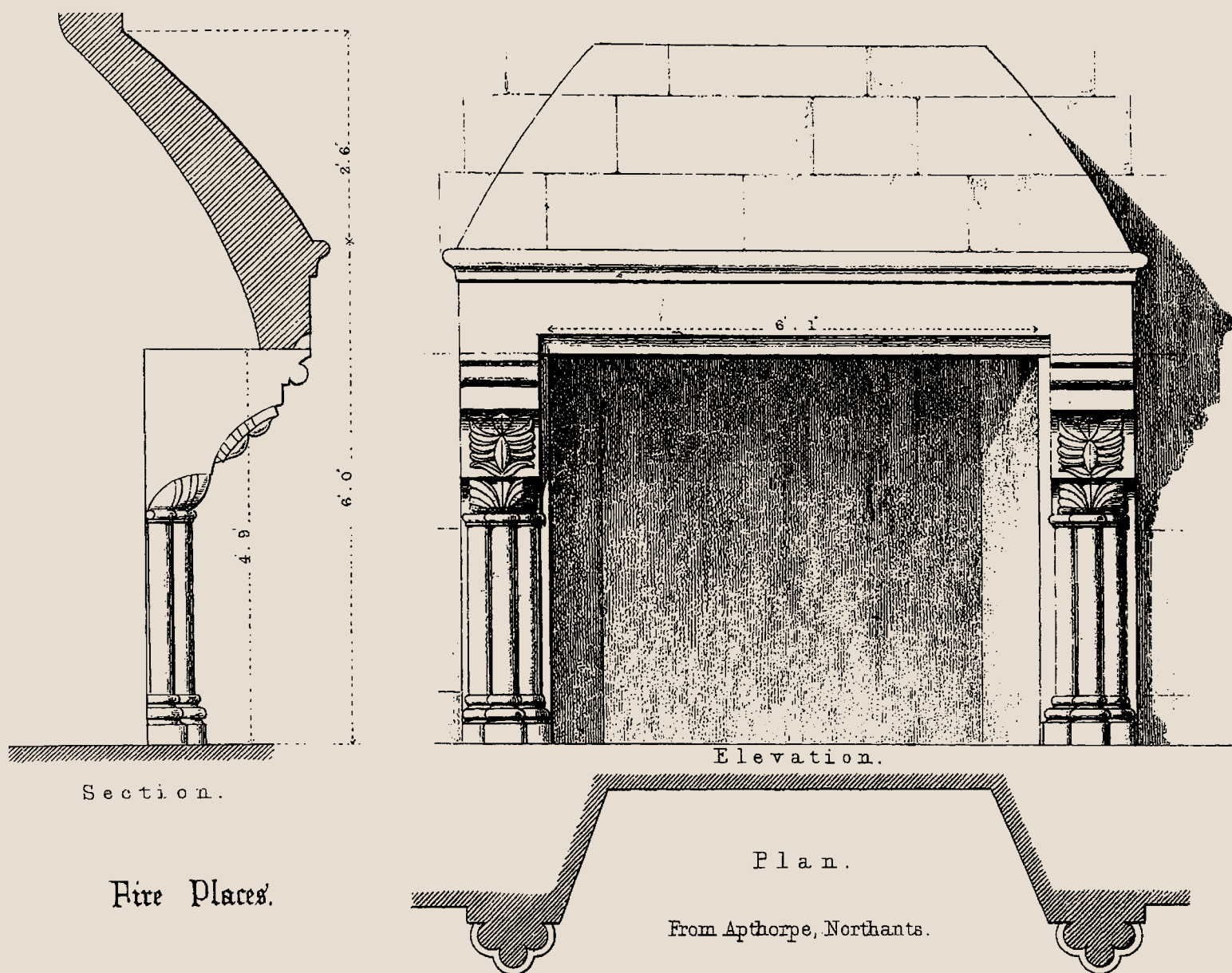


# APETHORPE HALL, APETHORPE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RECORD OF OPENING UP: VOLUME THREE

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT

Hannah Waugh



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**APETHORPE HALL  
APETHORPE  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
RECORD OF OPENING UP  
VOLUME THREE**

Hannah Waugh

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## **SUMMARY**

This is a further record of areas opened up as part of the research programme at Apethorpe Hall (for previous reports, see p. 2). The areas covered by the present volume are divided between the Duke's Closet, situated in the south range of the inner court, and room W2.07, in the west range of the outer court. The history and possible significance of the 13th-century fireplace once present at Apethorpe are also discussed.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

Survey plan by Nigel Fradgley and George Wilson.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank John Cattell, Nick Hill and Pete Smith for sharing their knowledge of the house; Katie Graham for assistance with survey work; Amanda Atton for help with desktop publishing; and Kathryn Morrison for her advice and guidance throughout the preparation of this report.

## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

NMR Swindon.

## **DATE OF SURVEY**

Opening up and survey work carried out 2009.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

English Heritage, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge, CB2 8BU  
Hannah Waugh; 01223 582700; [hannah.waugh@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:hannah.waugh@english-heritage.org.uk)

*Cover illustration reproduced from F. T. Dollman and J. R. Jobbins, 'An Analysis of Ancient Domestic Architecture in Great Britain', vol. I, London, 1861.*  
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# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Apethorpe Hall

Apethorpe Hall is a Grade I listed country house, located in north-east Northamptonshire. The oldest parts of the house, including the hall, were erected by the courtier Sir Guy Wolston in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Additions were made at various times in the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in the early 1560s Sir Walter Mildmay remodelled the house to provide state apartments. This paid off, as Queen Elizabeth I visited in 1566, initiating a long royal association with the property.

King James I visited Apethorpe on numerous occasions. In 1622, he ordered the new owner, Sir Francis Fane, soon to become the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Westmorland, to extend and refurbish the state apartments. The sequence of fine rooms created by Fane in 1622-24 is located in the south and east ranges. These rooms retain elaborate plasterwork ceilings and carved stone fireplaces; they are of supreme historical, artistic and architectural importance.



*Fig. 1. Apethorpe Hall, west range of the outer court. View from the south-east, 2005.*  
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Plans to remodel the house as a Palladian palace with two vast domes were prepared around 1740 by the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl, Thomas Fane, and his architect, Roger Morris. This scheme was never fully realised, but resulted in some significant alterations. Then, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Stamford architects Bryan and Edward Browning made various additions and alterations, including the erection of a loggia and conservatory against the south front, and the rearrangement of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century loggia in the east range. In 1904,

the impoverished Westmorlands sold the estate to Leonard Brassey, who engaged Sir Reginald Blomfield to undertake a great deal of work on the house and gardens. In 1947, Brassey sold the house to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton; it became an approved school, and later a community school. Alterations, mostly reversible, were made to fit the house for this purpose, initially in 1949-50, and later in the mid-1970s. The school closed in 1982.

