

# KEDLESTON

*By The Right Hon. the Viscount Scarsdale, T.D.*

*An address to the 38th Annual General Meeting of the Ancient Monuments Society at Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, on June 10th, 1961.*

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IN THE Annual Report of your Society<sup>1</sup> you have published a remarkably accurate and pleasant story of my home which covers practically everything. I am not, therefore, intending to reiterate, but will try to add a few items of interest which are of a personal nature, relating to family tradition, and which have not been mentioned in the many books and articles written about this home of mine.

The background of almost every possession is connected with times ancient, and also with money. The fact that my family—about which I am not going to say very much—has been resident here since the time of Henry I, is mainly because they were not very rich, they were not very poor, and they were not very anxious to connect themselves in important ways with the Government of the country and with the life and ways of this country's reigning families. As my uncle, George Curzon, declared, one of the reasons why a Curzon is still at Kedleston is because they never managed to lose their heads. He was, as you will know, Viceroy of India when he was aged 40, from 1898 until 1905. From time to time, of course, we lost a considerable amount of money, but we were always fortunate in having the money to lose. In the beginning we did not have more than one thousand acres at Kedleston and not a very large or famous castle or house. Our original Norman liege lord was Henri de Ferriere, first Earl of Derby, and our first big loss of money obviously occurred after his descendent, Robert de Ferriere, Earl of Derby, lost the battle of Chesterfield against King John. Our lands did not suffer, but as we were tied by ancient laws of holding Knight's Fees under the de Ferrieres, and he under the Crown, we had to pay substantial fines, but no more. Our lands were not taken away, as were all the de Ferriere estates; and Robert lost his head on the block.

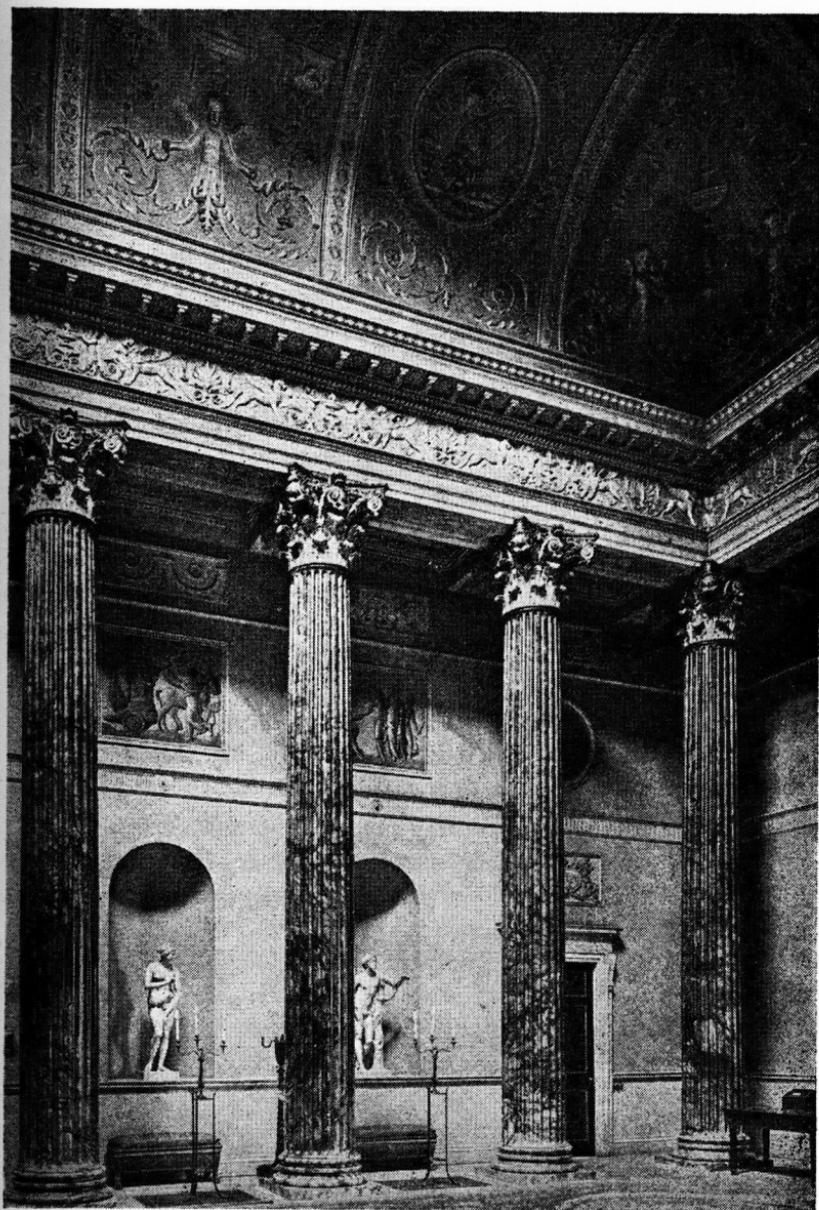
The next fact of significance is that Sir John Curzon, who in 1636 became the first baronet, Curzon of Kedleston, inherited a considerable fortune from his mother and—shortly after receiving a baronetcy in Derby at the same time as his step-brother, John Geil of Hopton—

