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Peter N. Lindfield

John Carter FSA (1748–1817): A New Corpus of Drawings, and the Painted Chamber

This essay examines a corpus of drawings at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, that I discovered and attributed to John Carter (1748–1817) in 2010. Of Carter's seventy-five drawings in this collection that cover Westminster, four offer further detailed insights into the Painted Chamber's wall paintings and tapestries c.1800. Annotated by Carter, these drawings can be read alongside his other earlier drawings of the Painted Chamber found today in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the British Museum in London. Not only do these drawings record a precious moment in late-Georgian London where some of the most remarkable medieval wall decorations were uncovered, but they also contextualize Carter's attitude to medieval architecture and their 'improvement' by his contemporaries.

Keywords: antiquarianism, destruction, Gothic, improvement, preservation, wall painting

Antiquarian drawing and preservationism

John Carter, a Georgian antiquary and architectural draughtsman, was primarily interested in recording, celebrating, and preserving Britain's medieval architectural heritage.¹ He was a regular contributor to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, writing initially under the name of 'An Architect', but subsequently he wrote pieces as J.C., J. Carter, and John Carter; his letters, largely published under the heading of 'Pursuits of Architectural Innovation', appeared in print between 1798 and 1817 and they present a detailed record of what can best be described as his crusade against interventions, some in the 'Gothic Revival' style, being made to medieval architecture at the time.² He has been characterized recently as an antiquary-draughtsman 'who could travel from site to site and investigate, excavate, climb scaffolding, record, and sometimes even restore the monuments that antiquaries wished to publicise' and his wish to preserve medieval architecture was conditioned by this scholarship, informed by physical investigation.³ Whilst the understanding of medieval architecture in the later eighteenth century had improved from that exhibited in 1730s' and 1740s' Britain, specifically by the work of William Kent (1685–1748) and Batty Langley (1696–1751), Carter was very much aware that medieval Gothic buildings continued to suffer from what he saw as a lack of respect for their age, history, and appearance.⁴ This, he knew, was a well-established tradition in Britain, where:

The style of which according to the day was after the Roman and Grecian manner, with a partial deviation from such designs to what was then termed Gothic that might cause a variety in appearances; Batty Langley and others some few years before having reared up

the vile congestion under the false notion of its being an imitation of our ancient Architecture but as unlike such pure and chast[e] works of art as dark to light. It was well they named their production by the barbarous name of Gothic, unequivocally so used in hostile discouragement and detraction to our antique at first by Sr Chr. Wren, he being the broacker of the insideous nick name Gothic.⁵

Unlike Langley's fantastical recreation of what he presented as 'genuine' Gothic architecture – something traced back to Saxon England that, he argued, was poorly revived in the medieval period – Carter's understanding of Gothic architecture was grounded firmly upon the documentation and preservation of medieval structures.⁶

The first of Carter's letters published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* under the title of 'The Pursuits of Architectural Innovation' dates to 1798, and it argues how the poor understanding of medieval architecture influenced the restoration, or 'improvement', of medieval fabrics.

It having been a matter of admiration of those who venerate the ancient arts of this kingdom, when informed that such or such a work of antiquity has been preserved from destruction by judicious repairs, or by the discerning protection of some guardian of this country's historical landmarks; it is, therefore, no less necessary to point out for their abhorrence the knowledge of those remains of our country's ancient splendours which may, from time to time, give way to the iron hand of architectural innovation.⁷

The antiquity to which Carter is referring to here is not Classical, but domestic Gothic examples. His roles as an antiquary and draughtsman are encapsulated in this letter: he objected outright to the ways in which medieval buildings – which he considered 'our country's ancient splendours' – were restored and 'improved' by his contemporaries. Carter despised the impact such architects and workmen had on such relics by applying modern innovations without due regard for preserving medieval structures and their internal arrangements. He considered this to be the 'iron hand of architectural innovation'. The result of such architectural innovation was all too clear to see when Carter visited Rochester Cathedral in Kent. Although,

The decent state of the cathedral, in regard to cleanliness, is highly praise-worthy ... a new screen at entering into the choir now meets the eye; a poverty-struck imitation of the ancient pointed arch-work. Here pointed arches and tracery are merely punched out; drops, crotches, finials, barely hinted, without any of their fine forms or beauty-relief; none of the delightful, in the incomprehensible, under-cut display ornamental ideas in the soffits [*sic*] of the canopies of the niches; none of the deep-shadowed infinity of mouldings. No; the magic charm of ancient workmanship is wanting; and why? Because the inclination to adhere religiously to the ancient manner is wanting; a proud opinion of superior knowledge and taste pervades in general all who at any time give designs in what *they* call the *Gothic* manner. This is their universal opinion, that the ancient works of architecture in this country are very well; but we can, in this refined age of the Arts, improve upon their style, and render perfect what they have left so full of imperfections. – Can that style of architecture be imperfect, the works of which have stood of ages? – Can that taste be improved which fills the soul of those who contemplate on its indescribable system with such enthusiastic delight?⁸

Clearly, each question was meant to be answered with a resounding 'no'. Such modern Gothic work as found at Rochester Cathedral was, to

Carter, nothing more than imperfect and impoverished echoes of genuine medieval craftsmanship and design. Such improvements could significantly influence the appearance and character of medieval structures, as he observed also at the Cathedral of St Alban in Hertfordshire, where,

On entering the building, we are greatly disappointed, ... at the strange metamorphoses that some part of the church has undergone within a very short period. The nave appears in a modern dress. ... In the windows are the remains of curious historical painted glass, which have escaped the havoc [*sic*] generally made when churches are under reparation, or, as it is usually termed, beautifying, by the workmen so employed, who, for their amusement, between the hours of work, mutilate and efface the most beautiful and curious remains of antiquity.⁹

With his deep regard for medieval architecture and dismay over the 'improvement' such buildings were suffering in the eighteenth century, notably styled as a mutilation in this letter, Carter became one of the most vocal defenders of medieval architecture from such innovation and 'improvement'.¹⁰

Several fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of London were of a like mind with regard to the preservation of medieval buildings, including Richard Gough (1735–1809), the Director of the Society of Antiquaries (1771–91), and John Milner (1752–1826), Vicar Apostolic of the Midland district of Britain. These men actively supported the documentation and preservation of medieval Gothic buildings in response to modern alterations being made to them. Horace Walpole (1717–97), the doyen of Gothic in Georgian Britain, similarly noticed the effects such improvement works had upon medieval structures, and he argued that 'the general disuse of Gothic architecture, and the decay and alterations so frequently made in churches, give prints a chance of being the sole preservatives of that style'.¹¹ Visual surveys of important medieval structures, particularly before any modern works were undertaken, were therefore crucial to record and understand such historical remains. This preservationist agenda was enhanced by the fact that Carter also considered Gothic to be a national style of architecture and so its documentation and protection from 'improvement' were patriotic undertakings:

A love of novelty, and an unfeeling contempt shewn for our sacred works of antiquity, which have been stigmatized with the barbarous name Gothic, is the *cause* whereby the Roman and Grecian styles of architecture have been introduced into every line of building since that period, both public and private. Therefore, the admiration that has been conjured up in support of such styles has necessarily turned the genius of Englishmen from their national architecture, to toil in an inglorious and servile pursuit to imitate a foreign manner.¹²

Such enthusiasm for and defence of Gothic structures found in his contributions to *The Gentleman's Magazine* can be found also in Carter's manuscript correspondence, notebooks, and drawings.