## **1.2 The Role of English Heritage at Apethorpe Hall**

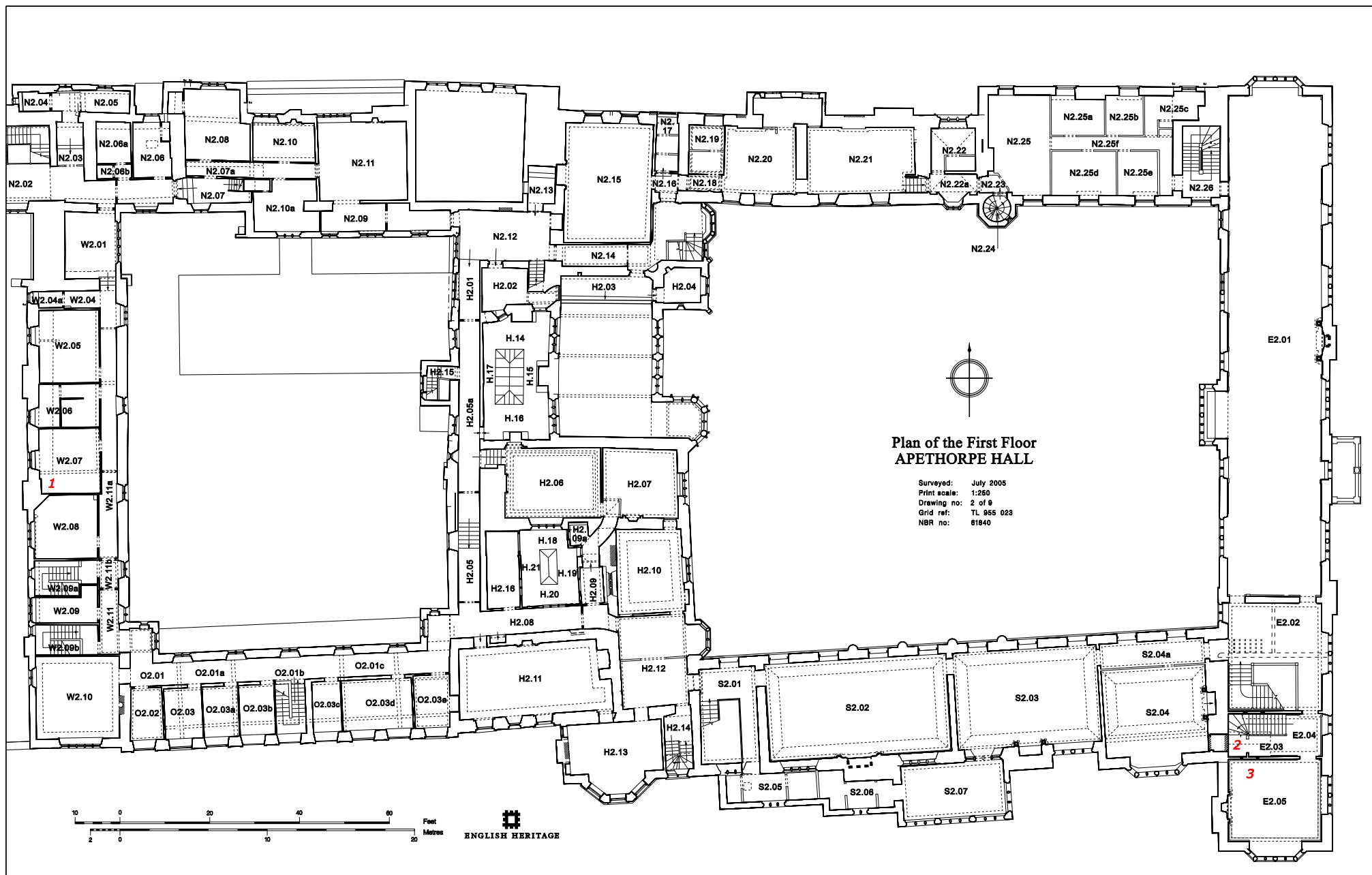
After the closure of the school, Apethorpe Hall was sold, but the new owner lived elsewhere and neglected the property, which was deemed a 'building at risk'. Following the issue of several urgent works notices, the house was subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order in 2004. It was handed over, by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to English Heritage, which assumed responsibility for instituting a phased programme of repairs and securing a viable future for the property.

## **1.3 Recently Uncovered Features**

Preliminary work undertaken in 2005-06 concentrated on assessing the condition of the property prior to designing and instituting Phase I of the repairs programme. This resulted in the opening up of certain areas which, revealing important architectural features, were recorded in a report by Kathryn A. Morrison, *Apethorpe Hall, Apethorpe, Northamptonshire: Record of Areas Opened Up Prior to Phase I Repairs*, English Heritage Research Department Report Series 30/2006. A subsequent report prepared by Claire Martin, *Apethorpe Hall, Apethorpe, Northamptonshire: Record of Opening Up Volume Two*, English Heritage Research Department Report Series 4/2008, documented those areas uncovered in 2006-07 alongside the effecting of the repairs programme.

The present volume provides a description of those sections of fabric opened up in 2009. Throughout the report, individually numbered features are located by reference to room numbers allocated by English Heritage (see floor plan).





## AREAS OPENED UP

### No. 1

**Feature:**

Blocked Chimneypiece

See also Appendix

**Location:**

West side of W2.07



Fig. 2.1

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Fig. 2.2

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**Description:**

Removal of an area of 20<sup>th</sup>-century plaster in room W2.07 to reveal evidence of the successive treatments of the fireplace opening.

