

# Abberley Hall, Worcestershire

**Report by  
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**April 2002**

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## Introduction

Abberley Hall (originally called Abberley Lodge) is a splendid Victorian country house in the Graeco-Italianate style, showing the range of domestic classical taste from the 1840s to the 1880s. The exterior has been somewhat compromised by the truncation of the chimneystacks and Italianate tower (which formed a key part of the composition) and the addition of the incongruous Head Master's house at the south west corner in the 1970s. The ground floor interior, however, is exceptionally well-preserved, and the sequence of hall, boudoir, drawing room, library, dining room and staircase contains a complete scheme of Victorian classical decoration which is now a rare survival and comparable with Brodsworth Hall in Yorkshire (English Heritage), and Osborne House on the Isle of Wight.

The estate was acquired by J. L. Moilliet (a Birmingham banker of Swiss extraction) in 1844 and a new house was designed for him by Samuel Whitfield Daukes comprising Daukes' first major country house work. It replaced an older house (illustrated in Nash's *Worcestershire* and the *Illustrated London News*, 3 January 1846). This new house was gutted by fire as soon as it was finished in December 1845, but the interior was fully reinstated by Daukes for Mrs Moilliet (the widow of the original builder), the house having been insured for £4,000. The architectural bones of the interior survive as reinstated by Daukes in 1845, and are

comparable to his classical work in Cheltenham of the same decade. The Italianate tower recalled those on his magnum opus, Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum at Friern Barnet (1848).

The estate was bought in March 1867 by Joseph Jones of Severn Stoke (Worcestershire), a rich entrepreneur whose fortune derived from hatting, coal, cotton and banking in Oldham, Lancashire.. On his death in 1880 it was inherited by his cousin John Joseph Jones. J. J. Jones carried out sweeping improvements to the grounds, built the clock tower in 1883 to the design of J. P. St Aubyn (original designs in the RIBA Drawings Collection), added the portico and billiard room wing to the Hall and redecorated and refurnished the interior using the firm of James Lamb of John Dalton Street, Manchester *circa* 1881. Lamb was among the finest provincial furniture-makers of the Victorian period, and was responsible for the decoration of several merchant's houses around Manchester and large public buildings in Lancashire, notably Bolton Town Hall (1873), but Abberley Hall was his major country-house job. Lamb's work complemented and enriched Daukes' early Victorian architecture to create an harmonious polychrome ensemble.

Since becoming a boys' preparatory school in 1916, the main ground floor rooms have been left much alone. Even some of Lamb's furniture survives, and the whole now offers the opportunity for careful restoration to its Victorian state, cleaning

and touching up the painted decorations and reinstating missing areas of wall colouring.

## I. Architectural History

The history of the present house at Abberley begins in September 1844 when the estate was bought for £24,765 by the Birmingham banker and iron founder John Lewis Moilliet who immediately commissioned the architect S. W. Daukes to rebuild the house. The name of Moilliet's architect is given in the R<sup>evd</sup> Lewis Moilliet's *Abberley Manor* (1905). This is the only source, but there is no reason to doubt it. It is often said that Moilliet bought the estate in 1837. The house was twice auctioned in that year by the daughters of the last Bromley owner, together with its 800 acre estate, but failed to sell. Legal papers in the Worcester Record Office, however, show that Moilliet did not buy the property (by private treaty) until 1844. This date fits much more convincingly into Daukes' career as the date for rebuilding the house. The previous history can be found in *VCH IV*, and Lewis Moilliet's *Abberley Manor* (1905). The property was originally called Abberley Lodge, but the change of name to Abberley Hall took place under J. L. Moilliet's ownership. The previous building on the site (illustrated in 'I. Nash's *Worcestershire I* (1781)) was a three-storeyed early-eighteenth century structure with a baroque pedimented doorcase and a crowning in cupola. This structure was described as being 'tumble-down'. The site of the house is that of a lodge in a medieval park, which may have been a tower-like structure, as in the early sixteenth century Leland refers to a 'castle' at Abberley.

The *Illustrated London News* said that Daukes' work was a remodelling and extension but it is likely to have been an almost complete rebuilding though some of the previous structure may have been retained in the centre. The old house was three-storeyed and much more compact. Daukes' expanded house is two-storeyed and the main block forms a spacious rectangle facing north and south; and had a symmetrical south front with ground floor Ionic arcade, and a slightly asymmetrical north front with an Italianate tower at the west end. It marked the junction with the service wings which, because of the steep fall in the ground on that side, contained two additional storeys below the principal floor level of the main part of the house. The service wings are of rendered brick, while the main house was faced in ashlar stone quarried locally.

The new house was gutted by fire on Christmas Day, 1845, soon after Moilliet's death. Mrs Moilliet, however, immediately commissioned Daukes to reconstruct the interior. As this was paid for by the insurance it is likely to have been a reasonably exact reinstatement as was the usual requirement of a fire insurance policy. The bones of the principal rooms with their Graeco-Italianate cornices and ceilings, the entrance hall with Ionic scagliola columns, and the stone cantilevered staircase with brass balustrade must all date from this time, and can be confidently attributed to Daukes. Though J. L. Moilliet left Abberley in trust

to his eldest son James Moillicet (together with the Chateau de Pregny, overlooking Lake Geneva – which had previously belonged to the Empress Josephine and her son Eugene Beauharnais), his ‘beloved wife’ Amelia was left the house for life, together with its contents.

The architect, Samuel Whitfield Daukes (1811-1880) came from a family of French descent who had made money in the West Indies. He was the archetypal eclectic early-Victorian. Born in London, he became a pupil of James Pigott Pritchett (1789-1868) of York. He started practise in Gloucester and Cheltenham *circa* 1839, entering into partnership with John R. Hamilton and Fred William Maberley. Much of his early work was in Cheltenham where he developed the Park estate with lodges and villas to his own design in the 1840s, using the same Graeco-Italianate vocabulary as at Abberley as well as Tudorbethan (for his own house, now demolished). He was architect to the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway, designing train sheds and stations including the Classical Lansdowne Station in Cheltenham, 1840, originally with a Doric porte cochère – now demolished. He was equally happy working in the Gothic and Norman styles, and designed a range of churches including Holy Trinity (West Bromwich), 1841, St John (Wednesbury) and St Peter’s (Cheltenham), 1845, as well as the collegiate Gothic Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. His largest classical works were the Colney Hatch Lunatic Asylum (1848-9) at Friern Barnet, with a façade over 1,000 feet long, and

his spectacular remodelling of Witley Court (next door to Abberley) for the Earl of Dudley *circa* 1860, a commission which was inspired by Abberley itself. In 1848 he had moved back to London from Gloucester and Cheltenham and continued his practice there for some years, before a long, prosperous retirement, dying at Beckenham, Kent in 1880.

