase for the tickets to go so quickly. It seems likely that newspapers would have had a hand in advertising the upcoming theatricals, though the detail contained within them was not always reliable, as evidenced by a letter to Martin in the Estate Correspondence from December 1897. In this, the writer thanks Martin 'for posting me up in the truth that the illuminations at Chatsworth next week will only be on the night of the arrival of HRH The Prince contrary to the "Derby Mercury" account which caught my eye this morning (enclosed) which will probably deceive the public. [...] as you suggest, they might not appear so elaborate as the public would desire' (DE/CH/2/1/19). We might speculate that, by 1901, the tradition of Chatsworth's high-status, annual theatrical entertainments was so embedded that, even with a break in 1900, they were hotly anticipated by the local and gentry

population to the extent that advertisement of ticket availability was scarcely necessary. Even without knowing more about the modes and timescales of ticket advertisement, the enthusiasm for purchasing a ticket to the theatricals in 1901 is clear.

This enthusiasm morphed into its more negative counterpart of 'jealousy & headturning' when tickets could not be procured or, based on Wrench's description of the sale of tickets being 'almost a farce', were felt not to be distributed fairly. Such strength of feeling is the second revealing aspect of Wrench's account since it attests to the construction of a new form of social hierarchy organised around access to the Estate Office, from which some people were excluded. Wrench and the Land Agent, Gilson Martin, can be seen to be social equals and socially acquainted in the context of the Chatsworth estate and locale: they were both honoured with medals by King Edward VII in 1907 in recognition of their service to him at Chatsworth (mentioned in relation to Wrench in 4.4.3 The Theatre as an Index of Social Mobility), and Martin is often mentioned in Wrench's diaries in relation to formal socialising with the royal members of the house party (though his work appears to have excluded him from participating in the dinners to which Wrench was so frequently invited).<sup>42</sup> This could explain why Wrench had such apparently easy access to the Estate Office when theatrical tickets became available. The other names on the 1901 'box office' records, summarised in Table 5.2, speak to the same, or similar, level of access to the Estate Office. For example, Fieldsend, the Land Agent's Assistant, secured both Gallery and 5-shilling tickets in this way, and we also see the name of Woodhead, who we know from Chapter 3 to have been the Clerk of Works. Apart from the Duchess, Gilson Martin himself is the highest individual holder of tickets while 'Chatsworth House' generally is the largest group holder of tickets after the 'official' vendors, though we have no more information on who specifically received these tickets.

The names mentioned so far are all employees or household members of Chatsworth, in one way or another. Yet, a letter in the Estate Correspondence alerts us to the fact that it was not only Chatsworth staff or household who had access to the Estate Office. On the 8th January 1901, George Whitehead wrote from Burton Closes, Bakewell, to thank Martin 'for troubling to send us the theatrical tickets when I know you must be very busy with much more important things' (DE/CH/2/1/28 'Whitehead'). Whitehead's name appears on the 'box office' records at the bottom of the list of names for 5-shilling tickets, showing he was sent two of them. Whitehead does not appear as resident in Derbyshire on the 1901 census, but he was present in Derbyshire ten years earlier - at the address from which he

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<sup>42</sup> For one example, in January 1900, Wrench recorded, '...the D[uke] of D[evonshire] came back & said "Wrench I want to introduce you to the D[uke] of York." The D[uke] of York shook hands [...] He remarked on my medals [...] Martin was then presented' (UNM Wr D 45).

would later write. On this 1891 census, Whitehead is 26 and his profession is given as 'Barrister at Law', a career that the census also shows us was following in the footsteps of his father, head of the household at Burton Closes, Smith Taylor-Whitehead. Despite it being George - Whitehead junior - writing to Martin, it seems likely that it was his father with the original social connection to Chatsworth.

Smith Taylor-Whitehead is listed on the 1891 census as a Justice of the Peace (JP), a member of the county magistracy and one appointed by the Lord-Lieutenant for Derbyshire - a role, in 1891, undertaken by the Duke of Devonshire. Legal historian, Patrick Polden, tells us that, in the 19th century, 'most of the territorial magnates subscribed to the Duke of Wellington's ideal of a justice: 'magistrates must be gentlemen of wealth, worth, consideration and education'' (2010, 907). Burton Closes, the house from which George was writing in 1901, survives today and is listed at Grade II\*. The listing description tells us that the house was built in the late 1840s and underwent two subsequent extensions, the second of which was for Taylor-Whitehead in 1888 (Historic England List Entry Number: 1148032). Not only does the construction of this house conform to the pattern of Bakewell's social and built expansion in the 19th century, as outlined above, but Taylor-Whitehead's investment in the building is indicative of his status as a 'gentleman of wealth'. Polden states that, in the 1890s, the Duke of Devonshire 'was claimed to feel unable to put millers, maltsters, and suchlike into the commission against the opposition of the justices' (2010, 907), suggesting that the Derbyshire bench to which the JP was appointed not only maintained prejudices against working class trades but also held significant sway over the appointment of its peers. Holding the position of a JP in Derbyshire, then, meant being part of an influential collective. As well as acting as a JP, Taylor-Whitehead also occupied the role of High Sheriff for Derbyshire in 1894, securing his position locally as one of power and influence, and demonstrating his connection with the landed aristocracy of Derbyshire, including the Duke of Devonshire.

Taylor-Whitehead died in April 1895 with Gilson Martin, Fieldsend and Wrench all present at his funeral (*Derby Daily Telegraph*, 27th April 1895). That his son George was writing on headed paper from Burton Closes in January 1901 suggests that the house was passed down to him, and we know from lists of audience members published in the newspapers that the two theatrical tickets he was sent were for him and his wife (*Derbyshire Times*, 19th Jan 1901). Nor were these tickets given to George only by virtue of his being Taylor-Whitehead's son: George's letter to Martin concludes 'when you are a bit quieter I will take the liberty of coming over to see you about the volunteers' (DE/CH/2/1/28 'Whitehead'). This closing line suggests George's own active participation as an organiser in events at, or connected to Chatsworth.

However, why did George ask Martin for tickets to the theatricals, rather than purchasing them from Wardley when he lived so locally? It seems likely that George missed his opportunity. Wrench had already purchased his tickets by the time he recorded his diary account on the 4th January, and we know that those tickets on sale from the 'official' vendors were sold within the day. George was thanking Martin for the tickets on the 8th January, and it is reasonable to assume that he had requested them around two days earlier. If there was already 'jealousy & headturning' by the 4th January, we can be confident that a number of people had failed to secure their tickets by this date. It seems likely, therefore, that George was asking for tickets after they had officially sold out. This is borne out by the formatting of the page recording his tickets in the 'box office' records. Not only is George's name at the bottom of the list for 5-shilling tickets, it appears after a gap of two lines following the previous name, highlighting it as a possible late addition.

We cannot know from the 'box office' records who failed to secure tickets to the theatricals, but it seems unlikely that George Whitehead was the only individual with connections to Chatsworth through organising events. That he was successful in purchasing tickets after they had officially sold out is more likely testament to his familial, personal connections with those in charge of the Estate Office. It speaks to a flexibility afforded to the Estate Office in its role as unofficial vendor of tickets that could not be afforded to the two 'official' vendors who engaged in more rigid transactions delimited by the number of tickets they had available. It was this flexibility which granted the Estate Office its power and elevated position within the theatrical social hierarchy.

The final point to make about Wrench's account is the extent to which it excludes a significant portion of the audience. Looking again at the table presented above showing the distribution of tickets across the three vendors in 1901, it is apparent that the Post Office in Edensor held more tickets for the Gallery than the Estate Office did for both performances. Given the mechanisms by which tickets were distributed, it was possible for the Estate Office to allocate Gallery tickets just as easily as they did for the other two ticket types. We might suppose, then, that the majority of would-be ticket holders for the Gallery did not have the same kind of access to the Estate Office as those who were more likely to purchase more expensive tickets. It must also be said, then, that the 'farce' identified by Wrench of many of the tickets being distributed from the Estate Office rather than either of the two official vendors did not apply to the Gallery. We cannot then suppose that Wrench implied the 'jealousy & headturning' of which he wrote to apply to this group either, though the newspapers reported on the speed with which all tickets from the main vendors were purchased.

The strong ill feelings that Wrench identified, rather, were not simply in response to not being able to purchase a ticket, but not being able to purchase *the right* ticket. We can interpret this in two ways: the first is that it was desirable to have a ticket for the main floor of the auditorium - possibly for the socially advantageous reasons identified in Chapter 4 - and the second is that social structures dictated that certain groups had to occupy certain areas of the auditorium. By this logic, even though the majority of would-be ticket holders for the Gallery were excluded from the hierarchy organised around access to the Estate Office, they were more likely to secure a ticket to the theatricals from the Post Office than someone restricted by their social position to the more expensive seats. So, while the mechanisms by which ticket distribution operated created a hierarchy around access to the Estate Office, this was not necessarily universally negative.

The existence of the 1901 'box office' records, though apparently unlikely, directly challenges the ticket information available from the more public printed programmes. Contrary to what is implied from the programmes, despite the vast majority of tickets to the 1901 performances being *sold*, they were not sold equitably. Without these administrative records, the pivotal role of the Estate Office in the distribution of tickets would remain hidden and, with it, the various modes of access and exchange. Attending the theatricals in 1901 was not a simple matter of purchasing a ticket, but was far more likely contingent on one's social status and relationship to the inner workings of the Chatsworth estate.

### 5.3 An Invited Audience: The 1905 'box office' records

The comparable 'box office' records from 1905 are revealing both in terms of the particularities of the theatrical arrangements for that specific year and for the way they characterise the function and organisation of an invited audience across this latter period of Chatsworth's private theatricals as a whole. Compared with the 1901 records, those for 1905 are much less detailed or complex. Discussing them prompts us to reconsider aspects of the 1901 audience arrangements - indeed, aspects of all the theatricals in the period under discussion here.

As a reminder, and following the information summarised in Table 5.1, the theatricals in 1905 consisted of only one performance and the audience was invited. The corresponding 'box office' records confirm this and are clearly titled, 'List of Invitations'. The records consist of two highly-similar lists of names and the town or village location of each name. Though almost identical, a comparison of the lists quickly determines that one records the names of those to whom invitations to the theatricals were extended, and the other the names of those who had accepted their invitation. The first, at three pages long, is perhaps most notable for the information it gives us on how the theatricals were organised in an invited-audience year, and for the names on it since, regardless of who was ultimately able to attend, these were the individuals thought most apposite to invite. This first list bears marginal annotations in red ink in the form of a number or a cross next to each name, indicating how many of a particular party were intending to attend - if any. There is also a numerical summary at the bottom of each of the three margins, tallying the number of positive responses. Thus, we do not need to count the individual numbers to know that, of the original list of invitees, 95 responded as attending (though this figure is corroborated by counting the individual numbers).

