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EDITORIAL

This is the last *PCAS* I shall edit (having decided that I should concentrate on my own research until senility overtakes me). The new Editor will be Alison Taylor, Cambridgeshire County Archaeologist for more than twenty years, and probably the first local archaeologist I met on my return to the 'old country' after many years in Australia. Alison's kindness and friendship, and her organisational abilities, I value highly, and I am delighted to edit this volume in her honour, at a time when she is beginning a new career as a consultant.

Many of the articles in this volume have been written by Alison's colleagues at the County Council, others by friends who have been associated with her and Cambridgeshire archaeology over many years, and this volume therefore concentrates on areas which I hope she will find of interest: around the massive piece of work on the Cambridgeshire Dykes are several shorter (but not small or insignificant) papers; all concerned with sites investigated in Cambridgeshire since 1974, and since Alison's appointment as County Archaeologist.

With our good wishes for future blossoming.

AUDREY MEANEY

An Archaeological Field Survey of Wothorpe, Cambridgeshire

C.C. Taylor

Introduction

In February 1994 the writer ran an archaeological survey training course for staff employed by Northamptonshire Archaeology at Wothorpe, Cambridgeshire. This paper summarises the results of that survey.

Wothorpe is best known for the remarkable, though now ruinous, house built there between 1615 and 1623 by Thomas Cecil, first Earl of Exeter. Less well known are the extensive earthworks that surround the house. These, together with a number of associated buildings, help to place Wothorpe House in its immediate context and give a much better understanding of the whole history of the settlement, both before and after the erection of the house itself. The entire complex is a remarkable survival of a historical landscape which perhaps deserves a much more detailed study than that given here. It is hoped, by publishing the results of the survey at Wothorpe, to encourage others to re-examine the area, and in particular the buildings there. The latter did not come within the remit of the survey course and are treated only summarily.

Topography and Communications

Wothorpe lies just south-west of Stamford on the southern edge of the Welland valley between 45 m and 90 m above OD (Fig. 1; TF 023053). Most of the site is on Northampton Sand although the underlying Upper Lias Clay is exposed in the small valley to the north east of the House.

Since the construction of the A1 Stamford bypass and the realignment of the A43 in the

early 1960s, Wothorpe has been in a cul-de-sac. Before then the A43 from Stamford to Northampton passed across the northern end of the village. At an earlier date this road formed one of the major routes of medieval times (Taylor 1979: 115–19). At the point where the old main road meets a lane coming from the south, there is a small triangular green (west of *d* on Fig. 1). This lane now curves south around Wothorpe Farm (*n* and *w* on Fig. 1), but it once ran closer to the south-west side of Wothorpe House. Indeed, it is still shown on roughly this alignment on a map of 1615 of Wothorpe parish, in the archives at Burghley House, and there depicted as blocked by the walled courts of the old Wothorpe manor house (Fig. 2). It presumably once continued south across Wittering Heath.

Documentary History

Wothorpe is first recorded in the eleventh century, although there is a tradition that it was one of a number of manors inherited in the tenth century by Abbot Turketel, who gave it to the Abbey of Crowland. By 1086 Wothorpe was divided into two manors. The larger, with a mill and a recorded population of thirteen, was held by Crowland Abbey. The smaller manor, held by the Abbot of Peterborough, was worked by three sokemen. This latter holding is said to be part of a larger estate at Wittering, held by the Abbot, and thus it is possible that not all of it was actually located at Wothorpe (Thorn 1979: 6a,9; 11,1). In 1086, therefore, Wothorpe had a recorded population of between thirteen and sixteen, perhaps comprising twelve to seventeen households, giving an actual population of between 65 and 80 people.

