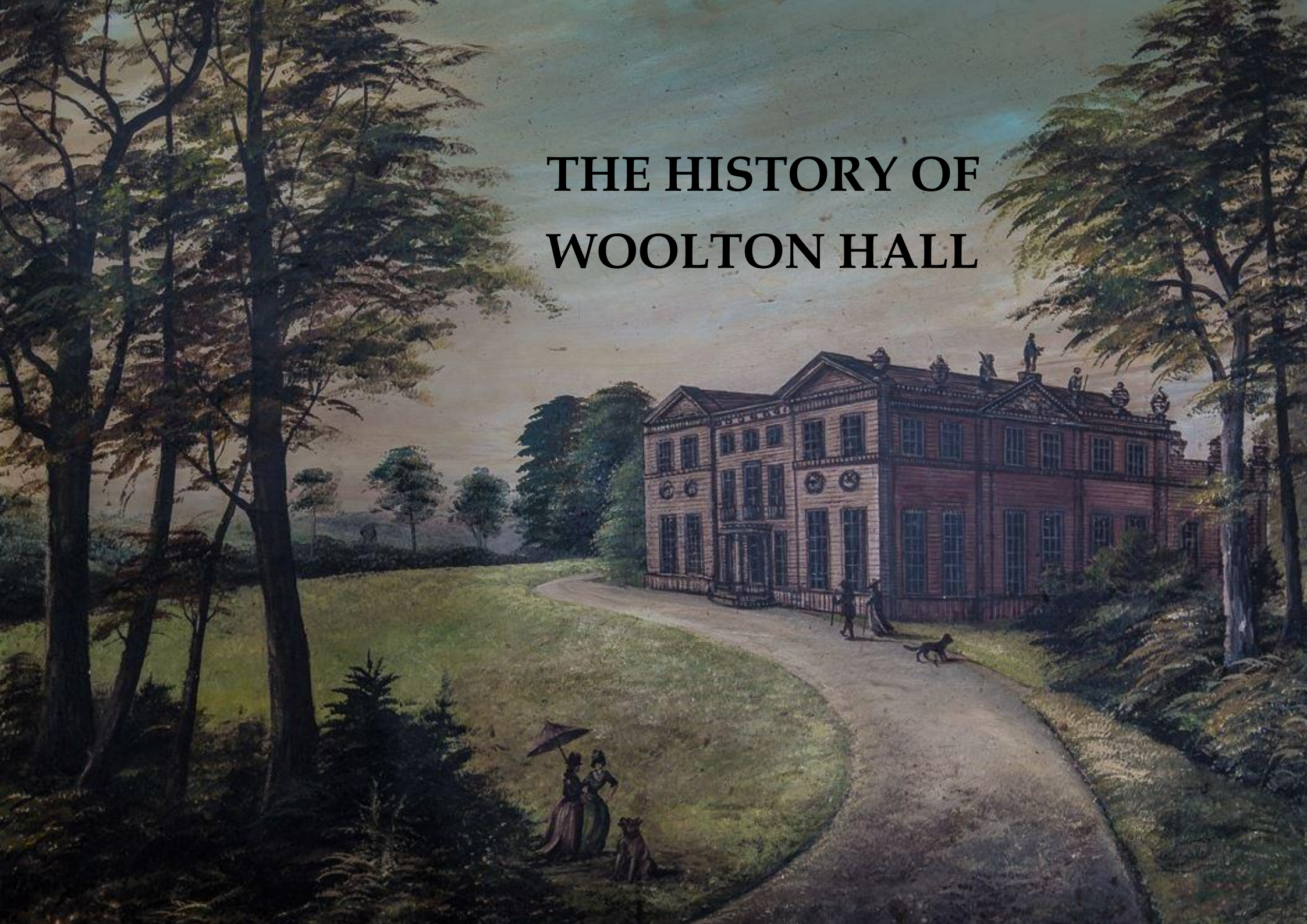


THE HISTORY OF WOOLTON HALL



My name is Jonathon Wild. I am a local Historian and have been actively involved in the historical aspect and campaigning of abandoned buildings (listed and none listed) for over twenty-five years in Liverpool. Born and bred in south Liverpool, I have had the misfortune of seeing a tremendous amount of buildings lost to the wrecker's ball across Liverpool, but also more importantly, shared the frustration on campaigning for abandoned buildings in which some have seen no movement in twenty-five years.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. Two buildings which I have been at the forefront of helping to save and were threatened with demolition are St John the Divine's Church, Fairfield, and the listed Grade 2 Eddesbury in West Derby (the former Margaret Beaven school). These buildings have been subject to a hard-fought campaign, one of which I stood up in front of a Judge in a Consistory Court, giving evidence on behalf of the building, as you do.

This book focuses on the Grade ONE Woolton Hall. Why? Because it has tremendous history going back to 1704 and history before this time too! It was extensively renovated in 1772 by the influential architect Robert Adam, **the building is said to be praised as the finest example of Robert Adam's work in the whole North of England!**

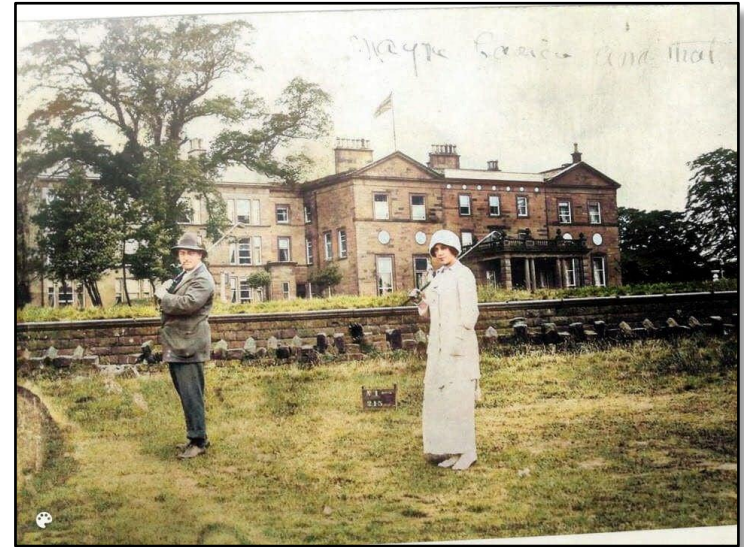
The building has seen several different owners, some of which have been caring of the building, others not so. Noted owners such as the Ashton family, the Molyneux family, it is currently in a shocking condition and has now caught the eye of Historic England, who after I advised on the plight of the buildings condition and history, was included in the 2021 At Risk Register for Historic England as a Category A site. The highest priority stating that the building is at 'immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric.'

Woolton Hall has been subject to numerous break-ins, vandalism, fires and general 'managed decline' and I cannot believe it hasn't been completely fire damaged by now. We have seen the utter destruction of the fire at Eddesbury in which we watched one of James Francis Doyle's noted Grade II listed buildings burn. We cannot let that happen with Woolton Hall.

I have focused on the building itself. Its floor plan, its extensions and part demolition and added various dates to the structure of the building. This is not the complete history of Woolton Hall, but in the limited time to get some much-needed publicity on the building, it's a fantastic start!

For more information on my extensive portfolio of historical websites, Facebook groups, and to discover further information on my two written books, please head across to www.braygreen.co.uk

Jonathon Wild





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CREDITS

I would first like to thank the family of the late **John Hibbert** who at the time of writing this booklet, John sadly passed away. John was instrumental in having the foresight to spend a great deal of his own money on the restoration of Woolton Hall in the 1980's. He took a much unloved building at the time and turned it in to a fantastic 'open for all' building. The village of Woolton had a very elaborate community centre in regal splendour and many people have spoken about having a birthday celebration/wedding celebration at Woolton Hall. Furthermore, the masonic lodges that met there would have additionally funded the building's upkeep. We must do all we can to assist in saving Woolton Hall in John's honour.

Thanks go to **Chris Cummings** and his group Haunted Scouse for my list of questions on the layout of the building before I devised the floorplan. It was down to some of his fantastic recordings in Woolton Hall that I was able to see the layout with my own eyes.

My thanks extend to **Joanna Morgan** at Liverpool City Council who has responded to my many e-mail's over the plight of Woolton Hall and allowed me to be kept informed of the latest proceedings. Without Joanna's assistance, we would not have realised that the building has been recently inspected by their team.

I would like to thank **Save Britain's Heritage** and **Historic England** for their assistance and their responses from my e-mail's. Both groups have assisted me with publication in the past and I am very grateful that I can reach out to them for further guidance where needed.

Special thanks to the Woolton Society and especially **Jean Davies** who promised me a copy of the 1972 Janet P Gnosspelius report. I think another book could be written on Janet and her massive undertaking on her architect's report as it was down to her report in which Woolton Hall was given Grade I listed status.

My thanks go to **Emily Hull** who assisted me in putting together the list of owners together. Emily is currently writing 'version two' of this PDF that will elaborate far more on the history of the building including the owners' wills, probates and family trees and will provide an outstanding view of the importance of the history of Woolton Hall's history.

Many of the images have been sourced over the years from difference sources. I'm not the best at keeping copyright records, so apologies if I have taken a photograph used without express permission. It's for the good of the Hall! Again, I have sourced floor-walk walkaround images from various YouTube footage – as they got in through a window, I don't think they'll have an issue with me using them for publicity.

Above all, I would like to thank everyone who has assisted me in supporting me in my determination and focus to attempt to highlight the plight of Woolton Hall, its history, its background and more importantly, it's future. With every book I write (whether published or in PDF format), I dedicate each book to my two children Alexis and Kiera. They know that I am involved in local history but at their ages, they have no real interest in local history. I didn't at their age. I only hope that we are able to save Woolton Hall so that the future generations can visit Woolton Hall for themselves and see what could have been lost to the wrecker's ball had we not acted.

Jonathon Wild, Local Historian and proprietor of Braygreen – www.braygreen.co.uk

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOOLTON

Before we start to review the history of Woolton Hall, we need to turn our attention to a brief history of Woolton and understand the lay of the land, the geology of the area and how Woolton Hall shaped the district from a lonely building to something that is now tucked away amongst the sprawl of the 'village.'

We must turn our attention to the neighbouring parish of Childwall to review the ecclesiastical side of things. Childwall Parish Church (All Saints) parish had 10 townships under its wing. In short, the parish of Childwall once ran down to Hale Village – and covered all the land in between.

There were a total of 10 townships under the Parish of Childwall, these were: Childwall, Hale, Halewood, Halebank, Speke, Garston, Allerton, Much Woolton (with Thingwall), Little Woolton and Wavertree. The neighbouring parishes were divided off as follows:

1828 Holy Trinity Wavertree, Garston, Woolton, Hale.

1856 St. Mary's Wavertree

1876 Allerton

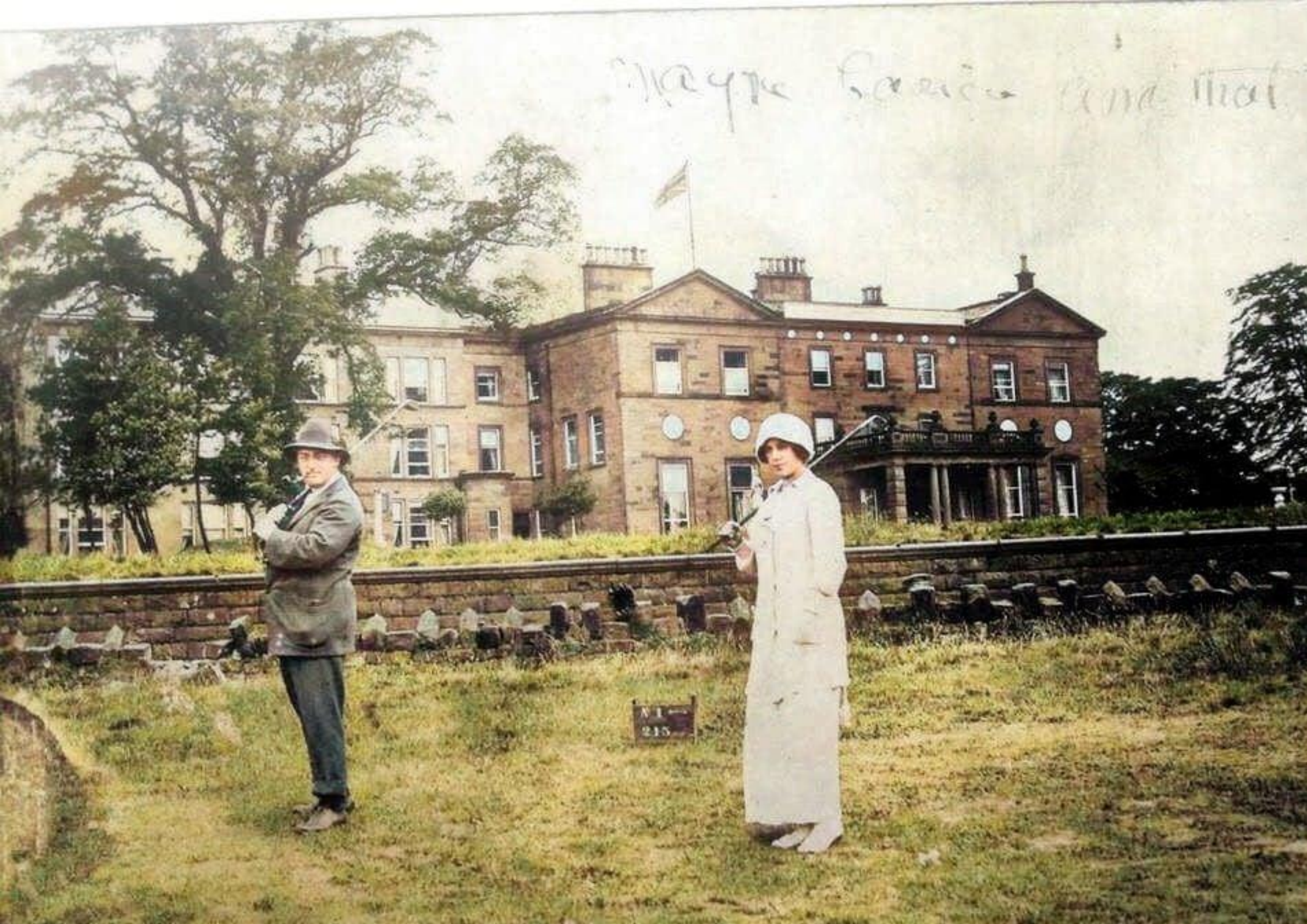
1893 Gateacre (Little Woolton)

1899 St. Bridget's separated from Holy Trinity.

With St Peter's Church in Woolton not being built until 1886, and before that there was a small chapel near the site of the present church from 1826, Childwall Church was the main Church that parishioners would visit and be associated with. We will come to this later where we find out about the Norris' from Speke Hall and also the Ashton's from Woolton Hall. All Saints Childwall holds lots of information associated with Woolton Hall!



Mayre Service and Mat





Can we return to over 250 million years ago and imagine dry dusty conditions in this area. The winds carrying sand and small pebbles to lay the foundations of Woolton. The great sandstone ridge that carries Woolton on was divided in two sections, each ridge in to two hills, each with measurements of around 300ft and 250ft.

The earliest settlement of the prehistoric period were placed on the curve of the 200ft contour facing south-east. The village itself was later built up along the same contour on the south-eastern slope, to project the village from the elements but yet high enough for dry land.

If we look at the earliest noted traditions, we find ourselves being pointed towards the Roman's being situated on Camp Hill. Investigations into this previously showed detailed evidence of an Iron Age encampment roughly 80ft in diameter with ramparts 10ft high and 15ft wide.

Perhaps we can start to look at the history of Woolton with its name. What does 'Woolton' actually mean? We need to go back to the Domesday book to see that the name is spelt as 'Uluentune' and 'Wulfa's tun' from the Anglo-Saxon personal name 'Wulfa' and the Old English 'tun' meaning a village or farm.

The translation from the Domesday book are as follows:

Uctred held Uluentune (Little Woolton). There are 2 carucates of land and half a league of wood. It was worth 64 pence.

Ulbert held Wibaldeslei (Lee Park). There are 2 carucates of land. It was worth 64 pence.

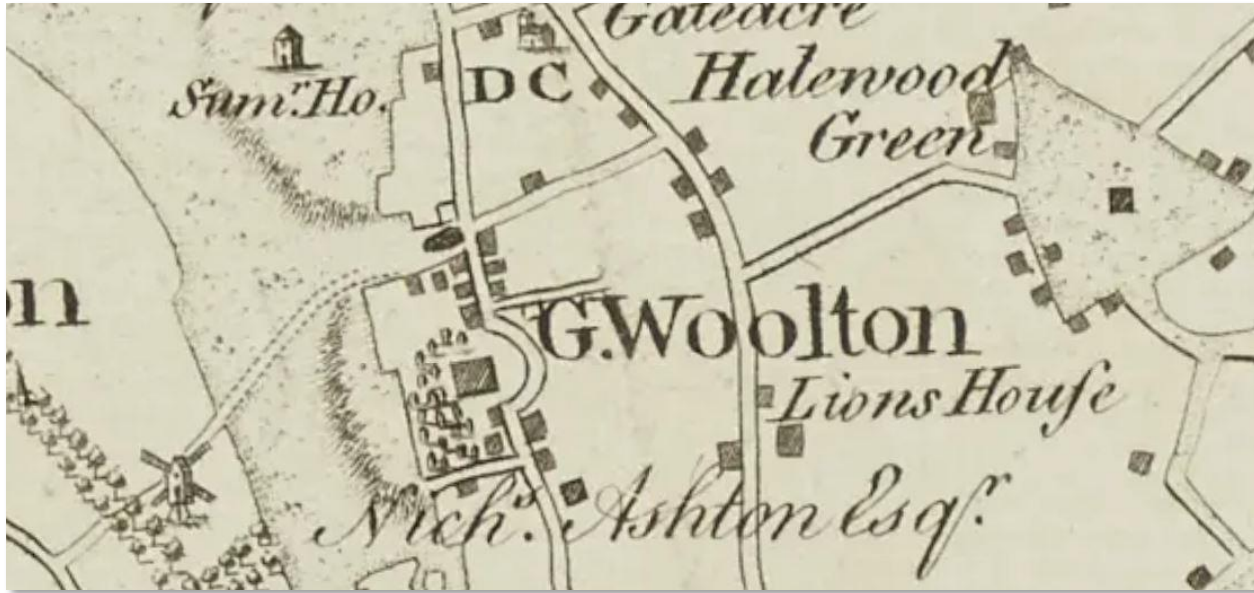
Two thanes held Uuetone (Much Woolton) as two manors. There is one carucate of land. It was worth 30 pence.

'Thanes' were the Anglo-Saxon names for Knights. Or men holding land by service. We then have to understand that a carucatre had something to do with a parcel of land. If we look at the size of this, it was an area of land that was about 120 acres. Therefore cultivated land in Much Woolton would have been around 8 households with the rest of the land being barren and little use. If we look towards the neighbouring Childwall for valuations of the land, at Childwall there was 'a priest with half a carucate in alms. Childwall itself was held for four manors and valued at 96 pence. Other local areas such as Wavertree were valued at 64 pence, Allerton being valued at 94 pence, and this would put Much Woolton at the lower end of the scale.

If the value of the land was lower than Childwall, for what reason was this the case? Was Woolton's barren land not suitable for farming it being situated between two ridges? If we look at Childwall, that too sits high on the hillside and is not an easy climb. We need to look into the history of Woolton further for additional answers.



EARLY MAPS



To understand the lay of the land, we can review a very early map of 1786 to see the location of Woolton Hall. On the map to the left it is marked as the enclosure above the name 'Nicholas Ashton Esq', the owner of Woolton Hall at the time.

While we are reviewing the map, it would be a great opportunity to provide some information on the 'summer house' that can be seen in the top left-hand corner of the map.

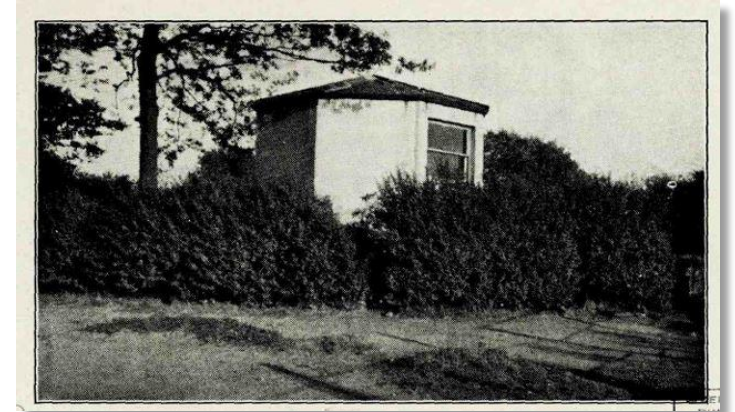
How we could go back in time to experience the lay of the land as it was!

In 1769 William Yates and George Perry published their Map of the Environs of Lever pool Drawn from an Actual Survey Taken in the Year 1768.

At the S.S.E. end of an area marked "Childwall Heath" is a point described as "Summer House." Elevated areas are surrounded by shaded lines, and it is within one of these areas that the " Summer House " is shown. There can be no doubt that the " summer house on Chilwell-hill" mentioned by Derrick and the " Summer House " on the Yates and Perry map refer to the same building.

