

RUFFORD ABBEY: A VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN COUNTRY HOUSE

by

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A previously un-published photograph of Rufford Abbey has recently come to light in an album of photographs entitled *Mansfield Album, 1900* deposited in the Nottinghamshire Archives¹ (Plate 1). This photograph of Rufford Abbey from the north-east shows the house before the new grand staircase wing was added to the east front and the bay window was added to the north front. This new staircase, housed in a projecting gabled wing at the centre of the east front, and the first-floor bay window on the north front, at the end of the Long Gallery, have in almost all previous publications been included as part of Anthony Salvin's documented alterations to the house carried out between 1837 and 1845² (Plate 2). This would have meant that this photograph was taken before Salvin began his alterations in 1837, and this would, in turn, have meant that it was one of the very earliest photographs ever taken! Ian Leith, an expert in early photography at the National Monuments Record, studied the image and concluded that this photograph could not possibly date from this early. Instead it was suggested that it dated from the 1870s at the earliest and that these additions must have been made after this date.

A re-examination of the various published documents which relate to the history of Rufford uncovered the following solution to this problem in the 2nd Lord Savile's article *Rufford Abbey*, published in *The Pall Mall Magazine* in 1898, where he states that 'The grand staircase, of carved oak, was designed and built by the late Lord Savile, H. M. Ambassador at Rome;'³ The 'late Lord Savile' referred to must be John Savile, 1st Baron Savile (1818–96) a diplomat, who inherited Rufford Abbey in 1887 and died in 1896. Consequently this new wing containing the grand staircase and

the bay on the north front were not part of Salvin's alterations, instead they were constructed sometime between 1887 and 1896. This would mean that the photograph which began this enquiry does, as Ian Leith so rightly suggested, most likely dates from the 1870s or early 1880s.

Even though this image is not an extremely early photograph, it is nonetheless a most important image for the history of Rufford Abbey in the 19th century. Its discovery has prompted further investigation into the dating of the other alterations and additions carried out here in the 19th century, and the resulting article completes the history of the house outlined in *Rufford Abbey and its Gardens in the 17th and 18th Centuries* published in the *English Heritage Historical Review* in 2013.⁴

OWNERSHIP OF RUFFORD ABBEY 1794–1938

Between the death of the 8th Baron Savile in 1784 and the sale of the estate in 1938 by the trustees of the 3rd Lord Savile, the Savile estates, including Rufford Abbey were subject to a particularly complex inheritance.⁵ Sir George Savile, 8th Baronet (1726–84) was the only son of Sir George Savile, 7th Baronet who died in 1743 leaving him the traditional Savile estates based around Thornhill in Yorkshire and Rufford Abbey in Nottinghamshire. When Sir George died childless in 1784 the bulk of these estates passed to his nephew Richard Lumley, the younger son of his sister Barbara, the wife of the 4th Earl of Scarbrough.⁶ There were two conditions attached to this bequest; first that he adopt the name Savile, and second that the Savile estates should never be joined



PLATE 1: An early photograph of Rufford Abbey from the north-east showing the house before the alterations designed by Lord Savile. c.1870. *Nottinghamshire Archives*.



PLATE 2: A photograph of Rufford Abbey from the north-east showing the new grand staircase wing designed by Lord Savile. c.1950. *National Monuments Record*.

to the estates of the Lumleys, Earls of Scarbrough. When Richard Lumley-Savile's elder brother George, the 5th Earl of Scarbrough, died childless in 1807, Richard inherited the Earldom and its associated Lumley estates, including Sandbeck Park in Yorkshire, Glentworth Hall in Lincolnshire and Lumley Castle in County Durham. So, in accordance with Sir George Savile's will, he passed the Savile estates, including Rufford, to his younger brother John Lumley, the Rector of Thornhill.

But when in 1832 Richard, 6th Earl of Scarbrough also died childless and the title and its estates passed to his brother, the Rev John Lumley (Savile), he refused to give up the Rufford Abbey estate. So, when John, the 7th Earl died in 1835 he bequeathed both the entailed Lumley estates and the Savile estates (including Rufford Abbey) to his son, another John, 8th Earl of Scarbrough, who fought and won a High Court action to retain the Savile estates.

Flushed with this success, the 8th Earl set about modernising Rufford Abbey. He employed Anthony Salvin to remodel the interior of the house between 1837 and 1845. The 8th Earl was no conventional Victorian aristocrat. As a young man, in around 1810, he rescued a young French girl, Agnes, from drowning in the Serpentine and then set up home with her. They remained unmarried though she bore

