

= Matthew Brettingham =

Matthew Brettingham ( 1699 ? 19 August 1769 ) , sometimes called Matthew Brettingham the Elder , was an 18th @-@ century Englishman who rose from humble origins to supervise the construction of Holkham Hall , and become one of the country 's best @-@ known architects of his generation . Much of his principal work has since been demolished , particularly his work in London , where he revolutionised the design of the grand townhouse . As a result , he is often overlooked today , remembered principally for his Palladian remodelling of numerous country houses , many of them situated in the East Anglia area of Britain . As Brettingham neared the pinnacle of his career , Palladianism began to fall out of fashion and neoclassicism was introduced , championed by the young Robert Adam .

= = Early life = =

Brettingham was born in 1699 , the second son of Launcelot Brettingham ( 1664 ? 1727 ) , a bricklayer or stonemason from Norwich , the county town of Norfolk , England . He married Martha Bunn ( c . 1697 ? 1783 ) at St. Augustine 's Church , Norwich , on 17 May 1721 and they had nine children together .

His early life is little documented , and one of the earliest recorded references to him is in 1719 , when he and his elder brother Robert were admitted to the city of Norwich as freemen bricklayers . A critic of Brettingham 's at this time claimed that his work was so poor that it was not worth the nine shillings a week ( £ 65 in 2016 ) he was paid as a craftsman bricklayer . Whatever the quality of his bricklaying , he soon advanced himself and became a building contractor .

= = Local contractor = =

During the early eighteenth century , a building contractor had far more responsibilities than the title suggests today . A contractor often designed , built , and oversaw all details of construction to completion . Architects , often called surveyors , were employed only for the grandest and largest of buildings . By 1730 , Brettingham is referred to as a surveyor , working on more important structures than cottages and agricultural buildings . In 1731 , it is recorded that he was paid £ 112 ( £ 16 @,@ 600 in 2016 ) for his work on Norwich Gaol . From then , he appears to have worked regularly as the surveyor to the Justices ( the contemporary local authority ) on public buildings and bridges throughout the 1740s . Projects of his dating from this time include the remodelling of the Shirehouse in Norwich , the construction of Lenwade Bridge over the river Wensum , repairs to Norwich Castle and Norwich Cathedral , as well as the rebuilding of much of St. Margaret 's Church , King 's Lynn , which had been severely damaged by the collapse of its spire in 1742 . His work on the Shirehouse , which was in the gothic style and showed a versatility of design rare for Brettingham , was to result in a protracted court case that was to rumble on through a large part of his life , with allegations of financial discrepancies . In 1755 , the case was eventually closed , and Brettingham was left several hundred pounds out of pocket ? several tens of thousands , in present @-@ day terms ? and with a stain ? if only a local one ? on his character . Transcripts of the case suggest that it was Brettingham 's brother Robert , to whom he had subcontracted and who was responsible for the flint stonework of the Shirehouse , who may have been the cause of the allegations . Brettingham 's brief flirtation with the Gothic style , in the words of Robin Lucas , indicates " the approach of an engineer rather than an antiquary " and is " now seen as outlandish " . The Shirehouse was demolished in 1822 .

= = Architect = =

In 1734 , Brettingham had his first great opportunity , when two of the foremost Palladian architects of the day , William Kent and Lord Burlington , were collaboratively designing a grandiose Palladian country palace at Holkham in Norfolk for Thomas Coke , 1st Earl of Leicester . Brettingham was

appointed Clerk of Works ( sometimes referred to as executive architect ) , at an annual salary of £ 50 ( £ 7 @, @ 300 per year in 2016 ) . He retained the position until the Earl 's death in 1759 . The illustrious architects were mostly absent ; indeed Burlington was more of an idealist than an architect , thus Brettingham and the patron Lord Leicester were left to work on the project together , with the practical Brettingham interpreting the architects ' plans to Leicester 's requirements . It was at Holkham that Brettingham first worked with the fashionable Palladian style , which was to be his trademark . Holkham was to be Brettingham 's springboard to fame , as it was through his association with it that he came to the attention of other local patrons , and further work at Heydon and Honingham Hall established Brettingham as a local country @-@ house architect .

Brettingham was commissioned in 1742 to redesign Langley Hall , a mansion standing in its own parkland in South Norfolk . His design was very much in the Palladian style of Holkham , though much smaller : a large principal central block linked to two flanking secondary wings by short corridors . The corner towers , while similar to those later designed by Brettingham at Euston Hall , were the work of a later owner and architect . The neoclassical entrance lodges were a later addition , by Sir John Soane . In 1743 , Brettingham began work on the construction of Hanworth Hall , Norfolk , also in the Palladian style , with a five @-@ bay facade of brick with the centre three bays projected with a pediment .

