



**ROYAL
COMMISSION
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OF ENGLAND**

Bay Hall
Hall Lane
Benington
Lincolnshire



HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT

**Bay Hall
Hall Lane
Benington
Lincolnshire**

September 1991

Southern Office: Alexander House, 19 Fleming Way, Swindon, Wilts SN1 2NG Tel: 0793 414100 Fax: 0793 414101.

Northern Office: Shelley House, Acomb Road, York YO2 4HB Tel: 0904 784411 Fax: 0904 795348.

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Bay Hall, Hall Lane

NGR: TF 3935 4639

SUMMARY

Bay Hall, Benington, is a three-storeyed brick house of c1730 with later alterations and additions. The original building has a rectangular double-pile plan with main rooms in the four corners and balancing front entrance and rear stair. The ground floor probably provided hall and parlour on the south front and kitchen and service room to the north. The principal stair rises only to the first floor, largely occupied by heated chambers. A service stair, partly removed on the ground floor, rose from the kitchen to the second floor, where there are two further heated chambers and two rooms without heating. Major alterations to the house include the creation in the mid 18th century of a single-bay entrance hall formed in the original hall. In the 19th century a service wing was added on the north side of the house.

ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTION

The house of c1730

Bay Hall is a three-storeyed brick house of double-pile form. It is of five bays on west and south fronts, the main elevations of the building, but on the east and north sides there are only three bays. Brickwork is in Flemish bond, there are projecting brick bands over ground, first and second floors, and stone is used in a chamfered plinth and parapet coping. Windows have pegged oak frames of cross form and splayed brick lintels, deeper on the west front than elsewhere. The present roof is flat and of modern date. It probably replaces a hipped roof, perhaps with a central well.

The principal entrance to the house lies in the centre of the symmetrical west front. Here the doorway, raised above the level of the plinth, has a pegged oak frame; this shows mortices and peg-holes for a door lintel, the height of which leaves space for a fanlight over. The gothic glazing of intersecting lancets dates from a later alteration. The south elevation is of five bays but on none of the floors are there five openings; the ground floor has three windows, a blind window and a blind doorway, the first floor has two windows and three blind windows, and the top floor has a mixture of blind and blocked windows. It is probable that the blind windows are original; bricks within the openings

are of the same character as those in the walls and are laid in courses matching those of the flanking walling. It will be demonstrated below that some of those on the top floor are certainly original, for there are no blockings visible internally, and it is therefore likely that others on this elevation are also primary. The arrangement of blind windows was probably intended to convey an impression of symmetry to this elevation without the need for an excessive number of openings. The east elevation is roughly but not exactly symmetrical, having mullioned window, the only one of its type in the building. The doorway on this elevation is an insertion. The north front, partially obscured by the later lower service wing, again has some blind windows.

The plan of the house is unusual in so far as the principal entrance front was not lined with the best reception rooms, for on the ground floor it had a kitchen to one side. The common functional division between reception rooms to the front and lesser rooms and service accommodation to the rear does not apply at Bay hall, where on the ground floor at least the division is between the sides of the house, with better rooms to the south and lesser rooms to the north. The principal doorway on the west front therefore lies at the junction of these areas. It opens now into a single-bay entrance passage. This is probably the result of a later alteration and it is likely that the doorway originally gave direct access to the south-west room, the hall. Beam spacings here suggest that the area of the passage was part of the room, and the position of the fireplace, off-centre within the present room, lends support to this argument. Furthermore, the wall dividing hall and passage is not bonded into other walls at either end, suggesting that it is an insertion. Decorative details within the reduced hall are thus likely to result from a refurbishment following the creation of the passage, but some raised fielded panels within recesses to either side of the fireplace may survive from the original room.