The second list in the 1905 'box office' records is also particularly notable for its annotations. Made in pencil this time, the notes are occasional and furnish the bearer of this list with a little more information on some of the individuals. For example, on the right of 'Edleston, Mr & Mrs' is noted '(Miss Wrench)', while next to 'Mr Davie', who is recorded as attending alone, is written 'married Miss McCreagh Thornhill'. We can see from the list that other members of the Wrench and McCreagh Thornhill families were present, thus connecting the less recognisable names with a larger familial group. Neither are these notes only in relation to changes in marital circumstances: though Mr, Mrs and Miss Drewry were invited and are recorded as a confirmed group of three, on the final list are the name and titles, 'Drewry, Mr, Miss & Mr', with '(son)' included in pencil on the right and 'Mrs Drewry cannot come' on the left. For whom was this list intended and at what point in the event of the theatricals?

Wrench's papers are able to shine a little more light on the matter by contextualising the role of the theatricals in one eventful evening. Saved in his diary from December 1904 is an invitation, nominally from the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, to meet the King and Queen on Thursday, 5th January - the date of the theatricals in 1905 (fig. 5.2). The time for this event is given as 9.45, with the 'Entertainment' beginning half an hour later at 10.15. Notably, 'Theatricals' has been crossed out, reflecting the difference in the style of performance that year, with professional performers being hired rather than the usual group of upper-class amateurs (see Appendix C). Underlined at the bottom of the invitation is, 'An answer is requested'. It seems likely that this invitation, then, sits chronologically between the two lists in the 'box office' records for this year, with the responses from this invitation and its counterparts informing the final compilation of names on the latter. Its existence therefore enables us to make an important distinction: the invitees were principally being invited to meet the King and Queen, and their presence at the theatricals - or 'entertainment' - was secondary.

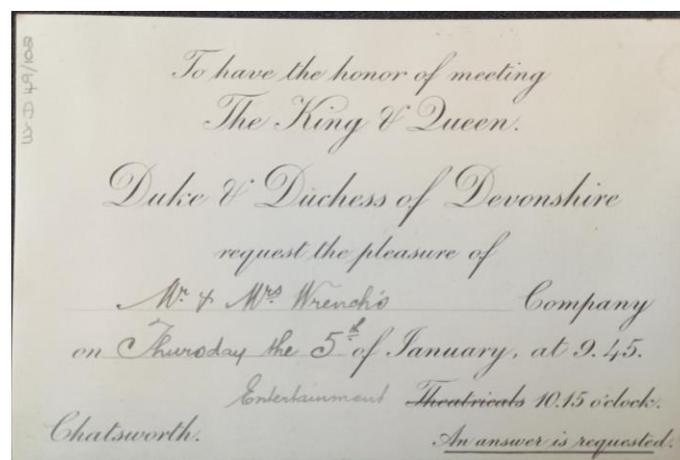


Figure 5.2 Invitation to meet the King and Queen on Thursday, 5th January 1905 (UNM Wr D 49/102).

This distinction frames the event of the theatricals as an explicitly social adjunct to the main event. With this framing, the theatricals/entertainment became part of a semi-formal, semi-public appearance from the King and Queen - an appearance that the Duke and Duchess could leverage with their invitees to a number of mutually beneficial ends. Wrench's papers have already testified to the social currency afforded to someone meeting or exchanging words with the King; Wrench attests to the particular potency of this happening in full view of one's peers, which this particular 1905 occasion was orchestrated to facilitate. At the same time, the opportunity to hold such an occasion reinforced the Duke and Duchess' local power and influence. Their role in facilitating this socially-powerful opportunity had the potential to forge and reinforce a sense of loyalty from their invitees - a feeling that could manifest in political support, with concrete repercussions both locally and nationally. Given

that there was no sale of tickets to these occasions, and since his name does not appear on the list of invitees, the events relinquished the opportunity to leverage the influence Charles Wardley, as discussed previously. However, other names on the list reveal the potential in engaging other networks of influence. The local position of Smith Taylor-Whitehead, for example, outlined above, is not to be minimised. As well as acting as a Justice of the Peace, he was also president of the Bakewell Working Men's Club, and attendees at his funeral included members of the Bakewell Conservative Club (*Derby Daily Telegraph*, 27th April 1895). Though Taylor-Whitehead had died by 1905, his biography and strong relationship with the Chatsworth Estate illustrate the political potential in activating social opportunities between the local gentry, professionals and middle-classes, and Chatsworth's high-status guests.

Such an interpretation of an invited audience to the Chatsworth theatricals casts the second list of invitees from 1905 in a new light. Demonstrating personal and specific familiarity with the invitees would be integral to building trust and loyalty. The notes made in pencil could either have acted as an aide-memoire to the bearer of the list, or as new information for someone who was even less familiar with the local population. We may not know who exactly handled this list, or when exactly in the proceedings it was used, but we can imagine its role in facilitating introductions and maintaining social relations with the local gentry and middle-class population.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This range of people and tapestry of communities involved in Chatsworth's theatricals comes more to the fore in the findings from this chapter, which hinge on the records of ticket sales and invitees from 1901, 1905 and 1906. Through these, the chapter established a pattern of audience attendance that shifted from paying to a mix of paying and invited from February 1903, correlating with a corresponding shift in the status of the theatricals upon the coronation of King Edward VII. By analysing the records from the paying audience of 1901, the chapter identified a number of parallel modes of ticket sales that included the informal 'box office' of the Duchess of Devonshire, the two formal, advertised outlets on the estate and in the nearby town of Bakewell, and the informal 'box office' of the Estate Office. The existence of multiple modes of ticketing challenges the advertised information on printed programmes and in newspaper articles of the time which gave only the formal outlets as options to the paying public, testifying to the potential power of the country house archive to unsettle the public record. Furthermore, the modes that the chapter identified established a number of key issues and avenues for future research.

Firstly, I interpret the Duchess's informal 'box office' as a broadly performative act, in line with the fundraising expectations of her title; the chapter identified the possible audiences of this act to be both her social circle when entertaining at Chatsworth, to whom she sold the tickets, and the actual, diverse audience gathered in the Theatre, in front of whom she was noted as handing over an envelope to the Land Agent who was, himself, ultimately responsible for organising ticket sales. There is more research to be done on understanding the role of fundraising events, those who fronted them, and the institutions that benefited from them in the wider fabric of estate life that interrogates the top-down, paternalistic paradigm so entangled with landowner-tenant narratives. Catherine Hindson has demonstrated the wider practice of charity fundraising in the same period through her study of West End actresses (2016), and any future study of country estate fundraising in the 1890s and 1900s ought also to consider the culture of charity fundraising more broadly.

Secondly, the chapter discovered that the two, formal ticket outlets, advertised to the paying public as offering all three ticket types, did not, in fact, have an equal or equitable number of those tickets. Indeed, the outlet in Bakewell had no tickets available for the Gallery at all, while that in the estate village of Edensor only had tickets for the Gallery on the first night and a mere handful of tickets for the main floor of the auditorium for the second. Tickets were distributed in the first instance by the Estate Office so, when read alongside the broadly hierarchical organisation of the auditorium identified in Chapter 4, this unequal access to tickets is seen both to demonstrate the estate's efforts

to control who could sit where in the space and to reflect existing, broadly-ascribed social structures. Moreover, by bringing into view networking systems of benevolent association - specifically, Freemasonry - the chapter found that the Bakewell outlet was positioned to further select or filter ticket-buyers, both controlling the social composition of the audience and mitigating against safety risks.

Finally, the chapter established the Estate Office as wielding significant social capital in its ability to grant access to the theatricals independent from the formal ticket outlets. Indeed, through the 1901 records, it was possible to deduce that, not only was the Estate Office able to sell tickets itself, it served as the primary 'box office', selling more tickets than either of the official outlets. Furthermore, the Estate Office had discretionary power, and was able to provide tickets to the theatricals even when the formal vendors had sold out of theirs. Those with access to the Estate Office were able to bypass the rush and queues at the formal outlets, and secure not only their preferred number of tickets but their preferred choice of ticket types, as well, unrestrained by the limited tickets available through the two official vendors. The ability to provide or withhold tickets granted the Estate Office and those who worked within it a social capital that has broadly gone unrecognised in scholarship on Land Agents (Beardmore, King and Monks (Eds) 2016). A secondary function of this finding is that anyone with access to the Estate Office can be seen to have wielded social status, in turn. This perspective locates the Estate Office and the Land Agent at the centre of a dynamic and diverse local community, challenging the landowner-centric paradigm and the hegemony of the elite narrative in studies of the country house.

This central, connected position of the Estate Office can also be read in the records that speak to an invited audience, in which annotations on the relationships between some invitees reveal the Office's intimate familiarity with the day-to-day lives of those who intersected with the estate. The chapter posits that this knowledge was leveraged by the Duke and Duchess to curry favour with local residents across a spectrum of society, the invitation of whom demonstrated the practice of 'soft' power that shored up the landowner's local influence at a time of national social change and rural instability. Therefore, the position of the Estate Office at the centre of local life underpinned the social success of the landowner while at Chatsworth.

Taken together with the previous chapter, this thesis presents a construct of space and ticket-buying that was, to a great extent, deliberate and planned. At the centre of this construct was the Estate Office. Exercising significant control over access to tickets - and, therefore, the potentially socially-

advantageous position of occupying a seat in the auditorium, as discussed in the previous chapter - and facilitating cordiality between invitees and the landowner granted the Estate Office considerable power over the audience at Chatsworth's annual theatricals. Such power casts the Estate Office as far more central to the social - and , therefore, political - success of the estate than has thus far been credited. Indeed, it is this central position of the Estate Office that has formed a common thread throughout this thesis and which shall be drawn out further in the Conclusion, which follows.

## 6. Conclusion

For both visitors to and scholars of Chatsworth, its theatre is on the margins of the country house story and experience. As outlined in the Literature Review, historic private performance practices have been wholly overlooked within the dominant narratives of Country House Studies and remain marginalised within Theatre History as a whole. As a result, heritage professionals seeking to share spaces that have histories of private performance or bring their stories to light face major interpretive challenges.

This thesis has sought to embed Chatsworth's theatre in its country house context by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that is rooted in Buildings Archaeology, but which tackles issues in - and draws on - the research from both Country House Studies and Theatre Studies. It has responded to the space itself, the building within which the space is situated, and the vast archive to establish a narrative of the room's development and use through the 19th century, from its inception in the 1820s to its last recorded use within the lifetime of the 8th Duke of Devonshire, in 1907. It is therefore strongly and singly linked to Chatsworth and its geographical, historical and social contexts. However, the thesis presents findings, raises questions and offers approaches that could equally be considered when researching historic performance spaces and practices at other country houses with the potential to unearth equally original and provoking material.

While much of this material has been discussed within the relevant chapters, in the following sections, I will consider some of the threads that run through this thesis and how they contribute to and build on existing scholarship. I will then reflect on the project more holistically, acknowledging some of the limitations, challenges and successes. Following a consideration of how further research could build on that offered herein, the chapter concludes with some final thoughts on the future potential of the interdisciplinary approach adopted here.

