

EDWARD DAVIS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY BATH ARCHITECT AND PUPIL OF SIR JOHN SOANE

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In Regency London surely the most exacting articulated training an architect could receive was at the office of Sir John Soane (1753-1837), given his leading professional status, prolific output and personal style – most importantly at the Bank of England – and not least his interest in education. The Bath architect, Edward Davis (1802-52), who spent two years there, said it gave him a ‘passport to life’, going on as he did to enjoy a successful architectural practice of his own. Soane in 1806 had succeeded his own teacher, George Dance, as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy, and delivered his famous lectures there from 1809 until the year before his death.¹ He also took considerable interest in his own pupils’ progress, even after they had left his employment, as the correspondence between Soane and Edward Davis shows. Moreover, Soane’s office, where his pupils and assistants worked six days a week throughout the hours of daylight, was contained within his own home and museum at 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields. Soane left this fascinating treasure trove of instructive antiquities to the nation provided that nothing be changed, and so it survives today.

Yet surprisingly little is known about Soane’s pupils after they left his office, and of the many pupils who passed through his articulated training during his long career relatively few went on to develop illustrious and productive practices of their own. Soane was a hard taskmaster and a man of difficult temperament, ‘austere, exacting, touchy and neurotic’,² and more ambitious, less compliant architects may not have stayed the course – (Sir) Robert Smirke (1780-1867) left after a few months. One of the most successful pupils was George Basevi (1794-1845) whose career was cut short by his early death, falling through the belfry floor of Ely Cathedral. Perhaps the most talented was the ‘odd and impracticable’ Joseph Michael Gandy (1771-1843),³ among whose few completed buildings is the Greek Revival ‘Doric House’ at Sion Hill, Bath of 1817, built for the painter Thomas Barker. The handful of others who succeeded as architects in private practice or public service are today little known, and Edward Davis provides a rare example where we can explore the interesting question as to what extent the influence of Soane is evident in a pupil’s works. The pared-down classicism of Soane’s personal style was

almost by definition inimitable, while the idiosyncrasy of his work, lying as it did outside the accepted Roman and later Greek classicism practised by his contemporaries, was in Soane's day seen as a criticism.⁴

The architecture of Edward Davis, at least for the first few years of his practice before he developed a secure personal style of his own, reflects the influence of his master, both in architectural detailing and in his ingenuity at planning the building on its site. His buildings, of which the main corpus is a series of Italianate picturesque villas, also represent remarkably early examples of the newly emerging styles of villa architecture as propogated by the publication of numerous and widely read pattern books. In the local context of Bath, Davis's work belongs to a body of architectural works carried out in the early nineteenth century by, or under the influence of, prominent London architects. In addition to Gandy's Doric House these include William Wilkins's Masonic Hall, York Street of 1817 and the Doric portico added in 1806 to the Kingston Assembly Rooms, Decimus Burton's now destroyed Tepid Swimming Bath adjacent to John Wood's Hot Bath, and Partis College, Lower Weston, of 1827 by Samuel and Philip Flood Page.

Edward Davis was born on 9 March 1802,⁵ the youngest of five children, and son of a painter, Charles Davis⁶ whose own father of the same name was a pastellist. Edward Davis had a brother, Charles, seven years his senior, whose son became the successful later Victorian architect, Major Charles Edward Davis (1827-1902). Major Davis designed many buildings including the Empire Hotel but he is perhaps most notable for having uncovered and excavated the Roman Baths.⁷

Edward Davis became a pupil of Sir John Soane on 25 May 1824, when Soane was already over seventy years old. It is not known how Soane selected his pupils; some are known to have been family friends, but presumably Davis must have displayed promising draughtsmanship, for in 1825 he was awarded a medal by the Society of Arts. On arriving each day the pupils' exact time of arrival was entered into the day books, which survive, together with the projects that they worked on each day. Work began at nine, six days a week, and although the leaving time is not recorded, the working day was possibly governed by the hours of daylight. Christmas Day, Good Friday and Whitsuntide were holidays.

Davis's principal task during his time with Soane was to produce drawings for the Board of Trade and Privy Council Offices, Whitehall, London. He was also much involved with the new Law Courts at the Palace of Westminster, the new dining room at 10 Downing Street (at that time the Chancellor of the Exchequer's house) and with Soane's three

late churches. He and the other pupils also spent much time making section drawings of the museum and other rooms at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. Davis took occasional leave of absence to visit Bath – one month over Christmas 1824 and two weeks in mid-May 1825 – then on Thursday 18 August we read, 'Davis absent from a *broken leg*'. The cause of the absence is underlined in the book and it is tantalising that we cannot know the circumstances of the accident. It was clearly incapacitating for he next came to the office the following Tuesday when 'Davis received permission from Mr Soane to be absent a month commencing on Thursday 25th'. He returned on 27 September and resumed work on plans and sections of the Cabinet Room at the Foreign Office, but for most of the autumn he drew Soane's museum, breakfast room, study and monk's room for publication. He then worked on miscellaneous projects into the spring, notably the Bethnal Green Chapel, on which the entire office worked for a month during January and February. He spent his final few weeks 'drawing ornaments, etc', plans and elevations of a triumphal arch, and views of the Board of Trade for exhibition. The day books contain little in the way of human insight and rarely humour. However, on his penultimate day, Thursday 13 April 1826 'Davis came last' to which had later been added '... as usual', though next day 'Davis came first'.