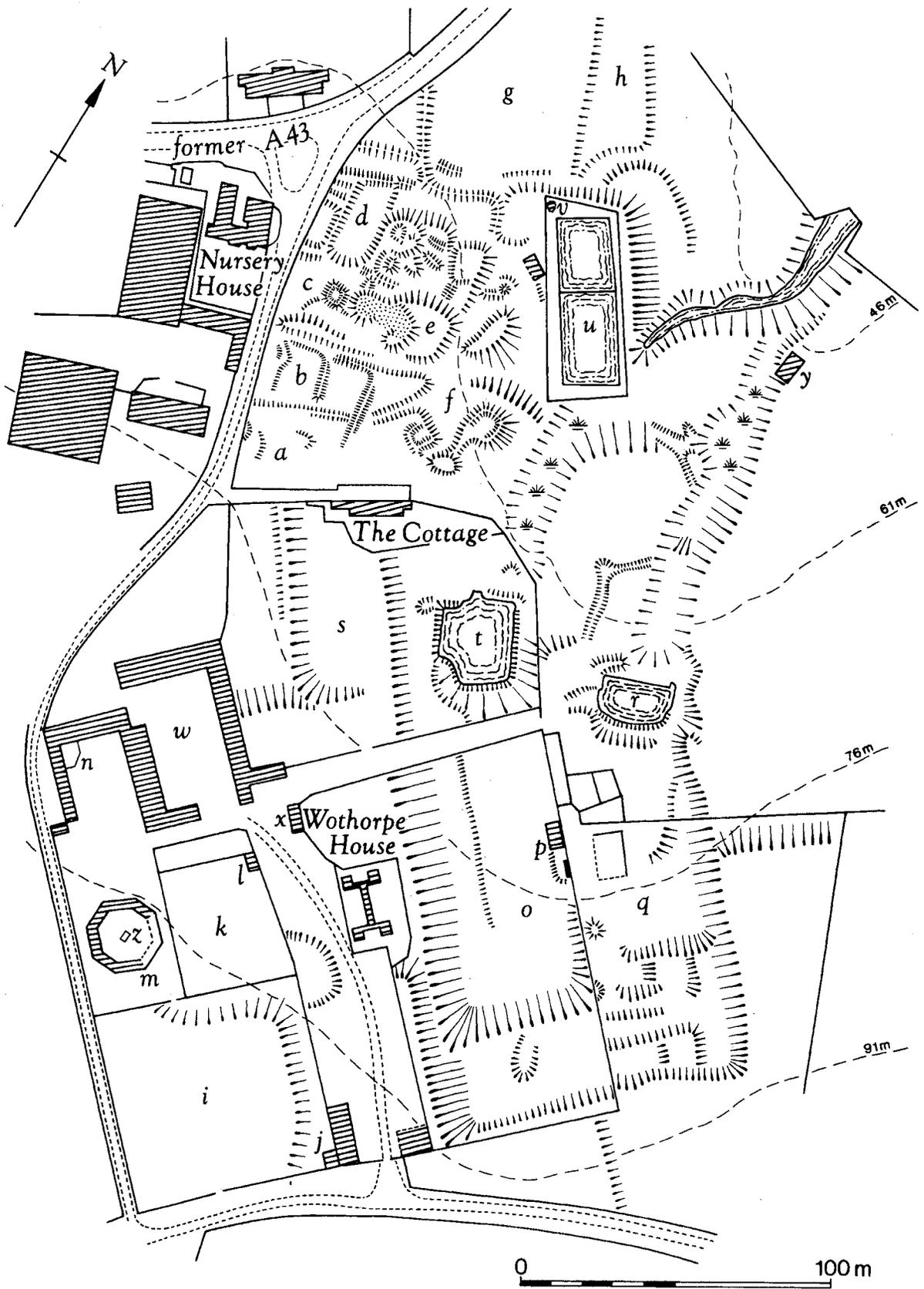


Figure 1. Archaeological survey of Wothorpe.

