

= Holkham Hall =

Holkham Hall (/ ˈhɒkəm / or / ˈhʊlkəm /) is an 18th @-@ century country house located adjacent to the village of Holkham , Norfolk , England . The house was constructed in the Palladian style for Thomas Coke , 1st Earl of Leicester (fifth creation) by the architect William Kent , aided by the architect and aristocrat Lord Burlington .

Holkham Hall is one of England 's finest examples of the Palladian revival style of architecture , and the severity of its design is closer to Palladio 's ideals than many of the other numerous Palladian style houses of the period . The Holkham Estate , had been built up by Sir Edward Coke , the founder of his family fortune . He bought Neales manor in 1609 , though never lived there , and many other purchases of land in Norfolk to endow to his six sons . His fourth son , John , inherited the land and married heiress Meriel Wheatley in 1612 . They made Hill Hall their home and by 1659 John had complete ownership of all three Holkham manors . It is the ancestral home of the Coke family , the Earls of Leicester of Holkham .

The interior of the hall is opulently , but by the standards of the day , simply decorated and furnished . Ornament is used with such restraint that it was possible to decorate both private and state rooms in the same style , without oppressing the former . The principal entrance is through the Marble Hall , which is in fact made of pink Derbyshire alabaster ; this leads to the piano nobile , or the first floor , and state rooms . The most impressive of these rooms is the Saloon , which has walls lined with red velvet . Each of the major state rooms is symmetrical in its layout and design ; in some rooms , false doors are necessary to fully achieve this balanced effect .

= = Architects and patron = =

Holkham was built by 1st Earl of Leicester , Thomas Coke , who was born in 1697 . A cultivated and wealthy man , Coke made the Grand Tour in his youth and was away from England for six years between 1712 and 1718 . It is likely he met both Burlington ? the aristocratic architect at the forefront of the Palladian revival movement in England ? and William Kent in Italy in 1715 , and that in the home of Palladianism the idea of the mansion at Holkham was conceived . Coke returned to England , not only with a newly acquired library , but also an art and sculpture collection with which to furnish his planned new mansion . However , after his return , he lived a feckless life , preoccupying himself with drinking , gambling and hunting , and being a leading supporter of cockfighting . He made a disastrous investment in the South Sea Company and when the South Sea Bubble burst in 1720 , the resultant losses delayed the building of Coke 's planned new country estate for over ten years . Coke , who had been made Earl of Leicester in 1744 , died in 1759 ? five years before the completion of Holkham ? having never fully recovered his financial losses . Thomas 's wife , Lady Margaret Tufton , Countess of Leicester (1700 ? 1775) , would oversee the finishing and furnishing of the house .

Although Colen Campbell was employed by Thomas Coke in the early 1720s , the oldest existing working and construction plans for Holkham were drawn by Matthew Brettingham , under the supervision of Thomas Coke , in 1726 . These followed the guidelines and ideals for the house as defined by Kent and Burlington . The Palladian revival style chosen was at this time making its return in England . The style made a brief appearance in England before the Civil War , when it was introduced by Inigo Jones . However , following the Restoration it was replaced in popular favour by the Baroque style . The " Palladian revival " , popular in the 18th century , was loosely based on the appearance of the works of the 16th @-@ century Italian architect Andrea Palladio . However it did not adhere to Palladio 's strict rules of proportion . The style eventually evolved into what is generally referred to as Georgian , still popular in England today . It was the chosen style for numerous houses in both town and country , although Holkham is exceptional for both its severity of design and for being closer than most in its adherence to Palladio 's ideals .

Although Thomas Coke oversaw the project , he delegated the on @-@ site architectural duties to the local Norfolk architect Matthew Brettingham , who was employed as the on @-@ site clerk of works . Brettingham was already the estate architect , and was in receipt of £ 50 a year (about 7

@, @ 000 pounds per year in 2016 terms) in return for " taking care of his Lordship 's buildings " . William Kent was mainly responsible for the interiors of the Southwest pavilion , or family wing block , particularly the Long Library . Kent produced a variety of alternative exteriors , suggesting a far richer decoration than Coke wanted . Brettingham described the building of Holkham as " the great work of [my life] " , and when he published his " The Plans and Elevations of the late Earl of Leicester 's House at Holkham " , he immodestly described himself as sole architect , making no mention of Kent 's involvement . However , in a later edition of the book , Brettingham 's son admitted that " the general idea was first struck out by the Earls of Leicester and Burlington , assisted by Mr. William Kent " .

In 1734 , the first foundations were laid ; however , building was to continue for thirty years , until the completion of the great house in 1764 .

= = Design = =

The Palladian style was admired by Whigs such as Thomas Coke , who sought to identify themselves with the Romans of antiquity . Kent was responsible for the external appearance of Holkham ; he based his design on Palladio 's unbuilt Villa Mocenigo , as it appears in *I Quattro Libri dell 'Architettura* , but with modifications .