Carter's drawings of medieval – and modern Gothic – architecture were central to his antiquarian practice and preservationist agenda. Indeed, he was associated with the Society of Antiquaries of London as a draughtsman in an unofficial capacity from 1780; by 1784 this position

had become semi-official; and in 1792 he was the society's official draughtsman.¹³ His visual-documentary efforts can be seen in *The History of Croyland Abbey* (1783), *Sepulchral Monuments* (1786), *Ancient Sculpture and Painting* (1780–94), *Vetusta Monumenta* (1789 and 1796), and *Ancient Architecture* (1795–1814): he produced copious drawings taken after architecture, sculpture, and other fragments, and these were engraved to illustrate the historical and antiquarian narratives presented in these publications. His diligent recording of antiquarian subjects across the last few decades of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century created a wealth of material, the largest collection of which can be found today bound according to date and in the British Library in London.¹⁴ The drawings in these volumes cover all manner of buildings, fragments, carved ornament, and applied art. Carter's interest in Gothic and his desire to record and preserve it was recognized by Gough, and, as the Director of the Society of Antiquaries, he promoted such research and scholarship on the subject. For example, he proposed that,

For the express purpose of preserving from mutilation, sacrilege, or even the dilapidation, the remains of ancient edifices [should be examined and the Society should] make due enquiry into the truth of such reports, and then, with due respect, give notice to the proprietors of reported edifice, of the wish of the Society to see them continue, at least, untouched by rapacious hands.¹⁵

Gough promoted Carter's work, including instructing him on occasion where he should go and which buildings he should record, and this resulted in a broad snapshot of Gothic buildings at the time.

Conflict between the 'preservers' and 'improvers' of Gothic architecture peaked with the work of James Wyatt (1746–1813) and his proposed election to the Society of Antiquaries of London.¹⁶ Wyatt came to prominence as an architect of Classical buildings, including the Pantheon on Oxford Street in London, which opened in 1772,¹⁷ but he also had a notable career as the architect of modern Gothic buildings, including Lee in Kent for Thomas Barrett (1744–1803), and Fonthill Abbey in Wiltshire for William Beckford (1760–1844).¹⁸ He also had an extensive practice restoring and improving church and cathedral architecture and interiors.¹⁹ Indeed, Wyatt was later termed 'the destroyer' by A.W.N. Pugin (1812–52), the nineteenth-century Gothic designer who critiqued earlier attempts to design architecture and furniture in a style modelled upon the medieval arts.²⁰ Carter was one of the Fellows who attempted to block Wyatt's admission to the Society of Antiquaries of London on June 29, 1797, precisely because of his interventions into notable Gothic structures. This move succeeded; Wyatt, however, was re-proposed and admitted the following week with 143 votes to 20.²¹ It was Wyatt's improvements and use of inauthentic materials – patent cement and cast iron in particular – that angered Carter, and he argued it was the fellows' 'business to elect persons who preserved antiquities and not those who destroyed them'.²² Indeed, Carter criticized Wyatt's work from 1799 at the House of Lords in the Palace of Westminster in

London for being an 'august pile of brick-bats and stucco' when he refaced the structure with Gothic details.²³ Gough similarly lambasted Wyatt's work from 1795 at Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire, because it failed to realize and respect the coherent evolution of medieval architecture.²⁴ And Milner argued that Wyatt,

Has destroyed, and is engaged at this very moment in destroying, the ancient sepulchres and monuments which we are associated, as far as in us lies, to protect – 'You are not bound', cry the Wyattists, 'to discuss the conduct of our friend in his profession any more than that of any other member'. – 'We are bound', the anti-Wyattists retort, 'to consider the same, when, by admitting him into our number, we shall appear, in the face of our contemporaries and of all posterity, to sanction a system which tends to deprive us of the very subjects of our study, and the sources of our information. If we really do approve of the mode of proceeding which has been adopted at Salisbury cathedral, and which is now going on at Durham, we cease to be Antiquaries, and it will become us to consider under what new determination and regulations we shall meet in future'.²⁵

Upon Wyatt's election to fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries of London, Gough resigned;²⁶ Carter continued his crusade against Wyatt and the 'improvement' of medieval churches. With Wyatt's popularity amongst churchmen in England for repairing and modifying their churches and cathedrals, and his admittance into the Society of Antiquaries of London, Carter's need to record medieval architecture gained renewed impetus. So, when buildings were threatened with 'improvement', or important new discoveries were made, Carter and other antiquaries were keen to make visual records of, and add to observations about, such ancient subjects; this is particularly the case with Carter's views of the Painted Chamber in the Palace of Westminster, discussed below.

The Palace of Westminster and the Painted Chamber

On October 16, 1834, a devastating and now infamous fire ripped through and destroyed the majority of the Palace of Westminster. The medieval palace had, by the nineteenth century, become a rambling series of interconnected buildings refurbished, refaced, and redeveloped over centuries by successive architects and builders.²⁷ There were some precious medieval parts within this architectural jumble, the most important of which was Westminster Hall, built by William II from 1097 and reworked subsequently by the installation of the hammer-beam roof under Richard II in 1393.²⁸ Westminster Hall's importance to the palace and the nation as a whole was expressed by attempts to save it from destruction in 1834.²⁹ Other structures within the palace threatened by the fire included St Stephen's Chapel and the nearby Painted Chamber, both of which were heavily damaged. St Stephen's, begun under Edward I in 1292, was not finished until Edward III's reign (architecturally in 1348 and decoratively in 1363), and it was designed to be a lavish and impressive setting for royal worship equal to anything in Europe; after dissolution, the upper chapel was converted to serve as the meeting-space for the House of Commons.³⁰ The Painted Chamber, or King's

Chamber, remodelled an early twelfth-century hall during Henry III's reign, as part of his lavish modifications to the palace³¹; Henry III had this large rectangular room constructed as a private apartment on the site of a room where Edward the Confessor was reputed to have died, and its connection to the saint was acknowledged by being known as St Edward's Chamber in 1477.³² Containing a canopied bed of state set in front of a mural depicting the coronation of Edward the Confessor, the Painted Chamber, as Chris Given-Wilson has articulated, was 'the inner, private sanctum of the [king where he] slept, and often dined or worked away from the hubbub of the household, closeted in privacy with a small circle of friends and counsellors'.³³ As well as a bedroom, this highly ornate and important room within the palace also hosted parliamentary gatherings from the 1330s.³⁴ The room's importance was enhanced by a series of murals painted onto the room's interior walls, in contrast to the building's plain exterior (Figure 1). These paintings were begun in 1226 but had to be re-worked after a fire of 1263 and again in 1267 when the Painted Chamber was broken into and the decorations were defaced.³⁵ It is these decorations that attracted comment from two Irish friars on pilgrimage to Palestine in the 1320s, which, as Paul Binski's landmark publication on the Painted Chamber notes, were described thus:

All the warlike stories of the whole Bible are painted with wonderful skill, and explained by a complete series of texts accurately written in French to the great admiration of the beholder and with the greatest royal magnificence.³⁶



Figure 1. John Greig after C. John M. Whichelo, *The Painted Chamber, Westminster*, 1804. B1977.14.22566. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

The Painted Chamber's mural decoration had subsequently been covered up, meaning that the medieval decorations were obscured in the eighteenth century.