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report and List of the Ancient Monuments Society, 1961, p. 8.*

received a baronetcy of England from Charles I in 1640. He became the receiver of the Duchy of Lancaster for the Parliamentary forces and for the Parliament of presumably sequestered royalist properties, although not all royalist properties were sequestered or seized. The Civil War was very much a local partizan affair in which Derby, or Derbyshire, was essentially a parliamentary stronghold whilst Nottingham remained Royalist. Sir John Curzon lived until he was 89 in the first large house of which we know at Kedleston, and left a considerable amount of money.

Also of importance in this first part of the story is the incredible age to which many Englishmen lived, and to which certainly a great number of my ancestors survived, in days when there was neither the surgery nor dentistry nor the medical knowledge that we now have. This again played its part in the saving of money and the devoting of that money, not to outside causes, but to the property. When Sir John died in 1678, his son promptly pulled down the old house and built a new one, having Smith senior of Warwick as his architect. At the same time he improved the property, increasing it, building new farms which brought in a tremendous expenditure in land drainage but also brought in additional rents; some of these, very nearly 300 years ago, are not greatly less than what I now receive from my tenant farmers. In a small way, this is English history. The improvements included the putting in of drains and the conversion to rich farm lands of heavily timbered forest land from the house right down to what we call Duffield Frith. On the high lands there was comparative dryness; on the low lands there were large bogs. It was the drainage of those bogs and their conversion into pasture land, under the landlordship of the Lord of the Manor, that increased and held in a steady fashion the income of the family which had already been in this place for some 600 years.

The second house that was built was a magnificent dwelling, but obviously not fine enough for the estimation of the 5th Baronet who inherited the baronetcy in 1758. He was made a Peer, the first Baron Scarsdale, in 1761, and was the builder of this house. Was the new hall just born of the current fashion to make the Grand Tour, to collect pictures, to collect beautiful furniture, and then to have a bigger and finer house in which to accommodate these treasures? That is undoubtedly so, but to do it you must also have the money. The first Baron Scarsdale was lucky enough to have as his mother, Mary Ashton of Clitheroe, a woman of considerable wealth. His grandmother, the heiress of William Penn of Pennsylvania, was Sarah Penn



Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire. The Marble Hall.