Some years ago the late Robert Gladstone told the writer that he had seen the Woolton Summer House from the top of the Woolton Reservoir. He suggested that the summer house was worthy of closer inspection with a view to ascertaining if the present building was that mentioned by Derrick. It was in response to this suggestion that the following notes on the summer house were compiled.

The summer house stands in the Knolle Park estate, a fine property with frontages on Beaconsfield Road and Church Road, Woolton. It is just within the Little Woolton boundary.



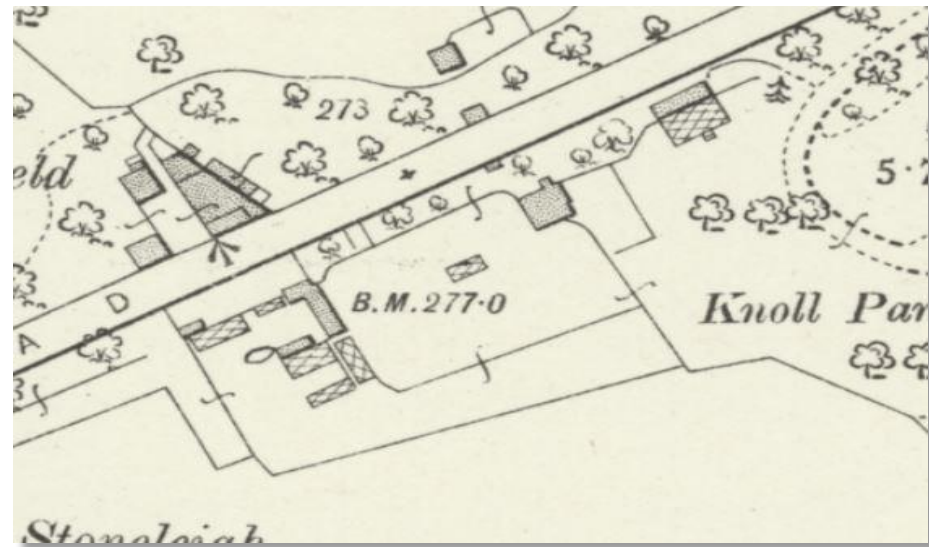
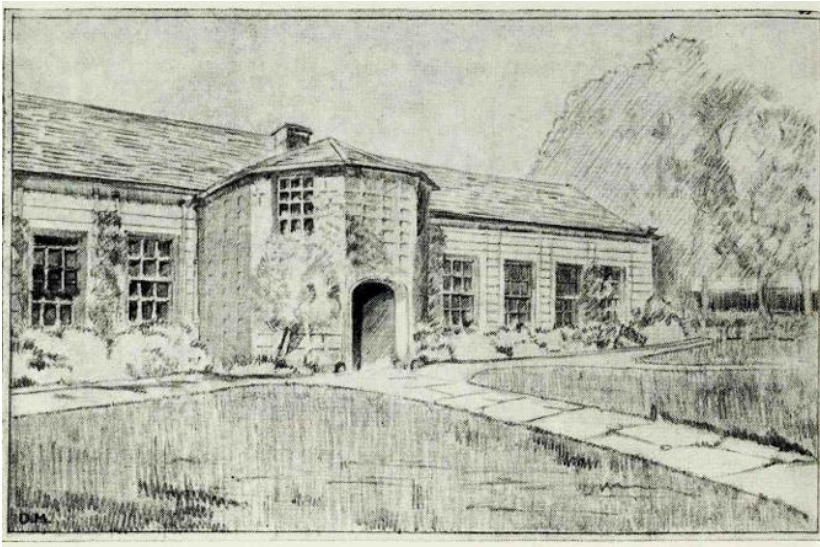
"In the autumn of 1938, by kind permission of the Sister-in charge, I visited Knolle Park to inspect the summer house. The building is a regular octagon and is stuccoed over red sandstone. The soil has receded at the base, leaving the unstuccoed stone exposed. Each of the eight sides is six feet in length, and from the ground to the eaves is ten feet. The walls are about sixteen inches thick. The low-pitched roof is of slate with ridge tiles ; it is in eight sections corresponding with the walls. Originally there were three windows facing south, south-west, and west. The south-west window has been built up, but the sill remains. The door is in the north-east wall and is approached by two or three steps. The summer house is surrounded by a circular wall, about eighteen inches high, in a rather decayed condition, partly stone and partly brick, surmounted by a stone coping and iron railing. The shrubs which surround the building make it impossible to photograph the lower portion."

“The interior is plastered. The stone floor is about two feet above the ground level. The ceiling is also plastered and is in eight sections corresponding with the roof. The trees which are now so plentiful near the summit date only from when Childwall and Woolton Heaths were laid out as large residential properties ; but even to-day, notwithstanding the surrounding patches of woodland, the view from the summer house is exceptionally fine.”

Derrick, as mentioned above, states that it extended to fifteen counties. Baines, in his Liverpool, comments : "It would have puzzled Mr. Derrick to have named the fifteen counties visible from Childwall, though few views can be finer than those obtained from that spot, and from the ridge on which Childwall stands, of the plains of Lancashire and Cheshire, the River Mersey and the sea, and the mountains of Flintshire, Denbighshire, and Carnarvon. In very clear weather Black Comb [Cumberland], the Isle of Anglesey, and the faint outline of the hills of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and perhaps Staffordshire may be seen, but it would require a strong imagination, as well as good eyes to make out the other counties."

Isaac Greene, the prosperous Prescott attorney, acquired the manors of Childwall, Much Woolton and Little Woolton in July 1718, and the summer house was therefore built at some time between that date and Greene's death in 1749. Greene married in 1725, and rebuilt Childwall Hall as his principal residence before 1728, and we may assume that in all probability the summer house also was then built. It was situated about a mile from the Hall and was doubtless used as the objective of many a delightful walk across the then unspoiled heath.

The summer house is devoid of architectural details which might enable one to fix approximately the period of its construction. There may, however, be buildings in existence of known date so similar in construction as to afford corroborative evidence of date. One such building is the porch of the Friends' Meeting House and School at Lancaster, of which an illustration is given. The City Librarian and Curator of Lancaster (Mr. G. M. Bland) informs me that this porch was built in 1708. The original Meeting House was built in 1677. A new one was erected on the same site in 1708, and although a lintel within the porch has in it a stone dated 1677, a Meeting House minute book records that the porch was included in the rebuilding scheme of 1708. The 1677 stone, probably for sentimental reasons, was evidently incorporated in the 1708 building. No trace now remains of the Woolton summer house. It is marked on a 1900's OS map behind Knolle Park as a small 'building' above the B. M. 277.0





On the left, we see the OS six inch, 1840s-1880s (county layers) map that provides the first real detail on the layout of Woolton Hall compared to its surroundings.

Its nearest 'neighbour' would have been the Much Woolton Old School which can be seen at the bottom of the map. This building was built circa 1610 and is nearly 100 years older than Woolton Hall itself.

There is also mention of a 'Summer House', but this is not the same summer house as the one described above, but an additional summer house within the (then) private grounds of Woolton Hall.

How fantastic would it have been to wander around the private gardens of Woolton Hall – now Woolton Woods!

On the right, we are now focusing our attention on the OS Six Inch 1888-1915 map that provides clearer detail on Woolton Hall. By this time, it has been enlarged and the area around the Hall is slowly being built up.

On the right-hand side of the map, Ashton Square is mostly overlooked in the present day. A small dark lane that you wouldn't notice in the car, this was built for the workers who tended to Woolton Hall and was named after Nicholas Ashton.

Even over 100 years later, Ashton Square is still on the map and still holds a row of small cottage type houses that form their own little courtyard. They are very small but very pretty houses, merely a 'two up two down' arrangement but very well hidden from the surrounding area and unless you walked up the lane, you would not know it was there.



If we return to our attention to Woolton Hall, what is the earliest date of the building? If we are to go on the general consensus that it was built for Richard Molyneux in 1704, then case closed. A new building for Woolton at the start of the 1700's. But upon delving into further historical papers, the following evidence must be submitted as part of the brief history on Woolton itself.

Depending on which source of information is reviewed, the land at Woolton Hall has been occupied since 1180 when the area of Much Woolton came under the lordship of the holy Catholic order of the Knights Hospitaller, who held this portion of land for over 350 years until the English Reformation took place. Back in the 16th Century, Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries suppressed the Knights Hospitaller leading the land being confiscated but then later restored by Mary I. This land was permanently confiscated from the order in 1559 until Elizabeth I and was kept by the crown until 1609. Hitherto, the land came under ownership of the Brettarghs of Holt who were reputed to have acquired it from an ancient family named 'de Woolton'.

On the death of William Brettargh in 1609, the land was described as being home to a cottage. It was then noted that between 1700 and 1704, the house and surrounding estate was sold to politician Richard Molyneux, 1st Viscount Molyneux who built the northern block of the Hall.

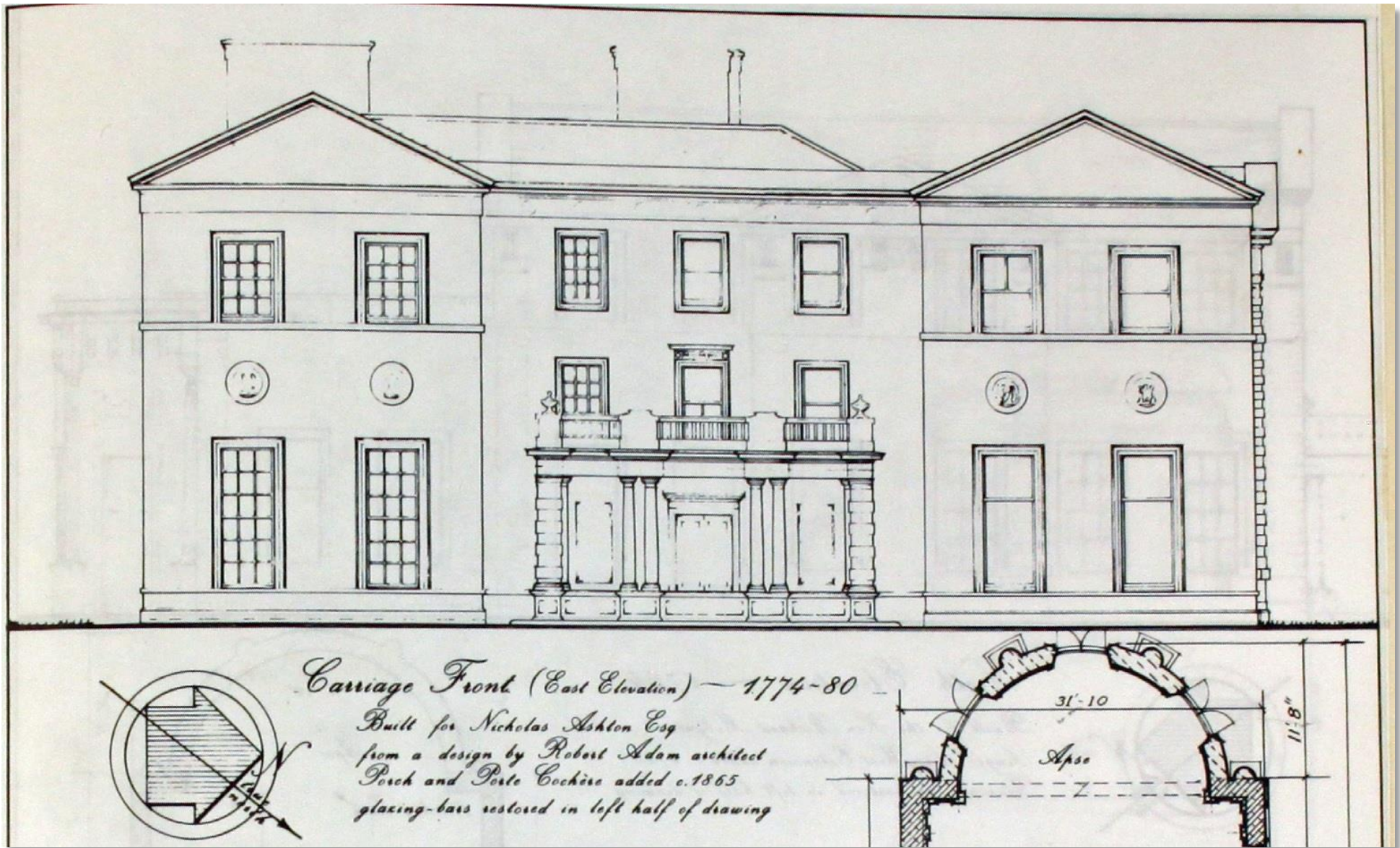
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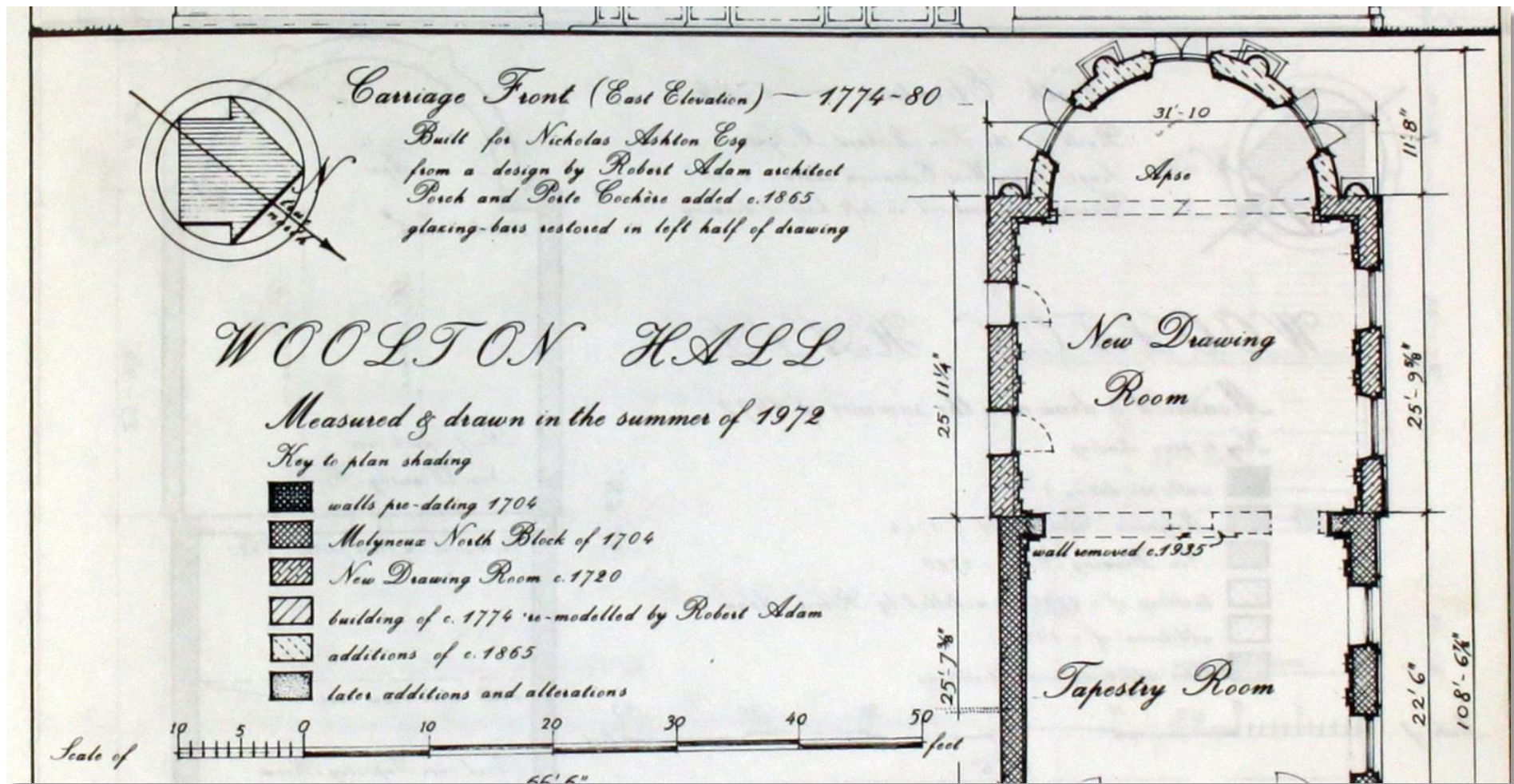
At this point, we must make a note of the importance of the work that Janet Gnosspelius did for Woolton Hall before we continue. She is seen on the left of the photograph with her friend Sylvia Lewis.

Janet trained at the Liverpool School of Architecture in the 1940's and built a reputation in church architecture and restoration, working for a time for the church architect Francis Xavier Velarde. From the late 1960's she developed a new life in local history and conservation. In 1972, the threatened demolition of Woolton Hall (Janet's report led to it being listed Grade 1) stimulated the founding of the still flourishing Woolton Society. Working with her close friend Sylvia Lewis, Janet was a formidable force in Liverpool planning inquiries, authoritatively challenging attitudes on conservation and even road planning. She would regularly deliver to the city planning office chunks of masonry, neatly labelled with provenance and date, asking that they be replaced.

Janet wrote 'Woolton Hall, Architect's Inspection of the Fabric' in 1972 and this was a report on the architect's inspection of the fabric, in July, August and September 1972, carried out for the Liverpool City Planning Department. I have been offered a copy of this book from the Woolton Society and thus all copyright of this book is with the Woolton Society. In part of her write up, Janet provides a full write up of the floorplans for each section and has added shading in to the various 'changes' to Woolton Hall over the years. At first glance, there is a variety of work undertaken, but perhaps the biggest eye opener is that Janet has confirmed that various walls from Woolton Hall pre-date 1704 and therefore must be from the 'cottage' that has been previously described.

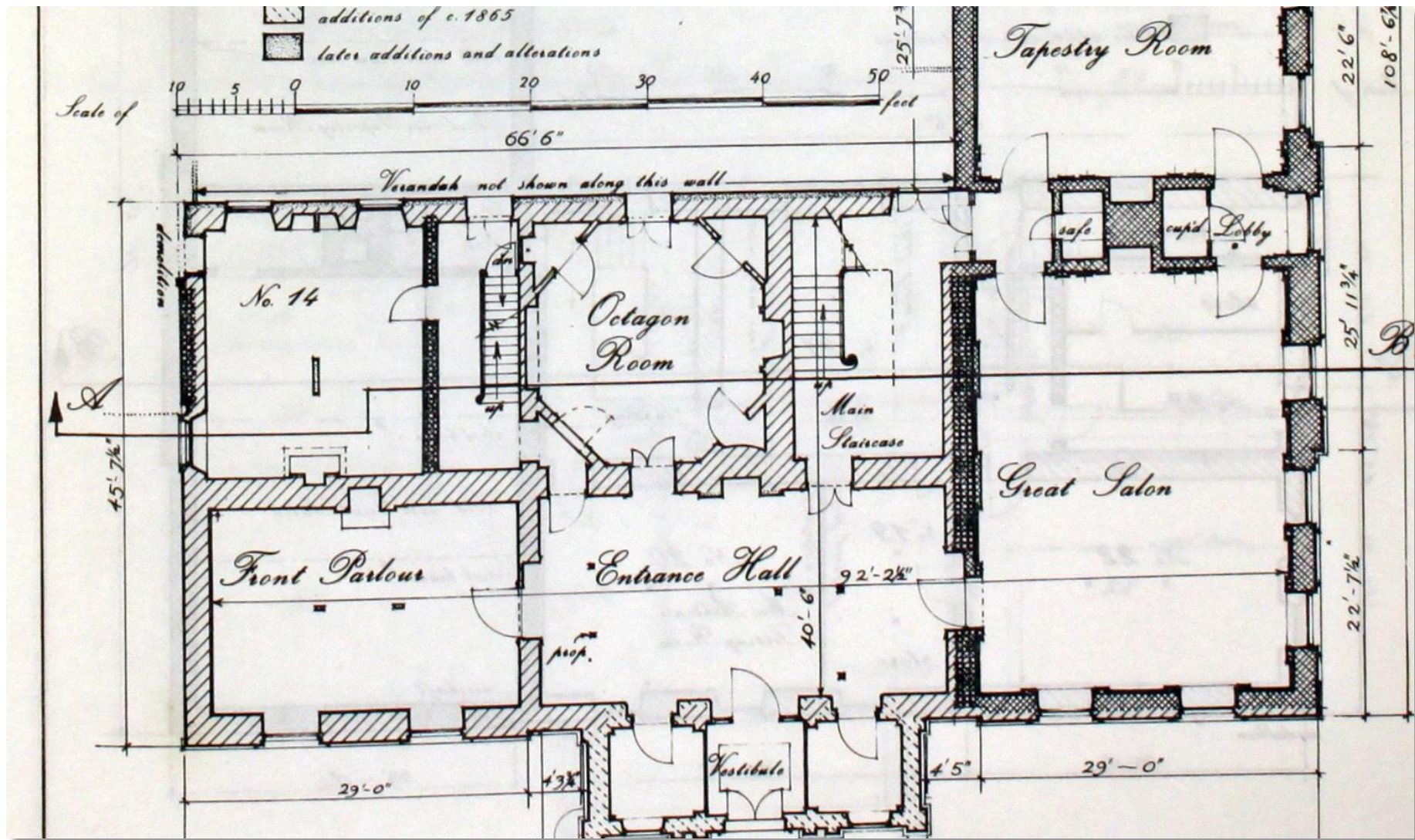


This and the following two pages are the Ground Floor architects plans from Janet Gnosspelius and are therefore copyright of the Woolton Society. They have been enlarged from the 1972 Architects report. It is incredible to see, and Janet raises some very valid points in that there were many walls that pre-date Woolton Hall. It is my conclusion that Woolton Hall was partly built on the footprint of the older 'cottage' that stood there.