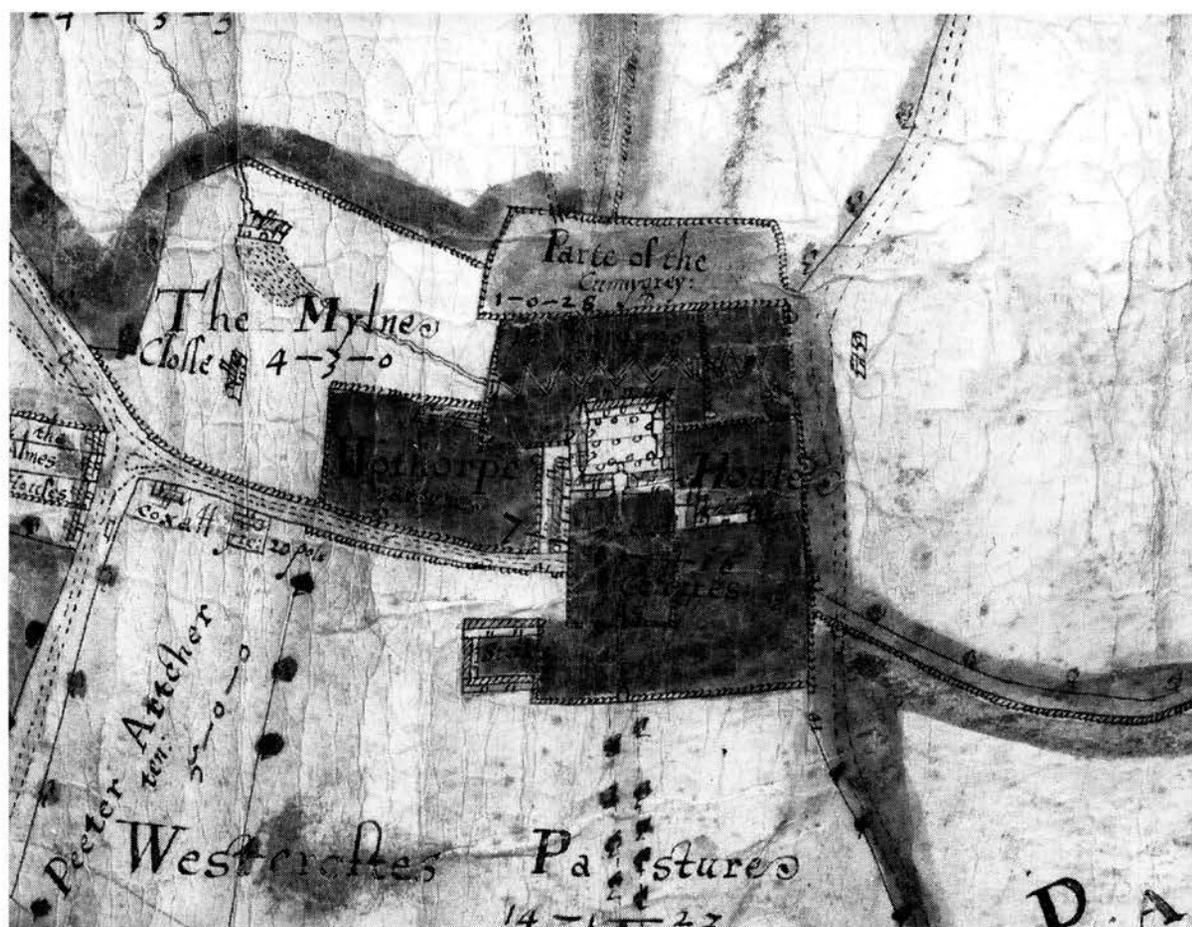


Figure 2. Detail of a plan of Wothorpe, 1615, Burghley Estate Archives.

Little is known of its size in later centuries. In 1301 there were nineteen taxpayers, suggesting perhaps 20 to 25 households, a fairly typical rise since 1086 (Allison *et al.* 1966: 48). The Black Death in 1349 may have reduced the population, but there is only indirect evidence for this. After the Plague, it was recorded that the small nunnery at Wothorpe 'being poorly endowed was by the pestilence which lately prevails reduced to such poverty that all the nuns but one on account of their penury have dispersed' (Steane 1974: 169). However, by 1377 the village, if it had been devastated by the Plague, had recovered. The Poll Tax Returns of that year list 40 people over the age of fourteen paying tax, giving a population of perhaps thirteen to eighteen households. The population must have fallen subsequently, for in 1524 only 22 taxpayers are listed, which probably means less than ten households. Further, the vicarage of the parish church, which had in any case been united with that of St Michael in Stamford in 1354, was worth nothing in 1535. The church itself was pulled

down in 1585. This all indicates a low and declining population.

The cause of this decline is unknown. It is unlikely that Crowland Abbey converted the parish to sheep in the late fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, as happened so often elsewhere, as the common fields of Wothorpe were still in existence in 1533, when 200 acres of arable are recorded (Allison *et al.*, *op. cit.*). On the other hand the earthwork evidence of a late medieval courtyard farm (e on Fig. 1, see below) might suggest that cattle were important then. The site of this farm also indicates that at least four former village properties had been abandoned before it was constructed. Certainly, by 1615, the former open fields had been enclosed. This could mean that the Cecils completed the depopulation of the village after their acquisition of the manor in 1540. By 1615, as the map of that date shows, in addition to the manor house on the site of Wothorpe House there were eight or nine houses in the village: four dwellings with long closes behind them and called 'The Alms Houses' standing at the

northern end of the green, two houses on the western side of the lane just south of the green, an isolated house in the field to the east and the water-mill to the east again (Fig. 2).

The population of Wothorpe appears to have remained low, for in 1674 only seven households are listed there. The abandonment of Wothorpe House in the late eighteenth century must have reduced it further, although Wothorpe Farm continued on the site. The mill and the isolated house had both disappeared by the early nineteenth century (OS 1824). Today only six dwellings are occupied at Wothorpe itself, although the population of the parish has much increased as a result of the development from the middle of the nineteenth century of the new settlement of Wothorpe, further east towards Stamford.