Returning to Bath from London he set up in practice at 3 Westgate Buildings, a property that he owned and from where he practised for the remainder of his career. The annual Poor Relief Assessments show both Edward and his brother Charles during the succeeding years to be owners and lessors of several properties in the parishes and the city, and it would appear that their father left them quite well off. Edward himself occupied a house at *Bear Inn*, Wells Road in the early 1830s, and he owned, or by 1836 possibly sublet from another owner, four other properties at the same address. It is reasonable to attribute as an early work by Davis a porch extension to 24 New King Street, Bath, which shows the strong influence of Soane. This has incised pilasters capped by acroteria decorated with anthemion, a very shallow pediment and a Greek key frieze. At the same time the ground floor was rusticated and a round-arch window inserted, the first floor window cills were lowered to floor level (common practice in nineteenth-century Bath) and a balcony added with railings of a swept design derived from Soane's house at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. A design dated 1830 for a Toll-House on the London Road near Bailbrook is also by Davis, as may be seen from entries in the papers of the Bath Turnpike Trust. The building is near-octagonal with rusticated ashlar walls, rusticated wings with plain pilasters and a shallow pediment, and a

portico of square columns with inset arches supported on brackets, with a simple pedimented attic over the centre (fig.1).⁸ It would be intriguing also to know more of his Octagon Temple for Sydney Gardens, Bath. *The Original Bath Guide* notes that 'a very elegant Rustic Temple, erected under the supervision of Mr. ED. DAVIS, Architect, of Bath, and appropriated on Show Days to the Exhibition of The Bath Horticultural Society, presents also a very pleasing and ornamental object'.⁹

The first fully recorded work of Davis was a group of neo-Tudor houses at Entry Hill, Bath, now Entry Hill Drive. The designs were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1828,¹⁰ the first of several to be accepted during his career, and it is evident that he was indebted to Soane for his help, for Davis wrote to thank him from Bath on 30 April:¹¹

Sir,

I beg leave to thank you for your very kind and successful pleading to obtain my Drawing an admission in your honorable Academy – Proud am I to have it placed (and by your interest to) in that room which has been so often ornamented by your admirable and instructive Designs – At the same time that I return thanks for the present favor I must not forget the past ones, I allude to those when I had the honor and advantage of studying under your instructions which has raised me above myself and will be a passport to me through life – I intend shortly to pay a visit to London when I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in health, and the honor of thanking you in person for your abundant favors.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your most obedient humble servant

Edward Davis

To

John Soane Esq RA

Designs for seventeen houses were exhibited at the Royal Academy but only five were built, and although noted in the catalogue as 'now building' their construction was in fact phased and they became occupied between 1829-36.¹² The project was a speculation by a local solicitor Richard Else, who practised in Harington Place, but who possibly occupied the houses progressively as they were finished. The houses are approached from the old Warminster Road up a private road flanked by



1. Design for a new Toll-House on the London Road near Bailbrook, dated 1830. (Reproduced by courtesy of Bath & North East Somerset Library and Archive Service: Bath Central Library)

vermiculated stone piers. The first to be completed was Entry Hill Villa,¹³ which was occupied by April 1829 and purchased by Charles Davis, Edward's elder brother in 1836, followed by Newfield Villa (now Newfield) first occupied by a Lieut. M. Novorelski from 1831. The next was Granville House which was completed by 1835 and, although again Charles Davis was owner, Edward Davis himself lived at the house with his wife and daughter from 1835 until 1841.¹⁴ Curiously the house is symmetrical, with a recessed centre forming the front entrance between flanking projecting wings decorated with tall Tudoresque chimneys and pinnacles. The name is associated with the Civil War royalist general, Sir Bevil Grenville who was defeated and killed at the Battle of Lansdown in 1642 (whose descendents later called themselves Granville) and whose grandson erected a commemorative monument at Lansdown. Edward Davis was commissioned to restore the monument and in so doing removed Grenville's coat-of-arms and incorporated it into the wall of Granville House.¹⁵ The principal edifice on the estate was intended to be Entry Hill House, which was occupied by 1836, an asymmetrical building with mullion and transom windows, an oriel bay window and battlemented parapets. The final house was The Briars, occupied by 1836.

In 1829 Davis applied unsuccessfully for the post of Surveyor to the County of Somerset, and on 16 December 1829 Soane wrote from Lincoln's Inn Fields supporting Davis's appointment:¹⁶

Dear Sir,

The Bearer of this Mr Edward Davis of Bath is a candidate for the vacant appointment of Surveyor to the County of Somerset, in whose success I feel much interest – Mr Davis having been sometime in my office. I can testify to his activity zeal and probity and should you be at liberty to afford him the advantage of your powerful support I shall esteem it a personal favour.

I am ...

Yours faithfully

JS

Copy to:

Col. Horner

Sir J. S. Hippersley, Bart.

Sir Alexr. Hood, Bart.

G. E. Allen Esq

The same year Edward Davis was commissioned to design the 46-acre Royal Victoria Park, Bath, the history of which is meticulously documented, albeit in a self-congratulatory tone, in the Park Committee's Annual Reports, quoted in Frederick Hanham's *Manual for the Park* which records the species planted.¹⁷ The local architect G. P. Manners had produced a design for the park in 1827, but it was Davis's later design that was carried out. The idea was instigated by a group of local businessmen, who convened a private committee in May and June of 1829 to discuss improvements to the Crescent Fields, land south of the Royal Crescent belonging to Lady Rivers. At their first meeting it was decided to extend the plan to include the Common Fields to the west to provide sufficient land for the ornamental plantations, walks and drives. Davis produced a Plan of the Improvements on the Bath Common Estate and this design was approved on 26 October after an interview, according to the Park Committee's first Annual Report, which was 'conducted in a most friendly manner'. Davis's plan was then submitted to the Corporation who unanimously decided to proceed, while Lady Rivers granted the approach through the Crescent Fields. After a meeting of local residents on 1 January 1830 chaired by the mayor, subscriptions were raised and work started immediately, employing nearly 200 men.