To the right of the chimneypiece, the west wall is predominantly of rubble, with some insertions of brick (fig. 2.1). At a height of c.183cm (6 feet) it bears evidence of a zig-zag break within the masonry (fig. 2.2). This appears to have been caused by the removal of the hooded 13<sup>th</sup>-century fireplace present within the room prior to c.1876 (see

Appendix). Above the hood-line, traces of fibrous plaster are visible on the surface of the rubble masonry; below are remnants of 20<sup>th</sup>-century plaster. Nails supporting studs for lathes remain within the wall.

The chimneybreast consists of 19<sup>th</sup>-century red brick, with a double row of headers forming the head of the fireplace opening. Situated above an iron lintel, the latter have a blackish surface colour and were later incised, perhaps to provide support for a mantelpiece. During the 20<sup>th</sup>-century the width of the opening was reduced using Fletton brick, and, excepting the recessed panel partially preserved in the upper part of the wall, the surface of the chimneybreast was brought forward. The central section of the fireplace opening has been blocked with bricks manufactured by the LBC.

**Key Measurements:**

area opened up: height 2.57m; width 1.51m

dimensions of fireplace opening: height 0.98m; width 0.8m

projection of chimneybreast: 0.19m

## No. 2

### Feature:

Wall Passage and Corresponding Doorway

See Morrison 2006, 16-18

See also Hughes 2006-7, 23-25 for analysis of paintwork

### Location:

Between rooms S2.04 (King's Chamber) in the south range and E2.03 (Spencer Stair) in the east range



Fig. 3.1

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Fig. 3.2

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### Description:

An extension of the area in the west wall of the Duke's Closet (now Spencer Stair) opened up to reveal the short passage linking the Closet with the King's Chamber.

The lower part of the left-hand jamb has now been uncovered, revealing a continuation of the vertical stripes painted on the face of the jamb: traces of dark red oilpaint are visible beneath a layer of grey undercoat, and a band of ochre (fig. 3.1). The paint was perhaps applied to the jamb accidentally during the decoration of the wooden architrave. Wooden dowels formerly securing the architrave punctuate the jamb. With one exception, these are positioned between the arris and the painted stripe.

The area exposing the upper section of the jamb, where the same sequence of paintwork occurs, has also been extended (fig. 3.2). Below, the hole piercing the brick blocking of the aperture has been increased, and layers of the red and ochre paintwork are visible on the walls of the passage. At the far end, the stone doorway of the west aperture is finished with a similar, but darker, ochre-coloured oilpaint. This includes that part of the jamb which shows evidence of damage around the lock area.

**Key Measurements:**

opening up of jamb: maximum height: 1.58m; maximum width: 0.37m

width of paint stripe: 0.02m-0.025m

distance between arris and paint stripe: 0.09m

diameter of dowel: 0.01m

measurements of hole: maximum height: 0.69m; maximum width: 0.6m

opening up of upper section of jamb: maximum height: 0.7m; maximum width: 0.3m

### No. 3

**Feature:**

Doorway (jamb; lintel)

See Morrison 2006, 14

**Location:**

First floor of east range, in Spencer Stair compartment, occupying thickness of wall between rooms E2.03 (Spencer Stair) and E2.05 (Duke's Chamber)



Fig. 4.1

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Fig. 4.2

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**Description:**

This is an extension of the area opened up to reveal the right-hand jamb and lintel of a doorway which once connected the Duke's Closet (now Spencer Stair) and the Duke's Chamber. The beam passing above the square-headed doorway is now visible: incorporating the structure of the lintel, it terminates in a mortice and tenon joint secured with two pegs (fig. 4.1). A horizontal stud has been inserted between the jamb and post. Laths for plaster have been nailed to both faces of the doorway.

The right-hand chamfer stop has also been uncovered (fig. 4.2). Consisting of repeated polygonal mouldings, the elaborate form matches that recorded in the Drawing Room (see Morrison 2006, 20-21).

**Key Measurements:**

width of post: 0.14m

depth of post: 0.12m

height of beam: 0.175-0.18m

depth of beam: 0.115m

width of stud: 0.12m

depth of stud: 0.055m

## APPENDIX

### The Lost Fireplace at Apethorpe

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there existed at Apethorpe a substantially-sized stone fireplace, characterised by clustered columns supporting foliate corbels and a projecting ashlar hood (fig. 5.1). First recorded in the west range of the outer or kitchen court in 1858, occupying a section of wall now divided between rooms W2.07 and W2.08, the chimneypiece was relocated to the New Dining Room in the south range c.1876. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, it had suffered a history of blocking, removal and alteration, and by the mid-1920s seems no longer to have been present within the building.