With the decayed Palace of Westminster being a concern to antiquaries in the later eighteenth century, it was resolved that Carter ought to begin surveying the palace in the 1790s, which he did, and by 1793 William Capon (1757–1827) was undertaking a large-scale survey of the palace.³⁷ The benefit of such studies became evident in 1834, but their relevance before the fire was highlighted in the Preface to *Account of the Collegiate Chapel of Saint Stephen at Westminster* (1795) by John Topham (1746–1803), given Wyatt's work on St Stephen's.³⁸ Wyatt had been enlisted to make the former royal chapel a space better suited to accommodate the House of Commons at the end of the eighteenth century; antiquarian documentary projects and publications were thus essential to help preserve historical subjects such as the former chapel when it was not possible to save them from intervention. Whilst working on St Stephen's to increase its seating capacity, Wyatt's men uncovered murals on the walls, but when Carter arrived there he discovered his entrance barred and thus he was unable to see the wall paintings. Another member of the Society of Antiquaries of London witnessed proceedings in the former chapel, and he recorded that:

I yesterday went to St. Stephen's chapel, Westminster, in consequence of hearing that some of its fine remains were under the destroying hammer of the workmen.

I saw some of the most exquisite performances of ancient art that this country, or indeed any other, ever produced, falling into dust and rubbish ... Among the many visitors present, there was the very Artist who, in 1791, surveyed and drew the plans, elevations, sections, &c. of this chapel, by order of the Society of Antiquaries, and who afterwards published them. I found him in conversation with a person, who peremptorily told him, that the Surveyor of the Board of Works had given the most direct and positive orders that he should not be permitted to draw from any one object in the place.³⁹

Although Carter was refused entry to St Stephen's, John Thomas Smith (1766–1833) took copies of the murals,⁴⁰ but 'the workmen very often followed him so close in their operations, as to remove, in the course of the same day on which he had made his drawing, the painting which he had been employed in copying that very morning'.⁴¹ The need to document such discoveries was therefore a pressing one.

The Painted Chamber (Figure 2), like St Stephen's Chapel, was also an important part of the palace that attracted attention, and it was addressed by Carter in a letter from July 17, 1799 included in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. He wrote to the magazine's editor in this letter stating that:

This chamber is particularly interesting to a few who love the former architectural splendour of England; and the more so, since the destruction of another superb chamber, called the Chapter-house, at Durham. When we have to record, that this last remaining example of a royal chamber belonging to our antient palaces has fallen, we shall have only to observe on the fact, that the long intended business, of getting rid of the House, is at last accomplished.

Figure 2. William Capon,
*Interior view looking east with
 Trojan War tapestries*, 1799.
 Parliamentary Art Collection
 WOA 1648.



It is to be presumed that, in the Pursuits of Architectural Innovation (as the Architect is now detailing its ravages in the neighbouring pile, the Abbey church), we shall have the particulars of the fate of this long, long dignified and important part of our national glory, which, perhaps, should have been preserved even with the same sacred veneration as the constitution of King, Lords, and Commons, itself! In this chamber is the celebrated tapestry, which, though it relates to the siege of Troy, yet presents an inexhaustible treasure of examples of the buildings, dress, warlike habitments and instruments, and at the decorations which shew the *costume* among us in the 15th century.⁴²

Little did Carter realize that even more significant and earlier visual material was hidden in the Painted Chamber under the walls' whitewash; these were documented by a series of antiquaries when the paintings were uncovered after the whitewash had been scrubbed off in 1818 and when subsequent work to modify the chamber, including the insertion of a new window on the south wall, was undertaken in 1819. The significance of the paintings'

discovery was clear to all: a letter dated October 4, 1819 published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* entitled 'Discoveries in the Painted Chamber' began by complaining that:

The accounts which have hitherto appeared in the public prints, of the recent discoveries in the Painted Chamber at Westminster, have been couched in terms far too general to be satisfactory to the Antiquary, and in language infinitely too indifferent to convey an adequate idea of their value, and the exquisite beauty and freshness of the numerous paintings and stucco ornaments which adorn the walls of this noble apartment of the antient Palace of our Sovereigns.⁴³

These discoveries, the writer noted, were 'made in consequence of some repairs, which have been taking place since the prorogation of Parliament'.⁴⁴ Continuing the letter, the author described certain parts of the wall paintings in detail, notably:

Among the Paintings, the most extensive, perfect, and beautiful, and perhaps the most interesting, is a representation of the Coronation of King Edward the Confessor on the North side, which occupies nearly the whole of the large space of wall between one of the windows, and the door which entered the oratory. The figures are of large size, and very numerous. [...] The figures are well proportioned, and are admirably disposed in small groups. The features of nearly all are entire, excepting those of King Edward, which are quite obliterated, and must have been intentionally defaced, as the crown and curled hair at the sides are perfect. [...] Fragments of various kings of figure are to be observed over the whole surface of the wall with mottoes and inscriptions, all equally beyond the power of description.⁴⁵

Hearing about the discoveries, the Society of Antiquaries of London's official artist, Charles Stothart (1786–1821), went to London and undertook a survey of the paintings.⁴⁶ The drawings were engraved and included in the Society's publication *Vetusta Monumenta*, including a view of *The Coronation of Edward the Confessor* (Figure 3) mentioned in the above-quoted letter, and other draughtsmen and architects, including Edward Crocker (c.1757–1836) and John Buckler (1770–1851), also recorded the room and its painted decoration.⁴⁷ As demonstrated by Carter's drawings of Westminster now held at Yale, he viewed portions of these murals before their full extent was understood.

