

◆ The drawings of Herstmonceux Castle by James Lambert, senior and junior, 1776–7

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In 1776 Lord Dacre commissioned the Lamberts to record his ancestors' home before its partial demolition. Their surviving working drawings were a key element in English Heritage's reassessment of Herstmonceux Castle in relation to other great fifteenth-century buildings. In 2006 East Sussex Record Office acquired the Lamberts' watercolours prepared for their client. The watercolours hitherto held to be those are identified as copies made by S. H. Grimm for William Burrell.

Sir Roger Fiennes built Herstmonceux Castle in the 1440s. 'The building he erected is among the most magnificent late medieval castles to survive anywhere in Europe.'¹ The Dacres, successors to the Fiennes, had estates widely spread in England and Ireland. The profligacy of the 15th Baron (1654–1722) obliged him to sell the Herstmonceux estate in 1708, to *nouveau riche* George Naylor of Lincoln's Inn. Within a generation the Naylor family discovered that the cost of maintaining the style appropriate to the setting was higher than affordable, and the setting was not particularly comfortable by the standards of the day. They ceased living there in about 1740. Robert Hare-Naylor inherited in 1775. Already living in Herstmonceux Place, a modern house by comparison and within sight of the Castle, he decided in 1776 to reduce the Castle to a picturesque landscape feature by demolishing the interior, some of the materials going to extend Herstmonceux Place.²

The Castle was long since of interest to antiquaries. The Bucks had published an engraving in 1737, dedicated to the then owner Francis Hare-Naylor, and in 1774 Francis Grose received a detailed description, with measurements, from an unnamed correspondent, perhaps the local schoolmaster and surveyor, Edward Allfree. Antiquaries were now dismayed at the destruction. Visiting the Castle towards the end of the century, Charles, 11th Duke of Norfolk (1746–1815), later promoter of *History of the western division of the County of Sussex*, opined to Allfree 'that the man who caused it to be so pulled to pieces deserved

to be hung drawn and quartered'. In 1788, John Byng reflected that:

Surely at the destruction there might have been some plunder for the antiquary, of paintings, carved work, wainscoting, magnificent chimney-pieces, tapestry, etc. etc. All sold as lumber and long since burnt! Though sometimes a curiosity is to be found in a neighbouring cottage, as a bedstead or an old panel painting nailed over a hole.³

But not everything was lost. Thomas Lennard, 17th Baron Dacre (1717–86), grandson of the vendor and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries since 1745, salvaged some fragments of fifteenth-century painted glass. Further, as Dr William Burrell wrote to the Revd William Hayley, in April 1778:

Lord Dacre's veneration for the memory of Sir Roger Fiennes has induced him to have exact drawings made, by Lambert, of the different courts of that noble and venerable mansion of Herstmonceux, the great hall, kitchen, etc., at the expense of 110 guineas; he has been so obliging as to allow me to have a copy, upon which I have employed a very eminent artist, and shall be very happy in showing it [to] Mr Hayley, if amusement or business brings him to London.⁴

In similarly informing Richard Gough, Burrell added that Lord Dacre had Lambert make 13 'most capital drawings', that the copies were made by Mr Grimm, augmented by pictures of the church, the monument of Thomas Lord Dacre (died 1533) and his son, and the brass of Sir William Fiennes (died 1403), and that 'he has outlines of portraits

