HADDON HALL AND BOLSOVER CASTLE

By P. A. Faulkner

The following studies of Haddon Hall and Bolsover Castle are confined, in the main, to their respective building histories. The historical and genealogical background has, particularly in the case of Haddon Hall, been covered elsewhere. The plans of Haddon Hall are based on an early 13th-century plan at Haddon, by kind permission of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, which has been corrected, as far as possible, by personal inspection on the site by the writer. They are not an accurate survey, but are probably more accurate than any hitherto published. The plans of Bolsover Castle are reproduced by permission of the Ministry of Public Building and Works from a survey by the Ancient Monuments branch of that Ministry.

Haddon Hall and Bolsover together cover the period from the 14th to the 17th century and provide an opportunity of following the changes that took place in the approach to the planning of a great house over that time. The medieval world of Sir Richard Vernon and that of the Duke of Newcastle who with his music, his poetry and his masques was, if anyone was, a renaissance prince, seem far apart. The houses were each perfectly fitted to their owners and yet, as these studies attempt to demonstrate, there was an even and gradual development from the one to the other. Fourteenth-century Haddon was designed to be lived in, it is an inward looking house, over which was laid the increased luxury and solemn ritual of the later 15th and 16th centuries. It was the continuation of this trend which led to the complete reversal of the medieval approach and the production of such architecture as the state rooms at Bolsover, designed, one cannot but feel, as a backcloth to display the Person of the Prince.

HADDON HALL

The earliest structural remains on the site are those parts of the Chapel, formerly the parish church of Nether Haddon, that can be dated to the late 11th or early 12th century. It may be assumed that the building at that time had an aisleless nave and chancel. Of the chancel nothing survives and its existence can only be inferred; that it was aisleless may be deduced from the fact that its successors were without aisles. The nave of this first church is represented only by a fragment of the lower portion of the west end of the existing nave. Some time c. 1200, perhaps in 1195 when Richard Vernon obtained a licence to enclose his house, a narrow aisle was added to the south of the nave, and probably also to the north, the two arches supported by a central pier being cut through the north and south nave walls. The central pier to the south side of the nave survives, though the arches it carried were later altered. The pier is circular with a roll-moulded base set on a square plinth block. The cap, originally of multi-scollop cushion form with a square abacus, was drastically reduced in later alterations. Nothing remains of the north aisle of this period. In the mid-13th century the south aisle was further widened to its present extent. To this period belong the lancet windows in its south, east and west walls. The junction of this work with that preceding it can be seen in the external masonry at the east and west ends of the aisle.

The 14th Century

There appears to be some evidence for a house at Haddon in 1170 in which year it is referred to in a deed dividing the property of William Avenel and again in 1195 when Richard
Vernon obtained a licence to surround his house at Haddon with a wall 12 ft. high. Other than the work already mentioned in the chapel, there is, nevertheless, nothing remaining on the site prior to the mid-14th century, the basic date of the present structure (Figs. 1–4). Sir Richard Vernon IV (1314–1400) was doubtless the builder. In 1330 he obtained a licence to enclose the park; in 1337 he journeyed to the Holy Land — his work at Haddon must therefore be between these two dates, i.e. in the second quarter of the 14th century. The surviving portions of his house, which surround what is now the upper court, are the Gatehouse (Peverel’s Tower), the Great Hall, with its upper and lower chamber blocks and the kitchen.

The Gatehouse occupies the N.E. angle of the original court. It does not project beyond the ranges in which it is set and it is marked as a separate entity only by rising to a central tower and two low flanking towers. All these are capped by corbelled battlements with crowstepped merlons, a modern rebuilding above corbel height but probably an accurate copy of the original. The central tower rises two and a half storeys above the flanking towers,
the parapets of which were joined over the outer or east face of the gate by a heavily machi-
colated gallery. The corbels for this remain but the parapet is lost.

The gate passage is spanned by a segmental barrel vault, defended at its outer end by gates
and a portcullis. Two guard chambers, also with segmental barrel vaults, flank the gate
passage. The northern chamber has loops with hollow chamfered external jamb in the N. and
E. walls; there was formerly a garderobe in the N.W. angle. From the S.E. corner of this
chamber a low crossloop commands the portcullis and in the W. wall is a blocked late medieval
door. The chamber is entered from the gate passage through a doorway with hollow chamfered
jams and ogee head. A similar door from the court leads to the south chamber, the window
to which was enlarged in the 16th century. At the inner end of the gate passage a similar
14th-century door leads to a vice which serves the upper floors of the gatehouse. Both upper
stages contain three rooms, the northern one in each case having formerly a garderobe in its
N.W. angle. The room immediately over the gate passage retains the portcullis recess. The
centre portion rises an extra storey while the stair above the second floor forms a square
turret which rises yet further. The upper windows, mostly two-light square-headed windows
with hollow chamfered jambs and heads, have been heavily restored but may represent the
original form.

Apart from the gatehouse there is no further work of the 14th century visible in the
N., E. or S. ranges of the court but there are sufficient indications to show that the north side
of the court formed a continuous range from the gatehouse to the kitchen. Two corbels in
the wall of the room to the S.E. of the kitchen suggest a pentice along the courtyard side of
this range. A contemporary door in the east wall of the former ground floor chamber of the
south chamber block points to further buildings along the south side of the court.