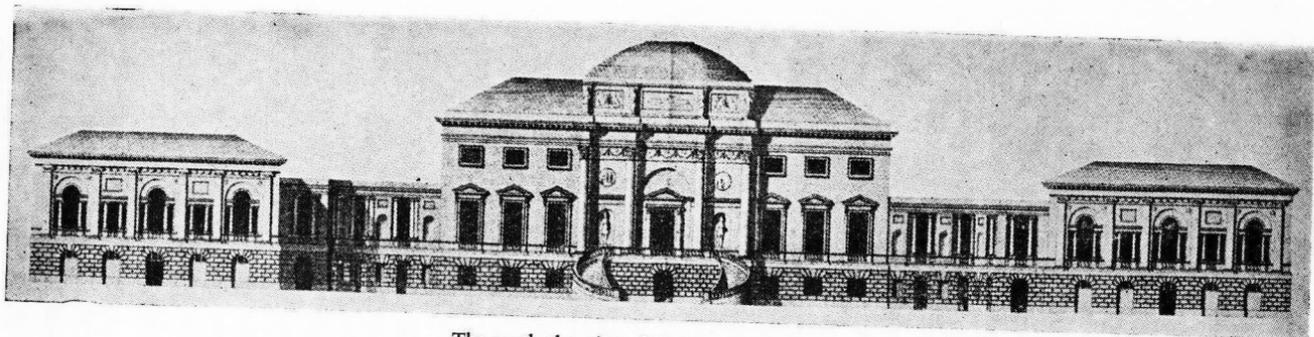
of Penn, in Buckinghamshire, also a woman of considerable wealth. Sufficiently rich to be able to leave her family home, Penn, not to her eldest grandson—who in her lifetime became the first Lord Scarsdale—but to his younger brother who was created Viscount Curzon in 1784. You therefore get a steady build up on money, and with it the entrancing and satisfying realization that this money was being spent in the maintenance of the old property or—in the case where possible defects were found in the architecture—in building something new, something of a finer nature, such as the present house. The income of Baron Scarsdale when he built this house was £10,000 a year. That is a lot of money today, but a very, very small income compared to that of many of the really wealthy families in England at that time, or even today; yet he managed, with the help of his friend, Robert Adam, and his younger brother, James Adam, and obviously with the good relationship he maintained with James Paine and presumably with Matthew Brettingham, to produce this house on the same site as the homes of his forebears—two former houses in the same setting in the park, adjacent to the medieval church which his family had been responsible for building in approximately 1135. I mention this because there is no mention of any church at Kedleston in the 1080 Domesday survey. We held the Knight's Fees from 1135 and the archaeological and architectural evidence of the fabric indicate this date of building. From that day, the little medieval church has been here, with the owner of Kedleston as Lord of the Manor, holding the advowson from that time until today.

When I go through the nineteen books which I have dating from 1758 to 1768, a period of about ten years, dealing entirely with the work that was then going on here, there is much of extraordinary interest because whilst the Agent was putting down the details of the work, there were many interesting asides, often written on the side of the book, and which illustrate the way of life. Visits to London cost £12.7.0 per head and took four days. In building, the first thing that was started was the demolition of the laundry, the ale house, the butcher's house, the smithy, the old inn, the mill and the stables. The redressing of all the old bricks and the re-use of all the old timbers and stones was itself a vast work. Piece-work was at the rate of 7/6 per 1,000 bricks to be dressed. There were 108 workmen, mentioned by name in these books, apart from the estate men. Large latrines were built in the gardens or pleasure grounds, whilst the workmen were encamped in existing outhouses of the old property which were subsequently, of course, pulled down. A supervisor named Samuel Wyatt

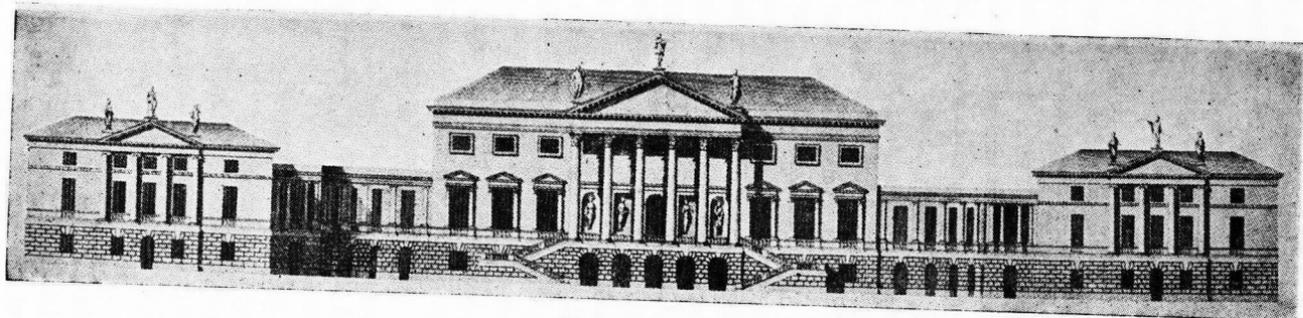
is mentioned; Messrs. Denston and Hall are named as chief foremen. Their work was checked by Curzon and his agent, Mr. Broadhurst, and then after 1761, the signature of Scarsdale appears. All these accounts were checked again monthly or quarterly, and reductions frequently made by Robert Adam, considering that too much had been charged.