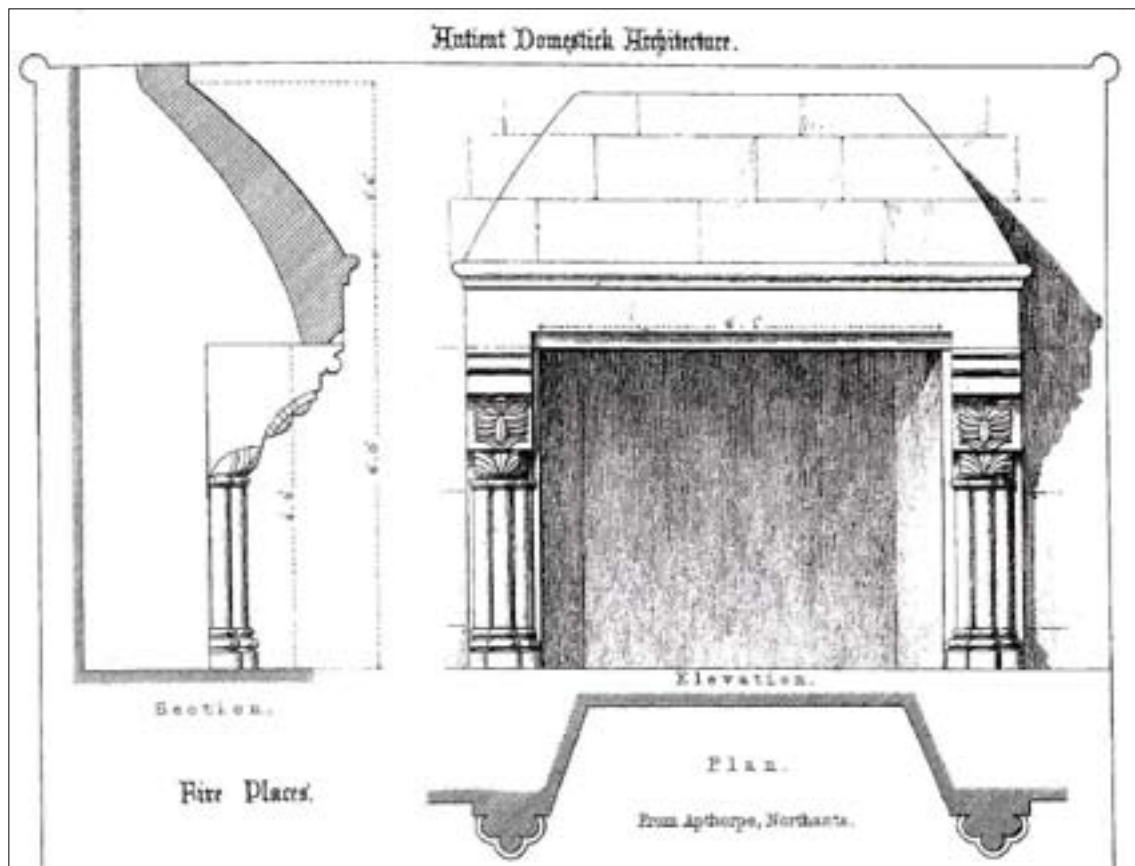


Fig. 5.1. The Apethorpe fireplace as illustrated by F. T. Dollman and J. R. Jobbins, 'An Analysis of Ancient Domestic Architecture in Great Britain', vol. I, 1861. Plate dated 1859.