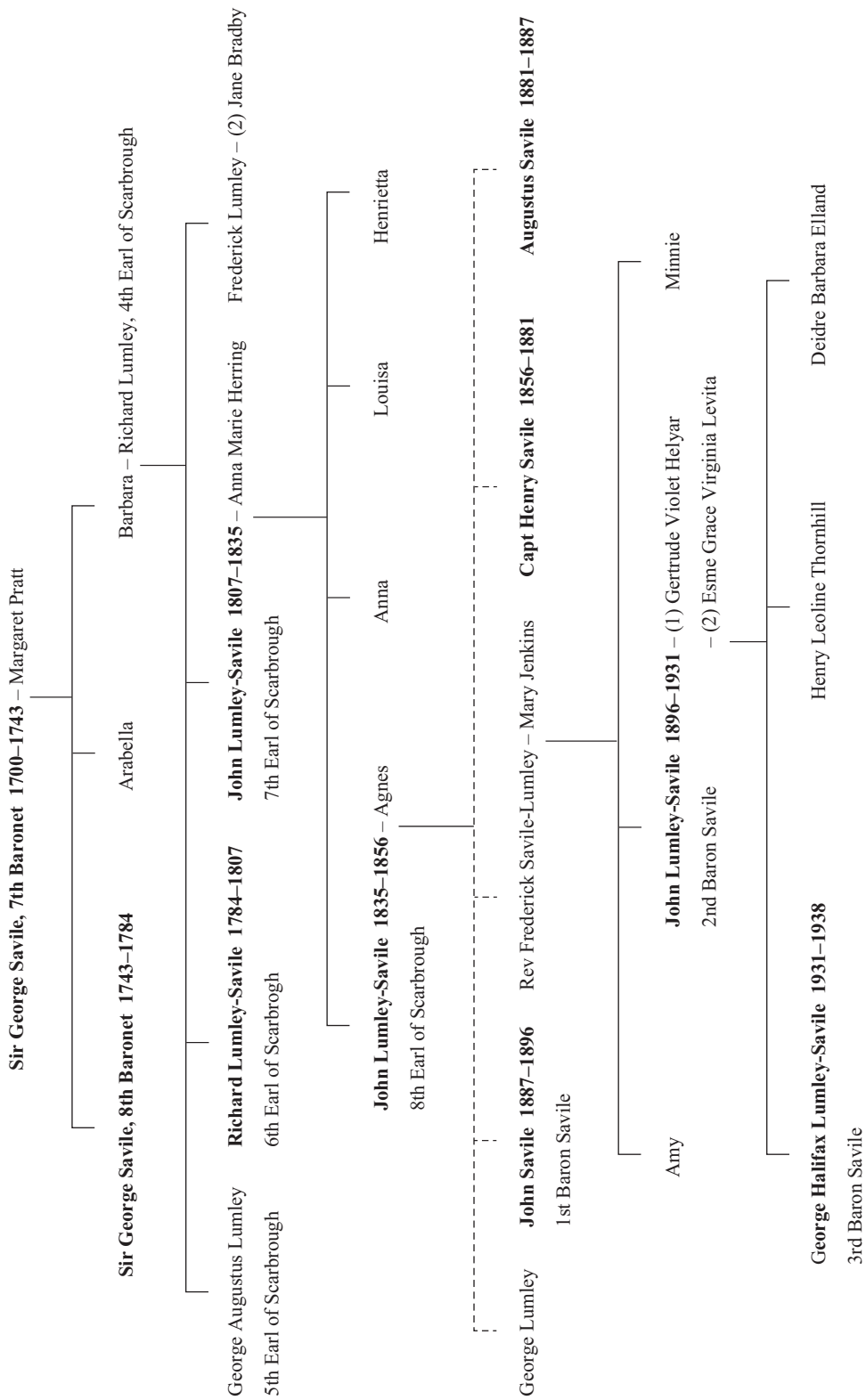


FIGURE 1: The Owners of Rufford Abbey 1700 to 1938. The names of the owners and their dates of ownership are given in **bold**. Dotted line denotes illegitimate off-spring.

him seven illegitimate children. When he inherited Rufford Abbey in 1835 they made their home there; presumably Victorian convention would not allow the Earl to live openly with Agnes at any of the Lumley family's seats; Sandbeck Park, Glentworth Hall or Lumley Castle. This also explains why the 8th Earl chose to modernise Rufford Abbey rather than any of his other properties.

On the 8th Earl's death in 1856, the title and the entailed Lumley estates passed to his Uncle Frederick's family, whilst the Savile estates, including Rufford Abbey, were bequeathed to his fourth natural son Captain Henry Savile; thus once again separating the two properties in accordance with the will of Sir George Savile, 8th Baronet.⁷ Henry Savile made a number of significant alterations to the Abbey. When Henry died childless in 1881 the Rufford Abbey estate passed to his younger brother, Augustus William Savile. When, in 1887, Augustus also died childless Rufford and the Savile estates passed to his elder brother, John Savile, who was created 1st Baron Savile in 1888. It was this Lord Savile who 'designed and built' the grand new staircase wing referred to at the beginning of this article. In 1896, when the 1st Lord Savile died, his title and the Rufford Abbey estate passed to his nephew, another John, the 2nd Lord Savile; the author of the article on Rufford Abbey published in *Pall Mall Magazine* referred to above. It was after the 2nd Lord Savile's death in 1931,

whilst his eldest son, George, the 3rd Lord Savile, was still a minor that his trustees decided to sell Rufford Abbey and its estate in 1938.

RUFFORD ABBEY IN 1784

Sir George Savile, 8th Baronet was born at Savile House in Leicester Square on 18th July 1726. He inherited the baronetcy and the Savile estates, including Rufford Abbey, in 1743 at the age of 17. In 1746 he and his trustees acquired 1,860 acres in the neighbouring parishes of Ollerton, Bilsthorpe, Kirton and Egmont from the Markham family for £22,000.⁸ After a brief spell as a lieutenant-colonel in Rockingham's regiment during the Jacobite rising, he was admitted to Queens' College, Cambridge graduating MA and LLD in 1749. From 1759 to 1783 he was five times MP for Yorkshire. He became a prominent and well respected politician who was a supporter of the Marquis of Rockingham.⁹ In 1780 he was described by Edmund Burke as 'seldom seeing the seat of his ancestors, he is always in the senate to serve his country, or in the field to defend it'.¹⁰ It is perhaps for this reason that when John Byng visited Rufford Abbey in 1789 he described it as 'gloomy and ill-managed' and 'very melancholy'.¹¹ The 8th Baronet finally resigned his seat in the House of Commons in 1783 and he died at Thornhill in Yorkshire on January 10th 1784.

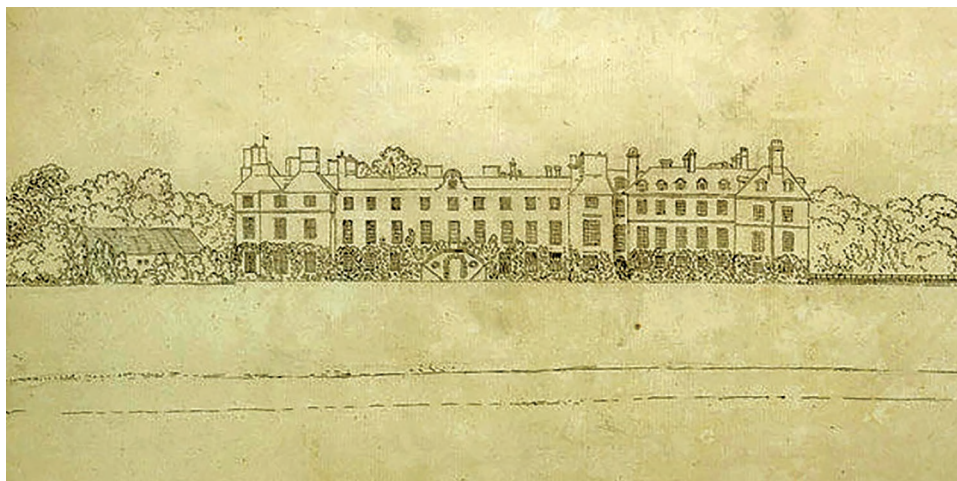


PLATE 3: S H Grimm. View of Rufford Abbey from the east, 1773. *British Library, Kaye Collection 15544 f145.*

Prior to his involvement in politics, the 8th Baronet had made important changes to the Rufford estate. In around 1750 he created the present lake by enlarging the former mill pond and erecting a new corn mill which acted as an eye-catcher at the north end of the lake.¹² He was an enthusiastic improver who landscaped the park, planted thousands of trees and enclosed over 1,000 acres on the Rufford estate. He swept away most of the formal gardens and water gardens created by his predecessors as evidenced by Samuel Hieronymus Grimm's view of Rufford Abbey from the east taken in 1773 (Plate 3), and from the undated watercolours which Richard Hewlings has tentatively attributed to P Grandey.¹³ These images also show that the raised terrace at the centre of the east front and the walled Wood Yard at the south end of the same front – screening the southern projecting gabled-wing – had been demolished as part of the 8th Baronet's improvements. They also show that the windows to the northern, late 17th century, section of the house and those on the east front had been given new sashes with thin glazing bars and large panes.¹⁴