Of the two eleventh-century manors, the Crowland holding remained with the Abbey until the Dissolution. Then in 1540 it was acquired by Richard Cecil. Cecil was the son of David Cecil, the youngest son of a Herefordshire yeoman family, who settled in Stamford in the late fifteenth century. David Cecil married the daughter of a rich Stamford merchant, and was alderman of Stamford three times. By the early sixteenth century he held a number of important Crown offices. His son Richard bought large areas of former monastic land between 1539 and 1545, including Wothorpe. It was Richard's son William, Lord Burghley, who became Queen Elizabeth's Principal Secretary and who began building Burghley House in the 1550s. Wothorpe has remained part of the Burghley estate ever since.

The second manor, held by the Abbot of Peterborough in 1086 together with the advowson of the parish church, seems to have been used to endow a nunnery at Wothorpe before 1300 (VCH 1906: 101). This nunnery is ill documented and was certainly small and poor. It may have been located near the parish church, which itself is traditionally said to have stood at the northern end of the green. Its lands, together with the advowson of the church, passed to Richard Cecil in 1540, thus placing the entire parish in single ownership. The church was pulled down in 1585, presumably by William Cecil.

The Village

Wothorpe village consists of an existing road system, a small number of dwellings, an abandoned farmstead and an extensive area of earthworks. At the head of the green, on its northern side, and on the site of the almshouses

and possibly that of the church and nunnery (north-west of *d* on Fig. 1), is a terrace of four cottages of mid to late nineteenth-century date in the standard style of the Burghley estate. Their predecessors are marked on the first edition OS 1-in. map of 1824, and the site may thus have been occupied continuously since medieval times. On the western side of the lane that runs south is Nursery House which has a datestone of 1658. It apparently incorporates sixteenth-century material, and it seems to be the house marked here on the 1615 plan. To the south of this house is a collection of recent buildings now part of a commercial nursery. Those close to the lane seem to occupy the site of another house shown here on the 1615 plan. To the east is a small stone-built dwelling called The Cottage, probably eighteenth-century in date. It may have been a gardener's cottage built towards the end of the period of occupation of Wothorpe House.

To the north of The Cottage and in the field to the east of the lane are the earthworks of the former village. They are in poor condition as a result of later activities but they are the remains of four properties (Fig. 1. *a-d*). Each once consisted of a house site close to the lane, a rectangular yard or croft behind it and a similar sized garden or toft at the rear. However, the crofts and tofts of the two northernmost (*c* and *d*) have been altered and overlain by other features. In addition, between two of the properties (*b* and *c*), cutting into them, there is a former narrow track leading from the existing lane to the site of a later farmstead (*e*) to the east, and possibly to the site of the mill.

These four earthwork village properties are typical of the arrangements found on many deserted medieval villages and should date from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. They all appear once to have been of the same form, shape and size which might suggest that the village originally had a regular layout with equal-sized plots on either side of a straight street. That is, it was a regular double-row settlement. If this was so it means that the four earthwork properties on the east of the lane would have been matched by four on the west. One of these would have been occupied by the predecessor of the existing Nursery House and another by the house which is shown to the south of it on the 1615 plan.

It is perhaps possible to speculate on this plan a little further. If the documentary sources are correct and there were anywhere between 12 and 25 households at Wothorpe at various times between 1086 and 1377, then the four properties, plus the suggested four on the west, are too few. The sites of at least four more, and

possibly up to seventeen more, are missing. The four and perhaps more could have been accommodated north of the green, if the church and the nunnery were elsewhere, but most must surely have lain further south along the original course of the lane in the area now occupied by Wothorpe Farm. There is room for at least ten properties, five on each side of the lane, of similar size to those surviving, between them and the position of Wothorpe House. The name of the field to the west of Wothorpe Farm and the lane on the 1615 plan is Westcroftes Pastures, which may be significant in this context. Assuming that the manor house of the Crowland holding lay at or near the site of the later Wothorpe House, then a line of village properties extending up to that manor house would not be unusual. Nor indeed would be their replacement by closes of an extended manor house following their abandonment.

