RAYNHAM HALL, NORFOLK

By John Harris

This paper is an attempt to revaluate the published documents concerning Raynham Hall, and to compare the house with the prevailing Court style, that of His Majesty’s Office of Works or, more precisely, the style of Inigo Jones. Two hypotheses are put forward for consideration: firstly, that the house is an object of experimentalism and as such exhibits a combination of remarkably advanced features together with traditional or conservative ones; secondly, that the central feature of the east side was conceived as a partially free-standing temple front.

The Raynham archives\(^1\) contain an incomplete series of building accounts from about 1618 to 1622, and a *Book of Remembrance* or jottings by Sir Roger Townsend, begun in January 1622 and ending incomplete on 1 July of the same year. These documents provide the basic data on the early stages of the building programme.

A 16th-century house stood to the west of the present Hall, in the valley near the church\(^2\). From here, for almost twenty years, Sir Roger watched the erection of a house he was destined never to inhabit, presumably making no attempt to hasten the works.

On 30 August 1619 a significant entry appears in the accounts, ‘This weeke Beginne the Buildings’. By September stone was being brought from the demolitions at Coxford Abbey, and stone was still being cut in April 1620. From May until October, Sir Roger and his draughtsman-cum-servant, William Edge, were away from England perhaps, as has been suggested, in the Low Countries. The purpose of their trip has aroused speculation; there is, however, no evidence of why they went or what they saw, and therefore no reason to suppose an architectural tour. In the summer of 1620 there would have been no need to go abroad to see the latest building styles. Not only were sufficient examples available in London, but at Newmarket Palace there was a work of major importance close at hand. On 25 March 1621 payments are recorded to William Edge for ‘Drawinge Divrs platts etc’, and Edge was ‘plattinge’ throughout the year. Then comes an unexpected entry; from April to May 1622, they were ‘takinge up the olde foundations, and digginge the newe’. One explanation for this sudden turn of events is given by Sir Henry Spelman, author of *The History and Fate of Sacrilege* (1632), and a neighbour of Sir Roger. Describing the desecration of monastic property, Spelman relates a heightened, but otherwise true, account of the occurrence at Raynham: ‘Sir Roger the Bar intending to build a goodly house at Raynham, and to fetch Stone for the same from Coxford Abbey, by advice of Sir Nathaniel Bacon his Grandfather, began to demolish the church there ... Sir Roger having dugged

---

1 I am indebted to Mr. T. S. Blakeney who kindly made the Raynham papers available for my inspection, and to the present Lord Townsend who allowed me free access to his home.

2 Shown in the Prideaux album. For permission to examine this album I am indebted to the owner, Mr. Prideaux-Brune of Prideaux Place, Cornwall.
the Cellaring of his new House and raised the Walls with some of the Abbey-Stone Breast high, the wall reft from the Corner Stones though it was clear above the Ground, which being reported to me by my servant Richard Tedcastle, I viewed them with mine own Eyes and found it so. Sir Roger, utterly dismayed with these Occurents, gave over his begun foundation, and digging a new wholly out of the Ground about 20 yards forward toward the North, hath there finished a stately House, using none of the Abbey-Stone about it.\(^1\)

The new foundations seem to have coincided with an innovation in the method of depicting the designs, for on Lady Day 1622 the accounts mention ‘Clapboard deale & other necessaries for the modell of the building’ to be made by William Edge and a joiner, Thomas Moore. This was a progressive idea for although models were common usage on the continent, they were hardly known in England, and did not find favour until advocated by Sir Henry Wotton in 1624\(^2\). There is no evidence, however, that the house contemplated on the new foundations was architecturally any more advanced than that begun on the old. The Booke of Remembrance is enlightening upon this point. On 15 January 1622, before the decision to lay new foundations, Sir Roger states that ‘it was thought fitting the lower hall windows should have frames of tymber, and no munnels of stone put into them’. He also notes that ‘the upper windows of the hall should have keystones putt into the heads of them’ and ‘that advice he had whether a flatt Rooffe or a Steepe Rooffe be most convenient’. Wooden framed windows had been used in the Banqueting House in Whitehall; but even more significant, particularly in the context of this paper, is their use in the Prince’s Lodging at Newmarket Palace, Inigo Jones’s latest project not far from Raynham. Not only was the Lodging one of Jones’s most influential buildings\(^3\), but the Palace would hardly have escaped the notice of anyone interested in architecture.