It is evident that whilst the East or the family wing, which was designed by Matthew Brettingham, was being built, the Curzons were still living in the old house on the site. In the present house, Caesars' Hall was traditionally known as Hunter's Hall, and is where the family came in with dirty, muddy boots after riding, shooting and squiring around the property. The upper hall was obviously one where dirty boots did not, or do not, match. The "Caesars" in the hall are not contemporary with the work of Robert Adam, but existed in a "Caesars' Hall" in the old house that was pulled down in 1758. Apart from the work and the wages, there are many incidental accounts, for repairs to nursery furniture, chairs, mangles made for the laundry, jobs done for the cook, making a bow and arrow for Master Curzon. The household accounts reveal further details of their way of life. Visits to London were made, as already mentioned, to Lord Scarsdale's home in Mansfield Street. We learn that even the Sicilian Jasper Wine Cooler which is to be seen upstairs in the state dining room dates from before this house. It was in the old house and no doubt had been brought back by Lord Scarsdale from his visits to Italy, perhaps in his father's lifetime; anyhow, it was crated up and taken down to London for the Season and brought back a few months later, unpacked, and on its return was subsequently put upstairs in the new state dining room. Then there are particulars of the rat-catcher who was continually at work. Every single item was looked after and made on the spot by all these people mentioned—carpenters, wood carvers, stone masons and metal workers. The great underground conduits of the old house were all made use of in a new functional design for the present building, and they still exist today. A normal size man can crawl through them. They run for hundreds of yards and the functional use to which they were put in this house is fairly obvious. Being fed by streams from higher land, running water flowed through them.

Robert Adam had very little to do in the design or placing of lavatorial drainage in his new house, as he was able to make use of the excellent conduits that existed for the same purpose in the old house. But there is much that is new. At the same time that all this work



The south elevation, showing proposed wings.



The north elevation.

Robert Adam's designs for Kedleston Hall, published in *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Volume 4 (1767).



The Adam Bridge at Kedleston Hall.

was going on, my ancestor and Robert Adam were re-designing the frontages to the deer park and doing away with the possibly medieval, then certainly Jacobean, and equally certainly after that Queen-Anne style, walled-in gardens that existed on the south side where is now the present great lawn. The work on the north side involved the creation of a chain of lakes, and of course of the bridge designed by Robert Adam. There is an earlier design by Spang for a two-arched bridge, not as beautiful as the three-arched bridge which Robert Adam himself designed and built. Spang designed for Robert Adam the marble work of four of the main mantelpieces and fireplaces. Josiah Wedgwood, who was a native of Staffordshire, was very anxious to get in some early work here, but he and Robert Adam could not agree on principle. It was not until something like 17 years after this house had been commenced that one finds a Wedgwood plaque being introduced into the Robert Adam alabaster fireplace and mantelpiece that is still to be seen in what we now call the tapestry gallery.

The kilns used for making the local bricks were always catching fire at this time. Stone for the main part of the new house was brought from Horsley Castle, some twelve miles away. A special six-wheeled dray was made for carting this stone. Three of the pillars on the north front are monoliths—their weight is  $7\frac{1}{2}$  tons each—and the other three are almost monoliths but as can be seen they are not quite. In the gigantic steps outside, two steps are cut out of one stone! The villagers of Horsley were regaled with Kedleston home-brewed ale, because they acted as brakes on the six-wheeled dray when coming down the hill from Horsley village where Horsley Castle stood—the scene of Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. A special road had to be made by my ancestor as a short cut to bring the stones down here by way of Duffield, and until 1926 the upkeep of that road, which was a public road with no toll, was in the charge and maintenance of the Kedleston Estate.

I will say first with regard to the care of monuments or monumental houses of size, that if you have not got someone who feels himself dedicated to look after that house, at whatever cost, at whatever personal sacrifice, then you are on a very bad wicket indeed. But if you have someone as owner, and that someone has a companion, a wife, who also feels dedicated to look after the property, the most important difficulties and problems of repair can be overcome.

The second point, of course, is the wherewithall to carry on the work, and this can only come in the first place from saving. Gone are the days—I think they ended possibly in 1916 when my grand-

father died—when you could say this was a rich estate. Land may be very valuable now, but not in proportion to the expenses involved. It is by opening one's house to the public that one can do things to the building that really might not otherwise be afforded.

