

**Letter of Horace Walpole  
To John Chute, Esq.  
Stowe, Aug. 4, 1753**

"I felt strangely tempted to stay at Oxford and survey it at my leisure; but as I was alone, I had not courage. I passed by Sir James Dashwood's a vast new house, situated so high that it seems to stand for the county as well as himself. I did look over Lord Jersey's which was built for a hunting-box, and is still little better.

But now I am going to tell you how delightful a day I passed at Wroxton. Lord Guildford has made George Montague so absolutely viceroy over it, that we saw it more agreeable than you can conceive; roamed over the whole house, found every door open, saw not a creature, had an extreme good dinner, wine, fruit, coffee and tea in the library, were served by fairies, tumbled over the books, said one or two talismanic words, and the cascade played, and went home loaded with pine-apples and flowers.

You will take me for Monsieur de Coulanges, I describe eatables so feelingly; but the manner in which we were served made the whole delicious. The house was built by a Lord Downe in the reign of James the First; and though there is a fine hall and a vast dining-room below, and as large a drawing-room above, it is neither good nor agreeable; one end of the front was never finished, and might have a good apartment.

The library is added by this Lord, and is a pleasant chamber. Except loads of portraits, there is no tolerable furniture. A whole-length of the first Earl of Downe is in the bath-ropes, and has a coif under the hat and feather. There is a charming picture of Prince Henry about twelve years old, drawing his sword to kill a stag, with a Lord Harrington; a good portrait of Sir Owen Hopton, 1390; your pious grandmother, my Lady Dacre, which I think like you; some good Cornelius Johnsons; a Lord North, by Riley, good; and an extreme fine portrait by him of the Lord Keeper: I have never seen but few of the hand, but most of them have been equal to Lely and the best of Sir Godfrey. There is too a curious portrait of Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of Trinity College, Oxford, said to be by Holbein. The chapel is new, but in a pretty Gothic taste, with a very long window of painted glass, very tolerable. The frieze is pendent, just in the manner I propose for the eating-room at Strawberry Hill.

Except one scene, which is indeed noble, I cannot much commend the without-doors. This scene consists of a beautiful lake entirely shut in with wood: the head falls into a fine cascade, and that into a serpentine river, over which is a little Gothic seat like a round temple, lifted up by a shaggy mount. On an eminence in the park is an obelisk erected to the honour and at the expense of "optimus" and "I, munificentissimus" the late Prince of Wales, *in loci amoenitatem et memoriam adventus ejus*. There are several paltry Chinese buildings and bridges, which have the merit or demerit of being the progenitors of a very numerous race all over the kingdom: at least they were of the very first.

In the church is a beautiful tomb of an Earl and Countess of Downe, and the tower is in a good plain Gothic style, and was once, they tell you, still more beautiful; but Mr. Miller, who designed it, unluckily once in his life happened to think rather of beauty than of the water-tables, and so it fell down the first winter.”

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p. 176, Letter 83