It has been suggested that the asymmetrical Italianate tower or belvedere at Abberley was an afterthought addition after the fire, but this was not the case. It formed an integral, and progressive, feature of Daukes' original design. The description in the *Illustrated London News* in January 1846 makes it clear that it was already in existence before the fire. Reference was made in that to 'some very extensive additions and improvements.. amongst which was the erection of a high tower, which overlooked the country for miles', all completed before J. L. Moilliet died. Such belvedere towers form features of other Daukes' buildings notably his great lunatic asylum at Colney Hatch, where a pair of such towers helped to vary the long drawn-out skyline. Charles Barry had popularized the Italianate villa form with a tower at Mount Felix, Walton on Thames, in 1835 and this seems to have been the model for Abberley. Mrs Moilliet died in 1861 and was succeeded by her son James who only owned the property for six years before putting it on the market in 1865 and selling it in March 1867 to Joseph Jones of Severn Stoke. Though he had bought the Elms, a nearby house for his own residence he obviously found it

galling that his mother – who enjoyed poor health – had clung on to the big house. In 1856 he had written to his lawyer: ‘The strongest and most successful means having been used to destroy all the former interest I feel in Abberley...’ The Moilliets enlarged the estate to 1120 acres and James Moilliet mortgaged it for £20,000 which may have been a reason for selling up. Interestingly, they may have exchanged houses, as James Moilliet then moved to Jones’s old home, Cheney Court (See Appendix).

Jones, no doubt, embarked on a redecoration of the interior and other improvements to the house immediately after acquiring the estate, as would be expected from a rich new owner purchasing a property. It is possible that some of the more old fashioned aspects of the present interior were his contribution (such as the painted frieze panels in the hall) incorporated in his cousin’s more sweeping works in the 1880s. Joseph Jones’s chief contribution was the remodelling of the stable block, with red brick ranges round two courtyards, but paying homage to the style of the house with a tower over the entrance arch. They occupy the site, and incorporate some of the structure of the pre-existing stables which are shown with a similar plan on the 1866 sales map. Joseph Jones’s additions to the stables included a theatre which survives as a rare example of a country house theatre; it is one of only a handful still in existence (of which that at Chatsworth is the best known).

It is possible, too, that the now vanished lean-to glass conservatory which is shown wrapping round the north east corner of the house on the later 19<sup>th</sup> century ordnance survey (surveyed 1883 and published in 1885) was added by Joseph Jones. It was described in the *Journal of Horticulture & Cottage Gardener*, 18 October 1887: 'The mansion is a fine substantial building, with a side wing, but this imports a one sided appearance to the structure that is not pleasing to the artistic eyes of its owner, and a second wing is about to be added. The place the latter must fill is at present filled by the conservatory and fernery. The former is one of the most beautiful glasshouses in the country. The floor is of marble, dark and white slabs alternating, and a magnificent fountain occupies the center. The fernery adjoining is a delightful retreat. The ferns are planted amongst boulders, and the sight and sound of trickling water amongst the latter render it still more enjoyable.'

The fact that the conservatory was demolished in the 1880s suggests that it must have been added by Joseph Jones, rather than his successor John Joseph Jones who is unlikely to have demolished his own work. (He never built the proposed second wing – if, indeed, it was ever a serious intention). The conservatory was a post-Moillet feature as it is not shown in the 1859 photograph of the house or 1866 map, so *circa* 1868 seems the best date for this vanished structure.

When John Joseph Jones succeeded his cousin Joseph in 1880, he immediately used his Lancashire cotton-based fortune to finance sweeping improvements to the house and park. (The clock tower of 1883 by S<sup>t</sup> Aubyn was his chief architectural addition). He left the main part of Daukes' architecture intact but replaced the small paned sashes with large sheets of plate glass (except in the service wings where they did not show), extended the drawing room outwards in a single-storeyed extension on the south front, added the far-projecting porte cochère in front of Daukes' porch on the north elevation, and built the projecting two-storeyed, 3-bay, billiard room wing on the north west side, to screen the domestic offices; as successive editions of the Ordnance Survey Maps indicate, compared to the 1866 Sales plan. Though making the house more asymmetrical, the general character of all this work respected the architectural style of Daukes' original design.

Inside, too, Daukes' architecture was retained, but enriched and redecorated. For this J. J. Jones employed James Lamb (1817-1903) from Manchester, the founder and head of an extensive furnishing, upholstering and decorating business which was one of the largest in the provinces in the Victorian period and whose products were noted for their 'artistic design', superlative materials and excellent workmanship. (See Appendix for biography). As Lamb's obituary in the *Manchester City News* on 22 August 1903 put it: 'He detested all ill-designed and bad work. It was this aim

[perfection], rather than mere money-making that was the dominating motive behind his efforts.’

Louis Hayes in *Reminiscences of Manchester* (1903) wrote ‘Lamb had made a reputation for the quality of his work that was unique, and any article coming from his workshops was a guarantee of its excellence.’ It was also very expensive! He started the business in Manchester in 1841 and seven years later moved to John Dalton Street. By the 1860s he was a prominent manufacturer, and in 1867 sent two cabinets to the Universal Exhibition in Paris that year. The *Art Journal* described his work enthusiastically: ‘Mr Lamb, cabinet manufacturer of Manchester, upholds the honour of the British provinces. He exhibits two cabinets of the highest Art-Character; that we engrave is of inlaid woods, very beautiful in design, of admirable proportions, and unsurpassed as an example of good workmanship. The elegant medallions are the plaques of Messrs Wedgwood.’ Such elaborate furniture show-pieces were specially designed and made for exhibitions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Lamb also exhibited a sideboard at the Second International Exhibition in London in 1862. The *Art Journal* described it: ‘composed of pollard oak, walnut and ebony, occasionally and judiciously relieved with gold. In the upper part are two life-size figures of Vintage and Harvest. Trophies of fruit, corn etc are introduced. The lower part is supported by figures of boys on thermal pedestals; the central panels are arranged to form one

connected relievos of game, fish, etc., groups of fruit and vegetables fill the carved end panels. 'The design is by Mr W. J. Estall; and the modelling is by M. Hugues Protat.' 'The dining room furniture at Abberley with its use of Pollard oak was obviously a modified version of the style of this piece.