The mid 14th-century Great Hall and its Chamber Blocks survives, with minor alterations,
in its entirety. Its style and detail indicate a date in the second quarter of the century. Its
entrance was originally from the east, the western porch being a later addition. The hall and
end blocks are contemporary and presented a continuous façade to the east with the gap between
the N. chamber block and the kitchen closed by a screen wall in the manner employed much
later at Dartington, Somerset, with double-stepped buttresses at bay intervals. At the south
end was a projection (later enlarged) which enclosed the stair to the upper floor of the southern
chamber block. The projection eastwards of this block was absorbed in the south range of
the court. On the west side the building was freestanding; the hall was recessed between the two
chamber blocks which projected roughly equally to the west with pairs of buttresses on the
angles.

The Hall, originally in four bays, now has a modern roof in five bays erected during the
restoration of 1920. Its opposed entrance doors in the east and west walls at the north end
are similar with moulded jambs externally and plain rear arches. Two original windows survive
in the east and west walls; they are two-light with low transoms, plain chamfered on the
outside with shutter rebate above and below the transom. The heads are trefoiled with a
quatrefoil in the head of the main arch. They are provided with window seats. A third similar
window on the west side was made smaller to accommodate a wall fireplace.

In the north end wall are four contemporary doors. In the east angle, nearest to the
normal entrance, is the door leading to the first floor north great chamber; there follow the
pantry door, the door to the central service passage and the buttery door.

The Pantry, entered only by the door from the hall, retains, in essence, its 14th-century
square headed window in the east wall; in it can also be seen the lower structure of the original
stair to the upper floor. There are no features in the central passage. The Buttery which, with
pantry and passage together, occupies the ground floor of the north chamber block has 14th-
century jambs to its west window and a later door cut through the N.W. angle. The space
to the north, between the kitchen and chamber block, was, in the 14th century, an open court
in which the buttresses to the north wall of the block may still be traced.

The first floor of this block, the North Great Chamber, now divided, was designed as one
room and retains its original arch-braced collar roof in four bays. From the appearance of
the eastern window, which, like the western, retains its 14th-century jambs but would seem
to have been truncated to allow for the later parapet treatment, the ends of the block were
Fig. 2.
evidently gabled in the usual manner of the period. There is now no trace of the original fireplace or garderobe. The former may be represented by the present 17th-century fireplace and the latter by the somewhat confused passage in the north-east angle.

The South Chamber Block of the original build contained a single chamber on each floor extending some 8 ft. beyond the hall to east and west. The south wall of the hall is at present pierced with three doorways of which the eastern, under the present stairs, was the entrance to the 14th-century Parlour. That this room was three bays longer than the existing room is shown by the continuation of the moulded 14th-century ceiling beams beyond the present east partition. In the original east wall of this chamber is a contemporary door leading to the south range of the east court.

In the southern bay of the parlour ceiling may be seen the trimming for the first staircase to the South Great Chamber. Corbelling over the ground floor door shows that this provided external access from the court direct, roughly on the site of the present staircase tower. Under this stair the parlour door lay in a lobby, the door to which from the hall remains. The 14th-century great chamber included the present lobby to the head of the stairs to the long gallery. Apart from a blocked window in the south wall no other notable features survive.

The Kitchen, at present almost entirely enclosed within later buildings, is substantially of the mid-14th century and was, apart from the screen wall connecting it with the east wall of the hall block, freestanding and open to its roof at that date. The weatherings to the stack of the great western fireplace are visible in the later rooms built against it. Internally the two large plain-chamfered fireplaces belong to the first period as well as the two-centred door towards the hall. The bakery to the east of the kitchen is probably also of the mid-14th century.

The 15th Century, Period I

In 1426 the house was enlarged to take in the west court and the former parish church of Nether Haddon. This amounted to a virtual rebuilding of the church: the chancel, the north aisle and the nave clerestory were built anew leaving only the pier from the earlier south arcade, the cap to which was cut to conform to the mouldings of the new arches supporting the clerestory wall; the west window was allowed to remain with another placed above it in the heightened wall; a new stair turret against the north wall gave access to the rood screen, some traceried panels from which have been re-used in the later pews.

A curtain wall closed the gap between the north-east angle of the chapel and the south chamber block. There is no indication that this was to be continued around the remaining two sides of the lower court. Immediately to the east of the chapel, with which the wall is one continuous build, may be seen its crenellated parapet embedded in a later heightening. For its remaining length the parapet was removed when the later Earl's Apartments were built over it. This short length of wall is of great interest as it embodies the original timber wall-walk structure thrown out behind the wall. The wall itself survives within the ground floor of the wing stretching west from the south chamber block. Placed against its inner face are five massive timber posts 14 ins. by 13 ins. at the base widening out to 2 ft. thick at the head. They rest on stone plinth blocks and at their heads carry beams projecting out from the wall. Between each post are corbels to carry the intermediate beams. The form of the flooring is not clear as this is buried within the present floor thickness of the upper room. The whole forms a rare example of the timber work associated with a defensive stone curtain wall.