The surviving earthworks of the village are, as has been noted, overlain on the east by a number of later features. These include a raised platform up to 1.5 m high, of generally rectangular form, but subdivided into a number of small roughly square plots and an area of stone rubble (*e*). There is no doubt that the rubble marks the position of the single house depicted in this field, then called The Mylne Close, on the 1615 plan. However, the earthworks indicate not only that this house once had a series of rectangular plots around it, but also that below it to the east was a large sunken yard, bounded on the south and east by stone buildings (*f*). This yard survives as a broad depression and at least three almost square buildings are marked by low stone foundations. Further, the whole complex is approached from the lane, or former village street, by a track visible as a terraceway, passing between and partly overlying the older properties (*b* and *c*) to the west, and perhaps continuing as a hollow-way towards the site of the mill. The site of this house, its plots, yard and other buildings, overlie the medieval village properties. The form of the earthworks, with a sunken yard surrounded by buildings, indicates that it is a typical late medieval courtyard farmstead, the yard being a 'crew yard' developed into its present form by the overwintering of cattle there. As such it should date from the late fourteenth or the fifteenth century, and was certainly laid out after at least part of the earlier village had been abandoned. Although this is again speculative, it might be suggested that this farmstead, together with the two dwellings shown on the opposite side of the village street on the 1615 plan, were post-desertion farmsteads resulting from engrossing – the gradual

consolidation of small peasant holdings into larger farms.

To the north east of the village are the remains of two or perhaps three plots, bounded by lynchets and banks which may be medieval in origin. The western one (*g*) is a large roughly triangular area which extends south-east from the edge of the old road to the side of the village properties. Its south-east end crosses into, and its western embanked boundary blocks, an earlier trackway. This trackway once ran from the village green, on the projected alignment of the old A43 to the west, down the slope in an east-north-easterly direction. The second field or plot (*h*) is a long narrow one, edged on the east and west by lynchets. At its south end the former track, here a slight hollow-way, seems to have been respected. A third plot may once have existed further north-east.

The Mill

Although documented in Domesday Book and depicted on the 1615 plan, the site of Wothorpe mill cannot be accurately located. The area of the pond is partly occupied by the later reservoir (*u*). The mill itself is likely to have stood near the south-eastern corner of the reservoir, close to the point where the present stream has cut a deep channel in the underlying clay.

Wothorpe House

There was, presumably, a manor house on the site of Wothorpe House during the medieval period, the centre of the Crowland holding. Nothing is known of it. On the 1615 plan the site is shown as occupied by a large establishment comprising a house, lodgings, courtyards, closes, gardens and stables. All these were perhaps erected after 1540 by the Cecils when they acquired Wothorpe. The arrangement of these structures is important for they conditioned the early seventeenth-century layout, much of which still survives.

The house stood on the site of the later Wothorpe House and consisted of four ranges set around a courtyard. The south-west range had a central gatehouse. In front of the gatehouse, on its south west, was another courtyard with a range of buildings, perhaps lodgings, on the north west. A central drive led from the gatehouse, across this courtyard, and thence south-west, first across another court and then across the north-western part of a large L-shaped court. On the north-west side of the latter were stables, so-named, U-shaped

in plan and on the site of the present stables (n). The drive passed from the outer court, through what appears to be another gateway and continued across the field named Westcroftes Pasture. Here the drive was lined with trees. The main approach to the house was thus from the west.

In addition, the 1615 plan shows other enclosures around the house. Immediately south-east of the house lay another court with, on its western boundary, a large long building, perhaps a barn. To the north east of the house lay two more closes. There was a long rectangular one near the house and another square one on the south-east side of the latter. Both these closes are called The Gardyns on the plan, which also shows a zigzag feature extending axially across both gardens and, at the northern end, becoming the stream flowing north to the mill. As these gardens occupied the walled upper part of the shallow valley to the north-east of the present house (o), this zigzag feature in the bed of the stream must have been an ornamental watercourse. At its extreme south-east end, and thus at the head of the valley, the plan shows an indeterminate feature which might be a pond or perhaps a structure such as a conduit head.

To the north west of the house and in the area of the walled close (s), the plan shows a further large L-shaped walled court, also labelled Gardynes. In the eastern corner of this court the plan shows some indistinct features which seem to include walls and perhaps buildings. To the north east of the main garden, below the house, a long narrow walled close (q) is shown and called Parte of the Cunnygrey. One final important feature shown on the 1615 plan is the complete blocking of the north to south village street and its southern continuation by the walled courts on the south-west of the house. This may suggest that the blocking was not an ancient occurrence but had taken place not long before the plan was made, perhaps at the same time as the house was built, after 1540.

