

## Sezincote

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Figure 1: Sezincote, Moreton in Marsh as depicted in the 1884 sale particulars.  
Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2013.

Down the drive,  
Under the early yellow leaves of oaks;  
One lodge is Tudor, one in Indian style.  
The bridge, the waterfall, the Temple Pool  
And there they burst on us, the onion domes,  
Chajjahs and chattris made of amber stone:  
'Home of the Oaks', exotic Sezincote.  
Stately and strange it stood, the Nabob's house,  
Indian without and coolest Greek within<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Sibthorpe would like to thank Edward Peake for his generous access to Sezincote house and grounds and for his time in discussing Sezincote's contemporary life. For information about visiting Sezincote, visit <http://www.sezincote.co.uk/>. Copyright for this research remains with Jan Sibthorpe.

<sup>2</sup>From *Summoned by Bells* by John Betjeman, 1960. Betjeman - celebrated writer, broadcaster and poet - was a regular visitor to Sezincote in the 1920s, as a guest of the Dugdales, the then owners of Sezincote.

Sezincote House and its gardens, a mirage of India in the heart of the Cotswolds, were created, largely as they are seen today, in the early nineteenth century. The house, outbuildings and (pleasure) gardens, owe their creation in the 'Indian manner' to the collaboration of its owner, Sir Charles Cockerell, (1755 – 1837), his brother, the architect Samuel Pepys Cockerell (1754 – 1827), the artist Thomas Daniell (1749 – 1840) and to a lesser extent the landscape gardener, Humphry Repton (1752 – 1818). Among them, these men possessed the knowledge, expertise and money to create a distinctive vision of India in the English countryside.

The basic structure of the house is that of a typical Georgian villa, of which the exterior has been given a 'strong infusion of Mughal architecture'.<sup>3</sup> The interior, in stark contrast, is neo-classical in design.<sup>4</sup> Once the home of Sir Charles Cockerell, banker, baronet, Member of Parliament and employee of the East India Company, Sezincote is now the home of Edward and Camilla Peake and their young family; Edward Peake's grandparents, Sir Cyril and Lady Kleinwort bought the estate in 1946 from the Dugdale family, 'dramatically' rescuing it from a 'long and romantic decline'.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas other case studies in *The East India Company at Home, 1757 – 1857* project have focused on Company families who sought to design, build and buy essentially neo-classical houses, this case study examines a house whose design explicitly referenced the imperial connections of its owner. Sezincote is thought to be the only 'Indian' country house ever built in England.<sup>6</sup> In a broad sense this case study asks why, and how, Sezincote emerged in this manner in the early nineteenth century and what does its design reveal about the impact of empire on domestic Britain? The question of 'why' Sezincote emerged in this way cannot be adequately answered with the evidence available: although there is much correspondence concerning the financial and estate management of Sezincote, there is very little that relates directly to its conception and construction.<sup>7</sup> Therefore this case study will instead explore the cultural contexts in which the house, and its gardens, was devised.

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Head, *The Indian Style* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Neo-classical refers to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century revival of the architectural styles of classical antiquity, of Ancient Greece and Rome. It was based upon principles of simplicity, symmetry and perspective and found reference in the sixteenth-century works of Andrea Palladio.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire, Volume 2, 1660 – 1830* (Andover: Philimore, 1992), p. 227 image caption.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 120.

<sup>7</sup> Gloucestershire Archives holds a wealth of papers, rent receipts and household accounts pertaining to the Sezincote estate, much still uncatalogued. The Bodleian Library also holds a significant collection of the Cockerell family papers. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Drawings Collection at the V&A, London holds three letters from 1810/11 from Thomas Daniell to Charles Cockerell which refer to the building of Sezincote.

Specifically this analysis considers who the Cockerell family were and how their background allowed them to conceptualise, and realise, this country house in an Indian idiom. It explores the broader context within which Sezincote was built and examines the extent to which Indian styles and motifs impacted on British architecture and other media in the early nineteenth century. It also suggests specific influences which might have provided the catalyst or inspiration for the creation of Sezincote at this particular moment in time.

Sezincote's story does not, however, end with the completion of its creation. By following Sezincote into the twenty-first century this case study further explores how, through the careful conservation and maintenance by its current owners, it retains the 'Indian Manner' to the present day. This intergenerational approach provides a 'then and now' perspective of both the house and gardens and attempts to shed light on the way in which the families associated with Sezincote have engaged with its buildings and its histories, and by implication, the notion of empire.

### **Sezincote: A Brief Description**



Figure 2: East façade, Sezincote; the copper Mughal-style dome dominates the skyline.  
Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2013.

By the standards of early nineteenth-century country houses, Sezincote was relatively small. Its underlying structure follows the conventions of Georgian villa design, with a central block flanked by wings ending in pavilions, while the

façades employ a number of Indian architectural devices.<sup>8</sup> The most obvious is the single copper Mughal-style dome (see figure 2), which dominates the roofline where four *chattris* (small minarets) mark the corners of the central block. These and the deep overhanging eaves or *chajja* are of Muslim influence (see figure 3), while the pillars and horizontal beam over the front door are of Hindu inspiration, likewise the many representations of the lotus. The ‘peacock tail’ arches crowning the first floor windows on the south façade (see figure 3 and 4) can often be seen in the buildings of Rajasthan.<sup>9</sup> The appearance of the eastern façade of the central block with its two-storeyed gateway style entrance bears strong reference to the Taj Mahal.



Figure 3: Detail of east façade, Sezincote, showing the *chajja* (deep overhanging eaves), one of four *chattris* (minarets) marking the corners of the central block and two-storeyed gateway style entrance. Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2013.



Figure 4: Detail of east façade, Sezincote, showing ‘peacock tail’ arches over the windows. Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain’s Raj* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Peake, David Peake, Susanna Peake and Graham Thomas, *Sezincote* (self-published visitor guidebook), p. 4. Although remaining a vibrant family home, the current owners generously allow public access to the gardens and certain rooms in the house on selected days.



Figure 5: The pavilion at the end of the orangery, Sezincote.  
Photograph by Diane James © 2013.

To the south of the house is the sweeping, curved orangery, with more peacock tail arches. The octagonal pavilion at the end of the orangery, with its ‘riot of colonettes, finials, delicate panelling, cupolas and coloured glass’ was once home to an aviary for exotic birds (see figure 5).<sup>10</sup> It is now the venue for afternoon tea served to the visiting public. To the north of the house is the octagonal or ‘tent’ room believed to have been Sir Charles Cockerell’s bedroom. It is thought to have been decorated to resemble a tent, with wooden, decorative spears supporting a canopy (see figure 6).<sup>11</sup> A curved passageway with iron trellis once connected this room to the house.