PARK LODGE

Previously it was thought that 'unlike nearby Newstead Abbey and Welbeck Abbey, both of which were given Gothick additions', Rufford had no Gothick style additions.¹⁵ This is now known to

be untrue. One building on the estate, which was almost certainly constructed for the 8th Baronet, Park Lodge (also known as the White Lodge or Eaking Lodge) was built in the Gothick style (Plate 4).¹⁶ It is situated on the southern edge of the park created by the 8th Baronet. Nothing is known of the building's history though a 'Lodge' is marked in this position on John Chapman's map of Nottinghamshire published in 1774.¹⁷ The building consists of a central square house with walls which extend on either side to enclose yards with slightly lower tower-like structures at both ends. The building is constructed of brick (now rendered and painted) with tall pointed window openings, blind cross arrow-slits and battlements. Its main façade faces north and it would have acted as an eye-catcher from the Abbey across the park. It seems likely that the central house was intended as the residence of an important member of the estate staff whilst the wings may well have been constructed as kennels. The lodge had become the Gamekeeper's residence by the 20th century.

RICHARD LUMLEY SAVILE 1784–1807

Richard Lumley-Savile (1757–1832), was the second son of the 4th Earl of Scarborough and his wife, Barbara, the sister of the 8th Baronet. He was educated at Eton between 1770 and 1773. Like many younger sons he joined the army. He was

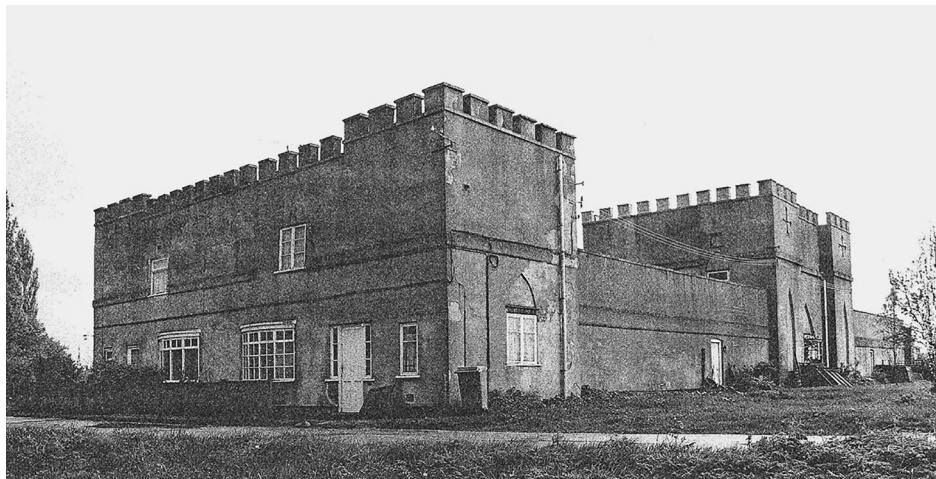


PLATE 4: Park Lodge. c.1993. Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.



PLATE 5: One of the Ice Houses in the Wilderness Woodland probably built for Richard Lumley Savile in c.1800. *Pete Smith.*

commissioned a cornet in the 10th Dragoons in 1775, promoted to lieutenant in 1778 and captain in the 86th Foot in 1780. He retired from the army on inheriting Rufford Abbey in 1784. He was MP for Lincoln from 1784 to 1790, though there is no record of him having spoken in the House.¹⁸ He was Sheriff of Nottingham 1793–94. He entertained the Prince of Wales, the future George IV, at Rufford in 1786. In 1787 he married the Hon Henrietta Willoughby, daughter of Henry, 5th Baron Middleton of Wollaton Hall near Nottingham. On 5th September 1807 his elder brother died and he became the 6th Earl of Scarborough and in accordance with his uncle's will he passed the Savile family estates to his younger brother John. Richard's obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* described him as 'well known and appreciated in the sporting circles, and his racing stud was formerly considered one of the most valuable in the kingdom'.¹⁹

There is no record of Richard Lumley Savile having carried out alterations to Rufford Abbey or the estate but it seems likely that he was responsible for the construction of the three Ice Houses in the Wilderness Woodlands to the north-west of the Abbey (Plate 5). These large ice houses are usually described as having been built in the 1820s,²⁰ though as we shall see the Rev John Lumley Savile who owned the estate during the 1820s did not live at

Rufford and almost certainly never commissioned any additions to the house or its grounds.

REV JOHN LUMLEY SAVILE (7TH EARL OF SCARBOROUGH) 1807–35

John Lumley, the third son of the 4th Earl of Scarborough, was destined for the church. He graduated from King's College, Cambridge and became a prebendary of York. The Hon and Rev John Lumley, as he was known in his youth, was Rector of Thornhill between 1793 and 1813. In 1807, when his elder brother Richard inherited the earldom he inherited Rufford Abbey and the Savile estates. Francis Laird, author of *The Beauties of England* (1813), gives us a brief glimpse of the Abbey at this time. He records that;

it [Rufford Abbey] is now the property of the Hon. and Rev. Lumley Savile, who resides at Edwinstowe in the vicinity, and has, therefore, left Rufford almost in an unfurnished state, with the exception of a numerous and valuable collection of paintings.²¹

John Lumley Savile kept the house and its gardens in good repair even though he never actually lived there, for Laird concludes his description; 'Though this mansion is uninhabited, the noble owner with a religious affection to the memory of his ancestors, has preserved the garden and grounds in the best state.'²² This is also confirmed by William White whose *Directory* of 1832 records that;

Though the noble owner lives chiefly at the neighbouring village of Edwinstow, he has a small establishment of servants here for the culture of his extensive farm, and the preservation of his game, park, woods, gardens, and pleasure grounds, which, with a religious affection for the memory of his ancestors, he keeps in excellent condition; indeed, everything is so elegant both in and about the mansion, that even a stranger cannot help feeling regret that such a spot should be in a great measure unenjoyed!²³

In 1832 the Hon and Rev John Lumley Savile became the 7th Earl of Scarborough on the death of his brother Richard. Popularly known as 'Black Jack', he had a reputation as a cruel and miserly man. He was killed in a riding accident on 24th

February 1835, and his death was referred to by his neighbour the 4th Duke of Newcastle in the following manner;

There never was a more odious or detested character. Poor man, he was truly unfit to appear suddenly before his maker, but his death, awful as it is, must be a blessing to all those who had anything to do with him.²⁴

His reputation as 'miserly' is confirmed by his refusal to relinquish the Savile estates in accordance with the will of Sir George Savile, 8th Baronet, and his reputation for cruelty is confirmed by his violent treatment of his son.²⁵ The 7th Earl was buried in St Helen's Church, Saxby in Lincolnshire, where his wife Anna Maria (née Herring) erected a tomb to his memory on which he is described somewhat euphemistically;

He was a kind friend

A liberal landlord

And a generous relation²⁶

The 7th Earl passed the entailed Lumley estates and the ill-gotten Savile estates to his eldest son on his death in 1835.