It is very important to scroll between this and the below page to see the full image of the ground floor floorplan of Woolton Hall and to understand the different editions to the Hall over the years. Some of the owners have been very kind to the Hall and greatly enhanced it. Others have not been so kind to the Hall and have possibly covered up various elements of the Hall as I will come to later on another floor plan.

However, Janet has stated that the walls below are pre-dating 1704! It is a fantastic discovery and therefore adds weight to the fact that we are not attempting to just save Woolton Hall, but that we are also attempting to save parts of the original 'cottage' that stood here before Woolton Hall!



As we can see, Janet has hit the nail on the head. She has confirmed that part of Woolton Hall's structure is dated before 1704. And this would mean that this was no small cottage, but a far grander house or hall with a substantial footprint in which Richard Molyneux has added to. We see that both sides of the kitchen room (no 14), as well as the right-hand side of the principal staircase was also used. It therefore poses the question whether the cellar system was also there pre Woolton Hall. There is no footprint of the cellar system that is under the Great Salon or Tapestry Room so it would suggest that the principal staircase wall would possibly be the 'outer wall' of the cottage. We are therefore not attempting just to save a building dated 1704 but also parts of a building predating 1704 and back to the 1600's!

PRE-WOOLTON HALL

While researching the History of Childwall, a favourite 'local historian' that I went back to time after time was Ronald Stewart-Brown M.A., F.S.A. I based much of my early findings from him as he gave the most precise history and information, backed up by sources and as much fact as possible, and it is therefore who I have turned my attention back to in the quest for the early years of Woolton Hall – and more importantly, pre Woolton Hall.

In studying modern maps of Liverpool, one will come across 'Much Woolton' and 'Little Woolton' and perhaps it is a good time to provide some explanation to this to set the scene for the layout of Woolton Hall as this is most important. Little Woolton appears to be much larger than its neighbour, over 1,388 acres compared to 795 acres of Much Woolton. Of course, the boundaries change over time and names change etc, but Little Woolton takes in far more than it did back then compared to now. It not only included the township itself, but two others 'vills or homesteads, which once were both separate from it. These names were Brettargh or Brettargh Holt and Wibald's Lee. If you were to look on a modern map, then Wibald's Lee is roughly now where Lee Park is. The name appears to point in the direction of 'Wigbalds's field'.



(Before I attempt to confuse everyone with the location of 'The Holt', I have added a map of the past to show its location. This is listed on the OS map as Holt Hall Farm (I'll come to more on this later) but for now, this was on what is now the corner of Caldwell Drive in Netherley. It is now just a patch of grass and has absolutely no reference to its important history back in the day.)

However, further research on the vill of Brettargh shows that this may have been spread across a much larger area which ran up west towards Childwall Brook. It is known that at one time, the owners of Brettargh also owned Wheat hill. Wheat hill was listed on (now) Naylor's Road as two properties, plus also Wheat hill House which was demolished for the extension of the M62 Motorway.

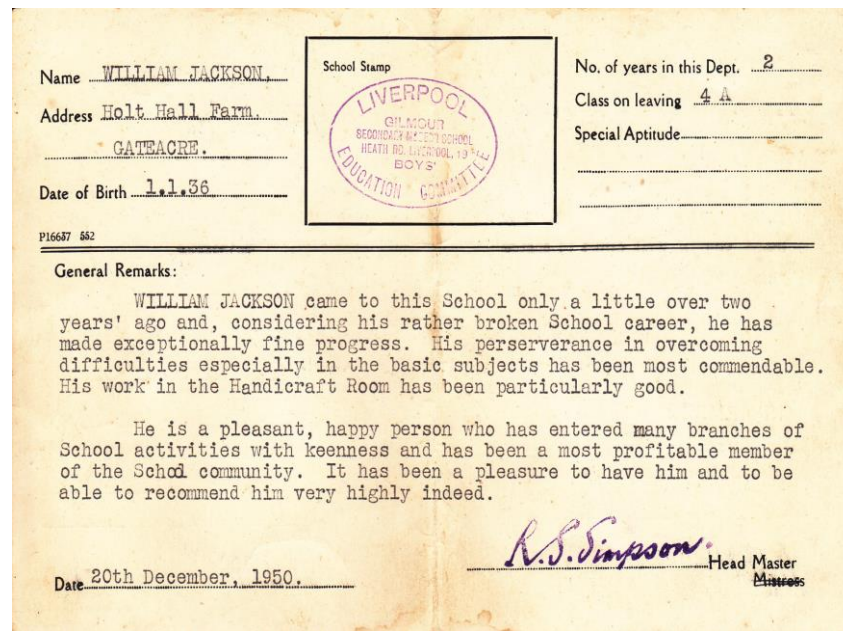
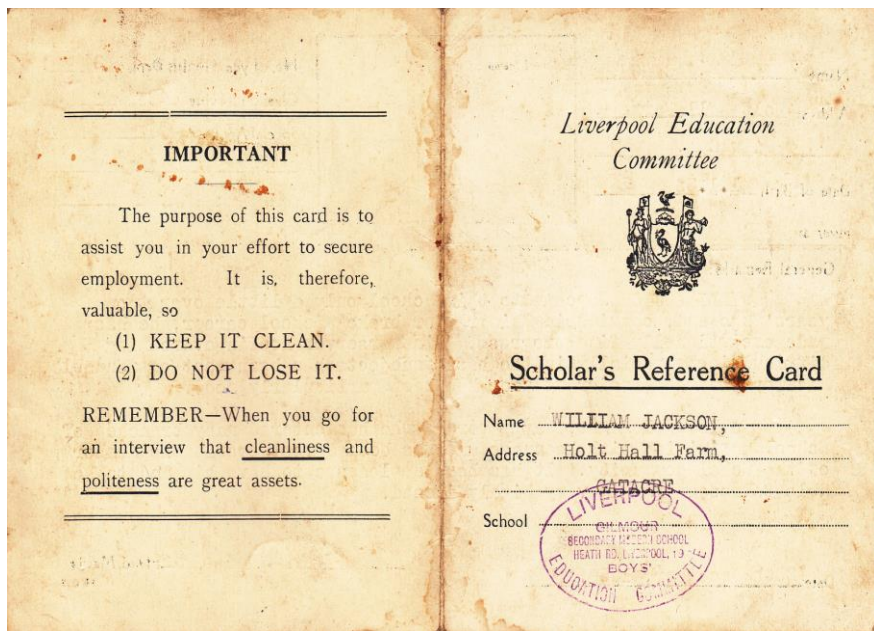
The earliest appearance of the name in known records appears from about 1180 onwards. John, constable of Chester and the lord of the barony of Widnes granted the 'vill' of Brettargh to William De Suonis.

This gift was coupled with the right to pannage and to enjoy all easements belonging to the Vill of Little Woolton, and with an obligation to pay the annual rent of 18d to the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, to whom the constable had given Much Woolton, probably only a few years before.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Brettargh loses its identity as a separate Vill and becomes merged with 'little Woolton.' In the fourteenth century, Brettargh passed into the hands of the most influential family in Lancashire, the Earls of Derby. From a second wife of Robert of Lathom, there came a family 'de Knowsley' and from then again, a branch 'de Huyton'.

HOLT HALL FARM

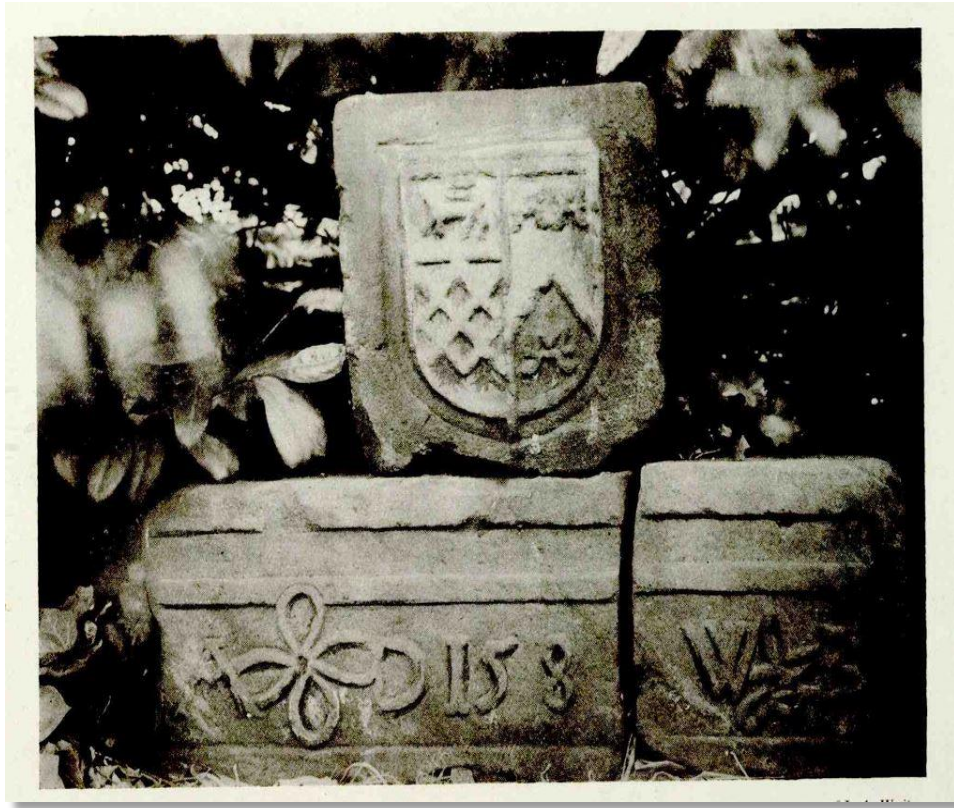
When my mum was born at the end of WW2 in Childwall, she would join her sisters and two brothers and meet up with other children area to go and explore. Just after the war, the land beyond the former railway bridge on Childwall Valley Road 'was all fields', and if you were anyone, the meeting point in Childwall was Jackson's Pond. This pond is no longer there but would have been situated on the field which is now bordered from Gateacre Park Drive and Escor Road. To gain access to this pond, one had to go through the boundary gate of Jackson's Farm. Now, Jackson's Farm to this day was something that 'started on Childwall Valley Road' and depending on who you spoke to, ran all the way up Gateacre Park Drive to Woolton. In reality, I believe it ran up to the next field which was Gorsey Cop Farm. Jackson's Farm operated out of Childwall House Farm and there were children including Harrison and Thomas. They also ran other farms in the area including New Hall Farm in West Derby. The family went out to Ontario in Canada in 1921 for 4 months and when they returned they lived at Childwall Farm. Harrison's brother, Thomas, later moved to Halt Hall Farm when he got married. Thomas' son, William spent some time at Holt Hall Farm and a good friend of mine, Debbie Jackson (whose father-in-law was William Jackson) allowed me permission to use the following items in this booklet.



Perhaps the greatest image is below. This shows William and his two sisters in front of The Holt – more commonly known as Holt Hall Farm. This would have been the same building that the Brettargh's used when it was called 'The Holt'. The building is sadly demolished now – but one item still survives to this day! As Brettargh Holt was the ancestral seat for the Brettargh family, this is a really important parcel of time for the pre-Woolton Hall history.



When Holt Hall Farm was demolished, laying in the field for some unknown reason were a few stones from the original building. They show a coat of arms and what looks like to be a date stone. A local must have known about them and 'saved them' for a future use. It was therefore incredible to track these stones down and realize that they still survive. During the building of a new garage in the south of Liverpool, these stones were added in to the front gable end!



It is not clear who were the owners in medieval times of what is now the Woolton Hall estate, but in Tudor times it was held by the Brettarghs of Brettargh Holt in Little Woolton (Holt Hall Farm), who were reputed to have acquired it from an ancient family named De Woolton. From the Brettarghs it descended to the Broughtons and then in 1704 it became the property of the Honourable Richard Molyneux, son and heir of William 4th Viscount Molyneux. This is why the Brettarghs of Brettargh Holt is so important in playing a part in the back story to the Woolton Hall estate.

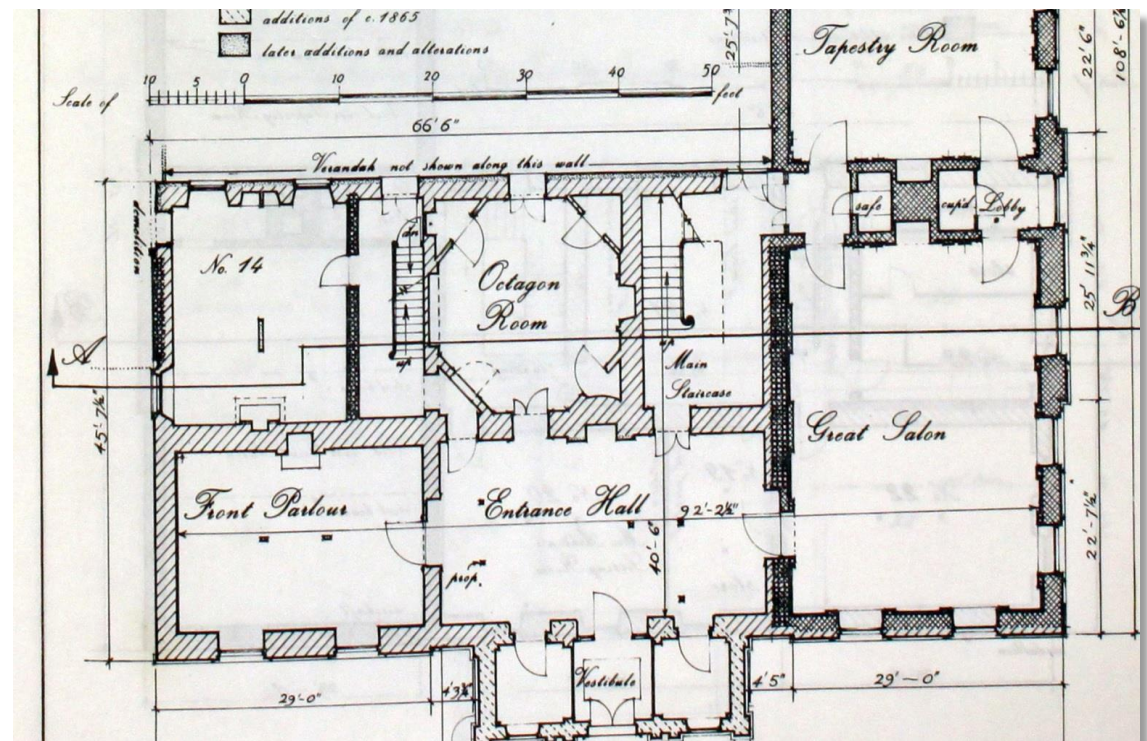
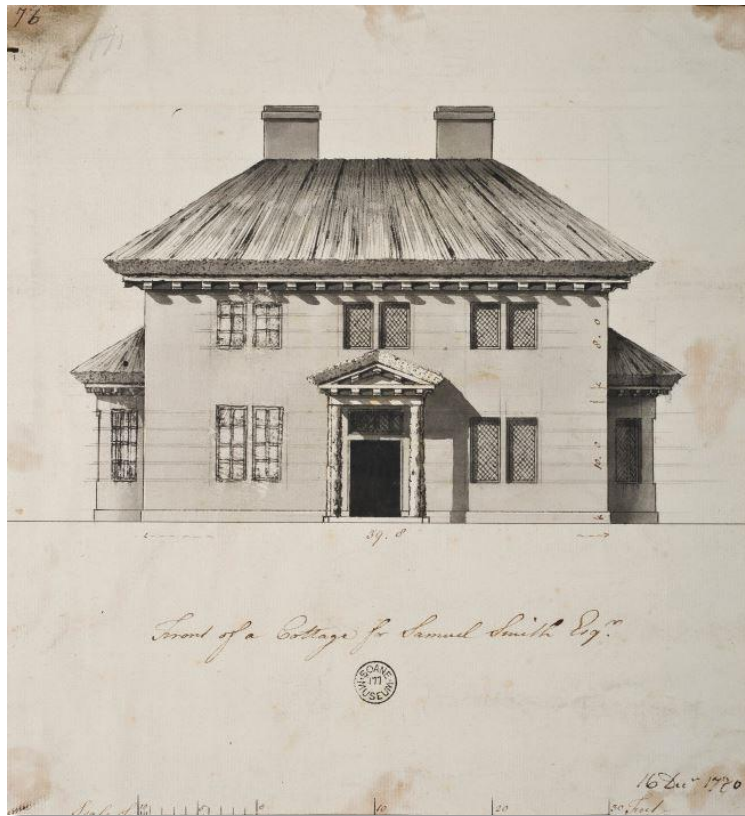
With the land being owned by William Brettargh that Woolton Hall was constructed on, it's important to have included this back story to gain the full history of the parcel of land that the building now sits on. It is very odd to see 'The Holt' just a patch of empty land with no historical signage to the past of this incredible history.

WOOLTON HALL – THE COTTAGE

For many people, the history of Woolton Hall starts in 1704. Richard Molyneux purchases the plot of land and constructs the earliest part of Woolton Hall. However, we now know this not to be the case. We are therefore not just dealing with a Grade 1 listed building that we thought was constructed in 1704, but it has now come to light that some of the Hall's structure pre-date the 1704 date with the following evidence.

In the 1972 Architectural report by Janet P Gnosspelius, she mentions that three of the walls in Woolton Hall are pre-dating 1704, when Woolton Hall was constructed. In contemporary maps at the time, it shows that there was building on the land and sources point to it being a 'cottage' of sorts. I believe that when the Molyneux's took over the land, they remodelled parts of the cottage into what we now know as Woolton Hall, and I also believe some or all of the cellar system predate 1704 too. I do not believe that Molyneux excavated further down into the current cellar system when it shows bedrock walls under the pre-1704 walls. To gain perspective of these walls, the left-hand side wall of the Kitchen, the wall between the kitchen and the servant's staircase is shown as pre-1704. The right-hand side wall of the principal staircase that adjoins the Great Salon is also pre-1704.

In one of the archives in the Soane's Museum, this drawing (note - this is not the actual cottage) is the sort of design I think we would have seen prior to the start of Woolton Hall. (if you can imagine the Great Salon on the right-hand side). This is why Woolton Hall is SO important, it's not just 1704 onwards, but we are also dealing with a shell of a building that predates 1704 also. The 1972 report shows the heavily shaded walls to be pre-1704.



WOOLTON HALL – THE OWNERS

Woolton Hall – constructed in 1704 – Grade 1 listed (1982). Land owned by William Brettargh - on his death the land being described as being home to a cottage. Sometime between 1700 and 1704, the house and surrounding estate was sold to politician Richard Molyneux 5th Viscount Molyneux.

1. **1704 till 1738** - Richard Molyneux, 5th Viscount Molyneux.
2. **1738 till 1766** – Mary Molyneux, wife of Richard.

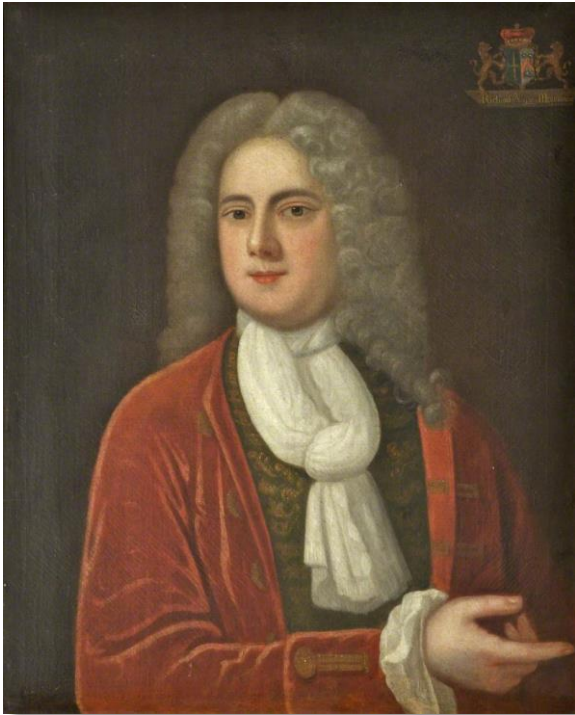
GAP OF 5 YEARS

3. **1771 till 1772** – Rev Batholomew Booth
4. **1772 till 1833** – Nicholas Ashton. (Former High Sheriff of Lancashire)
5. **1833 till 1865** – Joseph Ashton (Son of Nicholas) then Charles Ellis Ashton (Son of Joseph)
6. **1865 till 1877** – James Reddecliffe Jeffery (owner of Liverpool’s largest department store, Compton House)
7. **1877 till 1892** – Frederick Richards Leyland (Ship Owner – Leyland Line)

GAP OF 6 YEARS

8. **1898 till 1948** – Captain Peter McGuffie (West Wing demolished – turned into a Hydropathic Hotel and Golf course)
9. **Dates to be confirmed** – Headquarters of the Middlesex Regiment & Army Hospital
10. **1948 till 1970** – Sisters of Notre Dame
11. **1980 till 1985** – John Hibbert
12. **1985 till 2005** – Jim Murray
13. **2005 till present** – Jim Murray & Abid Chaudhry

RICHARD MOLYNEUX – 5TH VISCOUNT MOLYNEUX



As previously stated, Richard Molyneux purchased the land that Woolton Hall now sits on, and we presume that he saw that the 'cottage' was a good foundation to make good from that of a cottage into Woolton Hall.