By July 1622 the new Raynham was well above the ground. Although the accounts cease at this time, Spelman’s comments point to the completion of the work by 1632. It is possible, however, that he was referring only to the exterior fabric, for according to an inventory taken after Sir Roger’s death in 1637\(^4\) the house was still unfurnished. This state is also verified by an ambiguously worded letter said to have been written by Sir Roger Pratt, the architect, to Sir Horace Townsend who inherited Raynham in 1650\(^5\). Pratt relates that Sir Roger ‘bestowed his tyme to examine ... ev’ry inch accor. to Mathematics as he was able to do, witness his many Italian and French books of Architecture’ (author’s italics). He also says, ‘Sir Roger (Townsend) left this house only

---

1 In confirmation of this Mr. Blakeney tells me of considerable stone foundations discovered in an area about 20 yards to the south of the present house.
2 Sir Henry Wotton, The Elements of Architecture, 1644: ‘Let no man that intendeth to build, settle his fancie upon a draught of the worke in paper ... without a modell or type of the whole structure and of evry parcel and partition in pateboard or wood.
3 This is fully discussed by the author in Architectural History, 2 (1959), 26-40: ‘Inigo Jones and the Prince’s Lodging at Newmarket’.
4 Quoted in Country Life, May 14, 21, 1925.
decent & handsome as Augustus found Cleopatra after Mark Antoneys death in all her native beauty, which since your Lordship hath finished & furnished with all possible ornaments'. Raynham would therefore seem to have been completed in 1650, or even more likely in 1658 when Sir Horace married. In support of the '50's as a date of completion, the house contains black and white marble chimney pieces, and ornaments of a vernacular mannerist style common to the geographical area, and to be found at Thorpe Hall, Peterborough (1653-56) by Peter Mills, and closer at Wisbech Castle, now demolished.

An invaluable aid to our understanding of Raynham is a book of measured drawings prepared for Charles II's visit to the house in 1671. These drawings provide an excellent comparison between the east and west fronts as they were in the 17th century and as they are today (Pls. XIV and XV). The differences are due to two phases of alterations, one after 1671, and the other probably about 1732 by William Kent. The west front appears to be untouched by Kent, unless he slightly lowered the centre attic windows. The scrolly pedimented entrance is certainly before his time and is in a style consistent with a date any time between 1671 and c. 1700. On the east front Kent may have done more. Leaving the wings alone, he slightly ornamented the central feature and probably modified the doorway. In the intermediate bays, Kent, or someone earlier, replaced the oddly cumbersome fenestration by a much more satisfying design with windows copied from those on the wings. These are the essential alterations which may, in fact, be more complicated. The Prideaux album contains sketches of Raynham made about 1716. They show the intermediate bays already refronted and a pedimented central entrance to the east front. Kent may, therefore, have done far less to the exterior than has been generally realised, and it seems likely that the formation of the central entrances was simultaneous for both fronts.

The existing plan of Raynham is rectangular with wings slightly projecting on the east and more pronounced on the west front. The latter has been altered from the original plan (Pl. XVI) only by the substitution of the central entrance into the hall for the two end entrances leading into screens passages, a duplication of the traditional medieval arrangement and one which is alluded to in the Booke of Remembrance in 1622: 'That footinge be lefte in the Hall walls for the Skreens'. Alterations to the eastern half of the house have been more extensive: neither the central feature nor the linking walls accord well in design with the wings. It is possible that as first conceived the plan was H-shaped with a courtyard to the east; but even the hall elevation on the west and the adjoining

---

1 R.I.B.A. Album G1/1 (1-11). Inscriptions on the plans, such as 'Kings Lodging' and 'Duck of Monmouth Lodging', leave no doubt that these were connected with the royal visit. The draughtsman, 'I.E.', may perhaps have been one of the Edge family.
2 Kent's responsibility is confirmed by a letter from Sir Thomas Robinson to The Earl of Carlisle in 1731. Hist. MSS. Comm. 15th Report, Appendix, Part VI, 86.
3 Mr. R. W. Ketton-Cremer has raised the problem of dating the door by the armorial bearings. The ones emblazoned at present, being the arms of Townsend quartered with Vere, would not have been used after 1661 when Horace was created a Baron. Mr. Ketton-Cremer suggests that the door has been reconstructed from an even earlier one, in which case the shield may have come from another position in the house.
A. Measured drawing of west front, c. 1671 (R.I.B.A.)