### 6.1 Overarching Themes

#### 6.1.1 The Building and the Estate

Adopting a broadly chronological approach, Chapter 2 established the original architectural evolution and earliest uses of the building which today houses the Theatre, at the end of Chatsworth's North Wing. The research undertaken for this chapter, and the findings presented, are the first exploration of this topic in scholarly literature. Evidence suggests that the room underwent a number of key ideological and architectural transformations before its earliest recorded use in 1832. This understanding helped to explain the perception of the theatre today as an architectural 'outlier'. The

key finding was that the building was originally constructed as a quasi-independent structure and that in architectural drawings it was described as the 'Banqueting Room'. Taken together, these findings strongly recall, specifically, Elizabethan banqueting rooms and houses, and the chapter demonstrated the potential of interrogating this building type as a historical comparator. However, the study of Elizabethan banqueting houses requires significantly more investigation than the focus of this project allowed, as I outline below (Further Research). Nonetheless, the finding prompts a re-consideration of the building as having just as close a relationship with the surrounding landscape as it does with the house to which it is now attached. This relationship with the landscape and wider estate appears to have endured even when the building developed a closer structural connection with the rest of the house, as presented and discussed in Chapters 3 to 5.

In these later chapters, covering the years 1895 to 1907, the Land Agent, Gilson Martin, and the Estate Office in which he was based, were found to have significant managerial oversight of the development of the Theatre and the ways it was run. This oversight ranged from investing in theatrical technology, and securing and abiding by the strictures of the theatre licence, to resolving financial disputes. The Estate Office was also identified as overseeing ticket sales and distribution such that social hierarchies across the estate, and beyond, were both appropriately observed and reinforced. The chapters revealed the identities of the carpenters, craftsmen and labourers from across the estate who were employed to construct the stage alongside a stage carpenter from London, as well as the backstage responsibilities of the Land Agent's gardener, George Longden, a resident of the estate village of Edensor. While any existing information on the audience to the theatricals in this period focuses on the two or three rows of aristocrats usually present, this thesis has found that, in fact, the audience consisted of a wide cross-section of society, from estate tenants, such as the school teacher in Pilsley, to business owners from Bakewell, and from a variety of regional gentry to domestic staff from houses beyond the estate. Given the original architectural context outlined in the previous paragraph and the social one outlined here, the thesis argues that the Theatre should be considered as having just as strong an architectural and social relationship to the wider estate as it does to the rest of the house.

This claim resists the separation of the country house from the estate in which it sits that is so often presented in scholarly literature and reinforced by the epistemological positions of the academic fields that contribute to that literature. By centering the work of estate tenants and employees in the house, and acknowledging the presence of a diverse audience, it also subverts the top-down, paternalistic narrative that suffuses so much country house historiography. Yet, this thesis did not necessarily set out to challenge the hegemony of the elite narrative. While I acknowledge the influences on this thesis

in the Preface and Literature Review, the volume of voices hailing from across the estate - and beyond - was determined both by the traces left in the archive, particularly the estate accounts and correspondence, and the methodological approach of considering the use and development of space over its symbolic and artistic presentation.

One of the corollaries of an archives and building-centred methodology is also its ability to reveal what is happening backstage - thus also contributing to an emerging interest in behind-the-scenes stories, as exemplified by Essin (2016, 2021). As well as addressing key issues across country house historiography, the findings in this thesis, then, also contribute a historical perspective to the nascent area of backstage research in Theatre Studies.

### 6.1.2 Paratheatrical Space

Exploring the connection between the Theatre and the rest of the North Wing has also enabled this thesis to highlight the significance of what might be termed 'paratheatrical space'. At Chatsworth, the most obvious example of this is the Orangery, a glasshouse constructed between the Sculpture Gallery at one end and the Banqueting Room building at the other. The Orangery functioned as a rather fantastical space, filled with exotic flora and fauna and lit dramatically to create a distinctive sensory experience for those attending balls and charades in the 1830s and '40s and theatricals in the 1890s and 1900s. While the Orangery has caused issues for interpreting the architectural independence of the Theatre today, the thesis found that it presented no such concern to visitors to the Theatre through the 19th century. Rather, its display of innovative lighting alongside non-native flora and, later, fauna, all encased in glass, provoked delight and admiration in the historic visitor. The curation and presentation of the Orangery, then, when included on a route to the Theatre, is important for underpinning the character of the Theatre itself.

The idea of paratheatrical space can be extended to include the 'below stairs' spaces that formed the route for ticket-holders to the Gallery in the 1890s and 1900s. Evidence for this can be found in the late-19th-century theatre programmes, which advertised different entrances to the house for different ticket-holders. Thus, the theatre experience can be seen to begin at the point of entry to the house. Those spaces of the house along the routes to the Theatre, then, changed meaning in the context of an event in the room. This is particularly resonant for those routes followed by ticket-holders to the Gallery which passed through and by spaces 'below stairs' - a region of country houses today lumbered, in the main, with the heavy characterisation of 'work' and associated almost solely with household servants. By reconceptualising these spaces as paratheatrical, we are able to shuck the monolith of 'work' to acknowledge a host of potential socio-spatial functions and consequent

meanings, and by identifying a range of ticket-holders to the Gallery, we can populate the spaces with a diverse cast of characters that challenges the homogenised association with these spaces of household servants.

Such a perspective is afforded us by virtue of the study's through-line on public theatre. Since studies of private theatricals are, in the main, limited to on-stage activity, we are encouraged to turn to public models of theatregoing to contextualise the spatial aspects of attending private theatricals. Layering theatrical space on top of country house space opens the door to reconceptualisations of the latter more broadly, as argued here.

### 6.1.3 Assembly

One of the questions raised at the start of this thesis concerned the initial purpose of the Theatre at Chatsworth: what was the room created for? I have addressed many of the particularities of the room's inception, construction and early use in Chapter 2, while Chapters 3 to 5 considered the room's subsequent adaptation and use around 60 years later. Therefore, the room's uses have been considered in their ducal contexts. Indeed, this thesis has proposed that the historic uses to which the room was put were temporally-contingent: that they were products of the distinctive and particular interests, family structures and lifecycles of the incumbent Dukes and their households. So, what thread connects the room's purpose across these ducal periods and the century as a whole?

There is a risk in writing a chronological account of the Theatre at Chatsworth that ends with high-status private theatricals that some form of logical progress is implied. For example, without the considerations put forward in this thesis, it would be possible to read the installation of the stage in the 1890s as reifying the theatrical facet of the room's previous use-life and retrofitting this as the room's fixed and primary purpose. However, while private performance entertainment is a key theme in the room's evolution through the 19th century, the nature of the theatrical activity that underpinned the construction of the 1890s stage had evolved through the century, challenging the idea that a singular theatrical history of the room could be reified at all. Understanding the room in terms of the *evolution* of private theatricals, rather, would be one way to interpret it.

However, this thesis has shown that the spaces of the room and the routes to reach it by way of access spoke to concerns beyond the theatrical. Across all four chapters of this thesis, rather, is the theme of assembly, of people gathering. The spaces of the Theatre, and those to reach it, can be understood as structuring social interaction on the occasions of assembly. This has been illustrated particularly by reference to the boxes within the room. Chapter 2 analysed the redesign and renaming, in 1833, of

Wyatville's 'closets' to become more spacious 'boxes'. This change, identified for the first time in this thesis, coincided with an extension to the name of the room on architectural drawings and in the building accounts to include, '[...] or Theatre'. The thesis found that, while the changes and shift in name point to an increased importance placed on theatrical activity, the room remained a multi-use entertainment space throughout the lifetime of the 6th Duke (d. 1858). Interpreting the new 1833 boxes within this context of multi-use speaks more to their function as social microplaces (Clarke 2022), offering areas for withdrawal, privacy, refreshment or social intimacy in an otherwise large room with few other comparable areas. The chapter contended that these new microplaces recalled the smaller rooms found in Assembly Rooms of a similar period, and the ongoing potential of this comparison is discussed below in Further Research.

In Chapter 4, which considered the social and spatial arrangement of the auditorium following the installation of the stage in the 1890s, the boxes outwardly functioned as a way to organise an audience at the theatricals and reinforce social hierarchies. However, the chapter found that the architecture of the boxes afforded a more intimate social interaction with the high-status house party and a better view of the on-stage performance than many of the more expensive seats, disrupting their status in a seating hierarchy. Elsewhere in the auditorium in this period, the arrangement of seating was leveraged by one individual to indicate his social advancement. Understanding the spaces of the room in this way shifts the emphasis from the particulars of the central use activity - ie. 'ball', 'cards' or private theatricals' - and towards the forms of social engagement afforded both by the activity and the spaces themselves. Summarising the purpose of the room as for 'assembly' encompasses multiple forms of use and foregrounds their social nature. Furthermore, it is helpful as a guiding principle for considering any future uses of the room that seek to draw inspiration from its historical function.

## 6.2 Reflections

### 6.2.1 Archives

Undertaking this project through the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated its re-framing (see the Impact Statement at the top of this thesis). Rather than starting with Chatsworth's Theatre and looking outward to other sites and practices, as I might have done, I embraced the availability of, and freedom of access to Chatsworth itself: the landscape, the staff, the spaces of the buildings, and the archive. Archival scholars write of the ways access is structured by the material qualities of an archive (Mbembe 2002; Burton (Ed) 2006; Robinson 2010) - a truism that encapsulates access to historical knowledge, as much as access to the documents themselves. Our ability to access past events is

contingent on what remains, and the material remains that testify to the past lives of Chatsworth's Theatre are unusually rich; the Theatre itself and its scenic stock are incredibly rare survivors, while the archive collection as a whole is atypically comprehensive. Moreover, the spatial circumstances of engaging with archive material *about* the Theatre mere feet away *from* the Theatre lend that material a strong sense of authority - an authority that stands to be interrogated.

A familiarisation of the service spaces of the house, along with my position as a 'pseudo-insider' in the working culture of Chatsworth today (see 1.4.3 (Auto)ethnography, etc, and McAuley 2012, 7) and a desire to redress the imbalance of country house historiography concerning servants, led me to uncover some of the voices of the late 19th-century working community at Chatsworth that have hitherto been overlooked - all made possible by the availability of lists of named men in the Household Accounts. Yet, in doing so, I became increasingly aware of how little access I had to comparable material pertaining to the earlier work on the room. The 6th Duke's Building Accounts and diaries testify to a sustained project of major building works to construct the north wing. Moreover, the Duke affords us a rare mention of the human element of this work by writing of a party that was thrown for the masons and gardeners in the Banqueting Room (Theatre) - the very room the masons had worked to construct. However, no names are provided for this work, and the individuals therefore go overlooked in my study. Non-aristocratic women are even more poorly served by the documentary traces I worked with, with the result that the overarching narrative is dominated by the presence of men.

However, given that this is the first study to focus on, first, the construction and early uses of the Theatre and, latterly, the wider communities of Chatsworth's theatricals, while what is offered herein is only a partial history, it is one that can and should be interrogated and built upon according to the interests and motivations of future researchers. The utility to this study of the papers of Dr. Edward Wrench demonstrate the fruitfulness of engaging deeply with other, complementary archive collections, and I suggest this is pursued in any future study. Indeed, Lucy Brownson's consultation of the scrapbooks of Cecil Crofton (nee Frederick Martin, Gilson Martin's son) at Senate House Library (2023b) points to a generative avenue of connected research that accords with the uncovering of queer histories on country house estates.

