

THE JACOBEOAN MANOR HOUSE



The Tudor house, still a hall house close to its medieval antecedents, fades often imperceptibly into the Jacobean. This is marked in the Cotswolds by a nascent vernacular Classicism, when correct Renaissance detail and symmetry have come of age. The Cotswolds do not possess the great prodigy houses of the courtiers and London merchants, but its best Jacobean manor houses are worthy gems, raised by local squires and wool men. These are often compositions grouped with outbuildings of quality, exemplified by Stanway and its gatehouse, set in their deep valleys on the edge of the Cotswolds. The Jacobean house marks the advent of careful planning to a compact design. The hall was gradually demoted from the hierarchical medieval hall, with the raised dais, to an entrance hall, and private dining parlours as separate rooms. The following houses have been selected to show the range of Jacobean fine houses in the region.

Upper Swell Manor, near Stow-on-the-Wold, unusually for the popular Cotswolds, was until recently untouched and

Above: Jacobean Doughton Manor (of 1632–41) is the old house of the village, across the street from the Prince of Wales's late Georgian Highgrove. It was carefully repaired by Norman Jewson in 1933.

Left: Asthall Manor, near Burford, built for Sir Walter Jones c.1620, viewed across the water meadows of the Windrush: the quintessence of the Cotswold manorial group.



abandoned, in the care of the church. It represents the manor of Evesham Abbey, standing near the church. The existing house is dated about 1630. It is not a dwelling house, but closer in character to a lodge, like those of Newark Park and Lodge Park. There is strong central emphasis, with a gable above the two-storey porch, its outstanding feature, all in cut stone. This is a riot of Tuscan columns and strapwork frieze, with the segmental pediment broken by a shield bearing the arms of the Stratford family. Inside, a stair leads up by the porch to a richly decorated upper room, with a delicious frieze of plaster sphinxes and an outstanding Renaissance hooded chimneypiece with fish-scale ornament, and a good balustered staircase.

Stanton Court, near Broadway, a few miles north of Stanway, dates to around 1620. Between 1906 and 1937, the village was maintained by a model squire, the architect Sir Philip Stott, as a neat paragon of Cotswold vernacular, and it is described by Pevsner as the finest village, architecturally, in the North Cotswolds. Stott improved the house, removing all traces of Georgian accretions and tactfully substituting them for 'correct' Neo-Jacobean restorations.

Here the doorway in the porch is set to the side, and the hall has migrated to the centre of the main front, so that the principle of symmetry in plan and elevation, by now sacrosanct for this quality of house, is not offended. The main (entrance) façade has flanking gabled wings which project either side of the hall. In the centre are three gables: a porch and hall bay window respectively are formed in extruded angles, as narrow tower blocks either side of the hall.

Doughton Manor, of 1632–41, is three miles from Tetbury, on the high Cotswolds, opposite the Prince of Wales's house at Highgrove, and was probably always the old manor of the village, mentioned in 1328. It is a conservative Jacobean

country house typical of the Cotswold vernacular, with unusually thick walls (so thick that they were once said to be made of cob), built modestly in rendered rubble with stone windows and dressings, and a central stone porch.

The house is H-plan, with the front and back façades almost identical, both with five tall gables. They are still timidly asymmetrical, so that the exterior elevations express the hierarchy of the uses of the rooms within, in the medieval fashion. One of the flanking wings contains the kitchens and service rooms, with plain windows; the other contains the parlours, with grander bay windows on the main front. The entry by the porch is just off centre, with the larger section containing the hall. The chimney shafts have been truncated as ungainly stumps; the stacks are built into the walls.

Inside, the great chamber has a two-stage, heraldic chimney-piece, with strapwork cartouches bearing the Talboys' arms, the designs of which can be traced to sources in engravings by the Italian Benedetto Battini, according to Nicholas Cooper. The builder was Richard Talboys, a wool man from Yorkshire,



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who bought the estate of just 4 acres in 1631 in order to build a country house, away from his business in the smoke of Tetbury. The gate piers to the north bear his mark: 'R.T. 1641'.

Doughton Manor later became a farmhouse, united in the same ownership as the grander house at Highgrove. Part of its appeal is that it has remained little altered. It was put into repair with admirable restraint for Colonel F. A. Mitchell by the Arts and Crafts architect Norman Jewson, in 1933.