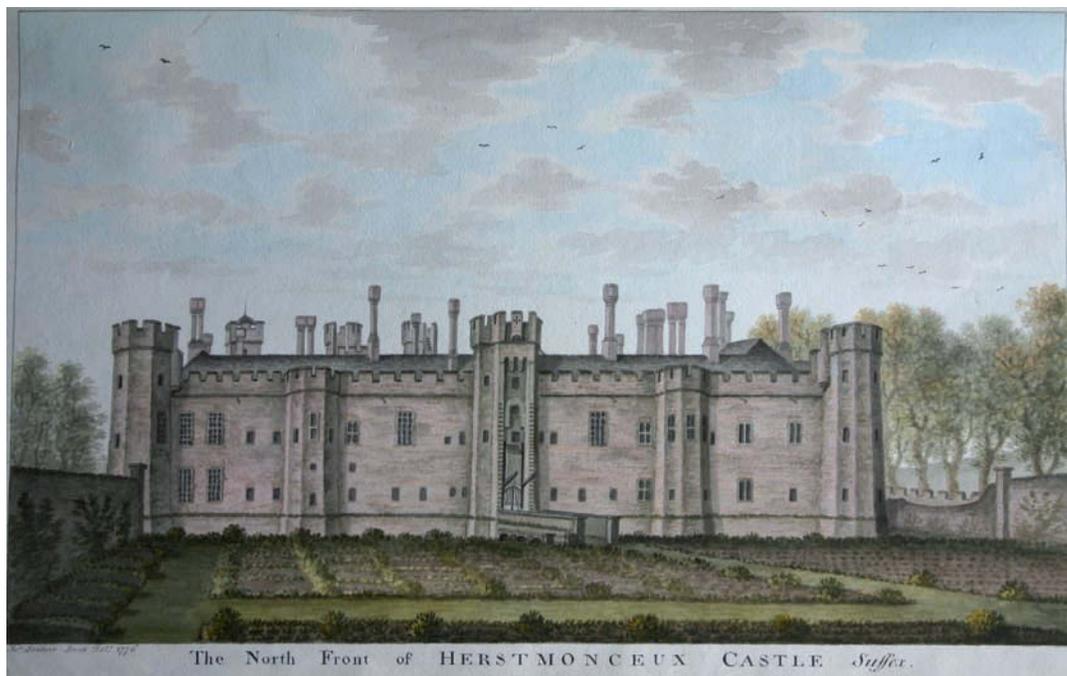


Fig. 1. 'The north front of Herstmonceux Castle, Sussex', by James Lambert (1725–88), 1776 (East Sussex Record Office, ACC 9374).

of Edw III and Philippa in Hoo[e] church window'.⁵

In my 1997 article on James Lambert (1725–88) and his nephew James (1741–99), I identified as one of the main groups of their work 33 field sketches of Herstmonceux Castle made in 1776 (19 plus two plans presented to the Sussex Archaeological Society (SAS) by 1890, LEWSA.VR.3531–3551, and 14 acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1911, E.402–415.1911), 18 finished drawings, watercolours and plans in a portfolio from the Ashburnham collection, now at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT (YCBA), and two similar watercolours at SAS.⁶ As I had not been able to see the portfolio, I accepted Yale's attribution to the Lamberts and took it to have been Lord Dacre's.

However, on 24 November 2005 Sotheby's offered for auction at its Bond Street, London gallery (lot 129) a portfolio of the same 13 views, all signed by one or other Lambert. The hammer price was £7440 to Jeremy Ltd of 29 Lowndes Street, London SW1, from whom it was bought in February 2006 by East Sussex Record Office (ESRO) for £12,000 with the aid of grants from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Record

Office and a public appeal. Further enquiry revealed that it had been consigned for sale by Lord Dacre's great great grand-daughter; it carries a Dacre bookplate. This portfolio (ACC 9374) is clearly that made for the Lamberts' client. Five views and two plans from it, when owned by Sir Thomas Barrett-Lennard of Belhus, were used to illustrate the article on the Castle in *Country Life* during 1918.⁷

The Yale portfolio (B1977.14.1092–1106) has the Burrell arms on the cover and contains the copies made for Dr William Burrell by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (1733–94). Francis Grose borrowed it to prepare cartoons for the engraver for four plates published in 1779–80 in his *Antiquities of England and Wales*, where the views are credited to Grimm.⁸ In the auction of Burrell's town library, in May 1796, appeared lot 327, 'Sussex, Views of Herstmonceux Castle, Church, &c. a Collection of 20 Drawings, in an Atlas Portfolio, covered with Russia'. The portfolio was lot 1943 in the sale of the library at Ashburnham Place by Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge on 7 December 1897: 'A collection of 18 original drawings (15 in water colours), and 2 ground plans of Herstmonceux Castle and places connected with



Fig. 2. 'The north front of Herstmonceux Castle, Sussex', by S. H. Grimm (1733–94), 1777/8 (Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1977.14.1096).

it, very cleverly executed, Russia gilt, with arms, atlas folio', sold to W. Flower for £9. It was not in the library in 1851, so was acquired subsequently by the great collector, Bertram, 4th Earl of Ashburnham (1797–1878).⁹ It was sold by W. H. B. Fletcher's executors at Sotheby's on 17 June 1941 (lot 466), directly or indirectly, to Captain A. W. F. Fuller (1882–1961) from whom (or more likely from whose widow) it passed to Paul Mellon who presented it to the Yale Center for British Art in 1977.¹⁰ By that time the number of items had been reduced from 20 to 18, by the removal of the two drawings of glass from Hooe church. The other three additional items, pictures of the church, and the memorials of Thomas Lord Dacre and Sir William Fiennes, Grimm probably drew along with Herstmonceux Place in 1783 and 1785.¹¹ It is likely that Fletcher was the first to attribute the portfolio to the Lamberts.