His Grandfather was the 3rd Viscount Maryborough of Sefton and Croxteth and Richard was expected to inherit. He married Mary Brudenell and acquired her dowry of £11,000. Was this used for continued construction on Woolton Hall? What was constructed included the north section of the present hall which included the great salon, a tapestry room, a dining room and a drawing room.

The accommodation of guests was also at the forefront of his mind and so either the cellars that may have been part of the cottage were used, or he dug down into the foundations to create elaborate 'wine bins' to store his wine and port. The work on Woolton Hall continued and was completed by 1714. It would be considered that the top floor of the Hall or at least part of the top floor were used for servants' quarters, the principal staircase only reaching the first floor even in today's configuration.

It was noted that one household member was a Catholic Benedictine priest who would have served the family by providing services especially for the predominantly Catholic household. Richard Holme OSB is the first named priest and was at the Hall from 1715 till his death in 1717.

Richard Molyneux passed away in 1738 and although the title passed to his brother, his widow, Lady Mary Molyneux continued to live at Woolton Hall as well as her husband's unmarried sister.

His only son had died at a very early age and both his daughters (Mary and Dorothy) left the hall when they were married. There must have still been a great array of servants, gardeners and people to assist his wife when she was living there but at the age of 86, in 1766, she passed away. At the time, a priest was still maintained at the Hall and Lady Molyneux made provisions for him after her death.

After this time, a parcel of land which comprised of twelve acres was purchased off Watergate Lane and money was provided for the construction of a small catholic chapel, known as St Benet's. The chapel has now been demolished; the gravestones moved back into Woolton Village but there have always been rumours of tunnels from Woolton Hall to St Benet's.

In the cellar system at Woolton Hall, there does not appear to be any physical evidence of tunnels, but these could have been blocked up over time. Certainly, the reorganization of Woolton Hall over time may have blocked these up for security reasons but it would be interesting to note if tunnels ever existed. If they did, perhaps one went to Woolton Woods or perhaps one went across by the main village.

For Woolton Hall's first owner, we have Richard Molyneux to thank for the creation of Woolton Hall and the legacy that we have left to fight for!

REV BARTHOLOMEW BOOTH



Bartholomew Booth was born in 1732 to a schoolmaster in the village of Mellor, eight miles south of Manchester. Wishing to follow in his father's footsteps, Booth decided to follow a typical path for that profession and seek ordination. In 1754 he went to Oxford to begin his studies at Brasenose College. After graduating, Booth held positions as schoolmaster and priest in Disley and Marple.

Booth may have continued down this path and been content to be a small village schoolmaster and curate, but for a strange family problem that would guide his actions for the rest of his life. Booth had married young and in 1760, his wife, Mary Chatterton, began to show signs of mental illness. Choosing to leave his wife and their youngest son, John, Booth made his way to Liverpool with his sons William and Robert (ages 7 and 4).

Once in Liverpool, Booth obtained a room in the Old Church Yard adjoining the church of Saint Nicholas for his classroom. The room was in the middle of the mercantile quarter, convenient for the middle class that Booth was targeting for his students. On January 7, 1765, Booth placed the following ad in the Williamson's Advertiser:

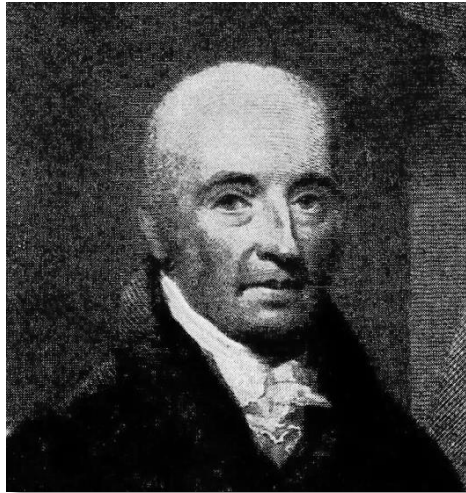
"On Monday, 7th, inst., at a large and convenient room near the Old Church Liverpool will be opened an Academy for the Instruction of Youth in the following useful and polite branches of learning viz. of the English Grammar, the Latin, Greek, French & German Languages, Writing in all the different hands, Geometry, Navigation, the Italian Method of Bookkeeping, Drawing & Music in the Spring, Summer & Autumn Quarters. The Art of Fencing between the hours of twelve and one (during which time the Gentlemen will not be permitted to stay in the Rooms). Ladies may be taught Drawing, Writing, Arithmetic & Geography. Rev. Mr. Booth".

Booth soon began to meet the Liverpool elite, including parishioners Joseph Valens and his daughters, Anne Bardsley, a 33-year-old widow, and her sister Mary Valens, age 24. The two women offered to help run the school without pay. This partnership would be a lifelong endeavor.

Soon, the classroom in Liverpool became too small, and the school moved to Woolton Hall, a large estate five miles from Liverpool. In order to fill this new school, Booth cast a wider net, placing an advertisement in the Virginia Gazette in 1766, the same year that George William was born. Despite his success, Booth's family problems continued to haunt him. Writing to a friend, Ralph Peters, Booth ponders the advantages of emigrating to the colonies, admitting that "the greatest of all Inducements which I must leave this Kingdom is my unhappy marriage. 'Tis True I have not been shocked with a Sight of the imprudent cause of all my Misfortunes for these ten Years past, yet still I am troubled and frequently hurt with Accounts of her Behaviour which is blamable in the highest Degree." Booth writes that he has provided provisions for her and is free to leave.

At the end of May in 1772, the Hall was sold to Nicholas Ashton and Booth emigrated to Maryland where he continued his educational services. Peter Newby had begun to write poetry and his *The Farewell*, set in the grounds of Woolton Hall was published in 1773.

NICHOLAS ASHTON



Nicholas Ashton was the next owner of Woolton Hall. He was a successful merchant and shipping owner and purchased the property in 1772. A brief view of his father's interests show that he had an interest in the Dungeon salt processing works near Hale Village (Oglet). In 1759, John Ashton passed away leaving the remaining assets of the business to his son. Nicholas was 17 at the time and this would have been a sizable interest.

Nicholas could be traced living at Hanover Street in Liverpool and then following this he moved to Clayton Square. Much like his father he became a successful businessman. In 1770 he served as High Sheriff of Lancashire and was also a magistrate for several years. It is noted that Nicholas Ashton was also a founder member of the Athenaeum in 1799.

During 1763, he married Mary Philpott in Chester, and he extended the house they lived in at the time. Sadly, Mary died in 1777, and he remarried Catherine Hodson of Liverpool four years later. He moved into Woolton Hall in 1772 and during his lifetime, he had a total of eleven children, all of which spent time at Woolton Hall.

His considerable wealth meant that he could make substantial changes to Woolton Hall, and he commissioned the noted architect Robert Adam to remodel parts of Woolton Hall.

The noted architect Robert Adam was said to have remodeled the interior of the Hall, to redesign the carriage front, the entrance hall, the main stairwell and the octagon room are all parts of Adam's work. However, when one views the interior of the property today, far more of Robert Adam's work can be seen. The ceiling in the front parlour room, the ceiling in Mrs. Ashton's room (see walkthrough below), and parts of the tapestry room. It is not noted but we believe that the tapestry room may hold a false ceiling with further work by Robert Adam.

At the end of 1780, the work was completed and Woolton Hall would have been palatial with a grand entrance sweeping into a carriageway, a Robert Adam's designed entrance chamber and further rooms designed by Robert Adam.

As well as managing Woolton Hall, Nicholas Ashton kept his workers in good order too. He constructed Ashton Square (off School Lane) which housed estate workers. Nicholas Ashton lived at the Hall until his death in 1833. With his death, the Hall was passed to his son, Joseph, born in 1783. He survived his father by only three years but had children so they could inherit. Nicholas Ashton and both wives are commemorated by Hatchments in Childwall Church.

If the 1841 census is reviewed, we can see that Mary Ashton was in residence (Nicholas's sister). She was 65 and was head of the household. One of Nicholas's other sons Henry was resident at the recently built Woolton Woods property – just behind the Hall. Joseph's family continued to reside at Woolton Hall and the 1851 census found his widow, Elizabeth Ashton aged 57, there. In addition, there were two visitors, six household servants, a footman, a lady's maid, a cook, two housemaids, and a dairymaid. By 1865 Woolton Hall would be sold again.

We must take a moment to reflect that Woolton Hall was a very busy Hall at this point. At least six servants were needed and various other people to run the Hall. Therefore, they would have made use of the servant's staircase rather than the principal staircase that the owners would have used.

JAMES REDDECLIFFE JEFFERY



James Reddecliffe Jeffery purchased Woolton Hall in a strange twist of fate. James and William, two brothers born in Plymouth owned Compton House which stood on Church Street in Liverpool, more or less opposite the former St Peter's Church across the road (demolished in 1922).

Their company was called Jeffery & Co and was established in 1832.

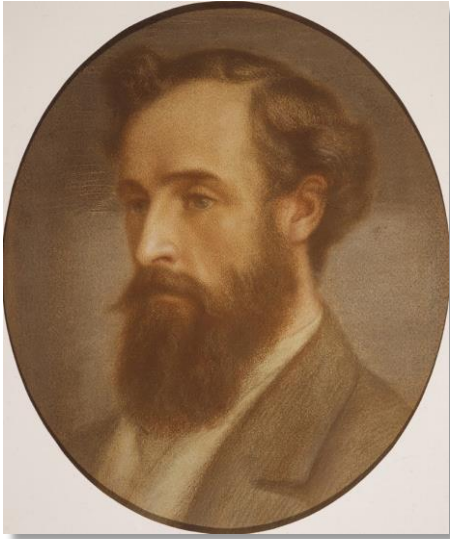
The building contained within a clothier, cabinet makers and Liverpool's largest drapers, with around 180 staff living on the upper floors. In December 1865, two police officers walking their beat discovered smoke coming from the basement of the property. Fire engines were called in from the West of England fire brigade as well as 40 men from the nearby HMS Donegal offering assistance. By midnight, all of the internal floors collapsed leaving on the shell remaining.

In the aftermath, the business was assessed for damages with a loss of £200,000 for stock plus £100,000 for the building. Owing to much of the company's stock being insured, James Reddecliffe Jeffery went ahead and purchased Woolton Hall and made plans for Compton House to be rebuilt.

Sadly, William passed away in 1868 leaving James to run the business, but it never made enough money to be successful and the business closed in 1871. The building was then sub divided into several shops. James would pass away a few months later. During Jeffery's time at Woolton Hall, he kept the building in very good order and spent a great deal of money enhancing the property. He added the massive Porte Cochere over the entrance and built the apse in 1865. However, with Jeffery's financial situation, the Hal was auctioned off but only the effects were sold at the time. The building stood empty still under Jeffery's name till 1877 when it was purchased by Frederick Richards Leyland Esq.



FREDERICK RICHARDS LEYLAND ESQ



Frederick Richards Leyland was born in 1831. He was noted as one of the largest British shipowners, running 25 steamships in the transatlantic trade. He was also a major art collector, who commissioned works from several of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood painters.

Leyland served as an apprentice in the firm of John Bibby, Sons & Co, where he rose to become a partner. In 1867, he took on the tenancy of Speke Hall, Liverpool, and in 1869 bought a house in London at 49 Princes Gate. At the end of 1872, when the Bibby partnership dissolved, he bought out his employers and changed the company name to the Leyland Line in 1873. Under his direction the line expanded into transatlantic trade and by 1882 had 25 steamships. He retired from active business in 1888, leaving his son Frederick Dawson Leyland in charge.

Frederick was married in 1855 to Frances Dawson and in 1861 found them living at 104 Huskisson Street.

Leyland and his family lived at Speke Hall as 'guardians' for Adelaide Watt who had inherited the Hall when her father died. In 1867 Frederick leased Speke Hall for a while.

In 1877, Frederick Richards Leyland purchased Woolton Hall. However, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what time he spent there. He was known to have had several mistresses and several illegitimate children. However, work continued at Woolton Hall for his requirements. The front lawn was raised, the garden and estate walls rebuilt, and new entrance gates were constructed. Woodleigh (now in the central reservation of High Street) was the former lodge to the Hall near the ornamental gates on the main drive. It was built before 1846 with a low-pitched roof – facing High Street.

The upper story was added by Leyland with a high-pitched roof and the gate piers and wrought iron gates were re-sited from beside the lodge when High Street acquired a second carriageway and trams in 1925.

Frederick passed away in London in 1892 and was buried in Brompton Cemetery in an elaborate tomb.

From his death there was a gap of ownership of Woolton Hall for 6 years.



PETER MCGUFFIE



There was a gap 'in service' for Woolton Hall until it was sold to Peter McGuffie in 1898. If we are to look at the census records, we can see that he was born in 1851 and by 1901 he was a ship owner aged 50. His wife, Annie, three sons (James, Andrew and John Frederick) and daughter Jeanie were all living at Woolton Hall at this time.

McGuffie had been a Conservative Liverpool City Councillor for Warbreck ward for nine years but chose to retire and move across to Woolton. In short, he saw Woolton Hall as a fantastic opportunity to expand the property and open the Hall as a Hydropathic establishment. In layman's terms, this would have been a fashionable 'treatment' business.

The building was then known as Woolton Hall Hydro and as McGuffie thought that Woolton Hall was slightly too small for his business requirements, he extended across to the wing on the left-hand side of the property as seen on the left.

Woolton Hall Hydro was opened for business in 1899, and it was stated that the dining room could seat 300 guests! Peter McGuffie died in 1911, and his probate records amounted to £14,225. He was listed as a 'Gentleman'. If we are to review the 1911 census, it shows his widow still living at Woolton Hall with her daughter, Jean and her son Andrew (now aged 30). Andrew McGuffie was then listed as the Proprietor of Woolton Hall Hydro.

There is no direct evidence that James McGuffie became involved in the hotel business, although listed in the census he was listed as living at Woolton Hall. Whatever family was in charge at the time, they had done sterling work to remodel Woolton Hall into the Hydro. There had been a further renovation of the Hall in 1913. It is listed as showing Sidney Herbert Pinnian as the manager.

Described as Woolton Hall Hydro, it was listed as 'extensive gardens and woodlands, tennis courts, a croquet lawn, greenhouses, a motor garage, and a 9-hole golf course!'

Andrew McGuffie himself wanted to sell the hotel enterprise since hydropathic establishments had gone out of fashion and it may be that the Woolton Hall experiment was never a true success. The Hall, at the time, had just 40 acres attached to it rather than the 400 acres that Richard Molyneux originally purchased in 1704.

To this day, the land that Woolton Hall has been encroached on additional neighbours, reducing its size even further.

WOOLTON HALL AUXILIARY HOSPITAL



With the outbreak of World War 1, in 1914, Woolton Hall was offered for use as an auxiliary hospital. However, it is somewhat unclear who exactly offered the use of Woolton Hall at this time.

Mr Holbrook Gaskell offered his house, Woolton Woods, which became a nurse's home. Camp Hill became a 60-bed auxiliary hospital, Woolton Convalescent Hospital became a 100-bed hospital, and Woolton Hall served as a significant military auxiliary hospital.

It cost £10,000 to re-equip the property which became a 200-bed hospital from 21st September 1914 until June 1919. Dr Charles Vereker was the medical officer in charge.

Altogether 2,963 patients passed through the hospital. It would be expected that local people would have assisted this building by working in the kitchens and attending to laundry.

Who actually owned Woolton Hall is a bit of a mystery at the time. Captain Peter McGuffie, the oldest of the three surviving brothers gave Woolton Hall as his address in 1920 when applying for his war medals. Land was sold during the 1920's and the new Liverpool Tramway was built cutting through the northern boundary of the hall estate to Woolton Street in 1925.

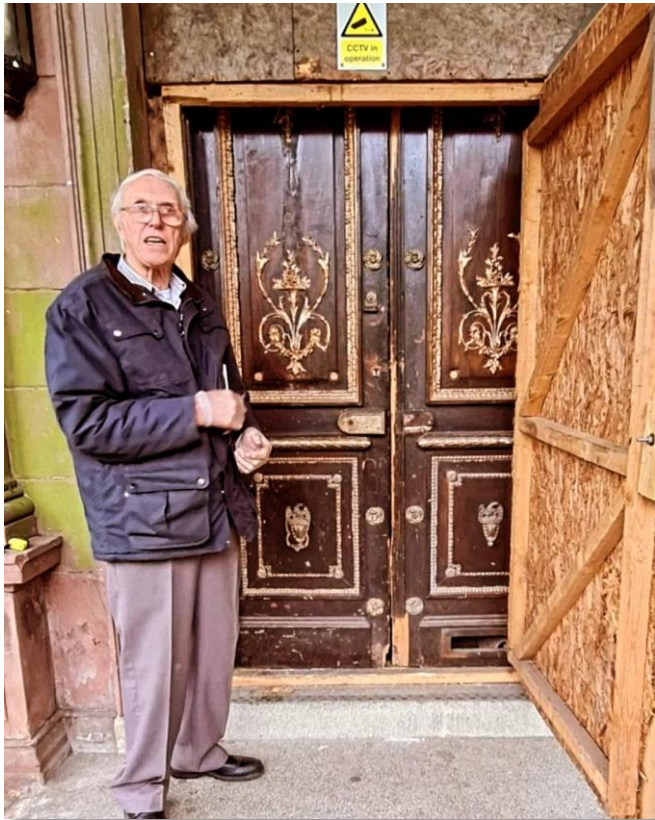
When war began in 1939, Woolton Hall was requisitioned by the Government and became a headquarters for the Middlesex regiment. This was because the regiment was equipped with machine guns and deployed to defend airports – including that of Speke.

Many men slept under canvas in the grounds of the Hall.

During the latter stages of the war, the United States Air Force had use of the building too.



JOHN HIBBERT



After the war, Woolton Hall was used by the Sisters of Notre Dame for a short while. In 1970, the school merged with Notre Dame High School and as the new school next door was built up, Woolton Hall was once again without an owner.

Local businessman, John Hibbert saw an opportunity with Woolton Hall. It was earmarked for demolition in the 1980's until John came along, purchased the Hall and set about a restoration process on this fine structure.

He spent £100,000 in changing some of the layout of the rooms upstairs with some additional doors, some rooms were changed in their layout and Woolton Hall would once again be the place to go for a birthday, a wedding afternoon or local celebrations. Many people can still recall being a guest at a party at Woolton Hall and it was thanks to John that this Hall was saved from demolition.

It was soon after ownership that Woolton Hall was given Grade I listed status, and this has protected the building ever since.

John decided to sell the Hall on to the next owner in 1985, but he became known as the caretaker and still visited the Hall whenever he could. He would still provide guided tours to local people and groups of interest and give a full detailed description of the history of the Hall, his time there and the unique points in Woolton Hall such as the Robert Adam designed ceilings.

It was sad to hear that in 2024, John Hibbert passed away. RIP John Hibbert.

The new owners decided that Woolton Hall would serve as a retirement home and plans were put in place to have an extension on the property and cater for a number of residents living there with full en-suite facilities and everything needed for a retirement home. However, this did not proceed even when there was a planning application in for 62 other retirement flats on the grounds.

In 2021, the building was added to Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk Register' as a Category A site, the highest priority, meaning that the building is at 'immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric'.

We can only hope that there is a future for Woolton Hall.

PAINTINGS IN THE HALL

Before the urban explorers got in and trashed Woolton Hall constantly, there were a number of paintings on the walls in the Tapestry Room and the Dance Hall. Thankfully these were replicas, and I thought it good to include these items as part of the fixtures and fittings of the history of Woolton Hall.