The hall would originally have given access to the kitchen to the north and to the rear of the house to the east. The doorway to the kitchen is now blocked. Access to the rear of the house is today by means of a panelled round-arched opening, probably on the site of an original opening. The panelling of the opening, although raised and fielded and therefore of early date, does not appear to be original, for at 'x' on plan it has been removed, revealing plastered brickwork behind. The opening leads through to the stair hall, which gives access to rooms at the rear of the house. The stair hall has a double-arched wooden screen, one arch opening on to the stair rising to the first floor, the other into a small partly-sunk understairs area lit by the mullioned window in the east wall; there is no sign that the area originally led to a basement. To the south of the stair hall is a heated parlour, perhaps originally a dining room; this has a cornice similar to that in the refurbished hall.

Service rooms were originally sited on the north side of the house. The kitchen, at the north-west corner, is today largely featureless. The fireplace, now blocked, is sited off-centre within the room and is contained within a large stack even though the opening itself is not large for a cooking hearth. The off-centre siting may be explained by the original existence of a service stair rising to the north of the stack; the lowest flight has been removed, but its former position is evident in plasterwork in a cupboard below the present stair. The original siting of the stair left room to the north for communication with the north-eastern room. The desirability of segregating 'polite' and service circulations suggests that an external doorway in the north wall, giving independent access to the service area, would have been an advantage, but later alterations in this area have obliterated any evidence for such a plan feature. The north-eastern room was unheated and has been subdivided.

The principal staircase rises to the first floor only. It is of dog-leg form and has square newels, moulded handrail, closed string and slender bulbous turned balusters. The stair hall retains some raised and fielded panels below a dado rail. The first-floor landing originally opened into heated chambers in the south-east, south-west and north-west corners of the building and into a second landing at the head of the service stair. The principal chamber was that over the hall. Like this room, it was originally of three bays, later subdivided to give a dressing room; its fittings and decoration date from this subdivision. The size of the original room and the limited number of reception with drawing room when the house was first built. Other rooms are smaller and were probably the best bedrooms. The service stair rises to the second floor and retains some splat balusters. On the second floor are two further heated chambers and two unheated rooms. The partial decay of the plaster lining has exposed the internal face of the brickwork on some walls, and the absence of evidence for blocking in some places demonstrates that the blind windows which form part of the composition of the walls externally have never been openings and belong, therefore, to the original design.

Alterations of the mid 18th century

The house underwent a major refurbishment in the mid 18th century. This involved some changes to the plan and the addition of much new decoration.

On the ground floor the principal alteration was the creation of an entrance passage, contrived by reducing the hall to two bays. The panelled arched opening through to the stair hall probably dates from this period, as do the panelled dado and plaster cornice in the reduced hall. The dado has simple plain panels, contrasting with the raised

and fielded panels of the earlier work. The plaster cornice defines a hall of reduced size, being present on the inserted wall, and breaks forward at the windows. The south-east room has a similar cornice and a plain panelled dado and therefore appears to have been re-fitted at this time.

On the first floor the major change was the reduction of the south-west chamber from three bays to two and the creation of a dressing room in the extra bay. As a result of the change the fireplace heating the chamber is markedly off-centre. The fireplace wall was lined with plain panelling, three panels to the height of the wall.

The addition of a service wing

In the early 19th century a short two-storeyed service wing was added on the north side of the house. It does not contain a large stack and therefore may not have provided a new kitchen. Its addition caused the blocking of opening in the north wall of the original house and the creation of new doorways to link with the service rooms.