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The provenance of the fireplace is undocumented, and opinions have consequently differed widely as to the circumstances surrounding its introduction to the house. Occurring in the first volume of the *Analysis of Ancient Domestic Architecture in Great Britain*, the earliest known description of the fireplace concluded it to be an authentic feature of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Surveyed by the authors F. T. Dollman and J. R. Jobbins c.1859 and published in 1861, the significance of this attribution lies in the fact that the pair encountered the feature prior to the changes wrought upon it during the later



19<sup>th</sup> century, and comparison with further examples of the hooded chimneypiece type confirms the existence of a close formal and stylistic affinity with the mid- to late 13<sup>th</sup> century. In form, the pyramidal hood, embellished with a stringcourse and resting on a lintel supported by corbels and engaged columns, is directly comparable with the fireplace of c.1260 found in the infirmary of Netley Abbey, Hampshire. More specifically, a similar use of triple shafts can be seen in the Jury Room at St. Briavels Castle, Gloucestershire.<sup>2</sup> The notably high level of carved detail to the Apethorpe chimneypiece, with foliate mouldings to both the capitals and concave corbels, finds a close ally in the Checker fireplace of c.1260 at Abingdon Abbey, Berkshire (fig. 5.2).

That each of these examples evidently derived from a room of some status highlights the apparent incongruity of the location of the Apethorpe chimneypiece. Situated until the later 19<sup>th</sup> century on the first floor of the west range, it inhabited a section of the building that appears to have functioned as a service wing from the time of its erection by Guy Wolston during the late 1470s, probably during the second phase of his rebuilding of the medieval house.<sup>3</sup> It is true that the suggestion that the range was initially intended as lodgings has also been forwarded, but this is not substantiated by structural evidence:

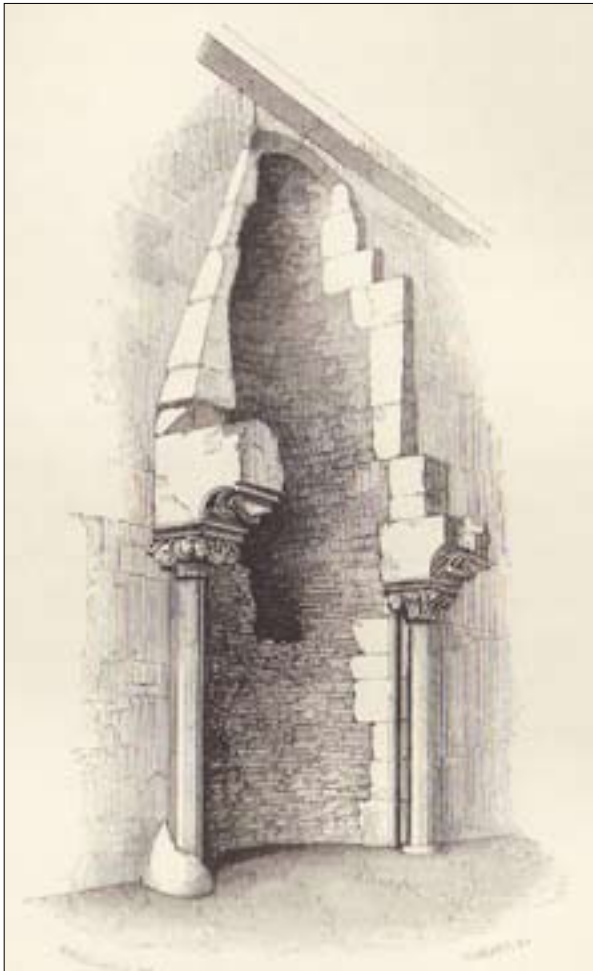


Fig. 5.2. The Checker fireplace of c.1260, Abingdon Abbey, Berkshire.  
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in contrast to the north range of the house, there is no trace of such elements as staircases, garderobes and stacks original to the building, or of a sequence of partitions original to the upper floor. Open to the apex of the roof at the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the latter instead appears to have been divided to form just two large spaces.<sup>4</sup> The poor quality of the roof timbers, furthermore, hints at a service function from the onset.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest documentary reference pertaining to this function of the range is provided by the inventory of Apethorpe drawn up in 1629, by which time the ground floor was occupied by the wash-house, bakehouse and dairy; above, the area now accommodating rooms W2.07 and W2.08 appears to be identifiable with that described as 'Willyam Laws Chamber called the Darie Chamber'. That the entry does not detail irons or other implements for the tending of a fire within the contents of this latter room is not, unfortunately, conclusive evidence that the hooded chimneypiece was yet to be introduced: at least a further eight



bedchambers are listed without reference to fire irons, and in each case the question of whether a fireplace existed is inconclusive.<sup>6</sup> Relatively sparsely furnished even within the context of those chambers assigned to the servants, it does, however, strengthen the impression of the anomaly that so grand and substantial a feature should have been introduced to this section of the house.