The 15th Century, Period II

The rebuilding of the chapel and the building of the curtain wall was but a prelude to a major reconstruction of the house undertaken in the second half of the 15th century but not finally completed until the middle of that following, turning the house from a single to a double courtyard layout, re-orientated to give entry from the N.W. instead of from the N.E.

Work on the chapel continued after the middle of the century; the belfry, which bears the initials of Sir William cannot have been completed until after 1432, the date of his succession. The splendid series of murals in the chapel, too, must date from the second half of the century.
and be the work of Sir William or that of his son Sir Henry Vernon, in possession from 1462 to 1515 and the most probable author of the reconstruction. Work of the period in the southern portion of the east range of the upper court includes the ground floor fireplace, with wave moulded jambs, traces of the ground floor fenestration facing the court, almost obliterated by the 17th-century alterations, and the southern door, four-centred under a similar hood mould. In the southern wall of the range where this meets the long gallery building are the lower portions of a circular stair in the S.W. angle and door jambs in the S.E. angle. Part of the well of this stair appears in the wall of the room above (visible behind the present hangings). Nothing further of the period appears in the south range until the old 14th-century south chamber block is reached. It must be assumed that for the time being the 14th-century state suite continued to serve its purpose or else required only minor adaptation. The Great Chamber and Parlour were, however, modernised. Survivals of this work are the new window inserted in the west wall of the parlour, the painted decoration to the ceiling of this room and the roof of the great chamber. The new roof, of cambered tie beam construction with moulded ties, purlins and joists, probably replaced a 14th-century roof at a lower level but with higher pitch. To the west, a range of three rooms, partly clasping the S.W. angle of the chamber block, was constructed in timber overriding the curtain wall built some fifty years before. Part of the timber framing and the roof of this range survive. The roof is similar in construction to that of the great chamber. Though the evidence for this reorganization of the southern range is adequate, later alterations prevent the elucidation of the details of its planning. The assumption that it contained many of the rooms not now identifiable but mentioned in Sir Henry Vernon’s will (ob. 1515) is doubtless correct.

The building of the west court was proceeding concurrently with the alterations to the older portions of the house, as a result of which the principal entrance became the west door rather than the east. To mark this change the present porch (bearing the arms of the builder of the hall, Richard Vernon IV, and his wife) was built covering the west door and the passage through to the east court divided from the hall by the erection of the screen which still exists. A room was formed over the porch and a door was cut through to the northern great chamber to which it thus formed an inner chamber. Access to the roof was combined with a door to the space over the new screens passage. The hall itself was improved by the addition of the present fireplace in the western wall. The reason for this is not clear as the narrower of the two hall windows in the west wall would seem to have been specially designed to allow for just such a chimney breast. The obvious explanation that the window was rebuilt is not borne out by the structural evidence.

The buildings to the west and north of the lower court followed. Stylistically, it is difficult to set this work as late as 1500, the usually accepted dating. It is of great importance in that it preserves practically unaltered the internal planning of the courtyard buildings of a late medieval house. Fragments of many of its contemporaries remain; none however contains such a wealth of minor authentic detail in so complete a setting. The buildings take up the west side of the court and half of the north side including the N.W. tower and entry. There was a pause, or at any rate change of plan, occurring at first floor level during the building of the tower.

Both ranges are designed to provide a series of lodgings for guests or household officers, more likely the former unless the latter were of some consequence. The need for accommodation such as this is of some sociological interest as it reflects the change in outlook from the late 14th century to the 15th century and the increasing pomp and state with which the country magnate was surrounded.

The essential accommodation for each lodging, be it for temporary guest or permanent official, had been settled from the early 14th century onwards as a single chamber with garderobe; for greater luxury an inner and more private chamber was added en suite with the main room which in extreme cases partook almost of the nature of a hall with the inner chamber itself expanding to a form of minor chamber block. Here we have a graded series of lodgings raised to first floor level and above, all based on this principle.

At the south end, next the chapel, a single chamber with garderobe is arranged over the chapel entry. The small garderobe tower masks the junction between the north aisle of
Fig. 4.
the chapel and the later buildings to the north while the vice leading to the lodging blocks
the aisle window demonstrating, perhaps, that when the chapel was rebuilt there was no
intention to surround the lower court with buildings. North of this, extending almost to the
tower, are two symmetrical Lodgings each with its main chamber and inner chamber, the former
with fireplace and garderobe, the latter with neither. Access is by a common straight stair
from the central doorway to the court, a subtle architectural point is made by the emphasis
given to the door by a hood mould, a feature all the surrounding openings lack. The stair,
enclosed between original timber partitions has a landing at its head with doors right and
left leading to the respective lodgings. The landing was lit by a lamp, the niche for which
survives in the end wall. All these features, including the doors themselves, appear to be
contemporary. The southern garderobe is fitted with a wall drain originally for a sink; this
was repeated in its neighbour. In both cases the inner chamber is divided from the outer by
the original timber partition.

