

# THE 2<sup>ND</sup> MARQUIS OF ROCKINGHAM'S PROPERTIES IN 1776

Stephen Cooper

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the owners of Wentworth Woodhouse were noblemen. It was a pre-democratic age, when the aristocracy (along with the gentry) still enjoyed enormous wealth and exercised enormous power. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Rockingham (1730-1782) was one of the richest men in Britain, and was Prime Minister twice, though briefly. He owned a large estate in what we now call South Yorkshire, and an even larger one in County Wicklow in Ireland. He sat in the House of Lords, controlled two 'pocket boroughs' and influenced elections in dozens of constituencies in the House of Commons, was Lord Lieutenant in his home County of Yorkshire, and controlled the militia there. He also owned or leased several houses apart from Wentworth House (as he called it).

My curiosity was aroused when I happened to read the account of a trial in the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London's Central Criminal Court, 1674-1913*. On 30 August 1786 one John Brown was indicted for 'feloniously stealing a black gelding, price £14, the property of John Sharman of Girton near Ryegate in Surrey. One of the witnesses for the prosecution was William Bruce, who was a shoe-maker and boot-maker at Lambeth-Marsh, next door to the Queen's Head. He said that the accused rented 'one pair of stairs' in Sharman's house, which consisted of three rooms in all. When asked what sort of man Brown was, Sharman replied:

He told me when he came to lodge with me, he was a gentleman's servant, and I having [sic] been a gentleman's servant myself; I lived with the Marquis of Rockingham about ten years ago;<sup>1</sup> and at Wimbledon I lived with him seven years; I was footman to my Lady:<sup>2</sup> I went down to Wentworth with him, and to Little Harriden [sic]; that was the very time when they left that house on Parson's Green, before they went to Mr Rush's House at Wimbledon.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. in about 1776, the year of the American Declaration of Independence.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Bright, Marchioness of Rockingham, brought estates at Badsworth and Ecclesall to the marriage in 1752. Widowed in 1782, she bought Hillingdon House in Uxbridge in 1786 for £9,000 and lived there until her own death in 1804. That House is now to let, as a restaurant.

The background to the testimony was that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis's grandfather, the Honourable Thomas Watson, was the third son of the Earl of Rockingham of Rockingham Castle in Northamptonshire and his wife Anne, who was the younger sister of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Strafford, and upon the latter's death in 1695, he inherited the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl's vast estates in both England and Ireland, changed his name to Thomas Watson-Wentworth, and changed the name of the House from Wentworth Woodhouse to Wentworth House. On his death in 1723, the South Yorkshire estate passed to his son, who was later created 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Rockingham. When he died in 1750, it passed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis and then, on his death without issue in 1782, to his nephew the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam.

Over 20 years ago, Melvyn Jones chronicled how both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquises of Rockingham substantially enlarged their estates at Wentworth, by means of purchases, exchanges of land, the enclosure of land and (in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis's case) by means of a fortunate marriage, to Mary Bright of Sheffield. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis's father had inherited around 9,000 acres (including parts of Wentworth, Brampton and Hoyland townships, and most of Tankersley parish) but purchased about 1,650 acres surrounding the estate, by means of 42 transactions costing £16,000, while the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis added a further 2,116 acres in 24 transactions costing nearly £37,000; and by the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis died in 1782, a total of some 4,500 acres had been added to the South Yorkshire estate in 96 transactions, costing more than £78,500. According to Paul Nunn, the Wentworth estate expanded from 9,240 acres to 17,200 acres during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The lasting influence of landlord control is everywhere visible in Wentworth. In 1862, Drake's *Directory of Rotherham* stated that the entire village was owned by the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam (1857-1902), and one doubts that the situation is very different today, although it is the Fitzwilliam Wentworth Estates Company, rather than the family, which nowadays runs the Estate Office.

As for Wentworth House, Jones described in detail how the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis was responsible for building both the Baroque West Front and most of the Palladian East Front, partly because he wanted to outdo his cousin at Wentworth Castle near Barnsley, who thought he should have succeeded to the estate at Wentworth. By the time the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis died in 1750, his building expenditure at Wentworth had reached £90,000.<sup>3</sup>

In the words of Harman & Pevsner, Wentworth House was and is "not just one of Yorkshire's but one of England's greatest and most remarkable houses, its ambitious Palladian East façade, extending 606 ft - 185 metres [being] celebrated for being the longest front of any English country house". In 1771 Arthur Young described the Marble Saloon as 'the finest room in England', while the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis had personally helped his father to put together a fine collection of statuary, including an Idolino (or Appolino?), a Clapping Faun, a

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<sup>3</sup> See Jones (1995), pp.118, 124; Jones (1998), pp 82-4; and Jones (2000); Nunn, 29.