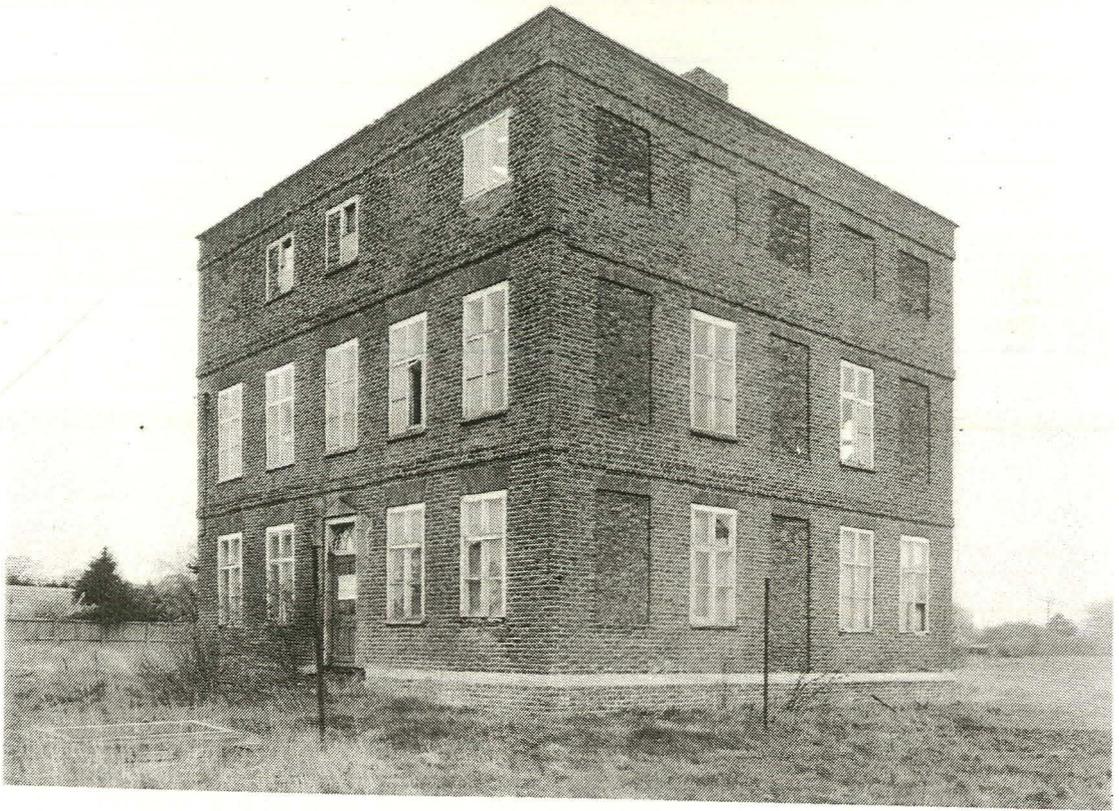
Visited: Colum Giles, Bernard Thomason, Roger Thomas, 26