The N.W. tower presents a more complicated plan. The castle tradition is observed by
placing over the gate a Principal Lodging of some importance, though in this case the military
command of the gate is nominal. Entered from the gate passage, a further reminder of an
older practice, a generous stair leads direct to the second floor. It is here that the change of
plan took place: intended in the first place to rise straight up, in practice this stair was set
back at first floor level resulting in considerable awkwardness. At first floor level a lobby
gives onto an ante-room or store room to the south. It is without a fireplace and is lit by a
two-light window onto the court. If, as is probable, this apartment was that of the steward
or bailiff this room may have served as a waiting room or office for the transaction of estate
business. The door to the north was cut through later, perhaps in the 17th century when the
room beyond acquired its present panelling.

On the second floor the entrance to the lodging proper is marked by the introduction
of moulded surrounds to the doors. To the south is a further ante-room, equipped this time
with a fireplace, and to the north the great chamber of the apartment occupies the second floor
of the gate tower itself. Eastwards of this, in the north range, is the inner chamber with the
blocked door to its former garderobe in the N.E. angle of the room. All external traces of
the garderobes in this area have been obliterated by a modern refacing of the north wall. From
this inner chamber a contemporary wooden stair, lit by a small loop in the south wall, leads
to a lobby below. This form of alternative access to the inner chamber of a principal lodging
would appear to be a feature of 15th-century planning. The upper room of the tower, again
entered through a door with moulded jambs, was the principal private chamber and treated
with some architectural care. The whole of this lodging contains a wealth of authentic detail
of the period including all the fireplace and door openings, with examples of doors, door
furniture and window shutters. A remarkable survival of great importance.

A vice from the centre of three doors to the court in the north wing gives access to a
further two-chambered Lodging on the first floor below the principal lodging already described.
A lobby at the head of the vice is separated from the main chamber by a contemporary partition
of timber. The first chamber has a fireplace and formerly had a garderobe in its N.E. angle.
The second chamber, redecorated and given a plaster ceiling in the 17th century, has its original
fireplace but was without a garderobe. This repeats the pattern of the lodgings in the west
range which also have the garderobe attached to the outer chamber rather than to the inner.
The door in the south wall of this room, connecting it to the staircase, is later, perhaps of the
17th century. If this door replaced one of earlier date the possibility cannot be ignored that
the western of these rooms was designed as the outer and the eastern as the inner chamber and
that the stair at the eastern end of the lodgings was intended as a 'back stair' to this inner
chamber and to that above. The door at first floor level connecting the stair to the lodging
to the east is modern.

Of the seven ground floor chambers, three have fireplaces. One of these, that in the
gate passage, is clearly the porter's lodge. None of these chambers has a garderobe attached
to it so that, in this context, it is unlikely that they were lodgings. Their position in what was
now the outer court, grouped near the gate, suggests offices and store rooms connected with
the administration of the estate or manor.
HADDON HALL AND BOLSOVER CASTLE

The 16th Century, Period I

The work of the late 15th century and of the first years of the 16th century in the west court left a short gap on the north side between the buildings just described and the west wall of the 14th-century kitchen. This was filled sometime in the first quarter of the 16th century by the North Lodgings consisting of four single chamber lodgings, two on each of two floors, with a central stair leading to the upper pair and closets (now windowless) arranged over the ground floor lobby. These lodgings provide a valuable comparison with those adjoining. Of particular note is the lack of garderobes, considered essential up to the end of the 15th century; after this time the guest or other occupant appears to have been satisfied with less accommodation more refined in detail, suggesting that a change was taking place wherein the guest was served no longer by servants who travelled and lodged with him but by a main body of household staff. Sir Henry Vernon died in 1515 and if, as seems probable, these lodgings are an early work of his successor, Sir George Vernon, 'King of the Peak', it would mean that they are contemporary with such work as Wolsey’s at Hampton Court in which similar accommodation was considered adequate.

The 16th Century, Period II

The 14th-century state rooms in the southern range, even though possibly modernised by his father, did not satisfy Sir George Vernon who embarked on yet another reconstruction involving the rebuilding of the south side of the east court and the redecoration of the remainder of the range.

On the upper floor the new accommodation consisted of a gallery, probably some 20 ft. shorter at the east end than the present gallery. No internal traces of it are now visible, but its roof is said to exist above the plasterwork of the present gallery ceiling. In the great chamber a new bay window was built out from the south wall but whatever else was done in this room has been overlaid by subsequent work, though perhaps the fireplace may be attributed to this period. Beyond, the timber structure of the three rooms formed by Sir Henry was encased in stone and two fireplaces inserted. The reason for this operation so soon after the building was erected is obscure.

On the ground floor more remains of Sir George Vernon’s work. Of the rooms beneath the gallery all the internal divisions appear to be of this time together with their doorways and the doorways and western three-light window facing the courtyard. On the southern side the evidence for the fenestration of this period is inconclusive. Doubtful too must remain the purpose of these rooms. In so far as care was taken in these alterations to preserve the staircase in the S.E. angle of the court leading to the upper floor, it may be that the ground floor of the range was reserved as minor lodgings for the household officers of the state guest who would be accommodated in the great suite above. West of these rooms the ground floor Parlour was provided with a new bay window beneath that of the great chamber and received the panelling that exists today. This splendid panelling in three plain stages under a frieze of carved and decorated heraldic panels surmounted by foliated cresting, bears the date of its erection, 1545. In the following century the parlour was shortened by three bays at its east end and the panelling rearranged at this point, some being adapted to fit the bay window recess, originally unpanelled.