## 6.2.2 Challenges and Successes

While the work of David Coates has proved to be foundational both to the development of this project and to the contextualisation of private performance practices through the 19th century more widely, the discovery of his MRes dissertation early on in the project was destabilising, causing me to doubt

the legitimacy and potential of my own research; it was ultimately pivotal to the direction my project took. In it, he addressed many of the key questions Chatsworth had about their Theatre as it operated at the end of the 19th century: its installation, the performances that were staged there, and the rehearsal processes and composition of the aristocratic performing troupe. Moreover, he embedded these events in their local context of performance culture. Today, Coates is very modest about this work; it represents something of the first, tentative step in a field that now constitutes his academic career. Yet, it is also the first - and foundational - narrative of Chatsworth's 'Theatre Royal' - a phase of private performance at Chatsworth at which the King was a regular attendee. While I took pains not to duplicate Coates's research, on more than one occasion I believed I had unearthed a relevant original 'fact', only to find the same 'fact' already claimed in his writing.

One of the steps I took to ensure originality in my study was to define on-stage activity in Chatsworth's late-19th century theatricals as outside the scope. Given the hegemony of the on-stage event within both studies of historic private theatricals and theatre history as a whole, this has proved to create something of a counterfactual theatre history. However, the result is an account that both brings into the light those activities, people and social structures that are usually cast in theatrical shadow, and weaves those same aspects through the historiographical narratives of the country house, its estate and wider environs to bring to the fore hitherto hidden, socially-complex networks. Much of this was achieved through the methodological perspective: an archaeological attendance to 'the archive' (as defined by Taylor, 2003; see 1.4.3 (Auto)ethnography, etc) values built fabric, the space it structures and material culture as highly as it does documentary evidence, if not more so. Theatre histories, on the whole, remain entrenched in the document - both the play text (even when used as a starting point for embodied re-enactments) and the written archive.

However, this study is highly specific on a number of levels: geographically, socially, spatially, archivally, etc. Widening its scope would be beneficial to interrogating its findings. Considering any application of the methodology advocated for here to the study of other private theatres or theatricals warrants an awareness of the limits of the archive, as touched on above. How do we privilege built fabric, architectural space and material culture if little trace of it survives? I would argue that this is as much an epistemological question as a methodological one and answering it requires a theatrical researcher to reframe what questions they are asking of the sources of evidence that *are* available; we can persist in asking archaeological questions of ostensibly theatrical material.

However, another key component of the methodology undertaken herein is its ethnographic outlook. As stated in 1.4.3 (Auto)ethnography, etc, I did not set out to undertake an ethnographic study but found myself implicated in the site and culture of my research subject by virtue of the circumstances of the CDA. My presence throughout this thesis has been implicit. It has also yielded a perspective that is informed by an embodied, as well as intellectual knowledge. There were multiple instances through the research process when I felt this singular, embodied perspective should be acknowledged more explicitly in the writing of the thesis itself, but I was at a loss for how this could be achieved and, in turn, what it would achieve. On reflection, a parallel autoethnographic narrative would be highly valuable to a study of this kind. Benefits would include highlighting the contingencies of 'the archive' (Taylor's broad definition, 2003) as it is navigated - and the partial history it therefore produces - and illustrating the sense of collapsed time an embedded researcher can feel - the accretions of meaning inscribed on the same surfaces or in the same spaces yet experienced at temporal distance. Should I be fortunate enough to embark on a similar project, I would be inclined to embrace an autoethnographic account in order to honour the process more authentically.

### 6.2.3 Impacts

As I articulated in 1.2.1 Background to Chatsworth, there is foundation to hope that the research undertaken for this thesis will inform a renewal of Chatsworth's Theatre that sees it integrated more fully into the story of Chatsworth and its offer to visitors to the site. While this thesis offers a thorough consideration of the Theatre's origins and evolution of use and community through the 19th century, over the course of the project I have contributed a number of other outputs that have informed a historical understanding of the room, and its position within the wider built context of the north wing, for both the collections team and the wider visiting public.

While reading through bundles of estate correspondence from 1895 to 1907, organised alphabetically by surname by the estate office from which they originated, I augmented the archive catalogue with the full surnames of the correspondents I encountered. This has enabled a search for these names to turn up item-level records that relate to them. Given the fact that many of the correspondents were tenants of the estate, this search function has enabled Chatsworth's archivists to respond more fulsomely to enquiries from those members of the public wishing to research historic ties to the wider estate for the first time. This speaks to a key blind spot in country house historiography. While the augmentation has clear temporal limits that should be expanded, it does offer a first step for enquirers into a deeper engagement with Chatsworth's archive.

On a more public-facing front, I produced four blog posts for Chatsworth's website (Calf 2020b, 2020a, 2021, 2025) and a number of Instagram posts for the collections team account (@chatsworthart). One of the Instagram posts shared images of an ivory theatre token that belonged to the 6th Duke of Devonshire and which speaks to his regular attendance at public theatres through the first half of the 19th century. The token is inscribed with a flourished signature that I could not discern. Having asked the account's followers if they could make out the name, one follower replied with an accurate answer, and the name 'Laporte' is now included on the catalogue entry for the token, linking it to wider theatrical histories. Moreover, embracing my performance background, I audio recorded all, bar one, of my blog posts for any visitors to Chatsworth's website who preferred to listen to longform writing, as I do. The recordings were embedded as audio-visual files onto the website to accompany the text. Inspired by this approach, some members of the collections team wished to adopt it and approached me for training in recording and editing audio files. While I referred them to a more experienced colleague, audio files are now used more widely in Chatsworth's blog posts from across the site.

I also contributed to a Channel 4 documentary on Chatsworth, undertaken under the restrictions of lockdowns in 2020. As one of a number of contributors to the programme, my segment represented the ways in which Chatsworth undertakes research to understand its own complex history. I filmed segments in both the archives and in the Theatre, opening the cache of theatre tickets for the first time and explaining to those behind the camera that the Theatre was the feather in the hosting cap of the 8th Duchess of Devonshire. In 2022, I participated in the Attingham Summer School programme - a 2.5-week intensive residential course to study the art and architecture of a number of historic houses across the country. Members on the course are selected following an application process and represent a cross-section of invested curators, conservators and researchers. While on the programme, one of my Attingham colleagues - a curator at a National Trust property - recognised me from the documentary and informed me that, prior to the programme, and despite being familiar with Chatsworth, he had not known there was a theatre there.

Further contributions to the media output of Chatsworth included co-writing and recording a segment for the multimedia guide on offer to visitors to the house. The segment considers the north wing as a whole but also draws a visitor's aural attention to the Theatre beyond the doors they can see in the Orangery. Since the Theatre is not on the visitor route to the house, this is one of the few occasions a knowledge of it can currently be woven into the visitor experience. I also supported the filming and story development of a series of short films on the architectural development of Chatsworth and its

collections, in collaboration with the Institute for Classical Architecture and Art (ICAA) in New York. As part of this, I recommended architectural drawings for the Head of Collections and Head of Exhibitions to refer to when discussing the development of the north wing, and outlined the ways in which they illustrated an evolving, iterative design process that responded to the existing structure of the previous north wing. As discussed in chapter 2, such a responsive design process is rarely acknowledged in architectural histories that broadly interpret polite buildings as belonging to a logical, stylistic canon. This interpretation was reiterated on camera by my colleagues and now forms a (very small) part of the way Chatsworth understands its own architectural history.

My involvement in these outputs and the impacts they have made are minimal when compared to the knowledge work undertaken by Chatsworth on a regular basis. My hope is that they will become even less significant when the Theatre is folded into Chatsworth's story more comprehensively. However, these examples do indicate the potential both of working collaboratively along the CDA model and of some of the ways the Theatre's history can be layered into more public-facing narratives.

### 6.3 Further Research

The conclusion has highlighted a number of areas that require further research. The first finding of the Theatre's original construction recalling Elizabethan banqueting rooms and houses, and its consequent similarities to the Assembly Room upon the changes made to the internal closets/boxes, are in need of further interrogation to fully understand the significance of these comparators. Each typological comparator has rich potential for digging deeper into the social implications and wider use context of Chatsworth's room in the 1830s and '40s; both building types broadly call to mind the use of space for the assembly of people, sometimes from diverse social backgrounds, for the explicit purpose of entertainment. However, there is limited existing scholarship through which to explore these comparisons; I was unable to identify any substantial work on the evolution of the country house Banqueting Room as a building type, while the limited research on the Assembly Room has strong urban and 18th-century biases. Furthermore, the temporal constraints of this PhD project prevented me from undertaking my own original research on these topics.

However, the research agenda around Assembly Rooms appears to be in the process of shifting. As I write, there is a forthcoming edited volume on the social and cultural world of Bath's 18th-century Assembly Room (Burlock, Eagles and LeBoff (Eds) 2025). One of the editors, Tatjana LeBoff, is a curator with the National Trust and, in this role, has been tasked with reopening Bath's Assembly Room as a public heritage site following a programme of conservation works. As I explored in the Literature

Review, the Trust has a strong track record of working with the academy to set a research agenda, and the partnership of editors for the forthcoming volume looks set to do this. Working alongside LeBoff has been Hillary Burlock, who is in the midst of a post-doctoral research project tracing the development of the British Assembly Room from 1660 to 1880 (Burlock 2024). From her description of the project, Burlock's study appears to employ a perspective that would be particularly pertinent for a reappraisal of Chatsworth's space: specifically, she asserts the potential of her work for 'illuminating the importance of assembly to British identity and leisure culture' (ibid.). It will be interesting to learn how Burlock positions and argues for the role of assembly in 19th-century society and the extent to which she considers the smaller microspaces of Assembly Room buildings in its social practice. It may prove fruitful to reconsider the earliest uses of Chatsworth's 'Banqueting Room or Theatre' in light of Burlock's work.

Meanwhile, the evolution of the country house Banqueting Room as a building type through the centuries between the Elizabethan and Regency periods requires significant exploration. Discussions of early modern banqueting houses are dominated by architectural historical interest in Inigo Jones's Banqueting House on Whitehall and the related 'arrival' of Palladianism in England.<sup>43</sup> This has cast something of a veil over a longer and richer history of such spaces. For example, Historic Royal Palaces recently undertook a fascinating research project to recreate the portable royal tents used by Henry VIII during his military campaigns, which included a banqueting house (Gregory 2019, 2020). Projects such as this evidence a longer evolution of the building typology than the overwhelming body of scholarship on Whitehall's Banqueting House permits. There is also significant evidence in 18th-century gardens across Britain for the enduring appeal of the banqueting house. In this context, the building is most often discussed only in terms of garden design and aesthetic layout, or in the same category as follies. There appears to remain no literature that establishes the evolution of the Banqueting House through the centuries. Yet, the spectrum of practical use of these spaces, the function(s) they served and the (re)interpretations of them through different historical periods would be a fascinating and original line of research.