The house shown on the 1615 plan was replaced very soon afterwards and before 1623 by the present Wothorpe House. This is not the place for a full description of that building, nor for a discussion of its wider architectural significance. It was built, so it was said, to enable Cecil 'to retire out of the dust while his great house of Burghley was a-sweeping'. In fact the house belongs to that group of sixteenth and early seventeenth-century structures called lodges, which in modern parlance were a kind of holiday home (Girouard 1978: 106-9). They often had fanciful architecture, were frequently built in secluded places, and were thus re-

garded as both secret and romantic. More practically, their separation from the comings and goings of the big house made them useful places for private meetings. By their very nature such buildings were not designed to accommodate large numbers of people. Wothorpe House, despite being ruinous, demonstrates all these characteristics.

What survives consists of four square towers of four storeys, with octagonal top storeys. They all have long narrow single-light windows surmounted by curious square openings with volute decoration around them. Pevsner (1973: 470-1) says that these are reminiscent of Italian Mannerism. Originally, these towers were set in the angles of the main cross-shaped building, of which only the internal spine wall remains, three storeys high and with a basement. A drawing by John Thorpe (Summerson 1966: Plate 26) shows what purports to be the original plan. However, investigation has indicated that the house was not built exactly as the Thorpe plan shows. What is clear is that the main entrance was on the south east, approached via a flight of steps, the cellar being a half-basement because of the sloping ground. On the ground floor was the hall, as well as the kitchen (*contra* Thorpe), with the parlour above looking out and down over the main garden to the north east.

Thomas Cecil did not enjoy his new house for long, for he died in 1623. Its later history is uncertain. It was modernised in the mid or late seventeenth century and by the middle of the eighteenth century it was used as a Dower House. It was abandoned before 1790, when the outer walls were pulled down.

The Gardens, Courts and Stables

The arrangement of the gardens and courts in 1615 has already been described. It was altered when the new house was built, but most of the original layout seems to have survived. The area of the main garden to the north east of the earlier house was retained as the principal garden to the new one, although it was extended further east into the area of the walled close called Parte of the Cunnygrey in 1615. The garden to the north west of the house was also retained, although it too may have been enlarged. The form of the courts to the south west of the old house also remained broadly the same but was altered in detail. This was principally because the main approach to the new house was turned through 180 degrees to that of the older one. In effect the approach was made to come from the east, from the direction of Burghley House.

The drive lay along the present track to the south-east of the house and gardens. As it neared the house it crossed the head of the small valley in which the gardens lay. In order to achieve the maximum visual impact for visitors, the track itself was, and still is, embanked and revetted in stone some 2 m above the land to the north, while the height of the walls around the main garden on its south east were kept lower than those elsewhere. The result was that approaching visitors saw the house in full view with its gardens below it.

The drive then turned north-west through what is now a plain gateway with no decorative features, and entered an elongated court with the house in the north corner at its north-western end. The walls of this court are undatable and have in any case been much rebuilt. However, they seem to reflect some of the early seventeenth-century arrangement. This courtyard appears in part to have been cut out of the earlier courts shown on the 1615 plan. It now has modern sheds at its southern end and a former pond on its south-western side. The pond may be part of the seventeenth-century layout, set to one side of the house entrance, but is more likely to have been a later stock drinking-pond. To the south west of this approach courtyard are three walled courts. The largest (i), coincides with the southern part of the L-shaped court shown here on the 1615 plan. Although the original ground surface of this court presumably sloped north-east, it has been deliberately levelled to roughly match the higher ground outside the court to the south west. The result is that there are scarps up to 2 m high along the inner north-western and north-eastern sides of the court. It is not clear what this court was used for, but its near-level surface suggests that it was intended as a bowling green and thus perhaps belongs to the same period as the later house and gardens. In the eastern corner of this court is a small building of stone rubble, roofed with stone slates (j). It has a plain door opening on its south-western side and no windows. It cannot be closely dated but as it stands is probably eighteenth-century and connected with animals. However it may be on the site of an earlier building, perhaps a summer-house.

To the north west of this court are two others, similarly walled in stone. The northern one (k) seems to coincide with the south-western two thirds of the middle court outside the house on the 1615 plan. In its northern corner is a small building (l), identical to that in the eastern corner of the court to the south east, and presumably of the same date and function and perhaps origin. To its south east is the last court (m), also walled, but open to the north west. It seems to be

identical in position to the north-western end of the large L-shaped court of the 1615 plan. Within it stands a nineteenth-century structure locally known as the Cockpit (see below).