The alterations at the south end of the great hall were, to some extent, matched at the north end where the space between the kitchen and the north great chamber was roofed over and an extra room formed at first floor level. In forming this room the northern window of the great chamber was blocked and a new fireplace inserted in what was the exterior face of the wall. It is possible that further rebuilding including the floors over the kitchen should be attributed to this period, but the present writer has been unable to gather sufficient information to prove this point. Completed in the 1560’s the alterations to the north of the great hall were the last of the Vernon works at Haddon, marked appropriately by Sir George with a display of Vernon and associated heraldry on the screen wall flanking the N.W. tower.
The 17th Century

In the last years of the 16th century and the early years of the 17th century, Sir John Manners put in hand the final series of alterations the house was to receive before modern times. The example of Chatsworth, Worksop, Sheffield and above all of Hardwick must have prompted Sir John to modernize Haddon once again. He did this by making his state rooms yet more splendid and by squeezing in the accommodation thus displaced where this could be managed.

The principal work was the extension, re-fenestration and redecoration of the long gallery. This was now made to project eastwards beyond the east range in what was virtually a bay window the width of the gallery. On the south side a large square bay and two canted bays were inserted in the older wall providing the enormous area of glass in vogue at the time. A new fireplace, classic in form, perhaps intended to have a plaster overmantel, and large flanking windows in the north wall completed the structural alterations to the gallery. The new decorations consisted of a coved plaster ceiling (much restored) beneath the older roof, decorated with low relief rib work, and the existing panelling. The panelling, which still bears its original painted and grained finish is, in its treatment, reminiscent of work at Bolsover in the use made of arched panels. The consoles in the frieze have what might be termed a 'Smithsonian' profile while the turreted cresting again recalls Bolsover. The Haddon gallery is, however, earlier in feeling looking rather towards Hardwick.

The influence of Hardwick is strong in the adjacent room to the N.E., the Orpheus Chamber, where the entire space on the first floor in the east range between the gallery and the gatehouse was formed into a single room, cutting off the staircase that formerly rose in its S.W. angle. This room, now divided into two, had a plaster cornice and a heavy classic fireplace over which is a high relief plaster panel depicting Orpheus charming the beasts. The panel is set between male and female caryatid figures, the whole being in the manner of Abraham Smith, the stuccoist of Hardwick.

At the west end of the long gallery the south great chamber was shortened to form a lobby at the head of a new staircase from the hall. This lobby, which was provided with a new window in its south wall, opened directly onto the revised stair which replaced the 14th-century stair to the great chamber. This later stair was placed in a separate tower projecting into the S.E. angle of the east court matching, in a typical manner, a similar projection that was built into the N.E. angle at the same time.

In the great chamber itself the west window was considerably enlarged, new panelling provided and an elaborate plaster frieze added above, of which portions remain on the south and east walls. A plaster ceiling, similar in treatment to that in the long gallery, was formed in the bay. The work in this room, though of some elaboration, cannot be said to be as sophisticated as that in the long gallery and may, indeed, be slightly earlier in date. In addition to the decorative work in this room a door was pierced in the north wall and a communicating gallery formed along the east side of the great hall, linking the north and south chamber blocks at first floor level.

The rooms to the west of the south great chamber were yet again reorganized, three bay windows being inserted in the south and two in the north wall. It has been suggested already that the formation of the new state rooms in the south range displaced lodging accommodation that had still to be fitted in elsewhere. This was achieved by rebuilding the north side of the east court. It would seem to have been a complete rebuilding as far as the range to the west of the kitchen was concerned. Beyond this rooms had already been formed over the kitchen and bakery to which were now added five further rooms in the blocks which project to the N.E. and N.W. of the north great chamber. The writer has been unable to examine these rooms in detail but understands that there is much interior work of the early 17th century which bears out the evidence of the fenestration and external masonry in attributing these rooms to Sir John Manners.
BOLSOVER CASTLE

The origin of the castle is obscure. It is not mentioned in Domesday where the manor is recorded as possessed by William Peveril from whose family it was seized by the Crown in 1173. Thereafter it remained with the Crown until granted in 1456 to Edmund Tudor from whom it descended to Henry VII. It was held by the Howard family until their disgrace in 1547, returning thence to the Crown by whom it was granted in 1553 to George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury.

For his second wife the Earl took Lady St. Loe, 'Bess of Hardwick', he being her fourth husband, uniting the vast possessions of the Cavendish and Talbot families. There is no evidence, however, that Lady Shrewsbury carried out any work at Bolsover; this was left to the following generations.

Under the terms of Lady St. Loe's marriage settlement her eldest son by a former marriage, Sir Charles Cavendish, was to wed Grace Talbot, the Earl's eldest daughter. In 1608 Sir Charles leased and later purchased Bolsover from Gilbert Talbot, heir of the 6th Earl, and shortly afterwards commenced work on the present buildings. The work was continued by his son, Sir William Cavendish (later 1st Duke of Newcastle) under whom the house assumed its present form.

