

PART V

NORFOLK : CASTLES AND MANSIONS

THETFORD CASTLE (THE 'CASTLE HILL')

BY P. K. BAILLIE REYNOLDS

The history of Thetford Castle is obscure, but its existing remains are conspicuous. It was evidently a motte-and-bailey castle, and the motte 80 feet high and nearly 1,000 feet in circumference is one of the largest in the Kingdom : of the bailey only some banks and ditches to the NE. survive. Such castles as a rule date from the early years of the Norman conquest, and the size of the motte argues that its builder was a great man. It seems reasonable to suppose that it was made to the order of Roger Bigod, to whom William the Conqueror assigned this part of the country ; but it is not mentioned in Domesday. Thetford was still then a place of some consequence and the see of the East Anglian Diocese, and to construct a stronghold to secure the town would be a natural step for the new Lord to take. With the transfer of the see to Norwich and of the Bigod seat to Framlingham, Thetford's importance waned and the castle became unnecessary. According to the Pipe Roll for 19 Henry II, 1172-3, the castle had then recently been demolished.

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CASTLE ACRE : THE CASTLE

BY P. K. BAILLIE REYNOLDS

Castle Acre was given by William the Conqueror to William de Warenne, who constructed there a castle of the usual motte-and-bailey type, and formidable remains of its earthworks still survive. It lies roughly N. and S. with the motte at the N. side of a horse-shoe shaped bailey. In the latter part of the twelfth century a shell-keep of flint masonry was built on the motte, and a curtain-wall on the bank of the bailey. Only fragments of these walls now survive. On the eastern side of the motte is a small additional enclosure. On the western side of the Castle was an outer bailey, which now encloses part of the village. This was defended by an earthwork, the straight west side of which survives. In the thirteenth century it was provided with masonry gate-towers, and that on the north still spans the village street, and is in the guardianship of the Ministry of Works. The corresponding gate on the south was pulled down in the early nineteenth century. The shape of this outer bailey has led to the supposition that it is of Roman origin. Sporadic Roman finds have been made in the neighbourhood, but there is no evidence of a Roman origin for the earthworks, and Haverfield dismissed the theory. In about 1345 John de Warenne sold the castle, and it was then allowed to fall into ruin.

CAISTER-BY-YARMOUTH CASTLE

BY W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON

Caister Castle was built about 1435 by Sir John Fastolf, a veteran of Henry V's French wars, and the original of Shakespeare's Falstaff—though the tried warrior of history was a very different person from the scallywag creation of the poet's humour. The building accounts are partly preserved and are of high interest. The ruins of the

castle form one of the finest pieces of medieval brickwork in England, and the plan, which is unique in this country, is that of a Rhenish *Wasserburg*. Recently, the site of the kilns where the bricks were made has been identified. Later, the castle belonged to Sir John Paston, and figures largely in the Paston letters. It was besieged and captured, with the aid of heavy guns, by the Duke of Norfolk in 1469, but was afterwards recovered by the Pastons, who continued to occupy it until 1599. The forecourt buildings are now the residence of Mr. Charles Hamblen Thomas.

ELSING HALL

BY THE REV. NOEL BOSTON

Elsing Hall, the seat of the Hastings family (p. 102) was probably completed by John Hastings who had the estate from 1436 to 1477. Although most of the foundations seems to be of the thirteenth century, at first sight the house looks rather disappointing owing to an 1852 restoration. The house is built of knapped flint with stone mouldings. Much of the moulded stone was either re-faced or replaced at this time, but on closer inspection the house proves to be one of very great interest and to be substantially as it was left in the fifteenth century. It is surrounded by a wet moat and there are traces of a fifteenth-century curtain wall. The chief feature of the house is the great hall which is very fine indeed, although the west gallery belongs to the nineteenth century restoration. The most interesting things in the hall are the rolls of arms. One of these consists of a roll of vellum 7 feet 4 inches in length and 17 inches wide and begins with Sir Henry Hastings. The pedigree is signed by William Harvey, Norroy King at Arms, and contains 65 shields. A second pedigree roll commences with Malcolm, King of Scots in 1100.

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EAST BARSHAM MANOR HOUSE

BY GEOFFREY WEBB

East Barsham Manor House is the much-restored fragment of an early sixteenth-century house of quite exceptional interest. It was probably begun between 1523 and 1527 for Sir Henry Fermor and completed in the 1530's. The building is a most elaborate example of ornamental brick work and terra-cotta of which the best early examples are mostly in East Anglia. The original plan has not been traced in its entirety but the unusual form of the entrance court, long and narrow, set transversely to the axis of the Gatehouse and porch, seems to link it with Beaupre Park near Wisbech. It is possible there may be other instances of this arrangement in Norfolk. The single storey hall with the chamber over, though found elsewhere, is not usual at so early a date. The house attracted considerable attention in the early years of the nineteenth century when some restoration of the finials was carried out. It was surveyed and published in *Vetusta Monumenta* in 1811. Pugin also published drawings of the house in 1830.