Carter's 'Westminster drawings' at Yale

A new corpus of 75 drawings was discovered by the author of this essay within the collection of the Yale Center for British Art (YCBA), New Haven, whilst a fellow there in 2010, and the complete list of drawings with their captions is detailed in the [Appendix](#). I attributed this corpus of drawings to Carter initially on the basis of their scrawl-like annotations that match Carter's distinctive handwriting exhibited in his drawings and correspondence held by, amongst other bodies, the British Library, King's College, London, and the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the drawing style exhibited in these sketches at Yale is also consistent with his known work at other archives.⁴⁸ The attribution of these Yale drawings to Carter is confirmed by the annotation of two in pencil with 'Original Sketches

Figure 3. James Basire after Charles Alfred Stothard, *The Coronation of Edward the Confessor*, 1842. Plate XXXVII from *Vetusta Monumenta*, vol.6 (1842). B1977.14.22593. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.



by John Carter' and 'John Carter's Sketches made in 1782'.⁴⁹ Carter's sketches of Gothic architecture, interiors, and architectural ornament at the YCBA are disseminated throughout a two-volume curated collection of drawings and engravings assembled from different antiquarian sources to depict Westminster's built environment; these volumes are known within the YCBA as *The Westminster Collection*, or *Plans and Views of Westminster*.⁵⁰ Carter's drawings make up only a fraction of *The Westminster Collection*, and the two volumes contain drawings arranged according to specific buildings grouped geographically within Westminster. Whilst ordered logically if the viewer is interested in a specific structure within Westminster, this arrangement means that Carter's drawings are disassociated from one another and scattered amongst a variety of works by different artists from various periods; this arrangement facilitates antiquarian-style comparative analysis but frustrates attempts to reconnect Carter's corpus. Despite this, they supplement the collection of Carter's vast array of traced drawings held especially by the British Library,⁵¹ and they are essentially Carter's 'field notes' made on-the-spot for personal reference or in preparation for publication. Importantly, they demonstrate how Carter engaged with medieval buildings and their fragmentary remains outside the polished context of engraved studies circulated in antiquarian publications.

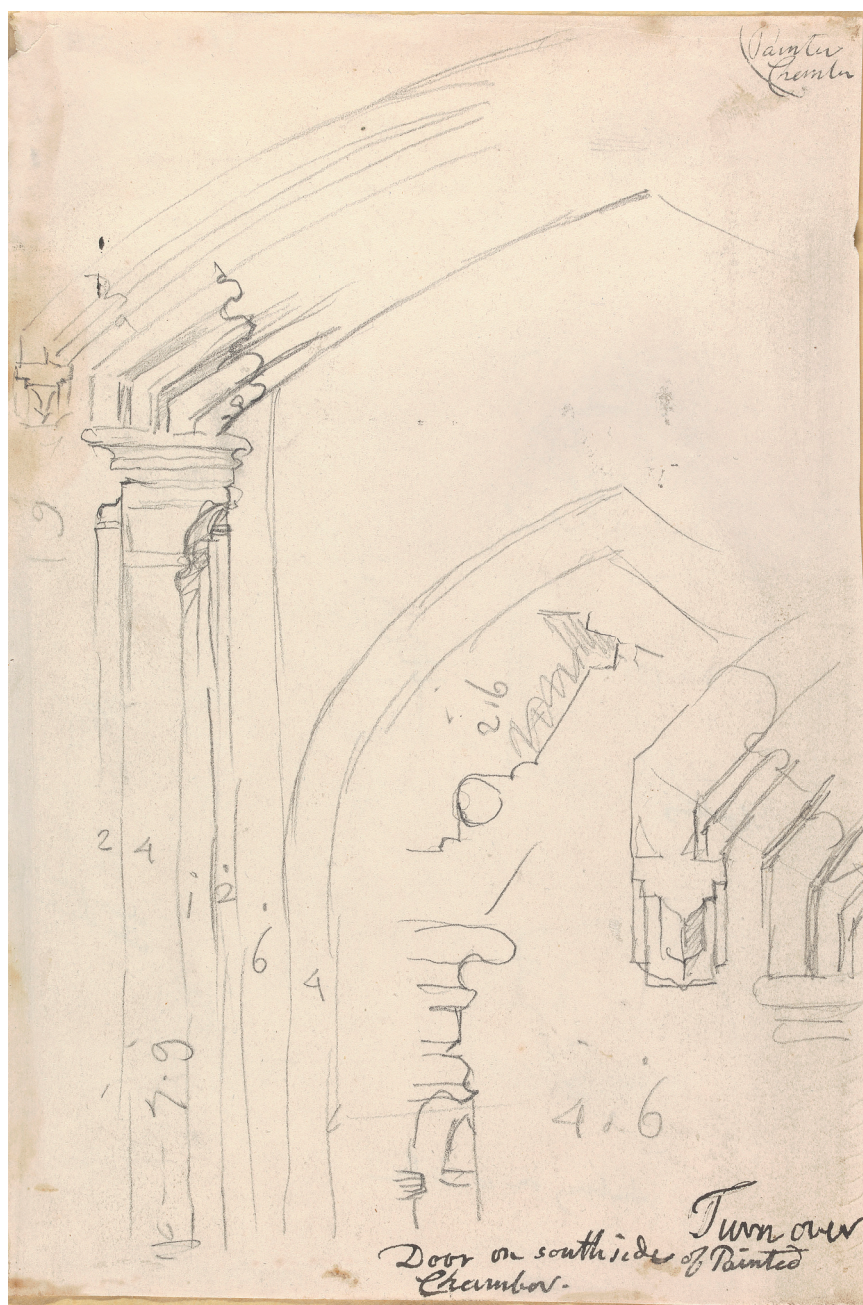
Within this corpus of drawings, Carter's sketches taken of the Palace of Westminster are particularly noteworthy: subjects include the former St Stephen's Chapel, the Painted Chamber, and the Prince's Chamber. Together, these drawings provide a detailed record of the Palace of Westminster's built environment pre-fire and at a crucial period when the medieval fabric still existed but was undergoing modernization. Some of the drawings record ruinous fragments, such as *View of the remains of the Crypt under the Dormitory in Deans yard* that details the vault springers and a doorway without any measurements.⁵² Another,

Figure 4. John Carter, *Plan of mouldings*, B1977.14.22505. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