It is constantly repeated that the furniture at Abberley was acquired from the Paris Exhibition (1867). Though Lamb exhibited at various exhibitions over the years, his known exhibition pieces do not relate to any of the furniture supplied to Abberley. In fact, he frequently decorated and furnished private houses and public buildings as direct commissions for clients. 'The Abberley project is one of those jobs; and the most extensive and best preserved to survive. This alone makes the principal rooms of Abberley one of the most important Victorian schemes of domestic decoration.

The scale of Lamb's work at Abberley can be gleaned by comparison with his commissions at smaller houses in Lancashire, such as Gladville, Victoria park, Manchester in 1867-8 (for which the bills survive) for the Nordlinger family, and a house, now demolished, at Whalley Range. (The dining room there is illustrated in an article by Bruce Wischall; See Appendix). Gladville cost the sum of £1025.18.9 and included paper hanging, Brussels carpets, chimneypieces, curtains, upholstery and furniture. Many of the big Victorian firms – like Gillow – did the

complete job. Estall who designed one of the exhibition pieces described in the *Art Journal*, had previously been employed by the firm of Jackson and Graham in the 1850s, before becoming Lamb's principal in-house designer. Lamb is also known to have used free-lance designers such as Hugues Protat (a Frenchman), Bruce Talbot and Charles Bevan who also worked for Gillow and other firms.

Lamb's public building commissions included the classical Baroque) Dining Room at Bolton Town Hall in 1873 where he supplied the chimneypiece as well as the carpet and furniture, and Manchester Town Hall in 1878 where he supplied Gothic furniture in the Waterhouse manner to match the architecture. With his stable of designers and range of services, Lamb was capable of the complete decoration of an interior like that at Abberley, which must, nevertheless, surely count as his largest country house commission.

Lamb's work at Abberley comprised the installation of new chimneypieces and overmantels in the Hall, Boudoir, Drawing Room, Dining Room and Library as well as the magnificent fitted bookcases in the latter with their fine carving and brass grilles, and the Lincrusta papering (Lamb introduced a Lincrusta range in 1878), painting, textiles, carpets, upholstery and furniture. The firm was dissolved in 1954 and its archives have disappeared so it is not possible to check the Abberley commission against the

Order Books, but the surviving Lamb stamps on the furniture and comparisons with examples of Lamb's work elsewhere (such as the Manchester City Art Gallery) add up to a convincing picture of his contribution.

John Joseph Jones died at Carlsbad in 1888 leaving no children and was succeeded by his younger brother William (who had married Mary daughter of William Brown of Oldham). He was High Sheriff of Worcestershire in 1899 and died in 1902 when Abberley was inherited by his eldest son in turn, Frederick William Jones. By 1912 it was owned by James Arthur Jones and in Kelly's Directory in 1916 was described as 'unoccupied.' Shortly after that it was occupied in 1917 by the boy's preparatory school evacuated from Blackheath during the First World War and the school has been there ever since. The rapid turnover of the last Jones owners combined with declining income (the estate rental in the 1890s was only £2,000 pa) precluded any further alterations while in private ownership, and the main rooms have subsequently been preserved in the aspect of school use.

## II. Architectural Description

### Exterior

#### The North (Entrance) Front

This survives largely as designed by Daukes in 1844, apart from the regrettable truncation of the Italianate tower in the 1960s. Apart from the tower, this façade was symmetrical with a wide, shallow projecting entrance porch which survives behind the port-cochère with fluted Doric columns and the Jones arms, added by J. J. Jones *circa* 1881. According to Lewis Moilliet, in *Abberley Manor* (attested also by the Ordnance Survey Map) J. J. Jones also added the projecting billiard room wing on the right, which repeats the style of the main house. J. J. Jones was also responsible for the large plate glass sashes which replaced Daukes' small paned windows, thus increasing the Victorian character of the house. The new house and its hilly setting must have reminded J. L. Moilliet of Switzerland and his estate there at Prégny in the Canton of Geneva.

The Moilliets were Protestants who had settled in Birmingham in the eighteenth century. J. L. Moilliet had made his fortune there with an iron foundry in West Bromwich and a banking house in Cherry Street. As well as Abberley and Prégny he bought other land and property in England which, together with the iron foundry, he bequeathed to his younger son, Theodore Moilliet.

James Moilliet inherited the bank as well as the Abberley and Prégny estates.

**The East Front** with its three widely spaced bays survives as designed by Daukes, apart from the replacement of his sashes with plate glass. The large glass conservatory and fernery probably added *circa* 1868 by Joseph Jones, which covered the ground floor of this elevation was demolished in the 1880s by J. J. Jones.

### **The South Front**

As designed by Daukes this was completely symmetrical and more regular than the north front, with a single-storeyed Ionic colonnade extending across the central five bays of the house and shading the library and dining room windows. At first floor level there is a central tripartite window. The original symmetry was disturbed by a single-storeyed extension to the drawing room which involved pushing the two right hand bays outwards to the line of the colonnade. This 1882 extension tactfully repeated Daukes' Ionic Order. The windows were also replaced with large plate glass sashes at the same time. (The 1970s Head Master's house is a less tactful addition, which is as damaging to Daukes' design of this elevation, as the truncation of the tower is to the entrance front.)

## Interior

### The Entrance Hall

This largely survives as designed by Daukes in 1845. The architectural detail is surprisingly refined and more Greek than Italianate. The Ionic Order of the two screens of Siena scagliola columns, the cornice, and the shallow stucco beams (which divide the ceiling into panels) are all derived from Athenian sources, such as the Erechtheum. The walls are articulated with blank arches and there is no dado. This arcade reflects the arched heads of the external ground floor windows. The five mahogany doors here and throughout the house are part of Daukes' work and have handsome Grecian mouldings.