Each portfolio contains a plan of the ground floor and of the first floor. The plans in the ESRO portfolio have the names of several rooms erased and of two amended, and the dimensions of some rooms included. The YCBA copies replicate those plans as amended. Another pair of plans at SAS,

LEWSA.VR 3550 and 3551, probably came to the Society with the field sketches and may therefore be what the Lamberts copied and amended. They show the rooms named, significant among them 'the papist chapel', 'the priest's apartments' and those of Mr Naylor, Mrs Naylor and Miss Naylor, probably George (died 1730), his wife Grace (died 1710) and their daughter Grace (died 1727) — suggesting that the Lamberts copied plans made between 1708 and 1730 at the outside.¹²

In the knowledge that Yale has Grimm's copies of the Lamberts' views, and taking the two versions of the north front by way of example (Figs 1 and 2), we can see that Grimm accurately copied the essential topographical detail, but then imposed characteristic elements of his style in place of the Lamberts'. The Lamberts' typically overcast sky with birds was replaced by Grimm's rather lighter and birdless sky. As usual, Grimm did not sign the view, which was the Lamberts' practice. Grimm added a painted border, uncommon in the Lamberts' work.

Robert Hare-Naylor's son Francis was an historian and may have taken more interest in

the Castle, and his wife Georgiana had been a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1781. She made a set of copies, presumably from the Dacre portfolio and most likely during their residence at Herstmonceux between 1797 and 1804. These copies were exhibited by their son Julius Charles Hare (1795–1855), then Rector of Herstmonceux and Archdeacon of Lewes, at a meeting of the SAS at Herstmonceux on 25 July 1850. Several were used for woodcuts to illustrate an article in the *Collections*. Their current whereabouts, if they have survived, are unknown, though Hastings Museum has a watercolour of the Great Hall inscribed on the back ‘Copy by Clarence Hare from Georgiana, Mrs Hare Naylor, belonged to Lady Taylor’; it was purchased for the Museum from the sale in 1908 on the death of Augustus John Cuthbert Hare, J. C. Hare’s nephew.¹³

Burrell’s letter is known only as printed by M. A. Lower in 1870. The fee of 110 guineas (£115.50) is so high as at first sight to suggest that Lower made a mistake in transcription. In fact it is all but confirmed by Dacre’s bank book; he paid the Lamberts £110 on 26 August 1777.¹⁴ This was a very large payment and I cannot think of any other work which may have been included in the price. Grimm was rated by Francis Grose ‘nearly the best draughtsman in London’, and in September 1777 he proposed to charge 10 guineas (£10.50) plus expenses for a fortnight with Sir Richard Worsley, in order to produce 12 to 14 drawings ‘on a large scale’ and also reduce them for the engraver for his *History of the Isle of Wight* — the implication is that he would do further work in London beyond the fortnight. He had recently charged 2½ guineas a week with all charges borne for nearly four months touring in Wales.¹⁵ As for the Lamberts, as jobbing provincial artists, their going rate was about £1 for a six-day week plus 4d a day beer allowance, as shown by Lambert junior’s bill for work in 1780 at West Grinstead church:¹⁶

two tables of commandments,	
Lord’s prayer and belief	£4.4.0
eleven sentences at 5s each	£2.15.0
seven weeks beer allowance at 4d per day for six days a week	£0.14.0
total	£7.13.0

This was much the same as the income of a clerk in a London counting house, a government official such as an Excise officer or a curate.¹⁷ Lord Dacre’s payment represented roughly a year’s earnings for both of them at that rate. One of the sketches, an external view, is dated 1 August 1776. The dated sketches of internal details are dated between 1 November and 14 December, suggesting a concentrated campaign of drawing over a couple of months while demolition was in progress, mainly by Lambert junior, followed by both uncle and nephew working up the finished watercolours in Lewes. It must have been a very profitable commission.

