

Propagator of 'Poussin's academic classicism in the age of Louis XIV'

24. **LOIR, Nicolas-Pierre.** PLAFONS À LA MODERNE, Paris: Chez P. Mariette, [c. 1658-1669].

£ 550

4to; 12 engraved plates, including title (measuring 260x180mm); modern marbled wrappers.

Rare set of twelve engraved plates presenting elaborate and lively stucco designs for ceilings enclosing blank panels for paintings.

Nicolas-Pierre Loir (1624-1679) was best known as a painter of historical and Biblical scenes, although here he demonstrates a vigorous style and bold line with great inventiveness of design. He 'was most influenced ... by Nicolas Poussin during a visit to Italy (1647-9) and is said to have made copies of his work ... He helped to propagate Poussin's academic classicism in the age of Louis XIV' (*The New Grove*).

Berlin Katalog 4016; Guilnard, p. 80; OCLC locates three copies only, at the Winterthur Museum, Canadian Centre for Architecture and in the Swedish National Library,

Original plans for one of London's first and grandest purpose built lunatic asylums

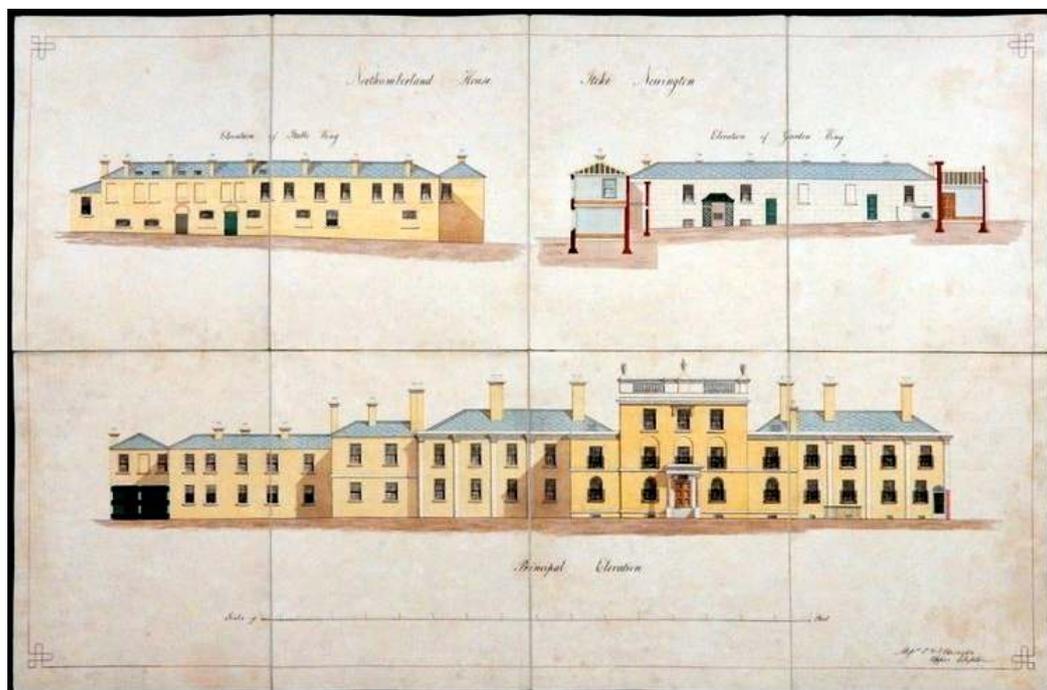
25. **[LONDON ASYLUM]. EDWARDS, P. & J. architects.** ORIGINAL PLANS FOR THE LONDON LUNATIC ASYLUM AT NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSE, STOKE NEWINGTON. London. [1829].

£ 6,500

A series of six hand pen and ink architectural plans and elevations 62 x 96 cm, sectioned in eight and mounted on canvas with marbled endpapers; each titled in ink:- Basement, Ground Plan; One Pair Plan; Roofs; Sections; and Elevation; folding into original burgundy morocco slipcase, lettered in gilt.

The original plans for one of London's first and grandest purpose built asylums. Although Northumberland House was in operation as a lunatic asylum for over a century, little seems to have been documented of its history.

Northumberland House, when built in 1822 to the south of the New River on the east side of Green Lanes in Stoke Newington, was probably originally conceived as a private dwelling but the possibilities of the site in the semi-rural north London soon saw the conversion into a private asylum. In 1829 the Metropolitan Commission of Lunacy 'noted that the House admitted its first patient in 1813' at which time it may have been under the supervision of the Quaker Dr Edward Long Fox. The Quaker poet Bernard Barton (1784-1849) wrote in 1827 *A Poet's Appeal for an Asylum at Stoke Newington* as part of a fund raising Bazaar. Clearly funds were forthcoming for the Asylum had opened in 1829.



'The majority of asylums were purpose-built because of the belief that the insane were best treated away from their own homes in an environment, which was specifically designed to meet their treatment requirements. Lunacy reformers and medical practitioners of the nineteenth century were largely concerned with therapeutic and humanitarian means of treating patients rather than promoting custodial regimes. This was manifested in a prominently held conviction that the asylum institution possessed inherently redemptive powers, drawn in large part from the ornamental landscape laid out for therapeutic uses, in which the building was firmly rooted. Superficially the purpose-built asylum estate appeared to be based on the model of the country house estate, which was still a popular and developing model of domestic residence for the wealthy classes' (Sarah Rutherford *The Landscapes of Public Lunatic Asylums, In England, 1808-1914*, PhD Thesis, De Montfort University, 2003).