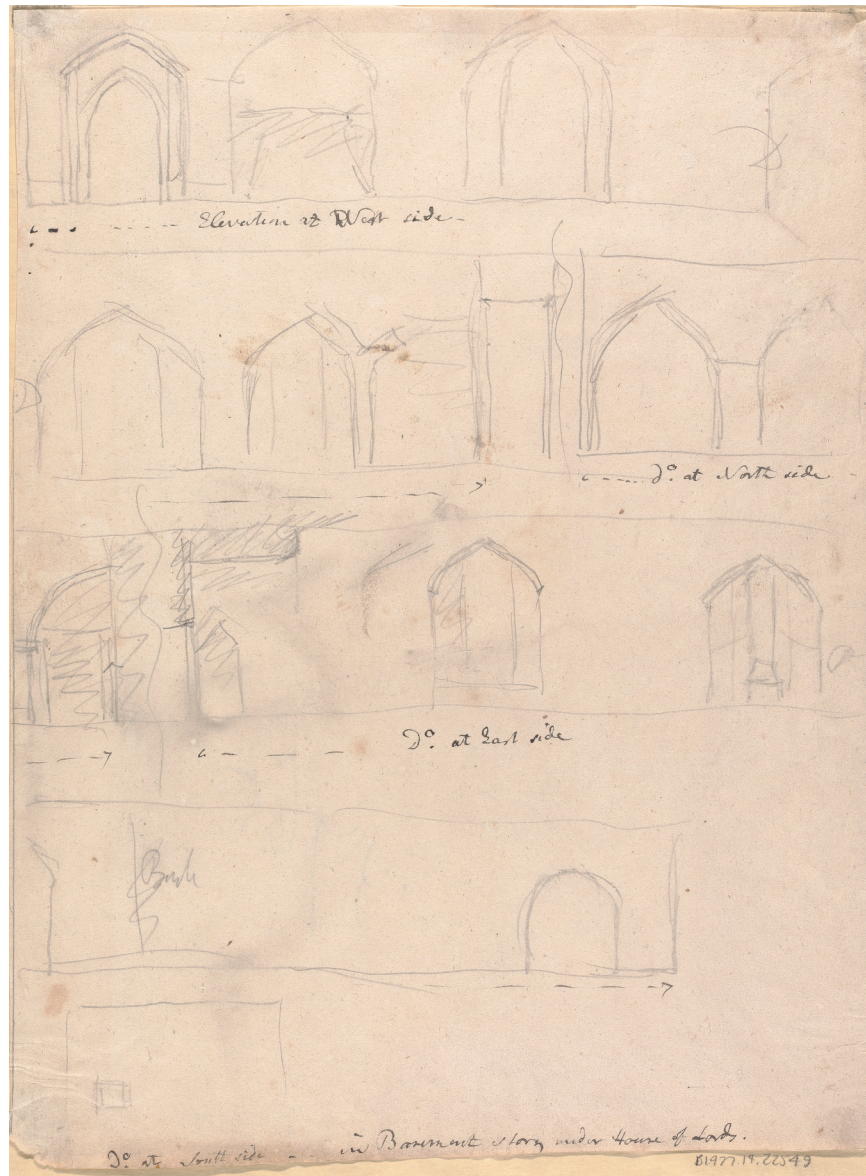
plan of mouldings, is quite different as six moulding profiles are recorded with apparent attention to accuracy, and measurements are also given (Figure 4).⁵³ Moulding dimensions are also specified on *door on south side of Painted Chamber* (Figure 5).⁵⁴ Most of Carter's drawings in this corpus, however, are of intact structures. Of these, three were made in the basement of the House of Lords: *South side* – – in *Basement Storey under House of Lords* is a effectively a straightforward catalogue of doors in this space (Figure 6), whereas *View in Basement Storey under House of Lords at C* (Figure 7) is an energetically executed study of the basement in

Figure 5. John Carter, *Door on south side of Painted Chamber, B1977.14.22577 r.* Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



perspective, illustrating the progression of doorways, walls, and vaults.⁵⁵ The latter is unusual within his drawings at Yale with some text on the verso:

Figure 6. John Carter, *South side -- in Basement Storey under House of Lords*, B1977.14.22549. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



After taking these sketches of the Basement, on coming into the streets, I found there had been, (during the few hours engaged on them) a most dreadful storm (not heard in The Basement) and there was scarce a house in Town but what has sustained some damage; many Trees in the Park blown down.⁵⁶

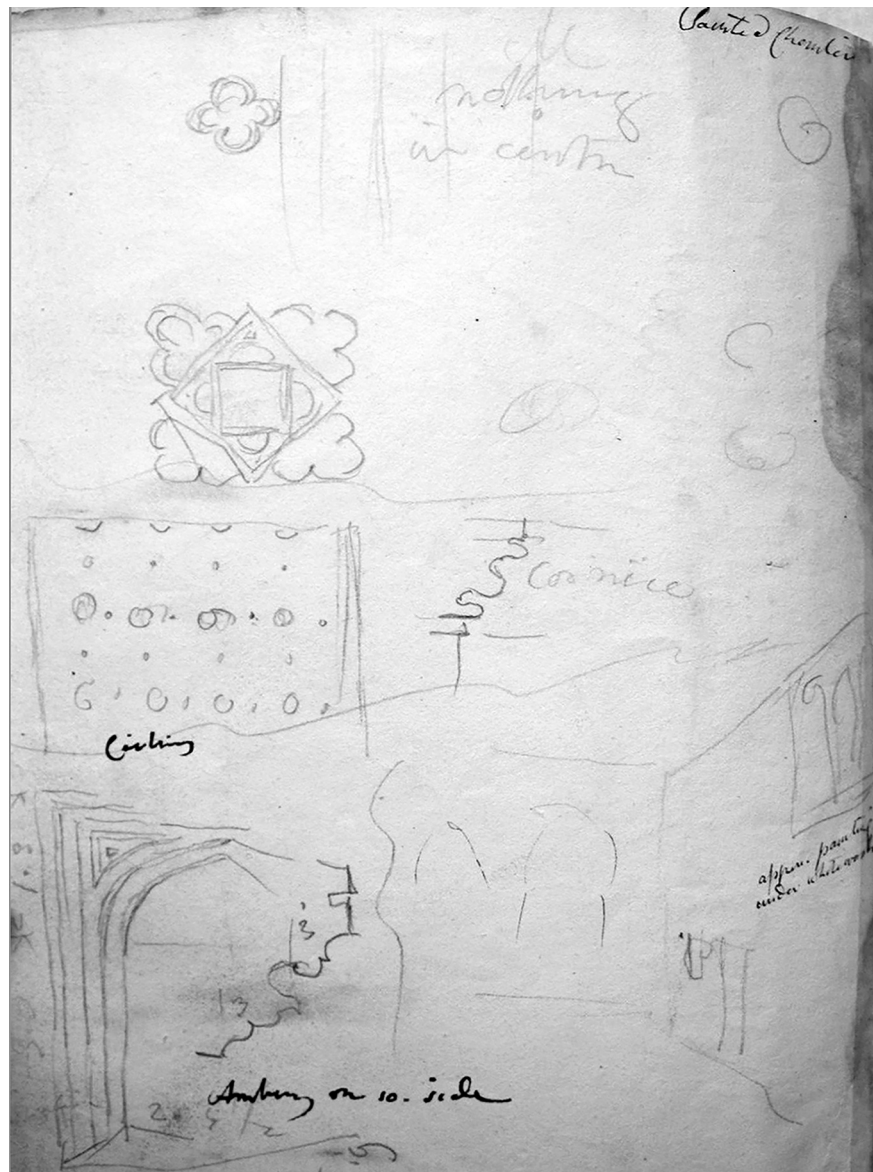
Clearly, Carter used these drawings as pictorial notes and, on this occasion, a record of occurrences.