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<sup>10</sup> Raymond Head, ‘Sezincote: A Paradigm of the Indian Style’, Unpublished MA Thesis, Royal College of Art, May 1982, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> Peake, Peake, Peake and Thomas, *Sezincote*, p. 5. Dents in the floor indicate that this is quite likely to have been the case (personal conversation with Edward Peake 12 August 2013). Plans of the house, held by RIBA, dated 1811 indicate Sir Charles’ bedroom was in the house, suggesting the tent room may have been an extra room of his own.



Figure 6: The octagonal or 'tent' room, Sezincote. Photograph by Diane James © 2013.

The gardens are resplendent with architectural and topographical references to Indian landscape and Indian religious culture: the Thornery - the water garden to the north of the house with the Indian bridge with its Brahmin bulls and lotus buds, its Temple pool with the shrine to the Hindu god, Surya, and a serpent fountain - provides a dramatic focal point (see figures 10, 11, 12 and 13). Grottoes hollowed out of the sloping banks, and curving rockeries with dramatically large boulders reminiscent of untamed Indian landscapes, surround the Temple pool and the descending pools. To the south of the house is a limestone grotto containing an Indian white marble water maze. The farm buildings and dairy are not exempt from the Indian influence, forming a complex reminiscent of an Indian fort (see figure 7). Two of the lodges at one of the entrances to Sezincote were originally modelled along the lines of a Bengal hut.



Figure 7: The farm buildings, Sezincote. Photograph by Diane James © 2013.

The overall aesthetic effect of the exterior of Sezincote finds reference in the Picturesque, with its sense of strangeness and artifice amid the dramatic, romantic landscape of its setting. Whilst from the outside Sezincote resembles the mausoleums depicted in Thomas Daniells' Indian paintings and engravings, once inside the aesthetic changes, remaining faithful to the more traditional neo-classical style. The complexity of the Indian stylisation with its mix of Hindu and Muslim architectural styles is blended with the symmetry and order of European neo-classicism, allowing for the conflation of East and West: an elaborate Eastern exterior belies an interior that operated as a functional domestic space.

## The Cockerell Family



Figure 8: Portrait of Samuel Pepys Cockerell by George Dance. 1793 Graphite, with watercolour. Museum number 1898,0712.17.  
© The Trustees of the British Museum

Sezincote's association with the Cockerells and the East India Company began in 1795 when Colonel John Cockerell (1752 – 1798) purchased the estate just prior to his retirement from the Company's military service.<sup>12</sup> Correspondence between John and his brother, Samuel Pepys Cockerell (see figure 8), documents the purchase of the estate from the Earl of Guildford.<sup>13</sup>

John Cockerell arrived home from Bengal in 1794 after a long and distinguished military career with the East India Company's (EIC) army. He first went to India in 1763, aged fourteen, and was attached to the household of General Sir Robert Barker, Commander-in-Chief at Bengal. In 1776 Cockerell was appointed to the military staff of Governor-General Warren Hastings – an association that may explain, in part, his choice of Sezincote, due to its proximity to Daylesford,

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<sup>12</sup> John, Charles, Samuel Pepys and Elizabeth Cockerell were descendants, through their mother of the diarist Samuel Pepys.

<sup>13</sup> Allen Firth, *The Book of Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford and Sezincote: Aspects of a North Cotswolds Community* (Tiverton: Halsgrove, 2005), pp. 49-66 and pp. 77-98; Head, 'Sezincote: A Paradigm of the Indian Style', pp. 15-16.

Hastings' home a few miles away. We have already seen in Georgina Green's study of [Valentines Mansion](#) that employees of the EIC tended to settle in areas where former Company colleagues, or relatives with EIC connections had chosen to live. John's sister Elizabeth Cockerell was married to John Belli, Hastings' private secretary and agent for the supply of provisions to the garrison in Fort William.<sup>14</sup> Charles Cockerell's former sister-in-law, Charlotte Blunt, married Charles von Imhoff, Warren Hastings stepson: Company loyalty and family connections were clearly important.<sup>15</sup>

John Cockerell's final years in India were spent attached to the staff of Lord Cornwallis, Governor-General of India, for whom he commanded troops, in the Mysore Wars against Tipu Sultan.<sup>16</sup> He returned to London in 1794, bringing with him his Indo-Portuguese mistress, Estuarta, who chose to settle in Brighton with their children rather than in London.<sup>17</sup> Although it was not unusual for the children born of the relationships between British men and Eurasian women to be baptised as Christians and educated in England, it was unusual for the mothers to travel as well. As Christopher Hawes notes, there was a 'tacit understanding that such partnerships were for India only' and 'save for a very few cases, when British men returned home the Indian companion stayed in India'.<sup>18</sup> John Cockerell made no provision for Estuarta in his will, leaving the bulk of his estate including Sezincote to his sister and two brothers.<sup>19</sup> An indenture dated September 1795, had requested that the property pass to Samuel Pepys Cockerell to 'prevent any wife of the said John Cockerell from being entitled to Power in any part of [the] premises after [the] death of John Cockerell', but the codicil to his will, dated 1795, simply states that 'Sezincote' be treated the same as his other property and effects and be left in equal shares between his two brothers and sister.<sup>20</sup> However, Cockerell did leave the sum of

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<sup>14</sup> *The Defence of Warren Hastings, Esq. (Late Governor General of Bengal) at the Bar of the House of Commons* (London: 1786), p.137.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, during a period of leave in England, Charles Cockerell gave evidence in Hastings' trial. See Meike Fellingner, "All Man's Pollution Does the Sea Cleanse": Revisiting the Nabobs in Britain 1785-1837', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Warwick 2010, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/emforum/projects/disstheses/dissertations/fellinger-meike> [accessed 31 January 2014], pp. 58-70.

<sup>16</sup> *The East India Military Calendar Containing the Services of General and Field Officers of the Indian Army* (Leadenhall: Kingsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1823), p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Correspondence and papers of Sir Charles Cockerell and other members of his family, 1774 – 1880. Shelfmarks: Dep.b.254, c.855-6, Bodleian Library, Oxford; letter to Sir Charles Cockerell from John Cockerell, 1794, Dep.c.856.

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Hawes, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1733 -1833* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D536/T36, Last Will and Testament of John Cockerell, Calcutta, 25 February 1793.

<sup>20</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, 1652, as cited in Head, 'Sezincote', p.16; Gloucestershire Archives, D536/T36, Last Will and Testament of John Cockerell, Calcutta, 25 February 1793, Second Codicil, 1795. See Hawes, *Poor Relations*, chapter 1 'British Men, Indian Women, Eurasian

eighty thousand rupees to be shared between his natural daughter Sophia Johnson (b.1782) and his natural sons John (b.1783), Charles (b.1785) and Samuel Johnson (b.1790).<sup>21</sup>

Although Estuarta appears to have been denied all claims to the Cockerell estate, she remained under the guardianship of the family, sometimes staying with John's sister Elizabeth and her husband in Southampton, where John Cockerell often visited her.<sup>22</sup> She was also, on occasion, the guest of Samuel Pepys Cockerell in London.<sup>23</sup> Estuarta's journey to England represents a larger story of empire's impact on domestic Britain. It is indicative of cultural exchange in its most physical and human form and warrants more attention than there is room for within this case study. The same is true for the fate of the children. This history, absent from the 'public' face of Sezincote, is recreated by an examination of the Cockerell family's private, domestic papers.