Thus far, I have highlighted the potential for further research with an emphasis on architectural history, but there also remains a significant piece of work to do to bring out the human voices of those identified in Chapter 5 of this thesis. In this chapter, I discussed details arising from the 'box office' records - papers that include lists of names. Efforts to learn more about these names through census

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<sup>43</sup> Within this body of scholarship on Whitehall's Banqueting House, Astington (2019) conceives of one phase of this space in a way that is particularly resonant for thinking about Chatsworth's Banqueting Room as a place of entertainment.

records, newspaper accounts and the Servants to Staff database have revealed the diversity of audience members present at the 1901 theatricals that has underpinned some of my conclusions, and I have illustrated some of my early findings in Appendix E. However, there is more to be made of these details that would have a significant bearing on how we understand the composition and intersection of communities and social networks on the country house estate and beyond its borders. An analysis of the names of those in the Boxes have the potential to contextualise the social status of some of the Chatsworth staff members, while the names of those with seats in the Gallery bring individuals into the picture that are otherwise wholly anonymised or expunged by the archive.

The information uncovered by my research offered some tantalizing, keyhole glimpses into some of the attendees, and their diversity challenges paradigms of country house histories, warranting a more fulsome record. However, given the socio-economic status of many of these individuals, it is likely that more creative approaches to archival research would be necessary to create this record. Here, the work of Saidiya Hartman (2019) offers one particularly inspiring approach, as also argued by Lucy Brownson in her 2023 article. Hartman draws on a range of archived ephemera and photography to create intimate records of African-American life that walk the line between history and imagination, in a process she loosely calls 'critical fabulation' (Hartman 2021, 127). Brownson acknowledges this approach as, 'radically resist[ing] the gaps and erasures wrought by institutional archival hierarchies and dominant modes of knowledge production' (2023, 313) and therefore, in essence, giving voice to the voiceless. Yet, Brownson's article also demonstrates that such an approach needs considerable time and resource in itself, which is why it could not be a priority for me during this research project.

There also remains further research to be done on unearthing the local culture of amateur performance in which Chatsworth's theatricals took place. Such research which would work to contextualise the aristocratic efforts on the estate and embed the contributions of estate staff within a wider knowledge of their community practices. As I discussed in 1.2.2 Literature on the Theatre at Chatsworth, Coates's MRes thesis covers some of this wider culture by drawing attention to penny readings and the amateur performances with which Dr Wrench was involved at the Hydropathic Establishment in Baslow (2010, 31). This valuable contextual work would benefit from a reexamination in light of the perspectives and individuals identified through this thesis. However, there may be more to uncover on the Chatsworth estate itself that speaks directly to country estate culture, in particular around the locale of the Chatsworth Institute in Edensor. There exists in the DCA a discrete collection of papers relating to George Esmond, a servant at Chatsworth in the early 20th century (DF33/2, and see Clapperton 2019). The collection testifies to Esmond's talents as a musical and dramatic

performer, as well as the skilled amateur company with whom he performed. One of the programmes included in the collection took place at the Chatsworth Institute and it seems highly likely that this venue regularly hosted amateur performances. Esmond's amateur work, more broadly, would be an interesting lens through which to consider the lives of estate staff beyond the narrow remit of their job titles. Indeed, there is work to be done to interrogate the network of performers in material already mentioned in this thesis - from the performances taking place in the Carriage House prior to the installation of the stage in the Banqueting Room, to that which was staged in the Theatre in May 1897 - as well as the nature of the repertoire they presented. While this approach may be more in line with the concerns of Theatre Studies, there is broad scope to embed findings in Country House Studies or, perhaps, in Social History, alongside the work of, for example, Carol Beardmore and her research on Dr Wrench (Beardmore 2019).

These avenues for further research carry forward the concern of this thesis with the relationship between historical people and built space. They all seek to locate voices in specific places and to understand the reflexive relationship between the two. Diversifying the cast of the historic country house from its current membership of elite protagonists is important for the ongoing relevance of country houses to a visiting public. The approaches taken here therefore speak to a current wider research agenda that most recently manifested in a two-day conference jointly organised by the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and the National Trust, called *The Public Country House* (Victoria and Albert Museum 2024). Taking place on the 50th anniversary of the V&A's own paradigm-shifting exhibition, *The Destruction of the Country House* (Strong, Binney and Harris (Eds) 1974), the event recalled and reshaped a key concern that underpinned its predecessor. Namely, the uncertain future of the public country house. Running through this conference was an exploration of what role the country house plays in meeting diverse audience expectations, and any future research project would benefit from shaping its output with this concern in mind.

## 6.4 Final Remarks

The revelations of the early development of the Banqueting Room building and the role of wider estate communities in the construction and management of the Theatre over the turn of the 20th century are a function of the fortunate particularities of Chatsworth's archive, the richness of the material record in the Theatre itself and the originality of applying a broadly archaeological methodology to a country house context. It is acknowledged that the potential for unearthing original and provoking findings may be greater at Chatsworth than at other sites where the archive may be less fulsome or the material remains less obvious, if there at all. However, we will remain oblivious of the potential of

other sources unless we begin the efforts to grapple with them. The first step in these efforts is to acknowledge the widespread and diverse practice of private performance entertainment through the 19th century; the second is to understand this practice as both a social and cultural product of its time, and to critically engage with it as such.

The possibilities for applying similar approaches as those taken in this thesis to other houses with histories of private performance are becoming increasingly likely through the ongoing research of David Coates, who is combing both public and private archive collections across the country to turn up evidence of private theatricals at sites previously unacknowledged as having them. Coates's work is couched in wider concerns for the practices of amateur performance more broadly, but the evidence that he unearths is ripe for deep and detailed exploration with the level of close analysis and contextualisation evident in this thesis. However, for theatrical narratives to become embedded in country house histories, they have to speak to wider country house issues, and material traces of theatrical histories have to be understood in their practical context. There is an opportunity to marry theatrical expertise - historical, practical and technical - with the curatorial concerns of the public country house to expand our knowledge of historic communities and to entertain and engage contemporary ones. May this thesis be a small step on the way to achieving that.

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WY/N/1/2a - South elevation of the Banqueting Room (all floors).

WY/N/1/3 - Longitudinal section [of Banqueting Room building].

WY/N/1/4 - Transverse longitudinal section [of Banqueting Room building].

WY/N/1/10 - South elevation of Temple and Banqueting Room.

WY/N/3/1a - Plan showing the east end of the Banqueting Room with the Closets and situation of the circular openings to give light to the staircase underneath.

WY/N/3/2 - Section of the Music Gallery in the Banqueting Room, west to east.

WY/N/3/3 - Section across the Banqueting Room, showing elevation of the Music Gallery.

WY/N/5/3 - Plan of best staircase leading to the Banqueting Room.

WY/N/5/4 - Section looking east of best staircase leading to Banqueting Room.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

The family tree for the 8th Duke of Devonshire.

*Image on the following page.*



## Appendix B

Unpublished blog post for Chatsworth's website, forthcoming 2025.

### Taking a Dim(mer) View: Cutting-Edge Technology in Chatsworth's 19th-century Theatre



Image 1: An electrical liquid resistance dimmer, used in the Theatre from 1896. Supplied by Drake & Gorham. Patented by Lyon's. Image: Aidan Haley.

This strange-looking object (image 1), currently stored outside the old Laundry and long assumed to be something to do with dairy churning is, in fact, a light dimmer. To be precise, it is an electrical liquid resistance dimmer for theatre lighting from the 1890s. When in use, the ceramic tube would be filled with a conductive liquid, with one electrode fixed at the bottom of the tube, and another attached to the lever so it could move easily through the liquid. When hooked up to electricity, the brightness of a stage lamp was controlled by the proximity of the top electrode to the bottom one: the closer they were, the brighter the lamp.<sup>44</sup> So far, so technical. But this dimmer is so much more illuminating than it seems. Beyond its practical use, it represents a fleeting convergence of the histories of theatre and the country house - two worlds united in one moment by their technical ambition. It's this ambition that's enshrined in Chatsworth's Theatre and embodied by this otherwise innocuous dimmer. Here, I'd like to tell you more.

The conversion in January 1896 of Chatsworth's former Ballroom into a theatre was a huge undertaking. Not only did an entire stage have to be constructed, with all its attendant fixtures and fittings, but the room was to be lit by electricity. Only installed in parts of the House a few years earlier, electricity had to be extended to the room from the main building. Around a thousand yards of cable was ordered, along with lamps, switches, brackets, fuses, pulleys, counterweights... The invoice from supplier Drake & Gorham extends to over four pages and, including the labour to install it all, amounts to £202 and 8 pence - the equivalent today of around £17,000. Our dimmer was one such item on this invoice, priced at £8 and 5 shillings - about £700 in today's money. And Drake & Gorham were not the only suppliers of new lighting equipment: a firm of metal workers provided an additional set of five long electrical battens which would light the stage from above. The full kit took over three weeks to install, employing at least seven men and bringing electric light to both the auditorium and the stage.

It's quite something to imagine all the activity taking place in this one room: alongside the installation of all this cable - while porcelain ceiling roses were being fixed in place and frosted tulip shades attached to lampholders - a further 33 men were employed in the construction of the stage itself. They were carpenters, joiners, plasterers, blacksmiths - all local and all engaged in the shared ambition of building a perfect, miniature theatre. Among a hundred other tasks, they were responsible for installing the painted proscenium arch that you see today (image 2), and for ensuring the smooth

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<sup>44</sup> For an entertaining explanation and demonstration of a similar dimmer, watch this YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRMEAYYW0dc&t=311s>

rolling of Chatsworth's unique front cloth - a mechanism that is surprisingly fiddly because it has to roll from the bottom. Like many historical events at Chatsworth, this was all achieved in record time: work started on the old Ballroom on 16th December 1895, and the first performance took place in the new Theatre on 27th January 1896. That's exactly six weeks.



Image 2: A view of the stage as it might appear today. The proscenium arch is painted to look like plaster with heavy swags of velvet curtain. Also visible in this image are the front cloth, showing old Chatsworth, and the area of the stage designed to house the footlights. Image © Chatsworth House Trust.

To put this theatrical investment in context, the story of technical advancement in country houses is sporadic and often reflects changes in individual fortunes. When we do see upheavals to technical systems, we can assume a significant financial investment has been made, and it's widely understood that this was usually to improve the comfort and convenience of those who lived in the house. As examples, I would invite you to think of the variety of bell systems you might have seen to summon servants; or, the range of washing facilities, reliant on the introduction of running water for improved sanitation; or, the evolution in food heating appliances to keep dishes warm on their journey from kitchen to dining room.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Marilyn Palmer and Ian West (2016) 'Technology in the Country House' Swindon: Historic England.

Meanwhile, in theatres, technological investment was necessary for financial sustainability. It was in their financial interest to capture and hold an audience's attention, to attract and build audience numbers. One of the ways they did this was to experiment with emerging technologies. The manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London, Sir Henry Irving, was a pioneer in this field. It was Irving who first dimmed the lights in the auditorium during a performance, and it was Irving who introduced stagehands dressed in black to undertake highly choreographed scene changes - a process that relied on the careful control of artificial light to veil backstage activity, rather than mechanically dropping a front cloth between acts.