In 1745 , Brettingham designed Gunton Hall in Norfolk for Sir William Harbord , three years after the former house on the site was gutted by fire . The new house of brick had a principal facade like that of Hanworth Hall , however , this larger house was seven bays deep , and had a large service wing on its western side . His commissions began to come from further afield : Goodwood in Sussex and Marble Hill , Twickenham .

In 1750 , now well @-@ known , the architect received an important commission to remodel Euston Hall in East Anglia , the Suffolk country seat of the influential 2nd Duke of Grafton . The original house , built circa 1666 in the French style , was built around a central court with large pavilions at each corner . While keeping the original layout , Brettingham formalised the fenestration and imposed a more classically severe order whereby the pavilions were transformed to towers in the Palladian fashion ( similar to those of Inigo Jones 's at Wilton House ) . The pavilions ' domes were replaced by low pyramid roofs similar to those at Holkham . Brettingham also created the large service courtyard at Euston that now acts as the entrance court to the mansion , which today is only a fraction of its former size .

The Euston commission seems to have brought Brettingham firmly to the notice of other wealthy patrons . In 1751 , he began work for the Earl of Egremont at Petworth House , Sussex . He continued work intermittently at Petworth for the next twelve years , including designing a new picture gallery from 1754 . Over the same period his country @-@ house work included alterations at Moor Park , Hertfordshire ; Wortley Hall , Yorkshire ; Wakefield Lodge , Northamptonshire ; and Benacre House , Suffolk .

= = London townhouses = =

From 1747 , Brettingham operated from London as well as Norwich . This period marks a turning point in his career , as he was now no longer designing country houses and farm buildings just for the local aristocrats and the Norfolk gentry , but for the greater aristocracy based in London .

One of Brettingham 's greatest solo commissions came when he was asked to design a town house for the 9th Duke of Norfolk in St. James 's Square , London . Completed in 1756 , the exterior of this mansion was similar to those of many of the great palazzi in Italian cities : bland and featureless , the piano nobile distinguishable only by its tall pedimented windows . This arrangement , devoid of pilasters and a pediment giving prominence to the central bays at roof height , was initially too severe for the English taste , even by the fashionable Palladian standards of the day . Early critics declared the design " insipid " .

However , the interior design of Norfolk House was to define the London town house for the next century . The floor plan was based on an adaptation of one of the secondary wings he had built at Holkham Hall . A circuit of reception rooms centred on a grand staircase , with the staircase hall

replacing the Italian traditional inner courtyard or two @-@ storey hall . This arrangement of salons allowed guests at large parties to circulate , having been received at the head of the staircase , without doubling back on arriving guests . The second advantage was that while each room had access to the next , it also had access to the central stairs , thus allowing only one or two rooms to be used at a time for smaller functions . Previously , guests in London houses had had to reach the principal salon through a long enfilade of minor reception rooms . In this square and compact way , Brettingham came close to recreating the layout of an original Palladian Villa . He transformed what Andrea Palladio had conceived as a country retreat into a London mansion appropriate for the lifestyle of the British aristocracy , with its reversal of the usual Italian domestic pattern of a large palazzo in town , and a smaller villa in the country . As happened so often in Brettingham 's career , Robert Adam later developed this design concept further , and was credited with its success . However , Brettingham 's plan for Norfolk House was to serve as the prototype for many London mansions over the next few decades .

Brettingham 's additional work in London included two more houses in St. James 's Square : No. 5 for the 2nd Earl of Strafford and No. 13 for the 1st Lord Ravensworth . Lord Egremont , for whom Brettingham was working in the country at Petworth , gave Brettingham another opportunity to design a grandiose London mansion ? the Egremont family 's town house . Begun in 1759 , this Palladian palace , known at the time as Egremont House , or more modestly as 94 Piccadilly , is one of the few great London town houses still standing . It later came to be known as Cambridge House and was the home of Lord Palmerston , and then of the Naval & Military Club ; as of October 2007 , it is in the process of conversion into a luxury hotel .