Officers of the St. George Civic Guard, Haarlem – Frans Hals



Banquet of the officers of the Calivermen Civic Guard, Haarlem – Frans Hals



Canterbury Pilgrims – William Blake



Twelfth night – David Teniers the Younger



Revelry at an Inn – Jan Steen



The Peasant Wedding – Pieter Bruegel the Elder



A School for Boys and Girls – Jan Steen



Lady Mary Molyneux – Jacob Huysmans



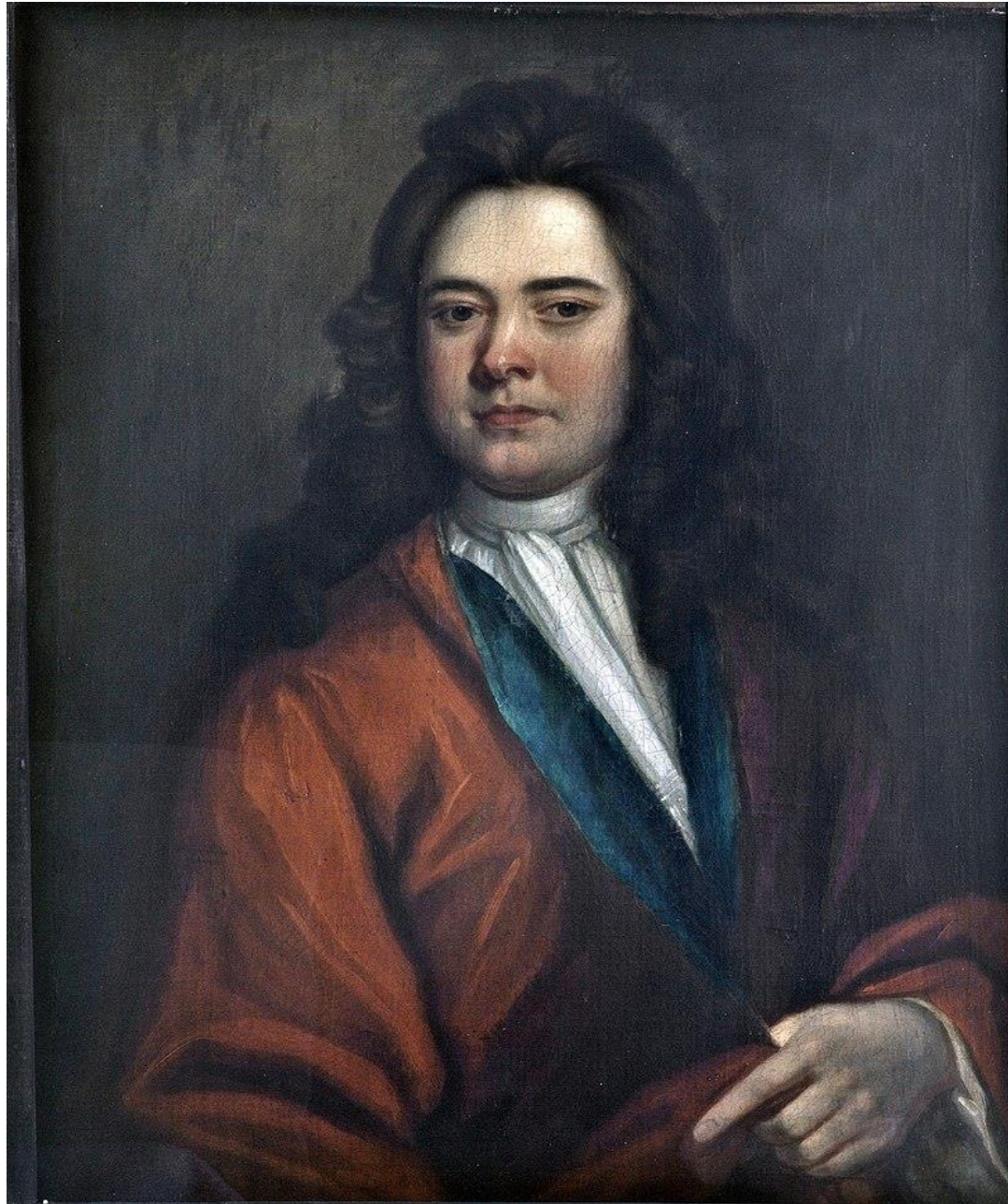
A man of the Molyneux family, possibly 4th Viscount Molyneux – Unknown Artist



Mrs John Ashton – Joseph Wright of Derby



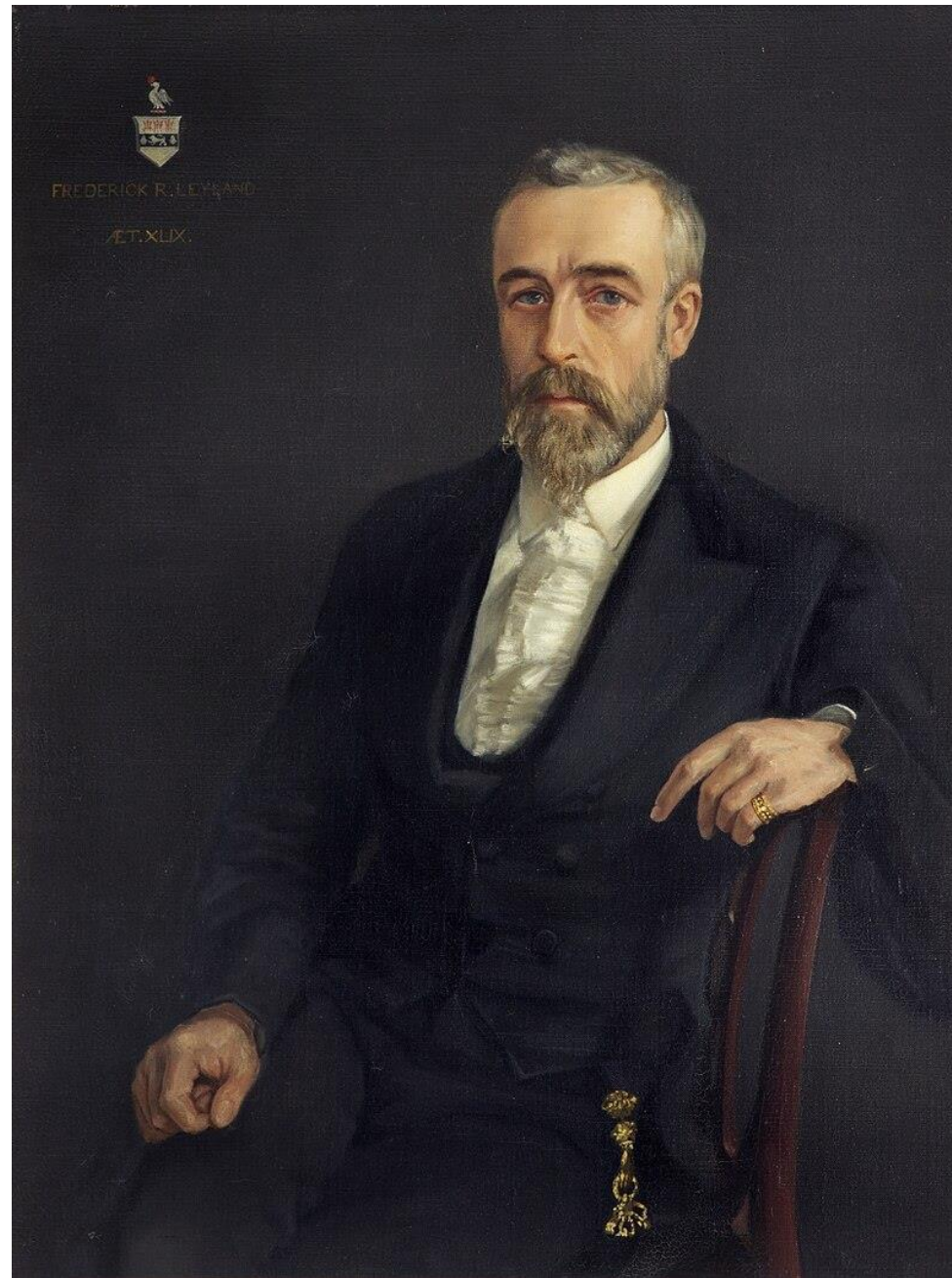
Sir Richard Molyneux, 1st Baronet – Unknown Artist



A man of the Molyneux family – Unknown Artist



Mary Molyneux – Unknown Artist



Frederick Leyland – Rosa Corder (1853–1893)



Architect, Robert Adam



Queen Ann



King George III

ROBERT ADAM

Whenever Woolton Hall is described, it never fails to amaze me on the weight of the following quotation: Built in 1704 and extensively renovated in 1772 by the influential architect Robert Adam, **the building is praised as the finest example of Adam's work in the North of England.**

Therefore how important is Woolton Hall? Not just as a historic building in Liverpool. Not just as a 300-year-old building. Not just as a Grade 1 listed structure. But this building was praised as the **finest example** of Adam's work in the North of England. Let that sink in for a moment.

Robert Adam FRSE FRS FSAScot FSA FRSA (3 July 1728 – 3 March 1792) was a British neoclassical architect, interior designer and furniture designer. He was the son of William Adam (1689–1748), Scotland's foremost architect of the time, and trained under him. With his older brother John, Robert took on the family business, which included lucrative work for the Board of Ordnance, after William's death.

In 1754, he left for Rome, spending nearly five years on the continent studying architecture under Charles-Louis Clérisseau and Giovanni Battista Piranesi. On his return to Britain he established a practice in London, where he was joined by his younger brother James. Here he developed the "Adam Style", and his theory of "movement" in architecture, based on his studies of antiquity and became one of the most successful and fashionable architects in the country. Adam held the post of Architect of the King's Works from 1761 to 1769.

Robert Adam was a leader of the first phase of the classical revival in England and Scotland from around 1760 until his death. He influenced the development of Western architecture, both in Europe and in North America. Adam designed interiors and fittings as well as houses. Much of his work consisted of remodelling existing houses, as well as contributions to Edinburgh's townscape and designing romantic pseudo-mediaeval country houses in Scotland.

His obituary appeared in the March 1792 edition of The Gentleman's Magazine:

It is somewhat remarkable that the Arts should be deprived at the same time of two of their greatest ornaments, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr Adam: and it is difficult to say which of them excelled most in his particular profession... Mr Adam produced a total change in the architecture of this country: and his fertile genius in elegant ornament was not confined to the decoration of buildings but has been diffused to every branch of manufacture. His talents extend beyond the lie of his own profession: he displayed in his numerous drawings in landscape a luxuriance of composition, and an effect of light and shadow, which have scarcely been equalled...to the last period of his life, Mr Adam displayed an increasing vigour of genius and refinement of taste: for in the space of one year preceding his death, he designed eight great public works, besides twenty five private buildings, so various in their style, and so beautiful in their composition, that they have been allowed by the best judges, sufficient of themselves, to establish his fame unrivalled as an artist.

Robert Adam didn't just have Woolton Hall to his name, some of the public buildings that he worked on are, Fort George, Scotland. The Argyll Arms, Inveraray. Royal Exchange, Edinburgh, with his brother John Adam (1753–54). Screen in front of the Old Admiralty, Whitehall, London (1760). Kedleston Hotel, Quarndon. Courts of Justice and Corn Market, Hertford, Hertfordshire, now Shire Hall (1768). Pulteney Bridge, Bath (1770). Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (1772). Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, remodelled, (1775). Drummonds Bank, Charing Cross, London. Glasgow Royal Infirmary (1791–94). Coutts Bank enclosed bridge, John Adam Street (1799).

But he didn't stop there and there are a further list of Churches, Mausoleums and urban domestic work to his name also.

Robert Adam also had a long list of Country Houses with major work and again these are just some of his works: Dumfries House, Ayrshire. Hatchlands Park, Surrey. Douglas Castle, Lanarkshire. Harewood House, West Yorkshire. Osterley Park, west London. Syon House interior, Brentford. Newby Hall, Newby Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire. Seton Castle, East Lothian. The list goes on and on.

Robert Adam had a noted style which could be recognised straight away. His influence on buildings was substantial and he was the 'go to' architect for when a grand design was needed to be remodelled or changed for the new owner. Every design that he produced was reflected in many architectural notes and books of the time and his work is still greatly admired to this day. Not only that, but when buildings have been demolished, parts of the Robert Adam designed structure have made their way into museums such is his work noted.

He left nearly 9,000 drawings, 8,856 of which (by both Robert and James Adam) were subsequently purchased in 1833 for £200 by the architect John Soane and are now at the Soane Museum in London. There are countless books written about Robert Adam and if one is lucky enough to own a Robert Adam designed structure, then the price reflects the fantastic work that Robert Adam completed.

So, imagine having a 300-year-old Grade 1 listed building in Liverpool in which Robert Adam's noted work could be seen on a number of ceilings? And that building is currently in managed decline, letting in water, rotting the ceilings away slowly and filling the Hall with extensive damp? Therefore welcome to Woolton Hall!

Perhaps Robert Adam's work needs to be shown from buildings around the UK below, before we move on to Woolton Hall itself.









Having seen the splendour of Robert Adam designed rooms around the UK, let us now turn our attention to Woolton Hall. It is very rare to find any Robert Adam designed works in Liverpool. (Even I struggle to think of another building in Liverpool with his work). But what is more frustrating is that the Robert Adam work in Woolton Hall is simply rotting away. Perhaps in all honesty, the present owner does not realise the importance of the ceilings in Woolton Hall?

When Robert Adam remodelled Woolton Hall, it was said that his works included: The entrance porch, the Octagon Room, the principle staircase and the entrance carriageway. However, when you explore the buildings rooms, you can see that there is more work by Robert Adam that don't appear to be noted in the original write up. These include the ceiling of the Parlour Room, the ceiling of the 1st floor front room (the former Mrs Ashton's room) and both I and Janet P Gnosspelius believe that the flat ceiling in the main 'Hall' is a false ceiling hiding the original Robert Adam ceiling in the void above!



This is the (now) Parlour Room on the left-hand side off the entrance chamber. At first glance because of the peeling of the paintwork, it is often overlooked but this is a very simple, yet stunning ceiling designed that is classic Robert Adam. How are we leaving this to flake away and fall down piece by piece (please note that this ceiling is now in far worse condition than this photograph).



We do know that the entrance chamber was remodelled by Robert Adam and yet changes over the years have lost the design.

However, how would this have looked when you walked in the entrance chamber?

I would like to think that the entrance chamber would have looked something like this – a very grand welcoming area to showcase off the rest of the Hall!



This is the noted Octagon Room – designed by Robert Adam. It beggars belief that this room is partly trashed. The Robert Adam painting has been removed from the wall, there is extensive damp in the ceiling (see above) and yet this is one of Robert Adam’s grand designs for Woolton Hall.

How have we let Woolton Hall get to this stage where we have rotting Robert Adam ceilings falling apart? 300 years’ worth of history – a Grade 1 listed structure and this is what we are now looking at.

Who has let this happen? The owners? Liverpool City Council? Who has failed to stop these ceilings become worse? Are we to just wait until these ceilings fall down?





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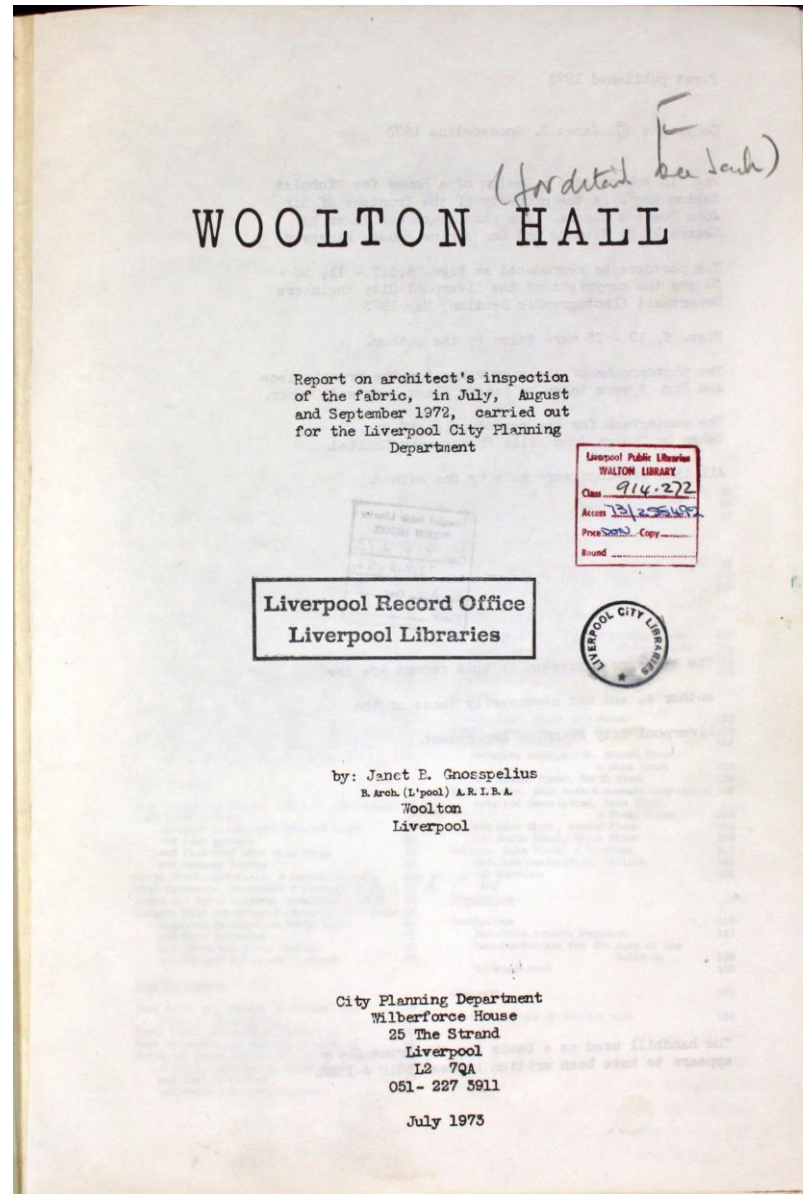
This is the Robert Adam ceiling in the 1st floor room overlooking the main entrance. Formerly Mrs Ashton's Room. The ceiling is now rotten and full of damp. This didn't happen overnight (see above picture). Who is checking up on our heritage? Or do the powers that be not realise that this is a noted Robert Adam ceiling and think that it was put up in the 1980's? Who has let this slip? Why has this not been part of an urgent works notice as soon as damp was spotted?

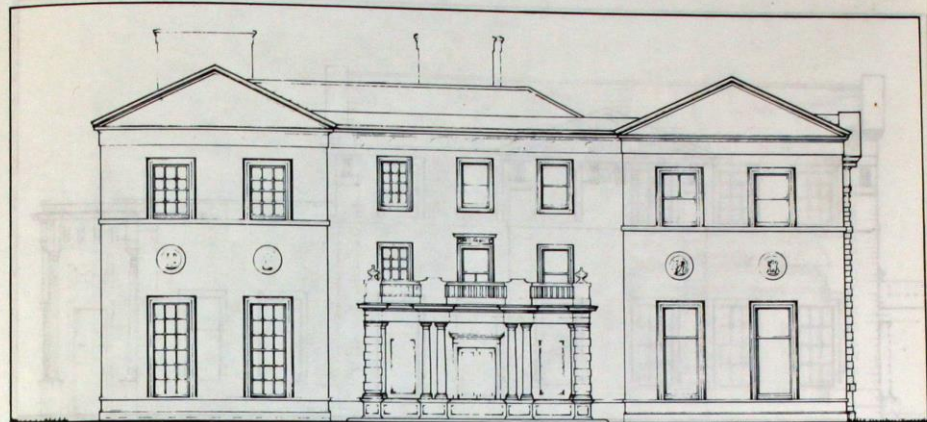


Woolton Hall has been remodelled over the years and the Principal staircase has changed somewhat in to the last 1980's design. However as this was a noted feature of the building, perhaps Woolton Hall would have looked like the image on the right? A Robert Adam designed stairwell in a private house. Can we not see how elaborate this building was/is and finally serve it some protection?

THE FLOORPLANS

When Janet P Gnosselius wrote her 1972 architects report on the building, she included floorplans that gave incredible information on the history of the building. The greatest point to the building being older than 1704 is that she has identified walls that pre-date 1704. And I therefore believe that Woolton Hall was partially built using walls from the older 'cottage'. We are therefore dealing with not just a 1704 building, but a structure that pre-dates 1704! We are possibly looking into the fact that parts of Woolton Hall date from the 1500's – possibly older than Speke Hall!





Carriage Front (East Elevation) — 1774-80

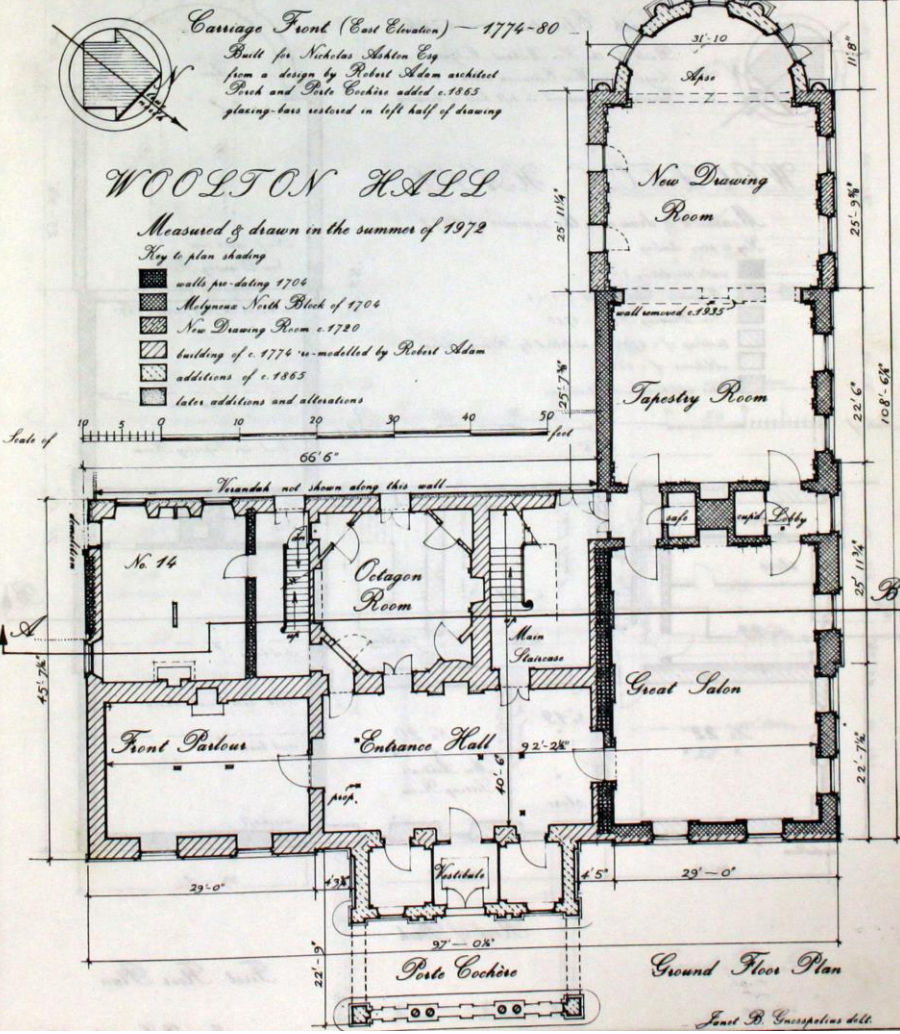
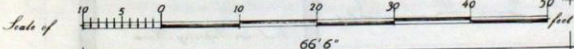
*Built for Nicholas Ashton Esq
 from a design by Robert Adam architect
 Peck and Pele Cochere added c.1865
 glassing-bars restored in left half of drawing*

WOOLTON HALL

Measured & drawn in the summer of 1972

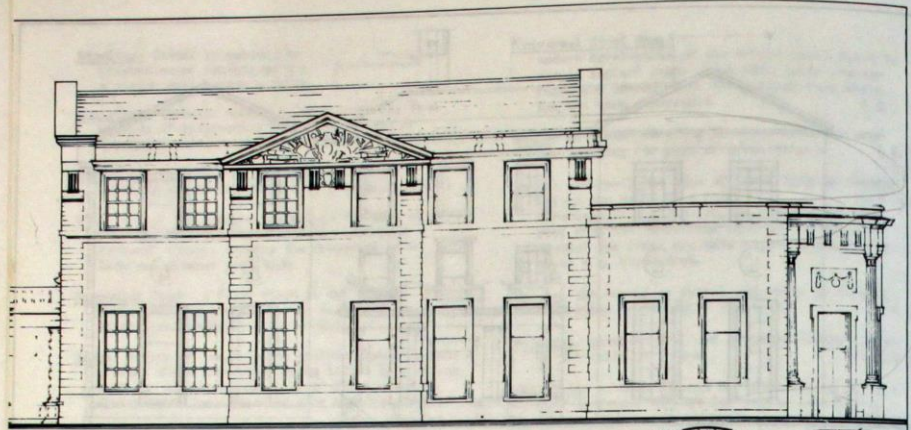
Key to plan shading

- walls pre-dating 1706
- Molyneux North Block of 1706
- New Drawing Room c.1720
- building of c.1774 '80—modelled by Robert Adam
- additions of c.1865
- later additions and alterations



Ground Floor Plan

Just B. Carpentier del.