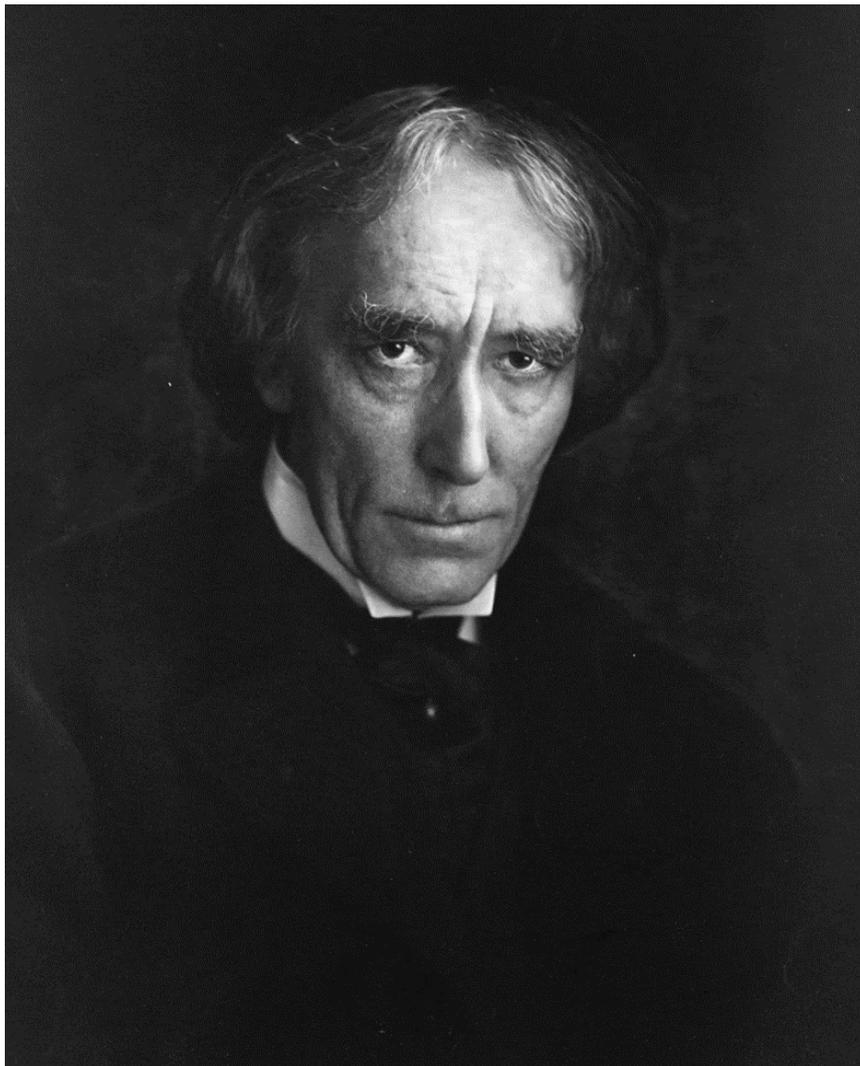


Image 3: Sir Henry Irving c. 1900. Image © Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-USZ62-105316)

Yet it was not Irving who first embraced the theatrical shift from gas to electric lighting - and perhaps for good reason. This accolade went to the Savoy Theatre, lit solely by electricity in 1881. Yet, by one

account, 'it was not till about 1891 that electric-light was, even in a crude condition, forward enough to be used for general lighting purposes in British theatres.'<sup>46</sup> That Chatsworth's Theatre was lit entirely by electric light from January 1896, then, tells us two things: first, that the family valued the role of theatrical entertainment so highly that it was prepared to extend its investment in new technology for this sole purpose; and, second, that in doing so, it was at the vanguard of ambitious theatrical technology as well.

But what of our dimmer? As suggested here, the archival records tell us that a lot of artificial light was brought into this resurrected room. The stage itself also suggests there was more: you may notice that the middle section at the front of the stage protrudes further than the rest. This was where the footlights were located. Explore under the stage with a torch and you can see the original electricity points that powered these lights: pipes that encased cables snake away into a shallow void. All these lights and only one dimmer. What did it do? Which lights did it dim?

Bram Stoker, author of *Dracula* and Irving's business manager at the Lyceum, wrote that Irving began experimenting with electric light by degrees. Accustomed to the quality and manipulation of light produced by gas, electric light was something of an unpleasant contrast. It is understood that ladies in country houses experienced something of the same discomfort, finding the new electric lights to be harsher on their complexions. For this reason, even though electric lights may have been introduced for general lighting, long dining tables, heavily laden for grand dinners, continued to be lit by candles.<sup>47</sup> Irving eased his way into electric light by using a similar blend of lighting sources. According to Stoker, unless the bulb was tinted, when theatrical electric light was dimmed, it changed colour. Adapting to this and understanding its possible applications required some level of experimentation. Irving's first foray into electrical light was with dimmable footlights. 'The purpose of lowering footlights,' Stoker tells us, 'is to create a scenic atmosphere of night or mystery or gloom.'<sup>48</sup> It's possible, then, that this row of lights lent itself to effective experimentation because of its particular atmospheric qualities. Regardless, the only way to lower electric footlights? A resistance dimmer.

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<sup>46</sup> p. 908 Bram Stoker (1911) 'Irving and Stage Lighting' *The Nineteenth Century and After: A Monthly Review* New York: Leonard Scott Publications Co. pp. 903-912. You can download a pdf copy of this article for free here: <http://www.bramstoker.org/nonfic/lighting.html>

<sup>47</sup> Palmer and West, p. 75

<sup>48</sup> Stoker, p. 908



Image 4: Bram Stoker c. 1906.

Was our dimmer used to control the intensity of the footlights in Chatsworth's theatre? Or, with so much electric light installed in the auditorium, did it employ Irving's tactic of slowly bringing the audience into darkness? It was an expensive item on the original invoice - whatever use to which it was put was deemed important enough to invest in. Reconstruction videos now show these early liquid resistance dimmers to be dangerous and to require a lot of maintenance. Stoker, too, writes of them as being 'a wasteful as well as an expensive mechanism'.<sup>49</sup> How successful was our dimmer? Does its existence today indicate that it stood the test of time or, as with so much country house technology, that investment in the Theatre wasn't maintained in the 20th century?<sup>50</sup>

Without further evidence, we can only speculate. Yet, regardless of its practical longevity, as an object at the vanguard of theatrical experimentation brought into Chatsworth only three years after the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> As far as I am aware, lighting in the Theatre was only updated in 2005.

revolutionary introduction of electricity, this otherwise innocuous dimmer represents an extraordinary meeting of worlds at a very particular moment in time.

*Thanks are due to Jim Laws, lighting historian and designer, for introducing me to these extraordinary objects, and to Dr. Scott Palmer for pointing me in the direction of useful resources to interpret them. Mistakes or misinterpretations are mine.*

## Appendix C

List of productions staged in Chatsworth's Theatre, including key performers and the stage manager(s), 1896-1907.

Date	Production(s)	Key People	Evidence	Stage Manager	Evidence
27th & 28th January 1896	'Dr. Johnson'; 'The Money Spinner'	Mr Leo Trevor, Captain Jeffcock, Mr. C. P. Colnaghi, Mrs. W. James, Earl of Rosslyn, Miss Muriel Wilson, Miss J. Graham  Menzies	CH11/1/2	Malcolm Bell	Programme in CH11/1/2
31st December 1896*	Tableaux. 'Elaine', 'Napoleon signing his Divorce', 'Red Riding Hood', 'Louis XVI's Farewell to Marie Antoinette and her Children'	Perf. by Lady Theo Acheson, Honble. Patrick Acheson, Mady Mary Acheson, Master White, Master Brif, Mr. John Cavendish, Honble. F. Curzon, Miss G. Williams	<i>Uncatalogued programme</i>		
8th & 9th January 1897	'Mrs. Hilary Regrets' and 'The Ladies' Battle'	Mr Leo Trevor, Miss Muriel Wilson, Lord Elcho, Lord Chelsea, Mr. Malcolm Bell, Countess of Mar & Kellie	CH11/1/2	Malcolm Bell	Programme in CH11/1/2
3rd May 1897	Concert / Interval / Tableaux Vivants	Miss Weatherill, Miss Turnbull, Mr Cave, Mr Weatherill, Miss F Turnbull, Miss Lillian Wright, Miss Myra Wright Miss B Paget, Miss E Knight, Miss Paget, Miss Wrench,	(not in DCA) <i>The Derbyshire Times</i> , Saturday 8th May 1897	?	<i>Newspaper does not state.</i>

		Mr Eddleston, Miss Fenton, Miss Hankin, Mr J Luxmoore, Miss Hiscock, Miss L Hiscock, Mr J Robertson, Miss Alice Hall, Miss E Knight, Mr Eddleston, Miss Harrison, Miss Hutchinson, Mr Dixon, Mr H Hearnshaw, Mr Reynolds, Ernest Longdon, Mr Weatherill, Miss Martin			
7th & 10th January 1898	'His Little Dodge'; 'Kitty Clive'	Mrs W James, Lady Randolph Churchill, Mr Mildmay, Mr Leo Trevor, Captain Jeffcock, Mr Bell, Miss Muriel Wilson	(not in DCA) <i>The Derbyshire Times</i> , 8th Jan 1898 & Wr D 43	Malcolm Bell	(not in DCA) <i>The Derbyshire Times</i> , 8th Jan 1898 & Wr D 43
6th & 7th January 1899	'Fool's Paradise'	Captain Jeffcock, Mr. Leo Trevor, Mr. Mark Mildmay, Mr. Clive Wilson, Lady Dickson Poynder, Mrs. J. G. Menzies, Miss Muriel Wilson, Mr. W. Deacon	CH11/1/2 (Sheffield Telegraph 7th Jan 1899)	Alexander Stuart	(not in DCA) <i>The Derbyshire Times</i> , 11th Jan 1899
11th & 14th January 1901	'Le Bibelot'; 'A Pantomime Rehearsal'	Mr F. Bingham Mildmay, MP, Count Albert Mensdorff, Mr Leo Trevor, Captain Jeffcock, Lady F. Sturt, Mrs W. James, Mrs J. Graham Menzies, Miss Muriel Wilson, Lady A. Acheson	CH11/1/2	Alexander Stuart / George Longden	Household Accounts - Stuart's receipts - Chatsworth Hotel invoice - - payment voucher 'Mr Longden Stage Manager'

