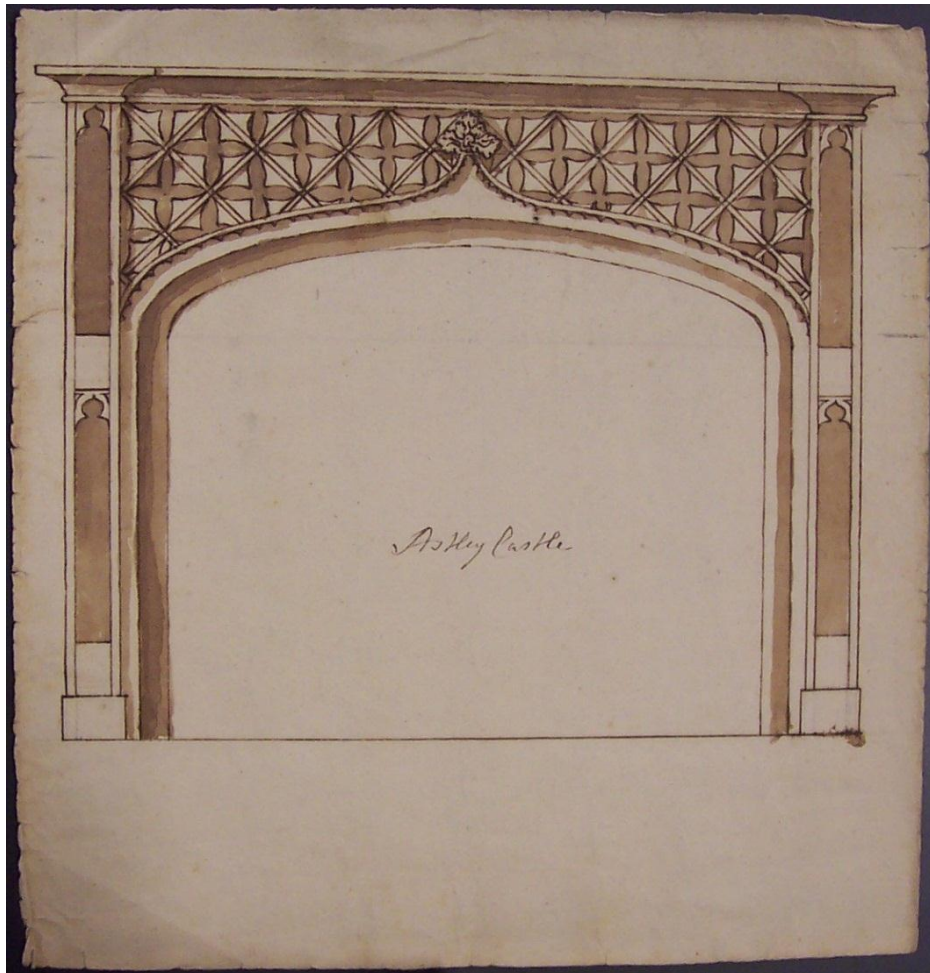


## Small architectural sketches and plans, mainly by Sir Roger Newdigate: a fireplace at Astley Castle (probably a design for it)

n.d. 1747-1768 – [CR 764/215](#)



### Astley Castle: A living place

Astley Castle has a rich and varied history. In 1266 Warin de Bassingburn was granted a licence to enclose the manor house at Astley with a dyke and walls, and to crenellate (fortify) the property<sup>1</sup>. By 1674 the castle had been sold to the Newdigate family, and among their records, there are a number of references to Astley. These offer up such insights into its history as an 1804 agreement by Sir Roger Newdigate to lease Astley Castle to Mrs Rebecca Hutchins of Chilvers Coton<sup>2</sup>. There is also a glimpse into family life afforded by an inventory of 1893, detailing the household furniture and effects at Astley Castle<sup>3</sup>.

## History of Astley Castle

Come the 1960s, Astley was being used as a hotel. In 1978, the castle was subject of a devastating fire, and the record office holds photocopies of photographs held by the National Buildings Record, taken after the fire<sup>4</sup>. Numerous proposals were made to restore the shell, but ultimately the cost proved prohibitive. In 1994, areas of the site were declared a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and a copy of the March 1994 County List of Scheduled Monuments is available for viewing in our searchroom<sup>5</sup>. Eventually however, in 2005, the Landmark Trust proposed a solution that involved building accommodation within the ruined walls. The finished building won the *RIBA Stirling Prize for Architecture* in September 2013.

## Shifting Sense of Permanence

This month's *Document of the Month* makes evident how design at Astley Castle is not restricted to the present day. Items such as this document accentuate how a building is not set at one point in time but is constantly shifting, constantly developing, and is not in a fixed state of permanence, whatever the sense of 'age' is. Here is a design of a fireplace from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and further records relating to changes of the building include plans of proposed alterations to Astley Castle Hotel, 1953-1964<sup>6</sup>. Combined, these records help to demonstrate the nuances of the past, and how buildings can hold as interesting and varied a history as the people who live within them.

## Sir Roger Newdigate and Design

Whether this fireplace was ever incorporated into the building itself is unclear, as no notes accompany the drawing. The sketch is, however, part of a large collection of drawings by Sir Roger Newdigate, showing his interest in architecture. The drawing of an 'everyday' feature such as a fireplace, signifying home and familiarity, offers an interesting juxtaposition to the sketches made by Sir Roger on his Grand Tour. This tour was a common practice, taking in sites of classical antiquity and exposing young men of the aristocracy to knowledge and wisdom. Looking through our present day prism onto the past, it might be interesting to consider what influences the Grand Tour excursions brought upon Roger Newdigate's sketches of his 'present'.

## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See C.913.Eng(P)

<sup>2</sup> CR 136/B1378b

<sup>3</sup> CR 136/A548

<sup>4</sup> PH504/9-13

<sup>5</sup> C.913.Eng(P)

<sup>6</sup> WCC0018/27/M3848