The plans for Holkham were of a large central block of two floors only , containing on the piano nobile level a series of symmetrically balanced state rooms situated around two courtyards . No hint of these courtyards is given externally ; they are intended for lighting rather than recreation or architectural value . This great central block is flanked by four smaller , rectangular blocks , or wings , and at each corners is linked to the main house not by long colonnades ? as would have been the norm in Palladian architecture ? but by short two @-@ storey wings of only one bay .

= = = Exterior = = =

The external appearance of Holkham can best be described as a huge Roman palace . However , as with most architectural designs , it is never quite that simple . Holkham is a Palladian house , and yet even by Palladian standards the external appearance is austere and devoid of ornamentation . This can almost certainly be traced to Coke himself . The on @-@ site , supervising architect , Matthew Brettingham , related that Coke required and demanded " commodiousness " , which can be interpreted as comfort . Hence rooms that were adequately lit by one window , had only one , as a second might have improved the external appearance but could have made a room cold or draughty . As a result , the few windows on the piano nobile , although symmetrically placed and balanced , appear lost in a sea of brickwork ; albeit these yellow bricks were cast as exact replicas of ancient Roman bricks expressly for Holkham . Above the windows of the piano nobile , where on a true Palladian structure the windows of a mezzanine would be , there is nothing . The reason for this is the double height of the state rooms on the piano nobile ; however , not even a blind window , such as those often seen in Palladio 's own work , is permitted to alleviate the severity of the facade . On the ground floor , the rusticated walls are pierced by small windows more reminiscent of a prison than a grand house . One architectural commentator , Nigel Nicolson , has described the house as appearing as functional as a Prussian riding school .

The principal , or South façade , is 344 feet (104 @. @ 9 m) in length (from each of the flanking wings to the other) , its austerity relieved on the piano nobile level only by a great six @-@ columned portico . Each end of the central block is terminated by a slight projection , containing a Venetian window surmounted by a single storey square tower and capped roof , similar to those employed by Inigo Jones at Wilton House nearly a century earlier . A near identical portico was designed by Inigo Jones and Isaac de Caus for the Palladian front at Wilton , but this was never executed .

The flanking wings contain service and secondary rooms ? the family wing to the south @-@ west ; the guest wing to the north @-@ west ; the chapel wing to the south @-@ east ; and the kitchen wing to the north @-@ east . Each wing 's external appearance is identical : three bays , each

separated from the other by a narrow recess in the elevation . Each bay is surmounted by an unadorned pediment . The composition of stone , recesses , varying pediments and chimneys of the four blocks is almost reminiscent of the English Baroque style in favour ten years earlier , employed at Seaton Delaval Hall by Sir John Vanbrugh . One of these wings , as at the later Kedleston Hall , was a self @-@ contained country house to accommodate the family when the state rooms and central block were not in use .

The one storey porch at the main north entrance was designed in the 1850s by Samuel Sanders Teulon , although stylistically it is indistinguishable from the 18th @-@ century building .

= = = Interior = = =

Inside the house , the Palladian form reaches a height and grandeur seldom seen in any other house in England . It has , in fact , been described as " The finest Palladian interior in England . " The grandeur of the interior is obtained with an absence of excessive ornament , and reflects Kent 's career @-@ long taste for " the eloquence of a plain surface " . Work on the interiors ran from 1739 to 1773 . The first habitable rooms were in the family wing and were in use from 1740 , the Long Library being the first major interior completed in 1741 . Among the last to be completed and entirely under Lady Leicester 's supervision is the Chapel with its alabaster reredos . The house is entered through the Marble Hall (though the chief building fabric is in fact pink Derbyshire alabaster) , modelled by Kent on a Roman basilica . The room is over 50 feet (15 m) from floor to ceiling and is dominated by the broad white marble flight of steps leading to the surrounding gallery , or peristyle : here alabaster Ionic columns support the coffered , gilded ceiling , copied from a design by Inigo Jones , inspired by the Pantheon in Rome . The fluted columns are thought to be replicas of those in the Temple of Fortuna Virilis , also in Rome . Around the hall are statues in niches ; these are predominantly plaster copies of classical deities .

The hall 's flight of steps lead to the piano nobile and state rooms . The grandest , the Saloon , is situated immediately behind the great portico , with its walls lined with patterned red caffoy (a mixture of wool , linen and silk) and a coffered , gilded ceiling . In this room hangs Rubens 's Return from Egypt . On his Grand Tour , the Earl acquired a collection of Roman copies of Greek and Roman sculpture which is contained in the extensive Statue Gallery , which runs the full length of the house north to south . The North Dining Room , a cube room of 27 feet (8 @.@ 2 m) contains an Axminster carpet that perfectly mirrors the pattern of the ceiling above . A bust of Aelius Verus , set in a niche in the wall of this room , was found during the restoration at Nettuno . A classical apse gives the room an almost temple air . The apse in fact , contains concealed access to the labyrinth of corridors and narrow stairs that lead to the distant kitchens and service areas of the house . Each corner of the east side of the principal block contains a square salon lit by a huge Venetian window , one of them ? the Landscape Room ? hung with paintings by Claude Lorrain and Gaspar Poussin . All of the major state rooms have symmetrical walls , even where this involves matching real with false doors . The major rooms also have elaborate white and multi @-@ coloured marble fireplaces , most with carvings and sculpture , mainly the work of Thomas Carter , though Joseph Pickford carved the fireplace in the Statue Gallery . Much of the furniture in the state rooms was also designed by William Kent , in a stately classicising baroque manner .