March 1991

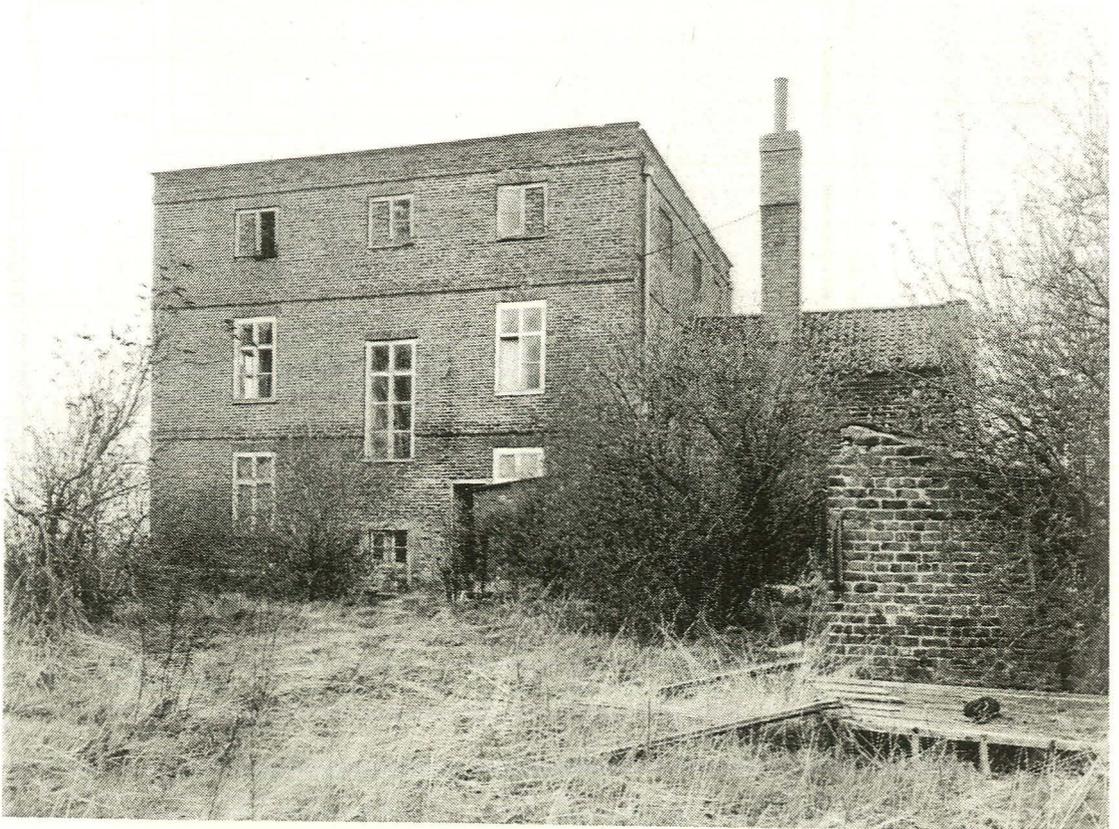
Report: Colum Giles

Plan: Bernard Thomason

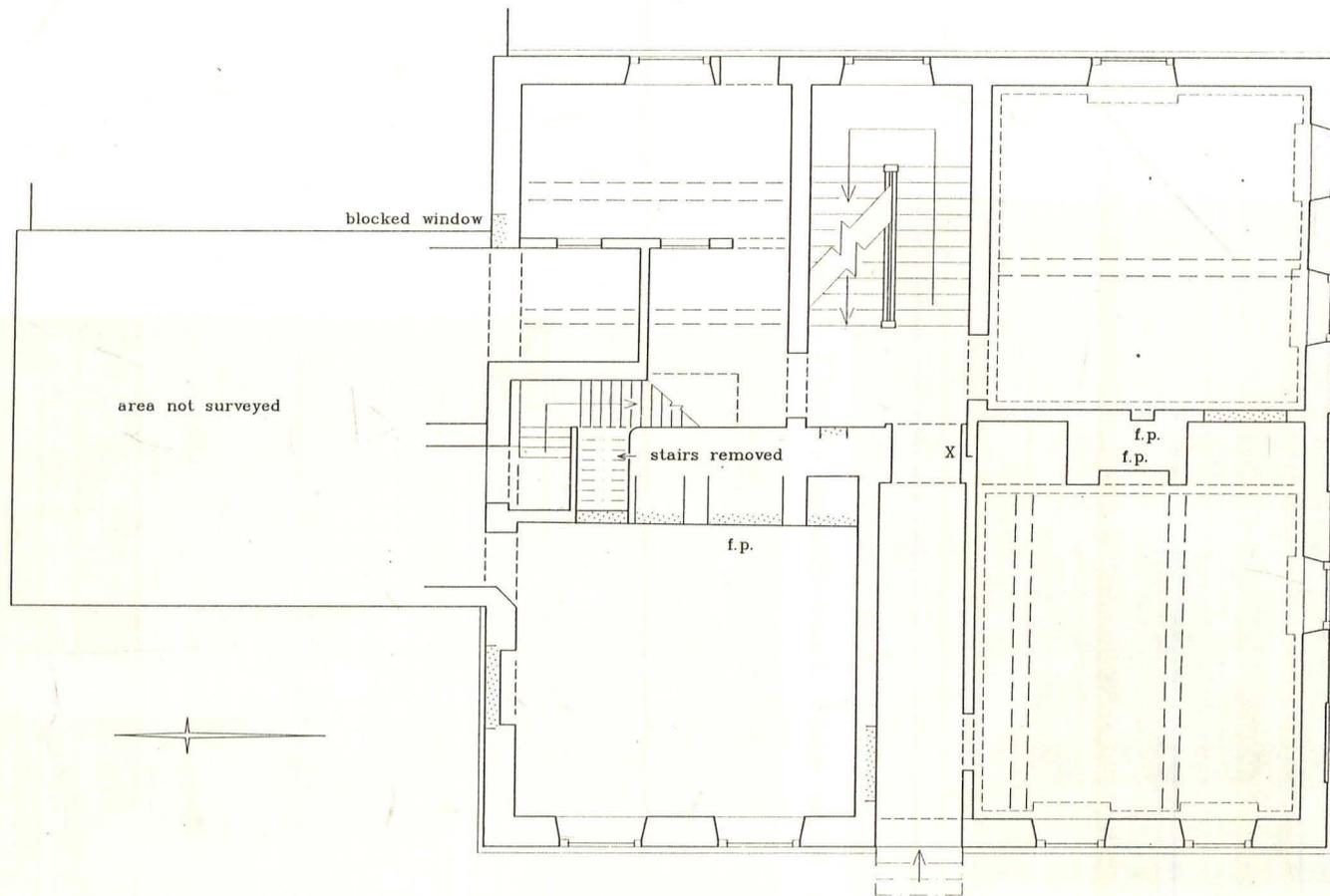