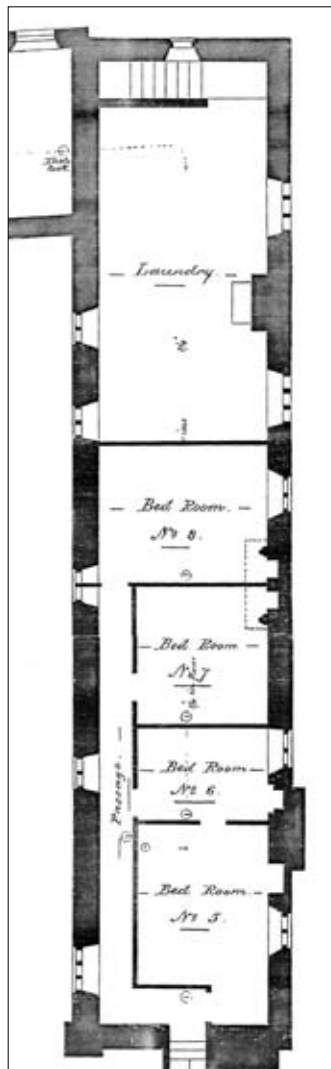


Fig. 5.3. First-floor plan of the west range of the outer court. South is at the top. Detail from 1887 copy of 1858 plan (Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland Record Office DG40/458).

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One possibility is, therefore, that the presence of the chimneypiece ought be deemed indicative of the partial survival of an earlier building somewhere on the site. Certainly this was the opinion expressed in the sale particulars drawn up for the house in 1892, which ascribed the origins of the west range of the outer court, 'supposed to be the oldest part of the structure', to the reign of Henry III (d.1272).<sup>7</sup> Apethorpe at this time was in the hands of Randolph Brito, otherwise referred to as Ralph Britton, to whom tenancy of the crown-held manor had been granted in 1231; this was to last until c.1281-2, rendering it a distinct possibility that the introduction of the chimneypiece was carried out under his patronage. Considering the status implied of its original setting by the form and detailing of the monumental stone chimneypiece, that Apethorpe was subsequently held in dower for ten years by Queen Eleanor of Provence (d.1291), widow of Henry III and mother to Edward I, is also worthy of note. During her period of tenure the manor was farmed by John de Lacy. Apethorpe was later granted for life to John, Baron de Clavering in 1312.<sup>8</sup>

Returning to the specific question of the west range, the first-floor position recorded of the chimneypiece in 1858 does not discourage the notion that it was inherited from an early solar. However, further evidence that a 13<sup>th</sup>-century building of high status existed in this position has not been forthcoming: whilst archaeological excavations carried out in the main, inner court of the house in 2007 implied that the site could have been occupied from the time of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, no traces of a built structure, indicating the extent of the early residence, have been identified.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the roof of the present west range has been established by dendrochronology as a single-build structure of c.1478-1480, and it would appear that the remainder of the fabric is commensurate with this date.<sup>10</sup> The idea that the chimneypiece was reused from a *lost* structure at Apethorpe is perhaps more valuable. Appreciated primarily for reasons of historical association, its insertion into the service wing could therefore have been motivated chiefly by a wish for preservation, rather than concern for public display.

The 1858 survey suggests that by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the feature had been *in situ* within this part of the building for some time. The plan (fig. 5.3) reveals the fireplace treated somewhat irreverently: sliced into two parts by a dividing wall, it straddled two of the first-floor bedrooms used by domestic staff. The latter were heated by a pair of smaller grates inserted within the hooded structure, and despite the impression of completeness conveyed by the *Analysis of Ancient Domestic Architecture*, the chimneypiece must still have been in this partitioned state when surveyed by Dollman and Jobbins for their engraving of 1859.



Fig. 5.4. Front Hall looking north, by Bedford Lemere.