Medici Mercury, a Medici Venus, three statues of the Emperor Hadrian's friend Antinous, two dying Gauls and the Roman general Germanicus.

It is clear that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis, like his ancestor the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Strafford, preferred living in Yorkshire to living in London. In 1767 he wrote "I am preparing to recover from all political fatigues by a journey into Yorkshire".<sup>4</sup> No doubt he had found being Prime Minister taxing in 1765-6, during which he presided over the repeal of the Stamp Act, in a vain attempt to assuage the anger of the 13 American Colonies.

The Park at Wentworth Woodhouse was not the only which Rockingham had in Yorkshire, since he also owned nearby Tankersley Hall and Park: this had been acquired by the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Strafford, and inhabited by a 'delinquent' Royalist, Sir Richard Fanshawe, and his lady, in the 1650s. However, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century the mansion there was allowed to fall into a ruinous condition, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis certainly never resided in 'Tankersley Old Hall' as it became known, though he still had a deer park there, and the Marchioness took tea in a Summer House in the Park, subsequently known as 'Lady's Folly Tower'; but Tankersley as a whole suffered badly from the effects of ironstone and then coal-mining, and the remaining deer were removed to Wentworth Park in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the Tower was demolished in 1960. Very little remains of the Old Hall.

The Marquis had the lease of a town house in London. This was no 4, Grosvenor Square in Mayfair, which he inherited in 1751, along with the rest of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis's estates. This house provided 'an ideal base for meetings with [Rockingham's] political friends, for attendance at court and at Parliament, and the social activities which made up the season'. Yet Sharman does not refer to it. Perhaps this is because he was not in the 'first division' of footmen? The Marquis, after all, had a large number of servants of all kinds - there were 97 household staff at Wentworth Woodhouse alone in 1773.<sup>5</sup>

The description of 4, Grosvenor Square in British History Online's *Survey of London*<sup>6</sup> tells us that the freehold of the Square as a whole formed part of the Duke of Westminster's estate; and that the original house was built around 1728 by a builder, who took a lease of the place. The house failed to sell, and in 1739 the builder's widow, a Mrs Simmons had to resort to a raffle. Eventually, the lease was sold to the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Effingham, but he in turn sold it in 1741 to the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Rockingham who moved there from Lincoln's Inn Fields early in 1742, and then made considerable alterations to it, supervised by Henry Flitcroft (one of the main architects employed at Wentworth Woodhouse). In 1743, Flitcroft wrote:

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<sup>4</sup> Albemarle, *Memoirs*, vol II, p.54, letter to the Earl of Hardwicke, 2 July 1767.

<sup>5</sup> Jones (1998), p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> *Survey of London: Volume 40, the Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair, Part 2 (The Buildings) Grosvenor Square: Individual Houses built before 1926.*

The Works at your House in Grosvenor Square go on very well, and as fast as the Nature of them will permit, the Steps are made down to the Lower offices by your Lordshipp's dressing room, and I have had 3 useless Doorways, and 7 blanks or holow places in ye Lower Story walld up Solid, which is a great strengthening to the Lower part of the House, the Bricklayers are Now at Work upon the Blanks and useless doorways which your Lordshipp Ordered to be walled up on the Hall floor, which will add much strength to ye House, the Plaisterers are got to Work on ye Ceiling. Ye Doorway of the Front is altering, and when that is done I shall order the wall of the Back stair case to be underpinned. When that is done I hope to be able to report the House secure. The fitting up ye Dining Room (which will be a very good one) and the Hall etc. will be pursued with all proper dispatch, and hope to have done the Whole in about two Months time.