Figure 7. John Carter, *View in Basement Storey under House of Lords at C*, B1977.14.22548. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



Without doubt, the most significant pieces in this collection are Carter's drawings taken first hand of the Painted Chamber. A particularly important example is the cursory sketch found on the verso of *door on south side of Painted Chamber* (Figure 5). The sketch is a simple overview of the Painted Chamber, but with the addition of a note, 'paintings under whitewash', recording the position of the newly-discovered thirteenth-century wall paintings (Figure 8).⁵⁷ Although most

Figure 8. John Carter, *Painted Chamber*, B1977.14.22577 v. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



of the paintings were hidden until 1818–19, having been papered over in 1800,⁵⁸ Carter clearly managed to survey some of the historical work before this.⁵⁹ Indeed, [Figure 8](#) and further drawings in the Yale collection place him at the Palace of Westminster at the time when the Painted Chamber's wall paintings were discovered. We know, for example, that William Capon (1757–1827) was aware of the paintings' emergence on the Painted Chamber's walls when he observed that there were 'several projections where the paint, or what he supposed to be paint, advanced

Figure 9. John Carter, *Paintings on the wall by H. in Plan*, B1977.14.22578. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



beyond the surface of the whitewashed walls'.⁶⁰ At least some of Carter's Yale drawings record parts of the medieval wall paintings; one it annotated in Carter's distinctive scrawl, 'Paintings on the wall by H. in plan' (Figure 9)⁶¹; it is very fragmented, but nevertheless this sketch is a precursor to later, far more detailed and well-known records made of the room's paintings produced by Charles Stothard at the behest of the Society of Antiquaries and following encouragement from the Secretary, Henry Ellis (1777–1869).⁶²

Carter's drawings do not offer any significant information about the thirteenth-century wall paintings, but, instead, they demonstrate his presence in the chamber when they were discovered initially. They consequently post-date a pair of drawings by Carter now in the Victoria and Albert Museum that detail the Painted Chamber in perspective and make no reference to the wall decorations (Figure 10) despite being annotated extensively, including with 'stone', 'tapestry', 'matting', 'crimson', 'dirty stone colour', and 'matting torn showing stone behind' to help him remember details of the room.⁶³ Had the wall paintings been discovered at the time that Carter produced these drawings, he would have surely noted their presence as he does in the Yale drawings; Carter therefore repeatedly drew the Painted Chamber and he appears to have taken the opportunity to gain access to new, crucial discoveries in the room. Indeed, Carter began recording the Painted Chamber as early as 1788,⁶⁴ and this continued through to the end of the century.

A further three drawings by Carter at Yale (Figures 11 and 12) depict figures and architectural backdrops taken of the c.1470 tapestries in the Painted Chamber depicting scenes from the Trojan Wars; these tapestries were hung over the top of the whitewashed thirteenth-century wall paintings and recorded tangentially by William Capon in his 1799 survey of the room (Figure 2).⁶⁵ Carter had also taken detailed drawings of these tapestries before 1800, with the sketches in pencil, watercolour, and ink

Figure 10. John Carter, *The Walls of the Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster, c.1799. E.2224-1924. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



(Figure 13) now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and further sketches in Westminster City Archives.⁶⁶ These wide tableaux recorded by Carter are tremendously detailed, but those in the Victoria and Albert Museum only record a selection of the total number of tapestries displayed in the Painted Chamber; the figures depicted in Carter's Yale drawings do not match any of the scenes recorded in these drawings and watercolours of the tapestries and therefore offer a record of other parts of the room's decoration. Of Carter's Yale drawings of the tapestries, the largest is an overview of a battle scene recording figures' postures, and it includes details of the knights and an architectural backdrop.⁶⁷ The subsequent drawings are exclusively figural and examine dress and posture.⁶⁸ Given that these tapestries were sold in 1825 and remain

Figure 11. John Carter, *Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – Paintings on the wall – detail*, B1977.14.22579. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



untraced, Carter's drawings of the tapestries offer important additional records of them, as well as demonstrating his interest in fine detail.⁶⁹

Whilst these drawings of the Painted Chamber's interior went unpublished, a number of Carter's other drawings of the room in the *Westminster Collection* concentrate upon its plain external structure and can be found engraved in *Ancient Architecture of England* (1795). *The East Front of the Painted Chamber* (Figure 14), for example, is directly reproduced as Plate LXVI in *Ancient Architecture*, minus, of course, Carter's personal notes attached to the drawings, such as 'Stone work made good', 'Tiles', or 'Bricks'. Along with detailed measurements of the elevation, mouldings, and architectural features, these drawings are clearly *aide-mémoires* and thus consistent with his other drawings found at Yale and elsewhere: they capture a snapshot of the building for future use. While Carter managed to survey the Painted Chamber's tapestries, and wall paintings discovered in 1799/1800, this is in marked contrast to occurrences in St Stephen's, discussed above, where he was prevented from witnessing the works and the associated discoveries.

Coda

Carter's drawings in the *Westminster Collection* clearly emphasize his dedication to recording Gothic architecture, sculpture, and art. His passion for documenting, and, hence, adding to scholarly and general knowledge of medieval architecture, particularly where examples were threatened with destruction, is demonstrated by these drawings at Yale. This attention to detail and passionate recording of medieval architecture is not surprising, considering his support for medieval art, and how he scorned the recent,

Figure 12. John Carter, *Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – Paintings on the wall – detail*, B1977.14.22580. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.



Figure 13. *Tapestry No. 2 in the Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster, c.1799. E.2235–1924. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*



Figure 14. John Carter, *The East Front of the Painted Chamber*, B1977.14.22571. Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven CT.

love of novelty, and an unfeeling contempt shewn for our sacred works of antiquity, which have been stigmatized with the barbarous name Gothic, is the *cause* whereby the Roman and Grecian styles of architecture have been introduced into every line of building since that period, both public and private. Therefore, the admiration that has been conjured up in support of such styles has necessarily turned the genius of Englishmen from their national architecture, to toil in an inglorious and servile pursuit to imitate a foreign manner.⁷⁰