JOHN LUMLEY SAVILE (8TH EARL OF SCARBOROUGH) 1835–56: ANTHONY SALVIN'S ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS 1837–45

John Lumley Savile, 8th Earl of Scarbrough succeeded his father in 1835. He was educated at Eton, attended St John's College Cambridge in 1808, transferred to Trinity Hall in 1809 and graduated MA. 'He was maimed as a boy, owing, it is said, to his father's violence,'²⁷ and relations with his father were strained to say the least. His father and mother complained constantly of his extravagance and his wild behaviour. He represented Nottinghamshire in Parliament from 1826 to 1832 and North Nottinghamshire from 1832 until inheriting the peerage in 1835. His political opinions were formulated largely in opposition to his father who was a 'staunch Whig'. He voted for the reform bill and for catholic emancipation.²⁸

The unconventional 8th Earl cohabited with Agnes, a young French girl, whom he had rescued from drowning, and by whom he had six surviving illegitimate children. From 1835 they resided at Rufford Abbey rather than Sandbeck Hall, the traditional seat of the Earl's of Scarborough. His successful action in the High Court to retain the Savile estates may well have been influenced by the fact that it was his intention on his death to leave the Savile estates to his illegitimate heirs thereby again separating them from the Lumley estates of the Earls of Scarborough.²⁹

As we have seen little alteration (except for new sash windows) appears to have taken place to the Abbey between the alterations for Sir George Savile in the 1730s and the 8th Earl's inheritance in 1835. As White's *Directory* in 1844 records;

This noble mansion, neglected for some years, is again, under its present noble possessor, approaching its former splendour,³⁰

A design, by the architects Woodhead & Hurst of Doncaster dated 1836, survives in the Nottinghamshire Archives for 'proposed outbuildings at Rufford'.³¹ The archives also contain the *Rufford Abbey Household and Estate Account Book* for the period 1837–45.³² This *Account Book* contains final payments in 1838 to 'Mr Hurst architect' and to 'Taylor' the clerk of works.³³ 'Mr Hurst, architect' must be William Hurst of Woodhead & Hurst. They were presumably engaged on completing some relatively minor alterations to the house, and were replaced by the architect, Anthony Salvin and his clerk of works, Roger Sugars Wilkinson for this larger scale remodelling of the house, only begun after the High Court's confirmation of the 8th Earl's ownership of the Savile estates.

The young Anthony Salvin was beginning to make a name for himself as a country house architect at this time. He had recently completed the dramatic exterior of nearby Harlaxton Manor (1831–7) in Lincolnshire, and he already had experience of modernising a number of old country houses.³⁴ His alterations at Rufford were largely internal and relatively unobtrusive. Most,



PLATE 6: The Brick Hall designed by Anthony Salvin 1837–45. *Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.*

PLATE 7: The Library designed by Anthony Salvin 1837–45. *Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.*

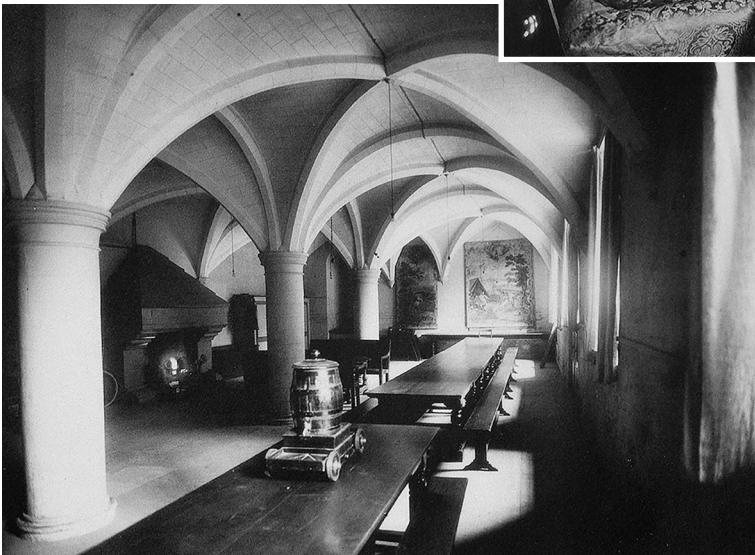


PLATE 8: The Servant's Hall, originally the undercroft to the lay brothers range, remodelled by Anthony Salvin 1837–45. *Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.*

but not all, were carried out in Salvin's preferred Elizabethan style.

The *Account Book* records a total expenditure of £27,809. 18. 4¾d.³⁵ It also reveals much about these alterations and those who provided the materials. These include the Duke of Newcastle who was paid £228 14s 5d on August 21, 1841 for 'flooring boards, stairs, slates, glass windows etc. from Worksop Manor',³⁶ the house designed by James Paine which was being dismantled at this time.³⁷ A few of the craftsmen are identified such as Charles Raymond Smith who was paid £296 in 1839 for carving a number of chimneypieces, John Wolstenholme who was paid £138 12s 6d for 'carving in the Brick Hall' and Wm Wilson who was paid £200 for 'plumber's and glazier's work during the repair of the Hall'.³⁸

The *Account Book* does not often specify which rooms were remodelled and re-decorated, but using Laird's description, and the descriptions of other visitors, it is possible to conclude that Salvin's alterations were restricted to the southern half of the house. Salvin enlarged the hall, known as the 'Brick Hall' because of its polished brick floor, and inserted a new screen, chimneypiece and open timber roof (Plate 6). He also created the new Library beyond to the north with carved bookcases and an elaborate plaster ceiling (Plate 7). Whilst to the south of the Brick Hall he contrived a series of service rooms including lamp room and butler's pantry. Below these rooms he created a new servant's hall by uncovering and restoring the undercroft of the former lay-brother's range (Plate 8) one of the few sections of the medieval abbey buildings which survive today. Francis White in his *Directory* published in 1864 records that the 8th Earl was responsible for this work.

The crypt below.....was at the same time brought to light by the removal of a chaos of subterranean rubbish, and now, as well as being converted into useful purposes, it attracts the interest of archaeologists, as a perfect specimen of a crypt of considerable antiquity.³⁹

Externally Salvin removed the late 17th century additions from west front; the elaborate gable, the oval dormer windows and the iron balcony.⁴⁰ He replaced the simple porch with the present two-storey porch, re-using its four Salomonic columns

and he re-built the bridge which leads to the porch (Plate 9). He also replaced the small wooden cupola, which topped the main gable on the south front, with the more substantial stone cupola which survives today.⁴¹ This involved replacing the clock and clock face, the new clock was made by John Thwaites of London. It also involved the rebuilding of part of the gable in order to support the heavier cupola (Plate 10).

On the eastern side he redecorated the central Salon, formerly known as the drawing room, in a contrasting classical style (Plate 11). This was to be the most expensive interior containing five sculpted relief panels in elaborate carved frames.