The later painted decoration has transformed the room. The palette is restrained, with olive, stone, pale blue and terracotta prevailing, and delicate stencilling and gilding. This scheme almost certainly dates from *circa* 1881, and is of very high quality. The black and white marble floor was no doubt introduced then too, as were the oak chimneypieces at either end, and their bevelled mirrored overmantels, by James Lamb of Manchester. They have a Jacobean flavour, with marble, polished brass and tiled inset fireplaces; and projecting brass lights. (There were originally for gas light, and the estate had its own gas works). Old photographs show the original glass torch pattern shades. There are two framed bevelled mirrors on the north wall *en suite* with the

overmantels and so also part of the Lamb furnishings. The four inset painted panels in square frames between the arch heads, depicting Worcestershire occupations (such as china painting and hop-picking), are by an unidentified artist, and possibly pre-date the 1880s J. J. Jones embellishments; they may have been commissioned by Joseph Jones *circa* 1868, but there is no definite evidence either way (though careful examination may produce a signature).

The room retains some of the Lamb furniture shown in late Victorian photographs as well as the stuffed animal heads: leather upholstered chairs and Italianate tables. The boarded area in the middle of the floor was then covered with a large Turkey pattern rug also shown in the old photograph.

**Recommendation:** The use of this room would enable a full restoration to the Victorian appearance. All the painted decoration should be lightly cleaned, restored and touched up as necessary by experts, the torch-pattern glass shades restored to the brass lamps on the overmantels, and a suitable, large, second-hand Turkey rug acquired for the central area. The Lamb furniture should be re-arranged here to reflect the appearance of the room in the late Victorian period, and new sofas etc upholstered to match: i.e. eight single chairs, five arm chairs, two 'Italian' tables and two settees. The restoration of this room, which is the major and best preserved Victorian interior in the sequence should be the

first priority of a planned campaign for the principal rooms at Abberley.

### **The Main Staircase**

The architecture of this space is by Daukes and is a continuation of the Greek Revival style of the Entrance Hall, to which it is the continuation. (The glazed dividing doors are a modern introduction to comply with building regulations). The stone cantilever staircase has simple brass balustrade. Brass is a comparatively rare (and expensive) feature for bannisters of staircases in England. The lower walls have blank arches one with decorative plaster tympanum depicting a river god. (Representing the Sabrine stream or Severn?). The upper part has a rich Greek Revival plaster cornice similar to the Entrance Hall ceiling. The harmonious polychrome paintwork mainly in blue and pink dates from the Jones period. The window wall above the half landing is particularly richly decorated, with a central pedestal which once obviously supported a marble bust. The upper rectangular frieze panels containing grisaille paintings of putti on a gold ground are probably by the same (unidentified) artist as those in the entrance hall. They are similar to the Grüner paintings in the Pennethorne galleries at Buckingham Palace. The large pollard oak dresser facing the front of the stairs is another piece supplied by James Lamb and is carved with the Jones crest. (The Jones arms were granted in 1847). The Victorian picture-hang on the walls is also a rare survival.

**Recommendation.** The staircase hall is an intact Daukes/Lamb interior, and only requires conservation of the plasterwork and painting, and the repair of the brass balustrade. The picture-hang should not be disturbed. The restoration of this space should, ideally, form part of the same contract as the hall.

### **The Boudoir (now office)**

The basic architecture of this small square room is as designed by Daukes in 1845 with skirting, dado, door and window architraves, fluted frieze, and cornice, and plaster panelled ceiling, and the splendid Grecian mahogany door. The room was transformed, however, by James Lamb's redecoration of *circa* 1882. The dado was covered with Lincrusta paper in green, buff and gold of an Adamesque pattern. The walls were enlivened with thin framed panels of gilt and pale blue Lincrusta paper with all-over scrolled pattern and anthemion, paterae and urns, and a subfrieze of delicate New-Adam design with festoons of husks, paterae and other Neo-classical motifs. The ceiling, too was embellished with a large panel of diapered white Lincrusta in the centre and painted paper borders of classical design, the decoration altogether forming a gentle harmony of pinks, buffs, blue-green and gold. The whole is a *tour de force* of Victorian Lincrusta and a reminder of the quality of Lamb's Lincrusta range introduced in 1878. The chimneypiece and large and elaborate mirrored overmantel with bracketed shelves for china also formed part of Lamb's 1882

embellishment and redecoration. The window pelmets are also a Lamb survival.

**Recommendation.** The Lincrusta decoration needs to be restored, and the missing pieces replaced to match, all by a paper specialist. This will be comparatively expensive and could, perhaps, form part of a second stage of the conservation project.

### **The Drawing Room**

Daukes' original room was extended to the south by addition of an extra bay *circa* 1881; this new area was carefully designed to match the 1840s dado, cornice and panelled ceiling in the main part of the room from which it is separated by an embellished downstand beam. The chimneypiece and overmantel, with oval mirror, and the matching architectural cabinet on the north wall, the small pedimented wall mirrors with lights, the pier glass and the original pelmets all form a Victorian ensemble of the highest quality. They are gilt and ebonised the cabinetwork, with superb ivory inlay and marquetry of pale coloured woods. They are typical of the best products of the Lamb firm in the 1880s, and their Graeco-Egyptian tone was relatively *avante garde* for the date as well as being sympathetic to Daukes' 1840s architecture. The red marble and brass fireplace, as well as the joinery of its surround, is also by Lamb. Many other 1880s fittings survive in the room including the rich brass fender, and the wall mounted bracket gasoliers (originally with glass bell shades) and the patent ventilators on the

chimneybreast. Efficient ventilation of rooms was a Victorian architectural obsession, and several interesting examples survive at Abberley. The ceiling retains its beautiful 1880s paint-work, mainly blue, pink and gold, the large central flat being painted blue with gold stars.

All the Lamb fittings survive in very good condition (though the bracket gasoliers have lost their original glass shades). The 1880s wall paper has a gilt filet in the corners. The wall paper itself looks as if it might have been introduced in the 1950s but it is at least in part, 1880s. It is a silvery white and gold striped Neo-Adam design. It is certain that this paper is the original design, as it is visible through the open door from the library in the late Victorian photographs, which shows identical stripes.