A Jacobean gabled manor, Sezincote, in 1795, was in much need of repair and renovation, and John Cockerell commissioned his brother, Samuel Pepys Cockerell, to develop and alter the house, outbuildings and estate. The intention at this time was to keep the alterations simple, within a primarily European idiom.<sup>24</sup> Writing to his agent, Walford (Hastings' local agent was also Walford, probably the same person), in Banbury, Oxfordshire, John Cockerell said he had 'many conceits and fancies in regard to Seasoncote for a residence' yet he was looking for workman to furnish 'the plain sort of work I shall mostly want.'<sup>25</sup> Raymond Head suggests that although John Cockerell wished to be seen as a respectable gentleman, with a 'house, carriage, a few servants and a gardener so that he could "embrace some Eligible, tho' moderate systematic Establishment"', he was not interested in the 'extravagant, pampered display commonly expected from a nabob'.<sup>26</sup> Sezincote was, nevertheless, a country manor house with land much like the country seats acquired or built by other returning employees of the East India Company. John Cockerell, however, died in 1798, before the alterations were fully complete and the Sezincote estate passed to his brothers, Charles and Samuel Pepys and sister Elizabeth. In 1801, Charles Cockerell bought the shares of his siblings for a total of £38,000 and it was during his tenure that Sezincote was transformed into an 'Indian House'.<sup>27</sup>

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Children' for a discussion of provisions made for the 'natural' children of relationships such as John Cockerell and Estuarta.

<sup>21</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D536/T36, Last Will and Testament of John Cockerell, Calcutta, 25 February 1793.

<sup>22</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D1652, John Cockerell to Walford, November 1797.

<sup>26</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p. 19 and p. 143, n.12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

Charles Cockerell had also had a long and distinguished career in the service of the East India Company, beginning as a writer in 1776 for the Surveyor's office in Bengal and progressing to become Postmaster General in Calcutta in 1784. He remained in this post until 1792, thereafter staying in India and in the service of the Company but without official employment, devoting much of his time to his own private business.<sup>28</sup> Both John and Charles were involved in private trade in India. Correspondence from John to Charles, now held at the Bodleian Library, refers to the brothers' business transactions. These documents include Bills of Exchange drawn on third parties to circumvent the Company's punitive rules surrounding the transfer of personal funds and details of the purchase of precious stones. Charles was also a partner in the agency house established by William Paxton (1744 - 1824). Paxton was assay officer and Master of the Mint in Bengal from 1778, a position which afforded him the opportunity to conduct his private business interests in facilitating the transfer of funds to Britain for other nabobs, allowing him to amass a considerable personal fortune.<sup>29</sup> When Paxton returned to England Charles took over the management of the agency house in Calcutta, which became Paxton, Cockerell and Trail, the most successful agency house of the period - it is in this activity that Charles appears to have amassed his fortune.<sup>30</sup>

In 1789 Charles married Maria Tryphena Blunt, the daughter of Sir Charles William Blunt, another employee of the Company; Maria died, childless, later that year and Charles remained a widower until 1808 when he married the Hon. Harriet Rushout, daughter of John Rushout, first Baron Northwick. The couple had two daughters and one son. Upon his return to England in 1801, Charles became a partner in the London office of Paxton, Cockerell and Trail, conducting business for clients in India and England. His personal interests extended beyond the company: he was a director of the Globe Insurance Company, the Arkendale and Derwent Mining Company and the Gas, Light and Coke Company. He maintained his connections to India and the Company, remaining a stockholder and serving as a commissioner on the Board of Control for India between 1835 and 1837.<sup>31</sup> Charles was close to Richard, Marquis of Wellesley, Governor-General of India from 1797 to 1805, having assisted him with financial arrangements during the Mysore war of 1799 and by commanding the military force raised within the civil service during this war.<sup>32</sup> His relationship with Wellesley appears to have been symbiotic, with Charles acting as creditor for

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<sup>28</sup>P. J. Marshall and Willem G. J. Kuiters, 'Cockerell, Sir Charles, first baronet (1755 - 1837)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 15 January 2013].

<sup>29</sup> Fellingner, "'All Man's Pollution Does the Sea Cleanse": Revisiting the Nabobs in Britain, 1785 - 1837', pp. 47-58.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall and Kuiters, 'Cockerell, Sir Charles, first baronet (1755 - 1837)'.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume1790-1820/member/cockerell-charles-1755-1837> [accessed 20 October 2013].

him and Wellesley supporting his baronetcy in 1809.<sup>33</sup> Charles' political career began in 1802 when he became MP for Tregony in Cornwall, eventually becoming MP for Evesham (having previously been Mayor) in 1819 until his death in 1837.<sup>34</sup> Coming from a relatively humble background Charles Cockerell was perhaps the epitome of nabobs as 'upstarts with vast, easily won fortunes', which they would use to 'advance their social and political influence'.<sup>35</sup>

### **Making Choices, Building Houses, Finding Inspiration**



Figure 9: South front of Sezincote showing the sweep of the orangery from the house to the pavilion. Note the peacock tail windows on the house and the orangery.  
Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2014.

Like his brother John, Charles Cockerell was to call upon Samuel Pepys Cockerell to mastermind further alterations to Sezincote. Unlike his brother John, these alterations were to be far from simple. A contemporary of John Nash and the innovative George Dance, and a former pupil of Sir Robert Taylor, Samuel Pepys Cockerell had made his reputation as an architect by the time he was thirty and from 1785 until 1805 he was primarily occupied with country house designs and church restoration.<sup>36</sup> In 1806 he became surveyor to the East India Company,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. (The Bodleian Library, Oxford holds correspondence relating to financial affairs of Cockerell and Wellesley, but these have not been consulted for this case study.)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs, Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p. 161. See also Helen Clifford's case study, Aske Hall, Yorkshire, <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/aske-hall-yorkshire/>.

<sup>36</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p.27.

despite never having travelled to India. Many of Samuel Pepys Cockerell's commissions came from his family connections to East India Company men. These included Middleton Hall in Carmarthenshire, for William Paxton, and – significantly for this case study - Daylesford in Gloucestershire, for Warren Hastings. Whilst his reputation was largely that of a classicist, he was also criticised for his controversial and original designs - often choosing to rebuild rather than restore projects, injecting them with his own decorative effects 'within an otherwise restrained idiom'.<sup>37</sup> For Charles, Samuel Pepys Cockerell undertook the task of re-clothing a classical English country house with the dress of India.