PLATE 9: The Porch and the Bridge designed by Anthony Salvin 1837–45. *Pete Smith.*



PLATE 10: The South Cupola designed by Anthony Salvin 1837–45. *Pete Smith.*

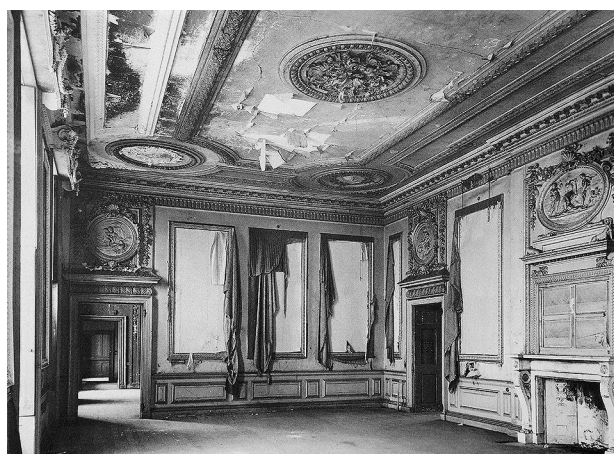


PLATE 11: The Salon designed by Anthony Salvin and decorated by Messrs. Crace, Armstrong Smith and Thomas Willement 1837–45. *Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.*

Four of these circular panels formed over-doors whilst the largest oval panel was sited over the marble chimneypiece. The decoration included framed panels of ‘crimson and white silk of the basket pattern’⁴² on the walls, deep coving and an elaborate plaster ceiling all of which was created by Messrs. Crace, Armstrong Smith and Thomas Willement.⁴³ Situated to the south of the Saloon, the Dining room, with its buffet alcove was probably redecorated at this time, as was the billiard room to the north of the Saloon though no photographic record of this work survives.

The park was enlarged by the re-routing of the main Nottingham to Doncaster road further west (for a second time) to its present position and a new straight entrance drive was constructed leading directly to the east front of the Abbey. The former northern entrance was abandoned and the new avenue created was planted with lime trees. In 1841 grand new gate-piers and gates were constructed by Salvin to form a fitting entrance to the estate (Plate 12). White’s Directory of 1844 also records that ‘1841 commenced the erection of a beautiful new Lodge, which was not completed till 1843’ this is the surviving West Lodge situated immediately over the road from the new gates⁴⁴ (Plate 13). The *Account Book* also records the expenditure of over £500 per annum on the gardens for the years 1837 to 1845, plus the salary



PLATE 12: The Gates and Railings designed by Anthony Salvin c.1840. *Pete Smith.*



PLATE 13: The West Lodge designed by Anthony Salvin 1841. *Pete Smith.*



PLATE 14: The Stableblock, built c.1660 and modernised and partly rebuilt by John Birch c.1865. *Pete Smith.*

of the head gardener; to 1841 Crisp Shooter at £78 per annum, after 1841 Thomas Challis at £90 per annum.⁴⁵

The 8th Earl of Scarbrough died on 29th October 1856 without ever having taken his seat in the House of Lords. An inventory of the estate which was taken in 1856 survives and this contains a complete list of the 197 estate staff and tenants.⁴⁶

CAPTAIN HENRY SAVILE 1856–81

In 1856 the Savile estates, including Rufford Abbey, passed to the 8th Earl's third surviving natural son, Henry. At the time he was a captain in the 2nd Life Guards. He was also a well-known racehorse owner whose horse Cremone won the Derby in 1872 and the Ascot Cup in 1873. Cremone won 20 of his 26 races and won prizes to the value of £22,439.

Like the construction of the grand staircase wing, the remodelling of the stableblock has previously been incorrectly dated. It has usually been attributed to the 1st Lord Savile in the 1880s,⁴⁷ but in fact it was Captain Henry Savile, who was, perhaps unsurprisingly, responsible for the remodelling of this building. The quadrangular brick stableblock was originally built in around 1660 and reputedly altered in 1737 (Plate 14). The 1856 Inventory

records the following accommodation within this stableblock;

Coachman's Room...Ten Stall Stable....Three Stall
Stable...Hack Stable...Six Stall Stable....Two Stall
Stable⁴⁸

The care of horses and the design of their accommodation had changed radically during the previous century.⁴⁹ The breeding of thoroughbred horses, such as hunters and racehorses, for example, led to the introduction of loose boxes, whilst a better understanding of the importance of hygiene led to the introduction of specialist flooring, a clean water supply, good drainage and ventilation, plus specialist rooms for the increasing amount of equine equipment. The remodelled stableblock incorporated all these advances within its walls.

For this work Captain Savile employed the architect John Birch who specialised in and wrote about the design of modern stable buildings. Birch includes plans, a cross-section and an elevation (Plate 15) of the work he carried out at Rufford Abbey in his book, *The Architecture of the Stables and Country Mansions*, published in 1883.⁵⁰ In it he states;

These drawings show the stables at Rufford Abbey, Notts, which the author had the honour of partly restoring for the late Henry Savile, Esq. The lower portion, from A to A ground plan VII., indicates the part rebuilt.

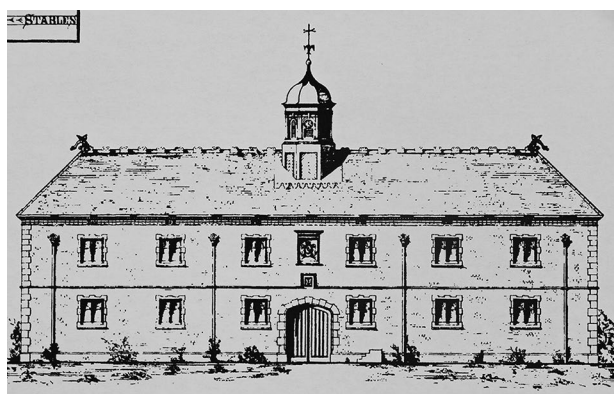


PLATE 15: John Birch. The West Front of the Stableblock at Rufford Abbey from *The Architecture of the Stables and Country Mansions* published in 1883.

This rebuilding referred to the west and south ranges of this quadrangular building. The break in the brickwork between the original 17th century structure and the 19th century rebuild can still be clearly seen on both the north and south fronts. Unfortunately Birch does not give a date for his rebuilding though it seems most likely to have been in the 1860s. The original arched entrance through the centre of the north range was blocked in order to increase the number of internal stalls. The rebuilt ranges copied almost exactly the form and detail of the original building on the exterior. Birch added a bold rubbed brick cornice all around the building to support the new roofs which were topped with terracotta dragon-head finials. He also added the four prominent iron downpipes with elaborate hoppers placed symmetrically along each façade. According to the elevation he also designed an octagonal cupola over the centre of the north range, but this seems never to have been built (Plate 15).