A carriage drive and gravel walk were built through this plantation, with shrubberies on both sides along the South Walk and on the North Walk along the upper boundary. These formed 'agreeable drives' and 'shady promenades', while a 'fish pond' with an encircling gravel walk created a central feature.

The park was open to the public by midsummer, and by the autumn entrances from Queen Square and Marlborough Buildings had been completed. The latter entrance screen, which is in the style of Soane, forms a pair of triumphal arches and owes much to the church of St John's, Bethnal Green, on which Davis was involved in his last few months at Soane's office. The park was officially opened on 28 October 1830 by the Duchess of Kent and her daughter, Princess Victoria, hence the name Royal Victoria Park. The Committee's Report presented at the First Anniversary on 7 January 1831 states that the adjacent Park Farm house, designed as a *cottage ornée*, was also being built. The report is fulsome in its praise:

The Committee disclaim any participation in that just meed of praise so liberally bestowed – it belongs to Mr. Edward Davis, Architect, who so tastefully laid it out, and to him exclusively. He it was, who has in this instance, so happily blended the luxuriance of nature with the classic proportions of art, as to render the Park at once an ornament to his native city, and a lasting memorial to his own fame.¹⁸

Edward Davis's next recorded design was another Royal Academy submission in 1832,¹⁹ a 'Design for a Villa intended to be built near to Bath', for which again Davis sought his master's help, for he wrote on 22 April:²⁰

Edward Davis presents his most respectful compliments to Sir John Soane and solicits of him his influence (which he was so kind as to use on a previous occasion) with the hanging Committee of the Royal Academy to obtain an admission of some Drawings which he has sent there for exhibition through his friend Mr Bailey.

Edward Davis offers many apologies to Sir John Soane for taking so great a liberty but which he trusts he will pardon.

Soane promptly obliged, writing on 25 April from Lincoln's Inn Fields to a Mr. Howard. This time he gives a touching insight into Davis's character:²¹

Dear Sir,

Mr. Edward Davis, some years since a pupil of mine, a very modest unassuming young man, and much respected in the County of Somerset,

has sent three architectural drawings to the Royal Academy for the ensuing Exhibition which he is given to understand have all been rejected – may I request that you will have the goodness to take the trouble to arrange that they may again be brought before the Committee in the hope that in further consideration some of them at least may be admitted.

Yours faithfully

The identity and form of this villa are unknown, but the core of Edward Davis's work over the next few years was a series of Italianate picturesque villas all containing near-identical repeated elements, but each demonstrating inventive planning and an awareness of the uniqueness of the site. The villas are remarkably in tune with the architectural pattern books that were being published contemporaneously. These books portray an image of Tuscany as seen through the paintings of Claude, with towers and campaniles, picturesque asymmetry, loggias and French windows opening directly onto terraced gardens. The style built on the cult of the Picturesque, a movement initiated at the end of the eighteenth century through the writings of Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price and Humphrey Repton. Their publications reacted against the artificial landscapes of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and developed a new taste for naturalistic, uncontrived landscape, together with an interpenetration of internal and external space. The most popular of the architectural pattern books were J. M. Gandy's two principal publications of 1805, *The Rural Architect* and *Designs for Cottages, Cottage Farms and Other Rural Buildings*, Buonarotti Papworth's *Rural Residences* of 1818, J. G. Jackson's *Designs for Villas* (1828), his teacher Robert Wetton's *Designs for Villas in the Italian Style of Architecture* (1830), Francis Goodwin's *Rural Architecture* (1835), and notably Charles Parker's *Villa Rustica*, published in parts between 1833 and 1841 with a second edition in 1848. The last-named was the first to introduce an Italianate style of house with shallow-pitch roofs and deeply projecting eaves penetrated by tall chimneys, round-arch and tripartite windows, of a type that was to be widely adopted by suburban housebuilders later in the nineteenth century.

Davis's villas belong to this style, yet are remarkably early examples of the genre. The first was precisely contemporary with Parker's initial publication, and for the most part the villas predate similar designs published in Loudon's popular *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* of 1838 and the *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture* of 1846. Davis's villas also substantially predate Henry Edmund Goodridge's Tuscan villas of a similar type with projecting eaves, the semi-detached Casa Bianca (originally Villa Bianca) and La Casetta of 1846 and Fiesole of 1848, on Bathwick Hill.



3. Smallcombe Grove (now Oakwood), Bathwick Hill, Bath, with Edward Davis's Italianate extension, c.1833 (left), incorporating Benjamin Barker's original villa (right).