Campden House in Chipping Campden was the nearest the Cotswolds approached to a Jacobean prodigy house. It was built about 1612–20 for Sir Baptist Hicks, an immensely rich London mercer in the King's favour, and rising, who in 1628 was created Viscount Campden of Campden, before dying the following year.

The house formed a complete and carefully planned ensemble with its pair of flanking banqueting houses, gate lodges, a terrace of alms houses, and superb gardens, set on the edge of the town. Fragments of the house can be detected above ground level, with the gateway and boundary walls. Four illustrations of the house 'before it was pulled down', all based on the same lost original, date from the eighteenth century. They record a symmetrical, three-storey, gabled house of eleven bays, with a complex and exotic roofscape of shaped gables and domes, and its ancillary buildings and terraced

gardens with plots.

The house is reputed to have cost £29,000 to build and £15,000 to furnish. Sadly, it was to have a short innings as the 2nd Lord Campden, who died in 1643, and the 3rd Lord Campden declared their hand with the Royalists in the Civil War. After it had stood for hardly twenty-five years, the house was fired and then mostly dismantled on the orders of Prince Rupert in 1645 in order to make it useless for occupation by the Parliamentary forces. It became a quarry later in the century, and was never rebuilt. A fragment of its main façade is all that remains.

The pair of banqueting houses, east and west, escaped the fire and destruction, and remain a marvel of their date, suggesting the glories which have been. They stood at either end of the terrace in front of the house, with their arcaded windows enclosing the loggias on the main floors. They have roofs with obelisks and trefoil ornament, and heavy, blind strapwork cresting, elaborate twisting corner chimneys, with ornamental finials, and a plaster frieze inside the west lodge. They are cut into the rising terraces, accessed at different levels from them; the lower rooms may have been fitted up as grottoes, like those at Woburn Abbey.

Earthworks survive as shapeless humps and banks in the pasture, representing the layout of a high-status Renaissance garden like that at Raglan Castle in Monmouthshire, advanced for its date. This has vanished from view but fortuitously survived unaltered underground, escaping the whims of



Upper Swell Manor, the nearby Jacobean manor built as a plaisance, with its central storyed porch with segmental pediment which served as an inspiration to the new house.
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subsequent fashion. Outlines of terraces, walks, a canal and water parterre and numerous early features were securely fossilised until they were deconstructed by archaeology and aerial photography in the 1980s. The old gatehouse and banqueting houses have recently been restored by The Landmark Trust and the barn has become a museum devoted to the Arts and Crafts.

The north block of Whittington Court represents the hall range of an Elizabethan house, probably built before 1592 for John Cotton on an older moated site. The Jacobean cross-wing added about 1630 is grander. It has large canted bay windows and a fine staircase, of full height, with cut off newels and balusters. The library has a hooded Renaissance chimneypiece, a provincial derivation from Book IV of Serlio's *L'Architettura* (1537). The Whittington Press was established in an outbuilding here.

Lower Slaughter Manor, near Cheltenham, was granted to the senior branch of the Whitmore family of Shropshire in 1611, who only sold it in 1964. It is an advanced house, built in 1656 by Valentine Strong, whose contract for the work

survives. It is one of the first Cotswold houses built to a double-pile plan, square, of five by five bays, with a hipped roof set to a pronounced overhang. But its Jacobean harmony has been spoiled by large extensions in the nineteenth century, particularly an awkward east wing of 1891.

Bibury Court is picturesquely set at the end of a short valley, on the edge of England's so-called most beautiful village. The main part of the house was built to an E-plan in 1633 for Sir Thomas Sackville, retaining an earlier projecting wing towards the church. The central porch is the strongest feature, with Renaissance doorway, Serlian rustication, and the arms of Sir Thomas and his wife. A good deal of internal remodelling was carried out: first in the mid-eighteenth century, then in 1830 for the 2nd Lord Sherborne by Lewis Wyatt, and finally there was an early-twentieth-century restoration in Neo-Georgian and Neo-Jacobean style undertaken for Sir Orme Clarke. Since 1968, the house has been a hotel, often floodlit at night.