Carter's Yale drawings thus demonstrate how he interacted with buildings and satisfied the demands of producing topographical works and keeping abreast of new discoveries in these historic contexts. These drawings can be read alongside his attempts to access and record the wall paintings discovered in St Stephen's and they add to our understanding of the scholarly study of medieval architecture in Britain as sponsored by the Society of Antiquaries of London, and especially of the Painted Chamber's decoration before the landmark record of the wall paintings made in the early nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1 Mordaunt Crook, *John Carter and the Mind of the Gothic*; and Dale Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity*, 192–97.
- 2 Crook, *John Carter*, 80–89; Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival*; and Peter N. Lindfield, "Northern Gothic: The Work of James Wyatt," 36–39.
- 3 Noah Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*, 231.
- 4 See Peter N. Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, 7–41, 54–81; Roger White, "William Kent and the Gothic Revival," 247–6; and Eileen Harris, "Batty Langley."
- 5 London, King's College Archives, Leathes 7/4, ff. 9 r–v.
- 6 Batty Langley and T. Langley, *Ancient Architecture: Restored*, dedication.
- 7 John Carter, "The Pursuits of Architectural Innovation," 764.
- 8 John Carter, "The Pursuits of Architectural Innovation 2," 825.
- 9 An Architect, "Damage by a Late Storm in St Alban's Abbey," 927–28.
- 10 John Frew, "Richard Gough, James Wyatt, and Late 18th-Century Preservation," 371–72; Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*, 231–52; and Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 260–64.
- 11 Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole*, i.
- 12 John Carter, "The Pursuits of Architectural Innovation 7," 92.
- 13 Crook, *John Carter*, 1; and Bernard Nurse, "John Carter, FSA (1748–1817)".
- 14 Crook, *John Carter*, 11; and London, British Library Add MSS 29925–43 (drawings) and Add MS 29944 (correspondence).
- 15 Richard Gough, "A Mode Pointed out for Preserving Ancient Edifices," 690.
- 16 John Frew, "James Wyatt's Choir Screen," 484; and John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt (1746–1813)*, 223, 227–29.
- 17 Robinson, *James Wyatt*, 15–26.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 220–23, 236–38; Matthew M. Reeve and Peter N. Lindfield, "A Child of Strawberry," 836–42; Lindfield, "Northern Gothic," 36–43; and Caroline Dakers, "Fonthill Recovered," 83–93, 284–301.
- 19 Robinson, *James Wyatt*, 224–31, 323–40; and Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, 1112–13.
- 20 Benjamin Ferrey, *Recollections of A.N. Welby Pugin*, 65–66.
- 21 Frew, "Richard Gough," 373; Robinson, *James Wyatt*, 226–29; and Crook, *John Carter*, 33–41.
- 22 Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington: September 1796–December 1798*, 864, July 6 1797.
- 23 New Correspondent, "Reply," 828.
- 24 John Frew, "Some Observations on James Wyatt's Gothic Style 1790–1797," 146; and Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 288–89.
- 25 John Milner, "Discoveries at Winchester – the Society of Antiquaries", 638.
- 26 Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity*, 231–32.

22 JOHN CARTER FSA (1748–1817)

- 27 For the fire and the Palace of Westminster's remodelling; see Caroline Shenton, *The Day Parliament Burned Down* and for the palace of Westminster; see *ibid.*, 7–15; and John Crook, "An Introduction to the Topography of the Medieval Palace of Westminster," 1–18.
- 28 Shenton, *The Day Parliament Burned Down*, 7–8, 22–24, 120–29.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 137–54.
- 30 John Goodall, "St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster," 111.
- 31 Christopher Wilson, "A Monument to St Edward the Confessor", 135; and Virginia Jansen, "Henry III's Palace at Westminster," 89–105.
- 32 Wilson, 168.
- 33 Chris Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity*, 5.
- 34 Paul Binski, *The Painted Chamber at Westminster*, 14, 35.
- 35 Wilson, "Monument to St Edward the Confessor," 161.
- 36 Binski, *The Painted Chamber*, 1. The manuscript is by Symon Semeonis and Hugo Illuminator, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 407; transcribed and translated in Mario Esposito, "The Pilgrimage of Symon Semeonis, 340; see also Matthew Reeve, "The Painted Chamber at Westminster," 189.
- 37 Binski, *The Painted Chamber*, 3.
- 38 Robinson, *James Wyatt*, 273–74.
- 39 Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, "St Stephen's Chapel," 734.
- 40 See Rosemary Hill, "Proceeding Like Guy Faux," 261–63.
- 41 John Thomas Smith, *Antiquities of Westminster*, vi.
- 42 John Carter, "The Painted Chamber; Plan for a Parliament House," 552.
- 43 Shield & 25-r., "Discoveries in the Painted Chamber," 389.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 *Ibid.*, 391.
- 46 Bray, *Memoirs*, 304.
- 47 Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, WA1863.1468; and British Library, London, BL Add. MS 36370 ff. 205–9.
- 48 Comparisons include London, *Victoria and Albert Museum*, E.2224–1924; illustrated in this essay; and London, King's College, Leathes 7/4 "Occurrences in the Life and Memorandums relating to the Professional pursuits [sic] of J C F.A.S. Architect,"
- 49 Yale Center for British Art, New Haven B1977.14.22611 and B1977.14.22672.
- 50 Yale Center for British Art, Plans and Views of Westminster.
- 51 British Library, London, Add MSS 29925–44.
- 52 Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.22681.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 22505.
- 54 Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.22577 r.
- 55 Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.22549 and B1977.14.22548.
- 56 Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.22548 v.
- 57 New Haven, *Yale Center for British Art*, B1977.14.22577 v.
- 58 William Capon, "Notes and Remarks, by the Late Mr William Capon, to Accompany His Plan of the Ancient Palace of Westminster," *Vetusta Monumenta* V (1835), 4–7.
- 59 For analysis of their discovery in 1800 and thereafter see Binski, *The Painted Chamber*, 3–4.
- 60 Capon, 'Notes and Remarks,' pl. XLVII, 7.
- 61 Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.22578. A plan with H marked on it, however, is not contained in the *Westminster Collection*. Perhaps this is the Victoria and Albert Museum, E.285A-1933.
- 62 Bray, *Memoirs*, 305–17; Binski, *The Painted Chamber*, 24; and Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries*, 237.
- 63 Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.2223–1924–E.2224–1924.
- 64 Westminster City Archives, London, Gardner Box 57 No 34.
- 65 John Cherry and Neil Stratford, *Westminster Kings and the Medieval Palace of Westminster*, 14–15; Palace of Westminster, London, WOA 1648.
- 66 Victoria and Albert Museum, E. 2225–1924, E.2238–1924; and E.2235–1924 (details of the tapestries); and E.285A-1933 (plan), and Westminster City Archives, London, Gardner Box 57 No 34.
- 67 See note 52 above, 22579.
- 68 Yale Center for British Art, B1977.14.22580–22581.
- 69 Marillier, "The Tapestries of the Painted Chamber", 35–36; See Victoria and Albert Museum, E.259–1933 and E.2249–1924.
- 70 Carter, "Architectural Innovation 7," 92.