RAINTHORPE HALL, TASBURGH

BY A. B. WHITTINGHAM

Two modern owners, Frederick Walpole and Sir Charles Harvey, who fitted the house with a varied collection of woodwork and glass, have made it necessary to enumerate in some detail the original features of this substantially intact Elizabethan manor.

Being Appleyard property, Rainthorpe Hall became the home of Amy Robsart's half-sister, Anne Appleyard. She had lived here with her two successive husbands,

Alexander Chapman and James Bigot, before it was sold in 1579 and rebuilt by a successful lawyer, Thomas Baxter. The part then built contains the Parlour and an impressive long room, formerly the Hall and Kitchen. The bay window rises to light the Great Chamber over the Hall. Opposite the porch and also reaching to the attics, is an octagonal stair-turret, so that the modest rear door enters the body of the Hall instead of the former screens. Later, Baxter added two wings in front: one to contain a new Kitchen and the other a cellar, each with its porch retaining one of the contemporary heavy oak plain door-frames. The side walls are half-timbered throughout upstairs, all the rest being brick. The wings omit the diaper patterns, stone quoins and crow-stepped gables, and may have been completed soon after the death of his wife, Elizabeth Bludworth, in 1587, their arms being painted impaled over an upper fireplace as well as carved separately on the original porch. Thereafter Anne Appleyard, by marrying Baxter, returned for the third time as bride to Rainthorpe Hall. A south bay was added between the parlour and hall in 1615, presumably by Baxter's grandson, Thomas, on his coming of age. The old heraldic glass in both bays is informative, including Anne's mother, Elizabeth Scott, impaled first by Roger Appleyard and second by John Robsart.

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FELBRIGG HALL

BY R. W. KETTON-CREMER

The south front of Felbrigg Hall (Pl. X, A), was built in the first decade of the seventeenth century by Sir John Wyndham and his son Thomas Windham, whose arms are carved above the entrance. (The difference of spelling in their names is intentional.) The site was occupied by an earlier house, of which traces remain in the cellars; this was presumably the manor-house of the Felbriggs, many of whose brasses are to be seen in the church, and by whose representatives the property was sold to John Wymondham in 1461. The south front is of brick with some flintwork, and appears (unusually for Norfolk) always to have been covered with plaster. The parapet carries the inscription GLORIA DEO IN EXCELSIS in pierced stone lettering.

Towards the end of the century the west wing was added, the architect being William Samwell. A number of his drawings are still preserved. The exterior, a fine piece of brickwork, was completed in 1686, and the decoration of the interior, including the elaborate ceilings, in 1687.

Between 1750 and 1755 several rooms were redecorated to the designs of James Paine, in particular the staircase-hall, the dining-room and the Gothic library. The front hall was Gothicized about 1840, and some interesting painted glass of various periods was placed in the windows. The stable courtyard, to the east of the house, was completed about the same time. No subsequent alterations have taken place.

The house contains a good collection of English, Dutch and Italian paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and some fine English and French furniture of the same periods. Among the pictures, the paintings of shipping and sea-fights by Willem van de Velde and Simon de Vlieger, and the large views of London Bridge and the Tower by Samuel Scott, are perhaps the most notable.

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BLICKLING HALL

BY GEOFFREY WEBB

Blickling Hall is one of the latest of the great Jacobean houses. It was in building for the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Henry Hobart, from about 1619 to 1628, and is known to be the work of Robert Lyminge, who had previously been employed at Hatfield House. The plaster-work of the State Rooms, especially that of the Long Gallery with its remarkable series of emblematic conceits, is especially noteworthy. The house was extensively altered and redecorated for the second Earl of Buckinghamshire in the second half of the eighteenth century. Much of this work was done to the designs of William Ivory, son of the well-known Norfolk architect, with whom was associated William Wilkins, also a Norfolk man. This is most likely Wilkins the grandfather of the architect of the National Gallery, who is known to have been a plasterer. The design of the park is attributed to Repton, and the Mausoleum for the second Earl of Buckinghamshire is by Joseph Bonomi.