9th & 10th January 1902	'A Commission'; 'La Ballade du Desespere'; 'A Dream of the New Year'	Mr. Mildmay, Mr. Leo Trevor, Captain Jeffcock, Miss Muriel Wilson, Mrs. J. G. Menzies, Lady Maud Warrender, Princess Henry of Pless, the Ladies Acheson	CH11/1/2 (Sheffield Daily Telegraph 10th Jan 1902)	Alexander Stuart / George Longden	Household Accounts - Chatsworth Hotel invoice - payment voucher 'Stage Manager etc'
9th & 12th January 1903	'Our Bitterest Foe'; 'The Eternal Feminine'; 'Shades of Night'	Leo Trevor, Capt Jeffcock, Muriel Wilson, Princess Henry of Pless, Frank Mildmay	CH11/1/2 (various newspaper sources)	Alexander Stuart & 2 unnamed men	Household Accounts - Stuart's receipts - Chatsworth Hotel invoice - payment voucher '& anr Stage Manager etc'
5th February 1903	'C'etait Gertrude'; cinematograph exhibition; 'The Dancing Girl & The Idol'	Count Albert Mensdorff, Miss Muriel Wilson, Lady Maud Warrender	CH11/1/2	Alexander Stuart & 2 unnamed men (J. Taylor likely to be one.)	Household Accounts - Stuart's receipts - Chatsworth Hotel invoice
7th & 8th January 1904	'The Eternal Feminine'; 'Cinderella and The Magic Slipper'; 'The Dancing Girl and The Idol'	Princess Henry of Pless, Mrs. Willie James, Miss Muriel Wilson, Sir Hedworth Williamson, Mr. Leo Trevor	CH11/1/2 & DE/CH/7/3/2/1	Alexander Stuart & 2 men (likely to be C. Wilcox and G[?] Pallen[illeg.]	Household Accounts - Stuart's receipts - Chatsworth Hotel invoice
5th January 1905	'My heart's at your feet' from 'The Cingalee'; 'Nightingale' by Zellee from 'An Artist's Model'; 'The Jewel of Asia' from	Isabel Jay, Mdlle. Genee	CH11/1/5	Unknown	

	'The Geisha'  A fantasia polka; 'Mrs. Hoggenheimer' by Caryll from 'The Milliner Duchess'; 'Cora' from 'The Toreador'; 'High Jinks' (perf. Mdlle. Genee)				
4th & 5th January 1906	'Lotus'; 'Selections' by Carl Heubert's Orchestra; 'Time is Money'; 'The Dancing Girl and the Idol'	Princess Henry of Pless, Mr. Charles Hawtrey, Miss Muriel Wilson, Lady Maud Warrender	CH11/1/2	Alexander Stuart	Uncatalogued accounts book, unsupported by vouchers etc.
4th January 1907	'The Ninth Waltz'; 'Selection' by Mr. Carl Heubert's Band; 'Pas Seul'; Songs; Cinematograph; 'A Contrast in Three Songs'	Miss Muriel Wilson, Viscount Duncannon, Mr. Walter Kirby, Lady Maud Warrender, Princess of Pless	CH11/1/2	Lady Maud Warrender, Count Albert Mensdorff (in part, for the duologue)	Sheffield Telegraph 5th Jan 1907 in CH11/1/5

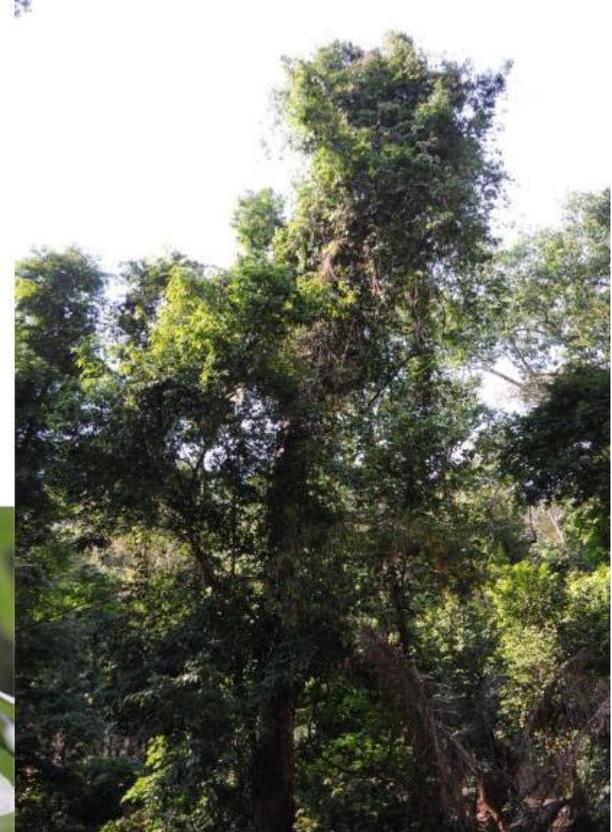
\* The December 1896 production was a children's performance.

## Appendix D

Illustrative examples of some of the trees and shrubs accommodated in the Orangery in the 1830s-'40s, as mentioned in the *Handbook of Chatsworth and Hardwick* (Cavendish 1844).



LHS: Orange tree (image: <https://www.thepalmtreecompany.com/product-page/citrus-trees-sweet-orange>). RHS: Araucaria (monkey puzzle tree) (image: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:30058753-2/images>)



LHS: 'Dammara Australis', renamed *Agathis Australis*, known natively as kauri (images: <https://leafland.co.nz/trees/agathis-australis/> and <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/agathis-australis/>). RHS: 'Altingia Excelsa', renamed *Liquidambar Excelsa* (images: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:58631-1/images>)



LHS: Magnolia (image: <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:30000709-2/images>). RHS: Rhododendron Arboreum (image: By Spencer Weart - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20799710>)

## Appendix E

An illustrative guide to some of the probable audience members in the Gallery for the first performance of the 1901 theatricals. Informed by the 1901 box office records, Servants and Staff Database and census returns.

*Image on the following page.*

John Hulley, aged around 18, worked as an Estate Clerk and lived with his parents in Edensor. He also bought a Second Seat ticket downstairs.

The names given here were all working in the household of Gilson Martin, Land Agent and resident of Edensor, who bought eight tickets in the Gallery, four Second Seat tickets and five Front Seat tickets downstairs. Kent and Harwood, aged 16 and 17, worked as general servants; Rouley and Elison, 26 and 22, worked as cooks; Lansley, 20, worked as a parlourmaid, and Birch, 19, a housemaid.

William Read, aged around 35, was a Gardener, living at Chatsworth with his wife, Margaret, and three small children.

William Chester, Head Gardener at Chatsworth, aged 65 and living in Barbrook Hall on the Chatsworth Estate, bought three tickets in the Gallery and two Second Seat tickets downstairs.

George Yeomans, aged around 26, was a clerk in the Estate Office and lived in Edensor. Yeomans had also worked as a general labourer on the construction of the stage in the Theatre in 1895-6.

Ellen Bacon, aged around 31 and living in Edensor, was the Post Office Clerk at the Edensor Post Office. The Bacons were given two Gallery tickets, which we might presume were by way of thanks for administering the sale of the others (see 5.2.2 The 'Public' Vendors).

Annie White and Sarah White, aged 19 and 17 respectively, worked as a cook and housemaid for Charles Fieldsend in Edensor. Both were born in Baslow. Fieldsend bought four further tickets in the Gallery and six Front Seat tickets downstairs.

Annie Beard, aged around 23, was working as a cook for Dr. E. M. Wrench, and Edith Lineker, aged 19, as a housemaid, at Park Lodge in Baslow, on the edge of the Chatsworth estate.

James Francis Woodhead, Surveyor and Clerk of Works at Chatsworth, bought six tickets in the Gallery and seven Second Seat tickets downstairs. However, it is possible that these tickets were not used since Woodhead was seriously ill with typhoid fever at the time. He died eight days after this performance.

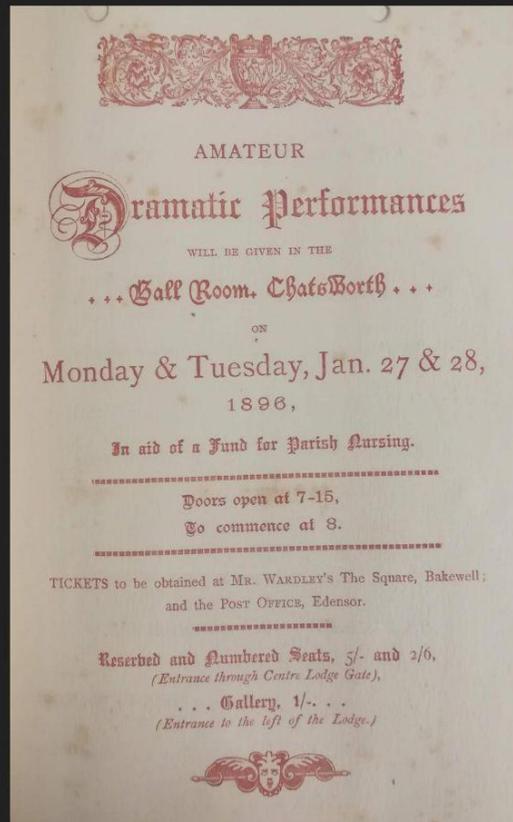
Alan Coakes, aged around 15 and living at Chatsworth, was one of the Assistants to the Land Agent.

ENTRANCE				105	106	107	108	Florence Kent	Annie Lansley	Lizzie Birch	Lizzie Rouley	Eliza Elison	Ethel Harwood	116			
				94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103				
				84	85	86	87	88	Chatsworth House		91	92	93				
				76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83						
				60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73
				46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
				Annie White	Sarah White	84	85	86	87	88	89	Annie Beard	Edith Lineker	42	43	44	45
				19	20	21	22					27	28	29	30	31	
				15	16	17	18					23	24	Alan Coakes	26		
				10	11	12	13	14									
				5	6	7	Ellen Bacon	9									
				1	George Yeomans	3	4										
GALLERY.																	
STAGE.																	

## Appendix F

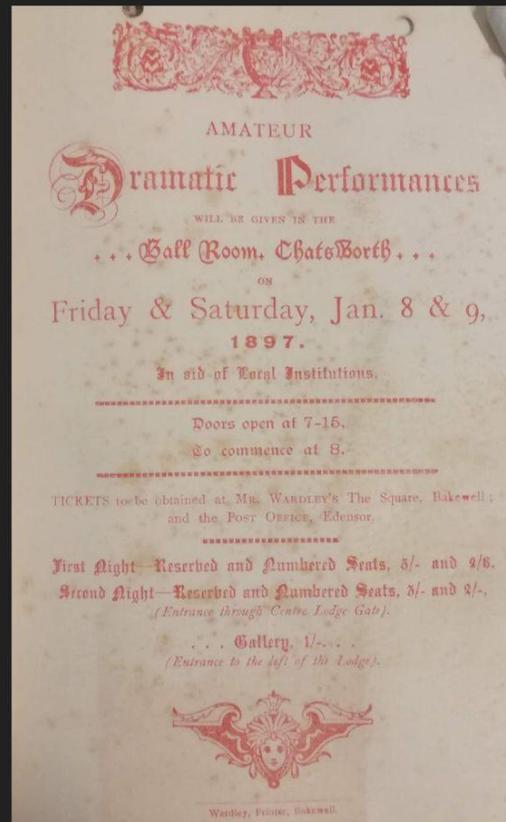
Illustrating all the theatrical programmes available in the DCA from 1896 to 1907, and indicating those years for which no programmes are available.