So restrained is the interior decoration of the state rooms , or in the words of James Lees @-@ Milne , " chaste " , that the smaller , more intimate rooms in the family 's private south @-@ west wing were decorated in similar vein , without being overpowering . The long library running the full length of the wing still contains the collection of books acquired by Thomas Coke on his Grand Tour through Italy , where he saw for the first time the Palladian villas which were to inspire Holkham .

The Green State bedroom is the principal bedroom ; it is decorated with paintings and tapestries , including works by Paul Saunders and George Smith Bradshaw . It is said that when Queen Mary visited , Gavin Hamilton 's " lewd " depiction of Jupiter Caressing Juno " was considered unsuitable for that lady 's eyes and was banished to the attics " .

= = Grounds = =

Work to the designs of William Kent on the park commenced in 1729 , several years before the house was constructed . This event was commemorated by the construction in 1730 of the obelisk , 80 feet (24 m) in height , standing on the highest point in the park . It is located over half a mile to the south and on axis with the centre of the house . An avenue of trees stretches over a mile south of the obelisk . Thousands of trees were planted on what had been windswept land ; by 1770 the park covered 1 @, @ 500 acres (6 @. @ 1 km²) . Other garden buildings designed by Kent are , near the far end of the avenue the Triumphal Arch , designed in 1739 but only completed in 1752 and the domed doric temple (1730 ? 35) in the woods near the obelisk . Above the main entrance to the house within the Marble Hall is this inscription :

THIS SEAT , on an open barren Estate

Was planned , planted , built , decorated .

And inhabited the middle of the XVIIIth Century

By THO 's COKE EARL of LEICESTER

Under Coke of Norfolk , the great @-@ nephew and heir of the builder , extensive improvements were made to the park and by his death in 1842 it had grown to its present extent of over 3 @, @ 000 acres (12 km²) . As well as planting over a million trees on the estate Coke employed the architect Samuel Wyatt to design over a number of buildings , including a series of farm buildings and farmhouses in a simplified neo @-@ classical style and , in the 1780s , the new walled kitchen gardens covering 6 acres (24 @, @ 000 m²) . The gardens stand to the west of the lake and include : A fig house , a peach house , a vinery , and other greenhouses . Wyatt 's designs culminated in c . 1790 with the Great Barn , located in the park half a mile south @-@ east of the obelisk . The cost of each farm was in the region of £ 1 @, @ 500 to £ 2 @, @ 600 : Lodge Farm , Castle Acre , cost £ 2 @, @ 604 6s . 5d. in 1797 ? 1800 . The lake to the west of the house , originally a marshy inlet or creek off the North Sea , was created in 1801 ? 03 by the landscape gardener William Eames .

After his death , Coke was commemorated by the Coke Monument , designed by William Donthorne and erected in 1845 ? 8 at a cost to the tenants of the estate of £ 4 @, @ 000 . The monument consists of a Corinthian column 120 feet (37 m) high , surmounted by a drum supporting a wheatsheaf and a plinth decorated with bas @-@ reliefs carved by John Henning , Jr . The corners of the plinth support sculptures of an ox , sheep , plough and seed @-@ drill . Coke 's work to increase farm yields had resulted in the rental income of the estate rising between 1776 and 1816 from £ 2 @, @ 200 to £ 20 @, @ 000 , and had considerable influence on agricultural methods in Britain .

In 1850 , Thomas Coke , 2nd Earl of Leicester , called in the architect William Burn to build new stables to the east of the house , in collaboration with W. A. Nesfield , who had designed the parterres . Work started at the same time on the terraces surrounding the house . This work continued until 1857 and included , to the south and on axis with the house , the monumental fountain of Saint George and the Dragon dated c . 1849 ? 57 sculpted by Charles Raymond Smith . To the east of the house and overlooking the terrace , Burn designed the large stone orangery , with a three @-@ bay pedimented centre and three @-@ bay flanking wings . The orangery is now roofless and windowless .

= = Holkham today = =

The cost of the construction of Holkham is thought to have been in the region of £ 90 @, @ 000 . This vast cost nearly ruined the heirs of the 1st Earl , but had the result that they were financially unable to alter the house to suit the whims of taste . Thus , the house has remained almost untouched since its completion in 1764 . Today , this perfect , if severe , example of Palladianism is at the heart of a thriving private estate of some 25 @, @ 000 acres (100 km²) . Though open to the public on Sundays , Mondays and Thursdays , it is still the family home of the Earls of Leicester of Holkham .