Though the interior of the stable block was converted into gallery spaces and a shop in the 1980s, a photograph of the interior of the six-stall stable in the south range has been preserved. The plans and cross-section published by Birch allow us to see the full extent of his alterations (Plate 16). The ground floor plan shows 15 stalls (9 stalls in the north range and 6 in the south), 11 generous loose boxes and a washing place, and the upper floor has a large granary, a hay store, saddle room, harness room, mess room, coachman's kitchen, parlour

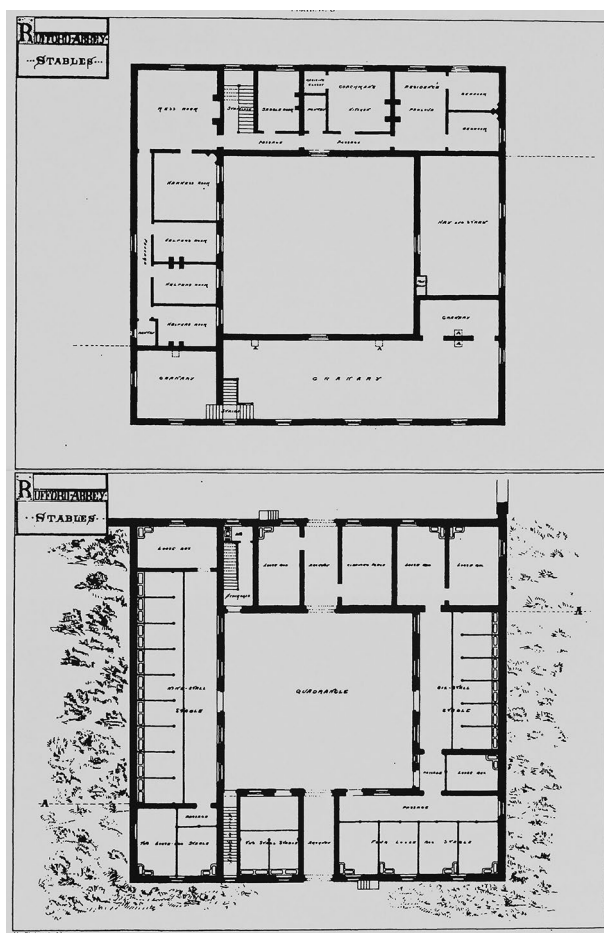


PLATE 16: John Birch. Plans of the ground and first floors of the Stableblock at Rufford Abbey from *The Architecture of the Stables and Country Mansions* published in 1883.

and two bedrooms plus three 'helper's rooms'. The cross-section – through the southern side of the west range – shows a modern stable interior with glazed tile walls, solid divisions between the stalls, gates with upper iron grills and iron feeding troughs, plus fireproof construction. This stable, which Birch described as having 'been well cared for, but had fallen gradually into decay', was converted into the most modern and hygienic equine accommodation available at that date.

As well as the stables Captain Henry Savile also converted and extended the original corn mill at the north end of the lake into a saw mill sometime in the 1860s.⁵¹ The new buildings comprised offices,



PLATE 17: The Saw Mill at Rufford Abbey, probably designed by John Birch c.1865. *Pete Smith.*

a saw mill, stabling for 6 horses, a blacksmith's forge, a mill manager's house and extensive joiners shops (Plate 17). Captain Savile was, thanks to the extensive tree planting of his ancestor the 8th Baronet, able to go into serious commercial timber production on the estate. The architect of these additions is unknown. It is possible that John Birch was the designer, for in his *Example of Stables* he refers to 'superintending other works on this extensive property', and like the stables, the additions and alterations were carried out in a style sympathetic to the original building.⁵²

In 1868 Henry Savile employed Thomas Lewis & Son of Newcastle-under-Lyme to design and build a range of 'Waggon Sheds and Stable Workshops' to the south-west of the existing stables.⁵³ He may also have been responsible for the new coach house and brewhouse built to the east of the stableblock.

Relatively little information has come to light about the development of the gardens in the later 19th century. An article appeared in *The Journal of Horticulture* in 1877 which describes the pleasure gardens with 'its rose garden and diamond shaped beds of pansies.....plus the extensive kitchen gardens with their vineries which.....were then under the supervision of a recently appointed head gardener Mr Doe.'⁵⁴

AUGUSTUS WILLIAM SAVILE 1881-7

On the death of Henry Savile in 1881 the estate passed to his younger brother Augustus William Savile who had been born in 1828. He was well known in high society. He was a personal friend of the Prince of Wales who stayed here at Rufford for the shooting and whilst attending the Doncaster races. He also lent Queen Victoria his villa in the South of France, the Villa Edelweiss when she visited Cannes April in 1887 to see the memorial to her son, Prince Leopold. Unfortunately due to ill-health he 'could not receive the royal party when it arrived. The Queen called on him at a nearby house which he had moved to', but he never recovered and died at Cannes soon after the Queen's departure.⁵⁵ A cartoon image of Augustus was included in *Vanity Fair* on 3rd January 1874.

Augustus subscribed to *The Great Houses of Nottinghamshire and the County Families* by Leonard Jacks published in 1881 which included a chapter on Rufford Abbey. According to John Bateman's *The Great Landowners of Great Britain & Ireland* published in 1883 Augustus owned 17,830 acres in Nottinghamshire which was worth a gross annual value of £17,213 and a further 16,000 acres in the West Riding of Yorkshire which brought in £35,000 making his income a total £52,213 from his land holdings.⁵⁶ Augustus only owned Rufford

for six years and on his death it passed to his eldest brother, John.

1ST LORD SAVILE'S ALTERATIONS 1887–96

Born on 6th January 1818, John Savile, 1st Baron Savile was the eldest surviving, natural son of the 8th Earl of Scarbrough.⁵⁷ He joined the Foreign Office in 1842 at the age of 24, and the following year he was appointed as private secretary and *attaché* to the Earl of Westmorland in Berlin. So began a long and distinguished career as a diplomat. He was stationed in St Petersburg in 1849 and Washington in 1854, then New York and Madrid in 1858. In 1860 he was posted to Constantinople and from there back to St Petersburg as *chargé d'affaires*, here in 1866 he was elected a member of the Russian Imperial Academy of Fine Arts. After postings to Saxony, then Switzerland and in 1868 Brussels he was finally promoted to British minister at Rome in 1883. In September 1888, after inheriting Rufford Abbey the previous year, he retired from the diplomatic service. He was created Companion of the Order of the Bath in 1873, Knight Commander in 1878, Grand Commander in 1885 and 1st Baron Savile in 1888 in recognition of his success in the diplomatic service. It was presumably his success in the diplomatic service and the fact that he was posted abroad most of his life which prompted his father to leave the Rufford estate to his younger brothers, Henry and then Augustus, before him.