Given the number of EIC employees who had spent the majority of their adult lives in India before returning to Britain with newly-acquired fortunes, it might be expected that many of the country houses they built, bought and altered 'at home', would exhibit some elements of the Indian idiom in their architecture. But returning nabobs, although keen to use their fortunes to purchase country houses and seats in Parliament in a bid to gain acceptance as members of Britain's ruling gentry, appeared to have 'no desire to represent themselves by their architecture as in any way visibly different from the gentry among whom they lived'.<sup>38</sup> The majority of houses were therefore faithful to the neo-classical or Palladian tradition in their exterior and interior architecture, as evidenced by other case studies within this project, such as [Valentines Mansion](#), [Swallowfield Park](#) and [Warfield Park](#). For the most part, references to experiences in India were contained within the house, in paintings, porcelain and furniture, either collected or commissioned. Sezincote itself was initially mobilized in John Cockerell's bid to become part of the 'systematic Establishment'. But under Charles, Sezincote was to become celebrated as the only English country house which 'possessed an architecture shaped by elements of Indian design,' thereby placing it outside of the 'systematic' establishment.<sup>39</sup>

Why would one nabob choose to create a house with an exterior that situated him outside the 'establishment' and represented him as different from the gentry among whom he lived whilst retaining an interior which supported the conventions of the 'establishment'? It is tempting to suggest that Charles Cockerell was a maverick who dared to try and subvert the 'establishment' and to flaunt his attempt at doing so, but in many ways he was one of its stalwarts: his Parliamentary seat, his baronetcy and his marriage to an aristocrat's daughter all indicate his desire to become accepted into the realms of the elite and landed gentry. Contemporary local newspapers show his active support of the local Heythrop hunt, other newspaper reports chronicle his numerous

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*, p.18.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

charitable donations and legal records demonstrate his appetite for prosecuting all who poached game upon his land.<sup>40</sup> Both he and his brothers had an appetite for buying local land in a successful bid to expand the Sezincote estate. In 1822 the 'Sezincote Aisle' was added to nearby Longborough church; family pews, a stove and a private entrance were installed to facilitate the family's worship. Letters between Charles Cockerell and, by now, his agent, Walford, indicate that Charles moved regularly between London and Sezincote. His London home (no longer standing) was at the prestigious Hyde Park Corner, Piccadilly, built to designs by Robert Adam and purchased in 1793, while he was still in India, it was very much part of the establishment. It was also virtually adjacent to Apsley House, home of Wellesley and later his brother, the Duke of Wellington.

In 1801, the visiting Muslim scholar and travel writer, Mirza Abu Talem Khan praised the generosity and ostentation of Charles Cockerell, recording that he had on one occasion dined at the Hyde Park house with seven hundred other 'persons of rank and consequence'.<sup>41</sup> They were served 'the choicest fruits and rarities procurable in London; many of these were produced by artificial heat; for the English not content with the fruits of their own climate, contrive by the assistance of glass and fire to cultivate those of the torrid zones'.<sup>42</sup> Ackermann's *Repository* considered it one of the 'magnificent mansions, which in any other country would be dignified with the appellation of palaces'.<sup>43</sup> And so the picture of an affluent emergent member of the English landed gentry builds. What spurred him to 'Indianise' his house at this particular moment in time? That it was more than a passing whim is borne out by the length of the project, some eighteen years.

### ***The Broader Context***

Although Sezincote may be considered the only country house in England to be built in the Indian style, it is not the first example of elements of Indian architecture in English buildings. Alongside a wider early nineteenth-century interest in emulating the architecture of Greek and Roman civilisations, there existed a growing interest in the architecture of India. Patrick Conner terms this interest an 'Indian revival' and a 'short but fascinating episode in the history of

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<sup>40</sup> Fellingner, "'All Man's Pollution Does the Sea Cleanse": Revisiting the Nabobs in Britain, 1785 – 1837', p. 64.

<sup>41</sup> *The Travels of Mirza Abu Talem Khan in Asia, Africa and Europe during the years 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802 and 1803, Written by Himself in the Persian Language*. Translated by Charles Stewart Esq. M.A.S, Vol.1 (London: Longman, Hurst, and Orme, 1810), p. 165.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.165. Edward Peake suggests that the gardens of Sezincote supplied the London house, (personal conversation 30<sup>th</sup> January 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Rudolph Ackermann, *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics*, London, Vol. 4 (July, 1810), p. 40.

taste,' that was restricted to a small group of connoisseurs.<sup>44</sup> It was an interest fuelled not only by 'commercial and cultural links' with India and first hand accounts of India but also by the paintings, and engravings of William Hodges and by those of Thomas and William Daniell.<sup>45</sup>

William Hodges had spent three years between 1781 and 1783 travelling around northern India drawing and painting the architecture and landscape under the patronage of Warren Hastings.<sup>46</sup> Upon his return to England he published some forty-eight of his views in *Select Views in India* and exhibited his works, over a number of years, at the Royal Academy. His work presented 'Indian architecture to British eyes for the first time as something aesthetically admirable'.<sup>47</sup> Hodges was praised by Sir Joshua Reynolds, for his depictions of 'Barbaric splendour of those Asiatick Buildings', which might provide architects not necessarily with models to copy but 'hints of composition and general effect'.<sup>48</sup> A friend of Samuel Pepys Cockerell, William Hodges' work in *Select Views in India* is credited with providing the likely source for the design of the dome at Daylesford, Warren Hastings' house in Gloucestershire. Built between 1788 and 1790 Daylesford was an early foray into the oriental theme with its 'Mughal dome on an otherwise classical edifice'.<sup>49</sup> In a similar way the roof of Banbury church, a few miles away, was finished with an Indian element with the bulbous vase shape of an *amalaka*.<sup>50</sup> Both are the work of Samuel Pepys Cockerell.

By the time Hodges had returned to London, Thomas and William Daniell had set off for India where they spent ten years travelling the length and breadth of the country, painting and sketching, using a *camera obscura* to help them accurately record the details of Indian buildings and landscapes. By their return to London in 1794 they had an unparalleled knowledge of Indian architecture. They spent thirteen years producing *Oriental Scenery*, six volumes of aquatints from their paintings and sketches; the last volume was made available to the public in 1808; the complete set cost £210.

Mildred Archer contends that the work of the Daniells was the most important single influence in popularizing Indian architecture in England in the early nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Many of the scenes depicted by the Daniells were completely new to most Europeans. Their work, which included wild and misty

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<sup>44</sup> Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West*, p. 113.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West*, p. 114.

<sup>49</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Mildred Archer, 'The Daniells in India and their Influence on British Architecture', *RIBA Journal*, 67, (September, 1960), p. 444.

landscapes with rugged foregrounds at times populated with Indian figures spoke of a wildness and sense of the sublime that resonated with the contemporary interest in the Picturesque and the growing Romantic movement. Views of Indian architecture and landscapes not only aroused a sense of wonder and curiosity amongst European travellers, both actual and armchair, they possibly also evoked a sense of nostalgia amongst those with first hand knowledge of India, such as Charles Cockerell.<sup>52</sup>

A collector of art, Charles Cockerell owned works by Hodges and Daniell.<sup>53</sup> What is more, he probably already knew Thomas Daniell, having met him in Calcutta and may have bought pictures from the Daniells in the lottery of 150 pictures they held in 1792 to fund their further travels.<sup>54</sup> The public acclaim given to the Daniells' work bore explicit approval of representations of India and implicit approval of the notion of 'empire', especially since the acquittal of Hastings, may have been sufficient to inspire Cockerell with his ambitious project, but there is another personality whose influence should be considered.