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Appendix

Westminster Collection Box 1 – Original drawings by John Carter

Drawing Number	Drawing Title/description
B1977.14.22464 r	East View of Modern [Gothic] Building – [by] St Stephen's Chapel/Speaker's House
B1977.14.22464 v	unidentified drawing of ogee arch
B1977.14.22482 r	South View in the Entrance or Porch at the west end of St Stephen's chapel. Westm
B1977.14.22482 v	Plan of the entrance or porch at the west end of St Stephen's chapel
B1977.14.22483	Entrance doorway in the tower
B1977.14.22484 r	Screen, or the outside of the Entrance or Porch of St Stephen's chapel Westm
B1977.14.22484 v	Screen, or the outside of the Entrance or Porch of St Stephen's chapel Westm [details]
B1977.14.22485	Screen, or the outside of the Entrance or Porch of St Stephen's chapel (detail)
B1977.14.22486	St Stephen's Chapel: shields in the frieze under sills of windows, painting in compartments under windows and compartments on south side next east end, making the three seats for the officiating priests
B1977.14.22487	Exterior, Interior, and – – Profile of the work under the sills of the windows of St Stephens chapel, Wstr
B1977.14.22488	Front and profile of the work immediately below the sills of the windows of St Stephen's Chapel Westr
B1977.14.22489	Detail of shaft bases [St Stephen's chapel?]
B1977.14.22490	St Stephen's Chapel, Westr [detail of moulding and floral ornament]
B1977.14.22491	New East front St Stephen's Chapel
B1977.14.22502	Parts of ceiling and Detail for view in a Chapel [drawing in Long Box] in area of cloisters of St Stephens chapel Westminster
B1977.14.22503	Half the plan of the ceiling [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22504	Various parts of the [bosses in the ceiling – St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22505	Plans of mouldings [St Stephen's Chapel]
B1977.14.22506 a&b	Continuation of proceeding parts [mouldings at St Stephens, Westminster]
B1977.14.22507	Impost and base of Columns [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22508	Impost mouldings + details on reverse [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22509	Impost mouldings + details on reverse [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]

(continued)

(Continued).

Westminster Collection Box 1 – Original drawings by John Carter

Drawing Number	Drawing Title/description
B1977.14.22512	Basso relievos in the groins of the cloisters, adjoining St Stephen's Chapel, Westr [Engraved in No. 22 of Ancient Sculpture] [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22513	Basso relievos in the groins of the cloisters, adjoining St Stephen's Chapel, Westr [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster] + IHS on the reverse
B1977.14.22514	Basso relievos in the groins of the cloisters, adjoining St Stephen's Chapel, Westr [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22515	Basso relievos in the groins of the cloisters, adjoining St Stephen's Chapel, Westr [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22516	Basso relievos in the groins of the cloisters, adjoining St Stephen's Chapel, Westr – North Cloister [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22517	Basso relievos in the groins of the undercroft of St Stephen's Chapel, Westr [St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster]
B1977.14.22518	These subjects a[re] on the crowning of the arches of the Undercroft to St Stephens Chapel, taken 1781 + more on the reverse
B1977.14.22519	Musical angel
B1977.14.22520	Boss from St Stephen's chapel, Westminster – reversed by a Glass
B1977.14.22521	Boss from St Stephen's chapel, Westminster – reversed
B1977.14.22522	Boss from St Stephen's chapel, Westminster – reversed
B1977.14.22523	Boss from St Stephen's chapel, Westminster – not reversed
B1977.14.22524	Boss from St Stephen's chapel, Westminster – not reversed
B1977.14.22546	Prince's chamber, Plan of Basement story under House of Lords
B1977.14.22547	Parts in Stores? – underhouse of Lords [Westminster]
B1977.14.22548	Views in Basement Story under House of Lords at C – reverse has: After taking these sketches of the Basement, on coming into the streets, I found there had been, (during the few hours engaged on them) a most dreadful storm (not heard in The Basement) and there was scarce a house in Town but what has sustained some damage; many Trees in the Park blown down
B1977.14.22549	Do at South side – – in Basement Story under House of Lords

Westminster Collection Box 2 – Original drawings by John Carter

Drawing Number	Drawing Title/description
B1977.14.22569	Palace at West – plan of rooms
B1977.14.22570	Plan of Painted Chamber, the Palace of Westminster
B1977.14.22571	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – East front of Painted Chamber and details

(continued)

(Continued).

Westminster Collection Box 1 – Original drawings by John Carter

Drawing Number	Drawing Title/description
B1977.14.22572	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – side windows
B1977.14.22573	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – North side and details
B1977.14.22574	Mouldings and their profiles
B1977.14.22575	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – details
B1977.14.22576	Continuation of East line of Antient Buildings on the left of East end of Painted Chamber
B1977.14.22577	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – Door on south side of Painted Chamber + details on the reverse
B1977.14.22578	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – Paintings on the wall by H. in plan
B1977.14.22579	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – Paintings on the wall – additional details
B1977.14.22580	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – Paintings on the wall – detail of knight from B1977.14.22579
B1977.14.22581	Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster – Paintings on the wall – detail
B1977.14.22608	East Plan of Chamber one pair, the Prince's Chamber, Palace of Westminster
B1977.14.22609	East front of Princes Chamber, Palace of Westminster + details of moulding on the reverse
B1977.14.22610	South side of Princes Chamber Westr [Palace of Westminster]
B1977.14.22611	Princes Chamber – external elevation + detail of windows on the reverse
B1977.14.22612	Princes Chamber – internal elevation
B1977.14.22613	Elevation of a door
B1977.14.22614	Door near Painted Chamber, Palace of Westminster
B1977.14.22697	Sculpted woman
B1977.14.22663	4 drawings of Hints from the Seats in Henry VII. chapel Westr Abbey
B1977.14.22664	Continuation of the Proceeding Ornament – Hy 7th Chapel
B1977.14.22672	South east view of the Abbey &c: from College St Westr
B1977.14.22673	View of modern gateway in ... Deans Yard
B1977.14.22675	North view of the Jerusalem-chamber, taken from the west porch of Westminster Abbey + capitals on reverse
B1977.14.22677	Door-way in wall of South Precincts? of Westr Abbey
B1977.14.22681	South west view of the remains of the Crypt under the Dormitory in Deans yard discovered June
B1977.14.22682	Plan and elevation of Springing of groins+ details on reverse
B1977.14.22685	South view of the Abbey church, Westminster, taken from Dean's-yard

(continued)

(Continued).

 Westminster Collection Box 1 – Original drawings by John Carter

Drawing Number	Drawing Title/description
B1977.14.22686	Intire line of Buildings on East side Dean's Yard K in 9 Can Abbey ch. Westr
B1977.14.22687	The line of buildings
B1977.14.22688	Buildings on the North side, Dean's Yard + in plan Abbey at Westr
B1977.14.22689	Details of Preceeding Elevations
B1977.14.22690	Continuation of do details
B1977.14.22691	Continuation of do details
B1977.14.22692	Continuation of do details + moulding profile on the reverse
B1977.14.22693	Details of Preceeding Elevations
B1977.14.22694	Window Deans Yard – Wesr + South Side of St Margaret's Church West

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Add MS 29,925–29,944.

Add MS 36370.

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Leathes 7/4.

London, Palace of Westminster

WOA 1648.

London, Victoria and Albert Museum

E.259-1933.

E.285A-1933.

E.2223-1924.

E.2224-1924.

E.2225-1924.

E.2235-1924.

E.2238-1924.

E.2249-1924.

London, Westminster City Archives

Gardner Box 57

New Haven, Yale Center for British Art

B1977.14.22505.

B1977.14.22548.

B1977.14.22549.

B1977.14.22577.

B1977.14.22578.

B1977.14.22579.

B1977.14.22580.

B1977.14.22581.

B1977.14.22611.

B1977.14.22672.

B1977.14.22681.

Plans and Views of Westminster.

Oxford, Ashmolean Museum

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