WOLTERTON PARK

BY GEOFFREY WEBB

Wolterton Hall (Pl. X, B) was built by Thomas Ripley for Horatio Walpole, brother of the great Minister, between the years 1727 and 1741. Ripley, who had occupied a series of offices under the Board of Works through the patronage of the Walpole family, had been employed to execute Campbell's designs for Houghton, in association with Kent for the interior decoration. The influence of Houghton on the design of Wolterton is clearly seen in the use of the ground floor as family living-rooms leaving the *piano nobile* as State apartments, and the consequent arrangement of the staircase. The house, which is the seat of the present Lord Walpole, is little altered except for the loss of the original steps to the first floor on the north front, the building of the present porch, and some renewal of woodwork in the nineteenth century. It contains a remarkable series of portraits and tapestries, associated with its first owner, whose nephew, Horace Walpole, has celebrated the House in the following lines :

What woods what streams around the seat
Was ever mansion so complete ?
Here happy Pug and Horace may
(and yet not have a groat to pay)
Two things they most have shunned, perform ;
I mean, they may be clean and warm.

HOLKHAM HALL

BY MARGARET WHINNEY

Holkham Hall, the seat of the Earl of Leicester, is one of the finest Palladian houses in the country. It was created by Thomas Coke (1697-1759), afterwards first Earl of Leicester, the great-grandson of Sir Edward Coke, Lord Chief Justice of England (d. 1635). During a lengthy Grand Tour (1712-18) Coke developed a passion for antique art and literature, began to form his famous collection of Livy manuscripts and also to acquire Roman sculpture. While in Italy he met Lord Burlington and William Kent, and it was probably then that the house was conceived. It has generally been assumed that the design was by Kent, but recent research has shown that it is more probable that the exterior, at least, is due to Burlington. Soon after his return Coke began to reclaim the marsh land on which he had decided to build, but the house itself was not started till 1734. Special pains were taken with the materials. Stone was at first proposed, but since Vitruvius states that brick was considered by the Romans to be more firm and durable than marble experiments were made with local clay, which was found to produce a brick surprisingly similar to a Roman brick which arrived by chance in a case of antique sculpture. The exterior of the house has as a result a rather austere appearance, though this would

have been less marked before the small panes in the windows were replaced by plate glass, and when the casements and sashes were burnished.

The plan is a development, on a grand scale, of the Palladian villa type with central block and four dependant wings which became popular in eighteenth-century England. This, with its great extent of floor space, makes it possible to keep all the main rooms on one floor, above the service rooms in the high rusticated basement.

The main block contains an exceptionally fine suite of state rooms, whose richness of decoration is in striking contrast to the plain exterior. The great hall, apsed at one end, is surrounded by a colonnade of Ionic columns of Derbyshire marble, supporting a richly coffered roof. Behind is the saloon, with typical Kent decoration in crimson and gold, while the sculpture gallery and dining-room (which with the hall contain Leicester's collection of antiques) have classical decoration of surprising severity for the date. The library, in one of the dependant blocks, is a room of great beauty. Its contents include many remarkable MSS., as well as the Livy collection and one of the note-books of Leonardo da Vinci.

The house was slow in building, and was not finished at Leicester's death in 1759. The chapel wing, finished by his widow by 1765, is less sumptuous in decoration. The work had been superintended by Matthew Brettingham, who in 1761 published the *Plans and Elevations of Holkham* in which no acknowledgement was made to its designer. In a second edition, published in 1769 by his nephew Robert, Kent's name however, appears and it is further stated that some of the ceilings and chimney pieces were from designs of Inigo Jones, and other details, including the order in the hall, were taken from Antoine Degodetz's *Edifices de Rome* (1682).

In 1776 the estate passed to Leicester's great nephew Thomas Coke, generally known as 'Coke of Norfolk'. He made little change in the house, but greatly improved its surroundings.

The pictures were mainly collected by the first Earl. They include a series of landscapes by Claude Lorrain, Van Dyck's equestrian portrait of the Duc d'Arenberg and a 'Flight into Egypt' by Rubens. Among the portraits is a fine late Gainsborough of 'Coke of Norfolk'. A further work of great interest is the sixteenth-century copy (by Aristotile da San Gallo) of Michelangelo's lost cartoon of 'The Bathers'. There are also drawings of the highest quality, including Raphael's cartoon for 'La belle Jardinière' and some brilliant landscape drawings by Claude.

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REPORT OF THE SPRING MEETING AT GUILDFORD

SATURDAY, MAY 7TH, 1949

The Spring Meeting of the Institute for 1949 was held on Saturday, May 7th, at Guildford. A considerable number of members and their friends took part, mainly travelling by train from London. In the morning Archbishop Abbot's Almshouses, the Guildhall, Guildford Castle, and the Guildford Museum (Castle Arch) were visited, and the Institute is indebted to Mr. Walter H. Godfrey, Mr. Bernard Rackham, and Miss Enid Dance for their guidance and expositions. At the Guildhall, Mr. Rackham had arranged a display of the Guildford Corporation Plate, which he described.

In the afternoon, by kind permission of His Grace the Duke of Sutherland, K.T., P.C., Sutton Place was visited, and the Institute is indebted to Mr. Geoffrey Webb for his services there as guide in the house and grounds.