Thomas Daniell's work also came to the attention of Mirza Abu Talem Khan. Visiting England between 1799 and 1803, Mirza Abu Talem Khan became something of a celebrity amongst Georgian society, welcomed into the drawing rooms of the elite and presented at Court. He describes visiting the house of 'Mr D\_\_\_l', where he 'saw the paintings of many of my Indian acquaintances, and some beautiful paintings of the Taje Mahal...at Agra and of several other places in Hindoostan, most accurately delineated.'<sup>55</sup> He considered the English to have 'had an opinion that there were not any buildings worth looking at in India,' and 'rejoiced that Mr Daniel had, by his skill, enabled me to convince them of the contrary'.<sup>56</sup> Charles Cockerell had close connections with Mirza Abu Talem Khan, 'liberally supply[ing]' him with money for drafts drawn on Calcutta, and offering him hospitality in London and at Sezincote.<sup>57</sup> In his travel journal Mirza Abu Talem Khan notes that it was 'the custom for gentleman of fortune to quit London during the summer months and to amuse themselves by travelling about the country' visiting the house of friends and acquaintances; Charles Cockerell conducted him on such a tour in 1801.<sup>58</sup> He was full of praise for the wonders of Windsor castle and for Blenheim Palace, which he found to be 'without

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<sup>52</sup> For instance, the first English building directly associated with *Oriental Scenery* was designed by Thomas Daniell. The small temple at Melchet Park, Hampshire, home of Major Sir John Osborne, a former soldier in India, was erected in 1800 in honour of Warren Hastings. See Archer 'The Daniells in India', p. 444 and Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West*, p. 120.

<sup>53</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> Archer, 'The Daniells in India', pp. 439-444; personal conversation with Edward Peake 30 January 2013.

<sup>55</sup> *The Travels of Mirza Abu Talem Khan in Asia, Africa and Europe*, p. 198.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

comparison, superior to anything I ever beheld. The beauties of Windsor Park fade before it; and every other place I had visited was effaced from my recollection on viewing its magnificence'.<sup>59</sup> He describes 'Seasoncot' as a 'delightful spot', and is also appreciative of Hasting's home at Daylesford.<sup>60</sup> The work on Sezincote did not begin until at least 1805. Could this friendship, and the affirmation of the accuracy of Daniells' work, have reignited Cockerell's interest in India and been the impetus to redevelop his estate?

That Charles was unafraid to display his wealth and his taste for the unusual and a sense of artistic enlightenment is demonstrated in his robust response to criticism of the external appearance of his Hyde Park Corner mansion. The incident, which occurred in 1807, was detailed in Ackermann's *Repository*, July 1810, and referred to a bas-relief of two satyrs in Coade stone on the front of the house, which were reported as obscene by the Society for Suppression of Vice. Cockerell refused to be bullied into removing them by arbitrary threats, defending them against 'bigotry and ignorance'.<sup>61</sup> Despite this, Samuel Pepys Cockerell wrote to his son Charles Robert Cockerell that 'Sir Chas...has not the least knowledge or discrimination' - a damning indictment of Sir Charles' taste, not unlike the criticism levelled at other nabobs for their conspicuous displays of wealth.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-7.

<sup>61</sup> Rudolph Ackermann, *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics*, London, Vol.4 (July, 1810), p.41.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted by Head, 'Sezincote', p.36, from a letter dated 7 May 1816.



Figure 10: Shiva *lingam* fountain in the Temple pool, Sezincote.  
Photograph by Diane James © 2013.

It is quite possible that Charles Cockerell had a genuine interest in Indian architecture and in India culture that ran deep enough to create this Indian idyll in the heart of the English countryside. He had after all spent his most formative years in India. The octagonal room to the north of the house (see figure 6), thought to be his bedroom, faces the rising sun, which is reflected gloriously through the stained glass panels – was this a deliberate positioning or simply a response to the topographical demands of the location of the house in the Cotswold hills? The design of the Temple pool with its temple to the sun god Surya, its fountain and indeed the shape of the pool itself, also warrant consideration with its references to Indian religious and spiritual beliefs. The fountain in the middle of the *yoni* shaped pool rises like a Shiva *lingam*, fed from a natural spring, and water cascades down through the Thornery in a regenerative sense (see figure 10). The Indian bridge, clearly inspired by the Caves of Elephanta in Mumbai Harbour, is built with Hindu columns, four deep, with stepping stones underneath and a stone seat in the middle, offering a place of quiet contemplation. Head suggests these columns were used for more functional reasons, offering the practical strength to carry the weight of a horse and carriage (see figure 11).<sup>63</sup> Mughal columns being more delicate might not have stood the test of time quite so well; the bridge is still in use today and is

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<sup>63</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p.70.

now required to bear the weight of cars. At Sezincote, Indian architecture has been adapted successfully to accommodate the practical demands of an English country estate.



Figure 11: Detail of the Indian bridge, Sezincote, showing the stone seat, the serpent fountain and Brahmin bulls. Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2013.

### **Building Sezincote: Building a Reputation**

In, or about, 1805 work began on clothing this English country house and its gardens with the garb of India.<sup>64</sup> The transformation was to continue into the 1820s. When ill health forced Samuel Pepys Cockerell to retire from the project, his son Charles Robert took up the mantle, designing the entrance lodges for his uncle Charles.

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<sup>64</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', chapter 5. Head discusses the evidence surrounding the dating of the project at Sezincote and concludes that it began in 1805, or possibly earlier as there is evidence that Thomas Daniell was staying in the area. Firth, *The Book of Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford and Sezincote*, also discusses this evidence, pp.86-89.



Figure 12: Thomas Daniell, 'Design for the Indian Bridge at Sezincote, Moreton-in-Marsh', RIBA 3951. Image courtesy of RIBA Library, Drawings and Archives Collections.

Although the design and build of the house were the responsibility of Samuel Pepys Cockerell, Thomas Daniell ensured that the design elements remained faithful to the drawings of the buildings he had sketched in India.<sup>65</sup> In an undated letter to Charles Cockerell, Daniell asked for more plans of the house: 'In looking over the sketches of Sezincot[e]...I find 2 of the E. front, but none of the S. I should be glad of an elevation of the latter if you have it.'<sup>66</sup> A surviving sketch of the South front is marked 'Daniell approved this to the upper part'.<sup>67</sup> The Royal Institute of British Architects' (RIBA) library holds an archive of the drawings and plans for Sezincote by Thomas Daniell which demonstrate his influence in the design of the landscape and in the garden structures (see figures 12 and 13).