In the north-western corner of this area is a U-shaped block of buildings (n) whose history is by no means clear. The overall shape is identical to that on the 1615 plan, there called Stables. The block on the north-western side may indeed have been stables, but seems to have been altered. Apart from a simple doorway at the north-eastern end, it has no openings except on the main, south-eastern, elevation. Here there is a line of seven windows, similar to if cruder than those on Wothorpe House itself. This suggests that the building is either of the same date as the main house or was remodelled when the latter was built. The elaborate stone central doorcase is early seventeenth-century. It is very battered and is perhaps reset from elsewhere. Certainly its low height would have prevented the building being used as a stable.

The south-west wing of the U-shaped block was once a row of three or four cottages perhaps of mid seventeenth-century date. It has been altered and added to, apparently in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when it was a farmhouse. It was abandoned after the Second World War. The north-western wing consists of a large stone rubble barn, probably seventeenth-century in origin, but later than the stable block and with various additions.

The former gardens at Wothorpe House survive mainly as earthworks and fall into three sections. The main garden (o) lies immediately north east of the house and covers almost 1 ha. It is bounded on all sides by stone walls of various dates. A broad, slightly splayed farm track, revetted in stone rubble 1.25 m above the ground to the south east, runs along the north-western side of the area. This is may be a later addition of the nineteenth century, although it is possible that it fossilises a former raised terrace at this end of the garden. The rest of the area is under pasture and contains the slight remains of the former seventeenth-century arrangement, although these are in very poor condition as a result of the land here having been ploughed at some time.

On the south-western side are traces of what was probably a massive terrace extending from the eastern corner of the house to the southern corner of the garden. It consists of a walkway adjacent to the wall with a large scarp still up to 2 m high. At the southern corner this terrace turns and runs along the south-eastern side of the garden, here very slight, less than 0.25 m high. Below the house is another broad, very degraded scarp. It presumably rep-

resents another raised terrace which formerly lay against the house. At its south-east end it turns and extends north-east across the area as a much spread cross-scarp up to 1.5 m high. The main part of the garden is thus divided into two parts. The upper south-eastern third is featureless except for a slight depression near the centre, which might mark a former pond. The lower north-western two-thirds are also featureless apart from a very slight scarp running north-west. This again may dimly reflect some original division.

On the north-eastern side of this garden area is an elaborate masonry doorway (*p*) of early seventeenth-century date. It has a moulded doorcase, surmounted by a stepped gable, which once had balls or finials on the steps and which is pierced by a circular opening at the top. The doorway is flanked on each side by a pair of plain roundheaded niches. The whole is positioned axially to the centre of the house on the opposite side of the garden and has a slight raised scarp projection in front of it, perhaps marking a former paved area or steps. Its function was presumably to give access to the garden compartment beyond.

The area of this garden is apparently identical to the two walled closes shown here on the 1615 plan. Indeed, the division between the two walled closes seems to coincide with the north east to south west dividing scarp on the ground. If so, this might mean that the garden remained divided into two parts after the building of the new house, with the latter in the centre of the south-western side of the large compartment opposite the gate (*p*). The earthwork remains of this garden are too slight to allow a reconstruction of it, beyond suggesting that it had a fairly typical early seventeenth-century form with terraces, walks, knots and possibly ponds.

The second part of the garden (*q*) lay to the north east of the last, presumably approached by the gateway described above. It seems to have occupied roughly the area described on the 1615 plan as *Parte of the Cunnygrey*. However, except on the south-western side no walls survive and the area now lies within a large field bounded on the other three sides by walls of eighteenth or nineteenth-century date. The field has been ploughed and reseeded and, as a result, the surviving earthworks are very slight and difficult to interpret. The main feature is a large degraded scarp still up to 1.5 m high running north west to south east. At its north-western end it extends into the next field and terminates close to the pond (*r*) there. At its south-eastern end it turns and runs south-west to meet the corner of the garden compartment already described. Within the angle formed by

this turn are a series of low scarps nowhere more than 0.2 m high, forming a generally rectangular pattern and coinciding with an area of unusually dark soil exposed in the molehills. It is difficult to give a detailed interpretation of these scarps beyond suggesting that they again represent some form of terraces, paths or flowerbeds typical of the early seventeenth century. The major outer scarp may mark a terrace walk which was backed by a perimeter wall.

The fact that the large boundary scarp on the north east extends north-west to the adjacent pond might indicate that the gardens also extended to this point. The earlier walled field, shown on the 1615 plan, certainly did. This in turn suggests that the pond itself may have been constructed as a garden feature. While this may be so, its later use as a collection reservoir for a water-supply system makes any earlier usage impossible to ascertain.