Large format photography: Roger Thomas



View from south-west



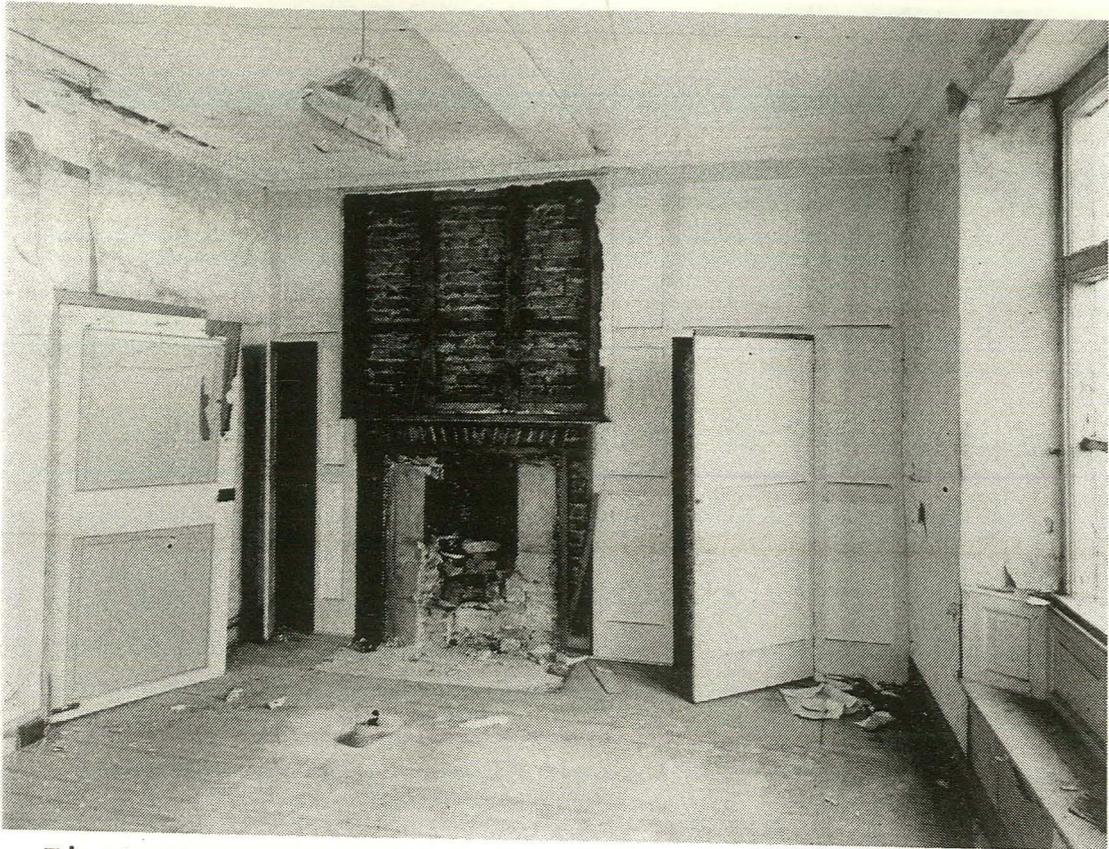
View from east showing stair window and added wing