North Elevation — 1704

Built for the Hon Richard Molyneux
Single story West Extension added c. 1720
Glassing-bars restored in left half of drawing

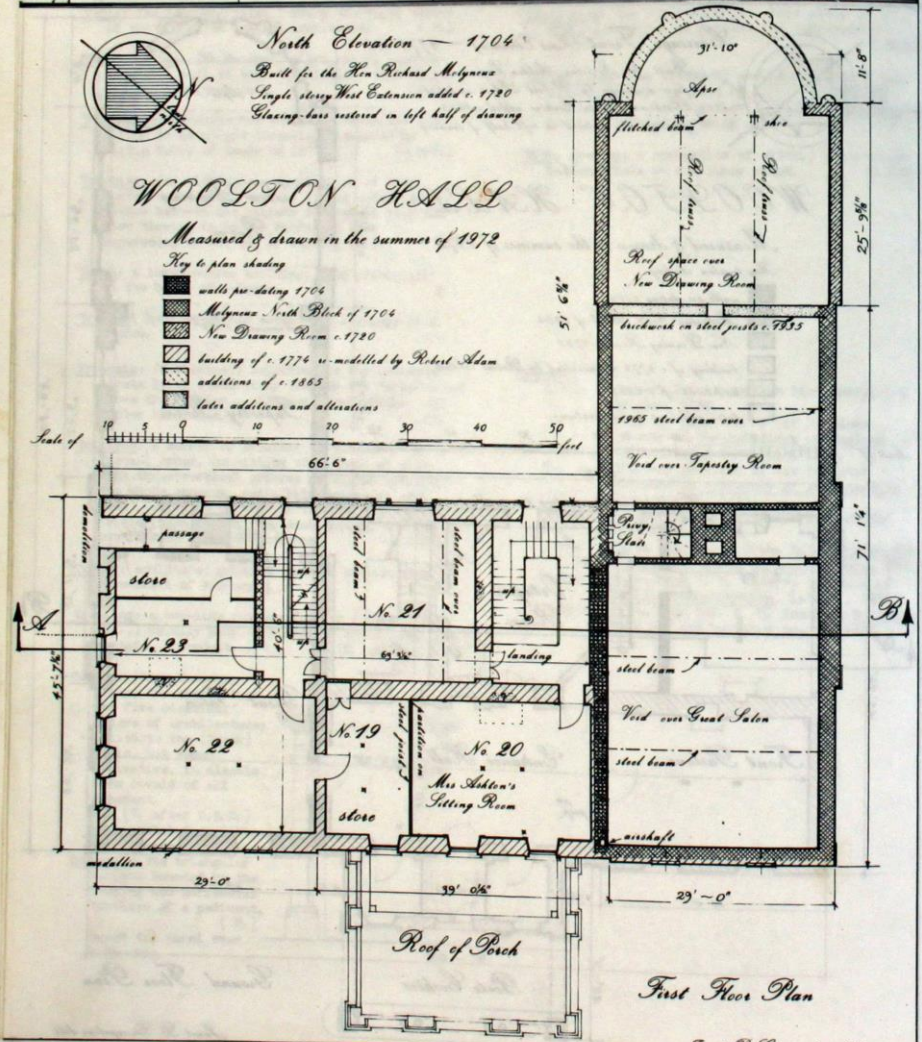
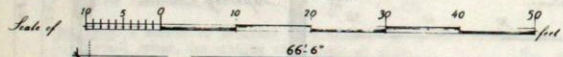


WOOLSTON HALL

Measured & drawn in the summer of 1972

Key to plan shading

- walls pre-dating 1704
- Molyneux North Block of 1704
- New Drawing Room c. 1720
- building of c. 1774 re-modelled by Robert Adam
- additions of c. 1865
- later additions and alterations



First Floor Plan

Janet B. Gussopkins del.



Longitudinal Section A-B

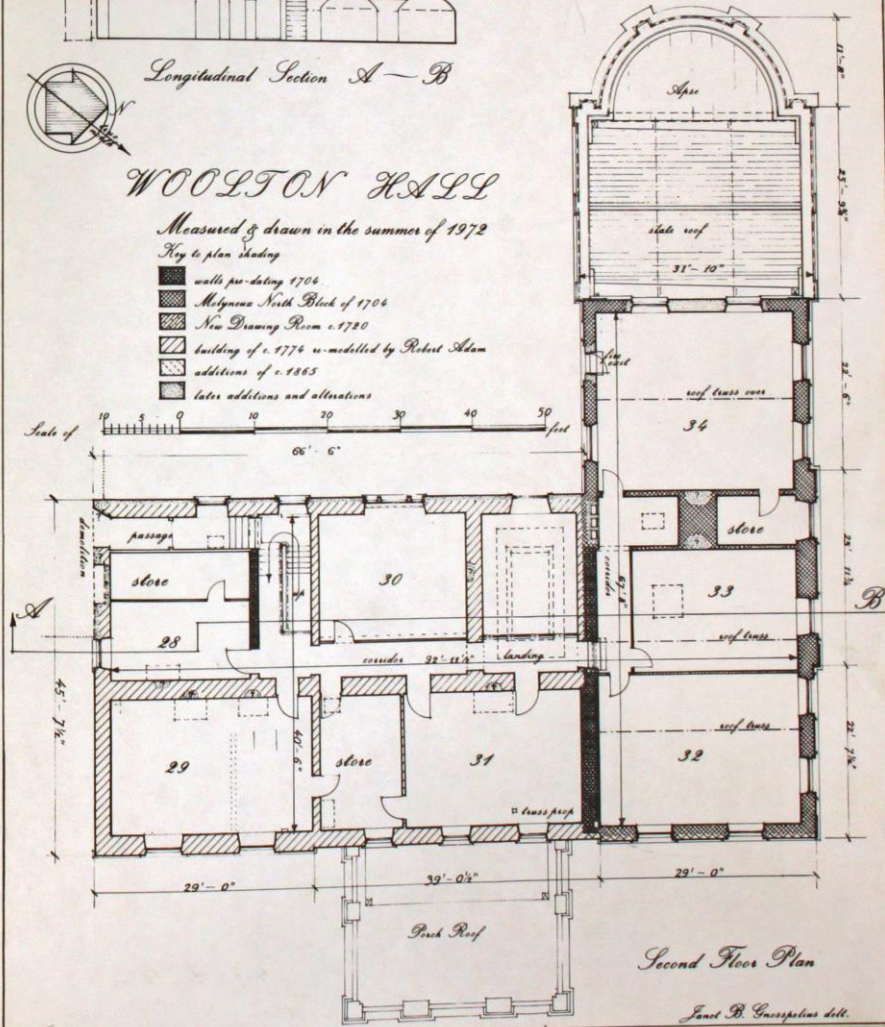


WOOLTON HALL

Measured & drawn in the summer of 1972

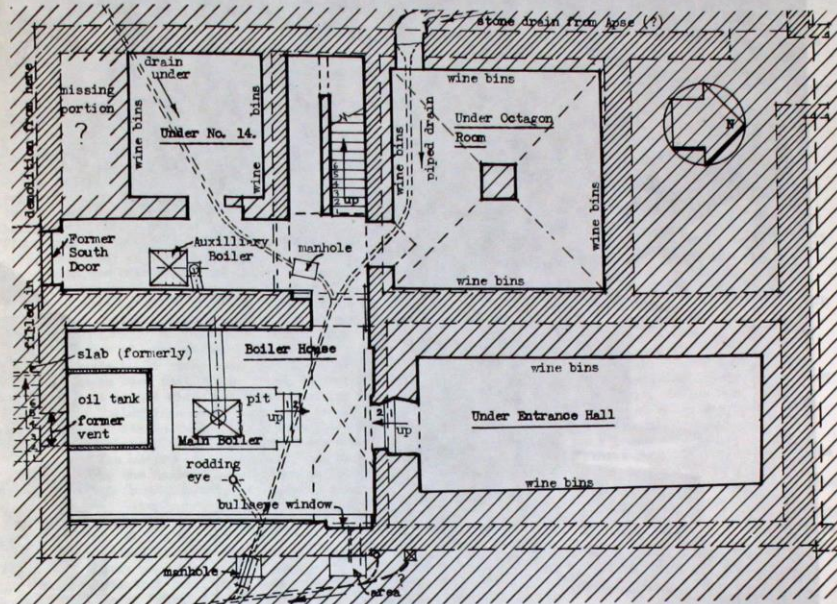
Key to plan shading

- walls pre-dating 1704
- Molyneux North Block of 1704
- New Drawing Room c.1720
- building of c.1776 re-modelled by Robert Adam
- additions of c.1865
- later additions and alterations



Second Floor Plan

Janet B. Crossington del.



MAIN BLOCK: CELLARS:

Stairs: (now the only access to the cellars) a bare 5 ft. wide with square cut York stone steps built in to brickwork on both sides, steps a good deal worn, "ceiling" the splayed undersides of steps over. "Lobby" a space at foot of stair about 6'11" square, is now covered with what seems to be a 6" thick (approximately) reinforced (?) concrete slab which was cast on corrugated sheet shuttering, to give 6'10" headroom (for many heating pipes)

Beside Stairs: brick vaulted tunnel 5'4" wide, showing rock about 9" high on S. side with stone wall above in squared stones hammer dressed to the springing of the segmental vault at 4'6" on S. crown at 6'1"; floor rises 2" into tunnel and is covered with cement screed; wall supporting stair is 9" brick; space at W. end of tunnel under stairs is vaulted and the opening spanned with a 9" wide oak beam; W. wall squared stone.

Passage to (former) S. Door: (partly under No. 14) a brick vaulted tunnel 6'0" wide leading to former 4'6" wide door opening at foot of external steps sealed in 1972 with brickwork before filling in steps (and former cellars of demolished S. wing) for adjacent new building. The brick vault to this passage is now incomplete with a 4'0" gap down the middle over which the present floor of No. 14 is carried on joists with some lath and plaster ceiling. Wall to W. rock at bottom foot, squared stone for about 3'6", topped with brick, on E. possibly rock at bottom, stone for about 5'6", springing of vault 5'3" on E. 5'6" on W., about 6'2" headroom now; 14" wide semi-elliptical brick arch at N. end at junction with lobby of stairs. Gas fired boiler situated in this passage (fitted for auxiliary heating of Woolton Hall in the 1960s, has its flue apparently taken into the flue from the fireplace of No. 14 over.

Under No. 14: (part of) wide segmental brick vault about 4'1" to springing, 6'4 1/2" to crown, W. wall part rock, part stone (rock inadequate here?) and rock reappears at S.E. corner and door jamb, other walls squared stone; doorway 4'6" wide off centre with main vault and has 5'8" to springing of its own segmental arch, brick infill panel on N. to reduce door to 5 ft. wide. (Fitted with brick and

dressed stone slab wine bins.)

Missing Portion: from the plan we observe that a portion of cellar at the S.W. corner is "missing", there is no clue now to access to this, but it does not seem that there was any access from inside the present cellars; whether it was indeed excavated cellar is not certain though it seems likely.

Under Octagon Room: square space 18'6" N. to S. x 19'9", with central brick pier 3 ft. square with segmental brick vault on all sides groined at corners, 3'9" at springing, 6'2 1/2" at crown, the lower 1'6" to 2'0" of the walls to W. S. and E. is rock with squared stone above, and the whole of the N. wall is square stone; in the W. wall at the S. end is access through the wall to a stone drain. (Outer walls fitted with wine bins.)

Under Entrance Hall: rectangular space 11'3" (average) x 30'0" (gives an impression that it could be older than the rest of the cellars, it is not so square cut,) the floor is about 10" lower than the other floors and also screeded, with 2 worn stone steps down; roofed with semi-elliptical brick vault springing about 5'6", crown 6'10", separate vault for doorway in a wall about 4 ft. thick; walls all cut in rock, slight signs of damp at N. end, distinct signs of damp along E. wall, floor has a poor patch between 1 and 2 yards from S. end. (Fitted with wine bins.) A wooden prop has been inserted under the brick vaulting, apparently to give additional support under a prop for the first and second floors above.

Under Front Parlour: (Boiler House) rectangular space 28'6" approximately N. to S. x 16 ft., roofed with a massive and wide semi-elliptical vault, with a cross vault from the lobby at the foot of the stairs, and to the bullseye opening opposite in the E. wall. Wall to W. cut in rock from 6" to 15", on S. from 15" to 2 ft., E. wall now is all brick lined with an inner 4 1/2" skin of brick to about 2 ft.; springing of vault about 21" on W. on squared stone wall, apparently similar on E. but masked by lining; crown of vault 6'2". Bullseye window (now sealed with brickwork of two ages) to area to E. (N. end of S. Break of Carriage Front) whose floor now cuts off lower half of Bullseye (hence a reconstruction?). At S. end of this cellar there was a rectangular opening some

THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE WOOLTON HALL

My name is Jonathon Wild. I am a local historian in Liverpool and have been fortunate to have seen lots of interesting parts of Liverpool not generally seen by the public. A Church bellringer for the last 30 years, I have climbed nearly every church tower in Liverpool, been the Tower Captain of All Saints Church in Childwall for a number of years, and also former Steeple Keeper at St Francis Xavier's church in Everton.

I have rang the bells at Liverpool Cathedral (the highest and heaviest peal of bells in the world) and had the opportunity to ring on the bells at the former Liverpool City Council Offices at the Municipal Buildings. Further to this, I have been a past tour guide at the Williamson's Tunnels and been fortunate to have accessed all parts of the 'Joseph Williamson' Tunnels in Edge Hill including the long lost 'Triple Decker Tunnel'. I have been up to the top of St Luke's Bombed Out Church to see the world's first all metal bell frame, cast in 1828 by George Gillebrand.

As a historian, I have written a number of websites/documents on the history of some of our fantastic buildings in Liverpool, including St Luke's Bombed Out Church, India Buildings, 30 James Street (former White Star Line HQ) and completed a 100 page write up of the complete history of the former St Peter's R.C Church in Seel Street (constructed in 1788).

Further to this, I have managed a number of campaigns on abandoned buildings in Liverpool. One of them is the Grade 2 listed Sandfield Tower set in Queens Drive, West Derby. I have dedicated twenty-five years to this campaign from when I first set eyes on the building. I have constructed a website (www.sandfieldtower.co.uk), written a book (PDF available upon request) on the history and yet watched the disgraceful 'managed decline' of this building from that of a 'the building had separate rooms' to that of a structure which is little more than a folly once the main roof crashed in and took the entire interior out. I continue to campaign on this building to this day.

However, it is perhaps my campaign on Eddebury which gave the most pleasing results. Eddebury is the former Margaret Beaven school in West Derby. A Grade 2 listed building, designed in 1884 by James Francis Doyle (30 James Street/St Barnabas Church/Former Royal Insurance building). I researched heavily into the building's history. Again, I designed a website, I wrote a PDF booklet on the history of the building and was determined to push in to everyone's lap. By chance, there was a developer who had caught the eye of the building but didn't know anything more about it. A quick google later and he was introduced to my complete history on the building, floor plans, interior and exterior images and the background on the building. He called me out of the blue and asked me to work with him (for free) to enable this building not only to get to the planning application stage, but to the point where planning was approved and that they could restore this fire damaged building to its former glory.

I'm happy to say that work has now started on restoring this grand Grade 2 structure and that this building will live for another couple of hundred years, fully restored and future proofed. The developer showed me the incredible work he had to do to gain planning approval. Lidar scans for each room (3D mapping), extensive photographs of every angle, measurements etc – but lots of this was helped by original pictures I had sourced to show what the original layout of the building looked like.

While a Historian and a Developer rarely go hand in hand, the choice was simple. Leave the building to rot and eventually fall down or accept that it will never be a private mansion again, but that the developer is prepared to restore it to its former glory into grand apartments, with lots of the original features still in place.

That has my vote.

So we come to Woolton Hall. And this is a complicated issue – but in some respects a very straightforward case surrounded by complete mystery. For those who are not aware of the background to Woolton Hall, the building is privately owned by two people. It is not a public building and therefore it is more difficult when it is privately owned – with lots of legal issues. However, let me start the explanation over this campaign.

I am not here to name names of who owns Woolton Hall. Anyone can do a quick Google and find out their names and company details. Neither have I contacted the owner directly. Nor have I ever personally blamed the owners for what I can only see as the managed decline of Woolton Hall. Why? Because a building that I am campaigning on should only be directed towards the building, and not get personal. For all I know, the owners could be in poor health. They may have no money. They may have even passed away (in the case of Edesbury – this was the case for a while!).

We know that in the past, there was a planning application that went in to turn Woolton Hall in to a retirement home. For whatever reason, this did not get off the ground. The owners blamed the City Council, the City Council pointed the finger at the owners and the last Echo article became a little heated.

Having worked with the City Council in the early stages of Sandfield Tower, I saw a document in November 2019 in which they were looking to compulsory purchase the building. They had gone in previously and completed urgent works notices and then billed the owner, getting as far as recovering costs in court. So, it is very easy to stick your hand up and blame Liverpool City Council for the mess that Woolton Hall is in. It is also very easy to blame the owner in a clear-cut case. Owner is doing nothing to stop the rot at Woolton Hall. Let's blame him. However, like I have said above, the owner could be in difficulty with money, be ill or actually be embarrassed that he needs help moving forward with Woolton Hall and doesn't know where to turn to.

So, the questions have to be asked. Is Woolton Hall insured for building and contents insurance? I don't think it is based on the fact that the insurance company could google Woolton Hall and see the constant break-ins and therefore stop the insurance believing that the owner isn't securing the property correctly. Therefore we have to assume that Woolton Hall is not insured. Therefore what is the other gain? Well, Woolton Hall sits on a grand patch of land in Woolton Village. Should the hall burn down in a fire and the structure become too unstable, the lot would have to be demolished and therefore the owner is then left with land with no listed building on top. Would that be more of a clear-cut case in which he can sell the land and sail off into the sunset? I am not suggesting that the owner has ever thought about either option or wishes for either option to take place – I am merely suggesting that there are two outcomes for legal purposes.

We all know of the stance of Historic England and their guidelines for listed buildings that are 'abandoned' (with or without an owner). But each time I have spoken to Historic England over previous listed buildings, they have carefully advised me that the power lays with the local authority. In this case, Liverpool City Council.

I could write a book on various past contacts at Liverpool City Council. In a past e-mail to Liverpool City Council I was told "In response to your enquiry received on 4 July 2022, we would like to reiterate our previous response and advise that Liverpool City Council do not have any funds available to maintain privately owned properties. You should forward any concerns about listed building to Historic England."

When I contacted Liverpool City Council about the constant break-ins over Woolton Hall, I was told, by a past member that "constantly e-mailing Liverpool City Council over separate break-ins at Woolton Hall....that we will monitor any future e-mail's from you but if they are on the same subject, we may choose to ignore them'!!

I have good contacts at Save Britain's Heritage and Historic England. I also have a new contact at Liverpool City Council who is aware of my no-nonsense approach to abandoned buildings. So let us see what options we have for Woolton Hall moving forward.