An inventory compiled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis's time tells us that, there were 'Turkey' carpets on the ground floor, along with statuary in the form of busts and bas-reliefs; marble chimneypieces were to be found up to the second-floor level; the garret bedrooms included a footmen's room with four beds in it and a maids' room with three beds. The porter's room contained a trophy of the Gordon Riots - 'an Iron Bar, taken from one of the Rioters in June 1780'. A second-floor closet contained two organs, and a top-floor lumber room held another trophy, 'a White Flag taken from the French'. The male servants in the house and stables were numbered, for tax purposes, at 23.

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis's death, the lease passed down to successive Earls Fitzwilliam, and lastly to the 7<sup>th</sup> (popularly known as 'Billy Fitzbilly'), who surrendered it. The Duke of Westminster's Estate then granted a 200-year lease to the Italian Ambassador, and a very extensive 'Italianisation' was carried out, followed by a further 'fitting-out and decoration in a similar spirit to the earlier', between 1969 and 1973. So 4 Grosvenor Square had now been the Italian Embassy for almost a century, and there is not much left now of the original building, though the Ambassador's study is said to have an 18<sup>th</sup> century English marble chimneypiece similar to examples at Wentworth Woodhouse and Woburn.

I have also noticed that there is a bust on the staircase in the Italian Embassy - said to be of good quality and 'after the antique', but unnamed in the guide to the Embassy published in 2003, which is almost certainly of the Emperor Hadrian's friend Antinous. This identification is important, because the statuary collection at Wentworth Woodhouse includes no less than three representations of Antinous: a statue in the Pillared Hall, a bust on the Grand Staircase and a relief in the West Entrance Hall. To my mind this points to the bust at 4 Grosvenor Square being put there by the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Rockingham.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *The Italian Embassy*, pp 41, 43.

Though Sharman did not refer to Grosvenor Square when he gave evidence at the Old Bailey, he did refer to two other London properties: those at Parson's Green and Wimbledon. I have found only two references to the former, the first being in a letter written by the Earl of Winchelsea to Rockingham on 3 August 1766, in which the former declines an offer of accommodation there:

My Lord,

I am much obliged to your Lordship and Lady Rockingham for your very obliging offer of Parson's Green. But it would in no respect answer any purpose of mine.<sup>8</sup>

The second reference to the Parson's Green property comes in Sharman's evidence at the Old Bailey and tells us that the Marquis rented a house there for about three years between 1766 and 1769.

As for the Wimbledon property, we are fortunate in that the relevant accounts have been studied by Elspeth Veale. Her conclusions were that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis took a lease on the property between 1771 and his death in 1782; and indeed we know that he died there.<sup>9</sup> The property demised by the lease included both a villa and a 20 acre estate, with kitchen gardens, pasture, a dove house, a melon ground, a plantation and a summer house. She also concluded that Rockingham came to prefer this house to the one at Grosvenor Square because he felt that it was a house where he could better escape the 'Bustle of Business'. Veale also concluded that, although Grosvenor Square supplied the Wimbledon house with services and supplies, it was Wimbledon men and women who worked there; and the gardens there were a better source of supply of certain kinds of produce. However, it is clear the Wimbledon house was demolished in the 1790s, and nothing of it survives today - not even an illustration.

Sharman's reference to 'Little Harriden' is misleading, since there is no such place; but there were two manors at *Great Harrowden* and *Little Harrowden*, and there was a Great Harrowden Hall. The estate there was sold by Nicholas Knollys, a descendant of the Vaux family, to the Honourable Thomas Watson in 1693. As we know, Watson inherited the estates of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Strafford at Wentworth two years later, when he changed his surname to Watson-Wentworth; but it was he built Great Harrowden Hall between about 1716 and 1723, while his son of the same name - who later became the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Rockingham - was the owner between 1723 and 1750.<sup>10</sup> On his death, the property passed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis and then to the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> Earls Fitzwilliam, before being re-sold to the Vaux family in 1895. In modern times it was leased to a Mrs Sharpe and her nieces the Misses Jeyes as a

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<sup>8</sup> Albemarle, *Memoirs*, vol II, pp 6-7.

<sup>9</sup> Albemarle, vol II, p.484.

<sup>10</sup> [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk); Jones (1995), 124.

school for 'young ladies' between 1876 and 1898,<sup>11</sup> while the Hall, Gardens and Park have been home to Wellingborough Golf Club since 1975. The Hall is the club house, part of the garden is used as a putting green and the Park is used as the course.