**Recommendation.** If this is to be used as a reception area for parents and visitors, a full-scale drawing room restoration would be possible. The damaged areas of the ceiling should be repaired, the paint-work cleaned and conserved by specialists. Where the wallpaper is damaged, mainly at dado level, it may be worth coping and making good. New curtains need to be provided similar in design to the fabrics purveyed by Lamb. The one curtain shown in the old library photograph is dark coloured and has a deep border fringe. It is likely that the floor also had a Brussels Weave carpet, similar to those Lamb is known to have supplied elsewhere (and that shown in the library photograph). The architectural

fittings dominate the room magnificently, and it is likely that in the nineteenth century the rest of the furniture was predominantly a variety of seat furniture – sofas, couches, arm chairs and small chairs – probably with glazed chintz covers. This is an effect that would be easy to recreate. Together with the entrance hall, the reinstatement of this room, which retains so much of its original decoration and exceptional furniture, should be a priority.

### **The Library**

This well preserved room is one of the best-documented in the house, as (like the Hall), its appearance is recorded in the late-Victorian photographs. Much that is shown in those views still, remarkably, survives today *in situ*, including the mahogany writing table, leather armchairs and even the heavy French bronze garniture on the chimneypiece. The mahogany doors and the well-designed plaster ceiling, with central circular panel surrounded by a band of scrollwork, are part of Daukes' 1845 design. The rest of the room, however, is a show-piece of Lamb joinery and decoration: including the superb fitted mahogany bookcases (carved with the *Stag Couchant* Jones crest), with gilt brass grilles and lettering (and Bramah patent locks), the chimneypiece in a Neo-Georgian taste, and the massive carved and pedimented overmantel framing a large looking glass with projecting brass 'gas lights' (originally with tulip shades).

The painted decoration here is a particularly handsome scheme and well-preserved. Above the book-cases is a deep frieze painted in a masculine classical taste with dark rectangular panels containing swags of laurel. The central ceiling panel is painted in a fan pattern in pale pink, gold and blue and the surrounding area with gold rosettes on cream. The only major loss in this room is the large brass central gasolier shown in the late Victorian photographs; the original carpets and curtains have also disappeared.

**Recommendation.** The carpet and curtains should be restored as shown in the old photographs. The former was a Brussels weave with a repeating quatrefoil panel. The latter would have comprised Lamb's textiles. The present strip lighting is incongruous and should be removed. While the original chandelier has gone missing, it might prove possible to find something similar in scale and materials for a reasonable price from a redundant church\* or similar. The paint-work only requires very gentle conservation. Otherwise the furnishing of this room perpetuates much of the late-Victorian quality and atmosphere.

### **The Dining Room**

Once again the ceiling and mahogany doors survive from Daukes' work, but the green marble chimneypiece (and brass and tiled fireplace) carved and mirrored mahogany overmantel and surround, the panelled dado, the carved overdoors and not least

the Pollard oak sideboard with high mirrored backdrop (Lamb No 5740) were all provided by James Lamb. The ceiling painting, in pale blue, pink, cream and gold also survives from the 1880s. The room contains a number of other interesting Victorian details, notably the ventilators in the ceiling coffers over the sideboard (to extract food smells) and the extraordinary brass obelisk-pattern gas lamps projecting on either side of the chimneypiece.

The original wall covering has disappeared. Traces of the original wallpaper, however, survive behind the sideboard mirror, and show that this room too was papered with Lamb's Lincrusta with an overall pattern. It has been painted over, however, so the original colour is not clear. As a dining room, it is likely to have been sombre-hued, perhaps a reddish tone which was the nineteenth century favourite dining room colour. There are ugly modern neon strip lights round the cornice. One original Lamb curtain pole survives.

**Recommendation.** The ideal would be to re-paper the walls in a copy of the original pattern of Lincrusta but this would be expensive (and possibly impractical, considering the use). The present compromise of repainting the walls of the room in a Victorian manner is acceptable. The ceiling painting requires careful repair and touching up by an expert conservationist. The walls have already been painted, in a suitable tone to harmonize with the mahogany joinery and darkened ceiling decorations. The

missing curtain poles could also be copied from the surviving original and curtains reinstated. The lighting, too, needs to be revised and the ugly neon tubes removed.

### **The Study/Smoking Room**

This small room which was part of the masculine domain of the house (close to the gentleman's lavatory and the business entrance) served as Mr Jones's place of business. It, too retains Lamb's 1880s decoration including carved doorcases, painted ceiling decoration and pale coloured Lincrusta wall paper, though not in as good condition as in the other main rooms. The black marble chimneypiece is by Daukes, and a survival from the 1840s like the window architraves and shutters.

**Recommendation.** The ceiling, painted decoration and Lincrusta paper are all in need of specialist conservation, but this is the least important of the main rooms, and the work could form part of a second stage.

### **Other Interiors**

**The Service Hall** outside the Dining Room retains its Victorian tiled floor, nineteenth century steel hot cupboard and servant's bells. These are all details of interest and should be preserved, but there is no need for any special conservation work here.

**The Billiard Room.** The Victorian scheme of decoration and furnishing has disappeared entirely. The room was redecorated, with plain oak panelling by the school in the 1920s. This room does not therefore require any conservation work.

**The Theatre in the Stables.** This is one of the most important historic survivals at Abberley, and is an extremely rare survival of a country house theatre. It is presumed to date from *circa* 1868 when Joseph Jones reconstructed the stables. The open-work roof with arched and pierced timber beams has a mid- rather than late-Victorian character. The rectangular painted panels forming a frieze round the top of the walls are an important feature and are almost certainly by the same artist as those in the Hall of the house itself. The old photographs show the late-Victorian appearance of the room, with the walls distempered a plain dark colour and some stencilled decoration round the proscenium arch.