The first of Edward Davis's villas in this style was Smallcombe Grove of 1833, known after 1856 as Oakwood, on Bathwick Hill (fig.3). Uniquely among Davis's villas, the work at Smallcombe Grove was an extension to an existing villa that he radically altered internally and externally to integrate with the new work to form a unified design. The existing house, the first on the upper slopes of Bathwick Hill, had been built by the landscape painter, Benjamin Barker (1776-1838), the brother of the more famous Thomas Barker, nine years his senior, who had commissioned Gandy to design Doric House. Benjamin had bought the land in 1814 jointly with his brother-in-law the flower painter James Hewlett. According to the antiquarian and cartographer John Britten, Barker

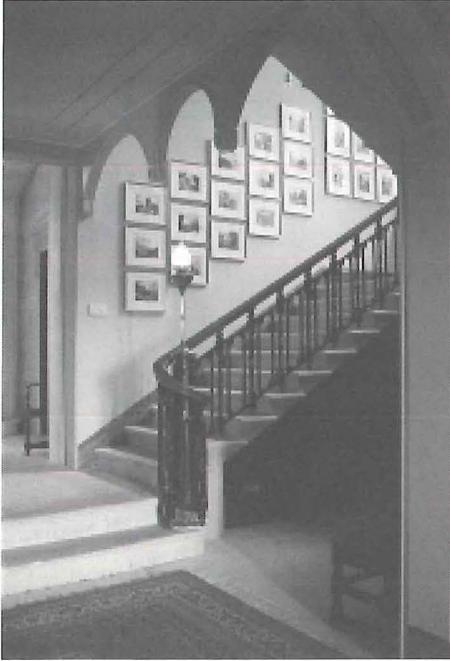
... painted numerous small landscapes, which were very popular, and readily sold at the exhibitions of the British Institution. He saved money, purchased and possessed a very delightful villa, on the west side of Claverton Down, where his hanging gardens, trout stream, woods, and paintings were calculated to command the admiration, and almost the envy, of his visitors. At this delectable retreat I spent many happy hours, in company with some of the Bath 'Worthies,' amongst whom was James Hewett [sic], a distinguished English flower painter whose sister Barker married.²²

Barker's biographer Edward Mangin described the place 'as beautiful as time and man could make it'²³ and by 1817 it was evidently locally well known, as Barker was visited that year by Queen Charlotte, accompanied by Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Clarence.

Barker's address was initially Woodland Cottage, which was possibly an earlier building now incorporated into the existing coach house. Sometime between 1814 and 1833, when Barker retired to Devon, he built for himself a larger but still modest house, perfectly square in plan with an M-shape roof and rendered in Roman cement, which he named Smallcombe Villa.²⁴ This structure forms the core of the main house today. During his last few years in Bath Barker became increasingly impecunious before he was forced to sell the house in 1833. It is therefore safe to assume that it was the new owner, Thomas Emmerson who commissioned Edward Davis to carry out the new works to transform the existing house into a large Italianate villa, which was renamed Smallcombe Grove.²⁵

To Barker's original square house Davis added a wing containing a dining room and main bedroom facing west onto the garden (see fig.3). This has a projecting bay at ground floor and had an open tripartite loggia at first floor (which has now been glazed to extend the bedroom) and a roof of shallow pitch with projecting eaves and a campanile. This wing extends uphill to form an east section, originally containing an art gallery (later used as a billiards room) with servants' quarters and a kitchen, and stables and a coach house beyond. The coach house opening is in the form of a shouldered-arch, and axial to this is a Tuscan watch tower with a shallow-pitch lead roof and projecting eaves. The two sections of the new wing were articulated by a single-storey flat roof (which was infilled to provide additional servants' accommodation in 1871) and connected at bedroom level by a top-lit vaulted vestibule.

Internally the architectural details throughout the house are in the manner of Sir John Soane, several details echoing specifically the projects which Edward Davis is known to have worked on in the office of his master. Davis structured the plan and resolved the natural gradient of the site by forming a north-south circulation axis east of the dining room, linking street level to the drawing room above the garden. A cascading stone staircase descends from the entrance into a shallow-domed ashlar-faced rusticated hall. Beyond is a staircase hall (fig.4) containing a sequence of segmental arches and flanked by arcaded downstand pelmets with finials reminiscent of the Court of Chancery (and of Soane's own dining room and library). The dining room has a shallow groin-vaulted 'starfish' ceiling, Soane's favourite hallmark, which recalls Davis's work on the remodelled dining room at



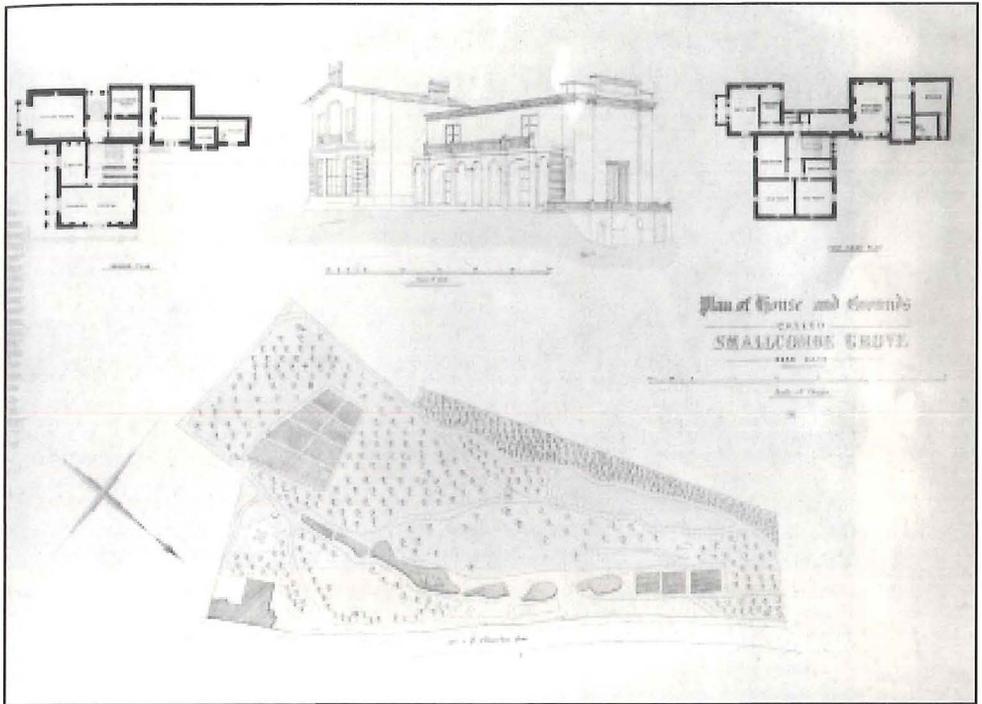
4. Smallcombe Grove: the staircase hall.