The Historic England website tells us that Great Harrowden Hall was mainly used as a dower house; but I doubt this is true, except for the period between 1723 and 1743, when it was undoubtedly occupied by the Honourable Thomas Watson's widow, the former Alice Proby.<sup>12</sup> However the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis certainly used it after Alice's death; and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marchioness was there in 1746 when she wrote to her husband, telling him of the impending arrival of her young son, Charles Lord Higham, fresh from his adventurous attempt to fight the Jacobites.<sup>13</sup> In addition, we know from Sharman's evidence at the Old Bailey that Higham himself, now the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Rockingham, was at Harrowden during the late 1770s.<sup>14</sup>

It is noticeable that the former footman Sharman's account of his time in service with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis does not mention several places which (rightly or wrongly) have long been associated) with Wentworth Woodhouse, notably Milton Hall near Peterborough, the boroughs of Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire and Malton in North Yorkshire, and Coolattin House in County Wicklow, Ireland.

The reason for the first omission is obvious. Milton Hall was the home of the Earls Fitzwilliam, in particular of the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl (1748-1833), a nephew of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis who inherited his Yorkshire estates in 1782. It passed to the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam, but on his death in 1857 he left it to a younger son, George, and it was inhabited by his descendants rather than the main Fitzwilliam line, until 1952, when Tom, the 10<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam united the two estates in his person once more.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, however, the great House at Wentworth had been leased to Lady Mabel Training College in 1950 but was subsequently sold, and is now the property of the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust, which acquired it in 2017, while the

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<sup>11</sup> *Stamford Mercury* for 24 March 1876.

<sup>12</sup> The arms of Watson and Proby are displayed over the iron gates in the Garden, at the rear. There is a statue in the garden of Samson killing a Philistine, as there once was at Wentworth Woodhouse.

<sup>13</sup> Letters from Lady to Lord Malton, 4 January 1746, and from the Housekeeper at Harrowden to Lord Malton of 8 January 1746, WWWM M2-357 and M8-65, cited by Dr Bloy in her PhD thesis, pp 24-5. Higham became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Rockingham in 1751.

<sup>14</sup> The Hall may have been used as a dower house again by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis's widow Mary Finch between 1750 and 1761, although there is a carpet at Wentworth Woodhouse which bears the name 'Mary Dowager Marchioness of Rockingham', which presumably relates to her occupation of the Yorkshire mansion in those years; and the *Ipswich Journal* for Saturday 30 May 1761 tells us that she died in London and was buried in York Minster. As for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis's dowager, the former Mary Bright, we know that she bought Hillingdon House in Uxbridge after her husband's death in 1782, and died there in 1804, Harrowden having passed to her nephew the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam, along with the rest of her husband's properties.

<sup>15</sup> There is a full account of the dispute in 1952, concerning the inheritance of the peerage and of the estate between Tom and his illegitimate elder brother 'Toby', including a reference to the (unreported) law report, in Bailey. In 1956, Tom married Joyce Elizabeth Mary Langdale (1898 – 1995) of Houghton Hall, in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

estates belong to the Fitzwilliam Wentworth Estate Company, in which the 10<sup>th</sup> and last Earl's step-grandson, Sir Philip Naylor-Leyland, has a major interest.

By contrast, the boroughs of Malton in North Yorkshire and Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire were purchased by Thomas Watson-Wentworth in 1713, and both these passed to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquises of Rockingham, and then down the Fitzwilliam main line, where they have remained.<sup>16</sup> As for Malton, the long association between the Fitzwilliam family, and now the Fitzwilliam Malton Estates Company, is very visible even today, since the town has a fine array of Georgian houses and buildings, some of them incorporating elements of classical architecture; and this is clearly the result of substantial spending by the family at the time. Especially notable is *The Talbot*, now famous for its food, but originally purchased by the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Rockingham as a hunting lodge - and still used by hunting parties in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though it became a hotel and coaching house in 1740. The Rockinghams and Fitzwilliams, in keeping with their reputation for 'aristocratic enterprise', also expended large sums on improving the Derwent Navigation. Meanwhile, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam helped to pay for the construction of a new railway station in 1844 and for an extension to the Town Hall in 1855, though the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl refused to pay for improvements to the sanitary condition of the cattle market in 1885.<sup>17</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Malton and Higham Ferrers were 'rotten' or 'pocket' boroughs. The former returned two MPs to Westminster, while (unusually) the latter returned only one.<sup>18</sup> This was a matter of some importance, because the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis was leader of the 'Rockinghams', the most important group of Whigs in Parliament, between 1762 and his death in 1782. Indeed, he 'fought' four general elections, in 1761, '68, '74 and '80, although fighting an election did not mean what it does today, since there were few contested elections, and none in the two boroughs. Instead, the Marquis nominated who should stand, and the result was a foregone conclusion. Such was his power in these towns that, when someone in Malton dared to put his name forward without obtaining the Marquis's approval, he had to climb down and apologise almost immediately.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jones (1995) p.124.