Chastleton House, Oxfordshire

You approach the archway in front of Chastleton down the deep lanes of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds, not far from Morton-on-Marsh, past a pretty dovecote, to find before you, soaring and solid, five, narrow, brooding gables of brown ochre stone, with a church set obligingly to one side. It is one of the most perfect Jacobean compositions in the country.

The history of the manor begins in 777 with Offa, King of the Mercians, who made a grant of land here to Evesham Abbey. It descended to the Catesbys, who owned the manor from the late medieval period. The last of them was Robert Catesby, the charismatic ringleader of the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot, killed resisting arrest in 1605. Nothing remains of the medieval manor house which stood on the site.

Chastleton was built anew between 1607 and 1612 for Sir

The entrance with strapwork pediment is set sideways, in the return wall at the lower end of the hall. The screens' end of the great hall in its 'Old English' arrangement, with contrived clutter, as photographed by Charles Latham in 1902.

Walter Jones, son of a wool merchant from Witney, who had prospered at the Bar and was MP for Worcester. Though he had risen in status from trade to gentry, and proudly traced his descent from Priam of Troy, his descendants grew poorer and poorer over the following centuries, so the history of Chastleton has been uneventful and its fabric preserved virtually as he left it when he died in 1632. It makes its mark on history only once, for the codification of the rules of croquet, in 1868.

Sir Walter Jones's grandson, Arthur, was known as 'the Cavalier', as he supported the King's Royalists during the Civil War and suffered fines under the Commonwealth, after he had escaped from the battle of Worcester. The Joneses continued to suffer as High Tory Jacobites in the eighteenth century.

Joneses were succeeded in 1828 by the Whitmores of Dudmaston in Shropshire. In living memory the descent moved sideways again to Alan Clutton-Brock, sometime Art



Correspondent of *The Times* and Slade Professor of Art, in 1955. He would shuffle to the door to show a handful of visitors round an arctic and increasingly dilapidated house. He greeted one through a miasma of alcohol and cobwebs, maintaining the cobwebs were cultivated, 'as they held the place together'.

He reigned in a time warp of donnish seclusion, among dank halls and the exquisite clutter of his ancestors, muffled in a greatcoat of heavy tweed, and spouting a charming patter à propos his Mannerist garden, or the romantic tale of the 'Cavalier' Arthur Jones in flight from the battle of Worcester in 1651. The Cavalier lurked in his secret place over the porch, while his wife laced a flagon of ale with a sleeping draught of laudanum for Cromwell's men who had come looking for him and were resting in the room next door. Jones stole the best of their horses and made his escape.

During Clutton-Brock's tenure, the rooms were unheated and musty, and increasingly bare as he consigned family heirlooms one by one to the London sale rooms. Clutton-Brock died in 1976 and his widow, Barbara, struggled on with the house and the remaining 30 acres of the estate. By the 1980s, the decay of this Jacobean treasure house was far advanced and imminent collapse threatened to condemn the house to

history. Fortunately, the National Trust acquired the house in 1991. Since their stewardship, the house has been pulled apart and put together again exactly as it was, preserving the illusion that nothing has changed.

Chastleton stands with five tall gables sandwiched between the embattled staircase towers; the façade is articulated in five, advancing and receding planes, the towers, flanking bays, projecting bays and the tallest bay with the hall sitting tight in the centre all capped with small gables. The façade is studiously symmetrical, with bays for the porch and the hall oriel either side of the central hall. The front steps lead up disconcertingly to a blank wall, as the entrance is contrived sideways in the flanking return wall of the porch to conceal its off-centre position, as at Stanton Court. The windows are symmetrical, but jumbled, and stand together with their string courses out of level.

The plan is square, compact but complex, based on the central courtyard, here outward facing, with two staircase

The long gallery in the attic with plasterwork in low relief, an interlace of ribbons and roses, to the barrel-vaulted ceiling: 'one of the most glorious rooms in England'.

The great chamber is the grandest reception room, with a riot of decoration smothering every surface: pendant bosses to the plaster ceiling, carved wainscoting, and a frieze of painted panels of sibyls and prophets.





towers at either end of the hall. The Oak Parlour for daily family use is off the lower end of the hall, where the kitchen might have been under the Tudor arrangement. The principal entertaining rooms are on the first floor, approached up the grander of the two staircases, with obelisk finials, which leads off the upper end of the hall. They are situated in the north range, arranged in an enfilade of great chamber, withdrawing chamber and bedchamber. The magnificent long gallery on the top floor runs the whole length of the north range.