B. West front today
(By permission of the National Buildings Record)
A. Measured drawing of east front, c. 1671 (R.I.B.A.)

B. East front today
(By permission of the National Buildings Record)
wings are inconsistent and it seems probable that the design was being continually modified. The insertion of the chapel wing in the centre of the east front would produce an E-plan in which the intermediate spaces, now filled by staircases, the 'Letel hall', and 'Ante rome', would be unpleasantly oppressive and call for a complete enclosing even if they had not been partly enclosed at the time of the erection of the central wing. In its final form, as a suite of rooms contained within a rectangle and encompassing two great compartments forming a T on one axis, the plan is startling for England—it may be remarked that this T-shaped arrangement is a feature based on Palladian canon and found, for example, at Palladio's Villa Pogliana illustrated in *I Quattro Libri*.

An examination of the elevations reveals similar modifications. On the west front (Pl. XIVa) the gabled wings are planned on a firm 1:2 ratio, but the centre between them is unresolved. The poorly designed entablature has no relationship to the cornice on the wings, and the axial line of the middle bay (pediment, circular window, square window, niche, arched window) is what one would expect from a simple local builder. The pediment, a competent example of northern classicism, seems suspended as if awaiting a frontispiece. As will be shown below, certain features (the window with a triplicate of keystones, and the broad conception of the wing fronts) are of advanced form. The elevation thus reveals the kind of compromise already noted in the plan.

The east front, with wings identical to those on the west front, includes a dominating pedimented centre-piece which, if viewed from an oblique angle (Pl. XVII), is like a temple façade projecting out of the main body of the cross wing for at least one third the width of the plan. The three units of wings and centre constitute three clearly defined statements in proportioned relationship to each other. The same cannot be said of the original arrangement of the units between the wings. These linking façades, with a tripartite window above and a tripartite arrangement of windows and doors below, could be regarded as a country mason's interpretation of the entrance of Palladio's Villa Pisano. They have no stylistic relationship either to the centre or to the wings, and it seems inconceivable that all these frontal elements could have been produced by the same mind during the same period of building. It is significant that these intermediate fronts conceal the already discussed unresolved compartments of the plan. If they were taken out of their context, they would be dated c.1660 rather than c.1630—in other words, they are consistent with a vernacular building style at the time of the Restoration.

If these façades do belong to a time around the mid-century, then they are of precisely that period when the house was being completed by Sir Horace Townsend. At this point my second hypothesis may be restated: that because of an inconsistency of plan on one side of the house, and of the styles of the elevation of the same side, the central bay may originally have been conceived as a partially free-standing temple feature. It has been noticed that even in the existing building the centre-piece projects up and out of the house; that the plan around these parts is inconsistent, as indeed are the thicknesses of the

2 Palladio, *op. cit.*, Lib. 2, 52.
outer walls; and that there is a definite stylistic difference between the wings and centre, and the intermediate bays. If the stylistic difference alone is accepted, and the intermediate bay fronts are later than the adjacent parts, only two possibilities remain for these fronts: either they replaced an even earlier front in the same position, which in view of the building seems unlikely, or, in support of the hypothesis, there were no fronts in the same plane as the adjacent parts. The fronts could have occurred at about the position of the staircase wall to the ‘Ante Rome’.

It has been mentioned that Sir Roger lived until his death in his house below the hill. The building period of twenty years was long for the seventeenth century, and Sir Roger was obviously in no hurry to move into his new home. His results bear the unmistakable stamp of experimentalism: a house is begun and discontinued, another is begun; models are made and Sir Roger may first have built the centre-part of the present house of only two stories and without the wings; then he may have added the wings and the second floor above the hall range; and as a final addition he may have built the chapel wing projecting from the centre of the east front. The temple feature in this position may not have been palatable to his successors for whom the most logical step would have been to fill in the spaces with a screen wall. The cumulative evidence suggests that this is what happened.

The foregoing explanation of Raynham has alluded to the advanced character of parts or intended parts of the composition, namely the T-arrangement of rooms on one axis, and the use of wooden framed windows rather than the traditional mullion and transom. These alone point to progressive thinking. They would not, however, be a basis for associating the house with Inigo Jones himself, or with the immediate influence of the Court style. Yet, the relationship of Raynham to his style can be shown to be very close, and parts of the composition are startlingly derivative from his designs.

