

Extract from James Dugdale's *The New British Traveller* (1819)

WANSTEAD

The village of Wanstead is 8 miles N. E. From St. Paul's Cathedral. The manor was granted by Alfric to the Church of Westminster, and confirmed by Edward the Confessor; but before the end of that monarch's reign, it became, probably by exchange, the property of the Church of St. Paul, and was afterwards appropriated to the Bishop of London; under whom, at the time of the Domesday Survey, it was held by Ralph Fitz-Brien. He afterwards passed through various possessors, to Sir John Heron, whose son, Sir Giles Heron, being attainted, his estates were seized by the crown; and Wanstead was granted, by Edward the Sixth, to Robert, Lord Rich; who made it his country residence, then called Naked Hall Hawe. His son sold it to Robert, Earl of Leicester, who enlarged and greatly improved the mansion; and in May, 1578, entertained Queen Elizabeth in it for several days: here, also, the same year, in September, he solemnised his marriage with the Countess of Essex. On the Earl's decease, in 1588¹, Wanstead became the property of the Countess, his widow; and, by some family conveyances, it subsequently became vested in Charles Blount, Earl of Devonshire, on whose death, in 1606, it escheated to the crown. It was afterwards the property of George, Marquis of Buckingham; of whom, in 1619 it was purchased by Sir Henry Mildmay; his descendant, Sir William Mildmay*, conveyed it to Sir Josiah Child, whose son, Sir Richard, afterwards created Earl Tylney, created the present Wanstead house, in 1715, near the site of the ancient mansion. His grandson, the late Earl Tylney, dying without issue, in 1784, this manor, with other large estates, devolved upon his nephew, Sir James Tylney Long, Bart. of Draycot, in Wiltshire; more whose only son, James, succeeded to his title and inheritance, in 1791; but being at that time a minor, his seat at Wanstead was let, and was in the occupation of the Prince de Condé. Sir James dying at a very early age, before he had attained majority, the estate devolved to his sister, who, about the year 1812, or 1813, married Mr. Wellesley Pole, nephew to the Duke of Wellington, who, in addition to his former plurality of names, has taken that of Long.

Wanstead house, now occupied by R. Long Pole Wellesley, Esq.** and his Lady, is a large and magnificent structure, standing in an extensive park, and surrounded with gardens and pleasure grounds. The principal front is 280 feet in length; the entrances in the centre, beneath a grand portico of six Corinthian columns; having a flight of steps on each side, and in the tympanum, the arms of the Tylney family, finely sculptured. The garden front has a pediment, enriched with a bas-relief, and supported by six three-quarter columns. The whole building is cased with Portland stone: its depth is between 70 and 80 feet. It consists of two stories; the uppermost contains the ballroom, states bed-chambers, and other principal apartments. Over the door leading into the great hall, is a

¹ The Earl, at his death, was much involved in debt; and from an inventory and estimate of his property, it appears, that the furniture, library, horses &c. at Wanstead, were valued at £119.6s.6d. The pictures, among which were three portraits of Henry the Eighth, the Queens Mary and Elizabeth, Lady Casimere, Lady Rich and 36 others not particularised, were valued at £11.13s.4d. The library, consisting only of an old Bible, the Acts and Monuments, old and torn, seven Psalters, and a Service Book, were estimated at 13s.8d. The horses were valued at £316.0s.8d. The bill for the Earl's funeral, amounted to the enormous sum (in that age) of £4000.

medallion of Colin Campbell, the architect; who acquired a great reputation from the science and judgment displayed by him, in the construction of his edifice.

The great hall, 51 feet by 36, is decorated in all the splendour of the last age. The ceiling, gilded and painted by Kent, displays personifications of Morning, Noon, Evening, and Night. The walls are ornamented with paintings from the Roman history, by Cassali: they represent Coriolanus, and his mother; Porsenna; and Pompey's last interview with his family. Here, also, is a portrait of Kent, who painted several ceilings at Wanstead house, besides that of the hall; and two large statues, brought from the ruins of Herculaneum; one of Domitian; the other of Livia, wife to Agrippa. Several suites of rooms extend from each side this apartment; among them that he is a ballroom, a son noon, and four spacious and well proportioned state bed-chambers.