1896



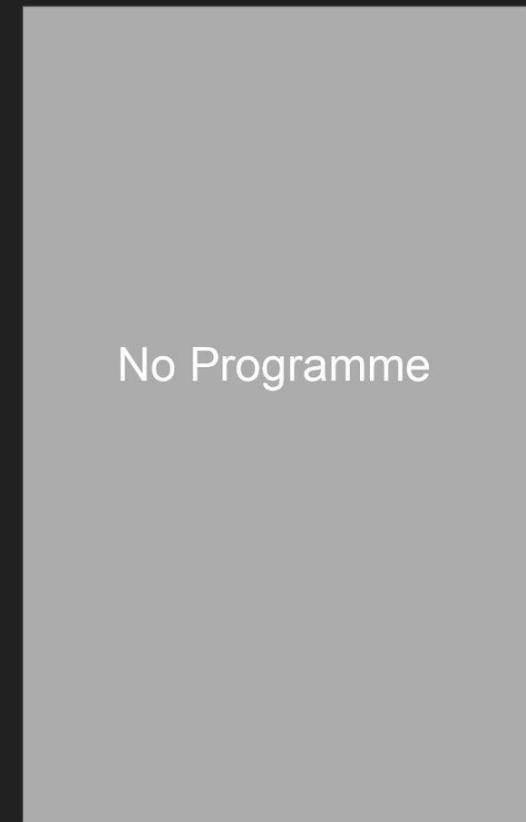
(Source: DCA CH11/1/2)

1897



(Source: DCA CH11/1/2)

1898



1899

No Programme

1901



AMATEUR  
**Dramatic Performances**  
WILL BE GIVEN IN THE  
... **Gall Room, Chatsworth** ...  
ON  
Friday & Monday, Jan. 11 & 14,  
1901.  
In aid of Local Institutions.

---

Doors open at 9.  
To commence at 9.30.

---

TICKETS to be obtained at MR. WARDLEY'S, The Square, Bakewell;  
and the POST OFFICE, Edensor.

---

Reserved and Numbered Seats, 5/- and 2/6.  
(Entrance through Centre Lodge Gate).

... Gallery, 1/- ...  
(Entrance to the left of the Lodge).



C. F. Wardley, High Peak News Offices, Bakewell.

(Source: DCA CH11/1/2)

1902

No Programme

1903  
(Jan)

No Programme

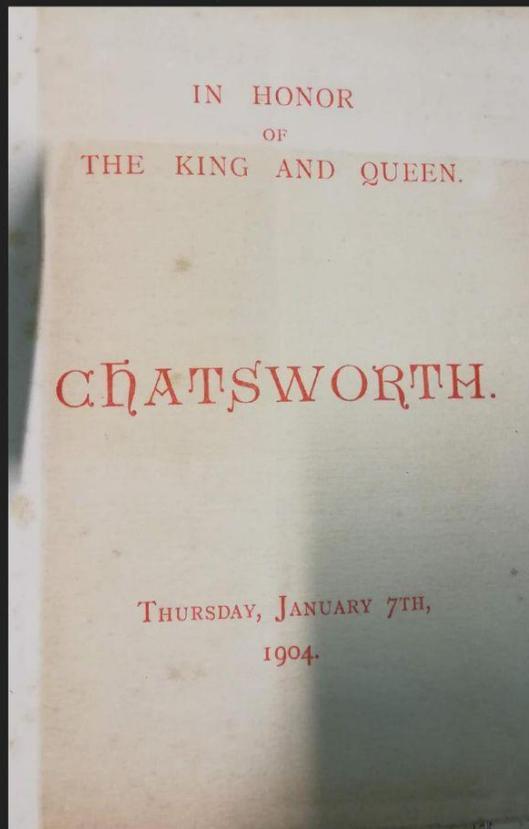
1903  
(Feb)

CHATSWORTH.

FEBRUARY 5th,  
1903.

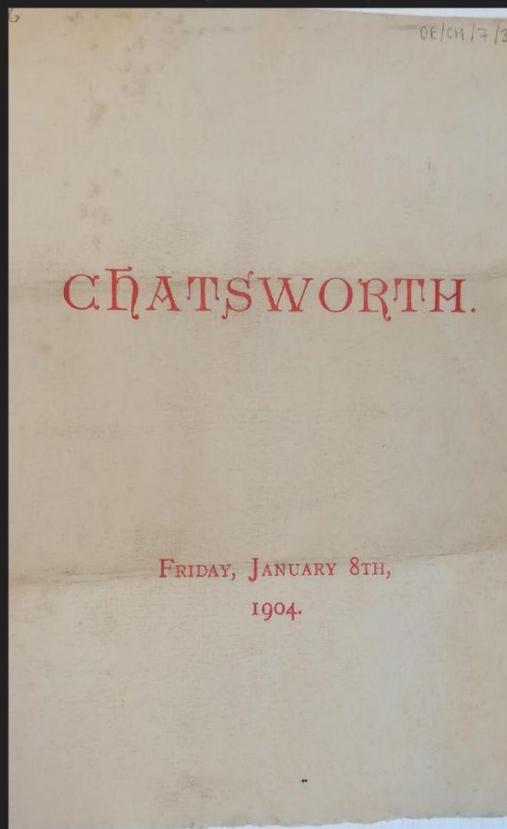
(Source: DCA CH11/1/2)

1904  
(7th Jan)



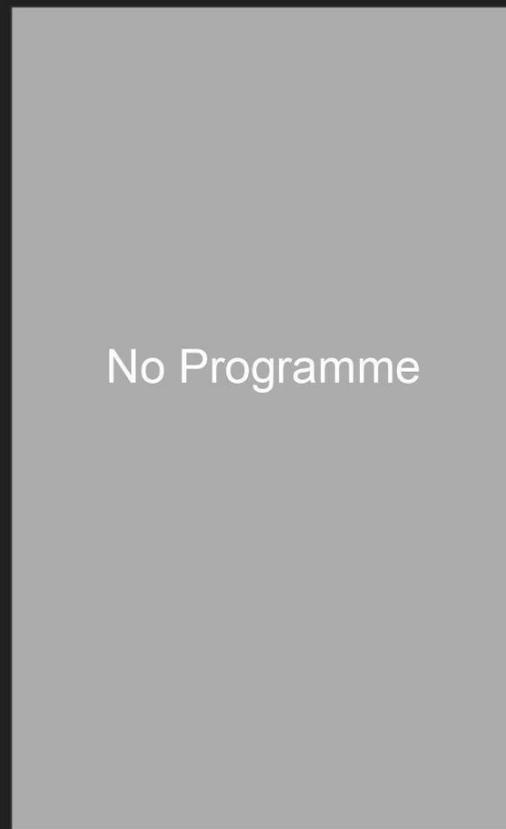
(Source: DCA CH11/1/2)

1904  
(8th Jan)

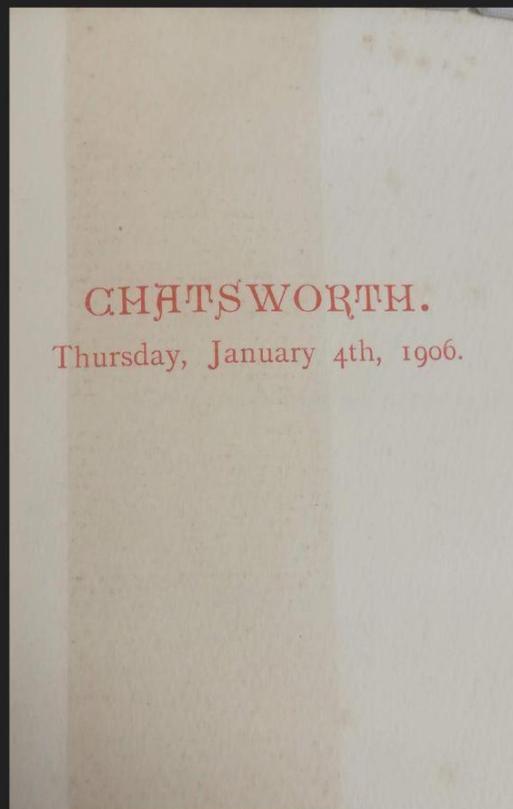


(Source: DCA DE/CH/7/3/2/1)

1905

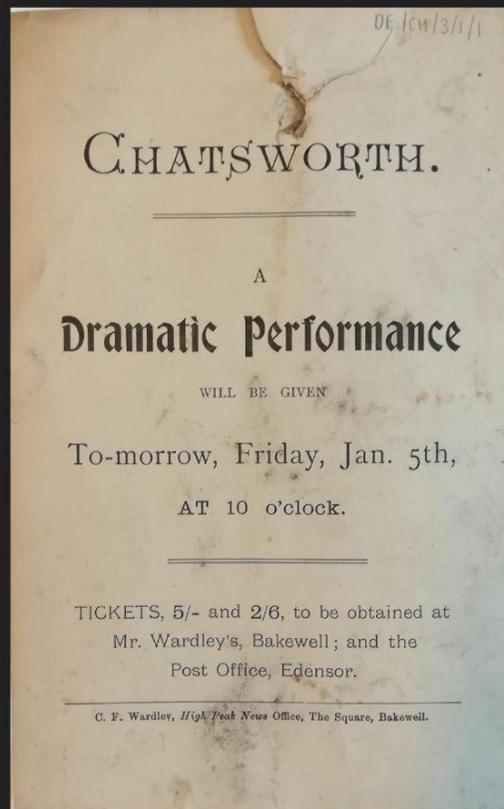


1906  
(4th Jan)



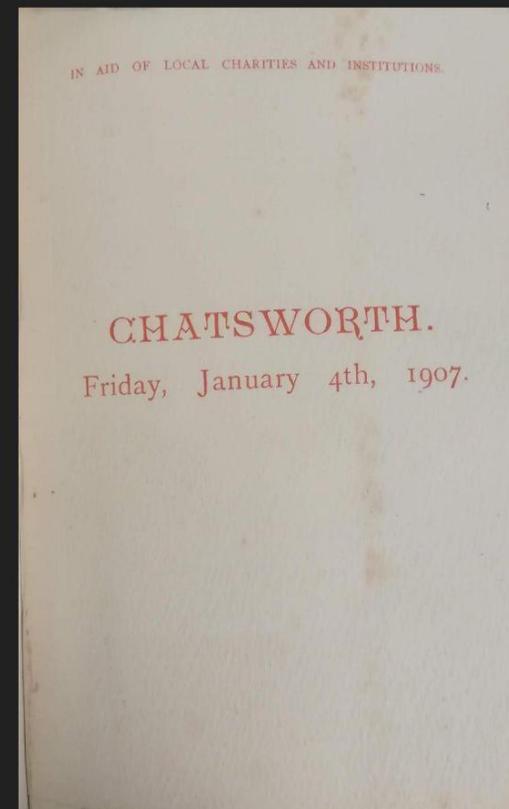
(Source: DCA CH11/1/2)

1906 (5th Jan)  
PLAYBILL



(Source: DCA DE/CH/3/1/1)

1907



(Source: DCA CH11/1/2)