In a past e-mail to Historic England, I was advised on the following:

“Thank you for your email making us aware of the recent disappointing situation at Woolton Hall. This was passed on to me – please accept my apologies for the delay in responding due to annual leave. I have been in touch with Liverpool Council to ask for an update. As noted in the emails you quote below, local authorities can use enforcement action to improve the condition of vacant listed buildings, for example service of an Urgent Works Notice or Repairs Notice. Historic England runs a grant scheme for local authorities to underwrite up to 80% of the cost of serving these notices. I have suggested to the Council that this is something they may wish to consider. I know they were quite recently in dialogue with the owner, and it had appeared that negotiations were taking a more positive turn, as well as there having been interest in the building which was on the market. The recent break-in you have highlighted shows that unfortunately things hadn’t improved as much as was hoped.”

Therefore, if Historic England are providing grants to underwrite up to 80 of the cost of serving an urgent works notice, why have multiple urgent works notices not been served by Liverpool City Council? I may be told that they have – but I don’t believe this given the terrible state of Woolton Hall. I have multiple internal and external images throughout the last twenty years showing what I would class as ‘managed decline’. There have been numerous break-ins at Woolton Hall where the owner has failed to secure the building properly. There are rooms with missing window frames, there have been times where the front door of Woolton Hall has been left open overnight after being broken in to. Local campaigners such as I are constantly e-mailing Liverpool City Council to highlight this.

So in a direct response to Liverpool City Council. Why is Woolton Hall in such a poor condition now? Not just a dusty grand hall that may need a lick of paint, but serious water ingress. Mould appearing on doors/walls. Plasterwork falling off in each room. Ceilings collapsing. Why have you not tasked the owner with making the building watertight? If you have, can you provide evidence on this via Urgent Works Notices?

In a direct response to the owner. What is the issue? Is it a lack of money to start basic restoration? Here’s an idea. Go around the property and understand what rooms are safe to walk in to. Construct a ‘one way’ tour map of the interior of Woolton Hall and charge the public £10 per visit into the property. So they can go in at their leisure and spend an hour inside Woolton Hall in which they can take video, photographs at their leisure, and marvel over the beauty. The money goes towards the basic security of the building – remember when 30 James Street first opened. There was a queue halfway around town to see the ground floor.

Again, if the owner reads this, why cannot they have an open day where local people give up their time to cut back the overgrowth in the grounds, even if we are not allowed to into the Hall? If the Hall is ‘up for sale’ then I’m sure many people would like to give the external grounds a good going over so at least the external grounds are in good order. Why not let us do this?

What is the answer?

The answer is that both Liverpool City Council and the owner NEED to understand the full history of this building via this document. They need to understand that this is a **GRADE ONE 300-year-old building**, built a year after the start of Buckingham Palace. That this building has just as much history – if not more – than Speke Hall. That a Grade ONE listed building is in the same category as Liverpool Cathedral. They need to understand that this building was described as the **“finest example of Adam's work in the North of England.”**

I therefore ask Liverpool City Council the following.

- When was the last time they inspected the property with a surveyor? Was the last visit just to go in and take some photos and take a look around the place or was this to see the further managed decline of the property.
- Based on the outcome of these images, what Urgent Works Notices have been served? What is the biggest impact that can be served for the Hall? Is it locking the building down completely so that no one can get in? Is it stopping leaks from the roof? What is the City Council's greatest concern?
- Can the City Council provide a clear timeline on past Urgent Works Notices? Have they been followed up? Have the work been done correctly?
- What is the next step? Will Liverpool City Council consider a Compulsory Purchase Order on the building?

I therefore ask the owner the following.

- Are you actually interested in saving the heritage of Woolton Hall?
- Are you aware of its rich history after reading all of the above?
- Are you interested in help from local people who would help you with basic repair work, cleaning and tidying of the Hall?
- Would you consider opening the building for paid tours?
- Do you see campaigns as the enemy? Has the above document changed your mind?

I ask this to everyone who is reading this to consider the following.

We have an absolute GEM of a building on our hands. It has incredible history, and I believe that it is part of an earlier structure pre-dating 1704 possibly making it as old as Speke Hall. It has had some fantastic owners complete with their own rich history. It has Robert Adam designed ceilings and these should be protected at ALL costs straight away. And yet, I cannot believe how Woolton Hall is still here. How someone hasn't set fire to this place yet and we would therefore lose at least 300 years' worth of history. Why is that when someone breaks into it, is no one really bothered? Imagine if someone tried to break into Liverpool Cathedral (Same Grade 1 listing). You'd have half of Merseyside Police turning up.

We are on the cusp of losing this grand hall. We are aware that no one is going to wave a magic wand and suddenly transform this building back to its former glory, but there has to be immediate talks between Liverpool City Council, the owner and Historic England to understand a way forward. I would be happy just to see the building completely secured so that no one else can break in – that in itself would be a start!

I have said that if I can be of any assistance in the help with the restoration of Woolton Hall then I would be only too pleased to be involved. I'm sure the other 800 people on the 'Save Woolton Hall' group would feel the same. We are not the enemy – we are simply very concerned that we will soon lose this grand hall to fire and watch Robert Adam ceilings literally go up in smoke.

Read the background on Woolton Hall and then realise what a stunning building this is, the rich History it has and let us all do something to assist the saving of this hall for future generations!!

Jonathon Wild – Local Historian and Proprietor of Braygreen – www.braygreen.co.uk

BRITISH
MUSEUM



Drawn by J.P. Neale.

WOOLTON HALL.
LANCASHIRE.

Engraved by T. Barber.

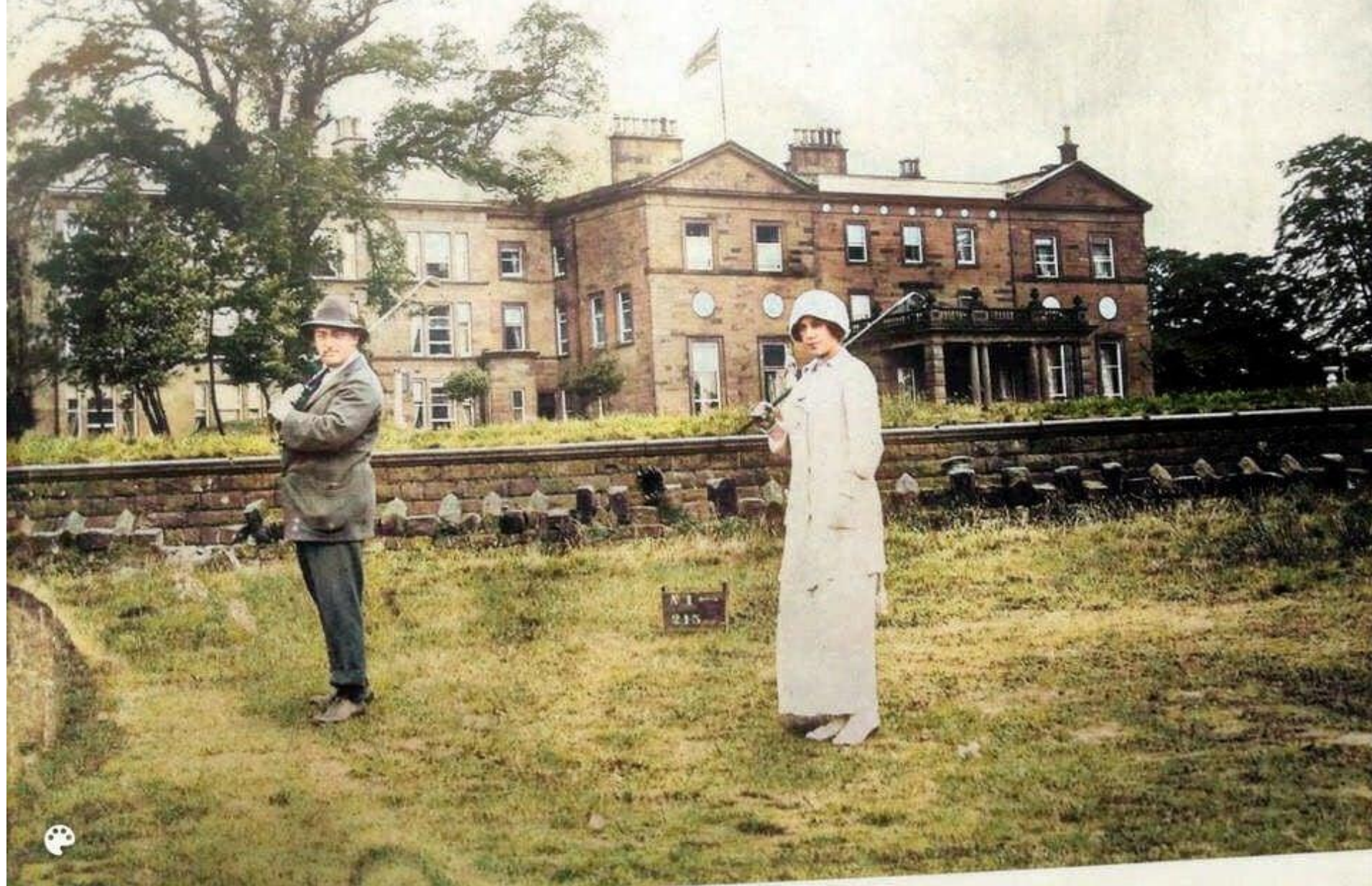








Mayre Service and Hotel











WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR

My name is Jonathon Wild. I am a local Historian in Liverpool and enthusiastic about our rich history, especially with regards to our buildings, listed or not. I have campaigned on a number of listed and unlisted buildings for over twenty-five years. Amongst other campaigns, two buildings I have campaigned on and helped to save are St John the Divine's Church in Fairfield, and Eddesbury, the former Margaret Beaven school in West Derby (Grade 2 listed). My portfolio can be found at www.braygreen.co.uk

As a Historian, I have yet to experience the Grand Tour of Woolton Hall. But before we start, a note or two must be added on the importance of this fine property, so that we can understand the seriousness of what could be lost by fire or further decline if the building is not secured property once and for all.

Woolton Hall is a **Grade 1** listed building. *A Grade 1 listed building is when the building is of exceptional national, architectural or of a historical importance.* It was constructed in 1704 and extensively renovated in 1772 by the influential architect Robert Adam. **The building is praised as the finest example of Adam's work in the North of England.** Robert Adam (1728-1792) was one of the most important British architects working in the Neoclassical style – a movement in the decorative and visual arts that drew inspiration from the 'classic' art and culture of Ancient Greece and Rome.

There have been a total of 15 owners throughout its history, and just a handful of names show the importance of the history of the building. Noted names such as **Richard Molyneux**, 5th Viscount Molyneux, **Nicholas Ashton** (Former High Sherriff of Lancashire), **James Reddecliffe Jeffery** (owner of Liverpool's largest department store, Compton House), and **Frederick Richards Leyland** (Ship Owner – Leyland Line). Together with Historian **Emily Hull**, we are working on the full background on these owners.

Woolton Hall has been written about in the past, a great source of information was from Janet P Gnosspelius' 1972 architectural report. It was this report that highlighted the importance of Woolton Hall and one of the reasons why it was not demolished. Further to this, it was re-opened by John Hibbert and extensive work took place to have this used for functions as well as a place for the local Masonic lodge to operate from. We have the Woolton Society to thank for their knowledge on the hall also.

The floor plans below are something that I have created myself. They are not to scale and have been taken from the 1972 architectural report as well as various 'walkabouts' on YouTube. They're not perfect, but they're not meant to be. They are there so anyone who has not yet set foot inside Woolton Hall can see the splendour of the building and see for themselves the extensive work that Robert Adam has added to this fine building. There is the ground floor, cellar, first floor and second floor. All pictures do not represent the present poor condition of the property after numerous break-ins, merely to guide one around the structure to experience the Grand Tour.

This document, together with the document that I and Emily are working on for the history of Woolton Hall is something we are doing to provide the full rich history of Woolton Hall. This was on the basis of a similar website and PDF document I worked on for Eddesbury (West Derby) in which a local developer saw the beauty of the building, saw all the history and write up on the background of the building, and saw it as a grand opportunity to restore the building to its former glory. This is now the only way forward purely because a compulsory purchase order is not something that the local powers that be will entertain or can afford in these uncertain times.

Lastly, if the owner ever has the chance to read this, I'd love to work with you on putting together the full history of the Hall with a private grand tour of the building and allow me to help you in anyway possible!

Jonathon Wild.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



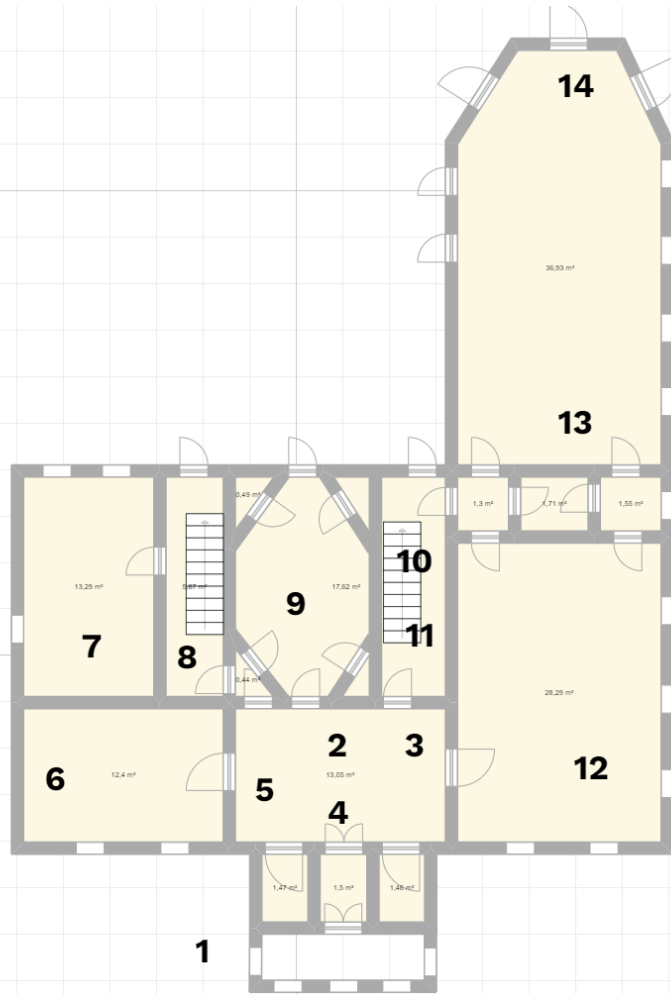
CONVENT OF NOTRE DAME, WOOLTON HALL, LIVERPOOL

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR

WOOLTON HALL – THE GROUND FLOOR



1. The porte-cochere
2. The rear of the entrance hall
3. Looking towards the Great Salon
4. Looking back towards the mail door
5. Looking towards the Front Parlour
6. Looking from the Front Parlour
7. Viewing the Kitchen area
8. Looking towards the servant's staircase
9. Viewing the Octagon Room
10. Views of the principal staircase
11. Views of the principal staircase
12. Looking down the Grand Salon
13. Views of the Tapestry Room
14. Looking towards the Apse

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



1. The porte-cochere

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



2. Looking towards the rear of the entrance chamber with the principal staircase on the right.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



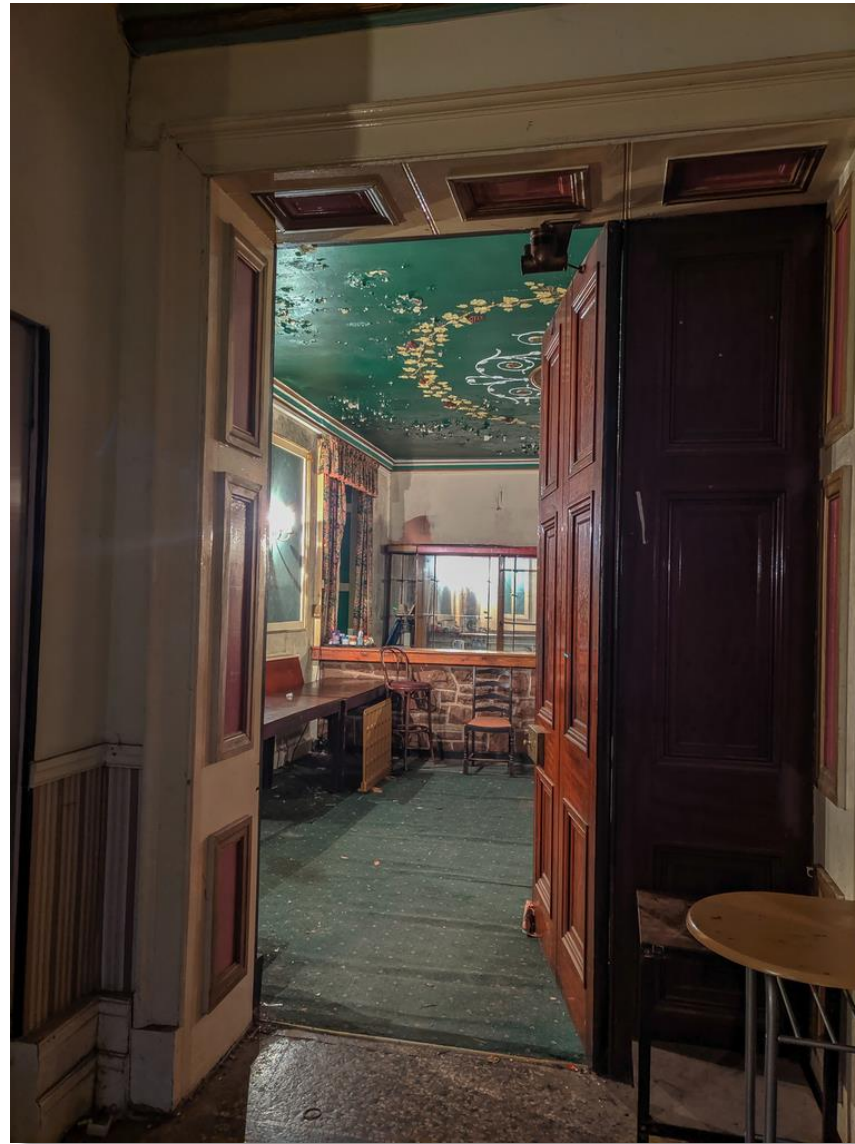
3. A view from the corner of the entrance chamber to the Great Salon on the right.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



4. Looking towards the main entrance, a telephone room to the right and (I assume) a storage room/cloaks to the left.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



5. Looking from the entrance chamber to the Front Parlour room (left hand side of the building)

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



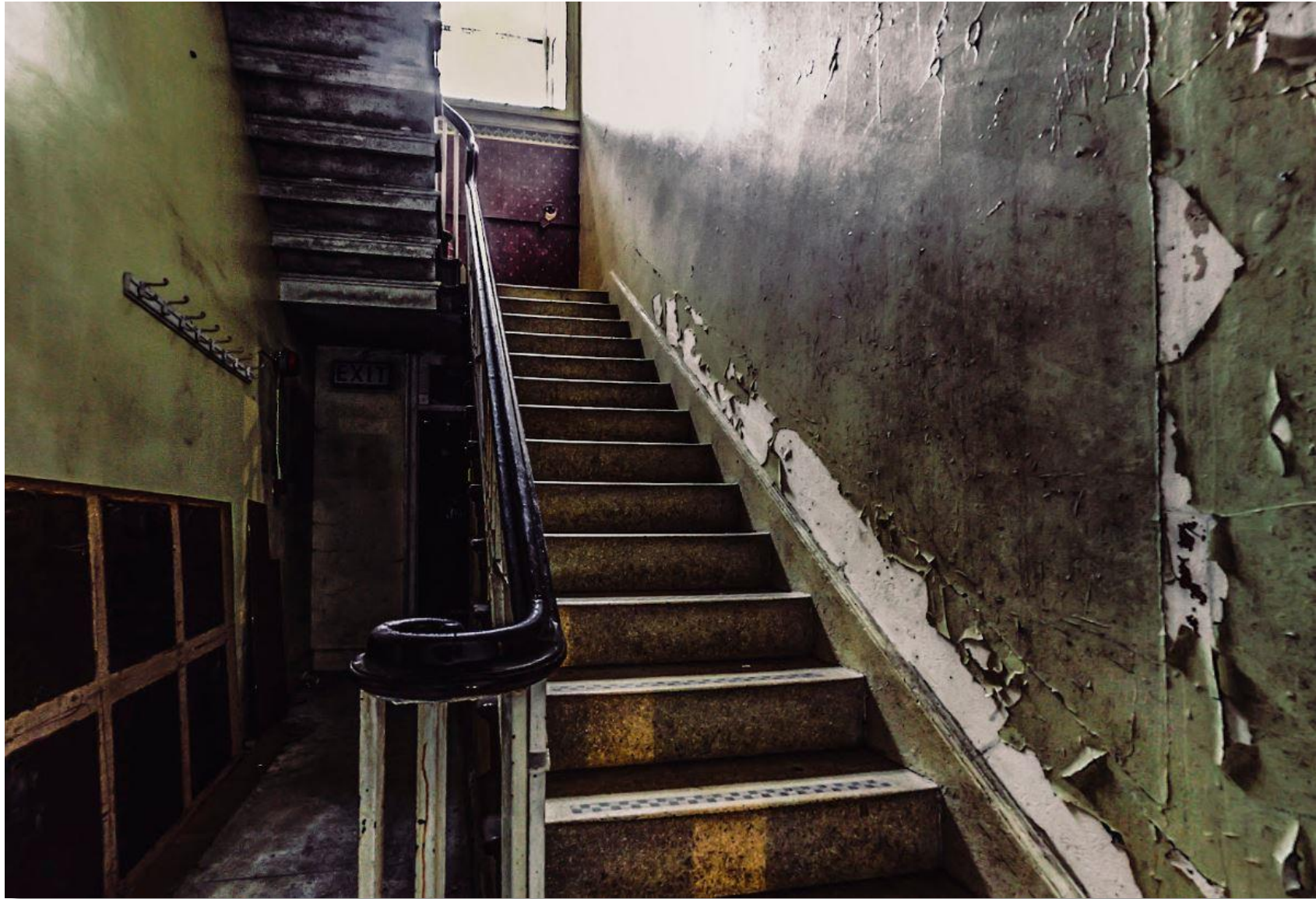
6. Looking from the Front Parlour back into the entrance chamber.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