= = Kedleston Hall = =

Sir Nathaniel Curzon , later 1st Baron Scarsdale , commissioned Brettingham in 1759 to design a great country house . Thirty years before a prospective design for a new Kedleston Hall had been drawn up by James Gibbs , one of the leading architects of the day , but Curzon wanted his new house to match the style and taste of Holkham . Lord Leicester , Holkham 's owner and Brettingham 's employer , was a particular hero of Curzon 's . Curzon was a Tory from a very old Derbyshire family , and he wished to create a showpiece to rival the nearby Chatsworth House owned by the Whig Duke of Devonshire , whose family were relative newcomers in the county , having arrived little more than two hundred years earlier . However , the Duke of Devonshire 's influence , wealth , and title were far superior to Curzon 's , and Curzon was unable to complete his house or to match the Devonshires ' influence ( William Cavendish , 4th Duke of Devonshire , had been Prime Minister in the 1750s ) . This commission might have been the ultimate accolade Brettingham was seeking , to recreate Holkham but this time with full credit . Kedleston Hall was designed by Brettingham on a plan by Palladio for the unbuilt Villa Mocenigo . The design by Brettingham , similar to that of Holkham Hall , was for a massive principal central block flanked by four secondary wings , each a miniature country house , themselves linked by quadrant corridors . From the outset of the project , Curzon seems to have presented Brettingham with rivals . In 1759 , while Brettingham was still supervising the construction of the initial phase , the northeast family block , Curzon employed architect James Paine , the most notable architect of the day , to supervise the kitchen block and quadrants . Paine also went on to supervise the construction of Brettingham 's great north front . However , this was a critical moment for architecture in England . Palladianism was being challenged by a new taste for neoclassical designs , one exponent of which was Robert Adam . Curzon had met Adam as early as 1758 , and had been impressed by the young architect newly returned from Rome . He employed Adam to design some garden pavilions for the new Kedleston . So impressed was Curzon by Adam 's work that by April 1760 he had put Adam in sole charge of the design of the new mansion , replacing both Brettingham and Paine . Adam completed the north facade of the mansion much as Brettingham had designed it , only altering Brettingham 's intended portico . The basic layout of the house remained loyal to Brettingham 's original plan , although only two of the proposed four secondary wings were executed .

Brettingham moved on to other projects . In the 1760s , he was approached by his most illustrious

patron , the Duke of York ( brother of King George III ) , to design one of the greatest mansions in Pall Mall , namely York House . The rectangular mansion that Brettingham designed was built in the Palladian style on two principal floors , with the state rooms as at Norfolk House , arranged in a circuit around the central staircase hall . The house was a mere pastiche of Norfolk House , but for Brettingham it had the kudos of a royal occupant .

= = Legacy = =

Its royal occupant may very well have made York House the pinnacle of Brettingham 's career . Built during the 1760s , it was one of his last grand houses . His last country @-@ house commission was at Packington Hall , Warwickshire . In 1761 , he published his plans of Holkham Hall , calling himself the architect , which led critics , including Horace Walpole , to decry him as a purloiner of Kent 's designs . Brettingham died in 1769 at his house outside St. Augustine 's Gate , Norwich , and was buried in the aisle of the parish church . Throughout his long career , Brettingham did much to popularise the Palladian movement . His clients included a Royal Duke and at least twenty @-@ one assorted peers and peeresses . He is not a household name today largely because his provincial work was heavily influenced by Kent and Burlington , and unlike his contemporary Giacomo Leoni he did not develop , or was not given the opportunity to develop , a strong personal stamp to his work on country houses . Ultimately , he and many of his contemporary architects were eclipsed by the designs of Robert Adam . Adam remodelled Brettingham 's York House in 1780 and , in addition to Kedleston Hall , went on to replace James Paine as architect at Nostell Priory , Alnwick Castle , and Syon House . In spite of this , Adam and Paine remained great friends ; Brettingham 's relationships with his fellow architects are unrecorded .

Brettingham 's principal contribution to architecture is perhaps the design of the grand town house , unremarkable for its exterior but with a circulating plan for reception rooms suitable for entertaining within on a forgotten scale of lavishness . Many of these anachronistic palaces are now long demolished or have been transformed for other uses and are inaccessible for public viewing . Hence , what little remains in London of his work is unknown to the general public . Of Brettingham 's work , only the buildings he remodelled have survived , and for this reason Brettingham now tends to be thought of as an " improver " rather than an architect of country houses .

There is no evidence that Brettingham ever formally studied architecture or travelled abroad . Reports of him making two trips to Continental Europe , are the result of confusion with his son , Matthew Brettingham the Younger . That he enjoyed success in his own lifetime is beyond doubt ? Robert Adam calculated that when Brettingham sent his son , Matthew , on the Grand Tour ( 1747 ) , he went with a sum of money in his pocket of around £ 15 @,@ 000 ( £ 2 @.@ 17 million in 2016 ) , an enormous amount at the time . However , part of this sum was probably used to acquire the statuary in Italy ( documented as supplied by Matthew Brettingham the Younger ) for the nearly completed Holkham Hall . Matthew Brettingham the Younger wrote that his father " considered the building of Holkham as the great work of his life " . While the design of that great monumental house , which still stands , cannot truly be accredited to him , it is the building for which Brettingham is best remembered .