

THE ADAM ROOM FACTSHEET



Robert Adam
Portrait by George Willison, c. 1773
By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

Lloyd's & Robert Adam

Robert Adam (1728 -1792) transformed the prevailing Palladian fashion in architecture by adopting elegant variations on classical originals. Lloyd's association with the Scottish architect is embodied in the magnificent Council room at Lloyd's, which bears his name.

However, there may be an even more direct association. A volume of evidence suggests that, in 1772, Adam was commissioned to produce a design for the 'New Lloyd's Coffee House'.

The original building was established in 1769 at 5, Pope's Head Alley, in the City of London, but within two years proved inadequate. So a group of merchants, underwriters and brokers each paid £100 into the Bank of England. This is recorded as being for the "building or removing to another House for the more Commodious Reception of the Gentlemen Underwriters etc".

It is likely that Adam's friend, Sir George Colbrook, a banker in Lombard Street, persuaded the architect to take an interest in this project. Records of the committee of Lloyd's on 14 April 1772 refer to "Mr Adams" as producing "two plans; one for altering the present New Lloyd's Coffee House" and the other "for the alteration and making the houses in Freeman's Court, Cornhill, into a very neat and convenient coffee house".

Adam is recorded as attending several meetings of the committee in 1772 and 1773, reporting on his negotiations in connection with the Freeman's Court property. Then, on 5 August 1774, the minutes show a payment of £150 to "Messrs Adams" for "surveying and drafts". Sadly, documentary evidence and surviving drawings indicate that this project did not proceed further.

Instead, rooms were leased in the Royal Exchange under the leadership of John Julius Angerstein, who later became Chairman of Lloyd's. Although referred to universally as 'Lloyd's Coffee House', the new premises immediately took on the appearance of a place of business rather than one of refreshment. The modern Lloyd's had been born.

The City of London's architecture at that time was dominated by the work of Sir Christopher Wren, the creator of St Paul's Cathedral. If Adam's project with Lloyd's had progressed, it is fascinating to imagine how the City's architectural heritage would have been further enhanced.



John Julius Angerstein (1735 - 1823)
by George Willison, c. 1818
(Acquired by the Corporation of Lloyd's, 1952)

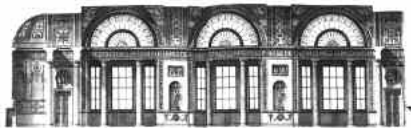
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Architectural Drawings
Source: Sir John Soane Museum © Lincoln's Inn Fields

Biography

- Robert Adam (1728-92) Scottish architect, born in Kirkaldy; brother of James Adam.
- He studied at Edinburgh and in Italy (1754-58).
- He and his brother established a practice in London in 1758 which existed for 40 years.
- From 1761-1769, he was architect of the King's Works, jointly with Sir William Chambers.
- In 1791, he designed eight public buildings and 25 private dwellings.



Architectural Drawings
Source: Sir John Soane Museum © Lincoln's Inn Fields