The wing gables may be likened to an early form of the ‘Holborn’ gable, of a type that was to become characteristic of brick buildings in the Home Counties. Nevertheless, the gable, essentially a triangular or segmental pediment raised on a panel with voluted sides, may have been introduced by Jones himself. Sir Fulke Greville’s house (or Brooke House) in the Strand was probably built about 1617 or certainly before 1619 when it was sketched by John Smithson (Pl. XVIII A) as one of a group of recently built London houses. The details are remarkably advanced for their date, notably the boldly defined cornice, and the central balcony or ‘Pergula’, an element favoured by Jones at the time. The clumsiness of the gable is almost certainly due to bad draughtsmanship on the part of Smithson who may have completed his sketches when he returned to the Midlands.

1 R.I.B.A. Smithson Collection, 111/6. It may be of Low Countries’ derivation, and is like the pergula found in the Veneto in a purer form. A number of villas on the Brenta have the single gable placed centrally in the roof.

Ground floor plan of Raynham Hall c. 1671 (R.I.B.A.)
Two designs by Inigo Jones for the Prince's Lodging, Newmarket (R.I.B.A.)
The scrolled gable also appears on an early design by Jones, now in the Devonshire Collections at Chatsworth (Pl. XVIIIb), which typifies his style of draughtsmanship up to the early 1620's. A comparison of the Chatsworth gable design with one of Jones's (1618) designs for the Newmarket Prince's Lodging (Pl. XVII, lower) is illuminating. Both have a similar arrangement of entrance bay, e.g., a square-headed keystoned doorway pushed up against a string, and a tall balustraded window above. The gable design may be for Sir Fulke Greville's house, both have similar proportions, a broadly projecting cornice, and the central window; yet the Chatsworth design is a more rigorously classical composition. The parts below the gable may be based on Scamozzi's Palazzo Trissimo at Vicenza, engraved in the immediately influential L'Idea dell'Architettura Universale (1615). The gable also differs from both the Greville and the Raynham ones in possessing the distinctive double scrolls based upon the great prototype for this form, Vignola's II Gesù, but with the oddly pointed shoulder, a Northern or Brabantian feature. In comparison, the Raynham gable is thinly inexpressive, and would not have received Jones's commendation.

A significant detail of the gable designs is a triplicate of shallow stepped keystones to the lower windows. In April 1618 Jones was experimenting with keystoned types, basing his sketches upon engravings of a theoretical nature by Serlio. The presence of a string course on these drawings suggests an ultimately practical intention. The keystones, in triplicate and quadruplicate, are spaced apart. Thus, they are slightly different from those on the Chatsworth gable design, and on the Prince's Lodging elevations. They are similar, however, to those on the Raynham elevations. The keystoned architrave is a necessary adjunct to the new Jonesian wooden framed window, and first occurs on an elevation of an unknown building dated 1616 and now at the R.I.B.A. The extended building period of Raynham prohibits any accurate dating for the fenestration. In the light of Sir Roger's advanced thinking, there is no reason why the form should not have been chosen in the early 1620's. It would seem almost certain, however, that the Raynham windows were foreshadowed by those on the Prince's Lodging at Newmarket. The two designs for that building are directly relevant to the Raynham problem.

The importance of the Newmarket designs in the analysis of Raynham lies in their position as the most advanced domestic project in England at the time. It has been suggested that Sir Roger most likely knew the works there. When he went to London, as he did in the winter of 1619, he could have taken a known route through Newmarket, or could easily have made a diversion from the usual Cambridge route. It is not unreasonable to presume that a man who, in Pratt's words, possessed many 'Italian and French books of architecture' would have taken the opportunity of seeing the Palace. He may even have been shown Jones's designs by Thomas Punter, the Clerk of the Works. In any

1 Chatsworth, Drawings from Chiswick, 19.
2 In the same category of early designs belong the pre-Italian-tour design by Jones for the new Exchange, discussed by L. Stone in Arch. J., CXIV, (1937), 106-111; and also Jones's earliest signed and dated design, the 1616 elevation in the R.I.B.A.
3 Scamozzi, L'Idea dell'Architettura Universale (1615), Lib. 3, Cap X.
4 Professor R. Wittkower fully discusses the theoretical implications of this drawing in R.I.B.A. Journal, 60, No. 3 (January, 1953), 83.
event, it is significant that all the progressive details at Raynham could have
been found in Jones’s work at Newmarket, if not on the Prince’s Lodging then
on the several other secondary structures.