<sup>17</sup> [www.maltonhistory.info](http://www.maltonhistory.info), citing the *Yorkshire Gazette*, 30 March 1844.

<sup>18</sup> Higham Ferrers ceased to be a rotten borough in 1832, as a result of the Great Reform Act. Malton survived continued to send two MPs to Westminster until 1868, and sent one between 1868 and 1885 (the year of the Third Reform Act).

<sup>19</sup> The number of contested elections was 53 in 1761, 83 in 1768. Some electors in Malton petitioned for a Mr St Quintin to be considered in 1761. When Rockingham deigned to reply and nominated Savile Finch, St Quintin wrote to him: "I greatly fear that my Request has given Offence, if so, I heartily Pardon for having been so impertinent in asking for so great Favour". Savile Finch was MP for Malton 1757-1780, when the Marquis persuaded him to step down in favour of Edmund Burke: Hoffman pp 34, 192, 306, 368. The *History of Parliament* website has the following entry for Savile Finch: "[He] was a small man, a client of aristocratic patrons, who made no mark in Parliament. He sat at Malton on Lord Rockingham's interest. He is not known to have spoken in the House; but voted regularly with the Rockinghams". This is how he excused himself in a letter to Rockingham on 3 Apr.

As for Rockingham's property in Ireland, there is no evidence that either the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis ever visited their estates there,<sup>20</sup> although - at around 90,000 acres - these accounted for three-quarters of their lands and brought in half their annual income. Nor did the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis added to the Irish estates in the same way as they added to the inheritance in Yorkshire.<sup>21</sup> By contrast their ancestor Thomas Watson-Wentworth had certainly visited Ireland in 1706 and in 1713, when he stayed with his agent in Coolattin Park for several weeks, and showed a close interest in the administration of the Irish estates. He may even have begun the building of a new house there, later known as Malton House.<sup>22</sup> This House was completed around 1730 and elaborate plans were prepared for its re-design and refurbishment in the mid 1770s; but it was badly damaged, perhaps even burnt to the ground, during the rising of the United Irishmen in 1798.<sup>23</sup>

There is another property is of interest, though again it is not mentioned by Sharman. This is Hallfield House, a Grade II listed building situated in Bradfield Dale, 1.7 miles west of Low Bradfield in Derbyshire. This is a substantial farmhouse, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by a member of the 'rising' gentry family of Greaves, but it was purchased by Thomas Watson-Wentworth in 1708, probably for use as a hunting lodge. It remained in the ownership of the Marquises of Rockingham and the Earls Fitzwilliam, for the next 250 years. The farm there consisted of 40 acres of land, 20 acres of meadow and 20 acres of pasture, with common grazing rights on the adjacent moors, which are nowadays let for grouse shooting.<sup>24</sup> According to the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, formal driven shooting - of the kind which is still popular - dates from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the advent of the railways and the improvement of shotguns; but there is evidence that grouse shooting was a traditional sport before that. For example, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Rev. Joseph Hunter's *Hallamshire* for 1875, we are told that people were shooting on the moors to the west of Sheffield as early as 1826, when there was a significant fire

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1769: "Hope my attendance in Parliament won't be absolutely necessary for the time I shall be absent, as this is the only time I can get to go to Bath and Mrs. Kendall has desired my wife and me to come immediately to her at Bath as she is going to her house in the country very soon. Your Lordship may be assured of my coming to town as soon as possible."

<sup>20</sup> However, Melvyn Jones informs me by e-mail dated 21/3/19 that he has never looked for such evidence!

<sup>21</sup> Bloy, p.350. Also, Jones (1995), p.124; Jones (1998), p.83.