Walter Jones would have cultivated good contacts in London, and Mark Girouard has suggested that he sought the advice of an architect of national standing, such as the obscure Robert Smythson, architect of Hardwick Hall, Burton Agnes and Wollaton. The intermediary may have been his friend and neighbour Ralph Sheldon, who is known to have supplied tapestries for Chastleton and has his arms in a place of honour over the fireplace in the best bedroom. The building work at Chastleton is traditional Cotswold vernacular, executed by local masons. The plasterwork inside may be Oxford workmanship.

The interiors are rich in textures and provenance, giving a sense of time arrested. Several items mentioned in a 1633 inventory, like the great oak table in the hall, are still *in situ*. The textiles are of quality, and authentic. The Fettipace room, the grandest bedroom, is hung with Flanders tapestries of Jacob and Essau recorded in the house in 1633. The closet beyond is lined in rare Irish or flame stitch hangings of the seventeenth century. The striped wool wall hangings at the top of the east stairs are of a material known as dornix (from Tournai), universal in seventeenth-century inventories, but of a type unknown today. Two Barcheston tapestries are displayed with the date 1595 and the initials of Walter and Elinor Jones.

The great chamber was the Jones's principal reception room, every surface of which is decorated with a provincial, restless virtuosity. The ceiling has vine trails, flowers, ribs and pendants. The walls are wainscoted, with painted panels of sibyls and prophets in the Roman manner framed in a frieze of caryatids. Allusive metaphysical conceits and references from Flemish pattern and emblem books inform the decorative arabesques. The heavy stone chimneypiece is the *tour de force*, with a strapwork cartouche whose armorial bearings express all too blatantly Jones's nouveaux-riches origins and gentry pretensions. The great chamber looks over the topiary garden, admired by the Victorians for the purity of its age. It

The five narrow gables of Chastleton's main front in tawny stone (1607–12) project and recede alternately between the flanking staircase towers. It was taken over by the National Trust in 1991 after 400 years in the ownership of the Jones family, who built it.

reinforces the sense of organic timelessness, but may or may not be contemporary with the house.

TO CUT



Stanway House, Gloucestershire

Noble Stanway is to many the ideal of the English manor house. It is one of the glorious Cotswold groupings, in glowing ochre stone from Guiting, consisting of manor house, gate-house, tithe barn and Norman church. The principal elements of this composition at the foot of the Cotswold escarpment, near Tewkesbury, have grown in harmony for over a thousand years, all of a piece. And Stanway has changed hands just once in that time.

It was given by the curiously-named thegns Odo and Dodo to the Abbots of Tewkesbury, perhaps as early as the date of its foundation in 715, and their 'fair stone house', a grange or summer retreat, was noted by John Leland. It came to Sir Richard Tracy, younger brother of the owner of Toddington, whose family, claiming descent from Charlemagne, had been settled in the area since before the Norman Conquest. Richard leased it from the monks in 1533, three years before the Dissolution of the smaller monasteries. His family have held it ever since, if by dint of a descent through the female line in 1817, when it came into the Charteris family, the Scottish

Earls of Wemyss.

Sir Paul Tracy inherited in 1569 and started work some ten years later, raising up the house on earlier monastic foundations to an unusual L-plan, with a hall and service block in the west (entrance) range, and round the corner to the south, the long parlour block. Sir Paul's hall is the glory of the house, dominated within and without by a magnificent sixty-light oriel window, on a five-sided plan, at the dais end of the hall. Lady Cynthia Asquith, diarist and a daughter of the house, described the evening light 'filtering through the oriel, with hundreds of latticed panes, so mellowed by time that whenever the sun shines through their amber and green glass, the effect is a vast honeycomb...'.

Sir Paul Tracy was created a baronet, one of the first, in

The medievalising Renaissance gatehouse of 1630–40 with mannered centrepiece is set at an angle to the house. The three shaped gables are topped with the scallop shells of the Tracy family, whose descendants have lived here since the Reformation.