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<sup>65</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p.55 and Firth, *The Book of Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford and Sezincote*, p.86.

<sup>66</sup> Correspondence cited in Head, 'Sezincote', p.55.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

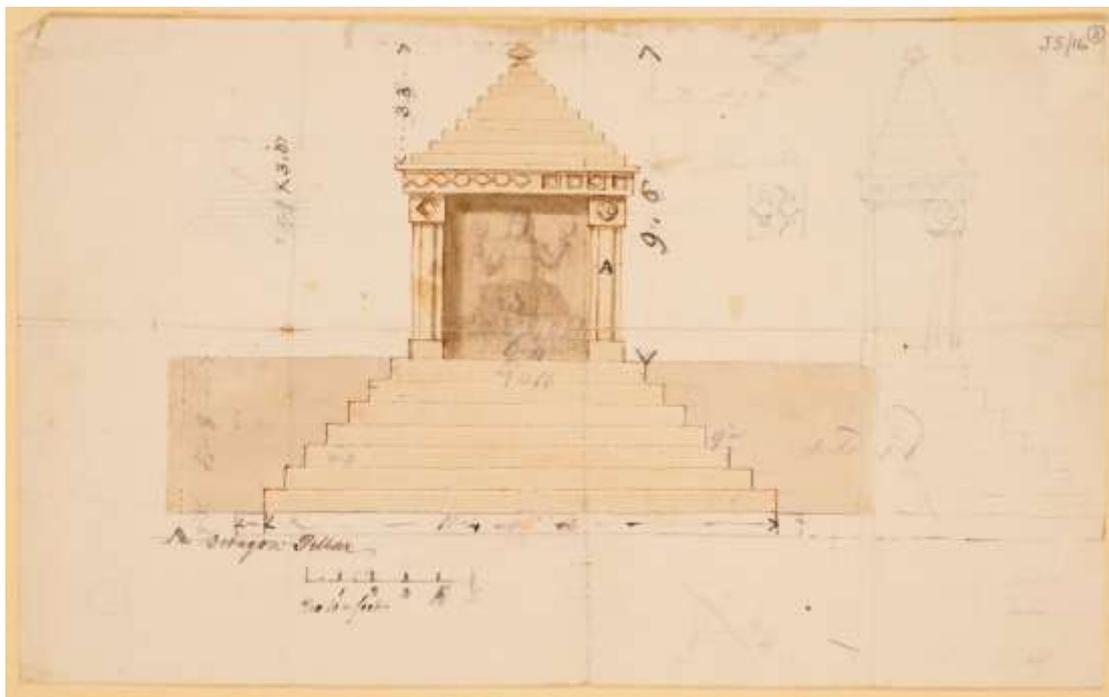


Figure 13: Thomas Daniell, 'Preliminary sketches for garden buildings of Sezincote, Moreton-in-Marsh'. RIBA 12240. RIBA Library Drawings and Archives Collections.

It was Daniell who Sir Charles consulted over details including the use of coloured glass in the conservatories and octagonal tent room.<sup>68</sup> In a letter dated January 1811 Thomas Daniell expresses his concern over the placing of the Brahmin bulls on the Indian bridge: 'I am dreadfully alarmed about the placing of the Brahminy Bulls – because I am certain they cannot be better placed – could Viswakarma, the Artist of the Gods, of Hindoos take a peek at Sezincote, he would say let the bulls remain where they are.'<sup>69</sup> He was disputing the placing of single bulls in the middle of the bridge instead of bulls in pairs facing each other over the columns of the bridge as he intended; today they, or at least the bronze replicas, remain extant in these positions. The garden buildings, including the shrine to Suyra and the Indian bridge are Daniell's design, however, the conservatories and parts of the landscaping are thought to have been at least suggested by Humphry Repton on visits to Sezincote where he had been, 'consulted by the proprietor of Sesincot, in Gloucestershire, where he wished to introduce the Gardening and Architecture which he had seen in India'.<sup>70</sup>

By 1817, with building work on the house completed and the gardens beginning to establish themselves, Charles Cockerell felt the need to record the developments at Sezincote. Having built the house from the drawings of Thomas

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Thomas Daniell to Sir Charles Cockerell, January 1811, quoted in Firth, *The Book of Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford and Sezincote*, p. 86.

<sup>69</sup> Cited in Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West*, p. 124, from the RIBA drawings collection, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

<sup>70</sup> Humphry Repton, *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening*, 1806, quoted in Archer, 'The Daniells in India', p. 444.

Daniell, Charles Cockerell employed the same hand to record the house and place it in the public realm. He commissioned paintings and engravings of the exterior of Sezincote from Thomas Daniell and from John Martin (1789 – 1854). Between 1818 and 1819, Daniell exhibited six of his paintings at the Royal Academy; Martin exhibited four. Head contends that this very public display of the splendours of Sezincote was timed to coincide with Charles Cockerell's election as a Freeman of the City of London in 1819.<sup>71</sup> Whether this is true or not, advertising Sezincote in this way appears to have been a way of building or enhancing reputations, not just for Daniell (who was already a Royal Academician) and Martin, but also for Sezincote and thus for the Cockerells – Samuel Pepys as an architect and Charles as a man of taste perhaps, but more importantly as a symbol of his social elevation. A grand carriage is depicted in one painting; the passenger is said to be the Prince Regent – he had visited Sezincote in 1807, whilst staying at Ragley Hall in Warwickshire. His implied presence would surely elevate Sezincote's and therefore Charles Cockerell's social status, ostensibly enhancing the reputation of both house and owner.

Despite this publicity and the exoticness of the subject, there is no evidence to suggest that Sezincote was included in the tours of country houses, such as Blenheim, Chatsworth, Hardwick Hall and Holkham Hall, and smaller, private country houses, visited by the curious elite, in what Esther Moir calls the 'Tour of Britain' and on which Charles Cockerell had taken his Muslim guest in 1801.<sup>72</sup> Few independent accounts of visits to the house in this period exist. An engraving of Sezincote was included in J.P. Neale's *Beauties of England*, in 1823; it describes Sezincote as being, 'In the style of the splendid palaces of the East. The grounds are varied and beautiful, and the whole laid out with very great taste [...] embellished with a variety of ornamental buildings erected in the most picturesque settings [...]'.<sup>73</sup> No mention is made of the interior.

One local quote, from the Reverend F.E. Witts, whilst describing the house as 'very peculiar and pleasing', highlights the contrast between the interior and exterior:

August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1828

Made a little excursion to Sezincote, where we passed nearly two hours in viewing the house and grounds. The exterior of the former is striking and picturesque, after a Hindu model, the tomb of Hyder Ali, and the first view of the house, conservatory, flower garden, bank of wood etc., very

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<sup>71</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p. 75.

<sup>72</sup> Esther Moir, *The Discovery of Britain: The English Tourist 1540 – 1840* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. xiv.