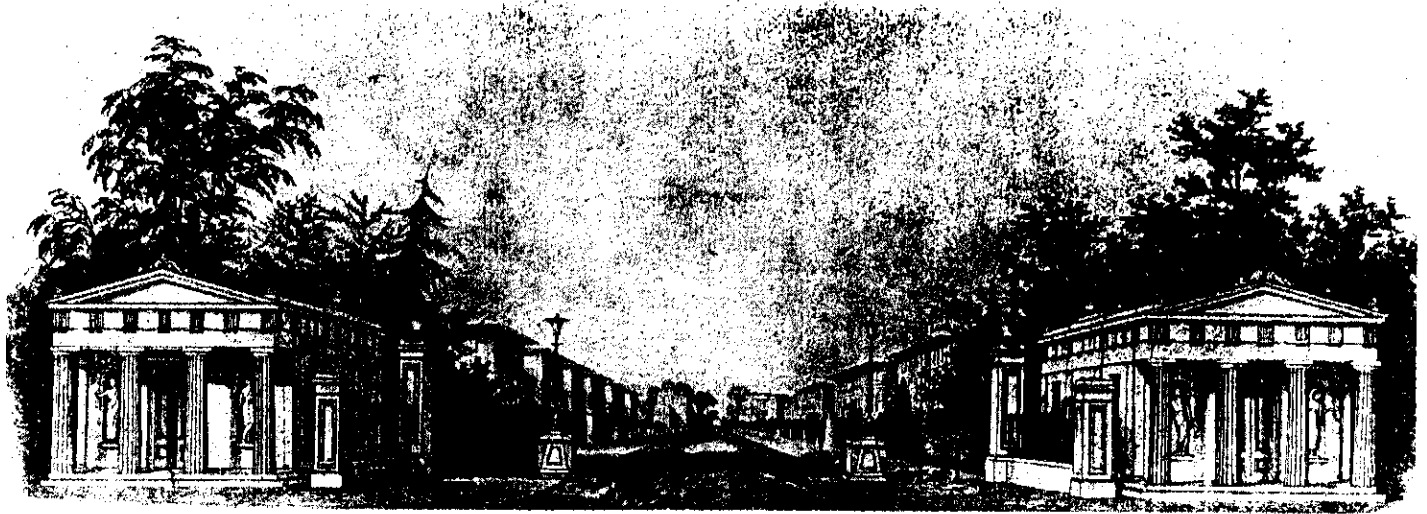
**Recommendation.** In view of its importance as a rare historical survival, the decoration of the theatre should form part of the conservation programme for the main Victorian rooms at Abberley.

### III. Appendices

1. 'S. Daukes', *Country Life*, December 1973

# ARCHITECT OF GREAT ASSURANCE

SAMUEL WHITFIELD DAUKES—I *By* DAVID VEREY



1—DAUKES'S DESIGN FOR NORTH LODGES TO THE PARK, CHELTENHAM. Daukes acquired the Park in 1839 and converted the grounds into a public pleasure garden

EVERYONE who has studied English 19th-century architecture must have heard of S. W. Daukes, and they might be able to say he was Lord Ward's architect at Witley Court, Worcestershire; but after that they would probably be a bit stumped. Architectural historians have added to the blur by spelling his name with a "w", an indubitably Anglicised but nevertheless wrong version of the way Daukes spelt it himself, for he was proud to be descended from the ancient French family of d'Aux.

Architecturally too, Daukes is rather difficult to place because of his eclecticism. He was a convinced eclectic by persuasion and in practice; and there were plenty of others who thought the same way in the 1840s, that decade of almost incomprehensible Architectural Civil War. There was a Gothic Party as everyone knows, a Classical Party headed by the powerful C. R. Cockerell whose designs showed his indebtedness to Wren, and thirdly the Eclectic Party, stronger than either in all but enthusiasm, for Eclecticism was the principle adopted by the new professional press. England is the home of compromise. It was agreed that Gothic was the proper mode for churches by most people, and by some, that Elizabethan did very well for

houses and Italian classical for municipal buildings.

Daukes was an admirer of Pugin, although a low churchman and not evidently in sympathy with the ecclesiological movement as he committed the "crimes" of designing an Anglo-Norman and a Perpendicular church. His greatest municipal building at Colney Hatch is distinctly Wrenian. The Royal Academy picture by Cockerell in 1839 *Tribute to Wren* had helped the Wren revival. A contemporary critic complained that architects and their clients chose building styles for reasons of association, and that "the architect therefore may be forced at the same moment to build correct buildings in all the styles thus contradicting himself every hour". This was indeed the case with Daukes. The criticism implies he should have designed in one style only, and one may ask which? Style is a scholarly technique and can be learnt just like a language. The architect's challenge is how he uses it, and how original can he be within the rules.

This is the test, and Daukes need not be accused of merely being "a prosperous commercial practitioner, and adherent of the convenient eclecticism of the thorough man of business". He comes much too well out

of the test for that, as we shall see. He could, and what is more did, design in any of the fashionable styles, neo-Greek, Norman, Gothic, Classical or Italianate. Further study indicates an architect full of self-confidence, whose drawings reveal a masterly assurance, and an absolute command of the picturesque elements of a composition, easily capable of winning competitions. Unlike many of his contemporaries he had the opportunity of designing magnificent buildings for the working classes and his asylum at Colney Hatch is quite as monumental as his mansion for the future Earl of Dudley. Like most of his contemporaries, however, he also had a flourishing ecclesiastical practice, and it is because two of his churches are now faced with possible redundancy that this seems a good moment to try to make him better known, eminent Early-Victorian architect as he was in his day.

Samuel Whitfield Daukes was born in London in 1811, which put him just right for the beginning of the era, seven years older than the Queen and the same age as Sir Gilbert Scott. His grandfather, Thomas Daukes, is said to have made money in the West Indies, and died at Pershore, Worcestershire, in 1793, having married a niece of George