Sir William was not only a great noble, being entrusted by King Charles with the governance of the Prince of Wales, but also of some talent, being (to quote Clarendon) 'accomplished ... in horsemanship, dancing and fencing' and 'amorous in painting and music'. To his interest in horsemanship we owe the Riding Schools at Welbeck (1623) and Bolsover. His treatise La Methode et Invention Nouvelle de Dresser Les Chevaux (Antwerp, 1658) was illustrated by engravings for which Bolsover provided the background. To his other skills witness is borne in a series of verses by Ben Jonson, whose masque 'Love's Welcome to Bolsover' was presented for the King and Queen's entertainment in 1634.

Bolsover played little part in the civil war. It was garrisoned for the King and surrendered 12th August, 1644 and partly demolished. Following the Restoration, Sir William, now Duke of Newcastle, repaired the buildings. He was, however, the last to make use of them for thereafter they were gradually abandoned in favour of Welbeck. By the middle of the 18th century the terrace range was evacuated and its roofs stripped. The Little Castle remained in use until the late 19th century while more recently the Riding School did service as a temporary church. In its latter days the architectural significance of the Castle was little appreciated, only to be revived when in 1945 the then Duke of Portland placed it in the care of the Ministry of Works.

The Medieval Buildings

In 1174, Henry II carried out works at Bolsover and Peak castles; these may have included the erection of a keep at Bolsover contemporary with that surviving at Peveril Castle, a view confirmed by a specific reference in the Pipe Rolls for 1214 to work on the 'Turris' at Bolsover. In 1216, the governor, Bryan de Lisle, was ordered to 'fortify' the castle; medieval foundations were discovered in 1950 beneath the forecourt of the Little Castle, doubtless the site of the 12th-century keep.

In shape and size the present fountain court walls almost certainly represent the inner bailey walls of the medieval castle, although no work of this date is now visible.

The building continued in active occupation until the 16th century and it cannot be doubted that alterations and improvements were made during that time. No evidence has yet come to light to show what these might have been.

The Cavendish Works: 1608-17

Sir Charles Cavendish, with John Smithson as his architect, started the remodelling of the medieval buildings that was, eventually, to obliterate all trace of the earlier castle. Work started before 1613 by which time the demolition of the medieval keep was sufficiently complete and the work of pulling down other, unspecified, buildings was in hand. Construction work was begun on both the Little Castle and the Terrace Range of buildings starting at the
northern end of the latter. From the surviving fragment of accounts it appears that the work had reached cellar height only by the end of the first year, though a good deal more stone had been worked than had been laid. In 1617 Sir Charles died, by which time the greater part of the structure of the Little Castle and of the block of apartments at the northern end of the Terrace range had been completed, though not as yet decorated. Further south, work on the kitchens and larders of the Terrace range had proceeded only to basement height.

The Little Castle would seem to have been roofed at this period and a certain amount of internal plastering, to be identified by lining out with false masonry joints, had been completed. The Hall vault and its fireplace, which bears the date 1616, had of necessity been finished as it carries structural walls above it.

1617–20

Following Sir Charles’ death his son, Sir William Cavendish, continued the work on the Terrace range being provided by John Smithson with a revised plan for this purpose. There was doubtless a pause after Sir Charles’ death and the work may not have been resumed until 1618. The northernmost canted bay of the range had been completed up to gable height, the adjacent bays, complete on the west, had reached the heads of the first floor windows only on the east. Southwards, the new plan provided for a Hall and grand staircase facing the court with, beyond them, a two-storey range of apartments. It was to be a double range and, stretching behind the hall and apartments, the whole of the western half was to be occupied by an immense gallery 170 ft. long with an ante-room or withdrawing chamber at each end. The southern end of the range was to be finished by a chapel and inner chapel with a curious projection southwards called the ‘steeple’.

In fact, this scheme was only partially realised. At the northern end slight modifications were made. The series of gables now built were capped with alternating segmental and triangular pediments, differing from those already erected and losing the last traces of the latter’s typical ‘Elizabethan’ outline. The Hall was completed according to plan in the traditional manner with its screens to the north, possibly, an open hammer-beam roof similar to that which Smithson was soon to erect over the Riding School at Welbeck. Chases for the wall posts for such a roof may be seen, filled in, on the hall walls. Completed also was the space to contain the great stair. It is doubtful whether the stair itself was erected, for at this point the proposal to erect the range of apartments facing the court was abandoned (although some of the foundations had been laid) and the work was terminated with a gable end facing southwards leaving the stair purposeless. Work continued, however, on the western half of the double range and the new Great Gallery was undertaken including the great central door to the court; the decision to abandon the eastern half of the range turned the latter into an external rather than internal door, its jambs being altered so that it opened in the reverse direction.