7. Viewing the kitchen area – the floor has rotted on the right-hand side.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



8. This view shows the servants staircase that ascends up to the top floor of the building. There is extensive damp in this area.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



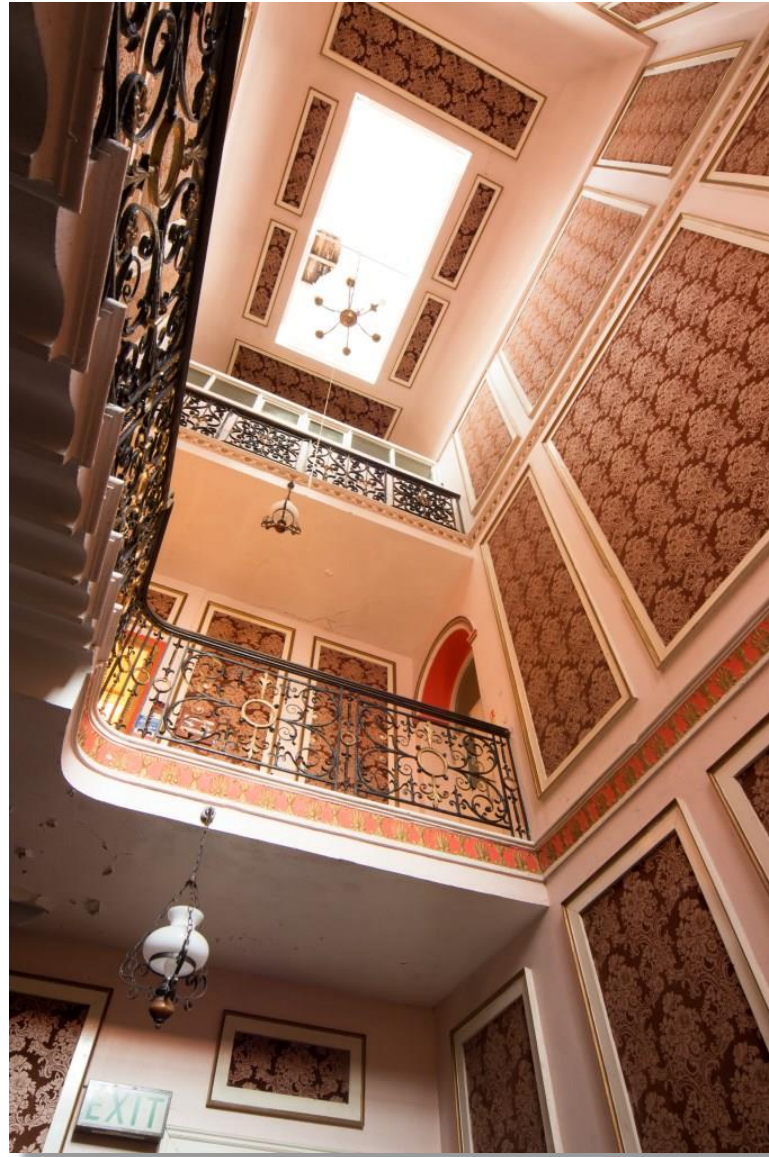
9. The Octagon Room from the past. Note the Robert Adam portrait on the right-hand side. It is incredible to still see the Robert Adam designed architecture in this room, which includes the fireplace, door surrounds and the ceiling. How has this not be recognised and saved?

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



10. Looking down the Robert Adam principle staircase towards the entrance chamber

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



11. A stunning view of the Robert Adam staircase. It is an odd situation that the principal staircase only leads to the first floor.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



12. Showing the Great Salon. In the centre is the safe room and double doors to the rear Tapestry Room.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



13. Looking back on the Tapestry Room towards the centre of the room. External doors to the right.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR

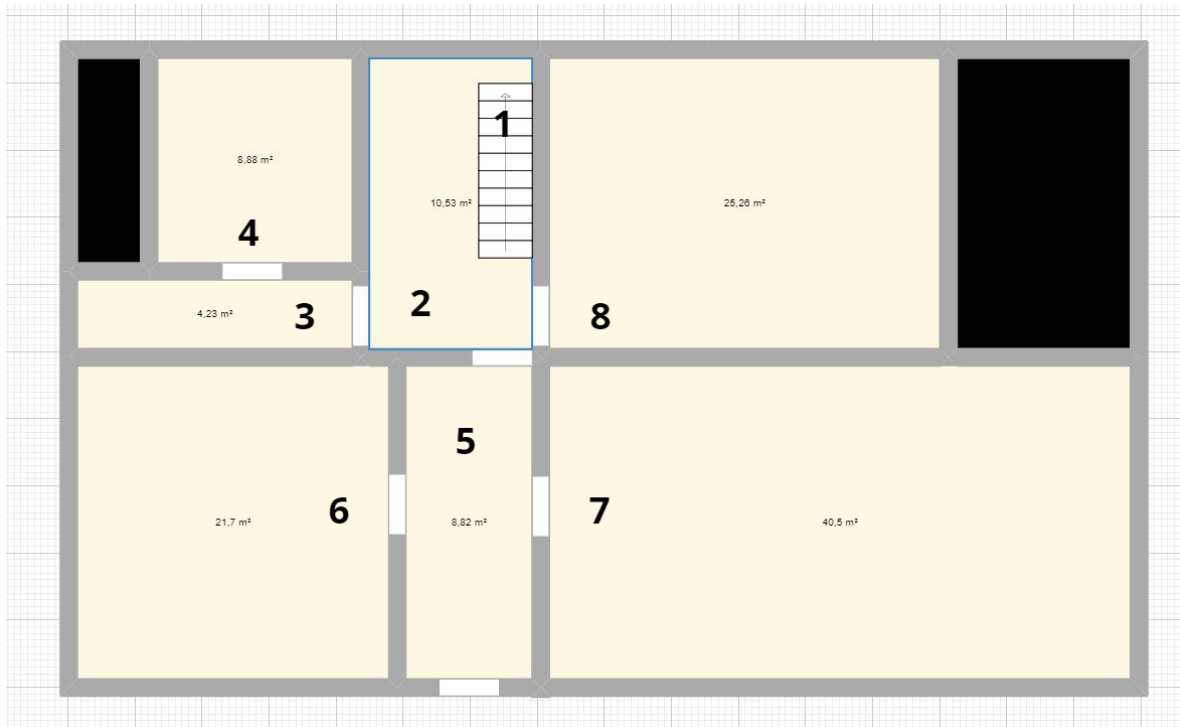


14. This shows the 'new' Drawing room looking towards the Apse.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR

WOOLTON HALL – THE CELLAR

In an attempt to map out Woolton Hall, I have now turned my attention to the cellar. Together with the floor plan from the 1972 architectural report and various YouTube ‘walkaround’ videos, I have created the floor plan below to show a basic layout. Again this is not to scale but gives an idea of the size of the rooms.



The cellar system is an odd layout when you look at the 1972 architects report. The shaded part of the top left states “from the plan we observe that a portion of the cellar at the S.W corner is ‘missing.’ There is no clue on how to gain access to this, but it does not seem that there was any access from inside the present cellar.

Again, the blank room on the top right indicates some sort of space, but once again it is not shown with any access point, and this has been blanked off on the 1972 report.

As above, I have added numbers to show the corresponding pictures taken. These have been taken off screen grabs from a YouTube video and aren’t as clear as the pictures I’ve used previously – but they still do an excellent job in locating around the cellar system!

1. Staircase down to the Cellar
2. Looking towards the end of the bricked up vaulted tunnel.
3. Looking towards the end of the capped off room.
4. The Wine Bins Room
5. Small corridor leading towards a coal chute

6. The main boiler section on the 1972 report
7. Titled ‘wine bins’ on the 1972 report
8. Again, listed as ‘wine bins,’ this is directly under the Octagon Room.

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1. The staircase leading down to the cellar system. This appears to be the only access.

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2. Listed as a brick vaulted tunnel. Was this some sort of tunnel leading off to the rear of Woolton Hall at one point in the past?

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3. This is looking towards another capped off area. At the end of this passageway was the entrance to the cellar systems of the external south wing of Woolton Hall that was built (and demolished) and would have stood to the left of Woolton Hall. Steps sealed in 1972 externally.

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4. The wine bins room. This would be under the kitchen area on the ground floor. Is Woolton Hall built on solid bedrock and built up with sandstone blocks?

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5. This shows a small corridor which points to what I believe to be a coal chute in the wall at the bottom.

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6. This is listed on the 1972 report as the main boiler section – though by this time, the main boiler seems to have been removed.

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7. This is a large room extending all the way back to a solid sandstone wall. Titled 'Wine Bins' on the 1972 report, this area is under the main entrance chamber above.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR



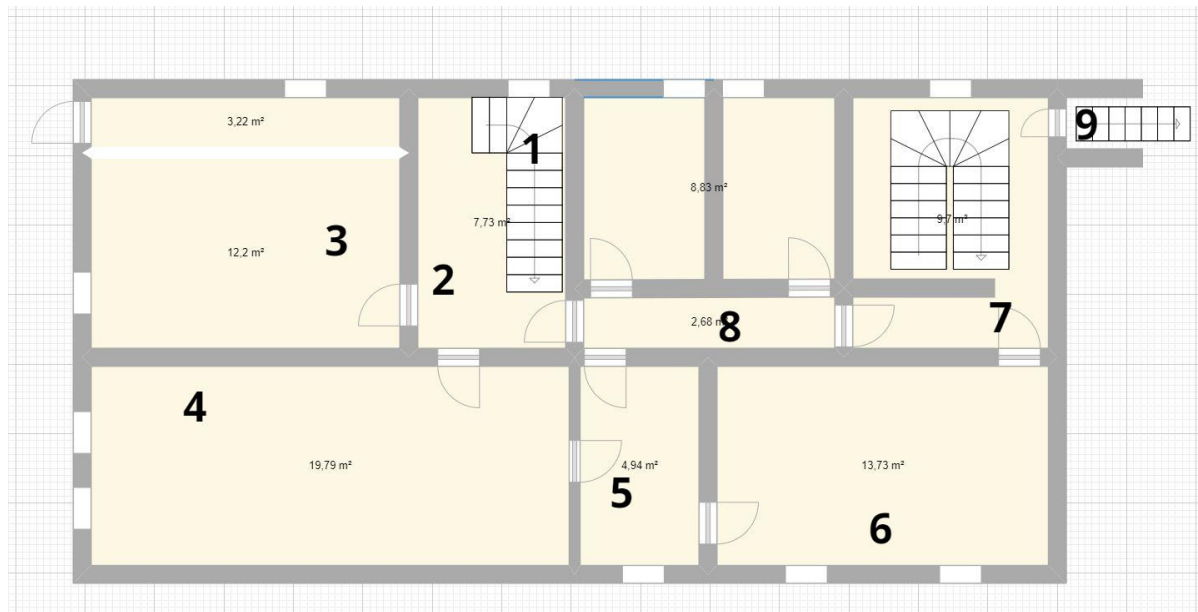
8. Again, this is listed as ‘wine bins’ on the report – we are now directly underneath the octagon room – the main buttress on the left giving support to the floor above.

WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR

WOOLTON HALL – FIRST FLOOR

Having not visited Woolton Hall before, I've had to check and double check the YouTube walkaround as well as the 1972 floorplan. What is really interesting is that there are some changes to the layout, and I will explain as I go along. Woolton Hall is an odd building in its layout. The servant's stairs go to the second floor, while the main staircase only goes to the 1st floor. So I believe that an extra set of stairs were added during the 1980's refurb. This is the straight set of stairs from the main staircase heading to the 3rd floor.

Again, the floor plan is looking from the front of the building so let's begin!



1. Servants' staircase to first floor
2. First floor landing
3. Sub-divided large front room with dumb waiter
4. Grand Masonic room
5. Lift room with access to front room
6. Originally Mrs Ashton's sitting room
7. The view over the principle staircase
8. The toilet block
9. Access to the 2nd floor

For this floor, I've made a mixture of the present-day layout, but also showing a slightly different layout above. At the top of the staircase (number 1), there used to be a set of steps that would take you along the corridor (see the white line). This would take you to the side wing extension, now demolished. The stairs have gone, and the wall has been bricked up. You will see that I've not included the right-hand side – that's because as far as I can tell (from the floorplan) there is nothing there. It is stated as 'void over tapestry room' – so I assume that because the ground floor tapestry and guest room on the right is 'double height,' it provides the reason why there is no first-floor rooms on the right-hand side!

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1. This shows the servant's staircase heading up to the rear of the building.

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2. This shows the start of the first floor. To the left-hand side is the door that takes you to the corridor for the toilets. To the right-hand side takes you to the first room.

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3. Again this is a really odd layout. Originally one big room, it has been sub divided in to at least 2 (and a storeroom) rooms. The window at the front is where the corridor would have passed in front of this window. The white wall next to the window is the dumb waiter as we are now directly over the kitchen area.

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4. This is one of the grand rooms used by the Freemason's for their lodge meeting.

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5. This shows the lift access and a sort of 'in-between' room – but before the lift was installed, this would have been the grand front room that extended into the next room.

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6. This shows the main upstairs room. On the 1972 floor plan, this is listed as Mrs Ashton's Sitting Room. This would have commanded some extensive views over Woolton especially because it gives access to the roof of the porch area. As you can see from the previous page, this has an original and utterly stunning Robert Adam ceiling!!

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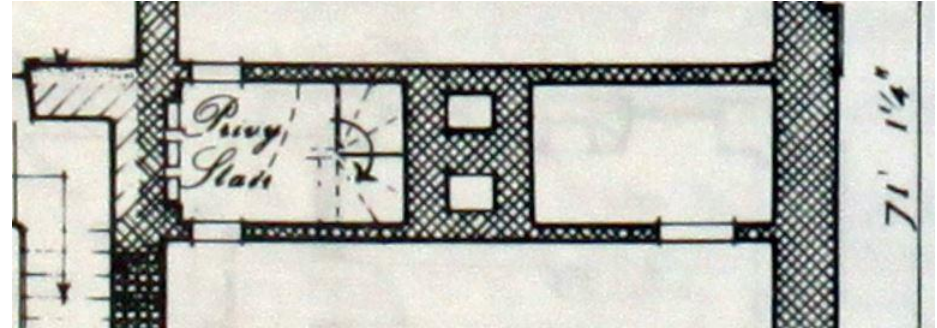
7. This shows the view looking down over the grand staircase. This is an original Robert Adam staircase and should be preserved at all costs (like the rest of the building!!).

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8. This shows the corridor joining the two staircases. On the right are the ladies and gents' toilets (didn't think it was necessary for a picture!)

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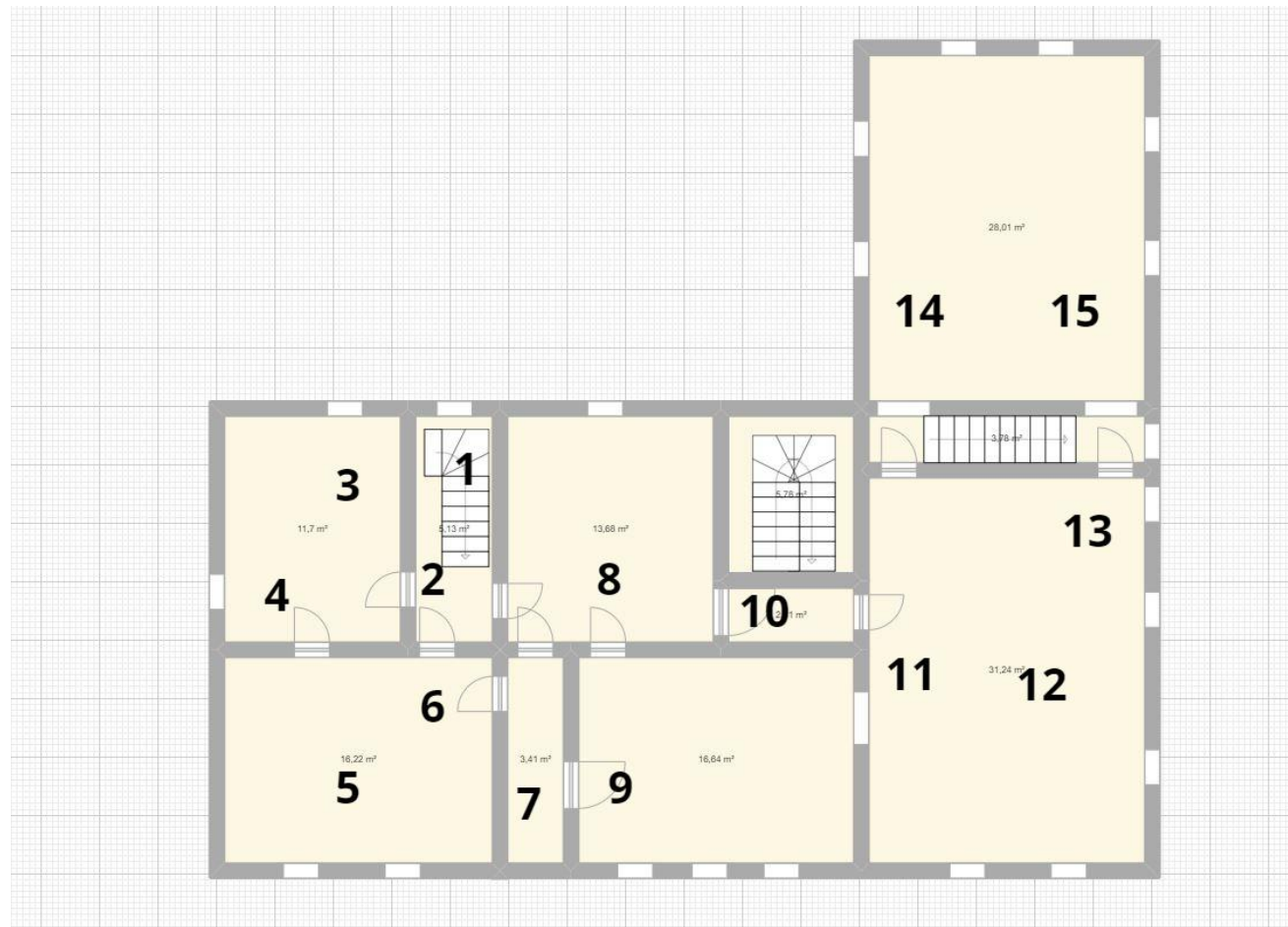
This shows the 'new' staircase heading up to the 3rd floor. It is interesting to see that before this was installed (I assume in the 1980's refurb), there is the above item on the floor plan. I can only assume that this could have been a priest's hiding hole. There seems to be absolutely no access to the voids above the ground floor tapestry room and thus this must have been a well-hidden area!

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WOOLTON HALL – THE GRAND TOUR

WOOLTON HALL – SECOND FLOOR

If you have never visited Woolton Hall before and have a floor plan in front of you, taken from the 1972 architects report, you'll end up trying to compare a walk around from YouTube and getting utterly lost, as I did. Rooms that appear to have windows, don't. Doors that appear on the plan, don't. There has been substantial changes from the original layout to the more modern layout and I have attempted to replicate this as best possible on the floor plan below!



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1. We climb up the servant's staircase and turn the corner to the top level.

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2. At the top of the staircase, we see two doors, turning right we enter the top floor room.

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3. This room has now been subdivided into this view and the view below. Originally this would have housed a corridor running in front of the window to gain access to the external wing on the left-hand side.

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4. This shows the other corner of the room – subdivided now but would have been one complete room originally.

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5. A new door has been added from the previous room (not on the 1972 plan) which takes you into the top corner room, once used for a Masonic meeting room.

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6. Turning around, there is the 'new' door on the left, the original door on the right from the plan is now blocked up.

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7. We've now walked through the 'wall/door/' and entered into the small lift chamber.

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8. We've now turned around and are walking to the large rear room (above the toilet block) – there is no corridor here.

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9. Go back to the 'lift' room and take the left-hand door – this now takes us to the other masonic room. There are three windows behind these boardings. Are they accessed by a small corridor? The door in the centre left is bricked up for some reason.

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10. The oddest view is this corridor. On the left-hand side would be the top rail or balcony overlooking principal staircase. Why was this blocked up?

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11. We are now in the side wing (top floor of the Great Salon) and viewing the blocked-up doorway on the left.

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12. We are now looking at the top floor of the wing (above the Grand Salon). This would have been used for a Masonic room.

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13. Turning around and looking at the central part of the room. The door in the corner leads to the back staircase.

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14. This is now the rear of the top floor side wing. It is in very poor state with missing window frames and water ingress.

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15. Turning around and heading through the door, this takes you to the top of the stairs and completes the walk around of the top floor.