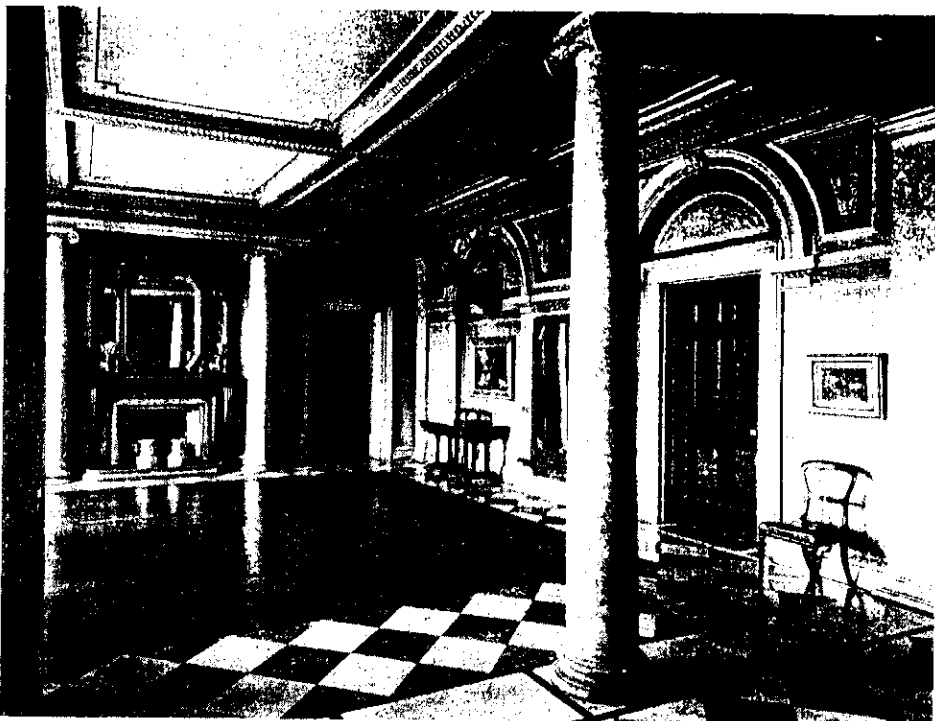
2—ST PAUL'S COLLEGE, CHELTENHAM. "This is a collegiate building in miniature, with a court partly flanked by convincingly 'medieval' one-storey buildings"

Whitfield, the preacher. His father Samuel Whitfield Daukes was a business man who had coal-mining and brewery interests and bought Digby House, Worcester, in 1827, and his mother was Hannah, daughter of Thomas Smith of Tibbington House, Staffordshire, and whose brother Richard Smith was mining agent to Lord Ward and was sent by the Government to prospect for minerals in Nova Scotia. His background then is well-to-do and set in Worcestershire, but he did his articles with J. P. Pritchett of York. Pritchett had a very large practice and was also architect and surveyor at Wentworth Woodhouse, enlarging the mansion and erecting churches - although a non-conformist himself - parsonages, schools and lodges on the estate. Daukes' fellow pupil James Medland joined him in Gloucester at a later date.

One of Daukes's first jobs on his own, was for John Lewis Moilhet, a Swiss banker of Birmingham, for whom he designed a country house Abberley Hall, near Worcester, in 1837 (Fig 3). The mansion was hardly finished when Moilhet died in 1845, and that Christmas there was a fire which was watched by the Dowager Queen Adelaide from her windows at Witley Court with tears of sympathy for poor Mrs Moilhet.

However, the house was immediately restored by Daukes. His original design was neo-Classical in the way that Cheltenham was

at that time. The sash windows have straight heads with shaped architraves, and there is a long Ionic colonnade on the garden front. The interior finish of these rooms is rather high quality with yellow scagliola columns and mahogany doors enriched with egg and dart mouldings and medallions, brass inlay, library shelves, and an Etruscan room. The general appearance of the entrance front is now Italianate, and it has an off-centre tower. The house has been through other vicissitudes when it belonged to the Cottentot Joneses, who built a separate clock tower in order to show the Earl of Dudley they could look down on him. Abberley is really better sited than Witley, on a hill with wonderful views and