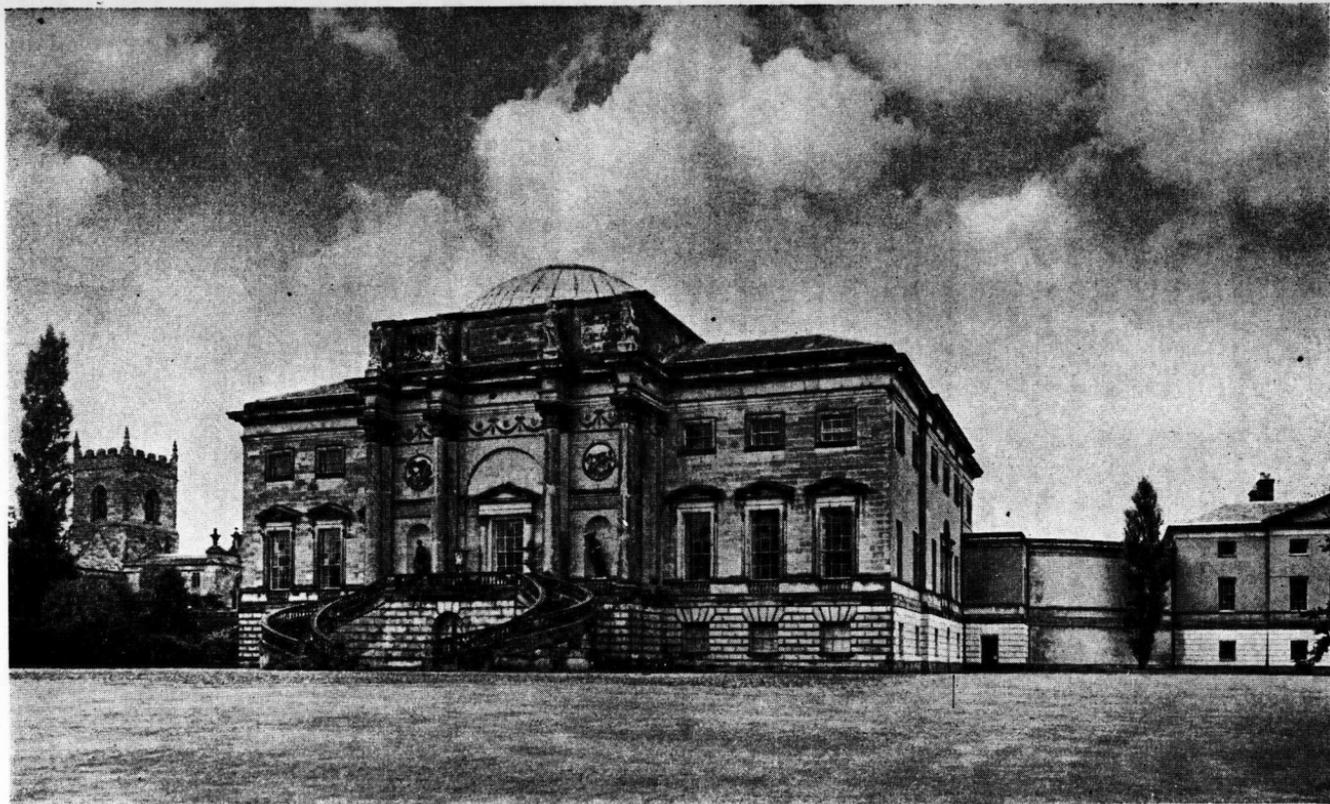
There are many pictures upstairs which obviously look as if they need restoration, and many others that obviously have been restored. I have restored a great many pictures in this house, out of income, for the restoration cannot come out of my Trust money. When I inherited in 1925, there was no Trust money left and the Trust money I have succeeded in getting myself is by judicious selling of land and putting the money into Trust. Unfortunately, one of the things one cannot do is to restore pictures out of such funds, owing to the laws governing Trusts.

Unfortunately, when my uncle, Lord Curzon, died, it was just at a time when he was turning away from his public life to spend money on this house. One thing stands out as of enormous importance, the fact that he made a mistake, I would say, in that he made no contracts for work as a whole. A contract was agreed upon and made just to cover one item of work, and when that was completed then came the next step. Now if contracts for the complete work had been made, this house would presumably have been in wonderful condition both outside and inside, certainly inside; but unfortunately as there were no binding contracts there was nothing one could do about it. It is rather extraordinary to think that when I inherited in 1925 there were some 30 or 40 workmen here doing the important work of re-wiring the entire house, re-piping it for water, hot and cold, central heating being put in, and yet that stopped dead when Lord Curzon died and the only amount of money that I received from his estate was £8,000 for the completion of the work which subsequently cost £26,000. I could only meet that by getting a loan on my own life. This is not a heartbreak story, it is all away and gone but it was a heartbreak story then, and might have broken the hearts of many people. At that time I do not think we had the help of such organizations as your Society to do anything to combat the more brutal and direct methods of the State in taking its full share of death duties from agricultural properties, that were only producing comparatively small incomes at possible 1½% interest, in exactly the same way as from industrial businesses producing a great deal of money, which of course would place them in a far better position for meeting such obligations.