10 Downing Street, and the drawing room has a ceiling similar to that of the dining room and library at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. Extensive use throughout the house of segmental arches, clerestory lighting, flush reeded skirtings, recessed architraves, paterae and other antique motifs and a system of incised linear ornamentation, gives a Soanian character.

It is uncertain to what extent Davis developed Barker's garden layout, but several features, including a stone bridge, fountain and balustrading, are of integrated design and form part of the Davis scheme. The reception rooms open onto terraces that overlook a formal parterre and fountain fed by plentiful spring water. This flows

into a series of small ashlar-lined lakes linked by cascades, leading progressively to wilderness and views beyond. Because of the significance of the garden and its close relationship with the house it is not unreasonable to suppose that Davis was commissioned because of his interest in landscape design. Davis's work was recorded as built in sales particulars²⁶ drawn in 1856 by the Bristol architect W. B. Gingell (1819-99) to market the property (it was sold that year) (fig.5).²⁷ These comprise a single sheet with small but accurate floor plans, a perspective view and a drawn survey of the garden.

In 1836 Davis was commissioned to design a large new rectory near Frome, Somerset. The client was Edmund Boyle, eighth Earl of Cork and Orrery of Marston House, Marston Bigot, and the house was for his youngest son, the Hon. and Rev. Richard Boyle. The isolated parish had a population in 1841 of just 534, and in 1805 the Boyle family had bought the advowson, the right of presenting a clergyman to the living, from the Marquess of Bath for £2,632. Richard Boyle, who had been blinded in one eye by a cricket ball while at Winchester, became curate of Marston Bigot in 1835 and rector the following year at the age of 24.



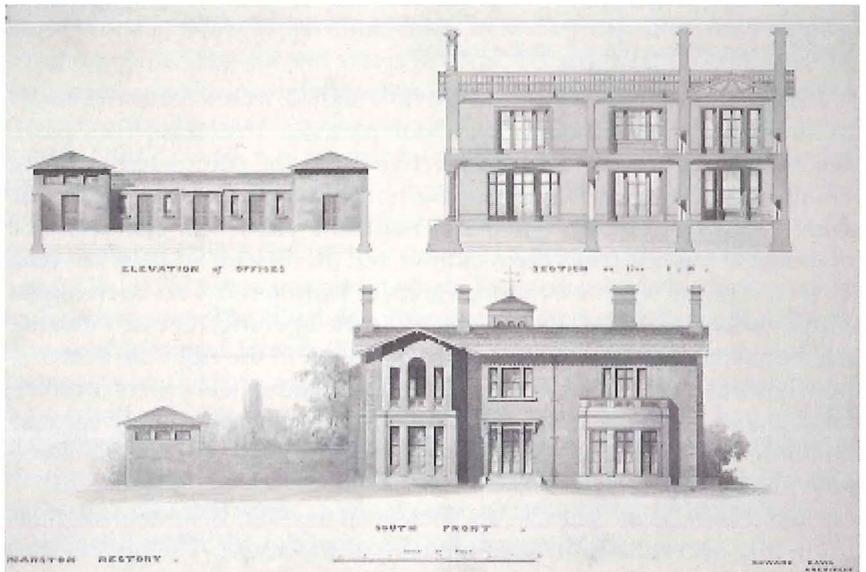
5. Smallcombe Grove: illustrations of the house and garden, drawn in 1856 as sales particulars when the house was placed on the market.

A finely drafted set of Edward Davis's signed watercolour drawings for the design exists, including floor plans, a structural roof plan, elevations, sections and two perspectives, and the completed building remains little altered from the original design (figs.6-7). Again the house is a picturesque asymmetrical Italianate villa, with characteristic projecting eaves and tripartite windows, but the interior is Greek Revival. To the left of the south elevation, the main bedroom has an open loggia similar to Smallcombe Grove with a tripartite opening, recessed glazing and a projecting bay to the dining room below. To the right the drawing room has a bay to the ground floor only. The façades here are constructed not of ashlar but rangework with ashlar dressings, presumably because the house was intended to be covered with ivy and wisteria, as indeed early photographs show.