<sup>22</sup> Melvyn Jones, *Ivanhoe Review* Summer 2000, p.20. See also Jones (1995) and Jones (1998) for land management. The guidebook to Coollattin, published by the Coollattin Golf Club, contains a drawing of 'Malton House, which was burned down during the 1798 Rebellion', which is reproduced below.

<sup>23</sup> The replacement, Coolattin House, was built between 1801 and 1804 for the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam by John Carr of York. Although the bulk of the Irish estates were sold to sitting tenants as a result of the Wyndham Land Purchase Act of 1903, the family retained Coolattin House and the estate attached, until 1975, when the Countess Olive died and it was sold by her trustees. Coolattin House is now a Golf Club, though it was founded by the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam ('Billy Fitzbilly') in 1922: *The Story of Coolattin House*, published by the Club on its website.

<sup>24</sup> *A walk from Low Bradfield along Dukes Road to Black Tor and Dale Dike Reservoir*-[www.bradfield-walkers.org.uk/Walks/DukesRoad.html](http://www.bradfield-walkers.org.uk/Walks/DukesRoad.html); Hey, 2002, pp 60-1; [www.hallfieldhouse.co.uk/history.html](http://www.hallfieldhouse.co.uk/history.html).



there; but it is perhaps more likely that Hallfield House was used by the Marquises of Rockingham for stag-hunting; and Stubbs certainly painted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis's staghounds.

Finally, we should mention two places which a newcomer to all this may easily be confused by: Wentworth Castle, near Barnsley and only seven miles from Wentworth Woodhouse, and Rockingham Castle, near Corby in Northamptonshire. Wentworth Castle is a grade-I listed country house; but there was an older house on the site, which was purchased by Thomas Wentworth, Baron Raby, in 1708.<sup>25</sup> He then started to build a new Baroque mansion there, perhaps because he thought that he had a better claim to the inheritance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Strafford (of the first creation). It is also thought that it was the building of Wentworth Castle which provoked the cousins at Wentworth Woodhouse into building what is now the West Front there.

The name of Rockingham Castle suggests a close link to the Rockingham Marquisate; and indeed *Wikipedia* has the following highly misleading lines:

Lewis Watson acquired the freehold of the castle and lands from the crown. Watson was successively a knight, baronet and baron. In the 1640s Rockingham was garrisoned by troops loyal to Charles I during the English Civil War. Lewis' grandson, also Lewis, was created Earl of Rockingham in 1714, a barony that was extinguished with the death of the 3<sup>rd</sup> baron in 1746. The estate then passed to his cousin Thomas Watson-Wentworth, who was created the 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess Rockingham later that year. When Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquess of Rockingham died in 1782, the estate among others passed to the son of his sister, William Fitzwilliam, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam.

In fact, however, there were two distinct lines of the Watson family, and Rockingham castle never belonged to either the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis, who (as we have heard) were descended from Thomas Watson, the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Edward Watson, Baron Rockingham, rather than of his first son Lewis Watson, the founder of what the historian of Rockingham castle described as 'the direct line of the Watsons'.<sup>26</sup> This again explains why Sharman makes no mention of the Castle, though he travelled considerable distances in the service of his master, even as far North as Wentworth.

So, there we have it. It appears that in the 1760s and 70s, when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis was one of the most wealthy and powerful individuals in England, and occupied a position which required him to be in Westminster for political activities, he preferred to spend his time at Wentworth House in Yorkshire; and this was also where the headquarters of his business empire was based. When in London, he used

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<sup>25</sup> The grandson of Sir William Wentworth, father of Thomas Wentworth, the attainted 1<sup>st</sup> Earl, executed in 1641. Raby was created 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Strafford (of the second creation) in 1711.

<sup>26</sup> Wise.

his town house in Grosvenor Square, though he often found that too busy for his liking, and so he also had a 'country house' in the metropolis, at first at Parson's Green and then in Wimbledon. This reflected his love of the classics, since the Romans had promoted the idea of '*rus in urbe*' - (the countryside in the town). Great Harrowden Hall in Northamptonshire was used as a dower house in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, but Rockingham used it in the 1770s, while Malton and Higham Ferrers were boroughs which were useful politically. Malton House in County Wicklow was too far away to be used as a residence, but it was what we should call a 'cash cow', because of the huge rental income it produced. By contrast, Hallfield House in Derbyshire was of distinctly minor importance, though useful as a hunting lodge on the moors to the west of Sheffield.