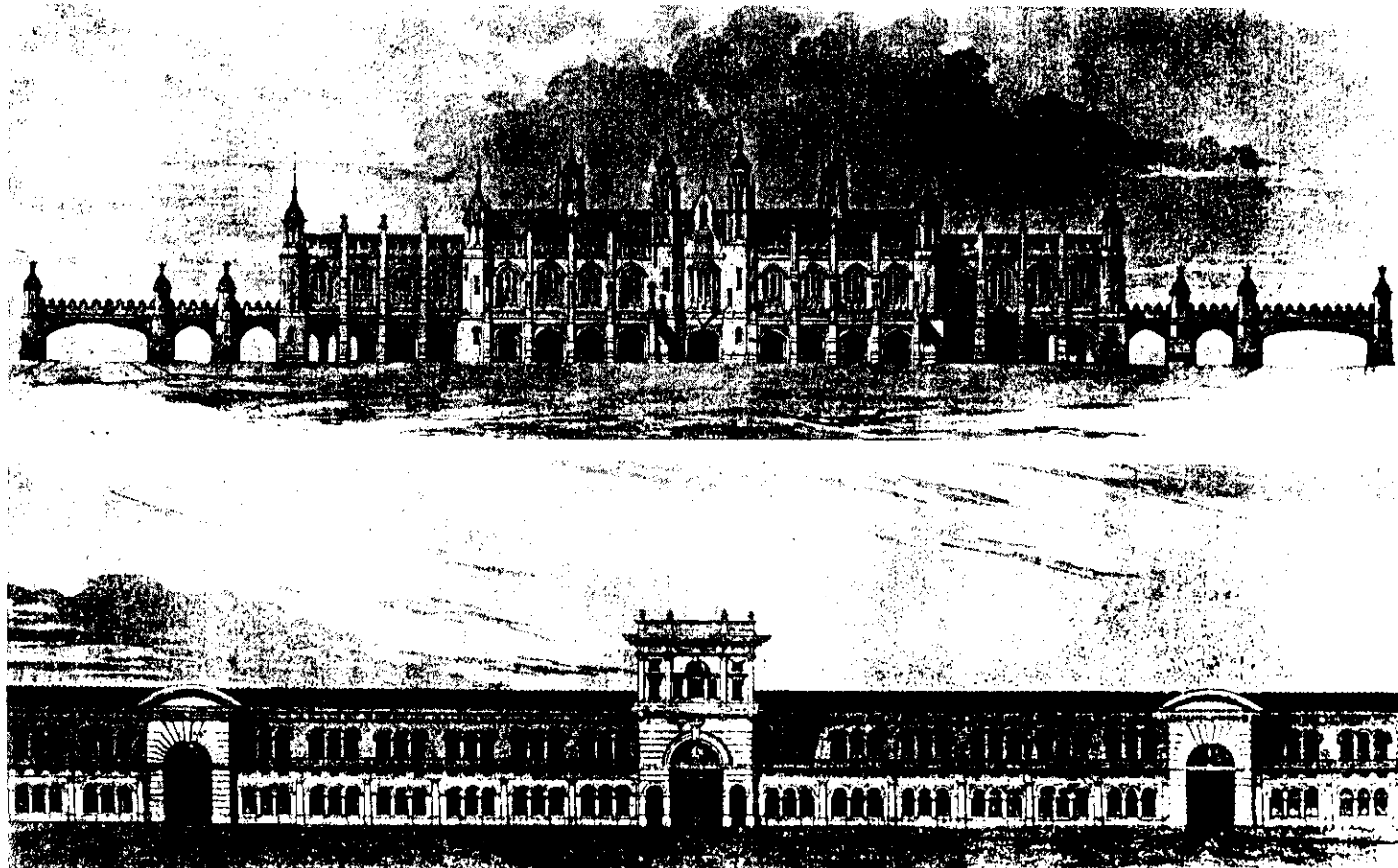


3 THE ENTRANCE HALL AT ABBERLEY, WORCESTERSHIRE. First designed by Daukes in 1837, the interior was restored by him after a fire in 1845.

now made more beautiful by the mature specimen trees.

In 1839 the young architect bought the estate in Cheltenham known as the Park (Fig 4). He was therefore following in the footsteps of the speculators Pearson Thompson in Montpellier and Pitt in Pittville, both of whom practically went bankrupt in the end. Daukes, however, managed not to plunge so deep. A contemporary guide book says the Park gardens "are laid out with very great taste, and with a stricter attention to the principles

of landscape gardening than is usually found in public works of this kind; possessing also many natural advantages such as are not enjoyed by any other establishment in Cheltenham. Originally they were intended for zoological gardens, having been planned in 1837-38 by a joint stock company started for that purpose; but the expenses of the undertaking having very considerably exceeded the income, the design was shortly abandoned and the property sold to S. W. Daukes Esq. who has converted the gardens into public pleasure



4 and 5 DAUKES'S ALTERNATIVE TUDOR AND CLASSICAL DESIGNS FOR A CHELTENHAM RAILWAY STATION, 1847. "Of the two he seemed happiest in the Tudor Gothic style"

grounds. Of the entire area of twenty acres, comprised in this purchase, about fourteen are laid out in promenades and lawns, among flower beds and clumps of the choicest shrubs... cricket, archery, and other athletic sports."

In 1839 Dawkes exhibited his first drawing at the Royal Academy for a house in Tudor style, to be called Tudor Lodge and built in the Park where most of the houses are neo-Greek. The same year he designed a small neo-Greek Register Office in Thornbury, an old-fashioned town near Bristol, this arbitrarily reversing the appropriate style for the place. Tudor Lodge was demolished soon after the last war, but the Old Register Office in Thornbury is still standing.

Another Tudor house was built for the Dowager Lady Elton at Clevedon, named Mount Elton. Dawkes' address in the Royal Academy list that year is simply given as Gloucester. He had been married in 1836 to Caroline Sarah White of Newton, Wiltshire; they lost their eldest son as an infant in 1840 and buried him at Barnwood, near Gloucester. His practice also extended to Cheltenham as his name appears in a list of architects working there in 1841, the year he took into partnership John K. Hamilton. From 1839-42 Dawkes was architect to the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway. Between then and 1848, when he started a London office at 14 Whitehall Place, he succeeded in building up a very large practice in the West Midlands.

Besides his connection with the Birmingham Gloucester Railway for which he designed clerks' houses, engine sheds, brakes men's cottages, and, in 1840, Lansdown Station, Cheltenham, remarkably unchanged except the Doric *porte-cochère* has recently been torn down leaving only one column standing, he was also architect to the proposed London, Oxford and Cheltenham Railway (Figs 4 and 5). Of his two alternative designs for a station he seems happiest in the Tudor Gothic style and produced a drawing of perfectly controlled symmetry and scale. What railway company committee could resist such confidence, and who would not want to



6—THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, CIRENCESTER

travel from the *piano nobile* of such an apparently luxurious station? Dawkes loved the immensely long façade; but his Italianate alternative in this case seems too endlessly repetitive, in spite of his youthful knowledge of Wentworth Woodhouse.

In Staffordshire, Holy Trinity, West Bromwich, was built in 1841, and St John, Wednesbury, in 1844. Schools for Bagnoll and Sons in connection with their collieries and iron works at Gold's Hill, West Bromwich were added in 1856. These commissions perhaps came through the influence of his uncle Richard Smith; but in Gloucestershire, Dawkes had a spectacular success when he won the important competition for the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester.

An address had been given to the Fairford

and Cirencester Fair in 1841 with a 1842 printed *Leicester Directory of the Society for the Education of the Poor* to claim the college building for just Agricultural College in England. Prince Albert, royal patron and Lord Bute, provided a farm of 400 acres with an existing farmhouse and barn. The building of the college was begun in April 1848 and was finished sufficiently to accommodate students in one year. The old farmhouse (seen on the right in Fig. 7) was utilised for the Principal's residence but was given new windows to match the Gothic style of the immensely long front of the College which was added on to it. The tower is central to the main block with five bays either side, divided by downpipes with embattled cast-iron rainwater head, and linked with an extra and slightly lower bay to the older and smaller buildings. This was the kind of thing Dawkes did very well, and a theme he enlarged upon in later work. The embattled tower has an amusing corbel table with fern animal heads, and straws of corn. Battlements also appear on the turret as they do at the slightly later St Paul's College in Cheltenham (Fig. 2).

This is a collegiate building in miniature with a court partly flanked by conveniently "medieval" one-storey buildings, and achieving picturesque massing with gabled three-storey blocks either end and a central gatchouse with a turret. The quiet golden-coloured rubble walls broken by simple fluted tracery seem to derive from Pugin as does the appearance of utility and truthfulness.

The foundation stone at St Paul's is inscribed: "This stone was laid by the Rt. Hon. Lord Ashley, President of the Church of England Training Institution founded to the purpose of instructing persons as masters for any part of the United Kingdom upon scriptural, evangelical and Protestant principles in accordance with the established Church, April 19th, 1849" — S. W. Dawkes, Architect. Thomas Haines Builder."

Illustrations: 1, 4 and 5, by author; 2, 3, 6 and 7, Alex. Starkey.

(To be concluded.)



7—THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, CIRENCESTER. The original farm house on the right is linked to the main building by an intermediate bay.