What Sir Charles’ plan was for the site occupied by the Great Gallery we do not know. It would seem that two storeys were intended and that the modification to a single storey for three quarters of so long a façade forced upon Smithson the need for some architectural element that would give cohesion to the whole. His solution was, to say the least, individual. He first of all removed the northern gables and gave the entire façade a continuous battlemented parapet and in addition placed large baluster motifs between each of his gallery windows with two more introduced between the windows of the older work, thus giving, at least in the sharp perspective which is the normal angle of view, the effect of a single theme running through the whole façade. It was at this stage of the design that Smithson introduced the variations on the pedimented door and window surround inspired, perhaps, by those he had seen and recorded during his visit to London in 1618. His drawings for these features survive.

1620–30

Continuing and perhaps overlapping his work on the Terrace Range Sir William resumed, some time after 1620, his father’s uncompleted work on the Little Castle. This later work incorporates much that can be traced to Smithson’s visit to the south in 1618–19. Externally the window over the porch and the door from the N.W. stair to the wall walk both relate to
drawings done by Smithson at this time and are alterations to the original design. Of the ground floor rooms, the interior of the Pillar Chamber or Parlour is the work of Sir William whose equestrian interests may have inspired the vault bosses. The panelling is an adaptation of panelling at Theobalds measured by John Smithson in 1618. The fireplace, the first of the remarkable series incorporating variegated stones in the tomb-makers manner, shows clear signs of being an afterthought placed in position after the main structure was well advanced.

The northern flank of the fireplace bears the Cavendish crest under a coronet, dating it after 1620, the year in which Sir William received the title of Viscount Mansfield. Contemporary with this fireplace must be the embryo bolection moulded surrounds in the ante-room and the lobby between the hall and the N.W. stair. The greater part of the remaining panelling also belongs to Sir William’s work, some, for example the insertion of a door where a mere opening was intended, implying adjustments to the first design. The paintings in the lunettes of the vault in hall and ante-room are also of this period.

On the first floor almost the whole of the interior appearance is due to Sir William though the general plan must, of course, have been settled in the time of his father. The
principal room is the Star Chamber or Great Chamber. Its plaster ceiling has strong affinities, particularly in the design of the low relief work within the panels, with the Theobalds panelling and with the decorated drops below the vault corbels in the Parlour below. The painted shields in the frieze contain, among others, the arms of Basset; they must, therefore, be the work of Sir William after his marriage in 1618 to Elizabeth Basset. The panelling to the north and west sides of the room and the fireplace are also of this period, the former being dated, in the N.E. corner, 1621. The other two walls, now covered with panels rescued from elsewhere, may have been completed by Sir Charles before 1617. They were designed for tapestry or fabric hangings which would have covered the plain inner faces of the doors, a scheme of decoration that Sir Charles had originally proposed for the Elysium room.

The suite of four rooms on the east and south sides of this floor shows Sir William's decorations; these include the painted ceilings of the Heaven and Elysium rooms, the decorated or marbled panelling and the three fireplaces. On the south side, leading off the Star Chamber and over the porch lies the Marble Closet. The vault, the fireplace and possibly the floor are the work of Sir William, c. 1620, and represent an alteration to his father's decorations, the cornice for which remains above the vault. The room resembles an unexecuted design by Smithson, probably for Sir Charles, 1613-17, for the Elysium room. It is possible that a certain amount of the stone used in the vault had already been worked for the earlier proposal.

The second floor is, with the exception of the lantern, entirely of Sir William's time, including the secondary partitions and the four fireplaces.

The Forecourt and Pavilions to the south of the Little Castle were completed at the same time as the decorations within, its building delayed perhaps by the need to complete the demolition of the medieval buildings on the site. Similarly the work in encasing the medieval curtain wall is of this period, though Sir Charles may have already started on the northern section including the well house where masonry occurs similar to that in the lower levels of the Terrace range. It would be reasonable for work to have started here as an improved water supply may have been a prerequisite to such an extensive rebuilding programme. Sir William, however, was still negotiating in 1622 for a right of way for the water pipes to one of the four conduits that are placed on the high ground around the castle and which are presumably of that date. The curtain wall with its broad walk originally enclosed between embattled parapets, was finally completed in 1630 when it was connected by a bridge to the Terrace range.

1630-34

Having completed the Little Castle and, as far as his then intentions went, the Terrace range, Sir William turned his attention to the Riding School range. The work at Bolsover to some extent followed Welbeck where a riding school had been added to John Smithson's design in the 1620's. The Bolsover Riding School is a more mature building of 1630-34, perhaps the result of experience at Welbeck, perhaps an indication of a change of designer. John Smithson was nearing the end of his life and may have handed the work on to Huntingdon Smithson. Whoever the designer, the building of the Riding School and its flanking range represents a major break in the development of the castle. Up to this point the layout had been allowed to grow along the lines imposed by the pre-existing medieval buildings and by the configuration of the site with no attempt at visual relationship between its elements. The buildings of the early 1630's sought to remedy this. The range consists of three unequal elements; to the east the lodgings and spectators' gallery, then the Riding School itself and to the west the Forge. They are so arranged to bring the architectural focus, i.e. the entrance doors to the Riding School, on the point where the axis of the Great Gallery meets that of the Little Castle. This last was emphasized by cutting a new gateway through the wall of the Fountain Court, canted to lie on the line of sight. Architecturally the range shows a hardening and surer handling of the style used for the 1620 work on the terrace buildings.