The two elevations and six plans show how the rooms in Northumberland House were to accommodate the better classes of patient.

The building was modelled after a late Georgian Palladian country house of three stories with wings either side of two stories. The central block which was to accommodate the Birkett family who then looked after the patients together with their staff. This part of the house included a central hall and stairwell with drawing room, dining room, kitchen and parlour on the ground floor. On the second floor are a drawing room, a combined 'Surgery & Library' and three bedrooms, these latter probably for the Birkett family who then looked after the patients. A third storey of the central block has a dressing room and four further bedrooms possibly allocated to nursing staff.

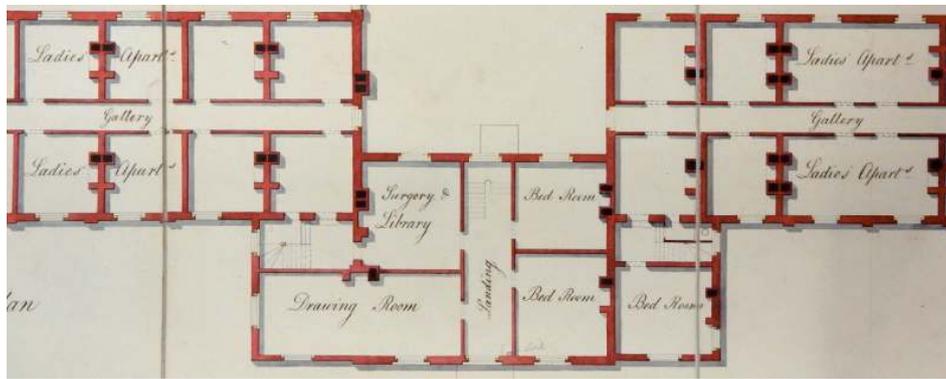
Both wings of the ground floor accommodated eighteen 'Ladies Apart[ments], that ran off from a central above these the wings of the first floor contained twenty-one 'Gents Apart[ments]'. A cellar under the right hand wing included the kitchen with a large oven, a scullery, housekeeper's room, and various cellars including one for coal.

The left of the main block was a two storied building which on the ground floor included the usual 'offices' - the coach house, stables, cow house, drying room, two sitting rooms and an open paved walk - a wall continues around to form a block with the house which included two gardens, one each for ladies and gentlemen, separated by a central wall.

Above these offices are five other gentlemen's apartments and two sitting rooms, being situated above the stables and out of sight and ear of the main block. It was these rooms that were probably designated to noisy and/or noisome patients.

The patients rooms are almost all of a uniform size measuring of 10 x 10 feet containing a fireplace, a window and accessed by a door from a gallery. The gallery could only be entered through a room that would have been guarded by member of the staff.

Some idea of this early period can be garnered from the reports of the visiting commissioners. In July 1829 It was noted that 'Divine service is performed every Sunday. The house is in good order with the exception of the Crib Room which is very offensive, nor does the keeper sleep sufficiently near to it.' A visit in October reported they 'Found the house in good order. The defect complained of in the last Report with respect to the Crib Room seems remedied. Divine service every Sunday'. In February 1830 they 'Found the house in



good order and the Crib Rooms much improved, but attention should be given to the repairing of the windows whenever they may be broken' and in April that 'This house is in good order considering that extensive alterations are carrying on. Prayers read every Sunday' Clearly the house was housing patients even though it was still under construction!

The asylum was under the supervision of Richard Birkett who looked after 40 private patients but no parish pauper patients were accommodated, or even contemplated. An 1835 prospectus showed the charges from £1 11s 6d to 5 guineas and another similar publication for 1839 describes the quality of lunatic the Birkett's were attracting *Prospectus of Northumberland House Asylum, Green Lanes, Stoke Newington for the reception of a limited number of persons mentally afflicted, under the immediate superintendence of Mr. and Mrs. Birkett, and respectable domestic attendants.*

Further references to the asylum periodically appear in the press, usually due to false imprisonment through influence by families looking to place their difficult relatives out of sight and mind through the helpful guidance of sympathetic doctors.

The Birkett family ran Northumberland House until 1877, when it was taken over as a going concern by Dr Alonzo Stocker the owner of Peckham House Asylum. He had originally worked at the Grove Hall Private Lunatic Asylum in Bow, the largest establishment in London, when he was admitted as a member of the Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane in 1864. It was probably due to Stocker that some more substantive alterations were made to the patient's accommodation, these are marked out in pencil and include general improvement including the introduction of a bath, toilets and indoor plumbing. Stocker acquired a new lease in 1906 but died in 1912. After Dr Stocker's death the asylum was retained by the family until the site was acquired by the London County Council in 1954 and subsequently demolished to make way for a housing estate.

The plans are signed 'P. & J. Edwards, Clapton Pond' who appear to have been local builder/architects although we have been unable to find anything about them or their work.

The Asylum is now remembered, if remembered at all, by accommodating T.S. Eliot's wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood Eliot (1888-1947), who was committed in 1938 and died there from either a heart attack or an overdose. Stevie Smith also remembered the asylum house in her poem 'Northumberland House'.