<sup>73</sup> Cited in Firth, *The Book of Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford and Sezincote*, p. 96. This image is available to view and purchase online.

peculiar and pleasing; but the interior is badly arranged and not particularly well-furnished. Several new apartments for bed chambers have been added; but the situation is very unfavourable under a high bank of clay covered with dense foliage, hence the house, conservatory and offices are very damp and dry rot has already commenced its ravages. The shrubberies and drest grounds are pretty and peculiar, the oriental taste is preserved as far as it could. Sir Charles and Lady Cockerell are now abroad<sup>74</sup>

This report fosters a sense of the dissonance experienced by the visitor, which still exists today. Approaching down the long drive, one feels transported to a part of England that can be described as a pastoral idyll. Yet as one moves on, the Indian bridge, the waterfall and the Temple pool suggest that all is not quite so 'English' as at first apparent. And then the onion dome, and the *chajjahs* and the *chattris* of amber stone do indeed burst upon us, as Betjeman so eloquently wrote, and one feels the exoticism of Indian architecture sweeping across this country estate nestled in the Cotswold countryside. Yet, crossing the threshold into the house one encounters the more familiar interior of an English country house, leaving India behind.

At the time of writing, no evidence was available to suggest that the interior of the house was anything other than neo-classical in architecture and Georgian in its material decoration and furnishing. In 1968 Lady Kleinwort noted that due to the neo-classical interior they did not have to 'play up to any oriental theme' with the interior renovations to the fabric of the house.<sup>75</sup> An inventory of Sezincote taken in 1837, shortly after Sir Charles Cockerell's death, assessed the 'Furniture, Pictures, Books, Plate, Wine, Farming Stock, Garden Utensils, and other effects at in upon about and belonging to the said testators Mansion House, Offices, Gardens and premises at Sezencot'.<sup>76</sup> Edward Bailey of Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, London made the inventory, and although a valuation totalling £11,908 is given, the inventory itself is not included.<sup>77</sup> This might have provided some evidence of the contents of the house and may have revealed a taste for Indian material culture within the house. The only hint given is in Lady

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<sup>74</sup> Reverend F. E. Witts, *The Diary of a Cotswold Parson*, cited in Firth *The Book of Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford and Sezincote*, p. 96.

<sup>75</sup> Lady Kleinwort, quoted in Clisby Kemp, 'Out of the East', *House and Garden*, November 1968, pp. 60-65 (p.64).

<sup>76</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D2167/9. Deed of Covenant and Release as to the Furniture, Stocks etc late of Sir Charles Cockerell deceased at Sezencot in the County of Gloucester dated 13 August 1839.

<sup>77</sup> I have been unable to trace any records for Edward Bailey, or the inventory, but there are still many uncatalogued records in Gloucestershire archives relating to the Cockerell family.

Harriet Cockerell's will in which she leaves to her granddaughter, Olivia Rushout an 'Indian Work Box and one also to Pamela Rushout'.<sup>78</sup>

### The Legacy of Sezincote



Figure 14: Spa Cottage, Lower Swell, Gloucestershire. Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2014.

In terms of a legacy to British architecture and the impact of empire on domestic Britain, Brighton Pavilion is the only notable building influenced by Sezincote, beyond this, no national style really endured. In 1806 Humphry Repton had recorded his appreciation of the Indian style he saw developing at Sezincote:

It happened that a little before my first visit to Brighton [1805], I had been consulted by the proprietor of Sesincot, in Gloucestershire, where he wished to introduce the Gardening and Architecture which he had seen in India. I confess the subject was then entirely new to me; but from his long residence in the interior of that country, and from the good taste and accuracy with which he had observed and pointed out to me the various forms of Hindu Architecture, a new field opened itself; and as I became more acquainted with them through the accurate Sketches and Drawings made on the spot by my ingenious friend Mr. T. Daniell, I was

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<sup>78</sup> Gloucestershire Archives, D536/F1, Copy Will and Codicil of Dame Harriet Cockerell. Proved 28 Nov 1851.

pleased at having discovered new sources of beauty and variety, which might gratify the thirst for novelty...<sup>79</sup>

Invited to submit designs for the further development of Brighton Pavilion, it was probably Repton who first alerted the Prince Regent to the wonders of Sezincote, encouraging him to visit in 1807, thus giving him the inspiration for 'Indianising' Brighton Pavilion. Despite producing one of his Red Books, *Designs for the Pavilion at Brighton*, which included a discourse on Indian architecture and in which the drawings and plans suggest that Sezincote was a strong influence on his designs, the commission for the work at the Royal Pavilion did not fall to Repton, instead it went to John Nash. Some small-scale localised imitations did occur in the Cotswolds; Spa Cottage at Lower Swell bears motifs probably copied from Sezincote, and New Market at Cheltenham, designed by Edward Jenkins, bore the 'Mughal' style seen at Sezincote (see figures 14 and 15).<sup>80</sup>



Figure 15: Edward Jenkins, View of the Arcade and Entrance to New Market House, Cheltenham, engraving, 1826, in *Griffiths New Historical Description of Cheltenham and its Vicinity* (Cheltenham, 1826), p. 22. Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, 1956.22.4 © Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum. Note the similarity in the arches to the peacock tail windows at Sezincote.

<sup>79</sup> Humphry Repton, *An Enquiry into the Changes of Taste in Landscape Gardening*, 1806, quoted in Archer, 'The Daniells in India' p.444.

<sup>80</sup> Head, *The Indian Style*, pp.44-5.



Figure 16: Worcester Lodges, Sezincote, as depicted on the 1884 sale particulars in the private collection at Sezincote. Photograph by Jan Sibthorpe © 2013.

If the house at Sezincote did not create a national style as a legacy, then the Worcester Lodges at one of the entrances to Sezincote may have taken up this mantle. Designed by Charles Robert Cockerell at the behest of his uncle, the lodges with their curvilinear roofs resembled the Bengal huts often depicted in *Oriental Scenery* (see figure 16).<sup>81</sup> Head suggests they were the first buildings in Britain to represent Indian vernacular architecture, and that they were the forerunners of the bungalow.<sup>82</sup> The lodges have since been remodelled. This subject requires more research beyond the reach of this case study but is interesting from the perspective of the impact and legacy of empire on domestic Britain.

By the 1820s Charles Cockerell appeared to be in some financial difficulties, confiding in his nephew that 'he had spent more than his income for many years.'<sup>83</sup> This may account for the state of disrepair the Reverend Witts recorded in 1828. Following the death of Sir Charles Cockerell's son, Sir Charles Rushout Rushout, in 1879, Sezincote had to be sold to realise the assets for distribution to claimants on the estate of Sir Charles (junior).<sup>84</sup> The estate was first put up for auction in 1880 but it was to take four years to sell. Interestingly, the Sezincote sale particulars dated 1884 depict the Worcester Lodges on the front cover; the

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<sup>81</sup> Head, 'Sezincote', p. 81.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>83</sup> Cited in Head, 'Sezincote', p.83.