If elements of Davis's façades are somewhat repetitious, he demonstrates originality and skill in the arrangement of the house. The plan is well



6. (above) Rectory, Marston Bigot, near Frome, Somerset, 1836-9, built for the Hon. and Rev. Richard Boyle: watercolour perspective signed by Edward Davis.
 7. (below) Rectory, Marston Bigot: rendered elevations and section signed by Edward Davis. (Both reproduced by courtesy of George H. Boyle, Esq.)



resolved on its site, and is ordered by symmetrical axes that are eroded and overlaid to create an informal, picturesque layout, turning the visitor this way and that. The drawing-room, library and dining room are on the south side facing a terraced formal balustraded Italianate garden with views to wooded hills beyond, while the north side is entirely for circulation. To the west a servants' wing extends north forming an entrance court and a yard with domestic offices and a dairy to the west. On the north elevation the front door, unusually, is in the corner on the left. A stone-flagged entrance hall beyond, with a fireplace, spans the width of the staircase hall which to the right extends the length of the main house. A cantilevered stone stair is contained within an ashlar-clad stairwell (sadly now painted) with Grecian Ionic columns. Over the stairwell the ceiling extends upwards to form a lantern glazed with amber-colour glass. Externally this forms an Italianate tower, suffusing the interior with a rich Soanic glow of yellow light. A sewing room upstairs was recorded in a sketch by Richard Boyle's wife, Eleanor Vere Boyle. It contains a chimneypiece flush with the wall and with incised decoration, with a detached mantleshef supported on brackets – nearly identical with one also extant at Smallcombe Grove. The house was completed by 1839.²⁸

In 1838 Edward Davis exhibited at the Royal Academy two further houses, both said to be 'now building'. One was the north east view of Twerton House, Bath, for Charles Wilkins, a wealthy mill owner,²⁹ 'his late residence having been taken down by the Great Western Railway Company who required the site in their line between Bath and Bristol'.³⁰ Wilkins did not remain there long as the house was acquired by the Carr family, another dynasty of mill-owners, after a fire in 1844 and was later known as Wood House. The house was Greek Revival style, with an Italianate west wing containing servants' quarters that survived the fire. Details of the house were recorded in sketches by Peter Coard before the house was demolished in 1965, including the elaborate base to the main staircase (fig.8).³¹



8. Twerton (later Wood) House, Bath, 1838. (Drawing reproduced by courtesy of Peter Coard)

The other house exhibited that year, 'now building from designs and under the supervision of Edward Davis', was another asymmetrical picturesque residence known as Barcombe at Barcombe Drive, Paignton, South Devon³². The house, built for N. H. Nugent, was possibly the most substantial which Davis built and originally stood alone in its grounds north of the town although it became surrounded by later development. Built in an eclectic Grecian-Gothic-Italianate style, its mixture of styles and asymmetry give the illusion of historical accretion. Unlike the other early nineteenth-century Torbay stucco villas, it was built of red sandstone with Bath stone dressings. The entrance front had shallow Gothic arched windows and doors, combined with a Doric four-column porch, with Doric triglyphs along the cornice. To the left was an Italianate tower with round-arched windows and dentil cornice. The garden elevation contained tripartite windows to the left, a canted bay towards the centre, and on the right the characteristic shallow pitch roof with projecting eaves and a slender campanile. Scandalously not listed by the Department of Environment, the house was demolished in 1989.

The last of this group of Italianate villas is known as Albury at Wrington, Somerset (later renamed le Moigne's but now known by the original name),



9. Albury, Wrington, Somerset, c.1836: detail of the Italianate west elevation with an open loggia to the main bedroom and projecting eaves.

built in the late 1830s for a solicitor. The house is entered from the north side between two nearly symmetrical wings. Each wing has tripartite windows at ground level with cornices supported on consoles and surmounted by acroteria, and round-arched windows at first floor. The west façade has the familiar projecting eaves and tripartite open loggia with recessed glazing to the main bedroom and tripartite windows to the drawing room below (fig.9). Inside, the hall is connected by arched openings to a cantilevered stone staircase lit by round-arched windows with amber glass margins. The staircase detail is similar to that at Wood House. The interior ironwork, joinery and plasterwork contain palmettes and other Greek Revival motifs and the window piers to the drawing room are inset with mirror strips.

Like most other practising architects of his day, Edward Davis carried out some church work. In 1833 he restored Prior Birde's Chapel in Bath Abbey Church, a delightful late medieval gem, and in 1834 published a series of lithographs of the chapel. These were entitled *Gothic Ornaments, etc., of Prior Birde's Oratory* and were made from drawings (now in the RIBA Drawings Collection) by Stephen Burchall (1806-?43) who had been a pupil of Soane from 1823-28, contemporary with Edward Davis. The project appears, however, to have been financially disastrous for Davis, according to the Council Minutes for 16 October 1835:

Item 11: To consider a Letter from Mr Edward Davis, Architect of this City, respecting the expenses attending the Restoration of Prior Birde's Chapel which considerably exceeds the amount of subscription, soliciting the consideration of this Corpn.

Mr Ed. Davis's Letter being now read and considered, Resolved: that as he undertook such work upon his own responsibility and as the Corporation were subscribers (amongst others) towards the Expenses upon the understanding that it was not to be commenced until the necessary Sum was raised, no further Contribution be made.

In 1844 Davis extended and altered St. Leonard's Church, Marston Bigot, Somerset, for the Hon. and Rev. Richard Cavendish Boyle for whom he had designed the rectory. It was to be his last work exhibited at the Royal Academy, and was said by the catalogue to be 'now building from the designs and under the supervision of [Edward Davis]'.³³ In 1786 Boyle's grandfather, the seventh Earl of Cork and Orerry had, by Private Act of Parliament, demolished the existing church. This was said to be 'a very ancient Building' but it interrupted his privacy and view from Marston House. He replaced it with a new church built on another site in neo-Gothic style, with three pointed-arch windows on each side of a battlemented parapet. He apparently designed it himself, for the drawings, which exist, are boldly inscribed, 'This plan belongs to me, Cork'. By the 1840s the rector required a chancel to be added to the church for, although the parish population was small, the church had become a popular venue for marriages which by then averaged forty a year. The alteration work which Davis carried out, although to a church of no great age or architectural merit, illustrates the contemporary radical attitude to church restoration, which only gradually disappeared in the nineteenth century. Architects rejected historical congruence and routinely made drastic

alterations to churches, removing later additions to obtain a definite unity of style. Davis's chancel was neo-Norman, and the existing church was altered at the same time to be uniform. The windows to the nave and the tower were given round-arch heads, the new chancel was connected to the existing nave by a Romanesque arch, and the south façade of the nave was clad in ashlar. The Romanesque 'beak-head' mouldings to the entrance through the tower are deliberately left unfinished as if the Norman mason had died before he could finish his work.