Lord Savile was a proficient amateur painter who specialised in landscapes and seascapes. He was also a keen amateur archaeologist. Whilst stationed in Rome he took part in valuable excavations at Civita Lavinia (Lanuvium) and his finds are today in the British Museum and in Nottingham Castle Museum. He was also a collector and connoisseur who put together a fine picture collection housed at Rufford. He was elected an honorary member of the Royal Academy in Antwerp. In 1883 he presented *Christ at the Column* (also known as *Christ contemplated by the Christian Soul* or *Christ after the Flagellation*) by Diego Velázquez to the National Gallery. He had purchased the picture in Madrid in 1858 from a 'poor old artist'. He also presented a further five lesser pictures to the gallery

over the following decade and he was made a trustee in 1890.⁵⁸

Lord Savile was presumably quite capable of producing designs for his new staircase, as suggested by his son in *Pall Mall Magazine*, though there is no documentation in the Savile Papers which indicates who the executant architect was. The construction of the new grand staircase involved the demolition of the existing central projecting wing on the east front (Plate 18) and its replacement by a slightly larger new wing (see also Plate 2). The original wing contained the 16th or 17th century open well stair recorded on a number of early plans. This much smaller and somewhat awkwardly sighted stair was replaced by the new and much larger single-flight return stair which linked the northern and southern sections of the house together far more successfully.

The exterior of the staircase wing with its tall mullioned bay window and prominent gable was



PLATE 18: Detail of an early photograph of Rufford Abbey from the north-east. c.1870. NA.

designed in the Elizabethan Revival style. The magnificent new stair with its unusual carved balustrade and its doorcases with segmental pediments was designed in the style of the late 17th century, presumably to complement the already existing interiors of the north wing completed in around 1680 (Plate 19). The ceiling of this stair was unusual, it had the same pattern of plaster ribs which is visible in surviving photographs of the Long Gallery⁵⁹ and both were copies of the ceiling in the Long Gallery at Hardwick New Hall.⁶⁰ Since the Long Gallery at Rufford was also altered at this time with the addition of a new bay window at its north end it seems most likely that this was also when its ceiling was remodelled.⁶¹ Hardwick would have been an appropriate model since both it and Rufford had, in the late 16th century, been owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury and his wife, Bess of Hardwick. The new bay window at the end of the Long Gallery, with its mullions and strap-work cresting supported on square columns, formed an incongruous element on William Taylor's 17th century north front (Plate 20).



PLATE 19: 'The Grand Staircase, of carved oak, was designed and built by the late Lord Savile, HM Ambassador at Rome.'
Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.



PLATE 20: The North Front of Rufford Abbey showing the incongruous Elizabethan-style bay window (far right) added to the Long Gallery by Lord Savile. *National Monuments Record.*

To the north of the grand staircase a new bedroom was formed from two closets and a corridor, known as the Venetian Room⁶² (Plate 21). The decidedly French style of the chimneypiece and the presumably Venetian silk wall decoration were typical of the interior decorators style of the 1880s. On a more practical note, in 1889 electricity was introduced into the house to replace the earlier oil lighting, and a new artesian well was sunk to increase the water supply. It was presumably at this date that the tall brick water tower was built to the south-east of the stableblock.



PLATE 21: The Venetian Room created by the 1st Lord Savile.
Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.

Lord Savile was responsible for commissioning and installing the enormous replica of a Roman lamp, which had been discovered at the excavations he had been involved in at the Temple of Diana at Nemi in Italy, as a fountain at the Bath House (Plate 22). This Bath House which had been designed and built by John Hallam in 1729 appears by the time of the 1856 inventory to have been largely dis-used.⁶³ Lord Savile commissioned the conversion of this Bath House into a winter garden to house exotic plants and some of the antique sculptures he acquired on his travels. This involved the construction of an elaborate iron and glass roof supported on decorative iron columns over the walled open court of the original Bath House (Plate 23). He also installed a boiler house and under-floor heating. The entrance was moved and the date '1889' inscribed over the new doorway presumably records the year of the completion of these alterations.⁶⁴ The glass and iron roof was removed during the 2nd World War and the Bath House was restored to something like its 18th century form in 1995.

Lord Savile continued the development of the gardens and was also responsible for the rebuilding of many of the farms and cottages on the estate. He died unmarried at Rufford Abbey 28th November



PLATE 22: The Fountain in front of the Bath House.

An enormous replica of a Roman lamp, which had been discovered at the excavations that the 1st Lord Savile had been involved in at the Temple of Diana at Nemi in Italy.

Pete Smith.



PLATE 23: The Winter Garden. Converted from the Bath House built in 1728 by the addition of a glass roof for the 1st Lord Savile in 1889. *Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey.*

1896 and was succeeded by his nephew. His will records that he died worth £43,766 5s 6d.⁶⁵

2ND LORD SAVILE 1896–1931

John Lumley Savile (1853–1931), who succeeded as the 2nd Lord Savile in 1896, was the son of the Rev Frederick Savile and his wife, Mary Jenkins. Frederick was the younger brother of the 1st Lord Savile and rector of Bilsthorpe in Nottinghamshire. John entered the diplomatic service in 1873 and remained at the Foreign Office until 1889. He married Gertrude Violet Helyar, who died in c.1918. He married for a second time Esme Grace Virginia Levita by whom he had three children, George (who eventually succeeded his father as 3rd Lord Savile), Henry (father of the present, 4th Lord Savile), and Deidre.

During the 2nd Lord Savile's long ownership of Rufford Abbey a number of important articles were published about the history of the house and the Savile family. The first of these was the article in the *Pall Mall Magazine* in 1898, which was written by the 2nd Lord himself.⁶⁶ This was followed by an anonymous article in *Country Life* for November 7th 1903.⁶⁷ The same issue

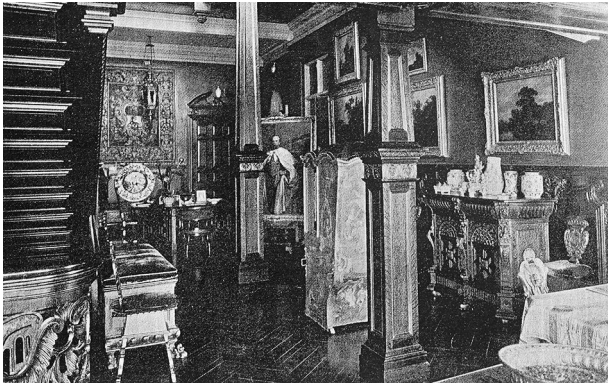


PLATE 24: The Grand Staircase, showing the square posts inserted to support the upper flights, from *The Motorist & Traveller* published in August, 1905. *Veteran & Vintage Car Club of Great Britain, Ashwell.*

also included an article entitled 'Shooting at Rufford Abbey' which featured Lord Savile, Lord Yarborough and Mr Rimington Wilson and the then Head Keeper, William Herod.⁶⁸ The Abbey was also included in Charles Latham's first volume of *In English Homes* published soon after. In 1910 a further article on Rufford Abbey appeared in *The Gardeners' Magazine*.⁶⁹ This detailed the extent of the gardens at this date, including the Japanese Garden completed in 1903 and the Roman Garden completed in 1904 plus the plans for expansion which Lord and Lady Savile had in hand.⁷⁰ It also records the fact that Mr J Doe was still the head gardener after over 30 years.