With a house like this, with all that is around it, the water, the trees, the park, there is so much detail one can go into. The king oak

which is still marked on the survey—I had to show it to the survey map makers—no longer exists; it finally died completely having been struck probably four or five times in its lifetime by lightning, and when cut it showed 653 ring years on it alone. There are still oaks in the park which are part of the old deer forest, which are over the 500-year mark now, but not many of them are left. There again, throughout a history of family possessions, you have those spasms of planting, and then of not planting. All this has so much to do with the appearance of a property and of a house.

To end with, I think it is interesting in the history of ownership of the house to note the period of time in which each owner, as Lord of the Manor, was concerned with the property, starting with the first Lord Scarsdale, who built this house, and who died in 1804, aged 77. He inherited when he was 31 and was Lord of the Manor for 46 years, and so had 46 years to work out his ideas on the house. His son died in 1837 aged 86, having inherited when he was 53 and being Lord of the Manor for 33 years. He achieved a certain amount, not in construction for obviously there was little to be done, but he bought a certain amount of furniture. He bought no pictures, because there again there were no pictures necessary to buy; and he bewailed, most of the time, his poverty because of his father's extravagance in building a house of this size on a very limited income. The third Baron was the son of the second Lord Scarsdale. He died in 1856 as a bachelor, aged 74, and inherited late in life when he was 56, being Lord of the Manor for only 18 years. During that period he could not afford to live in the Hall, so he lived in another house on the estate some  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles away. An interesting point about this was that at this time the attendance at church dropped by approximately 30; from this we can assume, taking the names of the servants, that they were more or less from this establishment, and that there were about 30 servants who were employed up to the time when he inherited in 1837. Then came my grandfather, the 4th Baron, who died in 1916, having lived to 85. He inherited when he was 25 and he was here 60 years as Lord of the Manor and rector of Kedleston. During that 60 years, which of course was partly during the Victorian period, he introduced acetylene gas lighting, and in 1908 electric light. At a later stage, he introduced a small system of central heating, both to the church and to this house, but he did not re-cover any of the walls with the original silk. There were patterns of the original silk, very frayed, very dead, and my uncle in 1924 had that silk scrupulously copied in the colours which existed, one a rich yellow which is not generally seen because it is in an area



The South Front, Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire.

called the Crosstitch Wing, and in the blue which is still existent in the State Withdrawing Room, Boudoir and State Bedroom. The only original 1760 silk to be seen is on the State bed. In order to keep anything of the past, one must think of fabrics today as being almost more important, to my mind, than pictures; pictures can be cleaned, and pictures, as all will know, can last in remarkably good condition, providing the conditions are of a moderate, even temperature, without decaying, whereas a fabric on chairs, in curtains, and so forth, has a forty-year life and no more. That I know from my own experience here.

This is a big place and a big subject, and having lived here as a boy I naturally have a great many memories. I was born on the property, and I know every tree, I think, every acre that my grandfather possessed and which of course is less now—I have had to sell a good lot. I do recall, as a very regular thing, the footman going down in his livery every morning to the Lion's Mouth Spring, which lies about 250 yards in front of the house, with two large jugs, drawing off some 66 gallons a minute of the ice cold drinking water for the house. Unfortunately today we do not do that, instead taking the water through pipes; but outside the spring is still to be seen; it is most magnificent water. This and the sulphur baths and the sulphur springs are possibly the reason why there was ever a house built here, surrounded by the forest land of Duffield Frith, going right on to the Sherwood Forest of Nottingham. This was the hunting lodge of Kettil, relative of Harold, King of England, from which it was called Kettilstune or Chetelstune.

Possibly, even before that, there may be some truth in the traditional story that when Derby was little Chester, there may have been some Roman villa or house here, clearly for the love of the springs to which the Romans were always attracted for religious reasons as well, of course, for any other. Here, we do abound with such springs, even to the sulphur springs on the other side of the water which in 1745 a surveyor declared was a bituminous spring, and which is now preserved by a Robert Adam building contemporary with this house.