The third and last part of the gardens (*s*) lay north of the house in the area also called gardens on the 1615 plan. These 1615 gardens occupied only a central rectangular strip of the present field and it is difficult to explain the earthworks which seem to belong to the post-1615 garden. The problem is exacerbated by a number of factors. Again, the field has been ploughed in recent times. In addition, the later pond (*t*) at the eastern corner of the field, another collecting reservoir, has led to alterations there. Further, both the wall and the farm buildings on the south-western side have been rebuilt in the nineteenth century and later. Finally, the lane running south-east from the northern part of the village, and shown on the 1615 plan as being blocked by the courtyards further south-east, appears to have crossed the south-western edge of this field. The best interpretation therefore is that the two degraded scarps running north west to south east across the field are former garden terraces and that the lower one also marks the north-eastern boundary of the earlier garden. Whether the pond (*t*) could have been part of the later gardens remains unclear.

The Reservoirs

In the field to the north east of the village remains and probably occupying the site of the medieval mill pond is a large rectangular pond (*u*). It is cut back into the hillside and has retaining banks up to 3m high on its north-east and north-west sides. It is marked as Reservoir (disused) on modern Ordnance Survey plans. Although apparently relatively recent, it seems to be part of a complex eighteenth or

nineteenth-century system of water collection and storage. Water coming down the stream in the shallow valley north-east of Wothorpe House, and presumably culverted since the seventeenth century, passed into the rectangular pond (*t*) which lies to the north of the former garden, at the point where the valley deepens considerably. This pond is revetted on its downslope side by a wall of thin limestone slabs set into the back of its low dam.

Further water is ponded in a similar rectangular pond (*r*) to the east. Water from this pond flows in a culvert either into the lower pond or into the stream just below it. The combined flow from both ponds, still culverted in the bottom of the valley, runs into the top of the large rectangular reservoir (*u*). The water from the reservoir now cascades down the ravine of the natural stream to the east. Originally, however, at least some of the water left the reservoir in its north-western corner and entered a system of underground pipes via a conduit head. This is a small octagonal structure (*v*) 2 m across and set over a deep stone-lined shaft. It is constructed of limestone rubble, with ashlar dressings and a doorway with a four-centred head of late seventeenth-century type. It is said to have been built in 1719 but is actually of nineteenth-century date; 1719 may be the date of the construction of the whole system. No details of the rest of the water distribution have been found but it may be significant that the height of the reservoir is some 16 m above the centre of Stamford and slightly less above Burghley House.

Recent Farm Buildings

Since the abandonment of Wothorpe House in the late eighteenth century, the area around it has been a working farm. As a result, many of the older structures have been altered and new ones erected. Among the new buildings are a stable block north-east of the earlier stables and another further south-east which, together with some piggeries of the 1940s or 1950s built into earlier structures, form a second yard (*w*) to the north east of the seventeenth-century one. There is also a late nineteenth-century shed (*x*) immediately north-west of Wothorpe House, a stock shed (*y*) of similar date in the field east of the reservoir and a curious octagonal structure (*z*), also of late nineteenth-century date, set in the court (*m*) to the south of the main farm buildings. This last building consists of an outer wall of limestone, with a range of brick and timber lean-tos around its inside. In the centre is a rectangular dry-stone walled pit about 2 m

across. This is called a Cockpit locally but is unlikely to have been one. Its real function is unknown.

Conclusion

The Wothorpe landscape is not unusual but the details are particularly well preserved and the story clear. A small, undistinguished yet prosperous village, owned by a monastic house, declined in the later middle ages. After the Dissolution it was acquired by a family of the rising gentry who completed the depopulation of the village and built a fine new manor house and gardens. After the further rise of the family into the aristocracy, the house was replaced in the early seventeenth century by a much more sophisticated structure intended for use as a detached lodge and which was provided with new gardens. This lodge was succeeded by a working farm in the late eighteenth century. Today the farmhouse has been abandoned in turn and only six dwellings remain at Wothorpe.

More specifically, the survey has identified a number of features which have significance beyond Wothorpe itself. It is possible that the medieval village was once a regular double-row settlement. If this is so, it is yet one more example of this form, which suggests that the type was once much more common than has previously seemed likely (Taylor 1994). The direct stratigraphical relationship between the peasant-type tofts and crofts and the late medieval courtyard farm is of considerable interest and again confirms what has been discovered elsewhere by excavation (Beresford and Hurst 1971: 107). In addition, the discovery and elucidation of the former gardens surrounding Wothorpe House is significant in terms of seventeenth-century garden history and especially for the settings of sixteenth and seventeenth-century lodges, of which Wothorpe is a fine example.

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