To the east of the great court a new boundary wall was built with a gateway flanked by rusticated columns forming an entrance at the south-east angle and a similar gateway, now partially collapsed, across the entrance along the line of the terrace to the south-west.
In the Fountain Garden the new axial theme was picked up by the positioning of the fountain itself, which bears the coronet of Sir William as Viscount Mansfield, and the West Garden Room cut into the medieval wall. The whole of the work of the 1630’s was aimed at bringing the buildings into a usable condition forced, perhaps, by Sir William’s desire, after twenty years work on the house, to speed completion. In 1633 Sir William was host to King Charles and his Queen at a great entertainment at Welbeck. The decision to hold a similar event at Bolsover the following year would make completion of the gardens and court even more pressing.

1633–40

The final phase must have begun soon after the 1634 Royal Entertainment. Again, there is some doubt as to how far the previous phase was complete before the new began. The transition takes place at the western end of the Riding School range where the Viscount arranged a small set of private rooms as an adjunct to a new state suite of three large rooms along the east side of the gallery, the site of the proposed state rooms of the 1618 scheme. The addition of these rooms was not the full extent of the work which was, in fact, a complete reorganization of the terrace range from the West Stair southwards. Just as the 1630 work realised a new outlook in the axial relationship between the buildings, so the work of the late 1590’s swept away the remnants of medieval planning and produced a house which clearly looked forward to the great 18th-century mansion.

The new Entrance Hall was placed on the centre axis of the gallery; a room in the grand manner, its two symmetrically placed fireplaces cut into the east wall of the gallery. Symmetrical too are the great doors in the north and south walls, that to the north being cut through the gable end of the truncated work of 1620, the original door to which was now blocked. Beyond this door the former stair hall was destroyed and run in with the former Great Hall to form the new Dining Room. Some sort of lobby of panelled timber work must have been formed here as the stairs down to the kitchens were retained, though altered in the top flight and provided with a new door into the court. For the open timber roof of Smithson’s Great Hall a flat plaster ceiling with a deep cornice was substituted. In the north wall the hatch to the servery was blocked. Over the new ceiling, attics were formed, reached perhaps by a timber stair to the west of the lobby between Dining Room and Entrance Hall.

South of the Entrance Hall the Withdrawing Room and State Bedchamber were new with, in each case, a fireplace cut into the old wall. From the Bedchamber a door led to the private rooms of which the staircase, at least, appears to have been completed with the Riding School range. On the western side of the range the Great Gallery was made even longer by incorporating in it the north and south Withdrawing Rooms. It was redecorated in new panelling and given a new plaster cornice. The old gallery fireplaces were blocked and new ones provided of classic design, probably in marble. To the north of the gallery the old entrance lobby ceased to be of use and its external stair to the terrace was removed and the door between it and the gallery blocked.

Facing the Courtyard the elevation of the Entrance Hall and Withdrawing Room is entirely of 1635–40, so also is the southern end of the range and the exterior of the lobby connecting the Riding School range with the Terrace range.

The Duke of Newcastle’s Works, 1662–66

After the surrender of the castle in 1644 the buildings were rendered uninhabitable by order of Parliament, the principal condition being that the doors should be removed and certain buildings in the outer court demolished. Of the buildings in the outer court, no trace or description remains, but clearly considerable damage, mostly internal, was done to the main structure. When Sir William, now Duke of Newcastle, recovered his possessions, in fact before he recovered legal possession, he embarked on repairs. From the surviving bills for this work, the greater part of the damage appears to have been in the Terrace range and in the private rooms in the S.W. corner of the great court. New doors between the Dining Room and Hall and between the Gallery and Hall were provided, and also, as might be expected from the terms of the parliamentary order, a number of other doors; over the door to the court
the achievement of arms was altered to suit Sir William’s new dignity as Duke. Stacks and windows also called for repair, but the major item was the Gallery roof, which required re-leading. The Duke was in considerable difficulty at the time, a telling letter from his agent in 1665 records that the purchase of the necessary lead for the gallery roof had to be delayed until certain rents came in. Among other works the bridge between the northern end of the Terrace range and the Fountain Court wall walk was rebuilt as well as the flight of steps from the terrace to the gallery door. By 1670, however, the work was complete and the house again furnished.

The 18th and 19th Centuries

The end of Bolsover Castle’s history as a great house came in the decade 1740-50 during which time much of the furniture was removed to Welbeck Abbey where some materials were said to have been incorporated in the Oxford Wing, and the Terrace range unroofed for the sake of its lead. Only the Little Castle was allowed to remain habitable and kept in repair.

In 1834, by which time the Little Castle had somewhat deteriorated, it was occupied by the Rev. John Hamilton Grey, Vicar of Bolsover, who refurnished the building and renewed the windows to the Pillar Chamber in the Gothic taste. His tenancy was to be the last regular occupation of the Castle.
BOLSOVER CASTLE  FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

KEY:

- 1605-17 Sir Charles Cavendish
- 1617-20 Sir William Cavendish
- 1620-30 Sir William Cavendish
- 1630-34 Sir William Cavendish
- 1653-54 Sir Wm Cavendish

Fig. 7.