In 1846 Davis entered a competition to rebuild Llandilo Church in Camarthenshire.³⁴ Fifty-two competitors entered, and the competition committee, on the recommendation of the Incorporated Church Building Society's surveyor, awarded Edward Davis first prize of fifty shillings. As was common at the time, the designs had to bear a motto that corresponded with the entrants' names in sealed envelopes to ensure anonymity. Davis's design bore the motto *Sic itur ad astra*, while the second prize of twenty shillings went to John Colston of Winchester, whose motto was *Spes*. However, despite Davis's design 'appearing to ... possess the most merit, and to be best adapted for the purposes set forth in the advertisement', the competition came to nothing, and the commission eventually went to Gilbert Scott.

Davis died on 30 April 1852 aged 50, leaving behind him a modest but significant legacy of works.³⁵ From the correspondence with Sir John Soane he clearly felt indebted to his master, and the 'very modest unassuming young man' is rare among the pupils for carrying forward at the early stages of his career the direct influence of his teacher. Looking forward as well as back, the Italianate villas are very early examples of the type later adopted in Bath by Henry Edmund Goodridge and which later in the century became commonplace with the influence of the *Villa Rustica*, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion* and the *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture*.

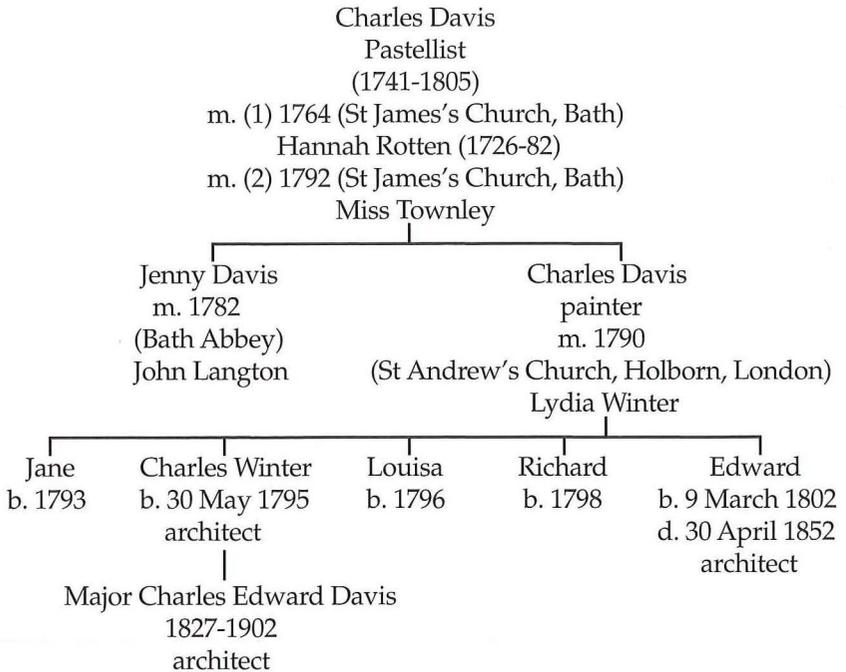
Appendix 1: Projects by Sir John Soane with which Edward Davis assisted, 25 May 1824-14 April 1826

- Privy Council and Board of Trade Offices, Whitehall
- Pelwall Hall, Staffordshire for Purney Silitoe Esq
- New Law Courts, Palace of Westminster: proposed Gothic façade; The Lord Chancellor's Robing Room; Court of King's Bench
- Drawings of Soane's house at Lincoln's Inn Fields: the museum, offices, study, picture rooms, breakfast room
- St Peter's Church, Walworth (pulpit and reading desk)
- House of Lords, Westminster: Committee Rooms and new library
- Bank of England
- Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone
- St John's Church, Bethnal Green
- 10 Downing Street (at that time the Chancellor of the Exchequer's House): alterations including new dining room
- Addition to Sulby Hall, Northants for Rene Payne

Appendix 2: Known architectural works of Edward Davis

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1830 (circa) | Alterations to 24 New King Street (attributed) |
| 1828 | Houses at Entry Hill, Bath |
| 1830 | Royal Victoria Park, Bath |
| 1830 | Toll-House on the London Road near Bailbrook |
| 1832 | Design for a Villa near Bath |
| 1833 (circa) | Smallcombe Grove (Oakwood from 1856), Bathwick Hill, Bath |
| 1833 | Restoration of Prior Birde's Oratory, Bath Abbey Church |
| 1834 (circa) | Restoration of Sir Bevil Grenville's monument, Lansdown |
| 1836 | Marston Rectory for the Hon. and Rev. Richard Boyle |
| 1838 | Twerton House, Bath, for Charles Wilkins, Esq., |
| 1838 | Barcombe, Paignton, South Devon |
| 1840 (circa) | Albury, Wrington |
| 1844 | Extension and alterations to St. Leonard's Church, Marston
Bigot, Somerset |
| 1846 | Competition entry to rebuild Llandilo Church, Camarthenshire |
| n.d. | Octagon Temple, Sydney Gardens |