Whether the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Rockingham was peripatetic, and progressed from one property to another, keeping one step ahead of the cleaners, like the medieval English monarchs, or some of the Dukes of Devonshire, is uncertain. I used to think this was unlikely, given their preference for Yorkshire. Now, I am not so sure. He certainly made regular use of the three properties mentioned by Sharman in his evidence to the Old Bailey, all those years ago.

## SOURCES & ABBREVIATIONS

Albemarle: George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle, *Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and His Contemporaries*, (Elibron Classics, 1852)

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**Wentworth Woodhouse, South Yorkshire**



**4, Grosvenor Square, Mayfair  
Now the Italian Embassy**





**Antinous, at 4 Grosvenor Square**



*The Talbot, Malton, North Yorkshire.*





**The Market Place, Malton**



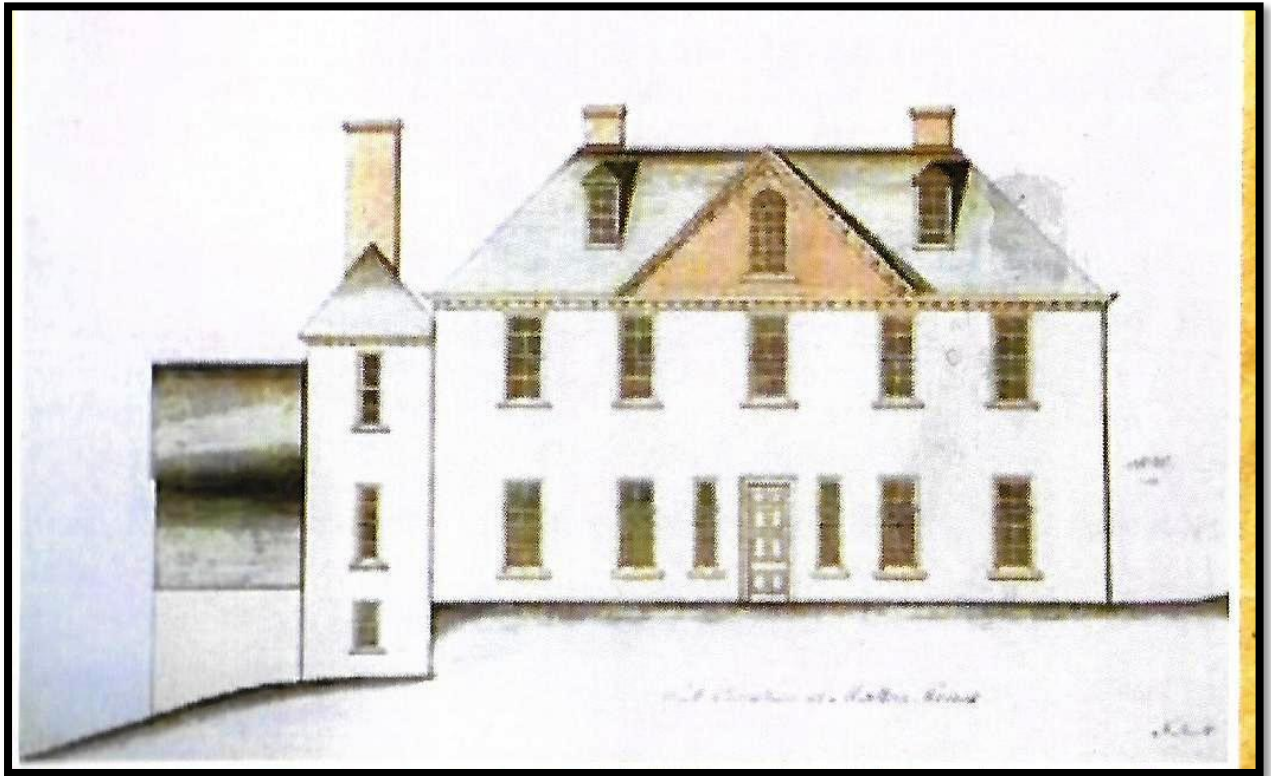


**Great Harrowden Hall, Northants.  
Now Wellingborough Golf Club**





**Hallfield House, Bradfield Dale**



**Malton House, County Wicklow, Ireland  
In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century  
(Coollatin House/Golf Club is now on the site)**