The photograph of the grand staircase in the *Pall Mall Magazine* article of 1898 shows it as a cantilevered stair with unsupported newels to the half-landing and the upper flight (see Plate 19), but in the photograph of the grand staircase shown in another article in *The Motorist and Traveller* published in 1905 (Plate 24) it is clear that wooden piers have been added to the newels to support the upper parts of the stair. Presumably the upper sections of the stair had started to fail!

The two articles which appeared in *The Motorist & Traveller* on August 9 and 16, 1905 were part of a series of articles by Leonard Willoughby entitled 'The Homes of Motorists'. The later article includes a photograph of the utilitarian three-motor garage Lord Savile had built at Rufford and a brief mention of his interest in motoring.

Lord Savile is a keen motorist, and uses his three cars a great deal.

The cars shown in my picture (Plate 25) are Lord Savile's two Serpollets, a 12-h.p. and a 6-h.p., and the 16-h.p. De Dietrich owned by the Hon. W. Guinness [on the right].⁷¹

Lord Savile's interest in motoring was probably fostered and encouraged by the Prince of Wales who, from 1900 onwards, owned a number of Daimler motors which he used at every available opportunity.⁷² The descriptions of the garages in the sale catalogues give further details. The 1938

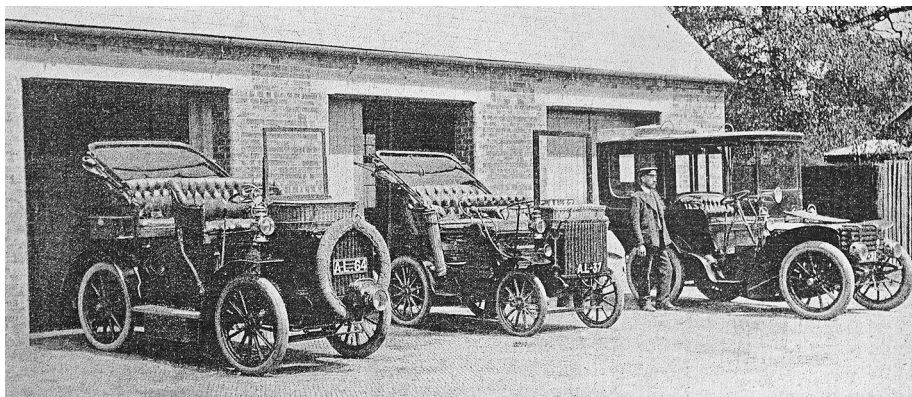


PLATE 25: The three-car Garage built to house the Serpollet motor cars belonging to the 2nd Lord Savile from *The Motorist & Traveller* published in August, 1905. *Veteran & Vintage Car Club of Great Britain, Ashwell.*

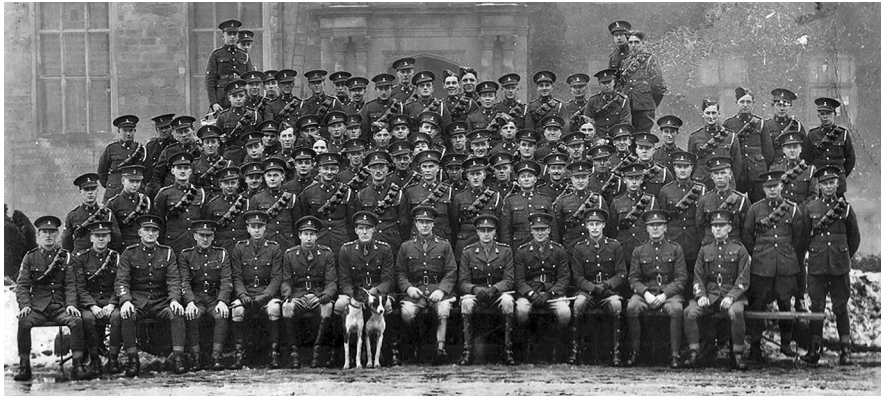


PLATE 26: The Leicestershire Yeomanry photographed in front of the main entrance to Rufford Abbey in 1939. *Nottinghamshire County Council, Rufford Abbey* .

catalogue states ‘they contain two Inspection Pits and hot water pipes heated from a “Robin Hood” boiler in a separate Stoke Hole’,⁷³ whilst the 1947 catalogue mentions a ‘concrete floor’ and ‘sliding doors in pairs’, all features which were essential for the housing of such very early motor cars.⁷⁴ The garage survives today subsumed within Abbey Cottage.

The inter-war years witnessed the final glory days of Rufford Abbey. As agricultural incomes fell Lord Savile’s income was boosted by coal revenues which allowed life to continue very much as it had in the Edwardian era. The royal visits continued for both hunting and for the Doncaster Races until the death of the 2nd Lord Savile in 1931.

AFTER 1931

The trustees of the 3rd Lord Savile, who was a minor at the time, decided to sell the Rufford estate in 1938. On the 11th of October the contents of the Abbey were auctioned in the Long Gallery and from 22nd to 25th of November the same year the house and estate were auctioned by Knight, Frank & Rutley. The Abbey was purchased by Sir Albert Ball who very soon sold it on to the somewhat eccentric Henry de Vere Clifton. The farms were sold mainly to tenants. The house was requisitioned in 1939 and the Leicestershire Yeomanry, 6th Cavalry Brigade was stationed here and adapted to motorised artillery (Plate 26). They were replaced by the 4th Battalion

of the Coldstream Guard with their Churchill tanks in 1943. A series of army huts were constructed in the grounds, which were later used to house Italian prisoners of war. From 1947 the army huts were used by the Forestry Commission who after 1950 shared the site with the Nottinghamshire branch of the Civil Defence.⁷⁵

An extremely vigorous campaign was fought by Robert Innes with the aid of *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* and *Country Life* to save the house, but to no avail.⁷⁶ Eventually the Abbey and 130 acres of park were purchased by Nottinghamshire County Council in 1952; controlled demolition began in 1956 and was completed by 1958. The vaulted monastic undercroft which was Scheduled as an Ancient Monument was taken into guardianship by the Ministry of Public Building and Works (now English Heritage). The south, service end of the Abbey was retained and later converted into a restaurant and offices. In 1969 the Abbey and its surviving grounds were designated a Country Park by Nottinghamshire County Council. The coach house was converted into a café and the Stableblock was converted into a shop and craft gallery in 1980.

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- 15 Smith (2009), 30.
- 16 The present list description suggests incorrectly that it was built in the mid-19th century. It was sold off in 1938 and has since been altered and divided into two separate dwellings.
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