

Luke Lightfoot – ‘skilled carver’

North Hall

Key facts

- Born 1722
- Wood Carver and Architect
- Owned and ran studio in London
- Died 1789



‘an ignorant knave, with no small spice of madness in his composition’
Thomas Robinson, 1700’s

Luke Lightfoot was a very talented carver, however not a trustworthy one. Lightfoot was hired, by Ralph, 2nd Earl Verney, to work on a couple of his London premises. Whilst doing work for Ralph in London, Lightfoot managed to entice the Earl to involve himself in two other building development schemes which required him to contribute substantial amounts of money. It is here that Lightfoot started to be light handed with the Earl’s money, as Ralph never saw any profit from these ventures. Before this was discovered though, Lightfoot was hired by Sir Ralph for a far larger venture, to be Master builder and developer of the remodel of Claydon House.

Lightfoot used his skill to make impressive carvings, most notably in the North Hall of Claydon House. Lightfoot’s extravagant decor may have proved to be a distraction to Sir Ralph, as it wasn’t until Thomas Robinson was brought in as the second architect at Claydon, that Lightfoot’s underhand ways came to be suspected.

Lightfoot was not doing all the work that Ralph had paid him to do. Whilst work was underway at Claydon, Lightfoot would have the workers there cut corners and use cheap materials. Then his workers would work at other sites doing various jobs unrelated to Claydon, but unknowingly to Ralph, still funded by the Earl.

Lightfoot was soon relieved from his position at Claydon, having been found untrustworthy by Thomas Robinson. Lightfoot paid back what he had swindled away of Ralph’s money through various means, including installing a fireplace in the North Hall which he originally made for another house. He will be forever remembered as man of great talent, but not someone to do business with.

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