The long south front round the corner, 1630–40. The highest fountain jet in Britain springs in Baroque water gardens under restoration on the hillside.





1611, and died in 1620, when he was succeeded by Sir Richard Tracy, who was an inspired and innovative builder. He added the house's great triumph of the gatehouse of the early seventeenth century (c.1630), and remodelled the south range.

The gatehouse is a medievalising, early Renaissance hybrid, producing a storeyed extravagance with three, shaped gables set with the Tracy scallop shells, a decorative flourish repeated throughout in finials, seats and niches. It is placed not, as in other Tracy houses, such as Toddington and Sudeley, opposite the main (west) entrance, but at right angles to it. The approach to the house is mediated by its gateway, itself a medieval conception, giving the feeling of a stately ceremony of entry every time the courtyard is accessed.

The courtyard is enclosed by a north gateway standing beyond, a west boundary wall (on the churchyard side) and the house with its main door to the east. The bay windows rise to full height either side of the Mannerist centrepiece, the archway of which carries a segmental pediment broken by a panel framing the shield of the Tracy (and Atkyns) arms, again with a pediment. There are Classical details in an advanced style for its date, more so than the hall of fifty years earlier, such as caused it for many years to be attributed rather hopefully to Inigo Jones. Today, the architect is generally thought to be Timothy Strong, of the family of master masons from Great Barrington.

The south front is a long range with a strong horizontal emphasis that pulled the old work together behind an improved façade of seven bays, with mullioned and transomed

windows. It is almost symmetrical, with an elegant doorway in the centre of 1724, probably added by Francis Smith, and arcaded strapwork cresting and battlements along the roof-line, answering that on the gatehouse bays.

The old north-east stone range may have stood on the site of the medieval or early sixteenth-century house, and was still standing when Kip executed his faithful engraving, c.1710. About 1859, it was demolished, when a new north wing, kitchen court and stables were added by William Burn. Detmar Blow also worked here in 1913, tidying, giving shape, and extending. Lord Wemyss demolished most of Burn's wing and back premises in 1948–54 to make the house 'viable'.

Inside, the improvements and adaptations over the generations since Jacobean times are more evident. The house is entered by the screens' passage, an early-eighteenth-century Doric colonnade of 1724 replacing the Jacobean arrangement. The great hall, lined with ashlar stone in the twentieth century, is hung with hatchments, antlers and tapestries. At the dais end is a table, with a single plank top scored with lines for the game of shuffleboard, 22ft-long, built for the room from timbers felled in 1620. The present dining or 'audit' room (still used for collecting rents) and old kitchen are off the lower end of the hall, to the north. The drawing room is approached up steps off the upper end, to the south, with early-Georgian panelling and a Neo-Jacobean ceiling of the 1860s.

After 1817, Stanway became a subsidiary of the Scottish estates of the Earls of Wemyss and March, descended from Susan Tracy Keck, last of the second dynasty of Tracys. In 1883, Lord Wemyss made it over to his son, Hugo, Lord Elcho, who had married Mary Wyndham. It became the centre of a glittering social and intellectual coterie, slightly at odds with the hunting squires of the Cotswolds. Their talented children formed the *jeunesse dorée* of the Edwardian era, when Stanway was the resort of a charmed aristocratic circle called 'The Souls'. They had an important influence on the cult of the Cotswold manor house, exemplified most resoundingly by Stanway. The house was restored by Detmar Blow, and featured in *Country Life* in November 1916.

The present owners are Lord and Lady Neidpath, who admirably maintain Stanway's traditions of munificent gentility. The Baroque water garden attributed to Charles Bridgman has a formal canal of the 1730s, eight ponds, a pyramid, built by Robert Tracy in 1756 to commemorate his father, from which the cascade tumbles down the slope, and a fountain. Lord Neidpath restored these features and in June 2004 set in motion the highest fountain in Britain at 300 feet and the highest gravity-fed fountain in the world, supplied by



Stanway grouping in golden ashlar. The bay window of the south front with strapwork cresting c.1630 (right) is answered by the shaped gables of the contemporary gate house in Flemish mannerist style, surmounted by the Tracy scallops against the sky. It stands across the long garden wall pierced by a *clair-voyée* forming peep holes over the public road.