The ball-room, 75 feet by 27, is magnificently fitted up, in the taste of the last century; the furniture being richly embossed and guilt, and the walls hung with tapestry. The latter is well executed, and represents the story of Telemachus, and the battles of Alexander, in two compartments. Over the chimney, is a fine painting of Portia, the wife of Brutus, by Schalken. The saloon, and 30 feet square, is highly embellished and contains several statues, and a picture of Pandora, by Nollkens, father of the sculptor of that name. In the bedrooms are several paintings; among them is St. John, and the Virgin, by Raphael; Apollo and Narcissus; Cupid, by Corregio; Venus Sleeping; Venus and Adonis; Cupid and Psyche; Diana and Endymion; and several views. The principal dining-room, 40 feet by 27, is embellished with paintings, by Cassali; representing Sophonisba taking poison; the continence of Scipio; and Alexander directing Apelles to paint Campespe: some good landscapes, and views of ruins, are also in this apartment. Various paintings are distributed through the other rooms; the best are, St. Francis, and a Holy Family, by Guido; Herodias, with the head of St. John Baptist, supposed by Titian; some flower pieces, by Baptiste; Lord Chief Justice Glynne, and his family, by Lely; and Sir Josiah child. On the ceiling of one of the drawing-rooms, is the painting of Jupiter and Semele; and in the centre of the chimney-piece, is the family crest, a flying eagle with a snake, in white marble.

The prospects from several of the apartments are extremely beautiful, and include a very extensive part of the surrounding country.

From the entrance to the park, on the west, the road to the house is skirted by rows of fine elms, and winds around a circular piece of water, extending considerably beyond each extremity of the mansion; which, from this approach, had an aspect of much grandeur. The gardens and pleasure grounds were laid out by Sir Richard Child. Opposite the back front is an easy ascent, through a pleasant vista, to the river Roding, which is formed into canals, and has a near it, a curious grotto, constructed by the second Earl Tylney, at an expense of £2000, independent of its costly materials. The slopes or elevated ground bordering the river, are beautifully planted.

On the south side of the park, nearly adjoining the grounds at Aldersbrook, a tessellated pavement was discovered, in 1735***. Its extent, from north to south, was about 20 feet; and from east to west, about 16. A small Brass coin of the Emperor Valens, a silver coin, and several large pieces of Roman brick, were also found. Mr. Lethieullier supposed it to have been the pavement of a banqueting room, belonging to a Roman villa. Further to the south, ruins of brick foundations have been met with; and fragments of urns, paterae, Roman coins, &c.

The parish church was repaired and enlarged in the early part of the last century, principally at the expense of the first Earl of Tylney; but being still found small and incommodious, it was resolved to pull it down, and build a new church on a larger scale, nearly adjoining the old site. The first stone of the present structure was laid on the 13th of July, 1787; and it was finished and consecrated in 1790. "The building is of brick, cased with Portland stone, and having a portico of the Doric order: at the west end is a cupola, supported by eight Ionic columns. The inside is extremely neat and elegant, without any unnecessary embellishments: it consists of a chancel, nave, and two aisles, separated by columns of the Corinthian order. The pavement (which is remarkable for its beauty and neatness) is of stone, brought from Painswick, in Gloucestershire. In the chancel is a beautiful window of stained glass, by Eginton, of Birmingham, representing our Saviour bearing the cross, from the picture at Magdalen College, Oxford. In the east window of the north aisle, are the royal arms; in the south aisle, those of the late Sir J.T. Long Bart. In the chancel is a superb monument, with the effigies of the deceased in white marble, to the memory of Sir Josiah Child, Bart. who died in the year 1699".

NOTES

*This is not quite correct: the estates of Sir Henry Mildmay were seized by the Crown upon the restoration of Charles II, as Mildmay was classed as a regicide. Initially granted to James, Duke of York (later James II), the estate was sold in December 1661 to Sir Robert Brookes, Mildmay's son-in-law. Josiah Child acquired it after Brookes mysteriously drowned in France in 1669.

** "R. Long Pole Wellesley, Esq." was in fact known as Hon. William Pole Tylney Long Wellesley after assuming his wife's surnames upon their marriage in 1812. Informally, the couple were known by the name Long-Wellesley.

***Lethieullier actually reported that the Roman pavement was discovered in 1715, though the first of the three letters he wrote on the subject to the Society of Antiquaries of London was dated 1735.