

# Sir Thomas Robinson – ‘architect’

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Paper Room

## Key facts

- Born 1702
- Married to Elizabeth Carlisle
- Architect
- Died 1777



**‘Mr Lightfoot’s design for finishing the great eating Room shock’d me so much and is so much the ridicule of all that have seen or heard of it’**

*Sir Thomas Robinson, 1769*

Sir Thomas Robinson was a gentleman architect, politician and collector. He was besotted with architecture, constantly remodelling any place that he lived, even during his time as a Governor in Barbados. However, because of his extensive building works he racked up huge debts, leaving him in financial difficulty and embarrassment.

Sir Thomas was brought to Claydon by Ralph, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl. They were already business partners working on the Ranelagh pleasure grounds in London. It is thought that Ralph was possibly tiring of the abundance or Rococo designs by his current architect (Luke Lightfoot). Sir Thomas thoroughly disapproved of Lightfoot with his improprieties of taste and poor construction methods. He soon uncovered the shoddy work that Lightfoot was doing at Claydon and had him dismissed, much to Lightfoot’s uproar, after workers fled from fear of the roof falling in the Ballroom they were working in.

Sir Thomas hired Plasterer Joseph Rose during this time and stayed on after Lightfoot’s departure to continue work. However it proved hard for Sir Thomas to carry out the work required because of the house’s structural problems. He and Ralph, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl, soon quarrelled over the work and possibility of Ralph’s money running out, which led Sir Thomas to leave.

Ralph, 2nd Earl Verney did bring in one more architect to complete the grand house after Sir Thomas’s departure. However Ralph, funds soon ran dry, just as Sir Thomas had been right to be concerned about. Thus Claydon was left unfinished and empty until two thirds of it were knocked down by Mary, Baroness Fermanagh who inherited Claydon.

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