The great hall dais is suffused with light from latticed casements in the oriel. The shuffleboard table (to the right) was made for the room in the 1620s.



Cold Ashton Manor, Gloucestershire

Christopher Hussey summarised Cold Ashton in *Country Life*, December 1934 as 'a hill top house, grey gables pricking the sky. A perfectly integrated symmetrical composition.' It is one of the most assured Jacobean compositions in the Cotswolds, carefully if conservatively planned. The house is set exposed to the cold winds on the highest point of the Cotswolds here, dramatic, commanding spectacular views over hills and St Catherine's Valley.

The manor of Cold Ashton belonged to Bath Abbey from the time of Athelstan to the Dissolution, when it was bought like many others by Sir Walter Denys, a speculator in monastic estates, for £760 11s. 8d. He sold the house on for an £80 profit to the Pepwell family, but the present house is believed to date from the purchase of the estate by John Gunning, Mayor of Bristol, in 1629. Sir Robert Gunning's arms are raised over the elaborate gateway from the road on cresting flanked by fruitful urns, dating some time after his grant of arms in 1662.

H. Avray Tipping described the gateway as designed by a man who had studied his John Shute or some other Classical

authority, 'the first English exposition of the Vitruvian rule' (1563): 'the rustication and restraint of the pilasters and entablature hint at a fairly direct Italian inspiration.'

The house is approached through its gateway arch up segmental steps, across a forecourt, where its façade rises above eleven more steps, with two, gabled cross-wings flanking the recessed centre; a Classical composition in Gothic dress. The wings have the canted bays of the Cotswolds; in the centre is a Classical balustrade over the porch, and a pair of oval windows either side. The north front is gabled and flush, resembling neighbouring Wick Court.

There is an entry set in its traditional place, at the lower end of the hall, which is to the rear. The hall screen is 'the chief jewel of this gem-like house', wrote Tipping. It is indeed the glory of the interior, richly carved, Classical, and exceptionally well preserved. The passage side away from the

The rusticated gateway from the road is dated after 1662, with the arms of Sir Robert Gunning: such early provincial Classicism is 'the first English exposition of the Vitruvian rule'.

The symmetrical south front whose grey gables prick the sky. The house on this hilltop site dates to shortly after 1629, with cross-wings and the typical canted bays of the Cotswolds.



hall is the most elaborate, with fielded panels carved in the solid with gouged rustication. Two archways lead into the hall, which have on the hall side Corinthian pilasters and dentil mouldings, and faint traces of polychrome paintwork.

Sir Robert was succeeded by the Langton family, later Gore-Langtons, who became Earls Temple of Stowe, seated more comfortably at Newton Park outside Bath, while they let Cold Ashton decline. They sold in 1902 to the sitting tenant, Mr Lucas, a yeoman farmer who continued to hold the estate till 1918, altering the house little. Cold Ashton was featured in its state of decay in the early *Country Life* of 1905.

Colonel Reggie Cooper was the saviour who acquired the house from Lucas and started to restore it with uncommon dedication and skill in 1923. He was certainly influenced by the cult of the manor house promulgated by Edward Hudson and H. Avray Tipping in the pages of *Country Life*. He was one of a group of repairers of early houses in the first years of

the twentieth century, called by John Cornforth the 'ex-Foreign Office circle', gentlemen of independent means and exquisite taste, with a passion for buying early manor houses which had fallen into advanced decay

Reggie Cooper started to collect appropriate early furniture in oak and walnut to complement the house, and created at Cold Ashton another paragon of the Cotswold manor house, connected to its idealised past. Tipping saw reflected in the composition this ideal: 'Colonel Cooper, with unerring judgment, refrained from "restoration" and ... by mere repair and preservation gave back to the whole place that is garden environment as well as house interior the spirit of its past.

Cooper continued to pursue his passion for early houses as a way of life, moving from Cold Ashton to Cothay in Somerset in 1925, a perfect example of the small, fifteenth-century manor house, where he laid out the existing gardens in the following years. Then he tackled Julians in Hertfordshire, and finally the fourteenth-century manor house of Knightstone in Devon. Cold Ashton was Cooper's first and perhaps one of his most successful restorations.

Rear of house with the yew walk.

View from the top of the house over the gateway into the wooded combes of the St Catherine's valley.