Further antiquarian recording occurred in 1810/11. While curate to the Revd Robert Hare at Herstmonceux and Ninfield, the Revd David Thomas Powell (1772/3–1848) ‘caused the front to be measured’. His surviving papers include 11 watercolours and drawings of the Castle.¹⁸ Our knowledge of the original design, though, is largely derived from the Lamberts’ drawings (or copies thereof) which have been consulted for that purpose since at least 1850, as the interior of the Castle was rebuilt to a novel design in two separate campaigns between 1913 and 1935. The sketches were a key element of English Heritage’s recent work to reassess the Castle’s significance in English architectural history and in relation to other great fifteenth-century buildings.¹⁹

Acknowledgements

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NOTES

- ¹ J. A. A. Goodall, 'A medieval masterpiece: Herstmonceux Castle, Sussex', *The Burlington Magazine* **146** (2004), 516.
- ² J. H. Farrant, *Sussex Depicted. Views and descriptions 1600–1800*, Sussex Record Society **85** (Lewes, 2001), 251–3.
- ³ Farrant, *Sussex Depicted*, 15–17, 27. British Library, Add. MS. 5679, f. 266. For Allfree (1744–1808), see J. Caffyn, *Sussex Schools in the 18th Century*, Sussex Record Society **81** (1998), 134, 280. Sussex Archaeological Society, library acc. 9087 (transferred to museum), f. 16. J. Byng, 'A tour into Sussex 1788', in *The Torrington Diaries: containing the Tours through England and Wales of the Hon. John Byng (later fifth Viscount Torrington) between the years 1781 and 1794*, ed. C. B. Andrews (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1934–6), **1**, 365.
- ⁴ Goodall, 'Medieval masterpiece', 524. Farrant, *Sussex Depicted*, 124–6.
- ⁵ Bodleian Library, Gough gen. top. 365, Gough's British Topography, Collections for a Third Edition, f. 488.
- ⁶ J. H. Farrant, 'James Lambert, senior and junior, landscape painters of Lewes', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter SAC) **135** (1997), 250. Goodall, 'Medieval masterpiece', reproduces nine of the sketches and the two floor plans in the SAS collection, and D. Calvert, *A History of Herstmonceux Castle* (Hailsham: Royal Greenwich Observatory, [1979]), three in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection. C. T. Phillips, 'Plans of Hurstmonceux Castle', SAC **37** (1890), 199; the SAS drawings were also recorded as an acquisition in 1892, after being mounted.
- ⁷ M. Conway, 'Herstmonceux Castle, the seat of Col. Claude Lowther, M.P.', *Country Life* **43** (1918), 3 parts.
- ⁸ Farrant, *Sussex Depicted*, 110–13. For the text accompanying the plates, Grose's sources included a pedigree by Richard St George in Lord Dacre's possession and the letter of 4 Apr. 1774 already mentioned.
- ⁹ British Library, 269.c.5. East Sussex Record Office (hereafter ESRO), ASH 4340, 4328; later catalogues are selective, but it may be listed in ASH 4322.
- ¹⁰ Catalogue cutting in the portfolio. West Sussex Record Office, MP 6107, A. W. F. Fuller's card index of his collections. Fuller made notes on two of the drawings.
- ¹¹ British Library, Add. MS. 5676, f. 35 [53]; 5670, ff. 74, 75 [136–9].
- ¹² Another copy of the first-floor plan in ESRO (AMS 6140/1/1, watermarked 1794) follows the SAS plan, except that the 'Housekeeper's room' is 'Mrs Beckett's room', perhaps the Margaret Beckett who was buried at Herstmonceux on 1 Jan. 1751.
- ¹³ E. Venables, 'The castle of Herstmonceux and its lords', SAC **4** (1851), 167. 'Naylor, Francis Hare-' and 'Hare, Julius Charles', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), consulted on-line. ESRO, ACC 8241, probate inventory of A. J. C. Hare, 1903, which indicates (p. 40) that he had owned a companion to that at Hastings Museum; it may now be in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- ¹⁴ Essex Record Office, D/DL/F133/2.
- ¹⁵ Isle of Wight Record Office, JER/WA/39/5/135. 'Grimm, Samuel Hieronymus', *ODNB*.
- ¹⁶ West Sussex Record Office, Par. 95/9/1.
- ¹⁷ J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power. War, Money and the English State 1688–1783* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 79.
- ¹⁸ Sussex Archaeological Society, library acc. 9087, ff. 16–18; 9089, f. 17. For Powell, see J. H. Farrant, 'A drawing of the Long Man of Wilmington, East Sussex, by the Revd D. T. Powell', SAC **133** (1995), 282–4.
- ¹⁹ Venables, 'Castle of Herstmonceux'. Conway, 'Herstmonceux Castle'. Goodall, 'Medieval masterpiece'.