Bay Hall, Benington, Lincolnshire.

Ground floor plan

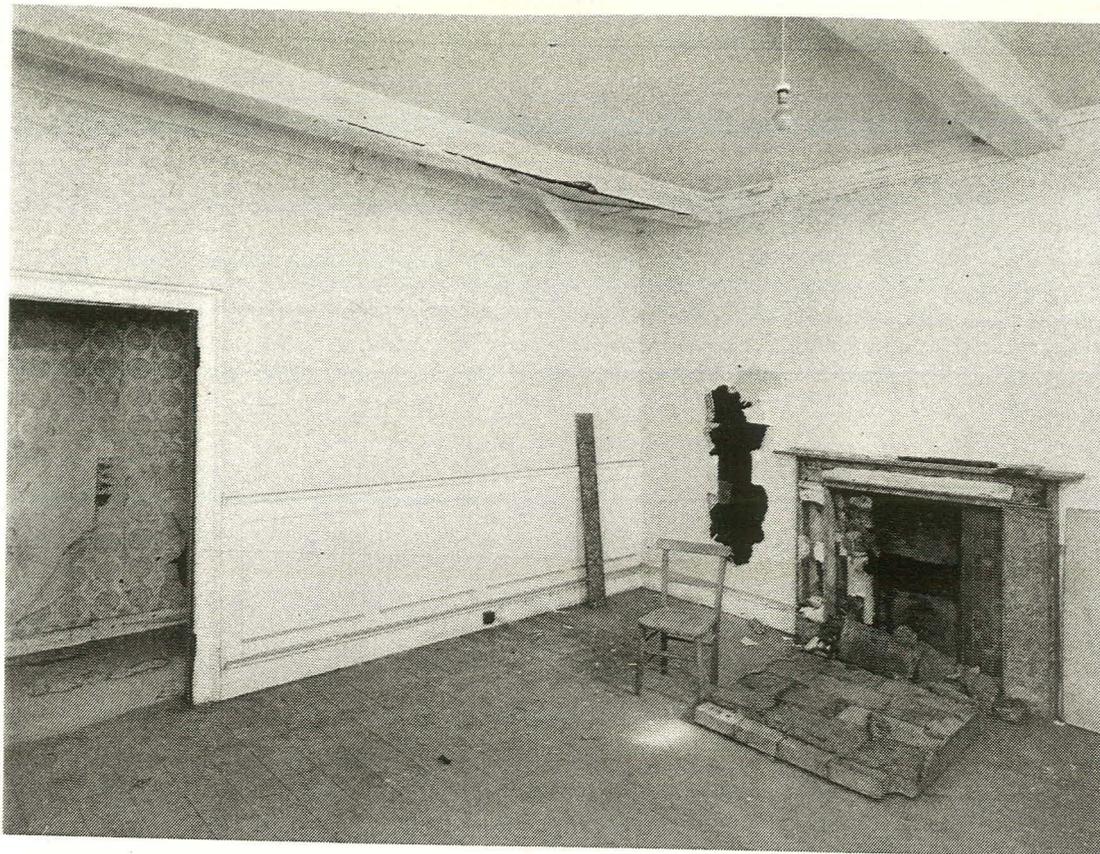




First floor, south-west room with inserted partition



First floor, service stair rising to second floor



South-west room (hall) with later inserted partition



Principal staircase rising to first-floor landing