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Correspondingly observing that the Apethorpe fireplace was ‘not very generally known’, the pair acknowledged that they had been alerted to its existence by the architect Edward Browning of Stamford, who, working initially with his father, had been involved with the alterations carried out to the house since the 1840s.<sup>11</sup> By c.1858-9 he was employed in the creation of a new ‘Front Hall’ on the ground floor of the east range. Coinciding in date with the production of the engraving, the hooded form chosen for the new fireplace provides a further indication of the renewal of interest surrounding the chimneypiece of the west range (fig. 5.4). In c.1876, this was to be followed by the removal of the latter feature from the service court to a position of greater prominence. It was erected in the New Dining Room established by the 12<sup>th</sup> Earl in the south-east corner of the Arkade.<sup>12</sup>



*Fig. 5.5. The New Dining Room looking east, c.1888.  
Reproduced by permission of Mrs Spicer.*

However, whilst the 1892 sale particulars confirm the identity of the 'ancient stone fireplace' as that which had been 'taken out and refixed here, from the part of the building now used as the Laundry, &c.', visual sources suggest that, as introduced above, the chimneypiece was much altered during the relocation.<sup>13</sup> The most significant change appears to have been its reduction in width: a comparison of Blomfield's 1913 plan of the ground floor rooms with the measurements recorded by Dollman and Jobbins indicates a difference of at least two feet, perhaps resulting from damage caused to the centre of the chimneypiece during the insertion, or indeed the removal, of the dividing wall. Divergences between the 1859 engraving and a photograph of the New Dining Room taken c.1888 (fig. 5.5) likewise suggest that the hood and lintel were altered at this time. The brackets and capitals, the stonework of which appears particularly crisp, may also have been renewed.

It was probably as a result of this reworking that Mr Brassey, uncertain of the feature's authenticity, had the fireplace removed from the room in 1922.<sup>14</sup> No record of its sale has been found, and it is possible that the item was simply disposed of; the associated chimneypiece of Browning's Front Hall had likewise been taken out by 1909.<sup>15</sup> The New Dining Room, or the Smoking Room, as it had become c.1904, was instead provided with the present stone fireplace of c.1740, embellished with a decorative relief carving of swags and shells. Similar in width to the final dimensions of the hooded chimneypiece,

but substantially lower in height and more modest in projection, this too appears to have been relocated from elsewhere within the house.

In the west range, the two rooms that formerly had accommodated the divided fireplace were likewise affected by Brassey's modifications. Following the removal of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century fireplace, bedroom W2.07 had retained a modest grate with square reveals; Blomfield may have been responsible for further reducing the width of opening, and certainly is known to have rebuilt the structure of the chimney stack and remodelled the adjacent window in 1912-3, when the room was identified as the bedroom of Lady Brassey's maid. The position of the earlier fireplace was likewise reused in bedroom W2.08, Lady Brassey's maid's workroom. As on the floor below, Blomfield resolved its awkward proximity to the corner of the room through the insertion of a diagonally-placed chimneypiece. The two rooms were subsequently fitted with centrally-heated radiators in 1938, and it is likely that the grates were finally blocked up at this time.

## ENDNOTES

1. Dollman and Jobbins 1861, vol. I, 2 and 53. The engraving of the chimneypiece is dated 1859.
2. Wood 1985, 263. The 13th-century jamb shafts in the Jury Room at St. Briavels Castle are reused from another chimneypiece.
3. John Cattell, 2009, pers. comm. A full-length monograph dedicated to Apethorpe Hall is forthcoming.
4. Cattell et al. 2006, 231 and 234.
5. John Cattell, 2009, pers. comm.
6. Inventory of Apethorpe Hall, 1629, Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO), W (A) Box 6, V, nos. 1 & 2.
7. Sale Catalogue, 1892, 68. Lincolnshire Archives (LA), FANE 9/1/2 (c).
8. John Cattell, 2009, pers. comm. Eleanor of Provence entered Amesbury Abbey, Wiltshire in 1286.
9. Ibid.
10. Cattell et al. 2006, 227; John Cattell, 2009, pers. comm.
11. Dollman and Jobbins 1861, vol. I, 2.
12. RCHME 1984, 11.
13. Sale Catalogue 1892, 68. Lincolnshire Archives (LA), FANE 9/1/2 (c)
14. Plan of Apethorpe Hall, June 1940.
15. Cattell et al. 2006, 324.

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