<sup>84</sup> Charles Rushout Cockerell changed his surname to Rushout by Royal license in 1849 in an (unsuccessful) attempt to inherit the Northwick estate and title of his mother's family. Firth, *The Book of Bourton-on-the-Hill, Batsford and Sezincote*, p. 57. Documents in Gloucester archives make reference to mortgages on properties within the Sezincote estate.

house itself is depicted inside, in colour (see figure 1). The sales particulars make no mention of the ‘Indianising’ of the house but do refer to the ‘Pleasure Grounds’ as being ‘embellished with a variety of Ornamental Buildings...from designs by Thomas Daniell Esq., R.A.’, and list the ‘Serpent Bridge’, ‘The Temple’ ‘Fountains’ and ‘Grottoes’.<sup>85</sup> They also list a peach house and two vineries, a stove house and forcing houses, such as had caught the attention of Mirza Abu Talem Khan. But it would seem that the ‘Indianising’ of the house was somewhat downplayed in the 1880s.

### Sezincote in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries



Figure 17: Indian Ambassador taxi, Sezincote. Photograph by Diane James © 2013.

In 1884, Sezincote was bought by James Dugdale. It was to remain in the Dugdale family until 1944 when Sir Cyril and Lady Kleinwort took over the house and estate in a somewhat dilapidated state. In the 1950s, the Kleinworts restored the exterior and interior of the house to their nineteenth-century splendour. Renovations to make the house smaller and more manageable took place but did not ‘in any way impair Cockerell’s general design’.<sup>86</sup> The gardens were also rescued and the Indian, or at least Asian influence extended. The Brahmin bulls originally made of Coade stone have been recast in bronze and remain on the bridge over the waterfall and pools, and by the steps to the orangery where they were originally placed. New, imposing elephant statues oversee what is now

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<sup>85</sup> Original Copies of the 1884 sales particulars are available for viewing in the National Art Library, London, 609.AD.0048. The 1880 sales particulars are available for viewing in Gloucestershire Archives, D1388/SL/6/78.

<sup>86</sup> Lady Kleinwort, quoted in Clisby Kemp, ‘Out of the East’, *House and Garden*, November 1968, pp. 60-65 (p.64).

called the Paradise Garden at the southern façade of the house. This part of the garden was not originally Indian in style; it was laid out in the style of a Mughal paradise garden, by Lady Kleinwort in 1965, with the help of her garden advisor, Graham Thomas. The Temple and the pools remain as they were originally depicted in Daniells' paintings of Sezincote; the serpent fountain still rising from the depths of the pool below the Indian bridge, and surrounded by rich vegetation. In 1961, Sir Cyril and Lady Kleinwort erected an Indian style tennis pavilion.

On the drive in front of the house stands a modern Indian Ambassador taxi, bedecked with silk flowers - somewhat incongruous in the Cotswold countryside, but strangely fitting in its new 'Indian' home creating a dialogue geographically and temporally between its origins in Calcutta and Sir Charles Cockerell who spent so many years in Calcutta and in a way 'updating' Sezincote, to the twenty-first century (see figure 17). The Indian bridge built to withstand the weight of an English Phaeton, now bears the passage of the Ambassador taxi.

There are many Asian treasures in the house itself, largely collected by Lady Kleinwort, including a set of six sandalwood chairs, veneered with ivory, highlighted with black lac and gilt, with cane seats (see figure 18). The chairs, bought at auction by Lady Kleinwort in the 1940s, were probably made in Vizagapatam c.1770, and are believed to have been originally given by Warren Hastings to Queen Charlotte, an avid collector of ivory furniture.<sup>87</sup> These chairs are indicative of global exchanges in much the same way that Sezincote itself is, but in reverse. Apparently modelled on patterns in Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Makers Director* (1754) the chairs were made by Indian craftsmen with Indian materials to European designs. Sezincote, in contrast, was modelled on Indian designs inspired by the drawings of Englishmen in India and built with English materials by English craftsmen.

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<sup>87</sup> Personal correspondence with Edward Peake 14 February 2013. For a detailed explanation of the provenance and commissioning of chairs similar to these see Amin Jaffer, *Furniture from British India and Ceylon: A Catalogue of the Collections in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum* (London: V&A Publications, 2001), pp. 199-200 and fn.9.



Figure 18: Chair, sandalwood with ivory veneer, black lac and gilt, cane seats, maker unknown, Vizagapatam, c.1770, Sezincote. Photograph by Diane James © 2013.

Lamps made from metal Chinese tea caddies light up the entrance hall where six of the seven paintings (commissioned by Sir Charles from Thomas Daniell) of the remodelled Sezincote once again hang, having been traced and bought by the Kleinwort family. Their presence is a testament not only to Daniell's work as an artist and at Sezincote, but it is also a testament to the longevity of Sezincote: they are a rare reunion of subject and painting. The set of ornamental spears said to have been used by Charles Cockerell as tent poles in his former bedroom, are now used as bedposts in one of the main bedrooms; rich and elegant fabrics now drape over them in much the same way that Sir Charles draped Indian architectural features over his Georgian country house. His former bedroom, the tent room, has been reimagined as it might have been and now houses a canopy depicting the stars on its underside whilst the walls are draped, tent style, in printed cotton specially commissioned from India. The current owners (the third generation of the Kleinwort family at Sezincote), travelled to India to commission and oversee the production of the fabrics.<sup>88</sup> In the dining room a

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<sup>88</sup> Personal conversation with Edward Peake, 30 January 2013.

*trompe l'oeil* mural painted by George Oakes in 1982 reimagines the view of the house as a visitor might have seen it in the early nineteenth century.<sup>89</sup> Such gestures in the house and gardens suggest a reconstitution of the heritage of Sezincote and its connections to India and generate a sense of the present reaching back into the past to continue the legacy of translating cultures across the globe, began by Charles Cockerell and his intimates in the early nineteenth century.

If Sezincote had sparked a new and enduring national style then in terms of *The East India Company at Home* project's questions surrounding the country house, Sezincote would surely be a symbol of the physical impact of empire on domestic Britain. In tribute to the Duke of Wellington, Sir Charles Cockerell erected the Wellington Pillar, designed by Daniell. The square, tapering pillar was once the chimney for the orangery and bears a cast iron plaque commemorating the military successes of Wellington, tacitly endorsing a wider sense of empire. But Sezincote was essentially a private country house and remains so today, open to the public only at the discretion of the family, who control its fate and choreograph its performance. In so doing they perpetuate not only the heritage of the house, but also offer a romantic and nostalgic notion of empire. That Sezincote has endured and now attracts many visitors, including wedding parties, is testament to the enduring aesthetic and visual impact of empire on Britain. The sense of the exotic 'other' still pervades the experience of the visitor, two hundred years on.

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<sup>89</sup> Edward Peake suggests that the mural is a recreation of Thomas Daniell's vision of India, rather than a reimagined view of the house. Personal correspondence 26 February 2014.