Appendix 3: The Davis Family



Notes

- 1 See David Watkin, *Sir John Soane, Enlightenment Thought and the Royal Academy Lectures* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- 2 Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (Yale University Press, 3rd ed., New Haven, 1995), p.905.
- 3 John Summerson, 'The Vision of J. M. Gandy' in *Heavenly Mansions* (1949).
- 4 This is quite the reverse of our own century when clients commission prominent architects because they want their building to have the unique style of their architect – Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, etc.
- 5 Bath Abbey records.
- 6 The Victoria Art Gallery, Bath has portraits by Thomas Beach of Charles Davis the pastellist, Mrs Charles Davis, Mrs Charles Davis (jnr), and Miss Jenny Davis, and they have biographical information attached.

- 7 Barry Cunliffe, 'Major Davis: Architect and Antiquarian', *Bath History*, Vol.I (Gloucester, 1986), p.27.
- 8 James Lees-Milne and David Ford, *Images of Bath* (Richmond-upon-Thames, 1982), no.975, p.348.
- 9 Meylor and Sons, *The Original Bath Guide* (Bath, 1851), p.53. This is presumably the octagonal building depicted on the Cotterell and Spackman plan of Bath of 1852-54, and identified on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1885 as a 'Refreshments Room'.
- 10 Algernon Graves, *Royal Academy Exhibitors, 1769-1904* (1905), catalogue no.1130.
- 11 Sir John Soane's Museum, ref. archives: Private correspondence XV.B.23.1.
- 12 This and other dates relating to the Entry Hill houses are from the annual Poor Relief Assessments.
- 13 Known by 1841 as Gothic Cottage, now known via several other names as The Lodge.
- 14 1841 Census as well as the Poor Relief Assessments; the 1842 Poor Relief Assessments indicate he had vacated the house.
- 15 R. E. M. Peach, *Street Lore of Bath* (Bath, 1893).
- 16 Sir John Soane's Museum, ref. archives: Private correspondence XV.B.23.2.
- 17 Frederick Hanham, *A Manual for the Park; or, A Botanical Description of the Trees and Shrubs in the Royal Victoria Park, Bath ...*(1857), Bath Central Library. See also Robin Whalley, 'The Royal Victoria Park', *Bath History*, Vol.V (Bath, 1994).
- 18 The 1834 report notes, among numerous other improvements, a new carriage entrance from the Weston Road, which is hoped to be 'creditable to the taste of the architect'. The other architectural feature to be added – during 1837 – was the Victoria Column designed by the City Architect, G. P. Manners. From the reports it is evident that William McAdam, joint surveyor of the Bath Turnpike Trust, became involved from 1835 and that he supervised, without payment, the improvement and maintenance of the drives until 1843.
- 19 Graves, *ibid.*, catalogue no.1019.
- 20 Sir John Soane's Museum, ref. archives: Private correspondence XV.B.23.3.
- 21 Sir John Soane's Museum, ref. archives: Private correspondence XV.B.23.4.
- 22 John Britten, *Autobiography* (1856), p.225.
- 23 Edward Mangin, *A Memoir to the Artist* (1843).
- 24 Barker's house is clearly shown on a steelplate engraving published by John Britton in 1829, *Images of Bath*, no.133.
- 25 The house has been wrongly attributed in various publications to Henry Edmund Goodridge.
- 26 Copies in Hunt Collection, Vol.2, p.94 and C. P. Russell, *Maps & Plans of City of Bath*, Vol.2, p.120, both in Bath Central Library. This has led to further confusion that Gingell was connected with extending the building – see Neil Jackson, *Nineteenth Century Bath Architects & Architecture* (Bath, 1991), pp.74-5 (the house also misnamed), p.113 and p.115.
- 27 The house was acquired by the Dobson family who extended it, first in 1871 to add further servants' accommodation (the 1891 census records eight resident servants) and again in 1896 by the London architect John Brydon, architect of the Guildhall extensions and the Victoria Art Gallery. Brydon designed a substantial new wing to the east of the house on the garden

front in neo-Jacobean style with mullion and transom windows and leaded windows and a projecting bay with a drawing room and further bedrooms. The house was bought by the Aikman family in 1902, and acquired by General Booth of The Salvation Army as a nursing home in 1928. It was known as the Aikman Eventide Home until 1992, when the original villa with its garden was restored as a house by the present writer, and the servants' accommodation made into three self-contained flats.

- 28 The rectory is shown on the Marston Bigot Tithing Map of 1839.
- 29 On Wilkins's woollen manufacturing business see Nicholas von Behr, 'The Cloth Industry of Twerton from the 1780s to the 1820s', *Bath History*, Vol. VI (Bath, 1996), p.88.
- 30 Graves, *ibid.*, catalogue no.1067.
- 31 Peter Coard, *Vanishing Bath*, Part 2 (Bath, 1971).
- 32 Graves, *ibid.*, catalogue nos.1202 and 1241 (sw view).
- 33 Graves, *ibid.*, catalogue no.1147.
- 34 *Builder*, iv (1846), p.329.
- 35 *Gentlemen's Magazine*, 1852 (i), p.637, though he apparently did not die in Bath (despite belief to the contrary – Colvin, *ibid.*, p.254), as Register Office officials have no record of it.

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