The two Newmarket designs are closely related to the first sketch for the
Banqueting House in Whitehall\(^1\). All are derived from the basic concept of
Palladio’s reconstruction of ancient domestic architecture\(^2\) which he held to be
the precedent and model for the temple. Since the villa did not survive from
the ancients in an elevational form, Palladio rationally applied the temple front
to his villas and town houses. In the final design for the Banqueting House the
temple front was practically synthesised away by Jones, but it is still the
dominant note of the Newmarket designs, and of the east front of Raynham.
It has not hitherto been appreciated that Raynham is probably the earliest
surviving expression in England of this temple façade idea\(^3\). The oblique view
of this elevation has already been discussed, as has the evidence that the temple
form may originally have been in greater relief forming a front to the central
stroke of an E-plan. Even in its present quasi three-dimensional form there
is no real successor to Raynham; all other expressions along these lines are
in one plane\(^4\).

The relationship between the Raynham and Newmarket centre-pieces is
remarkable. Raynham can be regarded as a synthesis of both of Jones’s designs.
It uses the fenestrated arrangement and proportions of one (Pl. XVII, lower),
and the order of the other (Ibid., upper) which, in turn, is an adaptation of
Scamozzi’s Casa Conero\(^5\). The source of the former Newmarket design is
unknown. The quoined centre-piece compresses the Scamozzian form, deletes
the orders, and produces an highly original elevation.

The Court style is not only confined to the plan and exteriors of Raynham.
In the Saloon, Kent designed an overmantel for a fireplace. The latter is uniquely
Jonesian, and has stylistic identity with his designs, particularly that for
Oatlands Palace of 1646\(^6\). This Raynham fireplace is the sole survivor of a type
which, as far as can be ascertained, was unique to the Royal Works.

The great upper, or ‘Belesarius’ room at Raynham occurs behind the
temple feature and above the chapel. It is not possible to give an accurate date
for the massive ceiling, the compartments of which were later ornamented
with paintings by Kent. The oval centre and massive beams are not by Kent,
nor do they fit the vernacular phase of Sir Horace’s works. They are, however,
consistent with what could have been produced in the 1630’s.

The sum total of this examination shows Raynham as a compromise
between the most advanced classicism of Inigo Jones and the current vernacular
or conservative styles. The advanced features are the gable, the keystoned

---

3 The façades of Houghton Conquest in Bedfordshire may be a little earlier. Centre-pieces of remark-
able purity were inserted into the Jacobean house before 1621. They were, however, temple features
in one plane only, and are stylistically related to Jones’s work, especially his Exchange design.
4 The idea of a house translated into a temple

---

5 Scamozzi, *op. cit.*, Part I, Lib 3, Cap XIV.
6 R.I.B.A. Burlington Devonshire Collection 11/3(9).

B. Design by Inigo Jones, perhaps for Sir Fulke Greville's house (Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement)
windows, the T plan, the temple feature, and a chimney surround. They punctuate a house of otherwise conservative form with screens passages, high hipped roof, and immature handlings of the side elevations and of the gable volutes. The failure to handle these advanced units of design may be due not only to the personality of Sir Roger, but also, in no small way, to the extended building programme. One leaves Raynham with the impression that it was a spare time occupation for Sir Roger, and, in this light, something of an experiment. It is not impossible that Sir Roger collected the latest innovations from various of Jones’s projects, just as John Smithson did, combining them into his own design. Yet from this one would expect something of a Smithonian result. This is not so at Raynham where details are pure Jonesian variations. Raynham cannot compare with the classicism of the Newmarket elevations, yet it is relevant that it can only be compared with these designs. Upon this basis Inigo Jones cannot be entirely disassociated with the Raynham project; we can at least hear his approval of the temple front.¹

¹ Nothing has been said in this paper about the visual or aesthetic impact of Raynham. In terms of domestic monumentality, and in terms of exquisitely smooth brick combined with an equally beautiful stonework, it remains the great classic house of the 1630's generation. No one leaving by the church avenue, and looking back to the house on the hill, can avoid being awed by the whole splendid ensemble.